



Niagara River Greenway Commission Project Consultation & Review Submission

January 2026

Revised 02/06/2026

Ellicott Creek Park Living Shoreline Expansion



Current conditions of the existing Ellicott Creek Park Living Shoreline Project. Note the Phragmites just beyond the project limits, which this project aims to address through the living shoreline project expansion.



Project Registration Number: _____

Niagara River Greenway Commission Consultation and Review Form:

Type of Review: Mandatory Consultation
 Voluntary Review and/or Endorsement

PROJECT SPONSOR INFORMATION

Name: Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Mailing Address: 721 Main Street, Buffalo

State: New York Zip Code: 14203

Federal ID# 22-2993054 Charities Registration #: 04-91-05

PROJECT TYPE

Check all that apply: Trail Development / Improvement Interpretation / Cultural Monuments
 Ecosystem / Riparian Habitat Restoration Stewardship
 Niagara River Greenway Placemaking / Public Access / Wayfinding

Funding Committee Request: Host Community Standing Committee
 Buffalo and Erie County Standing Committee
 Ecological Standing Committee
 State Parks Standing Committee
 Unsure at this time

Total Amount Requested: See below

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name: Ellicott Creek Park Living Shoreline Expansion

Location: Ellicott Creek Park

Site Address: 1 Ellicott Creek Road, Tonawanda

State: NY Zip Code: 14150

Minor Civil Division(s): Town of Tonawanda

County: Erie

Project Proponent Property Interest (own, lease, easement or other): Other

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

Name: Jill Jedlicka Title: Executive Director

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PROJECT POINT OF CONTACT

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1. IN A BRIEF PARAGRAPH, DESCRIBE THE PROJECT AND ITS PURPOSE, HOW AND WHEN IT WILL BE ACCOMPLISHED, AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT.

Project Background / Why It's Important

This project is a continuation of Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's (BNW's) Niagara River Riparian Restoration Program (also referred to as Living Shoreline Program). The program was developed in response to several planning initiatives and data analysis revealing the vast loss in natural shorelines and coastal wetland habitats within the Niagara Region. Modeling best practices from similar shoreline restoration programs around the nation, BNW's Living Shoreline Program aims to address the gap between interested waterfront landowners and required resources for on-the-ground restoration. This program leverages the skills and existing resources of conservation partners to increase riparian restoration activities in the Niagara River Greenway while increasing community engagement and awareness of shoreline best management practices.

To date, and with the support of funding from the Greenway Ecological Fund, BNW has implemented many successful shoreline restoration projects through this program, including those at Sandy Beach Park Club, Hyde Park Lake, Tiff Nature Preserve, the North Tonawanda Botanical Gardens, and Ellicott Island Bark Park. The completed projects have successfully restored degraded shoreline areas while demonstrating the benefits of nature-based landscape management. BNW has transformed 110 acres of underutilized lawn spaces and riparian zones into diverse pollinator-friendly habitats, enhancing biodiversity and increasing resiliency in the Western New York region.

One of BNW's earliest shoreline revitalization efforts, implemented through the Living Shoreline Program, is located within Ellicott Creek Park. Like other Living Shoreline projects, this effort transformed a previously degraded shoreline into an ecologically rich and resilient park asset. While the project has been successfully established and continues to deliver substantial ecological benefits, a significant portion of the Ellicott Creek Park shoreline outside the existing project limits remains impaired. Nutrient loading, ongoing bank erosion, and invasive species pressures continue to degrade these areas, underscoring the need to expand the current Living Shoreline to mitigate shoreline degradation and restore ecological function, stability, and resilience along this reach of Ellicott Creek.

The Healthy Niagara Phase 2 Plan identifies Ellicott Creek as one of 4 priority sub-watersheds to address impairments within the Lake Erie/Niagara River watershed, making it a priority for restoration. Additionally, the Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy and the 2019 Erie County Parks Master Plan Update specify the project location as an area that is in need of shoreline restoration.

Project Purpose:

The goal of this project is to transform the existing degraded shoreline into a more natural, resilient, and self-repairing form that better supports a sustainable, protective, and higher-functioning ecosystem. This project will enhance ecological function along Ellicott Creek by improving shoreline resilience, reducing erosion through vegetated stabilization, removing invasive species, and increasing native plant diversity. These improvements will create resting, nesting, and foraging habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife species and support a self-sustaining shoreline system that strengthens over time. Localized water quality benefits are anticipated through reduced sediment and nutrient inputs; however, watershed-scale impairments are expected to continue to influence overall water quality within this reach.

Project Goals / Proposed Actions / Methods / Timeline:

In accordance with preliminary feedback from the GESC, BNW is presenting 3 options for consideration in this proposal. For each option, BNW will serve as the lead project manager/administrator and will work closely with Erie County Parks throughout the process. Details for each project variant are described below.

OPTION 1: VEGETATION ENHANCEMENT

Project Cost: \$173,465

Option 1 consists of a low-impact restoration approach focused on vegetation management, with no shoreline grading or heavy construction. Because this project variant does not involve earthwork or structural improvements, a design consultant is not required. The work will focus on invasive species removal and the installation of native plantings suited to the site's existing conditions. All project components, including planning and implementation, will be carried out by BNW in coordination with Erie County Parks, an invasive species management contractor, and volunteers. The roles and responsibilities of each project partner under this option are described below.

- **Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper:** BNW will serve as the project lead and designer, developing invasive species management, planting, and other supporting plans. These plans do not need the same level of detail as construction contract drawings, as contractor bidding is not anticipated through this project option. However, some plan development will be required to help guide project implementation and secure permits.

BNW will also be responsible for public outreach, permit acquisition, signage design, project administration, project coordination, grant administration, contract development for invasive species management, contractor oversight, and site monitoring. Additionally, BNW will coordinate all aspects of project implementation, including plant procurement, plant installation, and recruiting volunteers to assist with planting activities as needed.

- **Erie County Parks:** Erie County Parks will assist with hazard tree removal and with the installation of project boundary markers.
- **Invasive Species Contractor:** A specialty landscape contractor will be hired to assist with invasive species management and site preparation before plant installation and during the establishment period.
- **Volunteers:** Plantings and plant protection fencing will be accomplished by volunteers when appropriate through BNW's RestoreCorps Program. Planting stock will likely include live stakes, seed, plugs, and containerized woody species.

The anticipated impact of project Option 1 will include:

- 650 linear feet of riparian enhancement through woody species installation
- .8 Acres of floodplain meadow habitat through lawn-to-meadow conversion
- 700 linear feet of Invasive species management and removal along Ellicott Creek

The anticipated project timeline for option 1 is outlined below.

April 2026:

Execute grant contract, execute landowner agreement, project kickoff

May - July 2026:

Site assessment/data collection;

Draft and execute contracts for archeological survey;

Draft and execute contracts for invasive species management;

Submit permit applications for invasive species management (by contractor);
Submit permit applications for hazard tree removal (by Parks)
Develop a preliminary restoration plan (by BNW);

August - October 2026:

Finalize design plans;
Submit permitting applications for restoration planting and signage;
Complete the first round of invasive species removal (phragmites and woodies);
Stabilize the site with a cover crop

November 2026 - March 2027:

Coordinate with permitting agencies;
Hazard tree removal (Parks);
Plant procurement (local nurseries will be explored);
Receive permits

April - September 2027:

Complete lawn-to-meadow site prep;
Complete the second round of invasive species removal (phragmites and woodies);
Stabilize the site with a cover crop;
Volunteer event planning and supply procurement;
Coordinate installation of project markers

October - December 2027:

Install all woody container plants;
Install all seed and stabilize the site;
Install plant protection fencing

January 2028 - February 2028:

Plant procurement;
Signage design

March - April 2028

Live stake installation

May - September 2028

Shoreline herbaceous plug installation;
Site monitoring;
Complete stewardship tasks, such as fence repair, watering, and cutbacks;
Coordinate invasive species management;
Develop landowner stewardship guide;
Coordinate sign installation

October - November 2028

Supplementary planting/seeding (as needed)

December 2028

Project close-out

While Option 1 is the most cost-effective project variant, its overall ecological and functional impact is limited when compared to the more comprehensive restoration approaches described in Options 2 and 3. Although native planting alone provides some benefit, the absence of shoreline grading and topographic manipulation prevents restoration of the shoreline margin ecotone, a critical transitional habitat for many

aquatic and semi-aquatic species. Existing conditions along this reach are characterized by steep, near-vertical banks, which restrict shoreline access for target species such as the Spiny Softshell Turtle and provide limited opportunity for shoreline-margin vegetation to establish.

Without topographic diversity, growing conditions across the project area will remain relatively uniform, constraining plant community complexity and long-term ecological resilience. In addition, stormwater inputs will continue to enter the creek largely unchanged, as overland flow patterns and stormwater outfalls would remain unaddressed under this option.

Public access considerations further limit the effectiveness of Option 1. Angling is the primary recreational use at this site, yet without involvement from a design professional, opportunities to thoughtfully accommodate this use, such as through stabilized fishing access or platforms, are not feasible. In the absence of designated access points, fishing activity is likely to occur informally along the shoreline, increasing pressure on newly planted areas and undermining restoration success. Conversely, limiting access to mowed trails alone risks disconnecting the project from the community that regularly uses this portion of the park.

While BNW recognizes that the GESC's primary focus is ecological restoration, the importance of public access in high-visibility park settings shouldn't be overlooked as part of planning and design. Integrating appropriate public access is essential to ensuring long-term project success and community support. Options 2 and 3 address this need by incorporating professional design services, allowing public access features (supported by matching funds) to be integrated in a manner that accommodates primary site users while minimizing impacts to restored habitat.

OPTION 2: TRANSFORMATIVE LIVING SHORELINE: DESIGN ONLY

Project Base Cost: \$204,390

Mussel Survey Contingency: \$15,000

Option 2 involves completing a comprehensive, transformative Living Shoreline design that will explore more intensive earthmoving to maximize the project's impact. Through more intensive site work, option 2 provides more opportunities to create diverse growing conditions within the project area, supporting a greater variety of plant species than option 1. Shoreline grading (above ordinary high-water) and pit mound topographic manipulations will create microclimates capable of supporting obligate wetland, facultative, and upland species within the proposed project area.

Additionally, topographic manipulation enables the project team to capture as much stormwater as possible before it enters Ellicott Creek, thereby improving water quality. Design solutions will address both sheet flow and point source stormwater pollution currently entering the waterway. Other anticipated project features include invasive species removal, habitat cove creation, dense native plantings, standing habitat snags, and modest public access features. This area of the park is popular with anglers, so incorporating stabilized access for this primary use is important to overall project acceptance and longevity.

Given the added complexity of Option 2, BNW will not lead design development. As such, this project option will require a competitive bidding process to secure a qualified design professional to lead design and permit acquisition. This project variant is limited to project design and invasive species management; however, BNW plans to leverage GESC investment while pursuing implementation funds from matching sources throughout the design process. The project goal and final deliverables include obtaining full permits and creating a shovel-ready design stamped by a licensed professional. This includes completing all drawings, specifications, and contractor bidding documents, enabling the project team to proceed to construction as soon as implementation funding is available.

The roles and responsibilities of each project partner through this project variant are described below.

- **Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper:** will serve as the project lead. Primary responsibilities include grant administration, project coordination, concept development, consultant procurement, contract development, and coordination throughout the design process. BNW will remain actively engaged during design development to ensure habitat function and water quality considerations remain central to all project decisions. By developing a site-specific concept to guide consultant-led design refinement, BNW will ensure the project advances from a strong ecological foundation.
- **Erie County Parks:** Erie County Parks will assist with hazard tree removal and review design materials at regular checkpoints to help guide design development.
- **Invasive Species Contractor:** A specialty landscape contractor will be hired to assist with invasive species management. Well-established colonies of phragmites occur along the shoreline of the proposed project area. Early management of these resilient invasive populations will reduce competitive pressure on native vegetation and improve long-term restoration success when the project is implemented (construction not included in option 2 scope). A sole-source procurement approach is anticipated for invasive species management services.
- **Design Consultant:** The selected consultant will be responsible for design and project specification development. They will also be the lead agency for permit acquisition. BNW will assist the consultant with public engagement, establish regular design check-ins to ensure the design is progressing in alignment with project objectives, and assist with permit application preparation.

The anticipated deliverables of Option 2 include completion of final design and permitting for a comprehensive Living Shoreline project. Key deliverables include:

- Securing project permits and completing final design documents for a living shoreline project that would:
 - Enhance approximately 650 linear feet of riparian shoreline through installation of native woody vegetation;
 - Remove invasive species along approximately 700 linear feet of the Ellicott Creek shoreline;
 - Establish approximately 0.8 acres of diverse floodplain meadow;
 - Incorporate shoreline grading above the ordinary high-water mark to create suitable conditions for shoreline-margin vegetation and diverse microhabitats supporting floodplain, wetland, and upland herbaceous plant communities;
 - Stabilize vulnerable shoreline areas using bioengineering and nature-based stabilization practices;
 - Include a habitat cove designed to intercept stormwater inputs while supporting wetland vegetation;
 - Improve bat, raptor, and cavity-nesting wildlife habitat through standing snag features; and
 - Integrate modest public access features to support project acceptance and stewardship, including low-impact mowed trails and one to two rock fishing platforms along Ellicott Creek.

The anticipated project timeline for option 2 is outlined below.

April 2026:

Execute grant contract, project kickoff.

May - July 2026:

Secure landowner agreement;
Develop invasive species management contracts;
Hire invasive species contractor;

Submit permit applications for invasive species management (by contractor);
Develop preliminary concepts;
Develop RFP for design services

August - September 2026:

Complete competitive bidding process for design consultant;
Execute design contract;
Complete the first round of invasive species removal (phragmites and woodies)

October - December 2026:

Consultant to complete site assessment/data collection;
Complete archeological survey;
Concept refinement;

January - March 2027:

Design development to 30%;
Preliminary consultation meetings with permitting agencies

April - June 2027:

Community engagement through social media and a public meeting;
Create project website;
Design development to 60%

July - September 2027:

Design development to 90%;
Submit permit applications;
Complete the second round of invasive species removal (phragmites and woodies);

October - December 2027:

Close invasive species management contract;
Finalize project specifications and construction bidding materials;
Permit agency correspondence;

January - March 2028:

Permit agency correspondence;
Receive project permits;
Design development to 100%;
Close design contract;

April 2028:

Final reporting and grant close-out

BNW will seek matching funds throughout the project timeline to enable the project team to enter the construction phase after the GESC-supported design phase concludes. GESC funds will not be used directly to support construction grant applications.

OPTION 3: TRANSFORMATIVE LIVING SHORELINE: DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

Project Base Cost: \$516,823

Mussel Survey Contingency: \$15,000

Option 3 represents the most comprehensive project variant and includes the full scope of work for both the design and construction of a transformative Living Shoreline. Under this option, BNW proposes partnering

directly with Labella Associates through a design-build project model to maximize the impact and cost-effectiveness of GESC project support. This approach allows BNW to realize meaningful time and cost savings by consolidating design and construction services under a single, integrated team, rather than pursuing separate competitive procurement processes for consultants and contractors.

Additional efficiencies are achieved through reduced administrative overhead, elimination of standalone construction bid documents, streamlined specifications, and early integration of construction expertise into the design process. This ensures the proposed design solutions are practical, buildable, and responsive to site conditions. By maintaining a unified project team throughout design development and construction, this model also minimizes requests for information and change orders, allowing the project to progress with fewer delays. Collectively, these efficiencies position Option 3 as the most effective pathway to deliver high-quality, resilient, and transformative shoreline restoration at the site.

The roles and responsibilities of each project partner are described below:

- **Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper:** will serve as the project lead. Primary responsibilities include grant administration, project coordination, concept development, signage design, and contract development. BNW will remain actively engaged during design development to ensure habitat function and water quality considerations remain central to all project decisions. By developing a site-specific concept to guide consultant-led design refinement, BNW will ensure the project advances from a strong ecological foundation.

During construction, BNW will assist with CCA services throughout project implementation and maintain close contact with all project partners to ensure the project progresses in alignment with design intent and grant objectives. After Construction, BNW will conduct regular site visits to evaluate site performance and direct any follow-up actions to improve plant establishment.

- **LaBella Associates:** will serve as both the design professional and construction contractor in this project variant. During the design phase, they will be responsible for coordinating pre-design surveys, developing schematic designs, and leading the permit acquisition process. BNW will assist the consultant with public engagement, establish regular design check-ins to ensure the design aligns with project objectives, and assist with permit application preparation.

During construction, Labella's design team will continue to lead CCA activities. This administrative lift is much less intensive than in other project scenarios where the contractor and design consultant are in different companies. Primary CCA responsibilities include hosting weekly progress meetings, tracking construction progress, and providing professional recommendations when field adjustments are required.

Labella's construction department will be solely responsible for all aspects of project implementation. This includes shoreline grading, installation of habitat and public-access features, plantings, and post-construction plant establishment. The contractor will also assume all responsibilities for invasive species management.

- **Erie County Parks:** Erie County Parks will remain involved, participating in regular project meetings during construction and assisting with project marker installation. Erie County may also contribute materials to the project, including woody debris and woodchips. These details will be explored and finalized during the project's design phase. The Parks Department will also serve as project steward after construction.

The anticipated impact of Option 3 is the full implementation of the design metrics established under Option 2. Key project outcomes include:

- Enhancement of approximately 650 linear feet of riparian shoreline through installation of native woody vegetation;
- Removal of invasive species along approximately 700 linear feet of the Ellicott Creek shoreline;
- Establishment of approximately 0.8 acres of diverse floodplain meadow, incorporating microhabitat conditions that support floodplain, wetland, and upland herbaceous plant communities;
- Creation of suitable growing conditions for shoreline-margin plant species along Ellicott Creek;
- Stabilization of vulnerable shoreline areas using bioengineering and nature-based stabilization practices;
- Construction of a habitat cove designed to intercept stormwater inputs while supporting wetland vegetation;
- Enhancement of bat, raptor, and cavity-nesting wildlife habitat through installation of standing snag features; and
- Incorporation of modest public access improvements to support project acceptance and stewardship, including low-impact mowed trails and one to two rock fishing platforms.

The anticipated project timeline for Option 3 is outlined below.

April 2026:

Execute grant contract, project kickoff.

May – July 2026:

Secure landowner agreement;
 Execute design-build contract with Labella;
 Submit permit applications for invasive species management (Labella);
 Complete site assessment/data collection;
 Develop preliminary concepts

August - September 2026:

Concept refinement;
 Design development to 30%;
 Preliminary consultation meetings with permitting agencies;
 Complete the first round of invasive species removal (phragmites and woodies)

October - December 2026:

Design development to 60%;
 Community engagement through social media and a public meeting;
 Submit permit applications

January - March 2027:

Permit agency correspondence;
 Design development to 90%;
 Create project website

April - June 2027:

Receive project permits;
 Design development to 100%;
 Finalize abbreviated project specifications

July - November 2027:

Project construction, including all site work and most plantings (sourcing plants from local nurseries will be explored);
Issue the certificate of substantial completion;
Begin 1-year warranty period

November 2027 - November 2028:

Signage design;
Develop the landowner stewardship guide;
Site monitoring;
Complete punch list items (e.g., spring dormant plantings and signage installation);
Carry out plant establishment activities (e.g., watering and invasive species management);
Corrective action as required to address work covered under project warranty (e.g., replacement plantings and erosion control);
Issue notice of acceptability of work and close contracts

December 2028:

Final reporting and project closeout

BNW will seek matching funds throughout the project to support the public access design components, estimated at \$45k. GESC funds will not be used directly to support construction grant applications.

Option 3 represents the highest level of investment among the proposed project variants, but it also delivers the greatest ecological return. By integrating comprehensive design and construction, this option would deliver a fully realized Living Shoreline that provides the greatest range of ecological services and long-term resilience at the site. This project variant also achieves significant time and cost savings through the design-build project model. Compared to a typical bid-design-bid-build procurement format, the project can begin construction more than a year earlier than Option 2 and save approximately \$57,804 in project expenses by reducing administrative workloads associated with competitive bidding. These tasks frequently involve developing design RFPs, scoring proposals, drafting contracts, preparing bid packages, and meeting more intensive CCA requirements from design firms when design and construction are completed by separate companies.

BNW believes this approach offers the most effective and lasting solution to address the existing shoreline impairments and maximizes the impact of Greenway investment.

Outreach/Community Engagement:

Community engagement is an important component of this project and is intended to ensure transparency, incorporate public input where appropriate, and support long-term community acceptance and stewardship of the restored shoreline. The level and type of engagement vary by project option, as described below.

- **Option 1:** Community engagement will include volunteer recruitment to support project implementation. Additional outreach will occur through social media, project webpage creation, and on-site signage.
- **Option 2:** Community engagement will include a public meeting focused on preliminary design concepts. This meeting will be interactive and led by the design consultant to inform design decisions during the early phases of design development. Additional outreach will occur through social media and the creation of a project webpage.
- **Option 3:** Community engagement under this option will include all activities described for Option 2, with the addition of interpretive signage installed during construction to communicate project goals and ecological benefits of living shorelines. Volunteer planting is not anticipated through this project variant.

BNW has extensive experience planning and implementing Living Shoreline projects along this corridor and within similar ecological and social contexts. Based on this experience, BNW does not propose convening a formal Technical Advisory Committee for this project. This approach reflects a deliberate effort to achieve cost efficiencies while relying on established design standards, internal technical expertise, and consultant-led design (Options 2 or 3). Public engagement efforts described above are expected to provide sufficient opportunity for community input and project transparency.

2. REFERRING TO THE NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY PLAN, CLEARLY DOCUMENT AND DESCRIBE HOW THE PROPOSED PROJECT WILL ADVANCE THE NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY VISION INCLUDING THE GOALS, PRINCIPLES, AND CRITERIA THAT DEFINE THAT VISION.

The Living Shorelines Program has been found consistent with Greenway goals, principals, and criteria and BNW intends to uphold these values in this proposed living shoreline project in Ellicott Creek Park. A more detailed description of how this project aligns with the Greenway vision are described below.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Excellence

In congruence with the history of success of BNW's Living Shorelines projects, BNW is committed to ensuring that this project is completed to the high standards BNW has established for the restoration projects completed through the Living Shoreline Program. This will be achieved through careful selection of project partners, thoughtful design, and by utilizing best management practices during project implementation.

Restoration

The section of Ellicott Creek where the project will take place holds vast opportunity for improvement as the current riparian buffer is limited due to mowing and has been degraded because of invasive species. As a result, the stretch of creek that has not yet been restored supports limited wildlife, few pollinators, and experiences impaired water quality due to unchecked runoff flowing directly into the Creek as well as streambank erosion. This project will address these impairments through the revitalization of .9 acres of impaired shoreline and riparian habitat. Once restored to a higher functioning landscape, the living shoreline project will offer many ecological services to the surrounding communities while providing improved habitat for a variety of species, including pollinators, birds, and amphibians.

Celebration

This project will be designed to celebrate the natural water resources that typify the Western New York region. Plant selection will be limited to Niagara River Watershed natives, further instilling a sense of place by showcasing and celebrating our regional flora identity. Additionally, BNW and project partners will document and share the success of the project with the community through social media posts and our website.

Sustainability

Long-term sustainability of the project will be achieved through the continued partnership with Erie County Parks, which as the owners of the site will ensure its maintenance as an environmental restoration site. The environmental restoration techniques used in the project will repair and enhance the shoreline into a natural system that is functional and self-repairing, once established.

Authenticity

Authenticity of place can be reinforced through the celebration of native flora and creating meaningful experiences for people to engage with their natural heritage and the significance of this space to indigenous heritage. This Living Shoreline project will touch on all of these things. Thoughtful plant selection will limit species lists to the plants historically documented to occur within the Niagara River Watershed, reinforcing regional identity and cultural significance. The ability for the community to interact with the project as they traverse the trail that follows along the canal will showcase the region's native flora and will provide

opportunities to create connections between people and their natural heritage.

Ecological Integrity

The ecological integrity of our natural resources is under constant threat from anthropogenic disturbances. The current conditions of the project area have been negatively affected through riparian infringement and degradation, runoff, and invasive species colonization. This project will work to address each of these impairments and revitalize .9 acres of shoreline habitat into a higher-functioning environment.

Partnerships

BNW has partnered with Erie County Parks on several living shorelines projects in the past including one at Ellicott Creek Park which has proven to be a successful project, and Erie County Parks has continued to invest in maintaining the improvements made at that site. This project area was identified as a priority by Erie County staff, and they are committed to partnering with BNW to implement the project and maintain it long-term.

Public Well-Being

After restoration, this project will provide a wealth of environmental services to the surrounding ecosystems and communities. Residents and visitors that encounter the project will experience the benefits associated with healthy shoreline ecosystems including the physical and psychological benefits associated with spending time in a thriving natural setting. The project will also demonstrate how healthy shoreline environments can exist in a manner that does not detract from public access uses along the waterfront, or sight lines to the water, which is important for community members, particularly those that live across the street from the creek.

Community Based

All options presented incorporate robust opportunities for community feedback as detailed above. It's important that the final restoration incorporates the desires of the community members, those who utilize Ellicott Creek Park for enjoyment, and anyone else with a vested interest.

GOALS:

Improve Access and Make Connections

The proposed living shoreline will incorporate areas of low growing native plants to maintain visual connections to the water.

Protect and Restore Environmental Systems

When functioning properly, living shoreline environments improve water quality by filtering sediments and improving stormwater infiltration; create habitat that supports the life cycles of many fish and wildlife species; reduce shoreline erosion by absorbing and lessening erosive forces; and enhance public access. This project will restore the ecological integrity of .9 acres of shoreline habitat, creating the conditions for these currently degraded areas to provide the many ecological services described above.

Also, the Living Shoreline Program aims to showcase best management practices and engage visitors to promote individual accountability towards the health and vitality of our shoreline environments. Each time a visitor walks along the pathway adjacent to the project area or reads a project sign, the project is successful in increasing public awareness about the importance of our shoreline ecosystems.

Promote Long Term Sustainability

Long-term sustainability of the project will be achieved through the continued partnership with Erie County Parks. As the owners of the site, the County will ensure its maintenance as an environmental restoration site. The environmental restoration techniques used in the project will repair and enhance the shoreline into a natural system that is functional and self-repairing, once established. Being a local organization, BNW often monitors sites to offer landowners advice on sustainable management and to offer adaptive management services through the RestoreCorps Program when funding allows.

Celebrate History and Heritage

Restoring degraded shoreline environments into higher functioning ecosystems contributes towards cultivating beauty and pride in our region. When put into a larger context, we realize that our region is not only defined by its globally significant freshwater resources, but also by its rebirth and renaissance. Habitat restoration is part of that story, and BNW helps tell this story by bringing living shoreline projects to communities throughout the Niagara River Watershed.

Through the careful selection of native plants, BNW strives to create site specific projects that celebrate native flora, reinforcing a regional identity centered around environment and ecology. These projects create opportunities for meaningful connections to occur as visitors experience these landscapes as they walk the trails and read project signage. This type of experience provides the platform for people to re-engage with their natural heritage and celebrate what makes this region special.

Spark Revitalization and Renewal

All the projects that comprise the Living Shoreline Program have two goals. The first is to restore ecological function at the site scale, and the second is to inspire change by providing on-the-ground examples of restoration techniques for others to emulate and to educate community members about healthy shorelines and their importance. As part of the Living Shoreline Program, the ecological restoration component of this project contributes directly to this sentiment by improving the health of our natural environment through restoration, and by offering opportunities of meaningful engagement via signage.

Community engagement is a key aspect of changing the current waterfront land management regime to one that promotes healthy shoreline conditions. Successful habitat revitalization projects have the power to inspire citizens to embrace a new landscape aesthetic along the shoreline that is more conducive to ecosystem health. This type of engagement increases awareness and empathy for our shoreline environments, which in turn can lead to a greater demand for these projects in the future and the creation of long-term stewards for years to come.

Extend Olmsted's Legacy

Olmsted's legacy can be seen all over Western New York. Rather than seeing a park as an isolated parcel, his vision was to create park networks and corridors. He challenged the existing paradigm that a park exists in a city, and instead promoted the idea that a city should exist within a park. A green necklace of open spaces and greenways embody this notion, and the Living Shoreline Program strives to add depth to this concept.

Not only should people have access to parks and greenways, but they should also be able to access healthy ecosystems that provide immersive viewing experiences and many other ecological services. This project adds this additional layer by creating .9 acres of riparian habitat along Ellicott Creek. The project will enhance habitat connections along the Creek and will provide opportunity to access and engage with restored riparian systems in a meaningful way.

CRITERIA

Priority Status

Restoration of the Niagara River and its tributaries is called out as a priority conservation project in the Niagara River Greenway Plan. The project will also provide restored natural habitat in an area that has been degraded, and will offer educational opportunities through signage.

Focus Area:

The project is located within the Greenway Focus Area.

Environmental Soundness:

Through the implementation of the Living Shoreline Program, BNW's team has gained extensive knowledge, partnerships, and technical expertise required to administer and lead restoration projects like the one proposed here. BNW will pull from experience to apply best practices to this project to maximize the project's impact as an ecological and community asset.

Implementable:

As described above, BNW has cultivated productive relationships with the landowner who is eager to work together to transform the existing riparian area into a thriving living shoreline. BNW's past experiences with similar restoration projects will help to ensure all aspects of the project remain feasible and implementable.

Economic Viability:

All professional services provided through this project will be secured through a competitive bid process, allowing BNW to select the most cost effective and qualified applicants to join the project team. Assembling a cost effective and experienced team is one of the primary responsibilities of BNW during this project. Project sustainability and longevity are other important factors to consider when evaluating a project's economic viability. BNW has coordinated with the landowner to confirm they have the skills and capacity to take on long-term stewardship of the project, ensuring the initial investment in enhancing the shoreline areas along this section of Ellicott Creek will endure for many years.

Local Sponsors or Partners:

BNW will be the lead sponsor of the project and will work closely with Erie County Parks throughout the project.

Matching Funds/Leveraging

Matching funds secured to date from Erie County Parks are detailed in the description of each option above and in the budget section below.

Consideration of Other Planning Efforts:

The Healthy Niagara Phase 2 Plan identifies Ellicott Creek as one of 4 priority sub-watersheds to address impairments within the Lake Erie/Niagara River watershed. The Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy assessed 2 locations along Ellicott Creek within Ellicott Creek Park utilizing the Stream Visual Assessment Protocol with one site found to be 'poor' and one 'severely degraded.' "These reaches had scores in the "poor" category mainly due to poor channel condition, bank condition, riparian zone, and water appearance scores. In these stream reaches conditions can be characterized as channelized with riprap and other hardened structures. The narrow riparian areas are less than half the channel width and all the reaches have Purple Loosestrife and Phragmites present. The water is turbid in this section most if not

all the time and water chestnut seeds were found in both creeks... Recommendations to address some of the issues found along these reaches are invasive species removal and management, riparian zone improvements, and shoreline cleanups to address litter (Frothingham, 2014).”

The 2019 Erie County Parks Master Plan Update specifies the following two priority projects for Ellicott Creek Park which align directly with the proposed project:

- Improve the health of Ellicott Creek and Tonawanda Creek. Work with NYSDEC, Buffalo Waterkeeper, Soil and Water District and other local stakeholder groups.
- Focus projects should include stream bank stabilization and erosion control, habitat conservation and restoration, stormwater management, and contaminant reduction.
- Continue coordination with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper on “expanding” Living Shoreline along Ellicott Creek, along with additional site specific projects as needed.
- Continued improvements to the ecological status of the creek and naturalization of the surrounding wooded areas can contribute to educational nature programs and trail/water recreation.
- Improve overall shoreline accessibility, amenities, and features. Although the park is heavily used, most of the park’s activity is not waterfront related. Ideas would include:
 - Improving fishing access by providing access points to the water’s edge. Selective vegetation pruning or removal and creation of fishing ‘platforms’ which may not need to be more than a compacted stone area to prevent erosion of the shoreline.
 - Enhancing areas for viewing the creeks and canal through selective vegetation pruning or removal.
 - Promote the heritage and recreational relationship between the park and the Erie Canal through visual connections and overlooks, as well as a series of interpretive signs and historical markers.
- Ellicott Creek Park needs to maximize nearly 17,500 feet of shoreline. Approximately 10,000 feet along Tonawanda Creek, a mile of which is along the navigable channel of the Erie Barge Canal, and 7,500 feet along Ellicott Creek.

The Niagara River Remedial Action Plan cites the loss of fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity along with degradation of nearshore habitats as major issues affecting the health of the Niagara River ecosystem. The Living Shoreline Program, through which many degraded shoreline areas have been revitalized, addresses this critical impairment, while advancing goals found in other important documents including: The Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy, Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, NY State Forest Action Plan, NY State Open Space Plan, NY Wildlife Action Plan, Great Lakes Action Agenda, and NYS Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

Clear Benefits:

This project will benefit water quality in Ellicott Creek and the Niagara River through nature-based strategies. Healthy riparian ecosystems are proven to effectively reduce stormwater pollution by extracting, containing, or immobilizing contaminants and excess nutrients from soil and water before it enters local waterbodies. Dense shoreline vegetation also reduces erosion of sediment via complex root systems that hold soils in place. This project proposes the creation of dense riparian plantings and nature-based green infrastructure solutions to maximize the ability of the shoreline to attenuate stormwater before it reaches Ellicott Creek and eventually the larger Great Lakes system.

This project will also benefit wildlife, most notably birds and beneficial insects, through the use of native plants and invasive species removal. The delicate relationship between plants and animals is well documented and this project will create a mosaic of different habitats ranging from wetlands to upland pollinator meadows. These types of habitats are desperately needed in the Niagara River watershed and

long-term stewardship efforts from the landowners will help ensure this project continues to provide high-quality habitat for a variety of wildlife.

As beneficiaries of this environmental restoration, community members will experience the benefits associated with healthy shoreline ecosystems including the physical and psychological benefits associated with spending time in a thriving natural setting.

3. IDENTIFY ALL SOURCES OF FUNDING AND THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING EXPECTED FROM EACH SOURCE. IDENTIFY AND QUANTIFY FUNDS THAT ARE ALREADY ON HAND OR HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT. EXPLAIN HOW THE PROJECT WILL BE OPERATED AND MAINTAINED.

Budget ranges for each option are described below.

OPTION 1: VEGETATION ENHANCEMENT

BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL GESC REQUEST*	MATCH / IN-KIND
PERSONNEL	\$132,160	
CONTRACTUAL	\$19,133	
SUPPLIES & PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$20,453	
TRAVEL	\$1,718	
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$173,465	\$8,314.85

* Additional budget details for each year of the project duration will be provided to the GESC after a preferred project variant is selected.

Personnel: Project funding will support BNW staff to carry out the roles and responsibilities described in this proposal.

Supplies/Program Expenses: This budget category includes anticipated permit fees, signage, and the materials required for project implementation. These include, but are not limited to, plants, seed, fencing, mulch, truck rentals, and miscellaneous tools.

Contractual: Project funding will be used to hire a landscape contractor to manage invasive species, and to cover other expenses associated with an archaeological survey and legal needs.

Travel: Supports mileage reimbursements for personal vehicle use and general automotive expenses associated with the company cargo van. BNW anticipates approximately 2,232 miles of travel during the project at a rate of \$.725 per mile.

Matching Funds: A direct cash match is not anticipated for project Option 1.

In-kind Contributions: BNW anticipates capturing 55 hours of volunteer time, valued at \$2,078.45 at the NYS volunteer rate of \$37.79/hr. Additionally, Erie County Parks has offered to contribute time, materials, and labor to support the project, totaling \$6,236.40. These are described below, along with an estimated value.

- Hazard tree removal: ~\$4,800 (4 trees x \$1,200)
- Project marker, material and installation: ~\$808.50 (30 markers x \$26.95)
- Material donation, wooden tree stakes: ~\$250 (50 stakes x \$5.00)

- Participation during design development: ~\$377.90 (10 hrs x \$37.79)

Additionally, Erie County will assume responsibility for routine site maintenance following project implementation. Typical maintenance activities include annual site inspections, invasive species management, and annual mowing of meadow areas. The estimated value of these services is approximately \$2,400 per year. Because these activities will occur after the active grant period, they are not reflected in the budget table above; however, they are noted here to acknowledge Erie County's projected investment and long-term stewardship commitment to the project.

OPTION 2: TRANSFORMATIVE LIVING SHORELINE: DESIGN ONLY

BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL GESC REQUEST*	MATCH / IN-KIND
PERSONNEL	\$94,490	
CONTRACTUAL	\$109,100	
SUPPLIES & PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$463	
TRAVEL	\$337	
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$204,390	\$5,780.80
CONTINGENCY (Mussel Survey)	\$15,000	

* Additional budget details for each year of the project duration will be provided to the GESC after a preferred project variant is selected.

Personnel: Project funding will support BNW staff to carry out the roles and responsibilities described in this proposal. These expenses are for design only.

Supplies/Program Expenses: This category covers supplies for the community engagement session and anticipated permit fees.

Contractual: Project funding will be used to hire a landscape contractor to manage invasive species, a design consultant to lead design development, and to cover other expenses associated with an archaeological survey and legal needs.

Travel: Covers mileage reimbursements for personal vehicle use. BNW anticipates approximately 465 miles of travel during the project at a rate of \$.725 per mile.

Matching Funds: A direct cash match is not anticipated for project Option 2.

In-kind Contributions: Erie County Parks has offered to contribute time, materials, and labor to support the project, totaling \$5,780.80. These are described below, along with an estimated value.

- Hazard tree removal: ~\$4,800 (4 trees x \$1,200)
- Donation of meeting space in the park casino building: ~\$225.00
- Participation during design development: ~\$755.80 (20 hrs x \$37.79)

Contingency: BNW intends to limit disturbance to areas above the ordinary high-water level to minimize potential impacts on aquatic species, including freshwater mussels. The project scope doesn't include in-water work or disturbances to the creek bed, but limited shoreline grading may be explored where appropriate to enhance the ecological function of the land-water transition zone. This approach is expected to avoid triggering freshwater mussel survey requirements from permitting agencies; however, a contingency has been included in the project budget to cover these costs should surveys ultimately be required.

OPTION 3: TRANSFORMATIVE LIVING SHORELINE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION.

BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL GESC REQUEST*	MATCH / IN-KIND	TOTAL BUDGET
PERSONNEL	\$116,930		\$
CONTRACTUAL	\$393,790		\$
SUPPLIES & PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$4,979		\$
TRAVEL	\$1,124		\$
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$516,823	\$6,513.72	\$
CONTINGENCY (Mussel Survey)	\$15,000		

** Additional budget details for each year of the project duration will be provided to the GESC after a preferred project variant is selected.*

Personnel: Project funding will support BNW staff to carry out the roles and responsibilities described in this proposal.

Supplies/Program Expenses: This category covers supplies for the community engagement session and anticipated permit fees. Additional costs under this budget category include construction general liability insurance, field marking supplies, and signage.

Contractual: Project funding will be used to hire Labella Associates as a project partner in a design-build project model. This firm will be responsible for invasive species management, schematic design, and project construction. Additional expenses in this category include costs associated with an archaeological survey and legal needs.

Travel: Covers mileage reimbursements for personal vehicle use. BNW anticipates approximately 1,550 miles of travel during the project at a rate of \$.725 per mile.

Matching Funds: BNW intends to secure matching funds to directly support the project's public access components. These funds have not yet been secured, so they have not been included in the budget table above. Preliminary estimates place the value of the public access components at \$45k. This includes 2-3 fishing platforms and minimal post-and-rail fencing.

In-kind Contributions: Erie County Parks has offered to contribute time, materials, and labor to support the project, totaling \$6,513.72. These are described below, along with an estimated value.

- Hazard tree removal: ~\$4,800 (4 trees x \$1,200)

- Project marker, material and installation: ~\$808.50 (30 markers x \$26.95)
- Donation of meeting space in the park casino building: ~\$225.00
- Participation during design development and construction: ~\$680.22 (18 hrs x \$37.79)

Additionally, Erie County will assume responsibility for routine site maintenance following project implementation. Typical maintenance activities include annual site inspections, invasive species management, and annual mowing of meadow areas. The estimated value of these services is approximately \$2,400 per year. Because these activities will occur after the active grant period, they are not reflected in the budget table above; however, they are noted here to acknowledge Erie County's projected investment and long-term stewardship commitment to the project.

Contingency: BNW intends to limit disturbance to areas above the ordinary high-water level to minimize potential impacts on aquatic species, including freshwater mussels. The project scope doesn't include in-water work or disturbances to the creek bed, but limited shoreline grading may be explored where appropriate to enhance the ecological function of the land–water transition zone. This approach is expected to avoid triggering freshwater mussel survey requirements from permitting agencies; however, a contingency has been included in the project budget to cover these costs should surveys ultimately be required.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE:

BNW recognizes that successful shoreline restoration depends on proper plant establishment and ongoing adaptive landscape management. These considerations are most applicable to Project Options 1 and 3, which include implementation of shoreline revitalization measures that require long-term stewardship beyond the grant period. Erie County Parks has agreed to assume long-term land management responsibilities for the site, as documented in the letter of support included with this proposal. To support this transition, BNW will prepare a landowner stewardship guide outlining recommended maintenance activities, timing, and procedures.

During the active grant period, the project scope includes a one-year establishment and warranty period. This period allows for ongoing site monitoring and corrective actions to support successful plant establishment. Under Option 1, BNW will lead warranty-period monitoring and maintenance activities. Under Option 3, these activities will be performed by the selected landscape contractor. Typical warranty-period activities include invasive species management, watering as needed, and supplemental planting.

Following grant closeout, BNW will incorporate this site into future RestoreCorps programming to support adaptive management needs as funding allows. Through RestoreCorps, BNW may conduct site assessments and mobilize staff, volunteers, or contractors to address management needs such as invasive species control and supplemental planting. This program enables BNW to maintain ongoing communication with land managers and to provide technical and implementation support, ensuring restored areas continue to function as intended.

BNW intends to remain actively engaged at this site during the initial years following project completion through RestoreCorps programming, subject to funding availability. This continued involvement will help maximize project performance, longevity, and protection of the initial restoration investment.

4. DESCRIBE THE MEASURES TAKEN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO GAIN COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR THIS PROJECT (HEARINGS, PETITIONS, PUBLIC SURVEYS, RESOLUTIONS OF SUPPORT OR OTHER METHODS). IF THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN CITED OR DESCRIBED IN A LOCAL PLANNING DOCUMENT OR SOME EQUIVALENT THEREOF, ATTACH COPIES OF THAT DOCUMENTATION HIGHLIGHTING THE SECTIONS THAT ARE RELEVANT TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT. DESCRIBE THE ROLE OF MUNICIPAL AGENCIES, STAKEHOLDER GROUPS, CONSULTANTS, VOLUNTEERS OR OTHERS WHO WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT.

COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, AND ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS:

BNW has worked with the NRG and GESC, numerous local municipalities, and other partners for over ten years to build the successful Living Shorelines Program. The success of several shoreline restoration projects in various settings throughout the region provides compelling case studies to share with new partners, which helps to build confidence and garner support for new living shoreline projects.

BNW has met with Erie County Parks to discuss the proposed project and a shared commitment to making this project a success. Erie County Parks will be involved throughout project development and is committed to long-term maintenance of the project.

BNW has consulted with the Town of Tonawanda, Tonawanda Seneca and Tuscarora Nations. This correspondence was sent on January 5th, 2026. A copy of this correspondence can be provided upon request.

LOCAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS:

The Niagara River Remedial Action Plan cites the loss of fish and wildlife habitat and biodiversity along with degradation of nearshore habitats as major issues affecting the health of the Niagara River ecosystem. The Living Shoreline Program directly addresses this critical impairment, while advancing goals found in other important documents including: The Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy, Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, NY State Forest Action Plan, NY State Open Space Plan, NY Wildlife Action Plan, Great Lakes Action Agenda, and NYS Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy.

The Healthy Niagara Phase 2 Plan identifies Ellicott Creek as one of 4 priority sub-watersheds to address impairments within the Lake Erie/Niagara River watershed. The Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy assessed 2 locations along Ellicott Creek within Ellicott Creek Park utilizing the Stream Visual Assessment Protocol with one site found to be 'poor' and one 'severely degraded.' "These reaches had scores in the "poor" category mainly due to poor channel condition, bank condition, riparian zone, and water appearance scores. In these stream reaches conditions can be characterized as channelized with riprap and other hardened structures. The narrow riparian areas are less than half the channel width and all the reaches have Purple Loosestrife and Phragmites present. The water is turbid in this section most if not all the time and water chestnut seeds were found in both creeks... Recommendations to address some of the issues found along these reaches are invasive species removal and management, riparian zone improvements, and shoreline cleanups to address litter (Frothingham, 2014)."

The 2019 Erie County Parks Master Plan Update specifies the following two priority projects for Ellicott Creek Park which align directly with the proposed project:

- Improve the health of Ellicott Creek and Tonawanda Creek. Work with NYSDEC, Buffalo Waterkeeper, Soil and Water District and other local stakeholder groups.
- Focus projects should include stream bank stabilization and erosion control, habitat conservation and restoration, stormwater management, and contaminant reduction.
- Continue coordination with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper on “expanding” Living Shoreline along Ellicott Creek, along with additional site specific projects as needed.
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- Enhancing areas for viewing the creeks and canal through selective vegetation pruning or removal.
- Promote the heritage and recreational relationship between the park and the Erie Canal through visual connections and overlooks, as well as a series of interpretive signs and historical markers.
- Ellicott Creek Park needs to maximize nearly 17,500 feet of shoreline. Approximately 10,000 feet along Tonawanda Creek, a mile of which is along the navigable channel of the Erie Barge Canal, and 7,500 feet along Ellicott Creek.

5. DESCRIBE AND DOCUMENT THE ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND EXISTING CONDITIONS AT THE PROPOSED PROJECT SITE. IF YOU ARE NOT THE OWNER OF THE PROPERTY INCLUDE A LETTER(S) OR RESOLUTION(S) EVIDENCING SUPPORT FOR THE PROJECT BY THE OWNER. PROVIDE PHOTOGRAPHS, CONCEPTUAL PLANS AND DRAWINGS THAT SHOW THE SITE AS IT PRESENTLY EXISTS AND HOW THE SITE WILL CHANGE WITH THE ADDITION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR PROJECT WILL COMPLY WITH THE STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW ACT (SEQRA). THE EXISTENCE OF WETLANDS, SIGNIFICANT UPLAND AND AQUATIC HABITATS, AND PLANT OR ANIMAL SPECIES THAT ARE CLASSIFIED AS RARE, THREATENED, OR ENDANGERED SHOULD BE NOTED. EXPLAIN HOW SUCH NATURAL RESOURCES WILL BE PROTECTED AND/OR ENHANCED. CITE ANY RELEVANT PROJECT-RELATED STUDIES.

EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS:

In 2017 BNW and Erie County Parks worked together to implement [a living shoreline project](#) at Ellicott Creek Park, the third project that was implemented in the Niagara River Greenway as part of BNW's Living Shoreline Program. The project was successful and was received positively by the community and visitors to the park. This project proposes an expansion to the existing living shoreline project, building off of the success that has been achieved to date in this area.

The proposed project area expands the restored area on both sides of the existing living shoreline project, extending west toward the adjacent service road and east toward the casino building (see Attachment B for the approximate project area). The project area was chosen to align with these two man-made features within the park, as they provide a logical endpoint for the project area. Defining the project area using these existing site features also ensures it is slightly below an acre, thereby avoiding the need to prepare a Stormwater Prevention Project Plan. This achieves cost savings associated with regulatory requirements. In total, the project will take place along 700 linear feet of shoreline, covering 0.9 acres of riparian area. Combined with the existing Living Shoreline site, this project will result in a continuous Living Shoreline within Ellicott Creek Park totaling 1,140 linear feet of shoreline and 1.32 acres of riparian area.

The riparian area within the proposed project area is primarily mowed turf grass to the water's edge, with a small riparian edge along the Ellicott Creek Shoreline. Riparian vegetation consists primarily of mixed woody and herbaceous invasive species, including Common Reed, Common Buckthorn, and Callery Pear. The riparian area has sheer, vertical banks with no smooth transition between land and water. These conditions provide limited opportunities for emergent aquatic and shoreline-margin plant communities to establish along the edge. Very little aquatic vegetation is observed in the creek along this reach, potentially due to turbid water conditions.

BNW staff have identified a stormwater discharge pipe near the casino building that may be contributing to impaired water quality in Ellicott Creek. The drainage area of this pipe is unknown, but it likely discharges runoff from surrounding impervious surfaces, including the parking lot and the casino building roof. Further investigation is required to determine runoff volume, but in any case, this project can be designed to capture stormwater before it enters the waterway, thereby improving water quality and supporting more diverse planting zones in the riparian areas.

Key species observed and documented in this area of Ellicott Creek include native freshwater mussels and the Spiny Softshell Turtle. Accordingly, the project will avoid any work or ground disturbance below the ordinary high water level to avoid disturbing these species. The Spiny Softshell Turtle was recently observed at Ellicott Creek Park for the [first time in 30 years](#), indicating that the habitat is favorable to this species. The water quality improvements created through this project will benefit these as well as many other fish and aquatic species. Additionally, newly created meadow, wetland, and shoreline margin habitats in riparian

areas that currently consist of turfgrass will benefit a wide range of terrestrial species, including pollinators, small mammals, and birds.

Ellicott Creek has been listed in the NYS Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters since 2004 (Segment ID 0102-0018) with fishing, secondary contact recreation, and primary contact recreation as impaired due to silt/sediment, total dissolved solids, and total phosphorus. The Regional Erie County Niagara River Watershed Management Plan (Phase 2) identified Ellicott Creek as the second most impaired sub-watershed in the study area in terms of water quality. Additionally, euglena blooms happen annually each summer in this part of the creek. Residents have observed these blooms since 2015, and more recent occurrences have been officially confirmed by BNW and the DEC. These indicators of degraded waterway health highlight the urgent need for shoreline revitalization to enhance the ecological condition of Ellicott Creek, the Niagara River Greenway, and the broader Great Lakes ecosystem.

CONSISTENCY WITH STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS OR REGULATIONS:

The DEC Environmental Resources Mapper shows an instance of rare species occurrence near the proposed project site. BNW will coordinate with DEC and other permitting agencies as relevant to navigate all required permitting and approval processes.

The Niagara River Greenway Habitat Conservation Strategy, Niagara River Remedial Action Plan, Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy, NY State Forest Action Plan, NY State Open Space Plan, NY Wildlife Action Plan, Great Lakes Action Agenda, and NYS Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy all identify restoration of shoreline and riparian areas as a priority. This project is aligned with those priorities.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Letter of Support
- B. Project Map
- C. Existing Conditions Photos