

2016

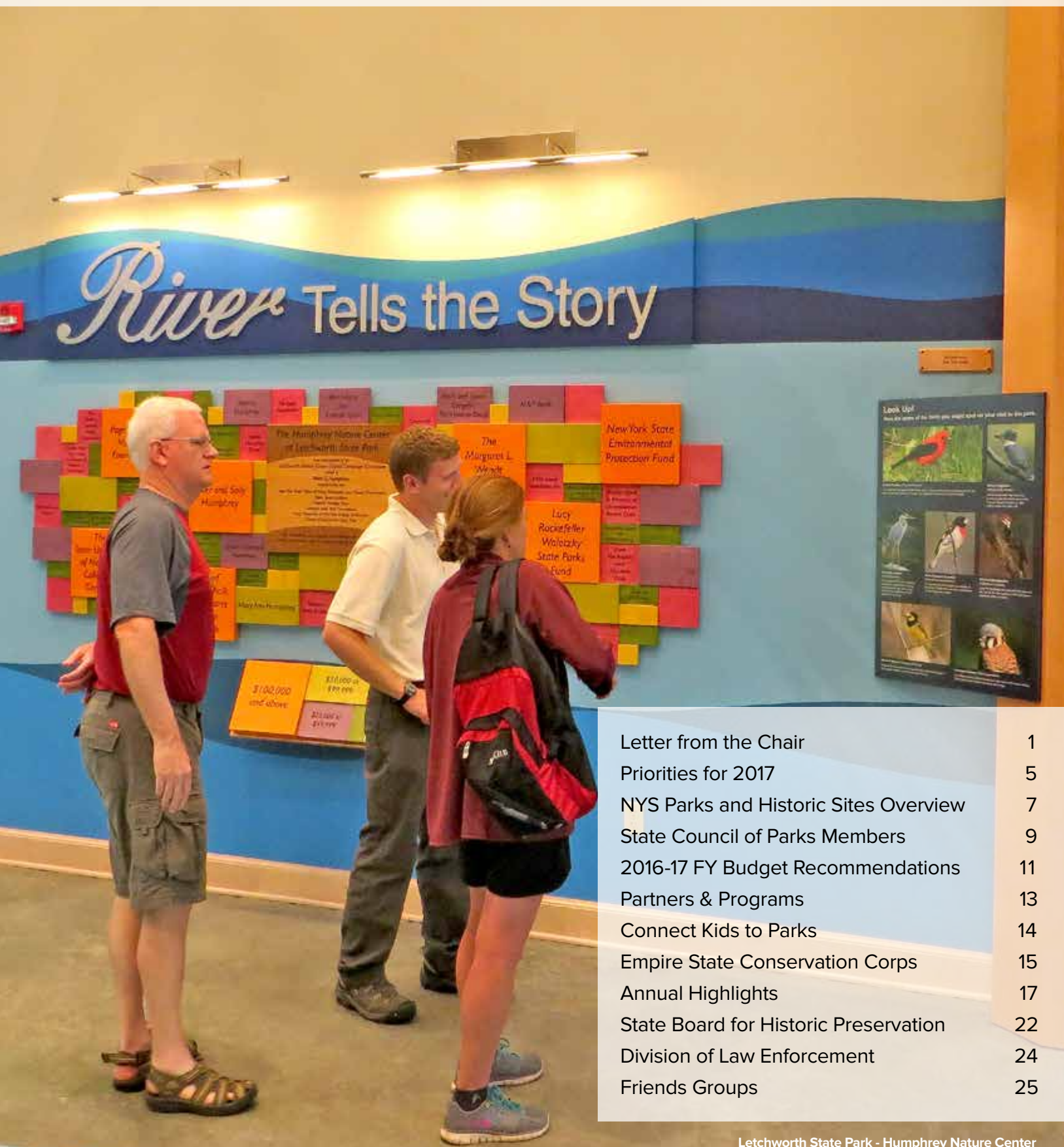
ANNUAL REPORT

New York State Council of Parks,
Recreation & Historic Preservation



NYS Parks Connect Kids 4th Grade Group
at Ft. Montgomery State Historic Site

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Letter from the Chair	1
Priorities for 2017	5
NYS Parks and Historic Sites Overview	7
State Council of Parks Members	9
2016-17 FY Budget Recommendations	11
Partners & Programs	13
Connect Kids to Parks	14
Empire State Conservation Corps	15
Annual Highlights	17
State Board for Historic Preservation	22
Division of Law Enforcement	24
Friends Groups	25



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

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

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

February 2017

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is pleased to submit its 2016 Annual Report. This report highlights the State Council of Parks and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's achievements during 2016, and sets forth recommendations for the coming year.

First, we continue to be enormously inspired by your unprecedented capital investment in New York state parks, which has resulted in a renaissance of the system. With a total of \$530 million invested in capital projects over the last five years, we are restoring public amenities, fixing failing infrastructure, creating new trails, and bringing our state's flagship parks back to life. New Yorkers and tourists are rediscovering state parks, and the agency continues to plan for the future based on your commitment to provide a total of \$900 million in capital funds as part of the NY Parks 2020 initiative. We are thrilled that your Executive Budget for 2017-2018 includes \$90 million in state parks capital funding in the next year as well as an additional \$30 million for investment in capital projects with high potential for public-private leverage.

With the revitalization of the state park system so firmly underway, we are working hard to ensure that all New Yorkers, particularly our youth, have the opportunity to experience all that our parks and historic sites have to offer. We are particularly proud of the Connect Kids to Parks initiative that includes free park entry to our state's 4th graders through participation on the Every-Kid-in-a-Park program. We are greatly appreciative of your support of the Connect Kids Transportation Grant Program which provides grants to classes in Title 1 districts across the state for field trips to state parks. Thousands of New York children have already participated in one or both of these programs—creating what we hope will be a life-long connection to their state parks and to the environment. Our free Learn-to-Swim program has taught thousands of children to swim over the last three years in areas where such opportunities are limited. And, we are investing in the next generation of environmental stewards through job training programs like the Excelsior Conversation Corps and Student Conservation Association. Together, these programs are bringing more youth to parks at time when connection to nature is more important than ever.

The State Council of Parks remains committed to continuing the tradition of philanthropic support for state parks and, together with the Alliance for NYS Parks 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.

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

Continued next page

Parks but also to maintain the new and improved infrastructure resulting from your investment and meet the needs of a growing number of visitors. The enacted 2016-17 budget includes \$183.4 million in appropriations for agency operations. This represents a General Fund spending reduction of about 15 percent from 2009; over the same period, permanent staffing has been reduced by 23 percent.

We clearly understand the need for the state to reduce spending, and our facilities have adopted several measures to reduce costs while continuing to operate at a first-rate level including:

- Improved energy use through application of solar and LED lighting
- Automated over 50 fee collection areas
- Implemented operational efficiencies like shared maintenance and reduced mowing
- Assigned park managers to multiple facilities, no longer one manager per park
- Increased usage of interagency collaboration and resource sharing
- Expanded friend group, non-profit and concession involvement in operations
- Increased private fundraising to help offset operating needs

All of this has allowed the agency to attract over 69 million visitors a year—a remarkable 21 percent increase from when you took office—while maintaining the highest quality of service. We respectfully request your support for increased state park operations to ensure that the magnificent revitalization you have made possible through NY Parks 2020 is optimally preserved and showcased.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky
Chair, State Council of Parks



PRIORITIES



The State Council of Parks will advance four priorities in 2017

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 provide safe, affordable and high-quality recreational and educational experiences to the 69 million people who visit our facilities annually, as well as continue to advance projects that improve accessibility for all visitors. **The State Council of Parks supports the Governor's commitment to include \$120 million of critical new capital funding in 2017-18 for state park improvements and infrastructure.**

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 particularly in communities of need and encouraging service engagement at state park facilities.

3. Promote and Celebrate our Parks

The State Council will continue to assist the agency in implementing marketing initiatives to create a strong brand for our parks and historic sites. We also support 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 and conserve them throughout our state park system to ensure that they are left unimpaired for future generations.



Photo Credit: WAMC, ALLISON DUNNE

Black Rock Ribbon Cutting Ceremony



Allegany State Park



Thacher State Park



Grafton Lakes State Park

OVERVIEW



The state park system is one of New York's greatest treasures. Today, the system totals 250 state parks, historic sites, recreational trails and boat launch sites, encompassing nearly 350,000 acres. New York's parks and historic sites provide affordable outdoor recreation and education opportunities to more than 69 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 childhood obesity.

State Parks is responsible for managing a vast array of public facilities. New York has the most developed state park systems in the nation, encompassing a huge inventory of public facilities including 5,000 buildings, 3 major hotels, 3 concert venues and multiple restaurants, 29 golf courses, 36 swimming pools, 67 beaches, 27 marinas, 40 boat launch sites, 26 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.

The term "State park system" as used in this report refers to New York's 250 state parks, historic sites, recreational trails and boat launch sites.



Jones Beach State Park Nature Center



Allegany State Park



Thacher State Park



Fort Ontario State Historic Site



Schodack Island State Park

COMMISSIONS



Humphrey Nature Center at Letchworth State Park

State Council of Parks

LUCY ROCKEFELLER
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

ROBERT MACKAY,
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.



State Parks Operating

BUDGET



State Parks Operating Budget

Ninety percent of the agency's operating budget goes to pay the direct costs incurred in operating New York's 215 State Parks and Historic Sites. **The enacted 2016-17 State Budget includes \$183.4 million in appropriations for agency operations (encompassing state General Fund support, federal programs, agency-generated special Revenue funds). This represents a General Fund spending reduction of about 15 percent from 2009-10 to 2016-17.**

Visitation

We are pleased to report that visitation in 2016 continued to grow with nearly 69 million visitors, 21% increase since 2011.



New York Parks 2020

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 that have enhanced the visitor experience and launched a renaissance in the statewide capital program. **With leveraged funds, in four years the program has invested \$531 million in projects that have or will improve 133 of 250 state parks and historic sites; over 230 projects have been completed or are underway.**

2016 Capital Highlights

Transforming Flagship State Parks

Multi-year, multi-million transformations are underway or planned at thirty flagship parks which will modernize, restore and improve these iconic parks for the millions of people who visit them every year. In 2016, major improvements completed at Jones Beach State Park included the reopening of the iconic West Bathhouse with a new TasteNY café and the restoration of the Field 6 Concession area. Work also began on improvements to the Central Mall. At Niagara Falls State Park, work was completed at Terrapin Point and the

Cave of the Winds Pedestrian area. A state of the art nature center opened at Letchworth State Park, and \$14 million was committed to improving the group camps at Harriman State Park which serve thousands of children every year. At the Walkway over the Hudson, plans were unveiled to construct gateway visitor centers at each end of the linear park, which has become the centerpiece of tourism in the Hudson Valley. At Watkins Glen State Park, work has begun on a \$6.5 million project to transform the park's entrance, not only a gateway to the famed park but to the village and the area's thriving tourism industry.

Promoting Healthy, Outdoor Active Recreation

NY Parks 2020 is improving playgrounds, building trails and restoring athletic facilities across the state. In 2016, the 8.5-mile Black Diamond Trail in the Finger Lakes was completed, connecting the City of Ithaca with several state parks along Cayuga Lake.

The trail runs along a former railroad line between Allan H. Treman State Park Marina, one of the state's largest inland marinas, and Taughannock Falls State Park.

Thirteen playgrounds will be restored or created as part of the Governor's goal to modernize 100 State Park playgrounds by 2020.

At Roberto Clemente State Park, a major partnership with Major League Baseball and Harlem RBI is creating youth baseball academy to incorporate sport, education and community engagement with NYC youth on new and refurbished athletic fields. A major capital revitalization of Roberto Clemente State Park in the Bronx also continues.

Connecting People with Parks

In 2016, construction began on several facilities that will enhance visitor connections to parks including a visitor center at Grafton Lakes State Park and an environmental education classroom at Saratoga Spa State Park. Accessible kayak launches are being installed at several parks across the state, expanding access for persons with disabilities. Others will be installed at Buffalo Harbor State Park, as well as at Seneca Lake State Park in Geneva and Wellesley Island State Park near Alexandria Bay next year. State Parks will work to expand their availability at popular paddling destinations in the coming years. At Taughannock Falls State Park, a welcome center has opened at the Overlook which attracts over 500,000 people annually to view the tallest single-drop waterfall east of the Mississippi. The welcome center provides an inviting and informative interpretive experience to these visitors and enhances the gateway to this popular attraction.

Rejuvenating our World Class Park System

Over half of NY Parks 2020 funds are directed toward projects that significantly improve the nuts and bolts of the system and repair basic infrastructure, from renovated bathhouses, repaired water systems, and new environmentally-friendly parking lots. In 2016, a new \$4 million bathhouse at Quaker Lake Beach in the Quaker Run Area of Allegany State Park is now open. The new bathhouse is the first major

improvement to the popular beachfront in nearly 50 years, and features new and improved food service, playground and public gathering areas. The bathhouse at Hamlin Beach State Park, built of Medina sandstone in 1939-40 by members of the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps, underwent a complete renovation to protect the building's historic integrity and modernize public spaces. The project included: repurposing the front lobby area to allow for public programs; renovating locker and bathrooms to fully meet current codes, including the Americans with Disabilities Act; repairing the historic masonry; renovating the exterior area including an ADA compliant ramp.

Preserving Historic Sites and Cultural Assets

NY Parks 2020 is preserving our state's historic and cultural assets, protecting our connection to the past and contributing to a vibrant historic tourism economy in New York State. In 2016, State Parks opened the rehabilitated "Stonehouse" at Johnson Hall State Historic Site in Fulton County, providing newly restored space for the public to better learn about the work and living conditions of some of the enslaved people at Johnson Hall in the 18th century. Important infrastructure upgrades were completed at two historic sites in the Central New York, utility work at Fort Ontario and an electrical project at Hyde Hall.

Sustaining New York's Natural Environment

NY Parks 2020 is investing in projects that will not only protect parks from the effects of climate change but also improve the energy efficiency of our system. Since, \$2.4 million has been allocated for solar installations in 12 parks; the largest is a \$1.7 million 500-kilowatt system at Robert Moses State Park. In 2016, construction began on a \$750,000 project to expand educational and recreational activities at Hamlin Beach State Park's Yanty Marsh – an ecologically unique area, popular for birdwatching, fishing, paddling and nature observation.

Energizing Local Economies

NY Parks 2020 is revitalizing facilities that attract major events and tourism, including Bethpage State Park which hosted the PGA Championship in 2016 and will welcome the Ryder Cup in 2019. State Parks annually catalyze 20,000 tourism jobs in local communities and the NY Parks 2020 is creating additional construction and engineering jobs.

2017-18 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. The State Council also supports the 2017-18 proposed additional allocation of \$30 million to invest in projects with high leverage potential.

PARTNERS & PROGRAMS



Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve - I Love My Park Day Volunteers

I LOVE MY PARK DAY

The fifth annual **I Love My Park Day** hosted with **Parks & Trails New York** on Saturday, May 2, 2016 saw 6500 volunteers who contributed 16,000 hours to 200 cleanup, improvement, beautification and stewardship projects at 95 state parks and historic sites.

New in 2016, national parks and forest lands in the Adirondacks and Catskills participated in the volunteer initiative, demonstrating the commitment New Yorkers have to improve all public lands. Save the Date for the 6th Annual I Love My Park Day, Saturday, May 6, 2017.

The **New York State Parks Learn-to-Swim Program** expanded to 30 State Parks in 2016, serving thousands of children in free or low-cost programs. Learn-to-Swim is 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.



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 all 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, 2017.

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. A 2015-16 census conducted by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) found that friends groups raised nearly \$9 million for parks and historic sites; donated more than 10,000 hours of work in preserving and enhancing parks; held more than 700 events that were enjoyed by nearly 300,000 people. In 2016, Governor Cuomo and the Legislature created a \$500,000 capacity-building grant program for state park and historic site Friends groups funded through the NYS Environmental Protection Fund. In its first year, the program



Learn To Swim Program - Hamlin Beach State Park



First Day Hikes - Evangola State Park



Clay Pit Ponds State Park Volunteers

awarded 20 grants to friends groups across the state that have resulted in projects like the installation of new interpretive kiosks and panels along popular areas of several parks; upgrading digital technology at historic sites and capital improvements that improve or expand park amenities.

Taste NY programs have been launched at several State Park facilities to feature locally-made products. At the Top of the Falls Restaurant, operated by Delaware North Parks and Resorts, is proudly offering food and beverages from more than a dozen New York producers, many of them from Western New York. The restored café in the West Bathhouse at Jones Beach State Park features an array of Taste NY products and a new lounge has opened at the Jones Beach Theatre feature Taste NY beverages. In 2016, we also launched Taste at Letchworth and Watkins Glen State Parks. For 2017, planning is underway to put Taste NY in Saratoga Spa, Lake Tagkanic, James Baird, FDR, Sunken Meadow, Robert Moses and Bethpage State Parks.



Jones Beach State Park

CONNECT KIDS TO PARKS



Connect Kids to Parks - Long Island



Bear Mountain State Park



Connect Kids to Parks - Wellesley Island State Park

In 2016, 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. As part of the effort, New York partnered with the National Park Service to extend free State Park day-use entry to all fourth-grade students and their families as well as created a grant program to help transport schoolchildren from underserved communities to outdoor recreation and environmental education programs in state parks and historic sites.

The Connect Kids to Parks program also includes initiatives to expand outdoor recreational opportunities for youth, including an expansion of the Learn-to-Swim program. In 2016, nearly 30 parks offered free swim lessons to over 3000 children. In addition, upwards of 20,000 children take part in swim programs offered through summer camps and activities at our parks. The Learn-to-Swim program is made possible through partnership with the American Red Cross, the NYS Department of Health, the National Swimming Pool Foundation and the Northeast Spa and Pool Association which will enter its fourth year in 2017.

Connect Kids to Parks will also focus on expanding youth service in our parks. From encouraging families and children to participate in I Love My Park Day as an introduction to volunteerism, to working with high schools, colleges and universities to recruit applicants for the Student Conservation Corps and the Excelsior Conservation Corp this effort is developing the next generation of environmental stewards.

CONSERVATION CORPS



Excelsior Conservation Corps AmeriCorps (ECC)



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 annual program will enroll up to 50 members (including veterans), ages of 18 to 25, to volunteer 10 months of their lives to serve their country as AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps members will receive a small stipend, health insurance, and will be eligible for a Segal education award at the end of their term of service in the amount \$5,815 which can be used to pay off qualified student loans or use towards future educational expenses.

In its first year, ECC students improved over 100 miles of trails; 376 acres of public lands; built or maintained over 320 structures in parks; and reached over 2600 individuals through environmental outreach programs.

Starting in 2017, the Student Conservation Corps (SCA) New York State Parks Corps program will expand to

engage enthusiastic conservationists to provide critical environmental education and stewardship in the Allegany, 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 coordinator, nuisance wildlife control, and much more.

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.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS



Allegany Region

7 parks, 1.8 million visitors

In addition to celebrating NY Parks 2020 capital accomplishments, including the grand openings of the Quaker Bathhouse at **Allegany State Park** and the mini-golf course at **Midway State Park**, friends groups in the Allegany Region had a particularly active year. With the success of reopening the **Barcelona Lighthouse** to the public, Regional Commission member Thomas Erlandson has been preparing to establish a Friends Group for the historic lighthouse. Regional Commission member Michael Lyons organized nature walks at **Long Point State Park** lead by volunteers from the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History. The Region continues to work with the Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway with the goal to correct the corridor's detours and closures in Allegany and Cattaraugus counties. Regional Commission Chairperson Dalton Burgett worked with principals of Chautauqua County schools to bring awareness of the Connect Kids to Parks program. The Friends of Allegany State Park raised over \$5,800 towards the restoration of the park's historic steam-operated sawmill with the goal of one day offering guided tours. The Friends also contributed over 1,300 volunteer hours toward various park projects, including rebuilding 25 park benches for the Quaker area, painted cabins throughout the park, and lead regular tours of the Fire and Stone Towers. NYS Parks took ownership of the Sunset Bay Access Site and Marina from the Department of Environmental Conservation in the spring, effectively making it a state park and renaming it **Sunset Bay State Marine Park**. The marina is located on Cattaraugus Creek near the river's mouth with easy access onto Lake Erie.



Allegany State Park- Quaker Area Bathhouse



Cayuga Lake State Park - Pavilion

Central Region

20 parks, 7 historic sites, 2.6 million visitors

Expanding park access has been a priority for the Central region and several projects were completed toward this goal in 2016. A multi-sensory trail project at **Glimmerglass** is in progress and an accessible kayak launch was installed at **Green Lake State Park**. Cabin renovations continue at Green Lakes, **Chenango Valley, Gilbert Lake State Parks and Selkirk Shores**; and campers at Green Lakes will now enjoy full-service campsites and new shower buildings. Thousands of Central NY residents attended events at their state parks in 2016. **Chenango Valley State Park** hosted thousands of runners competing in the NYS Section 4 and state cross country championship races. Three thousand people attended the Wicked Woods program at Green Lakes State Park. A dedicated maintenance crew has returned to **Old Erie Canal State Park** which saw 750 cyclists from all over the nation and world ride through as part of the annual Cycle the Erie bike event organized by **Parks & Trails New York**. Six parks in the region held Learn to Swim Programs. With the Friends group, **Lorenzo State Historic Site** hosted Symphoria, a free, open-air symphonic concert on the historic front lawn, continuing the long-standing tradition of free orchestral performances the site.

Finger Lakes

25 parks, 2 historic sites, 3.2 million visitors

The Finger Lakes Region managed to endure record droughts in 2016 which had a significant impact on the waterfall experience the region is known for. Record numbers came to our facilities to enjoy swimming, hiking and camping. In late fall, the region hosted local trail supporters who were



Green Lakes State Park



Black Diamond Trail



Hamlin Beach State Park - Restored Bath House



Hither Hills State Park - New Campground

joined by Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and Commissioner Harvey to celebrate the opening of the Black Diamond Trail, an 8 mile trail that runs on the west side of Cayuga Lake between the City of Ithaca and **Taughannock Falls State Park**. The family of William (Bill) Tompkins, long time Park Manager at **Cayuga Lake State Park** and mentor to a generation of staff in the region, gathered in July to celebrate the opening of a new pavilion at Cayuga Lake that was made possible with their generosity. The structure, named in honor of Bill and his wife Beulah, was designed and built by staff in the region. **Robert H. Treman State Park** hosted two work crews from the Excelsior Conservation Corps who reconstructed a staircase leading from the park office up the first pitch of the Park's Rim Trail. The trail is now more accessible than ever. The work stands as a great complement to the workmanship of the Civilian Conservation Corps whose craftsmanship is evident throughout the park.

Genesee Region

8 parks, 1.2 million visitors

It was an exciting year at **Letchworth State Park**. In July, Governor Cuomo attended the opening of the Humphrey Nature Center, a state-of-the-art facility that will provide nature programming, environmental education and community rooms to the visitors of this popular park. Three new playgrounds at the North End of the park were completed and work has begun on the rehabilitation of the Gorge Trail. The Friends of Letchworth completed a grant-funded project to restore a Civilian Conservation Corps-Lean-To shelter on the Highbanks Trail. At **Hamlin Beach**, the rehabilitation of the historic Area 3 Bath House was completed and opened June 2016. Construction has begun on improvements to the Yanty Marsh/East Woods area that will include trail improvements, new observation platform, rebuilt car top boat launch, and new pavilion. At **Darien Lakes**,

construction has begun on a new comfort station at the swimming beach. Improvements completed at the Genesee Valley Greenway include expanded access and parking for equestrian users, interpretive and informational kiosk, new lighting, fencing and benches; also interpretive programs along the Greenway continue to be expanded.

Long Island Region

26 parks, 1 historic site, 18 million visitors

The **Bethpage Black** hosted the 1st round of the FedEx Cup Tournament, sponsored by the Barclays, in August. The world's best 125 golfers were once again challenged by the world class course. An estimated 75,000 spectators were on site to view competition with a purse of \$1.5 million dollars and the FedEx Cup Trophy. Visitors to the golf course that week were treated to a number of exhibits including highlights of the Agency's environmental programs, such as IPM and Best Management Program, our Raptor Program, and the use of native plants to promote pollinators on our golf courses. Spectators visited the Taste NY Tent, located prominently on the 1st Fairway, to eat a meal consisting of foods grown or produced in New York State. With approximate \$50 million dollars economic impact to the region, this Tournament continues to provide many positive benefits and highlights State Park's facilities and programs to a wide audience. **Hither Hills State Park**, one of the busiest state park campgrounds, and only oceanfront campground, expanded in 2016. The East Picnic Field overlooking the existing campground and oceanfront was reconstructed into a 23-campsite facility with platforms, picnic tables and a new bathroom and shower facility. The facility opened on July 9th and was sold out for the rest of the summer in two days. The entire campground is sold out already for this upcoming summer. The new facility has been very well received by the public. The West Bathhouse Concession at

Jones Beach State Park was restored to its original configuration and design as part of the Governor's NY Parks 2020. The space included the Park's first "Taste NY" and provided our concessionaire the opportunity to showcase New York State sourced food products. Currently underway in the interior of the building is the renovation of the Marine Dining room. This room will be an event/catering hall showcasing magnificent views of the Atlantic Ocean. A new food concession was added to the Jones Beach Theater for the 2016 Concert Season. The first "Taste NY Bar" opened for concert-goers to enjoy New York State sourced snacks, spirits, beer and wine.

New York City Region

7 parks, 7.5 million visitors

New York Parks 2020 is having a truly transformative impact on state parks in the New York City region. At **Riverbank State Park** the renovation of the main entrance has made the park's gateway more green. The park has partnered with The Hort to build a new greenhouse which will host classes, provide gardener support and programs for local school children for gardening education year-round. This public-private partnership project is supported with funding from the Manhattan Borough President and the City Councilman. The dramatic revitalization of **Roberto Clemente State Park** continues with the renovation of the bulkhead, esplanade/upper esplanade almost complete; upper plaza, lower plaza underway; northern shoreline and ballfields renovation to commence spring 2017 – all part of the \$90 million renovation of the park with federal, state, city and private funding. The park's chess program sponsored by Gary Kasparov Foundation expanded to include school day chess with kids from the nearby elementary school and the afterschool arts program with Bronx Children's Museum continues this year with a bird-based curriculum. An updated park plan has been completed at **Clay Pit Ponds** where volunteerism has been particularly strong this year. A '100-strong' Bloomberg volunteer day put Gericke Farm field

to rest for the season. To the delight of volunteers and staff, an accidental harvest of leftover peppers led to the creation of "Gericke Farm Pepper Jam." More than 600 total volunteers hours were also contributed at **Bayswater Point** and resulted in beach clean-up, invasive species removal and a new butterfly/pollinator garden. As part of a new partnership, the Billion Oyster Project is installing new floating oyster nursery in Jamaica Bay, using park as staging area and home base for environmental education. **Gantry Plaza** will soon welcome a new ferry landing at the southern end of the park which will bring approximately 8000 new patrons to the park each day. The park's basketball courts were completed renovated with partial funding from the Coca-Cola Foundation which includes funds to build leagues. Dogs are among the many happy patrons at **East River State Park** where a new dog run was completed, with funding from the NYC City Council's participatory budgeting process. At **Four Freedoms**, the legacy of FDR continues to inspire through a park-produced documentary that highlights high school students interviewing elderly individuals (average age 87) regarding their personal memories of FDR from his era.

Niagara Region

18 parks, 2 historic sites, 11.7 million visitors

Niagara Falls State Park hosted a visit from Governor Cuomo who inspected the restoration work that has been underway. He heralded the improvements as transformative not only for the park but for tourism in the region. Much of the capital work in the park should conclude by the end of 2017. **Niagara Falls State Park** was also launched as a Taste NY site with New York State produced and inspired items featured at retail locations and the Top of the Falls Restaurant. At **Buffalo Harbor State Park** the pedestrian walkway on the break wall opened in the fall and will surely be a new hot spot come this summer in Buffalo. **Buffalo Harbor** also hosted a very successful *Be a NY Ninja* event in partnership with the Governor's Film



Harriman State Park



Buffalo Harbor State Park - Be a NY Ninja



Johnson Hall State Historic Site

Office where hundreds of community kids came out for a day of physical activity and games in the park Niagara Reional Commission Members attended the launch of the enhanced lighting of Niagara Falls on December 1. And, the Commission graciously hosted an Employee Appreciation picnic for all regional employees which was greatly appreciated and enjoyed by all.

Palisades Region

20 parks, 7 historic sites, 4.8 million visitors

The Appalachian Mountain Club Camp at Breakneck Pond in **Harriman State Park** opened this summer after extensive renovations. As part of the agreement, AMC undertook much of the renovation work directly. The camp was very popular during its first summer of operation, with more than 50 percent of the camp users from the general public. Work has begun on the Tower of Victory restoration project at **Washington Headquarters**. The project includes masonry repairs to the stone façade, restoration of the entry gates, which suffered damage during Superstorm Sandy and the roof structure, which covered the observation deck, will be reconstructed to historically match the original Spanish tile style roof that was removed in the 1950s due to severe storm damage caused by hurricane force winds. Most of the construction cost of \$1.5 million was privately raised through the Palisades Parks Conservancy.

Tallman pool at **Tallman Mountain State Park** reopened this year after being closed for more than seven years. The pool was repaired and operated by Tallman Beach and Pool Club, LLC. The pool offered season membership to the public and

a broader array of amenities from when it was last open. The renovation and operation of the pool was undertaken at no expense to the Commission. Just over 1.5 miles of carriage roads were restored in 2016 at **Minnewaska State Park Preserve**. The .82 mile section of Smiley Carriage Road from Lake Awosting to the Flybrook and a .81 section of Lake Awosting Carriage Road were restored. These projects were privately funded from donors with the Open Space Institute, without which the success of the carriage road restoration would not be possible. Additionally, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission funded the resurfacing of a 1 mile section of Upper Awosting Carriage Road in 2016 which completed the ongoing in-house restoration of the 3.1 mile Upper Awosting Carriage Road.

Saratoga-Capital District Region

12 parks, 8 historic sites, 4.7 million visitors

The Saratoga-Capital District region continues to work closely with friends groups and partners on several initiatives to improve park amenities, preserve historic resources and expand programming. At **John Brown Farm**, a new exhibit area focuses on 19th century New York abolitionists and furniture scholars visited **Fort Crailo** to study period furniture where chairs from **Crailo** and **Senate House** were featured. At **Mine Kill**, park staff installed new benches, hand-crafted from cedar cut onsite. **Crown Point State Historic Site** has partnered with the Lake Champlain Bridge Heritage Area to start a Quest map search, similar to a scavenger hunt. If visitors go to all six sites they will earn a Quest Map coin that is unique to this challenge. A cultural resources survey was conducted at **Bennington Battlefield** to help staff and scholars better understand events



Point Au Roche State Park Nature Center



Grafton Lakes State Park - Welcome Center Groundbreaking



Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park - New Historic Trail

of the battle and positions of the troops. In early 2017, the new visitors center at **Thacher State Park** will open. A private fundraising campaign led by the regional commission and the Open Space Institute has raised more than \$750,000 toward the facility that will serve as a gateway to the popular park. Construction on new visitor facilities at **Grafton Lakes** and **Saratoga Spa State Park** also began in 2016.

Taconic Region

14 parks, 6 historic sites, 4.2 million visitors

A partnership between State Parks, the Open Space Institute, the Taconic Regional Commission and the Friends of Fahnestock & Hudson Highlands resulted in the opening of a beautiful new welcome center in the Canopus area of **Fahnestock State Park**. The \$2 million project features year-round bathrooms, an improved café area and ski rental shop and a courtyard area with tables and a fire ring. The welcome center is a meeting place for swimmers in the summer and cross country skiers in the winter. An immigration exhibit opened at **Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site** focusing on immigrant history of Yonkers from World War II to present day. Highlights include an oral history interview project which featured over a dozen residents talking about their immigrant stories including Yonkers Mayor Mike Spano. The Keeper's House at the **Old Croton Aqueduct** opened to the public and OCA volunteers staff the house every weekend so the public can learn more about the Aqueduct and the work of the friends. In August, US Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell visited FDR State Park to unveil signs for the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary

Route National Historic Trail. The event at the park took place during the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service. Site interpreters at **Olana State Historic Site** started offering landscape tours to highlight the entire artist-designed landscape.

Thousand Islands

26 parks, 1 historic site, 1.6 million visitors

Parks were popular in the Thousand Islands Region in 2016. There was strong attendance all year with notable increases at **Southwick Beach** and **Cumberland Bay State Parks**. Visitors were treated to new beach bathhouse opened this year at **Higley Flow State Park** replacing an outdated facility. It features restrooms and changing facilities for patrons, life guard area with first aid station and new site amenities including picnic areas. The 1 mile extension to the Black River Trail is well underway with a spring 2017 completion planned. This will make the total length of the trail approximately 4.4 miles. The trail extends from the Village of Black River to just inside the City of Watertown. Future extensions are in the preliminary planning phase. A playground at **Eel Weir State Park** in St. Lawrence County will be complete in 2017. This playground will be a great addition to the day use area of the park. Many school children visited the region's parks as part of the Connect Kids program in 2016. Improvements currently underway at two of the Region's Nature Centers will make those visits even more enriching in the near future. The Minna Anthony Common Nature Center in **Wellesley Island State Park** and the Nature Center at are both receiving major upgrades to the interior and exterior of the buildings.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION



CRIS Geographic Information System

Quackenbush Building

2016 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 award-winning Quackenbush Building in downtown Troy, home of the Tech Valley Center of Gravity—an innovative business incubator for creative enterprises.

Schuyler Flatts Burial Ground Project, Menands, Town of Colonie

This past summer, the remains of 14 enslaved people were reburied at St. Agnes Cemetery in Menands, not far from where their unmarked graves were discovered during a 2005 Town of Colonie construction project. Based on investigations, it was determined that the remains, six women, one man, two children and five infants, were roughly 200 years old. The burial ground was dated between the 18th and early 19th centuries and was part of an estate owned by the Schuyler family. In 2015, artists, woodworkers and

students created burial containers for each set of remains. In June, the containers holding the remains laid in state at Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site in Albany as part of a celebration of their lives. The following day, the remains were reburied with great ceremony beside a tombstone that marks the site. "Here lies the remains of 14 souls known only to God. Enslaved in life, they are slaves no more."

Quackenbush Building, 30 3rd Street, Troy

The rehabilitation of the Quackenbush Building in downtown Troy is the result of a partnership between Quackenbush Properties and the Tech Valley Center of Gravity, an innovative nonprofit entity that supports startup companies, spurs job creation, and encourages economic development. The Quackenbush Building was built in 1857, served as a dry goods store until 1937, and later housed local businesses until 2001. The \$7.4 million rehabilitation project has rescued and transformed the vacant and deteriorated building into an innovative business development complex that has infused new life into this local landmark as well as the surrounding area.

Eastman Gardens, 800 East Main Street, Rochester

Originally built in 1917 by Eastman Kodak founder George Eastman, the former Eastman Dental Dispensary was the first school in the country to train dental hygienists. With the help of private investment and public funding, including preservation tax credits, the neglected institutional building has been repaired and updated for contemporary residential use. The more than \$20 million project repaired the building's exterior and adapted its interior, which includes 43 affordable apartment units and nine market rate units for seniors and physically handicapped persons. The complex offers quality housing in the center of the city, improving the lives of local residents and furthering local revitalization efforts. The project was additionally funded through a partnership with New York State Homes and Community Renewal.

Hangars 1 and 2, Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn

For many years, Hangars 1 and 2 at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn sat vacant and in need of rehabilitation. Built in 1931, they were part of a series of hangars that served New York City's first municipal airport, which was the starting point and terminus for many record-breaking continental and international flights. During World War II, the airfield

became one of the most important U.S. Navy installations, transporting naval aircraft from regional assembly plants to the West Coast for deployment in the Pacific Theater. Through a partnership between the National Park Service and the Williams Companies, the hangars have been restored and adapted for use as a natural gas metering and regulating station as part of a regional pipeline project. Located in the Gateway National Recreation Area, the hangars are contributing properties in the Floyd Bennett Field Historic District.

Old Croton Aqueduct Keeper's House, Dobbs Ferry

Through a partnership among the State Parks, the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, and Stephen Tilly, Architect—and with the help of public funding, private investment and hardworking volunteers, the Old Croton Aqueduct Keeper's House has been rehabilitated to serve visitors to the Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park. Built in the 1850s as part of the Old Croton Aqueduct water supply system, the house is a rare surviving aqueduct overseer's residence along the aqueduct trail. The restored house interprets the system's history, offers public rest rooms, and provides office space for state parks staff and the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct.



Eastman Gardens



Schuyler Flatts Burial Ground Project



Old Croton Aqueduct Keeper's House



Hangars 1 and 2

DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT



State Park Police Academy

New York State Park Police

The Division of Law Enforcement of the Office of Parks continues to work closely within the Agency and with our public safety partners to maintain safe State Parks, and deliver the highest quality of professional police services to our visitors, surrounding communities, and our fellow employees. Throughout a year of record-level visitation and many significant events, New York's State Parks and facilities were maintained as safe havens of public use by the Police Officers, Rangers and civilian employees of the Division.

Throughout the peak summer season, State Park Police provide essential public safety services, including crowd control, major event planning and coordination of law enforcement and emergency management at our State Parks 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, offer 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 at the State Park Police Academy in Rensselaerville. The 13th Session Basic School graduated seventeen State Park Police Officers to assignments in State Parks across New York State in April, and upon completion of Field Training in late June, these officers were assigned to the patrol force for the peak season. The 14th Session began in October, and is scheduled to graduate twenty eight new State Park Police Officers for summer 2017 operations.



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