



THE 'SHED SHEET

Spring 2025

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHAUTAUQUA WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

Partnering for Wetland Conservation

(by Daniel Conklin)

We're excited to announce that we are in the process of acquiring a parcel of land from Ducks Unlimited, a nonprofit organization dedicated to wetland conservation, as part of their In-Lieu Fee Wetland Program, which works to mitigate the impacts of development on wetland ecosystems.

With this program, developers who are unable to avoid wetland damage can offset their environmental impact by contributing to wetland restoration, enhancement, or preservation efforts in other areas through the purchasing of credits. The property we are acquiring is being restored to provide vital habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife species, helping to ensure the health of local ecosystems and maintaining the region's biodiversity. Once completed, the site will provide vital habitat for endangered and threatened species, such as the northern long-eared bat and Indiana bat, while also supporting species of greatest conservation need, including the wood thrush and American kestrel, along with many other wildlife species.



A drone photo showing recently constructed wetlands created by Ducks Unlimited on the site.

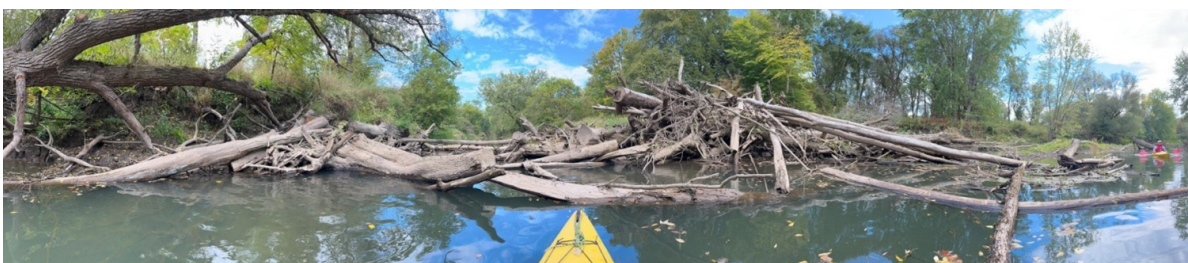
The parcel, located in the Town of Stockton, NY, spans nearly 80 acres and was primarily used for agricultural purposes before its acquisition by Ducks Unlimited in 2016. The site includes a variety of wetland communities that have been bolstered by the organization's recent work. Various mitigation activities were completed in 2024, which included major grading and contouring work. As part of the construction, wetlands were created using berms to maintain hydrology on the site. (continued page 7)

Are You Ready to Paddle?

Our waterway restoration and activation project is nearing completion!

(by Twan Leenders)

With summer just around the corner, now is the perfect time to start planning your water adventures! We are thrilled to invite you to explore Chautauqua County's Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail – a breathtaking, flat-water canoe and kayak route spanning over 50 miles of Cassadaga and Conewango Creeks. Due to a lack of maintenance and the devastating ash die-off caused by the Emerald Ash Borer, these waterways had become increasingly difficult – and sometimes even dangerous – for paddlers in recent years. Recognizing these challenges, the Conservancy has partnered with county officials and expert tree crews to clear obstructions, making the creeks safer for recreation while also enhancing their ecological health and resilience. (continued page 7)





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Scan here
to visit our
website!



716-664-2166

info@chautauquawatershed.org

www.chautauquawatershed.org



Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and
nationally accredited land trust working to
preserve and enhance the quality, scenic beauty,
and ecological health of the lands and waters of
the Chautauqua region for our community.

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As the days grow longer and spring fills the air, I am energized by the sense of hope this season always brings. It's especially important right now as we face uncertainty across our country. In these times, the most profound action we can take is to come together and refocus on the importance of community and ways to make a difference.

Here at the Conservancy, we're embracing that spirit of collaboration and forging ahead with inspiring initiatives that will have a positive impact on our community for generations to come. We are actively pursuing exciting new land acquisitions that will provide protection for our precious open spaces. As the protection of our National Forests and park systems is being questioned and threatened, I'm proud of this real and tangible way that we can help. Each piece of land we protect contributes to our collective well-being – improving water quality, offering habitat for wildlife, and providing a place for our families to connect with nature.

You may also have heard that we're closing in on the final stretch of restoration along the Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail. Over the past three years, our team has worked to clear over 35 miles of river. This summer, we'll be working to clear the remaining 17 miles and doing a final "sweep" of the entire system, resulting in a safe, usable blueway.

Another new development we're excited about is our beloved LakeScapes program – reintroduced with a fresh name, Yard Smarts! This program will continue to empower homeowners and community members to create healthier habitats right in their own yards, while cutting back on harmful chemicals and conserving water. By turning our immediate surroundings into more ecologically friendly spaces, we collectively contribute to the resilience and beauty of our region.

In these challenging times, let's remind ourselves that community is our stronghold – our chance to lean on one another and forge ahead with determination and care. We each have a sphere of influence, no matter how big or small, where our efforts can spark hope, foster cooperation, and inspire positive change. I encourage you to join us this spring and volunteer, participate in Yard Smarts, donate, or simply spread the word about the work we're doing together.

Thank you for standing with us. Your commitment and dedication inspires us. This spring, let's move forward with a renewed sense of purpose. United, we can truly make a difference.

With gratitude and warm regards,



Executive Director
Whitney Gleason

Get Yard Smart!

(by Carol Markham)

Want to make your yard a safe haven for birds, pollinators, and local wildlife while also protecting water quality? Here's how!

Contact our conservationist to learn about our FREE Yard Smarts consultations! Yard Smarts (formerly LakeScapes) will help you create a healthier, more eco-friendly space by recommending native plants, managing invasive species, and reducing runoff to protect Chautauqua County's water quality. No matter where you live or what size property you have, it's an easy way to make a positive impact on your environment and beautify your yard . . . all at the same time!



✉ Email: carol@chautauquawatershed.org

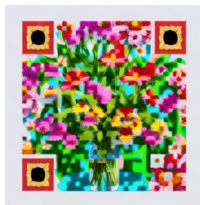
☎ Call: 716-664-2166 Ext. 2005

🌸 Get **Yard Smart** today and transform your yard into a thriving, sustainable sanctuary!



Love spending time by the water and want to protect it? Your yard can help! Yards can do a lot more than just look good – they can help keep water clean, support pollinators and wildlife, and make your space healthier and more beautiful! Scan the QR codes below to check out our two “Our Lakeshore Connection” videos, which include fun and easy ways to turn your yard into an eco-friendly sanctuary.

Be Yard Smart! Make a positive impact – right from your own backyard.



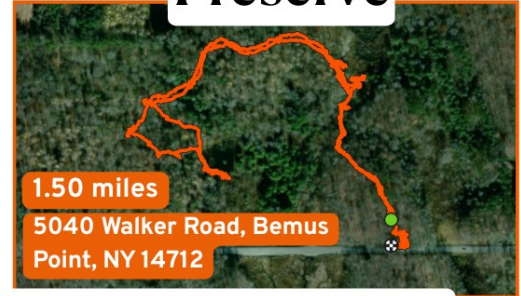
Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy Trails



Chautauqua Creek Oxbow Forest Preserve



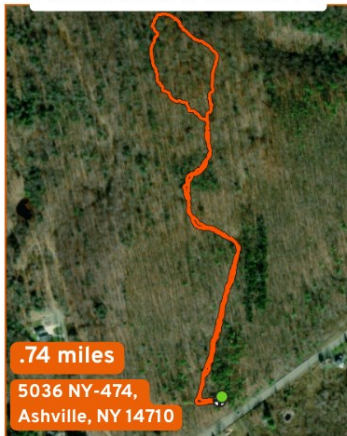
Browns Creek Preserve



Dobbins Woods



David & Margaret Naetzker Preserve



Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park



Chautauqua Lake Outlet Greenway



Bentley Preserve



Salomon Family Nature Preserve



Preserve Visitor Guidelines: Protecting Nature Together

(by Bethany O'Hagan)

Discovering all the nature preserves that Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy has to offer around Chautauqua County can be a rewarding and peaceful experience. As you explore them, we kindly ask that you respect the environment and follow the rules in place to help protect these special places for everyone to enjoy. We are hard at work developing signage for each preserve to help nature lovers understand what is expected of them to responsibly enjoy our properties. Until we get all our new signage up, here are some dos and don'ts to keep in mind:

DO:

- 🐾 Stay on designated trails – This helps protect delicate ecosystems and avoids trampling native plants or disturbing wildlife habitats.
- 🐾 Leave no trace – Pack out everything you bring in, including trash, food wrappers, and personal belongings. Take extra care not to leave food scraps or garbage.
- 🐾 Observe wildlife from a distance – Use binoculars or zoom lenses to enjoy animals without approaching or feeding them.
- 🐾 Carry a map or GPS – Even in familiar areas, it's important to stay oriented and know your way back.
- 🐾 Keep dogs on a leash – We love dogs at our preserves, but you must always keep them leashed, even if your dog is well behaved and voice trained. This will help keep them, other dogs, people, and wildlife safe. This is also New York State law.
- 🐾 Carry water and essentials – Stay hydrated and prepared for changing weather conditions or longer hikes.
- 🐾 Enjoy the birds and other sights and sounds – Getting outside is so beneficial to one's health. Please get outside and responsibly enjoy all there is to offer.
- 🐾 Report any issues – If you see an issue or concern about the condition of one of our trails, let us know. Use the form on our website or the QR code below to make a report.

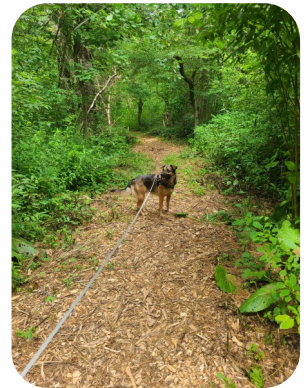
See a trail issue?
Scan here
to report it.



DON'T:

- 🐾 Don't remove anything from the preserve – Leave rocks, plants, and any natural objects as you found them to help preserve the ecosystem.
- 🐾 Don't feed or touch wildlife – Human interaction can harm animals or make them reliant on unnatural food sources.
- 🐾 No littering – Garbage left behind can be ingested by wildlife and can make it into our waterways. Please carry out everything you carry in.
- 🐾 No smoking and no fires – Fire can endanger the preserve and its inhabitants. Cigarette butts take years to break down and decompose and can kill wildlife if they ingest them.
- 🐾 No motorized vehicles – No dirt bikes, electric bikes, ATVs, or snowmobiles are allowed in our preserves.
- 🐾 No hunting of any kind without permission – It disrupts the natural serenity and wildlife behaviors. (For more information and to obtain permission to hunt, please contact our land specialist at Bethany@chautauquawatershed.org.)

Chautauqua County has a lot to offer. There is an open opportunity to unwind waiting for you, so go out and appreciate the beauty of the world while ensuring that future visitors and wildlife can do the same. Enjoy your time in nature, and we'll see you on the trails!



In Memoriam: Dennis Collins (1950 – 2025)

(by Nancy Wickmark & John Jablonski III)

In January of this year, we lost a former board director and dear friend to an incurable disease that he stoically battled for many years. Dennis Collins was a person you could always count on to step up and pitch in with his gentle ways and loving spirit.



He was a lifelong history teacher and a strong advocate for healthy lakes and the protection of sensitive and valuable wetlands around the Cassadaga Lakes and other important habitats across the region. He served as president of the Cassadaga Lakes Association from 2011-2019 and as a board director for the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy from 2019-2024.

Dennis filled his life with the joy of conversation, education, and nature and – although he can no longer be with us as we walk the woods, paddle the lakes, or cheer with the crowd – he will always be with us in spirit. Thank you, Dennis, for your generous giving of yourself to make the world a little better for all the rest of us.

He will be sadly missed and always remembered.

The Conservancy is planning to install a memorial bench at the Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park later this year in honor of Dennis. The bench will serve as a lasting tribute to his memory and his connection to the natural beauty of the area that he loved so much.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

chautauquawatershed.org/volunteer



PRESERVE STEWARD OR TRAIL ADOPTER

Steward the land on one of our preserves, or help maintain their trails.



INVASIVE SPECIES REMOVAL

Remove invasive plant species on our preserves.



HANDY-PERSON & CARPENTRY

Build, fix, & maintain enhancements on our preserves, help with projects & things around our office.



PLANTING & GARDEN MAINTENANCE

Plant & maintain our community gardens and @ our office.



OFFICE HELP

Help with mailings, small projects, graphic design, & tasks around the office.



EVENT HELP & TABLING

Help us at our events, or information tables.



**SIGN
UP
TODAY!**



“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make”
- Jane Goodall

Ducks Unlimited Site Acquisition (continued)

Two rounds of seeding were performed following construction. The low berms received a standard erosion-control seed mix, while all other exposed areas were broadcast with a wetland seed mix. In addition to these efforts, shrubs and trees were planted in portions of the wetland to enhance habitat diversity. The current habitat types on the site include Palustrine Emergent Marsh (PEM) wetland, Palustrine Scrub Shrub (PSS) wetland, Palustrine Forested (PFO) wetland, and forested uplands.

As part of the In-Lieu Fee Wetland Program, the site will need to meet the performance requirements set by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which include specific ecological and hydrological benchmarks. These standards ensure that the site achieves the intended conservation outcomes, such as establishing functional wetland habitats. Ongoing management and monitoring will be required to maintain these ecological functions, including invasive species control, hydrology monitoring, and periodic site assessments. While the Conservancy is currently in the process of accepting the donation, Ducks Unlimited will continue working toward their required metrics until the project has been deemed complete. We will then assume responsibility of the site and ensure it's protected in perpetuity. We are thrilled to collaborate with Ducks Unlimited on these important conservation efforts, contributing to the restoration and long-term protection of wetlands to ensure their vitality for future generations.

Below: A view of the site in the fall of 2024 showing the hundreds of trees Ducks Unlimited planted on site.



Waterways Restoration Project (continued)

Since launching our “Waterways Restoration and Activation” project in 2022, we’ve made incredible progress toward our goal of fully restoring the Marden Cobb Waterway Trail. By the end of 2024, nearly 40 miles of these waterways had been cleared, including the upper and lower sections of Conewango Creek and the upper 20 miles of Cassadaga Creek. In addition, most of the Chadakoin River is now also free from obstacles. On the Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail alone, we’ve removed over 249 hazards – ranging from single fallen trees to massive logjams made up of dozens of tangled logs and other debris.

Whenever possible, logs are relocated to safer areas onshore to prevent them from washing back into the water during floods. In other cases, they are strategically repositioned along the banks to help reduce erosion while also creating valuable habitat for fish, turtles, and other wildlife.

As we kick off this paddling season, we’re preparing to tackle the remaining 145 identified hazards, including four major logjams, that are located primarily within the central 17-mile section of the Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail. While we await funding and necessary permits, we’ll also be re-surveying previously cleared sections as soon as water levels drop from their winter highs.

If you’ve never experienced these stunning waterways from a canoe or kayak, this is the year to do it! Keep an eye on our events calendar – we’ll be offering several guided excursions with our staff on these waterways, as well as on Chautauqua Lake. We hope you’ll join us for an unforgettable adventure on the water!



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 24th	Birding Walk, Cassadaga Creek Wetland Preserve
Thursday, May 29th	Wine on the Trail Walk
Tuesday, June 10th	Invasive Species Workshop, Ball Creek Preserve
Saturday, June 21st	CHQ Trails Day Get out and enjoy Chautauqua County's land and waterway trails!
Monday, June 23rd	Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament, sponsored by Snug Harbor Marine
June	Wine on the Trail Walk
July	Wine on the Trail Walk
Saturday, August 16th	5 th Annual Native Plant Sale, Hosted by Chautauqua Marina

Stay tuned for more info on these and other events throughout the summer!

chautauquawatershed.org/events



The 'Shed Sheet newsletter is compiled and edited by Jill Eklund, Senior Executive Coordinator.