



Request for Proposal Forester / Restoration Ecologist Ecological Restoration at Red Fox Ravine in Kingston, NY

Summary

We seek a forester and/or restoration ecologist (*consultant*) with expertise and experience that includes urban forests to support us with an ecological restoration project at a 12-acre preserve we protect and steward in the City of Kingston. Additional advantages for proposals will be consultants who share philosophies and values with the Kingston Land Trust around land stewardship and community engagement.

Timeline for RFP and contract

We are in need of this support throughout the grant period for a grant we received for this project, which is April 1st, 2025 to February 8th, 2026. We are accepting proposals until EBD March 26th, will carry out consultant interviews shortly thereafter, and hope to choose a bid by April 1st.

Background

The Kingston Land Trust is carrying out an ecological restoration project at a 12-acre preserve in Kingston, NY that we protect and steward. This preserve was protected between 2020 and 2024 and is made up of forest surrounding a historic limestone quarry in the City of Kingston's hamlet of Wilbur; these 12 acres are now known as Red Fox Ravine (RFR), and along with 8 acres protected by the Northeastern Cave Conservancy make up 20 acres of protected land in the uplands above the Rondout Creek that were prioritized by the City of Kingston's Open Space Plan.

The preserve has intact native habitat, including upland forest (sugar maple, oak, hickory, eastern red cedars, sycamore, and more), the regionally rare purple cliff-brake fern, and caves and roosting habitat for endangered bat species. It also has significant disturbance, both historically as a quarry and from five years ago just before we protected the first parcel when the previous owner cut down hundreds of large trees in one area with the hopes of selling it as developable land and non-native opportunistic plants rushed in to take up the space. We rallied the community to help us protect and steward this land. Now, this Ecological Restoration grant, including the forestry/ecological restoration consultant, will help us greatly expand our restoration efforts at this preserve on the urban-rural boundary between the City

of Kingston and the habitat-rich ridge that connects Kingston to Rosendale. Simultaneously, we will further engage the community through cultural events/concerts, collective stewardship activities, and paid opportunities for newcomers to the ecological restoration world.

We have already made big public access improvements (trailhead parking lot and two initial trails for different abilities) that have allowed us to bring more community into our ecological restoration efforts. We have held a number of events on the preserve that combine aspects of volunteer community stewardship and workshops and cultural activities as a way of bringing in a wide audience, something we plan to continue and expand in 2025. Additionally, with a combination of staff and volunteer labor and professional trail construction specialists, we plan to continue the trail system in early 2025 so that stewards and visitors can safely get to the 10+ upper acres of the preserve as early as the summer, where two of the three project locations are.

We will plant trees on the recently clearcut hillside between the quarry and the parking lot to replace the ailanthus that we are currently limiting the growth of through mechanical methods (and continue more ailanthus control). We'll also clear and restore understory that has a high presence of non-native plants growing vigorously, including vines, on the southeast side of the upper quarry above Salamander Cave (protected by the Northeastern Cave Conservancy) and on the northwest side (largely Japanese barberry). We'll install deer exclusion in the areas where we plan to restore/diversify the understory.

As non-native plants are removed, we will replace them with regional specific native plants that are able to retain soil structure, inhabit certain ecological niches, improve the resilience and biodiversity of the ecosystem, and offer food and habitat to native wildlife, pollinators, birds, and mammals. The sumacs, in particular, can establish quickly, helping prevent other rapidly spreading non-native species from moving in.

Project timeline

Spring 2025:

- KLT engages forester / restoration ecologist (*consultant*)
- KLT does background research on forest restoration specific to this ecosystem--including consultation with other land trusts, other stewardship partners, and with the support of consultant.
- KLT begins engagement of existing volunteer networks and recruitment of new community stewards, including through a kick off Earth Day event (likely Saturday April 26) with music and food and through a Comida y Tierra Spanish language event focused on the topic of ecological restoration. Ideally, consultant will be able to attend the Earth Day event to be able to speak to community members about ecological restoration

- KLT, with the support of consultant, make a plan for initial planting of areas where stewardship has already been initiated in past years by the KLT (and that are already easily accessible and experience less deer browse)
- Carry out a small amount of planting in the areas mentioned in the last bullet
- KLT, with a trail-building contractor and volunteers, complete the next phase of trail construction providing easier access to the upper stretches of the preserve (separate grant)
- KLT finalizes the selection of community stewards and hosts a community steward orientation with the support of consultant

Summer 2025

- Host ecology and ethnoecology walks through the preserve, including one possibly led by the consultant with a focus on forest ecology and restoration
- Document existing conditions in three key areas of preserve for restoration. Consultant leads this documentation with the support of KLT land stewardship team and community stewards
- In collaboration with the KLT land stewardship team, consultant creates a stewardship and maintenance plan for each of these areas, focusing on control of non-native plant populations and site preparation for restoration, planting plans, and deer exclusion plans
- With support of consultant, KLT identifies numbers, varieties, and sources of plants to secure for the fall, and KLT orders plants for fall
- Also with consultant support, KLT identifies existing plants to save seeds from for propagation
- KLT hosts multiple work parties to remove non-native opportunistic plants and install deer exclusion

Fall 2025

- 2nd community event in the quarry community space with music and food where the project team presents findings thus far to the community and brings in more volunteers. Consultant may be requested to attend this event.
- KLT hosts multiple work parties to plant both trees and understory in the upper areas of the preserve
- KLT sets up cold frames, hosts seed gathering events
- KLT starts propagating seeds

Winter 2025-2026

- KLT land stewardship team and consultant review all materials and activities from 2025 and make plans for spring
- Consultant creates final stewardship plan for project, including recommendations for future years of restoration and stewardship

Management strategy:

As a land trust that thinks in the timeframe of perpetuity, we are committed to the long-term

stewardship of the land we protect. Ongoing management of this project in 2025 will be led by the KLT land stewardship team, who take on the most responsibility and technical tasks. There will be a core group of community stewards, supported by an optional stipend, that will spend more regular time with the KLT land stewardship team and be involved in more skilled tasks such as determining the locations and species of plantings. There will also be regular engagement of more sporadic volunteers through stewardship events, and, in a big team efforts fueled by music, food, and workshops led by the KLT network of experts in natural science, naturalism and land-based livelihood, we will be able to accomplish labor-intensive tasks such as watering plantings using buckets from the KLT-built rainwater catchment system to other parts of the preserve, pulling non-native spreading plants that threaten the success of the native plantings, and collected seeds for further propagation of native species.

Beyond 2025, we will continue this staff-community stewardship effort, although we expect management needs to decrease with time after plants establish themselves. An important aspect of long-term management is documentation and observation, which we will build into all phases of the project.

Project measurement and evaluation

The KLT maintains a digital stewardship log that includes:

- Tracking stewardship interventions through field notes and photos
- Document growth patterns of native species
- Record of plantings and measuring growth progression
- Observations about natural changes to the biodiversity
- Presence and patterns of various animal and insect species
- Check spread of invasive non-native species and/or overgrown plantings

The KLT has experience in this practice of regular monitoring as a land trust responsible for monitoring conservation easements and fee simple land under the Standards and Practices of the national Land Trust Alliance. We will draw from this practice for documentation of this project. We will take a pause to carry out periods of monitoring in the middle and at the end of the project, and then annually after that. We hope the consultant can give us recommendations on improving our monitoring techniques and practices. We would like to begin utilizing monitoring techniques established by the Environmental Monitoring and Management Alliance (EMMA), which has been used by other land trust partners we trust.

The KLT has a GIS license and basic ability to make maps, but we hope to improve our mapping practices this year and to be able to use GIS in the documentation of existing conditions and restoration interventions. If the consultant has this knowledge to offer, it would be a plus.

In addition to measuring the increase of native plant and animal populations as measured by our staff and community stewards, it will be equally important to track numbers and diversity of the community that is engaged in this project.

Our vision for success in this project includes noticeable changes in the diversity of plant species in the three project areas of the preserve, a robust and engaged community stewardship group that has momentum to continue beyond 2025, and a clear plan for ongoing management and restoration.

Consultant Scope of Work

Note that this SOW is subject to change upon recommendation of consultant and further discussion of KLT land stewardship team

Spring 2025:

- Initial meeting and site visit / walk with KLT land stewardship team
- Support KLT stewardship team in background research and learning on forest ecology on calcareous terrain, urban forestry, ecological/forest restoration, and other topics related to this project at Red Fox Ravine. This can include research and discussion on mechanical vs. chemical methods of control of opportunistic non-native (invasive) species. Throughout its existence, the KLT has not used chemical stewardship methods as part of our land stewardship practice and hope to keep it that way, although we want to engage in an informed exploration of the advantages, drawbacks, and risks of limited and precise chemical methods.
- Review and provide feedback on KLT stewardship team's overall plan for project, leading to a finalized plan to present to the community and potential community stewards
- Attend the kick-off Earth Day event (likely Saturday April 26 with rain date Sunday 27th) with music and food and be available to speak with the community about the project and topics related to the project like forestry, ecology, and restoration
- Support KLT land stewardship team in creating a plan for initial spring planting of areas where stewardship has already been initiated in past years by the KLT (and that are already easily accessible and experience less deer browse)
- Join a spring planting event to observe the KLT land stewardship teams techniques for planting (siting, spacing, depth, number of plants, etc.) and advise on any improvements
- Attend community steward orientation to support KLT land stewardship team in introducing community stewards to the project and forest restoration in general

Summer 2025:

- With the support of a KLT land steward, lead community members on a forest ecology walk through the preserve with attention given to existing conditions and opportunities for restoration
- With the support of KLT land stewardship team and community stewards, lead the documentation of existing conditions in three key areas of preserve for restoration. This should include an inventory of plant species in these areas (both trees and understory). This may include support with mapping and producing other visual representations of existing conditions and plans for restoration.
- In collaboration with the KLT land stewardship team, create a stewardship and maintenance plan for each of these areas, focusing on control/removal of non-native plant populations and site preparation for restoration, planting plans, and deer exclusion plans.
- Support KLT land stewardship team in identifying numbers and varieties of plants, as well as plant sources, to secure for fall planting
- Support KLT in identifying existing plants to save seeds from for propagation
- Attend *one* of the multiple work parties that the KLT hosts to remove non-native opportunistic plants and install deer exclusion. Advise on any improvements in techniques.

Fall 2025

- Attend the 2nd large KLT community event of the year in the quarry community space with music and support the KLT land stewardship (plus community steward) team in presenting our findings thus far to the community.
- Advise on KLT's plan for purchasing / building cold frames and collecting / propagating seeds from the forest

Winter 2025-2026

- With collaboration and support from KLT land stewardship team, review all materials and activities from 2025 and support development of a written and visual report from 2025
- With collaboration and support from the KLT land stewardship team, create a final stewardship plan for the project, including a maintenance and ongoing monitoring plan, and recommendations for future years of restoration and stewardship.

Budget

See total project budget attached. We have up to \$6000 budgeted for this consultant. If the consultant is any less than \$6000, we know we could apply the extra funds toward other aspects of the project, so we are interested in proposals that offer ways to economize in this way. That said, we want robust support from a consultant with a high degree of expertise and experience that is aligned with our values, and are prepared to spend the entire budgeted amount.

Submission requirements

Please submit a proposal via email, including *both* KLT contact email addresses listed below, that includes:

- Consultant bio or bios and qualifications (individual or team)
- Detailed description of how the consultant will carry out the proposed Scope of Work, including any suggested edits or additions
- Example(s) of other similar projects the consultant has done and the key results from these projects
- Two references from other clients the consultant has worked with
- Detailed fees, workload breakdown, and cost structure

KLT contacts

- Greg Shaheen (Director of Conservation and Stewardship):
greg@kingstonlandtrust.org
- Maggie Inge (Operations Manager): maggie@kingstonlandtrust.org

THANK YOU. We look forward to reviewing your proposal!