annual report 2019

PARKS & TRAILS NEW YORK

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Parks & Trails New York
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www.ptny.org

From our Board Chair and Executive Director

The current public health crisis reminds us of the importance of parks and trails. As we turn to nature for exercise, for comfort, for a breath of fresh air, we are especially grateful to our members, supporters, and partners who, since 1985, have helped us protect these treasured outdoor places.

In this unprecedented time, we're understanding just how important parks and trails are to our collective well-being.

But, ten years ago the future of New York's state parks was anything but certain.

After experiencing decades of disinvestment, many of our most cherished parks were on the brink of closing. Due to our supporters' tireless efforts, our community rallied to protect the oldest—and one of the largest and most diverse — state park systems in the nation.

Because of your support, parks have seen reinvestment of $900 million over the past decade. This means that not only are all parks open, they're thriving. New York State's parks and historic sites enjoyed a record 77 million visits in 2019. Visitors came from as far away as Japan and as close by as next door. These visitors, according to a study commissioned by Parks & Trails New York, contribute nearly $5 billion each year to the state's economy and create 54,000 jobs.

The good news is not reserved for parks, either. In 2020, New York celebrates the completion of the longest multi-use trail in the country — the 750-mile Empire State Trail. This is a dream come true for Parks & Trails New York and *all* trail lovers, culminating our decade-long campaign to Close the Gaps in the Erie Canalway Trail between Buffalo and Albany.

We have a lot to be proud of, and much we've accomplished.

However, increased use and more parks and trails mean we need to redouble our efforts to support our outdoor spaces. New York has one of the nation's largest systems of public lands, with 215 state parks and historic sites, millions of acres of forest preserves, and thousands of miles of multi-use trails. That's a lot of green space for exploration and respite, and a big responsibility. We owe it to ourselves, and to future generations, to continue protecting our environment and investing in public outdoor spaces.

Spending time outdoors is vital to our physical and mental health, now more than ever. And, now more than ever, we must ensure these spaces are protected and sustained for all New Yorkers.

So, thank you. Thank you for your support, your advocacy, your commitment.

Together, we will persevere in our fight to protect parks and trails, in good times and in times of crisis.

With gratitude and best wishes,

Robin Dropkin
Executive Director

Joe Scott
Board Chair

From Threatened to Thriving:
What We've Accomplished Together

Ten years ago we made a pledge to the parks community that we would fight to keep New York's parks open, safe, and beautiful. And today, thanks to our many supporters—from those sporting green Save Our State Parks buttons in 2010 to those donning green scarves for Park Advocacy Day in 2019—our parks are not only open, they're thriving.

$900 Million
invested in state parks and historic sites since 2010

This reinvestment has created new visitor and nature centers, new trails, and new essential park infrastructure.

77 Million
visits in 2019 to state parks and historic sites

That's a 35% increase from 2010. According to a report we commissioned, parks and their visitors contribute more than $5 billion and create 54,000 jobs annually.

76 Friends Groups
supporting state parks and historic sites

From the first Friends group—Old Fort Niagara Association, founded in 1927—the number of organizations dedicated to New York's parks and historic sites has grown to 76 strong. We're happy to welcome New York's newest Friends group—the Friends of Peebles Island State Park—to this dedicated and effective community.

More than 1,200 Miles
of multi-use trails

Starting with our *Closing the Gaps* campaign in 2010, and ending with the longest multi-use trail in the nation—the Empire State Trail, slated to open in 2020—we are growing the network of multi-use trails in NYS.

$450,000 in Grants
awarded

In 2019, 22 groups received funding in 2019 through the Park & Trail Partnership Grants program. Since the program's inception in 2015, a total of $1.8 million in grants have funded 82 projects. These grants leveraged $800,000 in private funds.

36,000 Volunteer Hours
for I Love My Park Day

With 8,000 volunteers working at 144 sites, I Love My Park Day is now one of the largest volunteer events in the state. The event started in 2011 as a way for New Yorkers to give back to the parks and outdoor places they love, growing in eight years by leaps and bounds from the original 40 sites.

650 Cyclists
completed 400 Miles along the iconic Erie Canal

On our 21st annual Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour participants, several from as far away as Australia, experienced the most famous and iconic of America's canal systems and enjoyed traffic-free bicycling on the Erie Canalway Trail.

Best Practices and Best Friends

From our founding in 1985, Parks & Trails New York has had the honor of working closely with some of the most committed state park stewards and advocates: Friends groups. From cleaning up trails to developing interpretive programming, we can say without hesitation that "you gotta have friends."

"I'm always at Friends group gatherings saying check out PTNY's site. It has everything you need and then some. I cannot say enough about PTNY as an organization, its targeted vision and purpose."

— Nancy, Friends of Moreau Lake State Park

WHAT'S A FRIENDS GROUP?

Friends groups are nonprofit organizations working closely with the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to support New York's state parks and historic sites. These groups of dedicated citizens—mostly volunteers—clear trails, paint buildings, build kiosks, lead interpretive programs, and raise significant funds for a wide range of projects. Friends groups often accomplish herculean tasks on shoestring budgets. Although a few organizations are large and well-funded, roughly half have budgets of $10,000 or less.

"Park and Trail Partnership Grants have been a huge help to us, especially with our Iroquois White Corn Project. The fall husking bee, the Project's keystone event at which the corn is husked, braided and hung to dry, draws people from all nations, indigenous and non-indigenous alike, and demonstrates our commitment to bringing people together to share and learn. An international student from a local college attended the bee and started braiding the corn tighter than tight. The master braider's jaw dropped. When questioned, the young woman simply answered, 'I grew up doing this back home in Kenya.'"

— Meg, Friends of Ganondagan State Park

FRIENDS BY THE NUMBERS:

- Friends groups bring in more than 675,000 park and historic site visitors through programming and events each year.
- Two-thirds of Friends groups host youth-specific programs, including interactive programming in STEM, summer camps, field trips, snow shoeing, movie nights, animal tracking… and much more.
- Friends groups raise over $17 million per year for state parks and historic sites.
- Friends groups volunteer more than 131,000 hours per year—for a value of $3 million.

"Working with Parks & Trails New York, we've seen collaboration, use, and appreciation increase."

— Joe, Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum

To help Friends groups step up in a variety of ways, we developed *Best Practices,* an A to Z compendium for non-profit organizations that steward and advocate for our parks and historic sites. We took decades of knowledge gleaned from working with Friends groups and other non-profit organizations across the state and merged it into this comprehensive 'how to' manual. *Best Practices* covers fundraising, grants, mission statements, bylaws, and much more.

View *Best Practices* on our website www.ptny.org.

"When we became a Friends group it quickened my sense of opportunity and responsibility with the site. I felt a new sense of obligation to make the farm more meaningful, engaging, and attractive to a wider audience."

— Martha, John Brown Lives!

Protecting, Expanding and Enhancing Parks and Trails into the Next Decade

A TRUE TRAIL NETWORK

Launching Trails Across New York Campaign

We are focusing on creating even greater trail connectivity throughout the state by working on a comprehensive, statewide greenways plan in partnership with State Parks. We envision a not-so-distant future where all New Yorkers are minutes from a safe, accessible trail by foot, bike, wheelchair … you pick!

Looking forward to the completion of the Empire State Trail

NYS is set to open the longest multi-use trail in the nation in 2020 — a dream come true for Parks & Trails New York and all trail enthusiasts. Celebrate our expanded connectivity by walking, cycling, or volunteering.

Visit www.ptny.org/trailfinder to find a multi-use trail near you.

PARKS, TRAILS AND PUBLIC LANDS

Doubling funding for Park and Trail Partnership Grants

With Park and Trail Partnership Grants now at the $1 million mark, we are looking forward to funding twice as many exciting and innovative projects.

Getting together with Friends

In the wake of our very successful 2019 statewide Friends conference, and to make sure we're offering the best support we can to Friends groups, we'll be launching a series of regional Friends group meetings closer to their home turfs in 2020.

ADVOCACY

Investing in New York's green infrastructure

We're joining with our fellow environmental organizations to promote the $3 billion Restore Mother Nature Bond Act. We'll be doing everything in our power to convince voters in November to vote YES! on the Bond Act. If passed, it will be the first environmental bond act since 1996.

Envisioning the future of parks and trails

The NY Parks 2020 Plan has been amazingly effective, infusing our state park system with $900 million in capital investment. We're excited to plan for and dream about how we can help parks and trails thrive—not just survive—in 2020 and beyond.

Ensuring all New Yorkers have nearby green space

We want to make sure *all* New Yorkers have easy access to nature and the outdoors, whether at a park or trail. From programs such as Connect Kids to Complete Streets, we're primed to push for access.

Come Build the Future of New York's Parks and Trails with Us!

5 WAYS TO SUPPORT:

- **Become a member**
- **Donate (and get your employer to match)**
- **Give at the office through EarthShare.org**
- **Give Stock, Mutual Funds, or support PTNY through your Donor Advised Fund**
- **Join our Legacy Society**

Visit ptny.org/get-involved/ways-to-give to learn more or contact Linden Horvath, Development Director, at lhorvath@ptny.org or 518-434-1583.

5 WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:

- **Volunteer for I Love My Park Day or Canal Clean Sweep**
- **Join us for an Advocacy Day at the Capitol**
- **Join a Park or Trail Friends Group**
- **Adopt a Trail**
- **Sign Up:** ***Receive updates on important park and trail issues and newsletters full of new outdoor places to explore***

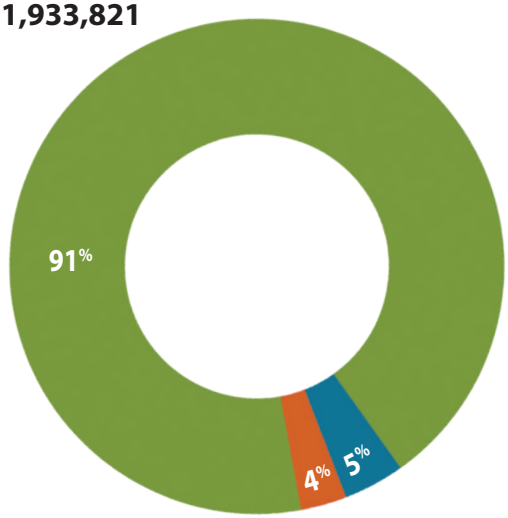
Visit ptny.org/get-involved/volunteer to learn more, call our office at 518-434-1583 or email ptny@ptny.org.

2019 Financial Summary

The charts represent overall income and expenses for Parks & Trails New York for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018.

OPERATING EXPENSES

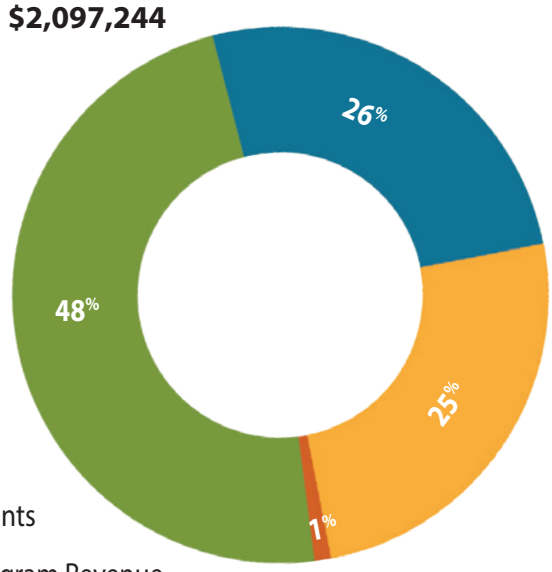
TOTAL: $1,933,821



- Programs: Conservation, Education & Advocacy
- Fundraising
- Management & General

OPERATING SUPPORT & REVENUE

TOTAL: $2,097,244



- Grants
- Program Revenue
- Individual, Foundation & Corporate Contributions
- Other

A copy of our complete audited financial statement can be obtained online at ptny.org/aboutus/financials or by calling Parks & Trails New York at 518-434-1583.

Thank You to Our Members and Donors

Parks & Trails New York thanks all who make our work possible: our donors giving anywhere from $1 to $99 and those volunteering, protecting, and advocating for our parks, trails and public lands. You keep our green spaces safe, clean, and welcoming today and for future generations.

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"I go to nature to be soothed and healed."

— **John Burroughs,** American naturalist and essayist from the Catskills.
Visit the John Burroughs Sanctuary in the town of Esopus, NY.

What does it take to protect our state's public lands?

A look at how Parks & Trails New York is making a difference for your favorite green spaces.

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