

NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY PLAN AND FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT



NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY COMMISSION

APRIL 4, 2007



**FINAL GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (FGEIS)
COVER SHEET**

Title of Action: Adoption and implementation of the Niagara River Greenway Plan

Location: Niagara and Erie Counties, New York State

Lead Agency: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

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Date of acceptance by Lead Agency: April 4, 2007

Consideration Period ends: May 3, 2007



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SEQR NOTICE OF COMPLETION OF A FINAL EIS

Date of Notice: April 4, 2007
Lead Agency: New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)
SEQR Status: Type I

This notice is issued pursuant to Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 (State environmental Quality Review) of the environmental Conservation Law. A Final Generic Impact Statement (FGEIS) on the proposed action described below has been prepared and has been accepted by OPRHP.

Title of Action: Adoption and Implementation of the Niagara River Greenway Plan

Location of Action: The Niagara River Greenway is located in towns and municipalities in Niagara and Erie Counties bordering the Niagara River.

Description of Action: The action involves adoption and implementation of the Niagara River Greenway Plan (Plan). The Plan establishes a unified vision and a set of principles for the Niagara River Greenway. It identifies the assets and resources that make up the Greenway. It sets priorities that suggest the types of activities to target in the near term. It identifies potential funding sources, partnerships and linkages, and addresses key transportation issues that affect the Greenway. The Plan also discusses several high priority "Implementation Concepts" which describe system-wide approaches and strategies for Greenway development.

Availability of FEIS: Copies of the Final Plan/FGEIS are available for review at the following locations: Niagara Greenway Commission Office at Beaver Island State Park, Grand Island, Grand Island Memorial Library, 1715 Bedell Rd., Grand Island; City of Tonawanda Public Library, 333 Main Street, Tonawanda; Kenilworth Library, 318 Montrose Avenue, Buffalo; Earl W. Brydges Library, 1425 Main Street, Niagara Falls; Niagara Falls Public Library-Lasalle Branch, 8728 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls; Lewiston Public Library, 305 S. Eighth St., Lewiston; North Tonawanda Public Library, 505 Meadow Drive, North Tonawanda; Ransomville Free Library, 3733 Ransomville Road, Ransomville; Wilson Free Library, 265 Young Street, Wilson; Youngstown Free Library, 240 Lockport Road, Youngstown; Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, 1 Lafayette Square, Buffalo; Kenmore Library, 160 Delaware Road, Kenmore; and online at: <http://www.niagaragreenway.org>

Agency representatives and the public can provide comments during the consideration period for the Final Plan/FEIS. The consideration period ends 30 days following the date of this Notice of Completion. Comments on the Final Plan/FEIS will be accepted by the Agency until May 3, 2007. Comments should be forwarded to the Agency Contact person.

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Copies of this notice have been filed with involved and interested agencies and persons including: the commissioner of NYS OPRHP, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, NYS Department of State, Municipalities within the Greenway and Greenway Commission Members.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------------|--|-----|
| ▪ | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | |
| 1.0 | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| | A. Purpose of the Niagara River Greenway Plan | 2 |
| | B. What is a Greenway?..... | 4 |
| | C. Niagara River Greenway Boundary | 7 |
| 2.0 | INVENTORY OF GREENWAY RESOURCES | 9 |
| | A. Existing Parks and Public Lands | 9 |
| | B. Ecological Resources..... | 13 |
| | C. Heritage Sites..... | 13 |
| | D. Additional Lands that Contribute to the Greenway | 14 |
| | E. Existing Plans and Plans Under Development | 16 |
| 3.0 | VISION AND PRINCIPLES | 19 |
| | A. A Vision for the Niagara River Greenway | 19 |
| | B. Overview of Public Participation Efforts | 21 |
| | C. Principles for Niagara River Greenway..... | 21 |
| | D. Greenway Goals | 23 |
| 4.0 | RECOMMENDATIONS / ACTION PLAN | 27 |
| | A. Criteria..... | 27 |
| | B. Funding Sources | 35 |
| | C. Operations and Maintenance | 36 |
| | D. Key Partnerships/ Organizational Framework | 41 |
| | E. Linkages | 44 |
| | F. Transportation Issues..... | 45 |
| | G. Greenway Implementation Concepts..... | 49 |
| | 1. Gateway Identification | 50 |
| | 2. Accessing, Experiencing and Connecting to the River | 53 |
| | 3. Protecting, Preserving and Restoring Important Ecological Resources | 86 |
| | 4. Linking Special Places and Destinations- “Telling the Story”..... | 92 |
| | 5. Heritage Tourism and Economic Revitalization | 99 |
| | H. Capturing the Vision..... | 101 |
| 5.0 | MUNICIPAL AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT | 103 |
| | A. Municipal Projects..... | 103 |
| | B. Stakeholder Projects | 103 |
| | C. Indian Nation Projects | 104 |

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| 6.0 | FINAL GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT | 105 |
| | A. Purpose and Need | 105 |
| | B. Description of Proposed Action | 105 |
| | C. Alternatives | 106 |
| | D. Environmental Setting and Impacts..... | 106 |
| | E. Cumulative Impacts..... | 143 |
| | F. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources | 143 |
| | G. Unavoidable Adverse Effects..... | 143 |
| | H. Effects on the Use and Conservation of Energy..... | 144 |
| | I. Growth Inducing Aspects of the Proposed Action | 144 |
| | J. Future Environmental Reviews | 145 |
| | | |
| 7.0 | COMMENTS AND RESPONSES | 147 |
| | A. Summary of Changes to the Plan and GEIS..... | 147 |
| | B. Comments and Responses | 150 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | | |
|----------|---|-----|
| Table 1 | Greenway Land Use..... | 107 |
| Table 2 | Municipalities with Approved Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs | 110 |
| Table 3 | Area Demographics..... | 112 |
| Table 4 | Total Revenues by Municipality by Major Revenue Sources, 2004..... | 114 |
| Table 5 | Total Expenditures by Municipality by Major Expenditure Recipient, 2004 | 115 |
| Table 6 | Total Industry Employment and Income for Buffalo-Niagara Falls MSA | 116 |
| Table 7 | NYSDEC Brownfield Programs | 118 |
| Table 8 | Greenway State Parks and Public Lands..... | 119 |
| Table 9 | Sensitive Bird Areas along the Niagara River Corridor..... | 136 |
| Table 10 | Persons/ Organizations Providing Comment | 159 |

LIST OF FIGURES:

| | Follows Page: |
|---|----------------------|
| Figure 1: Niagara River Greenway Boundary | 8 |
| Figure 2: State, County and Local Parks | 14 |
| Figure 3: Trailways and Byways..... | 14 |
| Figure 4: Water Access..... | 14 |
| Figure 5: Water Features and Wetlands..... | 14 |
| Figure 6: Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitat Areas | 14 |
| Figure 7: Heritage..... | 14 |
| Figure 8: Focus Area | 32 |
| Figure 9: Organizational Framework..... | 44 |
| Figure 10: Transportation Opportunities | 48 |
| Figure 11: Lake-to-Lake Gateways | 52 |
| Figure 12: Destination Gateways | 52 |
| Figure 13: Transition Gateways | 52 |
| Figure 14: Aquatic Gateways | 52 |
| Figure 15: Gateways Network..... | 52 |

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES (con't.):

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| Figure 16: | Multi-Use Trails..... | 54 |
| Figure 17: | Implementation Concept – Buffalo to Black Rock Channel Area..... | 54 |
| Figure 18: | Implementation Concept – West River Parkway..... | 60 |
| Figure 19: | Implementation Concept – Grand Island Boulevard..... | 66 |
| Figure 20: | Implementation Concept – Devils Hole and Power Plant Area..... | 70 |
| Figure 21: | Implementation Concept – Lower River Area..... | 78 |
| Figure 22: | Telling the Story..... | 94 |
| Figure 23: | Interpretive Signage..... | 94 |
| Figure 24: | Wayfinding Flow Chart..... | 96 |
| Figure 25: | System Approach to Signage Design..... | 96 |
| Figure 26: | Urban Hubs..... | 100 |
| Figure 27: | Heritage and Cultural Centers..... | 100 |
| Figure 28: | Ecological Center..... | 100 |
| Figure 29: | Interpretive Center Network..... | 100 |
| Figure 30: | Riverfront Preservation and Restoration..... | 100 |
| Figure 31: | Implementation Concepts..... | 102 |
| Figure 32: | Capturing the Greenway Vision..... | 102 |
| Figure 33: | Municipal Projects Overall Maps..... | 104 |
| Figure 34: | Municipal Projects City of Buffalo..... | 104 |
| Figure 35: | Municipal Projects Town of Tonawanda..... | 104 |
| Figure 36: | Municipal Projects City of Tonawanda..... | 104 |
| Figure 37: | Municipal Projects Town of Grand Island..... | 104 |
| Figure 38: | Municipal Projects City of North Tonawanda..... | 104 |
| Figure 39: | Municipal Projects Town of Wheatfield..... | 104 |
| Figure 40: | Municipal Projects Town of Cambria..... | 104 |
| Figure 41: | Municipal Projects Niagara Falls and Town of Niagara..... | 104 |
| Figure 42: | Municipal Projects Town of Lewiston and Village of Lewiston..... | 104 |
| Figure 43: | Municipal Projects Porter, Youngstown, and Wilson..... | 104 |
| Figure 44: | Stakeholder Projects Overall Maps..... | 104 |
| Figure 45: | Stakeholder Projects City of Buffalo..... | 104 |
| Figure 46: | Stakeholder Projects Grand Island – Niagara River..... | 104 |
| Figure 47: | Stakeholder Projects City of Tonawanda..... | 104 |
| Figure 48: | Stakeholder Projects North Tonawanda, Tonawanda Creek and Ellicott Creek... | 104 |
| Figure 49: | Stakeholder Projects Niagara Falls - Niagara River..... | 104 |
| Figure 50: | Stakeholder Projects Town and Village of Lewiston..... | 104 |
| Figure 51: | Stakeholder Projects Porter, Youngstown, and Wilson..... | 104 |
| Figure 52: | Indian Nation Project..... | 104 |
| Figure 53: | Land Use..... | 108 |
| Figure 54: | Local Waterfront Revitalization Program and Coastal Area Boundaries..... | 110 |
| Figure 55: | Brownfield Locations..... | 120 |
| Figure 56: | Community Services..... | 120 |
| Figure 57: | Educational Facilities..... | 120 |
| Figure 58: | FEMA Floodplains..... | 130 |
| Figure 59: | Hydric Soils..... | 130 |

Table of Contents

APPENDICES

- A. Legislation establishing Niagara River Greenway Commission
- B. Public Participation Summary
- C. Summary of Niagara Power Project Relicensing Settlement Agreements
- D. Funding Sources
- E. Municipal and Stakeholder Input
- F: List of Heritage Sites
- G. Economic and Fiscal Impact Analysis for Implementation of the Niagara River Greenway Plan
- H. Bibliography

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And the Citizens and Public Officials of Erie and Niagara Counties

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Niagara River Greenway is a world-class corridor of places, parks and landscapes that celebrates and interprets our unique natural, cultural, recreational, scenic and heritage resources and provides access to and connections between these important resources while giving rise to economic opportunities for the region.

This is the Vision Statement that has guided the development of the Niagara River Greenway Plan. It summarizes the intent of this document and the aspirations for the future of the Greenway.



Niagara Falls

The Vision Statement emphasizes the fact that the Niagara River Greenway has international significance. Niagara Falls is one of the most recognized places in the world. In addition to the Falls, the Niagara River corridor encompasses a variety of world-class features, both natural and man-made.

The Vision Statement also stresses that one of the functions of the Greenway will be to celebrate and interpret this region's many assets. The Niagara River Greenway will be a way of integrating the ideas and stories that bring the Niagara River corridor to life, revealing the region's place in history and its connections to the natural and built environment.

The Vision Statement underscores the incredible diversity of assets that comprise this corridor, including natural, cultural, recreational, scenic and heritage resources. It highlights the importance of increasing access to and connections between the region's many resources through a variety of methods, including signage, "wayfinding" systems, trails, waterfront access sites, overlooks, gateways and interpretive sites, to name a few, and it expresses the optimism that the

Greenway can lead to greater prosperity for the region.

At its foundation, the Niagara River Greenway Plan is a means to create connections between the various constituents, organizations and municipalities that comprise the Niagara River Greenway. It is an initiative with broad-based support that will foster consensus. Under the umbrella of the Niagara River Greenway, these entities can advance local and regional agendas for community livability, environmental sustainability, tourism and economic revitalization.

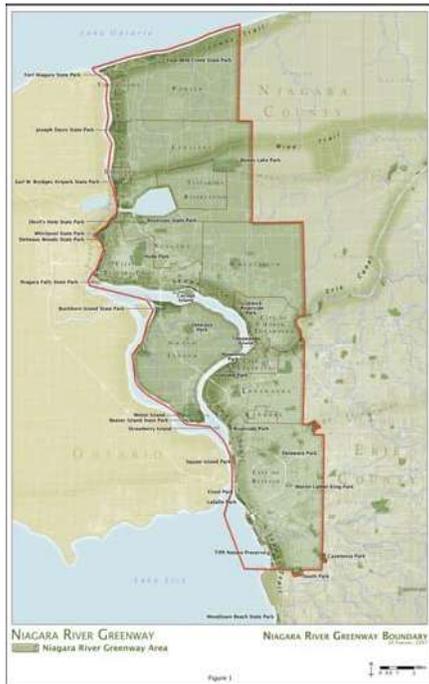
The Niagara River Greenway Plan is the direct response to the State legislation establishing the Niagara River Greenway Commission, but the Plan is also the result of local, grassroots advocacy for the special places that make up the Niagara River Greenway. Throughout, various stakeholders, local leadership and the general public have been integral to the development of this document.

The Niagara River Greenway Plan establishes a unified vision and a set of principles for the Niagara River Greenway. It identifies assets and resources that make up the Greenway. It sets priorities that suggest the types of activities to target in the near-term. It identifies potential funding sources, partnerships and linkages, and addresses key transportation issues that affect the Greenway. The Plan also discusses several high priority "Implementation Concepts," which describe system-wide approaches and strategies for Greenway development. The report concludes with a Generic Environmental Impact Statement that evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the Niagara River Greenway Plan and a chapter listing substantive comments received along with responses to these comments. This executive summary provides a brief overview of each section.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter sets the context for the Niagara River Greenway planning effort and establishes the Niagara River Greenway boundary. The boundary follows municipal lines and encompasses the municipalities of Porter, Youngstown, Lewiston (Town and Village), Niagara, Niagara Falls, Wheatfield, North Tonawanda, Grand Island, Tonawanda (City and Town), Kenmore, and Buffalo. Beyond the specific boundary of the Greenway, the boundary discussion acknowledges key connections and linkages with other systems, including the Seaway Trail, the Niagara Wine Trail and the Erie Canalway. The Niagara River Greenway boundary is shown in Figure 1.



Niagara River Greenway Boundary

Chapter 2: Inventory of Greenway Resources

This Chapter provides a summary of the many resources located along the Niagara River Greenway, including parks and public lands, ecological resources, priority conservation lands and heritage sites. The chapter also includes an inventory of existing planning documents.

Chapter 3: Vision and Principles

The vision for the Niagara River Greenway, the foundation for this document, has been discussed above. The principles for the Niagara River Greenway represent the general values that will guide greenway planning toward achieving that vision. The principles promote high-quality, ecologically sensitive and sustainable activities and development. The guiding principles for the development of the Niagara River Greenway are:

- **Excellence** – Existing Greenway resources are globally significant and Greenway projects will meet world class standards.
- **Sustainability** – The Greenway will be designed to promote ecological, economic and physical sustainability for long-term viability and effectiveness.
- **Accessibility** – The Greenway will be designed to provide and increase physical and visual access to and from the waterfront and related resources for a full range of users (youth, seniors, persons with disabilities).
- **Ecological Integrity** – The Greenway will be focused on maintaining and improving the health, vitality and integrity of natural resources and wildlife habitats. Emphasis will be placed on restoring and retaining ecologically significant areas and natural landscapes, both in and over the water and upland.
- **Public Well-Being** – The Greenway will be designed to achieve and promote physical and emotional wellness through the experience that it offers to the public. Availability of both land- and water-based recreational facilities, and access to both active and passive recreational opportunities should be considered in the development of Greenway assets.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Connectivity** – The Greenway will increase connectivity and access (trails, pathways, parks, water access), promote the continuity of open space and habitats, and provide for connections to related corridors and resources across the region, including connections at the international border with Canada.
- **Restoration** – The Greenway will be designed to encourage the restoration of ecological resources, the appropriate reuse of brownfields, and the revitalization of existing urban centers along the corridor.
- **Authenticity** – The Greenway will establish a clear sense of “place” and identity that reflects the traditional spirit and heritage of the area. Projects and activities should have a connection to the character, culture and/or history of their location.
- **Celebration** – The Greenway will be designed to celebrate local history, diversity, cultural resources, and the natural and built environments, and will seek to share this diverse tradition with local residents and visitors to the region. Projects that support education and interpretation are encouraged, as are events and activities that help build social interaction and shared experiences.
- **Partnerships** – The focus of the Greenway will revolve around cooperation and reciprocal compromise. Relationships and partnerships must be formed and strengthened to achieve coordination and integration of efforts throughout the Greenway.
- **Community Based** – Greenway planning will reflect the preferences and plans of the local communities, while respecting other stated goals and the communal vision of the Niagara River Greenway.

Building upon the principles, the planning process for the Greenway revealed a number of benchmark concepts that have been articulated as goals for the Greenway. These concepts will help guide collective actions within the region toward realization of the vision for the Greenway. As these goals are achieved, new priorities will be developed, consistent with the Vision and the Principles.



Parade in Village of Lewiston

Initial Greenway Goals are:

- **Improve Access:** provide more opportunities to enjoy the many resources of the Greenway. Methods to achieve this goal include development of gateways to welcome visitors and promote access. Also, development of multi-use trails, water-based trails, waterfront access points, scenic overlooks, and interpretive centers.
- **Make Connections:** physical connections that link destinations and communities; conceptual linkages between Greenway resources; and better connections between the Greenway and its residents and visitors. Foster greater integration of the stories, resources and features that make up the Niagara River Greenway.
- **Protect and Restore Environmental Systems:** for environmental purposes and to promote the future revitalization of the region’s economic health. Ecotourism; interpretive opportunities regarding ecological resources; habitat restoration; and reclamation of damaged areas such as brownfields.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ***Celebrate History and Heritage:*** the region’s shared history and heritage is a deeply held value. Increase opportunities for “Telling the Story” of the region. Consistent signage and wayfinding system; interpretive centers; and thematic frameworks for coordination of interpretive activities.
- ***Spark Revitalization and Renewal:*** revitalization, reinvestment and renewal in the cities and communities along the corridor through sustainable development, tourism and improved quality of life factors. Reuse of brownfields and downtown “Main Street” development. The ultimate goal is improving the natural environment, the built environment, the culture and recreational offerings along the Greenway to attract residents, visitors and investment.
- ***Promote Long-Term Sustainability:*** investments in existing resources and assets, including rehabilitation and improvement of aging facilities, to ensure their long-term viability and world-class stature.
- ***Extend Olmsted’s Legacy:*** achieving Frederick Law Olmsted’s vision of a necklace of parks and open spaces along the length of the River to build a legacy for future generations.

Chapter 4: Action Plan

Recommendations and implementation concepts for the Niagara River Greenway are provided in the Action Plan. The vision for the Niagara River Greenway will become a reality through hundreds of incremental steps and individual actions. The Action Plan established the foundation that guides collective decision-making for the Greenway, so that all stakeholders will have a sense of how their specific actions contribute to the whole.

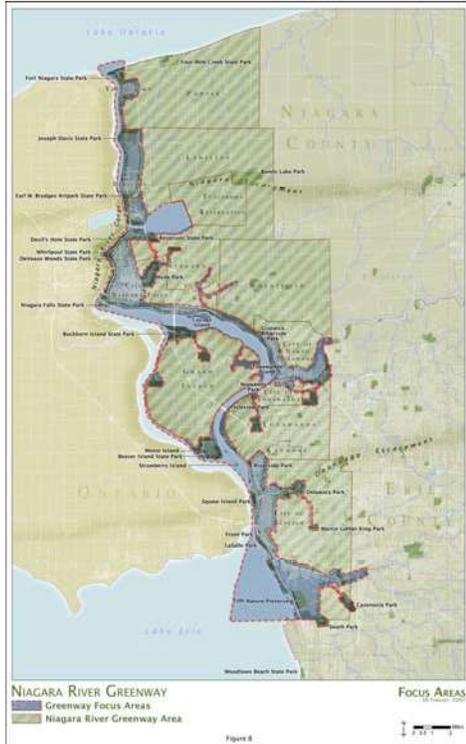
A. Criteria: The first section of the Action Plan sets criteria for evaluating and forming

projects and activities proposed within the Greenway. Greenway Planning will reflect the efforts of the New York Power Authority to settle with various municipalities and interests in relation to a new 50-year Niagara Power Project license, and the Standing Committees will be responsible for allocating Greenway funds established under those agreements. However, the criteria in the Plan will help the Niagara River Greenway Commission determine if an action is consistent with the Plan. They can also be used to help guide project development, by providing concepts to improve project design. Projects do not need to meet all 10 criteria. The criteria are:

1. ***Consistency with Principles:*** Projects and activities should strive to be consistent with the Principles for the Greenway. (see Chapter 3). Although this determination is inherently subjective, it provides a baseline for project assessment or development.
2. ***Priority Status:*** Projects should help achieve the goals for the Greenway (see Chapter 3). The list of priorities, based on the initial goals:
 - Improved access to waterfront resources
 - Development of an integrated trail and park system
 - Restoration of the Niagara River ecosystem
 - Interpretation and education about the region’s cultural, natural and historic resources
 - Revitalization of urban centers
3. ***Focus Area:*** Projects close to the River within the municipal boundaries of the Greenway, along State designated trails and related assets should be elevated. The focus area was based on local planning documents, including Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs, adjusted to incorporate nearby assets. There will be important and valuable projects that fall outside the focus area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Projects outside the focus area should help establish strong linkages between the Greenway focus area and the surrounding area.



4. **Environmental Soundness:** All projects within the Greenway should evaluate potential impacts associated with development and take a creative approach to reduce or remove any negative impacts.
 5. **Implementable:** Project proposals should include a schedule and a realistic assessment of the expected costs associated with the project, including costs of management, operations and maintenance. There should be evidence that the public supports the project through municipal resolution, public record or correspondence. When projects are too large to accomplish in one step, they should be broken into “sub-projects,” with each sub-project having independent value and benefit.
 6. **Economic Viability:** Each project should have a realistic assessment of anticipated economic viability, including consideration of on-going operation and maintenance (O&M) costs. Projects should be encouraged to incorporate sustainability.
 7. **Local Sponsor or Partner:** Projects need a sponsor that will oversee the long-term viability of the project: continued funding needs, operations and maintenance efforts, security, oversight of management and condition and stewardship into the future. The stronger the capacity of the sponsor, the more likely the project will be successful. Joint sponsors are encouraged where feasible.
 8. **Matching Funds/ Leveraging:** It is good policy to leverage the funds to the maximum amount possible. Dedicated Greenway funds should be seen as seed money, employed as “gap” financing, used to leverage other investments or to match grants obtained from other sources.
 9. **Consideration of other Planning Efforts:** Proposals for projects should build upon the great deal of planning work that has been completed throughout the region, and take local goals, values and vision into consideration while meeting best practices and models set forth in federal, state and regional documents including advances in new technology.
 10. **Clear Benefits:** All projects should demonstrate clear benefits to the Niagara River, the Niagara River Greenway and the stated vision of the Greenway as a world-class corridor.
- B. Funding Sources:** The Action Plan, in conjunction with Appendix D, describes potential funding sources for projects and activities along the Greenway.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

C. Operations and Maintenance: An “order-of-magnitude” analysis is provided to measure typical recurring costs that would be expected to occur from the execution of the Implementation Concepts included in the Niagara River Greenway Plan, using actual cost data from similar projects where available. The discussion also includes a framework for measuring and evaluating the potential long-term O&M costs. Additional information about the expected economic and fiscal impacts of the implementation of the Greenway plan is included in the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (Chapter 6) and in a Technical Memo in Appendix G. The Technical memo describes the net positive economic benefits expected to result from the implementation of the Greenway Plan, including macro-economic impacts (jobs, multiplier effects), environmental benefits and quality of life improvements. Initial estimates are that the \$9 million per year over 50 years in Greenway funds through the relicensing agreement would result in 162 jobs and approximately \$13 million annually in regional income, due to multiplier impacts. Additional funds from other sources spent on the Greenway would further increase these impacts. Net fiscal implications are also discussed.

D. Key Partnerships: The Niagara River Greenway Commission is the visible manifestation of and key advocate for the Greenway. The success of the Greenway, lies in establishing effective partnerships and cooperative relationships among all the partners. The process of developing the plan has highlighted areas of broad consensus and helped develop a greater capacity to move the program forward.

One aspect of this cooperation is consultation regarding potential funding of projects. Currently, the NYPA Greenway funds represent the only *dedicated* funding available for Greenway projects, although other sources of funding are available for Greenway projects

(see Appendix D) and it is possible that additional dedicated funding could emerge. The Standing Committees established under the Relicensing Agreements determine which projects will be funded, but there is a clear requirement that projects funded through the NYPA funds are consistent with the Niagara River Greenway Plan. Project sponsors must consult with the Niagara River Greenway Commission. The Niagara River Greenway Commission can also be an important partner for project sponsors who are applying for funding through federal or state programs, private foundations or other sources. This section of the Plan also indicates how the Plan can be amended, and addresses eminent domain.

E. Linkages: There are a number of existing features and assets that intersect with the Niagara River Greenway system, serving as junction points for interconnections with upland and interior communities. These connecting features represent an opportunity for creating both physical and conceptual linkages between the Greenway and the rest of the Buffalo-Niagara region. They have the potential to draw both residents and visitors to the Niagara River corridor.



Gateway Harbor, Erie Canal

F. Transportation Issues: Ease of transportation and access is a critical factor for the Greenway. The Plan advocates creating an environment where people can circulate comfortably and enjoy all of the Greenway’s assets, activities and attractions. The plan cannot and does not advocate specific designs for the many transportation projects planned

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

or being evaluated within the Greenway. Those projects are legally required to undergo a specific engineering, evaluation and planning process. However, proposed transportation projects should strive to be consistent with the goals and policies established in this Plan. The Plan encourages multi-modal opportunities, incorporating features for pedestrians, bicyclists and other transportation alternatives. Transportation projects within the Greenway should avoid creation of barriers between the water's edge and the neighborhoods surrounding it; they should seek to maximize access to the resources along the water's edge; and they should prioritize enjoyment of land uses over efficiency of traffic movement. Where there is overbuilt capacity, there should be a preference for returning excess pavement to another use.

G. Greenway Implementation Concepts:

Development of the Greenway is a long-term enterprise that requires building public support and forming partnerships. The Greenway Plan is a conceptual document that looks for opportunities across a broad spectrum of publicly and privately held lands, across more than a dozen municipalities and for a wide range of activities. Unpredictable changes in the economy, environment and lifestyles require a flexible plan and implementation strategy.

The Implementation Concepts illustrate certain high-priority system-wide concepts that will help promote implementation of the Niagara River Greenway. These Concepts can be summarized as Gateways; Connections; Environmental Restoration; Interpretation and Economic Revitalization.

1. Gateway Identification

Gateways are physical or spatial devices that celebrate a transition from one distinct place to another. Within the Niagara River Greenway, gateways will be developed as entrances into the Greenway and as transitions through the Greenway. The use

of gateways can also communicate particular messages, themes or attributes of the Greenway. Gateways for the Greenway include:

- ***Lake-to-Lake Gateways:*** Lakes Erie and Ontario anchor the ends of Niagara River Greenway, reinforcing its physical and symbolic definition as a *lake-to-lake* greenway.
- ***Destination Gateways:*** these gateways welcome visitors to the Niagara River Greenway. They provide an opportunity for providing directions to river and lake access points, establish a hierarchy of gateways and integrate Greenway gateways with other systems.
- ***Transition Gateways:*** transition gateways highlight passage through a cross section of the Greenway, typically over bridges, introducing large numbers of people to the beauty of the Niagara River Greenway and emphasizing the special nature of the Greenway as a location. An emphasis on international cooperation and the mutual intent to protect the natural and cultural resources of the River can occur on the international bridges.
- ***Aquatic Gateways:*** aquatic gateways have symbolic value and encourage new users. They also offer the opportunity to create places where boaters can tie up and take advantage of landside activities.



Paddlesports

2. Accessing, Experiencing and Connecting to the River

Ways to access, experience and connect to the River include scenic overlooks, water access sites, water-based trails, parks, and

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

recreational trails. Focusing on trails, this implementation concept discusses five gaps in the existing network of trails:

- **Buffalo-Black Rock Channel Area:** multi-use trail along the Black Rock channel connecting the trail at Scajaquada Creek to the Riverwalk.
- **Niagara River Parkway (West River Parkway):** multi-use trail from South Grand Island Bridge to the Buckhorn Bike Path.
- **Grand Island Boulevard:** trail along Grand Island Boulevard from Buckhorn Bike Path to multi-use trail at the South Grand Island Bridge.
- **Devil's Hole/Power Project Area:** trail from Artpark in Lewiston to Devil's Hole
- **Lower River Rd. – Lewiston to Youngstown:** trail linking the Villages of Lewiston and Youngstown.

3. Protecting, Preserving and Restoring Important Ecological Resources

This implementation concept identifies elements of the Niagara River ecosystem that are in need of enhancement, improvement or restoration due to the current impairment of their natural functions and values. Critical areas for protection, preservation or restoration include:

- **Upland Areas:** upland areas provide important habitat that contributes to the Niagara River ecosystem. Types of projects include protection, restoration and acquisition of unique woodlands or old growth forested areas, important bird nesting or feeding areas, unique wildlife habitats, grasslands or islands with unique or critical habitat values.
- **Riparian-Floodplain Areas:** riparian areas are critical to the health and vitality of the river because they offer food, shelter and nesting habitat for a variety of species. Project types include erosion repair, pollution control and shoreline restoration.

- **Wetlands:** wetlands are vital to the function and health of the Niagara River ecosystem. Project types include wetland enhancement and restoration, acquisition, habitat enhancement and educational projects.
- **Aquatic Habitat Areas:** the aquatic ecosystem of the Niagara River provides a wide range of features, including food, shelter, migratory routes and spawning habitats. The River is also an Important Bird Area (IBA) of international significance. Project types include restoration of various types of habitats and remediation of contaminated sediments.
- **Impaired Habitats:** Returning impaired habitats to a more natural state can help restore ecological productivity to the River. Types of projects include brownfield or landfill redevelopment, invasive species removal and remediation or correction of combined sewer overflows.



Lower Niagara River

4. Linking Special Places and Destinations- “Telling the Story”

This Implementation Concept addresses ways to interpret and share the rich heritage of the Niagara River Greenway. It organizes stories and sites along the Niagara River Greenway into five categories of interpretive venues. It recommends the development of a consistent map graphic to promote a high level of continuity for information about the Greenway across a range of media (signage, web site and print applications).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To support wayfinding,¹ the design of the interpretive signage used to convey the stories should include graphics, materials and construction detailing that is similar to other Greenway signage. Integration of signage, logo, form, color and detailing promotes a strong and consistent identity throughout the Greenway, as does consistency of content. It recommends developing a Wayfinding Standards Manual to articulate these standards and protocols for the entire Greenway.

This Implementation Concept also addresses how to differentiate and integrate the identities of different systems within the Niagara River Greenway (e.g. Greenway and Seaway Trail overlap)

5. Heritage Tourism and Economic Revitalization

Revitalizing the region's urban centers, celebrating the rich cultural heritage and protecting natural resources are sound economic development issues that can improve the quality of life in the region. Environmental protection and redevelopment work together to help promote economic activity, leading to stronger neighborhoods, a healthier environment, a vibrant economy and increased tourism. Elements of this concept include:

- **Revitalizing Urban Centers:** reinvest in existing infrastructure, consistent with smart growth policies. Enhanced quality of life features create a climate that is attractive to new business, encourages private sector investment and helps build a market for new commercial opportunities.
- **Promote Heritage and Cultural Centers:** most appropriately located in urban locations, the most successful and innovative new cultural centers are those that blur the line between education and

entertainment by combining learning activities with interactive experiences.

- **Develop Ecological Centers:** emphasis on education, research and conservation of natural resources, plants and wildlife. The design of ecological centers should combine landscape with architecture by incorporating the Greenway's natural features through minimal site impacts.
- **Promote Interpretive Center Network:** Interpretive centers, trailheads, environmental graphics and interpretation programming need to be organized and located according to a strategic hierarchy in order to promote a rich user experience. The diversity of activities and facilities will encourage visitors of all ages to visit the Greenway on a routine basis.
- **Support Riverfront Preservation and Restoration:** The fundamental goal of riverfront preservation and restoration is to fulfill the vision of continuous lake-to-lake access along the Niagara River. While much of the Niagara River shoreline is and will remain in private ownership, it is a priority to maintain public ownership and increase public access where feasible, whether through trail access, conservation easements, or other means.



City of Buffalo

¹ experience of how a person orients and negotiates through the natural and built environment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Capturing the Vision

The implementation concepts help capture a consistent visual and thematic message throughout the Greenway. Equally important is building upon the unique and distinctive qualities of each place along the corridor. The Niagara River Greenway offers an incredible variety of significant and unique places and experiences that occur within a relatively short linear distance. These places have been defined as “Gateways” and “Reaches.” Gateways are transitions from one distinct place to another, while reaches are distinctive segments of the Greenway between Gateways. The gateways and reaches combine to capture a vision of a contiguous series of special events and places highlighting the Niagara River Greenway’s *“unique natural, cultural, recreational, scenic and heritage resources.”*



Peace Bridge/ Bird Island Pier

Many of these individual gateways and reaches already have distinct identities. Over time, as the vision for Niagara River Greenway is achieved through the myriad of projects and activities that are and will be implemented along the corridor, the unique and distinct character of these locations will become even more apparent. A world-class user experience will emerge: an enchanting alternation of experiences between gateways and reaches that emphasize the variety of *“special places, parks, and landscapes”* from one end of the Greenway to the other.

Chapter 5: Municipal, Stakeholder and Indian Nation Input

This chapter summarizes and maps the input received from municipalities, stakeholder groups, Indian Nations and individuals for specific projects and recommendations along the Greenway. These lists are unedited and represent a wide variety of project types at various stages of conceptualization. Some are attached to a specific site; others are system-wide; while others are general in nature. The lists are included in the report as a documentation of public input. Their inclusion does NOT imply endorsement by the Niagara River Greenway Commission, and each proposal must be evaluated individually, based on merits. These lists and maps do illustrate the tremendous amount of work and energy being brought to Greenway issues on the part of a wide variety of municipalities, stakeholders and individuals.

Chapter 6: Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS)

The GEIS provides a discussion of the environmental setting, reasonable alternatives and potential impacts associated with the proposed action, which is the adoption and implementation of the Niagara River Greenway Plan. Implementation of the Plan will result in significant beneficial impacts to wetlands, terrestrial and aquatic resources, water quality, natural habitats, fisheries, and sensitive ecological areas along the Niagara River and its tributaries, particularly as these areas are protected, enhanced, restored, or improved. Protection, preservation or restoration of impaired wetlands will restore their functions and values to their full potential and in turn will result in significant long-term beneficial environmental impacts. The natural environment will benefit both on a system-wide basis and on specific sites by improving habitat for resident and migratory birds, fish and other species. Terrestrial and aquatic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

enhancements will result in beneficial social impacts as they add value to aesthetic, recreational and educational opportunities available in local communities. The guiding principles set forth in the Plan also will result in beneficial impacts upon existing land use by enhancing, maintaining and/or preserving areas of open space; developing areas for active recreational opportunities; encouraging redevelopment of vacant or underutilized brownfield sites and improving water access where access is currently limited or obstructed. The region's economy will benefit from enhanced recreational, cultural and ecotourism opportunities, increased residential property values, increased use of the River ecosystem for tourism and recreational boating, returning brownfields to productive and taxable uses and increased employment due to an influx of visitors and tourists.

While there are some potential adverse impacts, such as short-term and localized land use/traffic impacts in the vicinity of the particular development project, these impacts would not be significant nor would they be expected to adversely impact use and quality of the Greenway as a whole. Future projects may be subject to additional SEQR analysis, depending on the scope and location of that project as well as the potential environmental, social or economic impacts that may result.



Niagara River, Beaver Island State Park
Photo by Kim Ludwig- Isledegrande.com

While there has been discussion and debate about the details of the Greenway, there has been consistent agreement that the establishment of a Niagara River Greenway will benefit the region. The Niagara River Greenway will serve as a catalyst to a higher quality of life, an improved environment, and a rejuvenated region.

Chapter 7: Comments and Responses

The final chapter of the Plan includes the responses to the comments on the Plan received by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation as Lead Agency under SEQR. Two Public Hearings on the Draft Plan were held in December 2006, which a total of approximately 150 to 200 people attended. A total of 66 persons made oral statements, and many other provided written comments. All together, a total of 128 written and verbal comments on the plan were provided to the Agency. Some changes were made to the Draft Plan based on comments. These changes are identified in Chapter 7, Section A.

All comments were reviewed and summarized by categories. Responses were provided for each substantive comment category. A list of the persons and organizations who provided comments is contained at the end of this chapter.

In general, types of comments received included general support for the concept of a Niagara River Greenway, additional stakeholder input, questions about procedural or organizational issues and comments relating to specific aspects of the plan.