

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
From the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
December 21, 2008

Please Join the CWC Team!
By John Jablonski, Executive Director
The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy



One of the special sites CWC must soon raise the funds to conserve, or it will be sold for recreational home construction.

(Photo by Robert Lannon)

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy's 2008-09 membership drive is underway. We, the directors and members of the CWC team, hope that you'll decide the work we do merits joining our team as a member so that we can conserve more important watershed lands and engage more and more watershed landowners to be effective caretakers of our watershed.

The CWC was incorporated in December 1990 as a private, charitable not-for-profit organization. It was formed in reaction to two major concerns over

Chautauqua Lake: the rapid loss of the lake's scarce natural shoreline habitats to recreational home construction, and, with no controls, the erosion of massive amounts of soil from construction sites, which were being deposited into the lake. In the early and mid-1980s, the Chautauqua Lake Association was using herbicides to treat over 500 acres of plant beds in the lake, in addition to their mechanical harvesting. Fishermen and scientists were concerned that the program had grown to impact too much of the fish habitat in the lake and might have been affecting the fisheries. In response, the NYSDEC placed a moratorium on herbicide use in the lake until the county produced an environmental impact statement and submerged aquatic vegetation management plan that, after a lengthy public input process, determined when, where, and under what conditions herbicides could be used. At the same time, the future founders of the CWC requested that the root causes of the nuisance plant problems—excessive erosion, sedimentation and nutrient loading to the lake—be addressed by the county, municipalities, New York State, and the CLA. Our requests were not met, so we began meeting with the intention of building an alliance of people and organizations concerned about the lake to address the root causes of the lake's problems.

So 18 years later, where is the CWC now? We succeeded in conserving the Cheney farm lakeshore, Stow farm lakeshore, 890 feet of lakeshore at the Lutheran Center, 80 acres of wetlands on the Outlet and 5 acres at the mouth of Prendergast Creek, and 150 acres of Cassadaga Creek wetland-floodplain—for a total of 600 acres county-wide! We've succeeded in

educating thousands of people about the importance of controlling nutrients and keeping topsoil from reaching the lake. Our programs and team members framed the needs and played a major part in the creation of the Chautauqua Lake Management Commission (CLMC) and securing on-going county funding for this program. Interestingly, the nine-organization membership of the CLMC accomplishes the concept of the “Chautauqua Watershed Alliance,” which was the first name of the organization we set out to create 20 years ago! With the CLMC receiving significant county and state funding, more persons are working to address lake and watershed problems than ever before. CLMC educational funding is enabling the CWC to reach more and more watershed residents with information on how persons can manage their properties to avoid fueling our lakes’ algae and plant problems.

The CWC has stayed true to its mission “to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region.” For 2009, our top priorities are to: 1) meet the urgent need to save two forested shore sites on Chautauqua Lake, both which contain streams and wetlands important to storing, filtering and delivering clean waters to our lake, and both of which are very popular boating and swimming sites, now rare on a lake with 90% of its shoreline developed; and 2) provide watershed stewardship information and training to property owners, landscapers, businesspersons, community leaders, and others whose actions most directly contribute to the ability of the watershed to function effectively to collect, store, filter and deliver clean waters to our lakes. We strive to make sure lake and watershed decision-makers have the best scientific information available. Our programs are based on sound science. As such, they have withstood the test of time as new research continues to highlight the importance of conserving shorelines, streams and forests and controlling sediments and nutrients.

Tax deductible, membership donations are our primary source of funding. We ask you to please consider joining the CWC today. You can do so right now by going to the front page of our website at www.chautauquawatershed.org, scrolling down, and clicking on the Pay Pal button. You can also call our office at 664-2166 with your credit card information, or write a check to CWC and mail it to 413 North Main Street, Jamestown, NY 14701. Donors giving \$50 or more by 12/31/08 are eligible for a drawing to win an 8-hour rental of a pontoon boat provided by Chautauqua Marina, or a Mojave mountain bike. Please support healthy watersheds and waters!