



Natural
Heritage Trust

Annual Report

April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021

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Supporting parks,
preservation
and the environment
since 1968

2021

www.naturalheritagetrust.org

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Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to present our FY2020–2021 Year in Review, my first report as Executive Director of the Trust. Appointed in October 2020, it has been my honor to assume leadership of the organization as we work with our partners and friends to navigate the challenges and opportunities of recovering and reconnecting with each other as the COVID pandemic begins to wane. I look forward to our work together on behalf of New York’s state public lands.

This report highlights how the Trust has continued to successfully raise, manage, and administer funds to benefit public projects and programs in parks, historic sites and public lands throughout New York State. At the close of our fiscal year (March 31, 2021), the Trust held just over \$59 million in total assets, including more than \$32 million for permanent endowments. We managed over \$18 million in program and activity revenues, donations, grants, and corporate sponsorships, while expending approximately \$12.4 million in support of a wide variety of exemplary projects.

2020 was a year of tragic loss, unprecedented challenge and remarkable resilience. As New York State responded to the pandemic on every level, our public parks and open spaces provided an outlet for respite, relaxation, exercise, and relief. Since the beginning of the crisis, New York’s state parks were kept safely open thanks to dedicated staff and with the help of supportive and committed partners. As we emerge from the darkest days of the pandemic, our parks and outdoor spaces continue to be a ray of light. Families and friends are gathering again outdoors, enjoying our state’s green spaces, waterfronts and trails. As we rebuild after the pandemic, parks will continue to be there for all of us.

Our success has always been made possible by the steadfast commitment of our friends and patronage of our donors. We are deeply grateful to our agency partners—the [NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation](#) (OPRHP), the [NYS Department of Environmental Conservation](#) (DEC), and the [NY Department of State](#) (DOS)—and to the many individuals, businesses, foundations and communities for their investment in the Trust. You have been there for us and we are here—and will continue to be here—for you.

Gratefully,



Sally Drake
Executive Director



Board of Directors

Erik Kulleseid, Chair

Commissioner, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)

Erik Kulleseid has been serving as Parks Commissioner and as the Chair of NHT since 2019. Previously, Mr. Kulleseid served as Senior Vice President, Parks and Policy Program for the Open Space Institute. He co-founded the Parks Program (originally the Alliance for New York State Parks) at OSI, along with State Council of Parks Chair Lucy Waletzky and former State Parks Commissioner Carol Ash in 2010. During his tenure at OSI Mr. Kulleseid secured \$30 million in private and public funds to support improvements and expand recreational access to state parks, including the Jones Beach Revitalization Plan, the Humphrey Nature Center at Letchworth State Park, Thacher Park Center, Denny Farrell Riverbank State Park, and a number of transformational projects at Minnewaska State Park Preserve. Commissioner Kulleseid graduated from Yale College, has a Law degree from Stanford Law School and a Forestry Master's degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

Lucy R. Waletzky, M.D.

Chair, State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (SCOP)

Dr. Lucy Waletzky has been Chair of the Taconic Region Parks Commission since 2004 and Chair of the State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (SCOP) since March 2007. Under her leadership at SCOP, the Council's role has expanded with regional commissioners becoming more engaged in private fundraising, helping to build stronger community relationships and advocating to support and protect parks. Dr. Waletzky founded the Open Space Institute's Alliance for New York State Parks program in 2010, an initiative devoted to the restoration and support of New York's state parks. Through this partnership and her enduring support of other groups and organizations, Dr. Waletzky is, and continues to be, an unflinching and powerful voice in conservation, earning her numerous environmental awards. Most recently she was the 2018 recipient of OSI's Land Conservation Award.

Basil Seggos

Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

Since his appointment in 2015, Commissioner Seggos has managed programs promoting a clean, healthy and accessible environment and supporting world-class outdoor recreation on state lands and waters. In addition to advising the Governor on environmental policy and issues, he serves on a variety of boards including the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), Delaware River Basin Commission, the Great Lakes Commission, Hudson River Park, the NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC), the NYS Drinking Water Quality Council, the New York State Energy and Research Development Authority (NYSERDA), the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA), the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, NYS Energy Planning Board. He received his B.A. from Trinity College and earned his law degree from Pace University. Commissioner Seggos is a Captain in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Rossana Rosado

Secretary of State, Department of State (DOS)

Prior to being named the Secretary of State in 2016, Secretary Rosado was the first woman to serve as Editor and Publisher of the largest Spanish-language newspaper in the country, El Diario La Prensa, for which she earned numerous awards including an Emmy and a Peabody Award for Journalism. Secretary Rosado is equally accomplished in her roles in public service as she served on the board of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey from 2012 to 2015 and was recently reappointed to that role in 2017. She also chairs Governor Cuomo's Council on Community Re-entry and Reintegration of New Yorkers returning from prison, and served on Governor David Paterson's Task Force on Juvenile Justice. In addition to being a member of John Jay College's Foundation Board of Trustees since 2012, she was a Distinguished Lecturer at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice prior to joining the Cuomo administration. Secretary Rosado received her B.A. in journalism from Pace University.

2020 – 2021 Highlights & Accomplishments

Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park Breaks Ground

Construction has started on a first-of-its kind nature trail at Letchworth State Park designed for people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities. The Campaign to Build the Autism Nature Trail (ANT), with support from the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, has raised \$3 million toward a full \$3.7 million goal. Fundraising will continue to establish an endowment for long-term maintenance and programming on the mile-long trail, which is designed to address the sensory needs of people with ASD, a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication.



Groundbreaking of the Autism Nature Trail

Activities along the Autism Nature Trail will support and encourage sensory perception, while also providing enjoyable activities for visitors of all abilities and ages. Adjacent to the Humphrey Nature Center at Letchworth State Park, the trail and stations will be marked with signage telling visitors what to expect as they approach each curve of the trail and station – an important addition creating purposeful consistency and predictability for visitors.



Construction along Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park

The Campaign to Build the Autism Nature Trail at Letchworth State Park is supported by several organizational partners within New York State, including the Natural Heritage Trust, Camp Puzzle Peace, Letchworth State Park, Perry Central School District and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation. For more information or to contribute to ongoing work to fund quality programming at the site, visit: autismnaturetrail.com.

Jones Beach Energy and Nature Center Opens

The innovative Jones Beach Energy and Nature Center (JBENC) completed construction and opened to the public in September 2020 thanks to a partnership between New York State Parks, PSEG Long Island, the Long Island Power Authority, New York Power Authority, the Natural Heritage Trust and other state and local groups. The \$32 million year-round facility continues the State's revitalization of the historic park and will highlight the unique aspects of the park's topography, wildlife habitats and ecosystems.

Visitors will learn about New York State's ongoing clean energy initiatives through exhibitions and programming, and will be encouraged and empowered to practice environmental stewardship. The Trust is currently administering a grant from the Rauch Foundation to develop the "Energy & Us" secondary school curriculum. Developed with local educators, the curriculum will be offered at the JBENC to students from schools throughout the region, creating an immersive and hands-on educational experience focused on sustainability and conservation.



Ribbon cutting at the opening of the Jones Beach Energy and Nature Center

Empire State Trail Opens

In December 2020, Governor Cuomo announced the completion of the Empire State Trail, the nation's longest multi-use trail. The 750 total miles of trail—75 percent of which is off-road—are ideal for cyclists, hikers, runners, cross-country skiers and snow-shoers. The trail runs from New York City through the Hudson and Champlain Valleys to Canada, and from Albany to Buffalo along the Erie Canal. The Empire State Trail is expected to draw 8.6 million residents and tourists annually.



A riverside portion of the Empire State Trail

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Gateways

Along the Erie Canalway Trail section of the Empire State Trail, The Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation funded four gateways to provide a welcoming connection for trail visitors at key access points: Buffalo Harbor State Park in Buffalo; at the western entrance to the Erie Canal in Tonawanda; at Five Locks Park in Lockport; and in Genesee Valley Park in Rochester. The gateways include kiosks featuring local and statewide trail information, bicycle racks and shaded granite block seating. Each gateway features a "Ralph C. Wilson, Jr." memorial plaque honoring the late owner of the Buffalo Bills. The Foundation provided \$2.6 million dollars for the gateways.



New trail gateway at Buffalo Harbor State Park

Supporting Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Across Regions

With the support of a grant from the [Northern Border Regional Commission](#), (made possible in part with a Rural Business Development Grant from [USDA Rural Development](#)) the Trust is partnering with the [Department of State, State Parks](#) and the [Hudson Valley Greenway](#) to develop a marketing and promotional campaign to draw visitors and outdoor recreation enthusiasts to the sections of the Empire State Trail that connect communities to New York's northern border region. Recreational tourism has significant economic impact on the many small businesses and attractions located along the trail.



Trail entrance at Peebles Island State Park



A portion of the Genesee Valley Greenway

Western New York Greenways

The Trust continues to administer over \$13 million in [Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation](#) grant funding for Western New York greenway and trail projects, which will ensure completion of 30 miles of the [Genesee Valley Greenway](#) and allow planning and assessments for the [Niagara Shoreline Trails network](#). Funding from the Foundation is bridging the gaps in the [Niagara River Greenway](#), envisioned more than a decade ago as an unbroken trail along the Niagara River.

Connect Kids to Parks: Expansion Creates Ladders to the Outdoors

Building on the success of the [Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program](#) and with the support of the [Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation](#), the Trust has partnered with State Parks to launch the "Ladders to the Outdoors" program in Western New York. The program addresses the lack of equitable access to outdoor recreational spaces, recreational equipment, transportation, and skills development opportunities in under-served communities. To remove barriers to access, the intent of the program is to provide free equipment and instruction for robust programs like swimming, hiking, biking, boating, camping and sports.



Learn-to-Swim program

The Trust will continue to support the expansion of the Ladders to the Outdoors program. Donor support of the program will expand access to free recreational experiences at parks throughout the state.

The Trust also continued to support the [Learn-to-Swim program](#) at New York State parks. Although curtailed due to COVID, several programs were safely offered in 2020, providing young swimmers important access to instructional swim classes and safe, outdoor fun.

New Partnership Supports the Bike Library at Shirley Chisholm State Park

A new public-private partnership between State Parks and the Natural Heritage Trust—with generous funding from the [Con Edison Power of Giving program](#), the [Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy](#) and the [Bloomberg Philanthropies](#)—launched in early 2021 to support the third season of the Bike Library at [Shirley Chisholm State Park](#). This funding, administered by the Trust, will support the program's staffing and operations, including a program director, bike mechanics and instructors.



Park visitors preparing to enjoy the trails with bicycles borrowed from the Bike Library

The Bike Library loans free bikes with helmets so park visitors can explore 10 miles of car-free paths with beautiful vistas in the park. The Library will also offer bike riding classes for all ages—Learn to Glide and Ride—plus two Bike Swaps. In addition to donations to support the program, the Bike Library also accepts donations of bikes and supplies

Natural Heritage Trust Adopts Sustainable Investment Strategy

In January 2021, the Board of Directors approved an update to the Trust's investment policy that aligns our core mission of being responsible stewards of the environment and public lands with our investment strategy. By incorporating Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria into our investment decisions, the Trust encourages sustainable business practices and ethical behavior of companies and helps ensure that our fiscal stewardship reflects the environmental and social values inherent in our mission.



Learn more about all the projects supported by the Trust. Visit our new website and sign up for our newsletter.

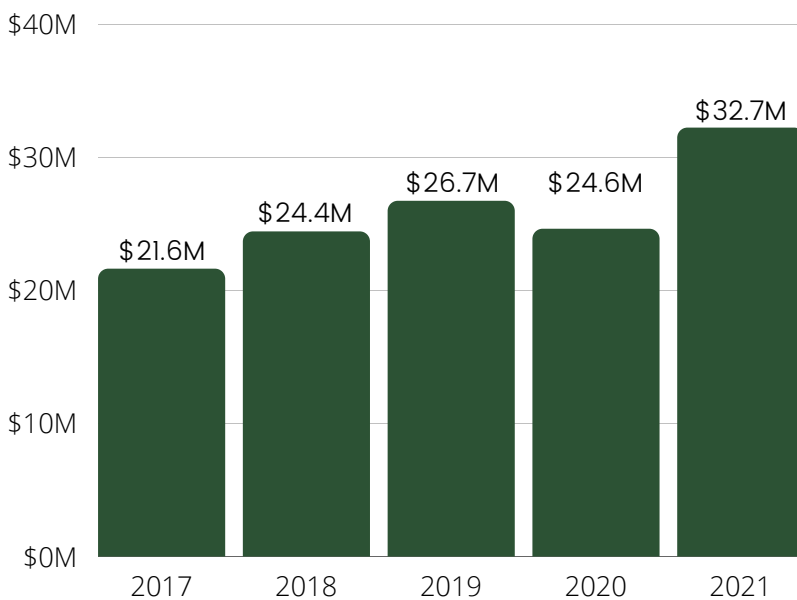
www.naturalheritagetrust.org

Financial Highlights

Balance Sheet – All Funds as of March 31, 2021

Assets	2021	2020
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,160,000	\$ 4,484,000
Investments (including Endowments)	57,998,000	48,088,000
Accounts & Other Receivables	101,000	104,000
Total Assets	\$ 59,259,000	\$ 52,676,000
Liabilities		
Due to Fiduciary Fund: State Parks & Environmental Conservation	53,130,000	47,402,000
Accounts & Other Payables	116,000	70,000
Long-Term Liabilities	5,322,000	3,169,000
Total Liabilities	\$ 58,568,000	\$ 50,641,000
Net Position		
Deferred Outflows/Inflows of Resources (Net)	(1,687,000)	(238,000)
Net Position	2,378,000	2,273,000
Total Liabilities and Net Position	\$ 59,259,000	\$ 52,676,000

Endowment Market Values

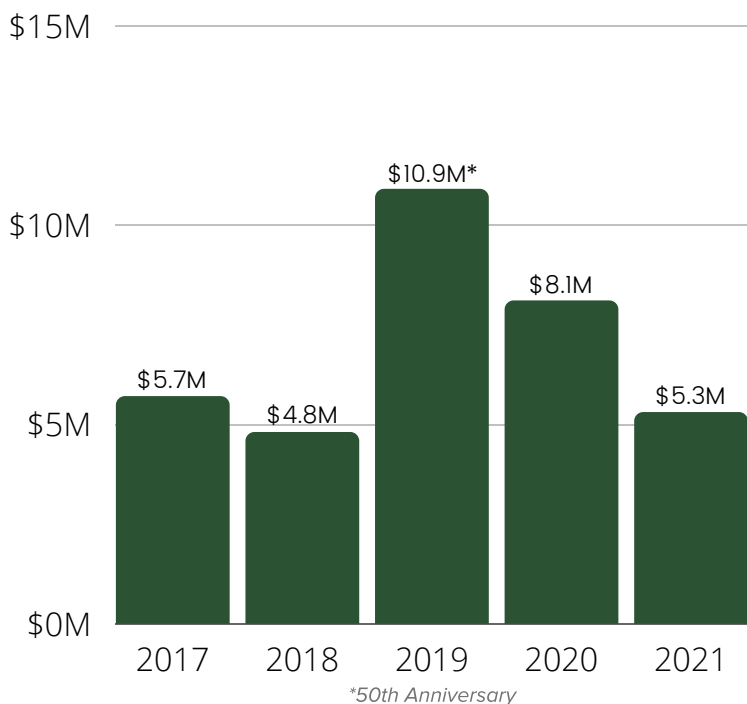


The NHT administers funds for thirteen permanently endowed parks and sites. Annual endowment distributions support the cost of operating, maintenance and public programming.

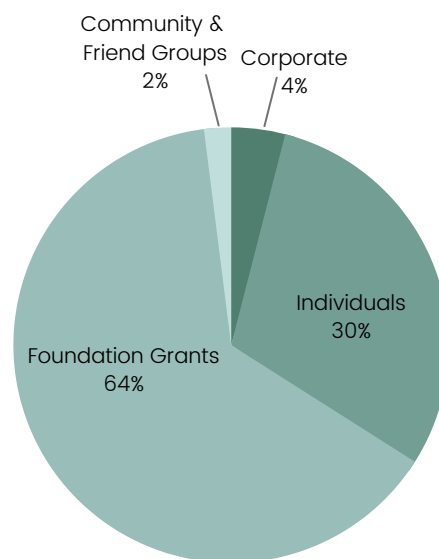
Summary of Changes – Fiduciary Funds
as of March 31, 2021

Additions	2021	2020
Gifts and Private Grants	\$ 5,256,000	\$ 8,114,000
Government Grants and Contracts	3,487,000	3,572,000
Activity and Program Income	246,000	1,069,000
Mitigation	572,000	658,000
Investment Income	527,000	631,000
Sponsorships	31,000	286,000
Other	42,000	112,000
Realized Gains on Investments	7,863,000	285,000
Unrealized Gains/(Losses)	170,000	(2,299,000)
Total Additions	\$ 18,194,000	\$ 12,428,000
Expenses	2021	2020
Program Support and Staff	4,732,000	5,307,000
Activity and Event Support	867,000	1,895,000
Capital Construction and Maintenance	4,494,000	1,832,000
Endowment Transfers	1,933,000	1,575,000
Professional Services	154,000	388,000
Promotional Material & Merchandise for Resale	110,000	343,000
Other	71,000	347,000
Total Expenses	\$ 12,361,000	\$ 11,687,000
Net Position	2021	2020
Change in Net Position	5,833,000	741,000
Net Position Beginning of Year	47,628,000	46,887,000
Net Position End of Year	\$ 53,461,000	\$ 47,628,000

Annual Growth in Contributions & Gifts



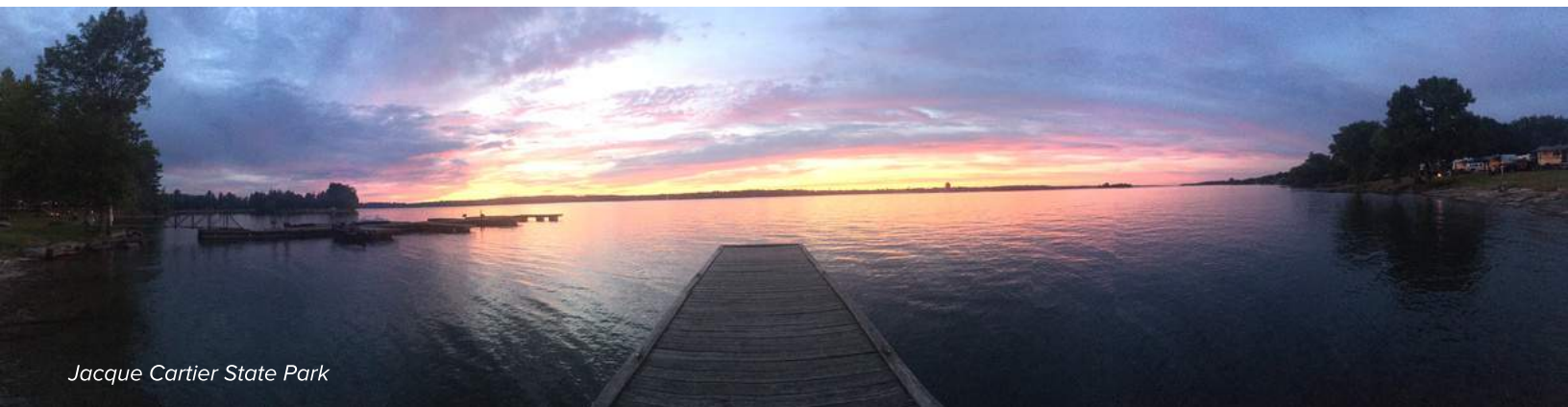
Support by Dollar Amount



Careful financial stewardship has guided the Natural Heritage Trust's mission for over 50 years, resulting in a robust organization prepared to expand the impact of private philanthropy and strategic partnerships throughout New York State.

Summary of Changes – Operating Funds
as of March 31, 2021

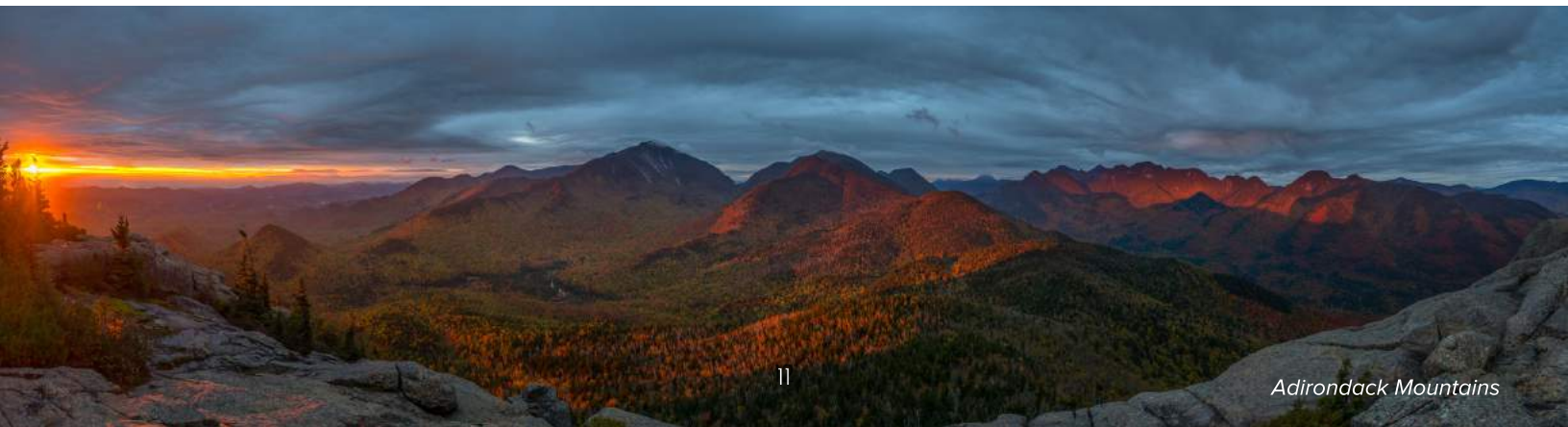
Revenue		2021		2020
Realized Gains on Investments	\$	919,000	\$	45,000
Administrative Income		531,000		582,000
Investment Income		497,000		507,000
Contributed (In-Kind) Services		17,000		28,000
Other		4,000		-
Unrealized Gains/(Losses) on Investments		(166,000)		213,000
Total Operating Revenues	\$	1,802,000	\$	1,375,000
Expenses				
Staffing		782,000		713,000
Accrued Costs		741,000		18,000
Professional Services		103,000		175,000
Office and Other		71,000		135,000
Total Expenses	\$	1,697,000	\$	1,041,000
Net Position				
Excess Revenues Over Expenditures		104,000		334,000
Net Position Beginning of Year		2,273,000		1,939,000
Net Position End of Year	\$	2,377,000	\$	2,273,000



Jacque Cartier State Park

Visit our website to
learn more & to
support our projects
and programs:

www.naturalheritagetrust.org





Public & Private Partnerships

The Natural Heritage Trust collaborates with the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of State (DOS) to identify sources of private investment to supplement state support for our natural, recreational and historic resources. Since 1968, millions of private dollars have been secured to support programming, capital projects, environmental and outdoor education, natural resource protection, and historic preservation throughout the state. The Trust is dedicated to building and sustaining relationships with private supporters to protect and enhance these programs and projects.

Endowments and Major Gifts

As of FY2020-21, the NHT managed over \$32 million in separate long-term investment/endowment accounts. The NHT manages 13 dedicated endowments statewide. NHT endowment funds are invested to provide an ongoing source of annual income. Earnings from these accounts support the restricted projects and programs for which the funds were raised. The NHT continues to actively expand its endowment portfolio.

Foundation Support

During FY2020-21, the NHT received support from a wide array of foundations, trusts and not-for-profit organizations. In some instances, the NHT receives annual distributions from entities with funding dedicated for the benefit of specific parks and facilities. In other cases, the NHT is awarded foundation grants in support of specific programs and/or projects.

Friends' Groups

As part of its overall mission, the NHT builds and maintains partnerships with a variety of Friends and other mission-congruent groups. The NHT collaborates in a number of ways—in some cases acting as a fiscal agent, and in some situations the NHT receives funds raised by the Friends in order to support a specific park or site.

Statewide Programming, Agency Initiatives and Collaborations

The NHT provides support to its state agency partners by soliciting and securing public and private funding via grants, donations, program income and other funds to enhance the agencies' abilities to carry out their respective missions by supplementing limited state resources. Through our cooperative relationships, the NHT provides agencies and friends groups with support in investment management and administrative functions for specific projects and programs.

Contributors, Supporters & Sponsors

Individuals

\$50,000+

The Estate of David Rockefeller
Gail Serventi
Susan Herrnstein
Lucy Waletzky, M.D.

\$25,000 - \$49,999

George VanArsdale & Elizabeth Osta
Rod & Loraine West

\$10,000 - \$24,999

Max Herrnstein
Minfong Ho & John Dennis
Judith Stoikov
Jean Verbridge

\$5,000 - \$9,999

Richard & Kathleen Remmer
Nicholas & Rosalie Delapi
Candace & John Marsellus
Connie Wohlars
Anne and Dr. Rob Quivey
Charles Chiampou

\$3,500 - \$4,999

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Gregory & Donna Lutz
Nellys Bard
Alison Dowling
Brienne Hegna
Debra Marano O'Reilly
John Sauer
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Ralph & Antoinette Cassetta
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Phylis Natoli
Michael & Dureen Panaro
Michelle Primiano & Ronald
DiGrugilliers
Don & Marcia Simon
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Joyce & Susan Witkowski

\$2,500 - \$3,499

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Lisa Perrella
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Evelyn Taylor
Matt Ventura
Alfred Mazza
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John Cheyne
Joan Mirviss
Braden Mulkeen
Peter & Heather Popovich
Nicolas & Joan Worontzoff

\$1,000 - \$2,499

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\$500 - \$999

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Allen & Dawn Gambler
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Susan Rock
Stephen Winding
John Allen
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Russell Stark
Joseph Teresi
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Monique Thoresz
Joan Torchia
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Cathleen White

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Kevan Knoche
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Nelson Sterner
Mary Toomey
Julio Luis Hernandez Delgado
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Barb Rosenfield
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Lydia Serota

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William Stavisky
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Mary & Peter Townend
Gary & Mary Warren
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John Winslow
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John Jakubowski
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Suzette Pondillo
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Mary Rowe
Barbara Torre
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Linda Damore
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Jane Boger
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Margaret Harfosh
Lori Hobday
Deborah Holson
Lisa Hoppe & David Arden
Nancy Jay
Natalie Jones
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Kiley Kemelman
Craig Kessler
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To Our Essential Workers

The Natural Heritage Trust is deeply grateful to the many essential workers at our partner agencies who worked tirelessly over the last year to keep public lands safe and open for all New Yorkers and who contributed to the State's pandemic response.

Thank you!





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