

ANNUAL REPORT



2025-2026 • CONSERVED FOREVER

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Cover & Inside Cover Photos: Chris Ray

Dear Friends of the Finger Lakes,

Thanks to you, the Finger Lakes Land Trust reached a major milestone this past fiscal year, conserving over 35,000 acres across the region. This accomplishment represents over three decades of long-term, consensus-based strategies to protect our cherished landscapes.

In this report, you will see the projects that helped us achieve this milestone, the direct result of your commitment to the land. We are honored to have your continued support as we work to strengthen the conservation landscape by focusing on projects that are important for water quality, wildlife habitat, farmland protection, and outdoor recreation.

Currently, the Land Trust owns and manages 45 nature preserves, featuring over 55 miles of trails, that are open to the public, free for all to enjoy. We also hold perpetual conservation easements on 204 properties across the region that remain in private ownership.

Behind the completion of every new project that increases these numbers is a community of supporters who work alongside us: our board of directors who provide crucial governance and oversight; our donors whose generosity ensures our success; and over 200 volunteers who care for our conserved lands. We are also fortunate to collaborate with local and state agencies to achieve our shared goals.

We are all partners in conservation, and the Land Trust staff extends our sincere gratitude for your dedication to our mission.

With gratitude,



Andrew Zepp
President



Karen
Karen Meriwether
Chair of the Board



1000+
acres
preserved
each year



503
parcels conserved
permanently

we've spent



37
years

protecting lands & waters

6 miles



of protected
lakeshore

774 miles of



FLLT by the Numbers



45+
publicly
accessible

nature preserves

57.5



miles of hiking trails
ready to explore

204

conservation
easements



signature

200



volunteers



35,634
acres
protected
forever



Nature Preserves

New Nature Preserve on Keuka Lake's Bluff Point

Thirty acres on Keuka Lake's Bluff Point were opened to the public in the town of Jerusalem, Yates County. The Waldershare Acres Nature Preserve features two intersecting loop trails which guide visitors through a mature hardwood forest that hosts migratory and resident songbirds. These woodlands play a vital role in helping to prevent erosion and minimize nutrient loading into Keuka Lake.



Partnership Protects Over 3,000 Feet Along Fall Creek in the Cayuga Lake Watershed

The FLLT purchased 26.5 acres of wetlands and upland buffers in the town of Summerhill, Cayuga County, containing 3,440 feet along Fall Creek, the source of Cornell University's drinking water supply and the largest tributary of Cayuga Lake. The property will be left in its natural state and managed as wildlife habitat. Funding for this project came from the New York State Water Quality Improvement Projects program (WQIP) and an anonymous individual donor.



Photo: Chris Ray

Canandaigua Vista Preserve Expands with New Addition

Twenty-two wooded acres were purchased as an addition to the FLLT's Canandaigua Vista Preserve, protecting additional forested habitat in the hills above Canandaigua Lake. The expansion of the preserve, which now stands at 112 acres, is essential for reducing erosion and preventing runoff from entering nearby waterways.

Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve Grows with 15th Addition

With support from private contributions and a grant from New York State, the FLLT purchased 83 acres in West Danby, Tompkins County, as an addition to its Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve. The property, which contains wetlands, a natural kettle pond, and woodlands, represents the 15th addition to this diverse natural area that now spans more than 630 acres.



Photo: Joan Lentini

Conservation Easements

Over 200 Acres of Organic Farmland in Yates County Protected

Utilizing funds from New York State's Farmland Protection Implementation Program, the FLLT protected 246 acres at Christiansen Farms in the towns of Benton, Milo, and Torrey, Yates County. Funds were used to purchase three agricultural conservation easements protecting three non-contiguous parcels, part of a NOFA-NY-certified organic dairy and crop farm.

Land Along Fall Creek in Tompkins County Protected

In Dryden, Tompkins County, the FLLT protected 15 acres with a conservation easement donated by landowners Glenn and Marcia Swan. The property has over 1,200 feet of frontage on Fall Creek, the largest tributary of Cayuga Lake. Partial funding was provided by New York State.

Donation of Property in Cayuga Lake Watershed Supports Education and Conservation

The FLLT protected 73 acres of scenic farmland in the town of Ulysses, Tompkins County, with a conservation easement. The property was donated to the organization by FLLT member Sandy Hill with the understanding that it would be sold to a private buyer subject to the terms of the easement. Most of the proceeds from the sale were used to create the Carman and Sandra B. Hill Fund, which the FLLT uses to support paid internships. Sandy's gift honors her late husband, Carman, who passed away in 2017.





Conservation Project Adds to Protection of Skaneateles Lake

Funds from public and private donors were used to purchase a perpetual conservation easement protecting 90 acres at Eastmere Farms in Skaneateles. The property contains a mix of woodlands, wetlands, agricultural fields, and 4,744 feet of frontage along Shotwell Brook, a significant tributary of Skaneateles Lake.

Photo: Chris Ray



Neighbors Unite to Protect 3,200 Feet Along Taughannock Creek

The FLLT accepted the donation of two conservation easements protecting adjacent properties in Ulysses, Tompkins County. The easements were granted by landowners and neighbors Scott Sutcliffe and Don and Eilene Guy, whose combined properties total 46 acres and contain 3,200 feet along Taughannock Creek, a tributary of Cayuga Lake. Funding from the Tompkins County Natural Infrastructure Capital Program covered transaction and stewardship costs associated with this project.

Photo: Chris Ray



Photo: FLLT

Easement Protects Over 200 Diverse Acres in Cortland County

With support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, the FLLT protected 203 acres with a conservation easement donated by landowners Jim Povero and Sandy Yahner. Located in Virgil, Cortland County, the scenic property spans the divide between the Cayuga Lake and Susquehanna River watersheds.

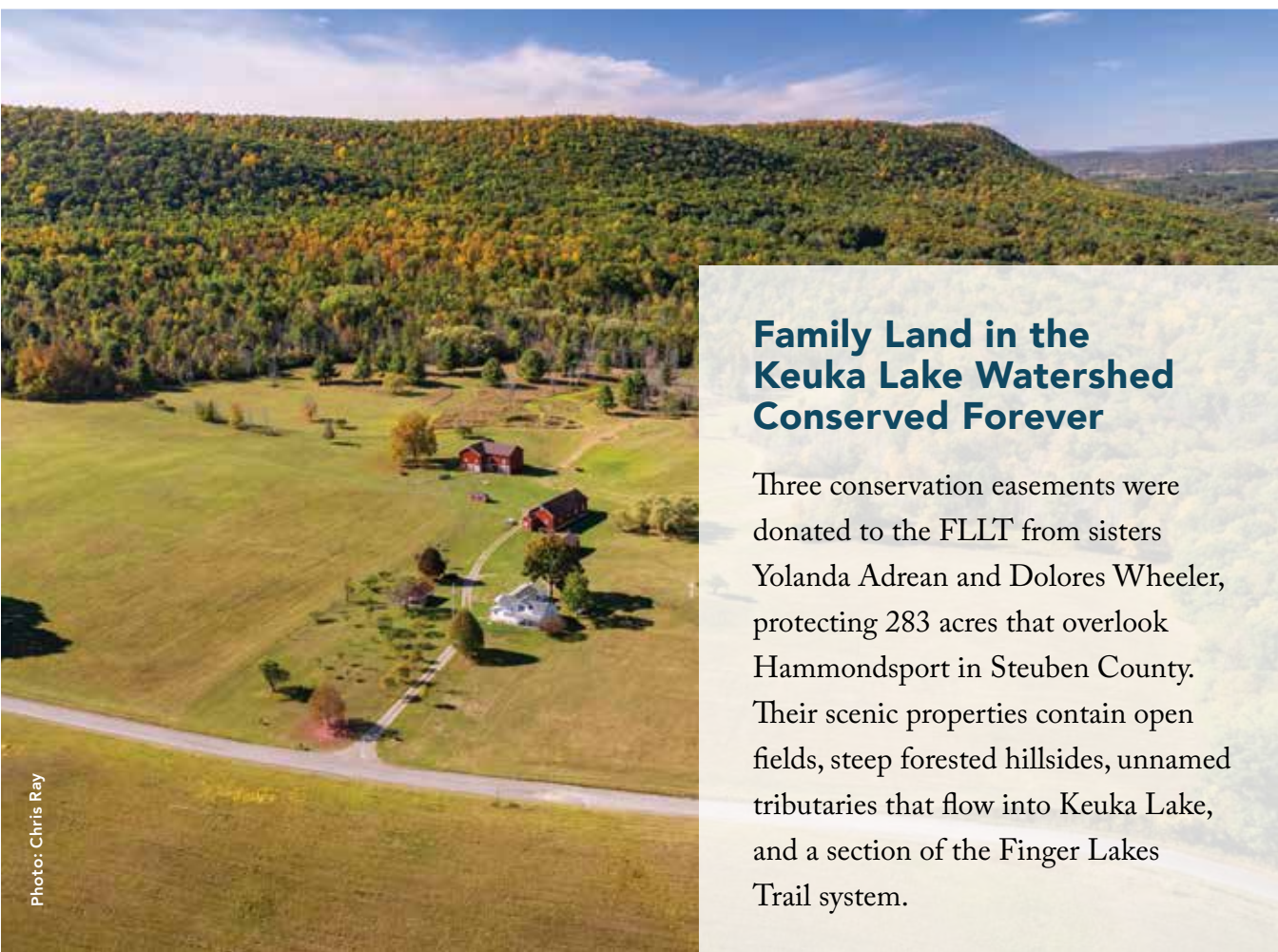


Photo: Chris Ray

Family Land in the Keuka Lake Watershed Conserved Forever

Three conservation easements were donated to the FLLT from sisters Yolanda Adrean and Dolores Wheeler, protecting 283 acres that overlook Hammondsport in Steuben County. Their scenic properties contain open fields, steep forested hillsides, unnamed tributaries that flow into Keuka Lake, and a section of the Finger Lakes Trail system.



Partnerships & Cooperative Acquisitions

Partnership with Town of Geneva Conserves the Heart of Kashong Glen

The FLLT purchased 74 acres including the heart of “Kashong Glen”—a classic Finger Lakes gorge located on the west side of Seneca Lake. The Town of Geneva readily agreed to partner with the FLLT and committed to own and steward the land as an addition to its nearby Kashong Conservation Area. Featuring more than 5,500 feet of frontage along Kashong Creek, this property is important for maintaining water quality in nearby Seneca Lake.

Wetland Acquisition Protects Wildlife Habitat

With funding from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Tompkins County, the FLLT purchased 18 acres containing mostly wetlands in Caroline, Tompkins County. Protection of this property, which is located in the Six Mile Creek watershed, safeguards Ithaca's drinking water supply. Locally recognized as important for birds and amphibians, the parcel was immediately transferred to The Wetland Trust to be protected and managed as wildlife habitat.

Expanding the Emerald Necklace

The FLLT purchased 35 acres in Caroline, Tompkins County, directly across from the organization's Eberhard Nature Preserve. The parcel is an important landscape connection piece in the Emerald Necklace, a growing complex of conservation lands that form an arc around the south end of Cayuga Lake. The organization intends to transfer the parcel to the DEC as an addition to Danby State Forest.

Photo: Chris Ray



Forest Acquisition Adds to Yellow Barn State Forest

A mostly wooded 108-acre parcel in Dryden, Tompkins County, was purchased by the FLLT as an addition to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Yellow Barn State Forest, a popular location for hiking and cross-country skiing. 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.

Photo: FLLT

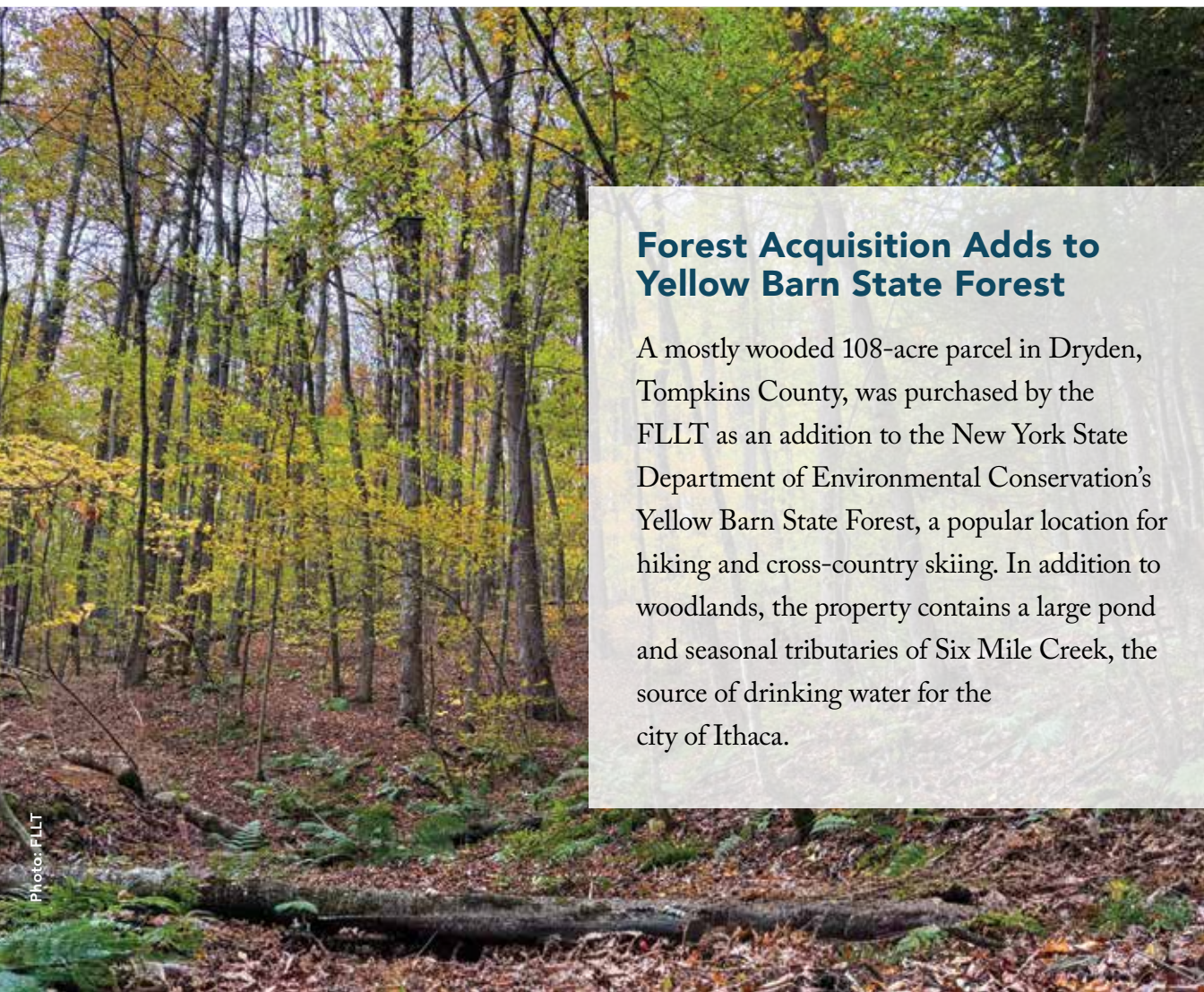




Photo: FLLT

STEWARDSHIP & RESTORATION

Our stewardship team continues to care for over 45 public conservation areas across the Finger Lakes. Much of this work—creating new nature preserves, managing invasive species, keeping the trails maintained, and more—is accomplished with the help of over 200 dedicated volunteers. We also monitor 200 properties annually upon which the FLLT holds perpetual conservation easements.



Photo: FLLT

This past spring, the FLLT completed new, universally accessible improvements in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, at the Roy H. Park Preserve in Dryden, Tompkins County. The new features include two scenic overlooks as well as trail extensions that provide access to wetlands; new leveling and handrail modifications for the existing boardwalk; two accessible parking spots; and improved access to Hammond Hill State Forest.

To help reduce stormwater flows and erosion, the FLLT planted 575 native trees and shrubs on a former cornfield at the Lower Preserve in Enfield, Tompkins County. Managed for wildlife habitat, the preserve features wetlands and a tributary of Taughannock Creek.

At the Houghton Land Preserve in Corning and the Goetchius Wetland Preserve in Caroline, Tompkins County, we made improvements to both parking areas, provided better drainage on adjacent trails, and upgraded preserve signage.

We also celebrated Earth Day by working on public access improvements at the Shotwell Brook Conservation Area in Skaneateles. Volunteers joined us from Skaneateles, Ithaca, Candor, Honeoye, Marcellus, Auburn, Geneva, and Interlaken to clear trash, prepare trails, and plant native trees and shrubs. The FLLT anticipates opening this conservation area to the public in 2027.

The staff at the FLLT thanks everyone who cares for our nature preserves! Together, we can continue to do so much more.



Photo: Chris Ray

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING



The FLLT recognizes that conservation requires collective action along with a network of strong partner organizations and committed landowners and volunteers.

During the past year, we partnered with the region's watershed associations and councils to convene the inaugural Finger Lakes Advocacy Day at the State Capitol in Albany. Thirty staff and volunteers participated in a two-day event designed to increase awareness about the Finger Lakes, including the threat of harmful algal

blooms and programs needed to address the issue. Those who participated in the event considered it a success, and planning is underway to offer the event again during 2027.

To address threats to our forests, the FLLT is partnering with the DEC and local chapters of the New York State Forest Owners Association. A workshop on oak wilt in South Bristol and a woods walk at Bear Swamp State Forest received positive feedback from attendees. Planning is underway for additional programs to disseminate information on invasive species and techniques to address them.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATION



Education is an important part of the FLLT's work in terms of beneficial conservation practices and the region's unique natural resources.

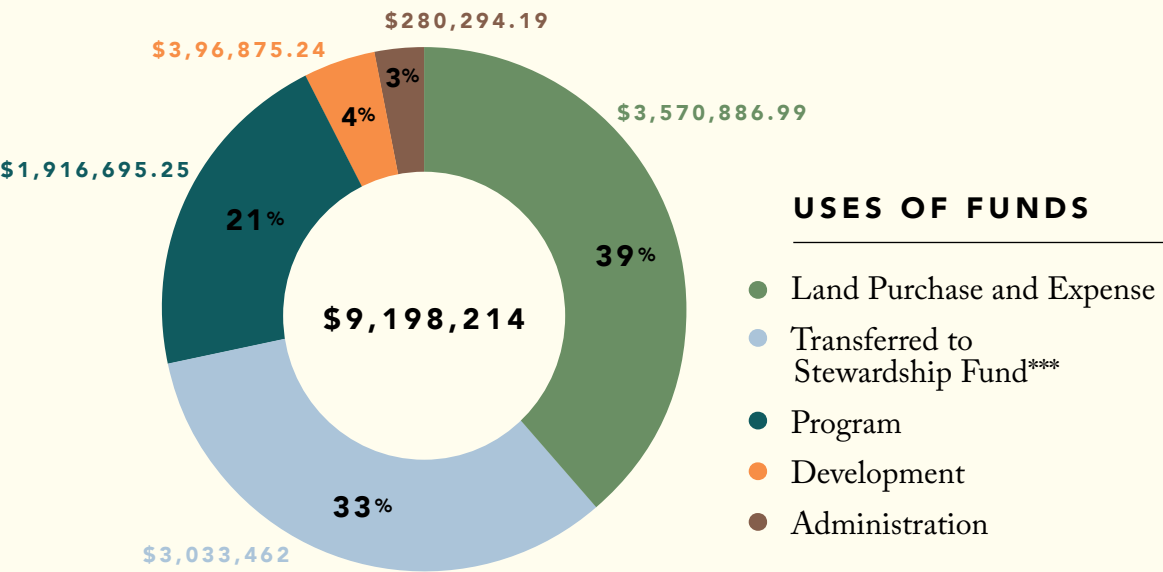
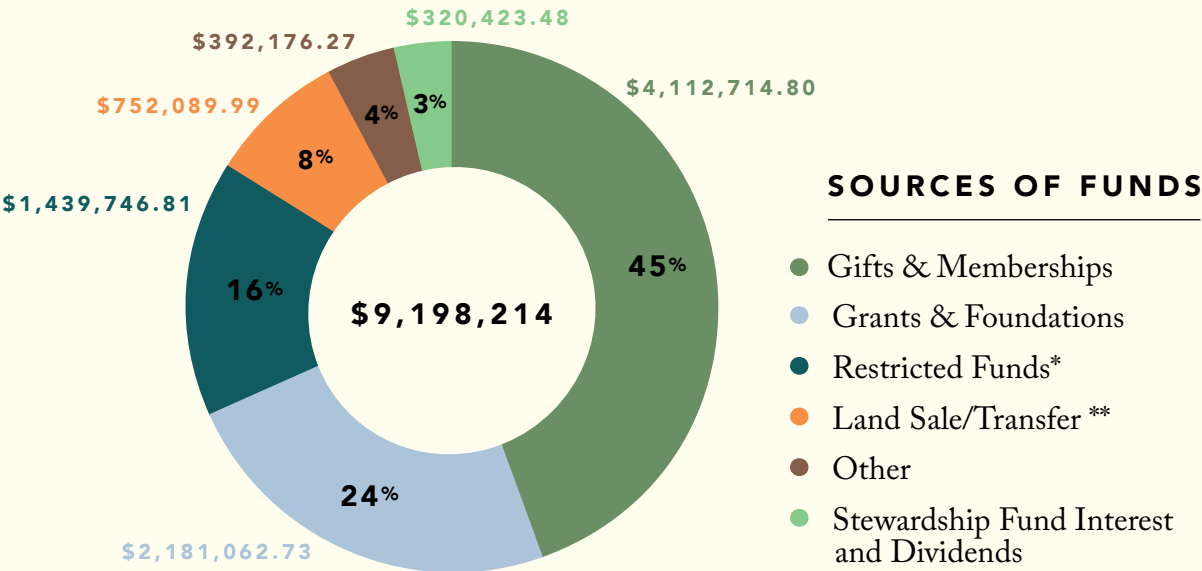
During the past year, our staff delivered presentations to inform communities about our conservation initiatives across the region concerning Hemlock to High Tor in the west, Keuka Lake's Bluff Point, the Seneca Lake watershed, Shotwell Brook in Skaneateles, and Otisco Lake in the east.

We also offered thirteen field trips on natural history topics including geology, plant identification, and birdwatching. These programs, presented by expert volunteer and staff naturalists, are part of the FLLT's popular Talks & Treks program and are offered to the public free of charge.

In addition, FLLT staff provided guided hikes for participants from Finger Lakes Community College, Greater Ithaca Activities Center, Canandaigua Botanical Society, and the Corning Professional Network.

FUND ALLOCATIONS

2025–2026



* Funds designated for current and future land purchases.

** Lands added to public holdings, or subject to a conservation easement, per prior agreement with donor.

*** The Stewardship Fund is a professionally managed fund from which 4% can be drawn annually to care for nature preserves and conservation easements.

Unaudited financial information for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026. Does not include the value of donated land and conservation easements. All figures presented reflect consolidated fund activity.

Thank You to Our Supporters!

You helped us make a difference this year!

Thanks to your tremendous support, we have conserved over 35,000 acres, ensuring scenic vistas, local foods, clean water, and wild places for everyone.

We are very grateful for gifts of all sizes and use them wisely to protect land and water across the region. In particular, we wish to acknowledge those who generously gave \$250 or more between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026.

LAND, CONSERVATION EASEMENT, AND REAL ESTATE DONATIONS:

Yolanda and Lee Adrean
Guy, Ryan, and Tim Christiansen
Don and Eilene Guy
Jim Povero and Sandy Yahner
The Estate of Robert A. Smallman
Glenn and Marcia Swann
Scott Sutcliffe
Dolores Wheeler

\$500,000+

Helga Beck
Estate of Sonya Burgher

\$250,000+

Anonymous (2)
New York State Department of
Environmental Conservation
New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation & Historic Preservation

\$100,000+

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Karen Meriwether and Thomas Snow
New York State Conservation
Partnership Program, administered
by the Land Trust Alliance
Onondaga County
The Raines Family Fund
Marcy Rosenkrantz

\$20,000-99,999

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