

The Erie Canal Trail

In an ambitious undertaking, New York State has appropriated \$35,000,000 to develop and improve a hiking and biking trail along the towpath from Albany to Buffalo, as well as along connecting canalways. Some parts have already been completed using local funding. There are seventy miles from Fairport to Lockport and thirty-six miles from Dewitt to Rome. Camillus has a trail, a waterway, a replica general store and a small, but fascinating, museum.

Elbridge CAC's involvement has been with the western Onondaga and eastern Cayuga County portions. The State has awarded a contract for Port Byron to Lock 51 in Jordan. Work has begun and should be completed in the summer of 2005. The bids are in for the Jordan to Van Buren section and that contract will be awarded soon, hoping for completion by December 2005.

The specifications for the trail include: 6" crushed stone base, stonedust topping, 8' wide with 2' shoulders, and brush cleared back 5' where space permits. In areas where the towpath no longer exists alternate routes will be used. Some of these will be along highways, with signage to show the way and alert motorists. There will be kiosks and picnic areas at significant points along the trail.

Opportunities for CACs and CBs exist all along the trail system.

Goals of the trail system include:

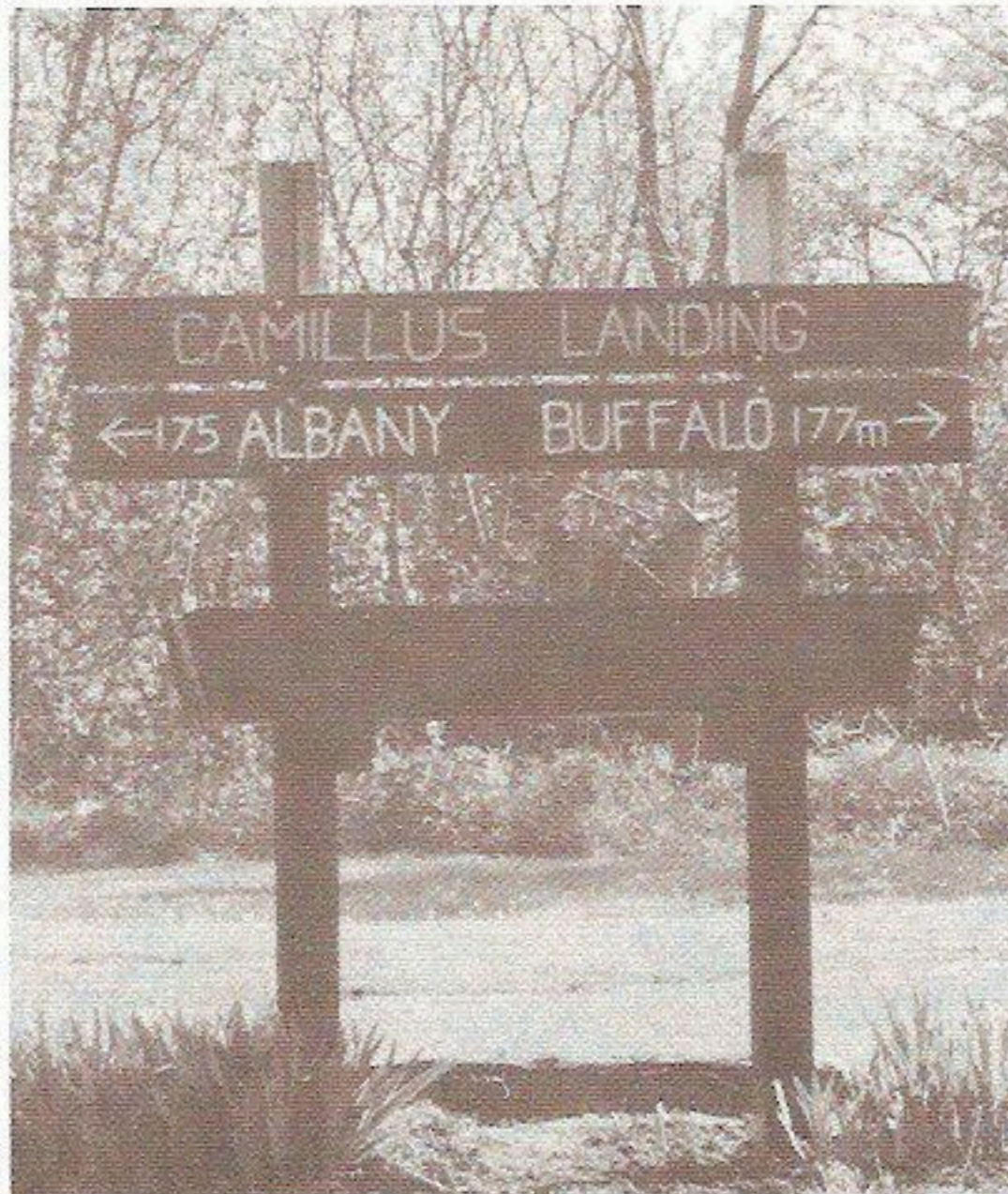
- helping local economies
- providing historical awareness of New York's contribution to our development as a nation
- affording travelers an opportunity to enjoy the beauty and diversity of upstate New York

When completed, the system will stretch over 500 miles, the longest hiking/biking trail in the United States.

As everyone learned in elementary school, in 1817

New York State set out on one of the most ambitious engineering projects in modern history. It was proposed to build an interior canal across the State from the Hudson River to Lake Erie.

The federal government was approached for funding and refused, saying essentially, "Why go to western New York? There's nothing out there." So New York State took it on themselves and in 1825 "Clinton's Ditch" opened for business.



We now know that the Erie Canal was a major factor in our nation's expansion to the west. Within a year freight rates dropped to ten percent of the former rates. The entire cost of the Canal construction (\$7,000,000) was recovered in twelve years. The canal underwent several changes - an upgrade, then the Barge Canal, then the New York State Canal System which still operates today. The 524-mile New York Canal System connects with hundreds of miles of lakes and rivers across the Empire State, linking the Great Lakes with the Hudson River and with five waterways in Canada.

Don Duger
NYSACC Secretary

SAVE THE DATE

2005 Conference on the Environment
Wind and Water: Waves of the Future

to be held at

The White Eagle Conference Center
Hamilton, Madison County, New York

October 8 - 10, 2005

More information to follow

What's Happening in Region 9

In this issue we are highlighting the activities and concerns of CACs and CBs in Region 9. In future issues we will publicize the interests and/or activities of other regions of the state. Send information to NYSACC News or to a NYSACC Director in your region. The NYSACC Board of Directors urges the CAC/CBs in Region 9 and others to submit applications for awards to be distributed at the 2005 Conference.

Town of Eden - New Open Space Map

The Eden Conservation Board has completed work on a new open space map prioritizing open space into three categories: Primary (most environmentally sensitive, Secondary, and Open (least environmentally sensitive). This map will assist the Conservation Board in recommending property for conservation easements and reviewing major developments.

Town of Boston - Earth Day Program

The Boston Conservation Advisory Council planned and directed an Earth Day program at the Boston Valley School. This involved assisting parents and children in tree and shrub planting, preparing the soil with compost, a hawk demonstration, a Zoomobile program, assisting students in bluebird house building and providing small tree/shrubs for the students to plant.

Town of Amherst

The Amherst CAC has been wrestling with the saving of green space. The use of Power Point presentations in showing alternatives to developers' site plans is helping to point out designs less damaging to the environment. Redoing the Open Space Index and map presents several layers of information that can be intermingled in a variety of displays inherent in the GIS.

In addition, the CAC is working to convince the Town that a dog park is needed to alleviate the problem of off-leash dogs destroying the environment in Town parks.

Town of Clarence

The Town of Clarence has authorized borrowing twelve and a half million dollars to protect open space by purchasing land or development rights. Passing this bond helped to leverage funds from NYS Agriculture and Markets and the US Department of Agriculture. A local land conservancy has been given the responsibility of deciding which open space should be protected. Protecting farmland is a high priority.

Town of Hamburg

The Town of Hamburg bought a 21-acre parcel of green space contiguous with 51 acres purchased by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. This area will be used for passive recreation such as hiking and birding.

Frank Manton, Director and Peter Warn

Websites of Note

In keeping with our lead article, the following websites are all related to the Erie Canal.



- <http://www.canals.ny.us>
Official website of New York State's canals, geared to the canals today, but with some important historical facts, includes information on excursions and vacations, canal culture and maps.
- <http://www.canalsnys.org>
Website of the NYS Canal Society which brings together canal enthusiasts from across the State to learn about the history, development and on-going activities associated with the numerous canal systems found throughout the State.
- <http://www.ptny.org>
Official website of Parks and Trails New York, an organization created to protect New York's parks and help communities create new parks, includes information on the Canalway Trail and Corridor and cycling the Erie Canal.
- <http://www.epodunk.com/routes/erie-canal>
Combines songs, historic information, post cards, panoramic photos, maps and community profiles to create a comprehensive multimedia package about the canal and its national impact.
- <http://www.history.rochester.edu/Canal>
A portion of the University of Rochester Department of History website with much historical information from original sources, includes a chronology of the Canal, maps and an extensive bibliography.
- <http://eriecanalmuseum.org>
Website of the Erie Canal Museum housed in the 1850 Weighlock Building in Syracuse

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NYSACC News is published three times a year. CACs are encouraged to submit press releases, articles, artwork or photography to the editor. For additional copies of NYSACC News and address changes, contact the Newsletter office.

Woodstock's Photovoltaic Project Award

The Town of Woodstock is currently negotiating with the New York State Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) for a potential photovoltaic award.

NYSERDA is a public-benefit corporation whose principal mission is to develop innovative solutions to some of the State's most difficult energy and environmental problems, including peak demand/system reliability efforts and economic development.

The funding for this NYSEDA program comes from Virginia Electric Power Company (VEPCO) pursuant to a legal action brought by New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer under the federal Clean Air Act. Under the resultant Consent Decree, VEPCO is obligated to provide \$1.8 million in funding to NYSEDA to accomplish the installation of solar photovoltaics ("PV") on municipal buildings in New York in order to displace the need for more polluting sources of electricity generation.

"Woodstock is one of a dozen successful applicants in this program," according to Town Supervisor Jeremy Wilber. "The resulting two photovoltaic systems at Town Hall and the new Town Highway Garage will provide both environmental and financial benefits to our residents by offsetting the expense of Town electricity purchases, while contributing to long-term reductions in the air pollution caused by power plant emissions."

For information concerning Woodstock's project, e-mail Ann Brandt at Abrandt@woodstockny.org

Choosing "Green Power"

New York State energy consumers can now buy "green power" for their homes. This cleaner electrical power comes from wind energy, hydro, biomass or landfill gas resources instead of from a mix of conventional generation that includes fossil fuels and nuclear power which have adverse environmental and health effects.

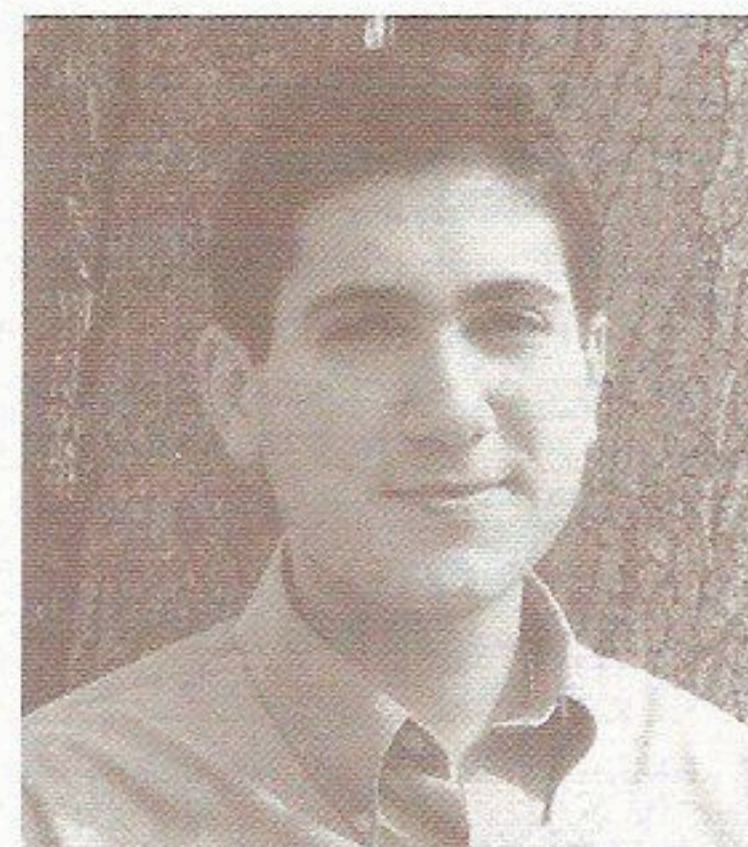
Wind turbines produce no pollutants and have minimal impact on bird populations. Hydroelectric green power comes from small existing dams which generally have limited environmental impact. Biomass refers to organic material which is burned in boilers to produce electricity. It can be environmentally friendly if certain criteria are met. Electricity generated by burning landfill gas is considered "green" because this process prevents unburned methane from entering the atmosphere and displaces fossil fuels.

But remember . . . the cleanest, greenest electricity is electricity not used! When a kilowatt hour of electricity is saved, more is done to help the environment than using any sort of "green" energy source. The average family could probably reduce its electrical consumption by 50% by adopting energy conserving behavior and using energy efficient appliances.

Spotlight on Peter Rizzo Our Newest Director

When NYSACC Directors first met Peter Rizzo at the 2003 Conference on the Environment in Buffalo, he was still in High School. We invited him to join NYSACC as a Director.

Since the age of seventeen, Peter has served as an appointed official on the Town of Tonawanda Commission for Conservation of the Environment. This Commission oversees all of the environmental concerns facing the Town, spearheading countless efforts to ensure environmental integrity at every level.



Every two years the Tonawanda Town Board appoints an active and interested high school student entering his or her junior year as a student-representative on the Town's Environmental Commission. Peter was appointed in 2001. From the oversight of hazardous waste removal and remediation to the implementation of a town-wide garden tour, he has played a role in facilitating positive change in the Town, as well as providing the municipality with a youthful perspective and outlook on the future of the Town's environmental concerns.

He has continued his service on the Commission as a full member. Now entering his third term, as well as his third year of study as an English major, Environmental Planning and Design minor, at the University of Buffalo, Peter also serves on the Town of Tonawanda Crime Resistance Executive Board and the Town Youth Court. He coaches Little League softball, is a member of his college honor society, plays the trumpet in the UB Jazz Ensemble and is active in student government. NYSACC is delighted to have Peter join our Board.

For a copy of Tonawanda's legislation regarding youth membership on their Commission, e-mail Peter Rizzo at pcrizzo@buffalo.edu.

YOU'RE INVITED

Mikel Sharkajian, the newly elected president of the New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils has invited NYSACC members to NYSAEMC's annual NYSDEC Update to be held Monday, June 27th at the NYSDEC offices at 625 Broadway, in Albany.

For further information concerning the Update contact Mikel at mshakarjian@yahoo.com

President's Message

I like the Erie Canal.

Here I am living on Long Island. I would not give up my quick and easy access to salt water, but the Erie Canal has no equivalent where I live.

I like the history of the Canal – distant history and recent history. Since I am a retired fourth grade teacher and 4th grade social studies is NYS history, I spent many years teaching the history of the Canal. Every time I come up-state and see it, I burst into song. "Low bridge, everybody down" and so on comes bursting from my mouth. It's embarrassingly predictable. I like the small museums scattered along the way. I like the big museums. I like the descriptive information along the route and the Trailblazers markers installed along major segments. I like the locks.

I like the small shops in some areas. I like the fancy restaurants in some places and the casual snack shops in others.

I like how the Canal looks as you drive and cross it again and again. I like that everywhere people are exercising – walking, running, biking, roller blading. I like that a biker can indeed go from Albany to Buffalo and so soon can walkers and runners. I like that for a small sum you can purchase a really neat small spiral bound guide to where to travel and stay if you are cycling. There's an eight-day 400-mile bicycle tour from Buffalo to Albany, which will occur this year July 10 – 17. This is the seventh annual bike tour.

I like that at all the NYS Thruway rest stops you can find Canal information and it's not all the same information.



There are good free maps and museum brochures. I like the effort that is being made by the NYS Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the NYS Thruway Authority. This focus is on community development, business growth and harbor revitalization.

I like that Governor George Pataki and the NYS Legislature approved \$50,000,000 to complete the Erie Canalway Trail and to fund harbor and port projects. \$35 million will complete the bike and pedestrian trail linking Lake Erie to the Hudson River. The rest will be spent on canal development in communities.

I like that there are so many Canal websites, that we could not begin to list them all.

But most of all, I like the potential for Conservation Commissions. In this issue of NYSACC News the efforts of the Elbridge CAC are covered. For further information on replicating this effort call Don Duger at 315 689-6361.

At a recent NYSACC Board of Director's meeting, it was suggested that we ask a different question in each issue of the newsletter and see if readers would like to respond. So here's the Question. Does the Erie Canal provide a potential restoration project, an educational project, an environmental project? Is your CAC doing something special as Elbridge is? Let us know.

Joy Squires

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