



# Chapter 1 - Introduction

Parkland and open space are two of New York State's most valuable nonrenewable resources that enhance the quality of life. These important places have a long history dating back to Niagara Falls State Park, the "Oldest State Park" in the country and Central Park in New York City. Recognizing the value of the parks and open space, this system of protected areas continues to expand to over 6,000 public areas comprising over 4 million acres.

Federal, state and local governments as stewards of these resources are faced with a challenging situation of maintaining and revitalizing an aging system while looking to the future to protect critical open space areas and addressing the needs of the citizens and the environment. These resources can no longer be viewed as islands but as systems that need to be connected to benefit both people and wildlife. The benefits derived from these efforts are far reaching – enhanced quality of life, increased tourism, improved health, protected ecosystems, and sustainability of our environment. Parks and open spaces are truly "important places" and must be protected.

These protected areas are the result of a long history supported by various funding sources including bond acts, the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The parkland conversion process associated with parks funded through LWCF and the parkland alienation applicable to all municipal park lands afford long term protection of these special places. It is important that these mechanisms are maintained for the benefit of future generations.

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is prepared periodically by the New

York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to provide statewide policy direction and to fulfill the agency's recreation and preservation mandate.

The SCORP process has evolved well beyond its original purpose of satisfying eligibility requirements for continued funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The 2009 SCORP will serve as a status report and as an overall guidance document for recreation resource preservation, planning and development through 2013. It is the State's premier assessment and policy statement to the executive and legislative branches of state government, other units of government, recreation and preservation interest groups, and the general public on the state of the State's Parks. Planners, researchers, administrators, legislators, educators, special interest groups, the general public and private sector entrepreneurs utilize the SCORP document as a basic information source particularly for recreational issues, policies, priorities and for supply and demand forecast data. However, it is the ongoing planning process and its related products, which gives the SCORP its greatest meaning.

This document is also used throughout the year to guide the allocation of state and federal funds for recreation and open space projects. The policies, needs assessment, programs and initiatives listed throughout SCORP are translated into criteria for evaluating projects in an objective manner. This document provides guidance for the allocation of municipal and not-for-profit funds to local areas and facilities with the greatest needs.

Currently, OPRHP and DEC are responsible for the bulk of outdoor recreation and conservation in the State. OPRHP administers about 330,000 acres

of land incorporating 178 state parks, 35 historic sites, 67 marine facilities and boat launch sites, 20 parkways, over 5,000 structures, 77 developed beaches, 53 swimming pools, 29 golf courses, over 800 cabins and rental houses, 8,355 campsites, and over 1,350 miles of trail, as well as several outdoor education centers, museums, and nature centers and the Empire State Games. DEC administers nearly 4 million acres of land (including 3 million acres of Forest Preserve, over 700,000 acres of State Forest, and over 190,000 acres of Wildlife Management Areas), over 662,000 acres of Conservation Easements, 52 campgrounds, several day-use areas, 12 fish hatcheries, 1,280 miles of easements for public fishing rights, over 400 boat launch and fishing access sites, two Submerged Heritage preserves, the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center, and about 2,800 miles of trail, as well as several environmental education centers and summer camps.

The SCORP expands OPRHP's mission statement and guiding principles to a statewide focus (Figure 1.1). The ideals within the mission statement and guiding principles are applicable to all public and private recreation providers as well as the protectors and managers of our natural, cultural and recreation resources. We share in the mandate to be responsible stewards of these resources.

**Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation**

**Mission Statement and Guiding Principles**

Mission Statement

The mission of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources.

Guiding Principles

- A Commitment to Leadership. We recognize the preeminence of the New York State Park and Historic Site System. We are committed to excellence, innovation, professionalism and to forging partnerships. We are committed to seeking the means by which operational and maintenance needs are met as recreational and cultural opportunities are enhanced for our patrons. To meet that challenge, we are committed to pursuing compatible revenue initiatives as we continue our commitment to protect resources.
- A Commitment to People. We are committed to serving and protecting the public to the best of our ability, with courtesy and respect. We are committed to our employees and volunteers, encouraging teamwork, self-improvement and mutual support.
- A Commitment to Service. We are committed to equal access and outreach to all segments of our society, recognizing individual needs and interests. We are committed to safety, security, creativity and accountability in providing our programs and services.
- A Commitment to Preservation. State Parks and Historic Sites are unique and irreplaceable public assets. We are committed to wise acquisition, planning and where compatible, development of recreational facilities; timely and professional care and maintenance; and a responsibility to future generations in whose trust we manage resources. We are committed to providing encouragement to all agencies and individuals to identify, evaluate and protect recreational, natural, historic and cultural resources.

*Revised: July 16, 1997*

**Figure 1.1 - OPRHP Mission Statement**

The Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) mission is taken from Section 1-0101 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law (Figure 1.2). DEC is charged with protecting the quality of New York State's land, water and air, the character of its scenery, the health and diversity of its fish and wildlife populations and habitats. Additionally, DEC conserves both living and nonliving resources for appropriate use. This includes managing the forest preserve in the Adirondacks and Catskills, protecting wetlands, rivers, lakes and salt water embayments, and serving as stewards of the State's plant and animal species. Saving and managing open space is a key part of this mission. In doing this, however, DEC bases its approach not just on the number of citizens who wish to participate in outdoor recreation activities, but also on the value of the resources themselves to present and future generations.

<b>Department of Environmental Conservation</b>	
<b>Mission Statement and Responsibilities</b>	
<b>Mission</b>	<p>The mission of the Department is to:</p> <p>“conserve, improve and protect its natural resources and environment, and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well being.”</p>
<b>Responsibilities</b>	<p>The Department of Environmental Conservation is responsible for administration and enforcement of the Environmental Conservation Law. The Department's major responsibilities as assigned by the Environmental Conservation Law are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulate the disposal, transport and treatment of hazardous and toxic wastes in an environmentally sound manner;</li> <li>• Manage the state program for oil and chemical spills;</li> <li>• Provide for the abatement of water, land and air pollution, including pesticides;</li> <li>• Monitor environmental conditions and test for contaminants;</li> <li>• Encourage recycling, recovery and reuse of all solid waste to conserve resources and reduce waste;</li> <li>• Administer fish and wildlife laws, carry out sound fish and wildlife management practices, and conduct fish and wildlife research;</li> <li>• Manage New York's marine and coastal resources;</li> <li>• Conduct sound forestry management practices on state lands, provide assistance to private forest landowners and manage fire prevention and control efforts;</li> <li>• Manage the Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves and recreational facilities, including campsites and the Belleayre Mountain ski center;</li> <li>• Protect tidal and freshwater wetlands and flood plains;</li> <li>• Promote the wise use of water resources;</li> <li>• Administer the wild, scenic and recreational rivers program;</li> <li>• Regulate mining, including reclamation of mined lands, extraction of oil and gas, and underground storage of natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas;</li> </ul> <p>Inform the public about environmental conservation principles and encourage their participation in environmental affairs.</p>

**Figure 1.2 - DEC Mission Statement**

# Planning Process Principles

The planning process for the SCORP is predicated upon three basic principles. An understanding, acceptance and faithful adherence to these principles is fundamental to the success of OPRHP's overall goal to provide a unified State Park and Recreation System which will serve the needs of all the State's citizenry. The plan and the process must also be responsive to modification in an expeditious and practical manner as warranted to meet changes in societal values and environmental conditions.

The three principles are:

1. Planning is a Continuous Process: Planning must match the dynamics of its environment, constantly reexamining assumptions, methods and objectives, in light of changing conditions and new information. Planning does not produce a finished blueprint of the future; it is an open-ended process which places before decision-makers the range of effective options. Through careful planning and prudent action, government can then make its maximum contribution to fulfilling the universal hope for a more satisfying life.
2. Planning must be Comprehensive: The planning process, and thus the information and research base which supports this process, must encompass the entire range of human activity and the environment - social, economic and physical. Planning for recreational facilities, programs and services, accordingly, must include careful consideration of all available physical resources and their appropriate use

potentials based upon ecological considerations. Recreation planning must also consider the social economic values, abilities and needs of the various segments of the population. This includes the citizenry at large and the interaction among governmental agencies and service systems.

3. Planning must be a Participatory and Coordinated Process: Coordination and cooperation among all government levels and the private sector is essential to allow for as much development of facilities and delivery of services to be a shared responsibility. Only in this way can costly duplication of services resulting in wasteful consumption of resources and finances, or omission of essential services, be avoided. No planning process should fail to include opportunity for a citizen's participation in the planning, policy formulation and implementation phases of the overall process.

## Objectives

The following objectives have been established to support the above-stated goal and planning principles:

1. To formulate, maintain and update the Statewide Park and Recreation Plan as required under the Parks and Recreation Law (Consolidated Laws, L. 1972, Chapter 660) Article 3, Section 3.15, (See Appendix A) as part of a continuous planning process.
2. To develop an outdoor recreation component within the framework of the Statewide Park and Recreation Plan in accordance with the Land and Water Conservation Fund Manual, Chapter 630.1.
3. To establish a statewide recreational planning framework to serve as

a guide to regional and local agencies in the formulation of plans and program policies and priorities.

4. To develop and maintain adequate information and analytic systems in support of OPRHP's planning, development, administration, coordination and review functions.
5. To establish and maintain intra- and interagency coordination mechanisms at the state, regional and local levels.
6. To establish and maintain citizens' participation through public meetings and surveys.

## Process

The proper development of recreation and open space plans requires adherence to a fundamental planning process — inventory, analysis and forecasting, plan formulation, and plan implementation— supported by program goals, actions and accomplishments. Existing supply, participation, and related social-economic and accessibility data have to be researched and basic land and water resources inventoried. After the inventory process is complete, use patterns, trends, constraints and potentials have to be analyzed, forecasts developed and deficiencies and user impacts evaluated. Once the analysis and evaluation are completed, the plan formulation stage is begun, where goals, objectives and standards are established and program alternatives evaluated. As a result of the process, the areas most needing actions are identified, priorities for development are established, and implementation processes are developed and put into action.

Objectives, goals and standards necessary to define future actions should be formulated through observation and the application of accepted techniques. Input from various citizen groups and

professional organizations should be solicited along with examination of alternative strategies. After standards and objectives are considered, the needs and potentials of the State, as a whole, and each region, must be evaluated so that the best use can be made of available resources - natural, human and fiscal.

A projection to the year 2025 is provided in the identification of recreation needs. Programs and statewide initiatives have a 5-year horizon; the plan must be constantly reexamined in light of changing conditions and new information. Planning, therefore, is a continuous, open-ended process. The plan provides the overall concept and policy framework for program and facility development. The action program identifies the implementation devices and strategies necessary to effectuate the plan.

## **Public Participation**

Public participation in the planning process provides a means for increasing the public understanding of recreation needs and opportunities within New York State as well as increasing the planners understanding of what the public desires. The goals, objectives, policies, actions, and program priorities ultimately expressed in SCORP begin to be shaped early in the planning process through the identification of the changing needs of New York's people. To insure the plan is an accurate reflection of both current and projected recreational needs, the State has sought input from citizens, state and local governmental officials, and interest groups.

In order to assure maximum opportunity for public participation, OPRHP has:

- Implemented a General Citizen Survey

- Implemented a Park Professional Survey
- Implemented a Trail Maintainer's Survey
- Formulated an interagency Working Group
- Coordinated with user groups

Additional input was obtained through the public review process for the Draft Plan. Comments have been considered and, where appropriate, included in the the final Plan. The Plan will be available for review on OPRHP's web site.

The participation of the public by no means ends the fulfillment of the above activities. Citizens will continue to be asked, periodically, what their recreation preferences are and their opinions on recreational issues and delivery of services. It is a major purpose of the SCORP to accurately anticipate the public's needs; and, in doing so, to lay the groundwork necessary to maximize the public benefit of the dollars spent for recreation and open space. It is further a purpose of SCORP to assure that the natural resources that comprise the State Park System are properly conserved and managed.

SCORP is part of a continuing planning process that evolves over time. The value of SCORP is not just in what it says but in how it is used to protect and manage the natural, cultural and recreation resources of New York State, for present and future generations. The plan assesses existing and future recreation demands, evaluates the current recreational opportunities and estimates needs. It also provides a forum for the public and recreation providers to express their needs and concerns. This information translates into major natural, cultural and recreation resource initiatives, action strategies and actions. As a result, this dynamic system is constantly changing and needs, policies, programs, and initiatives have to be revisited.

