



Jim LaParante

OBI's Longest Serving Board Member Set to Retire

Urban & Sally Hirshey at their home in Cape Vincent, overlooking scenic Fuller Bay.

Urban & Sally Hirshey Make Major Gift and Leave Legacy of Volunteer Spirit

OBI's longest serving board member, Sally Hirshey, is known for her dedication to OBI as well as more than 20 years as a teacher at Carthage Central School and at Jefferson Community College.

But it turns out that our land trust has actually taught this long-time teacher a thing or two – the importance of land conservation and how non-profit land trusts can play a vital role.

“When I first heard about OBI, I really hadn't put a lot

of thought into conservation,” recalls Sally, a Cape Vincent resident who joined OBI in the late 1990s. “Joining this land trust has really taught me about how important easements and donating land to land trusts can be when it comes to preserving land for the future.”

Sally only planned to serve for a couple of years when she initially began serving on the Board of Directors. This year marks her 19th year with OBI, making her the longest-ever serving board member of the all-volunteer board of directors.

Generous Gift of \$10,000 from Hirscheys Hopes to Inspire Support for OBI

Sally's husband, Urban, joined the OBI Board of Directors in 2016. For many years, the Hirscheys have been among OBI's top annual donors, and more than once hosted the OBI annual picnic fundraiser. This spring, the couple relocates to New Jersey to be closer to their children. Their parting gift to OBI was \$10,000 in matching funds that helped OBI win a \$15,000 grant from the Land Trust Alliance in April 2018.

“Our commitment will hopefully get others to think about supporting OBI also,” said Urban.

The conservation and stewardship monies totaling \$25,000 will fund education projects, as well as launch marketing and outreach programs. This will include field trips, presentations and events that will increase OBI's visibility and awareness of our land trust's conservation mission.

The rare and remarkable loyalty shown by the Hirscheys is very much appreciated by the OBI Board of Directors.

WHAT IS OBI? OUTREACH CAMPAIGN AIMS TO INFORM ABOUT OUR LOCAL LAND TRUST

If you are reading this newsletter, then you already know about OBI and our mission. But plenty of people have yet to learn about our local land trust. It's time to change that in 2018.

A \$25,000 outreach and education program aims to educate about OBI: who we are, what we do and how we protect rare habitats and the local lands we love.

This exciting first-ever program for our non-profit land trust is funded by a combination of private and public funds. In April, OBI received \$15,000 grant from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program. The grant was generously matched by a \$10,000 private donation from longtime OBI supporters Urban and Sally Hirshey.

Starting in June, our efforts will include various activities and events (featured on the backside of this newsletter), ranging from birding field trips, walkabouts in our 178-acre wildlife preserve, guided tours through the Chaumont Barrens, and educational sessions to learn about OBI and conservation options for landowners. Events/activities planned after newsletter publication will be announced on our website and Facebook page.

Mailings within our 8-town service area will aim to increase OBI's name recognition and – most importantly – could get people thinking about how they can get involved with land protection along Jefferson County's shoreline communities.

Part of the outreach effort will include celebration, as OBI marks its 25th anniversary this summer with a fundraiser on August 6 at the Crescent Yacht Club, Chaumont. The event raises money to cover OBI's operating expenses and also educates people about our land trust.



Lee Elsworth



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Julie K. Covey, **Executive Director** 2014-June 2018
 Gerry Smith, **Senior Consultant**

Join Us! The non-for-profit OBI Land Trust relies on contributions from the public and grants from foundations to fund our projects in land conservation.

Please send your contributions to:
P.O. Box 117, Chaumont, NY 13622.

A remittance envelope is conveniently included in this newsletter. Friendship levels range from \$100 Protector of the Land to \$1500 Friend of the Land, which includes a special edition decoy. Levels all include free tickets to the annual fundraiser, depending on friendship level. **We need and appreciate support of OBI!**

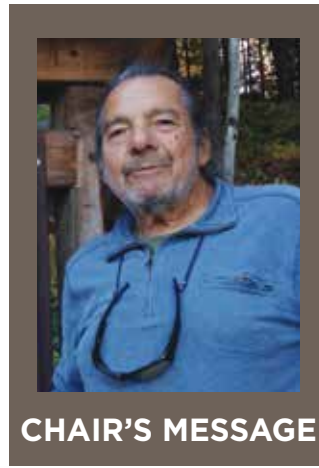


Greetings! 2018 will be a **BIG** year for **OBI!**

First of all, it is our 25th anniversary, so we will be celebrating at our August Annual Cookout!

Also, we have received an exciting grant that will be used for Community Outreach. So you will be seeing and hearing more about **OBI** this year. We will be implementing a marketing plan- a first for **OBI!** Hopefully, this will result in more community support as people get to know more about what we do, our mission, and how **YOU** can help and get involved.

The first order of business for 2018 was to update our image and identity. To achieve that, our Board defined the organization, and then our Marketing Committee worked with a graphic designer to develop our new logo (introduced in this newsletter). But before that,



CHAIR'S MESSAGE

we kinda had to decide who we were! We have had several names out there- Ontario Bays initiative (**OBI**), Eastern Lake Ontario Conservancy (**ELOC**), but you all know us as "**OBI**"!—so **OBI** it is! We are....**OBI-A Land Trust!** (Our official and legal name remains Ontario Bays Initiative, Inc.)

Our new logo and its visual aspects help to tell the story of **OBI**. The font is contemporary and conveys strength. The wildlife is representative of the habitats that are protected through **OBI's** conservation efforts. The Northern harrier exists in the wetlands and grasslands, while the Blanding's turtle exists in the uplands and wetlands. A symbiosis of wildlife and environment!

Jim LaPlante
OBI Board Chairman

Vicki Hanley Joins OBI



Her education and life-long love of nature made Vicki Hanley a perfect fit for **OBI**. The Watertown resident was unanimously elected to the **OBI** Board of Directors in January 2018. Vicki also recently joined the **OBI** marketing committee.

"My parents and their friends had a love of the outdoors and we spent many days hiking and fishing," she recalls of her summers spent in Inlet, located in the western Adirondacks. Vicki has a degree in Wildlife Biology Management from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse. She also worked nearly 30 years in finance, including the Bank of New York Mellon and NYNEX/Bell Atlantic Yellow Pages. Recent retirement is allowing her to

spend more time fishing, hiking and helping **OBI** with its local conservation mission.

Vicki also enjoys traveling and gardening and working part-time at a local golf course.

Farewell, Julie Covey
OBI's First Executive Director Steps Down

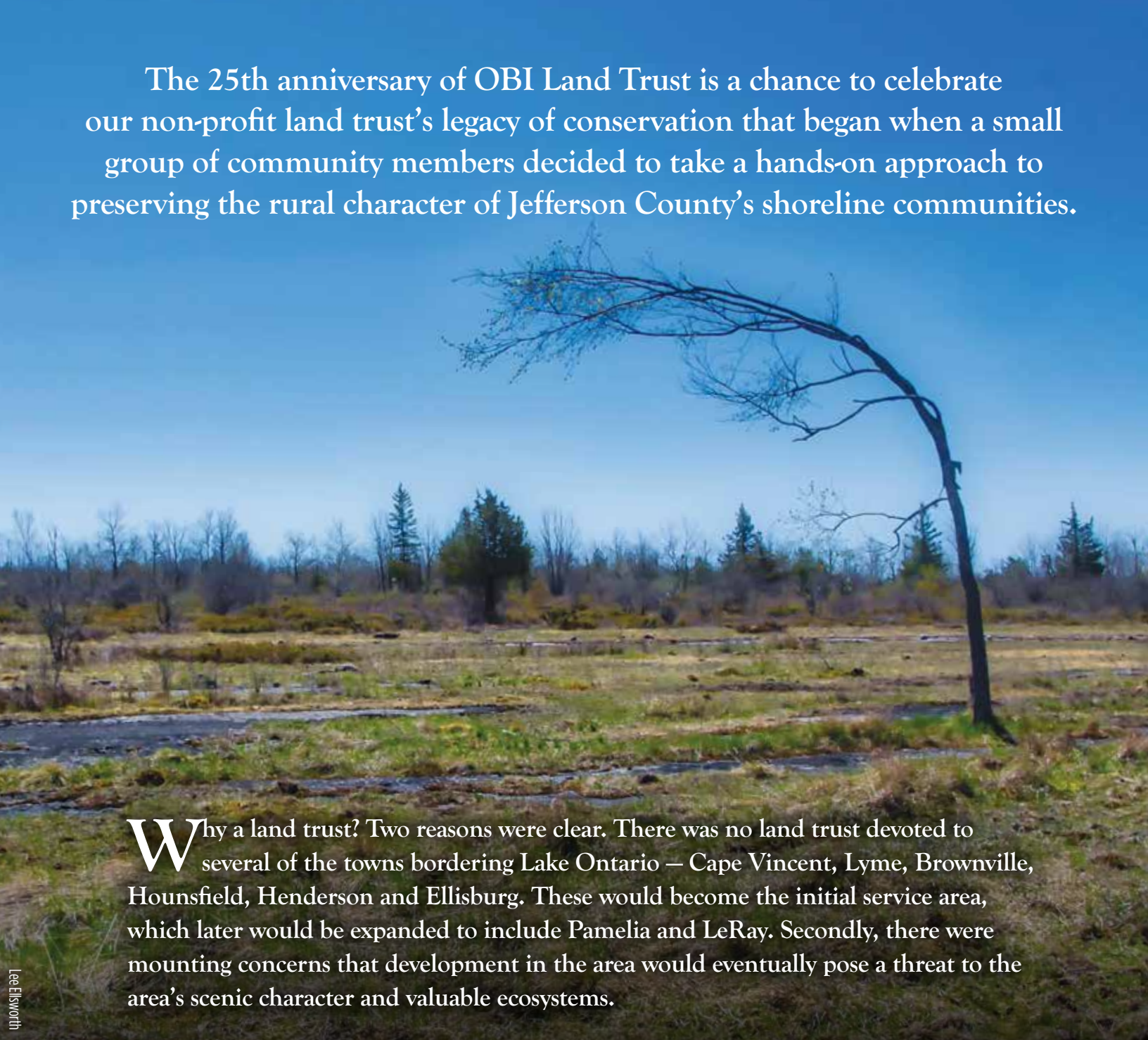
The **OBI** Board of Directors wishes to thank Julie K. Covey for her dedicated service as Executive Director of **OBI** for the past four years. She will leave **OBI** effective July 1, 2018.

Julie tackled everything from office work to field work. She helped with a long list of administrative tasks and often pulled on a pair of work boots for annual property inspections around the lands that **OBI** protects in Jefferson County. Prior to serving as executive director, Julie was a consultant to our land trust and editor of the **OBI** newsletter, where many of her captivating nature photographs have been featured.

"I would like to thank everyone who I have had the pleasure of working with over the past 13 years as newsletter editor, consultant and Executive Director of **OBI**," Julie said. "I am not leaving the area, just continuing down another path."

She can still be reached at birdeditor@gmail.com.
 Julie, we wish you all the best!

The 25th anniversary of OBI Land Trust is a chance to celebrate our non-profit land trust's legacy of conservation that began when a small group of community members decided to take a hands-on approach to preserving the rural character of Jefferson County's shoreline communities.



Why a land trust? Two reasons were clear. There was no land trust devoted to several of the towns bordering Lake Ontario — Cape Vincent, Lyme, Brownville, Hounsfield, Henderson and Ellisburg. These would become the initial service area, which later would be expanded to include Pamela and LeRay. Secondly, there were mounting concerns that development in the area would eventually pose a threat to the area's scenic character and valuable ecosystems.

Lee Elsworth

OBI was founded in Chaumont in 1993 as an all-volunteer land trust and has since successfully protected more than 750 acres in our service area, where agriculture and tourism are a way of life. This includes:

- a 178-acre nationally-recognized wildlife preserve
- more than 1700 feet of undeveloped shoreline in Henderson Harbor
- 400-plus acres of ecologically-sensitive alvar community
- immature hardwood forestland and abandoned farmland
- a unique 15-acre conservation area/woodland trail that includes an endangered Indiana bat habitat

Originally named Ontario Bays Initiative, Inc. to reflect interests that were not restricted to conservation, we quickly narrowed our focus. As we mark a quarter-century, we are now using the name “OBI, A Land Trust” to easily convey our mission: land protection. Our non-profit land trust status means we are qualified to accept conservation easements, which are a great way for people to preserve private land for lasting public benefit.

In 2004, we began a newsletter and an informal annual cookout to help cover operating expenses. The cookout was a big success and quickly became a summertime tradition for OBI supporters. It continues each year as a way to raise funds and attract interest in our local land trust.

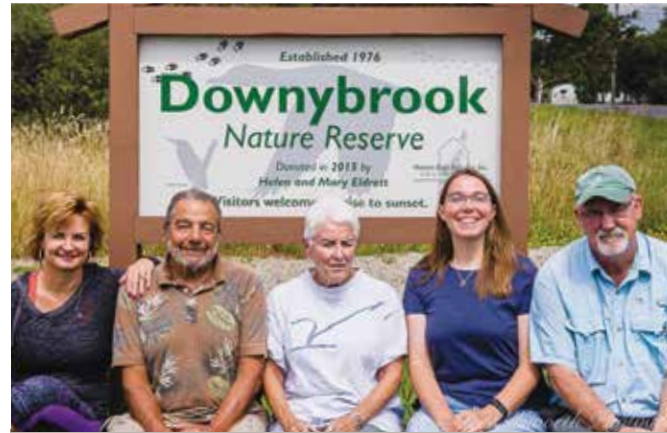
OBI operated as an all-volunteer land trust until 2013, when a part-time executive director Julie K. Covey was added to help further our goals and accomplishments. Senior Consultant Gerry Smith, an ornithologist, has contributed to our success since the beginning. Many volunteers have served as board members and officers, donating their time and various talents to help with everything from field work to fundraising. Some volunteers have served a decade or more, creating a legacy of volunteerism and dedication that is rare.

In this year of celebration of a 25-year milestone, OBI remains focused on preservation of our area’s ecological assets - coastal areas, woodlands, farmlands and open spaces - for future generations to enjoy in this very special part of Northern New York that we are happy to call home.



The late Lee Chamberlaine, a founder of OBI, on a guided tour of the Chaumont Barrens in 1997.

“Thank goodness for land trusts like OBI, at a time when flora and fauna are losing ground to encroachment and unwise actions by humans. Habitats are being saved.” Verna Docteur, Chaumont. Verna served many years as Secretary of the OBI Board of Directors.



“Like other land trusts, OBI’s central mission is to preserve and protect ecologically and environmentally sensitive lands. I am proud to have been a part of OBI’s growth and significant accomplishments,” Leland K. Russell, Evans Mills, formerly OBI Land Steward and Vice-Chairperson. Lee was a longtime member of the OBI Board of Directors until October 2013.



Clockwise from left: Bloodroot wildflowers; Greater yellowlegs; OBI Board members Tracy Valentine, Jim LaPlante, Joan Treadwell Woods, Julie Covey and Lee Ellsworth; Adelaide Weir at the OBI Annual Cookout. OBI encourages the love of nature starting at a young age. Kids of all ages to are welcome to participate and volunteer!



INSIDE OBI: Lee Ellsworth



Lee Ellsworth

Even if you have never met OBI Land Steward Lee Ellsworth, chances are you have seen his photographs. Lee's stunning images - including landscapes, birds and plants - have been featured by OBI both on our website and in brochures. His bird photographs regularly accompany the local newspaper column written by OBI consultant Gerry Smith. Lee's photographs have also been among those featured in the silent auction at OBI's annual fundraiser.

Nature photography became his passion in the 1970s. He has spent hundreds of hours in overgrown fields, pastures and rocky shorelines patiently waiting for the perfect opportunity to capture local wildlife in its natural habitat. "I'm always looking for a good photograph" when out in the field, he said. "It's just something I've always loved doing."



Lee joined the OBI Board of Directors in February 2015 and then became vice-chairperson of OBI in 2016. His knowledge of our region's different habitats - including the alvar - has helped with various aspects of our land trust. Lee has also been a volunteer for the Nature Conservancy for more than 20 years and is retired from a 30-year career as a lab director at the Watertown Water

Treatment Plant. Lee and his wife, Cathie, are longtime Watertown residents.

"Throughout my life, a goal of mine was to preserve open space. OBI allows me that opportunity," he said.

2018: THE YEAR OF THE BIRD

For me, every year since the early 1960s has recognized the importance of our feathered fellow travelers. Since birds have shaped my life and career, it is good to see they are finally getting deserved global recognition.

Many organizations, including OBI, will celebrate the approximately 8000 plus bird species found throughout the planet. Since as many as twenty five percent of bird worldwide are vulnerable to severe population decline and possible extinction, greater public awareness is badly needed. Like all living things their future well-being is our responsibility.

In addition to the great joy many humans derive from observing birds they provide our civilization with many benefits, from swallows devouring those nuisance biting flies to Vultures cleaning up the natural world - we would sorely feel their absence.

Birds are the proverbial "canary in the coal mine" giving early warnings of the ecological impacts of bad human decisions. As the decline of Bald Eagle warned of the dangers of DDT, its subsequent recovery confirmed we made a proper course correction. Famous ornithologist Dr. George Grinnell was once asked "Dr Grinnell, what can we do for our birds?" His reply, "Make sure they have a place to live." This is something we should dedicate ourselves to throughout this year of the bird.

Gerry Smith, a resident of Barnes Corners, is an ornithologist and is also a senior consultant at OBI. He is the author of the popular newspaper column, Natural History Notes about local bird life. He writes about topics ranging from migration patterns to tips for identifying different species of swans.



Julie Covey

NOTES FROM THE FIELD... by Julie Covey

Change is forever about us; sometimes it's slow, sometimes fast. This spring, the change to warmer, more spring-like conditions occurred suddenly. There was ice on the ground one week, and the wildflowers began blossoming in the woods the next.

The landscape of the North Country has changed much in my lifetime. There is far less undeveloped open space now than there was 40 years ago. Fields and woods, in many areas, have given way to development. To have a quiet walk in the woods may seem like a luxury, however studies have shown that people's quality of life is better when they have access to open space.*

If you have not yet taken the opportunity to walk the trails at Downybrook, or the Alex C. Velto Bat Conservation Area, please do! OBI is working, through grants and your donations, to preserve open space and rare habitats in the North Country. Help us to leave something for our children and their children. As was said by John James Audubon, "A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children." Thank you to all of you who help OBI in this goal!

*reference: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4078595/>



Julie Covey



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Donor Highlight



This beautiful, special edition male Gadwall decoy will be given to top-level donors (\$1500 and above) of the Friends of OBI Program in 2018. It is hand-carved by Ferguson Decoys in Woodville, NY. The dapper gray male Gadwall is found fairly common year-round in our region. Once rare in winter, now some regularly spend the coldest months in the ice-free areas of northeastern Lake Ontario and the western St. Lawrence River.

We appreciate and wish to recognize **Linda Ferguson** of **Ferguson Decoys** for making this piece available for OBI to give as a Thank You to our Friends!

EVENTS & WALK ABOUTS...

Wine and Birdsong, June 2nd, Henderson Harbor,
Private wildlife preserve (OBI Members only) Sponsored by White Caps Winery and OBI.

Zenda Farms Picnic, June 8th
OBI will Exhibit along with other local land trusts. Sponsored by Tilt.

Chaumont Barrens Preserve, June 9th & 20th, 9AM
Meet at the Van Alstyne Road Parking Lot. Tour the preserve. For more information visit: lymefreelibrary.org.
Sponsored by Lyme Free Library and OBI.

Downybrook Nature Preserve, July 26th, 9AM
Join the North County Bird Club for a leisurely walk through the preserve in search of mid-summer birds and wildlife!

Town of Lyme Bicentennial Celebration, July 29th, Chaumont
Kids activities and refreshments! Come learn about your local Land Trust!

Grassland Birds, July 29th, 11AM, White Caps Winery, Pt. Salubrious
Learn about these wonderful birds and hike with a fellow birder! Sponsored by White Caps Winery and OBI.

Annual Cookout & 25th Anniversary Party, August 6th, Crescent Yacht Club

Perch River Wildlife Management Area, August TBD
NYSDEC staff will lead a tour of the Perch River Wildlife Management Area for OBI (check website for details).

Downybrook Dedication, September 8th, Downybrook Nature Preserve

For more events and information visit: OBILandtrust.org