

# *Case Study:* **Tree Planting at the 2025 NFL Draft**

**- April 2025 -**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP), a nonpartisan partnership of the eight Great Lakes Governors and Canadian Premiers of Ontario and Québec, organized a successful, high-profile tree planting event for the 2025 NFL Draft in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Participants included Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers, Oneida Nation Chairman Tehassi Hill, representatives of the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, NFL Green, Verizon, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Overall, 90 trees were planted on the Oneida Nation Reservation and in Brown County Parks with a volunteer event on April 21, 2025.

GSGP leads the **Great Lakes St. Lawrence Trees Initiative**, a regional effort to plant 250 million trees by 2033. This partnership with NFL Green and Verizon supported the Trees Initiative by planting trees that will thrive and deliver long-term benefits in areas of need.

## Partners

The National Football League (NFL) is the largest and most profitable professional sports organization in the United States with an annual revenue of approximately \$18 billion (US). The 2025 NFL Draft, held in Green Bay, Wisconsin, attracted an in-person audience of more than 600,000 fans over the course of a week.

NFL Green, the NFL's sustainability initiative, works with corporate sponsor Verizon to develop community greening projects such as tree plantings in the local community. These greening projects are designed to leave a lasting legacy in the host community of the NFL Draft, Super Bowl, and other high-profile NFL events.





*Volunteers planting a tree at the Community Greening Event for the 2025 NFL Draft.*

## THE CHALLENGE

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NFL Green and Verizon required a local partner to organize a tree planting event for the 2025 NFL Draft with specific conditions:

- Trees must be planted in a public space and benefit the local community, with an emphasis on low tree canopy communities.
- Trees must be either native species or common local species.
- The host site(s) must commit to providing a minimum of two years of tree care and maintenance.
- The planting area must be protected from future development that would involve removing trees/plant material.
- Due to other NFL Draft week events, the tree planting event must take place on April 21, 2025, with any additional plantings completed within a month of the NFL Draft.

GSGP successfully applied to lead this effort after being connected to NFL Green through the Green Bay Packers and Discover Green Bay. The formal partnership between NFL Green and GSGP began approximately 6 weeks prior to the event, which required prompt action for success.

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*Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers speaking at the Community Planting Event.*

## THE PROCESS

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GSGP quickly mobilized partners in state government and local nonprofit organizations to identify tree planting partners, suitable planting locations, and tree supply. Green Bay, with a population of about 110,000, is the smallest community in the United States with a professional sports team. As such, there are relatively few tree planting organizations, nurseries, and other logistical partners needed to organize a high-profile tree planting event. GSGP leveraged longstanding relationships in the Green Bay area and across the state of Wisconsin to quickly arrange all personnel and materials needed for a successful event.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) provided connections to a local nursery with available native trees, as well as to Brown County Parks. The National Indian Carbon Coalition, a GSGP nonprofit partner, provided an introduction to the Oneida Nation of Wisconsin who subsequently extended an invitation to host the tree planting event.

GSGP worked closely with the Office of Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers and Oneida Nation to organize this event. The combination of engagement with a federally recognized Tribal government and participation by the Governor added significant complexity to this event.







*The ceremonial tree planting with the project team for the 2025 NFL Draft Community Greening Event.*

## RESULTS

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The Oneida Nation of Wisconsin hosted a tree planting event at the Amelia Cornelius Culture Park on April 21, 2025. Volunteers from Verizon, Oneida Nation, WDNR, and the broader community planted 15 large shade trees. An additional 40 trees were planted across the Oneida Nation Reservation in the weeks following the NFL Draft. Brown County Parks also planted 35 trees across four parks, including Pamperin Park, Bayshore County Park, Reforestation Camp, and Brown County Fairgrounds to restore canopy lost to the invasive Emerald Ash Borer (EAB).

### **Speakers included:**

Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers  
Jack Groh, Director, NFL Green  
Tehassi Hill, Chair, Oneida Nation of Wisconsin  
Susan Groh, Associate Director, NFL Green  
Susan Lucas, Associate Director of Sustainability, Verizon

The Oneida Nation's tribal council and royalty were also in attendance. And an Oneida Nation school choir performed traditional songs to kick-off the event.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

A media advisory was issued on April 18, 2025. The event was covered by local news outlets including: [WisPolitics](#), [Fox 11](#), [We are Green Bay](#), [Seehafer News](#), and [Yahoo News](#).





*Volunteers help plant a tree in Barkhausen Waterfowl Preserve in Brown County.*

## **Partner Testimonial**

*Verizon was honored to have partnered with the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) and NFL Green for multiple urban forestry projects tied to the 2025 NFL Draft in Green Bay. The strategic projects were in various locations (Oneida Nation Reservation and Brown County Parks) and will make an impact far into the future and tie directly to our tree planting efforts. GSGP's identification, coordination and planning for the events were key to the success of the projects. Thanks for letting Verizon be a part of these efforts.*

*-- Verizon*

# **IMPACT**

The 90 trees planted will provide benefits to the Oneida Nation and the broader Brown County community. Increased tree coverage will build upon recent revitalization efforts at Amelia Cornelius Culture Park and the adjacent Oneida Nation Veterans Memorial. Additional plantings on Oneida Nation lands and in Brown County Parks will increase access to green space for community members across Brown County. The social and environmental benefits include reducing urban heat, storing carbon, filtering air pollutants, capturing stormwater and runoff, and increasing wildlife habitat. Increased tree coverage will support local bird and wildlife populations, especially migratory birds.

## **Over 20 years, the trees planted will:**

- Capture nearly 54,000 pounds of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>E)
- Capture about 356,000 gallons of rainfall and avoid more than 42,000 gallons of runoff
- Remove nearly 560 pounds of air pollutants such as ozone and sulfur dioxide<sup>1</sup>

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1. Impact estimates calculated with i-Tree <https://www.itreetools.org/>





# CONCLUSION

GSGP provides turnkey project development for high-profile tree planting events. To date, GSGP has organized 16 high-profile planting events, which have planted more than 2,500 trees in various Great Lakes communities.

GSGP's longstanding regional relationships and unique ability to convene partners across sectors enables us to successfully kick-start and implement projects on a tight deadline. Our team has the right local connections and understands local community needs, which maximizes positive impacts to the community.



## Partner Testimonial

*At NFL Green, we are proud to have partnered with the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors & Premiers (GSGP) to bring lasting environmental benefits to Green Bay during the 2025 NFL Draft. GSGP's expertise in convening regional stakeholders and mobilizing resources made this high-profile tree planting initiative a resounding success. Their coordination ensured that trees were strategically planted across the Oneida Nation Reservation and Brown County Parks, strengthening local ecosystems and enhancing green spaces for the community.*

*NFL Green is committed to leaving a lasting positive impact in cities that host NFL events, and GSGP's dedication to sustainable reforestation aligned seamlessly with our mission. Thanks to the leadership of GSGP and the financial support provided by Verizon, the trees planted will provide shade, improve air quality, and restore vital habitats for decades to come.*



# Special Thanks to our Team of Partners



[www.greatlaketrees.org](http://www.greatlaketrees.org)