

Chapter 2 - Vision and Policies

Vision for Recreation in New York State

The vision for recreation in New York State is: "to provide a system of safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to protect and improve the quality of the valuable natural, historic and cultural resources." In meeting this vision, the quality of life will be improved with incentives for a healthier life style and economic vitality. This vision establishes a direction and leadership role for the State in providing a "greener" environment.

Policies and Strategies

The direction for recreation in New York State is guided by ten statewide policies of which seven have been in place since the last SCORP and are still considered relevant. These policies provide direction and support for protection and management of natural, cultural and recreation resources. The policies can be grouped into the four major initiative areas that respond to the current issues impacting the State's natural, cultural and recreational resources and that are consistent with OPRHP priorities. The policies will provide a strong, statewide structure to support specific actions and administrative and legislative decisions. Action strategies that support the policies are also identified.

Revitalizing our Parks and Historic Sites

Policy

Improve recreation and historic site operation, maintenance and resource management practices.

Action Strategies

- Rehabilitate and/or adaptively re-use existing recreation and historic facilities when feasible, to satisfy existing and projected recreation, interpretive and education needs.
- Promote compatible multiple uses and maximize, as appropriate, the length of activity seasons.
- Promote public health and safety, handicapped access and energy efficiencies in rehabilitation and new construction.
- Ensure protection of natural and cultural resources in undertaking park and historic site operation, maintenance and management activities.
- Encourage the training of park, historic site and land managers in best management practices for protection of natural and cultural resources as well as for operation and maintenance of facilities to ensure public health and safety.
- Significantly increase the state's investment in the management and operations of recreation and historic facilities.
- Develop, with input from managers, a sustainability plan to identify long-range goals and best management practices for park

and historic site operation, maintenance and management, and provide benchmarks for measuring success.

Policy

Improve and expand water-oriented recreation opportunities.

Action Strategies

- Encourage the acquisition, protection and/or development of park, recreational and cultural resource areas that are physically and visually accessible to water bodies and compatible with environmental limitations.
- Upgrade and protect water resources through monitoring, management programs, and ensure that water quality standards are met.
- Support management practices that reduce conflicts among water-related activities on significant natural water resource areas.
- Protect underwater lands that have significant natural, cultural and recreational qualities.
- Encourage the interpretation of and access to, where appropriate, significant underwater natural and cultural resources.
- Encourage appropriate waterfront development that provides water-dependent recreational activities and public access.
- Encourage waterfront zoning practices that protect and enhance water-related recreational activities and natural and cultural resources.

Vision and Policies

Policy

Apply research techniques and management practices to improve and expand parks, trails and other open spaces.

Action Strategies

- Establish long-term development strategies that have short-term action programs.
- Develop master and management plans for parks, recreation, natural, historic and cultural areas.
- Facilitate inventories and analyses, through Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other technologies, of park, recreation, natural and historic resources.
- Research and analyze new forms of leisure activities.
- Ensure appropriate public participation in planning, research and environmental review efforts.
- Promote recreation research to improve service delivery.
- Develop management information systems and support cost/benefit analyses that incorporate consideration for the intrinsic values of resources.
- Encourage the use of innovative management practices.
- Take maximum advantage of information technology (Internet, GIS, and Electronic Media) to provide access to research and information at parks, recreational and cultural resource areas.
- Develop a series of technical documents that provide additional guidelines for the development, management and operation of

recreational facilities such as trails and equestrian campgrounds.

- Establish a statewide GIS internet database clearinghouse to provide accurate and reliable information to managers on invasive species.
- Create an institute for invasive species research.
- Encourage scientific research and information sharing and establish a research agenda that will inform ecosystem-based management decisions and enhance ecosystem management capabilities.
- Create an ocean and coastal resources atlas to make information available to the public and decision makers.

Resource Stewardship and Interpretation

Policy

Preserve and protect natural and cultural resources.

Action Strategies

- Ensure that recreation development is compatible with the environmental characteristics and carrying capacities of resource areas.
- Ensure that the acquisition of open space resources is consistent with the approaches and recommendations identified in the NYS Conserving Open Space Plan.
- Encourage the preservation of open space in metropolitan areas.
- Encourage the acquisition of in-holdings and important properties adjacent to existing public landholdings.

- Be responsible stewards of the land and water resources that sustain plant and animal species and their habitats.
- Encourage the use of fee and non-fee acquisition as well as other techniques in the protection of important open space, scenic, historic, and ecologically sensitive areas.
- Develop, maintain, evaluate and support natural and cultural resource inventories and assessments.
- Promote efforts to increase knowledge and awareness of biodiversity and develop statewide, local and regional approaches to biodiversity protection and maintenance.
- Identify and protect biodiversity "hot spots" and expand protection of habitat corridors and buffer areas
- Seek to restore environmentally sensitive areas adversely impacted by past land and water use practices.
- Prepare a comprehensive invasive species management plan to ensure that New York State is fully prepared to prevent and combat invasive species.
- Ensure compliance with state and federal environmental and historic preservation regulations and guidelines.
- Identify threats to important natural, cultural, and recreational resources and take action to address such threats.
- Conduct studies of the impacts of the parks and trails on the state and local economies.

Policy

Support compatible recreation and interpretive programs.

Action Strategies

- Coordinate, improve and expand environmental, historical and cultural interpretive programs within recreational facilities.
- Encourage appropriate training in environmental and cultural interpretation and education for staff and volunteers.
- Improve outreach services and technical assistance provided by the State that helps to strengthen recreational and interpretive opportunities for the public.
- Develop a state park facility environmental interpretation plan including staffing, training, infrastructure and cooperation with partners.
- Encourage and support youth camp experiences, where appropriate.
- Encourage various forms of organized athletic competition that are compatible with natural, cultural and recreational resources.
- Encourage the preservation and interpretation of significant natural and cultural resources.
- Identify and encourage the creation and preservation of greenway systems connecting significant habitat areas and protecting biodiversity.
- Provide patron opportunities for observation, interpretation and education about significant natural and cultural resources.
- Through education and interpretive programs, work to reconnect

people with nature and empower the public with a greater role in, and involvement in, environmental protection and sustainability.

- Establish a comprehensive education and outreach effort as a critical component of a strategy for controlling invasive species.
- Continually update and expand the New York State Museum's exhibits and interactive computer kiosks on different regions of the State and on important natural and cultural resource issues.
- Encourage regions and communities to provide the New York State Museum with appropriate information and web links for accurate data input for electronic kiosks, signs, booths and publications.

Creating Connections beyond the Parks

Policy

Develop comprehensive, interconnected recreationway, greenway, blueway and heritage trail systems.

Action Strategies

- Identify and encourage the creation of recreationways, greenways, and blueways in and around metropolitan areas, along major water corridors and along other natural, abandoned railroad and utility corridors.
- Encourage the development of an interconnecting system of trails, recreationways, blueways and greenways.
- Encourage partnerships between federal, state and local governments, not-for-profit organizations, trail groups and private landowners in the development and maintenance of trails.

- Encourage full completion of the 534-mile canalway trail system.
- Encourage improvements to the canal recreationway system.
- Encourage trail uses of highway, abandoned rail, and utility corridors.
- Encourage local volunteer participation in the development and management of trail segments.
- Strengthen the statewide trails program for the coordination, planning and technical assistance of trail development.
- Incorporate protection and management of biodiversity within the recreationway and greenway system plans.
- Encourage the expansion of the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System.
- Promote and interpret the State's rich heritage through the development of Heritage Trails.

Policy

Protect natural connections between parks and open space areas.

Action Strategies

- Inventory and identify important ecosystems and natural connectors.
- Encourage the protection and/or acquisition of critical connectors.

Policy

Improve access to opportunities for regular physical activity that is in close proximity to where people live, work and/or go to school.

Vision and Policies

Action Strategies

- Encourage the development of trails, parks, and recreational facilities that can be reached by walking and bicycling.
- Modify existing facilities and develop new recreational facilities so they are universally accessible.
- Protect existing open spaces within urban areas.
- Encourage the development of trails within subdivisions to provide pedestrian access to neighboring communities and facilities.
- Encourage trails and open spaces to be incorporated in the revitalization of urban areas.
- Utilize transportation systems to provide continuity of trail systems, where appropriate.

Policy

Improve cooperation and coordination between all levels of government and the private sector in providing recreational opportunities and in enhancing natural and cultural resource stewardship.

Action Strategies

- Improve communication and coordination among public and private recreation providers.
- Facilitate citizen and broad public participation and input in planning, stewardship, management and development activities.
- Cooperate with communities and organizations seeking to improve recreation for underserved populations such as persons with disabilities, the economically disadvantaged, youth and older persons.

- Ensure cooperation and communication between parks, historic sites and cultural areas and colleges, universities, and other educational institutions.
- Increase public awareness of recreation and cultural opportunities.
- Support urban recreation initiatives.
- Support the development of a public constituency for park, recreation, and cultural resources.
- Encourage innovative partnerships in open space protection, the stewardship of natural and cultural resources, and the provision and maintenance of recreation facilities compatible with the character and goals of those facilities.
- Assist local communities in the development of effective zoning and other approaches to protect and enhance cultural and natural resources.
- Strengthen consistency among state, federal and local programs and policies.
- Work with and encourage the private sector to participate in performing resource recreation, environmental and cultural education and resource preservation functions.
- Take maximum advantage of conservation and youth service corps in the preservation of natural and cultural areas.
- Facilitate regional coordination and cooperation to address complex resource issues which cross political and jurisdictional boundaries.
- Support the functions of grass-roots partnerships around the State

to ensure prevention and rapid response to new invasive species.

- Support the Natural Heritage Trust and Legislative Assistance Programs that seek to expand the provisions of recreation services and resource protection.
- Expand the recreation resource base through nontraditional providers such as securing permission/easements from private land owners for recreational use of their lands.
- Encourage volunteer assistance in maintaining natural, cultural and recreation resources.
- Support efforts by all levels of government and not-for-profit organizations to eradicate existing invasive species infestations, both in our waters and on our lands.

Sustainability

Policy

Employ ecosystem-based management to ensure healthy, productive and resilient ecosystems which deliver the resources people want and need.

Action Strategies

- Ensure that activities in and uses of resources are sustainable, so that ecological health and integrity is maintained.
- Promote understanding of coastal systems.
- Inform decisions based on good science that recognizes ecosystems and their interconnections between land, air and water.
- Ensure that caution is applied when risks to ecosystems are uncertain.

Policy

Improve and expand the statewide commitment toward environmental sustainability in all parks, recreation and historic sites and support facilities.

Action Strategies

- Develop policies and procedures for reductions in energy consumption, reduction in the production of greenhouse gases through increased energy efficiency and increased use and support of renewable energy sources.
- Develop policies and procedures for the procurement of “green” products and services. Maximize the procurement of environmentally preferable or ‘green’ products and services.
- Evaluate opportunities to become a “carbon neutral” agency.
- Develop policies and procedures for waste reduction and minimizing or eliminating the use of toxic materials.
- Ensure practices that promote waste reduction, reuse, and recycling.
- Minimize or eliminate the use of toxic substances in park, recreation and historic site operation and maintenance. Use only non-toxic ‘green’ cleaning products.
- Purchase only Energy Star rated or ‘green’ equipment.
- Promote the procurement of locally produced commodities.
- Increase the use of non-fossil-fuel-based transportation, public transit and alternative transportation to and within recreational areas and open spaces.
- Increase the use of alternative fuels and non-fossil fuels in heavy-duty vehicles and construction equipment.
- Adopt Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for new construction where feasible and appropriate.
- Retrofit and renovate existing buildings to reduce energy use, conserve water, and improve indoor environmental quality, with consideration of possible LEED certification.
- Develop “green” design standards for small buildings where LEED certification may not be feasible.
- Use energy efficient equipment when upgrading water and wastewater infrastructure.
- Maximize the use of water conservation practices.
- Incorporate criteria into recreational grant/project rating systems that provide additional credits/points for incorporating the use of sustainable design and green technologies.
- Provide training and funding to park, historic site and land managers for energy efficiency and sustainability.

