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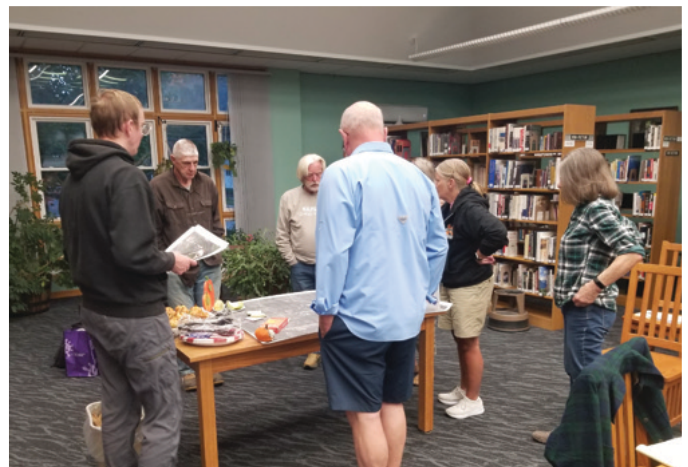


**A**SLF has been awarded \$40,000 through a New York Sea Grant to carry out a community-driven tree planting initiative for climate adaptation and community revitalization in Pulaski, NY. Developed and implemented in close collaboration with the Village of Pulaski and other local partners through a participatory planning process, this project will identify and develop tree planting projects that strengthen local climate resilience, enhance water quality, and engage residents and students in shaping a greener future for their community.

Pulaski, nestled along the iconic Salmon River, is a village deeply connected to its natural and cultural heritage. Like many communities in the Great Lakes region however, Pulaski is experiencing the growing impacts of climate change, from increased flooding to more frequent extreme weather events. This initiative seeks to address these challenges through one of the most effective and accessible nature-based solutions: planting trees. Both the Richland-Pulaski Comprehensive Plan and the community-driven Climate Action Plan identify strategic tree planting as a priority for revitalization, sustainability, and long-term climate preparedness. Pulaski is also designated as a Disadvantaged Community under New York State’s criteria, underscoring the importance of investing in natural infrastructure to

reduce environmental burdens and improve community health.

The project applies an ecosystem-based management approach designed to reflect local priorities and support Pulaski’s long-term goals. In partnership with the Mayor’s Office, the Tree Committee, and Pulaski Academy and Central School, ASLF successfully organized the first of three public workshops in October 2025. Residents



Community Members Joining the First Planning Workshop Organized by ASLF at Pulaski Public Library in October 2025

helped identify potential planting locations, provided input on site analyses, and suggested cooperative opportunities with Pulaski’s concurrently planned *continued on page 2*

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

As we close out 2025, I am deeply grateful for the resilience, dedication, and generosity that continue to define our Atlantic States Legal Foundation community. Together, we have achieved milestones that strengthen our mission and expand our impact across Central New York and beyond.

At the same time, we pause to honor and remember the friends we lost this year. Their contributions and presence enriched our community, and their legacies continue to inspire us as we move forward.

Looking ahead, our vision is clear: we will continue growing the organization, strengthening our partnerships both within Syracuse and across the region, and expanding our agroforestry and green infrastructure programs in places such as Oswego County. These initiatives not only support climate resilience but also reflect our commitment to sustainable, community-driven solutions.

Across New York and across the nation, nonprofits are grappling with rising program demand, fewer funding opportunities, and workforce challenges. Organizations are working with diminished resources, often while navigating shifting funding timelines, increased administrative costs, and the ongoing need to recruit and retain staff.

At the same time, there are still hopeful opportunities for the environment: in February the reauthorization of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative at \$500 million annually was introduced in Congress. If this act passes into law, GLRI would have funding through 2031 ensuring long-term support for projects combating pollution, invasive species, and stormwater runoff. These developments underscore the importance of collaboration, innovation, and advocacy in our work.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Atlantic States Legal Foundation, I thank you for your

continued support. Your trust and partnership make it possible for us to celebrate achievements, face challenges with innovation, and envision a future where our community and environment thrive together.

With gratitude,



John Pobedinsky  
Board Chair

*- continued from page 1*

Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) projects. ASLF is now conducting further site investigations to evaluate the potential benefits of tree planting and green infrastructure at these locations, including water quality improvement, runoff reduction, shading and cooling, biodiversity enhancement, and public space improvement. Conceptual planting plans will be developed to apply nature-based practices that create ecological, multifunctional landscapes and maximize these benefits. Subsequent workshops in 2026 will solicit community feedback to shape final planting plans grounded in community vision.

Two planting projects will be selected for implementation: one at Pulaski Academy and Central School and another on municipal property or within the right-of-way, potentially complementing a DRI project. At least 70 trees and shrubs will be planted, including edible species as part of ASLF's ongoing agroforestry initiative. The school project will also support Pulaski Academy and Central School in pursuing Tree Campus recognition by helping establish a campus tree committee, developing educational materials, and celebrating Arbor Day with a hands-on planting event.

The New York Sea Grant award represents an important milestone for both ASLF and the Village of Pulaski. Together, ASLF and community partners are advancing a shared vision: a more resilient, revitalized, and environmentally healthy Pulaski for generations to come.

# 2025 PROGRESS IN OSWEGO COUNTY GLRI

This fall ASLF, along with our partners SUNY-Oswego and St. Luke Family of Caring, began the first phase of tree planting for our Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) urban forestry and agroforestry project. The GLRI program is funded by the USDA Forest Service and covers a variety of tree planting and invasive species initiatives to improve water and environmental quality in the Great Lakes watershed. We began our project in late 2024 and will continue for several planting seasons, likely into late 2026.

coordinating tree and supply shipments, finalizing planting designs, and formalizing workflow processes with our partners. We ended up planting about 45 trees and shrubs on the SUNY-Oswego campus, mostly focusing on the expansion of Centennial Arboretum. After planting is complete, the arboretum will be eligible for an upgrade to Level II, making it only the second location in CNY to achieve such status. With much of the preliminary logistics finalized, we are ready to “hit the ground running” with our spring 2026 planting!



Planting Event at SUNY Oswego, October 2025

The ASLF goal is to plant at least 400 trees and shrubs in Oswego County at two locations – SUNY Oswego campus and the St. Luke’s Health Services campus. These trees will – when fully grown – reduce stormwater runoff by hundreds of thousands of gallons. Lake Ontario water quality benefits greatly from such a planting, as this is stormwater runoff that would otherwise make its way from streets and other impervious areas into local waterways as pollution. There is also an agroforestry food forest component integrated into the design, with the idea being to provide foraging opportunities for students, residents, and visitors. All trees and shrubs being planted are native species, with less common varieties such as pawpaw and American persimmon included for the benefit of human foragers and wildlife alike.

Part of the GLRI project involves outreach, education, and training. We have held several events so far with two public workshops taking place in February of 2025, an Arbor Day presentation at Rice Creek Field Station in April, and a tabling at the Rice Creek Pollinator Party in October. The purpose



Newly Planted Serviceberry Shrub

of the events is to inform and educate the public on topics related to the project as well as receive feedback on the design and plan. There will likely be several more events happening throughout the duration of the grant period. The project is also supported by the labor of local volunteers as well as a work crew from Catholic Charities of Onondaga County. In both cases there is a minor training component, and participants receive education on the basics of tree planting and site preparation.

The fall 2025 planting season was busy with

# OMG! CONSTRUCTION COMPLETED

**A**SLF continued the construction under its One Million Gallons Community Partnership Program, and successfully completed all OMG! green infrastructure (GI) projects in 2025.

## Syracuse Cultural Workers GI Improvement

Construction continued on the Syracuse Cultural Workers' projects on Lodi Street, where more than 440 native plants representing 10 species were installed. Once established, these plantings will stabilize soils, absorb stormwater and release it back into the atmosphere through transpiration, and provide vital wildlife habitat within this dense urban setting. Notably, half of the species selected are edible, offering fresh food for the community and serving as a living demonstration of how often-overlooked native edibles can be integrated into urban landscapes. Among them is the Shadblow Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*), included at the request of Syracuse Cultural Workers in celebration of Robin Wall Kimmerer's new book, *The Serviceberry – Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*.

The planting was carried out through a training program in collaboration with Onondaga Earth Corps (OEC) and another training partner, Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI). As part of the training, ASLF staff explained the design and function of the green infrastructure features, which manage stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces including parking lots and rooftops in this case. OEC



Rain Garden after Planting at 408 Lodi St

trainees were then introduced to the native plant palette and, under OEI's guidance, planted them while learning about the systems' long-term maintenance needs and procedures. This hands-on process provided valuable experience in understanding how green infrastructure operates and how proper care ensures its functionality and effectiveness.



Rain Garden Planting & Training Event at 408 Lodi St

Together, the two Syracuse Cultural Workers' projects removed approximately 2,800 square feet of impervious pavement, replacing it with more than 2,000 square feet of porous asphalt, a 450-square-foot rain garden, and new landscaped areas planted with native species. These features collectively manage runoff from more than 11,000 square feet of surface area, reducing flows to the combined sewer system by an estimated 200,000 gallons annually. In addition, the creation of an 800-square-foot native habitat and the planting of over 20 new trees will deliver a range of ecosystem services—cleaner air and water, fresh food, cooler summer temperatures, and more inviting outdoor spaces for the community.

## Bellegrove Church GI Improvement

The third OMG! project, developed in partnership with Bellegrove Missionary Church on MLK West in the Southside neighborhood, was completed this summer.

The Bellegrove Church site includes nearly two acres of impervious surface, consisting of the



Completed Bellegrove Project: Porous Asphalt Parking Lot, Native Green Space, and New Fencing

parking lot and building roof. Working through several design iterations, ASLF and Bellegrove selected a porous asphalt system to replace a section of the western parking lot, which had been shedding significant stormwater onto the street. Terry Horst Landscape Architecture, in collaboration with ASLF, designed a 16,000-square-foot porous asphalt system to address this issue. The project also introduced a landscaped area with native ornamental plants and large boulders, along with 200 feet of new fencing to complete the installation.

The finished project features a 16,300-square-foot porous paving surface that manages runoff from more than 32,000 square feet of impervious area, reducing flows to the combined sewer system by an estimated 580,000 gallons annually. In addition, over 600 square feet of new green space was created, planted with 263 native plant species that enhance ecological function and community aesthetics.



Launched in 2020, the One Million Gallons (OMG!) Program is a collaboration between the Atlantic States Legal Foundation (ASLF) and the Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection (WEP). The program's primary goal is to intercept stormwater runoff from high-priority service areas before it enters the combined sewer system, thereby reducing the risk of combined sewer

overflow (CSO) events. These overflows discharge a mixture of untreated sewage and stormwater into local waterways, degrading water quality and posing risks to public health.

The OMG! Program promotes the use of green infrastructure as a decentralized, nature-based approach to managing stormwater. GI practices rely on soil, plants, and natural processes, such as infiltration, evaporation, and transpiration, to mimic the natural water cycle and manage runoff at its source. Common GI practices include rain gardens, stormwater planters, green roofs, tree plantings and trenches, and permeable pavement. When implemented widely, GI becomes increasingly effective: the more green infrastructure installed across a neighborhood, the greater its cumulative impact. By slowing, capturing, and infiltrating stormwater runoff, these practices significantly ease pressure on sewer system, reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, and lower the risk of flooding.

Beyond stormwater management, GI projects deliver a range of environmental and community benefits. Trees and vegetation improve air quality, reduce urban heat island effects, produce fresh food, provide habitat, beautify neighborhoods, and help address broader environmental and socio-economic challenges associated with urbanization.

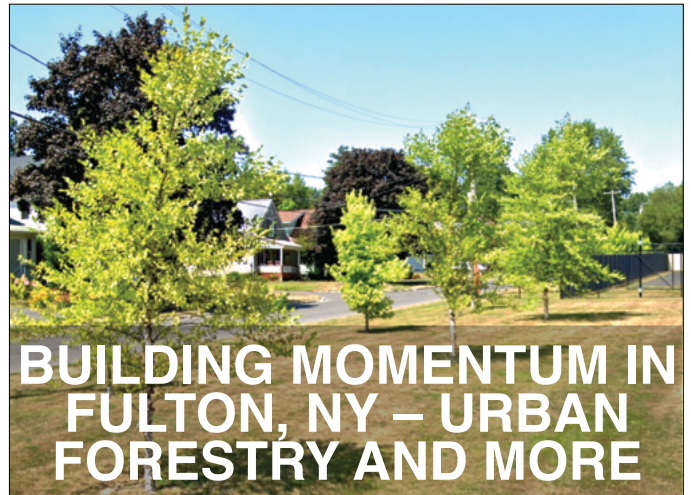
A defining feature of the OMG! Program has been its focus on equity and partnership. The program prioritized working with community partners that would otherwise face financial or other barriers to

participating in existing County GI programs. Through this approach, ASLF built strong, collaborative relationships with community partners throughout project planning, design, construction,



and public engagement and education. These partnerships are central to the program’s success and will remain critical as ASLF continues to promote the benefits of green infrastructure across Syracuse’s urban neighborhoods.

As the OMG! Program concludes, ASLF will continue to provide maintenance support for installed green infrastructure projects, along with ongoing public outreach and education. Closing out OMG! marks the final chapter of ASLF’s decades-long involvement in County-supported Onondaga Lake technical assistance—an effort that originated with the landmark litigation that formally concluded several years ago. Looking ahead, ASLF remains committed to supporting green infrastructure, urban forestry, and water resource protection in the Syracuse community, building on its longstanding legacy of environmental advocacy and stewardship.



Trees Planted by ASLF at Former Nestle Parking Lot Site in Fulton

Recently ASLF has been building a promising collaborative relationship with the Fulton community in Oswego County. Involvement initially began about 10 years ago with GLRI tree plantings in the area, and recently in 2024 ASLF carried out a NYS DOH wellness project which included several events in Fulton. In particular, the Fulton Garden Club has been quite active and we have been cultivating a partnership with this purposeful community-based organization through shared vision on what a green and flourishing Fulton looks like.

The Fulton community has also revived its tree committee, and it goes without saying ASLF has been there to support these efforts and provide needed technical assistance. A major goal of the committee is to create an urban forest master plan for the city, as this would open the door to other opportunities that would support future projects such as rebuilding the city’s canopy cover, planting downtown street trees, and enhancing parks with food forests. Another major goal of the tree committee is to establish a community tree nursery as a source of tree stock for future projects.

Other potential collaborative opportunities include participation in the Fulton School District’s Synergy program created to engage middle school students in community volunteerism (ASLF participated in the 2024 North Bay cleanup day teaching students about foraging and silviculture), and continuing to offer technical assistance related to agroforestry planning, green infrastructure, and grant-writing. We look forward to continuing our role in helping to grow civic engagement in this wonderful community.

# REMEMBERING ASLF FAMILY WE LOST IN 2025

**A**s we conclude another year at ASLF, we remember several individuals who have passed but will not be forgotten due to their support for our mission and vision.

**Christopher Wasiutynski** passed away on February 2, 2025, and had previously served as both ASLF staff and Board member in the 1990s focusing on the development of international programs (especially in eastern Europe). He was a transportation expert and was also known for the major role he played in defeating the “Westway” project, a plan to convert the NYC West Side Highway into a new Interstate.



Christopher Wasiutynski



Richard J. Lippes

**Richard J. Lippes**, environmental attorney, passed away on March 22, 2025. He served as ASLF general counsel for several decades but is most famous for his role in the Love Canal lawsuit, historic citizen litigation which served as catalyst for passage of the CERCLA (Superfund) Act in 1980 (this was not ASLF litigation). He also worked with ASLF on many lawsuits and served as a connection to outside legal networks.

**Gloria W. Sage** passed away on July 3, 2025, and was a long-time supporter of ASLF as well as the wife of the late Martin Sage, brother of ASLF cofounder Samuel H. Sage. Gloria earned her PhD from Harvard in 1963, the first year graduate degrees here were offered to women. She worked many years as a biomedical research scientist, and was also very active as a civic and environmental advocate in Syracuse.



Gloria W. Sage

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

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

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- "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 mission 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 "mightycase" 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  
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