



NEWS RELEASE

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**New State Budget Revitalizes New York's World Class System of Parks, Trails and Historic Sites
Spending Plan Benefits Local and Regional Economies
Creates New Public-Private Grants Program**

ALBANY, N.Y. – Parks & Trails New York, a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization, commends Governor Cuomo and state legislative leaders for crafting a new state budget that will help grow the economy, promote tourism, and enhance the quality of life for all New Yorkers. PTNY applauds the State Senate, led by Majority Leader Dean Skelos and Environmental Conservation Committee Chairman Thomas O'Mara, and the State Assembly, led by Speaker Carl Heastie and Environmental Conservation Committee Chairman Steven Englebright. The final budget for State FY 2015-16 includes landmark investments in state parks infrastructure, environmental programs, and grassroots Friends organizations.

New York State Parks and Historic Sites

"This infusion of capital funding breathes new life into a park system suffering from decades of underfunding," said Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director. "Thanks to the strong leadership of Governor Cuomo and the Legislature, the revitalization of our state park system can continue, boosting tourism, creating jobs, and securing New York's parks and conservation legacy for future generations."

The enacted budget keeps up the momentum in restoring New York's iconic state park system with a \$110 million capital investment. The funds will be used to address the backlog of capital needs at New York State Parks and Historic Sites across the state.

During the past three years, New York's state parks and historic sites have received unprecedented support. Yearly capital infusions have allowed the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to begin to address more than \$1 billion in infrastructure needs and critical health and safety repairs at state parks and historic sites, such as replacing aging water and sewer systems, rehabilitating restrooms, and repairing bridges, dams, roads, leaky roofs and swimming

pools. This investment in our state park system, leveraged with additional private and federal money, creates local jobs, boosts tourism in communities across the state, and helps to grow the state's economy sustainably.

"The budget agreement reflects the important role state parks play in local economic growth," said Dropkin. "It protects important natural areas contributing to enhanced sustainability and quality of life, and providing affordable, close-to-home recreational opportunities to New Yorkers across the state."

Parks & Trails New York looks forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to keep the momentum going for parks, including partnering with the Governor and OPRHP for the fourth annual I Love My Park Day on May 2nd, to celebrate and enhance New York's state parks and historic sites.

Environmental Protection Fund

Parks & Trails New York also commends state leaders for the appropriation of \$177 million for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). PTNY is encouraged by steady progress towards the restoration of the Fund. This year's \$15 million increase in the EPF appropriation is a recognition that New York needs to invest in programs that protect our clean air and water, support parks, trails and farms, creates jobs and improves the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

New Non-Profit Capacity-Building Grants Program

PYNY is very excited by the \$500,000 EPF appropriation for a new capacity-building grants program for organizations that promote and support the state's parks, trails and historic sites. This public-private capacity-building grants program will be administered by Parks & Trails New York in partnership with OPRHP. It will unlock the potential of Friends organizations across the state by increasing their effectiveness, productivity, and volunteer and fundraising capabilities. This will enhance park, trail and historic site stewardship, leading to even greater economic benefits from outdoor recreation and healthier, more sustainable and resilient communities.

"Active and engaged grassroots organizations already contribute significantly to the stewardship of the state's parks, trails and historic sites, raising tens of millions of dollars and logging hundreds of thousands of hours of volunteer assistance," said Dropkin. "This investment of EPF funds in a capacity-building grants program to strengthen these organizations will reap large benefits, enabling groups to leverage more private and federal funding, marshal more volunteer power, and augment the state's historic investment in parks."

About Parks & Trails New York: Parks & Trails New York is the leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated since 1985 to improving the health and quality of life of all New Yorkers by working with community organizations and municipalities to envision, create, promote, and protect a growing network of parks, greenways and trails throughout the state for all to use and enjoy. For more information, visit www.ptny.org.