

# GreenSpace

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

Fall/Winter 2022-2023



Niagara Falls State Park  
Photo Credit: The Source

## Get Ready for a Celebration

Get ready to celebrate... big time. And when we say “big,” we mean more than 250 sites, 350,000 acres, and close to 80 million visitors big. That’s right, it’s almost 100 years since NYS Parks were officially formed, becoming one of the nation’s first state park systems.

How did we get here? Well, 100 years ago New York was in a *somewhat* similar situation as today: environmental threats abounded (then degradation from resource extraction and industrialization, today climate change), the desire to protect the environment was high, and there was a bond act proposed to protect public green spaces for future generations.

Legislation passed in 1924, with 73% of voters saying “yes” to the bond act at the ballot box. The State Council of Parks was formed to oversee coalescing of existing parks, and creation of the new parks system.

So what does this mean for PTNY and State Parks in 2024? First and foremost, a lot of celebrating. Keep your eyes out for a year-long series of events taking place at New York’s parks, participating public lands, and historic sites.

PTNY is contributing to the milestone by updating our groundbreaking Economic Impact Study for NYS Parks. The study, published in 2016, was crucial in demonstrating the broader economic impact of NY’s public green spaces, finding that for every \$1 spent by the state on parks there was

a \$9 return on investment. In addition, our newly *doubled* Park & Trail Partnership grants will be focusing on funding accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion for our public lands, one of the tenets of the centennial celebration.

Looking forward to 2024 is not only an opportunity to celebrate an incredibly impactful first 100 years for NYS Parks, it’s an opportunity to build a future for the public green spaces we treasure. PTNY is proud to be working with partners to ensure that future includes the health of our communities, environment, and access to green space for *all* New Yorkers.

“The Centennial Celebration is an ideal opportunity for Friends groups and partners of NYS Parks to develop programs, initiatives, and events that will welcome all New Yorkers to our outstanding public lands. Unfortunately, not everyone feels like our parks and historic sites are for them — either through a lack of representation, a lack of access, or other impediments — and this celebration aims to address those barriers and create solutions for the next century of the parks system.”

— Will Coté, Parks Program Director, PTNY



# Trails, Literature, and Service for New York's Outdoor Spaces

Photo Credit: I Love NY

Have you ever been curious about trails on Long Island? Interested in the ties between literature and the outdoors? Need a Board Secretary? (Joking, he has enough jobs...)

**Let us introduce you to Tom Casey.** ➤

Tom is a retired English teacher turned full-time Long Island trails advocate. From the big to the small, Tom is on it.

Tom's love of the outdoors grew out of his love for the written word. "I grew up a city kid—all I knew about wildlife was pigeons and sparrows," Tom says. It wasn't until he took a course on the outdoors and literature at Montana State University in the 70s that he truly caught the hiking bug. "We took day trips, night trips, week-long backpacking trip in the Absaroka Beartooth Wilderness." Back in Long Island, though, Tom needed spaces to hike. He got involved in trails work on Long Island and, after meeting Nancy Manfredonia (who started the [L.I. Greenbelt Trail Conference](#) in 1978), he was hooked on supporting L.I. trails.

Nowadays Tom is indefatigable in his work for Long Island trails. He sits on the Boards of the L.I. Greenbelt Trail Conference, L.I. Pine Barrens Society, Friends of Connetquot, and L.I. Environmental Voters Forum, to name only a few. For many of those Boards, Tom performs multiple functions, but for several he holds the role of Secretary. As Tom notes... "Notice a pattern? No one else ever wants to be Secretary." Until last year he was also on the Board of the NYS State Trails Council as, you guessed it, Secretary.

Tom has been working on another passion project for the past several years: a guide to and history of Long Island's Greenbelt Trails. "I figured somebody's gotta record this. It's such an amazing thing in a built up area like this—to have an organization that has so many miles of trails—that has also spawned the creation of so many other groups." The book will be a detailed guide on how to access the trails, provide section-by-section navigation, cover history of Long Island and the L.I. Greenbelt Trail Conference, and even provide information on the geology of the island and why that makes Long Island trails so interesting. The book will be co-authored with John Turner, one of the co-founders of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society, and is expected to be finished in the winter of 2023.



**"I will always support  
Parks & Trails New York."**

But, other than co-authors and storied Long Island founders and luminaries, Tom has a critical partner in this work... Parks & Trails New York. Tom first became a member of PTNY in 2008 when he was introduced to our work while serving on the NYS Trails Council. "I thought: this is a good thing to join. PTNY does such great work around the state." And in his years of service for Long Island's green spaces, he's become even more convinced.

**"I see each year the good you're doing around the state with Park & Trail Partnership grants, helping not-for-profits.**

**Two of the Boards I'm on received PTNY grants this year. Grants such as these not only make worthy projects feasible, but energize a group. It's a huge boost in morale to know that our efforts are recognized.**

**Your partnerships with state agencies have created a sharper focus on the need for more open space, better management of that space, and more public awareness of New York's great park systems. For example, we've never seen a state budget as good as this for green space. To have an organization like PTNY pushing it, I think that helped a lot."**

As the winner of our first-round raffle for renewing members, Tom is getting a little back as a "thank you" for all his years of service and generosity: a three-year NYS Parks Pass. The Parks Pass (also called the "Empire Pass") provides holders unlimited day-use vehicle entry to most facilities operated by New York State Parks and the State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, including forests, beaches, trails and more. Tom and his wife are planning some amazing upstate adventures over the next three years, with their pass in hand.

If you're a PTNY member and it's time to renew, keep an eye on your mailbox! Renew your membership at \$50 or higher by November 30<sup>th</sup> and you'll be entered in the second raffle of the year. It's just a small way to say "thank you" to our members, who help us accomplish so much.



# A New Vision (and Bond Act) for the Next 100 Years of NY's Green Spaces

As we prepare to celebrate NYS Parks' Centennial in 2024, we can't help but notice some interesting resonances to this time one hundred years ago.

In 1922, there was a sizeable and visionary Bond Act in the works. Totalling \$15 million—just shy of \$260 million in today's money—this bond act was a critical part of forming what is today known as one of the premier parks systems in the world... New York State Parks.

Sound familiar? It should, as NYS voters are poised to approve the game-changing Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act this November, the first environmental bond act since 1996. Bond acts are a way for the state to fund important, large-scale initiatives by taking on debt through selling state bonds. Following approval by the NY legislature, these show up as a ballot initiative to be approved by voters. Fun fact: all but one of the 11 environmental bond acts put in front of NYS voters since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century have passed by 10% or more!

Another interesting point about NYS environmental bond acts is that—more often than not—they have arisen at times when there has been deep concern about the state of our ecosystems and natural resources. The bond act that served as the backbone to create NYS Parks arose at a time when massive deforestation and degradation of the environment was threatening the health of communities and flora and fauna alike. It is no surprise, then, that we are at another crucial moment for New York's environment, with another bond act on the horizon today. The looming threat of climate change, and the focus on green space as a public health necessity during the early days of the pandemic, has again proven how important our ecosystems and green spaces truly are.

So what will this new environmental bond act usher in for the next 100 years of New York's public lands? Unsurprisingly, the visionary scope of this \$4.2 billion initiative is wide and deep. From funding the preservation of farmland to expanding parks and protecting our watersheds and drinking water, the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Bond Act will—if passed—be a critical stop-gap protecting New York's communities, economy, *and* environment.

The Bond Act has been a key advocacy priority for Parks & Trails New York because it will create, expand, and improve parks and green spaces for all New Yorkers to enjoy, while also protecting forests and lakes, and improving habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife. Vote "YES" this November. Let's usher in another impactful 100 years for New Yorkers and the green spaces we love.



## What will the Bond Act do?

- Protect drinking water
- Conserve land for wildlife, habitat, and recreation
- Reduce pollution
- Modernize outdated infrastructure to improve resiliency
- Support 100,000 jobs statewide

## Celebrating Leadership for New York's Outdoors

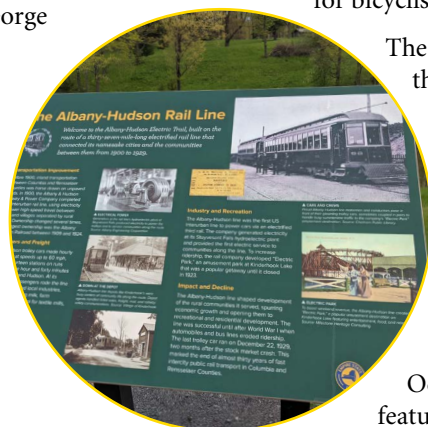
We're excited for the re-emergence of our George W. Perkins Award Reception this fall!

Established by PTNY close to 30 years ago, the George W. Perkins Award honors leaders in government, business, and philanthropy with a notable record of environmental accomplishment and public service. The Award is named for George W. Perkins, who, as a longtime member and president of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, was a model of the best in conservation leadership.

This year's reception honors National Grid and the Open Space Institute for their leadership and commitment to New York's environment and its future.

National Grid NY has committed to fighting climate change by fully eliminating fossil fuels from their U.S. gas and electric systems by 2050, if not sooner. National Grid was also instrumental in the creation of the Albany Hudson Electric Trail—part of the

Empire State Trail—by allowing use of a former electric trolley rail corridor the company owns to be converted into a multi-use trail for bicyclists, walkers, and runners of all ages and abilities.



The Open Space Institute protects land that supports the things we can't live without—clean water, climate protection, and healthy communities—and safeguards the places that make life worth living, such as parks for recreation and plant and animal habitat. OSI is also working hard to make access to our public green spaces more equitable, leading the charge with their recently released Open Spaces for All report.

Our Perkins Award Reception on Tuesday, October 25 at the University Club in NYC also features NYS Senator Skoufis as a speaker. Senator Skoufis has been a tireless advocate for increasing capital funding for state parks.

Contact our Director of Development, Linden Horvath, at [lhovath@ptny.org](mailto:lhovath@ptny.org) with any questions.





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*“Winter is an etching, spring a watercolor, summer an oil painting, and autumn a mosaic of them all.”*

— Stanley Horowitz



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# There's so much to celebrate for New York's public lands

Read inside to learn how your support is creating a bright future for our parks, trails, and public green spaces... and the New Yorkers who use and love them.