



**Niagara Wheatfield Eco-Campus Project Application
to the Greenway Commission**

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Name: Niagara Wheatfield Eco-Campus Project
Location: Niagara Wheatfield High School/Middle School Campus
Site Address: 2292 Saunders Settlement Rd. Sanborn
State: New York Zip Code: 14132
Minor Civil Division(s): _____
County: Niagara
Project Proponent Property Interest (own, lease, easement or other): Own

AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL

Name: Daniel Ljiljanich Title: Superintendent
Business Address: P.O. Box 309 5700 West Street, Sanborn
State: New York Zip Code: 14132
Telephone Number: 716-215-3003
E-Mail Address: dljiljanich@nwcsd.org

PROJECT POINT OF CONTACT

Name: Patrick Creamer Title: Eco-Campus Project Committee Chair/ district science teacher
Organization/Firm: Niagara Wheatfield CSD
Business Address: 2292 Saunders Settlement Rd. Sanborn
State: New York Zip Code: 14094
Telephone Number: 716-315-3150 ex. 2507
E-Mail Address: pcreamer@nwcsd.org

PROJECT NARRATIVE

Please attach material which responds to the following six items in the order that they are presented.

1. In a brief paragraph, describe the project and its purpose, how and when it will be accomplished, and why it is important.

The purpose of the NW Eco-Campus Project is to transform our campus grounds from simply being a series of buildings, parking lots and open spaces into a campus that blends and harmonizes nature wherever possible to bolster and protect our local natural systems, including a quarter mile of riparian zone along Niagara County's Cayuga Creek. We will also enhance the existing 1.7 mile walking trail by fully paving it and by adding several spur trails including a raised boardwalk through the creek's riparian zone. The result will be a campus that reduces our school's impact on the surrounding environment, improves water quality and habitat in the Cayuga Creek corridor, expands recreational and physical fitness opportunities for students and community members, and creates better opportunities for students, their families and the community to spend time in and learn about the importance of nature along Cayuga Creek, within the Niagara River Watershed.

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 Niagara Wheatfield Eco-Campus Project will advance the Niagara Greenway vision, its principles, goals and meet its criteria in a number of important ways. We will be restoring multiple acres of land by reintroducing native trees and shrubs, removing multiple dead ash trees and allowing nature to regenerate within the five acres of Cayuga Creek riparian zone on our campus. The restoration will improve the ecological integrity of the Cayuga Creek riparian zone by creating better habitat for native animals and plants and will help to improve the overall health and water quality of Cayuga Creek and thus, the Niagara River.

We will be restoring multiple areas around our campus that are currently mowed, back to a natural state, installing a pollinator garden and planting scores of native trees across our 116-acre campus. This aspect of our project will offer better habitat for wildlife, which will improve the ecological integrity of the region as well as improve the emotional well-being of our students by blending natural areas throughout the campus. It will also improve the environmental soundness by cutting

down on the amount of resources our school district must expend to mow and maintain the campus.

We will also enhance the existing 1.7 mile walking trail by fully paving it and by adding several spur trails including a raised boardwalk through the creek's riparian zone. These critical upgrades to our campus trail are some of the most exciting aspects of our project. They will dramatically increase accessibility and connections to the creek and the riparian zone for our students and the community, while also improving physical fitness opportunities. The intent of the boardwalk will be to provide immersive access, including handicap access, to the creek and the riparian zone in all seasons. In several locations along the boardwalk, areas will open up to accommodate classes or clubs to congregate and take advantage of educational opportunities related to the creek and its riparian zone. The boardwalk will also have a deck that will allow student researchers to take samples, make observations, do macroinvertebrate surveys and other forms of water quality testing. The boardwalk will help maintain the ecological integrity of the riparian zone by reducing the impact we have on the area, while greatly expanding access. We believe the improved trail system and boardwalk will greatly increase the connectedness, physical and emotional wellness, understanding of and appreciation for Cayuga Creek and natural spaces within the Niagara Greenway for our community and for our students. We will be adding signage to both improve usability and add educational opportunities along the trail. We will also add several security features to enhance the safety and security of the trail users. We would also like to connect our property to the property directly adjacent on the south end of the western border with a pedestrian bridge. The adjoining property is owned by the Niagara Wheatfield Athletic Association. Their long term plan for the property (currently used for agriculture) is to have athletic fields installed for their teams to use. Since the majority of NWAA athletes are Niagara Wheatfield students, a pedestrian bridge would offer our students safe and direct access to the playing fields while also expanding access to the riparian zone and connection to the greater community.

3. Define the budget for the total proposed project and include costs for the following:

We currently have our district’s architectural firm drawing up cost estimates and we will have those by our presentation in January.

Planning	\$ _____
Construction	\$ _____
Acquisition	\$ _____
Administration	\$ _____
Operation and Maintenance / Year	\$ _____
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$ _____

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.

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.

In the summer of 2018, our school district formed an eco-campus project committee comprised of administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, students and community organization leaders to work on ways to improve the ecological impact of our campus while also improving its usability for students and the community. This committee has successfully organized and run three volunteer work days, which have drawn together over 150 students, parents, staff and community members to work on environmental improvements to our campus. On these days, we have done campus-wide clean ups, planted native trees and plants and cleaned up several tons of debris in the Creek’s riparian zone, as well as made improvements to our existing trail.

We are working closely with the NW Board of Education, district parent groups, HS and MS student clubs, the NW HS Environmental Science class, our local Rotary, Lions and Kiwanis Clubs, the Town of Wheatfield Highway Department,

adjoining land owners, local landscaping companies, The National Wildlife Foundation and the Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper to ensure the success of our eco-campus project. Each of these organizations have and are committed to continuing to lend financial and volunteer support to our Eco-Campus Project. Resolutions of support from these organizations are forthcoming and should be available at our January presentation to the Commission.

We have attempted to apply for a NYS DEC Trees for Tribes grant, but we have learned that the program has been suspended indefinitely. We will be pursuing a NYS DEC Buffer in a Bag mini-grant that will provide us with 25-50 native saplings to plant in our riparian zone. We would like to plant them as a part of our spring 2020 volunteer day.

Our High School is one of four schools in Niagara County selected to take part in the Niagara County Youth Environmental Education and Leadership Program (NCYEELP). This program is administered jointly by the National Wildlife Foundation and Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and is funded by a grant through the NYS Attorney General's Office. Through this program, our high school has formed an environmental club for NW high schoolers and will be offering a college level environmental science course through Niagara Community College starting in the 2020-2021 school year. The grant provides the club with financial and personnel support to initiate environmental action projects and these students will play an active role in our Eco-Campus Project.

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.

Our Campus spans 116 acres, the vast majority of which is upland, including most of the Cayuga Creek riparian zone on our property. A small section of the riparian zone may be classified as wetland. The affected portion of the property will be assessed and delineated as plans are drawn up.

Part of the Boardwalk will be located on property owned by the Niagara Wheatfield Athletic Association. The NWAA has agreed to allow the use of this portion of their property for the boardwalk. A written agreement is forthcoming and we should have it by our January presentation.

See attached maps.

6. Please attach the proposed project timeline, identify any relevant milestones, and provide an estimated date for project completion/opening. If funded, it is expected that the project sponsor or point of contact will notify the Commission of the project opening date as it nears completion. *(Note: This addition to the application was made September 2018. All projects submitted for review after the November 20th meeting are to include a project timeline.)*

Tentative Timeline for the NW Eco-Campus Project

Spring 2020 - Planning phase/DEC Buffer in a Bag saplings planted

Summer/Fall 2020 - Land surveys and invasive species assessments and plans completed

Summer/Fall 2020 – Construction begins