

Genesee Valley Greenway State Park Management Plan

Monroe, Livingston, Wyoming, Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties

December 30, 2013



Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
Rose Harvey, Commissioner

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Prepared by
The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

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Abbreviations Used

AASHTO	The American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials
ADA	The Americans With Disabilities Act
DEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
FOGVG	Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway
DOJ	United States Department of Justice
DOT	New York State Department of Transportation
GVG	Genesee Valley Greenway State Park
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transit Enhancement Act
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NPS	National Park Service
NRCS	National Resources Conservation Service
NYPCA	New York Parks and Conservation Association (See also PTNY)
OPRHP	New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
PTNY	Parks & Trails New York (See also NYPCA)
RG&E	Rochester Gas & Electric Corporation
SAFETEA-LU	Safe Accountable Flexible Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century
TEP	Transportation Enhancements Program
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USPS	United States Postal Service

Introduction

What is a Greenway?

Greenways are defined by Charles Little in *Greenways for America* as “linear open space established along a natural corridor such as a river front, stream valley, or ridge line, or overland along a railroad right of way converted to recreational use, a canal, scenic road, or other route.” (Little 1990) Greenways provide the public with access to open space and opportunities for recreation and alternative transportation. They can also protect and enhance natural and cultural resources and serve as biological corridors, linking plant and animal habitats, and thereby help maintain the health of the ecosystem.

Nineteenth century landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted first proposed the greenway concept in the late 1800’s. His 1894 design for an 8-mile “Emerald Necklace” of interconnected parks around Boston is one example. More recently greenways received renewed attention when, in 1985, the President’s Commission on Americans Outdoors recommended a “system of recreational corridors that citizens could enter and use wherever it was convenient to them,” in response to the public’s desire for more recreational facilities close to home. In the 1990s, the Transportation Enhancements Programs of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and Transportation Equity Act of the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21) provided federal funds for bicycle/pedestrian projects. These programs have aided the acquisition and development of greenways around the country and in New York State.

The New York Statewide Trails Plan also defines Greenway trails according to configuration and uses. The plan says that multi-use Greenway trails are most simply described as thin linear parks. This definition suits the Genesee Valley Greenway quite well as it is a narrow, linear, rural state park with a trail surface of several types, having various amenities for a variety of trail users. (OPRHP 2010)

Background

Genesee Valley Greenway State Park (GVG) is a 90-mile long open space corridor in western New York operated by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The Park follows the route of the Genesee Valley Canal (1840-1878) and the Pennsylvania Railroad Rochester Branch (1882-1963/1971).

The GVG starts in the north at the Erie Canalway Trail in Rochester’s Genesee Valley Park and extends south to the Town of Cuba in Allegany County. Future plans will extend the Greenway to the Town of Hinsdale in Cattaraugus County. The Park includes a public, multi-use trail, and a variety of natural and historic resources.

The GVG passes through historic villages in sixteen towns located in Monroe, Livingston, Wyoming, Allegany, and Cattaraugus counties. Like other abandoned towpaths and rail beds across the country, the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park provides opportunities for public recreation, an off-road link to communities, parks, other trails, attractions in the region and for preservation of open space and natural and cultural resources. (Figure 1 - Vicinity)

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Figure 1 Vicinity Map



The Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (FOGVG) have been part of planning for the GVG since the early 1990's. They were included in a partnership with DEC and OPRHP which ended in 2010 when DEC transferred jurisdiction of their lands to OPRHP. Since that time OPRHP and FOGVG have entered into a Memorandum of Agreement outlining their relationship and the various responsibilities assigned. The FOGVG have been given the opportunity to participate in the development of this draft plan through review and comment on the document.

Additionally, in an effort to receive public input during the course of developing this management plan three public information meetings were held. The meetings took place in June of 2013 in Scottsville, Mt. Morris and Belmont. A public comment period of approximately 30 days followed the public meetings. Comments made during the meetings and the comment period were collected, evaluated and considered in the development of this management plan. These comments were important to the planning process.

This management plan updates and reorganizes the draft management plan that was produced by the partnership of OPRHP, FOGVG and DEC in 2006.

Outreach

The OPRHP public website has a web page dedicated to Genesee Valley Greenway State Park. The web page includes a park description, hours of operation, amenities and activities and resources and links. Other information may be added from time to time. The URL is <http://www.nysparks.com/parks/189/details.aspx>.

An interactive map of the Greenway is available online. The map contains Greenway routing, surfacing, condition and other information. It also contains the locations of several categories of structure and amenities. This map will be updated as the trail information changes. The map URL is <http://bit.ly/107F6jo>.

Purpose of the Plan

This Management Plan is being prepared to provide direction for the management and use of the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park (GVG) for the next 10-15 years, with reviews and updates every 5 years. It addresses the entire length of the greenway and recommends management strategies to:

- Enhance the recreation and economic benefits to the public and local communities
- Provide and further develop an alternative transportation corridor
- Preserve physical links between ecological communities and to provide environmental protection
- Preserve historic and cultural resources

Factors such as budget constraints, changing intensity and type of use, natural disasters and other unforeseen occurrences may necessitate deviations from scheduled management activities.

Structure of This Document

This document is divided into three (3) parts. Part 1 consists of what amounts to a manual for the operation, maintenance and management of the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park. It includes sections on the goals and objectives of the Park and specific strategies for various aspects of Park operation, management and maintenance.

Part 2 consists of background information about the history, physical, natural and historic resources of the park. This information was used in the development of the strategies in the first part.

Part 3 is an extensive Appendix with more complete information on some resources, suggestions for facility development, sketch designs for Park amenities and examples of some agreements and memoranda between OPRHP and volunteer groups