

ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK STATE PARKS

AN INITIATIVE OF
THE OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE

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Parks Transformation Underway

In the less than three years since the Open Space Institute's Alliance for New York State Parks was formed, the future of state parks has turned noticeably brighter. From the rehabilitation of campgrounds and swimming pools and upgrades to plumbing and electrical systems to beach improvements and trail work, repairs and improvements are underway at state parks throughout New York.

Thanks to Governor Andrew Cuomo and members of the state legislature a second installment of \$90 million was included in this year's budget to help state parks tackle a capital backlog totaling nearly \$1 billion.

Never in the history the New York's state park system has there been this level of sustained investment to upgrade the quality of our 213 state parks and historic sites. We are all enormously grateful to the governor, our state legislators and State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey. We are also very appreciative to all the parks staff, supporters and contractors who are working to make sure projects are being completed in a timely and efficient manner. And we are grateful to Alliance supporters for demonstrating that the parks must remain a priority.

In addition to the projects currently underway, architects, engineers and designers are hard at work preparing what we hope will be a third round of projects. We've made great progress so far, but there is so much more to do in order to protect, preserve and enhance New York's fabulous state parks for future generations.

From Shabby to Chic: Niagara Falls on the Upswing

Successful advocacy leads to major investments in nation's oldest state park

Two short years ago, a New York Times travel story used the word "shabby" to describe the conditions at Niagara Falls State Park.

Spurred by the story, the Alliance challenged the state to increase investment in Niagara Falls, along with New York's other deteriorating state parks. Governor Cuomo responded with a \$25 million commitment to revitalize Niagara Falls State Park.

Early this summer, the park unveiled a restored look and feel at three heavily visited areas. The result promotes the Olmsted-inspired connection to the powerful waterway and the natural surroundings, while offering inviting and enriching environments for the more than 8 million visitors welcomed at the park each year.

Report Highlights Jones Beach Parkgoers

A report issued this summer by the Alliance underscores the tremendous value and importance of Jones Beach State Park, not only as part of the culture of Long Island, but for residents of New York City, as well. More than 80 years after it first opened, the beach-front park welcomed 5.3 million visitors last year, drawing heavily from Nassau County and New York City's five boroughs.

The report indicates that visitors to Jones Beach are ethnically diverse (46 percent white; 33 percent Hispanic; 10 percent black; and 11 percent other). And while nearly half of all visitors reside in New York City, the park continues to serve a core Long Island constituency.

Efforts to rebuild and re-open following Superstorm Sandy were nothing short of remarkable. At the same time, the beach park still faces \$50 million in repairs and updates not related to the storm. These findings indicate that continued public investment in Jones Beach is warranted.

A complete copy of the report, which was supported by a grant from the Dyson Foundation, is available at www.osiny.org/JonesBeachReport.

Work Underway at Fahnestock State Park

Additional \$375,000 sought toward \$1.2 million fundraising goal

Work is nearly complete on the first phase of a project to upgrade the visitor and recreation area at Fahnestock State Park's Canopus Lake. The project is being funded through a public-private partnership led by OSI's Alliance for New York State Parks, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Taconic Region State Park Commission and the Friends of Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands State Parks.

To date, \$827,000 in public and private funding has been identified and raised toward a \$1.2 million goal to help improve and update run-down public facilities at the park's swimming beach and "Winter Park" area. More than half the money raised has been through private donations, while the remaining \$400,000 was secured through a state Environmental Protection Fund grant. Private support for the project will leverage an \$800,000 commitment by the state to improve the park.

Due to be completed this fall, the first project in this multi-phase initiative will remodel and winterize the public bathhouse and update the lifeguard facilities. The next phase includes renovations to the main courtyard, café space and winter recreation area. Additional plans for the park include naturalizing the swimming beach, upgrading trails and pathways, improving sustainability features, installing a fully accessible fishing pier and enhancing recreational and play opportunities at the park.

For decades OSI has recognized New York's Hudson Highlands as a priority landscape. Through multiple large-scale acquisitions, OSI has added nearly 7,000 acres to Fahnestock State Park. To learn more, visit: www.osiny.org/DonateFahnestock.

Alliance Sets its Sights on Letchworth State Park

Teams up with local supporters to back new nature center at spectacular gorge park

Just 30 minutes south of Rochester is one New York's most spectacular and memorable state parks. Rising above the tumbling Genesee River, Letchworth State Park offers dramatic gorge and waterfall vistas, miles of natural hiking trails, rich geological specimens, varied ecosystems and abundant natural and cultural histories. The park is one of the region's highlights, welcoming more than 650,000 visitors a year.

The Alliance is teaming up with local supporters to develop a campaign for a nature center at the park. The nature center will provide a welcoming gateway to the park and encourage visitors to fully explore, appreciate and learn about this remarkable setting.

The goal of this partnership is to utilize the Alliance's strengths and organizational connections to help the Office of State Parks and the local organization build a campaign to raise at least \$1.6 million, which will be matched by approximately \$3.2 million in state support.

The EPF At Twenty

As New York State's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) turns 20 years old this summer, we celebrate the more than \$2.7 billion in smart investments to protect the state's air, land and water resources.

Open space protection and the expansion and maintenance of state parks have been key elements of the EPF. EPF funds have protected more than 618,000 acres of open space, including 479,000 acres of valuable working forest lands. In addition, nine new state parks were created and 32,000 acres were added to existing state parks.

This year the governor and legislature increased funding for the EPF by \$19 million, bringing the current annual total to \$153 million. This increase is a strong start toward restoring past spending levels to this critical funding source.

Work at Minnewaska's Hamilton Point Carriage Road Begins

With our campaign goal of \$500,000 met, work is beginning on the Hamilton Point Carriage Road at Minnewaska State Park this fall.

The restored carriage road is expected to re-open in the spring of 2014.

This public-private project is part of a larger effort, led by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, the Mohonk Preserve and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to rebuild 83 miles of historic Smiley family carriage roads in New York's Shawangunk Mountains, many of which are in disrepair or even closed.