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Western New York Land Conservancy Opens its Newest Public Nature Preserve, Mossy Point in Wales

The Western New York Land Conservancy held a ribbon cutting ceremony today at Mossy Point, in Wales, to mark the grand opening of publicly accessible walking trails within the organization's newest preserve. Thanks to the efforts of the Friends of Mossy Point and the Land Conservancy community, which together raised \$1.6 million in 2020 via hundreds of donations, the land will be protected forever.

Combined with Kenneglenn Scenic and Nature Preserve and Hunters Creek County Park, Mossy Point adds to one of the largest patches of connected and protected forests in the entire Niagara River watershed at more than 1,100 acres. Visitors can find the 2.1 miles of trails, which wind through the 216-acre forest and crest at the very peak overlooking the scenic Mossy Point, by heading up the Hunters Creek Park trail starting at the lower parking lot on Hunters Creek Rd.

Mossy Point represents one of the newest acquisitions in the planned Western New York Wildway, a landscape-scale conservation initiative centered on protecting and connecting some of the largest forests in our region—a project that will, in turn, provide safe haven for our region's native plants and animals in a changing climate.

"We are extraordinarily thrilled to open these new trails to the public," said Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy. "There is so much incredible beauty to witness at Mossy Point. Migratory birds come from as far away as South America each spring to nest, Great-horned Owls, wildflowers, numerous varieties of ferns, tall old-growth hemlocks—this forest is absolutely teeming with the best that nature has to offer in Western New York."

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) played a significant role in the early stages of the campaign by awarding the Land Conservancy with a \$655,000 Water Quality Improvement Project grant. This grant helped spur others to support the cause. "Protecting vast tracts of forest like Mossy Point is a great example of DEC's successful WQIP program and its effective work to protect habitat and water quality both at its source and downstream," said DEC Region 9 Director Julie Barrett-O'Neill. "DEC congratulates Western New York Land Conservancy for its vision to pursue this important project to connect Mossy Point with two adjoining forests and benefit the Niagara River ecosystem."

“We are pleased to partner with the Land Conservancy on their new trail system by sharing an access point with our Hunters Creek Park,” said Mark Poloncarz, County Executive. “The partnership provides residents with yet another outlet for year-round recreation. Even better, those who live downstream can breathe a little easier knowing that this new, expanded acreage is doing valuable work absorbing and filtering rain water and preventing flooding. We welcome this new preserve and its trails.”

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, not-for-profit land trust that permanently protects land with significant conservation value in Western New York for current and future generations. The Land Conservancy envisions a future in which open spaces, working lands, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty are cherished and protected as part of the landscape and character of Western New York. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of 1000+ land trusts nationwide, including 87 in New York State. Land trusts have protected over 56 million acres of land.

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