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PRESS STATEMENT

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Parks & Trails New York Applauds Governor Cuomo's Historic Commitment to Complete Erie Canalway Trail and Create Empire State Trail by 2020

Empire State Trail Initiative Closes the Gaps in the Erie Canalway Trail and Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System to create nation's longest multi-use trail and boost economy

ALBANY, N.Y. – Parks & Trails New York, the state's leading nonprofit advocate for parks, trails, and greenways, applauds Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposal, announced today in his State of the State Address, to create the Empire State Trail by 2020. Completing and connecting unfinished sections of the Erie Canalway Trail and Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System will create the nation's longest multi-use trail, securing New York's place as a national and international destination for outdoor recreation and heritage tourism.

Completing the Erie Canalway Trail: A Legacy Project for New York

The Governor's visionary proposal signifies a historic commitment to complete the state's premier multi-use trail, the Erie Canalway Trail, which follows working and historic sections of the Erie Canal for 360 miles between Buffalo and Albany. The Governor's extraordinary announcement dovetails with the beginning of the Bicentennial of the Erie Canal and highlights the enduring importance of the waterway for tourism and recreation in Upstate New York. The Canal and Canalway Trail are already significant economic drivers. The Erie Canalway Trail attracts more than 1.6 million annual visits, with an estimated economic impact of \$253 million. Converting the remaining 72 miles of currently on-road connections to off-road trail will elevate the trail's appeal for visitors from around the world, resulting in an even greater economic impact to Upstate.

“The Governor’s vision put forth today for the Empire State Trail represents the same sort of imagination and foresight as the vision for the Erie Canal did 200 years ago,” said Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director. “The Erie Canalway Trail is such a unique asset for New York State and, once connected to the Hudson River Valley Greenway as the Empire State Trail, seals New York’s position as a leader in outdoor recreation.”

Parks & Trails New York’s *Close the Gaps* Campaign

Parks & Trails New York has been the leading non-profit advocate for Closing the Gaps in the Erie Canalway Trail for over a decade, working in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and numerous counties and municipalities. Parks & Trails New York’s *Cycle the Erie Canal* bike tour, now in its 19th year, attracts a growing number of riders from across the United States and the world, demonstrating the appeal of bicycling along one of America’s most historic and iconic waterways. Parks & Trails New York’s range of trip-planning resources have also helped thousands to successfully make the cross-state trip on their own.

More information and trip-planning resources can be found at www.CycletheErieCanal.com.

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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