

Western New York Wildway



Background

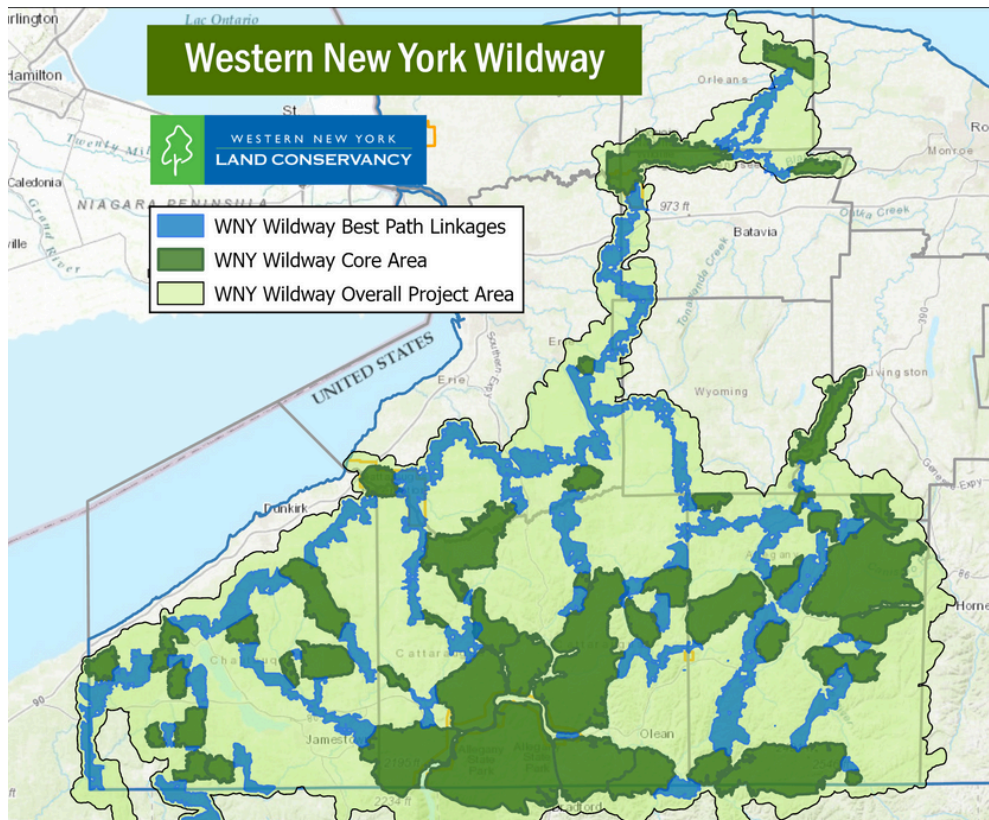


WESTERN NEW YORK
LAND CONSERVANCY

The WNY Wildway is a landscape-scale conservation initiative spearheaded by the Western New York Land Conservancy that aims to protect and connect the largest of our region's remaining tracts of wildlife habitat. By connecting the vast forests of northern Pennsylvania to the Great Lakes, the WNY Wildway allows plants and animals to roam across the land as they once did, and move to expand their ranges and ensure their survival as the climate changes. The WNY Wildway is part of our state's 30x30 initiative to protect 30% of New York State by 2030.

Re-Connecting WNY

- In Western New York, sprawling development has created a highly fragmented landscape: a disconnected patchwork of forests that leave plants and animals stranded on small islands of habitat without the ability to travel, forage, or breed—all three of which are necessary for species to survive and to adapt to our changing world. The WNY Wildway:
 - Combats habitat fragmentation
 - Encourages species movement
 - Provides climate resiliency



The WNY Wildway is a network of habitat cores and linkages in the eight counties of WNY (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming), connecting to the larger Eastern Wildway and ensuring plants and animals can move and migrate as the climate changes. Wildways are comprised of core habitats, connected by wildlife corridors or linkages, and surrounded by varying compatible uses. Core areas in our region are large tracts of habitat with minimal human infrastructure that serve as habitat blocks for native wildlife and plants.



Janet Gallogly Allegheny Wildlands. By Calvin Nemeck



WNY Wildway Components

- **Core Areas** encompass our region's most ecologically significant tracts of land that are at least 4,000 acres. They serve as vital habitat for a diversity of plant and animal species, and they incorporate most of the region's already protected land. These are areas where conservation efforts should be prioritized.
- **Linkages** are natural corridors that connect Core Areas, allowing wildlife to move safely between them to find resources, mates, and adapt to climate changes. They represent the shortest and easiest route between Core Areas using the most intact patches of natural land. Where roads intersect with these routes, wildlife crossings are critical for enabling safe passage for animals, reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions, and promoting ecological connectivity across the landscape.

The Land Conservancy's Approach

- **Permanently Protecting Land:** Through land acquisition, conservation easements, and other tools, the Land Conservancy is ensuring that critical areas are preserved forever.
- **Partner Power:** The WNY Wildway Partner Network amplifies impact by uniting resources, expertise, and networks with conservation organizations and local communities, driving collective action, and expanding reach across the Wildway.
- **Data-Driven Prioritization:** Guided by rigorous landscape analysis and wildlife studies, the Land Conservancy collects and uses the best available data to focus its efforts on protecting the region's most at-risk species and habitats.



Benefits for Wildlife and People

Biodiversity Conservation: Connected habitats support diverse species, from mammals to birds, plants to pollinators.

Community Resilience: Land protection bolsters ecosystem services like cleaner air and water, increases carbon storage to combat climate change, and provides flood mitigation to prevent costly damage to homes and communities.

Reduced Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions: Wildlife connectivity efforts reduce encounters between animals and roadways, saving lives and taxpayer dollars.

Local Recreation & Tourism: Land conservation enhances opportunities for eco-tourism, hiking, birdwatching, and nature experiences that enrich the community and attract visitors.

Join the Effort

The **WNY Wildway Partner Network** is a coalition of stakeholders committed to building and supporting the Wildway. Our partners include local, county, and state agencies, transit authorities, municipalities, private landowners, land trusts, conservation organizations, and community groups. Through collaboration, we aim to achieve a landscape-scale conservation effort that benefits both wildlife and people. The primary purpose of the WNY Wildway Partner Network is to engage the region in building the WNY Wildway fostering collaboration among partners, promoting awareness and implementation of the WNY Wildway, and supporting regional land protection and wildlife connectivity projects and initiatives.

Email info@wnylc.org to join.

Land Use Planning and Zoning

Municipalities play a critical role in protecting wildlife, preserving open spaces, and ensuring the natural beauty of our region endures for generations. By using thoughtful land-use tools, communities can help achieve conservation goals that benefit both people and nature.

- **Corridor Incorporation:** Towns can integrate connected green spaces into local plans to protect pathways for wildlife movement.
- **Conservation or Cluster Subdivision Design:** Cluster homes on smaller lots in a development to protect large open areas for wildlife, agriculture, or recreation. This approach not only preserves natural habitats but also enhances community character and reduces infrastructure costs.
- **Performance Zoning:** This tool regulates development based on its impacts rather than by separating areas by specific uses. It sets measurable standards such as preserving open space, protecting water quality, or maintaining wildlife corridors to encourage innovative development that aligns with conservation goals, while still allowing for diverse and adaptable land use.
- **Overlay Ordinances:** Municipalities can designate certain areas as overlay zones where more restrictive regulations are enacted to protect natural resources like steep slopes, stream corridors, wildlife habitats, and agricultural land.
- **Design Guidelines:** Implementing design guidelines can help minimize the impact of development proposals on nearby natural resources, allowing wildlife to pass through infrastructure.

Wildlife Crossings Funding

Federal funding opportunities are available for municipalities and transportation authorities to build wildlife crossings on roadways, helping to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions, enhance driver safety, and support wildlife movement.

- Federal Highway Administration: Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP) (\$200,000-\$20 million grants)
- Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program (\$675 million total available)

Over 15 other funding opportunities listed on this [linked SnapShot Guide](#) by Arc Solutions



Bobcat crossing under bridge . By WNY Land Conservancy

You can access the SnapShot Guide by going to https://arc-solutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/IIJA-Wildlife-Infrastructure-Funding-Guide_FINAL.pdf

