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The Land Conservancy Names Marisa Riggi Executive Director

The Western New York Land Conservancy has named Marisa Riggi as its new Executive Director, effective immediately. Riggi has been the Land Conservancy's Conservation Director since 2017, but she has also served as Acting Executive Director since June.

Riggi, who grew up in Williamsville, received her B.A. from SUNY Geneseo and her M.S. in Natural Resources from the University of Vermont. After graduation, she spent five years at the Northeast Wilderness Trust in Montpelier, VT, including three years as Conservation Director. There she saw firsthand how larger, connected forests were infinitely more beneficial for plants and animals; she also saw how these connected forests create natural corridors that allowed plants and animals to migrate, increasing their chance for survival. When she returned home in 2017 to join the Land Conservancy, she brought the same principles to our region's forests that had proved so successful in New England. These principles have propelled the organization's work.

In just six years at the Land Conservancy, she has led major conservation projects and helped the organization conserve more than 1,450 acres of land. This includes such high-profile forests as the College Lodge Forest near Fredonia, Mossy Point in Wales, and the Janet Gallogly Allegany Wildlands in Cattaraugus County. Under her leadership as Conservation Director, the Land Conservancy is currently working to save an additional 3,600 acres, including the Floating Fen in Chautauqua County, which the organization is fundraising to save this year. At the core of these conservation projects is one overarching goal: to protect, connect, and restore our forests and wildlands.

"Marisa has been a vital part of the Land Conservancy's leadership team since her arrival," said **Kathy Bieler, Board President**, "and she has done a fantastic job steering our conservation activities. She has also conceptualized and championed a groundbreaking vision called the Western New York Wildway, our ambitious, long-term project that will galvanize our community for decades to come. Her vision and dedication to our mission is unparalleled. We couldn't be more thrilled to have Marisa at the helm."

“I grew up in Western New York,” **Riggi** said. “I developed my love for nature while exploring the woods behind my house when I was little, and now my husband and I are raising our two kids here. This is my home, and I consider it my life’s mission to protect our region’s forests, farmlands, rivers, and streams for the benefit of every living creature. Working at the Land Conservancy, being part of an amazing staff *and* community of people, all passionately engaged in conservation, is an absolute joy. I couldn’t be more excited to transition into the role of Executive Director.”

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.