

LEAF

LAND, ENVIRONMENTAL, AG & FOOD AS MEDICINE

Division Quarterly Newsletter



LEAF Update News

A partnership with UWGB has students conducting frog and toad breeding surveys. The first monitoring period had spring peepers and wood frogs in abundance. The next round of surveys will occur soon as water temperatures warm. Northern Leopard Frogs, American Toads, and Gray Treefrogs are expected to be calling shortly to impress potential mates. Healthy frog populations indicate a healthy natural environment.



Staff Highlights

Wes Johnson

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Summer Projects :

- Murphy Grassed Waterway
- 2 ONF Pump House
- ONF Bison Pump House (East & West)

Nate Pelkey

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Nathan received his certification for prescribed burns, and his drone pilot certification Spring 2026! He is a resource for invasive species, working on purple loose strife and phragmites prevention work projects this summer.

Deven Metoxen

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- Duck Creek Tree Planting May 2026. 47 acres of mixed species is being reforested along the east side of Duck Creek across

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oneidaenvironmental@oneidanation.org



Environmental Area

Partnership News

Oneida Bird Monitoring Program has begun the monitoring the Spring Migration at different site locations in Oneida. This year, we have had up to 120 Great White Pelicans in one sighting! Thank you Scott & Jeff expert birders! Find the fun facts post about Pelicans on our LEAF FB page!

NONPOINT update: NEW Water Champions

Environmental Staff have been selected for the NEW Water Champions Award.



Bird Research Updates

Recent bird monitoring results reveal promising outcomes from our restoration efforts, (including prescribed fire) fostering robust bird communities. In Oneida's restored areas, the breeding bird diversity remained impressive, with over 90 species noted. Grassland species like Bobolink and Eastern Meadowlark are thriving, reflecting effective prairie management around nesting times. Wetland species such as American Bittern and Virginia Rail were observed.

Data strongly suggest that well-timed prescribed burns enhance thriving bird populations, reinforcing confidence in the positive direction of restoration efforts.

Habitat Restoration News

Fernando Road Wetland Restoration is 90% complete, aiming to revive the wetland, diminish flooding, and filter water. It utilized 27,780 cubic yards of sand or roughly 1,800 dump truck loads of sand from Oneida Lake stockpile, supported by NEW Water and Ducks Unlimited. A nearby parking area may allow for trail development. Deadline for completion, end of May.

- 21 acres of mixed restoration adjacent to honors 1st- acres in the Oneida Creek watershed.
- Approximately 50 acres of prairie habitat to be managed with prescribed burning. Burn cut-off is May 15th to prevent any disturbance to grassland nesting birds.
- More pictures on our LEAF FB page.

- First Down for Trees planted 28 trees that were donated at Oneida Lake, in April 2026.



Land & Conservation Area

Hazard Tree & Storm Damage - The department is facing a surge of damage and hazard tree requests. Please understand we do not address trees near power lines; utility providers must resolve these issues. Submitting multiple requests for the same situation, will not expedite the work order.

Fire wood seasonal information - Softwood is available to any Oneida Tribal member. Read more details on the Oneida Nation Webpage, go to LEAF, under Licenses, Permits, and Services, select Firewood.

Highlights:

Duck Creek Trail

Trail maintenance update: Duck Creek Trail is currently NOT OPEN. All other trails in the Trails Guide have been checked for post storm damage, the rest of the trails have passed a safety check and are open.

Oneida Lake

- The automatic gates open at 6:00 am and close at 9:00 pm. Last season, there were numerous visitors locked in at night. Make sure to plan trips to the lake accordingly.
- Fishing Reminders: Must provide license to obtain Oneida Sportsman Fishing License.
- Swimming Hours are the same as the Gate hours 6AM to 9PM daily.

Land Acquisition Update

So far this year, Oneida Nation has acquired 5 properties, bringing our total acres purchased in FY26 to 129.76, and reservation ownership up to 45%.



Welcome Jeremiah Pelky Data Information Systems

Please join us in welcoming Jeremiah N. Pelky to the LEAF Division! He is a Data Specialist in the Land Area where he will support data systems and information that help inform and strengthen our land base work. He has worked within the Oneida Nation for over 14 years at various departments such as DPW, and DTS. He holds his associates degree in Computer Support and a Bachelors in Computer Science. For recreation, he enjoys social time with friends and creating video games! We're excited to have Jeremiah as a part of the division and look forward to working with him more. Please join in on giving him a warm welcome!

Agricultural Area



Oneida Nation Farm

Oneida Nation Farm highlights: Cattle are expected to increase from 500 to 600 this summer, while bison, totaling around 180, should see at least 50 calves this spring. Bison graze on 350 rotational acres, and cattle on 500. We anticipate expanding grazing locations and will begin seed planting in mid-April. Come shop for your outdoor grilling needs with Angus Beef steaks and hamburger available now!

Orchard Update

Preparations for the New Orchard Store are underway, featuring a Cider Room, and a kitchen for treats like fresh cider, donuts, caramel apples and apple chips. Check the Oneida Orchard page for hours of operation. The Orchard hosts 34 apple varieties, 50 pear trees, and a high tunnel for produce. Tsyunhekw[^] was absorbed into the Oneida Orchard Farm. For details on Barter/Trade, shop hours and products see the Orchard Facebook page.



Food as Medicine Area Update:



Kudos to Yadie Jordan, the newly appointed Cannery Manager at the Oneida Nation Cannery! She is excited about the Cannery, especially with the new facility set to open its doors in the coming months. In her leisure time, she loves to unwind. Let's extend a warm welcome and congratulations to Yadie!

Food as Medicine Area

Elder Box Food Distribution Begins May 29th

Monthly Tribal Elder Food Box distribution start May 29, serving enrolled Oneida Elders. age 55+ Boxes include proteins, produce, shelf-stable items and traditional foods.

Oneida Food Distribution along with Oneida Emergency Food Pantry received help from UW-Extension to get a container and raised garden started at the front of the building. Oneida Food Distribution along with Oneida Emergency Food Pantry will be adding 11 raised garden beds this summer. The Items grown in the gardens were used in cooking classes and donated to the pantry. This summer's gardens will be part of the garden smarts for kids program.

Food Pantry Upcoming Classes

Join us every second Wednesday for evening classes at the Oneida Turtle School home ec room, hosted by Oneida Food Distribution and Oneida Emergency Food Pantry. It's a good opportunity to bond with family and friends while enhancing your culinary skills!

Strong Bodies Wellness Classes | June 29 - August 12

Strength and balance classes will be held Mondays and Wednesdays at the Oneida Emergency Food Pantry, supporting community health and movement.

Food Pantry Highlights

Growing together: Summer Gardens & Youth Programs

Eleven new raised garden beds will be added this summer, supporting Garden Smarts for Kids, cooking classes and pantry donations through hands- on learning.





Director's Corner

As we move further into the spring and summer seasons, I want to take a moment to recognize the tremendous work happening across the LEAF Division. From environmental restoration and conservation efforts to agricultural growth, habitat management, food distribution, and community wellness initiatives, our staff continue to demonstrate dedication, teamwork, and pride in serving the Oneida Nation and this great community!

This season reflects growth in many forms and in many areas. We are finishing planting at the farm, planting new fruit trees at the orchard, and marking buffers and setbacks in the fields. It is dry enough now to turn beef and bison out to pasture, and they have begun their calving season. Across our Environmental, Land, Agricultural, and Food as Medicine areas, we are seeing continued progress in remediation of hazard trees, restoration projects, habitat protection, land purchases, orchard farm expansion, agricultural production, seed and plant giveaway, and lots of community programming. These efforts not only support the health of our lands and waters, but also strengthen our people, traditions, and future generations. You may have seen that we are taking down several serious safety hazards of failing and falling down buildings. I want to acknowledge the partnerships, collaboration, and community involvement that continue to make this work possible. Whether through restoration efforts, food access programs, educational opportunities, youth engagement, or community events, these initiatives reflect the importance of working together toward a healthier and more sustainable future.

Thank you to all LEAF staff for your hard work, professionalism, and commitment. Your efforts continue to make a meaningful impact throughout the community each and every day.

We look forward to continuing this important work throughout the year ahead.

Eric McEster

