

# LOCAL NEWS

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## GOT A STORY YOU WANT TO SEE?

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3A Sunday,  
Oct. 27, 2019

## IN BRIEF

### Endangered species list changes sought in NY

ALBANY (AP) — The eastern hellbender will get more protection and the bald eagle and peregrine falcon will get less under proposed changes to New York's list of endangered and threatened species.

The Department of Environmental Conservation is proposing removal of 19 species from the state's endangered and threatened list. Those species including the bald eagle and peregrine falcon show significant population growth, making them no longer threatened. There are now 390 pairs of breeding bald eagles in New York, compared to one pair when they were listed as endangered in 1973.

The agency is proposing to add 18 other species as threatened or endangered. They include several species of freshwater mussels, the common nighthawk and the eastern hellbender salamander.

Public comments on the list proposals are being taken until Dec. 24.

### Times Square stabbing investigated

NEW YORK (AP) — Police say a man out for a night on the town was stabbed in New York's Times Square.

Authorities say the 30-year-old man was attacked while he and a woman were walking through the tourist district around 10:30 p.m. Friday.

They say the attacker may have argued with the man before stabbing him and fleeing on foot. No arrests have been made.

The victim was hospitalized in stable condition. His hometown wasn't available.

The stabbing happened on a bustling stretch of 42nd Street filled with restaurants, theaters and hotspots such as the Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum.

The area has transformed in recent decades. It has taken on a safer, family-friendly image after an era of being a gritty, red-light district dominated by porn parlors, strip clubs and crime.

## Cuomo expands 'Make America Safer' pledge

**ALBANY:** *Launches new grassroots social media campaign on gun safety.*

### STAFF REPORTS

ALBANY — Following the second in a series of conferences to raise awareness about the state's Red Flag gun safety law that went into effect this year, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo launched a grassroots effort Saturday to bolster his "Make America Safer" campaign — a four-point plan to curb gun violence on the national level.

Cuomo has called on Democratic presidential candidates to endorse the "Make America Safer" pledge — and Saturday Everytown for

Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action and March for Our Lives joined the governor's call for candidates to sign the pledge.

The social media campaign will focus on engaging and activating key coalition partners, advocates and concerned citizens who support the Make America Safer Pledge to help generate greater awareness and insert these important issues into the national dialogue about gun safety, while tracking their efforts across various social media platforms.

Following the horrific mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio in August 2019, Governor Cuomo called on the Democratic presidential candidates to support the "Make America Safer Pledge," which

includes the following gun safety measures that New York passed in 2013 with the SAFE Act:

- Outlaw assault weapons
- Create a mental health data base to prevent the dangerously mentally ill from purchasing a firearm
- Pass universal background checks closing the private gun sales loophole
- Pass Red Flag legislation preventing individuals who pose a risk to themselves or others from purchasing a firearm

"As the federal government continues to abdicate its responsibility to protect the people in this country by failing to take action on meaningful, common sense gun control, it is now more important than ever to have

a leader in Washington that has a plan to tackle these issues and end this violence once and for all," Cuomo said. "New York state passed these laws six years ago and they have worked. No legal gun owners' rights have been violated, but unnecessary, dangerous weapons are off the streets and dangerously mentally ill people cannot buy guns. We were the laboratory, and now it must be done on the national level."

Cuomo on Saturday hosted the second of three conferences to help teachers, school administrators and parent representatives understand the new law and how to use it to keep schools safe. The law, part of the nation's strongest gun laws, establishes a new civil procedure that allows a

concerned family member, school official or member of law enforcement to obtain a court order — known as an Extreme Risk Protection Order — to remove and keep guns away from individuals who pose a serious risk of harm to themselves or others. The court order specifically prohibits a person from purchasing or possessing a firearm, rifle or shotgun while the order is in effect. The new law became effective Aug. 24.

A call center offering information and links to step-by-step instructions about how to apply for an Extreme Risk Protection Order are now operating. The call center can be reached at 877-NYS-0101 and will be operated Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.

## Healing Field returning in 2021

**COMMEMORATION:** *Flag display at Gratwick Park to honor lives lost in Sept. 11 attacks.*

### STAFF REPORTS

After great success with their first Healing Field back in 2016, the Erie Niagara Sunrise Exchange Club is looking to bring the event back to North Tonawanda for another weekend in 2021.

A tradition launched in Sandy, Utah in 2002, over 400 Healing Fields have been set up across the U.S. over the years and has raised more than \$6 million in funds for various service, civic and non-profit organizations.

The 2016 North Tonawanda Healing Field featured 3,000 3-by-5-foot American flags displayed at Gratwick-Riverside Park, each displaying the name of someone who lost their life in the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. The 2021 display will also take

place over Sept. 11 weekend and will be called the 9/11 Memorial Healing Field, a nod to the 20th anniversary of the attacks.

"The support from the North Tonawanda elected representatives and numerous departments like the department of public works, the parks and recreation, police, and fire departments ensured our success," said Exchange Club Vice President Rob Sciandra. "We didn't consider another location due to this outstanding support."

The Erie Niagara Sunrise Exchange Club is seeking volunteers to partner with them for the purpose of planning and executing the event. Club President Robert Pecoraro and Sciandra have invited interested organizations to reach out to them to learn how they can help.

Club members say they will also need assistance from volunteers in the general public, but will call for that assistance closer to the

date of the event.

"The Erie Niagara Sunrise Exchange Club members were thrilled at the outpouring of support from the public during the 2016 Healing Field and we expect the 2021 event to be even better," Pecoraro said. "We learned a number of lessons during our first field and we stand united to ensure success in just under two years."

Additionally, each flag will require a local sponsor, which can feature the name of a loved one, first responder, veteran, volunteer, community servant or another deserving person, the club said. Following the display, the sponsor will be able to keep the flag they purchased and the 8-foot flag pole that comes with it.

Organizations interested in participating in the 2021 9/11 Memorial Healing Field can learn more by contacting Pecoraro at 696-2851 or pecoraror@aol.com or Ronald Sciandra at 316-0141 or ronald.sciandra@gmail.com.



PAUL BATTSON/FILE PHOTO

**The 2016 Healing Field in North Tonawanda featured 3,000 American flags along the Niagara River at Gratwick Park.** The Erie Niagara Sunrise Exchange Club, which organized the 2016 event, is planning to bring the Healing Field back in 2021 in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

## New York sued twice over Medicaid cuts

**CAPITOL WATCH:** *Hundreds of millions cut for elderly and disabled.*

**BY MARINA VILLENEUVE**  
Associated Press

ALBANY — Two lawsuits filed this year against Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration argue state health officials facing a \$1.7 billion shortfall bypassed the public and the legislature while in moving to slash hundreds of millions of Medicaid dollars for elderly and disabled people.

Groups serving over

75,000 senior and disabled New Yorkers are cautiously celebrating a judge's Oct. 11 reversal of what advocates say would amount to a \$150 million cut to Medicaid. And nursing home advocacy groups on Thursday lodged a lawsuit saying Cuomo's administration is trying to address the shortfall by jeopardizing \$352 million in state and federal funding.

At the heart of both lawsuits is the Democratic administration's strong push to curb ballooning Medicaid spending. About \$3.5 billion in Medicaid money this year is going to programs serving people who hire their own personal aides. Another \$5 billion is going to nursing homes, which last fall received the first cost-of-living increase in over a decade.

The lawsuit and Oct. 11 decision are under review, according to a Department of Health spokeswoman.

Twelve nursing homes have closed over the past five years, and two dozen Democratic lawmakers have called nursing home cuts "unrealistic and dangerous." Leaders of groups serving elderly and disabled New Yorkers who hire their own personal care aides are worried the state will still push ahead with cuts amid budgetary scrutiny.

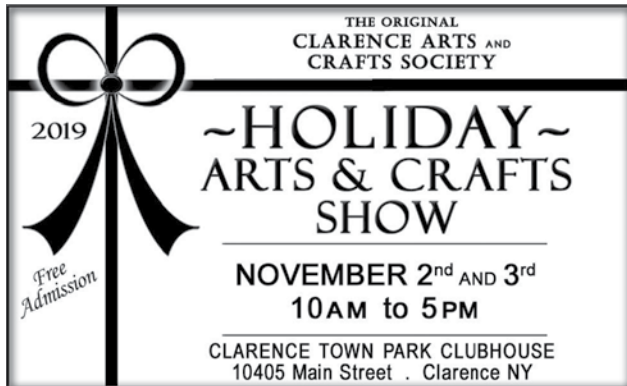
Rising long-term care costs, the minimum wage, declining federal funds and increasing enrollment are fueling the shortfall, according to New York's budget office spokesman. This year, Cuomo proposed and withdrew \$500 million in across-the-board Medicaid cuts, and later delayed \$1.7 billion in Medicaid payments by three days, into the next fiscal year, to abide by a spending cap and avoid payment cuts.


But as budget officials consider implementing more delayed payments or cuts, the state hasn't shared details that could shed light on how the shortfall appears to have suddenly

ballooned. Cuomo's budget office, for example, hasn't responded to an Associated Press request for a breakdown of previous delayed payments.

About two dozen Democratic lawmakers called in a Sept. 11 letter for Cuomo's administration to delay cuts. On Oct. 9, the health department sent nursing homes letters saying cuts were effective retroactive to July 1.

The lawsuit filed Thursday asks the state court to halt the "irrational, bean-counting" formula, which advocates say will lead to higher-than-expected cuts. It comes nearly two weeks after a state judge ruled Cuomo's health agency should have gone through the public rulemaking process before trying to cut \$150 million in administrative costs from the program serving Medicaid recipients who hire their own aides.




**Feasibility Study Available**  
**Balance of Plant and Groundwater Operable Units**  
**Niagara Falls Storage Site**  
**Information Session November 13**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo District is pleased to announce the release of the feasibility study for the Balance of Plant and Groundwater Operable Units of the Niagara Falls Storage Site, which is located in Lewiston, New York. A poster/information session to discuss the report is being conducted on Wednesday, November 13, 2019, at the Town of Lewiston Senior Center located at 4361 Lower River Road, Youngstown, New York. The meeting will begin with a poster session at 6:30 p.m. The presentation will begin at 7 p.m.

The feasibility study was prepared under the authority of the Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) for which the Corps of Engineers is the lead federal agency. The Corps of Engineers conducts FUSRAP projects in accordance with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, as amended, and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan. The feasibility study identifies and evaluates potential remedial alternatives to eliminate unacceptable risks to human health and the environment due to the presence of FUSRAP-related contamination.

The feasibility study is available on the web at: <https://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/Missions/HTRW/FUSRAP/Niagara-Falls-Storage-Site/> in the reports section. The report is also available electronically in the administrative record file for the site, which is located in the Town of Lewiston Public Library, 305 South Eighth Street, Lewiston, New York, the Youngstown Free Library, 240 Lockport Street, Youngstown, New York, and the Ransomville Free Library, 3733 Ransomville Road, Ransomville, New York. The administrative record file is also available for review by appointment at the Buffalo District Office Library located at 1776 Niagara Street in Buffalo, New York. For further information please e-mail [fusrap@usace.army.mil](mailto:fusrap@usace.army.mil), or call (800) 833-6390 (Option 4).

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