



WESTERN NEW YORK
LAND CONSERVANCY

TheResource

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN NEW YORK LAND CONSERVANCY

Fall 2023

The Floating Fen: A Rare Peatland

Western New York Land Conservancy
PO Box 471, East Aurora, NY 14052
(716) 687-1225 | info@wnylc.org
WNYLC.org

Staff

Josh Balisteri

Stewardship Director

Rachel Chrostowski

Farmland Protection Specialist

Sarah Costlow

Land Protection Specialist

Erik Danielson

Stewardship Coordinator

Kara Frisina

Communications & Development Manager

Molly Gadenz

The Riverline Outreach Coordinator

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PhD, Restoration Ecologist

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The Floating Fen: A Rare Peatland

In her powerful book *Fen, Bog & Swamp: A Short History of Peatland Destruction and its Role in the Climate Crisis*, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Annie Proulx details how our nation has systematically destroyed its wetlands. The Grand Kankakee in Indiana, the Great Black Swamp in Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana, and the Great Dismal that once covered more than 1 million acres in Virginia and North Carolina—all are examples of pristine wetlands that were drained, dredged, and largely destroyed. Many of the diverse plants and animals that called these lush habitats home, such as the Bachman's Warbler or the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, with its distinctive honk, were wiped out.



© Erik Danielson

Imagine an alternative scenario where these great wetlands still existed. How much richer would our country be today? Here in Western New York, we've lost huge swaths of wetlands to development over the last two centuries, but in recent decades we've also witnessed tremendous interest within our community to protect our largest remaining forests and wetlands.

Unique wetlands can still be found at the Floating Fen in Chautauqua County. Its geology dates back more than 10,000 years. When the glaciers retreated at the end of the last ice age, giant blocks of ice were left behind by retreating glaciers and, eventually, melted away. The cold, mineral-rich groundwater feeding these ponds allowed organic matter from mosses and grasses to build up faster than it could decay, forming the unique floating mats of peat we see today. Healthy peatlands were once more common in Western New York, but many have been lost. Erik Danielson, our naturalist, estimates that our region alone has lost nearly 75% of its fens—peatlands fed by groundwater—making the Floating Fen that much more important to save today.

The 223-acre Floating Fen property is home to a multitude of plants and animals. Black bears, Wood Ducks, Red-shouldered Hawks, porcupines, coyotes, and beavers all call it home. Each spring, migratory birds such as Scarlet Tanagers and Blackburnian Warblers return from South America and descend on this forest in vast numbers, filling the trees with the sweet sound of their music. The peat mats themselves are thick with the most beautiful display of carnivorous sundews and blue flag iris you will ever see in Western New York.



© Erik Danielson



© Erik Danielson

As a piece of the Western New York Wildway—our community’s plan to protect, connect, and restore our region’s largest forests—these 223 acres are part of an important process: the return of once-extirpated animals such as beavers and fishers, which play a critical role in our ecosystems.

Unfortunately, this special property is also in danger of being sold, its forest cut, and the rare plants and animals lost. If that happens, like many other American wetlands, the fen will be lost forever. Though we can’t bring back the Grand Kankakee, Great Black Swamp, or the Great Dismal, together we can ensure that one of our region’s most important wetlands is permanently protected, allowing people and wildlife to flourish.



© Erik Danielson

Save the Floating Fen

The Floating Fen is an incredible 223-acre property adjacent to the College Lodge Forest in Chautauqua County. It is home to a unique wetland, extraordinary life, and a diverse forest. You have an opportunity to protect this place. In order to purchase the land and protect it for future generations, our community must raise at least \$925,000 by December 31st, 2023. The good news: We’ve already raised more than \$750,000, and we’re almost there. Once it’s protected, it will join the College Lodge Forest to form a 400-acre block of connected land in the Western New York Wildway.

Donate If you would like to protect the Floating Fen, please send a check with Floating Fen on the memo line to:

Western New York Land Conservancy
P.O. Box 471
East Aurora, NY 14052

You can also donate online at www.wnyc.org. Select “Floating Fen” in the dropdown menu on the donation page.

The Black Creek- Angelica Creek Land Protection Program

In 2021, the Land Conservancy was awarded a \$2 million Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) grant by the state Department of Environmental Conservation. These source water protection funds enable us to conserve up to 1,000 acres in the Black Creek - Angelica Creek watershed, part of the Genesee River Basin, in Allegany County. The grant is the largest we've received, and it allows us to undertake our most comprehensive project in Allegany County to date.

We will soon begin work on the Black Creek - Angelica Creek Land Protection Program by reaching out to potential landowners in the towns of Allen, Angelica, Birdsall, Grove, and West Almond. Tens of thousands of people in the Genesee River Basin get their drinking water from aquifers, lakes, rivers, and streams, and with these WQIP funds, we will protect significant forests that maintain water quality for everyone. Land protection through this program will have a significant environmental and financial impact on the region since intact forests do valuable work absorbing, filtering, and retaining rainwater. This helps keep water fresh for drinking, recreation, and other uses. It also helps ensure that stormwater runoff doesn't increase, creating more flooding and causing thousands of dollars in damage. As a bonus, all land protected in this program will become part of the Western New York Wildway.

If you own land in one of these five Allegany County towns and you're interested in protecting your property via this program, please contact Sarah Costlow, our Land Protection Specialist, at scostlow@wnylc.org.



© Erik Danielson

To learn more about the **Western New York Wildway**, scan this QR code to visit the Western New York Wildway StoryMap.



Save Land by Donating Today!

Want to save our farms, forests, streams, and meadows for future generations?

Become a member, renew your membership, or donate to protect Western New York's most valuable resources today. To donate, use the envelope in this newsletter or visit wnylc.org and make your payment online. Thank you!

A Community Mural

The Riverline recently unveiled a new mural on a building at 44 Moore Street near downtown Buffalo. The mural was created by members of the Youth Mural Club at Buffalo Center for Arts & Technology (BCAT), who were the recipients of funding through The Riverline's Community Arts Program this year.

The goal of the Community Arts Program is to foster interaction between The Riverline communities by sharing stories and memories of people and places, highlighting the diversity of cultures and the rich history in the communities while providing meaningful opportunities for residents to tell their stories and express themselves through art.

Following a call for ideas from artists in May, proposals for the Community Arts Program were evaluated by an Arts Advisory Committee made up of local residents—individuals with professional experience in the arts and working with arts organizations, young people, and others with a vested interest in the mission and success of The Riverline. Three finalists were then asked to submit a more detailed proposal of how they would run the community-based project and the piece of art that would be created. At a public event in July at Undergrounds Coffee, each finalist displayed their proposals and The Riverline communities had the opportunity to interact with the finalists and choose their top preferences.

“The unveiling of the mural marks the end of a months-long community-driven process to make public art a key feature of The Riverline,” said The Riverline Director, Jeffrey Lebsack. “But it marks the *beginning* of future community arts programs to add even more art along The Riverline corridor.”

Thank you to City of Buffalo Councilmember Mitch Nowakowski and General Mills for providing the funding, and to the following local artists and individuals for serving on the Arts Advisory Committee: Ashley Amplement, Emma Brittain-Hardy, Sara Heidinger, Danielle Saeva, Dean Seneca, and XIII.



©Miguel Martinez and Ericka Palmer.



©Miguel Martinez and Ericka Palmer.

News

Staff: The Land Conservancy is growing, and we are excited to welcome new staff to our team.

Molly Gadenz

The Riverline Outreach Coordinator

Andrew Gaerte

Director of Development & Communications

Michelle Jones

Accounts Payable Clerk

Cathleen Maine

Deputy Director

Marisa Riggi

was promoted to Executive Director

Marcus Rosten

WNY Wildway Director

Teresa Tokasz

Natural Resource Specialist

To learn more about our team, visit us at wnylc.org/staff.

Grand Island: We received grant funding from the Greenway Ecological Standing Committee (GESC) to purchase a 42-acre property from the Pfohl family on Grand Island, one that includes shoreline on the Niagara River.

WNY Wildway: We were awarded \$227,474 from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to purchase the Perrysburg Headwater Forest conservation easement consisting of approximately 152 acres of forest within the headwaters of the Allegheny River. The property contains both mature hemlock-northern hardwoods forest and maple basswood forests, as well as mature beech trees. The land is also a part of the Western New York Wildway.

Tree planting: The City of Buffalo, Erie County, and the Village of Lancaster were awarded \$13 million to plant trees. These funds are part of \$1 billion in competitive grant money given across the country via the Inflation Reduction Act. We're thrilled to be part of the community outreach for the Buffalo and Erie County efforts.





© Margo Bittner

On the Farm: Bittner-Singer Orchards

Jim Bittner is a first-generation farmer. While working on farms during his teenage and college years, he grew to love everything about agriculture. This love was then transferred to his wife, Margo, and in the late 1980s they started their own orchard in Appleton, Niagara County.

Since then, especially after 1991 when they formed a partnership with their neighbor Tom Singer, their farm has grown to become one of the region’s largest fruit growers. Go into any local Wegmans, Tops, or Aldi’s and you’re sure to find Bittner-Singer fruits for sale. These days it’s a family affair; their sons, Kevin and David, are an important part of the farm’s management.

Like all farmers, they’ve experienced their fair share of difficulty. Twice in the late '90s, their crops were destroyed by hail. But the Bittners are skilled at adapting to changing market needs and weathered the storm. When consumer tastes changed and fewer people were buying maraschino cherries, for example, they found innovative solutions to use the highly productive soils found on their land to grow peach, apricot, and sweet cherry trees—making their farm one of the only farms in the state where such crops thrive. Their unique farm is located on prime real estate along Lake Ontario, and as a result, it’s constantly under pressure from new residential and commercial development proposals.

That’s why Bittner-Singer Farms is working with the Land Conservancy to permanently protect their land with a New York State grant. Once it’s protected, we can rest assured knowing that Bittner-Singer apples and peaches will always be available for everyone in our region to enjoy.

Are you a Farmer?

Would you like more information about protecting your farm?

Contact our Farmland Protection Specialist, Rachel Chrowstowski, at rachelc@wnylc.org or (716) 687-1225 ext 126.

Grand Island Forests Get a Restoration Makeover

If you’ve visited our Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary on Grand Island in the last two years, you may have wondered why parts of the preserve seem to be recently cleared and “under construction.” What you see are part of our efforts to restore headwater forests in the Great Lakes/Niagara River watershed. Many of these restoration projects begin with the removal of invasive plant species. Glossy buckthorn is a widespread invasive species on Grand Island that hinders the growth of the native plants and trees that purify, absorb, and filter the water we drink. We’ve been utilizing a method called forestry mowing (also known as mulching) to remove the dense buckthorn thickets during the winter when frozen ground conditions permit.



© Andy Lance

Led by our Restoration Ecologist, Dr. Andy Lance, the Land Conservancy has mulched over 30 acres of glossy buckthorn thickets in the Little Sixmile Creek corridor alone since 2021. But restoration work is not just about what’s removed. We’ve also planted 875 trees at Gallogly, including characteristic Grand Island species such as swamp white oak, American elm, and pin oak, and we’ve seeded the project areas extensively with native sedges and grasses. As part of our efforts, Andy maintains five 10 x 10-meter vegetation monitoring plots to track metrics of success in the project area. Prior to mulching, he identified an average of seven different plant species per plot. After mulching, that figure rose to an average of 48 species per plot, with one plot harboring an astonishing 62 different plant species.

Two other Grand Island properties are getting similar treatments. At our 11-acre Funk Preserve, which is not currently publicly accessible, we’ve mulched 8.5 acres of glossy buckthorn and planted over 140 American elms, basswoods, and swamp white oaks. Meanwhile, at our 42-acre Love Road Preserve Andy and his team are hard at work restoring that forest—though it, too, is not yet publicly accessible.

Thank you
for honoring those
you care for and
supporting their love
for nature.

In Honor of

JOSEPH C. JOHNSON
From John Lamancuso

TERRY MOSHER
From JoAnn Kaufmann

NANCY SMITH
*From Anne Bent &
Libby Weberg
John & Carol Daleo*

PRISCILLA & JON TITUS
From Wayne Yunghans

In Memory of

CAITLIN CAREY
From Patricia Kane

DR. MAUREEN FRIES
From Jeb Fries & Carmen Quinones

JOY HERRICK
*From Linda Ward, Nancy & Tom Smith,
Alison Hyde, Edna Hyer, Patricia Haynes,
Chuck & Louise Kreiner,
Kathleen & Gerald Patterson,
Rebecca Almond, Michael & Sue O'Brien,
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EMILY OPREA
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Robert Horvat, Linda Martin &
Robert Martin*

TULIE
From Holly Hewitt

KATHLEEN WRIGHT
From Victor Wright

GERTRUDE MURPHY
From John Toolen

The Janet Gallogly Allegany Wildlands is now open!

The 2.1 miles of trails were designed and built entirely by our stewardship team of Josh Balisteri, Erik Danielson, and Teresa Tokasz, with help from two summer interns from UB's Environmental Studies program, Reese Rudnick and Matthew Eberle. To learn about their trail-building process, visit wnylc.org/blog to read Josh's post. If you are interested in visiting the newest of our preserves, go to wnylc.org/alleganywildlands for more information.

Thank you to the following individuals who donated at least \$2,000 toward the Janet Gallogly Allegany Wildlands:

Anonymous (2)	Elizabeth Kyger and Stephen Moscov
James Battaglia	Dr. Steve Lakomy and Cheryl Lyles
Kathy & Scott Bieler	The Lenna Foundation
Cattaraugus Region Community Foundation - Community Fund	Lisa McGill and Matthew Borthwick
Theodore First	Frank & Linda Meyer
Judith Fisher	Ellen Neumaier
Gallogly Family Foundation	NYS Environmental Protection Fund
Andrew C. Giarrizzo	Margie and Sandy Nobel
Joe and Lynne Giroux	Outside Chronicles
Jon Kucera and Susan Graham	Paul Rutledge and Kathleen Ryan
Bob and Norma Henderson	Debbi Sabol
Karin Johnson	Stephen Still and Terrie Tucker
Oliver Kennedy and Christina Rockwell	Dr. Richard A. Stockton
	Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Funds administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo

Thank you to our **Legacy Society members** who have made us part of their legacy by including us in their planned giving, like their will. Are you interested in joining our Legacy Society and ensuring your favorite places are protected for future generations? Email Kyle Semmel, Communications Manager, at ksemmel@wnylc.org.

James Battaglia	Sally Metzger
Kathryn Bieler and Scott Bieler	Franklin and Linda Meyer
Lawrence M. and Carolyn K. Brooks	Barbara Mierzwa
Amy Choboy and Pamela Rossotto	Suzanne Murphy
Larry and Sheila Drake	John Owen, Jr.
Joan Eschner	Donald and Barbara Owens
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Chuck and Ann Fournier	Carleen Blake Ryan
Douglas Germony	Debbi Sabol
Amy Holt	Judith Sabol
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Did you know?

If you are 70 ½ or older, you can protect forests, farms, and wildlife with a qualified charitable donation (QCD) from your IRA. By donating directly to the Land Conservancy from your IRA you can support our mission while reducing your taxable income up to \$100,000. If you are interested in making such a donation, and reducing your tax-burden this year, please contact Andrew Gaerte, Director of Development and Communications, at agaerte@wnylc.org.

Our Mission The Land Conservancy is a regional, non-profit land trust that has protected 7500 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.

We are accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission.

The Land Conservancy recognizes that we serve on the traditional and ancestral lands of the Seneca, Tonawanda Seneca, and Tuscarora Nations

and other indigenous communities. We are thankful to the Haudenosaunee who have been and continue to be the stewards of this land. We are committed to the Haudenosaunee Seventh Generation Principle which asks us to honor the lessons of the last seven generations as we work in partnership to shape and heal the world the next seven generations will inherit. This acknowledgment, while important, is just a start. We are listening, learning, and taking actions to address injustices that have impacted the Haudenosaunee and the land.



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