

Greenway Ecological Standing Committee and Greenway Ecological Fund
Meeting Agenda

July 22, 2026, 1:20 PM – 4:00 PM

Western New York Welcome Center, 1999 Alvin Road, Grand Island, NY 14072

General Meeting Agenda

- 1:20 Opening Remarks
- 1:30 GESG 2026 Cycle 2 Proposal Presentation
 - o Restoring Habitat for Grassland Birds at The Jim & Edna Braddell Preserve
- 2:00 GESG Cycle 1 Ongoing Project Presentations
 - o Sheridan Park Living Shoreline
 - o HULM Lab
 - o Alt Nature Trail walk

Greenway Ecological Standing Committee and Greenway Ecological Fund Meeting Summary

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General Meeting

Attendees

Name	Affiliation
Emily Dyett	Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
Kerrie Gallo	Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper on behalf of Niagara Relicensing Environmental Coalition
Charley Oddo	Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
Maris Grundy	Friends of Silo City
Josh Smith	Friends of Silo City
Asa	Friends of Silo City
Kendra Gorski	Gomez and Sullivan Engineers
Michele Lockett	Niagara River Greenway Commission
Cheryl Jobs	New York Power Authority
Erin Redding	NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Amy Roe	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Andrew Gaerte	Western New York Land Conservancy
Brittany Hernon	Western New York Land Conservancy

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Erin Redding started the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves.

GESC 2026 Cycle 2 Proposal Presentation

Braddell Preserve Habitat

Presented by Brittany Hernon

- The project area is located on Grand Island and encompasses 38 acres of undeveloped land that was formerly used for agricultural purposes.
- The primary objective of the project is to preserve and manage the site as grassland bird habitat.
- Field assessments have documented approximately 60 bird species utilizing the property. Based on habitat conditions, it is estimated that as many as 100 bird species may occur at the site.
- The proposed grassland management plan includes the following activities:
 - Rotational mowing of approximately one-third of the site annually, with block mowing conducted in late September to early October.
 - Invasive species control within unmowed areas using fall foliar herbicide treatments targeting:
 - Reed canary grass
 - Canada thistle, bull thistle, and teasel
 - Buckthorn, honeysuckle, and multiflora rose

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- Native seed installation planned for 2029 following completion of invasive species management efforts.
- Conduct all restoration and management activities outside of the bird breeding season to minimize impacts on nesting birds.
- The Western New York Land Conservancy (WNYLC) has secured matching funds from the Buffalo Ornithological Society to establish a vegetative tree screen along the property boundary to help visually buffer the adjacent storage facility.

Questions/Comments

1. Amy Roe asked whether the project boundary includes the paper street and whether the Town, as owner of the roadway, supports the proposal.

Brittany Hernon confirmed that the paper street is included within the project boundary and that the Town is in agreement with the project.

2. Amy Roe noted that the current proposal covers a three-year period and asked about long-term management after the grant term expires.

Brittany Hernon explained that WNYLC anticipates either managing the property in-house or pursuing a partnership with the New York PRISM program or another organization to continue mowing and habitat management activities.

Andrew Gaerte added that WNYLC intends to utilize the stewardship fund established for the project to support ongoing mowing and maintenance efforts.

Erin Redding suggested that WNYLC contact Alt Nature Preserve regarding the potential shared use of mowing equipment, given the preserve's proximity to the project site.

3. Erin Redding stated that the Committee will require a formal letter of approval from the Town confirming its authorization for mowing activities on its property in perpetuity as part of the proposed habitat management plan.

4. Emily Dyett asked whether any native grasses are currently present on the site

Brittany Hernon responded that only a limited amount of native grass species are present within the project area.

5. Charley Oddo asked which foliar herbicide product would be used to treat thistle species

Brittany Hernon responded that triclopyr is proposed for use in foliar treatments targeting thistle and other invasive plant species.

6. Erin Redding stated that the Committee will conduct its consistency review of the proposal by September. To support that review, Erin requested that WNYLC revise the proposal to include:

- Additional information describing coordination with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) regarding any required project permits and approvals.
- A more detailed description of the proposed rotational mowing approach, including how mowing activities will be implemented and managed over time.
- Documentation from the Town formally authorizing mowing activities within its property, including long-term approval for ongoing habitat management.

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7. *Charley Oddo asked if burning invasives has been considered on this site.*

Brittany Hernon said not at this site, noting it is an interesting approach but complicated to implement.

GESC Cycle 1 Ongoing Project Presentations

Sheridan Park Living Shoreline

Presented by Charley Oddo

- The project is located within Sheridan Park in the Town of Tonawanda and includes three interconnected restoration areas: the West Pond, portions of the Two-Mile Creek corridor, and a habitat corridor connecting the two sites within the Niagara River watershed.
- The project is intended to restore and enhance degraded shoreline, riparian, and wetland habitats through the conversion of underutilized turf grass areas to native meadow and wetland communities. Additional goals include improving water quality, reducing stormwater impacts, controlling invasive species, and creating habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife.
- Existing Site Conditions
 - West Pond Area: Approximately 5 acres consisting primarily of mowed lawn, a stormwater channel, and a shallow pond with limited aquatic vegetation.
 - Two-Mile Creek Corridor: Approximately 2 acres of narrow mowed lawn adjacent to Two Mile Creek, with restoration constrained by existing buried utilities.
- Proposed Restoration Activities
 - Convert mowed lawn areas to native meadow habitat.
 - Establish native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation within the connective corridor.
 - Continue invasive species management, with additional treatments planned for fall 2026.
- Project Progress
 - Completed site assessments, including soil sampling and a tree inventory.
 - Retained Wendel as the project design consultant; the project is currently at approximately 60% design completion.
 - Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting scheduled for next week, includes the Town of Tonawanda and others. He mentioned BNW's coordination is ongoing with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).
 - Permit applications are expected to be submitted in September 2026, with an anticipated six-month agency review period.
 - Construction is currently planned for summer 2027.
 - Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper has secured approximately \$18,800 in matching funds from the Town of Tonawanda, New York Sea Grant, the Pollinator Conservation Fund, and an additional funding source.

Questions/Comments

1. Amy Roe asked whether soils excavated during the West Pond restoration would be used to create a fully submerged wetland area.

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Charley Oddo explained that the design is intended to achieve water depths ranging from approximately 0 to 18 inches. He added that Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper (BNW) sees potential future Phase 2 opportunities to improve the connection between West Pond and Two Mile Creek.

2. Erin Redding asked Charley Oddo to elaborate on the potential Phase 2 aquatic connection between West Pond and Two Mile Creek.

Charley Oddo stated that a formal feasibility assessment has not yet been completed because consultant funding has been limited. However, he noted that BNW would be interested in exploring the concept further if additional funding or project savings become available.

3. Erin Redding requested that the TAC meeting materials be emailed to her, noting that she would be unable to attend the meeting and would like the opportunity to review the information.
4. Erin Redding asked about the design of the proposed no-mow signs. She noted that mowing encroachment has occurred within portions of the Ellicott Creek project area and emphasized the importance of clear and visible signage to prevent similar issues at Sheridan Park.

Charley Oddo responded that the project will include numerous signs with simple messaging and that BNW is considering a color-coded system to communicate mowing schedules and management areas.

5. Erin Redding noted that invasive crayfish are present in Two Mile Creek and asked whether BNW has a protocol for addressing crayfish encountered during project implementation. She recommended contacting Lindsey Yoder at NYSDEC for guidance.

Charley Oddo stated that he would follow up with NYSDEC staff and noted that Lindsey Yoder had been invited to the upcoming TAC meeting but was unavailable. He added that the project's proposed 10:1 shoreline slope is not expected to be significantly affected by crayfish burrowing, although crayfish have been observed on site in relatively high numbers.

6. Amy Roe asked whether landowners along Two Mile Creek have been consulted regarding the proposed plantings, noting that property owners involved in previous ecological restoration projects have occasionally expressed concerns about trees blocking views.
7. Charley Oddo responded that public outreach and stakeholder engagement activities are planned for October 2026 to gather input from adjacent landowners and community members. He noted that several mature walnut trees are already present on the site and that the proposed meadow planting plan does not include vegetation that would exceed the height of the existing walnut trees.
8. Kerrie Gallo asked whether the site is considered for sampling under the Niagara River Area of Concern (AOC) program. She was interested in understanding whether BNW could leverage additional funding sources for future expansion of the project. She encouraged the group to maintain open communication regarding any relevant funding opportunities.

Erin Redding noted that Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding may be available through to support projects through approximately the 60% design phase. Erin stated that she would discuss the matter with Mark Filipowski and follow up with additional information.

Holistic Urban Land Management Lab at Silo City

Presented by Maris Grundy

- Project Summary

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- Since the start of the project, the HULM Lab has more than doubled its nursery footprint by expanding into previously developed urban infrastructure areas on the site.
- The expanded nursery space has allowed the team to test and implement new plant propagation and growing techniques.
- Through partnerships with local organizations and practitioners, staff have received training in native seed collection methods specific to the region.
- Over the four-year project period, the HULM Lab successfully propagated and grew:
 - 12,139 trees and shrubs
 - 17,618 herbaceous plants
- The project also established the HULM Lab School, an educational program that provided hands-on learning experiences to more than 420 students during the four-year grant period.
- Maris noted that additional funding support for the educational program was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Lessons Learned
 - Focusing production on a targeted list of species improved germination rates and overall propagation success.
 - Limiting specialized plant orders helped avoid situations where surplus plants remained without identified planting locations.
 - Prioritizing resilient “workhorse” species proved effective because many restoration projects were located in disturbed environments where hardy native species established more successfully.
 - One of the primary challenges was the mismatch between nursery growing cycles and project funding cycles, which complicated production planning and implementation schedules.
 - The educational component of the program required significant staff time and resources but was often not fully accounted for within project budgets.
 - Native seed collection activities were similarly difficult to fund, as seed collection costs are not always explicitly included in grant budgets.
 - The project highlighted the need to balance contract growing (producing plants for specific, funded projects) with speculative growing (producing plants in anticipation of future restoration needs), each of which presents different financial risks and opportunities.
 - The educational program found that framing activities around fun, recreation, and hands-on exploration with a science component was more effective at engaging students than delivering traditional science-focused lessons.
 - Incorporating meals and snacks into program activities helped improve participation and allowed students to remain focused and engaged throughout the day.
- Future Plans
 - Maris Grundy stated that HULM Lab would like to continue operating and expanding its nursery production, educational programming, and community engagement efforts. However, maintaining the nursery and educational programs at their current scale will require additional long-term financial support and sustainable funding sources.

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- Maris Grundy noted that HULM Lab is open to exploring opportunities for a regional subscription model that could provide a more sustainable funding source for nursery operations while helping regional partners secure reliable access to locally grown native plants.

Questions/Comments

1. Cheryl Jobs congratulated the HULM lab for their success and said this was an interesting project.
2. Kerrie Gallo asked what a regional subscription plan would look like.

Maris Grundy explained that participating partners would contribute funding to help cover the nursery's operating and overhead costs. In return, partners would have access to an available seed list and could receive plant materials either at no cost or at a reduced cost, depending on the structure of the program. This approach would provide more stable funding for nursery operations while helping project partners obtain locally grown native plants.

Josh Smith added that a regional subscription model would also allow HULM Lab to engage in more speculative growing, enabling the nursery to maintain an inventory of commonly needed species and respond more effectively to last-minute restoration project needs.

3. Kerrie Gallo asked whether there are any indications of a path forward for implementing a regional subscription plan.

Maris Grundy responded that developing and pursuing a regional subscription model will require additional organizational capacity. She noted that HULM Lab currently has only three staff members and that securing a grant writer would be an important next step to help identify funding opportunities, support program development, and advance long-term sustainability efforts.

4. Maris Grundy noted that HULM Lab has sufficient funding to remain operational for approximately one year. Beyond that timeframe, the nursery's long-term sustainability will depend on securing additional project contracts and plant production orders, as well as identifying new funding sources to support ongoing operations.
5. Erin Redding asked whether HULM Lab has explored partnering with restoration projects earlier in the development process to secure financial commitments for plant production, rather than waiting until projects are fully funded and ready to place plant orders.

Maris Grundy responded that she is open to that approach and views it as a potential opportunity for HULM Lab. She noted that Olmsted Parks has previously approached HULM about forming that type of partnership. However, she indicated that the right project and partnership structure have not yet presented themselves to move the concept forward.

Site Visit

- Following the project presentations, committee members traveled to the Alt Nature Trail.
- During the tour, Josh Smith provided information on a variety of native plant species established at the site.
- Josh discussed the propagation and production of many of the plants at the HULM Lab and highlighted how these species are being utilized to support habitat restoration and ecological enhancement projects throughout the region.

End of Meeting.