Niagara River Ramsar Designation - Canada

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Overview

- Who we are
- Why we are here today
- What is Ramsar
- Why Ramsar for the Niagara River
- Path moving forward
Why Are We Here Today?

On October 3, 2019 the U.S. portion of the Niagara River was officially designated as a Wetland of International Importance: a Ramsar site.

When Canada achieves Ramsar designation, the 2 sides will join, forming the first transboundary Ramsar site in all the America’s
Why Are We Here Today?

We are seeking Niagara Region’s endorsement for Niagara River Ramsar Designation.
Ramsar is a Global Convention for action on the wise use conservation of water-based ecosystems: Wetlands of International Importance. Think lands that are wet for global cultural interpretation.

Source: Ramsar
Ramsar is:

- Voluntary Convention signed by 171 countries
- Global biodiversity recognition of water-based systems
- Goal to strengthen global conservation and collaboration
171 member nations, over 25 million ha on 2,391 sites
Ramsar sites form the world’s largest network of globally important areas

Source: Ramsar
Canadian Ramsar Sites

Source: Globe and Mail / Richard Seeley

Source: Modified from NATO
Environmental Sustainability Research Centre
brocku.ca/esrc

Julia Baird
The image shows a map of the Canadian and U.S. boundaries along the Niagara River, including Niagara Falls and Grand Island. The map highlights the locations of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and the Niagara River. The map also includes a legend indicating the boundaries and green spaces within the Ramsar Site. The coordinates 43°00'50" N, 78°58'21" W are marked on the map, which are likely related to a specific location or point of interest along the boundary.
Ramsar Designation Criteria – one criteria needed to qualify

1. Is representative, rare, or unique.
2. Supports vulnerable, endangered or threatened species.
3. Supports keystone or endemic species.
4. Supports species at a critical stage in their life cycles.
5. Supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.
6. Supports 1% of the individuals global population of waterbird.
7. Supports a significant proportion of indigenous fish species.
8. An important food source, spawning area, or migration area for fish.
9. Supports 1% of the individuals population of a non-avian species.
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As a user of the water, OPG has no objection to the steering committee seeking designation of the Niagara River Corridor as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.
Feasibility

The use of the water on the Niagara River is governed by a Boundary Waters Treaty between Canada and the United States and is administered by the International Joint Commission (IJC). NYPA and the State of New York own most of the land immediately along the gorge and the river shore.

As a user of the water, NYPA has no objection to the steering committee seeking designation of the Niagara River Corridor as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.
What a Ramsar Designation Won’t Do:

- Ensure environmental protection, Ramsar designation will not bring regulation
- Restrict users rights, including the ability to draw water for irrigation (NOTL)
- The Ramsar Convention is a voluntary framework, it will not stop or prevent economic development projects (Thundering Waters)
- It does not “lock in” an administrative body (nominator) or any other endorsing partner. Endorsements can be reconsidered at anytime with no penalty.
Does not impact development project example:
Oak Hammock Marsh (Manitoba) – Ramsar Site (1987) & Ducks Unlimited Canada National Office
What will a Ramsar Designation do?

- Promote conservation through international cooperation
- Increase community pride through globally recognized level of significance
- Increase ecotourism (ornithologists Ramsar site network)
- Increase funding for tourism, economic development & resource management
- Increase marketing opportunities linked to site activities, services, & products
- The use of the globally recognized Ramsar logo in branding and advertising
Secoveljske Soline Ramsar Site Slovenia (Salt Pans)
QUILL LAKES WATER CRISIS RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

Quills Lakes, Saskatchewan: Ramsar Site 1987
QUILL LAKES WATER CRISIS RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION
Where is Canada in the Niagara River designation process?

Selection of a site nominator:

- In 2015, the Niagara Parks Commission Board of Directors approved the site nominator role in principal pending an acceptable legal review which is completed.

Completion of a Canadian nomination package:

- Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) species lists are all completed.
- Engagement with Indigenous partners, stakeholders and the community is on-going.
- Endorsement have been received from Ontario Power Generation, the City of Niagara Falls (Ontario), Town of Fort Erie, & GLSLCI, NPCA, NC, NRC, Land Care Niagara, various conservation groups.
- Endorsements are required from the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, the Regional Municipality of Niagara.
The Ramsar Convention has been operating as the most successful international conservation collaboration for 50 years (2021)
Endorsement from local/ state natural resource agency

• New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Endorsement from Congress representing area

• Congressman Brian Higgins

Endorsement from the landowners:

• New York Power Authority
• City of Niagara Falls
• City of Buffalo
• Erie County
• Town of Grand Island
• Village of Lewiston
• New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic
• City of Tonawanda
• City of North Tonawanda
• Town of Tonawanda
• Western New York Land Conservancy
Endorsements from local/ state stakeholders

- Audubon New York / Buffalo Audubon Society
- Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
- Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
- Buffalo Society of Natural Resources
- Friends of Times Beach Nature Preserve
- Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
- Lake Erie Watershed Protection Alliance
- New York State Senator Chris Jacobs
- New York State Assemblyman Sean Ryan
- Niagara Global Tourism Initiative
- Sierra Club Niagara Group
- Visit Buffalo Niagara

Endorsements from County & Municipality:

- City of Niagara Falls
- City of Buffalo
- Erie County
- Town of Grand Island
- Town of Lewiston
- Village of Lewiston
- City of Tonawanda
- City of North Tonawanda
- Town of Tonawanda
- Niagara County
- Town of Niagara
- Town of Porter
- Town of Wheatfield
- Village of Youngstown
NIAGARA RIVER CORRIDOR RECOGNIZED AS 40TH WETLAND OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE BY THE UNITED STATES
Global Opportunity for the entire Niagara River Community

Local Opportunity to **Change** the Legacy and **Be** the legacy
Thank you

Next Steps
Complete engagement requirements and submit final paperwork to ECCC
Then celebrate!!!