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## ASLF Awarded an EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant To Bring Agro-Forestry into the City



*PawPaw (Asimina triloba), North America's Largest Native Fruit*

The ASLF agroforestry program continues to grow in exciting new directions. We were recently awarded \$75,000 from a US Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Justice small grant, and the work has begun in the past fall. The program involves outreach and education on the benefits of agroforestry as a tool for helping to fight climate change as well as mitigate air and water pollution. Additionally, ASLF will plant 250 native fruit and nut producing trees and shrubs, including Pawpaw, the North America's largest native fruit, on several urban vacant properties in Syracuse, as well as on

the Onondaga Nation farm. These urban agroforestry demonstration projects will improve tree equity in impoverished neighborhoods, provide access to free fresh local produce, enhance green space and make these spaces more attractive, improve vacant land by decreasing its blight impact, help decrease the urban environmental stressors that can contribute to chronic disease. The project will, in collaboration with Syracuse Urban Food Forest Program (SOFFP), Onondaga Nation, Syracuse-Onondaga Food Systems Alliance (SOFSA), Helio Health, Southside TNT and other partners, incorporate training

sessions, educational lessons, and design charrette, in practicing self-sufficient urban food production, with a goal of raising awareness of benefits of urban native trees and food forests, and helping marginalized populations use urban agroforestry to increase resilience and food security.

The EJ grant aligns well with the ASLF programmatic trend of strengthening local environmental justice initiatives through greening urban areas, planting trees, and reducing stormwater pollution. Agroforestry – the deliberate integration of food-producing woody plants and trees into both rural and urban landscapes so as to optimize various environmental benefits - fits well within this scheme. The agroforestry program has been developing over the past several years under board directive, and as it grows, we hope, while collaborating with other pioneering groups, to provide leadership in Central New York on normalizing food forests in urban projects, especially in publicly accessible green space, and promoting the practice for the betterment of our communities. We are always open to discussing new partnerships and collaborations for this initiative, so please reach out if interested. For more information please visit our website ([aslf.org](http://aslf.org)).

## ASLF Helps Reforestation in Ecuador

This autumn, Atlantic States was awarded a grant from the Butler Foundation to conduct a pilot reforestation project in Ecuador. Most of the actual work will be conducted by our partner organization, Aves y Conservacion (AyC), which is the Ecuadoran operative of Bird Life International.

Inga is a genus of plant species in the New World with some twenty species in Ecuador alone. It is a legume, which nitrifies the soil, and therefore helps as a pioneer plant in agro-forestry. In addition, the fruit, which are long pods, are edible and sold commercially. In Spanish they are called guaba and in English they are called the ice cream tree. This grant will enable us to produce the appropriate species of Inga and use it in mixed plantings on land adjacent to a national park recently purchased by AyC. AyC hopes to reconstruct a viable forest on this land and also use it for educational purposes. Additionally, Atlantic States is looking for other areas where we can demonstrate value added farming in poor areas of the country.



*Inga and its Ice Cream Bean Image Source: kew.org*

# OMG! Nearing Its Goal

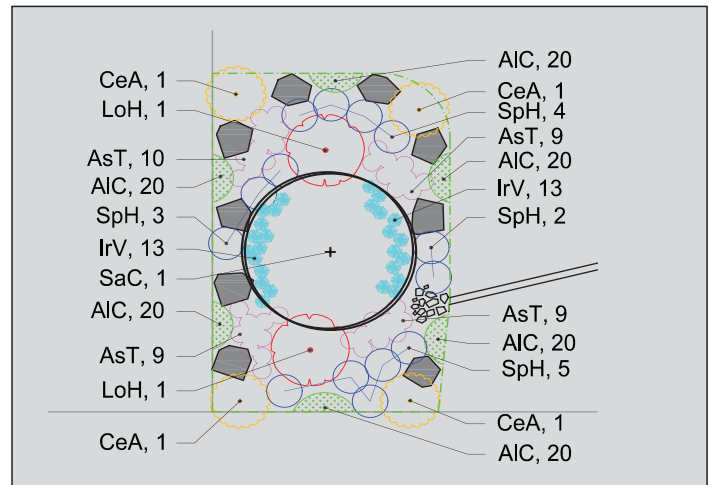
Back in 2020, ASLF kicked off the ambitious One Million Gallons (OMG!) Community Partnership Program. Sponsored by Onondaga County Water Environment Protection (WEP), the primary goal of this program is to improve Syracuse’s water resources by intercepting one million gallons of stormwater runoff each year from the combined sewer system through the implementation of green infrastructure on private and/or public properties. Example projects include rain gardens, bio-retention areas, permeable pavement, tree trenches, bioswales, green roofs, and rain barrels (description of each can be found at <http://aslf.org/omg/>).

Over the past two and a half years, assisted by a Community Advisory Group (CAG) comprised of working professionals who share a passion in improving the city we live in, the OMG! team conducted extensive outreach activities in the targeted areas. These led to over two dozen potential projects, for which we performed site studies, developed conceptual plans, and discussed with their owners, which include community organizations, local businesses, and city departments. By June 2022, we finally settled on three projects which, when built, will collectively manage well over one million gallons of annual stormwater, while providing other community and environmental benefits.

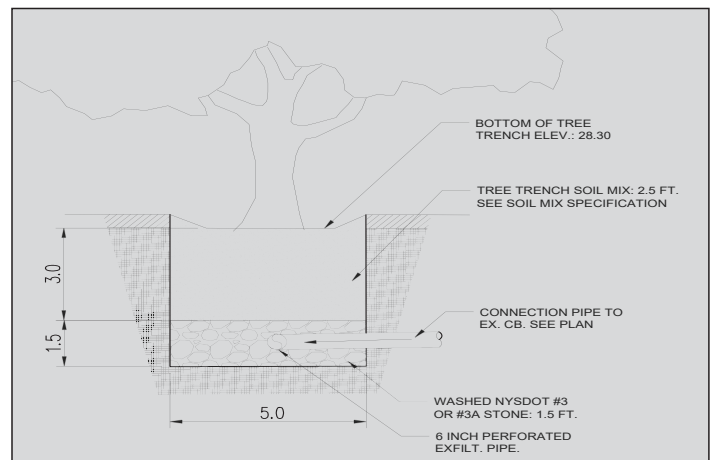
The first project, developed in partnership with Syracuse Cultural Workers, is located on Lodi Street, just outside of the Hawley-Green neighborhood. This project will see two parking lots retrofitted with a rain garden and a porous paving system, with the ability to intercept around 200,000 gallons of annual stormwater runoff from the combined sewer system. Our second project will be using a tree trench to manage runoff from the large parking lot of Evergreen Manufacturing Co., located on Cortland Ave in the Southwest neighborhood. At least 10 large shade trees will be added to the areas that lack tree canopy, and more than 470,000 gallons of stormwater runoff will be removed from the system each year. Finally,

the third project, in partnership with Belle Grove Missionary Baptist Church on Doctor M. L. K. W, will help replace a portion of the existing parking lot that needs repair with porous asphalt. The porous paving system is projected to manage over 570,000 gallons of stormwater runoff annually, while providing a safer and more environmental-friendly space for members to attend the congregation.

We are excited about the progress we have made so far. Currently, we are working hard to have all three projects built by 2023. After construction is completed, our focus in OMG! will shift to maintaining the built projects and using them as educational opportunities to promote green infrastructure in the community. If you are interested in learning more about OMG! or green infrastructure in general, please don’t hesitate to visit our website [aslf.org](http://aslf.org). You can also reach out to us at [atlantic.states@aslf.org](mailto:atlantic.states@aslf.org) or simply call us at (315) 475-1170. We’d love to hear from you!



*Rain Garden Planting Plan for Syracuse Cultural Workers Project*



*Tree Trench Design for Evergreen GI Project*



*A Great Blue Heron near Willow Bay Jetty in Onondaga Lake*

## Onondaga County's CSO Management Entered New Phase upon ACJ Closure

On October 8th, 2021, US District Judge Scullin signed the order for the termination of ACJ (Amended Consent Judgment) upon the joint request of the parties, closing this over-three-decade-long legal journey between ASLF, NYS DEC, and Onondaga County, which helped transform Onondaga Lake from one of the dirtiest water bodies of the nation to a potential swimming hole.

ACJ required the County to meet the effluent limits into Onondaga Lake from its wastewater treatment plant, and to remove 95% of raw sewage discharged as combined sewer overflows into the lake's tributaries, among other actions, to ultimately meet the water quality standards in these waters. Today, the change is visibly obvious --- water in the lake is cleaner, largely free of harmful algae blooms thanks to the lowered nutrient level. Monitoring data indicate dissolved oxygen of the water is more than doubled and the nutrient concentration including phosphorus and nitrogen slashed in half compared to pre-ACJ. Along

with other water quality improvements, these are all direct results from the hard work of a generation under ACJ and hundreds of improvement projects by the County to meet all the requirements. The effect is beyond the improvement in water quality. ACJ helped bring back a natural asset to the Central New York communities, stimulating a growth of recreational opportunities on and around the lake. It pioneered a citizen enforcement case that evolved with the advances of technologies and adapted to the development of standards. It initiated a green infrastructure campaign, which, with the help of far-reaching partnerships, will continue aiding the management of CSOs and building a more resilient community to climate change. The list goes on.

ACJ accomplished its mission in this historic process, but the effort is still ongoing. Prior to the ACJ closure, an administrative state consent order had been negotiated and agreed on between the NYS DEC and Onondaga County to address the unmet water

quality goals of ACJ concerning bacteria in some tributaries, and to develop a long-term CSO control plan that will lead to the ultimate compliance with the corresponding water quality standards. Under the four-year interim plan laid out in the state consent order that kicked in upon the closure of ACJ, the County will review the current water quality standards, continue building CSO management projects, and prepare an implementable CSO Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP).

In this new phase of water quality improvement effort, ASLF continues assisting the County in public outreach, stakeholder engagement, and new project development and implementation. We are working with the Syracuse community through a One Million Gallons Community Partnership Program to install more GI projects, while promoting GI for community resilience; we've conducted a series of outreach activities to inform the public about the LTCP and the remaining elevated bacteria levels in some tributaries, including four factsheets for the subject. In addition to attending and presenting at multiple community



ASLF at the Tuesday Market

CSO  
LONG-TERM  
CONTROL  
FACTSHEET  
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## FECAL COLIFORM & WATER QUALITY IN ONONDAGA LAKE WATERSHED

**WHAT ARE FECAL COLIFORMS?**  
Coliforms are bacteria that are always present in the digestive tracts of animals, including humans, and are found in their wastes. They  
Fecal coliform bacteria can enter streams/rivers through direct discharge of waste from wildlife, from agricultural and storm runoff.

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## USE ATTAINABILITY ANALYSIS

Use Attainability Analysis, or UAA for short, is one of the EPA's regulatory tools under the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). It is a key component of the process through which a state, territory, or tribe would enact a downgrading of the designated uses (DU) for a waterbody. Under CWA rules, all waters of the United States should be designated for uses that reflect the CWA's "fishable/swimmable" water quality goal, unless it is demonstrated impractical. EPA grants the states and authorized tribes

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## AMENDED CONSENT JUDGMENT BY THE NUMBERS

**WHAT IS ACJ?**  
In 1989, Atlantic States Legal Foundation (ASLF), joined by NYS DEC, signed a settlement agreement (Consent Judgment) with Onondaga County, which formed a legally based prescription for mitigating pollutants in Onondaga Lake and its tributaries. These pollutants were caused by wastewater discharges from the Metropolitan Syracuse Wastewater Treatment

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## COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW LONG-TERM CONTROL PLAN

**SYRACUSE AND ITS CSS**

Like hundreds of other cities in the US, Syracuse has a combined sewer system (CSS) to convey rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe. Most of the time, this CSS transports all of the wastewater to Metropolitan Syracuse Wastewater Treatment Plant (Metro), where it is treated and then discharged to Onondaga Lake. During periods of heavy rainfall or snowmelt, however, the wastewater volume in the combined sewer system can exceed the capacity of the system. The system will then overflow, by design, through dozens of outfalls into Onondaga Creek, Harbor Brook, and Ley Creek. These combined sewer overflows (CSOs), containing not only stormwater but also untreated sanitary sewer flows and industrial waste and debris, are a major water pollution concern for the CSO-receiving water, in this case, Onondaga Lake and the three CSO-receiving tributaries.

**WHAT IS LTCP?**

Per EPA CSO Control Policy, all communities with CSSs are expected to implement nine technology-based minimum control measures to control CSOs. In addition, a Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP) that integrates NMCs and identifies the appropriate CSO controls necessary to achieve waterbody-specific water quality standards (WQS) and the water quality goals of the Clean Water Act needs to be developed and implemented by most CSO communities. The overall LTCP planning approach consists of three major steps shown on the right.

The following nine elements need to be addressed through the LTCP development process:

1

Characterization, monitoring, and modeling activities as the basis for effective CSO controls

2

A public participation process in the decision-making

3

Sensitive areas as the highest priority

Atlantic States Legal Foundation    Onondaga County    For more information, visit [onondagalake.org](http://onondagalake.org) and [savethetrain.us](http://savethetrain.us)

*Factsheets Prepared by ASLF for Post-ACJ CSO Management  
Available at [www.onondagalake.org](http://www.onondagalake.org)*

meetings, ASLF tabled at this year's Blues Fest, Crawfish Fest, and Polish Fest, where we handed out factsheets and discussed with visitors about the LTCP program. We also hosted a booth at the Tuesday Farmer's Market at Clinton Square for six weeks, distributing information to a flux of audience every week. To access the factsheets, learn more about post-ACJ work on CSO management and updates on ASLF's involvement in the process, please visit [www.onondagalake.org](http://www.onondagalake.org), or follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/ASLF1982>.

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# ASLF Continues Assisting Communities to Improve Wolcott Creek with New Funding

ASLF has been awarded a Great Lakes Basin Small Grant by the New York Sea Grant program, which will support our continued collaboration with the communities in Wayne County to improve the water quality and the uses of Wolcott Creek. The \$50,000 award will fund a project in Town of Butler to develop a plan for needed improvements for the Butler Mill Pond through a community-driven planning process, and to facilitate the initiation of a community-based effort for continued management of the pond.

Butler Mill Pond is behind the Town Hall of Butler, formed by a mill on Wolcott Creek. It is about 5.5 miles upstream of the Mill Pond in Wolcott, which was one of the main focuses of ASLF's previous Sea Grant project with the Village of Wolcott. It's very encouraging to see our Wolcott project, which engaged stakeholders from the Wolcott Creek watershed, has this "spillover effect" that led us to this new opportunity to work with Town of

Butler on another section of the watershed. The proposed project with Butler will work directly with the community constituents and decision makers to reassess Butler Mill Pond and Wolcott Creek based on Ecosystem Based Management (EBM) principals, recognizing their key values for the Butler community and the watershed, identifying factors of impediment for both community uses and ecosystem health, prioritizing mitigation/improvement needs, and developing a plan with both implementable project(s) and management action items to help restore and protect these natural resources.

ASLF had supported concerned community members in fighting off a proposed sewage-sludge treatment facility in Butler. The new project for Butler Mill Pond will allow ASLF to examine this upstream section of Wolcott Creek, which had been brought up during the Wolcott project, and help ASLF to gain more holistic understanding of the Wolcott Creek watershed and its ecosystem. We anticipate all these to pave the way for more improvement opportunities in the watershed. To follow the progress of this project and learn about the project activities, please visit [www.aslf.org](http://www.aslf.org) or follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ASLF1982>.



*Butler Mill Pond in Town of Butler, Wayne County, NY*

# Changes at ASLF: Onboarding and Farewell

ASLF welcomed two new staff members and one new board member to join the organization in 2022.

Dylan Seaver comes to ASLF from SUNY-ESF and brings with him experience in the field of environmental policy, specifically, studying water resource-related issues concerning governance and management. He also has a professional background in forestry, working at Heiberg Memorial Forest in Tully, as well as 5-years of military experience serving in the United States Marine Corps. Dylan is our new Director of Outreach and Administration and is serving as our Interim Executive Director. He is excited to bring a fresh perspective to the organizations mission and goals, while serving the community through ASLF's programs and projects.

Cassidy McMann is a senior at SUNY-ESF and interned at ASLF for the duration of the summer. She is majoring in Environmental Studies with a concentration in Policy, Planning, and Law and has a strong interest in environmental policy and law. During her internship, Cassidy helped to plan and facilitate ASLF's projects related to green infrastructure and agroforestry. After the closure of her internship, Cassidy was hired on as Operations Assistant. In this role she works directly under the Executive Director to provide administrative

support, help facilitate outreach initiatives, and assist in project implementation.

Nick DeJohn joined ASLF BOD, serving as the Secretary.

We unfortunately had to say good-bye to Lhakpa Tsering, our Executive Director for the past two and a half years, and two longtime staff members, Paul Harris and Haichao Wang. Lhakpa steered ASLF through many difficult ventures, especially through the pandemic; Paul and Haichao were both integral members of the ASLF team, contributing greatly to all aspects of the organization's operation: from program development and fundraising, to community outreach and project implementation. ASLF is deeply appreciative of all the contributions all three of them have made, and would like to give a fond farewell to all of them, wishing them the best in their future endeavors.

## Board of Directors

Kevin Bliss .....	Chair
Nick DeJohn .....	Secretary
James Darlington .....	Member
Martha H. Loew .....	Member
John Pobedinsky .....	Member
Buffy Quinn .....	Treasurer
Samuel H. Sage .....	President
Camille Warner .....	Member

YES! I want to contribute to ASLF's important work!

I am already a member. Please update my records with the following information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Sign me up at the following level:

- "Supporter" (\$50)
- "Sponsor" (\$100)
- "Protector" (\$250)
- "Benefactor" (\$500+)
- "Patron" (\$1000+)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

YES! I am interested in volunteering with ASLF by:

- Doing outreach in my area
- Helping out in the ASLF office OR maintaining a rain garden
- Collecting native plant seeds
- Helping with web design
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# About us

## Who we are

**Atlantic States Legal Foundation (ASLF)** was established in 1982. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, ASLF was the principal NGO utilizing the citizen suit provision of the Clean Water Act as a means of forcing polluters to cease the desecration of America's waterways. Our mission as an advocacy organization is to develop and promote innovative and practical ways to preserve the environment, green the urban core, and protect water resources. We build bridges between communities, technical experts, and government to advocate for systemic improvements in environmental management, policy making, and public engagement.

## What we offer

Advocacy & Organizing Services for building resilient communities, protecting water and other environmental resources, and beneficial repurposing of urban space.

Technical Assistance for natural resource planning, green infrastructure, urban forestry, landscape design, stormwater management, environmental health, and environmental awareness.

Outreach & Education Services for underserved communities, agencies, and municipalities.

## What we do

We provide affordable legal, technical and organizational assistance to individuals, community groups, and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and as a way to effectively remediate threats to the natural environment. Currently, a major portion of our work portfolio is related to the protection, restoration, and conservation of our urban water resources. Many of our on-going projects have a focus on stormwater and combined sewer overflow (CSO) management. We use green infrastructure installations such as rain garden, bio-swale, and urban forestry to control non-point water pollution in the urban area.

Please visit <http://eepurl.com/OiYjP> to subscribe to our newsletter, or contact us and ask to be added to the list. You can also subscribe through scanning the QR code to the right.



Donating to ASLF online is easy with "mightycause" or by mail. Visitors to our websites now have the ability to donate simply by clicking the Donate Now logo. Of course, we still enjoy opening mail to find a donation by check, too! Please support your favorite environmentalists! All contributions to ASLF are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. Copies of ASLF's financial report may be obtained from the New York Department of State in Albany.



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