

New York State Council of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation



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New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation

State Council
of Parks



Ribbon Cutting at Frederic Church Center for Art and Landscape



First Day Hiker at Taconic State Park



Washington's HQ State Historic Site



2024 Full Solar Eclipse at Point Au Roche State Park



ILMPD 2024 at Hamlin Beach State Park



Niagara Falls State Park Lighting

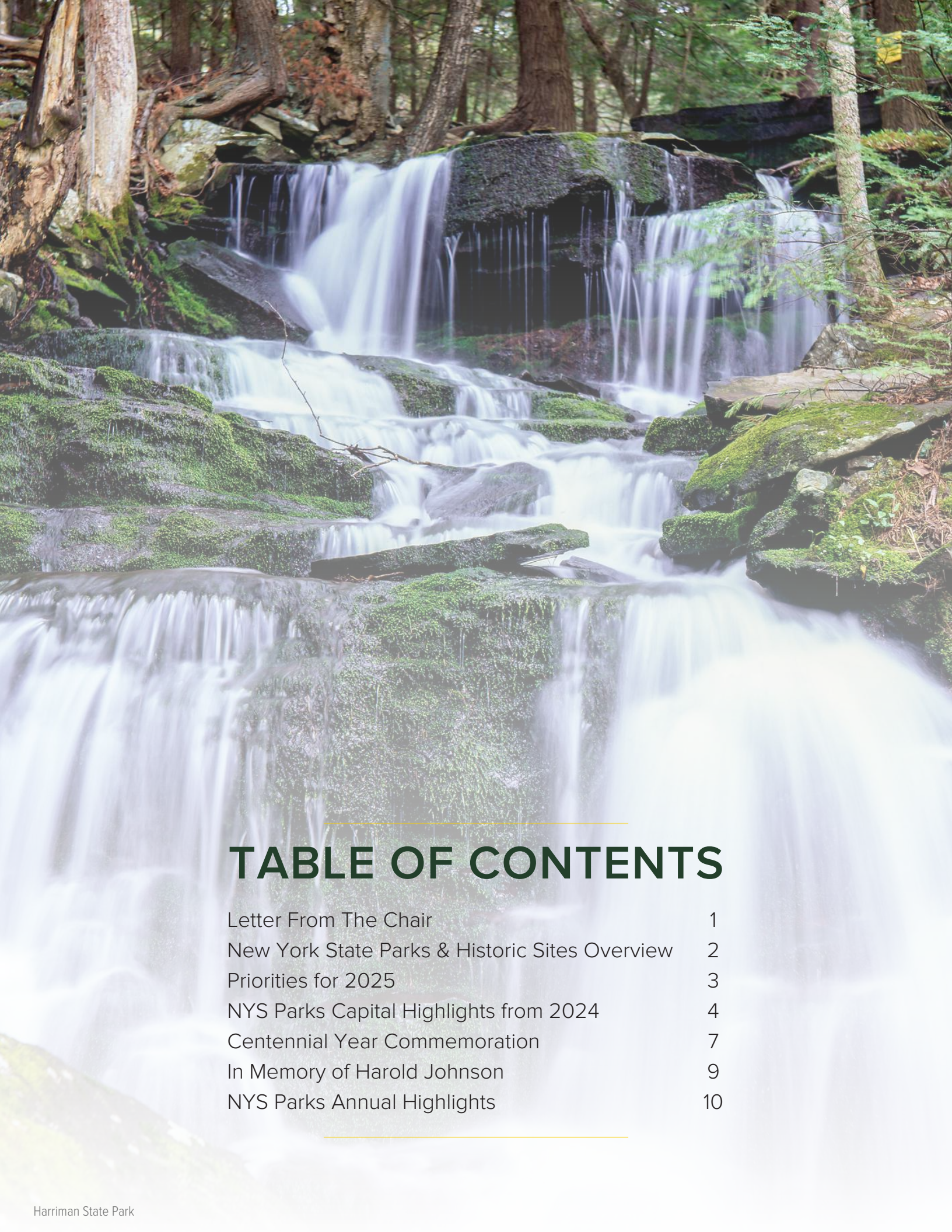


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**New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation**

**State Council
of Parks**

KATHY HOCHUL

Governor

RANDY SIMONS

Commissioner Pro Tem / Chief of Staff

BRYAN ERWIN

Chair, State Council of Parks

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor
Executive Chamber
Albany, New York 12224

February 2025

Dear Governor Hochul:

The State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is pleased to submit its 2024 Annual Report. This report highlights the State Council of Parks and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's achievements during 2024, and sets forth recommendations for the coming year.

As you know, 2024 was the Centennial Year of the New York State Council of Parks. This report highlights the many activities held around the state to commemorate this milestone and the ways we connected with communities to showcase just how loved New York's state parks are by so many New Yorkers.

This report highlights several major capital projects completed in 2024, as well as programs that deepen access and connection for all communities to state parks and historic sites. Your investment in, and strong support for, the state's public lands has allowed these initiatives to advance and will leave a legacy of conservation, access and economic stimulus that will be felt for generations to come. The State Council of Parks remains committed to seeking philanthropic and other outside support for state parks and historic sites on our own and with our partner organization, the Natural Heritage Trust. State Parks raised more than \$15 million in outside funds in 2024 to support essential capital projects, exhibits and long-term operations at state parks and historic sites throughout the State. Our friends groups -- from large to small -- continue to grow in strength and ability, providing high quality programs and working on important projects that are invaluable to our parks. We thank Parks & Trails New York for partnering with us to build our friends groups network and for administering the important capacity-building Park & Trail Partnership Grant funded through the EPF with your support.

I have made it a priority to engage with state and local leaders to educate and advocate on the importance of state parks in every community of our state, from Long Island to Niagara Falls. I have encouraged my fellow State Park Regional Commission chairs to do the same. It is more important than ever that we acknowledge the multitude of ways state parks positively impact our communities and ensure that we all act together to support them for the next generation.

As we embark on our 2nd century, parks are now needed more than ever. As welcoming environments for all New Yorkers, no matter their country of origin, whom they love or how they look. As safe fields of play and connection, no matter your ability. And as places for learning, no matter how fraught that history may be.

Our woods, beaches and mountains were formed in time immemorial. Our preservation of them has only been recent. And more recent still is our commitment to keep those parks for all New Yorkers. Reversing that faith would be as difficult for us as leveling those mountains, plugging the ocean and stamping out the forest.

We extend our deep gratitude to you for your continued commitment to ensuring that our state's remarkable public lands remain accessible to all New Yorkers. The State Council of Parks has been and will continue to be a proud partner in this effort.

Sincerely,

Bryan Erwin

Chair, State Council of Parks

NEW YORK STATE PARKS & HISTORIC SITES OVERVIEW

The State Park system is one of New York's greatest treasures. Today, the system totals over 250 parks, historic sites, recreational trails, golf courses, and boat launches. New York's Parks and Historic Sites provide affordable outdoor recreation and education opportunities to more than 88 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 as well as provide places for families and children to recreate, exercise, spend time together outdoors, and support health and well-being.

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks) is responsible for the operation and stewardship of the state parks system as well as advancing statewide parks, historic preservation, and open space mission. The agency has an "all funds" operating and capital budget of approximately \$607 million and is staffed by 2,469 permanent employees and more than 5,000 seasonal positions during peak operating season.

State Parks is responsible for managing a vast array of public facilities within its 250 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, 28 golf courses, 24 swimming pools and spray-grounds, 57 state parks with beaches, 21 marinas, 73 boat launch sites, 25 nature centers, 985 cabins and cottages, 8,555 campsites, more than 2,000 miles of trails, 118 dams, 600 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.

State Council of Parks and Regional Park Commissions

The State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation – known simply as the "State Council of Parks" – is a 14-member body established by Article 5 of the state Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law (PRHPL). The State Council is comprised of the Chairs of the eleven Regional Park Commissions, the Chair of the State Board for Historic Preservation, and the Commissioners of State Parks and Environmental Conservation.

As defined in PRHPL Section § 5.09, the State Council of Parks is a central advisory agency on all matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation.

The eleven Regional Parks Commissions, created by PRHPL Article 7, represent each of the State Parks Regions except for the Palisades (which is represented by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission) and the Adirondack & Catskill Park Region (which is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Conservation). Regional Commission members, who must be residents of the state, are appointed to seven-year terms by the Governor, confirmed by the Senate and serve without compensation. Regional Commissions serve as central advisory bodies on all matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation within their respective regions, with a focus on the operations of State Parks and Historic Sites.

STATE COUNCIL OF PARKS 2025 PRIORITIES

The State Council of Parks will advance four priorities in 2025:

1. Unplug & Play: Connecting Youth and Communities to Outdoor Recreation

The State Council of Parks supports Governor Hochul's initiative to promote youth mental and physical health through investments in recreational infrastructure including new playgrounds, swim areas and community centers in communities across the state. We will support and advocate for the New York State Park's free Learn to Swim, Connect Kids to Parks and Ladders to the Outdoors programs to continue the agency's long-standing commitment to connecting youth to outdoor recreation.

2. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Access for All

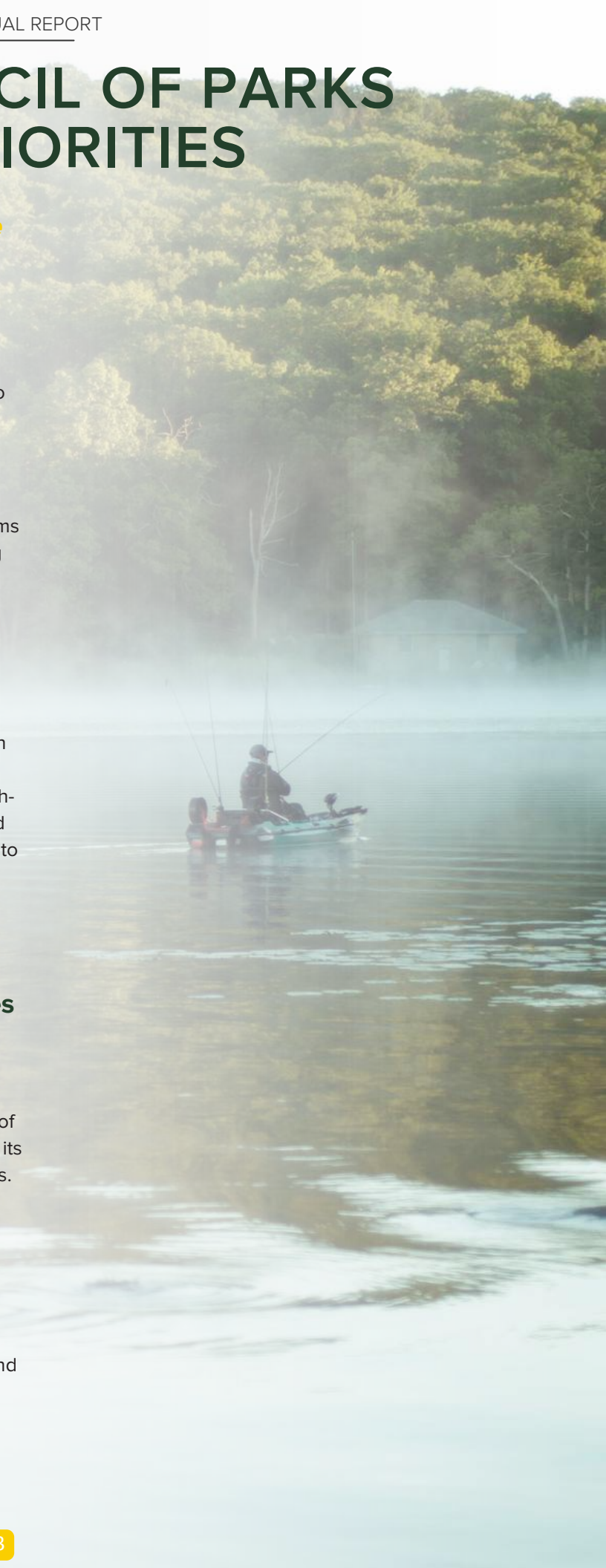
The State Council of Parks shares the agency's priority to expand diverse and equitable access to parks so that people from all communities and across all ages and abilities are included and can fully experience our parks and historic sites. In addition to supporting agency initiatives to reach all communities through high-quality and inclusive environmental and recreational programs and ensure that facilities are updated and accessible, we will continue to work with Governor Hochul and community leaders to recruit and appoint regional commission members who reflect the diverse communities we serve.

3. Stewardship of Natural & Historic Resources

The State Council of Parks recognizes the importance of the stewardship of our natural resources and the need to protect, preserve and conserve them throughout our state park system to ensure that public lands are left unaffected for future generations of visitors. We support the agency's Climate Change Action Plan and its efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change on our public lands.

4. Advocacy

The State Council of Parks will continue to assist the agency in promoting and protecting our parks and historic sites. We support efforts to encourage responsible stewardship, such as leave-no-trace principles and volunteer initiatives like I Love My Park Day and Park Advocacy Day. In particular, the Council will endeavor to ensure that funding and support for parks is equitable across all communities.



NYS PARKS CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS

Frederic Church Center for Art & Landscape at Olana State Historic Site (Taconic)

The new \$18 million Frederic Church Center was completed at Olana State Historic Site becoming a welcoming gateway for all visitors to Olana State Historic Site and making all 250 acres of the historic landscape an integral part of the visitor experience. This sustainably designed, all-electric building is the first structure built at Olana since Frederic Church's lifetime. The new center includes a spacious entry lobby for ticketing and orientation, a café, gender neutral restrooms and a multipurpose room adjoining outdoor terraces and paths that connect to Olana's historic carriage road network.



Ribbon Cutting at Frederic Church Center for Art and Landscape



Ribbon Cutting and upgraded facilities at Stony Brook State Park



Swimming Beach Upgrades at Stony Brook State Park (Finger Lakes)

Stony Brook State Park completed work on a \$4.5 million investment to improve public swimming facilities. The project included construction of a new 1,700 square-foot visitors' bathhouse with changing rooms, showers and restrooms, which replaced an obsolete bathhouse built in the 1960s. A new 750 square-foot building was constructed for a lifeguard headquarters, first aid area, and office space. The buildings were designed in a board and batten wood style to complement the park facilities that were constructed in the 1930s by members of the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression. Other improvements under the project include a new playground, renewed footpaths and wayfinding signage, and an area for a food truck to operate during special events.

Opening of Bayard Cutting Arboretum State Park Visitor Center (Long Island)

The new \$12.2 million Visitor Center was completed at Bayard Cutting Arboretum State Park, which will educate visitors about the Cutting family and their historic 60-room, Tudor-style mansion, the landscaped grounds with a wide variety of trees, shrubs and plants, and the impact of ongoing climate change on Long Island. The new 1,600 square-foot center features illustrated graphic displays and visually compelling exhibitions, an updated gift shop with official merchandise and pre-packaged food offerings, and a staffed information desk featuring park navigation information and literature about the arboretum. The Visitor Center also features a photovoltaic solar power array on its roof making it the newest of over 50 solar powered projects generating renewable electricity in State Parks since 2012. Improved parking with 248 new, asphalt-paved and standard-width parking spaces were added to replace the previous array of undersized parking spaces and were designed to improve storm water drainage and water quality.



Ribbon Cutting and upgraded facilities at Bayard Cutting Arboretum Visitor Center





Ribbon Cutting at new Warming Hut at Thacher State Park

Crow's Nest Project at Niagara Falls State Park (Niagara)

Announced construction is set to begin on the extension of the 'Crow's Nest' at Niagara Falls State Park. The 'Crow's Nest' is a set of stairs located alongside the American Falls that allow visitors to climb halfway up the side of the Falls for breathtaking views of the Falls before requiring visitors to go back down into the Gorge and return to the upper level via the Maid of the Mist elevators. The expansion project includes the construction of new stairs and an overlook structure which will connect the existing 'Crow's Nest' feature to Prospect Point at Niagara Falls State Park, providing a new close-up view of the Falls. When complete, the \$9 million project will provide visitors with a new option to experience the Niagara Gorge and relieve pedestrian congestion in the lower gorge during the busy season, where the only current means of egress is the elevator inside of the observation tower.



Renderings of Selkirk Shores Revitalization Project

Harlem Valley Rail Trail Resurfacing Project (Taconic)

The \$2.8 million project completed trail resurfacing and improvements over 3.6 miles of the Columbia County section of Harlem Valley Rail Trail. The upgrades to the trail section between Under Mountain Road and State Route 344 in Copake Falls were made to rehabilitate the first section of the 27-year-old trail. Upgrades also include drainage improvements, fencing and bollards, signs and pavement markings to existing parking lot and pedestrian crossings at various locations, earthwork, and vegetation management.

New Hop Field Warming Hut Open at John Boyd Thacher State Park (Saratoga/Capital)

The brand-new Hop Field Warming Hut, a welcoming gathering space designed to enhance year-round access and comfort, was completed at one of the park's most popular areas. The new 1,250-square-foot facility includes a wood-burning fireplace, year-round restrooms, and a warm refuge with books and board games from the winter chill for those exploring the park's vast trail system. Construction on the \$1.4 million project began in April 2024 and replaced a deteriorated 70-year-old small restroom building located at the Hop Field Picnic Area and trailhead.



Renderings of Crow's Nest Project at Niagara Falls State Park

Selkirk Shores Revitalization Project (Central)

A comprehensive \$7.6 million upgrade to the campgrounds and facilities at Selkirk Shores State Park is currently underway. Enhancements to the campground at Selkirk Shores include installing crushed stone or pavement at each of the 130 campsites, improving storm water drainage, adding more water hydrants to the campground loops, and installing new security features. The park's 24 cabins will receive accessibility upgrades and improvements to their electrical wiring, masonry, and roofs. The park office will be replaced and the entrance and exit pattern redesigned for improved traffic flow and easier check-in and check-out. The two existing camping restrooms will be replaced with larger, more accessible facilities located more centrally on the loops.



Resurfaced Harlem Valley Rail Trail

Recreational Improvements Across the State

The regions continue to develop and complete projects to improve access to outdoor recreation and the various amenities that our parks provide. A newly renovated playground opened at Saratoga Spa State Park featuring a variety of accessible elements designed to improve accessibility and enhance the visitor experience for all. This includes a paved walkway surrounding the perimeter of the playground, allowing individuals who use mobility devices to navigate easily and access the play structures from any point, and an accessible overlook, which gives visitors views to Geyser Creek.

A new accessible kayak launch opened at Glimmerglass State Park, which provides the public, including people with mobility challenges, access to recreational kayaking and car-top size boating on Otsego Lake. The new dock provides an overhead grab bar to enhance stability for people while entering and exiting the vessel. The launch, located near the park beach, includes a hinged ramp in the water to better hold the vessel in place before launching, as well as a low-scale stair that will allow wheelchair users to lower themselves into the boat.



New accessible kayak launch at Glimmerglass State Park



New accessible playground at Saratoga Spa State Park



CENTENNIAL YEAR COMMEMORATION

Centennial Marketing Campaign

State Parks launched a large marketing campaign to raise awareness of the system, educate audiences on the agency's role in preserving and protecting public lands, highlight the positive economic and social impact outdoor recreation has on communities statewide, and to build pride for state parks, historic sites, and recreational trails. The agency endeavored to reach key audiences to drive visitation to state parks and historic sites, as well as drive overall tourism and economic development to the local communities. The campaign comprised of social media and out-of-home (transit and billboard) promotion targeting upstate media markets and showcasing properties across the state. The campaign ran for over three months during peak season and garnered over 88 million impressions across the entire campaign, reaching an estimated 94% New Yorkers, ages 18-45. The campaign drove nearly 120,000 visitors to the Parks website where they could learn more and plan their next adventure. Social media was by far the strongest performing platform, garnering more than 55 million impressions and outperforming industry benchmarks. As a result of this campaign, 75% of the featured state parks and historic sites saw record attendance during the 2024 season.

First Day Hikes

In 2024, thousands of park visitors (two legged and four-legged) turned out across the state on January 1 to enjoy First Day Hikes and embrace nature's winter beauty. More than 120 hikes were hosted in communities across New York at state parks, historic sites, state forests, and other public lands.

I Love My Park Day

The 14th annual I Love My Park Day was held Saturday, May 4, 2024 at nearly 100 state parks, historic sites, and public lands across New York. The event, sponsored by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Parks & Trails New York, and the Department of Environmental Conservation, is the largest single-day volunteer event in New York State and enhances parks, historic sites, and public lands, and raises awareness of the state's outdoor recreation assets and their needs.

Centennial Challenge

Hundreds of New Yorkers participated in the centennial challenge, visiting parks and historic sites to complete fun and engaging missions. From snapping selfies with park rangers to taking a safe riding snowmobile course, participants learned all about what our agency has to offer.

Share Your Story

The agency received hundreds of stories and memories from visitors throughout the year, reminiscing about special moments, creating new traditions, and experiencing all the wonders of the outdoors. The State Council of Parks participated with several members contributing their personal history to the project. The stories will be catalogued and preserved to inspire future generations.

From Land to Legacy's Documentary

Capital region PBS affiliate WMHT highlighted the Centennial in a hour-long documentary on the evolution of our system over the last 100 years. Available online and in select regions of the state, the film is a look behind the scenes into how the system came to be.

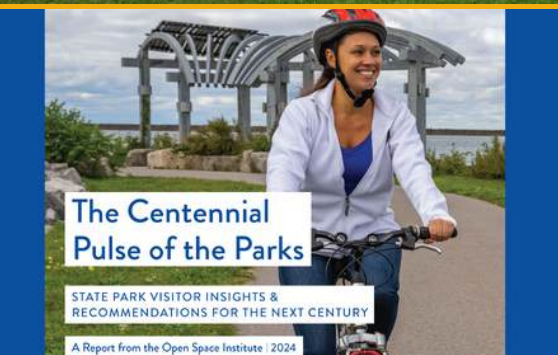
Centennial Meeting of the State Council of Parks

In October, the State Council of Parks held its annual meeting at Bear Mountain State





2024 SCOP Meeting at Bear Mountain State Park



The Centennial Pulse of the Parks

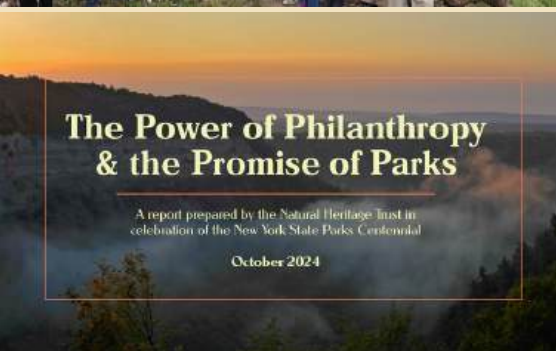
STATE PARK VISITOR INSIGHTS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

A Report from the Open Space Institute | 2024



NEW YORK'S STATE PARKS: ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR THE STATE

Prepared for Parks & Trails New York by Political Economic Research Institute



The Power of Philanthropy & the Promise of Parks

A report prepared by the Natural Heritage Trust in celebration of the New York State Parks Centennial

October 2024

Park where it acknowledged a proclamation from Governor Hochul commemorating its centennial year, toured the historic park, and offered a public showing of the Land to Legacy documentary.

Centennial Year Reports from Partners

In 2024, the Open Space Institute (OSI) issued "The Centennial Pulse of the Parks: State Park Visitor Insights and Recommendations for the Next Century." The report, produced from a major study conducted throughout the state, analyzes visitor demographics, experiences, and recreation trends, and demonstrates the tremendous value of state parks and the many ways that they positively impact people and communities. The report's findings also reveal continued challenges, highlighting the critical need for continued investment in the state park system.

Major themes revealed by the study include:

- State parks are integral to the fabric of communities throughout New York, enabling people to build meaningful connections with nature and with each other;
- Visitors appreciate recent and ongoing capital investments and improvements in state parks; and
- State parks are worthy of sustained investment—both for current visitors and for generations to come.

Based on the results of the study, the report makes the following recommendations:

- Continue and increase capital and operational investments for state parks;
- Broaden services and amenities to better engage and welcome diverse communities in state parks;
- Accelerate land acquisition, state park creation, and innovative state park development projects to accommodate a growing constituency of visitors and protect important open spaces; and
- Expand programs and amenities that improve access to nature for children and families.

Parks & Trails NY issued a new economic impact report entitled *New York's State Parks: Economic Engine for the State*, which found that the annual GDP of New York State Parks and Historic Sites amounted to \$3.7B in 2021. This economic impact rivals that of the state's agricultural sector, which generated \$3.3B during the same year (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis). The study, conducted by the Political Economic Research Institute with support from the Natural Heritage Trust, was based on data from Jan. 2021 through Dec. 2021 and examined the growth of visitation, sales, labor income, and GDP among communities that include state parks and historic sites. This information proves the economic value of New York's State Park System, in addition to the growing popularity of public spaces and need for ongoing investment. The study finds that park visitors generated \$5.8B in sales, \$2.5B in labor income, and \$3.7B in state GDP in 2021. The report also finds that State Parks funding results in a strong return on investment. Every \$1M invested in parks results in \$10M in sales, \$4M in labor income, and \$7M in state GDP.

The Natural Heritage Trust issued a publication *The Power of Philanthropy & the Promise of Parks*, an account of the remarkable role of private individuals and partnerships in creating, protecting and enhancing New York's state parks over the last century. This report delves into the profound impact of philanthropic contributions on the state park system, particularly over the last half century since the founding of the NHT in 1968. By examining specific case studies and collaboration models, this report aims to highlight the significant achievements made possible through philanthropy and inspire continued investment and involvement of private citizens in the protection and betterment of their state's remarkable natural resources and public lands.

IN MEMORY OF HAROLD JOHNSON II

1954 - 2024

CHAIR, THOUSAND ISLANDS REGIONAL COMMISSION

In September, the State Council of Parks honored the life and legacy of Harold Johnson who sadly passed away on July 29th, 2024. Harold served as the Chairperson of the Thousand Islands Regional Commission since 2000, one of the longest serving Chairs in the Council's history. Harold service continued a family legacy; his mother, Catherine Common Johnson, was Chair of the Commission for 40 years (longest serving SCOP Chair). He was the grandson of Minna Anthony Common, a pioneering artist, writer and naturalist for whom the beloved Minna Anthony Common Nature Center at Wellesley Island was named when it opened in 1969.

Connecting people to the waterways and history of the Thousand Islands region was a passion for Harold and he deeply understood the purpose of parks in making that connection in this region. His commitment to making the natural beauty of the Thousand Islands available to children and families never wavered.

Harold oversaw the renovation of the MAC Nature Center in 2018, a centerpiece of the NY Parks 2020 and Connect Kids to Parks initiatives, both of which he supported and advocated for over his tenure on the commission.

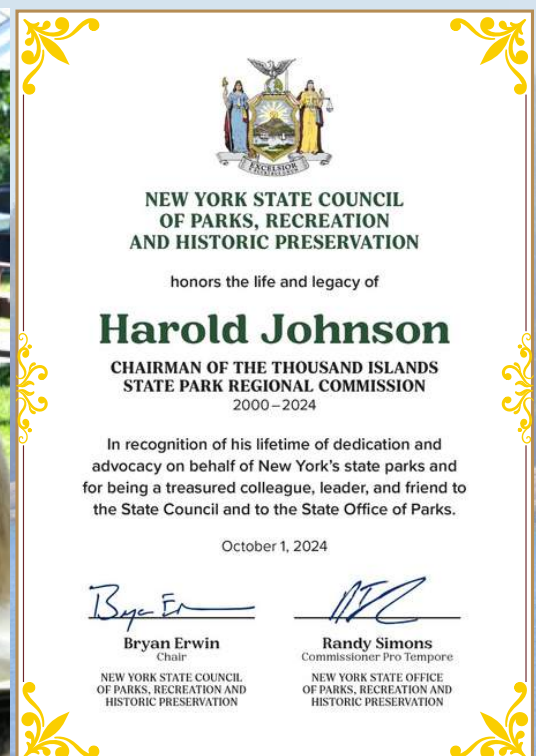
Other highlights of his tenure on the Council include:

- Rock Island State Park, opening in 2013
- Hosted the SCOP for a memorable and beautiful annual meeting in 2012
- Was a key collaborator on refining the final design for the transformation of Southwick Beach State Park, completed in 2020.

Harold's philosophy of leadership was based in authenticity. He was an authentic outdoorsman, and an authentic man in all things, who prized this quality in others. His steadfast presence will be greatly missed.



Harold Speaks at Grand Reopening of Minna Anthony Common Nature Center



NYS PARKS ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Allegany Region

For the centennial year, the Allegany Regional Commission chose to support the renovation of the Barcelona Lighthouse on Lake Erie. The 1829 lighthouse was degrading inside and out, and a multi-million-dollar project to renovate the structure and make improvements to access was necessary to ensure that the lighthouse remains a public treasure for generations to come. The lighthouse served as a beacon for shipping commerce for the former Portland Harbor before it was decommissioned by the U.S. Lighthouse Service and has now served as a community fixture for the Hamlet of Barcelona with its commercial fishing harbor, and as a publicly recognizable icon for the Town of Westfield. Over its nearly 200 years of existence, the lighthouse became the first public building in the United States to use natural gas, as well as the first natural gas fired lighthouse in the world; and today New York State Parks carries on the proud tradition of keeping a natural gas lantern burning atop the tower. The renovation was supported by State funding, community raised funds administered through the Natural Heritage Trust, and a grant from the National Park Service. The results of the project are spectacular, and for the first time, the public will be allowed to ascend the newly renovated wooden spiral staircase to the top of the structure after the ribbon cutting in May 2025.



Central Region

In June, the Old Erie Canal Boat Float, a Centennial event in the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park, brought more than 400 visitors to paddle in the park and visit the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum. Through Ladders to the Outdoors, kids were also able to participate in the event and get experience with kayaking, some for the very first time! New this year, paddlers were able to utilize the new ADA kayak launch installed in the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park, which opened access to people of all experience levels and abilities. The Centennial was on full display at this year's NYS Fair where thousands of people came to visit the NYS Park booths, Centennial exhibit, mini-golf, animal exhibits, and the Centennial sand sculpture. Selkirk Shores State Park construction has begun; the \$9 million capital improvement includes a new park office, new restroom facilities, and campground improvements. The Commission toured the park in June 2024. Construction should be completed at the end of this year. The Commission continues to support the Environmental Education Center at Green Lakes and continues to build on the success of Ladders to the Outdoors program.



Old Erie Canal Boat Float

Finger Lakes Region

In April, the Commission opened the Treman Exhibit at the Tompkins County History Center with over 200 individuals, including Commissioner Simons, gathering to honor the legacy of Robert H. Treman, the Finger Lakes Region's inaugural parks commission chairman and the Centennial anniversary of the New York State Park system. More than 4,000 spectators filled Fair Haven Beach State Park to witness the 2024 Eclipse in April, and despite cloudy skies, spirits were bright and enthusiasm was electric for this momentous event. In July, Commissioner Simons joined staff from around the Finger Lakes



Centennial lighting at Taughannock Falls State Park

to cut the ribbon on the new bathhouse at Stony Brook and to celebrate 13 years of service by Dave Banfield as chairman of the Finger Lakes Regional Commission. Taughannock Falls was illuminated in July to honor NYS Parks Centennial and drew thousands to the Overlook and to organized hikes up to the base of the falls. The 47th Roundtable was held at Seneca Lake State Park in October with over 215 staff attending (an all-time attendance record!). The event recognized staff with milestone years of service, Morgan Martin received the Employee of the Year Award. Commissioner Simons visited Watkins Glen State Park to announce the construction of the new Sentry Bridge at the park's Main Entrance. Construction will begin in July of 2025 and will be completed by the 4th of July in 2026.



Rendering of soon-to-be built Sentry Bridge at Watkins Glen State Park



Love My Park Day in the Genesee region

Genesee Region

The Genesee Region commemorated the Centennial with several community celebrations including the Hamlin Beach State Park Bash at the Beach; the Letchworth State Park NY Parks Legacy Celebration; Darien Lakes State Park Labor Day Celebration; and the Genesee Valley Greenway State Park Greenway Cycle Challenge. Commission members supported these events and engaged community participation. The Commission continues to prioritize outreach to local policymakers and elected officials to build awareness about and advocate for state parks in the region.



Jones Beach State Park 95th Anniversary Celebration

Long Island Region

The Long Island commission raised approximately \$70,000 through the Foundation for LI State Parks to support various elements of the Jones Beach Airshow, including Air Boss recruitment and Family of Military Service Member section. The Commission supported the Friends of Orient inaugural fundraiser and the Park Employees Annual Holiday breakfast. The region also hosted Centennial events at many parks including at Jones Beach, also celebrating its 95th year with a gigantic birthday cake, weighing a literal ton!



Shirley Chisholm State Park Birthday Celebration

New York City Region

On a gloriously sunny bright October Sunday, the NYC region celebrated the Centennial along with Shirley Chisholm – the person's – 100th birthday and the park's own 5th birthday all in one. With staff from every single park across the region lending a hand and, in equal measure, enjoying the splendid day, the region threw a big bash featuring a local kid steel pan orchestra, local step group performance, fishing, slow bike races (it's all about balance!), arts and crafts, photo booth fun, guided walks, scavenger hunts, and lots of great tabling with partners featuring Brooklyn Book Bodega's endless efforts to get books in kids' hands, raptors and other local wildlife, and so very much more. Hats off to SCSP and the whole NYC Region!

Niagara Region

On Sunday, September 21, the Niagara Region Commission hosted the first “Pedal for Parks” which included the closure of the North Grand Island Bridge. That was the first time the bridge had ever been closed for a recreational activity. The event had 464 registrants who took advantage of three different ride lengths that showed off over 9 parks and trail properties. Commission members helped fundraise for the event and they all showed up to ride or support riders as they returned to Beaver Island State Park.



Saratoga-Capital Region

In celebration of the State Parks Centennial Year, the Saratoga/Capital Region Commission launched the Access for All Campaign. The goal of the campaign was to raise \$100,000 for projects that would make NYS Parks and Historic Sites in the region more accessible to all people. The campaign surpassed expectations, with the commission reaching their goal several months early and eventually raising over \$120,000. Funds supported projects such as the Nature Bus to provide free rides from Albany to Thacher Park; the renovation of the State Seal Spring at Saratoga Spa State Park; and equipment and construction projects to make our parks and historic sites easier to access.

The Commission also celebrated the Centennial throughout the year, attending dozens of events including the Centennial Lighting at the Lincoln Bath, the opening of Big Bend Preserve, the International Spa Heritage Festival and many more.



New Frederic Church Center for Art and Landscape at Olana State Historic Site



Inaugural Pedal for Parks

Palisades Region

In September, the region celebrated the joint anniversary of the Bear Mountain Bridge and invited the community to a special hike, Bridges to Parks, where the storied history of the region, the bridge and the park were shared. In April, state and local leaders joined PIPC at Washington’s Headquarters to commemorate the partnership between the State Council of Parks and the Commission. Local leaders and residents also celebrated the reopening of the Bear Mountain State Park pool in August. And, a kick-off for State Parks’ U.S. Semiquincentennial celebration was held in September at Washington’s Headquarters.



Lincoln Baths Centennial Lighting

Taconic Region

Parks and historic sites in the Taconic region experienced a banner year with attendance up in all locations and each facility celebrating the State Parks’ Centennial in their own unique way. For example, Friends of Taconic State Park displayed special centennial themed banners at the Copake Iron Works Visitor Center, at the Copake Iron Works Railroad Station, and on their float in the huge August parade that celebrated the Town of Copake’s bicentennial. A highlight in the Region was the opening by Governor Hochul and area legislators of the wonderful new visitor center at Olana Historic Site on October 25, 2024.

Thousand Islands Region

The region engaged with about 1,500 folks at Centennial events. The main event for the Thousand Islands Region was the North American War of 1812 Grand Tactical at the Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site. Over 1,200 people came out to learn about the War of 1812 and see the reenactors. The region's unique event was paddling the voyageur canoe on the St. Lawrence River at Wellesley Island State Park. Each trip holds up to 16 paddlers, and programs ran four times a week (weather permitting). The region looks forward to getting out there for the next 100 years!



Reenactors at Sackets Harbor Battlefield State Historic Site

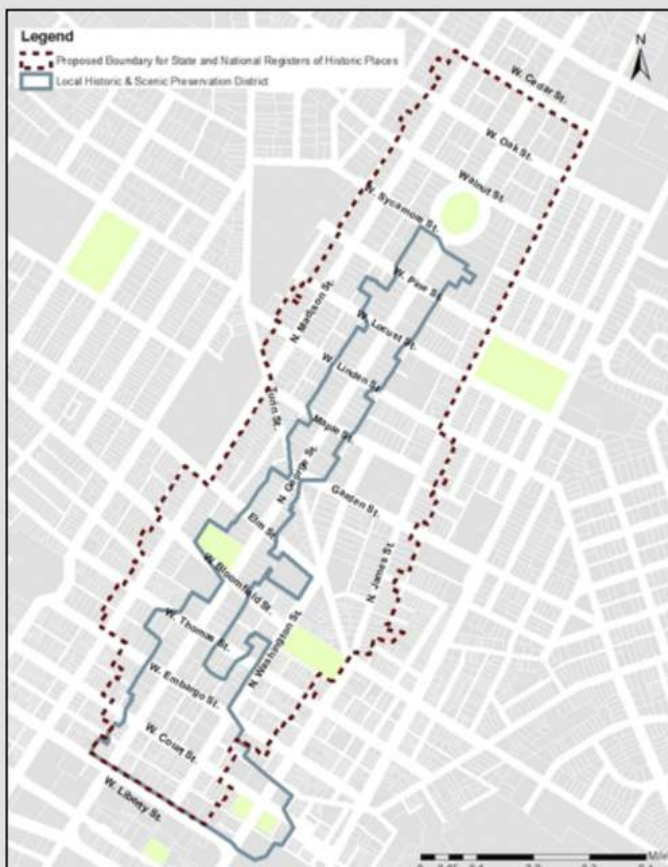
Division for Historic Preservation

The Division for Historic Preservation is the designated State Historic Preservation Office for New York and administers a variety of programs and services in collaboration with government agencies, organizations, and residents of New York State. In 2024, the Division received nearly 800 applications for the historic homeowner tax credit program and approved nearly \$38 million in improvements in historic homes across the state. The office approved a nation-leading \$560 million in investments in historic commercial properties. \$2.7 billion in historic preservation projects were under construction in 2024.

Notable among seventy-three nominations to the state and national registers for historic places is the newly established Rome Residential Historic District; the designation allows residents recovering from a tornado strike access to additional funding incentives to rebuild and repair their homes. These nominations add more than 6,600 individual historic structures across the state to the National Register.

The Division secured federal grants to help support historic preservation work in the state park system, including funds for exterior restoration at Washington's Headquarters (Palisades). Federal grant applications are pending for a new round of National Maritime Heritage Grants (Statewide) and Crown Point State Historic Site (Saratoga/Capital District).

The Division continues to prepare for national and state commemorations such as the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, the 200th Anniversary of the opening of the Erie Canal, and the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Emancipation in New York in 2027.



Washington's HQ State Historic Site



Old Erie Canal State Historic Park

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Expansion of Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park



Centennial Celebration Finger Lakes Region Pop-Up Exhibit



Clay Pit Ponds SP First Day Hike



ILMPD 2024 at Jones Beach SP



ILMPD 2024 at Gantry Plaza State Park



Re-Opening of the Pool at Bear Mountain State Park



Inaugural Pedal for Parks



My Parks Promise Display



ILMPD 2024 at Roberto Clemente State Park



Heckscher State Park Centennial Celebration



2024 First Day Hike at Saratoga Spa State Park



Centennial Sand Sculpture at the Great NYS Fair



Grand Opening of Big Bend Preserve at Moreau Lake State Park



Jones Beach State Park Water Tower Lighting



Centennial Celebration at the Great NYS Fair



Inaugural Pedal for Parks



Old Erie Canal Boat Float



**New York State
Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation**

**State Council
of Parks**

Albany, New York