

1

Introduction
and Purpose
of the Plan**PURPOSE OF THE PLAN**

In December 2000 the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Act (PL 106-544, title VIII) was adopted by Congress. This designation applies to all 234 municipalities adjoining the 524 miles of navigable waterway that comprise the New York State Canal System, including the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca and Oswego; the historic alignments of these canals, including the cities of Albany and Buffalo; and related navigable lakes, including Seneca and Cayuga Lakes. The legislation acknowledges the instrumental role the canals played in the growth and development of the United States, and affirms a national interest in the preservation and interpretation of the Corridor's important historic, cultural, recreational, educational, scenic and natural resources. The legislation stemmed from a 1995 Appropriations Act directive calling for a National Park Service special resource study which determined that the New York State Canal System was of "unparalleled national significance," merited federal recognition, and assessed national heritage corridor designation.*

While the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor benefits from numerous ongoing efforts to protect, interpret, and promote its wealth of resources, the region's residents agree that much more remains to be done. This Preservation and Management Plan for the Corridor is not a physical master plan detailing infrastructural or building projects to be undertaken. Rather, the purpose of the Plan is to offer guidance to the legislatively authorized Commission which will steward the plan's implementation, and its partners – federal and state agencies, individual communities, nonprofit and private organizations – in formu-

Photo:
Glens Falls Feeder Canal

Erie Canalway
National Heritage Corridor
Preservation and Management Plan

* New York State Canal System Special Resource Study, National Park Service, 1998

lating policies and taking action to achieve the National Heritage Corridor's full potential by:

- protecting and preserving its historic, natural, cultural and recreational resources;
- interpreting and educating the public about the story of the canals;
- fostering and promoting recreational opportunities;
- helping perpetuate canal-related music, art, literature, and folkway traditions;
- helping market the Corridor;
- stimulating economic development and community revitalization; and
- fostering cooperative partnerships.

The National Heritage Corridor will serve as an “umbrella” to unite and coordinate existing federal, state, and local plans and multiple points of view, focusing on partnerships that cross jurisdictional boundaries and build on mutual interests.

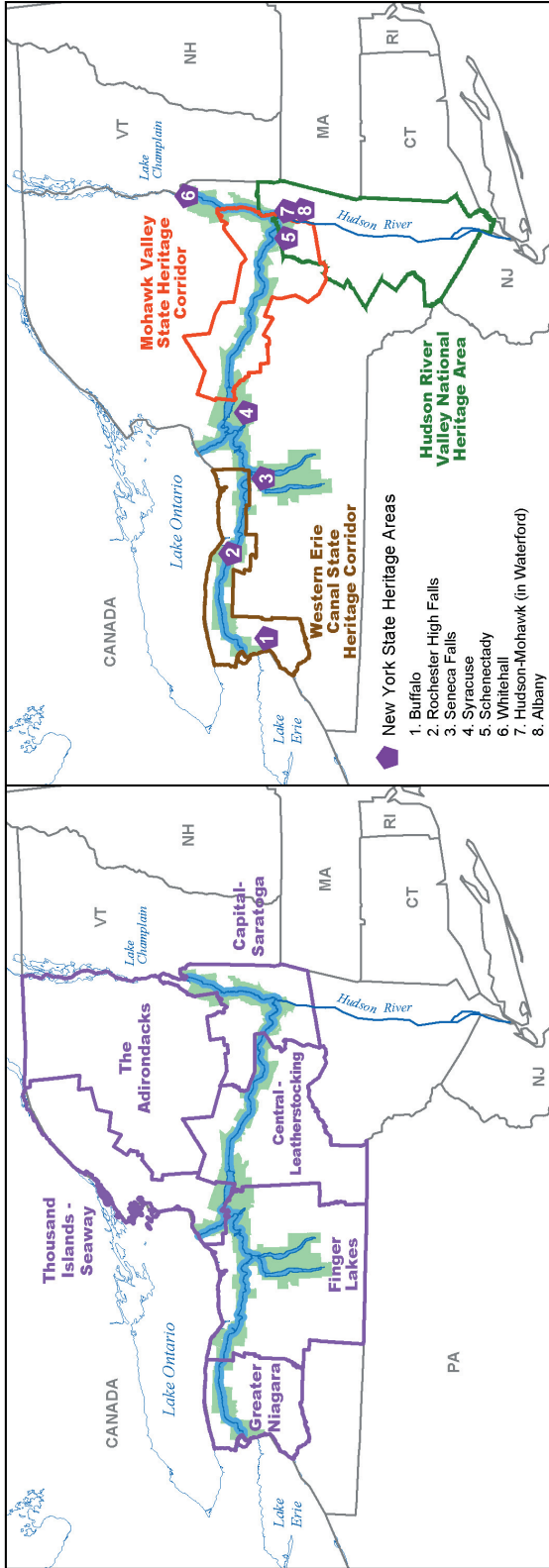
Preparation of the Plan has been informed by extensive public input. Nine public meetings were held in December 2003 and January 2004 in order to gather information and impressions from the public and explain to local communities the legislated purpose and mandate of the Corridor. Eight public review meetings were held in July 2005 in order to introduce the draft Preservation and Management Plan and Environmental Assessment and solicit comments from the public. Numerous additional meetings have been held with tribal representatives, political leaders, and private or nonprofit stewards of heritage resources. In addition, information surveys sent to every municipality in the Corridor, and returned by nearly half of them, provided a base level of information about the current status of historic preservation, interpretation and economic revitalization activities. The public has been invited to all official Commission meetings, and the Commission has also operated and promoted a public website since January 2004 to solicit input and provide updates. The Commission and the preparers of this Plan value this input and have sought to address in these pages all of the issues and concerns brought to their attention.

OTHER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS AND CORRIDORS

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor joins a distinguished group of over two dozen other nationally significant heritage regions located throughout the United States, each of which has made a unique contribution to the nation's development and growth. These areas, ranging in size from an entire state to urban districts, have used their status to promote themselves as special tourist destinations that combine a strong sense of place and natural scenic beauty with expanded opportunities for recreation and exploration of national history. In the most successful national heritage areas, intensive planning efforts have also elevated the quality of life for residents by protecting and interpreting their region's distinctive historic and natural features and building partnerships for community-based recreational and economic development.

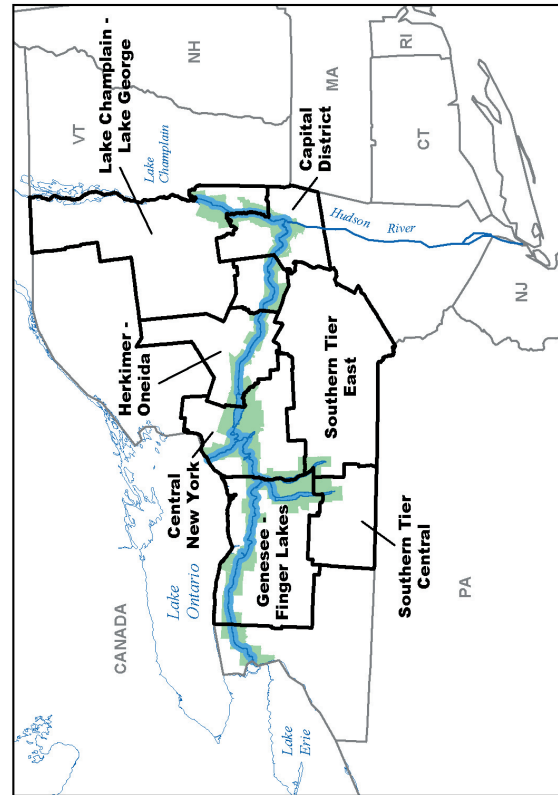


Network of Connecting Waterways



Other Heritage Areas and Corridors

New York State Tourism Regions



Regional Planning Council / Board Areas (7)

NYS Canal System (Barge Canal)

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



0 50 100 Miles

Jurisdictions Overlapping the Corridor

Several national heritage areas share characteristics similar to those of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Although somewhat smaller, the Illinois & Michigan, the Ohio & Erie, the Delaware & Lehigh, and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridors are each composed of diverse communities that share a common history threaded together by a canal system. In each region, local heritage extends far beyond the edges of the waterway. The national heritage area designation has helped the populations of these regions understand their historical and natural surroundings as part of a greater national story. Grasping the value of local heritage has motivated many communities to implement master plans and projects to protect and preserve historical and natural assets which might otherwise have been ignored, neglected or destroyed. Many of these efforts have sought to enhance the symbiotic relationship between the canal system and the region through an integrated program of historic preservation, conservation of natural resources, environmental quality and economic investment.

PARTNERS AND BUILDING BLOCKS

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan builds upon a number of well-conceived state and local plans for portions of the region. The Corridor's Plan is designed to coordinate and enhance these efforts rather than replace or override them. A major difference between this Plan and its predecessors is that it focuses on the comprehensive revitalization of a much larger region, spanning many jurisdictions. In addition to the 234 cities, towns and villages within its borders, the Corridor overlaps the boundaries of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area; ten New York State Heritage Areas or Corridors; seven regional planning areas; numerous state-defined areas for tourism promotion, environmental conservation, transportation and water management; several state and national parks and historic sites; and an abundance of state and nationally recognized historic places.

State and municipal agencies are only one part of the effort to revitalize the region encompassed by the Corridor. Statewide and regional nonprofits have taken a leadership role in guiding and funding improvements in preservation, conservation, recreation and interpretation. Many organizations are actively contributing to the realization of the vision of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, with volunteer or grassroots initiatives explicitly focused on the history and future potential of the canal system and the places most immediately influenced by it. This local enthusiasm and initiative is the key to ensuring the long-term stewardship of the Corridor's unique resources.

Because the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is primarily funded at the federal level, there are mechanisms available to the Commission that were not available to organizations involved with previous plans, including financial assistance and access to technical assistance from the National Park Service. With its broad scope, federal resources, and the high level of visibility and credibility provided by the National Park Service and Congressional designation, the National Heritage Corridor offers an opportunity to bring new focus, coordination, stature and visibility, clarity, and energy about the Canalway to an exten-

sive existing planning and implementation infrastructure. Given the extent of existing activities, the Corridor should be viewed as an additional resource to help coordinate and set in motion the strategies, remedies, and supportive actions of others.

The state and regional partners and planning initiatives that have influenced development of the Preservation and Management Plan are listed below and described in Chapters 3-8 of the Plan, with additional information on specific programs provided in the Appendix.

- New York State Canal Corporation and Thruway Authority
- New York State Canal Recreationway Commission
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, including the State Historic Preservation Office and the Heritage Areas program
- New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York State Department of State, including the Division of Coastal Resources and the Quality Communities Initiative
- New York State Department of Transportation, including the Scenic Byways program
- Empire State Development Corporation, including the Division of Marketing, Advertising and Tourism
- New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal
- New York State Department of Education, including the New York State Museum, Library, and Archives
- Governor's Office of Small Cities
- Regional Planning Boards/Councils and county planning agencies
- Tourism Promotion Agencies and Regional Tourism Organizations
- Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area/Hudson River Valley Greenway
- Lakes to Locks Passage
- Mohawk River Valley (State) Heritage Corridor
- Western Erie Canal (State) Heritage Corridor
- Canal Society of New York State
- Parks & Trails New York
- Preservation League of New York State
- Canal New York, Inc.

Essential input has also been provided by the following American Indian tribes and groups:

- Haudenosaunee (confederation of Iroquois nations)
- Oneida Indian Nation
- Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin
- Onondaga Indian Nation
- St. Regis Mohawk Tribe
- Seneca Nation of Indians
- Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma
- Stockbridge-Munsee Community of Wisconsin
- Tonawanda Band of Seneca
- Tuscarora Nation

There will be many opportunities for existing organizations to adopt within their own work plans specific projects and programs that help to achieve the vision and goals in this Plan. Qualified partners will receive technical and financial assistance from the Commission. Individuals, businesses, and philanthropic and community foundations will also play an important role and will be encouraged to maintain a close involvement in the Plan's implementation as they choose local and regional initiatives in which to invest. The Commission will also work closely with universities and educational institutions and organizations to foster programs and projects in direct support of the Plan's goals. The New York State Canal Corporation will continue to be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the New York State Canal System.

An ongoing working relationship between the Commission and the National Park Service (NPS) is also vital to a successful implementation program. While National Heritage Areas and Corridors are not traditional National Park System units, the NPS is the administrative sponsor and conduit for federal funding and technical assistance for the development and implementation of the Preservation and Management Plan for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The Commission will seek continued support from NPS in the areas of implementation, technical assistance, and, as feasible, staff assistance. The NPS will help provide a direct linkage to nearby National Park System units, the National Heritage Areas program, and available NPS technical assistance programs, and to other federal agencies that may be sources of additional funding and technical assistance.

GOALS OF THE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

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 the quality of life in corridor communities, and guiding the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21st century "River of Commerce and Culture."

In order to achieve this vision, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission has established the following goals and supporting objectives:

The Corridor's historic and distinctive sense of place will be widely expressed and consistently protected

- Build public support for preservation and enhancement of critical historic and cultural resources
- Protect and enhance the authenticity and integrity of the Corridor's historic resources and canals, and the continued utility of the 20th century canal system
- Encourage investment in historic town centers, sustainable new development practices, and retention of farming and open space
- Help Corridor communities plan for protection of historic and cultural resources and future development

The Corridor's natural resources will reflect the highest standards of environmental quality

- Increase public awareness and support for conservation and enhancement of critical natural resources
- Encourage quality stewardship policies and practices

The Corridor's recreation opportunities will achieve maximum scope and diversity, in harmony with the protection of heritage resources

- Increase access to and diversity of recreational opportunities throughout the Corridor
- Encourage repeat visits and extend the stay of recreational visitors through the quality of the experience
- Enhance connectivity between wild areas, cultural areas, trail segments, and recreation destinations

The Corridor's current and future generations of residents and visitors will value and support preservation of its heritage

- Develop a Corridor-wide interpretive framework that is broadly applicable and addresses not only the system's rich past but its present and future as well
- Integrate individual communities and heritage sites with each other and into the larger Corridor story
- Improve the impact and effectiveness of locally and regionally sponsored educational and interpretive programs, facilities and materials, festivals and events across the entire Corridor
- Strengthen understanding and appreciation of the Corridor's heritage and importance within and beyond the region's boundary, among residents and visitors alike

The Corridor's economic growth and heritage development will be balanced and self-sustaining

- Harness existing tourism, industrial, agricultural, and community development assets in the service of economic development that reinforces the region's sense of place
- Increase local capacity to undertake heritage- and place-based approaches to economic development
- Establish a unifying National Heritage Corridor identity of place and lifestyle that complements regional identities, tourism destinations, and individual cities; links lesser-known towns; and encompasses canal stories
- Integrate a heritage- and place-based perspective into every message communicating the benefits and rationales underpinning Corridor public investment decisions

The Corridor will be a 'must-do' travel experience for regional, national and international visitors

- Attract visitors to maximize economic impact from tourism within the Corridor
- Develop the Corridor tourism product while protecting and preserving the resource
- Provide coordination and technical assistance to the tourism development and marketing community
- Communicate to residents the ability of heritage tourism to stimulate education, preservation, visibility, and visitation

IMPLEMENTATION: ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The stated mission of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission 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.*”

Although many aspects of the Preservation and Management Plan are being implemented by others – state and local agencies, public and private organizations, and individuals – the Commission has the unique opportunity to coordinate programs, projects, and events across the Corridor while conducting its own activities. The Commission is not empowered to purchase or otherwise control property, enact laws or regulations, or direct the expenditure of public funds by other governmental entities. The individual municipalities and organizations in the Corridor will be encouraged to take advantage of the opportunities to work with the National Heritage Corridor, and to voluntarily implement their own plans and projects within the armature of the Plan. The Commission is responsible for shaping and guiding the greater vision of the Corridor, and gaining consensus and support.

Chapter 9 of the Plan details the Commission’s strategy to nurture locally and regionally directed initiatives in the Corridor. The following roles, drawing from the Commission’s legislated mandates and mission statement and the vision set forth in the Plan, establish an operational framework for the Commission and provide a strategic direction for implementation activities. The Commission will:

- Provide support, funding, technical assistance and/or in-kind services to others to assist in leveraging or implementing projects that advance the Plan;
- Catalyze collaboration among those whose decisions impact heritage resources, and among organizations in allied pursuits;
- Educate, communicate, and advocate for the Plan as a guiding document for decision makers, entrepreneurs, residents;
- Raise the profile of the Corridor as a whole, bringing greater local and world-wide 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.

The Commission will fulfill this role through a series of interrelated implementation strategies, each designed to advance multiple objectives, that are identified and prioritized in Chapter 9. The strategies overlap with and build one upon the other to render a comprehensive implementation program for the Commission and its partners. The Commission will also seek to establish a fundraising partner or foundation to develop support above and beyond its present sources for projects to advance its preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, economic revitalization, and tourism development goals.

In addition to the development of specific, targeted projects, the Commission's tools and incentives for implementation include:

- Cooperative agreements
- Support for partner organizations' projects and programs
- Guidelines, models, and best practices
- Advice and comment on policies and issues
- Circuit riders and technical assistance
- Certification program
- Community partner program
- Tourism development and marketing
- Awards and recognition program
- Management and use of the Corridor graphic identity
- Assistance to grantseekers
- Roundtables and conferences
- Continued public involvement through advisory groups, public meetings, publications and the Corridor website

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PLAN

The legislation authorizing the Corridor also established a 27-member Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission ("the Commission") and tasked it to work with federal, state, and local authorities to develop and implement a comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan. While the federal appropriations for the Corridor and term of the Commission are authorized for a 10-year period, the National Heritage Corridor designation is ongoing.

The Preservation and Management Plan was developed not only to address an array of needs and opportunities, but also to respond to particular requirements outlined in the authorizing legislation. The legislation authorizing the Corridor calls for the Commission to incorporate and integrate plans and to solicit public input on the development of the Preservation and Management Plan. The following is a brief summary of how the Plan has addressed the requirements.

- 1. Include a review of existing plans for the Corridor, including the Canal Recreationway Plan and Canal Revitalization Program, and incorporate them to the extent feasible to ensure consistence with local, regional and state planning efforts***

There have been many heritage related plans in the past addressing particular aspects of the New York State Canal System, regional canal development and protection, and local waterfront development. Implementation of these plans, in whole and in part, have added tremendous public infrastructure improvements and have helped to revitalize community focus on canals and their heritage development potential. These plans were reviewed and have been summarized as appropriate in Chapters 3-8 of this Plan. This Preservation and Management Plan is consistent with, builds on, and adds credence to the core values of these earlier plans, validates implementation actions to date, and generally supports completion of those plans' proposals.

The National Heritage Corridor designation and its broad purpose also introduce some very new concepts that not only can help advance the implementation of prior plans, but also can build a greater sense of national heritage and identity; forge cooperative partnerships to unify, strengthen, and integrate regional and local goals and actions to maximize efficiency and benefits; and foster consistent, coordinated, and high quality heritage-based resource experiences that improve the quality of life for Corridor residents and visitors alike. The Plan suggests that others may wish to incorporate National Heritage Corridor proposals into their planning and development activities, as appropriate.

2. *Provide a thematic inventory, survey, and evaluation of historic properties that should be conserved, restored, developed, or maintained because of their natural, cultural, or historic significance within the Corridor in accordance with the regulations for the National Register of Historic Places*

The list of National Register sites and districts provided in Appendix 1 contains more than 800 entries, which in turn reflect over 14,000 individual resources, documented by the New York State Historic Preservation Office. The Plan prescribes overarching guidelines and standards for the appropriate preservation treatment of the Corridor's diverse resources. The Plan proposes additional data collection on canal-related cultural resources to help support specific decisions on preservation, interpretation, and heritage development initiatives.

3. *Identify public and private-sector preservation goals and strategies for the Corridor*

These goals and strategies have been addressed primarily in Chapter 3, *Protecting Our Heritage: Preservation of Historic and Cultural Resources*, and Chapter 7, *Economic Revitalization*.

4. *Include a comprehensive interpretive plan that identifies, develops, supports, and enhances interpretation and education programs within the Corridor*

An interpretive plan provided in Chapter 6, *Telling the Story: Interpretation and Orientation*, captures the national significance of the canal system through its thematic interpretation framework, addresses the various means and tools that are now available in existing state and local interpretive and educational efforts, and provides proposals for enhancing and building on those efforts. The legislative requirements also indicated that the interpretive plan could include the following:

(a) research related to the construction and history of the canals and the cultural heritage of the canal workers, their families, those that traveled along the canals, the associated farming activities, the landscape, and the communities. Chapter 3, Chapter 6, and Chapter 9, Implementation,

propose future research efforts to add detail and depth about specific facets of history that can be used to better inform visitors and build understanding.

(b) documentation of and methods to support the perpetuation of music, art, poetry, literature and folkways associated with the canals. Chapter 3 and Chapter 6 address ways to enhance understanding of these important cultural values.

(c) educational and interpretative programs related to the Erie Canalway developed in cooperation with State and local governments, educational institutions, and nonprofit institutions. Chapter 6 and Chapter 9 provide guidance on ways to build cooperation to advance this purpose.

5. *Include a strategy to further the recreational development of the Corridor that will enable users to uniquely experience the canal system*

Chapter 5, *Promoting Recreation*, addresses recreation development needs and, together with Chapter 6, provides strategies to build on the unique character of the Corridor's recreation and interpretive opportunities, foster diverse experiences, and enhance varied methods for traveling through the Corridor and accessing resources.

6. *Propose programs to protect, interpret and promote the Corridor's historical, cultural, recreational, educational, scenic and natural resources*

The Plan cites many existing programs and actions that deserve support, and also identifies new initiatives, to help realize these diverse goals.

7. *Include an inventory of canal-related natural, cultural and historic sites and resources located in the Area*

The Appendix contains a general inventory of these sites and resources.

8. *Recommend Federal, State, and local strategies and policies to support economic development, especially tourism-related development and recreation, consistent with the purposes of the Corridor*

These strategies and policies are primarily addressed respectively in Chapter 7, Chapter 8, *Tourism Development and Marketing*, and Chapter 5.

9. *Develop criteria and priorities for financial preservation assistance*

Such criteria are addressed in Chapter 9.

10. *Identify and foster strong cooperative relationships between the National Park Service, the New York State Canal Corporation, other Federal and State agencies, and nongovernmental organizations*

Throughout the Plan, the importance of building cooperative relationships and partnerships at all levels is underscored as critical for achieving the Corridor's vision and goals.

11. *Recommend specific areas for development of interpretive, educational, and technical assistance centers associated with the Corridor*

Chapter 6 addresses how interpretive and educational programs, media, and technical assistance can be enhanced throughout the Corridor.

12. *Contain a program for implementation of the Canalway Plan by all necessary parties*

Chapter 9 identifies the means by which the Plan will be implemented and addresses the roles and responsibilities that may be assumed by both existing and potential cooperators.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

Chapter 2 of the Plan describes the national significance and historical context of the Corridor's resources. Chapters 3-6 analyze the existing conditions of the Corridor's historic and cultural, natural, recreational, interpretive and orientation resources, surveying recent and ongoing initiatives and providing guidelines for future planning and actions. The guidelines recognize that change has been a defining characteristic of the Corridor since the region's natural waterways were first modified by pickaxes and shovels. In this context, the guidelines are intended to enhance the Corridor's ability to accommodate change – new residents, new visitors, new development – while protecting the authenticity and integrity of the resources that make the Corridor an attractive place to live, work and explore. The chapters on preservation and interpretation are supplemented by demonstration projects in four Corridor communities or regions where the guidelines were applied in hands-on public planning sessions.

Chapter 7 of the Plan evaluates socioeconomic trends in the Corridor and the current outlook for growth, and puts forward best practices for heritage- and place-based economic development based on case studies of Corridor villages and cities that are capitalizing on their heritage resources. Chapter 8 outlines strategies to increase visitation and its positive economic impacts by strengthening the Corridor's tourism development and marketing infrastructure. Chapter 9 describes implementation of the Preservation and Management Plan, including:

- prioritized implementation strategies and a schedule for implementation of specific actions over the next five years;
- the roles and responsibilities of the Commission and its partners, including an initial staffing plan for the National Heritage Corridor;
- tools and incentives to influence regional and local planning, including criteria for financial and technical assistance;
- additional studies and compliance that may be required; and
- mechanisms for continued public involvement and coordination.

A section on consultation and coordination describes the public engagement process undertaken by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission throughout preparation of the Plan. A brief glossary, a list of references, a list of the 234 municipalities within the Corridor, and listings of the planning team and Commission members are provided at the end of the Plan. A separate volume or CD contains several appendices to the Plan providing additional detail on the Corridor's resources and sources of data for the Plan.

The Preservation and Management Plan is not intended to be the final word in planning. A fixed solution cannot be prescribed for every opportunity or problem across such a large and diverse region, and unforeseen opportunities and ideas will undoubtedly arise as the vision of the Corridor is realized. The Plan is designed to be flexible to adapt to varying funding climates, and inspire and facilitate new solutions as this region evolves. Where negative impacts are anticipated, the Commission is committed to mitigating actions as required. The Commission will continually monitor the impacts of its actions under the Plan through regular evaluations of its projects and programs. Most importantly, it is hoped that through this Preservation and Management Plan, communities will understand that local actions have regional implications and that there is mutual benefit in fostering cooperation across jurisdictional boundaries.