



# Afoot in the Field

## A Resource for Conservation Landowners in the Finger Lakes Region

Summer 2017

Vol. 8 Issue 2

On August 7th this year, the Finger Lakes Land Trust will take another big step forward in growing our stewardship program. That is when our first full-time staff Conservation Easement Steward, Hannah George, will begin her new job with FLLT, working under my direction to play an integral role in meeting our long-term conservation easement obligations and responsibilities. As conservation easement landowners, most of you will get to know Hannah in the coming year or two as she begins making annual easement monitoring visits to most of the 150+ properties that are subject to conservation easements and deed restrictions; in some cases taking over for Volunteer Stewards who have generously assisted the Land Trust for many years.

This is a good time to reflect on conservation easement stewardship, and what that entails for a land conservation organization such as ours. The goal of conservation easement stewardship is to make sure the pieces of paper we sign, in partnership with landowners who are committed to seeing that their unique and important properties are protected forever, are not forgotten or disregarded; that meaningful land conservation is achieved for generations to come, and the easement donor's legacy is realized. The Finger Lakes Land Trust takes this goal seriously, and dedicates significant resources to achieving it.



*Hannah George*

One of the most basic and obvious functions of a conservation easement stewardship program is to visit and inspect each and every one of the properties on which we hold a conservation easement or deed restriction, every single year. The purpose of the monitoring visit is to document the changes that occur on the property over time, allowing us to verify whether or not those changes are in compliance with the terms and conditions that were agreed to by the grantor and the Land Trust.

Every year I look forward to visiting many of the easement properties, most of which are privately owned and not open to the public. I very much enjoy chatting and sometimes hiking around, with the landowners; building lines of communication and nurturing a long-term conservation partnership – which is another critical element of easement stewardship. The better the communication, the better the relationship we will have over time and the less likely it is there will be an inadvertent problem or misunderstanding with adhering to the conservation agreement.

Some other functions of conservation easement stewardship programs are less visible or appreciated. Those include: reviewing requests for activities that require prior approval (for example, a forest management plan, subdivisions, or certain structures); helping to post boundary signs; anticipating and tracking changes in ownership, and prompt communication with new owners; answering questions from landowners, realtors, and prospective buyers; responding to activities that may be problematic in regard to compliance with the legal agreement; preparing outreach materials (such as this newsletter); training, coordination, and support of volunteers; acquiring and renewing a conservation easement defense insurance policy; meeting land trust accreditation standards; and lots and lots of document organization, filing, and archiving.

So I have great appreciation for the number of terrific landowners who love their properties and value their partnership with the Land Trust. I also appreciate very much the volunteers who have provided countless hours of assistance in making property visits on behalf of the Land Trust; and for the financial supporters of our organization that make it possible for us to grow our stewardship program when needed to keep up with our responsibilities.

It is with anticipation that I look forward to the increased capacity for good stewardship that Hannah will bring-maintaining relationships with a lot of great people, meeting the owners/donors of additional new conservation easement properties, and the perpetual care and safeguarding of all of our conservation agreements.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Olney'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chris Olney  
Director of Stewardship

*For questions or concerns regarding your conservation easement, please contact Chris Olney by calling the Land Trust at (607) 275-9487 or email [chrisolney@fllt.org](mailto:chrisolney@fllt.org).*

*"For the past twelve years, the Village of Freeville has been privileged to partner with the Finger Lakes Land Trust on the conservation and stewardship of the Genung Nature Preserve, a beautiful woodland tract within the Village on which the Land Trust holds a conservation easement. A recent example of the Land Trust's invaluable assistance in our conservation efforts in the preserve involved their identification of previously unnoticed third-party boundary encroachment issues, and working closely with the village and our resident Genung Preserve steward to effectively resolve those issues." - David Fogel, Mayor of Freeville*

*"One of the reasons we decided to buy the property was because a large portion of it had been set aside in the Land Trust by the previous owners. Not only did it give us some measure of protection from development, but for us, also represented being part of a larger group that shared our values of land preservation. An added bonus was learning more about the flora and ecosystem from the annual walk through with Land Trust staff. We were impressed by the age and pristine nature of the forest which will be preserved as a result of being part of the Finger Lakes Land Trust."*

*- Paul Coen and Susan McCouch,  
new owners of a CE property, Dryden*

*"Thank you for your assistance in finding a forester for our wooded lot on our conservation land easement. The references that Land Trust provided assisted us to maintain our woods. This will help us to sustain and preserve the trees for years to come. The forester educated us in the types of trees that we have and why some were not growing to their potential. This process will maintain the woods for all of our furry friends that live there."*

*- Curt and Sue Gillette, CE Landowner,  
Yates County*

*"On their own initiative, and with hearts of true land stewards, Chris Olney and Jason Gorman spent an entire, long, hot day cutting and chemically treating invasive Ailanthus trees on my easement property. FLLT efforts like this go beyond the yearly monitoring familiar to easement landowners. Thanks partners!"*

*- Don Wilson, CE landowner,  
Tompkins County*

**Newell Conservation Easement**  
Schuyler County

Photo: Anastasia Newell



# Finger Lakes Land Trust Conservation Easement and Deed Restriction Acquisition Statistics

*This summary does not include FLLT nature preserves, or parcels acquired by FLLT and then transferred unrestricted to government as additions to public lands.*

# of original conservation easements (CEs) granted to FLLT

**132**

# of original deed restrictions (DRs) enforceable by FLLT

**8**

Current total CEs & DRs

**11,693 acres**

# of CEs and DRs granted from 1989 (founding of FLLT) through 1999	33	covering 2,403 acres
# of CEs and DRs granted from 2000 through 2009	45	covering 3,166 acres
# of CEs and DRs granted from 2010 through June 2017	65	covering 6,464 acres
# of CEs purchased with governmental farmland protection funds	11	covering 2,022 acres
# of CEs/DRs that have public access (town, county, or non-profit nature preserves; private lands that host public trails, public fishing rights, or landowner choice)	24	covering 1,257 acres
# of CEs granted as a condition of sale of land from FLLT to a private buyer	13	covering 531 acres

\*as of end of June 2017



**Woldt Conservation Easement**  
Onondaga County

Photo: Rob Howard

# Finger Lakes Land Trust Conservation Easement and Deed Restriction Acquisition Statistics



**Gifford Schuster Conservation Easement**  
*Ontario County*

*Photo: Nigel Kent*

## Conservation Easements & Deed Restrictions by County

Cayuga	8	covering 1,250 acres
Chemung	5	covering 335 acres
Cortland	1	covering 124 acres
Livingston	2	covering 513 acres
Onondaga	7	covering 516 acres
Ontario	24	covering 2,052 acres
Schuyler	11	covering 932 acres
Seneca	1	covering 87 acres
Steuben	3	covering 88 acres
Tioga	6	covering 706 acres
Tompkins	64	covering 3,992 acres
Yates	10	covering 1,521 acres

# Finger Lakes Land Trust Conservation Easement and Deed Restriction Acquisition Statistics

Canadice	3	covering 256 acres
Canandaigua	16	covering 786 acres
Cayuga	55	covering 4,000 acres
Conesus	0	covering 0 acres
Hemlock	0	covering 0 acres
Honeoye	0	covering 0 acres
Keuka	4	covering 307 acres
Otisco	0	covering 0 acres
Owasco	0	covering 0 acres
Seneca	13	covering 1,673 acres
Skaneateles	6	covering 327 acres
Lake Ontario, north of Finger Lakes	16	covering 1,886 acres
Chemung/ Susquehanna	26	covering 2,485 acres

## Conservation Easements & Deed Restrictions by Watershed



**Catalpa Farms**  
Ontario County

*Photo: Nigel Kent*

# Finger Lakes Land Trust Conservation Easement and Deed Restriction Acquisition Statistics



**Suwinski Conservation Easement**  
*Tompkins County*

*Photo: Bill Hecht*

CE/DR properties that have been sold to a new owner or gifted to heirs	45
Permitted subdivisions that resulted in an additional new property owner	13
Times a CE has been amended	9
CE amendments that protected additional adjacent land	2
Minor issues of concern and/or problems with neighbors/3rd parties	60+
Forest, habitat, or agricultural management plans reviewed and approved by FLLT	23
Requests for structures or other kinds of improvements requiring prior approval	19
Number of approval requests (from above) that were approved	17
CEs/DRs that are "preservation oriented" and do not permit timber harvesting	35
CEs that do allow some level of timber harvest	108
CEs with a portion of the property designated an Environmental Protection Zone	19
Miles of boundary line	262



**Paige Conservation Easement**  
Schuyler County

Front & Back Cover Photos: Joshua Seidman-Zager

*The Finger Lakes Land Trust is a member supported, non-profit conservation organization that works cooperatively with landowners and local communities to conserve forever the lands and waters of the Finger Lakes region, ensuring scenic vistas, local foods, clean water, and wild places for everyone.*

***Afoot in the Field** is a newsletter provided by the Land Trust for landowners in the Finger Lakes who own properties that are permanently protected with a conservation easement, or who are otherwise committed to, or interested in, land conservation and wildlife habitat protection and improvement. For more information about the Finger Lakes Land Trust and its conservation programs, visit [www.fllt.org](http://www.fllt.org) or call 607-275-9487.*

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