



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024 • CONSERVED FOREVER





Dear Friends of the Finger Lakes,

As we celebrate our 35th anniversary, we reflect on our journey from a small all-volunteer group in 1989 to becoming an accredited conservation organization dedicated to protecting lands and waters across a 12-county region. Over these decades, the Land Trust has grown significantly, now managing more than 45 nature preserves and holding 188 conservation easements that safeguard private lands. In this report, we are proud to share our successes from the past year, which include the largest conservation project in our history as an organization.

Our success is deeply rooted in the unwavering support of over 220 volunteers, 4,000 members, and numerous landowners and partners across the Finger Lakes region. Thanks to your commitment, the 33,012 acres we have protected will remain safeguarded forever. We eagerly anticipate the impact we will continue to make together in the years ahead.

With gratitude,



Andrew Zepp
President



Fred Van Sickle
Board Chair

FLLT by the Numbers

Together We Make
an Impact



55.5

miles of hiking trails
ready to explore



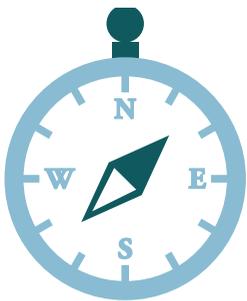
45+

publicly accessible
nature preserves



26,984

feet of protected
lakeshore



33,012
acres
protected
forever



1000+ acres
preserved
each year



Stewarding Together

Photo: Chris Ray

Our dedicated Land Trust staff and corps of volunteers completed another robust year of conservation projects. Over 220 volunteers contributed over 1,000 hours to build trails, plant native trees, manage invasive species, and care for our nature preserves.

In June, we opened the 223-acre Sims-Jennings Preserve at Cayuga Cliffs, thanks to the help of over 150 volunteers, including TST BOCES Construction Trades students, who attended a total of 10 volunteer workdays. Together, we built nearly two miles of interconnected hiking trails, wooden steps, footbridges, benches, and multiple vista points for enjoying views of Cayuga Lake.

We also focused on restoration projects designed to protect water quality and establish wildlife habitat. Over 1,000 native trees and shrubs were planted on private lands in Cayuga and Ontario counties. These newly planted trees create important stream buffers and promote new habitat on properties protected through conservation easements held by the Land Trust. Additionally, we

partnered with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to expand meadows at the site of the former Cedar View Golf Course, enhancing grassland habitat for migratory songbirds such as Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, and Eastern Meadowlarks.

After years of effort, we successfully protected the Bell Station shoreline. The Land Trust, in collaboration with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, announced the creation of the 287-acre Cayuga Shores Wildlife Management Area (formerly Bell Station). Now state-owned, this new area offers public access to the east side of Cayuga Lake, enhancing recreational opportunities and preserving the shoreline.

We are grateful to our members, volunteers, partners, and board and committee members who dedicate their time and resources to protecting and stewarding these lands and waters.

Together, we can do so much more to protect the Finger Lakes region.

2023-2024 CONSERVATION PROJECTS

2,502 acres



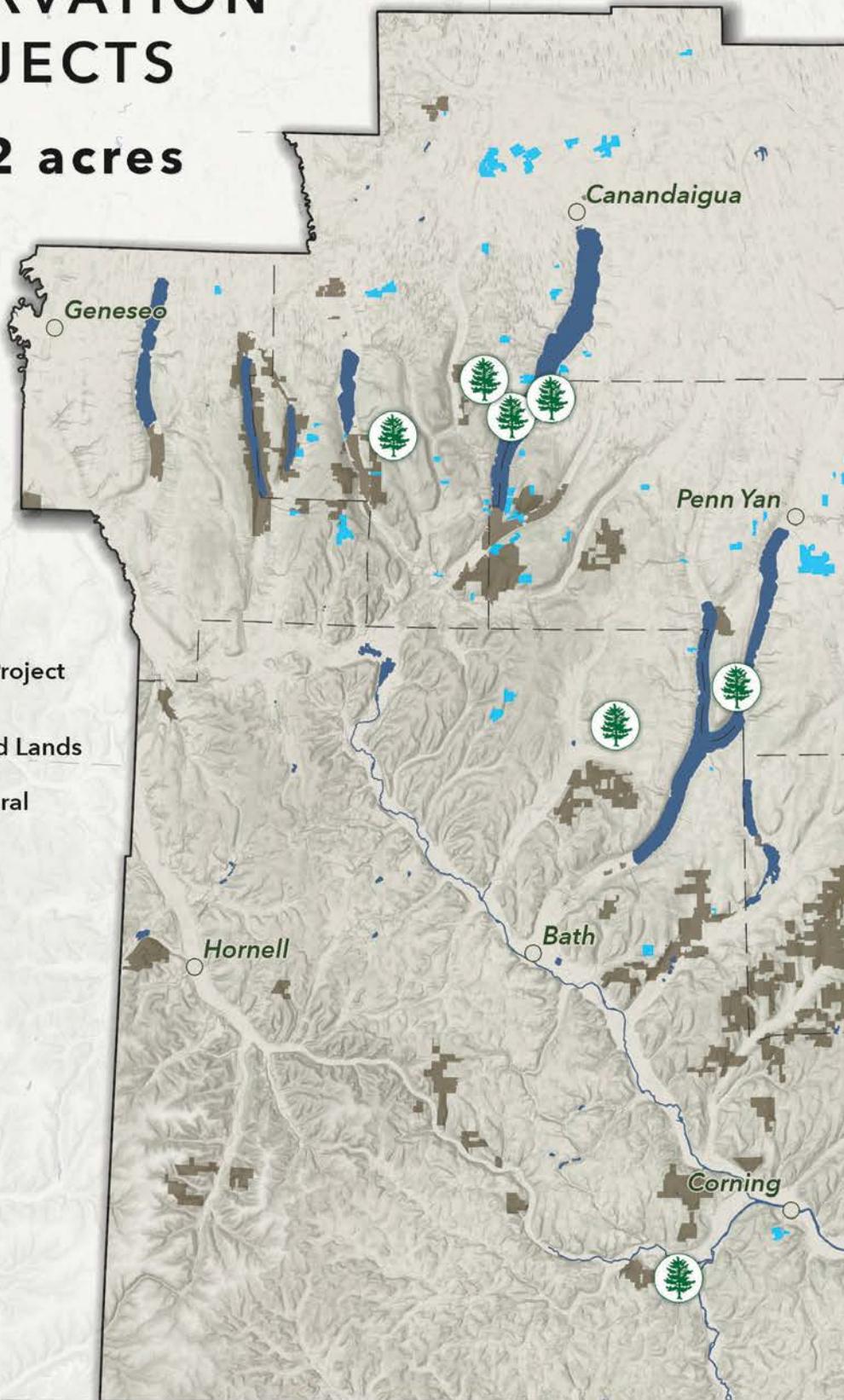
Conservation Project

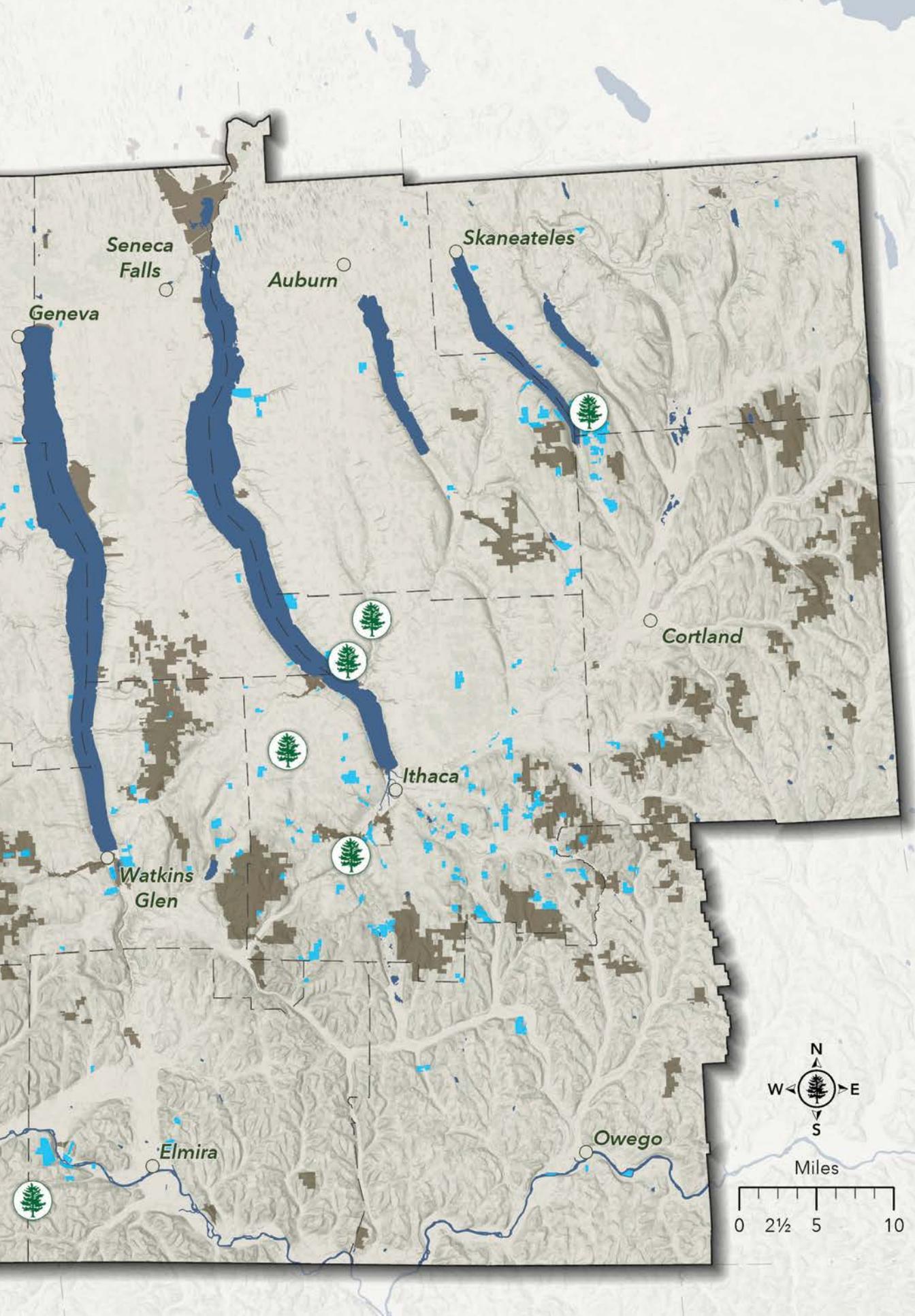


FLLT Conserved Lands



State and Federal
Public Lands





Seneca Falls

Auburn

Skaneateles

Geneva

Cortland

Ithaca

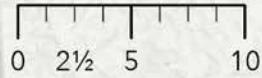
Watkins Glen

Elmira

Owego



Miles





Connecting Lands

Largest Conservation Project Completed in our 35th Year

With the purchase of 992 acres known as Bad Bear Hill in Steuben County, the Land Trust completed the largest conservation project in its 35-year history. Featuring one mile of frontage along the Canisteo River, the property contains forested hillsides, multiple streams, and meadows, and is home to black bears and Bald Eagles. Bad Bear Hill will ultimately be transferred to New York State as an addition to the adjacent McCarthy Hill State Forest which will more than double in size.

Photo: Chris Ray

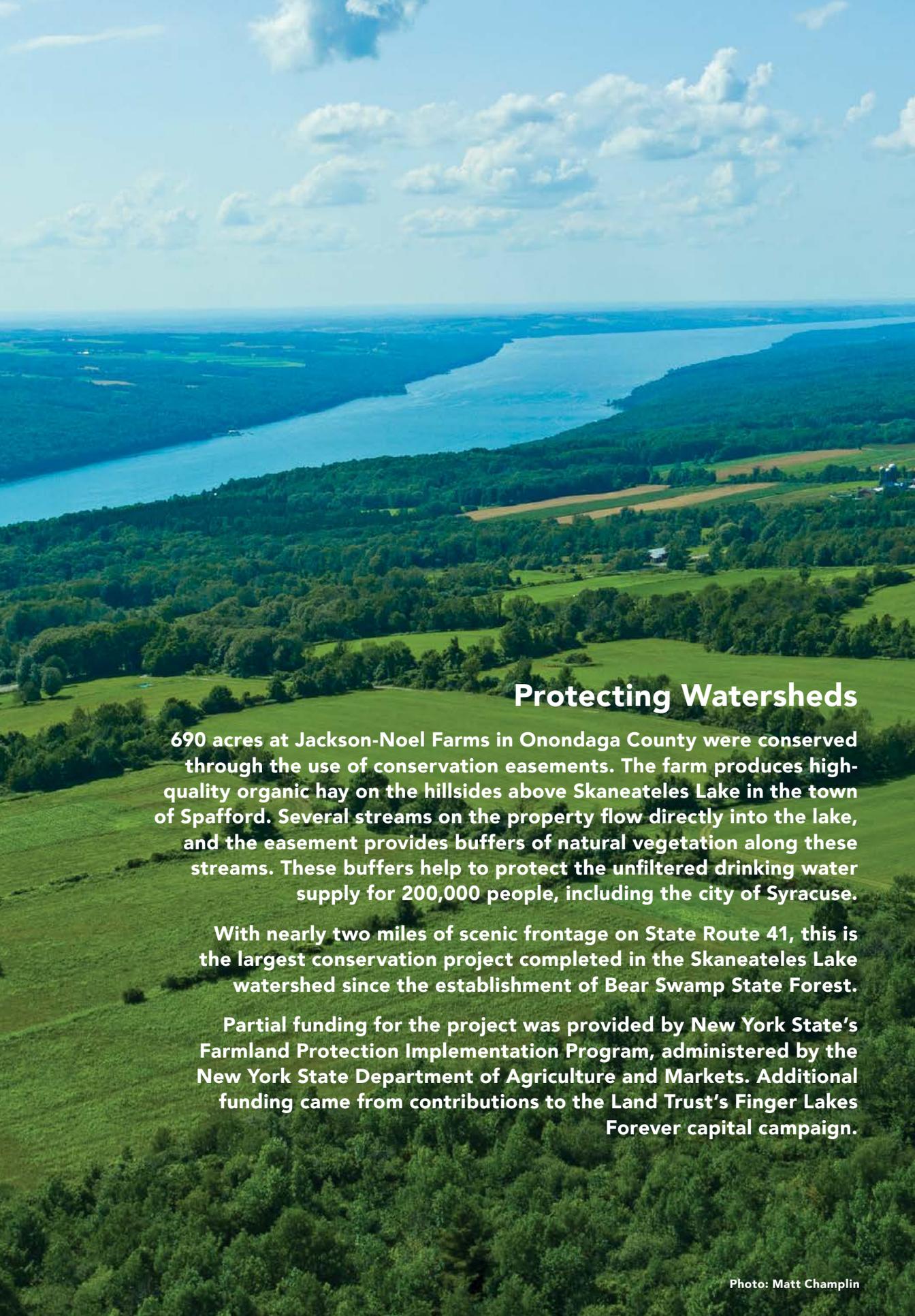
Adding to the Wesley Hill Nature Preserve

The Land Trust purchased a 38-acre addition to its Wesley Hill Nature Preserve in Ontario County, expanding this growing conservation area to 428 acres.

Nestled in the scenic Bristol Hills, the Wesley Hill Preserve offers visitors over five miles of hiking trails and protects 3,895 feet along Briggs Gully, one of the largest gorges in the Finger Lakes and a major tributary to Honeoye Lake. Situated in the Hemlock to High Tor corridor, this addition is part of a larger effort to conserve and connect lands from Hemlock Lake to the High Tor Wildlife Management Area.

Safeguarding Bird Habitat and Water Quality in Salmon Creek

The Salmon Creek Bird Sanctuary in Tompkins County protects habitat for a variety of neotropical songbirds and buffers water quality within Salmon Creek, a tributary of Cayuga Lake. The Land Trust purchased 7.5 acres as an addition to the sanctuary, which now encompasses 40 acres. This newly added parcel safeguards additional habitat, secures scenic views from development, and provides further water quality protection.



Protecting Watersheds

690 acres at Jackson-Noel Farms in Onondaga County were conserved through the use of conservation easements. The farm produces high-quality organic hay on the hillsides above Skaneateles Lake in the town of Spafford. Several streams on the property flow directly into the lake, and the easement provides buffers of natural vegetation along these streams. These buffers help to protect the unfiltered drinking water supply for 200,000 people, including the city of Syracuse.

With nearly two miles of scenic frontage on State Route 41, this is the largest conservation project completed in the Skaneateles Lake watershed since the establishment of Bear Swamp State Forest.

Partial funding for the project was provided by New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Program, administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Additional funding came from contributions to the Land Trust's Finger Lakes Forever capital campaign.

A woman with grey hair, wearing a purple jacket, sits on a green tractor in a lush green field. A golden retriever dog is sitting on the tractor next to her. In the background, there is a large body of water (likely a lake) under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The tractor has a yellow seat and a black steering wheel.

Securing a Legacy of Grape Production in Canandaigua

158 acres containing woodlands, meadows, crop fields, and vineyards in Ontario County are conserved forever thanks to a conservation easement donated by Dale and Glen Shaw. Since the 1940s, the property has been owned and managed by the Shaws who grow Concord, Niagara, Catawba, and Noreit grapes which they sell to Welch's for juice and to Randall Standish Vineyards in Canandaigua. The easement also protects more than 4,000 feet of frontage on two tributaries to a stream that flows into Canandaigua Lake, benefiting a public drinking water supply for 70,000 area residents.

Photo: Kate Riley

Preserving Rural Character in Perpetuity

David Henderson and John Hatch donated a conservation easement protecting 167 acres in Steuben County, in the towns of Prattsburgh and Pulteney. The property which serves as a rural family retreat is located on a hilltop in the Five Mile Creek sub-basin of the Cohocton River Watershed. This area is within the Resilient and Connected Network of lands—an important habitat corridor that will allow wildlife to migrate in response to climate change.

Other protected lands nearby include Urbana and Italy Hill state forests. The conservation easement will prohibit subdivision, permanently uniting ownership on both sides of Town Line Road.

“Preserving farmland, protecting forests, and habitat for many creatures, this conservation easement was a practical way to ensure that the Finger Lakes’ rural character lasts in perpetuity.” -David Henderson and John Hatch



Photo: PSP

Protecting Family Land in the Southern Tier

A conservation easement donated by members Stuart (Stu) and Lucy Schweizer will permanently protect 182 acres in Chemung and Steuben counties. Entirely located in the Chemung River basin of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, the property features forest, wetlands, grassland, and agricultural fields that are leased to local farmers.

Stu and Lucy have lived on the property since 1976 when they purchased their first 10 acres as parents of three young

children. Over the following decades, they slowly acquired neighboring parcels that went up for sale in the area, colloquially known as “Dutch Hill.”

“We love having had the privilege to live and raise our family in such a beautiful and unspoiled area... we view the easement as the best means to ensure this area remains that way well beyond our lifetimes.”

-Stu and Lucy Schweizer



New Nature Preserve Overlooking Cayuga Lake Brings Together Community

The 223-acre Sims-Jennings Preserve at Cayuga Cliffs opened to the public in June 2024. Located in Lansing, Tompkins County, it features over 4,000 feet of wooded bluffs, meadows, woodlands, and gorges. To ensure safe public access, the Land Trust purchased a 24-acre parcel along State Route 34B, allowing us to create a parking area and trailhead.

The Land Trust received lead support from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Tompkins County’s Natural Infrastructure Capital Program, the Chris Dennis Environment Foundation, Daniel Konowalow and Marcy Rosenkrantz, the Robert F. Schumann Foundation, and the Tompkins County Tourism Program. We also received numerous gifts from

our generous members in support of this project, and we are so grateful.

Thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers, community support, and funding partners, visitors can enjoy nearly two miles of public hiking trails with stunning lake views from multiple vantage points.

Friends and family of Danny Iandoli Miner dedicated “Danny’s Trail” to his memory. The main kiosk, funded by Mike Kamarck's cycling friends, welcomes guests, and a pollinator garden honors the Thompson family. TST-BOCES students also volunteered to help build a footbridge over a stream.

The new preserve was made possible by the contributions of many, and we hope it will be enjoyed by all who visit.



Photo: Chris Ray

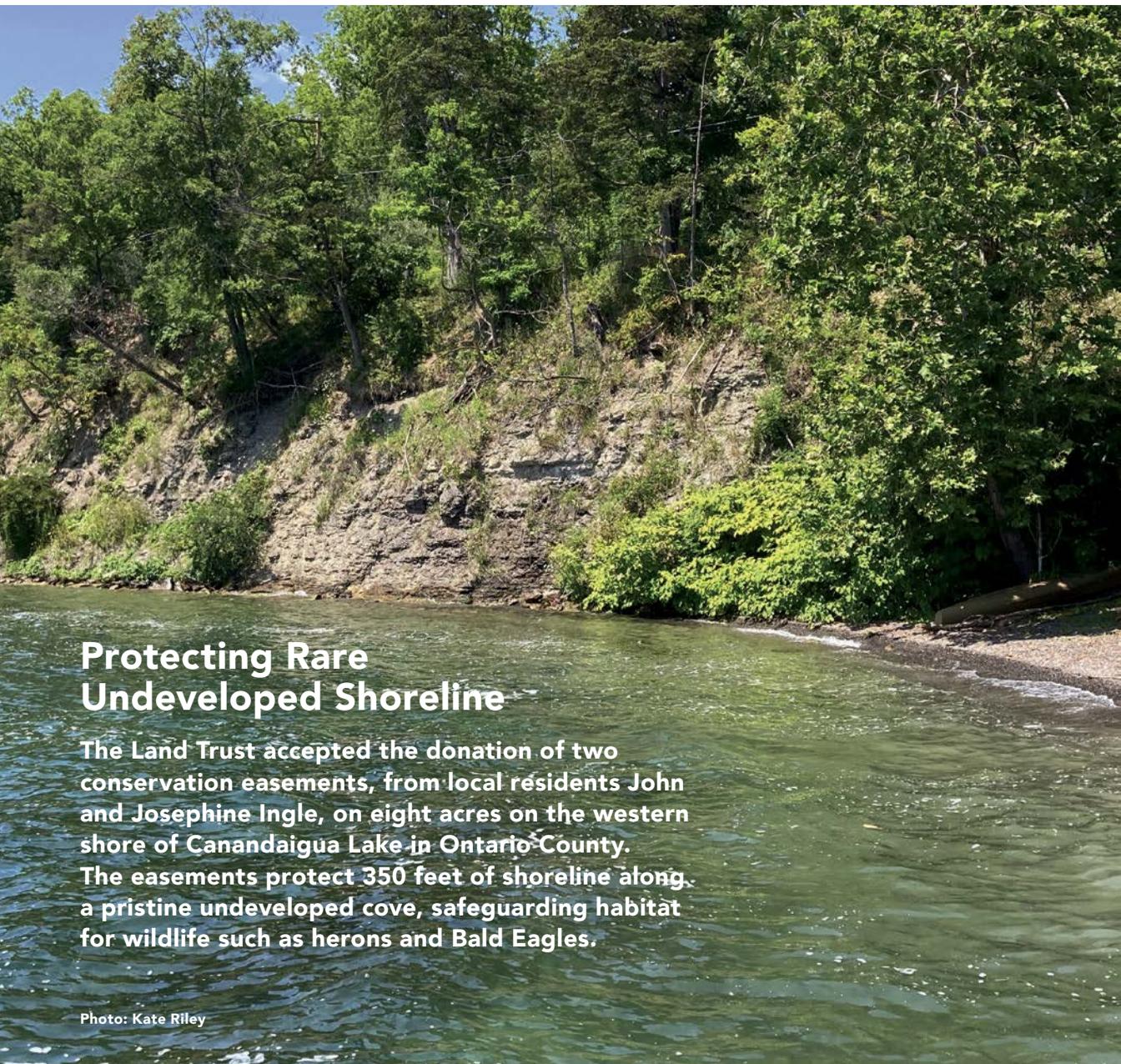


Sims-Jennings ribbon cutting
Photo: Dawn Cornell

10th Acquisition at Canandaigua Lake's Bare Hill

In partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Land Trust purchased 63 acres on Bare Hill, a scenic landmark that rises over 800 feet above the eastern shore of Canandaigua Lake.

Representing the organization's 10th acquisition in cooperation with DEC, the property will be added to the state-owned Bare Hill Unique Area, enhancing wildlife habitat protection, safeguarding water quality, and increasing public access to recreational opportunities. Land in this area holds special significance in the creation story of the Seneca Nation.



Protecting Rare Undeveloped Shoreline

The Land Trust accepted the donation of two conservation easements, from local residents John and Josephine Ingle, on eight acres on the western shore of Canandaigua Lake in Ontario County. The easements protect 350 feet of shoreline along a pristine undeveloped cove, safeguarding habitat for wildlife such as herons and Bald Eagles.



Protecting Keuka Lake's Watershed

As part of a new initiative to conserve lands on Keuka Lake's Bluff Point, the Land Trust purchased two properties totaling 57 acres on the east side of the bluff. The two properties feature hillside forest and several tributaries to the lake.

These forests play a vital role in helping to prevent erosion and minimize nutrient runoff into Keuka Lake. Bluff Point's woodlands also host a diversity of wildlife, including neotropical songbirds—some of which nest in the area, and others that continue to Canadian forests.



Fischer Old-Growth Forest Natural Area
Photo: Chris Ray

Wetland Protection in the Cayuga Lake Watershed

A 26-acre parcel was added to the Land Trust's Lower Nature Preserve in Tompkins County, which is currently managed for wildlife habitat. The property features 10 acres of wetlands and 1,200 feet of frontage on a tributary to Taughannock Creek. The protection of these wetlands secures wildlife-rich habitat and provides an upland buffer to Taughannock Creek, which flows into Cayuga Lake.

Partnership Protects Old-Growth Forest

A unique partnership between the Land Trust and Cornell Botanic Gardens resulted in the addition of 81 acres to the Fischer Old-Growth Forest Natural Area in Tompkins County. With grant funding from the county, the Land Trust agreed to hold a conservation easement for Cornell to establish permanent protection of the parcel. The addition expands the natural area to the north and east, and protects mixed hardwood forest and sensitive wetlands which filter runoff to the adjacent Cayuga Inlet.

2024 Annual Membership Meeting and Celebration

In June, we celebrated our members, volunteers, and community partners at our 35th Annual Meeting at Taughannock Falls State Park. Awards were presented to two volunteers for their service on behalf of the Land Trust. The Conservationist of the Year Award was presented to Jim Miller, an Ithaca-based attorney. A founding partner of Miller Mayer, LLP, Jim has been instrumental in representing the Land Trust as a *pro bono* attorney. In total, Miller Mayer, LLP has represented the Land Trust on 89 real property transactions, with Jim acting as the attorney on the lion's share of projects. These include some of the most complex and largest acquisitions- including Bell

Station and Bad Bear Hill, which at 990 acres is the largest conservation project in the Land Trust's history.

The Volunteer of the Year Award was presented to Polley McClure for her longstanding stewardship of the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve and overall support of the Land Trust. Polley is part of a team of amazing neighbors who help to maintain and care for the preserve in West Danby, Tompkins County.

On any given day, visitors may run into one of our preserve neighbors, spreading woodchips at the entrance, mowing the trails, or maintaining the parking area. You may even run into Polley, refreshing trail markers on the vast system of hiking trails, or cutting back brambles and multiflora rose to keep the preserve well-maintained.





35 Years of Enduring Support

We are deeply grateful for the crucial role our generous members play in advancing our mission. The Finger Lakes Land Trust was established in 1989 with the support of 187 founding members, who collectively contributed nearly \$10,000 to help launch our organization.

Last year, 35 of these founding members continued their support, demonstrating their enduring commitment to our cause. Over the past 35 years, the collective contributions of our members—whether through donation of time, land, labor, or financial support—have been invaluable.

Thanks to your ongoing generosity, we have grown, expanded our reach, and achieved significant milestones. Your continuous support is vital for preserving the lands and waters of the Finger Lakes region for future generations.



Photo: Bill Hecht

On our 35th anniversary, we extend a special thank you to the 35 founding members who made a gift in the fiscal year 2023-2024.

Anonymous (3)

John and Karen Confer

Lloyd Powell

Laura Stenzler and Ton Schat

Jane Brophy and Linda Spielman

Martha K. Brewster

Cornelia Farnum and Jack Booker

Stephen Lewandowski

Lyle S. Raymond, Jr.

Paul and Wieske Van Leuken

Margot Brinn and Tommy Beers

Christian and Helen Haller

Lynn Leopold

Barbara Page

Amy McCune

Tom Butler and Stephanie Behler

William Patchen and Karen Kaufmann

James and Terry Byrnes

Mary Ella Passage

David and Linda Caughey

Betsy and Dick Darlington

Laure C. Kamp

John and Judith Reppy

Jim Rothenberg and Mariana Wolfner

Jon Reis and Delia Hatch

John Wertis

Rich and Nancy Dolge

Jules and Patti Burgevin

Peter J. Davies and Linda DeNoyer

Ruth Kahn

David St. George and Lisa Wood

Schmitt Real Estate

Jean Jagendorf

Building Community Partnerships

Through Land Trust hosted programs and collaborations with partners across the Finger Lakes, we aim to raise awareness about conservation, water quality, and nature access. We are pleased to share some highlights of these collaborative efforts with our partners.

The Land Trust was honored to receive the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association's (CLWA) *2024 Partner in Protection* award for our ongoing commitment to conservation in the Canandaigua Lake watershed. The award also recognizes the Land Trust's collaborative efforts to support programming such as a free community paddle, a water quality education forum, and a presentation on white-tailed deer by Native American Interpreters from Ganondagan Seneca Art & Culture Center.



In partnership with the Finger Lakes Institute, we hosted Pulitzer Prize-nominated author and journalist Dan Egan for an online event about phosphorus and water quality. The conversation was attended by over 400 people.

In May, student volunteers helped to release 2,000 silver flies at the Stevenson Forest Preserve. The flies were provided by our friends at the New York Hemlock Initiative and are an important part of our efforts to protect the eastern hemlock. The silver flies are predators of the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), an invasive pest that threatens the hemlocks found in many of the forests and gorges in the region.

To celebrate Earth Day, staff, board members, and volunteers worked together to remove 700 lbs. of trash from Fall Creek at our Etna Nature Preserve, in collaboration with the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network.

Sharing Our Mission

The Land Trust hosted **12 Talks and Treks** on our nature preserves, offering free natural history education to members and the public.

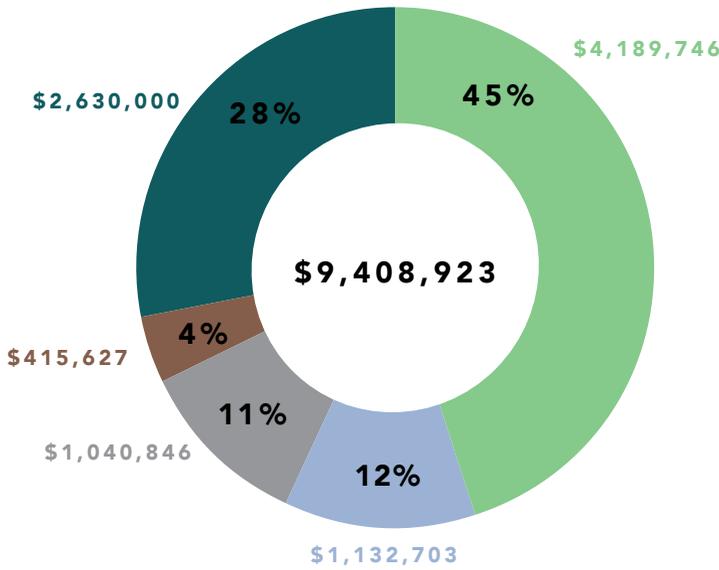
Staff led **4 guided hikes** for children from the Greater Ithaca Activities Center's Outdoor Adventure Camp, the Canandaigua Botanical Society, and the New York Statewide Senior Action Council.

Our staff and volunteers tabled at **16 community events** across the Finger Lakes region, including a Juneteenth celebration in Auburn, the Farmer's Market in Ithaca, the ADK Mountain Club Expo at Mendon Ponds Park, and the Keuka Gravel Ride.

Our Land Protection staff provided **14 workshops** and talks with the public across the Finger Lakes region.

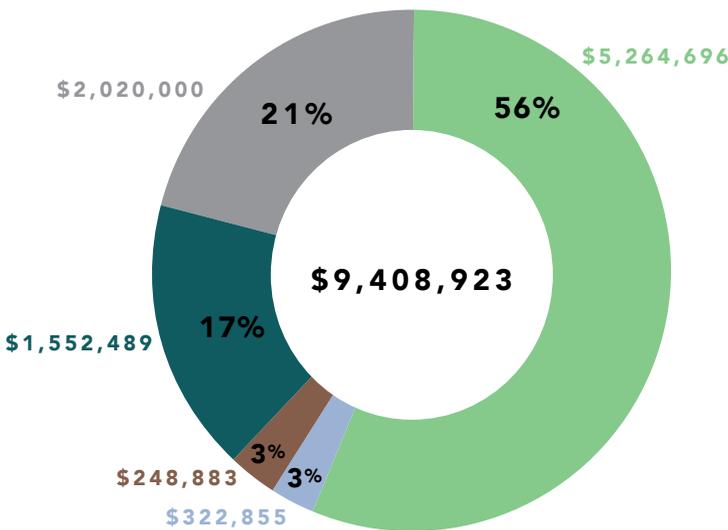


FINANCIALS 2023-2024



SOURCES OF FUNDS

- Individuals
- Grants and Foundations
- *Restricted Funds
- Investments Returns & Other
- **Land Sale/Transfer



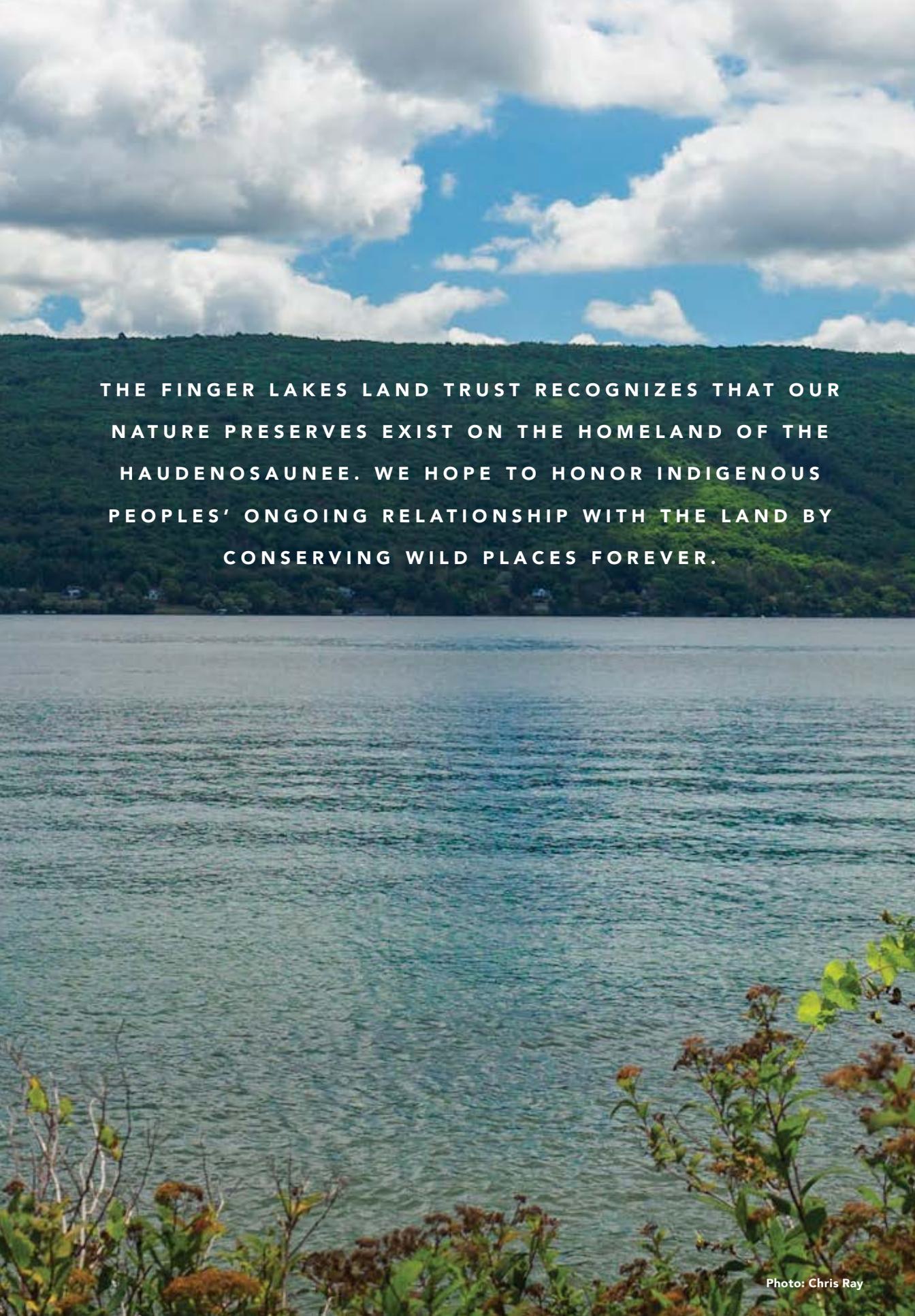
USES OF FUNDS

- Land Purchase
- Development
- Administration
- Conservation and Stewardship
- Loan Repayment

* Funds designated for Land Purchase from previous fiscal years

** Lands added to public holdings are sold subject to a conservation easement per prior agreement with donor

Unaudited financials for fiscal year ending June 30th, 2024. Does not include the value of donated land or conservation easements.



THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST RECOGNIZES THAT OUR
NATURE PRESERVES EXIST ON THE HOMELAND OF THE
HAUDENOSAUNEE. WE HOPE TO HONOR INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES' ONGOING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LAND BY
CONSERVING WILD PLACES FOREVER.

Finger Lakes Land Trust
202 E. Court St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

Return Service Requested

Thank you from the FLLT Staff!

TO CONSERVE FOREVER THE LANDS AND WATERS
OF THE FINGER LAKES REGION, ENSURING
SCENIC VISTAS, LOCAL FOODS, CLEAN WATER,
AND WILD PLACES FOR EVERYONE.

Photo: Jeff Katris

