

# Buffalo River AOC Habitat Restoration

## Restoring Habitat in the Buffalo River Area of Concern

Eight project sites were restored enhancing nearly two miles of shoreline and 20 acres of habitat along the lower Buffalo River. These projects bring the river closer to being removed from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC).



### Project Highlights

- Enhancement and restoration of nearly two miles of shoreline and twenty acres of habitat
- Increased shoreline stability and natural conditions
- Improved storm water treatment, reduced erosion, fewer invasive plant species, and less sedimentation
- Economic and community benefits directly related to the improved river ecosystems
- Funded by the NOAA-GLC Regional Partnership and implemented by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper.

### Environmental Benefits

Contribute to AOC Delisting  
Enhance fish and wildlife habitat

### Economic Benefits

Recreation  
Tourism  
Sport-fishing enhancement and revitalization

### Community Benefits

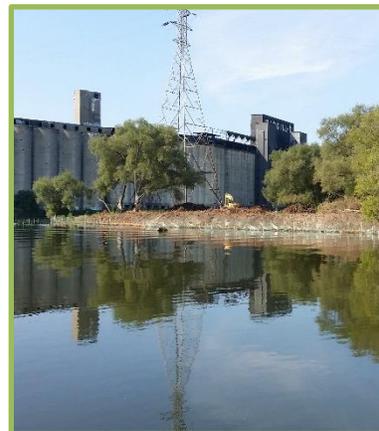
Increased water-based recreation and sport-fishing  
Improved water quality and ecosystem health



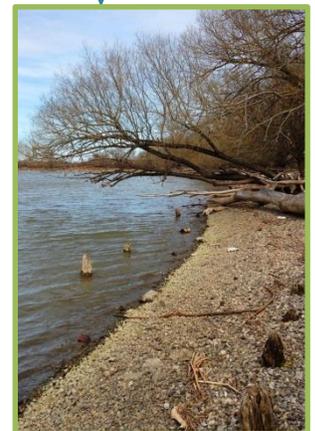
Buffalo Motor Generator



NYSDEC Ohio St. Boat Launch



Toe of Katherine St. Peninsula



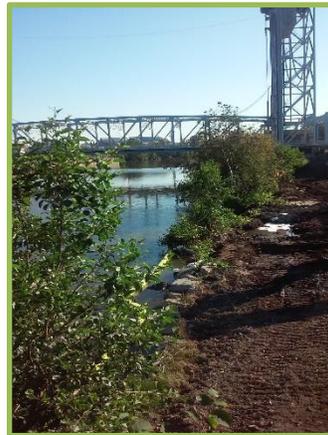
Blue Tower Turning Basin



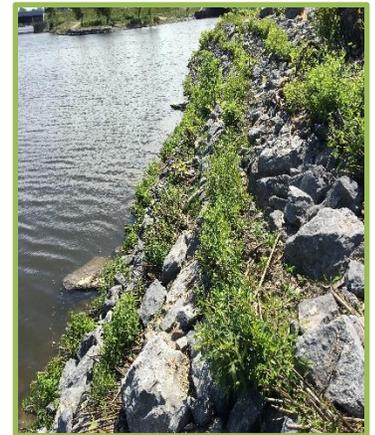
Buffalo Color Peninsula



RiverBend Phase I



RiverBend Phase II



Old Bailey Woods

## History of the River

The legacy of the Buffalo River is defined by its heavy industrialization, sediment contamination, agricultural runoff, poor water quality, and habitat degradation/alteration. Together, these characteristics left the river to be considered “biologically dead” in the 1960s. Today, the Buffalo River’s past is still evident but significant progress has been made to address these issues.

## Background of the Area of Concern

In 1989, the Buffalo River was declared an Area of Concern (AOC) by the International Joint Commission. The Buffalo River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) Remedial Advisory Committee designated the river for 9 of 14 possible Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs). Ultimately, the AOC program seeks to address each BUI and “delist” the AOC with a goal of restoring a minimum of 25 percent of the AOC’s shoreline with natural slopes, shallow water habitat, and aquatic native vegetation. Since its designation as an AOC, much has been accomplished in the Buffalo River, especially in remediating hazardous waste sites. Significant work to remediate contaminated sediment, which will aid in delisting seven of the AOC’s nine BUIs, has recently been completed. The completed habitat restoration projects at the above locations have directly benefited fish and wildlife populations and will aid in the removal of several BUIs ultimately leading to the delisting of the Buffalo River by 2022.

## Project Impacts

All project sites (Buffalo Motor and Generator, NYSDEC Ohio St. Boat Launch, Toe of Katherine St. Peninsula, Blue Tower Turning Basin, Buffalo Color Peninsula, RiverBend Phase I and II, and Old Bailey Woods) were completed in fall 2018. The projects provided significant on-the-ground benefits to the AOC including invasive species removal, near-shore habitat improvement, native species plantings, aquatic vegetation plantings, and shoreline softening.

## Funding and Partners

Just under \$6 million was provided for these projects by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) through a Regional Partnership with the Great Lakes Commission. Funding came from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), a regional program that supports the implementation of a comprehensive plan for the Great Lakes, including restoration of Areas of Concern. The projects are being managed locally by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, who have been participating and coordinating the restoration of the Buffalo River for more than 25 years.

## For More Information Contact:

**Katherine Winkler, Director, Ecological Design & Implementation**  
Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, 716-852-7483 x15, kwinkler@bnwaterkeeper.org

**Eric Ellis, Project Manager**  
Great Lakes Commission, 734-396-6089, eellis@glc.org



**BUFFALO NIAGARA  
WATERKEEPER®**