



## **Request for Proposal (RFP)**

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

**Proposal submission deadline: April 8, 2025** (See full Timeline and Key Dates below)

### **Introduction**

The Kingston Land Trust is a non-profit environmental and community organization that exists to protect, steward, create access to and build community power on land in and around Kingston as a means of reestablishing mutual care between humans and the ecosystems that sustain us. Ecological restoration of land that we protect and steward by our land stewardship team and volunteers is one of the most important activities we carry out.

This year, we are focusing our ecological restoration efforts at a 12-acre preserve we protect and steward in the City of Kingston called Red Fox Ravine, and we seek to contract a forester and/or restoration ecology consultant (hereafter referred to as “consultant”) to support this project. The consultant should have expertise and experience in forestry and ecological restoration of both rural and urban forests with varying levels of disturbance and human influence, including exceptional theoretical and practical/field knowledge of native and non-native plants. We need the consultant to support our team in creating concrete plans (project plan, planting plans, maintenance plans) and carrying out (also with the support of our team) field-based documentation of existing conditions. At the end of the project period, the consultant will produce a report to help summarize the project and provide a framework for continuing ecological restoration and stewardship. The consultant will also advise on our current methods and practices for stewardship and documentation. We hope that the consultant shares philosophies and values with the Kingston Land Trust around land stewardship and the important role of the community in this work. We are looking for a consultant with good communication skills, and it would be an added benefit if the consultant has experience educating people with various experience levels in these fields on the vital work of ecological restoration and other related topics.

### **Project Overview and Objectives**

This ecological restoration project will look at the entire preserve but focus on three different areas--a steep hillside that was deforested in 2019 where many ailanthus trees have since started growing, a middle elevation area on the northwest side of the quarry where the understory is overwhelmingly Japanese barberry, and a higher elevation area on the southeast side of the quarry with a high presence of non-native understory such as wineberry and vines harming the trees.

Our main goals for this project this year are to better understand how these areas can be shifted to the greater diversity and resilience of a forest with more native species and balance overall, to expand our community engagement efforts for stewardship and education at this preserve to include a committed group of community stewards and the general public, to carry out physical stewardship efforts to remove non-native plants and plant native ones, to install deer exclusion as deemed necessary, to collect and propagate native seeds, to document existing conditions and changes through stewardship, and to create a plan for ongoing maintenance and stewardship / ecological restoration.

### **Proposed Consultant Scope of Work and Timeline**

*Note the optional items, which are not essential but would be great to include if the budget allows*

#### **Spring 2025:**

- Initial meeting and site visit / walk with KLT land stewardship team
- Provide KLT land stewardship team with literature and other resources that are relevant to the project goals to review and share with community stewards as appropriate. This would hopefully include nuanced perspectives 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.
- Carry out one-on-one and group learning sessions and discussions with the KLT land stewardship team and possibly initial community stewards
- Review, provide feedback on, and help finalize the KLT land stewardship team's overall plan for project this year to be presented to the community and community stewards
- **(Optional)** Attend the KLT Earth Day Celebration in the quarry community space at the preserve (likely Saturday April 26 with rain date Sunday 27th) and be available to speak with community members about the project and topics related to the project
- With collaboration by the KLT land stewardship team, create a planting 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)
- **(Optional)** 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
- **(Optional)** Attend community steward orientation to support KLT land stewardship team in introducing community stewards to the project and forest restoration in general

#### **Summer 2025:**

- **(Optional)** 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
- Carry out one-on-one and group learning sessions and discussions with the KLT land stewardship team and community stewards
- With the support of the KLT land stewardship team and community stewards, carry out the documentation of existing conditions in three key areas of the preserve for restoration. This should include an inventory of plant species in these areas, both canopy and understory/ground cover, including some measure of the number and density of certain species,

and, if possible, an analysis of deer pressure. A bonus would be if this documentation can be represented geographically through mapping and in other visual representations. The KLT has some GIS and graphic capacity but is in need of support here.

- In collaboration with the KLT land stewardship team and drawing from the nuanced conversations about various methods in the spring, 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, fall planting plans, deer exclusion plans, and ongoing maintenance plans (including varying watering needs).
- Support KLT land stewardship team in identifying numbers and varieties of plants, as well as plant sources, to secure for fall planting
- **(Optional)** Support KLT in identifying existing plants on site 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

- Support the KLT land stewardship team and community stewards in carrying out planting plans by being available for questions about execution of the planting plans and attending at least one planting event
- **(Optional)** Advise on KLT's plan for purchasing / building cold frames and collecting / propagating seeds from the forest
- **(Optional)** Attend the 2nd KLT community event of the year in the quarry community space at the preserve and support the KLT land stewardship team and community stewards in presenting our findings thus far to the community.

#### Winter 2025-2026

- With collaboration and support from the KLT land stewardship team, review all materials and activities from this project and produce a written and visual report that summarizes our findings and activities in 2025 and a stewardship plan that lays out a maintenance and ongoing monitoring plan and gives recommendations for future years of restoration and stewardship.

#### Proposal Requirements

Please submit a proposal via email to [opportunities@kingstonlandtrust.org](mailto:opportunities@kingstonlandtrust.org) that includes:

- Consultant bio or bios and qualifications / experience (individual or team), including any other relevant information about the individual or company
- Contact information
- Detailed description of the consultants unique approach to the Scope of Work, including any suggested edits or additions to the Scope of Work and which (if any) *optional* SOW items would be included
- Answers to the following questions:
  1. What are the most important theoretical topics that should be considered as we (along with community stewards) deepen our knowledge of ecological restoration and engage in more detailed planning for this project?
  2. What are the most important technical considerations we should take into account?

3. What degree of change can we expect to see in one year in the species makeup of the project areas, and what factors will affect this?
  4. Despite the negative impacts of invasive species, what are some examples of ecological niches they may fill and roles they may play in disturbed environments that land stewards should be aware of?
  5. Why is it important to engage a diverse group of community members in ecological restoration and stewardship work?
- Example(s) of other similar projects the consultant has worked on and the key results from these projects
  - The contact information for at least one and ideally two clients the consultant has worked with (ideally on similar projects, although any project is fine) willing to serve as references
  - Fees and cost structure

### **Timeline and Key Dates**

- RFP release date: March 18, 2025
- Deadline for questions: April 3, 2025
- **Proposal submission deadline: April 8, 2025**
- Top proposals may be asked to have a conversation / interview with KLT Director of Conservation and Stewardship April 9, 10, or 11
- We hope to be able to choose a proposal by April 15th
- Project start date: ASAP after April 15th but no later than April 22nd
- Project completion date (final report due): February 2nd, 2026

### **Budget**

We have up to \$6000 budgeted for this consultant. If the total consultant fee is any less than \$6000, we know we could apply the extra grant funds toward other aspects of the project, so we are interested in proposals with a total budget in the range of \$4,000 to 6,000.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

The following factors will be used to evaluate proposals:

- Relevant experience, including qualifications and similar project history
- Detailed plan to carry out the Scope of Work, including any suggested improvements to it
- Items included in SOW relative to cost
- Alignment with the KLT's stewardship philosophy that avoids demonizing invasives species while still recognizing the negative impact they have on ecosystems, and prioritizing mechanical over chemical methods of removal
- Writing skills
- Answers to the five proposal questions
- Oral communication skills
- References

### **Instructions for questions and submissions:**

- Any questions during the RFP period should be emailed to **[opportunities@kingstonlandtrust.org](mailto:opportunities@kingstonlandtrust.org)**
- Proposals should also be emailed to **[opportunities@kingstonlandtrust.org](mailto:opportunities@kingstonlandtrust.org)**

**KLT Contacts:**

- Greg Shaheen (Director of Conservation and Stewardship): [greg@kingstonlandtrust.org](mailto:greg@kingstonlandtrust.org)

Greg is point-person at KLT for the Ecological Restoration project

- Maggie Inge (Operations Manager): [maggie@kingstonlandtrust.org](mailto:maggie@kingstonlandtrust.org)

Maggie is point person at KLT for contracts and finances

**THANK YOU.** We look forward to reviewing your proposal!

(See photo pages in separate PDF and additional background information below)

**Additional background information on project**

The Red Fox Ravine 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. 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. 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.

Ongoing stewardship:

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.

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.