CONSERVING OUTDOOR LIFE

CHAUTAUQUA WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

30 Years • 30 Preserves • 1,000 Acres

30th Anniversary &
2020 Annual Report



Welcome Message



We are pleased to present CWC's 30th Anniversary & 2020 Annual Report, celebrating our many 2020 programs, projects and accomplishments and major achievements over our 30+ years of conservation action!

We are so thankful for your partnership to conserve the landscapes, eco-systems and waters that make Chautauqua County a special place in which to live and recreate – a refuge for humans and wildlife alike! As we begin an exciting new era in our new headquarters in Lakewood, we will continue delivering conservation education, activities and stewardship of our beautiful preserves and natural areas for many years to come.

We have come a long way since a small group of us began meeting and dreaming in the late 1980's. There was urgency for action then, which continues to this day. When CWC was incorporated in 1990 as an all-volunteer organization, our early vision and mission for the organization was to: 1) save as many of the scenic and ecologically valuable Chautauqua Lake shoreline sites remaining in private ownership, and 2) work for protecting these very special waters from poorly managed development that was unnecessarily resulting in excess fertile sediment fueling excessive plant growth, algae blooms and the loss of lake depth. We also desired to raise awareness, appreciation and protection of the most important ecological, hydrological and scenic sites county-wide. Since our humble beginnings, CWC has established 31 nature preserves protecting 1,059 acres and facilitated the conservation of the Stow Farm Lakeshore, Cheney Farm Lakeshore, Whitney Bay and the Midway Historic Park on Chautauqua Lake by the State of New York. From the Chautauqua Lake Outlet north to Lake Erie and east to the Cassadaga Lakes and Creek, we have facilitated the conservation of over 1,126 acres county-wide. We have done so with the support of over 2,500 individuals, families, foundations, governments and organizations as well as with a strong, qualified and dedicated team of board directors and staff.

The science is clear – healthy streams and lakes require healthy, naturally-forested watersheds feeding them clean waters. Working with landowners to heal and restore our watershed lands in forests and wetlands is the most essential strategy for enhancing the quality of our lakes, streams and groundwaters, for maintaining healthy fish and wildlife communities and for capturing carbon dioxide to fight climate change. CWC has engaged with partners to complete erosion control projects at 14 sites on Chautauqua Lake tributaries over the last five years, while our conservationists have assisted landowners to create lakefront vegetative buffers from Mayville and Point Chautauqua to sites in Lakewood. "Lakescaping" consultations have provided designs for 86 sites with over 100 landowners and counting. Over the past year, our beautiful preserves have hosted 1,532 recorded visits, and our community of 110 volunteers, including preserve stewards, contributed 2,300+ hours of assistance**!**

With increasing development pressures, chemical threats and biodiversity losses across Planet Earth, our conservation work becomes *even more crucial* as we embark on our second 30 years! On behalf of the CWC board and staff, we express our deepest gratitude for your partnership as we strive to deliver preventive and restorative actions that will heal and enhance the quality of our lands and waters in perpetuity. You, our members, donors and granters provide the fuel and energy to accomplish our conservation goals – and we thank you!



Becky

Becky Nystrom
Board President

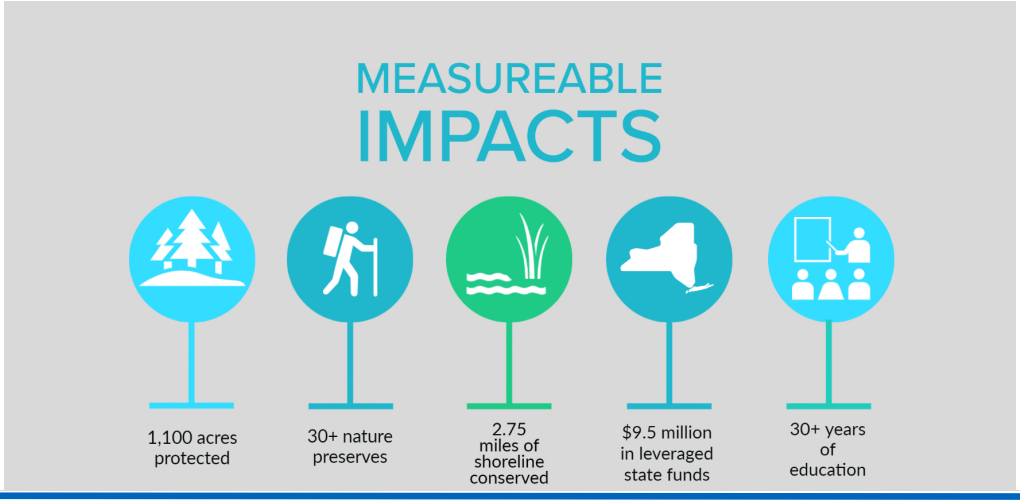
John

John Jablonski III
Executive Director

Celebrating 30 Years

Since our founding in 1990, and with the support of more than 3,000 supporters, donors, granters and volunteers, CWC has made great strides in the protection and enhancement of Chautauqua County's waterways, watersheds and habitats. Our accomplishments are numerous and have had far-reaching impacts throughout the county and downstream. Some of our proudest achievements over our 30 years of local conservation action include:

- Conserving more than 1,100 acres of land across the county and establishing and maintaining 30+ nature preserves which protect habitat, water quality, scenic beauty and public recreation alike on these sites
- Protecting 2 miles of Chautauqua Lake shoreline to conserve habitat, wetlands, scenic beauty and public access, including:
  - ◊ The Cheney Farm Lakeshore, which protected 34 acres of land and 3,600 feet of shoreline
  - ◊ The Stow Farm Lakeshore, which protected 19 acres of land, including 9 acres of wetlands, and 1,180 feet of shoreline
  - ◊ The Chautauqua Lake Outlet Greenway, which conserved 80 acres of land, including ¾ mile of the shoreline of Chautauqua Lake and Outlet
  - ◊ A conservation easement protecting 16 acres of forest land, including 900 feet of shoreline at the Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center
  - ◊ The Wells Bay Lakeshore Forest, conserving public use of a popular boating and swimming site
  - ◊ The Prendergast Creek and Whitney Bay wetlands, important fish and wildlife habitat and fishing sites
- Facilitating the preservation of the historic Midway Park as a state park
- Conserving 94 acres on the Cassadaga Lakes protecting ¾-mile of natural shoreline and 20% of the lakes' entire shoreline, including the 76-acre Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park
- Receiving two land donations totaling 44 acres from Jay Stratton to establish two preserves on Chautauqua Creek, protecting part of The Chautauqua Gorge and Westfield public water supply watershed
- Engaging landowners to restore thousands of feet of native plant habitats on shorelines with technical assistance through our *Healthy Landscapes - Healthy Waters, Starve the Algae! Save the Lake!* and *LakeScapes* programs, including assisting Chautauqua Institution to plan for their buffer installations
- Holding science-based educational programs and campaigns to increase awareness and implementation of more responsible land use practices on the part of governments, organizations, businesses and individuals
- Partnering with Chautauqua County, County Soil & Water Conservation District and Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance to provide publicity and education through the Chautauqua Lake NYSWQIP tributary erosion control and re-vegetation projects at 12 sites, substantially reducing lake sedimentation fueling lake plant growth



2020 – Year In Review

In 2020, the CWC celebrated its 30th Anniversary! And although COVID-19 caused the cancellation of many of our celebratory events last year, CWC staff and board were as busy as ever!

Our watershed land conservation, pollution prevention, technical assistance and preserve enhancement and management activities proceeded, with modifications for safety as necessary, and our 30+ nature preserves had more visitors than ever before!

Land Conservation

- Established the 76-acre Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park site
- Made enhancements at eight of our preserves, installing preserve signs, boardwalks and visitor sign-in boxes and expanding parking areas, trails and trail markings
- Participated with partner agencies in invasive species field surveys, monitoring and control efforts, including the invasive water chestnut, Japanese knotweed, common reed (Phragmites), multi-flora rose and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

Education & Technical Assistance

- Launched the *LakeScapes* program to engage lakeshore homeowners to plant and grow lakeshore native plant buffer strips, with on-site consultations with 101 property owners
- Designed and installed two native plant demonstration buffer gardens at Mayville Lakeside Park and Waldmer Park at Winchester Dock in Lakewood
- Designed and installed a native stormwater retention pond planting at the Heritage Woods – Orchard Grove location in Ellicott
- Developed and published *A Homeowner's Guide to Lake Friendly Living* and *Chautauqua Lake Watershed Stormwater Toolkit* booklets
- Provided technical, engineering and grants writing assistance to the Town of North Harmony toward designing and funding three erosion control projects on Ball Creek at Stow
- Facilitated progress on a proposed constructed wetland behind the Save-A-Lot Plaza in Lakewood to capture stormwater to prevent flooding of Fairmount Avenue (Route 394)
- Hosted two webinars to promote lake-friendly, chemical-free lawn care best practices; produced and distributed chemical-free yard signs throughout Chautauqua County; published three issues of *The 'Shed Sheet* newsletter and bi-weekly educational articles in *The Post Jour*nal newspaper

Osprey!

CWC celebrated the arrival of a family of osprey to our nesting platform at the Loomis Goose Creek Wetland Preserve! The pair has returned in 2021 . . . watch their story unfold on our Facebook page!



Lending A Hand!

Volunteers generously donated more than 2,000 hours of time to CWC in 2020! Our volunteers are invaluable, and our successes would not be possible without them!



Take A Hike!

In late spring, we installed visitor sign-in boxes at five of our preserves with featured trails, which recorded more than 1,600 visitor sign-ins between June and December alone!



2021 Activities

While the COVID-19 pandemic prompted shutdowns and social distancing, it also prompted people to spend more time in the great outdoors, creating a new or renewed engagement with and appreciation for nature and our environment. Our interconnectedness with nature has always been a cornerstone of CWC's mission, and we remain as committed as ever to enhancing and sustaining the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, rivers and streams of the Chautauqua region for the enjoyment and benefit of all. In 2021, we plan to:

- Pursue land acquisitions for conservation, including:
  - ◊ Expanding the Goose Creek Wetland Preserve by 33 acres south of Route 394
  - ◊ A 10-acre wetland site in the uplands of Mud Creek upstream from Chautauqua Lake
  - ◊ A 50-acre forest with 0.75-mile of Cheney Creek upstream from Chautauqua lake
  - ◊ A conservation easement on 5 acres of forest to expand the Chautauqua Creek Oxbow Preserve
  - ◊ An addition of 6 acres to expand the Salomon Family Preserve
  - ◊ Fourteen acres of waterfront forest at the mouth of Chautauqua Creek on Lake Erie
- Complete Phase I access improvements to further open the Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park to the public
- Pursue conservation actions that reduce serious erosion issues on Goose, Mud and Prendergast Creeks
- Continue to engage lakeshore and watershed landowners to establish lake-friendly *LakeScapes* plantings to restore and enhance wildlife habitat, reduce soil erosion and filter nutrients before they reach the lake
- Develop a strategic land conservation plan to guide efforts to conserve the most important ecological and hydrological sites and landscapes across the region
- Work to develop conservation and reforestation projects to conserve important wildlife habitat, protect water quality, enhance stormwater treatment and help sequester carbon to locally fight climate change
- Work with municipal leaders, engineers and landowners to design and complete stormwater, sediment and nutrient capture projects, including in the Town of Chautauqua, Lakewood, Busti and North Harmony
- Plan and implement forest conservation and restoration projects to capture carbon and fight climate change
- Engage and educate the public on watershed- and wildlife-friendly land care through one-on-one technical assistance and through print and digital outreach platforms



Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park



Working to reduce erosion

Promoting lake-friendly lawn care





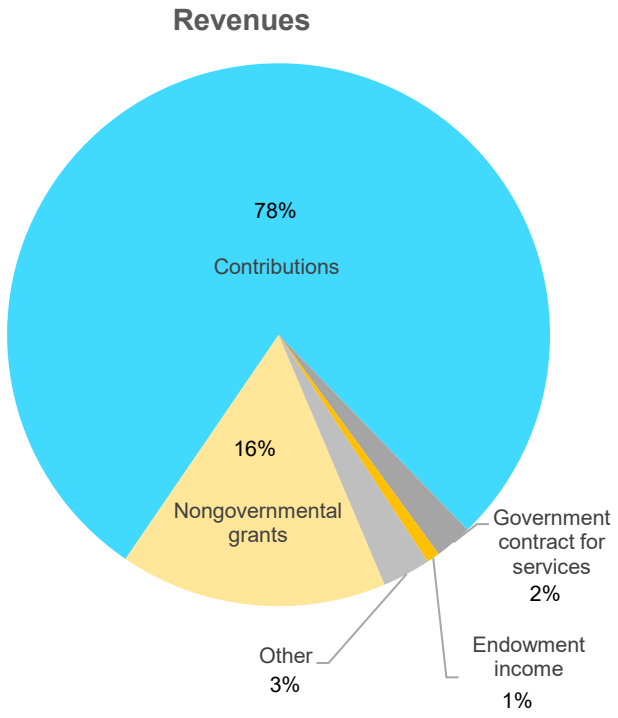
Restoring native habitats

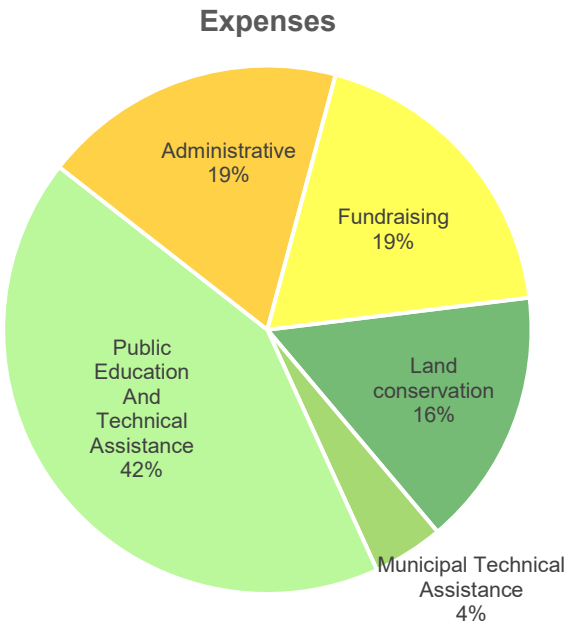
Financial Overview

Financial Summary for the Fiscal Year Ending 9/30/2020

ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash, other current assets - non-designated	$	230,844
Cash - board designated for land defense/ stewardship funds and operating reserve		216,250
Total current assets		**447,094**
PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT, net of accumulated depreciation		**2,371,602**
OTHER ASSETS		
Endowments held by community foundations		75,994
TOTAL ASSETS	**$**	**2,894,690**
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
LIABILITIES		
PPP loan, etc.		54,280
NET ASSETS		
Total net assets		2,840,410
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	**$**	**2,894,690**

REVENUES		
Nongovernmental grants	$	65,312
Contributions		320,632
Government contract for services		9,057
Endowment income		3,174
Other		11,777
TOTAL REVENUES	**$**	**409,952**
EXPENSES		
PROGRAM SERVICES		
Land conservation	$	75,676
Municipal Technical Assistance		20,740
Public Education And Technical Assistance		202,954
Total Program Services		**299,370**
ADMINISTRATIVE		**89,122**
FUNDRAISING		**90,459**
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$**	**478,951**

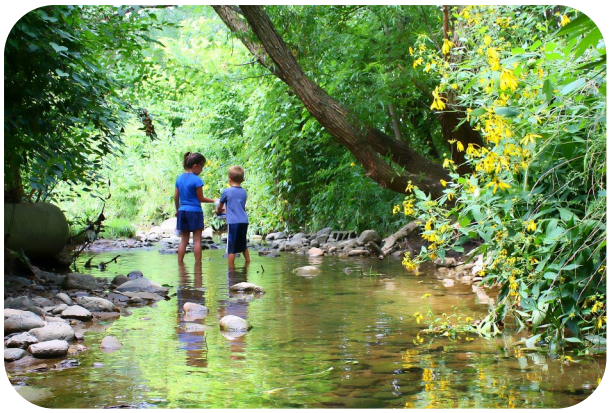




Looking Ahead

Commitment

Now in our 31st year, Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy remains committed to conserving lands with high ecological, hydrological and scenic value on Chautauqua County's natural lakeshores, along tributaries and within its watersheds and to promoting proactive best land, wildlife and water resource management practices.



Vision

CWC envisions abundant life-sustaining forests, fields, shorelands, wetlands, wildlife, watersheds and waters throughout the Chautauqua region, with clean waters and healthy, resilient and sustainable habitats for the next generation and many generations to come!

Long-Term Goals

With the knowledge that water quality, ecological health and scenic beauty are inextricably woven together, CWC will strive to achieve its vision by expanding its conservation of land and water quality and expanding its educational outreach to the community.



Land Conservation & Water Quality Protection

Through additional land acquisitions and easements and further implementation of best land management practices, we will:

- Conserve and restore healthy ecosystems and natural water systems region-wide to:
  - ◊ support native plant and animal species indigenous to the Chautauqua region
  - ◊ maximize the capture and infiltration of precipitation to groundwater to minimize flooding and erosion, sustain groundwater tables and maintain base flows in streams and summer lake levels
- Conserve, achieve and sustain high water quality used for wildlife habitat, recreational purposes, drinking water and food production and preparation
- Conserve and restore ecologically healthy forests to sequester carbon dioxide to fight climate change
- Manage and defend CWC preserve lands and easements to protect their ecological integrity, hydrological functions, and scenic beauty *in perpetuity*



Education & Engagement

Through enhanced education and engagement with other stake-holders and the community, we will:

- Build an awareness and understanding of the interconnectedness of watershed land use and its impact on both the health and scenic beauty of our area waterways
- Use this awareness and understanding to promote best landscaping, stormwater and land management practices throughout the region

With Gratitude for our Donors

Our sincerest gratitude to all our continuing and new members and supporters who donated from October 1, 2019 to December 31, 2020.

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