

# GreenSpace

For members, supporters, and friends of Parks & Trails New York

Winter 2016-2017



## You Bring the History of the Old Croton Aqueduct to Life for Millions of Visitors

Each year, more than a million people visit the Old Croton Aqueduct to walk part of the 26-mile trail running through this unique linear park in the Hudson Valley. Visitors marvel at the scenic path which runs along the top of an underground aqueduct, winding through many communities and passing by numerous historic sites and preserves. But until recently, many visitors didn't even realize that the trail is part of a State Park, let alone understand the enormous historical significance of the aqueduct under their feet.

### A transformative tale from our past waiting to be told

During the 1830s New York City suffered from a lack of fresh water to combat rising disease and fight the fires that often consumed parts of the city. A bold plan was hatched to build a 41-mile aqueduct and dam that would direct water from the Croton River to above-ground reservoirs located at the present sites of the New York Public Library and the Great Lawn of Central Park. In five years, thousands of workers, many of whom were Irish immigrants, completed this feat of masonry and brought up to 100 million gallons of fresh water to city residents daily.

Eventually, a skyrocketing population required construction of the New Croton Aqueduct, but the original continued to provide water to New York City until 1965. Its masonry structures are the foundation of what is now one of the world's largest municipal water systems, which stretches over 100 miles into central New York State and transports water to over 8 million city dwellers daily.

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"The grant we received from PTNY gave us a giant step forward in opening the new Visitor and Education rooms to the surprisingly worldwide group of visitors who appear every weekend. We love showing off our new displays, taking visitors through the story of how we got to this stage as well as explaining the facts of the engineering miracle that is the Aqueduct. Our guest book is overflowing with enthusiastic comments in a variety of languages. Hurrah for the grant! It got us going!"

— Mavis Cain, President,  
Friend of the Old Croton Aqueduct



**Parks & Trails New York helped Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct create an educational exhibit for the newly restored Keeper's House with a grant from the Park & Trail Partnership Program.**



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*“As a cyclist, it’s important to me that our state continues to expand and improve recreational trails. People tell me that they don’t like riding in the roads because so many drivers are texting and not paying attention. I volunteer with PTNY to help them collect data about how many people are using trails so they can use this information to secure more funding and help make safe trails for all to enjoy”*

— Dan Lynch



**Knowing how many people use trails and how they use them helps PTNY fight for funding to improve them.**

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**Parks & Trails New York is a member-supported non-profit working to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for all to use and enjoy. Parks & Trails New York is a 501(c)(3) organization as defined by the IRS. Contributions are tax-deductible.**

### Photos courtesy of:

Jim Greene, Tim McDonnell,  
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## Your Support Counts When Making the Case for Trails

Most New Yorkers believe that trail use is on the rise on their favorite community trails. Translating these observations into facts is one of the best ways communities across the state can make the case for investing in multi-use trails. Thanks to your support, PTNY has been empowering communities to do just that for more than a decade by organizing volunteers and conducting user counts on trails throughout New York State.

This past fall, the Capital District Transportation Committee, the regional transportation planning organization, commissioned PTNY to conduct trail counts on nine popular trails in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties to help them as they update their Regional Trail Perspectives document and plan for the future.

From the urban Uncle Sam Trail in Troy to the rural and suburban Zim Smith Trail in Saratoga County, PTNY and a host of enthusiastic volunteers conducted counts at more than 20 locations on some of the Capital District’s most regionally-significant multi-use trails. Volunteers collected data on the type of use, such as walking, biking, and rollerblading, in addition to users’ gender and direction of travel, and weather conditions, to get as detailed an assessment as possible.

In addition to providing valuable data, the count gives PTNY a unique opportunity to engage with communities and regular trail users that are some of the biggest supporters of the multi-use trail and greenway movement in New York State. While results of the count won’t be released until later this year, we get the sense that the numbers will confirm what everyone suspects already - New Yorkers love their local trails!





*“The terrific assistance we received from PTNY is the reason our organization was able to grow and sustain itself during very challenging times. PTNY’s experienced leadership and expertise made a difference to our organization and we are very grateful for all the support we received.”*

— Anne Bergantz, past president and current board member of Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail, Inc.



The Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail and Village of Springville celebrate the long-awaited opening of the new 1.8-mile Pop Warner Trail.

## A Rail Trail Dream Comes True Thanks to You!

Thanks again to your support for our work, PTNY has played an important role in helping the Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail and the western New York Village of Springville bring their dreams of a new rail trail to life. October marked the long-awaited opening of the 1.8-mile Springville Pop Warner Rail Trail. The trail is named in honor of the football legend Pop Warner, who lived in Springville. At the ribbon cutting, Mayor Krebs recognized PTNY and a long list of individuals, local organizations, civic leaders, and businesses whose contributions made the trail opening possible.

### Local Passion + PTNY know-how = progress

PTNY worked with the nonprofit Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail Inc. through our *Healthy Trails, Healthy People* program, which was funded by the Healthy Heart Program of the NYS Department of Health. Over the course of several years, PTNY provided technical assistance and gave the group several small catalyst grants to create trail vision posters, print materials, banners, a trail visit contest, and a video to help community members better imagine what the trail would look like and build support for its creation.

The Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail group’s goal is to convert the entire 27-mile discontinued Buffalo and Pittsburgh Railroad corridor into a first-class multi-use trail featuring beautiful scenery, ski areas, farmland, villages, county and town parks and a spectacular high-trestle bridge. Once completed, the trail will run from Orchard Park to the Town of Ashford, connect five communities across two counties, and provide residents and visitors with a wealth of recreational opportunities while bolstering local businesses.

Fran Gotcsik, Senior Consultant at PTNY explains, “Now that the 1.8-mile Pop Warner Trail is open it will further publicize and legitimize the entire 27-mile effort and hopefully move the railroad to enter into a railbanking agreement with the nonprofit Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail.”

## Reflection

By 2016 Arthur Savage Intern Alison Baxter

The eight months I spent as the Arthur Savage Intern at Parks & Trails New York far exceeded my expectations. For the final semester of my Master of Public Administration program, I sought an internship with an environmental organization to learn about environmental policy. This internship provided me with invaluable hands-on policy experience. My assignments covered the entirety of advocacy work from tracking legislation, writing bill memos, to lobbying for our parks and trails to legislators inside the state capitol. The staff at PTNY encouraged me to try new things and participate in a great variety of projects, and I am grateful for their support.



**"Thanks to the PTNY Arthur Savage Internship, I am highly motivated to develop a career in preserving New York's open spaces."**

During my time at PTNY I have truly developed as a professional, and I am very grateful to have had this opportunity. I will be advancing into my first employed position with first-hand experience with private-public partnerships, understanding of the legislative process, and a deeper appreciation for the New York State parks system.

Through the Rockefeller College at the University at Albany, I was selected to be an Excelsior Service Fellow. The connections I made and the skills I learned through my work at PTNY led to my placement with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



# Your voice, your time, your financial support— your contributions make so much possible.

## Cover Story continued

In 1983, a group of motivated citizen-volunteers formed the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct and dedicated themselves to restoring the Keeper's House, which had fallen into ruin. Located in Dobbs Ferry at the mid-point of the 26-mile trail, this beautiful house is the last remaining of six that were originally constructed to house maintenance supervisors. The Friends envisioned it as the perfect visitors' center and focal point for the State Park. After many years and Herculean efforts, this dedicated Friends group succeeded in raising \$1.2 million and renovating this marvelous piece of history.

### Our Park and Trail Partnership Program empowers Friends groups to make a big difference

The Friends' vision for the Keeper's House included an educational exhibit that would bring the history of this world-renowned water supply system and its role in the economic growth of New York City to life. They applied to the Park and Trail Partnership Program with plans for seven exhibits and were one of 20 friends organizations to be awarded a grant in March, 2016. Having a dynamic indoor visitor's center for the Old Croton Aqueduct State Park is helping the Friends group promote the park year-round, engage with local and city schools, and attract members and volunteers to support their work.

Thanks to your support, PTNY was successful in advocating for a second round of funding for the Park and Trail Partnership Program. The state approved another \$500,000 for the program through the Environmental Protection Fund in the 2016-2017 budget. Laura DiBetta, PTNY's Director of Parks Program and Government Relations, said "We've long believed in the grassroots power of park Friends groups to accomplish great things and have provided valuable technical assistance and small grants to support them. Now, with an even more significant source of funding available, we are excited to really see them take off and make improvements to parks that will benefit millions of visitors across the state."

## What will your legacy be?

**It's never too early to begin thinking about your legacy. As someone who appreciates nature and green space, we invite you to share your passion for New York's majestic parks and beautiful trails by making a planned gift to Parks & Trails New York and ensuring that your favorite parks and trails will be protected for generations to come.**

To learn more about becoming a member of the Legacy Society of Parks & Trails New York, please contact Meegan Finnegan, Director of Development, at [mfinnegan@ptny.org](mailto:mfinnegan@ptny.org) or 518-434-1583.



"I joined Parks and Trails New York because I care about these important public spaces. They are not receiving the protection that they need. I am the Coordinator of the New York Geographic Alliance, and we know that parks showcase the best that New York geography has to offer. Mr. Letchworth has long been a hero of mine, since he saved the beautiful falls and gorge from industrial degradation."

— Tim McDonnell, winner of a night at The Glen Iris Inn at Letchworth State Park during PTNY's spring membership drive

## Save the dates!

**March 13 — Park Advocacy Day**

**April 22-23 — Canal Clean Sweep**

**May 6 — 6th Annual I Love My Park Day!**

**July 9-16 — 19th Annual Cycle the Erie Canal Bike Tour**

### Ways to Support New York's Parks and Trails

- Become a member of Parks & Trails New York or make a donation online, by phone, or mail
- Double your donation by sending us your employer's matching gift form
- Remember Parks & Trails New York in your will
- Give at the office via EarthShare New York
- Get involved – join us on I Love My Park Day, Canal Clean Sweep, and Park and Trail Advocacy Days

Visit [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org) to learn more