



Creating and protecting parks and trails
for generations to come

2015 Annual Report



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www.ptny.org

Annual Report 2015



Your support helps ensure that all New Yorkers have beautiful, safe places to play, exercise, and enjoy the wonders of nature close to home.

Dear Friends of New York's Parks and Trails,

We can't thank you enough for supporting New York's parks and trails in 2015. In communities across the state, thousands of people are enjoying the parks and trails you've helped protect and improve. Children are spending valuable time exploring and playing outside. People are stepping away from a fast-paced world to take a walk or go for a bike ride. Families are looking forward to camping trips and vacations at the beach. We hope that you feel proud knowing that your support for our work has added so much to the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

PTNY celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2015 and it was a year marked with success. With your help, we continued to push for investment in our state parks and our efforts were rewarded. Happily, this year's state budget keeps up the momentum in restoring New York's iconic state park system with a \$90 million capital investment, continuing the Governor's multi-year commitment of \$900 million for parks through 2020.

The historic \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) secures New York's parks and conservation legacy for future generations. And the \$500,000 EPF appropriation for the **Park and Trail Partnership Program**, which we fought to establish for a decade, will fund a second year of capacity-building grants for Friends groups that promote and support the State Parks system.

Your support has enabled us to offer assistance and support to communities and grassroots organizations across the state as they work to enhance and protect their parks and trails. It has also allowed us to continue to promote our beloved outdoor spaces through events like our **Cycle the Erie Canal** ride. And together, through events such as **I Love My Park Day** and **Canal Clean Sweep**, you have helped inspire thousands of New Yorkers to volunteer their time and effort to care for our parks and trails.

All in all, we have a lot to be grateful for and much to inspire our efforts in the coming year. Most of all, we are thankful for you and for our wonderful community of supporters!

Robin Dropkin *Judith C. Mower*



Robin Dropkin
Executive Director



Judith C. Mower
Chair of the Board

Leading the Effort to Put Parks and Trails Front and Center in New York

PTNY is your voice in Albany and throughout the state for New York's parks and trails. We play an active role in the annual state budget process, advocating for park- and trail-related legislation. Our annual Advocacy Agenda lays out our priority issues and legislation and serves as a basis for testimony at hearings, meetings with lawmakers and annual advocacy days, as well as letters in support of or opposition to projects and legislation. In all our advocacy efforts, we strive to provide park and trail groups with the tools and information they need when it matters most.

With your help, we continued to push for investment in our state parks and our efforts were rewarded. This year's state budget keeps up the momentum in restoring New York's iconic state park system with a \$90 million capital investment, continuing the Governor's commitment to invest \$900 million for parks through 2020.

The record \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) secures New York's parks and conservation legacy for future generations and includes a \$500,000 appropriation for our new **Park and Trail Partnership Program**.

Bicycling and Walking Advocacy Picks Up Momentum



Speaking up for the rights and safety of pedestrians and cyclists is one of our top priorities.

PTNY is well known for its work expanding and improving trails across the state to provide healthy recreation opportunities. Now we are using that expertise to also advocate on behalf of the growing number of bicyclists and pedestrians who use trails, bike lanes and sidewalks for everyday transportation.

New York passed a Complete Streets law in 2011, which requires state, county, and local transportation agencies to consider roadway design features such as trails, bike lanes, and sidewalks that increase the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Unfortunately, reduced state and federal funding has greatly limited the ability of communities to build this infrastructure and demand for these facilities is great.

In 2013, PTNY joined with other bicycle-pedestrian advocates to form New Yorkers for Active Transportation (NY4AT). The coalition's goal is to secure dedicated funding for non-motorized transportation so that the Complete Street's law can be fully implemented.

This year, we came one step closer to securing that funding. Thanks to our legislative champions on this issue, we were successful in getting \$20 million for dedicated bike and pedestrian funding included in the Assembly budget for the first time—a giant leap forward. Although it was not included in the final budget, this achievement is significant and has energized us to fight for more and safer biking and walking infrastructure in the next budget.

Friends of Gantry Plaza Roll out the Welcome Mat and Promote Park Stewardship

Gantry Plaza State Park is a 12-acre riverside oasis in Queens that boasts spectacular views of the midtown Manhattan skyline, including the Empire State Building and the United Nations. Over the last few years the Park's neighborhood has expanded greatly and the Friends of Gantry Plaza see reaching these new residents as central to the future of the Friends and the park itself. A new 900-unit affordable housing complex, whose tenants are just beginning to move in, is providing the Friends a wonderful opportunity to promote the park and engage new volunteers and supporters.

The Friends successfully applied to the **Park and Trail Partnership Program** with plans to improve the park by replacing damaged Adirondack chairs, tree grates and broken light fixtures and to promote the park to the neighborhood through an outreach campaign. The campaign will welcome new residents to the park and promote volunteer opportunities beginning with **I Love My Park Day** and continuing with regular clean-up events throughout the year.



“Long Island City is going through major changes with the large influx of new residents and construction, much of it on the perimeter of Gantry Plaza State Park. This grant will allow us to educate new residents about our State Park, make some badly needed repairs and keep Gantry Plaza State Park a jewel of a park on the East River in New York City.

— Rob Basch, President of Friends of Gantry Plaza State Park, a recipient of a Park and Trail Partnership Program grant

Leveraging the Power of Grassroots Groups

Providing assistance and support to communities and park and trail grassroots groups is at the core of PTNY's work. Whether through landmark reports or communications with our experienced staff, we are the go-to organization for park and trail organizations, providing important resources and sharing our extensive network of contacts.



Rose Harvey, NYS Parks Commissioner, and Lucy Waletzky, Chair of the State Council for Parks joined PTNY Executive Director Robin Dropkin to announce the grant awards for the Parks and Trail Partnership Program. Pictured are representatives from Friends of the Rockefeller State Park Preserve, Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, and Walkway Over the Hudson.

We've long believed in the importance and value of Friends groups, which are usually comprised of a relatively small number of dedicated individuals – most often all volunteers – who accomplish Herculean tasks. They fundraise, develop trails, attend community meetings, staff nature centers and museums, plant flowers, and lead tours of school groups...all the while spreading the word that New York's parks and trails are truly something special.

Launched in 2015, our new **Park and Trail Partnership Program**, administered in collaboration with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, is designed to unlock the potential of Friends groups and enable them to accomplish great things for the parks, trails and state historic sites they support. In the first round of the grants program, more than one third of all eligible Friends groups applied.

We were pleased to award \$450,000 to 20 grant recipients in the spring of 2016. The breadth and variety of the funded projects is truly inspiring, from developing new interpretive trails and designing and equipping a visitor center, to creating a plan to repurpose a hay barn so that it can become a performance venue to bring in new revenue for the park. A full list of the projects that were funded through the **Park and Trail Partnership Program** can be found on our website at www.ptny.org.

Given the demand for the program, we are thrilled to initiate a second round of funding for the **Park and Trail Partnership Program** and look forward to helping more Friends groups realize their goals.

Promoting the Enjoyment and Care of Our Parks and Trails

New York's parks and trails are second to none and we want everyone to know it! Our *Cycling the Erie Canal* and *Cycling the Hudson Valley* guidebooks, Cycle the Erie Canal website, and online TrailFinder map provide ways to plan a fun and enjoyable outing whether you're cycling, hiking or just enjoying nature.

I Love My Park Day Gets Bigger and Sparks New Partnerships

New Yorkers sure do love their parks! 2016 marks the 5th anniversary of **I Love My Park Day**, and it just keeps getting bigger and better. The event's been a tremendous success and each year the number of participating parks grows, as does the number of volunteers, and of course, the tasks those volunteers accomplish to improve the parks we all treasure.

As it's grown, **I Love My Park Day** has inspired creative local and statewide partnerships. At Moreau Lake State Park in Saratoga County, for example, park staff and the Friends of Moreau used a grant from the Southern Adirondack Audubon Chapter to pay for lumber, as well as stain and brushes donated by a local paint store, to build a waterfowl observation blind.

Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct and park staff decided to use the first **I Love My Park Day**

Each July hundreds of cyclists of all ages, from across the country and the world, join us on our eight-day Cycle the Erie Canal annual tour to enjoy historic villages, beautiful scenery, and first-class cycling on this fully-supported trip. PTNY also organizes events like **I Love My Park Day** and **Canal Clean Sweep**, which bring thousands of volunteers together to enhance and beautify our parks and trails.

to launch a new invasive vine-removal project. Since then, the Friends have made numerous new connections with other organizations, received support from local municipalities, and partnered with a local business which donated employee time and machinery to the event.

On the statewide level, New Yorkers Volunteer—a program supported by the NYS Commission on National and Community Service—joined the **I Love My Park Day** effort as a Premier State Partner in 2013 to help recruit volunteers, promote the initiative and engage AmeriCorps members to support projects across the state. This year, the Excelsior Conservation Corps, a new AmeriCorps environmental education and stewardship program for 18- to 25-year-olds, will work on **I Love My Park Day** projects as part of its hands-on learning experience.

Corporate partners like AT&T, American Express, Con Edison, Brookfield, and Harney & Sons Fine Teas have been invaluable in providing resources to promote

the event and engage volunteers and encouraging teams of employee volunteers to give back.

In 2016, we added new projects at parks in the Catskills and the Adirondacks and were excited to include several national parks in celebration of the National Park Service's centennial. As **I Love My Park Day** grows, so too do opportunities for New Yorkers to give back, strengthen bonds, build memories, and instill a sense of stewardship in the next generation.



Nearly 7,500 volunteers of every age, background, and region of the state turned out to care for their parks on the 5th annual **I Love My Park Day**

Ways to Support New York's Parks and Trails

Visit www.ptny.org to learn more

- **Become a member or make a donation online, by phone or mail**
- **Get involved** – Join us for I Love My Park Day, Canal Clean Sweep, and Park and Trail Advocacy Days, or join a Friends group and help make your local park or trail greener
- **Double your impact** – Does your employer match charitable donations? If so, send us their matching gift form and we'll take care of the rest!
- **Give at the office** – Set up a convenient payroll deduction through Earth Share and the Combined Federal Campaign
- **Make a gift of stock** – Securely transfer stock directly from your brokerage account
- **Leave a legacy** – Consider leaving a legacy of parks and trails by including Parks & Trails New York in your estate planning

Future generations will have you to thank for preserving our state's legacy of parks and trails.

We are accountable to you!

Thanks to the generosity of our members and donors, in 2015 PTNY was able to do even more to protect, sustain and promote New York's green network of parks and trails. Thank you!

Financial Statement

Statement of Activities for the year ended June 30, 2015

Support and Revenue

Individual contributions	\$ 234,904
Grants	267,519
Corporate contributions	224,000
Special events	36,736
Program revenue	513,456
Other	4,711
Total support and revenue	\$ 1,281,326

Expenses

Program services	
Conservation	\$ 782,895
Public education	175,300
Membership	81,808
Total program services	\$ 1,040,003

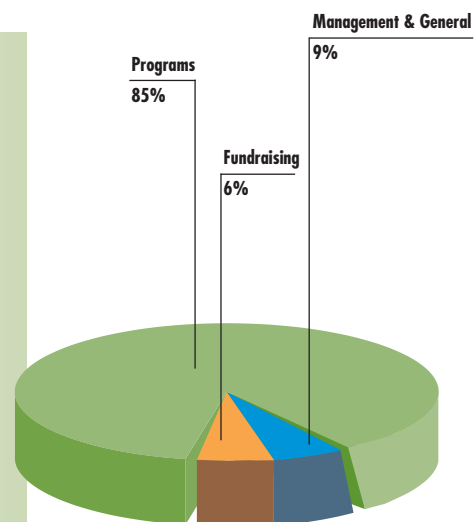
Expenses (continued)

Supporting services	
Management and general	\$ 105,179
Fundraising	70,121
Total supporting services	\$ 175,300
Total expenses	\$ 1,215,303

Net Assets

Change in net	66,023
Net, beginning	1,047,140
Net, end of year	\$ 1,113,163

A copy of our most recent audited financial statement is available online at www.ptny.org or upon request to Parks & Trails New York



Source: PTNY FY15 Audited Financial Statements

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IN MEMORY OF

THOMAS A. BOEHM
Anne Boehm

PTNY thanks the thousands of volunteers who help build, maintain and enhance our state parks and trails, serve as trail ambassadors, and help our bicycle tour participants have a safe and happy journey on the Erie Canalway Trail. Thanks for all you do!

Every effort has been made to provide an accurate accounting of PTNY supporters. Please contact us at ptny@ptny.org about any corrections.

To donate or join visit www.ptny.org



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Closing in on *Closing the Gaps*

Rich with history, the Erie Canal was a marvel of modern engineering that brought opportunity and prosperity to communities from Albany to Buffalo when it opened almost two centuries ago. Today, it continues to provide important economic, public health, tourism, and quality of life benefits to more than 3.7 million New Yorkers living along it. Steadily and surely, we are working on **Closing the Gaps** to make the Erie Canalway Trail the longest continuous statewide multi-use trail in the nation as well as promote it as a world-class destination for cyclists and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Since the **Closing the Gaps** campaign was launched in 2010 by PTNY and the Canalway Trails Association New York (CTANY), in conjunction with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, interest in completing the Erie Canalway Trail among citizens, community leaders, and local, state, and federal government officials has continued to grow. In 2015, 7 more miles of the



With only 72 miles to go, advocates are joining together to help Close the Gaps in the Erie Canalway Trail

trail were completed, leaving 72 miles to go! Our goal is to see that these remaining miles are either completed or planned by the 2017 bicentennial celebration of the start of Erie Canal construction.

The Erie Canalway End-to-End Program continues to inspire bicyclists and even some intrepid

walkers intent on adding their names to the growing list of people who've completed all 360 miles of the trail between Buffalo and Albany. In 2015, 589 made the journey. Congratulations End-to-Enders!

Each year, PTNY partners with the NYS Canal Corporation and communities along the Erie Canal to organize **Canal Clean Sweep**. The event brings thousands of volunteers of all ages together to participate in clean-up events in celebration of Earth Week. Volunteers pitch in to remove and recycle trash, build trails, weed, and cut brush in preparation for the upcoming canal navigation and tourism season. Since its start in 2005, the event has grown from 30 events to more than 100!