

Annual Report

April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022

Supporting parks, preservation & the environment in New York State since 1968



The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Gateway

Since 1968, the Buffalo Bills and former owner Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. have formed a bond with the people of Western New York. Throughout his 50-year ownership of the team, he committed his legacy not only through his contributions to the game of football, but also through his countless charitable endeavors.

Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson requested that a significant share of his estate, including the sale of the team, be used to continue his lifelong generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name—the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

With a grantmaking capacity that began with more than \$2 billion, the Foundation's mission is to invest in the quality of life of the people of the adopted home of Western New York and his lifelong home of Southern Michigan. In order to make an immediate, substantial and measurable impact in these communities, he directed the Foundation to spend down all of its funds by 2025.

On October 12, 2018, the Foundation made a historic commitment to support park & trails in honor of Mr. Wilson's 100th birthday. It was an opportunity to not just dream of, but realize, a stronger region and a more connected future through Mr. Wilson's generosity.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's Parks & Trails Initiative committed \$200 million specifically across Western New York and Southern Michigan regions to support the development of signature legacy parks and regional trails. The initiative supports the Foundation's efforts to connect communities, encourage healthy lifestyles and promote economic growth.

Eric County Parks

The Erie County Park system, established in 1925, is a substantial network that includes developed parkland, waterfront properties, and extensive conservation lands.

Just 2 miles north, Times Beach Natural Preserve, located right in the western gateway to the Niagara River, is a locally protected, 1,000-acre Bird Area where over 240 species of birds have been identified. The preserve has trails, boardwalks and observation blinds that provide viewing access to the bird and other ecological zones. The Preserve is easily accessed from the Empire State Trail and a shared-use path.

Black Rock Canal Park, pictured right, has a paved trail for walking, strolling and bicycling. There is also fishing docks, an off-leash dog park and a free boat launch for boats and jet skis. Black Rock Canal Park is located 8 miles north along the Empire State Trail route.

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2022

Natural Heritage Trust

www.naturalheritagetrust.org



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Natural
Heritage
Trust

The charitable partner of New York State's public lands & waters



Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to report on the activities of the Natural Heritage Trust over the last year in support of our mission to further conservation, outdoor recreation, historic preservation, and waterfront revitalization in New York State.

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, 2022), the Trust held just over \$65.8 million in total assets, including more than \$34.5 million for permanent endowments. We received over \$22.6 million in program and activity revenues, donations, grants, and corporate sponsorships, while expending approximately \$15 million in support of a wide variety of exemplary projects.

2021 was a year of rebuilding and adapting to the many changes the COVID pandemic has made to our lives. Steadfast has been the use and support of New York's public lands as places for New Yorkers to connect with nature, be active outdoors and spend time with family and friends. The Trust is honored to be a partner in New York's efforts to ensure that our parks, trails, historic sites, and open spaces are available to all. In 2021, we supported programs that expanded access to trails, connected communities with recreational activities, supported stewardship of our natural resources, and enhanced efforts to tell our state's diverse history.

As part of our effort to deepen our engagement with our supporters, partners, and friends, in 2021 the Trust launched a new and vibrant website that includes visually appealing information about the places and programs we support and modernized online donation system. As the charitable partner to New York's public lands, we will continue to enhance public awareness of our work to sustain and build support among all who value the outdoors. Please visit naturalheritagetrust.org to learn more, sign up for our newsletter, and follow us on Facebook.

In late 2021, NHT Board Member Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky retired after 14 years as Chair of the State Council of Parks. The Trust is grateful for her many years of service to the Board and for her unparalleled support of public lands, stewardship and natural resources that will be an inspiration for generations to come.

Our success has always been made possible by the 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 former 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.

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, and the 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.

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

Bryan Erwin is the current Chair of the Long Island State Park Commission, first appointed in December of 2008. He was reappointed in June of 2021 for a second seven-year term. In January of 2022, Bryan was named Acting Chair of the New York State Council of Parks. Bryan has a master's degree from Cornell University in International Trade and Finance. He was selected by President Obama in 2010 to run the Trade Advocacy Center, to facilitate US Government advocacy on behalf of U.S. exporters. While Director, Bryan advanced US commercial interests by leading 177 successful campaigns resulting in \$199.7B in new business for US companies, supporting 1 million U.S. jobs. He also drafted and facilitated Executive Order 13630, establishing an Interagency Task Force on Commercial Advocacy, signed by President Obama on December 6, 2012. He has spent much of his career promoting the growth of exports of U.S. goods and services around the world. A longtime advocate for State Parks, Bryan hails from the North Fork of Long Island where he and his wife, Danielle, are raising two daughters and a stuffed lemur, Coco.

Robert Rodriguez Secretary of State, Department of State (DOS)

Robert J. Rodriguez is currently serving as the Secretary of State. He was nominated by Governor Kathy Hochul to serve as New York's 68th Secretary of State. Mr. Rodriguez is a uniquely accomplished leader and former legislator, with civic and legislative successes that have been focused strategically on investing in and developing public-good infrastructure projects, creating good-paying jobs and addressing financial disparities for historically underrepresented minorities and low-income communities.

Our Impact

The Natural Heritage Trust administers grants and contracts with its agency partners that support efforts to protect, conserve and enhance the state's public lands.

Stewardship and Conservation

Projects at State Parks supported by the NHT include natural resource stewardship, environmental education programs, open space acquisition, and energy efficiency and sustainability initiatives. NHT supports the Department of Environmental Conservation's work to develop and manage several habitat improvement and public access projects throughout NYS, including the St. Lawrence River, Niagara River, and Hudson River. NHT supported programs at the Department of State protect, restore and educate the public about the South Shore Estuary and stewardship; further ecosystem-based management programs in the Ocean and Great Lakes watersheds, and protect natural resources along the state's coast lines.

Education

The NHT's partnerships support the development and implementation of environmental education through support of State Park nature centers, interpretive and educational staff and outreach programs in the Adirondack and Catskill areas, including the DEC Campership program which provides free or low-cost summer camp experiences that connect children with nature, conservation and ecology. The NHT also supports the state's historic site and interpretation programs, including efforts that ensure New York's diverse stories are told and represent the experiences of all communities.

Outdoor Recreation

The NHT supports a wide variety of programs in public lands that encourage park visitors to enjoy the outdoors through recreation including trail development and maintenance, youth sports and activities, athletic leagues, road races and sporting events, and outreach programs that provide instruction and equipment to break down barriers to access in communities throughout the state.





Better Together

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 FY2021-22, the NHT managed over \$34.5 million in separate long-term investment/endowment accounts. The NHT manages 17 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 FY2021-22, 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.

2021 – 2022 Highlights & Accomplishments

Niagara Falls State Park Welcome Center Breaks Ground

Construction is underway on a new, \$46 million state-of-the-art welcome center in Niagara Falls State Park. The facility will be a gateway to adventure along the Niagara River Corridor, greatly improving the visitor experience, complementing nature, and increasing the length of visits within the park in all four seasons. The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation will contribute \$8 million toward the project, through a grant administered by the NHT. The Wilson Foundation continues Ralph Wilson's remarkable legacy of support for tourism, parks and outdoor recreation, trail development, and community revitalization in Western New York.



Groundbreaking of new Niagara Falls Welcome Center in April 2021

Jones Beach Energy & Nature Center Launches Innovative STEAM Curriculum

In 2021, the Jones Beach Energy & Nature Center released *Energy & Us*, an interdisciplinary high school curriculum dedicated to exploring the relationships between people, energy, and the environment. With the beach itself as a classroom, *Energy & Us* encourages students to think critically about their role in the energy systems and environments that surround them. The development of the curriculum was supported by a generous grant from the Rauch Foundation, which also sponsors ongoing exhibitions and programming at the Center.



Lead educator and students at first annual Marine Camp

The Autism Nature Trail Opens!

Supported by more than \$3.3 million in private fundraising, the new Autism Nature Trail (ANT) at Letchworth State Park is a one-mile hiking loop that includes eight marked sensory stations, each designed to address a different sensory experience in a safe and supportive environment. Activities along the ANT support and encourage sensory perception and integration, while also providing enjoyable activities for visitors of all abilities and ages. Programs and maintenance of the trail will be supported by a long-term endowment held at the NHT, and through ongoing fundraising efforts led by the newly formed ANT Alliance.



Class from Perry Central School District visits the newly opened ANT



Various points along the newly completed Empire State Trail

Celebrating the Empire State Trail

With continued 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 NHT has worked with State Parks and the Hudson Valley Greenway to implement a marketing campaign to draw visitors and outdoor recreation enthusiasts to the sections of the Empire State Trail (EST) that connect communities to New York's northern border region. In 2022, the EST was a feature on PBS' Travels with Darley, showcasing communities, business and tourist attractions in the Champlain Valley, Mohawk Valley, WNY, and Hudson Valley.

The NHT joined State Parks, the EST and the nationally-known Boilermaker Race, to create the "Empire State Trail Challenge" – a four

month virtual challenge from April - July 2021, in which participants logged their miles to reach milestones tied to virtual progress along the Trail. Participants cumulatively logged 151,546 total miles hiking, running, and bicycling.

The NHT also supported the development of the extremely popular EST Map. State Parks distributes the EST maps to state and local government partners. The public can order printed copies from the EST website.

Western New York Trails and Stewardship

The Trust continues to administer over \$20 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, allow planning and assessments for the Niagara Shoreline Trails network, and improve trail access at large parks in the Niagara Region. In early 2022, the NHT was awarded a \$5.47 million grant from the Foundation to support phase 2 of the Quaker Area Recreation Trail in Allegany State Park, a trail connection project Artpark State Park and future development of the Genesee Valley Greenway in Allegany County.



Quaker Area Recreational Trail Construction



North Tonawanda Middle School students plant pollinator garden

In 2021, the NHT was awarded a grant from the Community Foundation of Greater Buffalo for a program to be implemented by the Niagara Riverway Greenway to build stewardship in the Greater Tonawanda community, restore natural riparian habitat, improve Great Lake water ecology, reduce river pollutants, and remove invasive species and add native ones by leveraging school communities and service organizations in a movement towards caring more about their environment and natural resources.

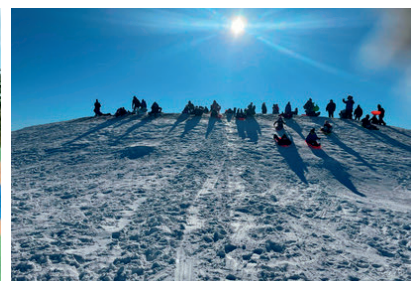
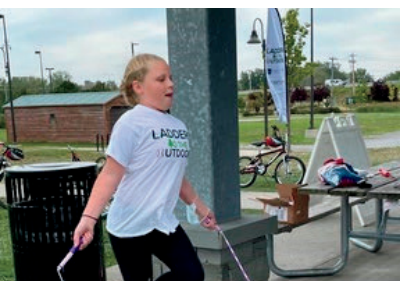
With the support of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the NHT has partnered with State Parks, the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission to develop a pilot program in Harriman State Park to advance the goals of the Ladders to the Outdoors initiative, aimed at breaking down barriers to accessing the outdoors. The AMC's Outdoor Engagement program encourages safe, responsible recreation and stewardship. The NHT is supporting interpretive program staff, a Junior Naturalist Guide, and supplies.

In Western New York, the Ladders to the Outdoors program supported by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation served nearly 2,000 youth from at least a dozen community organizations in its first full year of operation.

Expanding Ladders to the Outdoors



Ladders to the Outdoors 2022 Programming



Bike Library Rolls on at Shirley Chisholm State Park

The public-private partnership between State Parks and the NHT strengthened this year with generous funding from Secunda Family Foundation joining the Con Edison Power of Giving program, the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, and the Bloomberg Philanthropies to support the fourth 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 bike mechanics and instructors. 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 plus two Bike Swaps. In addition to donations to support the program, the Bike Library also accepts donations of bikes and supplies.



Skills Drills at the Bike Library at Shirley Chisholm State Park

Waletzky Fund Supports Stewardship and State Council of Parks Program



Retired SCOP Chair Lucy Waletzky

In late December 2021, Lucy R. Waletzky retired from her position as Chair of the New York State Council of Parks and as a Board Member of the NHT after 14 years of distinguished service. Her advocacy and support for New York's public lands are unparalleled and have helped to define the transformation of the State Parks System over the last decade.

Upon her retirement, Dr. Waletzky generously contributed to a fund within the NHT to support an Environmental Stewardship Fellowship and Program Coordinator for the State Council of Parks program. These positions will advance initiatives important to Dr. Waletzky, including the stewardship of natural resources in State Parks and the capacity of the State Council of Parks to continue its advocacy and support for parks and historic sites in every region of the state.



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

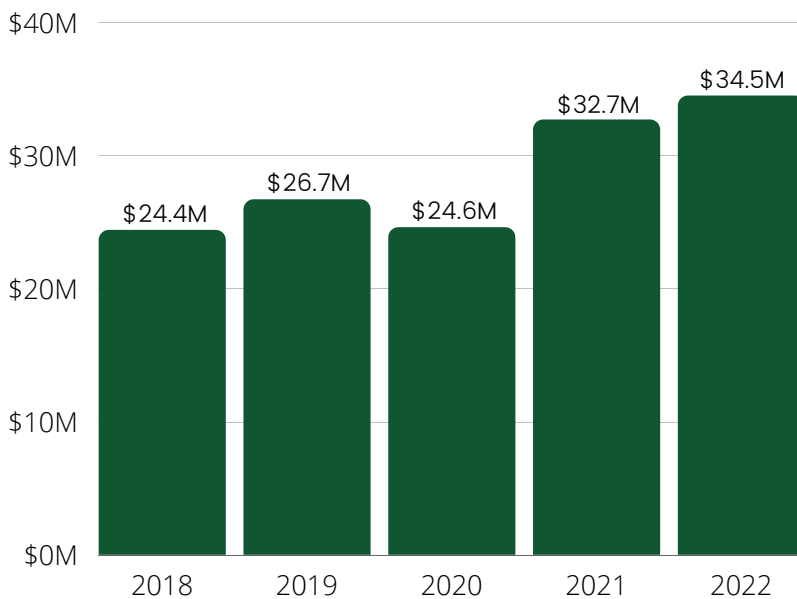
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Financial Highlights

Balance Sheet – All Funds as of March 31, 2022

Assets	2022	2021
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 5,263,000	\$ 1,160,000
Investments (Including Endowments)	60,519,000	57,998,000
Accounts & Other Receivables	87,000	101,000
Total Assets	\$ 65,869,000	\$ 59,259,000
Liabilities		
Due to Fiduciary Fund: State Parks & Environmental Conservation	61,020,000	53,130,000
Accounts & Other Payables	114,000	116,000
Long-Term Liabilities	1,875,000	5,322,000
Total Liabilities	\$ 63,009,000	\$ 58,568,000
Net Position		
Deferred Outflows/Inflows of Resources (Net)	910,000	(1,687,000)
Net Position	1,950,000	2,378,000
Total Liabilities and Net Position	\$ 65,869,000	\$ 59,259,000

Endowment Market Values

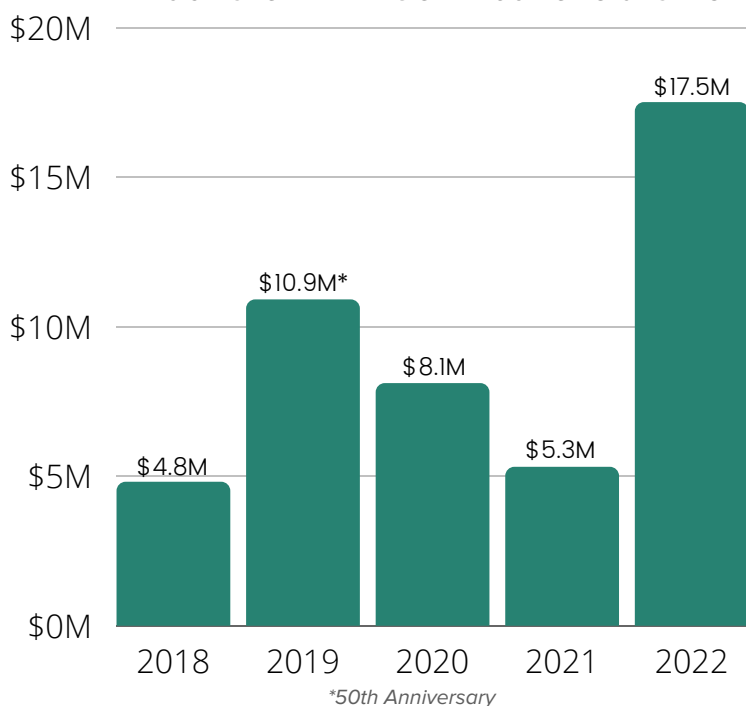


The NHT administers funds for seventeen permanently endowed parks and sites. Annual endowment distributions support the cost of operating, maintenance and public programming.

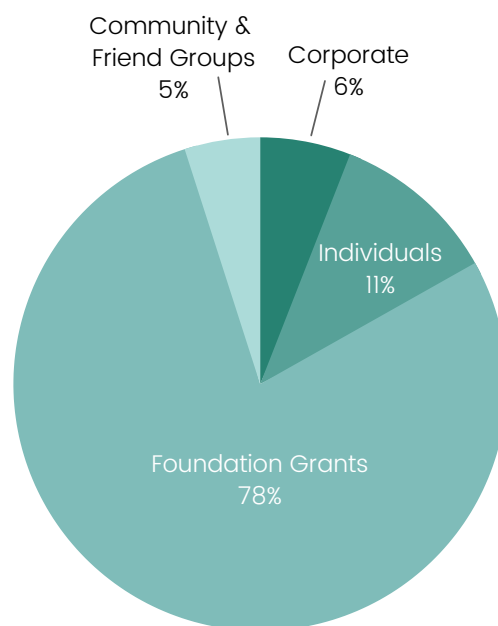
Summary of Changes – Fiduciary Funds as of March 31, 2022

Additions	2022	2021
Gifts and Private Grants	\$ 17,545,000	\$ 5,256,000
Government Grants and Contracts	3,473,000	3,487,000
Activity and Program Income	585,000	246,000
Mitigation	560,000	572,000
Investment Income	477,000	527,000
Sponsorships	100,000	31,000
Other	38,000	42,000
Realized Gains on Investments	219,000	7,863,000
Unrealized Gains/(Losses)	(310,000)	170,000
Total Additions	\$ 22,687,000	\$ 18,194,000
Expenses		
Program Support and Staff	4,830,000	4,732,000
Activity and Event Support	1,457,000	867,000
Capital Construction and Maintenance	8,029,000	4,494,000
Endowment Transfers	498,000	1,933,000
Professional Services	242,000	154,000
Promotional Material & Merchandise for Resale	162,000	110,000
Other	138,000	71,000
Total Expenses	\$ 15,356,000	\$ 12,361,000
Net Position		
Change in Net Position	7,331,000	5,833,000
Net Position Beginning of Year	53,461,000	47,628,000
Net Position End of Year	\$ 60,792,000	\$ 53,461,000

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, 2022

Revenue	2022	2021
Realized Gains on Investments	\$ 69,000	\$ 919,000
Administrative Income	340,000	531,000
Investment Income	487,000	497,000
Contributed (In-Kind) Services	14,000	17,000
Other	4,000	4,000
Unrealized Gains/(Losses) on Investments	(1,217,000)	(166,000)
Total Operating Revenues	\$ (303,000)	\$ 1,802,000
Expenses		
Staffing	749,000	782,000
Accrued Costs	(780,000)	741,000
Professional Services	102,000	103,000
Office and Other	54,000	71,000
Total Expenses	\$ 125,000	\$ 1,697,000
Net Position		
Excess Revenues Over Expenditures	(428,000)	105,000
Net Position Beginning of Year	2,378,000	2,273,000
Net Position End of Year	\$ 1,950,000	\$ 2,378,000



Pride at Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms State Park

*Visit our website to learn more & to
support our projects and programs:*
www.naturalheritagetrust.org



Ladders to the Outdoors Winter Programming



To Our Supporters

Thank You

We are honored to publicly acknowledge and sincerely thank our many donors, partners, and sponsors who contribute to the preservation of New York State's natural resources and historic treasures. This past year our supporters have given to the Trust in a multitude of ways and at a variety of levels. Contributions, both large and small, have enhanced programs and projects that directly benefit parks, conservation and historic preservation. We deeply appreciate the personal commitment and dedication of our generous supporters.

How to Get Involved

For over 50 years, thousands of individuals and private organizations have contributed financial resources that make the work of the Natural Heritage Trust possible.

Donations

You can make a tax-deductible contribution to the NHT in the form of cash, stocks, mutual fund shares, or donor-advised funds to support operations, programs and capital projects.

Memorial & Honorary Gifts

The NHT accepts memorial and tribute gifts to remember and honor family members and friends. These gifts can celebrate the special people, events and milestones in your life. When your memorial or tribute gift is received, the NHT will send a personalized letter to the person you indicate, notifying them of your thoughtful gift.

Legacy Gifts

You can also make a legacy gift by including the Natural Heritage Trust in your estate planning through a bequest or other means. The NHT offers options for permanently named endowments to support a specific park or region.

Employer Matching Gifts

Many companies will match your donation and you can send your employer's matching gift form with your donation.

AmazonSmile

Sign up for AmazonSmile, select the Natural Heritage Trust as your charity of choice, and then start shopping. Amazon will donate a portion of your purchase price to the NHT. Get started by following this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/16-1019635>

For more information, please contact Sally Drake at 518-474-2997. You can make a donation securely online at www.naturalheritagetrust.org or mail a check directly to:

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Albany, New York 12207

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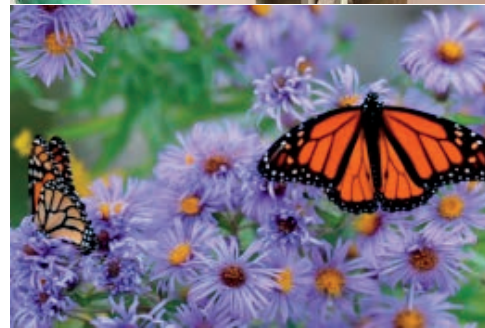
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