



New York Sea Grant (NYSG) is a collaborative program of the State University of New York, Cornell University, and NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration).

With 3,400 miles of coastlines, New York is the only U.S. state bordering both the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. More than 85% of NY's population lives in a coastal region.



NYSG provides research, education, and extension services enhancing coastal community economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and citizen awareness of NY's marine and Great Lakes resources.

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NYSG Focus Area for this project:

Resilient NY Communities and Economies

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Small Grants Strengthen Community Stewardship Across New York's Great Lakes Basin

Local partners, residents, and youth are addressing priority environmental issues across the Great Lakes region of New York.

Communities throughout New York's Great Lakes watershed are working to manage erosion, restore habitat, address invasive species, and respond to impacts related to environmental change. These challenges require ecosystem-based solutions supported by active community engagement to ensure that restoration efforts are carried on into the future. Building community involvement, especially among youth, is a critical need for long-term resilience.

In 2025, New York Sea Grant and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation awarded \$199,696 to five projects (recipients) that pair nature-based solutions with community involvement. These initiatives include a living shoreline restoration (Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper), invasive species management in priority forested areas (Genesee County Park and Forest), creation of a regional native seed network (Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County), climate-focused community tree planting (Atlantic States Legal Foundation), and hands-on watershed education with restoration activities for youth and volunteers (Western New York Land Conservancy). Across all projects, residents, landowners, youth, and partner organizations will work together to restore natural habitats and strengthen local capacity to care for Great Lakes resources.

These projects will collectively restore more than 6.75 acres, nearly 2,900 linear feet of riparian habitat, remove invasive species across 49 acres, expand access to native plants, and plant more than 70 trees. By engaging hundreds of residents across Erie, Genesee, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, and Oswego counties, these projects provide hands-on stewardship and foster local ownership of restoration and resilience efforts. This work strengthens community partnerships and advances local solutions to shared environmental challenges.

Investing in locally driven, hands-on restoration empowers communities to protect their natural resources, reduce environmental risks, and build lasting stewardship across the Great Lakes region.

Project Partner:

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation



Summer stewards assist with native species plantings for a living shoreline in Western New York as part of a 2022-2023 New York Great Lakes Basin Small Grant-funded project.
Photo: Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper