Seneca River Water Trail Draft Master Plan

Prepared By

Cayuga County Department of Planning & Economic Development

In Conjunction With

Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board
National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program
Town of Brutus, Cayuga County

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Everyone must believe in something. I believe I’ll go canoeing.

~ Henry David Thoreau
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background
Study Area
General Characteristics
Partners
Vision and Goals
Goal #1: Management
  • Structure
  • Financing
Goal #2: Facilities
  • Access Points
  • Day Use Sites
  • Overnight Accommodations
Goal #3: Guidance
  • Signature Logo
  • Website
  • Brochure
  • Guidebook
  • Interpretive Signage
  • Wayfinding Signage
  • Designated Paddler-Friendly Site Flags
Goal #4: Stewardship
- Partners
- Natural Resource
- Invasive Species
- Historical/Cultural Resource Protection
- Recreational Resource Protection
- Facility Management
- Education and Outreach Opportunities

Recommendation Summary

Implementation Strategy

Appendices

Appendix A: Master List of Boater Facilities

Appendix B: SRWT Facilities Matrix

Appendix C: Maps:
- M1: General Location
- M2: Study Area
- M3: Land Coverage
- M4: Land Use
- M5: Public Land
- M6: Points of Interest
BACKGROUND

The Seneca River Water Trail initiative builds on several major planning and development efforts occurring statewide to revitalize and enhance the recreational use of the New York State Canal System.

In 1993, the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board published the Central New York Canal Plan, which covers the five-county Central New York Region including Cayuga, Onondaga, Madison, Oswego and Cortland Counties. This plan was one of seven regional plans that were prepared covering the entire Canal System across the State.

The Central New York Canal Plan sought to maintain the quality of the canal corridor environment, promote and conserve the historical heritage associated with development of the Canal System, and encourage recreational and tourism use of the Canal System to stimulate economic activity in canal communities. The Central New York Canal Plan noted that the Canal System was faced with the three major issues:

- The existing facilities and services were not adequate to support the anticipated growth in tourism and recreational use, despite the fact that that growth was already occurring.
- Where facilities and services existed, there was not always a consistency in their quality.
- The geographic distribution of facilities and services was unplanned and therefore not necessarily within a convenient day's travel for canal users.

In 1995, the New York State Canal Corporation published the New York State Canal Recreationway Plan, which incorporated the seven regional plans and presented policies and programs that built upon those initiatives. Emphasis was placed on improving user
facilities and services, encouraging appropriate development, enhancing economic opportunities and protecting cultural and environmental resources.

In 1997, in order to stimulate implementation of initiatives presented in the Canal Recreationway Plan, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced the Canal Corridor Initiative. The HUD agency offered a grant and loan program for projects that would stimulate jobs and the economy of Upstate New York. A number of projects and communities have benefited from the initiative.

In 2001, Congress and the President designated the NYS Canal System as a National Heritage Corridor. Members were appointed to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission. The Commission prepared the Draft Preservation and Management Plan and Environmental Assessment and, during the summer of 2005, published the draft for public review and comment. The plan was finalized in 2006; its purposes include the following:

- Preserve historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources.
- Provide site interpretation and public educational regarding the Canal System.
- Promote recreational opportunities, economic development and community revitalization.
- Assist with the marketing of the Canal Corridor.

Also during 2005, the Governor appointed a new director of the NYS Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the NYS Thruway Authority, and announced a new vision for establishing the Erie Canal Greenway, which ultimately will become part of the Empire State Greenway linking the Erie Canal, Niagara River and Hudson River Greenways. The purpose of the Greenway initiative is to preserve the natural, environmental and historic sites and provide recreational opportunities by knitting together canal communities and creating mechanisms for intermunicipal cooperation. A Report of the Future of New York State Canals was
published at the end of 2005 that includes, among its recommendations, establishment of an Erie Canal Greenway Water Trail.

The Seneca River Water Trail, which is the subject of this plan, is a specific initiative to develop a 46-mile canoe and kayak trail on the Seneca River between Onondaga Lake and Cayuga Lake. The Seneca River Water Trail Plan was produced for the New York State Department of State with funds provided under Title 11 of the Environmental Fund. New York State Department of State may be reached through the Department’s website: www.nyswaterfront.com. A map of the Seneca River Water Trail is attached as M1: General Location Map.

The process of planning for development of the Seneca River Water Trail included developing a vision and goals for the trail; inventorying and identifying gaps in existing boater facilities and services; and making recommendations for trail development.

Throughout the planning process, a number of public and stakeholder meetings were held during which valuable feedback and information was received. Local canoe and kayak clubs, elected officials, Chambers of Commerce, local representatives and citizens have been forthcoming in support of the water trail initiative. As we move into the implementation phase, these individuals and organizations will be instrumental in helping to achieve the vision of the Seneca River Water Trail.
STUDY AREA

The Seneca River Water Trail study area extends from Cayuga-Seneca Lock #1 at the junction of the Erie and Cayuga-Seneca canals to the Inner Harbor of Onondaga Lake. The Trail stretches for 46 miles across Cayuga, Seneca and Onondaga counties and more than a dozen municipalities. It connects Cayuga Lake to Cross Lake to Onondaga Lake and is part of a much larger watershed area that eventually drains New York’s entire Finger Lakes region into Lake Ontario. A 1-mile buffer was established around the Seneca River Water Trail, and serves as the limits of the study area. A map of the study area is attached as M2: Study Area.

Canal Connections

The water trail follows the path of the Seneca River, which the State of New York channelized and developed as part of the Barge Canal in the early 1900s. The Barge Canal was constructed in order to compete with the new railroads, which were rapidly rendering the Enlarged Erie Canal obsolete. Advances in technology and engineering enabled the State to construct advanced lock and dam systems to control water levels on the River, which was dredged to a uniform depth of 12 feet. These actions ultimately resulted in drainage of thousands of acres of Montezuma marshland, and subsequent establishment by the federal government of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge – now a major attraction along the Seneca River Water Trail.

While the Seneca River continues to remain an important part of the NYS Erie Canal system, commercial transport of goods has all but disappeared. The River now functions primarily as a recreational resource for boaters, birders, sightseers and visitors to the area. Vast tracts of wetland, forest and farmland dominate the surrounding landscape and contribute not only the diversity of wildlife in the area, but also to the serene beauty of the surrounding landscape.
Two operational locks are part of the Seneca River Water Trail: Cayuga – Seneca Lock #1 which is the beginning point of the Trail, and Erie Canal Lock #24 in the Village of Baldwinsville. Other reminders of the Trail’s historic canal connection include the prominent remains of the Richmond Aqueduct on the north and south side of the River in the Towns of Montezuma, Cayuga County and Tyre, Seneca County. The Richmond Aqueduct was once part of the Enlarged Erie Canal and was used to transport boats up over the Seneca River. It was the second largest structure ever built on the Enlarged Erie; however most of the aqueduct was disassembled when the Barge Canal was constructed. Today, the remaining grand arches of the Richmond Aqueduct stand like ancient monoliths on the banks of the Seneca.

**Community Connections**

The Seneca River Water Trail provides a fluid connection between Central New York’s communities. The Trail allows paddlers to explore and experience the region’s history, culture and beauty in a unique way. Each community along the Trail has its own distinctive relationship to the River. The City of Syracuse, at the eastern terminus of the Trail, has invested millions of dollars into development of its Inner Harbor to strengthen the City’s connection to Onondaga Lake’s waterfront. The County of Onondaga has retained substantial land holdings around Onondaga Lake and maintains state-of-the-art waterfront park and trail facilities for residents and visitors alike. The Village of Baldwinsville has undergone extensive waterfront redevelopment within the past 10 years, has rediscovered its canal connection, and as a result has stimulated significant private investment in its downtown waterfront area. The Town of Montezuma has taken measures to protect its canal heritage and has successfully pursued a multi-county National Register listing for Seneca River Crossing Canals Historic District, which encompasses the Town’s Four Canals Historic Park. These and many other initiatives are being pursued at the local level as the municipalities along the Seneca River Water Trail strive to celebrate and enhance their waterfront locations.
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Municipalities

The SRWT spans three Counties and dozens of local municipalities (see M1: General Location Map). In Cayuga County it meanders from Cayuga Lake through the Towns of Aurelius, Montezuma, Conquest, Mentz, Cato, and Brutus. In Seneca County it passes through the Towns of Tyre and Seneca Falls. In Onondaga County it passes through the Towns of Elbridge, Van Buren, Lysander, Salina, Geddes; the Villages of Baldwinsville, Liverpool and Solvay; and ends in the City of Syracuse.

Land Coverage

Satellite data was used to determine the composition of land coverage along the Seneca River Water Trail. Forest land dominates the water trail, comprising over 40% of the land coverage within the study area. Agricultural related activity comprises an additional 30%. Developed land comprises less than 15% of the land coverage along the SRWT. The expansive tracts of forest and farm field contribute to the scenic beauty of the water trail and to its rich wildlife habitat. This data can also be viewed in M3: Land Coverage Map.

Land Use

Data from the Cayuga County and Onondaga County Offices of Real Property Services (RPS database) was used to determine the land use along the Seneca River Water Trail. This data can be viewed in M4: Land Use Map. The trail flows mainly through agricultural, park/conservation and residential land.
Public Lands

Data from the Cayuga County and Onondaga County Offices of Real Property Services (RPS database) was used to determine the public land along the Seneca River Water Trail. As is shown in map M5: Public Lands, there are numerous public land parcels along the SRWT that could eventually be utilized as facilities such as picnic and primitive camping areas.

Attractions and Existing Facilities

Trail user facilities are the heart and soul of the SRWT. They encompass both built and natural amenities. They can include launch sites, docks, restrooms, potable water sites, parking areas, campgrounds, restaurants, picnic areas, and attractions. Many of the SRWT’s existing facilities are located on public lands owned by local, county or State government. Private for-profit facilities such as marinas, campgrounds and restaurants are also available from the SRWT.

An inventory and description of attractions and existing facilities are included in Appendix A which contains a master list of boater facilities and Appendix B which contains a Seneca River Water Trail Facilities Matrix with information on the sites as well as amenities available. Also, attractions and existing facilities can be viewed in Map M6: Points of Interest.
PARTNERS

The Seneca River Water Trail Master Plan was developed in partnership with the following entities:

- National Park Service
- NYS Department of State
- NYS Canal Corporation
- Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board
- Cayuga County Department of Planning & Economic Development
- Onondaga County Parks
- Cayuga County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
- Local municipalities, including the Town of Brutus (Project Sponsor)
- Lysander Parks Department
- CNY Kayak Club
- Ka-Na-Wa-Ke Canoe Club
VISION

The vision for the Seneca River Water Trail is to establish a 46-mile recreational water trail for non-motorized boaters, which connects communities and attractions along the Seneca River between Cayuga Lake’s Mud Lock and the Inner Harbor of Onondaga Lake.

When fully developed, the Seneca River Water Trail will feature an array of frequent, high-quality facilities and services; stimulating points of interest; consistent signage; and meaningful interpretation of natural and historic sites. The trail will offer a rich, memorable experience for paddlers traveling on the New York State Canal System.

GOALS

1. Develop policies and procedures for long-term management of the Seneca River Water Trail.

2. Establish appropriately designed and spaced facilities including access points, day use areas, and overnight accommodations for use by paddlers on the Seneca River Water Trail.

3. Develop a coordinated interpretation, promotion, and visitor orientation program, and a signature identity for the Seneca River Water Trail.

4. Support on-going efforts to protect and preserve the natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources along the Seneca River Water Trail.
GOAL #1: DEVELOP POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT OF THE SENECA RIVER WATER TRAIL.

MANAGEMENT

Management: Structure

A Seneca River Water Trail (SRWT) Committee should be established to begin implementation of the SRWT Master Plan and the management of the SRWT. This SRWT Committee shall meet regularly and be comprised of representatives from the following groups/agencies:

- Cayuga County Planning Department of Planning and Economic Development
- Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency
- Cayuga County Tourism Agency
- Onondaga County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Cayuga and/or Onondaga County Cornell Cooperative Extension
- NYS Canal Corporation
- Onondaga County Park
- Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
- Canoe/kayak club
- Local business related to SRWT
- Person with interest in historic preservation
- Person with interest in natural resource conservation

This SRWT Committee will work to establish a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization for the SRWT. Benefits from non-profit status include the entitlement to apply to grant programs, tax exemptions and limited liability coverage. The name of this organization should be
SRWT, Inc. and the SRWT Committee will manage the SRWT, Inc. until a paid executive director is hired. Once the Director is hired, the SRWT Committee will become the SRWT Board who will oversee the Director. The Director in conjunction with the SRWT Board should pursue a strategy similar to that of the Hudson River Valley Greenway to develop and maintain the SRWT. In the absence of a paid executive director, many of the recommendations contained in this plan may end up shelved.

SRWT, Inc. will be responsible for overseeing three critical areas: 1) trail development, 2) promotion and marketing, and 3) resource protection. The Director should work with both public and private landowners along the trail to develop “paddler-friendly” sites. Examples of paddler-friendly practices include development of appropriate dockage on-site, ensuring the facility is visibly signed from the water, providing lockers for paddlers to store their boats while visiting, offering transport services for boaters and boats, etc. Paddler-friendly improvements will vary by site; therefore site enhancement should be explored on a case-by-case basis between the landowner and the Director.

The Director should also coordinate development of promotional materials for the SRWT; distribute marketing materials; and develop partnerships with other agencies and organizations along the SRWT to achieve resource protection.

**Recommendation M1:** Establish and convene the SRWT Committee.

**Recommendation M2:** Establish a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to implement the SRWT Master Plan and manage the SRWT.

**Recommendation M3:** Secure funds to establish a paid executive director to coordinate development and management of the SRWT.
Management: Financing

Funding of SRWT initiatives will prove to be a challenge in these fiscally constrained economic times. However opportunities exist to partner with existing agencies to leverage resources to achieve shared organizational goals. Partnering with businesses along the trail provides opportunity for formation of mutually beneficial relationships.

Grant assistance and technical assistance is available through a variety of federal and state agencies including NYS Department of State, NYS Canal Corporation, Empire State Development, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, NYS Department of Transportation, National Park Service, Federal Highway Administration and others. Private foundations are also in a position to assist with SRWT projects given the multi-dimensional aspects of the water trail, and the eligibility of the proposed 501(c)(3) management agency.

Recommendation M4: Secure funds to implement the SRWT Master Plan.
GOAL #2: ESTABLISH APPROPRIATELY DESIGNED, SPACED AND SERVICED FACILITIES INCLUDING ACCESS POINTS, DAY USE AREAS AND OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS FOR USE BY PADDLERS

FACILITIES

Trail user facilities are the heart and soul of the Seneca River Water Trail. They encompass built and natural amenities. They include launch sites, docks, boat lockers, restrooms, potable water sites, parking areas, restaurants, picnic areas, campgrounds, indoors lodging, and attractions. Many of the Trail’s existing facilities are located on public lands owned by local, county or State government. Most of these are free of charge to the user.

Private for-profit facilities including marinas, campgrounds and restaurants also exist. These facilities provide diversity and choice to SRWT users, and often provide essential services such as potable water and restrooms that are not currently available on many public lands.

This section of the plan provides an inventory and assessment of existing facilities along the Trail. The section examines the spacing and design of public and private access points; availability of restrooms and potable water; accessibility and quality of natural and historic sites; availability of indoor and outdoor dining areas; multi-modal transportation linkages; and the availability of overnight accommodations.

The SRWT, Inc. should work with public and private landowners along the SRWT to develop “paddler-friendly” sites. Improvements will vary by site and therefore should be explored on a case-by-case basis with individual landowners. Site enhancements may include establishment of launches, signage, parking, dockage, boat lockers and off-site transport service.
Recommendation F1: Work with public and private landowners along the SRWT to develop “paddler-friendly” sites.

**ACCESS POINTS**

Access points are sites that allow the boater to get on or off the River. Planning considerations for access points include spacing, accessibility from nearby transportation corridors, vehicle parking, trail and/or ramp to the water and signage.

**Access Point Spacing: Current Conditions**

Because the Seneca River is part of the NYS Canal Corridor that is heavily used by motorized boaters, several free public access points already exist along the River. These are typically designed to accommodate trailered watercraft, are well maintained and provide sufficient facilities for canoes, kayaks and other non-motorized watercraft.

The following publicly owned access points exist:

- Mud Lock, Cayuga-Seneca Lock #1 (river mile 0)
- Freebridge State Launch (river mile 1.0)
- Route 31 Bridge Site (river mile 5.2)
- Howland Island Road Launch (river mile 10.1)
- Mosquito Point Bridge (river mile 11.6)
- Bonta Bridge Boat Launch (river mile 18.7)
- Louise Mercer Memorial Park (river mile 34.8)
- Lions Community Park (river mile 35.9)
In addition to public access sites, the following for-profit businesses operate privately owned access points (generally, for use by patrons or the public for a fee):

- River Forest Campground (river mile 15.5)
- Cross Lake Inn and Marina-temporarily closed
- Cross Lake Park & Campground (river mile 22.4 + lake mile 2.8 = 25.2)
- Sunset Park Campground (river mile 22.4 + lake mile 1.7 = 24.1)
- Port O’ Call Restaurant (river mile 25.2)
- Plainville Campground (KOA) – temporarily closed
- Coopers Marina (river mile 34.7)
- J & S Marine (river mile 39.6)
- Sun Harbor Marina-temporarily closed
- Cold Springs Harbor (river mile 40.1)

**Access Point Spacing: Evaluation**

With few exceptions, access to the Trail is frequent and well spaced along the entire route. The following deficiencies are noted:

- A 9-mile gap exists between the Freebridge State Boat Launch and the Howland Island Road State Launch. The Route 31 Bridge Site in Seneca County is located mid distance between the two and would place paddlers within one mile of the proposed Four Canals Historic Park. However, while the Route 31 Bridge site exists, it is not currently paddler-friendly, attractive or easily accessible.
Private facilities help close the gaps between public access points; however these facilities do not guarantee SRWT access to the public. For instance, a gentleman’s agreement that may be working well today between a property owner and paddlers may evaporate if that facility is sold to a new owner. Of greatest significance is the fact that there is no permanent public access to Cross Lake. Virtually all of the shoreline is in private ownership. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation owns a 20-acre parcel on the northeast shore of the lake, that is accessible from Fire Lane 13 and has approximately 1250’ of shoreline. However the shallow muck soils and wetlands covering the site are not conducive to facility development.

All access points between Bonta Bridge State Launch in Brutus and Louise Mercer Park in Baldwinsville (a distance of 16 miles) are privately owned. This is due in part to lack of publicly owned land along Cross Lake. Because there is no direct public access to Cross Lake, paddlers wishing to explore the Lake and its associated Wildlife Management Area Islands may have to pay a fee to use a private facility, or will have to paddle some distance on the River to get to the Lake. From the west, a distance of 3 miles exists between the Bonta Bridge launch and Cross Lake; this distance is not considered prohibitive. However from the east, a distance of 11.6 miles exists between the Mercer launch and Cross Lake.

Due to the lack of access as listed above, additional permanent and direct public access should be established. Opportunities to establish this public access may include 1) establishing permanent public right-of-way at one or more private facilities; 2) exploring the feasibility of developing a public launch site on the Town of Van Buren parcel west of Baldwinsville; and 3) pursuing parcel acquisition for the purpose of establishing public access. The Towns of Cato, Elbridge, and Lysander may be in a position to negotiate public access to Cross Lake as part of future subdivision approvals along Cross Lake.
Recommendation F2: Establish permanent and direct public access to the SRWT and Cross Lake in areas where it is needed.

Access Point Vehicle Parking: General Observations

Although with few exceptions the spacing of access points along the Trail is sufficient, parking at some of these sites is not. Insufficient parking compromises a paddler’s ability to access the Trail and therefore is an important issue to be considered on a site-by-site basis. Additionally, because the SRWT is linear, it should be expected that some paddlers would park one car at their “put-in” site and a second car at their “take-out” site, thereby eliminating the need to backtrack along the trail. Because this is so, adequate parking at each and every access site becomes critical. Paddlers can only travel so far in a day, and because access sites are often spaced miles apart, each site must have adequate parking to ensure that paddlers will be able to pre-arrange a trip of reasonable length.

One of the reasons for this parking crunch relates to the fact that the Seneca River is a shared waterway used by both motorized and non-motorized boaters. Many of the access points along the Trail are used by motorized watercrafts. Vehicles towing trailered boats need two to three times as much parking space as those with car-top (non-motorized) boats. Car-top boaters compete with trailered vehicles for limited parking spaces. At most public access sites, designated non-trailer vehicle parking spaces do not exist.

Of the ten public access points listed above, three are designed to accommodate car-top boats only. Those include Route 31 Bridge Site (river mile 5.2); Howland Island Road Launch (river mile 10.1); and Bonta Bridge Boat Launch (river mile 18.7). It should be noted that, although these sites are not used by trailered watercraft, parking deficiencies exist at all three.
To ensure that paddlers have access to sufficient parking, a couple of options are available:

- Expand parking at existing access points where parking is a known issue.
- Create additional access points for car-top boaters exclusively. Selective placement of vegetation and/or boulders would help delineate car-top vehicle areas.

 Recommendation F3: Expand parking where needed and designate “car-top boaters only” parking spaces at each public access site.

**Access Point: Site-Specific Recommendations**

Site-specific recommendations are limited to publicly owned sites only; enhancements to privately owned sites should be explored on a case-by-case basis with individual property owners. Where feasible, public access to the Trail from privately owned facilities should be established via permanent easement. See Appendix A for more information and site plans.

**Howland Island Road Launch**
- Establish a small designated parking area for car-top vehicles along the north side of the road.
- Widen trail down to water to 5 feet minimum; clear overgrown vegetation
- “Hardscape” with geotextile and crusher run

**Mosquito Point Bridge Boat Launch**
- Expand parking as new facilities are added

**Bonta Bridge Boat Launch**
- Realign trail to River around wing wall of bridge
- Expand parking area to include designated car-top vehicle area
Recommendation F4: Begin to implement site specific access point improvements as listed in the SRWT Master Plan.

**Access Point Solid Waste Disposal: General Observations**

Nearly all privately owned facilities along the Trail offer restrooms, although some may require patronage for use. The following publicly owned facilities offer restrooms:

- Mud Lock, C&S Lock 1 (river mile 0)
- Louise Mercer Memorial Park (river mile 34.8)
- Paper Mill Island Park (river mile 35.0)
- Lions Community Park (river mile 35.9)
- Long Branch Park (river mile 40.5 + lake mile 0.25 = 40.75)
- Onondaga Lake Park (river mile 40.5 + lake mile 1.2 = 41.7)
- Salt Museum (river mile 40.5 + lake mile 3.1 = 43.6)
- Inner Harbor (river mile 40.5 + lake mile 5.5 = 46.0)

The Overnight Accommodations section of this plan provides recommendations for development of new camp facilities along the SRWT. These sites should have restroom facilities. Where available, flush toilets along a sanitary sewer system are the preferred method of waste disposal. However, sanitary sewer is not available along most of the SRWT due to the fact that the water trail courses through rural areas that lack the density to support costly infrastructure projects. The Village of Baldwinsville, Onondaga Lake Park and the Inner Harbor are exceptions. Human waste can be disposed of other ways, including:

- Chemical toilet - a privy having a watertight, impervious pail or tank containing a chemical solution placed immediately beneath the seat or urinal and a pipe or conduit connecting the riser with the tank (can be costly to maintain).
Facilities

- Earth-pit privy - a structure used to receive and dispose of human excreta in a pit in the earth (not recommended in most areas along the SRWT due to poorly drained soil and high water table).
- Pail or can privy - a privy having a watertight container directly under the seat for receiving human excreta, and ready access for the removal of the receptacle for emptying and cleaning (traditional portapotty).
- Vault privy - a privy for disposal of human excreta into a vault which is lined with impervious material and which provides access for the removal of the excreta (more permanent structure).
- Carry-in, carry-out - requires education and is typically considered undesirable.

The specific waste disposal method to be used at each site should be selected only after consideration of the site’s characteristics (e.g. soils), as well as the fiscal capacity of the managing agency to meet the maintenance requirements associated with the chosen system.

Recommendation F5: Develop restroom facilities at all planned, publicly owned, multi-use camp areas.

DAY-USE SITES

Day-use sites are natural, historic and cultural destination points along the SRWT. Day-use sites also include picnic areas, shopping districts and restaurants. Some have landings to get out and explore (Montezuma Wildlife Refuge), while others may be paddled around (Howland Island Wildlife Management Area).

The SRWT Master Plan recognizes that the quality and diversity of day use sites along the river plays a critical role in the overall success of the trail. These day use sites should be
continually enhanced and improved. Additional day sites along the trail should be developed.

**Day-Use Sites: Trails**

Boating to a trailhead, docking or locking one’s canoe or kayak, and then hiking to a day use area imparts a sense of adventure and remoteness. Along the SRWT, there are numerous opportunities to access hiking trails (and their linked attractions) from the water, including:

- Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge trail to visitor center and wildlife observation tower, accessible via dock.
- Howland Island Wildlife Management Area trail system around the island through natural areas, accessible via dock/log crib.
- Village of Baldwinsville Southwest Trail along Lock #24, directing visitors through the Village’s Central Business District, accessible via existing floating dock.
- Town of Lysander Planned Trail.
- Future Four Canals Park historic resources including Cayuga Seneca Canal, Clinton’s Ditch, Enlarged Erie Canal, via existing trail system including NYS Canalway Trail.
- Onondaga Lake Park West – Lakeland Trail (nature trail) and John Haley Memorial West Shore Trail access at Long Branch Park.
- Onondaga Lake Park East – East Shore Recreation Trail connecting SU Charger Boat House Facilities to Joseph Griffin Visitor Center, the Salt Museum, and other various park attractions.

Sites that access hiking trails can be enhanced and improved for paddlers and these enhancements and improvements can include:
• Develop a secure system in which to store canoes/kayaks at hiking trailheads while exploring on foot. Options include development of boat lockers and/or dock areas that offer ways to lock down watercraft.
• Provide interpretive and/or wayfinding signage and site brochures (if available) at each hiking trailhead to enhance the trail experience. The aforementioned sites should be given priority consideration when selecting sites for interpretive signage funded through this project.
• Provide a portage/launch area for each hiking trailhead area to allow easy access from/to the water.
• Trail surface may vary according to anticipated user and available funding. Where possible, design trails to meet handicapped accessibility requirements.

Other natural, historic and cultural destination points are located off the SRWT and connections should be made to access these sites via land and water trails or shuttle service. An example of one such attraction is the planned Port Byron Old Erie Canal Park, currently under development by the NYS Canal Society. A connection could be made via the Owasco Outlet by water or land to this facility. Most of the bank along the Outlet from the Seneca River to the City of Auburn is in public ownership; a walking trail in this area has been discussed for 30+ years and is entirely feasible. Perhaps with development of the SRWT and the Canal Park, interest will be renewed. Other potential linkages should be explored to Beaver Lake Nature Center, Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area, the Village of Weedsport Central Business District, and the Village of Jordan Central Business District.

Opportunities exist to access significant points of interest (and services) via interconnecting waterways or tributaries to the SRWT. The potential to develop additional water trails along these tributaries should be explored. The following opportunities exist:

• Port Byron Old Erie Heritage Park (via the Owasco River – currently accessible).
• Nine Mile Creek Canoe Trail (currently accessible).
• Camillus Aqueduct Park (via Nine Mile Creek - currently accessible).
• Parker Pond (via Muskrat Creek – not currently accessible).
• Aqueduct Park, Brutus (via Cold Spring Brook – not currently accessible).
• Rudy Schassel Park, Port Byron (via Cold Spring Brook/rewatered canal prism – not currently accessible).

These points of interest should be promoted through SRWT media including the website and guidebook, and that efforts be made in the future to establish accessibility via interconnecting waterways to those points of interest not currently accessible.

**Recommendation F6: Enhance and improve sites that access hiking trails.**

**Recommendation F7: Develop connections to access sites located off water via land and water trails or shuttle service.**

**Day-Use Sites: Dining Establishments**

Dining establishments are an important consideration along any water trail. Some trail users will prefer to bring their own meals with them, while others will want to dock at a restaurant and sit down for a served meal.

The following sites offer places to dine along the SRWT:

- River Forest Campground
- Devaney’s
- Cross Lake Inn & Marina-temporarily closed
- Port O’ Call Restaurant
- Jack’s Reef Hotel
- Village of Baldwinsville Central Business District
The largest gap in dining service along the SRWT occurs in Cayuga County. An extensive 16+-mile gap exists between River Forest Campground’s seasonal restaurant and Cayuga-Seneca Lock #1 (presumably a starting point for paddlers, which itself does not offer dining). The large gap can be explained in part by the fact that the NYS Canal was relocated north of our urban centers (Port Byron, Weedsport, Montezuma) during construction of the barge canal in the early 1900’s. The canal was routed away from these centers and their established places of business to the Seneca River, which flows primarily through rural, undeveloped areas of forest, farmland or floodplain.

This distance wouldn’t be a problem for a motorized boater, who may travel 10 miles/hour on the canal system. However for paddlers – who may travel 10 miles as a full day’s journey - this distance between dining areas presents a challenge. One design solution is to provide accessible, regularly spaced picnic areas for paddlers to enjoy meals they bring with them, especially in the area west of Weedsport on the SRWT.

Another feasible alternative is to develop connections via trails, as discussed above, or tributaries, to the urban centers so paddlers may access dining establishments, shops and attractions present there.
Day-Use: Site-Specific Recommendations to Access to Dining Establishments

Proposed Four Canals Park
- Develop dockage at the proposed Four Canals Park in Montezuma, which will allow paddlers to hike one mile down the Enlarged Erie Towpath to the Clifford House restaurant along NYS Route 90 Scenic Byway, in the Town of Montezuma.

Village of Port Byron
- Establish a water trail along the Owasco River to the Village of Port Byron Central Business District. Paddlers will travel about 3 miles on this very scenic waterway. A dock and/or boat locker should be provided at the Mentz Park Complex in the Village Center (plan underway) to allow paddlers to safely store their canoes/kayaks while they explore.
- Develop a walking trail along the Owasco River to the Village of Port Byron Central Business District, as discussed above.

Town of Brutus/Village of Weedsport
- Explore connectivity to the Weedsport Central Business District via a walking or water trail, or shuttle service.

Recommendation F8: Begin to implement site specific recommendations to access dining establishments as listed in the SRWT Master Plan.

Day-Use: Picnic Areas

Picnic areas allow paddlers to stop, rest, and rejuvenate before hitting the water again. They become important places to enjoy a packed lunch or dinner where restaurants are not available or accessible. They provide a rustic, affordable alternative to serviced dining. This is consistent with the SRWT vision to accommodate users of diverse backgrounds including low-income families. A spacing of picnic areas every 1-2 miles lends itself well to families
traveling with younger children, senior citizens and physically challenged individuals who may require more frequent rest stops.

Picnic areas may range from basic to advanced. A basic picnic area should offer minimal features including access, a place to sit, Leave No Trace signage, and identification signage viewable from the water. Basic picnic sites should be accessible to nonmotorized boaters only via simple ramps or streambank gradation, and should eventually be established every 1-2 miles along the SRWT.

The greatest concentration of existing picnic facilities along the SRWT occurs in the Village of Baldwinsville where the greatest concentration of dining establishments also exists. The following publicly owned sites currently offer free, accessible picnic facilities:

- Mud Lock, Cayuga-Seneca Lock #1
- Baldwinsville / Louise Mercer Memorial Park
- Baldwinsville Southwest Trail
- Paper Mill Island, Baldwinsville
- Lions Community Park
- Onondaga Lake Park
- Salt Museum

More advanced picnic areas should be developed at sites that offer a point of interest such as canal resources, wildlife viewing areas, trails etc. Advanced picnic areas should offer the minimal features of the basic picnic site, but could offer other amenities such as restrooms, trash receptacles, potable water, fishing access, trailheads, or campsites. Advanced picnic areas may also feature docks to be accessible to motorized boaters.

Advanced picnic areas should be developed at the following sites:

- Proposed Four Canals Historic Park
• Howland Island Wildlife Management Area
• Mosquito Point Bridge
• Bonta Bridge Boat Launch

This leaves a gap in service between Bonta Bridge and VanBuren of 11.5 miles, which is significant. However a few restaurants exist in this area to provide a dining option. If public access to Cross Lake is established, a designated picnic area should be provided.

**Recommendation F9:** Develop basic picnic areas every 1-2 miles along the SRWT and advanced picnic areas at sites listed in the SRWT Master Plan.

**Day-Use: Historic Sites**

The SRWT’s waterway heritage should be preserved, enhanced and promoted to trail users and local residents. Sites that are already doing this include the Salt Museum and Sainte Marie Among the Iroquois. Opportunities exist to develop other heritage sites along the SRWT at the proposed Four Canals Park in Montezuma and Mud Lock in Liverpool.

Waterway heritage should become a central theme associated with the SRWT, because it celebrates the important role the Seneca River, Cayuga and Onondaga Lakes have had in development of the Central New York Region and beyond, including influencing settlement patterns, culture, heritage, industry, and the environment.

Opportunities also exist to access inland historic sites via water and foot trails or shuttle. These include the Port Byron Old Erie Canal Park, Rudy Schassel Park in Port Byron, Aqueduct Park in Brutus, and Camillus Canal Park.
Day-Use: Four Canals Park Historic Site

The Town of Montezuma and Cayuga County have been working over the past few years to achieve NYS Historic Park designation of the Four Canals Park – one of the most historically rich sites along the NYS Canal Corridor. Four distinct canals were built through the site at various stages in the evolution of the present-day New York State Canal System. The SRWT forms the park’s western border. Physical remains of Clinton’s Ditch, the original Cayuga-Seneca Canal, and Enlarged Erie Canal are visible within the proposed park boundary, including:

- Clinton’s Ditch canal prism and stone Lock 62.
- Stone Lock 11 on the abandoned enlarged Cayuga-Seneca Canal.
- Canal prism, towpath, and heelpath of the Enlarged Erie.
- Enlarged Erie Canal dry dock.
- Richmond Aqueduct remains (2nd largest structure built on the Enlarged Erie).
- Remnants of a paper mill that once harvested and processed cattails in the area.
- Foundations and wells from lock tenders home.

Four Canals Park has the potential to become a premier attraction along the SRWT, the NYS Canalway Trail and the Route 90 Scenic Byway (located about ¼ mile due east).

Resources should be invested in the following improvements:

- Stabilization of Richmond Aqueduct (first, immediate priority).
- Removal of vegetation obscuring historic artifacts.
- Installation of Interpretive Signage at Historic Sites (Richmond Aqueduct, Clinton’s Ditch, Cayuga-Seneca Canal, Dry Dock, etc).
- Improved Access to Historic Sites (improved trail system).
• Development of camp area on uplands or adjacent land (to serve NYS Canalway Trail users and park visitors).
• Installation of wayfinding signage from the SRWT, NYS Route 31 and NYS Route 90.
• Development of dockage for access from Seneca River for motorized and non-motorized boats.
• Installation of boat lockers for non-motorized watercraft.
• Definition of existing parking areas.
• Construction of wildlife observation deck.
• Development of a self-guided walking tour brochure.

Recommendation F10: Continue efforts toward State Historic Park designation for the Four Canals Park.

Day-Use: Natural Resource Sites

The SRWT is rich in natural resource areas, fish and wildlife. This is due in large part to a thick riparian corridor along much of the riverbank, as well as the presence of significant wetland resources. Large landowners of significant habitat along the SRWT include the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, US Fish and Wildlife Services, Onondaga County Parks, the NYS Canal Corporation, and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation.

Wildlife should also be considered a central theme of the SRWT, and may be viewed both on water and land at adjacent day-use sites, including:

• Mud Lock, Cayuga-Seneca Lock #1
• Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
• Howland Island (Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area) – land features and travel around the island
• Cross Lake Wildlife Management Area

Recommendation F11: Waterway heritage and wildlife should become central themes associated with the SRWT.

Recommendation F12: Preserve additional wildlife habitat through establishment of a protected greenway corridor along the non-urban lengths of the SRWT, through further land acquisition by State and/or Federal agencies, and/or conservation easements.

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

A variety of options should be established to accommodate different needs and interests for overnight accommodations. Spacing of sites should occur every 3-10 miles. Commercial campsites should provide greater amenities to paddlers and may appeal most to families, the elderly, handicapped, or individuals seeking a more “comfortable” experience. Designated public campsites should not compete with private interests but should provide a rustic alternative to commercial, developed campsites. These sites may appeal to younger paddlers and individuals seeking isolation and solitude.

Overnight Accommodations: Primitive Camp Areas

Public, primitive campsites should be established along the trail every 3-5 miles. Where possible, these sites should be located in areas that feature additional attractions including parks, historic sites and state Canal locks. Opportunities exist to establish isolated tent sites with limited road access. Although this option raises some concern for safety with respect to emergency vehicle access, it minimizes exploitation of sites by non-paddlers and provides a rustic alternative for those seeking an experience of solitude.
It is recommended that primitive camp areas be developed at the following locations:

- Mud Lock - C&S Lock #1 (NYS Canal Corporation).
- Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area - Howland Island (NYS DEC).
- Montezuma Park – Proposed Four Canals State Historic Park (Town of Montezuma).
- Mosquito Point Bridge (east side of Route 38 – NYS Canal Corporation).
- Maloney Island, located just west of 690/370 intersection (NYS Canal Corporation).
- Fobes Island, located in Baldwinsville (NYS Canal Corporation).
- Lions Community Park (Village of Baldwinsville).
- Onondaga Lake Park (Onondaga County).

These primitive camp areas should be free to trail users and offer a minimum 2-3 clustered tent sites with room for overflow. A picnic table and fire ring should be provided. In wetland areas, raised platforms should be established to keep tents on dry ground. Lean-tos may also be constructed to provide additional protection in inclement weather. For sites that have additional unique features such as historic resources, signage and trails should be established from the pull-off area.

These primitive campsites should be made available on a first come, first serve basis and function as carry in, carry out facilities. As organizational capacity grows for long-term trail management within SRWT, a reservation system may be appropriate. In the meantime, a system of rules and regulations should be developed and posted at all sites, to include information on length of stay, site capacity, and environmental regulations. Enforcement of regulations should initially be carried out by a system of volunteers, municipal employees, or agency staff.

Campfires are an important part of the outdoor overnight experience. They provide cooking and warming energy from a renewable resource, and provide contemplative and/or social pleasure. It is therefore recommended that campfires be allowed at all public camp areas in
designated fire rings. Because the public camp areas will utilize a cluster design, one shared fire ring per camp area is sufficient. Leave No Trace principles should be posted at all sites.

Page 25 provides information on solid waste disposal options and Recommendation F5 which states: Develop restroom facilities at all planned, publicly owned, multi-use camp areas. The challenge in keeping costs down is to establish a critical mass of serviceable privies in the area.

**Recommendation F13:** Establish public, primitive campsites along the trail every 3-5 miles.
Goal #3: DEVELOP A COORDINATED INTERPRETATION, PROMOTION, AND VISITOR ORIENTATION PROGRAM, AND A SIGNATURE IDENTITY FOR THE SRWT

GUIDANCE

Trail guidance includes logistics such as access points and parking; safety information, stewardship promotion (Leave No Trace); and interpretation of interest points.

Recommendation G1: Use a variety of media materials to provide guidance to paddlers along the SRWT, including website, guidebook, maps and interpretive signage.

Guidance: Signature Logo

A signature logo has been developed and will be utilized on all promotional materials for the SRWT to create consistency and “brand recognition” among paddlers. The logo contains elements of the natural, scenic and historic value of the SRWT, conveys to the viewer that the SRWT is part of the NYS Canal System, and maintains visual integrity at appropriate scale in both color and black and white. The following logo design has been developed in-house by Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development:
**Guidance: SRWT Website**

A basic website has been developed by Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development for the SRWT at [http://cayuganet.org/srwt](http://cayuganet.org/srwt) and is hosted by Cayuga County Information Technologies. Eventually, a domain name should be purchased and hosted independently of the County web site. The following domain names were available at the time of publication of this plan:

- [www.SenecaWaterTrail.com](http://www.SenecaWaterTrail.com)
- [www.SenecaRiverWaterTrail.com](http://www.SenecaRiverWaterTrail.com)
- [www.SRWT.org](http://www.SRWT.org)
- [www.SRWT.us](http://www.SRWT.us)
- [www.SenecaRiver.org](http://www.SenecaRiver.org)

Maintenance of the website will occur through Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development until such time that SRWT, Inc. is established with in-house capacity to update the site independently.

The website features the following information:

- **What’s New** - Currently features information about the SRWT planning project, offering links to planning documents. Long-term, this section will offer current information on trail happenings including races and community events; water levels and warnings; new business openings; new facility development; etc.
- **About the Trail** – Currently features one map of the trail and information on sites. Long-term this section will offer additional clickable maps; additional information on access points; day use areas; overnight accommodations; and area history.
- **SRWT Project** – Currently offers an overview of the SRWT Project. Long-term this section may be renamed **SRWT Management**, and will feature final planning
documents; information about stewardship issues; rules and regulations; and
information about SRWT, Inc.

- **Express Yourself** – Currently features an on-line fillable form asking basic
  questions about planning the SRWT. Long-term this section may be renamed **Get
  Involved** and will feature information for volunteers, local communities, and
  businesses along the SRWT. Volunteer opportunities will be publicized. On-line
  feedback forms will be available as needed. Information about becoming a
  paddler-friendly business or park will also be publicized.

### Recommendation G2: Maintain and update the SRWT website.
**Guidance: SRWT Brochure**

A brochure has been developed for the SRWT. This brochure includes a table listing points of interest and facilities along the water trail, distances between them, and a corresponding map. There are a number of facilities that are currently closed, for sale or in the process of reopening. Therefore, the brochure is being produced on a color copier which allows the brochure to be continually updated. This brochure is available on the website and will be provided to tourism agencies in Cayuga and Onondaga Counties.

**Recommendation G3:** Update the brochure as needed and provide to the Cayuga and Onondaga Counties Tourism Agencies and on the SRWT website.

**Guidance: SRWT Guidebook**

A guidebook should be developed for the SRWT. Ideally, the guidebook will be sold by SRWT, Inc. or another appropriate agency to raise funds for improvements along the SRWT. The guidebook should feature the following information:

- **About the Trail** – This section of the guidebook will include information on the length and character of the trail; area history; mile marker system; and relationship to the New York State Canal System.
- **Interpretation** – Initially, two major themes will be explored and celebrated along the SRWT: wildlife and waterways. These themes will be made tangible to the paddler through development and promotion of linkages to specific points of interest along the trail.
- **Safety** – A critical component of all promotional materials, this section of the guidebook will feature a checklist of “What to Bring”; emergency phone numbers; lock navigation; how to obtain water level/weather information via telephone or the
web; highlight known hazards (motorized boater conflict; hunting areas; lake navigation); and emphasize the importance of recognizing one's limits.

- **User Education** - This section will feature major boating and camping regulations in effect along the SRWT; provide information on fishing regulations; and will promote the Leave No Trace ethic.

- **Amenities** - This section of the guidebook will inform paddlers of where to find potable water, toilets, camp areas, picnic areas, canoe/kayak outfitters, bait and tackle shops, grocery stores, etc.

- **Attractions** - Points of interest along the trail (places to visit) will be highlighted, interpreted and promoted. Contact information for individual points of interest will be provided where applicable.

- **Access Points** - This section of the guidebook will provide information on where paddlers can get on or off the water along the SRWT.

- **More Information** - Paddlers will be provided with the website address for the SRWT and the phone numbers of the Cayuga County Tourism Agency and Onondaga County Visitor and Convention Bureaus, as well as contact information for SRWT, Inc.

- **Maps** – A detailed map depicting the location of access points, attractions and amenities will be provided as an insert to the guidebook. Printing on waterproof paper will be explored as an option.

**Recommendation G4: Develop a guidebook for the SRWT.**
Guidance: SRWT Interpretive Signage

Interpretive signage should be developed along the SRWT in a coordinated manner. Because the SRWT Planning Project received initial funding from NYS Department of State, all signs developed with DOS funds must conform to the New York State Coastal Resources Interpretive Program (NYSCRIP) Signage Design Guidelines.

NYSCRIP guidelines describe two interpretive signage categories of signage: wayside interpretive and kiosk interpretive. Wayside signs are low-lying 2'x3' signs that provide interpretation of specific on-site resources. Wayside signage typically costs between $1,000 and $2,000. Kiosks are large, tri-paneled signs that provide interpretation of a community, locational map and background on the NYSCRIP objectives. Kiosks can cost upwards of $10,000.

Given budgetary constraints, it is recommended that kiosks be considered only for high traffic, full service public sites including Mud Lock, Baldwinsville visitor center, and Onondaga Lake Park. Long-term, when the Four Canals site is developed further, it should be considered for a kiosk.

Wayside interpretive signage will be provided at sites accessible from the water that are of historic or natural significance. Sites identified for wayside interpretive signage include the following:

- Mud Lock, C&S Lock # 1
- Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
- Howland Island Wildlife Management Area (site of new dock)
- Four Canals Proposed State Historic Park
- River Forest Campground (at Cayuga County SWCD dock)
- Devaneys (NYS Canal Corporation Pier)
- Paper Mill Island, Baldwinsville
- Lions Community Park, Baldwinsville
- Onondaga Lake Park, site of new launch near SU Boathouse
- Mud Lock, Liverpool

**Recommendation G5: Develop interpretive signage along the SRWT in a coordinated manner.**

**Guidance: Wayfinding Signage**

NYSCRIP Signage Guidelines apply to interpretive signage only. Other types of signs will be needed along the SRWT, including you are here maps, rules and regulations (at camp areas and picnic areas), and directional signage. NYS Canal Corporation Signage Guidelines should be used for all signs except interpretive signs.

Wayfinding signage is used to help paddlers navigate the SRWT and know their location on it. Wayfinding signage should be placed along the SRWT at sites that are accessible from both the water and land.

A samples of wayfinding signage is shown below:
Recommendation G7: Place wayfinding signage at sites accessible from both water and land.

**Guidance: Designated Paddler-Friendly Site Flags**

Designated flags placed along the SRWT at paddler-friendly sites will assist paddlers to find amenities and access points. The flags will be installed at the river’s edge, and will be visible from the water. This system has been used successfully along the Hudson River Water Trail. It provides advertising to businesses along the water trail, and informs paddlers of where they can get off the water to access additional amenities. The following images are for illustrative purposes only. One depicts the raising of an official flag at a designated Hudson River Water Trail site. The second is a proposed SRWT flag which depicts lock gates, greenway corridor and river.

![Hudson River Water Trail Flag-Raising](image1)

Recommendation G8: Mark designated paddler-friendly sites with a flag depicting a modified SRWT logo, and include this flag in official promotional materials produced for the SRWT.

![Proposed SRWT Flag](image2)
Goal #4: SUPPORT ON-GOING EFFORTS TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE NATURAL, HISTORIC, CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES ALONG THE SENeca RIVER WATER TRAIL

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship refers to care for the natural, historic, cultural and recreational assets of the SRWT. This plan recognizes resource protection as a critical component to the long-term management of the river as a recreational water trail. Natural resource protection is focused on improved water quality and habitat preservation. Historic and cultural resource protection is focused on preservation, restoration and celebration of historic and cultural resources. Recreational resource protection refers to protecting the river as a recreational resource and includes maintaining proper water levels, reducing siltation that impedes riverbank access, and maintaining the integrity of recreational facilities including camp areas, docks, and picnic areas.

Stewardship: Partners

Several organizations are either currently involved in or well positioned to engage in ongoing stewardship practices along the SRWT. They include (but are not limited to):

- Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Cayuga County and Onondaga County
- Cayuga County and Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- NYS Canal Corporation
Cross Lake Association  
Nile Mile Creek Conservation Council  
Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency  
Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection  
The Nature Conservancy  
Cayuga-Western Onondaga Canalway Trail Association  
Cayuga Lake Watershed Network  
Onondaga Lake Partnership  
Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FL-LOWPA)  
Upstate Freshwater Institute  
Friends of the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge  
NYS Canal Society  
Onondaga County Historical Association  
Cayuga County Historical Society  
Weedsport-Brutus Historical Society  
CNY Kayak Club  
Ka-Na-Wa-Ke Canoe Club  
Syracuse Chargers Rowing Club

**Stewardship: Natural Resources**

The Seneca River is part of the Seneca-Oneida-Oswego Rivers basin, which encompasses 5,100 square miles. Among the significant water resource features in this basin are seven Finger Lakes, Oneida and Onondaga Lakes, and a major segment of the New York State Barge Canal that incorporates the Clyde, Seneca, Oneida and Oswego Rivers.

Surface water generally drains northward to the Seneca River from the Finger Lakes and Onondaga Lake. The eastern portion of the watershed drains to Oneida Lake and eventually to the Oneida River, where it merges with the Seneca River (at the Three Rivers Junction) to
form the Oswego River flowing north to Lake Ontario\textsuperscript{1}. The image on the next page illustrates the extent of the Basin.

By virtue of geographic location, the Seneca River plays an important role in the Seneca-Oneida-Oswego Rivers basin. The geographic vastness presents unique challenges for natural resource protection, but also offers opportunities for intermunicipal and interagency partnerships, many of which have already formed to take on stewardship issues in the Seneca River Watershed, as well as the whole Seneca-Oneida-Oswego Rivers basin.

**Recommendation S1:** Work through existing involved agencies to undertake stewardship activities along the SRWT.

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**Stewardship: Invasive Species**

The invasive species problem in the Finger Lakes is a growing problem as more non-native species are introduced to the area, usually as a result of human activity. These invasives threaten the sustainability of healthy ecological systems by dominating areas and crowding out native species. Invasives present in the Seneca-Oneida-Oswego Rivers Basin include (but are not limited to) Eurasian Watermilfoil, Curlyleaf Pondweed, European Frogbit, Water Chestnut and Zebra Mussels.

Water Chestnut is an extremely prolific annual that moves in and dominates an area, forming dense, impenetrable surface mats that can severely limit recreation and habitat. Water Chestnut negatively impacts wetlands, beaches, sluggish rivers and streams. The Seneca River is plagued with this glossy, green, plant that can easily choke water bodies, out competing the native flora. During the past two decades, Water Chestnut has spread throughout the Central New York river/canal system from Cross Lake to Oneida Lake, and into the Oswego River Corridor. It now consumes well over 100 acres there and its range is constantly expanding. Concentrated efforts are being made by Cornell Cooperative Extensions of Cayuga and Onondaga County and other agencies to control the spread of water chestnut and other invasives.

**Recommendation S2: Participate in existing invasive species control programs.**

**Stewardship: Historic/Cultural Resource Protection**

Part of the attraction of the SRWT is its ability to connect paddlers to historic and cultural points of interest, by water. Stewardship including protection, restoration and interpretation of these resources is of paramount importance. The most significant canal-related historic resources along the SRWT may be found at the proposed Four Canals State Historic Park in the Town of Montezuma. The concentration of resources at this site is of statewide importance. The Richmond Aqueduct is in dire need of stabilization, having lost one of its
last remaining arches in the last two decades as a result of time, gravity and neglect. Other historic resources on site are suffering similar neglect; erosion due to plant root invasion is a significant problem. The appeal to New York State to take over management of the site is imminent. Other historic resources along the SRWT including the Salt Museum and Sainte Marie Among the Iroquois on Onondaga Lake and should continue to be preserved by Onondaga County Parks.

**Recommendation S3: Participate in historic and cultural resource protection along the SRWT.**

**Stewardship: Recreational Resource Protection**

This section of stewardship looks at two system-wide issues along the NYS Canal Corridor, water levels and dredging (siltation). Both are complex and multi-dimensional, and both are intimately connected to use of the Seneca River as a recreational resource.

The Seneca River is part of the NYS Canal System; therefore NYS Canal Corporation’s Syracuse Division Canal Office controls its water levels (for navigational purposes) as part of the Oswego River Basin. Emphasis is placed on flood reduction. Following the navigation season, the system’s water levels are lowered to provide storage for spring snowmelt and storm runoff. Prior to navigation season, water levels are raised gradually to predetermined safe levels for summer use. In the summer, levels are regulated to provide reserve capacity sufficient to contain moderate runoff.

It is not uncommon for the NYS Canal System to be closed periodically during the navigation season due to high water levels. Marinas and other businesses along the Canal suffer financially during these closures, which impact use of the system primarily by motorized boaters who cannot portage around locks or lift bridges. This plan recognizes the extreme complexities involved in water level management and seeks only to raise
awareness of the issue’s implications. The NYS Canal Corporation should continue to reach strive toward healthy water levels within the system.

Dredging is an important tool for improving water flow and navigation in the NYS Canal System. The NYS Canal Corporation performs dredging but it is typically limited to the central channel where motorized boats travel. Non-motorized boaters often travel closer to the river’s edge to avoid conflict with motorized boaters. However parts of the SRWT have severe siltation buildup along the banks and are simply not accessible. The NYS Canal Corporation, in conjunction with US Army Corp of Engineers, should seek to dredge the full width of the river channel on a regular basis to ensure sustained navigability by non-motorized boaters.

**Recommendation S4: Participate in with existing agencies to improve the SRWT for non-motorized boaters.**

**Stewardship: Facility Management**

Many of the boater facilities currently in place along the SRWT are being managed by existing agencies such as Onondaga County Parks or NYS Canal Corporation. The SRWT should partner with these agencies to maintain facilities along the SRWT.

As additional facilities and amenities are added to the SRWT, volunteers will play a critical role in helping to keep sites clean, and site amenities intact. A source of volunteers is the Adopt-a-Trail program. This program is a volunteer based program that encourages individuals or groups to adopt a section of a trail and/or recreation facility. Volunteer duties may include scheduled inspections, observations on user patterns and trends, removal of trash, identification of maintenance issues, repairs, clean up of the grounds, toilet repairs and cleaning, and keeping written records. The Cayuga-Western Onondaga Canalway Trail Association is already established and well-positioned to coordinate an Adopt-A-Trail program for the SRWT. This group is comprised of municipal officials, outdoor recreation
enthusiasts, historians, business leaders, etc. dedicated to maintenance of improved Canalway Trail surfaces from Camillus to Montezuma.

Another program that could be used to assist in facility management is the Leave No Trace Program. Leave No Trace Center (LNT) for Outdoor Ethics is a national nonprofit organization that unites public and private partners to teach minimum-impact skills and ethics to all types of outdoor enthusiasts. LNT’s seven principles are as follows:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

The SRWT should partner with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics and post their principles at all SRWT “paddler-friendly” sites. Benefits include the following:

- Use of the trademarked Leave No Trace logo and Seven Principles in all marketing and promotional materials.
- Listing of SRWT, Inc. in all partner listings including the Tracker (Leave No Trace’s quarterly newsletter/20,000 annual circulation) and other relevant publications.
- Listing on the Leave No Trace website with a link to the SRWT site.
- 10% discount on all educational materials.
- Site visit from the Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers to do a workshop of any length with your staff.
- Editorial content for newsletters, website, or other publications.
Recommendation S5: Work with existing agencies to maintain SRWT facilities.

Recommendation S6: Partner with the Cayuga-Western Onondaga Canalway Trail Association to coordinate an Adopt-A-Trail program for the SRWT.

Recommendation S7: Partner with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics.

**Stewardship: Education And Outreach Opportunities**

Education and outreach are keys to effective management of just about every water trail. The public must know that the trail is there, why it is important, and understand its benefits to recreation, education, and conservation. An informed citizenry will champion a trail by valuing it, using it responsibly and becoming its steward.

Some of these initiatives could include:

- Organize an annual river sojourn – which is a multi-day educational paddling trip that includes camping, programs, festive meals, meetings with elected officials, and lots of community engagement. Sojourns celebrate rivers, river stewardship, and projects like water trails; they help build an educated Trail constituency.
- Promote Leave No Trace ethic.
- Develop programming to get young people and adults to explore the Trail via canoe, kayak, or other craft.
- Organize special events and projects such as races, canoe-a-thons, learn-to-paddle days, boating safety courses, water trail photography contests or exhibits, and fishing tournaments. Consider developing a bike and boat event that connects the water trail to the NYS Canalway Trail.
- Tie into existing events along the water trail and develop a traveling promotional exhibit to inform the public of the benefits of the SRWT.
Develop partnerships with outfitters, fishing and boating businesses, other conservation, angling, and boating organizations, local municipalities and local, state and federal agencies.

Recommendation S8: Partner with existing agencies to promote stewardship and undertake initiatives to raise awareness of the SRWT and its resource protection needs.
RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Key:
F= Facilities
G=Guidance
S=Stewardship
M=Management

General Recommendations for Management

M1: Establish and convene the SRWT Committee.

M2: Establish a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to implement the SRWT Master Plan and manage the SRWT.

M3: Secure funds to establish a paid executive director position to coordinate development and management of the SRWT.

M4: Secure funds to implement the SRWT Master Plan.

General Recommendations for Facilities

F1: Work with public and private landowners along the SRWT to develop “paddler-friendly” sites.

F2: Establish permanent and direct public access to the SRWT and Cross Lake in areas where it is needed.

F3: Expand parking where needed and designate car-top vehicle parking only areas at each public access site.
Recommendations

F4: Begin to implement site specific access point improvements as listed in the SRWT Master Plan.

F5: Develop restroom facilities at all planned, publicly owned, multi-use camp areas.

F6: Enhance and improve sites that access hiking trails.

F7: Develop connections to access sites located off water via land and water trails or shuttle service.

F8: Begin to implement site specific improvements to access dining establishments as listed in the SRWT master plan.

F9: Develop basic picnic areas every 1-2 miles along the SRWT and advanced picnic areas at sites listed in the SRWT Master Plan.

F10: Continue efforts toward State Historic Park designation for Four Canals Park.

F11: Waterway heritage and wildlife should become central themes associated with the SRWT.

F12: Preserve additional wildlife habitat by establishing a protected greenway along non-urban lengths of the SRWT through further land acquisition by State and/or Federal agencies, and/or conservation easements.

F13: Establish public, primitive campsites along the trail every 3-5 miles.
General Recommendations for Guidance

G1: Use a variety of media materials to provide guidance to paddlers along the SRWT, including website, guidebook, maps and interpretive signage.

G2: Maintain and update the SRWT website.

G3: Update the brochure as needed and provide to the Cayuga County and Onondaga County Tourism Offices and on the SRWT website.

G4: Develop a guidebook for the SRWT.

G5: Develop interpretive signage along the SRWT in a coordinated manner.

G6: Place wayfinding signage at sites accessible from both water and land.

G8: Mark designated paddler-friendly sites with a flag depicting a modified SRWT logo, and include this flag in official promotional materials produced for the SRWT.

General Recommendations for Stewardship

S1: Work through existing involved agencies to undertake stewardship activities along the SRWT.

S2: Participate in existing invasive species control programs.

S3: Participate in historic and cultural resource protection along the SRWT.

S4: Participate in with existing agencies to improve the SRWT for non-motorized boaters.
S5: Work with existing agencies to maintain SRWT facilities.

S6: Partner with the Cayuga-Western Onondaga Canalway Trail Association to coordinate an Adopt-A-Trail program for the SRWT.

S7: Partner with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics.

S8: Partner with existing agencies to promote stewardship and undertake initiatives to raise awareness of the SRWT and its water resource protection needs.
Implementation Strategy

For each of the four goals (management, guidance, stewardship, and facilities), a three phased approach is proposed to implement the SRWT. The primary purpose for trail phasing is to ensure a logical sequence of implementation that provides a high degree of success as each phase is completed, thereby building momentum for each future phase. Since political, economic and land use conditions within the trail corridor could change over time, it is possible that actions proposed could change. This implementation plan is intended as a work in progress that can adapt to changing conditions.

Phase I (0 to 3 Years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Involved Agencies</th>
<th>Estimated Cost and/or Possible Funding Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MANAGEMENT</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish and convene the SRWT Committee. The SRWT Committee should meet regularly.</td>
<td>County Agencies, State Agencies, Federal Agencies, Local Businesses, Canoe/Kayak Clubs, Interested Citizens</td>
<td>Minimal cost. In-Kind Staff Time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to implement the SRWT Master Plan and manage the SRWT. This organization will be called SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>SRWT Committee</td>
<td>$1000. In-Kind Staff, Pro-bono, local funding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Task Involved Agencies Estimated Cost and/or Possible Funding Sources

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish a paid executive director position for the SRWT, Inc. to implement the SRWT Master Plan and manage the SRWT.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>$80,000. Fundraising activities, Federal and State Grants.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FACILITIES

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conduct a detailed inventory of public access sites and develop site improvement plan with cost estimates.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>$10,000. Fundraising activities, State and Federal grants, private foundations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore parking needs at access sites and begin to expand parking where needed and designate car-top vehicle parking only areas at each public access site.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., NYSDEC, Canal Corporation</td>
<td>$500 for signs. TBD to expand parking. Fundraising activities, State and Federal grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue efforts toward State Historic Park designation for Four Canals Park.</td>
<td>Cayuga County Planning Department, Town of Montezuma, NYS Parks</td>
<td>In-kind services.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Implementation

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUIDANCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRWT Website: Maintain and update with information. Examine if a new domain name would be beneficial.</td>
<td>SRWT Inc., Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development and IT.</td>
<td>Free to $200 for new domain name. Fundraising activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRWT Brochure: Update as needed and provide updated copies to Cayuga Co. and Onondaga Co. Tourism Agencies and on the website.</td>
<td>SRWT Inc., Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development</td>
<td>$100 for 1000 copies. In-kind. Fundraising activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin to produce and install paddler-friendly site flags.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., Local Municipalities, Businesses, NYSDEC, NYS Canal Corporation, State and Federal Agencies.</td>
<td>$500 for 100 flags. Fundraising activities, State and Federal grants, Local municipalities, Businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper ads and articles about the trail.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>Free to $500 for newspaper ads. Fundraising activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEWARDSHIP</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with existing involved agencies and organizations to undertake stewardship activities.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., Federal, State, and local agencies, local municipalities, private organizations.</td>
<td>Minimal cost.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Task Involved Agencies Estimated Cost and/or Possible Funding Sources

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<tr>
<td>Tie into existing events like the Seneca River Days in Baldwinsville</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., local organizations, local municipalities, County Tourism Agencies.</td>
<td>Minimal cost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become a member in Leave No Trace</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>$100. Fundraising.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Phase II (3 to 5 Years)
Continue to work on Phase I Tasks and begin Phase II tasks.

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<th>Task</th>
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<tr>
<td>GUIDANCE</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin to design, produce and install wayside interpretive signage at the sites listed in the Plan and as determined by the SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., Local Municipalities, NYSDEC, NYS Canal Corp., Businesses, State Agencies.</td>
<td>$5000. Fundraising, Federal and State Grants, local municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
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<td>Estimated Cost and/or Possible Funding Sources</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FACILITIES</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin to implement the access site improvement plan.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., NYSDEC, NYS Canal Corporation, Local Municipalities.</td>
<td>TBD. Fundraising, Federal and State Grants, local municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine sites for picnic areas and primitive camping along the trail and develop a plan.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., NYSDEC, Canal Corp., local municipalities.</td>
<td>$10,000. Fundraising activities, State and Federal grants, private foundations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore permanent and direct public access to Cross Lake.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., Town of Elbridge, Town of Cato, Town of Lysander.</td>
<td>TBD. Fundraising activities, State and Federal grants, private foundations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore permanent public access to the SRWT between Baldwinsville and Cross Lake, and other locations as needed.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., local municipalities, NYSDEC, Canal Corp.</td>
<td>TBD. Fundraising activities, State and Federal grants, private foundations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEWARDSHIP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a volunteer recruitment strategy and trail protection plan.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., Cayuga-Western Onondaga Canalway Trail Association.</td>
<td>$5,000. Fundraising activities, State and Federal Grants, private foundations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Task Involved Agencies Estimated Cost and/or Possible Funding Sources

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<tr>
<td>Participate in existing invasive species control programs.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., Cayuga and Onondaga Counties Cooperative Extensions, Canal Corp., NYSDEC.</td>
<td>Minimal cost to SRWT, Inc. FLLOWPA funding, NYSDEC, PRISMs funding, State and Federal Grants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase III (5 to 10 Years)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue to work on Phase I and Phase II Tasks. Begin Phase III Tasks.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FACILITIES</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin building picnic sites and primitive camping areas.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., NYSDEC, Canal Corporation, local municipalities.</td>
<td>TBD. Fundraising, Federal and State grants, local municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examine establishing a protected greenway along non-urban lengths of the SRWT though further land acquisition by State and/or Federal Agencies and/or conservation easements.</td>
<td>SRWT Director, Federal Agencies, State Agencies.</td>
<td>Minimal cost until start acquiring land and/or conservation easements. In-kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GUIDANCE</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to produce and install wayfinding signage at sites determined by the SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>SRWT Inc., local governments, NYSDEC, Canal Corp.</td>
<td>$5000. Fundraising, Federal and State Grants, local municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
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<td>Estimated Cost and/or Possible Funding Sources</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to design, produce and install wayside interpretive signage at the sites listed in the Plan and as determined by the SRWT Director and Board.</td>
<td>SRWT Inc., local governments, NYSDEC, Canal Corp.</td>
<td>$5000. Fundraising, Federal and State Grants, local municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin to design, produce and install kiosks at sites listed in the Plan and as determined by the SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>SRWT Director and Board, local governments, NYSDEC, Canal Corp.</td>
<td>$30,000. Fundraising, Federal and State Grants, local municipalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a guidebook.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc.</td>
<td>$10,000. Fundraising activities, State and Federal grants, private foundations, local businesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEWARDSHIP</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement volunteer recruitment and trail protection plan.</td>
<td>SRWT, Inc., volunteers</td>
<td>$5,000. Fundraising activities, State and Federal grants, private foundations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>