



THE 'SHED SHEET

Summer 2025

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHAUTAUQUA WATERSHED CONSERVANCY

Mary & Tom Huhn Nature Park Improvements

(by Justina Dore)

This spring, Wilson and Nancy Huhn reached out to the Conservancy about installing a bench at the Mary & Tom Huhn Nature Park in memory of Will's mother, Mary. They wished for the bench to be placed at a special site along the creek near the family headstones, which was also one of Mary's favorite places to visit when the land that is now the preserve belonged to her family. (Wilson Huhn generously donated the land to CWC in 2023 to preserve its beauty for future generations and help protect the water quality of two branches of Cheney Creek.)

In May, our land specialist, Bethany O'Hagan, along with volunteer Murl Kinal, cleared the site and installed the memorial bench. A few weeks later, Wilson and Nancy were able to visit the preserve, with Wilson remarking that "the most striking change that we saw were the many boulders that have been arranged, like artwork, in and along the banks of Cheney Creek to protect the stream and improve the clarity of the water. The first priority of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is to protect and preserve Chautauqua Lake, and it is impressive what you have achieved so far in this tributary of the lake."

The pool near the green bench is a wonderful family gathering spot, and the short path from the parking area makes it easily accessible. Although the trail is not open to the public currently, we are working to get it ready for everyone to enjoy soon. (continued page 5)



Wilson and Nancy Huhn enjoy a quiet moment on a newly installed memorial bench at the Mary & Tom Huhn Nature Park.

Celebrating John: A Legacy of Leadership & Dedication

(by Whitney Gleason)

After more than three decades of visionary leadership, John Jablonski III has stepped into a well-earned retirement. As the founding executive director of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, John turned a bold idea into a thriving organization that today protects thousands of acres of vital habitat and waterways, keeping our air and water cleaner and our community healthier and happier for generations to come.

For the past two years, John continued to share his wisdom and passion as our special projects coordinator. In this role, he helped guide critical initiatives and ensured a smooth transition for our team, our partners, and our supporters. His dedication, persistence, and ability to bring people together helped shape not only the land we conserve but also the strong community that surrounds our work.

We are deeply grateful for John's unwavering commitment and leadership. While we will miss his day-to-day presence, his legacy will live on in every acre preserved, every clean stream, and every person who values the natural beauty of our region. Please join us in wishing John all the best in this exciting next chapter!



Photo by Carol Jablonski



CHAUTAUQUA
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY

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Whitney Gleason, *Executive Director*
Tracy Carlson, *Director of Comm. Engagement*
Daniel Conklin, *Land Acquisition Coordinator*
Justina Dore, *Director of Development*
Jill Eklund, *Senior Executive Coordinator*
Twan Leenders, *Director of Conservation*
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Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and
nationally accredited land trust working to
preserve and enhance the quality, scenic beauty,
and ecological health of the lands and waters of
the Chautauqua region for our community.

From Executive Director Whitney Gleason

Summer is in full swing, and with it comes a renewed appreciation for the incredible natural resources that make this region such a special place to call home. Recently a friend asked me if I felt like those of us who live in Chautauqua County take clean water for granted more than others because we have so much of it. I hadn't really thought about that before, but when asked, it struck me how much we do. Or at least, how I've taken our abundance of access to clean water as a given in the past.



It wasn't until I went away to college that I realized how much I had grown accustomed to seeing beautiful bodies of water every day. Whether it's going for a run along the lake, jumping into one of our freshwater lakes after a long hike, wading in one of our many creeks, going for a paddle, or hopping into a boat with friends, we are so fortunate to have clean freshwater all around us throughout our County.

Just like my friend asking a thoughtful question, summer also serves as a constant reminder for me of this gift of access to clean, healthy water. So, I hope that you are enjoying this season with all of its splendor, and maybe this newsletter will serve as your reminder to get out and appreciate our waters.

In addition to drawing us back to the water, this summer season also marks an important transition for our organization. After decades of dedicated service, our founding executive director, John Jablonski III, has officially retired. For the past two years, John has remained on our team in a part-time role supporting special projects and ensuring a strong handoff to the next chapter. We are deeply grateful for his leadership and vision, which built the foundation for the work we continue today.

I also want to share an update on a significant process that we have been engaged in over the past year: the exploration of a potential merger with two partner organizations. While the process has been valuable – helping us all reflect on our missions and opportunities for collaboration – the boards ultimately decided not to merge at this time. Instead, we will continue to focus on strengthening partnerships and advancing our conservation work independently, with an even clearer sense of purpose and direction.

As always, your support makes all of this possible. From preserving land and restoring shorelines to offering community programs and protecting wildlife habitat, every step forward starts with your generosity. Together, we can ensure that clean water, open spaces, and thriving ecosystems remain at the heart of this community – not just during these beautiful summer days, but for generations to come.

With gratitude,

Meet our new Development Director . . .

This January, we welcomed Justina Dore to our staff as our new director of development.

Justina is originally from the Eastern Sierras of California and lived in the Pacific Northwest before moving to Jamestown in 2019. Justina graduated from California State University, Chico in 2010 with a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature and a Certificate in Literary Editing and Publishing, completing an internship at a grant writing agency that launched her career in non-profit fundraising and development. She has held a variety of leadership roles in environmental, human services, and social justice organizations while living in California and Oregon. Prior to joining the Conservancy, Justina served eight years as director of development at Parrott Creek Child and Family Services in Oregon, and we were happy to engage her as a volunteer on our Development Committee prior to her joining staff.

Justina is on the board of Rooted (which hosts an annual women's mountain bike festival) and is on the advisory council of the Jamestown Farmer's Market. She is passionate about social justice and environmental issues, and she loves birding, reading, baking, and outdoor adventures with her three children.

Justina has grown to call Chautauqua home over the last six years, and she is excited to get to know more of our community. If you would like to set up a time to meet with Justina, you can reach her at 716-664-2166 x1011 or at justina@chautauquawatershed.org.



. . . and our new Land Acquisition Coordinator!



We are also excited to welcome Daniel Conklin as our new land acquisition coordinator. Daniel brings a strong academic and professional background in environmental conservation, coupled with a lifelong passion for the lands and waters of the Chautauqua region.

Daniel holds an undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies and Geography and a Master's degree in Sustainability, both from the University at Buffalo. His previous roles with WNY PRISM, the University at Buffalo, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation focused on building ecological and community resilience in Western New York. He has worked on invasive species management, natural resource protection, environmental research, and community outreach, always with an emphasis on sustaining healthy ecosystems and preparing landscapes to withstand long-term environmental challenges.

At the Conservancy, Daniel began as a contractor, helping to wrap up our 2024 Early Detection AIS Surveys and working to restore and stabilize the stream banks at the Jamestown Riverwalk. Since assuming his role as the Land Acquisition Coordinator, Daniel has helped us conserve and acquire many new parcels through purchases, donations, and conservation easements. He's additionally taken lead roles on many other projects where his knowledge and background are able to shine.

A lifelong Western New Yorker, Daniel grew up kayaking local waterways, exploring the Chautauqua region's lakes, and hiking the region's trails. His personal connection to these landscapes inspires his dedication to conserving the natural areas that define the region's character and protect its waters. We are thrilled to welcome Daniel to our team and look forward to his contributions to local conservation and watershed resilience.

Our Yard Smarts Program: Helping to Clean Water, Create Biodiversity & Build Community!

(by Carol Markham)

Clean water, happy wildlife, and strong community roots – that’s what Yard Smarts is all about! By planting natives and working together, we’re turning ordinary yards into powerful habitats. Small changes at home can mean big wins for water, wildlife, and our neighborhoods. Check out a few ways we’re growing a greener Chautauqua:



Once a vacant city lot, 101 Park Avenue in Dunkirk is now blooming with life – Monarchs, songbirds, and pollinators galore – thanks to native plant gardens created with the help of the Chautauqua County Land Bank, Greener Gardens, Royal Fern Nursery, B&B Pollinator Friendly Gardens, Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, the City of Dunkirk, and SUNY stats students! With a big dose of biodiversity, this space now supports cleaner water, more wildlife, and a healthier community!



Clinton V. Bush Elementary School in Jamestown has planted two beautiful native gardens and is teaching students how native plants, wildlife, and the food they grow are all connected!



Longtime members Larry Koplik and Sarah Roberts of Dewittville created a model lakeshore buffer *and* planted over 100 native trees and shrubs on their 1.4-acre lakefront property to support water quality and wildlife habitat!

Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail Plan Released

Head over to our website (www.chautauquawatershed.org) and click the Projects tab to read our newly released publication “*Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail: Past, Present, and Future.*” You’ll get an overview of the work that has been carried out in Chautauqua County’s major waterways and Cassadaga Creek and Conewango Creek in recent years, specifically in the section known as the Marden E. Cobb Waterway Trail, to improve safety and hydrological functionality. Aspects of the region’s history, geology, and ecology, as well as practical information on the system’s infrastructure and its challenges, are also summarized to provide a starting point for future work. Recommendations for the next steps in restoration, activation, and resiliency improvements are also provided.

Jamestown Riverwalk Project: Creating a Pollinator Paradise

(by Daniel Conklin)

This spring and summer, we made significant progress on our Chadakoin River bank restoration project along the Jamestown Riverwalk, creating a healthier, more resilient urban waterway and green space for the community.



More than 30 volunteers, including crews from the Cummins Jamestown Engine Plant and other community members and partners, planted approximately 2,000 native plants and 100 dogwood live stakes along the riverbank. The plantings included a diverse mix of native grasses, sedges, and wildflowers, including favorites like blue vervain and swamp milkweed, which provide vibrant blooms and critical habitat for pollinators like butterflies and bees. Over 350 burlap sandbags were filled with a soil-mulch mix and placed in strategic areas to help stabilize erosion-prone areas. The plants were then placed into the sandbags, into areas that were backfilled with soil, and on the upper banks. Crews were also able to help remove large amounts of poison ivy, various invasive species, including wisteria,



and garbage that had accumulated in the park. One specific area of concern was a large, eroded hole located behind the Jamestown Cycle Shop. Utilizing the sandbags and metal fencing, a wall was created in which layers of sandbags and plants could be placed going up the steep incline, resulting in a look that is similar to what is done with terrace farming. This was a critical repair to stop further bank loss in one of the areas most impacted by issues related to runoff.

The newly created green infrastructure along the River's banks will not only help prevent future erosion and bank collapse but additionally provide beautiful habitat for local wildlife, such as turtles, birds, butterflies, and other pollinators. We will be adding nesting boxes for birds, as well as "bee hotels" for native bee species, and several bat roosting boxes to the project area soon to encourage wildlife to move back into the area and provide interesting landscape elements that can be enjoyed by those who visit the Jamestown Riverwalk.



This work was made possible through ARPA funding from the City of Jamestown, along with generous support from the Cummins Water Works program. We're especially grateful to the Cummins JEP volunteers who have been a huge help throughout the entirety of this project, as well as to Dan Stone and the City of Jamestown Parks Department for their partnership and support.

Huhn cont.

Plans for future improvements at the preserve include:

- Installing a kiosk.
- Developing new trails.
- Expanding and improving the parking area to accommodate vehicles and ensure accessibility.
- Addressing flooding caused by heavy rains that wash out old logging roads.
- Installing a footbridge to enable safe creek crossings.

Trail-building projects will continue to align with our accessibility and inclusion goals, focusing on removing barriers, adding clear trail markers, providing information on cell service, and implementing thoughtful design improvements to help all visitors feel confident, safe, and welcome in nature. Thank you to the Huhn family for sharing this special place with our communities and conserving this important area for the health of the lake and benefiting generations to come.



The Shifting State of Chautauqua Lake

(by Twan Leenders)

Anyone familiar with Chautauqua Lake knows that no two years are exactly alike. Conditions can shift dramatically depending on weather, water levels, and activities across the surrounding watershed. While some trends play out slowly, localized issues like algal blooms, plant overgrowth, or fish kills can appear and disappear quickly. What drives these shifts? And how do year-to-year variations in these factors influence the Lake today?

A Lake of Two Halves

Chautauqua Lake is divided into two distinct basins – north and south – each with unique characteristics in depth, water flow, and biological activity. These differences date back over 10,000 years, when glaciers carved the lakebed and left behind features that still influence how water moves and life thrives in each basin.

Sources of Water

The Lake's water comes from a combination of rainfall, snowmelt, groundwater, and 11 tributaries that drain a 13,156-acre (20.5 square-mile) watershed. Roughly 78% of its water arrives through surface runoff or stream inflow. In recent years, lower winter snowfall (like in 2023 and 2024) has meant Chautauqua Lake started the season with less water, prompting earlier Warner Dam adjustments.



The unexpected growth of large amounts of native pondweed species in the south basin of Chautauqua Lake this summer is triggered by a combination of several (perhaps all?) factors described here.

Managing Lake Levels

The Warner Dam in downtown Jamestown plays a crucial role in regulating water levels, especially from May through October. The goal is to maintain an elevation around 1,308.2 feet above sea level.

In dry periods, the Dam may be closed to conserve water. Ahead of major storms, it can be opened to prevent flooding. During dry, hot spells in summer, more water evaporates from the lake surface than gets replenished by springs and tributaries. Rainfall patterns strongly influence lake depth throughout spring and summer.

Why Low Water Matters

When lake levels drop, sunlight can reach deeper into the water, warming it and encouraging aquatic plants and algae to grow. Meanwhile, heavy rainstorms send sediment, nutrients, and pollutants from all over the watershed rushing into the Lake, especially in areas where natural buffers have been lost.

A Changing Watershed

The landscape surrounding Chautauqua Lake has changed drastically over time. Abundant forests and wetlands once filtered water and slowed erosion. Today, paved surfaces and lawns accelerate runoff and pollution. Without functioning wetlands and vegetated buffers, stormwater now reaches the Lake more quickly and unfiltered.

Changing Weather Patterns

Climate change is contributing to changing local weather patterns, causing stronger storms and less snowfall, both of which impact lake health. This year's intense rains helped maintain lake levels but also delivered large pulses of sediment, pollutants, and nutrients that fed aquatic plants and fueled algae blooms.

Clean Waters Flow from Healthy Watersheds

Chautauqua Lake is the endpoint of its watershed – it receives everything that runs off the land. Once water quality problems reach the Lake, they're difficult to reverse. Long-term improvements start upstream – by restoring forests, rebuilding wetlands, and reducing runoff from developed areas.

Protecting the Lake's Future

We can't control the weather, but we can manage how it affects our local environment. Smart in-lake management (both short-term and long-term) must be paired with upstream solutions if we want to preserve Chautauqua Lake for recreation, wildlife, and future generations.

Reflecting on our Merger Exploration

(by Whitney Gleason)



Over the past year, our board and staff have been engaged in a thoughtful and thorough exploration of a potential merger with two of our long-standing partner organizations, the Chautauqua Lake Association and the Chautauqua-Conewango Consortium. The process was rooted in a shared desire to better serve our supporters and community by evaluating whether a more unified approach could lead to greater impact, efficiency, and sustainability.

Throughout this exploration, we took time to assess each organization's mission, programs, financial health, governance structures, and long-term goals. We engaged consultants, hosted joint meetings, and solicited input from stakeholders. Along the way, the process sparked valuable conversations and deepened our mutual understanding and respect for each other's work.

Ultimately, after careful consideration, the boards made the decision not to merge at this time. While the idea of a single, combined organization held promise, we believe that remaining independent allows us to stay focused, flexible, and rooted in the specific needs of our community. We came away from this experience with a renewed sense of clarity about who we are, what we do best, and how we can most effectively serve the land, water, and people of our region.

This decision does not mark the end of our collaboration. We have appreciated getting to know each other on a much deeper level and will continue to work closely to support and lift one another up. We're grateful to everyone who participated in this process – and especially to you, our members, who make our work possible. Your continued trust and generosity give us the strength to lead with confidence and stay true to our mission.

Did You Know?

<p>Chautauqua Lake sits</p> <p>1,308 feet</p> <p>above sea level</p> <p>making it one of the highest navigable lakes in North America</p>	<p>7:50pm 9/1/25</p> <p>6:58pm 10/1/25</p> <p>6:10pm 11/1/25</p> <p>4:52pm 12/1/25</p> <p>Sunset times</p>	<p>over</p> <p>1,500</p> <p>farms</p> <p>in Chautauqua County</p>
<p>seen this colorful tree before?</p> <p>We are promoting the Outside Safe Space initiative at many of our public-access preserves. This icon is a simple way for people to show their support for shared respect, safety, and kindness on the trail.</p> <p>EveryBODY OUTSide</p>	<p>90%</p> <p>of an event's waste has to be diverted from landfills in order to have a</p> <p>Zero Waste Event</p>	<p>Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy</p> <p>has</p> <p>10+ Miles</p> <p>of open trails for public use</p>



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesdays in Sept —Trail Clean-Up Days

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| Sept 22 | Wine on the Trail at CLNP |
| Sept 27 | Sparks Under the Stars —
a Bon Voyage to Summer Bonfire |
| Sept 30 | Seed Saving Workshop |
| Oct TBD | Wine on the Trail |
| Oct TBD | Fall Foliage Walk |
| Ongoing | Aquatic Invasive Species Surveys |
| Ongoing | Online Native Plant Sale |

Visit www.chautauquawatershed.org for more
details on these and other upcoming events!

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your 'Shed Sheet by email and help save resources!

The 'Shed Sheet newsletter is compiled and edited by Jill Eklund, Senior Executive Coordinator.