2026 Climate Resilience Grant Program Project Descriptions

Conserving Resilient Lands—Acquisition Projects

Hudson Taconic Lands 154-acre fee acquisition in the Berkshire Wildlife Linkage in Rensselaer County that was slated to become a stone quarry. The property includes a half-mile of frontage on Kinderhook Creek and a rocky summit with steep cliff faces that afford views of the southern Rensselaer Plateau, Taconics, and Berkshires. The topographic diversity and variety of natural community types of the property give it high scores for Resilience and Landscape Diversity. Public recreational access will be made available and include opportunities for hiking, rock climbing and trout fishing.

Lake George Land Conservancy 431-acre fee acquisition within the Greens to Adirondacks linkage and the Lake George watershed in Washington County. The forested property contains 17 acres of open water and wetlands, half a mile of lake shoreline and two-thirds of a mile of a Class AA-Special stream. The property will connect conserved lands to its north and south, creating a span of 3,235 acres of contiguously protected land. Community benefits include the protection of a drinking water source for tens of thousands of people, as well as benefits to the local economy through the opening of new hiking trails and other recreational opportunities.

Saratoga P.L.A.N 254-acre conservation easement over Camp Woodhaven, a Girl Scout camp in the Catskills to Adirondacks linkage in Saratoga County. The property adjoins two other easements held by Saratoga PLAN, resulting in 421 acres of contiguous protected land. The camp provides girls of all backgrounds in eastern New York access to outdoor recreation, education, and engagement with nature. In addition to the benefits for the campers and staff, the project also includes a public trail easement that will help reroute a section of the Long Path, a premier 358-mile long distance trail from New York City to the Adirondacks, off of roads and into the woods.

Thousand Island Land Trust 170-acre conservation easement in the heart of the Algonquin to Adirondack focal area in St. Lawrence County. The property features magnificent habitat diversity supporting a variety of wildlife, including neotropical songbirds such as the golden-winged warbler, scarlet tanager and black and white warblers. It also possesses strong connectivity attributes by adjoining or being proximal to thousands of acres of State Forest and other protected lands owned by TILT.

Winnakee Land Trust 279-acre fee acquisition to create the Ro-Jan Community Forest in Dutchess and Columbia Counties in the Berkshire Wildlife Linkage. The property is characterized by intact forest, floodplains and wet-meadow complexes along a one-mile stretch of the Roeliff-Jansen Kill, a major tributary of the Hudson River. Winnakee will host meetings with key civic partners followed by a public planning process to guide stewardship, habitat restoration, recreational use, and future public access. Planned community benefits include equitable access to nature through the establishment of a new trail network, outdoor education and community programming that involve local residents, civic groups, youth organizations, environmental committees, and town officials.

Conserving Resilient Waters—Acquisition projects

Albany Water Board 33-acre fee acquisition adjacent to over 6,000 acres of protected watershed lands in the Catskills to Adirondacks linkage that serves as the drinking water source for the City of Albany. As part of a strategic source water protection effort, the Albany Water Board received a DEC Water Quality Improvement Grant to prioritize parcels for acquisition around Alcove Reservoir, the drinking water source for 132,082 people. The property is among the highest priority targets for acquisition due to its

900 feet of Hannacroix Creek, a mapped resilient stream, floodplain and wetland area with intact forested buffer on both sides.

Columbia Land Conservancy 204-acre conservation easement in the Berkshire Wildlife Linkage in Columbia County. Conservation of this property will ensure that it continues to provide important ecosystem services including flood mitigation as well as protecting an aquifer that contributes to groundwater recharge.

Nature Sanctuary Society of Western New York 20-acre fee acquisition in Erie County of a sphagnum shrub/black spruce-tamarack bog, a rare wetland type in New York State. It is a classic kettle hole bog with a 6-acres of open water centered within the larger sphagnum mat. The acquisition of this property will protect the bog from damage from motorized watercraft and potential subdivision. It will also allow for guided access to scientists, educators, students, and community members during permitted research and guided educational events, which has been unavailable for over 50 years.

Trust for Public Land 84-acre fee acquisition in Orange County along one of the narrowest segments of the Appalachian Trail corridor, a recognized climate migration pinch point. This project will prevent residential development of flood-prone lands while maintaining essential north-south wildlife connectivity in a rapidly fragmenting landscape. It will also enable a re-routing of the Appalachian Trail to protect wetland integrity on an adjacent protected property and improve public access The property will be transferred to the National Park Service and managed collaboratively through the AT Cooperative Management System.

Western New York Land Conservancy 311-acre fee acquisition in Chautauqua County that includes 4,200 feet of lake shoreline, extensive wetlands and climate-resilient forest. Protection of the property, which supports wetlands and natural shorelines on Bear Lake, will secure an emergency drinking water source. The new Bear Lake Preserve, scores above-average for resilience and connectivity and acquisition of this land aligns with goals of the Western NY Wildway, a conservation plan developed with extensive scientific input and GIS analysis, and backed by 70+ partners. Community support for this project spans decades, including advocacy from the Bear Lake Association and regional partners. Protection prevents damage to sensitive habitats, supports nature-based tourism, and increases public access.

Conserving Resilient Lands—Planning and Capacity projects

Genesee Valley Conservancy This project, the Conservation GIS Fellowship and Curriculum Program, addresses the urgent need for spatial data expertise in the conservation field by equipping emerging professionals and students with advanced mapping and analysis skills. Participants will engage in a Fellowship Program at Genesee Valley Conservancy focusing on ArcGIS Pro data visualization, directly applied to real-world habitat management, biodiversity preservation and habitat restoration scenarios. Tangible projects such as cartographic deliverables, decision making tools, suitability analyses, and automated modeling toolboxes will benefit and support Conservancy initiatives moving forward. By bridging classroom training with real world experience, this initiative will empower a new cohort of leaders to drive evidence-based conservation strategies through an innovative partnership in the Genesee River watershed while expanding the capacity of a local land trust.

Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust This project will strengthen the climate resilience of TILT's conserved lands by integrating science-based mapping, floodplain and wetland analysis, and climate vulnerability assessment into stewardship and acquisition planning. Staff will use TNC's Resilient and Connected Network tools alongside GIS data to evaluate connectivity, habitat value, and flood mitigation benefits across our conservation easements and fee lands. Outcomes will

include a climate-informed stewardship framework, updated monitoring protocols, and a prioritized list of lands for future conservation actions. By building internal capacity, the project ensures the organization can make strategic, science-based decisions that enhance both ecological and community resilience under a changing climate.

Wildlands Network This project will advance connectivity and climate resilience between two of the largest core habitats in eastern North America—the Pennsylvania Wilds and New York's Adirondack Park. Wildlands Network will complete a refined and detailed GIS analysis of the eastern two-thirds of the landscape to identify connectivity barriers and conservation priorities. They will also establish a framework for a Pennsylvania Wilds to Adirondacks Regional Conservation Partnership by expanding cooperative relationships with land trusts, state agencies, counties, and other organizations, including Indigenous Nations. Outcomes include understanding capacity-building needs, identifying regional conservation priorities, developing an approach to possible Indigenous Nation engagement, and establishing a framework for continued collaboration and long-term conservation efforts to enhance connectivity and climate resilience in the region.

Conserving Resilient Waters—Planning and Capacity projects

Ausable Freshwater Center This project will build organizational and regional capacity to identify, prioritize, and protect climate-resilient aquatic habitats by mapping thermal refugia in the upstream reaches of the Ausable River in northern New York. As climate-driven warming and altered flow regimes increasingly threaten cold-water species, groundwater-fed thermal refugia play a critical role in sustaining aquatic biodiversity, maintaining connectivity, and supporting downstream water quality and human communities. Through partnerships with the U.S. Geological Survey and Lake Champlain Sea Grant, the Center will integrate thermal imagery, desktop analysis, and existing biological and geomorphic data to produce a publicly accessible web-based map of thermal refugia. The project will culminate in staff training, partner engagement, a public forum, and community-facing products that directly inform future land protection, river restoration, and stewardship strategies, with results shared with NYSDEC, Adirondack Land Trust, and Open Space Institute to help prioritize land acquisition and restoration in critical riparian and floodplain areas.

Buffalo Niagara River Land Trust The Buffalo Niagara River Land Trust (BNRLT) will expand community-based conservation, education, and stewardship programming intended to increase their effectiveness in protecting lands at the land/water interface in Western New York, specifically the urban shorelines of the Buffalo River and the floodplains of Cayuga Creek. Through programs geared toward adults and families, such as Conservation Conversations, Eco-Expeditions, and Spruce Ups, which are volunteer stewardship events, BNRLT engages residents in restoration, citizen science, and education in the process of improving habitat conditions, stabilizing soils, and increasing public understanding of watershed processes and floodplain function. This work strengthens climate resilience and landscape connectivity, expands public access to conserved lands, and builds long-term community relationships with critical riparian and flood-prone areas.

Center for Native Peoples and the Environment, SUNY ESF This project will produce an ecological inventory, youth education feasibility study, caretaking plans, and stewardship agreements to guide Indigenous-led caretaking of a 600-acre property in Onchiota that the Nature Conservancy helped acquire. The property contains wetlands, floodplains, and a cold-water brook trout stream within the priority wetlands and floodplain areas identified by the CRGP. By bringing together both Traditional Ecological Knowledge with mainstream scientific knowledge, this work strengthens

climate resilience, cultural revitalization, and watershed connectivity within the St. Regis River headwaters.

Central New York Land Trust This project will build capacity for the Central New York Land Trust (CNYLT) to engage residents in five municipalities in two counties to plan activities at a new public nature preserve, located in a floodplain in the Great Lakes watershed. Through public engagement, planning efforts, and partnerships with community-based organizations, CNYLT will carry out educational activities and create an updated management plan and signage for protecting Limestone Creek. Project activities include stakeholder engagement, design and distribution of outreach materials, educational activities on a recently-donated property situated within the Limestone Creek floodplain, and an updated management plan for the nature preserve. The final result of this project will be a community-supported management plan and physical improvements at a new nature preserve to benefit and educate both upstream and downstream communities, helping them prepare for increasing floods, extreme weather events, and addressing erosion along an important waterway in Central New York.

Cracker Box Palace at Historic Alasa Farms This project entails the development of a strategic, multi-year plan that strengthens climate resilience and water quality protection across the 627-acre Alasa Farms property. The project will focus on safeguarding Second Creek—a major tributary to Great Sodus Bay, one of Lake Ontario's major embayments —through improved land use planning, wetland health assessment, and climate adaptive stewardship strategies. A key outcome will be the development of a Youth Conservation Corps–inspired program model that engages young adults in hands on conservation, technical skill building, and watershed protection. Funding will enable the non-profit to build organizational capacity, deepen partnerships, and create a clear roadmap for long term, community centered conservation impact.

Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force This project will strengthen the Onondaga Nation’s water resilience by supporting community driven planning grounded in Indigenous Water Sovereignty. Funding will support water quality testing, staff time, community honorariums, outreach materials, and essential field gear for sampling and watershed assessments. Together, HETF, the Onondaga Nation, and technical partners will assess water conditions, gather community knowledge, and identify priority actions for protecting key hydrological features such as wetlands, streams, and aquifers. The project will result in culturally grounded engagement materials, water quality insights, and a community defined set of next steps to strengthen water security and climate resilience.