



NEWS RELEASE

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New Yorkers call on Legislators to Get Rolling on Empire State Trail *Grassroots trail groups travel to Albany to support funding to build nation's longest multi-use trail*

Albany, NY— Outdoor enthusiasts and grassroots trail groups from across the state gather today in Albany for Empire State Trail Day, a day of legislative advocacy on behalf of Governor Cuomo's proposal to build the nation's longest multi-use trail.

The day's activities, organized by New York's leading trail advocacy organization, Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with Scenic Hudson and the Open Space Institute, begin with a morning briefing for advocates and remarks from State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey, Assemblymember Patricia Fahy, and a representative from the NYS Canal Corporation.

After the morning briefing, advocates will ask for support for the Empire State Trail in meetings with more than 60 legislators. They'll point to both the overall tourism impacts of long-distance trails, as well as local benefits that result from connecting and completing their 'backyard' sections of the Empire State Trail.

An interactive display highlighting the significance of the Empire State Trail for tourism and outdoor recreation will be open throughout the day in the Empire State Plaza Concourse entrance to the Legislative Office Building.

By finishing the Buffalo to Albany Erie Canalway Trail, and connecting New York City to the North Country, the Empire State Trail will create the nation's premier multi-use trail – a full 750 miles of off-road trail and safe on-road connections. This initiative will secure New York's place as a destination for outdoor recreation and heritage tourism, and contribute substantially to New York's economy, public health, and environment.

The 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail, a major component of the proposed Empire State Trail, already demonstrates how trails contribute to economic development. Currently 80% complete as an off-road route, a 2014 study found that the Erie Canalway Trail generates \$253 million in

economic impact and supports 3,400 jobs across Upstate New York. Advocates believe that at more than twice the length of the Erie, the Empire State Trail will have significantly higher economic impacts.

Moreover, by completing the Hudson River Valley Greenway, which is currently 50% complete, the new trail will connect popular state parks and historic sites such as Walkway Over the Hudson, FDR National Historic Site, and Saratoga Battlefield National Historic Park to the millions of New Yorkers that live between the Adirondacks and Manhattan.

“The Empire State Trail vision represents the same sort of imagination and foresight as the vision for the Erie Canal did 200 years ago,” said Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director. “The Erie Canalway Trail is such a unique asset for New York State and, once connected to the Hudson River Valley Greenway as the Empire State Trail, will secure New York’s position as a leader in outdoor recreation.”

“The Empire State Trail is a win-win for healthy lifestyles and statewide economic development. Increasingly, New Yorkers and visitors to our state are enjoying active lifestyles and exploring our rich cultural and small-town attractions,” said Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy for the environmental group Scenic Hudson. “Developing the Empire State Trail as the ‘backbone’ of the state’s trail system will keep the state competitive in attracting tourism dollars and be a major contributor to our quality of life. One need to look no further than the success of the Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park to see what this initiative can deliver to the state.”

Parks & Trails New York’s Close the Gaps Campaign

Parks & Trails New York has been the leading non-profit advocate for *Closing the Gaps* in the Erie Canalway Trail for over a decade, working in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and numerous counties and municipalities. Parks & Trails New York’s Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour, now in its 19th year, attracts a growing number of riders from across the United States and the world, demonstrating the appeal of bicycling along one of America’s most historic and iconic waterways. Parks & Trails New York’s range of trip-planning resources have also helped thousands to successfully make the cross-state trip on their own.

More information and trip-planning resources can be found at www.CycletheErieCanal.com.

About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York is the leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated since 1985 to improving the health and quality of life of all New Yorkers by working with community organizations and municipalities to envision, create, promote, and protect a growing network of parks, greenways and trails throughout the state for all to use and enjoy. For more information, visit www.ptny.org.

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