



# Niagara Riparian Restoration Program-Phase 2

Annual Progress Report  
Year 1

October 16, 2013

**1. Describe what progress you have made toward each of your grant objectives since your last status report. Did you meet your goals for this period? Please be specific.**

The Niagara Riparian Restoration Program has five main objectives. Over the current reporting period (October 2012-September 2013,) progress has been made on Objectives #1, 2, 3 and 5, with progress on objective #4 slated to begin in early 2014. In the fourth quarter of 2012, an initial work plan was developed for the grant and subsequently revised throughout the course of the reporting period to reflect both challenges and opportunities encountered. Accordingly, the initial timeline for specific deliverables under the grant was revised. Detailed descriptions of progress under each objective are provided below.

**1. Implement 5-8 riparian forest buffer and shoreline restoration projects**

During the reporting period, Riverkeeper capitalized on an opportunity to leverage Federal grant funds (EPA GLRI Riverbend and USFS Griffon Park) to this objective. Using Federal funds, Riverkeeper conducted initial background research on potential sites; evaluated bio-engineering methodologies; and developed design, Auto CAD and construction contract document standards and templates, all of which will be utilized as the team develops site specific living shoreline options in early 2014 under the NRRP grant. This opportunity allowed Riverkeeper to utilize alternative funding for specific work plan elements, saving NRRP funding for the ramp-up to conceptual site design in early 2014.

As will be discussed fully in section 3 of the report, challenges related to personnel were encountered during the reporting period under this objective. To address those challenges, the original work plan was revised to elevate progress on objectives 2 and 3, and delay certain milestones under objective #1. In September of 2013, a detailed work plan was developed for the fourth quarter of 2013 to not only ramp-up work under objective #1, but to ensure that clearly defined work on each of the objectives will continue seamlessly into 2014 and will remain a primary focus throughout the remainder of the grant.

**2. Implement the Native Niagara: Ready! Set! Grow! Native seed collection and grow-out program.**

Over the past year, the following activities were accomplished:

- Developed Target Site List and Plant Species List
- Developed Site Assessment Form, Assessment Guidelines and Checklist
- Held kickoff discussion with David Lee of Saratoga Springs NYSDEC Nursery
- Met with Richard Price of Urban Roots to discuss seed collection
- Conducted 21 Site Assessments to document native plant populations at 17 different natural areas in Western New York

- Initiated development of databases of sites, species and flowering/seeding times for project planning
- Began developing Field Reference Sheets for species identification, for use by project volunteers
- Planned one seed collection/cutting propagation event for 11/9/2013 with River Academy service learning class in partnership with Erie Community College
- Recruited and trained four student interns and three AmeriCorps to assist with project objectives

### 3. Coordinate Nine Water Chestnut Pull events to assist in controlling the invasive species in Tonawanda Creek

Over the past year, the following activities were accomplished:

- Met with Mike Goehle of USFWS to develop strategy for invasive Water Chestnut eradication
- Recruited volunteers, including Youthworks teen service organization, to conduct removal projects
- Assessed and purchased equipment for shallow water invasive removal including four canoes, safety equipment and decontamination equipment
- Conducted three staff inspections by kayak of suspected shallow-water Water Chestnut hotspots inaccessible to the USFWS equipment
- Conducted two invasive Water Chestnut removal events in Tonawanda Creek at Three Mile Island on July 17 and July 24, 2013
- Completed one Water chestnut removal event for September 28, 2013 with the River Academy service learning class in partnership with Erie Community College

### 4. Conduct a third-party evaluation of the NRRP program and coordinate the Niagara Greenway Graduate Internship Program to support program development and NRRP implementation.

To address personnel challenges discussed within section 3, revisions were made in the grant work plan to delay progress on this objective, focusing instead on objective #s 1, 2, 3 and 5. However, contact has been made with SUNY-ESF (Professors Emanuel Carter and Douglas Daley) regarding potentially utilizing their Landscape Architecture, Landscape Ecology and Environmental Engineering graduate students to help initiate the program. Work under this objective, as specifically detailed in the September 2013 workplan, is currently in progress and will continue seamlessly into 2014 and throughout the life of the grant.

### 5. Utilize the website and educational materials to provide waterfront landowners and stakeholders with technical information and to profile the NRRP projects.

Progress under this objective has focused on identifying revisions to the *Native and Naturalized Plant Guide for Buffalo Niagara* and the *Waterfront Landowner Stewardship Guide*. Revisions are being implemented this fall and reprints are scheduled for distribution by the end of January 2014. Website updates will initiate in late 2013 and

will continue throughout the life of the grant. Promotion of the NRRP grant is ongoing and matriculated throughout all of Riverkeeper's public engagement initiatives. Targeted outreach will ramp up in early 2014 as and will remain consistent throughout the remainder of the grant.

**2. How did you measure your progress since your last status report? What kind of data has been collected to determine whether progress is being made or not being made? What results have been obtained since your last status report?**

This is the first progress/status report submitted under Phase 2 of this grant. However, the grant application that was funded contained a set of clear objectives as well as milestones/activities and a projected timeline for completion of objectives. It also stated that annual program evaluation and work plan modification would be incorporated throughout the grant as necessary to adjust and adaptively manage the project. Over the current reporting period, the original grant work plan as well as a new timeline for milestones has been developed to reflect challenges and opportunities. This revision is provided as Attachment A.

Data collected under Objectives is measured based on the specific deliverables under each objective. For example, progress under Objective #2 can be measured by the number of sites scouted for seed collection, or the number of meetings held with partners to assist in developing targeted site lists and plant species lists. Since this grant is less about data collection and more about on the ground progress, we propose that the bullets listed under each objective serve as the measurements of progress towards a specific activity or milestone within each objective.

**3. What challenges have you encountered since your last status report? How are you addressing these challenges?**

The most significant challenge during the reporting period was the inability of the grant team to find and hire a qualified project manager. In 2013, Riverkeeper launched two separate searches for a qualified project manager. During the first search, first and second interviews were held but it was ultimately determined that the pool of applicants did not have enough direct experience working with shoreline restoration principles, construction oversight and general ecological restoration projects. Shortly thereafter, a second search was launched. During this second search, a qualified candidate was identified and offered the project management position. Unfortunately, the selected candidate could not accept the job offer for unforeseen personal circumstances.

In lieu of launching a third, time-intensive search, Riverkeeper opted to conduct an internal reorganization and subsequently has appointed a current qualified staff member as project manager. The project manager assumed duties beginning October 6, 2013. While Riverkeeper does not anticipate requiring additional funds for any of the challenges encountered, the current work plan, as well as the future work plan, will necessarily have to be revised. It is anticipated that an update will be provided in-person

to the GESC in early 2014, including a shifting of any budget lines that may be required in order to accommodate the new direction in project management.

**4. Are you on schedule to complete your project in the proposed timeline? If not, please explain why you are ahead or behind schedule.**

Based on the challenges described in section 3 of the report, Riverkeeper anticipates that a no-cost time extension may be required to complete the grant objectives in an exemplary manner. While Attachment A provides a revised set of milestones/activities and timeframes based on the current status of the project, it is foreseeable that additional revisions and budget line shifts may be necessary once the newly-appointed project manager gets up to speed. As stated above, the project team anticipates requesting a face-to-face meeting with the GESC in early 2014 to discuss progress and any necessary changes.

**5. Please use the table below to report your expenditures since your last status report. Include in-kind support from other resources you have used since your last report below the table. Please explain any differences between anticipated and actual expenditures. Attach copies of any relevant receipts or invoices to this report.**

A current snapshot of the grant budget is shown below. When the grant application was submitted, it was anticipated that the Year 1 budget would total \$235,225. Based on the evolution of the grant objectives to date, actual expenditures for Year 1 total \$128,320. The discrepancy between the original grant budget and the current budget can be directly correlated to the inability to hire a project manager over the reporting period. Moving forward into the current quarter (October through December 2013) and into 2014, it is expected that the newly appointed project manager will accelerate all grant objectives, with corresponding spending of grant funds to occur. While not a factor in the budget table below, it should be noted that Riverkeeper was able to leverage significant Federal funds to this grant over the reporting period in making progress under Objective 1.

Budget Categories	GESC-approved budget	Funds or in-kind support from other resources	Total expenses to date (as of 9/30/2013)	Remaining balance
Salaries and Benefits	\$437,813.00		\$30,170.65	\$407,642.35
Travel	\$9,900.00		\$826.06	\$9,073.94
Equipment				
Supplies	\$13,600.00		\$4,183.85	\$9,416.15
Meetings				
Printed Material				
Consultants	\$110,200.00		\$5,000.00	\$105,200.00

Other	\$127,917.00	\$597,000.00	\$88,140.00	\$39,777.00
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$699,430.00</b>	<b>\$597,000.00</b>	<b>\$128,320.56</b>	<b>\$571,109.44</b>

**6. What progress toward your objectives do you expect to make before your next status report? Please be specific.**

During the fourth quarter of 2013 (October through December,) a detailed work plan has been developed that outlines the expected progress on Objectives 1-5. A summary of those activities is provided below.

In addition, Attachment A provides a general overview of the revised grant milestones/activities and timeframes for the life of the grant from 2014 and beyond. In completing this revised chart, it is assumed that a no-cost time extension through 2016 will be requested. By the end of December 2013, the newly appointed project manager will have a detailed outline and work plan for 2014-2016 that can be shared with the GESC at an in-person meeting in early 2014.

For the period of October through December 2013, the following progress can be expected under each objective:

**Objective 1:**

- Develop 2014-2016 work plan and budget
- Conduct research via web, literature and conversations regarding living shoreline concepts and implementation strategies
- Apply results/priorities from Riverkeeper’s habitat conservation strategy to site review for potential living shorelines
- Consult with DEC and FWS regarding riparian and shoreline priorities
- Begin developing bioengineering site assessment/concept design standards/technical design standards
- Develop site ranking criteria
- Initiate development of landowner outreach materials
- Conduct internal assessment of potential site locations based on site assessment criteria
- Initiate baseline mapping for first round of potential sites and field analysis
- Contact landowners as appropriate for site access in 2014/obtain written permissions
- Develop a plan for site evaluation needs (i.e.: soil testing, surveys, etc.)

**Objective 2:**

- Continue seed collection site assessment utilizing interns and volunteers
- Coordinate permissions for sites
- Coordinate a seed collection event with trained staff (November)
- Communicate and consult with local partners (local nurseries, Saratoga Nursery, River Academy, etc.)

- Secure a GIS intern or consultant to help with seed collection mapping

Objective 3:

- Continue coordination with project partners (FWS)
- Organize and implement 1 chestnut pull event
- Develop plan for winter gear storage

Objective 4:

- Initiate and further develop outreach to universities regarding a partnering interest
- Develop and post a request for proposals if needed
- Develop agreements with willing academic partners
- Begin recruiting for graduate fellowships

Objective 5:

- Conduct monthly updates to the Riverkeeper website regarding project status
- Revise Native and Naturalized Plant Guide content and format
- Revise Waterfront Landowner Stewardship Guide content and format

**7. Please include 1 to 2 photographs with dates and short descriptions taken since your last project report.**

Below are 2 images from Water Chestnut pull events held over the reporting period, demonstrating progress under Objective #3.

July 17, 2013: 3-Mile Island, Tonawanda Creek



July 24, 2013: 3-Mile Island, Tonawanda Creek



## Attachment A: Revised Program Timeline

### Program Timeline Narrative & Project Schedule

The program was originally proposed for 10/1/2012 – 12/31/2015 with annual program evaluation, work plan modification, and reapplication to the Greenway Ecological Steering Committee. The proposed timeline carries work through the spring planting season of 2016, for which a no-cost time extension may be requested of the GESC in early 2014.

Timeline	Activity
Fall 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Formalize partnerships</li> <li>▪ Create work plans for staff</li> <li>▪ Begin research on bio-engineering methodologies</li> <li>▪ Begin development of Native Niagara program</li> </ul>
Winter–Spring 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Recruit and train Americorps members and volunteers to assist with Water Chestnut pull events and Native Niagara programs</li> <li>▪ Develop field reference sheets and database for Native Niagara</li> <li>▪ Organize Water Chestnut Pull events and seed collection events</li> <li>▪ Purchase equipment for shallow water invasive species removal</li> <li>▪ Conduct inspections at potential Water Chestnut removal sites</li> <li>▪ Develop Auto CAD design standards and construction document templates for living shorelines</li> <li>▪ Develop partnerships with potential academic institutions for fellowship evaluation program</li> <li>▪ Direct SUNY-ESF 5<sup>th</sup> year and Graduate Environmental Engineering, Landscape Architecture and Landscape Ecology studio design work exploring stream daylighting and living shoreline restorations in the Scajaquada Creek watershed.</li> </ul>
Summer–Fall 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop outreach materials and recruit landowners for living shoreline projects through a mailing and an informational workshop</li> <li>▪ Assemble a technical advisory committee and consult with technical experts on living shoreline program priorities</li> <li>▪ Conduct internal assessment of potential living shoreline site locations</li> <li>▪ Identify species and seed collection sites for Native Niagara</li> <li>▪ Communicate with project partners on Native Niagara program</li> <li>▪ Manage intern and volunteers for Native Niagara</li> <li>▪ Conduct site assessments for Native Niagara program</li> <li>▪ Plan at least (1) seed collection/cutting event</li> <li>▪ Conduct at least (2) Water Chestnut removal events</li> <li>▪ Recruit for graduate fellowship program</li> <li>▪ Begin revision assessment on (2) publications</li> <li>▪ Perform annual reporting and presentation to funder</li> </ul>
Winter-Spring 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Award notification and media event.</li> <li>▪ Develop detailed workplan for 2014; consult with GESC as needed</li> <li>▪ Conduct public outreach on living shoreline project goals</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify, recruit landowners, and begin to develop concept plans and budget for 2014/2015 projects</li> <li>▪ Begin site visits and landowner selection</li> <li>▪ Develop concept designs</li> <li>▪ Secure GESC approval and funding of 2014 living shoreline projects</li> <li>▪ Develop final designs and construction documents; secure permits</li> <li>▪ Organize Water Chestnut Pull events and seed collection events</li> <li>▪ Recruit, develop work plan, and manage graduate fellows for evaluation program</li> <li>▪ Reprint and distribute Landowner Stewardship Guide and Native and Naturalized Plan Guide</li> <li>▪ Hold (2) Technical Advisory Committee meetings as needed</li> </ul>
Summer-Fall 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Process first round of construction bidding, letting and begin construction; monitor contract</li> <li>▪ Facilitate technical exchange discussion and outreach to media and community</li> <li>▪ Identify, recruit landowners, and initiate concept plan development and budget for GESC approval of 2015 projects</li> <li>▪ Conduct Water Chestnut and seed collection events</li> <li>▪ Continue coordination and collaboration with project partners</li> <li>▪ Perform annual reporting and presentation to funder</li> </ul>
Winter – Spring 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Finalize concept plans, consult with GESC and secure funding for second round of living shoreline projects</li> <li>▪ Conduct POE activities for first round of construction projects</li> <li>▪ Conduct evaluations through fellowship program</li> <li>▪ Monitor and manage contracts for Round 1 living shoreline sites</li> <li>▪ Develop final designs and construction documents; secure permits for Round 2 living shorelines sites</li> <li>▪ Finalize native seed grow-out program</li> <li>▪ Continue evaluation of Phase 2 sites through the fellowship program</li> <li>▪ Continue public outreach and education initiatives, including distribution of (2) publications</li> </ul>
Summer –Fall 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Process second round of construction bidding, letting and begin construction; monitor contract</li> <li>▪ Complete any remaining water chestnut events per funding availability and need</li> <li>▪ Perform site evaluation on all living shoreline sites (fellowship program)</li> <li>▪ Conduct monitoring and manage contracts for all living shoreline sites; ensure maintenance and performance standards are met</li> <li>▪ Facilitate technical exchange discussion and outreach to media and community</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Recruit, develop work plan, and manage graduate intern</li></ul>
Winter-Spring 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Conduct final monitoring and assessments of living shoreline sites</li><li>▪ Final reporting of results of program assessments and accounting of expenditures will be submitted to participating funders and partners</li></ul>