



Parks & Trails New York Announces Support for “Open Spaces for All” Plan

Statewide plan outlines recommendations to better connect people to nature

ALBANY, NY (OCTOBER 13, 2022)— Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is pleased to support *Open Spaces for All*, a report issued by the Open Space Institute (OSI), in partnership with the New York Outdoor Recreation Coalition (NYORC), of which PTNY is a member. The *Open Spaces for All* report presents a comprehensive set of state-level recommendations designed to improve equity and access to parks and other open spaces for residents and visitors of New York State. The full report can be viewed at:

www.openspaceinstitute.org/research/openspacesforall.

Informed by a two-year process which included surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder engagement, *Open Spaces for All* identifies structural and societal barriers that hinder access and enjoyment of public parks, green spaces, open spaces, and other outdoor amenities for people of color, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and other under-represented or marginalized groups.

The plan presents state-level guidance for policies, programs, initiatives, and creative partnerships to engage and support a growing and increasingly diverse constituency of open space users. *Open Spaces for All* guidance includes:

- **Engaging and empowering communities and community partners.**
- **Prioritizing equity at the forefront of future park and open space investments.**
- **Building support and capacity for implementation of recommendations and improvements.**
- **Engagement of Indigenous peoples on issues of access, equity, and historical preservation, and honoring and protecting their unique connection to the land.**

The plan is intended to serve the state’s leaders, recreation providers and land managers as well as the greater outdoor recreation industry, nonprofit organizations, community groups and open space partners.

“*Open Spaces for All* is the first state-level plan in the nation solely dedicated to addressing issues of equitable access to the outdoors,” said Kim Elliman President and CEO, OSI. “This report delivers a blueprint for strategic investment in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice as critical components for New York’s magnificent open spaces. *Open Spaces for All* will catalyze

meaningful change toward future policies, programs, and initiatives grounded in equity, representation, and inclusion.”

“*Open Spaces for All* is charting a course for our country that considers sustainability of our public lands as a matter of both infrastructure and equitable access to the outdoors. At REI we believe a life outside is a life well lived, and that it is our responsibility to remove the barriers to entry that so many marginalized communities across the United States experience. We are proud to be a part of this important project and will continue to invest in its evolution and implementation in the future,” said Melissa Abramson, REI National Field Manager and Co-Chair, NYORC.

“Ensuring all New Yorkers are aware of and have access to State lands is integral to equitable state land management and the *Open Spaces for All* plan complements DEC’s ongoing efforts to ensure access to these treasured areas for visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to enjoy—particularly those who have experienced barriers to enjoying public lands,” said State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos. “DEC is grateful to our partners at the Open Space Institute and the New York Outdoor Recreation Coalition for their continued commitment to working collaboratively to protect public lands and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience the beauty of New York’s natural resources.”

State Parks Commissioner Erik Kulleseid said, “I applaud the Open Space Institute and New York Outdoor Recreation Coalition for their important work to help more people fully enjoy the benefits of outdoor recreation. *Open Spaces for All* is full of strong ideas that bolster our agency’s commitment to equitable access to our State Parks. We look forward to working with stakeholders to advance these goals.”

“Parks & Trails New York is committed to supporting *Open Spaces for All* which maps out a clear plan for not only expanding visitation for all New Yorkers but, perhaps more importantly, making them feel welcome at our public lands,” said Executive Director, Robin Dropkin. “We look forward to continuing our work with our partners, Friends groups, and state agency leaders to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility initiatives that will help shape the future of our open spaces.”

The *Open Spaces for All* report was created by OSI in partnership with NYORC, with input from more than 200 individuals representing diverse social and economic identities, community groups, nonprofit organizations, businesses, existing users, thought leaders, non-traditional stakeholders, and government entities from across the state. The plan was guided by a steering committee composed of members from OSI, NYORC, Inclusive Woods and Us, New York New Jersey Trail Conference, Center for Diversity at SUNY Potsdam, REI, and Get Out and Trek. The report was made possible with generous support from the Laurance S. Rockefeller Fund, Overhills Foundation, Samuel Freeman Charitable Foundation, and an individual contributor. Research support and analysis was provided by Potrero Group.

About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York is New York's leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated since 1985 to improving our health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space.

With thousands of members and supporters across the state, PTNY is a leading voice in the protection of New York's magnificent state park system and the creation and promotion of more than 1,500 miles of greenways, bike paths, river walks, and trails.

About OSI

The Open Space Institute protects scenic, natural, and historic landscapes to provide public enjoyment, conserve habitat and working lands and sustain communities. Founded in 1974, initially, to protect significant landscapes in New York State, today, OSI has been a partner in the protection of over 2.3 million acres in the eastern US and Canada, from Quebec to Florida.

OSI has had a long and highly successful connection with New York's state parks, preserves and forests, having protected land that accounts for a full 10 percent of the state's parkland. Over the past 45 years, OSI has doubled the size of Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Fahnestock State Park, Moreau Lake State Park, and Thacher State Park. OSI has protected more than 60,000 acres in or adjacent to the Adirondack Park Preserve and nearly 25,000 acres within the Catskill Park. For the last decade, OSI has become the state's leading private partner raising capital dollars and undertaking capital projects at state parks and lands to foster public access and offer 21st century amenities.

About NYORC

Initiated in 2020, NYORC is the state's leading advocacy network dedicated to the promoting of equal access to outdoor recreation and the continued progression of recreation-focused issues in New York. NYORC shares information, provides networking opportunities, and supports issues raised by members that advance the coalition's principles.