



FOR RELEASE May 5, 2021

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Buffalo and Erie County Join the Movement to Create Wildlife-Friendly Communities with the National Wildlife Federation and the BRRAlliance

Buffalo Becomes the 136th Certified Community Wildlife Habitat in the Nation and Erie County Registers to Join Buffalo in 2021

Buffalo, NY – May 5, 2021 – The BRRAlliance, celebrates the completion of the Buffalo Habitat Project which was launched two years ago with the goal of certifying the City of Buffalo as a National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat. This designation makes Buffalo the 136th such community in the country to achieve certification through the National Wildlife Federation program and it places Buffalo as the largest NWF Community Wildlife Habitat in New York State and the 15th largest in the nation. A Community Wildlife Habitat project creates multiple habitat areas in backyards, schoolyards, corporate properties, community gardens, parkland and other spaces.

At today's celebration Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown was presented with a framed certificate from the NWF and the BRRAlliance noting this achievement. The certification of the City of Buffalo involved over 220 properties in the city meeting the criteria for certification as a habitat areas and included community gardens, parks, businesses, schools and private residences. It also included an extensive list of required outreach and educational programming which the BRRAlliance provided throughout the eighteen months of certification activity.

The BRRAlliance credits their strategic partnerships with the City of Buffalo Parks Department, Grassroots Gardens and Gardens Buffalo Niagara for their ability to achieve this important designation so quickly. They also noted that many other organizations supported their efforts by volunteering to help create new wildlife friendly habitats in community green spaces, certifying property they controlled, sharing educational information with their audiences, and/or lending support financially to ensure this program was environmentally just and that there were no financial barriers to participation.

City Councilmember Joseph Golombek presented a proclamation from the Buffalo Common Council noting May 5th as Community Wildlife Habitat Day in Buffalo and marking May as Garden for Wildlife Month.

“The National Wildlife Federation commends the dedicated residents of Buffalo, NY and the BRRAlliance, Inc. and their partners for their wildlife conservation efforts and for coming together for a common purpose - to create a community where people and wildlife can flourish, said Patrick Fitzgerald, Senior Director of Community Wildlife at the National Wildlife Federation. “At a time when communities are faced with the problems of losing habitat to development, Buffalo, NY, stands out as a model for other urban communities to emulate. The knowledge and inspiration that this project has generated will lead Buffalo residents and visitors to take better care of their natural world.”

The BRRAlliance and the National Wildlife Federation also launched their newest initiative in Western New York by announcing that the County of Erie will be joining Buffalo in 2021 as they work together with Erie County, town and village municipalities, and other organizations to achieve certification for the County by the end of this year. Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz announced this initiative at the event which was attended by other political dignitaries, the media and Habitat Project partner organizations.

When completed, Erie County will become the 4th largest certified NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION Community Wildlife Habitat in the country. The BRRAlliance acknowledged the support of the Buffalo Niagara Greenway and the County of Erie Department of Environment and Planning for leading this effort with them as they position Western New York to lead the way for the rest of NY State to follow in what the BRRAlliance hopes will eventually become a state-wide initiative.

BRRAlliance President Deneb Pirrone observed that “The Black Rock Riverside Alliance is dedicated to improving the living conditions for the underserved communities of Northwest Buffalo and that mission includes improving the sustainability of our urban ecosystem. We recognize that our corner of Western New York is part of a larger, vibrant regional environment and we are grateful for our partners' support in rolling out and expanding the reach of this program beyond the City of Buffalo. This program, when adopted and implemented on a grander scale, will ensure wildlife that are so vital to a strong health ecosystem will thrive as they move, migrate, or resettle should they become displaced. It is our responsibility to our animal neighbors because we are the only ones that have the power to make the changes necessary to create a welcoming environment for them in our communities and undo some of the damage that has put so many species in danger here in our own backyards.”

The BRRAlliance added that in addition to their county wide educational programming they will be offering seeds through their annual Seed Bank and 1000 Sunflower projects, and this year they will also be offering 200 native tree seedlings later this month in a drive-up giveaway event along with the seeds.

The leadership of the BRRAlliance also thanked the Paul & Helen Ellis Charitable Trust for providing the initial funding for the Buffalo Habitat Project and several of the complementary initiatives that help achieve certification. They also offered special thanks to Erie County Legislator Lisa Chimera and Buffalo Common Councilmember Joseph Golombek for their continued support of the organization

which makes all they achieve possible. They also express extreme gratitude to the Buffalo Niagara Greenway and the Ecological Standing Committee for their commitment to fund the Erie County project in order to make this a more regional effort to benefit all.

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The BRRAlliance, Inc, is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization founded in 2011 with a mission to improve the quality of life for those that live in the Buffalo communities of Black Rock, Riverside, Grant-Amherst and West Hertel. They achieve this goal through their environmental and beautification programs and projects including managing community gardens, creating habitat spaces, installing public art and advocating for environmentally friendly improvements. They also serve as a catalyst for economic growth and development in this underserved waterfront area by leveraging investments for small business owners and by bringing or being the community voice at city infrastructure and improvements discussions. For more information about the Habitat Project locally or other BRRAlliance programs or projects visit www.brralliance.org or follow them on social media @BRRAlliance – Black Rock Riverside Alliance.

The Community Wildlife Habitat project is part of National Wildlife Federation's Garden for Wildlife program. These projects benefit the entire community of plants, wildlife, and people through the creation of sustainable landscapes that require little or no pesticides, fertilizers, and excess watering. These landscapes help keep water and air resources clean. They are healthier for people and the environment and are less resource-dependent than conventional landscapes. Habitat landscapes can serve to beautify our urban areas and give residents pride in their neighborhoods.

To date, 140 communities have been recognized with Community Wildlife Habitat certification. Since 1973, NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION has provided millions of people with the basic guidelines for making their landscapes more wildlife-friendly. There are more than 200,000 certified habitats nationwide. For more information, please go to: www.nwf.org/garden. Learn more at NWF.org/Community and get more updates from the National Wildlife Federation at NWF.org/News.

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