

# OUR STATE'S OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION PLAN

*It starts with the land.* New York has one of the largest public land bases in the country, with some of the most spectacular scenery and terrain representing every major ecosystem. Ranging from the salt marshes of Long Island to the alpine tundra of the Adirondack High Peaks, these are lands which are held for our State's citizens and represent a legacy of more than 100 years of land conservation and stewardship. Privately held lands, including farms and forests also contribute to open space protection and are part of the rich fabric of the State's outdoor heritage.



High Peaks from the Hudson [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org)  
Photo: © Carl Heilman *The Nature Conservancy*

New York's formal Open Space Conservation program began in 1990, and was designed to ensure citizen input into the land acquisition decisions made by the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). Since its beginning, the program has developed a comprehensive statewide Open Space Conservation Plan (Plan) that represents current open space conservation actions, tools, and programs administered by DEC, OPRHP, the Department of State (DOS), the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), the Department of Agriculture & Markets (DAM) and the Department of Transportation (DOT); and has become an important and popular advocacy voice for conserving our State's open spaces – and the quality of life which they provide us.

## Open Space Conservation Goals



Central Park ~ Manhattan

### New York's Open Space Conservation Goals:

- ✓ To protect habitat for the diversity of plant and animal species in order to ensure the protection of healthy, viable and sustainable ecosystems.
- ✓ To protect our State's water quality, including surface and underground drinking water supplies, lakes, streams and coastal and estuarine waters needed to sustain human life and aquatic ecosystems.
- ✓ To combat global climate change by encouraging more compact community design patterns.
- ✓ To combat global climate change by sustainable stewardship of our State's forests for carbon sequestration and air quality enhancement.
- ✓ To combat climate change by protecting our State's coastlines, and broad riparian corridors and wetlands.
- ✓ To combat global climate change by adding to the tree canopy in our urban centers and urban communities in order to moderate temper-

ature fluctuations, thereby lowering our energy consumption.

- ✓ To maintain an interconnected network of protected lands and waters allowing wildlife to be able to shift range with climate change to follow natural migration patterns.
- ✓ To improve quality of life and overall health in our State's communities, especially those with limited current access to open space.
- ✓ To maintain critical natural resource industries such as farming, forest products, commercial fishing and tourism.
- ✓ To protect habitat to sustain the traditional pastimes of hunting, fishing, trapping and wildlife viewing.
- ✓ To provide accessible, quality outdoor recreation and open space to all New Yorkers.
- ✓ To provide places for education and research relating to ecological, environmental and cultural resources.
- ✓ To protect and enhance scenic, historic and cultural resources considered to be valued parts of the common heritage of our State's citizens.

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***Open Space Conservation Principles***

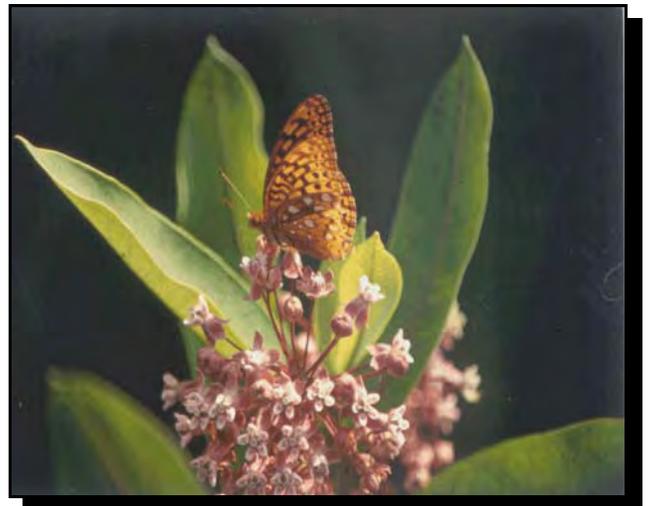
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New York's Open Space Conservation Principles:

- ✓ Work in partnership with other levels of government, community groups, not-for-profit conservation organizations and private landowners to establish and achieve land conservation goals.
- ✓ Expand the conservation tools available to communities and to individuals for undertaking complementary action at the local and regional level.
- ✓ Establish focused and achievable priorities for state action to conserve specific open space parcels and cultural resources.
- ✓ Identify various conservation tools, methods strategies and actions for protecting a variety

of open space resources.

- ✓ Establish conservation priorities through the objective measurement of urban and rural land conservation needs and broad-based citizen opinion.
- ✓ When utilizing land acquisition as a conservation tool, deal fairly and openly with property owners on a *willing seller/willing buyer* basis and work cooperatively with local governments and citizens.
- ✓ Identify future funding needs and stewardship expenses when proposing acquisition as a tool for land conservation.
- ✓ Strive to combat sprawl through smart growth planning at the local, regional and state planning level.

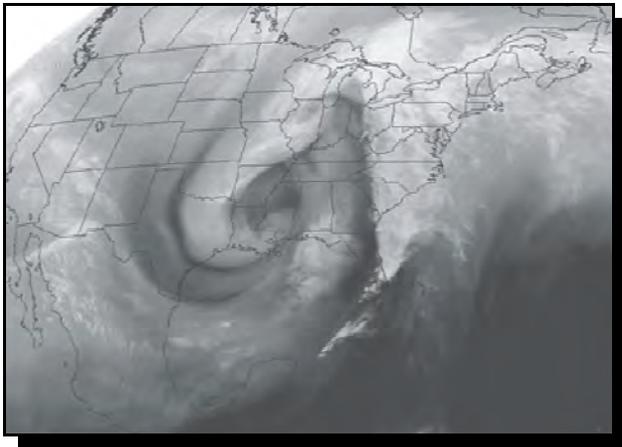


[www.landtrustalliance.org/community/Regions/northeast](http://www.landtrustalliance.org/community/Regions/northeast)  
**Northeast Land Trust Alliance**

*The Revised Plan*

The Open Space Plan has been revised every three years since 1992 in order to adapt to shifting conservation priorities. This 2009 revision is refocused and reorganized; it is streamlined to deliver relevant priorities without altering the purpose of land conservation for which the Plan was originally created.

*'Our' Actions*



*US Global Change Research Group  
www.usgrcp.gov*

The very real effects of global climate change remind us that our individual actions accumulate and create collective repercussions. Now, a wake-up call has come to all of us to take action to protect the environment in order to maintain our quality of life in New York State, for ourselves and for our youth who will live in the environment we create.

As our State faces severe budget restraints, we will need to adapt our strategies accordingly. Fortunately we have a wide array of methods to achieve our open space conservation goals. On the following pages is a list of conservation tools that we can use in order to continue to meet our open space needs during these challenging times.

These tools have expanded and become an important part of our State's Open Space Conservation program. Public land acquisition remains a necessary tool for conservation throughout our State, but alternative methods for

land protection can also be utilized. These tools include: involvement of citizens and their communities; collaboration among landowners; regional and Statewide coordination and cooperation in ecosystem-based management and Smart Growth efforts; townwide comprehensive planning; establishment of local open space funding sources; careful management of development incentives; local land use planning; the efforts of non-profit organizations; and practical changes in zoning. *Protection of open space, in as many ways as possible, is perhaps the most important investment we can make to counter the effects of climate change. Increasing protection for privately-owned open space is especially important to help keep more of New York's 7.6 million acres of farmland as farms, and more of New York's 14.4 million acres of privately-owned forest land as forests.*

The underlying goals and principles of protecting our State's resources through the Open Space Conservation program remain the same, but now as our State – and country – are faced with severe economic constraints, our actions, our focus, and our methods of conservation need to be more creative than ever.

This version of the Plan provides an integrated statewide strategy for land conservation, a more holistic view of the inter-connections between our State's natural resources. Beyond simply identifying individual parcels or areas of land within political boundaries, regional conservation projects and other programs will become prioritized within in a landscape context. Conservation goals also have been identified for sustaining New York's ecological integrity and rich biodiversity by maintaining viable and representative samples of all ecosystem types in the State, linking State lands to create large scale biodiversity reserves, maintaining evolutionary and ecological processes (i.e. disturbance regimes, hydrological processes, nutrient cycles, increasing effectiveness of conservation actions by considering site or parcel location on the landscape, and accounting for human use and impact).

There is significant public support for this type of large scale, integrated approach because it can be more effective than piece-meal, small scale efforts, and it considers natural resources at an effective ecological scale; as such, we will become better stewards of our land, infrastructure, and

natural resources. By conducting planning, acquisition, and restoration projects at the landscape level, we will accelerate the protection of air, land and water quality; build partnerships to foster an understanding of how to use and protect the environment; and provide a public role in planning, implementation, and evaluation of resource programs.

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***The Next 5 Years***

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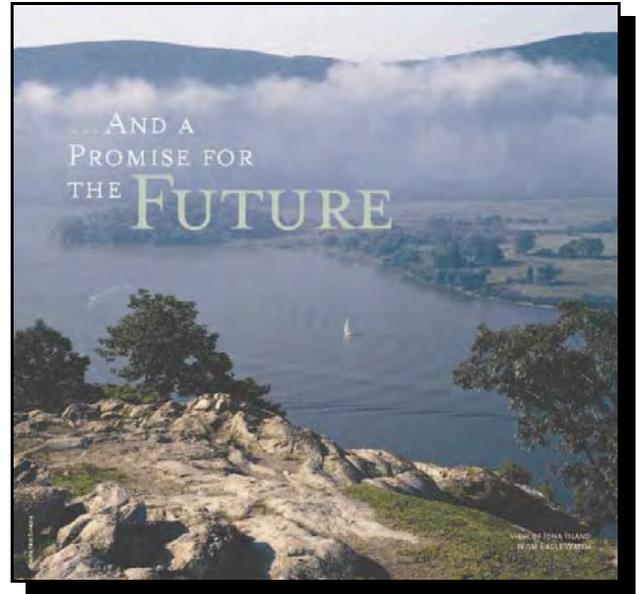
The 2009 New York State Open Space Conservation Plan identifies specific actions that need to be undertaken to pursue these urgent priorities:

- ✓ Responding to Climate Change;
- ✓ Fostering Green, Healthy Communities;
- ✓ Connecting New Yorkers with Nature & Recreation; and
- ✓ Safeguarding our Natural & Cultural Heritage.

For each objective, we identify recommended actions for reaching our objectives. Many of the actions are already in progress. They have been identified by the public and experienced, professional staff of various conservation programs assisting us in our open space conservation efforts.

Many of the actions which we identify will be undertaken through the efforts and offices of our State agencies, partnerships and local governments. These civic and conservation actions can guide and inspire each of us in our own realm of influence. Little steps add up; even small changes we make in our commute, our choice of home site, our use of energy, and our consumption can help make a difference for New York's future. Through personal engagement in open space conservation, there are many actions that we can undertake or initiate at every level.

We invite you to look at each objective, see what is needed in your community and use this Plan as a resource and a guide to reach attainable and important goals.



*View of Iona Island from Eagle Watch, Hudson River Valley*

*Photo: Nick Zungoli*

**Open Space Institute**  
[www.osiny.org](http://www.osiny.org)

**EXAMPLE of TOOLS AVAILABLE for OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION**

*For more information on these tools, see the NYS Department of State's Local Planning Guide [www.dos.state.ny.us/lqss/pdfs/OpenSpaces.pdf](http://www.dos.state.ny.us/lqss/pdfs/OpenSpaces.pdf)*

**TAX INCENTIVES & CREDITS**

State Forest Tax Laws  
 State Agricultural Value Assessments  
 Federal Historic Structure Rehabilitation  
 Federal Tax Credit For Gifts of Fee and Conservation Easements  
 State Conservation Easement Tax Credit  
 State Brownfield Redevelopment

**SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

Agricultural Districts  
 Forest Stewardship  
 Designation Programs  
 Heritage Areas  
 Scenic Districts  
 Scenic Byways  
 National/State Registers  
 Natural Landmarks

**PLANNING**

Adirondack Smart Growth Grants  
 Catskill Smart Growth Grants  
 Coastal Management Planning  
 Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan  
 Transportation Planning  
 Watershed Planning  
 Local Planning  
 Regional Planning  
 Infrastructure Development  
 Heritage Development  
 Smart Growth Grants  
 All-Hazard Mitigation Planning

**OTHER POLICIES**

**to Sustain Natural Resource Industry**

**FEDERAL PROGRAMS**

Land & Water Conservation Fund  
 Farm Bill – EQUIP, Community Forestry, etc.  
 Forest Legacy  
 State Wildlife Grants  
 Federal Endangered Species Act  
 North American Wetlands Conservation Act  
 National Heritage Areas  
 Coastal & Estuarine Land Conservation  
 Federally Administered Wetlands

**FEDERAL PROGRAMS (cont.)**

FEMA Hazard, Pre-Disaster  
 & Flood Mitigation

**LAND USE PROGRAMS**

Local Land Use Zoning  
 Subdivision Regulations  
 Municipal Comprehensive Plans  
 Site Plan Approval  
 Cluster Development  
 SEQR Critical Area Designation  
 Historic Preservation  
 Transfer of Development Rights

**STATE ADMINISTERED**

Adirondack Park Agency Act  
 Freshwater Wetlands Act  
 Tidal Wetlands Act  
 Coastal Erosion Hazard Area  
 State Endangered Species Act  
 Wild, Scenic & Recreational Rivers Act  
 Mined Land Reclamation Act  
 Water Quality Standards

**STATE & LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS**

Albany Pine Bush Commission  
 Central Pine Barrens Joint Planning & Policy Commission  
 Hudson River Estuary Program/Greenway  
 Tug Hill Commission  
 Adirondack Steering Committee  
 Long Island Sound Stewardship

**FINANCING**

Environmental Protection Fund  
 Community Preservation Act  
 Local Bond Act  
 State Revolving Loan Fund

**PROTECTION BY FEE, ACQUISITION, EASEMENT OR LEASE**

Land Trusts, Not-for-Profits & Community Interest Groups  
 Local Government  
 Federal Government  
 State Government