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# Annual Report



In partnership with the National Park Service



## Take the long view.

In tight economic times, money well spent is no luxury. It is essential. And sound investments yield multiple returns. Now more than ever, we must pull together to maximize our assets and resources.

In New York State, we have a nationally significant treasure: North America's most famous and influential manmade waterway. The NYS Canal System is the centerpiece of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and a tremendous asset for the 234 communities within the National Heritage Corridor.

Although the nature of commerce and culture along the Corridor has changed, the canal system remains essential infrastructure for the economy of upstate New York—as commercial transportation corridor, as recreational resource, as historical attraction, as focus for community revitalization, and as touchstone of the region's cultural identity. The economic benefits of enhanced canal maintenance and preservation activity can be measured in terms of tourism dollars, national stature, and regional pride, as well as in terms of direct revenues from canal use.

On the cover: *Cohoes Falls opened to the public in 2008 after nearly 100 years of being inaccessible. See page 3.*

In 2008, we continued to work closely with our public and private partners across the state and in the nation's capital to encourage and assist in historic preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, tourism, and community development. New projects, products, and services highlighted in this annual report showcase what we have been able to achieve.

We hope you'll agree that our results prove the value of continued public investment and stewardship of the canal system and adjoining lands. By preserving our heritage and building partnerships that advance our shared goals, we enhance and celebrate the Erie Canalway for all to use and enjoy.

Sincerely,

**Joseph M. Callahan**

Commission Chair

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

## Return on Investment

New Yorkers spent \$7 million to build the Erie Canal in 1825. They saw a return on their investment in ten years. In the 19th century heyday of the canals, public and private investments intended to advance individual competitiveness ultimately reinforced each other and advanced the entire region.



WATERFORD HARBOR, TIM MASSIE





*The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, established in 2000 by an Act of Congress, spans 524 miles across the full expanse of upstate New York. It includes the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain canals and their historic alignments. The Corridor encompasses 4,834 square miles in 23 counties and is home to 2.7 million people.*



Today, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is leveraging its federal budget allocation to help Corridor communities generate economic growth once again through the preservation, enhancement, and interpretation of their heritage resources.



Like the original investment in the Erie Canal, the benefits of projects and programs in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor are shared by millions of New Yorkers and visitors, and a nation that can be proud of its nationally significant heritage.

## Build Awareness and Understanding

Raising awareness and understanding of the region's impressive history, diverse cultural and recreational assets, and extraordinary impact on the American identity is among the primary strategies for achieving our mission. Accomplishments in 2008 include:



### Gateways to the Erie Canal

Buffalo's newly restored Commercial Slip and Falls View Park at the stunning overlook to the 75-foot Cohoes Falls in Cohoes opened to the public in 2008 with much deserved fanfare. Both sites have become must-see destinations in historic canal communities at the western and eastern ends of the Erie Canal. Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in partnership with the National Park Service, produced interpretive exhibits for both parks to share the nationally significant role each played in building the nation.

Erie Canalway worked closely with officials from the City of Cohoes and Brookfield Renewable Power, which operates Falls View Park as part of its hydro-electric licensing agreement, to plan the new park at Cohoes Falls. The waterfall is the second largest in the state and has been inaccessible for nearly 100 years. Interpretive signs highlight the historical, educational, and geological significance of Cohoes Falls and the Mohawk River, and their influence on construction of the Erie Canal.

Outdoor exhibits and interpretive signs are also being developed in Amsterdam, Fairport, Ithaca, Jordan, and Phoenix, thanks to funding and technical support from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. In addition, more than 60 people took advantage of a workshop offered by the Erie Canalway and National Park Service Harpers Ferry Center on how to develop outdoor interpretive signs. Erie Canalway produced a free *Guide to Developing Outdoor Exhibits* to assist organizations throughout the Corridor. These efforts are first steps toward our larger goal of making every community a gateway to the National Heritage Corridor.

### New Website

People visit our national parks and heritage areas nearly 275 million times a year. We start by helping visitors plan their trip online. A complete overhaul of the Erie Canalway website dramatically improved access to information on things to do throughout the Corridor. Residents and visitors can now plan a visit using regional maps and choose from more than 175 sites of interest. These include historic and cultural sites, nature preserves and parks, recreational sites, and canal structures and engineering marvels.

In addition, the new website shares the nationally significant history of New York's canals, provides resources for the Corridor's 234 municipalities, and invites participation in activities that enhance and celebrate the Erie Canalway. We see the website as critical infrastructure for uniting individual communities and sites within the larger framework of the National Heritage Corridor. [www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)

### Trails & Rails Program

The Trails & Rails Program—an educational partnership between Amtrak and the National Park Service—continued to offer a unique and interactive travel experience for weekend passengers to the Erie Canalway. Eighteen volunteer guides offered programs for more than 2,100 passengers from May through November in 2008. Interpretation on Amtrak's Maple Leaf train heading west out of the Albany-Rensselaer station covers the rich history of the Mohawk Valley, including the story of the Erie Canal. Programming on the Adirondack train heading north includes local Revolutionary War history and stories of the Hudson River and Champlain Canal.



### Visitor Center and Interpretive Programs

Two National Park Service Seasonal Rangers staffed our visitor center at Peebles Island State Park in Waterford and offered programs weekly throughout the summer.

## Reinforce the Canalway Corridor's Distinctive Sense of Place

The Corridor's historic and cultural resources deserve protection on their own merits, but also as contributors to a distinctive sense of place that appeals to residents, tourists, and others making place-based investment decisions. Accomplishments in 2008 include:



### Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence

In 2008, The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission called for applicants for its first annual Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence. The award sought to honor and celebrate significant places of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and recognize excellence in achieving the goals set forth in the Erie Canalway Preservation and Management Plan. An independent jury selected finalists based on written applications and rigorous site visits involving not only project sponsors, but stakeholders, community members, and municipal leaders.

### 2008 Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence Recipients

- Canal Place, Little Falls
- School Street Hydroelectric Facility, Brookfield Renewable Power, Cohoes

### 2008 Honorable Mention

- Fort Plain Free Library, Fort Plain
- Historic Palmyra's Wm. Phelps General Store and Home, Palmyra

### NYS Canal Conference

Nearly 200 canal enthusiasts from across the state convened in Grand Island in October for the 2008 NYS Canal Conference, hosted by the Canal Society of New York State, and co-sponsored by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and the New York State Canal Corporation. The conference provided excellent opportunities for networking and learning, and showcased successes in preserving and celebrating the state's rich canal history.

### Photo Contest and 2009 Calendar

Our third annual photo contest drew a record 433 entries from 124 photographers from five states (up from 288 photos in 2007). Winning images are featured in our 2009 Erie Canalway Calendar. We printed and distributed 5,000 free calendars to showcase the unique beauty, history, and recreational appeal of New York's canals and canal communities.

### National Register Listing for NYS Canal System

Along with representatives from the NYS Canal Corporation, the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and the NYS Museum, we have initiated listing the Barge Canal System on the National Register of Historic Places. Register listing will further recognize the national historical significance of the canal system and help protect historic canal resources throughout the Corridor.

### 2008 Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan

Good decisions and careful planning result in money well spent. In 2008 our Preservation and Management Plan received the highest award for a comprehensive plan from the American Planning Association. More than 70,000 planning professionals and elected officials learned of our efforts through a cover story in the April issue of *Planning* magazine. The award further confirms our sense of purpose as we work with public and private partners to encourage and assist in historic preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, tourism, and community development.



*Members of the planning team celebrate after accepting the 2008 Daniel Burnham Award at the APA Conference; (from left) Elaine Carmichael, Economic Stewardship, Inc., Mary Means, Mary Means Associates, Inc., Erie Canalway Commissioner Stuart Stein, Representative Marcia Kees, and Director of Planning and Heritage Development Hannah Blake.*

## Stimulate Economic Revitalization and Heritage Tourism

Each of the 234 cities, towns, and villages in the 4,834-square-mile National Heritage Corridor has a unique contribution to make to the Erie Canalway. Each has its own stories to tell, history to preserve, and places to celebrate. But the resources to make it happen are often beyond what is available locally. By working with communities and connecting individual sites to the larger Corridor, we are accomplishing more than single sites can do alone.

### Economic Impact Survey

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in partnership with an advisory team from the University at Albany and Cornell University, and volunteers throughout the Corridor conducted an economic impact study of heritage development and tourism within the Corridor in 2008. The data will contribute to an analysis of heritage tourism activity in selected National Heritage Areas throughout the nation, while also establishing a baseline for the entire Erie Canalway.

### Heritage-in-Arts

The unique combination of arts, heritage, and landscape within the Erie Canalway presents an exceptional opportunity for canal communities to come together to foster community pride, attract new visitors, and stimulate a creative economy through the arts. The Commission brought together more than 70 artists, community leaders, and canal enthusiasts for an Arts Forum in April 2008. The group investigated ways to use the arts to stimulate community connections, recognize the region's heritage, and invite people to further explore the 524-mile long canal system. From that forum, a steering group has emerged to identify and foster promising initiatives.



### Events

With an increasing number of festivals and events held throughout the Corridor in 2008, there were more reasons than ever this year to visit the Erie Canalway. The Commission joined with its partners to boost tourism and recreation by co-sponsoring a number of canal-wide events, including:

- **5th Annual Canalway Trail Celebration**—Forty-three events (up from 36 in 2007) were held in conjunction with National Trails Day in June. Events included clean-ups, festivals, boat tours, nature walks, and arts projects. *Sponsored by Parks & Trails New York, the NYS Canal Corporation, and Canalway Trails Association, with support from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.*

- **Cycling the Erie Canal**—Nearly 600 riders participated in the 10th annual, 400-mile recreational bike tour from Buffalo to Albany in July. The ride is the flagship movement to get people cycling through the Corridor throughout the year. Since its inception ten years ago, the ride has attracted cyclists from every state but Hawaii and five countries. *Hosted by Parks & Trails New York.*
- **Canal Splash!** 125 events over a single weekend drew an estimated 90,000 participants to explore the Erie Canalway's recreational, historic, and cultural assets. *Co-sponsored by the NYS Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.*
- **Music on the NYS Thruway**—Musician Paul Swiatek performed traditional Erie Canal songs at the Chittenango Travel Plaza on Labor Day weekend. The music entertained travelers and called attention to the many assets of the Erie Canalway, accessible from the Thruway. The musical performance was an outcome of our Heritage-in-Arts Initiative.

### Educational Tourism Guide

A first-of-its-kind resource that promotes active travel and enjoyable learning was published in 2008, thanks to a partnership among Canal New York, Canal Society of New York State, Visit Rochester, and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. *The Canal New York Experience* features educational programs and itineraries targeted to adult learners, as well as primary and secondary schools, and travel planners. The guide is available at [www.visitnyscanals.com](http://www.visitnyscanals.com).

## Strengthen Community Capacity: Grants Program

Investing in partnerships yields larger returns. In 2007, the Commission awarded \$200,000 in small grants to thirteen organizations. The funds were matched dollar for dollar by grantees for projects that build awareness of the region's rich history and contribute to the Erie Canalway as a world class tourism destination. Many of these projects came to fruition in 2008, and several longer term projects will be completed in 2009.



### Lock 7-12 Canalfest

*Chamber of Schenectady County & Montgomery County Chamber*

This two-day festival attracted 18,000 to 25,000 visitors and resulted in \$1 million dollars for communities annually. Grant funds supported Canalfest in 2007 and 2008; the event showcases historic sites, recreational sites, and local artisans along a 32-mile stretch of the Erie Canal in Montgomery and Schenectady Counties.

### Champlain Canal Waterfront Plan

*Town and Village of Fort Ann*

The village and town researched components and feasibility of waterfront improvements along the Champlain Canal in the Village and Town of Fort Ann and developed a waterfront map and plan. With plan in hand, the municipalities jointly secured \$125,000 in funding for streetscape improvements and \$225,000 for pedestrian access and a waterfront park on the Champlain Canal.

### Visit Canalway Trail

*Parks & Trails New York*

A complete online guide to planning a visit to the Erie Canalway Trail substantially improves visitor services. The website includes interactive maps, detailed trail information, and attractions. [www.ptny.org/bikecanal/](http://www.ptny.org/bikecanal/)

### Enhancing the Visitor Experience Training

*Landmark Society of Western New York*

A series of hospitality workshops for businesses owners, managers, and frontline staff was targeted to small businesses and museums in the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor. Training sessions covered creating and delivering the "Canal Experience," fundamentals of tourism, and how to interpret canal-related collections. The curriculum developed is applicable to other Corridor regions.

### Heritage Walking Tour, New Museum Brochures

*Historic Palmyra*

Two new brochures with walking tours of the Village of Palmyra and its historic cemetery help residents and visitors better access and appreciate the historic architecture and canal heritage of this "Queen of Canal Towns."



### 2009 Preview

Look for the historic canal motor ship *Day Peckinpaugh* on tour next summer on the Hudson River and Champlain Canal as part of New York's 2009 Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadracentennial Celebration. We will also be working with our partners to implement a National Park Service passport stamp program and continue multifaceted efforts to stimulate heritage development and tourism throughout the National Heritage Corridor.

### More to come in 2009

Eight additional grant projects expected to be completed in the coming year include:

- Lock Island Pedestrian Access Improvements, Interpretive Signs, and Brochure > *Village of Phoenix*
- Erie Canal Heritage Walking Tour, Interpretive Signs, and Brochure > *Village of Jordan*
- Guide to Ithaca Waterfront, Southern Gateway to the Erie Canal, Interpretive Sign and Brochure > *Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation*
- Erie Canal Narrated Cruises > *Cornhill Waterfront & Navigation Foundation, Rochester*
- Interpretive Signs and Information Kiosk > *Village of Fairport*
- Interpretive Signs and Exhibits, Buffalo River Historical District Park > *Valley Community Association, Buffalo*
- Interpretive Signs, Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park > *Canal Society of New York*
- Interactive Weighlock Exhibit > *Erie Canal Museum*



## Financial Report 2007

**Federal Appropriation:** \$768,524

### Program Area Spending:

Heritage Development \$283,809  
 Public Outreach and Events \$272,534  
 Interpretation and Education \$212,181

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor also matched its Federal appropriations dollar for dollar with non-Federal funds by working with our state and nonprofit partners on numerous preservation, heritage development, and recreation projects in the Corridor.



From left, front row: Beth Sciumeca, Jean Mackay, Rosemary Button; back: Lori Duell, Hannah Blake, Duncan Hay

## Corridor Commission

### OFFICERS

**Chair** Joseph M. Callahan, Syracuse  
**Vice Chair** Russell S. Andrews, Syracuse  
**Secretary** Alan Vincent, Little Falls  
**Treasurer** Peter Welsby, Lockport  
**Ex Officio** Dennis Reidenbach, Secretary of the Interior designee

### COMMISSIONERS

Wint Aldrich, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
 Clinton Brown, Buffalo  
 Mayor Victoria W. Daly, Palmyra  
 Rocco J. DiVeronica, Canastota  
 Robert Elliott, NYS Department of State  
 Pete Grannis, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
 Thomas X. Grasso, Rochester  
 Carol B. Greenough, Whitehall  
 Lynn B. Herzig, Geneva  
 Mary Ivey, NYS Department of Transportation  
 Christopher Lindley, Rochester  
 Carmella Mantello, NYS Canal Corporation  
 Robert McNary, Empire State Development Corporation  
 Eric Mower, Syracuse (Founding Chair, 2001-2008)  
 NYS Assemblyman Robert P. Reilly, Newtonville  
 Judith Schmidt-Dean, Schuylerville  
 Robert Shibley, Buffalo  
 Pieter W. Smeenk, Fairport  
 Stuart W. Stein, Ithaca  
 Peter Wiles Jr., Macedon

### STAFF

Beth Sciumeca, Executive Director  
 Hannah Blake, Director of Planning and Heritage Development  
 Rosemary Button, Administrative Assistant  
 Duncan Hay, Cultural Resources Manager  
 Jean Mackay, Director of Communications and Outreach  
 Lori Solomon-Duell, Director of Heritage Tourism

## Transitions

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is grateful for the long-time service of Congressman James Walsh, Commissioner Eric Mower, and Executive Director Frank Dean. Congressman Walsh, who sponsored the authorizing legislation that passed in 2000 to create the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, retired from Congress after a 20-year career in the House of Representatives. In June, founding Board Chair Eric Mower handed the reins to Joseph Callahan, who serves as the new Commission chair. Executive Director Frank Dean departed in April to become chief of the National Park Service Centennial Planning Office in Washington, DC. Dean spearheaded management planning and organizational development for the National Heritage Corridor since 2002. The Commission promoted Beth Sciumeca to serve as the new executive director.

## 2008 Congressional Delegation

### U.S. SENATORS

Charles Schumer  
 Hillary Rodham Clinton

### U.S. REPRESENTATIVES

Michael Arcuri  
 Kirsten Gillibrand  
 Brian Higgins  
 Maurice Hinchey  
 John Kuhl  
 John McHugh  
 Michael McNulty  
 Thomas Reynolds  
 Louise Slaughter  
 James Walsh