



Feasibility Study on Buffalo River Restoration Released; Public Meeting Announced

Third Update on Collaborative Restoration and Redevelopment Efforts

December 2010

Introduction

A unique public-private-non-profit partnership including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® and Honeywell is moving forward with plans to address a number of environmental problems affecting the Buffalo River. The environmental challenges include contaminated river sediments, poor water quality, a lack of safe public access, and insufficient fish and wildlife habitat. This partnership brings together diverse resources and expertise and has developed plans for a comprehensive cleanup and transformation of the river into a beneficial environmental, economic, and community resource.



*Elevated rail bridge crossing the Buffalo River near Smith Street,
by Jill Jedlicka*

The plans include two major environmental dredging projects. The first project, expected to begin in Spring 2011, will be conducted by USACE to address contaminated sediments in the federal navigation channel. This channel was created nearly a century ago to accommodate shipping and alleviate flooding of residential properties upstream. The USACE is responsible for maintaining the channel.

Public Meeting Notice

A public meeting about the
Buffalo River Feasibility Study
will be held on

Monday, December 13, 2010

at

Public School 33

157 Elk Street, Buffalo, NY 14210

from

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Representatives from the USEPA, USACE, DEC, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper, and Honeywell will be present to explain the preferred remedial alternative and answer questions from the public.

The second project, to be implemented with the oversight of the U.S. EPA, would address contaminated river sediments outside of the navigation channel. The remediation would occur mostly along the shoreline of the river in targeted areas of a 6.2 mile stretch of the lower Buffalo River and 1.4 mile stretch of the City Ship Canal, which is designated as an Area of Concern (AOC) (see Figure 1). An AOC is a formal federal designation given to 43 degraded water bodies within the Great Lakes Basin. This project is being planned and funded through the Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA). The GLLA project will follow the USACE dredging of the federal navigation channel after completion of the remedial design.

Why Am I Receiving Information About the Buffalo River at This Time?

This fact sheet announces completion of the draft Feasibility Study (FS) for the Buffalo River. The report evaluates five alternatives for remediating contaminated sediments in the AOC. The FS recommends an alternative, the “Enhanced Protectiveness Dredging,” which would include targeted removal and isolated capping of contaminated sediments as well as include habitat restoration.

Though a formal public comment period is not required under the Legacy Act, over the next 60 days the project partners are inviting the public to view and ask questions related to the draft Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study Report, which can be found at www.BuffaloRiverRestoration.org. Written correspondence on the proposed remedial alternative will be accepted through **January 31, 2011** and can be sent to info@buffaloriverrestoration.org.

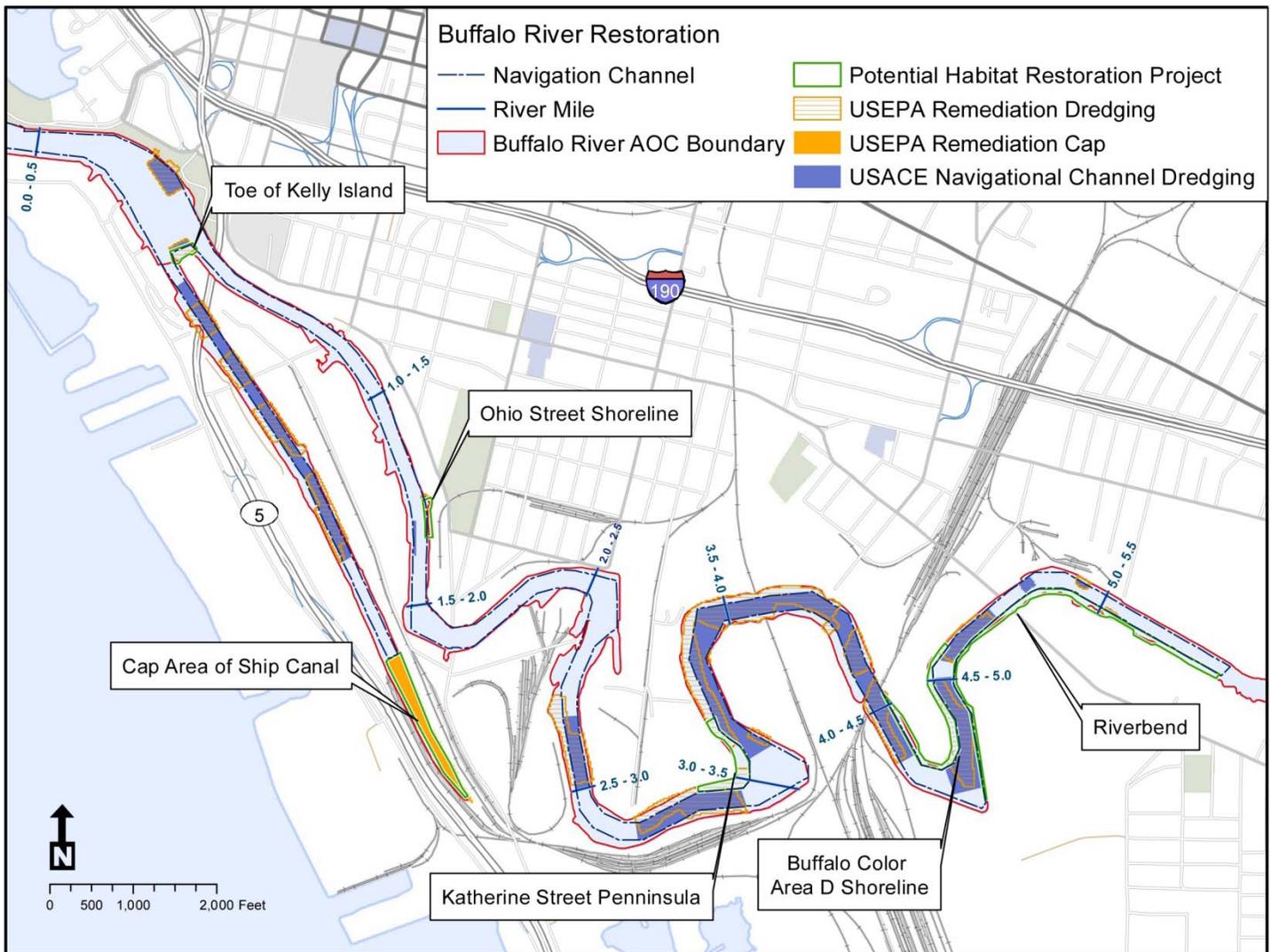


Figure 1: Proposed Restoration in the Buffalo River Area of Concern

The FS identifies and evaluates dredging, capping, and restoration technologies that would address contamination within the Buffalo River AOC. The FS also identifies the contaminants found in the AOC and the alternatives that most cost-effectively would address the potential ecological or human health risks associated with contaminated sediments. Details about the five alternatives that were evaluated, which ranged from “no action” to dredging and capping, are found in the FS.

Multiple contaminants of concern exist in the Buffalo River sediments, including but not limited to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH), polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), Lead (Pb), and mercury (Hg). In

general, the highest concentrations are located in the subsurface sediments from River Mile 3.5 to 5.5 and in the City Ship Canal.

The FS develops potential remedial alternatives that would protect human health and the environment and also be cost effective. The proposed alternatives have been evaluated based on their potential to accomplish four objectives:

1. Reduce exposure to humans and wildlife from direct sediment contact or through fish consumption by reducing the availability and/or concentration of contaminants in the sediment;
2. Reduce exposure of wildlife and aquatic communities to harmful concentrations of contaminants;
3. Reduce the potential for confined disposal of future dredged sediments (for routine navigational, commercial, and recreational purposes) by reducing contamination; and
4. Implement a remedy that is compatible with the Buffalo River Remedial Advisory Committee's goal of protecting and restoring habitat and supporting wildlife.

Proposed Remedial Alternative

The Preferred Alternative "Enhanced Protectiveness Dredging" (see Figure 1) is recommended because it effectively and efficiently achieves the objectives outlined above by dredging in areas that currently do not meet the objectives. Monitoring would be done both during and after dredging to determine the remedy's effectiveness and to ensure adequate protection of ecological and human health.

The Preferred Alternative also includes capping at the end of City Ship Canal to create a viable area for habitat. In addition to this habitat rehabilitation project, five additional areas along the river have been identified for restoration and improvement of habitat.

This preferred remedy would protect human health in areas frequently accessed by the public, where the river's velocity could move bottom sediments, and/or where sediments have been historically disturbed by ship traffic.

How Can I Obtain More Information?

The website, www.BuffaloRiverRestoration.org, hosted by NYSDEC, is a clearinghouse for river-related information about the upcoming sediment cleanup. A number of other websites with good information about the Buffalo River are also available:

- <http://www.epa.gov/greatlakes/aoc/buffalo.html>
- <http://www.lrb.usace.army.mil/missions/BufferoRiver/index.html>
- <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/37554.html>
- www.bnrivekeeper.org/programs/buffalo-river-remedial-action-plan/

To receive information on the Buffalo River by e-mail, sign up on NYSDEC's listserv at: <http://lists.dec.state.ny.us/mailman/listinfo/eriecountycleanupnews>.

Who Should I Contact If I Have Questions About the Buffalo River?

The following individuals can be contacted about this project and other issues related to the Buffalo River:

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