

Revitalizing the Great Lakes Seaway Trail Byway Brand

A New York Sea Grant (NYSG) partnership with the nonprofit Great Lakes Seaway Trail is assessing and revitalizing the brand of the 30-year-old, 518-mile-long New York-Pennsylvania byway that is one of America's Byways, a National Recreation Trail, and a NY State Bicycle Route.

NYSG created and coordinated an "Experience the Journey" tour that put Seaway Trail staff on the byway with an interactive "Spin the Wheel" activity designed as a fun, interactive way to invite traveler interest for opinion gathering. Travelers who answered a variety of questions about the visibility and attractiveness of the byway were rewarded with a Seaway Trail brand product.

"The *Experience The Journey* tour coordinated by New York Sea Grant puts the traveling public at the helm of this project for New York's freshwater shoreline, helping to chart how Seaway Trail, Inc. and its member attractions, accommodations and services set their sails to deliver on and exceed consumer expectations over the next 30 years," says Seaway Trail President & CEO Teresa Mitchell.

Great Lakes Seaway Trail hired a college student to implement and conduct the tour at key sites and events. Host communities included Youngstown, Dunkirk, Waddington, Cape Vincent, Henderson Harbor, Pultneyville, and Rochester. Events included lighthouse, marina and harbor festivals, and the NY Power Authority's 50th anniversary at Massena.



*The Experience the Journey interactive survey tour engaged visitors along the length of the Great Lakes Seaway Trail, that is one of America's Byways, a National Recreation Trail, and a New York State Bicycle Route.
Photo: Dave White, NYSG*

More than 1,000 consumer surveys were conducted with data gathered (types of travelers, preferred destinations and activities, interest in travel resources such as maps and magazine) leading to the development of a contemporary brand essence for the byway. The result is driving resource interpretation/accessibility, marketing, strategic partnerships and byway organizational capacity opportunities that support maximizing traveler interest, experience, and visitation with a resulting economic gain for byway communities and New York State's economy.

The next step will be to pioneer a comprehensive byway traveler experience/brand value/economic assessment tool for the Great Lakes Seaway Trail as a model for other New York State and national byways. A grant request has been submitted through the NYS Department of Transportation for federal funding for development of this prototype.

New York Sea Grant is a cooperative program of the State University of New York and Cornell University.

Sea Grant Extension administration is located at 112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

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