



VOL. 20 NO. 2 FALL 2020

The Thousand Islands Land Trust

Reflections

PO Box 238 . 135 John Street . Clayton, New York 13624 (315) 686-5345 . www.tilandtrust.org

TILT Earns National Recognition



Zenda Farms Preserve



One thing that unites us as a nation is land: Americans strongly support saving the open spaces they love. Since 1985, TILT has been working to conserve the natural beauty, diverse wildlife habitat, water quality, and outdoor recreation opportunities of the Thousand Islands region, for present and future generations. Today, TILT is excited to announce that it has renewed its Land Trust Accreditation – proving once again that, as part of a network of over 400 accredited land trusts across the nation, it is committed to professional excellence and to maintaining the

public's trust.

“Accreditation indicates that TILT conducts its business with the highest standards possible and assures our donors, supporters, and neighbors that the land trust is committed to its long-term responsibilities and permanence of our land conservation work,” said Greg McLean, Board President.

Through this renewal process, TILT provided extensive documentation and was subject to a comprehensive third-party evaluation prior to achieving this distinction. The Land Trust Ac-

creditation Commission awarded renewed accreditation, signifying its confidence that TILT's lands will be protected forever. The Land Trust Accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts a review of each applicant's policies and programs. For TILT, being an accredited land

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trust represents many years of hard work and an ongoing commitment to conserving the natural places we all love within the Thousand Islands and greater St. Lawrence River Valley.

“This is yet another example of how TILT has become a leader in conservation and a proven example of non-profit excellence. Highlighted through the review process was the Commission’s recognition of TILT’s Strategic Conservation Plan. When developed, TILT’s Strategic Conservation Plan was and continues to be seen as one of the most cutting-edge blueprints for land conservation in the country,” explained Jake Tibbles, Executive Director.

Since its founding, TILT has helped safeguard the regional landscape of the Thousand Islands by accepting conservation easements, acquiring property and by establishing accessible areas available for public enjoyment. Currently, TILT protects over 11,000 acres of land, both fee-owned land and conservation ease-

ments, including important wetland, grassland and woodland habitat. This includes 10 Signature Preserves and over 20 miles of multi-use trails that are open to the public, year-round. During the year, TILT hosts annual TILTreks, KidsTreks and TILTKids Day Camp programs, which promote living, learning and conserving in the Thousand Islands.

TILT was initially awarded National Accreditation by the Land Trust Alliance Accreditation Commission in 2009, and was among the second class of land trusts to receive this distinction. TILT was awarded their first renewal of accreditation in 2014, and this marks TILT’s second renewal.

“It is exciting to recognize TILT’s continued commitment to national standards by renewing this national mark of distinction,” said Melissa Kalvestrand, Executive Director of the Commission. “Donors and partners can trust that the more than 400 accredited land trusts across the country are united behind strong

standards and have demonstrated sound finances, ethical conduct, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.”

TILT is one of 1,363 land trusts across the United States according to the Land Trust Alliance’s most recent National Land Trust Census. A complete list of accredited land trusts and more information about the process and benefits can be found at www.landtrustaccreditation.org.



Grindstone Island aerial by Alex MacLean. TILT conserves over half of the island through conservation easements and fee-owned land.

Learn more about TILT’s work to conserve the Thousand Islands region at www.tilandtrust.org

Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail Community Connection Project

In partnership with the Village of Clayton, Town of Clayton and the Northern New York Community Foundation (NNYCF), the Thousand Islands Land Trust is working to complete the connection of the Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail to the Riverwalk in downtown Clayton. “Thank you to TILT for your dedication and commitment to connect our past Trails and Rails to our Riverwalk providing access from the heart of the village, for a wonderful outdoors experience.”- Norma Zimmer; Village of Clayton Mayor.

Together, we can meet ambitious goals to restore a piece of our region’s heritage, the historic railroad trestle bridge. “The Community Foundation is excited to be working with TILT to ensure the future for the Rivergate Trail and to help improve the region that we all care so much about,” explained Max DelSignore, NNYCF Assistant Director. The Foudation recently made a \$100,000 matching commitment to TILT to establish an endowment and ensure the forever stewardship of the trail and trestle.

Together we can:

Connect this trail with the popular Riverwalk in the Village of Clayton, creating a corridor for hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, alongside our region’s most precious wetlands, creeks, grasslands and forests.

Restore and enhance a local asset, contribute to our vibrant quality of the life, protect our natural resources and provide recreation opportunities that support the vitality of our local economy.

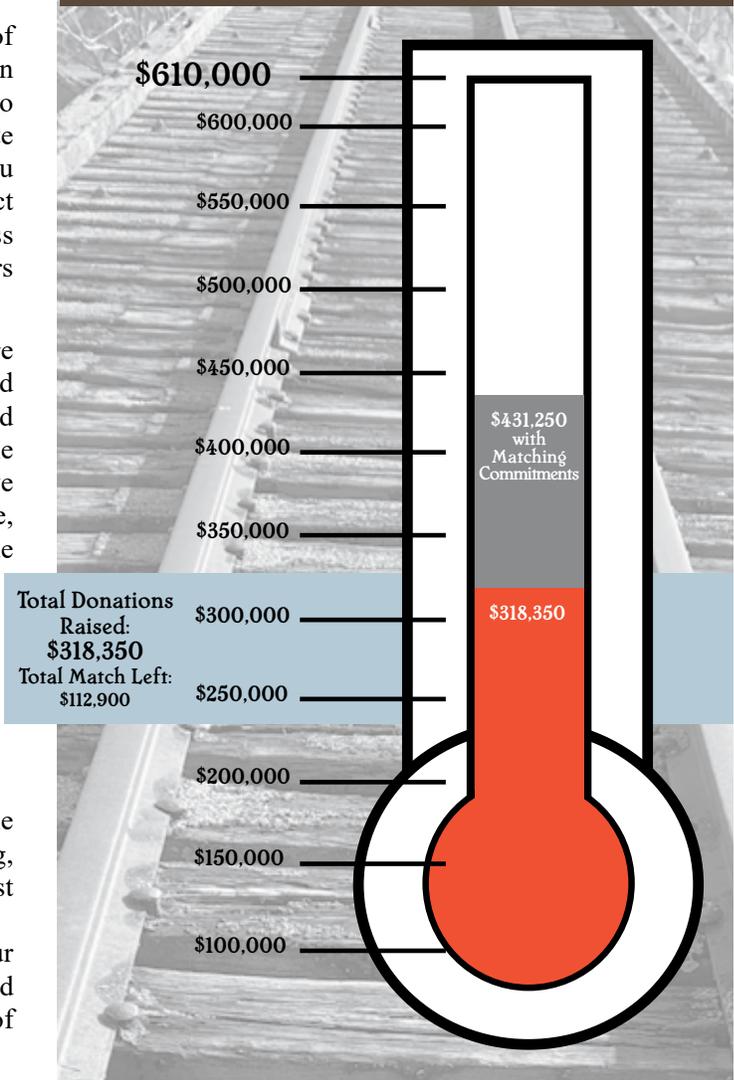
Sustain nature and a piece of history by building an endowment and advancing the stewardship work required to maintain the unique piece of our region.



To find out how you can contribute, please contact TILT at 315-686-5345.

Thank you for supporting this Community-wide Project!

GOAL: \$610,000



“Many communities lack up-to-date lodging and walk-able downtowns. Clayton has a new \$24 million hotel and a vibrant, walk-able downtown: It is the County’s art, events and recreation center. This new trail will link Clayton’s downtown into the rural countryside.” - Mike Geiss

“Completion of this trail was a lifelong dream of Mike’s who passed away in May, 2019, especially as its use for bicycles and wheelchairs. Your support would fulfill his legacy.” - Sandy Geiss

Tributes

March 21 - September 24, 2020

In memory of Renee Adwar

Elissa Sampson

In memory of Barbara Babowicz

Rodney Babowicz

In memory of

*Camilla Bentzen Baum,
Charles & Helena Bentzen*

Chuck Baum

In memory of Doug Banister

Phillip & Marion Johnson

In memory of Dr. Louis Benton

Richard & Elizabeth Wright

In memory of Bruce Brooks

Pamela Barton

Tom & Robyn Davison

Janice & Dan McPhail

Jake Tibbles

In memory of Don Brown

Janice Brown

In memory of Dot Carnegie

John Carnegie

In memory of MacDonald Clark

Ted & Kathy Drum

In memory of Donald Combs

Craig & Patty Esford

In memory of Dorothy Cosselman

Robert & Tori Cosselman

In memory of Sissy & Bill Danforth

John & Candace Marsellus

Dave & Caroline Munro

In memory of Ken Deedy

Barbara Deedy

Steve & Vici Diehl

Veronica & James Dolan

Pat Rich

Joe & Millie Savarese

Ken Deedy

Environmental Internship

John & Kim Farrell

In memory of

Dr. Anne K. Del Borgo

Nancy Del Borgo

In memory of Rex Ennis

Janet Lamb-Ennis

Jake Tibbles

In memory of

Joseph & Patricia Ficano

Jeff Ficano

In honor of Mary & Patrick Fowles

Margot Rendall & George Gardner

Peter Rendall & Pamela Adelman

Francie Minder

In memory of Dick Fulton

Michael Fulton

Remembering Bruce & Elaine Brooks



Bruce and Elaine Brooks are pictured with their daughter - and TILT Trustee - Janice McPhail. photo © Steve Sturtz

It is with great sadness that we share word that Bruce and Elaine Brooks passed away earlier this year. For those who did not have the opportunity to get to know Bruce and Elaine, they were genuine people and true River Rats. And their love for Grindstone Island was contagious.

When you think of the Brooks family, you can only think of the deep roots that tie Grindstone Island together. The Dano, Cummings and Rusho roots intertwine with the Brooks roots to add to the bedrock that is the Island community. Bruce's father, Irving Brooks, married Jessie Dano, grounding their 1000 Islands life by honeymooning on Grenell Island in 1904. Bruce was a River Rat from the start, living first in Jessie's family house on Grindstone and later in "Daybrook," the house he built with his father and brother. He laid the stone himself for the fireplace that now graces Janice & Dan McPhail's living room in the Brooks family home.

The Brooks were an integral part of the Grindstone Community. They were regular church goers, and Bruce served on the GIUMC Church Council while Elaine hosted early Men's and Women's Coffee in the cottage they built next to Daybrook. Bruce and Elaine set a high standard for Men's and Women's Coffee but the dinners were where they excelled.

Not only were Bruce and Elaine dedicated and passionate members of the Grindstone Island community, they were long standing supporters of TILT's land conservation efforts. In 2010, they donated a critical piece of Grindstone Island waterfront to TILT. This property is now the site of TILT's Grindstone Island Stewardship Facility. It also houses TIERS emergency equipment for the benefit of all who live, work and play on the Island. The "Bruce and Elaine Brooks Building" is a lasting tribute to their love of Grindstone, its land and the families who are lucky enough to share its bounty.

While the Brooks Family and Grindstone community have lost great friends, Bruce & Elaine's kindness and generosity are sure to live on.

135 John Street Reborn

The TILT Board and Staff are incredibly excited to share with you our newly renovated building at 135 John Street. Located at the intersection of the Village Docks, Veterans Memorial and Clayton Riverwalk, TILT looks forward to welcoming visits from year-round residents, summer residents and tourists alike.

In addition to being the proposed location of TILT's Discovery Center – "The Gateway to the Outdoors," the first floor has a new conference room which will be available to our many community partners: fellow non-profits, community clubs and organizations. We look forward to again hosting our local Rotary Club and Lions Club.

The newly renovated space also provides TILT with a formal reception area, storefront, and redesigned upstairs office space. And with solar panels being installed on the roof, much consideration was given to ensuring the efficiency and long term sustainability of the building.

Our heartfelt appreciation is extended to Carol and Dick Munro and the Munro Family for making this much needed renovation possible. You are true champions of TILT and the entire River community.



Special recognition goes to Jonathan and Kristen Taylor, Taylored Architecture, and Ben and Jada Walldroff, Jade Stone Engineering. Taylored Architecture and Jade Stone Engineering provided significant in-kind professional services that supported the renovation.

And a sincerest thanks goes to TILT's Building Committee – Art Mack, Robin Hoffman, Ben Walldroff, and John Cardamone. Thank you for your care and guidance.

TILT plans to host an open house in the summer of 2021. Please feel free to stop in and see us soon!



Tributes - cont.

In memory of Michael Geiss
Sandy Geiss
Doug & Dianne Rogers
Jake Tibbles

In memory of Hunter Grimes
Martha Grimes

In memory of Kay Heineman
Harriet Heineman

In memory of Peter Hendley
Linda Hendley & Family

In memory of Zell & Jim Kerr
Meg Kerr & Bob Vanderslice

In memory of Gary King
Mark Boss

In honor of Eric & Judy Mower
Maxine Quigg

In memory of John Murray
Jean Murray

In memory of Robert J. Nemeč
Paul & Elaine Nemeč

In memory of Joan Perconti
Michael Cooke

*In memory of Jim Rendall,
Chava Minder, Bob Minder*
Francie Rendall Minder

In memory of Walter & Louise Rice
Florence Lewis Rice & Leroy Lewis

*In memory of
Dr. & Mrs. Eugene Robinson*
Marcy & Chris Dembs

*In memory of Nanette "Tuni"
Rodormer*
Rob Rodormer

*In memory of
Madolyn & Leonard Root*
Philip & Roxanne Pratt

In memory of Riggs Smith
Nan Smith

In memory of Stephen Storie
Wayne & Lana Storie

In memory of Martha Tack
Elaine Tack

In memory of Anne R. Talcott
Ben & Rebecca Wright

In honor of my friends at TILT!
Susie Wood & David Duff

In memory of Joanne Truman
Josh & Rebecca Truman

In memory of J. Wyatt Uhlein
John & Catherine Uhlein
Jake Tibbles

In memory of Aaron Vogel
Charlann Tranella

In honor of Richard Withington
Nancy Del Borgo

In honor of Susie Wood
Sandy Wood Forand & Bernie Forand

Secretive Wetland Birds

by Gerry Smith, Consulting Ornithologist

There is a group of local waterbirds that even many dedicated river rats are not familiar with. They are secretive denizens of emergent wetlands along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. While some wetland birds, such as Black Tern and Great Blue Heron, are obvious to observers, others are not. These more secretive species include some herons, rails, shorebirds and waterfowl as well as wetland songbirds. Most often they are only detected by sounds uttered or when flushing and flying reluctantly for short distances before dropping back into the marsh. These interesting but little known birds are a challenge for people to become familiar with.

As the large wetlands of our region become ice free in spring, early breeders return. The earliest arrivals tend to be hardy waterfowl

species such as Wood Duck and Hooded Merganser. The habits of spring waterfowl, particularly courtship antics, make them far more obvious to us than other birds arriving close behind. Evidence suggests that rails such as the Virginia Rail and Common Gallinule arrive by mid April. They are often silent for another 2-4 weeks making them difficult to detect. Rails remain a bit of an enigma even to experienced observers.

Our one local breeding grebe species, the Pied-billed, often returns by late March but may remain quiet for a while. Once they commence the loud territorial mating call proclaiming ownership of their piece of marsh, they are hard to miss. Often mistaken for a small duck when seen, their ringing COW COW COW call is unique. This species has declined sharply in

the last half century. A major factor has been the previous water level management regime that affected the ratio of cattail/sedge meadow to open water. Hopefully the new regime of Plan 2014 will greatly improve this situation.

Our most frequent wetland shorebird is the Wilson's Snipe. This species may use even small pothole type wetlands. Usually detected by the winnowing sound made by its wing feathers during courtship displays, the male may be seen circling high above its breeding territory. This performance to attract a mate is spectacular and well worth spending a few minutes watching. It is most often performed between early April and mid-June during the height of the breeding season.

Three regular species of the enigmatic rail clan occur in our



Pied-billed Grebe

wetlands from April to October. These are the Virginia Rail, Sora and Common Gallinule. A fourth species, the King Rail, occasionally wanders this far north. These denizens of deep wet vegetation are rarely seen but often heard. All have distinctive territorial songs and calls that announce their presence from May to July. Once ceasing to call, they disappear into their watery realm until the following spring. Even during migration, most reports by birders are a result of rails colliding with structures or other causes of mortality.

The large Great Blue Heron is one of the most familiar birds to River Rats everywhere. While this species does feed in emergent wetlands it does not nest there. Some of the Great Blue's smaller cousins are among the interesting secretive birds of wetland commu-



Marsh Wren

nities. My favorites are the bitterns, American and Least. The first standing half as tall as a Great Blue and the latter capable of fitting in an oversized coat pocket. Both are masters of camouflage being excellent at hiding in plain sight, often "freezing" with neck and head extended straight up, their cryptic coloration gives them a remarkable resemblance to surrounding marsh vegetation.

As with many marshland species there is nothing cryptic about



Common Gallinule

their vocalizations. While the Least makes a distinctive COO COO COO, similar to a Black-billed Cuckoo, the American's sound, appropriate to its size, will blow you away. Colloquially known as "Thunder Pumper" this species' territorial "song" is extraordinary. By filling its chest cavity with air and releasing it, the male creates a sound that can be heard for great distances. The words "unk ka chuonk" repeated several times is the best representation I can manage. Once heard, this call will never be mistaken for any thing else. It sounds like a stake being pounded into the marsh. Having observed male American Bitterns delivering this performance, my impression is that they look like they are about to explode. Clearly it works for their lady loves and, although declining, the species persists.

While many species of songbirds use large coastal wetlands, few are obligate breeders in such habitat. One of the best examples is the Marsh Wren. This specialist relative of the familiar House Wren arrives on the River in late April. During the breeding season its staccato song reverberates through

the cattails. These jaunty little birds often sing from atop stalks of wetland plants; thus they are easier to see than many marsh dwellers. Also bolder than many birds that inhabit the marshlands, they will often permit fairly close approach by canoe or kayak. Other species of songbirds such as Swamp Sparrow breed in this habitat but they are not restricted to it.

The ecological value of wetlands to a myriad of life forms has been documented for decades. Preserving all existing wetlands large and small while attempting to restore those damaged by previous generations is essential. Once considered waste lands, we have learned that they are essential to the web of life on this planet. To quote from a late governor and senator from Florida, "My granddaddy tried to drain the Everglades. I am trying to restore them." We should seek to do as well for local wetlands drained for agriculture and other purposes.

Bird photos courtesy of Julie K. Covey/ Covey Images. To see more of her nature photography, check out Nature in NNY on Facebook.

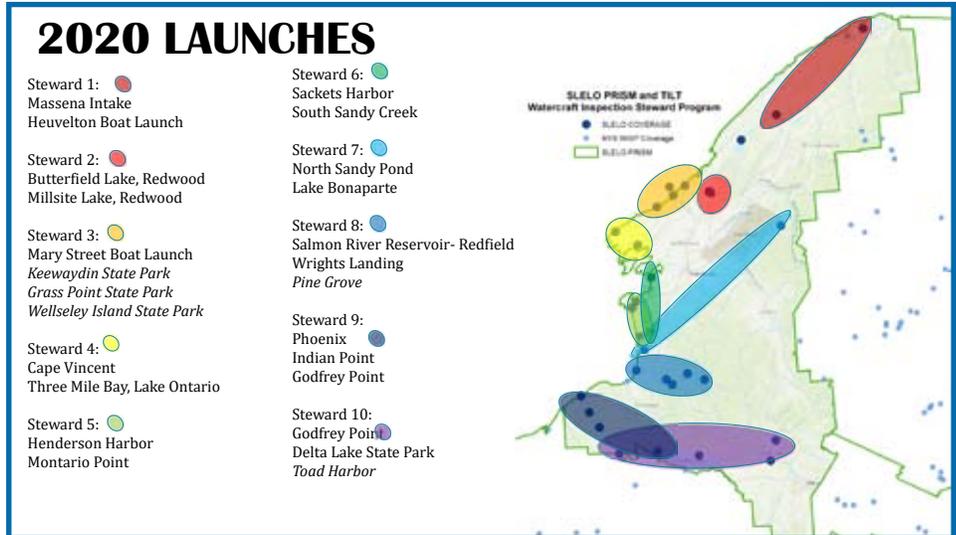
New Boat Launch Steward Season a Success

This summer, TILT partnered with the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) to administer a watercraft inspection stewardship program throughout the region. Ten Stewards were hired and trained to educate the public about how to look for and remove aquatic invasive species from their boating and fishing equipment, and were stationed at a total of 20 boat launches throughout the region.

As part of a larger statewide effort, Boat Launch Stewards are one of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Aquatic Nuisance Species priorities, deemed essential workers by New York State, with funding provided from the Environmental Protection Fund.

This program is designed to educate the public on *Clean, Drain, Dry* protocols in an effort to prevent the spread of invasive species between water bodies, with the end goal being that boaters and fishermen are trained to inspect their vessels and equipment themselves when no stewards are present.

Boat Launch Stewards further TILT's mission of conserving water



quality in the Thousand Islands region. They serve as a front-line defense against aquatic invasive species, like Hydrilla, Eurasian Water Milfoil, and Zebra Mussels. Aquatic invasive species can be transported by vessels between water bodies, dramatically altering the ecological processes in the lake and thereby resulting in poor water quality and reduced biodiversity.

With boaters, the Stewards conduct a voluntary inspection and survey using a standardized protocol, engage in dialogue about invasive species, their impact, and how to take preventative measures to stop their spread, provide educational materials, and collect data

that informs invasive species management throughout the state.

Launches that were covered by TILT-SLELO Stewards in TILT's service area include Mary Street in Clayton, Cape Vincent, Three Mile Bay, Butterfield Lake, Millsite Lake, Grass Point State Park, Keewaydin State Park, and Wellesley Island State Park. Beyond that, we staffed Boat Launch Stewards at launches stretching from Massena to Oneida Lake.

To date, Stewards completed 10,228 surveys. 96% of boaters agreed to an inspection, so nearly 10,000 boaters were taught how to inspect their vessel for aquatic hitchhikers. Most inspections took



Boat Launch Stewards at training session



place when boats or kayaks were launching. Inspections were completed on retrieving vessels when possible (when they returned to the launch).

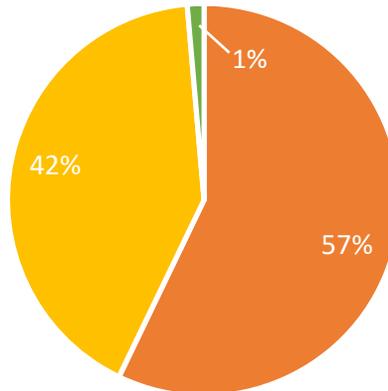
Of boaters that were asked where they last launched, a majority had their boat in either the same waterbody or no waterbody in the past 2 weeks. However, 16% of boaters launched their vessel in a different waterbody, meaning that their risk of spreading invasive species from one waterbody to another was high. This demonstrates the vital role Boat Launch Stewards play in stopping the spread of aquatic invasive species.

TILT's role in this program allowed us to drastically extend our reach beyond the region, sharing our message and ensuring that water quality is maintained in the River. As the St. Lawrence River serves as the outflow for all of the Great Lakes, it is important to prevent the spread of invasive species from all water bodies that flow into it.

While it was important to have Stewards stationed along the River in TILT's service area, it is also vital to have Stewards disseminating information broadly. We are grateful for this partnership with SLELO PRISM and the hard work of all of our Boat Launch Stewards this season, and encourage boaters to remember to *Clean, Drain, Dry* your vessels to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species.

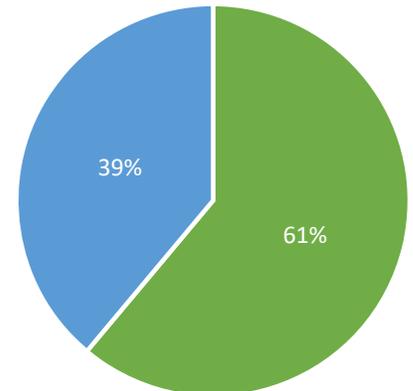
2020 Boat Launch Statistics

Boaters Reached by Vessel Type



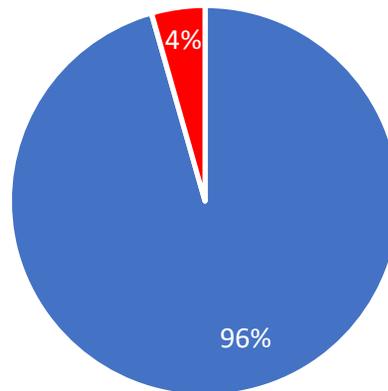
- Recreation
- Fishing
- Other

Point of Inspection



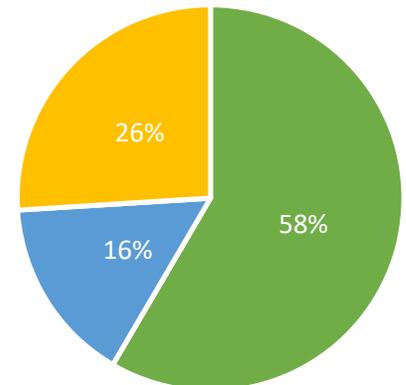
- Launching
- Retrieving

Compliance with Inspection



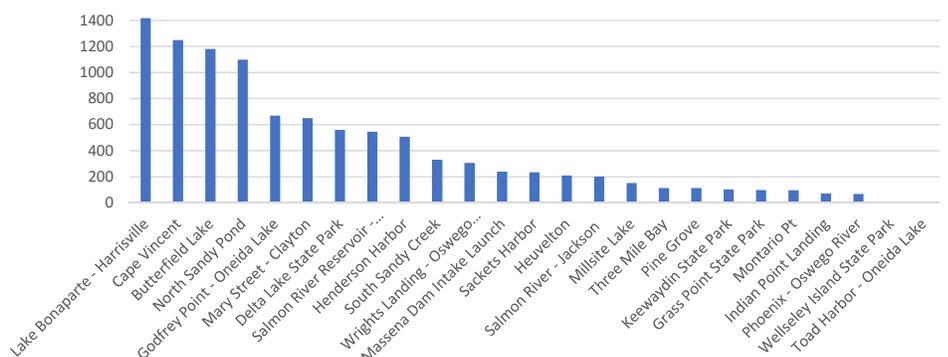
- Agree to Inspection
- Decline Inspection

Has the Boat Been in a Previous Water Body in the Past 2 Weeks?



- Same Waterbody
- Different Waterbody
- No Waterbody

Distribution of Inspections by Location



Protected & Connected: Growing the Crooked Creek Preserve...



Hemlock stand on Wilton property



Wetlands on Wilton property adding to Crooked Creek Preserve

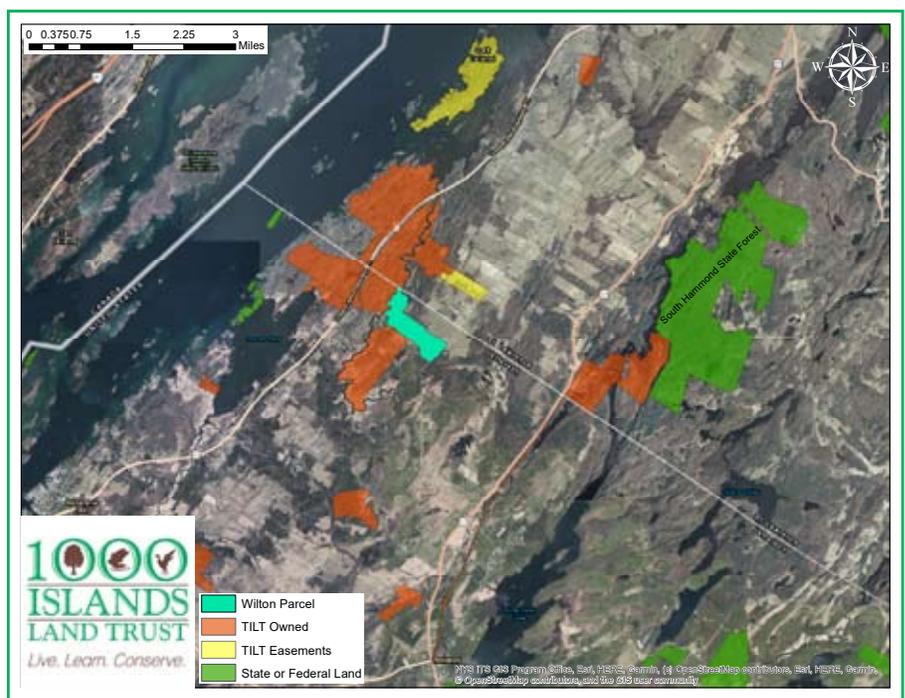
TILT Founder Ken Deedy once said that “when it comes to preserving habitat, the rule of thumb is *bigger is better*.” Ken recognized that large nature preserves and other protected open spaces serve as sanctuaries of biodiversity. He skillfully put this logic to work and facilitated conservation projects on thousands of acres along the upper St. Lawrence River, laying the foundation for many of TILT’s greatest land protection initiatives.

Building upon this concept are the lynchpins of conservation: *connectivity*, and its antithesis, *fragmentation*. Landscapes with a high degree of interconnected habitat networks, pathways and corridors bolster long-term ecological integrity. That is, *bigger, and more connected, is better*. It is TILT’s strategic conservation mission to conserve large swaths of connected habitat to promote biodiversity and prevent habitat fragmentation.

This summer, TILT was able to check both of these boxes by acquiring two parcels that contain 207-acres of pristine forest, wetland, grassland and open-water habitats that link the Crooked Creek Preserve to its Butterfield Marsh

property in the Town of Alexandria. TILT purchased the two parcels with private contributions as well as federal and state grant funding. Known as the Wilton and Runkles acquisitions, TILT’s new land protection projects bring the Crooked Creek Preserve to 2,200 acres of contiguous lands and waters, a feat that Ken most certainly would have relished.

The new properties, which are identified as be-



... and New Protection on Grindstone

ing climate change resilient, were listed for sale on the open market. They have a mile of creek frontage and a mile of road frontage along Routes 1 and 111, and TILT acted quickly to prevent the imminent risk of habitat fragmentation that would result from these parcels being developed. “We were able to be nimble and embrace this once-in-a-lifetime land protection opportunity in the heart of the Adirondack (A2A) wildlife corridor,” said Spencer Busler, Assistant Director. “If you’re a wildlife connoisseur, the Wilton and Runkles properties will not disappoint, from harriers and herons to turkeys and turtles.”

Ken’s conservation legacy was carried on once again this summer on Grindstone Island with the closing of the Ramseier Conservation Easement. The 9-acre conservation easement, which abuts TILT’s Heineman Songbird Forest at the foot of Grindstone, was acquired via bargain-sale from William Ramseier. The easement protects a critical coastal

marsh and its upland buffer, and maintains the natural beauty of the undeveloped shoreline near the Picton Channel. Aside from being a muskellunge nursery site, the marsh has been known to host the New York State threatened Blanding’s turtle as well as the state endangered fish, the pugnose shiner. “Protecting the marsh with a conservation easement was the most impactful way of honoring the legacy of my dear friend and neighbor Ken Deedy,” said William Ramseier, easement grantor. “Ken’s vision and passion for the Thousand Islands were sincerely inspiring. I’m grateful to be able to contribute to that tradition.”

By conserving this parcel, TILT is also protecting the natural resources that fuel the region’s tourism-based economy.

Large isolated preserves are immensely important, as are protected wildlife corridors and critical linkages. But they become far more meaningful when implemented together. After all, what good is a bridge that leads to nowhere?



Coastal marsh protected by the Ramseier easement

Stewardship in the Time of Covid

As we sit and watch the colors slowly change along the River it is hard to forget, even for just a moment, the stresses of everyday life. With the last ten months having created much uncertainty, it is important to stop and embrace the simplicity of nature, reminding ourselves that, like the changing of the leaves, we too, will continue to change, grow and overcome.

An argument could be made that now is our time to re-create our relationship with the natural world. When large social gatherings and long-distance travel come with certain restrictions, we have an opportunity to shift our focus to our own experiences in our own “backyards.”

As it was for all of us, this summer was different for TILT. We were unable to host the variety of different Treks and Events that we typically offer each year. However, through the unwavering support from our local communities along the River, TILT was able to carry out some wonderful stewardship projects on

several of our Signature Preserves.

It was great to see a significant increase in the utilization of TILT’s Preserves and Trails. This summer, members and guests of our River communities had the opportunity to enjoy the newly resurfaced Lois Jean and John MacFarlane Trail at Zenda Farms Preserve. These trail improvements provide safe and enjoyable outdoor recreation as we all look for new



MacFarlane Trail at Zenda Farms Preserve

of accessible hiking, biking, and cross country skiing.

Significant time was spent

on Grindstone Island implementing several preserve enhancement projects. TILT’s Stewardship Staff worked hard to improve access across its island preserves while enhancing several of its properties for the benefit of both native flora and fauna.

We are excited to have

completed these projects and look forward to monitoring their impacts moving forward.

We hope these preserve improvements will encourage outdoor recreation as we work to strengthen the appreciation of time spent outdoors. Most importantly, these projects would not be possible without continued support from our passionate River communities. We would like to thank everyone who supports conservation in the Thousand Islands. We hope that you have a chance to get out on the land and embrace the natural world and this very special place.



Trailhead for the Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail on East Line Road

and fun ways to get outside.

A new gazebo was installed at the Rivergate Trailhead located just outside of Clayton on East Line Road. With this new addition now in place, we invite everyone to check out the progress on the Rivergate Trail as we work towards connecting the downtown Riverwalk to the Clayton countryside. Even more exciting is the future revitalization of the historic trestle which spans McCarn Creek, connecting two historic sections of rail-trail while providing over seven miles



Replacing a bridge on the Macsherry Trail

Retirement is not Farewell

Arthur Ashe once said that “From what we get, we can make a living; what we give, however, makes a life.” When the TILT staff consider all that Susie Wood did during her time here at TILT, we are compelled to believe that she also lives by this tenet.

While it’s been over 10 months since Susie retired as TILT’s Membership Coordinator, her profound impact on both the organization and the people is felt each and every day. Though TILT has lost an irreplaceable member of its team, each one of us has gained an incredible friend and advocate for land conservation.

During Susie’s 15 year tenure at TILT, she played an integral role in the development and implementation of TILT’s membership program and was a critical part of deepening the impact of the organization’s outreach and messaging. Susie worked tirelessly, day in and day out, quietly behind the scenes. Every invitation, every event list, every name tag, every newsletter was carefully crafted and/or scrupulously edited by her watchful eye for detail, spelling and grammar.

The roles that Susie took on at the office exceeded any sort of job description and went far beyond the duties of a mentor. What we learned from her professionally and what she taught us about life is truly immeasurable. Susie had an incredible superpower of seeing each one of us wholly and providing precisely what we needed in any given moment – whether it was a piece of sage advice, a swift kick in the rear or a reminder not to take ourselves too seriously.

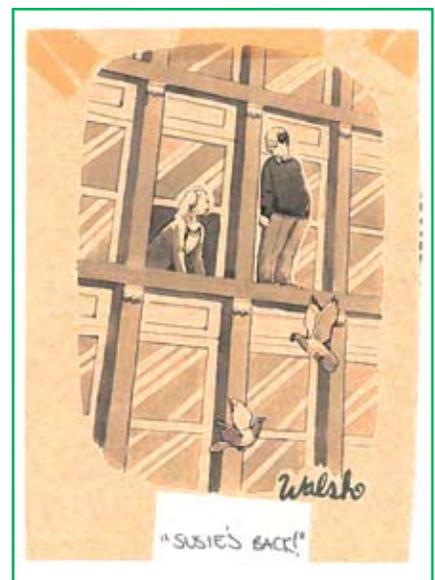
It is bittersweet to reflect back on all that we accomplished. Together, we forged a new path forward for TILT. We are truly fortunate to have had the opportunity to work alongside Susie. And even more so, we are blessed to be able to call Susie our friend. For that, we are forever grateful.

Susie not only made a difference through her work at TILT, but in the heart of the people she interacted with. She brought an authentic sense of comfort and stability to the organization, making it feel like a true family.

On behalf of the TILT Board, members and volunteers we extend our sincerest appreciation to Susie for continuing to share her steadfast wisdom, thoughtful eyes and ears, and unwavering love.

We wish Susie the best in this next chapter of her life.

Your Friends, The TILT Staff.



2020 Loon Census



Photo by Sandy Adams

Thank you to all who participated in the 2020 Annual Loon Census on Saturday, July 18th. We had a record of nearly 80 sign-ups and 50 volunteers that returned completed data forms - wow! We spotted 39 loons in the region (see map below).

These yearly efforts truly make a difference for New York's Common Loons. Each observation is incredibly valuable; even if you didn't spot a loon, your participation still provides important data!

Completed census forms were sent to our partners at the Adirondack Center For Loon Conservation, who draw on these annual

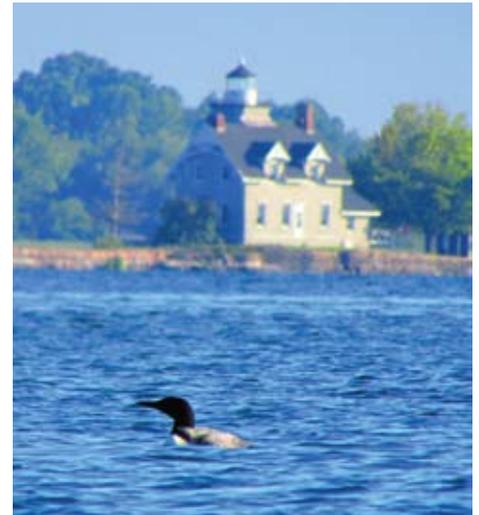
censuses to make management recommendations and better direct their efforts to restoring loon populations in the region.

Congratulations to the winner of this year's loon paddle, Chase Miller! Many thanks to John Miller III for painting and donating this absolutely beautiful piece, along with the one-of-a-kind hand-carved stand.

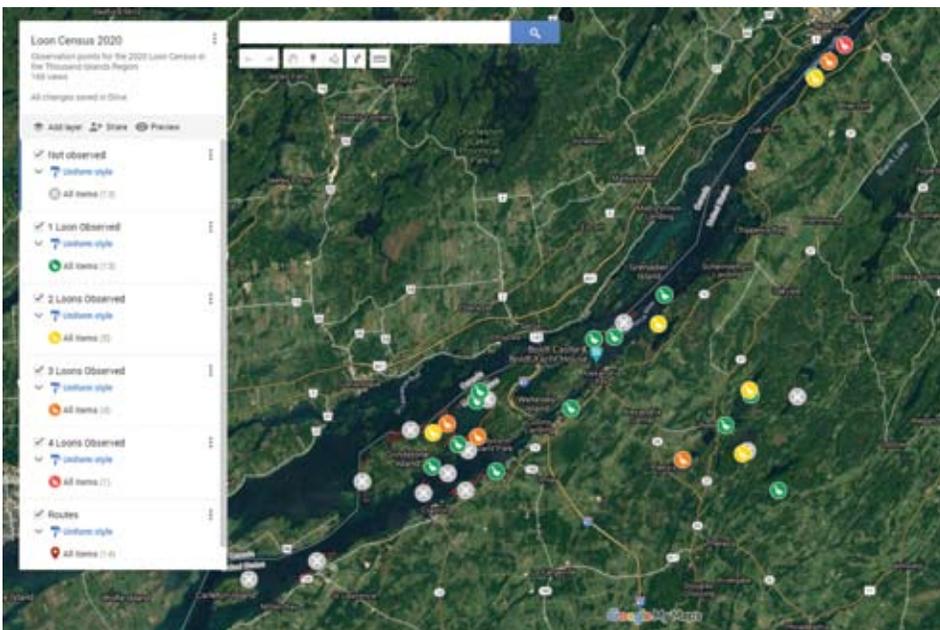
We hope you will consider joining us in next year's Annual Loon Census on Saturday, July 17th from 8-9am! In the meantime, get outside and enjoy our trails and the beautiful River that we, and the Common Loons, call home.



Chase Miller and family, the lucky winners of a John Miller III handcrafted loon paddle. All participants in TILT's annual loon census are eligible to win.



A Common Loon near Three Sisters Lighthouse in Chippewa Bay. Photo by Patty Mondore.



Counting loons from a kayak near Calumet Island. Photo by Dennis McCarthy.



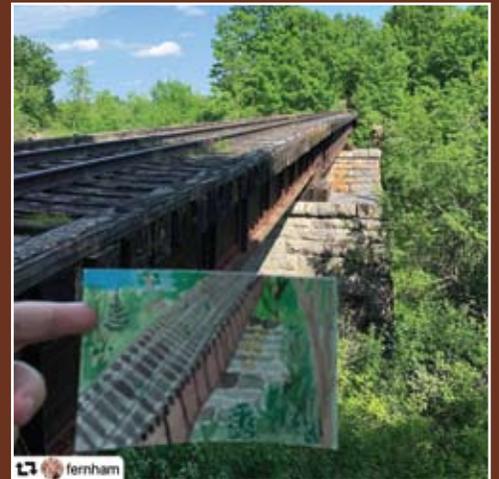
Photo Contest Winners



Philip J. Conde - June 1



Lori Arnot - June 15



Anne Fernald - June 29



Veronica Hayes - July 13



Peggy Punch - July 27



Katie Hungerford - August 24

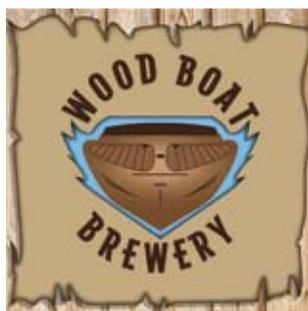


Emilie Morrison - August 10

This summer, TILT invited all of our social media followers to get outside by participating in the 2020 Summer Photo Contest. A winning photo was selected every two weeks. Winners received a gift certificate or prize from a local business and were featured on TILT's social media pages.

THANK YOU

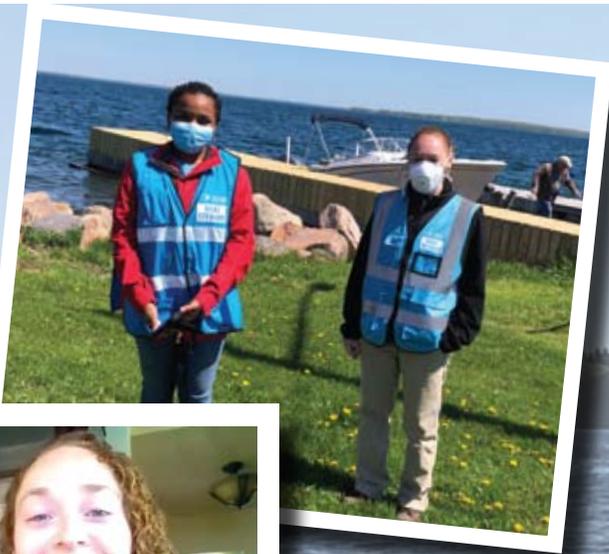
Photo Contest Sponsors!
Please support those who support land conservation.



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Di Prinzio's
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When I was offered this position as a Watercraft Inspection Steward, I was kind of nervous having to go up and talk to people and start conversations by myself, but this ended up being an amazing opportunity.

Lauren



I learned so much about aquatic invasive species from the online training, becoming familiar with the plants coming out of the water on trailers and watercraft.

Felicia



As the summer went on, boaters became much less apprehensive to speak with me and more interested in what I had to say about preventing the spread of invasive species in our waterways.

Alex



Boat Launch Steward Reflections - 2020



A great number of boaters were thankful to have their waters protected and pledged to continue doing their part to prevent the spread of invasive species, both by cleaning their own equipment and by talking with other boaters on their travels.
Hanna



Speaking to the boaters was fun for me because they were always very nice and understanding of what I was doing.
Gabe



Some skills I obtained during this job was becoming a more self-sufficient, independent worker and I can now identify many invasive and native species of plants on my own.
Janey



Steward Reflections Continued...

Summer Land Stewards

Ryan Aubertine

Being my second year as a Summer Land Steward, I knew what to expect working for TILT, but with COVID, everything had



changed. For the most part I was the only Summer Land Steward, which allowed me to spend more time taking care of the preserves that I had longed to see like Potters Beach, the River view at Macsherry, and the cliff views at Otter Creek. Seeing new additions since last summer was nice as well. The Rivergate Trail is a pleasant walk back to a trestle bridge that has to be the best view in my opinion.

Sadly, due to COVID, all TILT's events were cancelled. This was a big disappointment since the events are fun to work at. Instead I got to help with the big projects. These were mainly on Grindstone Island. I helped to build a road, clean up Potters Beach, and another property on the Island. I will never forget going across from the

mainland to Grindstone on a huge barge that was bringing heavy equipment to the Island. Those two weeks on Grindstone really showed the beauty of the Island that most people don't get to see.

Working for TILT really showed me how important the Land Trust is. I saw firsthand how to help care for the land while allowing people to see and experience nature. It was a pleasure and I am thankful to have the opportunity to work there.

Sean Heagerty

My return to TILT this year was unexpected. I had planned on starting an internship at National Grid last May but my start date was pushed up to July. This left me two months of unemployment, and I am incredibly grateful that I had the opportunity to come back to TILT.

I worked as a Land Steward back in the summer of 2018 and found it to be one of my most valuable employment opportunities. There is something about working in the heat and mud and bugs that really makes any job you will do after that feel like a cake walk.

My experience this past summer was a little different from 2018. A large part of my work included the marking of our preserve boundaries. This involved me using a GPS to ensure I was on the boundary line, all the while carrying a bag full of nails, signs, flagging, and high-viz tree paint. You quickly learn the hard

way that the property lines are not always chosen to most easily fit the landscape. I got the opportunity to bushwhack through miles of fields, thick brush, old growth forests, 60 foot cliff faces, and swamps, and I am honestly grateful for it.

I did also get to do some of the normal Land Steward tasks such as trail maintenance which was always refreshing. One particular project I helped on was rebuilding a footbridge along the Macsherry Trail on the Crooked Creek Preserve. I helped carry all of the lumber into the woods for the bridge, and worked with the rest of the stewardship staff on its construction.

All in all I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity to return to TILT and I would like to thank Brandon, Jake and the rest of the staff for giving me the opportunity to come back. A lot of things about 2020 haven't been great, but for me I can safely say my experience coming back to TILT was.



Sean Heagerty (l) and Ryan Aubertine haul materials into the Crooked Creek Preserve.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you. (Every Dollar Counts!)



It has been about a year now since stewardship staff installed donation boxes at our Signature Preserve trailheads and we want to take a moment to thank everyone who generously makes a donation while out hiking. To date we have raised over \$500! Thank you to all who generously give a little bit each time you enjoy time on the trail - we appreciate you!

If you enjoy hiking the TILT trails and wish to share your support, donation boxes are located at our trailheads. Please contribute to the stewardship and maintenance of TILT's trails, so that they remain open to the public for all to enjoy.

NY Philanthropist Wins Burl Bowl

Congratulations to our 2020 Raffle Winner and thank you to all who participated in the raffle through buying tickets.

This year's raffle was a one-of-a-kind burl bowl made from a fallen maple tree salvaged from the Crooked Creek Preserve by TILT supporter and expert craftsman Doug Drumm of Drumm Creations. Thank you Doug!

On Friday, September 25th TILT staff held its long-awaited drawing in front of a live crowd of hopeful ticket-holders over Facebook Live. And the winning ticket holder was Tom Walker. Tom and his wife Mabel are long-time TILT supporters and champions of the establishment of the Otter Creek Preserve. Their generosity can also be widely felt throughout the entire North Country. Congratulations Tom!

Together, nearly \$3,200 was raised that will directly support stewardship efforts on TILT's 10 Signature Preserves. Your generosity is most appreciated, thank you.

So.... please stay tuned for the announcement of TILT's 2021 Raffle...this new mystery piece will sure to delight all who are conservation minded and love the Thousand Islands!



Tom Walker, winner of the burl bowl, hand carved by Doug Drumm. photo by Laurie Pike.

New Donors

March 20 - September 24, 2020

Stephen Achimore
Sharon Adams
Bruce & Genie Anderson
Pamela Barton
Chuck Baum
Ben Butler
Carman & Mary Lou Cerio
William & Kim Conner
Jeff Cox
Rebecca Dahl
Jane Demer
Craig & Patty Esford
Vicky & Jerry Froome
Kevin & Marlene Hale
Eric Kling
Karin Kling Bright
Tom LaClair
Ann Mazur
Ryan & Sarah McKinley
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Kiera Pergram
David Poulin
Maxine Quigg
Peter Rendall & Pamela Adelman
Elissa Sampson
Sepp & Amy Scanlin
Daniel Sherman
Jerry Smith
Jeff & Janet Staples
Tom & Sue Storino
Josh & Rebecca Truman
Assemblyman Mark Walczyk

Be a
**Trail
blazer!**

Join our new
Monthly Giving
Program
Information at
www.TILandTrust.org

A vertical banner with a green border. At the top, it says "Be a Trail blazer!" in a stylized font. Below the text is a photograph of two people hiking away from the camera on a dirt path through a wooded area. At the bottom of the banner, it says "Join our new Monthly Giving Program Information at www.TILandTrust.org".

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March 5, 2021

Winter Gathering
in Florida

August 5, 2021

Volunteer Recognition
at Northern Flow Vineyards

September 11, 2021

Otter Creek Fun Run
at Otter Creek Preserve

June 11, 2021

Zenda Community Picnic

August 19, 2021

Major Donor Recognition
at Point Marguerite

July 17, 2021

Summer Gathering
at Coyote Moon Vineyards

SAVE THE DATES

PLEASE STAY TUNED FOR TIMELY UPDATES CONCERNING OUR EVENTS IN 2021