



# 2014 Annual Report

Creating and protecting parks and trails for generations to come

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“PTNY works so hard for so many of us. Outstanding job on getting the word out and making great things happen for today and tons of tomorrows!”

– Friends of Catherine Valley Trail

## Dear Friends of New York's Parks and Trails,

Thirty years ago a group of park advocates got together and decided that our magnificent state park system here in New York merited its own advocacy group. Thus Parks & Trails New York was born. The organization's purview quickly grew to include trails—or linear parks as we think of them.

We're proud of our successes over the years. In 2006, we came out with our landmark report, *Parks at a Turning Point*, which drew attention to the dire capital need at state parks. And because of that exposure, state parks today are in the midst of an unprecedented revitalization. In 2012, we launched the popular I Love My Park Day to make it easier for people to give back to the parks they love.

On the trail side, we're effectively working from the ground up – helping 38 communities across the state develop more than 250 miles of greenways, bikeways and community trails. And, we're making steady progress in our campaign to Close the Gaps in the Erie Canalway Trail between Albany and Buffalo. At 360 miles, when complete it will be the longest and most historic of all NYS multi-use trails.

As we consider these achievements, we are ever mindful that our successes are dependent on friends and supporters like you, who are as passionate as we are about parks and trails. Thank You!

Here's to another 30 years of protecting our precious outdoor spaces.

Best regards,

*Robin Dropkin* *Judith C. Mower*



**Robin Dropkin**  
*Executive Director*



**Judith C. Mower**  
*Chair of the Board*

**Photo credits:** cover – Niagara Falls State Park, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation/ J. Rozell; above– Watkins Glen State Park, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; other pages– Friends of Connetquot River State Park, Friends of Philipse Manor Hall.

# I Love My Park Day Builds a Movement

When Parks & Trails New York launched I Love My Park Day we knew New Yorkers would embrace the opportunity to give back to the parks they love. But even we couldn't have predicted the tremendous success and growth of the event in such a short amount of time. Since the first event in 2012, the number of parks involved in I Love My Park Day has more than doubled, with the number of volunteers tripling.

Each year on the first Saturday in May, I Love My Park Day engages thousands of New Yorkers in celebrating and improving New York's state parks and historic sites. Volunteers in every region of the state, from Montauk Point to Niagara Falls, now look forward to participating in local park projects—planting trees and flowers, restoring trails and wildlife habitat, and performing a variety of other site maintenance and improvement activities.

I Love My Park Day is not only making real improvements to state parks and historic sites—it's building a movement, engaging new volunteers in the stewardship of these treasured places.



Volunteers participating in I Love My Park Day 2014.



## BY THE NUMBERS

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Volunteers	2,000	4,000	6,000	6,500
Volunteer hours contributed	6,000	10,000	12,000	16,000
Participating Parks	40	78	83	95

## Supporting Park Friends

In 2014, Parks & Trails New York wrapped up two years of one-on-one support provided through PTNY's Friends Technical Assistance Program (TAP) to two Friends groups that support state parks and historic sites.

PTNY staff worked with the Friends of Caleb Smith Preserve on Long Island to grow its board and build their membership, as well as enhance communications. The Friends have recruited two new energetic board members and are working on a membership outreach plan. Last fall the Friends group hosted its first fundraising event at the Preserve. The event was a huge success, drawing 600 visitors, most of whom had never visited the Preserve previously.

The Friends of Philipse Manor Hall in Yonkers worked with PTNY staff on board development, enhanced communications, and new member and volunteer acquisition. The results have been fruitful; the Friends have added new board members and have been hosting more events at the site which has increased visibility in the community. In addition, the Friends invested in marketing materials, launched a new website, and now sends regular email communications. The

“The advice and guidance we've received from PTNY has been invaluable as we reorganize our board and build stronger connections in the community.”



Philipse Manor Hall 2014 Board of Directors.

Friends hosted a successful fundraising concert gala and have organized three art exhibitions at the site's community gallery.

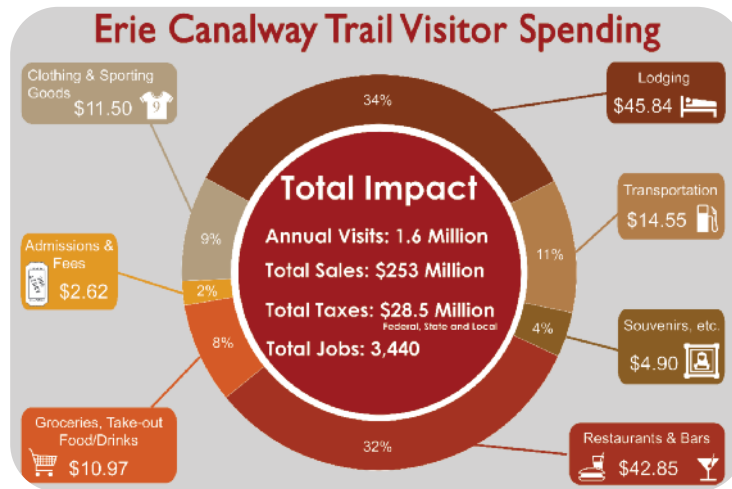
“The TAP program has been a gift to the Friends of Philipse Manor Hall,” says Shannon Daugherty, president of the Friends' board. “The advice and guidance we've received from Laura DiBetta and PTNY has been invaluable as we've reorganized our board and built stronger connections in the community. TAP gave us the tools we needed to focus on our strengths, pinpoint our weaknesses, and plan for the future.”



# Promoting the Growing Cycling Tourism Market

In July, PTNY released *The Economic Impact of the Erie Canalway Trail: An Assessment and User Profile of New York's Longest Multi-use Trail*, the first-ever report analyzing the importance of the Erie Canalway Trail to New York's economy. Commissioned by Parks & Trails New York and supported by the NYS Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the study found that the Erie Canalway Trail

experiences 1.6 million visits per year, generates approximately \$253 million in economic impact, and supports 3,440 jobs in the local economies within the



360-mile trail corridor. Data obtained from surveys of more than 500 trail users also revealed much about the demographics and preferences of Erie Canalway Trail visitors.

PTNY is using the study results to support its "Close the Gaps Campaign" on the Erie Canalway Trail and to inform its new multi-faceted Erie Canalway Trail marketing program aimed at adventure travelers and national and

international cyclists. Supported by a grant from Empire State Development – I Love New York, the marketing campaign will include a new Cycle the Erie Canal website and other materials aimed at attracting and assisting cycling tourists.

## Impacting Communities' Bottom Lines and Waistlines Through Local Trail Development

When PTNY helps communities with trail development, the assistance that staff provides is often thought of as a long-term investment that may take years to pay off. In 2014, two projects did just that. In the North Country town of Peru, Parks & Trails New York celebrated a trail opening that was nearly 10 years in the making when the ribbon was cut on the first 1.25 miles of the Little Ausable River Trail. In 2005, through its *Healthy Trails, Healthy People* program, PTNY provided Adele Douglas and other Peruvians advice on trail easements, routing, and community engagement that set them on a course that helped them finally realize their vision of a trail that connects the town's schools and parks.

In the Hudson Valley City of Kingston, another long-range trail vision nurtured through the *Healthy Trails, Healthy People* program took shape, with work beginning on the Kingston Point Rail Trail. The 1.5-mile trail is the first part of a larger, city-wide concept called the Kingston Greenline, which aims to provide bike and pedestrian accessibility throughout the city, as well as serve as a central connection point to several other rail trails in Ulster County. These trails will not only provide residents with new recreational opportunities, they will also establish corridors for active transportation, increasing residents' physical activity levels and reducing auto-dependence.



Volunteers cut the ribbon on the first 1.25 miles of the Little Ausable River Trail.

# Bicyclists Bring Business... to the Tonawandas



Tonawanda Mayor Rick Davis (right) and North Tonawanda Deputy Mayor Robert Welch seeing their cities from a new perspective on the Bike-a-Round.

In October, the 2014 edition of PTNY's Bicyclists Bring Business workshop pedaled into the Western New York cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda. This popular event, organized in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation and Canalway Trail communities, engages businesses and local leaders in a roundtable discussion regarding ways to capitalize on the important and growing local, national, and international bicycle tourism market. The two-day workshop also featured a Bike-a-Round – a bike trip for community leaders through the host communities to showcase current strengths and help identify opportunities to improve efforts to market to cycling tourists. Among the items discussed at 2014's conference was additional wayfinding signage and the creation of a cycling hub near the intersection of the Erie Canalway Trail and the area's growing trail network.

## The Year in Review: *Erie Canalway Trail Edition*

The Erie Canalway Trail is fast becoming one of the most popular tourism destinations for cyclists from throughout the country and the world thanks in part to PTNY's almost two-decade partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation. In 2014 these partnership activities yielded impressive results.

- PTNY's **Close the Gaps Campaign** continued to promote the need to finish the 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail so that all canal corridor communities can enjoy the trail's considerable economic and quality of life benefits. With three new miles of trail added in 2014, only 79 miles remain before it is finished. PTNY's goal is for all the remaining miles of trail to be finished or in process by the 2017 bi-centennial celebration of the start of Erie Canal construction.

- Biking or walking the entire 360-mile Erie Canalway is a major achievement that the **Erie Canalway Trail End-to-End Program**, is designed to celebrate. In 2014, 494 persons joined more than 1,300 others who have completed the entire trail between Buffalo and Albany since 2012.
- Who's on the Trail? The annual **Canalway Trail Count** has amassed ten years of important data on patterns of usage along the Canalway Trail which helps to confirm the trail's popularity and inform discussions regarding trail improvement and maintenance. Counts taken in 2014 resulted in estimates of annual visits to the trail of 208,500 in Tonawanda, 52,991 in Chittenango, and 8,063 in Oneida.



### Volunteers Get Dirty *to Keep the Canal Clean*

Each year, Canal Clean Sweep weekend brings thousands of adults and children to more than 100 volunteer clean-up events along the NYS Canal System in celebration of Earth Week. Volunteers come from municipalities located along the Canal System to pick up trash and debris, weed and trim brush, and enjoy some quality time helping their communities prepare for the hundreds of thousands of annual visitors each season. Canal Clean Sweep is organized by Parks & Trails New York and the NYS Canal Corporation.



Volunteers from Brockport are helping to beautify their community during Canal Clean Sweep.

To donate or join visit [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)



# What will your legacy be?



Planned gifts enable donors to make a meaningful contribution to Parks & Trails New York in a way that complements their financial goals.

It's never too early to begin thinking about your legacy. As someone who appreciates nature and green space, you're invited to share your passion for New York's majestic parks and beautiful trails by making a planned gift to Parks & Trails New York and ensuring that your favorite parks and trails will be protected for generations to come.

To learn more about becoming a member of The Legacy Society of Parks & Trails New York, please contact Tiffany Soricelli, Director of Development, at [tsoricelli@ptny.org](mailto:tsoricelli@ptny.org) or 518-434-1583.

The Legacy Society is a group of individuals who have shown their commitment to New York's parks and trails and the people who use them by making a planned gift to PTNY.

## Ways to Support New York's Parks and Trails

Visit [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org) to learn more

- **Get involved** – join us on I Love My Park Day, Canal Clean Sweep, and Park and Trail Advocacy Days, or join a Friends group, and help make New York greener, from the ground up
- **Become a member of Parks & Trails New York or make a donation**, online, by phone or mail
- **Double your donation** by sending us your employer's matching gift form
- **Remember Parks & Trails New York in your will**
- **Give at the office** via EarthShare New York

## We are accountable to you!

Thanks to the generosity of our members and donors, in 2014 PTNY was able to do even more to protect, sustain and promote New York's green network of parks and trails. Thank you!

### Financial Statement

Statement of Activities for the year ended June 30, 2014

#### Support and Revenue

Individual contributions	\$ 249,824
Grants	328,833
Corporate contributions	152,205
Special events	53,125
Program revenue	460,797
Other	2,409
<b>Total support and revenue</b>	<b>\$ 1,247,193</b>

#### Expenses

Program services	
Conservation	\$ 781,960
Public education	137,683
Membership	126,209
<b>Total program services</b>	<b>\$ 1,045,852</b>

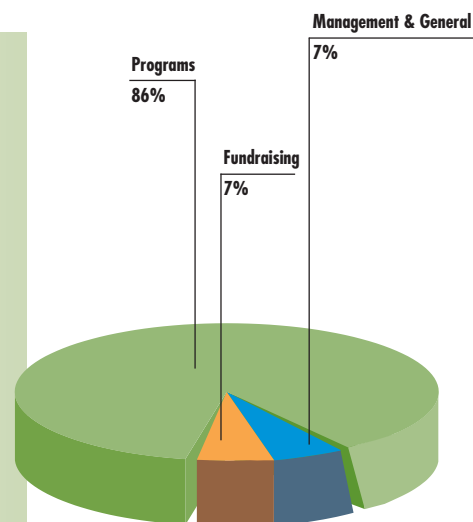
#### Expenses (continued)

Supporting services	
Management and general	\$ 80,313
Fundraising	91,789
<b>Total supporting services</b>	<b>\$ 172,102</b>
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,217,954</b>

#### Net Assets

Change in net	29,239
Net, beginning	1,017,901
Net, end of year	\$ 1,047,140

A copy of our most recent audited financial statement is available upon request to Parks & Trails New York



Source: PTNY FY14 Audited Financial Statements

# Thank You Members and Donors

*Gifts of \$100 or more*

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PTNY thanks the thousands of I Love My Park Day and Canal Clean Sweep volunteers who joined us last year to build and maintain our state parks and local trails; served as trail ambassadors on community trails; and helped our bicycle tour participants safely and happily experience the pleasures of the Erie Canalway Trail and Hudson Valley byways. Thank you!

*Every effort has been made to produce an accurate listing of PTNY supporters.  
Please contact us at [ptny@ptny.org](mailto:ptny@ptny.org) about any corrections.*

**To donate or join visit [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)**



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## Unlocking the Potential of Grassroots Groups

Parks & Trails New York's Growing the Grassroots program has provided capacity building grants and assistance to park and trail organizations around the state since 2009. The 2014 Growing the Grassroots grant awardees were: Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum, Friends of Allegany State Park, Friends of Astoria Heights Park, Friends of Connetquot State Park, New Baltimore Conservancy, Victor Hiking Trails, and Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Association.

PTNY has been so impressed with what our Growing the Grassroots grant recipients have been able to accomplish that we have long dreamt of being able to provide organizations with a more significant amount of funding. We are excited to announce that we will soon be able to do just that.

Included in the 2015-2016 final state budget is \$500,000 for a new capacity-building grants program for organizations that promote and support

“PTNY has long dreamt of being able to provide friends organizations with significant capacity-building grants. We're excited to announce we will soon be doing just that.”

the state's parks, trails and historic sites. This public-private capacity-building grants program will be administered by PTNY in partnership with the NYS

Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. It will unlock the potential of Friends organizations across the state by increasing their effectiveness, productivity, and volunteer and fundraising capabilities. This will enhance park, trail and historic site stewardship, leading to even greater economic benefits from outdoor recreation and healthier, more sustainable and resilient communities.

PTNY applauds Governor Cuomo and state legislative leaders for supporting this landmark investment in grassroots Friends organizations.

