

2017

ANNUAL REPORT



CREATING AND PROTECTING
PARKS AND TRAILS FOR
GENERATIONS TO COME



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Parks & Trails New York
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(518) 434-1583 (P)
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www.ptny.org

Thanks to you, New York
is greener than ever. Let's
continue to lead by
example and protect our
public greenspaces and
environment to make our
world a better place.

Dear Friends of New York's Parks and Trails,

Thanks to your continued support, 2017 was another banner year for New York's parks and trails. Although changes at the federal level have made this a difficult budget year for NYS, Governor Cuomo continues to stand strong for the environment, with significant investments in State Parks and Historic Sites and the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and, of course, his unwavering commitment to completing the 750-mile Empire State Trail by 2020. The proposed budget for 2018-19 includes \$90 million for State Parks capital projects, part of Governor Cuomo's NY Parks 2020 plan to invest \$900 million in critical projects at State Parks and Historic Sites. It also maintains \$300 million for the EPF, including \$500,000 for the Park & Trail Partnership Program, a transformational grants program for park and trail Friends groups that we administer in partnership with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

These visionary investments have paid off with a record 71 million visitors enjoying State Parks and Historic Sites in 2017. More visitors to parks means a better economy. A recent economic report commissioned by PTNY shows that State Parks support about 45,000 jobs and are responsible for \$5 billion in spending, a nine to one return on state investment.

But as promising as things are in New York, the proposed federal budget, which has been put on hold with budget extensions, is a major setback for environmentalists and people who care about parks, trails and other outdoor places.

The EPA budget (20% of the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation operating budget comes from federal funding) has been drastically cut. Proposed reductions in the National Park Service budget (26 NPS sites are located in NYS) and the elimination of Americorps (the funding source for the NYS Excelsior Conservation Program) will have a negative impact on the environment and people of New York.

Also of grave concern is the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which will expire on September 30, 2018 without action from Congress. For the past 52 years, the LWCF has used proceeds from off-shore oil and gas drilling to fund park and trail projects in every region of New York and across the country.

As New Yorkers, we have a lot to be thankful for. But changes at the Federal level threaten our progress. Now, more than ever, we must serve as an example for the rest of the country by leading the effort to protect our environment and public parks and trails.

We are grateful to have your continued support in the fight for New York's environment, parks and trails. ♦♦♦

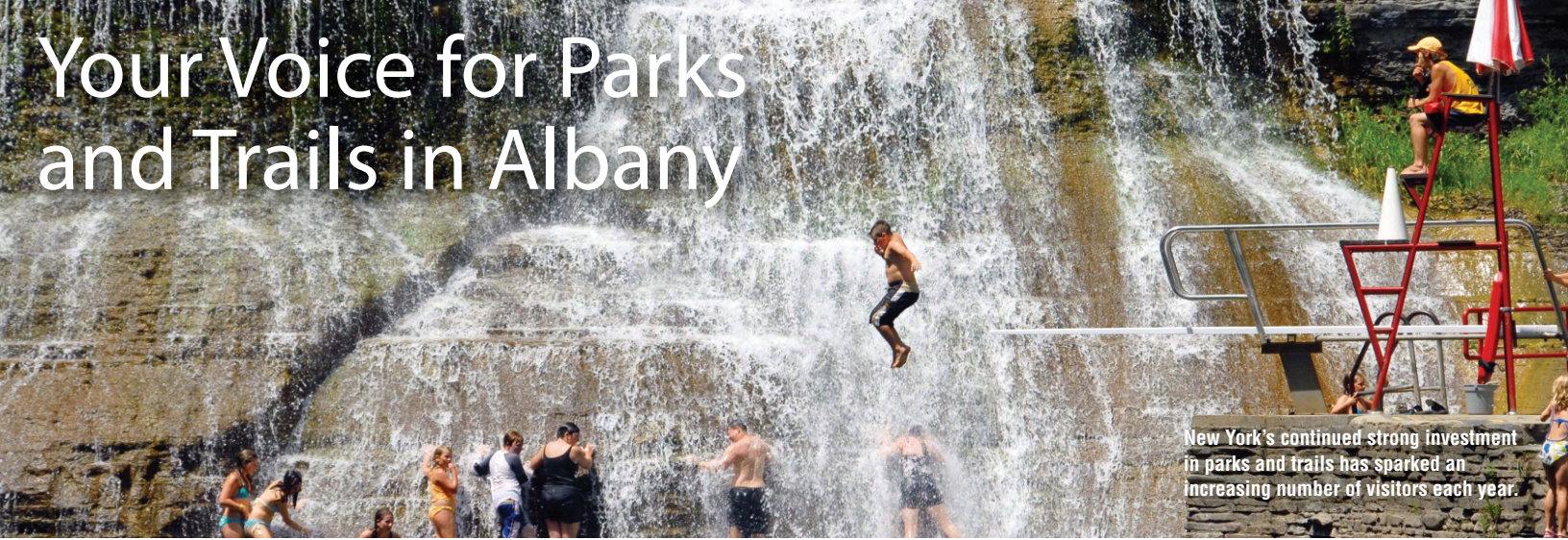
Robin Dropkin *Joe Scott*



Robin Dropkin
Executive Director

Joe Scott
Chair of the Board

Your Voice for Parks and Trails in Albany



New York's continued strong investment in parks and trails has sparked an increasing number of visitors each year.

Each year, PTNY plays an active role in the state budget and legislative process by advocating for legislation that supports parks and trails. Our annual advocacy agenda identifies priority issues and legislation, serves as the basis of our testimony at hearings, meetings with legislators and annual advocacy days, and guides us in our strategies in support of or in opposition to proposed legislation. In all of our advocacy efforts, we fight for the protection, improvement, and expansion of our parks and trails.

Your support for our advocacy work has helped spark a renaissance for New York's state park system. Thankfully, the proposed Fiscal Year 2018-19 Executive Budget continues this strong investment in our parks and shared green spaces.

The proposed budget includes \$300 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), including \$500,000 for the Park & Trail Partnership Program, a grant program for Friends organizations administered by PTNY. The EPF also sets aside another \$1 million for the Connect Kids to Parks Program that reimburses transportation costs for school children visiting State Parks, Historic Sites and other environmental education facilities.

It also contains \$90 million for State Parks capital projects, including \$15 million to build a new state park in Brooklyn's Jamaica Bay. This 407-acre park will be the largest in New York City, and will include 3.5 miles of trails, dramatically increasing recreation opportunities for the community.

An additional \$50 million in capital funding will complete the Hudson River Park on Manhattan's West Side. Originally slated for completion in 2005, this funding will leverage public-private partnerships and contribute to the Estuary Management Plan.

The Capital Plan also demonstrates the Governor's commitment to spending last year's appropriation to complete the Empire State Trail, a 750-mile continuous trail that expands outdoor recreation and economic development opportunities for communities it connects across the state.

The success of our advocacy work is encouraging, but there is always more to be done and we must keep investing in our parks and trails. We are grateful to you, and our wonderful community of supporters, for making this work possible. ♦♦

New Report: Parks Boost the Economy!

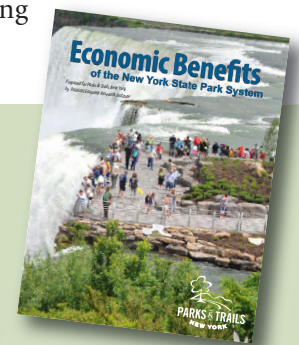
In 2017, PTNY commissioned a study on the economic benefits of parks from the independent Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts. The study, *Economic Benefits of the New York State Park System*, finds that the NYS Park System supports \$5 billion in sales, 54,000 jobs, and more than \$2.8 billion in additional state GDP. Each dollar of state funding supports \$9 of sales throughout the state.

From April 2015 to March 2016, the 67 million visits to the New York State park system resulted in about \$4 billion in spending by local and non-local visitors. This includes day trips and overnight trips, with visitors spending money on park entrance and use fees, sporting equipment, food and drink, transportation, lodging, and other expenses. Visitor spending has a multiplier effect, as jobs and revenues are

created in supporting industries throughout the economy. The total economic significance of the \$4 billion in visitor spending is about 45,000 jobs and \$2.4 billion additional state GDP.

In addition, state government funding and spending by partner organizations for park operations and capital improvements totaled \$543 million. This funding also has a multiplier effect, supporting about 9,000 jobs and averaging \$485 million in additional state GDP.

The report also noted numerous other benefits from parks, including increased property values and tax receipts, reduced pollution, and improved health and wellness. Every way you look at it, parks are a great investment! ♦♦



Park and Trail Partnership Program Spotlight

Iroquois White Corn Experience

Through its Iroquois White Corn Heritage Food Experience, Friends of Ganondagan have created a cultural food and educational experience for visitors featuring traditional Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) food and agricultural practices. The Friends used funding from the Park and Trail Partnership Program to infuse authentic Iroquois food experiences into their programming and events in an effort to develop a deeper understanding about Haudenosaunee culture.

The Friends also hoped to foster a greater awareness of Ganondagan State Historic Site, garner increased media attention, and attract new members and volunteers. After incorporating the Iroquois White Corn Heritage Food Experience programming into a number of events throughout the year, the Friends experienced a 15% bump in membership, welcomed 14 new volunteers, and were rewarded with 47 media spots featuring the historic site and its unique programming. ♦♦♦

"Adding an authentic, indigenous white corn food experience into our programming has been a wonderful experience that exceeded our expectations. Visitors are moved by the demonstrations and excited to experience Ganondagan through the lens of food. It's brought a whole new dimension to our site and the volunteers the program has attracted are excited to continue and build on this new tradition"

— Margaret Joseph,
Executive Director of Friends of Ganondagan State Historic Site



Friends of Ganondagan used their PTPP grant to offer visitors a taste of traditional Haudenosaunee food at events and programs at the site.

Park and Trail Partnership Program Empowers Friends Groups

Providing assistance and support to grassroots park and trail groups in communities across the state is at the heart of what PTNY does. Our staff provides expert technical advice and conducts landmark studies and trail counts to support the work of municipalities and park and trail organizations.

We've championed the importance and value of Friends groups, whose dedication, passion and on-the-ground knowledge of their parks enable them to do great things at the grassroots level. Working in partnership with state park staff, they fundraise, develop trails, organize and lead community programs, staff nature centers and museums, plant trees and flowers, and lead tours...all the while spreading love for New York's great outdoors.

After advocating for funding for park and trail Friends groups for more than 10 years, we were excited to launch the **Park and Trail Partnership Program**, in collaboration with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, in 2015. With funds from the Environmental Protection Fund, this competitive grants program enables grassroots groups to leverage more private funding; marshal more volunteer power; and support increased investment, events and activities at the parks and historic sites they serve.

In the first three years of the program, 61 projects were funded and \$1,350,000 in grants leveraged almost \$600,000 in matching funds in parks and historic sites in every corner of the state. From unique community programming designed to bring more children and families to parks, to restoring buildings and building visitor kiosks, to hiring staff and developing marketing plans to increase visitation, the great diversity of projects funded will improve and enhance parks for all to enjoy.

For a full list of projects funded through the Park and Trail Partnership Program, visit www.ptny.org. ♦♦♦

Bringing People Together to Ensure a Future for Parks and Trails

Home to Niagara Falls State Park, the nation's first state park designated in 1885, and with 215 state parks encompassing 350,000 acres and thousands of miles of trails, New York is a leader in environmental conservation and outdoor recreation. Our goal is to make sure that as many people as possible experience and fall in love with this wealth of beautiful parks and trails. The more people that use and care for them, the more certain it is that our state's legacy of public greenspace will continue.

Promoting Volunteerism

PTNY connects people to New York's outdoor spaces with a wide variety of tools, programs and events. Statewide volunteer events like **I Love My Park Day** and **Canal Clean Sweep**, which bring thousands of volunteers together to care for our parks and trails, build a tradition of stewardship, service, and pride amongst people of all ages and backgrounds.

Inspiring Adventure

2018 marks the 20th anniversary of **Cycle the Erie Canal**, our annual eight-day guided tour which brings cyclists from across the country and the world to enjoy historic villages, beautiful scenery, and first-class cycling on this fully-supported trip.

PTNY also helps adventure seekers with trip planning through its interactive online Erie Canalway Trail map and statewide Trailfinder map. Our *Cycling the Erie Canal* and *Cycling the Hudson Valley* guidebooks have helped thousands of cyclists from across the state and country as they plan their journeys. We also advise local communities on how to attract cyclists and outdoor adventurers through programs such as our **Bicyclists Bring Business** workshops and **Bike Friendly New York** business certification program. ◆◆

Inspiring the Next Generation of Conservationists

In all of our volunteer events, PTNY strives to engage people of all ages and backgrounds in caring for and stewarding parks and trails. We have a particular interest in attracting young people who we hope will develop a love for our outdoor spaces and a passion for protecting them.

We are proud to partner with the Student Conservation Association (SCA), America's largest and most effective youth conservation service organization, which has been participating in I Love My Park Day since its beginning. In New York State, SCA partners with AmeriCorps, NYS OPRHP, NYS DEC and various non-profits to field more than 130 members each year.

SCA's mission is to transform lives and lands by empowering young people to plan, act, and lead, while they protect and restore our natural and cultural resources.

Fortunately, I Love My Park Day provides a great opportunity for them to do just that.

In 2017, 88 SCA members and four staff pitched in at 45 parks and historic sites across the state for I Love My Park Day. In some cases, SCA members help plan projects, manage volunteers and do outreach for the event.

Hannah Long, who graduated from Missouri State University with a degree in Wildlife Biology, spent the day at Jones Beach State Park. "I grew up in a landlocked state so I was excited to travel to Jones Beach for I Love My Park Day as it was the first real beach I'd ever been to. A group of my fellow SCA members were there and we had a great day cleaning up the beach. It was inspiring to see all of the folks who came out to help on a windy and cloudy day. Together, we covered a lot of ground and cleaned up the beach.

Later that year, I went back and swam in the ocean for the first time in my life. It made me happy to see people enjoying such a beautiful place knowing that I was part of a team that helped keep it nice." ◆◆

Hannah Long (back, 2nd from right) and fellow Student Conservation Association members helped clean up Jones Beach on I Love My Park Day.



Thanks to you, our beautiful parks and trails are enriching your life and the lives of millions of New Yorkers and visitors each year!

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** – Consider setting 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

We are accountable to you!

Thanks to the generosity of our members and donors, in 2017 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, 2017

Support and Revenue

Individual contributions	\$ 257,041
Grants	421,825
Corporate contributions	169,587
Program revenue	562,439
Other	33,005
Total support and revenue	\$ 1,443,897

Expenses

Program services	
Conservation	\$ 939,520
Public education	199,318
Membership	93,796
Total program services	\$ 1,232,634

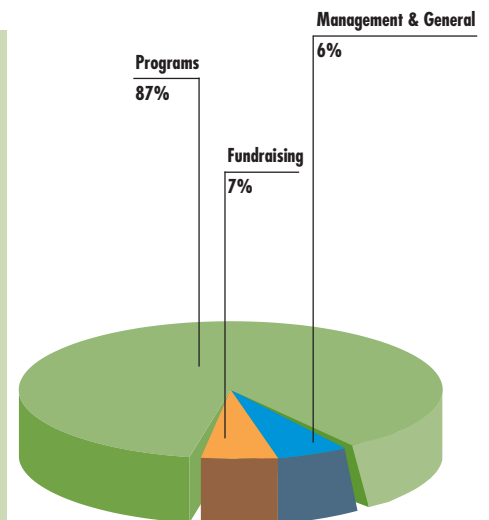
Expenses (continued)

Supporting services	
Management and general	\$ 82,073
Fundraising	93,800
Total supporting services	\$ 175,873
Total expenses	\$ 1,408,507

Net Assets

Change in net	35,390
Net, beginning	1,189,971
Net, end of year	\$ 1,225,361

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 FY17 Audited Financial Statements

Thank You Members and Donors

Gifts of \$100 or more

Parks & Trails New York is deeply grateful to the members and donors whose gifts of \$1 to \$99 also made our work possible.

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An Update on *Your* Empire State Trail

In 2017, Governor Cuomo proposed an investment of \$200 million to create the Empire State Trail (EST). After leading the campaign to “Close the Gaps” in the Erie Canalway Trail for more than 10 years, we were excited to see that dream, and so much more, realized. A year after the announcement, things are moving forward.

Here's what's happening:

- ◆ Hudson Electric Trail (AHET) - The 35-mile AHET between Rensselaer and Hudson is the longest section of new trail planned, with 27 miles of off-road trail along the route.
- ◆ Maybrook Trailway - The 25-mile Maybrook Trailway will connect existing trails in the Hudson Valley with the Walkway Over the Hudson, establishing the first Hudson River Crossing along the north-south spine of the EST.
- ◆ Champlain Canalway Trail - NYS announced that \$12 million will fund construction of 22 miles of multi-use trail along the 61-mile Champlain Canalway Trail.
- ◆ Erie Canalway Trail – Efforts to close the longest gap in the Erie Canalway Trail, 26 miles between Lyons to Port Byron, resulted in a preliminary route that will be half off-road trail and half on-road. A recently-announced plan to close the gap between Camillus and DeWitt through Syracuse with an off-road connection to the Onondaga Lake Trail will greatly

enhance the trail experience in Central NY. Public meetings on a Mohawk Valley gap section were held last winter, resulting in a plan for 11 miles of new trail in 2019.

In December, PTNY and the NYS Canal Corporation released results of the 2017 Canalway trail user counts in the Who's on the Trail report, revealing increased usage at multiple locations. A page dedicated to the EST was launched at ny.gov, with information about the future trail route and links to other sources of information such as CycletheErieCanal.com.



Rendering of off-road trail in Syracuse

PTNY will continue to champion the benefits of trails and support local communities as they develop their sections of the EST. Stay up to date on New York's growing trail network by signing up for PTNY eNews. ◆◆