



# 2020 Advocacy Agenda

## Building off of a Decade of Success for New York's Parks and Trail Networks

The beginning of a new decade is always a time to reflect on the accomplishments of the past ten years while setting ambitious goals for the decade to come.

Thanks to the Governor and the Legislature, and the advocacy of PTNY and our partners, the NY Parks 2020 plan allowed for an unprecedented renaissance in our state park system, with revitalized park infrastructure attracting historic numbers of visitors to outdoor destinations across the state. Seventy-four million visitors to parks across the state in 2018 alone have been able to enjoy the fruits of this commitment to providing outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Empire State Trail, set to be complete by the end of 2020, also marks the culmination of passionate advocacy and hard work by PTNY and our many members and partners over the past decade. This 750-mile trail system will link the Erie Canalway Trail, Champlain Canalway Trail, and Hudson River Valley Greenway and provide vital connections between our communities and many parks and historic sites in all parts of the state.

We should celebrate our successes. However, we must also turn to the years to come and envision what we can accomplish in the future. Our State Parks system deserves a continued investment in modernizing infrastructure and ensuring that the opportunity to enjoy outdoor recreation and open space is available for all. Operations funding must be increased to ensure our 180 state parks are welcoming and safe for visitors over the next decade.

We must also continue to invest in growing and enhancing our multi-use trails network by providing high-quality connections between communities across the state.

As has been the case for more than 30 years, PTNY is excited to continue its strong partnership with the Legislature and Governor Cuomo to enhance New York's role as a national leader in environmental protection and outdoor recreation and stewardship.



Robin Dropkin  
Executive Director  
Parks & Trails New York

## STATE PARKS

*Protect and revitalize state parks for future generations*

- Support the final installments of NY Parks 2020 capital investments, and plan for future appropriations to continue the restoration and revitalization of State Parks' aging infrastructure.
- Increase OPRHP's operations budget to meet increased visitation demands so that State Parks & Historic sites can more fully realize their potential as treasured destinations and economic engines for local communities.

## LOCAL PARKS

*Protect communities from the loss of parkland and open space*

- 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, or other land of equal or greater value for park improvements;
  - » A process to track alienation actions once they have been approved;
  - » A mechanism by which the terms of any approved alienation can be enforced.
- Provide sustainable funding for OPRHP to track parkland alienation and ensure adherence to regulation.



## LOCAL STEWARDSHIP

*Support grassroots organizations and remove obstacles to volunteerism*

- Continue to capitalize on the potential of grassroots organizations that support and strengthen state parks, trails, historic sites, and public lands by funding the NYS Park and Trail Partnership Grants at \$1,000,000.
- Expand the eligibility of the NYS Park and Trail Partnership Grants to allow volunteer groups on all state lands to access this resource
- Support the creation of a standard, universal registration form for volunteers working on lands owned and managed by state agencies and remove complicated permitting processes and other obstacles.



*Continue developing and improving the Empire State Trail and the state's trail network*

- Create a dedicated fund for maintaining and enhancing New York's growing multi-use trail network.
- Promote the state's multi-use trail network to attract tourism and economic development to New York's communities.
- Institute roll-on bicycle service on all New York Amtrak routes, supporting trail-related tourism on the Empire State Trail.
- 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.



# ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

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

- Establish a dedicated state funding source for infrastructure that supports human-powered transportation such as complete streets and on-street bicycle facilities
- Strengthen the New York State Complete Streets Act, passed in 2011, by closing a loophole that exempts maintenance and resurfacing projects, which account for most roadway 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.
- Enact a three-foot safe passing law requiring motorists to give bicyclists three feet of space when overtaking on the road.
- Amend the Vehicle and Traffic Law to enable New York municipalities to lower area speed limits below 30 miles per hour without needing Legislative approval.



# ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND

*Support a fully-funded and sustainable EPF*

- Support a \$350 million appropriation for the EPF, 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, and land stewardship that improves access to parks, historic sites, trails, forest lands, and recreation facilities.
- Protect the EPF from 'raids,' ensuring that funds from the EPF are not used for unrelated or extraneous purposes.
- Provide state agencies responsible for administering the EPF and implementing important environmental and public health programming with sustainable operations funding.
- Support efforts to reduce the negative environmental impact of single-use plastic by expanding the New York State Bottle Bill to include additional plastic containers and by ensuring an effective implementation of the ban on single-use plastic bags.
- Expand the ban on single-use plastic bags to include paper bags, replacing the current opt-in five-cent fee structure.

# About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is the leading advocate for outdoor recreation and open space across the state. The organization provides a voice for park and trail users and supporters with decision makers and the environmental community. PTNY works every day to keep our public spaces across New York accessible, safe, clean and beautiful.

Join Parks & Trails New York in supporting New York's great outdoor spaces!

Here's how you can help:

- Become a member
- Volunteer with a park or trail friends group
- Attend a park or trail clean up event
- Advocate for your favorite outdoor spaces locally or at a lobby day in Albany

For more information, visit [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).



**PARKS & TRAILS**  
NEW YORK

33 Elk Street  
Albany, NY 12207  
518-434-1583  
[www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)