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Introduction and Purpose of the Plan

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

In December 2000 the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Act (PL 106-544, title VIII) was adopted by Congress. This designation applies to all 234 municipalities adjoining the 524 miles of navigable waterway that comprise the New York State Canal System, including the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca and Oswego; the historic alignments of these canals, including the cities of Albany and Buffalo; and related navigable lakes, including Seneca and Cayuga Lakes. The legislation acknowledges the instrumental role the canals played in the growth and development of the United States, and affirms a national interest in the preservation and interpretation of the Corridor’s important historic, cultural, recreational, educational, scenic and natural resources. The legislation stemmed from a 1995 Appropriations Act directive calling for a National Park Service special resource study which determined that the New York State Canal System was of “unparalleled national significance,” merited federal recognition, and assessed national heritage corridor designation.*

While the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor benefits from numerous ongoing efforts to protect, interpret, and promote its wealth of resources, the region’s residents agree that much more remains to be done. This Preservation and Management Plan for the Corridor is not a physical master plan detailing infrastructural or building projects to be undertaken. Rather, the purpose of the Plan is to offer guidance to the legislatively authorized Commission which will steward the plan’s implementation, and its partners – federal and state agencies, individual communities, nonprofit and private organizations – in formu-

* New York State Canal System Special Resource Study, National Park Service, 1998
lating policies and taking action to achieve the National Heritage Corridor’s full potential by:

- protecting and preserving its historic, natural, cultural and recreational resources;
- interpreting and educating the public about the story of the canals;
- fostering and promoting recreational opportunities;
- helping perpetuate canal-related music, art, literature, and folkway traditions;
- helping market the Corridor;
- stimulating economic development and community revitalization; and
- fostering cooperative partnerships.

The National Heritage Corridor will serve as an “umbrella” to unite and coordinate existing federal, state, and local plans and multiple points of view, focusing on partnerships that cross jurisdictional boundaries and build on mutual interests.

Preparation of the Plan has been informed by extensive public input. Nine public meetings were held in December 2003 and January 2004 in order to gather information and impressions from the public and explain to local communities the legislated purpose and mandate of the Corridor. Eight public review meetings were held in July 2005 in order to introduce the draft Preservation and Management Plan and Environmental Assessment and solicit comments from the public. Numerous additional meetings have been held with tribal representatives, political leaders, and private or nonprofit stewards of heritage resources. In addition, information surveys sent to every municipality in the Corridor, and returned by nearly half of them, provided a base level of information about the current status of historic preservation, interpretation and economic revitalization activities. The public has been invited to all official Commission meetings, and the Commission has also operated and promoted a public website since January 2004 to solicit input and provide updates. The Commission and the preparers of this Plan value this input and have sought to address in these pages all of the issues and concerns brought to their attention.

OTHER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS AND CORRIDORS

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor joins a distinguished group of over two dozen other nationally significant heritage regions located throughout the United States, each of which has made a unique contribution to the nation’s development and growth. These areas, ranging in size from an entire state to urban districts, have used their status to promote themselves as special tourist destinations that combine a strong sense of place and natural scenic beauty with expanded opportunities for recreation and exploration of national history. In the most successful national heritage areas, intensive planning efforts have also elevated the quality of life for residents by protecting and interpreting their region’s distinctive historic and natural features and building partnerships for community-based recreational and economic development.
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New York State Tourism Regions

Other Heritage Areas and Corridors

1. Buffalo
2. Rochester Highland Falls
3. Seneca Falls
4. Syracuse
5. Schenectady
6. Whitehall
7. Hudson-Mohawk (in Waterford)
8. Albany

Regional Planning Council / Board Areas (7)

Jurisdictions Overlapping the Corridor

NYS Canal System (Barge Canal)
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
Several national heritage areas share characteristics similar to those of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Although somewhat smaller, the Illinois & Michigan, the Ohio & Erie, the Delaware & Lehigh, and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridors are each composed of diverse communities that share a common history threaded together by a canal system. In each region, local heritage extends far beyond the edges of the waterway. The national heritage area designation has helped the populations of these regions understand their historical and natural surroundings as part of a greater national story. Grasping the value of local heritage has motivated many communities to implement master plans and projects to protect and preserve historical and natural assets which might otherwise have been ignored, neglected or destroyed. Many of these efforts have sought to enhance the symbiotic relationship between the canal system and the region through an integrated program of historic preservation, conservation of natural resources, environmental quality and economic investment.

PARTNERS AND BUILDING BLOCKS

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan builds upon a number of well-conceived state and local plans for portions of the region. The Corridor’s Plan is designed to coordinate and enhance these efforts rather than replace or override them. A major difference between this Plan and its predecessors is that it focuses on the comprehensive revitalization of a much larger region, spanning many jurisdictions. In addition to the 234 cities, towns and villages within its borders, the Corridor overlaps the boundaries of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area; ten New York State Heritage Areas or Corridors; seven regional planning areas; numerous state-defined areas for tourism promotion, environmental conservation, transportation and water management; several state and national parks and historic sites; and an abundance of state and nationally recognized historic places.

State and municipal agencies are only one part of the effort to revitalize the region encompassed by the Corridor. Statewide and regional nonprofits have taken a leadership role in guiding and funding improvements in preservation, conservation, recreation and interpretation. Many organizations are actively contributing to the realization of the vision of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, with volunteer or grassroots initiatives explicitly focused on the history and future potential of the canal system and the places most immediately influenced by it. This local enthusiasm and initiative is the key to ensuring the long-term stewardship of the Corridor’s unique resources.

Because the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is primarily funded at the federal level, there are mechanisms available to the Commission that were not available to organizations involved with previous plans, including financial assistance and access to technical assistance from the National Park Service. With its broad scope, federal resources, and the high level of visibility and credibility provided by the National Park Service and Congressional designation, the National Heritage Corridor offers an opportunity to bring new focus, coordination, stature and visibility, clarity, and energy about the Canalway to an exten-
1.6 Introduction and Purpose of the Plan

... existing planning and implementation infrastructure. Given the extent of existing activities, the Corridor should be viewed as an additional resource to help coordinate and set in motion the strategies, remedies, and supportive actions of others.

The state and regional partners and planning initiatives that have influenced development of the Preservation and Management Plan are listed below and described in Chapters 3-8 of the Plan, with additional information on specific programs provided in the Appendix.

- New York State Canal Corporation and Thruway Authority
- New York State Canal Recreationway Commission
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, including the State Historic Preservation Office and the Heritage Areas program
- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York State Department of State, including the Division of Coastal Resources and the Quality Communities Initiative
- New York State Department of Transportation, including the Scenic Byways program
- Empire State Development Corporation, including the Division of Marketing, Advertising and Tourism
- New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal
- New York State Department of Education, including the New York State Museum, Library, and Archives
- Governor’s Office of Small Cities
- Regional Planning Boards/Councils and county planning agencies
- Tourism Promotion Agencies and Regional Tourism Organizations
- Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area/Hudson River Valley Greenway
- Lakes to Locks Passage
- Mohawk River Valley (State) Heritage Corridor
- Western Erie Canal (State) Heritage Corridor
- Canal Society of New York State
- Parks & Trails New York
- Preservation League of New York State
- Canal New York, Inc.

Essential input has also been provided by the following American Indian tribes and groups:

- Haudenosaunee (confederation of Iroquois nations)
- Oneida Indian Nation
- Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin
- Onondaga Indian Nation
- St. Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Seneca Nation of Indians
- Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma
- Stockbridge-Munsee Community of Wisconsin
- Tonawanda Band of Seneca
- Tuscarora Nation
There will be many opportunities for existing organizations to adopt within their own work plans specific projects and programs that help to achieve the vision and goals in this Plan. Qualified partners will receive technical and financial assistance from the Commission. Individuals, businesses, and philanthropic and community foundations will also play an important role and will be encouraged to maintain a close involvement in the Plan’s implementation as they choose local and regional initiatives in which to invest. The Commission will also work closely with universities and educational institutions and organizations to foster programs and projects in direct support of the Plan’s goals. The New York State Canal Corporation will continue to be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the New York State Canal System.

An ongoing working relationship between the Commission and the National Park Service (NPS) is also vital to a successful implementation program. While National Heritage Areas and Corridors are not traditional National Park System units, the NPS is the administrative sponsor and conduit for federal funding and technical assistance for the development and implementation of the Preservation and Management Plan for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The Commission will seek continued support from NPS in the areas of implementation, technical assistance, and, as feasible, staff assistance. The NPS will help provide a direct linkage to nearby National Park System units, the National Heritage Areas program, and available NPS technical assistance programs, and to other federal agencies that may be sources of additional funding and technical assistance.

GOALS OF THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, working through a wide range of partnerships, is preserving and interpreting our nation’s past, providing world class recreational and educational opportunities, fostering economic revitalization, improving the quality of life in corridor communities, and guiding the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21st century “River of Commerce and Culture.”

In order to achieve this vision, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission has established the following goals and supporting objectives:

The Corridor’s historic and distinctive sense of place will be widely expressed and consistently protected
- Build public support for preservation and enhancement of critical historic and cultural resources
- Protect and enhance the authenticity and integrity of the Corridor’s historic resources and canals, and the continued utility of the 20th century canal system
- Encourage investment in historic town centers, sustainable new development practices, and retention of farming and open space
- Help Corridor communities plan for protection of historic and cultural resources and future development
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The Corridor’s natural resources will reflect the highest standards of environmental quality
- Increase public awareness and support for conservation and enhancement of critical natural resources
- Encourage quality stewardship policies and practices

The Corridor’s recreation opportunities will achieve maximum scope and diversity, in harmony with the protection of heritage resources
- Increase access to and diversity of recreational opportunities throughout the Corridor
- Encourage repeat visits and extend the stay of recreational visitors through the quality of the experience
- Enhance connectivity between wild areas, cultural areas, trail segments, and recreation destinations

The Corridor’s current and future generations of residents and visitors will value and support preservation of its heritage
- Develop a Corridor-wide interpretive framework that is broadly applicable and addresses not only the system’s rich past but its present and future as well
- Integrate individual communities and heritage sites with each other and into the larger Corridor story
- Improve the impact and effectiveness of locally and regionally sponsored educational and interpretive programs, facilities and materials, festivals and events across the entire Corridor
- Strengthen understanding and appreciation of the Corridor’s heritage and importance within and beyond the region’s boundary, among residents and visitors alike

The Corridor’s economic growth and heritage development will be balanced and self-sustaining
- Harness existing tourism, industrial, agricultural, and community development assets in the service of economic development that reinforces the region’s sense of place
- Increase local capacity to undertake heritage- and place-based approaches to economic development
- Establish a unifying National Heritage Corridor identity of place and lifestyle that complements regional identities, tourism destinations, and individual cities; links lesser-known towns; and encompasses canal stories
- Integrate a heritage- and place-based perspective into every message communicating the benefits and rationales underpinning Corridor public investment decisions

The Corridor will be a ‘must-do’ travel experience for regional, national and international visitors
- Attract visitors to maximize economic impact from tourism within the Corridor
- Develop the Corridor tourism product while protecting and preserving the resource
- Provide coordination and technical assistance to the tourism development and marketing community
- Communicate to residents the ability of heritage tourism to stimulate education, preservation, visibility, and visitation
IMPLEMENTATION: ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The stated mission of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is to “plan for, encourage, and assist historic preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, tourism and community development throughout the Corridor in a manner that promotes partnerships among the Corridor’s many stakeholders, and reflects, celebrates and enhances the Corridor’s national significance for all to use and enjoy.”

Although many aspects of the Preservation and Management Plan are being implemented by others – state and local agencies, public and private organizations, and individuals – the Commission has the unique opportunity to coordinate programs, projects, and events across the Corridor while conducting its own activities. The Commission is not empowered to purchase or otherwise control property, enact laws or regulations, or direct the expenditure of public funds by other governmental entities. The individual municipalities and organizations in the Corridor will be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities to work with the National Heritage Corridor, and to voluntarily implement their own plans and projects within the armature of the Plan. The Commission is responsible for shaping and guiding the greater vision of the Corridor, and gaining consensus and support.

Chapter 9 of the Plan details the Commission’s strategy to nurture locally and regionally directed initiatives in the Corridor. The following roles, drawing from the Commission’s legislated mandates and mission statement and the vision set forth in the Plan, establish an operational framework for the Commission and provide a strategic direction for implementation activities. The Commission will:

• Provide support, funding, technical assistance and/or in-kind services to others to assist in leveraging or implementing projects that advance the Plan;
• Catalyze collaboration among those whose decisions impact heritage resources, and among organizations in allied pursuits;
• Educate, communicate, and advocate for the Plan as a guiding document for decision makers, entrepreneurs, residents;
• Raise the profile of the Corridor as a whole, bringing greater local and worldwide recognition of its unique history and resources; and
• Build a foundation for the future to ensure the stability and long-term sustainability of National Heritage Corridor activities.

The Commission will fulfill this role through a series of interrelated implementation strategies, each designed to advance multiple objectives, that are identified and prioritized in Chapter 9. The strategies overlap with and build one upon the other to render a comprehensive implementation program for the Commission and its partners. The Commission will also seek to establish a fundraising partner or foundation to develop support above and beyond its present sources for projects to advance its preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, economic revitalization, and tourism development goals.
1.10 Introduction and Purpose of the Plan

In addition to the development of specific, targeted projects, the Commission’s tools and incentives for implementation include:

- Cooperative agreements
- Support for partner organizations’ projects and programs
- Guidelines, models, and best practices
- Advice and comment on policies and issues
- Circuit riders and technical assistance
- Certification program
- Community partner program
- Tourism development and marketing
- Awards and recognition program
- Management and use of the Corridor graphic identity
- Assistance to grantseekers
- Roundtables and conferences
- Continued public involvement through advisory groups, public meetings, publications and the Corridor website

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PLAN

The legislation authorizing the Corridor also established a 27-member Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission (“the Commission”) and tasked it to work with federal, state, and local authorities to develop and implement a comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan. While the federal appropriations for the Corridor and term of the Commission are authorized for a 10-year period, the National Heritage Corridor designation is ongoing.

The Preservation and Management Plan was developed not only to address an array of needs and opportunities, but also to respond to particular requirements outlined in the authorizing legislation. The legislation authorizing the Corridor calls for the Commission to incorporate and integrate plans and to solicit public input on the development of the Preservation and Management Plan. The following is a brief summary of how the Plan has addressed the requirements.

1. Include a review of existing plans for the Corridor, including the Canal Recreationway Plan and Canal Revitalization Program, and incorporate them to the extent feasible to ensure consistence with local, regional and state planning efforts

There have been many heritage related plans in the past addressing particular aspects of the New York State Canal System, regional canal development and protection, and local waterfront development. Implementation of these plans, in whole and in part, have added tremendous public infrastructure improvements and have helped to revitalize community focus on canals and their heritage development potential. These plans were reviewed and have been summarized as appropriate in Chapters 3-8 of this Plan. This Preservation and Management Plan is consistent with, builds on, and adds credence to the core values of these earlier plans, validates implementation actions to date, and generally supports completion of those plans’ proposals.
The National Heritage Corridor designation and its broad purpose also introduce some very new concepts that not only can help advance the implementation of prior plans, but also can build a greater sense of national heritage and identity; forge cooperative partnerships to unify, strengthen, and integrate regional and local goals and actions to maximize efficiency and benefits; and foster consistent, coordinated, and high quality heritage-based resource experiences that improve the quality of life for Corridor residents and visitors alike. The Plan suggests that others may wish to incorporate National Heritage Corridor proposals into their planning and development activities, as appropriate.

2. **Provide a thematic inventory, survey, and evaluation of historic properties that should be conserved, restored, developed, or maintained because of their natural, cultural, or historic significance within the Corridor in accordance with the regulations for the National Register of Historic Places**

   The list of National Register sites and districts provided in Appendix 1 contains more than 800 entries, which in turn reflect over 14,000 individual resources, documented by the New York State Historic Preservation Office. The Plan prescribes overarching guidelines and standards for the appropriate preservation treatment of the Corridor’s diverse resources. The Plan proposes additional data collection on canal-related cultural resources to help support specific decisions on preservation, interpretation, and heritage development initiatives.

3. **Identify public and private-sector preservation goals and strategies for the Corridor**

   These goals and strategies have been addressed primarily in Chapter 3, *Protecting Our Heritage: Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources*, and Chapter 7, *Economic Revitalization*.

4. **Include a comprehensive interpretive plan that identifies, develops, supports, and enhances interpretation and education programs within the Corridor**

   An interpretive plan provided in Chapter 6, *Telling the Story: Interpretation and Orientation*, captures the national significance of the canal system through its thematic interpretation framework, addresses the various means and tools that are now available in existing state and local interpretive and educational efforts, and provides proposals for enhancing and building on those efforts. The legislative requirements also indicated that the interpretive plan could include the following:

   
   *(a) research related to the construction and history of the canals and the cultural heritage of the canal workers, their families, those that traveled along the canals, the associated farming activities, the landscape, and the communities.* Chapter 3, Chapter 6, and Chapter 9, *Implementation,*
propose future research efforts to add detail and depth about specific facets of history that can be used to better inform visitors and build understanding.

(b) documentation of and methods to support the perpetuation of music, art, poetry, literature and folkways associated with the canals. Chapter 3 and Chapter 6 address ways to enhance understanding of these important cultural values.

(c) educational and interpretative programs related to the Erie Canalway developed in cooperation with State and local governments, educational institutions, and nonprofit institutions. Chapter 6 and Chapter 9 provide guidance on ways to build cooperation to advance this purpose.

5. **Include a strategy to further the recreational development of the Corridor that will enable users to uniquely experience the canal system**

Chapter 5, *Promoting Recreation*, addresses recreation development needs and, together with Chapter 6, provides strategies to build on the unique character of the Corridor’s recreation and interpretive opportunities, foster diverse experiences, and enhance varied methods for traveling through the Corridor and accessing resources.

6. **Propose programs to protect, interpret and promote the Corridor’s historical, cultural, recreational, educational, scenic and natural resources**

The Plan cites many existing programs and actions that deserve support, and also identifies new initiatives, to help realize these diverse goals.

7. **Include an inventory of canal-related natural, cultural and historic sites and resources located in the Area**

The Appendix contains a general inventory of these sites and resources.

8. **Recommend Federal, State, and local strategies and policies to support economic development, especially tourism-related development and recreation, consistent with the purposes of the Corridor**

These strategies and policies are primarily addressed respectively in Chapter 7, Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*, and Chapter 5.

9. **Develop criteria and priorities for financial preservation assistance**

Such criteria are addressed in Chapter 9.

10. **Identify and foster strong cooperative relationships between the National Park Service, the New York State Canal Corporation, other Federal and State agencies, and nongovernmental organizations**
Throughout the Plan, the importance of building cooperative relationships and partnerships at all levels is underscored as critical for achieving the Corridor’s vision and goals.

11. **Recommend specific areas for development of interpretive, educational, and technical assistance centers associated with the Corridor**

Chapter 6 addresses how interpretive and educational programs, media, and technical assistance can be enhanced throughout the Corridor.

12. **Contain a program for implementation of the Canalway Plan by all necessary parties**

Chapter 9 identifies the means by which the Plan will be implemented and addresses the roles and responsibilities that may be assumed by both existing and potential cooperators.

**ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN**

Chapter 2 of the Plan describes the national significance and historical context of the Corridor’s resources. Chapters 3-6 analyze the existing conditions of the Corridor’s historic and cultural, natural, recreational, interpretive and orientation resources, surveying recent and ongoing initiatives and providing guidelines for future planning and actions. The guidelines recognize that change has been a defining characteristic of the Corridor since the region’s natural waterways were first modified by pickaxes and shovels. In this context, the guidelines are intended to enhance the Corridor’s ability to accommodate change – new residents, new visitors, new development – while protecting the authenticity and integrity of the resources that make the Corridor an attractive place to live, work and explore. The chapters on preservation and interpretation are supplemented by demonstration projects in four Corridor communities or regions where the guidelines were applied in hands-on public planning sessions.

Chapter 7 of the Plan evaluates socioeconomic trends in the Corridor and the current outlook for growth, and puts forward best practices for heritage- and place-based economic development based on case studies of Corridor villages and cities that are capitalizing on their heritage resources. Chapter 8 outlines strategies to increase visitation and its positive economic impacts by strengthening the Corridor’s tourism development and marketing infrastructure. Chapter 9 describes implementation of the Preservation and Management Plan, including:

- prioritized implementation strategies and a schedule for implementation of specific actions over the next five years;
- the roles and responsibilities of the Commission and its partners, including an initial staffing plan for the National Heritage Corridor;
- tools and incentives to influence regional and local planning, including criteria for financial and technical assistance;
- additional studies and compliance that may be required; and
- mechanisms for continued public involvement and coordination.
A section on consultation and coordination describes the public engagement process undertaken by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission throughout preparation of the Plan. A brief glossary, a list of references, a list of the 234 municipalities within the Corridor, and listings of the planning team and Commission members are provided at the end of the Plan. A separate volume or CD contains several appendices to the Plan providing additional detail on the Corridor’s resources and sources of data for the Plan.

The Preservation and Management Plan is not intended to be the final word in planning. A fixed solution cannot be prescribed for every opportunity or problem across such a large and diverse region, and unforeseen opportunities and ideas will undoubtedly arise as the vision of the Corridor is realized. The Plan is designed to be flexible to adapt to varying funding climates, and inspire and facilitate new solutions as this region evolves. Where negative impacts are anticipated, the Commission is committed to mitigating actions as required. The Commission will continually monitor the impacts of its actions under the Plan through regular evaluations of its projects and programs. Most importantly, it is hoped that through this Preservation and Management Plan, communities will understand that local actions have regional implications and that there is mutual benefit in fostering cooperation across jurisdictional boundaries.
NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE – OVERVIEW

The Erie Canal is the most successful and influential human-built waterway and one of the most important works of civil engineering and construction in North America. It facilitated and shaped the course of settlement of the Northeast, Midwest, and Great Plains, knit together the Atlantic Seaboard with the area west of the Appalachian Mountains, solidified New York City’s place as the young nation’s principal seaport and commercial center, and became a central element forging the national identity.

New York’s canal system, including the Erie Canal and its laterals – principally the Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals – opened the interior of the continent. Built through the only low-level gap between the Appalachian Mountain chain and the Adirondack Mountains, the Erie Canal provided one of the principal routes for migration and an economical and reliable means for transporting agricultural products and manufactured goods between the American interior, the eastern seaboard, and Europe.

The Erie Canal was a heroic feat of early 19th century engineering and construction, and at 363 miles long, more than twice the length of any canal in Europe. It was without precedent in North America, designed and built through sparsely settled territory by surveyors, engineers, contractors, and laborers who had to learn much of their craft on the job. Engineers and builders who got their start on New York’s canals went on to construct other canals, railroads, and public water supplies throughout the new nation.

In addition to cargo, New York’s canal system carried people and ideas – immigrants to the United States, and New Englanders, drawn by the prospect of rich
National Significance and Historical Context

farmland in upstate New York and beyond, along with innovators and manufacturers who established businesses along the canal. The general prosperity and ease of communication along New York’s canal corridors created a climate that fostered a number of nationally significant social reform and religious movements. At the same time, completion of the canal system and its accompanying effects severely disrupted the pre-existing Native American culture and settlements.

New York's canal system has been in continuous operation since 1825, longer than any other constructed transportation system on the North American continent. It can trace direct ancestry to short canals and navigation improvements to the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers built during the 1790s, and to the network of natural waterways that had been used for centuries for travel and commerce by members of the Iroquois Confederacy and other native peoples. Beyond the canal system's role in facilitating and shaping the growth of the nation, it is the unbroken living tradition of the waterways, the communities that line their banks, and the people who live and work on and near the canals and related navigable lakes that make the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca especially significant.

NATION BUILDING

Started just three and one-half decades after the end of the American Revolution and only three years after the end of the War of 1812, the Erie Canal helped establish the United States' place in North American affairs. Politicians and engineers consciously selected an interior route from the Hudson directly to Lake Erie, rather than a shorter route to Lake Ontario at Oswego. The interior route helped ensure that Midwestern timber and produce would flow through New York State to market, discouraged U.S. products from being shipped down the St. Lawrence River through Canada, which was still part of the British Empire, and diminished the risk of invasion from the north. Although it was never tested after the War of 1812, the security of the northern border of the U.S. was ensured by the strategic position of the Erie and Champlain Canals.

De Witt Clinton was the Erie Canal's most persistent and effective promoter. A former New York State legislator, U.S. Senator, Mayor of New York City, and a member of the commission that oversaw the initial surveys for a cross-state canal that started in 1810, Clinton spearheaded the political effort to bring the canal into being. After President Thomas Jefferson declined to support use of federal funds for a canal in New York and his successor James Madison vetoed a bill that would have provided federal money for canal and road projects, Clinton worked tirelessly to garner support for the canal from a deeply divided New York State legislature. His efforts paid off, and in 1817 the first canal authorization

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1724</td>
<td>Cadwallader Colden proposes canal linking Lake Erie and Hudson River</td>
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<tr>
<td>1785</td>
<td>Christopher Colles publishes Proposals for the speedy settlement of the waste and unappropriated lands of the western frontiers of New York, and for the improvement of the inland navigation between Albany and Oswego.</td>
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bill passed by a narrow margin. Clinton was elected Governor later that year, just before construction of the Erie Canal started at Rome on July 4, 1817.

Thereafter, construction and operation of the Erie Canal was authorized, funded, and managed by New York State. Ironically, at a time when national leaders such as John C. Calhoun were arguing strongly for federal support of internal improvements “to bind the Republic together with a perfect system of roads and canals,” the Erie and most of the waterways that followed during America’s great canal era were built with state funds under state direction. “Clinton’s Ditch” and its imitators illustrated the powerful role of state governments in the new republic.

The Erie Canal ensured the status of New York City as America’s premiere seaport, commercial center, and gateway to the interior – eclipsing New Orleans, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore. It helped New York become the “Empire State” – the leader in population, industry, and economic strength. Together, these effects gave New York a remarkable degree of political influence on the national scene.

Even before it was built, promoters of the Erie Canal claimed that it would “bind the Union,” reinforcing connections between the eastern seaboard and the still largely unsettled but expanding territories to the west. Echoing those claims, many historians believe that the Erie Canal had a major impact on the outcome of the American Civil War, not only for its role in transporting food and material, but also because economic and social ties between the northeastern seaboard and the Midwest, established and maintained by 35 years of commerce and migration along the Erie Canal, meant that residents of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota (a region historically called the “Old Northwest”) generally supported union rather than secession. If the Erie Canal had not been constructed, most of the commerce of the Midwest would have followed the Mississippi to and from New Orleans, and social, economic, and political sympathies might have taken a different form.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Erie Canal was the first effective route of interstate commerce between the Atlantic Coast and the interior of the country. The Erie not only carried settlers into upstate New York and the Midwest, it carried the products of their labor to the coastal and international marketplace. After the Erie Canal was completed, freight charges for shipping wheat from the Genesee Valley and Ohio to the port of New York dropped to a tenth of what it had previously cost to ship overland. As farmers received a greater portion of the selling price for their produce, agri-

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**1792**

New York State Legislature passes “an act for establishing and opening lock navigation within the state” and charters the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company and Northern Inland Lock Navigation Company to improve the Mohawk River-Oneida Lake-Oswego River and Hudson River-Lake Champlain water routes.
culture and settlement expanded, becoming increasingly oriented toward, and dependent on, national and international markets. Although New York politicians and citizens who promoted and paid for construction of the canal saw it as a means to bring prosperity to their own state, by 1847 more cargo on the Erie Canal originated in western states than in New York. By 1850, a quarter of all the grain grown in the United States traveled to market by way of the Erie Canal.

New York’s canal system was the largest public works project in 19th century North America and was so successful that it inspired a nationwide canal building boom that lasted for the next quarter-century. In the end, New York’s Erie, Champlain, and Oswego Canals, along with the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal in Delaware and the Delaware & Raritan Canal in New Jersey, were the only canals in the nation that generated toll revenues in excess of their construction and operating costs and could be considered commercial successes in their own right. Nonetheless, almost all of the canals inspired by the Erie prompted growth and development in the regions they served and these indirect benefits often exceeded direct financial returns to investors and state governments. In this sense America’s canals, and the Erie Canal in particular, typified the benefits of “internal improvements” promoted by Washington, Jefferson, Henry Clay, and other leaders of the new republic.

NATIONAL IDENTITY

The Erie Canal was considered one of the wonders of the new world and a source of intense pride to New York and the nation. It was more than twice as long as any canal in Europe and boasted heroic feats of engineering like the double five-rise locks and deep cut at Lockport and dramatic aqueducts at Rochester, Montezuma, Little Falls, Schoharie, Rexford and Crescent. Because it provided the most convenient route from New York City and the Hudson Valley to Niagara Falls, and passed scenic Mohawk River cataracts at Cohoes and Little Falls, the Erie Canal and the territory it ran through became both the route and the subject for dozens of foreign and American travelers, chroniclers, journalists, essayists, diarists, artists, and illustrators.

The observations recorded by these early travelers and published widely in books, periodicals, popular prints, and on decorative objects like Staffordshire pottery say a lot about the developing American character - how others saw Americans, how Americans saw themselves, and how they wanted others to see them. By 1852, when Marco Paul’s Travels on the Erie Canal was published, the waterway had been incorporated into children’s literature. At the turn of the 20th century it was the central element in hundreds of penny postcard views of upstate communities. By 1905, when Tin Pan Alley songwriter Thomas Allen published “Low Bridge, Everybody Down,” the Erie Canal had long since been

| 1792-98 | Wood Creek west of Rome straightened and deepened, a canal and locks constructed at Little Falls, and the Mohawk connected with Wood Creek and Oneida Lake near Rome. |
| 1808 | Secretary of State Albert Gallatin proposes to the U.S. Senate a national system of internal improvements including canals from the Hudson River to Lake Erie and Lake Champlain. |
eclipsed by railroads as a carrier of freight and passengers but remained deeply entrenched in the popular consciousness.

**ENGINEERING**

New York’s canal system was a nationally and internationally significant work of engineering. Although its builders borrowed and adapted ideas and techniques from earlier European canals, they applied them with audacity on an unprecedented scale through a region that was still largely wilderness. The initial construction of the Erie Canal between 1817 and 1825, and successive campaigns of improvements and enlargements throughout the 19th century, served as a training ground for many of America’s most active and productive engineers. Benjamin Wright, who gained experience with the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company during the 1790s, served as Chief Engineer of New York State Canals from 1817-28 and as consulting engineer on the Farmington, Blackstone, Chesapeake and Delaware, Chesapeake and Ohio, Delaware and Hudson, Welland, and St. Lawrence Ship Canals. Canvass White, Nathan Roberts, John B. Jervis, James Geddes, and others served apprenticeships on the Erie before going on to design and supervise construction of other important canal, railroad, bridge, and water supply projects throughout the country.

Started at a time when the military academy at West Point offered the only formal engineering instruction in North America, New York’s canal system provided practical schooling to a generation of designers and builders. It also led to the founding of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy (1824) and the introduction of engineering at Union College in Schenectady (1845), the nation’s first civilian engineering schools. The sciences of hydrology, geology, and paleontology were dramatically influenced by experiences gained during construction of the Erie Canal.

Beyond their initial construction, operation of New York’s canals required administration and management of a complex technological system on an unprecedented scale. Control of water resources, maintenance, toll collection, and administration of property, employees, contractors, and boaters on a network of more than 500 miles of artificial waterways (700 miles by the 1850s) required development of new procedures that would see later application in railroads, communication companies, public utilities, and government.

**SOCIAL INNOVATION AND REFORM**

In addition to people and products, the Erie Canal was a conduit for ideas. Several of the 19th century’s most influential social reform movements started and/or flourished along New York’s canal system, particularly in the central and

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1808</th>
<th>1810 – 11</th>
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<td>James Geddes surveys two cross-state canal routes: an interior route later taken by the Erie Canal, and an alternate route utilizing Lake Ontario and Niagara River.</td>
<td>State board of Canal Commissioners, led by DeWitt Clinton, examines routes, prepares estimates, and seeks funding for a cross-state canal.</td>
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western portions of the state. Many upstate residents pushed for the abolition of slavery. Frederick Douglass lived and published for a time in Rochester as did Harriet Tubman, before she moved to Auburn. The canal towpath served as one of the routes of the “Underground Railroad,” used by escaped slaves attempting to reach sanctuary in Canada. The women’s rights movement traces its roots to Rochester and Seneca Falls.

Religious revivalism swept the Erie Canal corridor with such intensity during the “Second Great Awakening” of the 1820s and ’30s that western New York came to be called the “Burned Over District.” Evangelical sects, millenialists, and new religious groups such as the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and Seventh Day Adventists were started in canal communities and spread their message along the waterway. Perfectionist groups like the Oneida Community flourished near the canal.

While it can be difficult to establish direct causal links between waterways and specific reform, it is possible to say that the general prosperity and the cosmopolitan nature of the Erie Canal corridor, which was experiencing dramatic growth and witnessing a flow of people from all over the Atlantic world, created a climate where social innovation and questioning of the established order could flourish.

**NATIVE AMERICAN SIGNIFICANCE**

New York’s canal building boom and the urban explosion that it triggered dramatically accelerated the dispossession and disruption of traditional life ways of the region’s Native American inhabitants that had been initiated by the introduction of European trade, diseases, colonial wars, the American Revolution, and encroaching settlement by non-natives. Early years of the canal era coincided with a period of state and federal policies that promoted “Indian removal” from developing portions of New York and other eastern states to reservations in comparatively isolated portions of those states and outlying territories in the American Midwest.

At the time of initial European contact, the upper Hudson Valley, including both the confluence with the Mohawk River and the overland route to the Champlain Valley was occupied by Mahican (Mohican) people. The remainder of upstate New York from Albany to the Great Lakes was homeland to the five nations of the Iroquois Confederacy comprising the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca peoples. Collectively, they referred to themselves as Haudenosaunee, the People of the Longhouse. By the mid-1600s the Haudenosaunee controlled trade in the Hudson, Champlain, and upper Saint Lawrence.

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<th>1812 – 14</th>
<th>1817</th>
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<td>War of 1812 reinforces desirability of constructing an interior canal route.</td>
<td>New York State Legislature approves state funding for Erie and Champlain Canals.</td>
<td>DeWitt Clinton elected Governor of New York.</td>
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</table>
River valleys, and to the west through what is now Ohio, most of Pennsylvania, and southern Ontario. The Mohawk River, Wood Creek, Oneida Lake and River, Oswego River, Seneca River, and Finger Lakes were heavily used routes for Haudenosaunee commerce, diplomacy, and warfare.

The river corridors, lakes, and carries between them also served as migration paths for early non-native settlers and invasion routes for colonial armies. Already pressed by European settlement and colonial wars between Britain, France, and Holland during the 17th and 18th centuries, the Haudenosaunee suffered large-scale dispossession during and after the American Revolution. The Mohawks, who had generally allied themselves with the British during earlier conflicts, were attacked by Americans in 1777 and most in the Mohawk Valley were driven north toward Montreal or west to the Niagara Frontier. In 1779, American forces under Generals Goose Van Schaick, John Sullivan, and James Clinton launched a three-pronged attack against the Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, who George Washington and others regarded as British sympathizers. Almost all of the villages, crops, and stored food in central and western New York were burned. Left without food or shelter at the onset of winter, many of the former residents of those villages sought refuge in the vicinity of British Fort Niagara.

Although many Haudenosaunee returned to their traditional homelands after the Treaty of Paris ended the Revolution in 1783, substantial numbers remained in British Canada. The centuries-old Iroquois Confederacy suffered a permanent split.

A succession of treaties drawn up in the decades following the Revolution reduced once vast traditional tribal territories to about 16 tightly circumscribed and comparatively small reservations. Subsequent treaties and land deals further reduced the area and number of reservations.

In the years after the American Revolution, enormous portions of western and northern New York fell under the control of land speculators and development companies as the idea of a cross-state canal took form. Although Iroquois reservations comprised very small portions of their traditional holdings, several stood in the path of these New Yorkers’ expansionist ambitions. Oneida territory included the “Great Carry” or Oneida Carry between the Mohawk and Oneida/Oswego drainage basins, as essential to Philip Schuyler’s Western Inland Lock Navigation Company and its Erie Canal successor as it had been for thousands of years before. The Onondagas retained control of many of the salt springs around Onondaga Lake as well as the marshland that would soon become the city of Syracuse. The Cayuga Reservation included much of the Seneca River and the northern end of Cayuga Lake and thereby controlled all

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<th>1817</th>
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<td><strong>Erie Canal construction begins in Rome July 4.</strong></td>
<td><strong>180 miles of Erie Canal open between Rochester and Little Falls.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Champlain Canal completed between Whitehall and Cohoes – 66 miles long, 19 locks.</strong></td>
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**CLINTON’S DITCH ERA: 1817-1835**
Map of Ho-de-no-sau-nee-ga, or the Territories of the People of the Longhouse in 1720

This map, published by Lewis Henry Morgan in his 1857 book League of the Ho-De-No-Sau-Nee or Iroquois, shows how the historical extent of Native American influence in New York State was understood during the time when the canals were at their peak. Although the straight lines on the map are somewhat artificial, they have been used by historians, anthropologists, and tribal representatives as a point of departure for discussions about Native American lands prior to European-American settlement.

1825
Eric Canal completed – 363 miles long, 83 locks. Governor Clinton rides the Seneca Chief from Buffalo to New York City for “Wedding of the Waters” ceremony in New York Harbor.

1825 – 29
State acquires Oswego Canal Company and constructs Oswego Canal between Syracuse and Lake Ontario – 38 miles, 18 locks.
potential waterborne access to the Finger Lakes. The Seneca’s largest reservation at Buffalo Creek occupied land that would later become a substantial portion of the city of Buffalo.

Not surprisingly, the principals of land companies were some of the most vocal and persistent promoters of both transportation improvements and the extinguishment of American Indian title to lands in central and western parts of the state. In the decades between the Revolution and the beginning of canal construction, individual land speculators, land companies, and a number of state and federal officials shared common interests and worked hard to remove the Haudenosaunee from New York’s lowland corridors and open the way for non-Indian settlement. A succession of land transfers, sales, and treaties, some of questionable ethics and legality, further diminished Haudenosaunee holdings along canals and, later, turnpike and rail lines.

The aftermath of the War of 1812 added the imperative of national defense to the land speculators’ promotion of non-Indian settlement along the border with British Canada. During his term as Secretary of War, coincident with construction of the Erie Canal from 1817-1825, John C. Calhoun advocated road and canal construction to facilitate rapid settlement of the northern sections of the nation as well as removal of all American Indians to territories west of the Mississippi. The Indian Removal Act of 1830, passed during the administration of President Andrew Jackson and Vice President Martin Van Buren, was supported by the Ogden Land Company and a number of prominent New Yorkers who continued to press for relocation of all Iroquois to western territories. During the 1830s, nearly half of the members of the Oneida Nation were loaded onto Erie Canal boats and transported to Buffalo, where they boarded lake vessels bound for Green Bay, Wisconsin close to the site of their newly established western reservation. The Seneca were similarly pressed.

After the Erie Canal was completed, the Ogden Land Company and its political allies worked assiduously to secure title to the Buffalo Creek Reservation of the Seneca, which stretched inland from Buffalo Harbor, immediately south of the western terminus of the canal, and was a prime spot for growth of the new boom town. They also sought title to a number of culturally significant Seneca reservations in the prime agricultural land of the Genesee Valley. Eventually the land speculators prevailed, often through fraudulent means. The Seneca relinquished Buffalo Creek in 1847.

By the peak of New York’s canal boom in the 1840s and ‘50s, the Erie and Champlain Canals ran through portions of the Mohawk ancestral homeland. Oneida territory was crossed by the Erie running east-to-west across the Oneida (Great) Carry and by the Black River Canal running north, the Chenango running south,

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<th>1826 – 28</th>
<th>1829</th>
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and a number of shorter waterways such as the Oneida Lake Canal. The Erie and Oswego Canals ran through Onondaga territory. The Erie and Cayuga-Seneca Canals ran through country once controlled by the Cayugas. The Erie and Genesee Valley Canals ran through the very heart of the Seneca Nation. The state condemned portions of the Seneca’s Oil Spring Reservation between 1858 and 1871 to build Cuba Lake, a storage reservoir for the Genesee Valley Canal.

The first boat to transit the full length of the Erie Canal, carrying Governor DeWitt Clinton and a party of dignitaries from Buffalo to New York Harbor for the “Wedding of the Waters” ceremony in the fall 1825, was called the Seneca Chief. The name of the vessel was only one of the ironies in the aquatic procession. Clinton considered himself an authority on Iroquois; in an 1811 speech before the New York Historical Society, when Clinton was mayor of New York City and a newly appointed canal commissioner, he predicted that “before the passing away of the present generation, not a single Iroquois will be seen in this state.” In this case, Clinton was not prophetic. The land speculators, politicians, and government officials who worked to remove the Iroquois from New York never fully succeeded. There are more members of the Six Nations in the state today than at the end of the Revolution although those who reside on reservations are often far from their ancestral homelands. While New York’s canal corridors are lined with sites of ancient and historic Iroquois villages, many of the descendents of those communities now live in distant portions of New York, the Midwest, and Canada.

STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE

The canal system has special significance to New York. It is a major landscape feature across the state. It established and shaped patterns of settlement and growth that remain today – New York City as the seaport and commercial center; Albany, the eastern gateway to the system; Syracuse, a city that grew from a swamp at the center of the system; Rochester, the manufacturing city by the falls and America’s first inland boom town; and Buffalo, grain port and industrial colossus at the western gateway.

Evidence of New York’s canal age is visible in the buildings and streetscapes of large and small communities across the state. Not only do canal towns share similarities in layout and orientation to the waterway, in most cases their architecture reflects the prosperity that characterized upstate New York’s lowland corridors from 1825 through the end of the 19th century.
The canal system shaped patterns of upstate agriculture, opening access to markets for Genesee wheat, cheese, butter, fruit and fruit products from central and western New York, as well as Adirondack timber and iron ore. During its first decade, most canal cargo came from central and western New York but that changed as the Erie opened the way for settlement and agriculture in the Great Lakes states. The shipment of Midwestern wheat and forest products caused canal tonnage arriving at Albany to quadruple between 1832 and 1836. While the volume of commerce from Western states grew by 500% between 1836 and 1856, the volume of traffic generated within New York grew by 80%. This initiated a trend, later reinforced by railroads and motor trucks and still visible today, for New York farmers to specialize in higher value semi-perishable products (dairy, fruit, and vegetables) rather than cereal grains.

The New York State Canal System was an enormous source of state revenue – the Erie, Champlain, and Oswego Canals paid for themselves in the first decade of operation. The system earned $121,461,871 in tolls between 1826 and 1883 when tolls were abolished by constitutional amendment. In addition to direct revenues, the Canal Fund provided an important reserve that secured the state’s financial status during periods of financial panic and depression throughout the 19th century when a number of other states were forced to default.

The immediate successes of the Erie, Champlain, and Oswego Canals inspired a boom in canal construction throughout upstate New York. While toll revenues of the Cayuga-Seneca, Crooked Lake, Oneida Lake, Chenango, Genesee Valley, and Black River never repaid the cost of their construction, these lateral waterways did prompt settlement, development, and economic growth in the regions that they reached and served to bind the state together in an era of difficult overland transportation.

Although less visible and more ephemeral than locks, buildings, and streetscapes, canal lifeways are a significant element in New York’s heritage. During the 19th century, a significant portion of upstate New York’s residents worked on or next to the canal system. In addition to boat crews and families, the system provided employment for lock tenders, maintenance workers, construction contractors, boat builders, and engineers. Many storekeepers, blacksmiths, and feed dealers derived a significant portion of their business from boaters and other canal workers. Upstate farmers and manufacturers shipped by canal. The canals also inspired and supported their own lively folk tradition of songs and stories. In other words, at least during the 19th century, the canal system was an integral part of the mental as well as the physical landscape for many New Yorkers.

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<th>1835</th>
<th>1842-46</th>
<th>1843</th>
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<tr>
<td>NYS Legislature approves enlargement of Erie, Champlain, and Oswego Canals to 7 feet deep and 70 feet wide, with locks capable of passing boats up to 240 tons.</td>
<td>Enlargement work halted due to State debt and “Stop and Tax Law.”</td>
<td>Albany and Buffalo connected by rail over routes operated by seven companies.</td>
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LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Erie Canal is significant at many levels, but all of New York’s canals have special significance in the communities along their routes. Canals were the principal reason that many communities were established where they were and when they were. Community form, street pattern, and architecture usually evolved in relation to the waterway. Access to canals was a reason why some communities prospered and grew more than their neighbors. Canals facilitated the growth of locally prominent manufacturers. They allowed many towns to call themselves “port,” even though they were hundreds of miles from the sea. Today, the vestigial influences of the 19th century canal system can been observed in the unusually wide streets (often called Erie Boulevard) that run through the centers of Schenectady, Utica, Rome, and Syracuse as well as dozens of Canal Streets, Lock Streets, and Towpath Roads in communities across upstate New York.

THE SYSTEM

Today, navigable portions of the New York State Canal System include the Erie Canal, which connects the Hudson River with Lake Erie, 338 miles to the west; the Champlain Canal, which connects the tidal portion of the Hudson River with Lake Champlain, 63 miles to the north; the Oswego Canal, which branches off from the Erie and follows the Oswego River to connect with Lake Ontario, 23 miles to the north; and the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, which follows the Seneca River to connect the Erie Canal with Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. The system is owned and operated by the New York State Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the New York State Thruway Authority. Statewide efforts to revitalize the system through recreational improvements have been led by the Canal Recreationway Commission since 1995.

In their current form, these canals follow alignments and utilize structures that were placed in service between 1915 and 1918, but all four have direct ancestors that opened to navigation in the 1820s. They all follow major rivers that native peoples used for thousands of years to transport goods and people. The trip west required an overland carry from Albany to Schenectady to avoid the Cohoes Falls; travel by canoe or bateau – thirty-foot flat-bottomed boats capable of carrying up to one and one-half tons each – up the Mohawk River to Little Falls; a one-mile carry around the falls; a further push up the Mohawk to the ancient Oneida Carrying Place or “Great Carry” over the low drainage divide between the Mohawk River and Wood Creek at Fort Stanwix; and a final downstream leg along the winding Wood Creek to Oneida Lake, across the lake to its outlet, and down the Oneida River to its confluence with the Seneca River.
From there, travelers could continue north, down the rapids of the Oswego River to Lake Ontario; or west, up the Seneca River through marshes to the heads of Seneca and Cayuga Lakes.

In 1792 the New York State Legislature chartered the Northern Inland Lock Navigation Company and the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company. Promoted by Philip Schuyler, these companies built short bypass channels and a handful of locks to improve navigation on the upper Hudson River and on the Mohawk River and Wood Creek between Schenectady and Oneida Lake. By 1798 the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company had completed canals and locks at Little Falls, Rome, and German Flatts near Herkimer, and had deepened and straightened Wood Creek to the point that sixty-foot Durham boats, capable of carrying up to ten tons each, could carry salt from the springs near Onondaga Lake and wheat from the Finger Lakes to Schenectady. Goods still had to be carried overland between Schenectady and Albany to bypass the great falls of the Mohawk at Cohoes. The Northern Company initiated work to improve navigation on the upper Hudson and connect it to Lake Champlain but the project was never completed.

Agitation for a cross-state canal that would connect the tidal Hudson River with the Great Lakes, without the need for carries, grew during the first decade of the 19th century. The New York State Legislature authorized surveys of routes between the Hudson and Lake Erie in 1808 and 1810. Construction of the Erie Canal started in 1817 and the waterway opened from Albany to Buffalo in 1825. The first iteration of the Erie Canal was 363 miles long and had 86 locks to make up the 571-foot difference in elevation between the Hudson River and Lake Erie. Locks were 90 feet long by 15 feet wide, the channel was a minimum of four feet deep and 40 feet wide at the surface, and boats built to fit the waterway could carry up to 30 tons. The Champlain Canal was also started in 1817 and opened in 1823. It was 66 miles long and had 19 locks of the same dimension as the Erie. Construction of the Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca Canals started in 1825 and both were completed by 1828. The Oswego Canal was 38 miles long and had 21 locks; the Cayuga-Seneca was 27 miles long and had 12 locks. Unlike the Erie and Champlain, which were designed as wholly independent channels parallel to but independent of flood- and drought-prone natural rivers, the Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca Canals made use of dredged river channels with towing paths on the bank.

Work to enlarge the system was authorized in 1835, proceeded fitfully due to state budget limitations, and was declared complete in 1862, even though considerable work remained to be done. Locks on the Erie, Champlain, and Oswego Canals were substantially or completely rebuilt with new dimensions of 110 feet long by 18 feet wide. Channels were deepened to seven feet and

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<th>1857</th>
<th>1862</th>
<th>1877 – 78</th>
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<td>Genesee Valley Canal completed connecting Erie Canal with Allegheny River.</td>
<td>Canal enlargement declared complete (although much work remained to be done)</td>
<td>Chemung, Crooked Lake, Oneida Lake, Chenango, and Genesee Valley Canals abandoned.</td>
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ENLARGED ERA: 1835-1917
widened to at least 70 feet. Locks on the Erie were “doubled” with two side-by-side chambers to facilitate simultaneous east and west bound traffic. All aqueducts were replaced or substantially rebuilt to accommodate the new channel dimensions and to allow boats to pass. New aqueducts were built across the Seneca River at Montezuma and across the Schoharie at Fort Hunter, replacing troublesome slackwater crossings and guard locks. Boats built to the new maximum dimensions could carry up to 240 tons of cargo. Channel straightening and minor realignments reduced the length of the Erie Canal from 363 to 350 miles.

New York built a number of other lateral canals that connected to the Erie, including the Chemung (completed 1833), Crooked Lake (1833), Chenango (1836), Genesee Valley (partially opened 1841, completed 1857) and Black River (1855) Canals. The Delaware & Hudson, connecting the Hudson River at Kingston to the Delaware at Port Jervis and the anthracite coal fields of northern Pennsylvania, was constructed by a private company and opened to navigation in 1828. All but the Black River and Delaware & Hudson were closed by the state in 1877-78. The D&H was abandoned 1899 but a portion was reopened for navigation from 1902 to 1912. The last boat descended the locks of the Black River Canal in 1924.

The Enlarged Erie Canal carried its peak tonnage in 1880. Although freight tapered off thereafter, there were continued cries to upgrade the system. Between 1884 and 1894 one of the two chambers at most of the Enlarged Erie’s locks between Cohoes and Lockport were lengthened to accommodate “double-headed” tows of two canal boats lashed end-to-end. Water turbine driven capstans were installed at lengthened locks to help pull boats in and out of the chambers (locks 3-18 at Cohoes, 36-39 at Little Falls, 57-59 at Newark, and the Lockport Flight were clustered too closely to be lengthened). Twelve of the 23 locks on the Oswego Canal were lengthened as part of the same program.

The New York State Legislature passed the “Nine Million Dollar Act” in 1895 to lengthen remaining locks and deepen the Enlarged Erie Canal channel from 7 to 9 feet. Construction of the “second enlargement” started immediately, even though initial estimates and bids indicated that it would cost $13.5 to $15 million to deepen the 350 mile long channel (or raise the banks) and modify 75 locks, 32 aqueducts, and most of the 642 bridges that crossed the canal between Albany and Buffalo. Work stopped on the partially completed project in 1898 amid allegations of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds.

The following year, newly elected Governor Theodore Roosevelt appointed a committee to investigate and report on the future of New York’s canal system. In 1903 the New York State Legislature passed the “Barge Canal Act,” based in...
Map of New-York State Canals c. 1858

This map, designed under the direction of Van Rensselaer Richmond, State Engineer & Surveyor, to accompany his report for 1858, highlights the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals as well as the state-built laterals: the Chemung, Crooked Lake, Chenango, Genesee Valley, and Black River Canals, all eventually closed to navigation. Originally published in the Annual Report of the New York State Engineer and Surveyor (C. Van Benthuyzen, Albany, 1860). The map has been modified to highlight the canals.

1899 Governor Theodore Roosevelt establishes Advisory Committee on Canals, which recommends further enlargement.

1901 Edward A. Bond submits Report on the Barge Canal from the Hudson River to the Great Lakes suggesting alternate canal routes across the state.
large part on the recommendations of Roosevelt’s committee. The New York State Barge Canal System upgraded the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals with some significant differences in routing and fundamental technology. Clinton’s Ditch, the Enlarged Erie, and the 19th century laterals were towpath canals on which boats were pulled by mules or horses. Small steamboats and tugs started to operate on New York’s canals during the late 19th century but their use was not promoted because of traffic conflicts with animal drawn boats and bank erosion caused by their wakes. By contrast, the New York State Barge Canal System was designed expressly for motorized vessels.

The new system needed wider and deeper channels but no longer required a towpath, so state engineers canalized extended portions of the Hudson, Mohawk, Oneida, Oswego, Seneca, and Clyde Rivers as well as Oneida, Onondaga, and Cross Lakes. In the western part of the state, the section of the Erie Canal along the Niagara River from Buffalo to Tonawanda was abandoned. From its new western terminus at Tonawanda, the Erie Barge Canal route followed most of the historic alignment to the Town of Greece, just west of Rochester, where it swung in a broad arc south of the city to avoid widespread demolition downtown. The Erie Barge Canal rejoined the route of the 19th century Erie near Pittsford and generally followed the historic alignment east to Lyons. From Lyons east, the Erie Barge Canal made use of river and lake beds and generally ran north of the earlier Erie Canal. Near Syracuse the 19th and 20th century routes were nearly ten miles apart. The Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca Barge Canals were canalized rivers. The large dams and locks built between 1905 and 1918 inundated many of their 19th century predecessors. The Champlain Barge Canal utilized the bed of the Hudson River from Troy north to Fort Edward. From Fort Edward to Whitehall its land cut closely paralleled its 19th predecessor but did not follow it exactly.

When it was completed in 1918 the New York State Barge Canal System was 12 feet deep. All locks were 300 feet long by 44.5 feet wide with lifts ranging between six and 40.5 feet, and could pass vessels of 3,000 ton capacity. Lock gates and valves were driven by electric motors and most lock sites had their own hydroelectric or gasoline driven power plants. The four interconnected canals of the current New York State Canal System include:

- **Erie:** 348 miles, with 220 miles of canalized rivers and lakes and 128 miles of land-cut channel; with 35 lift locks
- **Champlain:** 60 miles, of which 37 miles are canalized river and 23 miles are land-cut channel; with eleven lift locks
- **Oswego:** 24 miles, entirely within the canalized Oswego River; with seven lift locks

| 1903 | Barge Canal Act authorizes construction of major enlargements and realignments of Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals. |
| 1905 | Barge Canal construction begins. Minimum dimensions are 12 feet deep, with electrically operated locks 44.5 feet wide and 300 feet long. |

**ENLARGED ERA: 1835-1917**
• Cayuga-Seneca: 92 miles, utilizing three miles of land-cut channel and 89 miles of canalized rivers and lakes, including Seneca Lake, Cayuga Lake and the Seneca River; with four lift locks

Portions of earlier canals were adapted and maintained to supply water to the Barge Canal system. The Rome summit level, between Locks 20 and 21 on the drainage divide between the Mohawk and Oneida River basins, is fed by the Dewitt-New London portion of the Enlarged Erie and the associated upland reservoirs in Madison County and the Black River Canal and Forestport Feeder in Oneida County. Northern sections of the Chenango Canal and associated reservoirs supplement flows of the upper Mohawk. The summit level of the Champlain Canal, between Locks 8 and 9 on the drainage divide between the Hudson River and Lake Champlain basins, is fed by the Glens Falls Feeder and a portion of the 19th century Champlain Canal.

HISTORICAL INTEGRITY

Examples of all four major phases of New York canal building can be found within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

The New York State Barge Canal System, authorized in 1903 and completed in 1918, retains by far the highest level of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The structures and channels of the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca branches exist and operate today largely as they did when the system went into operation. There have certainly been changes and replacements, some losses and removals, and a handful of somewhat incompatible additions, but the effect of these alterations on the whole is almost inconsequential. Although many have been relined and a few were subject to mechanical alterations during the 1970s, all 58 locks on the system operate today much as they have for more than 85 years. The two classes of structures that have been subject to more significant losses are terminal buildings and powerhouses.

Elements of three earlier phases of canal construction are visible across the state. One lock, and a portion of the channel first dug in 1792, by the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company are visible in Little Falls. Archeological remains of other locks and channel segments from that period have been discovered near Rome and German Flatts in the Mohawk Valley.

At least four of the 96 locks of the original Erie Canal (commonly known as Clinton’s Ditch) survive and are visible above grade. Others may be buried, but most were dismantled or substantially altered during the 1835-62 program of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Entire Barge Canal system completed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>Black River Canal closed to navigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>St. Lawrence Seaway is opened between Montreal and Lake Ontario. Minimum dimensions are 27 feet deep, with locks 860 feet long.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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BARGE CANAL ERA: 1918-PRESENT
enlargement. In some places the enlargement followed a slightly different route in order to bypass curves and landforms that had caused problems for the early canal. The net effect was to reduce the length of the route from Albany to Buffalo from 363 to 350 miles and the number of locks required to make the 571-foot change in elevation between the Hudson and Lake Erie from 83 to 72. As a result of these slight changes in alignment, nearly 40 miles of Clinton’s Ditch prism (channel) survives in small segments scattered across the state.

More than half (46 of 72) of the locks built for the Enlarged Erie Canal and three quarters (24 of 32) of its aqueducts survive in some form and can be found in parks, fields, yards, and along highways between Albany and Buffalo. In 1983 it was estimated that as much as 143 miles of the original 350 miles of Enlarged Erie Canal prism survived and was visible on the landscape. Highway and sewer projects utilizing canal right-of-way have reduced the length of surviving prism over the past two decades, but a surprisingly large portion remains. While most of the remaining sections are dry or at best swampy, 32 miles of the Enlarged Erie, in Onondaga, Madison and Oneida Counties between Dewitt and New London on the outskirts of Rome, are maintained by the New York State Canal Corporation to supply water to the summit level of the 20th century Erie Barge Canal. This watered segment forms the spine of the 36 mile long Old Erie Canal State Park. Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site in Fort Hunter, Montgomery County includes about three miles of partially watered prism along with two Clinton’s Ditch locks, two Enlarged Erie locks and portions of a third, the remains of the 1837 aqueduct over Schoharie Creek, and a number of other canal structures. Other bypassed sections of the Enlarged Erie near Camillus in Onondaga County and Vischer’s Ferry in Saratoga County are watered and suggest the appearance of towpath canals during their years of operation.

A far greater portion of the structures on the lateral canals were demolished, flooded, or significantly altered than on the Erie during the construction of the Barge Canal system. At least seven of the 23 locks on the Enlarged Champlain Canal remain visible, along with several sections of prism. The Glens Falls Feeder Canal remains in service to supply water to the summit level of the Champlain Barge Canal. The feeder was never enlarged, so in addition to being watered, its fourteen surviving lock chambers are the largest group in the National Heritage Corridor that retain the smaller dimensions of Clinton’s Ditch. Four of the twenty-one locks of the Enlarged Oswego Canal are visible today.

| 1992 | Barge Canal renamed “New York State Canal System” and management transferred to new NYS Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the NYS Thruway Authority. |
| 1995 | Canal Recreationway Plan completed; Canal Revitalization Program begins. |
| 2000 | Congress establishes Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. |
3

Protecting our Heritage: Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources

OVERVIEW

The national significance of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor relies on the integrity and authenticity of its vast array of historic and cultural resources – the qualities that allow modern-day visitors to connect to the people, places and events that shaped the region, New York State, and the nation. Preservation is what protects the integrity and authenticity of physical elements, such as buildings, vessels, or the canals themselves, that can be toured and explained; of cultural expressions, such as oral histories, folkways, and art, that can be shared and absorbed; and of cultural landscapes, evolving places where the concrete and the ephemeral combine to resonate with the past and the present, that can only be appreciated through immersion and travel.

Increasingly, Congress, the National Park Service, preservationists, and other managers of cultural resources are recognizing the potential of heritage areas – regions with a compelling history of settlement, movement and change – as vehicles for managing living cultural landscapes where renewed stewardship of historic and natural resources is needed at the same time as economic revitalization. Successful heritage areas are regional partnerships that bring to the table the multiple “owners” of cultural landscapes, to set heritage development goals that balance preservation with economic growth, and to collaborate on strategies that optimize their resources. This chapter addresses the kinds of historic and cultural resources in the Corridor, describes the threats to their survival, and proposes guidelines for new and ongoing heritage development efforts by public and private actors.
3.2 Protecting our Heritage: Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources
The communities of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor currently benefit from extensive efforts to advance preservation goals by federal, state and municipal agencies, statewide and regional planning initiatives, nonprofit organizations, and countless individuals. In addition to protecting and enhancing historic and cultural resources throughout the Corridor, these efforts have heightened public awareness and wider recognition of the economic potential of heritage development. But much more work remains to be done, and while opportunities for new public and private partnerships abound, financial and management resources are limited. Numerous challenges face the movement to convert the Corridor’s historic integrity into economic benefits.

Economic growth, which has helped support preservation efforts in the Corridor, is also, paradoxically, among the greatest threats to the Corridor’s cultural landscapes. Formerly distinctive transitions from town to countryside are becoming blurred by greenfield development that homogenizes and erodes the Corridor’s unique sense of place. For the most part, decisions about land use are made at the local level, where competition for new development can marginalize preservation and open space conservation efforts. Different issues challenge the preservation of discrete resources: historic vessels, never meant to last beyond their commercial usefulness, must find new uses that can pay for their upkeep; archeological sites have low visibility and, unless public funds or permits are involved, have no protections; collections of documents and artifacts are underutilized and suffer unexamined gaps; folkways, particularly oral histories and traditional crafts, are fading with the generation that witnessed the Barge Canal’s heyday as a commercial shipping route and center of community life. And the canals themselves, cornerstones of the region’s culture, require constant maintenance to preserve their historic integrity as well as their continued commercial and recreational utility.

Any actively engaged community that sees value in its history can find a successful path through these challenges. The heritage development guidelines at the end of this chapter are intended to help communities work with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners to protect the integrity and authenticity of historic and cultural resources in a way that heightens public engagement and enhances the climate for new investment. The guidelines explain how to dovetail resources and opportunities so that the preservation of each resource advances the economy of its community. They also suggest how to improve linkages of historic and cultural resources to interpretive themes and to each other, providing opportunities for exposure, discovery, and increased support.

**GOALS**

The preservation goal for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is that the Corridor’s historic and distinctive sense of place will be widely recognized and consistently protected. Four objectives have been identified as milestones toward this goal:
Build public support for preservation and enhancement of critical historic and cultural resources

Without active and widespread public support, even the most basic strategies to preserve the Corridor’s historic and cultural resources will not succeed. Heightening public interest and participation requires a concerted effort to shift perceptions of “old” as having little present or future economic value, and to demonstrate how historic structures and cultural resources can become strategic assets for vital communities.

Protect and enhance the authenticity and integrity of the Corridor’s historic resources and canals, and the continued utility of the 20th century canal system

The Canalway Corridor will look different one hundred years from now, as well it should, but it should carry with it the essential elements – including an operating canal system – that reflect its past and present greatness. As change inevitably takes place in the Corridor, historic resources will require innovative preservation strategies to ensure that they contribute economically while providing a sense of continuity.

Encourage investment in historic town centers, sustainable new development practices, and retention of farming and open space

Adaptive reuse and context-sensitive infill development are necessary to leverage the concentrations of historic resources in town centers into tangible economic benefits. Sustainable new development that retains farming operations and open space will maximize the efficiency of municipal services, reduce environmental impacts, and preserve the distinction between town and country that makes the Corridor such an attractive place to live, work and visit.

Help Corridor communities plan for protection of historic and cultural resources and future development

Fiscally challenged municipalities need new development and stronger tax bases, but many local governments have limited resources to develop and implement incentives and land use strategies that assure the protection of historic and cultural resources or guide future development in ways that reinforce local character rather than erode it. National Heritage Corridor designation provides an opportunity to enhance the coordination and capacity communities need to manage change.

CONTEXT

The state of preservation in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is at a crossroads. Anchored by the vision of the 1995 Recreationway Plan and subsequent improvements to the canal system and Canalway Trail, new efforts are underway to capitalize on the region’s bounty of historic and cultural resources.
There are many outstanding and well-run historic sites, museums, and other interpretive facilities. Awakened to the potential of heritage development, municipalities, institutions and property owners are recognizing the value of the resources under their care, and the stories those resources convey. A number of Corridor communities have enacted preservation legislation and appointed preservation review commissions to qualify as Certified Local Governments, thereby becoming eligible for community preservation grants, technical preservation assistance, and training opportunities provided through the State Historic Preservation Office. There is a nascent but growing public awareness of the interconnectedness of historic resources, sustainable development, and quality of life.

Despite these positive signs, challenges remain. Many Corridor residents remain unaware of the presence and potential of their historic and cultural resources. Existing preservation efforts, competing for a limited pool of funding, often fail to capitalize on the benefits of partnership. Many stewards of historic sites struggle to keep their doors open to the public or are burdened by years of deferred maintenance. Worse, many resources, including cultural landscapes (see Resource Analysis section, page 3.12) that have no clear boundaries and span multiple jurisdictions, remain without formal protections or preservation strategies. Some kinds of new development, long awaited and much needed, are also eroding the characteristic sense of place that makes Corridor communities so attractive to employers and workers as well as visitors.

In this climate, the myriad successful efforts of preservationists in the Corridor should be recognized as nothing less than heroic. From librarians to locktenders to park managers, the stewards of the Corridor’s historic and cultural resources have built a strong tradition of preservation practice rooted in community values. The National Heritage Corridor designation should be understood in part as an acknowledgment of their hard work. It is the ambition of this Preservation and Management Plan to increase the impact of their ongoing efforts. Key programs and initiatives underway include the following:

**NEW YORK STATE CANAL CORPORATION**

The most successful preservation story in the Corridor is the Barge Canal itself. In continuous operation since 1918, and retaining the vast majority of its original features and materials, the Barge Canal is a testament to New York State’s vision, dedication, and effective management. Since it assumed responsibility for the Barge Canal in 1992, the Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the New York State Thruway Authority, has balanced the need to operate and update the system for commercial and recreational use while preserving and interpreting its historic elements. The Canal Corporation has worked to revitalize commercial shipping, a critical component of the Corridor’s heritage, while it has made major investments to accommodate and promote recreation. Although the Barge Canal is a model for adaptive reuse, it remains an underutilized asset. Increased resources for planning, preservation, and improvements to Canal Corporation properties can help ensure that the canal system achieves its full potential as a heritage destination and anchor for community revitalization.
NEW YORK STATE CANAL RECREATIONWAY COMMISSION

Comprised of state agencies, regional planning boards, and at-large members, the Canal Recreationway Commission was created to advise the Canal Corporation on actions needed to revitalize the canal system. The Recreationway Commission is guided by the 1995 Canal Recreationway Plan, which was developed as a framework for the adaptive reuse of the canal system as a recreational resource and underscored the relationship between historic resources and recreational tourism. Many of the plan’s preservation-related recommendations have been implemented, including: the National Heritage Corridor designation; construction of new canal harbors and other recreational facilities consistent with the Recreationway Plan’s suggested public space standards, and the Erie Canalway Trail, which when completed will connect historic and recreational resources along the length of the Erie Canal; development of an Interim Interpretive Plan by the Canal Corporation; and increased public interest in developing the region’s historic and cultural resources as heritage development assets. Projects under the jurisdiction of the Canal Corporation, including infrastructural improvements and all types of development on Canal Corporation lands, are subject to review and approval under Section 14.09 of the New York State Historic Preservation Law.

OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION (OPRHP)

In addition to managing eight historic sites and two parks with historic resources within the Corridor, the OPRHP, along with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), administers the state’s Open Space Conservation Plan, which guides local activities that help preserve the Corridor’s historic cultural landscapes (see Resource Analysis section, page 3.12). A number of OPRHP programs support local preservation activities, including: the Historic Preservation Program, which provides matching grants for the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of properties listed on the State or National Register of Historic Places through the Environmental Protection Fund; the Historic Barns Tax Credit, which assists with the rehabilitation of pre-1936 barns; and the Barns Restoration and Preservation Program, which provides matching grants for the preservation of historic agricultural buildings. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), a component of the OPRHP, is the state’s central source for preservation planning and technical assistance under the New York State Historic Preservation Act. In 1993, SHPO staff prepared a statement of significance finding elements of the New York State Canal System to be potentially eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND (EPF)

Created in 1993 by the Environmental Protection Act, this fund provides mechanisms for open space conservation, land acquisition, waterfront revitalization, water quality projects, farmland protection, and special areas planning. EPF Title 3 provides funds for OPRHP to undertake open space land conservation projects in partnership with local governments and nonprofit organizations. Title 9 provides funds for OPRHP, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to purchase, preserve or improve park lands, historic resources, and state-
designated heritage areas and corridors. Title 11 provides funds for waterfront revitalization plans, watershed management plans, and coastal rehabilitation projects.

**NEW YORK STATE HERITAGE AREA SYSTEM**

The Heritage Area System (formerly known as the Urban Cultural Park System), administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, is a state and local partnership established to preserve and develop areas that have special significance to New York State. Eight state heritage areas and two state heritage corridors lie within or overlap the boundaries of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Many of the heritage area management plans explicitly address preservation of canal-related resources, along with the overall goals of conservation, recreation, education and economic revitalization.

- **Mohawk Valley (State) Heritage Corridor:** The State Heritage Corridor’s management plan supports a number of preservation-related actions, including: establishment of Main Streets programs; seed investment in renovation of historic buildings and restoration of select heritage resources; development of linkages between waterfrents, downtowns, and recreational resources; identification of priority resources; production of a best practices handbook; and encouragement of agricultural preservation. Initiatives so far have focused on education and awareness, including presentations on heritage development and several community planning workshops. Implementation of an interpretive plan and a coordinated marketing effort with heritage organizations in the neighboring Hudson and Champlain valleys, have improved the demand and environment for historic preservation and increased the level of regional cooperation.

- **Western Erie Canal (State) Heritage Corridor:** Preservation actions supported by the State Heritage Corridor’s management plan include: promotion of public awareness about historic resources; coordination of regional preservation partners; documentation of historic buildings, cultural landscapes, and archaeological resources; and voluntary municipal adoption of a “compact resolution” to prioritize connections to the canal, develop an ethic of stewardship, pursue education and interpretation, and strengthen historic downtowns.

- **Albany Heritage Area:** This heritage area focuses on the state’s political and financial institutions, including the role they played in building the canal system.

- **Hudson-Mohawk Heritage Area (RiverSpark):** This heritage area, serving seven communities at the confluence of the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, regularly sponsors research, festivals, tours and capital projects that interpret the development of the canals and preserve the region’s many notable towpath-era and Barge Canal sites.

- **Whitehall Heritage Area:** This heritage area has been actively involved in the revitalization of the community’s main street, harbor and canal, and rehabilitated a canal terminal building to serve as a visitor center.

- **Schenectady Heritage Area:** This heritage area’s canal-related programs include historic district tours and downtown revitalization activities.

- **Syracuse Heritage Area:** With a visitor center hosted by the Erie Canal Museum, this heritage area focuses on canal history and helped make his-
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Protecting our Heritage: Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources

toric downtown Clinton Square, a former canalboat turning basin, a center of heritage interpretation.

- **Seneca Falls Heritage Area**: This heritage area’s canal-related projects have focused on main street revitalization, historic preservation, and enhancement of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal waterfront.
- **Rochester High Falls Heritage Area**: This heritage area’s canal-related programs highlight the canal-dependent power generation and mills that made Rochester the “Flour City.”
- **Buffalo Heritage Area**: This heritage area, focusing on revitalization of the arts district and its architectural landmarks, celebrates the remarkable flowering of culture that occurred when Buffalo flourished as the western terminus of the Erie Canal.

**STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE (SHPO)**

The SHPO, a component of the OPRHP, oversees compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act within New York. Under the 2002-2006 State Historic Preservation Plan, the SHPO supports a wide array of activities in partnership with numerous individuals, organizations, agencies, and governments. Among other activities, the SHPO manages the State Register of Historic Places and forwards its listings to the National Register; reviews applications for the federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit; administers historic preservation grants to municipalities and non-profits; assists in environmental reviews and archeological planning for projects under the State Environmental Quality Review Act; offers technical assistance and community preservation grants through the Certified Local Governments program; and promotes outreach and education. Targeted initiatives of value to the Corridor have included the Survey of Historic Resources Associated with African-Americans in New York State, the Barn Restoration and Preservation Program, and the Historic Bridges Inventory.

**ERIE CANAL GREENWAY**

A state agency task force is developing the concept for a legislatively designated state greenway along the Erie Canal, proposed by the Governor in 2005. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission was invited to participate as a member of the New York State Canal Corporation Interagency Task Force. The Commission will cooperate with the Canal Corporation and any entity created to help achieve compatible and complementary goals.

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS), U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

In addition to managing four national historic sites in the Corridor, the National Park Service also works closely with the New York SHPO on implementation of the State Historic Preservation Plan, including: listing of sites in the National Register of Historic Places; approval of projects for the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit; and evaluation of local preservation legislation and review commissions for the Certified Local Government program, which provides technical assistance and funding to communities that meet federal preservation planning standards. The Maritime Heritage Program maintains inventories
of historic ships and wrecks and provides technical assistance in preservation planning. The National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program provides technical assistance to organizations attempting to identify, document, preserve and interpret sites and travel routes related to this important national and local story. Preservation initiatives by the NPS and other federal agencies are guided by the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and related guidelines for historic buildings, cultural landscapes, and vessels.

The Erie Canalway: A Special Resource Study of the New York State Canal System, a 1998 report by the National Park Service, lays the groundwork for the creation of the Corridor and for major portions of this Preservation and Management Plan. It provides a concise and cogent analysis of the canal system’s significance at both a regional and national level, and proposes a set of core interpretive themes that seek to place the stories of the canals within a broad historical context. The analysis and themes in the special resource study have been updated and expanded in this Plan (see Chapter 2, National Significance).

In addition to facilitating the management of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the NPS also operates four National Park System units within the Corridor:

- Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site, Buffalo, where the Vice President and former New York governor took the oath of office in 1901 following President William McKinley’s death by an assassin’s bullet
- Women’s Rights National Historical Park, Seneca Falls, where the first Women’s Rights Convention was held in 1848, and where the participation of the convention’s organizers in the abolitionist movement is also interpreted
- Fort Stanwix National Monument, Rome, where the reconstructed battlements commemorate the Continental Army’s defense of the Oneida Carry during the American Revolution, and where the controversial pattern of European-American Indian relations is also interpreted
- Saratoga National Historical Park, Stillwater, where the American military won its first significant victory during the Revolution

The Kate Mullany National Historic Site, an affiliated area of the National Park System in Troy, is managed by the American Labor Studies Center.

**Hudson River Valley Greenway / Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area**

The Greenway Act of 1991 created two organizations to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving the Hudson River Valley’s scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making. The Greenway Council, a state agency, works with local and county governments to enhance local land use planning and create a voluntary regional planning compact for the Hudson River Valley. The Greenway Conservancy, a public benefit corporation, works with local governments, organizations, and individuals to establish a Hudson River Valley Trail system, promote the Hudson River Valley as a single tourism destination area,
and assist in the preservation of agriculture, and, with the Council, works with communities to strengthen state agency cooperation with local governments. The Greenway is the management entity of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, designated in 1996 to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Valley for the benefit of the nation. The Greenway works in partnership with the National Park Service to promote the National Heritage Area management plan themes of Freedom & Dignity, Nature & Culture, and Corridor of Commerce.

LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE

Designated an All-American Road – among the best of the nation’s scenic byways – Lakes to Locks Passage was created by merging the Champlain Canal Byway and the Champlain Trail (along Lake Champlain) for community revitalization and tourism development. The Byway’s Corridor Management Plan, developed through a partnership of the public and private stewards of the historic, natural, cultural, recreational and working landscape resources along the Champlain Canal, Upper Hudson River, Lake George and Lake Champlain regions, provides a structure to unify the communities along the interconnected waterway. Current activities to preserve, protect, and celebrate historic and cultural resources include the development of a thematic trail linking the sites of the French and Indian War in commemoration of its 250th anniversary. Plans are underway for similar trails commemorating the War of 1812 and explorations of Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain.

QUALITY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

The Quality Communities Task Force, comprised of 25 state agencies and academic partners, was created by an executive order of the Governor in 2000 to assist New York communities in implementing effective land development, preservation and rehabilitation strategies that promote both economic growth and environmental protection. The Quality Communities Initiative focuses on revitalizing town centers, protecting open space, and improving the use of technology in ways that complement the priorities of individual communities. Preservation-oriented recommendations by the Task Force include: providing tax incentives for preservation of historic downtown architecture; funding open space and farmland protection; and supporting the continued vitality of New York agriculture. Twelve pilot communities across New York, including Rome and Lockport, have received focused financial and technical assistance from state agencies to help develop and implement revitalization strategies based on the Task Force recommendations.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE – DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES

The Division of Coastal Resources encourages communities to guide the beneficial use, revitalization, and protection of their waterfront resources and watersheds by preparing Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans or intermunicipal watershed protection plans. In partnership with the Division, a municipality or inter-municipal region develops community consensus and policies to address
issues including waterfront redevelopment; harbor management; public access; erosion hazards management; water quality protection; habitat restoration; and historic maritime resource protection. The resulting comprehensive framework must indicate what local implementation measures are needed, specific projects that will advance the program, and state and federal agency actions necessary for the program's success. Once approved by the New York Secretary of State, the framework serves to coordinate state actions needed to achieve the goals of the community or region. Over the past eight years, over 90 grants totaling more than $6 million have been awarded to municipalities along the canal system, through Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund, for waterfront and watershed projects supported by the 1995 Recreationway Plan.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT)

The Department, in addition to administering the Scenic Byways Program, administers transportation funds including the federally funded Transportation Enhancements Program (TEP), which supports the operation of the Barge Canal and funds other non-traditional transportation “enhancement” projects such as waterfront access and historic preservation. DOT also owns and maintains bridges crossing the canals, and in 2001 executed a Programmatic Agreement addressing the National Register eligibility and management of historic canal bridges, outlining the process DOT will follow to meet its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & MARKETS

The Agricultural Districts Program, Farm Protection Planning, and Farmland Preservation Project assist local governments in the use of comprehensive planning, incentives, and the purchase of property interests to support the rural landscapes and active agricultural use that are vital to the Corridor’s heritage. Programs under the Food and Agricultural Industry Development initiative assist in the marketing and promotion of New York agricultural products and the establishment of new farms.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – NYS MUSEUM, LIBRARY, AND ARCHIVES

The Education Department’s Office of Cultural Education administers the State Museum, State Library, State Archives, and Educational TV/Public Broadcasting Program. The Museum collects, preserves, and interprets specimens, art, and artifacts relating to New York’s natural and human history. In addition to permanent and temporary exhibits in Albany, the Museum organizes traveling exhibits, cultural and educational programs, and research activities throughout the state. The Museum performs cultural resource management services for other state agencies, issues permits for archeological research under water and on state lands, administers the state historic marker program, and offers education, training, and expertise to teachers and municipal historians. The New York State Archives, a program of the department, cares for and provides access to over 130 million state documents that tell the story of New York from the 17th century to the present, and administers statewide records management
programs that reach out to state agencies, local governments, and community organizations. Because almost all of New York’s canals were built and operated by the state, the Archives contains the largest single body of documents, maps, and photographs of the system, particularly during the Barge Canal era. The Special Collections division of the New York State Library collects maps, published views, and business manuscripts throughout the state and has particularly rich holdings from communities within the National Heritage Corridor.

DIVISION OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY RENEWAL – MAIN STREETS

Founded in 2004, the New York Main Street Program was created to provide funding for Main Street and downtown revitalization efforts, help coordinate and guide efforts among state agencies, and to serve as a resource to communities looking for financial and technical assistance to revitalize their Main Street. Several state agencies including the Division of Housing and Community Renewal in partnership with the Housing Trust Fund Corporation, Department of State, Department of Transportation, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Governor’s Office for Small Cities, and Empire State Development Corporation were brought together to create the New York Main Street Program. Collectively, these agencies offer a wide variety of programs and technical resources to assist Main Street revitalization efforts such as facade renovations, streetscape enhancements, and rehabilitation of important downtown business or cultural anchors.

STATEWIDE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

The Canal Society of New York State advocates for the protection and interpretation of historic and natural resources and publishes field guides that document the interaction of geology and canal engineering at locations throughout the Corridor. The Society also holds a substantial body of historic photographs and artifacts relating to the canal system and hosts the annual New York State Canal Conference. Parks & Trails NY provides advocacy and technical assistance for trail and park planning and management, and is a major supporter of the Canalway Trail. The Preservation League of New York State provides grant support, technical assistance and training, legal advice, advocacy, and public recognition for historic preservation activity throughout the state. The League provides a critical source of funding for cultural resource surveys, historic structure reports, and historic landscape reports. These three National Heritage Corridor partners are primary links to grassroots organizing for preservation, conservation, and interpretive and recreational development.

RESOURCE ANALYSIS

An accurate picture of the historic and cultural resources of the Corridor today is fundamental to proposing management strategies for its future. This section assesses the Corridor’s cultural landscapes, historic properties and vessels, as well as archeological sites; documents, records, and artifacts; and arts and folkways. A general inventory of these resources is supplied in Appendix 2.
HERITAGE CORRIDOR CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

The Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals link a series of cultural landscapes – geographic areas, including cultural and natural resources, associated with specific events, activities, or people – that are unique to the region. The U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Historic Preservation define four overlapping classifications of cultural landscape: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes. Examples of all four classifications exist in abundance throughout the Corridor.

In the Corridor, the authenticity and integrity of each individual resource are valued not only because they protect the ability of the resource to convey meaning – a worthwhile goal – but also because they contribute to a sense of place that appeals to tourists and residents alike. In order to facilitate a cross-disciplinary approach to thinking about preservation in the context of interpretation and economic development, this Preservation and Management Plan identifies six types of Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor cultural landscapes based on the sense of place that they convey. Each may be considered analogous to a combination of the vernacular and ethnographic landscape classifications described by the Secretary’s Standards:

- Towpath-Era Canals
- 20th Century Barge Canal Land Cuts
- 20th Century Barge Canal Riverways
- Settlements – Hamlets, Villages, and Cities
- Industrial Landscapes
- Rural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes stretch across both time and narrow categorization, allowing for an understanding of how change occurs and how preserving the Corridor’s historic and cultural resources can enhance its economic development potential. To a large extent, interpretation of the Corridor’s history – through such themes as progress and power, connections and communications, invention and innovation, unity and diversity (see Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation) – depends on the integrity of its cultural landscapes. All of the Corridor’s cultural landscapes have evolved but retain elements specific to distinct historical periods – patterns of settlement, land use, and transportation, as well as individual structures, artifacts, and natural features, created or altered by human habitation – that continue to support the region’s unbroken living tradition of waterways.

PRE-CANAL HISTORY

New York’s lowland corridors and water courses, the products of dramatic episodes of geology and geomorphology, fostered and channeled human activity for thousands of years before Phillip Schuyler’s men cut the precursors to the Erie Canal in the late 18th century. The Hudson-Champlain, Mohawk, Oswego, Genesee, and Finger Lakes valleys supported settlement, migration, and trade for members of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy and the Archaic and Paleo-Indian hunters who came before. Similarly, the valleys provided
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routes for exploration, trade, and settlement by Europeans and Euro-Americans, starting with Samuel de Champlain and Henry Hudson in 1609. They were also the routes for imperial conquest and conflict – between Britain and Holland (1664), Britain and France (1754-63), Britain and the American colonies (1775-1783), and Britain and the United States (1812-1814).

Landmarks of these pre-canal occupancies and events survive throughout the Corridor, and many retain national and even international significance. Preservation issues and opportunities surrounding these resources differ little from those involving the later canal-era resources. The greater challenge is interpretive: how to acknowledge the events of the pre-canal period without diluting the central focus of the National Heritage Corridor designation – the Erie Canal and its role in shaping America. Nearly all of the significant historic and cultural resources described in this chapter impacted or were influenced by pre-canal events and cultures whose descendants continue to make major contributions to the region’s economic, political and social character (see Chapter 2, National Significance and Historical Context). Interpretation of pre-canal history in the Corridor is discussed in Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation.

THE CONTINUING ROLE OF THE CANALS

The canals are the key to the Corridor’s distinctive cultural landscapes. The Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals and related navigable lakes serve as the armature, or supporting framework, of the conceptual whole of the Canalway Corridor. Although the nature of commerce and culture along the Corridor has changed, the continuity of use of the canals remains the foundation of the entire region’s historic authenticity and interpretive value. At the same time, the continuity of public investment and stewardship – of the canal system and the adjoining lands – is the cornerstone of the region’s most significant efforts in preservation and conservation.

During the 19th century towpath era, the alignments of the original canal system and its enlargements followed routes, chosen by canal engineers and surveyors and dug by hand before the advent of steam-powered machinery, that avoided rivers, swamps and wetlands: all barriers to mule-drawn boats. Natural obstacles such as waterfalls and escarpments were also avoided to minimize the construction of locks, bridges, aqueducts, and other canal infrastructure. As these obstacles were overcome by improvements in engineering and, eventually, the motorization of canal vessels, each successive evolution of the canal system became shorter, with fewer locks.

Designed for motorized transportation, the 20th century canal system made use of natural waterways, resulting in a realignment and shortening of the central and eastern canal routes. Canalboats, no longer dependent on mules, traveled faster and stopped less often. The realignment of the central and eastern parts of the system into rivers and lakes removed canal traffic from many of the population centers that had grown up along the historic canal edge. These changes had lasting implications for the region’s economy, natural resources, settlement patterns and land use.
Today, the canals remain 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 permits and registrations.

For purposes of determining historic significance, it makes sense to divide the Corridor’s historic canal elements into the three major eras of development: the initial system, also known as Clinton’s Ditch; its enlargement, also known as the Enlarged Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals; and the 20th century Barge Canal (see Chapter 2, National Significance and Historical Context). However, for purposes of understanding and interpreting how the Corridor’s surviving canal elements contribute to the lives of today’s inhabitants, it makes sense to divide them into three thematic cultural landscapes: the towpath-era canals, the 20th century land cuts, and the 20th century riverways.

1. TOWPATH-ERA CANALS

New York State’s initial canal system, built from 1817 to 1828, and the enlarged system, undertaken from 1835 to 1862, represent the “towpath-era” canal experience before the mechanized improvements of the 20th century Barge Canal. Historic remnants of these canals, many of which are no longer owned by the New York State Canal Corporation, include the structures built by the state to operate the canal (locks, aqueducts, bridges, culverts, dams, feeders and reservoirs, stop gates, stream receivers, waste-weirs and spillways) and service canal traffic (weighlocks, drydocks, lockhouses, and locktenders’ houses), as well as the prism through which the water flowed and the private canalside commercial structures such as taverns, stores and warehouses.

The majority of the towpath-era canal landscape is found along the central and eastern sections of the Corridor, where the Barge Canal’s shift to natural waterways left these predecessor sections undisturbed. However, many towpath-era canal segments and structures, particularly the original prism of Clinton’s Ditch and features of the Northern Inland and Western Inland Navigation Company canals that preceded it, were abandoned for more than a century before the value of preservation and heritage development became clear. Long utilized as ad hoc landfills, some segments have been used as water, sewer, and utility corridors or filled to serve as street and highway rights of way.

The changes brought by the Barge Canal provide an important window into the life of the Corridor. The juxtaposition of towpath-era canal remnants with the Barge Canal, as at Lockport, Little Falls, Schuylerville, and Schoharie Crossing, illustrates the advancements in commerce and technology from the early 19th to the early 20th century and provides an unparalleled opportunity to make clear the relationships between Clinton’s Ditch, the enlarged system, and the Barge Canal. Opportunities also exist to make connections between the routes of the canals and successive modes of transportation, as at the Enlarged Erie locks at Port Byron, alongside the New York State Thruway (Interstate 90).
ervation and interpretation of such sites are critical to the success of heritage development in the Corridor.

Among more isolated towpath-era resources, the priority should lie with sites where multiple components, and their relationships to one another, are still recognizable; where individual resources have particular significance or interpretive value; and where past examples of preservation may prove instructive to modern-day and future efforts. The abandoned canal prism itself presents a special challenge for preservation and interpretation (see Guidelines for Heritage Development section, page 3.31). How deteriorated or overgrown can these remnants become before they are no longer recognizable as elements of the canal system? To what condition must they be restored in order to preserve their contribution to the Corridor’s cultural landscapes? Any evaluation of these resources must begin with their current condition: currently watered, reclaimed by wetlands, or lost to construction or vegetative growth.

*Watered* – The historic canal landscape is particularly evocative where water is combined with historic structures, as at the Glens Falls Feeder and the Old Erie Canal State Park. Watered canal segments that demonstrate engineering achievements, represent the connection from one town to the next across the state, or illustrate the historic relationship between the mule teams and canal boats have the most to contribute to Corridor interpretation. Variations on this landscape type can be found at the Old Erie Canal Village in Rome, Chittenango Landing, Camillus, and along the Great Embankment in Pittsford. Many of these sites are already publicly accessible; walkers, runners, and bicyclists use the towpath for recreation. The priority for existing watered segments is continued maintenance and, where necessary, improved interpretive facilities.

*Wetland* – In some locations, due to the absence of the constant supply of water through the canal prism, wetlands have grown or reclaimed sections of the historic canal. The types of wetlands vary from forested swamps to marshes populated with sedges, rushes, and cattails. Although wetland vegetation has altered the appearance of the prism, the canal is still visible and identifiable, and its edges are most often defined with berms, retaining walls, bridge abutments, or other canal structures. Some of these landscapes are within public parks along a towpath, such as at the Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site and a segment east of Nine Mile Creek aqueduct near Camillus. Due to the ecological and recreational value of wetlands, the priority for these landscapes is to improve interpretive opportunities and stabilize recognizable canal elements at the most publicly accessible sites. However, there may be some locations where the highest and best use of the prism is judged to be rewatering or some other intervention that is incompatible with the wetland.

*Buried/Overgrown* – Much of the towpath-era canal prism has been lost to development, road construction and lack of maintenance, and many of its associated structures are now unmarked. Their physical condition and interpretive value vary depending on ownership, maintenance, and integrity of the original structure. Some segments, such as those at Camillus and at Old Erie Canal Vil-
lage near Rome, have proven reclaimable. Other sites need to be identified and evaluated for integrity and accessibility; for segments with significant interpretive potential, the priority is recognition and protection by state and local heritage development partners. The priority for urban canal alignments filled in and renamed – as Erie Boulevards, Lock Streets, and the like – is preservation and commemoration of the canal route with appropriate landscape and urban design treatments, such as designed water features, and improved interpretive media that conceptually connect the canal to the urban form and architecture that survived it (see *Guidelines for Heritage Development* section, page 3.31).

### 2. 20th Century Barge Canal: Land Cuts

The increasing sophistication of civil engineering and the motorization of canal vessels allowed for a realignment of New York’s canal system into the rivers and lakes, where horsepower would have been inadequate to deal with the currents and towpaths would have been too far from deep water. However, no navigable riverways existed in the western part of the Erie Canal and in the northern section of the Champlain Canal. There, the existing land cuts were made deeper and wider to accommodate larger vessels, destroying much evidence of the towpath-era canals and adjoining structures. For this reason, preservation of surviving towpath-era canal structures is a special priority in the regions around the land-cut sections of the Barge Canal.

The alignments of these land-cut Barge Canal sections remained largely unchanged, so the surrounding cultural landscape was left substantially intact. The major exception was Buffalo, bypassed by the Barge Canal’s new terminus at Tonawanda and North Tonawanda; the former gateway to the West filled in its canals and sealed them beneath streets and an elevated highway. Plans are currently underway to unearth and interpret Buffalo’s original connection between the Erie Canal and Lake Erie. Elsewhere, in villages such as Medina, Fairport, and Lyons, the continuity of urban form, waterfront architecture, and orientation to the land-cut canal has favored adaptive reuse and smaller-scale retail-, tourism- and recreation-based development over wholesale urban and industrial redevelopment.

Unlike the Barge Canal riverways, the stone and concrete land-cut channels are generally characterized by a human-built homogeneity. Settlements, trees and landscape features face each other across the relatively narrow channel. The water is placid and sometimes warm, lacking the seasonal flooding that characterizes even the highly controlled flows of the riverways. Many of the bridges over the western Erie Canal are lower than those spanning the rest of the system’s land cuts and riverways, limiting recreational and, particularly, commercial boat traffic. While some residents consider these features drawbacks, they contribute to a distinctly intimate setting, with an immediate connection between settlements and the Barge Canal. The priority for this cultural landscape is to encourage development that complements the character and continuity of this evolving waterfront setting.
3. 20TH CENTURY BARGE CANAL: RIVERWAYS

The manipulation of river systems for use as canals greatly changed the Corridor’s natural and altered landscapes as well as the experience and perception of the canals. The rivers themselves were canalized, with channels dredged to twelve feet deep and marked with navigation buoys. The motorization of canal traffic continues to affect the region’s river and lake ecology and, through wake effects, unprotected shorelines.

Unlike historic canal edges, the edges of the Barge Canal riverways – the Mohawk and Seneca portions of the Erie Canal, the Hudson River portion of the Champlain Canal, and all of the Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca Canals, as well as Oneida and Onondaga Lakes – are hard to distinguish from natural banks and shores. In fact, many of the riverway edges have been modified extensively, with riprap and other reinforcing concealed by decades of vegetative growth. Trees and shrubs grow to the water’s edge; rock outcroppings rise from the valleys. Other than entering and leaving locks, boat travel on most of the central and eastern Barge Canal feels like boat travel on a river. This serene setting contributes significantly to the system’s attractiveness as a recreational resource.

At the same time, the river and lakefront sections of the canals are now valued as waterfront property, spurring suburban and retail development along the water’s edge. Vegetation has been thinned or removed to create views from homes to the river, and docks have appeared for pleasure boats and other recreational watercraft. Restaurants and shopping outlets market the canal to attract visitors and provide some interpretive media. Some kinds of development can damage fragile ecosystems; aggravate flooding and erosion with rapid runoff and increasingly hardened water edges; and diminish the visual quality that makes this landscape so amenable to settlement in the first place.

Residents of communities along Barge Canal riverways tend to identify the waterway as a river or lake; many are unaware of the historical significance of the Barge Canal and their proximity to it. In general, preservation and conservation efforts focused on the waterway as a river or lake rather than a part of the canal system have positively affected the canal’s protection from pollution and erosion. However, increased recognition of the waterways as part of the region’s most significant historic and cultural resource – the canal system – would support efforts to limit the visual impacts of waterfront development and protect scenic value. The priorities for protection of the riverways’ historic settings are to increase public access at high-volume locations, as per the 1995 Recreationway Plan proposal for canal harbors, service ports and waterfront landings, and to develop standards and incentives for responsible development (see Guidelines for Heritage Development section, page 3.31).

BARGE CANAL STRUCTURES

Construction of the Barge Canal required new types of structures. Reinforced concrete locks were much larger and powered by electricity, resulting in shorter lock-through times and, today, the ability to accommodate numerous recreational vessels at once. Movable dams were built to limit the disruptions caused...
by the natural river hydrology during flooding season. While these structures have been maintained as necessary for the continued operation of the Barge Canal, other structures that no longer serve their original function, such as terminal buildings and powerhouses, are vulnerable. Adaptive reuse to support Corridor interpretive, recreational, and visitor service needs may be a viable way to preserve these structures where such efforts can consciously contribute to the story of the canals’ continued evolution.

Public ownership of the system’s highly visible infrastructural elements provides the opportunity for actions to have broad impact; their proper treatment can provide an example and inspiration to smaller property holders. The New York State Canal Corporation, a division of the New York State Thruway Authority, is responsible for the operating canal system and its supportive infrastructure. The New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) is responsible for maintenance of most highway bridges over the canal system and shares responsibility with the Canal Corporation for maintenance of 16 lift bridges on the western portion of the Erie. The Canal Corporation’s year-round maintenance program for locks, dams, bulkheads and other infrastructure requires considerable ingenuity and craftsmanship, including in-house manufacture of replacement parts that are no longer available from any other source. The DOT, under its 2001 Canal Bridge Programmatic Agreement, works to maintain the integrity and extend the useful life of historic bridges, replacing damaged sections “in-kind” where possible.

In general, rehabilitation and maintenance of the Barge Canal and associated structures has successfully preserved its historic character. The workers, repair shops, and craftsmanship involved in maintaining this “living treasure” are themselves worthy of documentation and interpretation. While the Canal Corporation has not specifically outlined procedures by which it will meet its responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act or state preservation law, it works closely with the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which reviews canal system capital projects. New Canal Corporation facilities, such as the Canal Harbors constructed under the Canal Revitalization Program, have generally followed the Recreationway Plan’s suggested public space standards and should be considered models for future development that is in keeping with the Barge Canal’s contemporary maritime character.

4. SETTLEMENTS – HAMLETS, VILLAGES, AND CITIES

A glance at a population map of New York reveals the direct connection between the historic canal alignment and the distribution of cities, villages and hamlets across the state. In addition to providing access to natural resources, the canals provided shipping capacity to transport goods and people across New York State. Roads and rail have supplanted the canals as the generally preferred transportation modes for both people and goods, but these overland routes, subject to many of the same geographic constraints as the canals, continue to access the population centers born during the towpath era.

Canal construction impacted the spatial organization of settlements at both macro and micro scales. On the macro scale, the canals had different influ-
ences on populations across the state. In the east, the canals connected existing settlements. In the middle, established settlements stretched or moved toward the commerce on the canals. In the west, where there were few pre-existing settlements, the canals brought a major increase in density. On the micro scale, canal traffic determined the rhythm of settlement patterns. Mules or horses pulling the canalboats needed to be rested every 10 to 15 miles, and at that interval general stores, boarding houses, churches, and other civic structures sprang up to serve the canal traffic. This pattern remains visible along the land-cut section of the western Erie Canal. Settlements also occurred at major road crossings and at junctures where canal traffic was forced to stop – at turning basins, locks, and aqueducts.

Many settlements became disconnected from the active waterways when the Barge Canal was constructed. In many places, particularly in the Mohawk River Valley and the Corridor’s largest cities, the realignment “orphaned” streets, open spaces, and buildings that now seem misplaced; subsequent redevelopment has obscured the urban organization of these formerly canalside settlements. Still, remnants of the historic canal alignment survive in prominent locations, often as a city street named Erie Boulevard, sometimes supplemented by a linear park or historic marker. Along some Erie Boulevards the discerning eye can spot architectural features built in response to the historic canal, such as service doors designed to accommodate canal freight. The turning basin in Syracuse was filled in and turned into a plaza; in Frankfort, the canal prism became a linear greensward. The focus of heritage development at these sites should be preservation and commemoration of the original canal route. Landscape and urban design treatments, such as designed water features marking the canal route, and improved interpretive signage can conceptually connect the canal to the urban form and architecture that survived it.

There appear to be distinct canal town types, with characteristic form and structures, worth defining and interpreting. A major distinction between types can be found in the relationships of primary streets to the historic canal alignment – sometimes perpendicular, as in Fairport, sometimes parallel, as in Whitehall, but always indicating the focus of activity around the waterway. Town centers were built proximate to the canal, with churches, town hall, and post office at the four corners of town squares in villages such as Albion. The scale and density of the canal towns reflect an economy measured in boat- and cart-loads, and distances measured in a day’s walk.

While some villages and small cities retain these features, urban renewal activities and industrial development – especially in cities such as Buffalo and Rome – have altered the distinctive fabric of canalside settlement. In some cities, many buildings face away from the canal, creating a historic but unattractive panorama of blank walls and service alleys along the waterfront. Many communities are struggling with the effects of downtown abandonment exacerbated by suburban commercial and residential development. Despite the success of efforts to revitalize downtowns through adaptive reuse and improved connections to the canals and other recreational assets, the temptation to bring big-box stores, themed residential complexes, and large parking lots to waterfronts and downtowns remains strong.

The benefits of adaptive reuse, infill and context-sensitive development, and Main Street revitalization need to be promoted, and incentives offered in areas with the most threatened assets, and the most disadvantaged economies.
Integrating trails and public access points, the Corridor’s historical built context – the buildings and structures that provide human scale to cultural landscapes – offer heritage development opportunities. Some historic properties relate to the use and personages associated with the canal, as at Lockport and Tonawanda; but many do not. Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse have examples of outstanding architecture that postdate the canal era. Most of these properties are privately owned. In the effort to make the most of these places, the benefits of adaptive reuse, infill, context-sensitive development, and Main Street revitalization need to be promoted, and incentives offered in areas with the most threatened assets, and the most disadvantaged economies.

5. INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES

Industry was often the hinge between communities and the canals. The Corridor’s historic industrial landscape exists in two distinct forms: 19th century manufacturing districts where factories and mills were powered by water and steam; and 20th century complexes that stored grain, oil, and other products to be loaded aboard the Barge Canal’s larger vessels for affordable bulk transport.

Power generation, either by naturally falling water or by redirected canal water, was instrumental in establishing population centers during the towpath era. In Rochester, Genesee River water powered flour mills that shipped their products on the canal. In Cohoes, narrow streets and dense residential development overlook former textile factories, power canals, and the still functioning hydroelectric plant at Cohoes Falls, a view that illustrates the impact of industrial activity on urban form. The adaptability of many towpath-era industrial buildings for modern uses, and the power of these settings to explain the historic relationships between commercial and community life, provide strong arguments for preservation and interpretation.

The Barge Canal significantly increased shipping capacity, and the new scale of industrial development redefined communities’ relationship to the canals. Small warehouses connected by local streets to downtown businesses were supplanted – first by massive bulk cargo facilities, often located beyond city limits or isolated by rail yards, and later by parking lots for trucks and shipping containers. Massive grain elevators lined the Buffalo waterfront to receive shipments from the Great Lakes. In Utica, Rochester and Syracuse, tank farms of wide, squat silos stored enough petroleum to get through the winter months when the canal was closed.

Some of the larger complexes along the Barge Canal’s waterfront do not convey the image of innovation and prosperity suggested by the old mill districts, and are not nearly as conducive to recreation and community life. However, canal-related industry is an important part of the Corridor’s history and, in some locations, remains integral to the continuing traditions of life on the waterways. Only those industrial and large-scale commercial uses that adversely impact recreational facilities and historic downtowns should be shielded from the waterfront.
industrial and large-scale commercial uses that adversely impact recreational facilities and historic downtowns should be shielded from the waterfront. New water-dependent industrial uses should be sited so that they will least affect the aesthetic and environmental qualities of the Corridor’s canals and historic downtowns.

Decaying or abandoned 20th century industrial areas and brownfields present a difficult challenge: to preserve the Corridor’s industrial heritage and the continued viability of commercial traffic on the canals, while promoting the mixed-use redevelopment and environmental stewardship necessary to revitalize the Corridor as an economic engine. Some historic complexes, particularly older masonry buildings with open floorplates and extensive glazing designed for labor-intensive manufacturing, can be adapted for modern industrial, commercial or residential uses. Other historic industrial structures, such as processing and storage facilities, may be better suited for remediation and rehabilitation for non-intensive uses such as recreational facilities, or stabilized “ruins” in park-like settings that interpret or commemorate the Corridor’s industrial history. For inactive landfills and other contaminated sites that do not contribute to the Corridor’s historic industrial landscapes and spoil the visual experience, the priority is remediation and reuse.

6. RURAL LANDSCAPES

Rural settlements and the agricultural land surrounding them represent the first industry supported by boat traffic on the historic canals. Canals brought access to fertile lands and the ability to send products to regional and national markets. Canal waters were tapped by family farms and small-scale livestock or dairy operations, and even today are used to irrigate some crops.

The rural settlements established along the towpath-era canal now exist mostly as isolated structures. Cider presses, cold storage warehouses and other agricultural processing facilities were built proximate to the canal to facilitate the loading and unloading of canalboats. Stores and boarding houses, such as those found at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site and Port Byron, supplied the boat traffic with goods and provided repairs and other services. A typical retail store or eating establishment had entrances both canalside and landside; the owner’s family lived above, and in some cases, rooms were available for rent. The preservation of these and other historic remnants should be a priority where they can illustrate the continuity of agricultural use in the Corridor.

Today, agriculture, led by milk and fruit production, remains an important component of the Corridor’s economy (see Chapter 7, Economic Revitalization). The focus on perishables, which have dominated New York agriculture since the canals facilitated grain shipments from the West, has helped many farmers stay in business by supplying local markets. Responding to the demands of the Corridor’s urban grocery stores and restaurants – and an increasingly diverse population – many of the region’s farmers are growing high-value spe-
specialty crops or produce for the small but growing organic and local food movements. Agritourism is another growing source of support for the farm economy, particularly for the vineyards of the Finger Lakes region. Large-scale poultry and livestock production and factory agriculture, which do not contribute to the historic rural landscape and present environmental concerns, have not been significant factors in the Corridor to date.

Over the past five years, the number of farms and acreage of farmland in the Corridor have been declining at rates equal to or below the national average. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has successfully slowed the loss of farmlands through programs that support new and existing agricultural enterprises and protect agricultural land from development. Other organizations providing support to agriculture in the Corridor include the Rural Development Council at the New York Department of State, the Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Growing New Farmers Project, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These efforts deserve continued support and promotion. However, agricultural land will continue to disappear at a significant rate unless there is stronger public support for more sustainable models of development (see Guidelines for Heritage Development section, page 3.31).

Suburban development and shifting market conditions threaten to change the extent and character of the Corridor’s agricultural landscapes. Traditional settlement patterns, a defining characteristic of the Corridor, are in jeopardy as greenfield residential and retail projects – those built on agricultural lands and open space – erode the rural zones between towns, villages, and cities. Municipal services become increasingly inefficient as they are spread over a larger land area to serve widely dispersed residences, retail centers and office complexes. Such development also tends to place a heavy burden on the environment, which is impacted by the disruption or loss of habitat and increased runoff from streets, parking lots and other impermeable surfaces. In the Corridor, the preservation of farming and agricultural land is an important part of the effort to reduce suburban sprawl and its adverse effects.

While the historic connection between the canals and agricultural production has been supplanted by modern distribution methods, many people treasure the rural landscape that occupies much of the Corridor. Sweeping views of historic structures in rural settings and agricultural land interspersed with woodlots, hedgerows, and shelterbelts convey the pastoral, picturesque landscape captured in many early paintings and photographs of the Corridor. Over the last several decades, forests, the Corridor’s principal pre-settlement ecology, have reclaimed some agricultural lands that have been removed from production. However, the subtle contribution of farmland and agricultural open space to the region’s sense of cultural identity is not high in the public consciousness, and the strong association of certain crops and agriculturally-based industries with specific parts of the Corridor often escapes the attention of preservationists. More connections need to be made between agriculture and the preservation of the canal system’s history and the Corridor’s historic settings.
OTHER RESOURCES

7. VESSELS

New York’s canal system is the oldest continuously operated built transportation system in North America. Nowhere is the case for continuity of use stronger than for the waterborne activity that gave and still gives essential life to the canals. Whereas modern pleasure vessels may be the clearest indication of the system’s continued utility, historic vessels may be the most telling evidence of changes in the canals’ scale, use, and relationship to daily life. They include the state-owned floating plant; commercial vessels; and sunken and archeological remains of towpath-era vessels.

The state-owned floating plant continues the canal system’s living traditions of boat-building and maintenance. The fleet includes an impressive stock of vessels painted in the Canal Corporation’s characteristic blue and yellow, many of which have been in service since the Barge Canal opened: tugs, tenders, dredges, derrick boats, quarters boats, scows, buoy boats, and many more specialized vessels. The fleet flagship is the tugboat Urger, built in 1901 as a commercial fishing vessel, purchased in the 1920s to service the new Barge Canal, and recommissioned in 1991 as the focal point of a Canal Corporation educational program. The Urger, the first New York canal vessel to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, continues to ply the waters of the canal system on a regular basis from its home port in Waterford, with stopovers every year from Tonawanda to Whitehall to New York City.

Ongoing maintenance and the frequent need for repair or replacement may threaten the integrity and authenticity of state-owned vessels remaining in use, and currently there are no official preservation protocols in place. In addition to the Urger, the state’s floating plant represents a tremendous opportunity for interpretation. Retired vessels including the historic tug Buffalo in Waterford, and the derrick boat Lance Knapp, beached at the H. Lee White Maritime Museum in Oswego, have been transferred from state ownership to municipal and non-profit organizations for preservation and stewardship. These vessels, many uniquely designed or adapted for use in the canals, demonstrate the ingenuity and sheer scope of work required to keep the canals operational. The opportunity for a unique interpretive experience is enhanced during the winter maintenance season, when the canals and some interpretive venues are closed to through traffic but the floating plant and the Canal Corporation drydocks, boatyards and repair shops remain hard at work.

Commercial vessels embody the very purpose of the canals. A side-by-side comparison of grain-carrying vehicles alone would graphically illustrate a century-long story of national progress: from the first mule-drawn wooden canalboats, 60 feet long with a capacity of 30 tons, to the 256-foot-long, 1,600-ton self-propelled steel motorships that entered service on the Barge Canal in the 1920s. Barge Canal and towpath-era vessels offer different preservation opportunities. Towpath-era vessels survive only as underwater wrecks or museum reproductions. A few tugboats, built for the shallow draft and low clearances of canal operation, remain in service in rivers and harbors along the eastern sea-
board. Their numbers have declined significantly since the St. Lawrence Seaway opened a route for much larger ships between the Atlantic and the Great Lakes.

The peak years of the Barge Canal as a commercial thoroughfare are documented in a number of self-published books by tug captains, but most stories about the working canals remain undocumented (see Arts and Folkways, page 3.29). Commercial vessels that failed or could no longer be operated economically were often scrapped, scuttled or allowed to decay. A small number have been turned into museum exhibits by individuals and private organizations. The tug Chancellor, built for canal service in 1938 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is maintained by the Waterford Maritime Historical Society. In 2005, the New York State Museum, with assistance from the Canal Society of New York State, the New York State Canal Corporation, and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, acquired the historic motorship Day Peckinpaugh and began its transformation into a floating museum and classroom that will educate the public about the history and heritage of the New York State Canal System. The Day Peckinpaugh, the first vessel designed specifically for the dimensions of the Barge Canal and the last of its kind remaining afloat, has been listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places. The National Heritage Corridor will assist a multi-agency partnership in this major preservation, interpretation, and education effort.

Perhaps the best hope for preserving and interpreting the canal system's private commercial fleet is to encourage commercial traffic. The barging of great and unusual goods continues to draw residents and visitors alike to the canals and locks. Each year, the Waterford Tugboat Roundup attracts thousands of people to see working and restored canal tugs. There are signs of a resurgence in commercial shipping: from 2003 to 2004, the tonnage carried by cargo vessels on the canal system rose 38 percent, from 8,711 to 12,032 tons, and the numbers of vessels increased from 6,791 to 7,369. Oversized, overweight cargo that is difficult to transport by land constitutes the majority of items shipped and total value. Other factors associated with the rise include the high cost of fuel and increasing congestion along highways and railways. The Canal Corporation is working to take advantage of these factors and has joined Inland Rivers, Ports, and Terminals, a barge shipping group, to raise the profile of the New York State Canal System on the national waterways stage. The Canal Corporation has also discussed with the Army Corps of Engineers a potential feasibility study to investigate new commercial shipping initiatives.

In A Canalboat Primer, the staff of the Erie Canal Museum of Syracuse notes “It is hard to believe that the canalboats of the Erie Canal System, which numbered 4,350 in the 1880 census... would vanish from the scene with barely a trace remaining.” In 1978 the museum launched the Canalboat Archeological Needs Assessment and Location Survey (CANALS) to document a number of complete canalboats of various designs that had been found preserved in the depths of Cayuga and Seneca Lakes. Historical archival materials were also surveyed, and the Primer was published in 1981 with an annotated bibliography and blueprints for two canalboat types. Divers affiliated with the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum have documented several canalboats on the Vermont side of the lake, and the museum’s Lois McClure, a reproduction of a sailing
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A canalboat based on information from wrecks that saw service on the Champlain Canal during the 1860s, has sailed to New York City with a typical historic cargo of Vermont marble and dairy products. In 1991, the New York State Museum built the *Discovery*, a replica 18th century Mohawk River bateau, for educational programming along the 20th century canal system.

While the canals were built for commercial traffic, recreational vessels have been the system's most constant presence for approximately half a century. The middle years of the 20th century saw an explosion of recreational cruising nationwide, when the canals teemed with boats now considered classics – runabouts, sedan cruisers, and the occasional oceangoing yacht on its way between the Atlantic coast and the Great Lakes. Today’s boaters, whether kayakers out for a paddle or voyagers on a leg of the 6,000-mile “Great Loop” around the eastern United States, are participating in a longstanding tradition of enjoying life at under ten miles per hour. The repositioning of the canals as a recreational resource is well-established, but the history of pleasure boating in the system remains a largely untold story in need of documentation and interpretation.

Today, the Canalway Corridor hosts a variety of pleasure craft, from kayaks to luxury cruisers, and historic vessels that never passed through the canal system, such as the Navy tug *Nash* in Oswego, the destroyer escort *USS Slater* in Albany, and the destroyer *USS The Sullivans* and fireboat *Edward M. Cotter*, in Buffalo. With the help of the Canal Corporation and numerous public and private organizations, a number of sailing vessels, including historic tall ships over 100 feet in length such as the Freedom Schooner *Amistad*, have transited the canal system between Lake Ontario and the Hudson River after temporary removal of masts and rigging.

While nearly every vessel afloat in the canals contributes to maritime culture and builds the constituency for preserving waterfronts, heritage development in the Corridor would benefit from a more sustained effort to repopulate the canals with authentic vessels and reproductions open to the public. Numerous private pleasure craft and tour boats approximate the look of packet boats and other canal craft, but opportunities to experience towpath-era vessels are limited to replicas based on careful research. The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum’s *Louis B. McClure* is the most thoroughly documented and historically accurate replica in the Corridor. Erie Canal Village operates *The Chief Engineer*, a horse-drawn canalboat based on 19th century packet boats, on a section of the Enlarged Erie near Rome. A full-sized non-floating interpretation of a line boat is housed at the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse. Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum interprets a set of drydocks and related structures and is building its own canalboat replica along another watered section of the Enlarged Erie.

In addition to the well-known variations on the line and packet boat types, the Canalboat Archeological Needs Assessment and Location Survey discovered information about circus boats, library boats, and other unusual models that could find a use on the canals today. Efforts to document or replicate historic vessels should be undertaken with the assistance of the Museum Small Craft Association, which publishes a *Manual of Documentation* for small craft; and the Maritime Heritage Program at the National Park Service, which maintains
inventories of historic ships and wrecks and provides technical assistance in preservation planning, including nomination to the National Register.

8. ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

As a natural transportation corridor defined by geography, the Corridor contains hundreds of known archeological sites and quite likely thousands more that are unreported. These sites encompass the entire 12,000-year span of human habitation in New York, extending from earliest Paleo-Indian to the mid-20th century.

Archeology is one of the chief methods for recording, studying, understanding, and interpreting pre-contact Native American sites, most of which are not visible aboveground. These require sensitive treatment, including repatriation of artifacts to the Indian nations. Also largely buried are the traces of canal engineering by the Western and Northern Inland Navigation Companies that predate Clinton’s Ditch. In addition, more recent aboveground historical sites often have buried features and deposits. All of these remains provide a deeper level of understanding of historical site development, use, and evolution.

Archeological sites substantially broaden the cultural history available to the Corridor’s residents and visitors. Archeology can be a tool for understanding the lives of social and economic groups whose members do not appear prominently in the historical record – soldiers, farmers, laborers, tradesmen, shopkeepers, craftsmen, factory workers, canal workers and boatmen, freedmen and slaves, women and children.

Because of the extent of past human activity in the Corridor, use and reuse of the land through time has resulted in the loss of many important archeological sites. At the same time, not every site merits a full-scale archeological investigation. Different levels of preservation may be appropriate for different kinds of sites, depending on their value to research and interpretation, their location, and the potential for public access.

State and federal laws and regulations provide some measure of protection, especially where new development is supported by public funds, or requires state or federal permits. The Anthropological Survey program of the New York State Museum assists state agencies in the identification, recording, and management of archeological resources impacted by projects on state-owned lands. Projects proposed under the controlling legislation of the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) are subject to state government review. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is currently working on ways to promote the application of SEQRA at the municipal level, which has been hampered by a lack of access to information about sensitive areas and their value, varying levels of interest by Corridor communities, and the inefficiencies of evaluating projects with limited or no expected impacts.

Archeological sites on private lands are accorded no protection from development or destruction, unless the project utilizes state or federal funding or requires a government license or permit. Many as-yet-undocumented sites remain vulnerable to destruction or neglect due to a general lack of public understanding about the breadth and depth of the Corridor’s archeological value and the potential contribution of these resources to research, education, interpretation, and heritage tourism.
remain vulnerable to destruction or neglect due to a general lack of public understanding about the breadth and depth of the Corridor’s archeological value and the potential contribution of these resources to research, education, and interpretation.

Education and awareness are priorities for preserving the Corridor’s archeological resources. Corridor residents should understand the contributions of archeological sites to education and heritage development. Municipalities and developers should understand SEQRA, learn to consider archeology part of the environmental review process for projects in the Corridor, and recognize the benefits of archeological findings at project sites, including the potential for funding interpretive development and inclusion in Corridor-wide heritage tourism promotions.

Sponsors of proposed development projects in sensitive areas throughout the Corridor should confer with the Field Services Bureau of the SHPO about the appropriate scope of archeological investigations and mitigation of potential impacts, and about procedures for contacting Native American groups to safeguard against the possibility of disturbing sacred places and archeological sites known only to them.

9. DOCUMENTS AND ARTIFACTS

Historical documents pertaining to the Corridor include manuscripts, rare books, maps, atlases, paintings, prints, photographs, audio recordings and ephemera. Significant artifacts include craft products (see Arts and Folkways, page 3.29), tools, household items and furniture, packaging and signage, keepsakes and commemorative items, and other material remnants of historic events and day-to-day life. In addition to providing insights into the lives of the Corridor’s historic inhabitants, documents and artifacts are often the primary means of identifying or locating historic resources that otherwise exist only as archeological remains. Direct public contact with authentic documents and artifacts greatly enhances the effectiveness of historical and cultural interpretation as a tool for both education and inspiration. The value of these materials is enhanced by appropriate curation and handling and increased public access or awareness.

Whether collected from archeological sites or from collections that have remained indoors for decades, artifacts and records are often vulnerable to deterioration. Inappropriate repairs or partial material substitutions used to facilitate exhibition or to keep artifacts in use reduce historical authenticity. Documents and photographs are less likely to suffer such interventions but are even more susceptible to loss through accident or neglect. Careful records must be kept and maintained to establish provenance and allow for effective management and research if the Corridor’s historic documents and artifacts are to contribute to enhanced interpretive and educational efforts.

It is impossible to know how many significant documents and artifacts exist outside management standards of the Corridor’s many museums, colleges and universities, tribal museums and cultural centers, historical societies, archives,
and government institutions. An unknown number of private or family collections remain the primary source for new acquisitions by museums, public institutions, and databases. Proper protocols for handling, archiving, and curation, which are necessary to ensure protection of fragile papers, photographs, recordings, and artifacts, are not widely appreciated outside professional circles. Digital archiving is an evolving technology that may become a promising and cost-effective preservation method.

Databases particularly useful for the study of the Erie Canalway include the National Register of Historic Places; the Library of Congress website; databases sponsored by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; the Historic Documents Inventory at the New York State Museum, Library and Archives; the National Park Service Geographic Information System (GIS) database; and the Canal Corporation database. However, many kinds of information, particularly oral histories and recordings and documents related to the region’s Native Americans, are not well represented in current general databases and finding aids. Documents and artifacts from the more recent past, such as shipping logs, bills of lading, photographs, and personal narratives relating to the commercial and recreational use of the 20th century Barge Canal, are not widely available to the public.

10. ARTS AND FOLKWAYS

In its heyday, the Erie Canal was vivid in the popular imagination. Images of the canal appeared in paintings, drawings, engravings, and dinnerware. Canal songs were staples in the folk repertoire. Today, arts, music, literature, theatre, and other cultural expressions offer local perspectives on the broad themes of interpretive efforts, emphasizing the contributions of individuals and the continuity of community life. They also reflect community change, including the displacement of a thriving pre-existing Native American population by canal-era settlement.

Arts and folkways also provide a means of understanding the significance of some resources – buildings, objects, practices, ideas – that otherwise have no pathway to preservation, such as the National Register of Historic Places. These include cultural landmarks: places associated with people, activities or events of a local nature, that may lack the historical features, authenticity or integrity to merit protection by the state or federal government. Many cultural landmarks are gathering places or symbols of community character. The process of cultural landmarking can be an informal way to solicit community interest in preservation and build commitment to more formal activities such as the establishment of local preservation ordinances. Models for cultural landmarking in the state include the Register of Very Special Places, a program administered by Traditional Arts of Upstate New York (TAUNY), and Place Matters, a project of City Lore in New York City.

Unlike other historic and natural resources, which are permanently located and may be defined according to well-established preservation or conservation principles, many cultural expressions lack a clear definition or physical component. Thus the repositories of the Corridor’s cultural expressions range
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from the tangible – several major institutions, including museums and universities, and scores of regional and community based arts organizations – to the intangible: stories, customs and crafts that sustain a sense of identity, pride and self-determination for the residents of Corridor communities. The New York Folklore Society is the leading organization for the preservation and presentation of cultural expressions in the Corridor and throughout the state, working closely with the Folk Arts program of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA).

Particularly vulnerable are the more ephemeral cultural expressions that illustrate the role of the canals in catalyzing cultural change and diversification within and beyond the Corridor. The canals often served as both subject and, as conduits of communication and demographic change, as transmitter of folklore, oral histories, craft and performing arts:

Folklore – From real-life folk heroes like the waterfall-jumping Sam Patch, to Joshua, the 100-year-old giant frog of Empeyville, tall tales and traditional stories have provided a rich counterpoint to the official histories of the Erie Canal. Some folklore has been well documented as a popular form that develops from the dissemination and alteration of original oral histories. Towpath-era folklore has been compiled in several articles and books, most of which can be located in Lionel D. Wylde’s *The Erie Canal: A Bibliography* (1990). More endangered than the Corridor’s folklore is the raw material from which future folklore is made: oral histories, particularly from those who worked and lived on the Barge Canal.

Oral Histories – Personal, family and community narratives have persisted in oral traditions for generations, from legends told in the Longhouses of the Iroquois Confederacy to the salty tales of Barge Canal tugboat captains. Some stories persist long enough to enter popular culture as folklore; others are documented in self-published books, or by folklorists doing fieldwork. While some organizations have revived the practice of reciting personal narratives at informal gatherings, most of these histories are likely to disappear unless a concerted documentation effort is undertaken.

The New York Folklore Society’s Veterans History Project, supported by the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, provides a useful model for the collection of the “extraordinary stories of ordinary people.” The Folklore Society solicits participation through community outreach and trains partner organizations and individuals in the collection and archiving of oral and written histories. Another approach is taken by Traditional Arts of Upstate New York, which organizes community gatherings, often at cultural landmarks, and records the stories shared at these events.

Craft – Making art of necessity, craft ties traditional life directly to the waterways. Examples range from the construction of cobblestone houses using skills learned while building the canals, to local inventions like the fishing spoon, to the innovations of modern-day locktenders caring for equipment that is nearing a century of service. While canal-related crafts are on display in museums and demonstrations throughout the region, many artifacts are not preserved,
and many methods remain undocumented. The skills of the Canal Corporation’s maintenance workers, from rebuilding lock gates to repairing the floating plant, are in particular need of documentation.

The Folk Arts program of the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) funds presentations, exhibitions, and apprenticeships to organizations and individuals in support of the continuation and documentation of crafts and other folk arts. Documentation of crafts is also supported by the New York Folklore Society and the National Council for Traditional Arts, which also organizes cultural events such as the annual Lowell Folk Festival. In addition to public exposure and education, festivals can also broaden the market for retailable folk crafts. The Smithsonian Institution’s annual Folklife Festival in Washington, DC is a national venue for showcasing local crafts.

Performing Arts – The Erie Canal music, songs, drama and literature that reverberated throughout American culture changed with American tastes: the show tune “Oh! Dat Low Bridge!” was transformed into the Tin Pan Alley hit “Low Bridge, Everybody Down;” the novel “Rome Haul” became the basis for the Hollywood star vehicle “The Farmer Takes a Wife.” The canal system’s presence in American culture outlasted its commercial prominence – but it did not last forever. The audience for revivals and performances of classic Erie Canal folk tunes is kept alive by dozens of canal season festivals throughout the Corridor, by regional arts organizations such as TAUNY and the Crandall Public Library Center for Folklife in Glens Falls, and by the continued use of songs such as “15 Miles on the Erie Canal” to teach canal history in public schools nationwide.

The canals are rarely the subject of modern performing arts, despite the system’s worldwide name recognition and the continuing impact of the canals on the day-to-day life of Corridor residents. Since the decline of commercial traffic on the Barge Canal, a new generation has grown up knowing the canal largely as a recreational resource, and new populations of immigrants have settled the Corridor. While these audiences may provide a market for the continued presentation of traditional performing arts, they are building a repertoire of their own, some of it related to the canals. With the assistance of local and regional arts and educational institutions, such as the Arts and Cultural Council for Greater Rochester, the Corridor’s new cultural forms are finding pathways to increased participation and exposure.

GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is far too large, diverse, and complex to accommodate a single approach to preservation of its historic and cultural resources. It is possible, however, to provide a measure of philosophical consistency to the wide variety of preservation activities that must be considered, and to provide guidelines that will help promote and put into practice essential preservation values.

A philosophy of preservation for the Corridor must start by recognizing the historic and continuing roles of change in the region. For centuries, its inhab-
itants have looked to the region’s natural and artificial waterways as a means to renegotiate their relationships with the land, with each other, and with the rest of the world. The resulting cultural landscapes must continue to evolve in response to social, economic, and environmental imperatives. A “preserve in amber” approach is not an option for the Corridor. Change, and sometimes rapid change, is both necessary and widely desired.

What makes the Corridor nationally significant is that despite this history of change, it retains the essential elements that reflect its past and explain its evolution over time. These features have been identified in Chapter 2, National Significance and Historical Context. The preceding sections of Chapter 3 have described previous and ongoing efforts to preserve these resources, their current status and needs, and their potential future role in enhancing the Corridor’s attractiveness as a place to live, work, visit and learn. What follows is a framework for helping the stewards of individual historic and cultural resources make the most of this potential. For each of the resource types described in the preceding Resource Analysis section of this chapter, recommended treatments are described, priority sites or elements are suggested, and considerations for interpretation and economic development are outlined.

THE SECRETARY’S STANDARDS

The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for establishing professional standards and providing advice on the preservation and protection of all cultural resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties govern projects receiving federal grants-in-aid – including any projects that might be supported by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission with federal funds – and provide general guidance for work on any historic property. The Standards are a useful starting point for any evaluation of options for preserving historic buildings and infrastructure as well as cultural landscapes.

The Standards identify four degrees of intervention depending on existing condition and intended use. Preservation generally requires retention of the greatest possible amount of historic fabric, including form, features, materials and detailing. Rehabilitation allows for alterations or additions to a resource that meet continuing or new uses while retaining its historic character. Restoration calls for the accurate depiction of a resource at a particular time in its history, which may involve the removal of materials from subsequent periods. Reconstruction offers a limited framework for re-creating non-surviving resources with new materials, generally for interpretive purposes. Specific direction to assist in applying each of these standards is provided in the Secretary’s Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings and Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes.

Certain basic preservation values should remain paramount regardless of the application. Foremost are the protection of a resource’s authenticity and integrity. Authenticity is simply the real thing. Integrity is the ability of a resource to communicate its meaning – to tell its part of the story – as conveyed through
its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Authenticity and integrity are at the heart of any meaningful encounter with a significant historic resource. Another basic value is attention to the core procedures of responsible preservation: identification of character-defining features; evaluation of the resource’s condition; stabilization of deteriorated elements; protection and maintenance of original materials and features. Where necessary, these may be followed by repair and limited replacement in kind, or, where warranted by existing conditions and interpretive value, reconstruction.

The following guidelines indicate some situations in which reconstruction may be a viable option. However, because they are costly to build and maintain, and by definition are not authentic, reconstructions of lost structures and buildings are generally not an appropriate focus for preservation and interpretive efforts. Integrity cannot be regained once a resource is lost, and interpretation – when done well (see Chapter 6) – is almost always sufficient to impart an understanding and appreciation of history.

The Standards identify a number of factors to consider in choosing the most appropriate treatment for preservation of historic buildings, including relative significance in history; integrity and existing condition; proposed use; management and maintenance needs; archeological resources; and mandated codes or other modern requirements for safety and handicapped accessibility. Additional considerations for cultural landscapes include change and continuity, geographical context and natural systems. To these, an additional consideration may be added: interpretive and economic context within the Corridor. All efforts should be made to maximize the contribution of preservation activities to the identity of Corridor inhabitants, the education of Corridor visitors, the fabric of Corridor communities, and the strength of Corridor tourism, marketing and quality of life.

GUIDELINES FOR CORRIDOR RESOURCES

The 1995 Recreationway Plan recommended conceptual site design guidelines for both public and private improvements on land adjacent to the Barge Canal, with the intent of encouraging development that reinforces and enhances the canal experience. Those guidelines have been reproduced in Appendix 10. The additional guidelines provided in this section emphasize historic preservation and accommodate the unique characteristics of the Corridor’s cultural landscapes.

While the preceding sections of Chapter 3 have identified six basic types of cultural landscapes central to the Corridor’s historic significance, and evaluated their essential characteristics and integrity, closer study is needed to determine the specific elements contributing to cultural landscapes in individual locations. Thorough cultural landscape assessments in keeping with the Secretary’s Standards, documenting the period of significance, character-defining and incompatible features, critical scenic views and interpretive features, and historic, current, and desired uses and patterns of activities, should be an important part of any preservation planning undertaken by or with the assistance of federal, state, regional, or municipal agencies in the Corridor. These efforts should
seek to make use of the considerable capabilities of the planning, architecture, landscape, and environmental studies programs at the region’s colleges and universities. Cultural landscape assessments should be undertaken with an eye toward the long-term goal of completing an inventory of the entirety of the Corridor’s historic and cultural resources. Priorities for this effort are indicated throughout this section.

In 1993, staff at the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) prepared a statement of significance that found elements of the New York State Canal System and its towpath-era predecessors to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. All canal-related features of the system constructed between 1792 and a floating date 50 years before the present were considered to be potentially eligible. The Canal Corporation, Department of Transportation, and other state agencies have used the 1993 statement as the basis for preservation activities performed in compliance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The Canal Corporation’s current policy on capital projects is to rehabilitate and replace in-kind; all projects are reviewed by the SHPO.

A new statement of significance, based on this Preservation and Management Plan and the Special Resource Study completed by the National Park Service in 1998, should be prepared and submitted as part of a new Multiple Resource Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Cultural landscape assessments should be an important part of any preservation planning undertaken by or with the assistance of federal, state, regional, or municipal agencies in the Corridor.

A new statement of significance, based on this Preservation and Management Plan and the Special Resource Study completed by the National Park Service in 1998, should be prepared and submitted as part of a new Multiple Resource Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination should identify the types of features that contribute to the canal system’s significance, establish minimum thresholds for historical integrity, and set criteria for evaluating the level of association between particular cultural landscapes and the theme or area of significance. Followup to the nomination would include a full inventory and condition assessment. Existing inventories of visible towpath-era canal features between Buffalo and Albany, and all Barge Canal features, are largely complete. Inventories of towpath-era elements of the Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals, and assessments of the Corridor’s cultural landscapes, will require more work.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission recommends that a National Historic Landmark eligibility evaluation be undertaken for the New York State Canal System. If the system qualifies for and gains this heightened National Register status, the Commission will explore the potential for attaining World Heritage Site designation for the canal system under the United Nations’ UNESCO program. In addition to the canals themselves, the tools and traditions of those who maintain them should also be recognized and documented. Wherever possible, interpretation of canal-related resources should make sure to explain the three primary phases of canal development.
1. GUIDELINES FOR TOWPATH-ERA CANAL CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

CANAL PRISM

The following guidelines for preservation of the towpath-era canals are organized according to the current or proposed condition of the prism, as described in the preceding Resource Analysis section of this chapter. The guidelines for buried or lost canal segments should be considered the default treatment for wetland or overgrown and watered or rewatered segments.

**Buried / Lost**

- Overview: Much of the towpath-era prism has been lost to road construction, development, and neglect. Marking the alignment, even where no traces remain, is an important step toward knitting together the story of the canals’ evolution.
- Priority resources: Erie Boulevards and similarly named streets, linear parks or other features of settled areas that coincide with the original canal alignment; remnants of towpath-era canals near the Barge Canal, feeders and Thruway; canal prism and associated structures at the termini of the system (Albany and Buffalo).
- Recommended treatment: Preservation of surviving elements, including stone walls or other isolated elements in their original location, and features such as streets or viewsheds that indicate the original alignment. Many options are acceptable for marking the alignment, ranging from signage and lighting to special plantings and paving to commemorative landscaping and large-scale water features that convey a sense of the canal’s physical presence. Markings that attempt to recreate the image and materials of the canal prism where there are no authentic remains, or that deviate from the original alignment for practical or interpretive reasons, are not recommended.
- Additional preservation considerations: The loss of the towpath-era canal prism is a part of the story of change in the Corridor. Archeological investigation may be appropriate in some locations, especially where it can support the interpretation of canal-related structures and buildings. In general, reconstruction and rewatering are recommended only under exceptional circumstances (see Watered/Rewatering, page 3.37).
- Interpretation considerations: At key locations and/or regular intervals, the distances to Buffalo and Albany should be indicated in order to help conceptually place these locations within the full breadth of the towpath-era canal system. Interpretation of Erie Boulevards and similar resources should connect the canal to the urban form and architecture that survived it.
- Economic revitalization considerations: Increased visibility for the towpath-era canals will help to connect isolated towpath-era resources and bring exposure to communities and former waterfronts “orphaned” by the Barge Canal realignment.

Models:
- Syracuse: Erie Boulevard is interpreted at the Erie Canal Museum alongside the former waterway and at the newly constructed water feature in Clinton Square, but the street itself could benefit from new streetscape elements, a continuous bicycle route, and interpretive signage to celebrate the canal’s
relationship to the city. Archeological investigations should determine whether enough original elements of the towpath-era canal prism remain to provide authenticity to a more dramatic water-based feature.

- **Buffalo Erie Canal Harbor**: Strong local leadership and public participation has guided this effort, which has been informed by *A Canal Conversation*, a conference and document produced by the Urban Design Project at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Plans to commemorate the western terminus of the towpath-era Erie include extensive interpretation of lost canal elements and appropriate treatment and interpretation of historic remnants, combined with mixed-income waterfront redevelopment and transit.
- **Albany**: *See Archeological Sites*, page 3.48.

**Wetland / Overgrown**

- **Overview**: Canal segments that have been reclaimed by wetlands or vegetation now serve a dual function: as wildlife habitat and interpretive resource.
- **Priority resources**: Sections within parks or associated with other recreational resources; sections near the Barge Canal, feeders and Thruway.
- **Recommended treatment**: Preservation of surviving elements. As a rule, canal prisms that are overgrown or have reverted to wetlands should not be disturbed except for routine maintenance, such as trash and debris removal and possibly mowing the towpath. Repairs or interventions that postdate the abandonment of the canal, and do not contribute to interpretation, may be removed. Vegetation that impedes discernment of the canal prism or covers the towpath alignment should be examined for its current impacts: vegetation that negatively affects canal structures should be removed; vegetation that impedes interpretation should also be removed at strategic points to improve views and public access; vegetation that is valued as habitat or for aesthetic purposes, or assists in bank stabilization, should not be removed, unless it is an invasive species that presents an ecological threat.
- **Additional preservation considerations**: Removing or developing wetlands can trigger wetlands protection requirements and complicate permitting applications for needed preservation work. In general, reconstruction and rewatering are recommended only under exceptional circumstances (see *Watered/Rewatering*, page 3.37).
- **Interpretation considerations**: Wetland or overgrown canal sections provide an opportunity to interpret the ecological effects of the canals and their abandonment.
- **Economic revitalization considerations**: Wetlands have significant value for local and regional ecologies and contribute to recreation-based economic strategies.

**Models:**

- **Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site**: This well-managed site interprets multiple towpath-era remnants in a park-like setting, including the remains of an Enlarged Erie aqueduct and locks, the historic Putman’s Lock Stand store, a towpath-era house, and a segment of Clinton’s Ditch, each preserved with appropriate methods. The overgrown canal prism has been clarified and stabilized and the towpath trail restored for recreational use. Although the
site presents possible rewatering opportunities, the current juxtaposition of wetland vegetation and canal structures has significant scenic value.

- Vischers Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve: In this nature preserve and recreational resource maintained by the Town of Clifton Park, several miles of watered towpath-era canal prism provide a backdrop to historic structures including a dry dock, bridge foundations, and a restored 1840s canal bridge. The overgrown banks of the canal prism provide critical habitat for birds and other species. Human-powered boats can access the canal, and there are trails and access for hiking, fishing, and cross country skiing.

- Port Byron Erie Canal Heritage Park: See sidebar on this page.

**Watered / Rewatering**

- Overview: Watered segments of the Enlarged Erie exist between Dewitt and New London (Old Erie Canal State Park); near Camillus (Erie Canal Park); and near Vischers Ferry. Watered portions of the Enlarged Champlain Canal exist in Waterford, north of Fort Edward, and along the entire length of the Glens Falls Feeder Canal. Reconstruction and rewatering of buried, lost, wetland or overgrown segments is not currently a priority for the Corridor but must be allowed for. Rewatering can create new recreational opportunities, provide increased boater access to the region, and enhance connections between people and their heritage.

- Priority resources: Preservation of existing watered segments is a high priority for the Corridor. Reconstruction and rewatering may occur in situations of Corridor-wide significance, illustrating original canal engineering or historical events, and ideally in close proximity to intact towpath-era resources.

- Recommended treatment: Preservation of existing watered segments. As a rule, expansion of existing watered segments should use surviving or rehabilitated (rather than reconstructed) canal elements. Reconstruction and rewatering should only be considered if the following conditions are also met: original canal elements remain identifiable and are not adversely impacted; water can be maintained in the prism throughout the common canal season; the towpath alignment is also reconstructed and kept clear of vegetation that does not provide critical habitat or shade; the rewatering is ecologically and hydrologically sound; an archeological survey is completed and adequate steps taken to mitigate impacts to archeological resources; and the segment is long enough to convey the scope of the original canal.

- Additional preservation considerations: Reconstruction of canal-associated buildings in addition to the prism, and recreation of the canal setting beyond reconstruction of the towpath and associated vegetation, is generally not recommended (see Towpath-Era Canal Structures, page 3.38).

- Interpretation considerations: Interpretation of existing watered segments should address the reasons it survives. Connections to other towpath-era resources, as well as the relationship to the Barge Canal, should be emphasized. Interpretation of rewatered segments should explain their original significance. Documentation of both the original construction and the reconstruction should be part of the interpretation of any rewatered segment.

- Economic revitalization considerations: Existing watered segments should receive promotion as major heritage development resources. A cost/benefit study should be undertaken when considering reconstruction and rewatering.

**Old Erie Canal Heritage Park**

This innovative project, a partnership between Canal Society of New York State, Thruway Authority, Federal Highway Administration, State Historic Preservation Office, NYS Department of Transportation, and Cayuga County, will feature the only historic site in the nation with dedicated access from an interstate highway. With its own off-ramp, parking, visitor center, and return on-ramp, the site will be accessible to eastbound travelers on the New York State Thruway without additional toll. It will also be accessible to local traffic.

The project focuses on the restoration of an abandoned lock and prism of the Enlarged Erie Canal and an adjacent tavern and boarding house. The Erie House, built alongside the canal in 1895, catered to boatmen and immigrant workers passing through Lock 52, built in 1852. The restoration of the lock and prism, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, will retain the existing meadow and wetland. Interpretive exhibits and signage at the site will describe the site’s natural history, typical 19th century canal-side businesses, canal engineering and operation, and the story of immigrants such as Peter Van Detto, who built, operated, and lived at Erie House.

A visitor center at the site will feature exhibits on other Corridor heritage resources and attractions. Additional elements proposed for the project include the exhumation and restoration of a dry dock, restoration of a blacksmith shop and mule barn, construction of a canal boat replica, and conversion of a nearby trolley powerhouse into a Canal Museum and Research Library.
Models:
- **Old Erie Canal State Park:** A 36-mile watered segment of the Enlarged Erie Canal, which has been maintained as a feeder canal for the Barge Canal, is the centerpiece of this linear park and is an excellent resource for non-motorized boating. Many historic elements remain in context. State stewardship and recreational development, including a multi-use towpath trail, led to significant additional municipal, nonprofit, and private developments including Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum (see Archeological Sites, page 3.48) and Erie Canal Village, where it is possible to ride a reconstructed packet boat pulled by mules.
- **Erie Canal Park:** This seven-mile linear park, developed by the Town of Camillus and the Camillus Canal Society and operated by volunteers, has a multi-use towpath trail, boating opportunities, and both in-place and relocated towpath-era canal structures. Remnants of Clinton’s Ditch and the Enlarged Erie are in close proximity at this largely wooded site. Despite vegetation, the 1825 prism remains visible. The proposed restoration of the Nine Mile Creek Aqueduct will join two one-mile watered segments of the Enlarged Erie Canal. A replica of the original Sims canal store now serves as a museum.

**TOWPATH-ERA CANAL STRUCTURES AND ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS**

- **Overview:** With greater visibility than the prism itself, towpath-era canal structures and associated buildings are the region’s prime candidates for adaptive reuse, interpretation, and promotion of heritage development.
- **Priority resources:** Aqueducts; intact groupings of resources; resources adjacent to towpath-era canal remnants; resources with a visible relationship to canal engineering, commerce, or ways of life.
- **Recommended treatment:** Preservation and rehabilitation. Protection of associated landscapes, such as gardens or farmland, should also be considered. Restoration may be advisable for an individual structure that is significant for its role in a specific event or period in time, or has been altered beyond its ability to convey its significance to the towpath-era cultural landscape. For example, a restored and rewatered aqueduct – none currently exists – would tell an important story about the challenge of building the towpath-era canals, and create an unparalleled visual impact as well. Reconstruction should be considered only where a vanished structure significantly compromises the integrity of a grouping of surviving resources. “Ghosting” of building or structural footprints is a viable alternative to full reconstruction and should use materials and methods easily distinguished from those of authentic remnants.
- **Additional preservation considerations:** Sometimes, treatment of an entire structure may not be feasible. In these cases, exterior features and materials facing the towpath-era prism or the Barge Canal should be a priority. Where groups of buildings or original relationships between buildings and the canals remain intact, consideration should be given to mitigating the visual impact of modern infrastructure such as street lighting, parking, telephone wires, etc. in order to enhance the historic character of the setting.
- **Interpretation considerations:** The adaptive reuse of towpath-era structures and buildings, and the alterations and additions required to keep historic buildings useful, are an important part of the Corridor story. Adaptive reuse...
opportunities that keep buildings open to the public – even part-time, or occasionally – are preferable to new uses that preclude public access.

- Economic revitalization considerations: The temptation to embellish an isolated resource – surrounding a country store with reproductions, or using a single historic building to anchor a historically themed district of modern vintage – should be resisted, as such enterprises compromise authenticity and obscure the true story of the Corridor’s evolution over time. If every municipality in the Corridor were to rehabilitate a single historic structure, the collective impact to the region’s culture, historic character, and economy would be far greater than that of several major historic “style” developments.

Models:
- Syracuse: The National Register listed Weighlock Building, now housing the Erie Canal Museum, is the last remaining of seven weighlock buildings that played a critical role in the management of the towpath-era canal system. Rehabilitated for educational use, with a canalboat replica in place and visible from Erie Boulevard, the building is an important reminder of canal history in a city where most traces of the waterway have disappeared.
- Lockport: The Flight of Five, a renowned towpath-era engineering feat, has been preserved in place as stormwater weirs alongside the similarly remarkable Barge Canal Locks 34 and 35. The city was awarded an Environmental Protection Fund grant to complete the development of the adjacent Canal Park project and canal museum. A grouping of historic industrial buildings near the site provides an opportunity for adaptive reuse.
- Watervliet: The foundations of the Weighlock Building, where canalboats were weighed and a toll collected based on the cargo weight, are preserved and identified at Colonie’s Weighlock Park.
- Palmyra: The Aldrich Change Bridge is a unique towpath-era remnant that was originally erected at the Rochester Weighlock in 1850s, relocated to a crossing over the Enlarged Erie Canal near Palmyra in 1880, and later moved to a creek crossing on private farmland after that portion of the Enlarged Erie was superseded by the Barge Canal in 1915. After the bridge collapsed it was rescued, restored, and relocated to a new interpretive setting by the Village of Palmyra and Town of Macedon, with assistance from Wayne County and many volunteers.
- Juncta: Markers commemorate the junction of the towpath-era Erie and Champlain Canals and the beginning of a flight of 16 locks needed to pass Cohoes Falls. The project was a partnership between the City of Cohoes, Spindle City Historical Society, and NYS Department of Transportation, which continues to maintain the site by clearing the historic lock structures of overgrowth.
- Rochester: See sidebar on this page.

2-3. 20TH CENTURY BARGE CANAL: LAND CUTS AND RIVERWAYS

- Overview: The 1995 Recreationway Plan recommended site design guidelines for both public and private improvements on land adjacent to the Barge Canal, with the intent of encouraging development that reinforces and enhances the canal experience. Some additional guidelines are suggested below to emphasize historic preservation and accommodate the unique characteristics of the...
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Barge Canal’s two types of cultural landscapes. A separate set of guidelines addresses the Barge Canal’s historic structures and associated buildings.

- **Priority resources:** Canal Corporation lands, especially in settled areas that have not taken advantage of their waterfronts, in rural areas and open spaces pressured by suburban development, and on the edges of habitat and recreation areas. The continuity of public land along the canals is a significant aspect of the region’s history and of its potential for further recreational and interpretive development.

- **Recommended treatment:** Preservation and rehabilitation of historic waterfronts, including both infrastructure and buildings, require significant investment and should be a major focus of planning undertaken through the New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources Local Waterfront Revitalization Program. Conservation of canalside farmland and rural land use should be a major focus of agricultural preservation efforts. Conservation of habitat and erosion-prevention efforts should be coordinated with the Canal Corporation’s recreational development efforts, recreational use guidelines, and seasonal water management policies.

- **Additional preservation considerations:** Where traditional settlement patterns have persisted due to the continuity of the canal alignment, regional planning should seek to strengthen downtowns, encourage infill development and adaptive reuse, and preserve agricultural use and viewsheds.

- **Interpretation considerations:** In land cut sections, the continuity of settlement patterns provides stories that reinforce the imperatives of preservation. For riverway sections, the reorientation of settlements to the new canal alignment and the incorporation of natural systems into the canal environment are stories that support both preservation and conservation.

- **Economic revitalization considerations:** The Canal Corporation recently adopted a new land management policy which provides for review of proposed sales by the Canal Recreationway Commission and procedures for compliance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor should also be granted the opportunity to review and comment on proposed land management practices.

**Models:**

- Shrub and wooded embankments on the Western Erie and Champlain land cuts, and wetland or woodland vegetation on the natural banks of the canalized Oswego, Seneca, Mohawk, and Hudson Rivers, provide valuable habitat and a visual amenity for boaters.

- Article 42: This section of the New York State Executive Law, which directs statewide policies related to waterfront revitalization of coastal areas and inland waterways, outlines general guidelines to preserve natural and built...
resources. By prioritizing nonstructural measures, including the management of development, to protect against flooding and erosion, Article 42 helps to protect the natural dynamics of changing shorelines from unnecessary or inappropriate interventions.

**20TH CENTURY CANAL STRUCTURES AND ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS**

- **Overview:** While noting that the Canal Corporation had successfully preserved the canal system’s historic character, the 1995 Recreationway Plan recommended preparation of a comprehensive preservation plan by the Canal Corporation and suggested interim guidelines for the treatment of locks, dams, guard gates, bridges, and other structures, as well as the canal banks themselves. The purpose of such a plan would be to establish a “decision tree,” a standard management device allowing for quick determination of the proper course of action for resources in need of repair or replacement. The Canal Corporation should also continue to pass on and preserve the specialized skills necessary to keep the original equipment operating.

- **Priority resources:** Lock districts; decommissioned structures, including powerhousees, wooden terminal buildings, and maintenance facilities. It is particularly important that the Canal Corporation continue to promote awareness, stewardship and investment in rehabilitation and seek to reuse decommissioned and deteriorating structures with historic significance as per the guidelines in the 1995 Recreationway Plan. If no suitable reuse can be found or there are compelling economic advantages to disposition, the sale of any such structure to a private party should be premised on a comprehensive preservation covenant whenever possible, binding the new owner to protect the structure’s historic integrity.

- **Recommended treatment:** Rehabilitation. The Recreationway Plan guidelines note that some ancillary structures, fittings and signage added at lock sites since the Barge Canal’s construction are not compatible with the historic structures, and recommend their eventual removal through normal life cycle replacement. While this is a desirable goal, the definition of “non-contributing elements” should allow for new or updated structures that demonstrate the changing nature of the canal system without compromising the integrity of its historic character.

- **Additional preservation considerations:** Disposition of Canal Corporation lands adjacent to locks and canal structures should include protective covenants providing the Canal Recreationway Commission with the opportunity to review and comment on the consistency of any new development with the canal system’s historic character, commercial and recreational use. Guidelines for vehicular access and dropoff, buildings and other structures, parking, planting, lighting, site furnishings, and power lines should be consistent with the public space standards suggested by the Recreationway Plan.

- **Interpretation considerations:** Since most operating Barge Canal structures are in active use, decommissioned buildings, particularly highly visible ones such as lock powerhousees and locktenders’ buildings, provide an important opportunity for interpretation and should be considered for adaptive reuse as public facilities before they are removed or tasked with non-critical functions such as storage.

Decommissioned buildings provide an important opportunity for interpretation and should be considered for adaptive reuse as public facilities before they are removed or tasked with non-critical functions such as storage.
• Economic revitalization considerations: Wherever possible, efforts should be made to preserve both the integrity and continued commercial use of shipping facilities along the Barge Canal. Decommissioned powerhouses may offer an opportunity for adaptive reuse to support Corridor interpretive, recreational, and visitor service needs. As popular places to watch boat traffic and witness canal engineering in action, locks located in settled areas have the potential to become centers of canal-related economic development – but only if they are sufficiently well connected with downtowns, parking, hospitality and retail uses, parks, and rental facilities for bicycles and small watercraft.

Models:
• Little Falls: The new Canal Harbor constructed by the Canal Corporation includes a rehabilitated wood-framed freight house. The harbor anchors an area of substantial private investment and adaptive reuse, including Canal Place. Little Falls takes advantage of its well-preserved canal town identity and organization retaining the clear relationship to canal and natural features.
• Schuylerville: Rehabilitated powerhouse; towpath trail connects to towpath-era canal and historic sites
• Phoenix Bridge House: This historic canal structure, typical of the Barge Canal era, is home to a canal museum and the Bridge House Brats, a volunteer visitor services program that recruits local teenagers to connect canal boaters to downtown retail stores and nearby interpretive opportunities.
• Lockport: The 1909 Day Road truss bridge over the Erie Canal was rehabilitated in 2003 by the Department of Transportation, with damaged sections of important bridge features replaced in-kind. The bridge is one of 180 canal bridges determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register as contributing elements of the historic canal system.

4. SETTLEMENTS – HAMLETS, VILLAGES, AND CITIES

• Overview: The best way to counter suburban-style development in the Corridor is to strengthen the attractiveness of its long-settled hamlets, villages, and cities. The 1995 Recreationway Plan recommends site design principles for development in established communities. Models are described for cities, villages, and hamlets; see the Glossary for definitions of these jurisdictions.
• Priority resources: Settlements with the most threatened historic assets, and most disadvantaged economies; historic canal towns, including those no longer adjacent to a watered canal. Cultural landscape assessments (see Guidelines for Corridor Resources, page 3.33) should seek to delineate specific canal town typologies.
• Recommended treatment: Local heritage development planning should be considered as supplements to traditional historic preservation plans. Heritage development planning is intended to help decision makers embrace preservation as an economic development strategy. Settlements can capitalize on the amenities of the canal system and the Corridor’s wealth of other historic resources and recreational facilities by planning for mixed uses and encouraging adaptive reuse, infill and context-sensitive development, and Main Street revitalization. Heritage development plans should also take into
account opportunities for interpretation and economic development that take advantage of local features and character, and encourage adaptive reuse and new residential, commercial, retail and recreational development that can serve local as well as visiting populations.

- Additional preservation considerations: Heritage development plans should consider the treatment of public space – roads, parks, and sightlines – as well as buildings. For canal towns in particular, the creative rehabilitation of public space and buildings along the waterfront can reinforce the relationship between the canals and urban form. New or renovated buildings that back onto the canal should minimize or mask the appearance of service facilities such as garbage receptacles and mechanical systems; if possible, new entrances or windows to the canal should be created. Street and pedestrian connections between downtowns or Main Streets and waterfronts or recreational features should be emphasized; in settlements along the towpath-era alignments, buried or lost canals should be addressed as per the guidelines for Towpath-Era Canals (see page 3.35). Regional patterns should be addressed as per the guidelines for Barge Canal landscapes (see page 3.39).

- Interpretation considerations: Settlements in the Corridor, which typically have numerous historic and cultural resources spread throughout their fabric – or can point to the historic urban fabric itself as a resource – should avoid creating visitor centers isolated from actual historic or cultural resources. The emphasis for all interpretive facilities and media should be to encourage visitors to experience the resources themselves. Solutions include the development of walking and driving trails, or mapping settlements into easily digested thematic neighborhoods.

- Economic revitalization considerations: Main Street revitalization and similar efforts should avoid creating a false or nostalgic historic quality that usurps the Corridor’s authentic historic character. New storefronts, paving, street furniture and landscaping should not seek to rebuild a “historic” setting that never existed. High-quality, contemporary materials and good design can provide the intimacy and comfort level that encourage mixed-use activity and busy sidewalks, without generating confusion between authentic and imitative historic settings.

Models:

- Fairport: The compact downtown of Fairport has a strong canal identity based on its revitalized main street and canalside parks with connections to other destinations in the downtown. Extensive “in-town” dockage gives Fairport the ability to host tens of thousands of people at canal festivals.

- Oswego: This city, the major gateway to the canal system from the Great Lakes, is beginning to capitalize on multiple opportunities to redevelop its underutilized historic waterfront. New adaptive reuse projects are providing retail connections between downtown and the waterfront; plans are underway for a new maritime center that will interpret historic vessels alongside a modern drydock; and the city is considering the purchase and development of a small island in the canal as a public amenity for recreational fishing.

- Canastota: A well-preserved row of towpath-era commercial buildings lines a remnant of the Enlarged Erie Canal and a turning basin. The Canastota Canal Town museum is housed in one of the buildings. This unusual site, highly illustrative of towpath-era canal towns, was developed by the Canas-
tota Canal Town Corporation, a municipal entity established to promote community interest in preservation and recreational development.

- **Vischers Ferry:** This residential settlement, with numerous buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, features an interpretive trail built by a partnership between the Canal Corporation and AmeriCorps.

- **Waterford:** The new visitor center and canal harbor at Waterford combine interpretation with dockside amenities and easy access to both Barge Canal and towpath-era locks. Situated on a highly visible raised canal bank, the visitor center creatively addresses handicapped accessibility issues and features a contemporary design that complements its historical context.

- **Whitehall:** The unusually intact historic downtown along the canal in Whitehall remained largely underutilized for many years. A strong canalside presence and local interpretation efforts, including an abandoned terminal building converted into a museum and a historic bridge converted into a theater, have helped to attract new investments in adaptive reuse.

5. **INDUSTRIAL LANDSCAPES**

- **Overview:** Disused industrial and brownfield sites represent a significant opportunity for new industrial, commercial and residential development. Such development should be balanced with the need for new recreational and interpretive development that supports the heritage economy, sustains the Corridor’s sense of place, and provides public access to the waterfront. New industrial uses that are environmentally sound continue to contribute to the Corridor’s historic character and should not be rejected out of hand.

- **Priority resources:** Towpath-era power generation facilities and mill districts; Barge Canal ports and maritime districts; sites amenable to adaptive reuse.

- **Recommended treatment:** For districts with continuing industrial use, every effort should be made to survey and remediate past pollution. Waterfront infrastructure should be rehabilitated where conditions threaten water quality and ecology or detract from adjacent historic or recreational settings. Such rehabilitation may include rebuilding of bulkheads, removal of decayed infrastructure, relocation of dump sites, and installation of vegetative filter areas for treatment of runoff. For discontinued industrial sites, the recommended treatment is remediation and rehabilitation as required to prepare the site for adaptive reuse. Restoration may be advisable at some sites where more recent industrial development – generally, since the decline of commercial traffic on the Barge Canal, around 1970 – has compromised the integrity of a setting with a specific period of significance.

- **Additional preservation considerations:** Environmental remediation of some discontinued industrial sites may vary depending on the proposed use. All remediation, however, must minimize impacts to water quality in the canal system. Similarly, while the rehabilitation of disused industrial structures as ruins or shells for commemoration and interpretation may require different standards than more intensive uses, it should take long-term environmental impacts into account. In addition to preserving historic structures, adaptive reuse plans for industrial districts should also preserve the relationships of structures to the waterfront and, if applicable, railroads. Where industrial districts are to be reused as recreational sites, care should be taken to preserve the basic form and integrity of structures that must be “hollowed out”
or have machinery and other features removed for purposes of remediation and safety.

- **Interpretation considerations:** Industry and commercial shipping remain part of Corridor life and provide a link to the original physical and economic context of the Barge Canal. Interpretation of discontinued industrial sites offers opportunities to highlight the succession of land use in the Corridor, supported by historical or archeological evidence. The remediation process itself provides opportunities for public education about the relationship of artificial and natural systems in the Corridor.

- **Economic revitalization considerations:** For districts with continuing industrial use, commercial tenants should be offered incentives to undertake waterfront improvements and offer unused parcels for recreational use. For many Corridor cities, discontinued industrial sites offer major opportunities for new development adjacent to waterfronts and downtowns. New commercial and residential development should follow the recommendations for Settlements (see page 3.42) and the design guidelines in the 1995 Recreationway Plan.

**Models:**

- **Buffalo:** The Urban Design Project at the State University of New York is leading an effort to list Buffalo’s historic grain elevators on the National Register, which would make them eligible for federal historic preservation tax credits. These impressive structures, arrayed along the Buffalo River with easy access to downtown and the proposed Buffalo Erie Canal Harbor, could be the centerpiece of a new historical park.

- **Canajoharie:** The Beechnut complex is a working industrial landscape set in the heart of downtown Canajoharie, a representative of many nationally known commercial brands that originated along the Erie Canal. Façade improvements would increase the contribution of these buildings to the historic downtown. Additional interpretation of this landscape should address how industry anchored the local economy while fostering arts and culture.

- **Cohoes:** Highly visible connections remain between the dramatic Cohoes Falls and the historic Harmony Mills, company-built worker housing, and power canals that once laced the city. However, many mill buildings are abandoned and vulnerable. Opportunities exist to connect this historic area with trails and interpretive signage to the visitors center at Peebles Island State Park and the nearby Matton Shipyard.

### 6. RURAL LANDSCAPES

- **Overview:** The Corridor’s rural landscapes have accommodated significant changes in agricultural practice without losing their historic character. Where it is necessary, greenfield residential and commercial development should follow guidelines to complement that character.

- **Priority resources:** Historic agricultural structures; working farms; timberlands and open space. The continuity of Canal Corporation lands, some leased for farming purposes, provides a significant opportunity to maintain the open space rural character central to this cultural landscape.

- **Recommended treatment:** For historic agricultural structures, such as barns and farmhouses, the recommended treatment is rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. Reuse should maintain basic forms and features, such as rooflines and for agricultural landscapes, the preservation of open space, timberlands, and traditional clustering of buildings are most important.
elevations, as well as historic contributing ancillary structures, such as silos and utility sheds. For working farms, preservation of agricultural activity is the priority and should seek to preserve historic buildings while allowing for alterations and additions as necessary for agricultural use. For discontinued agricultural land, preservation of open space, timberlands, and traditional clustering of buildings are most important. Easements and the purchase of development rights should be explored as alternative preservation methods where agricultural use is discontinued. Preservation of trees and diverse vegetation are especially important alongside the canals and the natural and constructed drainage systems that feed them. Where possible, native plants should be reintroduced to discontinued croplands.

- Additional preservation considerations: Development of agricultural land should occur where it incurs the lowest additional cost for infrastructure and the least visual impact to intact stretches of the rural landscape. The 1995 Recreationway Plan’s recommended site design principles for development in agricultural or open space areas should be observed. In addition, siting of new non-farm development should provide some separation from remaining clusters of traditional buildings and preserve sightlines to those assemblies from the canals and designated scenic byways. New farm development should adopt the voluntary principles of the state’s Agricultural Environmental Management program.

- Interpretation considerations: Historic agricultural structures and timberlands are particularly valuable for interpretation of Corridor history as they represent the primary industries for which the first canals were built. Given the diffuse nature of this landscape, other opportunities for interpretation are limited. Roadside farmstands may provide a seasonal opportunity for informal wayside exhibits or distribution of interpretive media such as brochures and route maps; roadside pullouts should be constructed for the enjoyment of scenic views alongside narrow rural highways.

- Economic revitalization considerations: Heritage development and preservation of agricultural use and rural land can be mutually reinforcing. The beauty of farmland and opportunity to stop at farmstands, greenhouses and wineries attracts automobile tourists who might otherwise choose to travel by limited-access highways. Rural open space and timberlands buffer recreation and protected wildlife areas from other land uses. Greenmarkets help activate Corridor downtowns while providing a local outlet for perishable goods.

Models:
- Floating Farmer’s Market: This program, developed by the Lower Hudson-Long Island Resource Conservation and Development Council, operates an antique barge and tug to bring locally grown foods to Hudson River Valley communities, New York City, and Long Island. Opportunities exist to extend the program, which includes an educational component, to the canal system.
- Finger Lakes region: A variety of organizations in this region have worked to make the most of its scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, and agritourism potential. Scenic byways, a system of “Wine Trail” signage, and numerous bicycle routes, established with assistance from the Department of Transportation, provide clear connections between farmers markets, shopping

Greenmarkets help activate Corridor downtowns while providing a local outlet for perishable goods.
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the canal corporation should expand its practice of providing advance publicity for significant commercial lock-throughs. opportunities exist to enhance interpretation of the region’s relationship to the canal system.

- agricultural industry development, enhancement, and retention (aider): this community-based program, supported by cornell university, provides outreach and technical assistance to help integrate the agricultural sector into comprehensive economic development strategies at the local level.

7. vessels

- overview: the preservation of vessels is not a natural activity; unlike buildings, vessels are not meant to last forever, and they are not as suitable for adaptive reuse once historic technologies become obsolescent. the preservation of the barge canal, however, has sustained the usefulness of the canal corporation’s floating plant. the interpretive function of heritage development is emerging as an adaptive reuse option with benefits that exceed the costs of rehabilitation.

- priority resources: archeological remains of towpath-era vessels; canal corporation floating plant.

- recommended treatment: the national park service maritime heritage program provides guidelines for the protection of archeological remains and sunken wrecks. the canal corporation should develop a comprehensive preservation plan for its floating plant, with a focus on rehabilitation as the recommended treatment, as well as programs to document and teach maritime skills. the department of the interior’s standards for historic vessel preservation projects provides guidelines to protect the integrity of design, materials, and workmanship while allowing for necessary replacements and upgrades. inventory and documentation of the floating plant should be undertaken with the assistance of the historic american engineering record. for historically singular or exemplary vessels, necessary replacements or additions of features and materials should lend themselves to potential removal or reversal. vessels being considered for decommissioning and “scraping” or use for parts should first be evaluated for their historic significance and suitability for interpretive use.

- additional preservation considerations: the preservation of vessels should not overlook the artifacts they carry. private commercial fleets should be approached to discuss preservation and interpretation of historical records and photographs.

- interpretation considerations: archeological research into the remains of towpath-era vessels should be the basis for reproductions; modern materials should be avoided except where necessary to ensure safe operation. because of their unparalleled ability to evoke the experience of the waterways, working historic vessels and replicas should be considered as centerpieces of major interpretive exhibits at waterfronts within and outside the corridor.

- economic revitalization considerations: the canal corporation should expand its practice of providing advance publicity for significant commercial lock-throughs, a good source of advertising for the system’s continuing commercial potential and a great way to enhance local identification with the canals. an antique boat show and rally could boost interest in the history of recreational boating – a severely understudied part of the canal system story.

the canal corporation should expand its practice of providing advance publicity for significant commercial lock-throughs.
– and help spur development of new boat tours, rentals, sales and related services throughout the Corridor.

Models:

- Canal Corporation Tugboat Urger: The tug represents an inspirational story of adaptive reuse – from fishing boat to tug to “traveling classroom.” Flagship for the Canal Corporation’s floating plant, the tug hosts interpretive programs throughout its yearly run from New York City to Tonawanda to Whitehall.

- Waterford Tug Boat Roundup: This annual event brings thousands to tour New York’s historic tugboats, including privately owned and rehabilitated vessels. The Town of Waterford has also purchased the historic tug Buffalo from the Canal Corporation, which will provide winter storage and technical guidance for repairs to be conducted by the Town under the terms of an agreement with the State Historic Preservation Office.

- Canal Motorship Day Peckinpaugh: built in 1921 to carry grain from the upper Midwest, the Peckinpaugh was the first and now is the last surviving example of a class of self-propelled vessels designed to the maximum capacity of New York’s 20th century Barge Canal system. Saved from the scrappers by joint efforts of the New York State Museum, Canal Society of New York State, Canal Corporation, and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the vessel has been brought back to New York waters, listed on the State and National Register, and returned to operating condition. Plans for future navigation seasons include installing exhibits in the ship’s massive open cargo hold and touring the system.

8. ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES

- Overview: Archeological sites are by nature the least visible of the Corridor’s physical historic and cultural resources. Extensive education efforts are required to support the following guidelines.

- Priority resources: Native American sites; towpath-era canal prism and structures; submerged artifacts (see Vessels, above).

- Recommended treatment: Preservation in place, which can best serve protection of resources as well as the context for interpretation, is the preferred treatment for all archeological sites. However, most sites are uncovered in preparation for significant disturbance such as building foundations. All projects requiring government permitting must follow the review process mandated under State Environmental Quality Review Act. Registered archeological professionals should be contracted to perform all sensitivity assessments, field reconnaissance surveys, site evaluations, and mitigation plans with an eye toward artifact conservation and curation. Native American sites should be referred to the State Historic Preservation Office and tribal governments for guidance as per the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

- Additional preservation considerations: Especially sensitive sites may trigger regulations requiring extensive mitigation. For sites that do not meet this threshold, every effort should be made to preserve the context of the site as found, including topography and vegetation.
• Interpretation considerations: Sites that are covered or disturbed beyond their ability to convey contextual meaning should be marked with interpretive signage.

Models:
• Chittenango Landing: This interpretive site features the rehabilitation of archeological remains including a still-submerged canalboat; extensive educational programming. Includes dry docks, saw mill, blacksmith shop, woodworking shop, and interpretive center; connected to other sites via trails and boating opportunities along Old Erie Canal State Park.
• Albany Lock 1: Dogged investigation led to the rediscovery of original Lock 1 of the Enlarged Erie, and the search continues nearby for Lock 53 of the original Erie (Clinton’s Ditch). While proposed waterfront development in the area could provide funds and significant exposure for these keystone sites, it could also threaten their authenticity and integrity. These important structures should be permitted to stand alone and tell their own story; they should not be incorporated into faux watercourses or other non-historical commemorative features that deviate from the locks’ original setting.

9. DOCUMENTS AND ARTIFACTS

Improving outreach to private collectors and repositories, and increasing the visibility of documents, records, and artifacts through enhanced interpretive and educational efforts, are important preservation objectives for the Corridor. The New York State Museum and Archives administer statewide training, technical assistance, and grants for curators, educators, and archivists at state agencies, municipal governments, and community organizations. A major new permanent or traveling historical exhibit on canal-related themes, featuring recently discovered documents and artifacts as well as significant “classics” of the genre, could help raise interest in and support for further efforts to identify, preserve, and curate these resources. The scope and impact of the exhibit could be enhanced by partnership with a statewide or national repository such as the Smithsonian Institution, or a documentary production such as Modern Marvels: The Erie Canal, produced by the History Channel in 2000 using materials from the Archives (see Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation).

The unique challenges facing documents have been identified in the 1997 strategic plan for the State Historical Records Advisory Board, which provides planning and oversight for federal grants supporting New York State archival activities. A Challenge for the People and Organizations of New York sets priorities and goals to be addressed by user groups, records custodians, service providers, and professional organizations involved in the preservation and use of historical records in New York. The common themes emphasized in the report – collaboration and cooperation, inclusiveness and diversity in the documentary record, and effective use of current and emerging technology – are consistent with the vision of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

A goal for the Corridor should be the creation of a “virtual research collection” of canal-related historical images and documents on the internet, integrating the assets of major public and private collections and creating a publicly acces-
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Possible educational resource greater than the sum of its parts. Steps to reach this goal include developing a comprehensive list of canal-related topics, evaluating the status of existing collections, and identifying partner organizations - municipalities, state agencies, museums, libraries, universities, and nonprofit “friends” organizations. Given the limited funding available for documentation of historical records and the low level of public awareness, the key priorities for this effort are educating the public about the values of historical records and methods of preserving them, fostering their use in Corridor interpretation, and incorporating them as primary source materials in public education curricula (see Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation). The New York State Archives’ “Erie Canal Time Machine” (www.archives.nysed.gov/projects/eriecanal/index.html) suggests the opportunities of these virtual research collections.

Many of the Corridor’s goals for enhancing the treatment and presentation of documents and artifacts are consistent with the 2004-2008 Strategic Plan adopted by the Upstate History Alliance, a nonprofit organization which provides support, advice, and training to historical societies, museums, historians, and others interested in history in upstate New York. The plan outlines strategies to promote best practices and performance standards for museums and historical societies, provide up-to-date training in collections care and management, and increase quality and consistency of interpretive efforts, including the use of traveling exhibits as tools for training as well as education. Similarly, outreach efforts and interpretive products supported by the Corridor should feature images of original historical documents and artifacts and provide a broad audience with information on how individual collections can contribute to the effort to preserve and celebrate the region’s cultural heritage.

10. ARTS AND FOLKWAYS

Because existing inventories of canal-related cultural landmarks, oral histories, crafts, performing arts, and other expressions are scattered and largely outdated, and available resources for such work are limited, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor should seek to promote cultural inventorying. The Corridor should work closely with the New York Folklore Society and local partners to identify qualified fieldworkers and outline model work scopes and best practices, in order to help the broader population of preservation and interpretation experts to identify, inventory, and record cultural expressions in association with major preservation and interpretation projects.

The collection of oral histories describing the impacts of the canal system on work and life in the region is a priority for the Corridor and requires a concerted effort. The Corridor can best support the work of local organizations and historians by helping to organize a statewide initiative providing coordination, guidelines, grantseeking and technical assistance for the collection and curation of oral histories related to the thematic framework described in Chapter 6 of this Plan. Traveling exhibitions and educational efforts, such as the Canal Corporation’s itinerant tugboat Urger, could contribute by promoting and hosting “oral history events” at ports-of-call to collect, edit, and retell new stories. The Corridor could also pursue a partnership with StoryCorps, a nonprofit organization
which has installed kiosks in locations around the country to record oral histories for rebroadcast on national and local public radio stations. Any such effort should make use of the *Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide*, published by the Smithsonian Institution’s Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

To add interest and authentic cultural depth and diversity to interpretive efforts, and leverage the considerable talents of the region’s artistic community, the Corridor should encourage the incorporation of performances and representations of Corridor arts and folkways alongside exhibits and displays of physical resources. In particular, the Corridor should seek to bring sometimes overlooked groups – such as the Canal Corporation’s maintenance and operations workers, and the keepers of both historical and contemporary Native American culture – into Corridor interpretation through continued outreach and consultation efforts.

The most effective method to increase interest and participation in arts, literature, and folkways at the Corridor level is to make cultural expressions a more integral part of new and ongoing interpretation and education. New interpretive products described in Chapter 6 as worthy of Corridor support – a documentary, an orientation film, a comprehensive web-based guide, curriculum materials, exhibits – should incorporate cultural expressions to the greatest possible extent. Corridor support for new interpretive facilities should be contingent (in part) on the inclusion of a flexible performance and meeting space, displays on how individuals can contribute their own stories, crafts, and artistic expressions, and other physical design elements that would facilitate active community participation in the region’s continuously changing arts and folkways.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS**

Much of the support that will be provided to communities by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners over the coming years will be in the form of technical assistance: workshops, referrals, expert consultation, and other “how-to” help with the preparation of local and regional visions, plans, projects, and applications for grants and other financial assistance (see Chapter 9, *Implementation*). The demonstration projects serve as models for the Commission’s future work among the 234 municipalities along the current and historic alignments of the New York State Canal System.

The historic preservation demonstration projects are intended to illustrate how the recommendations described in the preceding Heritage Development Guidelines section of this chapter could be applied, in two locations, to protect the authenticity and integrity of the resources that make the Corridor an attractive place to live, work, and explore while also accommodating growth and change. The City of Lockport and the City of Little Falls were selected in order to learn from the valuable resources and important stories they encompass; to address a variety of characteristics and geographic locations; and to acknowledge the high level of commitment and interest shown by the communities’ responses to information surveys distributed by the Commission in 2004.
Each project was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, the community identified and contacted key stakeholders, established a meeting location, gathered materials and information on local preservation conditions and priorities, and selected a particular site to be investigated. In the second phase, the community hosted a workshop, facilitated by the consultant team, to discuss challenges and opportunities, identify priorities, partnerships, and potential funding sources, and propose a framework for action. In the third phase, the consultants returned to the community to present their analysis and documentation of the workshop and recommended next steps. That analysis is presented here.

THE CITY OF LOCKPORT

The City of Lockport is situated along the Niagara Escarpment about 25 miles east of Buffalo. The Erie Canal originally ascended the escarpment at this point through a dual series of five locks, which were enlarged prior to 1862. The reuse of one set of the “Flight of Five” as a spillway for the newer tandem Barge Canal locks built in the 20th century helped to preserve one of the more spectacular landmarks from the towpath era.

The canal and the locks were at the center of an industrial area that developed along the slopes of the escarpment. Main Street, the traditional city center, was located along the top of the escarpment and intersected the Erie Canal just above the locks. Most of the significant historic structures in Lockport are located around this area. Unfortunately, the Erie Canal is not highly visible at this point, as Main Street is supported by a broad deck over the canal, which remains well below street level through most of the downtown. The canal is further separated from Main Street after its nearly 70-foot descent through the locks, creating an upper and lower district in the downtown. Because several city blocks were demolished during the 1970s, there remains little evidence of
how the city engaged the canal at Main Street, and those buildings that did survive are lost in a sea of pavement and parking lots.

Although Lockport’s Main Street is undergoing a beautification program, there are no design guidelines in place for new construction, historic preservation, or signage. The lack of planning for Main Street has resulted in a collection of multiple building styles and shapes, and a wide range of signage quality. Many older buildings have been destroyed and new buildings are often out of character with their historic neighbors. Vacant parcels or parking lots frequently interrupt retail continuity along the street and some buildings harbor uses that do not generate pedestrian activity.

The Old City Hall block, the focus of this study, is at a strategic position between Main Street and the canal. There are two prominent historic buildings on the block: the Old City Hall, which is located immediately adjacent to the Flight of Five; and the Old Electric Building, which overlooks the canal. The top two floors of the Old Electric Building have been removed to create a scenic overlook that is directly accessible through a small park located on a former building site on Main Street. Because the viewing terrace is below street level and lies in the shadow of a large parking garage, it is isolated from the rest of the city and suffers from vandalism and a perceived lack of public safety; it does not appear to be part of the public realm. Both the Old City Hall and the Old Electric Building are currently unoccupied; however, the Old City Hall is in good condition and poised to be renovated and possibly converted into a restaurant. The Old Electric Building, however, is neglected and in a slow state of deterioration. There is not an evident use for this structure since it has no relationship to Main Street and poor access from the canal.
Existing view of Lockport Main Street

Sketch showing new buildings on Main Street and an interpretive reconstruction of historic facades concealing the existing garage

Sketch showing new community space atop the Old Electric Building connected to the Old City Hall (right), Main Street, and the lower level of the Erie Canal
There is an opportunity to resolve several urban design problems at this site through the rehabilitation and reuse of the historic buildings and the construction of key building elements. The objectives for any improvements to this block should include the following:

- Infill the empty parcels along Main Street and join the viewing terrace to this new development.
- Find a new use for the Old City Hall.
- Activate both Main Street and Pine Street by creating uses on the ground floors that generate pedestrian traffic.
- Camouflage the negative presence of the garage with facades that are more contextual with the architecture of Main Street.
- Stabilize the Old Electric Building and, if possible, determine a function for the lower levels of this structure.
- Provide a connection between the viewing terrace and the lower level of the canal.

Because some structures have a better relationship to the street, the successful restoration of the entire block will be improved if the uses in different buildings support one another. The park-like entrance to the viewing terrace should be considered a building parcel that includes the viewing terrace and the upper levels of the Old Electric Building. A new residential building or hotel on Main Street would fill this missing section of the street frontage, control access to the viewing terrace and hide the empty side wall of the neighboring residential building. In conjunction with this new building, the upper portion of the Old Electric Building should be reconstructed to enclose the viewing terrace for year-round use as a community space. Although the viewing terrace will be privately controlled, it will be more accessible to the public for special events and private functions throughout the year, will be maintained, and will be better maintained and substantially more secure. The ground floor use along Main Street should activate the street with retail or another street oriented activity. The possible reuse of the Old City Hall as a restaurant suggests it could have a supporting role for the community space atop the Old Electric Building. All of these buildings should be viewed as a single complex in which the uses interconnect and support one another. Ideally, this new complex should be connected to the lower level of the canal with an elevator that passes either through or to the side of the Old Electric Building.

In addition, there is an opportunity for an interpretive reconstruction of long-gone Main Street building facades to camouflage the existing helical parking garage, eliminate blind spaces that contribute to a diminished sense of safety, and suggest the former architectural character of the downtown. The ground level windows of these facades could also be used to display shop windows from an earlier era or other historic artifacts. Similarly, the lower levels of the Old Electric Building could be stabilized and used for the storage of canal related artifacts. At the same time, steps should be taken to ensure public safety within the garage itself. Alternatively, the garage could be replaced with a building that generates better street level activity and is more in character with the street. Parking would still need to be located nearby, but a relocated garage could be part of a long term plan to replace parking lots on Main Street with buildings.
It is highly recommended that the city consider establishing a special historic district that includes the remaining historic buildings and structures in the downtown. Historic districts can attract new investment by providing predictability to the approval process and the quality of the urban context. Furthermore, designation often changes the public perception of an area by connoting an official recognition of value.

The New York State historic preservation enabling legislation states that “...any county, city, town or village is empowered to provide by regulations, special conditions and restrictions for the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of places, districts, sites, buildings, structures, works of art, and other objects having a special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value ...” (New York State General Municipal Law Section 96-a).

The historic district should be protected with design guidelines and preservation standards. These can be enforced by establishing an architectural review commission to review new buildings and additions for compliance with established standards prior to issuing a construction permit. Design guidelines can be extended to include signage standards and landscaping for Main Street.

The current Main Street beautification effort should be applied to the connecting streets as well. Street landscaping can be used to unify a district and reduce the impact of empty lots or buildings that are out of character with the rest of the area.

THE CITY OF LITTLE FALLS

The City of Little Falls sits mid-way between Syracuse and Albany along the Mohawk River, at a point where the river makes a significant drop in elevation. Barge Canal Lock E17 at Little Falls controls the single largest elevation change within the entire canal system, with a lift of over 40.5 feet.

Because the Erie Canal was constructed on the south side of the Mohawk River opposite the city, a feeder canal was used to access the existing industrial areas on the north side of the river. The feeder canal, connected to the Erie by an aqueduct, also utilized portions of a canal built in 1795 by the Inland Lock Navigation Company. Remnants of the guard lock to this earlier canal still exist at its western terminus. The aqueduct has deteriorated, and the last standing arch recently collapsed. Several stone blocks from the aqueduct were recovered from the river and catalogued in the hope that portions of this structure could be restored in the future. The loss of this historic landmark highlights the danger of deferring the stabilization of important canal artifacts throughout the National Heritage Corridor.

Over time, Little Falls has grown up and away from the canal; it is now separated from the older city by a major highway and railroad. Several older mills and structures along the river, in an area called Canal Place, were recently renovated to accommodate residential, retail, and restaurant uses. In 2003 the Canal Corporation built a new harbor and renovated the old Terminal Building at Rotary Park, which is now used as a visitors center for transient boaters and
a public meeting space. This facility is located next to the recently completed segment of the Erie Canalway Trail along the opposite side of the canal. Individual efforts to restore the buildings around Canal Place have encouraged additional improvements to the area. Two smaller buildings at Benton’s Landing, overlooking the Mohawk River, were recently purchased and will be restored. Although the area was specifically recognized in the city’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) and some design guidelines were developed, there is not currently a mechanism in place to enforce standards for historic preservation or new construction.

Building upon the city’s LWRP plan, it is recommended that Canal Place be designated a special historic district and that a mechanism be introduced to enforce design guidelines and preservation standards for this area. Modern structures of varying quality have already been added to several older buildings as part of their adaptive reuse. Guidelines for the new construction in the historic district should recognize that modern buildings can be sympathetically added without damaging the character and scale of the district. Additional guidelines and standards should be written to encourage land uses that generate pedestrian activity, such as residential, hotel, retail, and restaurants. The pair of buildings next to Benton’s Landing, for example, will be more easily converted to residential uses if they are joined by a new structure that contains the required vertical circulation, fire exits and mechanical systems.

The community has expressed strong support for developing new pedestrian bridges and trails to encourage recreational use of the waterfront and create better connections to the rest of the city. To overcome the perceived separation of Canal Place from the downtown retail area, the existing ‘subway’ pedestrian underpass beneath the railroad should be replaced with a high profile pedestrian bridge. This is an opportunity to improve pedestrian access across the railway and State Route 167, and create a highly visible landmark for the city. Pedestrian bridges across the river and the canal can either utilize exist-
ing structures (such as the abandoned South Williams Street Bridge) or be built anew (such as the proposed crossing next to the public moorings at Benton’s Landing). The community should also consider developing a landscape plan for those places that link the area’s individual historic sites, and an interpretive plan to mark historic canal alignments or structures.

Although much of the old aqueduct connecting the feeder canal to the Erie has been lost, it would be a great tragedy if the remaining portions were allowed to decay further. The standing portions of the aqueduct should be stabilized and perhaps the remnants of the archways reconstructed or built into an interpretive structure that illustrates the placement of the original stones. It is important that the aqueduct be reconstructed in a way that maintains a distinction between the original artifacts and the new construction. The story of the aqueduct includes its slow deterioration, and a reproduction will never elicit the same appreciation as the surviving remnants of the original.
4

Conserving Natural Resources

OVERVIEW

Natural resources were integral to the historical and cultural development of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Today, they serve as the foundation for the success of the region’s tourism, recreation, and quality of life for residents. While the focus of this Preservation and Management Plan is on the protection of historic and cultural resources, natural resources also form a compelling story that can be used to interpret many elements of the Corridor.

The form and character of the land in the Corridor create a setting that is distinct from other regions in the country. The geology, soils, and landforms shaped the alignment and construction of the canals and provided the economic base for centuries of continuous settlement. Water resources weave through every portion of this landscape, including dramatic rivers, the marvel of the canals, a multitude of lakes, and underground aquifers. Within this climate, the vegetation is varied, including hardwood forests, wetlands, bogs, sweeping agricultural fields and orchards. The available water and variety of vegetation provide habitat for fish, waterfowl, upland forest species, and a number of threatened and endangered species.

These resources are the basis for a host of recreational activities and provide the essential ingredient for the quality of day-to-day life in the Corridor, attracting businesses, residents, and tourists to enjoy the natural beauty of the region. Although the Corridor’s natural resources have benefited from extensive investments in conservation, they remain sensitive to the adverse effects of uncontrolled development. The increased demand for residential development and related shoreline modifications along the canal system and other water bodies can significantly impact Corridor ecologies and natural systems, contributing...
to flooding, erosion, point and non-point source pollution, and habitat disruption. Land use regulations remain an important tool for balancing public conservation goals with the needs of residents and businesses attracted to the Corridor’s natural resources.

Enhanced stewardship of the Corridor environment will involve increased understanding of these natural resources and their interrelationship with each other and with the other goals of the National Heritage Corridor. Efforts to protect the region’s scenic value will enhance understanding of the historical and economic movements that have transformed the Corridor’s geology and hydrology into cultural landscapes (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage). At the same time, stronger relationships between recreational and natural resources, appropriately managed, can increase awareness of the delicate balance of the ecosystem (see Chapter 5, Promoting Recreation).

**GOALS**

The conservation goal for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is that the Corridor’s natural resources will reflect the highest standards of environmental quality. Two objectives have been identified as milestones toward this goal:

1. **Increase public awareness and support for conservation and enhancement of critical natural resources**
   
   One of the primary objectives of the Corridor is to raise public awareness of the tremendous natural resources in place. There is a wealth of available information in the public domain that describes the value of conserving and enhancing natural resources. This information should be conveyed to a wide public audience with a minimum of scientific and regulatory terminology. Public awareness is key to engaging broad support for conservation initiatives.

2. **Encourage quality stewardship practices**
   
   Open space conservation; enhancement of water and air quality; integrated regional management of natural resources, including waterfronts; and partnerships with other organizations and agencies are necessary to sustain natural resource protection in the Corridor.

**CONTEXT**

New York State has a long history as a leader in conservation activities, including a number of remarkable public-private partnerships that have served as national models for reconciling the needs of recreation and clean air and water with the needs of economic growth. Increasingly, individual communities are acting to conserve the natural resources they have recognized as critical to local character and quality of life. Ironically, enhancements such as newly protected areas, revitalized natural habitats, and cleaner waterways are sometimes threat-
Conserving Natural Resources

ened by the new growth they help to attract. As more people decide to live in and visit the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, it is imperative to educate the public about local and state initiatives responsible for restoring and protecting the region’s natural resources.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (DEC)

The department is responsible for the conservation and protection of the state’s environment and natural resources. DEC plans for the future use of state lands and protection of the state’s open space; advises watershed planning efforts; administers management of water quality, air quality, environmental remediation, and solid waste; develops Watershed Restoration and Protection Action Strategies (WRAPS); manages the state’s fish, wildlife, and marine resources; and oversees local administration of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), a significant tool for influencing all development actions that require government permits. Among DEC’s water quality initiatives are the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) for control of industrial discharges and combined sewer outfalls, stormwater regulations and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) regulations for control of non-point source pollution and agricultural runoff.

NEW YORK STATE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN

Jointly administered by DEC and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), this plan sets forth the state’s policy priorities and recommendations for open space conservation, preservation, and acquisition. It acts as a clearinghouse for information that local governments can use to pursue technical assistance and grants from other sources. It also guides the state’s efforts to become a more effective partner with local governments, conservation organizations, and private land owners to conserve important open space resources. The 1998 plan was credited with guiding conservation of more than 394,000 acres of land with $378 million from the Environmental Protection Fund and Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act. The plan is updated every three years with input from nine regional advisory committees and the general public.

The 2002 plan, based on input from the regional advisory committees, includes guiding principles, a summary of resource inventories and assessment of needs, project eligibility criteria and definitions, and a resource value rating system. The plan’s priorities are to protect water quality, habitat, and open space to meet the needs of residents, recreational users, resource-based industries, researchers, and ecological diversity. Recognizing the need to fit appropriate strategies to different resources, the plan calls for cost/benefit analyses of conservation methods and a policy of fair and open negotiation with local governments and private property owners on a willing seller/willing buyer basis.
NEW YORK STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND (EPF)

Created in 1993 by the Environmental Protection Act, this fund provides mechanisms for open space conservation, land acquisition, waterfront revitalization, water quality projects, farmland protection, and special areas planning. EPF Title 3 provides funds for OPRHP to undertake open space land conservation projects in partnership with local governments and nonprofit organizations. Title 9 provides funds for OPRHP, local governments, and nonprofit organizations to purchase, preserve or improve park lands, historic resources, and state-designated heritage areas and corridors. Title 11 provides funds for waterfront revitalization plans, watershed management plans, and coastal rehabilitation projects.

REGIONAL PLANNING BOARDS/COUNCILS AND COUNTY PLANNING AGENCIES

The National Heritage Corridor intersects seven of New York State’s nine regional planning jurisdictions and four unaffiliated counties: Erie and Niagara Counties, which share many planning functions; Tompkins County; and Montgomery County, which participates in the Mohawk Valley Economic Development District. The multi-county regional councils and county planning agencies provide technical assistance to municipalities and develop regional plans addressing land use, economic development, transportation, watershed management, and open space. The New York State Association of Regional Councils administers the Statewide Water Resources Management Program, which facilitates water quality planning that, like the state’s major drainage basins, crosses regional and other jurisdictional boundaries.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF STATE – DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES

Through the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, the Division of Coastal Resources encourages communities to guide the beneficial use, revitalization, and protection of their waterfront resources and watersheds by preparing Local Waterfront Revitalization Plans or intermunicipal watershed protection plans. In partnership with the Division, a municipality or inter-municipal region develops community consensus and policies to address issues including waterfront redevelopment; harbor management; public access; erosion hazards management; water quality protection; habitat restoration; and historic maritime resource protection. The resulting comprehensive framework must indicate what local implementation measures are needed, specific projects that will advance the program, and state and federal agency actions necessary for the program’s success. Once approved by the New York State Secretary of State, the framework serves to coordinate state actions needed to achieve the goals of the community or region. Over the past eight years, over 90 grants totaling more than $6 million have been awarded to municipalities along the canal system, through Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund, for waterfront and watershed projects supported by the 1995 Recreationway Plan.
BROWNFIELD OPPORTUNITY AREAS PROGRAM

This program, administered by the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of State, provides municipalities and community organizations with assistance to return contaminated and dormant areas back to productive use while restoring environmental quality. The program works with communities to build consensus on the future uses of strategic brownfield sites and establish the multi-agency and private sector partnerships necessary to leverage assistance and investments to revitalize multiple brownfield sites.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

The Department operates two matching grants programs under the Farmland Protection Program. The Farm Protection Planning program assists county governments in developing agricultural and farmland protection plans to maintain the economic viability of the State’s agricultural industry and its supporting land base. The Farmland Preservation program assists local governments in implementing their farmland protection plans and has focused on preserving the land base by purchasing the development rights on farms using a conservation easement. The purchase of development rights can help preserve open space and continued agricultural use where the benefits and protections available through agricultural districting and other planning tools may not be sufficient to overcome local development pressure and other issues affecting farmland.

QUALITY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

The Quality Communities Task Force, comprised of 25 State agencies and academic partners, was created by executive order in 2000 to assist New York communities in implementing effective land development, preservation and rehabilitation strategies that promote both economic growth and environmental protection. The Quality Communities Initiative focuses on revitalizing town centers, protecting open space, and improving the use of technology in ways that complement the priorities of individual communities. Conservation-oriented recommendations by the Task Force include: continued funding of open space and farmland conservation programs; providing a tax credit to encourage donation of property interests to nonprofits or government agencies for conservation purposes; authorizing the creation of local open space districts; funding a pilot project to encourage the voluntary transfer of development rights; and continued funding for the Agricultural Environmental Management program to assist farmers with addressing water quality concerns. Twelve pilot communities across New York, including Rome and Lockport, have received focused financial and technical assistance from state agencies to help develop and implement revitalization strategies based on the Task Force recommendations.
NEW YORK STATE HERITAGE AREA SYSTEM

The Heritage Area System (formerly known as the Urban Cultural Park System), administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, is a state-local partnership established to preserve and develop areas that have special significance to the state. Eight state heritage areas and two state heritage corridors, each guided by its own management plan, lie within or overlap the boundaries of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Many of the heritage area management plans explicitly address preservation of canal-related resources, along with the overall goals of conservation, recreation, education, and economic revitalization.

Specifically, the management plans for both the Mohawk Valley and the Western Erie Canal State Heritage Corridors recognize the close connection between the natural and built environments and the importance of the canal system's natural setting for recreation and tourism development. The interpretive plan for the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor cites geography as a major theme, noting that the valley's rich alluvial flats, limestone caves, natural diamonds, rock formations, and waterfalls created the conditions for all subsequent and future development. The management plan for the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor includes a model compact to be adopted by its partner communities, including a pledge to develop a community ethic of stewardship for natural as well as historic resources.

ERIE CANAL GREENWAY

A state agency task force is developing the concept for a legislatively designated state greenway along the Erie Canal, proposed by the Governor in 2005. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission was invited to participate as a member of the New York State Canal Corporation Interagency Task Force. The Commission will cooperate with the Canal Corporation and any entity created to help achieve compatible and complementary goals.

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY / HUDSON RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The Greenway Act of 1991 created two organizations to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving the Hudson River Valley's scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making. The Greenway Council, a state agency, works with local and county governments to enhance local land use planning and create a voluntary regional planning compact for the Hudson River Valley. The Greenway Conservancy, a public benefit corporation, works with local governments, organizations, and individuals to establish a Hudson River Valley Trail system, promote the Hudson River Valley as a single tourism destination area, and assist in the preservation of agriculture, and, with the Council, works with communities to strengthen state agency cooperation with local governments. The Greenway is the management entity of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, created in 1996 to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nation-
ally significant cultural and natural resources of the Valley for the benefit of the nation. The Greenway works in partnership with the National Park Service to promote the National Heritage Area management plan themes of Freedom & Dignity, Nature & Culture, and Corridor of Commerce.

LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE

Designated an All-American Road – among the best of the nation’s scenic byways - Lakes to Locks Passage was created by merging the Champlain Canal Byway and the Champlain Trail (along Lake Champlain) for community revitalization and tourism development. The Byway’s Corridor Management Plan, developed through a partnership of the public and private stewards of the historic, natural, cultural, recreational and working landscape resources along the Champlain Canal, Upper Hudson River, Lake George and Lake Champlain regions, provides a structure to unify the communities along the interconnected waterway. Lakes to Locks Passage works with private landowners and non-profit organizations to steward the region’s natural resources, recognizing that a viable rural economy is the best tool to maintain the scenic qualities of the working landscape.

FEDERALLY PROTECTED NATURAL RESOURCES

Two federally protected areas – the Finger Lakes National Forest, administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Fish & Wildlife Service – are within the Corridor boundary. In addition to conserving and interpreting critical habitat, open spaces, and water resources, these federally protected areas offer extensive recreational opportunities. The National Heritage Corridor will work closely with the managing entities of both areas to collaborate on enhanced outreach and interpretation activities.

NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARKS

Established in 1962 and administered by the National Park Service, this program aims to encourage and support voluntary preservation of sites that illustrate the geological and ecological history of the United States, and to strengthen the public’s appreciation of America’s natural heritage. The program affords recognition to what may otherwise be underappreciated sites, and helps the public and private stewards of National Natural Landmarks to find technical specialists who can advise them on how to care for the resources they own or manage. Five National Natural Landmarks, some open to public access, are within the Corridor: Hart’s Woods, Zurich Bog, Montezuma Marshes, Round Lake, and Moss Island.
RESOURCE ANALYSIS

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The Canalway Corridor takes advantage of the most significant gap in the Appalachian Mountain range, providing a natural avenue between the eastern seaboard and the Great Lakes. The engineering and construction of the canals responded to the unique topographic and geologic features of the region. The agricultural soils provided the basis for development along the Corridor, and unique attributes of the soils, minerals and stone sustained the economy over time. Today the shape of the land, lush vegetation, diverse habitat, and unique geological attractions offer a striking setting for tourists and other visitors.

**Bedrock Formation**

A shallow sea covered upstate New York during the period from 450 to 390 million years ago. Over time layers of shells and silt were deposited on the sea floor and were later compressed by overlying new sediments. In this process, sand was solidified into sandstone, thick layers of mud became soft shales, and dissolved shells and calcium carbonate formed thin layers of resistant dolomite and limestone. In shallow embayments, the seawater evaporated, leaving concentrations of dissolved minerals such as salt and gypsum. These ancient deposits provided the resources that later launched Syracuse’s salt trade in the nineteenth century.

When the geologic events of the Alleghanian Orogeny, or mountain-building episode, thrust up the Appalachian Plateau during the period from 320 to 250 million years ago, the sedimentary rocks west of the Hudson were tipped gently to the south, exposing a cross section of layers. The tipped layers blocked the prevailing northward flow of water and redirected the streams into east-west channels that cut down into the softer layers. The Mohawk, Seneca, and Clyde Rivers follow this east-west pattern, granting the Erie Canal an ease of construction and operation unknown to any other canal that attempted to unite the interior of the continent with the eastern seaboard. Some layers of bedrock were quarried and used as building stone in towns and cities across the corridor; Lockport dolomite, Medina sandstone, and Onondaga limestone were notable products.

As the streams cut down through the limestone caprock and tipped shale, they etched the surface into relief, leaving a pattern of steep slopes or escarpments facing north, and gentle slopes facing south. These escarpments extend east-west in bands across upstate New York. Along most of its length, the Erie Canal’s alignment took advantage of the east-west orientation of the underlying bedrock and the softer shales. Crossing an escarpment, however, posed a major challenge, as evidenced in Lockport, where the Flight of Five locks climbs approximately 60 feet to ascend the Niagara Escarpment.
Glacial Period

During the period from approximately one million to 10,000 years ago, successive waves of glaciers moved across the bedrock formation and shaped other distinctive landforms through processes of erosion and deposition. The glaciers eventually moved south as far as Pennsylvania, scouring material from the Laurentian Shield and mountains to the north and depositing a glacial till of cobbles, pebbles, sand, clay, and other material as they receded. The glaciers also shaped many unique glacial features that form the characteristic landscape of upstate New York.

In the area between Rochester and Syracuse, drumlin fields are prevalent. The drumlins record the direction of the glaciers’ flow from Lake Ontario in the north toward the Finger Lakes in the south with characteristic spoon-shaped hills. The Corridor is studded with kettle lakes, depressions formed when blocks of ice, surrounded and/or buried by glacial outwash, melted after the glacial retreat. Another glacial landform is the esker, a sinuous linear ridge created by sediment-laden streambeds flowing under the glacial ice. The canal builders took advantage of the Cartersville Esker to build the 70-foot-high Great Embankment across the Irondequoit Valley.

As the glaciers migrated southward, they flowed first into the existing stream valleys, carving a series of deep troughs. As they retreated northward, the receding edges of the glaciers deposited moraines of glacial outwash that dammed the flow of meltwater, creating finger lakes. Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake are excellent examples of this landform, with their north-south orientation parallel to the glacial movement. The glaciers also scoured the edges of pre-existing east-west valleys, transforming them into a broad, gentle U-shape, as seen along the Mohawk River today.

As the glaciers receded, huge pools of melt water formed between the high ground to the south and the face of the ice sheet to the north. With few outlets, the early lakes had high water levels, well above today’s levels of the Great Lakes and Finger Lakes, and extended to the ridges south of the Finger Lakes. As new outlets were created, each successive lake became lower and smaller. The now-vanished glacial Lake Warren, Lake Dana, Lake Dawson, and Lake Iroquois represented early lake levels before the current water level of Lake Ontario was established. Traces of these prehistoric lakebeds can be seen in the flat, low lying land around Syracuse and north of the Finger Lakes, such as beach deposits (Ridge Road) and delta deposits or kames (sand and gravel pits around Rochester).

Channels, following the course of the softer shale sediments extending from the Fairport area, through Palmyra, Newark, Lyons, and Clyde, to the Mohawk River Valley, drained the glacial lakes. Glacial erosion breached the high point at Little Falls, which had previously been a divide between east and west flowing rivers, and provided an outlet to the east for glacial meltwaters. As the lakes lowered, the Rome area was established as a new ridge point dividing the east-west flow.
With each new breach, water levels dropped suddenly in glacial lakes and deeper valleys, leaving tributary streams and rivers perched at a higher level. These hanging valleys were eroded back into gorges or, where the streams encountered resistant rock, became falls such as Watkins Glen, Enfield Falls, Ithaca Falls, and Taughannock Falls. Cohoes Falls follows this pattern at the juncture of the Mohawk and Hudson Valleys, where a cumulative drop of 170 feet posed one of the greatest challenges for the canal builders.

As the Corridor was settled, the many waterfalls throughout the region created multiple locations for power generation. Today, some of these unique geologic features are destinations, such as Canajoharie Pothole, where Canajoharie Creek scoured out a hole 20 feet in diameter and eight feet deep. At Moss Island in Little Falls, near Lock E17 of the Barge Canal, a National Natural Landmark marks the eastern United States’ best exposure of glacial age potholes eroded by meltwater floods.

*Topography and Soil Formation*

The 20th century Erie Canal climbs 570 feet from the Hudson River to Lake Erie, with a saddle in the middle where the land drops west of Rome (elevation 420 feet above mean sea level) down to a low point near Syracuse (elevation 360 feet) before climbing steadily to Rochester and the escarpment at Lockport. An extensive rock excavation west of Lockport (the Deep Cut) created a level section between Lockport and Buffalo. While this cut allows some of the water from Lake Erie to enter the system, the total quantity is limited by the flat slope from the lake to the escarpment (see *Canal System Profiles*, page 4.13).

The 19th century canal alignments followed a more circuitous path between Rome and Newark, following the contours as closely as possible. The low points were at Syracuse and Montezuma (elevations around 390 feet) and a summit, known as the Jordon Level, was introduced between them. At Newark (elevation 400 feet), the historic canal alignment is largely coincident with the 20th century canal alignment as it climbs in steps toward Lake Erie.

Rome is strategically located at the headwaters between the east flowing Mohawk River and Wood Creek, which flows west to Oneida Lake and its outlet to the Oswego River. The advantage of the Erie Canal as a pass through the mountains is underscored by the fact that Rome, a high point in the east-west passage, is lower than any other point along the entire east coast mountain chain between the St. Lawrence River and Birmingham, Alabama. Fort Stanwix was built in the eighteenth century to defend this important pass.

The fertility of the soils in the region is attributed to the permeability of the alluvial soils and the presence of calcium carbonate, or lime, from the dolomite and limestone bedrock, which balances the otherwise acidic soils. Historically, the agriculture of the region provided an economic base that fed the canal workers and their families, led to the settlement of towns and villages, and allowed for exports to the cities. Under the climatic influence of Lake Ontario, the lake plain and Niagara Escarpment made ideal locations for orchards, grain (thus Rochester’s early nickname, the “Flour City”), and later nurseries and seed companies
(Rochester as the “Flower City”). Today, the climate and soils continue to support plant nurseries, orchards, dairy and vegetable farms and are the basis for newer agricultural endeavors such as vineyards and specialty produce.

Shales between the Lockport Dolomite and Onondaga Limestone bedrock ridges were exposed and eroded following the last Ice Age (ending about 14,000 years ago), creating a low-lying area. In this region water flows from upland streams to the Finger Lakes, then to the canalized Seneca and Oswego Rivers, and finally into Lake Ontario.

During the waning stages of the glacial period, the land along the face of the receding ice sheet was generally low-lying, flat, and subject to frequent flooding. These areas, representing the vestiges of the final glacial lakes such as Lake Iroquois, collected organic debris that was slow to decompose in the high water table and led to the formation of bogs. The mucklands of the central region were well suited to root vegetables and produce that could be shipped to urban markets. Large wetland areas with poor drainage persist along the east-west band of the Canalway Corridor, most notably in the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. These wetlands provide water purification, flood protection, and wildlife habitat in the region.

As the last glaciers melted northward, ocean waters flowed through the St. Lawrence River Valley and into Lake Champlain, forming the short-lived Champlain Sea. Erosional processes of the glacial sea created the low-lying areas where the northern portion of the Champlain Canal flows today.

**Water**

The Corridor’s waterways include approximately 40 percent of New York State’s freshwater resources and drain nearly half of the state’s total area. The quality and quantity of the water are essential for navigation, drinking, recreation, irrigation, and a healthy ecosystem for plants and animals. Precipitation varies within the state and across the seasons, with a typical monthly precipitation rate of one to six inches. The amount and pattern of distribution typically supports the state’s needs. Snowfall is significant and varies widely across the Corridor, with an average annual range from 70 to 165 inches per year. Due to its expansive geography, the Corridor’s water resources are managed by a number of different entities (see *Water Supply and Management*, page 4.15).

**Water Resources**

The Corridor cuts across five major drainage basins (see *Canal System Hydrology*, page 4.14):

- Lake Champlain and its tributaries flow north to Canada and the St. Lawrence River.
- The Hudson-Mohawk River system flows east from Rome and south from the Adirondack Mountains to the Atlantic Ocean at New York City.
- The Oswego River flows north to Lake Ontario, draining the Ganargua Creek, Clyde River, and the Finger Lakes by way of the Seneca River from the west and Wood Creek, Oneida Lake, and the Oneida River from the east.
The Genesee River flows north to Lake Ontario.

The Lake Erie drainage area flows west to the Niagara River, which flows north to Lake Ontario.

The canals in the region closely follow the natural waterways, crossing from one divide to the other with locks. While the towpath canals of the nineteenth century avoided the riverbeds, significant segments of the 20th century Barge Canal are coincident with the Oswego, Mohawk, Seneca, and Hudson Rivers as well as Oneida and Cross Lakes. Over time, the canals have become integral to the hydrology of the region and they now carry much of the water moving through upstate New York. The Oswego River drains the entire central region of New York and its canals, from Rochester to Rome and from the Finger Lakes to Lake Ontario.

Twenty-one reservoirs help maintain water flow in portions of the canal system. The largest of these are the Hinckley Reservoir (7,542 acres) north of Herkimer and Delta Reservoir (3,137 acres) north of Rome. Delta Reservoir conveys water from the Adirondack Mountains via a system of upstream reservoirs. Portions of several towpath-era canals have been maintained as feeders to carry water from the reservoirs to the navigable canals, including sections of the Erie, Black River, Chenango, Champlain, and Glens Falls Feeder. Most reservoirs and segments of the Black River and Chenango feeder canals fall outside the Corridor’s boundary. While it is beyond the authority of the Corridor Commission to provide material support for the conservation of these important resources, it will work with others to ensure that these feeders and reservoirs continue to support the canal system’s water supply and water quality.

The permeable strata of the region’s glacial outwash store groundwater in aquifers that supply potable water for some of the urban areas along the Corridor. Primary water supply aquifers provide significant support for public water supplies in Fulton and Tonawanda, and a sole source aquifer provides drinking water for Schenectady. The region’s many lakes and reservoirs supply potable water for other towns and cities along the Corridor.

Water Supply and Management

During the navigation season, from early May to mid-November, the New York State Canal Corporation maintains navigable water depths in the canals by means of a range of water supply sources, appropriate lock and dam levels, and dredging. Adequate water supply is necessary to fill the canal prism at the beginning of the navigation season; to ensure adequate water for lock operation throughout the season; to replace water lost during the season (primarily in the land cut sections) to seepage through embankments, evaporation, and waste over spillways; and to generate hydroelectric power in certain locations.

Multiple sources ensure that the supply of water to the canal system is usually adequate for navigation. However, localized needs and the unique geography and engineering of the canal system require constant fine-tuning of the regulation of water flow through dams, guard gates, locks, and spillways. Providing water for the canal system’s summit levels, especially at Rome, has always been...
Conserving Natural Resources

While some water management decisions are made on a region-wide basis, others are made by upstream entities or by a large number of different parties, requiring considerable coordination.

Grants are available from the New York State Department of State, Division of Coastal Resources through the Environmental Protection Fund for the preparation and implementation of inter-municipal watershed protection plans. These plans identify threats to water quality and establish a consensus on actions needed to protect water quality, such as stormwater management projects, education, training, and strengthening local and state development controls. Within the Corridor, one such plan has been completed for the Cayuga Lake watershed, while another is nearing completion for the Oneida Lake watershed. Both used substantial funding from the Environmental Protection Fund.

The water supply for the various canal sections is as follows (see Canal System Hydrology):

- **Western Erie Canal**: The flow is generally eastward from Lake Erie and Niagara River down to Three Rivers Point, with contributions from the Genesee, Clyde, and Seneca Rivers. East of Fairport, the watersheds of the Ganargua River, Canandaigua Lake Outlet, and Clyde River contribute to the eastward flow. From Mays Point to Three Rivers Point, supplemental water is provided by Cayuga and Seneca Lakes via the canalized Seneca River.

- **Cayuga-Seneca Canal**: Water from Seneca and Cayuga Lakes flows north through the Cayuga-Seneca Canal/Seneca River to meet the Erie Canal at Mays Point.

- **Oswego Canal**: The natural watershed of the canalized Oswego River, flowing from the confluence of the Oneida and Seneca Rivers at Three Rivers north to Lake Ontario at Oswego, is supplemented by water flowing east from Lake Erie and the Seneca River/Erie Canal and west from the Rome summit and the canalized Oneida River.

- **Eastern Erie Canal**: Several sources are necessary to supply the Rome summit, between Lock 20 at Whitesboro and Lock 21 at New London, that straddles the drainage divide between the Mohawk-Hudson and the Oneida-Oswego-St. Lawrence drainage basins. The sources include Delta Reservoir, north of Rome, which stores water of the upper Mohawk River and taps into the Black River watershed via the Forestport Feeder Canal; West Canada Creek, which flows from its watershed in the Adirondack Mountains into Hinckley Reservoir and is then diverted downstream to Ninemile Creek to enter the Erie Canal just above Lock 20; a remnant of the Enlarged Erie Canal, which taps the watersheds and 19th century feeder reservoirs of Butternut, Limestone, Chittenango, Oneida, and Cowassalon Creeks south of the Erie Canal. East of the summit, most of the water is provided by the flow of the Mohawk River and its tributaries down to the Hudson, supplemented by discharges through remnants of the Chenango Canal and Oriskany Creek from reservoirs originally built to supply the summit level of the Chenango Canal, along with water from the summit of the Erie passing through Lock 20.

- **Champlain Canal**: The summit is just north of Fort Edward, where the canal crosses the drainage divide between the Hudson and Champlain-St. Law-
Conserving Natural Resources

4.17

The southern portion is fed naturally by the watershed and flow of the canalized Hudson River. The northern land-cut portion is fed by diverting water from the Hudson upstream of Glens Falls via the 12-mile Glens Falls Feeder Canal, supplemented, north of Fort Ann, by diversions from Wood and Halfway Creeks.

In the winter, land-cut sections of the canal system are closed and most are drained to prevent ice damage and blockages. Certain river sections, whose levels are regulated during the navigation season, are returned to a free-flowing condition in winter by raising the moveable dam gates. Much of the Canal Corporation’s maintenance occurs during the winter season, which requires draw down of water levels at the locks. In the spring, the canals carry significant snowmelt and other runoff, sometimes leading to flooding and bank erosion. The canal system receives sediment from tributaries which extend well beyond its confines; increased land development in the region has caused the sediment loads carried by these tributaries to increase significantly in recent years.

Canal dredging, an historically performed operation which is vital to the continued success of the canal system, poses several challenges to balancing the needs of maintaining a navigable waterway with environmental concerns. Concerns related to dredging in the Corridor may include: proper control of dredging operations to limit turbidity and the degradation of aquatic environment; timing of dredging activity in relation to the propagation of fish and other aquatic species; and proper disposal and management of dredge materials. The Canal Corporation’s dredging operations are coordinated with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the United States Army Corps of Engineers to minimize the effect on the environment.

There are several chemically contaminated sections of the canal system that have not been dredged due to the lack of suitable options for managing the toxic materials. Without attention, this issue may eventually pose a hazard to the navigation and use of these sections. Long term management of dredge spoils, both contaminated and uncontaminated, is also a concern.

In addition to the Canal Corporation, other entities involved in water management at a significant scale on tributaries to the New York canal system include the Canada-United States International Joint Commission; United States Army Corps of Engineers; United States Fish and Wildlife Service; Hudson River-Black River Regulating District; New York City Board of Water Supply; and New York Power Authority.

Water Quality

The abundance and high quality of the water resources in the Corridor and upstate New York fostered the agricultural industry and population growth in the early canal days. Over the years, industry has also thrived on the abundance and the power provided by the region’s waters. Today, the quality of the region’s water resources continues to support people and agriculture, and has also become the basis for recreation, tourism, and sport fishing, while also providing valuable habitat for aquatic plants and animals. The focus of State efforts
in the last three decades has been on recognizing and addressing the industrial pollution that threatens the quality of the water resources.

New York State supports the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) initiative of categorizing water quality relative to the uses it supports (e.g., drinking, fishing, and swimming). Currently, only 17 percent of New York State river and stream miles has been documented and assessed for water quality. Significant advances have been made to address the region’s pollution problems, with a focus on the following categories:

- **Industrial discharges**: Historic and uncontrolled industrial discharges have contaminated many sites within the Corridor, polluting groundwater as well as the soil and air. Federal, state, and local governments have various authorities to permit, monitor, and enforce compliance with environmental laws and regulations to minimize new discharge and address the contamination caused by historic discharges. The State’s Department of Environmental Conservation and the federal Environmental Protection Agency have the ability to access various funds for remediation of contaminated sites where there is no willing or able responsible party. The State’s Superfund and Brownfields Program was amended in 2004 to allocate additional funding and mechanisms to address such sites.

- **Combined sewer outfalls**: Historically, sewer systems in many communities were designed to carry stormwater runoff from streets, parking lots, and rooftops as well as domestic waste and industrial discharges. During heavy storms, sewage treatment facilities are unable to handle the increased flow, and the system overflows directly into watercourses, carrying bacteria from the untreated sewage as well as other pollutants in the stormwater. This condition can dramatically lower the fishing, swimming and drinking water quality of rivers and waterways. Projects are currently underway along the Corridor to eliminate combined sewer outfalls.

- **Urban and agricultural runoff**: Non-point source pollution from urban and agricultural lands is often too diffuse to be regulated or controlled by federal, state, or local governments. However, in the collective, urban and agricultural runoff constitutes broad-based challenges to the region’s water quality and can adversely impact the environment. Municipalities and the agricultural community can access current stormwater management regulations and existing programs at the State’s Department of Environmental Conservation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the state/county Soil and Water Conservation Districts to address runoff issues.

- **Hydroelectric power facilities**: Twenty-seven hydroelectric plants, owned by a number of corporations and public agencies, are located in the Corridor, ranging in size from 0.3 to 20.4 megawatts. Water discharged from hydroelectric plants can promote erosion, increase turbidity, and reduce dissolved oxygen levels. Some projects dewater significant lengths of natural riverbeds, diminishing aquatic habitat and impeding movement and migration of fish. Hydraulic turbines can injure or kill fish. Dams collect silt and debris, which accumulate toxic heavy metals and other pollutants and hold back vital nutrients that would otherwise flow with the watercourse and redirect the natural movement of fish. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
(FERC) licenses hydroelectric facilities, with input from other federal agencies, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), host municipalities, and non-governmental organizations. Hydroelectric power generation is one of the canal system’s historic uses, and is generally compatible with navigation as long as careful attention is paid to water levels and flows; balancing the allocation of the system’s water resources for power generation, navigation, and maintenance of aquatic habitat is a continuing challenge (see Water Supply and Management, page 4.15).

Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat

While much of the Corridor environment has lost its original distinctive ecological character, many acres remain undeveloped. Protected areas include forest and natural preserves, freshwater wetlands, lands under conservation easement, and federal, state and local wildlife management areas and parks. Though significantly modified, the vast canal waterway system and the continuous public lands that adjoin it provide an important habitat for the natural flora and fauna of upstate New York.

Vegetation in the region generally consists of mixed deciduous forests (beech-maple, oak-hickory, and hemlock-northern hardwood), swamp forests and bogs. Beech-maple forests are climax communities that thrive in the glacial till and create deep shade. Oak-hickory forests tend to do well in the drier soils of the sandy outwash plains; with less shade, these forests allow for a greater diversity of plant material and produce nuts that provide a basis for excellent wildlife habitat. Bogs are found in kettles and low-lying areas formed by glaciers and vestigial glacial lakes. Extensive areas of the region’s fertile soils have been cleared for agriculture to support meadows, orchards, and produce farms. In many areas suburban development has replaced both native forests and agricultural uses.

The following natural resource areas under federal and state jurisdiction, in addition to the canals themselves, are outstanding due to their ecological and wildlife profile, and/or innovative management (see map on page 4.2). Their conservation is key to preserving habitat areas and diverse native plantings.

- Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge: 6,400 acres with extensive marshes and a variety of other habitats; home to waterfowl, shorebirds, songbirds, white-tailed deer, and occasional eagles. Owned and controlled by federal and state governments, conservation groups, and private individuals in the region between Rochester and Syracuse. Ongoing restoration programs and studies are sponsored; limited public access is currently offered for recreation. Managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

- Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge: Nearly 11,000 acres, partly outside the National Heritage Corridor; approximately 1/3 forested wetland, 1/3 marsh, and the remainder grass, forest and brush uplands. Home to eagles, more than twenty species of ducks, land animals, and an important stop on annual migrations of Canada geese. Managed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

- Catherine Creek Marsh Complex: A 1,000-acre marsh complex located at the southern end of Seneca Lake, this area offers a rich and diverse habitat that is treasured by bird watchers and anglers.
• Cayuga Lake State Wildlife Management Area: Located at the northern end of Cayuga Lake and comprising 225 acres of cattail marsh and wooded swamps, this area offers an outstanding, diverse ecosystem and includes areas for public recreation.

• Willard State Wildlife Management Area: This 135-acre parcel is a model for agricultural use combined with recreation. Leases collected from the agricultural use of the land are reinvested in the property to finance improvements to serve recreational activities.

• Finger Lakes National Forest: The only national forest in the state, the Forest encompasses approximately 13,200 acres of high land between Seneca and Cayuga Lakes, with woodlands, pastures, and ponds.

• The Northern Montezuma and Galen State Wildlife Management Areas extend the wildlife habitat in the low-lying area around the Montezuma Swamp.

• In the flat lands around Oneida Lake are a number of other swamps and State wildlife management areas including Three Mile Bay/Big Bay, Hamlin, and Cicero Swamp, and to the east, the Rome Wildlife Management Area.

• State fish hatcheries are located on Oneida Lake, where warm-water species and walleyes are hatched, and in Rome, where brown, lake, and rainbow trout are hatched.

Between these areas, large undeveloped private land holdings contribute toward a continuous natural landscape and wildlife corridor, but there are few safeguards to maintain their long-term character (see Guidelines for Heritage Development section, page 4.21).

Invasive plants and aquatic species are not unknown to the canal system or upstate New York. Invasive species common to the area include zebra mussels, Eurasian water milfoil, water chestnuts, and purple loosestrife. Many of these species are carried and transferred through the system by boats. Some invasives impact water clarity, water quality, recreation activity, aesthetics, and the health of native species. Municipal water systems and other infrastructure can also be impacted by species such as the zebra mussel. Control and reduction of invasive species is an important economic and ecological goal for the Corridor region.

Numerous efforts are underway to address both the introduction of invasive species and the management of invasives already impacting the state’s waterways. In 2003, the state created an Invasive Species Task Force, co-chaired by the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, to address prevention, detection, monitoring, research, and public education to reduce the impacts of invasive species.

GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

New York State has a long history of public leadership in conservation activity and a robust system of incentives, programs, and regulations to protect and enhance the natural environment. For the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the key to maximizing the benefits of this system lies in strengthen-
Conserving Natural Resources

Through the lens of heritage development, many people are beginning to understand that sustainable alternatives to greenfield development are not only compatible with economic growth, but can also attract more residents, visitors, and businesses by enhancing quality of life. For these reasons, the guidelines provided here are general and strategic in nature.

Certain existing policies and practices are of particular benefit to the conservation and enjoyment of the Corridor’s natural resources and should be encouraged, accelerated, or expanded as feasible. To underscore mutual support for conservation goals and allow for appropriate support such as technical assistance, education, and outreach, the Corridor could pursue cooperative agreements to review or comment on the land conservation or disposition policies of the agencies (see Context section, page 4.3) responsible for the following activities:

- **Open space conservation:** Open space is a critical and potentially endangered Corridor resource that is central to the region’s distinctive cultural landscapes (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage), recreational opportunities (see Chapter 5, Promoting Recreation), attractiveness to tourists, residential quality of life, and the preservation of habitat and water quality described above. While initiatives to protect open space in New York are necessarily generated and approved at the local level, where land use controls and community interest operate, the opportunity exists to multiply the effects of individual initiatives through coordinating tools such as the state’s Open Space Conservation Plan. The Corridor will seek to work with the Regional Advisory Committees that guide the plan in order to ensure that key lands within the Corridor are considered for protection. Corridor support of open space initiatives could provide for waterfront parks, buffer zones for flooding, and phytoremediation – the use of plants to filter and clean chemically contaminated soils and water.

- **Sustainable growth:** “Greenfield” development that builds on uninhabited open space is a major factor affecting conservation of the Corridor’s natural resources. In addition to stressing the environment through increased pollution, rapid water runoff, and loss of habitat, greenfield development can decrease the efficiency of municipal services, increase reliance on individual automotive transportation, and erode the historic character of the Corridor’s cities, villages, and agricultural areas. Through the lens of heritage development, many people are beginning to understand that sustainable alternatives to greenfield development are not only compatible with economic growth, but can also attract more residents, visitors, and businesses by enhancing quality of life. The Corridor supports sustainable growth policy tools that incentivize infill development, brownfield remediation, and adaptive reuse, or link new development approvals with commitments to preserve historic properties and conserve open space (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage). These tools can help communities and developers build on the value of heritage resources, including the Corridor’s natural heritage, by channeling new development into existing communities and infrastructure and encouraging preservation and conservation activity. Restrictive land use tools, such as transfer or purchase of development rights, conservation easement pro-

Through the lens of heritage development, many people are beginning to understand that sustainable alternatives to greenfield development are not only compatible with economic growth, but can also attract more residents, visitors, and businesses by enhancing quality of life.
grams, and cooperative agreements, should be carefully considered by communities where incentive tools are not enough to protect important natural areas, open space, and greenway linkages.

- Agricultural lands: The preservation and development of agricultural economies, and conservation of the region’s prime and unique farmlands, is an important preservation and conservation goal for the Corridor (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage). A number of state programs assist local governments in the use of comprehensive planning, incentives, and the purchase of property interests to support rural landscapes and active agricultural use. They also assist in the marketing and promotion of New York State agricultural products and the establishment of new farms. Particularly important are the state’s incentive programs to promote voluntary environmental stewardship, and grant programs to reduce and prevent non-point source water pollution from agricultural activities. Preservation of agricultural lands is particularly important where they abut canals and natural waterways, recreation facilities and parks, and wildlife management areas, or where they constitute part of a continuous corridor of natural areas and open space.

- Intermunicipal/interagency planning for waterfronts and watersheds: As described above, the watersheds overlapping the Corridor’s boundaries are huge areas presenting complicated, interrelated water management needs. Local waterfronts are similarly connected by the canal, river, or lakefront they share. Planning for watersheds is most effective when it acknowledges that the movements of water and related natural resources such as riparian wildlife do not respect jurisdictional boundaries. In particular, long-term region-wide efforts to reduce rapid stormwater runoff and seasonal flooding by replacing deteriorated bulkheads with semi-natural water edges, remediating degraded shoreline vegetation, and expanding the use of permeable paving surfaces, can help reduce localized needs for flood and erosion control. The continuation of the state’s initiative to eliminate combined sewer outfalls is crucial to the improvement and enhancement of water quality within the canal system. Planning for waterfronts should take into consideration the heritage development guidelines for Barge Canal landcuts and riverways (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage).

In addition to the relatively widespread policies and practices noted above, some more focused approaches to conservation deserve special attention from the Corridor:

- Ecological restoration – the science of reintroducing and/or fortifying native plants and animals as self-sustainable communities that persist over time – can restore the native biodiversity of aquatic and upland biota and arrest or reverse the challenges caused by invasive species. These efforts measure success in terms of species reproduction, plant and animal population growth, and changes in the structures of complex systems such as woodlands and meadows. Public support for ecological restoration activities can be bolstered by community outreach and the involvement of universities, colleges, and high school science programs.
• Natural resource buffer areas can mitigate flooding and non-point source pollution. These buffers, typically located between developed areas and natural areas or water bodies, can filter excess nitrogen and phosphorous from fertilizers and sewer discharges; reduce erosion from seasonal flooding; and host diverse biotic communities. In supporting increased use of buffer areas, the Corridor should also work to ensure that they do not compromise the integrity of existing cultural landscapes, and that they conform with provisions of state and federal regulations for the protection of wetlands and floodplains.

• Although viewsheds provide crucial windows into the historic and evolving relationships between geology, hydrography, and patterns of human settlement and land use, they remain an underappreciated resource in the Corridor. Protection of viewsheds through land use tools, landscaping, and provision of roadside pulloffs, canal bulkheads, and other viewing platforms should focus on views identified by the cultural landscape assessments recommended in Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage. Viewshed protection and mitigating measures should be included in the impact statements of potentially disruptive land uses such as new landfills, industrial sites, greenfield developments, cell towers, and wind turbines. The New York State Scenic Byways program, which encourages the designation and management of viewsheds from several roadways within the Corridor, is one potential resource for this effort (see Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation).

• The Corridor should support specific actions to reduce or prevent invasive species, including efforts to encourage routine boat maintenance and rinsing to reduce transfer; biological and chemical treatment to curtail growth; public outreach through interpretive displays, advertisements, articles in targeted publications and recreational guides, and other educational devices; and comprehensive planning to coordinate the efforts of state agencies, regional planning organizations, and municipalities to address specific invasions and apply the guidelines set forth by the New York State Invasive Species Task Force. Due to the expansive nature of this problem and its causes, an increased federal commitment to invasive species management is also warranted.

• The Canal Corporation should continue to work with all appropriate agencies and interested parties to minimize the effects of dredging on natural resources. Winter dredging and partial drawdowns should be considered in targeted locations where they may have the greatest benefit to natural habitats. Since the canal system receives sediment from tributaries which extend well beyond its confines, a regional watershed management program should be developed to reduce the sediment load prior to deposition in the canals, thereby reducing the need for dredging.
5
Promoting Recreation

OVERVIEW

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor offers abundant recreational activities that range from urban experiences to backwoods settings. In most cases, the quality of the available recreational resources is directly related to the stewardship of natural resources. Fishing, swimming, and boating are all dependent on pristine waters. The integrity of the landscape and continuity of trails establish the basis for attracting bicyclists and hikers into the region. The many historic resources and cultural landscapes featured along these routes provide a deeper understanding of the region and add to its sense of place.

The last decade has seen a marked increase in outdoor recreation and a new focus on the recreational potential on the New York State Canal System. At the same time, heritage tourism has become the recreation of choice for many. The many recreational destinations in the Corridor will attract visitors to the region and improve the quality of life for residents. Organized trips and special events, whether oriented toward bicycling, boating, hiking, fishing, or hunting, offer opportunities to change perceptions and draw new people into the area. The provision of sports equipment, supplies, and rental equipment can enhance the experience of visitors and increase economic activity. The development of strategically located facilities and more consistent and sophisticated information can lead visitors to extend their stay, increasing the economic benefit to the region. The packaging and promotion of the recreational resources in the Corridor will benefit from a coordinated effort that crosses its many jurisdictional boundaries.

The National Heritage Corridor can advance the ongoing implementation of many of the recommendations of the 1995 New York State Canal Recreation-
5.2 Promoting Recreation
way Plan. The Recreationway Plan was developed as a framework to promote the use of the canal system as a recreational resource for boaters, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Many of the planned improvements outlined in the Recreationway Plan have been completed, including seven canal harbors, many of the service port and lock park projects identified in the plan, and 220 miles of the Erie Canalway Trail. The National Heritage Corridor’s national status, broader scope, and wider study area provide an opportunity to build on and expand the impact of the Recreationway concept, bringing it into concert with the goals of preservation, conservation, interpretation, and revitalization outlined elsewhere in this Preservation and Management Plan.

In general, this chapter addresses issues related to outdoor recreation. However, it is important to recognize that enjoyment of the Corridor’s heritage extends beyond use of the region’s waterways, parks, trails, and touring routes. In addition to shopping for souvenirs or antiques, visiting museums and galleries, and attending performances and events – activities that are directly related to the Corridor’s unique cultural landscapes – the recreational experience of Corridor residents as well as visitors is often driven by leisure opportunities such as dining, sports events, and local entertainment. Wherever possible, outdoor recreation should be integrated into the bigger picture of heritage tourism and leisure activity – both physically, with well-marked linkages between recreational facilities and downtowns, and conceptually, through cross-promotion and other marketing efforts. These issues are addressed more directly in Chapter 7, Economic Revitalization, and Chapter 8, Tourism Development and Marketing.

GOALS

The recreation goal for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is that the Corridor’s recreational opportunities will achieve maximum scope and diversity, in harmony with the protection of heritage resources. Three objectives have been identified as milestones toward this goal:

Increase access to and diversity of recreational opportunities throughout the Corridor

A broad range of recreational activities benefits residents, appeals to different interests in a family or group planning a trip, and encourages visitors to stay longer. Full implementation of the 1995 Recreationway Plan will maximize the Corridor’s unique ability to offer urban and rural experiences in close proximity to each other.

Encourage repeat visits and extend the stay of recreational visitors through the quality of the experience

Visitors to the Corridor should take away such a positive experience that they not only return, but encourage others to visit as well. The quality of the recreational experience is affected by the integrity of the cultural and natural resources; the proximity, accessibility, and development of quality trails, boating, and other
recreational opportunities; and availability of essential hospitality services that meet or exceed expectations.

**Enhance connectivity between protected areas, trail segments, and recreation destinations**

The best way to enhance the experience of the Corridor’s extensive recreational resources is to connect them, either physically, through trails, easements and careful land management, or virtually, through better interpretation consistent standards, and coordinated management, maps, and signage. Heightened connectivity will boost the perception of the Corridor as a cohesive geographic entity with a critical concentration of resources to experience.

**CONTEXT**

Government agencies, civic groups, and business leaders are developing the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor as an attractive leisure destination for residents, vacationers, and tourists worldwide. More and more communities are seeing waterfront recreation as the way to bring new life and energy to their area, and they are finding that the key to making the most of their waterfront assets includes a clear vision and plan, broad public involvement, and creative partnerships. A number of programs continue to introduce new national and international audiences to the Corridor’s remarkable recreational resources and, increasingly, are connecting them to each other and to historic town centers in an effort to improve quality of life for residents as well as visitors.

This chapter outlines the opportunities to build upon the wealth of previous plans and implementation efforts to create a spectacular place for recreation through trail use and management, connectivity and signage, water use and boater needs, seasonal use, facilities, and recreational heritage tourism.

**NEW YORK STATE CANAL RECREATIONWAY PLAN**

This 1995 plan was developed by the Canal Recreationway Commission as a framework for the adaptive reuse of the canal system as a recreational resource. The plan sought to launch “the next chapter in the canal system’s story” – a new vision of the canal system as a gathering place for leisure-time enjoyment, re-energizing adjacent communities and bringing new benefits and prosperity. The plan outlined numerous opportunities for water and landside recreation, including the potential for new charter and tour boats, for winter use of the canal prism and trails, and for the completion of a multi-use trail* parallel to the entire New York State Canal System – all significantly enhanced by the continuity of public lands managed by the Canal Corporation alongside the waterways.

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*The Canalway Trail was envisioned by the Recreationway Plan as a continuous 520-mile multi-use trail system parallel to the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals. The *Erie Canalway Trail*, running 348 miles parallel to the Erie Canal, will be the "spine" of the Canalway Trail system.
The Recreationway Plan envisioned the canal system as the spine for a linear park, with increased landside access along its entire length and recreational facilities located at strategic intervals for boating, hiking, and bicycling. These included seven new canal harbors at major gateways and stopping points and 96 service port and lock projects of varying complexity. Many of these projects were completed by the New York State Canal Corporation under the first $32.3 million, five-year Canal Revitalization Program begun in 1996, including all seven Canal Harbors, most of the service port and lock projects, large portions of the Erie Canalway Trail, and a system-wide marketing plan. A second $50 million five-year plan, begun in 2002, is targeting additional improvements to canal frontage at municipalities and access points throughout the system and the completion of the Erie Canalway Trail. When completed, this will be the longest continuous pedestrian and bicycle trail in the country - a significant eco-tourism destination that has already expanded recreational opportunities close to home and inspired additional trail-building efforts, providing quality of life benefits to Corridor residents.

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION, AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION (OPRHP)

In addition to developing and managing numerous state parks and historic sites with extensive recreational facilities of all kinds, the OPRHP prepares and implements the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), which sets statewide policy and priorities for recreation and historic preservation. The plan includes an analysis of supply and demand for recreation; a description of major statewide programs and initiatives related to recreation, open space, and cultural resources; and an outline for park planning and capital projects by the OPRHP and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The plan includes many specific goals and actions within each of these areas, as well as design guidelines for recreational facilities and a generic environmental impact statement for actions related to its implementation.

Under the OPRHP’s Parks Program, supported by the Environmental Protection Fund, matching grants are provided for the acquisition and/or development of parks and recreational facilities and for the protection of open space by municipalities and nonprofits. Additional funding programs provide assistance for boating and snowmobiling enforcement and aid to zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums. The OPRHP also sponsors numerous public events and recreational, educational, and outreach programs and administers the Heritage Area System.

NEW YORK STATE HERITAGE AREA SYSTEM

The Heritage Area System (formerly known as the Urban Cultural Park System) is a state-local partnership established to preserve and develop areas that have special significance to the state. Eight state heritage areas and two state heritage corridors, each guided by its own management plan, lie within or overlap the boundaries of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. These management plans have identified recreation development as an important goal, and
also address preservation of canal-related resources, conservation, education, and economic revitalization.

Specifically, the management plans for both the Mohawk Valley and the Western Erie Canal (State) Heritage Corridors call for completion of the Erie Canalway Trail, increasing linkages between recreational facilities, and promotion of recreational amenities to regional residents and visitors. The Mohawk Valley (State) Heritage Corridor has also focused on creation of a new Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, a regional partnership of communities that seeks to increase awareness, enjoyment and linkage of the wide variety of scenic, recreational and historic resources along the Mohawk River and Erie Barge Canal corridor from Waterford to Schenectady.

ERIE CANAL GREENWAY

A state agency task force is developing the concept for a legislatively designated state greenway along the Erie Canal, proposed by the Governor in 2005. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission was invited to participate as a member of the New York State Canal Corporation Interagency Task Force. The Commission will cooperate with the Canal Corporation and any entity created to help achieve compatible and complementary goals.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT)

The Department, in conjunction with the New York State Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Council, developed the New York State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in 1997 as a strategic document to improve bicycle and pedestrian access, mobility, and safety statewide. The plan calls for the development, implementation, and maintenance of a complete network of on- and off-road non-motorized transportation facilities to safely provide linkages between worksites, residences, schools, shopping areas, downtowns, and recreation sites (see Trail Activities, page 5.11). The Department has worked to integrate the Canalway Trail into the state’s transportation network through its Environmental Initiative, Context Sensitive Solutions program, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Program.

NEW YORK STATE SCENIC BYWAYS

The Department of Transportation administers the New York State Scenic Byways program, created in 1992 to coordinate recreation and tourism development with resource preservation along road corridors of outstanding regional scenic, natural, cultural or historic significance. Scenic Byways are sponsored by local or regional organizations, which develop and implement corridor management plans guided by a Scenic Byways Advisory Board that includes a number of state agencies as well as members of the motoring public, tourism associations, and organizations interested in preserving scenic quality. Several New York State Scenic Byways cross the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, each offering an alternative travel route to the region’s major highways while telling a story about New York State heritage. Three of these – Lakes to
Locks Passage, an All-American Road, and the Seaway Trail and the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, both National Scenic Byways – have also been designated as “America’s Byways” by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

**LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE**

Designated an All-American Road – among the best of the nation’s scenic byways – Lakes to Locks Passage was created by merging the Champlain Canal Byway and the Champlain Trail (along Lake Champlain) for community revitalization and tourism development. The Byway’s Corridor Management Plan, developed through a partnership of the public and private stewards of the historic, natural, cultural, recreational and working landscape resources along the Champlain Canal, Upper Hudson River, Lake George and Lake Champlain regions, provides a structure to unify the communities along the interconnected waterway. Lakes to Locks Passage has developed a series of multi-modal and theme-based interpretive trails for bicycling, boating and walking the Byway, complete with guidebooks and maps. Work is currently underway to expand the Lake Champlain Birding Trail through the Upper Hudson, Lake George and Champlain Canal regions.

**NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (DEC)**

The Department is responsible for the conservation and protection of the state’s environment and natural resources. DEC plans for the future use of state lands and protection of the state’s open space; advises on watershed planning efforts; administers management of water quality, air quality, environmental remediation, and solid waste; develops Watershed Restoration and Protection Action Strategies (WRAPS); manages the state’s fish, wildlife, and marine resources; and oversees local administration of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), a significant tool for influencing all development actions that require government permits. In addition to its water quality initiatives, the DEC works to enhance fishing opportunities by managing several hatcheries and stocking fishing areas.

**NEW YORK STATE OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN**

Jointly administered by the OPRHP and DEC, this plan sets forth the state’s policy priorities and recommendations for open space conservation and preservation. Its goals include the protection of water quality to sustain aquatic ecosystems and water-based recreation; the provision of high quality outdoor recreation, on both land and water, accessible to New Yorkers regardless of where they live, how much money they have, or their physical abilities; the protection and enhancement of scenic, historical, and cultural resources; the protection of the habitat to sustain the traditional pastimes of hunting, fishing, trapping, and viewing fish and wildlife; and the maintenance of critical natural resource-based industries, including tourism.
Visitors would be more likely to extend their stay and develop a richer appreciation of the area if a coordinated approach were established to link destinations, provide coordinated maps and informational materials, and convey the importance of local sites to the regional and national stories.

RESOURCES ANALYSIS

This section analyzes the Corridor’s major recreational resources and describes their associated activities. The quality of the resource, a critical mass of opportunities, continuity, and consistency will in many cases determine how useful the resource is to visitors and to local residents. Similarly, quality services and clear orientation and information will enhance the visitor experience. The major recreational resources in the Corridor can be categorized as:

- Heritage tourism activities, including experiencing cultural landscapes, historic sites, natural resources, and cultural institutions
- Water-related activities, including boating, water skiing, swimming, fishing
- Trail activities, including bicycling, walking, in-line skating, horseback riding, and picnicking
- Off-trail activities, including hiking, camping, bird watching, hunting, and trapping
- Winter activities, including cross country skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, ice fishing, and snowmobiling

These resources, which have the potential to attract recreation-oriented visitors from beyond the Corridor boundary, are supplemented and, often, connected by a wealth of local recreational facilities and opportunities used primarily by residents.

HERITAGE TOURISM AND SIGHTSEEING

Designated heritage areas, scenic routes and byways play particularly important roles in orienting travelers and connecting destinations both physically and thematically. A broader discussion of heritage development issues is provided in Chapter 7, Economic Revitalization. Key heritage tourism resources and opportunities in the Corridor are presented in the Appendix and summarized below:

Canals and canal features – A rich array of resources exists, remarkably intact along the 20th century Barge Canal and more fragmented along the towpath-era canal segments (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage). Numerous museums, visitor centers, and historic sites provide interpretation although the level of information and the message varies considerably (see Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation).

Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area – This national heritage area overlaps with the eastern portion of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and seeks to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley. The Hudson River Valley Greenway is responsible for the management of the national heritage area.

National Park System units – In addition to its oversight of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the National Park Service administers four Park units within the Corridor: the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site in Buffalo, the Women’s Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls,
Fort Stanwix National Monument in Rome, and Saratoga National Historical Park in Stillwater. The Kate Mullany National Historic Site, an affiliated area of the National Park System in Troy is managed by the American Labor Studies Center.

**New York State Heritage Area System** – The Mohawk Valley and Western Erie Canal (State) Heritage Corridors are regional resources with many interpretive materials and sites. In addition, eight Heritage Areas, formerly known as Urban Cultural Parks, interpret areas of more localized significance within the Corridor. The Albany, Buffalo Theatre District, Hudson-Mohawk (RiverSpark), Rochester High Falls, Schenectady, Seneca Falls, Syracuse, and Whitehall Heritage Areas all incorporate state-funded, locally operated visitor centers.

**New York State Historic Sites** – Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site and Old Erie Canal State Park are thematically tied to the National Heritage Corridor. A number of other state historic sites in the Corridor predate the canals, including several colonial and Revolutionary War sites concentrated along the Mohawk and Hudson River Valleys. Others, such as the Darwin Martin House in Buffalo, a notable Frank Lloyd Wright house, post-date New York’s canal era.

**New York Scenic Byways** – Four byways provide touring routes connecting heritage sites within the Corridor: Lakes to Locks Passage, connecting Waterford to Rouses Point at the northern end of Lake Champlain; the Mohawk Towpath, connecting Waterford to Schenectady; Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, encircling Cayuga Lake; and the Revolutionary Trail, connecting Albany to Rome. Lakes to Locks Passage, an All-American Road, and the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, a National Scenic Byway, have also been designated as “America’s Byways” by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Other byways provide connections between the Corridor and other significant tourism regions, including the Adirondack Trail, Southern Adirondack Byway, Central Adirondack Trail, Black River Trail, and Scenic Route 90. The Seaway Trail, a 454-mile National and New York State Scenic Byway along the Lake Erie, Niagara River, Lake Ontario, and St. Lawrence River waterfronts, parallels much of the Corridor.

Marketing information for these resources is developed on a county or regional basis, often overlooking connections from one region to another. In many cases, visitors would be more likely to extend their stay and develop a richer appreciation of the area if a coordinated approach were established to link destinations, provide coordinated maps and informational materials, and convey the importance of local sites to the regional and national stories (see Chapter 6 and Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*).

**WATER-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

The Corridor offers a wide variety of settings for water-related activities, including boating of all types, swimming, and fishing. While the features and the quality of the resources influence the pattern of activities, in all cases the quality and quantity of the water is essential for people enjoying water activities. The water features within the Corridor are detailed in the Appendix:
• New York State Canal System – 524 miles of connected waterways, including land cut canals and canalized rivers, used primarily for boating and also for fishing. The canal system is officially open to navigation from May 1 to November 15, and closed to through-boaters the rest of the year; weather-related closings and other interruptions in navigation are posted on the Canal Corporation website.

• Rivers and streams – In addition to the canalized rivers, a number of smaller rivers and streams drain the area and provide opportunities for fishing and small boat use.

• Towpath-era canals – Surviving watered towpath-era canal sections are ideally suited to small boat use and casual fishing.

• Lakes – The Corridor touches on two Great Lakes and Lake Champlain, and encompasses a number of lakes in the central part of the state, including two Finger Lakes, all of which host boating of all kinds, fishing, and swimming.

The recreational boating industry in America is generally considered to have peaked in the 1980s, and recreational traffic on the New York State Canal System remains below 1989 levels. While private boat ownership and use on the canals are difficult to foster, many canal segments remain underserved by excursion, tour, and charter boat services, as well as the provisioning services needed to sustain longer trips. Unlike their European counterparts, many American vacationers have yet to embrace the pleasures of extended canal boating. In 2004, there were 17 registered tour boats and 24 registered charter boats on the canal system, including hire boats and passenger vessels. From 2003-04, the number of tour boat lockings on the canals increased 3.3 percent, from 8,239 to 8,514, and the number of hire boat lockings increased 8.5 percent, from 6,791 to 7,369 (a locking is recorded each time a vessel passes through a lock or beneath a lift bridge). The persistent recreational underutilization of the canal system represents both a cultural challenge and an opportunity for economic growth.

Boating activities range from waterskiing and the use of large and small powerboats, houseboats, and personal watercraft to the use of non-motorized craft such as kayaks, canoes, rowboats, rowing shells, sailboards, and sailboats. The large scale of Oneida, Cayuga, and Seneca Lakes makes them well suited for water-skiing and sailing; after temporarily removing their masts and rigging, some sailboats also use the canal system and the Hudson River to travel between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic coast. In some cases, shared use of the waterways, especially the narrower canal segments, creates conflicts. Organized competitive rowing has become more popular and makes use of certain canal segments for practice and races. Competitive meets can only be held, however, if motorized traffic is stopped for a limited time period. Excessive speed of motorized boats can hamper small boating in canoes, sculls, and kayaks, whose users may prefer the quieter waters of the historic canals and the smaller rivers, streams, and lakes in the region.

While the canal harbors, service ports, and lock parks constructed since the 1995 Recreationway Plan have greatly enhanced public access to the canal system, many places still lack supportive or related services. Support services are critical for boating, especially public boat launches and marinas where docking, fuel, information, and other services are available. Visitors and many residents
depend on boat rentals for access to the water, whether for a weeklong houseboat excursion or an afternoon of canoeing or fishing from a rowboat. Camping facilities and motels convenient to the canal harbors, service areas, and marinas are important features needed by long distance boaters.

Action should be taken to encourage the participation of private enterprise in improving, creating and maintaining boater facilities in the Corridor. The Recreation Plan’s description of a typical service port included both private elements, such as a marina, retail shops or restaurants, and rental facilities, and public components such as a Canal Trail linkage and a waterfront park. Recommendations for expanding private enterprise in the Corridor are provided in Chapter 7, Economic Revitalization. Some steps specific to recreation development are already being taken. For example, in response to the concerns of private marina operators, the Canal Corporation is reviewing its rules and regulations on fees for the overnight use of public canal system bulkheads and docks.

Fishing occurs throughout the region, with some water bodies in the Corridor offering opportunities that are among the best in New York and the United States. This activity is popular with many residents, but salmon runs, fishing tournaments, and seasonal fishing opportunities also have the ability to attract anglers from outside the region and state; the opportunities for carp fishing along the canal have begun to attract international interest. In the Corridor, interest in ice fishing, particularly on Oneida Lake, and winter steelhead fishing, at the mouth of the Oswego Canal, has been increasing in recent years. Throughout the canal system and connecting lakes, anglers can catch a large variety of fish, including bullhead, bass (rock, small mouth, and large mouth), northern pike, catfish, sheepshead, yellow perch, carp, bluegill/pumpkinseed, walleye, steelhead, and salmon. High water quality, the control of invasive fauna and flora, increased public boat launches and other access sites, the acquisition and management of public fishing rights, and improved tourism information and marketing are key for expanding this activity.

Swimming is an activity that primarily serves local populations at informal locations throughout the Corridor. Water quality issues limit swimming opportunities in many canal segments due to historic industrial discharges, combined sewer outfalls, and urban and agricultural runoff. As these water pollution issues continue to be addressed state-wide, opportunities for swimming may increase within the Corridor.

TRAIL ACTIVITIES

Trail systems in and around the Corridor provide a significant recreational resource in the region. In particular, the Erie Canal Trail and other statewide and national trails can become major visitor destinations. Many people may also discover the many regional and local trails that link to the Erie Canal Trail, each distinguished by unique features and destinations along the way. Although the Corridor as a whole is served by a variety of long-distance trails, there are many opportunities to improve links between trails, or between trails and other recreational facilities or downtown areas. Leading trail organizations...
such as Parks & Trails NY have set as a goal the establishment of a continuous trail network, with a maximum of trail use opportunities, connected to the system-wide Canalway Trail. Regional and metro area bicycle/pedestrian plans undertaken with the support of the New York State Department of Transportation are another key element of the Corridor’s trail network.

Most trails in the region are multi-use and allow walking, bicycling, and cross country skiing. Special uses such as horseback riding, in-line skating, mountain biking, and snowmobiling are designated on a trail-by-trail basis, with considerable variation from one location to another. The North Country National Scenic Trail and the Finger Lakes Trail are designated for foot traffic only. By maintaining the presence of horses in the region, multi-use and designated horseback riding trails provide a reminder of the primary source of power for canal boats in the towpath-era canals. The characteristics of individual trails are summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trail Segment</th>
<th>Miles</th>
<th>Horseback Riding</th>
<th>In-line Skating</th>
<th>Snowmobiling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Erie Canal Trail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erie Canal Heritage Trail (2)</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
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<td>Camillus Canal Park Trail</td>
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<td>Old Erie Canal State Park Trail</td>
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<td>Rome-Utica</td>
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<td>Little Falls-Fort Plain</td>
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<td><strong>National/Statewide Laterals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Finger Lake Trail</td>
<td>560</td>
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<td><strong>Regional Laterals</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Path Trail</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genesee Valley Greenway</td>
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<td>Oswego Recreational Trail</td>
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<td>Link Trail</td>
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<td>Niagara Greenway</td>
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<td>Buffalo/Erie County Riverwalk</td>
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<td>Warren County Bikeway</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(1) Analysis does not include urban segments between 1 and 3 miles long
(2) Equestrian use and snowmobile use allowed in some sections (○)

For the national and statewide trails where recreation is restricted to non-motorized uses, multiple trail alignments may be necessary to accommodate other uses, especially along the canal towpaths. This could be accomplished in some areas by creating snowmobile trails on the opposite bank or by using the bed of the frozen canal, where the surface and the width are better suited for snowmobiles.
For bicyclists, the completed segments of the Erie Canalway Trail offer long stretches of off-road routes, with connections to small roads through the countryside. Once completed, the continuous 348-mile off-road trail along the route of the 19th and 20th century canals will provide a unique touring experience. Bicyclists might also be interested in pursuing the many other trails in the region, such as the Genesee Valley Greenway, Niagara Greenway, Finger Lakes National Forest Loop, Warren County Bikeway, and Buffalo and Erie County Riverwalk.

Experienced bicyclists looking to explore the Corridor may also choose to follow New York's State Bicycle Route 5, a 365-mile on-road signed bicycle route that parallels the Erie Canalway Trail between Niagara Falls and Albany and provides a direct link to State Bicycle Routes 9, 11, 14, 19 and 20. Together, these total over 1,700 miles of signed on-road bicycle routes across upstate New York, with links to other bicycle routes in Pennsylvania, Vermont, Massachusetts, and the Province of Quebec.

As a high priority project for the Canal Corporation, the implementation of the Erie Canalway Trail is steadily making progress, with funding and a phasing plan in place for remaining sections. Currently, about 220 miles of the trail are complete. In some locations, particularly along the lateral trails, key gaps remain. For example, a gap of 11 miles separates Fort Ann from Whitehall; since both towns are tourist destinations, this segment would be valuable for day trips as well as long-range cyclists traveling to or from the Lake Champlain bikeways. Upon completion, the Erie Canalway Trail will be the nation's longest continuous, dedicated hiking and bicycling trail. The value of the trail would be enhanced considerably by connections to regional trail systems throughout the Corridor.

As most recreational bicyclists and trail users arrive by personal automobile, there is a need for additional trailhead sites with parking facilities in villages and at key access points, where space is available. For the Erie Canalway Trail to truly become a national and international destination for bicyclists, more bicycle-related infrastructure, such as bicycle racks, needs to be installed, and better links from the area airports and train stations need to be established. For the annual Cycling the Erie Canal tour on the Erie Canalway Trail, riders are directed to take taxis from the airports and train stations to access the trail. At the same time, better links between trails and downtown areas could encourage commuting by bicycle or walking. Whether the improved links take the form of a physical trail connection or better signage within transportation hubs, easier connections will increase the number of riders on the trail.

Hikers and walkers are welcome on the trails mentioned above, but many may be attracted to some of the more remote or rugged trails in the region such as the North Country National Scenic Trail, the Finger Lakes Trail, the Long Path Trail, and the Link Trail. These off-road trails generally do not allow wheeled or motorized use. Four locations in the Corridor and vicinity currently offer approximately 100 miles of trails for horseback riders: Old Erie Canal State Park, Camillus Erie Canal Park, the Link Trail in Madison County, and the Oswego Recreational Trail.
5.14 Promoting Recreation

Many successful partnerships have been formed between organizations to facilitate trail completion and maintenance, but trail management can be a challenge. Some trails use public lands; others access private holdings through cooperative agreements and easements. Routes are periodically updated and improved as new alignments become available. Maps are available for some trails, but not others. Allowable uses and surface materials vary from segment to segment. The region’s trails are managed by a wide variety of entities, including non-profit and volunteer organizations; town, city and county governments; the National Park Service, which administers the North Country Scenic Trail in cooperation with numerous public and private partners; and statewide agencies including the New York State Canal Corporation, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

Campsites supported by the Canal Corporation have been opened along the Canalway Trail and are tailored to the needs of bicyclists, hikers, and boaters. The sites include enough area for at least four tents, potable water, picnic tables, grills, and toilets. New facilities are planned at canal locks and other publicly owned locations. The long-term goal is to establish a network of campsites along the Erie Canalway Trail approximately 35 miles apart. Additional services for trail users such as private campsites and accommodations, outfitting and bicycle shops, and equipment rental facilities represent key opportunities for small business development along the Corridor’s major trails and downtown or waterfront trail linkages (see Chapter 7, Economic Revitalization).

OFF-TRAIL ACTIVITIES

The Corridor offers tremendous opportunity for off-trail activities based on the extensive lands in local, state, and national ownership. While not all of this land is contiguous, it is concentrated in certain portions of the Corridor, providing regional focus for people who enjoy the back-country experience. Permitted activities vary within these areas, but generally include hunting and trapping during designated seasons, cross country skiing and snowshoeing in winter, and hiking, bird watching, and horseback riding year-round.

The central area of the Corridor provides significant attractions for outdoors enthusiasts, anchored by the excellent fishing in the Oswego River, Oneida Lake, Lake Ontario, and other waterways. Glacial action in this region gave rise to swampy, low-lying areas that have resisted development and provide excellent habitat for waterfowl and woodland animals, particularly in the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, a popular site for bird watching. Because these marshlands are so extensive, they form an important part of the flyway for migrating birds. A band of marshlands also extends along the southern edge of the Corridor between Lockport and Rochester, providing a significant destination for off-trail activities in the western Erie Canal region. In these remote areas, including the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, hunters will find waterfowl, rabbit, fox, raccoon, and squirrel. These areas also serve as part of the flyway for migration of ducks and Canadian geese.
The Finger Lakes are another significant destination for outdoor activities. While the lakes themselves offer rich fishing and boating opportunities, the mix of hardwood forest uplands, open pastures, and dramatic waterfalls will also draw people. Numerous wineries overlook the lakeshores and offer another destination for visitors in the region. Significant natural areas have been preserved under state and federal management. The eastern Erie Canal region and the Champlain Valley have older settlement patterns and do not have major back-country areas under public ownership within the boundaries of the Corridor. Most of the off-trail activities that occur in this region are focused on the tremendous resources of Adirondack Park to the north and the Catskills to the south. Moreau Lake State Park in Glens Falls and Delta Lake State Park north of Rome are primarily water-related resources, but they do offer hiking, camping, cross country skiing, and snowmobiling.

**WINTER ACTIVITIES**

Resources for winter recreation in the Corridor are diffuse and relatively small in scale, making them more likely to appeal to the local community than to destination visitors. Ice fishing occurs on the lakes and river segments. Cross country skiing is allowed on most trails, although the level terrain may be better suited to short workouts rather than long distance touring. The region offers some significant opportunities for snowshoeing, especially in the more remote areas. Because snowmobiles are allowed only on limited towpath segments and along the 26-mile Oswego Recreational Trail, this use is more likely to occur in nearby uplands, the Tug Hill Plateau, and the Adirondack and Catskill Mountains. Long distance ice skating along the land-cut canals would be quite unique, but the necessity of drawing down the water in most segments for winter lock maintenance precludes this activity. Still, a shallow ice sheet, cleared of snow and stopping short of the lock mechanisms, would in fact be preferable for safety.

The ability to share the trail is a key question, especially with motorized snowmobiles that can travel at high speeds. The possibility of allowing snowmobile use on a shallow frozen canal bed has been raised; this would have to be balanced with ice skating. Similarly, snowmobile use on the trail segments may conflict with cross-country skiing. In all cases, the enforcement of speed limits would be essential for safety.

Winter trail use decisions should be made on a collective regional scale rather than at an individual community level, to help maximize continuity in long-distance opportunities and ensure that the needs of all user groups are met. Snowmobile riders may require distances that span community boundaries to provide a worthwhile and pleasurable adventure. As such, partnerships with snowmobiling clubs should be sought to better understand their needs, balance trail uses appropriately, and encourage enforcement of trail use regulations.

In order to promote winter activities, whether for residents or visitors, small parking lots and trailheads are necessary at regular intervals and will require maintenance and snow clearing during the winter. Special consideration should be given to locations near population centers.
GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

The diversity of recreation options within the Corridor provides residents and visitors with opportunities to improve their physical health through exercise, to experience and appreciate natural and scenic resources, and to educate themselves about and be inspired by the history of the region. The sheer size of the Corridor makes prioritizing the scope of recreational improvements daunting. The criteria described below provide a framework for evaluating projects and identifying those that will best serve the overall recreational success of the Corridor, while still providing needed local improvements.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor supports full implementation of the 1995 Recreationway Plan, the regional plans on which it was based, and the local, regional, and statewide efforts it set in motion. In particular, the Corridor’s outreach and education efforts, technical assistance, and targeted investments seek to advance the Recreationway Plan’s recommendations for expanding recreation and tour boating opportunities, developing side trails off the system-wide Canalway Trail, encouraging open space conservation, and creating a continuous greenway alongside the canal system (see Chapter 4, Conservining Natural Resources).

The opportunity exists to make the Corridor a national and international destination for travelers in pursuit of unique outdoor recreation experiences (see Chapter 8, Tourism Development and Marketing). A signature sporting event focusing on human athleticism, such as a long-distance relay event with running, bicycling, and paddling segments along the length of the canals, could help raise the Corridor’s profile, bringing both spectators and top-level athletes to the canals. The Commission will support the development of this and other athletic events that will increase utilization of and support for the Corridor’s recreational facilities by both residents and visitors.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Diversity of Use – Proposed projects that offer a range of uses within their scope increase the overall opportunities in the Corridor and appeal to more than one type of user. For example, boating facilities located near a trailhead can provide facilities for hikers as well as boaters. Trails that connect both cultural and natural resources appeal to those seeking outdoor experiences and those eager to embrace the history of the region.

2. Location and Access – Proposed projects close to existing recreational resources, are accessible through public lands, and are along or connect to the Canalway Trail, the Barge Canal, or the towpath-era canals should be given priority. These projects will demand fewer resource inputs, will serve a known existing recreational audience, and will continue to focus attention on the main attraction of the Corridor – the historic canal system. In addition, projects that complete links (close gaps) between existing recreational destinations should be prioritized. These links will help create the identity of the larger connected Corridor, provide alternative lengths of experiences, and provide options for different user groups.
3. Accessibility – Many recreational facilities in the Corridor, including pedestrian trails, boat launches, and fishing access points, are inaccessible to people with disabilities. Recipients of Corridor support for recreational development must demonstrate that appropriate measures have been taken consistent with federal requirements to allow access by visitors with disabilities.

4. Visual Quality/Scenic Value – Proposed projects that provide access to or through areas of high scenic value should be given a high priority. Promontories, natural features that display the region’s geology and hydrology (e.g., waterfalls, cliffs), and historic structures should be considered of high scenic value. Projects should focus on showcasing the most scenic and visually appealing landscapes within the Corridor; increased opportunities to view the canal system from roadside pulloffs should also be pursued. Cultural landscape surveys and scenic quality assessments can identify priority locations and guide efforts to protect and enhance scenic value (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage).

5. Ecological Health - All decisions made to increase the recreation potential of the Corridor should consider the ecology of the natural resources in which new facilities are constructed. Ecological health can be measured by the presence of endangered, threatened or rare communities; high species diversity and habitat quality; and high ecological function (nutrient cycling, role in hydrological cycle). When recreational facilities are located in areas of high ecological health, construction must be environmentally sensitive and limit loss of habitat. Maintenance of recreational resources, such as the clearing of vegetation from trails and the control of pests and invasive species, should use environmentally sensitive methods.

6. Cultural Significance – All decisions made to increase the recreation potential of the Corridor should consider the cultural significance of the historic resources in which new facilities are constructed. Projects proposed within cultural landscapes should not jeopardize the overall historic integrity and character-defining features of that landscape (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage). Best practices for the private development of recreational facilities, including waterfront access for residential and commercial properties, should be identified and publicized.

7. Visitor Use Management – Expanded recreational facilities require adequate support infrastructure and services such as bathrooms, straightforward circulation plans, and safety and orientation devices such as signage, fencing, lighting, and boundary markers to prevent damage to sensitive areas and private property. In particular, much more signage providing directions, mileage, and trail use regulations is needed for the region’s pedestrian, bicycle, and multi-use trails, and enhanced visitor guides are needed for many segments of the canal system. Recipients of Corridor support for recreational development should be required to address the concerns of private property owners and other parties affected by their work, and make use of the guidelines regarding signage, orientation, and visitor services provided in Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation.
Below is a summary of activity-specific guidelines to assist in establishing priorities for recreation-focused improvements within the Corridor. The guidelines vary in specificity from convening working groups to determining trail surfaces. Roundtables, bringing together recreational facility managers from across the Corridor, may be a particularly effective means of expanding awareness and generating consensus on multiple use guidelines, design standards, and strategies for enhancing seasonal use.

**Heritage Tourism** – includes experiencing cultural landscapes, historic sites, natural resources, and cultural institutions. For guidelines, see Chapter 3, *Protecting Our Heritage*; Chapter 6, *Interpretation and Orientation*; and Chapter 7, *Economic Revitalization*.

**Water-related Activities** – include boating, fishing, and swimming

1. New boating opportunities for a wide variety of recreational users should be strongly encouraged. Excursion or day-trip boats, tour boats, charter or hire boats, and nonmotorized rental boats require distinct dockages and supportive services. Ready access to these activities should be a primary consideration in the location of new recreational facilities, waterfront improvements, and interpretive and visitor services (see Chapter 6, *Interpretation and Orientation*); they should be prominently featured in orientation and tourism promotion materials. Use of nonmotorized boats such as canoes and kayaks, a growing activity, can be encouraged by construction of launches for car-top boats and enforcement of speed limits to limit powerboat wakes.

2. New boating facilities and support services should continue to be installed at locations consistent with the system of boating services outlined in the Recreationway Plan. This system was based on length of average travel days, proximity to population centers, and potential to maximize opportunities for a variety of boating and other recreational activities. Facilities should accommodate non-motorized as well as motorized transportation and include boat rental facilities and removable boarding docks where the market demands them. The maintenance and upgrade of existing boat launches should be a high priority. To meet regional demand, any new boat launches should be sited in more developed recreation areas where roadway access is available, demand is high, and potential impacts to sensitive environmental resources is low. Consideration should also be given to winter-time access to allow for ice fishing.

3. Opportunities to promote the recreational use of the canal system by club and student athletes should be encouraged. Efforts to develop or expand rowing facilities, designate no-wake zones, and coordinate temporary stoppages of motorized boat traffic in limited canal segments should be undertaken in partnership with the organizers of regattas, community rowing programs, and educational boat building programs.

4. Fishing activities can be encouraged through improved boating facilities (see above) and dock facilities on shore. Fishing platforms and docks should be encouraged in appropriate town center settings or in proximity to other devel-
Promoting Recreation

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Trail projects that connect to the Canalway Trail should be given priority.

5. The maintenance and upgrade of existing swimming facilities should be a priority. Where sufficient demand exists, new swimming facilities should be sited carefully to meet criteria of acceptable water quality, adequate roadway access, suitable topography to minimize shoreline erosion, protection of sensitive wetland or bank vegetation, separation from boat launch facilities, little or no current, and other safety considerations.

6. The spread of invasive species such as water chestnuts and zebra mussels threatens to alter or curtail recreational activities such as boating, fishing, and swimming in some parts of the canal system. Corridor support for new water-related recreational facilities will seek to improve education about ways to reduce invasive species, such as routine boat maintenance and rinsing to reduce transfer.

**Trail Activities** - include bicycling, walking, in-line skating, horseback riding

1. Trail projects that connect to the Canalway Trail should be given priority over other trail construction. The canal system is the hallmark of the Corridor and every effort to link with it should be encouraged. Links to other key statewide, regional, and local trails, as well as downtown areas, waterfronts, and intermodal hubs such as train and bus stations, should also be encouraged.

2. Trailheads should be constructed at regular intervals on major pedestrian and bicycle trails as a means to increase public access and promote use. Interpretive kiosks with maps, trail information, and historic references should be installed at each trailhead location. Trailhead parking facilities should be located near canal locks, scenic locations, restaurants, or town centers, where they can serve as rest areas or support additional trailside amenities. Trail marking should be used to indicate permitted uses, and include directional signage and mile markers for bicyclists. Markings should also be placed in advance of intersections with other on- or off-road trails, especially the Canalway Trail. Other amenities that should be considered include emergency call boxes and weather shelters, potable water supply, picnic tables, and restrooms.

3. Each historic, natural, and cultural site gains significance and popularity when it is linked with another resource. Priority should be given to trails that access canal-related sites and allow travel through or views of Corridor cultural landscapes (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage), but should not be exclusive of other historic sites in the region (e.g., Revolutionary War sites, Native American sites). Car trips to and from these sites may also be reduced if alternative modes of transportation are available and intermodal connections are provided and well-marked.

4. In general, trails should be designed as multi-use trails except in cases of documented historic conflict. Multiple use trails meet the needs of most users, and limit the environmental impact and financial burden of dual trail construc-
promoting recreation; fewer signs clutter the landscape, and trail monitoring and surveillance are simplified. Trail use conflicts typically occur between pedestrians, bicyclists, and in-line skaters, and between snowmobilers and cross-country skiers in the winter. Trails that adequately address trail user speeds, sight distances, and trail widths can reduce the potential for conflict. In situations where use conflicts are not easily resolved and limited resources preclude the construction of additional trails, the concept of alternate-day zoning could be explored to handle heavy trail use. Under this system, the trails continue to be open to all uses, but are designated for a specific use on a given day.

5. The surface material of a trail often influences its use. Some trails follow old rail beds and have a cinder base; others follow the old towpaths and are surfaced in stone dust or asphalt. Stone dust and dirt paths are more suitable for horses, while road bicycles and in-line skates perform best on asphalt. The trail associations in the state have found that stone dust is the easiest surface to maintain. The Corridor will seek to support trails that are tailored to the desired user group and have the organizational capacity for both trail construction and long-term maintenance. Typically, trails in urban areas should be paved to promote a greater diversity of activities and populations. Trails in rural (exurban) areas should be stone dust for multi-purpose use (bicycle, horse, foot), ease of maintenance, and initial cost reduction. Lighting should be considered for safety and to appeal to evening uses, and designed to minimize light pollution of the night sky.

6. Individual regional and community trail planning and management efforts should seek to cooperate on use regulations and enforcement, publishing and distribution of maps, and installation of consistent signage throughout the Corridor’s trail networks.

**Off-Trail Activities** – include hiking, camping, bird watching, hunting, and trapping

1. With the goal of creating a network of camping facilities in the Corridor, campsite construction should be prioritized where gaps exist along the Canalway Trail and other known multi-day outing routes. Campsites should be designed to accommodate multiple types of recreational activities. Modeled after the Canal Corporation’s campsites along the Canalway Trail, campsites should include areas for tents, potable water, picnic tables, grills, and toilets (back-country camp sites not included), as well as put-ins for non-motorized boats.

2. Construction of additional hiking trails should be focused on linking existing trails to one another within the Corridor and to recreational facilities and established trail networks outside the Corridor. Extensive trail networks appeal to the multi-day visitor as well as residents seeking a variety of hiking options.

3. Facilities to enhance bird watching should be designed to minimize interference with the quality of the wildlife habitat. Where recreational trails, drives, and other facilities already exist, careful landscape design can serve to attract more birds by providing a diversity of habitat including fields, dense shrub-
bery, and wetland plantings. In more sensitive environments, boardwalks, trails, viewing platforms, and parking, if carefully sited, can provide limited access that enhances the experience. Special consideration should be given to prime sites on the north-south flyway, such as the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, both to protect the natural habitat and to allow for limited access and birdwatching. Interpretive signage and active programming can provide information about the variety of species, the importance of habitat, and threats to the ecosystem, including the activities of humans, dogs, and horses, and the various unintended consequences.

4. Hunting activities can be promoted through the preservation of large tracts of inter-connected wildlife habitat, especially undeveloped back woods and marsh areas where there is limited human activity. Hunting proximate to the canal system, an area of active public use, should be discouraged. Cooperative agreements with private landowners allow public access for hunting and other recreational purposes.

**Winter Activities** – include cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, ice skating, ice fishing, and snowmobiling

1. Regional working groups should be convened to address the dual use of trails by snowmobiles and cross-country skiers. In order to attract snowmobilers, adequate trail mileage must be available. As such, neighboring towns need to work together in the trail use decision-making process to address the snowmobiling issue. Involvement in trail use decisions by those affected is the best course of action for achieving a positive outcome.

2. Ice skating may be possible on portions of the canal if cooperative agreements can be arranged between the Canal Corporation and local municipalities and interest groups. The Canal Corporation’s concerns related to winter-time maintenance must be addressed, and may require creating a shallow ice sheet in the prism and installing barriers to prevent the ice from reaching lock structures. Access into the canal prism must also be addressed.
OVERVIEW

Two hundred years since its construction was first proposed, and fully a century after its commercial and economic preeminence was largely overtaken by other transportation modes, the Erie Canal today retains genuine national significance. More than a triumph of engineering and construction, more than an engine of development and prosperity, more than a monument to political will and power, the Erie Canal endures as an idea. The Erie Canal, and the New York State Canal System of which it is the centerpiece, stand as powerful symbols of American determination, ingenuity, and capability, and of the commitment to geographical, economic, social, and cultural integration that fundamentally informs the national character. At the same time, settlement subsequent to the construction of the canals posed great hardships to pre-existing Native American society – an indelible part of the national story.

Throughout the Corridor, powerful physical resources provide a perfect setting for engaging visitors in considering compelling stories and themes. These include natural features of geography and topography that dramatically illustrate both the original need for the canals and the obstacles that the system’s designers and builders faced; cultural features, including living canal communities and the folkways and other artistic expressions they sustain; historical features, primarily historical landscapes, that offer tangible evidence of the system’s evolution dating back to its earliest stages; and contemporary features, including the active operations and facilities of the Barge Canal. Indeed, one of the most compelling aspects of the Corridor for visitors is that its signature resource – the canal system – provides a living link not only across distance but through time, a splendid symbol of evolution and adaptation to change.
Linking the 234 municipalities, the more than 200 years of canal-related history, and the countless resources of this large region requires a multi-disciplinary effort. Interpretation is needed to engage and inform diverse audiences and provide a contextual “umbrella” connecting local stories to a larger sense of shared history. Education is needed to deepen and broaden understanding and develop constituencies for preservation and conservation. Wayfinding is needed to facilitate the arrival, orientation, and movement of people in order to maximize opportunities for exposure to resources in their historic and natural settings. Taken together, these efforts can build a unifying identity for the Corridor, and a level of recognition among both visitors and residents that they are participants in a unique and continuing living history.

From an interpretive, educational, and orientation perspective, the overarching goal of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is to enable a vibrant, engaging, dynamic, and satisfying user experience across the entire length of the Corridor. Future visitors to the region should encounter evidence of this effort at every turn. As a 21st century effort, interpretation of the Corridor story and orientation to its vast area and wide range of resources must make use of modern technology as well as traditional publications and “on the ground” exhibits and programs. Today’s diverse and mobile visitors increasingly rely on the internet to learn about potential destinations and plan trips, make spontaneous decisions about itineraries, and make use of cellphones and portable computers with wireless internet access as well as the networked resources available at some rest stops, museums, libraries and visitor centers.

Significantly, many of the obstacles confronting efforts to improve interpretation and orientation in the Corridor are also among the Corridor’s most engaging qualities: the wide array of interrelated interpretive subjects represented across the region; the broad range of independent but conceptually connected features and resources; strong regional and local identities and a tendency toward local focus; a great diversity of settings along hundreds of miles of navigable waterways; a highly porous transportation network with many access points and modes of travel; and a variety of existing interpretive assets and media of widely varying character, style, quality, and effectiveness.

To succeed, the Commission and its partners must transform these obstacles into opportunities, integrating the region’s geographical, political, economic, and cultural complexity into the valuable asset that it is truly capable of becoming. Historical linkages among Corridor sites and communities will be restored through the presentation of interconnected “Corridor-wide” themes and storylines at locations throughout the Corridor, using a variety of media and methodologies appropriate to each setting. The national significance of the canals will serve as a kind of melody line, while individual local and regional stories will provide vital harmonies and counterpoint. At the same time, enhanced access, wayfinding, and signage both to and within the Corridor will increase the visibility of heritage resources and build an identifiable image for use in marketing the Corridor, thereby increasing visitation and stimulating local and regional economic development.
GOALS

The interpretation and orientation goal for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is that current and future generations of residents and visitors will appreciate and support the preservation of the Corridor’s heritage. Five objectives have been identified as milestones toward this goal:

**Develop a Corridor-wide interpretive framework that is broadly applicable and addresses not only the system’s rich past but its present and future as well**

Corridor interpretation and education should seek to communicate with contemporary audiences in ways which highlight the relevance of the canal system’s history to their lives. Interpretation should not merely inform visitors about events of the past but engage them in active consideration of the legacies of those events and their meaning today. It should factually address the effects of the canals on Native Americans, as well as their continuing contributions to Corridor lifeways.

**Integrate individual communities and heritage sites with each other and into the larger Corridor story**

For visitors, one of the most important effects of the creation of the National Heritage Corridor will be a conceptual “reintegration” of the canals and their associated communities to form a clear and comprehensible whole. This will require an effort to provide a consistent and cohesive visitor experience across the entire Corridor, including strategically placed signage that will foster recognition, awareness, pride, and support among both residents and visitors.

**Improve the impact and effectiveness of locally and regionally sponsored educational and interpretive programs, facilities and materials, festivals and events across the entire Corridor**

Given the wide variety in subject, scope, and quality of ongoing local and regional interpretive and educational efforts within the Corridor, priority will be placed on supporting, improving, and integrating existing interpretive resources across the region, and on identifying and addressing any critical gaps in existing interpretive facilities. For both existing and new facilities, emphasis should be placed on facilitating direct contact with authentic Corridor resources.

**Strengthen understanding and appreciation of the Corridor’s heritage and importance within and beyond the region’s boundary, among residents and visitors alike**

New interpretive and educational activities within the Canalway Corridor will highlight the diversity of the region’s offerings while introducing clarity and consistency. A range of strategies and methodologies will be employed to help raise the profile of the Corridor not only in upstate New York but in other locations outside of the Corridor that affected, or were affected by, the development and operation of the canal system.
**CONTEXT**

Far too few people today, even including some who live along or nearby canal routes, are fully aware of the rich and complex history of New York’s canals or truly appreciate its impact on their lives. But virtually all Americans know the Erie Canal by name and have at least some awareness of its historic importance. This presents the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor with a great opportunity. Where once the canal was an internationally recognized attraction that offered access to popular scenic destinations (the Hudson Valley, Niagara Falls) and great cities (Albany, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo), today it represents the region’s pride in its past and its hope for the future. All across upstate New York, citizens have dedicated themselves to preserving and restoring the canals and their legacy, nurturing a kind of canal renaissance that holds out the promise of renewed vitality for the region.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor exists to support and extend this existing momentum and harness this movement’s energy to revitalize the region’s public image and reinstate the Erie Canal and the New York State Canal System to their rightful place as American icons. As a national initiative, the Corridor is uniquely positioned to reestablish the vital sense of physical and conceptual connectivity that the Erie Canal once provided between the nation’s Atlantic Coast and its Midwestern heartland, and among the communities along the canal system’s routes. This effort will build upon work completed in several prior planning efforts.

All of the interpretive and wayfinding plans described in this section are generally well-conceived and well-executed, and all offer valuable insights into the range of interpretive possibilities within the Corridor. Because of their geographic or topical focus, these plans do not encompass the breadth of the proposed thematic framework for the National Heritage Corridor (see Heritage Development Guidelines section, page 6.17). Together, however, they represent a great deal of research and careful investigation into the Corridor story. Therefore, there is no need to pursue development of additional comprehensive plans. Rather, emphasis should be placed on integrating and rationalizing the contents of existing studies and reports, and highlighting and responding to areas of discontinuity, redundancy, or missing information.

As discussed below, coordination strategies will need to be tailored for each existing plan based on its emphasis and current level of implementation. The goal of this effort is to add a Corridor “overlay” to existing or planned interpretive and wayfinding developments, acknowledging their partnership with and inclusion in the Corridor. The Corridor will also seek ways to integrate its proposed interpretive and wayfinding frameworks and graphic identity into planned local and regional developments.

**THE ERIE CANALWAY: A SPECIAL RESOURCE STUDY OF THE NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM (1998)**

This National Park Service report lays the groundwork for the creation of the Corridor and for major portions of this Preservation and Management Plan. It
provides a concise and cogent analysis of the canal system’s significance at both a regional and national level, and proposes a set of core interpretive themes that seeks to place the stories of the canals within a broad historical context. The analysis and themes in the special resource study have been updated and expanded in this Plan (see Chapter 2, National Significance and Historical Context).

NEW YORK STATE CANAL RECREATIONWAY PLAN (1995)

Although intended primarily as an analysis of the potential for adaptive reuse of the existing (operating) canal system for recreational purposes, this plan incorporates a comprehensive interpretive framework organized into seven major subjects and applied across 15 “thematic canal regions” (see Appendix 5). The themes identified in the Recreationway Plan – transportation, commerce and industry, the natural environment, cultural heritage, architecture, recreation, and military history – are subsumed within the National Heritage Corridor’s proposed interpretive framework (see Heritage Development Guidelines section, page 6.17). While the thematic canal regions do not contribute to an understanding of the Corridor as an entity greater than the sum of its parts, the suggested subjects for local interpretive emphasis will be useful to communities seeking to implement the proposed Corridor-wide interpretive framework and should be updated according to the guidelines in this Preservation and Management Plan.

Other than the efforts of the Canal Corporation (see below), minimal implementation of the kind of interpretation proposed in this plan has thus far been undertaken. However, some municipalities and organizations may be proceeding independently with interpretive development based on the plan’s thematic distribution. Corridor interpretive and wayfinding planners and designers should coordinate with those cities and villages designated as Recreationway gateways, harbors, and service ports to ensure that interpretive elements developed for those locations incorporate both the local identity and information as well as a Corridor identity and broader, connective Corridor-wide themes.

UNLOCKING THE LEGEND: NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM INTERIM INTERPRETIVE PLAN (2002)

This study, commissioned by the New York State Canal Corporation after consideration of the Recreationway Plan, describes a comprehensive framework of interpretive themes (see Appendix 5) and stories across the canal system and includes some preliminary suggestions for appropriate media and methodologies. Interpretive themes are cross-referenced with actual historic, cultural and natural resources, suggesting a potential thematic distribution of interpretive content along the canal system. While the interpretive themes differ slightly from those outlined in this chapter, there are no fundamental conflicts and many opportunities for collaboration.

To date, implementation of the Canal Corporation’s plan has included a number of kiosks at dockside and along the Erie Canalway Trail, as well as low-profile wayside exhibits and wayfinding signage for the trail itself. Additional kiosks are scheduled to be installed at locks and along the trail over the next
few years. Many of these sites will also be prime locations for orientation to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and introduction to Corridor-wide themes. Planners developing new interpretive elements for the Corridor should review these existing resources and coordinate content and messages between the two systems.

UNLOCKING THE LEGEND: NEW YORK STATE CANAL SYSTEM SIGNAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES (1999)

Implementation of the Canal Corporation’s Interpretive Plan (see above) is proceeding based on the design directions in these guidelines, which represent an important effort to establish a clear, cohesive “identity” for signage and interpretive graphics along the canals. The resulting wayfinding elements, combined with the Canal Corporation’s signature blue, yellow and red color scheme for lock machinery, railings and vessels, visually tie together many of the historic and recreational resources of the canal system. New interpretive elements for the National Heritage Corridor, including the graphic identity (see Interpretation Demonstration Projects section, page 6.39), will be carefully designed to complement the Canal Corporation’s guidelines.

NEW YORK STATE COASTAL RESOURCES INTERPRETIVE PROGRAM (NYSCRIP)

This program, developed in 2003 by the Canal Corporation and the New York State Department of State, sets forth themes and design standards for interpretive signage to heighten awareness of the environmental, social, and economic value of New York’s coastal and inland waterways resources. Funding to enable communities to implement NYSCRIP is available through the Environmental Protection Fund. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor will take an active role in future waterfront interpretive planning by Corridor communities interested in working with NYSCRIP.

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY / HUDSON RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The Greenway Act of 1991 created two organizations to facilitate the development of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving the Hudson River Valley’s scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making. The Greenway Council, a state agency, works with local and county governments to enhance local land use planning and create a voluntary regional planning compact for the Hudson River Valley. The Greenway Conservancy, a public benefit corporation, works with local governments, organizations, and individuals to establish a Hudson River Valley Trail system, promote the Hudson River Valley as a single tourism destination area, and assist in the preservation of agriculture, and, with the Council, works with communities to strengthen state agency cooperation with local governments. The Greenway is the management entity of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, created in 1996 to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nationally significant cultural and natural resources of the valley for the benefit
of the nation. The Greenway works in partnership with the National Park Service to promote the national heritage area management plan themes of Freedom & Dignity, Nature & Culture, and Corridor of Commerce, and is currently working with the New York State Department of Transportation on new wayfinding signage. The national heritage area overlaps with the Corridor in the Albany region, providing an opportunity for coordinated interpretive and orientation planning.

NEW YORK STATE HERITAGE AREA SYSTEM

The Mohawk Valley and Western Erie Canal State Heritage Corridors offer a regional resource with many interpretive materials and sites. In addition, eight Heritage Areas, formerly known as Urban Cultural Parks, interpret themes of regional significance within the Corridor. All incorporate state-funded, locally operated visitor centers. The Albany, Buffalo Theatre District, Hudson-Mohawk (RiverSpark), Rochester High Falls, Schenectady, Seneca Falls, Syracuse, and Whitehall Heritage Areas provide a local focus on topics that generally fit within the proposed interpretive framework for the Corridor, including transportation, defense, business and capital, labor and industry, reform movements, culture, and the natural environment (see Appendix 2 for details).

MOHAWK VALLEY HERITAGE CORRIDOR INTERPRETIVE PLAN (1998)

This plan, developed in conjunction with a management plan, includes proposed interpretive themes for the Mohawk Valley State Heritage Corridor, specific story suggestions, signage and exhibit design directions, and implementation guidelines and recommendations. This study offers a model for other regions within the National Heritage Corridor. The state heritage corridor has begun to deploy “branded” interpretive components, including wayfinding signage, a regional map, and exhibits at visitor centers and other locations. Planners developing new interpretive elements for the Corridor will coordinate content and messages with these existing resources.

WESTERN ERIE CANAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN (2005)

This document establishes priorities for the state heritage corridor and calls for the development of an interpretive plan to link regional themes to existing and new interpretive facilities, including independently planned visitor centers. The plan acknowledges the National Heritage Corridor as a potential partner in this effort, along with the National Park Service, Canal Corporation, and others. The National Heritage Corridor will take an active role in future partnership opportunities in interpretive planning for the state heritage corridor.

LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE CORRIDOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Designated an All-American Road – among the best of the nation’s scenic byways – Lakes to Locks Passage was created by merging the Champlain Canal Byway and the Champlain Trail (along Lake Champlain) for community revitalization and tourism development. The Byway’s corridor management plan, developed through a partnership of the public and private stewards of the his-
toric, natural, cultural, recreational and working landscape resources along the Champlain Canal, Upper Hudson River, Lake George and Lake Champlain regions, provides a structure to unify the communities along the interconnected waterway. The *Lakes to Locks Passage Visitor Information and Interpretation Plan* includes an extensive thematic framework (see Appendix 5) that has been used for interpretive media and trip planning aids. Plans are underway for the construction of several visitor centers and interpretive facilities throughout the region. Planners focus on partnering with other initiatives, such as the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, to coordinate content and messages.

**NEW YORK STATE SCENIC BYWAYS**

Scenic byways are roadway corridors designated at either the state or the national level as a means of linking archaeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and/or scenic qualities in a linear region. The program is a collaborative effort between communities and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYS DOT) at the state level, and with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) at the federal level. Scenic byways share many of the goals of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, including preservation and enhancement of resources, public participation, development of tourism, marketing and promotion, and interpretation of resources. The required corridor management plan for a scenic byway addresses issues such as roles and responsibilities, implementation actions, and identification of funding sources.

New York features many scenic byways, several of them directly linked to or relevant to the Corridor (see map on page 6.16, and Appendix 4). Four New York State Scenic Byways already contribute to the wayfinding system within the Corridor: Lakes to Locks Passage, connecting Waterford to Rouses Point at the northern end of Lake Champlain; the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, connecting Waterford to Schenectady; Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, encircling Cayuga Lake; and the Revolutionary Trail, connecting Albany to Rome. Lakes to Locks Passage, an All-American Road, and the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, a National Scenic Byway, have also been designated as “America’s Byways” by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Other New York State Scenic Byways provide connections between the Corridor and other significant tourism regions, including the Adirondack Trail, Southern Adirondack Byway, Central Adirondack Trail, Black River Trail, and Scenic Route 90. The Seaway Trail, a 454-mile National and New York State Scenic Byway along the Lake Erie, Niagara River, Lake Ontario, and St. Lawrence River waterfronts, parallels much of the Corridor.

**NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY**

The Thruway Authority manages upstate New York’s primary interstate highway (I-90), which runs within or parallel to the Corridor between Albany and Buffalo. Serving approximately 230 million vehicles traveling more than 8 billion miles each year, the Thruway is the key entry point and circulation route for a majority of Corridor visitors. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor has begun to work with the Thruway Authority on developing a Corridor signage program.
The Thruway Authority maintains tourism information centers at several travel plazas and interchanges along the system, some of them staffed year-round or seasonally, where travelers can obtain directional assistance and literature about destinations and attractions in New York. The Canal Society of New York State is sponsoring a project to construct the Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park at Lock 52 of the Enlarged Erie Canal on the south side of the Thruway, just west of Interchange 40. The Canal Society is coordinating with the Thruway Authority, Federal Highway Administration, State Historic Preservation Office, NYS Department of Transportation, and Cayuga County to develop a rest area that will allow eastbound Thruway motorists to park and learn about the Erie Canal’s history and influence on the economic development of New York.

NEW YORK STATE MANUAL OF UNIFORM TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES

In New York, signage on all highways open to public travel, regardless of type or the governmental agency having jurisdiction, is governed by 17 NYCRR Chapter V (commonly known as the NYS Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, or MUTCD) of the Department of Transportation’s regulations. These regulations vary slightly from the federal MUTCD guidelines. The MUTCD includes provisions for bicycle and snowmobile route markers, historic site markers, and destination markers for standard destinations including various transportation modes/stations, recreation modes/trails, colleges and universities, vineyards, orchards, libraries, lighthouses, fisheries, post offices, and “places where maple products are made.” The vineyard destination markers have been used in combination with specially designed logos for four individual “wine trails” in the Finger Lakes region to guide visitors to wineries along state highways.

Existing Thruway informational signage includes the highly recognizable “brown” signs for Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and the abandoned Enlarged Erie Canal lock at Port Byron; boundary signs (white on green) for counties and state tourism regions; canal and river crossing signs (white on green) for the Cayuga-Seneca Canal/Seneca River and the Erie Canal/Mohawk River; exit signs (white on green) identifying municipalities, airports, and major attractions such as Women’s Rights National Historical Park; and tourism direction signs (white on blue) near exits for food/lodging and gas (including Thruway service areas) as well as attractions, such as ski areas, within a limited radius of exits and meeting minimum visitation standards.

RESOURCE ANALYSIS

The challenges to implementation of an effective, integrated interpretive framework across the Corridor reflect the qualities and features that make the region so very attractive as an interpretive destination. The Corridor’s complexity promises variety, authenticity, and the potential for unexpected or serendipitous discoveries, but it also has the capacity to confuse visitors. This section considers the Corridor’s heterogeneous character in terms of both its challenges and its potential.
The Corridor is unusually diverse. It incorporates a wide variety of landscapes: dense urban centers, suburban sprawl, towns and villages, industrial zones, agricultural lands, and undeveloped wild and scenic areas. Economic conditions vary significantly across the Corridor, including pockets of great affluence as well as regions confronting serious economic challenges: unemployment and underemployment, loss of traditional industrial and/or agricultural bases, and overall infrastructure decline. Local heritage resources and the focus of historic interpretation in different Corridor communities and regions address different periods and events from before the arrival of Europeans to the 20th century economic and technological development of New York. Even the waterways themselves change dramatically from canal to canal, and from section to section within individual canals, ranging from robust commercial operations and recreational activities along the fully functioning 20th century Barge Canal to derelict, unwatered portions of the towpath-era canals.

The canals and their influences – past and present, economic, technological, political, social, and cultural – are the single unifying factor which serves to integrate the Corridor’s numerous disparate parts. The concept of connection – that provides the backbone for interpretation and orientation throughout the Corridor. As the Corridor’s national significance stems directly from its place in history as a route for commerce and ideas, it is only fitting that its future rests on its ability to maximize its role as a cohesive transportation system that effectively articulates connections between transit modes and heritage resources. Interpretation, education, and wayfinding are essential tools for accomplishing this objective.

MULTIFACETED INTERPRETIVE CONTENT

The Corridor’s resources offer access to a remarkable range of interpretive content. Major subjects that are well supported by Corridor resources include engineering and technological invention and innovation; economic and labor history; commerce and industry; pre-canal indigenous cultures; immigration, Euro-American settlement and community development; cultural conflict; disruption and persistence of Native American culture; religious, political, and social reform movements; geography, geology, hydrology, and topography; and cultural history, literature, music, art, and folkways. Within this overall framework, numerous more narrowly defined interpretive directions present themselves. To cite just a few of the most prominent:

- The role of the canals, in each of their successive iterations, as both beneficiaries and drivers of dramatic advances in science and engineering
- The emergence of the United States as a global economic, political, and military power
- The rise of New York City and New York State as regional and national economic powers
- The economic impacts of the canals on adjacent and nearby communities as a force shaping the development of agriculture and industry, commerce and trade
- The striking proliferation of social and religious movements that either formed or matured within the canal system’s sphere of influence, including, among others, women’s rights, abolition, utopianism, and prohibition
• The effect of the canals, both as a source of employment and a transportation corridor, on patterns of settlement, westward migration, and economic growth in New York and the American West
• The canals as a cultural phenomenon, symbols of pride and achievement that attracted worldwide attention and drew visitors to New York, including the practical linkages they provided between established destinations (Hudson River Valley, Niagara Falls, etc.)
• Canal heritage and folkways, especially during the mid- to late-19th century when the system’s influence was at its height
• The rise and fall of canals as a fulcrum in the development of commercial transportation systems, from horse and wagon to railroads, trucks and automobiles, and air transport
• Architectural history, as evidenced by a wide array of residential buildings, sacred spaces, and commercial and industrial buildings
• Natural history and environmental biology, related in particular to the rivers, lakes and wetlands associated with the canals
• Human activities in the region before the canal era, including the Iroquois Confederacy and pre-Haudenosaunee settlement, travel, and trade
• The dispossession and continuing role of Native Americans in the region
• European exploration, trade, and settlement of the region
• Military history, especially the Seven Years (French & Indian) War, American Revolution, and War of 1812

Some of these topics can be more effectively interpreted at certain locations within the Corridor than others, based upon the availability of specific tangible or intellectual resources at those sites. Topics relating specifically to pre-canal era events probably should be addressed primarily in the context of their relationship to the canals. There are landmarks of pre-canal occupancies and events throughout the Corridor. The interpretive challenge is to help visitors understand how what happened before the construction of the first canals in the 1790s relates to the central theme of the Corridor: the canal system and its role in shaping America.

In addition, numerous specific sites and stories within the Corridor are directly or at least tangentially related to the canal and are worthy of interpretive attention at the local or regional scale. The interpretive coordination effort that will be undertaken by the Corridor in partnership with local or regional historical societies or commissions on a site-by-site or region-by-region basis will seek to document and organize all of these stories as they relate to the canals. Interpretation in the Corridor will always refer back to the canals, and their origins and impacts, to provide a cohesive interpretive fabric.

DIVERSITY OF INTERPRETIVE ASSETS

The Corridor contains a striking array of existing interpretive assets devoted to presenting a variety of ideas and information – much but not all of it canal-related – to area residents as well as visiting tourists. These vary widely not only in character and style but in their quality and effectiveness. They include signs, interpretive graphics panels, and kiosks of varying vintage and design, sponsored by numerous entities; local and regional visitor centers and tourism facili-

Future interpretive development will be devoted primarily to enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and interconnectedness of existing interpretation and education efforts. The Corridor will seek to identify specific situations in which additional interpretive investment is warranted.
ties; New York State Heritage Area interpretive centers (formerly Urban Cultural Parks); nature centers; historic houses; historic sites; history museums; local historical societies; and even a number of fine arts museums and galleries whose collections and exhibitions directly relate to Corridor themes.

The diversity of interpretive assets can be beneficial, as they should vary to respond to the most effective means of communicating in a given situation. The development of additional interpretive media facilities will need to be relevant to what works best. Visitor centers and centralized interpretive facilities can have a galvanizing effect, especially in areas with a high concentration of historic, cultural, or natural resources and visitor traffic. However, functional interpretive facilities and media already exist within the Corridor and virtually all of these could be substantially improved to better serve visitors. In general, future interpretive development in the Corridor will be devoted primarily to enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and interconnectedness of existing interpretation and education efforts. The Corridor will seek to identify specific situations in which additional interpretive investment is warranted – either through the development of new media or facilities or through the improvement of existing offerings – in order to create a consistent and coherent visitor experience across the entire Corridor. At both existing and new facilities, emphasis will be placed on exposing visitors to the wealth of opportunities throughout the Corridor, and facilitating direct contact with authentic resources.

**COMPLEXITY OF ACCESS**

While the canal systems at one time were the lifeblood of the region, uniting disparate villages, towns, and regions, today the Corridor relies on roadway systems as the primary means of access. Multiple opportunities exist to access the Corridor by roadway, including the New York State Thruway, state routes, and local roads. The entire Corridor is well served by interstate highways, with no point further than 30 miles from a limited access highway and most areas considerably closer.

Roadway networks are more complex than the linear canals, with multiple routes that parallel the canals and many lateral connectors that create a highly permeable region. Roads, trails, and points of arrival via airports, train and bus stations, and ferry terminals require clarity of information and direction. The relationship between these multiple transportation access modes and heritage resources may not be readily apparent to visitors. The key to improving access and orientation in the Corridor will be to capitalize on existing transportation resources, enhance connections between them, and facilitate intermodal transfers, especially between primary (auto, air, train) and recreational (bicycle, boat) modes. For example, allowing bicycles on Amtrak trains would increase visitation to and use of the Canalway Trail by travelers from the Northeast region.

Corridor gateways include airport access via the international and national airports in Albany, Syracuse, Buffalo, and Rochester, and regional airports in Ithaca and other smaller cities; passenger rail access to major cities and canal harbors along the Erie and Champlain Canals via Amtrak; limited-stop rail service between New York City and Albany/Rensselaer; inter-city bus service between
major cities provided by Greyhound and Empire Trailways; and commuter bus service for smaller cities. Additionally, a high-speed ferry service between Rochester and Toronto is popular with tourists. Ferry service has also been proposed for Oswego, and Buffalo is planning a cruise ship terminal as part of a major heritage development on the Niagara River.

The multiplicity of opportunities to enter the Corridor and ways to travel through it presents a challenge to planning for interpretation and orientation. A focus on centrally located or concentrated facilities will inevitably serve only a small fraction of any target market. A more effective approach for the Corridor would be to focus on connectivity: between modes of travel, between locations, and between stories.

DIVERSITY OF USERS

Different audiences or user groups within the Corridor have different interpretive and informational interests and needs, but this does not mean that they are mutually exclusive. Local residents who take advantage of the Corridor for purely recreational purposes—jogging, walking, bicycling, boating, fishing, etc.—should be provided with opportunities to learn more about the history or heritage of the region. Indeed, building and sustaining local pride is critical to the Corridor’s success. Interpretation and information developed by the Corridor and its partners should serve the destination tourism audience while also reflecting the concerns of local or regional constituencies.

Corridor users—whether they are local residents, regional visitors, or destination tourists—employ various transportation modes, traveling by automobile, bus, boat, bicycle, and on foot. Many visitors will combine several modes. Each mode of transportation offers a different perspective, enabling visitors to better experience some aspects of the Corridor but preventing them from experiencing others. Different types of transportation should be served by interpretation and orientation methodologies matched to the specific characteristics of each mode of travel, both in terms of the location and distribution of interpretation and orientation components and of their media and messages.

For example, hikers and bicyclists will tend to travel point-to-point, and interpretation and orientation media at the intersections of logical travel segments—such as the trail markers and kiosks that are currently being implemented along the Canalway Trail—can provide information in discrete blocks, and in a predictable sequence. The same can also be said for boaters. The primary gaps in the wayfinding sequence for trail and canal users are at trailheads and dockages where connections to heritage resources, downtowns, and local services may not be readily apparent. By contrast, travel by personal automobile affords unparalleled flexibility, enabling drivers to pick and choose among multiple possible destinations—and creating a significant demand for comprehensive and reliable travel information and guidance. The primary gaps in the wayfinding sequence for auto travelers are signage elements that would:

• announce the presence of the Corridor from the New York State Thruway and the interstates that run parallel to the canal segments;
• identify key highway exits to reach the Corridor or key destinations; and
• orient visitors on the state arterials that provide lateral access between the highways and specific sites within the Corridor.

Independent and highly mobile visitors to the Corridor must be served by a mix of orientation films or exhibits at wayside visitor centers; conventional technologies such as repeat broadcasting stations; and innovative technologies such as internet broadcasts to wireless personal data assistants and cellphones. At the opposite end of the spectrum, scheduled group tours provide an excellent setting for scripted interpretation programs. Regardless of the audience, all interpretive facilities in the Corridor should be universally accessible – both physically and programmatically – with designs enabling the full participation of persons with disabilities and a full spectrum of media to engage people of all ages and educational levels.

**DISCONTINUITY AND LOCAL FOCUS**

Although all navigable portions of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century Barge Canal remain intact, remnants of towpath-era canals are scattered piecemeal across the state. A few of these canal fragments are easily recognizable for what they are; most are not. Only a tiny fraction are identified or interpreted, and an even smaller number have water in their channels. In response to this fragmentation, the Corridor’s interpretive strategies and methodologies must serve to clearly and consistently identify canal waterways wherever and in whatever form they appear; to distinguish between the different eras of canal construction; and to help visitors locate themselves geographically and temporally within a canal context.

Many resources are identified at the local level but are not identified as part of a larger system of historic, cultural, recreational, and natural resources. Signage programs carried out by the Canal Corporation, the Mohawk Valley State Heritage Corridor, the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and the individual National Park Service units help orient and focus visitors, but the multiple identities and overlapping geographies make it difficult to recognize the larger stories that connect them. Some individual municipalities or districts celebrate their connection to the canals through interpretive media, but this practice is inconsistent, and the cumulative impact of the canal system is not evident to the visitor or the resident.

In the eastern portion of the Corridor, scenic byways help orient visitors along the linear travel paths between Albany and Rome and between Albany and Whitehall, although the development and impact of the canal system is only one of many other stories interpreted. Signage conventions have already been established for trailblazing along these routes, which pass through multiple jurisdictions and connect many different heritage resources both physically and conceptually. In the central and western Corridor, with the exception of the Canalway Trail, there are no well-marked wayfinding routes to facilitate the experience of travel along the canals.

Most significantly, public awareness of the canal system as a continuous, connected, unifying entity needs to be enhanced. Civic involvement with the canals and other heritage resources occurs almost exclusively at a local or regional
level, and even recreational use of the waterways tends to be localized. Yet the vital role in linking the Atlantic Coast to the Midwest, and all the communities along the way, is precisely what made the Erie and its lateral canals so important in the first place.

**GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT**

If the canal system’s original promoters set themselves the daunting task of convincing their dubious peers and a skeptical public that construction of the new waterway was desirable or even feasible, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor today faces a similar challenge: overcoming some jurisdictional fragmentation, disunity, and inertia to restore the image of the canal system and immediate region as an intact and unified whole. To address this, the National Heritage Corridor will seek to take the lead in encouraging and supporting regional thinking and planning and, whenever possible, regional implementation for interpretation and orientation.

The concept of interconnection that formed the very core of DeWitt Clinton’s original vision for the Erie Canal provides a versatile model for developing Corridor-wide interpretation and orientation. Historically, of course, the canal system served as a tangible link between geographically separated places. It connected the communities along its banks, the Atlantic Coast to the Great Lakes and beyond, the American heartland to Europe, etc. The canals served as carriers of information and ideas, both literally, in their practical role as conduits of “data,” and more abstractly as a liberalizing influence that may have helped to prepare the ground for the flowering of social movements in the region. And through the simple fact of their continued existence and their on-going transformation from commercial and industrial to primarily recreational waterways, the canals increasingly serve to reconnect modern visitors and residents with their own history and heritage.

This concept – of the canal system as a mechanism for linking the stories and sites within the canal region, and for introducing those stories and sites to the wider world – should be the basis for making decisions about interpretive development in the Corridor. Three components serve as the foundation for implementation of interpretive improvements at the local or regional level: an interpretive framework that represents the Corridor’s national significance and its geographic and thematic scope; guidelines for the composition and deployment of various Corridor-wide interpretive media; and parameters for a Corridor-wide graphic identity and wayfinding system.

These guidelines will be further refined and adapted as they are applied “on the ground” in individual communities or regions through cooperation with a variety of partners. This process will include additional measures such as inventories of existing interpretive resources; research on specific underrepresented topics such as the impacts of the canals on Native American life; identification of local audiences, educational opportunities, and planning concerns; public outreach and civic engagement; and ongoing formal consultation with Native American tribes (see Chapter 9, Implementation); and coordination with the
stewards of related heritage resources outside Corridor boundaries, such as the abandoned lateral canals.

GUIDELINES FOR A CORRIDOR-WIDE INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

The following outline suggests a range of interpretive themes and topics that can be applied and effectively explored at various locations within the Corridor, providing focal points for informing visitors about the canals’ significance at a national and even international level. This list is largely based on the outcomes of prior interpretive planning efforts and is meant to be representative rather than exhaustive. Additional interpretive opportunities abound within the Corridor, and while many of these may have more local or regional than national significance, their presence contributes to the interpretive richness that is one of the region’s greatest attributes.

Core Theme: American Identity

The overarching interpretive theme of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is the emergence of an American national identity. Begun at a time when the War of 1812 was still a present memory and the connections of many of the new nation’s citizens to their British and European homelands remained strong, the construction of the Erie Canal and its laterals encompassed much of what we now consider to be fundamentally American: charismatic leadership, boldness and risk-taking, territorial expansionism, technological prowess, economic and industrial power, and social interchange. At the same time, the canals brought abuses – the dispossession and forced acculturation of Native Americans, the exploitation of immigrant labor – that Americans have since sought to mend. The Erie Canal served as the loom on which these separate threads were woven into a truly American fabric.

Subtheme: Progress and Power

The New York State Canal System, from its initial conception through its construction and subsequent improvement and reconfiguration, is a profound expression of political will and economic power. As an exercise in state government-sponsored development and an investment in the future, and as an instrument of social change (intended and unintended), the system stands as one of the most significant public works projects in the history of the United States.

- **Topic: Clinton’s Ditch** – Personality, political power, and vision
- **Topic: Nation and State** – Jefferson, Madison, Clinton, and the battle to build the Erie Canal
- **Topic: Disruption and Dislocation** – Effects of canal construction and subsequent settlement on Native American societies
- **Topic: Engine of Prosperity** – Economic impacts of canal construction and operation
- **Topic: Model Project** – Other canal initiatives influenced by the Erie’s success

Examples of locations expressing this subtheme include Albany, where the political fight over the canal was waged; Rome, location of the strategic Oneida
Carry, where the first shovelfuls were dug for the Erie Canal and where the first coordinated strike by Revolutionary troops against Native American settlements originated; and Watkins Glen, northern terminus of the Chemung Canal, point of departure to canal systems in Pennsylvania, and example of the far-reaching impacts of the Erie Canal.

Subtheme: Connections and Communication

Construction of the Erie Canal created a physical and commercial connection between the U.S. Atlantic coast and the nation’s Midwest and West that had impacts far beyond its intended effects. The canal formed the first truly effective means of inland interstate commerce, directly enabling the growth of Midwestern agriculture and the emergence of New York City and New York State as national and international economic powers.

- **Topic: Waves of Grain** – The canals’ impact on agricultural development and marketing
- **Topic: Urban Incubator** – Effects of the canals on growth of adjacent cities and towns
- **Topic: Empire State** – Role of the canals in New York State’s development as a center of national wealth
- **Topic: World Port** – Role of the canals in New York City’s development as the nation’s dominant port
- **Topic: New Frontiers** – The canals’ impact as a gateway to the Midwest and Great Lakes that helped bind the Union during the Civil War

Examples of locations expressing this subtheme include Buffalo, transfer point for west-bound settlers and east-bound harvests; the Finger Lakes region, where agricultural landscapes established by the earliest canal trade still dominate; and Schenectady, a village transformed into a city by the passage of railroad travelers seeking to avoid the multiple lockages between the Erie Canal and the Hudson River.

Subtheme: Invention and Innovation

The design, engineering, construction and operation of the canals represent an object lesson in the broad impacts of intensive technological development. At the time of its construction, the Erie Canal was longer and more complex than any other in the world. While its design and engineering were based on existing models, the determination to do whatever was necessary to “float over mountains” and link New York City to the Great Lakes demanded both technological and organizational innovations. The effects of this unprecedented concentration of creativity can still be felt today.

- **Topic: American Achievement** – Construction of the canals as a symbol of technological capability
- **Topic: Floating Over Mountains** – Geology, hydrology, and the design and engineering of the canal system’s routes, channels, locks, water supply, etc.
- **Topic: Innovation and Adaptation** – Role of the canals as a training and proving ground for America’s first generation of engineers; transfer of European canal technology and adaptation to American conditions
- **Topic: Integrated Systems** – Management and operation of canals
• **Topic: Evolution and Adaptation** – Three stages of canal development and continuing “reinvention” of 20th century Barge Canal

Examples of locations expressing this subtheme include **Lockport**, where the contrasting 19th and 20th century solutions to climbing the Niagara Escarpment still stand side by side; **Montezuma**, where changing attitudes about natural heritage led the federal government to rehabilitate and preserve a swamp that had been drained at great cost in conjunction with construction of the Erie Canal; and **Cohoes**, where the long sequence of locks between the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers tested the engineers who established a training program at nearby Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

**Subtheme: Unity and Diversity**

The canal system opened upstate New York and the American Midwest to the Atlantic Coast, and to the world. It carried and connected people and ideas, serving as an agent of social and cultural change that was as vital and influential in its time as the internet is today. Immigrant laborers who came to build and operate the canals introduced an extraordinary expansion of cultural diversity, transforming the character of cities, towns, and countryside along its route. The canals connected hitherto isolated and independent communities and created entirely new ones, forging a common context and a sense of shared identity. They served as both portal and destination for international visitors, whose passage through and perceptions of the canal system informed and influenced the culture of the region, and ultimately, of the nation as a whole.

• **Topic: Indigenous Presence** – Continuing roles of Native Americans in development of the region
• **Topic: Braided Streams** – Immigration, social and cultural interaction, ethnic diversity
• **Topic: Fertile Ground** – Role of canals in creating a hospitable context for social reform and religious movements
• **Topic: Popular Culture** – Image of canals as expressed in literature, music, art, theater
• **Topic: Folkways and Folklore** – The living heritage of the canals
• **Topic: New World Wonder** – Canals as national and international tourist attraction/destination

Examples of locations expressing this subtheme include **Volney**, where the integrated Bristol Hill Church served as a key gathering place for the abolitionist movement; **Schuylerville**, where the centrality of water to day-to-day life has been evident from the time of the Mohawk to the colonial era to the modern day; and **Seneca Falls**, home of the women’s rights movement.

**GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETIVE PRODUCTS AND PLANNING**

A determined visitor who seeks out existing interpretive offerings within the Corridor today can actually learn a great deal about the region’s history, but there is a tremendous amount of redundancy and no guarantee that the whole Corridor story will be presented – even in the simplest summary form – at any individual destination. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and its
partners can help to correct this condition by developing and disseminating a visually and thematically consistent system of high-quality interpretive components, from websites and publications to signs and exhibits: a “kit of parts” with a Corridor-wide perspective, featuring the Corridor’s interpretive identity, that can be deployed in various ways across the entire region.

From preliminary pre-visit planning materials to roadside signage and site interpretation, a consistent message consistently presented will dramatically improve the quality of the visitor experience. In all locations, the Corridor will seek to work closely with the owners and managers of existing heritage resources, as well as local and regional institutions, agencies, and civic organizations already working to improve the quality of interpretation and wayfinding. In many situations, the Corridor will seek to provide technical assistance – guidance on interpretive content, advice on program, exhibition, or signage planning and design, consultation on grant-writing and other fundraising strategies – in conjunction with elements from the “kit of parts.”

These interpretive media components will be planned and designed to complement existing materials, but not, for the most part, to replace them. Thus, an additional Corridor presence at a facility will serve to ensure that the total story of the canals is fully and accurately told, but not at the expense of a distinctive local or regional focus and flavor to the existing media. From the visitor’s perspective, a visible Corridor presence will help to weave potentially disparate individual locations into a recognizable overall pattern, and also offer reassurance that the information they’re getting is accurate and complete. To that end, the Corridor’s provision of technical assistance and support for interpretive media components may prioritize heritage resources or communities that agree to uphold certain standards of access and quality through a voluntary certification program or Canalway Community Partner program (see Chapter 9, Implementation).

Some components of the “kit of parts” are foundation-level products – items with a basic orientation function and broad scope that probably cannot be fully addressed by any of the Corridor’s partners and will be implemented by the Corridor. Foundation-level products include a documentary, an orientation film, a comprehensive and regularly updated web-based and/or printed guide to the Corridor, and an introductory fold-out brochure and map. The Corridor will also seek to take the lead in developing new interpretive technologies. Products that will be produced in partnership with other interpretive entities in the Corridor include multimedia programs; site-specific publications, wayside exhibits and kiosks; curriculum materials; and appropriate exhibits and interpretive centers. Many of these products should also have internet components, accessible from a single “gateway” site for visitors – an online Corridor-wide library of interpretive materials and information.

By creating some of the components in this “kit of parts” all at once and in relatively large volumes, the Corridor and its partners can gain significant cost efficiencies which will help to make the individual elements more affordable for constituent communities or institutions. Implementing the system in a consistent way across the Corridor will establish a sense of continuity and presence.
An additional Corridor presence at a facility will serve to ensure that the total story of the canals is fully and accurately told, but not at the expense of a distinctive local or regional focus and flavor.

that will enhance the interpretive effectiveness of local efforts. The following guidelines for the composition and deployment of Corridor interpretive media are suggested to achieve this goal:

**Travel and Orientation Materials**

Conventional wisdom suggests that informational components provide practical visit planning support for visitors, while interpretation seeks to engage the visitor in a deeper exploration of relevant questions, topics or themes. However, the line between these two categories is difficult to draw with any real precision, and visitors seldom make any such distinction. For this reason, it is critical that some level of interpretation be incorporated into travel and orientation products. Products such as the magazine *Mohawk Valley Heritage* and the *I Love NY Visitors Guide to Seneca County* are excellent examples of this strategy. To the degree that the Corridor’s identity comes to be associated with accuracy, reliability, and consistency of interpretation, this will only serve to enhance its effectiveness for marketing, public information, and other related purposes. More information on ways to insert the Corridor presence and message into promotional materials and wayfinding signage can be found in Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*, and below under *Guidelines for a Corridor Graphic Identity* (see page 6.28) and *Guidelines for a Wayfinding Framework* (see page 6.33).

**National Heritage Corridor Brief**

The National Heritage Corridor would benefit from a basic explanatory text including the Corridor graphic identity; two or three paragraphs explaining the National Heritage Corridor concept and approach; a website reference; and a thumbnail map of the Corridor, New York, adjacent states, and Canada, with major cities indicated. This “boilerplate” material would be inserted into partners’ new interpretive products as a highlighted box that would be supplemented by more detailed content where space allows. Appearing in a corner of new interpretive products and informational media throughout the Corridor, this “Corridor brief” would be a minimal way to increase understanding and appreciation of the Corridor in outlets where more extensive interpretive partnerships are not feasible.

**Informational Media**

Brochures, maps, guidebooks, site bulletins, and seasonal magazines or newspapers – and their online counterparts – should introduce core interpretive ideas while also providing practical trip planning, orientation, and navigation information, and extending the Corridor “brand” (see Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*). The National Heritage Corridor should seek a presence, ranging from the abovementioned Corridor brief to feature articles, in all publications that provide reliable information. The Corridor should have its own foundation-level publication, an introductory fold-out brochure and map in the “Unigrid” style of the National Park Service, as well as a brief Corridor history guide including an overview of the three primary phases of canal development. A comprehensive guide to the Corridor, updated annually, would best
be produced by a private or nonprofit partner dedicated to tourism promotion. Informational media should be distributed through partner organizations, and possibly also through retail tourism outlets in the region and beyond.

The comprehensive guide would be a complex and expensive undertaking, requiring extensive research and coordination with local and regional guides throughout the Corridor. A printed guide would be most helpful to automobile travelers and residents or business travelers making unplanned excursions. A web-based guide would have greater reach – especially to international travelers – and be much easier to update and use, with interactive maps and bulletins on changing information such as canal system openings and closings. Whether printed or web-based, the guide should relate heritage resources and, especially, cities and villages to the larger story of the canal system, with reference to the themes in the proposed Corridor-wide interpretive framework (page 6.18).

**Interpretive Panels and Graphics**

Simple small-scale graphic panels, installed in local museums, historic sites, and historical societies, would present a “total Corridor” message to complement locally developed interpretation at each site. A diverse typology of panel designs should be developed to reflect and coordinate with the range of possible installation venues throughout the Corridor. At a minimum, content on these panels should include the abovementioned Corridor brief, locate the site within the National Heritage Corridor, and specifically link the stories of that site with broader Corridor themes as outlined earlier in the proposed interpretive framework.

**Interpretive Waysides or Kiosks**

These freestanding “interpretive hubs” provide more in-depth interpretation of a significant historical site, landmark, or vista. They are most useful alongside resources in isolated locations, such as alongside roadways or at sites or scenic viewsheds in non-settled areas, and in exposed or high-traffic locations, such as rest stops, parks, visitor centers, and malls, where a supply of brochures or other handouts would not meet demand or capture the interest of passersby. Generally, horizontal or “cantilever” wayside panels are more appropriate in isolated or exposed areas where the resource at hand can be viewed over or beyond the panel. Vertical or “poster” wayside panels are more appropriate in high-traffic locations where the sign itself may need to be the main focus of attention.

Waysides are most effective where they interpret a physical resource located within view or nearby; brochures and other media are generally more appropriate for interpreting physical resources not at hand, or historical figures and events. Waysides should incorporate primary source material such as historic documents, photos, or artwork, especially where this can illustrate the contrast between historic and modern conditions at a particular location. Deployment of new interpretive kiosks (multi-paneled shelters) should focus on locations not currently served by any existing interpretation. Where interpretation already exists, the Corridor’s presence should be complementary, supporting and extending the messages already being provided.
Freestanding Interactive Multimedia Stations

“Plug-and-play” web- or computer-based kiosks – such as the U.S. Geological Survey/National Geographic personalized map machines now found in some National Parks and retail stores – should add significant interpretive depth to existing installations and also provide a potential source of revenue. Appropriate installation locations for these units include existing museums and visitor centers, highway travel plazas, airports or ferry/cruise ship terminals, public libraries, and shopping malls within the Corridor, as well as similar venues in selected locations beyond the Corridor (such as New York City) which have particular relevance to the story of the canal system.

Audiovisual and Multimedia Programs

Potential audiences for audio programs (such as radio documentaries), video programs (educational or broadcast), and interactive media include schools and libraries, museums and visitor centers, broadcast media, and community groups. For example, a Corridor-sponsored series of very brief (two minutes) audio documentary programs should be produced and distributed free of charge to local radio stations. The theme of these daily or weekly pieces could be “this day/week in the history of the canals,” with each segment describing a person or event that brings to life some aspect of Corridor heritage. Similarly, CD audio tours focusing on specific sections of the canal system, and describing how the region has changed, could be distributed through educational, interpretive, and tourism outlets. These programs should also be available through a central Corridor interpretive and informational website (see Informational Media, page 6.22).

Documentary and Orientation Films

Given its national significance, scenic beauty, and the integrity of resources ranging from towpath-era canal remnants to folksongs and crafts, the Corridor is overdue for a feature or miniseries-length documentary suitable for public television broadcast and available in multiple languages. In addition, a brief orientation film, introducing viewers to the region, its history and its modern-day attractions, might be a valuable component at a number of venues including visitor centers, New York State Heritage Area centers, museums, libraries, and hotels that supplement their in-room television programming with a local tourism promotion channel. The film could include a short piece on the National Heritage Corridor concept and approach, with the full orientation to be shown at the beginning of public meetings, tourism conventions, and other venues to “prime” the audience for a presentation on or discussion of the Corridor. It is important to note, however, that while the development of long-format audiovisual programs is a worthy goal, it should only be undertaken if a specific demand for such products is identified.

Special Events and Cultural Programming

Cultural programming – performing arts, readings, educational activities, re-enactments, guided tours, festivals, and special events – does more than pre-
serve historic resources; it helps bring historic resources to life. Special events can contribute simultaneously to community identity-building, interpretation of historic resources, and repeat visitation by heritage tourists and others. Cultural programming of particular relevance to celebrating and interpreting the Corridor’s heritage resources include boating events, which bring people to the waterfront, encourage recreational boating, and create public exposure for historic vessels; folk arts and crafts festivals, which help communities understand their past and generate support for preservation of cultural traditions; and sporting events, which take advantage of the Corridor’s wide variety of recreational settings. An annual signature event, such as a long-distance relay, celebrating human athleticism, drawing spectators to the canals, and raising public awareness of the canal system’s historic and modern utility, would be a valuable addition to the Corridor’s existing calendar of events (see Chapter 5, Promoting Recreation). Coordination with the Canal Corporation and other organizations could allow for interpretive programming to accompany the lock-throughs of significant commercial cargoes, historic canal boats, and tall ships.

Curriculum Materials

Activities based on the canals’ historic and natural resources and study plans developed by the National Heritage Corridor or its partners should support New York State curriculum guidelines for 4th, 7th, and 8th grade social studies; 9th grade earth science; 11th grade biology; and 12th grade physics. In addition to serving pedagogical goals, these materials should be designed to increase awareness of the Corridor and appreciation of its resources among this significant audience group. Field trips to the canals should be encouraged, and changes to the canal system over time – including the ongoing effort to balance preservation and new growth – should be incorporated into higher-level curricula. The National Heritage Corridor, its partners, and the New York State Department of Education should identify historical or natural resources in the Corridor with strong interpretive programming and educational value – including documents, records, and artistic expressions as well as physical resources such as architectural sites, canal engineering, and natural and geological phenomena.

New Technologies

Stewards and interpreters of historical resources have traditionally been slow to recognize the cost savings, and the expanded ability to reach larger audiences, associated with new technologies. The National Heritage Corridor Commission should be an “early adopter” of proven methods to expand audiences and sustain their interest. Investments should be made with an eye toward the future. Ten years before this Preservation and Management Plan was prepared, the internet would not have been seen as the indispensable research and promotional tool it is today. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, significant in part because it was a center of rapid change and technological growth nearly two centuries ago, should be a showcase for new methods of producing, transmitting, and displaying interpretive information. By extending the breadth and depth of its existing internet presence, the Corridor can simultaneously provide enhanced trip planning resources for potential visitors; expand the potential audience for Corridor destinations; and offer a “virtual visit” experience.
Cellphones, personal data assistants, and automobile-installed orientation and entertainment systems are increasingly able to receive locally broadcast content, which might be especially helpful in addressing the scale and diversity of the Corridor.

**Traveling Exhibits and Interpretive Programming**

A traveling exhibition program, offering exhibits at several different scales on a variety of canal-related topics, would offer quality interpretation at an affordable cost to smaller localities without the wherewithal to create their own exhibits. Traveling exhibits should be developed in a variety of scales and formats suited to a range of venues. A small-scale traveling exhibit, with display panels designed for easy packing, transporting, and installment, would be a great educational asset for schools, museums, conferences, and events such as canalfests, fairs, and boat shows, accompanied by talks, demonstrations, and question-and-answer sessions by roving interpretive guides employed by the National Heritage Corridor. A larger and more complex exhibition, featuring authentic artifacts, documents, models, and reproductions, to be displayed and transported in specially designed exhibit trailers to venues throughout New York, will also be undertaken by the Corridor Commission and its partners. The National Heritage Corridor will also contribute to the interpretive and educational programming planned for the *Day Peckinpaugh*, a Barge Canal motorship that has been acquired by the New York State Museum, with assistance from the New York State Canal Corporation and Canal Society of New York State, for preservation and adaptive reuse as a floating museum and classroom (see Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage).

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival, the largest annual cultural event in the U.S. capital, is a potential venue for enhanced interpretive programming outside the Corridor. Research-based presentations of contemporary living cultural traditions would broaden the Corridor’s national and international exposure and energize regional tradition bearers and their communities. The National Heritage Corridor will also seek to collaborate with the Smithsonian Institution on other interpretive projects and programs.

**Interpretive Centers**

Visitor centers or interpretive centers can enhance the quality of visitors’ experience of a city or region, providing more intensive exposure to a wider range of resources and themes than many isolated sites. Located where there are higher concentrations of heritage tourists and other target audiences, and integrated into a broader system of “gateways” to the Corridor experience, interpretive centers can help guide a broader audience to stories and sites of particular interest, stimulating deeper understanding and interest in side trips or return visits.

The Corridor is highly porous, with local, regional, and out-of-state visitors approaching diverse sites from multiple directions and points of view. Some may bypass visitor centers by accident, others by choice. History buffs, local residents, and visitors traveling by boat, bicycle, or foot are likely to focus on historic, cultural, and natural resources where they find them – canalside, trailside,
and on the streets of villages and cities. Thus, the vision for the Corridor calls for every existing interpretive site to become a gateway – an opportunity to bring people into the larger story of the Corridor. This Preservation and Management Plan places a strong emphasis on supporting, improving and integrating existing interpretive facilities, while leaving room for efforts to address critical gaps.

Planning for major visitor or interpretive facilities must not divert precious resources from other worthy community or Corridor initiatives. Any proposal to invest substantial resources in such an enterprise should be predicated on evidence that it will yield appropriate rewards in terms of visitor satisfaction and education, and perhaps more importantly, that it will enhance the overall quality of the visitor experience in the Corridor rather than inappropriately concentrating activity in one community or region.

In particular, the National Heritage Corridor should identify the areas of greatest need – such as the absence of a visible interpretive presence for the Corridor along the New York State Thruway, or the relative dearth of existing interpretive media focusing on individuals and ethnic groups – and then explore the potential for developing a facility as a joint venture with public or private partners. For example, the National Park Service’s recently completed Mississippi National River and Recreation Area Visitor Center was developed and designed in collaboration with the Science Museum of Minnesota – which itself has a major exhibition on the river – and is located within the lobby of the museum’s new building on the river in St. Paul. The MNRRA Visitor Center is thus able to take advantage of important synergies with the museum in terms of both interpretive programming and audience development.

Examples of such opportunities in the Corridor include the Buffalo Inner Harbor Project, where new interpretive centers and extensive historic preservation activities factor significantly in the plans for major new mixed-use waterfront development; and the Port Byron Old Erie Canal Heritage Park, where an interpretive center and restored canal structures will be accessible to travelers on the New York State Thruway. These projects offer the potential to bring the Corridor experience to life for a large number of residents and visitors by interpreting key historic resources onsite: remnants of the Commercial Slip in Buffalo, which connected the towpath-era Erie Canal to the Niagara River; and Lock 52 of the Enlarged Erie in Port Byron, alongside a cluster of canal-related structures.

At present there is minimal interpretation in the Corridor of the role and influence of the individuals who envisioned the potential of the canals and had the political, technical, and organizational abilities to see them through to completion. For the most part, existing interpretation similarly overlooks the many immigrant groups whose members provided the labor to build and develop the canals, settled the region’s frontier cities, and created a mix of cultural influences and lifeways that have lasted to the present day. To highlight these special contributions, the Corridor will help to develop an Erie Canalway Hall of Fame. This may be a new facility or an addition to or modification of an existing facility. A site will be selected by the National Heritage Corridor Commission after evaluating proposals from entities willing to operate and maintain the Hall of Fame.
An important objective for the Corridor is to extend awareness and appreciation of its heritage beyond the boundaries of the region. While the traveling exhibit (see page 6.26) and marketing (see Chapter 8, Tourism Development and Marketing) will work toward the fulfillment of this objective, a physical presence such as a permanent exhibit can do more to raise the Corridor’s profile in locations outside upstate New York that were directly affected by the development and operation of the canal system. In addition to addressing the national significance of the canals’ effects, interpretive facilities outside the Corridor can also encourage new audiences to experience the canals in person.

One location stands out for its direct relationship to the significance of the canals and their potential to drive new visitation. New York City represents a singular opportunity to re-establish the historical relationship between the Erie Canal and the city it transformed into the nation’s gateway to the world. Lower Manhattan, home to a great concentration of national commemorative sites and the point of embarkation for many of the immigrants who made their way west via the Erie Canal, is a natural site for an Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor interpretive exhibit. Millions of New York City area residents and visitors would not only benefit from an understanding of the canal system’s role in building the city and the Empire State; they would also learn about the Corridor’s modern-day charms, helping to stimulate among a vast and diverse audience a strong interest in directly experiencing the region’s heritage and recreational opportunities by visiting upstate.

GUIDELINES FOR A CORRIDOR GRAPHIC IDENTITY

A critical challenge facing the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is how to overlay a consistent, cohesive visual identity across the diverse range of resources, destinations, and materials that already exist. The lack of an easily recognizable and consistent Corridor-wide identity is a disincentive to visitation, especially to the kinds of impromptu detours or side trips that tend to extend the stay of visitors. A critical task for the Corridor is to develop a graphic identity for interpretation and orientation throughout the region – a welcoming and recognizable visual clue that signifies both the encompassing presence of the National Heritage Corridor and a reliable standard of quality and national significance – and to sensitively integrate this new identity across the range of sites and destinations that already exist along the canals.

This “overlay” needs to introduce new clarity and consistency of message for visitors and residents, without overwhelming or eroding the distinctive character of the Corridor’s existing offerings. The goal is not to make the Corridor experience uniform; to the contrary, it is important to emphasize the diversity of the Corridor’s offerings while introducing new clarity and consistency of message for visitors, and providing a cohesive character. Individual communities and sites naturally tend to focus on their particular resources. In order to achieve the greatest impact, the Corridor’s graphic identity must:

- act as an “umbrella” encompassing the region’s multifaceted interpretive fabric and visual identities;
• broadcast to residents and visitors the presence of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor as a cohesive entity; and
• highlight the participation of the National Park Service and acknowledge the significance of the National Heritage Corridor designation.

The Corridor graphic identity should connote accuracy and reliability in the minds of visitors, spurring confidence that they can expect a high-quality experience. Thus, in addition to serving as the characteristic design element of Corridor informational, wayfinding, and interpretive components, the graphic identity should also be the primary element of a certification system which would allow the Commission to recognize those preservation and interpretation efforts that meet certain standards of quality, content, and compatibility with the Corridor’s thematic framework and guidelines for interpretive development. Only those initiatives that meet these standards should be promoted and permitted to use the Corridor identity as “certified” Corridor sites or educational programs. As such, the graphic identity would act as a kind of National Heritage Corridor Commission “seal of approval” (see Chapter 9, Implementation).

Design Parameters

A crowded and confusing field of competing logos and symbols, many sharing overlapping graphics, are currently used in a wide variety of interpretive signs, marketing brochures, and other materials by owners, managers, and promoters of the Corridor’s heritage resources and attractions. A study of these marks strongly suggests that the addition of yet another stamp or logo, especially one based on a familiar symbol such as waves or a canalboat, would not advance the Corridor’s unifying mission. The graphic identity must symbolize the Corridor’s historical and contemporary aspects, while precluding confusion with existing visual identities in the region.

The National Park Service arrowhead is seen by many Corridor residents and stakeholders of its heritage resources as an important mark of credibility and familiarity that should be incorporated into the Corridor’s public image and graphic identity. The NPS “Unigrid” system is also seen as a highly recognizable and flexible feature that establishes consistency and authority when the characteristic “black band” is placed across the top of a variety of NPS signage and materials. Together, the arrowhead and the black band would lend considerable weight to the Corridor’s graphic identity.

The name “Erie Canal” is universally recognized, unlike the terms Clinton’s Ditch, Old Erie Canal, Enlarged Canal, Barge Canal, or New York State Canal System. Similarly, residents use local appellations such as the Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals and the Mohawk River. While these terms are part of the historic story of the Corridor, and are necessary to identify individual elements of the canals, the variety of terms is confusing. A single unifying name is necessary to orient residents toward a Corridor-wide vision, and to provide casual or prospective visitors with a clear understanding of what they can expect to see. The historically and geographically specific terms are better explained after the visitor arrives.
Because it contains the words “Erie Canal,” the term “Erie Canalway” can be used to capture both the historical and contemporary associations that give the Corridor its unique quality. The word “way” also contains numerous connotations that are applicable to the Corridor: a path or a link, as in the Thruway, a byway or a trailway; a direction, as in the way West; a means of entry or discovery, as in a gateway; a style or manner of life, as in folkways. A typographic image or wordmark using color, style, formation, and juxtaposition can be used to give meaning and impact to the letterforms of the words “Erie Canalway,” thus establishing the central visual motif of the graphic identity.

The addition of other shapes or forms to the words “Erie Canalway” tends to render them less legible and diminish their importance. The use of landscape or nature images, which is common to other state and National Heritage Areas, would be limited to one or two images and therefore fail to reflect the Canalway Corridor’s tremendous diversity of settings. The use of abstract geometric elements such as wavy lines would diminish the boldness and simplicity of the text. Arranging the words in a circle around an object, such as a boat, would be too similar to existing symbols such as the Canal Corporation packet boat logo and would be incompatible with the National Park Service arrowhead.

**Graphic Identity Concept**

While the illustrative examples provided in this Preservation and Management Plan convey the concept of a proposed Corridor graphic identity and its applications, further work is needed to develop a final graphic standard. The concept that is presented in this Plan consists of three basic elements: a wordmark representing the words “Erie Canalway,” and the NPS arrowhead, on a horizontal black band. This combination of elements is simple, clear, distinct from existing Corridor visual identities, and highly flexible in its form of application. It could be integrated with new and existing directional and interpretive signage, brochures, and other marketing materials without the need to substantially reconfigure them.

The wordmark uses the words “Erie Canalway” with descending baselines for “Erie,” “Canal,” and “way” in order to visually allude to the lock system. The graphic use of strong, inviting letterforms to illustrate the motion of a boat passing through the changing water elevations is intended to be both legible and memorable. The wordmark implies movement and structure without specifying a particular place or activity within the Corridor. A mental pause is created when reading the wordmark, inviting reflection on its significance and connotations. The word “Erie” is highlighted.

The arrowhead resides where it is most effective, isolated from other words or symbols at the rightmost end of the black band. In most applications, a fourth element, the descriptor “National Heritage Corridor,” would be added adjacent to the wordmark. The descriptor can be arranged in a variety of ways alongside the wordmark. Adding an image such as a canalboat to this graphic identity would reduce its clarity and introduce gimmicky or cute qualities not representative of the Corridor concept. When appropriate, the names or logos of
Corridor partners could be added beneath the graphic identity, right-justified below the arrowhead.

Application

Flexibility in overall size and the length of the black band make the graphic identity concept applicable to multiple situations. The strong banner quality allows it to literally sit above, or across the top, of signage and other symbols used by partner organizations, fulfilling the “umbrella” requirement. However, different applications may require different configurations. A basic “family” of shapes for the Corridor’s graphic identity includes the standard banner, a compressed banner for use where visibility from a distance is a requirement, and a square format that could be used as a logo where appropriate.

For some applications, further modifications would be necessary to address issues of context and scale and the requirements of the New York State Department of Transportation. Basic usage standards are provided in Chapter 9, Implementation, and will have to be elaborated. The Canal Corporation’s March 1999 publication “Unlocking the Legend: New York State Canal System Signage Design Guidelines” represents the scope of work necessary to guide implementation of an effective graphic identity system.

Actual implementation of the graphic identity system would occur in phases and through cooperation with partners throughout the Corridor. The highest priority should be the gaps in the proposed wayfinding system. Over time the signage system and the Corridor graphic identity will be incorporated into new heritage facilities or facility improvements, and eventually into the replacement and updating of existing signs.
Telling the Story: Interpretation and Orientation
GUIDELINES FOR A CORRIDOR-WIDE WAYFINDING FRAMEWORK

Although there are many successful wayfinding and signage programs in the region (see Resource Analysis section, page 6.9), a consistent and unified wayfinding identity for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is lacking. Key gaps in information and directional signage exist in the sequence of traveling from the region’s gateways and highways to its local heritage resources, particularly waterfronts and downtown areas in smaller communities. A Corridor-wide wayfinding framework is proposed to allow visitors to the region to clearly identify the Corridor as a place and to find key destinations within the Corridor. The wayfinding system will orient people using varying modes of transportation, including trains, boats, automobiles, and bicycles, as they move from gateway locations or regional highways to arterial and local roadways, districts, parking areas, and foot and bicycle trails.

An overall concern for any wayfinding system is to provide enough information to orient and direct the visitor without contributing to visual clutter in the landscape, taking into consideration points of arrival, key destinations, and desired paths of travel. In order to maximize the effectiveness of wayfinding, a system of signs must establish a recognizable identity with consistent design elements such as colors, typeface, and logos. The signage systems must also anticipate the sequence of arrival from transit hubs and interstate highway systems, to state and local roads, to town and village centers, to parking locations, to pedestrian level environments. At each point along this sequence, the level of information on signs must vary to address the audience and the mode of travel.

The proposed wayfinding framework for the Corridor is intended to establish a visually consistent and recognizable signage system that can work in many different situations and respond to the regulatory requirements of the New York State Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The following categories of signage provide the necessary hierarchy of information for the traveler:

1. Corridor Boundary
2. Tourist Direction
3. Scenic Byway
4. City/Town/Village Gateway
5. District Identity
6. Site Identification
7. Interpretive
8. Historic Marker
9. Trail Marker

The primary gap in existing wayfinding for the Corridor exists at the highway level, where boundary and tourist direction signs are essential to announce the “umbrella” presence of the Corridor and orient visitors to specific destinations. Major gaps in wayfinding along the length of the Corridor exist along the central and western Erie Canal and along the Oswego Canal, where new scenic byways or their equivalent could orient visitors along continuous state routes.
A diagrammatic illustration shows the Corridor graphic identity concept employed across the top or bottom of most of the signs in the proposed hierarchy. For highway boundary and exit signs, the graphic identity is employed as a logo within the standard sign format; here, the logo conveys a purely visual cue, while additional text is reproduced in a size and format legible to the highway driver. On the directional signs, the graphic identity is similarly incorporated as a visual cue into the logos of heritage sites or tourist oriented businesses. The graphic identity is not incorporated into the scenic byway signs, which utilize a system of logos established by DOT (see page 6.37).

In many cases, localized signage (City/Town/Village Gateways to Trail Markers) already exists; these vary by jurisdiction and by site, with a wide range of styles, typefaces, color, and logos. While this variety emphasizes the uniqueness of these places, an overall Corridor identity needs to be appended in order to orient visitors and convey the rich connections between sites. As new signs are added to the system, strategies will be developed to incorporate the Corridor graphic identity without detracting from the primary message about the municipality, site, or trail. The design, implementation, and maintenance of all signs on public roadways will need to be approved by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) according to the MUTCD guidelines.

Two additional diagrammatic illustrations on pages 6.35-6.36 show how the proposed wayfinding framework might be applied in two general situations: near a municipality, and near a more isolated heritage site. The symbols used in these illustrations are provided as a symbolic key and are not intended to be incorporated into the actual wayfinding signs indicated.

**Corridor Boundary**

Boundary signs should announce entry into the Corridor at key access points. Boundary signs are crucial for providing a sense of arrival and establishing the Corridor presence and graphic identity for visitors so that they can anticipate additional signage at lower levels in the hierarchy. Since Interstate 87 from Albany to Glen Falls (60 miles) and the Thruway (Interstate 90) from Albany to Buffalo (290 miles) travel within the Corridor for most of their length, only a limited number of boundary signs are necessary.

**Tourist Direction**

Tourist Direction signs indicating the availability of gas, food, lodging, camping, and attractions near upcoming exits are provided on interstate and controlled-access highways. Followup signs with directional arrows are also placed on exit ramps. The Corridor will seek to increase the amount of appropriate attractions signage for historic, cultural, and natural sites and heritage tourism services such as tour boats. Where logos are permitted, the Corridor will seek to incorporate its graphic identity into the logos of attractions on these tourist direction signs according to DOT regulations.
**Scenic Byways**

The New York State Scenic Byways program complements the Corridor’s wayfinding system by helping formalize touring routes along parts of the Corridor. Because scenic byways are established programs, signage conventions have already been established for trailblazing along these routes, which pass through multiple jurisdictions. These physical linkages connect many different heritage resources. The priority for the Corridor is to establish additional routes that complement existing scenic byways. Four New York State Scenic Byways already contribute to the wayfinding system within the Corridor, marked under guidelines established by DOT: Lakes to Locks Passage, connecting Waterford to Rouses Point at the northern end of Lake Champlain; the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, connecting Waterford to Schenectady; Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway, encircling Cayuga Lake; and the Revolutionary Trail, connecting Albany to Rome.

Distinctive signage can be placed along federal and state designated scenic byways to celebrate the unique character of a route. These signs are placed at major turns and as periodic reinforcements at intervals of five miles along the route. Over time, literature describing these existing routes can be expanded to recognize the Corridor and to incorporate additional interpretive information regarding the larger story of the region.

New scenic byways would facilitate wayfinding along the 19th and 20th century Erie, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals. As locally guided programs, new byways could be implemented in coordinated segments highlighting the particular history and character of a region, while tying back to the larger story and identity of the Corridor. The names and distinguishing logos of these individual byways, while conforming to DOT standards, could feature common elements related to the Corridor name and graphic identity. Candidates for new Corridor byways may include:

- State Route 5, which follows the general alignment of the towpath-era canal between Oneida and Camillus and then connects on to Seneca Falls;
- State Route 31, which closely parallels the route of the Erie Canal from Clyde to Lockport, continues on to Niagara Falls in the west, and follows the route of the 20th century Barge Canal from Clyde to Oneida in the east; and
- State Route 48, which parallels the Oswego Canal.

From a visitor’s point of view, increased signage and promotion of new and existing byways would be an improvement over the current system of state route numbers. Byways may also follow county and local roads to provide better access to recreational, cultural, scenic, or natural resources.

**City / Town / Village Gateway**

In order to celebrate their collaboration with the National Heritage Corridor, cities, towns, and villages participating in the Canalway Community Partner Program (see Chapter 9, Implementation) may choose to add the Corridor visual identity to existing or new gateway signs. Since the signs are implemented at the local level, they vary by locale, with unique typefaces, colors, and shapes as
appropriate. Existing signs typically feature the name of the municipality and other pertinent information such as settlement date, logos, or other images. If desired, municipalities could choose to add the Corridor graphic identity as a banner above or below their existing signs using the consistent black band, Corridor name, and NPS arrowhead. The Corridor graphic identity may be applied to municipal boundary signs within highway rights-of-way pursuant to approval by DOT.

**District Identity**

District identity signs are found in many cities and larger towns to orient visitors to key areas. These signs are unique to the locale and probably do not need to have the Corridor visual identity added to them, although it may be desirable if the district is canal related.

**Site Identification**

Specific destinations within the Corridor are identified with signs that announce entry and provide the name of the site and other site specific information. Where these signs already exist, such as at Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site, Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum, and Canal Corporation locks and facilities, the Corridor graphic identity could be added as a banner to make the connection between the specific site and the larger Corridor story and identity. Over time, new signs may be developed and could incorporate the Corridor graphic identity and the specific site name.

**Interpretive**

Interpretive signs orient visitors to specific features at the site and provide information about the history, natural environment, or cultural context. At this point in their journey, visitors are on foot and can absorb more detailed information through narrative text, maps, photos, and diagrams. Similar to site identification signs, the Corridor graphic identity could be added to existing signs and incorporated into the design of new signage together with recognition of other partners. More information on the composition and deployment of interpretive signage is provided under *Interpretive Products and Planning* (page 6.20).

**Historic Markers**

Historic markers are primarily commemorative, with narrative text in formats that vary by locale and jurisdiction. Due to the style and nature of these existing signs, no identity for the Corridor is necessary.

**Trail Markers**

The Corridor features a number of bicycle, towpath, and other walking trails (see Chapter 5, *Promoting Recreation*). Trail markers vary by locale but typically feature a logo and a directional arrow. The recommended strategy for markers not designated as official traffic control devices is to add the Corridor graphic identity to these signs as a banner to reinforce the Corridor identity.
INTERPRETATION DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

Much of the support that will be provided to communities by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners over the coming years will be in the form of technical assistance: workshops, referrals, expert consultation, and other “how-to” help with the preparation of local and regional visions, plans, projects, and applications for grants and other financial assistance (see Chapter 9, Implementation). The demonstration projects serve as models for the Commission’s future work among the 234 municipalities along the current and historic alignments of the New York State Canal System.

The interpretation projects are intended to illustrate how the thematic framework described in the Heritage Development Guidelines section of this chapter could be applied, in two locations, to support an engaging, dynamic, and consistent experience of the Corridor’s resources for both residents and visitors, building awareness and understanding of the Corridor’s past, current, and future link to American identity. The Village of Schuylerville/Town of Saratoga and the communities along the Old Erie Canal between Camillus and Rome were selected in order to learn from the valuable resources and important stories they encompass; to address a variety of characteristics and geographic locations; and to acknowledge the high level of commitment and interest shown by the communities’ responses to information surveys distributed by the Commission in 2004.

Each project was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, the community identified and contacted key stakeholders, established a meeting location, gathered materials and information on local interpretation conditions and priorities, and selected a particular set of interpretive challenges or theme to be investigated. In the second phase, the community hosted a workshop, facilitated by the consultant team, to discuss challenges and opportunities, identify priorities, partnerships, and potential funding sources, and propose a framework for action. In the third phase, the consultants returned to the community to present their analysis and documentation of the workshop and recommended next steps. That analysis is presented here.

SCHUYLERVILLE/OLD SARATOGA COMMUNITIES

The Schuylerville/Old Saratoga community is located on the Champlain Canal. The region is rural, with minimal interpretive development of canal-related stories, but it features several vital assets, including adjacency to well-established tourist destinations in nearby Saratoga Springs; existing name recognition as a Colonial Era and Revolutionary War heritage tourism destination; and exceptional historic canal-related resources. In addition, the community has a demonstrated record of visionary planning activities, cooperative efforts with other regional or statewide organizations, and solid local support for the development of interpretive and heritage tourism opportunities. At issue here is the complexity of interpreting multiple, overlapping stories and histories and incorporating the themes of several overlapping designated historical regions, including Lakes to Locks Passage; the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corri-
Project Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

(This analysis is the output of the consultant team’s observations and experience and not the output of a group of stakeholders’ collective thoughts.)

Strengths:
- Authentic interpretive context and resources
- Adjacencies with existing well developed tourism destinations
- Rich mix of interpretive themes and storylines, including both canal and non-canal topics
- Rare co-alignment of waterways: river, 20th century Barge Canal, and towpath-era canal route
- Easy accessibility to and between interpretive sites
- Solid, well organized local support structure

Weaknesses:
- Lack of well developed interpretation or visitor experiences at many destinations
- Absence of gateway orientation and visit planning components
- Low levels of public awareness of canal themes, relative to the region’s better established Colonial Era/Revolutionary War identity

Opportunities:
- Develop Old Saratoga region as a cohesive destination
- Leverage proximity of established tourist sites
• Develop individual sites and facilities to provide complete, varied and complementary experiences
• Engage visitors in multi-day, multi-site experiences
• Capitalize on authenticity of historic resources

Threats:
• Most sites and facilities operating without adequate staff or financial resources
• Competition for both resources and visitation from higher profile sites
• Potential for visitor disappointment if quality of experience does not meet expectations
• Organizational complexity complicates communications and inhibits coordinated development

Vision 2017: At the Canal: A Visitor’s Narrative

“July 4, 2017 – The 200th anniversary of the start of construction on the Erie Canal marks the first weekend of Canal Month, an increasingly popular annual event along the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Across the length of the Corridor, from Lake Erie to Lake Champlain, communities large and small and countless institutions and organizations are working together to celebrate the rich history and heritage of the New York State Canal System, and to share canal stories, resources, and experiences with visitors from around the world.

Like many visitors, we take advantage of high quality orientation and visit planning information available over the internet. We learn how past and present are interwoven along modern and historic canal routes, and we discover a destination near the eastern end of the Corridor that seems especially appealing. Schuylerville and Old Saratoga offer just the right mix of activities and sights for our family: Revolutionary War history, intriguing social and cultural history, recreational opportunities, and natural and environmental resources, as well as examples of 19th and 20th century canals.

With a destination in mind, we create our own customized itineraries and interpretive background packages. Historical information about Schuylerville and Old Saratoga, site profiles and hours of operation, and even driving directions are combined in a unified, user-friendly format. An initial package printed out at home is supplemented by more detailed materials accessed through high visibility kiosks at New York State Thruway rest stops and destinations such as the Saratoga Performing Arts Center and the Saratoga Racetrack.

At the Old Saratoga Orientation Center in Schuylerville, we are introduced to the area’s many resources and interpretive themes. Working together at the touchable interactive regional model, we set our priorities for the week.

From our base in Schuylerville, we take day trips throughout the area. At each destination we discover something special, but National Heritage Corridor interpretive materials at many sites remind us of how the story of the canal...
Telling the Story: Interpretation and Orientation

Mock-up of interpretive signage for Fish Creek near Schuylerville

intersects with local and regional themes. Before we came here we didn’t realize how interconnected our experience would be.

Each day as we drive from site to site, we learn more about the remarkable history of our surroundings through lively and informative cellphone based interpretive programs. Beautiful orchards and lush horse farms illustrate the region’s agricultural heritage, and diverse historical destinations abound. Plugging the phone into our car’s audio system brings us an aural tapestry of historic sounds, recreations and dramatizations, and expert explanations – all keyed to specific points along the way. Consistent and recognizable highway signage helps us find our way from site to site and lets us know when we’ve arrived.

At Lock 5 on the modern Champlain Canal, we are awed by the passage of commercial and pleasure boat traffic through the working locks. Interpretive exhibits, jointly sponsored by the National Heritage Corridor and the New York State Canal Corporation, describe the history and operations of this remarkable site.

From Lock 5 we walk to a trailhead at the northern end of the towpath trail in Schuyler’s Canal Park. The walk takes us just a short distance on the ground, but nearly 200 years back in time. The quiet, shaded towpath trail runs along the bank of the partially excavated and restored Old Champlain Canal, and at every turn a fascinating bit of history is revealed. An interpretive wayside graphic panel along the trail explains how the Barge Canal bypassed the town, undermining the local economy. It also reminds us that this is a National Heritage Corridor site. The mix of nature and history here is truly inspiring, and we return every morning for a constitutional before we begin our day of sightseeing.

On a hillside outside Schuylerville, we pause at an interpretive overlook. From here, the region’s braided stories are all on view: the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal; the Wilcox House, an important Underground Railroad site;
Fish Creek, a natural area with an early canal connection; and the site where retreating British soldiers set up their artillery during the battle of Saratoga.

At the General Schuyler House in Schuylerville, we enjoy a guided tour of the home that the Revolutionary War hero built after his original mansion had been burned by the British in 1777. We are surprised to discover that this site, too, has important connections to the story of New York’s canals. Schuyler himself first proposed building canals during the 18th century, and a half-century later his grandson was instrumental in the construction of the Champlain Canal. Outside the historic house, an Old Saratoga/National Heritage Corridor kiosk provides orientation and interpretive context.”

Summary Recommendations

In order to achieve this vision of an enhanced visitor experience, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners will need to collaborate on a sustained program of coordinated improvements. Over the short- to medium-term, the following actions are recommended:

• Develop and disseminate cohesive visit planning materials for the Schuylerville/Old Saratoga region which incorporate the National Heritage Corridor designation and graphic identity.

• Provide professional technical assistance to Schuylerville/Old Saratoga sites and communities to enhance their ability to coordinate their separate offerings, and to improve the overall quality of interpretation throughout the region.

• Develop and install a coordinated system of interpretive signage at Schuylerville/Old Saratoga sites, jointly sponsored by National Heritage Corridor, Old Saratoga on the Hudson, Lakes to Locks Passage, Mohawk Valley (State) Heritage Corridor, and Heritage New York, to encourage cross-visitation.

• Develop a long term strategic interpretive plan for the region, which outlines a framework for development over a 5- to 10-year period, identifying specific goals and objectives, action items, and annual implementation benchmarks.

OLD ERIE COMMUNITIES

The Old Erie communities and destinations included in this demonstration project are located along the route of the towpath-era Erie Canal, extending roughly from Camillus to Rome. These communities – the Town of Camillus, the Village of Canastota, the Village of Chittenango and Town of Sullivan, the Town of DeWitt, the Town of Geddes, the Town of Manlius, and the City of Syracuse – feature a number of established interpretive destinations with canal-related missions or themes. Communities within the region have already initiated a cooperative effort to plan and develop their heritage tourism attractions through the informally organized Partners Along the Canal Towpath (PACT) group. At issue here is the risk of repetition and confusion for visitors when several com-
munities all share a similar story. Although the story of the Old Erie Canal can be interpreted in multiple ways, coordination is needed to ensure a continuous, quality community experience.

*Project Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis*

(This analysis is the output of the consultant team’s observations and experience and not the output of a group of stakeholders’ collective thoughts.)

**Strengths:**
- Authentic interpretive context and resources
- Alignment along Old Erie Canal route
- Existing infrastructure of facilities and established destinations
- Easy accessibility to and between sites
- Varied character and interpretive focus of existing sites

**Weaknesses:**
- Lack of clear linkages or connective experience among sites
- Limited visibility of “canal” features
- Absence of gateway orientation and visit planning components
- Fluctuating quality of interpretive experiences

**Opportunities:**
- Develop overall region as a cohesive destination
- Develop individual sites and facilities to provide complementary experiences
- Engage visitors in multi-day, multi-site experiences
- Capitalize on authenticity of historic resources

Old Erie Canal in Canastota
Threats:
- Most sites and facilities operating without adequate staff or financial resources
- Competition among sites for resources and visitation
- Potential for visitor disappointment if experience quality does not meet expectations
- Organizational complexity complicates communications and inhibits coordinated development

*Vision 2017: At the Canal: A Visitor’s Narrative*

“July 4, 2017 – The 200th anniversary of the start of construction on the Erie Canal marks the first weekend of Canal Month, an increasingly popular annual event along the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Across the length of the Corridor, from Lake Erie to Lake Champlain, communities large and small and countless institutions and organizations are working together to celebrate the rich history and heritage of the New York State Canal System, and to share canal stories, resources, and experiences with visitors from around the world.

Many visitors take advantage of high quality orientation and visit planning information available over the internet. We learn how past and present are interwoven along modern and historic canal routes, and we discover a cluster of communities in the central part of the Corridor that seem an especially appealing destination. The Old Erie region offers a wide variety of activities and sights within easy driving – or even bicycling – distance of one another.
With a destination in mind, we can create our own customized itineraries and interpretive background packages. Historical information about Old Erie communities, location profiles and hours of operation, and driving directions are combined in a unified, user-friendly format. An initial package printed out at home is supplemented by more detailed materials accessed through high visibility kiosks at New York State Thruway rest stops and destinations such as DestiNY USA in Syracuse.

At the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse we enjoy the mix of art and interpretive exhibits, and we get a good grounding on “canal basics.” We also appreciate the Old Erie regional overview exhibit which shows us all the different sites in this region and explains how they are connected. Working together at the touchable interactive regional model, we set our priorities for the week.

From our base in Syracuse we take day trips throughout the area. At each destination we discover something special, but National Heritage Corridor interpretive materials remind us of how each different site connects to the larger story of the canals, showing us how the pieces of the puzzle all fit together.

As we drive from site to site, we learn more about the remarkable history of our surroundings through lively and informative cellphone based interpretive programs. Plugging the phone into our car’s audio system brings us an aural tapestry of historic sounds, recreations and dramatizations, and expert explanations – all keyed to specific points along the way. Consistent and recognizable highway signage helps us find our way from site to site and lets us know when we’ve arrived.
The Old Erie Canal State Historic Park, which extends for nearly 40 miles along the towpath-era canal route from DeWitt to Rome, connects a wealth of interpretive and scenic destinations in the Old Erie region with walking, hiking, and bicycling trails. New York State Parks interpretive signage is complemented by Corridor signage, and distinctively designed “mile markers” locate our position within the park and along the entire length of the canal.

At Camillus Erie Canal Park, near the historic village of Camillus, we spend an afternoon hiking along the old canal towpath, now a recreational trail. An interpretive wayside graphic panel along the trail provides plenty of food for thought. It also reminds us that this is a National Heritage Corridor site. We visit the impressive Nine Mile Creek aqueduct and take a brief boat ride on the canal. The Sims Store Museum brings the canal era to life and includes a well-defined National Heritage Corridor component that connects this place to the rest of the canal system and helps us decide what we want to do next.

We spend a wonderful day at the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum, where construction of an actual canalboat replica is underway. Standing next to this impressive work in progress on the drydock, we can finally comprehend the scale of these handsome utilitarian vessels. Like the canals themselves, they are a testament to the principle that form follows function. Inside the adjacent museum we find exhibits that explain the boatbuilding process.

The Village of Canastota, arrayed along the banks of the old canal, provides a perfect complement to our day at Chittenango Landing. Here we come to appreciate the economic forces that prompted the construction of the Erie Canal, and the enormous impact of the canals on New York’s agriculture and industries.
All along Canal Street, historical markers evoke the presence of once thriving enterprises and interpret historic buildings that still stand.

An interpretive kiosk in Canastota brings the bigger picture vividly into focus. Suddenly it becomes clear how a tiny town in central New York played a small but vital role in the formation of a distinctive American identity. Ripples of influence extend across the length of the canals themselves and beyond, linking the region and the state to the world.

On our last day we visit the recreated Erie Canal Village, in Rome. This is the only location along the canal where we can ride in a boat pulled by draft horses or mules walking ahead of us on the towpath. It’s an almost magical experience, slow and stately, that weaves together all of the separate interpretive threads we’ve encountered during our visit to the Old Erie region. We’re already making plans to return next year for a bicycle tour on the Erie Canalway Trail.”

Summary Recommendations

In order to achieve this vision of an enhanced visitor experience, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission and its partners will need to collaborate on a sustained program of coordinated improvements. Over the short- to medium-term, the following actions are recommended:

- Develop and disseminate cohesive visit planning materials for the Old Erie region which incorporate the National Heritage Corridor designation and identity.

- Provide professional technical assistance to Old Erie sites and communities to enhance their ability to coordinate their separate offerings, and to improve the overall quality of interpretation throughout the region.

- Develop and install simple graphic panels or signs at all Old Erie sites which define them as part of the Corridor, and which encourage cross-visitation.

- Develop a long term strategic interpretive plan for the region which outlines a framework for development over a 5- to 10-year period, identifying specific goals and objectives, action items, and annual implementation benchmarks.
7.1 OVERVIEW

For fueling economic growth and for the political and organizational achievement it represented, the Erie Canal became a symbol of America’s promise. Celebrating the prosperity attributable to the canal – the economic renaissance, expanded markets, the effective reduction in distance and time enjoyed by businesses, tourists, and settlers – means celebrating the nation’s earliest regionally organized economic system. This system thrived because community and commercial self-interest overlapped with the common interest: towns and businesses alike owed their living to the canal.

Today, the 524-mile New York State Canal System and the remnants of its predecessor towpath-era canals continue to represent a regional asset for economic development. Once linking markets, they now link natural, cultural, recreational, and historic resources. These resources, along with other key elements of a healthy economy such as a productive labor force, educational institutions, and transportation facilities, are part of the fundamental infrastructure that drives quality-of-life-based investments by businesses and individuals.

Because they are regional assets shared by the public and private sectors, protecting and enhancing these resources requires regional mechanisms to promote investments that respect local character and identity and contribute to placemaking. As in the heyday of the canals, success in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor will result when public and private investments, intended to increase individual competitiveness, reinforce each other and advance the region.
The preceding chapters detailed the rich array of historic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources within the Corridor, along with a host of recommendations for preserving, enhancing, and interpreting them. This chapter focuses on heritage development - an economic revitalization approach that respects these assets’ intrinsic value and uses them to strengthen the Erie Canalway brand, expand upstate New York’s economy, and help it compete in the market for place-based investments.

Upstate New York has been undergoing extensive restructuring for nearly two decades as it transitions from dependency on traditional manufacturing to a more diversified economic base featuring strong service, tourism, and technology sectors. Significant resources and numerous organizations devoted to economic development have been deployed at local, county, regional, and state-wide levels, using a blend of proven and innovative strategic techniques. Certainly any initiative which duplicates existing efforts risks increasing the system’s inefficiency by adding to its complexity.

No one organization can take on the breadth and depth of actions necessary to ensure that the Corridor evolves in a way that reflects the region’s heritage values. Moreover, the Corridor encompasses communities with widely varying assets for regional development and plans for achieving a desired future. It will take the collective know-how, skill, resources and energy of the private sector, labor, citizens, educational institutions, and all elements of government working in concert to achieve these goals. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission seeks to act as keeper of the larger vision, working to build deeper appreciation and understanding for the potential of heritage development.

Approaching economic development regionally entails overcoming challenges associated with any complex endeavor involving numerous stakeholders, limited resources, and shared authority, including:
- balancing local and regional concerns and priorities;
- navigating a web of jurisdictions and agencies with different governance and decision-making approaches;
- overcoming conflicts inherent in diverse regulatory systems and dealing with new stakeholder representatives with each election cycle or staffing change;
- managing communications and coordinating without micro-managing or relinquishing control; and
- choosing between competing projects/locations and identifying funding and other project resources that can be brought to bear upon the effort.

Other heritage areas around the country overcome these challenges by creating productive working relationships with existing organizations engaged in complementary activities. Thus, the added value of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is its emphasis on partnerships that cross jurisdictional boundaries and build on the mutual interests of economic and heritage development.

Whitehall

The Village of Whitehall, near Lake Champlain’s southern tip, was a center of waterfront activity long before the canals were built. Businesses settled on Main Street along the first Champlain Canal, and a district of 19th century buildings was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

The 1995 NYS Canal Recreationway Plan designated Whitehall as a Canal Harbor Community, and in 2000, the NYS Canal Corporation funded park improvements including an amphitheater and gazebo overlooking the Champlain Canal, a picnic shelter, a boat launch, a community building with public facilities and showers, bulkhead tie-downs for large tour boats, and floating docks for small boats. Young and old, visitors and residents alike use the park, which also attracts boaters to stop overnight and frequent the local bank, laundromat, and stores. At the north end of the park, the Whitehall State Heritage Area visitor center and the Skanesborough Museum, which is housed in a reused wooden canal terminal building, interpret local history.

Renewed public interest in the waterfront and grants from the NYS Governor’s Office for Small Cities helped to convince private developers to purchase four canalside commercial buildings in 2004, rehabilitate the properties, and restore their original uses as ground floor retail spaces with residences above. By consistently demonstrating that it values its heritage, the people of Whitehall have made their waterfront work for them once again.
GOALS

The economic revitalization goal for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is that economic growth and heritage development in the Corridor will be balanced and self-sustaining. Rather than establish specific desired outcomes, the four objectives below set forth a philosophy to guide future Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission decisions and infuse them with an economic development perspective:

Harness existing tourism, industrial, agricultural, and community development assets in the service of economic development that reinforces the region’s sense of place

The Commission’s approach to heritage development will seek to identify and strengthen the interests of all concerned by leveraging the Corridor’s wealth of historic, cultural, natural, and recreational resources for economic purposes without degrading these assets.

Increase local capacity to undertake heritage- and place-based approaches to economic development

The Commission will help foster formation of networks of communities that can learn from one another and that can be marketed to investors and travelers, help coordinate the actions of existing organizations and jurisdictions, and encourage partnerships that can leverage existing financial resources.

Establish a unifying National Heritage Corridor identity of place and lifestyle that complements regional identities, tourism destinations, and individual cities; links lesser-known towns; and encompasses canal stories

The Commission will take an inclusive approach to building a brand identity for the entire Corridor. Signage and wayfinding, tourism development, and community and economic development efforts will broadcast a consistent, balanced approach to heritage development and economic growth throughout the Corridor.

Integrate a heritage- and place-based perspective into every message communicating the benefits and rationales underpinning Corridor public investment decisions

Advocating investments that make the region a better place entails a persistent, focused educational effort. The Commission will advise and help communities and their leaders make and communicate decisions that improve the quality of the region as a venue for businesses and families.
7.4 Economic Revitalization

CONTEXT

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor will operate within a complex web of jurisdictions and organizations devoted to economic development concerns. Political subdivisions include counties, cities, towns, and villages in addition to the regional service areas of several state agencies. All counties and the larger cities devote staff and funding resources to economic and tourism development, sometimes by supporting third parties such as convention and visitors bureaus or industrial development authorities. Privately supported organizations such as chambers of commerce and other associations, utilities, and some universities contribute to the system as well.

The state and federal agencies contributing to economic development organize service provision according to regions; examples include the federal Economic Development Administration, the Thruway Authority and Canal Corporation, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and districts defined by the Department of Transportation, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, the Governor’s Office of Small Cities, the Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the Empire State Development Corporation and its Division of Marketing, Advertising and Tourism. Funding available through these and other agencies supports additional organizations with economic development responsibilities, including the Centers for Advanced Technology, the University-Industry Partnerships for Economic Growth, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) system and others. The Corridor also overlaps the areas of several New York State Empire Zones, seven regional planning areas, the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, and several New York State Scenic Byways – including two National Scenic Byways and an All-American Road – and encompasses most of the Mohawk Valley and Western Erie Canal State Heritage Corridors, as well as eight state heritage areas, all with economic development functions of their own.

This list is not an exhaustive compendium, but it illustrates the multifaceted nature of economic development services delivery in the Corridor. Together, these and other agencies, organizations, and programs:

• provide an array of services to businesses, entrepreneurs, and jobseekers through a wide array of traditional economic development activities geared toward ensuring workforce readiness, technology investment, product/process improvements, tax relief, and site availability;
• invest in transportation, communications, water/sewer treatment facilities, power, industrial parks, and other physical infrastructure required for economic growth;
• navigate through complex interlocking and overlapping service areas, program offerings, and funding pressures; and
• coordinate with parallel systems existing to advance tourism development, community development, conservation, and historic preservation.

Ensuring that the National Heritage Corridor carves out a mission that is both useful and unique is critical to ensuring the support of those already working on behalf of the region’s communities.

Little Falls

In the middle of what was once an extensive manufacturing district in the City of Little Falls, the demolition of an abandoned factory revealed the historic beauty of two deteriorating 150 year old stone buildings and sparked the imaginations of local property owners who formed the Canal Place Development Association. The site of the factory became a park, another park was built alongside the canal, and grant money was secured to make a host of improvements to the area.

The development group renovated one of the stone buildings for use as an antique center, boutique shops, and apartments, transforming a run-down building into a showcase. Their success prompted investors to buy the other stone building, where a second antique shop was located, establishing Little Falls as a destination for antique hunters. Restaurants, galleries, and an arts center round out a diverse cultural mix that makes Canal Place a unique historic gem along the Erie Canal.

Also in Little Falls is Rotary Park, one of seven canal harbor facilities developed by the NYS Canal Corporation. This transient marina includes a 1918 terminal building renovated to accommodate a regional tourism center, as well as restrooms and showers for overnight boaters. The facility is operated by the State Council on Waterways, a statewide advocacy and educational organization, which provides ground transportation between the marina and downtown Little Falls that allows boaters to patronize restaurants, antique shops, and other local businesses.
**HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT IN NEW YORK STATE**

In the Erie Canal’s heyday, upstate New York led the country’s phenomenal economic growth and enjoyed vibrant cities, a productive workforce, and seemingly limitless potential. This potential remains genuine, as evidenced by the region’s resilience and ongoing recovery from several decades of economic restructuring, especially in manufacturing-dependent communities. Significant efforts to reverse declining job growth and impacts on population, income, and employment are underway (see Appendix 7 for discussion).

Positioning the Corridor economy for future expansion means:
- recognizing that education and health care will be central to the region’s future economy, and nurturing those sectors;
- supporting the agricultural sector’s ability to take advantage of new opportunities in agritourism and both the commodity and specialty food markets;
- helping traditional industries and enterprises engaged in business and professional services so they can supplement the remaining manufacturing base;
- investing in social and economic infrastructure, including childcare, affordable housing, internet access, local school systems; and
- engaging in placemaking activities and investments to increase quality of life, business and tourism development.

New York State has a record of making investments and regional land use planning decisions in support of greater stewardship goals. State agencies have also strived to be good neighbors by moving their offices into downtown commercial districts and practicing context-sensitive design for Canal Corporation and Department of Transportation projects in areas with historical significance. And since tourism is one of New York’s key economic sectors, heritage development has long been accepted in New York as a potential contributor toward economic development.

This attention to the importance of place is also reflected in numerous local and regional efforts to encourage sustainable growth practices. Sustainable growth seeks to maximize the efficiency of municipal services and reduce negative environmental impacts by channeling new growth into areas that are already developed. Possible strategies include making sustainable development projects eligible for low-interest loans via a revolving loan fund, as well as other incentives, such as certain real property tax exemptions and priority for state financial assistance; or creating a state-level office of local assistance to provide technical, scientific, and financial assistance to localities in support of sustainable growth planning.

Meanwhile, communities across the state are beginning to think regionally and address quality of life as an economic development matter. In western New York, the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, the New Millennium Group, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, and the Urban Design Project at the University at Buffalo State University of New York are all working toward establishing a bi-national, regional approach to managing development and creating a “green infrastructure.” In the Albany area, rapid growth has led the Capital District Regional Planning Commission and the Capital District Transporta-
Amsterdam

Since completing its Local Waterfront Revitalization Program over twelve years ago, the City of Amsterdam has been quite successful in advancing its implementation, largely as a result of numerous grants from the Environmental Protection Fund and direct assistance from the NYS Canal Corporation.

To date, the Department of State has awarded four grants totaling over $1 million to the city for a variety of projects, the largest of which is construction of Riverlink Park adjacent to the downtown. The park has reconnected the city’s downtown with its long neglected Mohawk River waterfront and now serves as a major recreational and economic activity center for the region, bringing both residents and visitors downtown to utilize amenities including gardens, children’s playgrounds, a roller/hockey rink, transient boat docking, a café, and a summer concert program at an open-air stage.

Completion of the smaller Port Jackson Park nearby has been the focal point for revitalization efforts within the South Side neighborhood. Key to the city’s success has been the development of partnerships with state agencies and an extensive fund-raising effort involving local businesses and community organizations.

Economic Revitalization Committee to collaborate on a sustainable regional land use development plan. And the Metropolitan Development Association of Syracuse and Central New York recently unveiled the Essential New York Initiative, recommending six key strategies:

• target middle-market companies with the potential to support or expand existing industries;
• optimize key industry clusters;
• create, retain, and attract talent;
• leverage colleges and universities as economic and community growth engines;
• encourage the creation and growth of a stronger entrepreneurial culture; and
• develop a broader regional consciousness.

These initiatives recognize that although individual communities may lack the scale and resources to be competitive on a national and international level, an organized, proactive region can compete effectively for jobs and growth. And they explicitly promote cooperation among the many businesses, not-for-profits, economic development agencies, chambers of commerce, public officials, and private individuals who comprise the region’s leadership.

HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT IN CANALWAY CORRIDOR COMMUNITIES

A number of inter-related challenges face the economy of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

• Many individual communities lack a sufficient concentration of historic, cultural, recreational, and natural attractions to market themselves competitively to potential residents, businesses, and visitors.
• There is not enough visible, physical, and conceptual connectivity between attractions and communities to provide the continuity that encourages visitors to move from region to region across the span of the Corridor.
• Important potential business opportunities that would enhance the Corridor experience and expand potential markets – such as boating rentals – require specialized expertise, extensive start up costs, and initial capital.
• Limited tourism marketing is presented to a narrow audience.

These challenges also represent the Corridor’s main areas of economic opportunity. Case studies of five Corridor communities – Rochester, Fairport, Pittsford, Oswego, and Whitehall (see Appendix 8) – revealed that while each community’s experience is unique, all witnessed a similar pattern of initial public investments in quality of life infrastructure that, over time, resulted in additional private investment, a substantial increase in visitors and public activity along main streets and canals, and a stronger sense of community pride. Specifically, the case studies found that:

• Linkages with regional trade area groups, public and private development organizations enhanced the potential of investments in heritage resources to support local community and economic development.
• Collaborative efforts to establish regional identities and marketing strategies for businesses and communities were more successful than isolated efforts.
• Public sector investments in canal system infrastructure enhanced or catalyzed locally based community development activities that, in turn, formed
the basis for attracting a broad range of sustainable private sector investment.

- The most positive impacts on community quality of life derived from direct physical linkages between the waterfront or recreational facilities and town center retail businesses and from finding new uses for under-utilized historic buildings.
- Linkages with local colleges and universities fostered planning efforts and encouraged additional heritage activities and investment by taking advantage of student demand for recreation as well as academic resources for preservation, conservation, and economic development research and analysis.
- Although tourism is a major economic driver, heritage development initiatives also fostered other types of economic growth, such as private sector retail and recreational development.

There is strong evidence for the viability of heritage development throughout the rest of the Corridor. In 2002, the Canal Corporation commissioned an economic impact study that determined that canal system tourism contributed over $380 million in direct and indirect business sales annually. Large-scale mixed-use developments planned for the inner harbors of both Buffalo and Syracuse, as well as smaller-scale recreational and retail development in the Tonawandas, Amsterdam, and Fairport, demonstrate how a community’s waterfront location, historical attributes, and quality of life amenities can be leveraged to attract significant public and private sector investment.

One often overlooked asset for Corridor heritage development is the strong attachment to the region already exhibited by local residents. According to a study by the Northern New York Travel and Tourism Research Center, nearly half of current visitors to upstate communities originate in other upstate regions; a study by the Brookings Institution’s Metropolitan Policy Program showed that a significant proportion of new residents in upstate communities have moved from elsewhere in the region. Even as new residents, businesses, and visitors bring additional vitality and spending to the region, local residents will continue to provide a solid base of support for heritage investment.

In other heritage areas, tourism development has the potential to play an expanded role in local and regional economies as part of an integrated economic development strategy that complements the overall quality of life within communities. The fast-growing, high-spending tourism market segments interested in history, culture, and outdoor recreation are attracted in part by efforts to help them understand the nature and substance of the places they visit or live in. A detailed discussion of the role of tourism in heritage development is provided in Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*.

**RESOURCE ANALYSIS**

When people make personal or business oriented place-based investment decisions – where to operate a company, hold a convention, accept a job offer, retire or vacation – they couple financial and personal concerns. Increasingly, quality of life is at the top of the scale as a factor important to these decisions.
Economic Revitalization

Although difficult to define, quality of life clearly encompasses people, values, economic opportunity, culture, and place. By reinforcing these features, heritage development can become the foundation for regional strategies for economic revitalization.

Investments in culture and place have become the centerpiece of economic development initiatives in communities throughout the United States, in part because they appeal to people with a wide array of motivations. Young people, families, retirees, and, in particular, creative people who launch or work for fast-growing companies driven by innovation, productivity, and talent – all seek communities providing diversity, lifestyle amenities, and other interesting people. Quality of life represents a highly efficient growth engine because many of a location’s advantages as a place to run a business parallel its advantages as a place to live and a destination to visit. Pleasant neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown, accessible recreational opportunities, beautiful natural settings, architectural character, cultural offerings – all of these quality of life amenities support growth, and all are supported by heritage development.

Heritage development enhances local quality of life through activities – preservation, conservation, recreational and interpretive development, and, above all, regional partnership and community capacity-building – that demonstrate respect for the people, the place, and the past. In this way, heritage development strengthens an area’s distinctive sense of place and enables it to vie with its competitors for residents, businesses, private sector investment, and visitors. When communities blend a mix of heritage development and traditional economic development strategies – targeted tax incentives, infrastructure improvements, assembled and prepared commercial or industrial sites, and other techniques – they can ensure a level playing field while also working to increase their attractiveness as places to live, work, and visit.

The preceding chapters of this Preservation and Management Plan provide ample evidence of the wealth of heritage resources in the Corridor. They range from carefully restored and interpreted historic sites to the many more numerous historic buildings that line the streets of the Corridor’s towns and cities and are in need of sensitive rehabilitation. They also include the many attractive natural areas, wildlife refuges, and state and local parks; outstanding recreational facilities; and a wide variety of educational and interpretive resources, museums and cultural programs, historic vessels and archeological sites, scenic roads and agricultural landscapes. Every community in the Corridor has a unique mix of heritage resources, but they are all tied together by the physical presence and life of the waterways.

The New York State Canal System represents a remarkable heritage development success story. The modern and towpath-era canals serve multiple functions: as a primary heritage resource, a recreational facility, a habitat, a source of irrigation and power generation, a transportation route, a physical and conceptual spine for the entire Corridor, and a generator of economic revitalization. The past two decades witnessed significant public and private investments dedicated to restoring the canal system and adjacent properties. A study conducted by the Cornell Department of City and Regional Planning found that

### Oswego

Oswego’s waterfront revitalization strategy is anchored by a 1.5 mile shoreline promenade and park extending along both the sides of the Oswego River adjacent to the downtown. The park’s pedestrian walkway, transient boat docks and services, interpretive pavilions, and performing arts amphitheater provide a focus for the city's commercial district and the basis for promoting the city as a tourism destination.

The city designed and constructed the Oswego River Promenade and Park with grants from the Environmental Protection Fund totaling over $1 million and assistance from the NYS Canal Corporation. The city estimates that these public investments have leveraged nearly $16 million in additional private investment in properties adjoining the waterfront, created several hundred new jobs, and energized its community development planning process.

The city is now updating its Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, initially completed in 1986, to identify the next generation of projects needed to continue this revitalization effort. The city is taking a proactive role in preserving and redeveloping its historic retail business district through the use of historic tax credits to purchase and renovate a block of seven buildings. The city will relocate existing retail tenants, re-tenant the buildings, and sell them back to the private sector at the expiration of the tax credits.
these investments catalyzed economic development; enabled communities to attract and retain manufacturing jobs, as well as additional tourism-driven activity; advanced downtown revitalization; and changed public perception about the viability of economic development activity in upstate New York.

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY REGIONAL APPROACH

It is generally recognized that economic, agricultural, tourism, and community development interests overlap, as do the interests of preservation, conservation, recreation, and interpretation. All too often, however, advocates for these interests are pitted against one another. With a creative approach, diverse interests can coexist. Part of heritage development entails respecting the needs and contributions of traditional industries and the communities that rely on them for economic sustenance. Economic activities that reinforce the market’s sense of the National Heritage Corridor and strengthen its brand identity are especially valuable.

For example, the canal system is not just an historic or recreational resource; commercial shipping is crucial to the canals’ ongoing role in the regional economy. Commercial shipping is on the rise, a logical response to rising fuel prices and highway congestion; according to the New York State Canal Corporation, an estimated $102 million in cargo was transported via the canal system in 2004. Watching a tug and barge maneuver through the canal, perhaps delivering cargo as impressive as a 300-ton generator bound for a midwestern power plant, makes for a memorable and informative experience. With proper interpretation, such an experience attracts residents and tourists to the waterfront and also leads to greater support for commercial shipping in general, an underappreciated element of the nation’s economic infrastructure.

Similarly, while agriculture represents the first industry supported by boat traffic on the towpath-era canals, it remains a central part of the Corridor landscape. According to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York agriculture provides jobs for 100,000 farmers and their employees, generates over $3 billion in revenue, and provides a wide range of products to local, national, and international markets. Agriculture is also vital to the quality of life in the Corridor’s rural communities, and the preservation of open spaces, habitat, and scenic views. However, the contribution of agriculture to the region’s sense of cultural identity is not high in the consciousness of preservationists or the general public. New interpretative media, scenic byways, and downtown or canalside farmers’ markets can enhance the connections between agriculture and the preservation of the Corridor’s historical character.

Potential economic revitalization partners are sometimes limited by the geographic service areas defined in their charters or articles of incorporation. Although jurisdictional boundaries define most government activities, including economic and tourism development, most aspects of the economy ignore them. People and companies routinely cross city and county lines to go to work, to purchase goods and services and to pursue leisure activities. The success of any given business depends more on how the region’s economy performs than
7.10 Economic Revitalization

on how any individual jurisdiction fares; conversely, many jurisdictions share
in the benefits it generates.

EFFECTS OF HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

On a practical basis, heritage development seeks to forge productive partner-
ships across interests and borders. If regional economic forces affect business
success, and the benefits of local economic development accrue regionally,
then it makes sense to pursue these activities on a multi-jurisdictional basis that
reflects how the economy actually functions. Similarly, if multiple factors affect
location selection, and the benefits of preservation and conservation multiply
those of traditional economic development approaches, then it makes sense
to pursue those activities in a comprehensive manner that reflects the choices
residents, businesses, and tourists actually make.

Successful heritage development is opportunistic – seeking out and filling physi-
cal, operational, and conceptual gaps in existing development efforts and outlooks. Downtowns, natural and recreational features, and historic and cultural
attractions are strengthened and linked by improved interpretation, wayfind-
ing, and marketing. Communities that lack a critical mass of heritage resources
or organizational capacity are linked to central destinations and access points
and encouraged to develop a collaborative identity and cooperate on strategic
investments.

This kind of effort is a major part of the mission Congress has entrusted to the
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission. The track record of the
growing heritage areas movement demonstrates their ability to make positive
contributions to regional economies through heritage development. Through-
out the nation, national, regional, and local heritage areas have successfully:
• helped stimulate small businesses, and helped traditional economic devel-
  opment service providers with agricultural preservation and business reten-
  tion and recruitment efforts;
• spearheaded the revitalization of significant historic and cultural resources
  and the protection of natural resources that lend areas distinction and, hence,
  economic advantage;
• developed events, attractions, and recreational opportunities that draw sig-
  nificant audiences and attract new publicity and respect for their regions;
• established destinations and a sense of identity that made local businesses
  and residents revise their perceptions of long-abandoned places and spaces;
  and
• facilitated partnerships to accomplish complex undertakings that required
  cooperation across established boundaries, whether municipal borders, ser-
  vice areas, or traditional realms of authority.

Recent surveys of national heritage areas in particular show that the federal
presence provided a significant advantage to heritage development efforts in the
designated regions. All of these regions found that affiliation with the National
Park Service conferred credibility with stakeholders and potential investors,
facilitated the organization of local and regional interests, provided essential
technical assistance, and enhanced fund-raising efforts. Overall, NPS National

Tonawanda and North
Tonawanda

Both of these adjacent communities completed Local Waterfront Revitaliza-
tion Plans to establish a vision and consensus on actions needed to estab-
lish their waterfront as a major Canal System harbor center.

As a result of this inter-municipal cooperation and partnership with state
agencies, extensive pedestrian and boater access improvements have been developed, substantially improv-
ing the ability of both cities to take advantage of canal-related economic
opportunities and expand the region’s signature heritage event, the annual
Canal Fest of the Tonawandas.

Key to implementation have been nine grants from the Environmental Protec-
tion Fund, as well as direct assistance from the NYS Canal Corporation. A
subsequent comprehensive plan for the City of Tonawanda, funded by Erie
County, outlined strategies to further capitalize upon the waterfront area
through brownfield redevelopment and establishing a historic district alongside
the canal.
Heritage Areas program funding has leveraged additional dollars at a ratio of 1:8, with the private sector accounting for the largest share of leveraged funding.

Much of the economic impact of heritage areas is measured in increased tourism and its effects. In part, this is because changes in visitation and resulting tourism industry impacts are easier to measure, and more consistently tracked, than more indirect effects such as business recruitment or increased property valuation, which are affected by a range of economic factors of which heritage development is only a part. For example, a 2004 economic impact study of seven national heritage areas conducted by Michigan State University found that every additional twenty-five thousand heritage visitors spend an additional $2.5 million locally. This study acknowledged, however, that “the greater values of these programs will often be their contributions to historic and cultural preservation, education, and community identity and partnerships.”

GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

The preceding chapters of this Preservation and Management Plan provide specific guidelines for the enhancement of the Corridor’s historic, cultural, natural, recreational, and interpretive resources. For heritage development to generate the broadest possible economic impact, these investments must be strategically planned and executed, and:

- balanced with broader economic development activities;
- aimed at improving the Corridor’s image and identity;
- supported by broad public interest and engagement;
- pursued on a regional basis through partnerships;
- designed to leverage existing programs and develop new funding sources; and
- targeted to build on the Corridor’s competitive advantages.

Although the Corridor is not an economic development entity, its core mission of heritage resource stewardship and interpretation, its strategic outlook, and its focus on coordination and regional partnership-building will enhance economic opportunities throughout the Corridor. Mindful of the immense challenge and scale of the Corridor and its limited resources, the Commission will invest time, funds, and support strategically, aiming always for greatest leverage in putting heritage resources to work in the Corridor’s economy. The Commission will seek to become the driving force to:

- resolve conflicts born of geography and/or jurisdiction to help the Corridor to function as a region;
- provide constructive criticism of existing and proposed programs and policies that affect the region’s economy, environment, and cultural assets;
- incorporate prior planning and bridge gaps between the region’s various economic and tourism development organizations and unite them in common purpose;
- involve the region’s top private and public sector leaders and economic development practitioners in generating ideas to leverage heritage assets;
- set priorities for Corridor project initiatives and assure their implementation; and

Successful heritage development is opportunistic – seeking out and filling physical, operational, and conceptual gaps in existing development efforts and outlooks.
Economic Revitalization

Rochester

When railroad companies proposed to dispose of excess waterfront land in the 1980s, Rochester’s South River Corridor Plan, produced by a citizens advisory group, established a redevelopment strategy to improve access and visibility to the Genesee River. Over the next 10 years, the city and its partners acquired waterfront land, constructed trails and greenways, removed a riverfront road and blighted warehouses, and linked the riverbanks with a pedestrian crossing. A total project cost of approximately $25-30 million was funded by the federal, state, county, and city governments and the University of Rochester. Implementation of the University’s master plan served as a catalyst for the redevelopment effort, including the creation and maintenance of a waterfront park with funding from Bausch and Lomb, a major local employer.

These improvements, and the construction of a canal harbor by the NYS Canal Corporation, have prompted a number of private and public/private investments along the waterfront, including major new mixed-income housing, commercial, and retail developments, a marina, and a waterfront sports center that promotes rowing, kayaking, and canoeing and provides a staging area for an annual regatta that attracts approximately 40 universities and over 30,000 spectators. These developments have supported the Greater Rochester Visitor’s Association in its promotion of the city as a tourism and recreational destination and brought extensive new activity to the waterfront, requiring a widening of the canalside trails.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM CASE STUDIES OF CANALWAY CORRIDOR COMMUNITIES

The case studies of five Corridor communities, and additional conversations with Corridor economic development leaders, revealed that their most successful efforts were founded on the ability to identify and coordinate community and economic development objectives; define land-use plans ahead of development; and leverage public finance to encourage private sector investments. Typically, local planning and economic development agencies, supported by citizen groups and elected officials, led the effort for public grants and financing to mitigate environmental conditions, restore waterfront access, and rebuild public infrastructure. These efforts:

- increased usage of and appreciation for historic, natural, and recreational resources;
- provided greater physical and conceptual community and regional linkages;
- captured a greater share of the tourism market; and
- upgraded both community and regional image and identity.

Historic preservation planning and the availability of historic tax credits and grants played a significant role in attracting investment to town centers, but the requirements of preservation funding programs are still seen as a barrier to too many potential private investors. One successful strategy was public investment in one or two carefully selected adaptive reuse projects in critical downtown or waterfront locations, which increased public interest, attracted tourists and shoppers, and encouraged additional private investment nearby. Another strategy involved an initial public investment in making properties “developer ready” by clearing some preservation-related hurdles before marketing the properties to private investors.

In other communities, well defined and formalized community and economic development plans, particularly those that defined the waterfront as a key economic development asset, were essential for accessing funding for canal-related investments. Many communities recognized that their waterfronts and town centers provided the best opportunities to encourage new development and adaptive reuse, and invested in public improvements that served both residents and tourists. Rather than seek to attract “big box” retailers and large residential developers seeking greenfield sites, these communities focused on placemaking – selectively investing in projects that collectively contributed to the “canal town” or “historic downtown” setting that increased local identity and established a marketable image.

No single project or investment can be credited with the positive changes in any of the communities studied. Instead, it was the accumulation of public and private investments over time, and the consistent long-term focus on waterfront
and downtown improvements, that yielded increased public activity and private development. Other critical factors involved:

*Community Outreach/Public Private Partnerships*

Community participation served to drive and maintain a focus on the potential of existing assets, such as the canal or underutilized historic buildings, to contribute to local community and economic development or recreational activity. In general, unity in purpose – the desire to leverage heritage values into economic impacts – helped move the political process forward toward consensus on community and economic development issues and fostered a vision for future growth.

*Predevelopment Planning and Approvals*

The ability to coordinate community and economic development objectives resulted in land-use plans more suitable for attracting private sector investment. Successful communities anticipated the economic feasibility and benefits for specific kinds of private sector investments, as well as the types and amount of public incentives needed to initially attract and sustain private sector investment. The resulting plans and assemblages and/or rezoning of parcels lowered barriers of entry for the private sector by effectively reducing pre-development costs and providing assurances that community consensus was in place for specific types of uses and projects.

*Project Planning and Approvals*

The project planning and approvals process presented the opportunity to begin effective public-private partnerships through the facilitation of project specific site plan approvals and the conveyance of public and quasi-public benefits to the private sector as needed to develop and sustain project feasibility. Local municipal agencies played a strong role as the “lead agency” in facilitating public finance and grant opportunities. Pre-approved planning, zoning, and environmental impact statements provided speed to market for investors, and lower project costs.

*Project Financing*

Invariably, public and public-private projects required financing from multiple sources including but not limited to: Community Development Block Grants and the Canal Corridor Initiative; Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) grants; the Environmental Protection Agency; the Thruway Authority and Canal Corporation; the State Environmental Bond Act; funds from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of State, and Division of Housing and Community Renewal; local municipal tax-exempt financing; and a raft of programs under the Empire State Development Corporation. In most instances, public sector investment came first to “prime the pump” and establish the value of the project.
Private sector financing had multiple sources, including but not limited to private equity (including low income housing and historic tax credits), conventional debt provided by local banks, and public and quasi-public debt and credit enhancement provided by local industrial development authorities, the U.S. Small Business Administration, Section 108 loan guarantees from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corporation, and the Community Preservation Corporation. While conventional lending is available for private sector development initiatives, it appears that additional measures beyond public financing need to be taken to mitigate the perception of risk by conventional lenders. Pre-development planning and approvals can help with this problem at the micro level; at the macro level, a sustained campaign is needed to promote successful heritage development efforts based on public-private partnerships.

Public benefits should continue to play a role in attracting and sustaining private sector investment by reducing capital requirements and improving cash flow through ground leasing, project-specific public improvements (parking, waterfront access, open space, historic preservation), tax abatements, payments in lieu of taxes, and sales tax rebates on construction materials. However, the stewards of public economic development investment dollars should also consider the other cost-effective planning, partnership, and marketing measures described above. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor will also focus on the broader strategic measures below.

**BALANCING STEWARDSHIP AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Enhanced stewardship of heritage and cultural resources will increase the likelihood that authentic expressions of the canal system’s heyday will survive. The structures and remnants of the canals are, of course, the central heritage resource, and, thanks to reinvestment by New York State of over $200 million, much of the canal system has been assured a long future. Many key historic sites are owned and maintained by non-profit organizations or public agencies. Those that are open to the public, such as the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum and the Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site, are also contributing to the visitor experience and, hence, the region’s economy.

By far the largest number of heritage resources, however, are in the older sections of the Corridor’s villages, towns, and cities – in historic neighborhoods and downtowns. They are houses lived in by Corridor residents; public buildings such as schools, firehouses, and libraries; and main street buildings that are often occupied only on the ground floor. Some of these buildings, neighborhoods, and main street districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places; fewer are protected under local historic preservation ordinances. Such protective listings are important stewardship tools and wider use of them is called for.

Inducing reinvestment in historic structures remains a critical issue in the Corridor. The sheer magnitude of heritage resources means that significant private investment in their rehabilitation and reuse is essential for their survival. Initiatives such as the federal Canal Corridor Initiative of the late 1990s stimulated...
local government and private investment, but for the most part, absent significant public stimulus, the region’s economic recovery has not been sufficiently robust for private reinvestment to happen on a large scale.

Historic tax credits have become an important tool for encouraging investment in historic structures. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) administers the federal preservation investment tax credit for income-producing properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Many states have supplemented the federal tax credit with their own programs, some targeted at properties such as owner-occupied homes not covered by the federal credit, and others intended to match the federal program with additional incentives. The OPRHP administers a state tax credit limited to income-producing barns built or placed into agricultural service before 1936. Many heritage development efforts in other states have credited broader state historic tax credit programs with providing the essential impetus for private investment and adaptive reuse of key heritage resources, particularly in downtown areas.

Redevelopment in older cities and towns often involves time consuming property assembly, and can involve brownfield cleanup costs as well. Pre-development costs can be higher and less apparent. Consequently, private development dollars have tended to flow to more predictable greenfield sites, contributing to sprawl, which further saps the vitality of the Corridor’s historic towns and cities. A number of state programs for brownfield remediation, infrastructure enhancement, main street façade improvements, small business retention efforts, and loan guarantees are available to communities seeking to encourage reinvestment. However, competition for them is strong, and some communities lack capacity to raise matching funds or develop initial inventories or plans.

IDENTITY AND MARKETING

A successful brand represents the totality of thoughts, emotions, reactions, and assumptions evoked by a product. Brand strategies differentiate places in the minds of consumers – visitors, shoppers, and people making business and residential location decisions – and create a sustainable competitive advantage. The Erie Canal’s widespread recognition and nostalgic affection are tremendously valuable assets requiring strategic deployment and a plan for protection. How can this resource be capitalized upon for economic advantage?

As part of their work, nearly all of the jurisdictions and agencies operating in the Corridor strive to create an identity that markets their attributes, benefits, and services and speaks to the needs of various audiences, whether tourists, businesses, meeting planners, or decision-makers controlling funding and other resources. Since the Corridor is so extensive, the organizations and jurisdictions it encompasses often compete in the short run, even if mutual benefit accrues in the long run: a business invests in one location, which ultimately improves the broader regional economy; or a visitor chooses one destination, and later returns to another within the region. What results is a cacophony of marketing messages advancing competing brands, evident in both the economic and tourism development realms.
Economic Revitalization

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The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor will build an identity that capitalizes on people’s affection for canals in general (and the Erie Canal in particular) in a way that works for a wide array of audiences and purposes, arching over the many other canal-related identities in play without obscuring them. Deriving a core brand identity that works for the full Corridor, speaks to its full economic development mission, and becomes incorporated into communication efforts is no simple task. Nonetheless, the more the Corridor’s tourism, community and economic development, and private industries understand and support a brand strategy, incorporating it into their promotion efforts, the sooner the market will absorb the brand identity. The design concept and strategies for employment of the Corridor’s graphic identity and marketing image are outlined in Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation, and Chapter 8, Tourism Development and Marketing.

INCREASING UNDERSTANDING OF THE HERITAGE APPROACH

There is growing evidence that people will expend extra time, effort, and money to be in environments with authentic character and a sense of time and place. Although some Corridor communities – especially those within state-designated heritage areas and corridors – are taking steps to support heritage-based approaches to economic development, others lag behind in capitalizing on existing local and state strategies and programs to preserve and enhance heritage resources. Main streets, historic residential neighborhoods, and heritage attractions should all be part of a larger community and economic development strategy.

Until there is wider and deeper understanding of the potential of heritage development, it is not likely to attain the degree of support needed for a more coordinated, strategic approach. The Commission will work to increase understanding among local and state officials, business and civic leaders, lenders, and others of the potential for a systemic approach. This will involve:

- commissioning and distributing publications of success stories applicable to Corridor environments;
- co-sponsoring field expeditions to enable local and state leaders to meet their counterparts and experience relevant examples of heritage development in other National Heritage Areas and Corridors;
- engaging the Corridor’s chambers of commerce, community development organizations, and elected officials in annual symposia on heritage-related development and its application to Corridor communities.

EXPANDING CAPACITY THROUGH PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Economic revitalization is a long-term game and most often requires multiple players (local governments, economic development programs, as well as private investors and property owners). It is best undertaken by organizations that are skilled at orchestrating complex revitalization projects, most of which require sophisticated financing, careful sequencing, and programmatic connections to larger environments (canalside marina facilities that need linkages to nearby downtown revitalization areas, for instance). Investing in community capacity

Pittsford

Pittsford has consistently placed a significant emphasis on historic preservation as a basis for planning and attracting future development. The village’s citizen-led Historic Preservation Group and elected officials have provided leadership for establishing historic districts, facilitating historic preservation technical assistance to residential and commercial building owners, and setting standards for the architectural compatibility of new developments. The importance placed on historic preservation has created an accessible and pedestrian friendly “small town” experience conducive to specialty retail and strong residential demographics. As a result of these efforts, initial private sector investment along the canal occurred prior to any major public improvements.

Village investments have focused on enhancing and expanding public spaces. The Port of Pittsford Park was developed in the late 1970s by the village and town in an area previously used for the loading of coal and other commodities. In close proximity to the park are historic commercial structures that were served by the canal, and are being preserved for redevelopment. The Old Towpath Trail was built in the 1980s and later incorporated as a part of the continuous recreational trail that will parallel the entire Erie Canal. More recent developments include new waterfront amenities and docking facilities to attract boater traffic, and other improvements outlined in a Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan accepted by the village in 2002.
to perform these functions is essential for long-term leverage and sustainability of the heritage development effort.

In other national heritage areas, similar commissions have developed strategic responses. Two examples are particularly relevant. The Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, in Illinois, conducted the first regional Main Street program, working in three communities to build strong downtown revitalization programs in their historic downtowns. These staffed organizations coordinated volunteer task forces, provided technical assistance for business retention, helped organize special events, and encouraged historically sensitive rehabilitation. In Pennsylvania, the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor leads a “Market Towns” program, providing circuit-riding assistance and coaching to a number of small communities engaged in place-based heritage development. It is supported by the Pennsylvania Downtown Center and receives state funding from two agencies.

One way national heritage areas contribute to quality of life and competitiveness is by creating a climate of creativity and cooperation, a major economic development asset. People making place-based investment decisions often seek out collaborative environments characterized by relationships that balance shared purpose and independence. However, partnerships cannot be forced; they only work when they arise out of a shared sense of purpose. A successful effort to gain the respect and support of the region’s existing organizations – the potential partner population – must recognize that collaborations that do not make sense for all partners should not be pursued, and that for the good of the system as a whole, any individual organization’s participation is not necessarily a prerequisite for its access to shared benefits.

**LEVERAGING EXISTING PROGRAMS AND CREATING NEW FUNDING SOURCES**

A recent Brookings Institution report on upstate New York’s economy noted that while the state has many programs that are useful to economic development, greater leverage could be attained through better coordination. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor offers the opportunity to test more integrated approaches that might have wider application throughout the state.

The Commission can broker better leveraged place-based economic development initiatives. For example, the Commission supports efforts to coordinate projects funded by the Scenic Byways program of the New York State Department of Transportation, the Main Street program of the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, and interpretive grants from the New York State Council on the Arts or the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Further, the Commission can encourage state officials to review existing programs (economic and industrial development funds, Enterprise Zones, etc.) for their applicability to heritage development, heritage tourism, and heritage tourism serving businesses and remove any eligibility barriers.

Funding challenges associated with managing a large national heritage area are both practical and philosophical. Beyond the federal appropriation available to
Economic Revitalization

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Schenectady

Schenectady was designated a Preserve America community in 2005 for its commitment to historic preservation. Recent efforts demonstrate this city’s ability to plan for the future while preserving its heritage.

In 2005, the Capital District Transportation Committee, the Metropolitan Transportation Organization for the greater Albany region, approved $11.5 million of federal transportation funding to enhance Schenectady’s Erie Boulevard as part of a five-year transportation improvement plan.

A new bikeway called the Schenectady Towpath will run alongside the boulevard, formerly the site of the towpath-era Erie Canal. Design features in the boulevard’s newly created center median and along the towpath will evoke features of the original canal. The project is supported by the State Department of Transportation, the City of Schenectady, Schenectady County, and the Metroplex Authority, a local economic development authority.

The project is intended to facilitate the transformation of Schenectady’s central artery into the Erie-Edison Corridor, a vibrant technology corridor that will enhance Schenectady’s business development potential. The Erie-Edison project capitalizes on the region’s commitment to technology and its evolution into “Tech Valley” by providing shovel-ready space for state agencies and technology companies. Schenectady County and the Metroplex Authority are now working together to create additional economic development opportunities for Erie Boulevard.

the National Heritage Corridor, there are no obvious sources. Most appropriate existing funding sources available through foundations and state or federal agencies are already being tapped or targeted by potential partner organizations within the Corridor (or should be).

Identifying funding for programs and projects is important, but so is raising money to cover ongoing operating expenses, which is often more difficult to acquire. Earned income sources can create obligations that carry unanticipated expenses and staff demands that hamstring well-intentioned organizations. The national stature of the Erie Canal and the greater visibility that will come with its designation as a National Heritage Corridor could provide the opportunity to engage funding sources from beyond the Corridor. The Commission may explore the feasibility of creating funding vehicles to fill gaps in existing sources; for instance, a fund for the pre-development stage of important heritage development projects.

The Commission may also reach out and form or broker formation of partnerships to bring funding programs to the Corridor. An example is the New Markets Tax Credit Initiative of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s Community Investment Corporation. This national program and a parallel Bank of America Historic Tax Credit Fund offer more than $175 million in the form of tax credit equity for investors in commercial projects located in qualifying low-income census tracts. The National Heritage Corridor could benefit from a regional heritage development initiative in New York similar to the Progress Fund, a $50 million pool of capital created by Westsylvania, Inc. in western Pennsylvania that provides loan funds for small heritage and heritage tourism businesses that would otherwise not qualify for state funding programs.

Heritage areas often find their every funding decision scrutinized for its implications for each aspect of the mission, particularly when the project is undertaken with partners. Heritage areas can also find it difficult to balance their desire to distribute funding widely – which in the case of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor would lead to tiny allocations – with their desire to focus efforts on fewer projects, where their contribution makes a significant difference. Investing in programs such as technical assistance provided by Corridor staff is one way to spread Corridor values and standards, build cohesiveness, and demonstrate inclusiveness without having to limit funding to individual places, projects, or partners.

IDENTIFYING STEWARDSHIP AND PROJECT PRIORITIZATION POLICIES

The proposed economic revitalization role of the Commission is to be the holder of the vision for the National Heritage Corridor, builder of partnerships, and champion of heritage development. It will be the policy of the Commission to invest time, resources, and limited funds only in initiatives that afford significant leverage in terms of:

• catalyzing stronger projects that reinforce revitalization of historic town cores or add to the Corridor’s key heritage tourism experiences;
• enhancing local or partner capacity to undertake and manage place-based economic development initiatives;
• adding to the Corridor’s wealth of visitor-ready heritage tourism experiences and quality visitor services; and
• reusing heritage resources for activities that enrich the lives of residents, open economic opportunities for Corridor businesses, revitalize the Corridor’s agricultural economy, and bring new life to historic town centers.

The focus areas below take traditional economic development functions and approach them with a heritage sensibility, ensuring both consistency with the Corridor’s larger vision and avoidance of overlap with the existing organizations charged with community revitalization, economic development and tourism enhancement. The following “strategic clusters” lend themselves to what heritage areas do best – facilitate partnerships, transcend geographic and other barriers, and highlight what makes areas distinctive (see Chapter 9, Implementation, for specific Commission activities):

• Agricultural Preservation – taking action to protect landscapes, economies, and lifestyles that contribute to a region’s physical character and identity through farmland preservation and re-establishment of farmers’ markets for local produce and other products (refer to Chapter 3)

• Branding, Marketing and Promotion – reaffirming the Corridor as a vibrant place experiencing an economy in transition, worthy of the investment of both time and money (refer to Chapter 8)

• Communications Infrastructure Development – extending the legacy of the Erie Canal as a means of connecting communities, e.g., by delivering high speed wireless internet to Corridor communities

• Community Pride and Appearance Advancement – instilling a sensitivity and appreciation for how Corridor communities appear to others, from encouraging individual actions like clearing away refuse to community investments like re-landscaping downtown parks

• Economic Diversification – expanding how regional economies function by leveraging heritage and character to nurture nascent businesses and avoid over-reliance on specific sectors (e.g., tourism, manufacturing) or companies

• Education and Workforce Enhancement – examining how to help people create enterprises that serve a heritage perspective by teaching how to restore historic properties, providing hospitality training, etc.

• Historic Preservation – helping communities identify the projects that contribute to character, are located in high-traffic areas, or offer ways of expanding local commercial activities (retail, office and industrial), including adaptive reuse projects (refer to Chapter 3)

• Information Exchange and Coordination – becoming a clearinghouse for third party sources of pertinent information as well as helping organizations

The proposed economic revitalization role of the Commission is to be the holder of the vision for the National Heritage Corridor, builder of partnerships, and champion of heritage development.
Ithaca

Ithaca’s Light In Winter Festival draws from the intellectual and artistic talents of Cornell University and Ithaca College. In January of each year, scientists, musicians, dancers, writers, engineers, and artists share their unusual collaborative creations with thousands of visitors in venues throughout the community, including the historic downtown State Theatre. Funding comes from Tompkins County, private donations, local colleges, and corporate sponsors.

The Cayuga Waterfront Trail, a two-mile loop trail through downtown Ithaca, connects attractions such as the Ithaca Farmers Market with recreation areas and historic sites. Scenic overlooks, interpretive signs and kiosks, and decorative paving create a place for residents and visitors to relax, exercise, and enjoy the waterfront. Funding is provided by local, state, and federal sources and the purchase of individual bricks by many citizens and businesses. Several small businesses have located along the trail, which is a featured attraction in local tourism materials.

Ithaca is one of several bases for the Cayuga Lake and Seneca Lake Wine Trails, which guide visitors and residents to the multitude of wineries that dot the hillsides overlooking the two largest Finger Lakes. Tasting events are scheduled throughout the year, and many wineries have paired with local restaurants to offer samplings of regional foods. Signage, promotion, and event coordination are funded by participating wineries and proceeds from special events. Strong attendance at Wine Trail events brings economic benefits to the entire region.

launch and manage projects that benefit from the involvement of other public, private, and not-for-profit enterprises

- Public Facilities and Services Planning – identifying opportunities for communities within the region to share equipment, employees, etc., and then brokering the relationships
- Public Lands and Open Space Preservation – working with the land trust community and others to make thoughtful contributions to shared landscapes and open spaces, including identifying lands with historical and scenic significance and vistas that cross municipal and other boundaries (refer to Chapters 3 and 4)
- Recreation and Cultural Facilities Projects and Programs – creating both physical connections between communities, such as trails and greenways, and cultural connections between communities, using programming and development techniques (refer to Chapter 5)
- Regional Governance and Cost-Sharing – helping localities approach regional matters collectively, including providing information and brokering agreements on decision-making, cost allocation and revenue sharing, by first identifying small, meaningful test cases to help develop a system with a track record
- Repopulation – helping communities revive by recruiting entrepreneurs, returning residents, and others through both outreach and such practical help as coordinating relocation assistance, affordable housing assistance, etc.
- Small Enterprise Business Financing and Technical Assistance – identifying and nurturing entrepreneurs interested in launching firms engaged in activities that support the Corridor vision, e.g., providing services to tourists, locating a software enterprise in an historic mill, etc.
- Tourism Management – organizing and managing visitor experiences and expectations (refer to Chapter 8)
- Transportation Development and Improvements – knitting communities together and playing an ombudsman role as they negotiate with the New York State Department of Transportation, the Thruway Authority, and local government for sensitive solutions to congestion, parking, rail transit, and alternative modes of transportation and access
- Visitor Experience Product Development – providing the tools – region-wide interpretive frameworks, signage vocabularies, and technical assistance in fund-raising and coordinating festivals – that enable the region’s stewards of historical, natural, recreational, and other experiences to provide coherent visitor experiences and increase their ability to improve and update their offerings (refer to Chapters 6 and 8)
8

Tourism Development and Marketing

OVERVIEW

Most of this Preservation and Management Plan is devoted to the extraordinary resources available throughout the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Although these resources are critical to the success of heritage tourism, it is important to understand that preservation, conservation, or development of recreation and interpretation resources by themselves do not produce tourist visitation. However, expanded, coordinated, and focused tourism development and marketing can and will yield economic benefits.

For the Corridor, the ultimate purpose of tourism development and marketing is to utilize the region’s heritage resources to stimulate economic impact. Heritage resources attract residents and visitors alike by providing desirable amenities, experiences, and a sense of place. Tourism, in turn, can support local businesses, job opportunities, and tax revenues, and expand interest in the preservation of community culture and heritage. While the preceding chapters of this Plan focus on the Corridor’s resources and economy, tourism development and marketing looks primarily beyond the Corridor, to the potential visitor.

Tourism is a key component of the New York economy, and tourism marketing efforts by multiple state and local organizations are already in place, contributing to significant visitation throughout upstate New York. However, given the national significance of the canal system and the breadth and quality of its historic, natural, recreational, and interpretive resources, the Corridor is not as strong a factor in that existing marketing or visitation as it can and should be. While upstate communities express strong support for attracting tourists, it is generally believed that the Corridor itself does not have a high enough concentration of high-quality tourist destinations and that there is a lack of awareness...
Tourism Development and Marketing

of the canal system, its significance, and its value to potential visitors. Clearly, there is a need for product development and more in-depth, readily available information on the Corridor.

Tourism development and marketing for the Corridor must support strategies for the economic impact on the region as a whole as well as strategies for its individual regions and communities. Each community has a different role to play, is at a different stage of development, and will participate in the Corridor tourism effort at the level it chooses. In this respect, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor seeks to raise the profile of the entire region as a tourist destination, to fill strategic gaps, and to make more strategic use of the region’s heritage resources in order to increase the reach and effectiveness of existing tourism development and marketing efforts.

Some initial marketing steps have already been implemented, including a basic Corridor brochure and website and an exhibit at the Peebles Island Visitor Center in Waterford. Efforts such as an expanded Corridor-wide calendar of events and distribution of maps and brochures, which are already supported by the Corridor’s key tourism partners, can also be implemented quickly and at relatively low expense. However, other tourism needs, such as product development and the improvement of visitor services, will require larger investments of technical skill and funding.

GOALS

The tourism development and marketing goal for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is that the Corridor will be a ‘must-do’ travel experience for regional, national, and international visitors. Four objectives have been identified as milestones toward this goal:

Attract visitors to maximize economic impact from tourism within the Corridor

The economic impact of tourism to the Corridor can be maximized by increasing visitor spending through increased visitation, extended stays, and higher value customers. These objectives, in turn, require solid research, customer-driven and user-friendly mechanisms to facilitate travel sales, and a memorable, enriching visitor experience that yields high levels of satisfaction and return visitation.

Develop the Corridor tourism product while protecting and preserving the resource

The key to a satisfying visitor experience is the quality of the tourism product and visitor infrastructure: heritage and recreational resources and visitor information and amenities united by a consistent, recognizable identity and a strong sense of place. Visitor use management policies must be employed to keep increased numbers of visitors from overwhelming the carrying capacity of existing resources.
**Provide coordination and technical assistance to the tourism development and marketing community**

Increased coordination will improve the efficiency, reach, and effectiveness of existing tourism development and marketing efforts while providing an opportunity to establish a stronger, more unified identity for the Corridor. While some existing communities, destinations, and marketers operate sophisticated tourism efforts, others are in need of assistance with visitation research, assessments of visitor readiness, and marketing targeted to local resources and needs.

**Communicate to residents the ability of heritage tourism to stimulate education, preservation, visibility, and visitation**

Corridor residents are generally enthusiastic about tourism, but are understandably concerned about negative impacts to heritage resources and local community character, and few are fully aware of the potential for heritage-oriented tourism to help support preservation, conservation, interpretation, and recreation as part of a broader heritage development strategy.

**CONTEXT**

There are many potential national, state, and local partners for tourism development and marketing of the Corridor. While each has its own focus, all offer complementary opportunities, large and small, for the Corridor to utilize in its efforts. Listed below are key resources (see Appendix 9 for a more complete list).

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

In addition to managing and promoting four National Park System units in the Corridor that are heritage tourism destinations in their own right (see Chapter 3, *Protecting Our Heritage*), the NPS assembles National Register Travel Itineraries spotlighting different themes and geographic regions across the country, grounded in sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The NPS has also launched “See America’s National Parks,” a promotional campaign and partnership with the Travel Industry Association of America and the National Park Foundation, with its own website, branded travel packages, and domestic and international marketing materials.

**NEW YORK STATE CANAL CORPORATION**

The Canal Corporation conducts the most comprehensive marketing of the canal system and Erie Canalway Trail: domestic and international advertising, producing and distributing publications, attending trade shows, conducting public relations, sponsoring special events, and hosting a regularly updated website which includes a calendar of events, visitor services information, and links to tour and rental boat operators. The Canal Corporation also administers a matching grant program to local organizations and agencies for tourism marketing, provides educational programming for school children through the
tugboat Urger and classroom support, and uses the tug to promote the canal system at festivals in Corridor communities.

Although its jurisdiction covers the waterways and adjacent lands and does not extend throughout the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the Canal Corporation is a key strategic partner for Corridor tourism development and marketing. The Corridor supports the Canal Corporation’s long-term plan to assert a “Canals of the 21st Century” theme; shift marketing efforts from a solely water-based campaign to one based on landside recreational opportunities throughout the region; attract automobile travelers within the 3 to 5 hour driving distance range to canalside festivals, attractions, and boating activities; expand winter recreational options; and create a signature recreational event based on the canal system and canalside trails and facilities.

EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, DIVISION OF MARKETING, ADVERTISING AND TOURISM

The division administers the “I LOVE NY” campaign, a full service statewide tourism marketing effort with a primary focus on attracting visitors from outside New York State. The campaign has begun to focus greater attention on the growing heritage tourism market through advertising, travel guides, and partnerships with cultural organizations. While it promotes the state’s wide variety of attractions, and has included the canal system in many of its promotions, it is beyond the scope of the division to promote any individual tourism region or attraction to the exclusion of others. However, the “I LOVE NY” campaign provides enormous opportunities for local and regional partners to leverage their marketing efforts (see below).

REGIONAL / COUNTY / LOCAL TOURISM MARKETING RESOURCES

On a local and regional level, tourism promotion agencies (TPAs), convention and visitor bureaus (CVBs), and other organizations actively promote tourism to their service areas. In some places in the Corridor, local governments and businesses invest in tourism development and marketing through financing promotional activities, creating cultural districts, and brokering public-private partnerships. Many of these efforts are affiliated with the “I LOVE NY” campaign and receive funding from the New York State Division of Marketing, Advertising and Tourism or the state’s Cultural Tourism Initiative (see above). Some focus on canal-related heritage and recreation opportunities. Depending on location and resources, these organizations range from part-time programs to highly sophisticated, competitive operations. They include:

- New York State regional tourism organizations
- New York State tourism promotion agencies
- Convention and visitor bureaus
- County and municipal tourism departments
- Chambers of Commerce

(See Appendix 9 for more details).
Most tourism promotion organizations are funded by hotel/motel taxes paid by the visitor. Additional revenues for New York’s regional tourism organizations, tourism promotion agencies, and convention and visitor bureaus are generated by membership dues, cooperative advertising programs, local general fund allocations and special grants. The matching grants program administered by the New York State Division of Marketing, Advertising and Tourism, budgeted at $4.8 million in 2005, provides funds to these organizations. The division and its partners have recently initiated some creative marketing programs, including an Underground Railroad program and the “Heart of Arts” program. More of these initiatives are needed.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT)

The department administers federal funding for transportation-related “enhancement” projects such as waterfront access and historic preservation; develops state bicycle and pedestrian routes; installs and maintains travel information signage along the state’s public highways; and maintains the state’s Travel Information Gateway website, with maps and information on available modes of travel including canals and docking facilities. DOT also administers the New York State Scenic Byways program, created in 1992 to coordinate recreation and tourism development with resource preservation along road corridors of outstanding regional scenic, natural, cultural or historical significance. Several New York State Scenic Byways cross the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, each offering an alternative travel route to the region’s major highways while telling a story about New York’s heritage. Three of these – Lakes to Locks Passage, an All-American Road, and the Seaway Trail and the Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway, both national Scenic Byways – have also been designated as “America’s Byways” by the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor has begun to work with DOT on developing a Corridor signage program, and will consider the development of new scenic byways (see Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation).

NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY AUTHORITY

The Thruway Authority manages upstate New York’s primary interstate highway (I-90), which runs within or parallel to the Corridor between Albany and Buffalo. Serving approximately 230 million vehicles traveling more than 8 billion miles each year, the Thruway is the key entry point and circulation route for a majority of Corridor visitors. The Thruway Authority maintains tourism information centers at several travel plazas and interchanges along the system, some of them staffed year-round or seasonally, where travelers can obtain directional assistance and literature about destinations and attractions in New York. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor has begun to work with the Thruway Authority on developing a Corridor signage program.
NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION (OPRHP)

The OPRHP administers the New York State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and manages many of New York's prime tourism destinations, including state parks, historic sites, heritage areas, and heritage corridors, and manages campgrounds, boat launches, and public golf courses. The agency maintains a website and calendar of events to assist with heritage and recreational trip planning, with detailed information on heritage tourism opportunities available through the State Historic Preservation Office and the state heritage area visitor centers. OPRHP also funds trail development and maintenance and publishes trail maps and guides for boaters, snowmobilers, and winter travelers.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION (DEC)

The department manages the state’s fish, wildlife, and marine resources; administers sporting licenses and the New York State Sportsman Education Program; publishes the Conservationist magazine; maintains The Fishing Line, an internet resource with updated information on state fishing hotspots; operates environmental education and nature centers on protected lands; provides state forest rangers; and funds local projects to improve fishing and wildlife habitat and enhance public access to hunting and fishing areas through easements across private lands.

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS

The department supports agritourism development through its Farm Fresh Guide website and guide to farms and farmers’ markets, state and county fairs, and a number of programs that help promote and market state agricultural products.

NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE FOR HERITAGE NEW YORK

This program provides matching grants and guidelines to develop thematic heritage trails linking interpretive sites to statewide tourism marketing activities, to the state’s historical collections, and to each other through outreach and funding for websites, brochures, signage, and kiosks. Five heritage trails have been announced, all with themes linked to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor: the Revolutionary War Trail, Underground Railroad Trail, Theodore Roosevelt Trail, Women’s Heritage Trail; and Labor Heritage Trail. The latter two trails are currently under development.

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS (NYSCA)

This agency, devoted to preserving and expanding the state’s cultural resources, provides technical assistance and grants to arts and cultural organizations to broaden public access, appreciation, participation, and education. Together with the Arts & Business Council, NYSCA also supports the New York State Cultural Tourism Initiative, which assists communities and organizations in
the promotion of arts and cultural heritage programs designed to attract new
visitors and stimulate local economies.

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY / HUDSON RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL
HERITAGE AREA

The Greenway Act of 1991 created two organizations to facilitate the develop-
ment of a voluntary regional strategy for preserving the Hudson River Valley’s
scenic, natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources while encouraging
compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule
for land use decision making. The Greenway Council, a state agency, works with
local and county governments to enhance local land use planning and create a
voluntary regional planning compact for the Hudson River Valley. The Green-
way Conservancy, a public benefit corporation, works with local governments,
organizations, and individuals to establish a Hudson River Valley Trail system,
promote the Hudson River Valley as a single tourism destination area, assist in
the preservation of agriculture, and, with the Council, works with communities
to strengthen state agency cooperation with local governments. The Greenway
is the management entity of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area,
designated in 1996 to recognize, preserve, protect, and interpret the nation-
ally significant cultural and natural resources of the Valley for the benefit of the
nation. The national heritage area overlaps with the Erie Canalway National
Heritage Corridor in the capital region and provides an important opportunity
for collaboration on initiatives such as the development of wayfinding informa-
tion, interpretive media, and highway signage.

LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE

Designated an All-American Road – among the best of the nation’s scenic
byways – Lakes to Locks Passage was created by merging the Champlain Canal
Byway and the Champlain Trail (along Lake Champlain) for community revi-
talization and tourism development. The Byway’s corridor management plan,
developed through a partnership of the public and private stewards of the his-
toric, natural, cultural, recreational and working landscape resources along
the Champlain Canal, Upper Hudson River, Lake George and Lake Champlain
regions, provides a structure to unify the communities along the interconnected
waterway. The Lakes to Locks Passage Marketing Plan has defined strategic
steps to develop the waterway as a national and international destination for
visitors. An emphasis on historic resources, coupled with thematic and multi-
modal travel, targets the active baby-boomer market. A formal partnership with
tourism interests in Quebec has established a framework for international des-
tination development.

PRIVATE / NONPROFIT / OTHER RESOURCES

- Canal New York, Inc. is a new marketing and business alliance designed to
  provide destination marketing, government advocacy, tourism information,
  research, and other support for tourism efforts in New York’s canal communi-
  ties. Affiliation in this nonprofit organization will be open to the 234 munici-
palities in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, as well as corporate supporters.

- **Canal Society of New York State** advocates for the protection and interpretation of historic and natural resources and publishes field guides that document the interrelationships between geology and canal engineering at locations throughout the Corridor. The Canal Society, which hosts the annual New York State Canal Conference, is leading a number of tourism development efforts including the planned Port Byron Erie Canal Heritage Park, a partnership with the Thruway Authority (see above), State Historic Preservation Office, New York State DOT (see above), and Cayuga County.

- **Parks & Trails New York** provides advocacy and technical assistance for trail and park planning and management throughout the state, and is a primary supporter of the Canalway Trail and the annual Cycling the Erie Canal event and Canalway Trail Celebration.

- **Preservation League of New York State** provides grant support, technical assistance, and advocacy for historic preservation activity throughout the state, celebrates outstanding preservation projects through its annual awards, and calls attention to critical preservation needs through its annual Seven to Save program.

- **Arts & Business Council Inc.** collaborates with the New York State Council on the Arts on the Cultural Tourism Initiative Grants Program, which includes an annual workshop series and grants to encourage arts and cultural heritage programs designed to attract new visitors, stimulate local economies, generate new jobs, and create renewed pride in and recognition of the value of the arts and cultural heritage of local communities.

- **State Council on Waterways (SCOW)** advocates for the continued preservation and enhancement of New York’s natural and artificial waterways, supports canal-related promotional activities and tourism development, and operates a tour boat, educational programs, and a model program to connect a marina to downtown businesses in Little Falls.

- **Local historical societies and museums** ranging from storefront operations to regional preservation and educational organizations provide a critical link between Corridor resources, interpretation, and tourism development.

- **Commercial businesses and associations**, in addition to providing key visitor services, provide extensive support for tourism promotion agencies, convention and visitor bureaus, and special events.

### RESOURCE ANALYSIS

### GENERAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM TRENDS

Successful tourism development and marketing is research-based because travelers and travel behavior continually changes; trends impact success. Competitive tourism business models have changed from a primary focus on the product, to a focus on the competition, and now to a focus on the customer.

Twenty-five years ago, visitors took more than one week of vacation travel away from home; in 1985 it was 5.4 nights; in 2003 it averaged 4 days nationally. Much travel today is often a weekend “breakation.” Advance trip planning may once
have been 3 months or more, but now ranges from four weeks to one day. Rapidly expanding use of the internet for travel planning and travel purchasing offers new opportunities for travel destinations; 38 percent of park visitors prefer to plan online (source: Travel Industry Association of America [TIA]).

While leisure travel numbers have gone up, visitation to national and state parks and other historic sites in the U.S. reached a 10-year low in 2003 (D.K. Shifflet). Park visitation has increased slightly over the past decade, but national and state parks’ share of leisure visitation is down by 29 percent since 1994 (Travel Advance). One response is a national campaign by the National Park Service, the Travel Industry Association of America, and private partners, resulting in increased travel volume for national parks.

Outside forces can have a significant impact on travel patterns. Terrorism, war, and new visa and security procedures have negatively affected tourism (TIA). International visitation to the U.S. dropped more than 20 percent in the three years following 2001, employment declined, tax receipts dropped, and many travel organizations were jeopardized. The average U.S. family paid about $300 more for gasoline in 2004 than in 2003, impacting not only distance traveled for discretionary purposes, but also the relative importance of the perceived value of the destination (Energy Information Center). In response to these challenges the tourism industry has increased collaborative partnerships, conducted new research, and sought to become more innovative.

NEW YORK STATE TRAVEL AND TOURISM TRENDS

Recent years’ visitor travel patterns show increased auto travel, regional travel, family travel, rural travel, and “American heritage” travel within the U.S. Niagara Falls and New York City remain major magnet attractions for visitors to the state, and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor covers the largest part of the geography and a major transportation route between them. Recreation is also a strong draw for visitors to New York. All of these factors encourage new visitation to the Corridor.

New York ranks fifth in the United States as a state travel destination after California, Florida, Texas, and Pennsylvania, and it ranks first in overnight travel from Canada. For domestic and international traveler spending it ranks third, with $39.28 billion, after California ($78.13 billion) and Florida ($59.85 billion). In 2000, there were 131.2 million person trips to New York, yielding an estimated $37.5 billion in spending. More than one-quarter of these visitors attended a cultural activity or historic site (sources: TIA, Impact of Travel on State Economies; Travelscope 2000; D.K. Shifflet; Museum Association of New York).

The two key tourism market segments that match the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor tourism product are the cultural heritage traveler and the outdoor recreation or soft adventure traveler.

The following New York tourism data was collected by tourism region in 2000 and is not closely matched to the Corridor area (D.K. Shifflet):

• Automobile travel is the mode of choice for more than 85 percent of visitors to New York destinations. The average one-way distance traveled by overnight leisure visitors to tourism regions in upstate New York (see map of tourism regions in Chapter 1) ranges from a high of 614 miles to the Capitol-Saratoga region, to a low of 307 miles to the Adirondack region, with other regions
ranging from 400-600 miles. Although auto travel is primarily east-west, there are many opportunities for north-south travel within the Corridor as well.

- Although research shows that day leisure visitor spending is increasing at a more rapid rate than overnight leisure spending in New York, overnight leisure spending is approximately three times that of day visitation. To maximize economic impact, the primary target for the Corridor is overnight visitors staying in paid accommodations. The relative size of this cohort ranges widely in the Corridor, from 33 percent of visitors to the Capital-Saratoga region to 67 percent of visitors to the Adirondack region.

- General overnight leisure travel to tourism regions in upstate New York is initiated primarily in the third quarter (37 to 58 percent), during the watered months of the canal system, followed by the second quarter (23 to 26 percent), the fourth quarter (8 to 27 percent), and the first quarter (8 to 16 percent). Average visitor length of stay ranges from 3.7 to 4.4 days depending on the region.

In general, upstate New York is considered a “drive-to” market due to its limited airline service to primarily smaller, regional airports with few large international hubs. Most tourists are from the U.S. or Canada, with many driving from other east coast destinations such as New York City, Boston, or Philadelphia (see Appendix 9). Canadian visitation has been increasing in recent years, with tourists driving from Montreal or Toronto; a high-speed ferry service between Toronto and Rochester is popular with tourists.

According to a 2003 economic impact study by the Northern New York Travel and Tourism Research Center at the State University of New York in Potsdam, roughly half (46 percent) of travelers to the state are regional visitors. These visitors come from approximately 50 miles away or less, and are typically day-trippers from nearby urban areas and suburbs. For example, the port city of Oswego, a gateway for Lake Ontario and the Erie Canal, sees regional visitation primarily by car and boat from both Rochester and Syracuse, each located about an hour and a half away.

The two key tourism market segments that match the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor tourism product are the cultural heritage traveler and the outdoor recreation or soft adventure traveler. Overall, the cultural heritage travel market is larger (40.7 million participants in the Northeast vs. 16.8 million for outdoor recreation). Within the outdoor recreation category, strong market segments for the Corridor are fitness buffs, outdoors enthusiasts, recreational boaters, nature or ecotourists, and winter recreationists. More information on these two market segments is provided in Appendix 9.

In terms of the Corridor’s historic, natural, recreafional, and interpretive resources, cultural heritage tourism and outdoor recreation tourism are intertwined. In terms of marketing, however, these two segments have minimal overlap and will have to be targeted differently. For example, camping is the number one outdoor recreation activity, yet only six percent of cultural heritage travelers utilize recreational vehicles or tents for accommodations, and only six percent are motivated by outdoor recreation, although 16 percent will participate in outdoor recreation activities.
CULTURAL HERITAGE TRAVEL AND TOURISM TRENDS

The majority of cultural heritage travel is motivated by the desire to experience historic and cultural resources in person; special cultural events also influence the choice of destination and the timing of the trip. Cultural and heritage travel target markets for the Corridor include “canal buffs” (who log mileage traveled on or alongside canals, or seek out specific transportation or engineering features) and those interested in Corridor-related themes (religious movements, the Underground Railroad, women’s rights, industrial heritage, the Revolutionary War, etc.).

The Corridor’s historic and cultural resources are extensively described in Chapter 3 of this Plan (Protecting Our Heritage), and a thematic framework for understanding these resources is described in Chapter 6 (Interpretation and Orientation). Services and recreational features relevant to heritage travel in the Corridor are described in Chapter 5 (Promoting Recreation).

In a 2003 national study by the Travel Industry Association of America, cultural heritage visitors are identified as a growing segment of the general traveling population and as high value visitors with higher spending and longer stays than general leisure travelers. Other findings include the following (see Appendix 9 for further research detail):

- Cultural, arts, historical, and heritage activities/events were included in the travel of 81 percent of U.S. adults who took at least one trip of 50 miles or more (one way) away from home in 2002.
- While overall U.S. travel grew 5.6 percent from 1996 to 2002, cultural heritage travel grew more than twice as fast, at 13 percent. One in five (20 percent) of all domestic household trips include historical or cultural activity.
- Travelers ages 35-54 with higher education and/or income generate the greatest number of cultural heritage trips; there is growth in the 18-34 age group.
- Overall spending by cultural heritage travelers rose 17 percent from an average of $534 per trip in 1996 to $623 in 2002. Average per trip spending in the Northeast by cultural heritage travelers was $654, the highest of all regions in the U.S. (all figures in 2002 dollars).
- Cultural heritage travelers have a higher than average affinity for visiting national or state parks and taking group tours. Visiting a designated historic site and/or attending a performing arts event are among the most popular cultural heritage activities, while shopping is the most popular travel activity overall.
- Sixty-nine percent of cultural heritage travelers find that learning something new to enrich their lives makes their trips more memorable, and 57 percent selected travel based on their hobbies or interests. These numbers are even higher for frequent cultural heritage travelers (three or more trips per year).
- Most cultural heritage travel is by automobile, 90 percent includes an overnight stay, and average length of stay is 5.2 nights, most often in paid accommodations. Travel party size averaged 2.2, and has grown in the recent past.
- The most influential source of travel information is word-of-mouth, followed by the internet. A majority of visitors plan their trip within one month or less of traveling, and four in ten extended their stay because of a cultural heritage activity.

New York State Cultural Tourism Initiative (CTI)

A successful program now in its fifth year, the CTI is funded by the Arts and Business Council, Inc. under contract with the New York State Council on the Arts. The program grants approximately $230,000 per year to arts organizations that partner with tourism organizations to develop and market cultural heritage tourism. The CTI has returned millions of dollars in economic impact to communities and stimulated a climate of collaboration and partnership among hundreds of organizations and government entities. Over 40 multi-organizational, multi-disciplinary, multi-community projects have been funded throughout the state.
According to the World Tourism Organization, heritage tourism is projected to grow as much as 15 percent annually throughout the 21st century. A study performed by the University at Buffalo State University of New York in 2000 found that, on average, heritage tourism generated longer trips and an additional $166 beyond other types of tourism in upstate New York. These findings point to positive trends for the Corridor.

OUTDOOR RECREATION TRAVEL AND TOURISM TRENDS

Recreation oriented travelers are categorized in a variety of ways: outdoor recreationists, ecotourists, sports tourists, marine tourists, etc. Visitors traveling for recreation are usually referred to in the industry as “adventure travelers” and are categorized as “hard adventure” (e.g., whitewater rafting, snorkeling, mountain biking, etc.) and “soft adventure” (e.g., boating, bicycling, hiking, etc.) travelers.

From available research by the Travel Industry Association of America and an analysis of Corridor recreation opportunities, it is safe to conclude that most Corridor recreation can be categorized as soft adventure. The Corridor's natural resources, the basis for most of its recreational activities, are extensively described in Chapter 4 of this Plan (Conserving Natural Resources). Services and facilities relevant to outdoor recreation in the Corridor are described in Chapter 5 (Promoting Recreation).

In the Northeast, 16.8 million adults participated in soft adventure travel activities within the past five years. The top four soft adventure travel activities in the Northeast are camping, hiking, bicycling, and bird- or animal-watching (TIA, U.S. Forest Service). Because of population growth, actual numbers have grown for almost all outdoor recreation activities, even where the trends are down. Outdoor recreation is a solidly middle class interest; participation rates decline in income levels below $25,000 and above $100,000. Outdoor recreation visitors to the Northeast are the highest spenders, with an average of $1230 per trip including all soft adventure experiences.

Outdoor recreationists can be categorized as “participants” and “enthusiasts.” The number of enthusiasts is only one-third the number of participants, but enthusiasts represent 70 to 80 percent of travel days, have higher levels of education, spend more, and follow special interest publications. For tourism marketers, enthusiasts are the high value customers, and they are also easier to attract by advertising in special interest publications. Enthusiasts also tend to be more interested in or supportive of environmental stewardship, and will seek out natural resources known to be well-managed and accessible. This makes the Corridor, with its extensive natural resources and high level of stewardship, a good fit for these travelers (see Appendix 9 for further detail):

Fitness Buffs

Fitness buffs like running, walking, bicycling, and hiking. They are very interested in outdoor learning; 75 percent visit historic sites, 59 percent visit visitor centers, 76 percent visit nature centers, 81 percent participate in sightseeing,
and 87 percent participate in waterside activities. Fitness buffs have relatively high incomes and are a high value market segment for the Corridor, which features an extensive network of high-quality short- and long-distance trails, numerous opportunities to visit historic sites or nature centers, and extensive waterside activities. The 348-mile Erie Canalway Trail, the longest continuous pedestrian and bicycle trail in the U.S., is scheduled for completion in 2007; the Corridor already hosts an annual end-to-end “Cycling the Erie Canal” event.

**Outdoors Enthusiasts**

This category includes highly active outdoor sports enthusiasts, hunters, fishermen, campers, boaters, hikers, and snowmobilers. There is synergy between these activities, particularly between fishing and recreational boating (see below). According to the American Sportfishing Association, New York ranks third in the U.S. for non-resident economic output from sportfishing, reeling in nearly $585 million in 2001. There is anecdotal evidence that the Corridor could become an international destination for carp fishing, and several communities currently host annual fishing derbies. In general, outdoors enthusiasts are a high value market segment for the Corridor, which features the unique water resources of the canal system, an active snowmobiling community, and extensive off-road trails and backwoods areas.

**Recreational Boaters**

Recreational boating in the Corridor involves vessels ranging from large and small powerboats, houseboats, waterskiing, and personal watercraft, to non-motorized craft such as kayaks, canoes, rowboats, rowing shells, sailboards, and sailboats. Although “paddling” (kayaks, canoes, rowboats) attracts more participants throughout the Northeast, motor boats are more common on most segments of the New York State Canal System, partly because of the large scale, long distances, and commercial traffic of the canals, and partly because of the wide variety of motor boating opportunities, which include tour, excursion, and rental boats as well as personal vessels.

Recreational motor boating attracts adventure travelers with higher levels of income and education. Nationally, recreational motor boating increased 39 percent between 1982-83 and 1994-95, and it is a popular activity for 55 percent of hunting and fishing aficionados, 56 percent of highly active sports enthusiasts, 25 percent of fitness buffs, 22 percent of nature lovers, and 38 percent of fishing enthusiasts. Unlike participants in most other recreational activities, more than 20 percent of recreational boaters are over 50 years old. New York resident motor boat owners are identified as 91 percent male with no children living at home, an average age of 55 years, and a household income of $65,000. The vast majority live upstate, 65 percent own a boat sized 16-25 feet, and two-thirds of them fish.

Boating, although not as large in participant numbers as some other recreation categories, is an important activity for the Corridor. It is a significant contributor to the Corridor’s living heritage, encourages interest in the canal system itself, and attracts people canalside to participate in boating or watch boats lock
through the canals. Although Corridor boaters are primarily from upstate New York, the opportunity exists to attract non-local visitors to rent boats for canal excursions, and to attract “Great Loop” cruisers making the circuit of Eastern U.S. inland waterways. With under-utilized capacity on the canal waterways, there is excellent growth potential (see Chapter 5, Promoting Recreation). Recreational boaters are a very high value market segment for the Corridor.

Nature Tourists or Ecotourists

The International Ecotourism Society defines its mission as “responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people.” Nature lovers enjoy walking, birding and wildlife watching, nature study, sightseeing, and going to visitor centers. Total estimated U.S. participation is 26.6 million, and they are two-thirds female. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates bird/animal watching participants at 24 million nationwide, spending $18 billion per year. The demographics of ecotourists are particularly synergistic with the intent, experience, and offerings of the Corridor. They are a high value market segment for the Corridor.

Winter Recreationists

From a tourism economic impact perspective, winter visitors are highly valued because they can fill otherwise unused capacity in lodging, dining, and shopping venues. Growth rates for some of the most popular winter recreation activities are 92 percent for snowshoeing, 34 percent for snowmobiling, and 22 percent for snow skiing. In the Corridor, interest in ice fishing and winter steelhead fishing has been increasing in recent years. Outdoor recreationists classified as nature lovers and outdoors enthusiasts have a high interest in snow and ice activities; snowmobiling is a popular activity among 12 percent of highly active sports enthusiasts and 10 percent of those with high interest in hunting and fishing. New Hampshire 2003 state data on snowmobiling shows high spending per day, with more than 10 percent of the state’s annual visitor spending coming from snowmobilers. If comparable trends exist in New York, this experience demonstrates a high value market segment for the Corridor.

GUIDELINES FOR HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

Reduced travel overall, as well as reduced prices for accommodations, have decreased the revenue from hotel/motel taxes, a significant portion of which are dedicated for tourism marketing. Private sector tourism businesses are similarly impacted. Additionally, the prerogatives of safety, health, and education spending continue to challenge the ability of government to make up the loss of hotel/motel tax funding with public support for tourism development. To make the most of limited funding, heritage tourism destinations in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor must:

• collaborate and reduce duplication of effort;
• focus on enhancing the visitor experience of the heritage resources they have;
• use research to target their audiences and measure the results; and
• strategically market themselves to reach and motivate those audiences.
COORDINATION

Despite a wide variety of excellent tourism marketing being conducted by multiple state and local organizations, it is universally acknowledged that current marketing efforts for Corridor destinations are fragmented and that there is a lack of coordination. No entity exists to market the Corridor as a whole.

The existing tourism promotion system in New York, as in most states, is geographically based. Because tourism promotion is predominantly funded by a local hotel/motel tax which is collected on a municipal and/or county basis, municipal and county tourism promotion organizations focus on putting heads in _local_ beds. Other primary sources of funding include county general fund allocations; membership dues; and support from the New York State Canal Corporation and the Empire State Development Corporation Division of Marketing, Advertising and Tourism. The Canal Corporation’s promotions focus on the waterways and adjacent Erie Canalway Trail, although it is expanding its efforts to include more landside recreation.

The New York State Division of Marketing, Advertising and Tourism does feature the canal system in promotional efforts, but its jurisdiction is the entire state with all of its varied tourism products. The division oversees eleven tourism regions throughout the state, funded primarily through state grants, funds from the tourism promotion agencies in their region, and self-funded efforts such as advertising sales. The regions’ marketing efforts are significantly under-funded. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor crosses six of these tourism regions and their respective organizations (see Appendix 9).

While these agency divisions and regional and county geographic jurisdictions are individually logical, they do not make tourism marketing effective for the multi-jurisdictional destination that is the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Tourists are generally unaware of, and unmoved by, governmental boundaries; despite the efforts of local destination promotion organizations, tourists rarely stay in one location during an extended stay. In addition, locally focused or canal-focused tourism marketing efforts do not effectively communicate the breadth of experiences available to Corridor visitors, particularly the sophisticated heritage and recreation travelers who seek a variety of experiences.

Although some communities have begun to work together to promote themselves on a regional basis, many communities remain unaware of or out of step with marketing efforts going on down the road, resulting in inefficiencies that frustrate taxpayers and local tourism businesses and inconsistencies that frustrate tourists. Marketing the whole Corridor as a national and international destination would be cost-effective; avoid duplication of effort; create consistency of image, brand, and message; and create a much more compelling destination with a higher expectation of economic success. At the same time, coordination of event planning – perhaps through the designation of an annual week or weekend of Corridor-wide celebrations, anchored by a signature event, with enhanced promotions and marketing – would help put the region “on the calendar” of travel planners and sustain year-round interest in Corridor tourism opportunities.

Marketing the whole Corridor as a national and international destination would be cost-effective; avoid duplication of effort; create consistency of image, brand, and message; and create a much more compelling destination with a higher expectation of economic success.
The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor provides the opportunity for multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary management of tourism development and marketing efforts, with more extensive cross-promotion of tourism products. The Corridor Commission does not seek to duplicate the efforts of existing organizations. Marketing of local and regional tourism destinations remains necessary to help prospective tourists plan their visit once they decide to come to the Corridor. Intra-Corridor marketing and marketing of individual destinations and sub-regions should remain primarily the purview of existing organizations, while new marketing efforts with broader reach are pursued by the Corridor.

A key partner for the Corridor in this effort should be a new Corridor-wide convention and visitors bureau (CVB) or similar organization, supported by independent sources of funding. Such a partner would provide a much-needed single point of contact between the Corridor and residents, visitors, and other tourism development and marketing organizations, helping to coordinate cross-jurisdictional issues and programs by:

- providing leadership and vision to leverage the creativity and energy of existing tourism development and marketing efforts, creating opportunities for local organizations and communities to participate as they choose;
- meeting regularly with tourism professionals throughout the Corridor for advice and counsel, and providing a forum for discussion and idea creation;
- acting as a liaison between tourism marketing efforts and Corridor preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, and economic revitalization efforts; and
- providing linkage to the promotional activities of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, Lakes to Locks Passage, and National Park System units within the Corridor.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission will seek to collaborate as appropriate with Canal New York, Inc., a new nonprofit organization. The proposed mission statement of Canal New York, Inc. is “to serve as the one generally accepted private sector entity dedicated to tourism, marketing, legislative advocacy, and business collaboration to support existing and new business opportunities within New York’s canal communities.”

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT AND VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Successful heritage tourism is based first and foremost on the quality of historic, cultural, natural, recreational, and interpretive resources. For heritage tourists, quality constitutes more than the authenticity and integrity of these resources; it also means diversity, consistency, cohesiveness, continuity, and comprehensibility. Repeat visitation is unlikely if these attributes are not met. Moreover, contextually sensitive tourism efforts must carefully balance visitation, resident quality of life, and preservation of resources with the development of amenities for both visitors and residents to enjoy.

For tourism to be sustainable as an economic generator, the Corridor and its individual communities must attract repeat visitation. To generate repeat visi-
tation, the “tourism product” must be periodically renewed; heritage resources
must be enhanced, and the visitor experience of them must be continually
improved and refreshed. The Corridor is in a position to encourage such an
effort through its support for:
• enhanced preservation and interpretation of historic resources;
• expanded recreation and off-season opportunities;
• increased linkages between destinations; and
• improved quality and consistency of visitor services.

Enhanced Preservation and Interpretation

The cultural heritage travelers described in the preceding Context section of
this chapter tend to be sophisticated and demanding of their travel experiences;
they can readily appreciate the difference between “themed” attractions and
authentic historic resources that have maintained their integrity. Because these
travelers also tend to be well-educated and to travel with other adults, they often
seek out diversity in order to satisfy multiple interests and affinities. Given the
authenticity, integrity, and diversity of its historic resources, the Erie Canalway
National Heritage Corridor is in a strong position to attract additional heritage
tourism.

However, many resources remain inaccessible to visitors or vulnerable to deteri-
oration, inappropriate preservation practices, and, ironically, some of the same
development that is needed to attract tourism (see Visitor Services below). At
the same time, both residents and visitors have perceived a lack of consistency
in the quality of heritage tourism sites, in terms of both the comprehensiveness
or effectiveness of preservation efforts and the provision of interpretation and
visitor services. Visitors currently walk away from many heritage sites without
having a clear sense of how the sites are connected to the larger Corridor story,
without feeling that they have truly experienced the history of the site, or with-
out knowledge of similar or related sites down the road, and therefore without
a compelling reason to extend their stay or return for another visit.

All of these are reasons why the preservation of cultural landscapes – entire
geographic areas associated with specific events, activities, or people – are as
important to Corridor heritage tourism as the preservation of individual historic
resources such as buildings or vessels. Well-preserved patterns of settlement,
land use, or transportation help convey the strong sense of place that cultural
heritage travelers will seek out and revisit. For example, a 19th century industrial
district will have a stronger sense of place if it includes canalside elements of
power generation, factory or mill buildings, worker and management housing,
all connected by a continuous street grid uninterrupted by major non-contrib-
uting elements such as entertainment centers or big-box retail stores.

While well-preserved historic resources can in some ways tell their own sto-
ries, most cultural heritage travelers seek out in-depth information and stories
that connect heritage sites to people and events, to the landscapes surrounding
them, and to the broader sweep of history. The Corridor’s historic resources
have great ability to evoke history in a vivid and memorable way, in part because
the Corridor’s relevance as a “river of commerce and culture” has continued to
Tourism Development and Marketing

the present day and will continue into the future. While it is important for the interpretation of historic resources to tell local stories in local styles – thereby satisfying cultural heritage travelers’ demands for integrity, variety, and strong sense of place – it is also important for each resource to provide a “gateway” to the larger story of the Corridor, encouraging visits to other sites of interest and generating an understanding of the Corridor as a veritable treasure trove of history and culture. Where appropriate, an explanation of the three primary phases of canal development – the original, enlarged, and 20th century canal systems – should be used to help orient visitors within the Corridor’s historical timeline.

One of the Corridor’s most important historic resources is its intangible cultural heritage – the traditional and contemporary arts and folkways of people living and working alongside the waterways. Cultural programming – performing arts, readings, educational activities, reenactments, guided tours, festivals and special events – does more than preserve historic resources; it helps bring historic resources to life. For many visitors, these activities are a central part of the heritage tourism experience, bringing people together and providing an opening to broader participation in community life for residents and visitors alike.

Cultural programming is an important part of tourism development for the Corridor because it contributes simultaneously to community identity-building, interpretation of historic resources, and repeat visitation by heritage tourists and others. For example, many canal-related events in the Corridor have become settings for annual get-togethers such as family reunions.

Strategies to enhance preservation of the Corridor’s historic resources, including cultural landscapes, arts, and folkways, are outlined in Chapter 3, Protecting Our Heritage. Strategies to enhance interpretation, including educational and cultural programming, are outlined in Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation. Strategies to increase linkages between heritage sites in the Corridor are discussed below and in Chapter 6.

Expanded Recreation and Off-Season Opportunities

There will always be some degree of seasonality in Corridor tourism. The canal system is officially open to navigation from May 1 to November 15, and closed to through-boaters the rest of the year. Weather-related closings and other interruptions in navigation are posted on the Canal Corporation website. The non-navigable months are also the slowest for the upstate New York tourism industry in general. Most of the outdoor recreationists described in the preceding Context section of this chapter will be attracted primarily to the Corridor’s spring, summer, and fall activities, and recreational opportunities in the Corridor favor these seasons. However, communities need jobs and economic activity throughout the year, and the Corridor offers more to visitors than boating.

Natural resources are the basis for most outdoor recreation activity, and particularly for outdoors enthusiasts, eco-tourists, and winter recreationists. For these visitors, the continuity and accessibility of natural resources – the ability to find and move through trails, waterways, parks, and protected areas, perhaps for long distances and without modern intrusions – is almost as important as the
environmental quality of the resources. Preservation of cultural landscapes (see *Enhanced Preservation and Interpretation*, page 8.17) is valued in part because it encourages new development in existing town centers, helping to conserve existing natural areas, open spaces, and scenic views. Strategies for enhancing continuity of and access to natural resources in the Corridor are provided in Chapter 4, *Conserving Natural Resources*. Strategies for promoting recreation year-round are provided in Chapter 5, *Promoting Recreation*.

The “I LOVE NY” campaign is addressing the seasonality issue through winter promotions based on recreation – particularly skiing and snowmobiling – and the positioning of upstate cities and villages as resort areas surrounded by nature. A number of cities in the Corridor have also sought to increase winter activity among both residents and visitors with campaigns highlighting recreational activities such as ice skating, spectator sports such as hockey, outdoor arts such as ice and snow sculpture, and discounted shopping, dining, and admissions to cultural sites or performances. In general, efforts to enhance local quality of life by providing residents with centrally located activities during the winter months are also good for tourism if they add life to downtown streets.

The Corridor’s initiatives to expand preservation and conservation activity, focus new development on existing town centers, and promote recreational development will help support existing efforts to boost off-season visitation. Opportunities to develop new cross-country skiing and snowmobiling trails should be pursued in coordination with efforts to develop more all-season lodging properties. Innovative ways to integrate the canal system into winter tourism, such as converting short in-town canal segments to ice skating rinks or providing guided tours of the Canal Corporation’s winter maintenance operations in full swing, should be considered.

*Increased Linkages Between Destinations*

Other than visiting friends and relatives, the major motivation for travel is the experience itself. *Perceived value* of the experience will dictate how far visitors will travel, how long they will stay, and how much they will spend. Although the size and diversity of the Corridor would suggest that the number of possible visitor experiences is extraordinary, the reality is that many visitors will see only a small part of the region, even as repeat visitors. Although some residents have expressed frustration that the Corridor is so large and diverse that there is no way to tell the whole story in one place, this is a good thing from a tourism perspective; it offers a reason to travel to more of the Corridor.

Tourism development planners must consider what creates a critical mass of attractions or a powerful enough “experience magnet” to generate visitation in volume sufficient to create economic impact. Smaller sites and communities without a “critical mass” of attractions or heritage resources can band together thematically to create a “magnet” or link to larger magnet sites. Communities along less populated segments of the canals can collaborate on shared development goals and strategic siting of key visitor services to attract boaters, drivers, bicyclists, and through hikers. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
Tourism Development and Marketing

provides an interpretive and marketing “umbrella” that allows communities large and small to collaborate and attract more visitors than they could by acting alone. A primary partner for the Corridor in this effort will be the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, which has already encouraged considerable linkage efforts through its Heritage Areas Program and its Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Because the Corridor includes communities and heritage resources distant from the canals as well as waterfront communities, enhanced physical linkages between heritage resources are needed, including directional and confirmational signage, trails and designated byways, and intermodal connections.

A consistent and comprehensive wayfinding system for those traveling by automobile is a critical goal for the Corridor. Visitor itineraries or journeys organized by geography or theme can also provide this linkage, with loops originating in larger communities with accommodations and traveling through smaller communities with individual sites of interest. Strategies to enhance both thematic and physical linkages within the Corridor are outlined in Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation.

A basic conceptual link between individual communities and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor as a whole can be established through a program to provide a kind of affiliate status to communities that agree to support the Corridor vision and goals. These affiliated communities can be recognized with official Corridor signage at major entry points, and receive ongoing tourism development and marketing assistance from the Corridor Commission and its partners. Strategies to develop an affiliate community program are outlined in Chapter 9, Implementation.

At the national and international level, conceptual linkages can also be developed to connect the region with the Great Lakes and Midwest, with Canada, with New York City, with European nations that sent sons and daughters to build the canals and put down new roots, and with other heritage destinations and inland waterways – such as the “Great Loop” around the eastern U.S. – that are central to the American experience. Potential visitors should understand the Corridor as both a physical and conceptual link between New York City and Niagara Falls, New York’s most popular tourism destinations. These linkages are an important part of the Corridor’s positioning (see page 8.25).

Improved Quality and Consistency of Visitor Services

The capacity, location, and quality of some tourism infrastructure within the Corridor fall short of current needs. Availability of lodging, dining, retail, information, and support services, such as recreational outfitting and rentals, is limited in some areas. A significant number of services are seasonal, and many are provided by small businesses that have had little capital investment over the years. General strategies and models for heritage business development are provided in Chapter 7, Economic Revitalization.

Lodging options in the Corridor generally fall within two categories – economy chain hotels, located almost exclusively in urban areas or alongside their high-

Linkage Between Canal and Downtown Businesses

To connect boaters with downtown offerings, Phoenix, NY has developed an immensely popular nonprofit program called the “Bridge House Brats.” Youth ages 6-21 must qualify for and are trained to be Brats. Boaters can order from local restaurant menus at the Brat Shack or radio ahead, and meals are delivered to the dock. The Brats also maintain a small museum in a restored lift bridge operators’ tower with exhibits on local waterfront culture. Clever and innovative, the program generates revenue for downtown businesses, tip income for youth, extraordinary service for boaters, and goodwill for the community.
way approaches; and a larger number of independently owned bed and breakfasts, scattered among the region’s villages and hamlets, particularly those with scenic value or waterfront linkages. Whereas the region’s hotels generally cater to business travelers and those traveling to visit friends and family, providing family discounts and amenities such as pools or event spaces, bed and breakfast properties generally cater more directly to cultural heritage and outdoor recreation travelers, with amenities such as bicycle or boat rentals and tours.

Because the bulk of economic impact from tourism comes from overnight visitors, communities without lodging are sometimes left out of opportunities for tourism development. However, it is not necessary or even desirable that every community has a full complement of services. The greatest volume of visitation to the Corridor is by car, and most services are accessible within a reasonable driving distance from any destination. Communities without accommodations can benefit economically from day visitors through retail, dining, entertainment and attraction expenditures.

The Corridor may be considered as a collection of overlapping sub-regions, each defined by a particular type of visitor, within which individual communities can be assisted to determine what gaps they may have and whether to fill them with new development or by partnering with neighboring communities. The Corridor will support research that further identifies the needs and destinations of targeted visitor audiences (see Context section above) and the current capacities and future growth potential of existing visitor services such as year round rooms, seasonal lodging, campsites, recreational rentals and outfitting.

Many heritage and recreational sites within the Corridor are currently at various stages of visitor readiness or ability to service their identified carrying capacity. Guidelines for what constitutes visitor readiness – clarity of signage, predictable hours of operation, availability of restrooms and parking, handicapped accessibility – should be developed and disseminated. Strategies for improving visitor use management through recreational development are outlined in Chapter 5, Promoting Recreation. Visitor readiness criteria are also part of a planned certification program for the Corridor, designed to incentivize improvements for preservation and interpretation, as outlined in Chapter 9, Implementation.

Visitor information is a particularly important part of the visitor service infrastructure and a key to establishing and maintaining both physical and conceptual linkages between Corridor sites and communities. Corridor support for visitor travel planning must be customer-driven and user friendly, maximize the use of research and technology to intercept visitors and potential visitors at key moments in the decision making process, and provide simple and encouraging mechanisms for purchasing Corridor travel products. Different visitor information is needed at various points in the travel process:

- when the visitor is considering travel and choosing a destination;
- when the visitor is looking for specific travel experience information;
- when the visitor is looking to purchase travel products;
- when the visitor is in the Corridor;
- when the visitor is experiencing various sites; and
- when the visitor returns home.

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Community Lodging Development

Because economic impact is increased significantly by overnight stays, some Corridor communities without lodging, especially communities accessible to boaters, may wish to develop some accommodations capacity. One of many interesting possibilities worth exploring is the idea of creating a preservation-oriented small business program to stimulate the renovation and conversion of canal-side buildings with historic charm into lodgings. The development of a series of such small properties could be run as a collaborative chain of “Canal Host Houses,” independently owned but with a common reservation system and marketing program. A portion of the revenue could be re-directed into a revolving loan fund. Such a program would provide visitors by boat or car with additional places to stay, preserve and restore existing buildings, create new small businesses, provide jobs, and generate new economic impact to communities. A potential partner for this program, such as the Cornell School of Hotel Administration and its Center for Hospitality Research, could provide technical assistance to help identify properties, develop a business model, and train new owner-managers.
Strategies for providing consistent wayfinding and interpretive information are outlined in Chapter 6, *Interpretation and Orientation*. Critical elements of an effective visitor information system for the Corridor include:

- a comprehensive, “one-stop” Corridor-wide trip planning website with travel booking mechanism; the ability to search for sites and events by theme, activity, date, and region; inquiry response; and periodically updated information that can be used in local community press releases, including downloadable images;
- consistent and coordinated directional signage and other wayfinding devices such as maps and scenic byways;
- a suite of communications materials with a unified design, in formats suitable for coordination with other organizations’ marketing efforts, including single-sheet and trifold brochures, brochure shells, folders, etc.;
- expanded distribution or display of visitor information at high-volume sites such as attractions, hotels, Thruway rest areas, and shopping centers; and
- enhanced interpretive information at heritage sites, visitor centers, and roadside or canalside pulloffs for scenic views.

Visitor centers can significantly enhance the quality of the tourism experience by providing staff assistance with travel planning and information on the full spectrum of tourism options for a city or region. Too often, however, visitor centers are used as high-visibility signs of public investment in tourism development and are not backed up by necessary improvements to historic sites, interpretive resources, physical and conceptual linkages between sites, other necessary visitor services, or marketing. As stand-alone structures with static information displays and no direct connection to local historic resources, visitor centers can drain local tourism development funds without generating significant benefits. However, as community-centered amenities designed to accommodate cultural programming and interactive, updatable multimedia displays, fully integrated into a broader system of “gateways” to the Corridor experience, visitor centers can help guide a broad audience to stories and sites of interest.

**RESEARCH AND EVALUATION**

For tourism development and marketing in the Corridor to be effective, baseline data must be established and regular research must be conducted to refine marketing focus, measure success, and secure future funding. Some existing data on Corridor economic conditions and tourism levels is difficult to access, incomplete, inconsistent, or collected infrequently, complicating efforts to track progress and redirect efforts. The geographic breakdown of currently available research does not match the Corridor’s boundary; thus, estimates directly relevant to the Corridor often have to be extrapolated. Spending data currently obtained by the Empire State Development Corporation for New York State under a contractual agreement with D.K. Shifflet & Associates cannot be translated to the geographic boundary of the Corridor.

Some available data provides excellent insight into particular market segments, but must be translated into broader tourism uses. For example, Canal Corporation marketing efforts are restricted primarily to the upstate New York region, resulting in large numbers of local resident recreational users. While this is a
positive outcome, it does not add net new revenue to Corridor businesses (see Market Assessment and Targeting below). Similarly, much of the currently available data on recreational activity in the Corridor is based on resident data. It cannot be assumed that residential recreational data and tourism recreational data lead to the same conclusions.

The key assessments to determine tourism success are visitor volume and spending. This data provides on-going accountability and feedback to help continually refine tourism efforts. Some data on visitation and economic impacts could be tracked based on hotel/motel tax collections, but this data is collected by counties. In general, useful data cannot be secured on a local level; where it can be secured, many local tourism marketing organizations are too small and underfunded to be able to utilize it effectively. Collecting information on visitor satisfaction and perceived value is also critical to help tourism developers target their investments in product development. Much of this information may be anecdotal or informal in nature.

Corridor support for tourism research and evaluation will include commissioning custom research reports targeted to the Corridor’s geographic boundary in order to help ascertain basic Corridor visitation trends, develop better models of targeted visitor audiences, and measure the effects of Corridor tourism development and marketing efforts, including economic impacts. The Corridor will also support regional collection and interpretation of information about levels of visitor readiness and availability of visitor services (see Visitor Services above).

MARKETING

Successful tourism marketing is sophisticated, fast paced, flexible, research-based, customer-driven, and results-oriented; it connects with potential visitors, helping them to see the relevance of the destination to their own lives. Unsuccessful tourism marketing is topheavy with information, stodgy, cool-idea-based, product-driven, and process-oriented; there is simply too much competition to expect potential visitors to read lists and descriptions of attractions, hotels, etc., and hope they will visit. Just because a destination is historically significant, valuable, and loved by residents, does not mean that people will visit.

There are four components to a successful Corridor marketing program:
• market assessment and targeting;
• positioning;
• marketing image; and
• communication.

Market Assessment and Targeting

The Corridor’s tourism marketing effort can succeed by using research to identify potential or likely visitors and, more specifically, high value customers. Tourism economic impact may be generally determined by multiplying spending per person, per day, by the number of days. (A more complex and accu-
rate formula that accounts for both day visitors and overnight travelers staying in both paid and unpaid accommodations is available from the Empire State Development Corporation.

The greatest economic impact to the Corridor as a whole will come primarily from overnight visitors bringing net new dollars from outside the region into the Corridor. Overnight visitors spend approximately three times what a day visitor spends, thus making overnight visitors in paid accommodations the primary source for economic impact from tourism. For this reason, they should be the major (but not only) focus in marketing the Corridor as a destination in order to produce the desired economic gains.

Technically, a traveler from Albany to Buffalo fits the standard definition of a visitor – being more than 50 miles away from home – and is certainly counted as such by the destination. However, as far as net economic impact to the Corridor is concerned, that traveler is actually a resident. Many basic Corridor tourism marketing efforts will spur intra-Corridor travel and spending, and this will be helpful to all communities. In general, however, the economic goal of Corridor tourism marketing efforts should be to encourage overnight stays and to attract net new impact to the Corridor from more than 50 miles outside the region.

Targeting includes geographic, demographic, and psychographic (special interests) targets. Basic marketing tenets are to sell to strengths and to “fish where the fish are.” Targets for Corridor tourism marketing include both business travelers, who may make incidental visits to heritage sites and other attractions in the vicinity of their business, and leisure travelers, including:

- Visiting friends and relatives: Approximately half of New York visitors travel to visit friends and relatives.
- General vacation travel: Concentrated in the Adirondack region (52%) and the Thousand Islands-Seaway region (30%), with most other tourism regions averaging 10-14% general vacationers.
- Getaway travelers: Weekend travel and special event motivated travel ranges from 10-17% of overnight leisure travelers within the Corridor.
- Recreationists (hiking, bicycling, boating, camping, birdwatching, etc.).
- Cultural and heritage travelers.

Approximately 40 percent of visitation within New York is from state residents, many of them traveling along the New York State Thruway. Although auto travel is primarily east-west, there are good opportunities for north-south travel to the Corridor as well, including the Northway (Interstate 87) from Montreal. The Corridor also stretches between the largest visitor magnets in the state: Niagara Falls, Adirondack Park, and New York City. Tourism marketing for the Corridor should also consider markets with direct access to the major airports in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany as well as the cruise ship and ferry terminals in Buffalo and Rochester.

International travelers are too often overlooked by efforts to target Corridor tourism marketing. Although international visitation to the U.S. has not yet recovered to pre-2001 levels, the strengthening of foreign currencies relative to the U.S. dollar, the resurgence of New York City as an international destination,
and the proximity of the Corridor to Canadian destinations and population centers such as Toronto and Montreal present significant opportunities. In particular, Europe represents a significant potential canal boating market.

**Positioning**

Successful positioning of a tourism destination results from a confluence of the appeal of the destination, the memorability of the marketing image, finding a point of uniqueness, and finding a fit with the targeted customer, all used consistently. To prospective visitors, the Corridor is one travel choice among many competitors for their attention. Competitors must be identified and examined from a number of perspectives such as geographic draw, thematic draw, experience/activities offered, and peak seasons in order to develop and deliver a consistent message to prospective visitors.

Examples of competitors for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor include:

- **American Icons**, e.g., Statue of Liberty, Grand Canyon, Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Disney World/Land, Philadelphia monuments, Boston Freedom Trail, St. Louis Arch
- **New York** destinations and activity centers, e.g., Niagara Falls, Adirondack Park, Catskills, New York City, Corning Glass Museum
- **Destination Clusters**, e.g., Maine Coast (scenic beauty, recreation), Cape Cod (scenic beauty, recreation), Florida beaches (sun, sand, surf)
- **Linear Destination Experiences**, e.g., Appalachian Trail, Blue Ridge Parkway, Mississippi River, Hudson River, Route 66
- **Thematic Destinations**, e.g., Civil War, Revolutionary War, Underground Railroad, Women’s Rights
- **Other U.S. Heritage Canals**, e.g., Illinois & Michigan, Ohio & Erie, Delaware & Lehigh – primarily regional draws, many non-navigable

Some potential visitors – including international visitors – will be drawn by the iconic stature of the Erie Canal. Others will be drawn by the Corridor’s close association and proximity to other New York destinations, particularly Niagara Falls and Adirondack Park. Cultural heritage travelers will be drawn by the Corridor’s prominence as a thematic destination, and some will be drawn by its stature as site of the nation’s preeminent heritage canal and one of its top linear destinations. Outdoor recreationists will be drawn by the Corridor’s diversity of recreational opportunities.

This positioning should be central to Corridor advertising, promotions, travel trade and consumer shows, familiarization trips, and public relations, as well as efforts to foster cross-promotion with other destination marketing organizations and sites.

**Marketing Image**

A marketing image is not a logo or an interpretive theme; it is an underlying marketing identity that can be translated by an advertising agency into photographs, copy, slogans, and marketing campaigns. A marketing image is intangi-
ble yet must be compelling enough to psychologically and emotionally motivate people to spend the time and resources to travel. It must be carefully designed to reflect reality, to provide a unique positioning relative to competitor destinations, and to stimulate desire to visit.

The marketing question is not “Why is the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor nationally and historically significant?” but rather “Why should I go there?” There are other canals and heritage corridors and other important historic sites. Given the Corridor’s size and diversity, its marketing image cannot be too specific, nor can it be just descriptive; it must be emotionally resonant to people today. It must also fit a variety of complementary uses in addition to tourism marketing, including direct efforts to boost economic development and residents’ self-identification with local heritage.

The Erie Canal is an American icon, a national treasure and a “must-do” experience for heritage and recreation. It changed America and changed the way Americans see themselves. A visit to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor will change the visitor’s perspective. The Corridor both reflects and inspires the American experience: determination, innovation, ingenuity, capability and the challenging of frontiers. It was then, and is now, an American catalyst for hope and progress.

Communication

There are two critical aspects of communication in support of Corridor tourism development: public outreach to residents and stakeholders of Corridor resources, and marketing to potential visitors to the Corridor. While there are important distinctions between these two efforts – public outreach aims at people within the Corridor; marketing aims outside the Corridor – there are some things they will have in common. Both should:

• Speak to target markets. Although public outreach efforts will necessarily be broader in nature, addressing all Corridor residents, they should seek to strike a chord with cultural heritage and outdoor recreation enthusiasts within the Corridor. Public outreach to target markets will provide a constituency for preservation, conservation, recreation, and interpretation enhancement efforts, as well as a local base of activity to support appropriate use of Corridor heritage resources and related amenities.

• Strengthen the Corridor’s positioning. Both residents and potential visitors should have a strong sense of the Corridor’s contribution to the American experience. Public outreach efforts can encourage residents to develop a sense of “neighborhood pride” that encompasses the broader significance of the Corridor and the importance of their local neighborhoods as part of a larger whole that stands alongside the nation’s key icons and destinations.

• Reiterate and reinforce the marketing image. The marketing image doesn’t just work for advertising; it is the core element of the National Heritage Corridor’s mission.
9
Implementation

OVERVIEW

Achieving the vision and goals set forth in this Preservation and Management Plan will require a creative implementation strategy based on strong partnerships, a clear understanding of opportunities and objectives, and an entrepreneurial approach to funding. This chapter describes the roles and responsibilities of the key partners in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and sets forth a framework - an overall management direction and organizational structure - for implementation of this Plan. It describes priorities and funding options for implementation of specific actions based upon an understanding of the Corridor Commission's resources and legislative charge.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, working through a wide range of partnerships, is preserving and interpreting our nation’s past, providing world class recreational and educational opportunities, fostering economic revitalization, improving the quality of life in corridor communities, and guiding the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21st century “River of Commerce and Culture.” To this end, the stated mission of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is to “plan for, encourage, and assist historic preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, tourism and community development throughout the Corridor in a manner that promotes partnerships among the Corridor’s many stakeholders, and reflects, celebrates and enhances the Corridor’s national significance for all to use and enjoy.”

This chapter treats in general terms many of the organizational details that will be developed as part of the Commission’s operating program. The intent is to provide general direction for the key parties, and to allow flexibility for change and adaptation as the organization grows and matures.
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

Chapters 3-8 of this Preservation and Management Plan identified six goals (one for each “resource” chapter) to help achieve the vision for the Corridor:

- The Corridor’s historic and distinctive sense of place will be widely expressed and consistently protected (Chapter 3)
- The Corridor’s natural resources will reflect the highest standards of environmental quality (Chapter 4)
- The Corridor’s recreation opportunities will achieve maximum scope and diversity, in harmony with the protection of heritage resources (Chapter 5)
- The Corridor’s current and future generations of residents and visitors will value and support preservation of the Corridor’s heritage (Chapter 6)
- The Corridor will be a ‘must-do’ travel experience for regional, national and international visitors (Chapter 7)
- The Corridor’s economic growth and heritage development will be balanced and self-sustaining (Chapter 8)

The Commission has identified five interlocking strategies to achieve these goals. These strategies do not necessarily correspond exactly to the six goals, as they seek to encourage actions that cut across topical as well as jurisdictional boundaries. The strategies build one upon the other to render an integrated web of management actions to achieve the Corridor vision:

- Reinforce the Corridor’s Distinctive Sense of Place (includes strategies designed primarily to achieve objectives set forth in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6)
- Build Awareness and Understanding of the Corridor (Chapters 6, 7, 8)
- Expand the Circle of Friends Engaged in Heritage Development (all chapters)
- Increase Community Capacity to Achieve Stewardship Goals (all chapters)
- Stimulate Economic Revitalization (Chapters 3 and 8)

For each strategy, a series of possible action items has been identified and prioritized. The strategies and action items emerged from the vision for the Corridor outlined in the previous chapters of this Plan, an analysis of the challenges and opportunities facing the Corridor’s resources, and consideration of the Commission’s legislative charge. Descriptions of potential mechanisms for implementation of these strategies are provided in the final section of this chapter.

REINFORCE THE 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 distinct sense of place that appeals to tourists, residents, and others making place-based investment decisions. These strategies are designed to safeguard the ability of these resources to convey meaning and enhance their contributions to local character:

- Promote preservation and conservation policies, practices, and projects that direct new development toward existing population centers
  Formerly distinctive transitions between town and countryside are becoming blurred by new development that also stresses the environment and
decreases the efficiency of municipal services. Policies that incentivize infill development, brownfield remediation, and adaptive reuse will help communities protect and build on the value of their heritage resources.

- **Encourage wider use of historic tax credits in the Canalway Corridor to accelerate adaptive reuse of heritage resources and justify additional tax credit allocations**
  The availability of federal historic tax credits and grants has encouraged preservation-minded development in the town centers of several Corridor communities. Efforts to increase this activity should include creation of a new New York State tax credit for historic residential property.

- **Assemble and distribute guidelines, tools, and best practices for preservation, conservation, interpretation, and heritage development**
  An integrated, regional approach to protecting and enhancing the Corridor’s heritage resources will be encouraged by pointing the way toward top priorities, effective techniques, and sources of support for local efforts.

- **Advance historical research of Canalway Corridor resources and National Register listings for key sites**
  A new Multiple Resource nomination for the New York State Canal System and its previous alignments will be submitted to the National Register of Historic Places, followed by a full inventory. Additional research, including cultural landscape assessments, is needed to support the protection and increase the visibility of other critical historic resources.

**BUILD AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE CORRIDOR**

The New York State Canal System is North America’s oldest continuously operated built transportation system. Too few people today, including some Corridor residents, are fully aware of the region’s rich history and extraordinary impact on the American identity. These strategies are designed to increase appreciation and develop a constituency for continued stewardship of the Corridor’s historic, natural, and recreational resources:

- **Implement a strategic marketing and promotion program to increase Canalway Corridor visitation**
  While existing organizations will remain primarily responsible for intra-regional marketing, the Corridor will help to manage a multi-jurisdictional marketing effort with more extensive cross-promotion, improved collection and use of tourism research, and broader reach.

- **Establish a graphic identity for the Canalway Corridor and incorporate its elements into wayfinding signage and other system-wide communication, orientation, and interpretation tools**
  A welcoming and recognizable visual signal, sensitively integrated into new signage and informational media throughout the region, will announce the Corridor presence and connote quality and a unified sense of place.
• Develop a kit of parts – modular displays, exhibits, multimedia programs, and other interpretation tools – and install throughout the Corridor to make every site a gateway to the Canalway’s principal stories and themes
A visually and thematically consistent system of high-quality interpretive components, complementing existing media and facilities, will ensure that the total story of the canals is fully and accurately told throughout the Corridor and establish a standard of quality and sense of continuity.

• Support development of key informational and experiential products to make Canalway Corridor stories more accessible to residents and visitors, including a world-class documentary, traveling exhibits, an Erie Canalway Hall of Fame, an interpretive exhibit in Lower Manhattan, and collaborative efforts with the Smithsonian Institution
Targeted to fill existing gaps, a limited number of major new interpretive media and facilities will expand the Corridor’s national and international recognition and provide much-needed exposure to key visitor markets.

• Furnish resources to enhance public schools’ use of Canalway Corridor stories to teach required educational elements
Engaging study plans for use in local schools, making use of historic records and artifacts, visits to key sites, cultural activities, and traveling exhibits or interpretive programs, will broaden the audience for Corridor history.

• Provide roving interpretive guides and programs to bring Canalway Corridor stories to communities, schools, and historic sites
Deployed throughout the Corridor, seasonal guides can extend the reach and impact of existing interpretation and education, coordinate new cultural programming, and provide a signature presence for the Corridor vision.

EXPAND THE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS ENGAGED IN HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT

Partnerships can’t be forced; they only work when they arise from a shared sense of purpose. One way the Commission hopes to contribute to the Corridor is to create a climate of creativity and cooperation: a major asset. These strategies are designed to create an environment in which collaboration based on mutual respect and interests can flourish:

• Create roundtables to foster creative alliances among existing Canalway Corridor agencies/organizations and broker promising initiatives that result
With broad community and expert participation, a series of summits on critical resource management and heritage development topics will facilitate information exchange, consensus-building, and increased awareness.

• Work with key agencies/organizations to increase their outreach in the Canalway Corridor and establish the Corridor as a priority for existing programs
There are many opportunities for existing agencies and organizations to adopt, within their existing work plans and funding streams, specific projects and programs that will help to achieve the Corridor’s vision and goals.

- **Engage civic participation with a vigorous public outreach program and recurring community forums**
  Public meetings and workshops will increase awareness about, and support for, the Corridor’s vision and goals while soliciting diverse perspectives to inform future implementation.

- **Enlist community support for the Preservation and Management Plan with a voluntary Canalway Community Partner Program, offering supplementary assistance to collaborating communities**
  Communities that agree to pursue Corridor implementation strategies will receive priority in applying for Corridor technical or financial assistance and will be included in Corridor promotional activities and wayfinding signage.

**INCREASE COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE STEWARDSHIP GOALS**

The many people working to preserve and enhance Corridor resources and local economies are eager to learn new skills, get help from new sources, and identify successful pathways. These strategies are designed to enhance their ability to escort complex heritage development projects through acquisition, planning, financing, permitting, construction, programming, and making physical and conceptual connections to the larger Corridor environment:

- **Initiate a certification program, accompanied by appropriate technical assistance, to help interested property owners and site managers advance resource preservation and interpretation**
  Enhanced technical assistance, official recognition, and promotional activities will encourage resource stewards to apply quality standards to enhance the visitor experience and protect the Corridor’s national significance.

- **Dispatch “circuit riders” to help Canalway Corridor communities identify opportunities and pursue strategies for preservation, interpretation, and heritage development**
  Experts will provide onsite consultation, referrals, workshops, and other “how-to” help with the preparation of local and regional visions, plans, projects, and applications for grants and other financial assistance, while seeking out additional projects worthy of Corridor support.

- **Help grantseekers and pursue creative funding strategies for Canalway Corridor programs**
  A “funding clearinghouse” role will encourage organizations pursuing Corridor implementation strategies to work together, find the best-fit funding source, and submit stronger, more compelling funding applications with a regional or interdisciplinary outlook that is part of a Corridor-wide effort.
• **Work with Canalway Corridor colleges and universities to provide research, analysis, and technical expertise supporting heritage development**

In addition to faculty and students with proven capabilities on topics related to resource management and heritage development, the Corridor’s higher-education institutions have meeting facilities, staffing, and public outreach programs well-suited to help support key implementation activities.

**STIMULATE ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION**

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. These strategies are designed to help Corridor communities generate economic growth once again through the preservation, enhancement, and interpretation of their heritage resources:

• **Promote investment strategies and opportunities in the Canalway Corridor by sponsoring heritage development conferences and other outreach efforts**

Convening heritage development experts, investors, and Corridor community leaders will help communities to overcome challenges such as capitalizing viable business opportunities, attracting people with the requisite expertise, and identifying and preparing sites for redevelopment and adaptive reuse.

• **Coordinate existing planning and economic development programs to transform Canalway Corridor communities into a network of destination towns**

Reorienting existing public sources of funding and technical assistance to help Corridor communities capitalize on their historic neighborhoods, downtowns, and waterfronts will help attract new private-sector place-based investments.

• **Identify, support, and promote key Canalway Corridor demonstration projects to raise visibility and show positive local impacts of heritage development**

Targeted investments in a limited number of heritage development projects in critical locations, consistent with the Corridor vision and goals, will increase public interest and encourage similar improvements nearby.

• **Leverage Canal Revitalization Program investments to build on the economic opportunities associated with enhanced Canalway Corridor recreation facilities, including a major spectator event such as a multi-sport relay race along the length of the canals**

Enhanced special events, marketing, and new trails and signage connecting recreational facilities to each other and to downtowns or waterfronts will integrate the Corridor’s extensive recreational resources into the bigger picture of heritage tourism and leisure activity.
PRIORITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The goals and strategies described above constitute a long-term proposition, to be implemented over a ten- to fifteen-year period. The ability to achieve all that is set forth in this Plan will depend on the success of continued and enhanced partnerships and collaboration, policy decisions at the state and federal levels, and the availability of financial and other resources. Fortunately, many partnerships are already in place and poised for immediate action, and the Commission has been working closely with state and federal agencies throughout the preparation of the Plan. Long-term financial and organizational sustainability will require secure funding, beyond federal appropriations, which will take time to set in place.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

In its first few years of existence, the Commission has focused its attention on building an organization and completing the Plan, with assistance from the National Park Service, according to the following timeline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2000</td>
<td>Authorizing legislation passed by Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Commission established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2003</td>
<td>Planning process begins; Commission activities begin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2003-2004</td>
<td>Public scoping meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2005</td>
<td>Initial demonstration projects completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 2005</td>
<td>Public review of draft Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 2005-2006</td>
<td>Plan adopted; implementation begins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2010</td>
<td>Plan implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>National Heritage Corridor sustainability study completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2010</td>
<td>Commission authorization sunsets; National Heritage Corridor designation ongoing; implementation continues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the preparation of the Plan, Commission activities since the establishment of the National Heritage Corridor have included the following:

- public engagement including co-sponsorship of the Erie Canalway Convocation, public meetings, establishment of a website, and collection of surveys on local historic preservation, interpretation, and economic development activity from municipal leaders to engage and inform the public and key stakeholders;
- meetings with numerous organizations, state and municipal officials, educators, experts, and members of the public to discuss a vision for the future of the Canalway Corridor and strategies to achieve it;
- formal cooperative agreements with key organizations and agencies to share resources and pave the way for collaborative efforts;
- promotion of the Canalway Corridor’s unique resources and way of life to tourism agents and potential visitors through mass communications and participation in symposia, trade shows, and other public events;
• production and distribution of National Park Service brochures, annual reports, and a portable graphic display of information about the Canalway Corridor;
• design of new wayside exhibit panels for the Canalway Corridor in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation;
• outreach through the New York State educational curriculum by connecting the state’s canal school program to the National Park Service;
• matching grants to support several key projects to enhance tourism and economic development; and
• participation in planning for major economic development initiatives in the region, helping ensure that protection and promotion of the National Heritage Corridor’s resources is an integral part of the development strategy.

This activity level will increase as the Commission focuses attention on specific projects and expands its staff to assist its partners and Corridor communities. The Commission will need to “start small” in the first year or two with limited demonstration projects, to test strategies, set protocols, and attain demonstrable results. As the Commission and Corridor gain recognition, funding sources become available, and partners join in to help, momentum will build behind the Plan’s implementation and it will be possible to undertake larger, comprehensive, and more sustained projects requiring a greater commitment of funds and political capital. These results, to be documented before 2010, will provide the necessary information to assist the Commission in determining alternatives for continued operation after its Congressional authorization period lapses.

The following are performance measures for the Commission to achieve in its first year; progress toward all of these benchmarks is already underway. By the end of the first year of operation, the Commission will have:
• managed and delivered on initial expectations with proven results – several projects will be underway or completed;
• gathered a solid group of “friends” and partners, with active relationships with key leaders and stakeholders in place and a growing constituency to lend support in the future;
• provided funds to others strategically chosen for projects and programs in support of the Plan’s goals and strategies;
• identified alternative sources of funding beyond the matching funds for federal appropriations; and
• achieved widespread recognition for the accomplishments of the National Heritage Corridor and its partners.

The next five years will be critical to setting the pace and character of National Heritage Corridor activities for years to come. As with any start-up operation, it is anticipated that the Commission’s initial undertakings will be strategic and may be small in scale as models are being developed, protocols set, successes achieved. The table on the opposite page shows key milestones for the Commission for the first year and the next five years of Plan implementation.

By 2010, many of the Plan’s strategies will be implemented and yielding positive results with a stabilized, sustainable program in place. The Erie Canalway and, by association, all of upstate New York, will be on the map as an international
# BENCHMARKS FOR FIRST YEAR AND FIRST FIVE YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION

## First Year – Mobilize and Show Activity
The Commission will have several immediate priorities to address upon completion of this Plan. The following start-up tasks will also need to be undertaken by the organization to jump-start implementation.

## 2010 – Substantial Implementation
By 2010, many initiatives will be nearing completion or have tangible results. An emphasis will be placed on completing projects, creating visibility for the Corridor, and setting the groundwork for continued implementation activity.

### Communications & Public Outreach
- With release of the Plan, set in motion a public outreach and tourism marketing effort to enhance name recognition and/or presence and foster relationships with communities and existing partners
- Formalize partnerships with key agencies and organizations
- Initiate groundwork for a canal-wide conference on heritage development
- Name recognition achieved
- Corridor presence established through consistent wayfinding and interpretive signage throughout region
- Broad distribution of coordinated tourism and marketing materials, strong website, positive articles in national publications
- Diverse circle of friends still growing

### Project Development
- Select key projects to raise the visibility of the Commission and Corridor; identify funding sources, establish partner agreements, conduct outreach to communities, and set a timeline for implementation
- Make linkages/connections with others for access to key grant programs
- Support the development of key interpretive media
- Projects completed, compendium of “lessons learned” published; visionary, high-visibility projects underway
- Annual showcasing of successful demonstration projects underway
- Certification program in place, technical assistance materials completed and distributed
- Interpretive kit of parts completed

### Organizational Development
- Recruit and hire staff and contractors
- Develop new cooperative agreements with state agencies and other key stakeholders
- Determine the need for and role of potential advisory groups
- Staff fully operational with visible presence in field
- National Heritage Corridor sustainability study completed
- Long-term state policy and funding strategies underway

### Financial Development
- Establish fundraising foundation
- Prepare business plan
- Initiate feasibility/market studies and initial capacity grants
- Fundraising foundation is in place, project fundraising well underway
- Operational funding sources secured
- Diverse grants program underway
Implementation

Three Levels of Planning:

1. Preservation and Management Plan
   Describes resources, sets vision and goals, and proposes strategies to meet goals, with guidelines for approaches to specific types of resources; to be updated in five years.

2. Short-Range Implementation Plan
   Prioritizes specific actions over the first five years of implementation, with different levels of action based on funding potentials; to be updated within two years.

3. Business Plan / Annual Work Plans
   Initial business plan and year-to-year work plans for Commission staff, with adjustments to priorities based on availability of resources; to be updated annually.

In order to accomplish all of this, the Commission will need to reassess on a regular basis which actions are most important, keeping in mind the fact that other agencies and organizations will be soliciting support, funding, or technical assistance from the Commission for their own priority projects. At the same time, the Commission’s own level of funding will depend upon many variables likely to change from year to year. Thus, three levels of planning are called for: this Preservation and Management Plan; a five-year short-range implementation plan; and a business plan with annual work plans.

SHORT-RANGE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The short-range implementation plan will evaluate the merits of specific projects to be initiated or funded; will allow for the Commission to make course corrections or adjustments to past priorities in light of changing circumstances and opportunities; and will provide the basis for the Commission’s ongoing reporting and public outreach activities. The following preliminary plan has been prepared to assist in the prioritization of actions and the establishment of an initial business plan, commensurate with funding potentials. It is emphasized that this initial implementation plan will change from year to year as operational capabilities become more fully known; the tables that follow should be viewed in this light and not interpreted as a final plan.

Essential Program Actions

The initial implementation actions of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission upon approval of the Preservation and Management Plan are dependent on continued partnerships with state and local organizations and assume that current annual funding levels* from the U.S. Congress would remain constant for the next several years. Along with the Commission’s partners, a few key staff positions will be filled to initiate the following actions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Program Actions</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launch Management Plan</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop business plan</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a fundraising foundation for Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor programs</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop new cooperative agreements with state agencies, nonprofits, university consortium to formalize partnerships</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete graphic design standards</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The 2005 federal appropriation for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission was $700,000.
Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhanced Program Actions</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete signage design in accordance with NYS DOT / Thruway policies</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch website with improved interactivity/build public outreach</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assemble &amp; distribute targeted packages of existing tourism collateral materials</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete and distribute NPS brochure</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-sponsor roundtables: Historic Preservation, Interpretation</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Corridor-wide survey to collect baseline data</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance name recognition</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hire key staff / build organization</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop certification program for historic sites and interpretive facilities</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop criteria and seek proposals for National Heritage Corridor technical and/or financial assistance via a small grants program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify demonstration projects / promote ongoing “model projects”</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete and publicize success of initial demonstration projects</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate “circuit riders” multidisciplinary technical assistance program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate foundation fundraising activities</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop technical assistance materials for historic preservation research/documentation, curatorial (documents, artifacts, folkways)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate awards program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enhanced Program Actions

The following table lists the next highest priority actions for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission to initiate if sufficient funding is secured:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enhanced Program Actions</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete and distribute initial Corridor-wide tourism materials</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-sponsor roundtables: Marketing, Recreational Development</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop water-based traveling exhibit/classroom</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-sponsor statewide conference on heritage development</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop visitor readiness guidelines</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate oral history project</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support research to identify needs and destinations of targeted visitor audiences</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-sponsor roundtables: Agricultural Conservation, Water Quality</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate Corridor-wide road signage and wayfinding program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive “kit of parts”: weekly radio stories, audio tour guide</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate Canalway Community Partner program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate cultural resources documentation to support heritage efforts: National Register nomination for NYS Canal System; Historic Context Study with multiple property nominations; cultural landscape assessments</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete cultural tourism demonstration project</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-sponsor roundtables: Invasive Species Management, Historic Vessels</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete first phase of Corridor-wide road signage and wayfinding program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete Historic Context Study with initial National Register nominations</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate special events program including a signature canal-wide event</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop technical assistance materials for water quality management, agricultural conservation, recreational development</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive “kit of parts”: develop designs for wayside panels and modular museum exhibits; plan and assemble small traveling exhibits; complete and distribute curriculum materials; distribute wayside panels and modular museum exhibits; educational programs</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch seasonal interpretive guides program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete National Heritage Corridor sustainability study and implement National Heritage Corridor sustainability program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch expanded winter recreational use initiative</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate tourism and marketing technical assistance to communities</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Register nominations completed and current</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish and enhance touring routes throughout the Corridor in partnership with the New York State Scenic Byways program</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publish compendium of “lessons learned” from demonstration projects, roundtables, and ongoing technical assistance activities</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ideal Program Actions**

The actions listed below are examples of the type of large-scale, high visibility programs the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission could undertake with significant new financial resources raised by a proposed foundation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ideal Program Actions</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Announce concept for New York City based Erie Canal educational exhibit</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek support for orientation film and documentary</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with partners to secure a location and design for New York City exhibit</td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch “virtual research collection” online</td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launch side trails development initiative</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Televise documentary film</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate a publication sales program</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete second phase of Corridor-wide road signage and wayfinding program</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive “kit of parts”: complete and distribute orientation film; highway rest area interactive media stations</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop cable TV series</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop an Erie Canal Hall of Fame exhibit or facility</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with the Smithsonian Institution to develop Erie Canal programs and exhibits</td>
<td>X X X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan and assemble truck-mounted traveling exhibit</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host World Canals Conference</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION: COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

The successful implementation of this Preservation and Management Plan will depend upon partnerships. The Commission, supported by the National Park Service, will act primarily as a champion for the Corridor, steward of the Plan, and catalyst for action by leveraging the efforts of its partners, relying on the continued active participation of state and local agencies, organizations, businesses and individuals who are the “front line” in implementation. Much of the implementation will be carried out under existing programs and policies; the Commission will seek to stimulate whatever new or enhanced public and private actions and programs are needed to achieve the purposes of the Plan, building upon the great work already in place or underway. In addition, a non-profit foundation might also be established as a fundraising arm and extension of the Commission to increase the reach of this Plan.

ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR COMMISSION

The mission of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is to plan for, encourage, and assist historic preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, tourism, and community development throughout the Corridor in a manner that promotes partnerships among the Corridor’s many stakeholders, and reflects, celebrates, and enhances the Corridor’s national significance for all to use and enjoy.¹

Legislative Framework

The purposes of the Commission, as established by Congress, are to (1) work with federal, state, and local authorities to develop and implement the Preservation and Management Plan; and (2) foster the integration of canal-related historical, cultural, recreational, scenic, economic, and community development initiatives within the Corridor.²

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is a uniquely charged coordinating body that can be a catalyst for new ideas, bringing people and groups together to help achieve the goals set forth in this Plan. Established in 2002, the Commission is a 27-member, community-based federal commission appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, based primarily upon recommendations of the Governor of New York and the Corridor’s Congressional delegation. The Commission includes the U.S. Secretary of the Interior; the commissioners of seven New York State agencies, including the New York State Canal Corporation; 11 members recommended by the members of Congress whose districts overlap the Corridor;³ two members recommended by New York’s U. S. Senators; and six at-large community representatives who live in counties overlapping the Corridor, with one member who has knowledge and experience of the New York State Canal Recreationway Commission.

The enabling legislation for the Commission (Public Law 106-554, Title VIII) details both the powers and the duties of the Commission and provides guidance for implementation. The intent of Congress was for the Commission to
assist others in developing programs, facilities, and other activities to promote the implementation of the Plan. The Commission has no regulatory authority, and no responsibilities for land management or property administration. The legislation directs the Commission to:

1) undertake action to implement the Plan so as to assist the people of the State of New York in enhancing and interpreting the Corridor’s resources and its potential; and

2) support public and private efforts in conservation and preservation of the Corridor’s cultural and natural resources and economic revitalization consistent with the goals of the Plan.4

The legislation authorizes the priority actions to be carried out by the Commission:

- assisting in preservation treatment of the remaining elements of the original Erie Canal as well as other associated buildings, sites, or districts in the Corridor;
- assisting agencies and organizations with visitor centers museums, and other interpretive exhibits in the Corridor;
- encouraging enhanced economic development consistent with the Plan’s goals; and
- ensuring a clear and consistent visual communications program in the Corridor.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

The Commission’s primary focus will be to steward the Preservation and Management Plan – to maintain, disseminate, and help others make use of the Plan’s analysis and recommendations. The following roles, drawing from the Commission’s legislated mandates and mission statement and the vision set forth in the Plan, establish an operational framework for the Commission and provide a strategic direction for implementation activities. The Commission will:

- **Provide support, funding, technical assistance** and/or in-kind services to others to assist in leveraging or implementing projects that advance the Plan;

- **Catalyze collaboration** among those whose decisions impact heritage resources, and among organizations in allied pursuits;

- **Educate, communicate, and advocate** for the Plan as a guiding document for decision makers, entrepreneurs, residents;

- **Raise the profile** of the Corridor as a whole, bringing greater local and worldwide recognition of its unique history and resources; and

- **Build a foundation for the future** to ensure the stability and long-term sustainability of National Heritage Corridor activities.
In sum, the Commission will be both a supporter and an instigator. It will set and oversee the execution of policies as set forth in this Plan and monitor the progress made towards achieving the goals of the Plan. Its level of activism will vary depending upon the type of activity underway and the level of resources available. The Commission will maintain a direct linkage to key stakeholders and act as facilitators or brokers when they are needed to help advance projects and programs consistent with the Plan. For those projects that already have public or private support, are consistent with the Plan’s goals, and for which there is an organized team ready to take action, the Commission can provide critical additional support through funding or other means with minimal effort, to ensure the project’s success. In other instances, where there is a lack of leadership, vision or resources to carry out a critical element of the Plan, the Commission may take the lead in making that project happen.

Organization and Start-up Activities

The Commission’s management and governance must support an ability to participate in existing partnerships while also crafting new ones, securing capital investment, and attracting philanthropic support. The Commission must have adequate staff and the necessary resources to provide leadership, set quality standards, and channel the actions and energies of others effectively. The Commission’s organization must:
- be flexible enough to adapt to changing conditions and new challenges;
- include staff with the expertise necessary to foster critical partnerships and projects across a spectrum of program areas; and
- ensure the economic viability of its operations.

In order to pursue these endeavors, the Commission will have a staff that may include persons on detail from government agencies, direct hires, and contractors. The staff will be the “eyes and ears” for the Commission and will be directly involved with projects and programs in local communities. Some actions, such as staff-intensive programs designed to assist others, may be most effectively provided through cooperative agreements; for example, state agency staff could lend their time and expertise to support a particular project or undertaking for a limited timeframe through a Memorandum of Understanding. Other actions, such as tourism development, may be contracted. All activities in support of this Preservation and Management Plan, whether executed in-house or through partnerships, will need to be coordinated by the Commission’s core staff.

The Commission’s staff will need to have a diversity of skills, and possess the ability to work in a complex, changing environment. The following are core areas of expertise that will need to be reflected in the staffing composition:
- administration, finance and budgeting
- fundraising, contracting and project coordination
- public affairs and outreach
- preservation of historic and cultural resources
- conservation of natural resources
- interpretation and education
- heritage development
Personnel with expertise in additional areas may be brought in or contracted on an as-needed basis, perhaps for specific projects. These areas of expertise might include:

- marketing and tourism development
- planning and urban design
- historical and archeological research
- curatorial and inventory management
- graphic design and signage standards

Currently the Commission has an Executive Committee and five Task Groups organized around discrete subjects addressed in the Preservation and Management Plan. The Task Groups may continue to operate after the Plan’s adoption, or may be reconstituted to focus on particular aspects of implementation, such as:

- establishment of the potential new foundation (see below);
- requests by partners for funding assistance;
- review of annual budgets and financial planning documents; and
- monitoring of the Commission’s goals, ongoing projects, and future needs.

The role of these committees would be to vet the issues and concerns of particular matters and then present alternatives to the full Commission. The Commission will also need to formulate policies and procedures for personnel, procurement, and budget activities, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

_Sustaining the Management Structure_

Assuming that the Commission’s federal authorization and appropriations period ends in 2010, when those legislative provisions expire, it must develop a strategy for sustaining an effective organization for the continued pursuit of the Plan’s vision and goals. Before that date, the Commission will complete a sustainability study to assist it in determining and assessing alternatives for continuing National Heritage Corridor operations after 2010, and until the long-term goals of the Plan are substantially achieved. Given the relatively short period of time that will be reviewed by the sustainability study, the Commission’s early actions will be an important factor in assessing its effectiveness.

The uncertainty of future funding for the Corridor creates a challenge to long-range strategic planning, implementation of multi-year projects, and staff retention. The Commission will need to establish a secure, base level of funding in the near term to support the work of its staff. In addition to the potential new foundation (see page 9.21), the Commission will explore opportunities to achieve long-term sustainability through the involvement of key institutions, businesses, and beneficiaries. Long-term sustainability also relies on building an effective constituency for the Commission – a regional network of active partners and supporters of the Plan. The Commission will conduct community outreach, and work with agencies and elected officials, to ensure that the vision and goals of the Plan are supported, understood, and pursued.
The authorizing legislation for the Corridor allows for the Commission “to seek, accept and dispose of gifts, bequests, grants, or donations of money, personal property, or services, received from any source.” Additional funds, beyond federal appropriations, raised by the Commission may be unlimited but will be managed consistent with federal fiscal requirements; a clear set of priorities will be in place for funding, including priorities for fundraising (see Short-Range Implementation Plan above). The Commission will also consider adoption of fiscal policies that include strategies for fundraising and investment of monies in accordance with applicable federal law.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

An ongoing working relationship between the Commission and the National Park Service is vital to a successful implementation program. While National Heritage Areas and Corridors are not traditional National Park System units, the NPS is the administrative sponsor and conduit for federal funding and technical assistance for the development and implementation of the Preservation and Management Plan for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Throughout the preparation of the Plan, the NPS has provided a full-time executive director and professional staff, as well as administrative support, to help lay the planning foundation for achieving the Commission’s vision and goals.

The National Park Service manages four national historic sites within the Corridor, and the dominant themes of the Erie Canalway are relevant to each of these National Park System units. There are obvious opportunities for mutually beneficial assistance in the areas of interpretive coordination, historic preservation, tourism and marketing, and administrative support. For example:

- Part of the historic Champlain Canal is within the boundary of Saratoga National Historical Park, which also includes the home of General Philip Schuyler, one of the main proponents of canal construction.
- Fort Stanwix, now a national monument, was constructed to protect the strategic portage and link between the Mohawk and Oneida Rivers that eventually became part of the Erie Canal route.
- Women’s Rights National Historical Park on the banks of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal commemorates the early efforts to establish equality for women in American society, one of several social and reform movements fostered by the exchange of ideas along the canals.
- The Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site in Buffalo also recognizes the efforts of the 26th President to modernize the current Erie Canal when he was governor of New York.

The 4,600-mile North Country National Scenic Trail, extending from the Adirondack Park westward to the Missouri River in North Dakota, is administered by the National Park Service in cooperation with numerous public and private partners. It connects with the Corridor at Fort Stanwix National Monument in Rome and follows the historic towpath in Old Erie Canal State Historic Park west to Canastota, then swings south and connects with the Corridor once again at Finger Lakes National Forest, the village of Watkins Glen, and Watkins Glen State Park. The administrative office in Madison, Wisconsin provides financial
and technical assistance to partners for establishing and maintaining the hiking trail and interpreting significant natural and cultural resources along its route.

The Hudson Valley National Heritage Area, established by Congress in 1996, extends 150 miles along the Hudson River between Yonkers and Troy and overlaps the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor in the greater Albany area. Legislation is under consideration to extend the Hudson Valley NHA north to include Saratoga County, further overlapping with the Erie Canalway NHC. This will present further opportunities to coordinate interpretive efforts, marketing, and development of wayfinding signage. These efforts will take advantage of the fact that the Hudson Valley NHA’s national significance is based in part on its contributions to national commerce because of the connection that the river provided for barge traffic between the Erie and related canals, and New York City. To the west, the National Park Service is studying the feasibility of establishing a Niagara National Heritage Area in the vicinity of Niagara Falls, New York. As this effort progresses, the Corridor will continue to seek effective and coordinated partnerships with nearby and overlapping national heritage areas.

The National Park Service also works closely with the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on the listing of sites in the National Register of Historic Places, the approval of projects for the federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit, and the designation of Certified Local Governments (CLGs), helping to ensure that local preservation legislation and review commissions meet federal standards. In addition to support for historic preservation, interpretation, design, administration, and technical assistance skills available in National Park Service parks, regional offices, and technical centers, a number of special NPS programs can also provide specific assistance to the Commission, communities, and grassroots partners in the Corridor:

- The Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance Program can assist in planning for recreation corridor conservation and development.
- The Historic American Buildings Survey and the Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) can assist in technical documentation for historic buildings, infrastructure, and vessels.
- The Maritime Preservation Program can provide technical assistance in preservation planning for historic vessels.

**Legislative Framework**

As specified in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor’s enabling legislation, the Secretary of the Interior is authorized to provide assistance in the following areas:

- **Plan development** – The Secretary is authorized to assist the Commission in preparation of the Plan and may detail up to two Department of the Interior employees on a non-reimbursable basis to assist in this effort.
- **Technical assistance** – The Secretary is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with, provide technical assistance to, and award grants to the Commission to provide for the preservation and interpretation of the Corridor’s natural, cultural, historical, recreational, and scenic resources as per the approved Preservation and Management Plan.
These tasks may be delegated to Department bureaus such as the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Secretary or the Secretary's designee also serves ex-officio on the Commission; the National Park Service's Northeast Regional Director is the current designee.

Roles and Responsibilities

The ongoing participation of the Department of the Interior and National Park Service is critical not only to the start-up phase of the Commission but also to the long-term implementation of the Plan. The Commission will seek continued support from the Department and NPS in the areas of implementation, technical assistance, and, as feasible, staff assistance. The NPS will help provide a direct linkage to nearby National Park System units, the National Heritage Areas program, and available NPS technical assistance programs, and to other federal agencies that may be sources of additional funding and technical assistance. The NPS will work to make federal agencies aware of the Corridor and the importance of preserving and interpreting its resources.

Through their emphasis on quality resource protection and development and visitor experience, the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service can make substantive contributions to Corridor preservation and interpretation and the enhancement of Corridor identity and recognition. Examples of the assistance the Department and NPS could provide include:

- bringing hands-on expertise to help save and interpret critical resources, including development of programs to document and monitor resources;
- promoting and educating preservationists in the application of the Secretary's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties;
- establishing a certification program for preservation activities and interpretive facilities, to provide incentives for local groups to apply quality standards that will enhance the visitor experience and the integrity of historic resources;
- assisting the Commission and partners in scoping Corridor interpretive plans and developing standards for materials, media, and exhibits;
- facilitating strategic planning and regional collaboration on issues such as natural resource protection and recreation planning;
- advising and providing technical assistance to maintenance, conservation and curatorial efforts; and
- hosting technical work sessions for local communities, agencies, and organizations on subjects such as the Historic Tax Credit program.

In addition, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission’s affiliation with the Department and NPS can help to facilitate access to other federal agencies that can provide other kinds of financial and technical assistance, including:

- U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
- U.S. Department of the Interior, Geological Survey
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
• U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
• U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
• Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

_Corridor Presence_

In addition to providing assistance with the preservation and interpretation of the Corridor’s historic, cultural, and natural resources, the National Park Service, possibly through staff at the national historic sites/parks, could help orient and train seasonal interpretive personnel at a number of key canal related historic sites. The deployment of seasonal guides throughout the Corridor would help to improve the visibility of the Commission and its affiliation with the NPS, and promote the vision and goals of the Plan. This could be accomplished through Memorandums of Understanding or cooperative agreements with individual sites.

The NPS presence in the Corridor could also be supplemented through the designation of a new National Park System unit at an appropriate historic site or area directly related to the national significance of the Corridor. Any effort to establish a new National Park System unit in the Corridor would need to begin with a special resource study authorized by Congress, and would need to be closely coordinated with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and other partners of the Commission as appropriate. A new NPS unit would also require Congressional legislation. The benefits from such a unit could include increased access by Corridor communities to NPS personnel and resources; greater recognition of the Corridor’s national significance, due to the visible National Park System affiliation; increased NPS marketing and educational programs; and additional staff capacity and support for preservation, interpretation, and identity-building initiatives in the Corridor.

**ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR FOUNDATION**

In order to accomplish the goals set forth in this Plan, the Commission will need access to funding and project support above and beyond its present sources. For many organizations with a mission similar to that of the Commission, this has been achieved through the establishment of a separate foundation. Typically, an agreement between the foundation and the management entity identifies the organizations’ respective missions and their reasons for working together, roles, protocols, and conditions of partnership.

In this case, the primary purpose of a foundation will be to aid the Commission in accomplishing objectives it wants to achieve but cannot take on alone, or where the Commission is limited by its legislated authorities and access to funding. The foundation would use fundraising and a range of capital financing tools to fund or provide matching grants for specific, big ticket projects, or for programs in marketing, tourism development, and other areas of activity that are not primarily supported by the Commission’s other partners. Beyond fundraising, the foundation staff could contribute project management skills and administer contracts for Commission sponsored projects.
For purposes of this Preservation and Management Plan, the foundation is introduced as a concept that will require much more consideration. Most likely, the foundation would be incorporated as a 501c(3) nonprofit corporation with tax-exempt status at the state and federal levels. The Commission and foundation will have a shared vision about what both parties desire to achieve, and a common understanding of need, leadership, alignment, mutual respect and support. The foundation would pay its operating and project expenses through a combination of contributed and earned income derived from a mixed funding strategy, starting with a capacity building grant and eventually building to an endowment. Regardless of the form the new foundation might take, it will be an investment for the future and the long-term sustainability of the Corridor.

EXISTING AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS

One of the legislated purposes for the establishment of the Corridor is “to provide a framework to assist the State of New York, its units of local government, and the communities within the Erie Canalway in the development of integrated cultural, historical, recreational, economic, and community development programs in order to enhance and interpret the unique and nationally significant resources of the Erie Canalway.” To this end, the mission of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is premised on the principle of partnership and emphasizes the role of supporting partners’ efforts to accomplish the goals of the Plan.

The Commission defines its partners as those organizations, agencies, and individuals working to preserve, interpret, and promote the Corridor’s heritage resources. Since implementation of the New York State Canal Recreationway Plan began in 1995, local, state, and federal agencies, as well as nonprofit and private partners, have provided significant funding to a variety of public benefit projects and programs in support of the canal system and related resources. Individuals and businesses, in turn, have responded to these efforts with new private investments. The continued participation of all of these players is critical for the ongoing preservation, interpretation, and sustainable development of the much broader range of resources encompassed by the Corridor.

The Corridor’s authorizing legislation specifically called for the Secretary of the Interior to appoint to the Commission seven members with knowledge and experience of the following New York State agencies (or those agencies’ successors):

- Canal Corporation and Thruway Authority
- Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (including the State Historic Preservation Office and the Heritage Areas program)
- Department of Agriculture and Markets
- Department of Environmental Conservation
- Department of State (including the Division of Coastal Resources and the Quality Communities Initiative)
- Department of Transportation (including the Scenic Byways program)
- Empire State Development Corporation (including the Division of Marketing, Advertising and Tourism)
Other key partners that have also been involved in the preparation of this Preservation and Management Plan include:

- New York State Canal Recreationway Commission
- New York State Division of Housing
- New York State Department of Education (including the New York State Museum, Library, and Archives)
- Governor’s Office of Small Cities
- Regional Planning Boards/Councils and County planning agencies
- Tourism Promotion Agencies and Regional Tourism Organizations
- Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area/Hudson River Valley Greenway
- Lakes to Locks Passage
- Mohawk River Valley (State) Heritage Corridor
- Western Erie Canal (State) Heritage Corridor
- Canal Society of New York State
- Parks & Trails New York
- Preservation League of New York State
- Canal New York, Inc.

Essential input has also been provided by the following American Indian tribes and groups:

- Haudenosaunee (confederation of Iroquois nations)
- Oneida Indian Nation
- Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin
- Onondaga Indian Nation
- St. Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Seneca Nation of Indians
- Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma
- Stockbridge-Munsee Community of Wisconsin
- Tonawanda Band of Seneca
- Tuscarora Nation

The Commission will continue to work closely with tribal representatives to ensure that interpretive development in the Corridor addresses the impacts of the canals on Native American settlements and lifeways.

There will be many opportunities for existing organizations to adopt within their own work plans specific projects and programs that help to achieve the goals in this Plan. Qualified partners will receive technical and financial assistance from the Commission, based upon basic project and organizational criteria (see Support for Partner Organizations’ Projects and Programs below). Philanthropic, private, and community foundations will also play an important role and will be encouraged to maintain a close involvement in the Plan’s implementation as they choose local and regional initiatives in which to invest. The Commission will also work closely with universities and educational institutions and organizations to foster programs and projects in direct support of the Plan’s goals.

The Commission and its partners will also work together to build local support for projects, which will allow more ready solicitation of matching funds from federal, state, and private sources. One step toward this goal might be the estab-
# POTENTIAL LEVEL OF PARTNER PARTICIPATION IN ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR STRATEGIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Description</th>
<th>Thruway Authority / Canal Corp.</th>
<th>Office of Parks, Recreation &amp; Historic Preservation</th>
<th>Dept. of Agriculture &amp; Markets</th>
<th>Dept. of Environmental Conservation</th>
<th>Dept. of Transportation</th>
<th>Empire State Development Corporation</th>
<th>Dir. of Housing &amp; Community Renewal/ Housing Trust Fund Corp.</th>
<th>Gov’t’s Office of Small Cities</th>
<th>Canals &amp; Waterways</th>
<th>Parks &amp; Trails NY</th>
<th>Preservation League of New York State</th>
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<td>contributing role – partner contributes direct assistance to Commission and/or other partners with lead responsibility</td>
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## REINFORCE SENSE OF PLACE

- Assemble and distribute guidelines, tools, and best practices
- Champion sustainable preservation and conservation policies, practices, and projects
- Encourage wider availability and use of historic tax credits for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse
- Advance historical research and National Register listings

## BUILD AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

- Implement strategic marketing and promotion program to increase visitation
- Support development of key informational and experiential products
- Establish graphic identity and incorporate into wayfinding signage and orientation tools
- Develop and install an interpretive kit of parts to make every site a gateway
- Provide roving interpretive guides and programs
- Enhance schools’ use of Canalway Corridor stories to teach required educational elements

## EXPAND THE CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

- Engage civic participation with a vigorous public outreach program
- Create roundtables and broker promising initiatives that result
- Work with agencies/organizations to increase outreach and establish the Corridor as a priority
- Enlist community support for the Plan through a voluntary Canalway Community Partner Program

## INCREASE COMMUNITY CAPACITY

- Dispatch “circuit riders” to help Canalway Corridor communities
- Initiate a certification program for preservation and interpretation
- Help grantseekers and pursue creative funding strategies
- Work with colleges and universities to provide research, analysis, and technical assistance

## STIMULATE ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION

- Promote investment strategies and opportunities in the Canalway Corridor
- Identify, support, and promote key Canalway Corridor demonstration projects
- Coordinate programs to transform communities into a network of destination towns
- Leverage enhanced recreation facilities to build enhanced economic opportunities
lishment of a grassroots membership organization of enthusiasts dedicated to raising the Corridor’s profile, enlisting volunteer assistance, and expanding the constituency in support of the Commission’s goals. This role could be taken on by an existing organization or coalition of organizations that share the Commission’s vision, such as the Canal Society of New York and Parks & Trails NY. The New York State Canal Corporation will continue to be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the New York State Canal System.

POTENTIAL LEVEL OF PARTNER PARTICIPATION IN ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR STRATEGIES

The preceding chart shows how current key partners of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor presently envision their potential roles in helping the Commission to execute its implementation strategies. Rather than indicating specific commitments of funds or support, the chart shows each organization’s desired level of participation in those strategies for which its resources are best suited, with three assistance levels indicated as noted. The Commission values these partners’ significant expressions of support in undertaking implementation roles. When Plan implementation is at hand, the Commission will consider its responsibilities and capabilities, and further define the cooperative relationships it desires with its current and future partners.

* lead role – Commission endorses lead implementation by partner
* major role – Commission and partner share major implementation responsibility
* contributing role – partner contributes direct assistance to Commission and/or other partners with lead responsibility

MECHANISMS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL HERITAGE Corridor

Implementation of this Preservation and Management Plan creates a need to cover both operational expenses for the Commission and project expenses. Operational expenses include things such as staff, support services, office space, travel expenses, etc. Project expenses may be ongoing costs associated with programs or one-time costs associated with “bricks and mortar” construction projects, which would be undertaken by the Commission’s partners. Additional one-time costs will be associated with the start-up of Commission operations. Through fiscal year 2005, the Commission had received $2,010,000 in federal funds.

The Commission is authorized to receive Congressional appropriations of no more than $1,000,000 each fiscal year over a period of ten years, for a maximum total of $10,000,000. However, the funding provided by Congress may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of any activity carried out with such funds. The non-federal “matching” share may be in the form of cash, services, or in-kind contributions. The experience of other National Heritage Areas has
shown that their Congressional appropriations have helped leverage significant amounts of funding beyond the required “match.” Although the remainder of the Congressional appropriations will be instrumental to establishing the Commission’s organization and supporting priority projects over the first five years of implementation, it will be essential for the Commission to secure additional, sustainable funding from a variety of sources in order to achieve all of the Plan’s goals.

The Commission is authorized to and will conduct fundraising campaigns and will work to obtain necessary resources from both public and private sources. Members of the Commission lead or represent state and local government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and other key partners, and will be able to reach into their communities or organizations for funding and in-kind support toward achieving the goals of the Plan. These leaders will also help identify other partners, or prospective partners, whose help will be critical for success. A new foundation (see above) with a focus on major fundraising efforts would be an additional mechanism for supporting particular projects and programs as well as Commission operations.

A variety of potential funding sources is available, including grants and assistance programs through federal and state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector groups. Federal sources of funding and support for other National Heritage Area programs and projects beyond their Congressional appropriations have included the National Park Service (discretionary funding); U.S. Department of Transportation – Transportation Enhancements Program; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development – Community Development Block Grants; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service; and the National Endowment for the Arts/National Endowment for the Humanities. Key national nonprofit supporters of heritage areas have included the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Trust for Public Land, the Cultural & Heritage Tourism Alliance, and the Rural Policy Research Institute.

Given the existing scope of their programs and level of commitment to goals complementary to those emphasized in this Preservation and Management Plan (see Existing and Potential Partners above), New York State agencies will be key sources of support for Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor programs and projects. Through cooperative agreements (see below) and other arrangements, state agency programs could be more readily leveraged to initiate new National Heritage Corridor projects if they were to (1) acknowledge the Corridor’s Congressional designation and national significance, and (2) set as priorities for funding or support, those projects that help achieve the Corridor Plan’s goals and/or lie within the Corridor boundary.

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS**

The Commission is able to enter into cooperative agreements with other agencies, organizations, and individuals to leverage funding as well as to allow the Commission to more effectively and economically accomplish its mission. Cooperative agreements are legal instruments that establish a formal relation-
ship between a federal agency and a state or local government, tribal government, nonprofit organization, or other party.

The principal purpose of a cooperative agreement is to transfer funds, property, services, or anything of value in order to stimulate or support a public purpose authorized by law. Typically, a cooperative agreement is established in anticipation and in affirmation of substantial collaboration between both parties in carrying out the activities contemplated. A cooperative agreement differs from a grant because a grant provides for a transfer of funds or assistance without necessarily requiring substantial involvement by the grantor in the funded activity.

Cooperative agreements are often developed around specific projects, but the agreed-upon collaboration may contemplate more than one project. Each cooperative agreement undertaken by the Commission will identify the various types of activity supported under the agreement, the common objectives and specific responsibilities of the Commission and its partner, legal mandates and other terms and conditions binding each party, estimated time frame, funding sources, and an estimated cost ceiling.

To date, the Commission has developed cooperative agreements with key organizations to facilitate collaboration, sharing of information, and execution of some limited projects. These include:
- New York State Canal Corporation
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)
- Mohawk River Valley (State) Heritage Corridor
- Western Erie Canal (State) Heritage Corridor
- Canal Society of New York State
- Parks & Trails New York

With completion of this Preservation and Management Plan, these existing agreements will need to be expanded, and new agreements with additional partners will need to be established, to assign specific responsibilities to advance the Plan’s implementation.

SUPPORT FOR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS’ PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

The Commission will have a finite amount of funds each year for distribution to worthy partners in support of the Plan’s vision and goals. The Commission can provide direct funding to serve as an important match for a grant, to assist with initial project permitting or provide seed money to make a project or program viable, or for related studies needed to support a project or program. For most of these partners, financial assistance from the Commission will serve to supplement existing funding or leverage additional support. As of April 2005, the Commission had authorized $406,000 in support of 14 projects and programs in the Corridor.
To help the Commission focus on those projects and programs that best help to fulfill the Plan’s goals, the following organizational and project funding criteria will be used:

1. **Consistency with Plan vision and goals** – The project or program must help to fulfill one or more of the six goals for the Corridor set forth in this Plan. In keeping with the Plan, projects or programs must demonstrate
   - a high degree of public support and community engagement;
   - compliance with federal and state law, environmental regulations, and regional and local planning and preservation guidelines;
   - compliance with quality guidelines and standards, including, if appropriate, the Secretary’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and the guidelines for heritage development provided elsewhere in this Plan; and
   - evaluation and understanding of the existing condition, significance, and/or integrity of any historic, cultural, or natural resources affected.

2. **Realistically achievable** – In order to help jump-start implementation of the Plan, emphasis will be placed on projects or programs for which there is a high probability of delivering promised results by 2010. New projects or programs undertaken by high-capacity organizations, or projects and programs by others that are already planned, underway, and/or approved and in need of additional funds, services, or attention to complete, will be emphasized.

3. **Funding and leverage** – In order to make the most effective use of the Commission’s limited initial funding base, the ability of the project, program, or organization to leverage or raise funds from other sources will be taken into account. Even as the Commission gains the ability over time to provide more significant levels of funding, it will continue to be important for projects and programs to show a broad base of support. Emphasis will be placed on projects or programs for which the Commission’s support would serve as a key investment for:
   - creating momentum to catalyze something bigger/bolder; and
   - building consistent, coordinated Corridor-wide systems (interpretive media, wayfinding signage, tourism marketing, regional plans, etc.).

4. **Visibility** – In order to establish the Commission’s presence as a valuable partner, to encourage more communities and organizations to seek the Commission’s support and uphold Plan values, and to inspire further action by others, the ability of the project or program to attract sustained public interest, local or regional participation, and ongoing support will be taken into account.

5. **Critical action** – The Plan has established specific priorities for preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, tourism development, and community revitalization activities. In particular, projects or programs designed to address multiple issues, preserve or enhance endangered or critical resources, or create economic benefits for disadvantaged communities will be emphasized.

As a first step, the Commission will support a series of demonstration projects to help establish these criteria in practice. The Commission will then initiate a Call for Proposals process for organizations and communities to apply for National Heritage Corridor support. This process will challenge applicants to
demonstrate how their individual projects fit within the larger regional context of the Corridor, add value to the Corridor’s distinctive sense of place, and help to achieve the Plan’s vision and goals. One outcome of this process will be to encourage applicants, as well as other sources of support, to work collaboratively.

OTHER TOOLS AND INCENTIVES

Guidelines, Models, and Best Practices

Chapters 3-6 of this Preservation and Management Plan include heritage development guidelines to promote an integrated, regional approach to preserving, enhancing, and interpreting the Corridor’s nationally significant resources. These guidelines, which describe illustrative models and best practices already underway in the Corridor, are intended to help the stewards of critical resources realize the social and economic benefits that accrue to communities with authentic historic character, a healthy natural environment, diverse recreational opportunities, and a strong sense of identity. The guidelines, which may need to be updated over time (see Additional Studies and Compliance, page 9.35), also point the way toward specific strategies, public policies, state and regional programs, and other resources that communities can use to enhance local efforts. The guidelines will be at the center of the Corridor’s technical assistance, certification, and the Canalway Community Partnership Program (see page 9.30).

Advice and Comment

The Commission is not empowered to enact laws or regulations, or direct the expenditure of public funds by other governmental entities. However, in pursuit of a collaborative, comprehensive, and efficient approach to preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, economic revitalization, and tourism development for the Corridor, the Commission may be asked to participate in reviews of policies, practices, or projects under consideration by its partners, or may issue public comment on topics within the purview of its mission, through position papers, press releases, or other means. Any such actions by the Commission will be informed by the heritage development guidelines of this Preservation and Management Plan.

Circuit Riders and Technical Assistance

Technical assistance includes workshops, referrals, expert consultation, and other “how-to” help with the preparation of local and regional visions, plans, projects, and applications for grants and other financial assistance (see Assistance to Grantseekers below). The Commission intends to provide technical assistance to communities through “circuit riders” – experts in preservation, conservation, interpretation, and recreational, tourism, and heritage development who will spend much of their time “in the field” providing onsite consultation to organizations, programs, and projects designated as priorities by the Commission (see Support for Partner Organizations’ Projects and Programs above). In addition to providing assistance on a project-by-project basis, the circuit riders will seek out additional projects worthy of Commission support,
build local and regional partnerships, broadcast the Commission’s vision and goals for the Corridor, solicit public input and engagement, and administer the Corridor certification program (see below). Circuit riders could be recruited from the ranks of highly dedicated professionals and volunteers who currently manage many of the Corridor’s heritage resources.

Certification Program

The Commission will establish a certification program to provide incentives for property owners and stewards of eligible historic, cultural, and interpretive resources to apply quality standards that will enhance the visitor experience and protect the Corridor’s national significance. Through this program, the managing entity of the resource would voluntarily agree to uphold specific stewardship practices. In return, the Commission would offer technical assistance in historic preservation, resource protection, and interpretation and give official recognition to the resource, such as permitting the managing entity to use the Corridor’s graphic identity (see Logo Management below) and participate in enhanced promotional activities (see Tourism Development and Marketing below). While best suited for historic preservation and interpretive activities, the certification concept can be applied to a variety of areas, ranging from volunteer and docent programs to land conservation activities.

Criteria for consideration for the Corridor certification program would include those outlined for general Commission support (see Support for Partner Organizations’ Projects and Programs above) as well as the ability to:

- establish a direct connection to at least one theme relating to the Corridor’s national significance, as outlined in the Corridor’s interpretive framework;
- visually, physically, and/or thematically connect to and complement adjacent or nearby Corridor resources;
- manage the resource in a manner that protects its authenticity and integrity, environmental or scenic quality, and/or interpretive value according to the guidelines or standards outlined in this Preservation and Management Plan;
- provide public access and accurate interpretive information to visitors as appropriate; and
- maintain a clean, orderly facility that meets applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations for health and safety, equal employment opportunity, environmental compliance, and handicapped accessibility.

Canalway Community Partner Program

Voluntary partnership agreements have been used by many heritage areas and other regional planning organizations to help build community awareness of and support for basic heritage development goals. The Commission will work with its partners to develop a concise written agreement or “compact” that will provide the Corridor’s 234 municipalities with the opportunity to affirm the Commission’s vision and goals through a local public process. Participation in the program will not require a community to take any specific actions, but will call on the community to join the Commission, its partners, and other part-
ner communities in pursuing the mutually beneficial strategies provided for in the Plan. In order to ensure the continued meaningfulness of program membership, communities will be asked to periodically submit to the Commission information on activities they have taken in support of Plan goals. Partner communities may receive priority in applying for Corridor technical or financial assistance, will be included in Corridor promotional activities (see below), and will be permitted to use the Corridor’s graphic identity (see Logo Management below) in official community wayfinding signage and communications.

Tourism Development and Marketing

The Commission will undertake a number of activities as part of its tourism development effort and strategic tourism marketing and promotion program. Part of this effort will be implemented through the circuit riders program (see page 9.29), which will seek to help individual heritage sites and communities set tourism goals, identify strengths and weaknesses in heritage resources and interpretive or informational media and facilities, and build linkages to create regional destination clusters. Through its certification program (see page 9.30), the Commission will work to enhance the Corridor’s tourism product and visitor infrastructure by helping heritage sites to assess and improve their level of visitor readiness. The Commission’s approach to tourism development will be multi-disciplinary, encouraging the integration of cultural programming, interpretation, and education into efforts to enhance heritage sites and visitor services facilities.

The Commission will also act as a clearinghouse for Corridor-wide tourism marketing and promotional information, support new tourism research (see Additional Studies and Compliance, page 9.35), and foster the development of new Corridor-wide “soft” tourism products such as travel packages and itineraries, guides and brochures, and other promotional and informational materials (see Chapter 6, Interpretation and Orientation, and Chapter 8, Tourism Development and Marketing). Many of these activities may be undertaken in partnership or under contract with a Corridor-wide convention and visitors bureau or similar organization, which would bring additional resources to the effort to maintain high standards for the Corridor tourism experience (see Chapter 8). An independently funded tourism partner for the Commission will be sought to help position the Corridor, target high-value customers, and operate a dynamic Corridor tourism marketing and sales mechanism to generate maximum economic impact from tourism. Although the Commission’s marketing and promotional efforts will seek to be inclusive of all communities throughout the Corridor, participants in the Corridor’s technical assistance, certification, and Canalway Community Partner programs (see page 9.30) will have enhanced opportunities to work with the Commission and its tourism partner.

Awards and Recognition Program

The Commission will administer an awards program to celebrate and enhance the visibility of particularly successful heritage development projects and programs that uphold the vision and goals of the Corridor. This program will seek
to recognize the Commission’s partners and others responsible for supporting Plan goals; motivate higher levels of commitment and collaboration between partners; call attention to best practices or models for success; inspire others to take on similar efforts; show potential project funders and supporters what their participation can provide; and enhance the collective sense of community and civic involvement in the preservation, conservation, interpretation, or development of Corridor resources. The program will also serve as a means for tracking progress toward achieving Plan goals and acknowledging the importance of completed projects as a measure of success.

**Logo Management**

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission will employ a unique and distinctive graphic identity or logo (see Chapter 6, *Interpretation and Orientation*) as a means of establishing the Corridor’s presence and marking official Corridor communications, projects, and programs. The logo will also be used to help provide clarity and consistency to Corridor heritage development, orientation, interpretation, and tourism marketing efforts.

The graphic identity will be a protected federal mark, published in the Federal Register; further protection by trademarking may also be warranted. Use of the Corridor’s graphic identity by others must be licensed or authorized through formal agreements or letters of use, with appropriate stipulations and safeguards. In order to ensure consistency in policy, government agencies and other heritage areas will be asked not to reproduce the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor logo without permission; in return, the Corridor will provide the same courtesy with respect to its use of others’ logos.

Authorized uses of the Corridor logo by others could include promotional materials and interpretive media; independent publications associated with the Corridor; products sold or distributed by nonprofit organizations for Corridor-related fundraising or promotional activities; wayfinding signage for roads (as approved by the New York State Department of Transportation), municipalities, districts, and trails; and markers for individual historic, cultural, and interpretive sites certified by the Corridor (see page 9.30). All such uses will be subject to Corridor approval of the purpose, layout, context, and a sample, to ensure the quality of the logo reproduction. Alteration of the logo by others will not be approved.

In general, use of the logo by the Corridor and others should connote a commitment to the Corridor’s goals. Use of the logo should not be used for commercial site advertising, should not be associated with any materials that are discriminating or express offensive views, and must not imply endorsement of a particular business to the exclusion of others, or endorsement of any political or religious viewpoints.

**Assistance to Grantseekers**

Projects undertaken by the Commission’s partners in support of the Plan will be eligible for a broad variety of funding sources. Funneling the best or most
appropriate projects toward the best-fit funding source will be a significant challenge. A “funding clearinghouse” role will facilitate the Commission’s efforts to encourage partnering between organizations with similar projects and goals, helping them to submit stronger, more compelling funding applications with a regional or interdisciplinary outlook that is part of a coordinated, Corridor-wide effort. The Commission can also help direct funding applicants toward specific services such as marketing and economic research, finance and business planning resources, and grant-writing assistance. It is expected that grantseekers may also look to the Commission to provide seed money, technical assistance, and information that will make their projects more viable from a grant application standpoint.

CONTINUED PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Ongoing public involvement and outreach, including partnerships with government agencies and organizations, will be critical to the Plan’s successful implementation. The Commission and staff have already begun to develop a vigorous public relations program that strives to increase awareness about, and increase support for, the Commission’s vision and goals for the Corridor and its strategies for achieving them. The Commission will also utilize its existing network of partners, and actively seek additional partners, to increase public awareness and deliver its message through their outreach activities. The short-range implementation plan (see page 9.10) and annual report (see page 9.36) will also be important tools for public engagement, announcing new agendas, sharing progress toward goals, and providing opportunities for public input and feedback.

Ongoing public involvement through project implementation will be essential. Projects, particularly those in which the Commission takes the lead, will give the Commission an opportunity to share its vision and the Plan’s goals with a broad group of stakeholders, help establish the National Heritage Corridor’s credibility, and build outside capacity needed for future projects. Through an ever-expanding and evolving civic engagement process, the Commission and project proponents will be able to enrich the concepts and final product of an undertaking. Consequently, new partners will also become involved, thus resulting in an expanded constituency for the Corridor at large.

Advisory Groups

The Corridor’s authorizing legislation allows the Commission to consider the establishment of advisory groups as it deems necessary and beneficial toward the implementation of the Plan. Advisory groups, following Federal Advisory Committee Act provisions, could be formed around particular long-term strategies or programs, or they could be regional or geographically based. Alternatively, they could be formed around technical subject matters, such as heritage development or preservation, and linked to the corresponding Commission committees (see Organization and Start-Up Activities, page 9.16).
**Public Meetings**

Public meetings of the Commission will occur at least on a quarterly basis each calendar year. These forums will allow for the exchange of ideas about projects and planning objectives. Periodic workshops may also be held to ensure broad public participation and diverse perspectives to consideration of specific issues. Public meetings and agendas will be announced in advance, and notice will be published in local newspapers throughout the Corridor. The public will have an opportunity to comment at public meetings.

**Roundtables and Conferences**

The Commission will also take the lead in hosting a series of summits or roundtables on critical resource management and heritage development topics that would benefit from targeted investigation, partnership-building, and increased public awareness. Specific Corridor-wide issues that would benefit from informal roundtables include water supply and quality, visitor use management and recreation development, agricultural conservation, preservation of historic vessels, invasive species management, and heritage tourism marketing. One issue that would benefit from a conference – which might have a longer and more formal agenda than roundtables, with workshop sessions and requests for papers or presentations from experts – is heritage development, focusing on specific opportunities for generating economic growth through the preservation, enhancement, and interpretation of Corridor heritage resources.

These roundtables and conferences, hosted by the Commission in partnership with local, regional, or expert partners, will provide opportunities for interested parties, agencies and organizations to exchange information, develop consensus on priority action items, set collaborative strategies in motion, and further advance Plan objectives. In particular, the Commission will seek out the involvement of the Corridor’s colleges and universities, which have proven technical expertise and research and analysis capabilities on topics related to resource management and heritage development, as well as meeting facilities, staffing, and public outreach programs well-suited for roundtables. The Commission will also seek to support specific recommendations and collaborative initiatives that arise as a direct result of these roundtables or conferences (see *Support for Partner Organizations’ Projects and Programs*, page 9.27).

**Publications and Website**

Readily accessible media are a key element of any proactive public involvement strategy. The Commission will continue to develop and enhance its website as a primary hub of information on the Corridor, with connections to partner organizations and activities and events occurring throughout the National Heritage Corridor. Periodical publications such as newsletters, distributed by mail and posted on the website, will be another important form of outreach to communities, organizations, and individuals, alerting them to new information about Corridor programs, funding opportunities, best practices, and awards.
The Commission and Corridor staff will also benefit from a coordinated suite of targeted communications materials to use in public presentations and meetings. In addition to the Executive Summary of the Plan, which is intended to generate enthusiasm and interest in Corridor resources and strategies among key stakeholders and potential partners and supporters, these materials might include a PowerPoint show, an at-a-glance “agenda” distilling the Corridor vision, a “case statement” of key points for insertion into Corridor communications and grant applications, and a glossy tri-fold brochure in the highly recognizable National Park Service “Unigrid” format.

ADDITIONAL STUDIES AND COMPLIANCE

The preceding chapters of this Preservation and Management Plan have identified further research needs and plans required to support some of the Commission’s priority strategies for the Corridor. These include:

- **Guidelines for heritage development:** In Chapters 3-6 of this Plan, guidelines have been provided to help inform and coordinate future planning of preservation, conservation, interpretation, and recreational development activities in the Corridor (see above). While these guidelines have been developed through extensive study of Corridor resources and consultation with key stakeholders, they will require adjustment and enhancement to accommodate changing conditions, new discoveries and opportunities, or changing standards of treatment and practice. Ongoing efforts to update the guidelines will be informed by the results of Commission projects as well as by a proposed Corridor-wide heritage development conference (see above).

- **Impacts of canal development on Native Americans:** While Chapter 2 of this Plan briefly describes the significance of the canals as a major factor in the disruption and dispossession of the region’s Native American settlements, scholarship on this aspect of Corridor history is currently limited. More attention should be applied to the task of presenting Native American points of view on Corridor history and culture through the interpretive and educational media and programming proposed by this Plan. The efforts of the Commission and its partners to enhance and communicate these essential stories will be informed by continued consultation with the region’s Native American nations.

- **National Register nomination:** As noted in Chapter 3 of this Plan, an updated statement of significance is needed to support a multiple resource nomination of the New York State Canal System and towpath-era canals to the National Register of Historic Places. This statement, which would update a statement prepared in 1993 by the New York State Historic Preservation Office, may be based on information contained in this Plan as well as the 1998 special resource study by the National Park Service. Subsequent to the nomination, additional research on the canal system and related historic and cultural resources will be required, including a full inventory and condition assessment.
• **Graphic identity and signage design guidelines:** Chapter 6 of this Plan describes the graphic identity that has been developed to represent the National Heritage Corridor and serve as a unifying and consistent presence in Corridor-related communications, promotional materials, interpretive media, signage, and other orientation tools. Detailed graphic standards and designs for signage and other applications, with complete specifications for colors, fonts, materials, and usage, are required to facilitate the use of the graphic identity by the Commission and others.

• **Tourism research:** Chapter 8 of this Plan describes gaps in existing tourism-related research required to effectively target marketing activities and assess the economic impacts of heritage tourism in the Corridor. Official New York State tourism data is collected by tourism regions that are not correlated to the Corridor boundary, and much of the data available from other sources on related topics such as recreation are gathered from residents rather than tourists. The Commission will support efforts that will enable tourism promotion agencies and others to make the most effective use of limited marketing resources.

The Commission will also consider supporting additional research, inventories, or studies critical to the completion of priority projects (see *Support for Partner Organizations’ Projects and Programs*, page 9.27), such as an inventory in support of a National Register nomination or market research that supports the development of enhanced tourism products and new heritage-related businesses. In general, the Commission will seek the assistance of its state and federal partners, as well as the Corridor region’s colleges and universities, to provide financial or technical assistance for these activities.

An environmental assessment has been conducted for this Plan in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act. Applicable laws and processes governing further legal, cultural, and environmental compliance required for Plan implementation is described in the environmental assessment.

**MONITORING AND AMENDING THE PLAN**

The Commission will assess the Plan’s effectiveness on an ongoing basis and track its progress in meeting the goals and implementing the strategies of the Plan. The Commission will use conventional planning, budgeting, and benchmarking tools to monitor progress toward achieving Plan goals and long-term sustainability. The short-range implementation plan will allow for adjustments to be made along the way with public input. These adjustments, along with any legislative modifications that may be recommended, will be called out in an annual report.

The Commission will prepare an annual report that will describe and evaluate the progress toward implementing its short-range implementation plan, and the overall effectiveness of the Preservation and Management Plan’s strategies for preserving, interpreting, and protecting the Corridor and its resources. This may include a spotlight on success stories, such as completed projects, innovative programs, and key partnerships contributing to Plan implementation. The
Implementation

annual report will be prepared in conjunction with the Commission’s recurring and non-recurring federal appropriations requests, and will specifically address how its performance is affected by budget changes. The report will be made available to the Secretary of the Interior, Congress, and the public.  

While the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor designation is permanent, the authorizing legislation for the Corridor Commission sunsets in December 2010. As this date approaches, the Commission will conduct an evaluation, or sustainability study, of its operations and work to date with an eye toward options for the future. This analysis will include a review of the accomplishments of the Commission, National Park Service, and partners to date; an assessment of how effective federal funds invested in the Corridor have been in leveraging additional federal, state, local and private sector investment; an evaluation of the Commission as a form of management for the National Heritage Corridor; and identification of further actions and commitments needed to fulfill the legislative intent of the Corridor. This information will be used to assist the Commission in determining alternatives for continued National Heritage Corridor operations after 2010 and until the Plan’s goals are substantially achieved.

Endnotes

1 ECNHC mission statement
2 PL 106-554, Title VIII, Sec.804 (a)
3 After redistricting that took effect in 2004, the number of districts overlapping the Corridor is now 10.
4 PL 106-554, Title VIII, Sec.805 (b)
5 PL 106-554, Title VIII, Sec.804 (b,7)
6 PL 106-554, Title VIII, Sec.802(b)(4)
8 PL 106-554, Title VIII, Sec.805(d): “The Commission shall submit an annual report and shall make available an audit of all relevant records to the Governor and the Secretary identifying its expenses and any income, the entities to which any grants or technical assistance were made during the year for which the report was made, and contributions by other parties toward achieving Corridor purposes.”