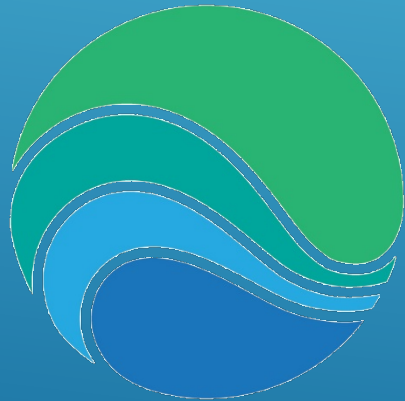


DISCOVER CAYUGA LAKE

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



*What If Everyone
Could Enjoy Our Lake?*



Making Our Lake part of Every Resident's life story.



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Since Discover Cayuga Lake launched the MV Teal on Cayuga Lake in 2018, our core youth programs- the *Floating Classroom*, *Trout in the Classroom* and the *Watershed Internship Program*- have provided a continuum of education and personal experiences for some 15,000 young people growing up in the Cayuga Watershed. We strive to keep these programs affordable and accessible, and during 2023 alone, our growing ecotourism program, in combination with community support, allowed us to provide nearly \$70,000 in financial assistance.

The educational program numbers you'll see in this report, however, only tell part of the story. Twenty years ago, one of our founders, Capt. Dennis Montgomery, asked, "What if everyone could enjoy this lake?" We've built a vision around that deceptively simple question; believing that effective education –the type that truly engages and nurtures the next generation of lake and climate champions- cannot happen unless our lake and streams are part of everyone's life story. If this makes sense to you, pause to consider how few people actually have access to our Finger Lakes. It is estimated that over 90% of "our" shorelines are privately held and inaccessible to others.

With these ideas in mind, we introduced a new mission statement during 2023, "*Cultivating informed and equitable relationships between people, and the waterways they depend upon.*" With an eye toward Cayuga Lake, naturally, we are working to offer not only education, but access and experiences of all types that will create the relationships that are a basis for education. For all Finger Lakes residents; all ages; all backgrounds.

MV Teal Entering Cayuga Lake from Mud Lock. Fall, 2017

Bringing Teal from NYC, through the Erie Canal was an experience that changed my life, and hopefully others. I hope this report offers a glimpse of what makes this work so special!

- Bill Foster, Executive Director.



OUR MISSION: To Cultivate Informed & Equitable Relationships between People and the Watersheds Upon Which They Depend.



The Cayuga Lake Watershed is our home and focus area, but we are available to communities throughout the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier. Our intention is to cultivate stronger relationships with our waterways by encouraging public access and providing experiences that both educate and open hearts to the beauty and value of these systems.

We weave the following values into our work:

1. **Sustainability:** Our work is rooted in 7th Generation principles, which require social, economic and environmental justice, and includes the right of all two-legged, four-legged, winged and finned beings to clean and healthy water now and in the future.
2. **Think Global, Act Local:** We emphasize the interconnected nature of all life, and the impact of our actions downstream and around the world.
3. **Collaboration:** We seek a diversity of perspectives and work to identify common interests. We seek opportunities to partner with sister organizations and strengthen our collective actions.
4. **Direct Experience:** Nature-based activities and hands-on learning are thus central to our programming, providing motivation to learn and the search for creative solutions.
5. **Hope, Optimism and Play:** We acknowledge that there is much suffering in the world, and seek to counter despair by encouraging all to pause, to celebrate, to wonder.

"We will love and respect only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught or allowed to experience."

- Baba Dioum,

OUR MISSION: To Cultivate Informed & Equitable Relationships between People and the Watersheds Upon Which They Depend.



“Informed & Equitable”. These words reflect our belief that, while watershed knowledge is critical, it is truly effective only when everyone can experience the resource. Our goal, therefore, is quite literally, to get everyone in our community onto the lake.

DCL offers a continuum of Community Access and Educational programs that encourage a sense of place and a sense of wonder for guests and learners of all ages and backgrounds. All are offered free of charge or with financial aid, thanks to our Cayuga Lake Community Fund.

Family Eco-Cruises. For our youngest learners family members.

Trout in the Classroom. Elementary and Middle Schools raise and release fish.

Floating Classroom. Middle and High School science and exploration on the lake.

Youth Crew & Internships. Paid career exploration and job training for older youth.

Community Sunset Cruises. For community members of all ages.

Lake Explorers Cruises. An introduction to citizen science on the lake.

DCL Policy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: DCL is committed as an organization to work toward becoming more diverse, equitable, and inclusive in its board, staff, interns, and programming in order to provide the most meaningful and engaging programs for all members of our community.

OUR MISSION: To Cultivate Informed & Equitable Relationships between People and the Watersheds Upon Which They Depend.



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Relationships. We strive to encourage everyone to think of these living, aquatic systems as part of their personal life story. How do we care for the lake; what does this place offer us? Do we feel a bond with this place?

Healthy human relationships are rooted in a range of personal experiences and emotions, as well as knowledge. For this reason, Discover Cayuga Lake programs include art, "Club Cayuga" music and dance cruises, and opportunities to get to know neighbors and colleagues on the lake. While climate change, HABs and Invasive Species are important calls to education and action, we also set aside time to celebrate our lake through **Hope, Optimism and Play**

"The climate crisis is complex, overwhelming and scary. We can approach it with fierce but gentle curiosity - instead of fear - so that we can keep our heart soft to care for the world, while sharpening our tools to dismantle what doesn't work and build what does."

- Qiyun Woo



Education & Access Programs for Our Watershed & Beyond

Discover Cayuga Lake offers the programs outlined on the following pages for residents in the Cayuga Lake Watershed, as well as communities throughout the Eastern Finger Lakes and Southern Tier.

During 2024, we anticipate working with every public school district in the Cayuga Lake Watershed via Trout in the Classroom, the Floating Classroom, or both.

We also work with schools from Cortland, Syracuse, Elmira and Binghamton on a regular basis. With the help of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, we are collaborating with watershed associations around Canandaigua, Owasco and Seneca Lakes to offer new and more consistent watershed education opportunities beyond the Cayuga Lake Watershed.



Floating Classroom Participant Communities: South Seneca, Southern Cayuga, Dryden, Trumansburg, Ithaca Middle Schools and several Elementary Schools, Union Springs, Cortland/Seven Valleys, Syracuse Bellevue ES and Nottingham HS; Greene, Elmira, Candor.



Trout in the Classroom Communities: South Seneca, Union Springs, Romulus, Geneva, Dryden, Trumansburg, Newfield, Groton, all eight Ithaca Elementary Schools, Lehman Alternative Community School, Eliz. Ann Clune Montessori, BOCES Smith School.



DCL Education Programs

The Floating Classroom

We are nearing our goal of providing one common experience – a cruise on the lake- for every student in the Cayuga Lake Watershed. In 2023, over 1200 students sailed with us, and we expect to increase that number to 1500 in 2024. All Floating Classroom programs are offered on a sliding fee basis to ensure that money is not a barrier. \$37,000 in “Youth Engagement Funding” was allocated to support schools and community groups wishing to join us on the lake during the past year!

DCL’s “flagship” education program, the **Floating Classroom**, offers a highly interactive experience on the Lake. Students are encouraged to think of themselves as “citizen-scientists”, recording observations for use by other classes and organizations. In fact, we depend on student data to help us understand and communicate the processes at work in Cayuga Lake.

Along with physical, chemical and biological science investigations, students explore the human and natural history of the lake to gain critical human context and a sense of place. DCL instructors draw from regional history and current watershed issues, such as climate change, harmful algal blooms or invasive species, to provide a foundation for inquiry-based learning.



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Hands on Water Sampling. From the basics to advanced technology, data is collected by students and volunteers.



Scientific Investigation. Middle school students explore the microscopic elements of lake ecology.



Sharing Results and Observations. Our goal is to encourage individual mastery and confident communication.

Trout in the Classroom.

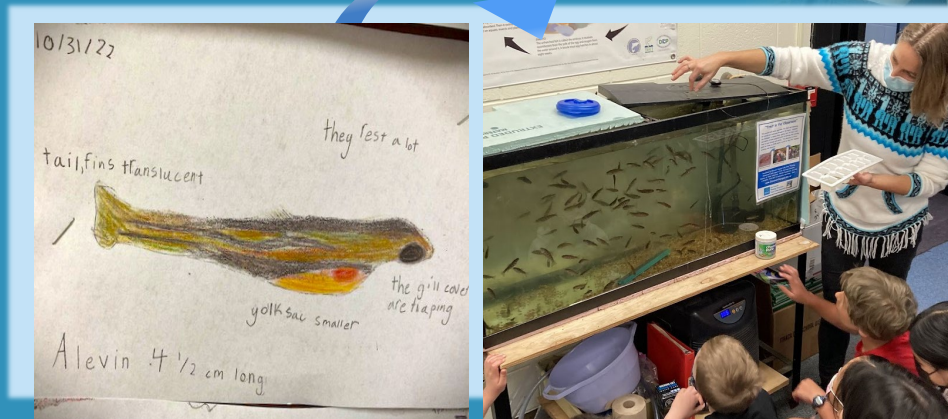
Discover Cayuga Lake coordinates the Finger Lakes "Trout in the Classroom" (TIC), a network of 20 schools, from Newfield to Geneva, sharing ideas and information as they raise trout over the span of six months.

Classes learn to maintain a cold-water aquarium system, and receive live trout eggs each fall. DCL staff visit classes monthly through the winter, provide technical support and facilitate field trips to local streams for every class each spring. During the 2022-2023 school year, 1400 students successfully raised and released trout!

Our thanks to our committed volunteers, and to the Leon Chandler Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the TRIAD Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife and the NY Dept. of Environmental Conservation, for providing financial assistance and technical support.

"MY STUDENTS ARE SO EXCITED. I RECEIVED A CALL FROM ONE STUDENT, WHO, UNFORTUNATELY WAS ON HER WAY TO THE HOSPITAL WITH PNEUMONIA. SHE WAS VERY WORRIED THAT SHE WOULD MISS SEEING THE TROUT EGGS HATCH!"

Liz McCheyne, So. Seneca Elementary



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Youth Employment & Internships.

Discover Cayuga Lake has created two important and related programs in order to provide a continuum of experiences for young people as their interests and abilities develop.

YOUTH CREW PROGRAM Every summer, DCL works with several youth service organizations* to provide paid employment opportunities on the Teal for teens seeking first-time employment experiences. Working in support of our adult interpretive crew provides important opportunities to exercise personal responsibility and to grow teamwork and other jobsite skills. Perhaps most importantly, teens working for DCL become accomplished speakers and presenters as they work with wide-ranging audiences onboard.

WATERSHED INTERNSHIP PROGRAM DCL is committed to providing administrative and financial support to partner organizations, to create a vibrant local environment for sustainability-related internships. During 2023, we hosted 4 college-aged interns onboard Teal, and supported 8 interns, posted at partner organizations. WIP participants gather weekly throughout the summer to learn how individuals and organizations work together in the interest of Watershed and Community resilience. The end result is an internship experience with broader context, and increasingly functional linkages between participating organizations.

More information is available at discovercayugalake.org/watershed-internship-program-cayuga-lake-internships/



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As a WIP intern, I gained real world work experience in a fun, experiential, and meaningful way. This experience allowed me to connect with like-minded people and learn about the local watershed, its characteristics, threats, and what can be done to protect it. – Wil Dewey, WIP Intern





DCL Education Programs

Community Access Cruise Series

Our Eco-Tourism Model allows us to provide a myriad of low cost, and free, programs to our community. From cruises aboard Teal to school-based programs to internships, we are engaging 1000s of local residents in the future of Cayuga Lake, and the Finger Lakes Region.

Providing access to Cayuga Lake for local residents of all ages is just as important to us as our educational programming. Throughout the cruise season, DCL offers a variety of weekly cruises which are free to the public. Our goal is to offer something for everyone in the community. Of course, we always appreciate supporting donations from those who are able. We have been encouraged by the amount of donations that community members give on these cruises.

Our goal is to offer something for everyone in the community. Community Access Cruises in 2023 included:

- **Family Eco-Cruises** - provided stories and wonder for 380 young learners and adult caretakers.
- **Lake Monitoring Cruises** - for over 300 aspiring citizen scientists.
- **Club Cayuga Sunset Cruises** - family-friendly music cruises for nearly 1000 residents.
- **Community Sunset Cruises** - with presentations by locals for nearly 1000 local adults interested in learning more about their lake.

"I appreciate how you reach out to all the segments of the community, and the diversity of activities that keep the community and tourists engaged."

- Alejandro Santana

The M/V Teal – A Boat for Everyone

The MV Teal was constructed in 1979, on Harker’s Island, North Carolina, and spent nearly 40 years on the Atlantic Coast before cruising the Erie Canal and landing in Cayuga Lake. Certified by the US Coast Guard with a capacity of 96 passengers, Teal is the largest vessel on Cayuga Lake. Our open deck layout accommodates a range of activities and allows Teal to accommodate guests with a range of abilities and mobility challenges.

As you might imagine, DCL invests a good deal of energy in maintaining our “flagship”. Teal’s wooden hull construction features juniper planking over oak framing. She is powered by highly reliable twin Detroit 6-71 diesel engines. This versatile combination offers day to day reliability. However, regular maintenance is critical and total annual upkeep is estimated at \$50,000.

Looking ahead- we’re excited by the prospect of building a coalition of business and community stakeholders in 2024 who are interested in leading the Finger Lakes into a post-combustion future. As Teal ages, she will become increasingly expensive, not to mention outdated, as our planet strives to move beyond fossil fuels. DCL will begin planning this year to replace Teal with an alternative-powered vessel as soon as 2028.

Teal is so much more than “just a boat” for us. Every day brings a surprise as I watch our crew educating students, mentoring interns and presenting our lake and our work to guests from all over the world.

- Master Captain Mike Willard.



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Tourism with a Mission.

DCL's mission & business model center on the concept of eco-tourism, emphasizing not only engaging and **informative** cruises for visitors, but also action on behalf of the environment and the delivery of benefits to local residents. Our model is well supported by our local tourism partners, and receives great reviews from tourists and community members alike.

Our success can be measured in our ability to generate eco-tourism revenue to bring benefits back to our community. DCL has been able to invest an increasing amount revenue toward school programs, free community cruises and paid internships every year. In 2019, we allocated \$4,000 in ecotourism revenue to our **education and community access programs**. Today, that value has grown to well over \$50,000.

Our suite of revenue-generating Public Eco-Cruises (and Charters) include:

- Osprey Eco-Cruises
- Fall Foliage Eco-Cruises
- Night Sky Cruises
- Sunset Cruises

Our guests to enjoy time on the lake while learning about the culture and natural history of our unique area from our experienced and knowledgeable interpretive crew. Interns and youth crew member are also often on board, sharing information about their home watershed and learning about the tourism business.

I really cannot recommend this tour more highly. The staff was super friendly, and incredibly knowledgeable. We really learned a lot about the lake, it's history and it's geology. This is a "must do" while in Ithaca! – John J.

DCL's work intersects the non-profit, education, eco-tourism and community service sectors. We hope to provide leadership in creating an increasingly vibrant and cohesive community focused around Cayuga Lake.

- Astrid Jirka, Director of Tourism & Outreach.



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2023 Season Summary of Tourism Impacts



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Public Cruises & Charters:

- 11,000 guests took a cruise on the Teal in 2023
- 1/3 local residents ; 2/3 Regional visitors

\$50,000+ in revenue & donations from these cruises was used to support our Education & Community Access Programs

- 2500 locals on the lake for Community Access Cruises
- 3200 students enjoying our Floating Classroom Programs
- 16 paid internships & youth employment positions

Donations



Eco-Tourism



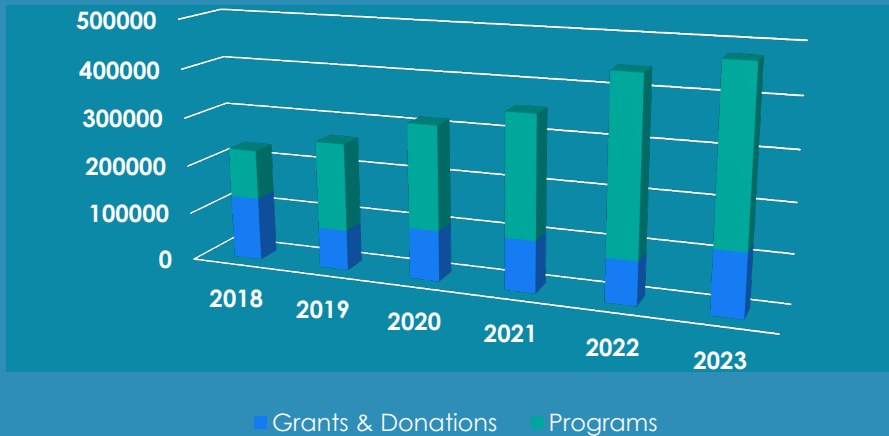
Accessible Programs



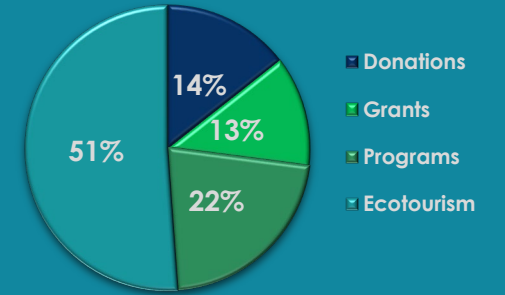
DCL has Grown to Serve a Need...

Discover Cayuga Lake launched the MV Teal in 2018 as a project of the nonprofit Center for Transformative Action. DCL has operated as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation since 2020. The Executive Director, under the oversight of our Board of Directors, procures and allocates funds and services, in keeping with DCL's mission and values. Steady growth in our programming and eco-tourism revenue affirms our view that there is a demand for the education, access and eco-tourism services provided by our staff.

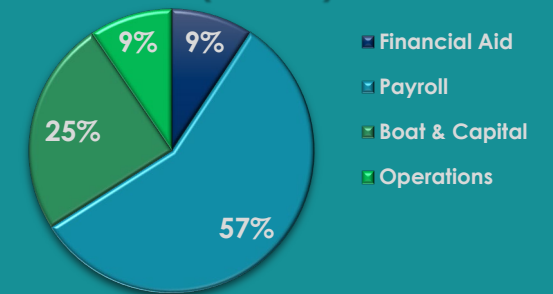
DCL Revenue (Actual) 2018 to 2023



DCL Revenue - 2023 (DRAFT)



DCL Expenses - 2023 (DRAFT)



... and Planning to Meet a Growing Need.

Climate change, an expanding regional population, and numerous other factors will place increasing stress on our natural systems in the not-so-distant future, and we expect a growing need for Watershed resilience, based on informed and equitable relationships between our people and their waterways. At the same time, we are recognizing limits to DCL's ability to meet that demand in its present form. Plans are underway now for new collaborations, expanded programming and a new, carbon-neutral commercial vessel! We hope you will keep track of our progress and join us on this exciting journey!



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WHO IS Discover Cayuga Lake?

Our Board of Directors....



Steve Kress, President



Capt. Paul Flagg



Laura Winter Falk, Secretary



Auguste Duplan, MD



Ron Van Ormer, Treasurer



Michelle Hallock



Carole Erslev



Brooke Burnett

Our Educators & Crew

Bill Foster, Executive Director
Astrid Jirka, Director of Tourism Initiatives
Michael Willard, Teal Master Captain

Katie Barnhill
Felicia Ansty
Sandy Dutkowski
Capt. Alan Green
Takoda Warner

April Taylor
Vito Brancato
Hana Pandori
Capt. Stephanie Gray
Jacoba Taylor

Our Volunteers

Shelley Blackler
Ken Kempfues
Bob Walters

Phil Koons
Sharon Howrey

Our Special Thanks...



To departing board members, Tom Vawter, Lynn Leopold and Candace Cornell, for their many years of hard work and dedication!

Our Community!



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To Our Partners & Supporters... Thank You!

In keeping with our guiding value of collaboration, we partner with dozens of local and regional organizations each year. We could not serve our community without them!

Partners & Supporting Organizations, Communities & Foundations

Cayuga Foundation	Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
West Shore Neighborhood Association	City of Ithaca Water Department
Community Science Institute	Finger Lakes Regional Parks
Greater Ithaca Activities Center	Ithaca Youth Bureau
The Friendship Fund	Lane Family Fund
Park Foundation	Sheldrake Winery
Southside Community Center	Stormwater Coalition of Tompkins Co.
Tompkins Co. Strategic Tourism Board	TRIAD Foundation
Trout Unlimited, Leon Chandler Chr.	Wells College
Community Foundation of Tompkins Co.	Groundswell Center for Food & Farming
NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation	Sustainable Finger Lakes
US Fish & Wildlife Service	Paddle'n'More

& Member Communities of the Cayuga Lake Inter-municipal Organization!

Our thanks, also, to our many, many Cayuga Lake Community Fund donors! And, to several particularly generous individuals who wish to remain anonymous, but you know who you are! Together, all of you helped us meet our goal of \$54,000 in donations during 2023!

We could never have arrived at this moment without the support of community members, and Tompkins County's forward-thinking tourism and business community. As well, we could never have accomplished any of this without the support of teachers and educational sponsors in our community. Here's to a bright future!



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