

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

Meeting to focus on Eighteenmile Creek's environmental improvements

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Environmental agencies are considering an upgrade to the environmental quality status of Eighteenmile Creek below Burt Dam. Residents can learn more about the proposed change of status and offer input during a virtual public meeting scheduled for 1 p.m. on July 8.

Findings of increased benthos — bottom-dwelling aquatic insects, worms, crustaceans, and other invertebrates — at the north end of the creek are showing that restoration efforts by the state Department of Environmental Conservation are making progress.

Since 1987, the DEC described Eighteenmile Creek below Burt Dam with “beneficial use impairments” for each type of ecological

damage caused by contaminated sediment from industry, community wastewater, and pesticides. Scott Collins, remedial action plan coordinator for Niagara County's Soil and Water Conservation District, said the northern creek section has been impaired for the human consumption of fish and wildlife; for bird or animal deformities or reproduction problems; and for the presence of benthos.

The small animals grouped as benthos often don't move around much, which means they can't avoid environmental stressors.

“ They're prey for fish or

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Anglers from Ohio, Pennsylvania and as far as Colorado converge on the base of the Burt dam for salmon fishing in this file photo.

File photo

CREEK

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mammals, and they're also great indicators of water quality and pollution," Collins said.

Study samples made of the lower Eighteenmile Creek in August 2021 and compared to the healthy lower Oak Orchard Creek in Waterport showed the presence of similar invertebrates, Collins said. Of the nearly 60 invertebrate species identified, stoneflies, mayflies, and caddisflies, which are not tolerant of pollution, were found in Eighteenmile Creek. Other benthos included scuds or freshwater shrimp, blackworms, leeches, a freshwater mussel species, and a variety of insects whose young develop in water before flying.

The study also found that the toxicity of Eighteenmile Creek sediment was similar to Oak Orchard Creek's sediment, which was a positive result.

Frank Campbell, sport fishing coordinator for

Niagara County, described the news as "a win" for the fishery.

"I think if the findings are showing that the invertebrate population is getting large and healthier, that points to one thing, a healthier system," Campbell said. "So we have better conditions for fish from the top to the bottom. I know for a fact that a lot of the fish that are being taken in the lake and the creeks are less polluted. I guess clean-up efforts have had a positive effect."

Earlier this year, Campbell said the presence of steelhead in creeks and the Niagara River during the winter and spring makes the area a 12-month fishing destination. The economic impact of the fishery, including charters, lodging, restaurants, and other goods and services, totals \$58.5 million for Niagara County.

While migratory fish, such as trout and salmon, are exempt from the consumption impairment, Collins said other fish species from the creek near Burt Dam

should not be eaten.

Collins said that an Eighteenmile Creek fish species study showed that more species are present now than in the past, with a higher abundance of bass.

However, the American mink's struggle with the creek's contaminants is the reason behind the continued beneficial use impairment for bird or animal deformities or reproduction problems. Collins said contamination from PCBs has caused the mink to have continued reproductive issues.

For the virtual meeting link, go to the Eighteenmile Creek Area of Concern Website at <https://www.eighteenmilerap.com/>

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DEC, Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District virtual public meeting for Eighteenmile Creek AOC

Submitted

Tue, Jul 1st 2025 01:45 pm

Meeting will provide updates on restoration efforts, opportunity to submit comments; draft report available for review through July 30

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Press Release

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District announced a virtual public meeting from noon to 1 p.m. Tuesday, July 8, to discuss restoration progress in the Eighteenmile Creek area of concern (AOC) in Niagara County. The meeting will also offer an opportunity for public input on the proposed removal of the degradation of benthos beneficial use impairment (BUI). Benthos are organisms that crawl, burrow, swim, or stay attached to the material on the bottom of a lake or stream.

The Eighteenmile Creek AOC is located in the town of Newfane, and encompasses the lower portion of Eighteenmile Creek from just below Burt Dam to Olcott Harbor at the outlet to Lake Ontario. The Eighteenmile Creek AOC was designated under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement in 1987 because of poor water quality and sediment contamination by former industrial and municipal discharges, waste disposal, and pesticide use. The federal Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has been instrumental in providing funding to address these environmental challenges and advance the BUI removal process. Once all BUIs in an AOC are removed, the AOC can move forward with delisting.

The degradation of benthos BUI was listed as impaired based on historical data, which indicated that macroinvertebrate communities were adversely affected by contaminated sediments. Recent DEC and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) surveys show these benthic communities are now similar or superior to those in a regional reference stream. After reviewing available data on benthic macroinvertebrate communities in the AOC, DEC and partners found improved conditions meeting BUI removal criteria and now seek public feedback on the proposed change in designation.

Th a virtual event and registration is required. To participate, visit <https://meetny-gc.oex.com/weblink/register/r4bfe4f53d41eee53bf6ea7673411305d>.

During this virtual meeting, DEC's Great Lakes Program and representatives from the Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District will provide details and criteria establishing support for the removal of the BUI. Comments on the draft report and proposed BUI removal may be made during the meeting, via the [AOC website](#), or by email at eighteenmilerap@gmail.com, until July 30.

Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District, in partnership with DEC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, coordinates restoration efforts under the Eighteenmile Creek AOC remedial action plan. A draft report, which details the completed actions and assessments supporting the BUI removal, is available for public review at the [Eighteenmile Creek AOC website](#).

For more information about the Eighteenmile Creek AOC, visit:

✓ [Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District's website](#)

✓ [DEC's Eighteenmile Creek area of concern webpage](#)

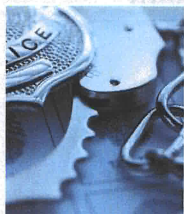
✓ [The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website](#)

✓ <https://dec.ny.gov/news/press-releases>

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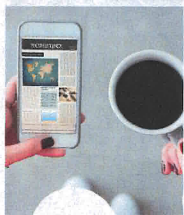
Sentinel

Hometown News



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