

# field, forest & fen



Connecting People with the Land



Marcie Foster

Paddling the Green Mile

## Green Mile on Susquehanna River

A "green mile" was recently secured along the Susquehanna River thanks to the conservation efforts of three families in Phoenix Mills. Helen Crowell recently partnered with Otsego Land Trust to protect her property at the confluence of the Susquehanna River and Oaks Creek with a conservation easement. This 30-acre easement links two contiguous conservation properties, including the Compton Bridge site owned by the Land Trust. Together, these three properties provide a mile of protected river and creek frontage in an area experiencing high development pressure south of Cooperstown.

"We are grateful to the conservation-minded residents of Phoenix Mills who worked with Otsego Land Trust to protect an entire mile of the river" said Peter Hujik, Executive Director. "

*continued on page 7*

### THE NATURE OF CONSERVATION Brook Trout

The brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*), also known as the speckled trout, is New York's official freshwater fish and native to much of the eastern United States. Anglers value "brookies" for their sporting action and fine eating. A strikingly beautiful fish, with speckles that intensify in color at spawning time, brook trout survive in only the coldest and cleanest, well-oxygenated streams,

lakes, and ponds. Conservation practitioners consider brook trout an indicator species because a strong wild brook trout population indicates that the stream where they live is healthy and has excellent water quality. A decline in brook trout populations can serve as an early warning that the health of the entire aquatic system is at risk.

Brook trout populations are usually dominated by small fish less than 12 inches in length, *continued on page 7*

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Brook trout



*Otsego Land Trust protects the distinctive rural character of the Otsego County area by securing lands and waters of significant scenic, historic, and ecological value, including forests and farmlands.*

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Little Sprouts

## Field Notes

Have you ever planted a tree? If you have, you know the sense of accomplishment that follows digging, planting and watering. And the satisfaction lingers—for years—as you watch the tree grow, change and mature season after season. Faith and hope are implicit in the very act of planting, as you look to the future. *The Man Who Planted Trees* by Jean Giono is a great read for those who revel in trees and short stories.

After participating in and leading large-scale stream-side forest restoration efforts in northern California, planting trees is in my blood. My wife and I planted maple trees to celebrate the birth of our son Luke two years ago. This spring, Luke helped me plant native hemlock seedlings on our north-facing slope. He handed me the seedlings and marked them for watering with blaze-orange flags.

This year, Otsego Land Trust is providing many opportunities for people to connect with trees and the land. Hundreds of children will be able to share the joy of planting trees and watching them grow, as the Otsego Land Trust team hands out native tree

seedlings at the ever-popular 4th of July Parade in Springfield. The trees go quickly, so we have to buy more for the third consecutive year!

In April, a dedicated group learned about forest management at our forest management workshop and woods walk. Last weekend, an enthusiastic crowd observed the mammoth sycamore trees growing along the Susquehanna River within conservation lands in the Phoenix Mills area. And we hope to recruit your help this summer in finding our area's biggest trees in the Champion Tree Search. Please consider lending your creative talent in our photography contest, centered on the theme of "People and Trees".

*What would we do without places for children to run, climb trees and mess around?*

What would we do without places for children to run, climb trees and mess around? Author and historian Wallace Stegner referred to the network of protected areas emerging around the country as a "geography of hope". Thank you for spreading the word about how people can play a vital role in our local conservation efforts. Your ongoing and generous support continues to encourage us. Thank you for planting seeds of hope in our community.

**Peter Hujik**  
Executive Director



Dorothy Manley on Scotch Hill

## CONSERVATION SPOTLIGHT 91-Acre Farm Protected on Scotch Hill

Dorothy Manley doesn't have to walk far from her front porch for some pretty incredible views across the Otego Creek Valley in the Town of Hartwick. Just across the driveway, actually, and that's the way she wants it to stay—now and forever. That's why she worked with Otsego Land Trust to place a conservation easement on 91 acres on the top of Scotch Hill, northwest of the hamlet of Hartwick. The farm encompasses 34 acres of active farmland, 13 acres of woods, 5 acres of wetland, and a trout-spawning tributary of Otego Creek.

Dorothy joins two other families that collectively have protected over 1,400 acres in the Upper Otego Creek area. In just the last three years, over 2 miles of headwater tributaries to Otego Creek have been secured. Dorothy's conservation efforts are noteworthy because she also is partnering with the Farm Service Agency to restore a natural stream-side buffer along a stretch of the tributary that runs through her farm to improve water quality and trout habitat.

Integrating ecological restoration projects with conservation easements is a growing priority for Otsego Land Trust and its partners.

A friendly face, a good listener, and a hard worker, Dorothy is well known for her almost 20 years manning the counter at the Quickway on State Route 205 in Hartwick. Before that, many remember her at the Farm & Home on Main Street in Cooperstown. At 82 years of age, Dorothy is glad to share some memories of her many years of dairy farming on Scotch Hill. She also enjoys watching wildlife—deer, fox, turkeys, a mother bear and cub a few years ago, and lately a curious woodchuck.

Her interest in conservation has grown over the years as she watched farmland like hers being carved up, and sensed that many of the newcomers did not feel a strong attachment to the land. "I don't want to look out from my porch and see more houses and all this land chopped up" she explains. Standing in an open field with rolling hills in the background, she spreads her arms and declares "I just love it here!"

## A Heritage of Floodplain Protection on Decatur Creek

The De Long family has lived in the Worcester and Westford area since 1803, when Elias settled in Westford. The history of the De Longs—and other local history—is well recounted by Larry De Long, a former town historian, who recently partnered with Otsego Land Trust to honor his father, Albert De Long, by protecting his strategically located, two-acre parcel on Decatur Creek in the hamlet of Worcester. "My father mowed this field every year until he was 80 years old," Larry reminisced, "and he wanted this parcel to remain open." The lot has long been a pleasant open area for neighborhood events, flying kites, and other types of recreation.

As part of the floodplain for Decatur Creek, the protected parcel buffers neighboring homes from floods. In fact, all three conservation projects described in this newsletter, in three different towns and along three different waterways, include a floodplain-conservation component. A common misperception is that state and federal regulations prevent development in floodplains and other wetlands. But board member Joe Homburger frequently adds clarity to the issue reminding people that the laws *regulate* wetlands development, but don't always *prohibit* it.

Larry De Long has long valued open space and the Town of Worcester. Larry chaired and served on the Town Planning Board for over five years, and was recently involved in completing the Worcester Heritage Park in downtown Worcester. Thanks to the De Long family, this green legacy along Decatur Creek adds a new and important chapter to conservation efforts in the Worcester area. ■

**FOCUS ON STEWARDSHIP****What is Stewardship and Why Does it Matter?**

By Marcie Foster

Conservation easements are designed to protect places forever. But how can anything last forever? As the old adage goes, the only constant is change, and that's especially true for the physical environment. In fact, the dynamic nature of the environment is one of the things that makes it special. Conservation easements are designed to protect the land and associated streams and wetlands, so that they can continue to function and evolve naturally over time.

*Stewardship is the solid commitment to monitor and defend a property and its conservation values, and is one of the most important responsibilities of land trusts.*

So how do land trusts maintain the terms of the conservation easement when the property itself is constantly changing? The answer is in stewardship.

Stewardship is the solid commitment to monitor and defend a property and its conservation values, and is one of the most important responsibilities of land trusts. Of course the environment will change over time, and that is why it is important to visit and observe the property. Without proper monitoring, changes, both planned and unplanned,



Keith Additon and John Davis monitor easement

go unnoticed, and may impact the conservation values of the land. Unlike deed restrictions, conservation easements assign land trusts the responsibility of monitoring and upholding their provisions.

To me, one of the most important aspects of stewardship is tracking the conservation values of easement lands as they change over time. The notes and photographs we take of the plants, animals, wetlands, streams, farms and their historic buildings and barns on an annual basis are documented and carefully archived. What a great resource these documents will be 100 years from now to observe how changes have occurred, both natural and unnatural.

For example, if a tornado rips through a protected forest stand, it will level trees and change the entire ecosystem. By stewarding the property prior to this dramatic event, a land trust will have documented the valuable resources of the property, which may include an American chestnut or an ecologically sensitive vernal pool, and will be able to document the changes that occur.

Without consistent monitoring efforts, unwanted changes, such as illegal

dumping, may go unnoticed by a landowner and land trust. By documenting pre-existing conditions, the landowner and land trust are in a better position to legally defend the property and its conservation values from illegal encroachments.

In a couple of generations, easement properties will not be exactly the same as the day that the easement was signed. However, with proper stewardship, all changes, warranted or unwarranted, will be observed, documented and addressed so that the integrity of the land remains intact. ■

**Forest Stewardship Workshop**

In mid-April, over 30 people from a wide range of backgrounds came together to take advantage of our first Forestry Management Workshop and Woods Walk at Greenwoods Conservancy in the Town of Burlington. Guest speakers included Cornell Cooperative Extension educators Kevin Mathers and Rebecca Hargrave, who discussed how to develop a forest management plan and forest ecology issues. New York State Department of Conservation foresters Daniel Gaidasz and Joshua Borst spoke about forestry programs provided by the state that provide financial incentives and assistance for forest owners. Rod Jones, certified forester of Northeast Timber Services, led a woods walk through the managed forests of Greenwoods Conservancy for a first-hand look at how trees are selected for harvest, and demonstrated some of the tools used by foresters. In spite of the very chilly weather, participants enjoyed the engaging speakers, friendly company and camaraderie, and learned how to better manage forests. ■



C. Tedesco

Forest Management Workshop and Woods Walk participants

**PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENES**  
**Marcie Foster**



Marcie Foster

“Check out that stone pile!”  
 “What a beautiful moss.”  
 “Isn’t this flower a...”

The enthusiastic commentary continues as we wind our way along an old trail in the woods in the town of Middlefield. Marcie Foster, our third Earle Peterson Conservation Fellow, enjoys this work, especially the outdoors part. A 2008 graduate of State University of New York—New Paltz with a bachelor’s degree in geography, Marcie has naturally migrated to jobs that include outside activities—archeology, mapping, and conservation. She has just completed a course in botany at State University of

New York—Cobleskill and hopes to pursue a masters degree in a conservation-related field. She also works part-time at the Clark Sports Center as an outdoor educator and rock climbing instructor. At Otsego Land Trust, Marcie is responsible for organizing stewardship records, scheduling monitoring visits, and creating a management plan template for land trust properties, such as the Compton Bridge parcel on the Susquehanna River. Her passion for the land is reflected in the care and dedication apparent in her work and in her passion to be outdoors. “Isn’t that a liverwort?” she asks, while stopping to admire yet another treasure along the trail.

**Bonnie and Kent Jones:  
 A Passion for Conservation  
 Prompts Monthly Action**

Bonnie and Kent Jones are the kind of people that know what they want. They chose Cooperstown as their home largely because the lake, surrounding farms, and countryside are far less spoiled than other rural areas in the Northeast. Appreciating the

tangible outcomes of land trusts, they quickly joined the conservation efforts of Otsego Land Trust.

The conservation ethic of John Muir and Aldo Leopold comes naturally to them. They both grew up in rural areas, neither of which remains as unspoiled as the Cooperstown area. They spent summers on an Adirondack lake and hiked some of the 46 High Peaks while their children were growing up. This inspired Kent to serve on the Boards of the Sagamore Institute on Raquette Lake and the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks. Bonnie has provided her legal skills in charitable giving and conservation easements to Open Spaces and Saratoga PLAN. Now they are getting involved in the efforts of Otsego Land Trust.

*continued on page 6*

**Wish List**

Fireproof filing cabinet	\$2,000
Tree seedlings (1,000)	\$750
Indesign graphics software	\$700
Digital SLR Camera	\$600
Stand for Xerox Phaser Copier	\$500
GPS unit	\$400
Signs for events (3)	\$125

Contributing any of the above supplies and equipment will further local conservation efforts and connect more people with the land. Contact our office with any questions and for more information about specifications.

*"We realize that most contributions come in at the end of the calendar year, but that fixed expenses come every month."*

*Jones continued from page 5*

Hiking in the Cheviot Mountains in northern England heightened the Jones' commitment to the conservation and stewardship of watersheds, wooded hills and farmland. "England appears to us as if it's 500 years ahead of the United States in the stewardship of its land. There is little urban or village sprawl and every acre of tillable farmland is protected as part of the food supply. We asked ourselves why Americans aren't more passionate about land protection? Now, we feel compelled to spread the word about conservation and to help secure the resources to sustain the environmental health and natural beauty of our area."

Bonnie and Kent are the most recent people to join our monthly giving program. "We elected to have our contribution withdrawn from our bank account on a monthly basis and appreciate that Otsego Land Trust offers that option," Bonnie recently told us. "We realize that most contributions come in at the end of the calendar year, but that fixed expenses come every month. We hope that what is convenient for us also helps cash flow at Otsego Land Trust." Please join us in extending a hearty welcome to Bonnie and Kent as they get settled in the area and get involved in local conservation efforts. ■

## "People and Trees" Photography Contest

Otsego Land Trust is sponsoring a photo contest with the theme "People and Trees" open to all residents of the Otsego Region. Photos should depict the importance of trees in our lives, our dependence and interactions with trees and forests, or the human connection to trees in general.

All entries must be received or post-marked by October 31, 2010. Up to 3 photos may be submitted in one of 3 categories: Professional, Amateur, or Youth (age 18 or under on October 31, 2010). Photos may be in color or black and white. Only digital photographs in .jpg format will be accepted. Photos will be featured on Otsego Land Trust's new website to be launched later this summer, and favorite photos will be selected by a panel selected by Otsego Land Trust and announced at year-end. One photo from each category (Professional, Amateur, or Youth) will be selected for monetary prizes of \$100/each, and one or more honorable mentions in each category will be awarded.

Photographs may be sent electronically to [connie@otsegolandtrust.org](mailto:connie@otsegolandtrust.org), mailed to Otsego Land Trust Tree Photos, P.O. Box 173, Cooperstown, NY 13326, or dropped off at Pioneer Alley, 101 Main St., Cooperstown, NY 13326. An entry form must be completed for each photo submitted. To receive contest guidelines and entry forms, email [connie@otsegolandtrust.org](mailto:connie@otsegolandtrust.org) or call (607) 547-2366. ■

## Champion Tree Search

What is the biggest tree you've seen in the area? Is it that tall, majestic white pine on a ridgeline or a sugar maple along the hedgerow? We would love to share your bragging rights with others and celebrate the champion trees throughout the area. Be sure to enter your big tree discovery in the first annual Champion Tree Search, sponsored by Otsego Land Trust.

In this first year we will be looking for the biggest trees of native or naturalized species. The winning trees will be determined by trunk circumference in conjunction with height and crown measurements. Please spread the word to children in your neighborhood and your local boy or girl scout troops! Why not use the tree search as an excuse for an outdoor excursion with your kids or grandchildren this summer?

Certificates and field guides will be mailed to winners in each species category. Otsego Land Trust will help you learn how your champion tree compares to those on the state and national levels. Those who nominate trees that qualify for the State Big Tree Register may receive additional prizes and publicity. For guidelines and entry forms please email [connie@otsegolandtrust.org](mailto:connie@otsegolandtrust.org) or call (607) 547-2366. ■

*Green Mile continued from page 1*

This green mile encompasses some of the best rural lands in the region, including active farmland, floodplain forest and wetlands, and a significant historic site. Protecting land along the Susquehanna River allows this important waterway to function naturally and helps keep all that depend on it healthy."

**Linking Three Sites**

Helen Crowell grew up in Phoenix Mills with her brother Peter Farmer, who protected his neighboring property a couple of years ago. "I have vivid memories of walking every inch of this property" she said. She also cited the natural, historical and archaeological significance of the area as motivating factors for her conservation easement. Another Phoenix Mills resident, John Robinson, helped Otsego Land Trust purchase the Compton Bridge site, downstream from Crowell, by alerting staff to its sale in 2008. For his efforts in helping Otsego Land Trust purchase its first property, John received the organization's Trailblazer Award in 2009. Otsego Land Trust is currently working with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to develop public access.

**A Confluence of History and Conservation**

History abounds in Phoenix Mills, named for the cotton mill and sawmill that once stood there. In *William Cooper's Town*, author Alan Taylor identifies the Susquehanna River and Oaks Creek confluence as the home of David Shipman, the early settler who inspired James Fenimore Cooper's fictional character Leatherstocking or Natty Bumppo in *The Pioneers* and related novels. Taylor notes that "Just as Marmaduke Temple had found Natty



Bruce Johnson Photography - Cooperstown

Hiking the Green Mile

Bumppo already settled on the land, William Cooper discovered that David Shipman had preceded him to Otsego. A check of the recorded deeds in Otsego County reveals that he never held title to his land. Like Natty Bumppo, Shipman was a squatter." Prior to Shipman, the confluence area was inhabited by local tribes, according to David Staley, archaeologist with New York State's Cultural Resource Survey Program.

The Susquehanna River, the longest river on the eastern seaboard, meanders over 400 miles from its outlet on Otsego Lake to the Chesapeake Bay. The 50-mile stretch of the Susquehanna River in our region harbors a variety of aquatic animals of conservation significance, including brook trout and rare freshwater mussels, and runs through extensive tracts of native floodplain forest, wetlands, and prime farmland. Two other families have partnered with Otsego Land Trust to protect land along the Susquehanna River corridor further downstream, including 50 acres in the Town of Middlefield and over 100 acres in the Town of Oneonta. With your sustained commitment, we can secure a string of additional parcels within the corridor and protect our stretch of the Susquehanna River in a meaningful way. ■

*Brook Trout continued from page 1*

and and they normally weigh less than five pounds in New York waters. The relatively short lifespan, typically five years maximum, and slow growth rates contribute to their small size. They feed on small aquatic insects, mollusks, crustaceans, and other small fish and minnows, but will eat whatever they can find, including air-borne insects that fall into the water. During the fall spawning season, their "redds" or nests are often found in large aggregations in gravelly, shallow stream headwaters.

Aside from Maine and a few river systems in the Adirondacks and northern New England, brook trout populations are highly fragmented due to the vast network of roads, dams, and culverts. Critical brook trout habitat has been lost to stream channelization, dam building, pollution, and erosion caused by poor land management practices, such as overgrazing and deforestation, which causes water temperatures to rise. Populations are also threatened by acid rain, chemicals, and competition and predation from non-native species. Because of these threats, brook trout are now relegated primarily to headwater streams. ■



Post Office Box 173  
Cooperstown, New York 13326

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

- July 5 Springfield Parade
- July 10 Otsego Lakes Festival
- July 11 Middlefield Days
- July 13 Mt. Otsego Hike
- Aug. 21 Annual Picnic
- Sept. 5 Southern Herkimer County Cedar Swamp Hike



spring peeper



Spider web on Compton Bridge parcel

C. Tedesco

### Spinning A Web

Explore the places and the natural treasures that define the Otsego Region. Discover what's at stake. Read the stories of the people and places that make up Otsego Land Trust. Stay abreast of land protection efforts and opportunities to connect with the land. Link to these opportunities and more

online later this month at our upgraded website: [www.otsegoLandtrust.org](http://www.otsegoLandtrust.org). Reduce paper and postage costs and sign up to receive our newsletter and e-news updates electronically. At [www.otsegoLandtrust.org](http://www.otsegoLandtrust.org) you will be able to move from the virtual to the real and get involved in on-the-ground conservation efforts with real people, in real places. ■