

GreenSpace

For members, supporters, and friends of Parks & Trails New York

Spring 2010



Parks & Trails
NEW YORK

www.ptny.org

A passion for parks *Threat of park closures ignites groundswell of grassroots support*

This has been a gloomy spring for parks, with Governor Paterson proposing to slash state park funding and close up to 91 state parks and historic sites. However, a significant silver lining has also emerged – hundreds of thousands of park lovers who made their voices heard in Albany and around the state.

“We never before witnessed so many people across the state step up and fight for their state parks,” said Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director. “Legislator after legislator said they heard from more constituents about park closures than on any other issue.”

Grassroots park advocates showed their support for state parks by contacting their legislators, signing petitions, joining Facebook groups, attending local park rallies, and travelling to Albany to participate in PTNY’s Save our State Parks Day.

Thanks to all this interest and activity, the media coverage has been outstanding. Hundreds of articles appeared in newspapers. Pro-parks editorials, op-eds, and letters to the editor abounded.

In March the hard work of so many park advocates paid off when both houses voted to restore \$11.3 million in park operating funds which would allow all state parks and historic sites to remain open in 2010-2011.

Parks in limbo

As of this writing, the late budget means that the State Parks agency is going ahead with plans to close 55 parks and historic sites, and curtail

*The grassroots
groundwork that has been
laid this year will stand
us well in the future.*



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programming and services at an additional 22.

The longer the budget stalemate goes on the worse it gets as the time to prepare the parks and historic sites for the season gets shorter and shorter.

We continue to be hopeful and are keeping up the pressure on the Governor and Legislature to provide a solution that will allow all parks and historic sites to open this season.

“Whatever the outcome of our efforts, park advocates can feel proud of what they’ve accomplished,” said Dropkin.



Through the efforts of Volunteer Service Award winners Elisa Zazzera and Joe Kozlowski, the Yonkers community often comes together to improve its section of the Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park.

National Trails Day ceremony to celebrate Greenway and Trail Award Winners

Join us!

National Trails Day Celebration and Award Presentation

June 8 at 11:00 a.m. — Legislative Office Building, Room 711A

See page 2 for Award Winners

Dear Friends of New York's parks and trails

We will fight for as long as it takes!

What a budget season it's been! And at this writing (mid May) it's not even over.

The threat to close almost half of our 215 state parks and historic sites (to "save" a meager \$11 million) inspired New Yorkers to rally as never before: more than 250,000 people signed on to pro-parks Facebook sites, and there have been "don't close our parks" rallies all across the state. The *New York Times*, other newspapers and TV and radio stations from Niagara to Montauk covered the issue regularly and many published pro-parks editorials.

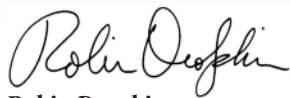
Legislators have repeatedly told us they have never heard from so many constituents on any other issue. Not education. Not health. Not taxes. Clearly, New Yorkers are passionate about their parks.

We're hopeful that no state parks will have to close this year. But the long-term prospects are ominous, as New York's budget deficit deepens and pressure grows to cut and cut and cut.

Parks & Trails New York is committed to fighting for as long as it takes. Why are state parks that important? For one thing, closing parks in a budget crunch is counter-productive: state parks contribute almost \$2 billion to state and local economies each year.

But there is another reason why we must support our state parks, a reason that does not receive as much attention as it should: parks are our common ground, our communal space, our way of enabling New Yorkers of every age, income, ability, and background to enjoy the natural world that is our common heritage. We are fighting for the life of that vision, and we will not give it up.

Join us, and visit one of New York's incredible state parks this weekend!



Robin Dropkin
Executive Director



PTNY awards nine grants to strengthen park and trail groups

Nine Capacity Building Grants were awarded by PTNY to provide not-for-profit park and trail groups with the tools and expertise they need to survive and thrive in these challenging economic times.

Groups will use the funds to increase organizational visibility and generate community support, grow membership, and attract additional volunteers.

Made possible by a generous private donor, these grants are a small investment in strengthening our state's not-for-profit park and trail organizations that will reap big benefits, enabling these groups to leverage more private funding and marshal more volunteer power to better fill the gaps in government spending created by challenging economic times.

PTNY received 55 applications from organizations located in 30 counties throughout the state. This is the second year of the grant program.

Awards were granted to:

- **Brooklyn Greenway Initiative**, Brooklyn, Kings County
- **Friends of Grimes Glen**, Naples, Ontario County
- **Friends of Kinderhook Trails**, Kinderhook, Columbia County
- **Friends of Rockland Lake and Hook Mountain State Parks**, Valley Cottage, Rockland County
- **Owasco Flats Nature Reserve** – Moravia, Cayuga County
- **Friends of Taconic State Park**, Copake Falls, Columbia County
- **Erie-Cattaraugus Rail Trail**, Orchard Park, Erie and Cattaraugus Counties
- **Friends of Connetquot State Park**, Oakdale, Suffolk County
- **Association for Conservation of Recreational and Natural Spaces**, Stafford, Genesee County

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Congrats to our 2010 Trail and Greenway Award winners

• Service Award

Elisa Zazzera and Joe Kozlowski, members of the *Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct*, for their efforts to involve the Yonkers community in the clean up and promotion of the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail.

• Public Leadership Award

Dorothy Lewandowski, NYC Parks and Recreation's *Queens Parks Commissioner* and **Velma Segars**, *Assistant to the Commissioner*, for their efforts to advocate for, create, map, and promote New York City's first Water Trail.

• Corporate Partnership Award

Eastern Mountain Sports, **Mobawk Commons Store** for its many years of support of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in Schenectady.

• Healthy Trails, Healthy People Award

Mark Bowers, *NYS DOT Region 9 Bike/Ped Coordinator*, and **Scott Reigle**, *Sr. Transportation Planner, Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study*, for their leadership and dedication to the 30-mile Greater Binghamton Greenway and Binghamton River Trail.

• Outside the Box Award

Fred Schaeffer, *Chairman, Walkway Over the Hudson*, for his vision, commitment, and perseverance to using the Poughkeepsie Railroad bridge as a trail connecting Ulster and Dutchess Counties.



Trails Coalition reps speak out for trails in Albany

Members of the New York State Trails Coalition journeyed to Albany for the third annual Trails Advocacy Day in March to meet with key Assembly members and Senators. The purpose of the meetings was to urge lawmakers to restore the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) to \$222 million and to prevent park closures by restoring \$11.2 million in operating funds for state parks - actions that directly impact both local and many long-distance trails within the state.

For some, a series of meetings with legislators and their staff was a first-time experience.

"Participating in National Trails Day was worthwhile and satisfying. I always read about the outcome of issues in the Senate and Assembly, but now that I was actually there voicing my opinion and hearing the government officials answering my questions in person, I have a much better understanding of how the system works and what I can do in the future. I will be doing it again," said Tom Trifoso, President of the Finger Lakes Mountain Bike Club.

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The EPF plays a key role in trail development as it provides funds for matching grant programs that towns, villages, and cities use to create and enhance local trails and parks. In addition, operating funds for State Parks are used to ensure the safety and functioning of several major trail systems which State Parks owns and/or operates such as the Old Croton Aqueduct Trail, Harlem Valley Rail Trail, Genesee Valley Greenway, sections of the Canalway Trail including Old Erie Canal State Park, Catherine Valley Trail, and the Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Site.



During Trails Advocacy Day, Tom Trifoso and Carol Worden of the Finger Lakes Mountain Bike Club met with their local Senator, George Winner of Elmira, to discuss the needs of trail advocates.

Trails Advocacy Day participants also used the occasion to remind legislators of the need to "Close the Gaps" and ensure the remaining segments of the Erie Canalway Trail will be finished, available for public use, and able to generate maximum tourism dollars for Upstate.

The New York State Trails Coalition was formed in 2007 and today represents 85 trails organizations and local governments dedicated to making New York a pre-eminent trail state with an interconnected network of trails linking the state's communities and parks.



Growing the Green

Funding ideas for your park and trail projects

Chenango Greenway merchandise raises visibility (and a little money, too)

Last year, the Chenango Greenway Conservancy (CGC) launched a promotional campaign to raise its visibility by creating T-shirts, reusable grocery bags, and water bottles featuring the CGC logo. CGC volunteers sell their swag at community happenings as well as at CGC's own trail-centered events such as National Trails Day, a canoe outing, and a "Kids of the Greenway" summer hike series.

The merchandise helps the Conservancy attract interest. "People no longer ask 'what is the greenway trail?' but rather 'how do I get to the greenway trail?' As a result, our membership has doubled in the past year," says Sharon Pelosi, Conservancy Chairperson.

Pelosi points out that the merchandising effort helped the organization raise a little money, but the biggest bang-for-the-buck has been the community buy-in. "Greenway merchandise allows people to identify themselves as supporters. Without these efforts to create a brand identity, I don't believe we would have been as successful in gaining the support of local government officials."

This support has paid off big-time. The CGC has gotten several grants, including a Recreational Trails Grant, a Conservation Fund grant from the Kodak American Greenways Program, and an Obesity Prevention Grant from the Chenango County Public Health Department.

Find out more about the Chenango Greenway Conservancy at www.chenangogreenway.org.



Cathy Cruz, Chenango Greenway Conservancy Board member, with some of the organization's merchandise at a local community day in the park.



Canal Clean Sweep – Five Years & Growing

The 5th annual Canal Clean Sweep, held over the weekend of April 17-18 to recognize Earth Day, again demonstrated the growing pride residents have in their communities with 95 events stretching from Tonawanda to Albany and Whitehall to Waterloo. Hundreds of volunteers braved cool and showery weather to give the NYS Canal System and Canalway Trail its annual “spring cleaning.” This statewide series of events is sponsored by the NYS Canal Corporation in partnership with Parks & Trails New York, the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation, and the NYS Consumer Protection Board. Special thanks go to the many local groups and volunteers who made the 2010 Sweep the biggest yet.



7th Annual Canalway Trail Celebration: Explore Your Canalway Trail!

The 2010 Canalway Trail Celebration is just around the corner. Coinciding with National Trails Day on June 5, this coordinated series of events is designed to increase awareness and enjoyment of the Canalway Trail system as a world-class recreation resource and tourist destination.

7TH ANNUAL



This year the Celebration offers more than 40 opportunities to explore the trail and the communities along it. Just a few of the events scheduled include dedication of a new segment of the Cayuga-Seneca Canalway Trail in Waterloo, history walks along the canal in Brockport, a Little Falls “Peddle & Paddle” day, and the annual canoe/kayak race and recreational paddle on the Glens Fall Feeder Canal. Check out the full list of events at www.ptny.org/canalway/celebration and join the fun!

The Celebration is sponsored by Parks and Trails New York, the NYS Canal Corporation, and the Canalway Trails Association New York, with additional support from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Who's on the Canalway Trail?

Up to 174,000 annual visitors on one Capital Region section!

The 2009 annual Canalway Trail Count confirms what most residents know, the Mohawk-Hudson Bike Hike Trail is a very popular place for walking and biking in the Capital Region. Estimates of Canalway Trail usage of up to 174,000 visitors per year at the Niskayuna train station were based on counts conducted by Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike Hike Trail volunteers during July and August 2009.

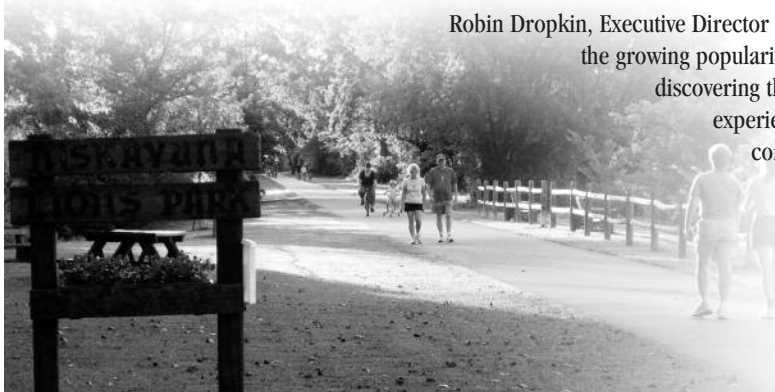
Counts were conducted at four trailheads located within a paved, 12-mile stretch of the Erie Canalway Trail in Schenectady and Albany Counties. Parks & Trails New York used the data obtained to calculate annual trail traffic estimates ranging from nearly 174,000 persons at the Niskayuna train station at Lions Park to almost 57,000 persons at rural Kiwanis Park in the Schenectady County town of Rotterdam. Annual trail traffic was estimated at approximately 106,000 persons for an urban trailhead adjacent to Schenectady Community College and 95,000 persons for the trailhead at Colonie Town Park in suburban Albany County.

The counts demonstrated that the majority of trail users were bicyclists, a finding that has been consistent since 2005 when the annual counts first began. In 2009, 53 percent of trail users were bicyclists, 30 percent were walkers, 12 percent joggers, and four percent in-line skaters.

Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks and Trails New York, said, “This year’s count again confirms the growing popularity of the Erie Canalway Trail. It’s clear that visitors and residents are discovering that walking or cycling the tranquil, traffic-free trail is a perfect way to experience the magic of the canal and the warmth and charm of the historic communities along its length.”

More information can be found in the report, *Who's on the Trail? The Erie Canalway Trail User Count 2009*, is available on the Parks & Trails New York's website www.ptny.org under publications.

Results of the 2009 Canalway Trail Count estimated annual trail traffic of 174,000 visitors near the old train station at Niskayuna's Lions Park in Schenectady County.



Visit *visit terrific* New York's Terrific Trails *trails*

It has been more than 60 years since a New York Ontario & Western Railway (O&W) train brought tourists from New York City to the southern Catskills resort area. Now several communities, with grant support from Sullivan Renaissance, are pursuing a new vision for the old Sullivan County rail corridor in which it once again contributes to local tourism, this time as a multi-use trail.

Founded in 1868 as the New York and Oswego Midland Railroad, the O&W prospered hauling both passengers and freight, notably anthracite coal from Pennsylvania's Lackawanna Valley. But with competition from roads and the decline of coal for heating, that prosperity waned. Passenger service ended in 1953, and in 1957 the O&W became the first major U.S. railroad to be abandoned in its entirety.

County had foresight to purchase railroad sections for trail

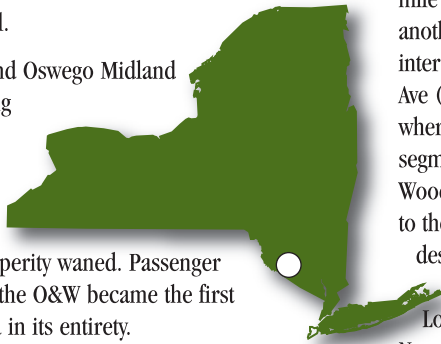
Fortunately, several municipalities had the foresight to purchase parts of the O&W bed with an eye toward a future trail. While the long-term vision calls for 24 miles of trail from the D&H Linear Park in Mamakating northwestward to Liberty, today 7.5 miles of rail trail are open for use. In the mid-1990s, the Town of Fallsburg built two sections of trail: a 2.5-mile segment from Mountaintale to Woodridge, and a 3-mile segment from South Fallsburg to Hurleyville.

Last October, members of the Fallsburg O&W Rail Trail Committee (a collaboration among the Town of Fallsburg, Woodridge Kiwanis, Mountaintale Action Committee, Mountaintale Community Development Project, Sullivan Striders, and other groups) cut the ribbon on a new 2-mile section of trail that begins in Woodridge and extends to the Neversink River. Here we will focus on the 4.5 miles from Mountaintale through Woodridge to the Neversink.

Gentle grades and a dirt/grass surface

Beginning at its current southeastern terminus in Mountaintale, the trail proceeds northwestward with gentle grades and a dirt/grass surface, closely paralleling Sandburg Creek on the left for a short distance and eventually crossing it near the halfway point between Mountaintale and Woodridge. The trail then traverses an embankment across Silver Lake, created in the 1840s by damming Sandburg Creek to supply water for the D&H Canal. After passing Krieger Park, with picnic facilities and other trails, the rail trail enters the Village of Woodridge and reaches a trailhead at Greenfield Road. There are several road crossings along this stretch of trail.

The O & W Rail Trail: Reviving a region's tourism draw



From here, trail users must follow (and cross) Green Avenue for about one-half mile into Woodridge to another trailhead near the intersection with Roosevelt Ave (County Highway 53), where the newest trail segment begins. Once out of Woodridge, the trail curves to the southwest and descends gradually to its end point at Avon Lodge Road and the Neversink River, a popular trout stream. The bridge that once carried the railroad over the river is gone.

The Rail Trail Committee is exploring options for opening the segment from the Neversink west to the hamlet of South Fallsburg, which includes an historic tunnel; completing this connection will require a new bridge across the river. For now, cyclists who wish to ride through must follow Avon Lodge Road south for about two mile to the Grey Road bridge over the river, then follow Grey Rd and other back roads north to South Fallsburg. The next trail segment begins near the intersection of Pleasant Valley Road and La Vista Drive. From there the trail rises slightly through woodlands and past wetlands and Alta Lake before descending into Hurleyville.

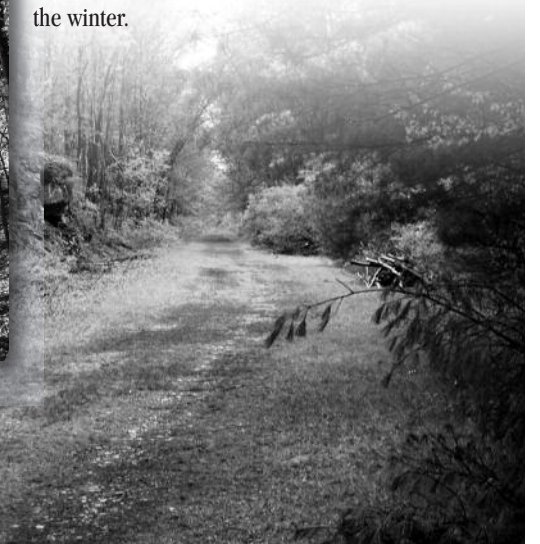
All sections of the trail are open to pedestrian, bicycle and equestrian use as well as cross-country skiing in the winter.



If You Go

Visit PTNY's TrailFinder for more information
www.ptny.org/trailfinder

Parking and restrooms are available at the new Mountaintale Railway Station & Visitor Center adjacent to the trailhead near Railroad Avenue and Post Hill Road. There also is parking at both trailheads in Woodridge. This coming summer, the Rail Trail Committee will construct a new trailhead with parking at the Neversink River/Avon Lodge Road.



PTNY receives Earth Day award for parks advocacy



PTNY was among five not-for-profit environmental organizations honored at an Earth Day event in Brooklyn organized by Broadway Stages, one of New York City's largest full-service Film & Television production facilities. Five NYS legislators each selected an organization to recognize. We are proud that Assemblyman Steve Englebright (D, Setauket) chose PTNY to recognize for our efforts to keep all state parks open.

PTNY Board member Kent Barwick, center, receives an Earth Day award on behalf of PTNY. Also shown (left to right) are NYS Assemblyman Joseph Lentol; Tony Argento, Founder of Broadway Stages; Gina Argento, President of Broadway Stages; and NYS Assemblyman Englebright.



We will miss Fred Schroeder

It is with great sadness that we note the death of Fred Schroeder – a passionate parks and conservation advocate, lover of the outdoors, expert hiker, gardener, and birder, and generous member of all these communities.

Fred died in March at the age of 85. We knew him best as an advocate for Thacher State Park in Voorheesville, Albany County – one of the parks slated to close this year if the Governor's budget were adopted. Fred designed, maintained and led hikes on trails in Thacher, and in 1998 he and his wife Martha provided the funds for New York State to build and endow the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center at Thompsons Lake in the park. Fred was an enthusiastic and devoted member of the Friends of Thacher Park.

We salute Fred Schroeder's unparalleled commitment to the broadest possible use and enjoyment of his community's natural resources. Thank you, Fred.

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Parks & Trails New York works to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for all to use and enjoy.

Parks & Trails New York is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization as defined by the IRS. Contributions are tax-deductible.

GreenSpace is published by Parks & Trails New York and is available on the PTNY website at www.ptny.org. Contributions of manuscripts, letters, photographs or other material relating to parks and trails in NYS are encouraged.

Photos courtesy of Broadway Stages, Brookfield Renewable Power, Chenango Greenway Conservancy, Hallie Schroeder, George Sarvis, Elisa Zazzera

Join or Donate to Parks & Trails New York today at www.ptny.org

Welcome two new Board members

John Hunter

A Parks & Trails New York member for more than 10 years, since he rode on (and loved) our Cycling the Erie Canal bike tour, John Hunter has worked with the utility and investment industries. He is an enthusiastic hiker, as well as bicyclist, and lives in New York City.

Rick Morse

Rick is senior policy advisor at Ecology and Environment, Inc., a global environmental consulting firm based in upstate New York. He was a member of the NYS Assembly staff for more than 30 years, focusing on environmental issues.

Why I Support Parks & Trails New York

Dr. Tom Holmes of Norwich, N.Y. got the trail bug 12 years ago when helping his son decide on an Eagle Scout project. Dr. Holmes suggested creating a trail along the Chenango River. "After all," he said to his son, "how hard can it be to make a trail?"

He soon realized his naivete. Wisely, his son decided it would be easier to organize a project to clean up an old Chenango Canal aqueduct, but Dr. Holmes has been hooked on the concept of a trail along the river ever since. With the work of a lot of people around Norwich, the project has evolved and blossomed into the Chenango River Greenway, which enjoys considerable community support. "The original emphasis for me was personal – to help my son create a path along the river where we could walk and bicycle, activities that we have long enjoyed."

"I began to realize just how important the trail could be to the health of our whole community,"

Parks & Trails New York has helped inspire and support us every step of the way.

Dr. Tom Holmes

says Dr. Holmes, a family physician. "There's a growing understanding that physical activity is essential to living a healthy lifestyle. We also wanted to reconnect our community to one of its major assets, the Chenango River."

Dr. Holmes has been a member of Parks & Trails New York since 2000. "Parks & Trails New York's support has been critical to the project's growth and success," he says. "Staff members have provided encouragement, focus, and perspective. They helped us create an action



plan, develop a strong organization with broad community support, and work jointly with other groups in the region to try to join our various trail networks together to form the Chenango Canal Heritage Trail, which we envision stretching from Utica to Binghamton."

"It's particularly exciting to help promote pedestrian-friendly communities," Dr. Holmes says. "In rural areas like ours we need to attract young people, and an active and livable lifestyle as demonstrated in a trail system is now a highly sought after attraction."

"It turns out that, yes, it's been hard to make the progress we have. There are issues involved in creating a heritage trail and a greenway that we didn't anticipate 12 years ago. But Parks & Trails New York has helped inspire and support us every step of the way."

Three ways to protect New York's parks and trails!

Double your donation with a matching gift

When you send a membership contribution or donation to Parks & Trails New York, you can double or even triple it by including your employer's matching gift form. For details, contact us at ptny@ptny.org.

Include Parks & Trails New York in your will or trust

You can provide now for a future gift to Parks & Trails New York by including a bequest in your will or trust, or naming PTNY as a beneficiary of your IRA. For more information, contact Martha Gershun at 518-434-1583.



Earth Share

You can give at the office, via payroll deduction to Earth Share of New York, an alliance of New York's leading nonprofit environmental organizations. For more information, visit www.earthshareny.org.

THANK YOU!!

Thank you to our Green Partners — businesses that support New York's parks and trails!

Brookfield Renewable Power

Brookfield Renewable Power, Inc., an owner, operator and developer of hydroelectric power facilities, is a proud partner in the communities in which it operates. The company has worked with a variety of stakeholders in New York to create or support lake habitat, restore river aquatic habitat, install screens to allow for safe passage of fish, establish Adirondack canoe routes, and open river access points to the public.

The four-acre Falls View Park in Cohoes, owned by Brookfield Renewable Power, offers a view of the scenic Cohoes Falls never before open to the public. The park is open May 1 through November 1. Nearby Overlook Park, also owned by Brookfield, is open year-round.





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New Guide Helps Communities, Businesses Attract More Bicyclists

According to the U.S. Travel Association, 27 million Americans have taken a bicycling vacation in the last five years and bicycling is now the third most common vacation activity. Community leaders and businesspeople seeking to benefit from this burgeoning interest in bicycle tourism now have a new resource to help them become more bicycle-friendly and appeal to more bicyclists. Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, has released a new publication, *Bicyclists Bring Business: a Guide to Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities*.

Based on the Bicyclists Bring Business community roundtable discussions offered by Parks & Trails New York and the Canal Corporation for several years, the guide describes the potential economic impact of bicycle

tourists, outlines the goals and needs of these visitors, and identifies steps to attract more of them. Although focused on the Canalway Trail because of its potential as an emerging world-class bicycle tourism destination, the guide's contents also will be useful to communities along other trails and bike routes.

The guide is available on Parks & Trails New York's website under publications.



27 million Americans have taken a bicycling vacation in the last five years and bicycling is now the third most common vacation activity

U.S. Travel Association



Still time to register for a fun and affordable cycling vacation

12th Annual

Cycling the Erie Canal

A 400-mile bicycle tour along the legendary Erie Canal
July 11-18, 2010

6th Annual

Great Hudson Valley Pedal

A 200-mile bicycle tour from Albany to New York City through the picturesque and historic Hudson Valley
August 10-15, 2010

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