



In partnership with the National Park Service

2011-16 STRATEGIC PLAN



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PART 1:
Background

Creating the Corridor

The combination of exceptional scenery, history, culture, and natural resources of the Erie Canalway earned the NYS Canal System and communities along its shores designation as a National Heritage Corridor in 2000. The authorizing legislation (PL 106-554, title VIII) afforded this designation in perpetuity, and also authorized a management entity, a 27 member Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission (“the Commission”) for ten years. In 2009, as part of a package of “technical corrections” to the original Act, Congress extended the authorization of the Commission to fifteen years. That authorization will expire in December 2015 unless Congress takes further action.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (“the Corridor”), a permanent national designation, is now fully ten years old. It is among the largest of the 49 National Heritage Areas that have been designated by Congress since 1981. It spans New York nearly edge to edge, east to west for 524 miles, encompassing all 234 municipalities linked by the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca and Oswego Canals and Cayuga and Seneca Lakes – together known as the New York State Canal System.

The legislation affirms a national interest in the preservation and interpretation of the Corridor’s important historic, cultural, recreational, educational, scenic and natural resources. The Corridor is a premier example of a regional cultural landscape far too large and too populated ever to be an American-style national park, yet of such surpassing significance that its story belongs to the nation, even the world. Today, nearly two hundred years after the first canal was built, it is possible in cities, canal towns, and countryside to see the immense impact of the Erie Canal. As the canal literally changed American geography and tapped the country’s Midwestern wealth, it also changed the face of upstate New York – and American culture – forever. This is a place that begs for the story-telling and care usually lavished on national parks.

The National Park Service is indeed involved, a critical benefit of the Corridor’s federal recognition. The Corridor’s ultimate fate, however, relies on the hard work of a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental entities at the local, regional, and state levels. Their efforts are encouraged by the Commission, composed of residents and officials of the region appointed by the Secretary of the Interior from nominations made by elected leaders. The Commission, working with a staff of two full time and one part time National Park Service employees and five others employed full time by a partnering organization, administers a limited amount of federal funding and seeks largely to coordinate and leverage the efforts of others.

The Commission’s first task was the completion of a management plan. The *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan* (P&MP) is considered the full blueprint for engaging the Corridor.

The Secretary of the Interior accepted the P&MP according to National Park Service standards in October 2006. With that, the Commission, staff, and partners across the Corridor embarked on the long term task of implementing the plan.

The *Preservation and Management Plan* (P&MP) is the most complete regional plan for upstate New York to date. Universally well-regarded – winner of the American Planning Association’s most prestigious award in 2008 – it lays out a powerful vision and ambitious goals for the Corridor.

The P&MP, however, is also a prime example of the challenge of advancing a heritage area, which requires progress in so many complex ways.

The Commission was fortunate in one important way, that the needs of the Canal System itself were already addressed through the operations of the New York State Canal Corporation, which itself had already advanced a major plan for the “Recreationway” with a focus on state-owned and other public lands along the canals. Thus, the Heritage Corridor’s spine was already in good hands.

But the entire body of the Corridor needs much more. Communities must thrive in order to make the dollars to invest in heritage preservation and recreation. Dollars brought by visitors fascinated by the Canalway’s authentic heritage can help the local and regional economy by supporting unique retail, dining and lodging opportunities as they enjoy museums and outdoor recreation, and boating and driving for pleasure. This “heritage tourism” can help diversify local economies by bringing in new dollars that help stabilize the many small businesses that can benefit from visitors. While “heritage development,” the amalgamation of good things stimulated by such a process, can lead to community betterment, it can be difficult to determine which comes first in such a cycle: visitors or community investment; preservation or dollars to preserve. This is especially true in a territory whose economy has lost vitality since the Erie Canal lost its status as a vital transportation artery between the American heartland and New York City, and where manufacturing has declined without adequate replacement.

Leadership and public/private investment become key ingredients in tackling such economic needs. The Commission brings new elements in upstate New York’s development to the table, helping to inform the agendas of existing players in service of the Corridor’s future as a national asset.

As with all heritage area management plans, the P&MP offers a regional vision, and a particular point of view that investment in development here is best accomplished by emphasizing communities’ unique, existing assets. Collaboration among all players is equally fundamental. Asserting a historical narrative so that both residents and visitors appreciate this place is another important concept in the heritage area approach. Community pride provides positive energy, and story-telling in all kinds of ways that is critical in building up the visitor experience.

Breaking down the concept into basics, the P&MP asks the Corridor’s partners and Commission to address the preservation of historic and cultural resources, the conservation of natural resources, recreation, interpretation (story-telling) and orientation (wayfinding), economic revitalization, and tourism development and marketing. Pursuing these ideas in combination, region-wide, through partnerships, makes a heritage area initiative unique.

The Need for a Strategic Plan

In the four years since the *Preservation and Management Plan* (P&MP) was accepted by the Secretary of the Interior, the Commission and a small, dedicated staff have made important advances.

The award-winning P&MP is by design a long term strategy for the success of the Corridor as a whole – including all actors, not necessarily the Commission alone. It is not intended as a document for guiding the short term internal operations of the management and administration of the organization; or offering short term prioritization of programmatic work. How to match effort and need to available resources? Where are the most effective levers? Which specific programs would yield the greatest impact? What priorities are used in distributing funds, recognition, training, technical assistance? How to respond to changing circumstances or the steady stream of opportunities unforeseen in the P&MP?

With time and experience, it is now possible to answer these questions with a greater degree of specificity than was possible before now. Thus, in early 2010, the Commission determined to assess its progress and create a strategic plan. The plan would be the Commission's and staff's playbook, based on the P&MP but providing greater focus for approximately the next five years. This document is the result of their analysis and deliberations.

To undertake the project, the Commission established a strategic planning committee and identified three key objectives for the strategic plan:

- Establish financial stability over time.
- Clarify the role of the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund.
- Review the *Preservation and Management Plan* and current programmatic activities and adjust priorities as necessary.



VISION.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, working through a wide range of partnerships, is preserving and interpreting our nation's past, providing world class recreational and educational opportunities, fostering economic revitalization, improving quality of life in Corridor communities, and guiding the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21st century "River of Commerce and Culture."

Methodology for Creating This Plan

Working with an outside facilitator, Heritage Strategies, LLC, beginning in March 2010 the Commission developed a plan for completion that included two full retreats, a number of committee meetings, an intensive interview process, and development of the final product.

In May the Commission held its initial strategic planning retreat in Utica. That meeting focused on fundraising and the relationship of the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund to the federal Commission, and resulted in creation of a Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat (SWOT) analysis.

Intensive interviews followed the retreat and the Commission's review of the SWOT at its June meeting. These included all Commissioners currently serving (24) and all seven staff members. In addition, stakeholder interviews were conducted with a variety of individuals throughout the Corridor and representatives of all four National Parks located within the Corridor. Finally, staff from four other National Heritage Areas with similar resources and concerns were interviewed. All interviews were transcribed and a final summary report was prepared by the facilitator.

Following the interview process the Commission's Strategic Planning Committee created a "model," or ideal representation, of the work and roles of the Corridor, Commission, and partners to guide development of the strategic plan. This proved to be a breakthrough moment, as it reduced an extremely complex mission to its fundamentals: *inform*, *promote*, and *preserve*, accomplished through *partnership* to achieve a long-term goal of *sustainability*.

The new model served as an outline for the conversation at the second retreat, held in November at Baldwinsville. That retreat suggested language, priorities, and direction for the final strategic plan, which also used the model as the organizing principle. The final draft of the plan was reviewed at the January 2011 Commission meeting in Syracuse and approved at the April 2011 Commission meeting in Buffalo.

"The purpose of the Preservation and Management Plan is to offer guidance to the legislatively authorized Commission and to its partners – federal and state agencies, individual communities, nonprofit and private organizations – in formulating policies and taking action to achieve the National Heritage Corridor's full potential"

—Erie Canalway Preservation and Management Plan, 2006



Dealing with Financial Stability and Administrative Needs

The following factors necessitated development of a strategy to secure non-federal and private funding to ensure we are able to continue the critical work through partnerships to implement the Preservation and Management Plan.

Reliance on Federal Funding

The first five years of work to implement the P&MP was funded through the Commission's annual appropriation, direct financial support from the National Park Service including the detail of two staff members and funding to support their activities, other funds from federal programs, and a limited amount of state and other grant funding. The Commission, like all NHA's has demonstrated an exceptional ability to leverage federal dollars with state and private sector funding, at ratios exceeding Congressionally imposed matching requirements.¹ The Commission recognizes the inherent risk of relying on federal appropriations as its primary source of operating support and seeks to diversify its fund development strategies. While it is assumed for the purposes of this strategic plan that some level of federal funding will continue, it is also assumed that such resources will be significantly reduced.

The uncertainty of federal funding and potential reductions are threats to on-going operations. It impedes long-range planning for a stable program that can efficiently respond to the Corridor's needs. Federal funding may best be suitable for specific projects where variability is not a threat to core operations.

Operating a Heritage Area Managing Entity Solely Through a Federal Body

Supplementing federal funds and maintaining a steady operational budget requires diversifying the sources of funds for Corridor programs. As a federal entity, however, the Commission is circumscribed in its capacity to raise funds from non-federal sources. Many grant programs are not open to federal entities and NPS entities cannot seek (but can sometimes accept) donations.

Federal procurement, hiring, contracting and other ordinary business matters can be onerous, add extra layers of communication and reporting, and can cause project delays and additional staff costs. Federal entities are generally precluded from enterprise activities such as product sales. A companion nonprofit entity can serve to supplement the Commission's administrative needs, as Parks & Trails New York currently does by hiring part of the staff. This shared public-private management model has proven successful at Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor where a commission and nonprofit worked side by side for a period of time.

¹ National Heritage Areas and the National Park Service: Protecting Investment and Sustaining a Public-Private Partnership for the Future, Alliance of National Heritage Areas, 2010

The Commission's 2015 Sunset and the Overall National Context

Although the designation of the NHC continues into perpetuity, Congressional authority for the Commission and its associated annual project funding is scheduled to expire in the fall of 2015.

With the likelihood of another reauthorization uncertain, and given the strong accomplishments of the Corridor over the last several years, as well as the ongoing public need for the programs it has developed, the question has been raised how the mission and nationally significant resources of the Corridor can be sustained.¹

The success of the NHA model has led to a sharp increase in the number of NHAs being designated in recent years. Overall funding for NHAs has not kept pace with this increase. Appropriations have fallen far behind authorizations and totaled less than \$18 million in FY10 (for 49 NHAs, with a cumulative authorization of \$49 million). Annual appropriation uncertainty, combined with the lack of adequate funding for the increased number of NHAs, has significantly affected the ability of new NHAs to move beyond initial planning, and restricted existing NHAs' ability to implement management plans and honor partnership agreements. This is inconsistent with the National Park System Advisory Board Report Charting a Future for the National Heritage Areas (2006) and the National Parks Second Century Commission Report Advancing the National Park Idea (2009), both of which focused on the critical role NHAs can play in helping the NPS fulfill its mission in the future.²

Program legislation is currently a strategy being pursued by the Alliance of National Heritage Areas and others to recognize the shared mission of the NPS and NHAs, and to strengthen the ability of NHAs to contribute to that mission by creating a system of NHAs within the NPS and giving it full program status. The legislation is likely to renew the mandate for NHAs to work through partnerships and maintain emphasis on leveraging federal dollars for state and private sector funding. The legislation is likely to establish, or mandate development of, objective criteria for nomination, designation, management planning, and performance evaluation of NHAs.

¹ Blackstone National Heritage Corridor, Briefing to Regional Directors

² National Heritage Areas and the National Park Service: Protecting Investment and Sustaining a Public-Private Partnership for the Future, Alliance of National Heritage Areas, 2010

Evaluation

In May 2008, Congress passed legislation requiring the Secretary of the Interior to conduct an evaluation of the accomplishments of a National Heritage Area three years prior to the date on which authority for federal funding of the NHA sunsets. ECNHC's sunset date is 2015.

The initial evaluations are designed to answer three questions:

- Based on its authorizing legislation and general management plan, has the Heritage Area achieved its proposed accomplishments?
- What have been the impacts of investments made by Federal, State, Tribal and local government and private entities?
- How do the Heritage Area's management structure, partnership relationships, and current funding contribute to its sustainability?

The evaluation design also examines:

- Overarching goals for NHA;
- Resources and key partnerships available to help NHA accomplish its goals;
- Activities and strategies that are being implemented to accomplish the NHA's goals;
- Intended short and long term outcomes; and
- The linkages among the activities, strategies, and outcomes.

The Benefits of Federal Designation

Why not simply allow the Commission to sunset if federal funding is so uncertain and federal operations are so restricted? In undergoing strategic planning, Commissioners have been unanimous in their appreciation of the status and prestige given to the Commission and the Corridor by federal recognition and the many benefits of a long-term partnership with one of the Nation's most trusted institutions, the National Park Service.

The federal appropriation for ECNHC is an added benefit which distinguishes the Commission significantly from other kinds of nonprofit organizations in the region.



MISSION.

The mission of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is to plan for, encourage and assist historic preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, tourism and community development throughout the Corridor in a manner that promotes partnerships among the Corridor's many stakeholders, and reflects, celebrates and enhances the Corridor's national significance for all to use and enjoy.

Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc.

Because of its ability to address these challenges by providing fundraising diversification and greater operational flexibility, a nonprofit “Heritage Fund” was envisioned in the P&MP. Such an entity can also be organized in such a way that it is effectively an “insurance policy” capable of undertaking direction of the Corridor should Congress allow the Commission to sunset. This “contingency plan” assures partners, donors and the public of the firm commitment of the coordinating entity to the long-term success of the Corridor.

The Commission established the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc. soon after the P&MP was accepted by the Secretary of the Interior in 2005. It is now time to bring the Heritage Fund forward to take full advantage of its potential. This requires populating its board – maintained until recently with a “skeleton crew” – with a mix of Commissioners and others, a step taken in November 2010. A second step is to ensure that the existing Cooperative Agreement between the Commission and the Heritage Fund board is effective in articulating clear direction for Heritage Fund activities.

Accordingly, this Strategic Plan will provide specific guidance for the Commission and the Heritage Fund in Strategic Priority #4, Sustain, and Strategic Priority #5, Manage.

“Across the country, national heritage areas are creating partnerships that include government agencies, philanthropic organizations, educational institutions, non-profit groups and private citizens – all engaged toward the same goal of preserving, protecting and ultimately improving the economic vitality of communities”

— Alliance of National Heritage Areas: Impact Facts, May 2010



Management Framework

The managing entity for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is a federally appointed commission. The P&MP, drawing from the Commission's legislated mandates, mission statement, and vision (listed in sidebars), establishes an operational framework for the Commission. In general, the Preservation and Management Plan states that the role of the Erie Canalway NHC Commission is to:

- Provide support, funding, technical assistance and/or in-kind services to others to assist in leveraging or implementing projects that advance the P&MP;
- Catalyze collaboration among those whose decisions impact heritage resources, and among organizations in allied pursuits;
- Educate, communicate, and advocate for the P&MP as a guiding document for decision makers, entrepreneurs, residents;
- Raise the profile of the Corridor as a whole, bringing greater local and worldwide recognition of its unique history and resources; and
- Build a foundation for the future to ensure the stability and long-term sustainability of National Heritage Corridor activities.
- Recognizes that the Commission primarily serves as a convener and that the only programs that it should develop on its own are ones that are fundamentally new or which could not be done by any other organization.

In honing its strategic direction for the next five years, the Commission believes that the emphasis in its role should be the following:


- To act as an educator/facilitator to motivate independent actions that will accomplish the mission of the ECNHC and maximize limited resources.
- To take action through specific projects or programs when ECNHC is the only or most appropriate entity to bring about initiation or successful completion of critical work.
- To link partner organizations to form a more cohesive entity throughout the 524-mile-long Corridor.
- To promote partnerships at the local, regional, state and federal levels to accomplish the mission of ECNHC and maximize limited resources. Given the size of the Corridor and the diverse number and types of partners, clarity in how the Commission will interact with those partners is needed.

How This Plan Will be Used

This strategic plan articulates a prioritization of work over the next five years and describes how it plans to accomplish this work. In short, the Commission **Preserves** the Corridor's nationally significant resources, **Promotes** tourism and recreation, and **Informs** the public and key audiences about the Corridor, its rich history, and the objectives of the Preservation and Management Plan. The result of this work is **Community Betterment** measured in various ways including economic revitalization. This work is accomplished by working through **Partnerships** and by **Sustaining** a financially viable management organization. The pages that follow outline specific strategies with measurable outcomes for each component of the model.

This Strategic Plan serves as:

1. A touchstone for the Commission and staff to keep as a priority the need to achieve fiscal sustainability through diversified funding.
2. The outline for the structure of future Commission meetings with focus on the actionable items it describes. Subsequent workplans and the annual programmatic budget will also be guided by this plan. The plan does not address associated tasks of timeframe and project specifics, etc., that are detailed as part of the annual workplanning process.
3. A guide for prioritizing and consolidating staff work with the intention of creating efficiencies of approach both within the Commission's programmatic work and in how the Commission and staff engage the Corridor.
4. A tool that defines our specific priorities and strategies for the coming five years. As such, it is intended to be used in conjunction with the P&MP and other planning documents in conveying to the public who we are and what we do.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY I

PRESERVE

“Ensure that the Corridor’s historic and distinctive sense of place is widely expressed and consistently protected.”

-Preservation and Management Plan, 2006


In the next five years, preservation efforts must focus on leveraging and completing existing multi-year projects and focusing attention on those areas and problems of the Corridor that demonstrate maximum need with potential for positive gain. Preservation efforts must be coupled with strong local support and undertaken in partnership with those state agencies and nonprofits with a vested interest.

	RESOURCE	PRIORITY	PARTNERS	STAFF
1 Preserve Corridor resources through documentation and mapping.				
a. Complete inventory and National Register (NR) historic district nomination of Barge Canal.	HUD (funded)	Medium	OPRHP	DH
b. Make inventory and documentation data publically available (Google Earth & etc.).	Foundation	Medium	OPRHP	DH
c. Assist Historic American Engineering (HAER) documentation and recording projects.	Local Foundation	Low		DH
2 Preserve historic resources by identifying candidates for NR and National Historic Landmark (NHL) nomination (19th century canal structures, buildings, historic districts, landscapes).				
a. Identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to address under recognized communities and property types.	Federal	Medium	NYSCC	DH
b. Develop National Register Multiple Property Documentation form (MPDF) for 19th century canal features.	Not Determined	Low	OPRHP	DH
c. Disseminate examples of local surveys and nominations that can serve as models for efforts in other canal communities.	Local Foundation	Medium	OPRHP, PLNYS	DH

	RESOURCE	PRIORITY	PARTNERS	STAFF
3 Preserve and protect canal community resources through state and local partners who monitor the condition of those resources and alert agencies to threats.	Not Determined	Low	OPRHP, PLNYS	DH
4 Preserve Corridor assets by highlighting exemplary preservation and conservation projects and by assembling and disseminating information regarding best practices, guidelines, and other resources.	Not Determined	Medium	OPRHP, PLNYS, DEC	DH, JM
5 Preserve and protect threatened resources by supporting local preservation efforts through technical assistance, participation in planning meetings, and letters of support.	Not Determined	Medium	OPRHP, PLNYS, NYSCC	HB

Preserve – Measures

- Barge Canal National Register Nomination completed by 12/2011.
- Barge Canal National Register Nomination database and maps are available on-line by 12/2012.
- Existing information about 19th century canal structures is identified, listed, and prioritized in a searchable database by 12/2012.
- Resource materials that document best practices, guidelines, and other relevant technical materials are available through the Erie Canalway NHC website.
- The Interpretive Media Plan described in Inform is inclusive of a process to disseminate the information developed in Preserve.
- Guidelines are established for responding to requests to support Corridor based preservation efforts.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

PROMOTE

“The Corridor’s economic growth and heritage development will be balanced and self-sustaining.”

-Preservation and Management Plan, 2006

The Commission of the Erie Canalway NHC recognizes that it is uniquely positioned to raise the profile of the Corridor as a whole. By making strategic use of the region’s heritage resources to increase the reach and effectiveness of existing tourism development and marketing efforts, it hopes to bring greater local and worldwide recognition of the Corridor’s unique history and resources.

	RESOURCE	PRIORITY	PARTNERS	STAFF
1 Promote best practices for heritage development, preservation, interpretation, tourism, and natural resource conservation.				
a. Distribute guidelines, funding and technical assistance resources, and contact information to communities, cultural organizations, partners, and others through Erie Canalway website, e-news, fact sheets, presentations, and other forums.	Not Determined	Medium	NYSCC, WECA, Partner Program	JM, LD
b. Encourage Peer-to-Peer information sharing through networking opportunities, list-serves, speaking engagements, and other opportunities.	IMLS	Medium	NYSCC, TPAs, Partner Program	LD, AK
c. Continue to recognize, promote, and disseminate best practices through the Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence program, while building partnerships with and connections among organizations and individuals doing outstanding heritage development.	Foundation and Sponsorship	High	NYSCC, Various planning, arts, economic development and preservation groups	JM, AK
2 Promote the development of tourism products and training to ensure the Corridor is visitor ready. Work with partners to provide training to destinations, cultural and recreational sites, communities, tourism professionals, and others in cultural heritage tourism related subjects (including visitor readiness and tourism visitation survey work).				
	Foundation and Sponsorship	High	NYSCC, CVBs, TPAs, and I Love NY	LD

	RESOURCE	PRIORITY	PARTNERS	STAFF
3 Promote widespread understanding among community and business leaders, residents, and others of the importance and value of the Canal System, the Heritage Corridor and cultural heritage development.				
a. Work with partners to collect existing and potentially undertake additional regional studies of the visitation and economic impacts of heritage tourism in the Corridor.	Foundation	Medium	Universities, NYSCC	LD,HB
b. Build a network of knowledgeable and committed community leaders and other decision makers who see the value in and are willing to advocate for the Corridor and Canal System.	Not Determined	Medium	NYSCC, PLNYS	All
c. Work with I Love NY, Local TPAs, Canal New York, and the NYS Canal Corporation to strategically market and promote the Canalway Corridor and its resources to national and international visitors.	Foundation and Sponsorship	High	I Love NY, TPAs, NYSCC, Canal New York	LD


4 Promote Canal-focused and Corridor-wide events to generate excitement and increased visitation/ use of Corridor recreational and heritage resources.				
a. Provide small sponsorships for community based canal-focused events throughout the Corridor.	Not Determined	High	NYSCC, ESDC	LD
b. Support partner-led Corridor-wide events including voyages, boating, cycling, and heritage events through limited sponsorships and marketing/outreach support.	Not Determined	High	NYSCC, DEC, OPRHP, PTNY, WECA	LD, JM
c. Seek partnerships with DEC, OPRHP, nonprofits, and others to increase access and public awareness of nature trails, public wetlands, and other natural resource opportunities.	Foundations	Medium	DEC, NYSCC, OPRHP, PTNY	JM,HB, LD

	RESOURCE	PRIORITY	PARTNERS	STAFF
5 Promote interconnectivity and multimodal transportation to link and facilitate access to Corridor communities and sites by car, rail, boat, and bike and on foot.				
a. Develop, in cooperation with partners, an Alternative Transportation needs assessment and prioritize projects throughout the Corridor that enhance connectivity between Corridor resources to make recreational travel within the Corridor more efficient and to bring new audiences to Corridor resources.	Federal Highways	High	NYSCC, PTNY, NPS Denver Service Center	HB
b. Work with partners to identify and secure additional Alternative Transportation funding to implement projects identified through the needs assessment.	Federal	High	NYSCC, PTNY, NPS Denver Service Center	HB
c. Advocate and leverage federal, state, and local support for Canalway Trail completion in collaboration with the NYS Canal Corporation and Parks and Trails New York, both of whom will take a lead role.	Not Determined	Low	NYSCC, PTNY	HB
d. On a case by case basis provide limited technical assistance for Canalway and Champlain canal based trail projects.	Not Determined	Medium	Communities, NYSCC, PTNY	LD

Promote – Measures

- By 2015, 25 sites in the National Heritage Corridor will be recognized through the Erie Canalway Heritage Award of Excellence for best practices in heritage development. ECNHC will publish case studies and lessons learned from these projects on the web to serve as models.
- ECNHC will establish a Peer-to-Peer Network of 30-50 participating organizations to facilitate regular dialog and resource sharing on best practices for conservation and heritage development.
- By 2013, ECNHC and its partners will develop 5 regionally based travel itineraries which will be distributed by TPAs, CVBs, and other tourism promotion organizations.
- I Love NY and related tourism partners that intersect the National Heritage Corridor will actively promote the Erie Canalway Corridor as a destination in their tourism guides, on their websites, and at national and international travel shows.
- The staff of I Love NY recognizes the tourism value of the Erie Canalway Corridor through representation in various promotional materials.

- Twenty-five cultural heritage sites in the Corridor will be promoted through the Passport to Parks program in order to link canal-related sites, encourage multi-day visits, and inform visitors of the impact of the canals.
- The overall number of sites that distribute ECNHC brochures increases.
- The overall number of visitors to canal specific heritage sites increases and is demonstrated through obtaining individual institutional tracking records from these organizations.
- Festival and event attendance, particularly at events centered on canal heritage and recreation, will continue to grow and generate significant tourism revenue. Ten percent of the 250-300 heritage-based festivals and events per year will be sponsored by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.
- New interpretive media products are developed and available to the public.
- Appropriate new media technology is in use and staff is adequately trained.
- Corridor sites and stories are visibly integrated for visitors through consistent signs at Erie Canalway Partner sites, the Passport to Parks program, regional brochures, and integrated web-based tourism information. Individual communities and heritage sites are integrated with each other and into the larger Corridor community.
- The planning phase of the Alternative Transportation project has been completed.
- Additional Alternative Transportation funding for the implementation phase has been identified and secured.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3

INFORM

“The Corridor’s current and future generations of residents and visitors will value and support preservation of its heritage.”

-Preservation and Management Plan, 2006

Significant gains have been made in raising awareness about the National Heritage Corridor as a place, as well as the benefits that the federal designation and Commission bring to the region. However, much of this recognition is limited to a relatively small number of heritage sites, community leaders and activists, and politicians. Efforts in the next five years must focus on increasing awareness of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor so that it achieves greater recognition at the local, state, and national level. When seen as a unified region, centered on a nationally significant canal system, the Corridor adds place-value which can be an integral part of economic and community revitalization in upstate New York.

	RESOURCE	PRIORITY	PARTNERS	STAFF
1 Inform broad audiences about the mission and accomplishments of the ECNHC and reinforce the Corridor’s unique sense of place through all communications.				
a. Continue to publish annually: annual report, ANHA reports, Erie Canalway Map & Guide. Develop new publications as needed to support organizational mission and fundraising activities.	Not Determined	High	ANHA	JM
b. Maintain the Erie Canalway website to serve multiple audiences and purposes: online brochure and portal to the National Heritage Corridor (the place and the organization), tool for education, gateway for visitors, and a resource for partners. Continue to build interactivity and user generated content.	Not Determined	High	NA	JM
c. Continue to inform stakeholders via electronic media, Partner signs, media releases, press events, and other publications and media outlets.	Not Determined	High	NYSCC, WECA, Partner Program	JM
d. Revise overall communications strategy annually to ensure that all Corridor programs (interpretive, promotional, preservation, development) include a communications component to inform key audiences about the program/project and its outcomes.	Not Determined	Medium	NA	JM

	RESOURCE	PRIORITY	PARTNERS	STAFF
<p>2 Inform museums and cultural sites how they individually and collectively enhance the full story of the canal’s lasting impact.</p>				
<p>a. Implement the Erie Canalway Partner Program to integrate and connect heritage sites to each other and to the Heritage Corridor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training and technical assistance including professional development opportunities. • Provide grants and access to funding sources • Install signs recognizing partner sites relationship to the ECNHC and Partner Program. • Provide peer networking and information sharing. 	IMLS Foundation	High	Various	AK, JM

<p>3 Inform residents, visitors, and the general public about the compelling stories, themes, places, and resources that comprise the Heritage Corridor by developing and using interpretive media to raise the profile of the Corridor as a whole.</p>				
<p>a. Develop an interpretive media plan for the Corridor that includes publications and exhibits as well as video, new media, performance and public art, multimedia, smart phone applications, and other related technology.</p>	Not Determined	Medium	NA	AK, JM
<p>b. Seek funding for and develop new approaches to interpretation in partnerships with museum and educational institutions.</p>	Foundation and Sponsorship	Medium	Museums, Universities, NYS Dept of Ed	AK
<p>c. Design and install 30-50 interpretive signs at key locations on NYS Canal Corporation land through the Federal Highway Administration grant.</p>	Federal Highways	High	NYSCC, DOT	DH

	RESOURCE	PRIORITY	PARTNERS	STAFF
4 Inform key stakeholders and decision makers within local, state, and federal government about the goals and objectives of the Erie Canalway NHC and collaboratively identify opportunities to implement the Preservation and Management Plan.				
a. Act as a convener and catalyst for strategic alliances among NYS agencies to leverage heritage assets and to target funding and technical assistance toward Corridor communities.	Foundation and State Awards	Medium	DOT, NYSCC, OPRHP	BS
b. Engage elected officials in ongoing efforts of the Erie Canalway NHC and its partners through briefings, tours, and special events.	Not Determined	Low	Congressional and State Representatives, Governor's office, local leaders	BS
c. In partnership with various state agencies, regional planning councils, and other partners, encourage communities to integrate heritage development into their planning efforts and to strengthen their heritage preservation policies and investments.	Not Determined	Low	NYSCC, DOS, ESDC	HB
d. State agencies with grant programs relevant to the ECNHC are encouraged to include points in the scoring process for those applicants able to link their projects with the ECNHC goals and objectives.	Not Determined	Low	NYSCC, DOS, OPRHP	BS

Inform – Measures

- Number of community websites and heritage websites linked to ECNHC.
- State agencies include points within their grant applications for applicants' ability to link their projects to the goals and objectives of the P&MP.
- Additional funding sources are secured that continue the Partner Program beyond the IMLS deadline in 2013.
- The Peer-to-Peer Network is growing.
- Testimonials reinforce the overall effectiveness of ECNHC technical assistance workshops provided by both partners and ECNHC staff.
- Number of communities with new interpretive signs related to their canal heritage.
- Continued growth and development of the annual Photo Contest and calendar.
- Map & Guide is updated and published annually.
- Map & Guide, Unigrd brochure, and site bulletins are distributed through various outlets.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4

SUSTAIN

“The ability to achieve all that is set forth in the Plan will depend on the success of continued and enhanced partnerships and collaboration, policy decisions at the state and federal levels, and the availability of financial and other resources.”

-Preservation and Management Plan, 2006

The ECNHC Commission and the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund Board have made their first priority the realization of financial sustainability by 2015. The goal is to minimize reliance on the federal appropriation, historically representing most of the resources available to the Commission. Over the past 10 years the federal appropriation has been used effectively to develop important programming, build local capacity, and create a Corridor wide sense of awareness of the value of the Erie Canalway. This positive climate now serves as the springboard to reverse the Commission's traditional reliance on the federal appropriation and make it a small part of a diverse package of public/private support.

1. **Sustain** the organization by building up on the historically strong work of the Commission by including both established and new partnership relationships that carry on the work of the ECNHC and result in realized financial returns through public/private partnerships.
2. **Sustain** the ongoing healthy relationship between ECNHC and ECHF by establishing a formalized working relationship that addresses the decision making process.
 - a. Write a short-term (1-2 year) Memo of Understanding addressing the protocols of the decision making process including staff management, programmatic direction, fundraising strategies, contracting, and general management and accounting, etc.
 - b. Following the short-term period of the MOU, create a long term agreement that addresses the points in Sustain 2.a.
3. **Sustain** the organization by engaging a fundraising professional through the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund to facilitate the preparation of a sustainability plan which establishes a process for reducing reliance on the federal appropriation and prioritizes the realization of non-federal funding as the main line of support.
 - a. Ensure that the sustainability planning matches and leverages goals and addresses benchmarks defined by the NPS evaluation process.
 - b. Establish clear direction that ECHF board member fundraising priorities and those of the fundraising professional are focused on the planning for and realization of general operating support.
 - c. Establish clear direction that ECNHC/ECHF Programmatic Staffs' fundraising priorities are to secure and administer programmatic support relevant to program area, including all grant associated research, writing, and administration.
 - d. Develop progressive annual goals of substituting sponsorships, grant dollars, and donations for federal funding in virtually all programs over the next five years.

4. **Sustain** the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund by building the Heritage Fund Board.
 - a. Establish a full complement of board members who represent a diverse cross-section of both the Corridor's geography and the professional disciplines specific to success in fundraising.

5. **Sustain** by establishing relevant policies and procedures that inform the transition of ECNHC Partner Staff and associated administration to the Heritage Fund.
 - a. ECNHC outgoing and incoming grants will be administered by the Heritage Fund.
 - b. The bulk of ECNHC's federal appropriation will be administered by the Heritage Fund.
 - c. The present Partner Staff will be transitioned to the Heritage Fund as the formal employer.
 - d. The line of authority between the Heritage Fund staff and the Commission Staff will be established.

Sustain – Measures

- The ECHF Board has established, in conjunction with the ECNHC Commission a clear and mutually agreed upon procedural protocol for all aspects of decision making.
- By the end of the strategic plan period the Heritage Fund serves as the administrative backbone of the Commission. All staff, contracts, and administrative services are conducted here.
- A fundraising professional is hired and has created a long range sustainability plan.
- The Heritage Fund Board generates a cash balance (and reserves) that serves to effectively front all funds needed to administer the federal appropriation's reimbursement cycle and is robust enough to mitigate anticipated delays in reimbursement.
- A database exists and continues to grow that is inclusive of funding opportunities that serve to assist staff in identifying programmatic support.
- A procedure is in place that supports staff efforts in the grant process including templates of general text, clear statistical data, and efficient accounting and tracking processes.
- The Heritage Fund and Commission have built a credible case for public support and have communicated this case clearly and consistently to many audiences.
- The Commission and all associated staff work seamlessly on a variety of programs and projects resulting in mutual support and growth.
- Political leaders, partners, and the public recognize and understand the benefits of assured funding for the ECNHC and the associated benefits of its resultant programs for the Corridor as a whole and are willing to state this publicly and advocate for the continued work of the ECNHC.
- All remaining questions from the 2008 New York Council of Nonprofits, Inc. report are addressed.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5

MANAGE

“The Commission must have adequate staff and the necessary resources to provide leadership, set quality standards, and channel the actions and energies of others effectively.”

-Preservation and Management Plan, 2006

To achieve the goals outlined in this five year plan, the Commission, Heritage Fund Board, Management, and Staff will strive for the most effective administrative functioning of the organization while ensuring efficient and strategic programmatic output.

1. **Manage** the organizational programmatic output to ensure the Commission achieves continued authorization both as a body and for funding beyond 2015.
2. **Manage** both the Commission and staff time to ensure sufficient personnel resources to complete the National Park Service’s National Heritage Area Evaluation.
3. **Manage** the continuity of the ECNHC by complying with relevant Congressional and other mandates regarding demonstrating organizational sustainability.
4. **Manage** the relationship between the Erie Canalway Commission and the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund by establishing the lines of authority between the staff and boards of both organizations.
5. **Manage** the daily operations through the generally accepted standards regarding NPO management and delegation of authority from the Commission to the Executive Director, and recognize that the Executive Director is the point of contact between the Commission and Staff.
6. **Manage** an efficient transition of ECNHC staff to the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund and maintain National Park Service staffing as a feature of the Commission.
7. **Manage** programmatic and budget decisions through the strategic plan.
8. **Manage** the creation of the annual workplan using the Strategic Plan as a structural foundation.
9. **Manage** the continued relevance of the Strategic Plan by structuring the ECNHC committees and Commission’s meeting agendas on the Plan’s Goals.

Manage – Measures

- The Commission receives continued Congressional authorization and associated funding beyond 2015.
- The NPS National Heritage Area Evaluation is completed and results in a favorable evaluation of the Commission and its programs.
- The Partner Staff and all administrative, financial, and personnel services are effectively transferred to the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund.
- The Strategies outlined in this Strategic Plan are reflected in the Annual Work Plan and the Plan’s measures are positively realized.

Terminology

For the purposes of this plan, the following terminology and abbreviations are used:

ANHA – Alliance of National Heritage Areas – a membership organization of the Congressionally designated National Heritage Areas committed to raising awareness among the Administration, Congress, its partners, and the public of the benefits of National Heritage Areas

Corridor, ECNHC – The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, a region of national significance designated by Congress.

CVB – Convention and Visitor Bureau

DEC – New York State Department of Conservation, administers Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grants in conjunction with OPRHP.

DOS – New York Department of State, home the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program.

DOT – Department of Transportation

ESDC – Empire State Development Corporation

Heritage Fund, ECHF – Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc., a private non-profit corporation created by the Commission of the ECNHC.

IMLS – Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency dedicated to the advancement of the nations museums and libraries.

NHA – National Heritage Area, Congressionally designated regions that function in partnership with the National Park Service.

NPS – National Park Service

NYSCC – New York State Canal Corporation, the formal owner and managing entity of the New York State Canal System. [This needs formal language from the NYS Canal Corp]

OPRHP – Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation. Manages the NYS park system as well as recreation, preservation, and conservation of objects including buildings, landscape, art, and historic objects.

P&MP – Preservation and Management Plan, the Commission's long term strategy for engaging the corridor.

PLNYS – Preservation League of New York State, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of New York State’s built and landscape environments.

PTNY – Parks & Trails New York, a non-profit organization that advocates for construction and maintenance of parks and trails throughout the state, organizes an annual bicycle tour along the length of the Erie Canal, and employs most of ECNHC’s staff through a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service (NPS).

SHPO – The State Historic Preservation Office, a department within the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

TPA – Tourism Promotion Agency

WECA – Western Erie Canal Alliance administers the NYS Western Erie Canal Heritage Area.

Development of Priority Criteria

Six criteria are used to prioritize each of the Strategic Plan’s Strategies. Five are taken directly from the Implementation chapter of the P&MP and a sixth is derived from the Management Framework section of the Strategic Plan. The criteria are cross referenced with questions that determine a value for each strategy. Where appropriate, the NHA evaluation methodology currently being used by NPS is included to help formulate these questions. The six criteria are: **High Degree of Public Support and Community Engagement; Realistically Achievable; Funding/Leverage; Visibility; Critical Action; Engages and Builds Partnerships**

