



Department of Environmental Conservation | Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation | Department of Health

# Outdoor Environmental Education and Recreation Plan for Children

FINAL REPORT

2025

Kathy Hochul, Governor





This report was prepared by staff in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Office of Outdoor Recreation and bureaus of Environmental Education and Recreation; Department of Health's Division of Chronic Disease Prevention and Center for Environmental Health; and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's Division of Environmental Stewardship and Planning, Planning and Analysis Bureau, and Environmental Education and Interpretation Section.

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# Executive Summary

In 2017, New York State enacted legislation (S3019/A735) that directed the Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to develop a long-term strategy for an outdoor environmental education and recreation plan. DOH; DEC; and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) collaborated to develop a blueprint for creating, developing, and retaining opportunities for outdoor play and learning for children in New York State based on an analysis of health and economic trends and their impact on access to outdoor spaces.

The *Outdoor Environmental Education and Recreation Plan for Children (Plan)* seeks to encourage and promote outdoor environmental education and recreational opportunities in New York State to promote healthy living. The Plan focuses on four broad objectives to achieve this vision and goal:

1. Inspire people to get offline, get outside, and visit green spaces;
2. Connect children and families with nature;
3. Provide ideas of what to do at home, school, childcare centers and family daycare settings, and community centers to promote a healthy lifestyle and enjoy nature; and
4. Promote policies and practices that support outdoor recreation, physical activity, and outdoor education throughout a person's lifespan and for generations to come.

The *Plan* serves as a guide to:

- Provide a variety of experiences in both formal and nonformal learning settings through outdoor recreation and education that increases students' environmental literacy and contributes to healthy lifestyles;
- Encourage children and families to participate in outdoor environmental activities and gain an understanding of the value of conservation, recreation, and preservation; and
- Provide information on efforts that can be supported at the State level as well as at local and regional levels by municipalities, schools, childcare centers and family daycare settings, not-for-profits, and others.

## How to Use This Document

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The *Plan* includes recommended actions for each objective along with potential strategies. The strategies should serve as a guide for agencies, municipalities, schools, not-for-profit organizations, and others as they consider expansion of existing—and development of new—programs. Strategies listed are examples of what could be offered but are not meant to be an exhaustive list. In some cases, potential strategies would need to be implemented by State entities; other strategies may be applicable to municipalities, schools, not-for-profit organizations, and other relevant organizations.

In keeping with New York State agency goals, and with consideration of feedback from stakeholders, agencies developing the *Plan* emphasized the need to apply an equity lens to each strategy to achieve the highest level of health, environmental education, and access outcomes for disadvantaged communities and those who have experienced injustices and socioeconomic and systemic disadvantages.

Please note that the majority of the report was drafted in 2023 and 2024. Thus, there may be more recent policies, legislation, or strategies that are not reflected in this report.

## Introduction

### Authorizing Legislation

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Chapter 276 of the 2017 Laws of New York directed DOH and DEC to develop a long-term strategy for an outdoor environmental education and recreation plan. The law focuses on creating, developing, and retaining opportunities for outdoor play and learning for children in New York State based on an analysis of health and economic trends and their impact on access to outdoor spaces. The legislation also directs agencies to develop the plan in consultation with health and environmental conservation advisory bodies and other stakeholders. Now complete, the agencies are submitting this report of findings and recommendations, including proposed legislation, to Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature. See Appendix A for the full Chapter 276 language.

## Developing the *Plan*

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Because OPRHP plays a critical role in outdoor recreation in the state, DEC and DOH engaged OPRHP in the early stages of the process.

DEC, DOH, and OPRHP worked on implementation of the legislation throughout 2017 and 2018. After a pause due to work on implementation of other State initiatives as well as disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the agencies reconvened in 2022. A draft set of goals, recommended actions, strategies, and tactics was finalized in November 2022.

Per the requirements of the law, State agencies identified existing health and environmental conservation advisory bodies created or authorized by statute and other organizations or persons who have a strong connection to outdoor environmental education and recreation—especially as it relates to children.

Two virtual meetings were held in March 2023 to provide information on the legislation; the development process; and the draft recommended actions, strategies, and tactics for the Plan. Meetings were offered at two different times to accommodate participant schedules. Forty-nine individuals representing 39 entities participated in total. A follow-up survey was sent to participants requesting one response per organization.

Feedback was used to improve and expand upon the Plan and possible strategies to be implemented. Most of the stakeholders indicated general approval of the proposed approach and recommended actions. See Appendix D for a summary of major cross-cutting themes identified by stakeholders during the webinars, followed by direct stakeholder feedback received for each strategy.

## Alignment with Other State Plans and Reports

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Many of the recommended actions and strategies in the *Plan* are directly aligned with existing State plans and initiatives that promote outdoor education and recreation. Those plans and initiatives are described below.

- **NYS Prevention Agenda 2025–2030 (Agency: DOH)**

The *Prevention Agenda* is New York's State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). It is a six-year initiative aimed at improving the health status of New Yorkers and reducing health disparities through a strong emphasis on prevention. The *Prevention Agenda* outlines key health priority areas and how these priority areas will be addressed to improve the health and well-being of all New Yorkers.

The *Prevention Agenda* is a tool for local public health agencies, hospitals, government agencies, community-based organizations, health care providers, advocates, educators, policymakers, and other critical partners to promote action, maximize resources, and prioritize strategies that advance health.

The *Prevention Agenda* emphasizes factors that influence health beyond traditional health outcomes, prevention strategies, medical care, and public health systems. The *Prevention Agenda* outlines 24 key priorities to address health conditions, behaviors, and systemic issues such as poverty, education, housing, access to quality health care, and the built environment. Addressing these issues is crucial for reducing health disparities. Included in the *Plan* are strategies to promote active transportation and physical activity.

- **Creating Healthy Schools and Communities Initiative (DOH)**

The Creating Healthy Schools and Communities Initiative establishes and supports sustainable healthy communities as places where it is easier to practice healthy behaviors. Twenty-five grantees work within high-need communities; engage a variety of partners and decision-makers; and develop and execute a comprehensive implementation plan in local catchment areas, including cities, towns, reservations, and neighborhoods.

Grant goals include:

- Implementing food service guidelines with worksites (e.g., hospitals; universities/colleges; private workplaces; and state, local, and tribal government facilities) and community settings (e.g., parks, stadiums, buildings/areas where community organizations meet) in multiple venues (e.g., cafeterias, cafés, grills, snack bars, concession stands, vending machines) to increase the availability of healthy foods. Food service guidelines are specific food, nutrition, and sustainability standards for food service operations that can be used to create a food environment that makes healthy choices easier for consumers;
- Improving policies, practices, and environments for physical activity and nutrition in early care and education settings, including childcare centers and family childcare homes. This is accomplished by providing training, technical assistance, and resources to early care and education providers to integrate age-appropriate physical activity throughout the day for infants, toddlers, and young children and to implement and embed nutrition best practices to ensure a healthy and positive eating environment;
- Implementing community design for physical activity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s [CDC’s] “Connecting Activity-Friendly Routes to Everyday Destinations”) interventions in municipalities to increase safe and accessible physical activity. This is accomplished through collaboration with partners to connect sidewalks, paths, bicycle routes, and public transit with homes, early care and education sites, schools, worksites, parks, and recreation centers by implementing master plans and land-use interventions or Complete Streets policies or plans. This is achieved by establishing new or improved pedestrian, bicycle, or transit transportation systems (i.e., activity-friendly routes) that are combined with new or improved land use or environmental design (i.e., connecting everyday destinations); and

- Implementing components of local school wellness policies for comprehensive school physical activity programs and a healthy nutrition environment as found in the CDC’s Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model.

- **NYS Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (OPRHP)**

OPRHP prepares the *New York State Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)* to provide policy direction and fulfill the agency’s recreation and preservation mandate. OPRHP is the State agency authorized by the Governor to represent and act for the State in working with the Secretary of the Interior for the purposes of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965, as amended. A revised *SCORP* is required every five years to maintain the State’s eligibility to receive funding from the LWCF.

The current report serves to:

- Describe the State’s demand for, and supply of, recreation resources (local, State, and federal);
- Establish and maintain public participation through outreach and surveys;
- Identify needs, trends, and new opportunities for recreation improvements;
- Provide an implementation program to meet the goals identified by stakeholders and elected leaders;
- Establish a statewide recreational planning framework to guide regional and local agencies in formulating plans, program policies, and priorities; and
- Develop and maintain adequate information in support of OPRHP’s planning, development, administration, coordination, and review functions for the *SCORP*.

The *2020–2025 SCORP* establishes eight programmatic goals based on the OPRHP mission, public responses, findings from research, data analysis, and input from the intra-State agency work group. These goals help shape the plan’s recommendations for action, which provide a path toward realizing the State’s long-term vision for recreation. The goals and recommendations are framed

by four overarching themes: (1) keep the outdoor recreation system welcoming, safe, affordable, and accessible; (2) improve the visitor experience; (3) restore and enhance the State outdoor recreation system, with an emphasis on conservation and resiliency; and (4) celebrate and teach history while promoting historic preservation efforts across the state.

The 2020–2025 SCORP goals are:

- Goal 1:** Connect children and adults with nature and recreation by improving access to outdoor recreation opportunities.
  - Goal 2:** Inform the public about outdoor recreation opportunities.
  - Goal 3:** Engage the public through programming.
  - Goal 4:** Reinvent and redesign the State’s outdoor recreation system.
  - Goal 5:** Build a twenty-first century green and resilient outdoor recreation system; repair and green aging infrastructure and open new facilities.
  - Goal 6:** Expand and protect natural connections between parks and open space.
  - Goal 7:** Restore, conserve, and protect the state’s biodiversity.
  - Goal 8:** Expand historic preservation efforts across the state, at the local and regional level, and cultivate pride of place.
- **NYS Open Space Conservation Plan (DEC, OPRHP)**  
The *New York State Open Space Conservation Plan (OSP)* serves as the blueprint for the State’s land conservation efforts. The *OSP* is revised periodically and ensures citizen input into the land-acquisition decisions made by DEC and OPRHP.

The 2016 *OSP* identifies specific actions to pursue these urgent priorities: promoting outdoor recreation; addressing climate change; ensuring clean water, air, and land for a healthy public and vibrant economy; and protecting, using, and conserving our natural resources and cultural heritage.

“Connecting Our Children with Nature” is a primary objective under Promoting Outdoor Recreation. Actions include:

- Continue to support partnerships that multiply efforts to inform the public about natural resource and environmental quality topics;
- Design improvements to DEC’s Environmental Education Centers and Camps, maximizing green features and their educational value, and making improvements at youth summer camps;
- Continue to expand youth programs within DEC’s Environmental Education Centers, such as offering weekly after-school outdoor discovery programs and weekend family-friendly programs;
- Promote environmental literacy and stewardship through place-based (i.e., Great Lakes, Hudson River, and Susquehanna River) experiential environmental education; and
- Continue and enhance I Fish NY and other outreach programs and educational fishing programs.

The *OSP* provides actions that can be taken in pursuit of each objective and a listing of associated programs and policies. The *OSP* also contains a statewide list of priority conservation projects that are eligible for funding through the New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) and other sources.

## Partner Efforts

DEC, OPHRP, and DOH work with many partners who are doing significant and meaningful work in the outdoor education and recreation sphere. From friends groups and statewide not-for-profits to environmental educators and recreation providers, these partners are filling critical needs in communities throughout the state and are key partners in carrying forward the strategies outlined in this document.

# Background and Context

## Obesity and Physical Activity

Obesity is a serious condition estimated to affect over 40% of adults and 20% of children throughout the United States (Stierman et al. 2021). Due to systemic and institutional barriers (Warren et al. 2022), obesity is more common among adults who are Black or Hispanic, have less education, have lower income, and/or live in rural areas (CDC 2022). Obesity is also more common among children who are Black or Hispanic, and children living in households with lower incomes (Stierman et al. 2021).

Regular physical activity can help children regulate body weight and reduce body fat (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS] 2018). It can also improve their academic performance, brain health, muscular fitness, heart and lung health, cardiometabolic health, long-term health, and bone strength (HHS 2018). HHS's *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans*

recommends that preschool-aged children (3–5 years old) should be physically active throughout the day, and children and adolescents (6–17 years old) should engage in 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity each day (HHS 2018). Throughout the U.S., 23% of children 6–17 years of age participate in 60 minutes of physical activity every day (Merlo 2020). The percentage of children who meet this guideline has decreased over time, and physical activity levels are lower for children who are Black, Hispanic, and/or female (Merlo 2020).

In New York State, 20% of children ages 6–17 participate in 60 minutes of physical activity daily (Warren et al. 2022). The percentage of high school students who meet this guideline has decreased significantly over the past 10 years, from 25% in 2011 to 19% in 2021 (see Table 1) (CDC 2021). Physical activity levels are consistently lower among high school students who are Black or Hispanic (CDC 2021).

## Trends in Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation trends are based upon several factors, such as availability of recreational resources like parks and open space, as well as the demand for various types of recreation activities. The *SCORP* is required to analyze the supply of and demand for public outdoor recreation. The *SCORP* process involves conducting a Public Outdoor Recreation Survey and the Park Professionals Survey to determine outdoor recreation resource needs of the public and park professionals. The *SCORP* also maintains an inventory of available outdoor recreation resources in the state. The benefits of conducting these surveys and maintaining the supply database on a consistent cycle is that trends can emerge.

Table 1. Trends in percentage of high school students in NYS who were physically active for at least 60 minutes a day on all 7 days

Active for 60 min a day all 7 days	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019	2021
All NYS high school students	25.1	25.7	23.3	23.2	19.2	19.4
White, non-Hispanic students	26.9	30.4	26.7	27.6	23.3	23.8
Black, non-Hispanic students	23.4	20.7	22.4	17.0	17.0	14.0
Hispanic students	24.8	17.0	18.4	18.3	15.3	16.8

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Trend Analysis Report for New York State (2021)



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Trends include emerging recreation activities that residents are participating in, the evolving demography of outdoor recreation participants, and changing demands for different types of recreational facilities over time.

For example, the 2020–2025 SCORP showed that general public survey participants 18 years and older are participating in more active types of recreation that include walking, jogging/running, day hiking, day uses such as picnicking, nature observation, playground use, dog walking, swimming, and biking. These activities are also the top activities of survey participants aged 65–85. While some of these activities are less active, the percentages of this age cohort are very similar to the statewide percentages. Another interesting observation is that two of the four activities involve trails.

**Table 2. Selection of recreational participation rates for the statewide and age 65–85 NYS population**

Activity*	Statewide Participation	Age 65–85 Participation
Walk	86.6%	86.2%
Park	86.0%	85.1%
Swim	68.9%	64.8%
Bike	49.3%	39.7%

\*NOTE: Activity definitions from the SCORP are below:

Walk - Walking for enjoyment/jogging/running on paths and trails, and day hiking.

Park - Relaxing in the park, picnicking, playground use, visiting nature areas and gardens, croquet, dog parks, etc.

Swim - Outdoor swimming, either in a pool (public or private), lake, ocean, or river.

Bike - Bicycling/mountain bikes whether on trails, established paths, off-road or on highways.

## Demographic Shifts

Along with overall population number changes, the demographic makeup of New York State is ever evolving. The New York State Master Plan for Aging reports that greater than 25% of the state’s population will be over the age of 60, and the 2020 Decennial Census reports that the population of New York State is continuing to become more diverse—ranking as the eighth most diverse state in the country. The largest racial group in New York State is still “White alone, not Hispanic or Latino.” “Hispanic or Latino” has had the largest increase of share of the population since the 2010 Decennial Census,

making it the second largest racial group in the state. An aging population, slowing population growth, domestic and international population movement patterns, and increased ethnic and racial diversity will have a large impact on shifting the State’s services to the evolving needs of New Yorkers.

## Economic Impacts

Outdoor recreation is big business and an important economic engine for many communities across the state. Outdoor recreation activities in New York State provided \$31.2 billion in economic activity in 2022 and supported 256,976 jobs (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2022). New York State ranks fourth in the nation on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) generated by outdoor recreation, and its outdoor recreation economy grew by 16.1% from 2021–2022. New York State also ranks in the top 10 nationally for camping, hiking, RVing, and bicycling.

## Health Care Costs Associated with Obesity

Adults with obesity have higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, arthritis, depression, sleep apnea, liver disease, kidney disease, gallbladder disease, pregnancy complications, cancer, and complications and serious illness from COVID-19 (Warren et al. 2022). Obesity costs approximately \$173 billion in national health care expenses and billions more in non-medical expenses each year (Hammond and Levin 2010).

Children with obesity have higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, hospitalization, and severe illness (Warren et al. 2022). Childhood obesity costs about \$14.3 billion in national health care expenses each year (Cawley 2010; Trasande and Chatterjee 2009). Because children with obesity are more likely to have obesity as adults, this economic burden will increase over time. Medical expenses for children with severe obesity are particularly high. Compared to children with healthy weight, annual medical expenditures for children with severe obesity are about \$900 higher per child (Kumar et al. 2023).

## Benefits of Outdoor Education and Recreation

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Numerous studies (DEC 2024) in the U.S. and around the world are exploring the health benefits of spending time outside in nature and green spaces, and specifically in forests. Exposure to forests and trees has been shown to boost the immune system; lower blood pressure; reduce stress; improve mood; increase ability to focus, even in children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); accelerate recovery from surgery or illness; increase energy level; and improve sleep.

For children in particular, spending time outdoors builds confidence, promotes creativity and imagination, teaches responsibility, provides different stimulation, gets kids moving, makes them think, and reduces stress and fatigue.

## Health Equity and Equity in Access and Inclusion

### Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health

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New York State defines health equity as achieving the highest level of health for all people and entails focused efforts to address avoidable inequalities by equalizing those conditions for health for those who have experienced injustices and socioeconomic and/or systemic disadvantages (Landau et al. 2020). Achieving health equity, eliminating disparities, and improving the health of all groups is an overarching goal for New York State agencies.

Health is influenced by many factors, which may generally be organized into five broad categories known as determinants of health: genetics, behavior, environmental and physical influences, medical care, and social factors. These five categories are interconnected. This *Plan* is focused on the environmental factors that influence health.

## Inequities in Access to Outdoor Education and Recreation

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According to a 2020 report by Conservation Science Partners, people of color, families with children, and low-income communities are most likely to be deprived of the benefits that nature provides (Landau et al. 2020). The racial and economic disparities in the destruction and protection of nature in America is sometimes called “The Nature Gap” (Rowland-Shea et al. 2020). Communities of color are three times more likely than white communities to live in nature-deprived places, and parks serving primarily nonwhite populations are half the size and five times more crowded than parks that serve majority white populations. The impact of policies recognized as systemic racism—such as redlining and inequities in access to green space—on enjoyment of the outdoors was further highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In New York State in 2017:

- Eighty-seven percent of people of color were living in a nature-deprived area, in stark contrast to just 9% of white people; and
- Seventy-four percent of people living in low-income communities were in a nature-deprived area, in contrast to 47% and 48% for high- and middle-income communities, respectively.

## Goals and Objectives

**Vision Statement: Connecting children and nature promotes healthy lifestyles and develops future environmental stewards for New York State.**

The *Plan's* goal is to encourage and promote outdoor environmental education and recreational opportunities in New York State to promote healthy living. The *Plan* focuses on four broad objectives to achieve this vision and goal:

1. Inspire people to get offline, get outside, and visit green spaces;
2. Connect children and families with nature;
3. Provide ideas of what to do at home, school, childcare centers and family daycare settings, and community centers to promote a healthy lifestyle and enjoy nature; and

- Promote policies and practices that support outdoor recreation, physical activity, and outdoor education throughout a person's lifespan and for generations to come.

The *Plan* serves as a guide to:

- Provide a variety of experiences in both formal and non-formal learning settings through outdoor recreation and education that increases students' environmental literacy and contributes to healthy lifestyles;
- Encourage children and families to participate in outdoor environmental activities and gain an understanding of the value of conservation, recreation, and preservation; and
- Provide information on efforts that can be supported at the state level, as well as at local and regional levels by municipalities, schools, childcare centers and family daycare settings, not-for-profits, and others.

## How to Use This Document

Below are recommended actions for each objective along with potential strategies. The strategies should serve as a guide for agencies, municipalities, schools, not-for-profit organizations, and others as they consider expansion of existing—and development of new—programs. Strategies listed are examples of what could be offered but are not meant to be an exhaustive list. In some cases, potential strategies would need to be implemented by State entities; others may be applicable to municipalities, schools, not-for-profit organizations, and other relevant organizations.

In keeping with New York State and State agency goals, and with consideration of feedback from stakeholders, DEC, OPRHP, and DOH emphasize the need to apply an equity lens to each strategy to achieve the highest level of health, environmental education, and access outcomes for disadvantaged communities and those who experience injustices and socioeconomic and systemic disadvantages. Efforts to bolster justice and equity in other State plans related to the outdoors, such as the *OSP*, are also underway and complement those outlined below.

## Objective 1: Inspire People to Get Offline, Get Outside, and Visit Green Spaces

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### Recommended Action 1.1: Coordinate and simplify promotions, messages, and outdoor activities via websites, social media, community-based networks, and local leaders.

Potential strategies include, but are not limited to:

- Enhance digital and print outreach materials and marketing efforts to make it easier for the public to find places to go and learn about activities. For example:
  1. Highlight examples of outdoor destinations that are accessible for people using mobility assistive devices or playgrounds that have inclusive planning for children with disabilities.
  2. Promote outdoor programs and activities through email newsletters, social media, and blogs.
  3. Update websites to easily identify places to visit.
  4. Continue to emphasize “Places to Go” in DEC’s *Conservationist* magazine for all ages and abilities and all parts of the state.
  5. Continue to promote OPRHP’s New York State Parks Explorer app.
  6. Revise and reissue popular *Conservationist for Kids* issues (e.g., birding, fishing, connecting with the outdoors) and create additional issues to inspire students to get outside.
- Expand events to celebrate statewide and national outdoor events like Earth Day, National Get Outdoors Day, First Day Hikes, Black Birders Week, Pride Month, Arbor Day, I Love My Park Day, Girl Scouts Love State Parks Day, etc.



- Create and enhance motivational activities that are audience appropriate to incentivize visitation and participation in the outdoors. Examples include:
  1. Create downloadable “passports” for families to record their visits to natural areas.
  2. Host challenges to encourage and incentivize outdoor activities. These can be activity-specific or location-based (e.g., birding challenge, area preserves challenge, wellness challenge); include messages on responsible recreation, if applicable.
  3. Blend technology with getting outdoors, such as through geocaching and digital photography, to encourage outdoor experiences.
- Ensure materials and promotions are culturally appropriate and relevant, available in multiple languages, and reflective of the diversity of New Yorkers (including diversity in age, gender identity, disability, race, ethnicity).
- Utilize partnerships with diverse community organizations and leaders to better reach people where they are (e.g., reach diverse audiences through local radio advertising in Spanish, non-traditional media outlets, hyper-local media outlets, faith-based organizations, and social service agencies).

### **Recommended Action 1.2: Conduct trainings, outdoor workshops, and professional development opportunities for teachers, youth workers, and early care and education centers and family childcare settings.**

Potential strategies:

- Conduct workshops such as Project WILD, Project Learning Tree®, and Water Education Today (WET).
- Correlate trainings with New York State Learning Standards and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).
- Offer place-based trainings and other workshops for formal and nonformal educators.

- Train interns, docents or guides, and volunteers to provide first-hand experiential environmental education and recreation opportunities for students.
- Develop sources of information (handouts, videos, etc.) for teachers or youth workers, including explanations on how to manage and teach students outdoors, and outdoor recreation activity skills such as Leave No Trace™, compass use, and hiking in groups.

### **Recommended Action 1.3: Promote wellness and emphasize health benefits of contact with nature.**

Potential strategies:

- Work with physicians, pharmacies, school nurses, and youth-serving organizations to recommend that children and adults get outside (i.e., “prescriptions”) coupled with information on places to go and how to access resources.
- Increase awareness of how contact with nature promotes wellness.
- Educate the public on how to recreate safely and protect themselves (e.g., wildlife encounters, tick-borne diseases, poison ivy, Leave No Trace™, etc.) so that children and families are more comfortable and prepared to enjoy time outdoors.
- Encourage community and home gardens by offering trainings with local youth clubs, schools, and youth employment organizations.

## **Objective 2: Connect Children and Families With Nature**

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### **Recommended Action 2.1: Improve accessibility of facilities and programs for people of all ages and abilities.**

Potential strategies:

- Meet and exceed, where feasible and consistent with land regulations, the accessibility standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) for public facilities and programs.

- Plan for equitable and inclusive design with input from stakeholders and, in cases where accessibility is not feasible, aim to establish and promote alternative opportunities to allow those who cannot access these spaces to similarly enjoy the benefits of public lands.
- Make all programs accessible to people with disabilities, as practicable, and include the availability of adaptive equipment.
- Increase equitable access to bike paths, hiking trails, open green spaces, recreational facilities, beaches, pools, and playgrounds, particularly among historically marginalized groups and underserved communities with limited access to recreation and green spaces.
- Offer free or low-cost programs in evenings and on weekends.
- Make information available in multiple languages and in accessible formats.

### **Recommended Action 2.2: Connect schools, youth-serving organizations, and early care and education centers and family childcare homes with green spaces, especially in urban and suburban locations and environmental justice areas.**

Potential strategies:

- Promote and enhance the State’s Connect Kids Transportation Grant program (Connect Kids).
- Work with urban transportation systems to bring people to more remote areas, especially for special events and festivals.
- Work with municipalities and housing authorities to establish age-appropriate playgrounds and green spaces for children of all ages, including those with disabilities, to be active.

### **Recommended Action 2.3: Provide natural play areas.**

Potential strategies:

- Assist schools, early care and education programs, parks, and nature centers in developing plans to construct natural play areas on-site.
- Provide early care and education providers with resources to establish childhood outdoor play and learning environments.
- Consider inclusive planning for children with sensory and/or intellectual/developmental disabilities when designing outdoor play and learning environments.

### **Recommended Action 2.4: Provide opportunities for students and children in early care and education centers and family childcare settings to learn where food comes from and to develop healthy eating habits.**

Potential strategies:

- Participate in farm-to-school and early care and education activities, such as gardening experience, food and nutrition education, and access to locally grown produce.
- Create gardens at schools, early care and education centers, and family childcare settings.
- Provide opportunities for including New York State healthy products on menus and for taste testing.
- Incorporate messages about local food in Learn-to-Fish and National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP).
- Highlight State facilities where schools can learn about farming utilizing Connect Kids, such as Stony Kill Farm and Clay Pit Ponds State Park Preserve.

## Recommended Action 2.5: Offer outdoor experiences for youth at schools, after-school programs, summer day camps, and in early care and education centers and family childcare settings.

Potential strategies:

- Train youth service workers to conduct after-school programs with hands-on activities that teach environmental concepts, such as DEC's 10-week After School Conservation Club program.
- Replicate Hudson River Estuary Program school lessons using scientific data from local areas.
- Expand "Day in the Life" of local rivers programs to give students first-hand experience in collecting and analyzing data related to water resources.
- Offer opportunities to participate in programs such as Envirothons®, BioBlitzes, and DEC and OPRHP Conservation Field Days.
- Enhance youth residential summer programs.
- Expand summer day camps offering environmental programs and healthy lifestyles.
- Partner with and support municipalities and not-for-profits to provide opportunities at summer camps.
- Offer additional youth hunts and fishing clinics in partnership with local organizations.
- Work with early care and education centers and family childcare homes to develop and implement policies that provide daily age-appropriate outdoor play for all children in care.
- Work with special education and literacy support specialists to develop a nature-focused program for children with additional support needs.

## Recommended Action 2.6: Provide visitors to public lands and facilities, such as campgrounds and nature centers, with opportunities to learn outdoor skills and understand environmental concepts.

Potential strategies:

- Provide free or low-cost guided programming to encourage people to try a new activity and develop new outdoor skills. For example:
  1. Expand, promote, and offer more programs for families.
  2. Offer guided hikes at parks, education and nature centers, and other state properties.
  3. Expand the State's First-Time Camper program.
  4. Conduct family-based programs based on Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) and Taconic Outdoor Education Center models that teach outdoor skills like using a map and compass, cooking, and survival.
  5. Host events like NYS' Get Outdoors & Get Together Day that provide opportunities to try activities like fishing, archery, paddling, hiking, and birding in an open house-type setting.
  6. Expand OPRHP's Ladders to the Outdoors program.
  7. Expand and promote learn-to-swim programs through initiatives such as New York Statewide Investment In More Swimming (NY SWIMS).
- Staff facilities and train educators, docents or guides, and volunteers on environmental education and interpretation.
  1. Staff State campgrounds with environmental educators or others to conduct the Nature Recreation Program, OPRHP's Explorer Club, and other interpretive programs.
  2. Train educators, docents or guides, and DEC Campground Ambassadors in programs like I BIRD NY and I FISH NY.

- Create and promote more biking, hiking, and nature trails connecting or adjacent to State campgrounds.

### **Objective 3: Provide Ideas of What to Do at Home, Schools, and Early Care and Education Centers and Family Childcare Homes to Promote a Healthy Lifestyle and Enjoy Nature**

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#### **Recommended Action 3.1: Develop and promote resources and websites for places to visit, how to be safe, and age-appropriate activities.**

Potential strategies:

- Increase awareness of existing resources and those developed during COVID-19 for caregivers and others to utilize while at home. For example, DEC’s “Caregiver, Parent, & Educator Resources While At Home” webpage, the #AdventureAtHome virtual series, and the Junior Naturalist Program.
- Increase awareness of resources that highlight places to go, such as OPRHP’s State Parks Explorer app and DEC’s New York State Birding Trail map.
- Provide information on winter recreation to promote year-round activity (e.g., First Day Hikes, ice fishing, snowshoeing, etc.).

#### **Recommended Action 3.2: Develop, sponsor, and expand wellness programs and healthy lifestyle initiatives for schools, early care and education centers and family childcare homes, places of worship, community organizations, youth development agencies, nature centers, etc.**

Potential strategies:

- Offer online webinars, lesson plans, and strategies.

- Conduct trainings for educators.
- Create online guidance for developing natural areas (nature trails; natural play areas; and gardens for pollinators, wildlife, or food) that encourage students to get outside.
- Encourage family-based nature clubs.
- Partner with youth organizations, parent-teacher associations, scouts, and the YMCA to encourage family participation.

#### **Recommended Action 3.3: Increase physical activity at schools, early care and education centers and family childcare settings, and community centers.**

Potential strategies:

- Encourage schools to implement at least 20 minutes of active recess time, preferably outside, in addition to regular physical education classes.
- Provide training and technical assistance opportunities for school and early care and education staff to encourage promotion of age-appropriate physical activity for children of all abilities. For example, provide physical education teachers with training on archery through DEC’s New York NASP and require staff to participate in Natural Learning Initiative’s “Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments” trainings and technical assistance opportunities.
- Encourage schools to include bike-skills workshops as part of physical education or other programming.
- Encourage schools to provide learn-to-swim opportunities.



## Objective 4: Promote Policies and Practices That Support Lifelong Outdoor Recreation, Physical Activity, and Outdoor Education for Generations to Come

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### Recommended Action 4.1: Improve community environments that support active transportation and recreational physical activity for people of all ages and abilities.

Potential strategies:

- Implement a combination of:
  - a. One or more new or improved pedestrian, bicycle, or transit transportation system components (i.e., activity-friendly routes—street pattern design and connectivity, pedestrian infrastructure, bicycle infrastructure, public transit infrastructure and access); with
  - b. New or improved land use or environmental design components (i.e., connecting everyday destinations—mixed land use, increased residential density, community or neighborhood proximity, parks and recreational facility access) while drawing attention to rail trails, improved land-use areas, and new transit lines that connect people to accessible outdoor resources.
- The combination of strategies from a) and b) can be implemented through comprehensive transportation plans or Complete Streets resolutions, policies, or ordinances to connect sidewalks, multiuse paths and trails, bicycle routes, and public transit with homes, early care and education sites, schools, worksites, parks, recreation facilities, and natural or green spaces. Work with local legislatures, community leaders and members, and local business partners to identify specific needs of communities.

### Recommended Action 4.2: Create school and early care and education centers and family childcare home environments that support opportunities for outdoor physical activity and recreation for people of all abilities.

Potential strategies:

- Implement components of the CDC’s Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs to increase opportunities for outdoor physical activity through:
  1. Before- and after-school walking and biking programs;
  2. Outdoor physical education, intramurals, and recess opportunities; and
  3. Physical activity breaks outside the classroom.
- Improve policies, practices, and environments to increase opportunities for children in early care and education centers and family childcare homes to participate in outdoor physical activity:
  1. Provide daily structured and unstructured (active play) opportunities for outdoor play, for all children, from birth to 5 years old;
  2. Provide a safe outdoor play area/ environment for children of all ages and abilities to be physically active; and
  3. Establish written outdoor physical activity policies that include the amount of time, space, and type (structured vs. unstructured) of physical activity required daily for all children, from birth to 5 years old.

### **Recommended Action 4.3: Maintain and expand infrastructure and staffing at park, recreation, and environmental education facilities to attract and welcome diverse visitors and keep them coming back.**

Potential strategies:

- Continue to support and provide funding for DEC's Adventure NY and OPRHP's Parks 2020 initiatives to rehabilitate aging State infrastructure, make facilities accessible to people with disabilities, fund environmental educators and interpreters to guide visitors' experiences, and expand and enhance access to the outdoors.
- Continue funding support for local parks through the EPF's Municipal Park Grants.
- Continue funding for zoos, botanical gardens, and aquaria in the EPF.
- Continue implementing the ADA Transition Plans utilizing ABA guidelines and universal design principles to expand, enhance, and create environments usable by all visitors regardless of ability or disability level.

### **Recommended Action 4.4: Increase access for people of all ages and abilities to outdoor places for physical activity.**

Potential strategies:

- Implement and/or promote a combination of community walking, wheeling, or biking programs, Open Streets programs, joint-use agreements with schools and community facilities, and Safe Routes to School programs, including programs that provide opportunities to experience adaptive equipment for physical activity.
- Increase park and recreation facility safety and decrease incivilities (e.g., litter, graffiti, dogs off leashes, unmaintained equipment), and promote new or upgraded park or facility amenities.

- Establish universal design features (i.e., playgrounds and structures; walking loops; recreation fields; outdoor physical activity equipment, fitness stations, or zones; skate zones; picnic areas; concessions or food vendors; and pet waste stations).
- Collaborate with housing authorities where families reside to establish safe, age-appropriate outdoor spaces so children of all ages can enjoy outdoor play.
- Develop supervised activities or programs combined with on-site marketing, community outreach, and safety education.

(Note: "Parks" can include mini-parks, pocket parks, or parklets; neighborhood parks; community and large urban parks; sports complexes; and natural resource areas.)

### **Recommended Action 4.5: Support initiatives that engage the public in the stewardship of natural resources, fostering a lifelong connection to the outdoors.**

Potential strategies:

- Promote participation in state and national volunteer stewardship events and responsible and sustainable recreation. Examples include:
  1. I Love My Park Day
  2. International Coastal Cleanup Day
  3. National Arbor Day
  4. National Public Lands Day
  5. Earth Day
  6. Canal Clean Sweep
  7. Love Our New York Lands education
  8. Leave No Trace™ education
  9. National Hunting and Fishing Day
  10. Free Fishing Days
  11. Girl Scouts Love State Parks Day



- Continue supporting the EPF and the stewardship and access programs funded through the EPF. For example, Connect Kids; Municipal Park Grants; NYS Park and Trail Partnership Program grants for OPRHP and DEC Friends groups; and the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquaria Capital Program.
- Increase the ranks of State environmental educators and other staff to conduct introductory experiences.
- Expand AmeriCorps and Conservation Corps partnerships, including State Parks Corps, Hudson Valley AmeriCorps, Trail Conference Conservation Corps, Adirondack Corps Community Crews, Trees New York, and similar programs.
- Expand nature-based citizen science opportunities such as BioBlitzes and The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada’s Project FeederWatch.
- Connect children and youth with field biologists and environmental stewards.

## Recommendations

In order to achieve the objectives above, DEC, OPRHP, and DOH recommend the following broad policy actions:

- 1. Demonstrate broad support for creating, developing, and retaining opportunities for outdoor play and learning in New York State through creation of a Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights.** A Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights illustrates what equitable access to nature should look like and establishes a common foundation and high aspirations for nature connection in a community. States that have implemented a Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights include Minnesota and Indiana.

New York State can further promote access to nature through support for local municipal resolutions that follow the Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights model. Many municipalities across the country have passed Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights resolutions—including Salt Lake City, Utah; Baltimore, Maryland; and San Francisco, California—and have used the process as a springboard for launching

new initiatives and programs, supporting partnerships, and advancing efforts to improve equity and inclusion.

In New York State, the City of Rochester passed a Children’s Bill of Rights as a guide to enable children and adults of Rochester to develop healthy, active lifestyles by spending more time outdoors (Rochester Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights). The effort is a collaboration with the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council, Youth Voice One Vision, youth from the Urban Ecologist Program of the Seneca Park Zoo Society; and support from the Cities Connecting Children to Nature national initiative.

- 2. Consider working with the Department of Civil Service to identify titles or amendments to titles to support environmental and recreational education and interpretation.**

While there is an Environmental Educator Civil Service title series, DEC and OPRHP must often use other titles to fulfill their environmental education work. The Environmental Educator series does not offer a traineeship, and it is not included in the Professional Career Opportunities (PCO) test. OPRHP also has many workers in titles who are doing environmental education work but do not qualify for promotion under the current Civil Service structure.

One option is adding an Education/Recreation parenthetical to the Environmental Program Specialist series and ensuring transferability to designated similar titles. DEC already has a number of Environmental Program Specialists conducting outreach and education, and the series is used by several State agencies. Additionally, long-term seasonal employees at DEC and OPRHP who are doing environmental education work and qualify for the PCO test would have new opportunities for retention and promotion.

This and other ideas should be explored with the goal of allowing for a larger and more diverse candidate pool; enabling people trained by DEC and OPRHP through various AmeriCorps and internship programs to more easily get on a list for environmental education jobs, instead of having to wait many years for an exam to be given; and allowing for people to more often be appointed or promoted permanently instead of provisionally. Creating a well-qualified workforce will be key to implementing the recommendations in this report.

**3. Continue to enhance State funding and staffing to support implementation of initiatives, both at the State and local level, through government and not-for-profit partners.** Many of the above-referenced State initiatives are funded through existing sources, including:

- New York State’s EPF is a source of funding for capital projects that protect the environment and enhance communities. The EPF also supports the stewardship of public lands, including State parks and millions of acres of public lands throughout the state. Through partnerships with volunteer organizations, State agencies use stewardship funding to manage trails and lands, protect natural resources, preserve wildlife habitats, make critical capital improvements at parks and campgrounds, educate students about conservation, and provide access to persons with disabilities. Several New York State agencies administer the funds and award grants to eligible State-led projects or to partnerships, either between State agencies and municipalities or between State agencies and not-for-profit organizations;
- NY Works provides capital funding for DEC and OPRHP to support critical infrastructure projects; and

- DOH provides funding for obesity and diabetes prevention through a New York State appropriation that supports local implementation of policies, systems, and environmental approaches to improve physical-activity safety and access for pedestrians and bicyclists in communities, and physical-activity opportunities for children and adolescents in early care and education settings and schools. Expanded available funding could increase opportunities for outdoor physical activity, such as supporting work with housing authorities to provide green space for outdoor play for children of all ages and abilities.

- 4. Establish an interagency transportation council and funding mechanism to address transportation barriers to accessing the outdoors and public lands.** Transportation is repeatedly cited as a major barrier to accessing nature and the outdoors. The State, working with local and regional transportation authorities and not-for-profit partners, could build on models such as the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) Nature Bus in Albany and Schenectady and the NFTA-Metro Parks Adventure Bus in Buffalo to implement long-term solutions that connect both urban and rural residents to parks, preserves, nature centers, and other public lands.
- 5. Encourage Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Rural Transportation Planning Organizations, Regional Economic Development Councils, and the New York State Department of Transportation to integrate health considerations into project scoring criteria** so that projects with active transportation components get more weight. Consider focusing on high-need areas, such as places with limited networks of activity-friendly infrastructure, places at risk for pedestrian or bicyclist injuries or fatalities, and places with inequities. Help ensure connections with destinations (e.g., schools, parks, commercial areas).



# Appendix A: Legislation

LAWS OF NEW YORK, 2017

## CHAPTER 276

AN ACT to authorize and direct the commissioners of health and environmental conservation to study and develop a long-term strategy to encourage and promote outdoor environmental education and recreational opportunities in New York state

Became a law Sept. 12, 2017, with the approval of the Governor. Passed by a majority vote, three-fifths being present.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature recognizes that in the last two decades, childhood has moved indoors. The average American boy or girl spends just four to seven minutes each day in unstructured outdoor play, and more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen. The decline in the appreciation and prevalence of outdoor recreation opportunities profoundly impacts the wellness of our state's youth. The correlation between increasing childhood obesity rates and the decline in outdoor recreation is undeniable.

Additionally, the legislature recognizes that visual and physical access to basic types of open space is vital for everyone, and particularly valuable to children growing up in "urban hardscapes," or areas where access to nature is limited.

The legislature further finds that the development of policies that foster stewardship of the environment and recognition of the health benefits of time spent in nature are essential to the residents of New York state. The legislature concludes that this can best be accomplished by the creation of a study on outdoor environmental education and recreation.

§ 2. The commissioners of health and environmental conservation are hereby authorized and directed to study and develop a long-term strategy for integrating an aggressive outdoor environmental education and recreation plan for children that focuses on creating, developing and retaining opportunities for outdoor play and learning in New York state. Such strategy shall be based on an analysis of the overall health of our youth including

the rise in childhood obesity rates, economic trends and their impact on access to outdoor spaces as well as all other factors necessary to develop a state-level blueprint for outdoor education and recreating. Such strategy shall be developed in consultation with health and environmental conservation advisory bodies created or authorized by statute and such other organizations or persons as the commissioners shall deem appropriate. Within one year of the effective date of this act, the commissioners shall submit a report of their findings and recommendations, including proposed legislation, if any, to the governor and the legislature.

§ 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

## Appendix B: Related Initiatives

### DEC Initiatives

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- **Adventure NY:** DEC's Adventure NY initiative was launched in 2017 to connect more New York families and visitors to the great outdoors. To provide for an even better user experience, DEC is making investments to improve public access to State land and water, upgrade campgrounds and facilities, and increase public awareness and information of all the outdoor recreation opportunities available in New York State.

Through Adventure NY, DEC is expanding access to healthy, active outdoor recreation; connecting people with nature and the outdoors; protecting New York State's natural resources; and boosting local economies.

- **Love Our New York Lands:** DEC's Love Our New York Lands campaign originally launched in spring 2021. Love Our New York Lands is designed to promote sustainable use and encourage visitors to recreate responsibly at State-owned lands to help protect these irreplaceable destinations for future generations. The following themes are emphasized throughout the campaign: stewardship, respect, and responsibility.

Driven partly by the uptick in use during the COVID-19 pandemic, the campaign supports DEC's ongoing efforts to promote Leave No Trace™ principles for sustainable and

responsible recreation, encourage stewardship and preparedness, reduce dangerous search-and-rescue operations, and discourage dumping trash at recreation sites and visiting crowded trails and destinations.

## OPRHP Initiatives

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- **Parks 2020:** Parks 2020 was a multiyear commitment to leverage a broad range of private and public funding to invest approximately \$900 million in State Park improvements from 2015 to 2020. Under the initiative, New York State set a goal of modernizing our parks system—replacing outdated equipment with modern, code-compliant facilities; improving access for people with disabilities; and creating specific areas for older and younger age groups.

The revitalization plan followed seven strategic priorities: transforming New York State’s flagship State parks; promoting healthy, active outdoor recreation; connecting people with parks; rejuvenating New York State’s world-class parks system; preserving historic sites and cultural assets; sustaining New York State’s natural environment; and energizing local economies.

## Multiagency Initiatives

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- **NYS Master Plan for Aging:** Through Executive Order No. 23, which Governor Hochul signed in November 2022, New York State has embarked on the creation of the *Master Plan for Aging (MPA)*, designed to ensure that older adults and individuals of all ages can live healthy, fulfilling lives while aging with dignity and independence.

The MPA, led by the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Office for the Aging, and the New York State Department of State, is the product of a collaborative effort with dozens of stakeholders inside and outside of government.

The 100-plus proposals presented in the *MPA Final Report* explore multiple approaches that address the built environment and infrastructure, transportation and transit, financing of care and services, recruitment and retention of the long-term care workforce, licensing and training, pilot initiatives that can bring together providers and community services, innovations in care and service delivery, public-private partnerships, and many more.

The MPA Council, which is made up of New York State executive agencies, will continue to engage stakeholders from groups and communities across New York State and coordinate efforts with State agencies to ensure that policy and programs supporting New York’s aging population are moving forward.

## Stakeholder Activities

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- One recent effort that shares synergies with this *Plan* is the *2022 Open Spaces for All* report. In 2022, the Open Space Institute (OSI) and the New York Outdoor Recreation Coalition (NYORC) partnered to create *Open Spaces for All*: a statewide plan that aims to make millions of acres of parks and open spaces more welcoming and accessible for New Yorkers and out-of-state visitors alike. The report establishes a vision for change, to support strategic priorities for improving and enhancing policies, programs, and initiatives; and to empower creative partnerships to encourage and engage a growing and increasingly diverse constituency of open space users.

# Appendix C: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

**ABA** - Architectural Barriers Act

**ADA** - Americans with Disabilities Act

**ADHD** - Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder

**After School Conservation Club** - The After School Conservation Club is a partnership with United Neighborhood Houses and The After School Corporation with DEC. It is a curriculum for established after-school programs to expose their elementary school-aged students to the wonder of the natural environment. The mission of the After School Conservation Club program is to bring environmental education to and foster a sense of stewardship in inner-city elementary school-aged children involved in after-school programs.

**Becoming an Outdoors-Woman** - Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) and Beyond BOW are programs designed to teach women outdoor skills. These programs provide women with information, encouragement, and hands-on instruction in outdoor skills such as fishing, shooting, archery, hunting, trapping, outdoor photography, map and compass, survival, camping, canoeing, and outdoor cooking. BOW workshops are designed primarily for women who have little or no experience with outdoor activities.

**BioBlitz** - A BioBlitz is an event that focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time. At a BioBlitz, scientists, families, students, teachers, and other community members work together to get a snapshot of an area's biodiversity. These events can happen in most any geography—urban, rural, or suburban—in areas as small as a backyard or as large as a country.

**CDC** - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

**CDTA** - Capital District Transportation Authority

**Complete Streets resolutions** - Complete Streets resolutions require state, county, and local agencies to consider the convenience and mobility of all users when developing transportation projects that receive State and federal funding.

**Connect Kids Transportation grants** - The Connect Kids to Parks Field Trip Grant Program (Connect Kids) is designed to connect students in New York State with nature and history. Each grant provides reimbursement for field trips to State and federal parks, forests, historic sites, fish hatcheries, and outdoor recreation areas. The Connect Kids to Swimming Instruction Transportation Grant Program connects New York State's school-age children (pre-K through grade 12) with swimming instruction by reimbursing transportation costs (including parking and vehicle-use fees) incurred by eligible entities for travel to facilities in New York State that are operated by State, municipal, and not-for-profit organizations that offer swim instruction based on a nationally recognized learn-to-swim curriculum.

**Conservation Field Days** - The Conservation Field Days concept is simple: bring together a student's excitement for the outdoors, environmental professionals willing to share their expertise, and a casual fair-like structure for them to share information and learn. The goal of this event is to teach students about important environmental issues while having fun in one of our most beautiful area parks.

**Day in the Life of Local Rivers** - Day in the Life of Local Rivers involves students collecting scientific information to create snapshots of local rivers at dozens of locations, then sharing their data using the internet so they can better understand how their piece of a local river fits into the larger ecosystem.

**DEC** - New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

**DOH** - New York State Department of Health

**Envirothon®** - The Envirothon® is a unique, hands-on approach to environmental education with a spirit of competition. Teams of high school students are tested in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and current environmental issues. The teams compete at a regional level. The winning team then progresses to state-level competition and the winning team from there goes on to compete at the national level.

**EPF** - New York State Environmental Protection Fund

**Explorer Club** - The Explorer Club Activity Book is a new way for children aged 5–13 to interact with New York's State parks. Featuring puzzles, guidance, and important safety information, this booklet is a great way to jump-start a child's excitement for the outdoors. Those who complete all 24 activities are rewarded with a special Explorer Club patch.

**First-Time Camper Program** - The First-Time Camper Program enables New York State families who have never camped before the opportunity to see if they enjoy the great outdoors before investing in their own gear by registering for a fully stocked campsite at a select NYS campground for a designated weekend during the summer.

**Get Outdoors & Get Together Day** - DEC and OPRHP, in partnership with the Office of the Chief Disability Officer, Office for People With Developmental Disabilities, NYS Department of Veterans' Services, Office of Mental Health, and Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs, host free and low-cost events to connect people to nature and provide increased access to the outdoors. Get Outdoors & Get Together Day brings people of all abilities, ages, identities, and backgrounds together for fun, healthful activities as part of the state's initiative to broaden the diversity of users and ensure inclusivity of access to State public lands.

**HHS** - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

**I BIRD NY** - The I BIRD NY program was launched in 2017 to build on the State's efforts to increase access to New York State's vast natural resources and promote no- and low-cost opportunities to explore the great outdoors and connect with nature via birding. It is managed by DEC.

**I FISH NY** - The I FISH NY Program's primary goal is to increase fishing participation and awareness of the outstanding fishing opportunities that New York State has to offer. The free program, managed by DEC, introduces people to the sport of angling through a variety of different approaches.

**Junior Naturalist Program** - At most DEC campgrounds, children aged 5 through 12 years old can request a Junior Naturalist Journal. The journal is filled with environmentally focused activities and can be completed during their stay. When the journal is completed, children present it to a DEC staff person who reviews the journal then gives the child an embroidered Junior Naturalist patch. Each year, the journal focuses on a different theme.

**Ladders to the Outdoors** - Funded by local foundations and powered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Natural Heritage Trust, Ladders to the Outdoors works with school districts, corporate partners, and youth organizations to connect kids to their New York State parks and historic sites, outdoor recreation and nature, and to foster a lifelong love of the outdoors.

**Learn-to-Swim programs** - These programs, a partnership among OPRHP, the American Red Cross, and other organizations, aim to teach children how to swim and stay safe around water. For example, OPRHP offers a free Learn-to-Swim program for children.

**LWCF** - Land and Water Conservation Fund

**NASP** - National Archery in the Schools Program, a cooperative effort between state conservation departments, school systems, and private organizations to help engage young citizens in outdoor activities and participate in the enduring sport of archery. The program promotes student education, physical education, and lifelong participation in archery. Since its inception in March 2002, more than 4 million students at over 8,500 schools in 47 states and 5 countries have participated in NASP. New York State was the 44th state to implement the program, and school participation continues to grow each year.

**Nature Recreation Program** - The Nature Recreation Program provides high-quality organized recreational, educational, and environmentally aware experiences for campers and day users at DEC campgrounds. The program is conducted by DEC employees throughout the camping season.

**NFTA** - Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority

**NY SWIMS** - New York Statewide Investment in More Swimming (NY SWIMS) is a statewide initiative to provide needed resources to build out municipal pools in high-need areas, connect New Yorkers to the State's rivers and lakes, and invest in State parks and pools. NY SWIMS also promotes initiatives to help more New Yorkers swim safely by addressing the statewide lifeguard shortage, increasing swimming instruction, and enhancing amenities offered at pools and beaches.

**NYS Birding Trail** - The New York State Birding Trail highlights world-class birding opportunities across the state. The trail provides information on places anyone can go to find birds amid beautiful settings. The trail is not a physically connected or built trail, but a network of promoted birding locations that can be accessed by car or public transportation and that provide an inclusive experience for all. The trail is managed by DEC in partnership with OPRHP and local and regional partners.

**Open Streets programs** - Open Streets programs repurpose city streets into car-free public spaces for people. These programs may be complemented by activities that promote physical activity, pedestrian and bike mobility, civic engagement, local economic development, community development, and cultural programming.

**OPRHP** - New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

**OSP** - *New York State Open Space Conservation Plan*

**PCO** - Professional Career Opportunities Exam, an entry level exam used to fill more than 150 Civil Service jobs.

**Project Learning Tree®** - Project Learning Tree® is an award winning, multi-disciplinary environmental education program for educators and students in pre-K through grade 12. Project Learning Tree®, a program of the American Forest Foundation, is one of the most widely used environmental education programs in the U.S. and abroad. Project Learning Tree® continues to set the standard for environmental education excellence.

**Project WILD** - Project WILD, along with Aquatic WILD, Flying WILD, and Growing Up WILD, are all interdisciplinary and provide hands-on, inquiry-based activities at relevant grade levels. They can be used indoors and out in urban, suburban, and rural environments. Educators find the curricula beneficial because the activities use a variety of teaching methods—discussion, role-playing, and guided imagery—to accommodate various learning styles.

**Safe Routes to School** - Safe Routes to School is a national initiative that works to make it safe, convenient, and fun for children to walk and bicycle to and from schools. The goal is to get more children walking and bicycling to school, improve kids' safety, and increase health and physical activity.

**SCORP** - *New York State Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*

**State Parks Explorer App** - OPRHP launched a mobile app to provide visitors and prospective visitors helpful information about the variety of destinations, activities, and adventures available throughout the Empire State's State parks and historic sites.

**STEM** - Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

**Water Education Today (WET)** - Project WET is a collection of innovative, water-related activities that are hands-on, easy to use, and fun. Project WET activities are easily incorporated into a school's existing curricula. Project WET is intended for teachers and non-formal educators working with youth in kindergarten through 12th grade. The program focuses on water's physical properties, water quality and what impacts it, and peoples' relationship to water throughout their lives.

## Appendix D: Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

Per the requirements of the law, State agencies identified existing health and environmental conservation advisory bodies created or authorized by statute, and other organizations or persons who have a strong connection to outdoor environmental education and recreation especially as it relates to children.

Two virtual meetings were held to provide information on the legislation, process, and the draft recommended objectives, actions, and strategies for an Outdoor Environmental Education and Recreation Plan for the State of New York. Meetings were offered at two different times to accommodate participant schedules. Forty-nine participated in total. A follow-up survey was sent to participants requesting one response per organization. In total, 22 responses were received via Microsoft Forms. Feedback was used to improve and expand upon the blueprint and potential tactics to be implemented.

Most of the stakeholders indicated general approval of the proposed approach and recommended actions. The following lists major cross-cutting themes identified by stakeholders during the

webinars, followed by direct stakeholder feedback received for each strategy (changed to “objective” in this final report).

## Cross-Cutting Themes

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### 1. Utilizing partnerships to achieve goals

- Find ways to leverage partners, such as community organizations with strong local connections, so that work does not all fall entirely on State agencies.
- Support not-for-profit partners with funding to leverage their strengths and expertise.
- Look for creative partnerships to provide opportunities, such as with New York City (NYC) Housing Authority outdoor areas.
- Encourage local municipalities and recreation departments to partner with community-based organizations that have community engagement expertise to support reaching areas with the highest health disparities.
- Partner with hunting and fishing organizations to create a robust Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) statewide program.

### 2. Addressing transportation as a barrier to accessing the outdoors

- Parks are often far from urban centers and rural communities struggle with a lack of or infrequent public/mass transportation options.

### 3. Enhanced promotions and programming

- The need for free or low-cost family-friendly opportunities to experience nature, especially at night and on the weekends and including access to equipment.
- Promotion of winter activities and resources to encourage people to get outdoors year-round.
- Outreach to trusted community leaders and small businesses that people frequent (barbershops, laundromats, bodegas) is a good way to get messages out to communities.

- Include early care and education centers in outreach.

### 4. Providing funding to achieve goals

- The need for dedicated funding required for implementation.

### 5. Promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility

- The need for training in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility for organizations and staff working with the public.
- Making information and resources available in multiple languages and formats.
- Efforts to find out what communities want and need in terms of programs.

### 6. Promoting sustainable recreation

- Include tactics related to teaching and promoting safe and responsible behavior to minimize impacts on natural resources.

### 7. Helpful resources and related reports

- *Open Spaces for All* report was noted as a source for recommendations.
- Trust for Public Land economic benefits reports were cited.
- DEC’s Statewide ADA Accessibility Coordinator is an underutilized resource.

## Feedback on Proposed Strategies

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### Strategy 1: Inspire People to Visit Green Spaces

#### 1. Partnering and broadening the reach of existing organizations and programs, in addition to those offered by the State

- Partner with hunting and fishing organizations to create a robust R3 statewide program.
- Work with BOCES (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) outdoor environmental education programs.
- Promote and support existing opportunities rather than create new ones.

**2.** Culturally competent and reflective materials to help expand what constitutes or who identifies as an outdoor recreator

- Messaging and materials should be reflective, relevant, and tailored to diverse communities.
- Have community leaders leading the conversation with the target audience because it will be coming from a trusted source—i.e., someone from that community—rather than being encouraged to do so by State agencies.
- Utilize adventure stories and first-person accounts by a variety of people with whom the public can identify (i.e., different ages, genders, backgrounds).
- Ensure any trainings, workshops, professional development, or promotional material is offered within a culturally responsive and sustaining framework, and from an inclusive lens. In promoting wellness and emphasizing the benefits of contact with nature, recognize that research has affirmed formerly redlined neighborhoods tend to have fewer and lower-quality green spaces, and that benefits to nature are important, but barriers of transportation, cost, and time limit individuals' ability to get out to nature.
- Develop and communicate a broad definition of what constitutes outdoor activity, especially in different geographic and urban/rural settings across the state.
- Address fears and misconceptions, whether real or perceived, that may hinder or prevent people from wanting to spend time outside (i.e., wildlife, tick-borne illness, etc.).

**3.** Support for environmental educators and outdoor curriculum

- Incorporate promoting and teaching responsible outdoor recreation behavior to keep visitors safe and to minimize impacts to natural resources (e.g., Leave No Trace™ outdoor skills and ethics).
- Support outdoor recreation educators to help people get outside and feel comfortable.

- Support educators/mentors with whom new outdoor recreation communities can identify—people who share their background and experiences.
- Incorporate the Talking is Teaching Campaign that the Council on Children and Families lead. There are opportunities to add messaging to parks and play structures, as well as promotion campaigns.
- Include early care and education as teachers for professional development opportunities.
- Develop how-to materials or handouts for teachers and youth workers.

**4.** Family-friendly programming

- Offer free and low-cost nature experiences and activities in State parks geared toward families, as well as free field trip opportunities for schools to local parks.

**5.** Other comments

- Encourage young people to bicycle for fun and by creating mountain bike and BMX skills development areas with trails. Kids who start biking early most likely will continue the habit as they age.

## Strategy 2: Connect Children and Families With Nature

**1.** Transportation

- Continue funding for transportation, and the Connect Kids program in the EPF.
- Explore how partners can offset travel barriers such as cost or the so-called “last mile,” [the remaining distance to an outdoor destination once someone departs public transportation that lacks a connection].
- Make public transportation more available and affordable for families in urban and environmental justice areas. Partner with CDTA, Amtrak, Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), etc., to provide these services on weekends and ensure that the destinations have programs and staffing to accommodate families.

2. Engaging with people to encourage participation, getting outdoors, and trying new activities
  - Offer opportunities for municipalities to lead activities that connect kids to nature (e.g., establishing a Children’s Outdoor Bill of Rights—see the example of the City of Rochester Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council).
  - Ask communities what types of programming are most meaningful to them and what current barriers to access exist. Work with local community-based organizations to support relationship building and get where historically marginalized populations are (e.g., barber shops, salons, churches, neighborhood associations).
  - Ensure any description of access includes getting to the place (safe routes), what’s there (is there accessible equipment?), and what the environment is (neighborhood safety).
  - Incorporate recommendations from *Open Spaces for All* into actions and tactics. The recommendations are focused on engaging communities, connecting them to nature, and making parks more accessible, welcoming, and inclusive.
  - Most State campground reservations (in particular, the Adirondacks) are filled long before the camping season even starts. This happens all too often before those new to camping think about making a reservation. This needs to be addressed.
  - Advance Complete Streets efforts around parks.
  - Offer mountain bike skills classes at parks with natural surface trails.
  - Develop creative ways to engage gadget-addicted youth in outdoor education/nature programs with a technology aspect (e.g., geocaching, digital nature photography) and blend it into more of the organic programming typically associated with outdoor education.
  - Expand connection to food habits and the outdoors, such as where food comes from and the model of the BOW program.

- DEC summer camps are an underutilized resource.

### Strategy 3: Provide Ideas of What to Do at Home, School, and Community Centers to Promote a Healthy Lifestyle and Enjoy Nature

1. Improved educational information and opportunities
  - Promote trips for schools to outdoor areas.
  - Include outdoor education opportunities and outdoor-based activities in physical education curriculum, e.g., archery, hiking, snowshoeing, kayaking.
  - Training for teachers, youth program coordinators at the middle- and high-school levels on activities families can do outdoors together, such as hiking, biking, paddling, skiing, etc.
  - Provide better education and create a culture of comfort regarding the dangers of the outdoors that typically hinder certain groups from excursions into nature (e.g., ticks, poison ivy, encountering scary wildlife such as bears and snakes)
2. Making agency and program offerings more inclusive
  - Engage families so activities can take place during after-school hours and/or on weekends.
  - Implement a marketing and messaging campaign that is multilingual and distributed digitally and in print to help reach those without access to Wi-Fi and computers as well as immigrant populations who may not feel comfortable communicating in English.
  - Provide resources beyond an online platform—particularly to people living in traditionally marginalized communities. The digital divide impacts many people living in poverty, and in order to share the importance of this work we must consider what’s available for printed distribution in places like libraries, recreation centers, and schools.

### 3. Other comments

- Mountain bike and bike motocross festivals can introduce the general public to a positive recreational activity.

## Strategy 4: Promote Policies and Practices That Support Outdoor Recreation, Physical Activity, and Outdoor Education Throughout a Person's Lifespan and for Generations to Come

### 1. Partnerships and inclusive programming

- Partner with the local mountain bike clubs; they are building communities that make it fun to stay active on the trails. Great communities build and help maintain great trails.
- Provide opportunities for bicycle education similar to the League of American Cyclists Adult Smart Cycling class. These can be offered through community centers or maybe through Department of Motor Vehicles locations.
- Promote collaborations with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) where many families with young children reside and depend on the outdoor space for physical activity and wellness. NYCHA's outdoor space is underdeveloped and not well maintained or safe for young children to utilize.
- Parks and Cooperative Extensions could offer volunteer opportunities/events that encourage people of all ages to care for nearby parks, open spaces, etc.
- To develop an affinity for lifelong recreational activity and sports, people need knowledge (where to go, how to get started), support (getting started, accountability), convenience (location) and affordability. Outdoor clubs and community groups could partner together to create these connections. Not-for-profit organizations could also play a role in making these connections.

- People will be interested when they see diversity and people who look like them doing the same activity. Offering more welcoming interactions between staff and the public will keep people coming back. Perhaps diverse staffing would help.
- Another consideration is to address safety. People need to feel safe and secure in where they're going and what they're doing.
- Promote and expand youth hunts, fishing clinics, and other outdoor activities that DEC participates in. OPRHP also hosts fishing clinics and other outdoor activities.

### 2. Open Spaces for All

- The plan should review the OSI and NYORC Open Spaces for All report for additional strategies.
- Funding and staff are essential to support the strategies outlined in this plan, and this should be added as an essential element in strategy 4.
- The recommendations from the Open Spaces for All report should be included in these strategies, especially bringing more voices into the discussion and ensuring that our multicultural history is accurately represented and the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population feels comfortable and welcome in these spaces.
- Expand open space and recreational opportunities in under-resourced or environmental justice neighborhoods and in areas where barriers exist to local open spaces (see Recommendation 2 in Open Spaces for All report). There could also be an opportunity to highlight the value of and opportunities for public-private partnerships in this work.

### 3. Other comments

- Consider active transportation education.
- The NYS Outdoor RX Act for veterans and DEC's Universal Access Program are two elements that Strategy 4 needs to ensure are active elements and participants.

# Appendix E: Partner Survey

The following is a copy of the March 2023 survey questions sent to stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft recommended strategies and actions for the *Outdoor Environmental Education and Recreation Plan* for New York State.

## Your Information

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1. Your name
2. Organization
3. Contact email
4. What region(s) of the state do you or your organization represent (check all that apply)
  - Statewide
  - Capital (Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady)
  - Central (Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego)
  - Finger Lakes (Chemung, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Wayne, Yates)
  - Long Island (Nassau, Suffolk)
  - Mid-Hudson (Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester)
  - Mohawk Valley (Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Otsego, Schoharie)
  - New York City
  - North Country (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Warren, Washington)
  - Southern Tier (Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Tioga, Tompkins)
  - Tug Hill Seaway (Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence)
  - Western New York (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara, Orleans, Wyoming)
  - Other (please specify)

5. Does your organization participate in any of the following initiatives (planning or implementation stages)
  - *NYS Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*
  - *NYS Open Space Plan*
  - *Prevention Agenda 2019-2024* (the NYS Department of Health's State Health Improvement Plan)
  - Other (please specify)

## Your Feedback

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The *DRAFT Outdoor Environmental Education and Recreation Plan*, December 2022, developed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Department of Health (DOH), and Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), seeks to encourage and promote outdoor environmental education and recreational opportunities in New York State for children and focuses on four broad strategies:

1. Inspire people to visit green spaces (Get 'em excited)
2. Connect children and families with nature (Get 'em there)
3. Provide ideas of what to do at home, school, and community centers to promote a healthy lifestyle and enjoy nature (Get 'em going)
4. Promote policies and practices that support outdoor recreation, physical activity, and outdoor education throughout the lifespan and for generations to come (Keep 'em going)

For **Strategy 1**: Inspire people to visit green spaces (Get 'em excited)

For each **Recommended Action** below, please rate its importance to promoting outdoor environmental education and recreational opportunities in New York State.

<b>Coordinate and simplify promotions and messages and outdoor activities, via websites, social media, community-based networks, and local leaders</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Conduct trainings, outdoor workshops and professional development opportunities for teachers and youth workers</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Promote wellness and emphasize health benefits of contact with nature</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response

What if any actions would you add to this strategy?

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For **Strategy 2**: Connect children and families with nature (Get 'em there)

For each **Recommended Action** below, please rate its importance to promoting outdoor environmental education and recreational opportunities in New York State.

<b>Ensure facilities and programs are accessible to people of all ages and abilities</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Connect schools and youth-serving organizations with green spaces, especially in urban and suburban locations and EJ [environmental justice] areas</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Provide natural play areas</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Provide opportunities for students to learn where food comes from and to develop healthy eating habits</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Offer outdoor experiences for youth at schools, after-school programs, and summer day camps</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Provide visitors to public lands and facilities, such as campgrounds and nature centers, with opportunities to learn outdoor skills and understand environmental concepts</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response

What if any actions would you add to this strategy?

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For **Strategy 3**: Provide ideas of what to do at home, school, and community centers to promote a healthy lifestyle and enjoy nature (Get 'em going)

For each **Recommended Action** below, please rate its importance to promoting outdoor environmental education and recreational opportunities in New York State.

<b>Develop and promote resources and websites for places to visit, how to be safe, and age-appropriate activities</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Develop, sponsor, and expand wellness programs and healthy lifestyle initiatives for schools, places of worship, community organizations, youth development agencies, nature centers, etc.</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Increase physical activity at schools, early care and education centers, and community centers</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response

What if any actions would you add to this strategy?

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For **Strategy 4**: Promote policies and practices that support outdoor recreation, physical activity, and outdoor education throughout the lifespan and for generations to come (Keep 'em going):

For each **Recommended Action** below, please rate its importance to promoting outdoor environmental education and recreational opportunities in New York State.

<b>Improve community environments that support active transportation (e.g., walking, rolling, bicycling) and recreational physical activity for people of all ages and abilities.</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Create school and childcare environments that support opportunities for outdoor physical activity and recreation for people of all abilities</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Maintain and expand infrastructure and staffing at park, recreation, and environmental education facilities to attract and welcome diverse visitors and keep them coming back</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Increase access for people of all ages and abilities to outdoor places for physical activity</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response
<b>Support initiatives that engage the public in the stewardship of natural resources, fostering a lifelong connection to the outdoors</b>	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Important	No Response

What if any actions would you add to this strategy?

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6. How might your organization be most effective in addressing one or more of the Actions and Tactics?
7. How can we assure that the plan addresses health equity and the social determinants of health?
8. Do you or your organization have any recommendations (e.g., policy, programmatic) that you think should be included in the plan?

## Appendix F: Stakeholder Feedback List

The following stakeholders and partners provided feedback for this plan:

- Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK)
- Alliance of New York State YMCAs
- Audubon New York
- Capital Roots
- City of Kingston
- Clinton County Health Department (CCHD)
- Common Ground Health
- Concerned Long Island Mountain Bicyclists (CLIMB)
- Cycle-CNY
- Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
- Friends of Five Rivers
- Friends of Reinstein Woods
- Hudson River Valley Greenway
- Ithaca College
- Jersey Off Road Bicycle Association (JORBA)
- New York Outdoor Recreation Coalition (NYORC)
- New York State Conservation Council Inc. (NYSCC)
- New York State Snowmobile Association (NYSSA)
- New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
- North Country Trail Association (NCTA)
- NYS Canal Corporation
- NYS Conservation Fund Advisory Board (CFAB)
- NYS Council on Children and Families (CCF)
- NYS Trails Council (NYSTC)
- New York Bicycling Coalition (NYBC)
- Onondaga County Health Department
- Open Space Institute (OSI)
- Outdoor Afro
- Palisades MTB
- Parks & Trails New York
- QUALITYstarsNY
- Rogers Environmental Education Center
- Seneca County Health Department
- St. Lawrence County Health Initiative, Inc.
- St. Peter's Health Partners
- Trust for Public Land (TPL)
- Wayne County Action Program, Inc. (Wayne CAP)
- Western New York Mountain Bicycling Association (WNYMBA)
- Western Suffolk BOCES

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