



# Reflections

SPRING 2025 | THE THOUSAND ISLANDS LAND TRUST



*Grindstone Island*

## INSIDE THE ISSUE

3

Conservation Highlight:  
Lange Property

16

Celebrating 40 Years of  
Conservation

22

Annual Report  
2024





## Board of Trustees

David Lucas  
President

Jennifer Caddick  
Vice President

Larry Kingsley  
Secretary

Greg McLean  
Treasurer

Robin Hoffman  
Member at Large

Mary Langan  
Member at Large

John Farrell  
Eric Gregware

Jane Heffron  
Art Mack

Molly MacWade  
Campbell Marshall

Janice McPhail  
Basil Seggos

Josh Truman  
Ben Walldroff

Carol Munro  
Trustee Emerita

## Staff

Jake Tibbles  
Executive Director

Spencer Busler  
Assistant Director

Terra Bach  
Director of Development  
& Communications

Kate Breheny  
Membership Coordinator

Kenneth Nims  
Stewardship Director

Natalie Gates  
Land Protection Specialist

Bridgett McCann  
Communications Specialist

Delaney McIlrath  
Community Engagement  
Coordinator



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



## 2025 Conservationist of the Year Award

An annual award to honor and recognize an individual, partner, volunteer, or organization that has made a significant contribution to our habitat conservation program in NY state.

*"Thank you to our friends at Ducks Unlimited for honoring the Thousand Islands Land Trust with this award. Habitat protection is at the heart of our mission, and we're fortunate to have them as a trusted partner to help safeguard thousands of acres along the St. Lawrence River."*

– Jake Tibbles, TILT Executive Director



**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.

Please visit [tilandtrust.org](http://tilandtrust.org) for more information or contact Terra Bach at 315-686-5345.





*Expanding the existing Howard-Smith and Rusho Preserves rather than acquiring smaller satellite properties ensures the integrity of these habitats, allowing for more effective wildlife corridors and long-term ecological health.*



*An aerial view of the diverse habitats of the Lange Property on Grindstone Island. © Spencer Busler*

# GRINDSTONE ISLAND GAINS 72 ACRES OF PROTECTED LAND

## Expansion of the Rusho and Howard-Smith Preserves

by Spencer Busler | Assistant Director

Abutting TILT's Howard-Smith and Rusho Preserves on Lower Town Landing Road, the vibrant Lange Property punches above its weight in terms of conservation values and breathtaking natural features. The mosaic of wet meadows, open grassland and hardwood outcrops creates a mecca for wildlife of all sizes and niches, from the smallest of native sweat bees to the brawny tight-ringed oaks. Only remnants of the land's pastoral history remain as the Property rewilds.

This sizeable piece of the conservation puzzle fell squarely into place last November with TILT's purchase of the 72.6± acre Lange Property on Grindstone Island. Over the last two years, the Land Trust worked with Heinrich (Henry) Lange to fulfill his vision of putting his land into conservation.

Expanding the existing Howard-Smith and Rusho Preserves ensures the integrity of these habitats, allowing for more effective wildlife corridors and long-term ecological health.

This thoughtful expansion also strengthens the resilience of Grindstone as a whole, as environmental conditions continue to change.

"As the breeding season ramps up in mid-May, the Lange Property comes alive with the songs of more than two dozen songbird species. Meanwhile, just yards away, a threatened Blanding's turtle makes its way through the dense grasses to find a partner. This place is a biodiversity hotspot and we're honored to see it protected," said Natalie Gates, TILT's Land Protection Specialist.

Our shared conservation footprint on Grindstone Island crests the 2,600-acre mark; a testament to the River community's commitment to safeguarding this ecological gem and a cherished way of life. For more information on how to conserve your land, please contact Spencer Busler at [sbusler@tilandtrust.org](mailto:sbusler@tilandtrust.org).



# RARE HABITATS AND FOREST CONNECTIVITY IN FOCUS

## TILT Conserves 240-acres on Black Lake

*This bird's-eye view of the property showcases the diverse habitats of wetlands and forest, home to rare species. © Spencer Busler*

by Spencer Busler | Assistant Director

*In the face of climate change, the A2A landscape is of increasing importance as species move north to more suitable habitats. The Thousand Islands also represents a critical leg of the Atlantic Flyway; a major bird migratory highway. The intersection of the A2A Wildway and Atlantic Flyway reinforces the need for land conservation in this region.*

In November 2024, TILT made a significant stride towards conservation of the Algonquin to Adirondack (A2A) wildlife corridor by acquiring a 240± acre tract of land in Hammond, NY. Located on the serene Mile Arm Bay of Black Lake, this wild and rugged property represents a timely investment in protecting the area's unique ecosystems while building upon existing conserved lands in support of habitat connectivity.

The Chapman Point Property's undulating carbon-rich forests descend into overflowing wetlands, exhibiting an array of diverse landscapes that thrive because of their connection to Black Lake and the adjoining Lonesome Bay

State Forest. These remote habitats host a wide range of rare species. Native threatened flora (local plants) such as the Back's sedge and rock elm (cork elm), and avifauna (birds) of special concern, including Pied-billed Grebe and Cerulean Warbler, rely on quiet tracts of wilderness like this for survival. The A2A corridor is a lifeline for many rare species, allowing them to move freely, find food, and breed.

With support from a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant and the Northeast Wilderness Trust, TILT will be keeping this property intact, ensuring that it remains a resilient forever-wild preserve,



*The unbroken canopies of this conserved forest support species of special concern like the Cerulean Warbler.*

promoting biodiversity and fostering ecosystem health.

TILT's work in securing the Chapman Point Property exemplifies a commitment to environmental stewardship, highlighting the importance of thoughtful land use. By emphasizing the necessity of preserving our natural habitats in their original state, we reinforce our dedication to creating a sustainable future for generations to come.



# REUNITING TURCOTTE FARM WITH ZENDA

## A New Season of Growth and Community

by Bridgett McCann | Communications Specialist

For years, the Turcotte Farm stood quietly beside Zenda Farms, its fields stretching toward the horizon, sharing the same rolling grasslands and sky. In December of 2023, this 7.9-acre property was brought back into the fold, strengthening the landscape and the conservation efforts that protect it.

With nearly five acres of scenic frontage along Crystal Springs Road, Turcotte Farm shares the same ecological importance as its neighboring Zenda Farms Preserve, providing essential habitat for grassland species. The property serves as a familiar refuge for Bobolinks and Eastern Meadowlarks, their cheerful songs filling the air. Small mammals like voles and field mice burrow in the fields, drawing the watchful eyes of Northern Harriers and Red-tailed Hawks soaring above. The land remains as it has been—wild, open, and full of life.

This past winter, the barns and fields took rest beneath a blanket of snow, frozen in time. But as the seasons shift, so too will the landscape. With spring approaching, the earth will awaken once more. Grass will green, flowers will bloom, and Zenda's flock of sheep will return, bringing life and movement back to the land.

### Looking Ahead this Season

Zenda Farms Preserve has long been a place where conservation meets community, offering a space for learning, engagement, and connection. This June, as the Farm bursts



*The iconic red Turcotte Farm barn stands quietly as the farmland stretches beneath a pristine blanket of snow, glowing in the warm hues of the winter sunset. © Chris Murray Photography*

back into activity, TILT happily welcomes back Shepherdess Kat Hammond and her skilled Border Collie companions. From herding demonstrations and barn tours to celebrated community events, the Farm will be alive with opportunities to connect with the land.

As each season unfolds, Zenda thrives as a community hub, strengthening the bond between people and place, ensuring that these rolling fields are always cherished.

*Zenda Farms Preserve has long been a place where conservation meets community, offering a space for learning, engagement, and connection.*



*Zenda's hairy sheep graze on the vibrant summer grasslands at Zenda Farms Preserve between sheepdog training sessions. © Bridgett McCann*



# TILT Joins Collaborative Effort to Restore Young Forests and Protect Golden-winged Warblers

by Natalie Gates | *Land Protection Specialist*

Together with the American Bird Conservancy, Ruffed Grouse Society and Indian River Lakes Conservancy, TILT is working to launch a large-scale habitat restoration effort aimed at supporting the rapidly declining population of Golden-winged Warblers. With the Thousand Islands region as New York's last stronghold for this species, this collaborative effort is vital for its survival.

TILT and its partners successfully secured a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Joint Venture Habitat Restoration and Protection grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to fund this habitat management work. The goal is to establish 200+ acres of Golden-winged Warbler habitat throughout the region, also benefitting other species, like the Ruffed Grouse, that are reliant on young forest habitat. Golden-winged Warblers depend on young forest and shrubland for breeding and nesting, but habitat

loss—driven by the decline of early successional forests and human disturbance—has significantly impacted their populations.

This fall, TILT will begin management at the Mullet Creek Nature Preserve at Fishers Landing. Using best management practices, our stewardship team will implement a variety of techniques to restore ideal habitat conditions. These efforts may involve selectively removing overgrown shrubs opening up herbaceous areas—landscapes dominated by grasses, wildflowers, ferns, and other soft-stemmed plants. Additionally, strategic methods such as softening the forest edge and planting key tree and shrub species will enhance structural diversity.

Through this joint effort, the Land Trust and its partners are taking critical steps to restore habitat and safeguard the future of the Golden-winged Warbler, the Ruffed Grouse and other

early successional species. This initiative highlights the power of conservation partnerships, ensuring that these threatened species continue to thrive in the Thousand Islands region.



*The Golden-winged Warbler, a threatened species in New York, relies on delicate early successional habitats to survive. Protecting these spaces is vital to preserving their future in our landscapes.*

*Aerial view of Mullet Creek Preserve at Fishers Landing, where early successional habitats of open space, shrubby cover, and mature trees support diverse wildlife, including Golden-winged Warbler and Ruffed Grouse.*

## 2025 RAFFLE Ruffed Grouse

*Hand-carved by Glenn Sweet of Thousand Islands Decoy Company*

Proceeds will help to conserve vital wildlife habitats in the Thousand Islands, A2A Wildway, and greater Atlantic Flyway.

**Tickets \$5 each or five for \$20**

Drawing on Friday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>

Purchase tickets by phone, our website, or stopping by our office.

Thousand Islands Land Trust  
135 John St., Clayton, NY 13624  
tilandtrust.org • (315) 686-5345

## 40 Years







# Conservation Connections



by Delaney McIlrath | Community Engagement Coordinator

During the 2024–2025 school year, TILT proudly continued our unique educational program: Conservation Connections. This initiative combines in-school lessons with curated field trips to teach local youth about the importance of conservation and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards.

## Field Trip Highlight

This year, we are partnering with two school districts to get students and educators out on the land at the S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve and Otter Creek Preserve.

These hands-on field trip experiences offer powerful educational benefits, enhancing student engagement, social-emotional development, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and motivation. They provide real-world, place-based learning opportunities that complement classroom instruction and support a holistic approach to education.

TILT looks forward to continuing to grow this exciting program. To learn more about educational opportunities or to plan a field trip for your district, please contact Delaney McIlrath at [dmcilrath@tilandtrust.org](mailto:dmcilrath@tilandtrust.org).



© Bridgett McCann

## TRAIL CAM SPOTLIGHT

# Look who we caught on camera!

## MEET THE RED-TAILED HAWK

Captured in stunning detail, this pair of Red-tailed Hawks showcases the power and grace of these formidable raptors. Known for their sharp vision and distinctive reddish-brown tails, these skilled hunters soar high above fields and forests, scanning for prey with remarkable precision.

The open fields of Zenda Farms Preserve provide an ideal location to catch a meal, offering ample opportunities for these hawks to hunt.

A fun fact about Red-tailed Hawks is their lifelong bond. These raptors mate for life and are often seen hunting together or perched side by side.

Their presence is a testament to the health of our local ecosystems, reminding us of the importance of conserving these wild spaces. Keep an eye on the skies, you might just spot a pair circling overhead!



*“The open fields of Zenda Farms Preserve provide an ideal location to catch a meal, offering ample opportunities for these hawks to hunt.”*



## In Honor of

**Kate & Brian Breheny**  
Bruce & Genie Anderson

**James & Leslie Cheney**  
Caylin Cheney

**William C. Dakin**  
Bob & Carol Dakin

**Future Generations for  
Save Blind Bay**  
Jonathan & Heather White

**Art Mack & Mary Jo Champion**  
Leslie Cobb

**Molly & Darden MacWade**  
Stewart & Beth Macsherry

**Cindy McLean**  
Penny Partlow

**Greg McLean**  
Community Foundation of  
Herkimer and Oneida Counties

**My new grand-nephew  
named Clayton**  
Jerry Smith

**Frankie Nims**  
Tom Bradley

**Skip Tolette**  
Marty Yenawine

## In Memory of

**Jim Affleck**  
Nancy & Bruce McKenzie

**Tim Arnold**  
Beverly & Gary Arnold

**Lily Orion Bach**  
Graeme & Jessica Spicer

**Florine F. Basile Jr.**  
Suzanne Pfister

**Frank Beadel**  
Wink Beadel

**Alonzo & Helen Brand**  
Alison Carter

**Don Brown**  
Janice Brown

**Megan Burns**  
Charles & Janet Burns

**Joel Charles**  
Charlene Greene  
James & Glorian Reinman

**Dennis & Alice Cheney and  
Dave Cheney**  
Tom & Kathy Cheney

**Frank Cole**  
Karen & Bruce Harrison

**Ronald Colin**  
Kathleen Hazel-Wood  
Linda & Robert Gaffney

**Jim Corey**  
Patricia Corey

**Dorothy Cosselman**  
Robert & Tori Cosselman

**Robert O. Cox**  
Ted & Kathy Drum

**Sissy Danforth**  
William Briggs  
William & Diana Grater

**Ken Deedy**  
Daniel Dolan  
Steve and Vici Diehl  
Myrna Kaplan

**David Duff**  
Deborah Bailey  
William & Diana Grater  
Sid Quarrier & Eliza Bailey  
Mark & Louise Scarlett  
Jake Tibbles & Alicia Dewey  
Lizzie & Ken Wempe  
Sandy Wood Forand &  
Bernie Forand

**Dick Fulton**  
Michael Fulton

**Kingsley L. Greene**  
Lawren Stevens

**Hunter Grimes III**  
Martha Grimes

**Steve Hart**  
Don & Denise Bartalo  
Bill & Shari Bauer  
Susan Brannen &  
John Greenwood  
Jennifer Brom  
Janet Colohan  
Patrick Coughlin  
Diane Dailey  
Robln Davis &  
William McNichol  
Carol Deinhardt  
Sheila Fess  
Judy Gardner  
Ben, Ayrel, Avery, Riley &  
Paxton Gonzalez  
Deborah Haag  
Haag & Wang Family  
Jessica Herbert  
John & Amy Herbert  
Jerry & Nancy Huffman  
A. Inzana  
Donald & Barbara James  
Maryjo Jesmer  
Tim & Sarah Klimasewski  
Renee Lustick  
Allyson Marvin  
Tom & Catherine Megan  
Daniel & Mary Mikel  
Catherine & Bruce Newell  
Brenna Noonan  
Thomas Noonan  
Jim and Jane O'Neill  
Dorothy O'Rourke  
Benjamin Richard  
Tom and Erin Roth  
Dr. Zia Segatol-Islami  
Marsha & Dick Senges  
Pat Shannon  
Christine L Simons  
Sue St. Louis & Peter Bleau  
Linda Summers  
Noel Tague  
Jim Tague & Lori Thistle  
Jake Tibbles & Alicia Dewey  
Craig Zicari & Anne Coon

**Daniel Hayes (Sandy)**  
**Gregory II, MD**  
Bonnie Wilkinson Mark &  
Charles Mark

## FAREWELLS

### Remembering Steve Hart



Steve enjoyed summers on the River with his fellow River Rats. He was an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed spending time at the 1000 Islands Sportsmen's Club, embracing the outdoor heritage of the region.

His family's dedication to conservation spans generations, reflecting their passion for preserving this cherished landscape.

In 1995, the Hart family's commitment to conservation took a significant step when they donated a conservation easement on Angel Isle, near Indian Point to TILT. Their belief in the ongoing care of TILT's Preserves and trails has been unwavering.

In recent years, they generously donated a Honda ATV to aid in trail maintenance, ensuring that public access and recreation could be enjoyed year-round. Their son, Andrew Hart, followed in their footsteps, serving as a Summer Land Steward for two years, furthering the family's legacy of stewardship and care for the land.

In 2024, Steve and Meg continued their generosity by donating their Draco boat to TILT. The proceeds from its sale will directly support our collective efforts to Save Blind Bay in Clayton, a vital and ecologically rich area.

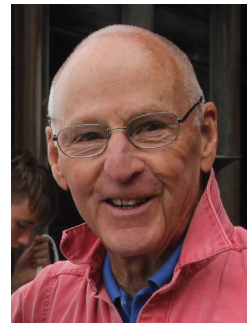
As a supporter of the Land Trust for 29 years, his smile and devotion to the Thousand Islands will be forever missed. He certainly has left a profound legacy on the future of conservation in the Thousand Islands. Steve's legacy will continue to emphasize the importance of stewardship and our responsibility to care for the land so that future generations may continue to benefit from its beauty and resources.



## Remembering Bill Munro

Bill's love of nature was best expressed through the lens of his camera, capturing the beauty of the world around him. For decades, we were fortunate to witness the moments he preserved—stunning glimpses of the wildlife and landscapes he cherished here in the Thousand Islands.

“The River,” as he fondly called it, was filled with summers on Murray Isle that were especially dear to him. His passions were wide-ranging, including birding, photography, hunting, and volunteering. A staple at the Zenda Community Picnic behind his camera, every person he captured was smiling ear to ear. The joy he brought to every place was immeasurable.



Through his images, Bill helped TILT connect people to the most special parts of nature, allowing others to see and appreciate the beauty of the River through his perspective. His work was more than just photography—it was a way of inspiring stewardship, fostering appreciation, and ensuring that others could form their own deep connections to the landscapes and wildlife he loved so dearly.

Bill and his wife, Judy, shared a deep passion for the Thousand Islands and its wildlife, with a commitment to conservation that extended far beyond photography. Their love for the River wove through every aspect of their lives. As devoted members for over 36 years, Bill and Judy were a cherished part of the TILT family. Bill's kindness, humility, and spontaneous visits to the TILT office will be greatly missed, but his legacy—rooted in conservation, adventure, and a profound love for the River—will continue to inspire future generations.

## Remembering Manley Rusho

Manley, a true River Rat, historian, storyteller, and conservationist, played an integral role in the Grindstone Island community. Growing up on Grindstone Island, he learned early to navigate its waters and respect its rhythms. In 1990, he returned to his roots, purchasing 75-acres on Grindstone Island, including the historic Lower Schoolhouse where he had once been a student. The land became a cherished gathering place for family and friends, fostering a deep appreciation for the outdoors.



In 2019, the Rusho Family partnered with TILT to conserve their land through the Grindstone Conservation Initiative, placing it under permanent protection. This agreement created a nature preserve free from future development, safeguarding the wetlands, grasslands, and forests that nourish the St. Lawrence. As Manley himself said, “With God's help, the property will look much as it did when I looked at it in 1938.”

His foresight and commitment to conservation preserved a piece of Grindstone Island's history and created an ecological reference point for the region. The land is a sanctuary for wildlife and place for future generations to experience the River's untouched beauty. In protecting it, Manley ensured that his love for the Thousand Islands would endure beyond his lifetime.

Manley was a true steward of the land, a guardian of history, and a friend to all who shared his love for the River. While we mourn his loss, we celebrate his lasting legacy with gratitude—his stories, the land he protected, and the lessons he imparted will continue to shape and protect the Thousand Islands.

## In Memory of

*Continued*

**Richard Heck**

Charles & Orinda Heck

**Harold Johnson –**

**For Carleton Island**  
Gabriel Rodriguez-Garriga

**Zell & Jim Kerr**

Meg Kerr & Bob Vanderslice

**David Lustick**

Renee Lustick

**Edward F. Martelle, Jr.**

Gretchen Martelle

**Chava Minder**

Francie Rendall Minder

**Herb & Rosemary Mossien**

Carol & Dan Mossien

**John Murray**

Jean Murray

**Bill Munro**

Jane Carver & Ron Cooper  
Robert & Mary Beth McCann  
Dave & Caroline Munro  
Rudy & Carol Napodano  
James & Glorian Reinman  
Carter & Nan Strickland  
Susie Wood  
Pat & Bruce Zicari

**Dick Munro**

RobIn Hoffman & Barry Jordan  
Susan Sullivan  
Susie Wood  
Pat & Bruce Zicari

**Judy Munro**

Dave & Caroline Munro  
Pat & Bruce Zicari

**Joan Perconti**

Michael Cooke

**Jim Rendall**

Francie Rendall Minder  
Margot Rendall &  
George Gardner

**Walter Louise & Jane Ann Rice**

Florence Lewis Rice & Leroy Lewis

**Michelle Riester**

Charissa Walker

**Manley Rusho**

Joan & Skip Tolette

**Dave & Sue Smith**

Ken Smith & Family

**Martha & Dan Tack**

Elaine Tack & KevIn  
Whitehead

**Elaine Turcotte**

Thomas & Kathryn Hill

**T. Urling & Mabel Walker**

Rande Richardson

**Carroll West**

Susan West

**Ted & Louise White**

Marie & Dan Ebbing

Tributes made from  
October 1, 2024 - March 14, 2025

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





Ken, his wife Meredith, and their young son Frank cruise the River aboard the Blue Dream, making memories to last a lifetime—and then some.



Four generations, one porch, and a bowl of water—where love, laughter, and legacy come to life on Grenell Island.

## The Unspoken Bond of the River

by Ken Nims | Stewardship Director

What makes the Thousand Islands so special isn't just the landscape—it's the people. Each island has its own story, and every resident a unique perspective on what makes this place magical. Some come for the fishing, some for the solitude, and others for the lively marinas and welcoming communities. Some families have been here for generations, while others are discovering the magic for the first time. Despite our different backgrounds and traditions, we are all united by a shared love of place.

The River is woven into the fabric of my family, stretching back five generations on Grenell Island. I learned to navigate not just the waters, but life itself—feeling the thrill of independence as a young boy, the warmth of community as I grew older, and a deep sense of belonging that has never faded. Now, as I raise my own children here, I find immeasurable joy in watching them fall in love with the same waters and islands just as I did.

For many of us, the start of each season feels like a homecoming. Spring arrives with a shared excitement in the air as everyone rushes to get their boats in the water. It's like Christmas morning—except instead of unwrapping presents, we're untying dock lines, checking motors, and planning our first ride.

Fall brings a familiar question: How long are you keeping the boat in? No matter the answer, we all know the cycle will start again soon. These rituals, small as they may seem, are part of what makes life on the River so special.

Raising the next generation on the River is more than tradition—it's a connection to something bigger. Every moment spent teaching them to navigate the channels, respect the water, and embrace its simple joys is a gift that honors the past while shaping the future. But this joy is bittersweet—I lost my father at a young age, yet his love for the River remains one of the most powerful influences on my life.

He taught me that it is more than water and islands—it's a place of healing, adventure, and connection. My earliest memories are of exploring it with him, and now I see his spirit in the moments shared with my family. The River keeps his spirit alive, filling me with gratitude.

Even during my time away, including a decade in New York City, I always knew I'd find my way back. Becoming a full-time resident of Clayton in 2016 reminded me of everything I had missed: the close-knit community, the way time seems to slow down here, and the unshakable feeling that I was exactly where I was meant to be. Meeting

the incredible people at TILT only deepened my appreciation for this place, as I saw firsthand their dedication to conserving the lands and waters that define our home.

*"The St. Lawrence River doesn't care where you come from or what you do—it simply welcomes you, offering an unspoken bond between those who call it home. Once the River is in your blood, it never leaves."*



Raising the next generation isn't just about sharing traditions—it's also about stewardship. The River has given us so much, and it's our responsibility to give back. That's why I'm passionate about TILT's work—ensuring the islands, shorelines, lands, and waters we love remain protected for future generations. The places I explored as a child are now the places I help conserve, a full-circle moment that brings me purpose.

In today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, the St. Lawrence River is a refuge. It reminds us to slow down, to disconnect from screens, and to reconnect with nature and each other. When life feels overwhelming, there's a simple solution: go jump in the River. There's no better way to clear your mind, recharge your spirit, and remember what truly matters.



40 Years



## Thank You Winter Gathering Sponsors!



Wealth  
Management

*The Munro Family  
Mike & Gladys Fitzsimmons  
Greg & Cindy McLean  
Art Mack & Mary Jo Champion  
Jeremy Smith & Andrea Risoli  
Molly & Darden MacWade*

The Thousand Islands Land Trust is working to conserve the natural beauty, diverse wildlife habitats, water quality and outdoor recreation opportunities of the Thousand Islands region, for present and future generations.

# Zenda Farms

## MAPLE SYRUP



**Bring a bottle home today!**

Enjoy it drizzled over pancakes, oatmeal, vanilla ice cream or even in your morning coffee.

**Available locally in Clayton at:**

TILT Office  
Hunner's Market  
TI Art Center  
1000 Islands River  
Rat Cheese

**12.7 FL OZ (357ml): \$16 • 25.5 FL OZ (750ml): \$22**

40 Years



## Zenda Community Picnic & Volunteer Recognition

**Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup>**

**5:30-7:30 pm**

**at Zenda Farms Preserve**

### Activities Include:

Classic Picnic Fare & Drinks  
Live • Music • Games  
Dunk Tank • Exhibits • Animals  
Antique Tractors and More!

**Tickets \$20 / \$5 Kids under 12**

Purchase online at [tilandtrust.org](http://tilandtrust.org)

Call us at 315-686-5345

or, buy at the door!





## Signature Preserve Highlight

# ZENDA FARMS PRESERVE

TILT's flagship Preserve celebrates open spaces and connects the community to the region's rich agricultural heritage through innovative land management, habitat restoration, and inspiring conservation programs.





Just outside the Village of Clayton, Zenda Farms Preserve is a historic dairy farm turned conservation success, with restored grasslands, woodlands, and wetlands that support pollinators, birds, and native plants—advancing TILT’s mission to protect the lands that define the Thousand Islands.

## PRESERVE ECOLOGY

The Preserve features diverse habitats—grasslands, wetlands, forests, and old fields—that support a range of wildlife. Adjacent to New York State’s French Creek Wildlife Management Area, its grasslands are critical for declining species like Eastern Meadowlarks, Bobolinks, and Henslow’s Sparrows. Through late-season rotational mowing and haying, we work to restore plant diversity and maintain a healthy landscape year-round. This management helps prevent shrubland encroachment, creating ideal conditions for grassland-nesting birds.

On the north side, pothole ponds come alive each spring with the calls of spring peepers. These seasonal wetlands are essential for supporting insect populations, which serve as a critical food source for amphibians and birds like the Wilson’s Snipe.

Zenda Woods, with its mix of maple, oak, and pine, provides vital edge habitat and food sources for many species. Owls frequently spotted here include Great Horned Owls, Screech Owls, and the endangered Short-eared Owl, which appears more often when meadow vole populations are high. These small mammals thrive in managed grasslands and are also a favorite food source for the occasional fox seen crossing the rolling hills.

On the south side of Zenda, wetland habitat restored in 2009 provides optimum conditions for a variety of waterfowl and shorebirds to nest, breed, and stop over during migration.

## HIKING THE PRESERVE

The Lois Jean and John MacFarlane Trail, named for Zenda’s original donors, is a low impact 1.35-mile trail perfect for jogging, hiking, and cross-country skiing, making it a community favorite year-round.

Two new additions to the Preserve have added mileage, and new habitats to explore. The half-mile Zenda Trail Spur circumnavigates the vineyard and winds into the meadows, while the 1.0-mile Zenda Woods Trail escapes into the forest behind the Farm.

## HOW TO GET THERE

From Clayton, take Route 12E west for 1.3 miles toward Cape Vincent, and turn right onto Zenda Road. Parking is just ahead on the left.

Photo credits:

Top row: © Steve Diehl; © Bridgett McCann; © Terra Bach;  
Middle row: ©Kat Hammond; © TILT Stock; © Dennis McCarthy  
Bottom photo: © Jake Tibbles

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

# Fun Facts



Once a thriving dairy and beef farm operating into the 1960s, Zenda was transformed by Merle Youngs, who built the unique Jamesway Barns.



Today, Zenda preserves its agricultural heritage while conserving meadows to support declining grassland bird species, with the historic Jamesway Barns standing as a symbol of that legacy—linking past and present through the lasting impact of conservation.



**The Lyre-tipped Spreadwing** (*Lestes unguicalatus*), a resident of Zenda Farms Preserve, is named for the lyre-shaped tips of the male’s abdomen, and is a delicate damselfly found in ponds and marshy wetlands across New York, though its presence is sporadic and declining.

This species plays a crucial role in the local ecosystem by preying on mosquitoes and other insects, darting over the fields and wetlands of the Preserve.



**James K. Hackett**, was a world-renowned Shakespearean actor who purchased the waterfront property known as the Woodlands in 1915 and renamed it “Zenda” after his favorite role in the film *The Prisoner of Zenda*.



## ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES

### Thank You for Your Service, Jane Carver

This winter, Jane Carver wrapped up a remarkable 16 years of dedicated service on the TILT Board, leaving behind a legacy of leadership, stewardship, and community engagement.

During her years of service, she was a driving force in TILT's growth, serving as a long-term member of the Easement & Property Stewardship Committee, and chair of the Easement & Property Acquisition (EPA) and Nominating Committees. With her strong science background, she helped advance the integrity of ecological conservation acquisitions while on EPA, making sure efforts were rooted in sound environmental principles.

Her contributions have shaped TILT's vision, governance, and sustainability of the organization, ensuring the invaluable protection of conserved lands. Over the years, Jane also served as the Vice President, co-chaired the TILT Alumni Group, led the Carbon Committee, and served on the

Executive, Strategic Plan, and Zenda Farms Preserve Management Plan Committees—each critical in shaping TILT's present and future.

Guided by her humility and modesty, she skillfully led the ad-hoc Carbon Committee on a fresh conservation initiative while also strengthening TILT's financial foundation. Her impact extends beyond governance—she's been a hands-on volunteer from the start at treks and events, often leading kayak excursions to share the beauty of the Thousand Islands and inspire others to connect with our conservation efforts.

Jane's visionary leadership, passion, and advocacy have left an indelible mark on TILT, ensuring the Land Trust remains strong moving forward.

A devoted "River Rat," she cares deeply about the community and the mission, valuing both the significance of the work and perseverance of the team that



*As a dedicated volunteer, Jane shined and was always there to lend a hand at many events, sharing TILT's mission with the River communities and beyond.*

*Photo taken at the 2014 Zenda Community Picnic by Sarah Ellen Smith.*

keeps it running. On behalf of the TILT Board of Trustees and Staff, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to Jane for her service—her contributions will be felt for generations to come.

## Celebrate 40 years of conservation with us at the... Summer Gathering

at the Thousand Island Park riverfront cottages of

*Eileen & Michael George*

Saturday, July 19, 2025  
6–9 pm

Tickets: \$125 per person

Please RSVP by July 11<sup>th</sup> by mail,  
phone (315) 686.5345, or  
visit [tilandtrust.org](http://tilandtrust.org).





# PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

## Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation

Loons are more than just an iconic presence on our waters. They serve as an important indicator of water quality and overall ecosystem health. This species requires clean, undeveloped shorelines for successful nesting, and their reproductive success is sensitive to disturbances, mercury contamination, and lead poisoning from fishing tackle.

Since the early 2000s, TILT has partnered with the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation (ACLC) to conduct the annual Loon Census, an initiative that gathers data on common loon populations across New York.

Volunteers play a key role in this effort, helping to track population trends and ensure that management actions can be taken if needed.



We are thrilled to welcome Denise Silfee from the ACLC as this year's featured speaker for our annual Birkhead Lecture. Their presentation will dive into the vital conservation efforts being made to protect loons in the Thousand Islands region and beyond.

To sign up for this year's Birkhead Lecture and Loon Census, visit [tilandtrust.org](http://tilandtrust.org) or call us at 315-686-5345.



*A pair of common loons gracefully glide across the St. Lawrence River, their striking black-and-white plumage reflecting the pristine waters they call home. Photo Sandy Adams Photography*



## Congratulations to Sandy Adams

### Winner of the 2024 Loon Census Paddle

A heartfelt thank you to Sandy for participating in last year's Loon Census and for supporting conservation in the Thousand Islands!

We also extend our gratitude to John Miller III, whose generosity and craftsmanship made this prize so special. His handcrafted paddle, "Loons on Garlock Bay," was created using locally sourced materials, a true reflection of the region's natural beauty and spirit.

## Looking ahead, we're excited to share a sneak peek of the 2025 Loon Census Paddle.

This year's theme is "Loons on Chippewa Creek" —with a special touch to celebrate two milestones: TILT's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and 30 years of Thousand Islands Picture Paddles.

Join us for this year's Loon Census and a chance to win this commemorative paddle!







## 1990s: Growth & Grassroots (1990-1999)

TILT expanded its reach with key acquisitions like Eagle Wings Shoals, Mid-River Farm, Goose Bay Marsh, and the Rivergate Trail corridor. Landmark preserves such as Potter's Beach, Heineman Songbird Forest, Zenda Farms, and Crooked Creek were also established.

**Total Acres Conserved by 1999: 5,677**

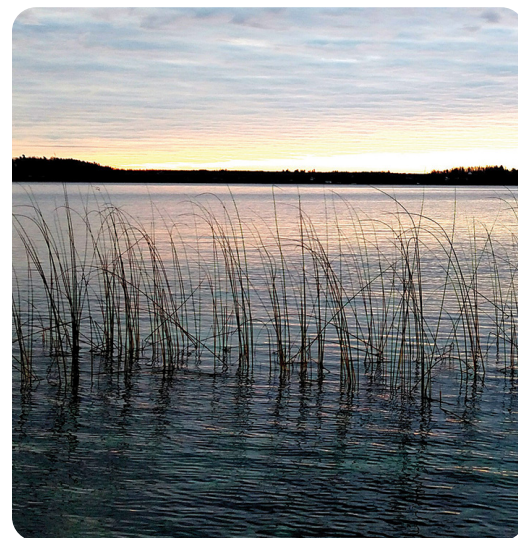


1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005

## 1980s: The Foundation Years (1985-1989)

TILT was founded on Grindstone Island by local residents at Rock Ledge, including Alison & Paul MacLean, Camilla Smith, Fran (Purcell) Mallory, Michael Mead, Ken Deedy, Patti Lashomb and Josey Murray. Early successes included the protection of Flynn Bay, a critical Muskellunge breeding ground, Fort Haldimand Preserve, Marks Farm, and Oak Island.

**Total Acres Conserved by 1989: 2,020**





## 2010s: Strategic Conservation & Stewardship (2010-2019)

TILT expanded its impact with new Preserves: Foster-Blake Woods, Otter Creek, and Wellesley Island. Key initiatives included launching TILTKids, advancing stewardship through grasslands restoration, and deepening a commitment to the Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) region and Atlantic Flyway as vital ecological wildways.

**Total Acres Conserved by 2019: 11,056**



2006 2007 2008 2009 **2010** 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 **2020** 2021 2022 2023 2024 **2025**



## 2000s: Trails, Education & Community (2000-2009)

TILT enhanced public access, education, and community engagement through the Grindstone Island Nature Trail, Mule Tours, the inaugural Zenda Community Picnic, the launch of the community garden at Zenda, and the TILTrekks & Talks programs.

Conservation milestones included Common Tern habitat projects, Rusho Preserve wetlands restoration, and TILT's first LTA Accreditation.

**Total Acres Conserved by 2009: 7,472**

## 2020s: Resilience, Restoration & Recognition (2020-2025)

TILT renewed its accreditation, opened 7 miles of trail through the Rivergate Community Connection Project and joined the River communities in the fight to Save Blind Bay — an ecologically significant wetland and wildlife habitat.

Recent milestones include launching the Forest Carbon Initiative, the establishment of the Edward & Marlene Schmeer Preserve in Cape Vincent, grassland restoration projects, and celebrating 40 years with the unveiling of the TILT Discovery Center.

**Total Acres Conserved by 2025: 14,500+**





# TILT Merch

## SHOP WITH A PURPOSE

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



### TILT Socks

Kick up your heels in your new TILT socks—perfect for outdoor adventures and lounging indoors. These everyday socks are the perfect blend of comfort and style.

\$12.50 a pair. One size fits most.



### New Otter-Inspired Merch Has Arrived!

We've got fresh new gear inspired by one of our favorite Preserves—Otter Creek! Whether you're hitting the trails, relaxing at home, or showing your love for the land, this collection is made for you—and the whole family!

Unisex sizing: S – 2XL

Long Sleeve T-shirts \$35 | Hoodies \$65

Available at the TILT Office and the Mary & Ted Mascott Welcome Center at Zenda Farms Preserve.

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

## Clayton Chamber Event at Zenda Farms Preserve

Saturday, July 26, 2025

Food trucks, vendors,  
live music, meet & greet  
with pilots, tethered rides  
— weather permitting!

[1000islandsballoons.com](http://1000islandsballoons.com)



BALLOONS *in the* ISLANDS



THOUSAND ISLANDS LAND TRUST  
ZENDA FARMS PRESERVE

## ZENDA FARMS PRESERVE

MARY & TED MASCOTT  
WELCOME CENTER

REOPENS  
FOR SUMMER 2025!





# Thousand Islands Land Trust

## 2025 Treks & Events

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



## SCAN

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

**Friday, May 23 | 3:30pm-5pm**

**Art from Nature KidsTrek with Thousand Islands Arts Center (TIAC)**

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

**Wednesday, June 4 | 9am-1pm**

**Jam & Jelly Series with Thousand Islands Arts Center (TIAC)**

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

**Friday, June 6 | 9am-11:30am**

**Spring Stewardship Day with Fuller Bay Association**

📍 Fuller Bay, Cape Vincent

**Friday, June 13 | 5:30-7:30pm**

**Community Picnic & Volunteer Recognition**

Tickets \$20 / \$5 Kids under 12

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

**Thursday, June 19 | 9am-10:30am**

**Walking Meditation**

📍 Otter Creek Preserve, Alexandria Bay

**\*Pop Up Trek! Tuesday, July 8 | 10:30am-12pm**

**Mushrooms and Mosses with Jean Fahey**

📍 Crooked Creek Preserve, Macsberry Trail, Hammond

**Thursday, July 10 | 11am-12:30pm**

**The Annual Birkhead Lecture with Denise Silfee from the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation (ACLC)**

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

**Saturday, July 19 | 8am-9am**

**Annual Loon Census with the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation (ACLC)**

📍 Various Locations (chosen by participants)

**Saturday, July 19 | 6pm-9pm**

**Annual Summer Gathering**

📍 The riverfront cottages of Eileen and Michael George, Thousand Island Park, Wellesley Island

**Thursday, July 24 | 10am-12:30pm**

**Healthy Land = Healthy River Series: Let it Flow! KidsTrek**

📍 Thousand Island Park, Friends of Rock Ridges Nature Trail & Treehouse, Wellesley Island

**Thursday, July 31 | 8:30am-3:30pm**

**Grindstone Island Mule Tour\***

\*Members Only — Become a Member Today!

📍 Grindstone Island Preserves, Clayton

**Wednesday, August 6 | 10am-12pm**

**"Ichthyologist (Fish Scientist) for a Day" KidsTrek with TIBS**

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

**Tuesday, August 12 | 8:30am-11am**

**Common Tern Nesting Grid Removal**

📍 Eagle Wing Shoals & Tidd Island, Clayton

**Friday, August 15 | 1pm-3pm**

**Farmyard Fun Day KidsTrek**

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

**Thursday, August 21 | 5:30pm-7:30pm**

**Islander Event**

📍 Linden Cove Home of Gretchen Scott & Lloyd Buchanan, Alexandria Bay

**Saturday, October 25 | 11am-1pm**

**Halloween Hike KidsTrek**

📍 Zenda Farms Preserve, Clayton

**Saturday, December 20 | 1pm-3pm**

**Conservation Christmas Wrapping Party**

📍 TILT Office, Clayton



# SPRINGING INTO ACTION:

## TILT Enhances Grasslands with Hedgerow Clearing at Schmeer Preserve

*An aerial view of the Schmeer Preserve gives a glance of Fuller Bay in the distance. Join TILT and the Fuller Bay Association on Friday, June 6 for a volunteer shoreline cleanup in Cape Vincent to help protect local waters and wildlife. © Spencer Busler*

by Ken Nims | Stewardship Director

### Restoring Habitat for At-Risk Grassland Birds

The Land Trust has taken decisive action to restore and protect critical habitats. One such effort is underway at the Edward & Marlene Schmeer Preserve, where TILT has made significant progress in revitalizing grasslands that serve as essential ecosystems for at-risk wildlife. This winter, the Land Trust's stewardship team conducted hedgerow clearing using a forestry mulcher to improve habitat connectivity for grassland-dependent species.

The Schmeer Preserve, acquired in 2023, was once an intensively farmed soybean and corn field. Working alongside the Schmeer Family, the Land Trust reseeded the land with native grasses, aiming to restore the once-thriving grassland ecosystem. The recent hedgerow removal marks a critical next step in this process, helping to connect fragmented fields and create an unbroken habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife.

Hedgerows, while historically formed through agricultural land use, can act as unintended barriers that make grasslands less suitable for species that rely on vast, open landscapes. Birds such as Bobolink, Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Upland Sandpiper often require expanses exceeding 50 acres to successfully nest and breed. The removal of these hedgerows at Schmeer Preserve is helping to restore the landscape to its natural state, providing these species with the space they need to thrive.

"Grassland connectivity is critical for species that depend on unbroken expanses of habitat," said Natalie Gates, TILT's Land Protection Specialist. "By removing these hedgerows,

we are not only restoring the land to a more natural state but also enhancing the viability of the Preserve as a home for some of our region's most at-risk grassland birds."

The restoration effort at Schmeer Preserve reflects a broader mission: safeguarding the Thousand Islands while balancing economic development. As commercial and residential expansion continue to impact the landscape, natural spaces become fragmented, putting pressure on wildlife and ecosystems.

TILT's proactive approach—restoring grasslands, conserving shorelines, and protecting forests—helps maintain this balance, serving as a crucial defense against the growing risks of overdevelopment.

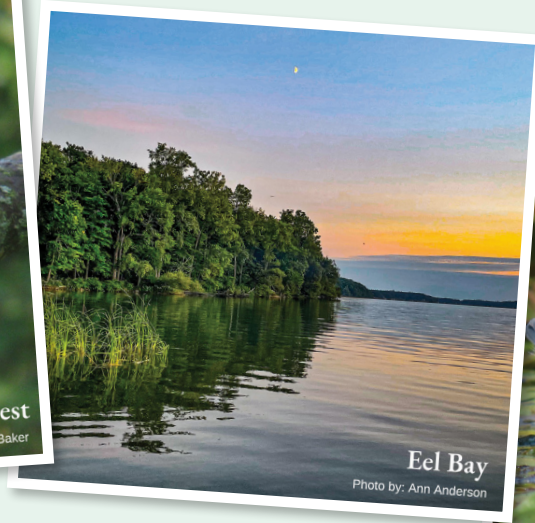
### A Measured Approach to Conservation and Land Stewardship

Throughout the clearing process, TILT's stewardship staff carefully removed dense brush while preserving mature trees, ensuring a balanced approach to landscape management. By taking this measured, ecologically responsible approach, the Land Trust continues to set a precedent for conservation efforts throughout the region.

The Schmeer Preserve restoration project is part of a larger commitment to protecting the Thousand Islands' natural beauty and ecological integrity.

With each restored acre, TILT is not only reversing past damage but also securing a future where wildlife can flourish, and future generations can experience the landscapes that make this region so special.





## Celebrating Our 2024 Photo Contest!

This year we launched our monthly Photo Contest, inviting the community to share their best moments out on the land. We've loved seeing all the incredible entries capturing the beauty of nature.

Campbell Marshall's winning photo on the Rivergate Trail perfectly captures TILT's mission in action. The work we do together is about more than just land; it's about connecting with people, creating memories, and caring for nature as a vibrant community.

Thank you to everyone who participated. The photo contest returns this spring with prizes for winners — keep your cameras ready!



## Discovery Comes to Life!

**OPENING SOON** — the TILT Discovery Center:  
The Gateway to the Outdoors is where learning meets excitement!

- Perfect for curious kids, families, and lifelong learners.
- Hands-on exhibits, cool science, and local history.

Get ready to be inspired to explore the outdoors after your visit.

*Adventure is just around the corner — come play, learn, and grow with us!*





# Annual Report 2024

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Thanks to the incredible support from members like you, 2024 was a year of remarkable achievements for land conservation in the Thousand Islands region.**

Your dedication was at the heart of our success. Together, we protected more land, worked tirelessly to steward it, and ensured its accessibility for all. We successfully conserved over 1,200-acres of diverse wildlife habitat, including pristine wetlands, mature forests, and open grasslands. Our efforts strengthened climate resilience by conserving and restoring more than 250-acres of wetlands contributing to a major milestone—conserving over 14,500-acres in total. This included safeguarding the headwaters of Crooked Creek in the A2A Wildway and Cape Vincent’s Tibbetts Point grasslands in the Greater Atlantic Flyway.

To ensure a balance between natural and built environments, we also secured over \$5 million in state and federal land conservation funding and forged new collaborations with regional and national conservation partners. These partnerships will advance the enhancement of critical habitat for at-risk species, such as the Short-eared Owl and Northern Harrier, reinforcing our commitment to bolstering biodiversity and ecological health.

Beyond conservation, we remained dedicated to fostering connections between people and nature. Our TILTreks, KidsTreks, and Conservation Connections programs engaged individuals of all ages, integrating hands-on environmental education with enriching outdoor experiences. By working

closely with local school districts, our staff integrated classroom and field-based educational programs into our beautiful Signature Preserves aligning our conservation efforts with New York State Education Standards. Meanwhile, our stewardship team maintained over 21 miles of public recreational trails across our Signature Preserves, ensuring accessibility and enjoyment for all. A particularly exciting milestone was the establishment of our first Signature Preserve in Cape Vincent – The Edward & Marlene Schmeer Preserve. This new asset offers breathtaking views of eastern Lake Ontario, and a promising future as a premier hiking and birdwatching destination.

Since our founding in 1985, TILT has grown from a grassroots initiative into a regional conservation leader. Your passion, dedication and support continue to inspire us to protect the lands, waters, and way of life that make the Thousand Islands so special. Thank you for believing in our mission and standing alongside us as we conserve this place we all love.

Sincerely,



David Lucas, President



Crooked Creek Preserve



# Financial Overview

For the fiscal year that ended December 31, 2024, TILT’s membership income was \$433,124 up 6 % from 2023. Operating expenses were \$986,767 up approximately 7% from 2023.

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.

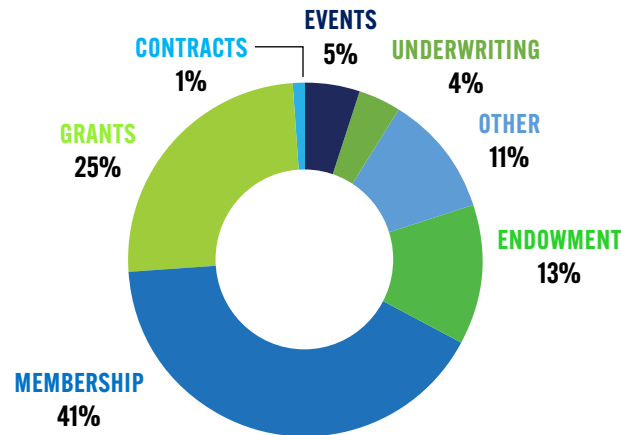
The firm of Stackel & Navarra was secured to perform TILT’s annual independent financial audit.

## Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2024\*

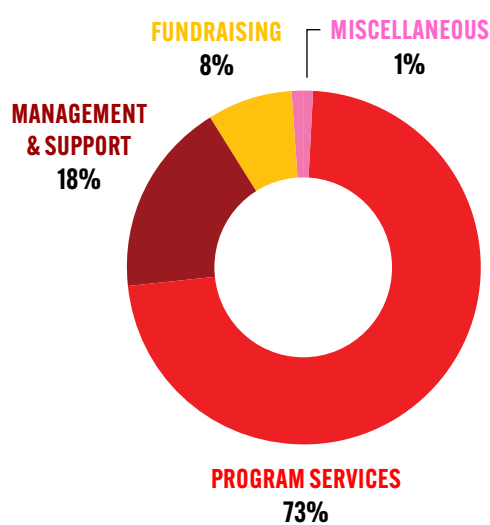
Cash & Investments .....	\$ 5,682,473.31
Other Assets .....	\$16,197,262.90
Total Assets.....	\$21,882,336.21
Liabilities /Pre-paid grants.....	\$ 802,911.83
Net Assets.....	\$21,079,424.38
Total Liabilities & Net Assets.....	\$21,882,336.21

*\*This financial information is reviewed during TILT’s annual independent audit in May.*

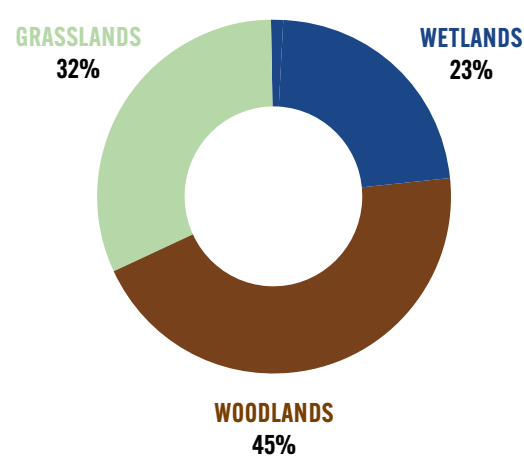
## INCOME



## EXPENSES



## HABITATS CONSERVED







135 John Street  
PO Box 238  
Clayton, NY 13624  
(315) 686-5345  
tilandtrust.org

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 12  
Clayton, NY 13624



**An Accredited Land Trust &  
Member of the Land Trust Alliance**



TILT BY THE NUMBERS



40

years of conserving the  
place we love



## New TILT Website

We've got a fresh new look!

Explore TILT's brand-new website—  
now easier to navigate, packed with  
stunning visuals, and full of ways to  
connect with the land you love.

Check it out today at  
[tilandtrust.org](http://tilandtrust.org)!



**SCAN**

with your phone's camera to  
check out the new website.



Cover Photo: Aerial photo of conserved lands on Grindstone Island.  
© Alex S. MacLean

Printed on Recycled Paper

Graphic Design by  
WDesignGroup.com

**STAY CONNECTED**

