

STATE OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION  
Alexander B. Grannis  
Commissioner



STATE OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
Carol Ash  
Commissioner

June 17, 2009

Dear New Yorkers:

We are pleased to share with you the State's 2009 Open Space Conservation Plan which provides an important agenda for moving the State's Open Space Program forward with guidance for open space planning and protection at the State, regional and community level.

This visionary plan contains a list of outstanding, priority conservation areas across the State which were identified by the nine Regional Advisory Committees with citizen input. It also contains comprehensive policy and program recommendations to expand the number and scope of the tools in the conservation toolbox. Our goal is to encourage our state and local government partners, landowners, non-profit conservation organizations, and land trusts to take advantage of the many opportunities to implement these recommendations as they develop their own strategies for achieving conservation goals.

The Plan includes many sensible and cost effective recommendations that can help protect our outdoor heritage in affordable ways. We are engaging the Governor's Smart Growth Cabinet, the Ocean and Great Lakes Council, the Climate Smart Community Network, and the Hudson River Estuary Program to assist New Yorkers and local government officials in implementing these recommendations with technical assistance to protect and enhance open space and its environmental benefits.

Today there is a well-deserved sense of urgency as we face the challenges of climate change, to prevent further warming and adapt to the changes already occurring, and to plan for those to come. There is a clear link between climate change and open space conservation. To this end, the Plan includes recommendations on how state and local governments can protect and enhance riparian, coastal and flood plain areas and forests as part of the adaptation to these climate changes, all while improving wildlife habitat and creating new outdoor recreational activities.

As we work to recover from the current financial crisis, we can use the Open Space Plan and our Smart Growth program to green our communities, create jobs, and conserve open spaces close to where people live, connected by a variety of transportation options that will help us improve our health, decrease our carbon emissions and protect the well-being of our ecosystems.

We must do all we can to reconnect ourselves and our children to the natural world, which is so important to our health and survival. Our generation has the responsibility to protect our environment and to develop the next generation's stewards of the earth, who will carry forward New York's proud stewardship legacy.

We extend our thanks to the members of the volunteer Regional Advisory Committees who devoted their time and expertise, as well as the dedicated and talented staff at the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and to the Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner Patrick Hooker and New York Secretary of State Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, and the professional support of their teams to develop this excellent and far reaching Plan.

Sincerely,



Alexander B. Grannis



Carol Ash

Enclosure