

GreenSpace

For members, supporters, and friends of Parks & Trails New York

Fall/Winter 2021-2022



"Whatever happens that benefits the trail benefits the community."

— Carl Shoenthal,
Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway

Partnerships Strengthen Communities and Trails in Western New York

Parks & Trails New York is excited to do what we love and what we've been doing for 35 years—supporting the development and promotion of trails and the communities along them—in western New York. With support from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr Foundation, we're working with Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway, State Parks, and Letchworth Gateway Villages on an exciting Trail Town initiative along the Genesee Valley Greenway. This partnership will expand and promote access to the Genesee Valley Greenway while helping communities benefit from the boom in trail-based tourism, which can be especially important for smaller rural communities.

We're particularly delighted to be working on the Genesee Valley Greenway, as we pioneered the creation of the trail more than 25 years ago with the establishment of a steering committee and the founding of the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway. Genesee Valley Greenway State Park follows the routes of the Genesee Valley Canal and Pennsylvania Railroad for 90 miles through woodlands, wetlands, river and stream valleys, rolling farmlands, steep gorges, and historic villages in 16 towns located in Monroe, Livingston, Wyoming, Allegany, and Cattaraugus counties.

If you tried to purchase a bicycle in 2020, it should come as no surprise that bike sales were up an astounding 121%. That means

a lot of opportunities for trailside communities to benefit from tourist dollars. Carl Shoenthal—Director and Vice President of the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway—has worked to expand the Greenway and support trailside towns. Shoenthal sees a huge opportunity for western New York communities to benefit from outdoor recreational tourism:

"Exploring the Greenway and western New York you realize you have world-class parks at your fingertips. The trail offers the kind of experience equivalent to Europe or the western U.S.: there's the Grand Canyon of the East (Letchworth State Park), the western New York wilds of the Southern Tier, the endless mountains of Cattaraugus County, the steep hill country in Ellicottville, the vibrancy of Buffalo and Niagara. Trails—especially the Empire State Trail—make rural communities accessible, enjoyable, and informative stops for tourists from all over."

With many communities hit economically by the global pandemic—and rural communities struggling to create jobs and attract and maintain populations—building a culture around outdoor recreation can be a viable and sustainable part of the strategy for solving fiscal woes. Trails and public green space raise

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A New Park and Trail Advocate at the Helm

With an obvious passion for public green space and outdoor recreation, New York's first female Governor is walking the talk when it comes to supporting the environment in the Empire State. Governor Hochul recently announced she was proposing another billion—for a total of \$4 billion—to the newly named Clean Air, Clean Water, Green Jobs Bond Act going before New York voters this November.

The Bond Act would provide the largest influx of capital funding for New York's environment—through projects aimed at flood risk reduction, open space land conservation and recreation projects, water quality and resiliency, and other climate mitigation infrastructure—in decades. Further, the proposed Bond Act is estimated to create 65,000 jobs for New Yorkers suffering the economic impacts of the pandemic.

Not just focusing on funding, Hochul's first initiative—Get there Green—ran in September as a way to promote green transit

such as cycling, public transport, and electronic vehicle use.

Parks & Trails New York is excited to see the environment, and green jobs, as some of the first priorities put forward by the new governor.

We are looking forward to what this might mean for areas where green funding and support have languished, such as staffing and operational support for State Parks.

If you're interested in supporting New York's public green spaces, consider joining us for our Park Advocacy Day in 2022, and check out our website for other ways to have an impact for our parks, trails, and public lands.



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property values, increasing tax income, and can be an important attractor for new businesses and residents.

Letchworth Gateway Villages and Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway have been doing tremendous grassroots community work to support the Greenway, but there were critical opportunities to expand the work the Friends didn't have capacity to take advantage of. That's where PTNY came in, Carl explains:

"Our group of local volunteers are mainly trail users, small business owners, and community advocates. We know our communities well, but our needs were technical in nature. PTNY came and did bike-arounds and trained community members on how to do them. Together we developed a visitor survey. PTNY brought in trail counters to get baseline data. PTNY—through its partnership with the Wilson



Foundation—is also supplying seed grants for communities.

Having PTNY reinforce our work at the statewide level is crucial. Face time with legislators at the state level is key to the success and longevity of our work."

PTNY is honored to partner with grassroots groups doing the deep and long-term work to support green space and their communities. Together, we can establish a cohesive bike culture, improve routing and wayfinding, and provide local leaders with a better understanding of best practices in attracting and expanding cycle-based tourism.

Carl says it best, "If you haven't experienced western New York and the Genesee Valley Greenway yet, come out and visit. Then tell friends and get the word out!"

You Gotta Have Friends...and Support Them!

The last year and a half has shown that grassroots Friends groups are more vital than ever in supporting our parks, trails and public lands.

Parks & Trails New York is working to deepen and broaden our support for these essential groups, and we're happy to announce some new initiatives to do just that. Formed this summer, the new Friends Leadership Council acts as a steering committee for all things Friends-related. This group will focus on Friends to Friends workshop content, information sharing and dialogue, capacity building, best-practice resources, and promoting and advocating for the park system by providing a unified voice for Friends groups and their respective parks and historic sites.

"PTNY helps demonstrate how crucial the relationship between a friends group and State Park or public land can be, each playing a significant and important role," says Elizabeth Waldstein, Executive Director of Walkway Over the Hudson and a Leadership Council member. "There are many resources available to fundraisers and nonprofits, but a Friends group is unique, with its own opportunities and challenges. For PTNY to be expanding its efforts

to bring Friends groups best practices, provide opportunities to share ideas, and offer resources is extremely important."

Leadership Council members are also key advisors in PTNY's buildout of our new online resource for Friends: The Friends Gateway. This online portal—funded by a generous grant from the Woolrich Outdoor Foundation—will offer event management, a resource library, forums to network and problem solve, and much more. We are looking forward to how the Gateway will bring together Friends groups from across the state and enable them to share expertise. Because no one is an expert on their park and work like our Friends, and we truly are mightier together.



Park & Trail Champions Stand Tall

We'd like to introduce you to an important group of supporters for our parks, trails and public lands: Park & Trail Champions. Park & Trail Champions give monthly to ensure our green spaces are protected and have a strong voice in Albany all year long. But don't take our word for it...

Meet John. A retired mechanical engineer, John, like many of our supporters, is unfaltering in his commitment to New York's outdoor spaces.

"Since I retired, it's my life. I spend a good deal of my time on it and it's the right thing to do. I look forward to my grandkids being able to keep riding and enjoying these spaces in the future."

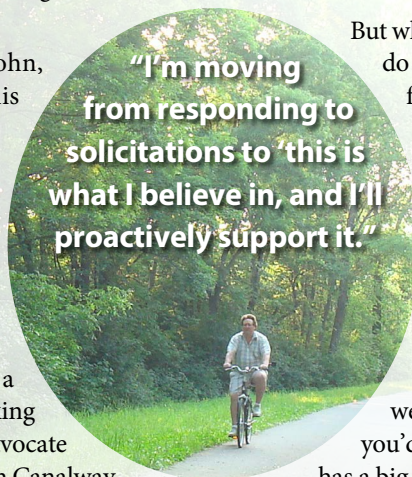
A long-time advocate for multi-use trails, greenways, and cycling, John is the Chair of his town's Trails and Open Space Committee and a member of the Champlain Canalway Trail Working Group. His work as a biking, walking and trail advocate started with rides on the Zim Smith and Champlain Canalway Trails ten years ago.

"I was winding down a consulting career, tired of working. I'd heard about these local trails and I got on the Zim Smith and thought, 'Wow, what a great experience!' And I've been getting involved with what I care about ever since."

But what does John's hard work and advocacy have to do with Park & Trail Champions? He has been one for a year this October.

"PTNY has been a frequent and substantial contributor to the work we do here. And I thought to myself: 'Well, okay, put your money where your mouth is.' We try to use our resources appropriately. I feel like giving to PTNY is what I'm supposed to be doing."

Thank you to John, and our other Park & Trail Champions, for your commitment to the work we do. It wouldn't be possible without you. If you'd like to join this committed group, any amount has a big impact. Visit ptny.org to give monthly today.





33 Elk Street
Albany, New York 12207

518.434.1583
ptny@ptny.org

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@parksandtrailsny



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@parkstrailsny

*“Every leaf speaks bliss to me,
fluttering from the autumn tree.”*

— Emily Bronte



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Your support of New York’s beautiful parks, trails,
and public lands *also* supports our communities.

Read inside to learn more about how these green
spaces are vital to our health and wellbeing