

2025 EMC Environmental Excellence Award Winners

The [Erie County Environmental Management Council](#) (EMC), an advisory board to the County on environmental issues, recognized the following 2024 Environmental Excellence Award Winners:

- **The Great Lakes Beach Sweep**, a volunteer-driven initiative launched in 1989, focuses on protecting and improving the health of Lake Erie. Led by local resident Sharon Trembath since its inception and organized in conjunction with the Center for Marine Conservation, this annual event engages Western New York residents in meaningful environmental stewardship. Each year, thousands of pounds of debris are removed from local shorelines, helping raise awareness about pollution and the importance of preserving our natural resources. The Great Lakes Beach Sweep continues to improve water quality in Lake Erie while building a more engaged, informed, and environmentally conscious community.
- **The What's a Tree Worth Project**, led by the Town of Hamburg Conservation Advisory Board, brings attention to one of our most valuable assets- our trees. A bright green tree tag was developed and placed on trees in public places in the town. These tags state the common and scientific names, tree height and information about tree benefits including carbon sequestered and stormwater retained. Through the efforts of dedicated volunteers, a variety of trees in public places are tagged with this information, raising awareness of the many benefits trees make to our local environment.
- **The Northwoods Nature Preserve and Trail Project**, led by the Village of Alden, protected 50 acres of aquifer recharge land through a 1990s land swap, creating the Northwoods Nature Preserve. In 2024, Eagle Scout candidate Owen Stanley led over 100 volunteer hours to build a one-mile trail, install signage, and construct a footbridge using reclaimed materials. The trail offers access to unique local history, fossil-rich shale, and mature woodlands while supporting water quality education and conservation. With minimal cost and deep community involvement, this project highlights Alden's long-term commitment to sustainability and serves as a model for environmental stewardship and local engagement.
- **Wheels for Workers 716**, founded in 2022 by John Hannon, is an all-volunteer nonprofit that repairs donated bicycles and provides them to individuals in need of reliable transportation. Partnering with local organizations, they've distributed over 4,500 bikes—each requiring about four volunteer hours—to residents across Erie County. With support from community groups, churches, and sponsors like West Herr and M&T Bank, Wheels operates a repair hub behind St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Their mission—"Donate a Bike, Change a Life"—demonstrates a sustainable model of reuse, community engagement, and transportation equity that continues to grow and inspire.
- **The Cold Spring Battery-Electric Bus Conversion Project** conducted by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) in partnership with National Grid and New York Power Authority, recently completed its first phase. This initiative established a

fleet of 45 electric transit buses, installed charging infrastructure, upgraded grid systems, and provided workforce training. The project supports clean energy goals by reducing emissions, improving air quality, and promoting sustainable transit. As the first project of its kind in the region, this effort positions NFTA as a leader in green transportation and reflects a strong commitment to a healthier, more energy-efficient future for Western New York.