



Panunzio Property

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2023



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The Thousand Islands Land Trust works to conserve the natural beauty, diverse wildlife habitats, water quality & outdoor recreational opportunities of the Thousand Islands Region, now and for future generations.



OPPOSE CBP IN BLIND BAY
SaveBlindBay.com

Senator Schumer Secures In-Person Hearing

Thanks to Senator Schumer's relentless advocacy, U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP) will now hold a public, in-person, scoping hearing on proposed sites for the new Border Patrol station. Senator Schumer urged transparency and community involvement in the decision-making process. We express deep appreciation to the Senator for his continued leadership on this issue, ensuring every voice in our River community is heard.

Originally, the deadline for public comments was proposed for May 20th. The Senator's efforts secured an extended 45-day public comment period past this date. The public hearing will be held on Tuesday, June 25th and Wednesday, June 26th at Cerow Recreation Park Arena, Clayton.

The Thousand Islands Land Trust, alongside our partners at Save The River®/Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper®, and the Coalition, emphasize the importance of community involvement, protecting Blind Bay's environment, and avoiding negative impacts to the broader waterfront character.

Comments may be submitted via email or US Mail to Mr. John Petrilla at:

Mail: 85 Enterprise Suite 450 (4th Floor)

Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

Email: BPAMNEPA@cbp.dhs.gov

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Petition Today!**

**Learn more at
saveblindbay.com**



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Aerial view of the Panunzio Properties that create the headwaters of Crooked Creek Preserve. © Spencer Busler

CONSERVING PANUNZIO

TILT PROTECTS A2A WILDWAY: HEADWATERS OF CROOKED CREEK

At the end of a narrow, gravel dead-end road lies a hidden treasure and a life-source to the St. Lawrence River. A place of magnificent beauty and untamed nature, where water emerges from the soil to embrace the open air. It is an origin of nourishment and energy that pulses through the entire web of life here in the Thousand Islands, and a place that elicits involuntary “wows”. The Panunzio Farm is two adjacent parcels at the end of Hunneyman Road in the Town of Alexandria. It is a trove of all things wild, and this year, TILT has proudly protected 224-acres of this treasured landscape.

With funding assistance from the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA), these two acquisitions mark a significant milestone for several of the Land Trust’s conservation objectives. “Aside from preserving some of the most stunning and productive wetlands in the Thousand Islands, the Panunzio properties are also ideally positioned at the intersection of headwaters of the Crooked Creek and the median of the A2A Wildway,” said Spencer Busler, TILT’s Assistant Director. “It’s a truly multi-dimensional landscape, and we’re thrilled to know that these lands will remain wild and natural.” Crooked Creek is the largest, contiguous emergent wetland complex in the Thousand Islands region. Protecting its upper watershed

is vital for providing long-term ecological integrity and water quality of Chippewa Bay and the broader St. Lawrence.

The properties host an impressive array of habitats, from mature hardwood ridges to vibrant meadows speckled with emergent wetland pockets. In fact, a United States Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish & Wildlife restoration took place on the property 20+ years ago. This project incorporated water control structures allowing active management of the wetlands, ensuring maximum functionality for wildlife and

other natural values. The diversity and remoteness of the Panunzio lands make them the perfect home for countless rare and threatened species, from Pied-billed grebe to Northern long-eared bat and Least bittern.

Terry Panunzio, the eldest of the Panunzio brothers, approached TILT in the summer of 2022 to discuss options for conserving his 119-acres on

Hunneyman Road. “Our family has the utmost respect for the outdoors. We’ve spent decades on this land, and knowing that it will remain natural was very important to us,” Terry stated. TILT purchased Terry’s land in January of 2024, and is closing on the 105-acre Louis Panunzio property this spring.

For more information on how to conserve your land with TILT, please contact Spencer Busler (sbusler@tilandtrust.org).

“Our family has the utmost respect for the outdoors. We’ve spent decades on this land, and knowing that it will remain natural was very important to us.”

—TERRY PANUNZIO





FISHERS LANDING EXPANDS WATERSHED PROTECTION

Aerial view of Mullet Creek with the St. Lawrence River in the distance © Spencer Busler

Exciting strides in watershed conservation have recently unfolded in the Fishers Landing community. Through three landmark projects, TILT has successfully protected nearly 444-acres of the Mullet Creek Watershed. These efforts not only safeguard water quality but also preserve crucial habitats for fish and wildlife. This is also a milestone for the residents of Fishers Landing and beyond, as these projects will enhance water filtration and groundwater replenishment, providing clean and safe water to the River.

Through the generous support from key stakeholders, including the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Fish Enhancement, Mitigation and Research Fund (FEMRF), and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), the acquisition and permanent protection of these properties has been made possible.

Preserving Riparian Habitat

The Fishers Landing Watershed Protection Initiative encompasses several land protection projects. The acquisitions of the Snyder and Berger properties which were completed this winter, have placed 170-acres of riparian habitat under conservation. Northern pike spawn along the Creek, Least bitterns and Kingfisher feed along the marsh edges, and Blanding's turtles use the sandy banks to lay their eggs. In addition, an astonishing variety of waterfowl gather to forage

and nest in the wetlands. Protection of the riparian buffer will also prevent flooding and erosion, and improve water clarity. With these conservation efforts, the Mullet Creek Watershed will now be safeguarded, ensuring that the delicate balance of the local ecosystem is upheld.

"These acquisitions not only benefit the immediate area but contribute to the broader conservation efforts aimed at preserving our natural heritage for future generations," said Natalie Gates, TILT's Land Protection Specialist. "By safeguarding riparian buffers and preserving critical habitats, the impact of this endeavor echoes throughout the entire ecosystem, benefiting both humans and wildlife alike; especially those in the Fishers Landing area."

Enhancing Water Quality

The Mecomber Conservation Easement furthers the Fishers Landing Initiative as it preserves 276-acres of headwater wetlands that feed into Mullet Creek. These wetlands are full of lush vegetation that support an immense diversity of wildlife. Its protection is essential to the health of the region as it will help filter out pollutants, preventing them from entering the watershed

These efforts stand as a beacon of hope for future conservation endeavors, illustrating the achievements that become possible through dedication, collaboration, and strategic investment in environmental protection.

Foltz Easement Buffers Songbird Forest on Grindstone, Protects Pristine Shoreline

There's something magical about the Picton Channel. At its narrowest point, just 500 feet wide, the towering mature hemlock and pine stands on either side create a dramatic gorge effect. In the winter, Bald Eagles gather to roost in these undisturbed forests. In the spring, a diversity of songbirds such as Cerulean Warbler, Wood Thrush, and Scarlet Tanager fill the canopy with melodious songs as Common Terns soar across the shore. The turquoise hue of the water here is simply breathtaking. In a word, picturesque.

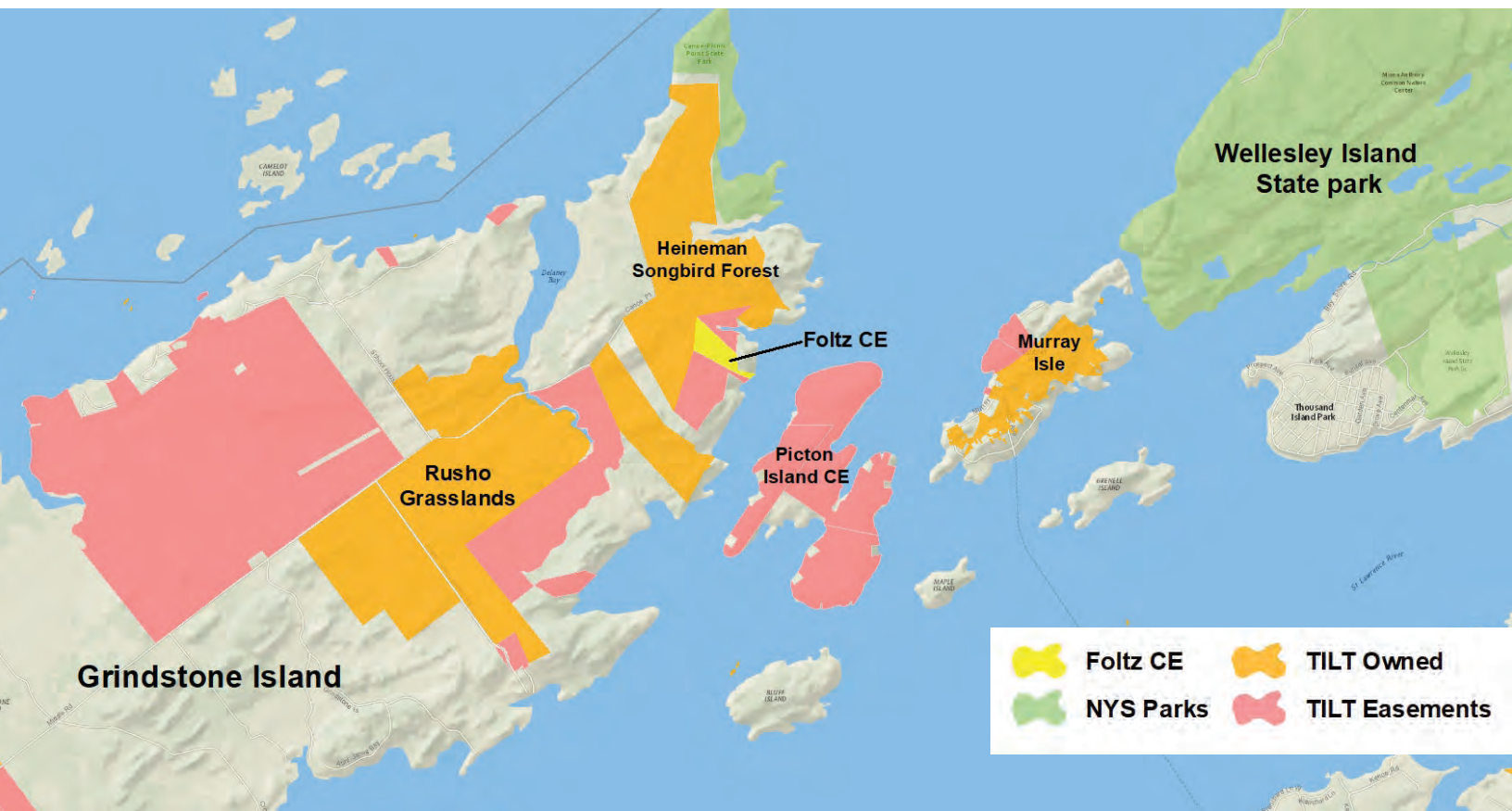
Over the years, TILT has made strides to protect this special part of the River with conservation easements and land acquisitions on Grindstone Island and Picton Island. This past autumn, the Foltz family played a pivotal role in advancing that goal with a 12-acre conservation easement on Grindstone.

The Foltz Easement protects 160± feet of undeveloped shoreline, and is entirely bordered by other TILT conservation lands and easements. This ultimately provides forest connectivity across the Grindstone, Picton, Murray and Wellesley Island corridor, ensuring a robust and healthy ecosystem. The easement allows the Foltz family to continue to own and enjoy their private land, while ensuring that the property remains in its natural state in perpetuity.

The Foltz's generous easement donation was used as match, helping catalyze two additional conservation grants, multiplying the impact of this one gift to expand meaningful conservation initiatives throughout the Thousand Islands. In essence, the Foltz Easement pays it forward for the common good in more ways than one.



A glimpse of the vibrant conserved woodlands on the Foltz easement. © Spencer Busler





TILT'S 2024 RAFFLE

Advancing Forest Connectivity

Celebrate your love of the Thousand Islands and its natural beauty with this hand-crafted table by Greg Coon of Alexandria Bay.

This hard maple, live-edge table top has white cedar legs adorned with shed antlers and beaver-chewed branches that were gathered from the Crooked Creek Watershed.

Funds raised will help to advance forest connectivity throughout the Thousand Islands and the A2A Wildway, including forest areas found across TILT's Signature Preserves like Crooked Creek, Chippewa Bay, Otter Creek, and Grindstone Island.

Price & Drawing

Raffle Tickets are available for \$5 each, or 5 tickets for \$20. The drawing will be held on Friday, August 23, 2024. You do not need to be present to win.

How to Purchase Tickets

Call 315-686-5345 and pay over the phone. Stop by the TILT Office at 135 John Street, Clayton. Visit tilandtrust.org to download a sheet of tickets. Mail tickets and payment to TILT, PO Box 238, Clayton NY 13624.

TRAIL CAM SPOTLIGHT

Look who we caught on camera!



MEET THE AMERICAN BITTERN

The American Bittern is a medium-sized heron with a thick and compact body. Also known as the "Thunder Pumper" due to the oong-KAchonk call it makes. They are strongly streaked, especially on the neck, and they can be very hard to see against marsh vegetation.

American Bitterns tend to forage alone, standing motionless or walking slowly with outspread toes in search of food. Probably what this bird was doing when we caught it on camera! They hunt during the day and especially at dawn and dusk. With its entire life-cycle dependent on wetlands, Crooked Creek Preserve is an ideal home for this secretive marsh bird.

Possibly the most famous aspect of bittern behavior is the stance it assumes when it perceives a threat. It points its bill skyward, elongates its body, and even sways with the breeze, all to blend in with its reedy surroundings.

"With its entire life-cycle dependent on wetlands, Crooked Creek Preserve is an ideal home for this secretive marsh bird."



The picturesque shoreline of the Rice-Clay Preserve © Spencer Busler

Critical Shoreline Habitat Protected in Lake of the Isles

Tucked within Lake of the Isles, lies a 12-acre expanse of mature oak forests bordered by a pristine shoreline: the Rice-Clay Preserve on Deer Point Island. A conservation endeavor, a decade in the making, has finally come to fruition this spring. Previously threatened by subdivision and development, this property now extends TILT's Wellesley Island Preserve and Barnett Marsh, forever protecting this wild region of the St. Lawrence River.

A Wildlife Sanctuary

Robert Rice has very fond memories of Deer Point Island, having owned the land for 45 years. He says, "It is truly a blessing to know that this property will now remain forever wild, thanks to the involvement of the Thousand Islands Land Trust." He has seen a great diversity of wildlife during his time there, from flying squirrels to loons. Notably, the gentle current

of the Lake provides important spawning habitat for sportfish such as bass and pike. The Rices have many cherished memories here, having enjoyed strolls amongst the massive oak trees from which Veeries and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks serenade through the spring to early summer.

In the fall, thousands of Redhead and Canvasback Ducks gather in these waters to prepare for their fall migration. Such sites provide essential resources for migratory waterfowl and neotropical songbirds as they embark on their journey south. Now, this preserve will be a safe haven, benefitting human and ecological health for generations to come.

The Land Trust's protection of Deer Point Island was made possible with funding from the NYS DEC and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service's North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA).

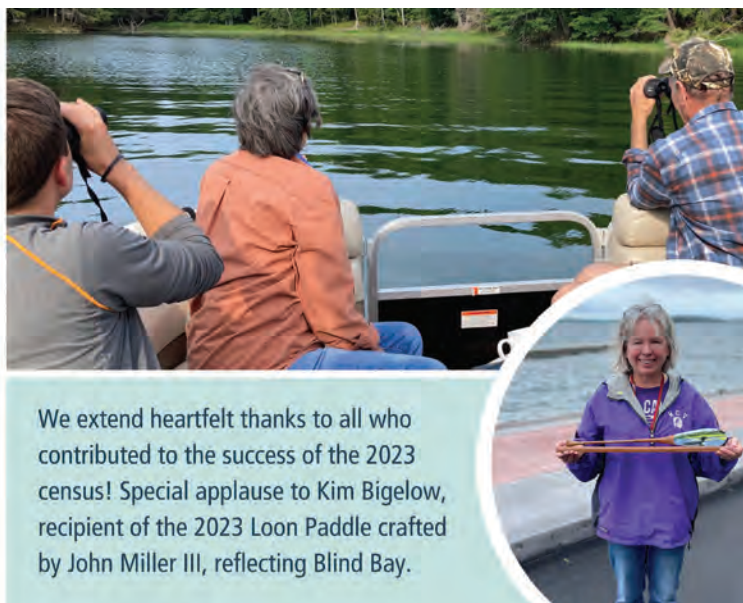


Join TILT for the Annual Loon Census! JULY 20, 2024

Partnered with the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation, this program is crucial for our local loon population. Volunteers will patrol the River from 8:00 to 9:00 am, counting loons and distinguishing adults from juveniles. Participants will be eligible for a chance to win a coveted Thousand Islands Souvenir Loon paddle, generously crafted and donated by John Miller III. The paddle theme for 2024: Garlock Bay!

Register on our website or by calling our office at (315)-686-5345.

Let's make a splash for Loon Conservation!



We extend heartfelt thanks to all who contributed to the success of the 2023 census! Special applause to Kim Bigelow, recipient of the 2023 Loon Paddle crafted by John Miller III, reflecting Blind Bay.

*In memory of Shaner
Graham Atkinson*
John G. Foster

*In memory of
Lily Orion Bach*
Graeme & Jessica Spicer

In memory of Frank Beadel
Wink Beadel

In memory of Gordon Bonisteel
Hartley & Reginald Schweitzer

*In memory of Dennis & Alice
Cheney & Dave Cheney*
Tom Cheney

*In honor of Clean Water
Flowing Into the
St. Lawrence River*
Rosie & Steve Marcus

*In memory of Beverly &
Frank Cole*
Karen & Bruce Harrison
Jake Tibbles & Alicia Dewey

In memory of Jim Corey
Patricia Corey

*In honor of Robert &
Carol Dakin*
Bill Dakin & Jeanne Richards

In honor of William G. Dakin
Robert & Carol Dakin

In memory of Matt Deedy
Barbara Deedy

In memory of Ken Deedy
Barbary Deedy
Daniel Dolan
Steve & Vici Diehl
Jake Tibbles & Alicia Dewey

In memory of Kevin Deedy
Barbara Deedy

*In memory of William, Shirley &
Robert Dodenhoff*
Susan & Howard Charbonneau

*In memory of Joseph &
Patricia Ficano*
Jeff Ficano

In memory of Alan Finkelstein
Diane & Mike Ferrucci

In memory of Dick Fulton
Michael Fulton

In memory of Jamie Gaffney
Kathleen Gaffney
Jake Tibbles & Alicia Dewey

In memory of Kingsley L. Greene
Lawren Stevens

In memory of Hunter Grimes III
Martha Grimes

*In memory of Marilyn &
Larry Gould*
Michael & Alison Carter

In memory of Dennis Honeywell
Marsha Spiridigliozzi

Tributes made from
October 1, 2023 - March 15, 2024

FAREWELLS

Remembering Zell Steever



Zell Steever at the Delaney Bay Fish Ladder following his presentation during the infamous Grindstone Island Mule Tour in 2021.

Zell and his family spent countless summers on Grindstone Island. He was dedicated to family, the communities he lived in, and the planet he loved.

During Zell's time on the TILT Board from 2004-2012, he served on the EPA, EPS and Executive committees. His dedication to stewardship and best land management practices found him frequently on TILT's Grindstone Island Preserves assisting staff with grassland habitat work and trail improvements. He was instrumental in helping the organization navigate several important conservation initiatives, including the expansion of the Zenda Farms Preserve, Crooked

Creek Preserve and Shoals Preserve. After his service on the Board, he volunteered each summer to help lead the infamous Grindstone Island Mule Tour. He found great enjoyment in sharing his knowledge of wetland ecosystems and the variety of wildlife that call the Island home. And in 2018, Zell worked closely with staff to catalyze the conservation of Manley Rusho's property, expanding TILT's Delaney Bay Preserve.

Prior to his time on the TILT Board, he was a conflict resolution specialist for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the federal agency that deals with water distribution rights in the western United States. Zell also worked for the President's Council on Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Corps of Engineers, and was a member of the U.S. delegation to Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

A supporter of the Land Trust for over 26 years, there is no question that Zell's passion for the outdoors and natural environment transcended both his professional career and personal life. While away from the River, he was deeply engaged in issues affecting his local community in Groton, Connecticut. Whether it was the environment, land use, water quality, climate resilience or public transportation matters, he was always willing to lend a helping hand and offer volunteer support.

Simply put, Zell was a great man. Incredibly smart, an ardent advocate, and an all-around good person to spend time with. He did so much for the Grindstone Island community and conservation in the Thousand Islands and will be greatly missed.



Remembering Lois Jean MacFarlane

Growing up in Clayton, Lois Jean was a true River Rat with a deep appreciation for nature and the St. Lawrence River. In 1997, Lois Jean MacFarlane and her husband John decided to donate Zenda Farms to the Thousand Islands Land Trust. This was the foundation for what is known today as the Zenda Farms Preserve. And in 2011, in their honor, the Lois Jean and John MacFarlane Trail was built at Zenda. Today, this Signature Preserve stands to be an iconic example of historic preservation meets conservation for future generations.



Lois Jean toasts the crowd at the 2011 Major Donor Appreciation Islander event which she hosted at her home in Clayton just steps away from Zenda.

Zenda Farms, under TILT's stewardship, forms a scenic gateway to the village of Clayton and a sanctuary habitat for grassland birds such as Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark and Savannah Sparrow. It serves as a focal point for environmental education and hosts local school field trips annually. Year-round, it is enjoyed by residents and visitors walking the MacFarlane Trail. Since 2006, TILT has celebrated open spaces by holding the Zenda Community Picnic to kick off the summer season. Friends and neighbors gather to enjoy the rolling hills, silver Jamesway barns, and community spirit, features that make Zenda a beloved landmark. The Picnic now includes volunteer recognition and has become one of the area's most anticipated early summer events.

This 412-acre environmental community center and working farm continues to grow. It serves as epicenter for environmental education, conservation and cultural and agricultural heritage in the Thousand Islands. The experiences and memories created in this historical and special place will be forever cherished. It is this legacy and generosity that Lois Jean leaves behind that we are truly grateful for.

In memory of Adele P. Jacobs, Henderson Harbor
Nancy Bronstein
Mary Klucznik
David Poulin
Deb Shulmansky

In honor of Bill Jeffery
Kimberly Jeffery

In memory of Scott Kempton
Kym & Larry Asam
Jane Carver & Ron Cooper
Robin Druckmkan
Kathy Elliott
Amy Guttman
Aaron Haack
Nancy & James Hummel
Valerie Johnson
Mike & Jean Kimber
Greg & Cindy McLean
Cyril Mouaikel & Marlene Hajal Mouaikel
Margaret Owen
Leslie Rowland & Fritz Hager
Gary & Vera Rushmer
Timothy & Melody Sweet
Jake Tibbles & Alicia Dewey
Janice & Harvey Weitzel
The Yakubovich Family
Marty Yenawine

In memory of Zell & Jim Kerr
Meg Kerr & Bob Vanderslice
Jean Kerr & Stewart Dutfeld

In memory of Gene & Arlene Long
Willie Blassingame

In honor of Art Mack & Mary Jo Champion
Susan Champion
Leslie Cobb
Tracie Tucci

In memory of Mary & Dick Macsherry
Stewart & Beth Macsherry
Jake Tibbles & Alicia Dewey

In memory of Edward F. Martelle, Jr.
Gretchen Martelle

In honor of Cindy McLean
Penny Partlow

In memory of Patrick Moore
Juliana Eames

In memory of John Murray
Jean Murray

In memory of My Ancestral River Rats
Bruce & Julie Mallette

In memory of Tom Nims
Tom Bradley

In memory of Joan Perconti
Michael Cooke

In memory of Carolyn & Geoffrey Pratt
Andree & Doug Jacobs-Perkins

In memory Dege Price
Bonnie Wilkinson Mark & Charles Mark
Lloyd & Carolyn Martin
Jake Tibbles & Alicia Dewey

In memory of Sonja Raetz
Randy Raetz

In memory of Jim Rendall
Margot Rendall & George Gardner

In memory of Walter & Louise Rice
Florence Lewis Rice & Leroy Lewis

In memory of Mary Ellen Rogers
James Barden

In memory of Joe & Rose Schirano
Brian & Phyllis Schirano

In memory of Stephen Storie
Wayne & Lana Storie

In honor of Charlie Tebbutt
Rachel Cole

In memory of Joanne Truman
Josh Truman

In honor of Josh Truman
Robin Lane

In memory of Barbara & Henry Vayo
Marie & Mark Greenbaum

In memory of Roger & Mary Etta White
Joan & Roger White Jr.

In memory of John & Dorothea Woolverton
Bruce Woolverton & Thomas Jewell

In memory of Capt. Richard T. Wright
Lizzie & Ken Wempe



**Thank you for
remembering
your loved ones
in this way!**

FAREWELLS

Remembering Scott Kempton

To Scott Kempton, the St. Lawrence River was a place of rejuvenation and adventure alike, a place to gather with family and friends, simply put it was home. Scott was a true believer in the Land Trust's mission and never missed an opportunity to support our conservation projects and community events.

His zest for life and adventurous spirit was contagious and only matched by his love of the Thousand Islands. Scott was a source of support and laughter, someone that you could count on in times of need. As a husband, he was a pillar of strength and personified the true meaning of a lifelong partner. As a father, Scott was a role model and mentor who provided boundless love and wisdom, passing on his deep connection to the River. And as an outdoorsman, his value of nature only increased. He understood that with the privilege of hunting along the St. Lawrence River came with a responsibility to ensure its long-term health and vitality.

As a member of the organization for over 14 years, it was without question that conserving the Thousand Islands held a special place in his heart. Scott's kindness, resilience and unconditional love for the River, friends and his family will not be forgotten.



Scott poses with friends, Debbie Heineman (left) and Elaine Chase (right) with a big smile at the 2023 TILT Summer Gathering at the TI Park Pavilion.

Remembering Nancy Seeley

Nancy's smile said it all. Her zest for life was only matched by her love of the outdoors and passion to help others by giving back to the communities she cared so much for. The St. Lawrence River was one of the places she loved deeply.

As a member of the Land Trust for 35 years, her impact on environmental education and conservation has been immeasurable, shaping the landscapes and the minds and values of countless individuals who will carry her legacy forward into the future. Nancy's dedication was invaluable and a true testament to shared values of community, the environment and conserving this vital resource for future generations.

Nancy and her family knew that TILT's mission to conserve land in the Thousand Islands region relies heavily on engaging the public about the importance of land conservation, and teaching kids to love the land. Through the Leonard C. and Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation, they helped to create and sustain the TILTKids Treks environmental education program from day one. Their commitment to providing resources for children's growth and development, coupled with their dedication to environmental education, has left an indelible mark on countless young lives. Through their generosity and vision, they have empowered children to explore, learn, and thrive in a world where environmental awareness is paramount.

The roots Nancy planted here at "The River" will continue to grow and influence the lives of children for generations to come. She will be deeply missed but her enduring legacy and smile will shine on inspiring others to become conservation champions of the Thousand Islands region and beyond.



Nancy Seeley at the Geiss Observation Tower on the Rivergate Trail in July of 2022 displaying her inspiring smile while enjoying the outdoors.

SPRINGING INTO ACTION: Stewardship Ramps Up



by Kenneth Nims | *Stewardship Director*

The Land Trust hit the ground running this spring on a series of stewardship initiatives. Our committed team, along with volunteers, collaborated to advance multiple conservation initiatives spanning the Thousand Islands region.

A sincere thank you goes out to all the volunteers who diligently reported on trail conditions throughout the winter months, providing valuable insights that guide our stewardship efforts. Amidst the thaw, our stewardship crew tackled trail maintenance and cleanup, breathing life back into pathways weathered by a mild but unpredictable North Country winter.

The annual Common Tern Grid installation kicked off the season, a vital step in safeguarding the delicate habitats of this threatened species. As the earth awakened on Arbor Day, TILT celebrated with our annual For The Trees event, planting 55 maple trees to grow our Zenda Farms Mead Family Maple Grove. Community partners Cross Island Farms, Thousand Islands Art Center and the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center engaged attendees with fun and educational activities. Building upon the work completed at For The Trees, another group of passionate volunteers joined us back at Zenda Farms Preserve for Spring Stewardship Day, where we planted larger maple trees. The day concluded with a roadside cleanup, all to take care of this special place, our Zenda Farms Preserve.

With community support, TILT will continue its steadfast commitment to stewardship, conserving the lands we hold dear and fostering the spirit of our mission.



A big thank you to our dedicated volunteers who participated in the 2024 Common Tern Grid installation on Eagle Wings Shoals! © Bridgett McCann



TILT Stewardship Director Ken Nims assists a few volunteers with their tree planting on Arbor Day. © Bridgett McCann



SIGNATURE PRESERVE HIGHLIGHT

GRINDSTONE ISLAND PRESERVES

Grindstone Island is the fourth largest island in the Thousand Islands region. TILT protects approximately 50% of the Island, through a combination of preserves and conservation easements.



Several preserves on the interior of Grindstone Island are conserving the agricultural heritage of the Island, as well as sensitive habitat for various native species. The Howard-Smith and Rusho Farm Preserves feature grassland habitat that was historic farmland. The Heineman Songbird Forest is the breeding ground for neotropical migratory songbirds, those birds that winter in Central America and return to North America for the summer season. And the Potters Beach Preserve provides acres of woodland habitat for wildlife and one of the only naturally occurring sandy beaches in the Thousand Islands.

PRESERVE ECOLOGY

Grassland bird species nest on the ground and need large expanses of open grassland like the ones found on the Howard Smith and Rusho Farm Preserves to rear their young. This is among the most quickly disappearing habitat in the United States today due to development pressures and a shift in agricultural practices. Neotropical migratory songbirds need an undisturbed leafy canopy where predators are less likely to live, like the habitat found in the Heineman Songbird Forest. The Grindstone Island Nature Trail winds through the deep forests of the Island and takes you across a boardwalk, providing incredible views of both the St. Lawrence River and the important wetlands that filter water, provide flood retention during large storms and provide important nursery grounds for spawning fish and nesting birds. A wooden bridge traverses the shallow emergent marsh, complete with benches for viewing native wildlife. Have a seat, you may spot a Least or American Bittern, Kingfisher, Mink, Muskrat, Otter, Beaver or Short-tailed Stoat.

HIKING THE PRESERVE

The Grindstone Island Nature Trail winds its way from Canoe Point State Park to Picnic Point State Park, both owned by the State of New York. It is jointly managed by TILT and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Thousand Islands Region Office.

HOW TO GET THERE

There is no public transportation to Grindstone Island, but the preserves are open to the public. Potters Beach is at the western end of Grindstone accessible from the water, and from North Shore Road. The Grindstone Island Nature Trail is at the eastern end of the Island and links Canoe Point State Park with Picnic Point State Park. It is accessible from the public docks at either park.

Photo credits:

Top row: © Martin Zonnenberg; © Chris Murray Photography;

© Martin Zonnenberg

Middle row: © Spencer Busler; © Terra Bach; © Martin Zonnenberg

Bottom photo: © Chris Murray Photography

Illustration credit: top right Robert McNamara of The Art of Wilderness

FUN FACTS



For over 100 years, Grindstone Island had a thriving community based primarily on dairy farming, although stone quarrying and even ship-building are in its history. New York State's last operating one-room school was on the Island and closed in 1989.



Throughout recent history, the Island's landscape has been dominated by human activity. Native Americans occupied Grindstone Island long before European explorers discovered its resources. Settlers found that easy access to the island made harvesting its forests and quarrying its rocks attractive.



Native Americans are believed to have brought Pin Oak seedlings to the Island several hundred years ago – usually this species is only found as far north as the Hudson River Valley. A member of the red oak family, pin oaks will not grow in areas of high elevation or on slopes. They are usually found in damp lowlands and near rivers, streams or lakes.

WELCOME NATALIE GATES & BRIDGETT MCCANN

Natalie Gates, Land Protection Specialist

As the new Land Protection Specialist, Natalie Gates is responsible for upholding land protection policies, conducting landowner outreach, and supporting easement and property acquisitions along with stewardship activities.



Natalie Gates.

TILT's Assistant Director, Spencer Busler stated, "Natalie's arrival couldn't come at a better time. TILT's conservation program continues to flourish, protecting some of the most important natural resources in the St. Lawrence River Valley. Her education and enthusiasm are perfectly suited for the role of Land Protection Specialist."

Natalie holds a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree in Wildlife Science from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF). During her undergraduate career, she worked at The American Chestnut Research and Restoration Project through SUNY-ESF, leading the summer pollination efforts. This project focuses on research with the ultimate goal leading to the development of a blight-tolerant American chestnut tree. Her success was celebrated with the pollination of over 10,000 chestnut flowers!

"I am thrilled and honored to be involved in the important conservation work happening here at TILT. Land conservation is my passion and it is essential for our future. I am new to the Thousand Islands region, and I can't wait to explore all of its incredible places," said Natalie.

Originally from Cincinnatus, NY, in the eastern part of Cortland County, she is no stranger to close-knit communities and looks forward to getting to know the Thousand Islands. In her spare time, Natalie enjoys hiking, painting, reading, and bird watching. Her passion lies in discovering new places to experience a variety of wildlife.

Bridgett McCann, Communications Specialist

In her new role as TILT's Communications Specialist, Bridgett McCann will be instrumental in advancing the mission through the strategic development and execution of community outreach initiatives. She comes to TILT with a diverse suite of environmental, administrative and marketing skills that will prove invaluable to the organization.



Bridgett McCann.

TILT's Director of Development, Terra Bach, stated, "As we continue to make strides in protecting our environment, Bridgett's unique skills will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing our reach and engagement. We are excited about the positive impact she will bring to our team and the invaluable role she will play in amplifying TILT's conservation initiatives. The combination of her love for the Thousand Islands, our community, and the outdoors aligns perfectly with our mission."

Graduating from St. Lawrence University with a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Government and Environmental Studies, her commitment to environmental advocacy and proficiency in crafting engaging content align with TILT's dedication to land conservation. "I am honored to join the Land Trust and contribute to the vital work they do and look forward to collaborating with this dedicated team to make a positive impact in the Thousand Islands region, a place very near to my heart," said Bridgett.

Originally from Rochester NY, Bridgett spent a lot of time on the River and looks forward to building a career here. Summers in the Thousand Islands fostered her appreciation for nature, conservation and sustainability. Outside of professional pursuits, she enjoys spending quality time outdoors with her family, friends, and two rambunctious black labs River and Rosie.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE, JOHN CARDAMONE



John Cardamone in his family boat, 'Ol Boy on the St. Lawrence River.

This past fall, John Cardamone retired from the TILT board after 17 years of service. John played key roles in many of TILT's endeavors and leaves behind a lasting legacy. He was a long-term member on the Easement & Property Acquisition Committee, Development Committee and served as chair of the Nominating Committee. It was through his role on Nominating, that John led the establishment of the strong and diverse Board of Trustees that has helped TILT achieve many successes. This impact will continue to ripple through time pushing the organization forward to reach its conservation goals.

His contribution as a TILT Trustee went beyond building its strong foundation. John and Sally graciously opened their home for TILT events many times. John was an integral part of the Building Committee that led the office renovation, offering his expertise in this intricate industry. Most recently, he has also been a strong supporter of our Blind Bay Legal Defense Fund.

John will be missed on the Board but with his deep family roots here at the River, we know we will see him often. On behalf of the TILT Board of Trustees and Staff, we extend our deepest gratitude to John for his service and his positive impact on the Thousand Islands, for generations to come.



Summer Gathering at the home of Larry & Diane Kingsley The Woodlands

**Saturday July 20, 2024
6-9 PM**

Tickets: \$125 per person

**All proceeds to benefit the essential conservation and stewardship of the
Thousand Islands, A2A Wildway and greater Atlantic Flyway.**

Please RSVP by July 7 by mail, phone (315)-686-5345, or email events@tilandtrust.org.



Conservation Ethic: A Generational Gift

by Spencer Busler | Assistant Director



Spencer sits atop his grandfather's lap circa 1993, spending time outside.

I'm not entirely sure where my grandfather gained his conservation ethic. Maybe it was ingrained in him by the bucolic way of life as a child growing up in Theresa, NY during the 1920s. Maybe it was something acquired while in hiding after his plane went down in Nazi-occupied France in World War II. Or possibly something learned from his decades of land surveying on the beautiful and diverse terrain of the Thousand Islands. Regardless of its origin, I am profoundly grateful to have inherited this conservation ethic.

Though he never plainly said it out loud, I now realize that he was incredibly aware of the two most finite resources that rule our human existence: time and land.

There was an impressive modesty to his ecological knowledge. He had no formal education in the environmental field, and would admit to not knowing "sh** from Shinola" on the matter. But he knew, almost to the hour, when the shadberries were ready for picking each June before the songbirds nibbled them all up. He knew when the bullheads would bite best and when the walleye would run up the Indian River each spring. With an innate ability, he knew the exact time each day when the wind would blow the hardest on the St. Lawrence. These were things not discovered from a book, but only through time on the land.

He taught me to have tremendous respect for the natural world around us. Through him, I learned that each and every acre matters. Just like the axe wound on that old pine tree in the back yard, the slightest of scars to our landscape take a long, long time to heal.

Now that I have two children of my own, I appreciate this sentiment more than ever before. I want to share with them the same outdoor experiences that I was lucky enough to have enjoyed as a child. Time spent catching the seemingly endless supply of hungry mid-summer sunfish off the camp dock on Clear Lake. Time at camp itself; a cottage that my grandfather built by hand nearly 60 years ago with salvaged nails that he stored in empty peanut butter jars. The stains of pine pitch on the bottom of my "summer" feet, and the shade of that 80-year old oak in August. I strive to share the things that are not discovered from a book, but only through time on the land.

So, in closing, I urge you to consider the long-term impact of your decision regarding the land—whether it's your front lawn, a family cottage, or a 400-acre woodlot. Contemplate for the youthful experiences of those just old enough to count the rings of a tree, and for all those wild things that call that tree home. After all, we'll never fully get back our time gone by, or our lands once trammed; a lesson that bears repeating.



Spencer enjoys an afternoon at his family cottage on Clear Lake with his son Wade on his lap.

From the Letterbox

MEMBERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Nonna Schtimpleman, Fairport NY

The first time I came to the Thousand Islands, I was in high school. My friend's family had a small cottage in Cape Vincent and we spent a week there one summer. I went waterskiing for the first time and still remember how terrified I was. I was a city kid and didn't learn to swim til I was in fourth grade.

I moved away not long after college and lived in Alaska for almost twenty years before coming back to Rochester in 2013. My husband and I started coming to Thousand Islands almost right away, first for day trips, then for weekend camping trips, and then for all of September. The island-iness of the River and all its nooks and crannies reminds us so much of Southeast Alaska. The freighters are the whales of the River. I love how quietly something so huge just appears and slides by. There are so few people in September and the River just feels ours, like home. The light is magic, the warm days are so lovely, and the stormy days are perfect for knitting socks on the dock.

When we come home each fall, we sift through our memories and the pictures take us back to the River and to all of the amazing places we've gotten to know. Last September, we paddled, hiked, and walked over 350 miles and loved each one, from pre-coffee paddles around Ironsides to walks down the road to Kring Point to windy day walks from Cape Vincent to Tibbets Point.

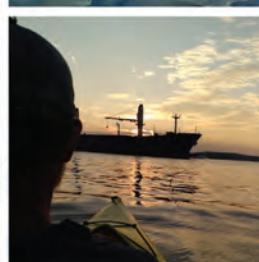
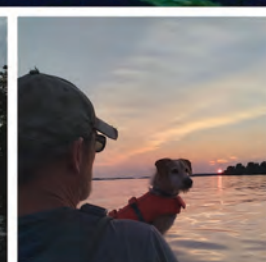
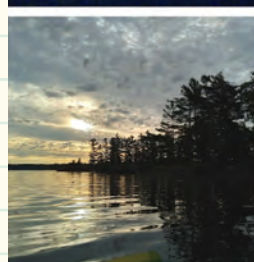
We look forward to coming back almost as soon as we leave and can't wait to see the three otters that spent last September checking us out. We loved paddling by beavers, muskrats, loons, cormorants, geese, and bald eagles, or spotting snakes and turtles basking in the sun. We loved seeing wild turkeys, deer, and porcupines on our walks down the road, and watching squirrels and chipmunks dart around the rocks at our tiny cottage. We're so grateful for all of it!

We're just down the road from the Macsherry Trail and visit often. Zenda Farms is another favorite and the views from Foster-Blake Woods are amazing. The Otter Creek Trail in Alex Bay is another favorite. It feels so far removed from the business of town.

We're so grateful for TILT and for everyone who loves the River as much as we do. Thank you, from the depths of my river-full soul.

Nonna, Doug, and Ed

We love hearing from our TILT Members! If you have a favorite memory or experience out on the land that you would like to share, please contact Kate Breheny, kbreheny@tilandtrust.org.



© Nonna Schtimpleman

TILT Merch

SHOP WITH A PURPOSE

Every dollar you spend helps support land conservation in the Thousand Islands.



TILT Hats

Get your new TILT hat today. Available with the classic TILT logo and now the Zenda Farms Preserve logo. Support conservation in every season with a comfortable canvas, trucker or winter beanies. To purchase, stop in the TILT Office or join us at the Zenda Picnic to get your hat!



Zenda Farms® Maple Syrup

Zenda Farms Maple Syrup is handcrafted, 100% local, full-bodied and rich in flavor.

Bottled in bourbon-style, clear, glass bottles our maple syrup will delight even the most discerning of pancake lovers.

Available in two sizes:

12.7 oz (375ml) \$15.00 | 25.5 oz (750 ml) \$22.00

Available at the TILT Office, Hunner's Market, 1000 Islands River Rat Cheese, and The Mustard Seed. Ask us about our bulk pricing.

Your purchase directly supports TILT's continued conservation, stewardship, and environmental educational programs.

golden GOODNESS

ZENDA FARMS HONEY

After a busy summer of foraging on the rolling hills of Zenda's conserved grasslands, the bees have produced pure golden goodness!

8oz: \$9.50 | 1lb: \$13.50 | 2lb: \$22 | 5lb: \$52

PACKAGED IN VINTAGE INSPIRED GLASS QUEENLINE JARS TO SHOWCASE THE RICH AMBER HUE.

Stop by one of the stores or the TILT Office to pick up a jar of raw, local honey.

Not at the River? We offer a pretty sweet option for shipping. Contact us today.



NOW AVAILABLE AT
HUNNER'S MARKET,
THE MUSTARD SEED
& 1000 ISLANDS
RIVER RAT CHEESE!

1000
ISLANDS
LAND TRUST

ZENDA COMMUNITY PICNIC & VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Friday, June 14th 2024

Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton, NY

5:30 - 7:30 pm

Tickets: \$20 Kids under 12 FREE

Available in advance ONLINE and AT-THE-DOOR

Classic Picnic Fare & Drinks

Live Music · Games · Exhibits · Animals and MORE!

Please RSVP by June 2nd to 315-686-5345 or events@tilandtrust.org



Thousand Islands Land Trust

2024 Events

Please register in advance for Treks and Events by visiting our website tilandtrust.org, emailing treks@tilandtrust.org, or calling the office at (315) 686-5345.

Friday, April 26 | 10 AM

12th Annual "For the Trees" Arbor Day Celebration

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

Saturday, May 11 | 10 AM

Spring Stewardship Day

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

Saturday, May 18 | 7:30 AM - 11 AM

Smith Bird Trek Series

Warbler Walk: 7:30 AM - 9 AM

Bird is the Word Hike: 9:30 AM - 11 AM

📍 Otter Creek Preserve & Nature Trail

Friday, June 14 | 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Community Picnic & Volunteer Recognition

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

Friday, June 21 | 10 AM

Summer Solstice Walking Meditation

📍 Otter Creek Preserve, Alexandria Bay

Tuesday, July 2 | 9 AM

Summer Yoga

📍 Foster-Blake Woods Preserve, Clayton

Tuesday, July 9 | 10 AM

Bend Like a Bug KidsTrek

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

Thursday, July 11 | 10:30 AM

Mushrooms & Mosses Trek

📍 Macsherry Trail, Crooked Creek Preserve, Hammond

Sunday, July 14 | 10 AM - 12:30 PM

Crooked Creek Kayak Adventure in Partnership with Riverbay Adventure Inn

📍 Crooked Creek Preserve, Hammond

Saturday, July 20 | 8 AM - 9 AM

Annual Loon Census with Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation

📍 Various Locations (chosen by participants)



SCAN

with your phone's camera to
learn more & register online.

Saturday, July 20 | 6 PM - 9 PM

Annual Summer Gathering

📍 The Woodlands, home of Larry & Diane Kingsley, Clayton

Thursday, July 25 | 10 AM

Rivergate Ride

📍 S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve - Rivergate Trail, Clayton

Thursday, August 1 | 10 AM - 12:30 PM

"Ichthyologist (Fish Scientist) for a Day" TILTKids Trek with TIBS

📍 Thousand Islands Biological Station (TIBS), Governor's Island

Saturday, August 10 | 10 AM - 12 PM

6th Annual Mutt Strut

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

Tuesday, August 13 | 10 AM - 12:30 PM

Healthy Land = Healthy River: "Damsels & Dragons" TILTKids Trek

📍 TI Park, Wellesley Island

Thursday, August 15 | 5 PM - 7 PM

Islander Event

📍 David & Robin Lucas's home on Bluff Island

Tuesday, August 20th | 8:30 AM

Common Tern Nesting Grid Removal

📍 Eagle Wing Shoals & Tidd Island

Thursday, August 22 | 5:30 PM

Annual Birkhead Lecture: Native Food Plants for Pollinators & People

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

Friday, September 13 | 10 AM

Fall Stewardship Day

📍 Fuller Bay, Cape Vincent

Saturday, October 26 | 11 AM

Halloween Hike

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

Conservation Connections



by Terra Bach | Director of Development & Communications

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Thousand Islands Land Trust launched the classroom edition of the unique educational program called Conservation Connections.



Field Trip Highlight

During the first academic year of this element of the program, TILT engaged with three different school districts and one homeschool group. Children and their educators got out on the land at Zenda Farms Preserve, the S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve and Chippewa Bay Preserve. These field trips are important because they offer learning experiences that enhance engagement, social skills, cultural awareness, critical thinking and motivation

among students. They complement traditional classroom instruction by providing hands-on, real-world learning opportunities that contribute to a holistic education.

In summary, this exciting program includes in-school lessons and field trips curated to teach local youth about the importance of conservation. We look forward to expanding this program and cultivating the future stewards of the Thousand Islands and beyond. To learn more about educational opportunities and to plan your district field trip today, please contact Terra Bach, tbach@tilandtrust.org.

Classroom Highlight

TILT enjoyed the opportunity to visit the 5th Grade Class at Guardino Elementary. The lesson touched upon Signature Preserves, sparking discussion among students about how many they've visited and the importance of getting outside. Further, the team and students delved into forest connectivity, establishing its relevance with the A2A Wildway being in their backyard. TILT staff left inspired by the students' knowledge and engagement.



TILT Discovery Center: The Gateway to the Outdoors

The Thousand Islands Land Trust is working to provide a transformative asset to our community through the creation of the **TILT Discovery Center: The Gateway to the Outdoors**. The center will act as a hub where visitors and locals alike can learn about regional outdoor resources.

Interactive exhibits will encourage hands-on experiences that allow people to explore and learn. Open year-round and right along the newly constructed Clayton Riverwalk, it will engage all who visit this increasingly popular destination.

We envision each and every visitor leaving the Discovery Center instilled with appreciation and knowledge of the region's complex ecosystem, natural resources, and cultural history all inspired by the work of TILT.





NATURE IS HERE FOR YOU

SPRING, SUMMER, WINTER, FALL: WE LOVE THIS PLACE, YEAR-ROUND!

The Thousand Islands are breathtaking in every season. Help sustain the lands you love by becoming a TILT Trailblazer.

By becoming a monthly donor, you join a community that sustains our commitment to safeguard the Thousand Islands you cherish throughout every season.

Join this special group of TILT members and become a Trailblazer Monthly Donor today!

Contact Kate Breheny, Membership Coordinator, kbreheny@tilandtrust.org or by calling 315-686-5345.



CREATE YOUR LEGACY. THOUSAND ISLANDS *FOREVER*

DO YOU HAVE A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE?

Land conservation is an investment in our future. Leaving a legacy is one of the most valuable, enduring gifts you can ever give.

For this reason we invite you to join others by including TILT in your estate plan and become a recognized member of **Thousand Islands Forever Legacy Program**.

Members represent a group of individuals who have made a lasting commitment to the conservation of the land in the Thousand Islands. This legacy will ensure that our most cherished open spaces are protected for present and future generations.

TOGETHER, WE ARE CONSERVING THE PLACE YOU LOVE.

To add the Thousand Islands Land Trust to your estate plan today, please visit tilandtrust.plannedgiving.org for more information or contact Terra Bach at 315-686-5345.

Annual Report 2023

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Conserving, restoring, and stewarding our treasured landscapes, now and for generations to come.

In 2023, the Land Trust made great strides in our collective effort to conserve critical wetlands, woodlands, and grasslands throughout the Thousand Islands region. This work includes the protection of the 317-acre Delano Farm in the Town of Alexandria, the 116-acre Snyder Property in Fishers Landing, the 12-acre Foltz Conservation Easement on Grindstone Island, and the 276-acre Mecomber Conservation Easement at the headwaters of Mullet Creek – all propelling TILT’s total conserved lands over 14,000 acres!

Exciting stewardship projects were completed this year. On the Tibbett’s Point Preserve, 165-acres of row crops were transformed into thriving meadows with native grasses and wildflowers, enhancing biodiversity and improving water quality. Dedicated volunteers also built the new Zenda Woods Trail at Zenda Farms Preserve. Additionally, upgrades were made to trails throughout the Grindstone Island Preserves, new footbridges and wildlife viewing platforms were constructed at the Macsherry and Chippewa Bay trails, and safe nesting habitat was provided for Common Terns on Eagle Wings Shoals and Tidd Island.

Working alongside Save The River, the Save Blind Bay Coalition and concerned community members, the Land Trust continued to advocate the siting of the proposed Border Patrol facility to the Bonnie Castle Recreation Center, steering it away from waterfront locations such as Blind Bay and Dockside Cottages.

TILT’s commitment to environmental education saw significant expansion in 2023. TILTreks, KidsTreks, and Conservation Connections programs were held on TILT’s

Signature Preserves and in the classroom, providing enriching experiences for area youth and fostering a deepened connection to the land.

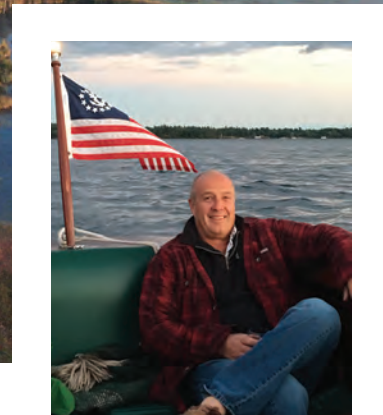
Building upon this continued momentum, I’m pleased to report that TILT has recently completed a new 5-Year Strategic Plan, outlining ambitions to accelerate and expand the conservation and stewardship of our region’s most critical natural resources. While the focus remains on protecting land for wildlife habitat, water quality, climate resilience, and outdoor recreation, the new Plan acknowledges that our region forms a crossroads where the A2A Wildway, Atlantic Flyway, and St. Lawrence Waterway come together, creating one of the most unique landscapes in the Northeast. The goal of this work is a greater quality of life, an improved economy and an enhanced environment.

Reflecting upon last year’s successes, we are reminded of our shared commitment to land conservation and environmental education. The partnerships we have forged, and the meaningful impact we have made in our River communities and beyond, have positioned us to grow as an organization. Thank you for believing in our mission. It is your involvement that truly empowers us to continue to do the work we do for the Thousand Islands and the broader St. Lawrence River Valley.

Together, conserving the places you love,



David Lucas, President



Financial Overview

For the fiscal year that ended December 31, 2023, TILT’s membership income was \$408,574, up 18.70 % from 2022. Operating income was \$1,092,547, up 11.67% from 2022. Operating expenses were \$920,473, up approximately 14.10% from 2022.

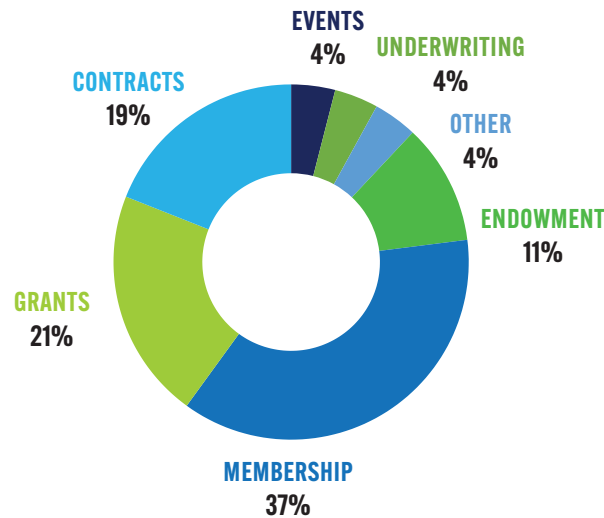
TILT’s Board of Trustees oversees an investment portfolio that is managed by an outside investment management firm, under the guidance of TILT’s Finance Committee. In addition, TILT has several agency funds that have been established at the Northern New York Community Foundation.

The firm of Stackel & Navarra was secured to perform TILT’s annual independent financial audit.

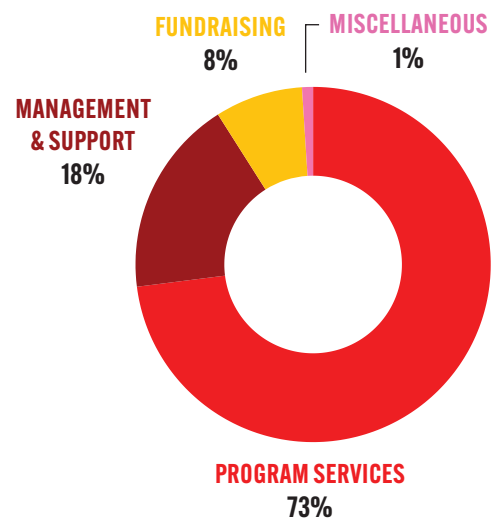
Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2023

Cash & Investments.....	\$4,097,230
Other Assets.....	\$15,464,611
Total Assets.....	\$19,561,840
Liabilities.....	\$154,986
Net Assets.....	\$19,406,854
Total Liabilities & Net Assets.....	\$19,561,840

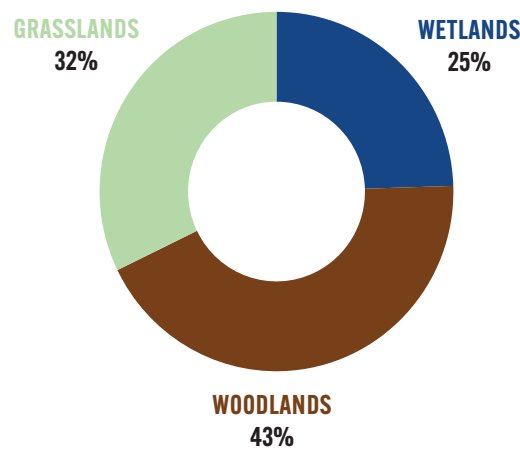
INCOME



EXPENSES



HABITATS CONSERVED



S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve © Chris Murray Photography



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tilandtrust.org



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Have you seen the Save Blind Bay: An Environmental Treasure video?

Check it out to learn
about this critical habitat
and what you can do to
help protect and Save
Blind Bay today!



SCAN

with your phone's camera to
watch the video!



Cover Photo: Aerial photo of the Panunzio Property.
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STAY CONNECTED

