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The Land Conservancy Places Conservation Easement on Grand Island's Alt Preserve

The Western New York Land Conservancy is thrilled to announce that it has permanently protected a 36-acre property in Grand Island, known as the Alt Preserve, with a conservation easement. The easement ensures that the land will never be developed.

The Alt Preserve is located on Whitehaven Road near the Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary. It has grassland habitat and wooded wetlands, and is home to many grassland nesting birds, including Bobolinks, Savannah Sparrows, and Northern Harriers. Funding for the conservation easement comes from the Greenway Ecological Standing Committee.

For the landowners, Nicole Gerber and Dave Reilly, the Alt Preserve is the culmination of a years-long effort. "My family has owned this land for six generations," Nicole Gerber said. "Until the 1960s, when we opened the first Chevrolet dealership in the Niagara frontier out of the old schoolhouse on the property, it served as fertile farmland. With funds from the conservation easement, Dave and I plan to restore the historic school house, ice house, and barn on the property to serve as a nature center that will be available for community programs. We also plan on creating walking trails open to the public, since the land has meadow habitat and a unique wet oak-hickory forest. Our commitment is to create an ecological respite and educational space that will serve both the wildlife and the people of Western New York. We are extremely excited to partner with the Land Conservancy to protect this special piece of land."

"Our work on Grand Island in recent years has been incredibly successful—for nature and the community," said Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy. "We are truly grateful to partner with such enthusiastic landowners as Nicole and Dave, who not only wish to conserve their land but also are committed to creating a space where future Grand Islanders can learn about the incredible diversity of nature all around them on the island."

This sentiment was shared by many local residents, including the Town Supervisor, John Whitney. “The Land Conservancy has been a tremendous partner for Grand Island,” he said. “With the establishment of the Alt Preserve, and thanks to the steadfast dedication and vision of our friends and neighbors, the town will soon have more outdoor space in nature to enjoy. This is a win for the town, and it’s a win for Western New York.”

Greg Stevens, Executive Director of the Niagara River Greenway Commission, agreed. He added: “The Niagara River Greenway is all about making connections, to trail systems, to the waterfront, to parks, and to communities. We are so pleased to partner with the Land Conservancy to execute our conservation strategy within the Niagara Region, and we appreciate all of their hard work in saving natural places like Grand Island’s Alt Preserve. Having lost 95% of the riparian wetlands in the Niagara corridor over the past 200 years, Grand Island is critically important to preserving and extending the precious bits that remain, and will therefore continue to be the focal point of our conservation planning. Since the Alt Preserve is located near the Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary *and* the Town’s Nike Base Park, it will become another great protected ecological jewel on the island.”

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust that has protected more than 7,000 acres of land with significant conservation value in Western New York for the benefit of future generations. We envision a future in which forests, farms, meadows, and waterways are connected, cherished, and protected in Western New York. Our clean air, clean water, and fertile soils will equitably support the health and wellbeing of future generations of every living thing. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. For more information on upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, or the mission of the Western New York Land Conservancy, please call (716) 687-1225 or visit wnylc.org.

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