

# STATE AND LOCAL PARKS

New York has one of the largest and most diverse state park systems in the nation. A decade of reinvestment led to record visitation to our public lands. However, this increased use also highlights the need for continued investment and commitment; not only for state parks and historic sites, but public green spaces of all kinds, particularly in areas where opportunities for safe, local recreation are limited or non-existent.

## OUR VISION

- New York's State Parks system is properly and firmly funded to ensure it is protected and revitalized for future generations
- Grant opportunities and secure, long-term funding are made available for grassroots volunteer organizations that steward public green space to carry out necessary projects and programs at their sites
- Every resident is provided the opportunity to access a park within walking distance of their home
- Communities across the state are protected from the unjust loss of parkland by the creation of a standard review process for parkland alienation
- Obstacles to volunteerism are removed, including different volunteer agreements with different agencies, allowing non-profit organizations that support our state parks and public lands to more readily recruit volunteers, ensure volunteer opportunities are accessible for all New Yorkers, and establish a core group of individuals that support our state park system



# STATE AND LOCAL PARKS 2021 PRIORITIES

- **Maintain or expand State Parks' operations budget to ensure increased visitation needs are met**
  - Support OPRHP's operations budget at a level that allows state parks and historic sites to continue to realize their potential as treasured destinations and economic engines for local communities.
  - Provide state agencies responsible for administering the EPF and implementing important environmental and public health programming with sustainable operations funding.
- **Maintain capital investment and modernization programs**
  - Ensure adequate funding for capital investments to sustain the restoration and revitalization of State Parks' aging infrastructure, including supporting a visioning plan for state park and historic site expansions, updates, and construction in order to continue improving visitor experience, expanding recreation opportunities and rejuvenating deteriorating facilities.
- **Continue to amplify the impact of grassroots organizations that steward public green space through Park and Trail Partnership Grants**
  - Maintain the Park and Trail Partnership Grants at \$1 million to support projects to strengthen Friends groups and enhance public access, stewardship and recreational opportunities at state parks, historic sites, trails, and public lands across New York.
- **Continue to expose students to nature through the Connect Kids to Parks Grant Program**
  - Maintain the Connect Kids Grant Program at \$2 million to continue to unite students, especially youth from Title 1 communities, with nature and history via reimbursement for field trips to state and federal parks, forests, historic sites, fish hatcheries and other outdoor recreation areas.



# STATE AND LOCAL PARKS 2021 PRIORITIES

- **Create and expand opportunities for equitable access to parks for residents in underserved areas**
  - Support the development of a state-funded open space program which facilitates and provides for the acquisition, creation, expansion, improvement, conservation, and protection of open space areas in our cities and beyond.
- **Facilitate a more rigorous process for the taking of parkland, or park “alienation”**
  - Expedite the passage of legislation that creates a more stringent process for park alienation that holds local governments accountable and provides transparency, specifically as it relates to the acquisition of replacement land, adequate monitoring, and enforcement of approved projects.
- **Encourage green energy projects at parks while protecting natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities**
  - Support actions that expedite the siting of in-park, small, green energy facilities, where appropriate, that will help to make parks energy self-sufficient, offset the carbon imprint of parks and park users, and adaptively reuse for such purposes existing paved and built upon areas.
  - Make sure there are adequate protections to prevent such facilities from impairing the visual quality of any park or its natural resources, or reducing its use for outdoor recreation.
- **Galvanize community stewardship of parks and historic sites by simplifying requirements for volunteers working on state lands**
  - Support the creation of a standard, universal form for volunteers working on state lands and remove complicated permitting processes, including requirements that long-term volunteers register each year and pay fees for volunteer registration.

