



NEWS RELEASE



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New Yorkers call on Legislators to Continue Revitalization of State Parks System
More than 30 grassroots groups travel to Albany to support state parks

Albany NY—New Yorkers from across the state are coming together at the State Capitol on March 3 for the 9th annual Park Advocacy Day to urge policymakers to protect and preserve New York's state parks. Representatives from more than 30 park Friends groups, environmental organizations, local parks, and educational organizations will make the case for state park funding.

The event comes on the heels of the unveiling of Governor Andrew Cuomo's seven-point framework to realize NY Parks 2020, a multi-year commitment to transform state parks and invest \$900 million through 2020.

Park advocates will urge state lawmakers to support the Governor's \$110 million capital investment in the state park system in this year's state budget, enhance the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), and support a new grants program for Friends groups that support and strengthen the state's parks, trails and historic sites.

Thanks to the nearly \$270 million investment made by the state over the last three years the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) has been incrementally addressing an estimated \$1 billion in infrastructure needs and critical safety repairs, breathing new life into an aging park system.

"Our state parks and historic sites are a public treasure of New York," said Parks & Trails New York Executive Director Robin Dropkin. "We appreciate the Governor's continued commitment to rejuvenating New York's state parks and historic sites and we look forward to working with the state legislature to ensure that our parks receive the funding necessary for them to operate safely and effectively."

"Thanks to Governor Cuomo and continued support from the legislature, state parks are on the upswing. Never in the history of the state park system has there been this level of sustained investment to upgrade and restore New York's state parks," said Erik Kulleseid, executive director of the Alliance for New York State Parks, a program of the Open Space Institute. "These investments are transforming a once beleaguered system and restoring our greatest natural treasures as sources of pride, community vitality and economic strength."

Included in the Governor's budget proposal for the EPF is \$500,000 for a new capacity-building grants program to increase the effectiveness, productivity, and volunteer and fundraising efforts of organizations that promote and support the state's parks, trails and historic sites. The program will foster stronger local public/private partnerships to more effectively leverage multiple resources. This will enhance park, trail and historic site stewardship, leading to even greater economic benefits from outdoor recreation, improved access to outdoor resources, 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,” said Dropkin. “A small investment of EPF funds in a competitive grants program to strengthen these organizations will reap large benefits, enabling groups to leverage more private and federal funding and marshal more volunteer power, and will augment the state’s historic investment in parks.”

Funding for New York’s park system also creates strong local jobs and helps to grow the state’s economy while restoring and reinvigorating treasured state parks and historic sites. With more than 62 million people annual visitors, New York’s state parks and historic sites are primed to anchor the state’s regional tourism efforts, particularly in upstate communities.

According to an independent study commissioned by Parks & Trails New York, the state park system boosts the state’s economy to the tune of nearly \$2 billion annually—a \$5-to-\$1 return on the state’s investment, while creating and sustaining 20,000 jobs exclusive of state parks employees. The study also shows that about 40% of total visitor spending comes from visitors living outside the communities in which the parks are located.

Parks & Trails New York and the Alliance for New York State Parks jointly organize Park Advocacy Day.

Parks & Trails New York advocates statewide for New York’s parks and trails and has been dedicated since 1985 to improving New Yorkers health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space.

A program of the Open Space Institute, the Alliance for New York State Parks advocates for New York’s state park system, strives to build an organized and effective public constituency for state parks, and seeks to create new public and private funding streams for state park programs and capital projects.

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