

COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM



CASE STUDY

Cost Efficient Alternatives Combat Storm Water Pollution Threats for Homeowners

Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® is a community-based nonprofit organization that has been dedicated to protecting the quality and quantity of water, while connecting people to water for the last 25 years. This is accomplished by cleaning up pollution from waterways, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, and enhancing public access through greenways that expand parks and open space. Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® has been leading a regional transformation in the rust belt towards a blue economy while bringing together multiple partners, community leaders, and other non-profits to showcase an international restoration model for the Great Lakes.

Challenge

Sewage pollution is the greatest on-going threat to the Great Lakes and our regional waterways. Stormwater pollution causes a multitude of water quality problems including bacteria, erosion, sedimentation, foul odors, and aesthetic impacts.

Landowners in the Niagara River Watershed play a significant role in the stewardship of local waters, especially as they design, plant and care for their property. However, many home and property owners do not know the best practices for managing stormwater. Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER®'s project goal is to support their efforts to improve water quality by conducting outreach and providing educational materials to homeowners and property owners. The materials and resources will provide homeowners with cost-efficient actions they can take to combat stormwater pollution threats.

Solution

Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® developed an "Inspiring Green Stormwater" program, an educational outreach initiative to help people understand how important our fresh water resources are, what and where stormwater drains are, and the impact these issues can make on the local environment. The program will provide the information necessary for home and property owners to take immediate cost-efficient action to combat stormwater pollution threats.

Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® set a goal to update and reprint three (3) of the most successful citizen guides for Best Management Practices for managing stormwater. The guides are:

"Know Your Sewershed" explains the basic working of the water cycle and how it is affected by land development. It further discusses stormwater management challenges and introduces green stormwater infrastructure and its role in the solution of managing our runoff.

"Western New York Guide to Native Plants for Your Garden" teaches landowners and gardeners how to utilize native plants to create a more sustainable landscape that requires less maintenance, fosters water conservation and reduces stormwater pollution.

"Landowner Waterfront Stewardship Guide" explains the importance of riparian buffers and assists property owners in creating these important features to stabilize and protect the stream banks on their property. In addition to a broad distribution of these publications, Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® also used these materials to reach two specific communities which both outflow directly into the Scajaquada Creek, to implement landowner education and guidance.

CHALLENGE

- Sewage pollution is the greatest on-going threat to the Great Lakes and our regional waterways, causing a multitude of water quality problems
- Home and property owners are undereducated on the best practices for managing stormwater

SOLUTION

- Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® developed an "Inspiring Green Stormwater" campaign that will provide necessary information for land owners to take immediate cost-efficient action to combat stormwater pollution threats
- Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® will update, re-printed and distributed three (3) of their most successful citizen guides for managing sewage pollution
- Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® directly engaged and educated two communities living in sewer water overflows

RESULTS

- Over 1,200 copies of educational materials were distributed to the local community
- Through 30 total events 1,877 participants were educated through hands-on and informative workshops about different methods to manage stormwater pollution

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Results

Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® committed to work directly with communities to ensure a high participation rate in engagement activities and identified three approaches that were highly effective: 1) integrating stormwater management information into the existing educational programs, 2) hosting a public meeting alongside other valued community partners, local agencies and elected officials and 3) distributing educational materials in a venue that serves as a hub for community organizing and civic engagement.

Using the first outreach approach, Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® generated high levels of participation and positive feedback by integrating stormwater education into River Academy, where students were introduced to the “Know Your Sewershed Guide” and the “Native Plant Guide” through a hands-on class on stormwater management taught by Mark Bogdan, Bioregional and Urban Design Project Manager. Students and their guests engaged in a lab exercise where they estimated the stormwater absorption capacity of various home and garden designs.

In November 2015, Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® organized and hosted “Save Our Scajaquada Creek”, a public meeting and panel discussion attended by over 160 community members. The goal of the event was to introduce community members to representatives from local agencies and organizations working on Scajaquada Creek, and host a panel discussion to facilitate a conversation about the creek’s water quality challenges and proposed solutions.

The final public forum event hosted by Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER® took place in April 2015 at the Polish Cadets Club. Hosting the forum at the Polish Cadets Club allowed Riverkeeper’s message to be supported by an organizational partner with deep roots in the community. Attendees learned about local plant and animal populations, watched a demonstration by the members of the Scajaquada Canoe Club, and received copies of the Native Plant Guide.

Through Riverkeeper’s “Inspiring Green Stormwater” engagement campaign, over 30 outreach events were hosted and/or attended. Over the course of the year, 1,877 residents living in sewer water overflows were directly engaged and 1,200 high-quality, informative publications were distributed.



Mark Bogdan, Bioregional and Urban Design Project Manager, presents stormwater management solutions



Students estimate stormwater management capacity in a lab exercise, working from the Know Your Sewershed Guide

Online Media:

- [Website](#)
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TESTIMONIAL

“Inspiring Green Stormwater was an extremely successful outreach campaign. We were able to provide high quality educational materials and learning opportunities directly to community members in the Buffalo area. NYSP2I’s support made this effort and outreach possible, and we are thankful for their support.”

– Susan E. Kornacki,
Communications & Development Manager
Buffalo Niagara RIVERKEEPER®

“Every time I attend a Riverkeeper event I leave feeling hopeful and excited about our future in Western New York; much work still to accomplish but the direction we as a community are headed and the completed projects of Riverkeeper are inspiring and I would love to pass along that inspiration to others.”

– Kelsey Burch, Event Attendee

NYSP2I PARTNERS



New York Manufacturing Extension Partnership

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