

Corn Hill Waterfront & Navigation Foundation Engages Youth in Pollution Prevention on the Erie Canal



Corn Hill Waterfront & Navigation Foundation

Corn Hill Waterfront and Navigation Foundation (CHN), founded in 1991, is a non-profit organization that works to connect a multi-generational community to local waterways through guided boat experiences and educational programs. For the past 27 years, guided by its mission, CHN has sought to foster the improvement and sustainability of the Erie Canal and Genesee River for current and future generations through education, awareness and enjoyment.

Challenge

Pollution of the Erie Canal has far-reaching consequences for waterways across New York State. Trash from littering and illegal dumping can reach lakes and streams and suffocate or entrap ducks, fish, turtles, or birds. Bacteria and disease-causing organisms from sewage and leaking septic systems can reach swimming areas, causing beach closures, and creating health hazards. Chemicals and oil entering the canal through illegal dumping or runoff, and pesticides, paints, solvents or motor oil can poison aquatic life, putting people and animals at risk from eating contaminated fish or drinking polluted water. Inorganic nutrients enter the connecting rivers and streams through runoff of fertilizers or detergents. These nutrients which may be helpful in small quantities cause algae to grow, which absorbs the oxygen that aquatic life needs to live. In larger amounts, chemicals and waste released within the canal watershed cause serious repercussions to the canal's biotic organisms.

Solution

The Environmental Education on the Erie Canal (E3C) project provides field excursions aboard the Sam Patch boat to teachers, students, and the local community with place-based water quality and ecology lessons to educate people on ways they can take action to prevent further pollution of the Erie Canal and precious water resources.

Challenge

- Various pollutants such as marine debris, sewage, oils, chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers, and detergent threaten wildlife and aquatic life.

Solution

- The E3C project provides field excursions aboard the Sam Patch boat educating people on actions they can take to prevent further pollution of the Erie Canal and our water resources.

Results

- During the grant period the project provided 18 cruises and had over 479 participants.
- Students designed informational rack cards distributed to locations along the canal.

Results

During the grant period, Corn Hill Navigation provided 18 cruises for students and families with a total of 479 participants (406 students, grades 5-12 and teachers, and 73 community members). All of the data collected was added to the [Finger Lakes Institute database](#), which is a citizen science platform used by other educational and scientific advocates of the state's waterways to aggregate data.

In addition, students learned about communicating water issues to the general public. They analyzed various rack cards and identified aspects that drew them to their favorite cards. Then the students all designed their own card and integrated their favorite components into one final card; 10,000 of which will be printed and distributed to popular destinations such as the Erie Canal Museum and Erie Canal Heritage Park. The organization also made a short video linked below to educate guests on the Sam Patch.

The curriculum and program will be disseminated to teachers and informal education settings along the 339 mile Erie Canal to expand canal-based environmental education across the state.

Online Media

- [Video](#)
- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)



"The E3C project brought environmental education to life by connecting young people with the Erie Canal as an ecosystem, and engaging students in using scientific tools and methods to assess the health of the canal. NYSP2I enabled Corn Hill Navigation to nurture a new generation of stewards of the canal and advocates for pollution prevention."

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