

GreenSpace

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

Fall/Winter 2020-2021



Knox Farm State Park, East Aurora, NY

New York State Parks in the Time of Covid: Friends Groups Step Up

Friends groups frequently work with park staff to offer engaging programming, run events, and get volunteers together for improvement and maintenance projects. But what happens when people can't be together in large groups? Friends of Knox Farm had to find the answer to that question this year, and while it's been difficult, the group has made the best of a tough situation.

"Our daily attendance has doubled, or even tripled. There's been more exploration of the park than ever before. It's great, but also puts a strain on the park. So we tried to act as a bridge for communicating park updates. People have been very appreciative and good stewards of the park," says Kathleen York, Executive Director of Friends of Knox Farm.

Kathleen's position, funded through a Park and Trail Partnership Grant (PTPG), was created last June and is the first non-volunteer role within the Friends group. "We saw almost immediate results after creating the position. Two philanthropic organizations reached out with opportunities for grants. Clearly these opportunities came from the steps PTPG allowed us to take."

PTPG is funded through the state Environmental Protection Fund and administered by Parks & Trails New York in partnership with State



"As problems go, having a lot of people at your park is a good one. We've had great support from our community, especially this year."


— Kathleen York,
Executive Director, Friends
of Knox Farm

Parks. Since its inception five years ago, the program has funded more than 100 projects totaling \$2.7 million. Friends of Knox Farm received another PTPG grant in this year's round of funding to restore historic barns on the park's 633 acres.

"I will personally be forever thankful for this year's grant. Parks staff are supporting the project through labor, so we can make our grant money go a lot farther than it would have in any other year," adds Kathleen.

But Friends of Knox Farm hasn't been untouched by the difficulties of this year. While the group had a successful fundraising and membership campaign for virtual I Love My Park Month in May, like many nonprofit organizations, future funding streams remain a concern. "How do you translate increased park usage to increased financial support? I think it's going to be a tough year coming up. That's going to be one of our big challenges and we are aware of it," muses Kathleen.

And Kathleen is right. Anyone who works with or is a regular visitor to our public green spaces has noticed increased visitation during the pandemic. That increased visitation, coupled with looming budget shortfalls, means this coming year will be a challenging one. In times like this, it's even more important that we come together to support each other and the state's crown jewels: its parks and public lands.



"In this time of continued difficulty, when people have been turning more and more to the outdoors for recreation and respite, and when the need to ensure that all Americans have access to the outdoors has never been greater, the 50-year dream of a fully funded Land and Water Conservation Fund has finally come to fruition."

— Robin Dropkin,
Executive Director, Parks & Trails New York

In the Midst of a Difficult Year, a BIG Win for the Outdoors

Half a century of tireless work by outdoors advocates nationwide has finally come to fruition. The Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA), signed into law August 4, fully and permanently funds, for the first time in history, the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), America's most important conservation program. The GAOA will provide nearly \$3 billion annually to conservation projects—outdoor recreation and maintenance of national parks and other public lands—with \$900 million directed to LWCF, double the funding provided prior to August 4.

Over the past 50 years, New York has received \$348.4 million from LWCF for projects as diverse as protecting forests and waterways in the Adirondacks, to building pocket parks and playgrounds in urban centers.

Parks & Trails New York is proud to have been a leader in NYS, as part of the national LWCF coalition, in the effort to finally push through the legislation this year. Thanks to your support, generations to come will enjoy greater access to nature and the outdoors.

Fight to Protect Green Space Continues

Unfortunately, we still have quite a way to go to ensure our green spaces are fully funded and supported. In July, Governor Cuomo determined that the \$3 billion Restore Mother Nature Bond Act would not appear on the November ballot. The initiative would have provided up to \$550 million for open space conservation and recreation projects, with the remainder going to restoration and flood risk reduction, climate change mitigation, and water quality improvement and resilient infrastructure.

Although off the table this year, the Governor and environmental advocates statewide are anticipating a second Bond Act effort in 2021. PTNY will be joining with partners to fight for this immensely important measure next year.

With the Environmental Bond Act no longer a possibility this year, it is more important than ever that New York maintains state funding for environmental initiatives, a tall order in light of looming budget shortfalls. We are particularly focused on protecting the \$300 million Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), as the programs it funds directly address issues stemming from the pandemic and ensuing fiscal crisis.

Continuing to keep our public green spaces and environment at the forefront of budgetary considerations will be difficult, but we've been here before. We're ready to roll up our sleeves and go to work with members, supporters and partners like you to get the job done.

WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

It's never too early to begin thinking about your legacy. As someone who appreciates nature and green space, we invite you to share your passion for New York's majestic parks and beautiful trails by making a planned gift to Parks & Trails New York and ensuring that your favorite parks and trails will be protected for generations to come.

To learn more about creating a lasting legacy for NYS parks, trails, and public green spaces, please contact Linden Horvath, Director of Development, at lhovath@ptny.org or 518-434-1583.

Trails Across New York Vision Pops Up in Poughkeepsie

"Thank you, what a great way to demonstrate to cyclists and motorists alike the benefits of bike lanes in the City of Poughkeepsie!"

"I can't drive, so I'd personally love to see a permanent bicycle corridor on every street. It will make the city much healthier and greener."

This past summer has been a busy one for trails, cyclists, and Parks & Trails New York's efforts on their behalf. After successfully advocating for legislation to develop a statewide greenways plan, we've been working closely with State Parks on some exciting first steps. PTNY held stakeholder webinars—as well as launched a survey that received thousands of responses—to find out what New Yorkers want to see in the upcoming Greenways Plan. With the Empire State Trail (the longest multi-use trail in the nation, set to open at the end of 2020!) as its spine, we are excited to work with our supporters, members, and partners to create an even more connected network of trails across the state.

This summer we also "hit the road"—with chalk—in Poughkeepsie in the mid-Hudson Valley. Our August 21 popup bike lane (as

ephemeral as the last days of summer) was a huge hit. We worked with the City of Poughkeepsie to create a temporary downtown bike lane, connecting residential areas to the city's commercial center and the Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park.

On-road connections are necessary infrastructure to create a truly linked network of rural and urban trails. Riders appreciated the added protection and enhanced access, and said they would be much more likely to cycle if the lane were permanent. PTNY is committed to a future of innovative and place-based solutions, connecting our communities to each other and our public green spaces.

Parks & Trails New York Members Make Connections

Bob Beck is, arguably, busier now that he's retired. Bob—a four-year PTNY member—has been working on developing a 10.5-mile rail trail in the Finger Lakes for the past five years. "It will start in Dryden and go right through the other communities, connecting with the City of Ithaca. It will be exactly what trails were meant to be: connectors between communities."

Bob decided to join PTNY because he loves what we love: New York State's parks, trails, and green spaces. Raised on a dairy farm in Upstate, Bob was a founding board member and the first executive director of the Finger Lakes Land Trust. His work to protect the Malloryville Bog led to a book (he's a published author), and a "Friends of the Land" award from the Nature Conservancy.

Bob's current passion is the Dryden Trail in particular—and supporting trail creation throughout the state in general. While getting easements for close to 50 land parcels isn't easy, Bob and his team of volunteers are dedicated to making the Dryden Trail a reality.

When we say our members and supporters are our lifeblood, we mean it. We are thankful—especially in such difficult times—for their commitment to the work we do individually and together to protect, promote and expand New York's public green spaces. Thank you.

"Why am I a member of PTNY? You do good work!"





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*“Autumn is a second spring
when every leaf is a flower.”*

— Albert Camus



Your support is vital
to New York's parks & trails

This year has been a strange and challenging one for grassroots groups that support New York's parks, trails, and historic sites. (see inside to learn more).