was nothing short of momentous for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The bicentennial year launched with the designation of the NYS Canal System as a National Historic Landmark and peaked with the convening of the World Canals Conference in Syracuse in September. With the bicentennial shining the spotlight on New York’s iconic canals, communities and organizations throughout the corridor stepped into the limelight and delivered their best.

We were proud to offer leadership, funding, and collaboration to bring the bicentennial to life and spread the word about the lasting and transformative impacts of New York’s iconic canal system. Let’s continue to work together to create vibrant communities connected by our waterways and guide the re-emergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21st century river of commerce and culture.

2017 Highlights

- The NYS Canal System became a National Historic Landmark, a designation that places it among the premier historic sites in the nation.
- Thousands attended Bicentennial Signature Events hosted by the NYS Canal Corporation and New York Power Authority.
- The World Canals Conference brought canal experts and enthusiasts from 14 nations to Syracuse to examine the transformative power of inland waterways.
- New Yorkers were treated to exceptional cross-canal journeys, including the Albany Symphony Orchestra’s Water Music NY, Our Ability’s Journey on the Erie Canal, Parks & Trails New York’s Cycle the Erie Canal, the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum’s 2017 Legacy Tour of the Lois McClure, the Corning Museum of Glass GlassBarge, and Votetilla celebrating the 100th anniversary of women’s right to vote.
- New York State announced funding for the completion of the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails and creation of the Empire State Trail by 2020.
- The New York State Museum in Albany celebrated the opening of phase one of a major new canal exhibit, Enterprising Waters: New York’s Erie Canal.
- American’s learned about the national impacts of the Erie Canal thanks to the release of Erie: The Canal That Made America by WCNY.

Together, these events, tours, and projects represent millions of dollars in new investment in New York’s canals. We look forward to accelerating the momentum for further heritage development and innovation in 2018.
anal enthusiasts from across the state joined us in Syracuse in January to celebrate the NYS Canal System's designation as a National Historic Landmark. Congressman John Katko and representatives from the NYS Canal Corporation, NYS Historic Preservation Office, and the National Park Service presented benefits and positive impacts of the prestigious recognition. Less than 3% of the thousands of places currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places are designated National Historic Landmarks, which are considered premier historic sites in the United States. The National Historic Landmark designation includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca canals still in operation today. It specifically recognizes the canal system for its role in shaping the American economy and settlement, as an embodiment of the Progressive Era emphasis on public works, and as a nationally significant work of early 20th century engineering and construction. The canal system’s 450 miles of navigation channels, locks, lift bridges, dams, power houses, and maintenance shops together represent a significant, distinctive, and exceptional entity.

“...With this National Historic Landmark designation, the New York Canal System will once again take on that central role in our state, and will be a hub for visitors, students, and families to come learn about our incredible past, and be inspired to do great things in the future.”
— Senator Kirsten Gillibrand

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Congresswoman Claudia Tenney joined us in Little Falls to unveil an NHL plaque. In 2018, we will install bronze plaques at fifteen locations along the canal, thanks to funding support from The William G. Pomeroy Foundation and the National Park Service. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation, spearheaded the nomination, which received full support from members of Congress whose districts include the canal, as well as New York State agencies, canal communities, and others.
The Transformative Power of Canals

WORLD CANALS CONFERENCE 2017

More than 400 people from three continents, including a dozen European countries, five Canadian provinces, and 20 U.S. states came together in Syracuse from September 24-28 for the World Canals Conference. Held at the restored Hotel Syracuse, now the Marriott Syracuse Downtown, the conference showcased some of the most innovative ideas and projects transforming canals worldwide.

The robust and varied program included more than 50 presenters who shared their experiences and insights during conference sessions. Daily study tours showcased innovative projects taking place along the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, and Oswego Canals. Networking, guest speakers, local events, and pre- and post-conference tours provided additional opportunities for exploration and learning.

We were proud to host the conference along with the NYS Canal Corporation and site host Visit Syracuse. I Love NY and National Grid provided major funding support, along with many other businesses and foundations (see page 16). Industry standards put the direct economic impact of a conference of this size to the host community at $475,000 with indirect and induced benefits totaling over $2 million.

The conference kicked off with public events attended by 1,000 people at the Syracuse Inner Harbor. Attendees were treated to outstanding glass blowing demonstrations by the Corning Museum of Glass, tours of Lake Champlain Maritime Museum’s canal schooner Lois McClure, rowing lessons in the Museum’s wooden long boats, and engaging displays by I LOVE NEW YORK and 30 cultural-heritage and recreation organizations.

Highlights of the conference included guest speakers Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and Empire State Development’s Executive Director of Tourism Ross D. Levi. Gil Quiniones, President and CEO of the New York Power Authority and Brian Stratton, Director of the NYS Canal Corporation announced the Reimagine the Canals competition during the opening session.

Study tours included a stop at the restored Erie House at Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park. Made-in-New York specialty foods and beverages were on the menu during the conference’s Upstate Cookout, Brew Tasting Event, and Welcome Dinner.

The Water Way video project brought youth and creative talent to WCC in a brand new way. Young visual artists from several countries showcased videos sharing their interpretation of their own relationships with the canals in their backyards. The videos were projected each night of the conference at the Everson Museum of Art’s outdoor amphitheater.

“The Transformative Power of Canals” is a collaboration between the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and NYS Canal Corporation for a wonderful example of how to do it superbly. We hope to emulate your grace and generosity in Ireland in 2018.”

— Christine Lavin, Waterways Ireland
Canal Shines in Bicentennial Spotlight

Celebrations throughout 2017 marked the 200th anniversary of the start of construction of the Erie Canal. Beginning with fanfare at the opening of the canal in May, the bicentennial theme resonated from community to community and in media outreach that reached millions. Stories in the New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Time, National Public Radio, and PBS stations raised awareness of the national impact of the Erie Canal, while also showcasing activities on the canal system today. Our office became an information hub for media outlets looking for photographs, facts, timelines, trivia, and travel tips, as well as expert interviewees. Coverage in national and state media invited new audiences to discover New York’s legendary canals.

“...the building of the Erie Canal was an act of faith, the demonstration of a spirit of enterprise by an organized government that has few parallels in world history.”
— George Rogers Taylor, The Transportation Revolution, 1815-60


Water Music: New York captivated 24,000 New Yorkers at seven concerts that celebrated the canal’s unique history and heritage. Performed by the Albany Symphony Orchestra and local guest musicians, the unique cross-regional journey included free waterfront performances in Albany, Schenectady, Amsterdam, Little Falls, Baldwinsville, Brockport, and Lockport.

New Yorkers celebrated the bicentennial of construction of the Erie Canal at numerous festivals and events, including a Signature Bicentennial event in Rome hosted by the NYS Canal Corporation and New York Power Authority, and sponsored by Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.
“It’s one thing to learn about it but another to actually see it with your own eyes.”
— Erie Canalway visitor

Welcoming Visitors

Helping people find their way to great canal experiences is an integral part of what we do. From producing calendars and maps to offering tours and brochures, we provided lots of direction and information that contributed to a successful canal season in 2017.

We also engaged Level 7 Market Research to find out more about who visits, where they go, and what they think about their experiences. Level 7 conducted a visitor profile survey and completed an economic impact study of events in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. One thousand visitors and potential visitors completed online surveys and 20 visitors provided in depth interviews; results and analysis will be made available in 2018.

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NYS Canalway Water Trail Launched

Paddling along the NYS Canal System became easier and more accessible in 2017, thanks to continued water trail development. Paddlers can now find more than 100 access points and amenities on the new NYS Canalway Water Trail website, which includes sites from Rome to Waterford along the eastern Erie Canal. In addition, more than 600 paddlers are participating in our new Facebook group dedicated to the water trail, which serves as a forum for sharing advice and information.

Winning images drawn from nearly 300 beautiful entries in the Erie Canalway Photo Contest graced the pages of the Erie Canalway calendar. We distributed 17,000 free calendars with the help of more than 75 libraries and visitor centers.

Funding provided by Empire State Development’s Market NY program and the National Park Service will enable us to expand the website and create a guidebook and map set covering the entire NYS Canal System in 2018. We are spearheading development of the water trail in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation, with assistance from the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program.

https://eriecanalway.org/watertrail
The fourth graders in Waterford (above) begin a day of learning about the Erie Canal along its very shores. Eager hands shoot up to answer questions about the nation’s legendary manmade waterway. Later, they board the barge Grand Erie and take their first trip through a lock. These children are among the 5,693 students who visited 13 historic sites and museums to experience the canal first hand this year, thanks to the Erie Canalway Ticket to Ride Program.

We also brought an additional 1,050 students to two national parks in the Erie Canalway Corridor this year through the National Park Service’s Every Kid in a Park program. Together, these programs have provided critical funding for transportation and education programs that have served 35,115 students in 210 schools since 2012.

These programs are made possible with generous support from the Central New York Community Foundation, M&T Bank, National Park Service, the National Park Foundation, and NYSUT.

Investing in Our Future

“We are excited to use your grant to fund our trip again this year. It is an awesome experience for our students to learn about local history that relates to the fourth grade curriculum.”
—Maureen Flaherty, Teacher, Roessleville Elementary School, South Colonie School District

With funding from the CNY Community Foundation, we were able to hire the R/E/D Group to evaluate three of our educational sites. After the assessment, we organized a two-day interpretive training workshop for staff and volunteers, led by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. In addition, we hosted a free three-day interpretive training workshop in March, in partnership with the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and the National Park Service.
Capitalizing on the Waterfront

What to do with six acres of prime waterfront property and the remains of the historic Matton Shipyard in Cohoes? Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor has been at the forefront of planning and fundraising efforts aimed at transforming the former shipyard, located within Peebles Island State Park. Several hundred people turned out to public meetings to voice their support and share ideas for adaptive reuse of the site’s remaining buildings and 740-foot waterfront at the eastern end of the Erie Canal; we will release a master plan in 2018. Building and waterfront stabilization are critical next steps of saving the shipyard for future recreational or educational uses. To that end, we have secured $148,170 in FY2017 from the NYS Canal Corporation to begin work in 2018. The Capital Region Economic Development Council awarded the project an additional $373,400 from NYS Canal Corporation and NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation.

Small Grants, Big Results

While large investments along the canal draw the greatest attention, smaller projects are adding up to big results for communities and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor as a whole. Over the past 10 years, we have made 62 small grants to communities and non-profit organizations that have spurred $1.6 million in additional investments in heritage preservation, recreation, and education. Seven projects received Erie Canalway grants totaling $32,103 in 2017. Ranging from $2,000 to $7,000, these small grants delivered wide-ranging benefits. The City of Amsterdam is producing wayside signs to connect the four-mile Chuchtanunda Creek Trail with the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Pedestrian Bridge and the Erie Canalway Trail. Corn Hill Navigation provided opportunities for Rochester City School District students to take field trips to the Erie Canal by offsetting school transportation costs. Rochester Accessible Adventures developed a training manual for adaptive paddling and hosted a community paddling event on the Erie Canal for people with disabilities. The Town of Montezuma is developing a series of trail markers and installing a new mural at the 160-acre Montezuma Heritage Park. The Village of Canastota received funding support for Tour the Towpath, a 36-mile bike ride from Rome to DeWitt via the Old Erie Canal State Park. This year’s ride was offered in conjunction with the 2017 World Canals Conference as a pre-conference trip. We also partnered with the Preservation League of New York State to support five Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) projects, totaling $10,000. Grants to Schenectady County Historical Society, Schoharie River Center, It’s a Wonderful Life Museum in Seneca Falls, the SS Columbia, and the Mohawk Valley Collective are covering the costs of building surveys, engineering analyses, and a handicap accessibility study.

We captured a treasure trove of stories about life at the barge canal era shipyard through interviews with 11 former Matton employees and family members. This oral history project was funded by the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Critical support from the Albany County Convention & Visitor’s Bureau is enabling us to finalize an informational brochure about Matton Shipyard that will help us to better inform the public and financial supporters about the incredible value and potential of this public resource.
Sustaining Our Work

We love our canal heritage and the distinctive canal communities, engineering marvels, waterways and trails that make the Erie Canalway extraordinary. We are grateful to our funders and individual donors for sharing that passion and advancing our mission to build a vibrant future along the waterway.

The Erie Canalway Heritage Fund is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that works hand-in-hand with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission. Contributions support our efforts to preserve and share our extraordinary canal heritage and leverage additional financial support to advance the entire region.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor also leveraged more than $1.93 million in FY 2017 in support of program and project activities, consistent with our award-winning Preservation and Management Plan.
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- **Vice Chair** Barbara Blanchard, Albany
- **Secretary** Alan Vincent, Little Falls
- **Treasurer** Harry Sicherman, Lockport
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**Commissioners**
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- Fred Born, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation
- Clinton Brown, Buffalo
- Jackie Czub, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
- James Farr, Rochester
- Thomas C. Grasso, Rochester
- Carol B. Greenough, Whitehall
- Doug Hamlin, Skaneateles
- Marilyn Higgins, Canastota
- John McGlone, Palatine Bridge
- Frank Proto, Slaterville
- Peter Ryan, NYS Department of Transportation
- Mary Elizabeth Stewart, Albany
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- Paul Webster, Niskayuna
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*Commission representative

TRANSITIONS

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions and years of service of departing Commissioner Anne Thane and Board of Director Dave Sampson.

Hannah Blake, Director of Planning & Heritage Development, was detailed to a special assignment with the Northeast Region of the National Park Service in 2017.

STAFF

Bob Radliff, Executive Director
Rosemary Button, Director of Financial Administration
Duncan Hay, Historian
Diane Jennings, Director of Administrative Services
Andy Kitzmann, Assistant Director
Jean Mackay, Director of Communications & Outreach
Brian Yates, Program Manager

CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION

**U.S. Senators**
- Kirsten Gillibrand
- Charles Schumer

**U.S. Representatives**
- John Faso (19th District)
- Paul Tonko (20th District)
- Elise Stefanik (21st District)
- Claudia Tenney (22nd District)
- Tom Reed (23rd District)
- John Katko (24th District)
- Louise Slaughter (25th District)
- Brian Higgins (26th District)
- Chris Collins (27th District)