

New York to host 2025 world canals conference

International event to be held in Buffalo during 200th anniversary celebration of historic Erie Canal's opening

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Friday announced New York state was selected by Inland Waterways International as the host of the 2025 World Canals Conference, an event that brings together hundreds of canal and inland waterway enthusiasts, professionals and scholars from around the world to learn about a variety of topics related to canals. The 2025 conference will be held in Buffalo as the state commemorates the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal's opening there in 1825.

The New York Power Authority, New York State Canal Corp., and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in partnership with the Erie Canal Harbor Development Corp. and Visit Buffalo Niagara, are the joint sponsors and will be coordinating all aspects of the conference.

"I am honored that New York state, and particularly the City of Buffalo, will host the 2025 World Canals Conference, providing us with the opportunity to host attendees from around the globe while highlighting a critical part of our state and nation's history during the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal's opening," Hochul said. "The Erie Canal has been an integral part of New York's economy and landscape since Gov. Dewitt Clinton began the 10-day inaugural voyage in Buffalo in 1825 on the newly completed canal, culminating in the famous 'Wedding of the Waters' ceremony in New York Harbor."

The World Canals Conference is a key component of a comprehensive, four-month celebration of the Erie Canal's bicentennial planned at the historic Buffalo waterfront between May and September of 2025. The event will highlight Buffalo's transformed waterfront Canalside district, which has recently seen more than \$400 million in new investment – including new hotels, a major sports arena, a children's museum, retail shops and a recreated waterway on the footprint of the original Erie Canal in the Queen City. Today, Buffalo's Canalside attracts more than 1,000,000 persons annually.

Hochul's team said, "The conference program will be vibrant, relevant and undeniably future-focused as canals and inland waterways are inexorably linked with the social, cultural and economic fiber of their surrounding communities. Accordingly, the event will be structured to embrace discussion of the innovations, opportunities and challenges which are driving healthy and sustainable waterways of the world today. Sessions on waterways and communities, tourism and recreation, waterway management, historic preservation, and inclusion and accessibility will comprise a diverse and compelling conference agenda. International attendees will mark the indelible impact the Erie Canal has brought to North America and beyond, and will be able to chart the course for a vibrant and promising future to be shared by inland waterways across the globe."

NYPA Interim President and CEO Justin E. Driscoll said, "Our New York Power Authority and Canal Corp. family is incredibly proud to join Gov. Hochul and our partners as we celebrate the bicentennial of New York state's iconic Erie Canal on a world stage. This international event will not only showcase our still-working canal system, but will also promote its continued positive impact on local economies and highlight the endless opportunities for adventure along our network of water and trailways."

New York State Canal Corp. Director Brian U. Stratton said, "For nearly two centuries, the Erie Canal has connected people and commerce across our state and, as the stewards of this iconic waterway, I am thrilled to celebrate its bicentennial alongside Gov. Hochul and our colleagues, as we bring the international focus of the World Canals Conference back to New York state. This global gathering of inland waterway leaders and canal enthusiasts allows us to truly showcase how our continued investments in the canal system support recreation and local businesses in canalside communities across upstate New York."

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Executive Director Bob Radliff said, "Buffalo is the ideal place to host this conference, and I am so proud to show the world all it has to offer. Known as the 'Gateway to the West', the Erie Canal connected the port city of

Buffalo with other cities along the Great Lakes and to the Atlantic Ocean in New York City. This historical connection is central to Buffalo's history, and it is the major reason the city became a commercial and industrial powerhouse in the 1800s."

ECHDC Board Chairman Robert Gioia said, "Canalside is honored to be selected to host the 2025 World Canals Conference. The conference will cap off a summer of celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal on the Buffalo waterfront. Several events are planned to mark the historic milestone, which will include public art, educational programming, and tours of the replica packet boat that is being built in the Longshed at Canalside right now."

Visit Buffalo Niagara President and CEO Patrick Kaler said, "The affordability of the 'City of Good Neighbors', combined with the small footprint, walkable downtown and wealth of outdoor leisure activities, including its stunning waterfront at the western terminus of the Erie Canal, makes Buffalo a competitive event destination, and the history we have to offer is unparalleled. I look forward to showing the world all it has to offer."

New York State Sen. Timothy Kennedy said, "The Erie Canal played a crucial role in the development of the City of Buffalo and all of New York and continues to be an important part of our city's identity today. I look forward to Buffalo showing off all that we have to offer for the 2025 World Canals Conference, which will commemorate the 200th anniversary of the opening of the canal. Congratulations to all who worked to secure this important event for the Queen City."

New York State Sen. Sean Ryan said, "It will be a distinct honor for Buffalo to host the 2025 World Canals Conference, as we mark the incredible 200-year milestone of the Erie Canal. This will be a unique opportunity to show Buffalo and Western New York to the world as we celebrate our history and look towards the future."

Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples Stokes said, "Buffalo is honored to host the 2025 World Canals Conference at the same time we will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal. Our waterfront has been attracting more and more visitors who are excited to learn more about the history of the Erie Canal. We look forward to exchanging good practices on canals systems, and showing conference attendees from around the world how Buffalo's Canalside has helped rejuvenate our city."

Assembly member Jon D. Rivera said, "When the Erie Canal opened its waterway in 1825, it ushered in a new era of American ingenuity, transforming the way bulk goods were shipped and redefining the way commercial transportation was conducted. Today, the Erie Canal is rightly recognized for its historical significance to our nation's economic prowess, and is justifiably considered to be among the most influential human-built waterways and examples of civil engineering. Having the 2025 World Canals Conference coincide with Buffalo's celebration of the 200th anniversary of the canal's opening will not only commemorate the renowned history of the canal itself, but it will also allow visitors from all over the world to see how Buffalo is investing in its waterfront and injecting modernity to one of the world's most recognizable canal systems."

City of Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown said, "Buffalo is proud to host this international delegation at Canalside. The city's famous grain elevators, outdoor recreation and unique architecture make it an excellent choice for the 2025 World Canals Convention. We look forward to welcoming you to our waterfront."

Inland Waterways International President Rudy Van der Ween said, "Inland Waterways International is eagerly looking forward to discovering Buffalo and the wider region with a large delegation of its members – coming from fewer than 27 countries worldwide – on the occasion of the World Canals Conference 2025! We are sure that the host city from NY/USA will make it an unforgettable event!"

The upcoming conference in Buffalo will mark the fourth time in recent years New York has hosted this international event. It was previously held in Rochester in 2000 and 2010, and again in Syracuse in 2017, which marked the 200 years since the start of construction of the Erie Canal in 1817. Specific details regarding the 2025 World Canals Conference will be announced as conference planning gets underway.

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