

A YEAR OF GROWTH

2022 TO 2023
ANNUAL REPORT



CHAUTAUQUA
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY

A BIG STEP:
APPLICATION FOR
NATIONAL LAND TRUST
ACCREDITATION

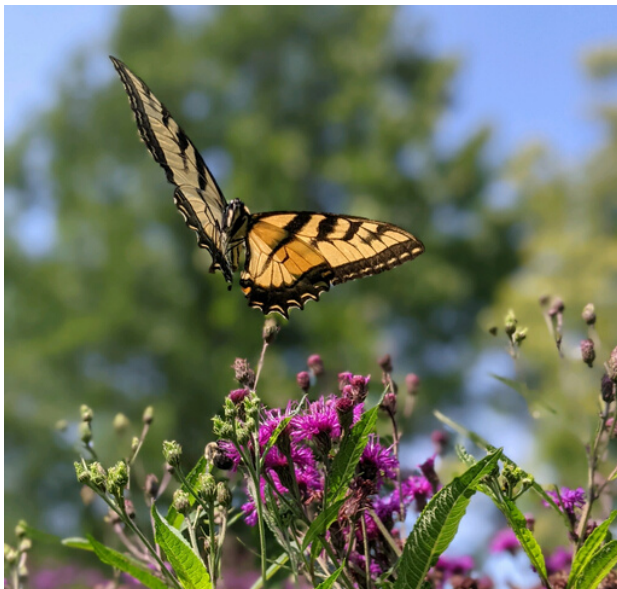
2022 BY THE
NUMBERS

6
NEW NATURE PRESERVES

MOVING FORWARD: LEADERSHIP
TRANSITIONS & STRATEGIC
CONSERVATION MAPPING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Executive Director	01
Strategic Conservation Mapping	02
A Changing of the Guard	04
National Land Trust Accreditation	06



What's Next for Our Fiscal Year	07
2022 By the Numbers	08
6 New Nature Preserves!	10
Board of Directors & Staff	11



I'm so happy to share with you all this year's annual report - a glimpse at our endeavors and accomplishments from the past year.

Director's Note



Another year has gone by, and watershed conservation remains essential. I am so proud of all that we have accomplished together. With six new nature preserves just this year, the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy continues to protect our waterways, wildlife, and the beautiful diverse ecosystems throughout Chautauqua County. Beyond its ecological significance, land conservation plays a vital role in maintaining clean air and water, mitigating the effects of climate change, and providing spaces for recreational and cultural activities. Together we are ensuring that the beauty and resources of Chautauqua County remain available for generations to come.

There have been some big changes this year as well. Nevertheless, as we move forward we remain committed to transparency, accountability, and the responsible stewardship of the land and resources you have entrusted to us. We are excited about the possibilities ahead and the positive changes we can bring to our environment and community. None of this is possible without your support, so please accept my sincerest thanks. Together, we are shaping a brighter and more sustainable future.

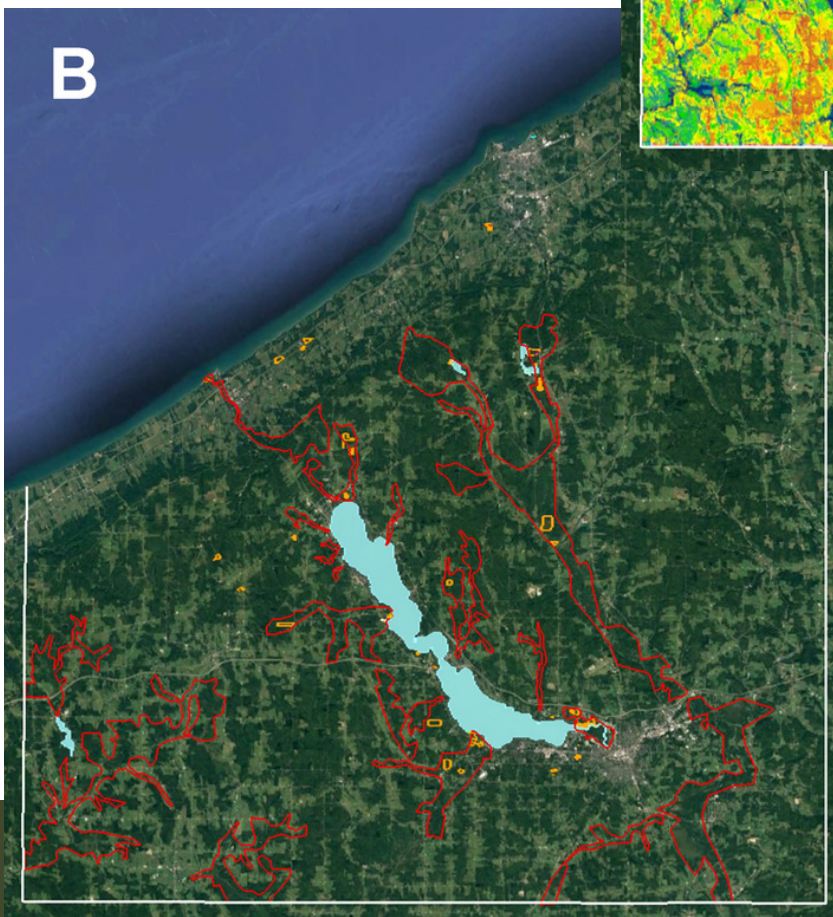
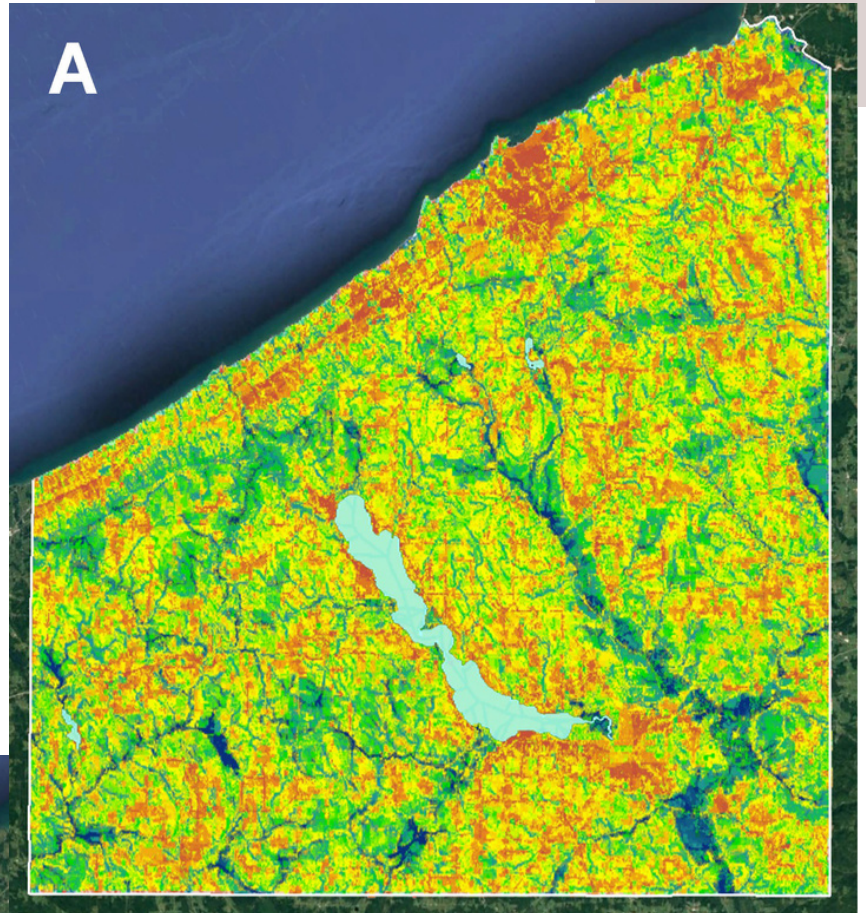
Whitney Gleason
Executive Director



Comprehensive Regional Conservation Implementation Strategy

By Twan Leenders

Each pixel of the CRCIS map represents an area measuring 30x30m in size (roughly 100ft x 100ft). During the CRCIS analysis, each of those "pixel" plots was assigned a score for about a dozen different environmental variables, ranging from soil type, current land use, and slope, to proximity to streams, presence of endangered species, and other relevant information. The greater the importance of these valuables in each area, the higher it scores.



In the end, these individual values were combined into a composite score for each pixel, that gives us a relatively objective, data-driven evaluation of how each, roughly one quarter-acre parcel contributes to the health and resilience of our county's watersheds. To make this numerical data easier to digest, the range of composite scores was translated into colors to create this map. Dark blue areas represent the highest composite conservation score, followed by green, yellow, orange, and eventually red with the lowest composite score.



Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy staff and conservation committee members then highlighted those areas in blue and dark green that do not already enjoy some degree of protection from other entities (e.g. state, county, municipal parks, and wildlife management areas). Much of the state land incorporates large forest blocks, which is why those are not included in our red-outlined conservation priority area maps. They are already protected in other ways. Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy's CRCIS model is primarily targeting protection of our water and watersheds - arguably some of our county's most valuable assets.

A next step in our conservation planning efforts is the prioritization of specific parcels to start "connecting the dots" of protected lands and ensure that we can protect both the ecological and economic connectivity of our landscape. It is these conversations that will educate our future land acquisition and ecological restoration agendas. In addition, outreach to decision makers at the county and municipal levels is another critical next step to share the information contained in these maps. Not only do they indicate where investing conservation dollars will give us the greatest return on our investment, they also clearly indicate where development should be concentrated to avoid unintended negative impacts on our water quality and environmental resiliency.



A CHANGING OF THE GUARD

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AFTER 33 YEARS
FROM 1990 TO 2023

By Whitney Gleason

After an incredible 33-year journey led by our former Executive Director and co-founder, John Jablonski III, a new chapter begins with a sense of excitement, optimism, and a dedication to preserving the progress made and commitment to conservation built over all of those years.



Stepping into the role of Executive Director, I am humbled by the legacy left by my predecessor. The vision that guided our organization through decades of challenges and successes has built a strong foundation that will continue to support our mission - to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty, and ecological health of the lakes, streams, wetlands, and watersheds of the Chautauqua, NY, region. The preservation of open spaces, wildlife habitats, and the nurturing of a deep connection between communities and nature are the cornerstones of this mission, which I will continue to strive toward and uphold.

From my time as an intern back in 2012 (right) to this day, I have greatly admired the steadfast and absolute commitment of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy to the protection of our region's waterways. As we move forward, my vision for our organization is one of partnership and growth. Collaboration will be at the heart of our approach - engaging with our local



municipalities, partnering with like-minded organizations, and continuing to prioritize education and community involvement. While change can be both exciting and daunting, it is a necessary part of growth.

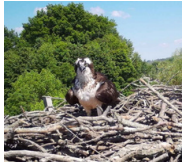


As your new Executive Director I am committed to upholding the values we stand for, while forging ahead with innovative strategies that will secure our mission for years to come. Thank you for joining me on this journey. Together we can build a strong future for our land trust and the precious landscapes we protect.

THE ACCREDITATION SEAL: A MARK OF DISTINCTION

WWW.LANDTRUSTACCREDITATION.ORG

→ Excellence



Accredited land trusts meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. These land trusts demonstrate their commitment to excellence by adopting *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, the ethical and technical guidelines for the responsible operation of a land trust, and meeting the accreditation requirements drawn from them.

→ Trust



Nonprofit organizations, including land trusts, are increasingly called on to demonstrate their accountability to the public. Accredited land trusts have voluntarily submitted their organizations to an external, independent review of their practices. As a result, accreditation provides the public with the assurance that the land trust displaying the accreditation seal meets established standards for organizational quality and permanent land conservation.

→ Permanence



Land trusts help conserve land that is essential to our health and well-being. When land trusts agree to protect land for the benefit of the public, in most cases they do so by promising that the protection is forever. The accreditation program verifies that the land trust has the policies and programs in place to keep this promise, either by caring for the land itself or transferring the land to an entity that can.



BECOMING A NATIONALLY ACCREDITED LAND TRUST

By Tracy Carlson

Last year in 2022, our staff began the process of applying to become a nationally accredited land trust through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission (LTAC). Prior to beginning our application, we applied to and were fortunate enough to be awarded with grant funding through the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP), to enable our staff to complete the one-and-a-half-year application process.

Becoming accredited is important for us not only to affirm to you, our donors, and our community that we hold a commitment to the highest standards for land conservation, but will also provide us with access to new funding opportunities and resources to help us achieve our mission. Accreditation will also join us with the other 1,281 active LTA land trusts across the nation who, with the help of other inactive land trusts, have helped protect over 61 million acres within the United States.

The application involved an extensive review process with the LTAC, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, where our staff submitted a pre-application in February 2023, and a final application in June 2023. Both applications had to demonstrate our fiscal accountability, strong organizational leadership, sound transactions and lasting stewardship of the lands that we conserve. As per the LTA, “accreditation is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence”.

The final step in our application will involve a final interview with the LTAC, set for the end of this August, 2023. We will then have to wait until early 2024, to know whether we’ve been awarded full accreditation status. So, stay tuned!

MOVING AHEAD WITH A

NEW FISCAL YEAR

By Whitney Gleason

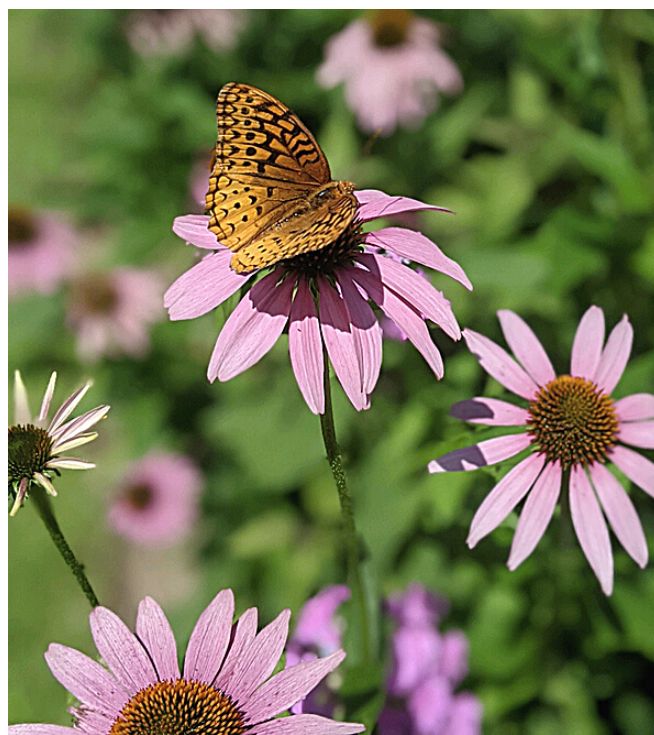
I'm excited to share that after careful consideration we have decided to transition from our current fiscal year, which runs from October 1st to September 31st, to a calendar year.

This decision has been made with the intention of aligning our financial reporting and grant reporting with the standard calendar year. We hope that this transition will streamline our financial processes, simplify reporting, and enhance transparency for our donors, board of directors, and staff. Further, this change will enable us to more effectively align our budgeting, planning and reporting activities.

We will be doing a short three month budget from this coming October 1st, 2023 to December 31st, 2023. Our first calendar year fiscal cycle will take effect January 1st, 2024.

I understand that large financial changes like this may raise questions, and we are committed to addressing any concerns you may have. So please, if you have any follow-up questions do not hesitate to reach out to our team at info@chautauquawatershed.org.

Thank you for your continued dedication to our organization's mission and vision!



Assets

CURRENT ASSETS	<u>2022</u>
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 622,508
Barter trade dollars	10,339
Grants and contracts for services receivable	34,806
Prepaid expenses	<u>2,096</u>
Total current assets	<u>669,749</u>
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, net of accumulated depreciation	<u>2,634,355</u>
OTHER ASSETS	
Land acquisition costs	20,699
Beneficial interest in assets held by others	83,223
Investments, at fair value	<u>205,757</u>
Total other assets	<u>309,679</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$ 3,613,783</u>

Liabilities and Net Assets

CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Accounts payable	\$ 1,646
Accrued expenses	17,234
Refundable grants	21,608
Current portion - loan payable	<u>2,497</u>
Total current liabilities	<u>42,985</u>
LONG-TERM DEBT, net of current portion	<u>94,145</u>
Total liabilities	<u>137,130</u>
NET ASSETS	
Without donor restrictions	3,114,823
With donor restrictions - purpose restricted	<u>361,830</u>
Total net assets	<u>3,476,653</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>\$ 3,613,785</u>

Statement of Activities

	2022		
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
REVENUES AND OTHER SUPPORT:			
Grants and contracts for services	\$ 228,643	\$ 78,920	\$ 307,563
Contributions - cash and securities	559,451	278,285	837,736
Contributions - bequests	5,000	-	5,000
Contributions - donated land	18,600	-	18,600
In-kind contributions	9,827	-	9,827
Special events	54,410	-	54,410
Annual dinner	3,500	-	3,500
Investment return	(44,242)	-	(44,242)
Interest income - bank	222	-	222
Other income	68	-	68
Net assets released from restrictions	41,762	(41,762)	-
Total revenues and other support	877,241	315,443	1,192,684
EXPENSES			
Program services	621,619	-	621,619
Administrative	173,213	-	173,213
Fundraising	141,387	-	141,387
Total expenses	936,219	-	936,219
Change in net assets from operations	(58,978)	315,443	256,465
OTHER CHANGES IN NET ASSETS:			
Change in beneficial interest in assets held by others	(15,341)	-	(15,341)
Gain in extinguishment of PPP loan	48,119	-	48,119
Total other changes	32,778	-	32,778
Change in net assets	(26,200)	315,443	289,243
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR, as restated	3,141,023	46,387	3,187,410
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	\$ 3,114,823	\$ 361,830	\$ 3,476,653

Six New Nature Preserves

The Pry Wetlands
24.3 acres



Kyle's Landing
22 acres

Southern Tier Brewing Company Preserve

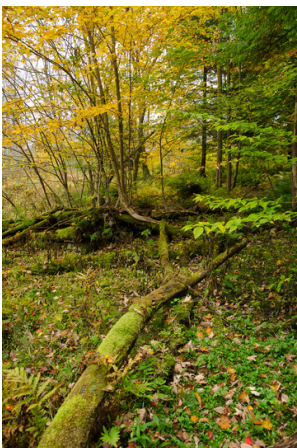
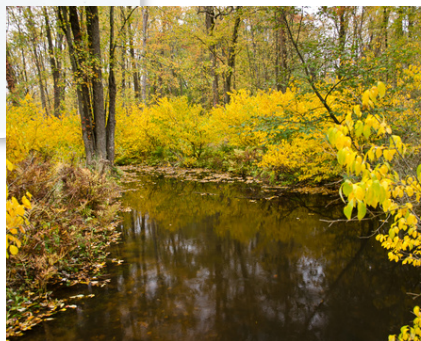
30.5 acres



Abram Nature Preserve

33.93 acres

Bear Lake Wetland Preserve
14.5 acres



McCray Peckinpaugh Nature Preserve

14.7 acres



Board of Directors

Rebecca L. Nystrom, Chair
Jeanne E. Wiebenga, Vice Chair
William R. Locke, Treasurer
Cheryl E. Mawhinney, Secretary
Kaitlyn L. Bentley
Jan L. Bowman
Dennis H. Collins
Michael E. Jabot
Deborah E. Moore
Lisa M. Schmidtfrerick-Miller
Mary Beth Southwick
Robyn R. Steele
Greg G. Swan
Deborah C. Trefts
William J. Ward
Ruth T. Wahl

Directors Emeriti:
Michael K. Lyons
Arthur D. Webster



Staff

Whitney Gleason, Executive Director
Tracy Carlson, Outreach Assistant
Jill Eklund, Director of Communications
Caitlin Gustafson, Business Manager
John Jablonski III, Special Projects Coordinator
Twan Leenders, Director of Conservation
Carol Markham, Conservationist
John McCarthy, Preserve Handyman
Bethany O'Hagan, Land Specialist



CHAUTAUQUA
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY

PO Box 45 • 71 E. Fairmount Avenue • Lakewood, NY 14712

www.chautauquawatershed.org