



NIAGARA RIVER GREENWAY COMMISSION
4th ANNUAL REPORT
MARCH 31, 2009



A Message from the Chairman



Greetings!

As I complete my third year as Chairman of the Niagara River Greenway Commission, I (we) once again look back with modest satisfaction at the goals we have achieved. We have moved into the next phase of the Plan, which is the development of the Niagara River Greenway; we must continue keep focused on what has brought us all together and guides us – the Vision Statement:

The Niagara River is a world-class corridor of places, parks and landscapes that celebrates and interprets our unique, 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

We now enter the third year under the officially adopted Greenway Plan facing the challenges of moving forward. The Commission with the assistance of the public will continue to review and take the necessary steps to recommend and consult on Niagara River Greenway Projects. The process has taken shape and with many exciting projects coming from stakeholders and communities we have had a very busy year.

During this past year we have reviewed a total of thirty-five (35) projects and found consistency with the Plan in thirty-three (33) of them. The latter had a gross value of \$25,901,572. We are now starting to see the fruits of our work as many of the projects start to begin the construction phase of their development. For example, Village of Lewiston's "Freedom Crossing", Buffalo-Olmsted's "Scajaquada Trail" and Grand Island's "Fisherman's Landing". It is gratifying to see the enthusiasm that exists within our community. As we move into our fourth year with the Plan we have ten (10) projects for review during the current cycle.

I would be remiss if I did not express my thanks to our Commission Members for their support and dedication. Their review and consideration of each project for its consistency with the Greenway Plan has been essential to the success we have had to-date. Together and with great anticipation, we all can look forward to what will become the world class Niagara River Greenway.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Kresse

Robert J. Kresse
Chairman

Organization

On September 21, 2004 then Governor George E. Pataki announced his approval of Chapter 460 of the Laws of 2004 establishing the Niagara River Greenway and creating a public benefit corporation for purpose of creating a Niagara River Greenway Plan and its subsequent implementation.

The Niagara River Greenway Commission was charged with creating the plan that would develop a linear system of parks and conversation areas, high-lighting the Niagara River in terms of its history, economic vitality and ecological significance. Key elements of this plan include increased public access to the Niagara River, development of a trail system with complimentary connections to land access points, balanced economic growth that compliments the natural and scenic environment, preservation and enhancement of environmental resources and the celebration of the region's cultural and industrial heritage.

The Members

May 30, 2005 then Governor Pataki announced the appointments to the Niagara River Greenway Commission which include: Vice Chairman Richard F. Soluri, Mayor Village of Lewiston, Secretary Paul G. Leuchner, Treasure John Giardino, Chairman of the Local Government Advisory Committee Ronald J. Pilozzi, Mayor City of Tonawanda, appointed January 2008, Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee, Paul A. Dyster, Mayor City of Niagara Falls and Louis P. Ciminelli. Robert J. Kresse was appointed Chairman of the Niagara River Greenway Commission in July 2006. At the time of this printing there is one vacancy amongst the citizen commissioners. The Legislation that guides the Commission also require seats be held by six voting members serving ex-officio from the following New York State Agencies: Department of State, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Department of Transportation, Department of Environmental Conservation, Economic Development and Power Authority.



The Niagara River Greenway Plan

Purpose

Chapter 460 of the enabling legislation established a very aggressive schedule for the completion of the Greenway Plan. The law required that the plan be submitted to the Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation no later than two years from the effective date or March 20, 2007. Ultimately the plan was submitted by the Commission receiving a unanimous endorsement by the communities within the boundaries of the Niagara River Greenway and signed into effect on May 17, 2008 by Commissioner Carol Ash.

Plan Process

The Niagara River Greenway Plan establishes a unified vision and a set of principals for the Niagara River Greenway. The Plan 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.



Continuing the Process

Preparation of the Niagara River Greenway Plan has provided meaningful opportunities for local leaders, stakeholders and the general public to provide ideas and insights into the development of the plan. Outreach was extensive and diversified. That same type of enthusiasm used in the development of the plan is carrying on into the review and consultation process. As projects are received from various sponsors they are posted to the Niagara River Greenway web-site, www.niagaragreenway.org, the commission solicits input from the general public, stakeholder groups, municipalities and other interested individuals or groups. The intent is to keep the public involved in the process and focused on the Vision of the Niagara River Greenway. Typically the public comment period lasts four weeks and coincides with the timeframe allowed Commission Members to review the same projects. The information about the projects is gathered and shared with the commission members prior to a regularly scheduled meeting of the full commission where the determination of consistency, in the opinion of the Niagara River Greenway Commission is determined. Notification of consistency along with comments received from both the general public and commission members is sent to each project sponsor with a copy going to the respective Standing Committee.

During the first year of project reviews the Niagara River Greenway Commission has received thirty-five (35) total projects and has deemed consistent thirty-three (33) with a total gross value of \$25,901,572. As funding is received from various sources we will see the start of construction on these projects. Projects receiving a consistent determination from the Niagara River Greenway Commission are as follows:



NEW YORK STATE PARKS (5)

*GOAT ISLAND LUNA ISLAND THREE SISTERS ISLANDS
WHIRLPOOL DEVIL'S HOLE WHIRLPOOL RIM*

*LEWISTON HISTORIC ASSOCIATION - FREEDOM CROSSING
FORT NIAGARA ASSOCIATION*

*GRAND ISLAND - FISHERMAN'S PARK
ERIE COUNTY - SHORELINE TRAIL SIGNAGE
BUFFALO OLMSTED PARKS CONSERVANCY
TOWN OF NIAGARA*

*CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS - JAYNE PARK RESTORATION
CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS - LaSALLE BLUEWAY TRAIL
NIAGARA FALLS HOUSING AUTHORITY - OUR RIVER'S RICHES
CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS - RIVERVIEW FRONT COMFORT STATION
CITY OF NORTH TONAWANDA - GRATWICK-RIVERSIDE PARK
CITY OF TONAWANDA - NIA-WANDA PARK PAVILION*

*BUFFALO NIAGARA RIVERKEEPER - BLUEWAY-GREENWAY GUIDE TO THE
NIAGARA RIVER*

*CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS - 93RD STREET BRIDGE REPLACEMENT
CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS - CUSTOMS HOUSE RESTORATION
CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS - PARKS PLANNING*

*CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS - CENTENNIAL CIRCLE PROJECT
BUFFALO-OLMSTED CONSERVANCY - MINNOW POOLS REHABILITATION
CITY OF BUFFALO - TIMES BEACH ENHANCEMENT*

*TOWN OF WHEATFIELD - RIVER ROAD GREENWAY MULTI-USE TRAIL PROJECT
BUFFALO NIAGARA RIVERKEEPER - NIAGARA RIVER RIPARIAN RESTORATION
NFTA - OUTER HARBOR BELL SLIP STABILATION PROJECT*

*TUSCAROARA NATION - RESTORATION PROJECTS
MEMBERS NIAGARA 10 - BOUNDARY WATERS TREATY CELEBRATION
SUNY RESEARCH FOUNDATION - INFORMATION FOR SUCESSFUL MNGT.
CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS - GILL CREEK PARK LIGHTING*

*VALLEY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, INC. - BUFFALO RIVER FEST PARK
VILLAGE OF YOUNGSTOWN - WATER/FERRY STREETS WATERFRONT ACCESS*



Special Projects

One of the primary goals of the Niagara River Greenway Plan is to provide access to the Niagara River for everyone including those with disabilities and special needs. Within the Niagara River Greenway there are accessible trails, fishing areas and park settings. However, there are no accessible facilities for those who want to experience the waters of the Niagara River firsthand. While it is a known fact that canoes and kayaks have been adapted for use by the disabled, there has been little attention to the corresponding need for adaptive paddlesports launch facilities.

The relatively placid waters of the upper Niagara River in the vicinity of Grand Island offer a unique opportunity for adaptive paddlesports activities. Representatives of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation have expressed interest in promoting paddlesports recreation for the disabled and have agreed to make a site available for an adaptive paddlesports launch at Beaver Island State Park. In response to this offer, Commissioner Paul Leuchner set about the task of finding a suitable launch system that would accommodate the needs of disabled paddlers. After months of research, technical analysis and discussion with noted experts two adaptive paddlesports launch systems were found that would provide access for the disabled including those individuals who were wheelchair bound. During the spring of 2009, Commissioner Leuchner developed a presentation that focused on the value and features of these launch systems. This presentation has been viewed by government agency representatives and municipal officials with the initial result that plans are already moving forward for the installation of handicapped accessible launch ramps within Beaver Island State Park. Similar projects are being planned at other locations within the Niagara River Greenway.

Financial Report

Once again we started the fiscal year with a limited amount of funding. The Commission along with the help of Assemblyman Sam Hoyt again received a source of revenue in the amount of \$80,000 from the New York Power Authority. As we go into the 2009 fiscal year Senator Antoine Thompson, Chairman of the Conservation Committee has provided the Niagara River Greenway Commission with a line item in the amount of \$300,000 which will be from the Environmental Protection Fund. Now as we move into our next year of operation the Niagara River Greenway Commission will be better prepared to continue keeping the focus on the vision of a "World Class Greenway" and the public informed and involved.

Financial Statement as of March 31, 2009

Income

\$154,643.92-Fund Balance, April 1, 2008
\$ 80,000- One Time Contribution NYPA
\$ 1,300-Paddles Up Niagara 08 Sponsorship
\$235,943.92

Expenses

\$ 108,535.72-Payroll
\$ 115.99-Travel
\$ 2,096.63-Commission Meetings
\$ 4,148.60-Promotion/Advertising
\$ 1,329.27-Office Supplies
\$ 275.00-Office Overhead
\$116,501.21

Fund Balance

\$235,943.92
-\$116,501.21
\$119,442.71

Public Outreach

As part of the ongoing effort to keep the public, stakeholder groups and governmental agencies informed, our website www.niagaragreenway.org continues to include announcements of up-coming meetings and minutes from previous meetings. In addition, both current projects in for review and projects having already received their determination are posted on the web-site for a living history of the developing Greenway. Resource documents related to the development of the Niagara River Greenway plan have been place on the site as well as a page where interested persons can submit their thoughts and/or suggestions to the commission.

During this past year we have been able to expand our pre-submission review and technical consultation with many project sponsors. By doing reviews with the individuals, stakeholder groups or municipalities the project presentation becomes more concise and focused on the actual project and not the many other detractors that always seem to keep coming up. This is a practice we plan to continue and expand as our reach of expertise grows.

Another very successful form of outreach has been the continuation of our participation in various “trade show” type venues. This past year we expanded into Boom-Days, Eastern Mountain Sports “Club Days”, Erie County Fair, New York State Fair, Daemen College Academic Festival and the Coast Guard Water Safety Expo. As we move into this next year we look to expand our presence in this very successful venue telling the story of the Niagara River Greenway.





July 2008 brought the third “Paddles Up Niagara” a paddle sport event that traveled 4.6 miles along the south river shoreline of Grand Island, New York, from the starting point at Beaver Island State Park to East River Marsh Restoration Project returning back to Beaver Island State Park, Little Beaver Island launch. The event was free of charge, with a fundraising lunch hosted by the Grand Island Historical Society along with a guided tour of the beautiful and historic River Lea House located on the grounds of Beaver Island State Park. Thanks to all of our sponsors for this years event, with a special thank-you to Northtown Subaru whose support as the main sponsor aided in making “Paddles Up Niagara 08” a great success. Once again we offered a min-trade and safety show where the various sponsors displayed their water-sports equipment, water safety techniques and environmental friendly activities. Those in attendance went home with a T-Shirt and an exciting day of activities. In total there were 143 crafts and 175 participants with a total event attendance over 400. In the three years that “Paddles Up Niagara” has been held we have showcased the Niagara River to 550 paddlers and over 1000 in total attendance. Plans for Paddles Up Niagara 09 are currently underway with a scheduled date of July 25, 2009.

Commission Goals for 2008-2009

In recapping the Niagara River Greenway Commission's goals for 2008-2009 the Commission accomplished the following:

- Municipal communication and support continued in the 2008-2009 year developing and working closely with the municipalities that make up the Niagara River Greenway. Assisting on projects as they came to the Commission.
- Nurtured community support and involvement as the "Consistency Determinations" process began of Niagara River Greenway Plan.
- Continued working towards a secure funding source for the Niagara River Greenway Commission obtaining support for same from Western New York Delegation.
- Raised awareness of the activities associated with the Niagara River by successfully hosting the third "Paddles Up Niagara" bring a total of 550 paddlers and over 1000 participants to enjoy the river resource.
- With limited funds, a key goal was to stay within and below budget. This goal was accomplished by keeping an eye on the costs and finding other sources of support rather than a sole resource of cash.

Statement of 2009-2010 Goals

- Municipal communication and support continue in the 2009-2010 year developing and working closely with the municipalities that make up the Niagara River Greenway.
- The commission established a large amount of public support by listening to the public members and stakeholder groups. The plan would not have been a success were it not for the participation and support of this vital group. Once again in 2009-2010 our goal is to expand the uses of the vital advisory committee.
- Once again with limited funds, a key goal will be to stay within and below budget.
- Expand funding sources for the Niagara River Greenway Commission administration.
- Bring stakeholders together to discuss projects of mutual interest.

The Niagara River Greenway Commission must continue to build consensus for the greenway by continuing to demonstrate objectivity and relating it to the quality of life expectations as defined by all segments of the public. The success of these goals will call attention to the natural and physical assets of the Niagara River as well as the history and culture that has shaped this region. Continuing to create a forum for new ideas that enhances the public use, enjoyment and appreciation of this water resource is the primary goal of the Commission.