

Grass Island Revised Final Design Details

August 28, 2019

- The Grass Island project is designed to protect natural aquatic vegetation in the Niagara River that provides valuable fish and wildlife habitat with the goal of enhancing and creating more habitat leading to an increase in the numbers of species such as muskellunge, herons and frogs.
- The project is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) along with other restoration projects in the Niagara River as part of the process to delist the river as an Area of Concern (AOC).
- The vegetation and habitat at Grass Island is being lost due to both natural forces (ice, waves) and human actions (boat wake, disturbance). The project is designed to protect the habitat from these impacts and allow for areas of Grass Island to be restored enhancing the habitat in the Niagara River.
- Features of the project include rock reefs to protect vegetation from ice, waves, boat wakes and human disturbance, sunken tree root wads for underwater habitat structure, and plantings of native emergent and submerged vegetation.
- The revised final design differs from a proposed design released at a public meeting on November 11, 2019 in the location and design of the upstream rock reef and it includes additional locations for signage.
- The upstream rock reef was moved further to the west given new information on the location of the waste water treatment outfall pipe. This new location for the reef allowed a 100-foot buffer to be reduced to only 20-feet which provides better protection and limits disturbance within the core habitat area.
- The upstream rock reef was also reduced in size which limits the impacts with the regulated wetland by reducing the amount of construction material used and the area of exposed rock that can be colonized by non-native mussels. The flattened, but still curved shaped, of the upstream reef is designed to deflect the forces of the current and ice.
- Plantings were also added to the upstream rock reef to provide a sight and sound buffer for wildlife within the core habitat area.
- Additional locations for signage were added around the island to provide increased opportunities for signage for safety and education on the habitat value of the area.
- What comes next?
 - Complete design drawings and specifications (Summer 2019)
 - Review the project under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (Summer/Fall 2019)
 - Permitting with regulatory agencies (e.g. NYSDEC, U.S. Army Corps) (Winter 2020)
 - Bidding and Contract (Spring 2020)
 - Start Construction (Fall 2020)