

Project Registration Number_____

**Niagara River Greenway Commission
Consultation and Review Form**

Type of Review Required: x Mandatory Consultation

 Voluntary Review and/or Endorsement

PROJECT SPONSOR INFORMATION

Name:	Western New York Land Conservancy, Inc		
Mailing Address:	P.O. Box 471, East Aurora		
State:	NY	Zip Code:	14052
Federal ID#	22-3160426	Charities Registration #	05-27-68

PROJECT TYPE

Check all that apply: ☒ Environmental ☐ Cultural/Heritage ☐ Land or Water Public Access

☐ Cultural ☐ Trail ☒ Educational/Interpretive

☐ Waterfront or Land Based Development ☒ Signage

☐ Recreational ☐ Other

Funding Committee Request:

☐ Host Community Standing Committee

☐ Buffalo and Erie County Standing Committee

☒ Ecological Standing Committee

☐ State Parks Standing Committee

☐ Unsure at this time

Amount Requested:	\$ 450,000
Matching Funds Available:	\$ 102,000

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name: Nature's Habitat Certification Program

Location: Throughout the Greenway

Site Address: NA

State: NY Zip Code: NA

Minor Civil Division(s): All Greenway Municipalities

County: Erie and Niagara County

Project Proponent Property Interest (own, lease, easement or other): Other - Voluntary habitat certification program on private properties.

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

Name: Nancy Smith Title: Executive Director

Business Address: P.O. Box 471, East Aurora

State: NY Zip Code: 14052

Telephone Number: (716) 687-1225 Cell Number: _____

Fax Number: NA

E-Mail Address: nancyrs@wnylc.org

PROJECT POINT OF CONTACT

Name: Jajeane Rose-Burney Title: Deputy Executive Director

Organization/Firm: Western New York Land Conservancy

Business Address: P.O. Box 471, East Aurora

State: NY Zip Code: 14052

Telephone Number: (716) 687-1225 Cell Number: _____

Fax Number: NA

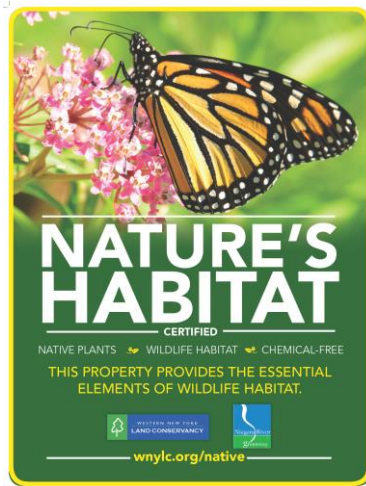
E-Mail Address: jajeane.rose@wnylc.org

NATURE'S HABITAT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Prepared for:



**NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY COMMISSION
Project Consultation and Review**



Prepared by:

Western New York Land Conservancy

November 21, 2017

PROJECT NARRATIVE: NATURE'S HABITAT CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

1: OVERVIEW

The Western New York Land Conservancy, a regional not-for-profit land trust, proposes to develop and lead a homeowner and business habitat certification program that will expand and connect our region's critical wildlife habitats, while at the same time exponentially leveraging Greenway funds with private dollars. Through education, training, recognition, and competition, *Nature's Habitat Certification Program* will encourage home and business owners to invest their own resources and instruct them in improving the ecological health of their properties. The program will prioritize properties surrounding protected parks and nature preserves, waterways, and public trails in or near the Greenway Focus Area, but will be available to properties throughout the Greenway municipalities. Signage on certified properties will publicly highlight the success of the program and the Greenway.

The Nature's Habitat Certification Program will educate and guide landowners to manage the lands surrounding their homes and businesses using five key components of a healthy landscape: landscaping with native species, establishing and maintaining habitat that is useful for indigenous wildlife, utilizing Best Management Practices to maintain the landscape, utilizing components that retain stormwater and improve water quality, and control of aggressive invasive species that degrade healthy landscapes. These private properties can include relatively small front and back yards in urban neighborhoods as well as large tracts of forests, meadows, and wetlands in more suburban or rural areas of the Greenway.

The Nature's Habitat Certification Program will be developed and initiated by a full-time project manager at the Land Conservancy whose sole responsibility will be the administration and promotion of the program. Solicitation of business and homeowner participants will begin early in the project. An aggressive public outreach effort will include a weekend series of events that will introduce the program, gain publicity, and offer a wide array of workshops, guided walks, and expert speakers. This kickoff event will be held in spring of 2018 and will enable planning of spring and summer gardens in a manner consistent with the program. Letters will also be sent to property owners as a way to solicit their participation. Summer interns will supplement the project manager's efforts during the busy growing season. The program will include the development of a user-friendly website that explains the purposes of the program, solicits interest and participants in the program, and offers a host of educational materials and other resources in support of the program. A nominal fee will be charged for the certification in order to ensure that the participants value the program and its benefits.

Organizations throughout the country have instituted similar programs in recent years, recognizing the broad benefits that result when landowners are encouraged to manage their land responsibly.

A recent study by Lerman et al. (cited in Coniff 2014) found that civic pride and competitiveness offered new hope for wildlife. Wildlife gardening is influenced by social and landscape factors so that social norms can be harnessed to maximize wildlife-friendly gardening practices and motivate improved urban biodiversity management (Goddard et al. 2012). An added benefit is improved quality of life by encouraging human and wildlife interaction in neighborhoods where there are racial and economic inequities in accessing biodiversity (Lerman and Warren 2011).

In some cases, municipalities use a program representative as “extended staff” that are able to forge relationships with home and business owners in a non-threatening way and thus relieve pressure on overburdened municipal infrastructure such as stormwater and sewer pipes. By forging relationships with public agencies, municipalities, and educational institutions, the “Conservation at Home” program near Chicago has become a recognized leader in stormwater management and now hosts an annual conference highlighting state of the art Best Management Practices and hand-on workshops (<http://www.theconservationfoundation.org/>).

The Columbia Land Trust’s Portland metro area Backyard Habitat Certification Program is an excellent model for our Nature’s Habitat Certification Program. Since 2009, the Columbia Land Trust’s program, co-managed with the Audubon Society, has signed up 3,000 people who are working to re-create some of the native habitat that has been lost to urbanization in their own backyards.

By involving residents directly in our efforts in the Greenway, we will strengthen stakeholder relationships in a compelling and effective way. Implementation of this program will reinforce objectives underway to improve and preserve important wildlife habitats, maintain water quality functions, and to help control flooding in developed areas while linking private lands with the public open space and outdoor recreation offered by the Niagara River Greenway.

2: CONSISTENCY WITH THE NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY PLAN

The proposed ***Nature’s Habitat Certification Program*** is perfectly aligned with the Niagara River Greenway Plan and will help achieve and expand the Greenway Vision. Within the Greenway, there have been many important efforts in recent years to acquire open spaces and to restore and protect these lands, creating a healthy living green corridor that attracts tourism and industry to our region. However, the integrity of the corridor will continue to be subjected to pressures posed by the management and use of adjacent property owners. Potential concerns in this regard include degradation of wildlife resources, the continual introduction of harmful invasive species, and degradation of water quality by poor land management practices. The ***Nature’s Habitat Certification Program*** will educate and encourage landowners to enhance the world-class “corridor of places, parks and landscapes” by extending the Greenway philosophy into neighborhoods, and rural and suburban landscapes.

The proposed *Nature's Habitat Certification Program* is guided by the same principles as those of the Niagara River Greenway. More specifically, the *Nature's Habitat Certification Program* builds on the Niagara River Greenway principles in the following ways.

1. **Excellence:** In the Land Conservancy's 26-year history we have preserved and protected over 6,500 acres of land, including farms, forests and scenic vistas on 87 protected properties. Our recent endeavors include landscape restoration work that seeks to link cultural, natural and recreation legacies in a way that both honors history and heals broken links resulting from misuse and misunderstanding of the fragility of our natural heritage. In all of our work, the Land Conservancy has adopted and strives to exceed the Standards and Practices set forth by the Land Trust Alliance, a national conservation organization that establishes best practices for regional land trusts. Recent awards are further testimony of our commitment to excellence: in 2016 we were awarded the Western New York American Planning Association's Award for Public Outreach, and in 2017 we were awarded Buffalo Spree's Best Wildlife Habitat Project Award for our promotion of native plants and removal of invasive species in our land protection projects.
2. **Sustainability:** Key components of this program are the very same that will allow our landscape to recover and remain a uniquely environmentally healthy and sustainable place for future generations.
3. **Accessibility:** The *Nature's Habitat Certification Program* will develop and promote educational materials that have potential for broad utilization. The program is based upon enhancing lands of Greenway homeowners and businesses to meet ecological and sustainable standards that will result in a better quality of life for every member of our Western New York community. Through planned promotions, this program facilitates public access to materials and knowledge that enhances experiences both within the Greenway and other area public spaces as well.
4. **Ecological Integrity:** The key components of the program are based on ecological regeneration and were selected for their ability to protect and enhance the ecological integrity of the region. These same components will strengthen the ecological integrity supported by the Niagara River Greenway principles.
5. **Public Well-being:** A fundamental goal of the program is to directly involve people by improving their connection to nature through sense-of-place and a healthy understanding of the region's natural heritage and the landscape's ecological functions. Modifications of private properties under the program will foster healthy wildlife populations, control flooding in surrounding neighborhoods, and help to maintain and improve water quality of the Niagara River, all of which are inherently in the interest of the public's well-being.

6. **Connectivity:** The proposed *Nature's Habitat Certification Program* will expand and connect the network of open spaces suitable for wildlife throughout the Niagara River Greenway, especially the Focus Area. Though some of these spaces may be small, together they add up to a significant source of the three components of wildlife habitat: food, water, and shelter, which may be particularly crucial for species that migrate.
7. **Restoration:** As participation in the *Nature's Habitat Certification Program* builds, participants enhance and restore wildlife habitats that have been degraded over time, will improve water quality, and will greatly reduce the likelihood of re-introduction of invasive plant species into the Greenway.
8. **Authenticity:** The program will educate home and business owners and members of the public at large to recognize and enhance our region's unique natural heritage, and will foster a deep respect and ownership in seeing that the region is restored and cared for in a deferential manner. Doug Tallamy's research on the ecological importance of native plants inspired this program.
9. **Celebration:** Signage, educational events, workshops and on-line guides will celebrate the natural heritage and environmental significance of Greenway and the region and will build civic and community pride in our region's unique resource.
10. **Partnerships:** The Land Conservancy, a regional not-for-profit land trust, is committed to creating the Nature's Habitat Certification Program and maintaining it. Anticipated partner organizations that will be approached as the program is developed include Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, PUSH Buffalo, Grassroots Gardens, Western New York PRISM, Buffalo Audubon Society, Niagara Frontier Botanical Society, Pollinator Conservation Association, and other community-based organizations. Ultimately, the program will create a direct partnership between landowners and the Greenway Commission itself in restoring the most precious of resources in our region.
11. **Community-based:** The concept for the proposed program originated in a strong desire to involve our citizens as partners in restoring their neighborhoods and communities and strengthening their connections with the living landscape and their knowledge of the Niagara River Greenway. The Program relies on the importance of community involvement in achieving the objectives of the Greenway Plan. The project is aligned with local, regional, and statewide planning documents.

The proposed **Nature's Habitat Certification Program** achieves all of the goals of the Niagara River Greenway Plan:

1. **Improve Access:** The proposed project will allow migratory wildlife a safe means of traveling through the Niagara River Greenway. It will provide people using protected parks and nature preserves, waterways, and trails an improved experience.
2. **Make Connections:** The proposed project will contribute to landscape-scale ecosystem connectivity and associated services.
3. **Protect and Restore Environmental Systems:** The proposed project will protect ecosystems services including reduction in erosive forces and the minimization of re-introduction of invasive plant species within the Greenway, and will improve water quality.
4. **Spark Revitalization and Renewal:** The contributions of this program will strengthen a rapidly growing sense of civic pride and will merge an awareness of natural and cultural heritage with recreation and the growing tourism industry throughout the regions served by the Greenway.
5. **Promote Long Term Sustainability:** The five key elements of the program were selected for their ability to achieve sustainable landscape management in the Greenway.
6. **Extend Olmsted's Legacy:** This program will help expand greenspaces, thereby strengthening Olmsted's vision of a necklace of open spaces along the length of the Niagara River.
7. **Celebrate History and Heritage:** Both the education and the enlistment of home and business owners in restoring the Niagara River corridor will instill a sense of place in the region and remind everyone of the unique natural and historical heritage the Niagara River gives witness to today.

And lastly, the ***Nature's Habitat Certification Program*** measures well in relation to the evaluative criteria established in the Niagara River Greenway Plan's "Action Plan."

1. **Consistency with Principles:** As noted already, the proposed project is guided by the same 11 principles that guide the Niagara River Greenway Plan.
2. **Priority Status:** The ***Nature's Habitat Certification Program*** mirrors the very same priorities designated in the Niagara River Greenway Plan: private properties and businesses with the Greenway, especially those in and near the Greenway Focus Area, become part of the pattern of connectiveness with which we strive to restore and enhance our region. As an extension of the ***integrated trail and park system***; these efforts fortify the ***restoration of the Niagara River ecosystem***; and build a greater audience for ***interpretation and education about the region's cultural, natural and historic resources***.

3. Focus Areas: The majority of the *Nature's Habitat Certification Program* will take in and near the Niagara River Greenway Focus Area.
4. Environmental Soundness: Environmental conservation is at the core of this project. The Project Goals are to instill ecological Best Management Practices in lands within the Greenway and thereby improve wildlife habitats and enhance resources for the species that are sustained there.
5. Implementable: This program follows a model from the Columbia Land Trust which has been successful for nearly a decade. This project is a grass-roots effort that can begin as soon as funding for a full-time staff member is achieved. This project does not require a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers or the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and does not require review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). The project is designed to allow many levels of involvement from simple to complex.
6. Economic viability: The proposed budget for this program is based on the Land Conservancy's experience managing conservation projects.
7. Local Sponsor or Partner: The Western New York Land Conservancy will be responsible for implementing the project.
8. Matching or Leveraged Funds: The total cost for three years of the program is estimated to be \$552,000. We will request approximately \$450,000 from the Greenway Ecological Standing Committee. We hope to raise an additional \$40,000 from participant certification fees, and an additional \$62,000 from other sources. The Land Conservancy will apply for funding from other local, state and federal grants, and will also raise funds from local foundations and private donors in the community. Past Land Conservancy projects have leveraged millions of dollars of non-Greenway funds. Perhaps most importantly, this program will leverage significant private funds from landowner investments in their own properties. These landowner investments are not reflected in the budget but will measure in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.
9. Consideration of Other Planning Efforts: The project is consistent with numerous local and regional planning documents. It is consistent with the New York State Open Space Plan, the Erie County Waterfront Trail System, the New York State Wildlife Action Plan, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategies and numerous other efforts to restore and reconnect this vital corridor.
10. Clear Benefits: The project offers clear benefits to the Niagara River and the Niagara River Greenway vision through restoration and enhancement of lands within the Greenway that will provide improved resources for wildlife, water quality benefits, and

widespread promotion and education regarding the Greenway and the region's natural heritage.

3: BUDGET

This budget requests start-up funding for the three-year program. Initial funding will allow us to seek and hire an expert to develop and run the program. As the program becomes visible in the region, participant fees and corporate sponsorships will begin to partially fund future years. This budget assumes that by the end of the three-year program we will have certified 750 homeowners and 50 businesses within the Niagara River Greenway.

The total cost for three years of the program is estimated to be \$552,000. We will request approximately \$450,000 from the Greenway Ecological Standing Committee. We hope to raise an additional \$40,000 from participant certification fees, and an additional \$62,000 from other sources including individual donors and grants.

SOURCES OF FUNDS	
Loan #1	\$0
Loan #1	\$0
Grant #1: Greenway	\$450,000
Grant #2	\$0
Other Source #1 (Participant certification fees)	\$40,000
Other Source #2 (Other fundraising)	\$62,000
TOTAL SOURCES OF FUNDS	\$552,000
USE OF FUNDS	
Planning	\$506,000
Construction	\$0
Acquisition	\$0
Administration	\$20,000
Operation and Maintenance / Year	\$0
Contingency (5%)	\$26,000
TOTAL USES OF FUNDS	\$552,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$552,000

Planning costs include a full-time staff position, additional staff support, intern stipends, staff travel, website design and updates, speaker and event costs, certification signs, and other printing, mailing, and outreach materials. Administration costs include grant administration. A 5% contingency was added to all planning and administration costs.

Allocated funds: The Land Conservancy has been actively researching this program idea by developing the Program concept and guidelines since 2015. We have identified other land trusts doing similar work in Portland Oregon and near Chicago. The Land Conservancy has already spent approximately \$5,000 of staff time on this research.

Operations and Maintenance Plan: As part of the Project, the project manager will develop educational materials that allow long-term sound management of *Nature's Habitat Certification Program* spaces. Funds acquired by the program as participant fees and sponsorships will assist with funding the program in the future.

4: COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The Land Conservancy will ensure public support for the project by meeting with local stakeholders, including city, town and county officials, regional environment groups, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Attached to this proposal are letters of support from Mayor Paul Dyster from the City of Niagara Falls, Supervisor Nate McMurray from Grand Island, NYS Assemblyman Sean Ryan, and Commissioner Tom Hersey from the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning. The Land Conservancy has already discussed this project with Niagara County Legislature Chair Wm. Keith McNall.

The Land Conservancy will engage key stakeholders in the development of the program. This will help ensure the success of the program. Through recent community engagement processes for the Stella Niagara Preserve and the Niagara Gorge Restoration projects, the Land Conservancy has forged neighborhood relationships among property owners that live within the Greenway. Our community engagement process at the Stella Niagara Preserve won an award from the Western New York Section and NY Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association in 2016.

The project is consistent with local and regional planning documents which were developed with significant public and stakeholder input.

The **2016 NYS Open Space Conservation Plan** identifies conservation goals specifically targeted by this program: protecting wildlife habitats for diversity and the sustainability of flora and fauna; protecting water quality; provide accessible, quality, outdoor recreation; and improving the quality of life and the health of our communities. As a means of achieving these goals, the Plan recommends working with partners, land owners, and local governments just as this project intends.

The **NYS Wildlife Action Plan** identifies the increase in risk of new occurrences of invasive species that is associated with residential and commercial development including the intentional introduction of invasive species in landscaping activities. The Plan also recommends promotion of practices to improve habitat for pollinators through pollinator-friendly landscaping and agricultural practices. Both of these important elements are addressed by *Nature's Habitat Certification Program*.

The **NYS DEC's Great Lakes Action Agenda** includes numerous goals targeted by the *Nature's Habitat Certification Program*. These include: combating invasive species, conserving and restoring fish and wildlife, enhancing community resiliency and ecosystem integrity; eliminating discharges of persistent toxic substances; controlling sediment, nutrient and pathogen releases; and promoting smart growth, redevelopment and adaptive reuse. We are excited offer a home and business owner program that so closely aligns with these goals.

The **Niagara River Remedial Action Plan (RAP)** specifies that homeowner actions can impact the watershed and asserts that everyone living in the Niagara River watershed has a role in improving biodiversity and local water quality.

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's **2015 Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy** recommends working "with public and private landowners on best management practices to gain maximum ecosystem and community values of wetlands including stormwater retention and filtration, native species diversity, and beauty" since most wetlands are located on private properties. This is directly aligned with *Nature's Habitat Certification Program*.

The Land Conservancy will oversee all phases of this project. The Land Conservancy will involve municipal agencies and stakeholders in planning for the program. Volunteers will be involved in implementation of the program and associated public activities.

5: ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

As outlined in the Project Narrative, the **Nature's Habitat Certification Program** would target landowners whose properties are near protected parks or nature preserves, waterways, or trails in or near the Greenway Focus Area, although properties throughout the Greenway would be possible. Protected greenspaces include, state, county and municipal parks, and public and private nature preserves or conservation areas. Waterways include the Niagara River Buffalo River, Scajaquada Creek, Tonawanda Creek, Big Sixmile Creek, and Gill Creek, among others. The trails includes in the Shoreline Trail and other walking and bike trails along Lake Erie and the Niagara River.

PROTECTING AND ENHANCING NATURAL RESOURCES

The main purpose of this project is to restore and enhance natural resources within properties in the Greenway. By building partnerships with homeowners and businesses, the Land Conservancy will enlist private citizens in healing the fabric of the greater Greenway landscape and also build a greater understanding the Greenway objectives. The Land Conservancy is committed to the long term implementation of this program.

PROPERTY OWNER SUPPORT

Private property owners will be invited to participate in the program. Participation is voluntary.

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT (SEQRA)

No SEQRA process or permits are required for the Land Conservancy to implement this program.

PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL PLAN

Not applicable.

LITERATURE CITED

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- Environment Canada, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Region II, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. 2012. *Niagara River Remedial Action Plan (RAP)*.
- Goddard M.A., Ikin K., Lerman S.B. (2017) Ecological and Social Factors Determining the Diversity of Birds in Residential Yards and Gardens. In: Murgui E., Hedblom M. (eds) Ecology and Conservation of Birds in Urban Environments. Springer, Chamberlin
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- Lerman and P. S. Warren. 2011. Ecological Applications, Vol. 21, No. 4 (June 2011), pp. 1327-1339 Published by: Wiley on behalf of the Ecological Society of America Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23022999> Accessed: 11-14-2017
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- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). 2016. *New York State Open Space Conservation Plan*.
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- The Niagara River Corridor IBA Working Group. 2002. Niagara River Corridor Important Bird Area Conservation Plan.
- Rose-Burney, Jajean. 2015. Draft Niagara River Corridor Ramsar Site Ramsar Information Sheet.

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REFERENCE WEBSITES

<https://www.columbialandtrust.org/project/portland-backyard-habitat-certification/>

<http://www.theconservationfoundation.org/>

<https://backyardhabitats.org>

<http://www.wildlifehc.org/get-certified/>

<http://delawarenaturesociety.org/CertifiedWildlifeHabitat/>

<https://www.atlantaaudubon.org/backyard-wildlife-sanctuary-certify>

<http://audubonva.org/wildlife-sanctuary-program>

<http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/landscaping/fblw/index.php>

ATTACHMENTS

1. Letters of Support
2. Potential Project Schedule
3. Map
4. Photos of example certified habitats
5. Proposed certification sign
6. Tax exempt status

1-LETTERS OF SUPPORT



Paul A. Dyster
Mayor

City of Niagara Falls, New York

P.O. Box 69, Niagara Falls, NY 14302-0069

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745 Main Street

Website: www.niagarafallsusa.org
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Phone: (716) 286-4310
Fax: (716) 286-4349

November 13, 2017

Jeanne Leccese
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, New York 14305

Dear Ms. Leccese:

I write to you today in support of the Western New York Land Conservancy's plan to create the Nature's Habitat program, an initiative that would enable private landowners to help in ongoing ecologic restoration work in the City of Niagara Falls as part of the Niagara River Greenway. This program would benefit Niagara Falls citizens and tourists and would foster improved civic pride and quality of life.

The City of Niagara Falls has faced many challenges in the past but we are now entering a new era in which environmental restoration and economic revitalization will go hand-in-hand. By involving landowners in removing invasive plant species, adding native plants, improving our water quality and reducing storm run-off through management of their own yards and neighborhoods, everyone will benefit in protecting the precious resources in the Niagara River and Gorge.

With improvements to our world-class state parks and the ongoing removal of sections of the Niagara Scenic Parkway, the Land Conservancy's program is a perfect opportunity to create a seamless interface between our portion of the Niagara River Greenway and the people who call this area home. The Land Conservancy has been an important partner in moving this work forward in a collaborative and engaging manner with our residents, and together we are committed to accomplishing what is clearly one of New York's most important conservation legacies.

For those reasons, I ask that you give your full support of the Nature's Habitat Program.

Sincerely,

Mayor Paul Dyster
City of Niagara Falls



OFFICE OF THE TOWN SUPERVISOR
NATHAN D. McMURRAY

November 7, 2017

Jeanne Leccese
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, NY 14305

Dear Ms. Leccese,

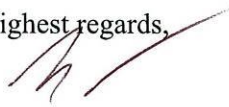
The Town of Grand Island strongly supports the Western New York Land Conservancy's initiative to develop and implement Nature's Habitat program, a home- and business-owner certification program to guide landowners in creating healthy sustainable landscapes that will complement the goals we are working so hard to achieve on Grand Island.

Grand Island is a unique resource located both in the center of the Niagara River and the larger Niagara River Greenway. As such, the Island offers a focal point that defines the aspirations of the Greenway Vision within this phenomenal corridor of priceless and irreplaceable natural resources. In recent years, we have partnered with the Land Conservancy to assure protection of the key natural lands. The punctuation of the Island by iconic State Parks protects the integrity of the values offered by undeveloped landscapes, yet these resources are under constant threats posed by invasive plant species.

The Nature's Habitat program would foster a partnership between public and private interests that would strengthen our collective efforts significantly. By assisting landowners in designing healthy landscapes surrounding their homes and businesses, we could improve water quality, and wildlife habitat, while also reducing flooding and the introduction of invasive species in the nearby lands we endeavor to protect. With the upcoming implementation of the West River Parkway Multi-use Path project, this program is a timely opportunity.

Please support the My Greenway Habitat Program as both a means of achieving improved ecosystem functions on Grand Island, and a crucial means of building partnerships with private landowners

Highest regards,


Nathan McMurray
Town Supervisor
Grand Island, NY



SEAN M. RYAN
Assemblyman 149th District

THE ASSEMBLY
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY

65 Grant Street
Buffalo, New York 14209
716-885-9630
FAX: 716-885-9636

Room 540
Legislative Office Building
Albany, New York 12248
518-455-4886
FAX: 518-455-4890
ryans@nyassembly.gov

November 14, 2017

Jeanne Leccese
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, NY 14305

Dear Ms. Leccese:

I write today regarding funding opportunities from the Niagara River Greenway Commission. I represent New York's 149th Assembly District. This district includes nearly all of the Niagara River Greenway Focus Area within the City of Buffalo. On behalf of my constituents, I am writing to support the Western New York Land Conservancy's Nature's Habitat program. This is exactly the type of initiative that will advance the Greenway vision of improving Buffalo's environment, it's neighborhoods, and it's quality of life.

The Niagara River Greenway and the funding provided by the New York Power Authority offer an incredible opportunity for our entire region. Most of the Greenway is highly urbanized, and many of the greatest ecological challenges are found on private properties surrounding our shorelines, parks, bike paths, and nature preserves. Expanding the Greenway requires thinking outside of the box. We need innovative solutions in order to address these challenges.

The Nature's Habitat program does just that. It would solicit and train homeowners and businesses to voluntarily improve their landscapes in ways that would provide water quality benefits, foster healthy wildlife populations, and utilize progressive management practices that are beneficial and sustainable. The program would identify and solicit property owners whose lands are located in key areas in the Niagara River Greenway thereby extending the Greenway into neighborhoods.

There is no question that Buffalo's vast waterfront, world-class greenspaces, and network of trails are fundamental to our future success. The Land Conservancy has long championed environmental conservation. This creative solution to ecological restoration will be part of our region's revitalization.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean M. Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sean" and last name "Ryan" clearly legible.

Sean M. Ryan
Member of Assembly



COUNTY OF ERIE

MARK C. POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

ERIE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

THOMAS R. HERSEY, JR.
COMMISSIONER

November 16, 2017

Jeanne Leccese
Niagara River Greenway Commission
3160 DeVeaux Woods Drive
Niagara Falls, NY 14305

Dear Ms. Leccese,

Erie County's Department of Environment and Planning strongly supports the Western New York Land Conservancy's "Nature's Habitat" program. The program provides a way to reach private landowners and enlist them as partners in achieving environmental health in communities adjacent to key features of the Niagara River Greenway.

This resourceful program incorporates a set of concepts that achieve improvements in landscaping, wildlife habitat, water quality, and land management techniques in community member's yards and forests and in businesses' properties. This will benefit the many parks and nature preserves in the Greenway that are impacted by invasive plant species that originate in nearby private properties, and the birds, pollinators, and other wildlife that will be able to extend their ranges outside of parks and greenspaces.

The program will also aid our efforts to relieve stormwater inputs into our sewer districts and will thus make the Greenway's ecosystem work more effectively to protect water quality and public properties. The program goes well with our vision for sustainable planning that protects and enhances our natural resources that bolsters our economic prosperity.

We are pleased that the Western New York Land Conservancy has taken an interest in partnering with the Greenway Commission and Erie County on achieving these important goals. Thank you for your consideration of this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Hersey, Jr.", is written over a horizontal line.

Thomas R. Hersey, Jr.
Commissioner of Environment & Planning

2-POTENTIAL PROJECT SCHEDULE

2018

Spring

- ✓ Hire a Program Manager.
- ✓ Develop website and educational materials.
- ✓ Plan and implement a kickoff event and public awareness campaign.
- ✓ Forge relationships with partner groups and municipalities.
- ✓ Send letters to priority areas in order to solicit participants.

Summer

- ✓ Begin to visit and make recommendations for home and business owners in order to have their properties certified under the ***Nature's Habitat Certification Program.***

Fall / Winter

- ✓ Assess initial achievements and refine the program as necessary.

2019

Spring

- ✓ Refine goals within specific neighborhoods and portions of the Greenway. Hold spring workshops. Solicit new input from neighborhood groups to address unforeseen challenges and best meet the needs of home and business owners.
- ✓ Continue to update website and educational materials. Tailor efforts to neighborhood needs.
- ✓ Conduct yard tours and workshops. Offer a series of classes at local educational institutions.
- ✓ Continue to refine program goals to assist partner organizations and municipalities.

Summer

- ✓ Complete a gap analysis to determine underrepresented portions of the Greenway and develop a means of seeking increased participation in those areas.
- ✓ Continue to visit and make recommendations for home and business owners in order to have their properties certified under the ***Nature's Habitat Certification Program.***

Fall / Winter

- ✓ Assess initial achievements and refine the program as necessary.

2020

Spring

- ✓ Hold spring workshops.
- ✓ Continue to update website and educational materials. Tailor efforts to neighborhood needs.
- ✓ Conduct yard tours and workshops. Offer a series of classes at local educational institutions.
- ✓ Continue to refine program goals to assist partner organizations and municipalities.
- ✓ Fundraising to include grant writing, major donor solicitations, fundraising letters and events.

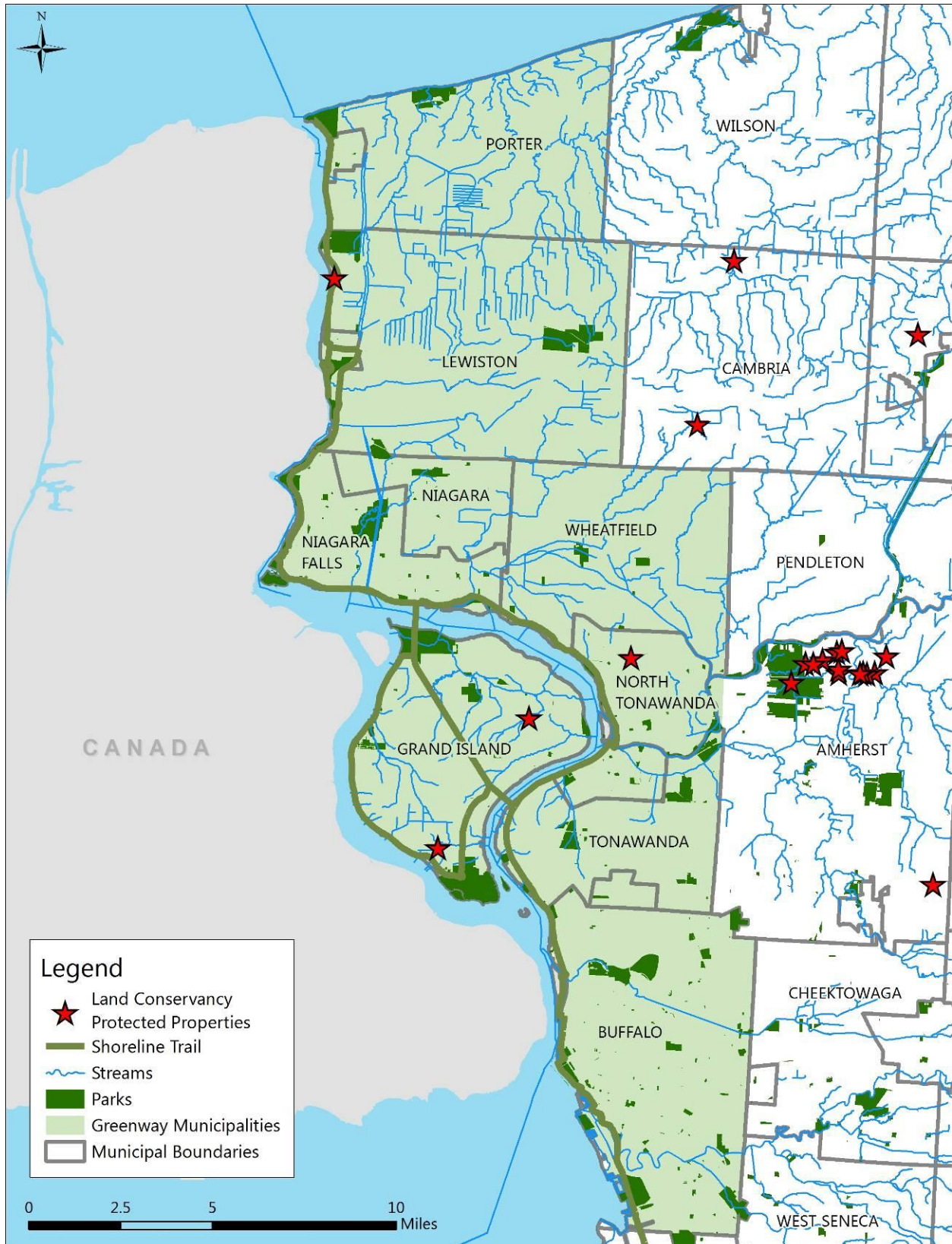
Summer

- ✓ Continue to visit and make recommendations for home and business owners in order to have their properties certified under the *Nature's Habitat Certification Program*.

Fall / Winter

- ✓ Assess achievements and refine the program as necessary.
- ✓ Send a newsletter to participants and sponsors highlighting accomplishments and soliciting input and assistance.
- ✓ Ongoing fundraising.

3-MAPS



4-PHOTOS OF EXAMPLE CERTIFIED HABITATS



<http://www.julieorrdesign.com/certified-wildlife-habitat/>



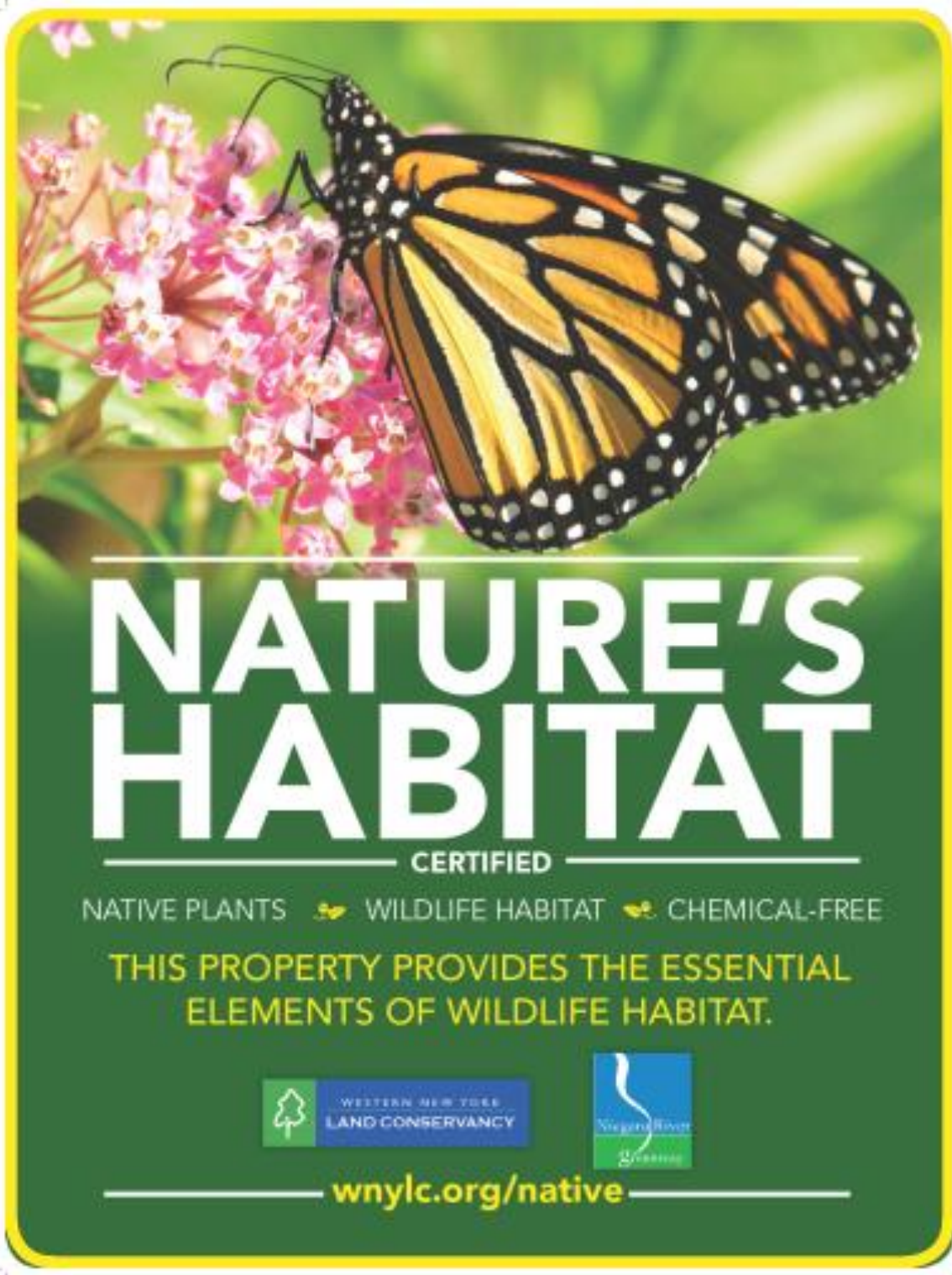
<https://dengarden.com/gardening/Bringing-Birds-to-the-Garden>



<http://wildlifehabitatpgh.blogspot.com/2016/06/>



5-PROPOSED CERTIFICATION SIGN



6-TAX EXEMPT STATUS



CINCINNATI OH 45999-0038

In reply refer to: 0248421964
June 11, 2013 LTR 4168C 0
22-3160426 000000 00
00019936
BODC: TE

WESTERN NEW YORK LAND CONSERVANCY
INC
PO BOX 471
EAST AURORA NY 14052



024975

Employer Identification Number: 22-3160426
Person to Contact: Ms. L Mitchell
Toll Free Telephone Number: 1-877-829-5500

Dear Taxpayer:

This is in response to your May 31, 2020, request for information regarding your tax-exempt status.

Our records indicate that you were recognized as exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code in a determination letter issued in April 1992.

Our records also indicate that you are not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because you are described in section(s) 509(a)(1) and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi).

Donors may deduct contributions to you as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to you or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes if they meet the applicable provisions of sections 2055, 2106, and 2522 of the Code.

Please refer to our website www.irs.gov/eo for information regarding filing requirements. Specifically, section 6033(j) of the Code provides that failure to file an annual information return for three consecutive years results in revocation of tax-exempt status as of the filing due date of the third return for organizations required to file. We will publish a list of organizations whose tax-exempt status was revoked under section 6033(j) of the Code on our website beginning in early 2011.