



Niagara River Area of Concern Habitat Restoration

Coastal habitat restoration during the **Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park Restoration Project** will benefit a wide range of species by replacing hardened shoreline with natural features.



Conceptual rendering for Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Restoration project

Project Highlights

Creation of up to 6.5 acres of open water, marsh canal, submerged aquatic vegetation, shallow water, and rock shoal habitat

Conversion of ~2 acres of historic fill back to open water

Conversion of ~2,500 feet of failing seawall to naturalized shoreline with habitat structures

The project is being implemented locally by the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation with funding provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) Regional Partnership.

Environmental Benefits

Improved fish and wildlife habitat
Removal of seawall
Improved stormwater filtration

Economic Benefits

Tourism and recreation
Coastal resiliency

Community Benefits

Recreational access
Shoreline safety and resilience



View of the hardened shoreline at the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Centennial Park inlet area

Niagara River AOC Background

The Niagara River Area of Concern is located in both Erie and Niagara counties in western New York and connects Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. In 1987, the Niagara River was designated as an AOC under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with seven designated beneficial use impairments (BUIs). Currently, only one BUI has been removed.

Project Progress

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park (now Ralph Wilson Park) Restoration project was identified as a priority coastal restoration project during the creation of the Niagara River AOC Habitat Restoration Plan. This plan was completed in 2019 with work on the project beginning shortly after. The engineering and design phase was completed in the fall of 2022 and construction began during summer of 2023. Construction of the inlet portion of the park is expected to be completed by late fall 2025.

Funding and Partners

Approximately \$2.5 million was made available for the engineering and design and pre-construction phases of the project through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a regional program that is supporting implementation of a comprehensive restoration plan for the Great Lakes. The project funding comes from NOAA through a Regional Partnership with the Great Lakes Commission. An additional \$12 million has been approved through a new Partnership. A diverse project management team is managing the project and includes the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; Gardiner & Theobald; Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates; Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper; other federal and state agencies; the City of Buffalo; and many others.

For More Information

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