

SAVING OUR SHIPS



PROGRESS REPORT JANUARY 2025

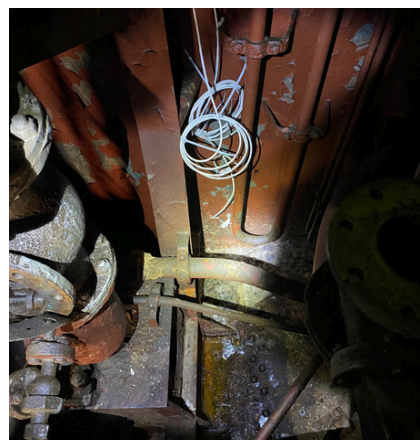
2025 is likely to be the most impactful year for the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park since its inception.

The City of Buffalo has started the process of selecting a marine project management firm to guide us through what is shaping up to be the most complex series of ship movements possibly in Buffalo's history, and likely far beyond. More on that as you read on.

Our Bluenose Specialty Ship Tours are rapidly becoming a popular winter activity here at the Park. Competing for most popular thus far are our Combat Systems Tour and our City at Sea Tours. For more information or to book a tour, click [HERE](#).

We've got exciting new developments regarding the restoration of spaces, enhancements to our guest experience, and adopting technology to make our tours among the most enjoyable and educational in Western New York. We've got much to share, so please read on!

We'll cover this in more detail as you read on, but the winter challenges have arrived in full force. A critical element in our plan to protect the ships through the heavy winds, ice and snow is the use of deicing bubblers to prevent ice from forming around and potentially damaging our ships in their most vulnerable areas. Due to the unusually cold temperatures, ice has formed rapidly near the ships, and on the tending and power lines of the bubblers. The damage sometimes renders them unusable.



In the image to the left, two 'waterbugs', or flood detection sensors are visible. These detectors are positioned approximately 18" apart, one above the other so that in the inevitable event of flooding, we can roughly determine the rate at which water is entering the ship. Positioning of these sensors is critical, and we make adjustments as we learn from our

experiences. As you can see in the image, the sensor is well above the bottom of the bilge, and situated between the keel and port side (there is an identical array on the starboard side). Because of their current height, the alarms weren't triggered when the space began to flood (ongoing at the time of this writing). When temporary repairs are complete, we'll reposition them so they trigger sooner.

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DRYDOCKING UPDATE

As mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this newsletter, The Sullivans and Croaker drydocking project will be uniquely complex. Before that, we must first survive this winter.

The Sullivans incident occurred in April of 2022 and the ship was considered sufficiently stable to demobilize the recovery Unified Command in June of that year. Since that time, we've had 13 significant and exceedingly costly flooding events aboard ship, including a major, multi-space series of leaks we're still working through at the time of this writing. The Croaker has also suffered a serious breach to one of her starboard ballast tanks within a few days of this writing, and we expect more with her too. As readers may know, the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park is a 501C3 not-for-profit organization that manages the ships on behalf of the City of Buffalo. The city owns the ships, buildings and surrounding land that comprises our operation. By necessity, we're very frugal and don't have the excess funds to afford these large capital repairs. Nonetheless, the BECNMP has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to mitigate flooding events that have continued to occur even after her 2022 recovery. For an entity our size, that's financially crippling and unsustainable.

You may remember from previous editions of this newsletter we've invested well over a half-million dollars into our Survivability Program alone, specifically designed and implemented to increase The Sullivans ability to recover from flooding events. What it can't do, however, is

prevent the hull breaches from happening – only a comprehensive hull repair in drydock will correct that.

We've also invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in staff and volunteer hours to work on critical watertight integrity projects aboard ship. We've replaced thousands of feet of watertight door, scuttle and hatch gaskets aboard, and if you've ever had the chance to work on one, you know it's exceedingly labor intensive and time-consuming. Once the gaskets were replaced, we conducted chalk tests to verify solid contact all the way around the door at the knife-edge. If we couldn't get a good seal, we worked with outside contractors to straighten warped steel doors and replace questionable hardware.

One thing is for certain: the Naval Park staff, board of directors and volunteers will continue to work tirelessly to save our ships. In fact, during this most recent serious flooding event from which we're just recovering, staff members volunteered to stay aboard ship all night to check her newly installed bilge pumps and to check for additional leaks every hour on the hour around the clock.

The plan is for The Sullivans and Croaker to leave for drydock this October – a very short 8 months from now. We're deeply concerned that an additional winter of waiting as a result of administrative roadblocks could prove catastrophic. All the marine experts
(continued on next page)

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DRYDOCKING UPDATE: CONT'D

with whom we've conferred have unambiguously remarked, the ship needs to be repaired now and not later.

There are legitimate concerns that the administrative demands normally applied to grants during non-emergency projects are potentially imposing avoidable delays on this project, which cannot afford a more leisurely timeline. First, each flooding event leaves residual damaging structural effects, particularly as it pertains to interior ice formations on the already badly weakened ships each time a new leak appears. Second, the costs of each flooding event diminish our capacity, as a small not-for-profit to financially weather them. Third, since we don't know how many, or how severe future flooding events will be, it's an open-ended burden that becomes impossible to budget or accurately plan for. The \$21 million budget was developed nearly two years ago. As we've witnessed across virtually all other economic sectors, inflation will negatively impact that figure. The more time passes, the more expensive the project becomes, particularly in terms of commodity and labor costs. There is currently no funding source for additional delay-based budget over-runs. We are respectfully urging the key decision-makers at all levels to work with us on expediting these administrative items to make sure the process doesn't impede or entirely derail saving our ships. The process should never be the reason a deserving outcome fails.

The \$21,000,000 we've been able to assemble, and which was pledged to the City of Buffalo \$19 million has come in the form of individual grants from county, state and federal sources – only the \$2 million being provided directly from the City is liquid and can be spent now. All of the grants are reimbursable, meaning the city must first find the available capital to spend, spend it, then submit to the pledging agency for what they hope will be timely reimbursement. With the city facing a number of fiscal challenges and recently having to pull back previously pledged funds for this project, all of the aforementioned is easier said than done. As of this writing, the City hasn't found a funding source it can draw from to spend beyond the \$2 million.

While all of this may sound daunting, the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park will expend every resource and all necessary energy to make this project happen on time. The commitment from our staff and growing army of volunteers is absolutely inspiring. Without them, we wouldn't be on the precipice of what we believe to be among the greatest victories in recent memory for our city, our veterans, and our country in preserving this irreplaceable icon of American service and sacrifice.

As indicated earlier, we believe timing is critical. We are hopeful the City will select a management firm with a clear intent of expediting and getting the ships safely to drydock without any undue delays.

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THE SULLIVANS

With the massive challenges we have in keeping The Sullivans safe and secure, you'd think no other work could possibly get done. But it does. Our combined crew of staff and volunteers are the most dedicated, creative and hard-working people around. Somehow, after all the critical daily checks, basic maintenance, flooding crisis management, snow and ice removal and cleaning, the crew still finds time to make creative improvements to our guests' experience. Aboard The Sullivans, starting in Spring 2025, you'll gain access to previously off-limits areas we've been working on over the winter, you'll experience a higher quality visit with the improvements to sound and visual elements, and depending on available resources, you may also witness new technologies in these spaces. It's an exciting time, and we're not wasting any of it.



For the first time since the partial sinking incident in April 2022, we'll be opening the main deck level of the forward superstructure which includes the Combat Information Center, the captain's in-port stateroom, the officer's pantry, and most special of all, the Memorial Wardroom, where we'll be able to share for the first time in years original artifacts that were a part of the Sullivan family's lives. In all, there'll be a minimum of 5 newly restored and enhanced spaces to view. We'll continue this work till opening day and add new elements to make a visit to The Sullivans more informative, enjoyable and fun.

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LITTLE ROCK

Little Rock has seen substantial improvements over the past couple years, and the pace is only increasing from here.

A very exciting new development is the series of new partnerships we're forming with local and national businesses, and in particular their Veteran Resource Groups (VRGs). Companies such as Moog are joining us in our efforts to restore incredibly important spaces aboard ship so that we can share important history and stories with our guests. In particular, Moog is working on Weapons Control - a space we haven't made available to the public ... yet. That space in particular has some mighty interesting, never before accessed secrets we want to share, but before we do, we'd prefer to more fully bring it back to life.

Other local companies have expressed an interest in providing us with financial support and expertise to bring back important but, as yet, closed and spaces back to public view. We've said it before and we'll reiterate it now - the best stories of our ships have yet to be told.

Among the first-ever winter tours we're offering, or Bluenose Tours as we call them, is the "Healthcare at Sea" tour, which is proving popular with our visitors. Have you ever wondered what would happen if a sailor had a medical emergency aboard ship while in the middle of the ocean? Or something as simple as a toothache? Our "Healthcare at Sea" tour will answer those questions and more while

showing you the spaces where those events occurred and personal anecdotes of our tour guide who was an active participant! You'll see the operating room, dentist's office, pharmacy and all the spaces that supported the need to keep 1,200 sailors healthy and ready for battle.

Speaking of tours, if you haven't yet taken advantage of this new menu of wintertime opportunities to spend an enjoyable day with us, please visit our [Bluenose Tours](#) page and check out some of our offerings. Remember, some of these tours provide personal access to spaces we've never shared with the public!



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CROAKER

As with the Little Rock, our "Beneath the Sea" tours aboard Croaker, part our Bluenose Tour series, are off to a great start. Led by submarine veterans who've been there, done that, the Croaker, "Beneath the Sea" tour takes you through all the interior spaces of the submarine as your experienced guide shares with you what it felt like to live, work, sleep, and train to fight beneath the waves.

While we're spending a good deal of our time with the unique challenges of keeping our historic vessels afloat during the harshest winter conditions, we also remain focused on improving our guest experience each and every year. One way we do that is with the Submarine Veteran working party. Each year, a group of

submarine veterans of all ages, and those who aren't veterans but have an interest in helping to preserve the submarine, get together and work together on a variety of projects in and on the sub. The group paints, cleans, maintains, and generally improves all things aboard our historic boat. Many in the working party stay throughout the week (this year the working party is scheduled from Monday, May 5th through Friday, May 9th) aboard Little Rock. They sleep in the staterooms we've renovated aboard ship, shower in the updated heads and, in some cases, have their meals in the officer's wardroom. For those who might be interested in joining this year's working party, please email our submarine caretaker Ken at: mm1ssn615@gmail.com no later than March 31st, 2025. The past two seasons were fun and productive, and we've got a feeling this year will be even more so.



Hopefully, by the time you're reading this, we'll know who the marine project management company will be after the City of Buffalo makes its final selection. The next step in this long process is Common Council approval. From there, contract negotiations will begin between the city and the management firm and once signed, it'll be time to get to work without delay. If all goes to plan, we'll have the singular privilege of watching the Croaker and The Sullivans, two World War II-era combat veteran warships getting underway together and crossing over the horizon together - a sight very few have been able to witness. Even better, 6 or 7 months after that, we'll all gather to watch them return safely home to their permanent moorings right here in our city.

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CURATOR'S CORNER BY SHANE STEPHENSON

The Buffalo Naval Park has a few exciting projects coming up over the next 12 months. The main project, as has been mentioned in this newsletter and elsewhere, is our ship's maintenance period for USS The Sullivans and USS Croaker. This work is, naturally, at the top of our priority list. Our work and transparency will help to enhance our trust with the national and international maritime community.

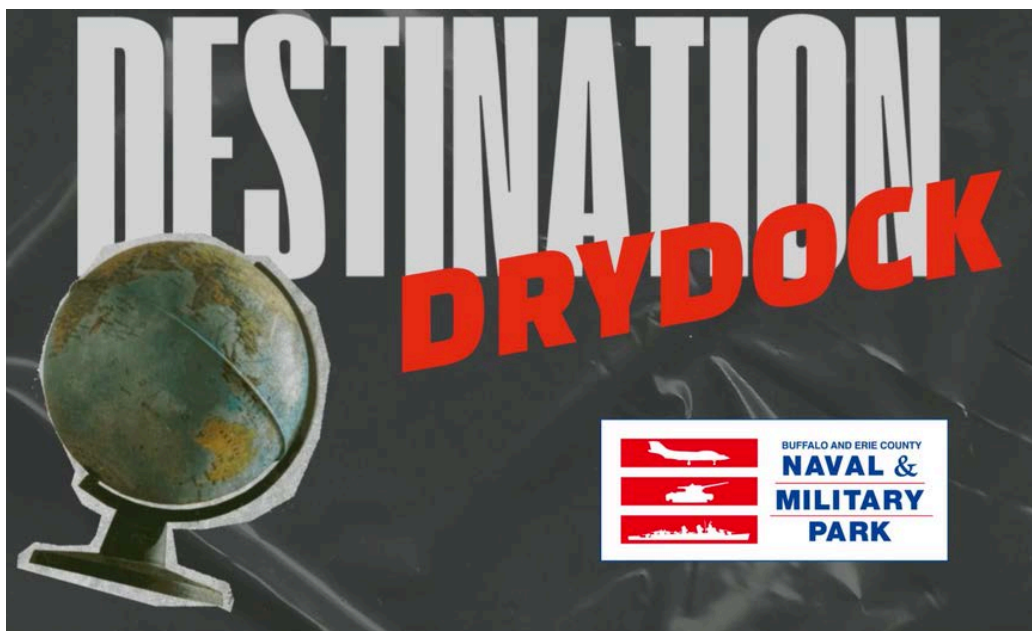
To help achieve these goals, we'll be offering as much access to this process, before and

after the ships leave. For other museum ships that have recently gone to dry dock, this video series hasn't been done before. Destination Drydock will be a year long series about the planning, procedures, and some of the behind the scenes to the process before the ships get on the move.

This video series will be published every other Thursday and will have the most up to date information as possible. Some information will not be ready to be shared either because of negotiations and time sensitive releases, but what we can release, we will.

Our mission during the April 2022 sinking was 'Failure is not an option', and that is our continued calling card and motivation. Stay tuned here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@BuffaloNavalPark>



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BLUENOSE WINTER TOURS!

For the first time ever, in it's nearly half a century of existence, the Buffalo and Erie County Naval and Military Park is now opening its ships for a diverse menu of private tour options - our [Bluenose Tours!](#)

Topping the list is our [Ships Archaeology](#) tour with Shane Stephenson. Shane will take you through spaces not open to the public at any season, and share his expansive knowledge of the ships and the courageous sailors who took them to sea. Click [HERE](#) for the Ships Archaeology tour.

Next up is our [City at Sea](#) tour, led by our lead caretaker Brendan. This tour takes you behind the scenes to see how sailors lived and maintained themselves for lengthy periods at sea. Brendan is immensely knowledgeable about the ships its history and many of the exciting stories from those who've served aboard. If you're interested in the City at Sea tour, click [HERE](#).

Ever wonder what happened when a sailor got a toothache at sea? Or worse? Then you'll want to join us for our [Healthcare at Sea](#) tour, led by Navy Corpsman and Vietnam veteran John. Drawing from his life experience and knowledge of our ships, John will share with you the spaces, the history and the jaw-dropping stories of keeping sailors and Marines healthy at sea - click [HERE!](#)

Our three ships afloat are all fighting ships, built to go into harm's way in defense of our nation. To do that, they were packed with state-of-the-art combat detection, tracking, and weapons systems. Join Mario, a senior member of our country's military who is an expert on these systems - because he's used them! Mario brings a wealth of real-world experience along with in-depth technical understanding of the machinery used to fight and keep us free. Click [HERE](#) for the [Combat Systems](#) tour.

Many have enjoyed the great guidance by our cadre of Docents, and now you can through the winter months with our [Docent-led](#) tours. You'll be guided through the main tour route of our ships and enjoy the insights from our well-trained guides. Click [HERE](#) for the Docent tour.

And last, but certainly not least is an exclusive tour of our submarine Croaker, led by veteran submarine sailors of the U.S. Navy. Our [Beneath the Sea](#) tour takes you through the spaces of the boat, from the forward torpedo room to the aft torpedo room, and every compartment in between. You'll hear about the history of the boat, its battles in the South Pacific and beyond, and you'll learn how the sailors survived beneath the waves. Join us for an exciting [Beneath the Sea](#) tour - click [HERE](#).

Whether you're a Western New Yorker, or you're visiting us from someplace else, take this first-ever unique opportunity and tour our ships!

**BLUENOSE WINTER TOURS - CLICK HERE OR GO TO:
[HTTPS://BUFFALONAIVALPARK.ORG/WINTERTOURS](https://buffalonaivalpark.org/wintertours)**

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JOIN US

AMBASSADORS: A new and exciting addition to our volunteer team, the ambassadors engage with visitors, greets and welcomes guests, provides general information on the grounds and in the museum building. This amazing group is already having a substantial impact on the quality of our visitor experience, so if you're interested in spending some beautiful days at the Buffalo waterfront helping to guide our guests, please consider this program.

DOCENTS/TOUR GUIDES: Our uniformed, trained cadre of docents are the guides and storytellers aboard our ships afloat. They know the histories, battles, sailors, and personal anecdotes related to these ships. If you're interested in becoming a docent, we'd love to hear from you!

MAINTENANCE: If you enjoy working with your hands and have an interest in restoring rare artifacts so essential to American history, we've got an abundance of opportunities! We're especially interested in having skilled metal workers, electricians, plumbers and carpenters volunteer with us, but all, regardless of skill level are welcome.

COLLECTIONS: Caring for and cataloging our unique artifacts takes a great deal of time, patience, and dedication. Under the direction of our curator, you could help preserve these precious objects so they'll be available for future generations.

GARDENS AND GROUNDS: If you've visited the park, you've no doubt seen the immaculately maintained grounds enjoyed by so many. If you enjoy gardening and wish to be a part of this dedicated team, please let us know - we'd love to have you join us!



Online volunteer form: www.buffalonaivalpark.org/volunteer

Email: info@buffalonaivalpark.org

Phone: 716-847-1773

Website: <https://www.buffalonaivalpark.org>

Buffalo Naval Park Youtube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@buffalonaivalpark>