The Stella Niagara Preserve

For: Niagara River Greenway
Ecological Fund Standing Committee

By: Western New York Land Conservancy

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Western New York Land Conservancy

protecting & conserving land for future generations
Kennegleenn Nature Preserve
Singer Farm, Niagara County
The Stella Niagara property is:

- 29 acres of **ecologically and culturally important** land in the Town of Lewiston.
- 1,474 feet of shoreline, the **third longest privately owned river frontage** in Niagara County.
- One of few **natural landing sites** between Niagara Falls and Lake Ontario.
- An **international priority** for protection.
The Stella Niagara Preserve will be:

- The **first nature preserve** along the Niagara River to be owned and operated by a not-for-profit organization.
- A **model** for creating new, high quality public spaces along the Niagara River Greenway without burdening public agencies with increased costs.
- A **critical link** in the Niagara River Greenway and Olmsted’s proposed necklace of open spaces along the length of the Niagara River.
Ecological Importance

• Multiple habitat types:
  • A 30-50 foot wide riparian area.
  • A two-acre mature hardwood forest with vernal pools.
  • A three-acre spring-fed scrub/shrub wetland.
  • An 18-acre gently sloping open field.
  • A shallow, offshore shoal and the ‘Stella Drift’.
Ecological Importance

• Supports rare, threatened and endangered species:
  • Lake Sturgeon (threatened in NYS) has been recorded along the shoreline of the property while feeding.
  • Offshore shoal provides habitat for the larval stage of several native warm water fish species.
  • Ninebark (endangered in NYS) is found in the riparian zone of the property.
  • “Native prairie“ habitat enhancements will support several rare and protected grassland species.
• As shoreline of the Niagara River, it is part of an internationally designated Important Bird Area.
• Provides important ecological services.
• Was placed on the Niagara River Area of Concern priority habitat list in 2012.
Cultural Importance

• Haudenosaunee history
  • Archaeological evidence of continuous use.
  • An important canoe landing site.
• War of 1812
  • Landing site of the British during their invasion of the U.S. in 1813.
• Spiritual significance
  • Home to the Sisters of St. Francis since 1907.
  • Registered “Peace Site.”
  • The chapel “miraculously” survived several floods caused by ice jams, including a severe flood in 1955.
The Land Conservancy will:

- Acquire the 29-acre private property.
- Open it to public access.
  - Create and improve a walking trail system.
  - Provide fishing and canoe / kayak access.
  - Place interpretive and wayfinding signage.
  - Hold events and hikes.
- Enhance 18 acres of grassland habitat.
- Continue stewardship of the property.
Project Cost

• Total project cost: $3,170,959
  • $25,000 for planning.
  • $223,124 for construction.
  • $2,310,185 for acquisition.
  • $20,000 for administration.
  • $592,650 for a stewardship fund (annual operation and maintenance costs are estimated to be $29,633).

• The Land Conservancy is asking the Greenway Ecological Fund Standing Committee for $500,000 in 2013 for property acquisition.
Matching Funds

• Potential sources:
  • Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Fund (HERF)
  • NRG Niagara County Host Community Standing Committee
  • Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)
  • NOAA Great Lakes Area of Concern Land Acquisition
  • Hahn Family Foundation
  • Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
  • John R. Oishei Foundation
  • Private and Corporate Donors
  • DEC Fishing Access Easements
Project Schedule

- Phase 1: Planning and Fundraising (March 2013 through September 2014)
- Phase 2: Acquisition (October 2014 through December 2014)
- Phase 3: Design (January 2015 through March 2015)
- Phase 4: Construction (April 2015 through August 2015)
- Phase 5: Continued Operations and Maintenance (September 2015 onward)
Priority Criteria

• The Stella Niagara Preserve:
  a. Preserves RTE species.
  b. Has a strong scientific foundation.
  c. Contributes to long term protection and enhancement of RTE species and their habitat.
  d. Achieves multiple ecological goals.
  e. Preserves Haudenosaunee features.
  f. Involves a multi-stakeholder collaboration.
  g. Is consistent with applicable resource management plans.
  h. Includes efforts to seek matching resources.
  i. Is time sensitive.
  j. Has documented municipal and county support, among many letters of support.
  k. Is feasible.
Letters of Support

- Sister Edith Wyss, OSF, Provincial Minister of the Sisters of St. Francis.
- Steven L. Reiter, Supervisor of the Town of Lewiston.
- William L. Ross, Chairman of the Niagara County Legislature.
- Senator George D. Maziarz, Vice President Pro Tempore, (R) 62nd Senate District NYS.
- Paul McKeown, Supervisor of Natural Resources, NYS DEC Region 9.
- Paul Jackson, President of the Niagara River Anglers Association.
- Loren Smith, Executive Director of the Buffalo Audubon Society.
Why Now?

• The project advances the goals of the Niagara River Greenway Plan at a critical stage in its implementation.
• The property is threatened by development and its acquisition is urgent.
With $500,000 from the GESC in 2013 and 2014, and $2.171 million from HERF, the Stella Niagara Preserve would be a reality.

Thank You!