



NEWS

Spring 2023

1974-2023 • 49 Years of Land Conservation

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PRESERVING OPEN SPACE

JOHN BAKER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It has been the prudence of Town officials, residents, numerous groups and the North Salem Open Land Foundation tirelessly working together to maintain and preserve the pastoral ambiance of North Salem. The core of our organization's mission has been preserving the character and natural beauty of the town. To date, we have protected more than 1,300 acres, equating to almost 10% of the town.

Aside from the visual value of open fields, stonewalls and woodlands, what are the benefits of land protection to a community? Actually, a community that prioritizes the protection of land is a healthy place to live and work. Getting out on the land whether it be on foot or horse, provides the participant with beneficial physical activity, as well as positively affecting one's mental health by reducing stress and improving mood. It also increases the social component of a community by bringing folks together to share common outdoor experiences. From an ecological standpoint, preserving land protects natural habitats, provides wildlife corridors, battles climate change, keeps green infrastructure to control flooding and protects our drinking water.

As we welcome our organization's 50th anniversary next year, we are proud of our accomplishments, but are prepared to work even harder at preserving more land for the next 50 years, for future generations to enjoy. North Salem Open Land Foundation is an accredited land trust with the Land Trust Alliance (LTA), and according to Andrew Bowman, LTA President and CEO, "the nation's land trust community in the United States has conserved approximately 60



million acres over the last 40 years—an area larger than all the land contained in America's National Parks." That is quite an accomplishment for the land trust community! But more needs to be accomplished. The LTA embraces the Biden Administration's 30x30 Initiative to conserve 30% of private lands and waters in America by the year 2030, as an action to combat climate change. To meet this challenge, land trusts like ours need to engage willing landowners to conserve their land.

Land development is outpacing land protection in the United States. As an example locally, just look at the pace of development over the past couple of years along the Route 6 corridor between Brewster and Danbury, just over a mile from our headquarters at the Weil Preserve. Land protection is local, community-based, voluntary and forever. As I had mentioned earlier, our organization has preserved, in perpetuity, 1,300 acres of land through land donations,

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purchases and conservation easements. Conservation easements are done on private lands, by landowners who are committed to conserving their woodlands, natural habitats and agrarian history. As a benefit, those landowners enjoy State and Federal tax incentives for their conservation easement donations to the North Salem Open Land Foundation. But also, we as a community benefit from the con-

servation easement, by way of a preserved vista, habitat or woodland. And conservation easements do not need to be open to the public.

If you are contemplating the future of your land, please give us a call and let's discuss the many options that may be available for the preservation of your land, and the community as a whole.

See you out on the land!

THANKS TO YOU, CONSERVATIONISTS!

PAM POOLEY, CHAIR

As a member of this foundation—you are a conservationist and I hope you are proud and gratified to support the open space and nature that abound here, making North Salem quite rare for a town so close to New York City. Members provide the funds that run the



organization—you help us keep preserves you see around town maintained, like Baxter, Hayfield-on-Keeler, Durand and Bloomerside to name a few of your 28 protected parcels, so that anyone can enjoy restorative moments in fields and forest. We are grateful to many of you who volunteer to help our staff keep the miles of trails safe and beautiful. Beyond outdoor work, we can help you conserve your own land, which has tax benefits. All members have a voice in the organization, hopefully attending our environmental programs, hikes and annual meeting cocktail party every fall at the Weil Headquarters.

Nearly five decades ago, **conservationists like you** had a vision to protect land around them from mindless development occurring in neighboring towns. Like you, they were inspired to retain North Salem's natural beauty — its spectacular rolling hills, stone

walls, waterways and woods. Like you, they cared about our fragile ecosystem. Like you, they were concerned about keeping our wetlands protected and drinking water clean. Like you, they wanted to encourage the wildlife food chain and pollination.

As we approach our 50th year of operation in 2024, you can share that you're a member of one of the oldest land trusts on the east coast, and know that your membership is part of the greater effort, connecting like-minded nature lovers since 1974. Our membership entry level has remained \$35 all these years, and in honor of our 50th birthday (and inflation), we raise this to \$50. I think you will agree, this is a small price for conservation, yet a big help toward our mission. *Membership is open to all.* When you look around, remember North Salem's rural beauty is not an accident, our conservation and maintenance efforts are tireless, and quietly at work! Encourage your friends and neighbors to join this legacy—to preserve, protect and engage with the natural world we all love here.

Thank you conservationists!

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

ANDREW MIDDLEBROOK, DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP

Our Wild Neighbors

"Life depends on little things we take for granted."

I recently watched a documentary called *Wings of Life* that discussed all sorts of small winged wonders of the world when that quote caught my attention and got me thinking. We're fortunate to live in an area with an abundance of open spaces and beautiful

locations to interact with abundant wildlife. We get the chance to see Bobcats, Coyote, Black bears and more on a relatively regular basis and that is an awesome thing to see. We always hope for positive encounters but these are still wild animals and that is something to be respected. That said, how do we coexist with our wild neighbors, big and small,



on a daily basis? Do we take enough time to think about our actions out there that impact everything that uses our landscape as well for their homes? Maybe it's time we start to return the favor for nature and be a part of the solution instead of a problem.

If we hope to continue to share our environment, we need to think about how we impact those creatures that call this place home as well. Disconnecting open space corridors for wildlife movement and shrinking open space forces wildlife of all types into smaller and smaller locations thus increasing the limit of food and the spread of diseases, amongst many other issues, throughout populations. Limiting over development of especially critical habitats is vital in keeping many of our smallest and most overlooked species from risk of local extinction including many native salamander species that rely on the same vernal pool to exist generation after generation. When these places disappear the creatures often disappear too.

On a smaller scale in our own yards, we can do things to allow wildlife to move through even though the area has been developed. In time, many species adapt to some form of development and suburban neighborhoods are one such location. For years, I myself have lived in an area that was once a historic orchard and the stonewalls built by the farmers who cleared the land still exist in my yard today. I live 3 miles from interstate 84 and can hear the highway at times yet still, wildlife is abundant throughout the neighborhood due mostly to unimpeded yards and the landscape surrounding it being relatively open to the movement of wildlife. This is common in many of our towns, we're lucky for that and things can get even better if we take the right steps to ensure that all wildlife have a place within our communities.

One step forward would be to use an integrated pest management approach to prevent the unnecessary use of harmful pesticides that end up unintentionally harming creatures of all types. We can limit

the use of outdoor lights during migrations and prevent the overuse of unneeded water on lawns that further impact drought conditions and can cause mosquitoes to breed. We can be more mindful of how we store our trash bins and our wild bird feeders to reduce negative interactions between humans and wildlife. Doing so also reduces the chance for an animal to become habituated to human behavior thus increasing the likelihood of the animal to have one too many negative interactions. These are but a few of the steps we can take on a daily basis to ensure a fair future for wildlife in our lives.

How we treat our landscape directly impacts who may visit as well. A perfectly manicured lawn may only host deer and the occasional squirrel, but a landscape that is natural or close to it, will become a safe haven for wildlife of all types. Having a woodlot or some leaves on the edge of your property, natural mulch and native plants and trees will also greatly increase the likelihood of wildlife using your yard as a home. You too will see the benefits such as plants and trees cooling your landscape with shade, they also stabilize soils, provide habitat, sustenance and help to suck up excess moisture and sequester carbon. Natural landscapes allow snakes a home that also eat the mice that might otherwise find your house a suitable habitat for them and all of their friends making your house the place to be!



EASTERN AMERICAN TOAD.

By planting native flowers, you help to provide forage for pollinators that are crucial to our own survival as well. Much of the food we consume daily could not exist without them and their ability to pollinate plants. These little wonders are highly susceptible to being harmed by a variety of insecticides that are used daily across the country, but

fortunately these issues are beginning to be addressed and many people have already begun to think twice before using them.

The Pollinator Pathway is one such catalyst in changing people's perspectives and bringing the loss of pollinators to the forefront in recent years. It became such a huge success that it is now present in thirteen states and two countries with North Salem and many of its residents a part of that movement. It is truly a prime example of what a small movement with lots of passionate individuals can do. Never take the small things for granted, that's what the Pollinator Pathway and this article are really about.

I ask that you take a moment to consider the things we do each day that overlook the living creatures around us. Watching the birds on your feeder or seeing the caterpillar crawling on your oak tree is a small gift that can continue daily if we act purposefully and make nature a part of it all. Let's not just stop and acknowledge them but learn from them. The planet is big and we're an active participant. It's easy to forget in the mix of our daily lives but our days are significantly better with the natural world around us. Let's be sure it stays that way even though things may change, it's still a beautiful thing worth protecting.

See you on the trails.

NEW VEHICLE FOR OPEN LAND

Caring for more than 1,300 acres takes a lot of time, effort and equipment. We are fortunate to be able to meet some of those needs by adding a new pickup truck to our equipment inventory. Having this truck is imperative to the future growth of our maintenance operations and will allow us to independently handle most of our stewardship projects. So when you see this truck parked at one of our Preserves, you'll know that your stewardship team is hard at work.



FIGHTING FOR BEECHES



CHARACTERISTIC LEAF BANDING AND DIEBACK AS A RESULT OF BLD ON BEECH LEAVES AT WEIL PRESERVE 2022

To minimize damage caused by the rapidly spreading Beech Leaf Disease (BLD), local conservationists formed the Beech Leaf Disease Coalition in November 2022. The BLD Coalition includes representatives from Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Mianus River Gorge, North Salem Open Land Foundation, Teatown Lake Reservation, Westchester County Parks, and Westchester Land Trust. Since there is no confirmed treatment for the disease itself, the BLD Coalition is diligently educating the public, mapping the extent of beech stands, restoring degraded forests, monitoring disease spread, and researching methods of treatment.

"This partnership will allow us to collaborate on solutions to what is one of the most pressing conservation issues in the region," said Taro Ietaka, a land manager with Westchester County Parks Conservation Division. Much of the groundwork of this collaboration was laid by the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (LH PRISM) which initially brought these organizations together through its BLD working group.

BLD affects the leaves of beech trees, resulting in the formation of visible dark bands. Over time, BLD

can cause the leaves throughout the tree to curl up and fall off during the summer. The disease is likely caused by an infestation of nematodes, a type of microscopic worm. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), trees with BLD may die within seven years. Beech trees, which have distinctive smooth gray bark, are very common in Westchester and Putnam counties and are an important part of the local ecosystem. If left unchecked, beech leaf disease could have a damaging effect on local

wildlife—birds forage and nest in beech and wildlife such as turkeys, deer, and bears rely on beech nuts as a food source.

While there is currently no treatment for infected trees, you can still work to protect forest health. Report any BLD observations in your neighborhood to iNaturalist (a phone app). You can also volunteer with organizations involved in promoting forest health, such as the members of the BLD Coalition.

If you are interested in learning more please visit <https://www.teatown.org/bld/> today!

INVASIVE SPECIES PANEL

ANDREW MIDDLEBROOK, DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP

On December 15, 2022 I was fortunate enough to participate in a panel discussion on invasive species presented by the Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance alongside fellow professionals at Teatown Lake Reservation. It was a wet and chilly evening but the room was warm and engaging, full of folks with big ideas and creative questions. The panel included representatives from the Lower Hudson Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management, the Westchester Parks Foundation and the Bronx River Parkway Conservation Conservancy. Each panelist discussed the various means in which their organization addresses invasive species management throughout Westchester County and the ways they engage the public in doing so. As many of these projects can be large in

scale and take years to complete, the need for volunteers is omnipresent. Being able to engage the public with these projects is a great means of informing and empowering landowners to do the same on their own properties. It is also an effective way to spread the word about the great work that local groups are engaged in that positively benefits our communities. It was a real pleasure to present alongside such dedicated and enthusiastic professionals whose work collectively is making for a stronger, more biodiverse and climate resilient future for Westchester County. You can view a recording of the presentation online by locating the Teatown Lake Reservation page in Youtube under their videos section under the title *Invasive Plant Species: What can we do about them?*

2023 SUMMER YOUTH CORPS

The North Salem Open Land Foundation is looking for young people interested in learning more about local ecology and land conservation to join us this summer as part of our 2023 Summer Youth Corps. **This year's program will run July 11, 2023 – August 17, 2023 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays from 9:00am - 3:00pm.** Participants will assist staff in the identification and removal of invasive plants, conduct natural resource surveys, native plantings and general preserve and trail maintenance throughout NSOLF properties. This program is a **volunteer opportunity** for individuals aged 16 years and up. For more information on this program and how to apply, please visit www.nsolf.org today!



NSOLF 2021 SUMMER YOUTH CORPS PARTICIPANTS AT WEIL PRESERVE

2023 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

NSOLF is looking to present the annual \$500 Environmental Award this year to a student who has shown a genuine engagement with nature and has made a positive impact on one or more of the protected parcels or projects of the North Salem Open Land Foundation during the current school year. Students who are in their junior or senior years are eligible to submit a statement of 500 words

or less demonstrating their commitment to the natural environment and describing a project or activity that has supported the efforts of NSOLF in beneficial and practical ways. **The deadline for submissions is June 1, 2023.** For more information about this award, please contact our office at info@nsolf.com or 914-669-5860.

PAUL TREGIDGO: NEW BOARD MEMBER

We are pleased to welcome Paul Tregidgo to the NSOLF Board of Trustees. Following an illustrious career in the international capital markets, Paul now focuses his professional energies on investable impact outcomes at the intersection of finance, markets and technology. He and his wife Barbara live in North Salem and New York City. They are parents to three children, Emily, Grace and Jessica. The family have been members of the Gipsy Trail Club in Carmel for several years. Both Paul and Barbara served terms on the Club's Board of Governors; Paul as Chair. Their tenures at GTC, located on 1,000 acres of wooded lands, fostered a deep appreciation of nature and its preservation in a caring and engaged community.



CLIMATE RESILIENCY GRANT

Last year, NSOLF was awarded a grant by the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) and Open Space Institute through their Land and Climate Grant Program. The program aims to support and build the capacity of land trusts and other groups that conserve and steward land to integrate climate resilience into land protection and management decisions.

“The program aims to support the development of climate-informed land conservation, stewardship or communications plans that address one or more of the following issues: habitat resilience, carbon mitigation or community adaptation to climate impacts such as stronger storms, flooding, drought, fire or extreme heat.” — LTA

NSOLF has worked to develop a well-researched approach to identifying climate resilient locations

throughout our preserves to aid staff in the targeted management of these vital landscapes. This grant has allowed us to focus our sights on additional issues related to increasingly impactful storms that seem to be happening more regularly and will likely continue. The grant is enabling us to involve bio-engineering, native plantings and land conservation as part of the solutions to ease storm-related damages.

All of this information will help dictate how we modify and adapt our land management plans for our preserves moving forward which is a vital tool in maintaining a holistic look at how our landscapes change over time and the best methods for success in the future. Visit www.nsolf.org for links to resources on how you too can learn about the climate-resilient properties of your own landscape.



VOLUNTEER DAYS

» *Your help is much appreciated!* «

Volunteer Days are designed so that volunteers will work alongside our Stewardship Team to help us maintain the Preserves, keep them safe for visitation, and increase awareness of what it takes to preserve the ecological value of the open land.

Visit **www.nsolf.org**
for locations and details.

May 17 » **June 14** « **June 28**



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

PLEASE VISIT **WWW.NSOLF.ORG** FOR MORE DETAILS

» MAY EVENTS «

May 13th: Library Fair at Ruth Keeler Library

May 13th: Wellness Retreat with TULA Yoga at Weil Preserve

May 20th: Membership Day at Baxter Preserve

» JUNE/JULY EVENTS «

June 10th: Wellness Retreat with TULA Yoga at Weil Preserve

June 11th: Bobolink Breakfast at Hayfield on Keeler Preserve

June 21st: Summer Solstice Yoga with TULA Yoga at
Weil Preserve

June 13, 20, 27 and July 11: Botanical Illustration for Beginners
with Pat Levinson

June 27, July 11, 18, 25th: Evening Yoga with TULA Yoga at
Weil Preserve

» SEPTEMBER EVENTS «

September 23rd: Trolls and Fairies of North Salem, A Lively
Storytelling with Jonathan Kruk at Weil Preserve

September 30th: Annual Meeting of Members at Weil Preserve

NSOLF CONSERVES 4.3 ACRES IN PERPETUITY

We are pleased to announce the donation of 4.3 acres of land to the North Salem Open Land Foundation from Bruce Hanna and his family. This parcel, located adjacent to Stempler Preserve and nearby Hawthorne and Bell-Blakely Preserves off of Bogtown Road, is primarily wetland, and is home to many native flora and fauna. With its naturally created basin, it lends itself to being a filter for stormwater runoff and a natural aquifer to the surrounding landscape.

"NSOLF is grateful for this donation from the Hanna Family. Not only does it help preserve the



natural beauty of the area, it protects vital habitats and holds great ecological value," said John Baker, Executive Director of NSOLF.

Dubbed the Hanna-Spinna Preserve to honor the Hanna Family and their friends, the Spinna Family. Bob Spinna served as North Salem's Town Supervisor in the 1980s, and his wife, Rose, was the North Salem tax receiver for many years. Mr. Hanna felt that this would be a nice way to commemorate their service to the town, as well as the love of North Salem shared by both families.

INTERNSHIPS

NSOLF is looking forward to hosting two North Salem High School interns this spring. They were carefully selected for their interest in land conservation and recently began working with us. Our interns will receive hands-on experience working alongside staff members to gain knowledge of field-work in the

preserves and in the office. While the primary focus will be on the outdoors, we will also bring the learning indoors so the interns can see the full circle of non-profit work. The interns typically wrap up their projects by mid-June with a final presentation to our Executive Director and their school advisor.

North Salem Open Land Foundation
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Scan the QR code to learn more
about NSOLF, make a donation,
or to renew your membership.

We Need You!

NSOLF depends on the continued support from the community.

Please make a tax-deductible contribution today.

(Our annual membership drive is mailed each Spring.)

All members are invited to join us for a Member Celebration.

Enclosed is my gift of:

☐ \$10,000 ☐ \$5,000 ☐ \$2,000 ☐ \$1,000 *Donors of \$1000 or more are invited to attend our annual Donor Party.*

☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$75 Family Membership ☐ \$50 Individual Membership ☐ \$_____

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- ☐ A matching gift program is offered through my employer. (Please enclose form)
☐ Please send information about the financial benefits of donating a conservation easement.
☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities at NSOLF.



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