

2014  
Annual Report



New York State Council of Parks,  
Recreation & Historic Preservation





**Cover: Sam's Point, Minnewaska State Park Preserve**

*(Photo credit: 1-Sunrise - Greg Miller, Courtesy of the Open Space Institute; 2-Upper Right, Garry Gleason, Courtesy of the Nature Conservancy)*

**Inside Cover: Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park**

## Table of Contents

Letter from the Chair	1
Priorities for 2015	5
NYS Parks and Historic Sites Overview	7
State Council of Parks Members	9
2015-16 FY Budget Recommendations	11
Annual Highlights	17
Division of Law Enforcement	25
State Board for Historic Preservation	27
Statewide Stewardship Initiatives	28
Partnerships	32



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

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

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ROSE HARVEY**  
Commissioner

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

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

January 2015

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is pleased to submit its 2014 Annual Report. This report highlights the State Council of Parks and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's achievements during 2014, and sets forth recommendations for the coming year.

First, we continue to be enormously inspired by your unprecedented capital investment in New York State parks, which has resulted in a renaissance of the system. With a total of \$421 million invested in capital projects over the last three years, we are restoring public amenities, fixing failing infrastructure, creating new trails, and bringing our State's flagship parks back to life. New Yorkers and tourists are rediscovering State Parks, and the agency continues to plan for the future based on your commitment to provide a total of \$900 million in capital funds as part of the NY Parks 2020 initiative announced in your 2015 Opportunity Agenda. We are thrilled that your Executive Budget for 2015-2016 includes an additional \$20 million for a total of \$110 million in the next year.

The revitalization of the State park system is perfectly timed with your parallel tourism initiatives, promoting New York State's natural, cultural, historic, agricultural and recreational sectors. From Taste NY to Path Through History to the I Love New York Campaign, our park system complements your impressive efforts to draw both New Yorkers and visitors from around the world to explore the wonders of our great State. We are proud that our State Parks are a part of your larger efforts to promote the entire State as a destination, showcasing its vast and diverse beauty.

The State Council of Parks remains committed to continuing the tradition of philanthropic support for State parks and, together with the Alliance for NYS Parks and the Natural Heritage Trust, has raised millions in private funds and through partnerships to support signature projects throughout the State. Among the projects supported in 2014 are: the nature center at Letchworth State Park; restoration of historic carriage roads at Minnewaska State Park; a planned visitor center at Thacher State Park; the expansion of programs including the free Learn-to-Swim program which over the last two summers has taught hundreds of New York children to swim at the lakes and pools in State parks; and the construction of the Seneca Arts and Culture Center at Ganondagan State Historic Site.

As the agency puts your NY Parks 2020 investment to work building new and renovating deteriorated facilities we must also maintain them and protect this historic capital investment while best serving our visitors. While we understand the need to use resources wisely, we encourage an increased level of general fund support.

*Continued next page*

The enacted 2014-15 State Budget included an allotment of \$107 million from the general fund out of a total agency operating budget of \$182 million, representing a spending reduction of 15 percent from 2009-10 and reduced permanent staffing by 23 percent since 2008. We clearly understood the need for the State to reduce spending, and our facilities have adopted several measures to reduce costs while continuing to operate at a first-rate level:

- Significantly reduced mowing of park land without negatively impacting the visitor experience
- Reduced travel of staff
- Improved energy usage through application of solar and led lighting
- Automated several fee collection areas
- Increased usage of interagency collaboration and resource sharing
- Expanded friend group formation and involvement in operations
- Increased private fundraising to help offset operating needs

All of this has allowed the agency to attract over 62 million visitors a year—a remarkable 8 percent increase from when you took office—while maintaining the quality of the operations. However, due to inflation, expanded park operations, and increased capital spending, operating funds available to adequately support the system is becoming a serious issue. Additional operating funds are needed to ensure we maintain our facilities and not allow our infrastructure to slip into disrepair due to inadequate funding as was the case years ago.

Given the importance of the State park system to New York’s tourism economy and economic vitality, we remain grateful for your investment and ask for your increased support for State park operations to ensure that your legacy-making revitalization of our parks is lasting and preserved.

Sincerely,



Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky, Chair



*Hamilton Point, Minnewaska State Park Preserve*



# *Priorities*



Hamlin Beach State Park



Higley Flow State Park



Minnewaska State Park Preserve



# State Council of Parks 2015 Priorities

The State Council of Parks will advance four priorities in 2015

## 1. Build and Sustain a 21st Century Park System that Is Safe, Affordable and Accessible.

Over the last three years, Governor Cuomo’s NY Works initiative has provided, with leveraged funds included, a total of \$421 million in funding for infrastructure repairs, the largest capital infusion in the history of the park system. This historic investment supports the agency’s parallel efforts to reinvent, redesign and automate park operations to leverage State resources and provide safe, affordable and high-quality recreational and educational experiences to the 62 million people who visit our facilities annually. The State Council of Parks supports an additional \$90 million of critical new capital funding in 2015-16 for State park improvements and infrastructure as well as adequate general fund support to maintain park operations, ensure a quality visitor experience and protect the infrastructure investment made possible by NY Works.

## 2. Increase, Deepen, and Improve the Visitor Experience

Understanding that connecting our citizens to their parks and historic sites is central to our mission, the State Council of Parks will support and encourage programs and opportunities to invite all New Yorkers to explore, experience, and enjoy our magnificent State park system. We will also support initiatives that develop programs to encourage healthy, active lifestyles, particularly among our youth. The State Council will continue to pursue private funding from individuals, corporations and foundations for the New York State park system with a focus on signature projects that greatly enhance the visitor’s experience and create connections between parks and the communities they serve. We have proudly raised over \$30 million in private funds for capital and programmatic initiatives and will continue to pursue such funds and partnerships to support State parks.

## 3. Promote and Celebrate our Parks

The State Council will continue to assist the agency in implementing marketing initiatives to create a strong brand for our parks and historic sites. We also support the message of “this parkland is your parkland” to promote stewardship and responsibility among our park visitors and partners and initiatives such as I Love My Park Day that encourage volunteerism and pride in our State parks and historic sites.

## 4. Stewardship of Natural Resources

The State Council of Parks recognizes the importance of the stewardship of our natural resources and the need to protect, preserve and conserve them throughout our State park system to ensure that they are left unimpaired for future generations.

A family of three is kayaking on the water. The kayaker in the front is a woman wearing sunglasses and a blue life vest, with a young child in a blue life vest seated in front of her. Another woman in a blue life vest is seated behind them. They are in a bright green kayak. In the background, a wooden pier extends into the water, and a dense city skyline with various skyscrapers is visible under a cloudy sky. A dark green semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the word "Overview" in a white, cursive font.

# *Overview*



Allegany State Park



Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site



Southwick Beach State Park

# New York State Parks and Historic Sites Overview

The State park system is one of New York's greatest treasures. Today, the system totals 215 State parks and historic sites encompassing nearly 335,000 acres. New York's parks and historic sites provide affordable outdoor recreation and education opportunities to more than 62 million visitors each year. These facilities contribute to the economic vitality and quality of life of local communities and directly support New York's tourism industry. Parks also provide a place for families and children to recreate and exercise, promoting healthy lifestyles and helping combat childhood obesity.

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks) is responsible for the operation and stewardship of the State park 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 \$312 million (FY2014-15 adjusted budget) and is staffed by 1,737 permanent employees and more than 4,500 seasonal positions during peak operating season.

State Parks is responsible for managing a vast array of public facilities within 180 State parks and 35 historic sites. New York has one of the most developed State park systems in the nation, encompassing a huge inventory of public facilities including 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.

*The term "State park system" as used in this report refers to New York's 180 State parks and 35 State historic sites.*



Saratoga Spa State Park



# State Council of Parks and Regional Park Commissions

## State Council of Parks

LUCY ROCKEFELLER  
WALETZKY,  
Chair and Taconic Commission

DALTON BURGETT,  
Allegany Commission

CORNELIUS B. MURPHY,  
Central Commission

W. DAVID BANFIELD,  
Finger Lakes Commission

PETER HUMPHREY,  
Vice-Chair and Genesee Commission

BRYAN ERWIN,  
Long Island Commission

JANET FELLEMAN,  
New York City Commission

CINDY ABBOTT LETRO,  
Niagara Frontier  
Commission

PHILIP WHITE,  
Palisades Commission

HEATHER MABEE,  
Saratoga-Capital District  
Commission

HAROLD JOHNSON II,  
Thousand Islands  
Commission

ROBERT MACKAY,  
State Board for  
Historic Preservation

## Roles and Responsibilities: Members, State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

The State Council, created by Article 5 of PRHPL, consists of the Chairs of the eleven Regional Parks Commissions (including a representative of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission), the Chair of the State Board of Historic Preservation, the Commissioner of State Parks, and the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation. The Governor appoints the Chair and Vice Chair of the State Council. The Council meets at least four times per year through in-person meetings and conference calls. The Council's statutory responsibilities include:

- Act as a central advisory agency on all matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation.
- Review the policy, budget, and statewide plans of the agency and make appropriate recommendations regarding their amendment or adoption.
- Submit reports to the Governor, not less than once each year, concerning progress in the area of state parks, recreation, and historic preservation.

### To advance these responsibilities, State Council of Parks members shall:

1. Endeavor to attend all State Council of Parks meetings.
2. During State Council meetings and through other channels, educate other Council Members, the State Parks Commissioner, and other Executive and OPRHP Staff about issues, priorities, challenges, and opportunities within their respective regions.
3. Communicate State Council and agency priorities and initiatives to all Regional Commission members. Encourage, motivate, and support fellow Regional Commissioners to enable them to fully engage in state parks issues.
4. Become educated about statewide parks, recreation, and historic preservation issues.
5. Develop and submit a written annual report to the Governor each October.
6. Undertake all responsibilities of Regional Parks Commissioners.



John Boyd Thacher State Park



Chittenango Falls State Park



Rock Island Lighthouse State Park

PHOTO CREDIT: GEORGE FISCHER

## Roles and Responsibilities: Members, Regional Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commission

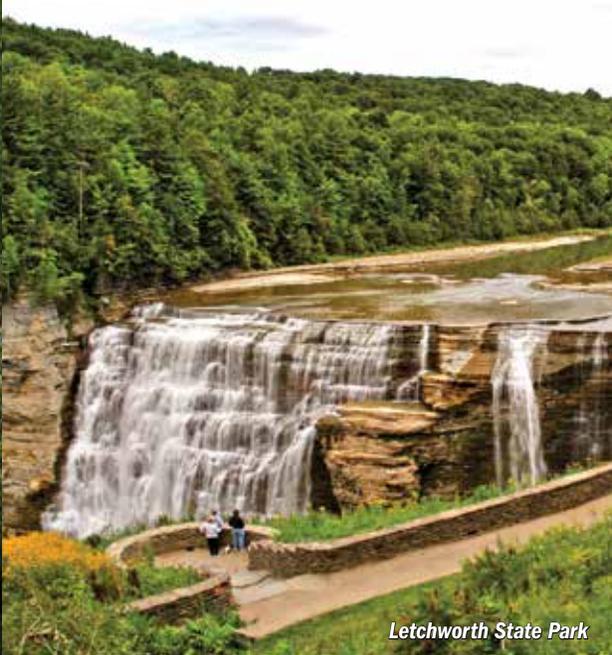
The ten Regional Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissions, created by Article 7 of PRHPL, represent each State Parks region, with the exception of the Palisades (represented by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission) and the Adirondack/Catskill park region. Each Regional Commission consists 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.



*Budget*



Letchworth State Park



Connetquot River State Park Preserve

# State Parks Operating and Capital Budget

## State Parks Operating Budget

State Parks is a “direct operations” agency. Ninety percent of the agency’s operating budget goes to pay the direct costs incurred in operating New York’s 215 State parks and historic sites. The enacted 2014-15 State Budget includes \$189.6 million in appropriations for OPRHP agency operations (encompassing state General Fund support, federal programs, agency-generated special Revenue funds). This represents a General Fund spending reduction of about 14 percent from 2009-10 to 2014-15.

We are pleased to report that in 2014 NY State Parks welcomed 62 million visitors, a three-percent increase over 2013, and nearly eight-percent increase since the Governor took office.

## State Parks Capital Budget

### New York Works

Since Governor’s Cuomo’s historic NY Works initiative began in 2012, New York State Parks has completed infrastructure projects in every region of the state that have enhanced the visitor experience and launched a renaissance in the statewide capital program. In three years the program has invested \$421 million statewide commitments; projects have or will improve 109 of 180 state parks and historic sites; 197 projects have been completed or are underway.

With continued capital investment, the Agency will further its efforts to fix aging infrastructure, and convert and transform New York’s parks and historic sites into a welcoming, transformative, 21st century park system with the following priorities: continue to address the backlog of capital needs in existing facilities, infrastructure and health and safety; incorporate energy efficiency, green technology and automation in capital projects; protect our Natural Resources; build for future storm readiness; and continue to develop public-private partnerships for signature projects.



Roberto Clemente State Park

### 2015-16 Capital Recommendation

To continue this forward momentum, the State Council of Parks respectfully requests support for the additional \$110 million of capital funding for state parks improvements included in the 2015-16 Executive Budget. The State Council also supports adequate operating funds and will continue to support efforts to leverage the public investment through private fundraising and partnership opportunities, including supporting private fundraising for signature projects that improve the visitors’ experience and increase connections between parks and the communities they serve.



Valley Stream State Park



Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic

# I Love My Park Day 2014

## Save the Date! I Love My Park Day 2015, Saturday, May 2

Thanks to the more than 6,000 volunteers who pitched in on Saturday, May 3 PTNY's third annual I Love My Park Day was another enormous success.



Volunteers took part in cleanup, improvement, and beautification projects at more than 80 state parks and historic sites in every corner of the state. At Saratoga Spa State Park, GE volunteers, park staff, and the Friends of Saratoga Spa State Park worked together to make a trail more accessible to people with disabilities. At Niagara Falls State Park, volunteers stained the railing in the Cave of the Winds. At Clark Reservation and Minnewaska State Parks, teams of scientists worked with the NY Natural Heritage Program as part of a 24-hour BioBlitz to document plant and wildlife species. After a winter of heavy snow and ice storms, volunteers at Wellesley Island State Park removed debris from trails, and then chipped those sticks and limbs to use as mulch for the trails.

Hundreds of volunteers cleaned the shores of Jones Beach, Captree, Robert Moses and Sunken Meadow State Parks and Green, Bowman, Rockland, and Hempstead Lakes. A record number of volunteers for a single event - more than 300 - spruced up Riverbank State Park by removing weeds, debris and trash and planting and seeding throughout the park.

I Love My Park Day again generated positive media coverage across the state. Governor Cuomo's invitation to all New Yorkers to volunteer on Saturday put the State park system, its needs, and the strong public support for parks in the public's eye. Social media was buzzing with posts, tweets and photos from events around the state. The L.L.Bean Bootmobile and pop group Capital Cities were on hand for the event at Thacher State Park, creating even more buzz.

In a boost to volunteerism, new and veteran volunteers came out to give back to the parks they use and enjoy all year and create a community of park lovers. Many park and historic site Friends groups enjoyed the best turnout ever for a volunteer event. A huge youth turnout helped to cement lifelong relationships with the outdoors and ensure the future stewardship of our parks and historic sites.



In a related initiative, the NY Natural Heritage Program, Parks & Trails New York, and State Park staff again hosted two "Bioblitzes" on I Love My Park Day, this year at Clark Reservation and Minnewaska State Park Preserve. Nearly 110 scientists with scientific backgrounds volunteered in the 24-hour inventory of the park's biodiversity with the goal of documenting as many rare and common species and significant natural communities as possible. Over 372 different species were documented in Clark Reservation and 262 in Minnewaska. These valuable efforts bring experts together to share knowledge and encourage the public to learn more about the special natural features in our parks.



*FORCES at the Great NYS Fair building bluebird nesting boxes*

## FORCES

The Friends Of Recreation, Conservation and Environmental Stewardship (FORCES) program is cooperatively funded by State Parks, the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and donor support from the Alliance for New York State Parks, a program of the Open Space Institute. The program expanded in 2014. To date, through the pilot effort with SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) and a growing network of 14 participating collegiate institutions, FORCES has now engaged more than 800 students.

SUNY ESF and Wells College student groups became college-sanctioned FORCES clubs in April 2013 and May 2014, respectively. ESF's club continues to grow, and Wells FORCES was awarded Best New Club by the College. In addition, Hartwick College, SUNY Oneonta and Hobart & William Smith Colleges have institutionally-supported FORCES organizations on their campuses. In its inaugural year, a FORCES Stewards Program provided meaningful internships for academic credit, work-study and professional experience, with over 25 students serving as Ambassadors and Stewards in several titles at numerous State parks and historic sites.

In addition to the current FORCES expansion in Central & Finger Lakes, State Parks staff along with students and faculty at partnering institutions, are either exploring or implementing FORCES initiatives in Niagara, Genesee, Saratoga and Taconic Regions.



*FORCES at the Great NYS Fair*



*Annual  
Highlights*



Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center



Fort Ontario State Historic Site



Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms State Park

# Annual Highlights

## Allegany Region

4 parks, 1.6 million visitors

In 2014, State Parks staff at **Allegany State Park** responded quickly and strongly to a serious weather emergency that threatened many structures in the park. In mid-August, an early evening flash flood resulted in nearly two inches of rain falling in a short period, overflowing stream banks, plugging culverts, washing away roadway and flooding buildings and campsites. Some areas were evacuated. Staff from around the region worked tirelessly to repair and stabilize the damage and restore park services to hundreds.

The region made significant progress on major capital revitalization projects in 2014. Through a nearly \$3 million investment from NY Works, improved shower buildings are under construction at Ryan and McIntosh Trails and at Cain Hollow, three deteriorated buildings will be completely replaced. These improvements will greatly benefit the over 200,000 people who camp at **Allegany State Park**



Allegany State Park

every year. At **Midway State Park**, staff built the first of three picnic pavilions, fulfilling a goal in the park's Master Plan

and a desire from the public for more event space in the park. The new pavilions are barrier free, allowing full accessibility to all.



Midway State Park

An important natural resource stewardship project that will also improve swimming conditions for park visitors was completed at **Lake Erie State Park** this year. The park installed a system to remove bacterial contaminants from the stream water that runs through the center of the park, cleansing the water it flowed into Lake Erie, and ultimately into the swimming area. With cleaner water, the park expects to have more operational swimming days than in the past. Early results show great promise, with bacterial levels dropping at least 40 percent.

**Allegany State Park** has a strong tradition of volunteerism which was on full display again this year on September 27, National Public Lands Day. Over 100 people contributed over 624 hours on park improvement projects like clearing weeds, reclaiming the stone France Brook Natural Spring, eradicating invasive species and painting the new Butterfly Meadow pavilion. The event was sponsored by Cabela's which also provided a corporate team to clean up the historic zoo site located behind the administration building.

## Central Region

### 20 parks, 7 historic sites, 2.6 million visitors

2014 was the year of programs at the region's flagship park, **Green Lakes State Park** with a steady growth in the number of programs offered to visitors as well as in attendance.

Weekly Saturday movie nights, for example, had over twice as many guests compared to 2013. Many of the programs seek to connect park



Green Lakes State Park

visitors with lesser known features of the park, including more remote trails and the disc golf course. Visitors also enjoyed unique programs like Moonlight hikes and snowshoe tours. Program organizers worked in conjunction with other departments to enhance programming. For instance, the popular Easter Egg Hunt program was held at Green lakes State Park Golf Course and brought over 250 guests to the Clubhouse restaurant. The park intends to continue to develop innovative, family friendly programs that encourage visitors to explore all the park has to offer.

The trail crew at **Green lakes State Park** also had a busy year. The team re-constructed the heavily walked Brookside Trail. Because of its location near a wetland, walkers often encountered muddy conditions which they would avoid by walking off trail. With use of geo-grids, stone and logs the trail surface was raised above the wetland areas, and the trail now offers our neighboring patrons a safe, dry, multi-use trail for access into the facility. All trails in the park were also color-coded, improving directional signage and safety for visitors.



Chenango Valley State Park

Golf is a popular activity at several parks in the Central Region, including at **Chenango Valley State Park** where the pro-shop transitioned to being fully operated by

the agency last year. This transition improved services for golfers, including the purchase and availability of 50 new EZ-GO golf carts. Helping the course to better accommodate 15 golf leagues and 40 outings a year, and busy day use, the carts have greatly improved revenues. The

shop is now also stocked with New York State Park-logged golf merchandise—from hats and shirts to shoes and golf balls—which has proven very popular among golfers.

## Finger Lakes

### 25 parks, 2 historic sites, 3.3 million visitors

Over 3 million people visited the renowned lake, waterfall and gorge parks of the Finger Lakes Region in 2014, a banner year for attendance. Trails and day-use areas were enjoyed by travelers from all parts of the United States and the world.

In an initiative to strengthen the connection between the residents of Ithaca and several popular State parks nearby, the region partnered with Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit (TCAT) to launch Route 22, providing bus service connecting **Robert H. Treman, Buttermilk Falls** and **Taughan-**



Taughannock Falls State Park

**nock Falls State Parks.** It was a popular route that also transported participants to the region's Learn-to-Swim program at Taughannock Falls, in which 70 children took part earning a certificate and beach towel.



Ganondagan State Historic Site

Construction of the highly anticipated Seneca Arts and Culture Center at **Ganondagan State Historic Site** continued in earnest and remained on schedule with a target opening date of July, 2015. Staff at the facility continues to operate and offer educational and interpretive programming. Funding for the Center was achieved through significant support from private fundraising, a major donation, and NY Works.

The region's natural resource stewardship and community partnership goals were advanced through an active FORCES program in 2014. Four students from SUNY ESF, Cornell University and Ithaca College received paid internships to assist with environmental educational programs and interpretation throughout the region. Another five students from Hobart and William Smith College developed a series of cycling tours at Sampson State Park focused on natural history, military history and water resources.

## Genesee Region

### 8 parks, 1.3 million visitors

In one of the largest private fundraising efforts undertaken by a regional commission to support the construction of a



new park facility, the **Letchworth Nature Center** project continues to progress. Work is well underway on the final design and a groundbreaking is planned for the spring of 2015. The public phase of the fundraising campaign kicked off with an elegant event at the Glen Iris Inn in May 2014 with Lieutenant Governor Robert Duffy in attendance. The campaign has raised almost \$1.5 million so far including a major grant from the Margaret L Wendt Foundation for \$375,000. Development of the partnership with SUNY Genesee is ongoing as are additional fundraising events and committee meetings for the next several months. The project received a high priority endorsement by the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council and the popular campgrounds at Letchworth State Park received a boost this year with NY Works funds. A major project was completed to upgrade the Highbanks Campground electric system and install new camper pads. Work is also scheduled to start in mid to late fall on replacing two comfort station/wash houses in Letchworth's Highbanks Campground for the 2015 season.

The Genesee Valley Greenway Management Plan was completed and in place for 2014 and under the leadership of the Greenway's first park manager, solid partnerships and good working relations with the Friends Group and the numerous municipalities and constituents involved have developed. The Towns of Mt. Morris and Hume and the Finger Lakes Trail Conference are all also currently working on the Greenway enhancement projects along the 90-mile trail.

As part of the statewide initiative to improve customer service and efficiency, automated pay stations were installed this spring at the **Conesus Lake State Boat Launch** and **Oak Orchard State Marine Park**. These units proved popular with patrons and cut expenses and raised revenues for the region. A pay station is planned in 2015 at Silver Lake State Park.

## Long Island Region

### 26 parks, 1 historic site, 19 million visitors

In an historic revitalization of the one of the world's most famous public parks, significant projects are now underway at **Jones Beach State Park** that will restore its historic and aesthetic grandeur, strengthen storm resiliency, expand recreational opportunities, and streamline park entry. The park's major historic buildings, including the East and West Bathhouses and Central Mall buildings will be rehabilitated; cultivated gardens, native and natural vegetation will be reintroduced; and the Central Mall's design and landscaping will be restored. New and improved recreational opportunities, including volleyball, soccer, cricket, miniature golf, yoga and a proposed adventure play area, and a wider variety of food and beverage options will be introduced to better serve the parks millions of visitors each year.

Several new visitor amenities and major events are in place at **Jones Beach State Park**. The region piloted with a new food and beverage concept at the Central Mall called the Smorgasbar. In more good news for the park, in partnership with Live Nation Incorporated, it again hosted the Holiday Light Show Spectacular, a Long Island holiday tradition last held in 2006. And, the Nikon Theater at Jones Beach had another successful concert season.



Two major capital projects were completed at **Sunken Meadow State Park**. At the Golf Course, the entranceway, comfort stations, offices and pro-shop were completely renovated and new heating and cooling systems were installed at the clubhouse. The exterior of the building including brick and slate has been restored, a new walkway and ramps have been constructed, and a major redesign of the landscape was completed. The West Orchard Comfort Station in Field 4 was reconstructed to serve the public with updated amenities. All interior and exterior fixtures, finishes, and facades were replaced—including a new roof—and new accessible sidewalks and entry points were added. Rounding out a big year for this park, a master planning process is underway and public hearing was held to receive comments and input from the

community. Several projects are underway including a multi-million dollar reconstruction of the main bathhouse. Other improvements include expansion of comfort stations, park police office, first aid office, and for the first-time ever a sizeable environmental education learning classroom.

Several major trail projects were announced in the region this year. On Memorial Day weekend the Ocean Parkway Coastal Greenway, a 3.6 mile shared-use path between **Jones Beach State Park** and **Tobay Beach in Nassau County** opened. The \$3.8 million project, opened prior to the summer season, enhances safety and ease of transportation for cyclists. A well-attended public workshop and open house was held as part of the planning process for a trails plan for Bethpage and Trail View State Parks. That process is now underway.

Nearly 5,000 patrons attended the 2nd Annual Jack-O'-Lantern Spectacular Sail was at **Belmont Lake State Park**. The first 50 carved pumpkins received were placed on flotation devices with candles inserted and sailed around the lake behind kayaks.

In an effort to improve efficiency for park visitors, automated pay stations were installed in **Bayard Cutting Arboretum** and at



the East and West Bathhouses and Field 10 at **Jones Beach State Park**. For the first time ever, park visitors are able to use a credit

card to pay the vehicle use fee. These machines have been beneficial to both parks.

With financial assistance from New York State grants to the Friends of **Connetquot River State Park**, the Connetquot River Grist Mill is currently undergoing major repairs. The mill originates from the 1700s. Over the years, weather and age have taken their toll on the structure. The restoration will stabilize the structure and eventually, the interior and milling machinery will be restored to create working mill. In welcome news to Long Island fishing enthusiasts, the Connetquot River State Park Preserve hatchery will reopen next year, helping to reinvigorate the rich trout fishing tradition on Long Island's Connetquot River. The hatchery has been closed since 2008, after a disease was detected within the fish. The fish disease has been eliminated from

the hatchery, and a new freshwater system is expected to eventually produce 30,000-35,000 trout 12 inches or greater in size on an annual basis, restoring the Connetquot River fishery as a world renowned fly fishing location as well as providing trout for **Caleb Smith State Park Preserve** and other Long Island parks.



State Parks has proposed a second phase of the **Nissequogue River State Park** Demolition and Improvement Project. When implemented this proposal will create new scenic overlook, create a new picnic and day-use area, and continue removal of deteriorated buildings. The \$6.4 million project calls for the demolition of abandoned residential buildings at the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center (KPPC) and restoring the site as a new scenic park area overlooking Long Island Sound.

## New York City Region

### 7 parks, 7.1 million visitors

At an event that showcased one of New York City's most iconic waterfront views, the shoreline at **East River State Park** officially reopened following a stabilization and enhancement project. Now better protected from dramatic erosion, the public can enjoy a new sandy beach and boat launch for kayaks and canoes. This summer, park attendance topped one million thanks to the enormously popular Smorgasburg and Taste of Williamsburg. The Friends of East River State Park remain strong partners for both the summer movie series and the park's popular Fall Festival.



Furthering a connection between recreational boaters and the state parks located along the East River, the region launched a partnership with the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance to provide free kayaking launching from **Gantry Plaza State Park**. Dozens of people showed up to paddle each kayaking weekend at the park. By community demand, a new dog run has also been designed for this park across from the sports field.

Two parks in the region offer unique natural settings with special stewardship needs. The statewide Invasive Species Strike Team freed a significant area **Bayswater State Park** from rampant invasives. Other improvements to be conducted with the US Army Corps of Engineers at the park will likely include a new fishing pier and restoration of the salt

Hundreds of youth participate in youth ice hockey and figure skating programs at **Riverbank State Park**. The park's ice rink was renovated with NY Works funds and now features a new concrete slab, new boards and stylish wind and sun shields on the



Riverbank State Park

southern end of the rink. The renovation lined up perfectly with a generous grant from the New York Rangers and Chase to support the youth hockey program. A partnership between the Regional Commission and the Alliance for NYS Parks is developing plans to upgrade the lighting, audio and stage at Riverbank's popular Cultural Theatre. These improvements to the facility will expand the use of the space from largely community social use to include theatre productions.

## Niagara Region

### 18 parks, 2 historic sites, 11.6 million visitors

In one of the largest restoration projects in New York State Park history, work at **Niagara Falls State Park** continued this year with projects at the popular Prospect Point and on



Niagara Falls State Park



Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve

marsh. At 260 acres, **Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve** is the largest state park in New York City, featuring miles of walking and riding trails and surprisingly undisturbed nature. Interpretive signage and information kiosks have been installed this year at key points in the park's trail system near the scenic ponds. The park's Interpretive Center hosted dozens of visits from area school children, offering programs ranging from nature scavenger hunts and hikes to readings about life on the park's historic Gericke Farm. The regional commission is evaluating use of Gericke Farm, NYC's oldest continuously operated organic farm and an unsung asset of Clay Pit Ponds Preserve.

Two major private grants supported important youth and community athletic programs at two of the region's largest parks. A strong tradition of baseball at **Roberto Clemente State Park** continues thanks to a generous grant from the MLB's Baseball Tomorrow Fund that supported, along with NY Works, the complete refurbishment of the park's baseball field. Plans to rebuild the park's bulkhead along the Harlem River as well as the entire lower plaza and esplanade have been finalized and applauded by the community. This work will begin in 2015, followed closely by renovation of the park's upper plaza including the main entrance to the park. With the completion of these projects in 2017, Roberto Clemente State Park will have been fully upgraded and refreshed.

the trails that run along the Upper River near where the river plunges over the falls. The North Shore Trail to Luna Island and the Lower Grove Trail are barrier free, landscaped, outfitted with benches and overlooks and provide a most contemplative walk along the water's edge.

The FORCES program extended into western New York this year with students from Niagara County Community College producing a video tour of the 30 Mile Lighthouse at **Golden Hill State Park** so that visitors with disabilities and others can experience the view from the top of the lighthouse. The video also includes a tour of the lightkeepers quarters.

Polo returned to **Knox Farm State Park** this summer thanks to effort by the Friends of Knox Farm. Historically, Knox Farm had been a hotbed of polo activity in western New York and this tournament marked the return of the sport after a several-year absence. Over 500 attended the day-long affair.

Friends and partners from the region's corporate sector rolled up their sleeves at **Beaver Island State Park** to help plant trees, paint shelters, clean the beach, remove invasive species. HSBC included this day of service as part of an annual conference that was meeting in Buffalo. Over 150 volunteers from HSBC not only contributed sweat equity, they brought a check for \$1500 to cover the cost of the trees they planted.



*Beaver Island State Park*

## Palisades Region

**20 parks, 7 historic sites, 4.8 million visitors**

The Open Space Institute added 1,068 acres to **Minnewaska State Park Preserve** through the transfer of the Sam's



*Minnewaska State Park Preserve*

Point Preserve. The property is known for its spectacular views and striking cliffscapes. The acquisition includes the preserve entrance, Sam's Point, the much-visited promontory that is the highest point along the entire Shawangunk Ridge; the 56-acre Lake Maratanza, the Loop Road, the Ice Caves Trail and the Conservation Center, and is home to one of the world's few examples of a high elevation dwarf pitch pine barrens, as well as nearly 40 rare plant and animal species. Construction has also begun on the park's first campground. The **Sam Pryor Shawangunk Gateway Campground**, opening in the spring of 2015 along Route

299, will have approximately 60 campsites, a manager's office, pavilion, and comfort station. Under a cooperative agreement, the Mohonk Preserve and the American Alpine Club will operate the campground on behalf of State Parks.

In September, the Hamilton Carriage Road reopened after a \$825,000 restoration, funded largely through private donations.

Maintaining the iconic scenic beauty of the Palisades is integral to the stewardship mission of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC). Finding that the height of a proposed LG USA Headquarters building above the tree line is not in accordance with this mission and would create a precedent inconsistent with its obligation to protect this landscape, PIPC passed a resolution urging LG USA Inc. to lower the building's proposed height. This resolution echoed the sentiments of many regional environmental groups and the National Park Service that the proposed building would threaten the integrity of this nationally designated area.

The Palisades Interstate Parkway between the George Washington Bridge Toll Plaza and the New York State Line, serves as an important connection between New York City and park facilities at **Harriman State Park** and **Bear Mountain State Park**. This eleven mile road surface which has carried over 22 million cars a year for nearly two decades, had reached the end of its useful life. A major repaving project was completed in 2014 and resurfaced this portion that includes three scenic overlooks, and repaired 13 bridge decks. The project was undertaken in cooperation with the New Jersey Department of Transportation.

Visitors to **Bear Mountain State Park** have enjoyed the historic Carousel for many generations. In 2014, an anonymous donor made a \$150,000 gift to assist in the Carousel's operations and replace the roof.



*Bear Mountain State Park*

This same generous donor also pledged up to \$50,000 towards a matching gift of other pledges toward an endowment for the operation and preservation of the Carousel.

## Saratoga-Capital District Region

### 12 parks, 8 historic sites, 4.8 million visitors



Thacher State Park

One of the most iconic state parks in New York's Capital Region,

**Thacher State Park** celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2014. The occasion was with a day of celebration on September 14, 2014 which included the dedication of a new historic marker and interpretive sign that explain the park's rich geologic and cultural history. To usher in the park's second century, many projects are underway including expanding the trails to caves and cliff destinations, opening the magnificent views off the escarpment, developing new recreational attractions for biking and climbing, building a multi-purpose Visitor Center, replacing aging restrooms, and developing more sustainable utility systems.



One of the most popular amenities at **Saratoga Spa State Park** is the family friendly Peerless Pool. To better serve its many visitors, a new picnic pavilion complex conveniently located near this pool and the playground was constructed this year thanks to NY Works.

The fully accessible Polaris Pavilion, named after one of the spouting mineral springs, can accommodate 75 people. A paved one-mile accessible trail loop is also being developed around the pool and pavilion complex. The Friends of Saratoga Spa State Park, together with the regional commission, also raised the funds to rehabilitate and reopen the Karista Spring in the historic Vale of Springs area, with donations from the Adirondack Trust Company and Allerdice Building Supply.



Karista Springs, Vale of Springs

A grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program of the National Park Service will help history come alive for visitors to **Bennington Battlefield State Historic Site** by improving interpretation of the site's battle features and increasing programming. In August, over 1300 visitors attended a series of events re-enacting a key battle of the American Revolutionary War that took place in Walloom-sac NY in August 1777. Known as the Battle for Bennington, it was a decisive victory for the American militia in the run up to the turning point of the Revolution at Saratoga. Dedicated volunteers from numerous veterans and re-enactment groups hosted the event.



Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site

**Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site** is the premier destination for an understanding of the engineering feat of the Erie Canal and its contribution to state and national history. Following devastating floods from storms Irene and Lee, new amenities at the site include the interpreted remains of historic Fort Hunter, new interpretive signs throughout the site, a new exhibit in the Visitor Center, and new parking area and sidewalks. The spectacular setting of the site is the perfect backdrop for creative new programming including Tai Chi, storytelling and kayaking.

## Taconic Region

### 13 parks, 6 historic sites, 4 million visitors

Since its opening in 2008, the **Walkway Over the Hudson State Park** has welcomed millions of visitors and supported the rejuvenation of the Poughkeepsie waterfront. The unique and popular park achieved another important milestone this year with the construction and operation of a 21-story outdoor elevator. Funded in part with a federal Transportation Enhancement Program (TEP) grant, the 76-second ride provides stunning views of the Hudson River and the structure of the old railroad bridge, as well as a direct connection to Upper Landing Park on the Poughkeepsie waterfront. The elevator opened in August, and over 48,000 people rode the elevator in its first three months of operation.

Several NY Works projects improved park facilities throughout the region. A new \$1.1 million entrance area has greatly improved **Taconic State Park's Copake Falls Area**. An environmentally-friendly parking lot features



*Taconic State Park-Copake Falls*

18,000 square feet of permeable pavers, which will reduce pollution in water runoff. The project beautified the park by

creating a new lookout area over the Ore Pit Pond swimming area and improved pedestrian accessibility to the pond with a fence along the road and a newly refurbished sidewalk. Through a collaboration between State Parks and NYS DOT, **Franklin Delano Roosevelt State Park** now has an improved and environmentally-friendly parking lot for visitors to the largest pool in the State Parks' system. The \$1.9 million project brought bioswales, grassy islands and newly-planted trees, which help to filter out pollutants from storm water and provide shade



*James Baird State Park*

to visitors on hot summer days. Golfers at **James Baird State Park** had reason to celebrate this fall with the announcement of the completion of a \$3.2 million irrigation system at the park's Robert-Trent Jones golf course. The new irrigation system is expected to greatly improve course conditions.

The great estates that dot the shoreline along New York's Hudson River draw history buffs and tourists from around the world. State Parks proudly operates several state historic sites that put this rich history on display. A \$2.1 million NY Works project has restored the grandeur of the mansion's east portico at **Staatsburgh State Historic Site**. A new access ramp was also installed, with a second ramp being planned on the portico to lead to the front doors of the grand entry hall. The importance of Staatsburgh and 12 other great estate historic sites and

parks to the Hudson Valley economy was highlighted in a 2014 report written by Urbanomics, Inc. The Economic Importance of the Great Estates Historic Sites and Parks found that these sites bring \$65 million in positive economic impact and roughly \$2 million in sales tax revenue to Dutchess County.

## Thousand Islands

**26 parks, 1 historic site, 1.7 million visitors**

The Thousand Islands Region is one of the state's most popular destinations for camping and boating along the pristine St. Lawrence River. NY Works has supported a significant investment in state park facilities that improve these recreational activities for the region's many visitors.

At **Grass Point State Park** campers in 2015 will enjoy the new Beach Bathhouse currently under construction. The outdated and



*Grass Point State Park*

worn facility will be replaced with a fully-accessible, modern and inviting building housing restrooms, showers and lifeguard functions including a first aid room. **Kring Point State Park**, one of the region's busiest camping parks and a destination for avid anglers, now boasts the most modern public dock system on its stretch of the St. Lawrence River, greatly improving the sport fishing experience on the St. Lawrence.

The region successfully secured an \$800,000 Transportation Enhancement Program grant to extend the popular 3.5 mile **Black River**



*Black River Trail*

**Trail**. The project will add a mile to the trail using an abandoned railroad bed that runs between the Village of Black River and the City of Watertown. This long-awaited connection to the city limits will open the trail to a public housing complex as well as a potential connection, in a future expansion phase, to the City of Watertown's trail network along the Black River. This pedestrian trail, popular year-round, provides walking, jogging, bicycling, rollerblading, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing opportunities for Fort Drum families and Jefferson County residents.



Traffic Safety Initiative



Drug Overdose Kit



Officer Cali & K-9 TEO



2014 Park Police Academy Graduation

# NYS Parks Division of Law Enforcement

## New York State Park Police

In 2014 members of the Division continued its efforts to provide and receive advanced Law Enforcement Training in order to maintain the tradition of being part of one of the safest park systems across the country continues. Partner initiatives and public education help to create the safe environment for all of our park visitors.

The New York State Park Police Academy graduated its 11th Session Basic School in May, 2014. The newly trained officers completed 26 weeks of intense law enforcement training that included penal and criminal procedural law, advanced first aid, firearms, emergency vehicle operations and DWI detection, report writing and courtroom procedures, Marine Law Enforcement, ATV and snowmobile operations, cultural diversity and ethics awareness. The officers were assigned to Regions across the state and will help to provide law enforcement services in our busy park system. The 12th Session class began in October, 2014 and plans to graduate and assign an additional 35 members in April, 2015.

The New York State Park Police have participated in training courses across the state that will result in the assignment of Drug Overdose Kits to our officers on patrol. These kits are free for participating agencies and are administered through County Department of Health Offices. Naloxone is a medication that is administered by nasal spray to an individual

who has overdosed on opioids. It works by temporarily reversing the effects of the opioid, allowing the individual to regain consciousness and resume normal breathing. In addition to teaching officers how to use naloxone, the course also provides an overview of the state's Good Samaritan Law, which is intended to encourage individuals to seek medical attention for someone who is experiencing a drug or alcohol overdose or other life-threatening injury, who otherwise may have refused to do so for fear of criminal prosecution.

The State Park Police have trained and utilized K-9 Units across the state since 2003. Two new additions to the Division will continue to assist the Park Police with carrying out the agency mission of providing a safe recreational experience for all State park visitors. A grant from Homeland Security helped the State Park Police in the Western District purchase and train a K-9 unit in the detection of explosives. K-9 TEO is a two-year old German Shepherd. TEO and his handler, Officer Cali, have completed training and are assigned to Niagara Falls. Niagara Falls State Park and its majestic water falls remain one of the most visited sites in the United States.

A donation from the Palisades Interstate Park Commission helped the Hudson Valley District purchase and train K-9 Sadie. Sadie is a one-year old Bloodhound. Sadie and his handler, Officer Mannocchi are assigned to the Palisades Region and are currently training to assist with Search & Rescue operations. Harriman State Park remains one of the largest and busiest woodland State parks in the Northeast.

Noticing a disturbing trend of lower seatbelt and child restraint use in proximity of state parks located outside large urban areas, State Park Police partnered together with the State Troopers to conduct joint enforcement and education campaigns in State parks. With over 60 million patrons visiting our State parks annually, the goal of this joint initiative was to monitor and enforce compliance with state seatbelt laws. Together, the agencies encouraged visiting motorists and their passengers to properly buckle-up their seat belts, and teach the importance of properly securing our youngest visitors in approved child safety seats.



## Division for Historic Preservation

Each year the Division for Historic Preservation reviews millions of dollars-worth of historic rehabilitation tax credit projects for income-producing and owner-occupied properties. Since the State preservation tax credit program began in 2006, complementing the long-standing federal credit for historic rehabilitation projects, their use in New York has significantly increased, especially in and around Buffalo. The economic downturn affecting upstate New York helped to stimulate the expansion and extension of the State tax credit program by the legislature and Governor Cuomo, with program improvements including a program extension to 2019, an increased cap on project expenditures, 800 newly qualified census tracts and a refundable credit for commercial projects beginning in 2015. On a statewide basis, New York's use of the federal preservation tax credits has broken national records for the past two years. In 2013 alone, New York's projects represented \$1.16 billion dollars in private investment. The matching State commercial credit greatly increased the use of the federal credit, with struggling upstate communities hosting 70 percent of these projects. The residential component of the State program has resulted in the rehabilitation of over 1,450 homes, with over \$45 million in total project expenditures, from 2010 through September 2014.

The division continues to advance the recommendations included in the 2012 **New York State Historic Site and State Historic Park System Assessment**. A number of new projects have helped to strengthen the system in a variety of ways, including:

- A series of 4 new rack cards with an updated, uniform design and information about nearby sites.
- A new cell phone tour at John Brown Farm that traces the life of one of the country's most controversial anti-slavery crusaders.
- A new short-term exhibit at Fort Ontario State Historic Site that highlights the 70th anniversary of the temporary emergency refugee shelter that was established at the fort following World War II.
- A colleagues' network via email among site and division staff to encourage the exchange of ideas, articles and information related to audience development, interpretation and best practices.



- A pilot historic site staff training program was held in November at the Rensselaer County Historical Society. The day-long session offered facilitated discussions a variety of topics, including attracting new audiences and improving visitor experience. The division plans to expand the program to other parts of the State.

## 2014 NYS Historic Preservation Awards

The annual State preservation awards honor excellence in the preservation and revitalization of New York's historic and cultural resources. The 2014 ceremony was held on December 4 at Academy Lofts, a preservation tax credit project that rehabilitated an abandoned school for an affordable housing complex for artists. This year's awards pay tribute to the following achievements.

- The Albany Housing Authority in partnership with Albany Barn, a local arts organization, for the outstanding rescue and rehabilitation of the former **St. Joseph's Academy** for low-income artists' residences, a community arts center and a business incubator for creative enterprises.
- Property owner and developer Charles Klugo for the transformation of the former **Bresee's department store** in downtown Oneonta into a contemporary commercial and residential complex. The project is a major component of the city's redevelopment efforts.
- To Artspace, a national nonprofit organization that creates living and work space for artists, in partnership with El Barrio's Operation Fightback, an East Harlem community development organization, for an outstanding rescue and rehabilitation of former **Public School 109** for affordable live/work housing for artists and their families, and a community arts space. The ACE Theatrical Group utilized a wide array of funding sources, including preservation tax

credits, for the more than \$90 million restoration of the 1920's Loew's Kings Theater in Brooklyn to its former glory.

- The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the National Park Service Heritage Documentation Program and the New York State Canal Corporation, all working in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office, succeeded in the monumental task of listing the 450-mile **New York State Barge Canal Historic District** on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. This outstanding research, documentation and recognition project celebrates a nationally significant work of early 20th century engineering that affected transportation and commerce across the eastern half of the continent for nearly a half century.
- The Castaldi family utilized the preservation tax credits to rehabilitate the 1930s **Suffolk Theater** on East Main Street in Riverhead as a center for performing arts and special events.
- The regional nonprofit Scenic Hudson organization led the impressive transformation of the abandoned **West Point Foundry** site in Cold Spring into a new park that interprets the property's industrial history along with its natural environment.

# NEW YORK STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation





Milkweed  
(Credit: Troy Weldy)



Red Eft



Red Fox



Allegany State Park

## Environmental Stewardship

In 2014 State Parks environmental staff and partners implemented over 30 stewardship projects to protect, restore and conserve New York's biodiversity, including: protection of federally listed plants and animals; enhancement of grassland habitats for birds; restoration of wetlands, streams and lakes; forest conservation and protection from harmful invasive species; innovative methods to reduce storm-water runoff; and water quality improvements. State Parks is the steward of over 800 locations of rare plants and animals as well as 400 high quality natural communities ranging from old-growth forests in Allegany State Park, to grassy summits in Taconic, or dunes and beaches on Long Island and Lake Ontario. Thanks to a long-standing partnership between State Parks and the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP), biologists conduct field inventories to identify, evaluate, and map these natural assets. This year, NYNHP biologists conducted field surveys in 40 parks and responded to roughly 50 requests for information. NYNHP is an affiliate of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and identifies rare species locations and concerns in parks, which helps guide planning, minimize impacts, and prioritize stewardship actions.

State Parks' Water Quality staff conducted 24 monitoring trips to assess 15 waterbodies. The team implemented 5 management projects which included controlling aquatic invasive species, bacteria reduction in streams, and remediating a pond contaminated containing a saxitoxin. Staff also ensured compliance with DOH criteria in all State Parks beaches and swimming pools (77 beaches and 45 pools), and took action to prevent bather or pet exposure to Harmful Algae Blooms. Staff also completed two Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grants, producing a total of 14 sanitary survey reports as well as educational material, which was distributed to numerous stakeholders and partner agencies.

This year, with funding from a GLRI grant, eight boat stewards inspected more than 7,000 watercraft and trailers for aquatic invasive species in the Niagara, Genesee, and Thousand Islands Regions. The stewards increased public awareness of aquatic invasive species issues by distributing educational materials bearing the universal "Clean-Drain-Dry" message to park patrons, and participated in on the ground invasive species control efforts for various species including water chestnut and Phragmites.

Invasive species management made huge strides this year with the deployment of five strike teams and two forest health teams. Strike teams worked in all regions to protect rare elements, perform early detection and rapid response, and create Invasive Species Prevention Zones. Forest health teams made early detections of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and Emerald Ash Borer allowing parks to respond rapidly to these threats, and all teams educated the public about their work.

One of the most exciting public outreach tools that State Parks' launched this year is the Nature Times blog. The blog shares interest-

ing stories and photos about stewardship and scientific research in our parks as well as fun facts about the plants and animals living there. This feature is one of the lasting results of State Parks' involvement with the Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern program. To receive blog postings, visit <http://nysparksnaturetimes.com>.

These partners enable State Parks to successfully implement and complete environmental stewardship projects.

- New York Natural Heritage Program
- SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
- New York Flora Association
- NatureServe
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York State Museum
- Cornell University
- Scenic Hudson
- Hartwick College
- The Nature Conservancy
- Palisades Interstate Park Commission
- Mid-Atlantic Region Seed Bank/ NY City Parks and Recreation

## Audubon in the Parks



*Audubon in the Parks* is an initiative with Audubon New York and State Parks, its Regional Commissions, Audubon Chapters and Friends Groups. The goal of this public/private partnership is to advance bird conservation in State Parks, specifically targeting Bird Conservation Areas (BCAs) and Audubon Important Bird Areas (IBAs) with a focus on the management guidance summaries created for State Parks, while also connecting people to these unique sites and advocating for funds to ensure these places and the habitats they support are restored.

## Sunken Meadow and Nissequogue River State Parks, Long Island

Volunteers from Four Harbors Audubon Society are working with State Parks environmental staff on restoring native meadows with Long Island ecotypic seeds on a 4-acre Brownfield site, a previous building that was part of the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center and which is now part of Nissequogue River State Park. Four Harbors Audubon Society volunteers and their partners, including students from S.T.A.T.E. (Students Taking



Action for Tomorrow's Environment), The Nissequogue River State Park Foun-

dation, and the Master Naturalists, will be conducting ongoing invasive species removal of mugwort as well as reseeding at the site.

At Sunken Meadows State Park, Four Harbors Audubon is also maintaining American Kestrel and Eastern Bluebird boxes, coordinating invasive species removal workdays, and continuing to maintain native display gardens. These demonstration sites not only help to improve habitat at the parks, but inspire visitors to take similar steps to create bird habitat in their own backyards.

## Fahnestock/Hudson Highlands State Park, Taconic Region

Our Constitution Marsh staff helped conduct ten Golden-winged Warbler surveys this past spring to assess habitats for the presence of this priority species as well as the potential restoration of appropriate habitats. Audubon staff will continue to work with park staff to assess future monitoring needs.



## Green Lakes State Park, Central Region

The grassland management plan that Audubon New York helped develop is being implemented this year at Green Lakes State Park. Audubon staff is working closely with park staff on implementing the plan and Onondaga Audubon Society has been an active partner, assisting with the bird and invasive species monitoring at the site. Green Lakes is poised to be the largest intact grassland bird habitat in the State park system.

## Moreau Lake State Park, Saratoga County



Southern Adirondack Audubon Society worked with the friends group and park staff this year on I Love My Park Day to design and construct a new bird blind to enhance the pond for bird sightings and provide a new learning tool for visiting school groups (see photo).

## Long Island Bird Conservation Program, For the Birds! and Be a Good Egg: Multiple Long Island State Parks

During the second year of our “Be a Good Egg” (BGE) share the beach stewardship program, FTB! students created signs for installation at State Park sites and volun-



teers were on the beach during some of the busiest days of the season, urging beach goers to sign a pledge to share the beach with nesting shorebirds at Jones Beach and Sunken Meadows State Parks. This season’s BGE volunteer training workshop took place at Connetquot State Park, which is also a regular location for the Great South Bay Audubon’s chapter events and home to a bluebird trail maintained by chapter volunteers.

In Orient Point State Park, our Long Island Bird Conservation Coordinator has been working with a researcher from John Hopkins University to monitor predator threats to beach nesting birds, while North Fork Audubon Chapter volunteers worked with students to install signs to protect plovers. At both Orient point and Jones Beach State Parks, Audubon New York has been monitoring and protecting nesting pairs of Piping Plovers, American Oystercatchers, and Least Terns. Audubon staff and volunteers have also been conducting shorebird migration surveys this year.



This fall, Onondaga Audubon continued bird walks at Green Lakes State Park, Rockland Audubon initiated an “Audubon in the Parks” series of bird walks at Rockland Lake State Park, Four Harbors Audubon tabled and led programming as part of Caleb Smith State Parks Fall Festival Day, and Audubon Society of the Capital Region and Northern Catskills Audubon provided programming on bird friendly gardening at Thatcher State Park’s fall festival. This past summer, Saw Mill Audubon staff as well as volunteers from three other Lower Hudson Valley Audubon chapters participated in Rockefeller State Park Preserve’s first ever Breeding Bird Blitz.

---

*Audubon partners are currently working in almost 20 State parks and are actively exploring work at more than 20 other sites. With 27 Audubon Chapters, Audubon New York staff and centers, and 213 State parks and historic sites located across the state, this initiative is well positioned to have a strong impact on New York’s priority birds and habitats. For more information contact Laura McCarthy at [lmccarthy@audubon.org](mailto:lmccarthy@audubon.org)*





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

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

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