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Volunteers participate in annual Canal Clean Sweep in Capital Region



Canal Clean Sweep volunteers go magnetfishing for debris to pull out of the Old Champlain Canal on Sunday morning at the Canalway Trail in Waterford. (Lauren Halligan – MediaNews Group)

By **LAUREN HALLIGAN** | lhalligan@troyrecord.com | The Saratogian
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CAPITAL REGION, N.Y. — Volunteers across the Capital Region and beyond spent the weekend participating in the 2022 Canal Clean Sweep, an annual clean-up event held across the New York State Canal System and Canalway Trail.

The Canal Clean Sweep, now in its 17th year, kicked off on Friday, which was Earth Day, and included more than 100 events along the more than 400-mile-long Canalway Trail system and the 524-mile-long Canal system throughout the weekend.

Groups all over New York took the opportunity to give back to their local communities and to show pride in one of the state's most iconic cultural and recreational resources.

The 2022 Canal Clean Sweep — organized by the non-profit Parks & Trails New York in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation — took place following a full year of trail use since the completion and opening of the Empire State Trail, a 750-mile multi-use path spanning the state from Manhattan north to the Adirondacks and west along the historic Erie Canal corridor to Buffalo. Over the last few years, the Canalway Trail system has seen unprecedented use, reflecting significant investments made as part of the completion of the Empire State Trail, and increased interest and participation in outdoor recreational activities due to COVID-19.

Through the efforts of volunteers across the state during Canal Clean Sweep 2022, communities will ensure the Canalway Trail system will remain a pristine recreational resource for locals and visitors alike.

In Waterford, along a stretch of the Canalway Trail, volunteers were removing metal debris from the waters of the Old Champlain Canal by magnetfishing. Under a section of railroad tracks that crosses over the canal, they removal lots of old railroad spikes and other metal.

One of the magnetfishers was Erica Schneider, who is a fellow with Parks & Trails New York. "The Canalway Trail system saw 3.3 million visits in 2021, based on a report that Parks & Trails New York and Canal Corporation came out with earlier this year," she said. "So with that many visits comes a great responsibility to take care of our public greenspaces. This trail is so important for so many people as a way to get outside and recreate safely. And this is our one Earth. It's Earth Day weekend, so it's a great time to get out and spend time with your neighbors and people that care about this natural resource."

At Hudson Crossing Park, located just outside of the village of Schuylerville, Canal Clean Sweep volunteers of all ages were invited to take part in spring cleaning efforts such as park clean-up, gardening, and repairs to the play garden, as well as preparing trails and grounds for cyclists and other visitors to the park, which welcomes over 30,000 visitors each year.

"Hudson Crossing Park is bordered by both the Champlain Canal and Hudson River, and as a volunteer driven non-profit organization it's events like these that allow us to offer our facilities, trails, programming, and events all year round," the park's executive director Kate Morse said of the statewide initiative. "It's important to recognize our responsibility to care for our waterways and greenspaces, and the annual Canal Clean Sweep event allows volunteers of all ages to do just that — with the added benefit of being able to spend some time out in the fresh air after a long winter."

At another Canal Clean Sweep event on Saturday, staff, friends and family of H2M architects + engineers in Latham gathered in Watervliet to clean up approximately five miles of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike Trail in honor of Earth Day.

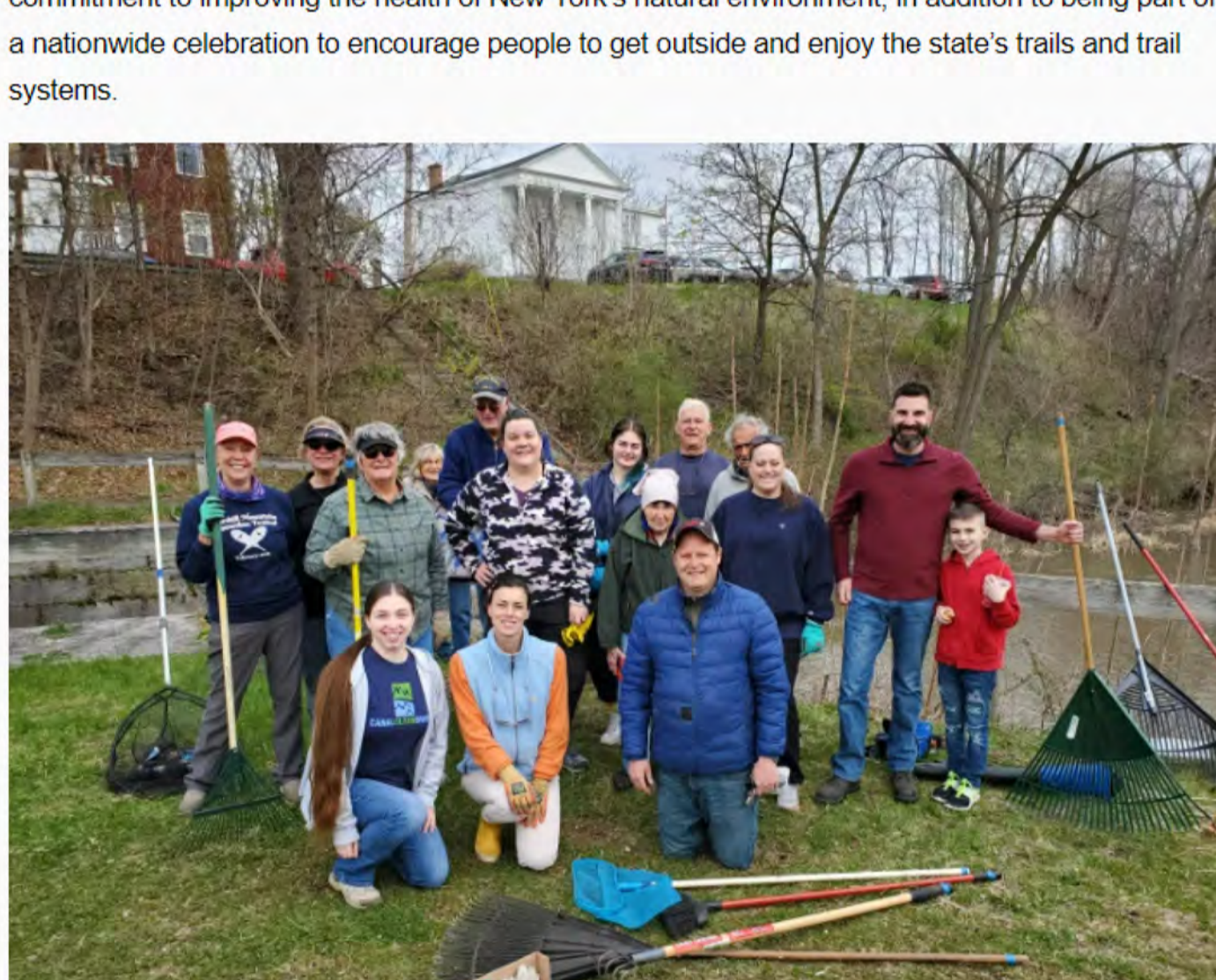
"We in the Albany office of H2M architects + engineers are proud to be a part of the Canal Clean Sweep for our third consecutive year. The Hudson Mohawk Bike Trail is a critical piece of our region's growing sustainable, human centric, infrastructure and we are thrilled to volunteer to help clean up the trail for the community," said the company's Adam Champagne, who lives in Troy and frequently uses the trail. "A part of H2M's mission is creating thriving and healthy communities, so participating in community events, like the Canal Clean Sweep, is important to us not just because of the specific event or cleanup, but it is an opportunity for us to engage with our community."

"We clean up with our neighbors, and while doing so we are acknowledging that these public spaces are the responsibility of all of us. While we are doing one good thing today, we are really demonstrating our commitment to our communities and our core values."

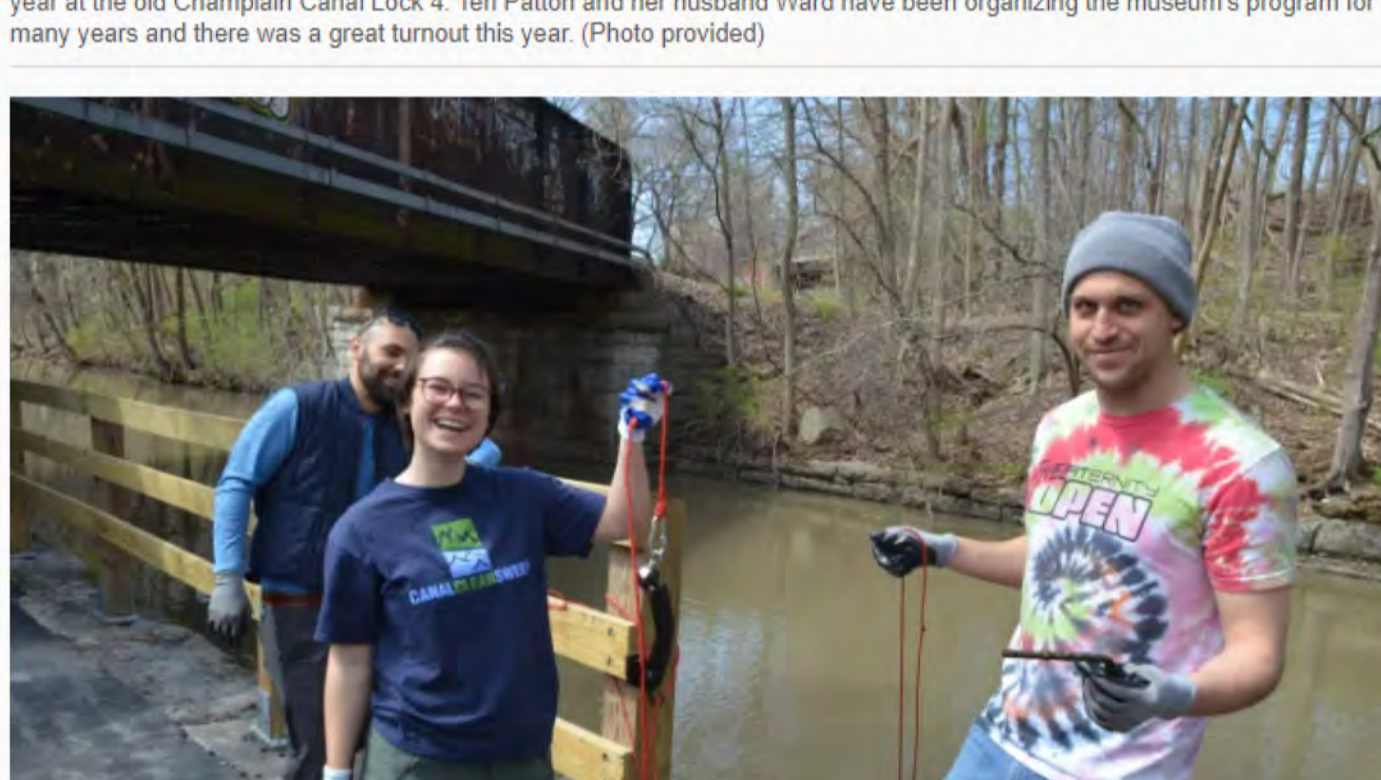
Canal Corporation director Brian U. Stratton said in a press release, "There is no better way to celebrate Earth Day than by taking care of one of the State's most remarkable landmarks, not only preparing it for recreational use for the upcoming warm months, but also making the water and trailways friendlier for the hundreds of species of wildlife that inhabit the Canal system," expressing his appreciation for the volunteers at this important event.

"Canal Clean Sweep is a great opportunity for thousands of volunteers across the state to give back to the trail that brings them joy and respite throughout the year" added Robin Dropkin, executive director of Parks & Trails New York. "Year after year, the Canal communities continue to amaze and inspire us with their support and participation — a testament to how much the Canal and Canalway Trail mean to them."

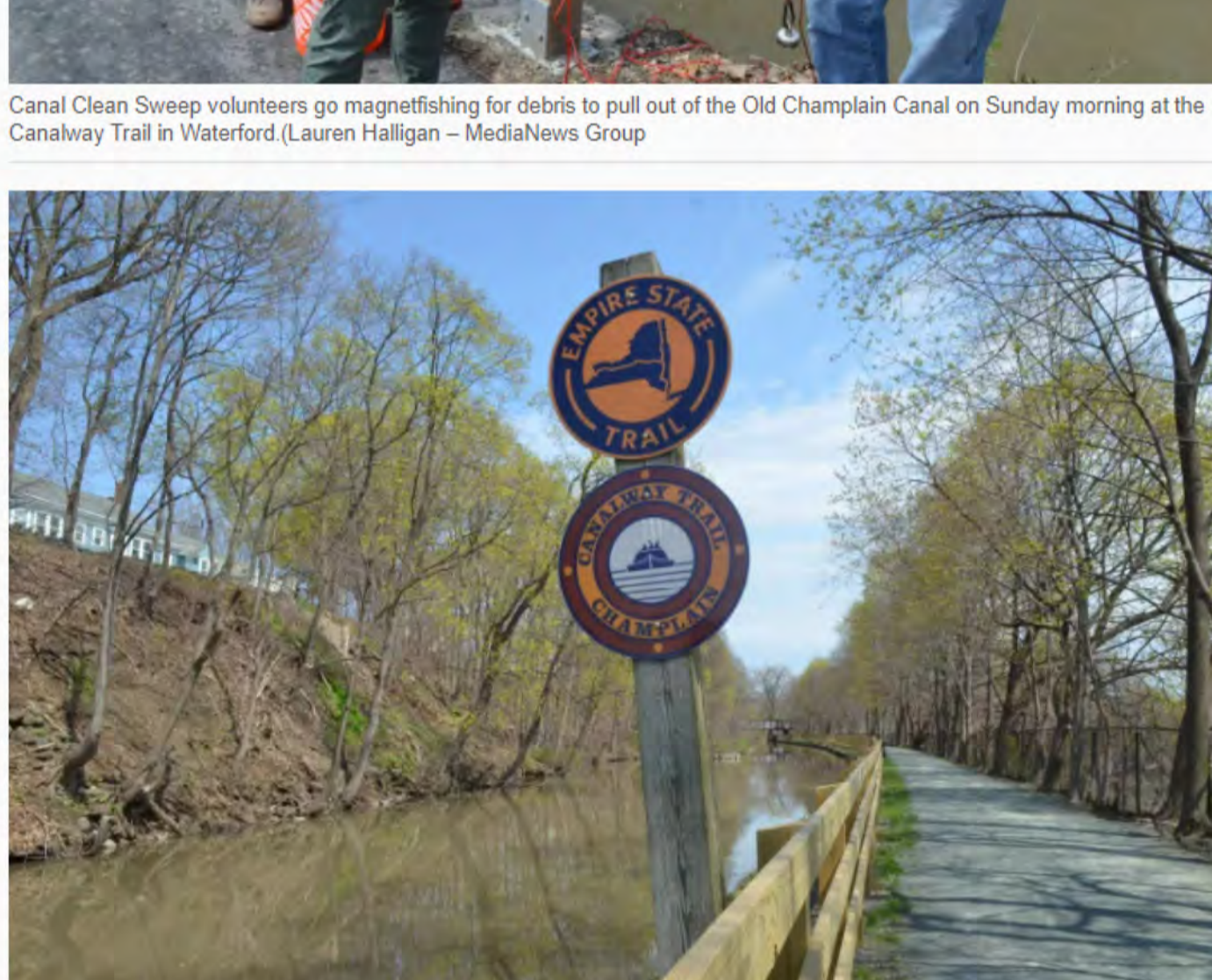
Canal Clean Sweep is one of a number of events held around the state to recognize the ongoing commitment to improving the health of New York's natural environment, in addition to being part of a nationwide celebration to encourage people to get outside and enjoy the state's trails and trail systems.



The Waterford Historical Museum and Cultural Center sponsored a Canal Clean Sweep event with Parks and Trails, NY this year at the old Champlain Canal Lock 4. Ted Patton and his husband Ward have been organizing the museum's program for many years and there was a great turnout this year. (Photo provided)



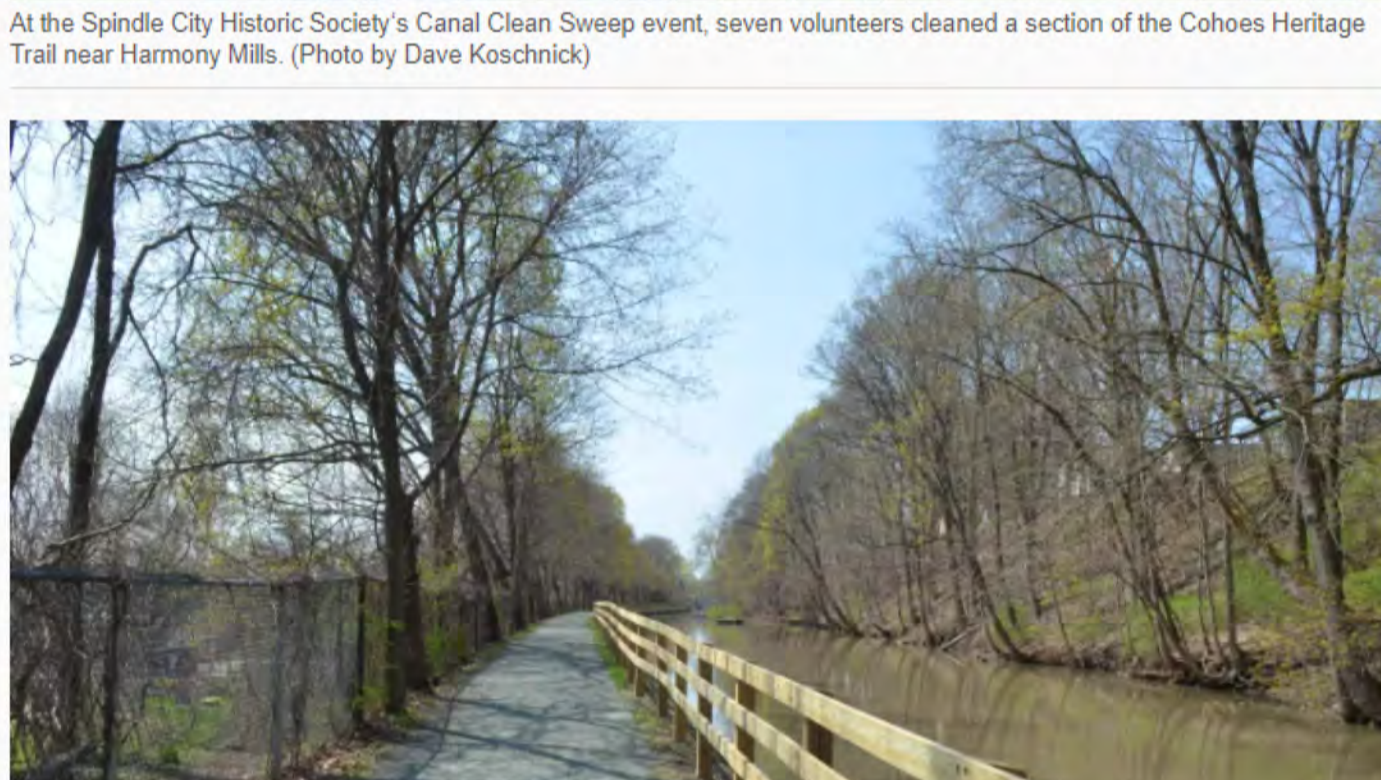
Canal Clean Sweep volunteers go magnetfishing for debris to pull out of the Old Champlain Canal on Sunday morning at the Canalway Trail in Waterford. (Lauren Halligan – MediaNews Group)



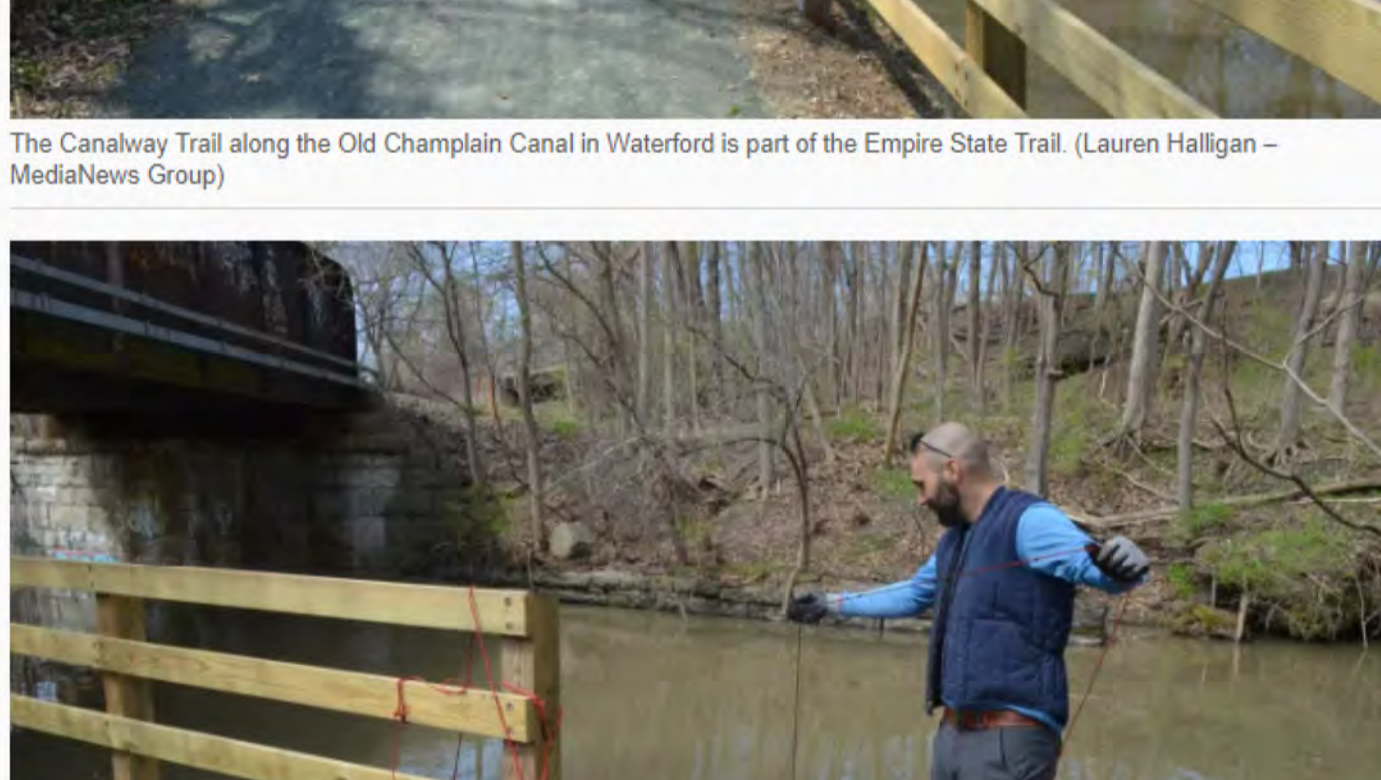
The Canalway Trail along the Old Champlain Canal in Waterford is part of the Empire State Trail. (Lauren Halligan – MediaNews Group)



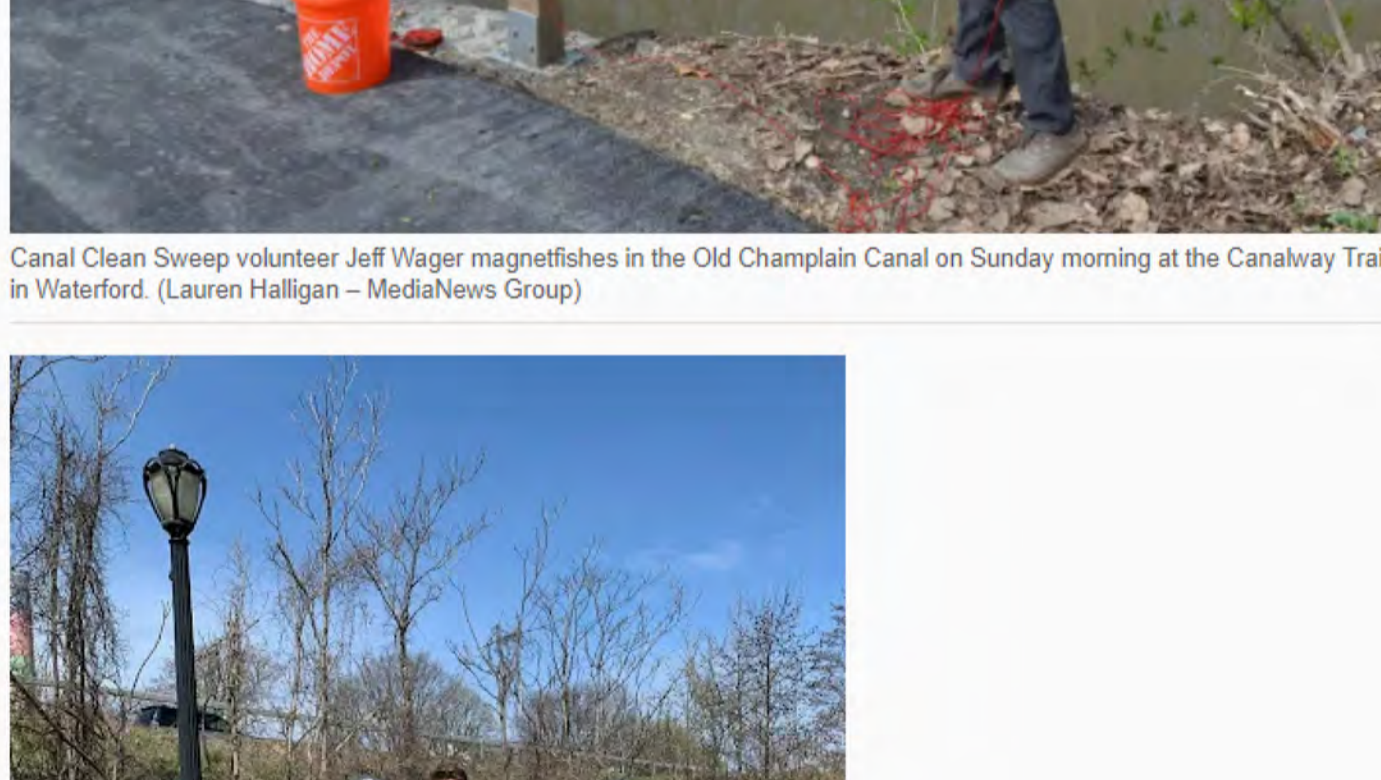
At the Spindie City Historic Society's Canal Clean Sweep event, seven volunteers cleaned a section of the Cobosco Heritage Trail near Harmony Mills. (Photo by Dave Koschick)



The Canalway Trail along the Old Champlain Canal in Waterford is part of the Empire State Trail. (Lauren Halligan – MediaNews Group)



Canal Clean Sweep volunteer, Jeff Wagner magnetfishes in the Old Champlain Canal on Sunday morning at the Canalway Trail in Waterford. (Lauren Halligan – MediaNews Group)



Volunteers from H2M architects + engineers clean roughly five miles of the Hudson Mohawk bikeway from Albany to the Troy as part of the 2022 Canal Clean Sweep event. (Photo provided)



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Canal Clean Sweep participants (left to right) Erica Schneider, Jeff Wagner and JJ Kullberg volunteer on Sunday morning at the Canalway Trail in Waterford. (Lauren Halligan – MediaNews Group)



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