



Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Summary of Public Comments Received

August 2021



Small cover photo credits, from left to right: Joshua House, Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance, and Jane Stryker.
Large cover photo credit: Joshua House.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Summary of Public Outreach Efforts 3

 Focus Group Sessions..... 3

 Public Comment Phase (March 1–June 1, 2021) 4

Summary of Public Feedback 5

 Public Response 5

 Public Feedback 8

Mapping the Finger Lakes Region 25

FIGURES

Figure 1. Boundary of the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study 2

Figure 2. Mapped responses to the StoryMap interactive question,
“What is the Finger Lakes Region?” 26

This page intentionally blank.

FINGER LAKES NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA FEASIBILITY STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The National Park Service (NPS) is [conducting a study](#) to determine the feasibility of designating the Finger Lakes region of New York as a national heritage area (NHA).

In March 2019, Congress passed the [John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act](#), under which the National Park Service, on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior, is directed to study the feasibility of designating the Finger Lakes region of New York as a national heritage area. The legislation identified the following counties to be considered as part of the study: Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne, and Yates (figure 1). Additional areas that have heritage aspects or are within the vicinity of the counties listed may also be considered within the study boundary (figure 1).

A national heritage area is a place designated by Congress where natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These patterns make national heritage areas representative of the national experience through the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved in them. Continued use of national heritage areas by people whose traditions helped to shape the landscapes enhances their significance. The United States currently has 55 national heritage areas throughout the country. National heritage areas are a grassroots community-driven approach to heritage conservation and economic development. Through public-private partnerships, national heritage area coordinating entities support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects.

National heritage areas further the mission of the National Park Service by fostering community stewardship of our nation's heritage. National heritage areas are not national park units. Rather, the National Park Service partners with, provides technical assistance to, and distributes federal funds appropriated by Congress to national heritage area management entities. The National Park Service does not assume ownership of land inside national heritage areas or impose land use controls. The funding that national heritage areas receive through agreements with the National Park Service is typically matched and supports heritage area operations along with an array of projects and programs.

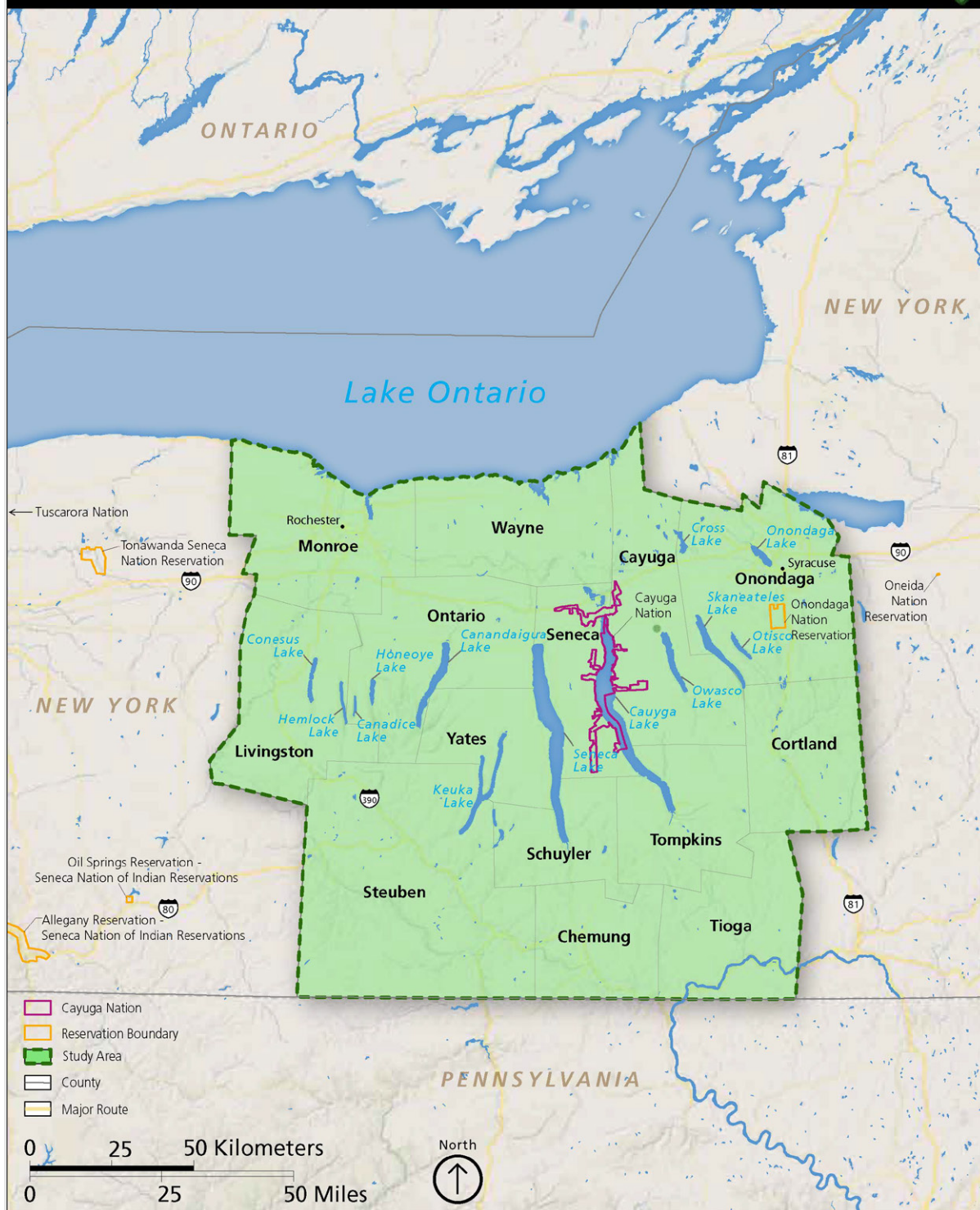


Figure 1. Boundary of the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study

The National Park Service follows [specific guidelines](#) during the development of a feasibility study. One critical aspect of a feasibility study is determining whether a study area has a story to tell that is rooted in its history and cultural traditions and is nationally important and unique to its part of the country. This story or stories can be brought to life through the lived-in landscapes and shared culture of the communities and residents who reside in the Finger Lakes. The study also seeks to document whether there is widespread public support for the designation of a national heritage area and whether an organization is poised to lead its management if created.

The NPS study team has begun gathering information about the history, culture, and resources associated with the counties identified in the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study legislation. Over the past year, team members with expertise in natural resources, cultural resources, community planning, visitor use, and socioeconomics completed research of primary documents, assessed academic work, and examined tourist publications that describe the area's features in depth. In addition, the team communicated with local community leaders, experts in various topic areas, and residents to learn more about the area's history, culture, and what makes the Finger Lakes traditions and lived-in landscape unique.

Through this research and these conversations, the team learned about the diversity of resources, various regional identities, numerous local organizations and economic development groups, and countless stories within the study area. This information informed a draft narrative report titled, "Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study—Historic Context and Nationally Important Themes" (hereafter referred to as the "historic context report"). That document describes the study area's history, culture, and impact on our nation's history. The report also presents potential interpretive themes that could illustrate nationally important stories of the Finger Lakes and places that demonstrate these themes.

Public feedback on the historic context report, as well as public opinion on the designation of a national heritage area and its potential management, was solicited during a public commenting period between March 1 and June 1, 2021.

This public comment summary document provides a high-level summary of input gathered from interested and affected individuals, groups, businesses, governments, elected officials, and a variety of state and local agencies during the Finger Lakes national heritage area feasibility study public commenting period. The National Park Service has solicited input from native nations, which will be incorporated into the study when received. Information collected will assist the feasibility study team with identification of issues and concerns related to the study area and help the National Park Service gauge the level of interest in national heritage area designation.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS

Public outreach for the feasibility study has been ongoing over the past year and has included multiple formats.

Focus Group Sessions

In May of 2020, the National Park Service hosted 14 virtual focus group-type sessions with each of the counties included in the study area (Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne, and Yates). The Finger

Lakes Tourism Alliance Board assisted the National Park Service with the selection of focus group members, who were chosen for their local knowledge related to natural resources, cultural resources, local traditions/lifeways, county history, recreational opportunities, educational opportunities, and/or the economic benefits of heritage tourism in their county.

During each two-hour session, NPS facilitators shared a brief presentation providing background on the national heritage areas program and the feasibility study process. Following the presentation, NPS staff engaged with participants in an informal conversation about the significance of the Finger Lakes area and resources found within each county. NPS staff asked the group to answer three discussion questions related to the national heritage area evaluation criteria. The questions were:

***Question 1:** What makes the Finger Lakes a nationally distinctive area and how does the 14-county study area contribute to, or exemplify, a distinctive aspect of America's national heritage? How does the area's history and natural landscape fit into a broader idea of national heritage? What unique American stories are being told here and why is the Finger Lakes the place to tell them?*

***Question 2:** What are examples of continuing customs and traditions, including amongst populations underrepresented in the overall historic narrative, evident in your county that link the current Finger Lakes landscape and people to the area's national importance?*

***Question 3:** What tangible resources in your county illustrate the distinct history and landscape of the study area and can support heritage tourism? How can visitors experience and understand the historic, cultural, and natural significance of the Finger Lakes and the ongoing customs and traditions identified that illustrate it in your county?*

NPS staff also encouraged participants to review the focus group summary notes and share additional information or sources with the NPS study team as a follow-up to the session. The input received during these sessions was used to inform the development of the historic context report.

Public Comment Phase (March 1–June 1, 2021)

In the spring of 2021, the National Park Service initiated a public comment period (March 1 through June 1, 2021) for the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study. The team solicited public feedback on the feasibility study through an interactive ArcGIS StoryMap website and the NPS Planning, Environment and Public Comment website (also known as the project website). These efforts were announced via press release to local and regional media. The press release provided information about the story map, which provided direct links to the project website and survey. In addition, information about the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study was presented at over 24 local government and/or regional/nongovernment organization meetings, which included:

- 9 individual county governments
- 1 multicounty government group
- 2 regional planning councils
- 1 city government

-
- 8 watershed/lake associations
 - 3 nongovernment organizations

These presentations provided an opportunity for the National Park Service to speak directly to residents and many elected officials and government staff in communities and counties scattered throughout the heart of the Finger Lakes area. The National Park Service’s strategy relied as much as possible on public meetings compliant with New York State’s Open Meetings Law as well as presentations to regional and local organizations that could help spread the word broadly beyond those in attendance.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Public Response

The National Park Service received a total of 413 correspondences via the project website, emailed comments, mailed letters, and survey responses. The National Park Service sought public feedback by requesting (1) responses to a seven-question survey related to the feasibility study, (2) feedback on the historic context report, and (3) geospatial comments on the extent of the Finger Lakes region. The survey questions and historic context report were posted on the project website and the link (<https://parkplanning.nps.gov/FingerLakes>) that was shared via press release and during informational meetings.

Of the total number of correspondences received, 172 were direct responses to the survey questions and 241 were resolutions or open-ended letters providing opinions or feedback (edits or comments) on the historic context report. The resolutions received from county and municipal governments were all submitted in support of designation of a national heritage area, and many also indicated support for a preferred coordinating entity and a preferred NHA boundary. No resolutions were received in opposition to designation of a national heritage area. Letters of support were also received from members of state and national representatives and senators.

Comments were received from every county in the 14-county study area, from New York residents outside of the study area, and from out-of-state respondents.

Thirty-seven of the correspondences received were adopted resolutions in support of the national heritage area designation. These resolutions were received from various local towns/cities/villages, municipal organizations, local counties, planning and development boards, and organizations/associations. All of these resolutions articulated support for the designation of a Finger Lakes National Heritage Area, and many of them expressed support for the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance administering the national heritage area as the local coordinating entity. Resolutions were received from the following entities:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Board of Finger Lakes
Tourism Alliance | • Board of the Steuben County
Conference and Visitors Bureau |
| • Board of Seneca Lake Pure
Waters Association | • Board of the Town of Montezuma |
| • Board of Supervisors Seneca County | • Cayuga Lake Watershed
Intermunicipal Organization |

-
- Chemung County Legislature
 - City of Geneva
 - Conesus Lake Association
 - Cortland County Legislature
 - County Legislature of Onondaga County
 - Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council
 - Greater Syracuse Hospitality & Tourism Association
 - Keuka Lake Association
 - Ontario County Board of Supervisors
 - Schuyler County Legislature
 - Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association
 - Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization
 - Skaneateles Area Chamber of Commerce
 - Smith Center for the Arts
 - Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board
 - Steuben County Legislature
 - Tioga County Local Development Corporation
 - Tioga County Planning Board
 - Tompkins County Legislature
 - Town of Candor Planning Board
 - Town of Montour
 - Town of Reading
 - Village of Aurora
 - Village of Burdett
 - Village of Trumansburg
 - Village of Union Springs Board
 - Village of Watkins Glen Board of Trustees
 - Wayne County Board of Supervisors
 - Yates County Country Cooperative
 - Yates County Legislature

In addition, correspondences were received from businesses and various types of organizations, including one existing national heritage area (Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor), both within and outside of the 14-county New York study area. Like the resolutions passed by local governments, most of these letters expressed support for the designation of a national heritage area in the Finger Lakes, and many indicated support for the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance as a local coordinating entity. Letters of support for designation were also received from members of state and national representatives and senators. The following organizations sent correspondences:

- Backbone Ridge History Group
- Bristol Hills Historical Society
- Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce
- Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association
- Cayuga County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway
- Chemung County Chamber of Commerce

-
- Chemung County Historical Society
 - Conesus Lake Association
 - Congress of the United States House of Representatives
 - Cornell Botanic Gardens
 - Cornell Cooperative Extension, Steuben County
 - Corning Area Chamber of Commerce
 - Corning's Gaffer District
 - Corning Museum of Glass
 - Cortland County Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
 - Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance
 - Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council
 - Finger Lakes Wine Country Tourism Marketing Association
 - Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex
 - Friends of Robert H. Treman State Park
 - Genesee Country Village & Museum
 - Geneva City Council
 - Geneva Historical Society
 - Greater Syracuse Hospitality & Tourism Association
 - Historic Owego Marketplace
 - Historic Palmyra
 - Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau
 - League of Women Voters of Schuyler County
 - Livingston County Planning Department
 - Local Historians and Representatives of Museums and Historical Societies in Seneca County
 - National Soaring Museum
 - New York Bicycling Coalition
 - New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
 - New York State Assembly
 - New York State Senate
 - Pal-Mac Lions Club
 - Schuyler County Historical Society
 - Schuyler County Legislature
 - Seneca County Chamber of Commerce
 - Seneca Falls Heritage and Tourism Center
 - Smith Center for the Arts
 - Steuben County Conference & Visitors Bureau
 - Syracuse Metropolitan League of Women Voters
 - Tanglewood Nature Center and Museum
 - Town of Hector
 - Town of Homer
 - Town of Horseheads
-

-
- Town of Montezuma
 - Town of Nichols
 - Town of Tioga
 - US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
 - United States Senate
 - Visit Rochester
 - Visit Syracuse
 - Watkins Glen Chamber of Commerce
 - Watkins-Montour Rotary Club
 - Wayne Historians Organization
 - Women’s Rights Alliance of New York State
 - Yates County Chamber of Commerce

And from the following businesses:

- Bristol Mountain
- Bunnell Associates
- Casella Farms
- Destination Niagara Falls
- Experience the Finger Lakes
- Hoffman Development Associates
- Holiday Inn Elmira Riverview
- Owl Gorge Productions
- Schuyler Hospital
- Seneca Lake Winery Association
- Seneca White Deer
- Sonnenberg Gardens & Mansion
- Sunset View Creamery
- The Olde Country Store and More
- Travel Market Insights
- Underwater Resources
- Watkins Sporting Goods

Public Feedback

In addition to open-ended input associated with support and concerns about designation (see the question #7 topic summary below), many correspondences responded to the survey questions posed on the project website. The survey questions were:

1. *What specific sites—historic places, natural areas, bodies of water, geographic or manmade features, counties, cities/communities—epitomize the Finger Lakes Region and set it apart from the rest of New York and neighboring states?*
2. *Do you think the Finger Lakes Region is a nationally notable area? Should it be recognized as a National Heritage Area? Why or why not?*
3. *What stories and histories have shaped the culture of the Finger Lakes?*
4. *What customs or traditions do you associate with the Finger Lakes? These could include food, festivals, activities, groups/organizations.*

-
5. *When you recreate in the Finger Lakes Region, what do you like to do and where do you like to go?*
 6. *If a National Heritage Area was created in the Finger Lakes Region, who should manage it?*
 7. *Do you have any ideas or concerns about creating a Finger Lakes National Heritage Area?*
 8. *Do you have any other comments or questions you would like to share with the study team?*

The following is a brief overview of respondent comments, broken down by survey question. While many commenters responded to the actual survey questions, others submitted letters and emails freely expressing their thoughts. The team assessed input from all correspondences received and it is summarized below under the categories of each survey question.

Question #1: What specific sites—historic places, natural areas, bodies of water, geographic or manmade features, counties, cities/communities—epitomize the Finger Lakes Region and set it apart from the rest of New York and neighboring states?

Respondents to question 1 identified types of features (e.g., waterfalls) and types of sites (e.g., state parks). Responses also provided specifically named museums, parks, and other historic and natural sites (“x” waterfall in “x” state park). A summary of these responses follows.

Types of Features—Types of features identified included, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Natural features:**
 - North-south deep glacier-carved lakes
 - Gorges and chasms
 - Gullies
 - Waterfalls and cascades
 - Topography of drumlins and lakes between them
 - “Pristine” and “fresh” water resources
 - Landscapes with micro-climates
 - Oak openings / Savannahs
 - Woodlands, steeply forested lands, old growth forests
 - Unique habitats and endangered flora
 - Fossil depositions
- **Cultural sites/features:**
 - Colonial settlement patterns (with a hamlet or village every 5-7 miles)
 - Gorge communities

-
- Farming communities
 - Regional architectural styles and building materials
 - Underground Railroad “safe houses” or “stations”
 - Amish and Mennonite communities
 - Educational institutions (universities and colleges) and their built environment/campuses
 - **Working lands and structures, culinary infrastructure, and agricultural products/food:**
 - Vineyard landscapes and their scenic views
 - Rich, arable land
 - Small-scale farms
 - Wineries (120+) including those along the glacial moraines
 - Farmers markets and farm stands
 - Agricultural products including wine, milk, yogurt, cheese, apples
 - Farm-to-table network including restaurants
 - Wells barns
 - Cobblestone architecture

Types of Sites and Named Sites—In addition to the general features commenters identified, many respondents included specifically named sites and places as contributing to the history and unique cultural and natural landscape of the Finger Lakes. These comments included not only “state parks” and “historic sites” but also agricultural land, former railroad lines, and other types of sites related to the unique American stories displayed in the Finger Lakes region. Many of the named sites mentioned in response to question #1 were included on the historic context report, which was open for public comment as part of this public engagement effort. Places suggested for consideration via public comment included sites from all 14 counties in the study area as well as some from outside, including:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| ● 1867 Parkview Inn | ● Allan H. Treman
State Marine Park | ● Barge Canal |
| ● 19th-century grist
mill at Robert H.
Treman State Park | ● American Rock Salt
in Groveland | ● Batavia Club of
Genesee |
| ● Abbey of the
Genesee | ● Arnot Art Museum | ● Batavia Downs |
| ● Alasa Farms | ● Aunt Sarah's Falls in
Schuyler County | ● Belhurst Castle and
Winery |
| ● Alex Haley Pool | ● Baltimore Woods
Nature Center | ● Belva Lockwood
Inn |
| ● Alexander Town
Hall | ● Bare Hill Unique
Area (Canandaigua) | ● Birthplace of Alex
Haley (Ithaca) |
-

-
- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| • Bixby-Keeney House in LeRoy | • Chemung County Historical Society | • Dryden Lake |
| • Black Diamond Trail/The Rail Trail | • Chimney Bluffs State Park | • Eastman Community Music School |
| • Bob and Ruth's Vineyard Restaurant in Naples | • Clark Gully, Birthplace to the World (Haudenosaunee) | • Eastman School of Music |
| • Bonded Winery #1 in Hammondsport—Pleasant Valley Wine Company | • Clemens Center | • Eight Square Schoolhouse |
| • Brand Park | • Clute Park and Campground | • Eldridge Park |
| • Bristol Burning Springs | • Confluence of Tioga, Canisteo and Conhocton Rivers | • Elizabeth Cady Stanton House |
| • Budd Park | • Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area | • Elmira Prison Camp |
| • Burned-over District | • Cornell Botanic Gardens | • Enfield Glen |
| • Buttermilk Falls State Park | • Cornell Lab of Ornithology | • Erie Canal |
| • Carpenter Falls Unique Area | • Cornell University | • Erie Canal Museum |
| • Cascadilla Gorge Natural Area | • Corning Museum of Glass | • Ernie Davis Burial |
| • Case Research Lab Museum | • Cowsheds Upper Falls in Fillmore Glen State Park | • Erwin Wildlife Management Area |
| • Cass Park | • Crescent Trail | • Fall Brook State Forest |
| • Catharine Valley Trail | • Cumming Nature Center | • Fillmore Glen State Park |
| • Cayuga and Seneca Wine Trails | • Darien Lakes State Park | • Finger Lakes Boating Museum |
| • Cayuga Museum of History & Art | • The Depot Museum of the Horseheads Historical Society | • Finger Lakes Gaming & Racetrack |
| • Cayuga/Tompkins Cooperative Hunting Area | • Downtown Owego Historic District | • Finger Lakes Museum |
| | | • Finger Lakes National Forest |
| | | • Finger Lakes Trail |
| | | • Caledonia Fish Hatchery in 1864 |
| | | • Fort Hill Cemetery |
-

-
- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| • Fort Ontario State Historic Site | • Harriet Tubman Museum & Education Center | • International Motor Racing Research Center |
| • Ganondagan State Historic Site | • Harris Hill Amusement Park | • Ithaca College |
| • Garrett Memorial Chapel | • Havana Glen Park | • Ithaca Falls |
| • Genesee Country Village and Museum | • Hector Falls | • Ithaca Gun Company |
| • Genesee Valley Greenway | • Hemlock-Canadice State Forest | • The Jell-O Gallery |
| • Genoa Historical Association Rural Life Museum | • Hemlock's "Little World's Fair" | • The Johnston House and Mike Weaver Drain Tile Museum |
| • George Eastman House Museum | • Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art | • John W. Jones Museum |
| • George Eastman Museum | • Highland Park | • Junius Ponds Cabins and Campground |
| • Geva Theatre Center | • Historic Canandaigua Boathouses on The City Pier (Canandaigua Lake) | • Kershaw Park |
| • Glen H Curtiss Aviation Museum | • History Center in Tompkins County | • Keuka Lake |
| • Glenora Falls in Keuka Park | • Hi-Tor Stone Monuments—Clark Gully | • Keuka Lake Outlet Trail and Preservation Area |
| • Glenwood Cemetery | • Hobart and William Smith Colleges | • Labrador Hollow Unique Area |
| • Greek Peak Mountain Resort | • Holding Point, Horseheads Industrial Center | • Lake Cayuta |
| • Grimes Glen Park | • Holland Land Office Museum | • Lake Como |
| • Groveland Ambuscade Monument | • Indian Monument in the Evergreen Cemetery | • Lavender Hill Commune |
| • Hadrian Hill | • International Harvester Co. in Cayuga County | • Letchworth State Park |
| • Hanover Square Historic District | | • Liberty Pole |
| • Harriet Tubman House | | • Lick Brook Falls |
| | | • Lime Hollow Nature Center |
| | | • Lincoln Hill Farms Winery |
-

-
- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little Lakes Community Center • Little Theater • Lodi Point State Park • Lucifer Falls • Ludlowville Park • Mark Twain House & Grave • Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation • Montezuma Audubon Center • Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge • Montour Falls • Moosewood Restaurant • Morgan Monument in the Batavia Cemetery • Morse/Borg Warner Chain Co. • Mount Morris Dam • Muller Field Station, Finger Lakes Community College • Museum of the Earth • Mushroom House • Myers Park • Namgyal Monastery Institute of Buddhist Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum • National Cash Register Company in Ithaca • National Museum of the American Coverlet • National Soaring Museum and Airfield • National Women's Hall of Fame • National Women's History Museum • National Warplane Museum • Newfield's Bridge • Newtown Battlefield State Park • New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva • Northern Montezuma Wildlife Management Area • Old Homer Village Historic District • Ontario County Courthouse (Canandaigua) • Owego Central Historic District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Station County Park • Parrott Hall • Pleasant Valley Wine Company / Great Western Winery • President Millard Fillmore Birthplace—Cayuga County • Prison City Pub and Brewery • Queens Castle in Lodi (Camp Fossenvue) • Rattlesnake Hill Wildlife Management Area • Retsof Salt Mine • Reynold's Gully • Susquehanna River Walk and Timber Trail • Robert H. Treman State Park • Rob's Trail Preserve • Rochester Institute of Technology • Rose Hill Mansion • Rush Oak Openings Unique Area • Salisbury-Pratt Homestead (Oren Cravath's former farm) |
|--|--|--|
-

-
- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| • Sampson Naval Training Station | • Squaw Island (Canandaigua) | • Susan B. Anthony Museum & House |
| • Sampson State Park | • St. John the Evangelist Church | • Syracuse University |
| • Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary | • Stafford Museum of History | • Tanglewood Nature Center & Museum |
| • Schuyler County Historical Society Museum | • Statue of Elizabeth Blackwell | • Taughannock Falls State Park |
| • Sciencenter Museum | • Statue of Mary Jemison, Letchworth State Park | • Taylor Wine Company |
| • Seabreeze Amusement Park | • Statues of Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, Susan B. Anthony Square Park | • Teal Park in Horseheads |
| • Seneca Army Depot | • Sterling Nature Center | • Temple Sinai |
| • Seneca Art & Culture Center | • Stewart Park, Ithaca | • Tinker Falls |
| • Seneca Lake | • Stony Brook State Park | • Torture Tree |
| • Seymour Public Library | • Strassenburg Planetarium, Rochester Museum & Science Center | • Town of Ithaca |
| • Shaker Heritage Society | • The Strong National Museum of Play | • Treleaven Wines |
| • SheQuaGa Falls | • Sullivan Campaign Historical Markers | • Tutelo Park |
| • Six Flags Darien Lake Theme Park | • Sullivans Monument at Newtown Battlefield State Park | • Wadsworth Homestead |
| • Ska-Nonh-Great Law of Peace Center | • Susan B. Anthony gravesite, Mount Hope Cemetery | • Wagner Vineyards |
| • Sonnenberg Gardens & Mansion | | • Walker House, Garrison |
| • Sonyea State Forest | | • Waneta Lake |
| • Spencer Crest Nature and Research Center | | • Watkins Glen State Park |
| • Sperr Memorial Park | | • Wells College |
| • Spook Hill Drive | | • West Hill Preserve |
| | | • Wharton Studio Museum |
| | | • Widmer Wine Cellars |
| | | • William H. Seward House Museum |
-

-
- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Osborn Stoddard's Birthplace • Windmill Farm and Craft Market • Windmill Market • Wisner Park | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice • Women's Rights National Historical Park | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodlawn National Cemetery • Yates County History Center • Zim Bandstand Historical Marker • Zimmerman House |
|--|---|---|

Question #2: Do you think the Finger Lakes Region is a nationally notable area? Should it be recognized as a national heritage area? Why or why not?

Nearly all survey respondents agreed that the Finger Lakes region is a “nationally notable area” and/or the region should be “recognized as a National Heritage Area.” While many respondents did not directly say “yes” to this question, their responses, such as “History can be found in every nook and cranny of this rich area,” indicated a general agreement with one or both of the questions. Using this standard for acknowledgement/response, only one correspondence of the 172 responses to the surveys stated directly that either the region was not nationally notable and/or it should not be recognized as a national heritage area. Several respondents used comparisons to well-known tourist areas, protected sites, and/or existing national heritage areas as well as links in the story map as evidence that the Finger Lakes region should be (or already was, “unofficially”) a national heritage area.

Respondent’s reasons for why (or why not) the region was notable and/or should be recognized as a national heritage area varied. Reasons included references to both the natural and cultural resources in the study area. Some respondents also articulated what they believed and/or hoped that a national heritage area designation would provide to the region, including a broader awareness of Finger Lakes attractions that could lead to economic benefits and natural and cultural resource conservation.

Question #3: What stories and histories have shaped the culture of the Finger Lakes?

Commenters often reiterated the primary themes provided in the historic context report, including the history of settlement in the area; emergence of social movements; the evolution of agriculture, industry, and transportation; and the impact of the Haudenosaunee people. Many respondents stressed the importance of telling an accurate and full story of the Haudenosaunee people in the region and having representatives of native nations tell their own stories. Commenters often identified the strong links of the themes/stories to the land itself. For example, the specific geography, geology, climate, and soils fostered a unique agricultural heritage, and the location and orientation of the lakes allowed for the development of sheltered, independent communities and culture. Respondents also noted the interconnectedness of the various stories identified in the historic context report, such as the early transportation advances in the region and their impact on the spread of social and religious ideas and movements.

Commenters also suggested new themes and stories from the study area’s 14-county geography in response to the themes presented in the historic context report. For example, many respondents

identified the importance of social and religious movements on the region but also articulated was how a particular movement, such as the advancement of women's rights, had on the Seneca Falls and the Syracuse areas. New suggestions for themes and stories included the area's naval significance, diversity derived from geography, natural resource conservation, the arts, boat building, and other social movements. Survey comments that expanded on existing themes in the historic context report included insights on the Haudenosaunee's impact and further information about the region's significance in the history of transportation, industry, environmentalism, and influence on the history of American food and agriculture.

Themes and stories recommended in public comments:

- **Naval significance**
 - Quasi naval station in the center of Seneca Lake once used to test torpedoes and is now a testing center for sonar projects
 - **Diversity within a small region derived from geography**
 - Diversity and variation in both natural and cultural environments across the area
 - **Natural resource management/conservation**
 - Fisheries industry on Lake Ontario
 - History of fish hatcheries in the region—Seth Green started the first fish hatchery in 1864 in Caledonia, New York (Livingston County)
 - **Settlement patterns and place names**
 - Region as the nation's first frontier expansion
 - Flourishing of boomtowns
 - History of the Holland Land Company
 - Grid patterns of towns due to early surveying
 - Region as one of the earliest vacation havens for the wealthy and powerful of New York City, resulting in many lakeside communities to become wealthy enclaves of grand homes
 - Unique characteristics of many historic towns that remained intact due to space used by farms, parklands, and wineries.
 - Vineyards' impact on the landscape
 - Most area lakes bear Native American names
 - Story of what was lost to development along lake shores
 - Culture of perseverance and independence
 - Impact of the War of 1812 on settlement and transportation patterns
 - Intact historical fabric in some areas due to their escape from urban renewal
 - Story of resettlement of families for the Finger Lakes National Forest
 - **Arts**
-

-
- Local theater (including outdoor and seasonal)
 - History of vaudeville
 - History of film, including silent films and the development of sound
 - Eastman Kodak's role in the development of photography and cinematography
 - **Social movements, government programs, and philanthropy and their impact**
 - Legacy of social movements that has continued to shape the residents of today's Finger Lakes region
 - Links between the various social movements and the impacts between them
 - Abolition
 - Women's rights
 - Prison reform—Auburn
 - Religious movements (e.g., Burned-Over District, Mormons, Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Shakers, Public Universal Friend)
 - Work by the Works Progress Administration in the region's state parks
 - George Eastman's funding to create Rochester's major institutions/structures (Eastman School of Music and University of Rochester)
 - Formation of the first chapter of the Red Cross by Clara Barton in Dansville, New York, in 1881
 - Formation of the Agricultural Extension Service and citizen science
 - **Outdoor recreation**
 - Many opportunities for sustainable, low-impact outdoor recreation due to access to public land and clean water
 - **Boat building**
 - Millport's many canal barges as a result of the construction of the canal (Chemung Scows & Lakers)
 - **Industry and environmentalism**
 - Forests' destruction by sawmills in the 19th century
 - Salt mining under the lakes that still impacts the region today
 - First in flight
 - **The impact of the Haudenosaunee**
 - Agricultural knowledge native peoples shared with Europeans (orchards and the Three Sisters)
 - Local legends and stories still shared today—storytelling tradition
-

-
- Canandaigua Treaty—the only unbroken treaty between a government entity and the Native Americans
 - Spiritual connection to the land and appreciation of nature
 - Location of historic trade routes and their connection to the present transportation network
 - Popularity of lacrosse that began in the region
 - Place names, including the names of the Finger Lakes themselves
 - **Transportation**
 - Use and impact of ferries and steamboats on the lakes
 - History and origins of the current routes—the road cut used for artillery in the Revolutionary War eventually became Route 14
 - Railroad's and Glen Trolley's route of 1895 contribution to prosperity of the area
 - **Development and impact of institutions of higher learning**
 - Cornell's heritage as one of the first land-grant universities after the passage of the Morrill Act of 1862 and Cornell's role in the development of the cooperative extension movement and research stations
 - Finger Lakes Consortium of Higher Education's 21 institutions
 - Faculty and visiting scholars bringing new ideas to the region from all over the world, continuing the legacy of innovation and the spread of new ideas
 - New York Central College, founded by abolitionists in 1849, not only hired black professors, but educated black, white, male, and female students in same classrooms with the same curriculum—something not done in that era
 - One of the first music schools—Ithaca College
 - Hobart and William Smith College (Geneva Medical College), where Elizabeth Blackwell became the first female doctor
 - **Food and agriculture**
 - Dairies
 - Wine making and vineyards
 - Early agritourism movement
 - Late 19th century recognition as the “Champagne Region of the West;” resilience of the wine industry following the temperance movement and prohibition growth of Taylor Wine company of the mid-20th century; passing of the Farm Winery Act of 1976
 - Passing of the Craft Beverages Act
-

-
- Importance of the early farm-to-table food movement; emergence of internationally recognized Riesling coming out of the wine region; Moosewood Restaurant in Ithaca and its cookbook's success in launching of vegetarian cuisine
 - Strength of farming, preserved by relocated Pennsylvania Amish and Mennonite farmers
 - The lakes as a good microclimate for wine grapes
 - Poor soils and challenges for farmers, leading to good scientific advancement in agriculture
 - Small tenant farmers along the Erie Canal and their hatred for the monopolistic economic practices of slavery
 - Agricultural workers today from the Caribbean and Central America
 - Impact of the Erie Canal on the growth of agriculture
 - John Johnston and Robert Swan and the tiles manufactured in the region that improved farming
 - Ice fishing
 - Impact of the region's agricultural science/research on current crops
 - Cabbage farming ("Phelps is the sauerkraut capital of the world")
 - Muck farming in the ancient glacial lake beds north of the Finger Lakes
 - Highest concentration of cobblestone construction

Lastly, many respondents told stories of their family and growing up in the Finger Lakes, connecting the Finger Lakes and the land of many residents and former residents who return, to a region that evokes strong personal memories.

Question #4: What customs or traditions do you associate with the Finger Lakes? These could include food, festivals, activities, groups/organizations.

Commenters provided a broad list of customs and traditions, and many followed the examples provided in the question, "food, festivals, activities, groups/organizations" to help identify those customs and traditions. Many of the comments highlighted specific personal and family traditions that the respondents enjoyed (sometimes for many years and for generations) such as "fishing" or "visiting u-pick farms."

The following list summarizes customs and traditions identified and/or shared by many of the respondents. These responses include both general activities such as "attending agricultural festivals" and specific activities such as eating "grape pie at the Grape Festival in Naples." A few respondents expressed the hope that personal family traditions (that are also regional traditions) would be passed along to the next generation.

- **Customs, culture, and traditional work**
 - Tradition of conservation
 - The wine industry—a traditional business

-
- Wine and craft brews culture
 - Early spring foraging of ramps and fiddleheads
 - Outdoor adventures and recreation as a family tradition in a pristine environment
 - Influences from strong, effective institutions of higher learning
 - **Ongoing events (small and large)**
 - State fair
 - Academic event—Hotel Ezra Cornell (student-led conference in its 96th year in 2021)
 - Sporting competitions—Wineglass Marathon, Seneca 7
 - “Ring of Fire” celebrations—Labor Day lighting of the perimeters of several lakes with flares that align with and give thanks for the autumnal harvest
 - Volunteer fire departments that host pancake dinners, fish fries, barbecues, and Election Day feasts as they are often polling places
 - New vintage releases at the wineries
 - **Activities (such as outdoor recreation and wine tours)**
 - Four-season outdoor recreation (including birdwatching, fishing, hunting)
 - Enjoying local food—custard, Zwiegle’s Hot Dogs, garbage plates, salt potatoes, cheese curds, local craft beverages including beer and wine, chicken BBQ with Bob Baker’s sauce recipe
 - Hiking, bicycling
 - Lake activities—sailing, boating, and paddle boarding
 - Wine-tasting (particularly Rieslings), beer tasting, wine tours, and visiting farmers markets
 - Shopping the downtowns of Finger Lakes towns
 - Attending summer parades
 - Family activities that are passed on from one generation to the next
 - Attending NASCAR racing events
 - Activities to support conservation (bird monitoring through clubs)
 - Lakeside vacationing
 - Family activities like camping
 - Winemaking
 - Watching college sports
 - Winter sports (Nordic skiing, snowshoeing) and enjoyment of the snow
 - Farm-to-table food production
-

-
- Fine dining
 - Native American dance workshops
 - Historic buildings and grave-site tours
 - Hiking tours
 - Cheese tours
 - Agricultural and rural life activities
 - Square and contra dancing
 - **Festivals (celebrating the unique resources of the area)**
 - Agricultural festivals, including harvest festivals and competitions—Grape Festival, Apple festivals, Marathon Maple Festival, the International Rutabaga Curl, Peppermint Festival, Dryden Dairy Days, history of Buckwheat Festival, Finger Lakes Wine Festival, Farm Bureau Farm Days, country fairs, and wine, 4H competitions
 - Seasonal and holiday festivals: Cohocton Fall Foliage Festival, Fire and Ice Winter Festival (downtown Canandaigua), Flares on the Lake for Fourth of July, Memorial Day celebration
 - Transportation—Celebrations of the Erie Canal, Keuka Lake Seaplane Festival, Balloon Festival, sailing regattas
 - Arts/Music festivals: Grassroots Festival, Rochester Jazz Festival, Canandaigua Lakefront Art Show (in its 47th year in 2021), Glass Festival (Corning) Plein Air Arts Festival (Canandaigua), It's a Wonderful Life Festival (Seneca Falls), Auburn Musical Theatre Festival, Skaneateles' 40+ years of lakeside concert history
 - July 4th fly-in breakfast at the Penn Yan flying club
 - Ethnic festivals
 - Hill Cumorah Pageant
 - Historic wooden boat celebrations—Skaneateles Antique Boat Show
 - Watkins Glen Grand Prix
 - National Lake Trout Derby and Bass Masters Fishing competition
 - Women's rights—Convention Days, Annual induction of women into the National Hall of Fame

Question #5: When you recreate in the Finger Lakes region, what do you like to do and where do you like to go?

Respondents identified the extensive trail system and the numerous state and local parks in the Finger Lakes as some of the top assets in the region that allowed for a variety of recreational activities. Commenters also viewed recreation in its broadest sense and included visiting museums and historic sites and other indoor “recreation” in addition to the more traditional outdoor recreational activities. Many of the outdoor recreational activities mentioned included those available during the warmer months, such as swimming and boating; however, commenters also

appreciated the “four-season” nature of the region. Question #4 above also includes many of the recreational activity responses.

Commenters highlighted the region’s high water quality in lakes and other bodies of water as an aspect of the water resources that permitted recreational activities. Although respondents noted that public access to the waterfront was not available on some lakes in the region, most respondents appreciated the number of state and local parks as well as the Finger Lakes National Forest and Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Respondents noted that those public parks provided access to hiking trails, boat launches, and other amenities for outdoor recreation as well as the conflicts that can arise between users in multiuse areas.

Question #6: If a national heritage area was created in the Finger Lakes region, who should manage it?

The question of a preferred management entity provided a greater challenge to survey takers than many of the other questions. Several of the survey respondents did not respond to this question and some were unsure and/or stated that they did not have enough information to provide a response. For those providing the name of a specific organization/agency as a management entity, commenters sometimes followed the suggestion with a question mark, likely indicating that additional information was needed to make a more informed decision.

As in other survey questions, some respondents identified general features of a management entity they would like to see (such as managed by local constituents and/or managed by an organization with a conservation focus) and/or offered the name of a specific organization or agency they thought would be worth considering as a managing entity. These two types of responses were not mutually exclusive, and often survey takers emphasized the feature, such as “regional,” and then added, “such as X organization.” Commenters provided the following preferred features of a potential management entity:

- Regionwide group
- Partnership, collaboration, and joint effort between communities/constituencies
- Local management
- Management at and/or between the local, state, and national levels
- Public-private entity
- Representation from the business community
- Local representation—by geography
- Mechanism that allows for input from citizens
- New, separate, and/or independent organization
- Mix of disciplines represented (history, tourism, natural resources, education, economic development)
- Structure that includes the native nations in the region
- Conservation and/or tourism focus

At least one respondent expressed interest in a regional management structure for their county, regardless of the overall regional management structure implemented for the national heritage area. Many respondents wanted to ensure that their constituency be represented, whether that be a community, county, or lake.

Respondents also identified specific organizations/agencies by type (state, federal government agency) and by name, identifying the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance and National Park Service most often. In mentioning specific entities, commenters offered a variety of roles, including management, oversight, and advisory positions. Even though the National Park Service was identified, the respondents may be considering the National Park Service as an advisor in the management process and not necessarily as the management entity. Of the entities identified by name, only the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance self-identified their intent and desire to serve as a coordinating entity. Commenters identified the following entities:

- Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance
- National Park Service (or general federal involvement)
- Finger Lakes Land Trust
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

In some cases, a commenter provided a hybrid answer, such as a specific existing entity with a different internal structure to manage the national heritage area. Many respondents not only mentioned the types of management entities they would support (such as an economic development organization) but also the types of activities that would be critical for the management entity to perform (such as land conservation.)

Question #7: Do you have any ideas or concerns about creating a Finger Lakes national heritage area?

Overwhelmingly, respondents to the survey had no concerns and/or their response reiterated their support for designating the region as a national heritage area. In addition, letters received independent of the survey expressed support for the designation of the Finger Lakes as a national heritage area. These correspondences were received from a range of individuals, organizations, official representatives, and municipalities. Letters repeatedly mentioned the rich history and unique geography as rationale for the support.

A small number of comments expressed concern about elements of the feasibility study. These concerns included objecting to the boundary representation of the Cayuga Nation as indicated on NPS maps, questioning the inclusion of the large cities of Rochester and Syracuse within the proposed national heritage area boundary, and questioning the need for the designation.

A few respondents expressed support for the designation but also concern for some aspect of the process. Below are the broad categories of concerns, which were mentioned by only a handful of respondents:

- Impact from increased tourism, including the need for new/upgrades to physical infrastructure and loss of housing to short-term rentals

-
- Concern that all stories of the region will not be told—especially the Haudenosaunee voices
 - General protection of natural resources including clean water
 - Concern that the governing structure of any future NHA entity be bottom-up, include involvement from local government, and have equal representation across the region and various constituencies
 - Concern that the boundary of the area encompasses too much or not enough land and suggestions for the inclusion of other New York counties (beyond the 14 of the study area) within the boundary
 - Threat of overdevelopment and insensitive development, especially in areas that impact natural resources or development that is not climate friendly
 - Concern about sustainable funding and equitable funding across the region
 - Loss of certain activities, such as hiking and hunting, to federal regulations or restrictions
 - Increase in regulations on private property (including the use of privately owned historic properties) and too much involvement by the federal government instead of local policy and control
 - Protection of natural resources, including open space and scenic resources from wind turbines and solar panels
 - Need for economic development (especially jobs)
 - Loss of affordable housing and gentrification
 - Concern that the NHA designation will not happen

Commenters also voiced suggestions and ideas for implementing a national heritage area, should a designation occur. These suggestions included:

- Return the lake-crossing ferries
 - Tell lesser-known stories
 - Save historical sites in poor condition
 - Contribute to jobs for underrepresented groups
 - Provide more information centers with staffed guidance and brochures for tourists
 - Include basic provisions, and/or references for leveraging funding for watershed and water quality protection efforts
 - Provide each county equal opportunity to develop projects that meet the guidelines of the national heritage area program
 - Encourage each site's participation in the NPS Passport Program
 - Develop an official history trail in the region to complement the many food and beverage trails
-

-
- Develop a historical tour along the path of the Chemung Canal that would include all villages that were on the canal
 - Encourage school trips, antique shows, camping trips, history tours, and food and wine tours
 - Provide more strategically placed overlook areas and platform towers for the countless views that are not easily accessible
 - Manage overuse, traffic, and congestion through strategies developed by areas experiencing similar problems with great natural beauty
 - Develop a zip line/ropes course near Glenwood Heights Road and the Black Diamond Trail
 - Develop an entity to address private citizens rights, property rights
 - Provide NPS technical assistance on appropriate preservation efforts to communities that have plans and regulations already in place but do not need another layer of regulation for local decision-making

Question #8: Do you have any other comments or questions you would like to share with the study team?

The responses to this question overlapped many of the responses from previous questions and included concern over preservation of resources, general support, additional resources to be added to the inventory, general feedback on the historic context report, and comments on potential management entities. Some respondents asked how they could become involved as volunteers or made suggestions for interpretation if the designation occurs. A handful of commenters expressed support for the feasibility study process and appreciation for the NPS presentations on the study effort. Several commenters indicated a desire for local control and management of a natural heritage area should one be designated, and a small number of correspondences expressed opposition to the designation due to the federal government's association.

MAPPING THE FINGER LAKES REGION

In addition to the survey questions, the StoryMap website asked visitors to engage with an interactive mapping tool to circle the area they personally identify as comprising the "Finger Lakes." A total of 56 people responded to the request. The graphic below (figure 2) depicts a heat map that shows both the percentage and number of individual respondents in agreement that any particular location is a part of the "Finger Lakes" region. The pale-yellow portion of the map represents the area that respondents unanimously depicted as the Finger Lakes region. The color shifts to various shades moving outward, depicting increased variability in the responses and less group consensus.

What is the Finger Lakes Region? Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

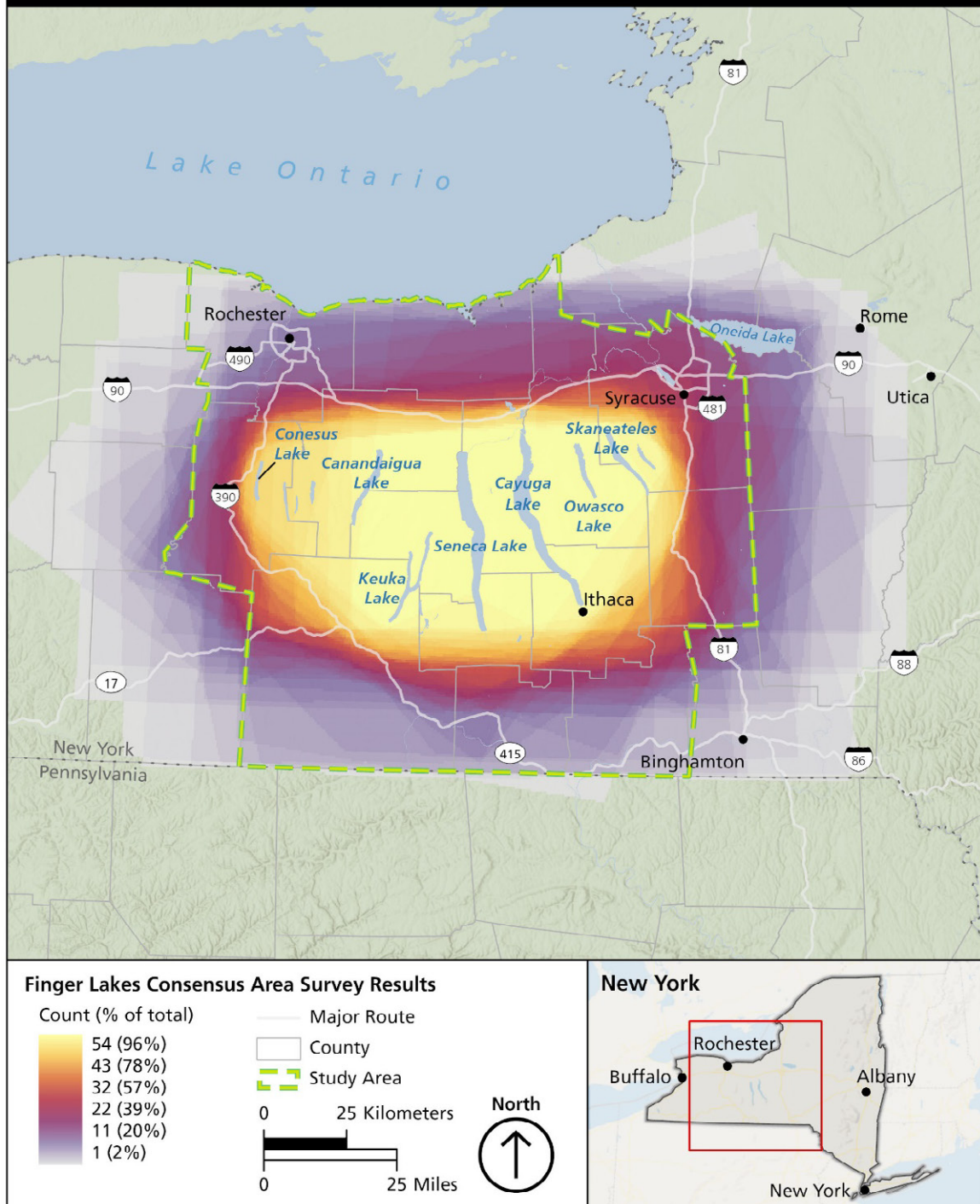
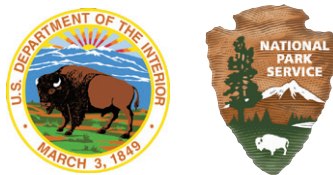


Figure 2. Mapped responses to the StoryMap interactive question, "What is the Finger Lakes Region?"



As the nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering sound use of our land and water resources; protecting our fish, wildlife, and biological diversity; preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historic places; and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to ensure that their development is in the best interests of all our people by encouraging stewardship and citizen participation in their care. The department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in island territories under US administration.

DSC 900/177004
August 2021

Back cover photo credit: Joshua House.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE • U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

.....
FINGER LAKES NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA • FEASIBILITY STUDY
.....

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED • AUGUST 2021

