

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Buffalo Niagara WATERKEEPER® initiatives and investments
in safeguarding the waters of Western New York.





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A MESSAGE

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & BOARD CHAIR

Resiliency is a word many have come to love and hate. It can simultaneously describe the ability to recover and thrive after enduring physical and emotional challenges, but it also indicates the persistence of ongoing environmental and climate threats and injustice that are still present in our community.

For Western New Yorkers, 2022 was a year we will never forget – one of horrific tragedies and senseless loss of life. It was also a year of tepid economic recovery, emergence from a global pandemic, and costly challenges fueled by nature's fury.

Despite enduring the uncertainties and frustrations of the last few years, we can still find comfort and respite in nature, in meaningful work, and by dedicating our energies for a purpose greater than ourselves. These values and a culture of resiliency embraced by our team at Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper (Waterkeeper) have resulted in significant positive impact on our water and Great Lakes community this past year.

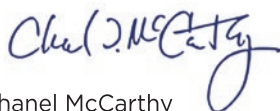
As you will see in this 2022 Annual Report, Waterkeeper's collective work continues to physically transform our region's waterfront and landscape for the better. Our Living Shorelines, Headwater and Waterway Revitalization initiatives boasted a spectacularly successful wetland restoration at Cayuga Creek, completion of a cold-water trout passage project in Crow Creek, advanced designs for future projects in Ellicott Creek Park, Gill Creek, and Buffalo Creek, and made significant progress in protecting valuable forested wetlands. Our Community Engagement Programs mobilized thousands of volunteers through citizen science, educated local youth, made national headlines on our PFAS contamination monitoring and advocacy, protected the health of our community through notifications of E. coli and Harmful Algal Blooms, and removed tons of litter and marine debris from local waterways, while leading the Great Lakes on a basin-wide cleanup. We advanced millions of dollars of restoration and public access projects associated with the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Centennial Park, the Buffalo River Remedial Action Plan, the Buffalo Riverwalk, and the design of several new Buffalo Blueway sites scheduled to be put in the ground in 2023.

Our work has been able to continue throughout the pandemic in large part from the generous, ongoing support of our donors and funders. We are grateful for the resilience of our team and community, and we will continue to honor your support through our inclusive and meaningful work building resilience and access in our natural spaces. We have an ambitious agenda for the next few years and look forward to inviting even more people into our mission – we can't do it without you!

Sincerely,



Jill Jedlicka
Executive Director
& WATERKEEPER



Chanel McCarthy
Board Chair



HEADWATERS

INITIATIVE

During 2022, Waterkeeper made significant progress in securing two headwater parcels for permanent protection through the NYS DEC Water Quality Improvement Program. Both parcels contain tributaries of Eighteenmile Creek, a priority source water protection watershed. It is anticipated that both parcels will be formally acquired in 2023.

We continued to build out the Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper Source Water Protection Program through partnership building, seeking funding for future program support, and the additional analysis needed for resource protection of our Niagara River watershed headwaters.

(Photos from donated parcels to be protected in the headwaters of the Eighteenmile Creek sub-watershed.)





SCAJAQUADA CREEK

INITIATIVE



For Scajaquada Creek and its 29-square mile watershed, 2022 was a year of building stronger partnerships and preparing for the imminent next steps. Along with our Scajaquada Corridor Coalition partners and WNY legislative representatives, we made significant progress toward key decisions around the future of the Scajaquada corridor. Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's water-centric vision for the lower Scajaquada corridor played a key role in four potential design scenarios which incorporated a reconnected floodplain, increased public access, and a new vision for Hoyt Lake.

We have worked tirelessly with our partners to make progress toward securing funding for future testing, modelling, and ecological restoration planning. Many pivotal local and regional decisions are on the horizon for 2023. We are hopeful and optimistic for all that the coming year has in store for Scajaquada and the communities in its watershed.





EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper’s shoreline cleanups have been a hallmark of the organization for over 30 years, engaging over 2,000 community members throughout the Niagara River Watershed each year in removing over 15 tons of trash from our shorelines, while integrating education and data collection. Waterkeeper’s Cleanups program now extends beyond the shorelines, engaging neighborhoods and communities in not only reduction of marine debris, but prevention. The spring of 2022 saw the successful completion of a two-year EPA grant that supported the growth and development of the entire Waterkeeper Cleanups program and created the Great Lakes CleanUP, a Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper-led, Great Lakes basin-wide coalition of 18 organizations with coordinated spring cleanup efforts.

2022 was also the culmination of two years of on-water cleanups in the Niagara River corridor and, through National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) funding, Waterkeeper sponsored the creation and installation of two unique art compositions focused on marine and freshwater plastic pollution at the Buffalo Zoo and the Aquarium of Niagara.

2022 saw the return of Buffalo Young Environmental Leaders Program (YELP) after a two-year hiatus and the continuation of growing partnerships in Niagara County. Through these current partnerships with Buffalo Public Schools, Niagara Falls High School, and Niagara Wheatfield High School, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper coordinates a college level course for underrepresented high school students to engage in an immersive place-focused education program that is grounded in environmental justice principles. YELP provides an opportunity for students to gain knowledge about local environmental issues, make career connections, and pursue environmental leadership. In 2022, over 60 students received college credit upon successful course completion and 12 took the opportunity to engage in a mentorship program during the summer.



Funding for our volunteer events provided in part by the M&T Charitable Foundation.



Funding for our education programs funded in part by Bank of America.

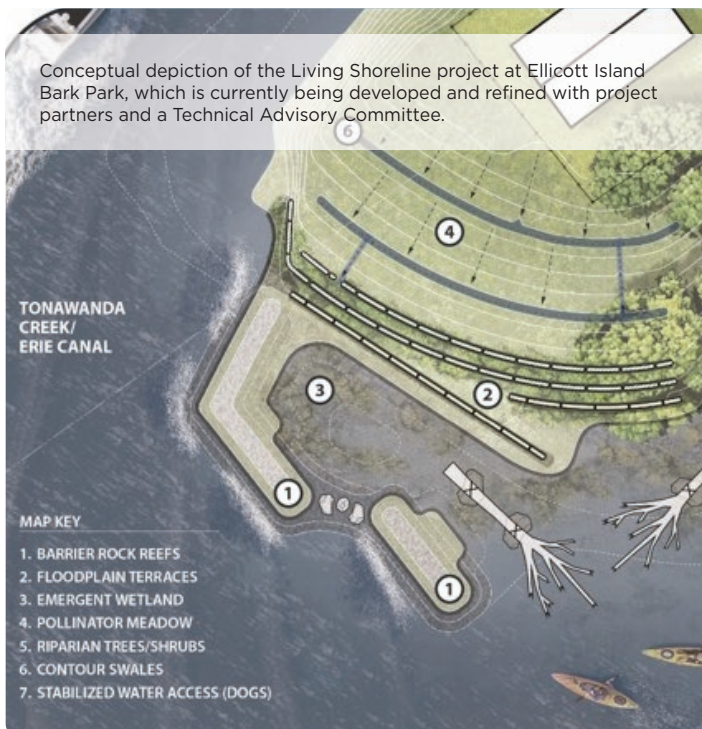


LIVING SHORELINES INITIATIVE

Shoreline habitats, where the land meets the water, are some of the most biologically productive places on earth. In the upper Niagara River alone, over 80% of shoreline habitats have been degraded. By restoring these significant ecosystems, we are increasing benefits through improved water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and improved resiliency. Our Living Shoreline Program has restored 10 degraded sites throughout the Niagara River Greenway in addition to the restoration work completed as part of the Buffalo River Remedial Action Plan.

In 2022, our efforts focused on monitoring and managing these restored sites, as well as restoring habitat at several new shoreline locations. Through our RestoreCorps program, 200 volunteers helped throughout the year to control invasive species, plant native species, and maintain trails and habitat boxes, and over 500 trees and shrubs and 2,300 herbaceous plugs were installed.

In 2022 we also worked to advance the design for our next project at Ellicott Island “Bark Park”. The project site is located at the southern end of the island, which has become severely eroded and is a danger to the community. The project will include natural erosion protections, reduce the slope, enhance public access and restore native vegetation. This work will reestablish the “ribbon of life” along the water’s edge, supporting numerous wildlife species including freshwater mussels, fish, amphibians, and beneficial insects. Project design is anticipated to be completed in early 2023, with construction beginning soon after.





WATERWAY REVITALIZATION INITIATIVE

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's Waterway Revitalization Initiative saw significant focus on alleviating flooding and strengthening coastal resiliency within our watershed in 2022. Our shorelines and neighborhoods are seeing increasing threats and negative impacts of extreme weather with changes in storm event frequency and intensity. In order to alleviate the physical and emotional damage caused by these storm events, Waterkeeper has undertaken efforts to evaluate, design, and implement solutions while educating and engaging key stakeholders and the community.

The Buffalo Coastal Resilience Study is an assessment of flood risks along the Lake Erie shoreline including the entirety of the City of Buffalo and the lower reaches of the Buffalo River and Scajaquada Creek. An assessment is underway on current conditions, and models will be developed that will identify the highest risk areas along the shoreline. Ultimately, potential projects will be identified that could help alleviate threats to infrastructure and the shoreline..

Buffalo Creek Floodplain Investigation

Building off of the Resilient NY Flood Mitigation Initiative: Buffalo Creek (2020) report which identified the Lexington Green neighborhood in West Seneca as a high risk area for devastating flooding, Waterkeeper received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's National Coastal Resilience Fund to identify opportunities for reconnecting Buffalo Creek to its historic floodplain. Our engineers have pinpointed areas along the Creek that would alleviate flood impacts to the community if a nature-based solution was implemented. Waterkeeper worked closely with the Town of West Seneca to meet with community members to present the current situation and educate them on the benefits of the proposed solutions. Based on the community support, Waterkeeper will be advancing this project into the final design and engineering phase and anticipates construction occurring in 2024.

Cayuga Creek Stream & Floodplain Restoration

After several decades of studies, planning, and design, 2022 saw the completion of a construction project to restore a 25-acre area along Cayuga Creek in Niagara County. The project area contains unique and significant habitat along the creek that had been straightened and channelized causing downstream flooding issues. In partnership with the Town of Niagara, Waterkeeper raised funds, secured the parcel and implemented a project at the site which reconnected the creek channel to its historic floodplain and created low-lying wetland areas to provide for greater flood storage during periods of high water levels. Restoration also included native species plantings and adding structural features into the creek channel to create valuable fish and wildlife habitat.

Setting up trail cameras on the Outer Harbor to capture the impact of storm events. Refined with project partners and a Technical Advisory Committee.



A public meeting was held to discuss the floodplain reconnection project.



Cayuga Creek's newly restored channel and adjacent wetlands provide significant flood storage after a large rain event.





BUFFALO BLUEWAY



As part of Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's Buffalo Blueway, the Red Jacket Riverfront Natural Habitat Park grand re-opening was held in June 2022 and marks the completion of the fifth Buffalo Blueway site. The project added an enhanced paddle sport launch, benches, ADA accessible walkways, a redesigned overlook with sweeping views of the Buffalo River, and an upgraded parking lot.

For 2023, the Buffalo Blueway has three additional sites in the design and implementation phase: Higgins Park, which will receive improved shoreline habitat and a graded ingress along the shoreline, South Buffalo Charter School, and the NYS DEC Harlem Road Boat Launch. Invasive species management work continues with anticipated final design and construction at these sites between 2023-24.

(Photos are from the Red Jacket Grand Re-Opening in June 2022.)





DONOR STORIES

EDWIN M. “TIM” JOHNSTON III



“Doing the work and making it happen is the hard part. Thank you for all you do.”

Edwin M. (“Tim”) Johnston, III



Edwin M. “Tim” Johnston III has been a dedicated supporter of Waterkeeper for many years, but this year he wanted to inspire others to be philanthropic as well.

In October of 2022, Tim reached out to us, sharing a recent experience he had: “As I was riding through the city and along the Buffalo River last week, I was thinking what remarkable progress Buffalo has made over the last decade, and how much of this is due to the work all of you do. I thought about mind, body, and environment.”

Tim reflected on the last 10 years of change when he described how people used to be physically cut off from the waterfront. “You could not ride Niagara Street safely. Pathways along the Buffalo River had yet to be built and the river was so dirty it killed much of the wildlife and biodiversity on its shore. I thought of the engineering, creative, and planning talent it took to clean up the Buffalo River, provide access to the waterfront, and for many other things to happen.”

Inspired by seeing the change in our community, Tim offered a month-long, dollar-for-dollar challenge gift to encourage others to support Waterkeeper. Waterkeeper shared Tim’s story and challenge, and we were overwhelmed and humbled at the response: over \$35,000 in matching contributions were made to successfully meet and greatly surpass Tim’s challenge!

We are grateful for Tim Johnston’s trust, investment and ongoing commitment to our work, and we are thankful for all of the supporters who were also inspired to help us meet his challenge. Fundraising efforts like this will continue to enable Waterkeeper to make our waterways healthier and more accessible for everyone to enjoy!



THANK YOU.

TO OUR 2022 MISSION PARTNERS



Philanthropic support from Western New York businesses is critical to our ability to advance the progress made across our region's waterways while continuing to tackle the growing threats to our environment. We are grateful for our 2022 Mission Partners investment in our mission.



**RICH FAMILY
FOUNDATION**

"Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper's work is vital to the health of our ecosystem in Western New York and to the wellness of our community. Rich Family Foundation is proud to be a neighbor and partner in supporting the critical work of protecting and restoring our waterways."



"Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper provides valuable stewardship, advocacy, education, and access in the Buffalo Niagara Region. We are proud to partner with a team that is completely committed to ensuring the health and accessibility of our local waterways for years to come."

Lawley

INSURANCE | EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

"Lawley is proud to partner with Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper because of their incredible commitment to being the guardians of our waters, maintaining a healthy and safe environment, and enhancing our community with access to our region's most extraordinary assets."

MANY THANKS.

TO ALL OF OUR 2022 KEY SPONSORS

By investing in Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, our Partners and Sponsors are an integral piece of the essential and enduring impact on the revitalization of our region's waterfront.





HOW WE WORK

OVERVIEW

Local Philanthropy
Donations & Giving

1



Individuals
Foundations
Corporations

10-1 Historical
Leverage of Generosity

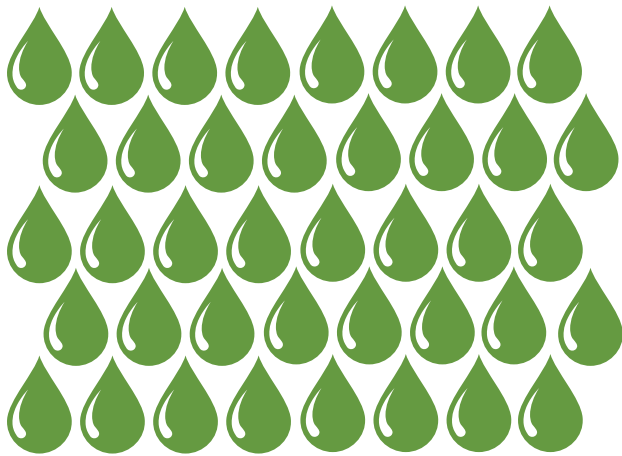
10X



This 10-1 leverage of generosity allows us to annually deliver over 60 programs and projects across the Niagara River Watershed.

4-1 Economic Investment
Back into the Community

4X*



Our most successful restoration initiative, the Buffalo River, has drawn another 4-fold in economic investment into our WNY community.

*** 4x ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC IMPACT**

*Economic Impacts of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: 2018





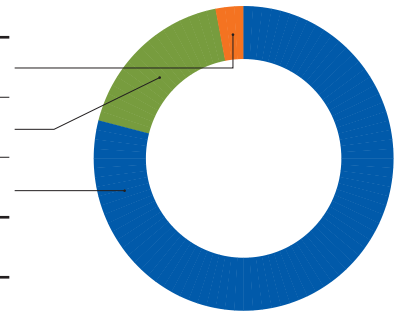
2022 FINANCIAL SUMMARY



OPERATING EXPENSES

2022 Totals

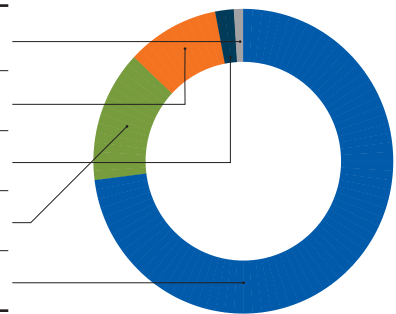
Fundraising Expenses	\$158,342	3%
Management & General Expenses	\$787,358	18%
Program Services Expenses	\$3,596,542	79%
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$4,542,242	100%



SUPPORT & REVENUE

2022 Totals

Program Sales	\$29,699	1%
Contributions - Individuals & Foundations	\$431,287	10%
Contributions - Corporate Entities	\$109,292	2%
Government Grants	\$595,466	14%
Other Grants	\$3,188,222	73%
TOTAL REVENUE	\$4,353,966	100%



Buffalo Niagara WATERKEEPER® is a 501(c)(3) and the figures that appear in the financial summary shown are taken from our 2022 audited financial statements.

For additional tax and financial information, please contact Kelly Mayer, Deputy Executive Director of Finance & Operations 716-852-7483 (Ext. 18) or email kmayer@bnwaterkeeper.org.



WATERKEEPER® Staff: Executives & Directors

Jill Jedlicka, Executive Director & WATERKEEPER

Kerrie Gallo, Deputy Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives

Kelly Mayer, Deputy Executive Director of Finance & Operations

James Bender, Advancement Director

Jen Fee, Director of Marketing & Communications

Joy Knowlton, Director of Finance & Operations

Emily Root, Director of Ecological Programs

Sandy Smith – Director of Community Engagement

Margaux Valenti, Esq., Legal & Program Advisor



BUFFALO NIAGARA WATERKEEPER® STAFF

WATERKEEPER® Staff:

Jeanne Beiter, Senior Program Manager

Robert Coady – Project Coordinator

Elizabeth Cute, Senior Project Manager

Emily Dyett – Senior Project Coordinator

Ryan Greer – Project Manager

Holly Kistner – Project Manager

Bonnie Majda – Administrative Assistant

Charles Oddo, Project Manager & Senior Designer

Juliann Parker, Administrative Manager

Wendy Paterson, Senior Program Manager

Dani Priebe, Development Coordinator

Claudia Rosen, Program Manager

Katherine Winkler, Senior Program Manager



POLICY/ADVOCACY

HIGHLIGHTS



New York is a Great Lakes State

In 2022, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper again created a “NY is a Great Lakes State” campaign that has resulted in increased participation for WNY in critical policy forums and elected official engagements across the Great Lakes, including Waterkeeper’s presence and leadership in 25 coalitions and groups. Within these forums, Waterkeeper advocated for increases in funding for NY’s Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), as well as passage of the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). These successes combine to arm NY’s Great Lakes communities with additional tools and resources to protect our waterways and communities.



Clean Air, Clean Water and Green Jobs Bond Act

As a part of the New Yorkers for Clean Water and Jobs Coalition, Waterkeeper conducted direct education and engagement of our Western New York (WNY) constituency, resulting in public support for a \$4.2 Billion Environmental Bond that was passed by NYS voters in November of 2022. These monies will support critical investments in environmental protection and restoration to ensure progress towards community and waterway revitalization is maintained and accelerated. Waterkeeper continues to work as an active member of the statewide coalition to ensure that WNY receives an equitable share of these funds and to advocate for funding of locally supported projects.



PFAS and Drinking Water

Waterkeeper staff advocated for stronger drinking water regulations to protect New Yorker’s from PFAS contamination, the forever chemicals that are a growing threat and emerging contaminant in waterways across the US. Through our participation in an Emerging Contaminants Coalition, Waterkeeper attended NYS Drinking Water Quality Council Meetings, advocated for data transparency, and submitted comments to the NYS Department of Health. In the summer of 2022, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper participated in a nationwide effort to study PFAS surface water contamination along with over 100 Waterkeeper groups coordinated by the Waterkeeper Alliance. To date we have sampled 14 sites along our WNY waterways to establish a baseline assessment of PFAS contamination in surface water.



Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

Waterkeeper maintained and enhanced our robust Riverwatch citizen science water quality monitoring program in 2022, serving as the “eyes on the ground” to identify priorities and actions that support the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. We trained over 30 volunteers to collect baseline water quality data on a monthly basis across our watershed, collected bacteria data at 15 sites, and conducted rapid response to community reported events, including potential Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). We collected 3,200 plastic nurdles from waterway shorelines, contributing data to the Nurdle Patrol Citizen Science project. Using the data collected, Waterkeeper advocated for New York State and Great Lakes Basin policies to better protect the integrity of our waterways and support the health of our community. In 2023 and beyond, Waterkeeper will continue to leverage our data to advance conversations around much needed policy and programs changes.





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WATERKEEPER®**

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BNWaterkeeper.org



**YOUR
SUPPORT
MAKES A**

Splash!

**CLEAN
FRESH
WATER**



Protect

**HEALTHY
ECOSYSTEMS
& WATER**



Restore

**PEOPLE &
WILDLIFE
TO WATER**



Connect

**GROWTH &
ENGAGEMENT**



Inspire

**WE CAN'T DO THIS WORK
WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT.**

**OUR WATER.
OUR FUTURE.**

