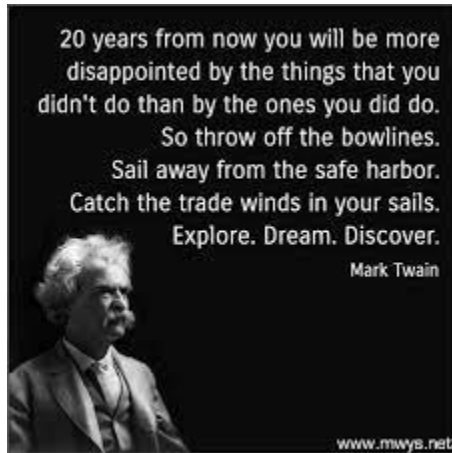




Finger Lakes National Forest, Hector, New York

Forest Happenings!!

Caring for the Land and Serving People



stands, ranging from home-built wood ones to the metal stands.



Spring Happenings – 2023

Tree Stand Tagging

The month of February had the crew focused on tagging tree stands illegally left on the Forest. The Forest has a closure order “FLNF 2010-07” that reads:

1. Use and occupancy of temporary trees stands and ground blinds, during the period from January 01 to September 01 of each year. (36 CFR 261.58(v))
2. The use and occupancy of temporary trees stands and ground blinds that are not clearly identified with the owner’s name and address in legible English. (36 CFR 261.58 (v))

In addition, NY DEC Regulation reads...

Temporary, portable tree stands, and hunting blinds may be placed at Hunting Areas beginning on the first day of pre-season scouting (14 days prior to opening day of deer season). All tree stands and blinds must be marked with the user’s name, Access Permit number, and telephone number. Tree stands and hunting blinds must not damage trees and must be removed at the end of the season.

The crew has made it thru forest lands in Seneca County and has identified and tagged over 150 tree

These stands will be removed and impounded once removed.

Recreation

Caywood Point Planning

Most folks know about the plight of Fossenvue trail at Caywood Point. It’s still in its washed-out condition.



We have been gathering a think tank of the regions brightest minds to develop a plan for repairing the trail down to the point and doing some preservation work on the castle.

To help us develop the rest of the “big picture” plan we will be visiting Caywood with a Landscape architect. They will help us look at all the pieces

and how they work together, from the roads and trails, the castle itself and our dispersed campers. Our goal is to come out of it with well-developed plan for the Caywood unit. One that will carry us into the future hopefully on a stable trail. We will be seeking Great America Outdoor Act (GAOA) funding to address the trail washout, and we already have an agreement in place with Historicorp to come do some maintenance on the queens castle itself.

Campgrounds

The lack of heavy snow to melt off means that we have been able to swing the gates open, Blueberry Patch and Backbone horse camp are now open to traffic. Just a reminder that mud season isn't completely over so please be mindful and park only on the gravel spurs and avoid the muddy spots.

Blueberry Patch campground will be getting some GAOA funded work this summer as we will be replacing the tent pad timbers and refreshing the gravel.



Here is one example of a rotted-out tent pad timber.

The old timbers are falling apart and much of the gravel has long since migrated away. Through the summer, district staff will remove and replace, providing a smoother place to pitch your tent at the campground.

And we almost forgot – the toilet will be replaced at Blueberry Patch Campground. This is the last toilet

to be replaced on the Forest – so essentially, we will not have any outhouses that are older than 13 years, and the majority were replaced within the last five years! If you ever experienced the old ones – you know it's about time this got done. Who knew you could get excited about replacing an outhouse!

Blueberry Patch Restoration!

Blueberry Patch campground got its name from the “Blueberry Patch” that is adjacent to the campground towards the west. Over the years, the blueberry plants have been getting choked out by competing vegetation. Last summer at the Lucky Hare volunteer day we started clearing out competing vegetation from the opening,

This Springs Lucky Hare volunteer event (May 7) we will be planting roughly 20 new native high bush blueberry plants (low bush already exist). With time we hope to have historic blueberry picking back in the patch.



Trails

Backbone Trail Bridge

We have exciting news! Funding was recently secured through a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant to replace another bridge on the Backbone Trail! This is the third trail bridge that we have been able to fund through this grant program and it has been instrumental for us to complete these upgrades and mitigate future damage to the trail and watershed.

Replacement of the bridges allow us to repair streambank erosion and other watershed health issues as part of the project while maintaining the

recreational opportunities that these trails present. Many of the trail bridges on the forest have been there for several decades and have been in dire need of replacement so we are super excited to receive this funding – as this means that all bridges on the Backbone Trail will have been replaced within the last five years!



New Bridge...



Old Bridge...

Potomac Loop Trail Update

Design work for upgrades on the Potomac Loop Trail between Potomac Group Campground and Potomac Pond have been in the process this winter and will be implemented this coming year! This section of trail has been identified as an area that frequently is flooded and needed work to prevent further damage to the trail and hydrologic function.

We hope that this work will minimize resource damage throughout the year, particularly in the “mud season” and allow all forest users a dry, accessible option to Potomac Pond for fishing.

Dunham Trail Shelter

The environmental analysis process is almost completed on restoration of the scenic vista at the Dunham Trail Shelter and we hope to implement the project this spring!

This project will include removal of several large trees that have grown in to block the scenic view, as well as removal of invasive species and early successional species that have grown in the previously existing opening. We hope to remove this brush and plant pollinator seed in the area to keep it open and provide native species for the wildlife to utilize. This will also allow for easier maintenance of the area in the future and a more enjoyable forest user experience for visitors of the trail shelter.



Area to be restored at Trail Shelter

Range

Prescribe Fire Returns to Range

This is year two of bringing back fire to the pastures, the picture above is of the test fire on Campbell pasture. Fuel moistures proved to be a little too high to meet our burn objective that day, so it's been postponed, but what are our objectives?

We are bringing fire back into pastures with the desired outcomes of controlling nonnative invasive species, encouraging native warm and cool season grasses, and improving forage production.



Fire on the ground in Campbell pasture.

In a perfect world we would be able to control that woody vegetation in the pastures with fire, which would relieve us from having to brush hog pastures. This would save us countless gallons of diesel, personnel time and impacts on the ground. As we get more reentries with fire we'll start to see those nonnative plants decline and native warm seasons return, which will improve everything from grassland bird habitat, cattle forage and the effectiveness of future burns.

Hector Grazing Association (HGA) Meeting

Grazing Association Meetings are a monthly event during the grazing season. We recently attended the first one of the season, where the annual operating plan (AOP) for this coming year was discussed – and it's very ambitious.

HGA is aiming to replace nearly 2 miles of fence on Teeter pasture and Shannon. This will complete the perimeter of these pastures, something that we have been chipping away at for the last three years.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding has come through big for the range program for this year as we will be able to install nearly four miles worth of fencing on Shannon and Hawes and replace the trough on Horton pasture. All told the value of the fence work alone will be over 200k.

Over the next couple of weeks, you may see HGA working through the pastures, clearing downed trees from the fence lines, and readying the pasture for cows to return in one months' time.

So, as we always do after a long “winter” we'd like to remind visitor to keep the gates closed. So, we can keep the cows where they belong and if you see anything unusual or cows on the loose, give the office a call!

Timber and Forest Health

Wet, is the word of the month for Timber. For a fleeting couple of days the weather looked like it was going to freeze the ground up and let us get started with the Finger Lakes Invasive Pest Strategy (FLIPS) timber sale. Then mud season returned.

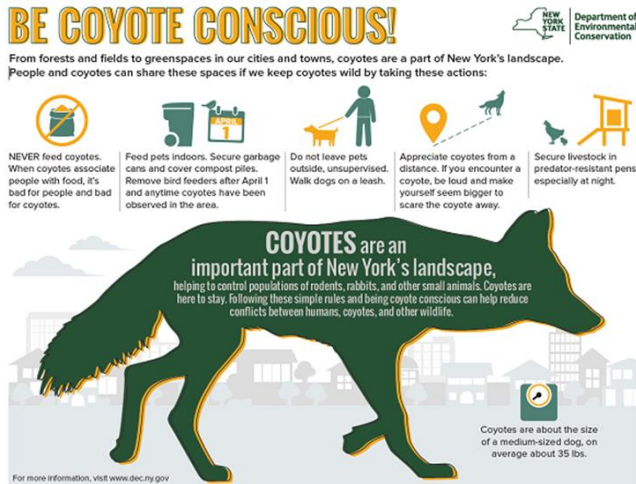
Yet again we are in a holding pattern waiting for drier conditions in the summer. The timber sale is being implemented through a stewardship agreement with National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) so that does give it several years to be harvested. Having this flexibility allows us to harvest when conditions are optimal and resource damage can be minimized. At least all of the pieces are in place now and as soon as conditions allow harvesting can begin!

Firewood

Remember with our spring cleaning going on at campgrounds and trail heads, we have had several hazardous trees that we had to take down. Also, the Town of Hector took a few trees down on Burnt Hill Road.



Come into the office and get yourself a new fuelwood permit so you can take advantage of this “easy to get” wood. Remember only Dead and Down wood can be taken with a fuelwood permit.



Wildlife

Wood Duck Boxes

Throughout the years, the Forest has set up and maintained wood duck's boxes throughout the forest, some of which can be seen on ponds like Potomac and Teeter Pond. These nesting boxes help in the reproduction efforts for wood ducks. These ducks are cavity nesters and were observed to fly in and out of cavities of trees near wetlands and ponds and, and that's how they got their name wood ducks. At the turn of the century, wood ducks' population drastically declined due to a variety of reasons, but with conservation efforts and the construction and maintenance of nesting boxes, these ducks are now the most common breeding ducks in New York.

This year, we went and checked on 14 wood duck boxes throughout the forest in mid-January to mid-February, to clean them out and add new bedding material (wood chips). Wood ducks do not bring in nesting material into the boxes or in natural cavities, so to help them out we supply the wood chips. We check to make sure the boxes are in good shape and

if the boxes are falling apart, they are replaced with new boxes.



Wood Duck nesting box at Teeter Pond.
Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo by D. Welch
Wildlife Technician

We also monitor the boxes for cleaning the boxes out, if it was used by wood ducks or other animals, and if it was used by ducks was the brood successful.

Out of the 14 boxes checked, two boxes had eggshell fragments and duck feathers inside the box. This means these nests were successful in their broods and the ducks will return to the same nesting area every year. These boxes are very important to the reproduction and sustainability of wood duck populations.



Wood duck box interior, feathers and eggshell fragments can be seen, this was a successful nest.

*Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo by D. Welch
Wildlife Technician*

Vernal Pool Surveys

Have you been out in the woods during the spring and heard a loud chirping noise coming from a wetland or pond? Those chirping calls are from a small amphibian called a wood frog. These frogs use small, forested depressions called vernal pools to breed in. Vernal pools are special bodies of water that form in depressions in forest, grasslands and shrublands. They collect water from the winter snow melt and spring rains and typically dry up by summer, which is perfect places for amphibians to lay their egg masses. Because they dry up by summer, these amphibians go from tadpole to immature adult in only a few months.



Wood frogs in amplexus hold, Male (top)
Female (bottom).

*Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo by D.
Welch Wildlife Technician*

Wood frogs are just one indicator species that uses these vernal pools, the other three species are the spotted, blue-spotted and the Jefferson salamanders. These four species use the vernal pools to breed in since there's no fish species that can prey upon the tadpoles. Wood frogs are the most common species seen in these pools, while the salamanders are harder to spot since they will hide under the leaf litter underwater and only come up for air. The breeding season begins around April and goes until late May, by then the salamanders will have moved back to their underground borrows, where they spend most of their time as adults.

The Forest has an on-going project to create these vernal pools across the forest to ensure these species have a place to boost their populations. Since 2019, four areas have been completed in creating these specialized pools. During April and May of this year, we have selected an area of interest to monitor and inventory 11 vernal pools that were created and see if these pools that were made are being used by those indicator species.



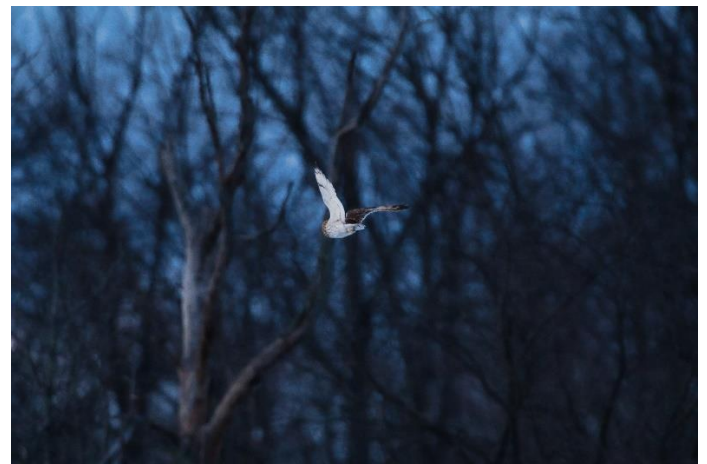
Wood frogs in amplexus hold, Male (top) Female
(bottom).

*Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo by D.
Welch Wildlife Technician*



A Spotted Salamander near a vernal pool

*Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo by D. Welch
Wildlife Technician*



A Short-eared Owl on the prowl.

*Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo By D. Welch
Wildlife Technician*



A female Northern Harrier flying over the grassland.

*Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo by D. Welch
Wildlife Technician*



A Short-eared Owl in the evening light.

*Photo Credit: Forest Service photo by D. Welch Wildlife
Technician*



A female Northern Harrier hunting in a pasture.

*Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo by D. Welch
Wildlife Technician*

Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS) & American Woodcock Society (AWS)

The Ruffed Grouse Society & American Woodcock Society have been great partner for both the Finger Lakes National Forest as well as the Green Mountain National Forest over the years. We are currently in the process of finalizing a five-year agreement to allow the partnership to continue.

Some of the projects identified currently include utilizing RGS's expertise to help build a shrubland conservation plan for the Finger Lakes NF, habitat projects such as habitat enhancement and apple tree release. We are also looking at the bigger picture and how to use stewardship to be able to fund larger scale projects both on Forest lands as well as neighboring lands. We will continue to work with RGS/AWS to implement high quality work to manage your public lands!



A female wood cock sitting on a nest.

*Photo Credit: USDA Forest Service photo by D. Welch
Wildlife Technician*

Can you find the woodcock in the photo above? We have spent some time this spring evaluating shrublands looking for quality areas to search for woodcock to tag. This was the first woodcock sighting on the National Forest this spring and hopefully the first of many!

Woodcock Trapping

The Forest will be participating in the trapping and tagging of woodcock this year. We have at least one tag to put out and that should provide us with

some great data about where woodcock is spending their time on the Forest.

This data will in turn provide us with the opportunity to evaluate our existing habitat, and ensure we are replicating that when completing subsequent work in our agreements with RGS and AWS.

We are excited to keep you updated on this project and look forward to working with a bunch of great partners to collect this valuable information.

Finger Lakes Community Career Day

Each year Finger Lakes Community College puts on a career fair for current students. This year the Forest was asked to participate and staff a table.



Both Matt, Matt and Greg were able to attend and speak to some very dedicated students who are looking forward to creating a career in the outdoor field. Greg also gave a keynote speech on the importance of networking and building career experience. Overall, it was a great day to be speaking with students and we are excited to continue our agreement with FLCC to ensure that we are helping current students get functional experience in the field, specifically with a federal land management agency.



Finger Lakes National Forests very own...Greg Flood (Wildlife Biologist), Matt Lark (Natural Resource Specialist) & Matt Kautz (Forestry Technician) – (left to right)

New York's Champion Trees

The newest [Big Tree Register is now available](#) on our website and among its ranks is a cottonwood that has been re-crowned as the largest known tree in NYS. Located in Schaghticoke, the cottonwood had been discovered and crowned the largest back in 1972 but was removed from the list when it was not remeasured or confirmed to still exist. It then became a forgotten entry gathering digital dust until the tree was rediscovered this past fall after one of our Big Tree enthusiasts, Fred Breglia, made some message board inquiries based on an old article about the tree. Fred connected with Kris Dulmer, whose uncle used to take him to see the tree, and now it has retaken its rightful place as the Queen of Champions.

A species' eligibility for champion status is determined by American Forests, which runs the National Big Tree Program, so please [check the American Forests website](#) to see which native and naturalized species qualify. If you think you've found a Big Tree candidate, measure its circumference at 4.5 feet above the ground and compare it to the existing champion - a large chunk of a tree's score comes from the circumference, so it is a good way to see if your tree has a fighting chance. If it is close, contact the Lands and Forests Program at a [DEC office near where the tree is located](#) to have a forester measure the tree, or find a

non-DEC professional experienced in identifying and measuring trees, such as a certified arborist or cooperating forester, to determine the tree's total point score. Complete a [New York State Big Tree Nomination Form \(PDF\)](#) and submit it to DEC for verification. The Big Tree Register is updated once



Pictured: A champion of champions – the Schaghticoke eastern cottonwood. Photo courtesy of Fred Breglia

a year in January. Nominations must be submitted by September 1 to make it into the following year's list. Please [contact the Big Tree Coordinator](#) if you have any questions. Happy Big Tree Hunting!



Office Hours

Our front office is open to the public on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:00am to 4:30 pm. meaning you can get information on the Forest.

If you have any questions, please call 607-546-4470 and choose "0" for the operator.

As always, the front Foyer is open 24/7 and stocked with maps, trail sheets and information about the area.

From the Ranger...

Have to say, since I don't have much room – I'm very thankful and appreciate the the great photos that Dylan has been taking for us! - Jodie

Wellness Tip:

One-Minute Mindfulness Meditation

Clear your mind and learn how to relax with these one-minute mindfulness meditation techniques!

Preparation


- Go to a quiet space.
- Set your timer for 1 minute and 20 seconds. (You may need the extra 20 seconds to get ready)
- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes - or open them, focused on one spot.


Gratitude Meditation

- Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
- Count 1-2-3 as you breathe in and 1-2-3 as you breathe out.
- Feel yourself relax as you continue breathing.
- Think of the things that you are most grateful for. Chase away the negative thoughts.
- Anchor on your breathing as you continue to build a positive energy.


Mindful Breathing

- Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.
- Count 1-2-3 as you breathe in and 1-2-3 as you breathe out.
- Feel how the breathing pattern affects your body and your thoughts.
- Chase away the distractions that crowd in (ex. wind blowing on your face, phone ringing, dogs barking)
- Focus on your breathing. Thoughts naturally appear but don't drift away. Anchor your attention on your breathing pattern.



 RAISING SELF AWARENESS®

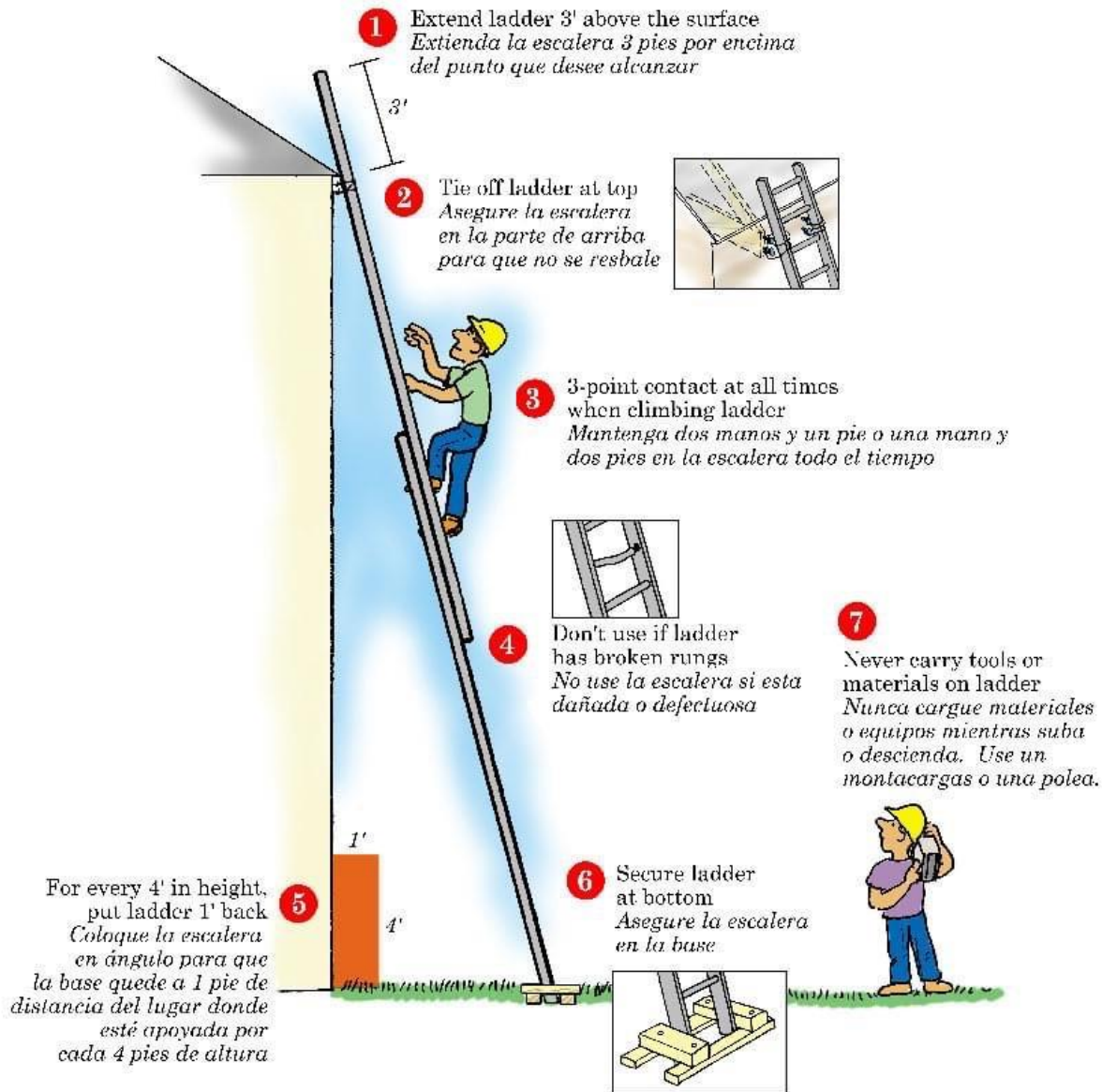
Discover your true potential and increase your self awareness at www.raisingselfawareness.com/mindfulness-meditation-techniques



Safety Message

7 Steps to Ladder Safety

7 PASOS DE SEGURIDAD EN ESCALERAS

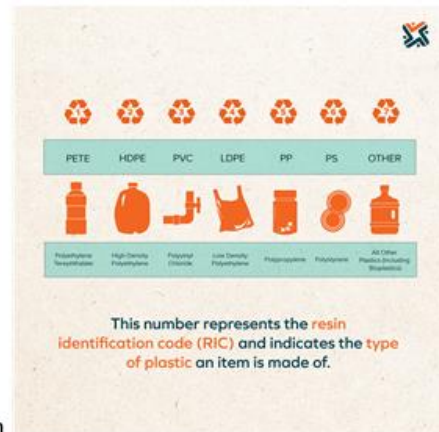


Climate Change

The Meaning Behind the Number Inside the Recycling Symbol

Have you ever wondered what that number inside the recycling symbol on a plastic item means?

- In the 1980s The Society of the Plastics Industry (SPI) created the numbers in an effort to develop consistency in plastics manufacturing.
- This number represents the resin identification code (RIC) and indicates the type of plastic an item is made of.
- Some (not all) recycling facilities use the RIC to sort through plastic materials. Simply because an item has a RIC, does not mean that item is accepted in your local recycling program.
- Many recycling programs are moving away from including RIC language in their recycling guidelines and referring more to the size and shape of a plastic item, such as “bottles, jugs and tubs” instead of “#1 & #2”. [What do your local recycling guidelines say?](https://recyclerightny.org/local-recycling-guidelines)



<https://recyclerightny.org/local-recycling-guidelines>



Just for Fun! Just for Kids!



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