

2025 AUTUMN PARTNER MEETING SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 12, 2025 - 9:45 AM-12:00 PM

AGENDA

- Welcome and Introductions
- Partner Survey, Bioblitz and Funding
- Updates from the SLELO Team
- 2025 Special Project Updates
- Roundtable Updates
- Open Dialog
- Adjournment
- Optional:
 - *Networking lunch*
 - *Salmon River Walk*

QUICK RECAP

Meeting was held in Pulaski at the Village office with 43 attendees representing 33 organizations / departments within the SLELO partnership. The beginning of the meeting focused on the partner survey and restructuring partnerships and improving communication with organizations involved in invasive species management. Various updates were shared on ongoing management efforts, monitoring activities, and community engagement initiatives across different regions. Organizations reported on successful projects and challenges, with discussions centered on coordination, public education, and future planning for invasive species management efforts. Recording is available on our Partners page - www.sleloinvasives.org/partners/

NEXT STEPS

- [Poll for 2026 partner meeting dates and timeframes by January 6](#)
 - Will share registration with calendar invites in the future and post dates on NYIS.info
- 2026 SLELO PRISM Special Project Funding [announcement released](#) with deadline of January 6th,
 - Plan to announce project funding awardees by January 16th
- Submit invasive species data to iMapInvasives by December 5th to be included in annual summaries.
- Share upcoming events, or report metrics for events, visit www.sleloinvasives.org/report-event-stats/

ATTENDEES (In-person and Virtual)

Brittney Rogers, SLELO PRISM and TNC
Adrein Owens, SLELO PRISM and TNC
Carolyn Koestner, SLELO PRISM and TNC
Megan Pistolese-Shaw, SLELO PRISM and TNC
Robert Smith, SLELO PRISM and TNC
Cierra Williams, CCE of Jefferson County
Isaac Matlock, CCE of Jefferson County
Anna Haws, NYS Water Resources Institute
Crystal Wixon, Fort Drum
Andrea Inserra, IRLC
Fate Syewoanguan, NY Natural Heritage Program
Greg Welter, NYNHP, Fort Drum
Thom Allgaier, NYS AGM
Brice Wager, NYS DEC
Emily Timkey, NYS DEC and WRI
Emily Fell, NYS DEC and WRI
Jayla White, NYS DEC and WRI
Richard Gentry, NYS DEC and WRI
Peter Kinney, NYS DEC FISHERIES
Erin Jennings, NYS DEC FORESTRY
Bonnie Parton, NYS DEC R7
Alexis Sprague, NYS DOT R2

Adam Bleau, NYS DOT R7
Raquel Mennella, NYS OPRHP
Sarah Acker, NYS OPRHP
Kennedy Sullivan, OPRHP / Onondaga Audubon
Stacy Furgal, NYSG
Irene Mazzocchi, OBI
Dylan Cox, OCSWCD
Jeff Richards, OCSWCD
Patricia Parkhurst, Onondaga Audubon
Daniel Bellinger, Save the River
Caryn Clements, Save the River
Alivia Bleau, SLC SWCD
Glenn Johnson, St. Lawrence Land Trust
Eric Hellquist, SUNY Oswego
Dirk Bryant, The Nature Conservancy
Ken Mix, Thompson Park Conservancy, Inc.
Bridgett McCann, Thousand Islands Land Trust, Inc
Spencer Busler, Thousand Islands Land Trust, Inc
Jillian Lee, Tug Hill Commission
John Souva, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust
Linda Gibbs, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust

SUMMARY OF UPDATES

SLELO PRISM Program Director Updates

Brittney introduced the meeting and agenda.

She highlighted the results of the recent partner survey and discussed the restructuring of partnerships due to changes in staffing, capacity, and program focus, which revealed that many organizations have not been active in partner meetings or collaborations but have continued interest for the future. Brittney outlined plans to improve communication and engagement with partners, including creating different partnership commitment categories and focusing on specific invasive species priorities. A full report should be prepared and disseminated to partners in early 2026.

Brittney also announced some relevant funding opportunities for partners. This included;

- Invasive Species Grant Program Round 4 with approximately \$4 million is available through the latest round of the Invasive Species Grant Program, funded by the EPF. This program supports projects that address both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species across NY Deadline: December 17, 2025, at 3 p.m.
- Stream Corridor Management Pilot Program: DEC and the NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee are inviting County SWCD to apply for funding under the Stream Corridor Management Pilot Program. This program is part of New York's Ocean and Great Lakes Initiative. Visit the [RFP 0365](#) for more information.
- The Nature Conservancy's [Climate Resilience Grant Program](#) (CRGP) to support fee and easement acquisitions as well as planning and capacity initiatives in two different funding categories - Conserving Resilient Lands and Conserving Resilient Waters is now open and accepting applications through February 13, 2026.
- Conservancy's [Resilient and Connected Appalachians Grant Program](#) (RCAGP). Fee and easement land acquisition projects in New York are eligible for this program if they protect resilient and connected lands within the mapped focal areas.
- Funding opportunity SLELO's active partners can take advantage of... We will fund up to 3 projects through our "Call for Project Nominations". Awardees will be contacted by January 16. Visit our website for more details - www.sleloinvasives.org/initiatives/

Brittney introduced the idea of hosting a BioBlitz event in 2026. A bioblitz is a focused effort to record as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time. For SLELO PRISM, observations will be submitted to platforms like inaturalist.org and iMapInvasives.org. The goal of a region wide bioblitz would be to increase engagement and awareness, valuable data collection, community science, strategic planning. Partners are invited to get involved by joining the planning team, hosting a satellite bioblitz site, providing staff or volunteers, promoting the event, and/or offering expertise.

Education Outreach and Communications Coordinator Updates

Megan presented education outreach metrics and encouraged partners to report invasive species-related events. To date, we have hosted 59 events, engaged with 2,187 event attendees, had 32,000 website visitors, 107 social media posts with 58,000 views reaching over 21,000 people and 5,000 interactions. We have also released 13 press releases. Megan highlighted the symposium and encouraged partners to visit our website to view the slides, recordings and resources - www.sleloinvasives.org/links-resources/eastern-lake-ontario-symposium-resources/ Megan mentioned upcoming events that are on our events page including new HWA trainings. Learn more about events on our website: <https://www.sleloinvasives.org/events/>. Requesting partners send their events to us and we will post on our website. Two online forms are available on our website to share upcoming

events or report metrics for held events, visit <https://www.sleloinvasives.org/newsandevents/report-event-stats/> or email Megan.Pistolese@tnc.org directly.

Conservation and GIS Analyst Updates

Carolyn discussed the use of drone flights for monitoring invasive species and the analysis of invasion history within the region. Undertook ten drone flights across Deer Creek WMA and Lakeview WMA to monitor spread of Water chestnut and effectiveness treatments in collaboration with DEC regional staff used these flights to track progress of treatments for other species such as phragmites. Carolyn also conducted Hemlock Health Monitoring flights to track impact of HWA invasion at two sites currently not known to have HWA but are within close proximity. Collaborated with the iMap team to develop a history of invasion for our PRISM, which allows us to better track progress of invasions and better detect pathways of invasion across the region. More details of the drone work Carolyn completed in 2025 can be found in an article from [our fall newsletter](#).

Terrestrial Restoration and Resiliency Coordinator Updates

Robert provided an overview of control efforts for invasive species like giant hogweed and biocontrol initiatives, including the establishment of parasitoid wasps. Surveys were conducted at 7 PCAs: Completed in Early October which included French Creek WMA, Limerick Cedars Preserve, OBI – Couch Easement, Point Peninsula WMA, Three Mile Creek Preserve, Tug Hill ISPZ, Upper & Lower Lakes WMA. Treatments were completed in late September which included 73 Total Sites Monitored for Giant Hogweed, 32 Sites with no germination, 19 root cut and 20 treated with herbicide. Swallowwort was treated at 10 PCAs, 50 HPAs; Knotweed treated at 5 PCAs, 9 HPAs, Phragmites at 10 PCAs and 17 HPAs and Bittersweet at 2 PCAs and 4 HPAs.

Three biological control groups were of focus for SLELO PRISM in 2025 which included;

- Swallowwort – *Hypena opulenta* Establishment Surveys (June-August) including Trail Survey at Wehle State Park and Transect Survey at Grenadier Island. No Evidence of *Hypena opulenta*.
- Emerald Ash Borer – 3 Parasitoid wasps *Spathius galinae*, *Tetrastichus planipennisi*, *Oobius agrili* Establishment Survey at SUNY Oswego Rice Creek Field Station Found 2 of 3 biocontrol insects, *S. galinae*, *T. planipennisi*. All 3 were found in 2024 (releases occurred in 2022/23).
- Spotted Knapweed – Flower/Seed Head and Root Weevils *Larinus* spp. (*minutus* or *obtus*) and *Cyphocleonus Achates*) released 200 of each in July/August at Deer Creek, to help protect fragile dune ecosystem along Lake Ontario set up monitoring plots

The team worked at 4 Restoration Sites including Black Pond, El Dorado Preserve, Selkirk Fen Preserve and Deer Creek WMA. Plantings occurred October 20-25 with 4 SLELO Staff, 5 partner staff and 18 Volunteers. In total 22 different species were selected and planted, with up to 15 species allocated per site specifically selected as site appropriate species. More information on our [Restoration Efforts](#) can be found on our website.

Aquatic Restoration and Resiliency Coordinator Updates

Adrien shared updates on aquatic vegetation surveys and monitoring efforts for invasive species emphasizing the need for management strategies. In 2025 surveyed Mud Lake, South Sandy Creek, Salmon River, Perch River, North Sandy Pond, Muskellunge Creek and French Creek. No Tier 1 species were found at these PCAs.

We partnered with NYS DEC region 6 + 7 teams, and Cornell University's Water Resources Institute, two-day monitoring effort surveying 3.25 miles of the Little Salmon River, revealed a greater distribution of fanwort than previously understood. [2025 Report](#) developed with recommendations for next steps is now on our website.

American Lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*) management effort at South Colwell Pond, Lakeview WMA had a mapped expansion from 0.80 acres in Fall of 2024 to 1.4 acres in 2025. With partners, we conducted flower head removal efforts to contain the spread of this population and are working on identifying next steps for management.

In total we collected 75 samples across the SLELO region in collaboration with SUNY Oswego lab providing qPCR analysis for 9 species and metabarcoding for our native fish community and 22 invasive fish species.

The aquatic conversation ended with a call for vigilance regarding the potential introduction of new invasive species and encouraged community involvement in ongoing efforts through programs like the Water Protectors and AISLE. Adrien specifically highlighted a Tier 1 species not yet detected in our region, though recently reported in Onondaga County - Parrot feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*). A species profile page is coming soon on our website and will be found on the [invasive species page](#).

2025 Special Project Updates

- Spencer Busler, Assistant Director for the Thousand Islands Land Trust, presented an update on their special project nomination for invasive species detection and management. The trust identified invasive species on 20 miles of trails across 8 signature preserves, with most species being Tier 3 and 4. They conducted mechanical removals of yellow iris on one preserve and plan to continue surveys and treatments in the coming years. Chemical treatments may be used in spring 2026 for larger infestations where mechanical methods are ineffective.
- Alivia Bleau presented an update on a St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District project focused on management and restoration of Blanding's turtle habitat, where they treated 53 acres and achieved a 2% survival rate of targeted invasive species.
- John Souva from Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust shared their progress on a buckthorn and honeysuckle removal project, which exceeded expectations with over 15 acres cleared and plans for continuing this work in the spring.
- Isaac Matlock with CCE Jefferson Co is currently working to confirm locations for small ecological restoration plots that will primarily serve an educational purpose in their respective communities in the region. Using native plants, our goal is to make an initial dent in restoring habitat in urban areas and to spur the adoption of these types of projects on small residential properties. Currently, we have confirmed 3 locations, and plant material and signs are being ordered for the Spring.

Roundtable Updates

The meeting concluded with updates from all attendees and organizations on invasive species management and conservation efforts. Key points included successful control efforts for narrow-leaf cattail and water chestnut, ongoing monitoring and removal projects, and the spread of spotted lanternfly and box tree moth. Participants discussed challenges such as staffing changes, budget constraints, and the need for better coordination of efforts across regions. The group also addressed the importance of public education and outreach, with plans for upcoming events and training programs. The conversation ended with a discussion on scheduling future partner meetings to improve coordination and participation.