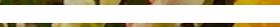




2022 ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Parks & Trails New York



2021 IN REVIEW

2022 TOP PRIORITIES

2021

- Funding maintained for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) at \$300 million, including \$1 million for Park & Trail Partnership Grants, \$2 million for the Connect Kids to School initiative, \$90 million for parks and recreation, and \$151 million for open space programs.
- Funding secured for the NY Parks 100 program, investing \$110 million annually for the next four years, allowing the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to build and restore visitor centers, bathroom facilities and other critical infrastructure and revitalize the nation's oldest state park system.
- \$75 million in capital funding provided for the Department of Environmental Conservation's Adventure NY program, ensuring the state can continue to improve access to state lands, rehabilitate campgrounds, and upgrade recreational facilities.
- Historic \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Environmental Bond Act approved as part of the budget and put on the ballot for approval by voters in November 2022. Funding would be used to combat climate change, reduce flood risk, and invest in resilient infrastructure. Funding includes \$550 million for open space land conservation and recreation, and includes a requirement that 35 percent of the funds be used to benefit environmental justice communities.
- Empire State Trail opened at the beginning of 2021, spanning from New York City to the Canadian border and from Albany to Buffalo. The 750-mile trail connects 20 regional trails to create a continuous statewide signed route. It is 75 per cent off-road to provide a safe and accessible route for cyclists, hikers, runners, cross-country skiers and snow-shoers.
- New York's first Statewide Greenway Trails Plan released by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The comprehensive document, developed as a result of legislation championed by PTNY and signed into law in 2019, addresses New York's statewide system of non-motorized multi-use trails. The plan identifies seven key goals and outlines recommendations to continue the development and improvement of New York's Greenway Trail network.
- New York's State Park system continued to grow and improve, with an 860-acre expansion of Moreau Lake State Park, the acquisition of the Pat McGee Trail in Cattaraugus County, the openings of the Environmental Education and Resilience Center at Hempstead Lake State Park, Pier 76's recreational and cultural space in Manhattan, and the innovative Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park.

2022

- Increase State Parks' staffing level to 2,300 Full Time Equivalents to allow the agency to address unsustainable strains on aging and new park infrastructure caused by record visitation levels and ensure that all visitors continue to have access to safe outdoor places for recreation and respite.
- Fund the NY Parks 100 capital program at \$330 million next year and annually over the next decade, sustaining the restoration and revitalization of State Parks' aging infrastructure to continue improving visitor experience and expanding recreational opportunities.
- Increase funding for the EPF to \$500 million with no offloads of staff costs, providing essential resources to environmental justice organizations, conserving land and water, creating new parks and trails, supporting climate adaptation and mitigation projects, and other important environmental initiatives.
- Increase funding for Park and Trail Partnership Grants from \$1 million to \$2 million, expanding the program's impact by further advancing private partnership efforts to steward the state's parks and public lands and addressing barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Increase the proposed 2022 Environmental Bond Act by \$1 billion to a total of \$4 billion to ensure that New York can protect and preserve our natural environment and withstand the impending threats of climate change, and rename the bond act to help ensure the measure is approved by voters in November.
- Continue New York's investment in multi-use trails by allocating \$100 million in funding from the Environmental Bond Act to support improvements to the Empire State Trail and implement the 2021 New York State Greenway Trails Plan.
- Dedicate state funding to continuing the growth and enhancement of New York's greenway trails network, providing the resources necessary to realize the vision laid out in the newly released Statewide Greenways Plan.
- Ensure that public lands are maintained for the benefit of the general public by creating a more stringent process for parkland alienation that holds government accountable and provides increased transparency.
- Pass the Crash Victim's Rights & Safety Act package of bills to redesign our streets with safety as a priority and to protect all roadway users.

STATE PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS

New York has one of the largest and most diverse state park systems in the nation. Record visitation to parks over the last decade, thanks in part to historic reinvestment in the system, 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

- Ensure New York's State Parks system is amply funded to guarantee it is protected and revitalized for future generations
- Secure long-term funding for grant opportunities that are made available for grassroots volunteer organizations to advance necessary projects and programs at their sites
- Provide all New Yorkers the opportunity to access open space in their communities
- Preserve and steward open spaces for future generations to enjoy



STATE PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS 2022 PRIORITIES

- **Expand State Parks' operations budget to ensure increased visitation needs are met**
 - Increase OPRHP's staffing level to 2,300 Full Time Equivalents which will correct an imbalance with state park operations and ensure that all visitors continue to have access to safe outdoor places for recreation and respite
- **Maintain capital investment and modernization programs**
 - Invest \$330 million in capital funding next year, and annually over the next decade, to upgrade and expand New York's world-class state parks system. Every dollar invested in state parks generates \$5 of economic activity.
- **Increase the Environmental Protection Fund appropriation from \$300 million to \$500 million**
 - Over the last three decades, the EPF has become essential to New York, providing resources to environmental justice organizations, conserving land and water, creating new parks and trails, and supporting climate adaptation and mitigation projects. Increasing this funding now would allow for strategic program expansions to address needs throughout the state.
- **Increase funding for Park and Trail Partnership Grants from \$1 million to \$2 million**
 - Increasing funding for this competitive grant program will expand the impact of Friends groups by further advancing public-private partnership efforts towards stewardship, expanding access to the state's parks and public lands and addressing barriers to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- **Create and expand opportunities for equitable access to parks for residents in underserved areas**
 - Support the continuation and expansion of the Parks, Preservation and Heritage Program (Municipal Parks), funded by the EPF, which facilitates and provides matching grants to projects that acquire, develop and plan municipal parks and recreational facilities in our cities.
- **Continue to expose students to nature through the Connect Kids to Parks Grant Program**
 - Maintain the Connect Kids to Parks Grant Program at \$2 million to continue to connect students, especially youth from Title 1 communities, with nature and history via a reimbursement for field trips to state and federal parks, forests, historic sites, fish hatcheries and other outdoor recreation areas.
- **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 the government accountable and provides transparency, specifically as it relates to the acquisition of replacement land, adequate monitoring, and enforcement of approved projects.



TRAILS ACROSS NEW YORK

The completion of the visionary Empire State Trail has sparked a larger conversation about the value of a truly interconnected greenway trail network. Continuing to build and improve greenway trail networks that connect communities will enhance travel, recreation, and tourism.

OUR VISION

- Ensure additional connections between the Empire State Trail and regional trail networks are built, guaranteeing all New Yorkers have access to a trail within a short distance of their homes.
- Prioritize trail development in communities and regions, such as Long Island, that are not connected to the Empire State Trail and remain underserved by trails.
- Establish a dedicated funding source for the construction of new trails, maintenance and enhancement of existing trails, and pursuance of land acquisition opportunities to connect existing trail segments.
- Use the Statewide Greenway Trails Plan as a guide for future planning efforts, driving the state towards a more comprehensive vision for the future of greenway trails.
- Ensure that a wide array of amenities are regularly accessible along trails, meeting the needs of users of all ages and abilities.



TRAILS ACROSS NEW YORK 2022 PRIORITIES

- **Increase the 2022 Environmental Bond Act by \$1 billion to a total of \$4 billion**

- The Environmental Bond Act, approved by the legislature as part of last year's budget at \$3 billion, should be increased by \$1 billion to ensure that New York can withstand the impending threats of climate change. Renaming the bond act as the Clean Water, Clean Air, Green Jobs Bond Act will help increase the likelihood that the measure is approved by voters in November 2022.

- **Include \$100 million for Trail Connections and Enhancements in the Environmental Bond Act**

- Continue the state's investment in multi-use trails by dedicating \$100 million in funding from the Environmental Bond Act to support improvements to the Empire State Trail and implement the 2021 New York State Greenway Trails Plan. Funding would support environmentally sustainable transportation by constructing new trails, providing significant repairs and enhancements to existing trails, and acquiring land needed to complete trail networks.

- **Extend the Empire State Trail**

- Increase the reach of the state's visionary Empire State Trail by extending it to include new corridors, such as the Long Island Greenway, Genesee Valley Greenway, and Niagara Shoreline Trail, and improve connections between the existing trail and nearby communities.

- **Encourage trail development by clarifying the state's Recreational Use Statute**

- Amend the Recreational Use Statute to cover all recreational activities and protect property owners who allow use of their land for trail purposes.

- **Enact the Crash Victim's Rights & Safety Act package of bills**

- Pass critical legislation to ensure that streets are designed to meet the needs of all users, allow municipalities to lower speed limits, require drivers to leave 3 feet of space when overtaking cyclists on roadways, and educate drivers on safely interacting with vulnerable road users.





2022 Advocacy Priorities

Parks & Trails New York

 ptny@ptny.org

 [parkstrailsny](https://www.instagram.com/parkstrailsny)

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 [PTNY](https://twitter.com/PTNY)

Parks & Trails New York, 33 Elk St, Albany, NY 12207