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Western New York Land Conservancy awarded \$85,000 in grants from NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Land Trust Alliance today announced approximately \$2.3 million in Conservation Partnership Program grants for 51 nonprofit land trusts across the state. Following Earth Week, a weeklong celebration of New York's commitment to protecting the environment, the grantees were announced at a statewide land trust gathering in Albany.

"Land conservation is an essential tool that provides immeasurable environmental and economic benefits for New Yorkers and visitors alike," said DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos. "Thanks to Governor Cuomo's leadership, financial support from the Environmental Protection Fund, and the hard work of New York's land trusts, the Conservation Partnership Program continues to improve our quality of life while protecting valuable natural resources and state lands."

Seventy grants funded through New York's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) will leverage an additional \$2.3 million in private and local funding to support projects that will protect farmland, wildlife habitat, and water quality, enhance public access for outdoor recreation, and conserve priority open space areas critical for community health, tourism, and regional economic development.

"This partnership enables land trusts and local communities to tap the enormous potential of the land to address societal challenges and positions New York as a national leader in demonstrating the relevance of land conservation to all Americans," said Andrew Bowman, president of the Land Trust Alliance. "New York's commitment to the Environmental Protection Fund sets a standard that can inspire other states to protect water quality, promote healthy communities, and address the growing risks of climate change. These are smart investments in our collective future. On behalf of the Land Trust Alliance and New York's land trust community, we thank Governor Andrew Cuomo, Commissioner Basil Seggos and the New York State Legislature for investing in this effort."

In addition, these investments will further land conservation and proactive stewardship practices to enable protected lands to sequester and store carbon. Recent research underscores the role that natural climate solutions will have in addressing the risks posed by climate change.

The Land Trust Alliance administers the Conservation Partnership Program in coordination with DEC. The 15th round of Conservation Partnership Program grants will help local land trusts sustain and expand community and landowner outreach initiatives and develop an array of land conservation, stewardship, and education programs.

The grants will further regional economic development goals by strengthening partnerships with local and state governments and advancing locally supported efforts to protect working farms, enhance public access and recreation opportunities, and conserve private lands prioritized in New York State's Open Space Conservation Plan and state wildlife action plan. Land trusts will also apply grant funds to prepare for national accreditation and renewal of accreditation, supporting New York land trust commitments to rigorous national standards for nonprofit governance and organizational excellence.

One of the two grants awarded to the Land Conservancy will support a community-driven design competition to generate ideas on how to transform the abandoned the DL&W rail corridor in downtown Buffalo into an accessible

linear park with multi-use trails and ecologically diverse wildlife habitat. Over the last few months, the Land Conservancy has been talking with residents, businesses, and community leaders about how to reuse the corridor—known locally as the Dell—that runs from Canalside to the Buffalo River near Solar City.

“The DL&W project will provide a new opportunity for residents and visitors to explore Buffalo with vistas that bring together our City’s unique industrial heritage with our magnificent natural landscape,” said Congressman Brian Higgins. “Time and again the Western New York Land Conservancy has served as a steward with great vision and this latest project along the DL&W line will continue progress that embraces the community characteristics that are naturally ours.”

"Protecting our environment and preserving our natural resources for generations to come is paramount, and with this investment from New York State, we're continuing to see a commitment that will foster responsible conservation," said Senator Tim Kennedy. "With this money, our community can continue to lead a discussion about the proposed reuse and transformation of the DL&W rail corridor—a project full of potential, and one that deserves state resources to fuel this thoughtful dialogue."

The second grant will support the creation of the Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary, a more than 140-acre forested wetland property surrounding Assumption Cemetery on Grand Island in the heart of the Niagara River. The Land Conservancy will undertake a community engagement process to plan for and develop public access at the future Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary. The Land Conservancy is in the process of finalizing the purchase of this property from Catholic Cemeteries.

“We have been very happy to work with the Land Conservancy to preserve this beautiful forest, which cleans our air and water and keeps us healthy," said Grand Island Supervisor Nate McMurray. "The sanctuary will give people access to another beautiful green space in Western New York. Now it will always be there for future generations to enjoy."

“The Town of Grand Island boasts some of Western New York’s most appealing green spaces filled with an abundance of natural beauty,” said State Senator Chris Jacobs. “I applaud the Land Conservancy for their leadership and vision in creating the Margery Gallogly Nature Sanctuary on the Island that will ensure these natural resources are preserved for the enjoyment of generations to come.”

Since the program's inception in 2002, the Conservation Partnership Program has awarded more than 820 grants totaling \$17.2 million in EPF funds to over 80 different land trust organizations across the state. The state's investment has leveraged over \$19 million in additional funding from local communities and private donors.

The 2018-19 State Budget includes \$300 million for the EPF, sustaining record level support for environmental funding. The EPF supports state land stewardship, agriculture programs, invasive species prevention and eradication, water quality improvement, municipal recycling and an aggressive environmental justice agenda.

New York's investment in land conservation and open space boosts property values, supports local businesses, saves taxpayer dollars, and protects public health. A study by the Trust for Public Land found that every dollar of investment from New York's Environmental Protection Fund generates \$7 in total economic benefits from tourism, reduced government costs, and public health.

Nancy Smith, Executive Director of the Western New York Land Conservancy, said, “The Land Conservancy is so grateful for this significant investment of Environmental Protection Funds in our community. These funds make it possible for us to save our region’s most transformative places and create new places where our residents and visitors can spend time connecting with one another and with nature. This support is vital to creating a healthy, vibrant Western New York.”

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 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 90 in New York State. Land trusts have protected 56 million acres of land. 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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