



INSPIRE



Clockwise from left: Rob's Trail II in Springwater, N.Y. © DEMIAN SPINDLER; Howard Spindler at Hemlock Lake © DEMIAN SPINDLER; Trail construction © MAT LEVINE/TNC.



A Finger Lakes Legacy

Lead gift from the Spindler Family Foundation launches lake-to-lake trail

The Spindler family—three siblings from Rochester, N.Y., along with their cousins and children—share an enthusiasm for the Finger Lakes and for The Nature Conservancy. “All of us directors of the family foundation believe in the American tradition of conservation,” says Howard Spindler, secretary. “We feel it’s something vital that needs to continue—the chance to get out and breathe in nature.”

Thanks to Howard and his family people will soon get to experience Hemlock and Canadice Lakes like never before. Their gift to the Conservancy’s “Rob’s Trail II” project will help us to connect a trail on Conservancy-owned land between Hemlock and Canadice Lakes with an existing but abandoned trail on state lands along the east shoreline of Hemlock Lake. At key points along the route, signs will showcase the area’s natural communities, geologic features, history and importance to people.

The project was a natural fit for the Spindlers who as kids enjoyed going to camp and spending time at a cottage in the hills. “As we got older, we became stewards of the land and got to be voices for nature through the Conservancy,” says Howard, who is a pianist and accompanist on the faculty of the Eastman Community Music School.

“I’ve hiked Rob’s Trail for years and came to admire and appreciate the generosity and vision of Rob van der Stricht, who founded the original trail. Just this spring, my son Demian and I hiked the area where the trail will be,

scrambling down to the water’s edge. It was amazing. It just made a lot of sense to us to spearhead the trail’s extension.”

Jan Miller, The Nature Conservancy’s senior philanthropy officer in Central and Western New York, expressed the chapter’s gratitude for this gift. “We are extremely grateful to the Spindler Family for their generosity and their eagerness to help make the dream of the lake-to-lake trail a reality. We’re confident that their lead gift will inspire others to provide support and help us break ground this spring.”

Howard hopes people will also realize what a gift they have in the Finger Lakes. “I would encourage people to get out and hike and paddle these lakes and experience what it is to have waters without pollution, without jet-skis and without development.”

EXPLORE »

See photos and maps of the Rob’s Trail II project at nature.org/cwny.

Honeoye Lake Revitalized

Honeoye Lake water quality project begins

Unlike states in the American Southwest, one of the things that New Yorkers can count on is an abundant supply of fresh water. Or can we? Consider this: Almost a half-million people on the shores of Lake Erie—one of the world’s greatest freshwater resources—could not drink the water from their faucets this summer because it was unsafe. Could a toxic algae bloom like the one that left people without tap water in Toledo, Ohio, happen in the Finger Lakes?

“We need to be concerned about blue-green algae in all our water bodies, including the Finger Lakes,” says Jim Howe. “However, we need to remember that blue-green algae blooms are just a symptom. The real issue is that we’re allowing too many nutrients—especially phosphorus—to enter our rivers and lakes.” Of all the Finger Lakes, Honeoye is particularly at risk. In 2013, a toxic bloom in Honeoye closed beaches for most of the summer.

Now, a Conservancy water quality project in Honeoye Lake has identified target tributaries where stream restoration can help remove nutrients and sediment before they reach Honeoye Lake, the Genesee River and Lake Ontario.

“When phosphorus increases by even a small amount, it can cause accelerated plant growth, algae blooms, low dissolved oxygen and the death of certain fish, invertebrates and other aquatic animals,” explains Stevie Adams, The Nature Conservancy’s freshwater practitioner in Central and Western New York.

In 2013, the Conservancy worked with the Honeoye Lake Watershed Task Force to identify the parts of the watershed that are the highest contributors of sediment and nutrients. Honeoye Inlet was identified as the greatest contributor. High levels of phosphorus create conditions ripe for the

growth of blue-green algae. The situation is further exacerbated by climate change, which has increased water temperatures and led to more violent storms that flush nutrients off of steep hillsides and into streams leading to the lake.

To address this threat, the Conservancy and partners will work to restore the portion of the Inlet that runs through state land—the Honeoye Inlet Wildlife Management Area.

“By restoring wetlands and meanders, we will reconnect the Inlet to its floodplain, which will naturally filter out nutrients and sediments from the water and keep them from entering Honeoye Lake,” Adams says. “We’ll ensure the stream flows produced by storms can spread out, slow down and drop the sediment and nutrients they carry before reaching the lake.”

But members of the community will have a role to play, too, adds Adams: “In parts of the watershed, steep valleys and geology present a challenge when it comes to treating runoff before it reaches the lake. In those places, the best solutions will be community-based actions that everyone can take—such as careful fertilizer and pesticide management and installing rain gardens. When it comes to water quality, we’ll need everyone’s involvement to fix the problem.”

HOW YOU CAN HELP »

The Honeoye Restoration Project hopes to secure a \$100,000 grant from the New York State Green Innovation Grant Program to fund the design and permitting phase. Now, the Conservancy must raise funds for the implementation phase. To help, contact Jan Miller at jan_miller@tnc.org or (585) 546-8030 x28.

Honeoye Lake © MAT LEVINE, TNC WITH AERIAL SUPPORT FROM LIGHTHAWK