



## PTNY's Summer of Love... for Greenways!

Parks & Trails New York's supported opportunities to explore New York's greenways are growing into a laundry list... and we're not complaining!

From July to September, PTNY welcomed over 1,000 cyclists— young and old, experienced and newbie—out on the trail with us. Anchored by our tried-and-true favorite, [Cycle the Erie Canal](#) celebrating its 25th anniversary, we added a tour of Long Island, a [bike-to-your-park day](#), and our new north-south Empire State Trail adventure: [Cycle the Hudson Valley](#).

You've probably heard of the "summer of love," but have you heard of the summer of bike tour love? We're working on making it "a thing."

We're so grateful for the traveling communities our tours create—from a one-day Long Island ramble to the eight-day adventure of Cycle the Erie Canal, we've got a "right sized" option for everyone to gather with fellow enthusiasts from across the globe. But did you know that our tours started with a dedicated focus on advocacy?

When CTEC launched in 1999 it welcomed a small group of dedicated bike lovers fighting for a truly connected and contiguous Erie Canalway Trail... and we've seen a lot of success! But there is still **so much** to be done. As many joining us on Cycle the Hudson Valley or our Bike for the Long Island Greenway rides noted: we've got a great system of greenways, but there are some big gaps to be addressed.

From on-road sections that aren't safe or comfortable for many, to lack of connectivity to underserved areas and other regional trail networks, we're committed to fighting for a more equitable and truly connected network of greenways providing all New Yorkers the opportunity to enjoy one of the nation's fastest-growing and best-loved outdoor recreational activities.

**"THANK YOU FOR ANOTHER  
AWESOME BEAUTIFUL  
SUPPORTED CYCLING  
EXPERIENCE!" -CTHV Cyclist**

And there's no better time to expand our vision for New York's green future. With our State Parks Centennial coming up in 2024 (you *know* we'll be celebrating!), we've got a laser focus on the future of our public green spaces. So "watch this space" for the rollout of some BIG statewide projects...

We can't wait to fight with you in 2024—and beyond—to build the best greenspace network in the nation, for every New Yorker now and for the generations to come.





# 100 Years of Public Green Space and Beyond...

If you've been keeping up with PTNY's writing—or the news—you know just how important our public green spaces have been through and post-pandemic. You also might be aware that we are struggling to keep state funding on par with visitation numbers.

Last year, New York's parks and public lands saw a record-breaking 79+ million visits; that's 5 times more than visits to Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Rocky Mountain National Park... combined. Even now, with the pandemic in retreat, the tide of hikers, bikers, and newly-minted nature lovers continues to grow. And that's only the numbers we know. All information points to greater numbers of visitors and locals flocking to our state public lands and greenways.

Never before have New York's parks, trails, and public lands been more important. And isn't being important what most of us would like to have on our birthdays?

Like the State Parks tagline, PTNY will "see you out there" to celebrate our public lands' Centennial for *all* of 2024. But, if you know us well, you know just enjoying our public green spaces isn't enough for the PTNY Team. Where there's need, we'll be rolling up our proverbial (or literal) sleeves.

While we're deep in celebration of our public lands, we're also facing an incredibly tough budget year in 2024. It is unfortunate that, when we should be investing in an even greater Parks System for the next 100 years, we're instead worried about securing funding to begin addressing the **\$3.5 billion backlog** in necessary capital funding to keep our system healthy, safe, and welcoming for all.

***"As we near the 2024 Centennial, we remember the vital role of investing in our State Parks for a better future." –NYS Senator Bill Weber***

**PTNY knows—bone deep—that our public lands are not "nice to haves;" they are critical to our public, environmental, and economic health.** It is, perhaps, not a coincidence that close to 100 years ago the nation was facing dire financial times—and answered with the prioritization of funding publicly accessible green spaces.

The Great Depression shook our nation and communities to the core, but an amazing silver lining created was the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps: a group that built lasting infrastructure like the stone benches at Letchworth that we still use today (and a recipient of a PTPG grant!). In times like these, ensuring our public green spaces are there for health and comfort is key... not to mention the incredibly important economic impacts they have from small towns to New York State as a whole.

That's why PTNY is fighting to keep some of our best-loved (and most-used historically) public lands open for all New Yorkers. Our goal for 2024 is a \$500m special Centennial Year capital injection to bring the state's most popular facilities back to a state of good repair. Spots like the beach at Lake Sebago and the eastern bathhouse at Jones Beach need to be available for our communities now... and into the next 100 years.

Much like that time close to 100 years ago, when we come together we can accomplish anything. So while we will be celebrating our flannels off next year, we'll ALSO be fighting for equity, access, and building a lasting legacy of safe, beautiful public green spaces for all New Yorkers. The PTNY Centennial party might involve work, but it will be full of celebration too. And the door is open and everyone is welcome!





# PTNY & Guests Honor a Legacy Etched Across the State



2023 has been a year of many changes for the Parks & Trails New York Team. We've seen the retirement and passing of our long-time Executive Director, Robin Dropkin, the amazing outpouring of support from our dedicated community and partners, and the excitement of growth that liminal times always bring.

Change can be difficult, and loss is never easy, but we've got an amazing foundation—created and guided by Robin's years of dedication—to build upon. And build we are.

Robin had many critical accomplishments, and if you've been out recently visiting our greenway trails or public lands, chances are you've enjoyed some of her impacts without even knowing it. So it's no surprise that some of New York's premiere public lands lovers joined us at our [2023 George W. Perkins Reception](#) honoring her life and legacy.

From Senator Jose Serrano (dedicated green space advocate and lovely person) to Parks Commissioner Erik Kuleseid and Carol Ash, former Commissioner and current Board Chair for the Palisades Parks Conservancy, there were no shortage of stories illuminating Robin's lasting impacts for our parks, trails, and public lands. Judy Mower, former PTNY Board Chair, spoke to Robin's specific brand of stoic kindness, humility, and "leading from the back."

And the room was packed! We can't say how grateful we were to join with our green space community; it would be impossible (at least in this newsletter!) to list luminaries convening to honor Robin. Like the launch of our first ever Robin Dropkin Legislative Leadership Award—presented to Sen. Serrano for his massive dedication to extending the crucial benefits of green space for all New Yorkers—the Perkins Reception was a celebration and evolution.

Attendees were entertained and engaged by current PTNY ED, Paul Steely White, and his vision for the future of PTNY—and its impact on our public lands system. From anchoring our trails work to data-driven approaches to equity and access, to fighting for critical capital funding for our public lands, Paul painted a picture of the next steps in PTNY's growth... and we were envisioning with him.

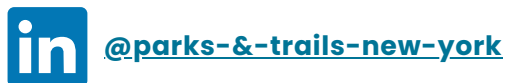
So get ready for some big moves in the new year... and the many years to come. We're so excited to honor the past and grow the future with you!







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## PTNY's Future: Equity, Access, and Building a Lasting Legacy

- ✓ Empire State Trail 2.0 & Parks Centennial: cutting-edge data for visitation accuracy & anchoring equity
- ✓ Funding for critical infrastructure at popular but ailing state park resources
- ✓ Funding for maintenance and expansion of our greenways network
- ✓ Illustrating the outsized economic impact of investing in our public lands: new report to be released in early 2024

