

# Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Establish NJ State Parks and Open Space Foundation

01/12/2024

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed S1311/A594, which establishes the NJ State Parks and Open Space Foundation within the Department of Environmental Protection. The foundation will be incorporated as a nonprofit corporation and will be responsible for raising funds for the maintenance and development of New Jersey's state parks and forests, as well as county and municipal parks and open spaces.

"Thanks to this monumental legislation, our state's natural treasures will only become more invaluable as we continue to invest in their preservation, resilience, and accessibility," **said Governor Murphy**. "From Liberty State Park to Island Beach State Park, our state parks and forests will continue to attract visitors to the Garden State while providing physical and mental health benefits for countless New Jersey families."

"This is a game-changing moment for parks and open space in New Jersey," **said Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette, who oversees New Jersey's vast system of State Parks, Forests & Historic Sites**. "By establishing this Foundation, Governor Murphy and our Legislature have created the avenue for passionate outdoor enthusiasts to champion improvements in the parks and open spaces they love and the greater environment we share. With this new tool, we will create a lasting conservation and outdoor recreation legacy that brings people and communities together to enjoy our natural treasures."

"The establishment of a foundation for the continued maintenance of our public parks and open spaces will help ensure access to state, county, and municipal parks for future generations," **said former Governor Richard J. Codey**. "For years, many of our public places have been in dire need of additional funding to provide for both maintenance and the creation of additional recreational opportunities. This new law is a key part of addressing that need and providing the resources that are needed for our public places to best serve the public."

"New Jersey is fortunate to have beautiful parks all over the state, thanks to our prioritization of preserving open space and providing opportunities for families to spend time outside. Still, maintaining these parks can be costly," **said Senator Shirley K. Turner**. "Through the NJ State Parks and Open Space Foundation we will be able to raise funds to not only maintain our parks but also invest in outdoor recreational equipment to get our kids moving for generations to come."

"As the Garden State, it is our responsibility to take the lead in nurturing our environment and open spaces," **said Assemblyman William Spearman**. "The enactment of this bill sends a clear message to New Jerseyans about the importance of preserving the innate beauty that characterizes our great state."

"The establishment of the New Jersey State Parks and Open Space Foundation is a pivotal step towards long-term sustainability of our state's natural allure," **said Assemblywoman Shama Haider**. "The Foundation is a testament of our commitment to our state with pristine, well-maintained parks and open spaces, fostering a healthier and more vibrant community."

"One of the many things that makes our State the Greatest in the Country is the remarkable variety that exists in New Jersey's many landscapes," **said Assemblyman Sterley Stanley**. "From cities to suburbs and from foundries to forests one of our state's greatest assets is not only the incredible diversity of landscapes that exist here but the proximity of those landscapes to one another. By creating the New Jersey State Parks and Open Space Foundation, we are recognizing our responsibility as lawmakers to take proactive steps to preserve this reality by protecting our state's natural wonders both small and large so they can continue to help define the place we are so proud to call home."

"New Jersey state, county and town parks and forests are beloved by millions – they are the place we escape for vacations, hikes, picnics or just an afternoon away. But they need more funding to handle their existing crowds – to say nothing of making them better. Whether it's Liberty State Park or the park down the street, this bill will help all of us by allowing private dollars to chip in to make our parks and wild areas even better and more accessible. We thank Sen. Shirley Turner and Asm. Bill Spearman for getting this bill done on the final day of session and Gov. Murphy for his support," **said Doug O'Malley, Director of Environment New Jersey**.

"New Jersey has one of the best state park systems in the country. This legislation underscores New Jersey's commitment to environmental stewardship and ensuring public access to our natural wonders," **said Barbara Brummer, The Nature Conservancy's New Jersey State Director.** "We are grateful to Governor Murphy and the dedicated members of the New Jersey Legislature for their joint efforts in enacting this transformative legislation."

"Newark is proud to host the Greenway, one of our newest State parks, and I'm grateful to the Murphy Administration and the Legislature for giving communities across New Jersey an innovative new tool to ensure our parks have the funding they need to thrive through widening the tent of genuine stakeholders," **said Evan Weiss, President and CEO of the Newark Alliance.**

"Parks and open spaces are critical assets for the people and wildlife of the Garden State. We know that these assets need increased attention and resources," **said Alex Ireland, New Jersey Audubon President & CEO.** "We are supportive of actions that will make our parks, safer, more welcoming, and more resilient in the years ahead."

"Having an accessible, safe, and well maintained park in your neighborhood has proven benefits to the health of our bodies, our minds, and our communities. This new foundation will help ensure parks are well kept for New Jerseyans to enjoy walking, hiking, birding, cycling, picnicking, and just getting outdoors," **said Ed Potosnak, Executive Director, New Jersey LCV.** "We applaud Governor Murphy and the Legislature for their commitment to green spaces throughout the state. While this bill will not supplant taxpayer support of open space and parks, it is important because funding through this new foundation will be both an environmental and economic boon for residents – especially for urban communities of color that have less access to green spaces for recreation."

"Parks and open space support our health and well-being and provide essential connections in our communities. As such, it is critical that the state's public land is well-maintained, accessible, and welcoming to all. This new law will ensure that New Jersey's parks and forests have the resources to benefit from robust investment and community engagement," **said Kim Elliman, President and CEO of the Open Space Institute.** "The Open Space Institute strongly supports this measure and applauds Governor Murphy, and leaders in the Senate and Assembly for their efforts to provide much-needed outdoor recreational resources for people throughout the state now and for future generations."

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