

Genesee – Finger Lakes Regional Blueway Analysis

An Inventory and Analysis of Regional Blueway Opportunity Areas

II. PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Methodology Overview

This project used an objective, iterative approach to first identify those waterways where paddling is feasible and to then identify the degree to which those waterways could contribute to a regional blueway system or serve as a local blueway route. That process involved preliminary research of existing maps and guidebooks as well as basic GIS analysis. This preliminary analysis was followed by a detailed review by the Project Advisory Committee as well as additional review by key stakeholders during a series of workshops in June 2009. The analysis phase was finalized through an extended period of field research in order to verify existing information and to collect additional data as necessary. Draft information was again presented to the public during a meeting held on June 16th, 2010 and open to public comment during the period of June 1, 2010 through June 24, 2010.

A primary outcome of this process is a GIS geo-database that acts as the central repository for most of the information gathered during field visits. A geo-database is a database designed to store, query, and manipulate geographic information and spatial data. It consists of several *feature classes* to which information is tied. Feature classes are classifications and representations of geographic features; information that supports those features is tied to them through a database. Feature classes used in this study include such geographic features as points, nodes, routes, route-systems, sections, polygons, and regions. Information tied to those classes includes the names of places or streams, latitude and longitude coordinates, and the presence of certain features, such as picnic areas or boat launches.

The primary feature classes that have been identified for consideration in this analysis include:

- 1) Riparian Corridors (shorelines of lakes, rivers and canals)
- 2) Canoe and Kayak Access Points
- 3) Other Supportive Blueway Elements (such as parks and overnight accommodations)

Stakeholder Outreach

Stakeholder and public involvement was identified as a critical element of this project. G/FLRPC held three regional stakeholder meetings in an effort to inform paddling enthusiasts and other relevant stakeholders about the project and to solicit important input from them. Information on the date, time and place of these meetings was included on a direct-mail flyer and press release which was sent to approximately 250 individuals, organizations and media outlets. During workshops, stakeholders were



6/17/09 Stakeholder Workshop held at Genesee Waterways Center, Rochester, NY.

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provided with a presentation on the project and were then asked to lend their knowledge and expertise regarding access point locations, site conditions, and paddling conditions. Attendees were also asked to lend their general thoughts and concerns pertaining to the project as a whole.

Meetings were organized geographically in an effort to focus the discussion(s) on specific regions, although the discussions were not limited to just those areas – participants were encouraged to discuss waterways outside of these regions. Further, if individuals were unable to attend a meeting in their preferred region, they were encouraged to attend at another location in order to provide their thoughts to project staff.

The press release used to advertise this process is included in Appendix B of this report.

Field Reconnaissance

After as much information regarding individual corridors could be gathered through research and stakeholder verification, it was necessary for staff to conduct field reconnaissance and verification. This involved visiting individual sites and assessing local conditions as well as making an account of all information through digital photographs, handheld GPS, and field data sheets and maps. This information would then be used to inform the blueway evaluation and ranking process, as described below in detail.

A blank Site Visit Form used as part of this study can be found in Appendix C of this report.



Project Methodology, Step-by-Step

The full process used in the identification and information gathering phases of this project are described below.

Step 1: Preliminary Blueway Opportunity Corridor Identification

The first step in this project required the identification of those riparian, lake and canal corridors that have the potential for possible future blueway designation. These waterways are referred to as “Preliminary Blueway Opportunity Areas.” Existing recreational canoe and kayak guides were used in order to identify the popular or established paddling destinations throughout the region. The Adirondack Mountain Club “Canoe Guide to Western and Central New York State” was used as a primary resource; other resources that were used have been included in Appendix A of this report.

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The canoe and kayak routes identified through these resources were consolidated into a single feature class using a GIS. This feature class was referred to as “Preliminary Blueway Opportunity Areas.” These preliminary routes were then presented to the Project Advisory Committee for review on March 30th, 2009. The preliminary routes were evaluated and discussed by the committee in detail; information was added by committee members where necessary and appropriate.

During the month of June 2009, a series of three Stakeholder Workshops were held across the Genesee – Finger Lakes Region. Canoe and kayak stakeholders were invited and asked to attend in order to offer similar input regarding the scope and accuracy of the original “Preliminary Blueway Opportunity Areas” map. Several additional minor errors and revisions were identified and noted during those meetings.

Waterways that extend outside of the nine-county G-FL Region are shown in green on Map 2-1 and are excluded from detailed study within this project.

Field reconnaissance and verification focused on the waterways and shorelines identified above. These areas would then be examined more carefully in an effort to determine its associated attributes and the reach of the navigable area of the corridor. Furthermore, the field reconnaissance process was used as a final verification in an effort to identify other stream reaches in the Region or additional pertinent information about the waterway.

Step 2: Access Point Verification

Within each Blueway Opportunity Area, access points for canoes, kayaks and other “car top” vessels were identified to the greatest level of accuracy possible using the guides and other similar resources cited above. This information was consolidated using a GIS; the feature class was referred to as “Preliminary Access Points.” Access points were similarly reviewed and commented on by members of the Project Advisory Committee and invited stakeholders during June 2009 workshops.

In most cases, it was difficult to accurately identify specific locations of canoe and kayak access points based solely on the descriptive information included in the guides or provided by stakeholders. In such instances, general locations of likely access points were noted for verification later during the field reconnaissance phase of the project. The majority of access points identified during this project were found during this phase.

Each access point in the feature class was assigned an individual identification number which corresponds to a column in the associated *attribute table*. Within this attribute table are locations for adding descriptive data regarding the points. Information such as parking availability and the presence of complementary facilities (bathrooms, camping facilities, etc.) was gathered as described in the steps below.

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Each of the following waterways was identified as having potential for blueway designation and, as such, has been identified as a Preliminary Blueway Opportunity Corridor/Area (refer to Map 2-1):

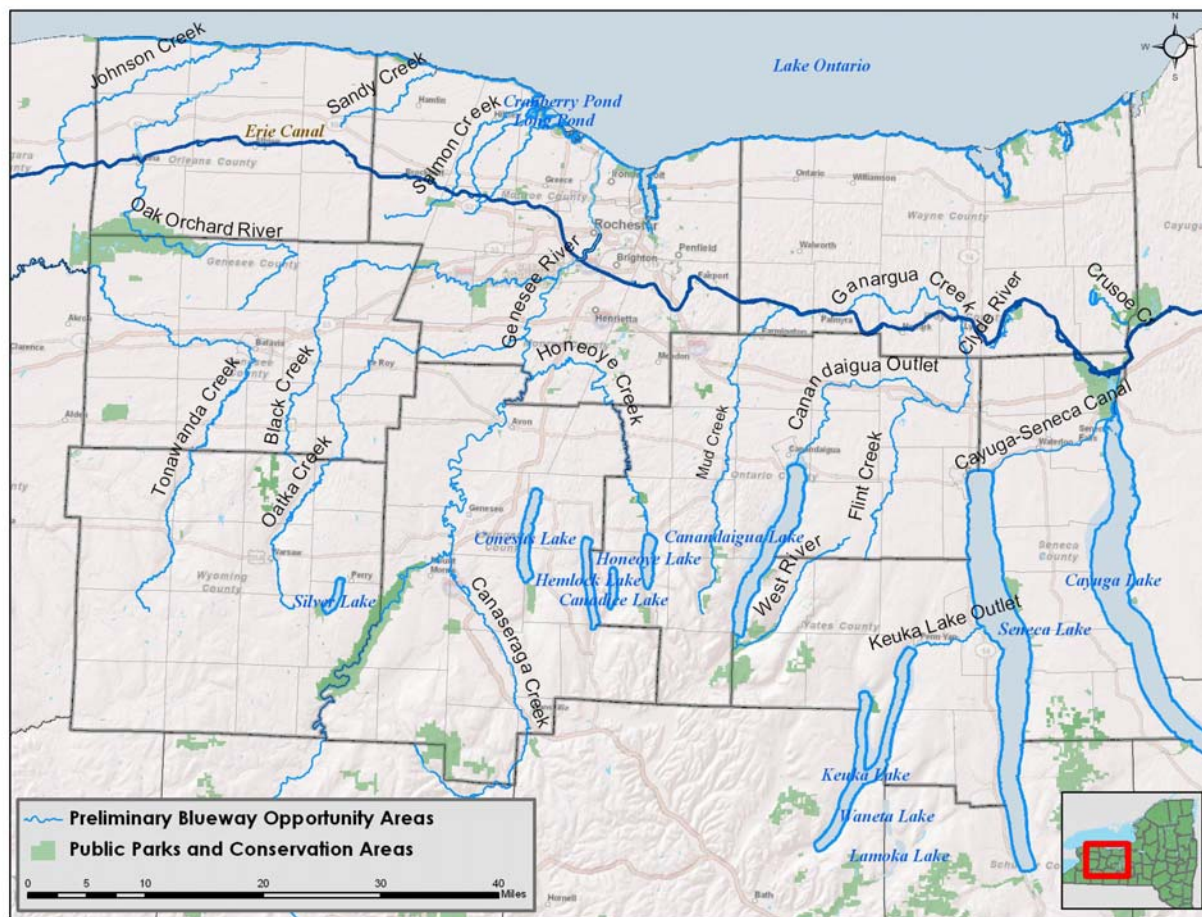
Streams and Canals:

- Black Creek
- Buttonwood Creek
- Canandaigua Outlet
- Canaseraga Creek
- Crusoe Creek
- Clyde River
- Flint Creek
- Ganargua Creek/Mud Creek
- Genesee River
- Honeoye Creek
- Irondequoit Creek
- Johnson Creek
- Keuka Lake Outlet
- Naples Creek
- Northrup Creek
- Oak Orchard River
- Oatka Creek
- Salmon Creek
- Sandy Creek
- Seneca River
- Tonawanda Creek
- West Creek
- West River
- NYS Canal System /Lock 32 Whitewater Park

Lakes:

- Canadice Lake
- Canandaigua Lake
- Cayuga Lake
- Conesus Lake
- Hemlock Lake
- Honeoye Lake
- Keuka Lake
- Lake Ontario shoreline and its embayments
- Seneca Lake
- Silver Lake

Map 2-1: Preliminary Blueway Opportunity Areas



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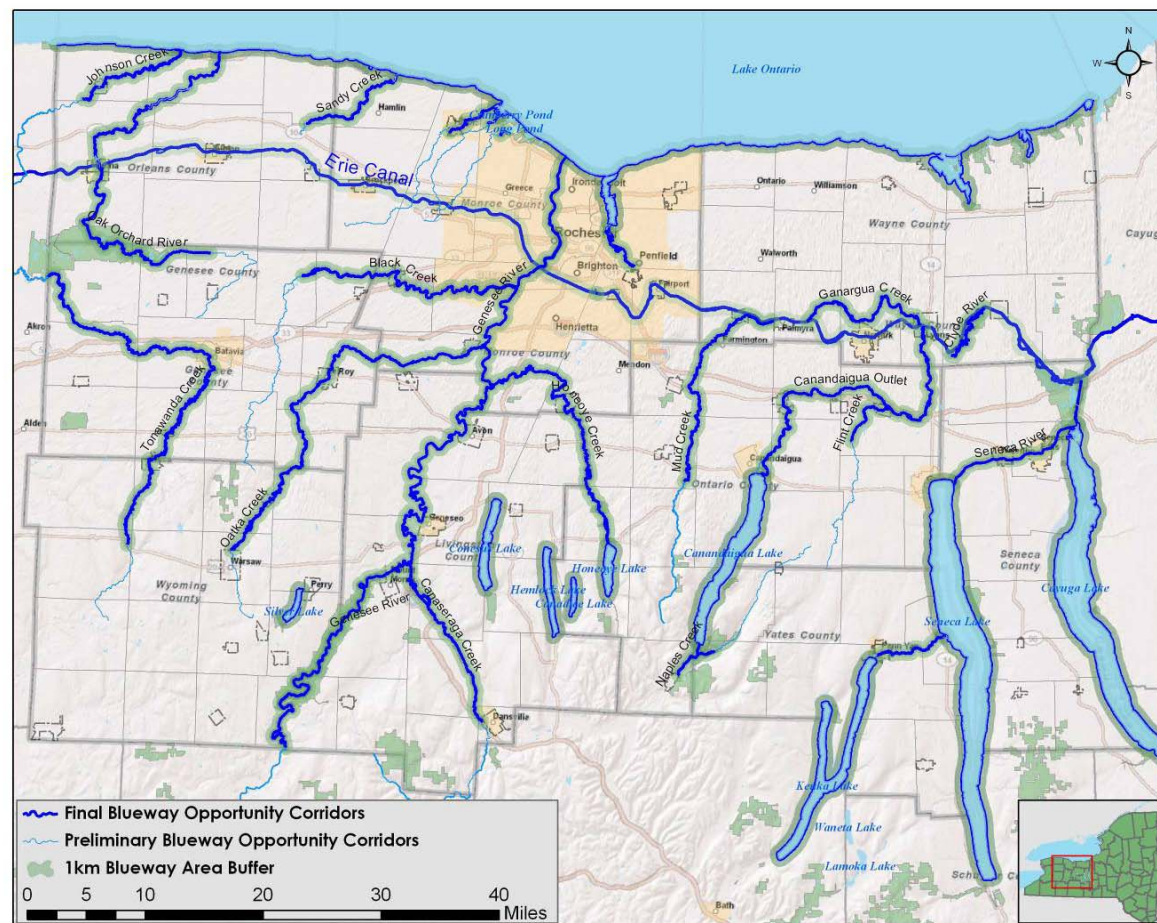
Step 3: Field Reconnaissance and Verification

After preliminary information was gathered, it was necessary to conduct field reconnaissance and verification of identified corridors and access sites. Project staff worked in the field for approximately 16 days between September and November of 2009. The purpose of this phase was to confirm existing information and to gather more detailed information on the corridors and their attributes. Photos, GPS waypoints, and detailed field notes were taken along each corridor. Detailed notes were entered onto Field Sheets for each access point.³ In addition, a unique series of field maps were created for each Preliminary Blueway Opportunity Area. These maps were used as both a way-finding device and field documentation tool by project staff.

Step 4: Establish Final Blueway Opportunity Areas

Up to this point, the process used in this analysis has identified entire stream and shoreline lengths that would be analyzed further. In the case of stream and river corridors, however, the upper-reaches of the stream are often non-navigable due to low water levels. Therefore, a general estimation of where the navigable area of a Blueway Opportunity Area begins needed to be made. Access points at the upper-most extent of the navigable area of waterways were used to delineate this

Map 2-2: Final Blueway Opportunity Areas



³ A blank Site Visit Form used as part of this study can be found in Appendix C of this report.

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upstream limit of the Blueway Opportunity Area. To this end, Blueway Opportunity Areas do not extend upstream as far as the actual stream length. In two cases, when stream current does not impede paddling upstream, the extent of the Blueway Opportunity Area extends further upstream from the final access point (Black Creek and the Genesee River are the only notable examples).

Step 5: Establish Rating Systems for Evaluating Blueway Attributes

Using field notes and any other available documentation on the site, the following information for each access point was entered into the GIS geo-database:

Access Point Rating

For each access point identified in this project, the following categories of access point quality were established and noted:

1 – No Definitive Access

The site shows no significant evidence that it is presently used for water access. Given the site’s strategic location, however, it has been identified for potential future consideration. Conversely, adequate safe access may be present but the access route traverses private property. Significant modification to the site may be necessary to ensure safe public access (including negotiation of an appropriate easement in the case of private property). Site conditions at the launch or on the water may be hazardous. Parking is limited or does not exist.

2 – Primitive Access

The site shows some evidence that it is used by the public for water access but it does not meet most of the National Park Service general recommendations for accessible launch design.⁴ The launch area may be in disrepair or access to water may require a fair degree of agility. Poor water quality or hazardous conditions due to water flow or steep banks may also limit accessibility. Conditions may be hazardous. If frequent use were to occur at the site, soil and vegetation loss would be likely to occur. Significant modification to the launch site is necessary to ensure safe public access and no adverse environmental impact. Off street parking is limited. Area is either on public land or is generally open to the public through special permit or landowner agreement.

Key Indicators:

- *Steep or unstable banks*
- *Significant erosion*
- *Limited off-street parking*

⁴ US NPS. “Logical Lasting Launches: Design Guidance for Canoe and Kayak Launches.” 2004. Last viewed online 4/20/10 at <http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/launchguide.pdf> .

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- *Barriers between parking area and water, such as long carry distance, high or thick vegetation, guardrails, deep mud or mud flats, thick aquatic vegetation, anoxic water conditions, or other obstructions*
- *Access point may be ‘incidental’ as opposed to deliberate*

3 – Limited Access

A deliberate attempt has been made to provide safe access to the water, but the site still has some clear limitations (although these limitations may be minor in some instances). The site meets some of the National Park Service’s general recommendations for design of an accessible launch, but may fall short in one or more critical areas. For example, the site may only provide adequate access during certain seasons or water levels; the site may be in disrepair or is suffering from or causing soil erosion or vegetation loss; the site has significantly interfered with the natural environment. Minor modifications could benefit the launch site. Off street parking may be limited during high use (should be approximately 5 spaces available). Area is either on public land or is generally open to the public through special permit or landowner agreement.

Key Indicators:

- *Gradual and stable slope to water, such as a beach area...no steep drops and plenty of room for loading one or more boats*
- *Adequate off-street parking (≥ 5 spaces)*
- *A deliberate attempt has been made to create safe access to the water*

4 – Excellent Access

Site is used frequently by the public and it meets most if not all of the general recommendations for design of an accessible launch. Off-street parking is likely to be sufficient most days. Area is either on public land or is generally open to the public through special permit or landowner agreement.

ADA Compliance

In addition, launch sites are reviewed to determine if they meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance. Guidelines for accessible boating facilities as set forth by the United States Access Board are considered during site evaluation.⁵ Indication of ADA compliance will be marked with either a “Y” indicating “yes” or “N” indicating “no” in the geo-database.

⁵ United States Access Board. “Accessible Boating Facilities: A Summary of Accessibility Guidelines for Recreation Facilities.” Last viewed online 4/20/10 at <http://www.access-board.gov/recreation/guides/boating.htm>

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Parking

Parking availability at access points will delineate the following:

Rating	Description
1 - Poor	<i>On-street parking only</i>
2 - Good	<i>Limited off-street parking and/or wide shoulder area parking – ability to remove vehicle completely from the road right of way.</i>
3 - Best	<i>Officially-designated off street public parking for at least three vehicles</i>

Parking site must be within a 200ft distance of launch point. Information at sites with officially-designated off street parking is supplemented with data collected by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation when and where available; this information will be entered into the “Comments” section of the attribute table.⁶

Complementary Facilities

The following complementary facilities are accounted for:

Complementary Facility	Label
<i>Trailer launch</i>	<i>T</i>
<i>Bathrooms</i>	<i>B</i>
<i>Picnic facilities (grill and/or table)</i>	<i>P</i>
<i>Camping facilities</i>	<i>C</i>
<i>Hiking</i>	<i>H</i>
<i>Other facilities*</i>	<i>O</i>

*“Other” facilities may be identified at the discretion of staff; details are provided in the “Comments” section of the attribute table.

⁶ NYSDEC. Boat Launch Sites by County. Last viewed online 6/6/10 at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7832.html>