

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2022



# Westchester Land Trust



## Finding JOY on the Land

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[westchesterlandtrust.org](http://westchesterlandtrust.org)

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(WLT) is a member of EarthShare, a nationwide network of America's most respected environmental and conservation charities. To find out how you and your employer can support WLT through an EarthShare workplace giving campaign visit [earthsharenyc.org](http://earthsharenyc.org) or contact Michelle Culbert at [Michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org](mailto:Michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org) or 914.234.6992 ext. 22.

Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) Number: 77308



**COVER**

Groundwork Hudson Valley's Green Team was hired to help us make improvements at Pine Croft Meadow Preserve last summer. Photo credit: WLT staff

**FROM THE PRESIDENT**



“Local land trusts (like WLT!) are leading the way to protect the natural spaces that sustain our communities.

**Land trusts have protected 61 million acres**—more than the total area of all national parks.

**Local and state land trusts contributed to 70%** of the growth in land protected since 2015.”



—Land Trust Alliance

Dear Friends,

**Since the founding of Westchester Land Trust (WLT) more than 30 years ago, we’ve been committed to enriching our community.** When I think about what “enrichment” means, my mind used to jump to the more visible aspects of what we do—conserving thousands of acres of land to protect our air, water, and critical wildlife habitats. We still do that! But today, my definition is a bit different.

**Over the past few years, we’ve taken a close look at our organization, our community, and how we can better serve those who put their faith and trust in our work.** Today, when I think about enrichment, my mind jumps to creating internship opportunities for future conservationists, like the two Youth Conservationist Award Honorees featured on page 6. I think about our Community Conservation Honorees for this year’s Annual Benefit, the Glenwood Lake Association and Friends of Glenwood Lake Park, who tirelessly worked with us for 20 years to protect sensitive undeveloped parcels around Glenwood Lake in the City of New Rochelle.

I’m reminded of our collaboration with partner organizations to protect 125 acres of land in Cortlandt that buffers stormwater entering the Hudson River and protects clean air and drinking water for the surrounding communities. And I imagine the upcoming start of the growing season at our small-acre Sugar Hill Farm, and how hundreds of volunteers will learn to grow fresh, nutritious food to be donated to neighbors in need.

**As you read through these pages, we hope you are reminded of the things that matter to you and your loved ones.** Your involvement and support helps us redefine what it means to enrich our community and why it must be rooted in fighting for all people to have the access, opportunity, and comfort necessary to find joy on the land. You continually inspire us and your support sustains us.

Thank you,

Lori Ensinger

P.S. There are many ways to get involved and find joy on the land this spring and summer—you can volunteer at Sugar Hill Farm, make a donation to support our work, follow us on social media, consider sharing your agricultural land with farmers in need of land to grow, or simply introduce a friend to a WLT preserve.

## Welcoming Beavers to Our Biggest Preserve



Beaver

The land we conserve is home to a stunning diversity of wildlife. From tiny butterflies and elusive bobcats to slithering salamanders and industrious beavers, there are countless creatures that call the 9,000 acres we've protected home. Let's take a look at how our staff and volunteers are working to coexist with a particularly crafty species.

### Building Dams

Back in 2020, we noticed some new wildlife residents at the Westchester Wilderness Walk / Zofnass Family Preserve in Pound Ridge—beavers! We were thrilled to see this native species at the preserve, but their presence posed a challenge for maintaining the land. The dam these beavers built along a small stream created a shallow, 15-acre pond that was flooding some sections of the trails. We were concerned that the flooding would increase if left unchecked.

Our staff consulted with wildlife biologist and beaver expert Dan Aitchison to “notch” the beaver dam and study the water levels to help us design and build a “beaver baffle” system. This ingenious flow device allows some water to pass through the dam, keeping the newly created pond at a depth that is low enough to allow accessibility of the trail, but not so low as to cause the beavers to leave and build another dam upstream. We actually want the beavers to stay put, so as not to flood other areas nearby. It's a fascinating and delicate balance!

To aid the transition to an aquatic ecosystem and stabilize the edges of the pond, volunteers planted live stakes or “living branches” of wetland shrubs including willows, dogwoods, and buttonbush, that will grow into thickets.

### Habitat Changes

Before the beavers transformed this habitat, the area was a forested wetland that was often muddy, but rarely inundated with water. Flooded beaver pond habitats were historically common in this area prior to extensive beaver hunting and trapping. Now that the pond has taken over, we're expecting to see a number of changes::

- Tree die-offs due to submerged roots
- Increased aquatic plant abundance
- More amphibians, fish, and waterfowl (mallards and wood ducks)
- Other semi-aquatic wildlife, like mink, muskrat, and even otters!

**Come check it out! This preserve is open for you to visit year round, free of charge. We hope you get the chance to come see the beavers in action soon!**

### Learn About Beavers!

The beaver is New York State's official mammal and has a habitat range that extends across most of the United States and Canada. Beavers are most active at night and can stay underwater for up to 15 minutes at a time. Their diet consists of herbaceous and woody plants.

Today, beavers can be found at 10% of WLT preserves—and they've all arrived within the past four years.



Otter



### How does the Beaver Baffle work?

A pipe runs along the bottom of the pond, which allows water to flow from the deep channel to an outflow behind the dam. To prevent the beaver from blocking the pipe, metal cages are placed around the inflow and outflow openings.



### Special Thanks...

We are grateful to our volunteers, Jaelen and Samantha, who worked tirelessly on a cold winter day, in a frozen pond, to help with this project.



“Our father loved to travel the world—when he returned home from a long trip, he would say, ‘Westchester is the most beautiful place I’ve ever been

to.’ That’s why he devoted his time and talent to WLT as a Director for many years and left a legacy gift to WLT when he passed. Using his gift to preserve this beautiful land is a perfectly fitting way to honor his spirit and love for the land.”

—Family of  
Worthington Mayo-Smith

## Creating a Connected Corridor in Cortlandt

**A**fter more than six years of planning and efforts, WLT permanently conserved 125 acres across three projects in the Town of Cortlandt in late 2021. The newly protected land sits within a 2,700-acre conservation corridor in the Croton-to-Highlands Biodiversity Area which includes the Town’s Hudson Highlands Gateway Park, the Hudson Highlands State Park, and the Appalachian Trail.

The project exemplifies the type of bold, large-scale conservation needed to protect the future of our region. “This was one of the largest remaining pieces of unprotected open space in Westchester,” said Lori Ensinger, President of WLT. “This land provides the community with ‘green solutions’ to help combat climate change as well as buffer the Hudson River and the drinking water supply for the City of Peekskill. Time was of the essence to avoid losing the land forever.”

### Brimming with Biodiversity

Criss-crossed with remnants of an unmaintained trail system, the new preserve features a spectacular diversity of wetland habitats, including a chestnut oak and mountain laurel forest, red maple swamp, oak and hickory forest, and beech, maple, and tulip forest. Home to a wide range of wildlife, bobcat tracks and coyote scat can be observed in areas. Its locally unique habitats are home to plants and animals designated by New York State as *Threatened* or *Special Concern*.

### A Land of Many Uses

The property has a rich history, one that we’re still learning more about. This area was originally inhabited by the Indigenous peoples of the Lenape, or

**The conservation assemblage came together through the generosity of many individuals and organizations.**

More than 100 acres were generously donated by the Estate of Amram Attias, 4 acres were donated by a neighboring landowner, and WLT purchased an adjacent 12 acres.

Funding was provided by a generous bequest from the Estate of Worthington Mayo-Smith (pictured above), who was a former Director of WLT, a grant from The Nature Conservancy of New York’s *Resilient and Connected Network* grant program, and WLT’s land acquisition fund.

“The impact of conserving this land forever will benefit the community in so many dynamic ways,” said Brendan Murphy, WLT’s Director of Stewardship. “It gives me peace to know that it will always be here for us, offering recreational opportunities, habitat for wildlife, and protection from the effects of climate change.”



Delaware, tribe. Situated in close proximity to the Hudson River, the land was likely a seasonal Lenape camp site or hunting ground. We will work with local Indigenous communities to incorporate and honor past uses of the land into the management of the property.

This land also played a role in the American Revolution and is documented as the site of a military parade ground and gallows. More recently, a large portion of the property was used as a recreational camp until the 1980s.

#### **Connecting Landscapes for Climate Resiliency**

Because this land is situated within an existing large conservation corridor, protecting it from development and fragmentation was a top priority. Landscape-scale projects like this one are vital for sustaining the clean air, water, and biodiversity that support human health.

The property’s wetlands and diverse terrain also make it more resilient to the effects of climate change. The sprawling woodlands sequester carbon and prevent it from being released into the atmosphere, and wetlands buffer local communities and the Hudson River from flooding and stormwater runoff.

#### **Planning for Public Access**

With many diverse habitats and stunning views, we’re excitedly preparing to welcome the community to explore this property. WLT’s staff is developing a plan to open a formal hiking trail system for public use—we’ll share updates on the timing of this later in the year. We will work with partners to conduct research on the land-use history and unique biodiversity of the property and will engage local school groups and volunteers to participate in this effort.

**Stay tuned for future updates about public access, programming, and volunteer opportunities. Contact WLT’s Preserve Manager, John Zeiger, at [johnz@westchesterlandtrust.org](mailto:johnz@westchesterlandtrust.org) to get involved or learn more.**



## **DID YOU KNOW?**

**This land falls within one of seven priority linkage areas in New York State** that were identified as providing critical connections between core forests by **The Nature Conservancy**, which provided grant funding for this project.



Large land projects like this demonstrate WLT’s ability to achieve the goals outlined in **President Biden’s 30x30 plan, which calls for the protection of at least 30% of U.S. land and water by 2030.**



# Save the date!



## Annual Benefit, Saturday, June 4 at JAMROC, the Katonah home of Monte and Angelina Lipman

Our biggest fundraiser of the year is being held in-person after two years of virtual and small gatherings! Enjoy dancing and dining outdoors, farm-fresh food stations, signature cocktails, and live music.

Together with old friends and new, we'll raise a glass to celebrate our land protection accomplishments and honor the significant contributions of our honorees.

### MEET The Lipmans

WLT's 2022 Annual Benefit hosts, **Monte and Angelina Lipman**, are an inspiringly successful duo with a deep love for the Bedford community. Monte is the Founder and CEO of Republic Records and is known for steering the label's growth, alongside his brother Avery Lipman (Founder and COO, Republic Records), from a small independent company launched in 1995 to the nation's top record label. Today, Republic Records represents the industry's best, including Ariana Grande, Drake, John Mellencamp, Nicki Minaj, Pearl Jam, Stevie Wonder, Taylor Swift, The Weeknd and more. Angelina is a research psychologist with a bachelor's degree from Columbia University and a master's and dual-PhD from New York University.

Raising their three children, Remy, Juliet, and Cameron, is Angelina and Monte's most important responsibility and the driving force behind their passion for WLT's mission. **"As the parents of three children, it's so important that we preserve natural areas that ensure our air and water are safe, for not only our children's generation, but for generations to come,"** Angelina said.



### COMMUNITY CONSERVATION HONOREES Glenwood Lake Association & Friends of Glenwood Lake Park

Over 20 years ago, community members from **Glenwood Lake Association and Friends of Glenwood Lake Park** in New Rochelle contacted WLT to advocate for the preservation of the last remaining undeveloped parcels around Glenwood Lake, the only lake in the southern part of New Rochelle. Surrounding the lake is a 13-acre park boasting diverse wildlife and hundreds of visitors each year.

The path was not easy, but five acres were preserved over several transactions between 2001-2006, and in early 2021 WLT acquired the last remaining undeveloped parcels around the Lake, protecting them as a public nature preserve forever. Glenwood Lake Association, Friends of Glenwood Lake Park, and the City of New Rochelle were critical to the success of this project.



### YOUTH CONSERVATIONIST HONOREES Rhys Healy & Halle Vernon

In the summer of 2020, **Rhys Healy** volunteered with WLT with the goal of preserving local ecosystems and gaining research experience. The following fall, Rhys designed an independent project collecting data on the white turtlehead plant, which is the sole native host of the regionally-rare Baltimore Checkerspot caterpillar, at WLT's Pine Croft Meadow Preserve in Waccabuc. In spring 2021, Rhys spent six weeks at WLT preserves around the county helping to revitalize habitat. Rhys attends Cornell University.

**Halle Vernon** got involved with WLT in the spring of 2020, when the world was closed, but WLT's preserves stayed open as a refuge for many, including Halle. While hiking at WLT's Westchester Wilderness Walk / Zofnass Family Preserve in Pound Ridge, Halle met Preserve Manager, John Zeiger, and Advisory Board Member, Mike Surdej. She asked if John needed more volunteer help and it wasn't long before Halle was helping with projects on WLT preserves, spanning from invasive management, mapping, split log bridge construction, trail clearing, native plant monitoring, and chainsaw work (after obtaining proper safety certification). Halle is a graduate of Brown University.



Rhys Healy & Halle Vernon

**Funds raised at our Annual Benefit directly support our land protection work. To request an invitation, please contact Michelle Culbert at 914-234-6992, ext. 22, [michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org](mailto:michelle@westchesterlandtrust.org).**

*The Annual Benefit will comply with New York State COVID safety guidelines on gatherings..*



# Westchester Land Trust Programs

Our programs and events will be held in person when possible. All events will follow local, state, and federal COVID-19 regulations. Group sizes are limited. **Online pre-registration is required for all programs and events—visit the Calendar section of our website to sign up. Please notify us of any cancellations so we can alert those on waiting lists.**

<p><b>Saturday</b> <b>April 23, 2022</b> <b>Session 1: 9:30 AM-12 PM</b> <b>Session 2: 1-3:30 PM</b></p>		<p><b>Tree Planting at Glenwood Lake Park</b> Glenwood Lake Park, New Rochelle, NY</p>	<p>Join us for a day of tree planting by the lake with our friends from the Glenwood Lake Association. We will plant trees using shovels and other hand tools. This program is appropriate for all ages, but minors must be accompanied by an adult. <b>Rain Date: Sunday, April 24, same session times</b></p>
<p><b>Saturday</b> <b>April 30, 2022</b> <b>Session 1: 9:30 AM-12 PM</b> <b>Session 2: 1-3:30 PM</b></p>		<p><b>Tree Planting at Hunter Brook Preserve</b> Hunter Brook Preserve, Yorktown, NY</p>	<p>In partnership with the Watershed Agricultural Council (WAC), we will be working to plant trees using shovels and other hand tools. This program is appropriate for all ages, but minors must be accompanied by an adult. Attendees need to be able to walk a half mile total on preserve trails. <b>Rain Date: Sunday, May 1, same session times</b></p>
<p><b>Saturday</b> <b>June 25, 2022</b> <b>10 AM-12:30 PM</b></p>		<p><b>Mile-a-Minute Removal at Pine Croft Meadow Preserve</b> Pine Croft Meadow Preserve, Lewisboro, NY</p>	<p>We will be working off-trail to remove invasive mile-a-minute vines overtopping native wildflowers in a field. Appropriate for ages 6 and up, and minors must be accompanied by an adult. Attendees will need to be able to walk a total of half a mile on and off trails.</p>
<p><b>Tuesday</b> <b>June 28, 2022</b> <b>10 AM-12:30 PM</b></p>		<p><b>Mile-a-Minute Removal at Hunter Brook Preserve</b> Hunter Brook Preserve, Yorktown, NY</p>	<p>We will be working off-trail to remove invasive mile-a-minute vines from young trees in a restoration site in the floodplain. Appropriate for ages 6 and up, and minors must be accompanied by an adult. Attendees will need to be able to walk a total of half a mile on and off trails.</p>

For all stewardship programs and events, we strongly recommend bringing water, snacks, long pants and long-sleeved shirts, close-toed shoes, mask, work gloves, and weather-appropriate clothing. Be aware that we will be working in a variety of habitats, often including off-trail areas where there may be thorny plants, poison ivy, muddy ground, ticks, and wasps, and limited access to restroom facilities.

## Volunteer Opportunities



**Grow and Share! Farm Volunteer Days**  
**Tuesdays and Thursdays**  
**9:30-11:30 AM**  
**Sugar Hill Farm, Bedford Hills, NY**

Learn about organic farming while helping us grow nutritious food for our neighbors in need. Everything we grow is donated to the Community Center of Northern Westchester and other local partners. All ages and experience levels are welcome.  
**Kick-Off: Thursday, April 12, 2022**

Visit our website to sign up to volunteer in the garden. For additional information, contact Betty Sue at [bettsue@westchesterlandtrust.org](mailto:bettsue@westchesterlandtrust.org)

Plus, coming soon...



**Pollinator Pop-Up Events**

WLT's Pollinator Pop-Up is an interactive exhibit that offers hands-on activities and a wealth of information for pollinator lovers of all ages.

**Visit our website to learn about Pop-Up dates, request the Pop-Up at your community event, or get a free resource packet including native wildflower seeds, instructional materials, and more!**

*Bluegrass in the Barn*

**Thursday, Sept. 15, 2022**  
**at**  
**Maple Grove Farm in Bedford**



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# YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS NOW & ALWAYS Westchester Land Trust

### Protect our environment and help others

Find Joy on the Land by joining the Sustaining Stewards Club with a recurring monthly donation today! A small gift to you makes a big difference to us—\$10 a month helps support internships and volunteer opportunities for the next generation of land stewards.




Scan to join our Sustaining Stewards Club with a monthly recurring donation.

### Thinking long term?

#### WLT's commitment to protect and care for the land is forever.

By making a planned gift, you can help create a legacy of conservation for your family and for future generations to enjoy. For information about WLT's planned giving program please contact Kara Whelan, Vice President at 914-234-6992 ext. 12 or by checking the legacy gift box below and we will reach out to you.



 WLT's mission has never been more urgent! Make your annual gift to WLT today to preserve land forever, keep trails safe and open to the public, and provide organic produce for your neighbors in need. No gift is too small!

### I would love to contribute

\$10  \$25  \$35  \$50  \$75  \$100  \$.....

Recurring  Monthly  Bi-Monthly

*For the price of one lunch a month, you can contribute \$100+ in 2022 and preserve the land that will sustain future generations.*

My gift is in honor/memory of

.....

I would like my gift to remain anonymous.

I would like to learn more about leaving a legacy gift in my will to WLT.

I will submit matching gift from my employer

.....

*WLT is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, your contribution is tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.*

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City

State

Zip

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Phone Number

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Email Address\*

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*Checks made out to Westchester Land Trust can be mailed to 403 Harris Road, Bedford Hills, NY 10507. Donate online by visiting WestchesterLandTrust.org and clicking the 'Donate' button.*

*\*The email provided above will be added to WLT's enews list to keep you up-to-date on Westchester Land Trust's successes, programs, and events. You can unsubscribe at any time. We never share your private information.*