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The Western New York Land Conservancy Announces a \$310,000 Matching Gift to Save the Allegany Wildlands

The Western New York Land Conservancy and the Friends of the Allegany Wildlands are announcing a \$310,000 matching gift to save the Allegany Wildlands, a stunning 200-acre forest located only a few hundred feet from the Allegheny Reservoir near Allegany State Park. They need members of the community to donate to match the gift by the end of this year. Every dollar donated will be matched, dollar for dollar. The total fundraising goal to save the Allegany Wildlands is \$879,000, and they have to secure that funding by the end of this year. Once that goal is met, the Land Conservancy will purchase the land and keep it open as a publicly accessible nature preserve forever.

The Allegany Wildlands is home to a spectacular diversity of plants and animals. During the last ice age, the glaciers never covered this forest, keeping intact an ancient plant community. As recently as 150 years ago, the forest teemed with massive American Chestnut trees, which had dominated eastern forests for 40 million years, but were wiped out by a blight. Amazingly, six American Chestnuts that are more than 40-feet tall still survive at the Allegany Wildlands, some of which are producing seeds. Large oaks, a threatened lily called a White Clintonia, and rare orchids also grow here. Underneath the forest canopy, black bear and bobcat roam the ridges and ravines. Majestic Bald Eagles soar overhead, colorful songbirds nest in the tall trees, and playful river otters search for fish in the nearby reservoir. But the Allegany Wildlands is also threatened. If the Land Conservancy community cannot meet its fundraising goal by December 31, 2021, it could be logged and developed.

The Gallogly Family Foundation has given \$200,000 towards the matching gift. Kasey DeLuke of the foundation, also a Land Conservancy board member, said: "The Land Conservancy has proven time again to be excellent champions of our region's most environmentally significant forests. Over the years, they have demonstrated how the work of a dedicated community can benefit an entire region. We are extraordinarily pleased to be able to assist the Land Conservancy in their efforts to save this incredible forest."

The matching gift includes \$100,000 from the Lenna Foundation. "The rolling, thickly forested hills that carpet this area are some of the most beautiful in our region," said Randy Ordines, President of the Lenna Foundation. "By protecting the Allegany Wildlands, the Land Conservancy community is helping to form a corridor of connectivity from Northern Pennsylvania to the Finger Lakes—joining with other protected forests up and down the east coast. We are proud to assist the Land Conservancy in these efforts."

A third, anonymous donor contributed an additional \$10,000.

“Saving forests like the Allegheny Wildlands is incredibly rewarding work,” said Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Land Conservancy. “But it truly takes a community coming together to make this work successful. We are immensely grateful for these gifts. They are a strong show of support for the work we’re doing to protect the Allegheny Wildlands, and to build a future Western New York where lush green forests remain intact.”

In the early 1800s, the property was purchased by the Sluga family from the Holland Land Company. Generations of their family have been its stewards ever since. Though the Sluga family has decided to sell their land, for the next chapter of this forest’s story, they want it protected. Protecting the Allegheny Wildlands will also kick off an ambitious idea—creating the Western New York Wildway. The Wildway will be a connected corridor of protected lands that stretches from the vast forests of northern Pennsylvania to the Great Lakes, through to the Finger Lakes, the Adirondacks, and beyond. It will form part of the Eastern Wildway which runs all the way from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. The 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 those in need to move around to new homes as climate changes. The Allegheny Wildlands is already connected to 7,000 acres of protected state land, nestled between Allegheny State Park and South Valley State Forest, and it is a significant link in a future Western New York Wildway.

The Land Conservancy needs donations of all sizes in order to save the Allegheny Wildlands. For larger donations, naming opportunities include:

- ONE DONOR OF \$200,000 can name the preserve **(Reserved)**
- ONE DONOR OF \$100,000 can have the trail named in their honor **(Reserved)**
- DONORS OF \$25,000 OR MORE can have a bench named in their honor.
- DONORS OF \$10,000 OR MORE will have their name listed on a plaque placed at the preserve.
- DONORS OF \$2,000 OR MORE will be recognized in the Land Conservancy newsletter.

If you would like to donate to save the Allegheny Wildlands, you can donate online at wnylc.org or send a check made payable to “Western New York Land Conservancy” to P.O. Box 471, East Aurora, NY 14052. Please call or email if you have questions: (716) 687-1225 or info@wnylc.org.

The Western New York Land Conservancy is a regional, not-for-profit land trust that permanently protects land with significant conservation value in Western New York for current and future generations. The Land Conservancy envisions a future in which open spaces, working lands, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty are cherished and protected as part of the landscape and character of Western New York. The Land Conservancy is accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission and is one of 1000+ land trusts nationwide, including 87 in New York State. Land trusts have protected over 56 million acres of land. To learn more about the Land Conservancy, visit wnylc.org.

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