



SLELO PRISM

St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Invasive Species Management
"Teaming Up to Stop the Spread of Invasive Species"

2025 Autumn Newsletter

*Celebrating Our Water Protectors and the
Aquatic Invasive Species Learning Experience*



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About the Cover: *Celebrating Our Water Protectors and the Aquatic Invasive Species Learning Experience*

Brittney Rogers, SLELO PRISM

As we wrap up the second year of the Aquatic Invasive Species Learning Experience (AISLE), we celebrate a growing community of Water Protectors who are making a meaningful impact across our region. This initiative, led by the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM), has empowered individuals to learn about aquatic invasive species and native aquatic plants, while taking action to protect our vital water resources.

Since the program's inception, 107 participants have engaged in hands-on learning experiences focused on identifying, understanding, and managing AIS. These participants come from diverse backgrounds including students, educators, conservationists, and everyday nature enthusiasts, all united by a shared commitment to preserving the ecological integrity of our freshwater ecosystems.

AISLE offers a unique blend of education and stewardship. Through virtual and in person workshops, field activities, and digital resources, participants gain the knowledge and tools needed to recognize invasive species such as hydrilla, Eurasian watermilfoil, and water chestnut, while also learning to appreciate and protect native aquatic plants that support biodiversity and water quality.

A key highlight of the program is Water Protectors initiative, which encourages individuals to "adopt" a waterbody in their community. This stewardship model fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, empowering volunteers to monitor and report on the health of their chosen waterway.



To date, 31 people have adopted waters across the region, from small ponds to major tributaries, contributing valuable data and observations that support regional conservation efforts. These Water Protectors are not only helping to detect and prevent the spread of AIS, they're also building a network of informed and engaged communities who care deeply about the future of our waters. Their efforts are visible on the interactive [**Water Protector dashboard**](#), which showcases the breadth of participation and the geographic diversity of adopted sites.

The success of year two reflects the power of community-driven conservation. By combining education with action, the AIS Learning Experience is cultivating a culture of stewardship that extends beyond the classroom and into the field. Participants leave the program not only with new knowledge but with a renewed sense of purpose and connection to the natural world. As we look ahead to year three we invite more individuals to join this growing movement. Whether you're a seasoned environmentalist or simply curious about your local waterways, there's a place for you in the Water Protector community. Together, we can protect our aquatic ecosystems for generations to come. [**Sign-up**](#) to receive an invitation to join the AISLE in 2026!

Funding and Research Opportunities

Invasive Species Grant Program Round 4:

Approximately **\$4 million** is available through the latest round of the Invasive Species Grant Program, funded by the **Environmental Protection Fund**. This program supports projects that address both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species across New York State.

Eligible applicants: Municipalities, academic institutions, and not-for-profits.

Project categories: spread prevention, rapid response, research, and site restoration.

Grant range: \$11,000–\$250,000 (25% match required)

Deadline: December 17, 2025, at 3 p.m.

[Program website](#)

Stream Corridor Management Pilot Program:

The Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Soil and Water Conservation Committee are inviting County Soil and Water Conservation Districts to apply for funding under the Stream Corridor Management Pilot Program. This initiative supports the creation of healthy stream corridor systems.

Deadline: December 8th, 2025.

Projects may include stream stabilization, riparian buffer establishment, and mitigation of roadside erosion from runoff and failing culverts.

This program is part of New York's Ocean and Great Lakes Initiative.

Visit the [RFP 0365 – Stream Corridor Management Program](#) for more information.

Water Resources Research/Outreach Pre-Proposals (2026):

WRI and DEC invite proposals for applied research, outreach, and policy analysis supporting statewide water resource goals.

Deadline: November, 24th, 2025.

Contact Brian Rahm at bgr4@cornell.edu (copy nyswri@cornell.edu).

[RFP Overview](#)

[WRI Grants Website](#)

2026 EAB Parasitoid Release and Research Program: The USDA is now accepting site and research requests for the 2026 Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Biocontrol Program. Biocontrol species: *Oobius agrili*, *Spathius galinae*, *Spathius agrili*, and *Tetrastichus planipennisi*. **For 2025 release sites:** Continue with second-year releases at the same locations. **For new 2026 sites:** Around 100 new sites on public lands will be accepted, with priority given to new counties and states.

- **Deadline:** Site and research requests are due by December 1st, 2025.
- Email EAB.Biocontrol.Program@USDA.gov to receive the required documents to submit your request.
- [MBC Parasitoid Dashboard](#): view parasitoid release sites or identify potential areas where releases have not occurred yet.
- [EAB Biocontrol Release Guidelines](#)

Partner Spotlight: Reforestation Taking Place in Jefferson County

Mandy St. Hilaire, The Nature Conservancy

New York State has set one of the most ambitious climate goals in the country: plant 680 million trees by 2040. The Nature Conservancy is helping lead the charge, with a bold plan to contribute towards the state goal of reforesting 1.7 million acres—an effort that could sequester nearly 5 million metric tons of CO₂ by 2050. Reforestation is not just a climate solution; it's a chance to restore ecosystems, improve water and air quality, and create new economic opportunities for communities across the state.

To meet this challenge, we must scale up dramatically—from planting approximately 1,000 acres annually today to 200 times that by 2040. That means building infrastructure, engaging landowners, and testing scalable models for success.

In September 2024, The Nature Conservancy launched the Reforestation Demonstration project, primarily landing in Jefferson County—one of the most promising areas in the state for tree planting. According to our [Reforestation Potential report](#) produced in collaboration with Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Jefferson County has some of the highest opportunity for reforesting post-agricultural lands. Combined with support from the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), we were able to begin testing a new program to engage landowners and plant trees.

In just one year, we've planted 15,850 trees across 35 acres in Jefferson and Franklin counties through offering two landowner incentives – [Tapping into Your Land's Potential](#) and [Planting with Purpose](#). This work was made possible through partnerships with local nurseries, contractors, and SWCDs. The Demonstration is designed to allow us to test new approaches to outreach, planting, and monitoring that we can share with partners to scale reforestation. In Spring 2026, a combination of these two incentives is being offered to landowners in Jefferson, Franklin, and St Lawrence Counties in partnership with local SWCDs.

With 97% of New York's reforestation potential located on private lands, landowner engagement is essential.



Encouragingly, [64% of New York landowners](#) report being motivated to reforest portions of their land. Our new incentive program is designed using social science insights—to meet landowners where they are and encourage participation. Partners are key in supporting landowner engagement and increasing local capacity for reforestation implementation. **Our goals are clear:**

- Deliver measurable progress toward reforesting 1.7 million acres.
- Build a scalable proof of concept for large-scale planting.
- Generate insights to guide long-term sustainability. Mobilize partners and build momentum statewide.

Reforestation helps restore native habitats, reduce erosion, and build resilience against invasive species. By planting the right trees in the right places, we're not just storing carbon—we're strengthening ecosystems.

The Nature Conservancy is acting now—on the ground, with partners, and with purpose. Jefferson County is just the beginning. With bold investment, visionary leadership, and your partnership, we can turn this vision into reality.

For more information, including participation in our Reforestation Demonstration as a landowner or partner, reach out to The Nature Conservancy's NY Reforestation team at ReforestNY@tnc.org.

A New Landscape Pest, Box Tree Moth

Jacob Leeser – Cornell University Integrated Pest Management

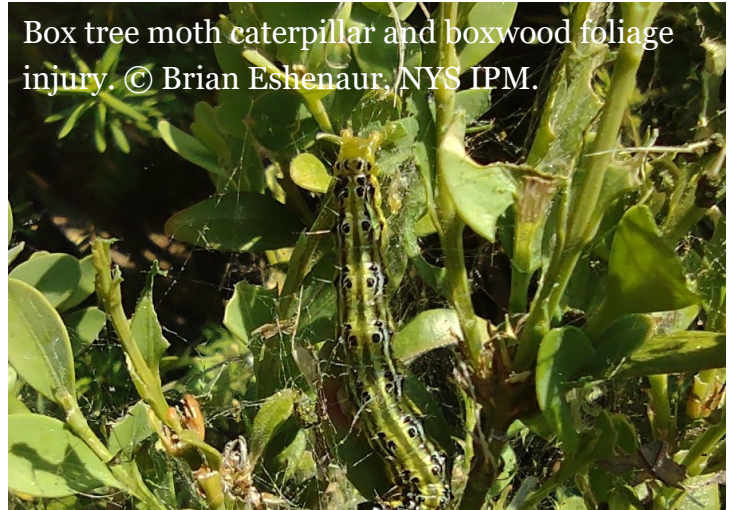
Home gardeners and landscape professionals in the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario region should be on the lookout for a new invasive pest. The box tree moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*) has the capacity to quickly destroy boxwood plantings if not identified and treated. Boxwoods are popular evergreen landscape shrubs known for their deer resistance, shade tolerance, and their low-maintenance, slow-growing habit. They can be used in foundation plantings, low hedges or even topiaries and knot gardens.

Box tree moth (BTM) first found its way to NY in 2021 along Lake Erie in Niagara County and has been slowly moving eastward. There are currently small populations near Lake Erie and the St. Lawrence River in Jefferson, and St. Lawrence counties.

Box tree moth feeds on the foliage as a green caterpillar with a black head. They grow from a minute size at the time of hatching to over an inch long in as little as two weeks, at which point they will pupate into adult moths to mate and lay eggs. Moths are white with brown wing margins, with a crescent-moon marking through the brown margin useful for positive identification.

Only the caterpillars actively harm plants, which they do by feeding on the leaves. If left unmanaged, BTM can reproduce rapidly, completing up to three life cycles in a year. High populations can defoliate a boxwood thoroughly enough to kill the plant within weeks.

Box tree moth caterpillar and boxwood foliage injury. © Brian Eshenaur, NYS IPM.



BTM caterpillars are clever enough to hide deep within the dense canopy of the boxwood. While sureying for BTM, it is important to part the outer branches and inspect the center of the shrub. Look for the distinctive feeding patterns of BTM, where both sides of a leaf are eaten but the mid-stem remains intact. As with any invasive species, early detection and rapid response are the best methods to control BTM. If you suspect you have found box tree moth, please inform NYS Agriculture and Markets by reporting it [here](#).

Cornell IPM has BTM management resources on their [Box Tree Moth webpage](#). Small populations can be controlled by hand-picking the caterpillars off shrubs. There are products registered in New York State for controlling this pest, including organic options such as neem oil and mineral oil. A full list can be found at [this link](#).

For gardeners looking circumvent this pest, Cornell IPM has composed a list of [alternative plants](#). For questions about BTM and other invasive pests, contact Jacob Leeser, Cornell University IPM Program jl4353@cornell.edu.

Species Spotlight: *Parrotfeather*

SLELO PRISM-Adrien Owens

Myriophyllum aquaticum, commonly referred to as Parrotfeather, is an aquatic plant native to South America. Spread by human dispersal, mainly by the aquatic plant trade for aquarium and garden ponds, *Myriophyllum aquaticum* has spread invasively across at least 26 states in North America, and around the world. Once established in a new environment the plant easily spreads downstream in the form of vegetative fragments or attached to ships or boats. There are only female plants in North America, meaning there are no seeds produced from the plants in the U.S. The foliage dies off in winter, and the roots produce new shoots in the spring.

How to Identify:

Myriophyllum aquaticum is a rhizomatous aquatic perennial that has both submerged and emergent feathery leaves that appear in whorls along their stems, which can grow up to 6 feet long. Submerged leaves are 0.6-1.4 in. long and have 20 to 30 divisions per leaf. Submerged foliage is chartreuse in color. The stems and leaves of parrotfeather can stand nearly a foot out of the water. Emergent leaves are stiff, in whorls of four to six, pinnately compound, and finely divided into ten or more thread like sections. Emergent leaves are 0.8-2 in. long, less divided and dark blue-green, much different than submerged leaves. Small yellow-green flowers bloom in summer from the leaf axils of emergent stems.

Significance:

Despite being invasive in many regions, *Myriophyllum aquaticum* is still commonly sold



Parrotfeather. Photo credit, Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org

as a water garden plant, which has the potential to escape into local waterways. Parrotfeather can be found in freshwater lakes, ponds, and canals with slow-moving waters. This invasive plant competes with native aquatic plant communities, forming dense mats that can entirely cover the surface of the water providing habitat for mosquitos. Parrotfeather is a Tier-1 species, meaning it is *not* known to be present within our region but it is within a 100 mile radius, or a clear pathway exists. An established population of parrotfeather was found by the Finger Lakes PRISM in Onondaga County in 2025. Once established, control of this plant is extremely costly, making early detection a critical measure to protect our region's native plant diversity and access to our waterways.

If you think you may have found parrotfeather please report it to NYiMapInvasives.

If you are unable to report sightings directly to iMap, please send clear, up-close photos of the plant and GPS coordinates of the location to Adrien.Owens@tnc.org.

Tracking Invasive Species with eDNA

Emma Kerl – SUNY Oswego

Researchers from SUNY Oswego's Aquatic Conservation Laboratory are collaborating with the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM) to monitor and detect invasive species in the Lake Ontario watershed using environmental DNA (eDNA) technology.

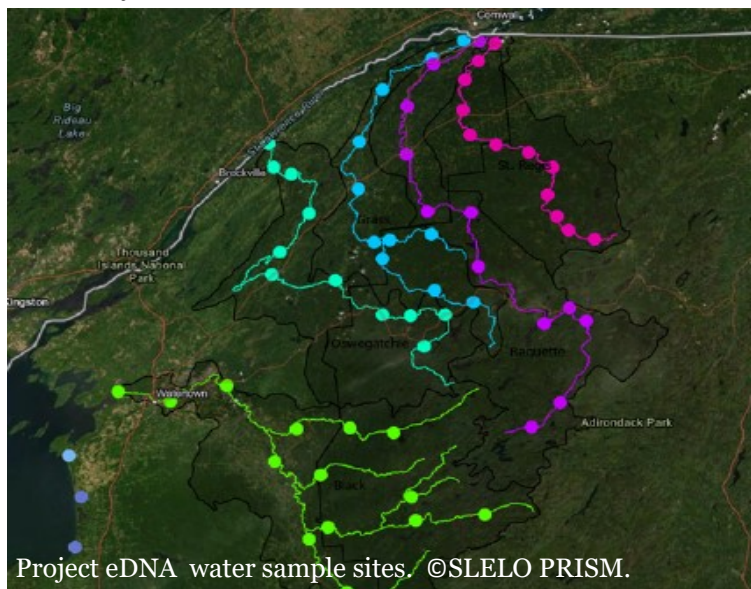
The research project is supported by a \$10,000 award from The Nature Conservancy for its work on identifying non-native species that rapidly colonize and permanently alter aquatic communities, such as those in the Great Lakes region. Using eDNA, researchers can detect these species far sooner than traditional "fish-in-hand" surveys, enabling earlier action to contain or prevent their spread.

Environmental DNA is genetic material that organisms leave behind in their environment. For aquatic species, this means scientists can collect a simple water sample and screen it for DNA from fish, invertebrates, plants, or even bacteria. The approach functions like forensic science for ecosystems — as long as researchers find a genetic footprint, they know the species is present.

Traditional methods for detecting invasive species often rely on visible observations or physically capturing the organism, which can only occur after a population has already established itself. eDNA provides an early warning system, allowing action to prevent further spread. Invasive species pose a significant threat to the ecological balance of



the Great Lakes region, outcompeting native fish, disrupting food webs, and, in some cases, preying on valuable species. The economic impact is also substantial, putting the region's multibillion-dollar fishing industry and local economies at risk.



The project is focusing on waterbodies in the Lake Ontario watershed and screening for nine invasive species known to affect the region: rusty crayfish, bighead carp, silver carp, northern snakehead, tench, round goby, tubenose goby, hydrilla and Eurasian watermilfoil. Once a positive detection occurs, response efforts can include targeted field surveys, physical removal or other containment efforts.

Seeds of Stewardship: Growing a Native Seed Network for Our Region

Isaac Matlock, CCE Jefferson

A new initiative, *Seeds of Stewardship*, is taking root across Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence counties. Led by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County, the project aims to build a regional native seed network that supports ecosystems, restores habitats, and strengthens our connection to the land and water.

Focusing on the northeastern Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River region, the project highlights the importance of native plants in protecting shorelines, improving water quality, and supporting wildlife and pollinators. Restoration efforts often struggle to find locally adapted plant material—species suited to our unique soils and climate. *Seeds of Stewardship* addresses this by creating a community-based system for collecting, storing, and growing seeds from our region's ecosystems.

By training volunteers, landowners, and students to collect and propagate native seeds, the project will enhance both environmental health and community engagement. Participants will learn how native plants reduce erosion, filter stormwater, and provide habitat, while creating beautiful, biodiverse landscapes. Educational workshops and hands-on programs will invite people of all ages to participate through seed collection, citizen science, and habitat restoration.

The initiative supports key conservation efforts, including the Great Lakes Action Agenda and New York State's Native Plant Seed Supply Program ([Senate Bill S7849](#)). These programs promote sustainable, local approaches to water protection, habitat restoration, and climate resiliency.



Isaac Matlock leading a group of volunteers on a seed collection program. © Isaac Matlock

By building local seed supply chains and increasing the use of regionally adapted plants, *Seeds of Stewardship* will make native plants more accessible and ensure conservation efforts reflect our local ecology.

In 2026, the project will establish three community seed storage hubs and twenty certified seed collection sites across diverse habitats—dunes, wetlands, forests, and grasslands. Volunteers will be trained to collect seeds using national conservation standards, ensuring long-term genetic diversity and ecological health. Collected seeds will be available to conservation groups, schools, and municipalities for shoreline stabilization, pollinator gardens, and habitat recovery.

By the end of 2026, *Seeds of Stewardship* aims to collect and store seeds from at least 15 native species, develop a regional wild seed collection guide, and train dozens of volunteers in restoration techniques. Its broader goal is to inspire lasting stewardship, empowering communities to care for the natural resources that make our region unique. Through collaboration, education, and hands-on conservation, *Seeds of Stewardship* will help our landscapes thrive while deepening people's connection to the place they call home.

Seeking Volunteers to Monitor Vernal Pools in NY

Ashley Ballou-NYNHP

Vernal pools, wetlands that can be difficult to find and are often overlooked, play an important role in a healthy New York forest eco-system. These wetlands are usually small and shallow, are flooded for a few months in the spring, and lack fish, but they provide habitat for countless species throughout the year.

Species such as spotted salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*), jefferson salamanders (*Ambystoma jeffersonianum*), and wood frogs (*Lithobates sylvaticus*) use the flooded pools in the spring to lay their eggs, and the pools stay wet long enough for them to hatch and metamorphose. Since vernal pools eventually dry out, fish are unable to maintain populations in these wetlands, enabling amphibian eggs and larvae to develop without a high rate of predation. Countless other species, such as marbled salamanders (*Ambystoma opacum*), fairy shrimp, and turtles, use vernal pools throughout the year for breeding, feeding, and shelter.

Despite the important role vernal pools play in our landscape, there is still much to learn about them because these small landscape features can be difficult to locate and conserve. The New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) is working with organizations in Great Lakes states to increase knowledge of vernal pools using new mapping tools, and recruiting volunteers for a new community science program called NY POOLS! Remote sensing will be used to identify potential vernal pools in the Western, Northern, and Capital regions of New York.



Spotted salamander and eggs. © Ashley Ballou.

The northern focal region for this project is within Jefferson and St. Lawrence counties and overlaps with much of the SLELO region. Community scientists will be trained using a combination of webinars, training manuals, and in-person workshops beginning in 2026. Volunteers will be assigned potential pools based on their location and availability, and they will be asked to visit up to three times throughout the year to verify that it is a vernal pool and to monitor for breeding amphibians and other important species. Data collected by volunteers will be used to increase our knowledge of vernal pool productivity throughout the state, expand a database of New York's vernal pools, and test the accuracy of new mapping tools. NYNHP welcomes participation from volunteers with any level of knowledge about vernal pools! Sign up to become a volunteer for NY POOLS, or to be added to an email list by filling out this [online form](#). If you're interested in this opportunity, reach out to Ashley Ballou at Asley.Ballou@dec.ny.gov.

iMap Data Viewer: *Intersection between Native & Invasive Species*

Mitch O'Neil, NYNHP & iMapInvasives

The SLELO region hosts many unique natural communities (groupings of plants and animals that occur together and share a common environment). For example, several are associated with the globally rare alvars, limestone plains which occur around the Great Lakes and create unique conditions for rare plants like the state endangered lesser fringed gentian (*Gentianopsis virgata* ssp. *virgata*) pictured below.



Lesser fringed gentian (*Gentianopsis virgata* ssp. *virgata*, S1). © Steve Young.

Invasive plants like swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum* spp.) also establish in these habitats, outcompeting and displacing native vegetation, including rare plants. This is not an isolated phenomenon; interactions like this between invasive species and native biodiversity are seen across the region and state. Below is an iMap record of swallowwort growing in an alvar grassland.



Pale swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum rossicum*)
©Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM.

The New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) collects and maintains data on native species and natural communities across the state, focusing on those that are rare or in decline. This includes threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species.

NYNHP also administers [iMapInvasives](#) as the invasive species database for the state, and analyzes how invasive species intersect with rare species. This includes a map viewer shared with PRISM staff highlighting areas with invasive species occurring near rare species populations.

PRISMs use this information to target their invasive species management efforts to protect biodiversity. For example, SLELO prioritizes invasive species removals and suppression in areas with rare native species and ecological communities threatened by impacts from invasive species.

To learn more about rare species and significant natural communities in New York, visit the New York Natural Heritage [website](#) or the following publicly available resources:

Conservation Guides: informational profiles on many of the rare species and significant natural communities in the state.

DEC's Environmental Resource Mapper: includes generalized rare and protected species locations.

Map of Significant Natural Communities: on the NYS GIS clearinghouse.

A Resounding Success: 2025 Eastern Lake Ontario Invasive Species Symposium

Megan Pistolese-Shaw, SLELO PRISM

The energy was electric at SUNY Oswego's Sheldon Hall Ballroom on June 12th, as over 100 passionate attendees gathered for the most successful Eastern Lake Ontario Invasive Species Symposium to date! With 20 dynamic presenters, 14 engaging exhibitors, and a keynote address from the renowned Robin Wall Kimmerer, the event was a vibrant celebration of collaboration, innovation, and ecological stewardship.

This year's theme, **"Adaptive Approaches for Terrestrial and Aquatic Invasive Species Management,"** struck a powerful chord. It emphasized the integration of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), the impacts of climate change, and the urgent need for biodiversity restoration. The agenda was thoughtfully designed to foster meaningful dialogue, featuring interactive conversation prompts and ample time for networking and exploration of exhibitor booths.

The excitement didn't actually begin there. On June 11th, hands-on workshops at SUNY Oswego's Rice Creek Field Station brought theory into practice. Participants contributed to emerald ash borer biological control monitoring and engaged in a Water Protector's session led by aquatic ecology experts, Dr. Eric and Berre Hellquist—an unforgettable experience that deepened understanding of our lands and waters.



Behind the scenes, a dedicated team of volunteers and partners made it all possible. Special thanks to the Education Committee members—Cierra LaDorothy-Williams, Jillian Lee, Linda Gibbs, Emily Fell, Jayla White, Payton Reese, and Lucas Russell—whose tireless efforts ensured the event ran seamlessly, and to photographers, Kelly Roe and Jillian Lee.

For those who couldn't attend or want to relive the experience, recordings of the presentations, the full agenda, slides, and speaker resources are available on our [symposium resources webpage](#). If you joined us, we'd love to hear your thoughts through our [symposium](#) and [workshop](#) evaluation forms.

This year's symposium wasn't just an event, it was a movement. A testament to what's possible when knowledge, community, and action come together to protect our ecosystems.



Terrestrial Restoration and Resiliency Updates

Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM

2025 Management Efforts Update:

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*):

- 73 Total Sites Monitored
- 32 Sites with no germination
- 3 Retired
- 19 Sites root cut
- 20 Sites herbicide treatment
- 2 Sites with no permission to treat

Swallowwort (*Vincetoxicum rossicum*):

- 50 HPAs being managed
- 10 PCAs
- 169.46 Acres under management (HPA)
- 36.39 Acres of Presence Area

Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*):

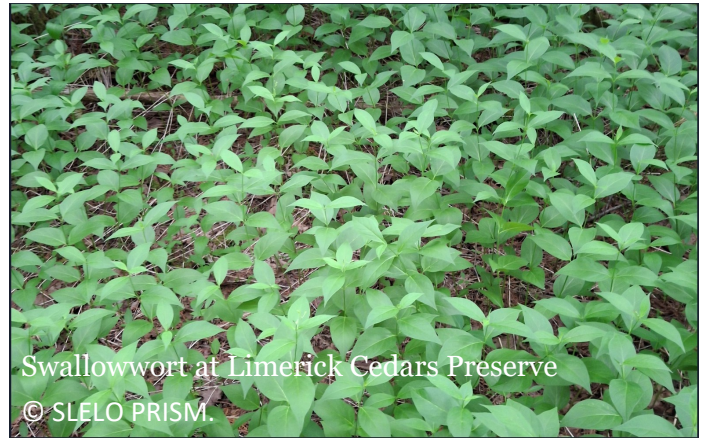
- 9 HPAs being managed
- 5 PCAs
- 7.32 Acres under management (HPA)
- 2.33 Acres of Presence Area

Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*):

- 17 HPAs being managed
- 10 PCAs
- 30.67 Acres under management (HPA)
- 3.8 Acres of Presence Area

Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

- 4 HPAs being managed
- 2 PCAs
- 5.40 Acres under management (HPA)
- 1.32 Acres of Presence Area



Swallowwort at Limerick Cedars Preserve

© SLELO PRISM.

2025 Early Detection Surveys:

The 2025 Invasive Species Surveys were recently completed. Surveys were completed at approximately 117 Highly Probable Areas (HPAs) on 7 Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs), 35 of these have active treatments occurring and have been evaluated for post-treatment success. We found common invasive species such as pale swallowwort, phragmites, and invasive knotweed; no Tier 1 or 2 species were detected. More details will be included in our annual report. Native species surveys at these PCAs were also conducted to determine the best plants for restoration work.

2025 Biocontrol Updates:

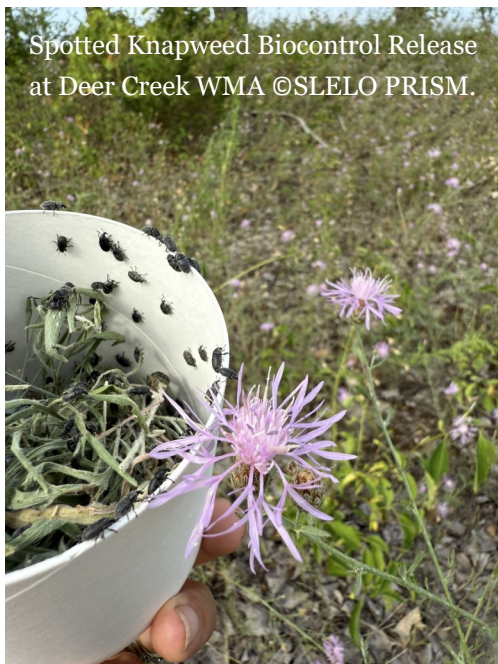
Swallowwort: Establishment surveys for *Hypena opulenta*, the biocontrol moth for swallowwort, were conducted at Wehle State Park and Grenadier Island from June-August. Unfortunately, no moths or evidence of their presence were found at either site during these surveys. Based on the results of these surveys and those in years past, we will not be releasing or surveying for *Hypena opulenta* moths in the future. However, we will continue chemical and manual/mechanical management until another approved biocontrol is found.

Terrestrial Restoration and Resiliency Updates

Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM

Emerald Ash Borer

This summer was the 2nd year of the EAB Biocontrol Recovery/Establishment Survey at Rice Creek Field Station at SUNY Oswego. This survey involved placing 15 yellow pan traps on trees that had to be checked every week for 15 weeks. These traps attract and capture many different insects, including the three parasitoid wasps that were released in 2022/2023 as biocontrol for emerald ash borer. Last year, SLELO Staff, partners, and volunteers found all three of the parasitoid wasps, (*Spathius galinae*, *Tetrastichus planipennisi*, and *Oobius agrili*), while this year we found *Spathius* and *Tetrastichus*, but could-n't find *Oobius*. According to the USDA, we have good evidence that *Spathius* and *Tetrastichus* are establishing and *Oobius* may also be establishing but needs further surveying to determine that. Our hope is that these species will all become fully established and protect the young and uninfested ash trees at SUNY Oswego and the surrounding region.



Spotted Knapweed Biocontrol Release at Deer Creek WMA ©SLELO PRISM.

Spotted Knapweed:

In July and August, we released two species (400 in total) of weevils approved as biocontrol for spotted knapweed at Deer Creek WMA to help protect the fragile dune ecosystem along Lake Ontario. These species are *Larinus spp.*, which target the flower/seed head, and *Cyphocleonus Achates*, which targets the roots.



Restoration Planting at El Dorado Preserve. ©SLELO PRISM.

Fall 2025 Restoration Area Plantings:

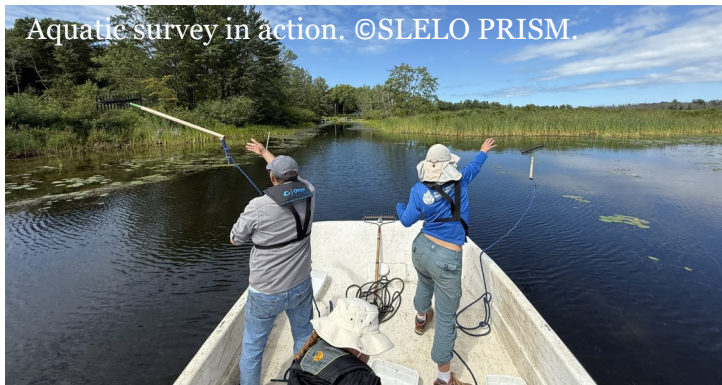
From October 20th-25th, SLELO PRISM, along with New York DEC and Parks Staff and 18 volunteers, planted nearly 1,400 plants at four restoration areas (Deer Creek WMA, El Dorado Preserve, Black Pond, and Selkirk Fen Preserve).

To support diversity, we selected 22 plant species, with up to 15 of each species planted at one restoration area. Resources such as iNaturalist, New York Flora Atlas website, and the New York Natural Heritage Program's Ecological Communities Guide were used to determine if each species was native and habitat appropriate for these sites.

Aquatic Restoration and Resiliency Updates

Adrien Owens, SLELO PRISM

This year, our team conducted aquatic field surveys across seven water bodies including Mud Lake, South Sandy Creek, Salmon River, French Creek, Perch River, North Sandy Pond, and Muskellunge Creek. Aquatic plant surveys include using a point intercept approach, otherwise known as rake toss sampling to assess aquatic vegetation below the surface of the water. This helps us monitor and track plant community composition of native and invasive aquatic plant assemblages in our region.



Aquatic survey in action. ©SLELO PRISM.

Specialized surveys were also launched this year focused on fanwort detection along the reach of the Little Salmon River into the Bay of Lake Ontario. Since Fanwort was detected for *the first time* in nearshore habitats of the Great Lakes *last year* in Black Creek, our team launched a rapid response effort to gauge the establishment of this species, and how far downstream towards lake Ontario the population has spread. Unfortunately, our team and partners with DEC, who assisted with the survey detected fanwort close to the mouth of Lake Ontario. This species spreads easily via fragments carried by water flow and boats, which is why the discovery of fanwort close to Lake Ontario is of special concern. We plan to continue to track this population and construct a management plan based on our findings.

Team SLELO at work on the water. ©SLELO PRISM.



Last year, team SLELO detected and mapped a population of *Nelumbo lutea*, or American lotus, in Lakeview Wildlife Management Area. Believed to have been introduced to New York by First Peoples for food, unchecked, this species forms dense canopies over the shallow margins of lakes and rivers, which can restrict water movement, impact water quality, and block sun-light from entering the water column. We have observed a rapid expansion of this population from 0.80 acres in Fall 2024 to 1.4 acres in Summer 2025. With a wave of volunteers, we removed all flower heads containing seeds to contain the spread of this population.

Volunteers assist with flower head removal and make fashionable hats. ©SLELO PRISM.



A Bird's Eye View of Invasive Spread and Treatment Success

Carolyn Koestner, SLELO PRISM

This summer, we had the opportunity to use our new drone to repeat and expand upon aerial monitoring work that SLELO conducted in 2021.

Over the course of the summer, our Conservation and GIS Analyst, and resident drone pilot, Carolyn conducted ten drone flights across Deer Creek WMA and Lakeview WMA WMA to monitor spread of Water chestnut and effectiveness treatments in collaboration with DEC regional staff. Flights were conducted before and after water chestnut treatments so that we could track treatment efficacy in near real time.

We also used these flights to track progress of treatments for other species such as phragmites. For example, in the images below you can see the initial extent of a patch of Phragmites at Lakeview WMA in 2021, updated imagery from this year shows a significant decrease in the size of the patch and the emergence of new vegetation.



Finally, this year we also began incorporating the drone into our Forest Health Monitoring work by taking aerial imagery of one of our hemlock health monitoring plots. Moving forward, we plan to refly this same flight annually to track health of this stand as it continues to face increasing pressure from Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

It was successful season of drone flying and we look forward to continuing to expand upon and incorporate more of this tool into our work.



2021 SLELO PRISM drone imagery for Deer Creek WMA phragmites patch. ©SLELO PRISM/TNC.

2025 SLELO PRISM drone imagery for Deer Creek WMA phragmites patch. Note the decrease in size of the patch following treatments from SLELO©SLELO PRISM/TNC.

Protector's Activity

Megan Pistolese-Shaw, SLELO PRISM

The air is crisp, the leaves are ablaze with color, and the scent of campfire smoke drifts through the woods. It's fall in the Northeast—and for hunters, anglers, RV owners, and anyone who treasures a weekend under the stars, it's prime time to head into the backcountry and enjoy a cozy campfire.

Before you pack up your gear and load firewood into your vehicle, there's something you need to know. Firewood can carry hidden threats. Invasive species like the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), invasive longhorned beetle (*Anoplophora glabripennis*), and spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) can hide within firewood for months, even surviving harsh winters. When firewood is moved from one location to another, invasive species like these can emerge and wreak havoc on forests, wildlife habitats, and the very campsites we all enjoy.

What Can You Do to Help?

- Be in the first line of defense and follow these simple steps for your next campfire!
- **Buy firewood where you burn it:** New York State prohibits moving firewood more than 50 miles from its origin to reduce pest movement.
- **Choose certified, heat-treated wood:** Look for firewood treated at 160°F (71°C) for 75 minutes to ensure its pest-free.
- **Gather responsibly on-site:** When allowed, collect only dead and downed wood smaller than your wrist, and always check local guidelines.



By following these simple steps, you dramatically reduce the risk of accidentally transporting invasive species that could go on to decimate tree populations in new areas.

Use these tools to learn more about firewood regulations and where to source local firewood.

- [NYS DEC Firewood Regulations](#)
- [Firewood Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Firewood Map](#)
- [Firewood Month Landing Page & Webinar Recordings](#)

Help Spread the Word!

Tell your friends and family about firewood regulations. Follow the Don't Move Firewood [Facebook](#) & [Instagram](#) pages. Reshare posts or premade graphics from their [Resource Library](#).

Become a Protector

Sign up to receive monthly emails with easy ways to care for our lands and waters. Take part in fun blog challenges for a chance to win prizes, explore helpful resources, and share inspiring content from our social media library.

iPledgeToProtect.org

Upcoming Events

Eastern Lake Ontario Swallow-wort collaborative

Linking People, Information & Action Through Enhanced Communication

December 4th, 2025

3 PM-4:30 PM EST Via Zoom

-Speakers-

- David Harris, SUNY ESF
- Spencer Busler, Thousand Islands Land Trust
- Josh Van Wieren, Thousand Islands National Park of Canada
- Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM

-Topics-

- Updates on *Chrysoschus asclepiadeus* root beetles as a biocontrol for swallow-worts.
- Overview of swallow-wort management efforts in the Thousand Islands Region.
- Networking session

[Get Details](#)

Hike to Protect Hemlocks

LEARNING SERIES

Learn to Identify, Survey, and Report Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA)

Session 1: December 5th 1-2:30 PM, HWA and iMapInvasives webinar.

Session 2: December 18th 12:45-2 PM, Field trip to view HWA.

HWA Survey Hikes held from 10 AM- 12 PM:

- January 22, 2026- Salmon River Falls, Richland, NY
- February 5, 2026- Trenton Greenbelt Trail, Holland Patent, NY
- March 5, 2026- Forest Park, Camden, NY



[Get Details](#)



INVASIVE SPECIES
MANAGEMENT
SAINT LAWRENCE
EASTERN LAKE ONTARIO

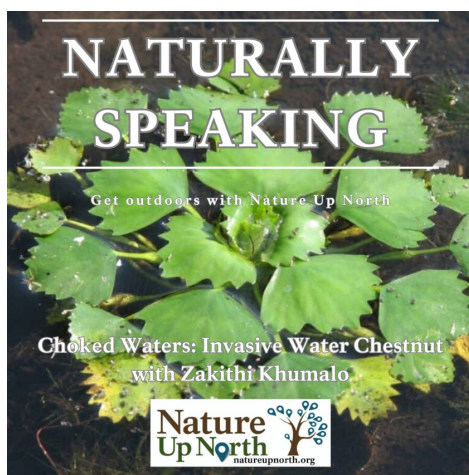
Aquatic Invasive Species Learning Experience



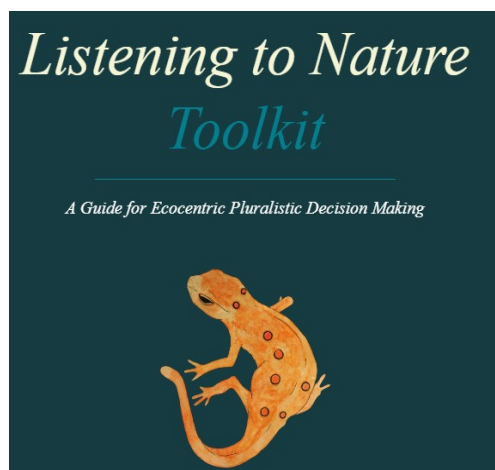
[Get Details](#)

- November 15th, 2025, 11 AM-1 PM: [SLF Egg Mass Scraping Workshop](#)
- November 15th, 4-5:30 PM: [Owl Prowl with THTLT](#)
- November 17th 9 AM- 2:30 PM: Volunteers are needed to assist restoration at Sandy Island Beach State Park. If interested, contact Kennedy.Sullivan@parks.ny.gov.
- November 19th, 2025, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM: [Cornell IPM webinar-Interactions between SLF and Native Species](#)
- November 21st, 2025, 6:45-8:15 PM: [Magnificent Milkweed Workshop with Oswego CCE](#)
- Multiple dates in January 2026: [CCE Jefferson Master Gardener Trainings](#)
- January 22nd, 2026, 6:30 - 8: PM: [Take Action for Forests and Wildlife webinar with IRLC](#).
- January 31st, 2026: [Save the River's Annual Winter Environmental Conference](#)
- March 19th-21st, 2026: [LIISMA PRISM's Resilient Long Island Symposium](#) (accepting abstracts)

Notable Announcements



[Listen to the Podcast](#)



[Access the Toolkit](#)



[Tree Planting Tracker](#)

To have your events, jobs, volunteer, or funding opportunities featured contact megan.pistolese@tnc.org

From the Director's Desk



At SLELO PRISM, collaboration is more than a strategy, it's our foundation. This season, we took a meaningful step to strengthen that foundation by launching our 2025 Partner Engagement Survey. The goal? To better understand how we can support our partners, improve communication, and identify new opportunities to work together.

We were thrilled by the thoughtful responses we received. Our partners insights are helping us shape a more connected and effective conservation community, one that reflects the diverse strengths, perspectives and needs of our partners. From celebrating your successes to identifying shared challenges, the survey has given us a clearer picture of how we can grow stronger together.

We recognize that time is so valuable, and we're deeply grateful to everyone who contributed. For those who took the survey, your feedback is not only appreciated, it's essential.

It helps us ensure that our work remains relevant, responsive, and rooted in the realities of those on the ground.

As the late Dr. Jane Goodall reminds us, "*Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play. Every individual makes a difference.*" This spirit of shared purpose is what drives our work forward.

As a result, we've also made updates to our [Partner Page](#) to better showcase the incredible work being done across our network. We invite you to explore the page and learn more about our partners and their contributions to protect native habitats and manage invasive species throughout the region.

Thank you for your continued partnership.

Together, we're building something truly impactful.

-Brittney Rogers

*SLELO PRISM is hosted by The Nature Conservancy in coordination with the
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The Nature
Conservancy



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

