



## Victory for parks in state budget

### 48 parks and historic sites to get upgrades

The Governor and Legislature reached a budget agreement before the April 1 deadline that included great news for our state park system. The final budget includes \$89 million for capital improvements at state parks and historic sites in every region of the state.



Niagara Falls State Park to get a \$25 million upgrade

This historic infusion of capital will create jobs and address critical needs in our state park system, things like replacing aging water and sewer lines and repairing bridges, roads and swimming pools. [See the list of infrastructure projects](#) announced earlier this month. Read Parks & Trails New York [press statement](#) on the final budget and on the final list of projects.

The budget also maintains the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) at \$134 million. The EPF pays for programs that protect and create parks and trails, preserve valuable natural resources, and more. We at PTNY will continue to work with state lawmakers to see environmental funding further enhanced in the 2012 legislative session.

Thank you to everyone who reached out to the Governor and state lawmakers in support of our park system! Your efforts were key to making sure parks received this much-needed capital funding.

## Show your love for parks! First-ever I Love My Park Day May 5

Online volunteer registration for the first-ever I Love My Park Day is [now open!](#)

**I LOVE  
MY PARK**

**APRIL 2012**

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**Celebrating 25  
years  
of advocacy for  
New York's parks  
and trails**

### TrailFinder Trail of the Month

#### Catharine Valley Trail



Spring has finally arrived, providing great opportunities to get out and enjoy the [Catharine Valley Trail](#) in the Finger Lakes. This stone dust trail follows an abandoned railroad and canal towpath corridor, making it great for walking and bicycling as well as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Along the six-mile trail, users will travel through many different wildlife habitats in

[I Love My Park Day](#) is an exciting new statewide event to bring visibility to the entire state park system and its needs.



On Saturday, May 5, you can join with volunteers across the state to help celebrate and improve park lands and beaches, plant trees and gardens, restore trails and wildlife habitat and carry out site-improvement projects at state parks and historic sites.

Parks & Trails New York, in collaboration with the [Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation](#), is coordinating the event at the statewide level, with cleanup, improvement and beautification projects organized by friends groups and park staff.

Visit the [I Love My Park Day website](#) to find an event near you and register to be a part of this exciting day!

## New federal transportation bill delayed again

### Funding for trails and bike/ped facilities still in limbo

House members are key to the future of funding for trails. As the March 31 deadline loomed, the House wasn't able to pass a new federal transportation bill so Congress agreed to a 90-day extension of SAFETEA-LU. This is the ninth extension since the act expired in 2009. It is unclear what will happen as the House majority doesn't appear interested in passing the two-year \$109 billion transportation bill approved by the Senate. While not perfect, this bill at least preserves some funding for infrastructure that supports bicycling and walking.

We can't take our eye off the prize now! **Your Representatives need to hear from you!** Invite them to a trail event and keep reminding them of how important Transportation Enhancements, Safe Routes to School and Recreational Trails programs are to the local economy, community revitalization, quality of life, healthy physical activity, and alternative transportation. Urge them to ensure these programs are included in the next transportation legislation.

## Federal LWCF funding update

As we reported last month, President Obama's proposed FY 2013 budget shows his continued commitment to robust funding for the [Land and Water Conservation Fund](#) (LWCF). The President is requesting \$450 million for the LWCF, a 30 percent increase over FY 12 funding levels. This includes \$60 million for the stateside program which funds matching grants to local

the glacially carved valley south of Seneca Lake.

When construction is complete, a total of 12 miles of trail will be open to the public.

The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation manages the trail in partnership with the [Friends of the Catharine Valley Trail](#). For more information on this trail and others like it, visit [TrailFinder](#), PTNY's interactive guide to multi-use trails throughout New York State.

### PTNY's capacity-building program sports a new name and logo

Parks & Trails New York's



PTNY's capacity building grant program is changing its name to [Growing the Grassroots](#) to better reflect its role in helping grassroots park and trail groups become stronger and more effective stewards of New York's parks and trails. PTNY's small grants have already made a big difference to 36 park and trail groups in every part of the state.

### Clean Sweep coming up

governments for public outdoor recreation areas and facilities, including many local park and trail projects.

The House and Senate have not yet drafted their appropriations bills, but PTNY has been working with its partners in the LWCF Coalition to ensure that significant funding for LWCF is included in their respective budget proposals.

- In the House, a "Dear Colleague" letter was completed requesting \$450 million and was signed by 152 Members of Congress, including 17 representatives from New York (Bishop, Israel, King, McCarthy, Ackerman, Nadler, Towns, Velazquez, Grimm, Maloney, Rangel, Engel, Hayworth, Tonko, Owens, Hanna, Slaughter).
- Senators Schumer and Gillibrand supported the Senate's version of the transportation bill which included reauthorization of LWCF at \$700M per year for the next two years. Along with 44 other Senators, they also signed a "Dear Colleague" letter to the House Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee noting the Senate's funding level of \$700M and urging the House to also support "strong and consistent funding."

**What you can do:** Thank Senators [Gillibrand](#) and [Schumer](#) for their continued support for funding for parks and trails. If your representative is among the 17 listed above, thank them for showing their support by signing the "Dear Colleague" letter.

## PTNY capacity grant helps Ulster County trail organization plan for future



As members of Ulster County's [Walkkill Valley Rail Trail Association](#) (WVRTA) contemplated the planned doubling of the length of their trail, they realized the need to grow their organization and attract additional members and volunteers. Using a Growing the Grassroots capacity building grant from PTNY, the WVRTA engaged a consultant to assist them in completing a [strategic plan](#) that expanded the all-volunteer group's horizon beyond the limits of current capabilities and helped them plan for the future via incremental, organized steps.

"The WVRTA Board extends appreciation to Parks & Trails New York for providing the grant for our planning process, without which the strategic plan would not have been developed. Our Board has grown through this process and we believe we are better prepared for the next few years," said WVRTA president Ruth Elwell.



On **April 20-22**, over 1,000 volunteers from across the state will celebrate Earth Day by taking part in [Canal Clean Sweep](#), the state-wide clean-up of the NYS Canal System. More than 70 events are scheduled with more being added every day. Those interested in hosting a clean-up in their community should email event coordinator [Elijah Yearick](#) **as soon as possible**. Just want to lend a hand? Check our [event page](#) for a clean-up near you.

## Celebrate National Trails Day June 4



[National Trails Day](#), June 4, is quickly approaching. Hundreds of events are planned nation-wide, including many in New York State. The Village of Granville in Washington County will host its third annual [Rail Trail to the Footbridge 5K](#). In the Bronx, the [Friends of Van Cortlandt Park](#) will work on restoring the park's Cass Gallagher Trail. [Register](#) an event or [find an event](#) near you.

## First Niagara teams up with PTNY on Cycling the Erie Canal bike tour



PTNY welcomes [First Niagara](#) as the official bank sponsor of Cycling the Erie Canal 2012.

"The First Niagara Bank Foundation is thrilled to sponsor

Cycling the Erie Canal. We look forward to cheering on the riders from our more than 200 branch locations across the state," said Elizabeth Gurney, Executive Director of the First Niagara Bank Foundation.

"This exciting event covers our upstate New York footprint from Buffalo to Albany, an area where we recently expanded with our acquisition of HSBC branches. Cycling the Erie Canal is the perfect venue to welcome our new associates and customers," added Gurney.

Thank you, First Niagara, for your support!

## Got Ideas? Your input on State Park plans sought



The public currently has two opportunities to contribute to state park master plans. The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (ORPHP) is engaged in an ongoing effort to create and update management plans for its parks and historic sites. The master plan lays out a vision for the park and guides natural resource protection and public recreation. It also reviews the current conditions at the park and makes recommendations for improvements to existing facilities as well as new facilities to meet visitor needs.

Read PTNY's statement in a [recent article](#) that the park master planning process engages the public and reminds them that they essentially own the parks.

### Rockland Lake State Park Complex

The Rockland Lake State Park complex in the lower Hudson Valley includes [Rockland Lake](#), [Hook Mountain](#), [Nyack Beach](#), and [Haverstraw Beach State Parks](#). A public information meeting regarding the preparation of a Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the complex was held in March and public comments are currently being accepted. An [information packet](#) can be viewed online and

### Looking for cycling fun this summer?

#### Cycling the Erie Canal July 8-15

Join PTNY for the 14th annual [Cycling the Erie Canal](#) bike tour. Meet people from all over the world while getting to know the Canalway Trail from Buffalo to Albany on this 8-day, 400-mile ride.

#### Great Hudson Valley Pedal July 31-August 5

Experience five fabulous bridge crossings, art museums, historic riverfront mansions, wineries and more on the 8th annual [Great Hudson Valley Pedal](#), a six-day, 200-mile ride from Albany to NYC.

#### Webinar: Best Practices for Developing Interpretive Panels for Trails

American Trails is hosting a [webinar](#) "Telling a Better Story: Best Practices for Developing Interpretive Panels for Trails" on Thursday, April 26 at 1:00 pm. [Registration](#) fee is \$25.

#### New Technical Assistance Grants available for historic resources

The Preservation League of New York State is offering [Technical Assistance Grants](#) up to \$3000 for not-for-profits and municipalities to fund professional studies that will aid the preservation of New York's cultural and historic resources.

written comments and suggestions may be [submitted](#) until **April 27**.

### **John Boyd Thacher and Thompson's Lake State Parks**

OPRHP is also developing a new master plan for [John Boyd Thacher](#) and [Thompson's Lake State Parks](#) outside of Albany. The public can provide comments at an open house at the [Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center](#) on Saturday, April 28 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. No decisions about the elements of the master plan have been made so this gives members of the public an opportunity to contribute comments about the future of the parks at the earliest stage of planning. Additional meetings will be held in May (dates, times and locations to be announced).

For more information about the open house and the new master plan, contact [Salim Chishti, Park Planner](#).

## **Montezuma trail system connects hamlet to its history**



Montezuma's history is inextricably linked to that of the Erie Canal. In 1820, the Cayuga County hamlet was at the western terminus of Clinton's Ditch. For nearly 100 years Montezuma was a port of call for traffic on Clinton's Ditch, the Expanded Erie, and the Cayuga-Seneca Canals. Today evidence of

the three canals can still be found within the 140-acre Montezuma Heritage Park. Aside from the prisms of each canal, [notable features](#) include the ruins of a lock tender's cottage, the incredibly well-preserved Lock 11 of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal and the remains of the Richmond Aqueduct, once the second-longest aqueduct on the expanded Erie.

While the Town of Montezuma has owned the park since the 1960s, the effort to connect the hamlet and the historic resources via a [trail system](#) began several years ago. Utilizing the former canal towpath and ATV trails, the Heritage Park Design Committee has established the foundation of a trail system through the park.

Recently PTNY's Elijah Yearick met with local committee members to walk the trails and learn more about the abundance of historic resources in the Park. The Montezuma Trail system is receiving technical assistance as part of PTNY's [Healthy Trails Healthy People](#) program.

Prospective applicants must first discuss their project with the appropriate [League](#) staff. Application deadlines are **April 30 and October 1, 2012**.

### **New resources for urban pathways**

For those working to build and promote urban trails, Rails to Trails Conservancy has several new [resources](#) including [Urban Pathways to Healthy Neighborhoods: Promising Strategies for Encouraging Trail Use in Urban Neighborhoods](#) and the short video, "[Is it Safe? Crime and Perceptions of Safety on Urban Pathways](#)."

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