

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF PARKS, RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2019





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Chair	1
Priorities for 2020	4
NYS Parks and Historic Sites Overview	6
State Council of Parks Members	8
NY Parks 2020	10
Partners & Programs	14
Connect Kids to Parks	16
Learn to Swim	17
Empire State Conservation Corps	18
Empire State Trail	19
Annual Highlights	20
State Board for Historic Preservation	26
Environmental Stewardship & Planning	29



Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

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

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ERIK KULLESEID
Commissioner

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

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

February 2020

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is pleased to submit its 2019 Annual Report. This report highlights the State Council of Parks and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's achievements during 2019, and sets forth recommendations for the coming year.

I, representing the State Council of Parks, was proud to join you at the grand opening of Shirley Chisholm State Park last summer. This stunning park has already welcomed thousands of people and we are confident it will be a popular and powerful place in the community for outdoor recreation, environmental education and connection. Together with the hundreds of projects completed as part of your historic NY Parks 2020 capital initiative, the New York State park system is poised to enter the new decade with unprecedented visitation, a vast array of modern amenities and outdoor recreational activities drawing visitors from near and far, and new programs connecting the next generation and new users to our parks and historic sites.

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 300,000 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. These and other agency-led programs ensure that parks are open and accessible to all.

The State Council of Parks remains committed to continuing the tradition of philanthropic support for state parks and, together with the Open Space Institute's Alliance for NYS Parks Program and the Natural Heritage Trust, has raised millions in private funds and through partnerships to support signature and other projects, exhibits and long-term operations at state parks and historic sites throughout the State. And, our friends' groups-from large to small-continue to grow in strength and ability, providing high quality programs and working on important projects that are invaluable to our parks. We thank Parks & Trails New York for administering the important capacity building Park & Trail Partnership Grant funded through the EPF with your support.

Continued next page

To protect the historic Parks 2020 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 77 million people who visit our parks annually receive high quality service commensurate with the magnificence of the capital revitalization you have led. We are grateful for the 22 new positions added from the agency's increased revenue but will continue to advocate for more staff to address increasing shortages.

We extend our 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.

Finally, the State Council of Parks strongly supports your proposed Restore Mother Nature Bond Act and we will advocate for it with our commission members, friends' groups and environmental partners.

Best wishes,



Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky
Chair, State Council of Parks



STATE COUNCIL OF PARKS 2020 PRIORITIES



Connect Kids to Parks



Niagara Falls State Park



Visitor Center - Thacher State Park

The State Council of Parks will advance five priorities in 2020

1 Building Better Parks: Parks 2020 and Beyond

Governor Cuomo has made investing in tourism and recreation a vital piece of his economic development agenda. Under the umbrella of his \$900 million Parks 2020 Initiative, New York has completed more than 800 individual park improvement projects, rebuilding and revitalizing park infrastructure and amenities around the State, and creating four new parks, with a special focus on 55 underserved and urban communities. As the New York State Park system approaches its centennial anniversary, The State Council of Parks supports the Governor's commitment to continue this transformation by funding the State Parks capital plan to continue to transform improve and expand the state's parks, historic sites and network of open space.

2 Equity in Park Access

The State Council of Parks shares the agency's priority to expand diverse and equitable access to parks so that people from all communities and across all ages and abilities are included and can fully experience our parks and historic sites. In addition to the Council's continued advocacy for Connect Kids to Parks—a highly successful program to connect youth to outdoor recreation, environmental education and our state's history through the field trip grant program, we support the agency's diversion and inclusion initiative which seeks to reach new park users, promote access and diversify the workforce.

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 park is your park" to promote stewardship and responsibility among our park visitors and partners and initiatives such as I Love My Park Day that encourages volunteerism and pride in our state parks and historic sites.

4 Stewardship of Natural and Historic 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. The Council also recognizes the urgency of the climate change crisis and supports the Governor's climate policy initiatives, including the Restore Mother Nature Bond Act proposed in the 2020 State of the State.

5 Advocacy

Wherever state parks and historic sites have threatened or actual boundary (or certain visual or toxic) encroachments, SCOP will mobilize and form plans to stop them.



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, historic sites and public facilities encompassing nearly 350,000 acres. New York's parks and historic sites provide affordable outdoor recreation and education opportunities to 77 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 2000 permanent employees and more than 4,500 seasonal positions during peak operating season. Approximately 77 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.



Roberto Clemente State Park



New Windsor Cantonment State Historic



Robert H. Treman State Park



STATE COUNCIL OF PARKS & REGIONAL PARK COMMISSIONS

IN THE FUTURE DAYS WHICH WE SEEM TO M...
WE LOOK FORWARD TO A WORLD FOUNDED...
ESSENTIAL HUMAN FREEDOMS. THE FIRST IS FREEDOM OF...
SPEECH AND EXPRESSION - EVERYWHERE IN THE...
SECOND IS FREEDOM OF EVERY PERSON TO WORSHIP GOD...
IN HIS OWN WAY - EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD. THE THIRD...
IS FREEDOM FROM WANT... EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD...
THE FOURTH IS FREEDOM FROM FEAR, ANYWHERE IN THE...

Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms State Park

2019

State Council of Parks

LUCY WALETZKY
Chair, SCOP & Taconic Commission

DALTON BURGETT
Chair, Allegany Commission

CORNELIUS B. MURPHY
Chair, Central Commission

W. DAVID BANFIELD
Chair, Finger Lakes Commission

PETER HUMPHREY
Chair, Vice-Chair & Genesee Commission

BRYAN ERWIN
Chair, Long Island Commission

LEISLE LIN
Chair, New York City Commission

CINDY ABBOTT LETRO
Chair, Niagara Frontier Commission

DAVID MORTIMER
Chair, Palisades Commission

HEATHER MABEE
Chair, Saratoga-Capital District Commission

HAROLD JOHNSON II
Chair, 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.





Shirley Chisholm State Park

2019

New York Parks 2020



Transforming Flagship State Parks

Since Governor 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 state-wide capital program. With leveraged funds, in eight years the program has invested \$1 billion in projects that have or will improve 176 state parks and historic sites; 900 projects have been completed or are underway. In addition, since 2011 Governor Cuomo has created four new parks with a special focus on underserved and urban communities. In 2012, the Governor opened Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt Island; in 2015 he opened Buffalo Harbor State Park; in 2017 Hallock State Park Preserve opened in Suffolk County; and in 2019 the Governor opened Shirley Chisholm State Park, the largest state park in New York City.

NY Parks 2020 Highlights 2020

Opening Shirley Chisholm State Park

In July, Governor Cuomo opened the state's newest and largest public park in New York City, the 407-acre Shirley Chisholm State Park along the shores of Jamaica Bay. The new park honors Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, an edu-

cator, former representative of the 12th Congressional district in New York for seven terms and the first African American woman to run for president. The park is a signature project of Governor Cuomo's Vital Brooklyn Initiative. Under the initial \$20 million phase, the park will provide ten miles of marked trails for hiking and biking; a bayside pier for picnicking and fishing along the park's Pennsylvania Avenue side; and water access. A partnership with Bike New York will create the Shirley Chisholm State Park Bike Library, offering free loaner bikes of all sizes to ride the crushed stone trails of the park.

Roberto Clemente State Park Transformed

This spring, New York State Parks completed and opened three major components of the park's transformation. The projects create a revitalized setting for the Bronx park's 1.3 million visitors, expand opportunities for youth programs, and make the park and surrounding neighborhood more resilient against flooding from the Harlem River, including: \$46 million redesign of the waterfront; a \$7 million rehabilitation of the upper plaza; \$8.6 million to install two synthetic turf ballfields - a multipurpose field and T-Ball field - as well as a renovation of the park's natural turf field.

Robert Frederick Smith Center for Performing Arts at Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park

Last spring the Robert Frederick Smith Center for the Performing Arts opened at Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park in Harlem. The opening was celebrated with a performance featuring The Late Show with Stephen Colbert bandleader Jon Batiste, as well as some of the community's most talented



Sampson State Park Marina



Walkway-Over-the-Hudson - Dutchess Welcome Center

artists. The performance space is named in recognition of philanthropist and Vista Equity Partners Founder, Chairman and CEO Robert Frederick Smith's \$1 million donation toward a \$2.8 million renovation of the facility.

Sampson State Park Marina Revitalized

A \$7.5 million public-private partnership is rehabilitating the aging marina and will create a long-term campground at Sampson State Park. In partnership with New York State Parks and the New York State Canal Corporation, SamSen LLC will transform the marina and an underutilized area of the park into a modern destination for boating and long-term camping at the 2,000-acre park on Seneca Lake.

Walkway-Over-the-Hudson—Dutchess Welcome Center

The \$3 million Dutchess Welcome Center at the eastern approach to Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park was completed in July. The multipurpose facility creates a new welcoming gateway in time for the Hudson Valley tourism destination's 10th anniversary. Governor Cuomo announced the next phase of improvements will include a new pavilion and expanded gathering space at the Poughkeepsie entrance.

Saratoga Spa State Park: SPAC Improvement

A \$1.75 million project to modernize the Saratoga Performing Arts Center amphitheater was completed in time for the 2019 summer concert season. The project renovated the amphitheater's aging balcony ramps and lighting with an elegant and safe entryway.



Saratoga Spa State Park: SPAC



Roberto Clemente State Park



Camp Junior at Harriman State Park

Camp Junior at Harriman State Park

This summer, 300 Bronx youth attended summer camp at the newly opened Camp Junior in Harriman State Park. New York State Parks established the camp in partnership with The Fresh Air Fund and Bronx leaders, investing \$2 million over two years in Camp Junior to rehabilitate a deteriorated youth camp in Harriman State Park, a 47,500-acre wilderness park in Rockland and Orange Counties that is only 30 minutes from the Bronx. Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie helped to secure operating funds for the camp.

Tower of Victory, Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site

In April, the Tower of Victory at Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site in Newburgh reopened to the public, restoring access to the Tower and observation level and enhancing the visitor experience for the nation's first publicly-owned historic site. Originally constructed between 1883 and 1887 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of the Revolutionary War, the Tower was built at the site where Washington was headquartered the longest during the Revolution. The original roof was damaged in 1950 by a hurricane and removed, closing off access to the rooftop viewing platform that provided amazing views of the Hudson River. Fundraising for the Tower of Victory began in September of 2012 with construction commencing in the Fall of 2016. The complete funding for the restoration totaled \$1.6 million.





Schunemunk State Park

2019

Statewide Initiatives

Stewardship and Sustainability

State Parks is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from its operations and to be a part of the solution to the climate change crisis. To this end the agency in 2019 worked to build resiliency along shorelines including Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, and in NYC and Long Island; reduce its electrical demand to reduce its carbon footprint. By 2040, 100 percent of that state park system will be powered by renewable energy sources. Solar installations have been completed in 29 state parks. The agency added more plug-in electric vehicles to its fleet, and this year installed 40 charging stations at facilities with plans for another 40 stations next year. The agency phased out single-use plastic items from parks' vendors to reduce the amount of plastic escaping into the environment.

Land Acquisition

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 the Governor took office in 2011, State Parks has added more than 15,000 acres of new open space acres most notably in the Hudson Valley and Palisades regions where open space is 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. Significant acquisitions in 2019 included Horse Island, a historically significant site of the War of 1812 that will become part of Sackets Harbor State Historic Site in the Thousand Islands. Nearly 2000 acres of land has been preserved in the Hudson Valley including some of the largest tracts of privately held land in the Shawangunk Mountains and Hudson Highlands west of the Hudson River. These acquisitions expand several state parks, adds new trails and viewpoints, and conserve valuable ecological corridors.

Responding to the Lake Ontario Flooding Crisis and Renewing Camping Tourism

In 2019, State Parks was part of a multi-agency task force charged by Governor Cuomo to develop a plan to harden infrastructure along Lake Ontario's waterfront in response to record flooding in 2019. The REDI Commission strengthened the region's local economies, heavily dependent on summer tourism.

As part of the REDI response, in August Governor Cuomo announced a 50 percent discount on fees at more than 30 campgrounds, parks and boat launches along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence, those campgrounds received 10,263 new reservations. This represents about 36,000 additional visitors to a region impacted by high lake levels. Since Governor Cuomo took office in 2011, total overnight stays at campgrounds operated by the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation have risen 26 percent, with reservations up 21 percent. During that period, the number of state park campgrounds increased from 65 to 68, with total campsites available increasing from 8,379 to 8,555. The number of full-service cottages -- which include amenities like power, kitchen, bath, beds, living room, and outdoor living space -- jumped from 50 to 128, and cabins went from 791 to 830. In 2011, there were no yurts available at campgrounds, and now there are 18.

2020-21 Capital Recommendation

The State Council of Parks is proud to support Governor Cuomo's NY Parks 2020 initiative which will continue to invest \$110 million a year into the transformation of the New York State Park system. The State Council of Parks also supports the proposed Restore Mother Nature Bond Act to advance vital stewardship and sustainability projects across the state including at New York state parks.

PARTNERS & PROGRAMS



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



First Day Hikes

I LOVE MY PARK day

The eighth annual **I Love My Park Day** hosted with **Parks & Trails New York** on Saturday, May 7, 2019 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 9th Annual I Love My Park Day, Saturday, May 2, 2020.

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 7500 participated in hikes at 80 parks on January 1, 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. A study by **Parks & Trails New York** released in 2019 found not-for-profit Friends organizations supporting New York's state parks and historic sites provide critical support and programs to the state park system, including more than \$17 million in private funds raised and nearly 132,000 hours of volunteer labor donated.



I Love My Park Day Volunteers



Minnewaska State Park Preserve 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, 22 partner organiza-

tions received \$450,000 in 2019 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.



Newly built boat racks funded through the Park and Trail Partnership Program. Moreau Lake State Park



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 2019 projects included: partnering with State Parks in the design and construction of a new Minnewaska Visitor Center, carriage road restoration at Minnewaska State Park Preserve; the creation of new gateway signage at Fahnestock State Park; revitalizing the Cultural Performance Center at Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park; partnering with West Point cadets to construct new trail bridges at Fahnestock; and protecting land adjacent to Schunnemunk, Minnewaska, and Harriman and State Parks to protect the parks and improve public access.



Center for Performing Arts at Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park

THANKS TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS

CONNECT KIDS TO PARKS



Rock Island Lighthouse State Park - Connect Kids to Parks



2019

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. **Since 2016, the Connect Kids Field Trip Program has awarded 3,690 field trip grants and has served nearly 300,000 students in New York. In 2018-19, participation in the grant program grew by 30 percent.** 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.

The New York State Parks **Learn-to-Swim Program** continued for a sixth year in 2019 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 American Red Cross, the National Swimming Pool Foundation and the Northeast Spa and Pool Foundation.



Riverbank State Park - Learn-to-Swim



Get Together Day at Buffalo Harbor State Park

2019

In 2019, 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, lanterns, 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.

In September, New York State Parks hosted the first-ever **Get Together Day**, an initiative with the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities to celebrate community inclusion and showcase accessibility in outdoor recreation. Programs, events and activities were offered at seven parks across the state.



State Park at the Fair



First-Time Camper Program



ECC PROGRAMS

Excelsior Conservation Corps (ECC)

2019

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 40 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 continues to create 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 40 members (including vets), ages 18 to 25, to volunteer 10 months of their lives to serve their country as AmeriCorps members.

In year four, ECC students improved 108 miles of trails; 806 acres of land; built or maintained 149 visitor-use structures and reached over 24,000 individuals through environmental outreach programs.



EMPIRE STATE TRAIL



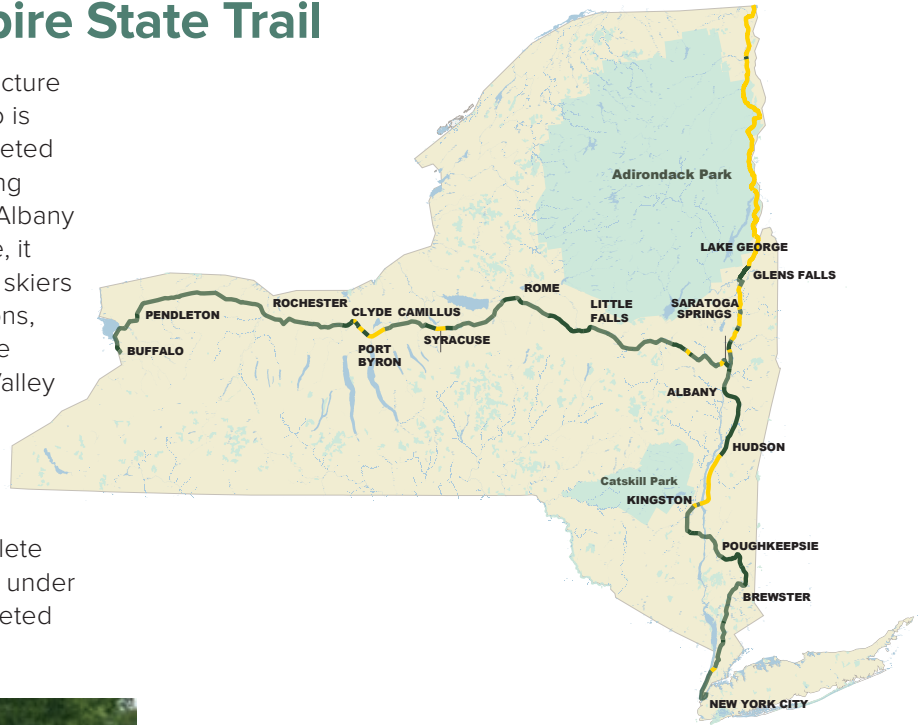
Empire State Trail - Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park



2019

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. State Parks, the Hudson River Valley Greenway, and many state and local government partners are undertaking 60 construction projects to complete the trail: 80 percent of the projects are finished or under construction; the remaining projects will be completed by December, 2020.



In May, Governor Cuomo announced the start of construction on more than \$36 million of Empire State Trail projects in Onondaga County. The projects will complete a continuous Empire State Trail cycling and pedestrian route through Syracuse by eliminating the current 14-mile gap through Camillus, Syracuse, and DeWitt. The projects will close the largest gap in the Erie Canalway section of the Empire State Trail.

A scenic view of the Niagara River flowing over a rocky ledge, creating a powerful waterfall. The water is a vibrant blue-green color, and the surrounding area is lush with green trees and vegetation. In the foreground, a paved walkway with a metal railing runs along the edge of the waterfall. Several people are standing on the walkway, looking at the falls and taking photos. The scene is bright and sunny, with long shadows cast across the pavement.

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS



Watkins Glen State Park - North Rim Staircase

2019

2019 Annual Highlights

Allegany Region

Allegany State Park continues to be a top destination for trail users, as improvements are continually made to the vast trail system. A new 3.6 mile single track mountain bike trail was recently completed in partnership with the Western New York Mountain Bike Association in the Red House Area, and groundbreaking occurred on Phase 1 of a paved multi-use trail in the Quaker Run Area (1.6 miles) which will eventually extend over 5 miles and act as an alternative transportation corridor for this expansive camping facility. Fundraising at **Midway State Park** is facilitating active restoration of historic amusement rides, including a 1948 Eli Ferris Wheel and a 1960 Herschell Twister. A new Connect Kids program is starting at Allegany State Park in partnership with the Seneca-Iroquois National Museum in Salamanca. School groups will have the opportunity to experience activities in both the park and the museum and learn more about how communities are connected.

Central Region

Chenango Valley State Park continues to experience a surge in visitation and park experiences. Last year, the innovative refrigerated ice rink drew thousands of visitors to the park in the heart of winter for the annual Binghamton Pond Fest. The rink is more sustainable this year with the addition of full electric service to the ice rink area, enabling the use of an electric chiller instead of using large diesel generators and there are electric pedestals for use by vendors. **Selkirk Shores** campground electrification project was completed in 2019 and for the first time, all 132 campsites have electric service.

Finger Lakes

The First Day Hike at **Taughannock** continues to shatter records. On January 1, 2019 1,242 intrepid hikers started their year on the right foot with a hike through the park and demonstrated the strong community connection to the park. Two major trail improvements were completed this year and



Chenango Valley State Park



Trail opening at Allan Treman State Marine Park



Roberto Clemente State Park

included the opening of the North Rim Staircase at **Watkins Glen State Park** and the opening of Trail at **Allan Treman State Marine Park** that links to Black Diamond Trail and the City of Ithaca's Cayuga Waterfront Trail.

Genesee Region

Construction on the Lower Falls Rec Center at **Letchworth** started in April. When complete the area will include multiple playing courts, games, exercise and play equipment. An improved **Hamlin Beach State Park** campground opened in May with two new comfort stations and three new playgrounds. The restoration, relocation and re-opening of the historic (CCC constructed) St. Helena Shelter in Letchworth State Park was completed in Summer 2019. Staff and equipment from around the region were heavily involved in protection and mitigations efforts in response to the Lake Ontario flooding issues. Letchworth State Park hosted the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra in July for an outdoor concert on the Archery Field followed by a fireworks display over the gorge. The **Genesee Valley Greenway State Park** received a \$5 million grant from the Ralph Wilson Foun-

ation and a \$1.54 million TAP grant through NYS DOT for projects to enhance the northern section of the trail and a comprehensive study to plan future improvements along the entire 90-mile GVG. In September, Letchworth hosted the National CCC Legacy Gathering with alumni and representatives from all over country. Hamlin Beach State Park Manager Kate Gross spearheaded the effort to establish a statewide Peer Support program. This program assists employees dealing with traumatic events in our parks.

Long Island Region

Completed six months ahead of schedule, the Jones Beach Shared Use Path opened in April. The 4.5-mile leisure trail that offers walkers, skaters, runners, and cyclists stunning views of one of New York's most popular and beautiful state parks. **Jones Beach State Park** celebrated its 90th Birthday this summer. The party included the debut of the WildPlay Adventure Course and the completion of several capital projects part of the Jones Beach revitalization. Bethpage Black hosted the PGA Championship in May, welcoming more than 200,000 spectators to the park's storied Bethpage Black golf



Letchworth State Park Preserve - First Day Hikes



Jones Beach State Park - WildPlay Adventure Course

course. The 69-site campground at **Heckscher State Park** in Suffolk County reopened to the public this summer after a \$500,000 investment to renovate the park's camping facilities.

New York City Region

2019 was a busy year for state parks in New York City. A new state park opened in Brooklyn, **Shirley Chisholm State Park**, becoming the largest state park in New York City; a major transformation of **Roberto Clemente State Park** was completed; and the renovation of the performing arts center at **Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park** was celebrated with an evening of stellar musical acts honoring donor Robert F. Smith. Environmental education programs continue to grow throughout the region, with an innovative pop-up module used at **East River, Gantry Plaza** and **Roberto Clemente State Parks**. At Shirley Chisholm, the region partnered with Bike NY to create a Bike Library to provide free bikes and encourage bike use in the park.

Niagara Region

The opening of the new main entrance to the **Niagara Falls State Park** was completed. The project is part of Governor Cuomo's \$70 million investment in transforming the park. The new Welcome Plaza serves as a more majestic arrival space as well as better tying the park to the city of Niagara Falls. The removal of two miles of the Niagara Scenic Parkway began, which will result in not only the largest expansion of Niagara Falls State Park ever but also in a trail system to connect Niagara Falls with northern attractions and to the City of Niagara Falls. Additionally, the Restore the Gorge project headed by the Western New York Land Conservancy pro-



gressed with additional funding for on-the-ground ecological restoration, including nearly \$950,000 in Greenway Ecological Fund grants to combat invasive plant species and cultivate native plants. New amenities were added to **Deveaux Woods State Park** in 2019, including a comfort station constructed with materials from the historic carriage house, and a new dog park that opened to the public in October, the first dog park in the Falls. At **Buffalo Harbor** a gateway for the Empire State Trail was complete with an official opening planned for spring 2020. This will serve as the starting (or ending) point of the trail that connects Buffalo to Manhattan.





Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site



National Purple Heart Hall of Honor - Expansion Rendering

Palisades Region

Construction on two major projects in the region is underway. A public-private project with the Open Space Institute will create a new 5,000 square-foot facility at **Minnewaska State Park** that features public amenities and classroom space, exhibits and programming to educate visitors on the park's natural and recreational features. The new \$6.1 million visitor center is part of a \$28.2 million public-private investment in Minnewaska State Park Preserve under Governor Cuomo's NY Parks 2020 initiative, which includes \$21.2 million in state funding. And, last fall construction began on a \$17 million expansion of the **National Purple Heart Hall of Honor** in Orange County, not far from where George Washington first established the Badge of Military Merit, the inspiration for the modern Purple Heart. Located in **New Windsor**, a few miles from the **Washington Headquarters State Historic Site** in Newburgh, the Hall of Honor is being expanded with almost 4,300 square feet of new and refurbished exhibit space, with an increased emphasis on stories of individual award recipients.

Saratoga-Capital District Region

In 2019 State Parks began work on the transformation of the historic Roosevelt II bathhouse. The building has sat vacant for over 30 years awaiting its next life. This initial investment of just over \$2 million to stabilize the structure laid the groundwork for partner organizations to step in and match the state's investment with significant private funding. **SPAC** received an REDC award to offer new opportunities for public use of the space including health and wellness programming provided by the Coesa organization, a black box theatre, gallery space, public use of the lobby and new coffee shop, and much more. Regional and Park staff worked with a great team from the Bureau of Historic Site and Park Services to update the lobby at **Spa Park** to better highlight the historical elegance of the room while providing modern interpretation and visitor amenities. Capped in the early 1900s to protect its mineral waters from exploitation, the Shonts Spring was restored by park staff and the Friends of Saratoga Spa State Park and its waters are flowing once more after 100 years. In a pioneering project, State Parks partnered with Ithaca College's Physics and Astronomy Depart-





John Jay Homestead State Historic Site



Higley Flow State Park

ment and the Friends of Schuyler Mansion to have an existing papier mache ceiling at **Philipse Manor Hall** 3D scanned by portable laser units. Once scanned, a 3D printer then used the scans to create a total of 55 unique molds to recreate the Philipse Manor ceiling for **Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site**. More than 300 pieces were cast to make the ceiling, using over 500 pounds of paper pulp. Once finished, the ornamental ceiling now looks like it has always been there.

Taconic Region

Engaging the public in ways meant to stimulate, excite, endear and provoke thought the Taconic Region showcased an array of different programming in 2019. **John Jay Homestead State Historic Site** sponsors a fabulous Scholar's Lecture series. In October renowned Harvard professor, author and television commentator Henry Louis Gates, Jr. spoke on Reconstruction with fascinating parallels from the 1860s to today's times. The site offers house tours in Spanish several times a month and has a robust school visitation program. The Olana Partnership, in an evolution of our public-private partnership, took over the delivery of all public programming, including newly expanded

offerings on the site, with great success in 2019. Taconic Commission members and local Pickleball aficionados welcomed the first Pickleball courts in the region this fall. They are already in great demand bringing new visitors to the park. The Friends of Mills at Staatsburgh raised funds to paint the gilded age mansion's ceiling this year and replace tattered draperies. What a difference it has made!

Thousand Islands

New floating docks were installed at **Long Point State Park**, designed to be more resilient in fluctuating water conditions. Seven new comfort stations are completed and opened at **Higley Flow State Park**. Two new playgrounds installed at **Southwick Beach** and **Robert G. Wehle State Parks**. A new comfort station at Long Point State Park was designed and built by talented in-house engineers and regional maintenance crews. Among many accomplishments by our Student Conservation Association members were two hitches at **Cedar Island State Park** as part of an initiative to revitalize this primitive island camping and day use park. A much-needed fish cleaning station was constructed at **Wellesley Island State Park**.



James Baird State Park - New Pickleball Court Unveiling

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PS 186 - Boys & Girls Club of Harlem - NYS Historic Tax Credit Rehabilitation

2019

Division for Historic Preservation

The Division for Historic Preservation leads the nation in the number and diversity of historic preservation listings. In 2019, nearly 4800 properties across 28 counties were added to the National Register of Historic Places, qualifying them to use the New York State Rehabilitation Tax Credit program or access state and federal grant programs providing funding for historic preservation. Since Governor Cuomo and Legislature improved our State Historic credit incentives in 2013 and 2017, New York State leads the nation in encouraging private investment in the revitalization of historic buildings. In 2019,

this program catalyzed \$528 million in private investment to restore derelict commercial, Main Street buildings and historic districts essential to local economic development. Over 80 percent of program applications come from upstate communities, both urban and rural while program participation in New York City and the outer boroughs remains strong. In total, this program has incentivized more than \$6.5 billion in historic resource redevelopment, and more than 670 additional projects are pending or in early planning stages.

Completed HTC Projects, 2011-2019

Park Region:	Completed HTC Investments:	Number of Projects:
Adirondacks:	\$7,558,184	3
Allegany:	\$26,935,723	7
Central:	\$545,370,034	66
Finger Lakes:	\$150,131,493	51
Genesee:	\$226,577,697	33
Long Island:	\$10,100,000	4
New York City:	\$3,930,526,753	86
Niagara:	\$868,748,713	112
Palisades:	\$61,303,468	31
Saratoga/Capital:	\$539,723,949	139
Taconic:	\$35,014,556	6
Thousand Islands:	\$113,332,398	15
TOTAL:	\$6,466,023,368	553

Underway HTC Projects, 2015-2019

Park Region:	Projected HTC Investments:	Number of Projects:
Adirondacks:	\$0	0
Allegany:	\$34,612,125	11
Central:	\$144,684,063	30
Finger Lakes:	\$77,112,129	27
Genesee:	\$310,732,534	24
Long Island:	\$470,000	2
New York City:	\$2,507,805,691	41
Niagara:	\$492,532,278	60
Palisades:	\$77,024,222	53
Saratoga/Capital:	\$264,040,422	151
Taconic:	\$3,300,850	7
Thousand Islands:	\$36,768,686	3
TOTAL:	\$3,949,083,000	411

Planned HTC Projects, 2015-2019

Park Region:	Pending HTC Investments:	Number of Projects:
Adirondacks:		3
Allegany:		9
Central:		29
Finger Lakes:		16
Genesee:		12
Long Island:		2
New York City:		28
Niagara:		58
Palisades:		40
Saratoga/Capital:		49
Taconic:		7
Thousand Islands:		6
TOTAL:		259

2019 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 4th.

The TWA Hotel, JFK Airport (New York City)

The TWA Hotel transformed the former Trans World Airlines terminal, which was designed by world-renowned architect Eero Saarinen in 1962 and closed to the public in 2001, into the centerpiece of a modern 512-room hotel that preserves its neo-futuristic design.

The Marshall Bice House, Village of Schoharie (Mohawk Valley)

Flooded during Hurricane Irene, the 19th Century Italianate-style mansion has been remodeled to be more resilient to floods. It has also been rehabilitated into a commercial space and apartments using historic preservation tax credits. It was placed on the National Register in 2017 after years of neglect.

The Coeymans Stone House, Village of Coeymans (Capital Region)

This Dutch Baronial Manor House dating to approximately 1700, has been restored and reconstructed to its current Georgian form after nearly five decades of historically accurate work.

Libertad (former Jones Court Public Housing), Elmira (Southern Tier)

This 1953 low-income apartment complex has been rehabilitated into 91 apartments of affordable housing, including 20 units earmarked for homeless veterans. The former Jones Court public housing was named after John W. Jones, a former slave who settled in Elmira and helped others escape via the Underground Railroad.

Innisfree, Millbrook (Hudson Valley)

Innisfree is a nationally-significant, 150-acre public garden in rural Dutchess County that reflects the vision of master landscape architect Lester Collins, who shaped the property for six decades prior to his death in 1993. As one of the largest intact, modern designed landscapes in America, Innisfree reflects a blend of Japanese, Chinese, modern and ecological design principles.





Sag Harbor Hills, Azurest & Ninevah Subdivisions Historic Division

2019

2019 Historic Preservation Awards

The Colored Musicians Club, City of Buffalo (Western New York)

Formed in 1917, the Colored Musicians Club was one of the oldest continually operating African-American musicians' clubs in the country as well as an office for Buffalo Local 533, an early African-American union of musicians. These organizations were part of the response to racism and segregation in Buffalo's musical community.

The Architecture of James H. Johnson Historic Resources Survey (Finger Lakes)

This survey documents the career and buildings of Rochester architect James H. Johnson, who worked in the area from 1957 until his death in 2016. He designed many distinctive public, private, and religious buildings, favoring free-flowing, curvilinear shapes and later creating more geometrically-oriented variations.

Programmatic Agreement with the New York City Housing Authority

The New York City Housing Authority collaborated with State Parks to create a streamlined process for National Historic Preservation Act reviews. The Housing Authority worked on more than three dozen city housing projects now on the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Village of Wyoming Gas Light Restoration (Finger Lakes)

The small village of Wyoming, which has used its original natural gas streetlights since the late 19th Century, will carry the tradition into the 21st Century with modern gas streetlights. The village, commonly known as "Gaslight Village," is one of the state's last surviving examples from an era when streets were illuminated by gas lights.

The Sag Harbor Hills, Azurest & Ninevah Steering Committee (Long Island)

Community volunteers worked for nearly four years to get the 2019 listing of the Sag Harbor Hills, Azurest and Ninevah Subdivisions Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places. The area is historically significant as a summer community created by and for African-American professionals and their families. The district is in the incorporated village of Sag Harbor, Suffolk County.





2019

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 77 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:

- Completed the 2020-25 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
- Administered \$7.7M of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding
- Two organizations joined the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums (ZBGA) Program for a total of 95 participants with an increased appropriation at \$16M
- Acquired over 2,600 acres in fee or conservation easements
- Continued to support environmental education at 30 park nature centers and assisted development on the Jones Beach Energy and Nature Center, Minnewaska Visitor Center, and the Taconic Outdoor Ed Center

- Updated 116 trail maps and conducted accessibility assessments at select trails
- The New York Works Backcountry Trails Program allocated \$1 million in funding to 22 different projects that are now underway
- Constructed East River Marsh habitat restoration in Beaver Island State Park, one of four large-scale habitat restoration projects funded by an \$11M Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant from the Environmental Protection Agency
- Implemented over 30 stewardship projects statewide, focused on rare species conservation, wetland restoration, nature-based shorelines, and habitat management
- Three, four-member seasonal invasive species strike teams conducted 67 invasive plant projects in 53 parks, manually controlling target species on 136 acres and surveying 2,728 acres of parkland
- Two seasonal forest health teams surveyed 47 parks for forest pests and pathogens, covering 33,606 acres
- Protected approximately 2,000 hemlock trees against the invasive pest hemlock woolly adelgid
- Through a partnership with SUNY ESF, the NYS Parks Boat Steward Program educated nearly 57,000 boaters and inspected 23,743 watercrafts for aquatic invasive species at 24 park boat launches
- Worked with iMap Invasives, PRISMs, and other partners to develop standardized data collection and reporting of invasive species
- Participated in Strategic Decision-Making workshop with federal and state partners to address Harmful Algal Blooms
- Monitored water quality at 59 park beaches and 35 pools and spray grounds
- Provided training on the Integrated Tick Management Program to help reduce humane-tick encounters that can result in tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease



Thacher State Park - Pride Outside NY



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic
Preservation**

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

Albany, New York 12238
518-486-1868 • Fax: 518-486-2924