



2017 Legislative Priorities



About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York is the leading statewide organization working to preserve and enhance a network of parks, trails and greenways for all New Yorkers for generations to come. Since 1985, we have been dedicated to improving our health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space.

Parks & Trails New York has worked with hundreds of community organizations and municipalities to envision, create, promote, and protect a growing network of parks and more than 1,500 miles of greenways, bike paths, and trails throughout New York State. Our influential reports and advocacy efforts have been critical to keeping parks and historic sites open and protecting New York's natural, recreational, cultural and historical resources.

For more information, visit www.ptny.org.



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Keeping the Momentum Going

From the glorious beach parks on Long Island to the delightful waterfall parks in the Finger Lakes to the cross-state Erie Canalway Trail—and hundreds of other parks and trails throughout the state—New York's outdoor gems are destinations and significant drivers of the state's economic engine.



*Robin Dropkin
Executive Director
Parks & Trails New York*

Thanks to the commitment of the Governor and Legislature, state parks, under the Governor's visionary NY Parks 2020 plan, are in the midst of an unprecedented renaissance, with five straight years of significant capital funding to build and restore visitor centers, bath houses and other critical infrastructure.

More than 80% complete, the Erie Canalway Trail (ECT) continues to grow. Soon a completed ECT will be connected to fully-developed Champlain Canalway Trail and Hudson River Greenway to create the Empire State Trail, a 750-mile super trail that links NYC to the Canadian border, and Albany to Buffalo.

Closing the Gaps in the Canalway Trail system has been a priority for PTNY for more than a decade. Now, we see that dream coming to fruition, plus more! The Empire State Trail will be a legacy for future generations of New Yorkers.

More and more, parks, trails and greenways are being recognized for the essential role they play in New York's economic growth, the health of its residents, and the long-term resiliency and sustainability of its communities. Let's keep the momentum going!

As we have been doing for more than 30 years, PTNY looks forward to working with Governor Cuomo and legislators to enhance New York's role as a national leader in the protection, promotion and enhancement of parks, trails and greenways, and to ensure that these natural, recreational and cultural treasures are an integral part of the state's economic, transportation, health, and environmental strategies.

State Parks

Protect and revitalize state parks for future generations

- Support continued NY Parks 2020 annual capital investment of \$90 million to restore and rebuild state parks' aging and dilapidated infrastructure.
- Begin to put OPRHP's operations budget on an upward trajectory so that our state parks and historic sites can more fully realize their potential as destinations and economic engines for local communities.

Statewide Trail Network

Celebrate the bicentennial of the Erie Canal by completing the Erie Canalway Trail, the nation's longest multi-use trail, enhancing its appeal as a premier destination for outdoor recreation and heritage tourism

- Support the Empire State Trail vision which provides funding to build a 750-mile multi-use trail network to connect New York City to the Canadian border, and Buffalo to Albany. This vision responds to PTNY's longstanding call to Close the Gaps in the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails with trail enhancements and new trail construction in both corridors, as well as proposing a fully-connected trail network in the Hudson Valley.





Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

Support a fully funded and sustainable EPF

- Support a \$300 million appropriation for the EPF, building on the historic commitment made in last year's state budget, securing New York's position of national leadership, and addressing environmental needs across the state, including: land acquisition for trail corridors and parks; municipal parks and waterfront revitalization grants, which fund many local park and trail projects; and state land stewardship and public access to state parks, historic sites, and state forest lands and recreation facilities.
- Unlock the potential of grassroots Friends groups that support and strengthen state parks and historic sites with a third round of \$500,000 for the NYS Park and Trail Partnership Program.
- Provide state agencies responsible for administering the EPF and implementing important programs that protect our shared environment and public health with sustainable funding to meet existing needs.

Trails & Active Transportation

Strengthen local economies, promote public health, and increase clean transportation options

- Establish a dedicated, state funding source to build infrastructure that supports bicycling such as multi-use trails and on-street bicycle treatments.
- Strengthen the Complete Streets Act that since 2011 has required the State, counties and localities to consider all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists, in undertaking transportation projects utilizing state and federal funding, by eliminating the existing exemption for resurfacing, maintenance and pavement recycling projects.
- Incorporate funding mechanisms for active transportation (biking/walking) infrastructure and policies that support greater use of non-motorized transportation into climate change resiliency planning at all levels.
- Bring greater transparency to the NYS Department of Transportation's capital planning process to increase accountability and encourage a more equitable distribution of funding between all travel modes, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.



Local Parks

Enact legislation to protect communities from a loss of parkland

- Establish a more rigorous process for the taking of parkland, or park “alienation,” that holds government accountable and provides transparency. Legislation should include:
 - » A requirement that all alienation legislation includes a detailed description of the parcel to be alienated and the replacement parkland;
 - » A requirement that alienation authorization not become effective until a municipality has first acquired and dedicated replacement parkland. When replacement parkland is not available, dedication of an amount equal to, or greater than, the fair market value of the alienated property must be dedicated for park improvements;
 - » A process to track alienation actions once they have been approved;
 - » Provisions for enforcement of the terms of the alienation.

Local Stewardship

Remove obstacles to volunteerism

- Support the creation of a standard, universal registration form for volunteers working on lands owned and managed by DEC, OPRHP and the Canal Corporation, and remove complicated permitting processes, the requirement that long-term volunteers register each year, and fees for volunteer registration.

Increase recreational opportunities

- Expand the number and kinds of recreational uses that are covered by the Recreational Use Statute in order to provide increased recreational opportunities throughout the state.
- Encourage park and trail development by extending liability protection for recreational use to landowners of railroad and utility corridors.

Federal Priorities

- Increase funding for active transportation, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, safety programming, and research, in a new federal transportation bill.
- Provide full, dedicated, permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at \$900 million.
 - » Make permanent the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership grant program to provide funding to create and revitalize urban parks.
- Develop roll-on service for bicycles on Amtrak trains, supporting trail-related tourism and the restaurants, lodging and other businesses in communities that serve cyclists.
- Implement a national Complete Streets standard.
- Improve the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians by setting specific goals and performance measures.
- Support new funding mechanisms for Complete Streets and encourage funding equity in low-income communities.
- Support local control of federal transportation funding.



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