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**CONTACT:**

Nancy Smith, Executive Director  
(716) 687-1225 ext. 17  
nancysr@wnylc.org

## Land Conservancy gets \$100,000 Grant to Enhance Waterfront Access and Wildlife Habitat at the Niagara Gorge

The Western New York Land Conservancy and residents of Grand Island hope to create a new 140-acre forested nature preserve in the heart of the Niagara River.

“The Great Lakes Basin contains 84% of the surface freshwater of North America,” said Land Conservancy Nancy Smith, Executive Director. “This headwater forest is part of this much larger system, and protecting it will ensure that future generations can drink, swim, and fish from our Great Lakes.”

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.wnyc.org](http://www.wnyc.org).

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Enhancing Waterfront Access and Wildlife Habitat at the Niagara Gorge -  
\$100,000 grant

WNY Land Conservancy

The project will connect people to the Niagara Gorge along the Niagara River in Niagara Falls and restore the ecosystems. Components include: native seed collection and propagation, invasive plant control, native plantings and improvement of one community garden near the Niagara Gorge.

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Oath, the Verizon company that now owns Yahoo, announced 20 grants totaling \$427,826 to Niagara County-area groups and projects Tuesday.

Oath inherited Yahoo's commitment to make up to \$500,000 a year in local grants through 2021 as a condition of the state incentives it received toward construction of its data and call centers in Lockport.

The largest grant Tuesday was \$100,000 to the Western New York Land Conservancy for its effort to improve wildlife habitat and public access in the Niagara River Gorge.

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Oath, a subsidiary of Verizon, announced 20 community organizations as winners of grants from its Yahoo Community Funds for Niagara County and the Lockport area on Tuesday. The awards add up to almost \$428,000.

The Community Funds were established in 2015, as part of Oath's (formerly Yahoo!'s) \$170 million agreement with Empire State Development to expand its data center and establish a customer care center in Niagara County. Oath is pledged to continue feeding the funds until 2021.

Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul announced the winners at a press conference.

"Our low-cost power is often the reason we are able to attract businesses here," Hochul said, adding that the goal of the community fund grants is to "transition from the old school industries ... to the new technology of the future. The entire purpose of these funds is to help the community organizations sponsor programs that help spread STEM ideas across the county and in the process help drive down unemployment in the area."

The Dale Association will receive \$13,000. CEO Maureen Wendt said the grant will help finance the Dale's intergenerational learning programs, which cover history, writing and reading. The programs have senior citizens and youths learning from each other.

"Different children are at different levels, so anytime you have the benefit of supporting their core learning it's good for everybody," Wendt said. "And some of the kids don't have a grandparent figure, and some of the volunteer adults don't have grandchildren, so I think you get the benefit of learning about and learning from another generation."

Lockport Robotics will receive \$5,000. The money will support students' involvement in the annual FIRST robotics competition, according to instructor Jim Rogowski.

Organizations that received grants from the Oath Yahoo Community Fund for Niagara County include Canisius College, Literacy New York Buffalo-Niagara, Niagara Falls Boys & Girls Club, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, Old Fort Niagara Association and the Western New York Land Conservancy.