New York State Canal Recreationway Plan Update

Stakeholder Interviews

Prepared for the New York State Canal Corporation

UAlbany Planning Studio

Fall 2014
The image on the cover page is of the NYS Canal Corporation’s Grand Erie Tug Boat heading southbound on the Hudson River from the dock facing West in Troy, New York. The picture was taken by Lisa A. Ford on September 5th, 2014 at 1:30 PM.

This report has been made available for persons with disabilities.
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Geographic Distribution of Surveyed Stakeholders
INTRODUCTION

The New York State Canal Corporation has embarked on a planning process to update the 1995 *New York State Canal Recreationway Plan* to guide the future development of the Canal Recreationway. The University at Albany Fall 2014 Planning Studio is assisting the New York State Canal Corporation in this effort. This report represents the first stage of this process: stakeholder interviews.

The NYS Canal Corporation provided Studio Members with approximately thirty stakeholder names and contact information. The stakeholders were selected by the Canal Corporation based on their involvement with the Canal Recreationway and the unique perspective they would bring to the planning process. The map presented below is the geographic distribution of the surveyed stakeholders. A brief summary of the stakeholders’ affiliations are provided in Appendix A; they are organized alphabetically by type of agency or organization.

![Figure 1: Graphic Distribution of Surveyed Stakeholders](image)

Studio Members conducted individual interviews in September and October 2014. Following an analysis of all of the stakeholder interviews, Studio Members found that several common themes emerged. These prevailing ideas are listed on page 6, followed by a detailed analysis of the similarities, differences, and major themes of the interview responses. A write-up of each individual interview appears in Appendix B.
Several major themes emerged from the stakeholder interviews.

**Cohesion:** Stakeholders emphasized a need for more consistent management and stewardship of the Canal System as a unified whole, not only with respect to its physical infrastructure, but also in more policy-driven concerns like marketing, communications, and public image.

**Community Engagement:** The canal communities serve as points of entry to the Canal System and areas of tourist interaction. Many of the stakeholders who were interviewed felt there was a need for greater connectivity, investment, and communication between canal communities in order to achieve the most effective community involvement in the future of the Canal System.

**Historic Awareness:** Stakeholders acknowledged the historic importance of the Canal System and a need to emphasize historic awareness. Stakeholders recognized accomplishments in this regard in the ongoing work of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, but also stressed a need for greater consideration of history in all parts of the Canal System. Stakeholders noted, in particular, discrepancies in the presentation and interpretation of heritage resources between the western and eastern halves of the state.

**Public/Private Balance:** Several stakeholders felt that excessive or unbalanced investment in public facilities and amenities could create competitive hardships for private businesses. Suggestions to avoid this situation included the following:

- Reduce competitive pressure on privately-owned boating services by charging additional fees at public facilities
- Invest in private businesses as well as public infrastructure
STAKEHOLDER SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In September 2014 the NYS Canal Corporation provided a list of approximately thirty stakeholder names, associated agencies, and contact information to the University at Albany Planning Studio. The stakeholders represented regional and county planning agencies, private businesses, canal advocates, private nonprofit organizations, the National Park Service, Regional Economic Development Councils, and state agencies. After an introductory letter was sent to the stakeholders from Brian Stratton, the Director of the NYS Canal Corporation, the stakeholders were contacted by Studio Members to arrange interviews. When possible, in-person interviews were scheduled, but some interviews were conducted by telephone when distance, location, or availability prohibited direct meetings. Other stakeholders chose to submit their responses by email. The circumstances of each interview are given in individual reports located in Appendix A.

To elicit a range of responses, Studio Members designed seven open-ended questions. Each stakeholder was asked the same questions regardless of location or affiliation. The questions were as follows:

1. What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?
2. What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?
3. What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for canal communities?
4. What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?
5. What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to:
   - Increase local community involvement along the Canal System?
   - Participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017?
   - Implement the plan update upon its completion?
6. What actions would you recommend to:
   - Strengthen existing partnerships?
   - Add new partnerships?
7. Is there anything that you would like to add?
Question 1 was an open ended question that required stakeholders to prioritize their thoughts and opinions of the canal. Seeking to identify critical successes, Studio Members asked the stakeholders to list the top three aspects that had been successful since the 1995 NYS Canal Recreationway Plan. The following is a compiled list of the top identified successes that have been seen by stakeholders over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System.

**The Canalway Trail**

The Canalway Trail was the most popularly cited accomplishment among stakeholders, mentioned by approximately half of all respondents. The Canalway Trail has encouraged recreation, generated significant economic impact, and brought greater recognition to connected canal communities. Most stakeholders agreed that the trail must be completed in order to fully capitalize on this success.

**Wider Recognition of Canal Communities and Tourism Opportunities**

A number of stakeholders pointed out that the Canal System has stimulated tourism and has greatly raised the profile of many canal communities in the public consciousness, at the regional level and beyond. However, these very same public image triumphs – the general awareness of the Canal System, its satellite communities, and potential tourism opportunities - were also frequently cited as barriers to success in subsequent interview questions. This incongruity indicates that while stakeholders are generally pleased with the greater prominence of canal system tourism, there is also a great opportunity for further growth in this respect through marketing and education.

**Increased Recreational Use of the Canal**

Stakeholders were pleased with increased recreational use of the canal system. To build on this development, stakeholders recommended lower costs and fees for recreation use, completion of the Canalway Trail, and continued promotion of the canal system for greater public awareness.
QUESTION 1

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Collaboration between the NYS Canal Corporation and other Canal Stakeholders

Many respondents praised the collaboration between the NYS Canal Corporation and other canal stakeholders, but also noted room for improvement in these relationships. In order to build upon this successful cooperation, stakeholders recommended more direct communication and engagement with canal communities and partners by the Canal Corporation.

Improvement of Canal Infrastructure

Infrastructure improvements along the canal, such as the restoration of locks and walls, were cited by many as a success. However, most stakeholders then expressed the need to build on this success by putting in place a more effective maintenance system, improved through increased funding and more comprehensive planning.

Increased Amenities Provided Along the Canal

Many stakeholders noted an increase in the quantity and quality of Canal System amenities in the last two decades, though many expressed concern regarding the ongoing maintenance of these facilities and services. Opinions also varied on the matter of public canal harbors and the competitive pressures these apply to private operators on the Canal System, in particular the notion that these businesses must unfairly contend with subsidized services offered at severely reduced costs. In order to encourage more equitable commercial competition, these stakeholders suggested the Canal Corporation consider implementing a fee system for the use of public amenities, which would also generate revenue for maintenance.
QUESTION 1

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Increased Commercial Use of the Canal

The ongoing revival of commercial transportation on the Canal System was another common response to this question, and many stakeholders recommended policies to increase these activities. Not only does commercial waterway traffic recall the original function of New York’s historic canals, but it provides a lucrative and invaluable source of revenue for operation and maintenance. However, some stakeholders expressed a need to be mindful of the potential incompatibility between increasing commercial use of the canals and established recreational activities, and advised a particular concern for maintaining community character and quality in any proposed escalation of shipping traffic.

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Several stakeholders expressed an admiration for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (ECNHC), principally in its ability to generate national recognition of the New York State Canal System, and also the beneficial partnership opportunities with the National Park Service this federal entity provides. The *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan* (2008) and the ECNHC website ([www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)) were held up as particularly impressive models for the Canal System to emulate in its planning activities. Finally, stakeholders recommended a renewal of this advantageous federal designation for the Erie Canal.
Question 2 asked stakeholders to identify the three most significant challenges to the NYS Canal System. It also requested that stakeholders provide potential solutions to overcome these challenges. More than twice as many challenges were identified as successes, possibly indicative of varying stakeholder perspective and locations. However, among these challenges a few themes emerged.

**Ineffective Maintenance System**

Numerous stakeholders mentioned canal maintenance as a key challenge that needs to be addressed. Currently, restoration of aging infrastructure and frequent dredging is cost prohibitive under the current structure for canal maintenance, leading to lost opportunities and poor boater navigation. There are ongoing tidal, rainfall and flooding concerns associated with the canal as well as a need for a resiliency plan in response to climate change. Communities do not always know who to contact when there is a maintenance issue, and instability in state leadership increases communication and long-term maintenance issues. Stakeholders suggest that there should be a long-term plan in place specifically for maintenance with responsible parties listed and funding sources identified.

**Perception and Existence of Low Environmental Quality**

While public perception of low environmental quality was cited as a challenge to combat via marketing, this perception did not appear to be off-base considering some of the environmental challenges listed by interviewees such as invasive species and the presence of PCBs. Stakeholders suggested that there should be increased communication with the New York State Department of Conservation, that General Electric should be held accountable for the clean-up and cost of PCBs, and that an early warning system for invasive species be installed and policy procedures put in place forcing people to clean and dry their boats.
QUESTION 2

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Funding

Funding was often cited as a challenge that exacerbated most other challenges associated with the Canal System. As discussed under maintenance, funding is a key concern in the repair of aging infrastructure and dredging. Funding is often an obstacle for canal communities in the ongoing maintenance of public infrastructure, the implementation of new projects and investment in private business. Many stakeholders would like help from the NYS Canal Corporation in identifying grants to aid in these projects. An additional funding obstacle had to do with marketing, with interviewees advocating for a more unified approach so individual communities had access to advertisement and marketing opportunities.

Economic Downturn

Some stakeholders recognized that nothing happens in a vacuum and that economic downturns had a lot to do with business and boater decline. Several cited high gas prices as a reason for lost boater traffic as well as other increased maintenance costs. While stakeholder’s acknowledged that the NYS Canal Corporation could not control the economy, it was suggested that it play a role in supporting communities and businesses in economic slumps or putting some safeguarding policies into place so as to reduce impact.

Public Infrastructure Competing with Private Business

There was some concern, mostly among private business owners, that public harbors were putting private marinas out of business, with a couple of interviewees citing examples from Whitehall. It was suggested that there be charges for using public amenities in order to allow private businesses to compete.
QUESTION 2

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Canal Community Disengagement

Several stakeholders felt that canal communities, as a whole, were disinvested in the project due to lack of awareness of the economic impact to their community, as well as either feeling disconnected from the NYS Canal Corporation or unaware of its role or existence. There was also indication that communities may not be fully aware of the canal’s historic significance, making it hard for them to engage visitors. Therefore, many stakeholders proposed increased education as a method to combat this disengagement as well as increasing localized non-profit partnerships.

Marketing Not Unified or Cohesive

Most stakeholders at some point indicated that marketing needed to be accomplished in unity, with some suggesting that there should be an umbrella entity coordinating all marketing efforts such as I Love NY.

Lack of Connectivity

A number of concerns fell under this heading including Canalway Trail completion, the need to connect gaps in snowmobile trails, canal-community connectivity, and the need for increased signage. One stakeholder suggested that there needed to be some coordination with utility companies in completing the Canalway Trail. Another suggested that there be a sign audit and installation strategy to address inconsistent signage along the trail.

Public is Not Knowledgeable about Canal Significance and Opportunity

Stakeholders suggested that a key challenge was lack of public knowledge regarding the Canal System’s natural and historical significance. There needs to be public education for people with different interests to attract people, jobs, and families, as well as to build and maintain public and political support for the canal.
Question #3 was an open-ended question that elicited a range of responses and recommendations. This question touched on the need to develop income generating activities that not only benefit the Canal System as a whole, but also the communities located on the Canal. Five common themes and ideas were identified:

**Invest in Private Business:**

- Develop marinas, restaurants, stores, and other facilities on or near the canal
- Support grants to businesses to improve rare façades
- Stop making free public amenities that compete with private businesses
- Increase funding opportunities and provide incentives to pursue businesses
- Market canal to industry
- Provide increased renewable energy production
- Support canalside bed and breakfasts
- Encourage industrial and agricultural tourism
- Increase canal trips
- Support industry along the canal, especially industry that is innovative

**Increase Connectivity and Signage:**

- Provide consistent signage design
- Add more exits to canal from Thruway
- Sustain multi-modal interconnections
- Increase local knowledge and training on canal system and local area
- Encourage image cohesion (e.g. mule statues at the locks)
- Add and maintain bulletin boards at each dock for boaters
- Improve canal trail
- Develop canal-side parks
- Increase state-assisted canal tour
- Increase kayak/canoe/bicycle rental opportunities
- Add dock space and allow docking in the lock at night
QUESTION 3

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal Communities?

Provide more Amenities and Services:
- Provide more amenities for boaters such as potable water, clean restrooms, hot showers, electrical outlets, etc.
- Provide place for trash, recyclables and compost
- Increase living history attractions
- Seek funding for facilities for travelers that also benefit residents, such as trails, visitor center
- Foster recreation in winter for snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, skating, etc.
- Invest in the physical infrastructure of the canal, such as dredging the channel and repairing walls; maintain canal walls so that they are user-friendly and safe
- Improve car-top boat launch access
- Provide tour planning assistance for boaters
- Invest in recreational facilities that encourage use by families and tourists

Engagement with Municipalities:
- Provide Main Street programs
- Invest in downtowns and encourage land use that joins downtowns with the waterfront
- Provide leaders with webinars or training on canal systems so they have some support
- Seek state and federal grants for waterfront revitalization and smart growth
- Bring back and develop multiple use/mixed use development, buildings and land-use close to the water
- Invest in village revitalization and historic restoration
- Invest in infrastructure
- Follow and encourage use of the Blueway Trail model
- Build housing that supports people living and working along the canal
QUESTION 3

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal Communities?

Miscellaneous:

- Work on the creation of a National Historic Scenic Byway Plan
- Ensure lease and sale of Canal Corporation lands benefits canalside communities
- Increase minimum stay at locks from 48 hours to 3-4 days
- Encourage art on the canal, such as canal-wide art murals
- Restore sections of the 19th century Erie Canal to a fully navigable waterway
- Encourage marketing to get people to waterside
- Support a culture of community by bringing users back to the waterfront
- Publish the book ‘Working Tug Boats’
Tourism is one important usage of the canal; it also is one of the most challenging. Stakeholders presented a myriad of ideas to increase and improve the canal as a tourist destination. Listed below are common themes expressed by stakeholders on ways to make the canal a tourism destination:

- Host canal festivals to link the communities
- Update and maintain canal walls to make them safe for tie ups as well as aesthetically pleasing
- Add lights to existing structures to draw attention to the canal
- Market the canal by depicting people recreating through all four seasons along the canal and using the existing infrastructure of NYS marketing
- Provide services along the canal system 24 hours a day
- Advertise downtowns as a series of main streets, not just focusing on the canal system itself
- Increase education and awareness about the canal
- Add more partnerships
- Have one lead voice or entity that coordinates all efforts
- Have better and more signage and facilities along the canal
- Create attractive destination and deals, perhaps in packages
- Create an interactive page to see where one can and cannot travel on canals as well as times of lock operation for boaters
- Seek better use of technology to increase electronic presence, including mobile apps

These were common themes found in the stakeholders interviews. Differences were illustrative of the broadly ranging personal goals of the stakeholders, their geographic location, and their knowledge level of the canal system.
QUESTION 4

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination?

How would you market that vision?

Some of the central differences are:

- Some of the stakeholders focused more on the canal communities, while others focused on the canal and waterway. There was also focus on recreation along the canal in some of the interviews, acknowledging the importance of tourists who enjoy activities such as bicycling, fishing, hiking, bird watching, canoeing, and many other activities.

- The main differences in responses to this question seemed to come from the geographic differences in the stakeholders who were interviewed. The canal is unique throughout the state, so activities along the eastern part of the canal system may be different than activities along the western portion of the canal system.

- Different marketing techniques included:
  - Celebrating the canal
  - Recreation
  - Connecting Lake Champlain to the canal
  - Canal cruises
  - Advertising downtowns

The main emphasis was how to easily and affordably market the canal system to get people to want to visit New York and its extensive and unique canal system. The stakeholders had ideas on how to market the canal, but did not provide any implementation strategies. Setting up tourism packages including sites to visit along the canal, places to stay, and hours of operation, would be a good start in marketing the canal system and bringing in tourism. Funding continues to be a challenge, which emphasizes the importance of working on partnerships and cooperation between communities and state and local governments to strengthen tourism strategies.
QUESTION 5

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to:

Increase local community involvement along the Canal System?

Participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017?

Implement the plan update upon its completion?

Increase community involvement along the canal system

The most common response to this question by stakeholders was that they were already fairly active with communities along the canal system, and that their most vital role for the future would be to simply continue doing what they are doing or to find ways to do it better. The activities currently in place as identified by these stakeholders are as follows:

- Work and collaborate with various community partners on development and implementation of plans
- Provide technical assistance on tasks such as grant writing, tourism marketing, streamlining the permitting process, federal designations, etc.
- Prioritize waterfront development
- Act as a liaison between local partners and state agencies
- Hold workshops and roundtables that are tied to the canal
- Support promotional events and materials
- Generally continue and improve current activities
QUESTION 5

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to:

Increase local community involvement along the Canal System?

Participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017?

Implement the plan update upon its completion?

Other responses to this question, while not held by the majority, are worth mentioning as we look to the future success of the plan:

- Work closely with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor to increase community involvement along the canal system;
- Combine good planning with resilience
- Utilize the “Blueway Trail” approach – very successful in the past in getting people to the waterways for recreation – build upon the success of this model.
- Seek funding in the form of incentives and grant programs to implement components of the plan
- Offer design competitions for students to create promotional material
- Reach out to communities that have not had success in implementing the plan and find ways to give them the push they need to move forward and be successful
- Facilitate partnerships in general with various community engagement efforts (i.e. historic preservation, planning, community economic development, promotion, organization, and program management, resource development, grant making, and other activities), and general community outreach
- Incorporate the canal system into regional and local planning efforts
- Improve landside access and trail programs, such as trail adoption, clean sweeps, trail counts, impact and user reports
- Improve the international visibility of the canal system
- Provide indirect support
QUESTION 5

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to:

- Increase local community involvement along the Canal System?
- Participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017?
- Implement the plan update upon its completion?

Participate in the Canal Bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017?

Responses to this question from the stakeholders interviewed were almost unanimous in their support of the upcoming Canal Bicentennial and the need to celebrate this milestone. Stakeholder responses to this question fell into two distinct categories; the first being support for celebrating this milestone, not only as a means of recognizing the impact of the canal on the history of this country, but also as a way to positively showcase New York State. It was suggested that celebration of this event could provide a major boost in recognizing the value of canal communities.

The second category of responses, highlighted below, pertained to stakeholder involvement, the desire to be involved in planning the celebration, and related canal system activities currently underway, though not necessarily identified as being related to the bicentennial celebration.

- The City of Syracuse has been accepted to host the World Canal Conference in 2017; the NYS Canal Corporation, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and the Canal Society of New York State are heavily involved in planning this event.
- In 2016 Oswego will be celebrating the city’s bicentennial and that celebration will focus on the canal, which has been integral to the growth of this region, and which led to Oswego being the largest inland port in the country.
- Lakes to Locks Passage is currently working on an interpretive trail that connects places along the canal system, which could potentially be in place in time for the bicentennial celebration.
In preparation for the World Canal Conference, the Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor sees their role as being the starting point for the “birthday” celebration. They anticipate including all canal people, from operators and business owners to canal enthusiasts from all over the world. They mentioned what they will do in 2017 to kick-off the celebration and then in 2025, which is the conclusion of the celebration. The question that is raised, however, is what will be done in between these two bookend events? It should also be noted that while many of the stakeholders anticipate being involved, none are aware of any efforts being undertaken at this time, and many are just waiting to be asked.

Other stakeholder responses regarding the Bicentennial generally fell into the following categories:

- Offered general support and interest, a willingness to participate, and/or are currently discussing within their organization
- Cited success of earlier commemorative events as inspiration for upcoming bicentennial
- Suggested coincidental projects, announcements, and commemorations
- Offered promotional support
- Offered general leadership/guidance
QUESTION 5

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to:

Increase local community involvement along the Canal System?

Participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017?

Implement the plan update upon its completion?

Implement the plan update upon its completion?

The responses to this question were among the most varied of all three questions, with a few of the stakeholders offering no response to the question. However, of all the responses received, the response that was most common from the stakeholders spoke to the willingness to assist with implementation of the plan, but with the caveat that any type of assistance will be dependent upon the content of the updated plan. The other responses shared no commonalities and are summarized below:

- The Canal Society of New York State feels that there is a very high potential for outreach to millions of travelers along the New York State Thruway system through exposure to the Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron.
- Lakes to Locks indicated that they are already active with the canal system and will continue to do so.
- The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor indicated that this is a question they have asked themselves before. They have their own master and strategic plans that they are working on implementing, and the question comes up of how to incorporate their plans into the canal plans.
- Some smaller organizations, like Parks and Trails New York and the Camillus Erie Canal Park, offered to encourage promotional efforts, education, voluntarism, and community involvement.
- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation could assist with land acquisition (for open space preservation or recreation).
- Some larger government agencies suggested possible assistance infrastructure, improved access, and technical guidance with official designations, etc.
- Others suggested general planning support, such as collaboration and facilitation, including engaging each organization in the planning process to the fullest extent of its talents and resources.
**QUESTION 6**

What actions would you recommend to:
- Strengthen existing partnerships?
- Add new partnerships?
- What potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Question 6 is an open ended question which seeks to provide input on strengthening existing partnerships and adding new partnerships. The question recognized the value of partnership in the success of the canal, and elicited suggestions to further their success.

As a result of the stakeholder interviews, commonly shared idea for partnerships is to have one lead agency that coordinates all other smaller group efforts. Interviews also revealed that the existing partnerships are already very strong, and communication and information sharing is one of the aspects which should be developed. There should be more regular meetings between stakeholders, local entities, and private organizations/businesses. Strengthening partnerships with advocacy groups such as Parks and Trails of New York, and non-profit organizations such as Canal New York are also important.

Moreover, the importance of assisting local communities that do not have the capacity in the way of staff for planning and development activities was underlined by the stakeholders.

There is also a list of recommended stakeholders including, environmental and conservation groups, public and private organizations, public/private partnerships, and coalition groups.

- Chamber of Commerce
- National Grid
- Cruise and charter boat companies
- Local main-street groups
- I Love NY
- Historic preservation groups
- Gems along the Mohawk
- Regional Economic Development Councils
QUESTION 6

What actions would you recommend to:

Strengthen existing partnerships?

Add new partnerships?

What potential or additional partners do you suggest?

- Major corporations
- National Geographic
- Travel Channel
- Partners connected to industry groups/commercial trade
- NYS Cultural Heritage Tourism Network
- Paddling community
- Disability organizations
- Historical and cultural organizations
- Artistic partnerships
- Quality of life organizations
- Adopt-a-trail ambassadors
- Student competitions
- Audubon Society (birding/nature viewing maps)
- Internships
- Mentor 4th graders
- BOCES and landscaping departments (build and maintain landscape near locks)
- National Honor Society volunteer groups
- Farmers markets at locks
- Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts can adopt composting and recycling, etc.

In addition to these ideas, stakeholders also stated that there should be an ongoing process in place to look for and nurture new partners.
QUESTION 7

Is there anything you would like to add?

Question 7 gave the stakeholders an opportunity to add additional comments.

The majority of the stakeholders had various additional comments to conclude the interview, although similar themes did arise. Challenges with implementation of the plan, maintenance, funding, and marketing were key aspects of concern with several ideas on how to develop awareness of the canal system, build partnerships, and create an attraction to build on the successes over the past 20 years.

Implementation is difficult. Many municipalities do not have the staff to read the plan so it is important to have those engaged prioritize and expand on the Canal System’s economic opportunity, preservation, and sustainability; not just check a completed task off the list. Maintaining the infrastructural health of the system is paramount and represents the foundation on which all subsequent and supplementary canal activities stand. Dredging, the restoration of historic harbor walls and bridges, protecting the natural habitat of the lakes, and controlling invasive species in the canal waterways are essential to its future. Of course all of this requires funding, which is always scarce. There needs to be a better explanation given to the public on why it is important for the canal to be funded with Thruway revenue from tolls and why it is important for cooperation between municipalities for marketing. Many small communities do not have the funds to act alone and should capitalize on collaborating as a larger unit. There also needs to be a delineation made between the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor and other components of the Canal System that do not share the Erie Canal title.

Creating awareness and building partnerships is key when identifying the canal system as a recreational attraction. New Yorkers need clarity in identifying and extolling the importance of the canal and its constituent structural makeup to justify continuous efforts. The Canal played such an important role in the state’s history, which needs to be appreciated; the Canal cannot survive as a museum piece.
The approaching bicentennial of the Erie Canal is an enormous opportunity to engage and educate the public. It is important to build partnerships and put forth the time, attention, and resources needed now so this opportunity is not minimized or squandered. Having round table meetings and an understanding of the roles existing entities play will create an understanding of who is responsible for what, which is necessary to successfully move forward for the bicentennial and the Canal System as a whole.

Creating an entity that crosses arbitrary political boundaries and/or an umbrella organization for the trail and other purposes would allow the system to work as a greater entity as opposed to being Balkanized. Building on the strengths of existing partnerships will also help to expand opportunities, for example the Regional Economic Development Council is in their 5th year and they are looking to refresh their structure and focus by creating regional priorities. The Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor is working with a wide range of partnerships. They are working to preserve and interpret our nation’s past, provide world-class recreational and education opportunities, foster economic revitalization, improve the quality of life in corridor communities, and guide the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21st century ‘River of Commerce’.

Expanding involvement and awareness will provide an opportunity to create the NYS Canal System as a destination. There are really two canal systems in the state, one in western NY with substantial political, governmental, and public knowledge combined with support, and another in the eastern portion of the state where natural rivers for the navigation channel of the modern-day canal exist, but are much less understood and utilized. This needs to be addressed in a statewide context so that the innumerable tourism and recreational assets are recognized in a more uniform fashion, and the underutilized sections receive more focused promotion and resources.
Is there anything you would like to add?

Keep everyone informed. Connection of information, as well as connection of parts, such as the trail, has the potential for a great return on investment, and having the trail designated as a historic place will help to maintain this unique asset and bring more attention to the waterfronts. Currently many communities have old industrial sites and vacant land located along the water. There is a need for brownfield remediation and development to expand on opportunities for local restaurants and water taxi services.

There is a potential to create a world-class destination by connecting to Quebec and Montreal. Currently there is a cut off and the Canal Corp needs to include Lake Champlain because it is a large tourism destination. Overall those interviewed had a great deal of information to share on how the NYS Canal System can be showcased and utilized by educating its importance and connecting resources.
APPENDIX A

Stakeholder Agency/Organization
Description
Canal Advocates

**Tom Prindle** is a former New York State Canal Corporation employee who continues to be an advocate for the canal system. Mr. Prindle was involved not only in designing rehabilitation projects, but also in designing the first interpretive signage and kiosks placed along the canal system. Mr. Prindle has also served as president of the State Council of Waterways which was involved in the development of the Erie Canal Heritage Park in Port Byron.

**Tom Ryan** is a former commissioner of the New York State Canal Corporation and Thruway Authority executive who continues to work as an advocate for the canal system. A past winner of the “Spirit of the Canal Award,” Mr. Ryan has also served as the president of the State Council on Waterways, a statewide nonprofit educational and tourism promotion organization dedicated to marketing and promoting the New York State Canal System and to increasing public access to the waterway in underserved areas across the state.

**Judith Schmidt-Dean** has owned the Schuyler Yacht Basin, a private marina in Schuylerville, NY, with her husband Phil for 29 years. She served as chair of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor for four years, served in several capacities as a board member of Canal NY, and in 2008 won an award for her canal advocacy from the Canal Society of New York State. She has been significantly active in citizen groups and with recreation commissions since the beginning of her business.

County Planning Agencies

The **Oswego County Department of Planning and Community Development** coordinates activities in land use, comprehensive planning, environmental management, and community development in addition to providing technical assistance and expertise in planning to local governments and the public. Oswego County is comprised of the cities of Oswego and Fulton, 10 villages, 22 towns, and the 23-mile Oswego Canal, which is part of the New York State Canal System and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

The **Schenectady County Economic Development Planning Department** coordinates sound planning with local, state and federal agencies, balancing economic development with the preservation of natural resources. Its activities constitute a comprehensive range of planning services, including zoning, subdivision and environmental review, riverfront revitalization, transportation planning, ground water protection, agricultural protection, and park and recreation development. Schenectady County comprises the City of Schenectady, five towns, two villages, and eight hamlets, and includes lengths of the Mohawk River that correspond to the present and historic segments of the Erie Canal. Projects currently underway include the Mohawk Riverfront Revitalization Plan and the Schenectady Bike Link Project.
National Park Service

The *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor* was established by the U.S. Congress in 2000 and includes the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego and Champlain Canals. The Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor is managed through a public-private partnership between the 27-member federal Erie Canalway Commission and the non-profit Erie Canalway Heritage Fund with staff support from the National Park Service. This public-private partnership works to preserve the heritage of the canalway, promote the corridor as a world-class tourism destination, and foster vibrant communities connected by the waterway.

The *National Parks Service* is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior entrusted with the care of America’s national parks, many national monuments, and other historical and conservation properties with various title designations. Of particular importance to the NYS Canal System is its role as management entity of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

The *Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program* of the National Park Service provides support for community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. This national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals partner with community groups, non-profits, tribes and state and local governments to design trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, protect special places and create recreation opportunities.

Private Business

*Mid-Lakes Navigation* is a family-owned and operated cruise and charter boat company based in Skaneateles, NY. Since 1968, the Wiles family has led journeys on the waters of the Erie Canal and Skaneateles Lake, offering leisurely connections to many canalside communities, attractions and activities, as well as a glimpse into the engineering and history of the canal and a distinctly maritime gateway to the Finger Lakes region and the scenic countryside of Central New York.

Private Non-Profits:

The *Camillus Erie Canal Park* was established in 1972 near the historic village of Camillus, NY. It is part of the Town of Camillus Parks and Recreation Department, but maintained and operated by the all-volunteer Camillus Canal Society. The mission of the Camillus Canal Society is to foster and promote public interest in the preservation and restoration of the historic Erie Canal.
The **Canal Society of New York State** is a nonprofit educational organization formed in 1956 to promote appreciation and preservation of both the historic and present-day canals of New York State. The society protects historic canal sites and features, supports the revitalization of canals and development of canal ports, canal trails, and recreational facilities, educates people on canal history, and works as an advocate for canal renewal and development.

**Canal New York Marketing and Business Alliance, Inc.** is the primary private sector organization promoting economic and business development along the entire New York State Canal System Corridor. Canal New York focuses on bringing business to its members through tourism marketing programs, educational outreach, legislative advocacy, and member organizational development. Their mission is to serve as the one universally accepted private sector entity dedicated to tourism, marketing, legislative advocacy and business collaboration in support of existing and new economic opportunities within New York State's canal communities.

The **Champlain Canalway Trail Working Group** is a voluntary, ad hoc partnership that includes local and regional canal and trail groups, public agencies, and park and preservation organizations formed to assist localities to develop, manage, and maintain the Canalway Trail.

The **Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance** is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve, promote, and protect the Glens Falls Feeder Canal and Towpath Trail through responsible recreation, environmental education, and preservation.

**Hudson Crossing Park** is a grassroots steering committee formed by volunteers, planners, school leaders, and elected officials from Saratoga and Washington counties brought together to create a park to benefit local communities and serve a multi-generational audience. Volunteers secured funding for signage, cleared trails, and hosted public events. The mission of Hudson Crossing Park is to tie environmental responsibility to economic revitalization and to engage people of all ages in making informed choices for a sustainable future.

**Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc.** is a private nonprofit organization established to manage the interconnected waterways of the Upper Hudson River/Champlain Canal, Lake George, Lake Champlain, and the Richelieu River/Chambly Canal. The scenic, historic, natural, cultural, recreational, and working landscape resources of these interconnected waterways are managed through a partnership of public, private, and nonprofit organizations that work to protect and promote these valuable resources in balance with economic development and tourism.
**Parks and Trails New York** is New York’s leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated to improving the health, economy, and quality of life of all through the use and enjoyment of green space since 1985. Parks and Trails New York has worked with hundreds of community organizations and municipalities to envision, create, promote, and protect a growing network of parks and more than 1,500 miles of greenways, bike paths, and trails throughout New York State.

The **Western Erie Canal Alliance (WECA)** is the managing entity of New York State’s Management Plan for the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor, encompassing a 136-mile stretch of the Erie Canal and running through Erie, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, and Wayne counties. Its organizations help preserve, maintain and promote the integrity of this corridor. It is also home to the only acknowledged and designated Coordinating National Trust Main Street Program in New York State, allowing canal communities in the corridor to invest in their downtowns. WECA’s mission is a four-step approach that encourages the economic growth of the Erie Canal corridor and its communities, including developing vibrant regional economies, enhancing regional quality of life, encouraging resource conservation, and increasing the appreciation of the natural and unique cultural resources.

**Regional Economic Development Councils**

The **Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council** was one of ten regional councils established in 2011 by Governor Andrew Cuomo and is a public-private partnership comprised of stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and nongovernmental organizations. The Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council has been tasked with creating a strategic plan for economic development and community renewal in the Mohawk Valley, while preserving the natural, cultural, and geographic resources of the region.

**Regional Planning Agencies**

The **Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council** was established in 1977 by a joint resolution with the eight original member counties, which were Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne and Yates (Wyoming County was added to the Council in 1986). The council includes chief elected officials, local legislators, department heads, and key community leaders representing the participating counties and the City of Rochester. The primary programs of the council include local, regional and water resources planning, regional economic development planning, and the management of a data, technology, and resource center. The council is a public organization that was formed to foster coordination among neighboring counties and to provide a regional approach to concerns, projects, and development that cross local boundaries.
The **Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program** is unique in New York State and is the result of an interrelationship of three major planning organizations, all housed in one location. The combined staff of this program serve the Oneida County Department of Planning, the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program, and the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study. Planning activities are conducted at both the county and the regional level with extensive location assistance provided to cities, towns and villages.

**State Agencies**

The **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)** is the executive agency of the state government responsible for all state programs that are designed to protect or enhance the environment. The goal of the DEC is to conserve, improve and protect New York’s natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people in the state as well as their overall economic and social well-being.

The **New York State Department of State** is the executive agency of the state government responsible for the official compilation of state agency rules, regulations, and documents. It is also involved in strategic investment, economic development, and consumer protection, among many other regulatory responsibilities. Smart Growth Planning is part of the Division of Local Government Services within the Department of State, which is tasked with promoting the principles of smart growth at the state, regional, and local levels within New York State. Smart growth principles encourage community planning and development in priority economic growth areas, as well as the redevelopment of existing community centers, all while ensuring protection of important natural and historic resources.

The **New York State Department of Transportation** is the executive agency of the state government that is responsible for maintaining a safe, efficient, balanced and environmentally sound transportation system for the state. They are tasked with coordinating and developing comprehensive transportation policy for the state, and coordinating and assisting in the development and operation of transportation facilities and services for highways, railroads, mass transit systems, ports, waterways and aviation facilities.

The **New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation** is the executive agency of the state government responsible for the management of state parks facilities, historic sites, heritage programs, historic preservation, and recreational and interpretive planning, as well as grants administration and technical and regulatory assistance related to these activities. Its mission is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors, and to be a responsible steward of the natural, historic, and cultural resources of the Empire State.
APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
Karl Beard
National Park Service
Interviewed by Lisa A. Ford

Karl Beard is a conservation planner with the National Park Service, working on the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program. The interview was conducted in person at Mr. Beard’s Hyde Park, NY office at 3:00 PM on September 25, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

One the main successes was the Canalway Trail system. To build on that, Mr. Beard recommended finishing the trails and finding additional opportunities to link to local communities. Additional corollary stuff to include were accommodations for camping and biking. Successes along the Oswego and Cayuga portions included use of a decommissioned coal plant down in Ithaca. PTNY bikeway pre-packaged themed experiences are a way to continue to build on this. The Canal Harbors have transformed host communities. A second tier of similarly developed harbors of focal communities with guidance to local attractions would build on that success. Keeping it an authentic experience is important, rather than a Disney-type version. Repurposing the historic buildings would help communities to readapt. Another way to build on success is the example of the Thruway stop at Port Byron. The original stone locks could be adapted into a pull-off interpretive area.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Chronically underserved communities are a challenge. Finding ways to connect linkages to benefit from the Canal System might help as a way to overcome this challenge. Examples include a Syracuse greenway corridor along roads that are adjacent to canal.

Montezuma’s strategic location could really capitalize on connections to the many directions of the Canal System. Some analysis is needed to find additional investment opportunities. Another challenge is climate change resiliency. To overcome this challenge, an infrastructure overhaul is required. The current funding mechanism is a challenge; there needs to be other ways than tolls paying for Canal System related expenses.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for the Canal communities?

Explore “Main Street” programs as investment opportunities. Work with communities to help identify assets and catalyze capital investments (locally-owned wineries, for example). Cultivate local interests and use of space that guide people how to use the space with regional considerations.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

A seamless system of trails would provide a better integration between the trail, the waterway, and canalside communities. This is done well at the harbors but is less well done elsewhere. Provision of services and attractions that are useful, used, enjoyed, and valued by local communities would encourage use and could be marketed as such.

Exploit the competitive advantage of mid-lake navigation would encourage use. Intermodal (stylistic) rentals to include packaging, investment opportunities, self-guided tours, etc. Electric boats, for example, provide a quiet experience. Ports are needed to service electric boats using solar technology and electric infrastructure (ELco, for example). Market spare seat tours to included concepts such as paddle/kayak the entire Canal System. Market human powered boaters and market attention to their needs.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?
As NPS we can assist with programs and work on Cayuga/Oswego portion’s next step of trails development. We can also help in the development of human use guide capacity. Another form of participation is in the realm of Water Trail usage programming (for example, Riverfest events). The permitting process needs to be made easier.

On the Erie portion, provide adaptive paddling for ADA, making use of calmer water areas and marketing that advantage as family and novice friendly. Cycling adaptive use is another area where we can be involved.

We can help with Federal designations such as a National Water Trail designation and a National Historical Trail designation so the trail system can be added to National Trails System. Currently, scenic trails require a study and act of Congress to obtain national designation. We can help in determining Historic trails (e.g., Oregon Trail or Trail of Tears).

In regards to the bicentennial, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor promotes national significance in partnership with state and local communities. Much planning is needed and we can be a part of that.

Upon the plan’s completion, we will persist to help with the completion of the trail. We will also continue to work on the above-mentioned designations.

**What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?**

Strengthen partnerships with the Water Trail, and human-powered boating community by reaching out to paddling and boat liveries. The Canal Corporation should be considered a partner to develop a viable water trail to use. Paddle-friendly waterfronts require overnight accommodations, and access. A standard accessible design should be incorporated canal-wide. Partner with and steer communities in a more economically sustainable direction.

Additional partners to consider would be the paddling community, including the adaptive community. American Canoe Association could be a new partner. Market the Canal System as a family destination. Consider adding whitewater parks developers.

**Is there anything that you would like to add?**

The National Heritage Corridor designation is time-bounded, meant to jump start stable and sustainable places. For example, the current Erie designation is set to expire in 2017 (he thought). For NPS to be a part of future development, a different role would need to be established. Currently, programming, signage, and events need to occur at the community level.

Designation as a National Trail changes this role into a longer-term responsibility for NPS to take part in cultivating additional partnerships. NPS would be more of a practical partner rather than a funding source.
Dave Beebe
Camillus Erie Canal Park
Interviewed by Joseph Seman

Dave Beebe and his wife, Liz Beebe, have been active advocates and volunteers along the Canal System for 43 years. Liz Beebe is the executive director of the Camillus Canal Society, while Dave serves as the director of the Camillus Erie Canal Park and president of the Camillus Canal Society. The interview was conducted over the telephone on September 22, 2014, at 3:00 PM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

The couple pointed to the Buffalo harbor expansion as a success as well as the work that has been done to harbors and ports along the Canal System. To build on these successes, they recommend completing more harbor projects (e.g., Syracuse). Another success has been the increased commercial use of the Canal, especially by larger ships from Canada, which has been viewed as a result of the expansion of the ports (e.g., Oswego). The couple also credited the people that have been involved with the Canal System over the past 20 years as a great success.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Dave and Liz believe the biggest challenges are maintaining and preserving the infrastructure of the Canal, retaining dedicated and skilled volunteers, and improving the public image of the Canal System so that funding can be made available. They believe we need to get our legislatures, starting from the top down to the local municipalities, to understand the importance of the Canal System and the significance of it in order to increase funding and retention of good workers.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Provide more funding for publicity (I Love NY) and promote the Canal System as a destination for tourists during all seasons (promote winter activities). Educate local communities on opportunities available for attracting tourism and provide increased resources.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

They believe that activities along the canals need to be coordinated within the Canal System (e.g., local wine tours) to encourage more group and family multi-day trips. There should be an increased involvement with local libraries to attract local groups (e.g., senior groups, schools), universities and other higher level learning programs to visit the Canal and surrounding communities.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

The couple stated that they are focusing locally with these goals. They will continue to reach out to schools and senior organizations to both educate and bring these groups to the Canal System. They are currently forming a committee to see what the Camillus Erie Canal Park will be doing as they prepare for the [2017 Erie Canal] Bicentennial, and will communicate those plans as they are formulated. The couple acknowledged that they play an important but small role in the Canal System, so implementation of the plan will really come in the form of educating locals and working within the context of volunteer groups that they have established over the years.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; What potential or additional partners do you suggest?

There are many groups involved with the Canal System and in order to strengthen existing partnerships there needs to be an umbrella organization that coordinates their efforts, “They all have common problems and the effort to communicate is hard, but when accomplished it is fruitful. People need to talk together and not overlap
their efforts in order to work towards the same goal.”

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Dave would like to see a delineation made between the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor and the other components of the Canal System that may not share the “Erie Canal” title.
Paul Beyer
New York State Department of State
Interviewed by Lauren Elmers

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Clean up prime sites to build on. This would require the cleanup of contamination. Attract people, jobs, and families back to the urban core. Mr. Beyer stated that now we have models (e.g. Buffalo, Syracuse).

We can use their industrial legacy as a catalyst for growth. Mr. Beyer stated that we need to figure out how to apply that model to small and mid-size cities.

Another challenge has been planning adequately for more flooding. Canal infrastructure needs to be more resilient. Mr. Beyer listed a recent effort that involved installing removable dams, which would better handle high water flows, as opposed to destroying the infrastructure. He stated that we need to adapt to a changing climate.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Mr. Beyer stated that funding public-private partnerships is an investment opportunity. If the state invests in infrastructure, we should see more investment of private dollars; it is a partnership approach. Link the regional economies to the global economies. Buffalo, Syracuse, and the Mohawk Valley are taking the lead. We need to advertise our potential (i.e. Global NY).

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Mr. Beyer began by stating that this is not his area of expertise.

Market to women on canal. Continue funding for I Love NY and work closely with that program. There is also a need to advertise downtowns, not just for recreation, fishing, and waterfronts, but also as a series of main streets.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?
Planning and Local Waterfront Resiliency Program grants; Mr. Beyer stated that these can be married with resiliency plans and NY Rising. We should combine good planning and resiliency. His agency can bring smart growth mentality to communities, even if they’re not on the canal directly.

The [2017 Erie] Canal Bicentennial will be an opportunity for a major boost. It is good timing - at a time when we are recognizing the value of Canal communities.

We [upstate New York] were great once; can we use that to propel us forward? Mr. Beyer stated that we should look at the current successes, not just the past. His role is to look ahead to where things are going.

**What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?**

Mr. Beyer listed the Smart Growth Advocacy Committee; this is partially his role. Partner with the resiliency movement. They were separate at one point. This is a chance for them to join together. The opportunity for public-private partnership is ripe.

**Is there anything that you would like to add?**

Mr. Beyer re-emphasized the role of the Regional Economic Development Councils, and that this plan should continue to be linked to them. Creating regional priorities, REDC is in its fifth year; they are looking to refresh their structure and priorities.

Recommendation for further interview: Tony Giardina, DOS (his counterpart serving on the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor).
Mike Bieklie
Hudson Crossing Park
Interviewed by Jenny Majkut

Mike Bieklie is a board member and the Vice President of Outreach and Communication for Hudson Crossing Park. Mr. Bieklie was interviewed at the home of Alan and Marlene Bissell on September 24, 2014, at 9:00 AM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

The upgrading of locks - adding kiosks on how locks work would continue to improve this aspect.

The development of pocket parks near locks with picnic tables has helped draw visitors and could be improved by creating audio hotspots to allow for internet access.

The increase of commercial traffic has been a success, but there needs to be more publicity on the ease of moving products, such as the fact there are no bumps, traffic jams, and there are also environmental benefits. Bring more environmental benefits such as solar panels to increase efficiency.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

The majority of the state’s population is not near the Canal System and doesn’t know its benefits; it is more thought of as a relic. The cost of infrastructure and dredging is tremendous, which leads to a lack of dredging. Creating an “I Love NY Canals” campaign would help bring recognition and therefore funding.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Get to community leaders. There is a lot of turnover in small communities and there should be webinars or YouTube videos for review and planning support. Politicians are afraid to make mistakes, so engaging the Department of State will allow help in finding expertise in other agencies.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

- Provide Thruway exposure to the Canal System.
- Show communities it is more than just a waterway connecting the Great Lakes.
- Promote sailing vacations.
- Provide cruises and compare how they are marketed in Europe.
- Aim initial international targeting to Canada and then broaden.
- Produce a document on the Canal System, the birth of it, the impact it had on New York and ability for recreation.
- Show success stories of assets.
- Blog and create videos for the website.
- Look into Parks Canada and how they market.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Hudson Crossing Park is a 100% volunteer group that established itself as a destination. Our mission is to tie environmental responsibility to economic revitalization, and to engage people of all ages in making informed choices for a sustainable future. We showcase culture and history to create a recreation destination and provide a great all age venue. We can also help other communities by creating a video.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Figure out what can be done to help new and current partnerships.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Mr. Bieklie had no additional comments.
Alan & Marlene Bissell
Hudson Crossing Park
Interviewed by Jenny Majkut

Alan and Marlene Bissell are advisory members of Hudson Crossing Park, in addition to being Canal System advocates and avid boaters.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

- The National Heritage Corridor.
- The Canalway Trail.
- The Canal Corporation becoming an authority, because it provides a stated budget.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

The depth of the canals limits commercial traffic; there needs to be more bridges that raise and dredging to increase activity.

The canals need to become more weather and storm safe; there have been numerous times that locks are closed. This is a problem because it is already only available for use seasonally.

The image needs work; there is a lack of awareness and a stigma that it is meant for rich boaters, when in fact the majority are everyday people.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Increase commercial traffic; there should be an incentive outreach to pursue businesses with dedicated staff. Complete the Canalway Trail and have a hub at each lock.

- Increase amenities at each lock and be consistent. As boaters who spend weeks on the canals, there needs to be a place with potable water, clean restrooms, hot showers, and a place for trash, recycling, and compost. Having a place for compost can actually save millions in cutting trash bills.
- Increase the minimum stay at locks from 48 hours to three to four days. Allow overnight docking in the locks. Increase available dock space; Sylvan Beach is a good example.
- Create a pool of money for a revolving loan to gain upfront money awarded grants. Hudson Crossing Park is available to grant but cannot come up with the upfront money needed; having a revolving loan fund will increase opportunities.
- Increase alternate energy production to create more of an eco-destination with hydro, wind, and solar. Have Wi-Fi available at all locks. Increase the number of places that loan bicycles.
- Promote the Canal System as a destination by having postcards, buttons, flags for boats, etc. available.
- Offer training to lock tenders in customer service as well as provide knowledge of the area.
- Increase the number of bicycle business workshops in partnership with Parks and Trails NY.
- Link the locks for better image cohesion; for example, each lock could have a mule sculpture.
- Provide bulletin boards in the same place at every lock to allow boaters on a schedule easy access to information.
- Have signage to the community.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

- Promote ecotourism.
- Promote birding and create the entire system as a birding route.
- Create a single interactive page to see where boaters can and cannot travel on canals. If it is too difficult to plan a trip people will go somewhere else.
- Increase the focus on hiker, biker, and boater campsites.
- Reissue a cruising guide.
- Add funding for winter events, such as a winter carnival on the canal, ice carving, etc.
- Advertise more in *Inter-Coastal Waterway*, *Active Captain*, and at southern boat shows.
- Create a “spend your summer with us” campaign to showcase that the canals are not just what one has to travel through to get where they are going.
- Research Canadian canals. Canadian models are run by the [Canadian] parks system.
- Lock tenders are professional and well-dressed in uniforms, as well as knowledgeable in the history of every lock.
- There are museums to sell items.
- All locks and bridges are hand operated.
- There is a blue line available for boaters to attach themselves to show they want to go through the lock or stay overnight in the lock.
- Provide accessibility to more tours.
- Better utilize the National Geographic website and Lakes to Locks, Inc.
- There needs to be updated information technology; it is behind the times.
- Encourage fishing tours.
- Have the Canal Corporation executives rent a boat and tour the canals to learn what it is like as a visitor.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; Participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; Implement the plan update upon its completion?

We can have a Canalway Trail working group to get more ambassadors and adopt-a-trail opportunities to increase involvement. We can also have competitions with students for design work.

We plan to promote and cross-promote the bicentennial. Hudson Crossing Park is doing a living history event. The Canal System and the Revolutionary War are tightly intertwined.

Neither Alan nor Marlene could say how to help implement the plan upon completion until it is provided.

**What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?**

Have a public annual round table, oftentimes those who gather for the canals are at a conference and unable to talk. Have a ticket-to-ride to strengthen partnerships. Partner with the Audubon Society; birding/nature viewing maps.

Have internships to allow the younger generation to design tourism material and improve information technology opportunities. We should also mentor fourth graders to get them more involved.

Partner with BOCES programs to adopt a lock and maintain landscape and/or landscaping companies to showcase their work and advertise. Partner with schools for honor society students to meet their required volunteer time.

- Bring more farmers markets into locks to increase activity in the community.
- Increase living history with the *Half Moon* and the *Urgers.*
- Increase art on the canals with mural mania that is supported canal-wide.
- Have composting and recycling amenities adopted by Boy Scout and Girl Scout groups to gain a merit badge.

**Is there anything that you would like to add?**

Connect end to end to create a world-class destination. People are going to want to go to Lake Champlain.
Jessica Breiten
Herkimer-Oneida Counties
Comprehensive Planning Program
and Oneida County Department of Planning
Interviewed by Daniel Jeanson

Jessica Breiten is the chief planner of the Herkimer and Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program, as well as the chief planner for the Oneida County Planning Department. The interview was conducted over the telephone on September 24, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

There has been an observable increase in recreational use along the Canal System.

The trail system is an incredible asset for the local communities. That being said, the trail has to be completed immediately.

Funding for local governments to complete projects has been tremendous. This should be continued and enhanced.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Funding sources need to be enhanced. This must happen in order to complete the trail, and to support local municipalities in their continued efforts in promoting the Canal System.

Water level control is a concern on the Canal System. From the perspective of Oneida and Herkimer counties, Rome is the highest point on the whole Canal System; that combined with upland reservoirs and flood plains makes this a special concern, especially with more frequent storms and weather events.

Another challenge is ongoing maintenance in the form of infrastructure, locks, dredging, and trails. This all goes back to funding.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

The trail system needs to be completed, including linkages to downtowns. Support services should be targeted for the trail. These include bike shops, restaurants, retail, etc.

There should be an expansion of the marinas and ports.

Water level - a lot of land directly adjacent to the Canal is in the flood plain.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

The system is already fairly well-marketed, but the trail comes back into this area. If the Canal System is to be marketed as a recreation destination, then the trail infrastructure needs to be in place.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Funding speaks to priorities. Projects that have funding will be the first ones to get worked on. If there is no funding for an item, then it most likely will not happen.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Partners are already identified for the most part. More regularly scheduled regional meetings with the Canal Corporation and local communities would help.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

The entire system has come a long way. Jessica is less involved in the Recreationway then others, but overall she believes it has been a success.
Diana Carter
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Interviewed by Tristan Lowery

Diana Carter is Director of Planning at the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). She spoke on behalf of Tom Alworth, Deputy Commissioner for Natural Resources for OPRHP. This interview was conducted at the OPRHP offices at 625 Broadway in Albany, N.Y. on September 25, 2014, at 11:30 AM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Ms. Carter cited public access to the Canal System as its greatest achievement in the past two decades, specifically mentioning improvements to facilities and amenities, as well as completed connections between the watercourse and state properties managed by OPRHP. She applauded the cooperation between her agency and the Canal Corporation in the management of landside and canal lock parks, as well as the role in statewide infrastructure planning played by the NYS Works Task Force.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Ms. Carter noted changes in recreational canal use as more boat owners leave their craft in mooring for longer spells because of rising fuel prices, which leads to reductions in the revenue required by the Canal System to operate. She wondered how the Canal Corporation will continue to raise funds as recreational boat activities fluctuate with unpredictable changes in fuel costs, or even with cyclical economic events like the recent depression. Ms. Carter identified climate change as an immediate threat that the Canal Corporation should consider, particularly regarding sea level rise on the waterways with which the Canal System joins, resiliency efforts by landside communities, and sustainable energy conversion. She also cautioned the Canal Corporation not to underestimate the importance of gateway communities as engines of economic development for the Canal System and recommended a continued policy of engagement with local municipalities.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Ms. Carter identified the Village of Lansingburgh and the City of Waterford as two notable economic beneficiaries of the recreational popularity of the canals. She attributed their respective downtown revitalizations in equal parts to an advantageous proximity to canal-related activities enjoyed by these two communities, as well as a shared industrial heritage that has been deliberately capitalized upon and coordinated with Canal System planning. While the Canal System and the recreational visitation have provided an inflow of tourism dollars that has driven conspicuous economic development in Waterford and Lansingburgh, there is no reason these successes could not be replicated elsewhere, particularly given the wealth of history associated with canal communities in New York State. As such, Ms. Carter recommended that the Canal Corporation continue to promote landside heritage tourism throughout the entire system, particularly in cooperation with OPRHP and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (she suggested that National Parks Service branding and mutual marketing might be a particularly effective strategy in this venture).

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Ms. Carter was satisfied that the latter part of her answer to Question 3 concerning investment opportunities for the Canal System also constituted a pertinent response to this question.
What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Ms. Carter was quick to suggest that OPRHP was particularly adept at plan implementation, a quality she attributes to the agency’s practice of accumulating projects in anticipation of future funding, allowing planning to take place even in the unpredictable economic climate of state bureaucracy. In the long-run, this strategy becomes useful in that it allows OPRHP to maintain a stable of “shovel ready” plans to be put in place quickly whenever funding and resources become available. This policy also allows for a more regular and frequent succession of accomplishments that keeps the benefits of planning in the public eye (the “low-hanging fruit”, as she put it), rather than holding out for more infrequent large scale projects with lower chances for success. Ms. Carter also praised the ability of OPRHP to secure partnership money and grants. As for the Erie Canal bicentennial to begin in 2017, she said she knew of no specific plans but suggested that the regional offices of OPRHP might be involved in event planning appropriate to this celebration.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Ms. Carter advocated the many public-private agreements OPRHP endorses in its work, and sees this approach as a model for more successful Canal System planning. She specifically cited memoranda of understanding, vending and rental contracts, collaboration with advocacy groups, voluntarism, and local government cooperative management as successfully proven arrangements that the Canal Corporation could easily draw on in order to more fully realize the resource and recreational potential of the Canal System.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Ms. Carter had no additional comments.
Vicky Daly
Canal New York and the Town of Palmyra, New York
Interviewed by Jenny Majkut

Vicky Daly is the current three-term mayor of the Town of Palmyra, N.Y. Additionally, Vicky is a chairperson for Canal NY.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Biggest thing seen is the tie-together; there is much more access to the Canal Corporation and staff at all levels. As a result of that there is a greater presence of the Canal Corporation outreach that has developed over last 12 years. People can talk to them and feel comfortable coming up with things. Tied to that, not just officials of community but residents in canal communities are getting involved.

We should keep more of the same. The head of marketing for the Canal Corporation reached out to Palmyra to see if they were interested in having the Urger make a stop on its way from the western part of the state to the Albany and Waterford areas. This was not required but should be continued.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Money or ignorance. Ignorance meaning that some people forget about the canal or don’t even realize it still exists. At a travel show in New York City, there were people that thought the Erie Canal was filled in to create the Thruway. Others only see it as a tourism asset, whereas Brian Stratton’s study of the non-tourism impact was in the billions [of dollars]. I Love NY is helping and will continue helping to spread awareness. Funding and money are always tight and people need to understand the value so it can be more successful.

Weather is also a challenge. If people know how things work and what’s involved it would be easier to explain why impacts on Mohawk Valley create impacts on the western side. People need more information.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

There are a lot of projects going on in certain areas and there needs to be more projects and more places to stop and enjoy that are easily accessible on canals, for example, the Tugboat Roundup.

I Love NY is focused on Fairport where events have been taking place for the past 35 years. They do fantastic things.

Housing developments that are high-end would be happy to see restaurants, wineries, and breweries along the canals.

Investment should cover a range of activities. An ice cream shop would do great in summer. Some boats keep bicycles on board but there should be places to rent bikes for everyday families. Not everyone on the canals is wealthy, so activities need to be accessible to all.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

This goes back to letting people know about the canals. There is something for everyone and there should be a focus on things that families can do with kids. Palmyra has harbor hosts, where all retirees go down and meet the boats and give bags with a letter from the mayor, coupons for local stores, a “welcome to the village” brochure and maps.

There are signs at JFK [International Airport] in the arrival section that are primarily for overseas flights welcoming people in Japanese, French, German, and there is a push to get ready for Chinese tourism as well. The Canal System needs to be communicated effectively to the international crowd.
Palmyra can’t do that but Europeans speak many languages so there should be marketing on various levels and non-English materials available, especially on the website (I Love NY is doing that). We should also expand our use of social media.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

In regards to increasing local community involvement along the Canal System, we work with the Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and have meetings with those involved in marketing to create a cultural heritage tourism network that puts together itineraries and packages. We have been working with them to do this for years; with upcoming events these will continue to be a collaborative effort.

Canal NY is state-governed, the National Heritage Corridor is private, and Canal NY is private; we need something federal. The Canal Corporation can’t go to foreign trade shows and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor never knows how much money it will have because it is at the mercy of the State and the Senate and House of Representatives. We need to work together to go to London, Dublin, and Canada to market. Because Canal NY is a private agency, they have the ability to advocate and talk to legislature in a way that others cannot; those involved with the government can’t market in person because they are in business with the State. Canal NY is a business that can go to each and every hearing across the state and educate people about the Canal System.

We are working to get a canal caucus as a booster team for the canals because they are a tremendous asset to the state and bring money. Also, the Canal System is over 500 miles, with 224 communities along the canal, which is a big piece of New York State.

In regards to participating in the [2017 Erie] Canal Bicentennial: the bicentennial needs a lot of planning; we would primarily need marketing with other agencies to work with what is created. There will be two anniversaries statewide combining the bicentennial with women’s rights. This should not be just a one-shot deal; there should be statewide events on many occasions.

Finally, in regards to implementing the plan update upon its completion, we will be cooperative and do what we can but we can’t really tell until we see the plan.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

In regards to strengthening existing partnerships, the governor’s advisory council is helping with marketing. We should have a meeting twice a year that is very informal to keep everyone involved and allow others to see what has been done and discuss how to plan for what is coming up; this should be a part of the regular process.

Canal NY had a retreat in July for the board members and any member of other organizations who wanted to help shape the 10-year-old organization, which led to a partner meeting and other meetings. Events like this could lead to new partnerships. During retreat events or meetings, those involved should brainstorm about who else should be involved. There are many options: those in hospitality, members from Parks and Trails NY, and those who promote tourism. Communities vary in size and the roles of people vary; it is important to see where the holes are. The local government doesn’t have money to promote and market and the state government has a 2% cap on a tax increase so every year there is less money. PPAs are employees of the county doing a huge job and not getting the recognition they should.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

I live in and was the mayor of Palmyra for three terms and I am afraid because it’s harder to market on the state level; combining a lot of little communities to act as one larger location in order to market would be helpful. I Love NY found Fairport; however, there are so many smaller communities and each community is different and has different things to offer.
The Village of Naples on Canandaigua Lake has a grape festival with wine stomping and everything in the village is painted purple, people wear purple, etc. I encourage other locations to ask, “What color is your community?” Find what is unique.

Someone should take the time to investigate opportunities. Wayne County started doing Autumn on the Erie. It has five villages on the Erie and each village held a different event so they pooled together to have “Autumn on the Erie.”

The Harbor Host is another example of how things start with just a few people talking and figuring out how to use the little bit of money available. The Harbor Host started by greeting people on boats and now Palmyra is a harbor ambassador.

People need to work together and not forget about the little guy.
Robin Dropkin
Parks & Trails NY
Interviewed by Joseph Seman

Robin Dropkin has been Executive Director of Parks and Trails New York since 2003. The interview was conducted in person on September 9, 2014, at 3:00 PM at the offices of Parks and Trails New York.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Robin believes one success has been an increased recognition by canal communities that the Canal System is an important resource. This should be furthered by supporting them with more grants, events, and central projects. Another success has been the new harbors/facilities/bike-hike camping areas, which can be built upon by getting the word out to more active recreationalists and creating/promoting a water trail built on the foundation created by NPS Rivers and Trails network. A third success has been more trail build outs and community enhancements at trail heads which can be built upon by closing the gaps along the trail and increasing the awareness of the lateral Canal trails (i.e. Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca trails).

What challenges do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

There is a lack of awareness in the general population of New York State and outside visitors which could be addressed with an increased marketing staff and budget. The trail needs to be completed with consistent signage along its entirety. There needs to be a sign audit and plan installation strategy in place to address this. Robin believes there needs to be more cooperation with local utilities to use their corridors to complete the trail.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Complete the trail, create Canalway Trail gateways, more parking areas, and look into a shuttle service/Amtrak roll-on service. Create incentives for adaptive reuse of old buildings along the canals and trail and ensure that canal communities are bicycle-friendly by incentivizing infrastructure and complete street programs.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Robin recommends there being one unified voice for marketing the Canal System (water and trail). A one-stop website or mobile application that allows visitors to make reservations and lays out an itinerary as well as an increased social media presence is needed. Employ I Love NY communication channels and marketing forces to fully get behind the Canal and trail as a major tourism asset (like what was done for winter recreation in the Adirondacks).

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

PTNY will continue to conduct “Bicyclists Bring Business” roundtables with local communities, adopt-a-trail programs, clean sweeps, and trail counts, while also updating the Canal System impact/user reports, and continuing their participation in Cycling the Erie Canal guidebook updates. PTNY would like to announce a plan to close the gaps in the Erie Canalway Trail by the 2017 bicentennial. To implement the updated plan, PTNY will help publicize it and encourage a broad base of stakeholders to contribute to the plan.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Robin recommends regular meetings/updates of the Canal System among general stakeholders, as well as between trail owners and managers.
Robin recommends getting utilities like National Grid to cooperate with extending trails, while also reaching out to user groups, counties/municipalities, and other agencies.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

There needs to be an umbrella organization for the trail. Everyone needs to understand the roles that existing entities play so everyone understands who is responsible for what. Finally, there are gaps in the trail that can be filled with National Grid Corridors; we need to bring them in and encourage them to cooperate.
Steve Feeney
Schenectady County Planning Department
Interviewed by Samantha Young

Steve Feeney works for the Schenectady County Planning Department. Mr. Feeney was interviewed over the phone on October 17, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

- There is heightened awareness about the Canal System in general.
- Steve feels that recreation and economic opportunities have increased recently along the canal.
- Trail construction along the land side part of the canal could be improved. It seems to take a lot of money and pressure to make this happen.
- More canal related development along with construction of the trail would bring in more people.
- He feels that the Canal Corporation is more active in the western part of the state. Things in the Schenectady region are usually done more by the locals (local and state government) and it is hard to get funding.
- More investment in the area and more waterside development would benefit the communities.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

FUNDING – upkeep and water related infrastructure are a massive undertaking.

- Trying to complete the trail is difficult because of funding, but whenever flooding affects the locks there is money to fix them.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Complete the Canalway Trail and improve visitor services along the Canal System.

- It seems like they are always scraping for money, but as soon as something major happens (storms, etc.) the money always shows up.
- It is not an increase in return economically to fix the locks, which seems to be where a lot of the money goes. Fixing the trail would be more of an economic benefit.

Historic canal side opportunities should also be explored.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Complete the trail!!!

- Get people from all over the country wanting to visit.
- People need to know where to bike and where to stay.
- Make the trail continuous.

Increase Canal Corporation investment in the Mohawk region.

- Most of the funding comes from Department of State and local (possibly EPF funds?).
What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Improve and expand access to the canals and rivers.

- There are trail related projects going on currently. Continued improvement and expanded access would help.

Expand upon canal related events.

Continue to enhance trails and visitors.

- Invest in interpretive signage.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Expand canal corporation grants programs.

- Steve is curious where they have invested money over the years.

Work with local governments more.

Reach out to the federal government and see if we could increase financial participation in that area.

He sees mostly private funding and grants currently and would like to encourage more private sector investments.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

COMPLETE THE CANALWAY TRAIL.

- It has been a struggle for years to do this and we need to make connections.
- Locals are willing to take the lead, but need a little more financial help.
- Finishing the trail would provide the highest return on investment.

Adding facilities and water fountains would be a good investment.

Investments need to be prioritized.

It’s a slow process, but it is possible.

Keeping water in the canal is expensive, but we manage to do that.
Tom Grasso
Canal Society of New York State
Interviewed by Farokh Bagheri

Tom Grasso is the president of the Canal Society of New York State. Due to scheduling conflicts, Mr. Grasso emailed his responses to the following questions on September 29, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

There have been more sections of the Canalway Trail completed; also more canal harbor and canalside development brought online. The Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron has direct access from the Thruway and Route NY 31.

We can build on these successes with increased marketing, social media use, and engaging communities and younger people.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Bringing the system back to its original (and later) design dimensions – need major increase in dredging.

Getting more trip boats and hotel boats operating on the system and stopping for minor and major extended periods at canal town ports – need incentives and marketing.

Restoring the motorship Day Peckinpaugh, and getting her “on the road” throughout the Canal System, Great Lakes, and beyond. Moving ownership of the vessel to a state agency or organization that cares and has the knowledge base.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Restoring sections of the nineteenth-century Erie Canal to fully-navigable waterways (where appropriate) especially in urban settings – create destinations and economic engines of revitalization; canalside bed-and-breakfasts; bicycles and one-way rental opportunities; boat, canoe, other muscle-powered vessel rental opportunities; improved boater amenities; marketing; get people to the waterside; more winter utilization – ice skating, cross-country skiing, etc.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Marketing, marketing, and marketing!

In regards to marketing the vision, I have no idea - I’m not a marketer. But probably through showing sexy images of the Canal System throughout four seasons with people and places doing all the things that one can do on the canal—such as hiking, biking; roller-blading, jogging, picnicking, reading, people-watching, concerts, napping, fishing, boating, bird-watching, ice-skating, watching boats pass through the locks, going to a museum, scenic beauty, hiring a canal boat for a week, etc.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

The Canal Society is intimately involved in planning and organizing the World Canals Conference in Syracuse in September 2017.

Upon the plan’s completion, we will have nationwide exposure at the Erie Canal Heritage Park at Port Byron. This has huge potential to outreach to millions of travelers on the NYS Thruway.
What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Communicate and share information – don’t be parochial. New partnerships can be young professional groups; outreach to public school history teachers and technology teachers; local history groups; student clubs at colleges and universities; Twitter, Facebook, and other social media outreach.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

No.
Wayne Hale
Orleans County Planning Department
Interviewed by Chanchilo Ezung

Wayne Hale is the Director of the Orleans County Planning Department and an appointed member of the NYS Canal Recreationway Commission. Mr. Hale was interviewed over the phone on October 2, 2014, at 10:30 AM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

One success is the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in terms of giving the Canal System international and national recognition. Another success would be local community recreational uses like bicycling. Large projects like the Flight of Fives at Lockport have also been great successes.

To build on these accomplishments, we can build on the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor designation and work toward renewing it [by Congress]. We should also encourage more bicycling use in communities.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Aging bridges have been proven to be unsafe for citizens, especially farmers, school buses and emergency vehicles. There should be new and better policy procedures to balance the history value versus the utility for public safety.

Turn the canals into a front door for businesses. Many rare architectural façades of canal communities are neglected; making these frontages more appealing through restoration will help in attracting tourism and businesses.

Propose a canal towpath for snowmobiling. Some municipalities block towpaths, creating gaps in the snowmobile trails and also preventing easy accessibility to gasoline for the snowmobiles. There are also too many uncoordinated plans.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Grants for businesses to improve the rare façades of waterfront communities would be a good investment. Investment in the wayfinding signage of canal communities, giving them design consistency would also be beneficial. Finally, create a scenic trail and a National Heritage Scenic Byway Plan.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Mr. Hale did not answer this question.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

The New York Canal Recreation Commission has a major role in the overall promotion and planning of the Canal System. It can promote tour groups, add buses to canals, provide tours to help operators become familiar with the Canal System, and invite domestic and international travel writers both to describe the canal experience.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

To strengthen existing partnerships, the Canal Corporation should review its insurance liability requirements for private projects because the high cost prohibits smaller projects from happening.

In regards to adding new partnerships, the Canal Corporation should look to major corporations, National Geographic, and the Travel Channel.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Mr. Hale did not have any additional comments.
The third success is the water quality which comes from the federal Clean Water Act. The benefits of the Clean Water Act were not seen immediately, but within the past 15-20 years there have been some dramatic changes. The canals were filthy in the 1950’s -1960’s but nobody would call them that today.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

I think one of the challenges that both people in the Canal Corporation and we in Heritage Corridor end up dealing with, is letting people know that the Canal System is still functioning and operational.

For the Canal Corporation that extends to a related challenge, not only is the canal still operational, but it is a valuable asset to the people of the state. So that is one of the big challenges; much of the public has still not gotten that message and I think that leads to an assumption that canals are a thing of the past.

Another challenge: The aging infrastructure on the Canal System that we use today is coming up on its one hundredth birthday. It has been remarkably well-maintained by the succession of state agencies, public corporations, Department of Transportation, Thruway Authority/Canal Corporation but it is still an expensive ongoing responsibility.

So those two things together relate to the third challenge, which is building and maintaining public and political support to fund the Canal System. Every time the Thruway Authority proposed raising tolls, some people say why is the Canal System supported by Thruway tolls? The decision was made many years ago to transfer the Canal System from the State’s general fund to the Thruway Authority. Either way, you have people complaining why is my money going to pay for something that I may or may not benefit from?

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

We have seen evidence of reinvestment in downtown. In past decades, in many communities, investments have gone to the suburbs (across the state and the nation). Canal communities, in particular, have some great historic main streets that intersect the canals, usually at right angles to the waterway.
That intersection of water and pavement has generated some rebirth in these communities. We can point to places like Albion and Brockport and say they are succeeding in those towns and there might be something that can be replicated in other canal communities across the system.

This success has not been replicated in all canal communities so that is our continuing challenge.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

We need to emphasize that the Canal System is alive and well; functioning and operating. Thinking it is closed is a reasonable assumption because most of the waterways and most of the canals in this country have been retired for almost a century now.

I Love NY says they need marketable packages: accommodations, boating, rentals, food, etc. that make it easy for the tourist to plan their visit (for 2 days, 3 days, a week etc.). There are some communities that have been very successful in promoting themselves as destinations and have huge community pride, with the Canal as the central element of that community pride. A part of this is reinforced by the way that tourist promotion monies are distributed by New York State. The funds go to individual county Tourist Promotion Agencies (TPAs) and there are some TPAs that do not think of themselves as part of a larger region.

We have worked hard at the Heritage Corridor and at the Canal Corporation to work together to say, “you are a part of a larger system now and we don’t want to take anything away from the excitement and magic of the place where you live, but we do want to help you recognize that your community and your county is part of a larger system that goes from one end of the state to the other.”

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; Participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; Implement the plan update upon its completion?

The community involvement is something that both the Canal Corporation and the Heritage Corridor are working on. What we do in the next 10 years is keep doing what we have been doing, and do it better.

In some early projects we gravitated toward projects where there was already a pretty good chance of success and what we thought they needed was a just a little help. There were a few places that were already successful and they did not need our help. But probably in the next 10 years what we need to do is look at some of those communities that are not close to success and need a little more help. Those include some of the urban places such as Rome, Amsterdam, Clyde; and Schenectady and Newark (which are getting there on their own but could use more help).

I was just in Milan, Italy, at the World Canal Conference where we presented the proposal to host the 2017 World Canal Conference in the City of Syracuse. Our proposal was accepted. Our role will be the kick off for the birthday party which will include canal enthusiasts from all over the world. So that is first thing that we are going to do. Beyond that, we will talk about what do we do in 2017 and what do we do in 2025, which is the conclusion of the 200th anniversary and the conclusion of the era of construction.

I recall that during the sesquicentennial celebration of the canal construction, which occurred from 1967 to 1975, it was a very big event and there was a lot of public attention on the Canal System at that time. Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site (designated as a National Historic Landmark) and the Old Erie Canal State Park (a 30 mile long portion (Rome to Syracuse) of the old Canal that was bypassed in the early of the 20th century) were both featured. Both of these state parks have been underfunded and neither of them have lived up to their potential, if you look at the sort of master plan documents for those parks from the 1960s, you will find out that we were planning to do all kinds of things. Even so, these were prominent investments so we can say that we did something tangible in the sesquicentennial period.

I keep asking people -- what are going to be the tangible, long term markers of the bicentennial?
Plan implementation is an interesting question because the Heritage Corridor has its own master plan and its own strategic plan. We are working on how we implement our own plan. It is a question we ask ourselves not every day, probably not even every week, but it comes up periodically.

The Heritage Corridor and the Canal Corporation have gotten much better at working together and are actually working very closely together now.

As the Heritage Corridor, 14 years ago nobody knew what we could do, honestly we didn’t know what we could do, and we were just getting started.

As we have started to demonstrate what we can do, the Canal Corporation has said, they do that very well, we can let them do that, and vice versa. This cooperative leadership is important to future success.

This is a transition to your question six – What can the organization do to implement the plan? I think probably now that the Heritage Corridor is actually a player, we can help to draft and implement the plan.

**What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?**

I was sort of trending in that as part of the previous question; I think the existing partnership between the state and the federal agencies is strong and is getting stronger.

There are some things that are very obvious, e.g., the Canal Corporation is responsible for operating and maintaining the waterway. They do a very good job and I don’t think the Heritage Corridor and the National Park Service have any interest in getting into that. When the Heritage Corridor came along in 2000, after the 1995 CRP had been written, we had to work our way through who was going to do what. We have made progress on this.

Now, a third partner is new (just around 10 years): Canal New York is a sort of a chamber of commerce for businesses on the Canal System and it brought a number of advantages to the table.

There are some functions that the Canal New York can play because it is a non-governmental agency. It can do things that neither the Canal Corporation nor the Heritage Corridor can do. It can advertise; it can lobby, which is forbidden by state or federal entities. There is always a place for the loyal opposition. The Canal Corporation or the Heritage Corridor might say we just did a really great thing but the business owners and users on the Canal System might claim that it is not such a great thing and it had a negative impact. Canal New York can play a function in bringing issues to the attention of the Canal Corporation.

One example, after Hurricane Irene and T.S. Lee, a seemingly minor cutback in Canal System hours had a significant impact on a number of businesses and they let this be known. Canal New York has a role as not only an advertising and a lobbying organization but also bringing issues to the attention of the Canal Corporation or the Heritage Corridor.

The fourth partner is the Canal Society of New York State which is largely a historical organization. They have organized the state canal conference for many years.

There is a fifth statewide organization that deserves mention. It is Park and Trails New York which is a statewide organization and Canal System advocacy group. They have been running an annual bike tour across the state every summer for over fifteen years from Buffalo to Albany along Erie Canal. This brings 500 people a year and has opened up enormous possibilities to the Canal System. They are also an advocate for additional trail construction along the Champlain Canal and some of the other lateral canals.

I think all of these five organizations are working well. But another issue is, whether it is a non-profit organization like the Canal Society or PTNY, or a governmental organization like the Heritage Corridor or the Canal Corporation, we all need to claim credit for our successes because that is how we get political support and donations that are needed to succeed. We need to all give credit where credit is due. Collectively we all play a role with the Canal System to one degree or another but everyone needs to understand why we each have to be able to say to our donors, or the legislature, or Congress, “this is something our organizations have accomplished.”
I think the new partner that is just coming to the horizon is I Love NY. I also credit a lot to Brian Stratton, the director of the Canal Corporation.

I think I Love NY is an important new partner that we have, hope to have and we are getting more attention from. The relationship with I Love NY is a work in progress. They are not a full-fledged partner yet but I am hoping they will become one. Brian Stratton has been in communication with Gavin Landry, who has become a big supporter of the canals, with hope of a stronger partnership in the future.

There are other advocacy organizations that could play larger role, e.g., the Society for Industrial Archeology.

The ECNHC has developed a partner program with community, museum and historic sites. The idea is that we, as the Heritage Corridor management entity, will never have the resources to have new visitor centers, but that we have great facilities in communities across the state that are already providing visitor services so, if we can work with them, they will help convey our message. We initially identified about 30 partners which are already well-established sites that are open on a regular basis; places such as the Rochester Museum and Science Center, New York State Museum, Lockport Discovery Center, Canastota Canal Town Museum. Others will be added as they are identified.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Mr. Hay did not have any additional comments.
Janet Kennedy
Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc.
Interviewed by Deb Nelson

Janet Kennedy is the executive director of Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. The interview was conducted over the phone on October 2, 2014, at 10:00 AM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Major – all the work on the Canalway bike trail – most of this has been on the Erie Canal and a little on the Champlain Canal (mostly planning). There is only so much money and resources; hopefully there will be a continued investment in the Canal System. Public relations and community service has been a success. Lakes to Locks has been a catalyst for the area from Albany to Whitehall – there has been a great deal of success to get a group together that meets monthly.

It is easy to build trail and boaters like to stop to use bike paths, especially if they have kids with them. They especially like trails into villages, etc. Most boats have bikes onboard – infrastructure is good for boaters as well as bikers and walkers. It’s a win-win and a wonderful program.

Canal Fest Week – not sure if they do this every year. This is a ten-day to two-week festival, combined with a biking event and boating activity, which becomes a reason for the trip. It’s like a progressive dinner party – the Canal Corporation could provide leadership and coordination. The festival could attract people worldwide providing for great branding. This provides international opportunity. Recognize that the Canal Corporation has been struggling with floods, etc., these past years.

Champlain Canal Trail Working Group – Recreation Plan originally written as if Canal Corporation would do it all themselves (in a vacuum). The plan languished.

About five years ago a group thought: “What if we got together and took bites?” There have been some successes, then the economy crashed, but they stuck with it. The group is now called the Champlain Canal Trail Working Group. Jeannie Williams is the coordinator, and they are getting Canal Corp support. They never hesitate to ask for help – Canal Corp is the best state agency to work with.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

The Canal System itself – maintenance. Four years in a row with major flooding with damage to the infrastructure, but they keep it going – respect that; no criticism. Under the current leadership the Canal Corp tries to reach out – superb.

For the Canalway Recreation Plan, the Canalway stops in Whitehall – the canal was built to Lake Champlain. By not having Lake Champlain in the plan, we are cutting off recreation from Lake Champlain, Montreal, and Quebec. There is not enough outreach to Montreal. There are many boaters from Canada.

There needs to be more coordination between Canal Corporation and Lake Champlain for marketing/events and infrastructure improvement – that would be great. Legislation doesn’t include Lake Champlain – let’s change that. Lake Champlain communities are crying to be included in Champlain Canal. This would provide a triangle loop: Great Lakes/Erie Canal/Champlain Canal.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

See continued funding in facilities for travelers that also benefit residents, such as trails, visitor centers, grants programs – continuing that and expanding if it can be. Grants – think that they allow in-kind match – this helps community (e.g., boat launches for canoes/kayaks).

Heard, though not involved, that snowmobilers like to use the canal in the winter, particularly on Champlain Canal. Canal Corp should foster recreation in winter for snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, etc. for winter recreation to be served.
What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

A ten-day to two-week Canal Fest that links communities. Sometimes they brand but don’t promote the interconnectedness. Really deliver that these communities are open and welcome visitors. These communities have Canal heritage pride.

Another step would be to connect Lake Champlain to Montreal. Get Lake Champlain on maps. More partnerships on Lake Champlain and Canal.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Continue what we are already doing. Lakes to Locks is the catalyst for the Champlain Canal Trail Working Group. PTNY provides technical assistance. Lakes to Locks is committed to keep that going – continue that kind of informal collaboration along Champlain Canal. Lakes to Locks in best position to make that happen. The working group did bike tour around the Canal – talking about birding theme.

For the bicentennial we are currently working on an interpretive trail that connects places; mobile app - people, places, and stories along the canal. This may be ready by 2017 – great goal to shoot for – this could be the basis for a tour. This includes “Passage Ports” – GPS-triggered. The old canal is US Rt. 4 – there are places with the canal intact.

Upon the plan’s completion we will implement aspects depending on the content of the plan. We are already active with Canal Corporation and agencies, and will continue to do that.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Existing partnerships are about as strong as they can be. Janet’s background is as a planner – has learned that money is not the problem – need vision and leadership. Communities are stepping up (e.g., Dix Bridge – open to pedestrians [Schuylerville] – connects both sides of the Canal. Lakes to Locks is the catalyst. Lakes to Locks works closely with ECNHC and other scenic byways. They are aware of what’s going on in other areas. Champlain Canal “red-headed step-child” is the focus of Lakes to Locks. Do some stuff that others aren’t doing (e.g., Passage Ports) – part of Lakes to Locks strategy/plan.

At this time there are no potential partnerships we would like to add. We have all these communities getting together each month (Working Group) and we have projects. Lakes to Locks provides technical assistance as needed. This is a good model and good example of grassroots, ad hoc action.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Provided some background – was involved with byway planning project – facilitated merger – been doing this almost 20 years.

Need entity that crosses arbitrary political boundaries.

Canal Corporation needs to include Lake Champlain – cut off connection to Quebec and Montreal. What do we need to do to change legislation?
Roxanne Kise
Western Erie Canal Alliance
Interviewed by Robyn C. Keefe

Roxanne Kise is Executive Director for the Western Erie Canal Alliance (WECA), a nonprofit organization that “serves as a conduit and partner to regional communities in an effort to preserve, sustain and promote the natural, cultural and economic resources of the Western Erie Canal Heritage Corridor.” WECA administers the National Trust Main Street Program in New York State. In addition, Roxanne has served as mayor for the Village of Clyde, NY, a canal community. Roxanne was interviewed by phone on October 1, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

First, many amenities have been developed along the Canal System. The Erie Canalway Trail has also been a success. It needs to be completed. Right now it currently hinders the economic development of communities without trails. Roxanne cites studies that have shown that the trail drives business and economic development in Canal communities.

Finally, recreational use of the Canal System has increased.

To build on these successes, partners should continue marketing the Canal System throughout the world and educate community stakeholders on the impact of the system.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

First, economic stability is a challenge. Roxanne expresses concern over instability in state leadership, wondering if state leaders will continue to recognize the economic impact of the canal and not use it as the scapegoat for the Thruway Authority.

Second, not charging people enough to boat is a challenge. Roxanne says that fares should go up, stating that people who can afford good boats can afford the fees.

Third, maintenance of the Canal System is a challenge. Roxanne says there is not enough personnel maintaining the system and that local officials don’t know who to contact. She suggests there might be a better system for maintenance.

In order to overcome some of these challenges, more education for municipalities is needed. Roxanne suggests that leaders in canal communities need to be educated on the economic impact of the canal. Also, the Canal Corporation should publicize what is being done well.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Roxanne says the Canal System should be marketed more for industry so that it can be used as it was intended to be used. She also applauds new exits along the Thruway to the Canal System, wondering if more of that can’t be done.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Roxanne says that she would like to see a better app for mobile phones, indicating that the current I Love NY app does not do enough for the canals. She suggests an app that shows visitors what is offered by each community along the Canal System, emphasizing that historic tourism brings in more money than any other tourism and should be a draw for people to go into communities.
What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

In regards to increasing community involvement, Roxanne says that WECA will continue to let communities know what is available through the NYS Canal Corporation, acting as a facilitator. She says that people in the community often don’t know who to go to, making WECA an effective go-between. She also says her organization can provide cross-marketing throughout the canal corridor.

Regarding the Canal bicentennial, Roxanne says WECA will participate any way they can. She suggests that the Anniversary Boat should make a stop at each Canal community since all contribute to the Canal System.

Regarding implementation, Roxanne says that WECA would need to see the completed plan before committing to a role.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

In order to strengthen existing partnerships, Roxanne suggests a newsletter would open up communication with Canal communities. She also says there needs to be more face-to-face meetings where relationships can be built and issues discussed.

Roxanne suggests adding partners connected to commercial trade, especially those that work with industry groups. She also suggests the NYS Cultural Heritage Tourism Network as a potential partner.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

No.
Shelah LaDuc
New York State Department of Transportation
Interviewed by Ayse Tezel

Shelah LaDuc is the director of Landscape Architecture Bureau of NYSDOT. The interview was conducted in person on October 2, 2014, at 1:30 PM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Shelah believes that there is a successful package of improvements on the Canal System. She believes that access to the water has improved in recent years and there is more commercial traffic on the canals.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Access, maintenance, and advertisement were three topics that Shelah brought up. She believes that in rural areas, which have no facilities, there is limited access to water; also industrial locations are not scenic. Also, there is a challenge between maintaining infrastructure and protecting its historical significance. Above all, she believes that there is no interaction between locals and the Canal System and that it is not well-known by the locals.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Shelah thinks that the eastern Erie Canal communities need to take the western part’s successes as an example for economic development. She believes that industrial and agricultural tourism, canal trips and connection to other recreational activities is the key to economic sustainability in canal communities and that this will build the reputation of the Canal System. So, industrial and agricultural tourism investments, recreational canal trips, and connection to other activities are actions to take in order to make the canals well-known both locally and nationwide.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Shelah stated that NYSDOT does not have direct responsibility for the Canal System. In her opinion, NYSDOT will continue to support the Thruway in canal projects and will continue communicating with local nonprofit organizations and other agencies.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Shelah recommended that there should be partnerships with private cruise companies, parks, and local museums.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Lastly, Shelah mentioned targeted ventures such as restaurants and water taxis should be considered as development components. She also stated that protection of the natural habitat in the lakes and invasive species in the canals is an important issue that needs attention.
Connecting waterfronts to downtowns, we need to make the waterfronts more accessible to people, neighborhoods, parks. Make it part of their lives, make it an amazing destination – need to blend it in to downtown. Adding safer sidewalks, lighting, etc. would be beneficial

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Bring back multiple-use/mixed-use development close to the water. Public-private partnerships are needed. We need to make places vibrant; you need people down there living and working, not leaving after a work day. This takes time; people need to use the water – it changes the culture of a community.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

A simple way to start doing this would be to light up the existing structures (bridges, etc.) to draw attention to the canals. The canal structures all have electricity close enough to make this happen and it’s fairly cheap and easy to maintain. Create skyline features; Pittsburgh and Philadelphia are examples of this – they celebrate their waterfronts by lighting them up. Change the way that people view the canals.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

- Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council made waterfront a priority.
- Turn it into an initiative.
- They can continue prioritizing waterfront development.
- Liaisons between communities and the Canal Corporation can do work in smaller places along the canals – promote the canals and educate communities as a partner.
- Prioritizing development – easier for ESD as a regional council. They can recommend projects to the state.
- Leaders in helping to implement the plan.
What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Many partnerships are already out there; he feels the importance would be to strengthen those existing partnerships by:

- Some communities don’t have the capacity (planning, development, staff, etc.), so they rely on outside agencies.
- Missing a long-term planning function.
- For example, Fort Edward; twice a year they have round tables to bring agencies and stakeholders together in the community. This is done to identify challenges and opportunities to form a long term action plan.
- ESD is willing to help coordinate or host – being a liaison in these communities to make this possible.
- Brian and Sharon are awesome.
- HUD would be a good partner – they are limited, but he feels they are under utilized

Is there anything that you would like to add?

- Feels that a common denominator among canal communities is the industrial buildings along the waterfront.
- Brownfields along the waterfront are the communities’ best form of real estate.
- Need brownfield remediation.
- Vacant land along waterfront – gets left because communities can’t afford to clean it.
- Tried to fix them in Rome, which is starting to make a difference.
- Eliminate and redevelop the brownfields to support other activities.
- Making connections is key.
- The priority should be kept on waterfronts.
Kathy Mosher & Fran Sheehan
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Interviewed by Audrey Burneson

Kathy Mosher is Assistant Commissioner of Natural Resources for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Kathy brought the former assistant commissioner of natural resources, Fran Sheehan, with her to join in the interview. Kathy and Fran were interviewed in person, at their office on September 24, 2014. The interview was recorded and parts of the transcription are included below as fit the questions.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

1. Pedestrian path.
2. Canal communities - publicity around the canal communities.
3. If the canals is a major transportation corridor, how do we connect? Better signage?

Fran: For me I think, from our perspective, the overwhelming success has been the pedestrian trail.

Kathy: Absolutely

Fran: Which is going to be over five hundred miles when it's completed and I think it's nearly three quarters done. And that's huge.

Kathy: I agree. There's been a lot more publicity about the local towns along the Canal.

Fran: Exactly. Buying into the future of the communities through the Canal System.

Kathy: And canals have been promoting tourism to get people to those towns along the canals, so I would see that as a success.

Fran: Right, and there's been a grant program for those communities both at the state and the federal level. When Governor Cuomo was with [the U.S. Department] of Housing and Urban Development. He had to draft and get grants for that to focus communities on using the Canal as an economic development, so it's been good.

Kathy: I think something we can improve upon is along the Canal, whether it's biking or walking or boats, how do we use that as a major transportation corridor. How do we connect people on that to open space that's close by? So, state parks or county parks or wildlife management areas. So, we could do a better job of signage along the Canal that people you know, you're using the canal as a recreation way but there's also you know interesting things along the way. Again, have people spend more time in the communities along the canal.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

There are PCBs in the Champlain Canal. And it's not navigable because there's so much sediment in the canal and I think that a huge challenge is to try to figure out how we're going to dredge the PCBs out of the Hudson and Champlain Canal and make that usable again. Because Canals is not just promoting the recreation piece, but also the lower cost associated with lower cost of the transportation for goods along the Canal System. So that's one, the PCBs.

Another is, often times DEC has dredging windows, where we have fish that are spawning. And we say to Canals, ok you need to dredge before... Make up a date... April 1 because that's when we have trout spawning, and sometimes for whatever reason, because there's a storm or canals has a lot to do, they miss their window to dredge and they come to DEC and ask for us to waive the time where we're asking for no dredging because of certain fish. So that has been a challenge for our two agencies to work through some of those issues.
I would think the third challenge is the expense of running the Canal System, and the infrastructure upgrades that are needed for the trails and the locks and the dams; it’s just really, really high and I think that’s been a challenge for the Canals, finding the funding to do that.

Me: Do you have any recommendations for how to get past those challenges?

Kathy: Well, on the PCBs, we need to get General Electric to pay for that. It’s going to be a long term challenge. On the second one, on the dredging windows, we are meeting with Canal Corp to try to work through some of those issues. On the funding for canals, geez. I don’t know, they can’t really charge a user fee… I don’t know where they’re going to get their funding from.

It’s kind of a chicken and an egg, because it you had more transportation, shipment of goods and services, I think there would be more justification for some of their expenses, so. But then you’ve got to dredge some of the areas for that, so that the barges can make it up and down the canal. I guess it’s part of the Recreationway piece, because you have to dredge it for all boats, and if you bring more money in you can do more improvements to the canal system.

**What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?**

Fran: Well, both we and Department of State, of course, run a smart growth program, parts of which are assigned to Canal communities. Hopefully we’ll be able to continue that.

Kathy: And DOS has that waterfront revitalization grant. Can that be used for Canal communities?

Fran: Yes, they can be. Those are grants that DOS manages with us and others.

Me: So those are used by the Canal communities?

Fran: Yes. They’re basically to focus development on their waterfronts, and use the Canal as an economic development engine.

Kathy: So we have this whole Regional Economic Development Council. I don’t know if council has looked at the Canal as an economic driver for parts of the state where it goes through. I don’t know if Canals has... DEC has staff people that participate in this REDC, and I don’t know if Canals does

Fran: I don’t know either

Kathy: and that might be a source of even more investment money as well.

**What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?**

Oh, right, well we talked about the signage. Do you ever see the Canal in the I Love NY campaign?

I mean, having more of an emphasis ... especially for downstate. Two thirds of New York’s population is in New York City and Long Island. It really should be included in the I Love NY campaign and show all the things that are happening on the Canal. And that I Love NY campaign was also geared towards international visitors. If you go into JFK’s [International Airport] international section, there’s literally 300 yards of your walk is all this I Love NY campaign. It also is on the outer doors, it could easily, it did not, as far as I saw, but it could easily include the Canal as well.

So I’ve been tempted as a resident up here, I’ve been tempted to go to some of those events, like in Waterford, but I haven't. So, I wonder how many people even from upstate New York go, and what would attract them to go. Have you been to any, Fran?

Fran: I’ve been to some of the bike stuff. That Parks and Trails New York, that’s a great example of some of the marketing. They’re a nonprofit and an advocacy organization. They’ve done a lot to highlight the bike capabilities of the trail. That’s been a really good thing. Again, there’s federal.
The federal Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor effort has brought some attention to the Canal, and when the National Parks Service gets involved, they’re world-renowned and very good at marketing, so I think that’s been a very good partnership.

Fran: As Kathy knows, we’ve been using our seat on the Canal Recreationway to improve access for the fishing and angling and the local motor boat use. And we’ll continue to do.

**What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?**

Work actively with the Department of State and others in funneling resources to the Canal communities. Kathy’s seat on the Recreationway ensures that the voices of sportsmen and others are heard as it relates to the Canal, that’s really our role.

Kathy: We have Facebook and Twitter, and we could do more if we hear about an event along the Canal System that has the open space and natural resources. If they’re having a fishing tournament, we could certainly advertise that.

In regards to the [Erie] Canal bicentennial:

Kathy: I think that’s something we’re working on. That gives us a good three years to say, where are the key parts of the Canal System that are linked DEC-owned land or fishing opportunity. We could put in signage and be part of that celebration, if there is a great fishing site or a great trail, we could host some of those activities.

Fran: We have regional offices all across the Canal System, and those regional offices could help us market good events along the way. And again, our Syracuse regional director Ken Lynch has been very active in both the state canalway and the federal one, and continues to do that.

In regards to implementing the plan upon its completion:

Kathy: And DEC has money in our open space account to buy properties, for example, we’re working with Canals right now on Leto Island. It’s a phenomenal fishing location, mostly for trout, and DOT closed the bridge access over to the island so the fishermen who want to go have to walk across the canal’s lock, which drives them crazy. It’s a safety issue. So we’re trying to, DEC and canals, to come up with a solution and approach DOT. So that involves land acquisition. We’re willing to, if there’s land along the Canal System that makes sense for open space recreation and enhances the canal, we’re happy to look for those opportunities for land acquisition.

**What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?**

Partnerships with nonprofits: we should look at the Finger Lakes Land Trust - could the Finger Lakes connect to the Canal System?

For-profits (other than shipping): we should look at boat rentals and Mid-Lakes Navigation. Upstate and rural areas of the state are challenged economically and this is a gem that hopefully we can use to improve the communities along the Canal. It is a challenge.

**Is there anything that you would like to add?**

The bicentennial is a phenomenal opportunity to really raise interest. Getting the governor on board - have you ever heard the governor talk about the Canal? Getting the governor to place an emphasis on the Canal would be helpful.

Gems Along the Mohawk in Herkimer [County] developed port communities, spent a lot of money developing boat launches, etc. In the first meeting, they talked about a lot of surplus land they wanted to sell. The proceeds will go back into the Canal.

Final words: I think that Brian Stratton’s emphasis on the recreation piece of the Canal is really important. And we’re working with them on how to link the Canal to open space opportunities. I’m looking forward to it.
Tom Prindle
New York State Canal Corporation
Interviewed by Lauren Ellmers

Tom Prindle is a former New York State Canal Corporation employee and former New York State Thruway Authority employee. Mr. Prindle was interviewed in person on September 23, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Transformation from being underappreciated, and the awareness building that has occurred has been a success. Maintenance has been significant. The capital condition of the canal locks is good; the infrastructure has been greatly improved. Mr. Prindle mentioned that there used to be large holes in some portions of the walls of the Canal. The commercial water transportation is another success. The Canal Corporation has taken up the cause, and now it has found new legitimacy. Mr. Prindle credits Rob Goldman for helping to keep this alive.

To build on these successes, we must look at maintenance; it is a problem and it needs a large amount of money to solve. The Canal Corporation and the State need to be committed to spending money. Mr. Prindle also stated that canal travel is cheaper than other transportation resources. He also posed the following question: how can the Canal System pay for itself or generate income? It needs to help restore the economy for upstate New York. He went on to state that, when challenged, the authority needs to generate commerce.

Mr. Prindle also stated that there have not been many major successes in private development. He thought that the tourist report was nebulous. It credited the charter boat industry as adding $200,000. This is pure propaganda. He claims that the Canal System needs a business plan. They need an economic plan and genuine stewardship over the Canal System from politicians. At the same time, he applauds New York State for the change in their approach; it was like night to day.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

What to do with it? Who should take it? This includes looking at the longevity. Mr. Prindle doesn’t think that people understand; there is a lack of understanding about its meaning especially as a natural and historic resource. We need ongoing public education that approaches different aspects. Not everyone has the same interest. Some may be interested in engineering; others in nature.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

This is a hard question to answer. He is not an economist. We need to look at the small communities. Each had their own indigenous industries. For example, Lockport had Harrison Radio. All of this indigenous industry is gone. The Canal cannot bring it back.

He suggested that there is a potential for shore-side development for industrial uses. New York State and DEC need to think outside of the box. At one point he heard of a plan that an inventor near Utica had. He was going to take all of the dead tires from receiving stations along the Canal. The tires would then be compressed, exported abroad, and reused. This would generate income for the Canal. One liability for the Canal is that the Canal has removed some of the potential - the terminals. He said that the Canal needs to address both commercial and recreational uses. There should always be a place for a tugboat to park, if nothing else, to honor the dead.

Mr. Prindle also stated that there is a need for dredging. The State can’t keep up with it. In the public’s mind, they wonder why bother dredging if no one is using the Canal? The Canal could be a means of transporting scrap metal, construction equipment, concrete (anything we manufacture in upstate New York). Is there the potential for the Canal to work in concert with rail and roadways?

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

[End of interview]
Marketing. The Canal System needs to plug into the infrastructure of the New York State marketing system. Mr. Prindle also posed the question, what does a canal vacation look like? Is there anyone who can plan out a trip itinerary? Something that is cheap and cheerful. Cuomo had the idea of using the Canal System as a trail to guide people to landmarks and destinations. One town could be used as the main jumping point. Every town along the way has its own little treasure. Different themes could be woven in, for example, the Revolutionary War. Having people available to tie the dots would be necessary; the Canal System could use AAA as a model. It would make planning a family vacation easier.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

(Only discussed the [Erie Canal] Bicentennial during the interview, as the other questions were not relevant).

It is a big story, and he hopes that the State gets behind it. The [Erie] Canal bicentennial is a huge story; it changed the entire country. The event could be used to showcase upstate New York and generate some pride. Mr. Prindle stated that he currently reads economic reports at his job, and they are depressing. It gives the impression that the best days are behind upstate, and therefore we need to restore morale.

The bicentennial needs to be bigger than what was done for the Henry Hudson voyage [quadricentennial], during which the State did little. The State should look back on the centennial celebration.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Mr. Prindle served as the president of the State Council on Waterways (SCOW). It was founded in 1986 as a nonprofit coalition. The group became a public advocacy group, though it should have been more involved in lobbying. SCOW lost its way; the group could never quite decide what it wanted to be. It was many different things.

Mr. Prindle stated that we currently need some coalition of entities across the state. There is no public forum, and there needs to be information sharing. The will allow partnerships to evolve.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Mr. Prindle offered suggestions on where he thinks the Canal should go. He suggested that we ask if it should stay under the Thruway Authority. His answer was yes. Under the DOT, it was a starving child on the sidewalk. Mr. Prindle stated that there needs to be a better explanation to the public on why the Canal System is being funded with Thruway revenue from tolls and why this is important. He is weary that the canals will end-up back in the old days.

Mr. Prindle also claims that with society changing, the appreciation of history needs to be insurable. In 30, 40, or 50 years, who is going to be left to care for the canals? The old traditional audiences aren’t there anymore, and the Canal System cannot survive as a museum piece.

Mr. Prindle concluded by restating the need for dredging. But dredging requires a lot of money. The canals need innovative cargo development and different types of shipping. It needs to maintain this use and cannot do so without significant investment in dredging.

Recommendations for further interview: Rob Goldman
Bob Radliff

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
Interviewed by Daniel Jeanson

Bob Radliff is the current director of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Due to scheduling conflicts, Mr. Radliff emailed his responses on October 16, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor has been a great success. The trail system is an incredible asset for the local communities. That being said, the trail has to be completed immediately.

Canal Corporation, PTNY, ECNHC, and others have created greater awareness by communities and residents of the existing and underutilized value of the corridor/Canal Recreationway. Many groups and organizations working together (e.g. Champlain Canal Trail Working Group). Growth of festivals and events (e.g. Lois McClure and Cycling the Erie Canal).

More and more people are realizing the opportunities to revitalize the corridor, invest in downtowns and Canal communities and its many other historical, cultural, recreational and natural assets, and link them in a growing network, providing unique experiences and community economic development opportunities.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

There is a need to broaden the audience and grow the sense of ownership. Add diversity, and increase the number and types of stakeholders. Overcome by broadening the message: more than just the Canal, and its past, also about today’s communities, economic development (with emphasis on community & sustainability), quality of life and solutions for today and tomorrow.

Current competition for limited resources encourages self-promotion rather than value of whole. This can be overcome by increasing the amount of resources invested through solid planning, prioritization and coordination.

Eliminate thoughts that the Erie Canal is a thing of the past; that it is outdated, dirty, and no longer useful. Overcome with education, promotion, and real progress towards revitalization (including small business development) and improved environmental quality.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Present system as an opportunity to invest in existing infrastructure, like smart growth. Give such projects extra points for New York State and other public funding.

Facilitate live, work and play opportunities for targeted audiences (e.g. youth, artists). Target academic and other institutions that have resources (for collaboration).

Capture revenue/investment opportunities from Thruway travelers.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Clarify our collective goals. Market the Canal System as a whole unit, linked by assets, regions, etc. ECNHC, the Canal Corporation, and other canal-wide entities, supported by I Love NY, etc., should prepare a comprehensive marketing plan, either internally (with increased support for appropriate staff) and/or via consultant(s).

Fully utilize the new National Register [of Historic Places] listing of the New York State Barge Canal (prepared by ECNHC, with support from the Canal Corporation and OPRHP). Consider joint banners and flags at locks, etc., helping to create that historic and vibrant sense of place.

Promotion through websites and other media should be consistent across groups marketing the Canal System – branding, ease of use/understanding...set goals, metrics, etc. to know if we are being successful. Social media with focus on sense of place. Hub and spoke model using New York City, the Adirondacks, Niagara Falls, etc.
What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Increase local community involvement along the Canal System? ECNHC has professional staff engaged with local communities and involved in historic preservation, planning, community economic development, promotion, organizational and program management, resource development, grant making, and other activities. ECNHC is working with the Canal Corporation on planning the bicentennial. We will consider giving our programs bicentennial themes and prioritize our support for bicentennial events and initiatives. We are also co-hosting the World Canals Conference in 2017 with the Canal Corporation.

 Hopefully the Canal Recreationway Plan will be consistent with our Preservation and Management Plan, and vice versa.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

More resources would help. Also, improved acknowledgement of others’ efforts. Partnerships with environmental, conservation, and main street groups would be beneficial.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

The ECNHC, working through a wide range of partnerships, is preserving and interpreting our nation’s past, providing world class recreational and education opportunities, fostering economic revitalization, improving quality of life in Corridor communities, and guiding the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a twenty-first century “River of Commerce and Culture”.
Tom Ryan
New York State Canal Corporation
and New York State Thruway Authority
Interviewed by Katherine Czajkowski

Tom Ryan is the former commissioner of the New York State Canal Corporation and the former chief of staff for the New York State Thruway Authority. Due to scheduling conflicts, Mr. Ryan emailed his responses on October 18, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

The most important success was the transfer of administration of the Canal System from the New York State Department of Transportation to the State Thruway Authority in 1992. The Canal System has thrived as the New York State Canal Corporation, a Thruway subsidiary, has reconstructed nearly all deficient canal infrastructure since the transfer.

Second are the significant and far-ranging contributions resulting from the federal government’s partnership in the form of the Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor Commission. Its activities have resulted in raising the profile and importance of the state Canal System to the general public in a way never before accomplished.

Third is the emergence of the Canal Recreationway Commission - the successor to the former New York State Canal Planning & Development Board - as a true partner with the Canal Corporation in recent years. Its membership includes private sector individuals as well as state agency officials who advise the Corporation on the operation of the system.

These successes will be sustained and enlarged with continuing and increased attention and support from the [Thruway] Authority, the governor, the state legislature, and the public. All of which will be possible with a focused and targeted outreach by the Canal Corporation intended to solidify the role of canals as a major recreation and tourism asset for the Empire State.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

The three biggest challenges include the isolated but recurring attempts to separate the Canal Corporation from the Thruway Authority; the acute need to further integrate the Canal System into the overall promotional efforts of the state’s Economic Development Corporation (I Love NY campaign); and the maintenance dredging requirements to meet the ongoing silting in of the navigation channel -- the preeminent need of which is navigational dredging on the Champlain Canal, as an additional component of the soon to conclude EPA-GE environmental remediation project.

(An effective narrative that lists suggested ways for overcoming these challenges will need to be the subject of a much larger future commentary.)

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

The leasing and sale of Canal lands to communities and developers is without question the best chance to maximize the economic impact of our vast inland waterway. Extensive use of leasing and sales was envisioned at the time of the state transfer, but never realized due to an early decision by the Authority to make lessees and new owners responsible for any environmental issues involved with the land. Although this provision has not always been invoked in recent years, this is a policy issue that must be fully corrected before any real, sustained economic progress will be realized. Canal lands are, after all, public lands to begin with – where any environmental degradation was actually caused by the government. These are not areas where the public needs to be protected from corporate entities that are long since gone from the scene! Additionally, the Authority is indemnified, by the 1992 statute, from environmental issues on the transferred lands.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?
Canal communities and attractions will come into their own as tourism destinations when visitors can have a reasonable assurance of being able to get out on the waterway in a local tour boat. A state-sponsored pilot project that locates small tour boats at several promising locations on each of the four segments of the Canal System is the obvious next step in tourism evolution along the system -- first established in modern times by Peter Wiles, Sr. aboard the Emita II along the mainline Erie Canal in 1974.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Mr. Ryan felt this question was not applicable to him in his current capacity.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

A private sector organization (“Friends of the Canal”?) should be established to coordinate among the many local and regional canal support groups and partnerships in operation today. Additional partnerships are not likely needed. What is needed are communication, association, and perhaps federation among existing groups to increase their overall effectiveness.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

There are really two canal systems in the state. One in Western New York where there is substantial political, governmental, and public knowledge and support for canals, and another in the Eastern portion of the state where natural rivers form the navigation channel of the modern-day canal and where the waterway is much less understood and utilized. That needs to be addressed in a statewide context so that the innumerable tourism and recreational assets are recognized in more uniform fashion, and the underutilized sections receive more focused promotion and resources.

The state Canal System is in much better shape today than it was 20 years ago, although it has taken longer that envisioned by the Canal 2000 legislation, enacted in 1992, which changed the modern-day course of our historic waterway. The challenge today is to build on that progress in a way that expands on the Canal System's economic opportunity, preservation, and sustainability that virtually all of the engaged partners are working toward today.

The approaching bicentennial of the Erie Canal presents an enormous opportunity for progress on this subject in our lifetime. Time and attention, as well as sufficient resources, need to be applied now so that the opportunity is not minimized or squandered. DeWitt Clinton and his supporters deserve no less.
Mark Rountree
Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
Interviewed by Audrey Burneson

Mark Rountree is a senior planner for the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning. Mr. Rountree was interviewed by phone on October 2, 2014. There were problems with the audibility and not all answers were captured. For this reason, Mr. Rountree’s responses will be in a bullet point format.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

- Canalway Trail.
- Wider recognition.
- Engage more with local governments.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

- Funding.
- Getting the word out about activities.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

- State investment in canal communities.
- Sell Canal Corporation land and develop it in a way that benefits communities.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Design guidelines for Canal communities which capture the historic Erie Canal and incorporate it into community identity.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Response not captured.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Response not captured.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Response not captured.
Eric Scheffel
Empire State Development Agency
Interviewed by Chanchilo Ezung

Eric Scheffel is the senior public information specialist at the Empire State Development Agency. Mr. Scheffel was interviewed in person at his office on September 26, 2014, at 10:30 AM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

The Canal System is cleaner and that can be built upon with better maintenance of canals. Information is more easily found through the use of the internet, as well as over the phone. The bike path has been improved along the canals as well.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

One challenge has been tide/rainfall. Not much can be done about mother nature however increasingly efforts to clean up the canal of debris and opening locks after major storms is necessary.

A better process could be put in place to assist travelers who are stuck on the Canal System due to weather/lock problems/boating failures by providing easier access to land, food, shelter, mechanical assistance, etc.

Lack of canalside attractions has been another challenge. You can travel for many miles without finding anything of interest or any dockage.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Development assistance for marinas/restaurants/facilities that are on or near canals. State-assisted canal tours; a fleet of boats with pilots who can provide an interesting and safe experience to travelers on the Canal.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Create an attractive destination and deal. Make it affordable and easy for visitors to access. Also, pull together packages and promote these through the international marketing programs. Packages should include transportation to/from airports, canal boat rental and/or guide, food, off-boat lodging if needed, planned itineraries with multiple options, transportation as needed from canals to attractions.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

To increase local community involvement along the Canal System, we can provide tourism travel information and knowledge. In regards to participating in the [Erie] Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017, I Love NY can assist in promoting the bicentennial in multiple ways from internet and social media to printed materials.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

To strengthen existing partnerships, we should encourage dedicated team members from all agencies identified as partners to meet regularly on these goals with their management and as a group to identify and outline future steps. In regards to additional partners in the public/private realm, we should look to boat launches/marinas/restaurants to create a value-added program only used by boaters. Also working with nearby states as boaters travel the loop.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

The canals have only begun to see a resurgence in
popularity but I believe it has been mainly used by those owning boats and traveling the loop. It has been seen as a rich man’s vacation. If it could be packages and made affordable at different levels, with fun/exciting stops along the way incorporated into the plan, with or without a guide, the everyday traveler may be enticed into spending time on the canals.
Judith Schmidt-Dean
The Schuyler Yacht Basin
Interviewed by Robyn C. Keefe

Judith Schmidt-Dean has owned a private marina with her husband Phil for 29 years. She served as chair of the National Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor for four years, has served in several capacities as a board member of Canal NY, and in 2008 won an award for her canal advocacy through the New York State Canal Society. She has been significantly active in citizen groups and with recreation commissions since the beginning of her business. Mrs. Schmidt-Dean was interviewed in person at her home on September 24, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Three main successes:
1. Canal Infrastructure – It has greatly improved since 20 years ago, making it easier for boats to navigate through locks. Some of the locks even have ropes to pull up on.
2. Crisis Management – It was incredible how quickly the NYS Canal Corporation was able to respond to the flooding that occurred three years ago. 50 subcontractors were recruited within days. The final costs for clean-up and repair were enormous, but that state basically write a blank check for it.
3. Trail System – The trail system, especially the connected trail along the Mohawk has been wonderful. There are also good plans in place for pocket parks along the Champlain.

Building on Successes:
- Implementation – Implement the plans that are in place right now.
- Consistency of Canal Administration – Understanding the politics involved in keeping people in their roles, still applauds the capability of current administration in getting things done.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

3 Main Challenges:
1. Boater Decline
   - Increased Cost to Boating – Gasoline prices are high and ethanol mixtures damage the boats, hiking up maintenance costs.
   - Boaters anxious about going through the lock.
   - Luxury boats/large boats sales are down. These boaters spend the most money at businesses along the Canal.
   - Less services are being offered along the Canal because businesses are closing. Boaters require services.
2. Free public docks are interfering with private businesses.
   - Big grants are given to communities to build free community centers/marinas with no long-term vision of how they will be maintained.
   - Tax burden for maintaining boats falls to community members not benefiting from the local tourism dollars.
   - Free docks put private docks out of business, impacting the economic sustainability of Canal communities.
3. Economic Downturns
   - Major source of business used to be French Canadians; now, very few of them come because of economic decline at home.

Overcoming Challenges:
- Experience – In order to generate good word of mouth and online reviews, the experience has to be high quality.
- Marketing – Market to the right people (see question #4).
- Education – People are afraid of going through the locks. It is important that there is education for potential and new boaters.
What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Stop making things “free.”
- Judith would like to see less money spent on public infrastructure in Canal communities that takes away private business and puts a tax burden on community members. Instead, private business should be supported so that communities can sustain themselves.
- Whitehall is an example of how investing in free public goods ultimately led to the detriment of the community. A free dock and community center was put in after a huge grant from the NYS Canal Corporation. Initially the public enjoyed the center with the Canal Corporation taking on the maintenance and operations cost. Then those costs fell onto the community, which couldn’t maintain it, causing the center to go into disrepair. Two private marinas have since gone out of business because they couldn’t compete with “free.”
- Judith recommends that the State collect competitive rates from public docks so as to not put private businesses out of business and to aid in the continuing maintenance of the docks.

Provide more services to boaters.
- Right now there is nothing for people to come to. Marketing can only do so much.

Invest in private business.
- People want to come to thriving communities, not dead communities.
- It is hard to get money on the table for the renovation of old buildings with the intention of putting in a business.
- Judith suggests Hudson Crossing as a successful model.

Judith also makes the point that the business point of view is “can I keep people here long enough to make money off of it?”

Don’t let the tolls increase for boating.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

International Marketing
- Market to the French Canadians that currently dock their boats on Lake Champlain.
- Does not see potential for an overseas European market.

National/Regional Tourism
- Harness the power of partnerships for advertising purposes. Individual private business owners cannot afford expensive advertisements. Judith suggests a piggyback approach where everyone divides the cost.
- Market the trip, not the canal.
- Presentations at yacht clubs/boat shows.
- More presence in guidebooks.
- Increase electronic presence.
- Invest in mobile apps.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Judith stated that she would love to be involved in the Canal bicentennial, but that she doesn’t see a role for her business in increasing community involvement or implementing the plan.
What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Judith suggests that award systems are significant in strengthening partnerships, especially awards directed at small groups of people coming together to make a project happen to make lives and the community better. Here, she mentioned a small group of people preserving the only existing lighthouse on the Canal System. She states that there is a lot of isolation of the system; by recognizing small successes by community members it is possible to inspire other communities to do their own projects and initiatives because they know they aren’t alone. Small grants and support are all these groups need. Judith had no suggestions for specific new partners.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

No.
Dave Turner
Oswego County Planning Department
Interviewed by Deb Nelson

Dave Turner is the director of the Oswego County Planning Department. The interview was conducted over the phone on October 2, 2014, at 2:00 PM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Investment by the State to keep infrastructure operational and safe. E.g. On Oswego Canal (and entire system), the Canal Corporation has repaired canal walls used by recreational boaters in areas not associated with their everyday operations. They put a lot of money in the lock areas – hope they put funds in sections more for pedestrian and transient users. There are lots of places where people can tie up that are kind of rough.

They have been putting some effort in revitalizing commercial traffic on the Canal – it provides revenue to offset costs to maintain the Canal for recreational users. They are not always as cooperative as could be to separate uses. For instance, for a period of time in Oswego County they allowed grain barges and associated tugs to tie up near restaurants, etc. during tourist season. The tugs would idle and black sooty smoke from the tugs would disturb the businesses and visitors. The Canal Corporation had the ability to stop this practice but failed to do so.

Keep financial structure such that recreational users are not hit with exorbitant fees.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Maintain points of infrastructure other than gears, motors, lock system. The financial part is the challenge – need significant commercial traffic to support that.

Specifically and locally – challenge in Oswego with legal battle over Lido Island (near Lock #7). There used to be access from the mainland to Lido Island. Lido Island was industrial but more recently used for recreation and Oswego River fishery. The Canal Corporation/Thruway Authority/DOT failed to maintain the bridge to get to the island and the bridge deteriorated to the point where they had to take the bridge down. There is no more access to the property and therefore no revenue. There is no emergency access either. DEC had an interest in possibly purchasing Lido Island but now there is no access. There has been a tremendous decline in seasonal tourism, such as camping and fishing on Lido Island or in the restaurants and other businesses in town since the negligence on the State’s part resulted in no access.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

This goes back to Question 1 – maintain the canal walls so they are user-friendly and safe.

Car-top boat launch access improvements – there are lots of places where folks can’t get in to the Canal without going through lock. There are opportunities at or around lock structures to create boat launches for recreational purposes.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Maintenance of canal walls – the condition of the walls discourages tie ups and stopping in canal communities to spend money. Need walls to be safe and aesthetically pleasing. Marketing – fortunate in Oswego that they get canal cruises to come and stop here. Not everyone gets those opportunities.

There are plenty of old canal structures that are interesting and still exist that could be restored/enhanced/cleaned up and have interpretative signage.
This would encourage boaters to stop and give people a reason to choose boating on the Canal rather than a lake. Some of these areas you can’t get to or are not safe or are overgrown. Marketing of those old canal structures would be good for a cross-section of folks that are recreational boaters and have historic interests; these would become places as destinations.

Partner, with financial assistance, to create documents to distribute to folks to bring to the Canal and attract people to canal side communities. Sponsor events and provide financial support for these events.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Already pretty active in increasing local community involvement – currently maintain museum in Oswego with history of the Canal. Oswego centennial in 2016 – hoping to attract Great Lakes cruises to Oswego – opportunities for activities along the canal.

In regards to the bicentennial, we expect to be involved, but not heard of anything yet. Oswego will have its bicentennial in 2016 – it will focus on the Canal as well. The Canal was important to growth of the region for centuries. Oswego was important for several notable reasons, including ship building, and the grain elevator invented here. Oswego once was the largest inland port in the country. Salt was shipped out of the port which helped Syracuse grow.

Hard to say how we will be part of the plan’s implementation until plan comes out. Canal is important – has been forever. Whatever is reasonable; will be happy to help.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

We will continue to support efforts for canal-related activities.

If made investment or funding through the Department of State for historic preservation along the Canal, history folks may be new partners to promote and enjoy the Canal, rather than focus on recreational boaters.

Years ago the Canal was more of a Recreationway than today. There were islands in Oswego Canal with grand structures (e.g., Pathfinder Island) – locals and others would go there for picnics, festivals, etc. It was the highlight of everyone’s weekend. Most of those places are overgrown or not maintained.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

The Canal System has such great potential. The reason its potential is likely not to be reached is funding. Need to invest funds to maintain things people could enjoy. For instance, Leto Island - the bridge was in the inventory with others in the State and not a priority bridge. There is not enough money to go around.
Fred Wehner
Tug Boat Owner
Interviewed by Ayse Tezel

Fred Wehner is a tug boat owner from Fort Edward. The interview was conducted by phone on September 26, 2014, at 2:00 PM.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Fred made it clear that the first step to take is to upgrade current docks. Installing electricity and extending the open hours from 10:00 PM to a later time. He recommended that there should be trip planning assistance for boaters who are coming from other areas. He also mentioned that the Canal Corporation started a book *Working Tug Boats* and he believes it is a good way to promote the canals.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to Increase local community involvement along the Canal System; Participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; Implement the plan update upon its completion?

As a tug boat owner, Fred has a personal website. He also does tour planning for boaters coming from other states and helps with the distribution of news and forms about Erie Canal to other boaters.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Fred believes that there is a good communication between other stakeholders, locals and the Canal Corporation and he wishes to see this in future.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Fred did not have anything else to add.

Fred Wehner is a tug boat owner from Fort Edward. The interview was conducted by phone on September 26, 2014, at 2:00 PM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Fred believes that recent maintenance and flood control is the most important success that he had seen. Recent upgrades in the infrastructure has led boaters to come to the area more. However, he also mentioned that eastern Erie Canal still needs more ports because there are not many places to stop.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Cost of the fuel is the biggest challenge in front of both boaters and developers of the Canal. Fred mentioned that marinas usually overcharge for diesel, and boat traffic has declined nearly 50% in last 10 years.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Fred mentioned Fairport, located on the western Erie Canal, as a good example of sustainable economic structure. He believes that locals’ attention and investments such as an ice-cream parlor would change a port and the community entirely. He suggested that there should be convenient stores, restaurants, and laundries nearby ports.
Peter Wiles
Mid-Lakes Navigation
Canal New York Marketing and Business
Interviewed by Tristan Lowery

Mr. Wiles has been an owner (along with his brother Dan) of Mid-Lakes Navigation, a cruise and charter boat operation based in Skaneateles, New York, since 1968. He is also a former founding chair of the Canal New York Marketing and Business Alliance. The interview was conducted over the telephone on September 25, 2014, at 3:00 PM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

Mr. Wiles expressed satisfied astonishment at the very survival of the NYS Canal System after nearly a century of demanding commercial use - and occasional neglect. He cited infrastructural problems in the 1970s during bleaker times when it seemed the Canal System was most in danger of slipping into a permanent state of dereliction. Mr. Wiles humorously recalled speaking to people for whom the Erie Canal was merely a grade school memory and who were certain it must have been “filled in” long ago. With these memories fresh in his mind, he credited heightened public awareness for the latest successes of the Canal System, which have led to increased recreational use, community development, and helped spread the word necessary to rescue these waterways from a fate of obsolescence. Finally, Mr. Wiles stressed the importance of local business and private investment in the Canal System as both the foundation of its recent revitalization, and as an indispensable condition of any further successes.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Mr. Wiles cited the general economic decline of the Great Recession beginning in 2008 as the primary challenge to the NYS Canal System. As a remedy, he suggested the Canal Corporation continue in its support of communities in times of economic hardship, and advocated the adoption of safeguarding financial policies and assurances in the future.

Throughout the interview, Mr. Wiles returned to the physical integrity of the Canal System as a primary area of concern for maritime operators. As part of an industry that optimistically relies on a 100 - 120 day boating and sightseeing season for the greater part of its annual profits, Mid-Lakes Navigation and companies like it can suffer greatly when periodic infrastructural problems arise on the canals, reducing the viability of these very seasonal operations and cutting into earnings for the year.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Mr. Wiles sees the Canal System as an already valuable investment in and of itself and stated that he would greatly prefer to see more pragmatic and much-needed structural maintenance take place, even over the more glamorous undertakings of tourism and marketing. He called for the Canal Corporation to avail itself of assets already in place – its mechanical infrastructure, the value of its equipment and built environment, and to both resume and initiate uses not yet realized to their greatest possible use. Mr. Wiles was adamant in advocating a complete realization of the Canal System’s industrial legacy, envisioning a future in which no physical component of the waterway was left unexploited to its fullest potential. He recommended a wide range of ideas, from hydroelectric power stations, to research and development of various engineering projects, to third party involvement in public-private business arrangements not unlike vending operations on the New York State Thruway.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Mr. Wiles stated that he believed that the Canal Corporation is already working towards
that goal, particularly in its support of other entities, its coordination of marketing (with I Love NY, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, Canal NY), and cooperation with local businesses and private sector marketing efforts.

**What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?**

Mr. Wiles promised that his company would continue to carry on as it has for over thirty years as far as engaging local communities and supporting tourism and recreation. As for the upcoming bicentennial celebration, he stated he would be happy to discuss appropriate boating events with the Canal Corporation.

**What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?**

Mr. Wiles suggested the cruise and charter boat industry as an ideal partnership for the Canal Corporation. He stated that there is an occasional lack of discourse between the Corporation and the operators of commercial watercraft and boating facilities and services on the Canal System and he’d like any future planning to address and reinforce these communications channels.

**Is there anything that you would like to add?**

Mr. Wiles fervently stated that his “one wish” in this planning process was for clarity and purpose in justifying, identifying, and extolling the importance of the Canal System and its constituent structural makeup. “The Canal (System) is a machine and it really needs to be treated as such”, he said, emphasizing his commitment to the physical wellbeing of the Canal System. Mr. Wiles stressed that the infrastructural health of the system is paramount and represents the foundation on which all subsequent and supplementary canal activities stand, and that it would be “a shame” if it were neglected.
Jeanne Williams
Champlain Canalway Trail Working Group and the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance
Interviewed by Lisa A. Ford

Jeanne Williams is a chairperson for the Champlain Canalway Trail Working Group and the director of the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Alliance. The interview was conducted over the phone on September 25, 2014 at 10:00 AM.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

- Canal Corporation trail specific insight: a cultural shift toward sustainable recreation, health recreation, historic preservation.
- For the boat user, efforts of the Canal Corporation and I Love NY efforts to help people recognize and change people’s perception of the canals as polluted waters.
- Canal Corporation’s collaboration with other agencies (Park and Trails NY, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, I Love NY).

To build on these successes, the Canal Corporation can help to find funding sources for historic preservation and recreation.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

- Perception of local residents: change from manufacturing; repurpose old buildings.
- Complete more of the trails along the entire length.
- Financial: more trails and canal projects and events funding.
- Overcoming: collaborative efforts of organizations, municipalities, etc.
- Promote commercial use.
- Improvement of quality of life – recreation.

- Funding upstate through the use of an upbeat conceptualization rather than as an area in decline.
- Market as diverse to better balance available resources.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

The Canal Corporation is doing a great job with previous investments, especially the revitalization of the Five Combined Locks of the Feeder Canal and Towpath Trail in Glens Falls.

Pedestrian/bike access good for exploration, do more canalside parks/dockages for boater/yachters. Key links off canals and into cities/towns/villages – right now often times there is no “there”. Can also look at increasing the amount of canoe/kayak facilities, which would impact tourist dollars, and promote waterside rental facilities.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

The Canal Corporation is doing a great job with I Love NY and local tourism boards. There needs to be more of an inversion in how opportunities are identified: right now, it is rather top-down. Instead, local communities could/should report to the Canal Corporation and link possibilities/opportunities to report upward to make Canal Corporation aware of local opportunities.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

Increase local community involvement along the Canal System? We are doing all we can to promote events, historical preservation, industry, manufacturing, etc. along the Canal. We apply for grants through CFA community match and will continue to promote an increase of activities along the Canal for local businesses and Canal communities.

Participate in the [Erie] Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017? We have information and a board considering ideas to participate with Canal Corporation events.
Opportunity for input and celebration of local historical attractions; participation in walks/runs, music, etc.

Implement the plan update upon its completion? Work closely with the municipalities (numbering 14 to 17, in addition to three counties). Promote community involvement; participation.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Top-down, trickle-down effect between regional entities. Weights on grants for collaboration strengths and encourage local collaboration.

In regards to new partners, we should look at historical organizations, artistic partnerships, cultural organizations, quality of life partnerships and we should encourage industrial opportunities.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

This was very comprehensive.
David Zorn
Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council
Interviewed by Katherine Czajkowski

David Zorn is the executive director of the Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council. Mr. Zorn was interviewed over the phone on September 24, 2014.

What are the three main successes you have seen over the past 20 years on the NYS Canal System? How can we build on those successes?

The main one is the villages taking advantage of canals for economic development and land use regulation and control. More successes from the land-side rather than the water (canalside). In this region, the Western Erie Canal Alliance (WECA) pursued and received funding. After their plan was done, it was housed with the Western New York Landmark Society, which was responsible for the Western Erie Canal Management Plan.

With regards to the Western Erie Canal Management Plan – one task in that plan was for the creation of a Western Erie Canal Main Street Program to work with the villages on revitalization around the Canal. Landmark Society got funds to do so – the Genesee Finger Lake Regional Planning Council served as director for the first two years of the program. Parts of the National Main Street Program were incorporated into the guidelines for the WEC Main Street Program. Was able to get three villages interested in pursuing this type of development and created a position of village coordinator and a board; they provided training; created an action plan and created a “Walking Tour of Main Street” program. Got to work in 2012/2013, each village received specific plan with assessments and design guidelines, which were not tied in any way to the Canal Recreationway Plan.

These types of initiatives show that once there is money, there is the impetus to move forward. Without this program, development might never have happened. Pittsford, Fairport, Brockport, Palmyra, and Spencerport all built their own successes outside of the Recreationway Plan.

We can build on these successes by getting more funding, especially at the regional level. Acting locally is the key; revise the plan and commit to doing implementations on the ground.

What do you see as the three biggest challenges on the NYS Canal System and what do you recommend to overcome these challenges?

Usage of the canals – there is not much traffic on the canals. Landside is a bigger deal than the use of the canals. Recently had opportunity to travel from Fairport to Brighton – on a boat on the Canal – used the trail a lot. The activity in between in the villages is impressive, but not much use of the canals themselves.

To overcome these challenges we need more money, more improvements, projects and programs for landside adjacent to the canals.

What investment opportunities should be explored on the Canal System to maximize a sustainable economic future for Canal communities?

Did a Blueway Trail Assessment of the region – the Canal Corporation needs to think in terms of that type of investment strategy. Places throughout the country have been fairly successful with the Blueway Trail approach. Usage of the water to attract more boat traffic; marketing; activities; services landside in strategic places. Invest in Village revitalization and historic restoration.

Upper floors in villages – successful first-floor retail, but what is being done on the second and third floors? Improve the Canalway Trail – seems like this is the biggest success – should build on this.

What actions do you recommend be taken to encourage use of the Canal System as an international, national, and regional tourism destination? How would you market that vision?

Some interrelationship of tourism approach. New York State level is good – tie in the county tourism agencies and coordinating the approach.
Erie/Niagara and Wayne/Seneca are successful because work was done on a regional approach. All the counties need to work on the same page. Provide services along the Canal System - service provision is done at the private level, but creating those places is good, public services are important for boaters and bikers. They need to know the services are there when they get there, not just 9 to 5. Services are poor to adequate from 9 to 5, poorer 5 to 9. Commitment to 24-hour quality service provision that people can count on. Effort into a 10 to 20 year plan is great, but planning effort at local, timelier level is better. In terms of marketing that vision we need to celebrate the canals, but the system that is in place right now. More coordination and collaboration is needed at the local and regional level. Use available resources in the most effective way possible.

What role can your organization/agency play over the next 10 years to increase local community involvement along the Canal System; participate in the Canal bicentennial scheduled to begin in 2017; implement the plan update upon its completion?

That would depend on what it entails and if there is money. We can do a lot based on experience with local and regional planning. We will work as closely as possible with the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Continue working with communities to assist with development and implementation of plan. Continue to hold workshops/round tables, which are currently held every six months. We have done sessions that are tied to the Canal, more can be done. For our planning agency, three of nine counties are on the main canal, five of nine counties along the entire system. There are four counties that are not involved, that is a fine line. Planning regional to local levels – need a “boots on the ground” approach.

Blueway Approach – inventory and implementation. Getting folks to the Canal – fiscal, educational, economic development.

What actions would you recommend to strengthen existing partnerships; add new partnerships; what potential or additional partners do you suggest?

Who needs to be at the table? That is the question that needs to be asked. There is a local-regional deep dive that needs to happen. Good stakeholders were involved in the 1995 plan, but not everyone who needed to be there was there. Direction at local level is needed – the plan doesn’t resonate at the local level. Few more tools in the toolbox are needed for those communities/regional planning/larger urban areas that are working to implement the plan. On the ground, lower level tasks are needed.

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Need to look beyond just checking off the box that a task is completed. Consultants are hired, meetings held and plan created – then it languishes – a plan is great to have, but implementation is key and money is key to implementation. A lot of municipalities have not read the plan, there are limitations of local municipalities – part time staff, no available people.
APPENDIX C

Fall 2014 UAlbany Planning Studio
Master's in Regional Planning at the University at Albany

The Master's Program (MRP) in Urban and Regional Planning at the University at Albany provides a solid foundation for students to enter into professional planning practice and research. Hailing from many states and countries across the globe, the graduate students learn and apply planning methods to improve the quality of life in communities and regions.

The University at Albany's 48-credit two-year Master of Regional Planning Program in Urban and Regional Planning was established in 1982 and is fully accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board, the sole national accrediting body for planning.

The MRP program is interdisciplinary, student-centered and participative, emphasizing the importance of creativity, public involvement, social justice, professional ethics, and environmental sustainability.

The program is strongly oriented towards professional practice and provides a thorough foundation in land use planning, a range of technical skills and internship opportunities, and the opportunity to specialize in one of three alternative fields:

- Environmental and land use planning
- Housing, local economic development and community planning
- Transportation planning

MRP graduates are well-poised to enter the professional planning arena. MRP alumni include university faculty, professional consultants, PhD students, and planners practicing in several regions of the United States and many foreign countries.

The MRP Planning Studio provides collaborative team planning exercises to design, evaluate, plan, and manage projects and programs. The Fall 2014 Planning Studio is working with the New York State Canal Corporation as they launch the planning process to update the New York State Canal Recreationway Plan. The Fall 2014 Planning Studio graduate students are:

- Farokh Bagheri
- Audrey Burneson
- Katherine Czajkowski
- Lauren Ellmers
- Chanchilo Ezung
- Lisa Ford
- Dan Jeanson
- Robyn Keefe
- Tristan Lowery
- Jenny Majkut
- Debra Nelson
- Joseph Seman
- Ayse Tezel
- Samantha Young
- Instructor: Marcia Kees
Farokh Bagheri
Farokh Bagheri is a motivated student pursuing his Master's in Regional Planning at the University at Albany. Mr. Bagheri received his bachelor's degree at Allameh Tabatabai University (ATU), the largest specialized state social sciences university in Iran and the Middle East. After completing his bachelor's degree, Mr. Bagheri assisted the former head of the Iranian Sociological Association, compiling and editing *The Bibliography of Social Theory*. He also served as research coordinator on four major projects in Iran, addressing community development and planning, neighborhood planning, sewerage and surface water management. Currently, Mr. Bagheri works as a graduate assistant at the Global Institute for Health and Human Rights (GIHHR) and the International Academic Program (IAP) at the University at Albany, and is a student assistant at the New York State Department of Health, Center for Health Care Policy and Resource Development. Mr. Bagheri's graduate studies concentrate on sustainable community development, neighborhood planning, and neighborhood revitalization. He strongly believes in public participation and the main role of community in the process of decision making in neighborhood planning.

Audrey Burneson
Audrey Burneson is a graduate student pursuing her Master's in Regional Planning and Certificate in Geographic Information Systems at the University at Albany. She has a Bachelor's of Art in Anthropology from the State University of New York at Geneseo, with a secondary major in Geography and a minor in Environmental Studies. Audrey was previously an intern at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in the Division of Lands and Forests, Bureau of State Land Management developing maps of recreational opportunities on state land. She is currently looking for an internship in the field of transportation planning.

Katherine Czajkowski
Katherine Czajkowski is currently employed by the Water Resources Institute at Cornell University as the Mohawk Watershed Coordinator, assisting the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in coordination and implementation of the Mohawk River Basin Action Agenda. Prior to this, she was employed by Schenectady County Soil and Water Conservation District as the Regional Stormwater Control Specialist assigned to the Region 4 and 6 offices of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, charged with delivery and implementation of the Phase II Stormwater Construction and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) programs in accordance with the Clean Water Act. Ms. Czajkowski is a Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC) and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Regional and Urban Planning from the University at Albany where she is currently pursuing a Master's of Regional Planning (with a concentration in environmental and land use planning).
Lauren Ellmers

Graduating in December 2014, Lauren is completing the Master’s in Regional Planning program with a concentration in housing, economic development, and community planning. She is currently an intern with the Town of Glenville where she is responsible for updating the Town’s Comprehensive Plan. Previously, she completed two terms of AmeriCorps*VISTA service where she managed programs designed to fight poverty, increase college access for low-income individuals, and attract job opportunities to struggling communities. Lauren is interested in pursuing a career in public service with a focus on economic development and public policy. She holds a bachelor’s degree in public policy from Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York.

Chanchilo Ezung

Chanchilo Ezung is a graduate student in the Urban and Regional Planning program at the University at Albany concentrating in transportation planning. Chanchilo is interested in sustainable transportation, and in the development and reconstruction of underdeveloped towns and cities. She graduated with a Bachelor in Engineering (Civil) degree from the National Institute of Engineering at Mysore, India. As part of her engineering degree, she was involved in survey and design of expanding a village road to a district road. Prior to joining the University at Albany, Chanchilo worked as a Junior Engineer at the Department of Irrigation and Flood Control in Nagaland, India.

Lisa Ford

Lisa Ford is a Certified Intern Engineer in the State of New York. She attends the University at Albany in the Master’s Program in Urban and Regional Planning, specializing in transportation planning and sustainability concepts wherein she is learning the value of collaborative communication skills. Lisa achieved her Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) with specialization in transportation/traffic/highway design. While at RPI, she developed excellent critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Lisa’s previous relevant work experience includes thirteen years as a drafter/CADD/engineering technician, mostly in the Central Florida region, as an independent contractor. Lisa has a strong sense of personal ethics which align with the American Society of Civil Engineers’ code. She is detail-oriented, motivated, and able to work independently with outstanding results. Lisa has successfully taken on leadership roles for which she has received a number of accolades and scholarships. She epitomizes passionate progressive values, perseverance, and vociferous activism. Lisa personifies an appreciation for diversity as well as a strong desire to serve the public good.
**Dan Jeanson**

Dan Jeanson is currently attending the University at Albany and is enrolled in the Master’s in Regional Planning program. He earned his Bachelor’s of Arts degree from the University at Albany, dual majoring in Urban Studies & Planning, and History. He is currently an intern at the Hudson River Valley Greenway/ Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. His professional experience also includes five years as a Supervisor of Operations for the American Red Cross, Biomedical Services Department from June 2008 until January 2014. His interests include environmental causes, transportation and infrastructure issues, and politics.

**Robyn Keefe**

Robyn Keefe is a second-year graduate student in the Master’s of Regional Planning (MRP) program at the University at Albany, specializing in community, heritage and universal access planning. Over the summer of 2014, Robyn co-authored a report providing research and analysis to Partners for Albany Stories, a group of cultural and historical organizations collaborating to develop a citywide interpretive plan for Albany, N.Y. Robyn has also contributed to a strategic planning process at the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. Prior to beginning the MRP program, Robyn worked for many years as a professional community advocate, serving in nonprofit employment and social development programs for persons with disabilities. Robyn holds a bachelor’s degree in special education from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale. As a planner, Robyn aspires to facilitate the development of communities that recognize and address the needs and interests of all who have, do, and will live(d) there - past, present and future.

**Tristan Lowery**

Tristan Lowery is a second-year student in the Master’s Program in Urban and Regional Planning at the University at Albany, pursuing a concentration in environmental and land-use planning. He is currently complementing his studies with an internship at the Hudson River Valley Greenway in Albany, N.Y. As an avid amateur naturalist, Tristan has a broad interest in the environmental effects of development, with a particular concern for urban biodiversity and habitat conservation. Tristan holds a bachelor’s degree in media studies from Queens College, City University of New York, Flushing, N.Y.
Jenny Majkut

Jenny Majkut is currently a second year student in the Master's of Urban and Regional Planning program at the University of Albany, specializing in environmental planning. Jenny received her Bachelor's of Science in Architecture at the University of Nevada - Las Vegas. She returned to the Albany area to combine her education in planning and architecture to be well equipped to pursue her passion of helping areas develop comprehensively. Jenny is an avid believer in the importance of sustainability and redevelopment, and plans to focus in these efforts throughout her career. Jenny is currently an intern at the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA), working in their residential department, which offers incentives to contractors and customers in an effort to make their homes more energy efficient.

Debra Nelson

Debra Nelson is a Strategic Policy Advisor with the NYS Department of Transportation with more than 20 years’ experience in environmental leadership in the transportation realm. Deb is a prominent national leader in environmental stewardship, planning and sustainability in transportation. She chairs the International Conference on Ecology and Transportation, serves on the Transportation Research Board of the National Academy of Sciences, and advises the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, the Strategic Highway Research Program, and the National Highway Institute. Debra has been certified as a Professional Wetland Scientist by the Society of Wetland Scientists, and as a Certified Ecologist, conferred by the Ecological Society of America. Debra earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Forestry from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and is earning a Master of Regional Planning at the University at Albany. Deb is an ardent champion for making transportation decisions that support a sustainable society.

Joseph Seman

Joseph Seman is an Albany, New York-based graduate student in the field of urban studies and regional planning. An upstate New York native, Joseph graduated from the University at Albany with a bachelor’s degree in urban studies and planning. He has continued his education at the University at Albany in pursuit of a graduate degree in regional planning, with graduate certificates in both urban policy and geographic information systems and spatial analysis. With community development as a focus, and an increasing concentration towards rural community development, Joseph intends to practice sustainable community planning in accordance with the AICP code of ethics and professional conduct in his post graduate career.
Ayse Tezel
Ayse T. Tezel is currently a second-year student in the Master’s Program in Urban and Regional Planning at the University at Albany, concentrating in environmental and land use planning. She holds a bachelor’s degree of urban and regional planning from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in Istanbul, Turkey. As an admirer of history and nature, Ayse studied urban renewal laws and policies in Turkey for her bachelor’s thesis, and worked as an assistant planner in an architecture firm focused on restoration of historic buildings. She also has an interest in water resources management and conservation.

Samantha Young
Samantha Young is currently a second-year student in the Master’s Program in Urban and Regional Planning at the University at Albany, specializing in environmental and land use planning. Samantha received her bachelor’s degree in environmental science with a concentration in geography and a certificate in Geographic Information Systems from the University at Albany as well. Samantha is supplementing her graduate studies by working at the U.S. Geological Survey, providing IT and mapping support on current environmental research issues. Samantha is an admirer of the outdoors and conservation practices. She wishes to pursue a career using GIS to help make the world a more sustainable place to live.

Instructor: Marcia Kees
Marcia Kees has served as an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University at Albany since 2011, teaching planning law, park and historic preservation planning, and planning studio courses. She completed thirty-five years of public service employment, retiring in 2010 from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Ms. Kees has written or reviewed plans or projects in most of New York’s sixty-two counties, including participation in over fifty major plans or studies. She has provided technical assistance on heritage and greenway planning and development, historic preservation, community and economic development, waterfront revitalization, heritage tourism, and interpretive programming and exhibit design. Ms. Kees worked on special assignment to the National Park Service to oversee the production of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan, which received the 2007 Daniel Burnham Award for a Comprehensive Plan from the American Planning Association. Ms. Kees conducted her undergraduate work in history and social sciences at State University of New York at Oswego and graduate work in city and regional planning at Cornell University. She is past president of the New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association and the Capital District Planners Association and has served as a board member or advisor for several non-profit organizations.
New York State Canal Recreationways Plan Update

Stakeholder Interviews

Prepared for the New York State Canal Corporation
UAlbany Planning Studio

Fall 2014

UNIVERSITY at ALBANY
State University of New York