



## NEWS RELEASE



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**New Yorkers call on Legislators to Continue Historic Revitalization of State Park System**  
***Grassroots groups travel to Albany to support state parks***

**Albany NY**—New Yorkers from across the state are coming together at the State Capitol on March 5, 2018 for the 12th annual Park Advocacy Day to urge policymakers to protect and preserve New York’s state parks. Representatives from more than 40 park Friends groups, environmental organizations, local parks, and educational organizations will make the case for state park funding. Parks & Trails New York and the Open Space Institute jointly organize Park Advocacy Day.

Park advocates will urge state lawmakers to support the Governor’s \$90 million capital investment in the state park system in this year’s state budget, and continue to support the Park and Trail Partnership Program, a grants program for Friends groups that support and strengthen the state’s parks, trails and historic sites.

Park supporters will also call upon legislators to include \$300 million for the state’s Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) as the Governor proposed in his Executive Budget. The EPF supports and protects parks by providing critical funding for stewardship, public access, open space land protection, and municipal parks. By supporting this historic investment in the EPF, legislators will enable the state to better meet current demands and make New York a national leader in conservation.

With leveraged funds, the state has invested more than \$700 million over the last six years, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) has been incrementally addressing an estimated \$1 billion in infrastructure needs and critical safety repairs. This has breathed new life into New York’s aging park system.

“Our state parks and historic sites are public treasures that belong to all New Yorkers,” said Parks & Trails New York Executive Director Robin Dropkin. “We appreciate the Governor’s continued commitment to rejuvenating New York’s state parks and historic sites and we applaud his historic commitment to New York’s Environmental Protection Fund. We look forward to working with the state legislature to ensure that our parks are restored to their full glory.”

“We are extraordinarily grateful to Governor Cuomo and the legislature for turning the fortunes of New York’s state park system and the spectacular natural and cultural treasures it contains,” said Erik Kulleseid, executive director of the Open Space Institute’s Alliance for New York State Parks program. “This significant and sustained infusion of resources is helping our parks assume their rightful place as sources of pride, community vitality and economic strength.”

Included in the Governor's budget proposal for the EPF is \$500,000 for the Park and Trail Partnership Program, a capacity-building grants program designed to increase the effectiveness, productivity, and volunteer and fundraising efforts of organizations that promote and support the state's parks, trails and historic sites.

The Program enhances park, trail and historic site stewardship by fostering local public/private partnerships and enabling small grassroots organizations to more effectively leverage multiple resources. These partnerships lead to greater economic benefits from outdoor recreation, improved access to outdoor resources, and healthier, more sustainable and resilient communities.

Funding for New York's park system also creates strong local jobs and helps to grow the state's economy while restoring and reinvigorating treasured state parks and historic sites. Visitation to State Parks has grown by 23% over the past 7 years. With now more than 71 million annual visitors, New York's state parks and historic sites are anchors of the state's regional tourism efforts, particularly in upstate communities.

According to an independent study commissioned by Parks & Trails New York, the state park system boosts the state's economy to the tune of nearly \$5 billion annually—a \$9-to-\$1 return on the state's investment, while creating and sustaining 45,000 jobs exclusive of state parks employees. The study also shows that about 21% of total visitor spending comes from visitors living outside the communities in which the parks are located.

Parks & Trails New York advocates statewide for New York's parks and trails and has been dedicated for over 30 years to improving New Yorkers health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space.

A program of the Open Space Institute, the Alliance for New York State Parks advocates for New York's state park system, strives to build an organized and effective public constituency for state parks, and seeks to create new public and private funding streams for state park programs and capital projects.

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