Contact:
Heather Smith
Grand Traverse BAYKEEPER®
231.935.1514 x3
hsmith@gtbay.org

The Watershed Center
GRAND TRAVERSE BAY
13170 S. West Bay Shore Drive
Traverse City, MI 49684
231.935.1514
gtbay.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE WATERSHED CENTER PARTNERS WITH GREAT LAKES WATERKEEPERS ON TRASH-FREE GREAT LAKES GRANT

Traverse City, MI – Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper has received a federal grant from the Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative for nearly $300,000 to lead an effort across the Great Lakes Basin for coordinated cleanups through 2022. The effort will help keep drinking water resources safe and protect habitats throughout the Great Lakes Basin.

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and its partners, Seneca Park Zoo, Friends of the Detroit River, The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay, and Milwaukee Riverkeeper, will utilize the federal funding to coordinate trash clean up events and awareness campaigns in their five respective Great Lakes communities in 2021 and 2022, with the goal of removing 68 metric tons of trash from 17,120 acres by the end of 2022.

Litter pollution in the Great Lakes basin is increasing and is a threat to many communities' drinking water quality and the habitats of native fish and wildlife species. Therefore, in addition to the cleanups over the next two years, the coalition hopes to add 10 additional Great Lakes communities to the collective effort, dubbed "The Great Lakes Cleanup," by 2025.

"Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper is honored to lead this effort, and we are grateful for EPA's support for this multi-state, multi-lake collaborative effort," said Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper Executive Director Jill Jedlicka. "We are thrilled to be able to work with our fellow Waterkeeper organizations around the Great Lakes, who are some of the most effective water advocates in the world. Our collective action and cooperation are intended to benefit the health and future of the millions of people and species that call the Great Lakes Basin their home and we can't wait to mobilize thousands more citizens and volunteers in these clean-up efforts."

"EPA's new, innovative Trash-Free Great Lakes program underscores the administration's commitment to protecting and preserving these binational treasures," said EPA Region 5 Administrator Kurt Thiede. "EPA is proud to support Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and all of our partners through this inaugural round of grants as we work to address the issue of litter and debris in the Great Lakes."

"We are thrilled to collaborate with Waterkeepers across the Great Lakes basin to pick up litter in and around our Great Lakes. In the Grand Traverse Bay watershed, near-record high water levels have resulted in litter and debris scattered across our beaches and near-shore waters," said Grand Traverse BAYKEEPER® Heather Smith. "The Trash Free Water grant will give us the opportunity to remove some of this larger debris, such as patio furniture and dock sections, that have been scattered by high water and wave action."

"We are excited to partner with our other Great Lakes Waterkeepers to address the real problem of trash and single-use plastics that threaten the water quality, wildlife, and aesthetic beauty of our Great Lakes and its tributaries," said Riverkeeper Cheryl Nenn of Milwaukee Riverkeeper. "Working together we can raise awareness of simple things that people can do to reduce trash at the source, as well as foster an army of Great Lakes volunteers to clean up trash before it can enter into the Great Lakes, which is the source of drinking water for 40 million Americans and Canadians."

"As an organization that has been involved in clean-ups for over 20 years, Friends of the Detroit River has witnessed firsthand the value these events have had in uniting volunteers, fostering relationships, creating stewards for our river, and the positive impacts they have had on our natural resources and the communities that surround them," said Friends of the Detroit River Chairman David Howell. "Our organization is thrilled to expand our efforts in partnership with this grant opportunity to reach the broader Great Lakes region, because we all share and benefit from this interconnected system."

"The Seneca Park Zoo Society is extremely proud to be asked to take part in this effort for the city of Rochester," said Director of Programming and Conservation Action for Seneca Park Zoo Society Tom Snyder. "Working together with these great cities and organizations will help build sustainability for the benefit of everybody that lives near any of the Great Lakes."

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The Watershed Center is a non-profit organization that advocates for clean water in Grand Traverse Bay and acts to protect and preserve its 1,000-square mile watershed, which covers portions of Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Antrim, and Kalkaska counties. Learn more at www.gtbay.org.