



The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

A New Lakeshore Park for the Village of Aurora



CHRIS RAY

Thanks to the generosity and perseverance of Land Trust member Grace Bates, the Village of Aurora recently accepted the donation of four acres including 1,100 feet of scenic lakeshore to be managed as a new lakeshore park. Grace acquired the parcel last year from Wells College, with the intent of creating the park for public enjoyment.

Before gifting the property to the Village, Grace donated a conservation easement to the Land Trust designed to protect the parcel in perpetuity. Grace worked with Land Trust staff and representatives from the Village to finalize the agreement which includes designated zones for public access, and the protection of scenic views and wildlife habitat.

The new park should be well known to anyone who has traveled

on the east side of Cayuga Lake. The property borders State Route 90, a segment of the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, and is located at the south end of the Village of Aurora. It features a mix of wooded and open frontage on a scenic cove that hosts concentrations of waterfowl in the winter and Bald Eagles year-round.

"There is no doubt in my mind that this is the most exciting thing I have ever been a part of," said Grace

Bates. "With the help of villagers and friends, we have created a park in Aurora along the shore at the south end of the village. This park will protect wildlife habitat, preserve scenic views, and provide village and visitor access to Cayuga Lake forever."

"We are very pleased and grateful to partner with Grace Bates and the Finger Lakes Land Trust to revitalize the Village of Aurora," said Aurora

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Land Trust work is “forever work.” The efforts we undertake today are designed to stand the test of time and benefit future generations.



BILL BANASZEWSKI

Protecting land requires us to secure the long-term funding needed for the stewardship of our nature preserves and conservation easements, as well as a robust conservation program that will continue this work beyond our lifetimes.

Our staff and volunteers could not carry out our conservation work if our members and landowners did not share this commitment. Thankfully, people like Fred and Susan Van Sickle, and the late David Connolly, a landowner from Cortland County, recognized

the need for land and water conservation to stand the test of time.

Planned gifts made through an individual’s will or long-term plans are essential to the success of the Land Trust’s efforts. In this issue of *The Land Steward*, you can read about how David planned for the future of his beloved woodland through his will, and how Fred and Susan have deepened their commitment to conservation through a planned gift and challenged others to do the same.

We’re grateful to Fred, Susan,

and David for their tremendous dedication to our land and waters, and to all who have made planned gifts. We hope that others will consider joining in the conservation of *Our Finger Lakes Forever* to sustain the sparkling waters, majestic forests, scenic farmland, and accessible natural areas that inspire us all.

Andrew Zepp, President

A New Lakeshore Park for the Village of Aurora

continued from cover

Mayor James Orman. “This will now provide the Village with public access to the lake for families to gather safely.”

With the completion of this project, the Land Trust has worked with partners to conserve nearly three miles of shoreline on Cayuga Lake. Other protected lands nearby include the VanRiper Conservation Area and Whitlock Nature Preserve, the Cayuga Shores Wildlife Management Area, Camp Barton, and over 600 acres at the privately owned Great Gully Farm.



CHRIS RAY

Land Acquisition Adds to Protection of Skaneateles Lake

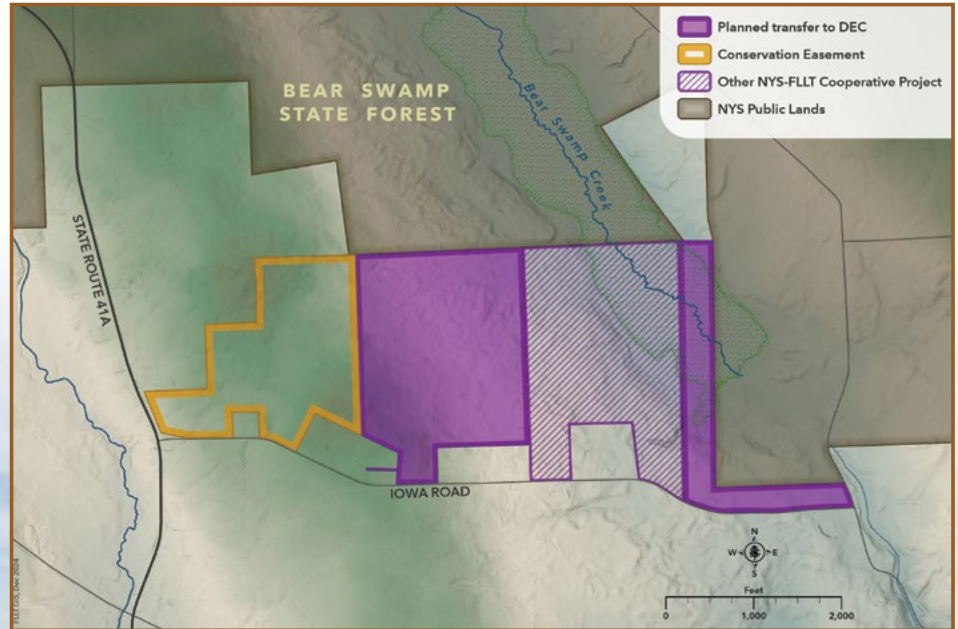
In the rugged highlands just southwest of Skaneateles Lake, the 3,539-acre Bear Swamp State Forest quietly safeguards the unfiltered source of drinking water for Syracuse-area residents. Bordered on each side by forested slopes, Bear Swamp Creek wends its way north through the forest, filtered by woods and wetlands, entering the lake at Carpenter Falls Unique Area.

In February, the Land Trust purchased 218 acres adjacent to the state forest in the town of Sempronius in Cayuga County. The property encompasses wetlands, upland forests, and 1,755 feet of frontage on Bear Swamp Creek, the largest tributary to Skaneateles Lake.

The Land Trust intends to transfer a portion of the newly acquired property, approximately 141 acres, to New York State as an addition to Bear Swamp State Forest. This key property will connect the eastern portion of the forest with 102 acres acquired by the Land Trust in 2021, which will also join the state's land holdings in this area.

The remaining 77 acres are primarily agricultural land and will be conserved through the use of a

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CHALLENGE MATCH

Our Finger Lakes Forever

A New Commitment to the Future of Conservation in the Finger Lakes

The Land Trust is honored to announce a new opportunity to provide for the future of conservation in the Finger Lakes. A planned gift allows you to contribute assets to the Finger Lakes Land Trust through your will or long-term plans, ensuring that your support and values protect *Our Finger Lakes Forever*. We seek to double the number of pledged Land Trust gifts from 32 to 64.



With your planned gift, you have the power to safeguard the Finger Lakes for future generations. Land Trust leaders Fred and Susan Van Sickle have pledged to contribute \$1,000 to the Land Trust's general operating fund for every new planned gift commitment or notification that helps achieve our goal of 64 commitments. They have also doubled their own bequest, deepening their dedication to conservation.

By notifying us of your planned gift today, you will help protect our cherished landscapes and water resources—ensuring they are protected for generations to come.

By making a planned gift you will join a community that supports *Our Finger Lakes Forever*. This community of forward-thinking members are planning today to secure a lasting future for the health and resiliency of the Finger Lakes region.

To notify us of your plans, please contact the Land Trust at (607) 275-9487 or visit fltt.org/plannedgiving.

"WE were inspired to protect the natural beauty of the Finger Lakes after moving to Ithaca a decade ago. When we were looking at our gift for the *Land Trust's Finger Lakes Forever Campaign*, we decided to add a bequest to increase our impact. A planned gift is a tangible way to invest in solutions to the climate crisis and keep the Finger Lakes iconic. It also allows us to continue our support beyond our lifetimes and sets a strong example for our children.

We are committed to supporting local organizations that preserve land and enrich our region, and we're proud to support the Land Trust's vision and outstanding work."

—Fred and Susan Van Sickle, Ithaca, NY

Land Gift Ensures Integrity of James Kennedy State Forest

In early April, the Land Trust acquired 108 wooded acres from the estate of David Connolly in the town of Virgil, Cortland County. This “inholding” property is bordered on all sides by James Kennedy State Forest and serves as a buffer to the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) which traverses its southern boundary.

CHRIS RAY

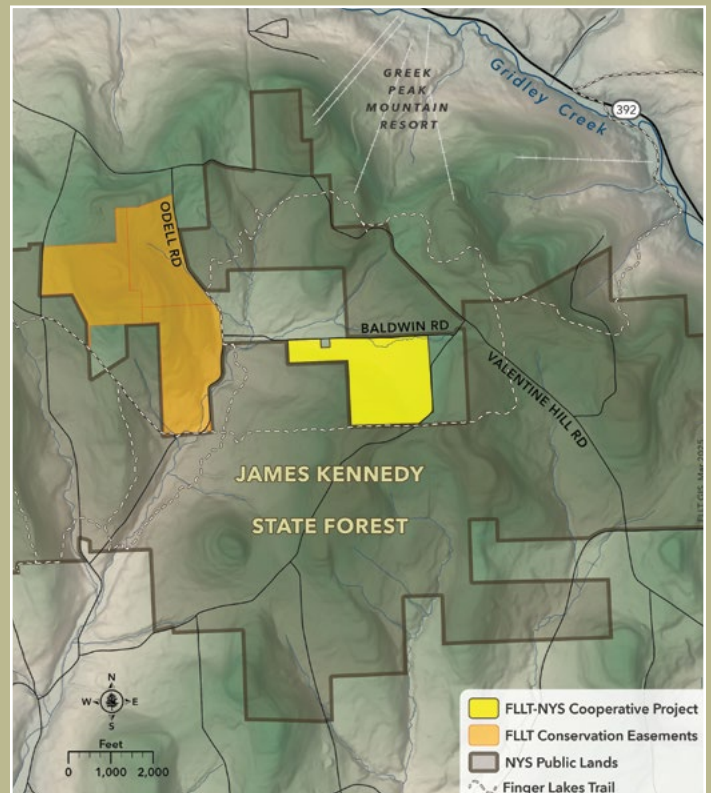
The Land Trust intends to donate the parcel to New York State as an addition to the state forest, adding to a block of protected lands in this area. This newly acquired property is also in close proximity to 250 privately owned acres protected with perpetual conservation easements held by the Land Trust since 2021.

For many years before his passing, David made numerous trails on this land where he would take friends and family for rides on his ATV. The property features steep slopes, stands of hardwood trees, and 1,400 feet of frontage along a tributary to the East Branch of Owego Creek—located within the Susquehanna River watershed.

Protection of this parcel will safeguard wildlife habitat, create new public recreational opportunities, and help protect water quality in Owego Creek. The parcel has over 3,000 feet of road frontage on Baldwin Road and over 1,000 feet on a public forest access road, providing additional public access points to the state land.

Adjacent to Greek Peak Mountain Resort, James Kennedy State Forest occupies the higher elevations of this scenic forested landscape. A popular site for outdoor recreation, the forest hosts annual running events, cross-country skiers, and hikers looking for challenging sections of the FLT.

Protecting intact forests in the region continues to be a conservation priority for the Land Trust. Large and undisturbed forested corridors are crucial for mitigating the impacts of climate change, supporting biodiversity, and allowing for the continued movement of wildlife.



Land Trust Secures Over 1,600 Feet Along the Chemung River

The Land Trust recently purchased 24 acres featuring 1,680 feet of frontage along the Chemung River in the town of Chemung. The parcel will ultimately be transferred to the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), for future use as a public conservation area and fishing access site.

Located off of County Route 60 in Chemung County, the wooded property contains roosting habitat for Bald Eagles and migratory birds. Small ponds and stands of mixed hardwood trees define the parcel which also contains scenic views of the surrounding hills.

The Land Trust is focused on protecting lands bordering the Chemung River to safeguard wildlife habitat and create new recreational opportunities. To date, the organization has protected over 14 miles of streambank and over 3,000

acres in the Chemung River watershed. Protected lands include the Steege Hill, Houghton, and Plymouth Woods nature preserves, and three parcels acquired in partnership with New York State to create the Big Flats Wildlife Management Area.

The preserves, as well as other conserved public spaces up and down the river, are part of the Chemung River Greenbelt. The greenbelt is an ambitious open space plan that will tie the many Chemung River communities together through a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

"The Chemung River is a remarkable natural resource that provides outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation," said Land Trust President Andrew Zepp. "By working together with local partners, we can secure vital habitats for fish and wildlife while expanding public access to the river."



In celebration of Earth Day on April 22, Land Trust staff and volunteers removed 900 pounds of garbage, 30 tires, scrap metal, and recycling on the new conservation area on the Chemung River. People of all ages came from Big Flats, Corning, Ithaca, and Rochester to beautify the roadside and floodplain of this future public access point.



Shotwell Brook Conservation Area Gains Support from Local Governments

When the Land Trust acquired 101 acres adjacent to the village of Skaneateles last fall, the community expressed strong support for the initiative to protect the property and prepare it for public access.

CHRIS RAY

Since then, local governments have also recognized the importance of conserving the land, a mix of fields, wetlands, and woods located in an area of intense development pressure.

Most recently, the Land Trust received \$180,000 from Onondaga County through their new Greenways and Blueways Grant Program. A key component of Plan Onondaga, the County's comprehensive plan, the grant program funds projects that expand corridors of open space and protect waterways to improve ecological health, protect watersheds, and provide outdoor recreational opportunities. The Town of Skaneateles has also pledged \$50,000

in support of the future "Shotwell Brook Conservation Area."

The Land Trust identified the property as a conservation priority due to its location near the headwaters of Shotwell Brook, a key tributary of Skaneateles Lake. The parcel features more than 1,000 feet of frontage on the brook and more than 1,000 feet of frontage on U.S. Route 20 and is part of the eastern gateway to Skaneateles and the Finger Lakes region.

Establishing this public conservation area will safeguard water quality within the Skaneateles Lake watershed as Shotwell Brook enters the lake near the intake for the city of Syracuse's unfiltered drinking water supply. Before creating public access,

the Land Trust will initiate ecological restoration efforts on the land through a partnership with the Partners for Fish & Wildlife Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This will include restoring and enhancing wetlands on the property, planting native trees and shrubs, establishing native grassland, and controlling non-native, invasive pest species.

Additionally, the FLLT intends to develop 2.1 miles of walking paths on the land, including a universally accessible loop trail. The site will also feature scenic overlooks and wildlife viewing areas along with an interpretive kiosk and a parking area. Visit fltt.org/shotwellbrook to learn more.

Land Acquisition Adds to Protection of Skaneateles Lake *continued from page 3*

perpetual conservation easement and sold to a private buyer subject to the terms of the easement. Proceeds from the sale will be used to replenish the Land Trust's Opportunity Fund, a dedicated account created by the organization to make time-sensitive acquisitions possible.

Protection of these properties will safeguard water quality in Skaneateles Lake, protect wildlife habitat, and provide additional recreational opportunities. Bear Swamp State Forest hosts a popular network of recreational trails—over 15 miles of multi-use trails and miles of quiet, unpaved roads.

This is the organization's ninth conservation project in

the vicinity of Bear Swamp, which is identified as a priority project within New York State's Open Space Plan. It is also part of an Audubon-designated Important Bird Area and features extensive pristine wetlands and rare flora. Other protected lands in the area include Carpenter Falls State Unique Area and the Land Trust's Bahar Nature Preserve.

Conservation easements are voluntary legal agreements that permanently limit future land use in order to protect the land's conservation value. Lands subject to conservation easements remain in private ownership, on local tax rolls, and available for traditional uses such as farming and hunting.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH NEW YORK STATE

Advance Conservation Across the Finger Lakes Region

Cooperative partnerships with New York State agencies such as the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation are a driving force behind many of the Land Trust's conservation efforts. When properties with significant ecological, cultural, and recreational significance located near public lands are placed on the market, the Land Trust can step in quickly to acquire them as future additions to wildlife management areas, state forests, and parks.

In early 2025, publicly accessible state lands gained over 420 acres initially acquired by the Land Trust over the past several years. In the Southern Tier, the Land Trust transferred 210 acres to New York State as an addition to the Big Flats Wildlife Management Area in Chemung County. Situated against the dramatic backdrop of the iconic Palisades between Elmira and Corning, the property supports diverse wildlife such as Bald Eagles and black bears. Scenic fields and steep wooded slopes define the parcel which is nestled along the Chemung River valley. The Land Trust helped establish this WMA with a 104-acre parcel containing a portion of the Palisades that was transferred to the state in 2022.

In Tioga County, Robinson Hollow State Forest grew with the addition of 139 acres, first acquired by the Land Trust in 2019. Located in the town of Richford, the property occupies a hilltop situated between two tributaries to



*New addition to the Big Flats
Wildlife Management Area along
the Chemung River*





A view of Bare Hill Unique Area on the eastern shore of Canandaigua Lake

the West Branch of Owego Creek. Rolling fields, long maintained as grassland bird habitat, and a pond add to the site's diversity. The Finger Lakes Trail borders the parcel's western boundary and runs north through the state forest.

On the eastern shore of Canandaigua Lake in Yates County, Bare Hill Unique Area in the town of Middlesex gained five new wooded parcels totaling 64 acres. Bare Hill is well known in the region for its scenic views as well as its cultural significance in the creation story of the Seneca Nation. The addition of these undeveloped lands to Bare Hill enhances wildlife habitat protection, helps safeguard water quality in Canandaigua Lake, and increases public access to recreational opportunities.

At Ganondagan State Historic Site in Victor, Ontario County, the Land Trust transferred 15 acres of meadows directly across from the entrance to this National Historic

Bare Hill is well known in the region for its scenic views as well as its cultural significance in the creation story of the Seneca Nation.

Landmark, the original site of a 17th-century Seneca town. The Land Trust purchased the property at the request of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation as part of the agency's effort to safeguard this rural landscape from encroaching suburban development.

These protected properties represent the collective effort of multiple agencies and organizations throughout the Finger Lakes region who work in partnership with the ultimate goal of conserving land for outdoor recreation, cultural preservation, and watershed and habitat protection.

Initial land purchases are made possible through the generosity of individuals, foundations, and the Land Trust's Opportunity Fund—a revolving internal fund dedicated to making time-sensitive acquisitions possible. The fund is then replenished either through fundraising or the sale of land to a public conservation agency.

A Change to Donor Recognition

Our conservation achievements would not be possible without the generous support of our members and supporters. As we continue to grow, we're making an important change to how we recognize membership contributions.

Starting this year, we're transitioning to a fiscal year reporting cycle (July 1–June 30). This means that our donor roll, which was previously included in the spring newsletter, will now be part of our annual report, published each fall. The report will list all donors who give \$250 and above during the fiscal year.

To ensure no gifts are overlooked during this transition, our upcoming annual report will include two periods:

January 1–December 31, 2024, and January 1–June 30, 2025. If you gave during both periods, your name may appear more than once as we thank you for your continued generosity.

We're incredibly grateful for your support of the Finger Lakes Land Trust. If you have any questions about your giving, please feel free to reach out to us at info@flt.org.

Our appreciation for gifts in honor of

Grace Bates FROM Marc Brown and Susan Taylor- Brown	Finnegan FROM Kathleen Marjinsky	Channi Sacks FROM Mary Royer and Nelson Burdick	Marc Mason FROM Barbara Peiker Priscilla Rogerson and Alice Kendall	Dr. Janet Simon FROM Barbara Simon and Paula Mayhew
Betsy Darlington FROM David Feldshuh and Martha Frommelt	Nancy Frank FROM Nora Frank and Walter Houseman	John L. and Dorothy T. Greenwood FROM Gaylenn Greenwood	Hailey Nase FROM Mitch Wilber	Jerry Sparman FROM Stu and Betsy Gillim

Our deepest gratitude for thoughtful gifts in memory of

Gary Brownell FROM Danny Hartman Southern Tier Home Builders and Remodelers Association Paul Strebel The Thacher Family Cousins Antoinette and John D. Tubbert, Jr. Andrew Wolvin	Clair, Helen, and Mark Chamberlain FROM Jim Chamberlain and Karen Dyson	Daniel Hall FROM Barbara, Robert, and Jennifer Hall Ken and Vicky Hall	<i>Louise Holmes Roger and Darlys McDonough Meg and Glenn Reed</i>	William David Olmstead FROM Sherri Dunham Loreen Nash Mary-Ann and Bob Robinson James Stewart Carl and Sil Young
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The FLLT would like to express our sincere apologies to the family and friends of **Thomas J. Hargrave, Jr.** for incorrectly listing his name and the names of those who made contributions in his memory in the previous issue of *The Land Steward*.

We are grateful for the following gifts made in Thomas' memory between September 27, 2024, and January 15, 2025.

Anonymous (2)
Bruce Bell
Mary Butler
Elizabeth Farnham
Sherman and Anne
Farnham
Duncan and Jane
Frame
Scott Forsyth
John and Lindsay
Garrett
Ann H. Hargrave Loos
Pete and Jeannie
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Katherine and Clay
Phillips
Eileen Pines and
David Binsack
Peter and Lisa Sykes
William Sykes
Rudy and Meg Warren

A CLOSER LOOK



Allelopathy: Better Living through Chemicals

Eastern black
walnut tree

There are many ways for invasive plant species to gain a foothold and push out or supersede native species. Some invasive plants—like kudzu or the aptly named mile-a-minute weed—spread like wildfire through rapid growth, others adapt quickly and outcompete the locals for nutrients and other resources, and still others have characteristics that make them hard to eradicate.

But some plants—invasive or not—secrete biochemicals that inhibit the growth and development of neighboring plant species, giving them an advantage over the competition. This survival mechanism is known as *allelopathy*. The allelochemicals released by these plants are secondary metabolites that are not needed for the primary metabolic processes of the plant.

For example, garlic mustard has become a thriving invasive species in the understory of North American temperate forests in the Northeast and Midwest. Garlic mustard excretes sinigrin, a glucoside also found in broccoli and Brussels sprouts, that inhibits the growth of other plant species and can disrupt soil fungi that help tree roots absorb water and nutrients. This gives the mustard plant a competitive advantage for resources and the ability to more easily displace native flora, thereby reducing biodiversity in many forested areas.

The term allelopathy was coined by Austrian botanist Hans Molisch in 1937. Although the meaning of the term has evolved in the decades since, it generally refers to a chemically driven interaction between plants, or between plants and other micro-organisms. It is the biochemical element that distinguishes it from simple resource competition, and it is not limited to invasive species.

Take the native black walnut, which is an allelopathic tree native to central and eastern North America. It releases juglone, a chemical compound that inhibits respiration in some plant species, into the air and soil through its roots, bark, and leaves. (Interestingly, juglone is also used as a coloring agent in food and cosmetics.) Plants that are susceptible to the toxicity of juglone may experience yellowing leaves, wilted foliage, stunted growth, or die off. This limits the plant species that can survive and grow in close proximity to a black walnut tree.

Willows also tend to have few other competing plant

species in their general vicinity, but they are not considered to be allelopathic. That's because their competitive advantage is not due to a biochemical release, but rather their voracious consumption of water, which limits the availability of moisture to other nearby plants.

While allelopathy has given a number of invasive species—from eucalyptus to the Chinese “tree of heaven” to knapweed—a leg (branch?) up on native flora in the competition for resources, much of the current research into allelochemicals is finding ways to use their effects in a positive way.

In particular, recent research has been focused on using allelochemicals in sustainable agriculture, primarily as an environmentally friendly tool for weed suppression. Using plants with weed-suppressing allelochemicals as cover crops, mulch, or plantings in a fallow field can help keep weeds in check without the use of synthetic herbicides that can harm pollinating insects and undermine soil and water quality. Example species include rye, sorghum, fescue, winter vetch, and certain rice varieties.

A related strategy is to create natural herbicides using extracts of allelochemicals, though the process of isolating and synthesizing these chemicals can be very expensive. There are few currently available on a commercial scale, but research efforts are ongoing.

Lest you think that allelochemicals are only harmful to other plant species, there are some allelopathic plants that can actually improve growth conditions for their neighbors. Some species of legumes, like the aforementioned winter vetch, can promote nitrogen in the soil—a good thing for plants—while also releasing allelochemicals that inhibit certain weeds and pests. Allelochemicals leached from the box elder can stimulate growth of bluestem grasses, which are commonly grown in hay fields and pasture lands.

We are still scratching the surface in our understanding of allelochemicals and their potential usage in modern agricultural practices. The ability to breed allelopathic plants that can promote crop growth while providing herbicidal, insecticidal, and antimicrobial qualities could go a long way toward improving crop yields and help meet global food security challenges.

—Jeff Tonole

Finger Lakes Land Trust

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36th Annual Meeting & Member Picnic

Saturday, June 14
11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Cedar View Conservation Area
125 Cedar View Road
Lansing, NY

WE invite all Land Trust members to join us for our Annual Meeting as we celebrate our conservation successes of the past year! Visit flt.org/2025annualmeeting or see the insert for more information.

For information on upcoming events as part of the Land Trust's Talks & Treks series, visit flt.org/events.



KIM SHERWOOD