



Indian River Lakes CONSERVANCY

Protect • Learn • Enjoy • Forever

Newsletter
Fall 2020



Letter from the Director

Dear Friends of the IRLC,

As we wrap up 2020, there is a clear hope among all of us that 2021 will play out in a more “normal” fashion when compared with this year. This spring, summer, and fall, IRLC’s 20 miles of trails were a popular destination, allowing countless community members the ability to recreate and use our trail system as a physical and emotional outlet to one of the greatest collective challenges we have faced in our lifetimes.

As this unprecedented spring and summer evolved into fall, we all came to a much deeper appreciation for the importance of protected lands and public access for the health of both humans and wildlife. As we adapted our programming to the changing times, I often wondered what Henry Carse envisioned in 1998 when he donated that first piece of land to IRLC - a 16 acre wetland on Butterfield Lake known as Osprey Marsh. When he made his initial offer, a handful of families were excited about accepting responsibility to protect this wetland, but Henry’s stipulation was that in order to receive the land, they had to form a land trust to ensure that the land would be protected FOREVER. This was the genesis of the IRLC and a pivotal moment for the Indian River Lakes Region.

Fast-forward 22 years to where we are today. The IRLC is now a maturing land trust currently protecting over 2,500 acres of pristine upland forests, wetlands, and scenic vistas along our shorelines throughout the Indian River watershed. Looking into 2021, our habitat protection programs will continue to expand as we build new partnerships

and programs with other environmental organizations in our area including the Algonquin to Adirondack Initiative (A2A), Ducks Unlimited, and Fort Drum’s Environmental Division. The synergy created by these partnerships will enable IRLC to preserve more land and protect more critical habitats, ensuring the health and wellbeing of the natural places we love FOREVER.

We are excited to announce that SUNY Environmental School for Science and Forestry’s (ESF) Restoration Science Center will be a new WHIRL partner in 2021. This will allow ESF students to lead and mentor our Project WHIRL students in environmental restoration efforts in collaboration with lake associations and IRLC volunteers.

This winter we will be reaching out to our lake associations to learn more about their challenges. Then, we will tailor our spring water quality conference to address their needs and look to align resources for specific aquatic invasive and water quality issues. Our goal in these efforts is to improve water quality on our Indian River Lakes – enabling healthy lakes FOREVER.

We believe Henry Carse would be very proud of the IRLC and everything that we have accomplished in the 22 years since he made that first land donation, but he would also challenge us to continue to expand our land conservation, water quality protection, and environmental education programs. By doing so, we will support his vision of FOREVER.

If the IRLC is to continue its upward course, we need your help. Our success for the next 20 years and FOREVER is up to you. We

are in the midst of our first ever capital campaign, but this summer's limitations on socializing and gatherings made it very challenging to personally connect with and discuss our campaign with our members and supporters.

As we close out 2020, we ask that you consider making an impactful gift to the IRLC. Recently, the Northern New York Community Foundation established an IRLC Endowment Fund allowing you to make gifts that will support us FOREVER.

We look forward to seeing all of you next

year at our events in person, on our trails, or even as a volunteer.

We wish you Happy Holidays and a safe, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

PROTECT – LEARN – ENJOY – FOREVER



James Wylie Huffman III, Executive Director



Front Cover and Family Photos by Courtney Thomas Photography
The Wills Family enjoys a walk at Redwood Hill Preserve in Late Fall

Ducks Unlimited Partners to Protect Wetland Habitat and Breeding Grounds in Our Region

Ducks Unlimited (DU) partners with the IRLC and other local land trusts and the Department of Defense at Fort Drum to help protect the wetlands in the St. Lawrence River Valley, which are the most important breeding area in the Atlantic Flyway for many waterfowl species.

Ducks Unlimited protects this land for waterfowl thanks to the help of local land trusts and our many conservation partners, including the Department of Defense at Fort Drum. Land trusts and Fort Drum are valuable partners, as they buy land or conservation easements for the purpose of conservation. DU has numerous partners in the region to include the Indian River Lakes Conservancy, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Thousand Islands Land Trust, St. Lawrence Land Trust, the Department of Defense (DOD), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Onondaga Audubon Society, Town of Brownville, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Chippewas Point Alliance and private landowners. This team is helping deliver a \$3.3 million St. Lawrence River Valley North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant that will help conserve over 2,600 acres in the region in 2021.

“All of our recent \$1 million NAWCA grants have included land trust partnerships,” said Sarah Fleming, Ducks Unlimited Director of Northeast Conservation Programs. “We could never deliver

our successful program or meet the match required without the help of our conservation allies.”

Land trust partners generally identify opportunities to conserve land in their service area and approach Ducks Unlimited for assistance in protecting the land through easements or fee title acquisitions. Ducks Unlimited writes the NAWCA proposal, and if awarded funding, helps acquire the land or puts it under easement. Land is often donated or partially donated, so the value of donation is used as matching funds towards the grant. The process offers mutual benefits for the land trusts and the DU partnership, as all partners are able to further their mission by protecting critical habitats for the public to access.

DU’s protection efforts to minimize fragmentation and maximize contiguous habitat target the agriculture-dominated landscape of the St. Lawrence River Valley, which is home to a mosaic of crops, hay, and pasture farmland interspersed with native grasses.

This objective also aligns with the goals of the DOD Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) Program, managed by Fort Drum. The ACUB program works with local landowners to place conservation easements on private lands or acquire critical properties for protection, that are adjacent to the training base. Since 2009 the ACUB program has established buffer areas of farmland and natural lands around Fort Drum

to limit effects of development and maximize areas inside the installation that can be used to support the installation’s mission.

The Army has teamed up with DU and local land trusts to include IRLC and Tug Hill Tomorrow, who work with landowners in the area and encourage them toward voluntary land conservation efforts around the base. To date over 20 properties protect over 8,400 acres. IRLC will be the newest partner to this program and we hope to acquire 350-acres of land in Lewis county that will be added to the IRLC portfolio in 2021.

The funding from the ACUB program is also used to leverage our successful NAWCA grants. Over the last three years DU and partners have secured several federal NAWCA grants and with the associated leveraged private funding, protection in the St. Lawrence has invested over \$6 million and protected over 4,000-acres. When combined with the ACUB program that is over 12,000 acres protecting in the St. Lawrence Region through our successful land trust and DOD partnerships.

DU looks forward to continuing our successful partnership with the local land trusts, including IRLC, and we intend to submit another NAWCA grant for \$1 million in February that would conserve another 2,000 acres.

Sara Fleming is the Director of Conservation Programs for Ducks Unlimited's Northeast Region.



Kids' Nature Camps
First-ever Nature Camp at Baker Woods



Environmental Education

Thank you for your support in teaching the next generation to enjoy and care for our Indian River Lakes. It was a successful season!



StoryTime
Hikes and Paddles



Project WHIRL

Field Trips



Girl Scout Hikes



People and Place Stories

How this Special Place Makes a Difference in Two Families' Lives

Take a walk down the Beatrice Rosamond Trail at Redwood Hill and you never know who you might run into. The faces that enjoy these woods are young and old and from near and far. Each visitor has a story to tell about how nature has made an impact on their lives.

Emily Wills and her Family

One warm fall day, the kind of day we will all be dreaming about in a few months, I ran into Emily Wills with her two beautiful babies in tow. I shouldn't say babies since Gracie is now 6 years old and Jameson is 3. The years go by so fast. It seems like only yesterday Emily and I were in high school dreaming about getting married and having families of our own.

Grace and Jameson came running up to me to show me their prizes - animal figurines - received for completing the Scavenger Hunt put together by Judy Keeler of our education committee. Mushrooms were the highlight this fall season as far as interesting sights goes. We saw them in every color and fantastical shape.

Emily told me about how they try to get outside every day. Life with two littles can be overwhelming. "Outdoor time is essential. It's so nice having this trail to bring them to - exercise and fresh air, and free entertainment." It's great for the kids to get out, but we know it's very important for parents too. Little Gracie was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes in September 2018. Spending time in nature gives Emily a healthy counterbalance to the stress of doctor's appointments and taking care of Gracie's new routines and diet.

Mary Wills, well known in the area for her Interior Design Business, but affectionately known as Gigi to Grace and Jameson, accompanied them on the walk. "These are my woods," Mary explained. "the same ones I played in as a child." Mary grew up just down the road, Stine Road that is, and played amongst these trees years ago.

How lovely is the continuity of three generations enjoying a sunny fall day on the same piece of earth?

Special places, like this, our beautiful home have a way of intertwining the years and making them flow together, wrapped around one another like the spirals of a grapevine wreath. We, as humans, crave that continuity coupled with the happy surprises of a forest walk - the wonders of a newly budded flower, changing leaves, or the sparkling filters of light landing in new and interesting ways on the ground.

I have to ask myself- What will I say to my grandchildren someday when we bring them to this and other special places from our youth? This strip mall used to be a forest? This lake used to be alive? I hope that's not the case. That's why we're working to preserve land and water now, for later.



*Grace Wills
Overlooking
Butterfield Lake
with her Gigi,
Mary Wills*

Judy and Bud Adams

Judy and Bud Adams of Syracuse, NY are also regulars on the IRLC trails and have been enjoying the Indian River Lakes area for 53 years. They were just a young couple in love when they began spending summers on Millsite Lake. Bud is now 90 years old.

Bud has always been an outdoorsman and quite the swimmer. He would swim laps around Millsite's Cherry Island right up until a few years ago. Judy and Bud have also always liked going for walks.

Until the trails were open, though, we didn't have a very good place to go walking. "Now we come walking here or at Grand Lake Reserve almost every day. Some things have gotten harder as we have gotten older but going for a walk in the woods together still remains one of our favorite pasttimes."

Heidi Sourwine, IRLC Program Coordinator



Judy and Bud's one-year-old Pugle Jake made for a handsome sidekick, darting here and there as the two enjoyed an autumn stroll. Photo by Elliott D. Hillback, Jr.



Stewardship Team Volunteers at Grand Lake Reserve

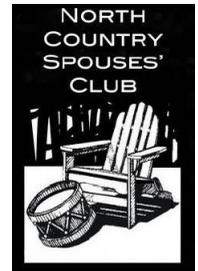


Stewards Clear Trails at Mark A.F. Baker Island

Thank you to our volunteers whose commitment made a challenging year successful!

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Roger Adams | Judy Keeler |
| Joan & Richard Applebaum | The Kerns Family |
| Josh & Jen Allein | Penny Kring |
| Molly Bashaw | Rick Lopez |
| Matt Brennan | Ryan, Stephanie, Ava, & Emmett Lopez |
| Dick Company | Anne Marie McManus |
| Sandy Caputo | Carter Mason |
| Matt & Linda Carney | Bill Mattingly |
| Liam Carney | Andy Mein |
| Martha Cline | Zachary Miliks |
| Kathy Cullen | Laura, Ed, Ethan & Connor Nachbauer |
| Kimberly Cullen | Reed Nichols |
| Carl & Jacob Donders | Pam Nelson |
| Jan Douglass | Lee, Siobhan, & Maebh Nesbitt |
| Walter Dutcher | Zane Peterson |
| Chris Ebey | Megan Pistolese |
| Jeanne Emery | Mark & Louise Scarlett |
| Janet Gee | Chad & Alyssa Sidmore |
| Steve Goobic | Angela Sinkbeil |
| Deborah Grimes | Rob & Gala Smith |
| Sue Gwise | Ed Sourwine |
| Denise, Ralph, Thomas, & Erina Haddock | Joana Sousa |
| Starr Hansson | Mathew Soucy |
| Nathaniel Hazworth | Ron Tibbles |
| Marjorie Hillback | Walt Tibbles |
| Suzanne Holdridge | Steve Wardell |
| Lydia, Victoria, & Jimmy Huffman | Greg & Zane Washburn |
| Tom Hughes | Mat Webber |
| Alan Hunter | Cooper Uliano & Piper Warren |
| Andrea Inserra | Robert West |
| Maria Inserra | Frank Williams |
| Chris Kabel | Bob & Gail Wright |
| Eileen Kaleel | |

Thank you to our Kids' Nature Camp Sponsors!



Northern New York Youth Philanthropy Council
An advisory committee of the Northern New York Community Foundation



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Executive Director

Heidi Sourwine
Program Coordinator



Front Cover: © Courtney Thomas
Back Cover © Penny Kring; Grass Lake
Photographed during Stewardship
Day at Mark A.F. Baker Island

IRLC Newsletter : Fall 2020

Join us for an upcoming event...

Protecting Our Hemlocks <i>Virtual Program with SLELO & Cornell Coop.</i>	December 3 rd
The Night Tree Story Walk <i>at Redwood Hill Preserve</i>	December 11 th - 22 nd
Virtual Nature Talk <i>Dr. Diana White shares her research on Milfoil</i>	January 16 th
Tracking Snowshoe Trek at Baker Woods <i>with Local Legend and Author Peter O'Shea</i>	TBD
Redwood Hill Winter Wonderland Hike <i>Kim Cullen will lead this mid-winter hike</i>	February 16 th
Virtual Nature Talk <i>Join DEC's Molly Farrell & Angelena Ross to learn about Bats, a threatened species</i>	February 20 th
Virtual Nature Talk <i>Environmentally-friendly Gardening with Sue Gwise</i>	March 20 th
Water Quality Conference	June 4 th
Celebration of Lakes <i>at the Bella Brooke Winery</i>	July 24 th

For a full listing of events & event details, visit indianriverlakes.org.

