

**Greenway Ecological Standing Committee and Greenway Ecological Fund
Ecological Standing Committee and Habitat Enhancement and Recreation Fund
Meeting Agenda**

March 20, 2024, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
NOCO Pavilion, 450 Ensminger Road, Tonawanda, NY

General Meeting

| Time | Item |
|-------|---|
| 10:00 | Sheridan Park Living Shoreline Site Visit at potential Project Site |
| 10:15 | Drive to NOCO Pavilion |
| 10:30 | Opening Remarks and Introductions |
| 10:40 | GESC 2024 Cycle 1 Proposal Presentations Alt Nature Trail Improvements by Citizen Coalition for Wildlife and Environment Sheridan Park Living Shoreline by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper |
| 11:40 | ESC Pre-proposals Presentations East Canal by Tifft Nature Preserve Restore Corp by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper |
| 12:10 | Lunch |

Committee Session

| | |
|-------|--|
| 12:40 | GEF and HERF Balances |
| 12:45 | Committee Session Building, GESC and ESC |
| 1:30 | Greenway Plant Guidelines |
| 2:00 | ESC Funding Priorities |
| 3:00 | Adjourn |

**Greenway Ecological Standing Committee and Greenway Ecological Fund
Ecological Standing Committee and Habitat Enhancement and Recreation Fund
Meeting Summary**

March 20, 2024, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

General Meeting

Attendees

| Name | Affiliation |
|------------------------------|--|
| Kerrie Gallo | Niagara Relicensing Environmental Coalition |
| Erin Redding | NYS Department of Environmental Conservation |
| Jenny Landry (remote) | NYS Department of Environmental Conservation |
| Cheryl Jobs | New York Power Authority |
| Steve Schoenwiesner (remote) | New York Power Authority |
| Scott Schlueter | US Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Kendra Gorski | Gomez and Sullivan Engineers |
| Emily Root | Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper |
| Charley Oddo | Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper |
| Zach Goodrich | Tifft Nature Preserve |
| Nicole Gerber | Citizen Coalition for Wildlife and Environment |
| Dave Reilly | Citizen Coalition for Wildlife and Environment |

Site Visit

Site Visit at Sheridan Park Living Shoreline Site Visit at potential Project Site

Charley Oddo led K. Gallo, S. Schlueter, E. Redding, E. Root and K. Gorski through a brief visit to the proposed Sheridan Park Living Shoreline Project’s West Pond site.

GESC 2024 Cycle 1 Proposal Presentations

Alt Nature Trail Improvements by Citizen Coalition for Wildlife and Environment

This was presented by Dave Reilly. He provided a brief overview of Citizen Coalition for Wildlife and Environment (CCWE). He stated the CCWE:

- operates on a volunteer basis;
- receives annual income from fundraises such as their annual plant sale;
- received \$95,000 grant from Erie County Greenway fund in 2024. (This grant will pay for an accessible bathroom in the Alt Nature Preserve visitor’s center and for trail development);
- participates with other non-for-profits and environmental groups for events.

Dave provided a brief history of the Alt Nature Preserve on Grand Island, NY. The land has been owned by the Alt family for several generations; it was previously farmland and is now a nature preserve. The Western New York Land Conservancy holds a conservation easement for much of the property; however, this easement does not cover the proposed project area. The Alt Nature

Meeting Summary

March 20, 2024

Preserve contains a wet oak hickory swamp which is a unique plant community type. Alt Nature Preserve is connected to the Niagara River corridor and close to other Greenway projects and lands. The current trail is 0.5 mile (1 way).

In May 2023, Alt Nature Preserve opened the historical schoolhouse building for events and presentations. The goals of the Alt Nature Preserve are to provide events that focus on youth education and family activities. They have future plans to expand on school access and university studies; hold barn workshops and install historical farming education exhibits; and collaborate with Haudenosaunee citizens to plant teaching gardens.

The proposed Alt Nature trail improvements include plants, trail and signage.

CCWE is requesting \$60,500 from GESC.

Sheridan Park Living Shoreline by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

This project was presented by Charley Oddo. The proposed project site contains 3 areas;

1. West Pond site
2. 2-mile creek site
3. Connective corridor (tree canopy) to connect the area 1 and 2.

The lawn next to West Pond is a good opportunity to plant trees and create habitat and connectivity that is currently lacking. Proposed site improvements include:

- Converting the lawn to a pollinator meadow
- Establishing aquatic habitat at the West Pond;
- Reducing stormwater pollution;
- Reducing invasive phragmites on site;
- Creating new park assets including walking trails (ADA slope, not surfacing) and park benches.

This would be a bid-design-bid-build project. GESC funds would cover the design of all three projects components as well as construction at West Pond. Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper would seek additional funds to construct the remaining two project components.

The anticipated project timeline is:

- 2024 establish landowner agreements;
- 2025 design;
- 2026 bid and construction;
- 2027 construction close out and period of establishment.

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper is requesting \$637,440 from GESC.

ESC Pre-proposals Presentations

East Canal Ecological Renovation Phase 2 by Tifft Nature Preserve by Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences

This project pre-proposal was presented by Zach Goodrich.

Meeting Summary

March 20, 2024

The proposed project is located in the East Canal at Tiff Nature Preserve, which is connected to Lake Kirsty. Phase 1 of the East Canal Ecological Renovation Project is focused on terrestrial invasive species management and native plant community and habitat establishment. The proposed Phase 2 would be focused on aquatic habitat within the East Canal. The canal is currently bordered by low growing herbaceous vegetation, which does not offer shade. There is no transitional zone between the land and water. Eurasian milfoil is the dominant aquatic plant. The site has potential for improved water quality, marsh bird habitat, fish spawning and nursery habitat, and a resilient plant community. It is sheltered from extreme weather by the beaver dam at its mouth, and the mounds to the south. The canal's maximum depth is ten feet, and most of the canal is less than four to six feet deep.

Work in Phase 2 would remove the invasive Eurasian milfoil, install aquatic and transitional plants, and install herbivory deterrents. No earthwork is proposed, as there are limitations on digging at Tiff Nature Preserve, due to its history as a dump. Coir logs would be used along the length of the bank, with plugs and lifestakes installed in them. Rock socks would be used for aquatic plants. The planting list is still in development.

The proposed timeline is:

- Summer 2024 apply for and acquire permits (this will be done in conjunction with phase 1 permit applications);
- Spring 2025 Eurasian milfoil treatment, live stake installation;
- Summer 2025 planting;
- 2026 additional plantings.

Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences is requesting \$298,750 from ESC.

Adaptive Management with the RestoreCorps Program by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

This pre-proposal was presented by Charley Oddo.

The RestoreCorps program focuses on riparian restoration sites, replanting vegetation, and adaptive management. Waterkeeper has Restoration Adaptive Management Program Stewards (RAMPS) who are typically youth who have graduated from highschool. These stewards are compensated for their time.

The RestoreCorps program allows Waterkeeper to invest in the long term success of restoration sites by addressing issues that typically develop after a three-year grant for project construction has ended. The proposed adaptive management sites for this cycle are dispersed throughout the Niagara Basin. Waterkeeper will work at about five sites each year.

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper is requesting \$696,040 from ESC.

Greenway Ecological Standing Committee and Greenway Ecological Fund Meeting Agenda

July 10, 2024, 9:30 AM-3:00 PM

Adult Learning Center, Niagara Wheatfield School Campus, 2292 Saunders Settlement Rd,
Sanborn, NY 14132

General Meeting

Opening Remarks, Introductions, and Ice Breaker

Project Proposal Presentation

- Bedell Road Property Protection Proposal Presentation

Ongoing and Completed Project Presentations

- Greenway Land Protection Program, Grand Island Final Presentation
- BRRAlliance Habitat Program, Niagara County Pollinator Conservation Sites
- HULM Lab at Silo City
- Gill Creek Master Restoration Plan
- RestoreCorps 2

Project Proposal Presentation

- Niagara Wheatfield Ecocampus on Cayuga Creek Proposal Presentation *On site*

Committee Session

Greenway Ecological Fund Update

Project Proposal Consensus Building Discussion

- Bedell Road Protection, Western New York Land Conservancy
- Cayuga Creek Living Shoreline, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Ongoing Projects Discussion

- HULM Lab at Silo City
- BRRAlliance Habitat Program
- Greenway Land Protection Program, Grand Island
- Niagara Gorge and Rim Restoration
- Gill Creek Master Restoration Plan
- RestoreCorps 2

Greenway Ecological Standing Committee and Greenway Ecological Fund
Meeting Summary

July 10, 2024, 9:30 AM-3:00 PM

General Meeting

Attendees

| Name | Affiliation |
|------------------|--|
| Anne McCooley | Black Rock Riverside Alliance |
| Kerrie Gallo | Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Niagara Environmental Relicensing Coalition |
| Charley Oddo | Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper |
| Emily Root | Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper |
| Erin Redding | NYS Department of Environmental Conservation |
| Cheryl Jobs | New York Power Authority |
| Maris Grundy | Silo City |
| Josh Smith | Silo City |
| Amy Roe (remote) | US Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Sarah Costlow | Western New York Land Conservancy |
| Andrew Gaerte | Western New York Land Conservancy |
| Kyra Umrigar | Western New York Land Conservancy |

Opening Remarks, Introductions, and Ice Breaker

Project Proposal Presentation

Protecting Bedell Meadows, Western New York Land Conservancy

Presented by Sarah Costlow

The Western New York Land Conservancy is proposing to purchase and permanently protect an approximately 43-acre property on Grand Island. The property is located on the south side of Bedell Road, west of 190. This property was identified as part of the Land Conservancy's current Greenway Land Protection Program, Grand Island.

The Bedell property was formerly farmland and is now meadow, grassland, shrub, and potential wetland habitat with native and non-native vegetation. The area is expected to support grassland birds and amphibians.

The Land Conservancy is requesting \$752,411 for acquisition, habitat restoration, public access, stewardship and legal defense fund contributions, mileage, administrative costs, and contingency.

Discussion

There are not sufficient funds in the Greenway Ecological Fund to support both Cycle 2 proposed projects in full. The committee members asked how the Land Conservancy could adjust their budget, bring in additional funding from other sources, or eliminate tasks from this project if full funding is not awarded. Sarah said that the Land Conservancy have considered pursuing other funding.

Meeting Summary

July 20, 2022

Ongoing and Completed Project Presentations

Greenway Land Protection Program, Grand Island and Grand Island Nature Preserves Final Presentations, Western New York Land Conservancy

Presented by Sarah Costlow

The Greenway Land Protection Program, Grand Island, is nearing completion. The Land Conservancy has protecting three properties (Love Rd, Alt Preserve (easement), Funk Preserve), is currently acquiring a fourth (Pfohl Preserve, and has identified a fifth (Bedell Meadows, described above).

BRRAlliance Habitat Program, Niagara County Pollinator Conservation Sites, BRRAlliance

Presented by Anne McCooey

BRRAlliance is meeting their outreach, education, and administrative goals for the Habitat Program. Over 180 Certified NWF Wildlife Habitats have been registered, including parks, gold courses, school yards, community gardens, and private properties.

The GESC grant has allowed BRRAlliance to grow and establish itself as a more sustainable, robust organization.

Ongoing and Completed Project Presentations, continued

HULM Lab at Silo City, Silo City

Presented by Maris Grundy

Silo City has physically expanded its native plant nursery. It is currently growing 41 species of trees and shrubs and 35 species of herbaceous plants. The staff have developed customized methods for growing plants in rock socks and air pruning containers.

The GESC grant has also allowed for professional employees and resource development.

Silo City is actively partnering with multiple organizations, City of Buffalo schools, and agencies to share knowledge, support workforce development, and supply plants for restoration projects.

Gill Creek Conceptual Restoration Plan, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Presented by Emily Root

This project has been retitled Gill Creek Conceptual Restoration Plan, rather than Gill Creek Master Plan, to better reflect the goals and outcome of the project.

Waterkeeper finalized the Conceptual Restoration Plan in December 2023. Emily shared three conceptual plans for Hyde Park Lake that were developed as part of the plan. Waterkeeper is pursuing funding for implementation of these living shorelines and recreational features in partnership with the City of Niagara Falls.

RestoreCorps 2, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Presented by Charley Oddo

Meeting Summary

July 20, 2022

The mission of the RestoreCorps program is to revitalize riparian and shoreline ecosystems while restoring the vital connection between people and their environment. RestoreCorps 2 has included three types of activities: riparian restoration, park re-tree, and adaptive management. These activities are strategically coordinated to support restoration projects beyond implementation and through establishment. Charley described this as “bridging the resiliency gap” for a project. Work will continue in through 2024 and 2025.

Project Proposal Presentation

Niagara Wheatfield Ecocampus on Cayuga Creek Proposal Presentation, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

This presentation was an on-site walking tour of the proposed project area. The project area includes a riparian buffer of Cayuga Creek, on the west site of the Niagara Wheatfield School District property; Cayuga Creek; and the flood plain of Cayuga Creek within a parcel owned by the Niagara Wheatfield Amateur Athletics Association.

**Greenway Ecological Standing Committee and Greenway Ecological Fund
Ecological Standing Committee and Habitat Enhancement and Recreation Fund
Meeting Agenda**

September 18, 2024, 1:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Teams Meeting

Agenda

1:00 Introductions and Opening Remarks

1:10 GESC Ongoing Project Presentation and ESC Proposal Presentations & Consensus Building

- East Canal Ecological Renovation at Tiffet Nature Preserve, Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences

1:40 ESC Ongoing Project Presentations

- Ellicott Island Living Shoreline Implementation, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
- Freshwater Mussel Propagation for Restoration and Water Quality Improvement in the Niagara River Drainage, University at Buffalo
- Centennial Park Aquatic Habitat, City of Buffalo

3:00 Break

3:20 GESC Cycle 2 Ongoing Project Presentations

- Protecting the Pfohl Property, Western New York Land Conservancy
- Protecting Love Rd Preserve, Western New York Land Conservancy
- Greenway Land Protection Program: Lower Niagara River and Niagara Escarpment, Western New York Land Conservancy
- Protecting the Niagara Escarpment Addition Preserve, Western New York Land Conservancy

4:00 Committee Discussions

**Greenway Ecological Standing Committee and Greenway Ecological Fund
Ecological Standing Committee and Habitat Enhancement and Recreation Fund
Meeting Summary**

September 18, 2024, 1:00 PM – 4:12 PM

General Meeting

Attendees

| Name | Affiliation |
|---------------------|---|
| Kerrie Gallo | Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and Niagara Relicensing Environmental Coalition |
| Emily G. Dyett | Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and Niagara Relicensing Environmental Coalition |
| Charley Oddo | Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper |
| Katherine Winkler | Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper |
| Zachary Goodrich | Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences |
| Andy Rabb | City of Buffalo |
| Kevin Gulvin | Gardiner USA |
| Kendra Gorski | Gomez and Sullivan |
| Erin Redding | NYS Department of Environmental Conservation |
| Charles Rosenburg | NYS Department of Environmental Conservation |
| Jenny Landry | NYS Department of Environmental Conservation |
| Cheryl Jobs | New York Power Authority |
| Christine Abrams | Tonawanda Seneca Nation |
| Amy Roe | US Fish and Wildlife Service |
| Jonah Fronk | University at Buffalo |
| Corey Krabbenhoft | University at Buffalo |
| Isabel Porto-Hannes | University at Buffalo |
| Max Striedl | University at Buffalo |
| Sara Costlow | Western New York Land Conservancy |
| Andrew Gaerte | Western New York Land Conservancy |
| Marissa Riggi | Western New York Land Conservancy |
| Kyra Umrigar | Western New York Land Conservancy |
| Andrew Vance | Western New York Land Conservancy |

GESC Project Status Presentation and ESC Project Proposal

East Canal Ecological Renovation at Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences

Presented by Zachary Goodrich

GESC Project Update

- Project area background issues included being dominated by invasive plants, lack of trees/shrubs diversity and regeneration and no transitional upland-aquatic plant zone.
- Project area potential opportunities are that area is protected from the wind, beaver dam attenuates water level and canal shallow depth is for good establishing aquatic plants.
- Phase I Project Timeline Summary:

Meeting Summary

September 18, 2024

- Design – Complete
- Permitting – On schedule – Zach noted that there is a small wetland area in the eastern part of the project that requires an Article 24 DEC permit. Tifft will apply soon however, that will most likely be completed next year.
- Woody Invasive Removal – Behind schedule the estimated completion expected Fall 2024. At this time 85% has been removed, cleared and mulched. 65% has been treated and 50% of site is prepared for planting.
- Phragmites Invasive Treatment – On schedule
- Knotweed Invasive Treatment – On schedule. 75% complete. Tifft utilizing the sponge wiper method that has been showing success.
- Planting – On schedule. Planting started late August and will continue into the Fall 2024. Many volunteers are lined up for planting work. Tifft partnered with Silo City for plants. A total of 3,200 trees and shrubs are to be planted by May 2025.
- Seeding – Scheduled for December 2024.

ESC Project Proposal: Phase II – Aquatic and Transitional Zone

- This proposal was the second phase of the East Canal project. The Project tasks would include the removal of the aquatic invasive plants from the canal (Eurasian water milfoil and curly leaf pondweed), stabilization of the bank, and the native plantings.
- Tifft is asking for \$228,288.
- Phase II estimated timeline:
 - Permitting - Fall/Winter 2024
 - Construction of deer fence – Fall 2024
 - Invasive treatment – Spring 2025
 - Plantings – Start Summer 2025 continue into 2026

Questions/Comments

1. Chuck Rosenburg said that the 2025 NYSDEC freshwater wetland permitting should be straight forward. The new jurisdiction regulations that include urban areas per the census bureau will not apply to the Tifft eastern area because this area is not designated urban. Chuck and Zach will discuss permitting further in a separate meeting.
2. Committee members have until December 1, 2024 to reach consensus on the Phase II East Canal proposal.

ESC Ongoing Project Presentations

Ellicott Island Living Shoreline Implementation, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Presented by Charley Oddo

GESC Project Update

- The Project area is located on the southern tip of Ellicott Island Bark Park in Tonawanda Creek. The closest road crossings are East Robinson Rd and Niagara Falls Blvd. The area was greatly eroded and lacked vegetation due to high dog traffic in and out of the water.

Meeting Summary

September 18, 2024

- The project design has been provided to GESC. This included shoreline re-grading and stabilization, restoration wetland area, habitat logs, and new dog entrance way to the water that included a wood log fence to prevent dogs from entering restoration wetland area.
- Project earthwork started in May 2024 and was completed in July 2024. There was a later start due to low water levels and contractor not able to float work barge to the project area.
- A mussel survey was completed.
- Budget remaining = \$238,760. Contingency funds will need to be used for the two additional expenses: additional cost for mussel survey and cost for purchasing fill. The original design called for the contractor to use the dredged material from the dog entryway to stabilize the toe of the slope. This dredged material was too mucky and could not be used to stabilize the slope, therefore purchased fill was needed.
- Plantings should be completed by December 2025. The contractor is waiting for the desired Erie County natives to be available per their planting plan.

Freshwater Mussel Propagation for Restoration and Water Quality Improvement in the Niagara River Drainage, University at Buffalo

Presented by Isabel Porto-Hannes

GESC Project Update

- The intent of this project is to determine if the Niagara River is a suitable habitat to support mussel communities. The project involves water and substrate quality assessments and propagation of juvenile mussels that are placed in different test locations to measure and compare growth and survival.
- All work was conducted with appropriate NYSDEC and NYSOPRHP licenses and permits.
- Propagation tanks were constructed at UB and mussels were kept over winter 2023-2024.
- Largemouth bass were used as host fish. 1,000 – 1,800 juvenile mussels were obtained from 90-300 fish. UB kept some to try and raise and also sent 250 mussels to Columbia Environmental Research System. A third infestation was needed due to some UB mortalities. A site on Ellicott Creek was used to obtain mussel glochidia.
- In July 2024, UB loaded mussels into mussel silos and mussel cages. The silos and cages were placed in the Niagara River and in tributary control areas. The cages were buried completely in the sediment. The growth and survival of the mussels were monitored every two weeks. Water samples were taken and the sediment was tested for carbon and nitrogen at each site.
- UB is still doing data analysis. Preliminary results were shared in the presentation.
- UB is considering how to address challenges with keeping juvenile mussels alive in lab settings.

Meeting Summary

September 18, 2024

- Remaining project tasks include data analysis, reporting, and a second round of juvenile mussel placement and sampling in 2025.

Questions/Comments

Questions were asked regarding the preliminary results.

Centennial Park Aquatic Habitat, City of Buffalo

Presented by Katherine Winkler

GESC Project Update

- The aquatic habitat Alternative 2A was chosen for the project design. The project has removed a seawall and converted two acres of park land to wetland.
- Construction started in July 2023. The habitat cove has been excavated and planting is to be completed by end of September 2024.
- The HERF budget should be almost spent by the end of the year. Budget spent to date is \$457,000 (paid to contractors).

Questions/Comments

1. Erin Redding asked if the contractors being used were local. Andrew Rabb answered yes but not all. He noted that there is a City of Buffalo requirement that contractors use 30% local labor, but noted there are many subcontractors and not all of those are local.
2. Erin Redding asked if the City of Buffalo would be asking to use the contingency funding. She reminded the group that they are required to provide explanations and invoices to the Committee. Katherine Winkler said they will most likely need contingency funding and will provide the needed information.

GESC Cycle 2 Ongoing Project Presentations

Protecting the Pfohl Property, Western New York Land Conservancy

Presented by Sarah Costlow

Progress Updates

- The property is 56 acres on Grand Island, NY, includes 400 feet of Niagara River shoreline.
- WNYLC has completed prioritization and is under contract with a landowner to purchase property. However, on the property, there is a land locked portion of the parcel that requires access across the National Grid ROW. The landowner is renegotiating an easement issue with National Grid. This easement needs to be resolved prior to selling the property. Once the easement situation is resolved, WNYLC plans to purchase parcel and has two years of restoration work planned.

Protecting Love Rd Preserve, Western New York Land Conservancy

Presented by Andrew Lance

Meeting Summary

September 18, 2024

Progress Updates

- Invasive species control work has been completed.
- Restoration of the 0.75-mile trail has been completed. This included clearing and installation of bog bridges. The trail should be opened for public use in fall 2024.
- Installation of a two-car parking lot and culvert completed. The parking lot land was a landowner donation.

Greenway Land Protection Program: Lower Niagara River and Niagara Escarpment, Western New York Land Conservancy

Presented by Sarah Costlow

Progress Updates

- Stonehaven Property – This property acquired by the Town of Lewiston. WNYLC considers this an assisted transaction
- River Road – WNYLC is taking over this project from Ducks Unlimited.
- Stefik Property – 112 acres. WNYLC considered purchasing this property but ultimately decided that it would not be feasible to meet the restoration needs.
- Clipping Estate - 65 acres along Niagara Escarpment. WNYLC considered this property but did not purchase it. The property is dominated by Norway maple and restoration was not feasible.
- A 100-acre property in Lockport (outside of the Niagara River Greenway) is going to be willed to the WNYLC by a landowner. The parcel is primarily a maple-hardwood swamp but also contains silver maple -ash swamp.

Questions/Comments

1. Kerrie Gallo asked if the Duck Unlimited project was a wetland mitigation bank project. Sarah said yes.

Protecting the Niagara Escarpment Addition Preserve

Presented by Andrew Lance

Progress Updates

- Reforestation work included 100 native, climate resilient trees installed October 2023 (bur oak, white oak, hackberry, basswood),
- Installed wire fencing to protect from herbivory,
- Removed 48 bird cherry trees,
- Partnered with WNY PRISM for ecological monitoring.