



NEWS RELEASE
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New York's Largest Earth Day Celebration Kicks off Friday, April 23
More than 100 Canal Clean Sweep Events Scheduled across New York State

Volunteer groups across New York State are making final preparations for the [annual Canal Clean Sweep](#), the spring cleaning of the NYS Canal System and Canalway Trail, with most events scheduled for the upcoming weekend, April 23-25, 2021. More than 100 Clean Sweep events have been scheduled across the 524-mile-long Canal System, providing opportunities for residents to give back to their local communities and to show pride in a unique cultural and recreational resource.

Canal Clean Sweep celebrates Earth Day, and volunteer efforts will help to prepare the Canal System for the 2021 navigation season, scheduled to begin May 21.

The Canalway Trail System saw increased use in 2020, with nearly 3.9 million visits to the 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail, a more than 30% increase over 2019. These figures reflect significant investments made as part of the completion of the Empire State Trail, and increased interest and participation in outdoor recreational activities due to COVID-19.

Due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, each Canal Clean Sweep event is limited to 10 participants this year. Clean-up organizers are responsible for ensuring that all volunteers wear a mask for the duration of the clean-up event, maintain a minimum distance of 6 feet, and encourage use of hand sanitizer. Volunteers who have any signs of illness or have potentially been exposed to COVID-19 within the previous two weeks should not participate.

Canal Clean Sweep is organized by the non-profit Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation. **To learn more about Canal Clean Sweep**, visit www.ptny.org/events/canal-clean-sweep.

“The annual Canal Clean Sweep is an opportunity to celebrate Earth Day and ensures our state’s iconic Canal System remains environmentally healthy for future generations,” said **Brian U. Stratton, Director of the Canal Corporation**. “In 2020 alone, the Erie Canalway Trail saw nearly

3.9 million visitors and because of the dedicated New Yorkers who participate in this event, millions more will be able to continue to appreciate the canal's scenic and historic sites in 2021 and for years to come."

"Canal Clean Sweep is a great opportunity for thousands of volunteers across the state to give back and enjoy a safe, outdoor activity," said **Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York**. "Even in a pandemic, Canal communities are eager to offer their support and participation, proving how much the Canal and Canalway Trail mean to them."

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Parks & Trails New York is the state's leading advocate for parks and trails. Since 1998, PTNY has been working in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation to help canal communities plan, develop and promote the Canalway Trail. PTNY organizes Cycle the Erie Canal, an eight-day bicycle tour along the historic Erie Canal that attracts more than 650 participants each year. In 2021, the organization published an updated version of the popular guidebook, *Cycling the Erie Canal: A Guide to 360 miles of Adventure and History along the Erie Canalway Trail*. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

The New York State Canal Corporation runs the New York State Canal System, which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. In 2017, the Canal Corporation celebrated the 200th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal, which occurred in the city of Rome on July 4, 1817. The Canal System includes the Canalway Trail, a network of approximately 300 miles of multiple-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trail follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System as well as adjacent abandoned rail corridors. Together, the canals and trail create a world-class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic, and unique New York resource. To learn more about the New York State Canal and Canalway Trail System or to obtain a free map, please call 1-800-4CANAL4 or visit the Canal Corporation's website at www.canals.ny.gov.