



New Canaan  
Land Trust

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# 2017-2018 ANNUAL REPORT

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# *A letter* FROM OUR LEADERS

*Dear Members and Friends,*

Just over 50 years ago, a small group of conservationists had a vision that would forever preserve the scenic landscape of New Canaan. In 1967, Jack Gunther, Elise Lapham, and Mary Lib-Katzenbach came together to create a land trust that would permanently protect open space in New Canaan. These visionaries foresaw the effects that uncontrolled development could have on our community and wanted to ensure that New Canaan maintained its rural charm long after they were gone. They also understood that protecting land would create sanctuaries for wildlife to thrive and preserves where the community could reconnect with the natural environment.

With your support, we are able to continue this conservation legacy by preserving new parcels of open space, by stewarding our preserves, and by engaging our community in our work.

As you read through the pages of this report, you will see exactly what your generous contributions have allowed us to accomplish. Your support enabled us to immerse a group of six local high school students in sustainable land management projects during our Summer Steward Internship Program and opened their eyes to the natural wonders that exist beyond the edges of a screen. Your support provided our community with new recreational opportunities along the 2.5-mile GreenLink Trail that increased access to three Land Trust preserves, the Nature Center, and Irwin park. Your support helped permanently protect the 6.4-acres of pristine woodlands, wetlands, and pond habitats at the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve and enabled us to cultivate a wildflower meadow where a house once stood.

Most importantly, however, your support sends a message that you care about the environment and our community. Whether you donated money or volunteered time to help maintain trails, to restore habitat for wildlife, to increase programming for our children, or to protect additional open space, your contributions enable us to make New Canaan a better place for everyone.

We are so proud of what you helped us accomplish this year and thank you for believing in the work that we do at the New Canaan Land Trust.

*Sincerely,*



Art Berry, President



Aaron Lefland, Executive Director

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## Meet our Executive Director AARON LEFLAND

Aaron Lefland joined the New Canaan Land Trust in June of 2017 after completing his Masters at the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. Aaron's academic focus on sustainable management coupled with his previous experience managing a community forestry program in suburban Boston prepared him well for the challenge of managing NCLT's diverse preserves. With parcels from less than an acre to nearly fifty acres, and containing a variety of habitats including meadows, wetlands, forests, and ponds, there is no one-size-fits-all approach for stewarding these properties.

Aaron has made it a priority to increase access to the Land Trust's preserves and engage members of the community in land conservation and stewardship projects. He believes that creating a strong connection between people and their natural surroundings is one of the best ways to promote a land conservation ethic.

When not at the office, Aaron can often be found walking the Land Trust trails with his dog, Penny. He enjoys meeting new people and learning more about why they are proud supporters of the New Canaan Land Trust.

## Mission STATEMENT

The mission of the New Canaan Land Trust is to preserve and protect open space in the Town of New Canaan. Preservation of open space benefits our community by adding natural sanctuaries for the residents, preserving precious natural wildlife habitats, and the scenic, rural character of New Canaan for future generations.



### Donor SPOTLIGHT



**SUSAN BERGEN** became an avid supporter when the Land Trust began to open up its largest preserves for public use. Having lived in CA and NJ near thousands

of acres of protected land, she loves access to open space and now frequently hikes on Land Trust preserves. With a particular interest in native plants, pollinators and birds, she also has assisted with planting plans for the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve and given wildflower tours of the Watson-Symington Preserve for the Summer Stewardship Program. "I support the New Canaan Land Trust for two important reasons – I really believe in preserving the habitats in which we reside, and the Land Trust properties provide a great opportunity for people to observe nature and learn about the land in which they live."

*Photos courtesy of Susan Bergen, Connor DeMayo, Kent Findlay, Valerie Stryker, and the New Canaan Land Trust Board and Staff.*

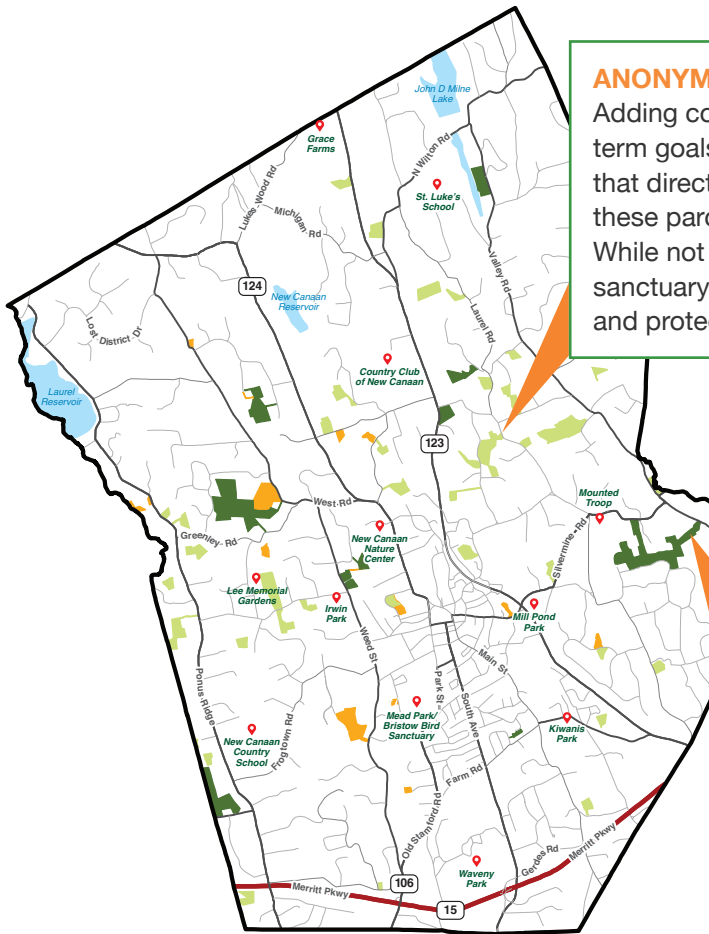


# The Year IN REVIEW



## PROTECTING OPEN SPACE

With almost 400 acres, the NCLT is New Canaan's largest holder of permanently protected open space. Last year, we added to this legacy by protecting both the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve and a second preserve, donated anonymously.



Open Closed Easements Points of Interest

### ANONYMOUS ADDITION TO ROSEBROOK AUDUBON PRESERVE

Adding connected parcels to existing preserves has been one of our long-term goals. In 2017, we received a generous donation of 2.2 acres of land that directly borders the former Audubon land on Rosebrook Road. Together, these parcels protect 15 acres of contiguous forest and wetland habitat. While not intended for public visitation, the land will remain as a wildlife sanctuary in perpetuity, maintaining the rural character of the neighborhood and protecting water quality for the residents using well systems.

### SILVERMINE-FOWLER PRESERVE

Nearly three years in the making, the acquisition of the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve was one of our greatest accomplishments this past year. In partnership with the Trust for Public Land, we completed a \$1,300,000 capital campaign, resulting in the permanent protection of 6.4 acres of woodlands and wetlands, as well as the entirety of Still Pond. Thanks to the support of our members, the New Canaan Community Foundation, the Town of New Canaan, the State of Connecticut, and numerous family foundations, the property has been saved from development and forever will provide our community with a natural place to recreate and escape the stresses of daily life. In addition, the Silvermine neighborhood gains access to the adjoining 40-acres of land already protected by the Land Trust.

## INVESTIGATING THE STATE OF NEW CANAAN'S OPEN SPACE

In the winter of 2017, we partnered with New Canaan's Conservation Commission and students from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies to conduct a study on existing and potential open space in our community. Our study found that the protected open space in New Canaan, comprised of town parks, Land Trust preserves, and water company property, totals approximately 9% of the town's area. With nearly 4% of the town remaining as undeveloped open space, it may be possible for New Canaan to reach the State of Connecticut's goal of 11% protected open space through a combination of acquisitions and increased conservation restrictions. The study also emphasized the need for collaboration with the Town, Land Trust, and our community.

## OPEN SPACE BY THE NUMBERS

**8.5 ACRES**

permanently protected in  
2017/18 fiscal year

**341 ACRES**

owned by the  
New Canaan Land Trust

**50 ACRES**

of conservation easements held  
by the New Canaan Land Trust

**70 PARCELS**

managed by the  
New Canaan Land Trust



# The Year IN REVIEW



## STEWARDING THE LAND

Our job is not done when we acquire a parcel of land. In fact, land stewardship encompasses most of our ongoing work, including building and maintaining our trail systems, mowing our meadows, removing invasive species, restoring historic stone walls, conducting annual monitoring visits for all of our properties and easements, and more.

## THE GREENLINK TRAIL

Opening the GreenLink Trail on Earth Day was a highlight in 2018! This new walking trail traverses three Land Trust properties and easements via a series of raised walkways and bridges, connecting Irwin Park to the New Canaan Nature Center. The GreenLink completes a larger 2.5-mile loop that offers walkers and runners a scenic and safe trail to navigate from downtown New Canaan through Irwin Park, across the GreenLink to the New Canaan Nature Center, and back to town. Over five years in the making, this project was made possible by grants from the New Canaan Community Foundation and the Green Links Organization, donations from neighbors of the trail, and support from many town commissions and departments. We are thrilled to see the active use of our newest trail.

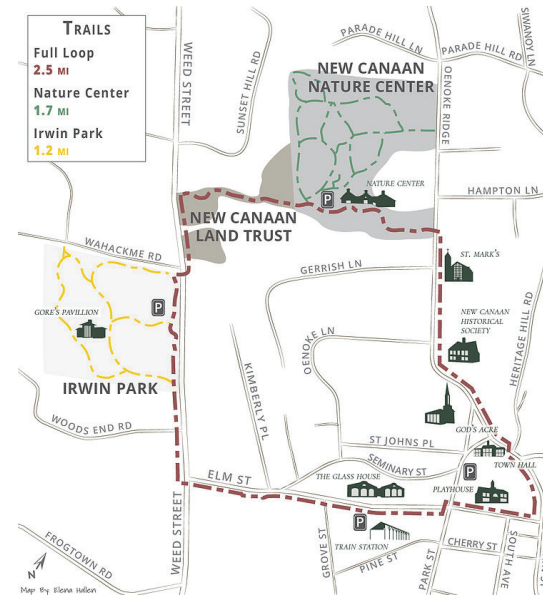
## HABITAT RESTORATION

With the different ecosystems found across our preserves, there is much work to be done to foster healthy habitats for native flora and fauna. Our stewardship includes:

- Following an ecologically-based mowing regimen at our meadows that promotes the establishment of native flowers and grasses, while minimizing disturbances to the birds, bees, and mammals;
- Removing invasive species from our woodlands while planting native species in their stead;
- Reducing soil erosion on our trails, thus protecting downhill wetlands; and
- Installing birdhouses and bat boxes designed specifically for native species with declining populations.

## STONE WALL RESTORATION

In addition to the natural resources, our preserves are important historic and cultural resources. One of the most evident: the stone walls that crisscross many of our preserves and remind us of New Canaan's agrarian history. This year, local stonemason Greg Faillaci applied his craft to restore multiple sections of historic stone walls, including a continuation of the Colhoun Preserve's stone wall on Davenport Ridge Road – a stone wall recognized in 2016 with the President's Preservation Award by the New Canaan Preservation Alliance.



## LAND STEWARDSHIP BY THE NUMBERS

**5.5 MILES**

of trail maintained by the  
New Canaan Land Trust

**150 FEET**

of newly restored  
stone wall

**30 MILES**

of property boundaries  
inspected annually

**6 ACRES**

of meadow managed for  
birds, pollinating insects,  
and native wildflowers

**3 NEW**

informational kiosks  
installed at major  
trailheads





## ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

We believe that the land protected by the New Canaan Land Trust is an invaluable resource for our community. Whether for recreation, education, birding, community service, hobbies, or something completely different, we are always looking for ways to bring more people out to our preserves and to engage them in land conservation and stewardship.

### SUMMER STEWARD INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

One of our premier programs, the Summer Steward Internship, marked its fourth year in 2017. The program engaged six local high schoolers for five weeks in land conservation and stewardship, along with education and research when possible. The program's success fueled a doubling in the enrollment and the hiring of a dedicated program coordinator in 2018.

### COMMUNITY EVENTS



Four rehabilitated wildlife releases with Wildlife in Crisis, throughout the year



GreenLink Opening on Earth Day, April 2018



50th Annual Membership Meeting, November 2017



Silvermine-Fowler Preserve Opening, October 2017



*“We feel the need to support NCLT so that they can continue preserving varied spaces for all to enjoy. NCLT’s stewardship of these lands brings the opportunity to volunteer time caring for the land or to contribute dollars for items needed for maintenance, acquisitions, supplies.” –Dianne Colgan*

### EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS

**Bobby Carpenter** built a series of raised walkways across wetlands at the Colhoun Preserve, giving visitors easier access to our 1-mile trail loop.

**Peter Dantini** built a gate and parking area at the entrance to the Hick’s Meadow, along Silvermine Road, to be opened soon.

**Dylan Kortman** installed water diversion bars along a steep section of trail at the Watson-Symington Preserve, reducing soil erosion caused by rainfall.

**Gus Larson** transformed an old flower bed at the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve into a council ring seating area, used during our opening of the preserve.

**Matthew Peiser** built two trailhead message boards and installed signs along the trails at the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve, and the adjacent Kelly Upland Preserve.

**Andrew Weitz** built a bridge and raised walkway across wetlands at the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve, connecting the preserve to our adjacent 40 acres of trailed woodlands.







## Developing Partnerships IN OUR COMMUNITY

**Service League of Boys** For years, we have partnered with the SLOBs to complete numerous land stewardship projects. This year, over two dozen volunteers helped remove invasive species, repair stone walls, and clear trails.

**Wildlife in Crisis** Partnering with Wildlife in Crisis allows us to give rehabilitated animals a second chance at life. This year alone, we reintroduced 2 red-tailed hawks, 5 bluebirds, 4 flying squirrels, an American kestrel, and a screech owl back into nature on Land Trust properties.

**New Canaan Bee Foundation** For the second year, the New Canaan Bee Foundation has partnered with us to place hives of native honeybees at the Livingston Higley Meadow. The foundation, comprised of New Canaan High School students, tends to the bees throughout the summer, while the bees help to pollinate the meadow's native flowers.

**STAR Inc.** This spring, we worked with STAR Inc. to bring individuals with developmental disabilities to our preserves where they could learn about nature and help with habitat restoration projects.

**Other Partner Organizations** Grace Farms, Highstead, Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership, New Canaan Beautification League, New Canaan Community Foundation, New Canaan Garden Club, NCHS Friends of the Earth Club, New Canaan Nature Center, New Canaan Parents 4 Kids, and Planet New Canaan.

### **New Canaan High School Internship Program**

We were fortunate to work with three NCHS interns during the month of June. Our interns learned about the Land Trust while helping with projects ranging from marketing and outreach to land stewardship.







## Land Trust ACCREDITATION

Undergoing the process of accreditation allowed us to display our organization's great work, while also identifying areas for improvement and adopting best practices to become a stronger, more sustainable land trust.



## Awaiting Accreditation AN ORGANIZATIONAL MILESTONE

We are excited to announce that, after nearly three years of preparation, we have submitted our application for accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance. The accreditation program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places in perpetuity.

During this process, we:



Created and adopted new policies related to governance, land acquisitions, easement monitoring, financial control, record keeping, and more;



Established an annual monitoring procedure for all properties and easements;



Ensured the financial well-being of our organization by designating reserve funds for stewardship and legal defense;



Developed management plans for all of our properties, based on the conservation values of each specific site.

While we are waiting for the accreditation commission's decision, we are confident that our organization is operating in line with the Standards and Practices developed by the Land Trust Alliance, and that we demonstrate ethical conduct, sound finances, responsible governance, and lasting stewardship.



### Donor SPOTLIGHT

**CHARLIE WOODMAN** Gifts come in all shapes and sizes. Precious are the many hours and talents that Charlie Woodman and his dad, Dave, have shared with the New Canaan Land Trust over the last

several years. With his own landscaping business Charlie brought not only the energy of youth, but also knowledge and expertise to trail maintenance and stonewall work at the Silvermine-Fowler and Colhoun properties. As a high-school senior, he served as the NCLT liaison to the SLOBs, recruiting others to work on land stewardship. Charlie's dedication to community service earned him recognition as the SLOB with the most volunteer hours throughout his four years of high-school, for which he received a \$100 monetary award that he twice donated to the Land Trust. "I developed a really good working relationship with some Board members of the Land Trust and I know that they need money reinvested into the properties we worked on."

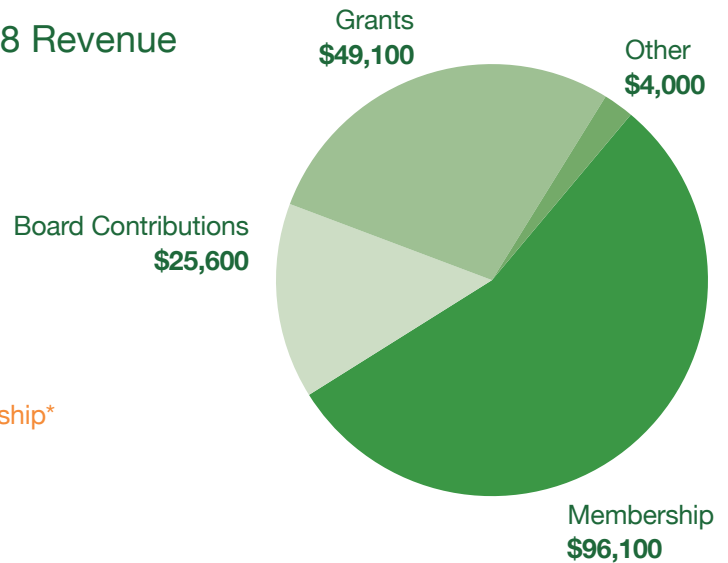


# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

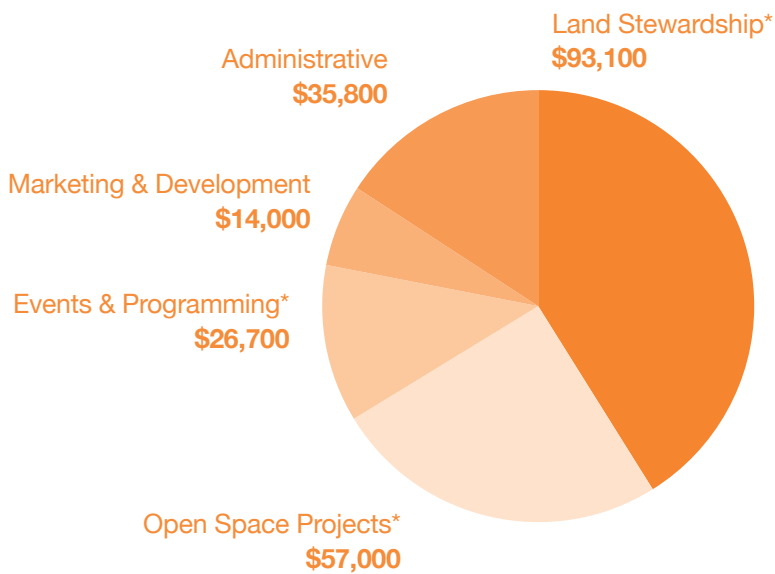
(June 1, 2017 – May 31, 2018)



## FY 2017-2018 Revenue \$174,800

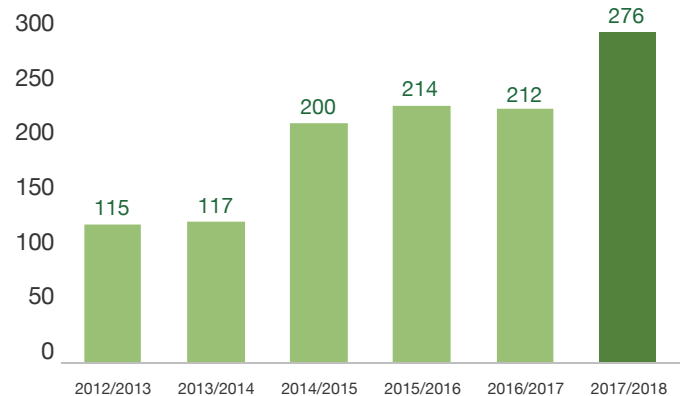


## FY 2017-2018 Expenses\* \$226,400



\* \$60,000 in expenses were associated with projects and programming related to the Silvermine-Fowler Preserve acquisition. Funds for these projects were raised in the previous fiscal year.

## HOUSEHOLD MEMBERSHIPS



Revenue and expenses are unaudited and rounded to the nearest hundred



*I support the Land Trust because I value the “green” of New Canaan. Overdevelopment destroys this and the habitat for wildlife that is under great pressure due to humans. In addition, having these natural areas close to home, to walk through and enjoy, is a gift. –Nancy Lothrop*



*I’ve been a long-time supporter, and more significantly since the Land Trust has moved to rehabilitate, maintain and open up their properties for the enjoyment of the entire New Canaan community! –Bob Seelert*



# DONOR AND SPONSOR RECOGNITION

## 2017/2018 MEMBERS

### Jack Gunther Visionaries (\$10,000 +)

Harlan and Lois Anderson Family Foundation  
Jim and Dede Bartlett  
The Jeniam Foundation

### Conservationists (\$5,000 +)

Art and Ellie Berry  
John and Melissa Engel III  
Ronald and Christie Ulrich

### Stewards (\$2,500 +)

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John and Priscilla Woyke  
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*Names reflect cumulative gifts between June 1, 2017 and May 31, 2018. We apologize if we inadvertently misspelled or omitted your name, and hope that you will reach out to us so that may correct our records.*



Lazlo Papp  
 Mark and Cynthia Peiser  
 Stephen and Christine Pinney  
 Dan and Penny Rashin  
 Walter Reilly  
 Penny Ross  
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 Amy Silberfein  
 Douglas and Deborah Simpson  
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#### Other Supporters

Howard and Marjorie Aronson  
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 State of CT Department of Energy  
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 Nancy Watson-Symington  
 George and Caroline Wheelright

#### EASEMENT GRANTORS

Anonymous (x2)  
 Chris Bargas  
 Russ Bradley  
 Bertha "Bunny" Betts  
 Canaan Close Condominium  
 Association  
 George and La Jean Clark  
 Francis D'Addario  
 Ida Davidoff  
 Robin and Margaret Fryer  
 Clara Locke Gilbert  
 William and Carolyn Halsey  
 Craig and Susan Hoelzer  
 Elizabeth (Buffie) E. Kingsley  
 Robert and Ruth Layton  
 Ogden Ludlow  
 Ann Watson-Symington

*Interested in donating land to the New Canaan Land Trust? Please contact us for more information,  
 including possible tax benefits for New Canaan homeowners.*





## CONNECT WITH US



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New Canaan  
Land Trust

[www.NewCanaanLandTrust.org](http://www.NewCanaanLandTrust.org)

[Info@NewCanaanLandTrust.org](mailto:Info@NewCanaanLandTrust.org)

P.O. Box 425  
New Canaan, CT 06840

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**JOIN US ON WEDNESDAY,  
NOVEMBER 14, 2018 FROM 6 TO 8PM  
IN ST. MARK'S MORRILL HALL**

Our annual meeting is an excellent way to learn more about the New Canaan Land Trust and meet like-minded members of your community. In addition to updates from our President, Treasurer, and Executive Director, the evening will feature our guest speaker, Kevin Case, the Northeast Director of the Land Trust Alliance. We hope to see you there!



**SIGN UP**  
for our newsletter  
on our website!

