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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – January 15, 2019

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Parks & Trails New York Applauds Governor Cuomo’s Historic Investment in Parks, the Environment and Grassroots Friends Groups in Budget

Parks & Trails New York commends Governor Cuomo for advancing policies that protect New York’s environment and provide New Yorkers with greater access to the outdoors. The Governor’s proposed budget builds on last year’s unparalleled commitment to parks and the environment and significantly strengthens its impact by proposing to ban single-use bags, expand the bottle bill and foster greater grassroots citizen engagement through expanded support of the Park and Trail Partnership Program in the Environmental Protection Fund.

“Governor Cuomo’s proposed investment in the environment, as outlined in his FY2019-20 budget, puts New York at the forefront as a national leader in the protection of parks, trails and natural resources and the advancement of tourism and outdoor recreation,” says Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director.

New York State Parks and Historic Sites

The Governor’s proposed budget includes a \$110 million investment in parks to address the backlog of infrastructure needs at New York State Parks and Historic Sites. The Governor’s proposal keeps up the momentum in revitalizing New York’s state parks as part of his multi-year commitment of \$900 million through 2020.

“Governor Cuomo’s budget proposal reflects his recognition of the important role state parks play in local economic growth, protecting important natural areas for enhanced sustainability and quality of life, and providing affordable, close-to-home recreational opportunities to New Yorkers,” says Dropkin.

Environmental Protection Fund

Parks & Trails New York also applauds the Governor for proposing to sustain a funding level of \$300 million for the state’s Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). The EPF protects clean air and water and supports parks, trails and farms, among many other job-creating programs. Parks & Trails New York is pleased to see the Governor’s continued support for the enhancement of this critical source of funding for New York’s communities. Parks & Trails New York is particularly appreciative of the support in the EPF for state land stewardship and public access, open space and land conservation, and the municipal park grants program, all of which suffered deep cuts during the state’s financial crisis.

Included in the Governor’s budget proposal for the EPF is an increase to \$1 million for the NYS Park and Trail Partnership Program, a capacity-building grants program for grassroots organizations that support, strengthen and improve access to the state’s parks, trails, historic sites and public lands. By doubling the amount of available funds, this competitive grants program will enable state park and Department of Environmental Conservation Friends groups to expand their impact and strengthen the state’s outdoor heritage of public-private partnership. The program, administered by Parks & Trails New York in partnership with OPRHP, has since 2015 awarded 60 grants totaling \$1.4 million, with funds going toward innovative educational programs,

creative capital projects, and enhanced stewardship. These grants have leveraged more than \$585,000 in private investment.

“There is tremendous interest in the Park and Trail Partnership Program and its potential to transform Friends organizations and enhance their ability to steward our most beloved public outdoor spaces,” says Dropkin. “This innovative program is a testament to Governor Cuomo’s vision of more citizen stewardship and engagement of public green spaces in New York State.”

We look forward to working with the Governor and Legislature in the coming months on these important issues and others in our [2019 Advocacy Agenda](#).

Parks & Trails New York is the state’s leading advocate for parks and trails, working since 1985 to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for use and enjoyment by all. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

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