



Niagara Habitat Conservation Strategy

Scope. Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER is undertaking the development of a habitat conservation strategy for the Niagara River Watershed. The geographic scope of this two-year project is the tributary area of the Niagara River within Western New York – an area of about 900,000 acres.

Purpose. The Strategy will identify the most critical biodiversity features in the watershed and its major sub-basins, evaluate those features in terms of current ecological health and also vulnerability, and determine specific conservation needs and priority actions for implementation. It will provide a science-based, collaborative blueprint to guide future efforts to protect and restore the habitat values, species communities and ecological functions that define a healthy Niagara Watershed.

Project Team. The effort will be led by Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER and include a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of habitat and wildlife experts and a Stakeholder Group of municipal officials, resource-based groups (anglers, botanists, birders), and citizen groups. The project is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant.

How will this be done? The *Niagara Habitat Conservation Strategy* will use a Conservation Action Planning (CAP) process similar to those utilized for the Lake Ontario Watershed, the Lake Erie Watershed, and the Niagara River Watershed in Canada. The CAP process generally includes the following steps:

- Identify the species, natural communities and ecological systems (such as wetlands, upland forest or migratory fish) that represent the biodiversity within the watershed.
- Evaluate the health or viability of these features by defining a set of indicators representing landscape context, condition, size, and other variables to help rate the health status of each feature. Verify and refine these assessments with stakeholders.
- Identify critical threats—such as invasive species, urban sprawl, dams and barriers—and rank them according to the potential severity of impact.
- Develop conservation measures and also priority areas to focus limited resources.
- Implement, adapt and improve as necessary.

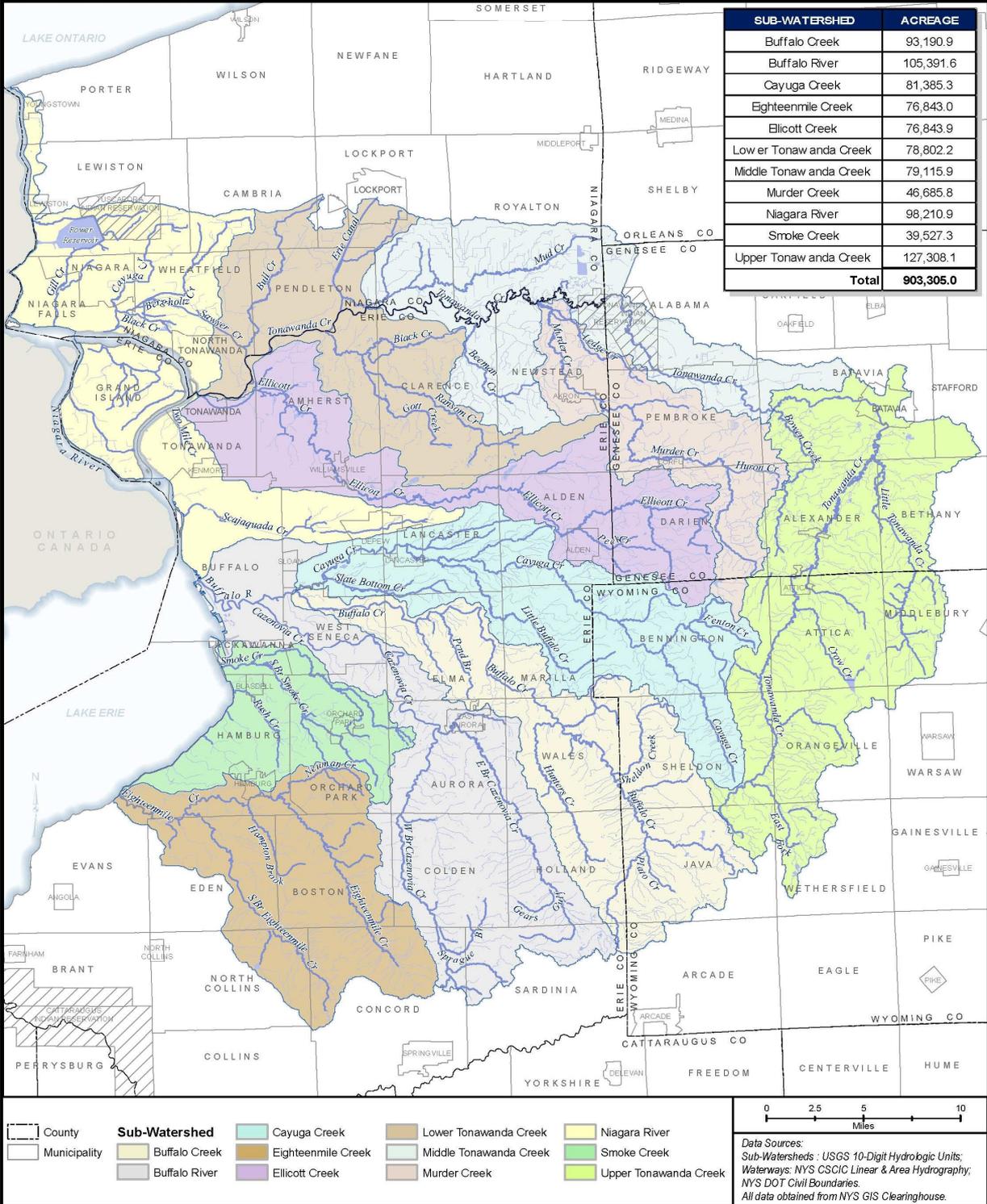
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RIVERKEEPER leads Buffalo Niagara's efforts to safeguard our water for present and future generations. It is our mission to protect and restore water quality and quantity and to connect people with water.



Niagara River Watershed and Sub-Watersheds

WESTERN NEW YORK



Prepared by Lisa Matthies-Wiza, Sept 2010.