

ADIRONDACK CHAPTER UPDATE | FALL/WINTER | 2020

The Adirondacks depend on us.



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Building Community Resilience



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Dear Friend,

Despite recent world events, The Nature Conservancy's team in the Adirondacks has been tremendously resourceful and creative, seeking ways to stay connected, maintain partnerships and achieve meaningful, lasting impacts. Friends like you have long recognized the power of nature—and in times like these, I'm sure you understand how it serves an even greater role—one that helps build community resilience.

While our Adirondack team has deftly adapted to a new world, the Covid-19 pandemic has put racial and socioeconomic disparities into sharp focus. *We acknowledge that we can only have a vibrant, resilient and sustainable natural world if there is equity, justice and peace for all of humanity.*

Under the leadership of our new CEO, Jennifer Morris, we are committed to enacting a holistic plan that includes investing in diversity, equity and inclusion in our work and in our workplace. Organization-wide initiatives that push for equal access to nature, build communities where both nature and people thrive, and ensure the safety and respect of our colleagues and partners, reflect the “real” work of conservation.

This work strongly touches down here in the Adirondacks where our community resilience is so closely tied to the health of our forests, rivers, and lakes. Our natural lands provide endless possibilities for recreation and enjoyment. But we must ensure that all people have equal opportunities to engage with nature and that our Adirondack communities are safe and welcoming for all. Our staff and our board of trustees have been working together to do the necessary listening and learning so we can advance our knowledge, apply our unique skillsets, and get to work.

In July we sponsored the Common Ground Alliance Forum, which brought together over 200 government leaders, nonprofits, business owners, and community members to address some of these issues in the Park. And we are benefiting from the leadership of the Adirondack Diversity Initiative, which has launched an antiracism education and mobilization campaign. The social fabric of the Adirondacks impacts our conservation and climate adaptation work just as much as the economic factors do. The solutions we embrace will ensure that our Adirondack communities will continue to thrive alongside our natural wonders.

With your support, we are creating a strong and healthy world for future generations.

Thank you,

Peg R. Olsen
Director

The Boquet River's Bounty

A MULTIPRONGED APPROACH TO CONSERVATION

Our work in the Boquet River and its surrounding lands began more than four decades ago. We're providing places for people to enjoy, mitigating threats from climate change, restoring crucial salmon habitat, and ensuring the economic vitality of local communities.



Boquet River Nature Preserve

Connecting people to nature is one of our most important goals. We've put the finishing touches on a new trail connecting the Boquet River Nature

Preserve with Main Street in downtown Willsboro, helping link the town's economic future to conservation. This summer, we installed new interpretive signs, and our colleagues at the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program helped us build new boot brush stations at each trailhead to thwart the spread of invasive plants.

The Boquet River Nature Preserve includes 120 stunning acres of forest and floodplain, and more than a half-mile of shoreline on river. And it's brought people to town who often find themselves left out of nature thanks to a wheelchair-friendly trail network named for Tim Barnett, the Adirondack Chapter's founder.



Climate Change Adaptation

We've been awarded a \$400,000 grant by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to improve flood resilience and habitat for native fish in the Boquet

River watershed. These funds are key to advancing our work on climate change adaptation. Together with towns and local transportation partners, we'll replace undersized culverts with

climate- and fish-friendly designs to reduce the risk of flooding in our communities and ensure fish and other wildlife can thrive.



Land Protection

Our work to protect water quality goes beyond the river. We're collaborating with landowners along the North Branch of the Boquet River to help us maintain the health of this vital area for years to come. By being mindful of where crops are grown and houses are built, we can protect and restore streamside wetlands and forests that are critical to reducing the amount of sediment and pollutants that reach the water.



Atlantic Salmon Habitat Restoration

This fall, we will be surveying the river bottom for salmon nests along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. One of the most gratifying results of our work has been the resurgence of native salmon populations. Before the Willsboro Dam was demolished by the town in 2015, Atlantic salmon hadn't been seen in the Boquet River for 150 years. Since then, scientists have found naturally producing Atlantic salmon fry in the North Branch of the Boquet River three times, most recently in July 2019.





© Hannah Darrin

Meet Hannah Darrin, Adirondack Chapter Board Member

What's your connection to the Adirondacks?

My grandparents honeymooned on Lake George and, in 1956, bought a house on the lake near Hague—the same house I'm living in right now. Since then, my family has contributed to the successes of the Darrin Freshwater Institute of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. I volunteered there in the summers while growing up. Several years later, I returned to the Adirondacks working in outdoor education, leading backpacking and canoeing expeditions for young adults. The weeks I spent sleeping in hemlock forests, traversing slides and paddling glassy ponds gave me a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the local lands and waters. It's a place I hope to be a part of for my entire life.

What about The Nature Conservancy's work resonates with you?

While earning my master's degree at Yale's School of the Environment, I didn't expect that my education would open my eyes to the limitations of protecting land separate from people. We are inextricably linked to nature and must shift our behaviors in order to protect what we love and rely on in the Adirondacks. The Nature Conservancy's work in and with our communities resonates with me because everything is connected to the health of the natural world.

What's your hope for the future of the Adirondacks?

I'd like to see The Nature Conservancy continue to work toward centering indigenous people and people of color in this environmental movement. We lose extensive knowledge by not listening to these communities and can learn from their stories and (their experience on) the land. I hope in the future that the Adirondack Park is more welcoming to these storytellers. It should be a place where all residents can collaborate on setting goals and sustaining life, not just in our policies and designated areas, but in all our collective actions and beliefs.

You've just graduated from Yale with a master's degree in environmental management. What's next?

It's a challenging time to look for a job. I'm volunteering in my community and keeping myself and the people around me healthy. I'm repairing an old sailboat and spending lots of time with my dog hiking and paddling on lands that the Conservancy has protected. I hope to work at the intersection of food production, land conservation, social justice, and education.



© Erika Bailey

Conservancy Preserves are Crucial to Science and Solace

The Nature Conservancy has created the largest network of private preserves in the world—providing opportunities for people to connect with nature while protecting wildlife and the natural resources that bring us clean air and water. And this powerful network is more than just a host of pretty places.

Many of our New York preserves are living laboratories where scientists are studying the most pressing conservation challenges of our time. Conservancy lands and waters are increasingly being used as model sites for developing new tools and solutions for dealing with a changing climate.

“It’s an exciting time at The Nature Conservancy as we are using our preserves for research and to advance a future where nature and people thrive,” says Mathew Levine, Director of Stewardship for The Nature Conservancy in New York.

Our preserves are also inspiring the next generation of outdoor lovers and conservationists. The Nature Conservancy’s publicly accessible sites in New York collectively draw hundreds of thousands of people annually. This year, they’re playing a critical role to help people cope with the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The experience of the outdoors has never been more important,” explains Marcela Maldonado, The Nature Conservancy’s Preserve Coordinator in New York. “Most

of our flagship preserves are seeing three to four times the visitation they typically receive. We’re delighted that we can provide people with a respite from the stress they are feeling.”

And Conservancy sites are increasingly being used to provide new access opportunities for underrepresented communities and for people with mobility challenges.

We’re managing our flagship preserves as a network of publicly accessible places that provide access to multi-use outdoor recreation opportunities. We’re engaging our visitors with new signage and better trails. And importantly, we are working to create equitable access for people that have been traditionally excluded from enjoying such places.

“In an effort to expand our reach and bring nature to more people, we are starting up partnerships with organizations that represent or serve communities of color like Latino Outdoors, Outdoor Afro and Westmoreland Sanctuary. We’re piloting these partnerships in the greater New York City area, and hope to grow meaningful relationships across New York state,” Maldonado continues.

Soon, we will be making more preserves accessible to low-mobility users. Currently, Mashomack Preserve on Shelter Island, our Boquet River Preserve in Essex County and Thompson Pond in Dutchess County have wheelchair-compliant trails.

By the Numbers

From Montauk's coast to the Adirondacks' High Peaks to the Great Lakes' shoreline and beyond, The Nature Conservancy in New York is leading the way to building a resilient future. We are united in the need to protect land, water and all the life it sustains.

As 2020 was a challenging year for all of us, we are so grateful for your support in helping us tackle the greatest environmental threats of our time. Here's a look at the recent accomplishments and cumulative efforts of our New York team. With special thanks to the multitude of partners that we work with in support of our efforts.

8,500

native trees planted for climate resilience in the important Tug Hill region this year.

1.1

miles of vital native fish habitat reconnected in the Finger Lakes region.

700+

volunteers in New York now enrolled to help advance our mission on the ground and in the water.

15

states from Maine to Florida voted to protect Atlantic Menhaden using holistic fishing management approach.

3,350

trees identified and measured to study the health of Mashomack Preserve's forests.

11%

of trees in the Adirondacks potentially threatened by hemlock woolly adelgid, an invasive insect that we're mobilizing to control.

1,000+

supporters attended our Power of Nature virtual event series.

\$3.7 million

approved in Suffolk County to fund its landmark septic system replacement program to improve water quality.

106

vacant parcels, totaling 22 acres of valuable wetlands conserved in a flood-prone area of Mastic Beach, Long Island.

28,000

saplings planted in Jamaica Bay, New York City as part of an effort to expand the urban forest.



© William Madden



For more information, visit nature.org/newyork



© Marjo Aho/The Nature Conservancy

There has never been a detailed map of the extensive network of nearshore reefs and coastal habitats throughout the Caribbean—until now. The Nature Conservancy is using aerial technologies to create precise visualizations of important marine environments, like coral reefs, throughout the region.

Taking to the Skies to Protect the Seas

Thanks to satellites, a high-tech aircraft, aerial drones and scuba divers, The Nature Conservancy is building three-dimensional habitat models, revealing the location and condition of the Caribbean’s coral reefs, seagrass beds and other oases of underwater life—in order to best protect these vital habitats.

The maps will help guide solutions that address the unique environmental threats faced by each island nation and prioritize climate adaptation for the 44 million people who call the region home.

“Well-managed natural resources are critical to the economic security of any country—especially those in the Caribbean that are so heavily dependent on reef-associated tourism. But you cannot protect what you do not know is there. These

state-of-the-art maps provide a new level of detail about reefs and other important habitats that will help us make smarter investments in conservation. The Nature Conservancy and our partners will use the maps to guide our work in the Caribbean, and we believe this can serve as a model for other protection and management efforts around the world,” explains Dr. Robert Brumbaugh, Executive Director for The Nature Conservancy’s Caribbean Division.

Caribbean communities depend on more than one million square miles of marine resources that have sustained them for generations, including the essential coral reefs that provide livelihoods, food and tourism revenue. In fact, half of all jobs in the Caribbean region rely on healthy marine habitats. A recent Conservancy-led study found that reef-associated tourism generates close to \$8 billion annually for local economies.



NEW YORK – CARIBBEAN CONNECTIONS

One of New York’s most vulnerable birds, the Bicknell’s thrush, spends its summers in the Adirondacks and winters in the Caribbean. This migratory songbird is facing severe loss of habitat due to deforestation and climate change. But to help populations rebound, The Nature Conservancy is protecting its specialized breeding spots: high-elevation spruce-fir forests in the Adirondacks. And in the Caribbean, we’re supporting management of Haiti’s Parc National La Visite. In addition, we’re restoring the native forests in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica which provide food and habitat for Bicknell’s thrush and a host of other migratory species.



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WORKING TOGETHER TO FIND COMMON GROUND

The Adirondacks offer so much. Natural beauty. A sense of community. A healthy way of life. But jobs and housing can be hard to find. And a lack of cultural and ethnic diversity leaves many feeling left out.

The Nature Conservancy's Adirondack Chapter joined more than 200 elected officials, businesses, non-profit groups and community members to find ways to attract a new generation of Adirondack residents and to make our communities more welcoming and inclusive at this year's Common Ground Alliance Forum.

The Common Ground Alliance was established in 2007 to support both environmental quality and economic vitality of the Adirondacks—two goals that are inextricably linked. We're proud to have helped shape this year's agenda and to have been a Headline Sponsor.

Check out commongroundadk.org for more details.