



Westchester Land Trust



SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER



WHERE HOPE TAKES SHAPE

Across landscapes, communities, and time

On a walk at Westchester Land Trust's Dominican Sisters of Hope conservation easement in Ossining, I witnessed a small act of courage.

A killdeer appeared on the path ahead of me, fluttering low, one wing trailing as if broken. It took only a few moments for me to understand that this was no injury, but a performance. The bird's actions were meant to lure all possible harm away from its babies. When I retreated, the bird rose swiftly into the breeze, then vanished into the grass—its future safe once more.

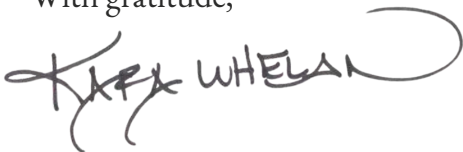
Moments like this play over and over in my head and in my heart, reminding me that hope speaks softly. It lives in a mother's instinct, in quiet resilience, and in the fierce love that safeguards what matters most.

At Westchester Land Trust we celebrate hope every day. We see it in the land we protect, in the steadfast leadership of our 2026 Annual Benefit Honorees, and in nature's quiet beauty and still waters. People and places restore our hope and remind us why we do this work.

Protecting land is about safeguarding the future for all who will walk these trails after us. Like the bird feigning a broken wing to protect her young, we are called to protect the land with care and intention. If you are seeking hope this season, join us.

We have so much hope to share with you.

With gratitude,



Kara Whelan
President

Aerial view of the Hudson River at The Center at Mariandale, which is protected by a WLT conservation easement and stewarded by the Dominican Sisters of Hope. We will host our Annual Benefit at this stunning landscape on June 6. Photo by Ben Kleist



One of my favorite parts of this work is walking the land alongside members of our community. If you'd like to join me for a walk this spring, I warmly invite you to get in touch at kara@westchesterlandtrust.org or 914-234-6992 ext. 12.

BELONGING BEGINS WITH UNDERSTANDING

Empowering people to navigate nature with confidence


Nature is not a one-size-fits-all experience—access begins with understanding what people need to feel comfortable before stepping onto the land.

In 2025, Westchester Land Trust took a thoughtful step toward meeting people where they are, on the trail and beyond.

With support from the Land Trust Alliance, we launched an accessibility pilot at three preserves, gathering detailed, on-the-ground data about trail conditions, including slope, cross slope, surface type, and other features that shape a visitor's experience. This work isn't about defining who can or cannot use a trail. It's about offering clarity so people know they are welcome at our preserves, belong in nature, and can decide for themselves what feels accessible to them.

Alongside this fieldwork—and working in partnership with an accessibility consultant—we redesigned preserve maps to ensure information is clear, consistent, and easy to access on our website before visitors arrive. Knowing what to expect can ease uncertainty, build confidence, and help people feel more prepared to spend time outdoors.

Accessibility is ongoing work. As our nature preserves evolve, so will our approach as we continue to listen, learn, and adapt. By embedding accessibility into how we care for the land, we are working toward a future where nature feels more welcoming, more transparent, and more possible for everyone.



Pine Croft Meadow Preserve in Waccabuc was part of the pilot and features, among other accessibility updates, an ADA accessible parking spot. Photo by MaryKay O'Donnell

DRAWN TOGETHER BY THE LAND

Lodestone Preserve and the promise of what comes next

Some places have a way of drawing people in.

Long before conservation plans were drawn or boundaries defined, the land now known as Lodestone Preserve pulled miners to its magnetite-rich hillsides, shaping the landscape's history and leaving behind old mining roads that still trace its contours. Today, that same sense of pull remains—but now as a beacon of open space, welcoming people to connect with nature.

In 2025, Westchester Land Trust preserved more than 200 acres of forested watershed land in the Town of Southeast, the largest land protection acquisition in the organization's 37-year history. This \$2.2 million project permanently safeguards a critically important landscape that protects drinking water quality for over nine million people across Westchester County and New York City, including communities in Ossining, Mount Pleasant, Sleepy Hollow, and the Bronx.

This is conservation at scale: land that filters water naturally, supports vital wildlife habitat, and contributes to climate resilience for generations to come.

Today, Lodestone stands at the intersection of history and possibility. Its diverse northern hardwood forests, rocky outcroppings, floodplains, and vernal pools support a rich web of life—among them amphibians, migratory songbirds, barred owls, and multiple bat species. A historic mine shaft likely provides winter refuge for state- and federally endangered bats, making this land ecologically significant in ways that are hidden beneath the surface.

“Protecting Lodestone isn’t just about securing land on a map,” says Janelle Robbins, Westchester Land Trust’s Vice President of Conservation. “It’s about listening to the land itself—its history, its habitats, and its potential—and responding in ways that honor both.”

Like the land, Lodestone Preserve’s future will be shaped by careful stewardship. The preserve is not yet open for public access, but work is well underway to prepare it thoughtfully. Historic mining roads will be repurposed as wide, stable trails, building on our pilot accessibility project launched in 2025. And early stewardship efforts are focused on forest health, habitat protection, and research that supports species like bats and other wildlife.

This isn’t just about land for today; it’s about land that matters to people, to ecosystems, and to the water that flows from hill to home.

The acquisition was made possible through generous support from The PCLB Foundation, along with partnership support from Scenic Hudson Land Trust and the broader community of WLT supporters. Their collective investment illustrates what’s possible when philanthropy and conservation work together.



BE A PART OF WHAT COMES NEXT

Watch for upcoming volunteer opportunities and be part of preparing Lodestone Preserve for its future.

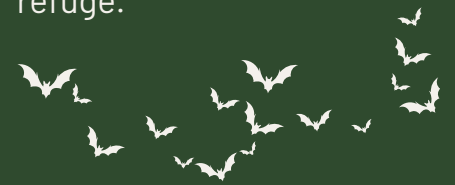
Visit westchesterlandtrust.org/events or email jakob@westchesterlandtrust.org.



Lodestone preserve was once home to a magnetite mining operation. Photo by Janelle Robbins

Did you know?

The historic magnetite mine (now closed) at Lodestone Preserve now likely serves as a hibernaculum for state- and federally endangered bat species, offering a rare and protected winter refuge.



PICTURED LEFT: Aerial image of Lodestone Preserve’s reservoir. Photo by Ben Kleist

HOPE

on the Hudson

WHERE LAND, LEGACY, AND CARE ENDURE

On June 6, Westchester Land Trust will gather friends, supporters, and partners for Hope on the Hudson—our annual benefit and a joyful celebration of the people and places that make conservation possible.

This year's event will be held at the breathtaking Center at Mariandale, home to the Dominican Sisters of Hope, where rolling woods and sweeping Hudson River views set the stage for an evening filled with connection, gratitude, and hope.

At the event, we will honor the Dominican Sisters of Hope, Allison Turcan of D.I.G. Farm, and Doug Mancinelli of North Castle Vine Cutters. As stewards of Mariandale, the Sisters have long understood the land as a place of welcome, reflection, and renewal—a landscape that nurtures both ecological health and the human spirit.

Several years ago, that vision took on a lasting form when Westchester Land Trust partnered with the Sisters to place a conservation easement on 34 acres of the Mariandale property. Faced with the option of selling the land to a developer, they chose to honor their commitment to the land and their community, ensuring this special place would be protected and cared for forever. It was a powerful, forward-looking act—one rooted in hope, generosity, and a deep sense of responsibility to future generations.

Our Hope on the Hudson annual benefit is a celebration of that kind of leadership. It's a chance to come together, celebrate shared successes, and raise critical funds for the future of land conservation in our region.

Proceeds from the benefit directly support Westchester Land Trust's work to protect vital landscapes—from forests and waterways to places of learning, gathering, and quiet refuge. Whether you join us as a guest, sponsor, or advertiser, your support helps ensure that hope continues to take shape across the lands we love.

TICKETS ARE ON SALE!

Join us for our biggest party of the year



- Meet our Honorees
- Purchase tickets or a table
- Learn about sponsorships and ad opportunities
- Get involved

A LEGACY THAT FLOWS FORWARD

Supporting the future of conservation through planned giving



Marian Rose believed deeply in protecting the natural world—not just for today, but for those who come after her.

PICTURED ABOVE: Marian Rose always joined WLT staff for the annual monitoring of her conservation easement. Photo by Kara Whelan

A devoted supporter and partner of Westchester Land Trust, Marian gave generously during her lifetime and included WLT in her estate plans. She was the organization’s first Board secretary and took minutes at the very first meeting at founder Louis McCagg’s house back in 1988. In 2005, she donated a conservation easement on her land in Bedford—preserving landscapes that protect the water quality of Swallow Lake.

That water flows onward—into Pitch Swamp, the Stone Hill River, and ultimately the Muscoot Reservoir—helping supply clean drinking water to communities across Westchester County and New York City. Marian understood that conservation is cumulative, and one protected place can ripple outward in profound ways.

By choosing to include Westchester Land Trust in her estate plans, Marian ensured that her commitment to the environment would continue long beyond her lifetime, offering a powerful example of how thoughtful planning can create lasting impact.

Marian passed away in the fall of 2025 at the age of 104. Her legacy lives on through the land she protected, the water it safeguards, and the future she helped secure through her generosity and foresight.

PLAN TODAY. PROTECT FOREVER.

By including Westchester Land Trust in your estate plans, you can create a legacy that protects land, water, and life—forever. To learn more about planned giving contact Susan Leighton at susan@westchesterlandtrust.org or 914-234-6992 ext. 23

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VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

For conservation easement landowners

Join us (via Zoom) Wednesday, May 20 from 4-6pm for our next virtual office hours to ask your burning conservation easement questions. Whether you own a property under easement or aspire to, WLT's experts will explain every step of the easement process.

Advanced registration is required.

Email jody@westchesterlandtrust.org to RSVP.



ON THE COVER: A bobcat explores the land at The Center at Mariandale in Ossining. Photo by Karalyn Lamb