



# Friends of the Great Swamp



FrOGS

PO Box 373, Pawling, NY 12564

*Volume 1, Issue 1*

*Spring 2000*

## *Welcome*

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter of Friends of the Great Swamp (we call ourselves FrOGS). Our mission is clear and it is local: preserve the Great Swamp of Dutchess and Putnam Counties.

The Great Swamp is our local environmental treasure. FrOGS activities are carried out in our hometowns and during outdoor events very near our own backyards. Much of FrOGS communication will always be local and personal – and we want to keep it that way.

The primary purpose of our newsletters will be to tell you about FrOGS activities and events, projects ongoing in the Swamp, and regional conservation news of note.

We have a very special opportunity to have a positive and personal impact on the maintenance of a healthy Great Swamp. Few other communities have an environmental treasure approaching its biological, hydrological, and economic importance. The Great Swamp benefits each and every resident in its watershed, and thus we all have a personal stake in protecting it for the future. We invite you to join FrOGS and help us in our mission to preserve the many values of this extraordinary ecosystem.

## A brief history of Friends of the Great Swamp...

Almost ten years ago, a group of concerned citizens banded together to form Friends of the Great Swamp, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving our local environmental treasure, the Great Swamp of Dutchess and Putnam Counties.

FrOGS was founded to respond to threats to the integrity of The Great Swamp. The Great Swamp is in imminent danger from existing and future development, and human activities.

FrOGS became incorporated as a not-for-profit, tax-exempt organization in 1997. FrOGS helps people learn about, enjoy, and preserve the Great Swamp. FrOGS is dedicated to protecting the Swamp through science and education.

Examples of activities and accomplishments:

◆ FrOGS members have participated in ten studies of the Great Swamp and its wildlife in association with the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Nature Conservancy. Currently, FrOGS members are making an inventory of larger animals in the Great Swamp using tracking methodology designed by Keeping Track, a conservation organization with expertise in tracking.

◆ FrOGS and the Great Swamp Office of The Nature Conservancy have jointly sponsored the annual Great Swamp Art Exhibit and Wildlife Celebration in October. In addition to the hundreds of adults that view the art and other exhibits, hundreds of children attend the free live-animal educational show. This event raises awareness of the Swamp and artists contribute a portion of the proceeds to FrOGS's programs.

◆ FrOGS has also worked with the fourth grade "Up River, Down River" educational exchange program conducted by the New York Aquarium. This immensely popular program, with its exchange visit to the Aquarium, is currently active in the Dover Primary School.

◆ FrOGS offers a very popular annual canoe trip down the Great Swamp, starting from Green Chimneys.

### ***The Great Swamp***

- \* *is a water purifier*
- \* *is a wildlife refuge*
- \* *helps control flooding*
- \* *is a ground-water recharge area*
- \* *is a recreation area*
- \* *is an outdoor classroom for all ages*

***Over 1 Million People depend on the Great Swamp for their drinking water***



# Membership

Membership in FrOGS is currently FREE, and we hope to be able to keep it that way. The only obligation that a FrOGS member has is to believe in the importance of preserving our local environmental treasure, The Great Swamp, for future generations. Membership puts you in the front line of conservation right in your backyard and town.

Members will receive all newsletters and special alerts of upcoming events. Contributing members will also receive discounts on FrOGS merchandise and a FrOGS electrostatic window sticker.

Simply contact us at the address listed below if you want your name added to (or removed from) our mailing list of FrOGS supporters. Feel free to pass this newsletter on to an interested friend or relative.

## All Donations to FrOGS are Tax Deductible

*Friends of the Great Swamp is a successful organization, and the generosity of our members and supporters extends FrOGS's reach and effectiveness. Contributions support our special events, educational programs, and scientific projects. Donations also help ensure that membership remains free to all.*

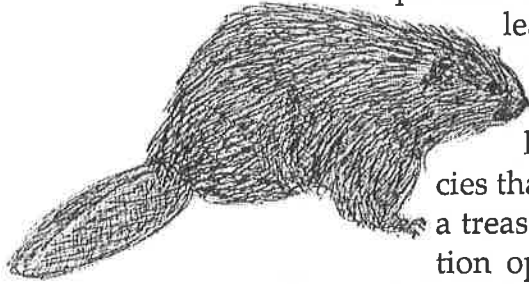
*Please consider a tax deductible gift to FrOGS. Simply forward your gift in the envelope attached to this newsletter. Or, send your gift to:*

*Friends of the Great Swamp  
PO Box 373, Pawling, NY 12564  
(914) 855-1917*

*Thanks for your generous support!*



# A Strategy to Conserve the Great Swamp



Many people are concerned about the Great Swamp and often ask what they can do to protect it. Answering this question recently became much easier with the newly released report *The Great Swamp: A Watershed Conservation Strategy*. Published by The Nature Conservancy, this report details the rich diversity of habitat and the wealth of plant and animal species that make the Great Swamp their home. It provides a treasure trove of information on water quality, recreation opportunities, economics, and trends that are affecting the wetland and its watershed. The document also contains maps of the Great Swamp that illustrate special issues within the wetland, such as land use changes, natural communities, recreation and protected lands, and pollution sources.

Most important, the Conservation Strategy identifies six key initiatives to conserve the Great Swamp. These initiatives include increasing public awareness of the Swamp's many functions, fostering local leadership on wetland and watershed protection, strengthening state and local regulations, improving water quality, protecting plant and animal habitat, and encouraging compatible economic development and improved land-use planning.

The report charts a course of action for the future and highlights many ways to get involved in protecting the Great Swamp. Activities include participating in the FrOGS Annual Great Swamp Cleanup, landscaping with native plants, or pumping out residential septic systems. There are specific recommendations for municipalities, such as regional planning and changes in land use laws, as well as recommendations for conservation organizations that include protecting habitat, open space and recreation access points. There is a role for every individual and group. Many of the recommendations are already underway.

Conservation of the Great Swamp and enhancement of the local quality of life depend on development and economic growth that are compatible with the environment and consistent with community goals.

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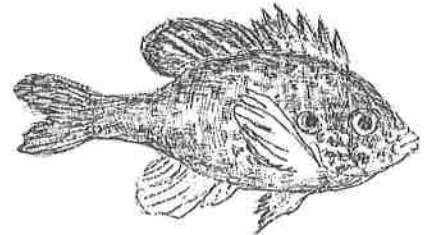
The sustained health of each element – community, economy, and environment – is tied to the vitality of the others.

Some of the findings of the Conservation Strategy include:

- ⇒ 85% of watershed residents consider the Great Swamp a part of their community's heritage that should be protected for future generations.
- ⇒ At least 46 rare or significant plants, animals, and natural communities, including the federally protected bog turtle, are found in the Great Swamp.
- ⇒ Thousands of people use the Great Swamp for canoeing, hiking, fishing, and hunting every year.
- ⇒ The Great Swamp is estimated to be 38% larger than currently delineated by New York State. The Strategy recommends that NYS Department of Environmental Conservation revise its wetland maps to accurately portray the true extent of the Swamp.
- ⇒ Population in the watershed is growing rapidly. This growth has led to documented reductions in wetland, open space, and agricultural lands. Comprehensive watershed planning across municipal borders, led by local officials, is encouraged to direct development away from sensitive areas and protect wetlands and recreation areas.
- ⇒ Wetlands and floodplains such as the Great Swamp are worth almost \$8,000 per acre, based on the ecological services they provide. This estimate, published in the scientific journal *Nature*, ranked wetlands the second most valuable ecosystem on the planet

Highlights of the Conservation Strategy will be presented by the author, Dan Siemann, at the next FrOGS meeting on Wednesday, April 5, at 7:30 p.m. at the Holiday Hills YMCA in Pawling.

<b>Great Swamp Facts</b>	
<i>Size (TNC Estimate):</i>	6,768 acres
<i>Size (NYSDEC Map):</i>	4,202 acres
<i>Watershed Size:</i>	62,343 acres
<i>North Flow:</i>	19,694 acres
<i>South Flow:</i>	42,649 acres
<i>Watershed Residents:</i>	
<i>1990:</i>	39,305
<i>2040 (est.):</i>	88,783
<i>Total Rare Species:</i>	38
<i>Rare Plant Species:</i>	19
<i>Rare Bird Species:</i>	10
<i>Rare Fish Species:</i>	1
<i>Rare Plant Species:</i>	19
<i>Rare Amphibian/Reptile Species:</i>	8



## FrOGS Chairman Tom Keasbey Retires

Tom Keasbey announced his retirement as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Friends of the Great Swamp in December 1999. Tom was the first chairman of FrOGS after it incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 1997. He was instrumental in creating FrOGS's by-laws and shepherding it through the legal requirements of incorporation.



Under Tom's leadership of FrOGS, the Great Swamp has become a household word to almost all those living in our area. Tom organized canoe trips in the Great Swamp, led the Great Swamp Cleanups in the Patterson area, and was a leader in the continuing success of the annual Great Swamp Art Exhibit and Wildlife Celebration.

Tom will continue to help with the annual Great Swamp canoe outings and will still be a key leader in the preservation of the Swamp. Thanks for your leadership Tom – we'll see you around the Great Swamp.

## In Memoriam: Mike Ciaiola, FrOGS Director

Michael Ciaiola, 54, a Director of Friends of the Great Swamp and member of our executive committee, died of cancer on Christmas Day, 1999. Michael was a high school science teacher and the preeminent leader in preserving the Great Swamp.



Mike worked tirelessly for the conservation of open space and the Great Swamp, and spent countless hours working on preserves, in meetings, and on the phone to implement his conservation vision. Putnam County Executive Bob Bondi pointed out that, through Mike's efforts, over 2000 acres of the Great Swamp Watershed have been permanently saved for future generations.

In addition to his teaching and his work with FrOGS, Mike was probably most well known as the President of *Putnam County Land Trust*, an organization he stewarded and lead for much of its history.

His legacy will include the achievement of his dearest goal, *Putnam County Land Trust's* acquisition of the 100+ acre Ice Pond Conservation Area in Patterson.

Friends of the Great Swamp is making a donation to The Ice Pond Conservation Area in Mike's memory.





# Calendar of Events...

## APRIL

**5** **Wednesday, 7:30 PM. FrOGS Meeting.** Featured Speaker: Dan Siemann will present the Great Swamp Conservation Strategy. Other items on the agenda include a wrap-up of FrOGS activities and a look at what's in store for 2000. Location: Holiday Hills YMCA in Pawling. Contact Gordon Douglas (855-1917) for information.

**29** **Saturday, 9:00 AM-Noon. Annual Great Swamp Cleanup.** Pitch in to clean up portions of the Great Swamp. The Clean Up is an excellent opportunity to enhance the Swamp and its ability to function. Bring work gloves, bug repellent, sturdy buckets, and a rake. Lunch will be provided. Locations: Dover—meet at the Copperknocker Restaurant in Webatuck Crafts Village (Contact David Duff -832-0103). Pawling—meet at Murrow Park, Old Route 55, West of Village of Pawling (Contact: Irmgard Siedler—855-5867). Holmes—meet at Holmes-Whaley Lake Civic Association Bldg. on Route 292 (Contact: Susan 855-5409 or Laurie 878-7201).

**29** **Saturday, times vary. Putnam County Land Trust Great Swamp Canoe Trip.** Paddle the Great Swamp, observe wildlife from your canoe, and learn about the ins and outs of our local ecological treasure. No paddling experience necessary. Location: Green Chimneys School, Putnam Lake Road, Brewster. Contact: Judy Terlizzi, 228-4520.

## MAY

**6** **Sunday, 6:30 PM. Putnam County Land Trust Benefit Dinner and Silent Auction.** Featuring J. Henry Fair and Helene Grimaud of the Wolf Conservation Center, and Paul Kupchok with live birds of prey. Come support the Land Trust and enjoy an evening of gourmet food and excellent entertainment. Location: Green Chimneys School, Putnam Lake Road, Brewster. Contact: Judy Terlizzi, 228-4520.

**7** **Saturday, times vary. Putnam County Land Trust Great Swamp Canoe Trip.** See description above.