



Afoot in the Field

RESOURCE FOR CONSERVATION LANDOWNERS



EBERHARD PRESERVE, TOMPKINS COUNTY; CHRIS RAY

HOW TIME FLIES! It's hard to believe that 15 years have slipped by since I started at the Finger Lakes Land Trust in October 2008. This issue of Afoot in the Field, with an overview of how many amazing properties have been protected by private landowners in partnership with FLLT, has allowed me to reflect on how much FLLT has grown.

When I started at FLLT, the organization had accepted conservation easements and deed restrictions on 67 properties, totaling 4,917 acres. As of January 2024, the Land Trust was just granted its 200th legal conservation agreement, on land totaling 19,670 acres, and there are many more in the pipeline.

Back in 2008, visiting 67 private conservation properties while also managing 28 FLLT nature preserves was manageable for me and many volunteers. But the number of conservation easements and nature preserves increased at a rapid rate, and it was inevitable that the staff had to grow. I still split my time between nature preserve and conservation easement stewardship, but am thrilled to now be part of a team that includes two full-time and one part-time/seasonal staff for nature preserve stewardship, and two full-time staff for conservation easement stewardship.

We are so thankful to all the FLLT members and donors who support our work. Your support allows us to take on new conservation projects and steadily grow our capacity to care for land and ensure the perpetual integrity of conservation agreements.

Chris Olney
Director of Stewardship



Conservation Easement Statistics

SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT of the Finger Lakes Land Trust in 1989, conservation easements and deed restrictions have been major tools for conservation. As of January 2024, we are currently up to **215** parcels that need to be monitored annually.

- 187** Original Conservation Easements
- 13** Original Deed Restrictions
- 15** Parcels Created By Permitted Subdivision



From top: Argetsinger CE Vineyard; Mike Smith. Lowe CE wetland by beavers; Hailey Nase.

Subdivided parcels are treated as separate parcels with different landowners. *(Important Note: not all conservation easements allow subdivision.)*

Conservation Easements (CE) and Deed Restrictions (DR) are very similar and our monitoring is the same. The major difference is that DRs usually have fewer restrictions. Each CE and DR has different features, restrictions, and allowances that are specific to the individual property.

Landowners, just like their land, vary greatly. We have 350+ individual landowners! Our landowners have a large variety of professions. We have farmers, engineers for NASA, professors, and doctors.

In the last 5 years, 20+ new landowners purchased properties subject to conservation easements. Each new landowner receives a welcome letter with information about the protected property and the FLLT. If you are preparing to sell, we are happy to speak with prospective buyers to ensure they understand the terms of the easement before purchasing the property.

Conservation Restrictions Granted by Decade

1989-1999
34 Conservation Easements
2,128 acres

2000-2009
37 Conservation Easements
8 Deed Restrictions
3,120 acres

2010-2019
73 Conservation Easements
4 Deed Restrictions
8,986 acres

2020-JAN.2024
43 Conservation Easements
1 Deed Restriction
5,745 acres

FLLT protection staff keeps the CE stewards busy as they are constantly working on new projects!

Almost 20,000 acres have been protected through CE and DR properties. The land varies from working farms, meadows, forests, shorelines, wetlands, streams, and gorges. Property size ranges from our largest property at 700 acres, and the smallest at 1 acre. Covering the Finger Lakes region is no small feat with CE properties spanning 12 counties and 13 watersheds.



From top: Birdsall Farm aerial view; Matt Champlin. Field View from Radcliffe / Felipe CE; Hailey Nase.

Meet the CE Stewardship Staff

HAILEY NASE - Conservation Easement Stewardship Manager

Hailey is responsible for ensuring that all properties with a conservation restriction are monitored at least once per year, tracking changes in ownership, and working through a variety of issues related to these properties. Hailey is the primary contact person at FLLT for landowners.

A LITTLE ABOUT HAILEY

One of the best parts of this job is interacting with wonderful landowners and getting to explore the Finger Lakes Region. I love finding new places to take my dog on hikes, exploring new trails to go cross-country skiing, and discovering new lakes to kayak.

Favorite Tree: Any spruce, because they remind me of the red spruce in the White Mountains of New Hampshire where I first fell in love with hiking.

Favorite Time of Year:

Fall. I love the fall colors and the apple desserts.

Favorite Body of Water:

A small creek where you can listen to the water.

Favorite Animal: Ducks, they can do it all: swim, walk, and fly!

Favorite Monitoring

Moment: After over 350+ monitoring visits for the FLLT, one of the visits that I

remember fondly was when a landowner's dog and cat joined for the monitoring visit. I've had dogs join in the past, but this was the first time a cat had joined for a monitoring inspection walk. It was fun to have the company.



Hailey at a conservation easement property; Jake Brenner.

MARGARET ROYALL - Conservation Easement Steward

Margaret conducts the majority of the routine annual property monitoring visits. Each year she will contact landowners ahead of time to schedule the inspections and learn about any changes over the past year. Landowners are encouraged to join Margaret for a walk around the property and chat about land management and other topics of interest.

A LITTLE ABOUT MARGARET

I feel lucky that my job includes walking in the woods, fields, and gorges, seeing the beauty of nature, and hearing stories from people about their land. Seeing and admiring insects, flowers, moss, and other small wonders along with larger landscapes have inspired my passion for land conservation.

Favorite Tree: Oaks because they support so much wildlife and often have quirky twists and bumps.

Favorite Insect: Large silk moths, with their fuzzy bodies and wings, are amazing, especially since they can fly despite their size.

Favorite Time of Day:

Dusk with its magical light, sunsets, and chance of seeing bats.

Favorite Flower: I can't pick a favorite, but I am drawn to spring ephemerals and every flower that has an insect on it.

Favorite Monitoring

Moment: I've enjoyed all the walks with landowners who've told stories about the first time they visited the property, had an animal encounter, or identified a unique feature on a part of their property as we walked by the spot. Looking forward to many more stories to come.



Margaret at the Stevenson Forest Preserve

When Should I Call FLLT?



Contact us anytime with questions about your conservation easement property. Some activities will require the FLLT's input or approval. It is always better to ask before starting your project! Specifically, please contact us...



Before **selling** your property



Before **building** on your property



Before **cutting trees** or harvesting timber



Anytime you have a **question** or are unsure what your conservation easement allows

You can call the FLLT office at (607) 275-9487, or email us:

Chris Olney, Director of Stewardship, chrisolney@fllt.org

Hailey Nase, Conservation Easement Stewardship Manager, haileynase@fllt.org

Margaret Royall, Conservation Easement Steward, margaretroyall@fllt.org

Afoot in the Field is provided for landowners in the Finger Lakes region who own conservation easement properties or who are otherwise committed to land conservation and wildlife habitat protection.

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."



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