



For Immediate Release:
February 2, 2021

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Land Conservancy Awarded Tonawanda Community Environmental Benefit Program Grant to Enhance Multiple Preserves

The Land Conservancy is pleased to announce that it has received a \$160,000 grant from the Tonawanda Community Environmental Benefit Program (TCEBP). With this funding, the Land Conservancy will undertake a host of projects at preserves in North Tonawanda and Grand Island. Through this project, they will improve existing nature preserves, restore wildlife habitat, reduce the threat of hazard trees, improve walking trails, and engage people of all ages in environmental education.

The TCEBP grant award decisions were made by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Office of the Attorney General, following the results of a public balloting process developed by these agencies in collaboration with a Community Advisory Panel made up of area residents. Projects with the highest number of ballots were selected for funding.

Specific project highlights include:

- removing dangerous hazard trees and planting new trees at the North Tonawanda Audubon Preserve on Birch Drive
- native tree plantings and invasive species removal at the Gallogly Nature Sanctuary, Love Road Preserve, and Funk Preserve on Grand Island
- environmental education programs for people of all ages and backgrounds at the preserves

The past two years have proven that people are eager to get out in nature and explore. These nature preserves have seen many new visitors. The preserve forests are home to fascinating plants and animals like Pileated Woodpeckers, Ovenbirds, silver maples, and the fragrant native shrub spicebush. Unfortunately, they also have non-native invasive plants, especially shrubs like buckthorn and honeysuckle, which crowd out native plants, reducing the diversity of wildlife and limiting the growth of our native wildflowers and trees. Invasive plants also have fewer positive impacts on stormwater absorption, as well as air and water

quality. In some places, invasive insects have decimated native trees, leaving dead or dying trees that are hazards for people and nearby homes.

“As someone who grew up in Western New York at a time when the water and air were full of toxic wastes from the local steel plants, I know how important environmental conservation is to the Tonawanda community,” **said Governor Kathy Hochul.** “The State’s historic actions, as well as these new efforts advanced by the Western New York Land Conservancy and all of the Tonawanda Community Environmental Benefit Program grant awardees, will promote and drive sustainability in the area for years to come and I am glad it is moving forward with the nearly \$1 million funds obtained from the State’s enforcement action against Tonawanda Coke Corp. Western New Yorkers no longer have to suffer from the pollution emitted by Tonawanda Coke, and with these grants, New York State is helping to provide a cleaner, healthier environment for current and future generations.”

“For years, the Tonawanda Coke Corporation endangered the health and safety of New Yorkers,” **said Attorney General Letitia James.** “Because of our successful enforcement actions against Tonawanda Coke, we were able to provide more than \$900,000 for revitalization efforts in the Tonawanda community, including to the Land Conservancy to restore the environment back to its natural beauty and health. I look forward to seeing the results of the Land Conservancy’s project and the great benefit it will provide to this community.”

Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy, said of the TCEBP grant award: “These grant funds will help the Land Conservancy address a number of key environmental concerns head on, and we are thrilled to receive funding through the Tonawanda Community Environmental Benefit Program. We are especially excited to know that our project received so many votes. That means that the community truly values the work we do and the opportunities for outdoor recreation and education these projects will provide. We can’t wait to get started.”

Work at the North Tonawanda Audubon Preserve and environmental education programs will be done in collaboration with the Buffalo Audubon Society. **Ed Sirianno, Executive Director of Buffalo Audubon,** which owns and manages more than 1,000 acres of nature preserves in our region that include many miles of publicly accessible trails, welcomes the opportunity to partner with the Land Conservancy. “Many residents of these communities live far from publicly accessible nature preserves,” he said, “and in some cases the trails on those nature preserves need improvements. Working together, we will develop programming that will educate the public about why ecological restoration matters *and* make actual physical improvements to the trails and forests that residents have told us they value.”

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 www.wnylc.org.

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