



1974-2024 • 50 Years of Land Conservation

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A GIFT FOR A GIFT

PAM POOLEY, BOARD CHAIR

We can easily be grateful for our slice of paradise here in North Salem. We recognize that our bucolic countryside makes us different from many haphazardly developed towns in the area. Sustaining our rural nature nudges us to revere our shared natural world. Our town, our foundation and our landowners don't simply save open, undeveloped space for the sake of possession, we feel an interconnectedness with the land. Land around here gifts us with hay, flowers, trees, fruit, vegetables, livestock, forage, and an abundance of vibrant wildlife.

Ecologically, the land is busy doing its thing without us—photosynthesis, nitrogen fixation and carbon sequestration to name a few unseen activities. But as you know, once a field, woodland or wetland succumbs to development, these ecosystems made up of creatures and their habitats that sustain our soil, water and air are obliterated, while stormwater becomes a menace.

Preservation is a shared gift and stands for legacy in this town. Our foundation keeps an eye on nearly thirty nature preserves— all for your public enjoyment



and health. Townspeople over the past fifty years have contributed land and financing to save these spaces, and many are so-named in remembrance of their largess.

To reciprocate, let's all join forces and give at least the minimum membership of \$50. Thank you!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

JOHN BAKER

A milestone: fifty years ago, in 1974 a small group of conservation-minded North Salem residents came together to form the North Salem Open Land Foundation. Their foresight for preserving fields, meadows, woodlands and the town's bucolic country setting has led to North Salem being one of the least overdeveloped communities in Westchester County.

The initial donation in 1974 of two acres of land on the Titicus River by Leo and Audrey Lances became our first preserve, known as the Lances Preserve. Today, our land holdings include twenty eight preserves and fourteen conservation easements held on private and

public lands, totaling 1,331 acres of protected land.

Did they know fifty years ago, how impactful their efforts would be towards preserving vital ecosystems, wildlife corridors, protection of drinking water and offsetting climate change? In 1979, when "The Baxter Road Group" purchased and donated 113-acres of land destined for development to NSOLF, which today is called Baxter Preserve, that this gem of land would become the focal point for passive recreation in town? To me, all of this reflects upon a committed, dedicated community that recognizes the importance of open

Continued on page 2

space and all of the economic, environmental, recreational and social benefits associated with it.

Now as we gaze into a crystal ball, what will the next 50 years look like in 2074? Based on current predictions, we can expect a continued rise in temperature, more severe storms, a warming, rising ocean, and the loss of species. With these anticipated conditions, our protection and stewardship of the land will have significant value for flood protection, biodiversity and the preservation of green spaces for future generations.

For a half century, our organization has proudly partnered with the Town of North Salem, Golden Bridges Hounds, North Salem Bridle Trails Association, local organizations and residents working toward preserving the character and natural beauty of our town.

In recognition of our collective accomplishments, we are hosting a “50th Anniversary Celebration” on Saturday, October 26th from 6-10pm at Staysail Farm. Please join us for a fun-filled, celebratory evening!

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

ANDREW MIDDLEBROOK, DIRECTOR OF STEWARDSHIP

The Power of People

When I first began working with North Salem Open Land Foundation (NSOLF), it was in a volunteer role helping to maintain the well established trail system throughout the Halmi Hearst Mead O’Donohue Preserve(s). I had begun to spend my Mondays off from work monitoring the trails there and soon found myself helping out on other preserves that NSOLF owned and maintained as well. Within a few months, I was offered the dream opportunity to come on board as an employee and I have been immensely grateful for being given the chance to do what I love ever since. I frequently tell this story to people who are looking to branch into the field of land conservation as I believe it is important to remember that sometimes starting small can have a lasting impact. My time spent volunteering was something I truly enjoyed and it gave me great purpose knowing I was making a difference. Giving your time and talent is a simple act that goes a long way for organizations like NSOLF that depend on volunteers to be able to carry out their mission.

In fact, there was a well established group of individuals who were doing exactly the same type of work and I soon got to know them as overseeing the volunteer program became a part of my role at NSOLF. At the time, our volunteer land steward program was flush with eighteen dedicated

people who were doing great work on the trails, many of whom had been with the organization for years. They possessed a wealth of institutional knowledge that I began to tap any chance I could to gain a more holistic understanding of the many challenges and successes that this land trust had overcome throughout the years. This helped me to locate and identify areas where we needed to address issues such as invasive species, weather related trail issues, and so much more. Over the years, some folks have moved away, others have passed but many of these people are still actively involved with us today. Our volunteer land steward program is now up to twenty-nine people with room to grow!



VOLUNTEERS PLANTING TREES AT WEIL PRESERVE..

This is an exciting program for us as we get to share not only the land we love with so many of you but we also get to know the people who care for it as much as we do. Conserving land is a multifaceted thing; it involves the natural elements, the plants and wildlife that call it home but also the people who care so deeply to want to protect these places in perpetuity. That is the mark of a small, grass roots effort that, as we celebrate our fiftieth year as a land trust, is a testament to the power of people when we come together.

These types of volunteer, people-powered movements can have a ripple effect within the region, and quite possibly become a national movement all because a few dedicated volunteers took the initiative. One of these types of programs we have had the wonderful opportunity to be a part of for years now is The Pollinator Pathway. What started as a small, regional effort to educate people about the importance of our native pollinators and the native plants they rely on to survive became a national movement that has inspired people throughout the country to re-vision what it means to have a truly healthy, native landscape and not one that consists solely of grass. This is just one example of how a few folks who gave their time to something meaningful to them created something that will last for generations and hopefully inspire others to do the same.

In 2023 alone, NSOLF engaged with over 200 participants at a variety of 41 volunteer days, invasive species training and educational sessions. We

collectively completed hundreds of hours of work in the field improving trails, managing invasive species, planting and caring for native species in restoration sites, clearing trees, and so much more. We are a small operation that could not have done this work without the help of so many of you and those numbers continue to drive home the impact a few people can make by volunteering their time and talent.

If you have an interest in land conservation, wildlife, trail work or simply just want to get outside please consider joining us for one of our volunteer events this year. If you know of a teen looking to get into this type of work, please consider our Summer Youth Corps, starting July 9th. We love meeting new people and sharing our knowledge and love of the natural world with you. The more we collaborate together, the more we learn about how we can all lend a hand in our communities. Our volunteer land stewards all come with their own skill sets so don't be shy if you think you might not be "qualified" to come on board. We'll provide you with the skills and training to do what you are comfortable with. As we celebrate this jubilee year, we hope that you will join us and help us blaze the way for another successful fifty years to come.

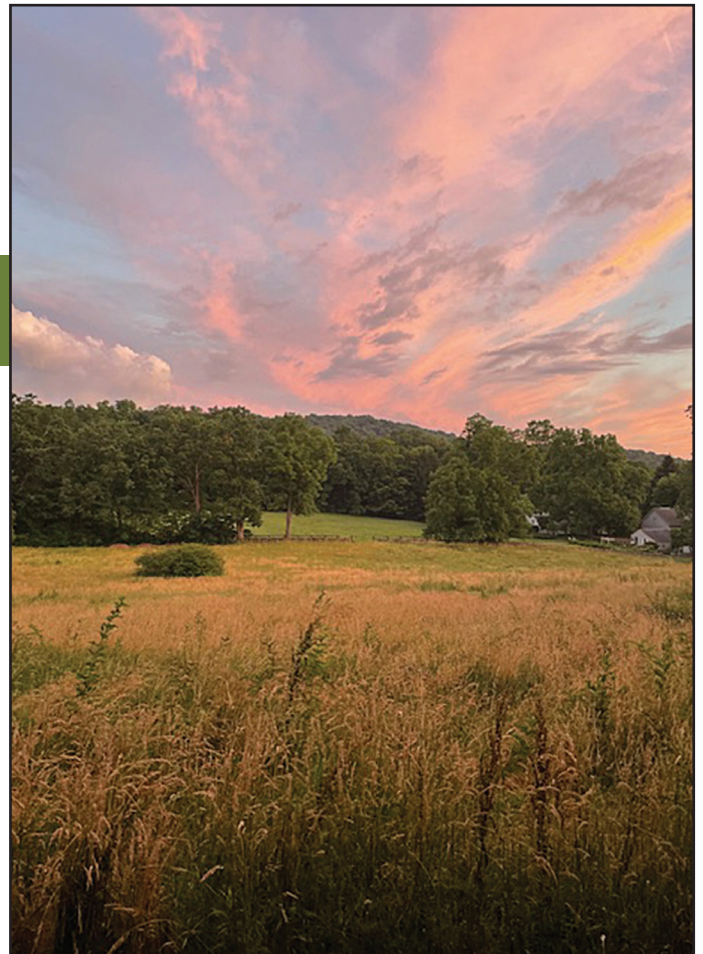
See you on the trails!

6 ACRES PRESERVED FOREVER THROUGH CONSERVATION EASEMENT

We are excited to have the opportunity to add a new conservation easement to our inventory of conserved land in North Salem. Thank you to Jesse and Carol Goldberg for their generous donation to ensure this beautiful land will remain free of development. It is not open to the public.

The 6-acre parcel is part of the Goldberg's Artemis Farm, which they have owned for more than fifty years. It holds great ecological value with its open fields, meadows, and forests, and provides protection for wildlife habitats.

If you have questions about conservation easements or are considering conserving part of your land, please contact John Baker at john@nsolf.org.



2024 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

We are pleased to announce that we will once again present a \$500 Environmental Award to a high school junior or senior who has shown a genuine engagement with nature and who has made a positive impact on one of our Preserves during this current school year.

In 2023, we had the pleasure of awarding Lola Molina for her active role in picking up litter along the Titicus Reservoir, engaging students at North Salem High School to recycle clothing, and working with community members to relocate the Community Garden to a place where it will be used and appreciated.

Eligible students can apply by sending a letter of 500 words or less, stating their intentions and reasons why they deserve the award. The deadline is May 15, 2024. Applications should be sent by mail to North Salem Open Land Foundation, P.O. Box 176, North Salem, NY 10560. For questions, please call the office at (914) 669-5860.

LOLA MOLINA ACCEPTS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN BAKER.



4-H VOLUNTEERS HELPING OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

Over the past several seasons, NSOLF has participated in a national NestWatch program run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The intention of the program is to track trends in avian reproduction. During the 2023 NestWatch, we spotted 7 nests, 50 eggs and 34 fledglings in our designated bird boxes at Weil Preserve. What an eggs-ellent season!

With the help of our local Westchester 4-H group, we were able to double the number of bird boxes at Weil Preserve. The group of dedicated teens joined us on several Saturdays and assisted us in all aspects of building and installing the new boxes. Each box has been set up with GPS coordinates and is ready for monitoring this spring.

Thank you to the 4-H group for helping us with this project. We are eagerly awaiting the flurry of activity in the new boxes this spring, and are looking forward to future partnerships with the 4-H group.

NEW MAPS FOR YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE!

The New York State Conservation Partnership Program awarded North Salem Open Land Foundation with a grant to update all of our preserve maps. We are happy to announce the unveiling of these maps will be in Spring 2024! The new maps will be posted at each trailhead and will include a QR code so that visitors may digitally access the maps as well as gather information about the preserves. This is a much needed project as many of our existing maps have become outdated due to the addition of several new trails, including trails that now link some of our



preserves together or provide access to preserves that were previously inaccessible.

The new maps will have a uniform look and will be easy to follow for anyone visiting as a first timer or as a frequent guest of our preserves. Useful information will be included in the maps, such as trail length,

where to park, points of interest, and more. Our rules and guidelines for visits will also be posted along with information about our organization. We look forward to unveiling the maps soon and we hope you find them helpful while visiting our many beautiful preserves and trails!

NSOLF WELCOMES NEW BOARD AND STAFF MEMBERS

We are excited to welcome **Victoria Craig** to our Stewardship Team as a Conservation Technician, a newly created part-time position. Victoria, a recent graduate of SUNY Oneonta with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Sustainability, is eager to put her skills to use in the field. As a Conservation Technician, Victoria will assist with trail maintenance, restoration



projects, vegetation management, Citizen Science projects and community engagement among other things. The position is dedicated to restoring and protecting the long-term ecological resilience of our preserves.

Victoria has been passionately working on recreating the NSOLF maps through the mapping grant received from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (see pg. 4). She has been honing her cartography skills to make new maps for each of our preserves. The software Victoria uses has allowed her to take photos and make written notes in real time to ensure accuracy for our visitors. She has thoroughly enjoyed spending time in the preserves getting to know the landscape and our visitors - both people and animals alike!

Please join us in welcoming **Shari Soward** to the Board of Trustees. Shari and her husband Fred have lived in Westchester for many years and moved to North Salem in 2020. Their property abuts Gaymark Preserve, which she describes as an "exquisite place."

Shari had an illustrious career in the financial industry for over 40 years, working for companies such as Lehman Brothers, Neuberger Berman Private Asset Management Group, and RBC Wealth Management. Her focus involved fixed income, followed by Wealth Management in 1994. She has also served on Boards, giving her time and talent back to charitable organizations. Shari is currently the Chairperson of The

Survivor Fund, an organization that provides support for survivors of torture. She is also heavily involved in the Epilepsy Foundation, for which she was chosen and trained to be a "Champion." As a Champion, she builds strong relationships with members of Congress to further ensure the Foundation's goals and policy priorities.

We're looking forward to working with Shari as we know she will make a positive impact at NSOLF!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

MAY EVENTS

May 4th: Animal Embassy

May 18th: Stewardship Recruitment Day

May 21st: Volunteer Day

JUNE EVENTS

June 8th: Breakfast with the Bobolink

June 15th: Mushroom Walk

June 18th: Volunteer Day

JULY EVENTS

July 16: Volunteer Day

SEPTEMBER EVENTS

September 3-29: Photography Contest
(see page 7)

OCTOBER EVENTS

October 5: Annual Meeting

October 26: 50th Anniversary Celebration

North Salem Open Land Foundation (NSOLF) preserves have been strategically selected due to the delicate ecosystems within them. One such ecosystem is wetlands, whose value is often overlooked and underappreciated. Conserving a wetlands area means that we are saving one of the most integral parts of our ecosystem! The value and delicacy of wetlands is comparable to that of a coral reef, and although they only cover 6% of our earth, they are home to 40% of the world's species. In North Salem alone, we conserve over 1,300 acres of land, of which 35% is wetlands.

Wetlands have three important characteristics; an area that has undrained hydric soil, is annually saturated with water during the growing season, and hosts aquatic plants at least periodically. Each sector of wetlands has vital roles in sustaining their health. Maintaining trees and shrubs like willows and alders around wetlands helps cool the water's temperature, which is crucial for the survival of delicate species of amphibians and insects who are extremely sensitive to the world's changing climate. Native plants like Rush (*Juncus effusus*) help to filter out excess nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, keeping the water clean for its inhabitants. Wetlands also provide a large variety of food and shelter for wildlife that inhabit them, this is especially important for full or par-

tial migratory species like Great Blue Herons that use wetlands as a place to refuel on their long journey.

Historically, many people have undermined the value of wetlands due to their inability to host infrastructure and have even deemed wetlands as roadblocks on the path to development. As a result, many wetlands have been drained, filled or altered leading to an increase in inland flooding. Wetland loss is now recognized as a serious environmental and economic threat. In addition to the valuable resources they provide its inhabitants, wetlands provide areas for recreation, education, and scientific research. They protect us from major flood events by acting as a barrier from large bodies of water, saving the value of our properties. Some scientists refer to wetlands as "nature's kidneys," as they slow the flow of flood water across a landscape, allowing particulate matter to settle to the bottom, providing valuable nutrients for wetland species. This filtration in turn provides us with fresh, filtered water!

Safeguarding these delicate land areas involves monitoring our local water quality and being stewards of our own land. There are a few crucial steps we can take to ensure the health of our wetlands... and remember, you can make a difference when you consider that rainwater runoff and groundwater absorption all make their way to the wetlands eventual-

ly. When caring for your lawn and garden, consider natural and organic alternatives that are eco-friendly and non-toxic to avoid harmful runoff. We want to ensure that we are not adding nitrogen into the wetland through groundwater absorption. Compost spread has proven to be a sustainable alternative to keeping your grass lush and green. For those who have a wetland area on your property, please consider planting native plants that have low water footprints and are well adapted to hydric soils. To make the greatest long term impact, think about establishing a conservation easement on your property through NSOLF. Thank you for helping us maintain healthy wetlands in our area!



Save the Date!
50th Anniversary Celebration
Saturday, October 26th, 6-10PM
Staysail Farm, North Salem
Special Performance by Alan Menken

Entertainment ~ Honored Guests ~ Merriment

WISH LIST: NEW EQUIPMENT TO EASE THE CLEARING

It's no secret that invasive plants species are problematic, especially when you manage more than 1,300 acres of land. Much of our time at NSOLF is consumed by invasive species—thinking about them, planning our remediation projects, and combatting them to make sure we are giving native plants a fighting chance. We currently do much of this remediation manually as we do not own the appropriate equipment. We occasionally rent equipment or hire someone who has the equipment, to help with our projects.

In order to effectively manage our fields, NSOLF would like to purchase a Ventrac tractor with a tough



cut mower. This tractor would allow us the ability to gain and retain open spaces against the ever-persistent invasive species in our region. This tractor will greatly assist our staff to effectively manage vegetation in fields, meadows, and the forest edge of our preserves. In the long run, owning this piece of equipment will be beneficial to us both fiscally and with our time man-

agement. We are asking our patrons to help us raise the funds so that we can secure a Ventrac tractor.

The cost of the Ventrac tractor is \$42,000 and your tax deductible donation toward its purchase is greatly appreciated.



PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Land Through the Lens

An exhibition of photographs will be held at the Ruth Keeler Memorial Library from September 3 - 29, 2024

All Photographers Including:

Professionals, Amateurs, and students of North Salem schools, grades K-12 are encouraged to submit

Photograph Subject:

Photos must be taken at NSOLF Preserves. May include natural landscape, native flora and fauna, people, horses, and leashed pets.

For additional information and registration
<https://www.nsolf.org/programs-and-activities>



North Salem Open Land Foundation
P.O. Box 176
North Salem, NY 10560

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Victoria Craig



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 ☐ \$_____

Name _____

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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.



Please make your tax-deductible contribution payable to

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Online Donations can be made at www.nsof.org

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