



The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

Land Trust Partners with the Town of Geneva to Conserve Kashong Glen

When a well-known property on the west side of Seneca Lake went on the market last year, the Land Trust acted quickly to secure a contract to purchase the 74-acre parcel for conservation. This property features the heart of a favorite natural area known as “Kashong Glen”—a classic Finger Lakes gorge located in both Geneva, Ontario County, and Benton, Yates County.

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Partners dedicate the Sims-Jennings Preserve at Cayuga Cliffs in 2024.

DAWIN CORNELL

As the Land Trust celebrates the major milestone of 35,000 acres conserved, it is important to recognize the instrumental role that our partners have played in making this possible.

Across the region, we've partnered with municipal, county, state, and federal agencies to expand parks and conservation lands, making nature more accessible to residents and visitors alike.

Thanks to a strong partnership with the Town of Geneva and funding from both the public and private sectors, the heart of Kashong Glen is now secure, and the enjoyment of this special natural area by future generations is ensured.

To address the growing threats to water quality, including harmful algal blooms, we've undertaken more watershed restoration projects. These rely on public funding and agency expertise, along with the critical support of watershed associations and intermunicipal watershed councils.

At our nature preserves, partnerships with non-profit and community organizations play an important role in developing and maintaining hiking trails, parking areas, and other public access

improvements.

Thank you to all our partners for helping us achieve our goals, ensuring the lands and waters of our region continue to inspire us all today and into the future.

Andrew Zepp
President

Land Trust Partners with the Town of Geneva to Conserve Kashong Glen

continued from cover

Featuring more than 5,500 feet of frontage along Kashong Creek, this property is important for maintaining water quality in nearby Seneca Lake. The parcel also features several scenic waterfalls and provides habitat for a variety of wildlife.

The Town of Geneva readily agreed to partner with the Land Trust and committed to own and steward the land as an addition to its nearby Kashong Conservation Area. Both partners worked together to establish this 84-acre conservation area in 2008, with land that was donated by Polly Spedding. The Town owns the land and maintains a network of hiking trails, while the Land Trust holds and monitors a deed restriction that ensures the land will not be developed.

"When I learned this property was for sale, I immediately

contacted the Land Trust with a plea: 'We have to obtain this property and save it from development,'" said Geneva Town Supervisor Mark Venuti. "True to form, the Land Trust came through."

New York State provided 85% of funding for this project through a grant from the Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) program. The Land Trust has established a fundraising goal of \$75,000 to cover a portion of the remaining costs, which will be matched by the Town of Geneva. If you would like to contribute to this project, please contact the Land Trust's Director of Development, Cherise Tolbert, at **(607) 275-9487** or cherisetolbert@flit.org.

Conservation Easements Protect Family Land in the Keuka Lake Watershed



CHRIS RAY

When she was 11 years old, Yolanda Adrean moved with her family from Washington, DC to the family farm outside of Hammondsport in Steuben County. The varied landscape of farmland, forest, and streams provided a haven for Yolanda and her four siblings to explore and enjoy. "It was the best place to grow up," said Yolanda.

The property, which is off of Winding Stair Road, has been in the family for more than a century. Yolanda's great-grandparents, Robert and Melinda Wheeler, acquired the original parcel in 1911. Two generations later, her father, Wilbur Wheeler, became the sole owner and moved his family there after retiring from the military. The family grew grapes on the property for many years, and when viticulture was no longer profitable, they shifted to hay production.

The property was transferred to Wilbur's five children in the early 2000s. Today, three of the siblings—Yolanda, Dolores Wheeler, and Valerie Stern—own portions of the family's original land. Yolanda also owns several neighboring properties she purchased in the intervening years.

In late 2025, Yolanda and Dolores finalized an agreement to donate conservation easements to the Land Trust on their portions of the property, covering a total of 283 acres. A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and an organization, such as the Land Trust, that limits or prohibits development on a property in perpetuity while maintaining private ownership.

In addition to a significant amount of agricultural land,

the property has steep hillsides that create a gorge on its eastern border, with Loughline Creek running through the ravine on its way to Keuka Lake. There is also substantial forestland, particularly on the west side of Winding Stair Road, that includes a portion of the Finger Lakes Trail. Part of Yolanda's property also hosts the Triad Trail, which is a part of the Twisted Branch 100-kilometer ultra-marathon.

Dolores is the only Wheeler descendant living on the property, so she has been serving as de facto land steward and caretaker. She lives in the family farmhouse, raises cattle and chickens on the property, continues to produce hay, and has restored several historic barns to their former glory.

Although Yolanda lives in Atlanta now, she and her children and grandchildren—the sixth generation to spend time on the property—still return to visit the place she calls her "emotional home."

"My father said, 'They're never going to make more land.' And that always stuck with me," said Yolanda. "My goal was to make sure the land had proper stewardship. It's such a precious resource and needs to be protected."

—Jeff Tonole

Forest Acquisition Adds to Ithaca's Emerald Necklace

The Land Trust recently purchased 108 acres off Card Road in Dryden, Tompkins County. The mostly wooded property borders Yellow Barn State Forest and is in close proximity to Hammond Hill State Forest and the Roy H. Park Preserve. With the protection of this parcel, the organization has reached a major milestone of 35,000 acres conserved across the Finger Lakes region.

The Land Trust intends to transfer the parcel to New York State as an addition to Yellow Barn State Forest, a popular location for hiking, cross-country skiing, and other activities. Partnerships with the state are a key component of the organization's efforts to expand public access to outdoor recreational opportunities while safeguarding water quality and wildlife habitat.

In addition to woodlands, the property contains a large pond and seasonal tributaries of Six Mile Creek, the source of drinking water for the city of Ithaca. It is also an important landscape connection piece in the Emerald Necklace, a proposed greenbelt linking 50,000 acres of existing conservation land in an arc around Ithaca, from the Finger Lakes National Forest

in the west to the Hammond Hill State Forest in the east.

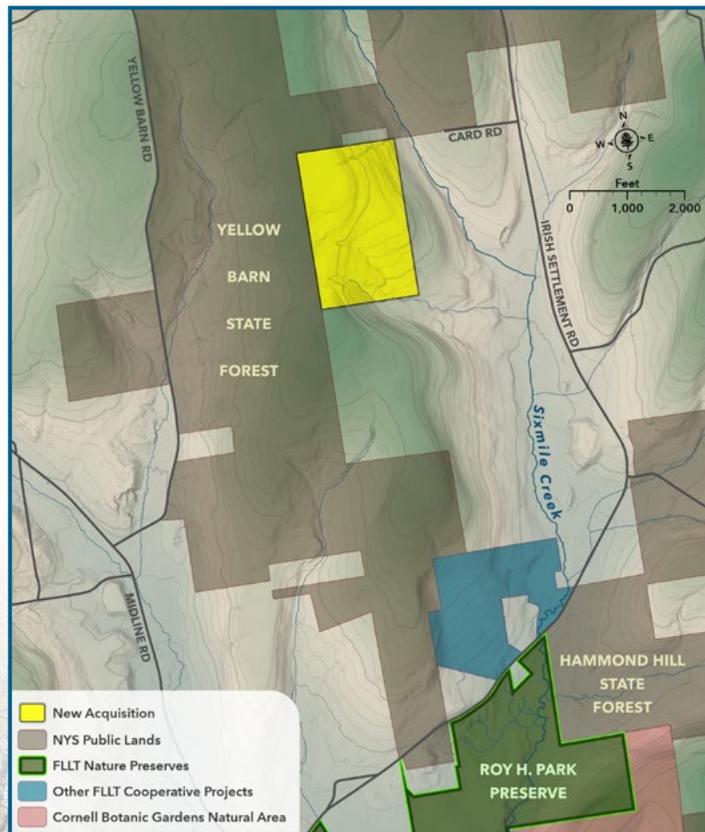
Together, these lands host 78 miles of the Finger Lakes Trail, two National Audubon Society-designated Important Bird Areas, numerous Finger Lakes Land Trust Preserves and conservation easements, several state forests and parks, and dozens of Tompkins County-designated Unique Natural Areas. The Emerald Necklace is also recognized as a priority

project within New York State's Open Space Plan.

The property was purchased from the adult children of Peter Van Soest, Professor Emeritus of Animal Science at Cornell University, who passed away in 2021.

"Our father bought the 'Hilltop' land with friends in the early 1970s," said John Van Soest. "It was their getaway for picnics and family swims. Eventually, he was the last owner. He wrote books there and held retreats with his students; it was a special place for him."

Funding for the project came from the Land Trust's Opportunity Fund, a dedicated account created by the organization to make time-sensitive acquisitions possible. Funds are ultimately replenished either through fundraising or the sale of land to a public conservation agency.



Land Trust Opens Waldershare Acres Nature Preserve on Keuka Lake's Bluff Point



Pictured from L to R: Land Steward Blake Enos, Development Associate Danaka Olsen, Senior Land Steward Eric Mastroberti, Chair of the Board Karen Meriwether, landowner Joan Winters, Nature Preserve Manager Jason Gorman, Director of Stewardship Chris Olney, and Conservation Projects Manager Amy Olney

In early October, Land Trust staff were joined by friends and supporters to celebrate the opening of the new Waldershare Acres Nature Preserve on Keuka Lake's Bluff Point in Jerusalem, Yates County.

The property was purchased in 2024 after the organization launched a new initiative to conserve lands in this area that are significant for their ecological value and scenic beauty.

The preserve can now be accessed from a parking area on East Bluff Drive and is open year-round from dawn to dusk for low-impact recreational activities such as walking, hiking, and nature observation. Two short intersecting loop trails totaling 0.6 miles weave through a mature hardwood forest that hosts migratory and resident songbirds and plays

a vital role in stabilizing soils and minimizing nutrient loading into Keuka Lake.

Waldershare Acres was acquired from local resident Joan Winters. This land was named by her parents, Margaret A. Winters and Robert A. Winters, in a nod to her grandfather, who was a historian and language classicist. Waldershare in Old English roughly translates to "district of the forest dwellers."

The Land Trust is so appreciative of everyone who helped make this preserve possible for all to enjoy.

Leadership gifts were contributed by Dave and Brenda Rickey, Karen Meriwether and Thomas Snow, and two anonymous donors.

"We are grateful for the community support that made Waldershare Acres possible," said Land Trust President Andrew Zepp. "It is our hope that this project will lead to the protection of additional lands on Bluff Point."

More information, including a map and directions, can be found at flt.org/waldershare.



Matching Gift Challenge Raises \$100,000 for Conservation

THIS PAST FALL, a generous family initiated a \$100,000 matching gift challenge to amplify the Finger Lakes Land Trust's conservation efforts. The challenge was designed to inspire new members to join and encourage existing supporters to increase their contributions, with all new donations being matched dollar-for-dollar.

The challenge was a terrific success! Together, we raised an additional \$100,000 that will go to work right away protecting lands and waters across the region. We're grateful to everyone who participated and to the family whose generosity made this possible. Thank you for your commitment to conservation in the Finger Lakes!

35,000 Acres Conserved Forever!

Thanks to the steadfast support of Land Trust members, partners, and supporters, the organization has achieved a major milestone of 35,000 acres protected across the region! In total, that includes 6 miles of lakeshore protected permanently, 55 miles of trails free to everyone, over 45 nature preserves, and 200 private properties conserved and retained on local tax rolls.

This big accomplishment means 35,000 small victories for conservation, and 35,000 big reasons to thank you all. Thank you!

Canandaigua
Lake

LAND TRUST PLANTS Over 500 Native Trees and Shrubs IN THE CAYUGA LAKE WATERSHED



CHRIS RAY

The Land Trust recently planted 575 native trees and shrubs on a recently acquired property in the Cayuga Lake watershed.

The project took place in a former corn field bordering a tributary of Taughannock Creek and adjacent wetlands in Enfield, Tompkins County, on a conservation area that is managed for wildlife habitat.

The plantings will help reduce stormwater flows and erosion, while filtering pollutants—improving the water quality of Taughannock Creek, a tributary of Cayuga Lake. In addition, the newly planted trees and shrubs will provide habitat and act as a food source for various wildlife, including resident and migrant songbirds. Species planted include black cherry, shagbark hickory, sycamore, elderberry, and gray dogwood.

The planting was established on a 25-acre property that was recently purchased as an addition to the Land Trust's Lower Nature Preserve. Located on Iradell Road, the preserve features wetlands, ponds, brushland, and forest that provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife species.

Trees planted on a 1.5-acre section of the preserve are intended to provide forested habitat while the shrubs planted on a 2.4-acre section are designed to diversify open meadow. The plantings are protected from herbivory with tree tubes and have a biodegradable mat around their base to hold back competing vegetation. Land Trust staff will monitor the site

at the beginning and end of each growing season for survival and maintenance needs.

Trees planted on a 1.5-acre section of the preserve are intended to provide forested habitat while the shrubs planted on a 2.4-acre section are designed to diversify open meadow.

This is the organization's fifth restoration project involving the creation of stream buffers within the Cayuga Lake watershed. Over the past five years, the organization has worked with partners to plant more than 10,000 trees and shrubs across the region.

Funding for the project was provided by The Nature Conservancy and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Our appreciation for gifts in honor of

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LEAVE A LASTING IMPACT PROTECT OUR FINGER LAKES FOREVER

You can help the lands and waters of the Finger Lakes region remain resilient through planned giving. A planned gift allows you to give assets to the Land Trust through your will or long-term plans. Visit fllt.org/plannedgiving or call (607) 275-9487 to learn more.

BILL BANASZEWSKI



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Anatomy of a Waterfall: *Tully Limestone*

The dramatic landscapes, gorges, and waterfalls of the Finger Lakes region resulted from a combination of two different geologic factors—the underlying bedrock and the much more recent glaciations.

The bedrock formed as a result of the slow accumulation of sediments in a shallow inland sea some 400 to 355 million years ago. The subsequent burial, to depths that may have exceeded 10,000 feet, turned the soft sediment into rock (known as lithification). Tectonic forces deep in the Earth over millions of years uplifted and warped these rocks. The uplift caused progressive erosion of the rock surface to a point where



it generally resembled today's landscape but without the deep Finger Lake valleys. At least 10 and possibly 20 continental-scale glaciations over the last ~ 2.5 million years deeply eroded the preexisting river valleys oriented generally parallel to the north-to-south ice-flow direction. Stream valleys not coincident with the ice flow were bypassed and often packed with glacially-derived sediment.

The glacial erosion created steep valley sides with uplands on either side that can rise up to 1,000 feet above the adjacent lake surface. The tributary streams entering the lakes start high above the lakes, resulting in rapid erosion of the tributary valleys, producing steep gorges. As the erosion downcut into the underlying bedrock, the streams encounter intermixed layers of rock that differ dramatically in their resistance to erosion. For example, lithification of muds produces finely bedded shale; sands produce sandstone; and lime muds (similar to what might be found in the reefs around Bermuda and the Florida Keys) produce limestones. The fine bedding of the shales produces a very weak rock that is easily eroded. In contrast, sandstones and limestones tend to be very resistant to erosion.

This contrast in rock strength, combined with the large vertical drop of the tributary streams, is what causes waterfalls and riffles to form in the streams and gorges, because the weaker shale erodes much more quickly than sandstones or limestones. In cases where a particularly thick and strong rock layer sits above a thick and weak rock layer, dramatic falls can be produced.

A wonderful example of this is Tinker Falls in southeastern Onondaga County. The strong, resistant rock that forms the lip of the falls is the Tully Limestone, which sits above the Moscow shale. The Moscow shale is very susceptible to stream erosion in addition to wet-drying and frost-freeze erosion. The combination of the thick, strong limestone over the thick and very weak shale has produced the beautiful overhanging falls.

Tinker Falls is roughly four miles east of Tully, NY, where the Tully Limestone was originally described and named in 1838. Since that time, the limestone has been found to outcrop (be exposed at the Earth's surface) as far east as the Chenango River and west to the eastern side of Canandaigua Lake. The limestone is thickest in the outcrop near Tinker Falls at around 30 feet and thins out and changes character at its western and eastern extent.

The sedimentary rocks in Central New York all tilt down (dip) gently to the south, such that they outcrop to the north but dive below the Earth's surface further south. Given this dip direction and the topography of the lake valleys, the Tully Limestone outcrops along the eastern side of Canandaigua Lake, along the west and east sides of both Seneca and Cayuga lakes (but drops to or below lake level toward the southern end), and wraps around the west, south, and east sides of Owasco, Skaneateles, and Otisco lakes.

This outcrop pattern results in some beautiful scenery! Wherever there is a tributary stream on slopes crossing the limestone, a waterfall results. The Tully Limestone is responsible for Carpenter Falls on the west side of Skaneateles Lake; falls in the lower section of Fillmore Glen State Park in Moravia on the east side of the Owasco Inlet valley; the undercut Ludlowville Falls on Salmon Creek and the falls at the Cayuga Shores Wildlife Management Area on the eastern side of Cayuga Lake; the lower falls at Taughannock State Park (visible from Highway 89); and the Seneca Mills Falls on the Keuka Outlet trail between Keuka and Seneca lakes. This is in addition to a multitude of smaller, and typically unnamed, falls across the region where small streams cross the outcrop.

Winter is a great time to experience the dramatic landscapes of the Finger Lakes region and the ice-draped waterfalls that are 400 million years in the making.

—George Thomas

Finger Lakes Land Trust

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SAVE THE DATE!

Our 37th Annual Meeting

will be held on Saturday, June 13, 2026,
at Ganondagan State Historic Site
7000 County Road 41, Victor, NY 14564

Details to come in the next issue of *The Land Steward*. For information on upcoming events, visit flt.org/events.

Canadice
Lake