



CHAUTAUQUA
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY

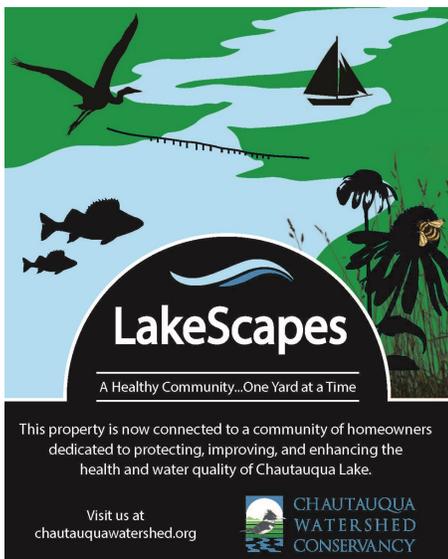
30 Years • 30 Preserves • 1,000 Acres



The 'Shed Sheet

Summer 2020

Lovin' Lakescapes!



Who could have imagined its popularity and success!

CWC's new LakeScapes program has been circling the lake, providing consultations with not only lakefront homeowners but with owners of creekside and inland homes as well! From Dunkirk to Jamestown, Lakewood to Mayville, Stockton to Bemus Point, CWC has been on the road spreading knowledge and guidance, beautifying backyards and teaching landowners how to make their property better absorb and filter runoff while enhancing their quality of life, the lake and the wildlife that live and thrive within it! Homeowners across Chautauqua County have been taking pride in their personal space and improving water quality by taking ownership of their own backyards, no matter where they live or what size garden they want to create!

CWC's new LakeScapes program officially started in May 2020 and, despite tenuous COVID-19 circumstances, has continued to grow ever since! In only 2½ months, we have safely consulted with 70 homeowners and have 39 of our beautiful LakeScapes signs displayed around the lake. In these yard consultations, we've discussed everything from lawn care and mowing to plant identification and native plant suggestions, as well as creative ways to expand lakefront vegetation and buffer areas. We have even touched on tree and shrub trimming, poison ivy control and the best ways to deter geese on your property! In between these yard consultations, we have also created many buffer and raingarden designs as well as installed demonstration buffer gardens at Mayville Lakeside Park and Waldmer Park (at Winchester Dock) and a stormwater retention pond planting at the Heritage Ministries - Woodlands location.

Lakescapes program participants have the option to receive this beautiful and informative sign to display in their yard or garden, designating their property as one committed to preserving the health of our lakes and community!

CWC has not let COVID-19 slow us down... so many wonderful and beautiful vegetative buffers have been created with masks and a 6-foot personal buffer! *(article continues on page 3)*

2020 Priority Programs

As CWC celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2020, we remain as committed today as we were in 1990 to preserving and enhancing the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, rivers and streams of the Chautauqua region. Despite having to cancel many events this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, our watershed land conservation, technical assistance, pollution prevention and preserve enhancement and management activities have proceeded, with modifications for safety as necessary.

CWC started the year by closing on the purchase of 76 acres of forest and lakeshore wetlands on Upper Cassadaga Lake to establish the future Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park. Volunteers have been assisting CWC with marking and clearing trails and planning for the construction of a welcome shelter/kiosk and wildlife observation blind. Labella Associates has graciously been assisting with architectural design of improvements, and fundraising for improvements and a park stewardship endowment fund continue. Construction on park structures is anticipated to commence later this year and be completed in 2021. *(article continues on page 4)*



(photo by Jill Eklund)

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CHAUTAUQUA WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

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The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams, wetlands and watersheds of the Chautauqua region.

Member of



Message From The Executive Director

Greetings to you – our donors, supporters, friends and neighbors! I hope that this newsletter finds you well this summer and able to cope with these trying times.



John Jablonski III

As most of you know, CWC is celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2020! It has been a year of reflection and pride in all that we have accomplished. To celebrate, CWC had planned numerous anniversary events throughout the year, but unfortunately, most had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. We were, however, able to hold a virtual wildflower walk and a fundraiser at Brazil/Labyrinth this spring as well as a fundraiser at Big Inlet Brewing in July. Following state and CDC safety protocols, we have a few events happening in August and September – our annual meeting (featuring Erik Kulleseid, Commissioner of New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation), a fundraiser at Andriaccio's and two education presentations, one by horticulturist Sally Cunningham and another by native plants expert and author Doug Tallamy.

While COVID-19 might have put a damper on this year's events, our staff has still been as busy as ever! Likewise, our preserve trails have been as busy as ever too! We are thrilled to see so many people getting out into nature, enjoying our trails and reaping the physical and mental benefits of spending time outdoors connecting with nature.

With the generous support of our donors and supporters and a PPP loan through Northwest Bank, CWC staff have been able to continue to work full-time on our conservation, technical assistance and educational projects and programs. Our conservation staff, in particular, has done a wonderful job of creatively persisting to provide technical Lakescapes program assistance to 70 properties this year while adhering to "NYS On Pause" regulations. The number of families and property owner groups naturalizing much of their shorelines with vegetative buffers for nutrient capture, erosion control and habitat has grown substantially – building on ten years of previous efforts!

We worked with the Village of Mayville, Heritage Ministries and many Lakewood residents on recent Starve the Algae! Save the Lake! landscaping demonstration projects. We continue to assist the Town of Chautauqua and Chautauqua Lake Estates to address stormwater issues that arose after infrastructure improvements were made to a nearby steep hillside environment.

Our lands manager, preserve stewards and other volunteers continue to monitor, maintain and make improvements to our preserves to make them enjoyable for your use. CWC's directors have been working countless hours to safely manage volunteers, help maintain our preserves and coordinate events and fundraising activities. This year, we also have several summer interns, who are performing invasive species management and other work out in the field, as well as working on various research projects.

The continuation of these and many other CWC conservation programs and projects relies on the support of you, our donors. We hope that you will continue to generously support these activities as best you can. Please continue to get out and enjoy our preserves – whether on foot or by kayak or canoe! On behalf of the rest of staff and our board of directors, THANK YOU to all who support our proactive, preventative and restorative conservation efforts! Stay safe and healthy, and enjoy the rest of your summer!

Lovin' Lakescapes continued . . .

Partnering with the Winchester Dock Association, CWC installed a demonstration lakeside buffer that serves as an example of a structured, landscaped buffer that any homeowner can install on his or her property. If you are interested in what the program provides, it is worth stopping by this site and checking out this beautiful garden.

As an added bonus, the adjoining community of 8+ wonderful neighbors, spanning over 200 yards of lakefront property, decided to create a “no-mow” buffer zone. They increased this “no-mow” area to approximately 10-20 feet and just stopped mowing. It was as easy as that! Some planted native plants and other perennials directly in the un-mowed grass. Others created mowed pathways meandering through the buffer, with their grandchildren running excitedly through the beautiful meadow adventure full of flowers and grasses. Instead of a mowed, sterile green lawn, this community of neighbors created a beautiful, interactive natural space in their own backyards that brings enjoyment not only to the people that walk through it or gaze upon it, but also to the birds, butterflies and insects that feed and live there...all the while soaking up and filtering nutrients and pollutants and protecting our lake! This program has been and continues to be a wonderful way to connect and support homeowners and their communities!

For more program information or to schedule your own Lakescapes consultation, contact our Conservationist, Carol Markham, at carol@chautauquawatershed.org. Backyard consultations and technical assistance are free and can include free plant and landscape design recommendations as well! You also have the option to receive one of our beautiful LakeScapes sign (with a \$30 donation to help cover the cost of the sign) to proudly display in your yard and let your neighbors and friends know that you are dedicated to improving and enhancing the health and quality of our lakes!



The Winchester Dock Association's demonstration buffer garden and Waldmer Park homeowners' no-mow buffer. (photo by Whitney Gleason)

A Sampling Of Our Beautiful Lakescapes Buffers & Gardens!

(photos by Carol Markham)



2020 Priority Programs continued . . .

CWC continues to make improvements to many of our 31 nature preserves (which cover 1,043 acres throughout the county) through our Gateways to Nature program to make these preserves more accessible and enjoyable for public use.



Above: Before and after photos of a lakeshore buffer in Mayville, one of CWC's Lakescapes program Projects. (CWC photos)

Right: Cows in Prendergast Creek, a tributary to Chautauqua Lake. (photo by Judy Maskrey)

Conservationist Carol Markham, Water Quality Program Manager Whitney Gleason and collaborating landowners and volunteers have been busy implementing our Starve the Algae! Save the Lake! program, Chemical-Free Lawn Care program and Lakescapes program. Lakeshore buffer and stormwater pond landscaping demonstration projects were planted in Lakewood, Mayville Park and West Ellicott in June, and Carol has made 70 Lakescapes landscaping advisements, including 44 shoreline sites since May – with more to come! We've aired hundreds of chemical-free lawn care radio messages and utilized various social media since April to educate landowners on how they can avoid fertilizing our lakes, avoid killing pollinators and other beneficial organisms and, at the same time, protect the health of families and pets.

CWC is also proceeding with its Tributary Conservation and Enhancement Program to identify and address sources of pollution from our waterways, enhance and heal stream corridors, plant waterfront buffers and establish conservation easements to protect our waterways. CWC and the Chautauqua County Soil & Water Conservation District are pursuing funding for projects to fence cattle out of Mud Creek (a Chautauqua Lake tributary) and permanently conserve the stream corridor, as well as other similar sites on lake tributaries. CWC is facilitating projects with local municipalities to seek funds and construct or enhance stormwater basins, created wetlands and other structures to trap sediments and nutrients before they reach the lake.



Through our Clear Waters Land Conservation Program, we are pursuing the permanent conservation of lands on Prendergast Creek, Cheney Creek and Goose Creek, with stream bank restoration and erosion control where needed. CWC is also working to conserve scenic and ecologically-valuable lands on Chautauqua Creek and Cattaraugus Creek.

Find out more about these programs and how you can participate in the stewardship of our lands and waters by visiting our website and following CWC on Facebook and Instagram. Get on board with us for clean water and healthy habitats!

Improve Your Lawn's Drinking Power!

Help your lawn recover from summer and gear up for fall!

What is one of the best things you can do for you lawn in late summer? Core aeration! Thatch is a layer of dead and decomposing grass blades that forms on top of your soil. Your grass grows so fast and lush in the spring that, many times, this thatch layer grows faster than the dead blades can decompose. When this happens, the thatch and soil tend to get compacted, and nutrients (and even water) have a hard time penetrating through this layer to the roots. Dry, brown spots begin to appear in your lawn because the thatch layer repels the water and causes run-off.

Core aeration is a service that many lawn care companies offer and is beneficial to your lawn (and the lake!). It punches holes in your grass and pulls out cores. These holes increase your lawn's ability to absorb water, nutrients and air into the soil. Core aeration should be performed in late August as temperatures cool and soil moisture is adequate. At this time of year, your lawn is recuperating from the stress of summer, and core aeration helps the grass gear up for fall root growth. Contact your lawn care company today, or better yet, grab a pitchfork and do it yourself! Optimize your lawn's food storage and help it go dormant into winter healthy and happy!



Trails & Trail Improvements

This summer, we've spent some time working to improve a number of our existing preserve trails, build some new trails and add in some trail features that will help us understand who is using our trails and what they like about them.

Visitor Sign In Boxes

The first improvement project we undertook was the addition of bright blue visitor sign in boxes at our featured preserve trails. These old-fashioned paper and pencil sign in boxes will help us understand the frequency of visitors and the kinds of activities they enjoy while walking the trails. Some visitors are there to enjoy a simple nature walk, some are there specifically to go "birding" and some walk the trails for exercise.

Sign in boxes are now located at our David and Margaret Naetzker Preserve (on Route 474 just outside of Asheville), Bentley Nature Preserve (just off Route 430 near Jamestown), Dobbins Woods Preserve (on Bly Hill Road in Asheville), Brown's Creek Preserve (on Walker Road in Ellicott) and Oxbow Preserve (on Lyons Road between Mayville and Sherman). The sign in boxes have been in place for just a few weeks, but we are already getting a lot of good data about the usage of our trails at these sites. Several additional sign in boxes will be coming to other locations soon. If you visit a preserve with a sign-in box, please let us know you were there! It helps us to put some numbers behind the part of our mission that involves providing access to natural spaces for people to enjoy as well as habitat and water quality improvement through the conservation of sensitive ecosystems.

Dobbins Woods Preserve

At our Dobbins Woods Preserve, a fairly large number of additional "bog bridges" have been added to enable visitors to enjoy the trails there even when they are a bit wet. Anyone familiar with this preserve knows that it can be quite muddy, especially in the spring and fall. While interns and staff moved wood around for the building of these new bog bridges, it was our volunteer preserve stewards who really came through for us and did the actual construction.



Additional bog bridges have been installed over several muddy spots at our Dobbins Woods Preserve in Asheville. (photos by Craig Seger)

Naetzker Preserve

At the David and Margaret Naetzker Preserve, we've done work to maintain water bars across the trail and keep the storm water projects planted with native species up the slope in good order. We've also done work on access from the road. Per our Lands Manager, Jeremy Woolson, this location is a fairly well-kept open secret, and the trail makes for some pretty relaxed hiking once it flattens out up on top of the hill. When you visit this preserve, be sure to watch for blackberry brambles along the trail for a nice late summer snack!



Outlet Greenway Preserve & Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park

Up and coming preserve work includes a new trail at our Chautauqua Lake Outlet Greenway Preserve that will stretch from the parking area on Old Fluvanna Road out to the edge of Chautauqua Lake near the Chadakoin River.

We are also developing and marking trails at the new Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park with help from our partners and friends at the Cassadaga Lakes Association.



Above: The Bentley Preserve is one of several preserves to receive a visitor sign in box. (photos by Jill Eklund)

Below: A water bar across a trail at the Naetzker Preserve, used to divert water and reduce/prevent erosion. (photo by Jeremy Woolson)

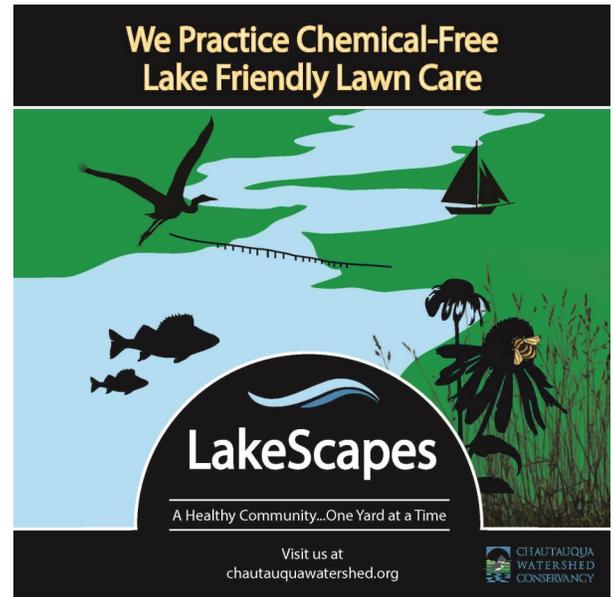
Take The Leap To A Chemical-Free Lawn! (... and get your free yard sign today!)

What we do in our yards matters, and collectively, we have a tremendous influence on not only the water quality of the lake but also on the people, wildlife and organisms that live in and around it.

We, as backyard gardeners and lawn care managers, have the power to create a yard that will support a healthy ecosystem. Two of the easiest ways to create this health and environmental wealth in your own yard is to forgo the use of pesticides and herbicides and reduce the amount of lawn you mow. Approximately 100 million pounds of pesticides and insecticides are used by homeowners to kill unwanted weeds and insects in their lawns. These chemicals are found in our common “weed and feed” products as well as in applications sprayed by local lawncare companies. These poisons are toxic to humans and pets and destroy the beneficial bugs needed for pollination of our gardens, for food for birds and their offspring and for organisms that maintain healthy soil. Their use should be a personal and community concern for our overall health and well-being.

We must transform our ideas of what a healthy yard should look like. If we, as a community, can allow ourselves to see a perfectly mowed lawn for what it really is...a green desert that provides no food or shelter for wildlife...then we can adjust our mindset to take pride in not mowing. And, with less grass to mow, homeowners can create and promote native plant species and re-create the habitat and space that wildlife needs to survive and thrive. When you stop mowing, you'll not only see all of the nature that we have lost starting to come back, but you'll also get to interact with it too. Turn these no-mow areas into habitat everyone and everything can enjoy! Whether it's a rain garden situated in a wet corner of your yard, a landscaped front entrance or a native flower garden at the edge of your property, take pride in your personal space, improve water quality, create habitat for local wildlife and improve the health and beauty of your yard for all to enjoy.

CWC invites you to join us in taking pride in our imperfect personal spaces by pledging to avoid the use of chemicals on your lawn. By following a few simple tips – such as spot treating weeds and pests only when problematic, mowing higher and mulching your lawn clippings – you can be a part of the solution. Safeguard the health of your family and our community, while protecting birds, bees and pollinators too. Then show your neighbors that you care by proudly displaying our FREE chemical-free lawn sign (shown above). If you'd like a sign, please let us know by emailing info@chautauquawatershed.org or by calling our office at 716.664.2166, and our staff will deliver one to you locally at no charge. Together we can build a healthy community... one yard at a time!



Pledge to avoid the use of chemicals on your lawn and proudly display this chemical-free lawn care sign to show you are doing your part to safeguard the health of the water quality of the lake and the people, wildlife and organisms that live in and around it.



Railing Added to Goose Creek Valley Greenway Preserve Trail

Improvements to CWC nature preserves continue to keep us busy!

One of our many preserve improvements this summer includes the addition of a safety railing on part of the walking trail at our Goose Creek Valley Greenway Preserve (on Hoag Road in Asheville) which leads visitors down to the banks of Goose Creek. A big thank you to our Vice President and preserve foreman Craig Seger for installing the railing and making the walk to the creek safer and easier for those who visit this beautiful site!

(photos by Craig Seger)



Chautauqua Lake Wastewater Treatment & Sewer Extensions Update

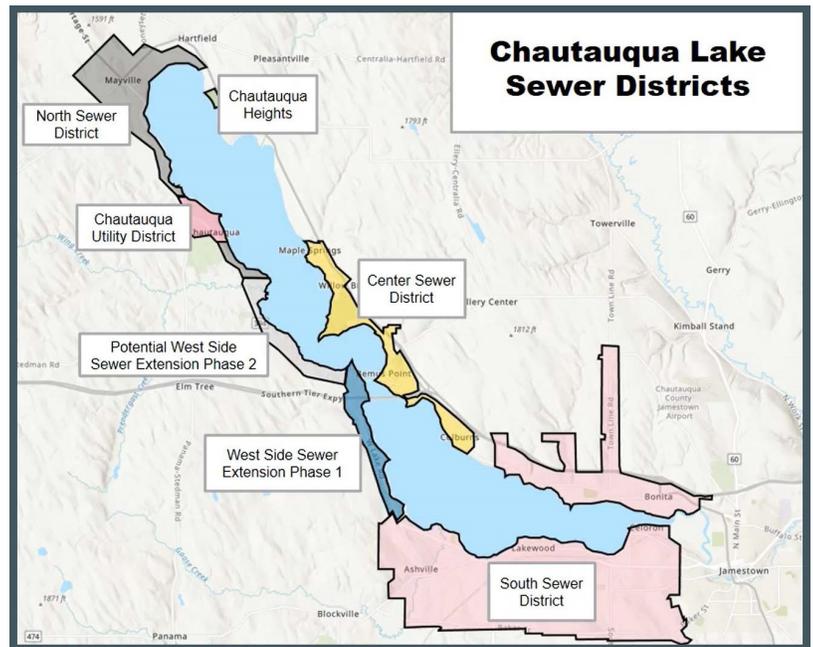
When we last reported on the wastewater treatment plant improvements and sewer district expansions for Chautauqua Lake in early 2019, the South and Center Chautauqua Lake Sewer District had solicited proposals for the design and construction of the West Side Sewer Extension Phase I Project in order to choose an engineering firm. Since then, SCCLSD has continued to move forward on this important project, which will help to reduce the amount of phosphorus loading to Chautauqua Lake by providing public sewers to a portion of unsewered properties on the west side of the lake along Route 394. Phase 1 includes the replacement of approximately 450 private septic systems with public sewer facilities.

Discharges from septic systems contribute nutrients, including phosphorus, to our area streams and lakes. An excessive amount of this phosphorus can cause increased growths of aquatic plants and algae. In fact, in freshwater lakes such as Chautauqua Lake, phosphorus is a main driver of algae blooms. Algae can be harmful in and of itself to both humans and animals, but it can also be harmful after it dies and decays because it robs our waters of dissolved oxygen that is needed for fish to survive. In 2012, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation released a Total Maximum Daily Load report, which set guidelines for phosphorus reductions within the lake and watershed. Around the same time, private septic systems were identified as a problem for the health of our lake and, as a result, led to the West Side Sewer Extension Projects.

After the submission of design and construction proposals, GHD Engineering was awarded the project. In 2020, GHD submitted their Basis of Design Report, which was accepted by SCCLSD and establishes the required infrastructure needed to meet our communities' current needs as well as our projected population growth. The full report can be found at <https://chqgov.com/sites/default/files/document-files/2020-05/BODR-Final.pdf>. It is this report that will serve as the basis for the detailed design of the new system.

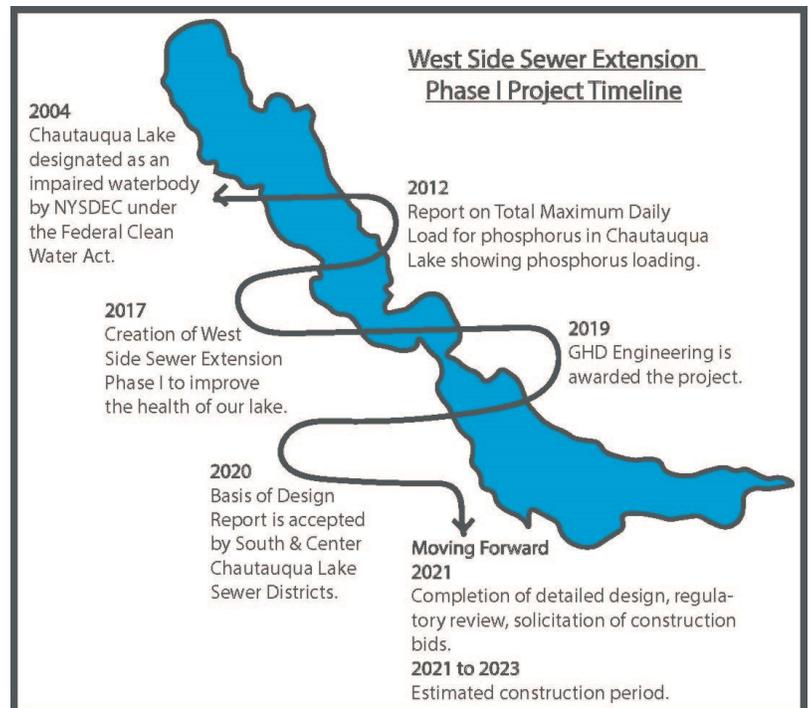
The next steps for the West Side Sewer Extension Phase I Project will be the completion of the detailed design by GHD and submission for regulatory agencies' review. This review will be followed by advertisement and solicitation for construction bids. Funded by \$7,972,000 in grant dollars and \$8,916,000 in zero interest New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation' Clean Water State Revolving Fund loan dollars, SCCLSD hopes to begin construction of the Phase I Project in 2021 and estimates completion by 2023.

For a video containing more detailed information on the major project elements and how you can help, visit <https://chqgov.com/water-and-sewer-districts/westside-sewer-extension>.



Map above by Chautauqua County (chq.gov)

Illustration below by Whitney Gleason





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UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday / August 12th / Time TBD (virtual event)

“Our Yards & Gardens: Instruments of Positive Change” - Presentation by horticulturalist Sally Cunningham. Learn about the important choices that gardeners and homeowners can make for clean water, happy pollinators and sustainable eco-systems!

Thursday / August 13th / 4-9PM

Fundraiser at Andriaccio’s Restaurant in Chautauqua, NY
Celebrate 30 years with us! Together, we can...Save The Aqua In Chautauqua!

Thursday / August 27th / 7PM (virtual event)

CWC 30th Anniversary Annual Meeting, with featured speaker Erik Kulleseid,
Commissioner of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

Tuesday / September 1st / 7PM (virtual event)

LakeScapes/Chemical-Free Lawncare/Native Plants & Insects Presentation:
A Guide to Restoring the Little Things that Run the World, by native plants expert
and author Doug Tallamy

More details available on our website and social media!

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