

Open Space



No Place Like Home

Campaign to Save New England’s Wildlife

As the scrubby marshes of southern Maine disappear from the landscape, replaced by housing subdivisions and well-manicured lawns, the once-thriving New England cottontail finds itself in dire straits, searching, quite simply, for a place to live.

The New England cottontail is considered a habitat-sensitive species—one less able to adapt to changes in habitat than its more common cousin, the Eastern cottontail. The New England cottontail’s population has plummeted over the past half-century, dropping as much as 75 percent and slipping dangerously close to federal endangered status.

As European settlers arrived in New England in the 17th century and began clearing forests for farmland, downed trees created the dense, year-round cover where the rabbits flourished. Farming slowly tapered off in New England, with native cottontail populations declining as a result.

Across the United States, but particularly in the southern central and southeastern regions of the country, habitat loss is the number-one cause of wildlife imperilment, pushing species
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A footbridge spans a stream at Highland Farm, York, Maine

100 Years on the Hudson



Photographer Greg Miller’s *Panorama of the Hudson River* is a visual history lesson contained within a book. A comparative photo essay showcasing 100 years on the Hudson, its photographs illustrate the tremendous change, much of it pleasantly surprising, that has taken place on the River over the last century. Miller’s book is a testament to the comeback staged by the Hudson and those working to protect it.

The book, published by SUNY Press, is a joint project of OSI and the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art at SUNY New Paltz.

To order *Panorama of the Hudson River*, please visit www.sunypress.edu.

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Our Mission

The Open Space Institute (OSI) protects scenic, natural, and historic landscapes to ensure public enjoyment, conserve habitats, and sustain community character.

Since 1964, OSI has protected over 100,000 acres in New York State and assisted in the protection of an additional 1.7 million acres across the East Coast.



Brett Cole

Reflections on Life & Land

Dear Friends,

We're now just over a year into the economic downturn, and nonprofit agencies like the Open Space Institute are thinking creatively about conservation and making it work in the current financial climate. In this edition of *Open Space*, we examine the issue of funding from two sides, looking first at the private sector, where the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation has capitalized OSI with \$6 million to launch *Saving New England's Wildlife*, a major campaign to protect wildlife habitat in Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. Over the next two years, as OSI makes grants and loans to land trusts in those three states, the funds from the Duke Foundation will be matched five to one, affording us a tremendous opportunity to generate new streams of funding and create landscape-level conservation at the same time.

We also investigate the challenge of public funding, in particular the federal government's Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Government is forever stretched thin, and funding for conservation today is in short supply—as it is even in more prosperous times. We make the case that conservation makes good fiscal sense at all times and believe a fully funded LWCF is a solid investment in the future.

And right here at home in New York State, where OSI acquires land directly, we're hard at work on our core initiatives—farmland preservation and the expansion of spectacular, publicly accessible landscapes in the historic Hudson River Valley and beyond. Our work helps keep farmers farming, boosting local economies, and minimizing the energy spent bringing food from the farm to the dinner table. The lands we protect bring communities together around recreation and history.

We thank you, as always, for your support of our work. With it, OSI remains strong even in lean times.

Kim Elliman
CEO

Joe Martens
President

Extracting Resources

The Future of the Land and Water Conservation Fund



Waterfall in the Northern Forest, NH

left and right: Jerry and Marcy Monkman

Conserving close to 10 million acres over its 44-year history, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is the federal government's greatest tool for protecting our treasured open spaces.

Since a 1968 congressional act directed offshore oil and gas drilling fees into the fund, LWCF has historically been seen as a balancing tool, one that enables conservation efforts to keep pace with environmentally destructive activities. The “give and take” model works well in theory and has been adopted by a number of states that have implemented their own dedicated conservation funds, but the reality is LWCF has rarely been funded at its congressionally authorized level of \$900 million each year.

Instead, the LWCF coffers have reached the \$900 million mark only once since the program's inception, peaking at \$970 million in 1998. Although the current administration has pledged full fund-

ing by 2014, LWCF hasn't broken \$200 million since 2003 and received only \$113 million, one of its lowest allocations ever, two years ago.

Last year, the government brought in \$24 billion in royalties from oil and gas development on public lands. Yet the \$900 million LWCF—which would have represented only a fraction of those royalties—was far from fully funded.

One can justifiably ask, where did all the money go instead? For two decades or more, LWCF funds have routinely been diverted from land acquisition and preservation to other federal budget items, never to be repaid.

Recognizing the vital need for consistent, full LWCF funding, the Open Space Institute has created the Outdoors America Campaign, which encourages Congress to authorize a full \$900 million for open space protection. Outdoors America urges policymakers to consider

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Extracting Resources

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the benefits of preserving open space, regardless of the economic climate.

"We're making an effort, yet again, to make a modest down payment so that future Americans will have ample natural resources for their use and enjoyment," said OSI CEO Kim Elliman.

Parks and recreational amenities increase property values, which stimulate the economy. According to the Land Trust Alliance, homes situated near protected land often sell for 10 to 20 percent more than those without parks nearby.

Last November, voters spoke out in overwhelming (75 percent) favor of \$7 billion in state and local spending for land acquisition and conservation, despite the recession. Voters have traditionally supported conservation in times both good and bad. In the past two decades, voters have approved ballot measures that created \$54 billion in new funding for land acquisition.

"Investing in the Land and Water Conservation Fund is good business for the health of our communities and a sound investment for future generations," says Lesley Kane Szynal, the director of OSI's Outdoors America Campaign. "Outdoor recreation contributes \$730 billion a year to the economy, supporting one out of every 20 jobs in the country

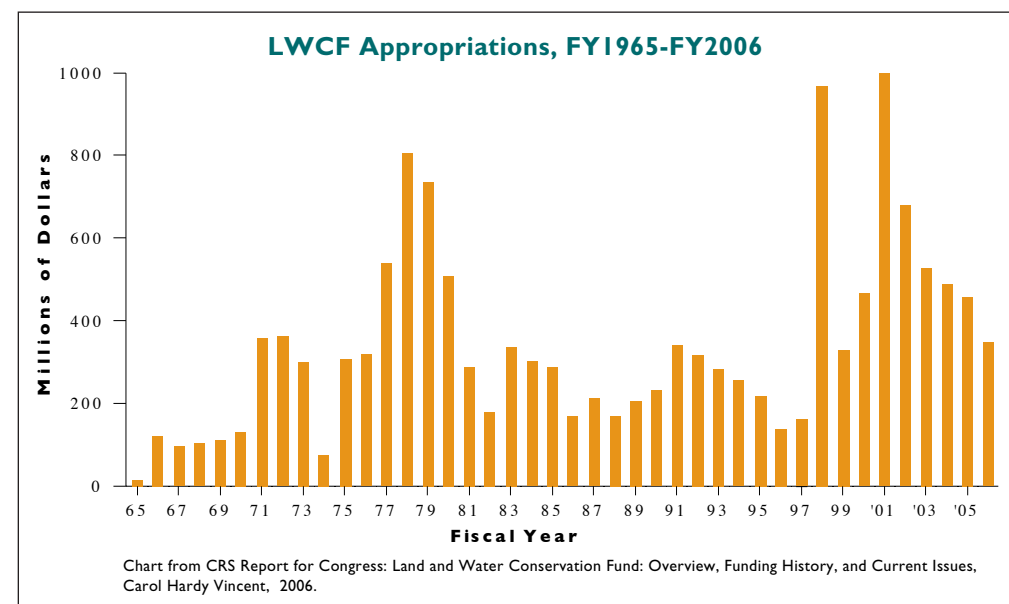
and stimulating consumer spending.

"When LWCF was envisioned in 1962, President Kennedy and Congress sought to ensure that as we depleted one national asset, we reinvested in protecting another for future generations to enjoy. When the economics of conservation make sense, as is the case today, it is an investment worth making."

Perhaps the greatest impetus for conservation—although the two issues are rarely linked by the mainstream media—is global climate change. The connection, however, is simple. More so than hybrid automobiles or energy-efficient light bulbs, standing trees fight emissions by naturally removing carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas largely responsible for climate change, from the air. Conversely, 100 to 200 tons of carbon dioxide per acre is released when forestland is converted for development. It's estimated that 20 percent of all global emissions is due to loss of forests.

Global warming, literally the upward inching of the earth's temperature, is responsible for extreme weather patterns and loss of habitat that threatens to throw off the natural balance of biodiversity on the planet. Most scientists agree that if carbon dioxide emissions are not cut dramatically, the results will be catastrophic.

Funding for the protection of land and clean water is critically important, now more than ever.



"Forests and open space are a huge component of sequestering carbon; without them, greenhouse gases would be 10 to 20 percent worse in our region."

— Dan Sosland
Executive Director
Environment Northeast

Land Matters News & Events

Reviving Community Forests

OSI's Conservation Finance Program is preparing to launch the Community Forest Fund, a new initiative designed to support the creation and expansion of community forests in northern New England. Once a fixture of local economies throughout the region, community forests have largely collapsed in New England because of global economic change, the large-scale disposition of industrial forestland, and continuing fragmentation of the land.

However, seeing a growing interest among local communities in conserving and capturing the economic, social, and ecological benefits of forestland ownership, OSI has created the Community Forest Fund to support the permanent protection of municipal or community-owned forestland by issuing loans and matching capital grants for the purchase of land and permanent conservation

easements in New England.

The fund, capitalized with \$5 million, builds upon the success of the Northern Forest Protection Fund, through which OSI helped protect 1.6 million acres in New England's 26 million-acre Northern Forest. The Community Forest Fund will initially concentrate on northern New England but remain flexible to respond to demand. It is likely to focus resources in areas where community ownership is economically feasible and advances landscape conservation strategies, and where significant planning has occurred, as in the Mahoosucs (Maine–New Hampshire), the Downeast lakes region (Maine–New Brunswick), the Appalachian corridor (Northeast Kingdom–southern Quebec), and the Quabbin to Cardigan corridor (Massachusetts–New Hampshire).

Forging Trails, Saving Farms



Katy Silberger

OSI has continued two of its signature initiatives in New York State: providing recreational opportunities and protecting working farms. In partnership with the Wallkill Valley Land Trust, OSI acquired 65 acres of the former Wallkill Valley Railroad

in September. The acquisition extended the popular Wallkill Valley Rail Trail by 11.5 miles, nearly doubling its length. The trail is used by bikers, hikers, equestrians, cross-country skiers and many others, and takes its users on a scenic tour along open farmlands, the Shawangunk Ridge and the limestone caves of the Binnewater Lakes region.

An easement on the 149-acre Domino Farm in Ulster County will ultimately be funded by a \$693,900 purchase of development rights (PDR) grant awarded by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Farmland Protection Program in December 2007. It ensures that the farm will stay in agriculture and cannot be threatened by development. The project is part of OSI's ongoing Two Valleys Campaign, which focuses protection efforts on working farms in the Rondout and Wallkill valleys, an area of scenic beauty and abundant farmland.

Changes in Ownership

Last fall, OSI's Conservation Research Program published *Forestland for Sale: Challenges and Opportunities for Conservation over the Next 10 Years*, a report that examined the dramatic recent changes in forestland ownership in the Mahoosucs region of Maine and New Hampshire and laid out a strategy for the future. Using that report's recommendations as a starting point, OSI will now, for the first time, reach out to TIMOs and REITs—the financial investment vehicles now buying and selling huge swaths of forestland—as well as financial investors and analysts to identify the extent and general location of ownerships and find opportunities for win-win partnerships to prepare for large-scale forest sales over the next 10 years.

Our intention is to inform and support efforts aimed at retaining large private forestlands as a critical part of the economy and ecology east of the grasslands. The first phase of work will involve mapping large corporate ownerships and examining the likely timing, value, and location of potential land sales.

The second phase will engage regional partners in identifying areas that are at greatest risk of conversion as well as regions of highest conservation priority. We will use the data to inform both new and ongoing efforts and to increase funding for maintaining forestland in forest use.

Read the full report at:
www.osiny.org/ForestlandForSale

“With a 40-year record of leadership in land conservation and conservation finance, OSI is well-positioned to work with partners across New England to make a difference for wildlife habitat.”

— Mark Shaffer
Program Director for the
Environment, Doris Duke
Charitable Foundation

No Place (cont. from page 1)

like the New England cottontail, as well as turtles, snakes, and many others, to the brink of endangered status, a difficult point from which to return. More than nonnative species invasion, pollution, overhunting, and disease, it is the loss of open, undeveloped space—to the tune of about 6,000 acres per day—that is pushing wildlife out of its natural environment. With nowhere to go, animals risk extirpation and ultimately extinction.

Just launched by the Open Space Institute, *Saving New England's Wildlife*, an initiative that will provide grants for the purchase of land and permanent conservation easements, aims to combat these trends. Over the next two years, the initiative, capitalized with \$6 million from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, will fund more than 15 transformative projects that accelerate the conservation of high-priority wildlife habitat in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. The grant, which OSI will spread over two phases of regranting, will be matched five to one by additional funding from public and private sources, so, all told, it could support more than \$25 million in conservation.

“The [New England] cottontail may well be the canary in the coal mine for New England,” said Peter Howell, OSI’s executive vice president. “If we can protect its habitat, it could thrive. If not, it may disappear, and with it, other wildlife that we have come to regard as common in this region.”

Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts each support conservation of species diversity. All three have areas undergoing a high rate of habitat loss due to development and fragmentation. All three, recognizing the urgent need for conservation, responded to a 2001 congressional request and developed state wildlife action plans (SWAPs) to identify areas of priority and guide protection efforts. And all three have supportive political leaders, committed agencies, experienced partner organizations, conservation-minded citizens, and

exemplary land conservation programs.

In 2001, prior to the request from Congress, only six states had completed biodiversity plans—the prototype for today’s more detailed SWAPs. Massachusetts was one of the six; New Hampshire was working on its plan at the time. Eight years later, these two states’ plans are considered some of the most thorough in the country, creating a blueprint for both government agencies and nonprofits to follow in protecting vulnerable habitat land.

“The primary value of these plans is that they’ve dramatically elevated the level of interest among federal agencies and the conservation community in coordinating our efforts,” says Sara Vickerman, the senior director of biodiversity partnerships at Defenders of Wildlife, a conservation organization geared toward wildlife issues. “Without these plans, we would be seeing considerably less attention being paid to the conservation needs of the vast majority of species that are out there.”

Vickerman believes that state wildlife action plans should result in sustained, coordinated protection efforts that will be more successful than the fragmented habitat conservation programs introduced on the federal and local levels in recent years.

“These plans can and do facilitate more strategic investment on the part of a variety of partners,” she said.

OSI’s first success under *Saving New England's Wildlife* is the protection of Highland Farm in York, Maine, which links the unfragmented forested area around Mount Agamenticus to conservation lands along the York River. Strengthened by an \$118,000 grant from the Open Space Conservancy, OSI’s land acquisition affiliate, the York Land Trust preserved 151 acres of habitat for seven threatened and endangered species, including restoration sites for the New England cottontail. The project also safeguards drinking water for the residents of three nearby towns and provides recreational and educational opportunities and links to a 40-mile trail system around Mount Agamenticus.

Mark McCollough

Asking the Right Questions

Tom Strickland and Kim Elliman

Led by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, the U.S. Department of the Interior is the nation’s principal conservation agency, providing access to our natural and cultural heritage and protecting America’s treasures for future generations. In his capacity as Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, Thomas L. Strickland oversees and coordinates policy decisions for the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He is also the chief of staff to Secretary Salazar, with whom he was a founder and board member of Great Outdoors Colorado, a statewide agency created in 1992 which invests lottery funds in parks and open space.

OSI CEO Kim Elliman spoke recently with Assistant Secretary Strickland about full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, protecting land in a lean economic climate, and how conservation can abate climate change.

OSI: How do you see us getting to full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund by 2014?

TS: The Secretary of the Interior has been very clear and direct about what he believes has been a 45-year broken promise with respect to the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The commitment to the American people was that some portion of the value of the resources that were being extracted by one generation would be saved and put back into the land for the benefit of future generations. And almost in every year in the succeeding 45 years that has not been honored. LWCF has only been funded at its full authorization level once because Congress has not appropriated the dollars. So, it has been a broken promise and it’s one that the Secretary is doing everything he can to correct for the American people. We have strong support in Congress, and we are hopeful to achieve full funding of LWCF by 2014, if not sooner. And we will need the support of allies like the Open Space Institute and others to make this happen.

Last year the U.S. received approximately \$24 billion in royalties from lands managed by the Department of the Interior for oil and gas development on public lands. So, had the will

been there and the nexus been drawn more tightly in the original legislation, it would have been easy for Congress to fully fund LWCF at its \$900 million per year authorization level. It’s a moral obligation to the Secretary, as well as an extraordinarily effective strategy to preserve and protect the most valuable landscapes, at the federal, state and local levels.

OSI: These are tough economic times, as you know, and basically every agency of government below the federal government is cutting back on land acquisition because of constrained municipal and state budgets. They may think land acquisition is an expense that they can probably defer. Do you see any way in your efforts through LWCF or other initiatives that you can help promote what has been a wonderful 15-year trend line for more municipal and state bonding and dedicated funding for land acquisition?

TS: I would challenge OSI, as well as our department and all those that are interested in these issues, to be more focused and strategic about getting the message out about the economic importance and the economic generating capacity of our landscapes and our great outdoors. The outdoor industry association has estimated that outdoor recreation contributes \$730 billion annually to the economy. When you look at bird watching, sporting activities, hunting and fishing, as well as other activities, it’s an enormously important part of our economy. Let’s look at Colorado, for example. One of our strongest selling points for business in Colorado, and for attracting a talented work force, is the quality of life in Colorado, and Great Outdoors Colorado has probably done more to benefit the quality of life in Colorado than anything else in the last 17 years. By doing that it has made the experience of living in Colorado and the competitive stature of Colorado that much stronger, in terms of having clean air, clean water, protecting our special places, having lots of open space and large, intact ecosystems. The right question is not, ‘Can we afford to preserve more land?’ The right question is, ‘Can we afford not to preserve more land?’



*Thomas L. Strickland
Assistant Secretary for Fish and
Wildlife and Parks*

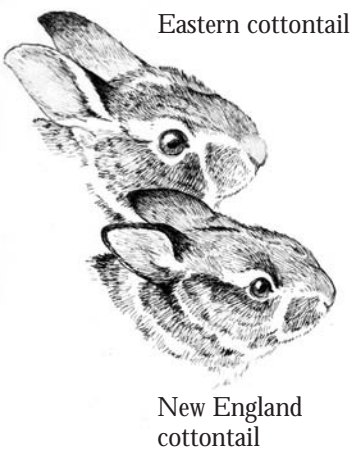
More on www.osiny.org

Complete interview with Kim Elliman & Thomas Strickland
www.osiny.org/InterviewStrickland

Three-part series on making
The Panorama of the Hudson
www.osiny.org/Panorama

Read OSI report:
Forestland For Sale
www.osiny.org/ForestlandForSale

More Rail Trail photos and map:
www.osiny.org/RailTrail



Eastern cottontail

New England
cottontail