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NEWS RELEASE

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I Love My Park Day Partners Encourage New Yorkers to Give Back *Volunteers sought for more than 100 events across the Empire State on May 7* *AT&T announces major contribution to annual event*

(Poughkeepsie, NY) Elected officials join Parks & Trails New York and representatives from AT&T at the Walkway Over the Hudson today to encourage all New Yorkers to register to volunteer on Saturday, May 7, 2016 for the statewide I Love My Park Day.

Coordinated jointly by Parks & Trails New York, a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization, and State Parks with support from Governor Cuomo, I Love My Park Day is a statewide event to improve and enhance New York's parks and historic sites and bring visibility to the entire park system's needs. More than 100 state parks and historic sites will participate in every region of the state, from Long Island to Buffalo, from the Southern Tier to the Thousand Islands, from the Hudson Valley to Lake Champlain.

“New York State is a leader in parks and conservation because of a long history of stewardship and generosity of private citizens,” said Parks & Trails New York Executive Director Robin Dropkin. “I Love My Park Day gives us a great chance to do our part, by helping out at the parks we love.”

Since its inaugural year, I Love My Park Day has tripled in size and impact. The fifth annual I Love My Park Day is expected to draw 7,000 volunteers across the state. Volunteers of every age and walk of life will roll up their sleeves to clean up park lands and beaches, plant trees and gardens, restore trails and wildlife habitat, and remove invasive species. These efforts will bring real, tangible enhancements to New York's treasured outdoor spaces, keeping them beautiful and inviting to the more than 65 million people who visit the state park system each year.

“Our state parks and historic sites can't thrive without dedicated partners and broad public support,” State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey said. “I Love My Park Day is a great way for citizens to show their support for New York's wonderful park system. I'm grateful to all of the partners who make I Love My Park Day a great success.”

I Love My Park Day would not be possible without the support of statewide sponsors and partners. AT&T, a Premier Sponsor of the event, has contributed more than \$35,000 over the last three years to support I Love My Park Day.

“New Yorkers love their parks, and it's not a surprise that ‘I Love My Park’ Day has grown exponentially in size since its inception in 2012,” said Marissa Shorenstein, president of AT&T New

York. “AT&T salutes the good work of the thousands of volunteers who will pitch in at more than 100 parks across the state, cleaning beaches and shorelines, improving trails, painting fences, clearing debris and making parks more accessible.”

The support for I Love My Park Day grows out of AT&T’s commitment to advancing education, strengthening communities and improving lives. Through its community initiatives, AT&T has a long history of investing in projects that create learning opportunities; promote academic and economic achievement; or address community needs. AT&T Aspire is AT&T’s signature philanthropic initiative that drives innovation in education by bringing diverse resources to bear on the issue including funding, technology, employee volunteerism, and mentoring. Through Aspire, AT&T has passed the \$250 million mark on its plan to invest \$350 million in education from 2008-2017 and is using the power of its network to build a better tomorrow.

“The investment in I Love My Park Day by our sponsors and partners is inspiring. We are especially grateful for the steadfast support of AT&T in the success of I Love My Park Day,” said Dropkin.

“Seeing how much the public loves their state parks and historic sites is nothing short of inspiring,” said State Parks Taconic Regional Director Linda Cooper. “State Parks is grateful for the services our volunteers provide for us on I Love My Park Day and throughout the year. Our gratitude is also extended to Parks & Trails New York, AT&T and others who help make this event a reality each May.”

Taconic Regional Parks Commissioner Arthur L. Gellert added, “I Love My Park Day is the finest example of the partnership among the public, private, not-for-profit and corporate sectors. It represents a growing pride in our parks and historic sites, as they represent the best of our state’s recreation and cultural venues. On behalf of my fellow Parks Commissioners of the Taconic Region, I congratulate and thank all those who will make May 7 a great success.”

Other major sponsors include Premier Sponsor American Express and Champion Sponsors Harney & Sons Fine Teas, Consolidated Edison, and Brookfield.

This year’s event includes new partnerships with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the National Park Service, with volunteer events planned at four locations in the Adirondack and Catskill regions of the state and at five national parks in New York State. The New York State Commission National and Community Service is joining the effort again this year to help recruit volunteers, promote the initiative and provide support to projects across the state. Also contributing this year are members of the New York State Excelsior Conservation Corps, a new statewide New York State AmeriCorps program initiated by Governor Cuomo and run by the Student Conservation Association.

“The Commission on National and Community Service has been happy to support ‘I Love My Park Day’ since its inception,” said Linda Cohen, the Commission’s Executive Director. “With the establishment of the Excelsior Conservation Corps, we are now in a position to enhance our contributions in the form of AmeriCorps members whose service is dedicated to conservation and environmental stewardship, as the Governor envisioned when the Excelsior Corps was created.”

At the Walkway Over the Hudson, volunteers will enhance the entrance to the park and make it more welcoming by building a new rock wall and flower bed around the west-side entrance sign, trimming vegetation and cleaning up around the Metro North parking lot, and cleaning up the shoreline along Fallkill Creek and the Hudson River.

Walkway Over the Hudson Executive Director Elizabeth Waldstein-Hart said, “I Love My Park Day perfectly highlights the powerful partnership that exists between New York State, nonprofit advocacy organizations like Parks & Trails New York, the business community, and the Walkway organization’s dedicated corps of volunteer Ambassadors. These collaborations have helped make Walkway State Park a remarkable success since it opened in 2009 and they continue to contribute to our ongoing efforts to improve the Park.”

Senator Sue Serino said, “Here in the Hudson Valley, our parks and historic sites are so much of what makes us unique,” said Senator Serino. “To see hundreds of local volunteers coming together, taking time out of their busy schedules to make them a priority is an incredible experience. I look forward to being a part of ‘I Love My Park Day’ this year and I hope that we see even more volunteers coming out to support their favorite local park or historic site.”

Senator George Amedore said, "We are so fortunate throughout the 46th Senate District, and all of New York State, to have access to beautiful parks and recreational opportunities. I encourage everyone to get out, volunteer, and enjoy the wonderful natural resources we are surrounded by."

Assemblyman Frank Skartados said, “Our parks are integral to the New York State experience, and they help make it a great place to live. Every park has its own unique qualities and affords tourists and natives alike the opportunity to camp, boat, fish, and enjoy nature. I’m grateful to live near our crown jewel, the Walkway Over the Hudson, which offers one of the state’s most alluring panoramic views – and I’m especially grateful for the volunteers who protect and maintain this natural treasure.”

For the fourth annual event last spring, 6,500 volunteers took part in more than 200 cleanup, improvement and beautification projects at 95 state parks and historic sites, contributing 16,000 hours of volunteer service.

To register to volunteer for the fifth annual I Love My Park Day, visit www.ptny.org/ilovemypark.

Parks & Trails New York is the state’s leading advocate for parks and trails, working since 1985 to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for use and enjoyment by all. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

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