

# GreenSpace

For members, supporters, and friends of Parks & Trails New York

Winter 2010 – 2011



Parks & Trails  
NEW YORK

www.ptny.org

## New report *exposes state parks crisis*

### Dedicated funding stream proposed to save system

A new report from Parks & Trails New York and the Alliance for New York State Parks depicts a state park system in crisis and puts forward a three-fold plan of action to protect and revitalize New York's parks and historic sites.

The NYS Park System, encompassing 178 parks and 35 historic sites and serving 57 million visitors annually, is in peril from chronic under-funding and lack of investment in aging infrastructure. Although the last minute restoration of \$11 million avoided the need for park closures last season, since 2008 the parks agency has absorbed a series of precipitous budget cuts that have devastated the agency and threaten the future of our parks.

*The NYS  
Park System is in  
peril from chronic  
under-funding and lack  
of investment in aging  
infrastructure.*

New York must take back its rightful role as the nation's leader in providing outdoor recreation, access to nature, and cultural education. Parks & Trails New York and the Alliance for New York State Parks are committed to helping the State restore its leadership, and to engaging all New Yorkers in the effort.

(See page 7 for recommended actions)

Parks & Trails New York has been the state's leading advocate for parks and trails for more than 25 years. PTNY was a major consultant on the 1993 Rockefeller Institute of Government report, *Preserve & Protect: Challenges Facing New York's Park System*. PTNY's influential report, *Parks at a Turning Point*, directed public attention to New York's chronically underfunded State Parks, inspiring a \$200 million park capital spending program in 2008 and 2009 while its subsequent report, *The NYS Park System: an Economic Asset to the Empire State*, documented parks' significant economic benefits to the state.

### Three new trail projects selected to receive assistance from PTNY

Three trail projects have been selected to receive assistance from PTNY as part of its *Healthy Trails, Healthy People* program. PTNY provides help with technical issues, planning, public outreach, grant writing, fundraising, programming, organizational development and other activities critical to the long-term success of trail projects.

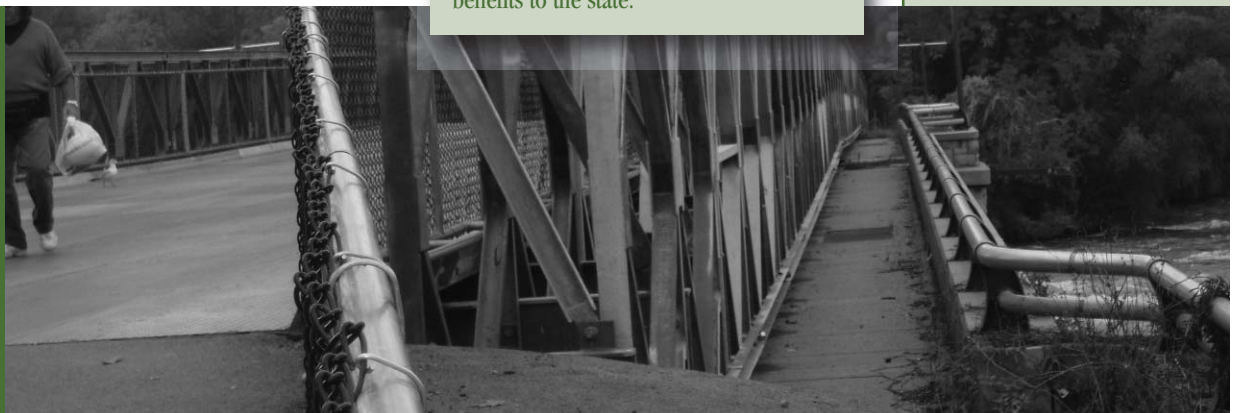
PTNY staff has assisted trail development efforts in 35 communities located in 33 different counties since we launched our *Healthy Trails, Healthy People* program in 2004. When these projects are completed, almost 250 miles of new multi-use trail will be open to the public. *Healthy Trails, Healthy People* is funded in part by a grant from the Healthy Heart Program of the NYS Department of Health.

(See page 6 for projects selected)



State parks has a documented capital backlog of more than \$1 billion, almost half of it necessary for basic health and safety needs.

Niagara Falls' historic Goat Island Bridge symbolizes the deterioration of park infrastructure; it can no longer carry tram traffic—and has been capped with a temporary pedestrian bridge.



FROM THE DESK OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
ROBIN DROPKIN

## Message to Governor-Elect Andrew Cuomo



We commend and welcome your *A Cleaner, Greener NY* report on the environment, particularly your pledges to:

- keep parks open for eco-tourism, environmental education and recreation
- improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to provide the “critical link” to our transit systems and alternatives to gas vehicles
- encourage public-private partnerships with not-for-profit organizations to support natural resource stewardship

There are numerous reasons parks must be a priority of your administration.

- 57 million... the number of people who voted with their feet in 2010, by visiting New York’s state parks
- \$1.9 billion... the revenue produced by parks visitors for private businesses in the areas around state parks (according to an independent report commissioned by PTNY in 2009)
- 250,000+ friends... the number of people who rallied this spring when 90 parks and historic sites were threatened with closure

There’s another reason—your legacy. If your commitments in *A Cleaner, Greener NY* are honored, New Yorkers for generations to come will be able to feel proud of the environmental leadership in New York State.

Mr. Cuomo, we look forward to working with you, legislative leaders and all New Yorkers to advance a robust outdoor recreation and environmental agenda.

*Thank you to our Green Partners*  
— businesses that support  
New York’s parks and trails!



CSEA, New York’s leading union, has long been a supporter of Parks & Trails New York. CSEA is celebrating its Centennial Anniversary in 2010 and has a history of service representing its members and the people of New York. CSEA has a natural affinity with PTNY as the representative of thousands of state and local government workers who staff and maintain state and local parks and roadways, the Canal system and numerous other jobs helping to oversee the natural environment of the Empire State.



Founded more than 150 years ago in western New York, M&T Bank is considered one of the country’s most highly regarded regional banks, recognized for its financial strength and sound management. M&T Bank believes it is its responsibility as a corporate citizen to do all it can to strengthen the communities in which it operates. Through the volunteerism of its employees and financial contributions made through the M&T Charitable Foundation M&T supports a diverse range of cultural, civic, education, health care, human services and youth organizations that add value to communities.

## PTNY capacity building grants making big difference for park and trail groups

Capacity building grants are helping 17 park and trail groups gain greater visibility and attract new members and volunteers. The grants program, launched by PTNY in 2008, annually offers awards ranging up to \$3,000 to park and trail nonprofits to assist them with start-up, fundraising initiatives, board training, communications, and volunteer recruitment and management – functions that are not typically supported by other grants.

In western New York, the Erie-Cattaraugus Rail Trail (ECRT) friends group used their \$1300 grant to print postcards and a banner to promote the group throughout the five towns where the 27-mile trail will be located.

*Our capacity grant helped build enthusiasm and momentum among our members.*

**Jane Peck**, President  
Friends of  
Taconic State Park

The Friends of Taconic State Park in the Hudson Valley used a \$1,400 award to hire a marketing and membership development consultant to help the organization undertake a membership mailing and a major member cultivation event and create marketing materials. As a result, the Friends organization has already met its goal of adding 100 new members.

The recipients of this year’s grants will be announced in January 2011.



About 50 members of Friends of Taconic State Park attended the group’s second Annual Meeting. Most were new members who joined in the last year thanks to a membership campaign undertaken with a PTNY capacity grant. The featured speaker at the event was State Council of Parks chairwoman Lucy R. Waletzky (fifth woman from right).

# Joining Parks & Trails New York *was our way of becoming New Yorkers*

Moving a family from one state to another can be stressful. When Margaret Logan and Charles Coulter moved to Southampton, New York, after living for many years in Boston, Mass., they chose a surefire means of feeling more at home: becoming members of Parks & Trails New York.

“Bicycling is our favorite outdoor activity,” says Margaret. “We’ve bicycled widely in New England and in Europe, and whenever you can leave the road for the peace and beauty of a trail it gets even better. Joining Parks & Trails New York, back in 1995, opened a wish book of possibilities for us.

“Our favorite ride to date was the Erie Canalway Trail, rich in natural beauty, history, architecture, and nice people along the way,” she added. “It was one of the best vacations we’ve ever had, and it confirmed our initial decision to join PTNY. The excellent guidebook PTNY publishes for the trail assures you’ll have a great trip.”

Ms. Logan and Mr. Coulter also support PTNY because of the organization’s parks advocacy and grassroots trail planning and promotion.

And they wholeheartedly support PTNY’s Campaign to Save Our State Parks from destructive budget cuts. “What’s more important than parks?” Margaret asks. “We hope the politicians will understand that parks are essential.”



*Of course we continue  
to support Parks & Trails New York.  
We love parks and trails!*

## *Three ways to protect New York’s parks and trails!*

### **Double your donation with a matching gift**

When you send a membership contribution or donation to Parks & Trails New York, you can double or even triple it by including your employer’s matching gift form. For details, contact us at [ptny@ptny.org](mailto:ptny@ptny.org).

### **Include Parks & Trails New York in your will or trust**

You can provide now for a future gift to Parks & Trails New York by including a bequest in your will or trust, or naming PTNY as a beneficiary of your IRA. For more information, contact Martha Gershun at 518-434-1583.



### **Earth Share**

You can give at the office, via payroll deduction to Earth Share of New York, an alliance of New York’s leading nonprofit environmental organizations. For more information, visit [www.earthsharenyc.org](http://www.earthsharenyc.org).

## Party for the parks *— honoring park champions*

On November 16, in NYC, PTNY recognized champion park advocates by honoring, with our coveted George W. Perkins Award for important contributions to New York’s parks, Assemblyman Steve Englebright, State Senator José Serrano, and intrepid park Friends groups statewide, represented by four outstanding groups – Friends of Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands, Knox Farm, Riverbank, and Thacher and Thompsons Lake State Parks.

The reception was held at the historic Century Association in New York City. Honorary Co-chairs were Ann Perkins Cabot, David Mortimer, and Dr. Lucy Waletzky.



Park champions State Senator José Serrano (left) and Assemblyman Steve Englebright (right) receive the PTNY George W. Perkins Award at a November reception in NYC.

# THANK YOU!!

# Meet our new staff



**Mark Luciano**, Director of Park Programs and Government Relations, has eight years of experience working at the NYS Legislature and as a Regional Rep for a member of New York's Congressional Delegation. Outside of work Mark enjoys music, writing and spending quality time outside with his dog Tessa.

**Lauren Alpert**, Bicycle Projects Assistant, is a graduate student in transportation planning at the State University of New York at Albany. Previously, Lauren worked for Capital District Community Gardens and the New York Public Interest Research Group. In her spare time, Lauren enjoys playing dodgeball, bicycling, hiking and attempting to grow vegetables.



Communications Intern **Benjamin Orcutt** studied English at the State University of New York at New Paltz, where his love for the outdoors flourished in the nearby Shawungunk Mountains. After graduating with his Bachelor's degree, Benjamin returned home to the Capital Region to start a career in the non-profit sector with a focus on the environment. Outside of work, Benjamin enjoys practicing the guitar, writing, and playing with his dog Kelso.



## Welcome to three new Board members

**Seymour Knox, IV** is Principal at BPG Global Consulting, LLC, and head of the Friends of Knox Farm State Park near Buffalo. The 633-acre farm, one of the jewels of the state park system, is the former home of the Knox family.

**Doug Logan** is the Director of Time Warner Sports in Syracuse and the former play-by-play "Voice of the Orange" for Syracuse University football and basketball. He has received numerous awards for community service.

**Kristen Mucitelli-Heath**, from Syracuse, is Executive Director of the Upstate-Long Island Senate Democratic Caucus. She previously served as Vice President of Strategy and Planning at Empire State Development.

## PTNY highlights importance of parks and trails in statewide publications

In the spring issue of *NYSAC News*, published by the NYS Association of Counties, the lead article was "Supporting Parks and Trails in Challenging Economic Times: Lessons from State Parks," which presents ways to protect against budget cuts in the next recession.

The September/October edition of *Talk of the Towns*, the magazine of the Association of Towns, includes "Slow-speed Trail: Bicycle Tourism and Local Economies in New York State," which encourages local officials to support trail development to boost tourism and economic growth and outlines steps communities can take to attract bicycle tourists.

Both articles can be found on the PTNY website, [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)



## Trail and Greenway Award winners honored at Albany ceremony

Parks & Trails New York presented our 2010 Community Trail and Greenway Awards at the Legislative Office Building in Albany this summer. Awardees included:

- Volunteer Service Award - Elisa Zazzera and Joe Kozlowski, Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail State Park
- Public Leadership Award - Dorothy Lewandowski and Velma Segars, the New York City Water Trail
- Corporate Partnership Award - Eastern Mountain Sports, Schenectady store
- Healthy Trails, Healthy People Award - Mark Bowers and Scott Reigle, Greater Binghamton Greenway Project/Binghamton River Trail
- Outside the Box Award - Fred Schaeffer, Walkway over the Hudson State Historic Park.



PTNY board chair David Shaffer presents the Public Leadership Award to Dorothy Lewandowski (left) and Velma Segars of the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation for their work on the New York City Water Trail

PTNY also presented Special Recognition Awards to Senator David Valesky and Assemblyman William Magee for their support of the Chittenango Creek Walk and Neighborhood Trail, Chenango Towpath Trail, and Susquehanna Greenway.

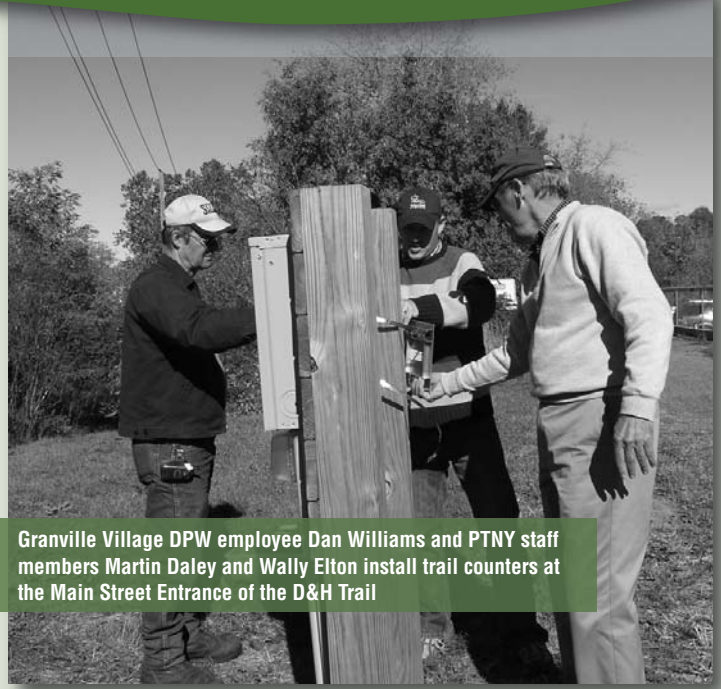
# COUNT THEM IN

## PTNY helps communities count and survey trail users

Parks & Trails New York's *Healthy Trails, Healthy People (HTHP)* program was developed to help New Yorkers create more active communities and an enhanced quality of life through the development and promotion of multi-use trails.

One component of HTHP is an initiative to increase use of existing trails. PTNY is helping the Town of Fallsburg in the Catskills increase usage of eight miles of existing, but underutilized, multi-use trail. We are also working with the Town and Village of Granville and the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce in Washington County to develop a 30-mile multi-use trail on a state-owned former rail corridor along the border with Vermont.

PTNY set up infrared trail counters in these two communities and will be performing trail user surveys on an ongoing basis. The counts and surveys will help identify who is using the trail, how often, for what purpose, and how trail users feel about the trail experience. This data will be used to develop promotional material and identify improvements and access to the trail that will result in increased trail use.



Granville Village DPW employee Dan Williams and PTNY staff members Martin Daley and Wally Elton install trail counters at the Main Street Entrance of the D&H Trail

## Campaign to close the gaps *in Canalway Trail makes headway*

Parks & Trails New York's "Close the Gaps" campaign, which aims to focus attention on the importance of finishing the Canalway Trail, took some major steps forward recently.

### Senator Gillibrand holds roundtable

In September, the office of U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, following a meeting with PTNY staff members, brought together more than 50 local, county and state leaders from government and the nonprofit and business sectors to discuss ways to complete the Erie Canalway Trail between Albany and Utica. The forum was held in Canajoharie in collaboration with PTNY and the New York State Canal Corporation.

Presentations by NYS Canal Corporation Director Carmella Mantello and PTNY Executive Director Robin Dropkin described the present status of the trail and its multiple benefits. During a discussion of next steps, the group affirmed the importance of completing the trail to the economy of the region and agreed to work together to find solutions to some of the most challenging sections. Schenectady County announced it has made completing the trail its top economic development priority.

The Senator's office plans to hold similar roundtables in other regions of the state.

*The Erie  
Canalway Trail  
cannot realize its full potential  
as a world class tourism  
destination until it is finished  
from Buffalo to Albany  
as a continuous  
off-road trail.*



Participants at a roundtable convened by the office of Senator Gillibrand to close the gaps in the Erie Canalway Trail between Albany and Utica affirmed the importance of completing the trail to the region's economy.

### Progress report on closing the gaps

PTNY and the Trail friends group, Canalway Trail Association New York (CTANY), recently released the first of what will become an annual publication describing progress in completing the Canalway Trail and outlining the most important priorities for the next year. *Closing the Gaps: a progress report on the Erie Canalway Trail* is available at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).

# Parks suffering dramatic and disproportionate cuts

Governor David A. Paterson recently proposed to lay off 90 additional staff at the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. This would be a tremendous blow to New York's parks. While the maintenance, security and service workload at state parks has

been going up, budgets and staffing have been going down. The office lost 17 percent of its permanent staff and almost 20 percent of its seasonal staff since 2008 - a total of more than 1,400 permanent and seasonal workers. During the previous decade, the operating budget

declined steadily, although the state created 26 new state parks.

These cuts have already resulted in diminished security, seriously deferred maintenance and a deteriorating park experience for everyone. There is no denying that the state is in fiscal trouble, but parks are being disproportionately hit. The parks jobs the governor proposes to cut by Dec. 31 represent almost 5 percent of the workers at the agency. Compare this with proposed cuts at the Department of Motor Vehicles of 2.6 percent, or the Department of Transportation of 1.4 percent. Parks, key to our quality of life, should be seen as no less essential.

Plus, unlike other agencies, the vast majority - more than 85 percent - of the parks agency's staff works directly on operations, out in the field. So these cuts will mean dirtier, less safe parks and historic sites, and the destruction of irreplaceable habitats. And, inevitably, they will mean park closings.

Attacking parks makes no sense as public or fiscal policy. Park attendance is up by 1.4 million this year and every dollar spent by visitors returns \$5 in revenue to the state, according to an independent report commissioned by PTNY last year. The parks agency's \$160-million annual operating budget is minuscule: less than one quarter of 1 percent of the total state budget. It is incredibly penny-wise and pound-foolish to keep cutting the state parks budget.

New Yorkers love and need their parks! That's why we're going to have to fight harder than ever to prevent more budget slashing and park closings in 2011 - when the NYS budget is expected to be even worse.

## Three new trail projects selected to receive assistance from PTNY

(Continued from Cover)

### Projects selected:

- **City of Kingston Trail Options, Ulster County** – PTNY will work with the Kingston Land Trust to engage the community in exploring the feasibility of connecting existing rail trails outside the city to the downtown.



Trails are well-liked community amenities that are growing in popularity.

- **Village of Copenhagen, Lewis County** – PTNY will assist the Village of Copenhagen and the Copenhagen Community Day Committee with the creation of a 1.5-mile walking trail linking the Deer River and a school and park within the village.
- **Village of Cayuga Recreation Trail, Cayuga County** – PTNY will assist the Village of Cayuga Planning Board with the creation of a 2.5-mile walking trail connecting two parks, an elementary school, and the Cayuga Lake waterfront.

Published by:

**Parks & Trails New York**

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This publication was made possible, in part, with funding from the New York State Council on the Arts, a state agency.



Parks & Trails New York works to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for all to use and enjoy.

Parks & Trails New York is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization as defined by the IRS. Contributions are tax-deductible.

GreenSpace is published by Parks & Trails New York and is available on the PTNY website at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org). Contributions of manuscripts, letters, photographs or other material relating to parks and trails in NYS are encouraged.

Photos courtesy of: NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Friends of Taconic State Park, Margaret Logan, Gillian Scott

Join or Donate to Parks & Trails New York today at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)



Are you ready to fight with us?

# News from State Parks



## Farewell to popular Parks Commissioner

Carol Ash resigned as Commissioner of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) effective October 13. Building upon the recommendations put forth in PTNY's report, *Parks at a Turning Point*, Commissioner Ash initiated an effort to rebuild and restore parks aging infrastructure, successfully securing more than \$200 million for capital improvements during her tenure.

"Commissioner Ash will be remembered for her passionate and dynamic leadership of our wonderful but beleaguered park system. She left her mark in so many ways, from rebuilding park infrastructure to placing a renewed focus on protecting park natural resources," said PTNY Executive Director Robin Dropkin.

Executive Deputy Commissioner Andy Beers has been appointed Acting Commissioner by Governor Paterson.



CAROL ASH

## State Trails Coordinator retires

State Trails Coordinator and OPRHP Director of Planning Bob Reinhardt has retired after 34 years with the agency. Bob oversaw statewide recreation planning, state park master planning and many other programs related to park use and protection. He also administered the State Trails Council since its establishment in 1981. Trails Planner Nancy Stoner will be assuming many of Bob's trail-related duties.

## Kudos to Parks for sustained master planning effort

Despite tough economic times and a shrinking budget, State Parks has stuck by its commitment to master planning. Since 2008, nine master plans have been completed or are in development.

"Planning for the future of parks is important at any time but may be even more important given current budget uncertainties," said PTNY Executive Director Robin Dropkin. "We commend Parks for continuing this important endeavor."

## Draft Statewide Trails Plan released

The State Parks agency recently released its 2010 Draft Statewide Trails Plan. It is the first update of the plan since 1994 and reflects the results of regional public meetings, trail-user surveys for eight multi-use trails, and surveys of trail managers and trails groups conducted between 2005 and 2008.

In its comments, PTNY praised the plan as an excellent resource and a guide for the future, but was disappointed that the plan didn't have more specific prioritized goals and greater detail regarding responsibility for and timing of implementation.

"Trails are too important for us to settle for a plan without teeth," said Fran Gotsik, PTNY Director of Programs and Policy.

Parks & Trails New York's comments on the Draft Trails Plan are available on our website at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).

## New report exposes state parks crisis

(Continued from Cover)

### Recommended Actions

#### • Stop cutting the parks budget

Since 2008, the state parks budget has decreased 18 percent and the agency has lost 1400 permanent and seasonal staff. Service reductions are already a reality at 100 state parks and historic sites. Any further budget reductions will result in closures and will do virtually nothing to improve the State's fiscal situation.

#### • Fix crumbling facilities and failing infrastructure

Capital spending for parks fell to \$31 million this year – the smallest amount in the agency's 40-year history – against a documented capital backlog of more than \$1 billion, almost half of it necessary to address basic health and safety needs. An investment of at least \$100 million annually is needed to turn around the situation.

#### • Secure permanent state parks funding

The parks agency has aggressively increased its earned revenue from \$35 million in 1994 to \$90 million this year. Fees cannot be increased further without threatening affordability for many New Yorkers. A new dedicated funding stream is needed to adequately fund the state park system.

The full report, *Protect Their Future: New York's State Parks in Crisis*, is available on the PTNY website [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).



Greenhouses at Caumsett State Park



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## Winter is almost here — New York's trails still beckon you!

The leaves have fallen, morning frost covers the ground, the sun sets earlier. Winter is almost here and many people put away their outdoor gear for the season. But New York's miles of multi-use trails beckon and offer special experiences for winter walkers, snowshoers, and cross-country skiers.

Some trails follow old canals and other historic transportation corridors. With leaves no longer concealing the landscape, you can more readily discover features like the stonework of lock walls. Here are a few to consider.

### **Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail**

The canal was built in the 1920s to carry water from the Hudson River to the Champlain Canal. Today a 7-mile trail follows the old towpath in Glens Falls and Hudson Falls.

### **Chenango Canal Towpath Trail**

This canal connected the Erie Canal at Utica with the Susquehanna River near Binghamton. Today 8 miles of towpath trail in Madison County follow an intact section of the historic waterway.

### **Erie Canalway Trail in Lockport**

Part of 100 miles of continuous trail between Lockport and Newark, this segment reveals historic structures such as the original "flight of five" locks that lifted boats across the Niagara Escarpment.

### **D & H Canal Trail**

The canal once extended 108 miles from Pennsylvania coal mines to the Hudson River at Kingston. Today a trail follows parts of the old towpath in Ulster and Sullivan counties.



Bike tour registration opens January 1  
*Be part of the fun!*

**13th Annual**

## **Cycling the Erie Canal**

A 400-mile bicycle tour  
along the legendary Erie Canal  
**July 10-17, 2011**

**7th Annual**

## **Great Hudson Valley Pedal**

A 200-mile bicycle tour from Albany to New York City  
through the picturesque and historic Hudson Valley  
**August 16-21, 2011**

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