

ATLANTIC STATES LEGAL FOUNDATION

1654 West Onondaga St, Syracuse, NY 13204

(315) 475 1170

Facebook.com/ASLF1982

aslf.org

Newsletter 2023

Also in this issue:

Letter from the Chair	Page 2
EJ Grant Closes out	Page 3
ASLF Receives DOH Grant	Page 3
ASLF Presented at SER2023	Page 4
Butler Mill Pond Sea Grant Completed	Page 5
Changes at ASLF	Page 6
Board Updates	Page 7

First OMG! Project Completed

On December 15, 2023, four years after its launch, ASLF's One Million Gallons (OMG!) Community Partnership Program celebrated the completion of its first green infrastructure project.

OMG! is a green infrastructure program developed in collaboration with the Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection (WEP). Its primary objective is to enhance water quality in the Syracuse area by capturing one million gallons of stormwater runoff annually from the combined sewer-served regions. These combined sewers handle both sanitary sewage and stormwater runoff. During periods of intense rainfall or snowmelt, the sewers may become overwhelmed by the increased volume, leading to the untreated discharge of sewage in the form of combined sewer overflows into Onondaga Creek and Harbor Brook. This, in turn, causes a degradation in water quality. OMG! addresses this issue by reducing runoff through the implementation of green infrastructure on private and/or public properties. Examples of such projects include rain gardens, bio-retention areas, permeable pavement, tree trenches, bioswales, green roofs, and rain barrels (<http://aslf.org/omg/>).

The completed project is the result of a collaboration with Evergreen Manufacturing Co. located at 235 Cortland Avenue. The project site encompasses a 2-acre commercial property, nearly 100% covered with impervious surfaces. These impermeable surfaces prevent rainwater from infiltrating the ground, leading to a substantial



Completed Tree Trench at Evergreen Manufacturing

volume of stormwater runoff during heavy storms.

The OMG! project strategically installed a tree trench along the west and south property lines to capture runoff from a paved parking area spanning 25,800 square feet. A stormwater tree trench is a specific type of bioretention practice where a collection of trees and other plants are planted in a typically linear, shallow depression. This depression is filled with at least 3 feet of soil media on top of an underground drainage layer, consisting of stones with a diameter of 2-2.5 inches. This design provides void space to store and infiltrate stormwater runoff. The Evergreen tree trench, implemented by the OMG!

continued on Page 2

Letter from the Chair

For the past several years, I have been a member of the Atlantic States Legal Foundation Board of Directors and have greatly enjoyed working with and learning from other experienced, talented, and insightful board members and staff. I now serve as interim board chair and look forward to the opportunity to work in a different capacity on the board.

Atlantic States has had a few notable changes lately. Our office has moved permanently from the longtime home at 658 West Onondaga Street to the Catholic Charities House of Providence building just down the road at 1654 West Onondaga Street in Syracuse. It is a more efficient and practical work space that will allow staff to focus on the mission of the organization. Atlantic States is undertaking many exciting projects, including forestry, agroforestry, green stormwater infrastructure, and water protection projects, as you will read in the newsletter. We are pursuing many more opportunities that contribute to the improvement and protection of the environment in Central New York and beyond.

On a personal note, I was born and raised in Syracuse, not far from the Atlantic States office. I have experience in grant writing, grant making, technical and proposal writing, and am a former staff member of ASLF. I believe strongly in the work that we do to effect positive change for both people and the environment. I am currently based in Buffalo, New York, where I live with my wife and two daughters.

On behalf of the board of directors, we thank you for your continued support and look forward to serving the environmental needs of Central New York.

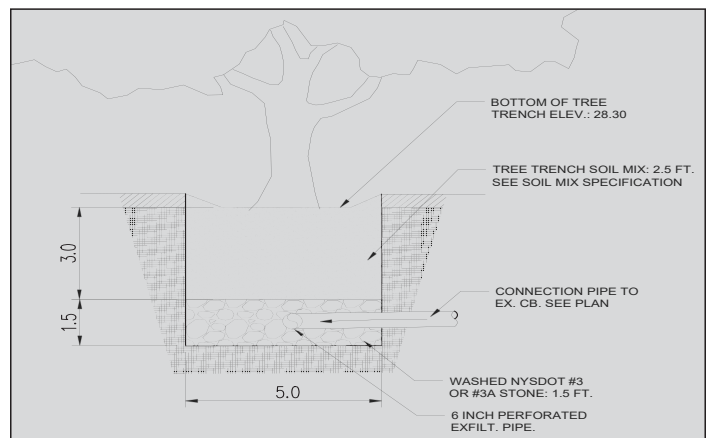
John Pobedinsky
Board Chair

continued from Page 1

project, is expected to intercept over 454,000 gallons of runoff annually. Planted with large, native trees and small shrubs, this tree trench serves multiple purposes, including providing shade, creating habitat, enhancing the street's aesthetics, and contributing to the City of Syracuse's efforts to augment its urban tree canopy in the area.

In addition to the implementation of the tree trench, a concurrent project involving porous paving, funded by the Save The Rain Green Improvement Fund, was developed and executed alongside the OMG! initiative. This porous paving system effectively captures runoff originating from the eastern half of the parking lot and the roof of Evergreen's office building. When combined, these two initiatives will successfully capture approximately 90% of the stormwater runoff from the entire property, equating to the removal of over 1,351,000 gallons of stormwater from the combined sewer system each year.

Furthermore, OMG! is in the contracting stages of two additional projects in collaboration with Syracuse Cultural Workers on the Northside and Bellegrove Baptist Missionary Church on the Southside of the city. The design plans for both projects have been finalized, with construction scheduled for 2024. Upon completion, the cumulative impact of all three projects will result in a substantial annual runoff reduction of 1,233,400 gallons, contributing to water quality improvement in the foreseeable decades. For more information about OMG! and project updates, please visit <http://aslf.org/omg/>.



Tree Trench Design for Evergreen OMG! Project

ASLF Completes a Unique EPA-funded Agroforestry Project

In 2021 ASLF was awarded an EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant to implement agroforestry demonstration projects, and we are proud to celebrate our hard work and close out the project. We worked with several partners to plant food-producing native trees and shrubs on properties within the City of Syracuse as well as on the Onondaga Nation Farm. The project's purpose was to increase food security and sovereignty, particularly targeting neighborhoods and populations disproportionately affected by poverty and/or negative COVID-19 health outcomes.



Kwanzaa Garden Planting with Partners and Volunteers

Agroforestry deliberately integrates food-producing woody plants into both rural and urban landscapes to optimize various environmental benefits, such as improving water and air quality, increasing biodiversity, and attenuating flooding. We planted over 250 fruit and nut-bearing trees and shrubs at seven locations. Six of these sites were in the City of Syracuse, and included: two vacant lots owned by ASLF in the Skunk City neighborhood, a City-owned site near the creekwalk, McKinley Park, the Kwanzaa garden operated by Southside

TNT, and the front lawn of the Catholic Charities House of Providence. Our largest site by far was the Onondaga Nation Farm where the planting will add an agroforestry dimension to the current operation. Species included pawpaw, American persimmon, black walnut, butternut, aronia, American hazelnut, elderberry, and others. All are native and produce edible and/or medicinal products.

In addition to the plantings, ASLF also conducted outreach, gave several presentations, and prepared a white paper summarizing the project. What made this project unique was the integration of public agroforestry, environmental justice, and food security. It is an important cornerstone of the ASLF agroforestry program moving forward. We will continue promoting the planting of food-producing trees as one of many solutions for both urban and rural community resilience issues as our program grows.

ASLF Receives DOH Funding to Promote Agroforestry for Healthy Living

ASLF has been awarded a grant from the New York State Department of Health (DOH) to support a community wellness project in Oswego County, New York. The project will focus on promoting the benefits of agroforestry as it pertains to COVID-19 health disparities.

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on communities of color, low-income communities, and other marginalized groups. These communities often face greater exposure to the virus and have less access to healthcare and other resources. Agroforestry has the potential to address some of the health disparities associated with COVID-19 through providing multiple benefits. It improves food security by providing communities with access to fresh, nutritious food, which is essential for a healthy

immune system; it allows more access to green space which has been shown to reduce stress and improve mood; and the incorporated gardening or foraging encourage people to spend more active hours in a food forest. In addition, agroforestry projects like this one, that are designed and implemented in partnership with communities, will help build trust and empower residents, which can lead to a more sustainable and equitable approach to addressing health disparities.

This project will build on ASLF's past successes by educating the community about the benefits of agroforestry and providing opportunities for people to get involved in planting and growing their own food. ASLF will partner with local organizations in Oswego County to organize a series of workshops and other events. Through presentation and hands-on activities, these events will introduce the concept and practices of urban agroforestry, showcase examples of applications in urban landscapes, and demonstrate both common and unusual edible native plants, highlighting their edible parts, uses, and preparation for food. We will emphasize how gardening and other outdoor activities, particularly growing food, can help manage the impact of COVID-19 and similar events, and introduce people to native plants that are suitable for different urban landscapes and easy to grow and harvest.

The project will begin early 2024, and is expected to last for six months. If you are interested in learning more about this project and agroforestry, visit aslf.org/current-project or follow us on Facebook to find out about upcoming events.

ASLF Presented at SER's 10th World Conference on Ecological Restoration

ASLF representatives attended and presented at SER2023, the 10th World Conference on Ecological

Restoration, hosted by SER (Society for Ecological Restoration) from September 26 to 30, 2023, in Darwin, Australia.

The SER World Conference is a biennial convergence of experts across scientific, technical, and socio-economic dimensions, dedicated to the restoration of damaged ecosystems across various biomes and continents. This year's conference, attended by over 1000 individuals from more than 80 countries, centered around the theme "Nature and People as One: Celebrating and Restoring Connection."

At the event, ASLF President Samuel Sage and Project Director Hongbin Gao delivered a presentation on urban food forest initiatives in Syracuse. These initiatives involve community efforts strategically incorporating food-producing trees into the city's urban tree canopy restoration program, specifically targeting low-income neighborhoods. The approach includes planting edible, native trees and shrubs along streams and other locations and creating urban food forests. These not only enhance water quality but also provide residents in low-income neighborhoods access to fresh and healthy fruits and address issues of food insecurity and urban tree canopy inequity prevalent in these economically disadvantaged areas. With support of associated outreach and educational programs, these initiatives contribute to establishing an ecological consciousness that recognizes and celebrates the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, which is a crucial foundation for future restoration efforts to build resilient communities.

ASLF previously presented at the 6th SER World Conference in Manchester, UK in 2015. The next World Conference, SER2025, has been scheduled to occur in Denver, Colorado, USA from September 25 to October 04, 2025.





ASLF Executive Director, Dylan Seaver (right) and Program Director, Paul Harris (left) with community volunteers at the newly installed pavilion

Butler Mill Pond Improvement Project Completed

ASLF successfully completed another project in the Wolcott Creek watershed in Wayne County, NY, assisting the local communities in understanding their watershed and fostering environmental stewardship to protect and enhance local water quality.

The project specifically focused on Butler Mill Pond, a picturesque 29-acre body of water created by a mill dam on Wolcott Creek in the Town of Butler, NY. Serving as a vital element in the ecological well-being of the Wolcott Creek watershed, the pond is situated adjacent to Butler Town Hall, overlooking a sprawling 10-acre green space with 600 feet of scenic waterfront. This strategic location positions the pond as an important natural and recreational resource for the community.

In 2022, ASLF secured a New York Sea Grant for \$49,690 to support a community-driven planning study for the Butler Mill Pond. The study aimed to reassess the pond based on Ecosystem-Based Management (EBM) principles, formulate necessary improvement and management recommendations, and facilitate the initiation of a community-based effort for implementation and ongoing management of this valuable community asset.

ASLF, in collaboration with the town and community volunteers, organized three community workshops. During these sessions, participants shared their aspirations for the pond, contributing to a collective blueprint for its future. This collaborative effort resulted in the inception of the first improvement project applying EBM principles, incorporating both ecological and recreational enhancements.

Central to this project is a restoration demonstration featuring native fruit- and nut-bearing trees and shrubs and native perennials planted in a small-scale

food forest. This initiative aligns with future best management practices for riparian restoration in the watershed. Additionally, a dock, pavilion, picnic tables and benches, and birdhouses were installed along the waterfront. These elements collectively created a long-desired public space, encouraging visitors to engage more closely with the pond, fostering a deeper connection with the waterway, and promoting environmental stewardship.



Community Volunteer Planting

ASLF took charge of the design plan for the improvement project and led the procurement of plants and amenities using the grant funds. The installation was a collaborative effort involving the town, ASLF, the newly founded Friends of Butler Mill Pond (FBMP), and other community volunteers. Comprising four active community members, FBMP not only provided manual labor but also played an active role in local governance. They spoke for the project at a town board meeting, effectively coordinating efforts to overcome various challenges encountered during the project's implementation.

ASLF will continue to support the town and FBMP to engage and empower Butler community in protecting and restoring the ecological function of their watershed. Please follow us on Facebook for future project updates at facebook.com/ASLF1982.

Transitions, Welcomes, Farewells, and a New Chapter at ASLF

At ASLF, change brings fresh energy and renewed commitment to our mission. As we embark on exciting new ventures, we take a moment to celebrate transitions, bid farewell to a valued employee, and extend a warm welcome back to another.

First, with grateful hearts, we say goodbye to Cassidy McMann, our Projects and Operations Administrator. For the past year, Cassidy has played an integral role in our Environmental Justice and Sea Grant projects, skillfully managing administrative tasks and keeping our wheels spinning. Her dedication, organizational skills, and enthusiasm have been invaluable assets, and we'll miss her positive presence dearly. We wish Cassidy all the best in her future endeavors and know she'll continue to shine wherever she lands.

Stepping back into the fold is Paul Harris, spearheading our Agroforestry program as the Program Director! Paul's expertise in grant writing is already proving instrumental in securing funding for critical agroforestry projects, and is an area where we expect a lot of growth in terms of securing new partners and projects. We're also thrilled to have him assist with grant closeout efforts for our EJ and Sea Grant programs, ensuring smooth transitions and maximized impact for project partners. Paul is coming back to us after taking a hiatus last year to complete his Masters in Agroforestry degree. We are thrilled to have Paul back, and his expertise in agroforestry will be invaluable to our mission. Paul's return signifies ASLF's commitment to employee growth and environmental stewardship. With his expertise, ASLF is poised for even greater achievements.

Finally, it is with immense pride that we announce the appointment of Dylan Seaver as the new Executive Director of ASLF! Dylan has served

as Outreach and Education Director as well as the Acting ED for nearly 2-years. We have full confidence in Dylan’s ability to propel our organization to even greater heights, and we’re excited to witness the next chapter unfold under his guidance.

These transitions mark a time of both reflection and anticipation. We bid farewell with gratitude, welcome back with open arms, and celebrate the start of a new era at ASLF. As ASLF evolves, one thing remains constant: our unwavering commitment to protecting the environment and upholding the rights of those who depend on it. We invite you to join us on this journey as we continue to fight for a healthier, more just planet.

Board of Directors Annual Meeting

The ASLF annual meeting was held on November 15, 2023, during which two new members were voted onto our board of directors: Christine Body, and Nasseer Idrisi. Christine, in addition to being a former ASLF employee, is a passionate advocate for the environment and brings a wealth of experience in nonprofit leadership to the board. Naseer, also a former employee, is our liaison to the international scientific community as part of our ongoing effort to promote greener solutions across the globe. We look

forward to the contributions Nasseer and Christine will bring to ASLF.

In addition, we are pleased to welcome back John Pobedinsky as Chair, Martha Loew as Vice-Chair, Buffy Quinn as Treasurer, Kevin Bliss as Secretary, and Jim Darlington. These experienced leaders will continue to provide strong, strategic guidance as we move forward.

Of course, we would be amiss if we didn’t mention our President and founder Samuel Sage, for whom without his years of dedication, our organization would not exist. The efforts and opportunities that he has presented to the community have inspired many of us to pursue careers in environmental advocacy.

We look forward to working with our newly elected and returning board members to continue our mission of making a positive impact on our community.

Board of Directors

John Pobedinsky	Chair
Kevin Bliss	Secretary
Buffy Quinn	Treasurer
Samuel H. Sage	President
Martha H. Loew	Vice President
Christine Body	Member
James Darlington	Member
Naseer Idrisi	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) is a New York chartered not-for-profit corporation founded in 1982 with its purpose being to provide affordable technical, legal, and organizing services to a variety of citizens, citizen groups, local governments, and others on a wide variety of environmental issues. 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. Through environmental litigation against Onondaga County, NY decades ago, we started the process of resuscitating Onondaga Lake, and this remains a cornerstone of our legacy. Since that time we have protected hundreds of watersheds in New York State and beyond through our practical approach to conservation.

What we do

Our current program combines technical expertise, planning, design, and citizen advocacy to empower communities towards a better level of environmental decision-making and involvement, as a way to effectively remediate threats to the natural environment. A major portion of our work portfolio is related to the protection, restoration,

and conservation of our urban water resources. We develop, promote and implement 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.

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.



1654 West Onondaga Street
Syracuse NY 13204



Scan to Donate Now!