

WNY PRISM Quarterly Meeting

April 6,, 2017

Buffalo River Area of Concern (AOC) – Erie County Habitat Restoration & Remedial Action Plan

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What is an AOC?

- In 1987, the Buffalo River was designated as an “**Area of Concern**” or one of the 43 most toxic hotspots in the Great Lakes.



AOC:

- Under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, all “**Areas of Concern,**” (AOC’s) were required to complete a **Remedial Action Plan, or (RAP).**
- The **Buffalo River RAP** was completed in 1989 by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation in partnership with a local citizen’s **Remedial Advisory Committee (RAC)** that developed a remediation strategy and water quality monitoring program.

Final outcomes will be to remove beneficial use impairments through restoration, habitat protection and ongoing monitoring and maintenance to ultimately **delist the Buffalo River as an AOC.**

- **More info at** <https://www.epa.gov/buffalo-river-aoc>

Project Background:

13 sites along the Buffalo River are being restored for a total of \$20 million funded by the Federal Government.

Restorations include:

- Aquatic - (shoreline, emergent & submerged vegetation)
- Riparian - (terrestrial area along shoreline) and
- Upland - (terrestrial plantings outside of shoreline buffer zone)

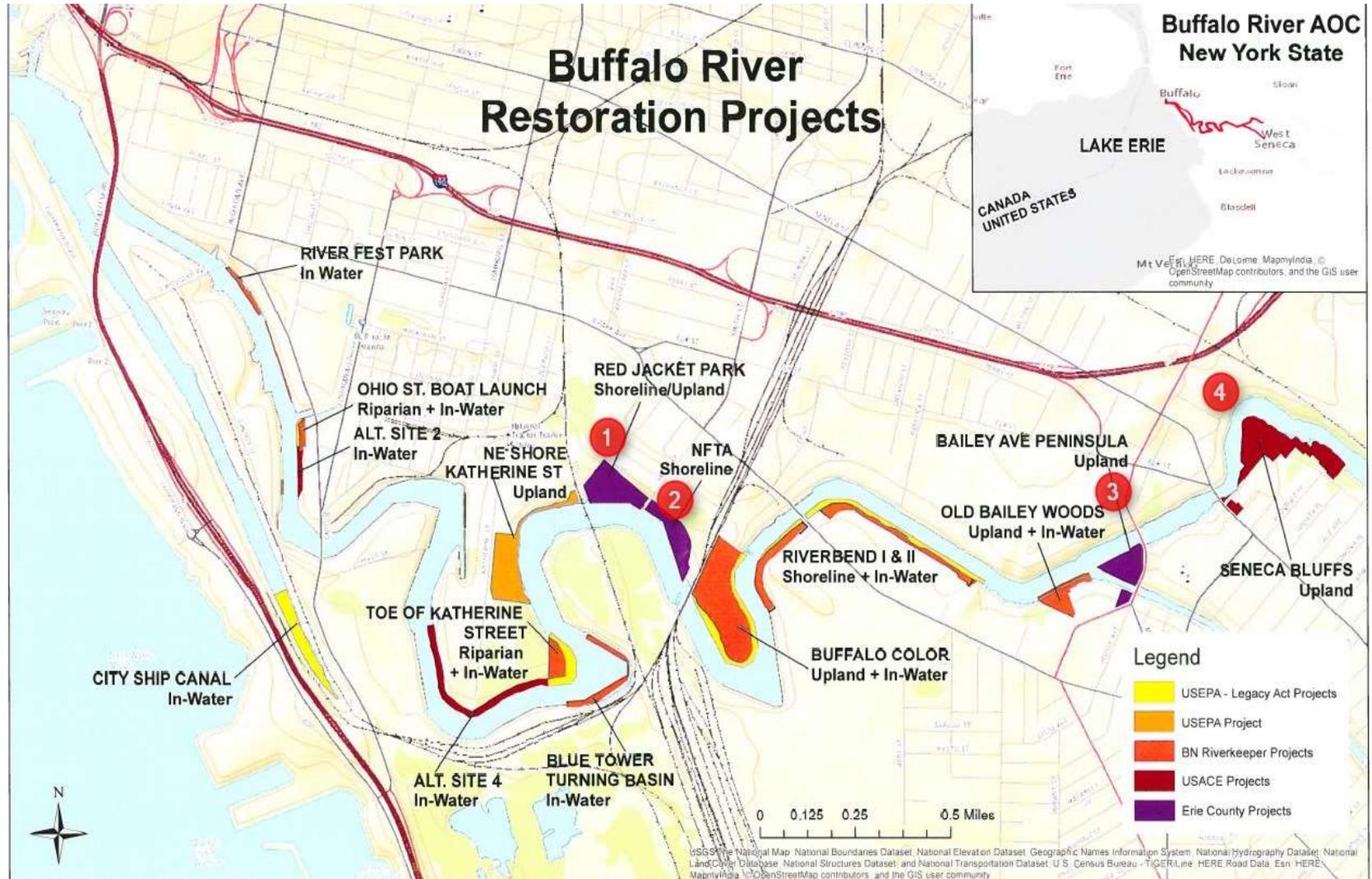
Erie County DEP received approximately \$3 million in grants from the *US EPA – Great Lakes Restoration Initiative* to manage the Buffalo River RAP Coordination and design/construction of:

1. Red Jacket Natural Habitat Park
2. NFTA/61 Smith Street Shoreline
3. Bailey Peninsula Natural Habitat Park
4. An additional approximate \$2 million was granted by US EPA directly to the US Army Corps for restoration of Erie County's Seneca Bluffs Shoreline **for a total of approximately \$5 million invested in Erie County Parks.**

Our Mission:

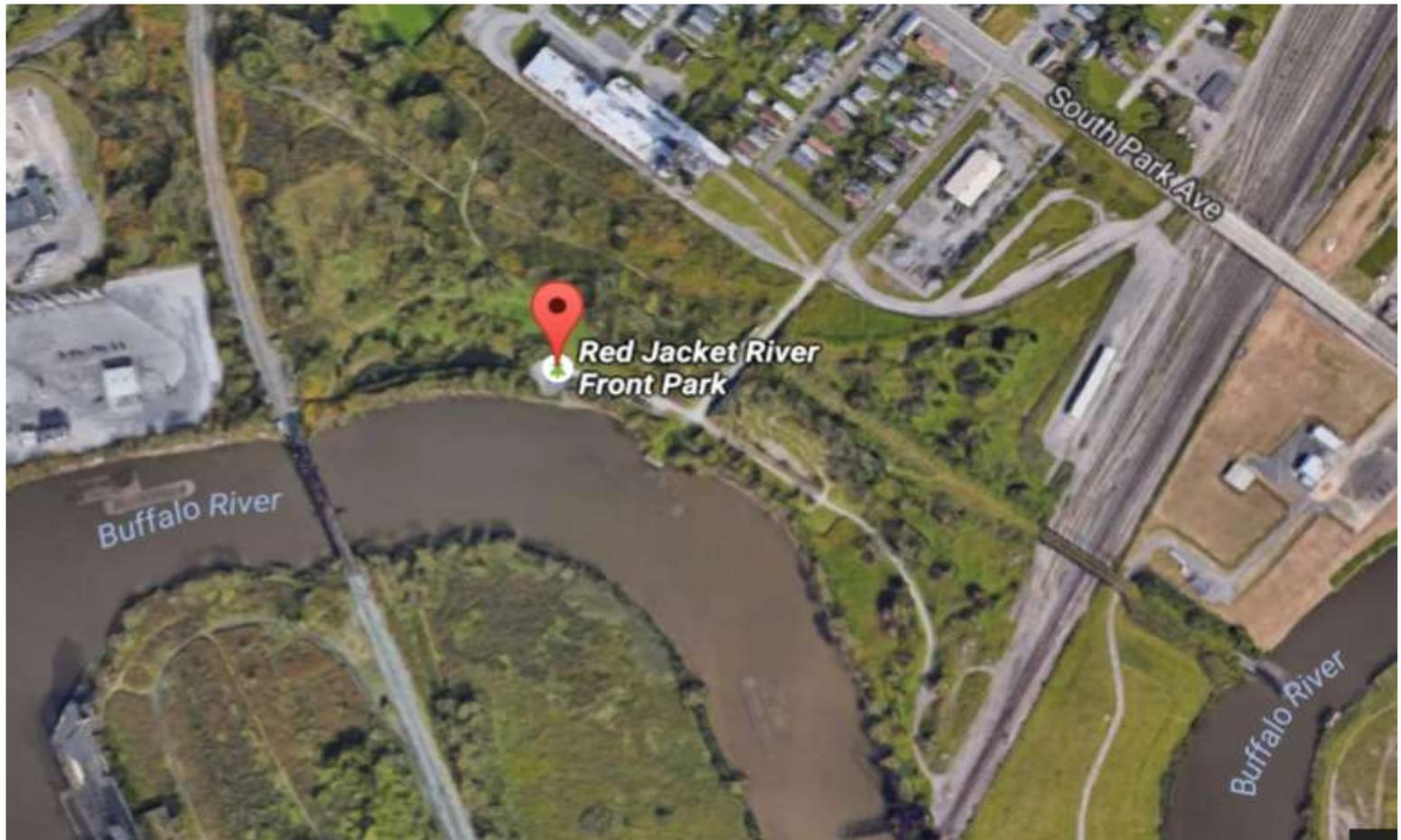
Restore natural habitat and beneficial uses of our waters including fishing and recreation. A healthy ecosystem is the key to it all!

Buffalo River AOC Habitat Restoration Sites



USGS: The National Map, National Boundaries Dataset, National Elevation Dataset, Geographic Names Information System, National Hydrography Dataset, National Land Cover Database, National Structures Dataset, and National Transportation Dataset. U.S. Census Bureau - TIGER/Line. HERE: Road Data, Esri: HERE, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS user community

1. Erie County's Red Jacket Natural Habitat Park (Foot of Smith Street)



EC Buffalo River Restorations

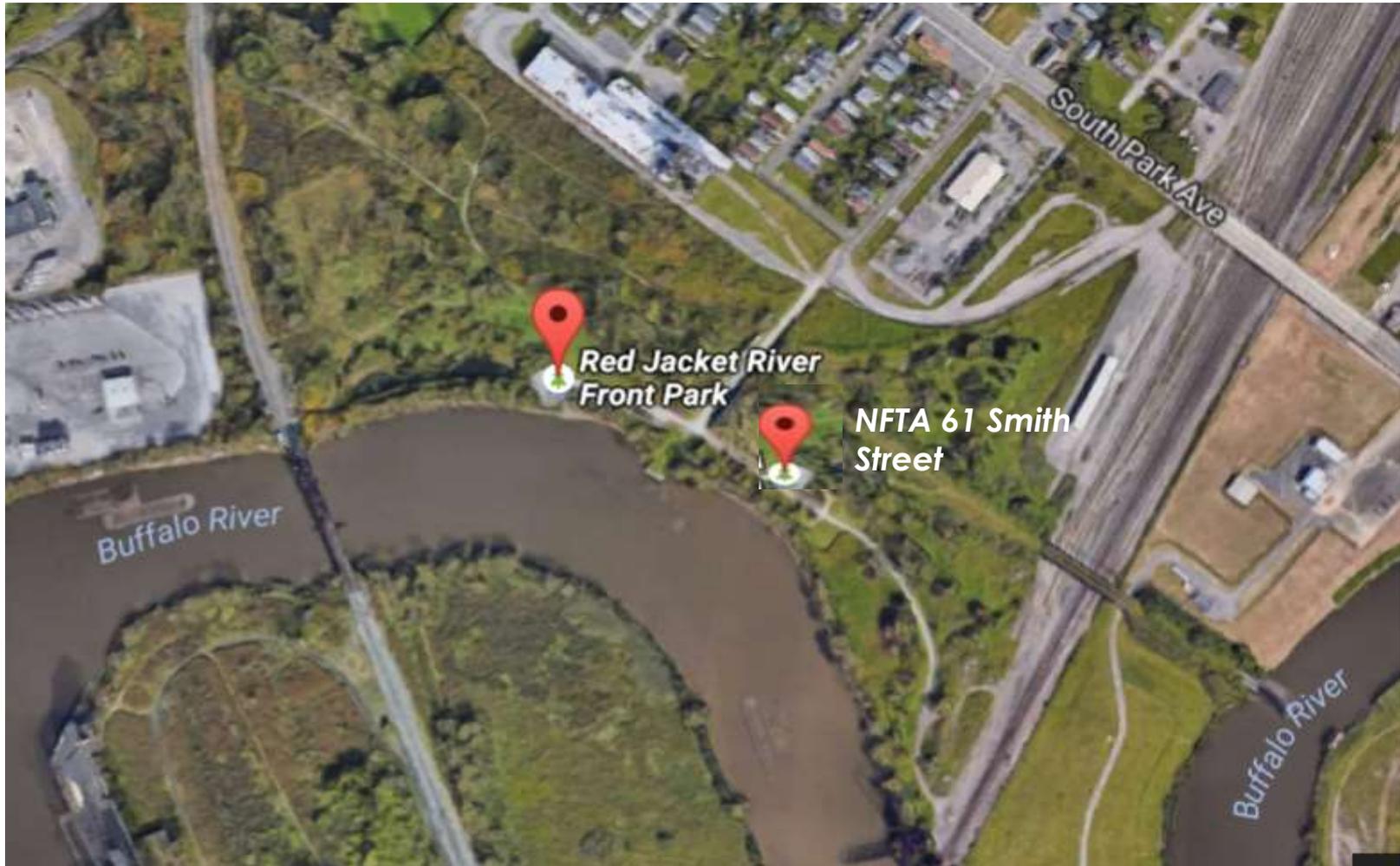
- Shoreline and near-shore habitat restoration for fish and wildlife enhancement.
- Upgraded trails and informal kayak launch access with enhanced green infrastructure parking area.
- Living fence line around site perimeter to deter infiltration of invasive species from neighboring properties.



EC Buffalo River Restorations

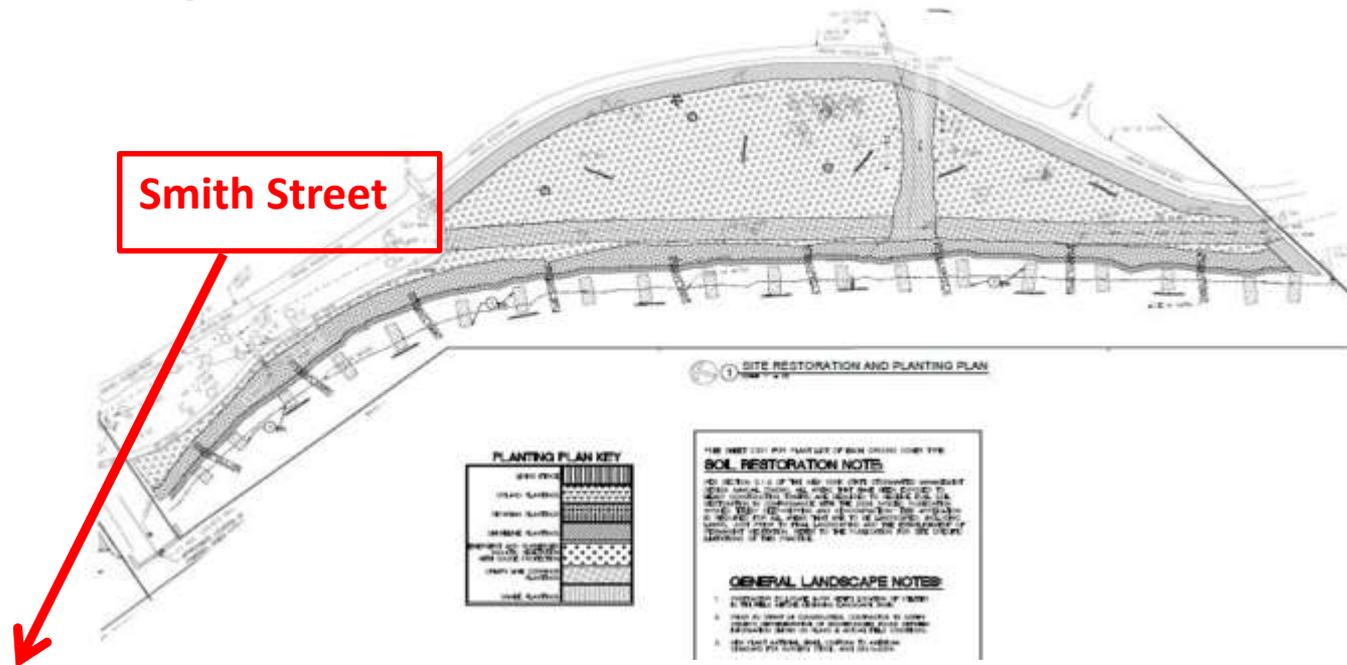


2. NFTA – 61 Smith Street Shoreline



EC Buffalo River Restorations

- Project direct-funded by EPA to Erie County to assist with delisting goals of the Buffalo River AOC shoreline due to its proximity immediately adjacent to Red Jacket
- Shoreline and near-shore habitat restoration for fish and wildlife enhancement. No additional trail or green infrastructure and NFTA's desire to discourage public use of this area.



Red Jacket & NFTA Smith Street



EC Buffalo River Restorations



EC Buffalo River Restorations



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EC Buffalo River Restorations

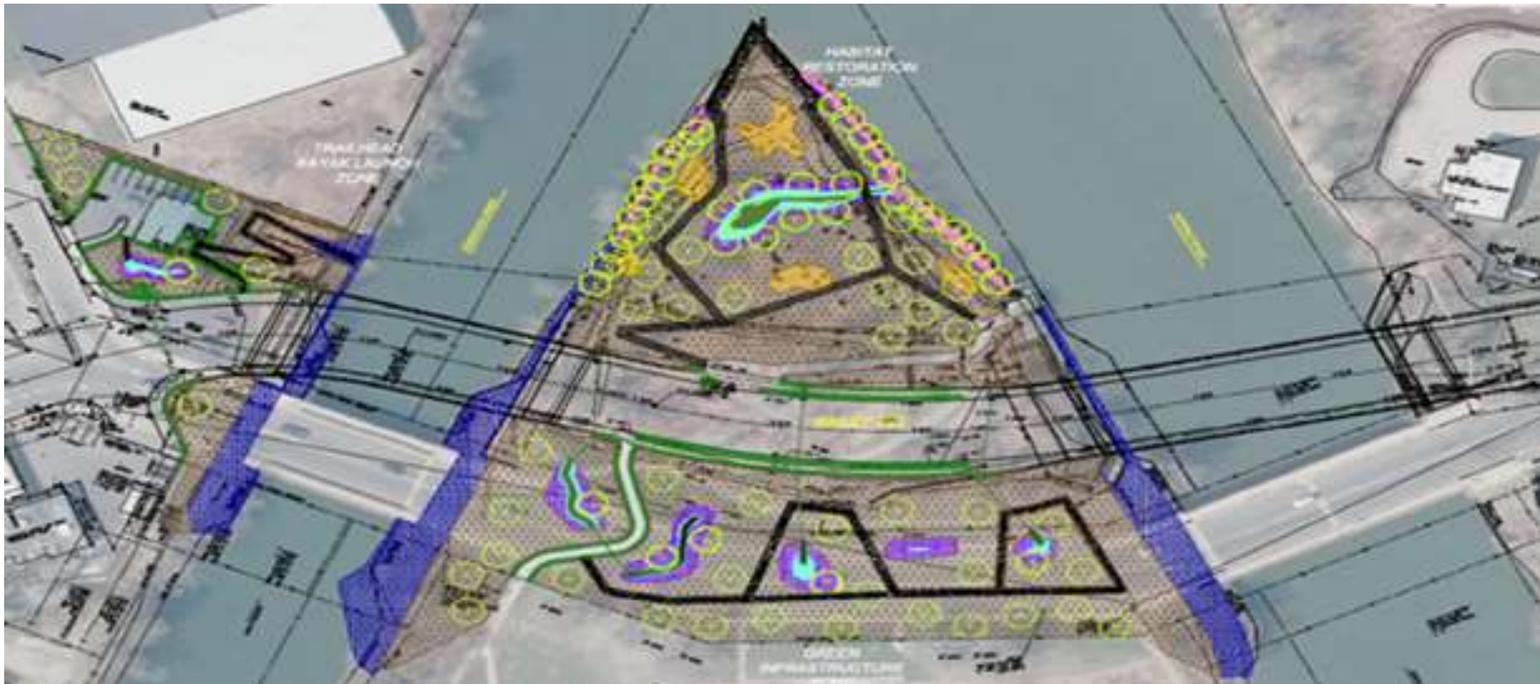


3. Erie County's Bailey Peninsula Natural Habitat Park



EC Buffalo River Restorations

- Shoreline improvements, creation of a seiche wetland and turtle habitat feature
- Kayak launch, walking trails and fishing access upgrades.
- Land transfer between City of Buffalo and Erie County for Bailey Bridge relocation project added approximately \$350,000 green infrastructure improvements, parking area, kiosk and trailhead for Erie County residents paid for by the City's bridge project.



Bailey Restoration



EC Buffalo River Restorations



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EC Buffalo River Restorations

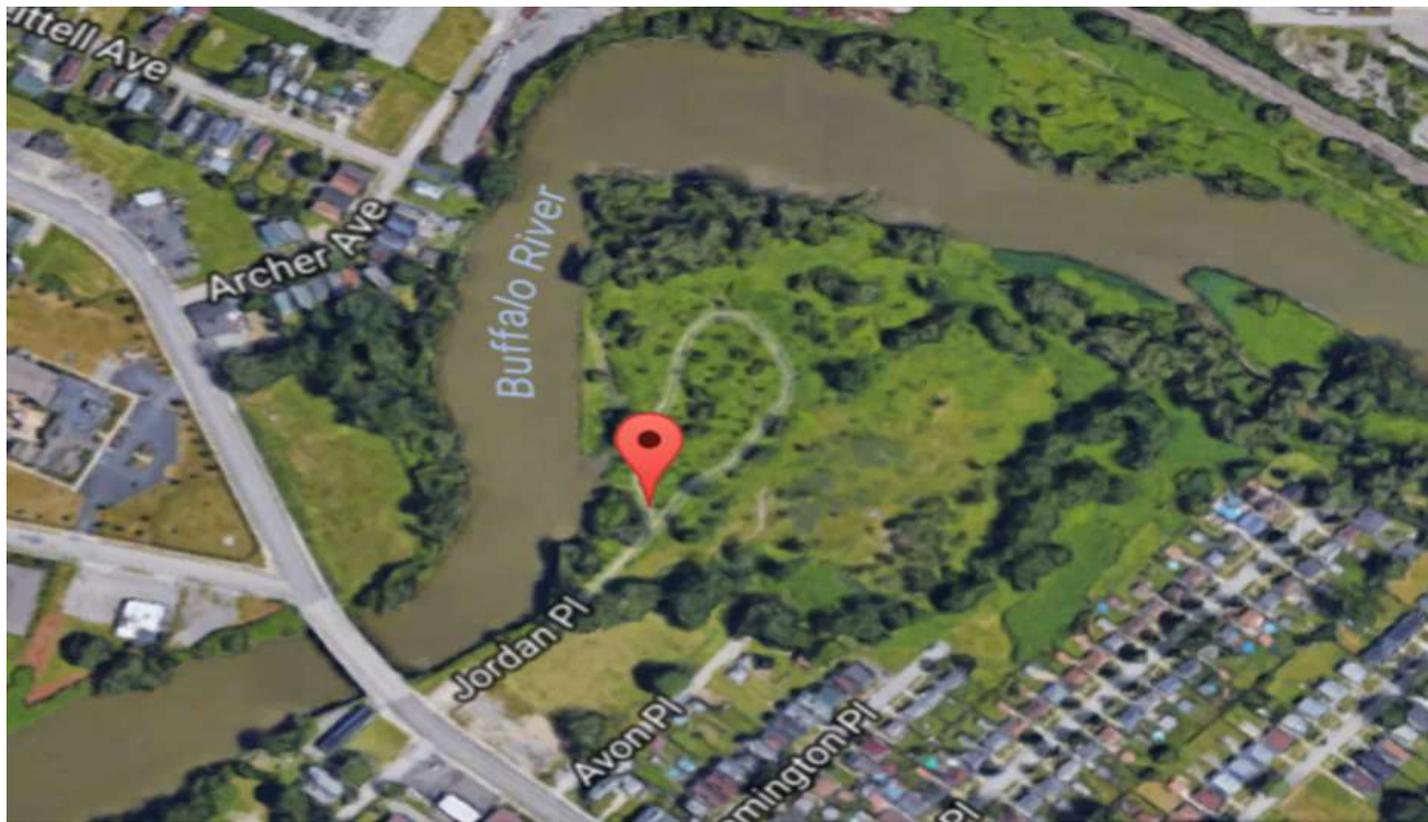


EC Buffalo River Restorations



4. Erie County's Seneca Bluffs Natural Habitat Park

- 3,500 linear feet of shoreline restoration including Riverene Island.



EC Buffalo River Restorations

- US EPA direct-funded US Army Corps approximately \$2 million to assist with AOC delisting goals
- Significant bank stabilization and reshaping including extensive native planting
- Includes 5-year operations & maintenance paid by US EPA for shoreline and riparian plantings



Seneca Bluffs Acquisition



- **US Fish & Wildlife Service awarded EC DEP \$325,000 to purchase approx. 10 acres of commercial land adjacent to SB**
- **Erie County acquired the property on 9/28/16 and now owns 25 acres of natural habitat parkland in urban South Buffalo.**
- **Many opportunities exist for educational, community and habitat uses**

Time Lapse Videos

- A day at the Seneca Bluffs Construction Site**

EC Buffalo River Restorations



Seneca Bluffs
Photo Point 3

Pre-Treatment 2015
6-18-2015

EC Buffalo River Restorations



Seneca Bluffs
Photo Point 3

Pre-Treatment 2016
5-20-2016

EC Buffalo River Restorations



Seneca Bluffs
Photo Point 5

Pre-Treatment 2015
6-18-2015

EC Buffalo River Restorations



Seneca Bluffs
Photo Point 5

Pre-Treatment 2016
5-20-2016

EC Buffalo River Restorations



Seneca Bluffs
Photo Point 8

Pre-Treatment 2015
6-18-2015

EC Buffalo River Restorations



Seneca Bluffs
Photo Point 8

Pre-Treatment 2016
5-20-2016

EC Buffalo River Restorations



Seneca Bluffs
Photo Point 10

Pre-Treatment 2015
6-18-2015

EC Buffalo River Restorations



Seneca Bluffs
Photo Point 10

Pre-Treatment 2016
5-20-2016

Environmental Stewardship

Keys to success of these restorations:

- Long-term maintenance, monitoring and control of invasives. This is a perpetual effort... they will come back stronger if left alone! EC DEP and US EPA are working on a 5-year grant to protect and maintain these investments.
- Erie County Parks Master Plan will investigate ongoing funding sources for protection of these resources.
- Early discussions with other municipalities and partners (City of Buffalo, Buffalo Sewer Authority, US Army Corps, WNY PRISM, others) to create long-term, sustainable solutions.
- 2017 Native plantings will out-compete invasives and reduce mowing/maintenance over time. EC is exploring a native plant policy and propagation of native species (trees, shrubs & plants) within our own properties and facilities.

Keys to success:

- **Community & volunteer participation is needed** – neighborhood groups, schools, citizens for monthly clean-ups, plantings, invasive species control.
- **Public & Municipal Education** – teach neighboring owners about the spread of invasives and how to monitor their own properties. Train municipal officials about the spread of invasives through equipment washing and proper disposal of ditch/site cleanup waste.
- **Neighborhood watch** programs to report illegal dumping or suspicious activity.
- **Police/Sherriff/Park Ranger** patrolling and presence to promote safety and keep away bad actors.
- **Positive activities** such as fishing clinics, kayaking, living classrooms , public art projects, community gardens, farmer's market, beer gardens, neighborhood activities... all within a passive-use, natural habitat setting.

Questions?

Please contact me with any feedback. *Thank you!*

- **Vicki Haas**
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