

Getting Started...

A Guide to Planning Trails in New York State



A joint publication of:
Parks & Trails New York
and Hudson River Valley Greenway



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Dear Prospective Trail Builder:

Congratulations on taking the first steps towards establishing a trail in your community. The journey can be lengthy and complex but also highly rewarding.

We encourage you to read through this publication to prepare for the journey. Getting Started: A Guide to Planning Trails in New York State is based on the experience of many successful trail organizers. Their experience has shown that, although no two trails are developed in exactly the same way or under the same circumstances, there are a number of common steps along the way. Getting Started lays out those steps to help guide you on your way.

As you plan, design, and build your trail, remember that you are creating a resource for your community that will be enjoyed by your family, friends, and neighbors, as well as visitors, far into the future.

Best of luck and thank you for making New York a better place to live, work, and play.

Sincerely,



Robin Dropkin, Executive Director
Parks & Trails New York



Carmella R. Mantello, Executive Director
Hudson River Valley Greenway

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: CREATING A NETWORK OF TRAILS ACROSS NEW YORK

Imagine going out your front door and within a few minutes being on a trail that leads through your community. You pass shops and restaurants on your way to work, school, or a local park. By taking a turn and going farther, you might follow the trail into the countryside, or link with another trail that extends along a river to the next town, or into the mountains - or all the way across the state.

This compelling vision is driving a groundswell of trail building throughout New York, as local citizens begin to understand that access to the great outdoors and to our natural, historic, and cultural treasures is part of the answer for re-invigorating and enhancing the livability of New York's cities, towns, and villages and improving the fitness and health of its citizens.

The purpose of this guide is to foster the vision of a network of trails across New York State — with the Hudson River Greenway Trail, the Canalway Trail, and several long-distance hiking trails — as backbones of the system. The best way to foster this vision is by helping *you* get started with trail planning in *your* community. The most successful trail projects are usually initiated at the local level. By developing a trail in your community, the goal of establishing a statewide network of trails across the Empire State is one step closer.

New York State is fortunate to already have a substantial number of trails, from community-based multi-use recreation trails to such renowned long-distance hiking trails as the Appalachian Trail and Finger Lakes Trail. With thousands of miles of scenic rivers and streams, lakeshores, canals, historic roadways, and abandoned railroad corridors, plus hundreds of appealing cities, towns and villages, opportunities for additional trails abound in every region of the state.



CHAPTER 1

At first, it may seem like a daunting task to develop a trail. And there's no denying that the process is complicated. Any project that involves assorted governmental entities and community organizations and, sometimes, hundreds of property owners would have to be. But, when the process is broken down into smaller steps, it is quite manageable. Hundreds of ordinary citizens — just like you — have worked to successfully develop trails in their communities. Throughout this publication, you'll meet some of these people and learn more about their trail projects.

The chapters that follow set out the general steps involved in developing a trail. Since each community and each trail project differs, you will want to adapt the information in this guide to fit your community's interests, needs, politics, and opportunities.

More help is available

Getting Started is intended to provide information and resources applicable to all of New York State. Technical assistance and more in-depth information is available, statewide, through Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and, in the Hudson Valley, through the Hudson River Valley Greenway. Other organizational resources are listed in Appendix A.



WHO USES TRAILS?

Walkers, bicyclists, hikers, joggers, in-line skaters, cross-country skiers, equestrians, dog walkers, bird watchers, parents with baby strollers, people in wheelchairs, seniors getting exercise, tourists, locals, kids learning to ride bicycles, retirees. In some places, snowmobilers enjoy the trails. In communities along rivers or lakes, anglers and boaters use the trails. Decisions about trail use are usually local and tailored to individual communities.



Trails: A proven asset for good health

Studies from the national Centers for Disease Control show that providing better access to places for physical activity, such as local trails, increases the level of physical activity in a community. Becoming more active can help:

- control weight and high blood pressure
- reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes and heart attack
- lessen symptoms of depression and anxiety
- decrease arthritis pain and disability
- prevent osteoporosis and falls

Despite these proven benefits, in 2000, only 45% of men and 32% of women in New York engaged in the recommended 30 minutes of daily moderate physical activity. As a result, more than half of New York adults are overweight or obese. More than \$6 billion of New York's Medicare and Medicaid costs are directly attributable to obesity. Trails offer an enjoyable, versatile, and practical means to engage in a wide variety of physical activities, including walking, jogging, bicycling, in-line skating, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.

Seniors can benefit most

Seniors are the least active age group in the United States. Research has shown that seniors who have healthy lifestyles that include regular physical activity reduce their risk for chronic diseases and have half the rate of disability of those who do not.

Trails bring economic vitality to New York's communities

Parks & Trails New York and The Business Council of New York State teamed up to publish a brochure, *Greenways and Trails—Bringing Economic Benefits to New York*. The brochure demonstrates the very tangible way greenways and trails are helping bring new economic vitality to New York's cities, towns, and villages. The brochure is available on the PTNY website — www.ptny.org — or by contacting PTNY.

How trails benefit communities

Communities benefit greatly from trails. Following are some of the many benefits that trails provide:

- Nearby places to pursue healthy physical activities
- Close-to-home recreation
- Safe places to walk or bike to work, school, and local shops
- Economic development resulting from increased tourism and enhanced quality of life
- Open space protection
- Enjoyable places for people of all ages to experience the great outdoors and learn about the natural world
- An opportunity for people with disabilities to participate in leisure recreation and fitness activities as well as access otherwise inaccessible natural areas
- River and stream corridor protection
- Historic resource preservation
- Enhanced civic engagement through people coming together to plan, build, and use the trail
- Connections between the many special places in a community, including the downtown area, parks, waterfront areas, historic and cultural sites, and other public amenities
- Critical routes for wildlife
- Preservation of community character
- New way to discover the special places in a community
- Positive community image



CHAPTER 2 GETTING ORGANIZED

Trail projects usually begin with a resource and a vision. Sometimes the source of this vision is a governmental agency, such as a local or county planning board. Just as often, the source is a local citizen. For instance, one day, while driving by an abandoned rail corridor that runs through town, someone thinks, "Wouldn't this make a great trail? I wonder what it would take to clean it up and open it to the public?"

The person with the original idea usually "tests the water" by informally sharing the vision with friends, family, and colleagues. For the idea to gain real momentum, however, the broader resources of the community must be mobilized. Therefore, one of the first steps in planning a trail is to get more people involved by forming a committee whose purpose is to organize, coordinate, and lead the effort to establish the trail.



Among the tasks the trail committee may take on:

- Communicate the vision
- Educate officials, the public, and landowners about the benefits of trails in general and this trail project in particular
- Foster public input
- Encourage more people to participate
- Build broad community support
- Determine trail route options
- Identify opportunities for access/use agreements
- Raise funds
- Organize events
- Involve the media
- Oversee or provide input into trail design
- Participate in construction
- Maintain the trail
- CELEBRATE AND HAVE FUN



TRAILS TAKE TIME

Developing a trail takes patience and perseverance but, as many communities in New York and around the country can attest, it's well worth it.

Following is a time line that shows how the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in Ulster County came to be.

1977

Last freight run along Wallkill Valley Railroad.

1983

Local community leaders from six towns form a committee to visualize a plan for a linear park and to consider buying the abandoned rail bed.

Community volunteers organize themselves into the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Association.

1985

Town of Montgomery buys two miles of rail bed; Town of Shawangunk buys 2.3 miles of rail bed; New York State Department of Corrections buys 1.4 miles of rail bed.

1986

Private citizen John Rahl buys 11 miles of rail bed.

1988-90

Wallkill Valley Land Trust, the Town of New Paltz, and the Village of New Paltz negotiate jointly to purchase 12.5 miles of rail bed in New Paltz and Gardiner and sell to the municipalities involved.

1991

Land Trust completes purchase of the rail bed and sells appropriate sections at once to the Town and Village of New Paltz.

Gardiner declines to purchase its section, so the Land Trust continues to own the Gardiner section.

Informal opening of the Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail in New Paltz and Gardiner.

The Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Association assumes management and maintenance of the trail.

1993

Town of Shawangunk opens its Jesse McHugh Rail Trail, from the Village of Wallkill south to the Town border.

2003

Trail is a popular amenity, drawing local and international users. It hosts many community and cultural gatherings throughout the year. The Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Association continues to maintain, promote and improve the Trail. The Association also looks for ways to expand the trail and connect it to local resources.

www.petbikemagazines.org / Dan Burden



The makeup of the committee

A trail committee may be created by a municipality, community organization, non-profit organization, or interested citizens. It's very helpful if your local municipality or county government is an active partner. While the support and participation of all citizens is welcome, think strategically as to the makeup of the trail committee. Strive to have the committee represent the diversity of interests in your community to ensure broad "investment." Include the people who will be most effective at building an extensive network of support and, of course, getting the work done.

When considering possible sources for members of the committee, look to:

- Community leaders: municipal officials, scout leaders, school teachers, coaches, and administrators, religious leaders, corporate leaders, board members of civic organizations such as Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, and garden clubs
- Outdoor recreation/user groups: trail and hiking organizations, bicyclists, runners, equestrians, cross-country skiers, bird watchers, snowmobilers, school athletic departments, scout groups, senior citizens, and individuals with disabilities
- Local businesses: downtown business associations, chambers of commerce, individual shop owners, utilities, corporations, restaurants, and lodging establishments
- Public agencies at the state, national, regional, county, and municipal level: planning, parks and recreation, public works, environmental conservation council, soil and water conservation, waterfront revitalization, health, transportation, tourism, cooperative extension, and management agencies for any open space properties such as nature preserves and state forests
- Landowners: neighborhood or homeowner associations, farmers, utilities, and other significant landowners
- Local organizations or representatives of regional, state, or national organizations with potential interest: environmental, conservation, fish and game, land trusts, farm bureau, historic preservation, alternative transportation, smart growth, and health
- University and college faculty and students
- Interested individual citizens and trail advocates
- Media: newspaper, radio, television, internet
- Technical experts: landscape architects, planners, contractors, engineers, foresters, attorneys, and public relations and computer specialists

CHAPTER 2

Leadership of the committee

Leadership is a key ingredient in transforming any vision into reality. The trail committee needs a well-respected member of the community to guide it. The ideal candidate will be a consensus builder who is sensitive to the needs and desires of the many constituencies that will have an interest in the project. He or she will have good communication skills, foster a sense of enthusiasm and teamwork, and perhaps most importantly, have perseverance. Trail development is a multi-year endeavor and, while one person cannot be expected to devote 10 years to one project (although many do!), a certain level of leadership stability is desirable. At the same time, regular rotation of leadership roles and duties keeps an organization fresh and vital.

Some trail committees find it preferable to have co-chairs rather than a single chairperson, as this spreads out the responsibilities and provides double the amount of dedicated leadership.



Keep your eyes open for "spark plugs"

Individuals make trail projects happen. It's amazing what the leadership and inspiration of a single person can mean to the success of a trail project. Private citizens, non-governmental organizations, governmental institutions, planning and consulting firms, and the private sector all have roles to play in the complex process of trail development. Out of this cast of players, most likely one or two champions or "spark plugs" will emerge who will provide critical leadership to move the project forward at various stages of development. Although no single person can carry an entire trail project singlehandedly, "spark plugs" are crucial to the success of a trail project, so be on the lookout for potential ones.

FROM THE FIELD

Spark Plug Extraordinaire

Elinor Mettler has been lobbying and laboring for a rail-trail in Columbia and Dutchess Counties ever since she visited the Cape Cod Rail Trail 20 years ago. Once the idea formed in Elinor's mind to convert the 43-mile abandoned Harlem Valley rail bed to a trail, there was no stopping her. She button-holed local officials to tell them about her idea and used the local newspaper, of which she was then editor and publisher, to educate people about the value of rail-trails.

For the most part, she was met with a stone wall. Supervisors said the trail would cause trespassing problems for neighboring landowners. Town board members shook their heads over the potential insurance and maintenance problems. Local planners were skeptical. But Elinor persevered, eventually winning the support of Dutchess County and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Slowly but surely, with the support of a local citizens group, the Harlem Valley Rail-Trail Association, local officials began to come around. As acquisition and development of the rail bed moves northward, Mettler is beginning to see her vision come to life.

At the ground breaking of the latest section of trail, some of the very same supervisors and council members who scoffed at the notion of a rail-trail 20 years ago were there smiling at the cameras. That's persistence. That's a spark plug.

At the time of publication, 12.1 miles of the Harlem Valley Rail-Trail are open to the public. By the end of 2004, 2.6 more miles will be open, with another 7 miles expected to open in 2006.



Elinor Mettler, spark plug extraordinaire, resting on the bench along the Harlem Valley Rail-Trail dedicated to her and her late husband, John.



Establishing a purpose and goals

Initial trail committee meetings will probably be taken up with defining the group's purpose and establishing goals. Adopting clear and realistic goals early on will help the group prioritize its activities and make the most of limited resources and people power. Is the committee's goal to acquire and manage the trail corridor itself? To do enough legwork and activate enough advocates for the trail project so that a governmental entity will take over? To establish a long-term partnership with local government? Formulating very specific

objectives is best left until after the issues, concerns, and desires of the public become known. Although early trail committee meetings tend to be informal, it's helpful to have someone take notes or minutes so there is a record of decisions for future reference. During this early organizational stage, get as much information about other trails as you can. Send away for plans, maps, and brochures. Call trail managers and trail friends groups. Best yet, take some field trips to nearby trails and talk to those who made it happen.

FROM THE FIELD

Sample Trail Committee Goal and Objectives

The D&H Canal Heritage Corridor in Ulster County is filled with historical significance and natural beauty. The corridor includes historic hamlets, farmland, the Rondout Creek, the railbed of the former New York Ontario & Western Railroad, and beautiful views of the Catskills and Shawangunk Mountains. The D&H Canal Heritage Corridor Steering Committee was formed in the early 1990's by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), with the assistance of the National Park Service (NPS) Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, to build community support and foster planning for the creation of trails and linear parks and stewardship of the corridor's historic resources. The Committee included representatives of local municipalities, historical societies, businesses, and private landowners. Working with PTNY and NPS, the Steering Committee identified its central goals in small meetings. Then it sponsored a series of public workshops to build support for those goals and develop specific objectives. An example of one of these goals and concomitant objectives follows:

Goal

- To promote greater appreciation, protection, and beneficial use of the D&H Canal Heritage Corridor's natural, historic, and recreational resources in ways that recognize and respect the rights and interests of private property owners.

Objectives

- Provide close-to-home, non-motorized recreational opportunities throughout the corridor for jogging, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, bicycling, walking, boating, fishing, relaxing, family outings, and simply enjoying the outdoors.
- Promote community recognition, appreciation, and protection of the Heritage Corridor's historic and natural features.
- Actively involve and unify communities, businesses, groups, and individuals in the decision-making, regional coordination, and local implementation of heritage corridor projects, linking the region's historic, natural, and economic resources.



A series of public meetings helped develop specific objectives for the D&H Canal Heritage Corridor project.

Organizational Models

At this point, committee members may want to “institutionalize” the group through incorporation and not-for-profit status. The decision about whether or not to incorporate as a not-for-profit organization must be weighed carefully. Benefits of incorporation include the ability to accept grants and tax-deductible donations, enter into contracts, hire employees, participate in group insurance plans, and hold titles and easements. Incorporating as a non-profit may also limit the liability exposure of committee members. While the benefits of incorporating can be significant, they must be balanced against the time and expense involved with filing for not-for-profit status and keeping necessary records.

Several alternatives exist to establishing a new not-for-profit organization. If the committee is working closely with a municipal government, the municipality can accept and administer funds for the committee. Another option is to affiliate with an established not-for-profit organization, such as a land trust, parks organization, or chamber of commerce, either temporarily or on a more permanent basis.

Section 501 c (3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code defines and limits the activities of not-for-profit organizations. To incorporate as a not-for-profit, the committee will need to file articles of

incorporation, adopt formal by-laws, and formally apply to the Internal Revenue Service for tax-exempt status, the most arduous part of the process. Obtaining legal advice to guide you in the incorporation process is highly recommended. For additional information on incorporation, contact the NYS Department of State Division of Corporations at 518/473-2492 or go to: www.dos.state.ny.us/corp/nfpfile.html

What's in a name?

Choosing a name for your trail project is sure to stimulate committee members' creative juices. Don't take this task lightly because, as any good marketing person knows, a name can be critical to "product" success. It can be an important factor in the trail's ability to draw users in the future. Strive to make the name distinctive and catchy. Names that are associated with local history or the local landscape are usually good choices. Several examples of interesting trail names in New York State include the Horsemen's Trail in Westchester County, the Port Jefferson Shoreline to Shoreline Greenway Trail in Nassau County, and the Lehigh Memory Trail in Erie County. You might also consider getting the greater community involved and making the selection of a trail name an integral part of your publicity campaign.



ALTERNATIVES TO ESTABLISHING A NEW NON-PROFIT

Often, fledgling organizations are not ready to undergo the somewhat lengthy process of incorporating as a not-for-profit. Their members are focused on programmatic issues, not administrative tasks. Also, young organizations do not always have the necessary funds to seek not-for-profit status.

Organizations in this situation can sometimes find an existing not-for-profit to work under. Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) can help young trail organizations through its Fiscal Agent Program. Under this program, PTNY accepts funds for a new trail group and holds them in a special account.

PTNY has a few requirements for joining the Fiscal Agent program. First, the group must have a mission that is compatible with PTNY's mission. The group must formally apply to the program by submitting an application form and a proposed budget. If approved, PTNY and the group sign a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines the rights and responsibilities of both parties.

Under this program, a newly formed trail group can quickly begin collecting funds. It can concentrate on its mission rather than spending time and money in applying for not-for-profit status. For more information call PTNY at 518-434-1583



FROM THE FIELD

A legendary trail name

The Horsemen's Trail is a 2-1/2 mile network of trails in the Hudson Valley Village of Sleepy Hollow named after the most memorable character from the Washington Irving classic, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. The Horsemen's Trail starts at the Hudson River and follows the Pocantico Creek for much of its length, running through wooded fields and farmlands, crossing the Old Croton Aqueduct, and stepping down into the old Sleepy Hollow cemetery.

GET LOCAL OFFICIALS ON BOARD EARLY

Be sure to reach out and establish good communication with your local elected officials early on. You want them to hear the facts about your project from a supporter, not rumors from an irate opponent. Invite a municipal representative to participate in the committee. Once on board, a municipality can become the entity that ensures the project's longevity by providing official and political support, professional and technical expertise, financial resources, and on-going trail maintenance.

Good places to look for friends within municipal government are members of planning and zoning boards, parks and recreation departments, open space committees, conservation boards, and environmental councils. Work to get your trail project "institutionalized" by having it included in your municipality's comprehensive, recreation, or open space plan. This can be a big boom in fundraising.

Think outside the borders of your community, too. The trail you are considering may have the potential to continue beyond your town or link with other nearby trails. Try to arrange for neighboring municipalities to come together to discuss potential shared trail resources. You might want to include the county or a regional planning organization in these multi-town discussions.

Partners: the more the merrier

Partners are vital to success. Think about whose support you will need, both in the short and long term. The broader the partnerships created around a trail project, the better. Identify and reach out to all groups that could possibly be of help, and involve them from the start. Think through what each constituency has to gain from the project and use these benefits to convince each to participate. Outdoor enthusiasts, recreation, and tourism-related business owners, health advocates, environmentalists,

and conservation-minded individuals and officials are all natural supporters.

Be sure to seek support from the business community. Business people can be powerful allies and help make the case for the economic benefits of trails.

With the recent emphasis on regular exercise to improve health, the health community can also be a strong ally. Refer to the list of sources for committee members (*page 7, Makeup of the Committee*) to get ideas on where to seek potential trail partners.

FROM THE FIELD

Partnerships at heart of Genesee Valley Greenway

Partnerships have been at the heart of the Genesee Valley Greenway project in western New York since it began in 1990.

In the first few years of the project, the landowner, Rochester Gas & Electric, worked with local governments, citizen committees, and a steering committee — organized by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), with the assistance of the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program — to open sections of trail to public use. In 1993, the newly formed Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (Friends) partnered with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to apply for federal transportation enhancement funds under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The successful funding of that \$2.5 million application cemented the partnership that has today resulted in a long list of accomplishments. The most notable accomplishment is the acquisition by the state of the 90-mile corridor, which runs from Genesee Valley Park in Rochester to close to the Pennsylvania border. Other noteworthy accomplishments include the completion of 52 miles of trail and the formation of dozens of partnerships with individuals, organizations, and local governments.

As Frances Gotcsik, Executive Director of the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway from 1996 to 2003, says, "The Greenway partnership functions well because DEC, OPRHP, and the Friends each contribute different strengths that combine to allow more to be accomplished than one entity could do alone."

Examples of Genesee Valley Greenway projects undertaken by area partners:

- Genesee Valley Board of Cooperative Educational Services Career Exploration, Metal Trades, and Auto Body classes—6,000 hours for trail clearing and maintenance and fabrication, painting, and installation of trail gates.
- Letchworth District Boy Scouts—3,200 hours as trail adopters and three years worth of fall camp-o-ree work.
- Six local committees, comprised of interested citizens—thousands of hours for trail clearing, maintenance, and promotion.
- Allegany County Public Works Department—labor and materials valued at \$5,000 to assist with trail development.
- SUNY Geneseo design students—560 hours for design and execution of 20 posters promoting the Greenway.



District Boy Scouts have contributed more than 3,200 hours of volunteer service to the Genesee Valley Greenway.

Role of Partners

Determine as early as possible the role of partners in the design, development, management, and maintenance of the trail. Arrangements will vary from community to community - any combination that works is fine. Local municipalities are usually key partners, but often public sector partners will not agree to assume responsibilities until public support is solidified.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of a trail committee. Area colleges, schools, and community service organizations are usually fertile sources for volunteers. Volunteers commit themselves to a project because they believe in it, but also because they want to enjoy themselves. Having fun helps everyone maintain their commitment and get through the inevitable difficult times. Find ways to recognize volunteers and celebrate their good work. Keep a "shopping list" of projects for volunteers. When volunteers ask how they can help, give them a project that's do-able, enjoyable, and important. Then, give them an opportunity to report their success to the committee and receive their due praise. Recognize and award volunteer efforts at an annual volunteer event.

Remember to keep track of volunteer hours to demonstrate to decision makers and potential partners and funders the level of support for a project. Also, volunteer hours can sometimes be used as part of a match for a grant.



SOURCES OF ON-THE-GROUND VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE

Later on in your trail project, when you're ready for on-the-ground work, consider these sources of volunteers:

- Youth Groups - scouts (particularly Eagle Scouts), 4-H groups
- Service Organizations - Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary, garden clubs, religious institutions, school clubs, fraternities and sororities
- Businesses and professionals
- Correctional Institutions
- National Guard - contact the NYS GuardHELP Program, at 518-786-4643
- Americorps - Contact NYS Commission on National and Community Service, www.nyscnscs.org

Do your homework: preliminary research

Committee members should have a general sense of the opportunities, feasibility, and potential points of opposition surrounding the trail project before officially "going public." Assign a few committee members to unofficially feel out community leaders and landowners about the project.

Some questions to consider during preliminary research:

- Will the proposed trail go along an existing alignment, such as an abandoned rail corridor or along a waterway, or will the route have to be mapped out?
- Who owns the land of the proposed trail alignment and the land adjacent to it?
- What points of interest might the trail link — town park, school, library, main street?
- What makes the trail interesting — natural features, historic significance?
- What is the land being used for now?
- Could the trail be part of a larger trail or greenway system?
- What are the potential benefits to the community?
- What are the potential liabilities?
- What entity might manage the trail in the long run?
- How might the trail be funded — for acquisition, development and maintenance?

FROM THE FIELD

Going it alone

Although local municipalities and counties are usually key partners in a trail project, it is possible for a trail group to go it alone.

In the early 1990's, Betsy and Greg Russell moved to Canandaigua, N.Y., at the northwestern tip of the Finger Lakes. They wanted to take their children bicycling on the kind of safe, off-road rail-trail that was so popular in Greg's native Wisconsin. Not finding any, they got out a map and started researching old railroad corridors. Lo and behold, they discovered that Penn Central was looking to sell 35 miles of abandoned rail corridor in Ontario County.

The Russells put a small notice in the paper announcing a meeting for people interested in creating a local rail-trail. They knew they were on to something when 45 people showed up.

"We were very naive. We didn't have an organization, and we didn't have any money, but we had enthusiasm," recalls Betsy.

Penn Central's \$100,000 asking price seemed quite reasonable so the rail-trail group approached local municipal leaders. Unfortunately, some adjacent landowners who were opposed to the trail had gotten to local leaders first and the municipalities didn't want anything to do with the trail project.

Not willing to let this opportunity slip by, the group incorporated as Ontario Pathways and managed to raise the necessary funds to buy the corridor through loans and fundraising activities. The group paid off its loans of \$85,000 in 3-1/2 years through memberships, private donors, and business contributions. They also sold off several pieces of disconnected rail corridor included in the purchase to raise funds.

Today, Ontario Pathways manages 19 miles of trail open to the public.

"We're oddballs, I know. Maybe sometime in the future a governmental entity will take over. But for now, we believe we can do things better and more efficiently," says Betsy. "We're very proud of the trail and what the organization has accomplished."



The non-profit and all-volunteer Ontario Pathways owns and manages 19 miles of trail open to the public. Here, a Saturday work crew in February blazes a new trail.

CHAPTER 3

GOING PUBLIC

Your committee is formed. You've grappled with your purpose and established reasonable goals. You've asked yourself some tough questions and come up with sound answers. It's now time to share your vision with other members of the community and the public.

Patience, patience, patience

At this point, committee members are probably full of enthusiasm and raring to go but a cautionary word is in order here. The "going public" stage of a trail project can sometimes last for years, as the community hashes through thorny issues and local officials wait for the dust to settle to decide whether to lend their support to the project.

Exploring issues and opportunities in the community

Committee members will want to go out into the community to listen and learn about the range of issues and opportunities surrounding the proposed trail project. Begin by meeting individually or in small groups with community leaders, landowners, and neighbors. What is the level of interest and support? What trail route do people favor? Which community resources would they like to see connected by the trail? What are people's concerns? What are the obstacles to developing a trail?

These early meetings will provide an opportunity to meet key people, solicit information, begin to make people aware of the trail project, and get some feedback with which you can fine tune the trail concept. Keep the meetings short and remember at the close to ask for referrals to other key people.

The people you meet with will have many questions. Although you won't have all the answers at this early stage of trail planning, people will view you with more credibility if you can show you've done your homework.

Approaching the media

At some point, committee members will want to reach out to the media for help in informing the public about the trail project. Newspaper and television coverage is invaluable in generating public input and support. However, publicity can also provoke opponents and, since reporters like to present both sides of a story, provide opponents with a public forum. Therefore, carefully weigh the best time to approach the media.

Make sure to invite the media to any public meeting or event. Develop a list of local newspapers and radio and television stations and call them to find out who is the best person to contact. Also inquire how they prefer to receive information. Nowadays, many media representatives prefer to receive material electronically. Put together a press kit to provide background material to the media.





Good visuals are useful throughout the planning stages of a trail.

Press kit contents:

- a folder with pockets
- a press release about the event - make sure to include the names and telephone numbers of people to contact for more information
- a speaker list with short biographical profiles
- a newsletter from your organization (if available)
- a brochure or fact sheet about the trail project

Another good avenue for getting the word out about your trail project is the op-ed and letters to the editor section of your local newspaper.

Visual aids

When taking your trail vision public, it's helpful to have something tangible to show people, either in the form of a concept plan or rough map. Keep the plan or map broad in scope at this point since its main purpose is to stimulate discussion. If you use a map, denote a wide trail corridor rather than a

specific trail route. Photos or sketches of particularly interesting historic or scenic features of the trail corridor are helpful in engendering interest in the project, as are slides and video footage.

Brochures, pamphlets, flyers and posters are good communication tools to reach large numbers of people. Brochures and pamphlets are usually folded and printed double-sided for multiple text panels. They can be handed out, stuffed in an envelope, sent as a self-mailer, or placed in libraries and other public places. Flyers and posters are typically one-sided and meant to be displayed fully open.

Keep it simple

A simple brochure that presents some background and highlights of the trail project and the purpose and goals of the trail committee is a good selling tool. Maps and photos make the brochure more interesting but aren't necessary. A standard 8 1/2-inch by 11-inch piece of paper folded into thirds is easy to hand out and mail, plus it's inexpensive to reproduce.

FROM THE FIELD

Map promotes county-wide trail concept

A group of citizens, comprised of representatives from community groups, local government, and public agencies, as well as interested individuals, banded together in 1992 to form the Saratoga County Heritage Trails Committee. The Committee set forth as its vision a county-wide network of trails and bikeways that would provide safe on- and off-road trails, connecting places where people live, work, shop, go to school and recreate. With the assistance of the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, the group early on promoted its work through the development of a vision map which schematically shows existing and potential trails in the county. Today, the Committee is still going strong and has many successes to show for its years of hard work.



The Saratoga County Heritage Trails Committee early on developed a vision map to promote its work.

Working with landowners and neighbors

Landowners and neighbors are critical to the success of a trail project. No matter how much support your project has in the larger community, opposition by landowners and neighbors can slow down or sometimes even kill a project. The most important thing when meeting with landowners and neighbors is to listen to them carefully and acknowledge their concerns. Areas in which landowners and neighbors may have concerns include privacy, liability, safety, and property values. Be prepared to address these concerns as best you can. Chapter 6 of this publication goes into more detail about these issues, including results of a survey of landowners living adjacent to the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in New York's Capital Region.

When to contact landowners: a horse-before-the-cart dilemma

The decision as to when to contact landowners can be tricky. It's awkward to approach landowners before many of the questions they will surely ask have been answered. On the other hand, if landowners hear about a trail project through the "grapevine," they may feel marginalized and have a strong negative reaction. The best approach is to be honest and clear with landowners from the beginning. Tell them what the committee is thinking and ask for their input.

Tips for meeting with landowners and neighbors

- Meet with landowners and neighbors early, preferably before any public meetings. You don't want them to hear and react to rumors before you've given them the facts.
- Meet with landowners individually. A landowner is more likely to express his or her true feelings about a project outside of a public setting, where pressure from friends and neighbors can be intense.
- Try to meet with all landowners and neighbors. This process is time-consuming, but experience has shown it pays off in the end.
- If a landowner seems particularly hostile to a project, consider bringing along a supportive neighbor or respected community member. Always inform the landowner that you'll be bringing another person with you.
- Schedule the meeting at a convenient time and location for the landowner.
- Be a good listener. Try not to get defensive. Acknowledge the importance of concerns the landowner may have.
- Take notes to demonstrate to landowners that their input is important.
- Have the facts straight about the project.
- Remain cool, calm, and collected.
- Be patient. Even the most vociferous opponents have been known to change their minds as projects progress.



A public process

Good trail planning involves significant public outreach, with public input informing and guiding the process from start to finish. After all, trails are for people and the best way to end up with a successful trail is to solicit and incorporate input from the people who will use it and have to live with it. This input is most often gathered in a series of public meetings held at various stages of trail development.

The community issues workshop

Once committee members have met with community leaders, landowners, and neighbors, consider holding a community workshop to identify broader issues and concerns. Ideally, if the trail project



encompasses several towns, it's best to hold more than one workshop. That way, attendees won't have to travel far and will feel more comfortable because they're in familiar surroundings.

The workshop is a structured, yet informal, public meeting. It provides a way to inform the general public about the trail project and receive valuable input on opportunities and issues. A trail represents change and local citizens may, understandably, have reservations about the project.

Benefits of holding a community workshop

- Reassures everyone that trail planning and development will be a public process in which all views, concerns, issues, and ideas will be considered and every effort made to address them.
- Builds trust and goodwill toward the committee by creating an environment of cooperation and dialogue.
- Provides factual information to the community.
- Provides a forum for the public to ask questions, express concerns, and be heard.

- Strengthens and broadens the base of support.
- Provides a forum for supporters to publicly demonstrate support and for opponents to voice their concerns.
- Identifies those in the community with expertise that can help ensure the success of the project.
- Provides an opportunity to publicize the trail vision.
- Lets the community know that an organized group of citizens is spearheading the project.

Getting the word out

Some options to consider in publicizing your community workshop: mailings, articles in local newspapers, a notice in the legal notices section of the newspaper, public service announcements on radio and cable access channels, presentations or announcements at meetings of local civic organizations, meetings with community leaders, organization newsletters, flyers, list serves, and one-on-one contact. Personally contact key supporters to encourage them to attend.

PREPARING FOR THE WORKSHOP

Adopt the Boy Scout's motto, *Be Prepared*. Things to consider when planning the workshop:

- **Goals.** Be clear about what the committee wants to accomplish.
- **Research.** Assess early on who you want to attend and the major issues and concerns that are likely to be brought up.
- **Time and location.** Choose a time that allows about two and a half hours for the workshop. Hold it in a well-known, neutral, and convenient location such as a school, library, or municipal facility.
- **Plan and timetable.** Determine tasks and committee members' assignments. Make a checklist and timetable. Clarify the role of partners.
- **Publicity.** Put together a plan to get the word out. Identify categories of people the committee would like to attend and consider how to reach them.
- **Logistics.** Prepare an agenda, a list of speakers, presentation materials, hand-outs, sign-in sheets, refreshments. Identify the convener, welcomer, moderator, and facilitators.
- **Outreach to the media.** Send a press kit to the media with information on the trail project and an invitation to attend the workshop.

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR A TRAIL COMMUNITY ISSUES WORKSHOP

6:30 p.m.

Displays set up, committee members available to informally talk with early arrivals, refreshments available

7:00 p.m. (Publicized start time)

Participants arrive, sign in, get name tags, settle in, look at displays, enjoy refreshments, and mingle

7:10 p.m.

Opening remarks

Welcome

Workshop agenda, goals, next steps (brief)

Trail project highlights

Purpose, goals and plans of trail committee

Guest speaker on benefits of trails (optional)

8:00 p.m.

Solicit, record and prioritize ideas and concerns

8:45 p.m.

Group reports and discussion (if break-out groups were necessary)

9:00 p.m.

Concluding remarks

Summarize input

Next steps

Invite use of comment sheets

Thanks and closing

9:15 p.m.

More refreshments and mingling

Workshop format

Always start and end the workshop close to the publicized time. Begin the workshop with a broad-brush introduction that touches on the workshop agenda, desired outcome of the workshop, highlights of the trail project, the purpose and goals of the trail committee, and how the committee plans to proceed. You might consider having a guest speaker give a short presentation or slide show on how trails benefit communities. A representative from a nearby successful trail may fit the bill perfectly here. The rest of the workshop should be participatory, with the goal of soliciting, recording, and prioritizing participants' ideas and concerns. Be clear about what will be done with input, both oral and written. If more than 15 or 20 people are present, break out participants into two or more groups. Be prepared to have several facilitators available to lead these break-out groups.

The facilitators will lead participants in a brainstorming session to bring forth ideas and concerns about the trail project. Be clear about the ground rules, such as only one person at a time may speak. As ideas

and concerns are voiced, volunteer recorders capture them on flip charts. Once all ideas and concerns have been recorded, the group assigns the issues high, medium or low priority status. This is often done by having participants vote with stickers or hot dots.

After soliciting input about issues and concerns, and if time allows, facilitators may ask participants to identify key sites and resources that the trail could link. Make sure this input is recorded, too.

If participants have divided into smaller groups, re-assemble them at this point. With the aid of a moderator and volunteer reporters from each break-out group, share and consolidate the findings.

Remember to have comment sheets available for people who may not feel comfortable voicing their opinion in public.

After the workshop, transcribe the results of the workshop and send it out to all participants. Inform participants how their input will be used. Schedule a follow-up workshop in which experts address the highest priority issues and concerns.



CHAPTER 3

Workshop alternative: the open house

An open house is an even less formal way to inform and obtain input from the public. One of its main advantages is that it allows one-on-one discussions. An open house might be in order if it seems likely that a block of opponents will show up at a workshop and monopolize the proceedings. For an open house, reserve a room in a community facility, such as the library or town hall, for two hours and invite people to come and talk informally with committee members. Have visual aids available to generate discussion, particularly maps of the proposed trail corridor. Also provide brochures and information that people can take home with them. Make sure that an adequate number of committee members are available so that people who show up feel welcome. Provide a sign-in sheet, comment sheets, and, of course, refreshments.

Down the road, other types of workshops are advisable or may be required. These include workshops on trail design and management and official public hearings, such as those mandated under New York State laws such as the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

State Environmental Quality Review Act - SEQRA

New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) requires all state and local government agencies to consider environmental impacts equally with social and economic factors during decision-making and to involve the public in the process. Many projects or activities proposed by a state agency or unit of local government require an environmental impact assessment under SEQRA to identify and mitigate significant environmental impacts. Actions that trigger the SEQRA process involve irrevocable commitment of resources. These actions, such as land acquisition or site clearing, usually occur far along in the trail planning process.

For more information on SEQRA:

New York State Department of
Environmental Conservation (DEC)
www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dcs/seqr



Displays such as this generate lively discussion at an open house.



www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden

Other ways to involve the public

You may want to consider other ways of getting the public involved in addition to meetings, workshops, and open houses. For instance, the committee might send out a survey or create a speakers bureau to present information on the trail project at meetings of local organizations. Paper or on-line newsletters, on-line discussion groups, and websites are also great tools for involving the public.

Trail projects take time to be noticed, understood and embraced by the general public. Thus, it's important to give projects as much visibility as possible. Consider organizing an on-site outdoor event so

people better can better visualize the potential of the trail. Invite specific groups that you would like to see become involved.

Increasing the number of stakeholder interests helps build support for trail projects. If the proposed trail follows an old transportation corridor, hold a corridor history night and ask people to bring pictures and stories or ask someone from the historical society to give a talk on the corridor's history. Provide opportunities for youth involvement, which also tends to involve parents. Invite school and scout groups to help with trail projects and events. Ask school art classes to design posters promoting the trail or a trail-related event.

FROM THE FIELD

Outdoor events spark public interest

Outdoor events are great ways to engender interest in your trail project.

The Hudson River Valley Ramble is an annual trails festival in the Hudson Valley that features walks, hikes, paddles, and pedals. Through a variety of guided outdoor experiences, the Ramble encourages participants to explore the vast riches of the Hudson River Valley. The Ramble is sponsored by the Hudson River Valley Heritage Area and the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

The Canalway Trail Celebration, occurring on National Trails Day (always the first Saturday in June), consists of a coordinated series of local events on the Erie Canalway Trail. Events include history and nature walks, trail clean ups, walks and runs for health, and treasure hunts. Parks & Trails New York, the New York State Canal Corporation and the Canalway Trails Association of New York organize the Canalway Trail Celebration. When complete, the 350-mile Erie Canalway Trail will link the Hudson River and Lake Erie.



CHAPTER 4

TRAIL PLANNING

Trail planning involves several key tasks. Among these tasks are conducting an inventory, mapping, researching property ownership, determining project feasibility, deciding on trail uses, looking at trail route options, researching funding possibilities, and developing a trail management and maintenance plan.

Sometimes, trail committee members will have the necessary skills to carry out these tasks. However, some of the tasks are quite complex and may require professional assistance. If you're lucky, you may be able to find professionals willing to donate their time, or perhaps staff of a cooperating agency can take on some of the work.

Many excellent resources exist in the form of handbooks and organizations to help you with trail planning. (See Appendices A & B).

Maps and inventory

Basic working and presentation maps are essential. Useful maps to have on hand include zoning, tax, road, and topographic maps. Aerial photos and soil maps are also useful. Your county or town planning office is a good source for large, accurate maps. The New York State Department of Transportation sells maps of different sections of New York in a variety of scales. Environmental management councils and soil and water districts are other good sources for maps.

The first thing to research is land ownership. Your local tax assessor will have this information on tax maps. Especially note land held in public ownership, land owned by utilities, and land owned for preservation, conservation, or recreation purposes. Also note any large land holdings.

INVENTORY ITEMS

Land ownership:

- Tax parcel data
- Public lands
- Existing local or regional plans

Natural features:

- Soil
- Vegetation
- Wildlife
- Topography, especially steep slopes, cliffs, ravines, hilltops
- Special land forms: caves, rocks outcroppings
- Water features: wetlands, lakes and ponds, rivers and streams
- Scenic overlooks
- Farmlands and orchards

FROM THE FIELD

Consultants help community shape common vision

The City of Newburgh received a matching grant of \$18,000 from the Hudson River Valley Greenway to support its trail development and open space planning efforts along the Quassaick Creek. The City is part of a broad coalition of individuals, municipalities, agencies, and community groups formed around efforts to preserve and increase public access to the natural and cultural resources of the Quassaick Creek, an easterly flowing tributary of the Hudson River. \$7,000 of the grant was used to hire a consultant to facilitate charrettes (early public planning workshops) to garner residents' ideas and suggestions about the project and to start to shape a common vision.

The City of Newburgh, working in tandem with other key Quassaick Creek Coalition members, sent out a request for proposals (RFP) to half a dozen firms that had experience in facilitating charrettes. The RFP included the project scope and spelled out the criteria for selecting a consultant. These included professional qualifications, charrette and community outreach experience, trail planning experience, a work program utilizing a multi-disciplinary team of professionals, deliverables, and references. The RFP also laid out a two-envelope system for respondents to follow — one envelope was to include the consultant's qualifications, proposed approach, timetable, and deliverables and the other envelope was to include proposed fees for the services. The City received three proposals.

A Coalition subcommittee of five people carefully evaluated the proposals, using a point system it had developed. The committee's first choice was interpretive planner Donald Watson of EarthRise, whose team included two landscape architects, an organizational expert, and an artist and illustrator. Before he was hired, Watson was asked to come and talk with the Coalition to make sure he "clicked" with the group.

The charrette, held over two consecutive days, was extremely successful, with more than 50 agencies, community organizations, and businesses attending.



The City of Newburgh hired consultants to carry out two planning charrettes for its Quassaick Creek project.

Built features:

- Parks
- Commercial areas
- Villages, town centers, urban downtowns
- Residential areas
- Schools, libraries, museums
- Historic buildings, battlefields
- Canals
- Other points of interest

Trail corridor infrastructure

- Existing trail segments
- Condition of existing trails or trail segments
- Abandoned transportation corridors (railroads, canals, trolleys)
- Bridges
- Tunnels
- Culverts
- Historic railroad/canal structures

Important: The integrity of large trail structures such as bridges and tunnels should be evaluated by a qualified structural engineer.

Surrounding infrastructure:

- Public transportation
- Public bathrooms
- Roads and crossings
- Railroads and crossings
- Utility rights-of-way and crossings
- Parking areas
- Restaurants
- Lodging
- Boat launches
- Other trails

A base inventory of natural resources, built features, trail corridor infrastructure, and surrounding infrastructure will provide you with an important planning tool and bring credibility to your project. Significant natural resources such as wetlands are often the highlight of a trail, but they can also pose challenges to development. The condition of structural features such as bridges and tunnels can sometimes make or break your project.

Before beginning your on-the-ground inventory, review existing inventories and plans. Many government agencies are responsible for collecting, analyzing, and updating resource information which they make available to the public at little or no cost. These may include master plans, waterfront revitalization plans, recreation plans, natural and cultural resource inventories, and regional and state open space plans. Your county planning agency is a good place to start gathering this information.

Involve volunteers

An inventory is a great way to get volunteers involved. To conduct your inventory, get out on the potential trail corridor and systematically record what you find. You can either write down your findings or tape record them as you move along. Photographs and video are also excellent ways to document your findings. Note problem areas and areas that offer special opportunities, such as great views or access to water bodies. Also note potential trail access points. As information is collected, consider inputting it into a computer database.

If the corridor is privately owned or if you have to cross private property to access the corridor, make sure to get permission first.

www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden



Hiring consultants

Finding the right consultant is more art than science but following certain steps will help ensure a good match. First, decide exactly what outcome or product you want from the consultant. Next, develop a list of what kinds of expertise will be needed: engineering, architectural, planning, etc. Then develop a list of qualified and experienced firms or professionals by querying local government resources, professional associations, and other trail and planning organizations. In general, it's usually best to stick with people who have specific experience with trail projects, although a consultant new to trail work may put in a lower bid in order to get a foot in the door of a new market.

Put together a package that includes information about your project, a general scope of work, time schedule, and criteria for selecting consultants. Send this packet to five or six firms. Certain grant programs and state funds require you to publish a notice in the newspaper, the New York State Contract Reporter, or elsewhere. Evaluate the responses and choose two or three consultants to interview. When making your final decision, keep in mind that a higher fee does not necessarily indicate a higher quality of work. On the other hand, be wary of a quote that is significantly lower than the others. Also consider the size of the firm in relation to the size of your project. A large firm will surely have the necessary resources but will it give your project the attention it deserves?

Trail route and connections

If your proposed trail is not on an existing corridor such as an abandoned railbed, you'll have to create a route. Start by considering the resources found in your inventory. Analyze these resources as to positive and negative aspects. Identify several possible trail route options and connections, always striving to link special places, population areas, and transportation facilities. Find good trail beginnings and ends. Trails should connect locations that naturally attract people.

A Trail plan is critical

Even without the help of professionals, you can put together a basic trail plan which falls somewhere between a feasibility study and master plan and provides answers to fundamental questions such as who, what,

where, how, and when. A trail plan helps clarify and communicate the trail vision and the steps required to make the trail a reality. You will also find a basic trail plan useful when applying for grants because all your information will be in one place. The content and level of detail in the plan will vary according to the needs of your project and community.

Consider universal design

Consider a universal design or universal access approach to trail design. This approach, in an outdoor setting, seeks to provide an environment that is safe, appealing, and easy to use by people of all abilities and ages while maintaining the integrity of the natural resources. The inherent accessible nature of this design method eliminates the need to make later modifications for accessibility.

The basic trail plan

A trail plan doesn't have to be lengthy but it should contain certain key elements. These elements are as follows:

- 1. Introduction.** How the trail project got started, the committee's purpose and goals, activities to date.
- 2. Route.** A "big picture" discussion. Highlight features, special places the trail will connect, and opportunities for educating people about the community's resources.
- 3. Land ownership.** Identify major public and private landowners along the proposed trail route. If you have the support of landowners, discuss proposed types of agreements for trail access and use.
- 4. Inventory of resources.**
- 5. Uses.** Identify possible trail uses. Remember to consider accessibility for people with disabilities.
- 6. Trail design and development.** Identify agencies or organizations that could carry out trail design and development, estimate rough costs, and project sources of funds.

FROM THE FIELD

Trail links residential area and town park

The places a trail links are often the reason for its existence. The Town of Malta in Saratoga County opened its first community park in 1993 along a county road. When the park generated a great deal of bicycle traffic, especially from children, the Town started looking for ways to make it safer for bicyclists to get to the Park. In 1996, the Town invited the Capital District Transportation Committee, the area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), to make recommendations to improve bicycle safety. As a result of this study, the Town requested that the County install 'share the road' signs and improve road shoulders. A petition with 350 names demonstrated the strong desire of local residents for safe bicycle access to the park. In August of 1999, the Town requested that its engineer study bicycle and pedestrian access between a local residential neighborhood, the town park, and the downtown area. The Town created a capital account for bikeway/pedestrian projects and started negotiating easements with Saratoga County and a homeowner's association to create a 10-foot-wide path along the county road between the neighborhood and park. When the pathway was completed, it was an immediate success, drawing walkers and joggers as well as bicyclists.



7. Trail management.

Identify possible agencies or organizations which could take over management and maintenance of the trail. Make sure to consider safety and emergency services in the plan. Include estimated costs and potential funding sources for these activities.

8. Pilot project. A common and proven approach to trail development is to identify and develop a small, eminently "do-able" trail segment that can stand out on its own and that engenders little controversy. Pilot projects demonstrate the benefits of a trail, build support in the community, and create confidence among the trail committee, partners, and volunteers.

9. Maps. Clearly identify trail route options, access points, and significant features and destinations along the route.

Maintaining traditional land uses

Trails can be designed to be compatible with traditional uses of the land such as agriculture, forestry, hunting, trapping, and fishing. They can also serve to educate others about the many productive uses of the land. Special information and instructions concerning these traditional uses are often incorporated into trail signs and guides.

Trail management

Trail management encompasses many elements: user safety and risk management, patrol and emergency procedures, administration, programming and events, stewardship, and maintenance. Trail management can be undertaken by a local, state, or federal agency, or a non-profit organization, or any combination. Non-profit organizations should understand that trail management requires significant resources. In most cases, a non-profit organization works in partnership with a governmental agency to manage a trail. Ideally, responsibility for the management

of a trail should be established in the late planning stages, well before construction begins.

When a trail passes through several jurisdictions, it is preferable to have one agency or organization, rather than several local agencies, manage it or at least take on the role as "lead coordinating organization." This way, the trail is likely to have more consistency in design, signs, and maintenance.

Trail maintenance

Regular trail maintenance is an ongoing and necessary activity that invites more people to use a trail and ensures continued safe use. It also sends the right message to local citizens and visitors, reflecting positively on the character of a local community.

Regular trail maintenance activities include mowing, pruning vegetation, picking up litter, and inspecting and repairing all trail structures. Any amenities added to a trail, such as trash cans, toilets, kiosks, and map dispensers, also require regular maintenance.

FROM THE FIELD

Canalway Trails Association of New York guides Adopt-A-Trail Program

The New York State Canalway Trail System is a network of approximately 230 miles of multi-use trail across upstate New York paralleling the NYS Canal System. When completed, the Canalway Trail will span over 500 miles.

The Canalway Trails Association of New York (CTANY) is a voluntary organization dedicated to making the Canalway Trail a world class multi-use recreational trail. CTANY assists state agencies, local municipalities, counties, and organizations in developing and maintaining the Canalway Trail System and acts as a coordination and communication group for Canalway Trail stakeholders. CTANY also organizes and guides participation in the Canalway Trail Adopt-a-Trail Program.

CTANY is organized under a three-tiered structure which includes a statewide board of directors, regional canalway trail groups, and local adopt-a-trail groups.

CTANY functions in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation, the agency leading Canalway Trail development statewide, and operates under the non-profit status of Parks & Trails New York.



The length of the Canalway Trail, combined with multiple ownership and management arrangements, has led to the creation of the volunteer Canalway Trails Association of New York.

CHAPTER 5

INTEGRATING NATURAL VALUES AND RECREATIONAL USE

Seriously consider conservation goals as well as recreation goals in your trail planning. Open spaces, wild areas, and wetlands in New York are becoming increasingly fragmented. Trail corridors can play an important role in connecting these resources. They can become key components of a green infrastructure, an interconnected network of green space that conserves natural ecosystem values and functions and provides associated benefits to humans. The vegetation along trail corridors also helps purify storm water runoff and mitigate a variety of pollutants in built environments. Protecting a natural landscape while promoting use of it can be challenging, but it is a challenge worth undertaking.

Rivers and trails

River and stream corridors provide unique trail and greenway opportunities. They are linear in nature and tend to be relatively



Trails along rivers and streams bring people back into contact with these special resources and can lead to a heightened sense of awareness and appreciation.

flat. They may be undeveloped since their susceptibility to flooding has tended to limit their use to agriculture and other low-impact activities. As railroads were often built along rivers and stream corridors there may also be great potential for rail-trails along waterways.

Trails along rivers, streams, and wetlands offer expanded access for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. In addition to providing recreation, trails along rivers and streams bring people back into contact with these precious resources and can cultivate a new sense of awareness and appreciation which often creates strong river advocates. A trail corridor can also be a key ingredient of a larger open space protection plan.

Developing a trail along a river or stream presents a unique challenge: how to protect and promote the natural value of the waterway while integrating those values with recreational use. Sometimes, a river or stream corridor has such extraordinary natural assets that the health of those assets takes precedence over recreation. But, in most cases, the environmental impact of trails and other low-key human uses, such as canoe and kayak put-ins, can be mitigated through proper design and management.

Locating trails along rivers and streams requires special planning, design, and maintenance. Improper trail location or construction within a floodplain may result in erosion or sedimentation that can seriously degrade water quality. Altering a floodway by adding fill may disrupt normal flooding patterns and cause damage both up and downstream. Also, building a trail in a floodplain or wetland location may require permits from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the Army Corps of Engineers (if the project requires filling or placing of dredge material into navigable waters and adjacent wetlands).

THE VALUE OF HEALTHY RIVER AND STREAM CORRIDORS

- Provide favorable habitat for fish and other wildlife
- Provide movement corridors for wildlife
- Filter and trap excess nutrients and pollutants
- Carry nutrients that sustain wetlands and estuaries
- Recharge underground aquifers
- Deliver free top soil for agriculture
- Absorb flood energies in meanders, marshes and flood plains
- Filter and store sediment from erosion
- Make great outdoor classrooms, particularly in urban areas
- Instill a sense of outdoor stewardship through volunteer programs such as buffer plantings and clean-ups
- Link historic communities where earliest settlements developed along waterways
- Grace us with the breathtaking beauty of ravines, valleys, and waterfalls

Your local soil and water conservation district is a good resource for best practices on protecting soil and water resources, as is the Rivers and Trails Program of the National Park Service.

Bridges and boardwalks can minimize disturbance in sensitive wetlands. Here, a Boy Scout troop helps build a puncheon boardwalk through a wetland.



General design considerations for developing trails along waterways.

Whenever possible, stay out of the most sensitive natural areas such as wetlands. Locate trails well to the edge or adjacent to these areas.

If wetlands must be encroached upon, use a bridge or boardwalk to minimize disturbance.

Minimize human-wildlife conflicts by siting paths where there will be the least interference. Consult experts on which species need the most protection and try to accommodate them in the design of the trail. Keep in mind that some species are more sensitive to disturbance at various life stages and seasons.

Use lookouts and scenic overlooks to enjoy and learn about sensitive areas rather than having trails go right through them.

Do not add above-grade fill in a floodplain. If gravel, concrete, or asphalt is necessary for construction, remove an equal amount of floodplain material to maintain an unimpeded floodway.

Ideally, a bridge crossing a waterway should span the watercourse and the floodplain. If this is not possible, secure the bridge on foundations with break away mountings or attach moorings to minimize damage from flood debris.

Soil along rivers and streams is highly subject to frost upheaval and may require special base preparation, particularly for paved surfaces and shallow roots.

Plant stream-side buffers, including trees and filter strips of native grasses and shrubs, to check runoff sediments and pollutants from agricultural fields and other nonpoint

pollution sources and to moderate water temperature. The width of the buffer varies according to surrounding land use, soil, vegetation, slope, and other factors.

Use native vegetation that is sustainable without chemical treatment, excess watering, or frequent mowing. Excessive mowing of stream-side vegetation reduces the vegetation's filtering effectiveness, lessens wildlife value, and unnecessarily adds to maintenance expense.

Preserve existing vegetation, such as trees, and all ground cover within the drip lines of trees.

Protect both sides of a river or stream, if possible. Include in the protected area the floodplain, riparian forest, associated wetlands, intermittent tributaries, gullies, and upland areas.

Look beyond the protected corridor and advocate use of best management practices — terraces, strip cropping, vegetated buffer zones — by private landowners.

Build steps or a ramp between the top and bottom of a river or stream bank to provide easy access and discourage trail users from creating lots of little paths to the waterway that will increase erosion.

Incorporate river education into trail brochures, maps, and trailhead signs.

During trail construction, use erosion-control devices such as silt fences, hay bales, diversion ditches, and sediment basins.

Use porous surface materials when possible. Pavement prevents infiltration of rain and runoff.

CHAPTER 6

LANDOWNER ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Landowner outreach and education are vital components of a successful trail project. Understandably, neighbors and adjacent landowners may have questions and concerns. Fortunately, in trail after trail across New York State and the nation, many landowners have become trail supporters once their concerns are addressed.

The most common areas for concern among landowners are property value, liability, vandalism, litter, privacy, access to farm fields, and safety. Experience and numerous studies have shown these issues to be more perceived problems than actual problems. Nevertheless, landowners' concerns must be taken seriously and respected.

Trails make good neighbors

Studies documenting actual experiences from around the nation and New York State demonstrate that well-planned and designed trails can be good neighbors and that living with trails can be highly rewarding. In a survey of residents along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in New York's Capital Region, the majority of adjacent landowners reported being satisfied with the trail as a neighbor.



A survey of residents along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in New York's Capital Region found that the majority of landowners are satisfied with the trail as a neighbor.

A Survey of Residents

The Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail & Its Impact on Adjoining Residential Properties

A survey of residential property owners' perspectives regarding an adjacent multi-use recreational trail's impact on their lives and property

Following is a summary of a 1998 survey, prepared by the Schenectady County Department of Planning, on adjacent landowners' views of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, a 35-mile long multi-use trail that travels along the shores of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers through Albany and Schenectady Counties.

- 86 percent of property owners use the trail.
- 88 percent said they were satisfied or neutral about the trail as a neighbor.
- 86 percent felt that the trail increased or had no effect on their ability to sell their homes.
- 86 percent felt the trail did not pose a risk to their own or their family's safety.
- 80 percent felt that the trail improved the quality of the neighborhood or had no impact on it.

GREENWAY OFFERS LIABILITY INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR TRAILS ON PRIVATE LANDS

The Hudson River Valley Greenway makes available liability coverage to private landowners within the 13-county Greenway Area who want to work with community trail groups and local governments to allow public access to trails on their land. The primary purpose of the insurance is to provide an immediate tool to help local trail groups increase landowner comfort and allow trail planning and implementation to move forward. Once a local municipality or land trust is ready to play a more active role, they are encouraged to adopt these trails under their own liability coverage.



Liability

In our litigious society, it's only natural for neighbors and landowners to have concerns about liability. Trail committee members can address the issue of liability by providing factual information about protection afforded by New York State law and through insurance.

Very few trail-related lawsuits have occurred in New York. The NY-NJ Trail Conference and the Fingers Lakes Trail Conference together manage over 1700 miles of trail. Neither has ever experienced a trail-related lawsuit.

Statutory Protection

New York's Recreational Use Statute (NYS General Obligations Law subsection 9-103) limits the liability of landowners who voluntarily allow access to their land for certain recreational activities. These recreational activities include the most common trail activities such as hiking, bicycle riding, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Although no law is perfect, the Recreational Use Statute offers an important measure of protection.

The law applies to landowners whether or not they grant permission for use of their property, as long as the following two conditions exist: they do not charge a fee and do not maliciously fail to guard against hazards. If these conditions exist, the liability of landowners who allow access is no greater than landowners who post their property against trespass.

Insurance Protection

While the Recreational Use Statute provides protection from liability, nothing can prevent a suit from being brought against a landowner, even if it turns out to be groundless. Fortunately, homeowner insurance usually provides coverage to the owner if someone is injured on the property whether or not the person has permission to be there. If someone is hurt and makes a claim, the insurance company has a duty to "defend" the insured owner, which means that the company will select an attorney and handle any litigation. The concept of "residence" is usually interpreted broadly and includes surrounding grounds, other structures, and vacant land, as long as it is not actively farmed or used for timbering purposes. Landowners conducting active farming or timbering operations usually have special liability insurance.

The combination of the recreational use statute and coverages available to landowners through their own insurance policies provides a solid shield against the risk of litigation. In addition, landowners may be able to be named as "additional insured" parties on the policy of any public or private organization responsible for managing the trail.



Some enforcement agencies use officers on bicycles to patrol trails.

Safety

Trails have excellent safety records compared to other public and private places. Although neighbors are often apprehensive about trails bringing an increase in crime, four separate studies and experience since 1979 on various trails across the country concluded that landowners adjacent to trails experience negligible crime as a result of trails. A 1998 study of 372 rail-trails nationwide — together totaling more than 7,000 miles of trail and more than 45 million estimated annual users — found that trails are among the safest places in communities. As for the safety of trail users, a study of the 1800-mile Appalachian Trail found that a person was more likely to be struck by lightning than be a crime victim on the trail.

Despite the low risk, good management dictates that safety plans, including emergency response strategies, be incorporated in trail management plans. These plans should be in place before opening the trail to the public. In many cases, a local law enforcement authority, such as the county sheriff or local police department, will monitor the trail. In some cases, community volunteers monitor, as well as maintain, local trails. Experience has shown that involved neighbors and nearby landowners, acting as the trail's local "eyes and ears," play a key role in maintaining a safe, enjoyable trail. A good first step towards developing emergency response strategies is to hold an on-site meeting with local enforcement authorities and emergency response organizations.





Privacy and Trespassing

Trail use is a very directed, "through" activity, which means that trail users tend to stay on a trail and not loiter or enter adjacent property. In addition, trail users are usually respectful of private property and landowner privacy.

Optimally, your trail will be sited as far as possible from residences, agricultural fields, or other intensive-use areas to

minimize its impact on landowner activities. Natural barriers, topography, landscaping, and, when necessary, fencing can also buffer residences from trail users.

Education of trail users can prevent many trail problems. Trail users can be directed, through signs, printed material, and direct contact with trail stewards, to respect private property by entering at designated access points, staying on designated trails, and carrying out their litter.

FROM THE FIELD

Foe into friend

Across the nation, examples abound of former trail opponents who are now supporters. In New York, some excellent examples of this about-face can be found.

When the concept for the Genesee Valley Greenway in western New York was first being presented in town meetings along the corridor, several horse breeders were adamantly opposed to the idea. They feared that trail users would harm their horses or that their horses would harm trail users and create a huge liability problem. Their fears turned out to be unfounded.

One of the project's earliest and most vociferous opponents, Barbara Galbraith of Rodney Farms in Scottsville, N.Y., has changed her mind about the Greenway. "When talk first started on turning the old railroad bed into a walkway, we were opposed to the project. Time has passed and we have come full-circle into believing that the Greenway is an asset to the community. We constantly see hikers, bicyclists, and riders using the trail."

On the eastern end of the state, in Dutchess County, some community members also voiced strong skepticism about the Harlem Valley Rail-Trail when it was first proposed. Albert Francke, a retired attorney, was one of those to voice his concern. The Trail runs directly in front of his property for one-half mile.

"When I first heard there was going to be a trail, I was worried that people would intrude on my privacy. That fear turned out to be unfounded. I was also adamantly opposed to the trail being paved. I was wrong about that, too," says Francke. "Today, I use the trail all the time and am very happy it's so close to my home."



The NYS Horse Council can provide helpful information on developing trails suitable for horses: www.nyshc.org

Litter and vandalism

Most trail users are respectful and considerate of private property. As outdoor enthusiasts, they are interested in preserving the natural beauty of the area and maintaining recreational access to the landscape. Many trail users are in the habit of carrying trash bags with them, for their own use and to pick up other litter; many report that lately there has been far less trash to pick up. Proper signs, maintenance, and monitoring can help promote well-kept trails.

Trails and property values

Many landowners are concerned about the impact that a trail might have on the value of their property. National studies undertaken to assess impacts of trails on property value have found that property values typically increase slightly or remain constant. For example:

- A 1993 National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program study — undertaken by Pennsylvania State University — conducted interviews with 663 property owners and 71 realtors and property appraisers along three trails. The study concludes that trail development does not have adverse effects on property values.
- A 1998 study prepared by the Schenectady County Department of Planning on the impact of the 35-mile Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail on adjoining residential properties concluded that, out of the 215 adjacent

landowners who responded to the survey, the majority believed the trail increased or had no effect on the value of their property. In addition, 86 percent of landowners felt that the trail increased or had no impact on their ability to sell their homes.

- In Minnesota, a 1997 study on adjacent property owner perceptions of a trail within the Minneapolis/St. Paul area found that the majority of respondents thought the trail would increase or not affect the resale value of their property.
- A 1997 survey of residents along the Iron Horse Trail in Contra Costa County, California found that one-third of the respondents bought their homes, in part, because of the trail. Most of the other respondents said that the trail was neither a positive nor negative factor in their decision to buy their homes.
- According to a 2001 study by Cornell University, proximity to parks and recreation is among the top five reasons people give for selecting a community to live in.



MORE INFORMATION FOR LANDOWNERS

Getting Involved - A Community Trail Handbook for Landowners, a joint publication of the Hudson River Valley Greenway and Parks & Trails New York, addresses a wide range of issues important to landowners about establishing trails — trail creation options, potential financial and tax benefits, liability, privacy, and compatibility with existing land uses. Contact the Greenway at 518/473-3835 or PTNY at 518/434-1583 to obtain a copy or go to the PTNY website at www.ptny.org.

How landowners can participate in trail development

Landowners interested in opening a portion of their land to public use have a number of options. These range from a simple, informal handshake to granting an easement to donating property. No two landowner situations are alike. Each landowner will have different goals and concerns regarding trail development. Often times, landowners will start with one of the less permanent options. Then, as their confidence and satisfaction with the trail grows, they may feel more comfortable about entering into a more permanent arrangement.



FROM THE FIELD

Easing into a permanent easement

John and Gloria Golden have lived along the Hudson River in Hyde Park for 28 years. They love the River and the woods along its banks. When they were approached in 1990 about allowing the Hyde Park Trail* to cross their property, they were open to the idea but had some concerns about littering and illegal use of the trail by motorized vehicles. With this in mind, they granted a right-of-way trail easement on a 1/2-mile of woods road on their property that included a two-year renewable clause.

"The flexibility in the terms of the easement allayed our concerns and allowed us to test the waters," notes John.

Eight years later, the Goldenes took steps to make the easement permanent.

"Trail users are nice, responsible people. They take good care of the trail and respect the private residences along it. I'm happy to be able to share this marvelous place with as many people as possible," says John.

The Hyde Park Trail — a 10-mile trail connecting the Roosevelt and Vanderbilt National Historic Sites and Mills Norrie State Park in the Hudson Valley — was developed and is maintained through a partnership between the Hyde Park Recreation Department, Adirondack Mountain Club, Scenic Hudson, National Park Service, Boy Scouts, Hudson Valley Railroad Society and the Winnakee Land Trust. The Goldenes' easement is held by the Winnakee Land Trust.



APPENDIX A

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOURCES



New York State Non-Governmental Organizations

Adirondack Mountain Club

814 Goggins Road
Lake George, NY 12845
518-668-4447
adkinfo@adk.org
www.adk.org

Finger Lakes Trail Conference

6111 Visitor Center Road
Mt. Morris, NY 14510
585-658-9320
information@fingerlakestrail.org
www.fingerlakestrail.org

Canalway Trails Association of New York c/o Parks & Trails New York

29 Elk Street, 3rd Floor
Albany, NY 12207
518-434-1583
canaltrail@ptny.org
www.ptny.org

Land Trust Alliance of NYS

110 Spring Street
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
518-587-0774
ltane@lta.org
www.lta.org

Long Island Greenbelt Trail Conference

102 New Mill Rd.
Smithtown, NY 11787
516-360-0753
ligreenbelt&juno.com
www.hike-li.com

Neighborhood Open Space Coalition

356 Seventh Avenue, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10001
212-352-9330
dave.lutz@treebranch.com
www.treebranch.com

New York Bicycling Coalition

5 New Scotland Avenue
Albany, NY 12208
518 436-0889
nybc@nybc.net
www.nybc.net

New York / New Jersey Trail Conference

156 Ramapo Valley Road
Mahwah, NJ 07430
201-512-9348
info@nynjtc.org
www.nynjtc.org

New York State Physical Activity Coalition

65 Niagara Square, Room 607
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-851-4052
nyspac@city-buffalo.org
www.nysphysicalactivity.org

Parks & Trails New York

29 Elk Street, 3rd Floor
Albany, NY 12207
518-434-1583
ptny@ptny.org
www.ptny.org

Scenic Hudson, Inc.

One Civic Center Plaza, Suite 200
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
845-473-4440
info@scenicudson.org
www.scenicudson.org

A listing of regional and local trail groups in New York State can be found on the Parks & Trails New York web site www.ptny.org

New York State Agencies and Programs

Hudson River Valley Greenway

Capitol Station, Room 254
Albany, NY 12224
518-473-3835
hrvg@hudsongreenway.state.ny.us
www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us

NYS Canal Corporation

Canalway Trail Program
200 Southern Blvd.
Albany, NY 12209
1-800-4CANAL4
www.canals.state.ny.us

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

Office of Natural Resources and Planning
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-4250
518-474-2121
www.dec.state.ny.us

NYS Department of Health

Healthy Heart Program
Riverview Center
150 Broadway
Albany, NY 12204
518-474-6683
www.health.state.ny.us

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic Preservation

State Trails Coordinator
Agency Building 1, 17th Floor
Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12238
518-474-0415
www.nysparks.state.ny.us

NYS Department of State

Division of Coastal Resources/
Quality Communities
41 State Street
Albany, NY 12231-0001
518-474-6000
www.dos.state.ny.us

NYS Department of Transportation

Bicycle and Pedestrian Program
1220 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12232
518-457-2100
www.dot.state.ny.us/pubtrans/bphome.html

National Non-Governmental Organizations

Active Living by Design

400 Market Street
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27516
919-843-2523
info@activelivingbydesign.org
www.activelivingbydesign.org

American Hiking Society

1422 Fenwick Lane
Silver Springs, MD 20910
301-565-6704
info@AmericanHiking.org
www.americanhiking.org

American Trails

P.O. Box 491797
Redding, CA 96049-1797
(530) 547-2060
AmTrails@futureone.com
www.americantrails.org

Appalachian Mountain Club

5 Joy Street
Boston, MA 02108
617-523-0636
information@outdoors.org
www.outdoors.org

Conservation Fund - American Greenways

1800 N. Kent St.
Arlington, VA 22209-2156
703-525-6300
postmaster@conservationfund.org
www.conservationfund.org

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

1100 Seventeenth St., NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
202-974-5122
railtrails@transact.org
www.railtrails.org

Federal Agencies and Programs

National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program

New York Office
4097 Albany Post Road
Hyde Park, NY 12538
845-229-9115
karl_beard@nps.gov
http://www.nps.gov/rtrca

Soil and Water Conservation Districts

NYS Soil and Water Conservation Committee
1 Winners Circle
Albany, NY 12235
518-457-3738
www.agmkt.state.ny.us/soilwater/home.html

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

*New York District
Jacob K. Javitz Federal Building
26 Federal Plaza
New York, NY 10278-0090
212-264-0100
*Buffalo District
1776 Niagara Street
Buffalo, NY 14207-3199
716-879-4200
www.usace.army.mil

APPENDIX B

PUBLICATIONS AND ON-LINE RESOURCES

Design/Technical

Current Planning Guidelines and Design Standards Being Used by State and Local Agencies for Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Case Study No. 24 of the National Bicycle and Walking Study
Federal Highway Administration, 1992.

Greenways: A Guide to Planning, Design, and Development

by Charles A. Flink and Robert M. Searns
Island Press, Washington, D.C., 1993.

Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities

AASHTO Task Force on Geometric Design
American Association of State Highway
and Transportation Officials, 1999

How Greenways Work: a Handbook on Ecology (2nd ed)

by Jonathan M. Labaree
National Park Service Rivers and Trails Conservation Assistance
Program and QLF/Atlantic Center for the Environment, 1992

Lightly on the Land: The Student Conservation Association Trail Building & Maintenance Manual

by Robert C. Birkby
Seattle: Student Conservation Association / The Mountaineers, 1996.

Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind – A Handbook for Trail Planners

Trails and Wildlife Task Force
Colorado State Parks / Hellmund Associates, 1998.

Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Trails

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Government Printing Office, 1996.

Trail Building and Maintenance (3rd edition)

by Robert D. Proudman and Reuben Rajala
Appalachian Mountain Club, 1996.

Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook

USDA Forest Service Technology and Development Program
U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway
Administration, 2000

Trails for the Twenty-First Century – Planning, Design, and Management Manual for Multi-Use Trails (2nd ed.)

by Charles A. Flink
Island Press, 2001.

Wetland Trail Design and Construction

USDA Forest Service Technology and Development Program and
U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration

Organizational Tools

Getting Involved – A Community Trail Handbook for Landowners

Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley &
New York Parks and Conservation Association (now Parks & Trails
New York), 2002.

How to Make Meetings Work

by Michael Doyle and David Straus
Berkeley Publishing Group, 1993

The Next Generation...The New York State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

NYS Department of Transportation, 1997.

Organizing Outdoor Volunteers

by Roger Moore, Vicki La Farge and Charles L Tracy
Appalachian Mountain Club, 1992

Benefits of Trails

Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails, and Greenway Corridors (4th ed.)

National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance
Program, 1995.

Effect of Greenways on Property Values and Public Safety

The Conservation Fund & Colorado State Parks State Trails
Program, 1995.

Evaluation of the Burke-Gilman Trail's Effect on Property Values and Crime

by Peter Lagerway
City of Seattle Engineering Department, 1987.

Greenways & Trails – Bringing Economic Benefits to New York

New York Parks and Conservation Association (now Parks & Trails
New York), 2000.

Impacts of Rail-Trails: A Study of the Users and Property Owners from Three Trails

by Roger Moore., et al
National Park Service – Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance
Program and Penn State University, 1992.

Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail – Its Impact on Adjoining Residential Properties

by Stephen Feeney
Schenectady County Department of Planning, 1998.

Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail - Analysis of Use, Regional Benefits & Economic Impact

by Stephen Feeney
Schenectady County Department of Planning, 1998.

Thinking Green: A Guide to the Benefits and Costs of Greenways and Trails

Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 1998

Trails for All Americans

American Trails
National Park Service, 1990.

Transportation Potential and Other benefits of Off-Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Case Study No.7 of the National Bicycle and Walking Study
Federal Highway Administration, 1992.

Web Resources:

Most of the organizations in Appendix A have websites with information pertinent to trail planning. Following are a few additional websites for trail planning:

The Access Board-federal agency on accessible design

www.access-board.gov/outdoor/outdoor-rec

National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program - Community Toolbox

<http://www.nps.gov/phso/rtcatoobox/>

New York State GIS Clearinghouse

www.nysgis.state.ny.us

Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse

<http://www.trailsandgreenways.org/>

University of Minnesota Trail Planning, Construction and Maintenance bibliography and searchable database

<http://forestry.lib.umn.edu/bib/trls.phtml>

APPENDIX **C** FUNDING RESOURCES

The question of how to get your trail funded is, of course, a very important one. Funding is never easy to come by and often seems a mysterious process. However, a lack of funds is seldom the real obstacle to overcome in trail development; rather it's a lack of political will and commitment on the part of decision makers. So if your trail project repeatedly fails to get funding, it's probably a good idea to step back and build more support for it within your community.

Funding opportunities run the gamut from government and foundation grants to corporate sponsorships and buy-a-brick programs ... and everything in between. Most trails are funded with a combination of public sector, private sector and local funds.

The particulars of funding programs (deadlines, priorities, requirements) change often. Established funding programs fold and new ones emerge so stay alert to new opportunities. Always check websites or up-to-date printed material before applying. Try to talk to someone in the program. Ask as many questions as you can. The more familiar you are with the process and requirements, the more successful you will be.

Can anybody remember when the times were not hard and money was not scarce?

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Resources for Funding Information

American Trails

www.americantrails.org

Articles on many aspects of trail funding (check under resources on website).

Conservation Assistance Tools

<http://cat.sonoran.org/>

Technical and funding information for organizations working on conservation projects across the United States.

Environmental Grantmakers Association

www.ega.org

A voluntary association of foundations and giving programs concerned with the protection of the natural environment.

Foundation Center

www.fdncenter.org

A leading authority on institutional philanthropy. The Center's collection of resources is available in libraries in all 50 states in the U.S.

Grants Action News

www.assembly.state.ny.us

A monthly newsletter of the NYS Assembly that includes information on available state and federal grants, plus information on grant writing workshops. Free mail subscriptions: 1-800-356-8486.

NYS Citizens' Guide

Find answers to New York State-related questions, locate services and access those services online.

www.nysegov.com

NYS Quality Communities Clearinghouse

<http://www.dos.state.ny.us/qc/home.shtml>

NYS agency support - grants, technical assistance, success stories

Parks & Trails New York

(formerly New York Parks and Conservation Association)

www.ptny.org

Information on funding sources for trails, particularly New York State programs.

Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse

www.trailsandgreenways.org

Technical assistance, information resources, and referrals to trail and greenway advocates and developers. Includes a database of funding sources for trail and greenway projects (check under technical assistance on website).

Urban Parks Institute

www.urbanparks.pps.org/topics/funding

Information sources, success stories, tips and case studies on various types of funding.

Funding Sources

Listed here are common trail funding sources divided into government and non-government sources.

Government

NYS Department of Transportation (DOT)

1220 Washington Avenue, Building 4, Albany, NY 12232,
(518) 457-6195, www.dot.state.ny.us (look under programs)

Transportation Enhancements Program Projects must meet one of 12 eligible activities. Provision of facilities for bicycles and pedestrians and preservation of abandoned railway corridors, including conversion and use for bicycle and pedestrian trails, are among the eligible activities. State agencies, authorities, and municipalities are eligible. This is a reimbursement program that requires 20% local match; some in-kind services can be used as match. The program is administered in NYS through Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and, in areas outside of MPO regions, through regional DOT offices. Dozens of trail projects in NYS have received funding under the Enhancements Program. Continuation of this program is contingent upon its inclusion within the next federal transportation legislation (Transportation Efficiency Act-TEA), which is expected to be re-authorized in 2004. Source of funds: Federal Highway Administration. NYS Enhancements Program Coordinator: 518-457-4835. General information: www.enhancements.org.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement

Program A program to reduce congestion on local streets and improve air quality. Funds are available to urban communities designated as “non-attainment” areas for air quality, meaning the air is more polluted than federal standards allow. A reimbursement program requiring a 20% local match. Several significant trail projects in NYS have been funded under the CMAQ program. Funding comes from the TEA program. General information: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/cmaq/

Scenic Byways Program This component of TEA legislation is designed to protect and enhance designated scenic roads. Money is available for cultural and historic resource protection and tourism information signage. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities can be developed in conjunction with scenic roadway projects and some states have developed trails in conjunction with this initiative. General information: www.byways.org

Coordinated NYS grant programs — OPRHP, DOS, HRVG

Several state agencies administer grant programs, under which trails can be funded, that use funds from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). These agencies - the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), the NYS Department of State (DOS), and the Hudson River Valley Greenway (HRVG) - coordinate their applications and timetables. The coordinated annual call for proposals usually comes in the spring, with deadlines in the summer. The agencies work together to give applicants information regarding program eligibility, program requirements, and application procedures and usually hold a series of public information meetings in the spring.

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)

Bureau of Grant Management, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building One, 16th Floor, Albany, NY 12238, (518) 474-0427,
www.nysparks.com/grants

Recreational Trails Program funds the acquisition, development and maintenance of trails. State and local governments, non-profits, corporations, and individuals may apply. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$100,000 and a 20% local match is required. 30% of funds must go to motorized trails, 30% to non-motorized trails, balance for mixed-use trails. The deadline is irregular. Source of funds: Federal Highway Administration.

Parks Matching Grants Program funds the acquisition, development and improvement of parks, historic properties and Heritage Area Systems (EPF) and acquisition and development of outdoor recreation facilities (LWCF). Municipalities and non-profits with ownership interest may apply. The funding cap changes annually (in 2004-\$350,000) A 100% local match is required. The call for proposals usually occurs in the spring. Source of funds: Environmental Protection Fund-EPF, Land and Water Conservation Fund-LWCF.

Hudson River Valley Greenway (HRVG)

Capitol Station, Room 254, Albany, NY 12224, (518) 473-3835.
<http://www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us>

Administers grant programs that offer financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit organizations within the legislatively-designated Greenway Area (see website for area). Intended to provide seed funding and planning dollars for community projects in the early stages or to complement other sources of funding. Grant programs are administered on a reimbursement basis and a local match of at least 50% of the project cost is required, with in-kind services or a cash match permitted. Call for proposals usually in the spring.

Greenway Conservancy small grants: An annual, competitive program for all communities and non-profit organizations in the Greenway Area. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Greenway Community grants: For communities in the Greenway area that have passed a resolution supporting the Greenway Criteria. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$10,000 and are awarded on a rolling basis.

Greenway Compact grants: For communities that adopt and implement a regional compact. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 and are awarded on a rolling basis

APPENDIX C

NYS Department of State (DOS)

Division of Coastal Resources and Waterfront Revitalization, 41 State St., Albany, NY 12231-0001, (518) 473-3942, www.dos.state.ny.us/cstl/epfba2.html

Waterfront rediscovery; coastal education and tourism programs; preparation or implementation of Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs (LWRP) or components of LWRP programs. Municipalities located on New York's coastal waters (including tidal rivers) or on designated inland waterways (see DOS website for listing of eligible waterways) are eligible. Grants of up to \$500,000, with a required 100% local match. The call for proposals is usually in the spring. Source of funds: Environmental Protection Fund.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO)

New York State Metropolitan Planning Organizations Coalition, www.nysmpos.org

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) — the quasi-governmental entities charged with planning, programming and coordination of federal highway and transit investments in urban areas with populations over 50,000 — have regional programs that can fund trails. NYS has 13 MPO's. Contact the MPO in your area for more information.

NYS Assembly and Senate

www.assembly.state.ny.us, www.senate.state.ny.us

New York State Assembly Members and Senators have money available for local projects - commonly referred to as "member items." Contact your local representative at the beginning of the legislative session in January.

NYS Council on the Arts (NYSCA)

175 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014, 212-627-4455, www.nysca.org

Offers funding through its Architecture, Planning, and Design program that emphasizes projects that address planning and community design, open space planning, streetscapes, transportation linkages, and design of public spaces. Non-profits must register by March 1; application due April 1.

Governor's Office for Small Cities (GOSC)

Agency Building 4, 6th Floor, Empire State Plaza, Albany, New York 12223, 518-474-2057. www.nysmallcities.com

Grants for economic development and improving community facilities and services are available to towns and villages having a population under 50,000, and counties with an un-incorporated population of under 200,000. Grants are given out on continuous year-round basis until funds run out. Source of funds: Housing and Urban Development-HUD Community Development Block Grants.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4250, (518) 402-9401, www.dec.state.ny.us

DEC oversees acquisition of significant open space lands included in the official NYS Open Space Plan, revised every five years (last revision 2002). No application process exists. Contact your regional DEC office to get information about your regional open space committee, which is the route to get your trail corridor included in the Open Space Plan.

NYS Department of Health (DOH)

Healthy Heart Program, 150 Broadway, 3rd Floor, Albany, NY 12204, (518) 474-6683, www.health.state.ny.us

The Healthy Heart Program periodically issues requests for proposals that relate to trail development and promotion.

Local Government Revenue Sources

Property taxes, local improvement plans and districts, impact fees, bond referendums.

Non-Government

American Greenways Kodak Awards

The Conservation Fund, 1800 North Kent Street, Suite 1120, Arlington, VA 22209, (703) 525-6300, www.conservationfund.org/conservation/amgreen

Local greenway planning, design or development grants given primarily to local, regional, statewide non-profits, although public agencies may also apply. Funding up to \$2,500 but usually between \$500 and \$1500. Deadline: June.



American Hiking Society

1422 Fenwick Lane, Silver Springs, MD 20910, (301) 565-6704, www.americanbiking.org

National Trails Endowment for building, improving, protecting trails or increasing the constituency for a specific trail project (focus is on hiking trails). Non-profits may apply for up to \$10,000. November deadline

Trails for Tomorrow provides \$500 in cash and goods worth up to \$2,000 for outstanding National Trails Day events that put trails at the forefront of communities.

Bikes Belong Coalition

1368 Beacon Street, Suite 102, Brookline, MA 02446-2800, (617) 734-2800, www.bikesbelong.org

Sponsored by members of the American bicycle industry. Development of bicycle facilities, especially projects that could be funded under TEA programs. Local non-profits, agencies, and citizens may apply. Funding up to \$10,000. Grants awarded on a rolling basis.

Community Foundations

Often overlooked as a source of funding, Community Foundations frequently provide funds for organizational capacity building activities. Contact your local community foundation to find out what types of programs it funds. **Community Foundations in New York:**

Adirondack Community Trust	Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation
Central New York Community Foundation	Northern New York Community Foundation
Chautauqua Region Community Foundation	Rochester Area Community Foundation
Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo	The Community Foundation for South Central New York
Community Foundation for the Capital Region	The Community Foundation of Dutchess County
Community Foundation of Orange County	The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties
Community Foundation of Tompkins County	The Community Foundation of the Elmira-Corning Area
Long Island Community Foundation	The Glens Falls Foundation.
New York Community Trust	

Conservation Alliance Grants

Patagonia, 259 W. Santa Clara Street, Ventura CA 93001, www.conservationalliance.com

A group of 62 outdoor businesses support this program for the protection of wild and natural areas where outdoor enthusiasts recreate. Non-profits (must be sponsored by a member company - EMS, Patagonia, Timberland, etc.) may apply. Grants range from \$15,000 to \$50,000. Deadlines: January and August.

Furthermore...

518 Warren Street, P.O. Box 667, Hudson, NY 12534, (518) 828-8900, www.furthermore.org

Funding up to \$15,000 for publications, including maps, guides, pamphlets. Conservation a key interest. Non-profits or public agencies in partnership with a non-profit may apply. Deadlines: March and September.

Hudson River Improvement Fund

40 West 20th St, New York, NY 10011, (212) 924-8290, www.hudsonriver.org

For capital construction, development or improvement. Priority categories: public access, education facilities, habitat protection as pertains to Hudson River. Non-profits and governmental bodies are eligible. Grants are between \$5,000 and \$20,000; in-kind services and matching funds encouraged. Deadlines: March and October.

Powerbar's Direct Impact on Rivers and Trails (DIRT)

2150 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94710, www.powerbar.com

A grant program primarily for non-profits to protect, preserve and restore recreational lands and waterways. Funding between \$1,000-\$5,000 with an early June deadline.

ABOUT PARKS & TRAILS NEW YORK & THE HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY

Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York (formerly New York Parks and Conservation Association) is a statewide non-profit membership organization that works to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for all to use and enjoy.

The organization's role in making this network a reality is to guide the development of local, grassroots groups and to foster partnerships amongst trail and park stakeholders. To promote a statewide network, Parks & Trails New York published a poster, *Building Community Trails Across New York*; developed an on-line trail resource, *Trail Finder Maps*; promotes the economic benefits of trails through its publication, *Greenways and Trails – Bringing Economic Benefits to New York*; published a handbook, in partnership with the Hudson River Valley Greenway, for landowners considering allowing public access to trails on their land, entitled *Getting Involved: A Community Trail Handbook for Landowners*; and organizes a biennial statewide greenways and trails conference.

As part of a statewide effort to improve the health of New York's citizens, in 2003 Parks & Trails New York began a five-year program to help localities develop more "active community environments" through the creation of shared-use trails. With support from the NYS Department of Health, Parks & Trails New York presents public workshops, provides technical assistance, and helps build the vision, constituencies and local support that are so critical to the long-term success of trail projects.

As a partner in the Canalway Trail Partnership, Parks & Trails New York is working with the New York State Canal Corporation to create a continuous 524-mile trail along New York State's historic canal system. Since 1998, Parks & Trails New York has annually organized *Cycling the Erie Canal*, a 500-person cross-state bicycle trip along the Erie Canal to promote completion of the Canalway Trail and bicycle & heritage tourism.

Hudson River Valley Greenway

The Hudson River Valley possesses world-renowned resources. To recognize this and to help Hudson Valley communities become better places to live and work, the New York State Legislature passed landmark legislation in 1991 establishing the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

The goals of the Greenway legislation are to protect and enhance the region's unique heritage, increase awareness and appreciation of its resources, and enhance the sustainability of local economies. The legislation also aims to promote a broader identity for the Hudson River Valley's communities and resources by encouraging municipal cooperation and tourism development on a regional level. To help promote and establish a linked identity among communities and their resources, the Greenway legislation calls for the designation and development of a regional network of trails — the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail system.

The Greenway also administers the Hudson River Valley Greenway Water Trail Program, a joint venture between the Greenway and the Hudson River Water Trail Association. In April 2001, Governor Pataki appropriated \$1 million to the Greenway for development of the Water Trail. The 158-mile Water Trail begins on the shores of Waterford, Saratoga County, and extends to the shoreline of New York City. It will provide access points at least every ten miles along both shores of the Hudson River, and include campsites to help promote multi-day excursions and connections to the land-based Greenway Trail.

The Hudson River Valley Greenway Program, administered jointly by the Greenway Communities Council and the Greenway Conservancy for the Hudson River Valley, works with a broad range of public and private partners through its Planning, Trails and Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area programs. The Planning Program works with local communities to help balance environmental protection and economic development needs, incorporating the Governor's Quality Communities principles. The Trails Program is working on land-based and water-based trails in the Hudson River Valley region, fostering connections between open spaces, heritage sites and downtown "main streets" to enhance public access, regional tourism and agricultural protection and promotion. The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, a federal program administered by the Greenway, promotes regional tourism based upon the Valley's role in the development of the Nation.



Photos courtesy of:

Cayuga Waterfront Trail
Clough Harbor & Associates LLP
Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway
Harlem Valley Rail-Trail Association
Hudson River Valley Greenway
Neighborhood Open Space Coalition
NYS Canal Corporation
NYS Horse Council
NY-NJ Trail Conference
NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
Parks & Trails New York
Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
Ontario Pathways
Quad Design
Schenectady County
Village of Sleepy Hollow



Getting Started...

A Guide to Planning Trails in New York State

A joint publication of:

Parks & Trails New York

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