

Regional Niagara River/Lake Erie Watershed Management Plan – Phase 2

Community Outreach and Participation Plan



**Department
of State**



BUFFALO NIAGARA RIVERKEEPER®



Project Summary and Roles of Partners

The Niagara River/Lake Erie watershed encompasses a large portion of Western New York. Over 1.5 million acres or approximately 2,410 square miles of land in 8 counties drain to these bodies of water. This area has recently experienced heavy investment in the two Great Lakes Areas of Concern, Buffalo River and Niagara River, in an effort to clean up years of point source pollution. While this investment is an enormous step in the right direction, nonpoint source contamination as a result of human activities on land is now a major concern causing beach closures, erosion and flooding problems, and numerous other impacts. It is important to manage the watershed properly in order to minimize these issues for the benefit of all.

Erie County Department of Environment and Planning (Erie County) is the project manager and grant recipient for the Regional Niagara River/Lake Erie Watershed Management Plan-Phase 2 project, which will continue the work of the Niagara River Watershed Management Plan – Phase 1, completed by Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper in 2014, and expand it to include the Lake Erie watershed territory. This plan will explore what can be done to protect and restore water resources throughout the watershed area. Financial support for this project is provided from the New York State Department of State with funds provided under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund.

Erie County will work in partnership with Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper and the Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance to complete this second phase of the plan.

- **Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper** will focus on data collection, water quality sampling, and implementation plans in the five prioritized sub-watersheds of the Niagara River watershed: Upper Tonawanda Creek, Lower Tonawanda Creek, Buffalo River, Smokes Creek, and Eighteenmile Creek. This work in Erie, Genesee, Niagara, and Wyoming counties builds upon Phase 1 of the project. Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper will also develop an Urban Creek Corridor Restoration—Community Engagement Model for Scajaquada Creek by engaging with the Scajaquada Creek Working Group and design students in landscape architecture, environmental planning, and engineering.
- The **Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance (LEWPA)** will assist Erie County with expanding this plan into the Lake Erie watershed. This will include a review of existing data; an inventory of watershed physical, biological, and ecological conditions; and identification of problems and opportunities in the Lake Erie watershed area. The result will be a Watershed Atlas that lists reports and existing Geographic Information System data on the entire Niagara River/Lake Erie watershed region, as well as, a comprehensive Watershed Characterization Report, and a Citizen's Guide, which will also encompass the entire Niagara River/Lake Erie watershed.

- Erie County will work with the partners to create a municipal workshop series as well. This will be developed to educate municipal and elected officials on the findings of the report.

Key Contacts

Erie County and LEWPA

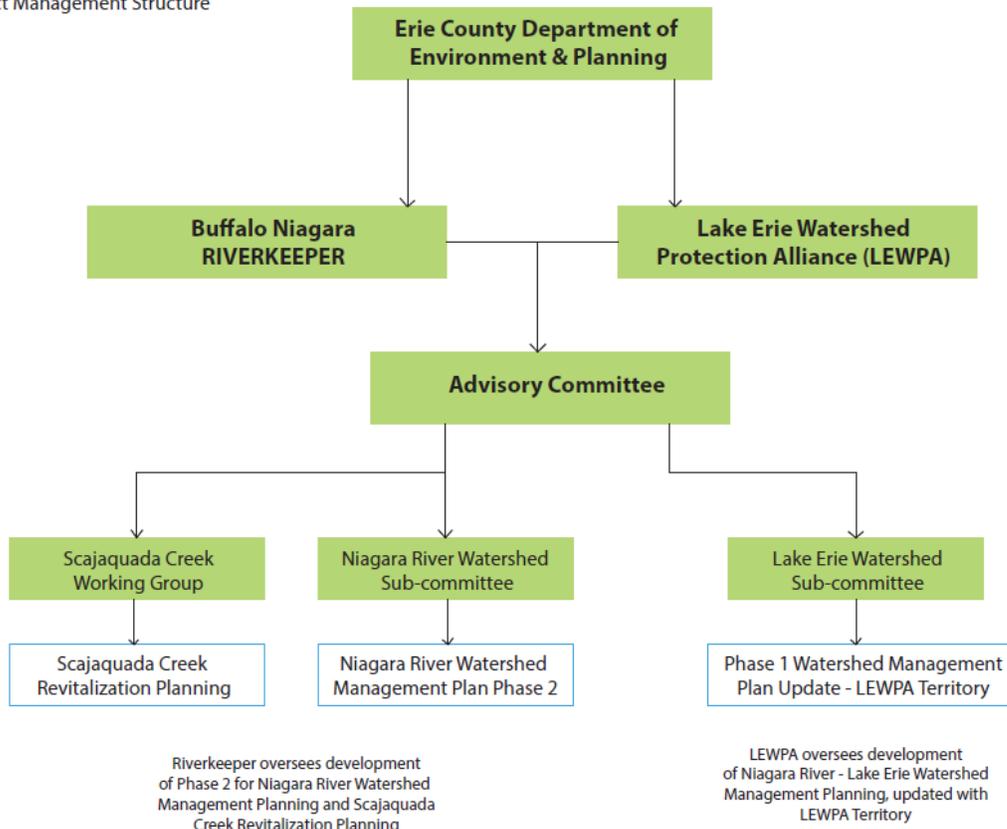
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Project Organization

Project Management Structure



Community Outreach Plan

The goal of this document is to outline the plan to engage the community throughout this process including how the public will be able to provide input and how they will be educated on the findings. Active participation and stakeholder involvement is key to developing a comprehensive and successful watershed-wide management plan. Stakeholders such as citizens, community groups, environmental organizations, businesses, agencies, and public officials will have opportunities, as detailed in this plan, to shape the resulting findings and recommendations.

The plan includes the following elements:

- Committees/Groups
 - Project Update Group
 - Project Advisory Committee
 - Subcommittees
- Community outreach at events
- Webpage updates
- Agency and organization meetings
- Municipal consultations
- Public participation meetings

Elements may be added or removed throughout the process as needed.

Committees:

Project Update Group

A Project Update Group has been created to keep interested parties up-to-date on the progress of the project. Periodic updates will be sent out via email to the group that includes elected officials, environmental stakeholder groups, agency staff, interested individuals, etc. If you would like to be updated on the progress of the project, please contact Joanna Panasiewicz.

Project Advisory Committee

The Project Advisory Committee includes regional experts, agencies, and stakeholders who can oversee various aspects of the project in partnership with Erie County, LEWPA, and Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper and provide valuable expertise, feedback on plans, review work products, assist with public outreach, and other items as needed. Communication is mostly via email and meetings will be scheduled as needed to present findings.

Project Advisory Committee Members:

Barry Boyer	Formerly of University at Buffalo Law School
Mark Clapsadl	Buffalo State
Brian Davis	Cattaraugus County Soil and Water Conservation District
Shannon Dougherty	NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Diane Evans	Town of Grand Island
Joe Fiegl	Erie County Division of Sewerage Management
Kelly Frothingham	Buffalo State
Mark Gaston	Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District
Dr. Rosa Gonzalez	WNY Regional Economic Development Committee
Diane Held	Cornell Cooperative Extension
Sheila Hess	Conservation Connects
Tom Hoffman	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Andrea Locke	WNY Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management
Dr. Chris Lowry	University at Buffalo
Nicole Matteson	NYS Senator Marc Panepinto's Office
Jon Mayr	Southern Tier West
Dave McCoy	Chautauqua County Dept. of Planning and Economic Development
Greg McKurth	Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District
Sylvia Patterson	Seneca Nation of Indians Environmental Protection Department
Bartholomew Roberts	University at Buffalo Regional Institute
Jajeon Rose-Burney	WNY Land Conservancy
Mary Rossi	Western New York Stormwater Coalition
Lynda Schneekloth	Urban Design Project and Sierra Club Niagara Group
Mark Seider	Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District
Loren Smith	Buffalo Audubon
Lucille G. White	Seneca Nation of Indians
Darran Crabtree	Nature Conservancy
Margaret Wooster	Citizen at Large

Subcommittees

Three subcommittees exist to review and comment on specific portions of this project.

- Lake Erie Watershed Subcommittee
- Niagara River Watershed Subcommittee
- Scajaquada Creek Working Group

Erie County and LEWPA manage the Lake Erie subcommittee to work on the new expanded territory of the Lake Erie watershed. Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper manages the Niagara River subcommittee, which will focus on Phase 2 of the Niagara River watershed data collection and implementation plans for the five prioritized subwatersheds. Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper also manages the Scajaquada Creek Working Group subcommittee working on the Urban Creek Corridor Restoration – Community Engagement Model. Appendices are located at the end of the document with the participating organizations. These are subject to change.

Community Outreach at Events

Erie County and LEWPA will promote the Project at various public events throughout the watershed as invited. In addition, attendees will have the opportunity to sign up for updates on when the public meetings will take place. Examples include Town of Evans Environmental Fair, Great Lakes Experience, Erie County Fair, Williamsville Earth Day/Arbor Day Fair, Daemen College Environmental Summit, and others. Watershed protection and pollution prevention outreach, such as educational brochures, may be developed to educate watershed stakeholders.

Webpage Updates

A Watershed Management Plan webpage describing the project will be created on www.erie.gov. Progress updates and reports will be made available on the webpage and can be shared on social media. Public meetings will be announced and the public will be invited to submit questions or comments on the Project and its deliverables on the webpage as well.

Agency and Organization Meetings

Erie County, LEWPA, and/or Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper will give updates on the progress of the Project, as well as findings at various agency and organization meetings throughout the watershed while also obtaining input on the Plan development. Examples include meetings of the Cattaraugus County Water Quality Council, Lake Erie Management Commission, Erie County Water Quality Committee, Erie County Environmental Management Council, Tonawanda Creek Watershed Committee, Great Lakes Action Agenda Lake Erie Work Group, and others.

Municipal Consultations

Erie County, LEWPA, and/or Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper will meet with officials in various municipalities in the watershed as needed. Meetings or phone calls will take place in order to gather information, explain findings, and provide information.

Public Participation Meetings

Erie County, LEWPA, and/or Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper will host at least 6 public meetings. At least two will be in the new Lake Erie watershed area and four will be in the Niagara River watershed area. The purpose of these meetings will be to gather public input and conduct watershed visioning, as well as to disseminate information and findings. Public meetings will be announced on the

Erie County and Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper webpages and social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) and will be encouraged to be shared by other community groups and stakeholders involved in the Project. Press releases will also be sent to local media outlets and notification will go out on various email list serves relating to water quality.

Work Schedule Including Public Meetings

The following shows the approximate time periods for work products and public meetings. This schedule may change as the project progresses.

PROJECT TASKS	SCHEDULE
Hold Project scoping meetings	Spring 2015
Establish Project Advisory Committee and subcommittees	Summer 2015
First year data collection in Niagara River watershed	Summer 2015
Watershed Atlas update with Lake Erie watershed	Fall 2015
First year data collection analysis	Fall 2015
First round public meetings	Spring/Summer 2016
Watershed Characterization Report update with Lake Erie information	2016
Second year data collection in Niagara River watershed	Summer 2016
Second year data collection analysis and establish subwatershed target levels and goals	Fall 2016
Second round public meetings	Fall 2016
Local Law Assessment in Lake Erie watershed	2016
Create Municipal Workshop Series	2016
Scajaquada Creek Urban Creek Corridor Restoration Community Engagement Model	2016 through 2017
Scajaquada Creek Design Collaborative	2017
Conduct subwatershed evaluations in Lake Erie watershed	2016 through 2017
Niagara River priority subwatershed implementation plan development with specific management actions	2016 through 2017
Third round of public meetings	Winter/Spring 2017
Update Citizen's guide with new information	2017
Create next phase strategy	2017

The goal of this project is to create a comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for the Niagara River and Lake Erie watershed in New York State that incorporates input from various stakeholders, agencies, and the public in order to protect and enhance our water resource.

APPENDIX A: Lake Erie Watershed Sub-Committee

The following local experts, agencies, and organizations will be represented on the sub-committee:

Alliance for the Great Lakes	Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
NYS DEC - Region 9 Bureau of Fisheries	Southern Tier West Regional Planning and Development Board
NYS DEC - Lake Erie Binational Lakewide Action Management Plan representative	Chautauqua County Land Bank Corporation
NYS Senator Marc Panepinto's Office	Chautauqua County Soil and Water Conservation District
Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance	Village of Westfield Water Pollution Control Facility
Trout Unlimited	Chautauqua County Chamber of Commerce
Cattaraugus County Economic Development, Planning, & Tourism	Chautauqua County Legislature
Cattaraugus County Soil and Water Conservation District	Chautauqua County Planning and Economic Development
Cattaraugus County Health Department	North County Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan Steering Committee
Cattaraugus County Water Quality Council	Peter J. Smith & Company, Inc.
Lake Erie Management Commission	Westfield Development Corporation
Chautauqua County Health Department	Fredonia University 2020 Lake Erie Discovery Center planning team
Chautauqua County Sports Fishery Advisory Board	5-8 Municipalities
Erie County Health Department - Environmental Health Division	Seneca Nation of Indians (SNI)
Erie County Soil and Water Conservation District	Environmental Protection Department

APPENDIX B: Niagara River Watershed Sub-Committee

The following local experts, agencies, and organizations will be represented in the sub-committee:

Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper	Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District
Erie County Department of Environment & Planning	Wyoming County Department of Planning
Erie County Department of Health	Genesee County Soil & Water Conservation District
Erie County Division of Sewerage Management	Genesee County Planning Department
Erie County Soil & Water Conservation District	Seneca Nation of Indians
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (Region 9)	The Nature Conservancy
US Fish and Wildlife	UB Regional Institute & Urban Design Project
Niagara County Department of Economic Development	WNY Land Conservancy
Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District	Buffalo Audubon
Niagara County Health Department	City of Buffalo Sewer Authority
Local Environmental Law Experts	Senator Marc Panepinto's Office
Cornell Cooperative Extension	Buffalo State College/Great Lakes Center
University at Buffalo/Physical Hydro-geography Laboratory	3-5 Interested Citizens
Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (WNY PRISM)	Conservation Connects
	3-5 Municipal Representatives

APPENDIX C: Scajaquada Creek Working Group

The Scajaquada Creek Working Group has traditionally had a variety of representation over the years. With renewed interest in the Scajaquada Creek Corridor, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper is recruiting additional stakeholders, municipal officials, engineers and environmental experts to participate in the Working Group. Overall the intent is to have representation from the following agencies and organizations:

Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper	US Congressman Chris Collin's Office
Erie County Department of Environment & Planning	US Senator Chuck Schumer
Erie County Department of Health	Forest Lawn Cemetery
Erie County Division of Sewerage Management	Vision Niagara
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (Region 9)	Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society
US Army Corps of Engineers – Buffalo District	Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
NYS Department of Transportation – Region 5	Black Rock Historical Society
US Fish and Wildlife	Black Rock Riverside Alliance
City of Buffalo	Scajaquada Canoe Club
City of Buffalo Sewer Authority	Grant Amherst Business Association
Town of Cheektowaga	Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council
Town of Lancaster	Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Village of Depew	Canisius College
Senator Patrick Gallivan's Office	Neighborhood Block Clubs
Senator Tim Kennedy's Office	Buffalo State College
Senator Marc Panepinto's Office	University at Buffalo
Assemblyman Sean Ryan's Office	Buffalo Zoo
Assemblywoman Crystal Peoples-Stokes's Office	Medaille College
Assemblywoman Angela Wozniak's Office	Parkside Community Association
US Congressman Brian Higgins' Office	Elmwood Village Association
	Scajaquada Pathway Committee
	Richardson Center Corporation
	Interested Citizens
	Conservation Connects