



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Prescribed Burn at Stella Niagara Preserve

On Friday, May 18, the Western New York Land Conservancy conducted a prescribed burn at the Stella Preserve on Lower River Road in Lewiston. The preserve contains a beautiful restored grassland—one of the most threatened natural communities in New York State. This grassland is very healthy, brimming with tall native grasses and giving wildlife a place to hide, eat, rest, and nest. One of the best ways to keep a grassland healthy is to burn it periodically.

“Fire is a natural tool to maintain grasslands,” said Dave Spiering, the Land Conservancy’s Conservation Project Manager. “Properly executed, prescribed fire can help prevent the invasion of shrubs and trees and maintain the edge effect along adjoining woodlands and hedgerows. It also helps clear out undesirable, invasive species of plants and insects, increases the availability of nutrients in the soil, and stimulates growth of grasses and perennials. Fire is surprisingly good for these plants and the wildlife that depend on grassland habitat.”

Taking a lesson from nature, humans have used fire as a land management tool for centuries. Farmers use fire to revitalize pastures and maintain hedgerows. Forest managers use fire to reduce the risk of uncontrolled wildfires and promote the growth of desirable tree species. Wildlife managers use fire to keep grasslands open for the birds and animals that rely on them for their survival. When used in a controlled way, fire is a very useful, cost-effective, and safe land management tool. When humans suppress wildfires, we inadvertently harm entire ecosystems dependent on fire. The Land Conservancy’s prescribed burn will support the health of the Stella Niagara Preserve.

In November 2016, the Land Conservancy conducted its first ever prescribed burn at the Niagara Escarpment Preserve in Lockport. The burn was so successful that it was done again this spring. Both burns at the Niagara Escarpment Preserve and the one at the Stella Niagara Preserve were run by Applied Ecological Services (AES), a company that has been conducting safe and successful prescribed burns for over twenty years. AES developed a burn plan specifically for each preserve that was approved by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Forestry Division.

“Unlike an incidental wildfire, a prescribed burn requires very specific weather conditions,” said Ben Zimmerman of AES. “We had to wait until the wind direction and speed, temperature, and humidity were just right before we were able to conduct the burn.”

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 1,700 land trusts nationwide, including 90 in New York State. Land trusts have protected 40 million acres over the last 20 years. 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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