



Transitions: Jablonski Looks Back ... and Ahead!

By John Jablonski III, Deputy Director



John Jablonski III has stepped down as the executive director of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy. He will serve as deputy director through April 1st and will then move into the role of special projects coordinator.

As of February 15th, after 32 years of leading the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, first as its president and then its executive director, I have stepped down from the executive director position and assumed the role of deputy director. I am pleased that our board of directors has promoted Whitney Gleason to the executive director position. Whitney formerly served as the deputy director and development director of this organization.

This transition is happening at an exciting time for the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy. The organization's conservation program scope and impact has grown significantly over the last few years. Under my tenure, the organization started in 1990 with lake and watershed educational programming and then built its capacity to conserve and maintain lands for conservation. And now it has accelerated its habitat and waterway conservation activities and expanded into habitat restoration activities as well. We focused in the 1990s and early 2000s on conserving the largest, most threatened and highest ecological value remaining wetlands and steep shorelands on Chautauqua Lake and have expanded efforts to conserve important habitat sites on Chautauqua Lake tributaries, Chautauqua Creek, Cassadaga Lakes, Cassadaga Creek and Bear Lake.

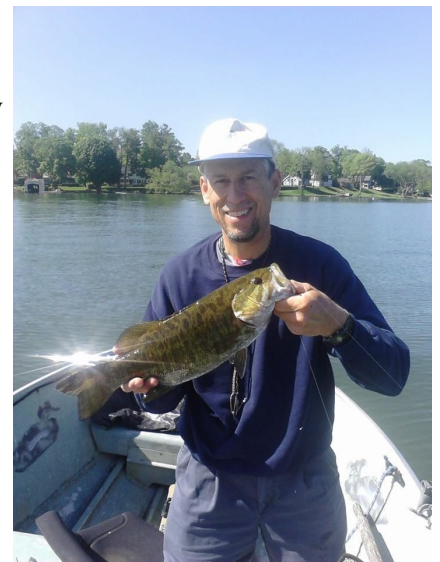
Over time, we were also able to facilitate the conservation of the Cheney and Stow Farm lakeshores as well as Midway Park. In 2022, we partnered with the City of Jamestown to start an ambitious restoration program for the Chadakoin River and the City of Dunkirk on waterfront restoration. For 2023 and into the future, CWC is mapping the most important parcels and larger landscapes to target for conservation, to best ensure healthy fish and wildlife habitats, clean waters and scenic beauty for the Chautauqua region for generations to come. Healthy

groundwaters, streams and lakes require ecologically-healthy watersheds. Clean waters are necessary for healthy people, and the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is your local organization leading these activities in our region!

On April 1st, I will transition from full-time deputy director to part-time special projects coordinator to continue to work on a small number of impactful habitat and waterway conservation and restoration projects, while taking the time to better get to know many of you, our fantastic donors! This will also be an opportunity for me to spend more time exploring and enjoying our beautiful local waterways with family and friends.

I have been very blessed to have the generous support of so many conservation-minded people to help me pursue my dream of keeping our Chautauqua lakes and their watersheds clean, healthy and as natural and enjoyable as possible.

Thank you for your part in helping me realize and continue to pursue this dream! I am more than confident in the organization's continued success with our dedicated board of directors and talented staff team as we look to the future.



John enjoying one of his favorite pastimes - fishing for small-mouth bass in Chautauqua Lake!



CWC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit 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, NY region.

Staff

Whitney Gleason, *Executive Director*
John Jablonski III, *Deputy Director*
Tracy Carlson, *Outreach Assistant*
Jill Eklund, *Director of Communications*
Caitlin Gustafson, *Business Manager*
Twan Leenders, *Director of Conservation*
Carol Markham, *Conservationist*
John McCarthy ("Johnny Mac"),
Preserve Handyman
Bethany O'Hagan, *Land Specialist*

Board of Directors

Rebecca L. Nystrom, *President*
Jeanne E. Wiebenga, *Vice President*
William R. Locke, *Treasurer*
Cheryl E. Mawhinney, *Secretary*
Kaitlyn L. Bentley
Janis L. Bowman
Dennis H. Collins
Christine C. Flanders
Michael E. Jabot
Deborah E. Moore
Lisa M. Schmidtfrerick-Miller
Craig A. Seger
Mary Beth Southwick
Greg G. Swan
Deborah C. Trefts
Ruth T. Wahl
William J. Ward

Emeritus Board

Donald F. Kimmel, *in memoriam*
Michael K. Lyons
Thomas A. Small
Arthur D. Webster

Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
71 East Fairmount Avenue / PO Box 45
Lakewood, NY 14750
716-664-2166
info@chautauquawatershed.org



Member of
Land Trust Alliance
Together, conserving the places you love

Welcome Bethany O'Hagan, Our New Land Specialist!

Bethany O'Hagan has joined the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy staff as our new land specialist!

Originally from Soldotna, Alaska, Bethany moved to Chautauqua County from Portland, Oregon, where she lived for the last 22 years. After obtaining her Bachelor of Science degree with a major in geography and minor in black studies from Portland State University, she worked for many years contracted through the City of Portland's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability managing and running many recycling and sustainability projects. One major project she spearheaded was data collection and reporting on the implementation of a proposed city-wide composting program for the City of Portland, which the city did implement!



Bethany O'Hagan

Bethany has dedicated her life to learning and living the most zero waste life she can. She became a Master Recycler and participated in countless material sorts and presentations for businesses around the Portland metropolitan area. She also worked for the Portland Farmers Market, where she served as market coordinator for two of their markets and helped to create their durable dish program, which is still intact today!

Even though Bethany's life passion has been waste reducing, composting and recycling – and overall working to divert as much as possible from landfills – she has grown to also become very passionate about conserving and protecting water resources. Her belief is that, without access to clean water and protecting our waterways, waste streams and recycling do not matter!

Bethany loves living in Jamestown with her husband (where he was born and lived for most of his formative years), her two amazing young daughters and her beloved husky. She is now a member of Zonta and is also in the process of becoming a Master Gardener. She is an avid plant person, worm composter and book reader – usually reading multiple books at a time! She also loves listening to records, swinging on tree swings, camping, bike riding, snowboarding, playing any sort of game whatsoever, drinking scotch and jumping into any body of water with her family and friends. She is also beyond delighted to join the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy as its new land specialist!



Save resources by asking to get your
'Shed Sheet newsletter electronically!

Simply email us at
info@chautauquawatershed.org!

What We're Working On In 2023!

By Whitney Gleason, Executive Director

2023 is a big year for the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy! As our co-founder and executive director of 30+ years shifts his focus to special projects, I am excited to begin leading the organization at such a pivotal moment in our growth.

This year, we will be applying to become an accredited land trust through the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. Achieving land trust accreditation is a mark of distinction, showing that the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy has committed itself to meeting the highest standards for land conservation. Becoming accredited is an important step that furthers our commitment to our region and to those who support us.

In addition to pursuing accreditation this year, we are launching our Collaborative Regional Conservation Implementation Strategy (CRCIS) for Chautauqua County. We have long seen the need for a concerted effort to identify the most important sites for conservation across our region. The pandemic has changed how people work, allowing more and more of us who grew up here to move home (just like I did). As climate change continues, wildfires and water scarcity send more and more people to our region with its promise of clean air and fresh water. While these changes bring wonderful opportunities for our local economy, they also threaten the health of the very same environment that myself and others have moved here in pursuit of. Our hope is that, by using high resolution mapping to better understand our landscape, we can partner with our local municipalities, other nonprofit organizations, businesses, and landowners to build and grow better. These maps will allow us to make more informed decisions on where it's safe to develop and where we should be looking to protect.



Whitney Gleason

While pursuing accreditation and launching our CRCIS initiative, we will also be continuing our LakeScapes program and our Chautauqua County Wildlife Habitat Project to provide technical assistance for landowners throughout the county as well as continuing our work with waterway restoration initiatives and work on controlling invasive species throughout the region.

As you can see, 2023 is a big and busy year for the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, and I couldn't be more excited! Thank you for your support, without which none of these projects or programs would be possible!

Bear Lake Wetland Site Acquired!



Wetlands along the Bear Lake shoreline (CWC photo)

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy has acquired 14.4 acres of wetlands including hardwood swamp and emergent marsh with 775 feet of frontage on Bear Lake from the Village of Brocton.

These wetlands are of very high ecological and flood water storage value. Per deputy director John Jablonski III, "It's really exciting to get a conservation foothold on Bear Lake, which still has about two-thirds of its shoreline in a natural and undeveloped condition. This very wet site has had little human disturbance. The swamp edge there is known to host screech owls and a wide variety of birds and amphibians as well as a healthy assemblage of plant species particular to emergent wetlands of the area. We are eager to undertake a more in-depth biological survey of this property to see what is living there. We will continue to pursue the conservation of additional shoreline wetland properties on this lake and in its watershed."



Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park

A New Recreation Destination For The Whole Family!

Our Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park has seen a flurry of activity the past three years as Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy staff, volunteers and contractors have been making significant site improvements throughout the park. Some of the projects will be wrapped up this spring, and soon it will be our most accessible preserve in the county.

The 77-acre park is located in the central part of Chautauqua County, roughly halfway between the urban centers of Jamestown and Dunkirk/Fredonia and is easily accessible from Route 60. It borders Upper Cassadaga Lake, the northernmost of the three Cassadaga Lakes, as well as a glacial kettle hole, called Mud Lake. The park protects important shoreline and floodplain habitat as well as the forested uplands that filter rain-water before it drains into these lakes, serving an important role in maintaining the health of these watersheds. Not only does the park have an important ecological function, our efforts in the past three years have created a wonderfully accessible infrastructure for visitors of most abilities that make visiting as easy as, well, a walk in the park!

When visiting the park, you will notice a beautiful new pavilion at the trail head that houses an artfully rendered trail map, created by local artist Emma Cook, which is decorated with many of the park's unique inhabitants. Trying to find most of these would make for a fun family scavenger hunt activity. The parking area adjacent to the pavilion was recently graded and improved with more gravel to accommodate 6-8 cars, but overflow parking is available on the old Route 60 spur that provides access to the park.

The pavilion is located at the start of the ¼ mile-long Mud Lake Trail, a level and easily accessible trail that provides a comfortable and engaging walking experience for visitors of most abilities. Drainage along the interpretive Mud Lake Trail has been improved and a few sections of elevated walkways will be installed soon to ensure year-round, level "stroller accessible" access. The Mud Lake Trail will be outfitted with five customized interpretive signs that address a variety of natural history topics in a family-friendly manner.

A large, wheelchair accessible wildlife viewing blind has been constructed on the shore of Mud Lake, at the end of the interpretive Mud Lake Trail. Closeable viewing windows, located at different heights to accommodate people of different sizes and abilities, provide engaging and comfortable opportunities to admire the birds and other wildlife on the lake. As an aside, a preliminary bird list for Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park and its adjacent lakes currently stands at 176 species, making it one of the most diverse birding sites in Chautauqua County! A viewing deck with benches, located adjacent to the blind, will be completed soon. It overlooks a shoreline restoration project as well as the Mud Lake wetlands. Finishing touches on the wildlife viewing blind and deck are awaiting improved weather conditions but are scheduled to be completed in early spring.

An old gravel parking area, once used to park boat trailers and trucks, is now home to unusual plant communities (and some encroaching invasives). We are in the process of removing non-native plants and augmenting the existing vegetation with additional native species on either side of the trail to create habitat for butterflies and other pollinators. Additionally, shoreline restoration efforts are also underway to improve the appearance and functionality of the damaged vegetation along the shoreline where people once launched their boats.

These and other improvements were made possible through financial support from Chautauqua County's 2% occupancy tax waterways fund and the NYS Conservation Partnership Program, administered by the Land Trust Alliance, as well as from private contributions. We hope that you will come visit this beautiful park sometime soon. If you do, bring your kids and some friends. And consider visiting often – the park is beautiful in every season!

More details on Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park and other Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy preserves can be found on our website here: <https://www.chautauquawatershed.org/preserves>.



Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park Improvements



Tree-of-Heaven: A 'Devilish' Invasive

The invasive Tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) is a very fast-growing tree native to China. Its common name is likely derived from its speedy growth, as it can reach "heaven" quickly. Tree-of-heaven thrives in very poor soils, in exposed locations and under tough growing conditions, which allowed it to become widespread in many urban areas. It exudes chemicals from its leaves, roots and bark that limit or prevent the establishment of nearby other plants, so it can easily maintain its dominance once established. These trees are also hard to kill. Cutting one down will cause dozens of sucker sprouts to emerge from the stump and its root system. If done incorrectly, attempts to remove these trees can actually have the opposite effect!

Tree-of-heaven is also the preferred host plant for the invasive Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*), originally from China and first detected in the US in 2014. This bug feeds on a variety of fruit, ornamental, and woody trees and is particularly fond of grapes and apples. While feeding, they excrete a sugary substance that covers everything beneath them, causing park benches, playground equipment, picnic tables, etc., to become covered in a sticky honeydew. It is now firmly established in eastern Pennsylvania and spreading. A 2020 study by economists in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences projects found that, if it is not contained, the economic impact of Spotted Lanternfly infestations on Pennsylvania's economy could potentially range from \$324 million to \$554 million annually and lead to the loss of 2,800 to 5,500 jobs! Imagine what will happen if this bug reaches Chautauqua County!



Mikael Catanese of ArborWild Environmental injects invasive Tree-of-Heaven stems along the Chadakoin River corridor with a targeted herbicide.

Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy was awarded American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding last fall from the City of Jamestown to tackle this growing invasive species threat. A licensed herbicide applicator from ArborWild Environmental worked with our conservation staff to chemically treat over 3,000 individual Tree-of-Heaven plants, ranging from towering trees to young shoots. Herbicides were injected into the stem of each just before the trees dropped their fall foliage. This method caused the chemicals to travel directly to the tree's root system without causing any unwanted impacts on nearby vegetation. Soon, once the weather warms up and these trees leaf out, we will know how effective this first round of treatment has been. As is always the case with hardy invasives, targeted re-treatment of the survivors will likely be needed for the next 2-3 years before these trees are entirely eradicated from the city's landscape.

Trees – Wanted Dead or Alive!



If you have a snag (a standing dead or dying tree) on your property, pause and consider the many benefits it provides before deciding to remove it.

Invasive insects and diseases are a real threat. Chautauqua County and all of western New York have been hit hard with the emerald ash borer devastating our ash trees in recent years. Not to mention our Eastern Hemlock (by the hemlock woolly adelgid beetle) and American Beech (with beech leaf disease). The need to plant and replace these infected trees with healthy, new native ones has never been greater.

But many homeowners are left wondering...what should I do with all my dead trees?

Your first thought might be to call a tree company, clean up your yard and have these dead, “ugly” trees removed. Dead or alive...tree removal can be extremely costly and has the potential of removing more than just wood. If a dead tree is in danger of falling on your home, nearby structure and/or roadway, removing it is, of course, the right choice. But what about the trees that are not posing a threat to anything or anyone?

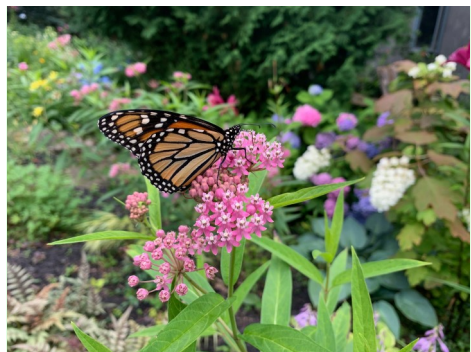
Let’s look at a dead tree from a different perspective. What would be the benefit of leaving it stand and not worrying about the way it looks? First, you would keep more money in your pocket, which is always a good thing! But allowing a dead tree to remain standing also provides an incredible habitat for our local birds, insects and wildlife. In fact, some of the most important trees on your property are the ones that are no longer alive.

Standing dead or dying trees are called snags. They are an important component of healthy forests, as well as your yard, and can be critical habitat for wildlife. In a sense, snags are very much “alive.”

Woodpeckers peck into the soft wood for insects and larvae, creating many excavated cavities. Owls and squirrels nest in these open cavities as do bluebirds, chickadees, and nuthatches. Bats roost within crevices and under the flaky loose bark. And countless species rely on their abundant insects, fungi and lichens as a food source. More than 100 Species of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians need snags for nesting, roosting, shelter, denning, and feeding, and nearly 45 species alone forage for food in them!

So long as they aren’t in a hazardous location such as near a road or building, consider leaving snags. Not only do they provide for our local wildlife, but these vertical dead pillars also create visual interest, store carbon and can actually provide more habitats for wildlife dead than alive. And, as an added bonus, they will continue to enrich your soil for decades to come. So why not save your money and leave that dead tree standing.

For more information regarding snags in your yard or on your property, or even creating and/or trimming snags for wildlife, please contact our conservationist, Carol Markham, by emailing carol@chautauquawatershed.org or calling 716-664-2166, ext. 1005.



Spring is right around the corner, and soon we will step into planning mode for our outdoor gardens and yards. Make us part of that planning and visit our website at www.chautauquawatershed.org for native plant recommendations, eco-friendly lawn care tips and alternatives, shoreline buffer information and more! You can also learn how your yard can become a Certified Backyard Wildlife Habitat! Remember too, if you need help selecting the right native tree, shrub or perennial for your property, reach out to our conservationist, Carol Markham, at 716-664-2166 x1005 or carol@chautauquawatershed.org for help!

Introducing . . .

A New Cost-Sharing Program for LakeScapes!

This program, funded by a 2023 County 2% Bed Tax grant, will offer participation in an individual cost-share program to residents in two locations within Chautauqua County and will support and guide grant recipients to create watershed-friendly, pollinator-happy habitat in their yards! This includes lake/streamside buffer gardens, rain gardens, and foundation plantings – all designed to help protect water quality in our local creeks and waterways. This year, the communities of Goose Creek and Lily Dale have been selected as our target areas to maximize the impacts of our land conservation and habitat restoration efforts in those two areas and to have the greatest benefit for Chautauqua Lake and Cassadaga Lakes.



We will be personally reaching out to these targeted communities and, through this cost-share program, a reimbursable grant of \$300 will be offered to the first 25 applicants in each of these communities who submit an entry into the program. The program will inform homeowners about watershed-friendly landscapes and encourage them to take immediate action in their yards to reduce nutrient and sediment run-off and create native wildlife habitat. Our staff will help grant recipients plan and design their projects and provide tips on plant selection, upkeep, and maintenance. Grant recipients will need to document their project, submit before and after photos, and install their landscape within the allotted grant period. Only native plants will be eligible for reimbursement, and a 25% match on all funding received is required. This hands-on, interactive grant program will be more impactful and more purposeful and guarantee more beneficial water absorbing plants and habitats are being integrated and added to communities within Chautauqua County's watersheds – taking our successful LakeScapes program to new heights!

For any questions on the program or applying, contact our conservationist Carol Markham by calling 716-664-2166 x1005 or emailing carol@chautauquawatershed.org.



CLEAN HEALTHY WATER FOR ALL

Did you know there are many ways to make a difference with the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy?

Make a donation from your IRA

Gifts to the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy can satisfy your required minimum distribution while avoiding federal income tax.

Make a grant from your Donor Advised Fund.

Make a gift of **stocks, bonds, or mutual funds** and make a difference while avoiding capital gains.

Visit www.chautauquawatershed.org/support-us to make a gift or to learn more.



CHAUTAUQUA
WATERSHED
CONSERVANCY

PO Box 45
71 East Fairmount Avenue
Lakewood, NY 14750

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
JAMESTOWN, NY
PERMIT NO. 20

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Register Now To Golf, Sail & Sponsor!



Sign up now to get out on the golf greens or put your boat in the water in support of the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy this summer! Our annual Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament is scheduled for June 26th, and our annual Chautauqua Lake Sailing Rallye is scheduled for July 17th! Both events are important fundraisers for our organization – and also a lot of fun! Register your team or crew now! Visit our website for more event details or call 716-664-2166.

(photo, left, by Jill Eklund | photo, right, by Emily Yeager)



UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|------------|---|
| March 21st | Presentation by Dr. Sherri “Sam” Mason on microplastics pollution at St. Luke’s <i>(co-sponsored)</i> |
| May 4th | Arbor Day & Wildlife Habitat Certification Celebration at SUNY JCC <i>(co-sponsored)</i> |
| June 3rd | National Trails Day event <i>(TBD)</i> |
| June 26th | Annual Charity Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Chautauqua Golf Club |
| July 17th | Annual Chautauqua Lake Sailing Rallye |
| TBD | Grand Opening for Cassadaga Lakes Nature Park |

Visit www.chautauquawatershed.org for more info!