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## New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

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### **CLEANUP OF UNION SHIP CANAL UNDERWAY**

#### **Public Green Space and Habitat Restoration Will Boost Buffalo Waterfront**

New York State and City of Buffalo officials announced today that cleanup at the Union Ship Canal (former site of the Hanna Furnace plant) site at Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park has reached a major milestone: the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC) recently began the remediation of the site that will be developed into a public green space known as Ship Canal Commons.

State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Region 9 Director Abby Snyder was joined by Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown, Erie County Executive Chris Collins, State Senator William Stachowski and other representatives at a news conference held at the Union Ship Canal today to showcase the cleanup and construction of a public green space that will offer the community new opportunities for enjoyment of Buffalo's waterfront.

"The launch of this cleanup is significant for the people of Buffalo, the local economy and the local environment," Regional Director Snyder said. "New York's remedial programs can play an important role in revitalizing the economy. The cleanup and the construction of Ship Canal Commons highlight how these programs also promote the cultural and social character of communities, especially those trying to reinvent themselves and move away from a history of environmental degradation."

The former Hanna Furnace property is located near Route 5 at the southern city limit of Buffalo. The cleanup focuses on "Parcel 3," a 20-acre portion of the property surrounding the Union Ship Canal, which leads to the Buffalo Outer Harbor. A three to four feet thick reinforced concrete pad covers the site on the south side of the canal. The remainder of the site is vacant with little vegetation.

Once predominantly marsh land, the Hanna property was backfilled with ash, cinders and slag from local iron and steel foundries. The Hanna Furnace foundry was built on top of this fill material. From 1903 to 1982, when the facility closed, the Hanna Furnace plant processed iron ore into pig iron. Parcel 3 was the unloading and storage area for the facility's raw materials (limestone, ore and coke), which were delivered by lake freighters through the Union Ship Canal and by an extensive railroad network. The widespread use of industrial backfill and the operation of the foundry contaminated the site.

The remedy for the site involves removing debris, excavating contaminated soils, and placing a two-foot layer of clean soil over the entire Parcel 3 for development into a public green space. Because sections of the canal wall were found to be at risk of collapse, an underwater berm of sand and/or stone will be constructed to stabilize the canal.

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In concert with the canal wall repairs, shallow-water fish habitats will also be developed within or adjacent to the canal. The habitat will allow fish and other aquatic wildlife to thrive and enhance spawning throughout the entire Buffalo River basin.

The goal of the planned public green space is to create within the Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park an atmosphere conducive to recreational activity, such as picnicking, fishing, and hiking. It will include a multi-use trail to connect people to the Outer Harbor, Tifft Nature Preserve and the Seaway Trail. It will also become the southern anchor to the Niagara Greenway. Proposed interpretive and informational displays will reconnect people to the industrial heritage of the site and educate the public on the importance that the steel and iron industries had on the region, as well as the importance of the transition of the site into a community and ecological resource.

“With the Environmental Restoration Program funding that the New York State Department of Environmental conservation has provided under Commissioner Pete Grannis’s leadership, the City of Buffalo will soon have a new 22 acre park for our citizens to enjoy,” said Mayor Byron W. Brown. “Ship Canal Commons has been designed with the industrial heritage of the site in mind and we appreciate the other funding contributors that have stepped up to make this project one that the City of Buffalo will be very proud of.”

"The water-side environmental clean-up efforts at Union Ship Canal combined with the \$200,000 in Recovery Act funded land-side improvements will give Western New York residents and visitors another waterfront destination to enjoy," said Congressman Brian Higgins.

“This is going to be a great park, with fishing, hiking, picnicking and many other recreational activities. And as the State Senator for the 58th District, representing much of the Buffalo waterfront, I am quite pleased to witness the beginning of the Union Ship Canal cleanup and construction of the public green space that will offer our community new opportunities to experience Buffalo’s waterfront,” said Senator William T. Stachowski. “Having previously supported funds for canal area infrastructure, I look forward to the completion of this park and recreation, which will benefit Western New York residents, as well as the many species of wildlife which call the Outer Harbor home, for generations to come.”

Erie County Executive Chris Collins said, "As we work to revitalize our community, we must take advantage of our waterfront and greenway. That is why the County is committed to ensuring projects like this go forward. Erie County has committed a total of \$1.3 million toward this project in order to leverage \$8.1 million in additional federal and state funding. I am confident this new public green space and convenient access to Lake Erie will be enjoyed by generations to come."

Portions of the former Hanna Furnace and former Shenango Steel properties were previously cleaned up under the State Superfund, Environmental Restoration, and Brownfield Cleanup Programs. Those parcels are now home to the Cobey Inc., CertainTeed and Sonwil Distribution, current residents of the expanding Buffalo Lakeside Commerce Park. BUDC is acting as project manager on behalf of the City of Buffalo and Erie County for this project.

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