

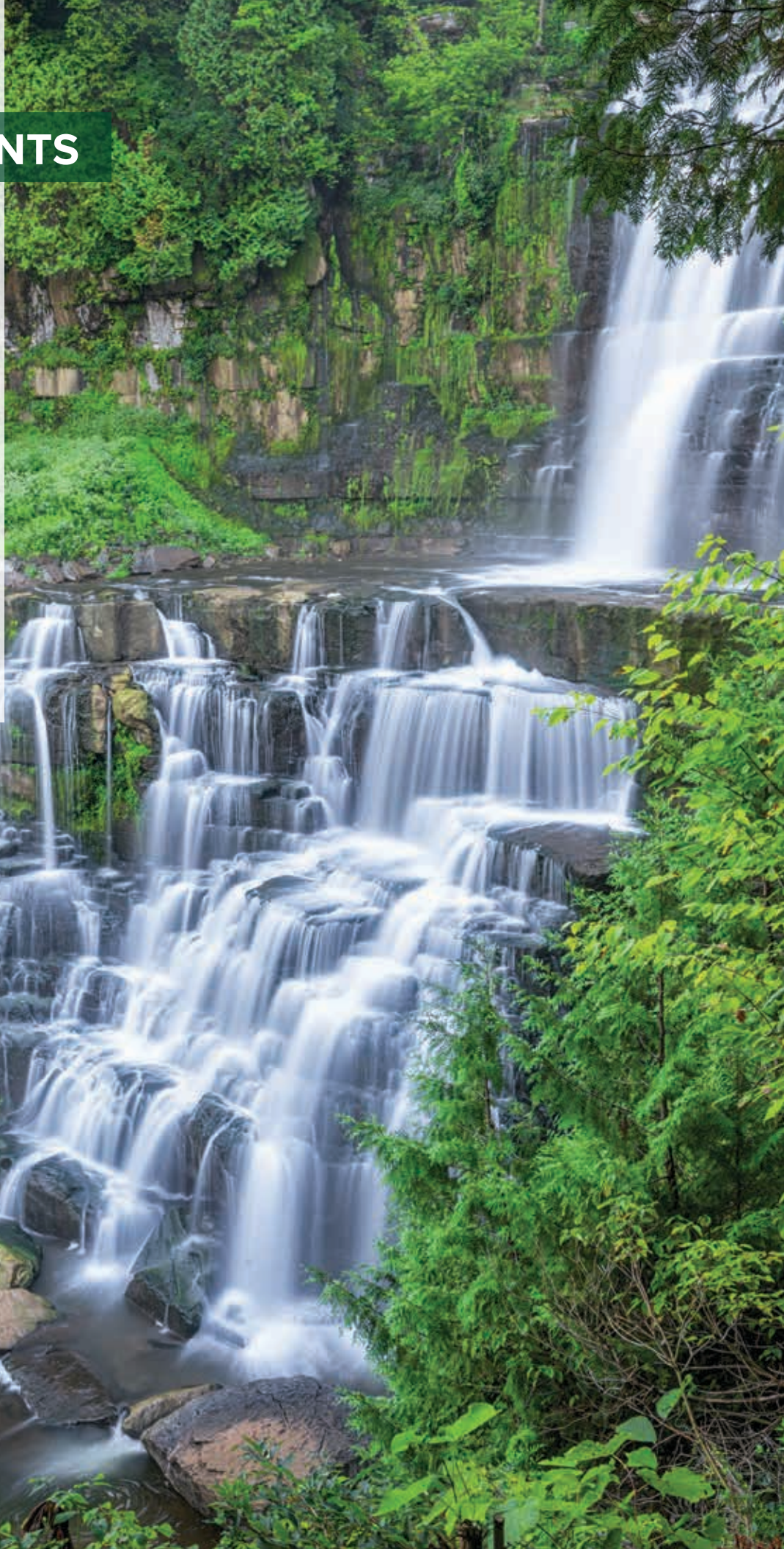


**New York State  
Council of Parks,  
Recreation &  
Historic Preservation**  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2018**



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## Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

## State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ERIK KULLESEID**  
Acting Commissioner

**LUCY R. WALETZKY, M.D.**  
State Council Chair

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor  
Executive Chamber  
Albany, NY 12224

February 2019

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is pleased to submit its 2018 Annual Report. This report highlights the State Council of Parks and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's achievements during 2018, and sets forth recommendations for the coming year.

First, we applaud your selection of Erik Kulleseid as the next State Parks Commissioner. He is eminently qualified for the position with a deep and passionate commitment to the mission of the agency. He is also poised to continue the legacy-making initiatives that former Commissioner Rose Harvey developed under your leadership including the unprecedented capital investment in New York State Parks, which has resulted in a renaissance of the system. With over \$880 million invested in capital projects over the last six years, we are restoring public amenities, fixing failing infrastructure, creating new trails, and bringing our state's flagship parks back to life.

With the revitalization of the state park system so firmly underway, we are working hard to ensure that all New Yorkers, particularly our youth, can experience all that our parks and historic sites offer. We are especially proud of the *Connect Kids to Parks Transportation Grant Program* which provides grants to classes in Title 1 districts across the state for field trips to state parks. Since 2016, nearly 200,000 students have visited a state park or historic site through this program. They are experiencing nature, learning about their state's history, and making new connections in their communities and beyond. We thank you for your continued support to nurture the next generation of park visitors, environmental stewards and active, healthy New Yorkers. Our free *Learn-to-Swim* program has taught thousands of children to swim over the last five years in areas where such opportunities are limited and has gained national recognition for its success in overcoming barriers to swimming

The State Council of Parks remains committed to continuing the tradition of philanthropic support for state parks and, together with the Open Space Institute and the Natural Heritage Trust, has raised millions in private funds and through partnerships to support signature projects, exhibits and long-term operations at state parks and historic sites throughout the state. And, our friends groups—from large to small—remain an integral part of our system, providing time, resources and partnership on a wide array of projects and programs. Thank you for your support of the Capacity Building Grant program in the EPF which helps support and strengthen these organizations.

Continued next page

As the agency puts your *NY Parks 2020* investment to work building new and renovating deteriorated facilities we must also maintain them and protect this historic capital investment while best serving our visitors. We encourage an increased level of general fund support in the state budget to support not only the basic operations of State Parks but also to maintain the new and improved infrastructure resulting from your investment and meet the needs of a growing number of visitors. We continue to support the agency's efforts to implement significant and far-reaching efficiency measures including improved energy use; automated fee collection; shared maintenance and interagency collaboration. We also continue to support, encourage and identify innovative partnerships that expand services to park patrons without additional operating expense to the agency. By ensuring an adequate level of operational support for State Parks we ensure that the 71 million people who visit our parks annually receive high quality service commensurate with the magnificence of the capital revitalization you have led.

Finally, the State Council of Parks acknowledges its deep gratitude to you for your continued commitment to ensuring that our state's remarkable public lands remain accessible to all New Yorkers and for fighting efforts that threaten our state's natural resources whether through over- development, encroachment or environmental hazards. Your stewardship is remarkable and your strong leadership is more needed than ever. We are proud to be your partners in this effort.

Best wishes,



Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky  
Chair, State Council of Parks



# STATE COUNCIL OF PARKS 2019 PRIORITIES



Heckscher State Park - I Love My Park Day



Allegheny State Park



Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms State Park

# The State Council of Parks will advance five priorities in 2019



## 1 Build and Sustain a 21st Century Park System that Is Safe, Affordable and Accessible.

In his *NY Parks 2020*, the Governor made a multi-year commitment to leverage a broad range of private and public funding to invest approximately \$900 million in State Parks from 2011 to 2020, the largest capital infusion in the history of the park system. This historic investment supports the agency's parallel efforts to rehabilitate, reinvent, and redesign park operations to leverage state resources and provide safe, affordable and high-quality recreational and educational experiences to the 71 million people who visit our facilities annually. The State Council of Parks supports the Governor's commitment to include \$110 million, including \$20 million for the new Shirley Chisholm State Park in Brooklyn, of critical new capital funding in 2019-20 for state park improvements and infrastructure as well as adequate general fund support to maintain park operations, ensure a quality visitor experience and protect the infrastructure investment made possible by NY Parks 2020.

## 2 Connect the Next Generation to the NYS Park System

Compelling anecdotal and sociological research points to the conclusion that youth are less connected to the outdoor environment; absent an effort to reverse this trend, we risk a future of declining park visitation and alienation from the natural environment. The State Council of Parks supports the Connect Kids to Parks initiative to connect the

next generation of New Yorkers to their parks through offering increased educational and recreational opportunities aimed at youth, removing barriers to access and encouraging service engagement at State Park facilities.

## 3 Promote and Celebrate our Parks

The State Council supports the message of "this parkland is your parkland" to promote stewardship and responsibility among our park visitors and partners and initiatives such as I Love My Park Day that encourage volunteerism and pride in our state parks and historic sites.

## 4 Stewardship of Natural Resources

The State Council of Parks recognizes the importance of the stewardship of our natural resources and the need to protect, preserve, conserve and restore them throughout our state park system to ensure that they are left unimpaired for future generations.

## 5 Advocacy

To respond to significant increases in visitation and the addition of new parks and facilities throughout the system that have resulted from the Governor's historic commitment to rebuilding parks, the State Council of Parks will continue to advocate for increased staffing levels and operating resources for the agency. And, wherever state parks and historic sites have threatened or actual boundary (or certain visual or toxic) encroachments the SCOP will mobilize and form plans to stop them.



Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park- Connect Kids to Parks

# OVERVIEW





# New York State Parks & Historic Sites Overview



The State Park System is one of New York's greatest treasures. Today, the system totals 250 state parks and historic sites encompassing nearly 350,000 acres. New York's parks and historic sites provide affordable outdoor recreation and education opportunities to 71 million visitors each year. These facilities contribute to the economic vitality and quality of life of local communities and directly support New York's tourism industry. Parks also provide a place for families and children to recreate and exercise, promoting healthy lifestyles and helping combat obesity, diabetes caused by the twin evils of a sedentary life and unhealthy food.

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks) is responsible for the operation and stewardship of the state parks system, as well as advancing a statewide parks, historic preservation, and open space mission. The agency has an "all funds" operating and capital budget of approximately \$333 million and is staffed by 1749 permanent employees and more than 4,500 seasonal positions during peak operating season. Approximately 71 million people visit State Parks annually.

State Parks is responsible for managing a vast array of public facilities. New York has one of the most developed state park systems in the nation, encompassing a huge inventory of public facilities including 180 state parks, 35 historic sites 5,000 buildings, 29 golf courses, 36 swimming pools, 67 beaches, 27 marinas, 40 boat launch sites, 18 nature centers, 817 cabins, 8,355 campsites, more than 2,000 miles of trails, 106 dams, 604 bridges, hundreds of miles of roads, and dozens of historic structures listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

New York's State Park system has long been recognized as one of the best and most diverse in the nation. Among the fifty states, we rank first in the number of operating facilities and first in the total number of campsites. We are fifth in total acreage and second in total annual visitation. Attendance at Niagara Falls State Park is greater than that of Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks combined, and more than twice as many people visit Jones Beach each year than visit Yellowstone. Niagara Falls is the oldest state park in the nation and Washington's Headquarters is the first property acquired with public funds for the express purpose of historic preservation and patriotic visitation.



Saratoga Spa State Park - New Playground



Bear Mountain State Park



Wellesley Island State Park



Niagara Falls State Park - Cave of the Winds Experience

# STATE COUNCIL OF PARKS & REGIONAL PARK COMMISSIONS



Watkins Glen State Park



## State Council of Parks

LUCY WALETZKY,  
Chair and Taconic Commission

DALTON BURGETT,  
Allegany Commission

CORNELIUS B. MURPHY,  
Central Commission

W. DAVID BANFIELD,  
Finger Lakes Commission

PETER HUMPHREY,  
Vice-Chair and Genesee Commission

BRYAN ERWIN,  
Long Island Commission

LEISLE LIN,  
New York City Commission

CINDY ABBOTT LETRO,  
Niagara Frontier Commission

DAVID MORTIMER,  
Palisades Commission

HEATHER MABEE,  
Saratoga-Capital District Commission

HAROLD JOHNSON II,  
Thousand Islands Commission

DOUGLAS PERRELLI  
State Board for Historic Preservation

## Roles and Responsibilities: Members, State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The State Council, created by Article 5 of PRHPL, consists of the Chairs of the eleven Regional Parks Commissions (including a representative of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission), the Chair of the State Board of Historic Preservation, the Commissioner of State Parks, and the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation. The Governor appoints the Chair and Vice Chair of the State Council. The Council meets at least four times per year through in-person meetings and conference calls. The Council's statutory responsibilities include:

- Act as a central advisory agency on all matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation.
- Review the policy, budget, and statewide plans of the agency and make appropriate recommendations regarding their amendment or adoption.
- Submit reports to the Governor, not less than once each year, concerning progress in the area of state parks, recreation, and historic preservation.

### To advance these responsibilities, State Council of Parks members shall:

1. Endeavor to attend all State Council of Parks meetings.
2. During State Council meetings and through other channels, educate other Council Members, the State Parks Commissioner, and other Executive and OPRHP Staff about issues, priorities, challenges, and opportunities within their respective regions.
3. Communicate State Council and agency priorities and initiatives to all Regional Commission members. Encourage, motivate, and support fellow Regional Commissioners to enable them to fully engage in state parks issues.
4. Become educated about statewide parks, recreation, and historic preservation issues.
5. Develop and submit a written annual report to the Governor.
6. Undertake all responsibilities of Regional Parks Commissioners.

## Roles and Responsibilities: Members, Regional Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commission

The ten Regional Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissions, created by Article 7 of PRHPL, represent each State Parks region, with the exception of the Palisades (represented by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission) and the Adirondack/Catskill park region. Each Regional Commission consists of seven to fourteen members (the number for each commission is set in law). All Commission members, who must be residents of the state, are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate for seven-year terms. The Governor designates the chair of each Commission. Each Regional Commission meets at least four times per year. The Regional Commissions are charged with acting as a central advisory body on all matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation within their respective regions, with particular focus on the operations of the state parks and historic sites.

### To advance these responsibilities, Regional Parks Commissioners shall:

1. Endeavor to attend all Regional Parks Commission meetings.
2. Learn about the operations, priorities, and programs of the region, and participate in the annual review and approval of the regional budget. Remain in regular contact with the Regional Director. Visit as many state parks and historic sites in the region as possible, and become acquainted with regional staff and park managers.
3. Serve as an advocate for the state parks and historic sites within the region, including:

- “Adopt” one or more state parks, or historic sites, so that every park and site in the region has a Regional Commissioner with whom they have a special relationship. Actively participate in the formation or enhancement of Friends Groups, including considering making personal financial contributions, and assisting in fundraising efforts.
- Meet with State Legislators and other elected officials to educate them about issues, challenges and opportunities facing state parks and historic sites and advocate for state park funding and policy priorities.

4. Enlist the support of parks user groups, environmental and historic preservation organizations, land trusts, local community and business leaders, tourism officials, and other partners to advance State Parks’ goals and priorities.
5. Become educated about parks, recreation, and historic preservation issues throughout the region, with particular emphasis on issues – such as inappropriate development, sprawl, illegal ATVs, climate change, invasive species, etc.– that threaten state parks and historic sites. Testify or appear as appropriate at environmental review hearings, local planning meetings, etc. regarding proposed projects that impact park and historic site resources.
6. Participate as appropriate in continuing education opportunities such as: attending the annual Facilities Managers conference; participating in park master planning, trailway development, and parkland designation efforts (such as Bird Conservation Areas and Natural Heritage Areas) for individual parks; and attending parks, open space, and historic preservation conferences and training programs.
7. Assist in identifying qualified individuals to fill vacant Regional Commission positions.



# BUDGET



Watkins Glen State Park

## New York Parks 2020



### Transforming Flagship State Parks

Since Governor's Cuomo's historic NY Parks 2020 initiative began, New York State Parks has completed infrastructure projects in every region of the state enhancing the visitor experience and launching a renaissance in the statewide capital program. **With leveraged funds, in eight years the program has invested \$880 million in projects that have or will improve 176 state parks and historic sites; over 820 projects have been completed or are underway.**

### NY Parks 2020 Highlights 2018

#### Transformed Gateway to Watkins Glen State Park

A \$6.5 million project converted a decrepit parking lot at the base of the gorge into green space, creating new park amenities and enhanced interpretation of Watkin Glen's unique natural and cultural history. The project relocated the parking area away from the gorge and across Franklin Street to improve vehicular traffic flow on village streets and pedestrian traffic flow in the park. The old asphalt parking lot was transformed into a more natural landscaped park setting, that includes a new visitor welcome center, a small outdoor amphitheater and improved education displays on the park's human history and natural features: a new viewing area where people unable to hike the gorge can enjoy a dramatic waterfall: renovation and expansion of the existing concession building with expanded Taste of NY offerings.

#### Walkway over the Hudson Ulster Visitor Center

The \$5.4 million Ulster Welcome Center at the western gateway to Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park features: a new plaza and amphitheater seating for special events and programs for hundreds of people; a covered 1,400-square-foot patio; improved visitor circulation, including new and improved signage, enhanced landscaping, a bus drop-off location to provide easier access, and upgraded and environmentally friendly pathways that will improve connections for those entering and exiting the park; and concession stand and public restrooms.



Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park



Wildwood State Park - Vacation Cottages

### Long Island's First State Vacation Cottages

Full-service vacation cottages opened this summer at Wildwood and Hecksher State Parks in Long Island. The cottages feature one-and-two-bedroom units, as well as a bathroom, kitchenette, screened porch and select furnishings. The cottages are the first to be offered in Long Island and offer a high-quality experience for vacationers looking to enjoy the beaches.

### Green Lakes State Park Environmental Center

In September, Green Lakes State Park Environmental Education Center opened to the public with several hundred enthusiastic area school children present. The project converted a deteriorated 1940's boat house on Green Lake into a modern facility to house park events and enhance environmental education programming. The historic boathouse materials were disassembled and meticulously rebuilt away from the water's edge. The new 1,100-square-foot center includes indoor classroom/multipurpose space and restrooms in the building, as well as an outdoor classroom, lakefront boardwalk and canoe/kayak landing, new boat rental booth and storage racks. A public-private partnership spearheaded by the Central Regional State Parks

Commission raised \$1 million in donations and grants for the project, including providing exhibits on the formation and science of park's rare meromictic lakes; wildlife and unique habitats, a large topographic park map; people and the park through history, and an activity kiosk to highlight many things to do at Green Lakes State Park through an interactive touchscreen. The Open Space Institute obtained a \$500,000 Environmental Protection Fund grant through the Central Region Economic Development Council to assist with the building's construction.

### Chenango Valley Lakefront Revitalization

The 2018 State Park Learn-to-Swim program kicked off in July at the revitalized Chenango Valley State Park beachfront and swimming area. The project modernized the aging beachfront infrastructure and created a more welcoming environment for families by expanding the sand beach area with multiple swim areas areas; adding a splash pad area adjacent to beach to offer children a new play experience and alternative to cool down and a new corkscrew waterslide; and installing an ADA-accessible dock with fleet of kayaks and stand-up paddleboards available for rent.



Green Lakes State Park



Chenango Valley State Park



Grafton Lakes State Park Welcome Center

### Grafton Lakes Welcome Center

A \$3.2 million Grafton Lakes State Park Welcome Center opened last spring, providing a new sustainably designed year-round public gathering space for improved educational, recreational and volunteer programming at the Rensselaer County park. The Welcome Center provides much-needed activity space to expand and enhance the park's environmental education programs, which already serve about 7,000 children and families annually. Grafton Lakes State Park is involved in Rensselaer Youth Outdoors, a network of partners that introduces and engages the children and families of Rensselaer County to the wonder, science and adventure of nature. The new welcome center will host school groups and professional development opportunities for teachers and engaged through this partnership.

### Minna Anthony Common Nature Center

State Parks and the Friends of the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center have completed a \$1.75 million project to renew the nature center named after a pioneering female environmentalist in the North Country. The 50-year-old facility underwent a complete \$750,000 structural renovation funded by the NY Parks 2020 initiative. The improvements included a new main entrance with a gift shop and waterside building additions as well as the restoration of the great room riverside viewing wall, along with roof repairs and energy efficiency upgrades. In addition, The Friends of the Nature Center raised more than \$1 million in private donations and grants to renew the exhibits and interior features.



Minna Anthony Common Nature Center



## Preserving Cultural Assets and Connecting Communities to Outdoor Recreation

In 2018, State Parks supported several major state initiatives to expand park access, preserve cultural assets and connect communities to open space and recreational facilities.

### NYS Equal Rights Heritage Center, Auburn

In November, Cuomo announced the grand opening of the New York State Equal Rights Heritage Center in Auburn. The Center serves to emphasize New York State's progressive history of promoting social and equal rights, celebrate New York's equal rights pioneers, and encourage tourism at the region's many attractions and destinations. The \$10 million Center is funded and supported through the Governor's Central NY Rising Initiative, the region's comprehensive strategy to revitalize communities and grow the economy.

### Vital Brooklyn Playgrounds

Governor Cuomo's \$1.4 billion Vital Brooklyn initiative seeks to transform the Central Brooklyn region by identifying and investing in eight integrated areas that will help to establish a national paradigm for addressing chronic disparities, such as systemic violence and entrenched poverty in high-need com-

munities. The comprehensive plan targets increased access to open spaces and recreation. By 2020, the Vital Brooklyn initiative will transform eight schoolyards into playgrounds, renovate 22 community gardens and improve four recreation centers in Central Brooklyn.

## Stewardship and Sustainability

State Parks is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its operations. Agency energy and sustainability initiatives over the last ten years have reduced emissions by over 5,739 mt of CO<sub>2</sub> every year, the equivalent of the energy use of 620 homes over one year. Programs include renewable energy through which 16 operational solar arrays, including the largest array ever built by state employees, have been constructed. Another 16 arrays were planned in 2018. State Parks pioneered the first clean fuel trolleys in the nation at Niagara Falls State Park. The agency is expanding its clean-fuel vehicle fleet and installing EV charging stations. Areas have been identified for reduced grass mowing which has helped the agency avoid burning gallons of gasoline.

Land acquisition has also been an important part of the stewardship initiatives to fill-in parks, create linkages and connections between parks and protect open space and preserve natural resources. Since 2011, State Parks has closed on 85 acquisition projects and acquired more than 13,000 acres most notably in the Hudson Valley and Palisades regions where open space is an important as habitat corridors and protective buffer to existing parks and increased development. Land acquisition not only results in more open space, it also creates buffers and protection to existing parks from all types of encroachment.



## 2019-20 Capital Recommendation

*The State Council of Parks is proud to support Governor Cuomo's NY Parks 2020 initiative which will continue to invest \$90 million a year over the next four years into the transformation of the New York State Park system.*

# PARTNERS & PROGRAMS



Beaver Pond Campgrounds - Harriman State Park - I Love My Park Day Volunteers

The seventh annual **I Love My Park Day** hosted with **Parks & Trails New York** on Saturday, May 5, 2018 saw 8000 volunteers who contributed 16,000 hours to 250 cleanup, improvement, beautification and stewardship projects at 125 state parks and historic sites and an expanded number of national parks and forest lands in the Adirondacks and Catskills. Save the Date for the 8th Annual I Love My Park Day, Saturday, May 4, 2019.



**New York State Park Friends Groups** continue to be an integral part of the success of the state park system. Over 90 friends' groups provide funding and volunteers for park and historic site programs, events and special projects.



Audubon in the Parks



**Audubon in the Parks** currently works in almost 20 state parks and is actively exploring work at more than 20 other sites. With 27 Audubon Chapters, Audubon New York staff and centers, and 213 State Parks and Historic Sites

located across the state, this initiative has a strong impact on New York's priority birds and habitats.



**First Day Hikes** are part of a national initiative led by America's State Parks to get people outdoors, with over 400 hikes scheduled in all 50 states. Kids and adults across America participated in First Day Hikes, getting their hearts pumping and enjoying the beauty of a state park. In New York, nearly 4000 participated in hikes at 49 parks on January 1, 2018.



First Day Hikes - Niagara Falls State Park





Minnewaska State Park Preserve - Rendering of the New Visitor Center



To leverage the grassroots support for State Parks, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo created the **Park and Trail Partnership Grant Program** in 2016. Funded through the Environmental Protection Fund, 21 partner organiza-

tions received \$450,000 in 2018 to advance their work to raise private funds for capital projects; perform maintenance tasks; provide educational programming; and promote public use through hosting special events. Grants will be matched by over \$200,000 in private and local funding.



**OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE**

The **Open Space Institute** (OSI), is leveraging public investments by raising private funds and completing projects at New York State Parks that make these popular outdoor destinations more welcoming and engaging. OSI's 2018 projects included: carriage road restoration at Minnewaska State Park Preserve; fundraising kickoff for the new Minnewaska Visitor Center; securing \$1.2 million for improvements to the cultural center at Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park; partnering with West Point cadets to construct new trail bridges at Fahnestock State Park; and protecting land adjacent to Harriman and Watkins Glen State Parks to improve public access and enhance the visitor experience.



Newly built volunteer center funded through the Park and Trail Partnership Program. Little Stony Point, Hudson Valley



Fahnestock State Park Bridge Construction

# CONNECT KIDS



Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park - Connect Kids to Parks

## Connect Kids to Parks



In 2017, New York State launched the “Connect Kids to Parks” program to enhance educational and recreational opportunities for schoolchildren and help promote parks and historic places in every corner of the state.

A key program in this initiative is the Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant program. In three years, over 2300 field trip grants have been awarded serving over 160,000 public school children who have visited state lands in every region of the state.



The grant, funded through the Environmental Protection Fund, covers the costs of transportation and all program fees for any grade from a Title 1 school district.

New York also continues its to extend free State Park day-use entry to all fourth-grade students through acceptance of the Every-Kid-in-a-Park pass. Together, these programs have served nearly 300,000 New York youth in just three years.



# CONNECT KIDS



Lake Taghkanic State Park - Learn To Swim



The New York State Parks **Learn-to-Swim Program** continued for a sixth year in 2018 at more than 30 parks across the state, teaching thousands of youth to swim. Learn-to-Swim continues to be supported through a partnership with the New York State Department of Health, the American Red Cross, the National Swimming Pool Foundation and the Northeast Spa and Pool Foundation.

In 2018, 500 foster families received free State Park Empire Passes, affording them the opportunity to enjoy state parks and outdoor recreation together. The **Foster Family Park Access** program is a partnership with the Office of Children and Family Services and was announced



as part of Foster Care Appreciation Month last spring and we launched the **First-Time Camper Program** in partnership with the Department of Environmental Conservation which offered free camping to 40 families at select parks over eight summer weekends. The new campers were provided with a family tent, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, camp chairs, lantern, and even firewood. A Camping Ambassador met families at the campsite and help them get camp set up with a camping 101 lesson. Campers also had the opportunity to learn from experts how to fish, hike, bird watch, paddle and more, all while having fun and making memories that last forever.



Roberto Clemente State Park - Learn-to-Swim



First-Time Camper Program



# ECC PROGRAMS

Excelsior Conservation Corps (ECC)

## Empire State Conservation Corps Programs



In 2016, Governor Cuomo launched the Excelsior Conservation Corps AmeriCorps (ECC) to build upon the legacy of President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps, providing 50 young men and women the opportunity to serve together as they restore, protect and enhance New York's natural resources and recreational opportunities that are the backbone of the state's outdoor experience.

The ECC is creating the next generation of conservation leaders in New York State by empowering young people of all backgrounds through education, hands-on experience and training. The program will enroll up to 50 members (including vets), ages of 18 to 25, to volunteer 10 months of their lives to serve their country as AmeriCorps members.

In year three, to date, ECC members improved 65 miles of trails; 448 acres of land; built or maintained 126 visitor-use structures and reached over 19,000 individuals through environmental outreach programs. In 2018 ECC members installed solar panel arrays in the Thousand Islands region providing 7810 kilowatt hours to parks.

Starting in 2017, the Student Conservation Corps (SCA) New York State Parks Corps program expanded to engage enthusiastic conservationists to provide critical environmental education and stewardship in the Allegany, Central, Finger



Lakes, and Thousand Islands regions of New York State. The New York State Parks Corps program is a ten-month residential program focusing on environmental education, trail maintenance and construction, and wildlife management. Projects include new trail construction, environmental education and interpretation, volunteer coordination, nuisance wildlife control, and much more. In its second year, the Park Corps program improved 52 miles of trail and 91 acres of land and reached over 16,000 individuals through environmental outreach programs.

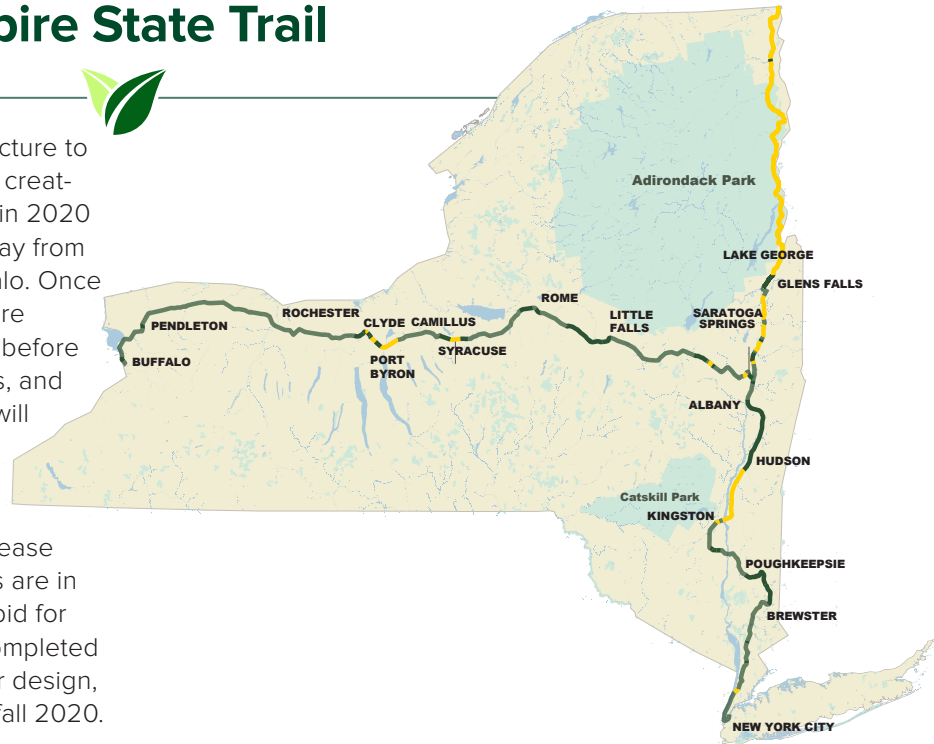
The Friends of Recreation, Conservation and Environmental Stewardship (FORCES) program is cooperatively funded by State Parks, the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and donor support from the Alliance for New York State Parks, a program of the Open Space Institute. The FORCES Program is currently affiliated with 28 academic institutions. The Program supported over 80 stewards (interns) in 2016 and over 4,400 volunteer service hours. FORCES reenergized efforts in the Niagara Region with the recent hire of a Program Specialist. Momentum also increased in the Taconic and Allegany Regions With assistance from 4 Excelsior Conservation Corps members, over 30 FORCES stewards once again joined with the NYS Bluebird Society and the State Office of Children and Family Services to construct about 1,700 bluebird houses at the State Park at the NYS Fair.



## Empire State Trail



As part of the promise to invest and build infrastructure to support New York's economy, Governor Cuomo is creating the Empire State Trail, which when completed in 2020 will create a 750-mile trail bike and walking pathway from New York City to Canada and from Albany to Buffalo. Once the Empire State Trail is complete, it will attract more hikers, bikers, and cross-country skiers than ever before and provide access to destinations, heritage areas, and historic sites and districts. The Empire State Trail will connect the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail and the Erie Canalway Trail, creating the largest state multi-use trail in the nation. Considerable progress on the trail has been made, including release of the Empire State Trail Plan. Engineering designs are in process for 56 trail projects, many of which were bid for construction in 2018. Of the 56 projects, 29 are completed or underway. The remaining projects are all under design, and are on schedule for completion no later than fall 2020.



Last fall, Parks joined community leaders in the Mohawk Valley to announce the opening of a new 5-mile section of the Erie Canalway recreational trail between South Amsterdam and Pattersonville. The \$1.75 million project is part of Governor Cuomo's Empire State Trail initiative.

In October, Governor Cuomo announced that State Parks received a \$6.5 million grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation to expand the Empire State Trail initiative in Western New York. The grant will be used to enhance the trail with gateways, signage, kiosks, bike racks and other amenities that will make it a world-class destination. The grant will also be used to help complete the Shoreline Trail and add trail amenities from Buffalo to Niagara Falls.



# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS





Green Lakes State Park

## 2018 Annual Highlights



### Allegheny Region

A \$2 million historic preservation project is underway at the Red House Administration Building at **Allegheny State Park** in Western New York. This project will rehabilitate the exterior of the 90-year-old building, including the removal and restoration of 173 historic windows and doors. With funding through a Parks and Trails Partnership Grant, the Friends of Allegheny partnered with the Western New York Mountain Biking Association to design and construct approximately 2 miles of new, narrow tread trail to supplement the initial 4 mile loop. The project also created signage on the trail, and new kiosks complete with maps and other useful information.

### Central Region

The Regional Commission, led by Chair Neil Murphy, celebrated the successful culmination of its private fundraising campaign, including a grant secured by the Open Space Institute to support the environmental center at **Green Lakes State**

**Park**. The project converted a deteriorated 1940s boat house on Green Lake into an environmental education center and related improvements. Park attendance significantly increased at **Chenango Valley State Park** because of the revitalized lakefront. The park was host to the State's launch of the 2018 Learn-to-Swim program in July, welcoming community leaders and families to celebrate the restoration. An upgrade to the **Old Erie Canal State Park** part of the Empire State Trail, has also brought renewed interest and higher visitation to this linear park.

### Finger Lakes

The Finger Lakes region continues to advance projects that connect state parks to the that area's thriving tourism industry and local economic revitalization efforts. The acquisition of two properties adjacent to the Canandaigua site at **Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion** will allow creation of a new gateway and welcome center, featuring a new cafe and enhanced program space. The plan complements "Finger



Old Erie Canal State Park



Watkins Glen State Park New Visitor Center



Letchworth State Park

Lakes Forward,” the region’s successful Upstate Revitalization Initiative plan, a comprehensive strategy to grow the economy. The New York State Tourism Industry Association recognized the new visitor center at **Watkins Glen State Park** which is operated in partnership with the Watkins Glen Chamber of Commerce. New rustic cabins at **Buttermilk Falls State Park** and newly rehabilitated cabins opened at **Robert Treman State Park** in the Southern Tier in time for the peak outdoor camping season. The new cabins are nestled amongst the region’s wineries, gorges, and cultural destinations. The improvements are a major component of Southern Tier Soaring, the region’s blueprint for economic growth.

## Genesee Region

The transformed Portageville Entrance at **Letchworth State Park**, the Park’s southernmost entrance that offers convenient access from Route 19A/436 to the Glen Iris Inn and upper, middle and lower falls, reopened to the public in 2018. The transformation features a straightened realignment of Park Road at the entrance, restoration along Trail 1 at the intersection with Trail 2 which ties into the restoration work on

the stairs leading down to the upper/middle falls, new native plantings and a new parking lot relocated to the gorge side of the road for better viewing.

## Long Island Region

Connect Kids programs flourished this summer at **Orient Beach** and **Hallock State Parks** where a partnership with the Atlantic Marine Society and the Group for the East End offered community programs at both parks on marine life and ocean stewardship. The region’s first camping cabins opened to the public at **Wildwood** and **Hecksher State Parks**, offering a new way to experience camping at the beach. The transformation of **Jones Beach State Park** continues with the opening of the Boardwalk Café in July and an announcement in November by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo of a new \$18 million Energy and Nature Education Center. In a public-private partnership with PSEG Long Island, the Long Island Power Authority, New York Power Authority and private donors, State Parks will construct an interactive facility to encourage visitors of all ages to become good stewards of the environment and smart energy consumers.



Hecksher State Park Preserve - New Cottages



Bethpage State Park Golf Course - Hosts the 2019 PGA Championship



## New York City Region

In October, State Parks announced a \$2.8 million public-private project to upgrade and revitalize the Cultural Performance Center at the **Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park** in Harlem. The performance space will be renamed the Robert Frederick Smith Center for the Performing Arts in recognition of businessman and philanthropist Robert Frederick Smith's \$1 million donation. Fundraising efforts are supported by the Open Space Institute and NYC Regional Commission. At **Roberto Clemente State Park**, Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, New York City Council Member Vanessa Gibson and Omni New York LLC, owner of the adjacent Riverpark Towers, together announced a \$1.35 million transformation of the Roberto Clemente State Park South Playground. In September, Governor Cuomo announced that the largest state park in NYC would open in 2019. The 407-acres **Shirley Chisholm State Park** along Jamaica Bay in Brooklyn will feature trails and waterfront access. Park design and implementation is underway. Corporate volunteerism continues to thrive in the NYC region, with large groups completing projects at **Riverbank, Bayswater** and **Gantry Plaza State Parks** this year.

## Niagara Region

The Niagara Region celebrated the completion of the West River Parkway this year. The \$2.5 million Parks 2020 project transformed two lanes of highway into a vehicle free multi-use, multi-season trail that runs along eight miles of the Niagara River from **Beaver Island State Park** to **Buckhorn State Park**. It includes refurbished overlooks, landscaping and year-round access to the water while closing a significant



Fort Niagara State Park

gap in the Niagara River Greenway Shoreline Trail. Funding for the project was provided by a \$1.6 million federal grant as well as \$900,000 from the New York Power Authority through the Niagara River Greenway Commission. A new \$2.7 million **Fort Niagara State Park** Bathhouse adjacent to the popular swimming pool opened in time for the Fort's kick-off to the summer swimming season. The bathhouse includes brick and stone masonry that reflects the historic architectural integrity of the old Fort and adds open-air entry to improve sightlines and better connect visitors between the pool and the bathhouse.





Saratoga Spa State Park - Peerless Pool Bathhouse

## Palisades Region

The restoration of the Tower of Victory at **Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site** re-opened to the public after extensive renovations. The Palisades Park Conservancy raised \$1.8 million dollars through private philanthropy and public grants to restore the historic structure that had been closed for over six decades. The NY/NJ Trail Conference continues a robust partnership in the region, most notably providing a trail stewardship program to not only maintain and repair trails but educate the public about safe hiking and leave no trace principles. A \$10 million expansion of the **National Purple Heart Hall of Honor** in New Windsor will further recognize and pay tribute to those who have been awarded the Purple Heart, America's oldest military decoration. The expansion will include a new wing with enhanced and interactive exhibits and galleries, increased programming, a redesigned entrance, improved accessibility, native landscaping, more convenient parking and several walkway improvements.

## Saratoga-Capital District Region

In June, the Peerless Pool reopened to the public after a major renovation that greatly improved the bathhouse facilities and added green space, a hiking trail and a playground near the pool complex. Climbing at **Thacher State Park** proved to be very popular in its first season with 820 climbers visiting from all over the country and even the world to experience the park's famous cliffs. **Moreau Lake State Park** grew again this year with the addition of 131 acres that will expand year-round trail-based recreation and protect the natural habitat in fast-growing northern Saratoga County. The new parcel will expand the park's trail network, provide access to scenic views and protect open space. It encompasses multiple summits, including Palmertown Mountain, and affords dramatic views of the Hudson Valley and southern Adirondack Mountains.



National Purple Heart Hall of Honor



Leave No Trace - Breakneck Ridge

## Taconic Region

The **Walkway over the Hudson** brought the skies to mid-Hudson Valley residents through a program of gazing at the stars from the elevated park through telescopes with NASA astronaut Shane Kimbrough. *Leave No Trace* selected **Breakneck Ridge** as a 'Hot Spot' in the nation to help raise awareness among patrons about outdoor recreation ethics in natural areas. The program engages the community and brings solutions to popular natural areas around the country facing heavy recreational use the threat of harm to trails, parks and open space areas. The *Leave No Trace* Traveling

trainers are experts who provide public education on how to effectively 'Leave No Trace' in a fun and interactive way for all ages. **Rockefeller State Park Preserve** grew by 346-acres, land gifted to the state by David Rockefeller. The acquisition brings the Preserve's total acreage to 1,771 acres stretching from the Hudson River to the Taconic Parkway, and ensures the landscape will remain intact and open to the public. The gift builds on the Rockefeller family's longstanding support for its namesake park.

## Thousand Islands

Local school children joined community leaders and supporters at the **Minna Anthony Common Nature Center** reopening ceremony in June. The region has broken ground on a transformational capital initiative at **Southwick Beach State Park**, located on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. The projects include a new "Lakeview Commons" beach building, green parking areas and new camping loop. Visitors to the park will still find all the things they have always loved about Southwick Beach, but their experience will be enhanced by beautiful and more functional amenities. Site work has begun at **Westcott Beach State Park** on ten cottages that will be tucked into the woods on a high ridge overlooking Lake Ontario, a location that will treat future visitors to world-class sunsets. Campers at **Higley Flow State Park** will soon have new bathrooms, with 7 projects currently underway to replace the old facilities.



Rockefeller State Park Preserve



Minna Anthony Common Nature Center

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION



Hotel Saranac

## Division for Historic Preservation



The Division for Historic Preservation helps communities identify, evaluate, preserve and revitalize their historic, archeological, and cultural resources. The Division works with governments, the public, and educational and not-for-profit organizations to raise historic preservation awareness, to instill in New Yorkers a sense of pride in the state's unique history and to encourage heritage tourism and community revitalization.

### 2018 Historic Preservation Awards

Established in 1980, the state preservation awards are given by the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation each year to honor excellence in the protection and rejuvenation of New York's historic and cultural resources. This year's awards were presented at a ceremony held at the New York State Museum on December 6th.

### Randolph Houses, Harlem

The 1890s Randolph Houses were empty and slated for demolition when Trinity Partners Inc. and West Harlem Group Assistance took on the redevelopment project. The project transformed an entire Harlem streetscape, including 36 buildings and 283 housing units. With the assistance of historic tax credits and federal low-income housing tax credits, the project is a great example of how New York City's distinguishing 19th century tenement buildings can serve modern housing needs and create affordable housing in the city.

### Tower of Victory, Washington's Headquarters, Newburgh

The Tower of Victory at Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site was built in 1887 to commemorate the peace following the Revolution War. The tower fell into disrepair after its roof was damaged by storm in the 1950s. A multi-decade restoration effort by the State Parks Palisades Region, the Palisades Park Conservancy, and local masons and construction companies saw the reconstruction of the roof, observation deck and conservation/ reinstallation of the several bronze statues.

### New York City LGBT Historic Sites Project

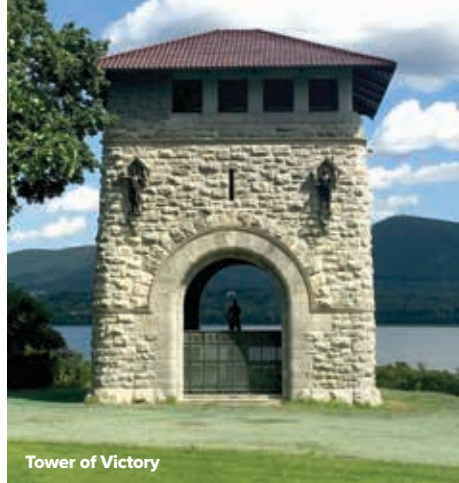
The New York City LGBT Historic Sites project helped expand understanding of LGBT history in the five boroughs. The multi-year survey included the completion of a historic context statement, the addition of five new listings to the State and National Registers of Historic Places, an interactive GIS based website, and dynamic social media campaign. The project was funded and supported by two NPS Underrepresented Communities grants, the J.M. Kaplan Fund, Arcus Foundation, the New York Community Trust, and American Express.

### Hotel Saranac, Saranac Lake

Underutilized for decades, the 1927 Hotel Saranac has been transformed by a local developer into a premier hotel and



Sibley Square



Tower of Victory



The New Guinea Community Site

heritage tourism hub in the North Country. The \$35 million rehabilitation, now part of the Curio Collection by Hilton, is the largest historic tax credit investment in the Adirondacks. The hotel includes 82 renovated rooms, a spa, bar and grill, and salon.

### Sibley Square, Rochester

Opened in 1906, Sibley’s was once the largest department store between New York City and Chicago. The store closed in 1989. In 2013 WinnCompanies began its largest preservation and reuse project to date, revitalizing 1.1 million square feet as mixed income, mixed use development, incorporating commercial, residential, educational, and recreational elements. The project is now largest historic tax credit investment in upstate New York. The result is a mixed-use hub that includes low income and market rate housing, commercial, office, maker, and workforce development space. This project reflects a successful public-private partnership, including assistance from Empire State Development and New York State Homes and Community Renewal.

### The New Guinea Community Site, Hyde Park

The archaeologically significant historic resource located in Hackett Hill Park in the Town of Hyde Park documents an early Dutchess County free black community that was active from ca. 1790 to ca. 1850, when historical records that relate to African Americans experience are meager. The Town of Hyde Park, the Hyde Park Historical Society and local volunteers worked with the state to list the New Guinea Community Site on the State

and National Registers of Historic Places. The partners also worked together to preserve artifacts recovered from excavations of the site. The town is also creating walking trails and interpretive signage and developing a classroom curriculum for local school students.

### Mark Thomas, Western District Director, New York State Parks, Awardee

From 2007 until his retirement this year, Mark Thomas directed state parks in the 10 Western New York counties and oversaw the execution of Governor Andrew Cuomo’s “NY Parks 2020” initiative which included more than a \$125 million investment into Western Region state parks. Thomas’s tenure included the \$70 million restoration of Niagara Falls State Park, the nation’s oldest state park, and the opening of the Humphrey Nature Center at Letchworth State Park.



Mark Thomas



Randolph Houses



New York City LGBT Historic Sites Project



State Park Police Academy



# NYS Parks Division of Law Enforcement



## New York State Park Police

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Division of Law Enforcement continues to support the Agency's mission and to work closely with our public safety partners to maintain safe and enjoyable parks. The State Park Police deliver the highest quality professional police services to our visitors, our surrounding communities, and our fellow employees. With another year of record visitation, significant events, and enhanced responsibilities New York's State Parks and facilities have been maintained as safe havens of public use by Park Police Officers, Park Forest Rangers, Public Safety Rangers and civilian employees of the Division. Throughout the peak summer season, State Park Police officers provided essential public safety services, including crowd control, major event planning and coordination of law enforcement and emergency management at our State Parks, concert venues and Historic Sites. In remote campsites and secluded day use areas, on our trails and waterways, and in urban parks, State Park Police members serve as guardians of State Parks natural resources and our visitors. With highly visible patrols, the uniformed members of the Division engage with visitors, provide

assistance, and maintain control of large crowds that may become unruly. The State Park Police protect the civil and constitutional rights of persons, and initiate proper and legal enforcement actions when needed, doing the utmost to maintain a high standard of integrity and public trust. The recruiting, hiring, and training of the Division of Law Enforcement staff remains a priority of the Agency. The 15th Session Basic School graduated twenty-seven State Park Police Officers to assignments in State Parks across New York State in April 2018. These officers were assigned to the patrol force for the peak summer season. The 16th Basic School Session began in October 2018, and is scheduled to graduate forty new State Park Police Officers for summer 2019 operations.

### CORE VALUES of the NYS Park Police – P.R.I.D.E

- P – Professionalism**
- R – Respect**
- I – Integrity**
- D – Dedication**
- E – Excellence**



Invasive Species Strike Team

## Environmental Stewardship & Planning



### Division of Environmental Stewardship and Planning

The Division of Environmental Stewardship and Planning (DESP) is dedicated to the protection, conservation and resiliency of the State Parks and Historic Site system. By working collaboratively with stakeholders and partners, the Division provides education, training, and tools necessary to make informed decisions that balance responsible recreation with the needs of the natural environment. These efforts will ensure a robust and sustainable Parks and Historic Site system now and for generations to come. The Division of Environmental Stewardship and Planning brings together the Sections of Environmental Education, Real Property, Geographic Information Systems, Planning, Environmental Analysis, and Stewardship to balance the recreational needs of 71 million annual visitors to State Parks with operational and ecological sustainability.

Working with partners and volunteers the Division has launched hundreds of initiatives to ensure our iconic landscapes and environments are conserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

#### Project highlights across the state over the past year include:

- Under a \$11 million Federal-State partnership, the agency began construction on habitat restoration projects on Grand Island in the Niagara River Corridor
- 20 Boat Stewards conducted over 24,000 watercraft inspections for aquatic invasive species providing education to over 58,000 boaters at 27 OPRHP owned boat launches
- Three, four-member seasonal invasive species strike teams conducted 108 projects in 75 parks, manually controlling 330 acres of invasive species and surveying 1770 acres and 128 miles of trails
- Two seasonal forest health teams surveyed in 67 state parks and historic sites, including 466 miles of roads and trails
- Approximately 3500 hemlock trees were treated to protect against Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA)

- Acquired nearly 1,300 acres of park land, including; the Mann Property at Green Lakes, Baker parcels at Moreau Lake; the Estate Gift at Rockefeller State Park Preserve; and Horse Island at Sackets Harbor State Park
- Completed and adopted the Taconic State Park Master Plan and designated Taconic State Park as a Bird Conservation Area
- Completed data collection for the preparation of the 2020 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and the State Park System Plan
- Three organizations joined the ZBGA Program for a total of 93 participants and funding has been maintained at \$15M
- Completed a pilot program that collected and mapped utility information in 10 parks.
- Decommissioned a dam at Wellesley Island State Park restoring the wetland complex
- After on-going protection and monitoring efforts by State Parks and partners, a pair of federally-endangered Great Lakes Piping Plovers successfully nested at Sandy Island Beach State Park for the first time in decades
- Coordinated education and research efforts on the issue of harmful algal blooms
- Completed the Integrated Tick Management Program to help reduce humane-tick encounters that can result in tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease.
- Supported expansion of environmental education and interpretation at 28 nature centers and five historic sites
- Directed \$150,000 in funding to dedicated trails crews in Finger Lakes, Central, and Saratoga-Capital Regions
- Secured \$74,000 in RTP Grant funding to create a trails technician position to perform universal accessibility assessments on and create a GIS database for trails in state park facilities



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic  
Preservation**

**State Council of Parks,  
Recreation and  
Historic Preservation**

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