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Conservation Benefits the Local Economy!

Crooked Creek Preserve,
© Chris Murray Photography



The Thousand Islands Land Trust works to conserve the natural beauty, diverse wildlife habitats, water quality & outdoor recreational opportunities of the Thousand Islands region, now and for future generations.

TILT Preserves are key economic drivers that collectively contribute millions in economic benefits annually throughout St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties.” Such are the findings of TILT’s recent study, *The Economic Benefits of Preserves, Trails, and Conserved Open Spaces in the Thousand Islands Region*, which was conducted by The Trust for Public Land. The study was peer-reviewed by Clarkson University Associate Professor Martin D. Heintzelman, PhD and Scholar of Environmental Economics, and was funded through a grant from the Fresh Sound Foundation.

The study assesses the impact of preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces on the region’s economy by drawing from several case studies of TILT preserves.

In addition, the study clearly confirms that preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces, such as Zenda Farms and Otter Creek, have a net positive impact on nearby residential property values demonstrating that people are willing to pay more for a home close to these amenities.

“This ultimately translates into greater property tax revenues generated annually from homes adjacent to protected spaces,” stated Jake Tibbles,

continued on page 2



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TABLE 2. ENHANCED PROPERTY VALUE DUE TO PROXIMITY TO PRESERVES, TRAILS, AND CONSERVED OPEN SPACES IN THE 1000 ISLANDS REGION

Category	Value (2018\$)
Number of homes within 500 feet of preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces	
Jefferson County	4,140
St. Lawrence County	3,220
Total	7,360
Total market value of homes within 500 feet of preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces	
Jefferson County	\$733,000,000
St. Lawrence County	\$384,000,000
Total	\$1,120,000,000
Additional market value due to preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces*	
Jefferson County	\$36,700,000
St. Lawrence County	\$19,200,000
Total	\$55,900,000
Additional annual property tax revenue due to preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces	
Jefferson County	\$417,000
St. Lawrence County	\$267,000
Total	\$684,000

* The additional market value due to preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces is a one-time benefit and does not accrue annually.



The Value of Open Space:
 A Review of the Literature Applied to the
 Thousand Islands Region and the
 Work of the Thousand Islands Land Trust

TILT’s Executive Director. “National research over several decades found that this additional tax revenue offsets the costs associated with preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces as well as any reductions in the total taxable land, refuting the idea that such amenities result in a net reduction in the value of an area’s tax base.”

The premium for proximity to preserves, trails, and open spaces up to 2,000 feet was found to affect market values by 20% or more in the region. Since property tax is related to a parcel’s value, the increase in property value as a result of a parcel’s proximity to preserves, trail, and conserved open space leads to additional property taxes generated annually.

“Residents choosing to call the Thousand Islands home value being close to the region’s preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces. Be it a family home near Zenda Farms Preserve or a summer cottage near one of the several State Parks in the region, these amenities create additional value across our local communities,” explained Professor Heintzelman.

These conserved lands were found to increase the value of nearby residential properties in the Thousand Islands region by \$55.9 million and increase property tax revenues by \$684,000 per year. These conserved spaces attract visitors to the region, enhance property values, provide recreational opportunities for residents, and

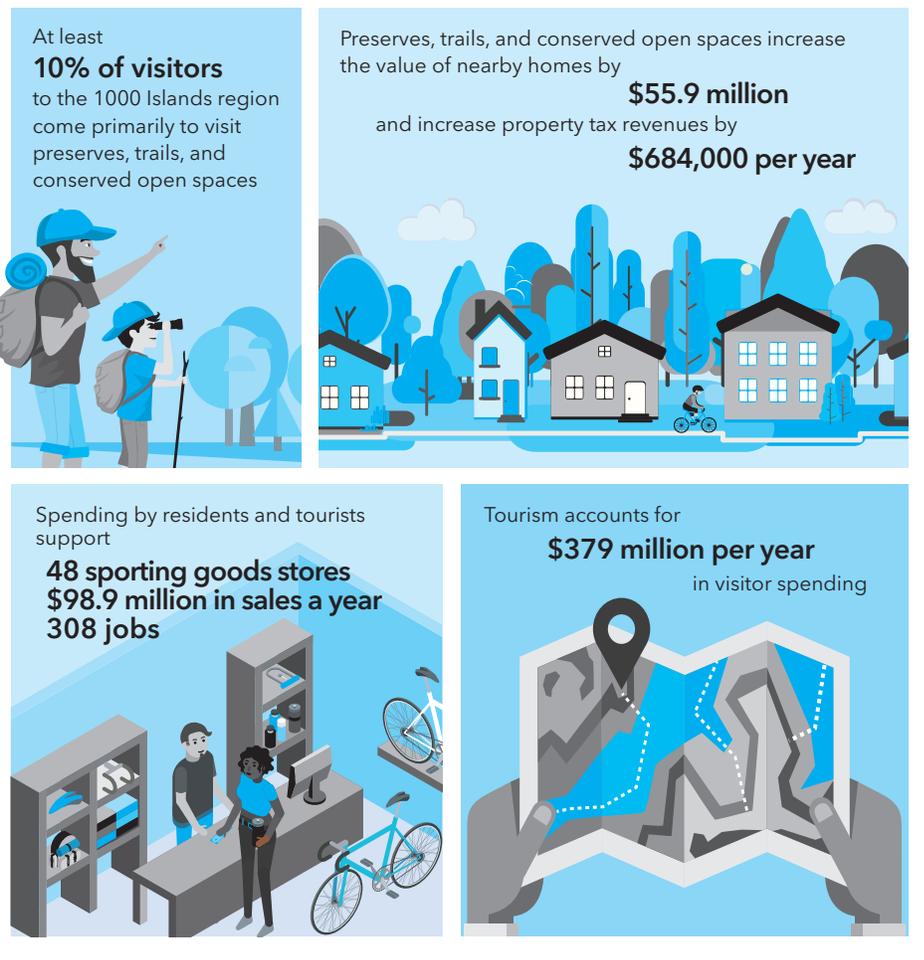
boost economic development. By doing so, they also support local jobs, increase spending at local businesses, and generate local sales tax revenue.

“This new report shows that the Thousand Islands region’s preserves, trails, and open spaces are some of its greatest assets,” said Carter Strickland, New York State Director for The Trust for Public Land. “In addition to making the region a great place to live, publicly accessible spaces allow visitors to appreciate the Thousand Islands’ unique natural beauty, and they attract visitors, increase property values and help fuel the local economy. As a kid, I spent every summer on Grindstone Island, and it is gratifying to see community assets like Potters Beach protected for future generations and also to see more people using the interior of the island because of TILT’s preserves.”

Spending by visitors in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties has a large impact on the local economy, generating \$164 million in labor income and 6,100 jobs each year, as well as \$25.8 million in local taxes and \$21.0 million in state taxes annually. In fact, if not for the tourism-related taxes, the average household in the Thousand Island region would have to pay an additional \$456 each year to maintain the same level of government revenue.

“From the wetlands and upland forests made accessible by the Crooked Creek Preserve and the Macsherry Trail to the sands of Potters Beach, and the expansive farmland of Zenda Farms Preserve, TILT’s preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces play a critical role in driving the tourism industry in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties.” stated Greg McLean,

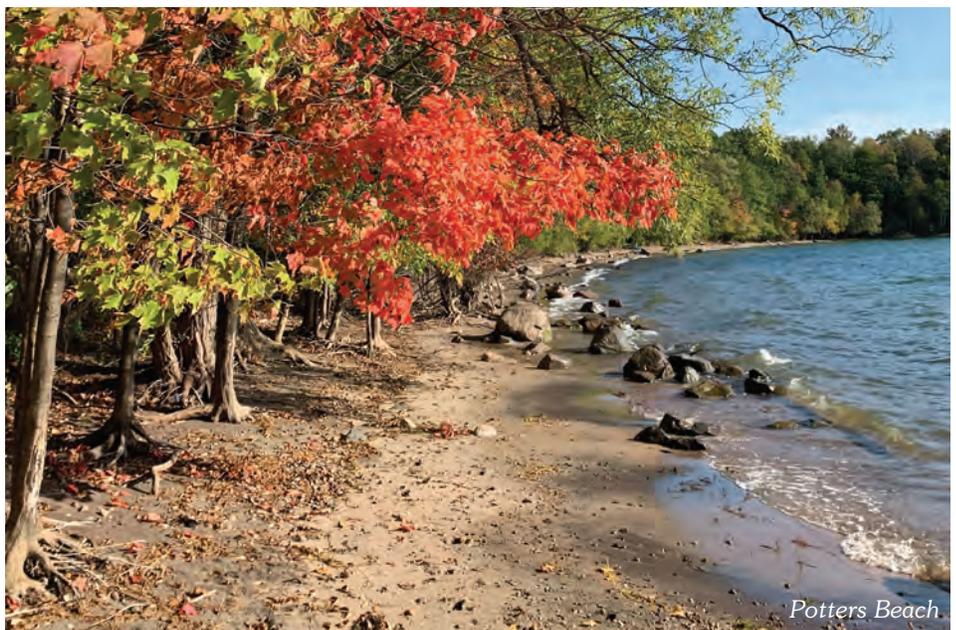
The economic benefits of preserves, trails, and conserved open spaces in the 1000 Islands region



TILT’s president.

To read the study, the literature review, and the corresponding fact sheet, visit www.tilandtrust.org.

For additional questions, contact the TILT office at 315-686-5345 or info@tilandtrust.org.



Potters Beach

Tributes

April 26, 2019 - October 7, 2019

In memory of Shaner Graham Atkinson

David Barclay
Weezie and Buck Blanchard
Jane Carver and Ron Cooper
Ellen Collins
Mike and Eileen Comerford
George Cox
Trent Dickey
John G. Foster
Laurie Gadsden
Carol Hills
Kristene Pierce
Margot Remington Oman and
Richard Oman
Stephen and Het Sabo
Stephan J. Sabo
Janet Taylor
Jake Tibbles and Alicia Dewey
Josh and Rebecca Truman

In memory of Barbara Babowicz Rodney Babowicz

In memory of Nancy K. Breslin

Elizabeth and John Belle
Suzanne Belle
Barclay Damon LLP
Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP
Suzanne and David Lipman
John and Judy McCullough
Teddy and Peggy McNally
James and Cynthia Mecomber
Donald G. Price
Bud and Marguerite Sanzone
Jeremy Smith
Jake Tibbles and Alicia Dewey
John Tucker

In memory of Dori Ann Weisberg Broudy

Berne Broudy
Kate Broudy
Jake Tibbles and Alicia Dewey

In memory of Dot Carnegie John and Kathy Carnegie

In memory of Sissy and Bill Danforth John and Candace Marsellus

In memory of Sissy Danforth Peter O'Shea

In memory of Bill Danforth Andy and Carolyn Anderson

Bill and Judy Munro
Jake Tibbles and Alicia Dewey
Merritt Vaughan
Greater Horizons

In memory of Andrew Davison Beverly Davison

In memory of Ken Deedy
(these gifts appear on page 10)

Message from the President

As 2019 winds down, progress at TILT certainly isn't slowing.

It was another banner year for the organization, the community and for conservation in the Thousand Islands. Kate Breheny hit the ground running as TILT's new Membership Coordinator, a strong contingent of interns backed up our stewardship efforts, while sadly, Susie Wood has decided to retire...well, sort of - she enthusiastically agreed to continue her great work on larger publications like our Reflections Newsletter and Annual Report.

Our community events, from the Zenda Picnic to the Summer Gathering and Otter Creek Fun Run & Celebration, and our other events throughout the year continue to grow. Our stewardship efforts strengthened protection of our land and abatement of invasive species. Membership stands at just over 800 strong with growing numbers and participation.

Our conservation efforts marked unmatched momentum through the protection of over 600 acres in 2019, adding to the 10,500 overall acres managed by TILT. This was funded through state and federal grants totaling \$650,000, partnerships with other conservation groups and, you, our generous supporters.

Confirming the economic benefits of conservation to land owners, municipalities and local businesses, an independent study, conducted by the Trust for Public Land, in conjunction with Clarkson University, quantified the local and regional impact of preserving land. The Study concluded that conserved lands, trails and open spaces increased market values of nearby homes, generating increased tax revenues of \$684,000 annually.

The momentum is also build-



ing for conservation efforts along the A2A Corridor, which spans an area from the Adirondack Park in New York to the Algonquin Park in Ontario, passing directly through the heart of the Thousand Islands. This critical migration route for everything from birds to moose has been identified as a must-save habitat, with TILT playing a major role.

Back at our home-base, renovations are being planned for greater efficiency and expanded use. In addition to building upgrades, TILT is in the planning stages for an Interpretive Center — an educational and informational exhibit for the community, highlighting the existing conservation efforts, the future need for conservation, and the important role TILT plays.

So by all measures, it has been a great year, and with these tail winds, we have high expectations for 2020 and beyond — all in keeping with our 2018-2021 Strategic Plan.

Let us celebrate the success but also recognize the challenges ahead and, with your help, we can continue conserving the place you love.

*With warm regards,
Greg McLean, President*

Welcoming New Trustees



Sue Ballard

Sue Ballard currently serves as Vice President for Alumni Engagement at Syracuse University. Prior to her work for the university, she served as the Director of Stewardship and Special Events for Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, where she led a team of 10 donor relations and events officers.

Before that, Sue served as the first-ever major gifts officer for the College of Mount St. Joseph. She spent the majority of her early career at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), where she was

involved in a variety of alumni and volunteer engagement activities. In addition, Sue brings with her substantial board management experience through her work with BGSU's alumni board and foundation board, as well as Cincinnati Children's foundation board.

Sue, a native of Rochester, NY, received a B.A. in political science from Hartwick College and earned her M.A. in college student personnel at Bowling Green State University. Her family is from all around the region, with ties to Cape Vincent and Clayton. After a life and career in the Midwest, her fond childhood memories of summers at the River called her home. She transitioned her life with her husband to Northern NY in winter 2016, and reminds herself every drive down to the River how fortunate she feels to be back home.



John Farrell

Dr. John Farrell is a professor in the Department of Environmental & Forest Biology at SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry (SUNY-ESF). He received his Ph.D. in 1998 and M.S. in 1991 from SUNY-ESF and joined the faculty in 2000. His interests revolve around aquatic ecology and management of aquatic resources.

John is also the Director of the College's Thousand Islands Biological Station (TIBS) on Governor's Island, Clayton. He focuses his research on fish ecology and coastal wetland ecology, and their application

toward addressing environmental problems facing our freshwater systems.

TIBS is a major aquatic research facility in North America and John invests time in development activities to support building infrastructure and other research initiatives at TIBS. John has received significant funding from agencies including the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the Great Lakes Research Consortium and Cornell University.

John has worked with TILT to deliver the highly popular *Ichthyologist for a Day KidsTrek* since 2012 and always participates in TLT's annual Zenda Community Picnic. His work serves to illuminate environmental issues facing the St. Lawrence, and how to protect it. His knowledge and experience will help place TILT at the forefront of conservation in the 1000 Islands region.

Tributes - cont.

In memory of

Mary "Fern" Dillabaugh

Brandon Amo and Tina Smith

In memory of Rex Ennis

Janet Lamb-Ennis

In honor of Katy Textor Farmer and Family

Rachel Rockwell

In memory of

Joseph & Patricia Ficano

Jeff Ficano

In memory of Rett Foster

Judy Foster and John Glick

In memory of Carol S. Freeman

The Sauer Family

In memory of

Andrew & Betty Hayduke

Jake Tibbles and Alicia Dewey

In memory of Kay Heineman

Harriet Heineman

In memory of Joseph F. Kelly

Linda Dahl

In memory of

Richard Macsherry

Jake Tibbles and Alicia Dewey

In honor of

Molly and Darden MacWade

Trey and Barbara Vars

In memory of

Patricia Anne McFadden

Ken Schwarz and Linda Watson

In memory of Joan Perconti

Michael Cooke

In memory of Jim Rendall,

Chava Minder, Bob Minder

Francie Rendall Minder

In honor of Walter Rice Family

Florence Lewis Rice and Leroy

Lewis

In memory of Mary Ann Scibetti

Linda Levine

In memory of David K. Smith

Elizabeth and John Belle

Jake Tibbles and Alicia Dewey

In memory of

Mary Margaret Smith

QCI Asset Management Inc.

In memory of William C. Taylor

Gwen Stockwell Taylor

In memory of Elaine Turcotte

Thomas and Kathryn Hill

In memory of J. Wyatt Uhlein

Mary Ann Cooper

Fatima and Everett Rea

Jake Tibbles and Alicia Dewey

Sally Tuttle

Summer Interns and Land Stewards Speak



Campbell Lake

For the past 18 years of my life, I have been fortunate enough to experience the magic of the Thousand Islands region, making lifelong friends and memories. This summer, however, I became something more. My summer internship with TILT has transformed me from a lover and enjoyer of the Thousand Islands into one of its passionate protectors.

Through my position as

TILT's Education & Outreach Intern, my appreciation for TILT's mission, the Thousand Islands region, and environmental conservation and education has grown tenfold. I find myself inspired by my co-workers' altruistic dedication to the TILT cause, and this summer opportunity has instilled in me the same desire to preserve the place I love most.

I greatly benefitted from my internship experience, under the expert guidance of Alaina Young and with the encouraging support of the entire staff. From day one, I felt welcomed and wanted – my position seemed integral to the team's success, and it was a great feeling to know my help was needed.

My duties – in managing social media outlets, drafting press releases, creating email-blasts, assisting in trek and event planning, and overall spreading the good word of TILT – were the most significant takeaways of this incredible internship. These responsibilities

ingrained in me a heightened sense of accountability, expectation, commitment, and the priceless, intangible rewards that come from seeing one's hard work and accomplishments come to life. I know that the education I received will be absolutely essential to furthering myself in the world of marketing, outreach and communications.

I owe all my thanks to the TILT family for this once-in-a-lifetime experience. The fact that I was afforded this summer opportunity to live *and* work in the Thousand Islands is a memory I'll keep with me forever – and one that has imparted my personal commitment to conserving this area. I am thankful beyond words for the impact that this internship has had on me. As I head into my final year at The University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and soon after into the 'real' world, I am so grateful and excited to see where my involvement with the Land Trust will take me.

William Wyland



When I was hired as a land steward for TILT last spring, I was a bit apprehensive and uncertain as to what being a land steward really entailed. I soon discovered that with all of my scouting experience, I was up to the task offered to me at TILT.

I became adept at using tools to keep TILT's trails open and accessible for all who choose to enjoy them. I learned to manage my time for multiple jobs in a day.

Probably my favorite part of working with TILT was the people with whom I interacted on a daily

basis, and those I met at treks and events. Whether I was parking cars, helping to set up and clean up, or chatting with members, it was a pleasure to be a part of it all.

To be amongst supporters of the River and the lands surrounding her banks has made me realize that the role of TILT in the community is an all-encompassing one, so worthy of the time and effort that is put into this incredible organization. I appreciated having had the opportunity to be a part of TILT this summer, and I thank all those who helped to guide me through this experience.



Ryan Aubertine

Working for TILT was an unmatched experience and the TILT staff was great, treating me like family and helping me create lasting friendships with the other interns.

I especially enjoyed working at TILT’s events, where I could meet and talk with TILT members and donors. I also enjoyed helping with TILTreks, learning alongside the participants. One of the most interesting treks was “Ichthyologist for a Day.” It was fascinating to see how musky are raised, as well as going down to the micro level to see microscopic invertebrates in the water column. And who wouldn’t enjoy helping kids catch their first fish!

I came to appreciate the impact of TILT’s conserved lands and the impact stewardship of these lands makes on the region. One of our regular responsibilities was trail maintenance, and I learned

how to operate many different tools on the trails.

I was also TILT’s representative at the Clean the River event hosted by Save The River. As we collected trash on Wellesley Island, I was surprised at how much debris was in our waterways: bottles, cans, tons of plastic, even a fishing rod, to the most surprising, a chair.

Of all the conservation work that TILT does, I think the most important is environmental education for children. The KidsCamp at Zenda Farms and “Ichthyologist for a Day” help kids learn about important environmental issues in a fun and rewarding way.

This has been a summer to remember!



Sean Deedy

This was my third year as a Summer Land Steward and I was still excited each day to head off to work. The diversity of jobs such as trail maintenance, painting, and being a Mule Drover for several Land Trust functions on Grindstone, kept the job fun and interesting.

It always impresses me the great appreciation shown for the work we do by the people I meet while doing trail maintenance. I am equally impressed by the way

the Land Trust brings together people of all ages and different walks of life for a common cause, the preservation of the Thousand Islands. It may take a village to raise a child, but I have learned as a Land Steward, that it takes the entire River community to protect and preserve this place we all love.

It has been an honor and privilege to be a part of the Land Trust that my uncle, Ken Deedy, played such an integral role in nurturing and developing. The River is an important place for my entire family. I hope in doing my part, I honor Ken’s legacy. I am lucky to be able to summer in the Thousand Islands and help preserve the natural beauty of this wonderful place.



Dean Smith, TILT Land Manager, spreads gravel after installing a culvert on the Chippewa Bay Preserve.

Connecting Wild Lands

TILT Conserves 500 acres within Migration Corridor in South Hammond



Caption: Cool aerial photo of either Ciliberti or Charlebois

by Spencer Busler, Assistant Director

It may be the unexpected, chilly autumn breeze bringing in a rumbling weather front. It may be the sweet, earthy aroma of the rusty leaves after they've met the damp forest floor. No matter the cue, all of us who call the Thousand Islands home know that the seasons are changing.

Nights are becoming longer than the days. And with each gust, acorns and hickory nuts rain from above. Beaver ponds swell, and the grounds soften as they replenish with each raindrop. The natural world teems as the flora and fauna read the signs of the inevitable winter, seeking to build nutritional reserves for the upcoming torpor. The warm hustle and bustle of our short summer season may have subsided, but our furred and feathered counterparts continue to ramp up in activity, fully recognizing the change of seasons.

"The beauty of the Thousand Islands region is causing an uptick in development, isolating forest cores from each other as new roads and homes are built. TILT's recent work to protect land on three parcels adjacent to the South Hammond State Forest is deliberate, focused, and essential for our wildlife to adapt to climate change."

For some, these signs trigger a migration. As many of our family and friends load their cars or board southbound planes, the skies fill with honking vees of geese pointed in the same direction. Black bears roam for miles in search of the next productive beech stand,

and the deer herds prepare to descend from higher elevations in anticipation of the looming snowfall.

Much like our well-marked interstate highways and regulated airspace, these animals also need safe, unfragmented freeways for their travels. In an effort to conserve one

of the most important wildlife migration corridors in the eastern United States, TILT has conserved three new adjoining parcels of land totaling nearly 500 acres adjacent to the South Hammond State Forest in St. Lawrence County.

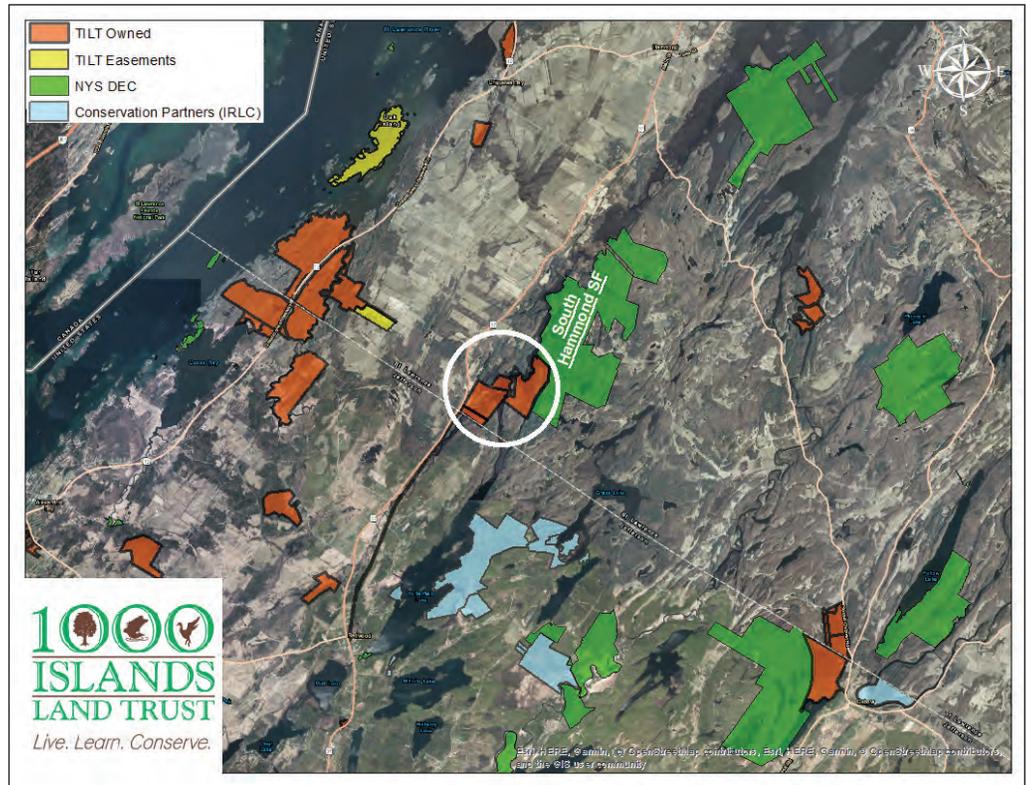
In the heart of the US Algonquin to Adirondack

(A2A) corridor, these wild and open properties feature towering forest stands, expansive wetland flats, meandering streams and diverse upland habitats. With assistance from a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, administered by TILT's conservation partners at Ducks Unlimited, and with the help of private donors, these vibrant lands have been purchased by TILT for permanent protection against development and incompatible use.

“Connectivity is a key objective of the Adirondacks Collaborative,” said David Miller, Executive Director for the Collaborative. “Our vision of a resilient, ecologically connected A2A region depends on our partners taking local actions that contribute to the bigger ecological picture. Protecting key strategic environmental areas that improve connectivity in areas like South Hammond is a perfect example!”

The South Hammond region between Butterfield Lake and Black Lake has been recognized as being highly resilient to climate change. This is in part because of the existing mosaic of conserved lands in the area, but also because of its landscape and habitat diversity. The adjoining 2000+ acre South Hammond State Forest features unique sandstone pavement barrens, of which there are likely less than two dozen occurrences across the entire state. This region also supports a variety of rare, threatened and endangered species such as the pied-billed grebe and the peregrine falcon.

These newly conserved lands are positioned less than two miles east of TILT's single largest contiguous preserve: the Crooked Creek Preserve. The Preserve's popular Macsherry Trail is a hiking destination for tourists, seasonal and year-round residents. Its popularity stems not only from its convenient location near Kring Point State Park, but also from the high likelihood of experiencing wildlife while on the trail. Users frequently report turtles, foxes, ducks, beavers, rare birds, deer, porcupine, and even the occasional



black bear and bobcat! These animals aren't here by coincidence. The Crooked Creek Preserve offers them over 2,000 acres of intact wilderness to live, feed and breed, and by establishing a conservation corridor between the Preserve and the State Forest, we're protecting these populations from the threat of isolation as we move into the future.

“Protecting this region is more important now than ever,” said Alex French, the Sustainability Coordinator for Clarkson University's Institute for A Sustainable Environment. He also serves as the President of the Adirondacks Collaborative. “Meanwhile the beauty of the Thousand Islands region is causing an uptick in development, isolating forest cores from each other as new roads and homes are built. TILT's recent work to protect land on three parcels adjacent to the South Hammond State Forest is deliberate, focused, and essential for our wildlife to adapt to climate change.”

Through TILT's conservation of these properties, the organization is following through with its commitment of protecting the most important natural resources of the St. Lawrence River Valley for both current and future generations. In doing so, the organization is shortening the gap between conservation lands within this important corridor, in turn allowing our precious wildlife to rightfully roam free.

Ken Deedy's Legacy

The Kenneth Deedy Environmental Internship Fund Goal Reached



Strengthening a Partnership

Left: Staff, board members, and volunteers from the three partner organizations - TILT, Save The River, and Minna Anthony Common Nature Center - at the Celebration For Future Generations, where it was announced that the fund goal had been reached.

Back: l.-r. Terra Bach, TILT; Margaret Hummel, STR; Patricia Shulenburg, STR; Anna Kellner, MACNC; Darlene Sourwine, MACNC. Lauren Eggleston, MACNC, Max Koch, MACNC. Front: Spencer Busler, TILT; Brandon Hollis, TILT; Bridget Wright, STR; Kendall Hathaway, STR; John Peach, STR; Matt Elliott, MACNC; Andy Kane, MACNC; Jake Tibbles, TILT; Gaby Padowska, MACNC; Kate Breheny, TILT

TILT, Save The River and Minna Anthony Common Nature Center have established the Kenneth Deedy Environmental Internship Fund, in honor of Ken, his passion for the Thousand Islands, and his vision for its conservation.

Held at the Northern New York Community Foundation, this fund will be used to hire a high school or college student for a summer long internship. The student will work for all three organizations, immersing them into the fields of land conservation

and stewardship, environmental education, and environmental advocacy.

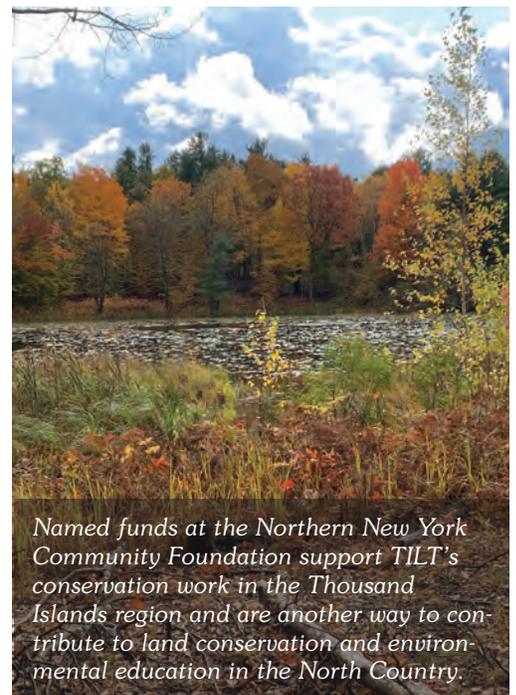
Before his passing, Ken made the initial gift to establish this fund and thanks to the generosity of many supporters and a \$50,000 grant made by the Northern New York Community Foundation, **over \$160,000** has been raised!

Thank you to all who donated to this fund and helped contribute to Ken's outstanding legacy.

A Note from the Northern New York Community Foundation

I am fortunate to be able to work with those who care deeply about the stewardship and conservation of the Thousand Islands region. While most have a history of support of TILT, others are looking for guidance on how to include a conservation legacy for the region as part of their overall planning. Either way, because of our partnership with TILT, I have a natural pathway to provide them with options for endowing their annual giving beyond their lifetimes either specifically or broadly in support of TILT's important work and mission. These named Community Foundation funds encourage a holistic approach to perpetuating the critical annual support that will help ensure that donors' charitable intentions for TILT and their other favorite organizations are honored over time. Just as important, TILT will stand stronger with charitable resources that will span the generations in perpetuity.

*Rande Richardson
Northern New York Community Foundation*



Named funds at the Northern New York Community Foundation support TILT's conservation work in the Thousand Islands region and are another way to contribute to land conservation and environmental education in the North Country.

Donors to the Kenneth Deedy Environmental Internship Fund

Howard and Laurie Abel
Johanna Ames and Matt Coats
Anonymous
John and Lori Arnot
Mary Hannah Arnot
The Atkinson Family
Terra & Freddy Bach
Dennis and Sarah Baldwin
Skip Behrhorst and Donna Fisher
Paige Benigno
Lee Bentz and Mike Brandemuehl
Louise Birkhead
Steve and Cherie Bluth
Jim and Cindy Bower
Nancy Boynton
Kate and Brian Breheny
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John Brothers
Janet and Jon Burrows
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John Burt
Spencer and Laice Busler
John and Kathy Carnegie
Bob Carnegie
Jane Carver and Ron Cooper
Cerow Agency
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Chet and Ann Massari
Erin McBride
Linda C. McConkey
Cynthia and Gregory McLean
Janice and Dan McPhail
The Mead Family
Doreen Meeks
Daniel and Lynn Miller
James and Kathleen Miller
Diane and Bob Miron
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Marlene Hajal Mouaikel

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Tom and Julie Tinney
Joan and Skip Tolette
Bob and Dorothy Topping
Michael and Temple Touchette
John Tucker
Merritt Vaughan
T. Urling and Mabel Walker
Ann Ward
Roy and Peggy White
Jonathan and Heather White
Patti Wood and Jim Schnauber
Susie Wood and David Duff



Guess who's coming to... breakfast and lunch and dinner

by Gerry Smith, Consulting Ornithologist

In the last few years, on several islands in the St. Lawrence River, summer residents have noticed that suddenly the island is devoid of small birds. Mystified by this occurrence, people have been concerned. Actually there is no cause for concern, Merlin has landed on the island. No, not the sorcerer from King Arthur's court but an avian wizard with nearly as many tricks that it uses to catch small birds. The Merlin is a medium sized falcon, slightly larger than the more familiar American Kestrel, but more powerful and with a pugnacious nature.

The Merlin breeds mostly in northern forested areas of the Northern Hemisphere. In North America, the open Boreal Forest stretching from Newfoundland to Alaska is its primary stronghold. Feeding mainly on small and medium sized birds, this falcon surprises and captures its mobile prey with swift flight attacks. As with all falcon species, Merlin do not build a nest. Instead they usually occupy the abandoned nest of a crow or a hawk from a previous year. Wherever suitable used housing is available a pair can raise a brood. When they are present, small birds often make themselves scarce.

This species is a marvelously interesting predator that is currently a great example of successful adaptation to a changing world.

Merlin populations in North America were greatly impacted by DDT in the same way as Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon. Possessing a higher reproductive rate, 3-5 young per pair, than those larger species more Merlins survived the DDT disaster. By the 1990s a clear population recovery was underway from the very low levels of the late 1960s and 1970s.

First noticed as increased numbers of Merlin migrating through our area, this trend has continued. During the last three decades extraordinary changes have occurred to local Merlin populations as a result of rapid adaptation.

Such major changes in a native species, as a result of adaptation over a relatively short period, are most unusual. Formerly strictly a migrant bird passing through New York, they now winter and breed within the state. In the Thousand Islands region, this species was unknown as a wintering bird until the end of the last century. Now individuals regularly are present between November and March. Usually these wintering birds are found in urban centers or near large farms where invasive European Starling and other such birds abound.

Their change in status as a breeder is even more

remarkable. Unknown as a nesting species in New York in 1985, they were widespread in the Adirondacks by 2005. Their populations continue to grow and they are now a regular nesting species in our region. Thus, where nesting in the islands was unknown until this century, they are now an uncommon but regular breeder. Breeding birds generally arrive at local nesting sites from late March to late April. After completing their reproductive cycle they usually depart between August and mid September. Migrants from farther north usually arrive in late August and most individuals depart our region by mid October.

This species is a marvelously interesting little predator that is currently a great example of successful adaptation to a changing world. A true magician in the battle to survive, Merlin are now more common than anytime in my half century of birding. However, I can understand why others might be distressed by the perceived carnage a pair causes to local songbirds. As we have learned predators are essential to healthy prey populations and well functioning ecosystems. So enjoy their likely transitory presence in your neighborhood and watch their fascinating behavior. Fear not, when the old nest that serves as their nursery falls down they will depart and local songbirds will return.



*Above and facing: Immature male Merlin.
Photos by Julie Covey*



The Annual Loon Census

Every year, TILT partners with the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation to recruit volunteers for the Annual Loon Census. On the morning of July 20th, participants selected an area of their choice to sit for an hour and observe Common Loons. They recorded data on the loons they saw, including count, age, and location, as well as weather and other environmental variables.

One lucky winner is chosen each year out of the volunteers who participate in the loon census. Randomly drawn, the winner this year was Janet Gregware, who was presented with the coveted reward:

a beautiful hand-painted wooden loon paddle, made and donated by John Miller III. This paddle was awarded at the Volunteer Recognition Event on Thursday, August 1st, which served as a celebration and thank you for all of the work volunteers do to further TILT's mission.

Common Loon populations in the Adirondack region and on the St. Lawrence face numerous threats, including mercury pollution, shoreline development, fishing line entanglement, lead poisoning from ingestion of toxic fishing tackle, and human disturbance. The loon census provides valuable information on the status

of the population, which can be influential in guiding management and conservation decisions.



Janet Gregware, left, is presented with the loon paddle by Alaina Young, TILT's Education and Outreach Coordinator. The paddle is hand-crafted and donated annually by John Miller III, Thousand Islands Picture Paddles



TILT Blog:

Common Ground



Rebecca Dahl celebrates her River Rat status by walking on the ice.

It was late April, the first time I'd ever laid eyes on the mighty St. Lawrence River. I was standing under a dimly lit lamp post well after dusk gazing out towards Grindstone Island, wearing a winter coat (to my surprise) while the cool wind whipped my hair. After a few minutes of trying

to decipher the width of the River and where exactly Canada began, I gave up and decided to just breathe it all in. There was something to this place. Perhaps it was how wild and unyielding the River seemed or that I lost count of how many trees I could see in a matter of seconds. It was breathtaking – even in the freezing cold, even if I was surrounded by snow in spring. After a few more moments, I peeled myself away from the River and began walking back to my room for the night. After all, I had a job interview the next day.

My first summer in the Thousand Islands was a blur of sunshine, activity, wild spaces, and friendly faces. I heard stories of the wicked winter that preceded, always told with a hint of modest North Country pride in carrying on despite chilling temperatures and mounds of snow. I learned the folklore of how the is-

lands were 'carved out' and after numerous conflicting stories, where Thousand Islands dressing was really made. I discovered that when someone on the River tells you: "my family has been here forever" they actually mean it.

That last part has always intrigued me the most.

What a magical connection to have - being able to share the distinct bond of 'River life' from generation to generation. Being assured that the character of this special place has been maintained in an ever-changing world. Knowing what it feels like to live on the edge of wilderness. Sharing this space not only with one another but with thousands of wild critters, from songbirds to muskie to porcupines.

I was told many times that first summer: "It gets in your blood, The River." They weren't wrong.

Throughout, and possibly in spite of, my suburban New Jersey upbringing I've always been drawn to nature. I remember spending summers as a kid, running outside barefoot and catching lightning bugs.

The beauty of the natural world on a scale as grandiose as the Thousand Islands isn't a luxury, it's a necessity.

Racing my brother while bike riding along the Delaware & Raritan Canal. Helping (okay, watching) my dad care for the many trees in our yard, discussing how impossibly tall they seemed to grow year after year.

My love for this Earth has never been a question. Still, the Thousand Islands snuck up on me with an awakening I experienced on a deeper, more personal level as I was surrounded by abundant natural spaces on a regular basis. The full realization and accounting of how my face beams when I step onto a farm, how my mind quiets walking through the forest, how my

soul lights up as I float my kayak into the water. As though I was drawing back on an ancestral memory of spending long hours on the farm or navigating through unexplored territory, I fully realized that these open, wild spaces are not just something that I love. They are my home.

It's apparent to me that being immersed in the beauty of the natural world on a scale as grandiose as the Thousand Islands isn't a luxury, it's a necessity. While green spaces no matter their size or where they are, play a vital role in connecting people to the land, in creating habitat, and in providing fresh air – experiencing large ecosystems that are quite literally bursting with dynamic, diverse life puts our role as humans into a greater perspective. In how we should care for our Earth, how disconnected we may be from our natural world, and how to begin our own “re-wilding”.

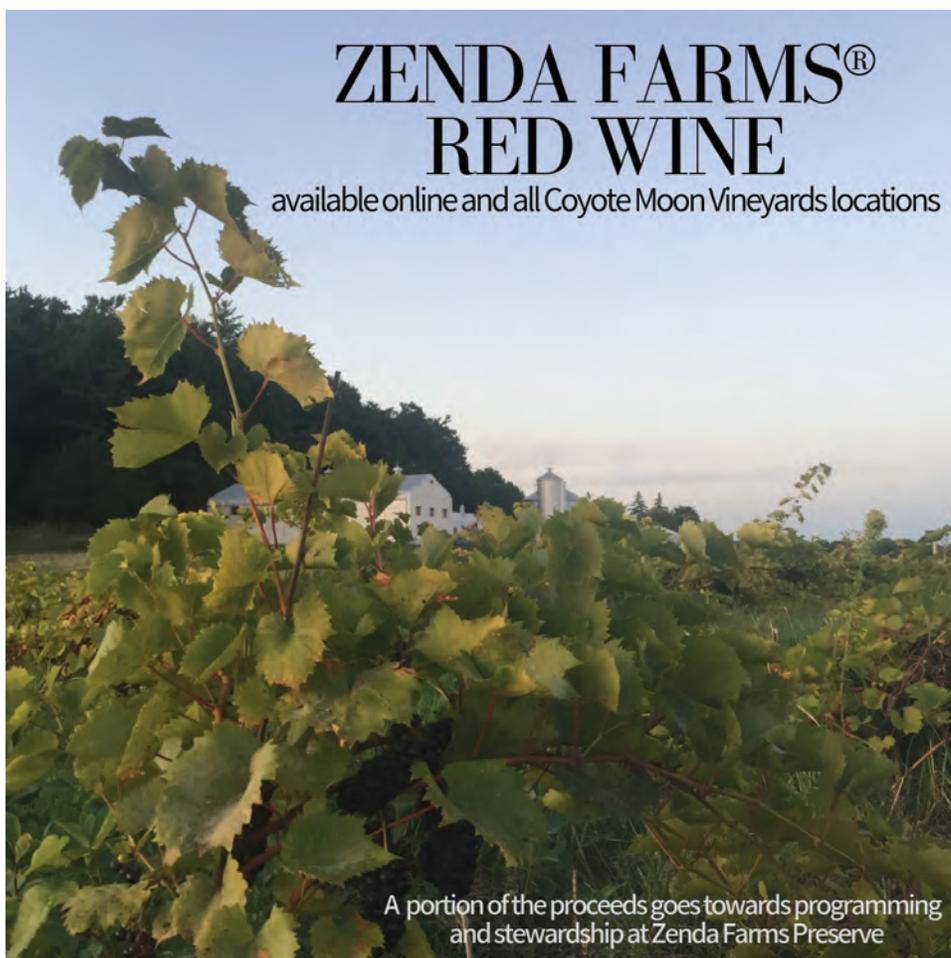
Whether it's a park, a mountain range, a farm with rolling hills, or the River, protecting these spaces becomes important not only for wildlife, for water quality, or for fresh air but as a key component to bet-

ter understand ourselves, our role and our impact on this planet.

It's been four and a half years since I was first introduced to the powerful grace of the St. Lawrence River, and I'm still mesmerized by it all:

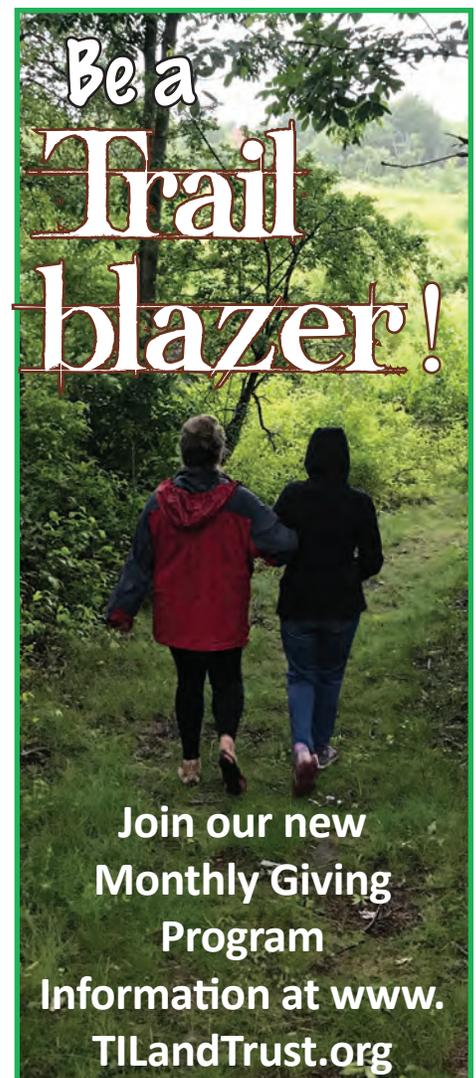
- The pride that all residents of the River hold for this special place, and how that pride is passed from generation to generation.
- How quickly a brush with nature and a River breeze can revitalize the human spirit.
- The wide diversity and number of wildlife species that I can't even begin to count, who call this place home.
- Feeling like I've rediscovered a piece of this human-Earth connection that was buried deep within.
- And that it takes FIVE WHOLE bridges to find where exactly Canada begins.

Rebecca Dahl, Zenda Farms Program Director



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Information at [www.
TILandTrust.org](http://www.TILandTrust.org)

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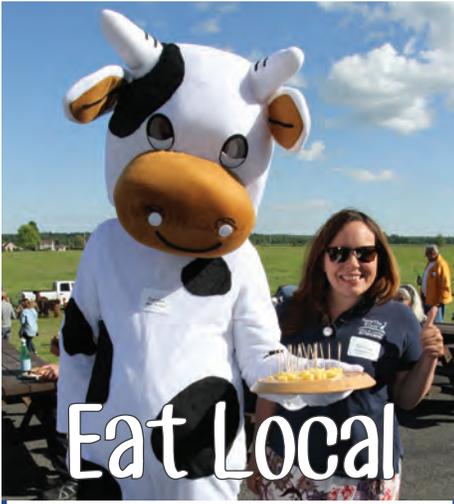
What we do today, shapes the world for our children, our children's children and future generations. Our story (our legacy) is what we leave behind. Will our stories inspire others to work to leave a smaller footprint on our earth and precious Thousand Islands region? We at TILT believe that together through dedication to keeping this special place healthy and beautiful for all who live here, especially our children, our children's children and forevermore – we can make a transcending difference.

The *Thousand Islands Forever* Legacy Program has been created to make it easy for you to be a part of the region's future and to play a guiding role in the conservation of our wild places. By including TILT in your estate plan, you join a special group of people who have made a lasting commitment to land conservation in the Thousand Island region.

For more information, please contact Terra Bach, Director of Development & Communications, at tbach@TILandTrust.org, or through the TILT office at 315-686-5345. Visit our website, www.TILandTrust.org/support/planned-giving-thousand-islands-forever for additional details.

Eat . Play . Live . in the 1000 Islands

Please support these local businesses that support land conservation!



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Bella's
Clayton Food Co-op
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The Roxy Hotel
The Victorian/Subway
Top of the Bay
Wellesley Hotel
Wood Boat Brewery



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Reinman's Decorating Center
River Day Spa & Salon
River Golf Adventures
River Living
River Magic
River Muse Art Gallery
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Thank you, 2019 Sponsors!

From Rail to Trail

Linking the Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail to the Village of Clayton

by Spencer Busler, Assistant Director

The 1870s were a time of vigor and vitality for the small riverfront community of Clayton. This era sparked a century of local commerce primarily driven by one transportation amenity: the railroad.

Spurring from an inland junction in Theresa, the Black River-Utica Railroad (later the New York Central) transported all types of cargo to and from the shores of the St. Lawrence, including ice, salt, fish, coal, grain, granite, hay, lumber, but most importantly, people.

As road systems improved and vehicular transportation expanded, the need for the railroad dwindled. Finally, just under 50 years ago the final service from Clayton left the station.

For several decades, the majority of the railroad corridor had remained abandoned, filling in with dense shrubs and overhanging trees. In the mid-90s, under the leadership of former Executive Director Louise “Sissy” Danforth, TILT started acquiring sections of the forgotten railroad bed for the

development of a recreational rail-trail.

A particularly popular section of this trail system spanned from LaFargeville to Black Creek Road in the Town of Clayton. This section was used year-round by hikers, bikers, cross country skiers and snowmobilers. In 2011, TILT was able to acquire the S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve, helping extend its ownership of the railroad bed from Black Creek Road to just shy of the Clayton Village line.

Seeing the value in such an outdoor recreational asset, TILT, along with several community advisers, began contemplating plans for the extension of the recreational pedestrian/bicycle trail into the Village, with an intention of linking it to the waterfront (now the Village Riverwalk). It was realized that in order to take place, the trail would

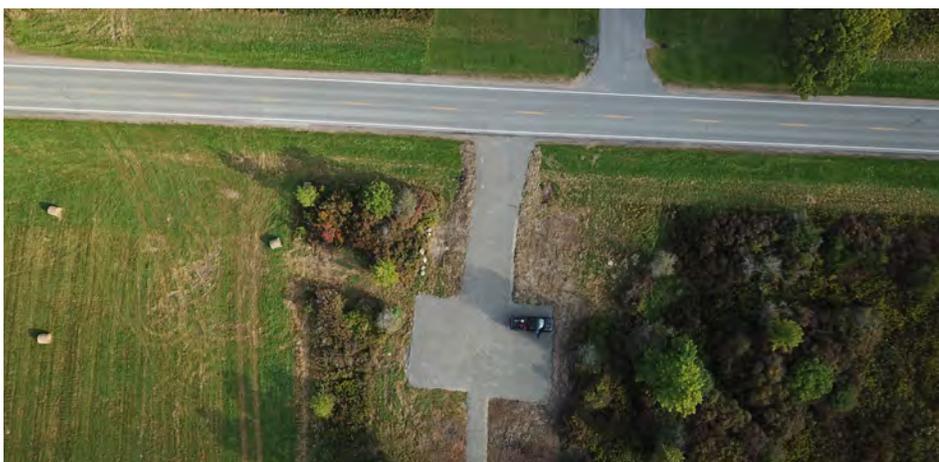
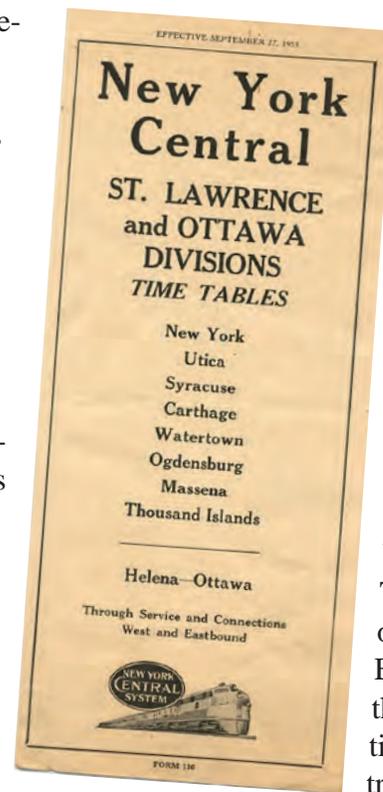
have had to pass through several privately-owned parcels.

TILT was up to the challenge, and has now successfully secured the easements and lands necessary to establish this important trail extension from LaFargeville to Route 12 in the Village of Clayton. Through the purchase of two parcels on East Line Road, and through the acquisition of three public trail easements donated by the Antique

Boat Museum, Green Future LLC, and the Village of Clayton, TILT has now laid the groundwork for bringing these plans to action.

In fact, earlier this year TILT broke ground on a new parking area and trail leading south from East Line Road to the existing TILT-owned railroad bed on the Ingerson Preserve. The new trail provides access to the historic railroad trestle bridge over McCarn Creek. This impressive structure spans 160 feet across the ravine, and is elevated 60 feet above the creek bottom by a pair of massive stone piers. Due to the decades of abandonment, the bridge is in disrepair and is currently unsafe for crossing.

TILT soon plans to rehabilitate this trestle bridge for safe pedestrian use, and to move its trail-building efforts to the north side of East



Aerial view of the new parking area off of East Line Road.



The new parking area and path on that connect to the Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail and the S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve.

Line Road by following a corridor along Carrier Ridge and merging back onto the Village-owned railroad bed as it parallels the Clayton Country Club. The goal by year-end 2020: a connected and safe trail system leading from the majestic riverfront to the wild and open countryside for all to enjoy.

The guidance and support provided by the Rivergate Trail Community Advisory Committee, which includes the Town and Village of Clayton, has been instrumental in bringing this project forward. All who enjoy outdoor recreation in the Thousand Islands owe praise to the municipalities and the Advisory Committee for their dedication to bringing life back to this historic railroad.

Today in the Thousand Islands, if you're looking for a peaceful bicycle ride without vehicles whizzing by the narrow road shoulder, your options are dissatisfyingly slim. But by this time next year, the solution will be a scenic rail-trail with a touch of local history and nature intertwined... all right in your back yard.

TILT is currently raising funds for the trail development and trestle bridge renovations, and intends to pursue grant funding to supplement their completion. If you're inter-

ested in learning more about how you can support this community project, please contact the TILT office at 315-686-5345.

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Proceeds from the sales of the cheese go back in to programming & stewardship at Zenda Farms Preserve

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TILT's Signature Preserves: Grant Funding Provides for Trail Revitalization

by Brandon Hollis, Stewardship Director



MacFarlane Trail at Zenda Farms Preserve

It's a warm summer morning. You round the bend of the Lois Jean & John MacFarlane Nature Trail – part of the beautiful and historic Zenda Farms Preserve. As the sun reflects off the morning dew, you stop and sit on a hand-made stone bench, gazing through the leaves of several maple trees that you helped plant earlier that spring. You continue onward, crossing over a series of bridges that span the rolling hills of the open fields. You stop and read that these grasslands are home to a number of NYS threatened bird species, such as the Bobolink, Henslow's Sparrow, and Upland Sandpiper. As you make your way back to your vehicle, you realize the positive impacts the natural world has on our everyday lives.

Over the past three decades, the Thousand Islands Land Trust has had the privilege of conserving some of the most pristine and ecologically sensitive landscapes along the St. Lawrence River. These protected

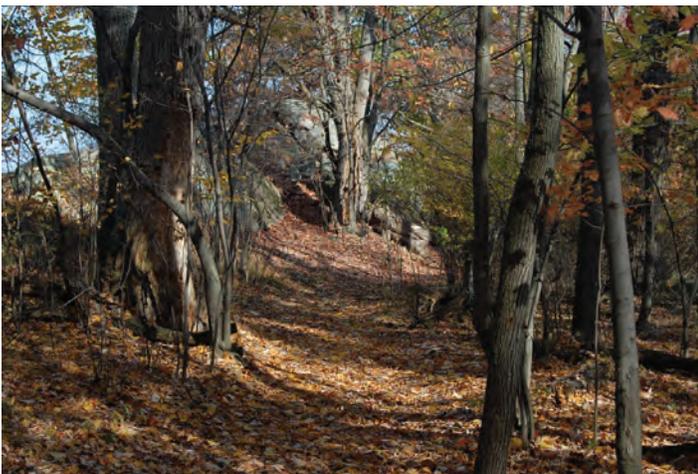


Fort Haldimand on Carleton Island

lands serve as a time capsule, forever preserving the natural beauty that draws us all to this special place in northern New York.

With the River communities at the heart of our work, TILT prides itself on providing public access to these forever wild lands. With our built environment continuing to expand, TILT has recognized the increased importance of connecting people to the natural world. This concept of getting people out on the land continues to drive the organization, as TILT looks for new and creative ways to provide outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences throughout the Thousand Islands region.

Understanding this concept, TILT has been able to establish eight Signature Preserves across five townships. These Signature Preserves embody all aspects of the organization: providing public access and outdoor recreational opportunities, conserving natural



Grindstone Island Nature Trail



Macsherry Trail at Crooked Creek Preserve



Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail in the Ingerson Preserve, photo © Chris Murray Photography

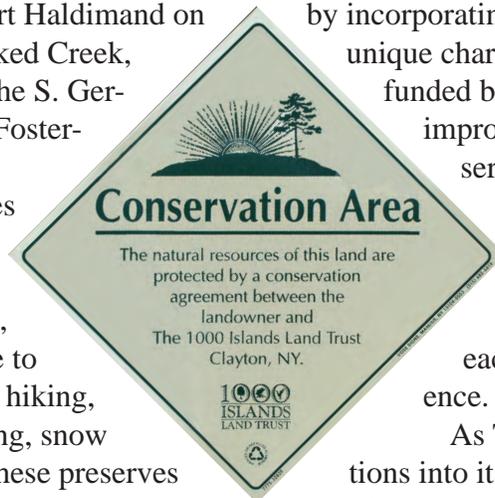


Foster-Blake Woods, photo by Robin Tubolino

beauty and diverse wildlife habitats, and protecting water quality through the preservation of wetlands and undisturbed uplands. These preserves are: Grindstone Island (including Potters Beach), Fort Haldimand on Carleton Island, Zenda Farms, Crooked Creek, Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail and the S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve, Otter Creek, Foster-Blake Woods, and Chippewa Bay.

Through the Signature Preserves program, TILT has been able to provide public access to thousands of acres and nearly 20 miles of trails, hosting multiple locations for people to enjoy a variety of outdoor activities: hiking, biking, kayaking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, and wildlife observation. These preserves also serve as sites for TILT to host its robust Treks & Talks Program, offering a series of educational field-trips and workshops.

In an effort to continue to provide new and updated experiences, TILT applied for a 2019 Steward-



ship Grant through the NYS Conservation Partnership Program. TILT was able to secure nearly \$50,000 dollars for the enhancement of its Signature Preserves by incorporating new features that highlight the unique character of each preserve. Projects funded by this grant will include new kiosks, improved trail infrastructure, new preserve entrance signs, an observation deck, and multiple interpretive panels. These specific projects look to establish a recognizable brand for the organization while providing each trail user with an enriched experience.

As TILT incorporates these new additions into its Signature Preserves, we hope that our River communities continue to support our efforts. Through this work, the Thousand Islands Land Trust looks to strengthen the human-nature relationship, providing the opportunity to create a lifelong connection to these truly special lands.



Otter Creek Nature Trail



Chippewa Bay Preserve

Celebrating Our Volunteers



Doug McLellan and Caroline Yung won the Merle Youngs Conservation Award for their work on the Zenda Comes Alive! video. The award was presented by Rebecca Dahl, Zenda Farms Program Director.



Bill Munro won the Distinguished Service Award for his many years of service to TILT, in countless ways, not the least of which is photography. The award was presented by Terra Bach, Director of Development & Communications.



Dan Miller won the Volunteer Leadership Award in recognition of his contribution as a leader of TILTreks. Mike Stock (not pictured) was also recognized for his many years of support to our KayakTreks. The award was presented by Alaina Young, Education & Outreach Coordinator.



Jeff Staples won the Stewardship Society Award for his dedication to year-round stewardship of TILT preserves. The award was presented by Brandon Hollis, Stewardship Director.



Farmer Ed gives a tour of Homestead Fields Farm

THANK YOU
to our Zenda Farms Cheese Fundraiser Participants



We are "UDDERLY" grateful!



Proceeds from the fundraiser will support the partnership with Homestead Heritage Cheese and programming at Zenda Farms

2019 TILTreks were a blast!



TILTKids Camp



Ichthyologist for a Day!



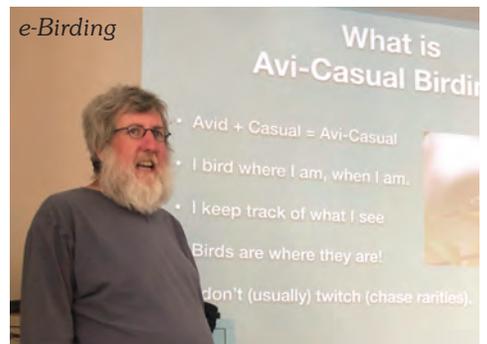
Yoga on a preserve



For the Trees! Arbor Day Celebration



Warbler Walk



e-Birding

What is
Avi-Casual Birding

- Avid + Casual = Avi-Casual
- I bird where I am, when I am.
- I keep track of what I see
- Birds are where they are!
- I don't (usually) twitch (chase rarities).



Spring Stewardship Day



Struttin'
my stuff
@ the 3rd annual
MUTT STRUT with
1000 ISLANDS LAND TRUST & SPCA
Jefferson County



Invasive Species Workshop



Otter Creek Family Fun Run (& Walk)



Moonlight KayakTrek with IRLC



Cub Scouts at Fall Stewardship Day

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SAVE THE DATES



March 6, 2020
 Winter Gathering

July 18, 2020
 Summer Gathering

August 20, 2020*
 * tentative
 Major Donor
 Recognition

June 20, 2020
 Zenda Community Picnic

August 6, 2020
 Volunteer Recognition

September 12, 2020
 Otter Creek Fun Run
 & Celebration