

Canalway Trail Management Organization

Report of Research Findings and Recommendations

Report prepared by

Canalway Trail Partnership Project

New York State Canal Corporation
National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
New York Parks and Conservation Association

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Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	4
a.	The Canalway Trail Development and Management.....	4
b.	Overview	6
2.	Findings	9
a.	Findings from interviews with Canalway Trail owners and maintainers and volunteer organizations.	9
b.	Findings from interviews and research on trail management organization models 11	
i.	Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (BARTC).....	11
ii.	Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L).....	12
iii.	Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC)	15
iv.	Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC)	17
v.	Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (FOGVG)	19
vi.	Trent-Severn Canal (TSC).....	22
c.	Findings from interviews and research on Adopt-a-trail models from other state agency's programs.	23
i.	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)	23
ii.	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. (OPRHP) 24	
iii.	New York State Department of Transportation (DOT).....	25
3.	Analysis	26
a.	Structure of Existing Trail Management Organizations.	26
b.	The Role of Volunteers	28
c.	Legal relationship between the Non Profit Corporations and the agencies on whose property they are working.....	29
d.	Policies, Design and Maintenance Standards	29
4.	Recommendations	31
a.	Canalway Trail Management Organization (CTMO).....	31
i.	Introduction.....	31
ii.	Mission	31
iii.	Operational Authority.....	32

iv.	Start-Up.....	32
v.	Funding	33
vi.	Structure.....	33
1.	A managing board	34
2.	Regional Canalway Trail Groups (RCTG).....	36
b.	Policies and Standards	41
c.	Designation.....	43
5.	Appendices	44
a.	Role of the National Park Service	44
b.	Canalway Trail Management Organization flow chart.	45
c.	Acknowledgements.....	46
i.	Canalway Trail Steering Committee	46
ii.	Interviewees.....	46
1.	Canalway Trail Managers	46
2.	Other Trail Management Organizations	46
d.	MOU's and "Adopt-a-Trail" agreements from various agencies and existing trail management groups.	47

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1. Introduction

a. The Canalway Trail Development and Management

The 1995 Canal Recreationway Plan recognizes the importance of land side recreational opportunities along the historic New York State Canal System. An important part of this is the Canalway Trail. The trail is a proposed, continuous, five hundred twenty four mile multi-use trail that, when completed will allow hikers, bicyclists and other users to have uninterrupted travel along these waterways. Presently, a little over half of the trail is in place. The largest completed sections are in the eastern, central and western parts of the state.

The continuous Canalway Trail will be a world-class recreational resource and attract tourists from all over the state, country and world as well as offering an unparalleled local resource within fifty miles of five million residents of New York State. The route follows one of the most important historic resources in the history of the United States and passes through and near some of the most important historic sites associated with the birth and development of this nation.

Following the recommendations of the Canal Recreationway Plan, it is the long-term goal of the New York State Canal Corporation (NYSCC) to complete this trail across the state. The NYSCC has completed about 100 miles of trail since the program began. Most of this development has occurred on Canal Corporation lands and lands owned by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. These two agencies own approximately two-thirds of the proposed trail route. The remaining third, however, is owned by multiple public jurisdictions and some private lands.

While the diversity of state and local land ownership land presents many challenges to the development of the trail, it also presents challenges for the management and maintenance of the trail once it is completed. The management of a trail of this length and complexity of ownership needs to

be well planned in order to assure a consistent and high quality experience for all users – both tourists and local residents alike

Recognizing the importance of volunteer and community participation in the development, maintenance and management of a trail system of this length and complexity, the NYSCC was successful in obtaining assistance from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) in 1995 to organize grassroots support for the Canalway Trail. This project became known as the Friends of the Canalway Trail initiative. Actions taken under this effort included: 1) the formation of a Steering Committee comprised of volunteers, trail advocates, trail managers, and local officials to advise the NYSCC and RTCA in the development of the organization. There are approximately 20 members on the Steering Committee. 2) a series of workshops were also held across the Canal System to identify those who were interested in the Canalway Trail and provide training on key trail related issues. Over 400 people attended nine separate workshops. 3) in conjunction with New York Parks and Conservation Association (NYPCA,) the first Canalway Trail Trek, a cross-state bike tour, was held in 1997 to demonstrate the importance of, and benefits associated with, completing the Canalway Trail. A tremendous amount of media attention was generated by the trek as well as interest amongst local officials and citizens and in the media; and 4) conducted the first two annual Canalway Trail statewide conferences in partnership with the New York State Canal Conference.

Another project that has been undertaken to generate grassroots support for the Canalway Trail is the Canalway Trail Partnership. Initiated in 1998 by the NYSCC, NPSRTCAP and NYPCA, the goal of the project is to assist and strengthen the role of local municipalities and trail groups in developing and maintaining a multi-use recreational trail along the 524-mile NYS Canal System. One of the more significant results of this project is that many more

citizens and communities are actively working to plan and develop their segments of the Canalway Trail.

Formation of the Canalway Trail Management Organization (CTMO) is the next step in the efforts to encourage grassroots participation in the development, management and maintenance of the Canalway Trail. This process will integrate the work already performed by the Steering Committee, NYSCC, RTCA and NYPCA.

It is proposed that the CTMO will be a statewide organization and will be responsible for assisting localities in developing, managing and maintaining the Canalway Trail. It will organize local and regional trail groups under an umbrella that will promote communication, develop standards and policies and offer a non-profit umbrella. The creation of a CTMO is a new beginning rather than an end product. It will ultimately be shaped by the many committed New Yorkers who manage and maintain our annually growing Canalway Trail system

This report is the culmination of months of discussion and input from Canalway Trail owners, managers, committed trail volunteers and other users. This report also reflects the experience of the other umbrella and friends organizations across the nation.

b. Overview

The purpose of this document is to: (1) report on findings of research into existing trail management organizations and individuals; (2) to provide an analysis of those findings and; (3) in light of that analysis, to recommend a structure for a Canalway Trail Management Organization (CTMO).

A key issue in developing a five hundred twenty four mile world-class recreational trail is consistency in its construction and management.

Although the Canal Corporation owns a majority of the existing and proposed trail corridor, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation also owns a significant portion. Several counties and local municipalities also own and manage portions of the corridor. A substantial proportion of the remaining undeveloped trail segments will also be locally owned and managed. The proposed CTMO will help coordinate the trail development and management activities between these various entities, which will result in a continuous statewide trail that meets user needs and expectations.

The document is structured as follows:

- The first part is a summary of findings from interviews with:
 - Existing Canalway Trail owners/managers
 - Representatives from other organizations in the US and Canada that are responsible for trail maintenance in multi-jurisdictional situations
 - Representatives from New York State agencies operating "Adopt-a-Resource" volunteer citizen stewardship programs.
- The second part is an analysis of the findings from part one.
- The third part of the report presents preliminary recommendations for the structure of a proposed statewide Canalway Trail Management Organization.

This draft report is intended to act as a catalyst for discussion among the parties involved in developing the CTMO. Accordingly, a structure and a course of action to develop such an organization is proposed. The process of developing the organization will involve discussion and inclusion of many points of view. Through

this type of open discourse a wide variety of ideas be tapped and used in the creation of this important body.

2. Findings

a. Findings from interviews with Canalway Trail owners and maintainers and volunteer organizations.

Discussions with various people who are now in positions that involve some amount of responsibility for trail maintenance revealed many issues common to this group. This group generally does not use volunteers on a regular basis or in "partnership" type agreements. The greatest use of volunteers is for cleanup type operations that are usually single events that are inspired by the organization that the volunteers belong to (i.e. boy scouts, girl scouts, corporations, service clubs, etc.) Comments on the effectiveness of volunteers varied greatly with some very enthusiastic about the work done and some skeptical because of experiences with low volunteer turnout or flagging interest on the part of volunteer organizations. In general, at present, most of the responsibility for maintenance on the existing trail goes to NYS Canal Corporation, OPRHP, Counties and Municipalities.

The primary maintenance issues that arise for this group are; litter, mowing, brush cutting, weed removal and signage. Where the trail is close to the bank of the canal or canalized river, erosion becomes an important and expensive issue. Paving issues are less prevalent, more maintenance is needed on stone dust trail surfaces; this involves raking and dressing the surface. On asphalt trails the condition varies greatly, depending on the quality of the original trail construction and other factors, such as tree roots. Maintenance on asphalt surfacing is normally expensive and limited to agency employees rather than volunteers.

All those contacted said that they would welcome partnerships with local volunteers to do certain maintenance tasks on the trail. Comments such as "...we really appreciate it when volunteers help out with our spring cleanup or beautification work," and "Volunteers have definitely helped us concentrate on the more complicated aspects of the job, they can help us by clearing and mowing while we can do tasks that otherwise we might not be able to get to," were common. The most mentioned tasks were litter removal and light brush cutting/removal. Other tasks mentioned were mowing (where volunteers supply the equipment), weed removal, building small projects such as benches and kiosks, signage maintenance, event programming, fund raising, and advocacy.

Attitudes about standardized trail management and maintenance guidelines varied widely. As a group the managers were ambivalent on the subject. A few of the managers had a concern that standards may be unacceptable to localities that may want to treat their section of the trail according to their own desires. Such as some sections that may want to allow snowmobiles or horses, or some sections that do not want paving.

The question of surfacing and standards for that surfacing was an area of great concern with one manager concerned that "...standardizing the trail surfacing across the state would be a mistake in that it would impose a standard on communities that they are unwilling to undertake." And from another, "that it takes a decision away from the locality which should be theirs to make on property that they own." On the other hand one manager commented that "trail standards will help us improve the trail and allow for users to feel safe and enjoy the trail more."

All managers responded positively when asked if they would be willing to participate in local working groups made up of volunteers, agency representatives and municipal officials to help run the management organization. They also agreed that having a statewide management organization was a good idea and would be willing to help formulate how it works and to participate in it.

b. Findings from interviews and research on trail management organization models

i. Bay Area Ridge Trail Council (BARTC)

The Bay Area Ridge Trail Council is a non-profit organization which plans, promotes, and constructs the Bay Area Ridge Trail, a four hundred mile mostly hiking, trail connecting parks and preserved open spaces along the ridgelines surrounding San Francisco Bay in California.

At present the BARTC is also developing an umbrella management organization. The Bay Area Ridge Trail (BART) is dissimilar to the Canalway Trail in that it is not entirely multiple use. Sections of the BART are exclusively for hiking. In those sections mountain bikes are discouraged due to the amount of erosion they have been causing. Other sections are multiple use and even accept horse traffic.

The similarities with Canalway Trail are that the trail goes through many different jurisdictions. Several counties and cities are involved. The BARTC is also presently in the process of purchasing private land in order to complete the trail. This mixture of public agencies, counties, municipalities

and private ownership is very reminiscent of the Canalway Trail.

The maintenance and management of this trail is divided up amongst the various owners. Like the Canalway Trail, the owners take responsibility for trail maintenance, supplemented by the work of volunteers where available. This help is scattered at best and the real role of the BARTC has been that of advocacy, planning, identifying acquisition needs and promotion of the use of the trail through maps, guides and events.

BARTC has just started investigating the formation of an umbrella organization that would provide standardized guidelines for maintenance and development. They are also trying to increase the role of volunteers in these tasks and provide a link between the volunteer organizations, the trail owners and the overseeing organization. There is some reticence to the formation of uniform trail standards because, as with the Canalway Trail, different localities may have different ideas of how the trail should be designed within their jurisdiction.

They are also doing the same kind of research that we are and are also experiencing the lack of suitable models. Most interesting to them is the ATC model.

ii. Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L)

The D&L Trail is a 180-mile recreational trail that extends from Wilkes-Barre, PA to Bristol, PA. The D&L Trail links

communities, historic canals and canal towns. The trail is the spine of the D&L and follows these historic canals, and the transportation route that coal took along the extensive transportation system of railroads, rivers, dams and canals from mine to market.

The organization that oversees the volunteer activities on the trail in the D&L is the Wildlands Conservancy (WC). The program is called the "Trail Tenders." The WC has been coordinating volunteer tasks on the trail for the past seven months. The volunteer program has been in development for the past year but had been delayed due to the death of their Executive Director.

There is, at present, no formal agreement with the various municipalities and other local governments along the trail for standardizing maintenance and management guidelines. At the present, the locality where the work is being done informs WC about what to do and how. Again, the localities are interested in maintaining the trail within their borders as they see fit.

The trail is considered a multiple use trail but the surfacing is loose, composed of gravel or "wood chips" which limit the uses to hiking, mountain biking and equestrian.

The WC has control of all volunteer activities on the trail and does a lot of publicity for the Trail Tenders program. Trail Tenders are individuals and groups that take on responsibility for many types of volunteer maintenance activities along the canal and trail. This can include such varied activities as litter clean up to erosion control projects on the canal. The Trail

Tenders report their activities to Wildlands Conservancy and give the number of person-hours worked. Since April of 1999 740 people have worked 4866 hours. This averages out to 6.57 hours per person in the past eight months.

These volunteers have been gathered by staff members of WC doing workshops in the various sections of the D&L and encouraging people to sign on as tenders. The WC then also organizes formal workdays and publicizes them along the trail to encourage other volunteers, not necessarily in the Trail Tenders program, to participate. To date a couple of these events have taken place and have been very successful. The WC uses guidelines from Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) Stewardship program to determine tasks to be done along the trail on an ongoing and one time basis.

The WC would also be the over seeing organization for any coordinated management and maintenance effort. At the time of his death, their Executive Director was in the process of evaluating other organizations of this type. This work was going to be partially based on the MOU that the East Coast Greenway uses as well as models from Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC) and RTC. Presently a group of seven municipalities have combined efforts into a non-profit group called the Lehigh Canal Recreation Commission, which can act as a funnel for funds intended for non-profits. But this group has taken no stands on maintenance, management or development issues other than to endorse the Trail Tenders program.

WC hopes to revive the effort to build a management structure as soon as a new Executive Director is hired and is up to speed with this task.

iii. Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC)

The ATC is a non-profit organization with the purpose of operating, developing and maintaining the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (ANST), a hiking trail that runs from Maine to Georgia. This function is carried out under a Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service on federally owned land and similar agreements on land owned by others. As of now there are only 25 miles of non-federal land left in the ANST. Because the ANST is strictly a hiking trail many of the trail maintenance and management specifics do not apply to the Canalway Trail; but the management structure has definite applications to the Canalway Trail.

Structurally, ATC is a federation of 31 hiking club and trail conference members. Each member provides volunteer labor to maintain and manage the ANST in its area. Many of the clubs were in existence before the ATC came to be and participated in the formation of the federation. About half of the member hiking clubs are non-profit organizations in their own right and half have no official organizational structure.

As part of the Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service, ATC is authorized to redelegate responsibility for trail management to member clubs that it identifies. Through its board of directors (made up of representatives from all the clubs,) the ATC provides an over-arching organization, which

authorizes this redelegation of management activities and develops trail management guidelines.

In order to be delegated as the manager of a section of the ANST, ATC requires local members (clubs, partners, communities, trail councils) to develop a *Local Management Plan* that specifies the responsibilities and projected tasks needed for that member's section of the trail. ATC publishes the *Local Management Planning Guide*, which helps the member organization develop their plan. Additionally, trail standards for development and maintenance are published in the ATC's book, *Trail Construction, Design and Maintenance* which local clubs follow when developing, maintaining or managing their section of the trail. Local clubs are represented in the national organization by having a member on the board of directors of ATC.

The development of these guidelines and standards is a task that ATC takes on for itself with input from local clubs. The Trail Management Committee of the ATC has regional meetings with agency partners and volunteers. New policies may show up at these meetings and be discussed between the Committee and the meeting attendees. Drafts of the new policies or guidelines are published in the ATC newsletter. This allows for open comment on the proposed policy. After an unspecified (to me) period of time the policy becomes official. There is usually a one and one-half year gestation period for new policies.

iv. Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC)

The FLTC is a non-profit organization responsible for overseeing the maintenance and development of approximately 800 miles of hiking trails in New York State on public and private land. FLTC has three major missions, first to provide an administrative umbrella under which the individual trail caretakers operate, and second, to provide consistent trail marking, signage, mapping, and consistent relations with permitting land owners and public agencies. FLTC also prints maps and guidebooks of its trails and sells and distributes them in its third function as disseminator of public information.

The FLTC is structurally similar to the ATC. It is a membership organization, and the trail itself is built and maintained by an amalgamation of local hiking/trail clubs that undertake to maintain a certain length of the trail. Individuals and loosely organized groups also may also elect to take care of sections of the trail and maintain it under FLTC guidance. The FLTC is run by a 15-member board of directors made up of people from the hiking clubs elected by the membership. Five members are elected per year. This board of directors is responsible for electing six officers.

Trail issues are brought before the board of directors through the trail committee and trail chair. A general meeting of all trail caretakers occurs once per year where trail issues and policy recommendations can be discussed.

Policies about trail issues, such as methods for marking the trail are decided on by the board of directors with input from

the membership, and carried out by the hiking clubs or other trail caretakers in the field. Disagreements about methodologies are generally solved by the individual caretakers using their best judgment and the Area Coordinator (see below) or board of directors making sure that trail safety and navigation is maintained. An example cited by the interviewee was that of trail marking. The main trail of the FLTC is marked with white painted blazes on trees. Some local clubs object to using paint and use strips of white poly instead. These strips are then nailed to the trees as blazes. The effect is the same, i.e. white blazes still mark the way and safety is maintained. When you walk this trail you will periodically see white painted blazes and white poly blazes.

The FLTC has divided its trails into seven areas and instituted a middle level of organization of seven Area Coordinators to correspond with these divisions. These Area Coordinators are trail enthusiasts who are out in the field on a certain area of the trail. These coordinators can see problems developing on the trail and alert the trail chair of the board and the local hiking club, also serving as one more filter so that every little detail doesn't have to be handled by the Statewide Trail Chair.

The FLTC also organizes special workweeks three times per year when special projects are undertaken. This can include major construction projects such as bridges or lean-tos or other improvements not related to routine maintenance.

Presently and over the last decade, three hundred fifty plus eligible miles of the Finger Lakes Trail in the western half of the state are gradually being certified as North Country

National Scenic Trail. This association has made it possible for the FLTC to apply for monetary and other assistance that can be used for improvements and maintenance on the certified section of the trail.

Unlike ATC, FLTC does not own any land that its trails go through, except for three small donated sections and a few permanent donated trail easements. The trails are on private and public lands, with the public lands belonging to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and occasionally a county park.

Where the trail crosses state property the trail is maintained under Temporary Revocable Permits (TRP). These permits periodically need to be changed when the route of the trail changes due to logging or other DEC practices. When these changes occur, the DEC official in charge notifies the FLTC, which can then notify the local hiking club in charge of that section so that new trails can be scouted, built and marked. FLTC is also in the process beginning to use "Adopt-a-Resource" program that DEC has initiated for volunteers. (See below for a description of that program.)

v. Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (FOGVG)

The Genesee Valley Greenway is a fifty-mile linear park that runs from the southern tip of Letchworth State Park to the City of Rochester along the Genesee River and the abandoned Genesee Valley Canal in upstate New York. The greenway includes a multi-use recreation trail on abandoned

railroad right-of-way and canal towpath. The land is or will be owned by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

The FOGVG is a not for profit corporation, whose mission is to establish and maintain a public, multi-use trail and natural greenway corridor along the abandoned Genesee Valley Canal and its successor, the Pennsylvania Railroad, from the Erie Canal Heritage Trail in Rochester, NY to Hinsdale, Cattaraugus County, NY. in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Genesee Valley Greenway Steering Committee.

The FOGVG is governed by a fourteen-member board of directors living within the Greenway region. To ensure continued grass roots community involvement in decision-making, all chairpersons of local committees are members of the board. Local committees are made up of citizen volunteers and a major function of the local committees is to conduct clearing and maintenance of sections of the trail.

The major goals of the FOGVG are threefold. First, to provide public recreation by supplying opportunities for various recreational activities along the abandoned canal towpath and rail bed, and increasing access to recreational use of the Genesee River. Second, to advance community resource protection by protecting, promoting and linking canal and other historic and cultural, natural and habitat resources along the Greenway Corridor and to increase community knowledge of these local and natural resources. And, third, to stimulate economic development through the

promotion of tourism and Greenway trail-related businesses and provide opportunities for jobs skills training.

The FOGVG is currently negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DEC and OPRHP. The MOU has not been adopted as of this date but the draft includes language that is very helpful in understanding the relationship of the FOGVG and the state agencies involved.

The MOU will authorize the FOGVG as a partner with DEC and OPRHP in the development and maintenance of the greenway. As part of this MOU the three parties will cooperatively develop a Unit Management Plan (UMP). The UMP is being developed by the three parties in monthly meetings of DEC Superintendents, OPRHP Engineers, State Foresters, and FOGVG representatives. Public input is also included. The UMP will serve as the basis for policies regarding trail development, and continued operation and maintenance.

The MOU also stipulates that the FOGVG will provide assistance to OPRHP and DEC for operation and maintenance of the greenway trail. The specific tasks that are enumerated are inspection, repair, refurbishing, replacement of signage, and parking area and trail head vehicle barrier maintenance. Also stipulated is that the FOGVG is limited to using volunteer laborers that are registered with OPRHP or DEC. This registration is part of the "Adopt-a-Resource" program that DEC currently uses. This program is described in more detail below. The MOU requires that volunteers operate under this program.

OPRHP and DEC are responsible for inspection, maintenance and repairs to major structures such as bridges and culverts with FOGVG given responsibility for identifying historic structures.

In its 1999 Annual Report the FOGVG reports a variety of volunteer efforts totaling 4297 hours. These activities included clearing vegetation from the trail and historic structures (weeding and brush cutting), mowing, picking up trash, fabricating and painting gates, meeting to discuss trail planning and management, conducting a detailed inventory of the condition of canal and railroad era culverts, and organizing events. These volunteers were from many walks of life. Some were individuals and some were members of groups varying from BOCES classes through Boy Scouts, Local Committees and snowmobile clubs.

vi. Trent-Severn Canal (TSC)

The TSC is a 386-kilometer canal that crosses central Ontario from the Bay of Quinte to Georgian Bay. The non-profit organization, Friends of the Trent-Severn, is in charge of all volunteer activities on the canal and the canalside trail.

The volunteer activities are limited in Canada due to the federal funding that the canal gets. This means that all maintenance, construction and canal related management activities must be done by employees. The volunteers concentrate on promotion and fund raising activities. These include running special events, staffing souvenir shops, promoting tourism along the canal through publications, leaflets and press kits. The Friends of the Trent-Severn also maintains a web page, which lists many of the scheduled

activities along the waterway as well as navigation and recreation information.

The idea of volunteers affording this type of help was presented to the various trail managers in the interviews and all agreed that this type of assistance from a friends group would be eagerly accepted.

c. Findings from interviews and research on Adopt-a-trail models from other state agency's programs.

i. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

DEC has a program called the "Adopt a Natural Resource." Highlights of the program are:

- As the DEC is responsible for the management of natural resources on lands under its jurisdiction and as it intends to improve the environmental quality of those natural resources at a minimum cost to the state, the program states that volunteerism is the cornerstone of the program.
- As such, volunteers in this program are afforded a formal opportunity to propose activities for meeting the management needs of state owned natural resources.
- These activities may involve remediating vandalism, picking up litter and trash, establishing or maintaining access of nature trails, providing interpretive services for school groups and other citizens, managing wildlife habitats and otherwise providing positive benefits to the natural resource.

- The statute authorizes DEC to use a stewardship agreement for these activities and established application procedures for considering stewardship proposals.
- The DEC can also use its discretion in providing personnel, facilities and supplies in support of activities in this program.
- Signs are erected in recognition of these activities as well as press releases, newsletters and other forms of recognition as DEC deems appropriate.
- DEC invites and encourages individuals and groups to become participants in the program
- Stewards are afforded liability and workers' compensation protection by DEC provided they are acting within the scope of the agreement. These are the same protection as salaried state employees. The stewards provide the DEC with volunteer names, Social Security numbers, hours and dates worked.
- Activities are in accordance with all laws, regulation and DEC policies and must conform to any existing management plans or with approval of the respective management authority.
- A copy of the application form and the DEC policy statement initiating this program is attached to this report in the Appendix.

ii. New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. (OPRHP)

OPRHP does not, currently, have an Adopt a trail or similar program. A representative at headquarters related that some of the sections or parks have used the DEC program as a "template" for volunteer activities in OPRHP owned facilities. Volunteers can also

participate in state parks and other properties by applying to the superintendent of the facility and arranging work sessions locally. In general, the work must be supervised by an OPRHP employee, must fit in with the Unit Management Plan of the park and is restricted to work that can be done without using heavy machinery. OPRHP also collects the social security numbers of individual volunteers and provides workers compensation insurance.

OPRHP does, however have a model MOU agreement that it uses with Friends groups. This MOU was developed out of a need to legally identify the rights and responsibilities of the agency and the Friends groups that perform work on state parks and other OPRHP owned facilities. The MOU is attached to this document in the Appendix. It provides an example for MOUs that may be used between local Canalway Trail volunteer groups and the land owning agencies.

iii. New York State Department of Transportation (DOT)

DOT has an "Adopt-a-Highway" program that allows volunteers to perform some maintenance work along public highways. In general it is very similar to the DEC program with some differences due to the dangers of work close to an active highway. The agreement and application is attached to this document in the Appendix.

3. Analysis

The interviews and research presented in the above section reveal several patterns of information that are valuable to the development of the managing organization for the Canalway Trail. This information can basically be broken down into three categories. The first is the structure of existing trail management organizations, the second is the role of volunteers and the third is the legal relationships between the organization and the agencies on whose property they are working.

a. Structure of Existing Trail Management Organizations.

An examination of the information collected from these organizations reveals several common points that help them operate within the volunteer and agency milieu.

- **They are organized as non-profit corporations.** This is important because it allows the groups to enter into agreements and MOUs with federal and state agencies. It also allows them to take advantage of funding sources that would otherwise be off limits to other types of entities such as state agencies, municipalities and for profit corporations. In some cases the organization began to operate under the umbrella status of another non-profit until such time as the new group was ready to incorporate on its own.
- **They operate under a legal agreement with the landowners.** This aspect is discussed under section 3.b. below.
- **They have a layered organization.** This means that in general there are three levels of organization. First, a board of directors or

managing board which has overall responsibility for the organization and the trail. Usually, it is this body that has signed the MOU with the agency or agencies. This board also very often elects its own officers, convenes committees, and enters into MOUs with organizations that are responsible for sub-sections of the trail. (i.e., the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference has an MOU with the ATC for the section of the trail they maintain.), decides on trail policies, expedites communication between trail sections and between members of the organization and agencies. The Board of Directors is also usually made up of members elected by the members of volunteer organizations in each trail sections as well as trail owners and members-at-large. Agency representatives usually act in an advisory capacity.

The second layer of organization is the sectional group. The nature of most of these trails, like the Canalway Trail, is that they are very long. This means that they cross many jurisdictional boundaries and are thus dealing with many local and regional differences. This is dealt with by dividing the trail geographically so that each section is overseen by the local or regional section group. These groups are generally made up of representatives of local governments, agencies, landowners and volunteers or volunteer organizations. This is the level of organization that generally deals with the nitty-gritty of trail maintenance in a particular section of the trail, and, where required, the local management plan is developed. Because of their local focus they are aware of issues on the trail in their influence and can act efficiently to correct it. These groups elect members to the board of directors. Communication dissemination is an important function of these mid-level groups. They offer a local means for discussion of local trail issues that can then be brought before the board of directors and a means by which information from the statewide

organization can reach the individual volunteers and volunteer organizations.

The next level is the local volunteer and trail user. This level is discussed in the next analysis section.

b. The Role of Volunteers

Volunteers form the major work force for all the trail management organizations contacted. They provide, at no or very low cost, an extensive supplement to already over taxed municipal or other maintenance departments. While volunteers, in general, cannot do some tasks that require heavy machinery or specialized training, they can perform any number of very valuable tasks that might otherwise be neglected. Examples of these tasks have been listed elsewhere in this document, but in summary they include all sorts of vegetation management, surfacing repairs, building and repairing infrastructure, programming events, publicity, signage repair and building, fundraising, patrolling, etc. The list is surprisingly inclusive and is limited only by the imagination and openness of the individuals involved.

The essential part of involving volunteers is to include them in the decision-making path and to give them legal status to work on the trail. The first can be dealt with by setting up the organization in a way that includes the ability of volunteers to be heard on every level of the organization. The second is handled, with written agreements between the volunteers or volunteer groups and the agency that owns the section of trail the volunteers will be working on. These agreements can take the form of "Adopt a Trail" contracts, MOUs or friends group contracts, but all have a similar purpose and form. The purposes are:

- to explicitly spell out the responsibilities of the volunteers and of the agency
- to explicitly identify the type and extent of the work that will be performed
- to outline the process of reviewing that work
- to protect both the agency and the volunteers in the event of mishap.
- additional provisions may also provide for programming events, publicity or fundraising

c. Legal relationship between the Non Profit Corporations and the agencies on whose property they are working

Usually the landowner is a federal or state agency or some combination thereof. Where private landowners exist agreements need to be made with them as well. The legal agreements usually take the form of an MOU between the agency and the Non Profit Corporation. The MOU spells out the responsibilities of each of the parties, provides legal protection for each of the parties and authorizes the Non profit to perform work on the trail and to delegate others under its auspices to do work on the trail. Other aspects of some of the MOUs are that they clearly define what is meant by the trail, the type of work allowed, the type of agreements that volunteers need to work under, and the method of either party withdrawing from the agreement. Several MOUs that were used in this study are attached to this document.

d. Policies, Design and Maintenance Standards

If there is any general characterization about the way other groups have dealt with standardizing policies and design and maintenance standards, it is "gently." As one representative of a trail conference said "...it is generally a matter of forming a policy which we can recommend but not impose on the

local clubs." In other words a trail management group as a whole may, through serious debate and discussion, define a policy about a particular trail issue but in the end it is up to the local groups to enforce or not enforce that policy.

Generally, if a local clubs do not enforce policies that are central to the safety of trail users or otherwise important to the mission of the non-profit, the group may lose its legal right to maintain that section of the trail through the agencies invoking the withdrawal clauses in the MOU or other agreement.

4. Recommendations

a. Canalway Trail Management Organization (CTMO)

i. Introduction

The recommendations presented below are based on the analysis of interviews presented above with the existing Canalway Trail managers and other trail management organizations. They are intended to be a starting point in defining an organization that will participate in many aspects of managing the Canalway Trail.

An important aspect of this organization is the partnership among state, county, and local governments, citizen volunteers, and civic organizations. This partnership is critical to the development of a well-maintained, consistent trail that satisfies all the users: tourists and residents alike.

ii. Mission

The mission of the CTMO will be to promote the completion and maintenance of the Canalway Trail, a five hundred twenty four mile multiple-use continuous trail across the state, for the safe and enjoyable use of residents and tourists and to provide an umbrella to help promote communication and coordination among all the parties involved in the development and maintenance of the trail, including the Canal Corporation, OPRHP, DEC, NPS, the various county and municipal agencies along the canal, the volunteers and volunteer groups, and user groups.

In order to carry out this mission the CTMO will, in partnership with Canal Corporation and other agencies:

- Promote partnerships among state, county and local government agencies, citizen volunteers or volunteer groups, trail users, service organizations, etc. for the purpose of sharing management and maintenance responsibilities.
- Convene a temporary ad-hoc committee to develop a policy and management and maintenance guidelines document that can be used to accomplish the mission across the state. This committee should be composed of representatives from the NYS Canal Corporation, OPRHP, the Regional Canalway Trail Groups, volunteer trail users, National Park Service and New York Parks and Conservation Association.
- Develop a local management planning process, which promotes local participation in achieving the mission. This should include the requirement of preparing and publishing a Local Management Plan.
- Continue to revise and develop policies and guidelines that promote the objective of the mission on a statewide basis as new issues arise and old ones have new solutions.
- Promote the Canalway Trail.
- Advocate for funding and legislation that will promote the mission.

iii. Operational Authority

The CTMO should operate under an MOU with Canal Corporation and other state and local agencies that own land that the Canalway Trail passes through.

iv. Start-Up

The report recommends that the CTMO, during the initial two-year start-up phase of the organization, utilize the 501 (c) (3) non-profit status of the New York Parks and Conservation Association.

NYPCA has agreed, if funds are available, to provide critical staff support to help organize and coordinate CTMO activities, ensure good communications amongst the many stakeholders, and provide "trouble shooting" assistance as needed. NYPCA is a statewide organization that is the non-profit partner in the Canalway Trail Partnership Project and has focused its trail activities on assisting canal communities to organize, plan and develop their trail segments. NYPCA works across New York as a catalyst to assist communities to organize and develop greenways, community trails and heritage corridors. NYPCA has initiated projects that launched three independent organizations.

At the end of the two-year start-up period the CTMO board would decide how to address its future staffing and organizational needs.

v. Funding

One of the first tasks of the CTMO will be to prepare an operating budget. That task is beyond the scope of this document but several items that should be included are: paid staff, office space and other office expenses, printing and mailing costs for newsletters, meeting notices, and standards and policy guidelines, etc. Cost should be kept to a minimum.

Funding for the initial start-up costs of organizing and coordinating the CTMO will be needed to begin the project.

vi. Structure

The CTMO will be composed of three parts: a managing board, regional Canalway Trail groups and volunteers. A recommendation

for the responsibilities and structure of these three divisions is described below.

1. A managing board

The CTMO managing board is a statewide board of directors, which implements the mission of the CTMO.

a. The responsibilities of the managing board should be

- In partnership with the regional Canalway Trail groups and the volunteers, write bylaws for the CTMO.
- Convene a temporary ad-hoc committee to develop a policy and management and maintenance guidelines document that can be used to accomplish the mission across the state. This committee should be composed of representatives from the NYS Canal Corporation, OPRHP, the Regional Canalway Trail Groups, volunteer trail users, National Park Service and New York Parks and Conservation Association.
- Develop a local management planning process and assist Regional Canalway Trail Groups in developing and implementing local Canalway Trail management plans.
- Circulate a model Adopt-a-trail policy and agreement to be used between local volunteer organizations and state and local agencies that

own the trail. (It is understood that some state agencies have existing model agreements that can be used in the place of the model CTMO agreement.)

- Distribute information about statewide policy and management and maintenance guidelines to the section groups
- Promote communication between the Regional Canalway Trail Groups and between those groups and the board which continues to revise and develop the policy and maintenance guidelines
- Monitor and help ensure the implementation of statewide standards and policies by the RCTGs and all trail managers.
- Fundraise in support of Canalway Trail activities.
- Prepare agreements with the RCTGs to clarify their roles and responsibilities.

b. The composition of the managing board:

- Voting representatives elected by each Regional Canalway Trail Group (described below)
- Voting representatives from Canal Corporation.
- Non-voting members from NPS (See Appendix a. for a further discussion on the role of the National Park Service.) and NYPCA.

c. Interim or Start-Up Board

Until the Regional Canalway Trail Groups are formed and have elected representatives to the permanent board, the members of the Canalway Trail Steering Committee will assume the responsibilities of the managing board. Individual members of the Canalway Trail Steering Committee may elect not to participate in the Managing Board.

This interim board will also actively work to recruit and new local groups and to form Regional Canalway Trail Groups that will elect representatives to the permanent managing board.

2. Regional Canalway Trail Groups (RCTG)

The RCTGs are committees involved in the management and maintenance of a specific geographical area of the Canalway Trail. These areas may be decided on using various parameters such as NYS Canal Corporation sections, county divisions or other jurisdictional areas. It is probably best to limit the number of miles any RCTG is responsible for to around 50 miles but this may vary given other geographical considerations.

It may also be that initially the managing board will decide on the geographical distribution of the RCTGs and that, after more experience is gained, the regions may wish to merge or split into different divisions. It may also be possible that initially there may be no cohesive group for a certain section

of the trail. In that case the managing board should appoint a member at large to represent that area.

The Regional Canalway Trail Groups will operate under agreements with the CTMO Managing Board. These agreements will be written by the managing board with the help of the RCTGs and the property owners. They may be modeled after similar agreements that are used by ATC, FLTC, etc. An important part of the relationship between the RCTG and the CTMO Managing Board is the Local Management Plan that the RCTG develops.

a. The responsibilities of the canal section groups should be

- Encourage and monitor volunteer activity along the trail in that region and encourage trail users to become volunteers
- Develop a local management plan
- Develop local trail groups
- Monitor and assess local trail development, management and maintenance needs and solutions in the region
- Recruit volunteers
- Help the managing board implement the mission of the CTMO in that region
- Expedite communication between volunteers and between volunteers and agencies and the managing board.
- Communicate local trail issues to the managing board for discussion

- Send an elected representative to the managing board
- Promote and develop partnerships with local volunteers and volunteer groups for trail management and maintenance

b. The Regional Canalway Trail Groups should be composed of representatives from

- NYS Canal Corporation (probably section engineer or similar)
- State, Region, County or Local government or agencies.
- Trail owner
- Trail maintainer
- Volunteer groups within the section
- Key individual volunteers

c. Volunteers

Volunteers (it is assumed that volunteers will also be users of the trail and the two terms are used interchangeably here) should be an important part of both the working and the administrative functions of the CTMO on all levels. Volunteer participation will reduce the financial burden on the state and local governments to maintain the trail, will promote a sense of ownership at a grass roots level and will result in a better, safer and more enjoyable trail. This sense of ownership will help in all aspects of implementing the mission of the CTMO at the local

level. Volunteers and volunteer organizations should be sought out and encouraged to participate in partnerships with local and state agencies involved with Canalway Trail management and maintenance.

Volunteers can participate in many tasks involved with Canalway Trail management and maintenance as well as programming, fundraising and promotion. Some of these tasks are listed below but this list is not meant to be complete and local volunteers should be encouraged to participate in any way that promotes the mission of the CTMO.

- Act as the "eyes and ears" of the RCTG on the trail
- Serve on managing board and committees
- Trash cleanup
- Brush clearing
- Assist in developing design and maintenance guidelines
- Mowing
- Construction and maintenance of trail amenities such as benches, kiosks, comfort facilities, vehicle control structures, etc.
- Landscaping
- Programming events
- Fundraising
- Promotion
- Liaison activities with local businesses

The volunteers perform these tasks on the Canalway Trail according to the Local Management Plan (LMP) that the RCTG for that area has developed. Volunteers also participate in the development of these LMPs and participate at meetings of the RCTG where regional trail issues are discussed and solutions adopted. Volunteers can also serve on the Managing Board representing their RCTG.

The RCTG, in partnership with authorizing agencies, coordinates and oversees the work of the volunteers on the regional trail section and assures that the work is being done according to the LMP and the Adopt-a-Trail agreement (see below). The RCTG also participates in volunteer education and recognition of volunteer contributions to the trail.

- **Adopt-a-Trail Agreements**

The legal relationship between the trail maintenance groups and the authorizing partner such as Canal Corporation or OPRHP will be an Adopt-a-Trail agreement. The CTMO should prepare a model standard agreement to be approved by the agencies and/or landowner in that section of the trail.

It is highly recommended that existing agreements of this sort used by the DEC and DOT be studied before drafting and approving the new agreement. MOUs that OPRHP uses with friends groups should also be studied.

Some of the features of the Adopt-a-Trail agreement should be:

- Written agreement stating what each party will do.
- A provision for recognition of volunteers.
- Agency oversight of volunteer activities
- Compliance with any local management plans
- Compliance with CTMO mission
- Dates of range of dates when work will take place, if possible
- Workers compensation for volunteers
- Provision of tools for volunteers
- If power equipment is used, rules for their use
- Provision of any agency staff or equipment

b. Policies and Standards

As is mentioned above in the analysis section, most trail managers approve of some level of standardization of design, maintenance and policies. As the Canalway Trail becomes the premier multi-use trail in the US it becomes increasingly important to ensure that people's experience of it is uniformly positive. Along with that, the level of safety on the trail must be extremely high and the quality of facilities consistent with the goal of providing a first class recreational and tourism experience.

In order to offer that experience [it is recommended that] the CTMO managing board convene an ad hoc committee to develop a set of design and maintenance guidelines that will be adopted by the Regional Canalway Trail Groups. These guidelines should be incorporated into any official operating agreements between agencies and Canalway Trail volunteer groups.

Two areas of consistency should be dealt with; these are design and maintenance standards and trail use policies.

Design standards should be developed using a standard that is widely accepted by design professionals. These standards may cover trail width and grades, drainage, various types of surfacing, curves, bridges, infrastructure, signage, parking, lighting and vehicle barriers. Standards that could be used as models for these include those developed by AASHTO, the American Society of Landscape Architects, American Institute of Architects, recreational organizations, Americans with Disabilities Act, Consumer Products Safety Commission and the American Society of Testing and Materials.

Maintenance standards should be developed with input from all levels of the organization. These standards should include specifications for mowing, brush clearing, herbicide use, surface repair and maintenance, painting, signage repairs, erosion control, repairs to infrastructure such as benches, kiosks, vehicle barriers and etc.

Signage is a major maintenance issue at the moment due to the many places where the trail leaves the canal and goes on rural and urban roads. Signage inventory and maintenance standards should be developed.

RCTGs that do not design or maintain the trail to these standards thereby creating either an unsafe condition, or one that detracts from the overall appeal of the Canalway Trail as a worldwide destination for tourism and recreation, should lose their agreement with the CTMO Managing Board and trail section should possibly lose its "Canalway Trail" designation. (see below)

A second area of standardization is in trail use. It should be within the purview of the CTMO to participate with Canal Corporation and other agencies in developing policies for the use of the trail. These policies can include uses that are permitted, and where, hours of operation, commercial use of the trail, group use, etc.

c. Designation

It is important to make note that the creation of the Canalway Trail is of great economic importance to the canal communities. There should be a responsibility on the part of each community and Regional Canalway Trail Group to develop and maintain the trail in such a way as to enhance the image of the trail as a first-class, cross-state, multi-use trail. In return for doing this the canal maintainers should receive certain advantages and recognition from the Canal Corporation and other responsible agencies [with official capacities.]

This recognition can come in the form of official designation as Canalway Trail. This designation should bring with it economic advantages such as signage, inclusion in promotional materials, mapping, press releases and other programs that Canal Corporation can develop to enhance economic opportunities along the trail.

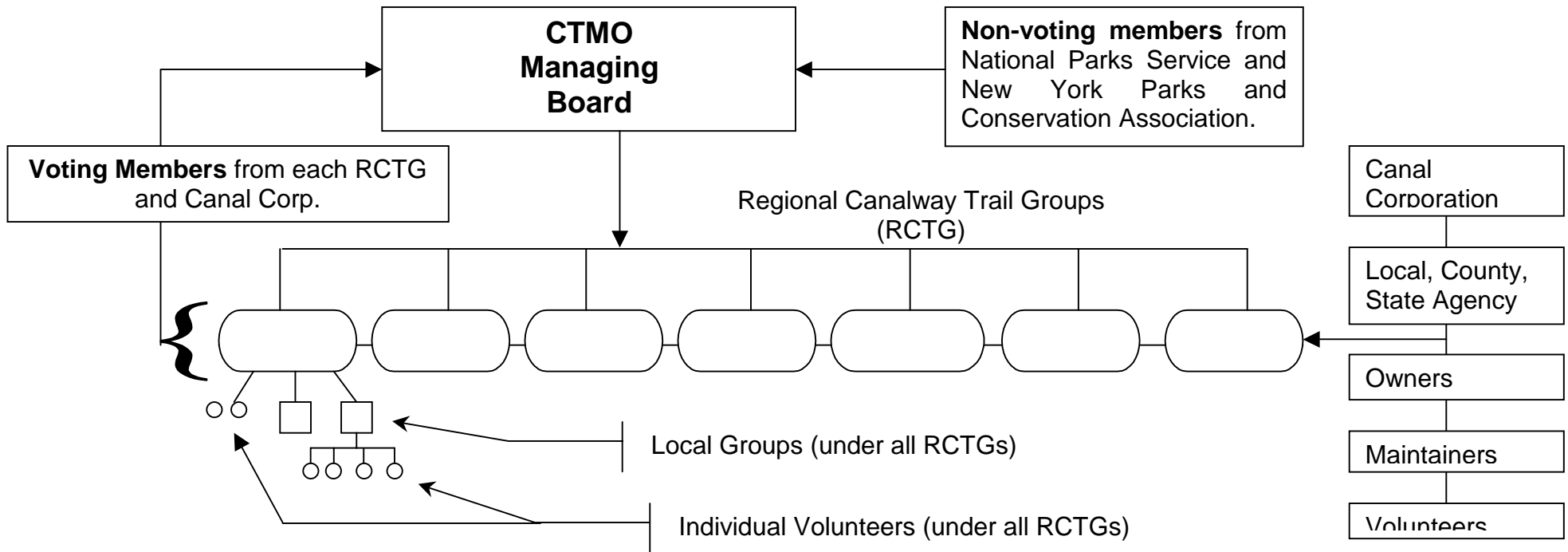
5. Appendices

a. Role of the National Park Service

At the direction of Congress, the National Park Service recently conducted a Special Resource Study for the New York Canal System. This report found that a National Heritage Corridor designation would be appropriate for this area. This finding was based upon the significance of the resource and its role in American History, the distinctive landscape of the canal system, and public support for a coordinated initiative to address historic preservation, interpretation, education, recreation and tourism throughout the entire canal system. The proposed designation would encompass the 524-mile canal system that includes the Erie, Oswego, Champlain and Cayuga-Seneca Canals, along with sections of the Old Erie Canal.

If, by another act of Congress, federal designation of the Canal System were to become a reality, then the National Park Service would have a sustained role in the Canal corridor. This role would likely include providing continued technical assistance and support for the Canalway Trail, notably assistance for the CTMO.

b. Canalway Trail Management Organization flow chart.



c. Acknowledgements

The Canalway Trail Partnership Project would like to thank the following people who agreed to be interviewed and who discussed the issues of the Canalway Trail in their area with the author. Their input on volunteers, trail development, design and maintenance standards and organizational structure have proved very valuable in completing this document.

i. Canalway Trail Steering Committee

The members of the Canalway Trail Steering Committee have provided constant and invaluable guidance, wisdom and creativity in shaping this organization, and continue to be committed to helping develop and maintain the Canalway Trail.

ii. Interviewees

1. Canalway Trail Managers

Don Bell, Dan Culligan, Richard Glamm, John Zmarthie, Fred Sokolowski, Bob Walker, Joe Donovan and Richard Jordan all of the New York State Canal Corporation.

Mark Haggdorn, City of Cohoes; Michael Francini, Albany County; Steve Feeney, Schenectady County Planning; Ken Showalter, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; Tom Higgins, Cayuga County Planning Department; John Eallanardo, Onondaga County Parks Department; Fenton Hanchett, Friends of the Camillus Erie Canal Park.

2. Other Trail Management Organizations

- Pattie Watson, Friends of the Trent-Severn Canal – Canada
- Clifford Janoff, Bay Area Ridge Trail Council – California (San Francisco Bay Area)
- David Statzel, Appalachian Trail Conference
- Sherri Petrilak, Wildlands Conservancy, Friends of the Delaware and Lehigh Canal Trail and Trail Tenders Program – Pennsylvania
- Fran Gotcsik, Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway – New York
- Irene Szabo, Finger Lakes Trail Conference – New York

d. MOU's and "Adopt-a-Trail" agreements from various agencies and existing trail management groups.

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; Adopt-a-Natural Resource Program Policy Statement
- Memorandum of Understanding for the Appalachian National Scenic Trail in the State of New Jersey.
- Model Operations and Management Plan for the Merrimack River Trail prepared by the Appalachian Mountain Club.
- Cooperative Agreement between National Park Service and Appalachian Trail Conference.
- Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway, Inc. By-Laws.
- Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway, Inc. Adopt A Trail Work Report Form
- Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway, Inc. Adopt A Trail Agreement
- DRAFT Memorandum of Understanding between the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway, Inc. and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation concerning the Genesee Valley Greenway
- New York State Department of Transportation Sample Adopt a Highway Information Sheet, Safety Checklist and Agreement.