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NEWS RELEASE

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Survey Shows New Yorkers Sustain Their State Parks with Substantial Donations of Money and Labor

State Park Friends Groups Raise \$17 Million, Harness 132,000 Hours of Volunteer Time

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ALBANY, NY -- A 2018 survey of not-for-profit Friends organizations supporting New York's state parks and historic sites details the critical support and programs these groups provide to our state park system, including more than \$17 million in private funds raised and nearly 132,000 hours of volunteer labor donated.

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), a statewide not-for-profit advocacy organization, conducted the survey. PTNY conducted a similar survey in 2015 and the most recent data shows a dramatic acceleration in the activities and impact of these dedicated groups.

“These groups of dedicated citizens provide a significant complement to New York State’s ongoing revitalization of its iconic park system,” PTNY Executive Director Robin Dropkin said. “Through their time, creativity, hard work and commitment, Friends groups are critical to ensuring the state parks and historic sites we love stay open and have the funding needed to remain a world-class state park system.”

Key findings for 2018 include:

- Friends groups raised more than \$17 million for the state park system through a combination of efforts, including individual and corporate contributions, grants, programs, special events, and merchandise sales.
- Friends groups harnessed the power of 5,192 volunteers for a total of 131,798 hours of volunteer time and an estimated \$3.2 million in volunteer labor.
- Friends groups hosted on average 35 programs annually which brought in nearly 700,000 visitors – up from just 18 programs in 2015
- 62% of Friends groups host programs specifically for youth – including a science, technology, engineering, and mathematics summer camp; field trips; nature journaling; snowshoeing; movie nights; scavenger hunts; story hours; and animal tracking.
- The state park system boasts 76 Friends groups – and 21 of those have formed since 2000.

The survey also shows Friends groups accomplish these results on shoe-string budgets with few paid employees. More than half of Friends groups have no staff at all.

“The survey offers clear evidence of how deeply New Yorkers love their parks, and how dedicated they are to their success,” Dropkin said. “Continuing to build and strengthen our park system’s grassroots supporters—and their partnership with the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation—will pay even greater dividends for these beloved public spaces.”

About PTNY

Parks & Trails New York is New York’s leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, working since 1985 to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state to improve our health, economy and quality of life. With members and supporters across the state, PTNY is the foremost voice in the protection of New York’s magnificent state park system and the creation and promotion of thousands of miles of greenways, bike paths, river walks and trails.

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