Stewardship Program 2025 IMPACT REPORT

Iconic trails and waterways rely upon stewardship efforts to develop and maintain destination appeal. It is this intentional, ongoing maintenance and care that make quality trails—and lasting memories—possible.

2025 IMPACT

Stewards now care for 100% of the 450-mile NYS Canalway Water Trail. 2025 was our most impactful year with the greatest number of volunteers, volunteer hours, and number of canal users engaged. We set a goal at the program's inception in 2021 to achieve full coverage for the bicentennial year in 2025 and we were thrilled to reach it.

93
stewards

85%
volunteer retention rate

450
miles stewarded

830
visits (May 1-October 31)

833
trash bags filled

1,196
worm containers/ bait boxes collected

2,208
paddlers, boaters, and visitors engaged

1,894
hours of volunteer time

$72,881
value



Highlights & Next Steps

- Stewards continue to report on invasive species with water chestnut and hydrilla being most sighted. Stewards who have received proper training are participating in invasive species removal. We will offer more training and tools to help stewards identify invasives species.
- More than half of the waste collected at launch sites was from fishermen, including worm containers/bait boxes. Tools to educate fishermen combined with additional outreach is planned, including a small task force to address the problem.
- Erie Canalway will continue to attract more stewards with a goal of maintaining 100% coverage for the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Champlain and Oswego canals.

ERIE CANALWAY National Heritage Corridor

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.eriecanalway.org/watertrail

Behind the Numbers

"Certainly visitor behavior has improved—I'm finding way fewer pieces of trash and cigarette butts." — *Jennifer L., Water Trail Steward*

"The lures continue to be a hit even with bait fishermen. They make for a very smooth introduction to remind them to clean up after themselves." — *Kerry A., Water Trail Steward*







The NYS Canalway Water Trail Stewardship Program is a joint initiative of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and New York State Canal Corporation. The New York State Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the New York Power Authority, manages the canal and is responsible for operations. Erie Canalway works closely with the Canal Corporation, as well as with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, and local municipalities to manage the Stewardship Program.

WATER TRAIL AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM GOALS

1. Increase use and improve access.
2. Encourage understanding and commitment to the distinct sense of place.
3. Preserve the historic, natural and scenic beauty of the Water Trail.
4. Establish a system for monitoring and communicating Water Trail conditions.
5. Improve safety and enjoyment for Water Trail users.
6. Achieve long-term sustainability for both the program and the facilities and resources it stewards.

NYS CANALWAY WATER TRAIL STEWARD RESPONSIBILITIES

Stewards engage with paddlers, boaters, anglers and visitors to encourage them to be responsible stewards of the waterway; clean up debris and waste on shore and in the water; assist paddlers and visitors; and have fun while giving back to their communities.

We supply stewards with training, a supply kit, branded apparel, and informational brochures to educate the public on invasive species, water safety and NYS Navigation Laws, and canal history. Annual recognition dinners give us the opportunity to thank stewards, hear about their experiences, and help them connect with each other.

QUESTIONS?

Contact Mona Caron, Director of Trails & Stewardship, at mona_caron@eriecanalway.org or 518-237-7000 x204

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