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OUR P.A.P.E.R

Parks Are for People & Environmental Resources

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Introduction

Well, another winter has passed here at New York State Parks, and the Natural Resource Stewards and the rest of the team from the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) have remained extremely busy. This issue of *Our Paper* will share the various habitat protection projects, natural resource surveys, invasive species public outreach programs, and other work completed by EMB in the past several months, with a special focus on our contributions to the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

Special Focus—The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Furthers Stewardship in Parks

In 2009, significant environmental restoration funding became available for projects in the Great Lakes watershed. The federal government recognized the importance of the health and sustainability of Great Lake ecosystems and that they are in desperate need of restoration. President Obama and Congress provided \$475 million dollars to the US Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies for habitat and wildlife protection and restoration, water quality issues, invasive species removal and prevention and other environmental issues through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).

New York State Parks as well as other agencies and organizations recognized this excellent opportunity to further environmental stewardship and implement on-the-ground restoration projects. Beginning in summer 2009, a collaborative effort between state agen-

cies and organizations began to discuss and organize priority projects. A list of over 100 projects was created and newly formed working groups discussed each project and partnered on them where appropriate. This effort enabled a large group of partners to collaborate on a large scale, reduce redundancy, learn about other's projects, and create very competitive restoration projects.

To date, Parks has submitted proposals for eight projects totaling over \$2 million and with this funding we would expect to hire 17 seasonal employees. Our projects include: wetland and species restoration; pollution control and remediation; invasive species prevention, control and eradication; and water quality and bathing beach monitoring.

State Parks is a collabora-

tor on nine other projects, these include: two shoreline restoration projects (lead by DOS and DAM); culvert repairs and maintenance (lead by DEC); feral swine detection and eradication (lead by DAM); reducing the spread of pests through firewood (lead by DEC); communicating beach monitoring results to the public (lead by DOH); monitoring coastal wetlands (lead by NHP); and enhancing tributary monitoring (lead by DEC).

Thus far, NY State has submitted 111 projects totaling \$70.8 million. We should begin hearing if the projects will be funded within the coming weeks. In these difficult fiscal times, the GLRI would provide much needed support for the vital restoration of our Great Lake ecosystems.

- *Kristen Cady-Sawyer & Lynn Bogan, EMB Program Specialist and Ecologist*

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Alphabet Soup-

DOS = Dept. of State
DAM = Dept. of Ag& Markets
DEC = Dept. of Env. Conservation
DOH = Dept. of Health
NHP = Natural Heritage Program



Blanding's Turtle Conservation in the St. Lawrence River Valley

Through the Federal *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative*, Natural Resources Steward Casey Holzworth has submitted a \$200,000 grant application to study and protect Blanding's turtles in the St. Lawrence River valley. Blanding's turtles, a medium sized (max diameter: 10in.), semi-aquatic turtle best distinguished by its bright yellow chin and throat, are listed as a Threatened Species by NYS DEC. Working in cooperation with SUNY Potsdam and DEC Region 6, this project application would fund trapping and tracking Blanding's turtles in order to facilitate nest site creation and road mortality mitigation projects. By establishing nesting habitat and reducing road mortality (cited as a limiting factor and possibly the most significant impact to these populations, respectively by recent scientific

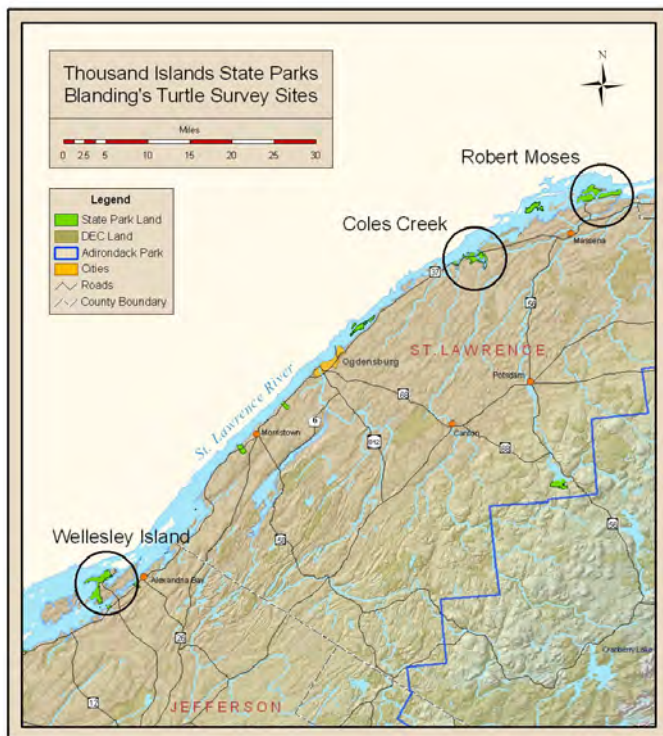
studies) this project would address two of the most pressing issues confronting Blanding's turtle conservation in northern New York.

This project would expand work conducted at Coles Creek State Park to Wellesley Island and Robert Moses State Parks as well as five nearby DEC Wildlife Management Areas. Students from SUNY Potsdam and Clarkson University would trap Blanding's turtles using baited hoop traps. Once trapped, radio-transmitters would be attached to the turtles' shells, which would allow students to track their movements. Special attention would be paid to areas of suspected nesting activity and road crossings. If deemed appropriate after site evaluation, some nesting areas would be expanded or created in or-

der to provide more opportunity for safe nesting. Any nests discovered would be also protected from predators using wire-mesh predator guards. Road crossing hotspots would either be fitted with specialized turtle fencing to keep turtles off of the roadway or with signs warning motorists of the presence of turtles on the roadway. All activities would be thoroughly monitored for their impact.

If funded, this project would represent one of the largest efforts to monitor and protect Blanding's turtles in New York State.

*-Casey Holzworth, NRS
Saratoga and Thousand Islands
Regions*



Woodlawn Beach State Park Wetland Restoration

Woodlawn Beach State Park is located along the eastern most point of Lake Erie. It lies along a major coastal migratory route and serves as a stopover site for birds during their migration. However, the park's emergent marsh and wooded wetlands have not escaped impacts of nearby industrial activities. Some areas were filled with slag and cinder by Bethlehem Steel Corporation and upstream bacteriological contamination is evident at the downstream bathing beach. Through the Federal *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative*, a grant proposal has been submitted to restore and enhance a portion of the park's wetlands to provide a fuller range of wildlife habitat and improved ecosystem function, especially with respect to water quality.

Currently, Blasdell Creek meanders through a degraded marsh within the park before reaching Lake Erie, and this 9-acre wetland complex would be the target of one of the enhancement efforts. Natural hydrology has been disrupted, but by restoring contact between the creek and wetland, beneficial wetland functions such as improved hydrologic retention, nutrient and sediment trapping, and microbial processing would significantly improve the quality of this coastal stream, while



Isolated wooded wetland targeted for restoration of connectivity to larger marsh complex.



Blasdell Creek wetland –2009

also enhancing wildlife habitat. Work would be conducted in conjunction with Buffalo State College to monitor the water quality and hydrology of the wetland. In addition to water contamination, the streams has been infested by sizeable populations of invasive plant species, which limit habitat diversity and quality. Invasive control programs would be implemented, along with the introduction of a diverse suite of native wetland plants appropriate to the region.

Expected results from this project would include greater numbers of marsh nesting birds, amphibians and reptiles breeding and nesting in Woodlawn Beach State Park, lower densities of invasive plant species, and cleaner water reaching Lake Erie. A larger, functioning wetland would not only supply more wildlife habitat, but improve the health of the lake itself. There is an urgent need to reduce the pollution entering our Great Lakes and to restore natural habitat; this project addresses both of these concerns with its actions to naturally filter out pollutants of Blasdell Creek with an enhanced wetland complex.

-Meg Janis, NRS
Western District Regions

Japanese stilt grass and swallow-wort removal at Selkirk Shores SP

For the past two years, Selkirk Shores SP has become a battleground for EDRR (Early Detection and Rapid Response) invasive plant removal projects. Since their detection in the summer of 2008, Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) and pale swallow-wort (*Vincetoxicum rossicum*) populations at the park have been "rooted out" by volunteers from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) and PRISM (Partners for Regional Invasive Species Management).

These projects have succeeded greatly due to the dedicated efforts of Sandy Bonanno, ESF alumnus and local swallow-wort expert. Sandy has volunteered countless hours at Selkirk

Shores carefully removing hundreds of individual swallow-wort plants. All involved are excited to see results of these manual removal projects by finding no swallow-wort during the growing season of 2010.



Japanese stilt grass if left unchecked can spread rapidly and out-compete native vegetation. The distinct white, shiny mid-vein on the leaf of this annual grass often aids in identification.



Armed with gloves and tools from EMB's invasive control initiatives, Sandy Bonanno (pictured center in red) and student volunteers from ESF braved the weather at Selkirk on a rainy day in October 2009.

- Tom Hughes, NRS
Central and Finger Lakes Regions

Environmental Field Days at Green Lakes State Park

On October 6 and 7, 2009, Green Lakes State Park once again hosted its annual Environmental Field Days. NRS Biologist Tom Hughes, working closely with EMB, Central Region and Green Lakes SP staff, coordinated this year's event.

Nearly 900 5th and 6th graders from 13 different schools in the greater Syracuse area participated.

Environmental Field Days consist of fun-filled environmental pres-

entations and activities designed to fit the science curriculum for the 5th and 6th grade classes in attendance. Student groups visit 8 stations throughout the day where educators present topics ranging from ecosystems and recycling to lake ecology and fish identification.

Many presenters from several different organizations volunteered their time and knowledge, including Page Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Rosamond Gifford Zoo, Rogers Environmental Education Center, Barefoot Bob Astronomy, Izaak Walton League, Cornell Cooperative Extension and NYS-DEC.

- Tom Hughes, NRS Central and Finger Lakes Regions



Sixth grade students from Nate Perry Elementary School celebrate Environmental Field Days at Green Lakes SP. The new bathhouse that appears in the background is a facility that was awarded the 2009 Structures Project of the Year by the Central New York Branch of the American Public Works Association.

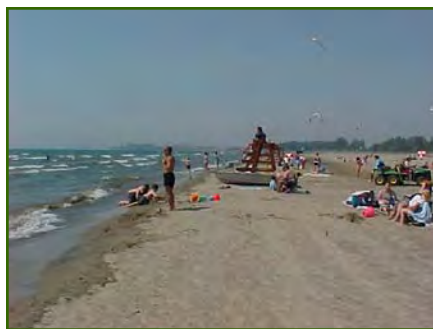


Student volunteers from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry provide instruction for the always popular animal tracks activity.

Pollution Source Track-down and Remediation

A GLRI grant proposal was submitted for continued research at Woodlawn Beach State Park and its watershed. This proposal includes additional sanitary survey work in order to track-down the pollution sources in Rush Creek, Blasdell Creek and Foster Brook and also to identify of remediation measures and watershed best management practices that could improve water quality at Woodlawn Beach. The sanitary survey work would also explore algae and leafy debris as potential pollution sources for the beach. This project would experiment with various beach grooming techniques to reduce contamination from these non-point sources. The work would be a collaboration between

OPRHP, Erie County Department of Health and also NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Stream Biomonitoring Unit. OPRHP would work with the beach grooming techniques while Erie County DOH would conduct detailed stream surveys on the creeks to



Woodlawn Beach on a warm summer day.



Sampling station along Rush Creek.

identify additional sources of bacterial contamination. DEC's Biomonitoring Unit would also work in the streams by kick sampling for benthic macroinvertebrates and characterizing the in-stream and riparian habitat.

-Karen Terbush, Environmental Analyst

Meet the Biologist –Kimberly Smith (State Parks Botanist)



Kim collecting plant data at Minnewaska State Park Preserve. Oh, the heights we go for the sake of science!

I am originally from Andover, Massachusetts, just north of Boston. From there I decided to head west to the Evergreen State College in Washington, where I received a B.S. in Environmental Science. After graduating I went to work for the Nature Conservancy restoring and monitoring native vegetation in wetlands. The project sparked my interest in native plant restoration and I continued on to work for the National Park Service in Hawaii for the next three years. My work there involved native plant restoration and studying the effects of fire on native plant communities. Working on the island led me to another opportunity on a different island halfway around the world! On the island of Mauritius, located east of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean, I continued to work on native plant restoration and protecting endangered species. After all of my travels, I wanted to return to the northeast to get back to my roots. I received an M.S. in Natural Resources from the University of Vermont and gained a lot of experience working in northern hardwood forests in Vermont and the Adirondacks.

Currently, I am the State Parks Botanist working on a partnership between OPRHP and the New York Natural Heritage Program. My work here involves tracking rare plant populations in state parks and consulting on natural resource management and planning. New York's state parks harbor an incredible diversity of rare plants so there is always a lot to do!



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EMB Mission Statement

The mission of the Environmental Management Bureau is to assist OPRHP in the responsible stewardship of its valuable natural, historic and cultural resources, as well as in providing safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors.