



WCC 2025 Schedule


Programming is tailored to people working in economic and community development, waterway management, tourism, and historic preservation along the world's inland waterways. Customize your participation based on your interests, or discover new thinkers and topics that expand your horizons.

 Sunday Sept 21
<div><div>12:00pm - 5:00pm Conference Kickoff</div><div>Head to Canalside for the Erie Canal Bicentennial Summer Sendoff event, including live performances, carousel rides, special programs and tours, and entertainment. Canalside is a one mile walk from the Hyatt Regency Hotel or take Buffalo's light rail from the hotel.</div></div>
<div><div>1:00pm - 4:00pm Cycle the Outer Harbor</div><div>Enjoy a 10-mile guided bike ride along the Empire State Trail to Buffalo's Outer Harbor, led by Parks & Trails New York. Departs from Canalside; 2-3 hours. The ride will follow a casual pace and will stop multiple times at points of interest. Bike rentals are available, first come, first served. Registration required and limited to 75 participants.</div></div>
<div><div>6:00pm - 7:00pm Inland Waterways International Annual Meeting</div><div>For members of Inland Waterways International. Location: Hyatt Regency Hotel</div></div>
<div><div>7:00pm - 9:00pm International Welcome Reception</div><div>Meet, mingle, and enjoy drinks and light hors d'oeuvres with fellow attendees at this casual reception. Location: Hyatt Regency Hotel, 2nd Floor</div></div>



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Monday Sept 22

8:30am - 9:15am

Conference Opening and Welcome

Conference hosts and local dignitaries welcome attendees to Buffalo.

9:15am - 11:15am

General Sessions

9:15am - 10:00am

Currents of Change: How Historic Waterways Drive Economic Growth

Speakers:

Walter T. Mosley,
Secretary of the State of New York

Brian Stratton,
Director, NYS Canal Corporation

Hope Knight,
CEO and Commissioner of Empire State Development

Zhang Futang,
Chairman, World Canal Cities Cooperation Organization, Yangzhou, China

10:00am - 10:30am

Break,
Exhibition Hall Open 10am-5pm

10:30am - 11:15 am

Reshaping Landscapes - Waterways in Transition

Speaker:

Angela Zabochnik,
Office for Urban Green Spaces and Waterways Leipzig

11:15 am - 12:00 pm

Keynote Richard Millar

Richard Millar

Chief Operating Officer, Scottish Canals

Forging the Future

How Scotland's canals are being repurposed to support our changing society and environment

12:00pm - 1:00pm

Lunch

Special presentation: Story and Symbol: Recreating the Erie Canal Boat Seneca Chief

Buffalo Maritime Center



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MondaySept 22

1:00pm - 4:30pm
Breakout Sessions

1:00pm-2:00pm

1Trends in Waterway Tourism & Recreation

Seeing the Canal Anew Through the Arts

Speakers:
Angelyn Chandler,
New York Power Authority

Matthew López-Jensen,
Fordham University and
Parsons School of Design

Clara Riedlinger,
Artist/Filmmaker

Mary Mattingly,
Artist

2Inclusion and Accessibility

Before the Erie Canal:
Indigenous Water
Transport and Biological
Wealth

Speakers:
Maddy Nyblad,
Assistant Professor,
SUNY ESF

Catherine Landis,
Center for Native Peoples
and the Environment,
SUNY ESF

3Waterway Management

Canal Boat Electrification:
Problems and Solutions

Speakers:
David Borton,
CEO, Sustainable Energy
Systems Inc

Eric Hamilton,
Secretary, Mohawk
Towpath Byway

Pete Bardunias,
Senior Vice President,
Capital Region Chamber

Locking Forward and
Back: Using AI to enable
the Past to Speak to the
Present to Ensure the
Future of New York State
Canal System

Speaker:
Chuck Piotrowski,
New York Power Authority

2:10pm-3:10pm

1Canals and Historic Preservation

The Grand Erie Canal:
Precedents, Growth and
Preservation

Speakers:
Brad Utter,
New York State Museum

Derrick Pratt,
Erie Canal Museum

David Brooks,
Schoharie Crossing State
Historic Site

2Trends in Waterway Tourism & Recreation

Attracting Long-Distance
Cruising Boats to a Canal
Near You

Speakers:
Kim Russo,
America's Great Loop
Cruisers' Association

Chad Buchner,
Trent-Severn Waterway
National Historic Site of
Canada

Canals: Outstanding
Tourist Attractions—and
Great Neighbors!

Speaker:
Thomas Vonier,
UIA International Union of
Architects

3Healthy Waterways,
Healthy Communities

Upstate New York's
Renaissance in Downtown
Revitalization in Erie
Canal Communities

Speakers:
Paul Beyer,
NYS Department of State

Austin Tylec,
Mayor, City of North
Tonawanda

Ken Kearney,
Kearney Realty &
Development Group

Amanda Smith,
NYS Department of State

3:10pm-3:30pm: Break / Exhibition Hall Open 1:00pm - 4:30pm



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Breakout Sessions

3:30pm - 4:30pm

1Waterway Management

Aquatic Invasive Species Management Protecting Our Waters: Innovative Strategies Against Aquatic Invaders

Speakers:
Kate Litrell,
Senior Environmental Scientist,
New York Power Authority

Meg Modley Gilbertson,
Lake Champlain Basin Program

Shifting Gears after 10 Years: Initiating New Techniques for Hydrilla Control on the Erie Canal

Speaker:
Lindsay Yoder,
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

2Trends in Waterway Tourism & Recreation

Boosting Canal Economies Through Novel Tourism

Speaker:
Marilyn Higgins,
Author, Dreams of Freedom

Harnessing Popular Culture to Expand Popular Interest in Canals

Speaker:
Nancy Bachana,
Educator, D&H Canal Museum
Author, The Key to Puzzler's Lock Children Puzzle Mystery

3Inclusion and Accessibility

Encounters with Uncomfortable Histories in the Canal Space

Speaker:
Dr. Jodie Matthews,
Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Uncovering Peyton Harris

Speaker:
Dr. Yao Kahlil Newkirk,
Black Feather Theatre Co.
Creator of The EMBODY Praxis


4:30pm - 5:30pm
WMHT Documentary Screening

Reflections on the Erie Canal
Look back on the two-hundred-year journey of the Erie Canal and contemplate its future on its bicentennial anniversary.



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Monday Sept 22

5:30pm - 6:30pm


Reception at the Statler Hotel

Meet in the lobby for the short walk to the Statler Hotel for our evening reception and dinner.

6:30pm - 8:30pm

Welcome Dinner and Keynote Haben Girma at the Statler Hotel


Welcome Dinner and Keynote Haben Girma at the Statler Hotel. Enjoy camaraderie, drinks and fine food at the elegantly restored historic Statler Hotel, just a short walk from the Hyatt.



Tuesday Sept 23

Boxed breakfast will be handed out on the buses. Buses depart from the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Departs 8:00 am, Returns 8:30 pm




NIAGARA FALLS - WELLAND CANAL

Field Session

Cross Border Connections: From Past to Present

Departs 8:00 am, Returns 8:00 pm




BROCKPORT - FAIRPORT

Field Session

Recreation, Access, and Accessibility

Departs 8:15 am, Returns 8:30 pm




LOCKPORT - MEDINA

Field Session

Downtown Revitalization Through History and Art

Depart 8:30 am, Returns 8:30 pm



NORTH TONAWANDA - LOCKPORT

Field Session

Waterfront Revitalization and Economic Development

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	Wednesday Sept 24
<div>6:30am - 8:00am</div> <div>Breakfast at the Hyatt Regency Hotel</div> <div>Buses to Canalside will depart the Hyatt in 3 waves: (3) buses at 7:30am, (3) at 8:00am, and (1) at 8:15am</div>	
<div>8:30am - 10:00am</div> <div>Erie Canal Boat Seneca Chief Voyage Kickoff Ceremony at Canalside</div> <div>Conference delegates will join in the sendoff ceremony for the Erie Canal Boat Seneca Chief as it launches from Canalside for its bicentennial voyage from Buffalo to New York City</div>	
<div>10:00am - 1:00pm</div> <div>Explore and Lunch On Your Own</div> <div>Enjoy local fare in downtown Buffalo. Paper sessions begin promptly at 1:00pm.</div> <div>Optional Programs:</div> <div>11:00am - 12:00 pm - Walking Tour of Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor (Starts at the Hyatt Regency Hotel)</div> <div>12:00pm - 12:45 pm - Workshop/Discussion: The World Canals Cities Canal Walk Project Cheng Hao, Founding Chairman, Canal Walk Action (Buffalo Niagara Convention Center)</div>	
<div>1:00pm - 4:30pm</div> <div>Exhibition Hall Open</div> <div>Exhibition Hall Open</div>	



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WednesdaySept 24

1:00pm - 4:30pm
Breakout Sessions

1:00pm-2:00pm

1Trends in Waterway Tourism & Recreation

Locks, Lore, and Living History: The Vital Role of Canal Tenders

Speakers:

Paul David Richardson,
New York State Canal Corporation

Chad Buchner,
Trent-Severn Waterway National Historic Site of Canada

John McKee,
New York State Canal Corporation

2Canals and Historic Preservation

Preserving History at the Schoharie Crossing Aqueduct

Speaker:

Paul Banks,
Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site

200 Years Strong: The Adaptive Re-use of the Erie Canal

Speaker:

Robyn Sedgwick,
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

Living Museums: Making Lockhouses More Accessible to the Public

Speaker:

Arden Shaer,
C&O Canal Trust

3Healthy Waterways, Healthy Communities

The Importance Of Transiting Boats In Securing The Future Of The French Waterway Network

Speaker:

David Edwards May,
Inland Waterways International

Renewed Focus on Inland Water Transport in India

Speaker:

Sri Krishna Kumar,
Indian Water Resources Society & Department of Water Resources, Uttar Pradesh, India

2:10pm - 3:10pm

1Trends in Waterway Tourism & Recreation

Historic Routes, Future Opportunities: Community Engagement Through the Erie Canal

Speakers:

Derrick Pratt,
Erie Canal Museum

Erica Schneider,
Parks & Trails New York

Ashley Quimby-Simoni,
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

2Inclusion and Accessibility

Canal Narratives: Expanding Storytelling and Finding Audiences

Speakers:

Catherine Rafferty,
WMHT Public Media

Will Pedigo,
WMHT Public Media

Shane Mahar,
New York Power Authority/ NYS Canal Corporation

3Waterway Management

Seepage Solutions: Engineering Excellence on the Erie Canal

Speakers:

Wesley Hollenbach,
AECOM

Joe Dodd,
New York Power Authority

Enhancing Waterway Management and Decision-Making with System-Wide Models: Insights from the Erie Canal in the United States

Speaker:

Allan Estivalet,
Schnabel Engineering

Felix Weidlinger,
Schnabel Engineering

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Breakout Sessions

3:30pm - 4:30pm

1Trends in Waterway Tourism & Recreation

The Erie Canal at 200: Uncovering Diverse Legacies and Untold Stories

Speakers:

Brian McAlonie,
Visitor Planning Consulting

Michele-Elise Burnett,
Kakekalanicks

Barbara Sears-Neversgold, PhD,
Educator, Community Historian, and Author

Susan Eck,
Historian

Reconnecting Buffalo to Its Waterfront:
The Story of Ralph Wilson Park

Speakers:

Katie Campos,
Executive Director, Ralph Wilson Park Conservancy

Charlie Torres,
Vice President, Board of Directors, Ralph Wilson Park Conservancy

2Inclusion and Accessibility

How Historic Interpretation of the Underground Railroad Can Generate Tourism in Canal Communities and Create Economic Development Opportunities for Underrepresented Groups

Speakers:

Sage Hamilton-Hazarika,
Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State

Garry Johnson,
NAACP New York State Conference

Shondel Beverly,
Oneida County Tourism

3Healthy Waterways, Healthy Communities

Historic Downtown Revitalization Through Canal Connectivity

Speaker:

Michael Cocquyt,
LaBella Associates

Delaware Canal - Then and Now

Speakers:

Michael Ginder,
Friends of the Delaware Canal

Brett Webber,
Friends of the Delaware Canal

6:00pm - 6:30pm
Transport To Canalside

Transport To Canalside

6:30pm - 8:30pm
Banquet at Canalside

Return to the waterfront for this casual dinner with live musical performances and your choice of ethnic food from several food trucks.

8:30pm - 9:00pm
Return Transport To Hyatt

Return Transport To Hyatt

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ThursdaySept 25

7:00am - 8:30am

Breakfast at the Hyatt Regency Hotel

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8:30am - 12:00pm

General Sessions

8:30am - 9:00am

From New York to Europe—A Canal Appreciation

Speaker:

John Kucko,

John Kucko Digital

9:00am - 9:30am

Lingqu Canal & WCC26, The Ancient Canal and Modern Community Life

Speaker:

Tang Lijing,

Director, Lingqu Canal Museum

9:30am - 10:30am

Sustainable Inclusion: Transforming Canal Recreation Through Education and Action

Speakers:

Alyson Danielewicz,

New York Power Authority

Darby Racey,

New York Power Authority

Anita O'Brien,

Rochester Accessible Adventures

Kate Morse,

Hudson Crossing Park

Laura Mack,

Corn Hill Waterfront & Navigation Foundation

10:00am - 10:30am

Break

11:00am - 12:00pm

Trails and Stewardship

Moderator:

Mona Caron,

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Bridging Eras: The New York State Canalway Trail's Past, Present, and Future

Speakers:

Dylan Carey,

Parks & Trails New York

Sasha del Peral,

NYS Canal Corporation

C&O Canal: Towpath trail becomes the driver for historic preservation

Speaker:

Bill Holdsworth,

Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Association

Cultivating The Next Generation of Public Lands Stewards Through Perennial Engagement

Speaker:

Rebecca Murray,

PTNY

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Thursday Sept 25

12:00pm - 12:45pm
Hand-off Ceremony for WCC2026 Hosts and Closing

WCC2025 hosts will pass the torch to delegates from Guilin, China, host city for WCC2026

12:45pm - 1:00pm
Grab And Go Lunch

Pick up a boxed lunch before departing.