



**Canal  
Corporation**



## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

### **CONSULTANT TO CONDUCT EXISTING CONDITIONS EVALUATION AND DEVELOP LONG-TERM PLANS FOR RECREATIONAL USERS' AMENITIES ALONG THE ERIE CANAL**

**Release: November 3, 2023**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc. ("Erie Canalway"), the not-for-profit partner of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission, and the New York State Canal Corporation ("NYS Canal Corporation") are seeking written proposals from a qualified consultant ("Consultant") to conduct a condition evaluation and needs assessment of amenities for recreational users of land and water trails along the NYS Canal System. The consultant will also develop recommendations and priorities for long-term planning for amenities improvements at various locations.

The following goals will guide the project:

- ✓ Improve amenities for people of all abilities
- ✓ Improve recreational users' experiences
- ✓ Enhance the Canalway Corridor's distinct sense of place for all users
- ✓ Strengthen long-term stewardship of land and water trails by users

The project also has partial funding support from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Mohawk River Basin Program.

#### **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**NYS Canal System-** Comprised of 524 miles of navigable waterways, the system includes the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca, and Oswego Canals. The largest of these is the Erie which connects the Hudson River with Lake Erie, 338 miles to the west.

**Erie Canalway Trail-** Running approximately 360 miles between Albany and Buffalo, this multiuse trail closely parallels both active and historic sections of the Erie Canal. The trail is maintained by various entities, including the NYS Canal Corporation, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), counties and local municipalities.

**Empire State Trail-** This 750-mile trail runs north-south from New York City to the Canadian border and east-west with the Erie Canalway Trail from Albany to Buffalo. The east-west portion is signed and co-branded as both the Erie Canalway Trail and the Empire State Trail.

**NYS Canalway Water Trail** is comprised of 450 miles of canals and interconnected lakes and rivers, that provide access for paddlers to the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Champlain and Oswego canals. There are more than 150 access sites along the water trail. A dedicated stewardship program is managed by Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Approximately 65 volunteer stewards perform light maintenance and cleanup and serve as ambassadors. The water trail is a designated National Water Trail. It is signed as the NYS Canalway Water Trail.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND**

**Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor-** The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor works to preserve the Nation's extraordinary canal heritage, promote the Corridor as a world-class tourism destination, and foster vibrant communities connected by more than 500 miles of waterway. It achieves its mission in partnership with the National Park Service, New York State agencies, non-profit organizations, local residents, and more than 200 communities across the full expanse of upstate New York. The Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc. is an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works hand-in-hand with the federally appointed Erie Canalway Commission to implement and manage endeavors within the Corridor. [www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)

**The New York State Canal Corporation-** The New York State Canal System is operated and maintained by the New York State Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the New York Power Authority. New York's Canal System includes four historic canals: the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Champlain, and Oswego. Spanning 524-miles, the canal waterways link the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. Following most of the original towpaths, the Canal System also includes the 365-mile Canalway Trail, which runs from Albany to Buffalo and from Albany to Whitehall. [New York State Canals \(ny.gov\)](http://NewYorkStateCanals.ny.gov)

## SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work includes two components:

### **1. AMENITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT, PLANNING AND STEWARDSHIP FOR PADDLERS ON THE MOHAWK RIVER SECTION OF THE ERIE CANAL**

The first component will focus **exclusively on paddlers and volunteer stewards in the Mohawk River portion of the Erie Canal**. This section runs approximately 114 miles from Bellamy Harbor Park, Rome, to Waterford Point Boat Ramp, Waterford, and includes more than 20 canal communities ([Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor :: Paddle the Water Trail](#)).

For this component, the Consultant will:

- a. Use existing data on paddler access and amenities to assess conditions on the ground, and make updates based on current conditions;
- b. Identify gaps and places where amenities are needed but do not exist, as well as new or expanded paddler access and amenities needed, through on-site visits, research and interviews;
- c. Work with Erie Canalway and NYS Canal Corporation to identify the best data management tools for compiling information and keeping it up-to-date in the future;
- d. Identify the potential roles of volunteer stewards in future monitoring and maintenance of amenities, including any site-specific needs or considerations.
- e. Develop and present comprehensive mile-by-mile recommendations for paddler access and amenities and long-term volunteer stewardship. (Amenity designs are being developed separately by NYS Canal Corporation.)

For a list of amenities to be included in the scope of work, and related issues to be addressed (such as, amenity spacing and use of Stewards for monitoring and maintenance), see **Appendix A: Mohawk River Section of Erie Canal – List of Amenities for Paddlers**.

The Consultant will be required to gather information from key stakeholders and partners to inform the comprehensive assessment of the needs of the Mohawk River/Erie Canal section of the NYS Canalway Water Trail. Consultant should plan for 15 focus groups and/or interviews that include canal communities/municipalities, outdoor recreation and paddling groups, members of Water Trail Advisory Committee, and volunteer stewards. Contact information for key stakeholders and partners will be provided when the contract is awarded.

NYS DEC/Mohawk River Watershed Basin Program staff will need to be engaged and consulted with throughout the duration of this component of the project.

## **2. AMENITIES NEEDS ASSESSMENT, PLANNING AND RELATED FOR PADDLERS, RECREATIONAL BOATERS, BICYCLISTS, AND PEDESTRIANS ON THE ERIE CANAL AND ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL**

The second component focuses more expansively on multiple users and a larger geography. The consultant will conduct a conditions evaluation and needs assessment of both the waterway and land trail across the entire Erie Canal, from the Tonawandas to Waterford. Users will include paddlers and recreational boaters on the waterway, bicyclists, pedestrians, and other trail users.

Note: Component 1 for Paddlers on the Mohawk River section of the Erie Canal, described above, will require its own report but the data and plans from that component will also be incorporated into this more comprehensive scope of work.

For this component, the Consultant will:

- a. Catalog existing amenities for each user group along the waterway and Canalway Trail on a mile-by-mile basis, using existing data and making updates to data based on current conditions.
  - a. Canal amenity centers exist in numerous communities. Amenities vary at each location. Catalog existing amenities at these locations.
  - b. Major trail heads have varying amenities. Catalog existing amenities at these locations.
  - c. Public and private marinas provide critical services and amenities for boaters. Catalog existing amenities at these locations.
  - d. Some communities offer launch sites for paddlers. Catalog these sites and any additional amenities at these locations.
- b. Identify gaps and places where amenities are needed but do not exist for each user group. Identify locations where amenity centers or “hubs” could serve multiple user groups.
- c. Work with Erie Canalway and NYS Canal Corporation to identify the best data management tools for compiling information and keeping it up to date in the future;
- d. Develop recommendations that address the needs of multiple users for each site/location evaluated. (Amenity designs are being developed by NYS Canal Corporation.)

For a list of amenities to be included in the scope of work, and related issues to be addressed (such as, amenity spacing and use of Stewards for monitoring and maintenance), see **Appendix B: Erie Canal and Erie Canalway Trail – List of Amenities for Paddlers, Recreational Boaters, Bicyclists, and Pedestrians.**

The Consultant will be required to gather information from key stakeholders and partners to inform the comprehensive assessment of the amenities needs of the entire Erie Canal and Erie Canalway Trail. Consultant should plan for 15 focus groups and/or interviews (in addition to the 15 identified in Component 1) that include canal communities/municipalities, outdoor recreation groups and Stewards for a comprehensive look at the needs of the entire Erie Canal land and water trails. For this component, there are two groups of Stewards: (1) NYS Canalway Water Trail Stewards that Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor trains and manages, and (2) Erie Canalway Trail Adopt-A-Trail Stewards that Parks & Trails New York trains and manages. Both stewardship programs receive NYS Canal Corporation support.

## **FINAL PRODUCT**

Completion of the project will **include at least two reports**. All reports shall be well-organized, well-written and visually appealing, and include the following:

- ✓ High level executive summaries of findings and recommendations
- ✓ Data management system with data obtained and GPS location-based maps pinpointing existing and proposed amenities (comprehensive) – see data specifications below
- ✓ Photos of existing amenities (samples, not exhaustive)
- ✓ Photos and/or descriptions of relevant best amenities examples or practices from elsewhere
- ✓ Mile-by-mile list of recommended amenities, including hubs (centers of amenities)
- ✓ All raw data and materials, including meeting/interview notes with stakeholders

## **DATA SPECIFICATIONS**

All data to be collected in such a way to be viewed and used in a GIS environment using ArcGIS. Data shall be collected in coordinate system NAD 1983 UTM, Zone 18. Data collection shall be based on type of amenity, user group and existing/proposed amenity. At the completion of the project, all final data will be provided in a file geodatabase.

#### Resources:

- The ADA standards, 2012 AASHTO Bike Guide & EST Design Manual
- The NYS Canal Corporation's existing GIS mapping (to be provided upon award), which includes: trail (width, material, CL), existing amenities, trail ownership, Waterway and Trail mile post markers

### **BUDGET**

This will be a **fixed-price contract not to exceed \$150,000** including all consultant fees, subcontractor fees, travel, and all other expenses.

The \$150,000 breaks down as follows: (a) \$50,000 for the Amenities Needs Assessment, Plan and related for Paddlers on the Mohawk River section of the Erie Canal, and (b) \$100,000 for the Amenities Needs Assessment, Plan and related for Multiple Users on the land and water trails of the entire Erie Canal.

### **MINORITY OR WOMEN OWNED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES**

NYS-certified Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs) are encouraged to submit proposals. Prospective Consultants should identify if they are a NYS-certified M/WBE and/or how they plan to incorporate any M/WBEs as subcontractors (with a recommended goal of 30% of the contract amount). If sub-contractors will be used, please indicate those components of the contract that they will fulfill.

### **SUBMISSIONS (FOR BOTH SCOPES OF WORK)**

**Proposals will only be accepted that include both scopes of work.**

Written proposals must be received by **4pm on December 12, 2023.**

**Proposals should be submitted electronically to [mona\\_caron@partner.nps.gov](mailto:mona_caron@partner.nps.gov) in PDF format into a single file of less than 10MB.**

Each proposal should include the following for consideration:

1. Cover sheet or letter, including project lead contact information
2. Proposal addressing approaches to both scopes of work

3. Fixed cost budgets addressing both scopes of work
4. Proposed payment schedules
5. Schedules for project completion (project must be completed by January 31, 2025)
6. Plans to meet the recommended 30% NYS M/WBE goals
7. Statement of qualifications, including samples of previous relevant work and resumes for key team members
8. Proposals should be a maximum of 40 pages, inclusive of resumes and work samples

### **PROPOSAL SELECTION**

Erie Canalway and the NYS Canal Corporation will select a Consultant that provides the best overall value, determined by, among other factors, demonstrated project understanding, realistic schedule of deliverables, reasonable and responsible cost, and relevant experience. Each proposal will be evaluated using the criteria for selection set forth below (not necessarily in priority order):

- a. Overall approach to project, work plan and timeline.
- b. Total cost and fee schedule.
- c. Demonstrated record of experience and capability, including availability of the lead person(s) and other staff who would be assigned to provide services.
- d. Plan to meet recommended NYS-certified M/WBE goals.
- e. Familiarity with the Erie Canal waterway and land trails.
- f. Overall completeness, clarity, quality, and responsiveness of the proposal to the RFP.

Erie Canalway retains all rights to submitted proposals and may (1) reject any or all proposals, or (2) propose modified scopes of work to any prospective Provider(s).

### **ESTIMATED TIMELINE**

November 3, 2023: Release of RFP

November 3 – November 17: Questions may be directed to project contact ONLY; all questions & answers will be shared on Erie Canalway website by November 22

December 12, 2023: Proposals received by 4pm

December 2023 - January 2024: Finalist interview(s); anticipated proposal selection

January 31, 2024: Contract signed

February 1, 2024: Consultant begins work

October 31, 2024: All field work completed and raw data shared

November 2024: Submit draft report

December 31, 2024: Final report completed and submitted

January 31, 2025: Contract closed out

### **AMENITIES PROJECT MANAGER CONTACT INFORMATION**

#### **Mona Caron, Program Manager**

Erie Canalway Heritage Fund, Inc.

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

[mona\\_caron@partner.nps.gov](mailto:mona_caron@partner.nps.gov)

work: 518-237-7000 x 204

cell: 518-429-9068

### **EXISTING RESOURCES**

(TO BE REVIEWED AND INCORPORATED, TO THE EXTENT PRACTICAL, INTO THE PROJECT)

#### **System-wide/Multiple Users**

- **NYS Canal Map:** Includes amenity centers, places of interest, marinas, paddling access sites, and more: [NY Canal Map](#)

#### **Paddling**

- **NYS Canalway Water Trail:** [Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor :: Paddle the Water Trail](#)
- **NYS Canalway Water Trail Guidebook & Map Set, Second Edition;** Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (2022): [Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor :: Paddling Guidebook and Map Set](#)
- **NYS Canal System Hand Launch Facility Design Guide;** [Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor \(2021\): NYS Canal System Hand-Launch Facility Design Guide Final 011822 sm.pdf \(eriecanalway.org\)](#)



- **NYS Department of Environmental Conservation:** [Mohawk River Watershed - NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation](#)

## **Boating**

- **America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association:** [AGLCA | America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association](#)
- **Boat Owner's Association of The United States (BoatUS):** [Boat Owner's Association of The United States | BoatUS](#)
- **Empire State Marine Trades Association:** [Empire State Marine Trades Association | Facebook](#)

## **Erie Canalway Trail and Bicycling**

- **Erie Canalway Trail / Empire State Trail:** [Map | Empire State Trail \(ny.gov\)](#)
- ***Cycle the Erie Canal, Fifth Edition; Parks & Trails New York* (2021):** [Cycle the Erie](#) (ptny.org/publications/cycling-guidebooks/cycling-the-erie-canal)
- **Cycling the Erie Canal website:** [Parks & Trails New York: Cycle the Erie Canal \(ptny.org\)](#)
- **Empire State Trail Design Guidelines:** [EST Design Guide Oct 2017 0.pdf \(ny.gov\)](#)

## **REQUIRED INTERVIEWS**

**(Specific contacts to be provided after contract awarded)**

- **Erie Canalway and NYS Canal Corporation Key Staff**
- **Mohawk River Watershed Basin Program Key Staff, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation:** [Mohawk River Watershed - NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation](#)
- **NYS Canalway Water Trail Volunteer Stewards** [Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor :: Stewardship](#)
- **Erie Canalway Trail / Empire State Trail: Adopt-a-Trail Stewards** (managed by Parks & Trails New York; : [Parks & Trails New York :: Adopt-a-Trail \(ptny.org\)](#))
- **NYS Canalway Water Trail Advisory Committee**

## **ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS**

(Specific contacts to be provided after contract awarded; not all groups listed below will need to be interviewed; Erie Canalway, NYS Canal Corporation and Consultant will determine so that the minimum number of interviews required in the Scope of Work will be met)

## **PADDLING**

### **Local Groups:**

- ADK Mountain Club: Albany Chapter: [albany.adk.org](http://albany.adk.org); Genesee Valley Chapter: [adk-gvc.org](http://adk-gvc.org); Schenectady Chapter: [adk-schenectady.org](http://adk-schenectady.org)
- Northern NY Paddlers/Schenectady Wintersports Club: [swcweb.org](http://swcweb.org)
- NY Paddlesports Racing Association: [nypra.org](http://nypra.org)

### **National:**

- American Canoe Association: [www.americancanoe.org](http://www.americancanoe.org)
- National Park Service: [www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/national-water-trails-system](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem/national-water-trails-system) (note: NYS Canalway Water Trail designated a National Water Trail in 2022)

## **BICYCLING**

### **Local Groups:**

- Albany Bicycle Coalition: [albanybicyclecoalition.com](http://albanybicyclecoalition.com)
- Mohawk Hudson Cycling Club: [mohawkhudsoncyclingclub.org](http://mohawkhudsoncyclingclub.org)
- Niagara Frontier Bicycle Club: [nfbc.com](http://nfbc.com)
- Onondaga Cycling Club: [onondagacyclingclub.org](http://onondagacyclingclub.org)
- Rochester Cycling Club: [rochesterbicyclingclub.org](http://rochesterbicyclingclub.org)

### **National:**

- League of American Bicyclists - Bicycle Friendly America: [bikeleague.org](http://bikeleague.org)

## **RUNNING/WALKING**

- Hudson-Mohawk Road Runners Club: [hmrrc.com](http://hmrrc.com)
- Rochester Road Runners: [rochesterroadrunners.org](http://rochesterroadrunners.org)

## **APPENDIX A: Mohawk River Section of Erie Canal – List of Amenities for Paddlers**

Below are the amenities to be catalogued and studied for future planning. The goal is to better define and understand existing and needed amenities to create high quality paddling experiences for residents and visitors (“users”). Among other components, the Consultant’s final product(s) should address the proper spacing of the various amenities, seek to convey amenity consistency and a unique sense of place, and address long-term impacts and maintenance.

### **Amenities:**

Hand Launches

Storage (boats and gear)

Rentals (including boat share)

Restrooms (permanent & portable)

Potable Water

Showers

Laundry

Parking

Camping

Trash/Recycling

Pavilions/shaded area/picnic areas

Benches/Seating

Wi-Fi

Consultant should build in some flexibility for adding, deleting and/or substituting amenities once the project is underway, based on the mutual agreement of Erie Canalway/NYS Canal Corporation and the Consultant.

## **APPENDIX B: Erie Canal and Erie Canalway Trail – List of Amenities for Paddlers, Recreational Boaters, Bicyclists, and Pedestrians**

Below are the amenities to be catalogued and studied for future planning. The goal is to better define and understand existing and needed amenities to create high quality paddling, boating, bicycling, and walking/running experiences for residents and visitors (“users”). Among other components, the Consultant’s final product(s) should address the proper spacing of the various amenities, seek to convey amenity consistency and a unique sense of place, and address long-term impacts and maintenance.

**Amenities:**

Hand Launches

Storage/racks (boats, bicycles, and gear)

Rentals (including bicycle and boat share)

Repair stations

Restrooms (permanent & portable)

Potable Water

Showers

Laundry

Parking

Camping

Trash/Recycling

Pavilions/shaded area/picnic areas

Benches/Seating

Wi-Fi

Phone charging stations (solar powered)

Power

Sewage pump-out

Consultant should build in some flexibility for adding, deleting and/or substituting amenities once the project is underway, based on the mutual agreement of Erie Canalway/NYS Canal Corporation and the Consultant.