



ADOPT *a* TRAIL

Handbook



Background

The approximately 400-mile Canalway Trail System needs regular maintenance to keep it in good repair for biking, walking, and other trail activities. While state and local agencies are ultimately responsible for maintaining the trail, local volunteer groups can play their part in helping the trail look its best.

Since 2003, Adopt-a-Trail Program and its volunteers have helped the New York State Canal Corporation with light maintenance for segments of trail under the Corporation's jurisdiction. The AAT program is funded by the New York State Canal Corporation and administered by Parks & Trail New York (PTNY).



About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is New York's leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated since 1985 to improving our health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space. PTNY works to expand, protect, and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout our state for use and enjoyment by all. For more information, visit www.ptny.org.



About the New York State Canal Corporation

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. 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.



What do Trail Adopters do?

As adopters of a local trail section, local groups can engage in various activities. AAT groups must engage in adopter activities at least 4 hours a month between April and November.

Groups are permitted to perform regular inspection and monitoring of the Corporation owned segments of trail and light maintenance activities such as, grass mowing, brush cutting, and removal of litter/fallen branches, racking, and weeding (additional activities can be found below). This regular attention helps to make the Canalway Trail a world-class recreational destination, and the volunteer opportunities that local trail work affords result in stronger communities along the Canal system.

Adopters can also help influence decision-making by assisting with [data collection efforts](#). This activity is conducted once a year, with guidance provided by PTNY staff. Please see “Resources for Volunteer Manual Trail Counts” to learn more. Data collected through this program is useful because:

- The level of potential use is one of the critical pieces of information needed to make the case for a project, and it is frequently required for grant applications.
- Assessing the value of trails is critical for ensuring that local public officials continue to steer public investment into the construction, operations and maintenance of trails.
- Establishing baseline trail-usage levels can highlight changes in usage patterns over time and enable jurisdictions to evaluate the effectiveness of their trail investments.
- This information can further justify prioritization for key projects.

Finally, by wearing an ambassador/adopter t-shirt (provided by PTNY), adopters can be a resource for trail users by providing direct assistance to users and sharing recommendations with others. This role allows volunteers to interface with trail users directly, including, but not limited to:

- Providing directions to nearby points of interest.
- Providing users with guidance on trail etiquette.
- Sharing the history of the Canal with interested users.
- Offering recommendations for nearby services, amenities, and attractions.

What are the requirements?

1. Commit to a three-year agreement, beginning in April.
2. Fill out an [application](#) that will need to be approved by PTNY and the NYSCC (a representative will reach out to let you know the application has been approved).
3. Once the application has been approved, acquire a [volunteer registration form](#) from every person that will perform activities as part of the AAT group.
4. Update the [volunteer roster](#) on an annual basis listing contact information for active volunteers.
5. Agree to meet four minimum requirements:
 - Visit adopted section(s) at least once a month between April 1 and November 30.
 - Spend 4 hours per month performing adopter activities (can be shared among volunteers).
 - Host a [Canal Clean Sweep](#) event.
 - Complete two [field reports](#) from April-November.

The frequency at which you provide the following services will be indicated in the application:*

Activities	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never or n/a
Light Maintenance					
Inspect and monitoring the Trail					
Pick up litter/debris					
Mowing-electric or push mower (with NYSCC approval)					
Weed whacking (with NYSCC approval)					
Pruning - Hand trim tree/shrub branches					
Raking/sweeping, removing excess downed vegetation					
Weed and/or mulch flower beds (i.e., gardening including watering and plantings)					
Data Collection					
Manual trail user counts					
Community Engagement					
Educate trail users about Canal history					
Provide assistance to trail users (directions, points of interest, information about trail conditions)					
Promote proper trail etiquette					
Offer recommendations to trail users (lodging, attractions, food and drink)					
Recruit new Bike Friendly Businesses					

Who can adopt a trail section?

Individuals, families, and organizations may adopt a minimum of one mile along the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails that are owned and maintained by the New York State Canal Corporation. It is also possible to adopt specific locations such as a trailhead or trail parking area when appropriate. It is a great community project for a scout or youth group, school, company, or service organization. There is no cost to volunteers to be involved. However, volunteers in the AAT program must be at least 12 years old and parent or guardian signature is required for anyone under the age of 18.

How often do they perform trail work?

AAT groups must engage in adopter activities at least 4 hours a month between April and November.

Trail adopters are not bound by set schedules, although they are required to engage in trail activities at least once a month between April and November, for a minimum of 4 hours. Adopters should keep track of the maintenance activities performed, and the number of volunteer hours spent on those activities in order to adequately submit the [semimonthly report](#).

How do I adopt a trail section?

The first step in the AAT process is finding a trail section that is available for adoption and convenient for your group. Review the [AAT map](#) that identifies sections that are available for adoption (indicated in orange). These segments of trail are owned and maintained by the Corporation. You can also email PTNY (see contacts below) to discuss available trail sections or the possibility of volunteering with an existing group to perform trail work.

After finding a suitable, available trail section, please submit an [online application](#). Once the application has been approved, a representative will instruct you to complete a [volunteer roster](#), and instruct each of your volunteers fill out a [registration form](#). These documents should all be submitted electronically, and will be shared with the Canal Corporation for approval.

Once your group is approved, at least one representative from the AAT group will be invited to participate in an annual orientation in April of the current year. A t-shirt will be provided to every volunteer listed on the roster; sizes available will depend on current stock.



Safety

Some of the activities you perform may expose you to risks such as poison ivy, insect or other bites, injuries, or falls. It is your responsibility to know your own limitations and to only engage in activities suited to your abilities and physical conditions. The following check-list will ensure that volunteers are safe and understand appropriate trail etiquette:

- ☐ Yield right of way to trail users.
- ☐ No motor vehicles shall be driven on Canalway unless required for medical emergency.
- ☐ Do not pick up anything that could be hazardous to your health or safety. This includes needles, jagged glass, animal carcasses or heavy objects.
- ☐ Stay off the underside of overhead bridge structures. Do not lean over bridge railings, water embankments, or barriers and railings at the canal locks.
- ☐ Avoid overexertion and dehydration. Drink plenty of fluids.
- ☐ Do not engage in any activity that will compromise your safety, the safety of other volunteers, or trail users.
- ☐ Minors (ages 12-17) may not operate motorized or power equipment.
- ☐ Keep a safe distance between volunteers to avoid being whipped by branches or injury from tools.
- ☐ Be sure that areas to be mowed are clear of debris such as rocks, glass and other objects.
- ☐ Wear safety glasses and a hard hat when operating motorized equipment. Other volunteers and trail users should be well clear of cutting, mowing and trimming operations.
- ☐ Wear appropriate gloves and long pants. Learn to recognize and avoid poison ivy or other irritants. Leather shoes or boots are recommended.
- ☐ No horseplay.

Reporting Issues

If you encounter a serious injury or illness, immediately call 911 or get someone else to do so. Dealing with such emergencies, including possible heart attacks, seizures, loss of consciousness, head or back injuries, and broken bones, is best left to trained personnel. If you have first aid/CPR certification, you may offer assistance after you have called 911.

Adopters should report conditions on the Canalway Trail that are beyond the scope of the volunteer group to the nearest Canal Section Office and the Trail Manager via email (see contacts below).

Recognition

Sharing pictures and stories from your AAT activities through social media is a great way to foster excitement and interest in the Canalway Trail, as well as provide you with a way to recognize your volunteers.

PTNY and the NYS Canal Corporation both maintain active Facebook and Instagram pages. PTNY also maintains the Facebook page and official website for the Erie Canalway Trail, www.cycletheeriecanal.com. Share your photos with PTNY's Project Coordinator, and tag the preceding pages in your posts and photos for greater reach.



Contacts

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY)

As the administrator of the Adopt-a-Trail program, PTNY should be your first call for questions regarding finding an available trail section, registering volunteers, or connecting with other trail groups and adopters.

Parks & Trails New York
33 Elk Street
Albany, NY 12207
Phone: 518-434-1583
Email: canaltrail@ptny.org
Website: www.ptny.org/AAT

Parks & Trails New York
Rebecca Murray
Rmurray@ptny.org
(518) 217-8575

NYS Canal Corporation

The NYS Canal Corporation is responsible for maintenance of the Canalway Trail throughout much of its length. The Canal Corporation will provide trash bags and arrange for disposal of materials collected during volunteer maintenance if coordinated in advance of service. Contact your local section office or www.canals.ny.gov/trails/adopt.html for more information.

NYS Canal Corporation - Trail Manager
Sasha Del Peral
Sasha.delPeral@canals.ny.gov

NYS Canal Corporation- Trail Maintenance Manager
Shelby Moore
Shelby.Moore@nypa.gov

New York State Canal Corporation Section Offices

NYS Canal Corporation – Section #1
Lower Broadway/Route 4
Fort Edward, NY 12828
(518) 747-4613

NYS Canal Corporation – Section #2
200 Davis Avenue
Waterford, NY 12188
(518) 233-8575

NYS Canal Corporation – Section #3
3 Bridge Street
Fonda, NY 12068
(518) 853-3823

NYS Canal Corporation – Section #4
105 North Genesee Street
Utica, NY 13502
(315) 733-9530

NYS Canal Corporation – Section #5
9052 River Road
Phoenix, NY 13135
(315) 695-2210

NYS Canal Corporation – Section #6
7665 Dry Dock Road
Lyons, NY 14489
(315) 946-6192

NYS Canal Corporation – Section #7
141 North Liberty Street
Albion, NY 14411
(585) 589-5689