



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –APRIL 10, 2023

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Canalway Trail System received over 10 million visits during COVID-19

Data from the last five years indicate that the Canalway Trail system was vital during pandemic, and usage remains strong with 3.55 million visits per year.

ALBANY, NY – The Erie Canalway Trail and the Champlain Canalway Trail continue to receive high levels of use year after year, according to the newly released *Who's on the Trail 2022: Canalway Trail* report from Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the New York State Canal Corporation (NYSCC). PTNY estimates that the Canalway Trail system as a whole receives roughly 3.55 million visits per year, based on longitudinal count data from electronic counters installed at 24 locations along the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails over the past five years.

Who's on the Trail 2022: Canalway Trail estimates that the 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail between Albany and Buffalo receives approximately 3.37 million visits per year, and the 60-mile Champlain Canalway Trail between Waterford and Whitehall sees about 184,000 visits annually. Use peaked during the shutdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and has remained strong in the years since. Since the onset of the pandemic in 2020, the report estimates that the Canalway Trail system as a whole received more than 10 million visits.

The Canalway Trail system was a vital resource for many New Yorkers during the pandemic, with nearly 80% of the Upstate New York population living within 25 miles of the Erie Canalway Trail. For many communities, the trail served as an outlet for safe, local recreation. Data from this year's report demonstrates that those who discovered the trail during the height of the pandemic continue to come back, having worked canal recreation into their post-pandemic routines.

Who's on the Trail 2022: Canalway Trail highlights ten locations along the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails where electronic trail counters were used to count the number of visitors. These counts were augmented by additional electronic counts performed by two partner organizations, the Genesee Transportation Council and the Hudson River Valley Greenway, at three and two locations along the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails respectively. Manual counts were conducted by volunteers at six

additional locations along the Erie Canalway Trail to better understand the types of visitors using the trail at each location.

Most count locations saw the heaviest use on weekends and holidays, suggesting the trail is particularly popular for recreational activities. The summer season (between June 21 and September 20) showed the highest use at all count locations, but the trail saw sustained levels of use all year long.

Who's on the Trail 2022: Canalway Trail also includes information on those trail users who completed an end-to-end journey on the trail and registered as an official Erie Canalway Trail “End-to-Enders.” In 2022, 31 percent of registered End-to-Enders called New York home; the rest of End-to-Enders came to the Canalway Trail from 45 other states and Washington D.C., as well as from as far as Australia, Hungary, Canada, and Ireland. End-to-Enders found many options for accommodations along the Erie Canalway Trail, as 93 percent of riders spent at least one night at a hotel or motel during their trip, while 28 percent camped at least one night during their journey.

Each year PTNY issues the *Who's on the Trail: Canalway Trail* report to provide a detailed summary of trail use along the Erie and Champlain Canals. Locations vary each year to ensure that usage is measured in all parts of the state. The reports highlight annual use estimates at each count location, as well as seasonal use trends and more detailed user trends when data is available. Collectively, these numbers tell a compelling narrative about the trail's popularity and provide further justification for continuing to invest in these popular resources.

New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said, “Our scenic Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails are havens for recreation across Upstate New York, and I am thrilled that so many outdoor enthusiasts of all ages and abilities continue to utilize our trails for hiking, biking, and adventure. Continued investment into these trails is a top priority of the Canal Corporation that ensures all visitors have safe access to the state's most bucolic landscapes and amenities found in canalside communities for generations to come.”

Parks & Trails New York Executive Director Paul Steely White said, “The Canalway Trail is an incredibly valuable asset, providing easy access to recreation for millions of New Yorkers, while serving as a world-class destination for visitors from around the world. As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic, it is clear that the investments made to the Empire State Trail system are paying off.”

To read the full report visit www.ptny.org/trailcounts.

About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York is the state's leading advocate for parks and trails. Since 1998, PTNY has been working in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation to help canal communities plan, develop and promote the Canalway Trail. PTNY organizes Cycle the Erie Canal, an eight-day bicycle tour along the historic Erie Canal that attracts more than 650 participants each year. The organization also publishes the popular guidebook, *Cycling the Erie Canal: A Guide to 360 miles of Adventure and History along the Erie Canalway Trail*. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

About the New York State Canal System

The New York State Canal Corporation runs the New York State Canal System, which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. In 2017, the Canal Corporation celebrated the 200th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal, which occurred in the city of

Rome on July 4, 1817. The Canal System includes the Canalway Trail, a network of approximately 400 miles of multi-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trail follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System as well as adjacent abandoned rail corridors. Together, the canals and trail create a world-class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic, and unique New York resource. To learn more about the New York State Canal and Canalway Trail System or to obtain a free map, please call 1-800-4CANAL4 or visit the Canal Corporation's website at www.canals.ny.gov.

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