

Canalway TRAILTIMES

Winter 2020-21



Issue #57

The Canalway Trail offers recreational opportunities amidst the beautiful scenery of Upstate New York

New York's Groundbreaking 750-mile Empire State Trail is Now Open!

Four years after Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that New York State would take on the ambitious Empire State Trail project, and decades after advocates first started pushing for a contiguous trail network that connects abandoned canal towpaths, rail trails and other corridors, the Empire State Trail is officially open. The 750-mile long trail runs along the historic Erie Canal corridor from Buffalo east to Albany, along the Champlain Canal and Lake Champlain corridors north to the Canadian border and south through the Hudson Valley to New York City. (Page 4-5 centerfold)



End-to-End on the Erie Canalway Trail: A Year Like No Other

Seeking adventure and respite from a stressful year, despite the challenges the pandemic presented, hundreds of intrepid travelers embarked on journeys between Buffalo and Albany along the Erie Canalway Trail. (Page 2)



An Essential Lifeline During a Challenging Year

In a challenging year, the popularity of the Canalway Trail reached unprecedented levels, as New Yorkers across the state took to the great outdoors for physical and mental exercise. (Page 6)

That's What Friends Are For

If you find yourself riding along the Erie Canalway Trail for a few days or even just a few miles, drop by one of our Bike Friendly New York businesses for a taste of hospitality and high-quality service. (Page 7)

Volunteers Always Willing to Lend a Helping Hand

Those gifted with a green thumb and a penchant for community service make quality Erie Canalway Trail volunteers. More than 100 individuals exhibit these traits and share in the responsibility of caring for the 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail. (Page 3)



End-to-End on the Erie Canalway Trail: A Year Like No Other

2020 saw more than 100 End-To-Enders complete their journey across the Erie Canalway Trail

Riding end-to-end on the Erie Canalway Trail may have looked a little different this year, but that didn't deter over 100 adventurous riders and walkers. Since 2012, Parks & Trails New York and the New York State Canal Corporation have celebrated the achievements of the trail's long-distance travelers, and this year was no exception. To date, the End-to-End Recognition Program has acknowledged over 2,000 individuals who have traveled the entire 360-mile trail in one multi-day trip or in multiple segments over time.

For the majority of End-to-Enders, riding the Erie Canalway Trail was the perfect summer adventure because it allowed individuals to social distance, proving to be the impetus they needed to hit the trail running—or cycling. End-to-Enders Kevin and Ann Marie from Rochester completed the trail in 14 separate outings, made possible by the flexibility of working from home. Suzanne of Tuckahoe said that with the lockdown, her adventure “was a wonderful way to disconnect from the stresses of work and the world!”

Ask this year's group of End-to-Enders about the best part of their trip and you'll hear just about everything – from the charming canal towns to the evolving scenery to the delightful interactions with strangers along the way. Green Lakes State Park

just outside of Syracuse was a favorite place to stop, offering stunning views of two unique meromictic lakes.

For some travelers, it wasn't the scenery but the people they met along the way that made the trip so memorable. Whether it was greeting the local fishermen, camping with fellow cyclists at the locks, or receiving directions from friendly passersby, End-to-

Enders were consistently impressed by the welcoming character along New York's remarkable Erie Canalway Trail.

Join the ranks of End-to-Enders and start planning your own summer adventure!



Suzanne and her boyfriend completed their adventure in eight days.



Green Lakes State Park in Fayetteville.
Photo courtesy NYS OPRHP



Volunteers Always Willing to Lend a Helping Hand

Year-round volunteers help keep the Erie Canalway Trail in great condition


Volunteers across the Erie Canalway Trail brave the rain, heat, snow, and wind to help maintain this wonderful asset. Dedicated volunteers, including Trail Ambassadors, Trail Adopters, and participants in the annual Canal Clean Sweep, help perform essential tasks year-round, including picking up litter, trimming brush, and removing fallen branches. They also provide trail users with trail route information and historical anecdotes.

Volunteers have fully embraced the corridor-wide trail culture and have jump-started initiatives that have helped build community character. Seeking out flower gardens with repurposed bicycle part sculptures? Talk to the Trail Keepers in Pendleton. Wondering what a camp-out at a NYS Canal Corporation Boater/Biker/Hiker Campsite is like? Just ask our friend David and his family. Curious who is keeping the Erie Canalway Trail free of trash and debris in Hulberton? Ask the

Kendall Lawn Chair Ladies. You can usually pick out Erie Canalway Trail volunteers because they will be sporting some bright orange swag!

Despite the cancellation of the Clean Sweep event this year due to COVID-19, our volunteer network showed great initiative and sought out local opportunities along the trail. The Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and CREATE Community Studios implemented the second annual "Color the Canal" initiative to beautify the Erie Canalway Trail and the Pack and Troop 25 made their first cleanup walk along the trail along a new stretch of trail from Fort Herkimer to Lock E18.

Even though 2020 was an unusual year, our volunteers carried on with grace and determination. With most indoor activities limited, taking on the role of a trail steward proved to be a unique outlet. The Rotary Club of Rochester-Southwest, one of PTNY's newest Adopt-A-Trail groups, said that despite the need to maintain social distancing, the adopt-a-trail program has "been pretty COVID-compatible so far."

We are grateful to the individuals that take time out of their busy lives to help care for the Canalway Trail. 



Color the Canal artwork along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail



BSA/Pack 25 celebrates their first cleanup



The Empire State Trail is now open!

The mega trail, a source of recreation, economic development and tourism, connects 20 regional trails to create a continuous statewide signed route

It's finally here! Four years after Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that New York State would take on the ambitious Empire State Trail project, and decades after advocates first started pushing for a contiguous trail network that connects abandoned canal towpaths, rail trails and other corridors, the Empire State Trail is officially open. The 750-mile-long trail runs along the historic Erie Canal corridor from Buffalo east to Albany, along the Champlain Canal and Lake Champlain corridors north to the Canadian border and south through the Hudson Valley to New York City.

The amount of work completed over the past four years is a cause for celebration and congratulations to all those involved.

"Governor Cuomo's vision for the newly-completed Empire State Trail merges economic development with the beautiful views along the Canal system to create exceptional outdoor recreation opportunities, both for residents of canalside communities and for visitors from across New York and beyond. The Erie Canalway and Champlain Canalway Trail segments of the Empire State Trail reintroduce New Yorkers to the historic towpaths of our state's storied waterways and connect a new generation to the rich heritage of the New York Canal system."

— **Brian U. Stratton, Director, NYS Canal Corporation**





Summary of Canalway Trail Projects:

Macedon Bridge: NYSDOT restored a closed vehicle bridge over the Erie Canal, creating a bicycling and walking trail and a local park.

Loop the Lake Trail-Syracuse: Onondaga County constructed a new 1.5-mile trail on the south shore of Onondaga Lake, including a new bicycle/pedestrian bridge over CSX's rail line.

Erie Blvd-Syracuse: NYSDOT constructed a 3-mile trail in the median of Erie Blvd, from East Syracuse to DeWitt.

Utica: NYS Canal Corporation constructed a new 3.5-mile trail east of Utica.

Herkimer County: NYS Canal Corporation completed a new 1.3-mile trail section from Frankfort to Ilion, a new 2-mile trail from Ilion to Mohawk, and a new 2.2-mile trail from Lock E18 to Route 167.

Fort Edward to Fort Ann: The New York State Canal Corporation constructed two adjacent trail sections, creating a new 12-mile trail from Fort Edward to Fort Ann.

Fort Ann to Comstock: NYSDOT built a new 0.75-mile off-road trail in Washington County and designated a 7-mile route on local roads.

One of the keystone projects of the Empire State Trail is the completion of an off-road route through the city of Syracuse. That route is now complete and features four main segments. The Honeywell Corporation built the westernmost of these segments, which connects Reed Webster Park in Camillus with the New York State Fairgrounds and passes by the historic Gere's Lock. The Loop the Lake Trail, which will eventually run along the perimeter of Onondaga Lake, runs between the State Fairgrounds and the Inner Harbor, passing over the rail line that had been a significant barrier. Now, a stunning bridge provides soaring views of the lake. In the Inner Harbor area, the trail runs via the existing Onondaga Creekwalk that winds into downtown. Heading east out of the city, the innovative Elevating Erie project came up with the route which travels down the median of Erie Boulevard before following Towpath Road and a newly constructed bridge over the highway to connect with the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park in DeWitt.

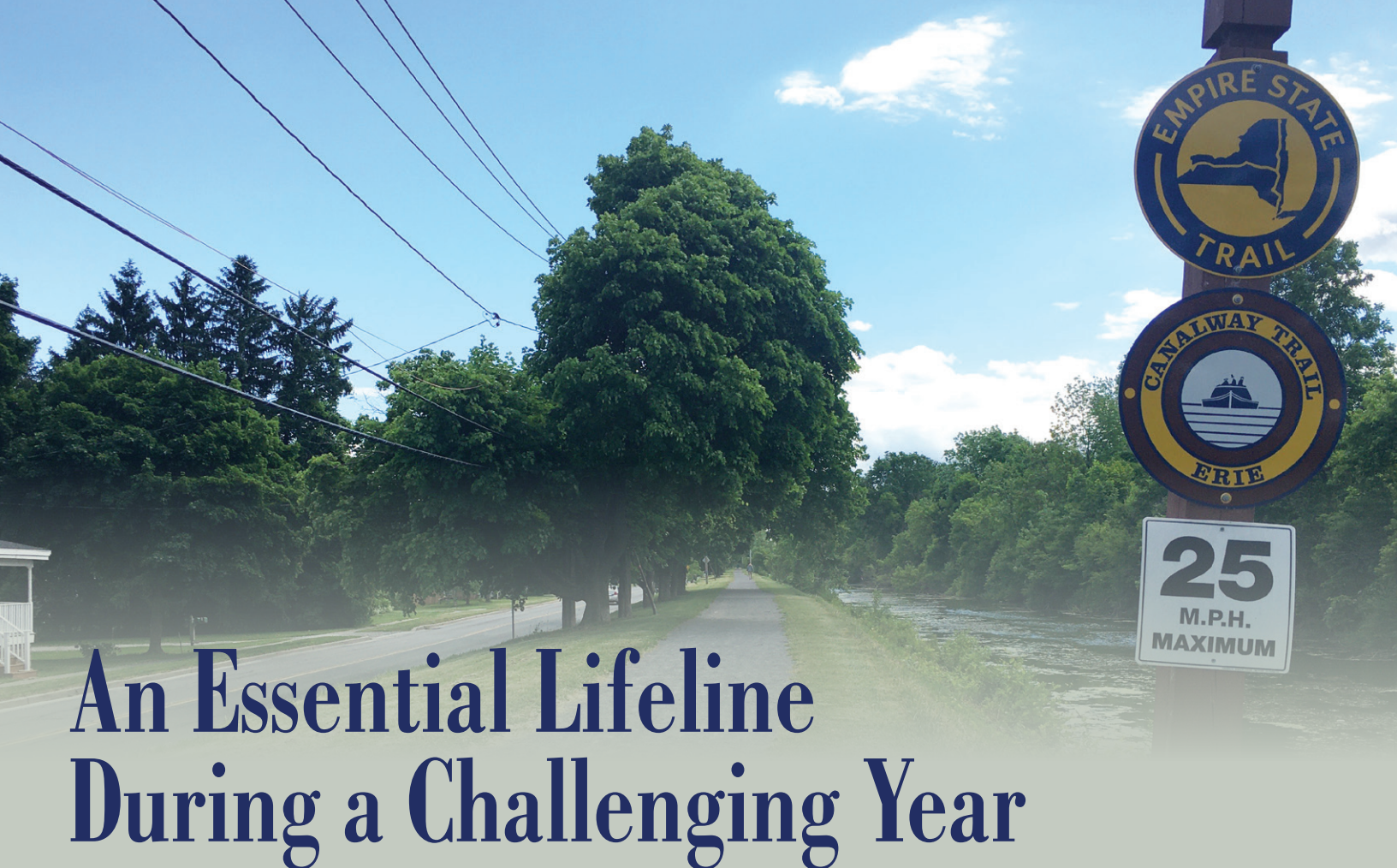
In the Mohawk Valley, one of the worst stretches of on-road riding has now been replaced with a beautiful new trail, running east from Utica to Schuylers. Further east, new trail along the banks of the Mohawk River runs from Frankfort through Ilion to Mohawk, where it connects with a previously built trail running to Fort Herkimer. This trail connects with two additional new stretches, running from Fort Herkimer Church to Lock E-18, and on to Little Falls. From there, the trail connections are continuous to Schenectady – almost 70 miles!

Exciting work is happening along the Champlain Canal corridor as well. One of the most scenic stretches of the entire Canalway Trail system now boasts a new trail between Fort Edward and Fort Ann. In Fort Edward, the new trail intersects with the Feeder Canal Trail in Glens Falls, which connects with the Warren County Bikeway and serves as a gateway to Lake George and the Adirondacks.

The Empire State Trail creates a connection between the Canalway Trail system and New York City. The Albany-Hudson Electric Trail runs from Rensselaer, across the river from the Erie Canalway Trail's eastern terminus in Albany, south to Hudson. From there,

the trail follows lightly used rural roads down to Kingston, where a series of new trails take the route all the way to the northern end of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail. From that point, the route is almost entirely off road, running south on the Wallkill to New Paltz, and then following to the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, the Walkway Over the Hudson, the William R. Steinhaus Dutchess Rail Trail, the newly constructed Maybrook Trailway, the Putnam Trailway, the Westchester North and South County, the Putnam Greenway Trail into the Bronx and finally the Hudson River Greenway along the west side of Manhattan to the Battery.





An Essential Lifeline During a Challenging Year

Millions of people relied on the Canalway Trail for exercise and enjoyment in 2020

The Canalway Trail system gives millions of New Yorkers in more than 200 canalside communities a dedicated place to walk, jog, and bike right from their doorsteps. With so many changes to our daily lives in 2020, the Canalway Trail has seen unprecedented use and served as an essential source of mental and physical health for New Yorkers around the state.

Since 2005, Parks & Trails New York and the NYS Canal Corporation have been at the forefront of quantifying the trail's popularity through annual Canalway Trail counts. Data collection methods have changed as newer technology made collection easier and more reliable. In 2014, the first electronic trail counter was installed for a full year. This practice has produced more and better data.

The 15th annual trail counts tell an important story; as the COVID pandemic

changed our lives in so many ways, the Canalway Trail became even more valuable as a respite for canalside communities and their residents. Four locations for which we have data for both 2019 and 2020 show a startling increase.


German Flatts
17,333 in 2019 / **37,027** in 2020
114% increase

Schuylerville
15,619 in 2019 / **24,192** in 2020
55% increase

DeWitt
126,102 in 2019 / **167,603** in 2020
33% increase

Tonawanda
244,993 in 2019 / **304,773** in 2020
24% increase

The 2020 counts will help local officials and community groups as they seek to enhance their existing trail network and identify opportunities for new connector trails. Count data is also used to inform an estimate of total trail use across the state as part of PTNY's annual Who's on the Trail report. In 2019, the total estimated use of the Canalway Trail system was a whopping 3.3 million visits! We can't wait to see how the Erie Canalway benefits from the completion of the Empire State Trail in 2021.

Keep a lookout for Who's on the Trail 2020, available in late winter 2021 at ptny.org/trailcounts. 



That's What Friends Are For

Providing essential services for cyclists, Bike Friendly New York businesses create healthier local economies and communities

Parks & Trails New York administers various programs along the Erie Canalway trail to ensure that users feel safe, welcome, and engaged while they are out on the trail and exploring nearby communities. Bike Friendly New York (BFNY) certification promotes businesses and establishments that offer amenities and services specifically intended to enhance the user experience for cyclists.

The sky's the limit for Bike Friendly Businesses; from hostels and fitness centers, to boutiques and cideries, more than 150 businesses are now certified throughout the state. Being bike friendly is less about answering a series of "yes or no" questions about services and amenities than adopting a particular mindset. To be bike friendly, businesses must show an understanding of the needs of local and touring cyclists, and find new ways to meet these needs.

If you are selecting a lodging, food, or convenience store, consider selecting a Bike Friendly Business. You'll be pleased to find that the staff can offer information about trail routes and secure places to lock up your bike and gear, as well as providing an overall welcoming environment. Keep an eye out for the logo in the shop windows, visit CycletheErieCanal.com or purchase the Cycling the Erie Canal guidebook (information on the back) to identify Bike Friendly Businesses throughout the state.



**BIKE FRIENDLY
NEW YORK**

CERTIFIED BUSINESS
CycletheErieCanal.com

Here are just a few of the many Bicycle Friendly Businesses worth pedaling to

Flying Bison Brewing Company

Cyclists are welcome at the brewery sampling room, can access online trail and street maps for the Buffalo area, enjoy a delicious Rusty Chain lager, and participate in numerous bike swap and fundraising events.



Red's Twilight on the Erie RV Park and Campground

Red's offers one-night stays with no reservation, a bike repair kit, discounts to cyclists, self-serve laundry, public charging station for phones, bath house, showers, and a camp store.



Hungry Chicken Country Store

Dishing out the area's best egg sandwich, check out the Hungry Chicken's weather-protected bike-hike trail map mounted on the side of the building, and lock up at their newly installed bike rack.





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Canalway T R A I L T I M E S

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Order your copy of the newly revised *Cycling the Erie Canal*

Cycling the Erie Canal: A Guide to 360 Miles of Adventure and History Along the Erie Canalway Trail is an indispensable resource for dedicated cyclists planning to bike across the state or the casual rider looking to take the family out for a couple of hours. The guidebook is great for walkers, hikers, inline skates, boaters and auto travelers too, and is the perfect size to tuck in your saddle bag or backpack.

The guidebook features 142 pages packed with detailed information about the outstanding bicycling and sightseeing waiting for you along the Erie Canal, including 38 easy-to-read, full-color maps. Highlights include brand new inset maps to guide trail users through downtowns of major cities, with new trail segments added and on-road routing updated. The updated guidebook features a comprehensive listing of attractions, historic sites, visitor centers, parks, lodging, bike shops, parking and other services.

Visit ptny.org/guidebook
to order your copy today

NON-MEMBERS: \$26.95

MEMBERS: \$24.25

