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The Land Conservancy Names Jon Kaledin New Executive Director

The Western New York Land Conservancy has named Jon Kaledin as its new Executive Director, effective January 9, 2023. He will succeed longtime Executive Director Nancy Smith.

Kaledin is an accomplished leader in the conservation and environment field. He has held executive positions in the private, government, and non-profit sectors—including 15 years as New York General Counsel at The Nature Conservancy’s New York State office in Albany. His substantive areas of expertise are land conservation, water, environmental policy, climate change, and clean energy. He brings to the Land Conservancy an extensive background in advocacy, policy, land protection, land stewardship, fundraising, board development and relations, and public communications work. He holds a B.A. from Harvard University and a J.D. from New York University School of Law, where he was President of the Environmental Law Society.

In addition to a wealth of experience serving in state and international conservation roles, Kaledin has considerable experience in the Western New York region—which includes extensive work on the Lake Ontario shoreline, acquiring Motor Island Wildlife Management Area on behalf of New York State’s Department of Environmental Conservation, conservation work in the Zoar Valley, and advising on farmland issues out of The Nature Conservancy’s Jamestown office, among many other projects. Letchworth State Park also happens to be one of his favorite places in the world.

“I am so happy to welcome Jon to the Land Conservancy,” said **Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy**. “We have an ambitious agenda that includes large-scale restoration projects such as restoring the forests in the Niagara Gorge, building The Riverline near downtown Buffalo, helping shape the Niagara River Greenway, and creating the Western New York Wildway. With Jon’s wealth of experience and knowledge in every facet of land conservation, he will be able to hit the ground running.”

“Jon’s arrival at the Land Conservancy comes at a favorable moment in our history,” said **Kathy Bieler, Board President**. “We have seen sizable growth under Nancy’s leadership, and we’ve enjoyed tremendous success protecting thousands of acres of land in Western New York, including nearly 4,000 acres of farmland. With our financial stability, and with our incredibly dedicated staff in place, Jon is well positioned to take the reins from Nancy and keep our momentum moving forward.”

“I’m honored and thrilled to become the Land Conservancy’s next Executive Director,” said **Kaledin**. “The organization has accomplished important things over the past decade—from establishing and permanently protecting the Stella Niagara Preserve, the College Lodge Forest, and the Mossy Point Preserve, to developing a thriving organizational culture. I’m humbled by the trust the staff and Board of Directors have placed in me to continue with Nancy Smith’s remarkable legacy. I am eager to join and become a part of the Western New York community, and help with the region’s critically important conservation work that lies ahead.”

Quotes:

Congressman Brian Higgins said, “The Western New York Land Conservancy has been a leader in forward-thinking community preservation and enhancement projects across the region. Stepping into Nancy’s shoes is no easy task. We are glad to see someone with extensive expertise and an understanding of Western New York fill this role, and we look forward to working with Jon to support the Land Conservancy as it continues its good work.”

“Jon Kaledin brings a wealth of experience to the Western New York Land Conservancy, and I’m confident that his knowledge, advocacy, and leadership will continue to advance the Conservancy’s ambitious environmental and community-driven priorities, both in Buffalo and across our greater region,” said **Senator Tim Kennedy**. “While we will miss Nancy Smith’s unwavering dedication and spirit, we know Jon will pick up right where she left off, and continue to build on the momentum and growth that the Land Conservancy has generated over the last decade.”

“I congratulate Jon and wish him success in leading the Western New York Land Conservancy in the important work it does in our community,” said **Senator Patrick M. Gullivan**. “I thank the Land Conservancy for its dedication to protecting our forests, waterways, and farms for future generations.”

“I applaud Nancy Smith for her leadership, dedication, and service to our community and would like to congratulate and welcome Jon Kaledin to the Western New York Land Conservancy. I look forward to working with Jon on preserving our natural legacy and encouraging WNYers from every walk of life to enjoy our preserved and wild spaces,” commented **Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes**.

“The Western New York Land Conservancy is a valuable partner in the State Department of Environmental Conservation’s (DEC) ongoing work to protect the land, water and air in the

Buffalo-Niagara region,” said **DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos**. “Jon Kaledin brings impressive credentials and a long record of successful environmental achievements to Western New York. DEC looks forward to continuing our close partnership under Jon Kaledin’s leadership and congratulates the Conservancy on its announcement.”

“I have known Jon for over 27 years, working closely with him during our respective tenures at The Nature Conservancy in New York and beyond. Jon is a gentle and strong leader with an inquisitive mind and a solutions-oriented style,” said **Tom Duffus, Vice President & Northeast Representative of The Conservation Fund**, a national land trust that has conserved over 500,000 acres in New York. “I know Jon is passionate about western New York, my home grounds. He will take Western New York Land Conservancy to the next level that Nancy so ably prepared the organization to do.”

“Jon is a terrific choice to lead the Western New York Land Conservancy, building on a decade of growth and innovative projects under Nancy’s leadership,” said **Carter Strickland, VP Mid-Atlantic Region and New York State Director for Trust for Public Land**. “I have worked with Jon for many years and his expertise will help Western New York communities tap into land and water funding and create projects that will make the area more equitable, more livable, and even more of a climate refuge.”

“We are delighted to welcome Jon Kaledin to his new role and also to recognize Nancy Smith for her many accomplishments,” says **Finger Lakes Land Trust Executive Director Andy Zepp**. “Together, land trusts in Central & Western New York are working with local communities to conserve those lands that define the character of our region.”

“It’s outstanding news that Jon is returning to New York State as the Executive Director of the Western New York Land Conservancy,” said **Joe Martens, past President of the Open Space Institute and former Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**. “It will be great to have him back! His extensive conservation experience, his love for the natural world, and his affability make him a great fit to lead the Land Conservancy.”

“Jon is a seasoned non-profit leader and brings a wealth of experience in land conservation, habitat protection, and watershed management. This is an exciting time for the Western New York Land Conservancy,” said **Andy Beers, the retired Director of New York’s Empire State Trail program**.

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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