The New York State Parks Centennial

The NYS Parks Centennial
Celebrating 100 Years of the New York State Park System
1924-2024

2024 marks the 100th anniversary of the State Council of Parks, which forged the state park system that New Yorkers know and love today.

In 2023, we will launch a Centennial campaign to celebrate 100 years of connections between New York State parks and historic sites, our partners and our communities – as well as build public support for a vibrant, accessible, and welcoming Park system for the next 100 years.

Natural Heritage Trust

naturalheritagetrust.org

Natural Heritage Trust

The charitable partner of New York State's public lands & waters

The Charitable Partner to New York's State Public Lands and Waters

Mission

The NHT's mission is to "serve as a focal point for the receipt and administration of private gifts, devises and bequests of real and personal property donated to further conservation, outdoor recreation and historic preservation purposes and advance public understanding, revitalization and restoration of New York's waterfronts."

Status

The NHT has both government and IRC 501(C)3 non-profit status. As a public-benefit corporation it is subject to the NYS Public Authorities Law (PAL). All donations to the NHT are tax-deductible.

New York State Council of Parks

The State Council of Parks and Regional Commissions advise on all matters affecting parks, recreation and historic preservation within their regions and communities.

2022 State Council of Parks

- **Bryan Erwin**, Acting Chair, State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Long Island Region
- **Wendy Brand**, Allegany Region
- **Neil Murphy,** Central Region
- **David Banfield**, Finger Lakes Region
- **Nate Coogan**, Genesee Region
- **Leisle Lin**, NYC Region
- **Cindy Abbott Letro**, Niagara Region
- **Bryce O'Brien**, PIPC
- **Heather Mabee**, Saratoga-Capital District Region
- **Harold Johnson**, Thousand Islands Region
- **Edgar Masters**, Taconic Region
- **Doug Perelli, SHPO**

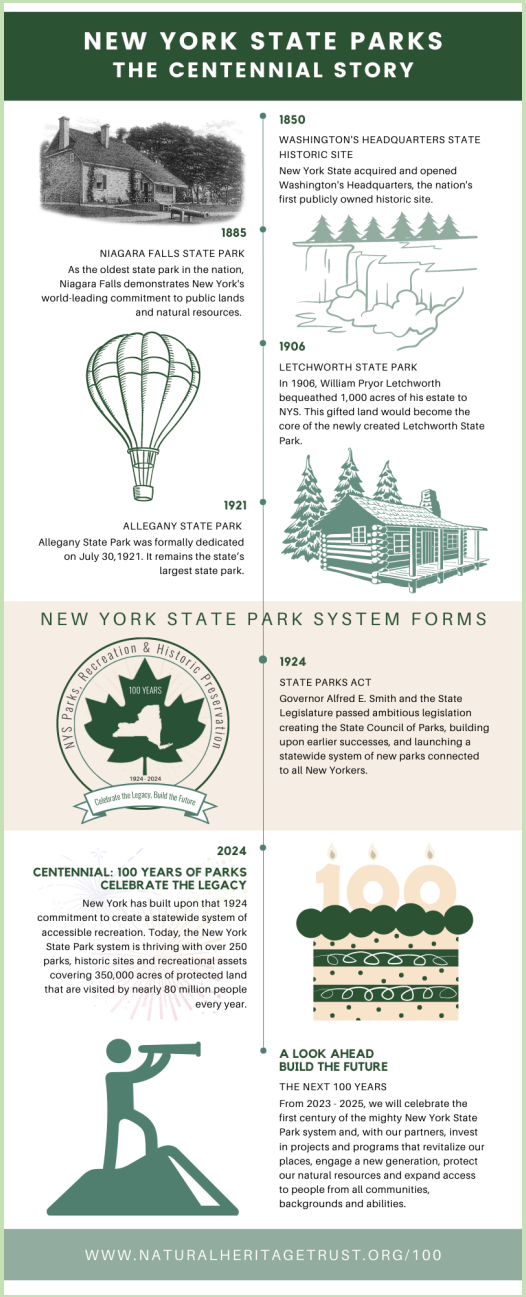
The Centennial Story

Until 1924, New York's state parks were scattered across mostly rural areas with minimal public recreation and overseen by local commissions with little connecting them.

To bring order to this disjointed collection of about three dozen parks and historic sites, and respond to an increasing public interest in recreation, in 1922 New York State government developed a plan for State Parks.

The plan mapped out a blueprint for leadership and proposed a $15 million bond act to enlarge existing parks and acquire new ones.

In 1924, the State Council of Parks was established in statute, and the voters approved the historic bond act.



The Centennial Story

Over the next 100 years, New York continued to build upon that early commitment to create parks accessible for recreation. Today, the New York State Park system is thriving with **over 250 parks, historic sites and recreational assets spanning** 350,000 acres of protected land that are visited **by nearly 80 million people every year**.

NYS Parks: A History of Firsts and Notable Distinctions

Niagara Falls State Park, est. 1885

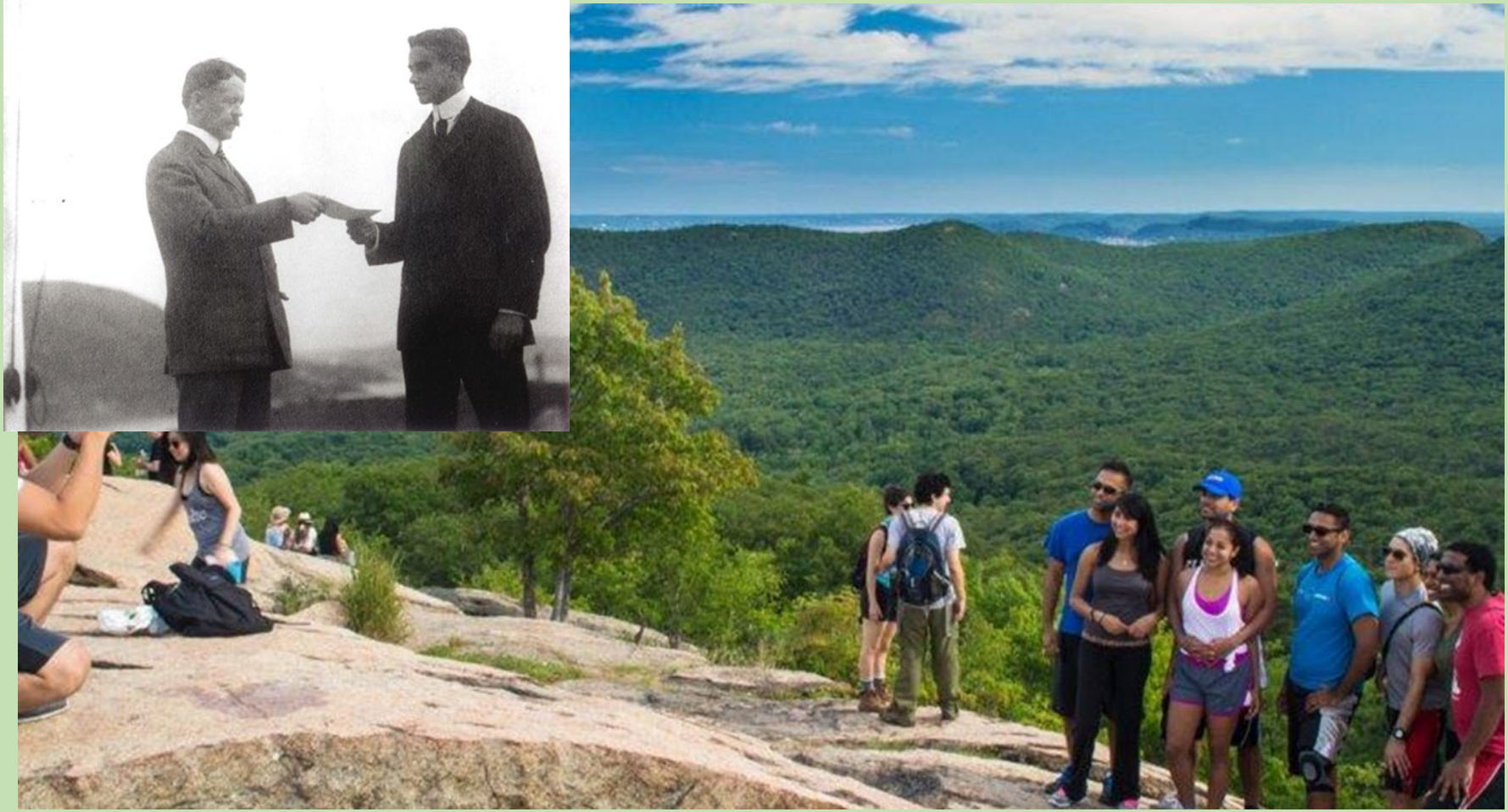
The Nation's Oldest State Park

Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site

The Nation's First Public Historic Site, 1850

Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks

In the early 1900's, the Harriman, Perkins and Rockefeller families joined forces to create the parks by donating land and funds.



Allegany State Park

One of the oldest state parks in New York (est. 1921), and the largest in the system.

Regional Histories: A Legacy of Partnerships

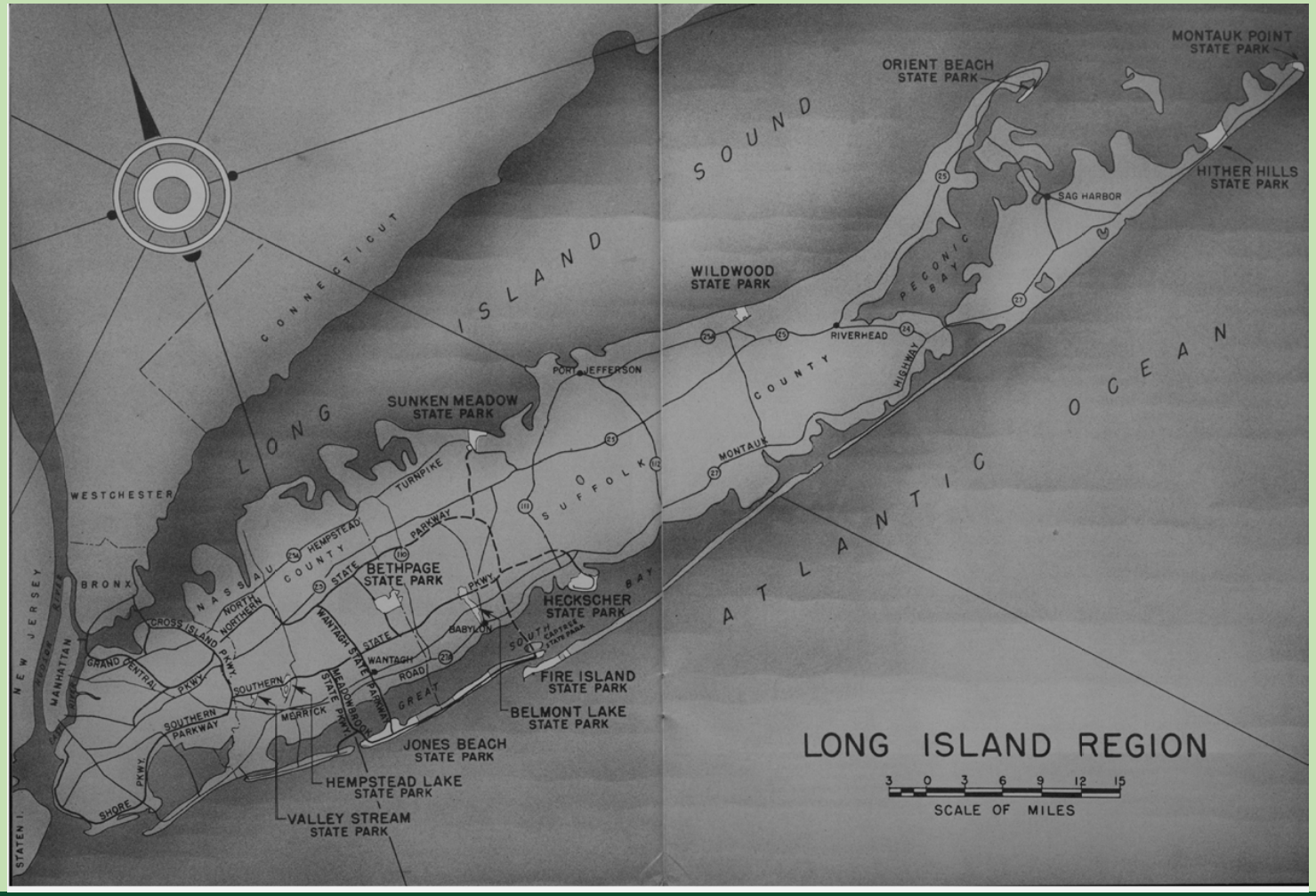
Long Island Regional Commission

The LI Commission predated SCOP as one of its founding entities and part of the effort led by Robert Moses to create a unified state park plan. At the time, the only park in the region was the largely inaccessible Fire Island.

The growing recreational needs of the people of the State were completely ignored in this curious, irresponsible, administrative hodgepodge. Mass production of automobiles, shorter working hours and an enormous increase in outdoor activities, sports and recreation marked the end of the age in which parks could be considered exclusively municipal functions. In 1924 and 1925, with the enthusiastic support of Governor Alfred E. Smith, the State was divided into natural and logical park regions pursuant to an amendment to the Conservation Law which established a State Council of Parks.

Long Island Regional Commission

The Commission was immediately allotted $1M to launch the LI State Park and Parkway Plan. Overcoming a myriad of local political matters, 12 parks and 86 miles of parkway were created by the SCOP between 1924 and 1949.



Jones Beach State Park

Jones Beach State Park was approved by the voters of Hempstead in 1926 and opened to the public by Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1929. In its first year of operations, 1.5 million people visited the park.

"And the most glittering star in the system has in its simple common name the perfect understatement for what is one of the world's grandest public beaches…"
50th SCOP REPORT

Orient Beach State Park

On Long Island's North Fork, the community of Orient voted to turn its public park over to the Long Island Commission to manage and develop, creating Orient Beach State Park in October of 1929.

Planting Fields Arboretum

Deeded to NYS in 1949, the former Coe Family estate on the North Shore was one of the first examples of the transition from the gilded age to post-war era development of public lands in NYS. These sites are also defined by their long-standing partnerships in operations and programs, including the Planting Fields Foundation.

Bayard Cutting Arboretum

Bayard Cutting Arboretum was donated to the Long Island State Park Region by Mrs. William Bayard Cutting and her daughter, Mrs. Olivia James, in memory of William Bayard Cutting. The site was opened to the public in 1954 and is operated with the Bayard Cutting Arboretum Horticultural Society

Caumsett State Historic Park Preserve

The former Marshall Field Estate was acquired by NYS in 1961, another of the “gold coast” estates to become a state park. Surrounding land was acquired for a parkway that instead became Cold Spring Harbor and Trail View State Parks. The Caumsett Foundation supports programming and operations at the Preserve

Walt Whitman Birthplace State Historic Site

Established in 1957 as NY's 22nd historic site after nearly a decade of advocacy by the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association which continues to operate the site and provide innovative cultural and educational programming

Nissequogue River State Park

One of the Region's newest parks, Nissequogue River State Park opened in 2000, protecting the site of a former psychiatric facility from development. The NRSP Foundation has worked since 2008 to restore facilities, offer programming and further develop the park.

New York City Regional Commission

Added to the SCOP in 1967, the Commission represented a new focus in this era to develop recreational facilities and activities and bring “State Parks closer to people’s daily lives.” Roberto Clemente State Park in the Bronx was NYC’s first State Park, opened in 1973.

Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park

First of its kind urban park, built atop a sewage treatment plant on the Hudson River. Serving the Harlem community as a recreational hub since 1993.

Gantry Plaza State Park

Opened in 1998, and part of major redevelopment in the Queens West area, programming in the park is led by Hunters Point Parks Conservancy.

Four Freedoms State Park

In 2012, nearly 40 years after its original proposal, Four Freedoms Park opened on Roosevelt Island in NYC, thanks to the Four Freedoms Park Conservancy which continues to lead innovative cultural and educational programming at the park.

Shirley Chisholm State Park

The first state park in Brooklyn and one of the state's newest parks, opening 2019 on the former site of the Penn/Fountain landfill.

Long Island Region Partnerships

• Leveraging Resources • Programming • Volunteerism • Outreach • Advocacy •

- Planting Fields Foundation
- Caumsett Foundation
- Friends of Jones Beach
- Bayard Cutting Arboretum
- Walt Whitman Birthplace Association
- Nissequogue River State Park Foundation
- Connetquot State Park
- Friends of Montauk Downs State Park
- Friends of Orient Beach
- Friends of Caleb Smith Preserve

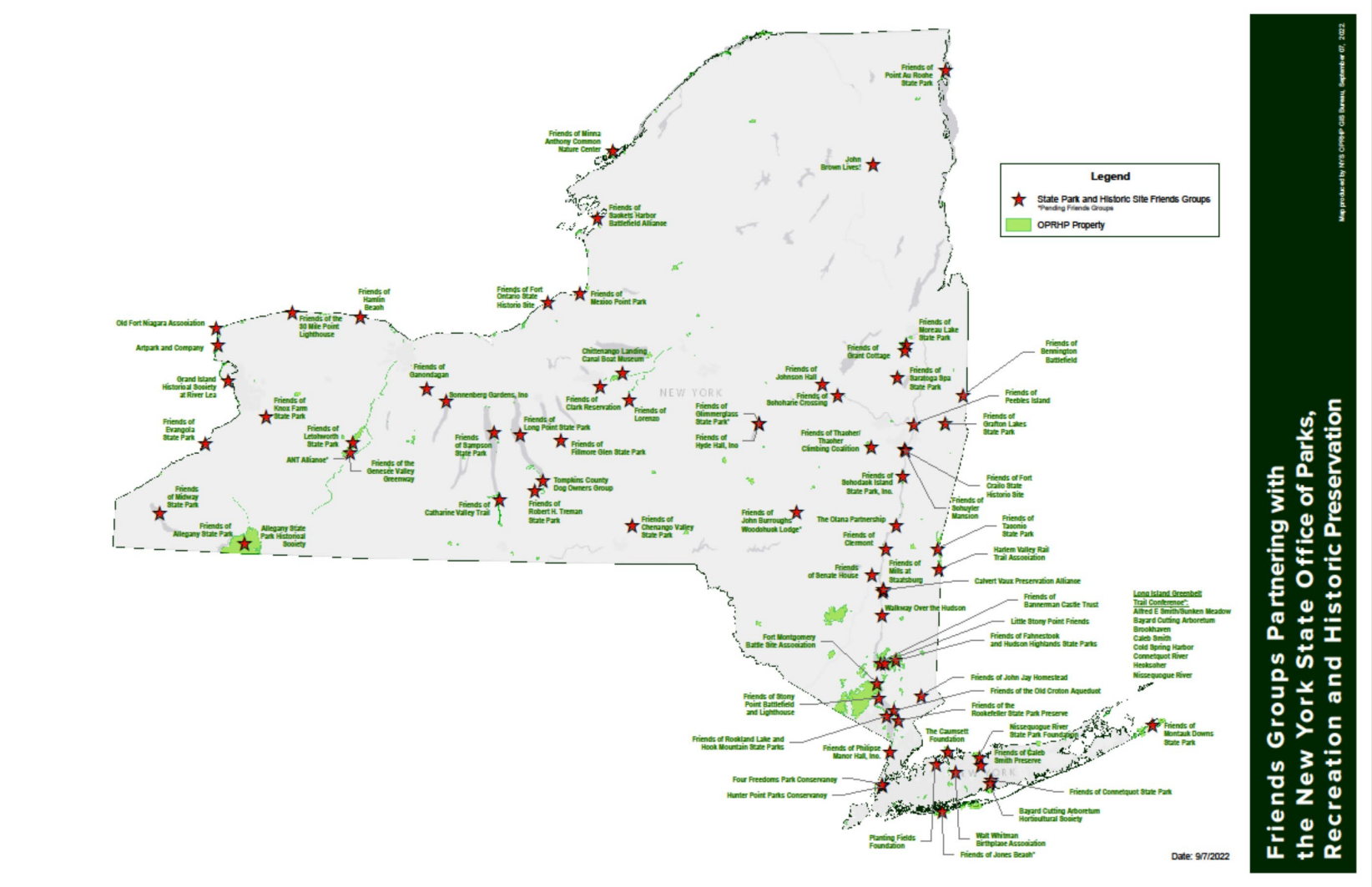
New York City Region Partnerships

• Leveraging Resources • Programming • Volunteerism • Outreach • Advocacy •

- Four Freedoms Conservancy
- Hunter Point Parks Conservancy

New York State Parks and Historic Site Friends Groups

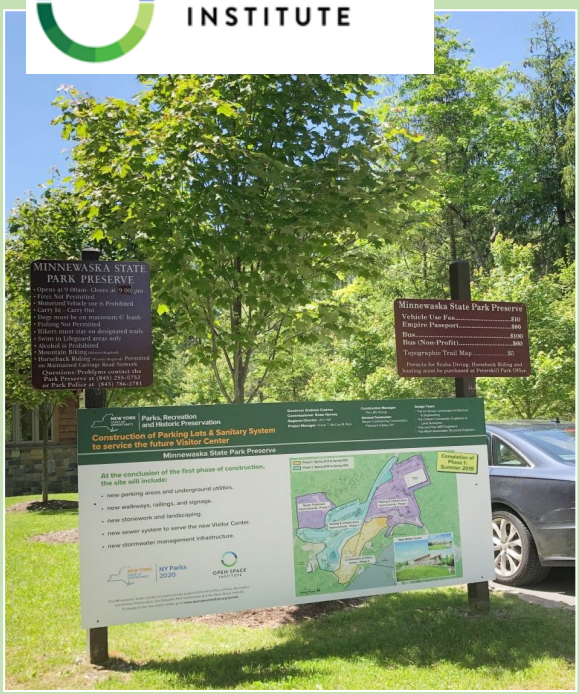
Today, there are over 80 Friends Groups in the State Park system. Mostly volunteer-based non-profit organizations, these groups are vital partners in the agency's mission.



Program and Advocacy Partners

PARKS & TRAILS NEW YORK

OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

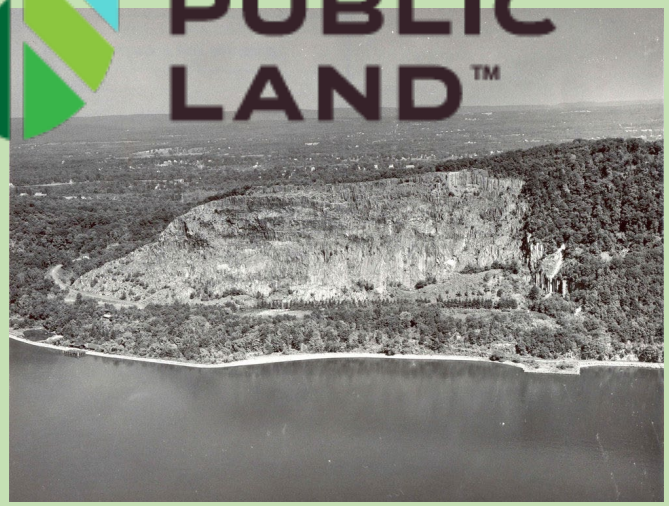


Stewardship and Sustainability Partners

Advocacy for EPF, leading park programs and preserving open space

Audubon

TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND™



The Nature Conservancy

SCENIC HUDSON

land ▪ parks ▪ advocacy

2024: An Opportunity

The Opportunity of the Centennial

Carrying the Legacy of Partnership into the Next Century

2024 is an **opportunity** to highlight public and private investment in our park system, continue the revitalization of our parks, engage a new generation of visitors, and…

Continue to create and strengthen partnerships to support innovative future projects and programs throughout the park and historic site system.

Parks Centennial

Invest

Connect

Protect Forever

The Opportunity of the Centennial

Highlight agency and partner projects & programs that advance today's priorities and build our future:

Revitalize
Improve, revitalize and modernize to deepen the visitor experience.

Access
Increase access for all communities and provide high quality outdoor recreational and cultural experiences that are welcoming to all people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities.

Whole Story
Narrate our state's whole, diverse history at our historic sites and parks.

Stewardship
Protect and preserve our natural resources through stewardship and sustainability.

Support
Ignite support for the state park system among a new generation of patrons

Let’s Invest

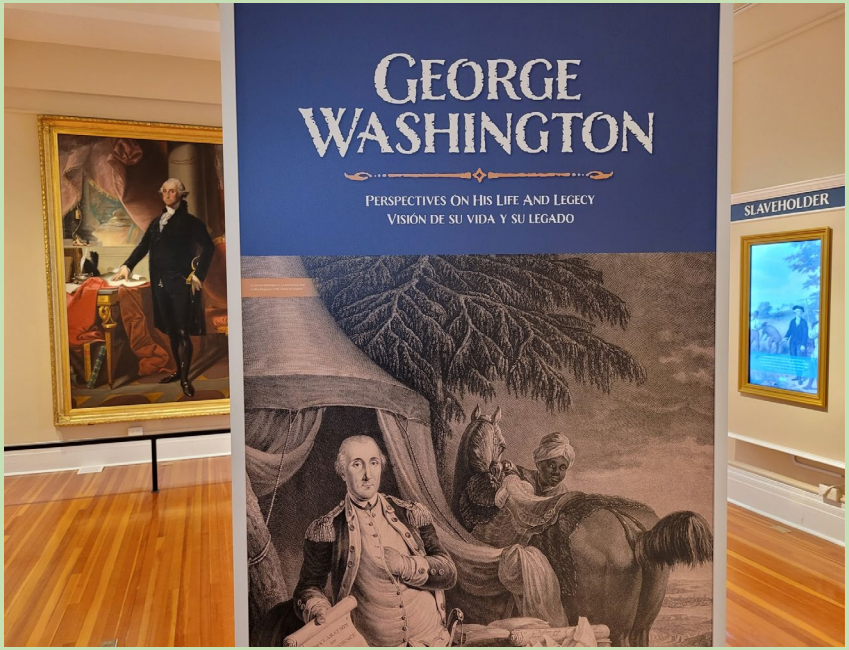
The Centennial Campaign will highlight the state’s historic investment in state parks and leverage private support for infrastructure and programmatic projects that continue the historic revitalization of the park system through partnerships.

Priority projects will ensure that parks and historic sites meet the needs of the **21st century visitor**, provide a high quality outdoor recreational and cultural experience that is **accessible and welcoming to all**, and invest in stewardship and sustainability projects that **protect our natural resources** and combat climate change.

Let’s Connect

The Centennial campaign and its partners will engage a new generation of visitors with innovative programming **that breaks down barriers**, **expands access** and tells the story of New York’s **diverse history**.

Partners and agencies will continue to advance tourism and cultural programming.



Let’s Protect Forever

Friends and supporters of parks will have the opportunity to donate to a fund established in the Natural Heritage Trust and be a **champion of NY State Parks** for the next generation.

A Grassroots fundraising campaign will **engage the public** and leverage a **new generation** of park supporters

Be a Park Champion

Support the Second Century Fund

Your gift to the Second Century Fund will protect parks and enhance programming into the next century. Together, we can provide a high quality outdoor recreational and cultural experience that is accessible and welcoming to all

Visit us online to make your gift today!

naturalheritagetrust.org/100

NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation
100 YEARS
1924 - 2024
Celebrate the Legacy. Build the Future

New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

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Resources, Next Steps & Contacts

Next Steps

Plan

- Brainstorm projects, programs, or events
- Submit ideas late fall/winter

Launch

- Early 2023 agency announcement

Resources

Communications Took Kit

- Social Media
- Marketing
- Graphics
- Announcements & Events

Funding

- Grants
- Fundraising

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Ways to Collaborate

- Project Identification and Support—working with your park, site and region
- Grant Opportunities
- Partnering on fundraising campaigns
- Fiscal agent support

Contacts

State Parks Centennial Campaign

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