



# The Land Steward

NEWSLETTER OF THE FINGER LAKES LAND TRUST

*working to protect the natural integrity of the Finger Lakes region*

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## Partnership Secures Otisco Lake Shoreline

*A rare stretch of undeveloped shoreline on Otisco Lake is now conserved forever thanks to a partnership between the Land Trust, Onondaga County, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).*

**T**he Land Trust recently acquired the 35-acre property with 2,300 feet of lakeshore at the very south end Otisco.

The property features meadows with scattered trees as well as several shallow ponds, two seasonal tributaries to the lake, and forested wetlands. Flocks of waterfowl utilize the area during migration and herons are frequently observed feeding in the ponds. The site also provides habitat for Bald Eagles.

The Land Trust acquired the land from the estate of William "Bill" Henderson. Henderson purchased the

land back in 1942 at a public auction. He was 15 years old at the time and rode his bicycle to the auction. Henderson subsequently maintained the land for 76 years until his passing in 2018.

NYSDEC provided significant funding for the project through its Water Quality Improvement Project Program. The Land Trust also secured a grant from the Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment Fund. Onondaga County will own and manage the site as a public conservation area while the Land Trust will retain and monitor a

perpetual conservation easement.

During the coming months, the Land Trust will work with partners to plant approximately 600 native trees and shrubs to serve as buffers to the lake and two tributary streams. The Land Trust will also work with Onondaga County to develop a long-term management plan that provides for the restoration of wildlife habitat as well as appropriate public access for hiking, wildlife observation, and fishing.

The property will remain closed to the public until restoration efforts are complete. It is anticipated that the

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BILL HECHT

*For most of us, it feels like a long time since the start of the pandemic. Many have taken to our parks and trails to help manage anxiety, reconnect with nature, and get a distraction from the frequently grim news of the day.*

**WE** have noted the increased usage of our trails and received plenty of feedback: “My family found solace in your nature preserves,” said one member. “The trails have allowed me to relieve my stress,” said another. Your trails have been “something of a lifesaver,” said a third.

We are glad to see that the public is enjoying and valuing our trails and preserves. We are grateful for our dedicated corps of volunteers and staff who steward these lands for the benefit of everyone. Thank you!

We also recognize that we need to conserve and maintain more of these areas—for the benefit of the wildlife that lives there, as well as us humans that need wild places as well.

Toward that end, the Land Trust is currently preparing several new preserves that offer trails to accommodate the public, including our Owasco Bluffs Preserve near Auburn that features scenic lakeshore

views and our new Botsford Nature Preserve near Branchport that will provide access to a rugged gorge. Similar work is also underway in Canandaigua, where a new nature preserve will be opened to the public sometime in 2021.

These are just a few of the ways in which the Land Trust is connecting people with nature and providing opportunities to get outdoors. We look forward to a future when everyone in our region has easy access to a nearby natural area.

We also look forward to seeing you out on the trails this fall!



Andrew Zepp  
Executive Director, Finger Lakes Land Trust



STEFANIE DELANEY

*New nature preserve overlooking Canandaigua Lake*

## Partnership Secures Otisco Lake Shoreline

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site will be conveyed to the county and formally opened for public access sometime during 2021. To watch a beautiful aerial video and learn more about the project, please visit [fllt.org/otisco20](http://fllt.org/otisco20).

NYSDEC Commissioner Basil Seggos celebrated the acquisition, saying that, “Through New York’s Water Quality Improvement Project grant program, New York State is making strategic investments to protect and enhance water quality for the benefit of our environment and public health. DEC is

proud to partner with the Finger Lakes Land Trust and Onondaga County on the conservation of this shoreline parcel to enhance public access to recreation opportunities, protect habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, and to safeguard water quality in Otisco Lake as a public drinking water source.”

Onondaga County Executive Ryan McMahon added, “Onondaga County remains committed to securing and protecting sources of clean drinking water for our community. This newly acquired property, which will be added

to the Onondaga County Parks system, will ensure that Otisco Lake continues to be a source of safe drinking water to the residents of Onondaga County.”

This is the Land Trust’s second conservation project in the Otisco Lake watershed. The organization opened its 36-acre Otisco Lake Preserve in 2015. Located in the town of Spafford on the west side of the lake, this preserve protects over 1,300 feet of undeveloped shoreline and has a hiking trail that leads visitors down a steep hillside to the shore.