



NEWS RELEASE

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

\$500,000 Proposed For New Grants Program

ALBANY, N.Y. – Parks & Trails New York, a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization, applauds Governor Cuomo's budget proposal for State FY 2015-2016, which includes important investments in state park infrastructure, environmental programs, and grassroots Friends organizations that will help grow the economy, promote tourism, and enhance the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

New York State Parks and Historic Sites

The Governor's proposed budget includes a \$110 million investment to address the backlog of infrastructure needs at New York State Parks and Historic Sites. The Governor's proposal keeps up the momentum in restoring New York's state parks with a multi-year commitment of \$900 million through 2020. The budget proposal also provides a modest increase to the operations budget of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

"Parks & Trails New York is pleased that the Governor continues to recognize the importance of healthy state parks and historic sites," said Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director. "This substantial capital funding will help to continue the revitalization of our state park system and secure our parks and conservation legacy for future generations."

Governor Cuomo has shown unprecedented support for New York's state parks and historic sites during his administration. Yearly capital infusions have allowed OPRHP to begin to address the more than \$1 billion in infrastructure needs and critical safety repairs at state parks and historic sites, such as replacing aging water and sewer systems, rehabilitating restrooms, and repairing bridges, dams, roads, leaky roofs and swimming pools. This investment in our state park system, leveraged with additional

private and federal money, creates local jobs, boosts tourism in communities across the state, and helps to grow the state's economy sustainably.

"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," said Dropkin.

Parks & Trails New York looks forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to keep the momentum going for parks, including partnering with the Governor and OPRHP for the fourth annual I Love My Park Day in May to celebrate and enhance New York's state parks and historic sites.

Environmental Protection Fund

Parks & Trails New York also commends the Governor for proposing to increase funding for the state's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to \$172 million, an increase of \$10 million over the current fiscal year. 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.

New Non-Profit Capacity-Building Grants Program

Included in the Governor's budget proposal for the EPF is \$500,000 for a new capacity-building grants program for organizations that promote and support the state's parks, trails and historic sites. The capacity-building grants program, to be administered by Parks & Trails New York, would unlock the potential of these organizations by increasing their effectiveness, productivity, and volunteer and fundraising capabilities. This will enhance park, trail and historic site stewardship, leading to even greater economic benefits from outdoor recreation and healthier, more sustainable and resilient communities.

"Active and engaged grassroots organizations already contribute significantly to the stewardship of the state's parks, trails and historic sites, raising tens of millions of dollars and logging hundreds of thousands of hours of volunteer assistance," said Dropkin. "A small investment of EPF funds in a capacity-building grants program to strengthen these organizations will reap large benefits, enabling groups to leverage more private and federal funding, marshal more volunteer power, and augment the Governor's historic investment in parks. Parks & Trails New York looks forward to working with the Governor and Legislature to see this transformative program through to implementation."

Excelsior Conservation Corps

The Governor also announced the creation of the Excelsior Conservation Corps (ECC) to tap into New Yorkers' spirit of community service and help address environmental needs across the state, including trail stewardship and participation in cleanup, beautification and improvement projects at New York State Parks and Historic Sites on I Love My Park Day. Parks & Trails New York welcomes the opportunity to work with a diverse cadre of young volunteers in the stewardship of our parks and trails.

Parks & Trails New York's 2015 Legislative Priorities

Parks & Trails New York also announced the release of its 2015 legislative priorities. The policies and programs supported by Parks & Trails New York reflect the essential role of parks, trails and greenways in New York's economic growth, the health of its residents, and the long-term resiliency and sustainability of its communities. In 2015, Parks & Trails New York will work to ensure that our natural, recreational and cultural treasures are an integral part of the state's economic, transportation, health, and environmental strategies. PTNY's 2015 legislative priorities may be viewed at www.ptny.org/pdfs/advocacy/PTNY2015Priorities.pdf.

About Parks & Trails New York: Parks & Trails New York is the leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated since 1985 to improving the health and quality of life of all New Yorkers by working with community organizations and municipalities to envision, create, promote, and protect a growing network of parks, greenways and trails throughout the state for all to use and enjoy. For more information, visit www.ptny.org.

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