

# NY Parks 2020

Renewing the Stewardship  
of our State Park System



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**



## Dear Fellow New Yorkers,

The New York State park system is one of our state's most treasured public assets, and one of the most prized services State government provides its citizens. In fact, our parks and historic sites are visited by 62 million people a year.

Yet the park system's acclaimed status was threatened by decades of neglect and decay. Historic buildings were shuttered, recreational facilities boarded up, bathrooms unusable, and playgrounds rusted and unsafe. Once-celebrated destinations became "shabby" and unwelcoming. In 2010, park advocates Parks & Trails New York and the Alliance for New York State Parks said "the state's park system is now in crisis," and called closed park facilities a symbol of "Albany dysfunction."

As I took office, my Administration found a backlog of overdue capital repairs, including critical projects that had been left unaddressed for decades. We immediately set about to restore our park system to its prior grandeur and glory. A historic investment in State parks and historic sites is launching a transformation to create a 21st century park system, while solving problems that have been decades in the making.

Hundreds of projects are renewing what was once broken and deteriorated, while making parks more appealing to modern visitors, more sustainable for future generations, and more resilient to the effects of climate change. In doing so, we are creating jobs, growing the tourism industry, and promoting the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

I encourage you to discover and enjoy our revitalized parks and historic sites.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

# NY Parks 2020: A 7-Point Vision for Transforming NYS Parks



Bear Mountain State Park

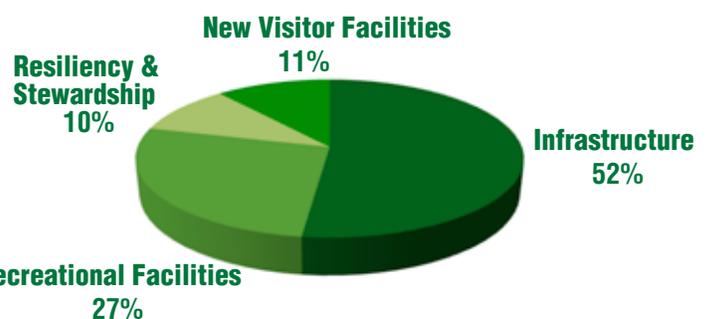
The Governor has made the protection of land and parks a hallmark of his tenure. From the outset of his administration in 2011, Governor Cuomo has reversed the trend of deteriorating parks, making a multi-year commitment of funding to advance hundreds of capital design and construction projects. **By 2020, NY Parks will leverage private philanthropy and other public dollars to yield a \$900 million investment in State Parks.**

NY Parks 2020 is creating a park system for the 21st century. Improvements will be energy efficiency, operational sustainability and universal access to people of all abilities will be factored into all projects. The renaissance of our park system is better serving our citizens and showcasing all the State has to offer.

To build on this renaissance while systematically tackling ongoing capital needs, the revitalization plan follows 7 strategic priorities:

- **Transforming New York's flagship State Parks**
- **Promoting healthy, active outdoor recreation**
- **Connecting people with parks**
- **Rejuvenating our world class park system**
- **Preserving historic sites and cultural assets**
- **Sustaining New York's natural environment**
- **Energizing local economies**

## **\$900 Million for State Parks: How the Dollars are Spent**



**In his first term, Governor Cuomo has made tremendous progress to revitalize parks. Together with private donations and other leveraged public funds, New York State has advanced 279 capital improvement projects at 109 parks and historic sites since 2012.**

Recreational facilities include comfort stations, playgrounds, pools, campgrounds and golf course facilities.

Infrastructure includes health/safety/code improvements, sewer and water, roads and parking, utilities, and renovation projects.

Resiliency and stewardship includes historic sites, dams, natural resource improvements and trails.

New facilities include nature centers, welcome facilities and passive park improvements.

“The State Park system is at the heart and soul of New York State’s natural environment. Good care of our natural resources is crucial to the revitalization of State Parks, and the Governor’s investment will help protect sensitive plant and animal habitat, tackle invasive species, prepare for climate change and model sound sustainability practices for future generations.”

—Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky,  
Chair, New York State Council of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation

# 1 Transform New York's Flagship State Parks



The gorge trail at Watkins Glen State Park.

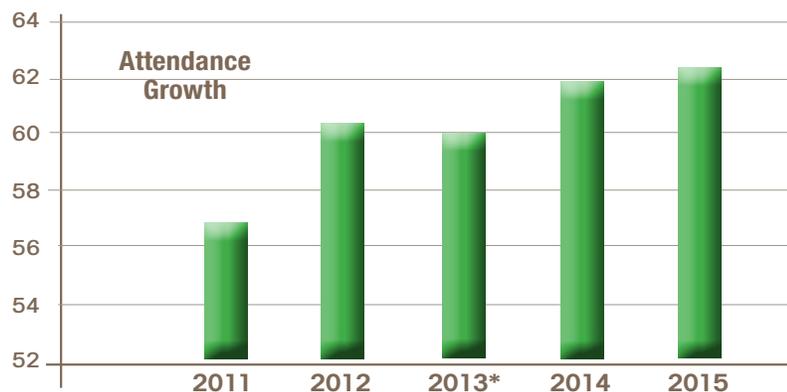
“This infusion of capital funding is breathing new life into a park system that has suffered from decades of underfunding. Thanks to the strong commitment of Governor Cuomo and the Legislature the revitalization of our State park system can continue, boosting tourism, creating jobs, and securing New York’s parks and conservation legacy for future generations.”

—Robin Dropkin,  
Executive Director of Parks  
& Trails New York

**N**iagara Falls. Jones Beach. Letchworth. Allegany. Green Lakes. Watkins Glen. Wellesley Island. Saratoga Spa. Bear Mountain. Olana. Riverbank. New York’s flagship parks are the most popular – but also receive the most wear-and-tear. NY Parks 2020 is making their stewardship a priority:

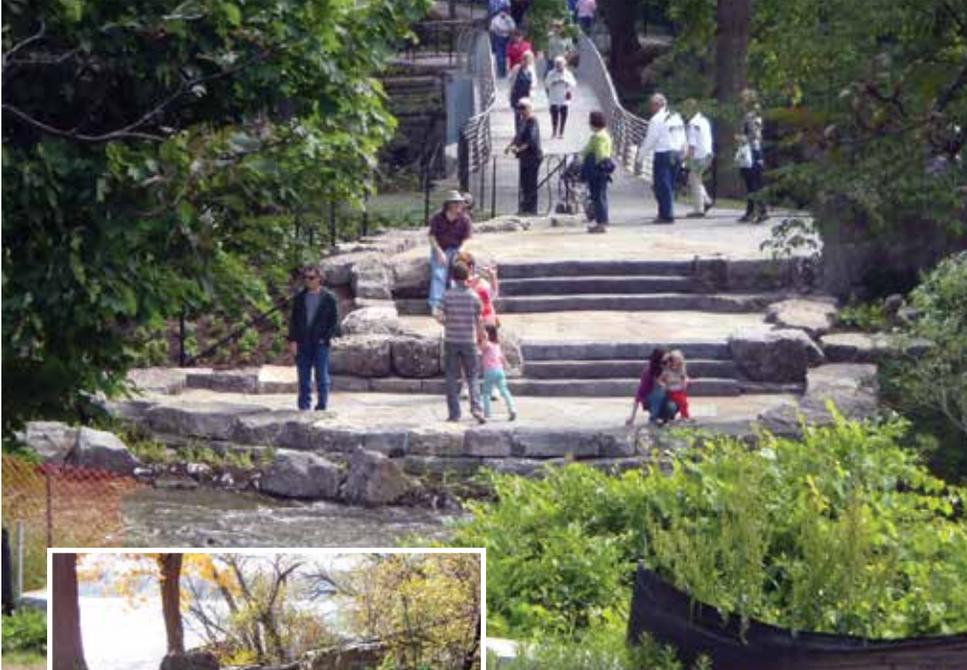
- **Creating welcoming gateways.** NY Parks 2020 is advancing projects to green parking, increase automation and enhance signage to increase visitor convenience.
- **Enhancing natural and historic features.** Projects will enhance the natural and historic features that set flagship parks apart.
- **Increasing and deepening the visitors’ experience.** Projects will develop new recreational, cultural and hospitality amenities to attract new visitors and deepen their enjoyment of the parks.

## Increasing Park Visitation



**Figure 1:** Park visitation has climbed steadily since the Governor began the revitalization initiative, and is projected to continue increasing 1% annually. (\*Attendance fell slightly in 2013 while parks were undergoing repairs to Superstorm Sandy damage.)

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Renewing Niagara Falls State Park



**Above:** Landscape improvements make Three Sisters Island more inviting. **Inset:** Trails deteriorated from heavy usage have been repaired.

The nation's oldest and most-visited state park is the first flagship to undergo a park-wide transformation, to better reflect noted designer Frederick Law Olmsted's vision for the park:

- Beginning a multi-year, \$50 million commitment to revitalize Niagara Falls State Park in 2012.
- Transforming popular but highly-worn areas, with new pedestrian walkways, overlook improvements, enhanced landscaping as well as new benches, light posts, and railings.
- Developing new recreational and educational services to engage the park's 8 million annual visitors.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Breathing New Life into the Historic Jones Beach State Park



**Above:** Artist rendering of new restaurant on the Central Mall. **Inset:** Vacant former restaurant site will be improved.

By 2020, a \$65 million multi-year Jones Beach Revitalization Plan will reinvigorate one of the first and most iconic state parks on the Long Island coast.

- Expanding food and beverage services and recreational opportunities.
- Restoring the park's historic and aesthetic grandeur.
- Promoting public-private partnerships to offer more visitor services.
- Making park facilities stronger and more storm-resilient.

# 2 Promote Healthy, Active Outdoor Recreation



New playground at Roberto Clemente State Park.

“The future of Roberto Clemente State Park is brighter than ever, thanks to these much-needed capital improvements that my office has partnered with the State to bring forward. This park offers amazing amenities to the people of The Bronx, and these improvements will help make a true gem shine even brighter.”

—Bronx Borough President  
Ruben Diaz Jr.

**A**larming health problems are related to society’s sedentary lifestyles, including obesity, heart disease and diabetes. State Parks are well-positioned to encourage families to get moving, and spark a lifelong connection to parks and physical activity:

- **Building new recreational facilities.** Adding miles of new trails, rehabilitating pools, establishing new soccer and baseball fields, expanding bikeways and greenways, and rehabilitating golf courses.
- **Investing in underserved communities.** Community recreational State Parks such as Roberto Clemente and Riverbank in New York City will see comprehensive overhauls. NY Parks 2020 is revitalizing the Harriman group camps to serve more children from urban populations with high rates of diabetes, asthma and obesity.
- **Hosting sports and fitness events.** Modern facilities support a multitude of recreational and fitness activities, including athletic leagues, learn-to-swim programs, charity walks, triathlons, golf, hiking and more.

## Building New Places To Play



Figure 2: By 2020, State Parks will add or improve 100 out of 134 playgrounds.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Repairing Athletic Facilities at Riverbank State Park



**Above:** Youth sports programs have resumed on Riverbank's athletic field. **Inset:** The field's torn synthetic carpet had presented a safety hazard.

NY Parks 2020 is making safe, new playgrounds and athletic facilities a priority:

- Playgrounds and athletic facilities are a gateway to healthy, active living for young families.
- The popular outdoor athletic field at Riverbank State Park had been closed for safety reasons.
- In 2012, the restoration of heavily used facilities, including a gym floor, running track and a worn and deteriorated athletic field were completed—enabling this the West Harlem park to continue serving 250,000 yearly school, youth program, and recreational visitors who rely on the field.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Improving the Harriman State Park Group Camps



**Above:** This YMCA group is among the 20,000 campers who stay at the Harriman Group Camps annually. **Inset:** The Harriman lakes generally do not have beaches. This is an alternative that has been used in the Harriman Group camps for more than 50 years.

NY Parks 2020 is repairing and modernizing the popular pools and swimming facilities that draw people for healthful summer recreation, including the “swimming cribs” that have been in use at the Harriman State Park Group Camps:

- Six of the old swimming cribs that had been around for 20 years or more were replaced in 2014.
- Most of the kids that attend these camps cannot swim and this provides a safe means for them to be introduced to the water.
- The docks provide a means for swimmers to get in and out of the water easily. Children are divided up into cribs that have depths in which all the inexperienced swimmers can stand.

# 3

## Connect People with Parks



Governor Cuomo at I Love My Park Day at Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park

“These capital dollars are breathing new life into beloved State Parks and Historic Sites, supporting tourism, and helping improve the quality of life in communities across the state.”

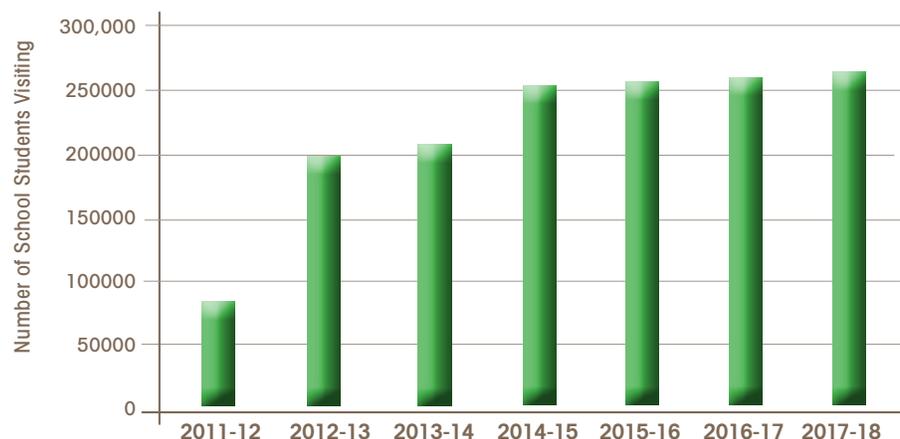
—Senator **Betty Little**  
Chair

Senate Committee on Cultural  
Affairs, Tourism, Parks & Recreation

**P**ark improvements won't matter unless the public has the opportunity to use them. NY Parks 2020 is helping address changing demographics and lifestyles by:

- **Opening underutilized parkland.** Open and provide access to previously undeveloped and underutilized parklands into new State Park Preserves for hiking and outdoor recreation, starting with Hallock Park Preserve, Robert V. Riddell, and Denning's Point in Hudson Highlands State Park.
- **Improving customer service.** Tap new technologies and automation to give consumers faster online interactions and mobile tools to connect park visitors and enhance on-the-ground experiences.
- **Reconnecting children to the outdoors.** Invest in building and enhancing nature centers and facilities to teach outdoor skills to attract a new generation of park devotees.

### Combating 'Nature Deficit Disorder'



**Figure 3:** Improved facilities will help steadily increase the number of school students who gain a hands-on educational experience at State Parks and Historic Sites every year, and combat the lack of outdoor recreation for children that author Richard Louv described as Nature Deficit Disorder.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Creating a Nature Center for Letchworth State Park



Artist rendering of the Letchworth Nature Center, Livingston and Wyoming Counties

Leveraged with a \$1.6 million private capital campaign led by Genesee Parks Commission Chair Peter Humphrey, Letchworth State Park will break ground in 2015 on a much-needed Nature Center to:

- Serve as a hub from which to venture out and enjoy the richness of the Letchworth experience.
- Educate visitors about the park's natural history and environmental conditions.
- Feature research space, an exhibit area and meeting/classroom space.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: A Room with a View from Thacher State Park



Artist rendering of the future Thacher Visitor Center, Albany County

A campaign to raise private funds to create a central focal point will:

- Serve as a starting point for year-round exploration of the vast trail network.
- Highlight the park's fossil-rich geology with engaging and interactive exhibits.
- Provide multi-purpose indoor and outdoor spaces for gatherings overlooking the most dramatic views in the region.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: A New Destination for Seneca Art and Culture

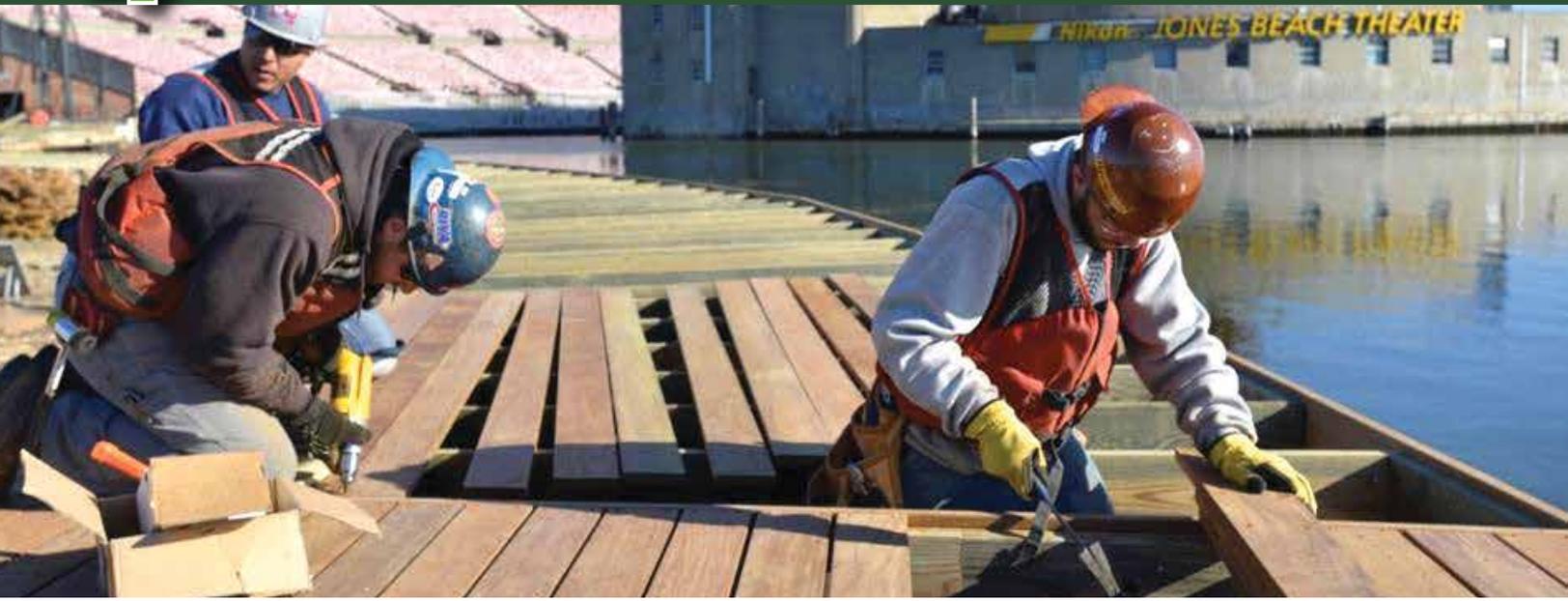


Artist rendering of the Seneca Art and Culture Center Ontario County to open in summer 2015

A destination dedicated to Seneca and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) contributions to art and culture is underway at the Ganondagan State Historic Site.

- The \$11 million project is supported by \$3.9 million from Governor Cuomo's economic development initiatives and contributions from the Seneca Nation, and private funds raised by the Friends of Ganondagan.
- The Center will feature gallery space, a theater, auditorium, kitchen & gift shop.
- Auditorium will provide flexibility for events, performances, and exhibits.

# 4 Rejuvenate our World-Class Park System



Repairing the Jones Beach State Park boardwalk.

“All New Yorkers will be delighted to see this continuing investment in our public parks and historic sites. I am proud we in the Assembly have helped ensure that Governor Cuomo. . . continues to improve and revitalize our precious natural treasures and recreational resources.”

—Assemblywoman  
**Margaret Markey**

Chair  
Assembly Committee on Tourism,  
Parks, Arts and Sports Development

**F**or more than a century, New York has enjoyed a world-class recreational and educational park system. Yet many state parks are in various stages of disrepair due to age, heavy public use and deferred maintenance. NY Parks 2020 is:

- **Delivering high quality public use facilities.** Modernizing and repairing cabins, boat launches, picnic shelters, recreation fields, and pools.
- **Modernizing basic infrastructure.** Refurbishing bathrooms, campground shower buildings, roads, bridges, parking lots and contact stations after years of neglect.
- **Repairing critical health and safety systems.** Repairing essential but unnoticed drinking water systems, sewage treatment systems, dams and utilities that ensure the health and safety of park visitors.

## Improving Recreation Facilities

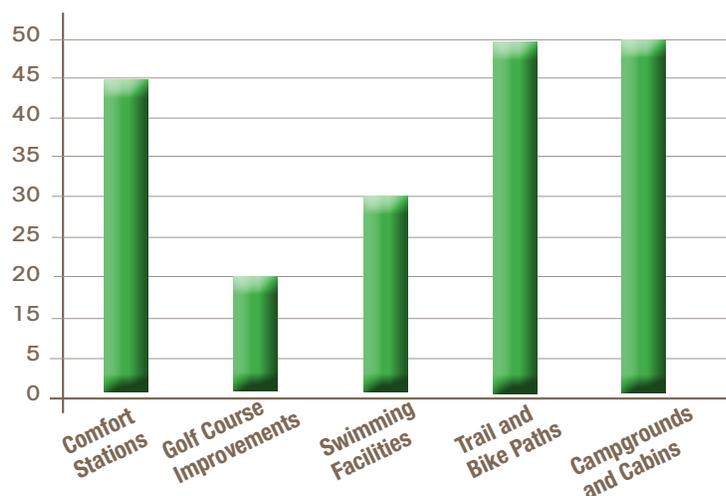
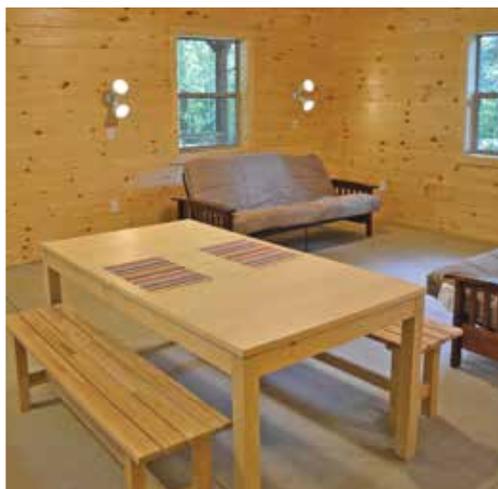


Figure 4: NY Parks 2020 is improving hundreds of worn down recreational facilities.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Reviving a Popular Allegany State Park Campground



**Above (top and left):** Brand new cottages at Allegany are open for all seasons. Great for summer vacations with the whole family, fall hiking trips for couples looking for spectacular autumn colors, winter snowmobiling, and spring fishing excursions. **Inset:** Cabins are a huge improvement over cabins that had been neglected for decades.

State Parks' campgrounds are popular, affordable places for families to vacation in the great outdoors. State Park campsites and cabins are occupied for more than 590,000 nights a year. NY Parks 2020 is reversing years of neglect, including at Allegany State Park:

- In 2014, 28 new four season full-service cottages were constructed to give visitors quality year-round accommodations.
- The cottages are available for public rental and sleep up to six, with a bathroom and shower.
- The popular cabins enhance Allegany State Park's appeal as a Southern Tier vacation destination.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Creating a More Welcoming Verona Beach

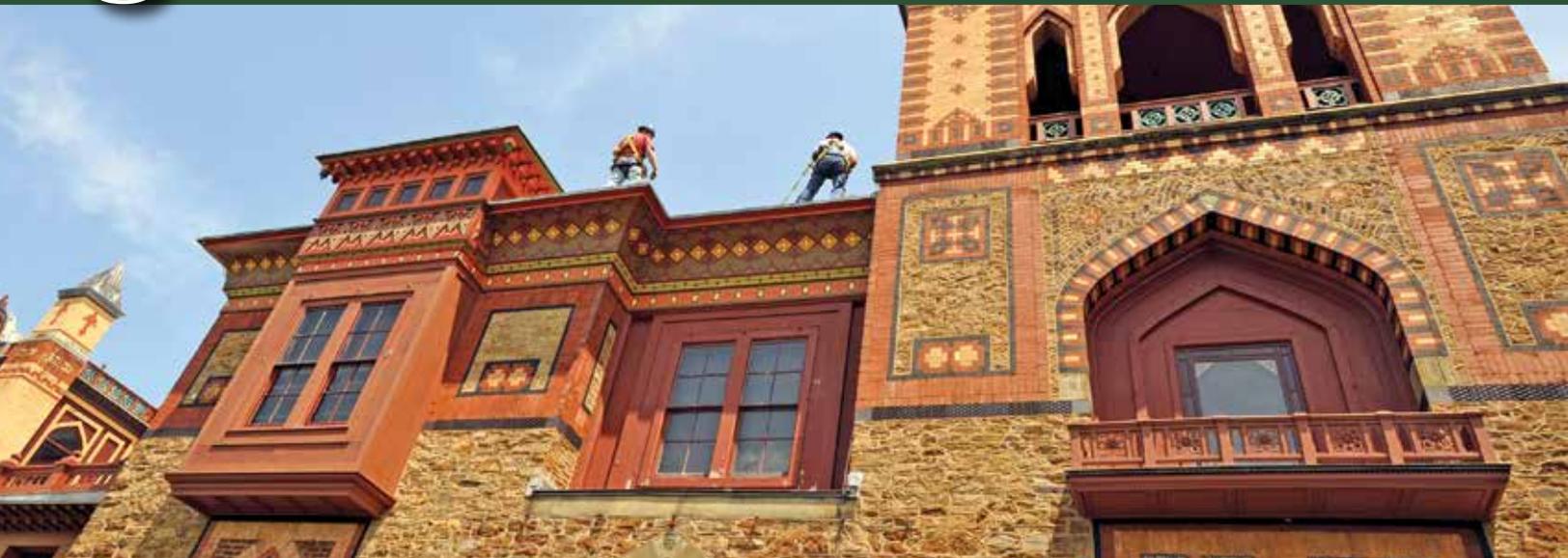


**Above:** Newly completed bathhouse set back from beach to increase waterfront space. **Inset:** The flood-prone, deteriorated 1949 bathhouse was replaced.

Clean, well-maintained bathrooms, bathhouses and shower facilities are fundamental to park visitors. The outdated Verona Beach Bathhouse was a noticeable sign of neglect. Improvements include:

- Family-friendly design locates Men's and Women's facilities next to each other in center of building, along with a unisex family room.
- Environmental and energy efficient design includes passive ventilation, high efficiency lighting, occupancy sensors, low water use fixtures, low operator costs.
- A redesigned beach with new enclosed pavilion and three new picnic shelters.

# 5 Preserve our Historic Sites and Cultural Assets



Repairing the Olana State Historic Site roof.

“New York State has long been a leader in recognizing and preserving our heritage – and nowhere is that more evident than in the diverse collection of historic sites with the State park system. The Governor’s renewed stewardship of our public historic sites honors this proud tradition.”

–Robert B. Mackay,  
Chair  
New York State Board  
for Historic Preservation

The State park system includes numerous historic sites and structures, which are featured in Governor Cuomo’s Path Through History program – highlighting New York’s rich heritage and promoting tourism and economic development. To celebrate these assets, NY Parks 2020 is:

- **Protecting historic landmarks.** Preserve and improve historic buildings, structures and landscapes, including repairs to roofs, windows and other exterior features.
- **Honoring the work of New York’s artisans and craftspeople.** Preserving the work of the skilled workers whose labor is embodied in distinctive buildings and handsome stonework throughout the park system, often built by the Civilian Conservation Corps.
- **Protecting the public’s historic collections.** Modernizing technology and climate control systems to protect and expand access to the public’s valued collections of art, furniture, books and textiles within the historic sites; and to facilitate future listings of historic structures.

## A Historic Commitment to New York’s Heritage



Figure 5: State Parks will complete an average of 10 projects annually to preserve and enhance State Historic Sites, State Historic Parks, and park buildings on the National Register of Historic Places.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Preserving a Hudson Valley Landmark



**Above:** 100-year-old estate wall looks brand new. **Inset:** The wall had been crumbling for 30 years.

The crumbling estate wall of the Staatsburgh State Historic Site in Dutchess County was a visible sign of the disinvestment in our park system. A \$4.2 million investment in the 79-room mansion and grounds:

- Meticulously rebuilt the 100-year-old stone wall; gateway to Rhinebeck.
- Refurbished and returned 16-foot high wrought iron gates that had not been in place since the mid-1970s.
- Repaired the mansion's leaking roof and renovated the East Portico for the first time in more than a century.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Reopening the Rock Island Lighthouse



**Above:** Closed since 2006, the Rock Island Lighthouse State Park fully opened in June 2013. **Inset:** The project preserves the lighthouse commissioned in 1848.

State Parks completed a \$1.5 million rehabilitation of the Rock Island Lighthouse in the Thousand Islands region:

- Restored keeper's house and its main floor features exhibits.
- Refurbished second floor for special events.
- Established a boat tour in partnership with a private business to bring tourists to the site.

# 6 Sustain New York's Natural Environment



Invasive water chestnut removal at Fair Haven Beach State Park.

As stewards of the 335,000 acres of parkland, a central part of State Parks' mission is to protect its natural treasures, beautiful open spaces and diversity of plant and animal life.

“New York’s state parks are on a generational upswing, thanks to the vision of Governor Cuomo and the support of the Legislature. Their long-term commitment is transforming a once beleaguered state park system and restoring our greatest natural treasures as sources of pride, community vitality and economic strength.”

–Erik Kulleseid,  
Executive Director

Alliance for New York State Parks,  
A Program of the Open Space Institute

- **Protecting natural resources.** A variety of stewardship initiatives—in partnership with colleges, not-for-profits and volunteers—will include projects to prevent the spread of invasive species, protect rare plants and animals, plant trees and improve natural habitat at parks across the State.
- **Preparing for climate change.** Parks are a first line of defense against destructive storm surges, wave action and rising sea levels. Park projects to improve storm resiliency will also enhance recreational opportunities, restore wildlife habitats and improve waterfront access.
- **Making state parks a model of sustainability.** Solar energy, efficient LED lighting, improved insulation and new HVAC systems will make the park system more efficient, attractive and healthy.

## Environmental Stewardship Projects

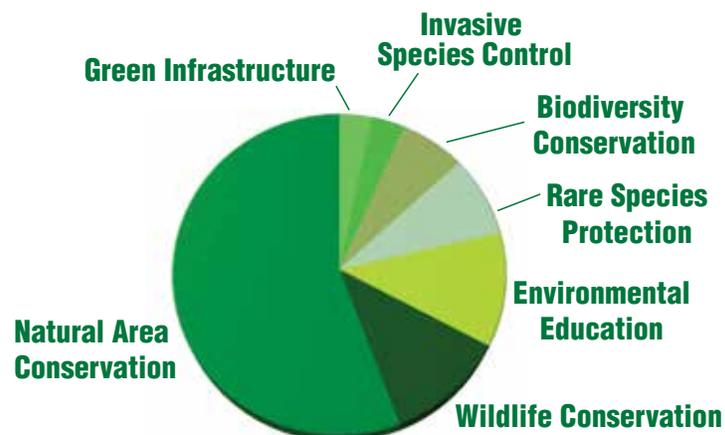


Figure 6: NY Parks 2020 environmental stewardship projects conserve and enhance State Parks' natural environments, improving habitat for plants and animals and creating a more enjoyable natural experience for patrons.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Greening the Roberto Clemente Waterfront



**Above:** A new tidal pool will connect visitors to the river. **Inset:** The riverfront is closed off due to safety concerns.

Governor Cuomo's storm resiliency initiative includes natural infrastructure projects in urban and rural areas, and along the coasts, including Roberto Clemente State Park in the Bronx:

- Replace and enhance the deteriorating 2,200-foot bulkhead along the Harlem River.
- Create a new natural tidal pool area to improve the park setting and better absorb stormwater.
- Stabilize 1,600 feet of stone and natural shoreline north of the bulkhead, protecting park facilities which buffer Metro North train tracks.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Restoring & Enhancing Beaches and Protective Dunes



**Above:** Rebuilt dunes and beach protect the Ocean Parkway. **Inset:** The parkway damaged in Superstorm Sandy.

Governor Cuomo is leading a concerted effort to nourish park beaches and strengthen the shoreline buffers protecting Robert Moses State Park from future storms as part of the State's efforts to re-imagine New York for a new weather reality.

- State Parks, with state and federal agencies, are placing 3.4 million cubic yards of sand on the coastline to reestablish 7.5 miles of beaches and protective dunes adjacent to the park and Ocean Parkway.
- Building back Robert Moses and Gilgo State Park beaches with natural sand and dunes will enhance native plant and animal habitat and protect the area's coastal beauty.
- Sand dredged from the State Boat channel will improve navigation for recreational boaters and anglers.

# 7 Energize Local Economies



The Barclays professional golf tournament at Bethpage State Park.

“We are grateful to Governor Cuomo’s commitment to hosting the PGA Championship and Ryder Cup at Bethpage and we look forward to working with both local and state officials to add an unforgettable chapter in golf history at Bethpage.”

–Pete Bevacqua,  
PGA of America  
Chief Executive Officer

Improvements made by NY Parks 2020 are leveraging the system’s positive impact.

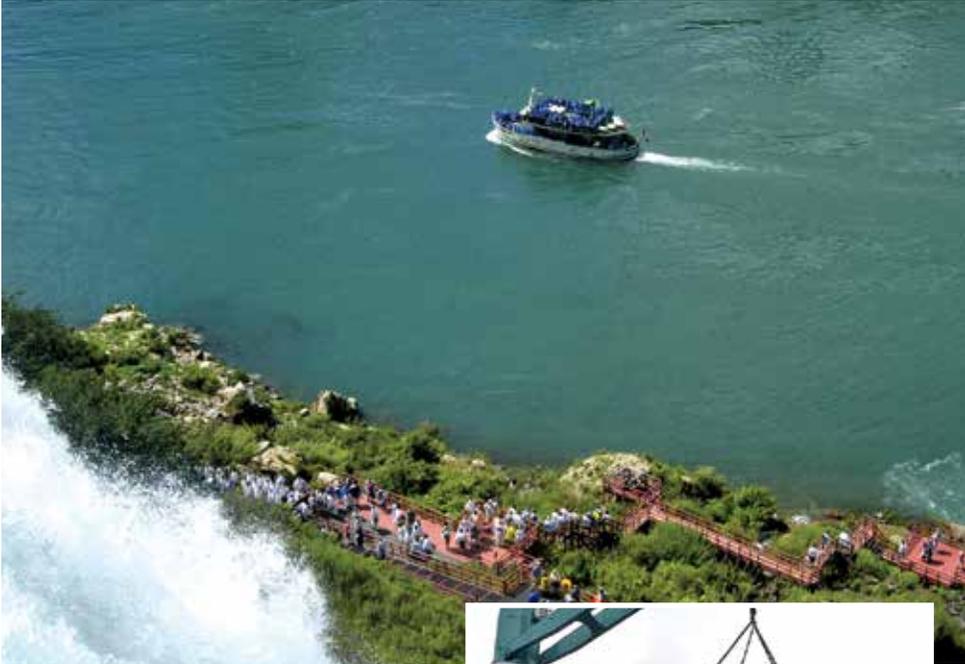
- **Partnering with businesses and not-for-profits to enhance visitor services.** NY Parks 2020 will leverage investments in social, athletic, hospitality and cultural facilities, such as restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and visitor centers – and provide more and better services for visitors.
- **Hosting more recreational and cultural events.** Home to top-grossing concert venues, professional golf tournaments, thrilling tight rope walks and spectacular air shows, State Parks have capacity to host major tourism events. Revitalizing parks will better position Parks to attract high-profile events, generate more tourist dollars and showcase the state.
- **Creating local jobs.** State Parks annually catalyze 20,000 tourism jobs in local communities and the NY Parks 2020 investment will create additional construction and engineering jobs.

## Parks are the Epicenter of a \$646 Billion Recreational Industry



Figure 7: State Parks are where outdoor recreation enthusiasts come to play – and support a \$33.8 billion industry in New York State and \$646 billion nationwide. (Outdoor Industry Association)

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Preserving an Iconic Tourism Destination



**Above:**The Maid of the Mist is a critical tourism draw. **Inset:** New dock secured the boat tour's home in NYS.



Governor Cuomo secured the future of the iconic Maid of the Mist scenic boat excursions at Niagara Falls for decades into the future, preserving a critical element of the region's tourism industry.

- The Maid of the Mist will continue operating in the Niagara Gorge and increase revenues to Niagara Falls State Park.
- In 2013, the Maid of the Mist completed a \$32 million dockage on the American side of the gorge.
- The facility will also allow for unprecedented access for the general public into the Niagara Gorge.

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: Revitalizing the Saratoga Performing Arts Center



**Above:** Visitors enjoy a concert on the lawn of the outdoor amphitheater. **Inset:** The deteriorated façade is replaced with private donations capping over \$10 million in state investment.



SPAC and the State improved the Saratoga Performing Arts Center as a major cultural tourism destination in Saratoga Spa State Park:

- Rock concerts, ballet, opera and classical music performances draw hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Saratoga County venue every summer.
- A public-private partnership rehabilitated the deteriorating 50-year-old amphitheater in 2012.
- A 2013 project renewed the venue's gateway and parking lot to improve traffic flow, add shade, incorporate new sustainable features, and provide a more welcoming experience for park visitors.

# Did you know?

New York's State Parks bear a proud tradition of "biggest" and "firsts."



*Artpark State Park*

- **Niagara Falls State Park.** New York's first state park and the oldest state park in the nation, established: 1885.



*Niagara Falls State Park*

- **Trailside Museum at Bear Mountain.** First state nature center.
- **Artpark.** First state park in the nation dedicated entirely to the visual and performing arts.

- **Jones Beach State Park.** Largest public swimming beach facility in the country.
- **Bethpage State Park.** Selected to host the 2019 PGA Championship and the 2024 Ryder Cup, as well as four Barclays Tournaments and the 2002 and 2009 U.S. Open Championship.



*Moreau Lake State Park*

- **New York has more state operated campsites than any other state in the nation.** More than 15,500 campsites operated

## The New York State Parks System

- 180 parks
- 35 historic sites
- 67 bathing beaches
- 29 golf courses
- 2,000 miles of trails
- 335,000 acres
- 62,000,000 happy visitors



*Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park*

by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and Department of Environmental Conservation.

- **Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park.** The longest, elevated pedestrian bridge in the world.
- **Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site in Newburgh.** First state historic site in America.



*Washington's Headquarters*



*National Purple Heart Hall of Honor*

- **National Purple Heart Hall of Honor at New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site.** Only institution in the nation dedicated to Purple Heart Recipients, and the nation's sole repository dedicated to the preservation of their stories of sacrifice.



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ROSE HARVEY**  
Commissioner