



Tugs of all shapes and sizes line the docks at the Waterford Tugboat Roundup. Some used for pleasure, some hard at work, some just for the fun of it (like the tiny kayak-based "mini tug" pictured at center). But all pay homage to centuries of maritime heritage.



Visitors to the Waterford Tugboat Roundup pass by a host of interesting exhibits, vendors and other displays, just across the docks from the boats.



Still going strong: Lock 2 on the Erie Canal dumps water to prepare for a westbound vessel to enter. These engineering marvels made possible inland marine transportation, helping shape the USA into a great industrial power.

Tugboat Roundup Turns 20 – Celebrating the Working Vessels of The Waterways

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20 years ago, a group of enthusiastic volunteers created an event dedicated to tugboats and other vessels which toil along our rivers and canals to efficiently transport goods and raw materials to their destinations. America became a great nation in large part due to the ease at which such transport could be conducted far into the country's interior, a feat made possible by the then-advanced technology which tamed wild rivers, dredged through rock and marshes, and produced the Erie Canal. By 1999, a new century was dawning, much of the perceived need for tugs on upstate waterways had dried up due to alternatives such as rail transport and the New York State Thruway, so a tribute to the tugs and the sailors who operated them was a great way to salute our maritime heritage, showcasing those hard-working vessels.

The Waterford Tugboat Roundup (www.tugboatroundup.com) has done far more than that, however. By keeping maritime transport in the public eye, it has helped demonstrate that even today there are great uses for tugs and barges in delivering cargoes to inland locations that would be far more difficult (and expensive!) to do on a train or highway. Thanks to rising energy and land-based infrastructure costs and public outcry for environmentally-sustainable practices, the marine industry has gotten a second look. Demand for water transportation is on the rise, and the tugboats of the Roundup are very busy throughout the year serving their customers and making deliveries.

The 20th Anniversary Roundup will be held Friday-Sunday, September 6-8, 2019, as always right at the docks at the Richard M. Hurst Harbor Center (1 Tugboat Alley, Waterford, NY 12188).

The Roundup is a wonderful festival, filled with exhibits, vendors, food, music, and some of the best fireworks in upstate New York (Saturday night, weather permitting). The event begins with a tugboat parade from Albany to Waterford Friday afternoon, and tours of many of the tugs will be available all through the weekend. Sunday morning is also the Tugboat Chug 5k, which raises money for local charities. Waterford itself is a unique place – The Town (founded in 1816) contains America's oldest continuously incorporated Village, founded in 1794, the historic engineering wonder of the Waterford Flight of 5 locks, Revolutionary War emplacements put in place by Thaddeus Kosciuszko in case the Battle of Saratoga had gone poorly, great restaurants, interesting shops, kayak rentals, and more.

For more information on the Waterford Tugboat Roundup, upstate waterway events and other upstate New York attractions, call (518) 371-3763, visit www.southernSaratoga.org or stop by the Southern Saratoga Information Center (at the Exit 9 Rest Area on I-87).



Twin sisters Margot and Frances spearhead the NYS Marine Highway Transportation Co's fleet (www.nysmarinehighway.com). These vessels do most of the heavy lifting on the canals these days, and were designed for such use. Their pilothouses can lower to go under those bridges made famous by the "Erie Canal Song" over a century ago.