

Why the Niagara River Corridor?

Designating the Niagara River Corridor as a Wetland of International Importance



Photo: Nicole Komin

The Ramsar Convention



Photo: www.ramsar.org

The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, more commonly known as the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental treaty that embodies a commitment to encourage education and sustainable development as a means of protecting the world's wetlands. As described by the Ramsar Secretariat (www.ramsar.org), "the Ramsar Convention's mission is to promote the wise use of wetlands and the employment of sustainable development practices. Satisfying this mission requires international cooperation. The Ramsar Convention encourages nations to designate wetlands throughout the world as "internationally important." This designation helps member nations manage wetlands in a way that promotes the best possible sustainable use of wetland resources.

According to the Ramsar Secretariat, a wetland is an area where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and associated plant and animal life. For the Ramsar Convention's purposes, riparian and coastal zones adjacent to a wetland, and even certain islands or bodies of water lying within the wetland, may be considered integral parts of the wetland. In some unique instances, an ecologically coherent wetland deserving of international recognition can extend across national borders. The Ramsar Convention seeks to recognize such "transboundary wetlands" and establish a cooperative management arrangement between the nations involved. The Niagara River Corridor meets the definition and intent of the Convention's concept of a designatable transboundary wetland.

Successfully obtaining a Ramsar designation requires meeting certain criteria relating to the ecological characteristics of the wetland. A Ramsar Information Sheet ("RIS") specifying how the criteria are met is submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat once it is approved by member nations. An RIS provides detailed data on various scientific and cultural parameters, including issues relating to science, conservation, and culture, and includes a map precisely delimiting the boundaries of the site to be designated.

Ramsar designation confers many noteworthy benefits. These can include: enhanced scientific attention, increased tourism, access to certain funding sources, and opportunities for public education and outreach. For a more in-depth discussion of the

benefits and responsibilities of Ramsar designation, please see www.ramsar.org and the SUNY Buffalo Environmental Law Clinic's "[Ramsar FAQ](#)."

Why Designate the Niagara River Corridor?

The Niagara River Corridor is an ideal location for Ramsar designation. Such designation supports the conservation of the River and its natural resources and does not impede continued sustainable development that is vital to our region's prosperity.

Ramsar designation of the Niagara River Corridor would:

- Foster international cooperation between the United States and Canada
- Encourage sustainable use of the River's natural resources
- Increase public awareness of the Niagara River's importance
- Invite further scientific exploration and improve collective understanding of the area
- Increase potential for access to public and private funding

Due to its unique ecological character, the Niagara River Corridor satisfies the Ramsar Convention's criteria for designation. While the history of the River demonstrates a clear showing of past degradation and overuse, it is still vibrant and full of life.

Rare and unique features not found anywhere else in the world



Niagara Falls, Photo: DEC

Home to more than 20,000 waterbirds and over 80 species of fish



Ring-billed Gull
Photo: Joe Lefevre, DEC



Common Mergansers
Photo: Bill Banaszewski, DEC



Northern Pike
Photo: DEC



Walleye
Photo: DEC



Largemouth Bass
Photo: DEC



Rock Bass
Photo: DEC

Provides an ideal habitat for many bird and fish species during critical times of their lifecycle



Bald Eagles nesting, Photo: DEC

Supports various species that are endangered, threatened, or of special concern as well as keystone species that act as an important food source for other species



Lake Sturgeon (NYS Threatened)
Photo: DEC



Peregrine Falcon (NYS Endangered)
Photo: Barbara Loucks, DEC



Emerald Shiner (keystone species)
Photo: DEC

The Niagara River Corridor is an international symbol and an environmental treasure with unique ecological character deserving celebration. For decades, the Niagara region has blended a unique ecological habitat with cutting-edge industry, and the Niagara River Corridor has thrived. The status of a Wetland of International Importance would support the River's vibrancy for generations to come.

More information on the Ramsar Convention and what it means to become a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance, refer to:

- The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands [www.ramsar.org]
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service- International Affairs [<http://www.fws.gov/international/>]
- Canadian Wildlife Service [www.ec.gc.ca]
- "Ramsar FAQ" [<http://www.law.buffalo.edu/content/dam/law/restricted-assets/pdf/environmental/projects/ramsar-faq.pdf>]
- Ramsar Website, "The Niagara River Corridor: An Important Transnational Treasure" [<http://www.law.buffalo.edu/ramsar>]

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