



# NEWS RELEASE

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## Supreme Court Decision on Rail Trails Does Not Affect NYS Trails

ALBANY – The recent U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Marvin M. Brandt Revocable Trust et al. v. United States*, represents a setback for the rail trail movement. However, contrary to several media reports, the Court's decision is quite limited in scope, **and it will have no effect on existing or planned rail trails in New York State.**

The Court's ruling denies the federal government the right to convert a federally-granted right-of-way into a rail-trail, instead allowing the abandoned rail corridor to fall back into private ownership. This result is disappointing for residents of and visitors to Medicine Bow National Forest in Wyoming, as it blocks completion of the Medicine Bow Trail, much of which is already open for recreational use. The Court's decision is also disappointing to supporters of rail trails and organizations, such as Parks & Trails New York, which have fought to create more and better trail networks for several decades.

As the Rails to Trails Conservancy has reported, close examination of the case revealed that the scope of the Court's decision is "much narrower than has been reported in the press." The Brandt case only applies to federally-granted railroad rights-of-way. Most of these are located in western states.

Several other rail-trail criteria also serve to limit the applicability of the decision. **Therefore, the ruling does not affect ANY rail trails or rail-trail projects in New York.** That means that New Yorkers can continue to enjoy the hundreds of miles of trails built on former rail corridors, with no worry that these recreation and transportation resources will be jeopardized by the Supreme Court's decision.

Fran Gotcsik, Parks & Trails New York's Director of Programs and Policy, says, "Parks & Trails New York was disappointed by the recent Supreme Court decision regarding rail trails, but we want all New Yorkers to know that it will not affect any trails in our state. Thankfully, New Yorkers will continue to enjoy hundreds of miles of fantastic trails such as the Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail, the Genesee Valley Greenway, and the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail – without the threat of closure."

Parks & Trails New York has made an official [statement](#) regarding the Brandt case available on its website, and will continue to provide information about this case and any future challenges to rail trails in New York State.

*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](http://www.ptny.org).*

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