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Community Reaches Fundraising Goal, Western New York Land Conservancy Acquires the Floating Fen and Becker Preserve

The Western New York Land Conservancy and the Friends of Floating Fen are pleased to announce that the community has reached their fundraising goal to save the Floating Fen, and they officially purchased the property on December 29th.

The Floating Fen is an incredibly diverse property that's home to a unique wetland that includes a bog-like area, "the floating fen," from which the new preserve derives its name. Every summer, the floating fen comes alive with a carpet of blue flag iris, carnivorous sundews, and a trove of rare plants. The surrounding forest also teems with porcupines, beavers, fishers, great flocks of migratory songbirds, and other wildlife.

Located next to the College Lodge Forest, one of the Land Conservancy's recent acquisitions, this spectacular 225-acre preserve in Chautauqua County now becomes an integral part of the WNY Wildway: a connected corridor of protected lands that stretches from the vast forests of northern Pennsylvania to the Great Lakes, connecting with the Eastern Wildway through to the Finger Lakes, the Adirondacks, and beyond. The WNY Wildway will allow plants and animals to migrate across the land as they once did, it will allow those that have disappeared from our region to return home, and it will allow wildlife to move to new homes as the climate changes.

In addition to the Floating Fen, the Land Conservancy also announced that they've acquired the 97-acre Becker Preserve in Holland. Thanks to the generosity of Linda Ruckdeschel, who owned the property and donated it to the Land Conservancy, the community only had to raise project and stewardship costs. The Conservation Trail—a popular 177-mile hiking trail that extends from the Pennsylvania border to Canada and was envisioned by the trailblazer Mabel James, Linda Ruckdeschel's great aunt—also makes its way through a portion of the property. An additional trail, known as the Becker Loop, connects to the main Conservation Trail.

"Floating Fen and Becker Preserve both fall within WNY Wildway prioritized linkage areas," said the Land Conservancy's Executive Director, Marisa Riggi. "To date, a scant 1.3% of WNY Wildway linkage areas are protected, leaving the critical corridors between habitat cores vulnerable. By saving these properties the Land Conservancy community is protecting crucial links that allow wildlife to move across the landscape and expand their ranges. This is a huge step in the right direction, and I'm beyond thrilled that so many people across our region support our work and the WNY Wildway."

Over the next year, the Land Conservancy will create a walking trail at Floating Fen and will open the property year-round as a publicly accessible nature preserve. They will also permanently protect the forest and wetland. The trails at Becker Preserve are part of the Conservation Trail branch of the Finger Lakes Trail.

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust that has protected 7,500 acres of land with significant conservation value in our region. We envision a future in which forests, farms, meadows, and waterways are connected, cherished, and protected in Western New York. We are accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. To learn more about our mission and vision, and to read our land acknowledgement, visit wnylc.org.

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