



NEWS RELEASE

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New Yorkers Call on Legislators to Continue Historic Revitalization of State Parks System

Grassroots travel to Albany to support state parks

ALBANY, NY—March 4, 2019—New Yorkers from across the state are coming together at the State Capitol on March 4th for the 13th annual Park Advocacy Day to urge policymakers to protect and preserve New York’s state parks. Nearly 80 representatives from more than 30 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 \$110 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 capacity-building 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 maintain the \$300 million for the state’s Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). The EPF supports and protects parks by providing critical funding for stewardship, public access, open space land protection, and municipal parks.

Thanks to Governor Cuomo’s ongoing Parks 2020 Initiative, New York’s state parks are undergoing a historic renaissance.

“We are extraordinarily grateful to Governor Cuomo and the legislature for transforming New York’s state park system and the spectacular natural and cultural treasures it contains,” said Kathy Moser, Open Space Institute’s Vice President of Parks and Policy. “This significant and sustained infusion of resources is helping our parks assume their rightful place as sources of pride, community vitality and economic strength.”

“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 applaud the Governor and the legislature for continuing to breathe new life into New York’s great outdoor places through their historic support of New York’s Environmental Protection Fund.”

Included in the Governor’s budget proposal for the EPF is \$1 million for the Park and Trail Partnership Program. The Program, with proposed funding for a 5th year, 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.

“Active and engaged grassroots organizations already contribute significantly to the stewardship of the state’s parks, trails and historic sites,” said Dropkin. “The Park and Trail Partnership Program complements the state’s historic investment in parks made through the Governor’s Parks 2020 initiative by enabling groups to leverage more private and federal funding and marshal more volunteer power.”

The state’s NY Parks 2020 initiative is investing \$900 million in private and public funding from 2011 to 2020. Investments in 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 New York State Parks continues to grow and has increased by 23 percent since 2011. With more than 71 million visitors in 2017, New York’s state parks and historic sites are anchors for the state’s regional tourism efforts, particularly in upstate communities.

According to a 2017 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 total spending by local and non-local visitors was about \$4 billion, with visitors spending money on park entrance and use fees, sporting equipment, food and drink, transportation, lodging, and other expenses.

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.

The Parks and Policy program of the Open Space Institute 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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