Prioritizing Trail Work

NYC's trail networks are made up of over 350 miles of nature trails that offer park goers access to the natural areas in NYC Parks, from forests to coastal wetlands and marshes. In 2021, the NAC released the first [Strategic Trails Plan for New York City](#) to inform the management of nature trails citywide. One core goal of this plan is to formalize[1] the entire nature trail system, which will ensure all trails are maintained, navigable, and contribute to the health of the forest. To ensure the formalization process happens in a transparent and equitable way, we developed a data-driven ranking system to determine the order by which the Citywide Trails Team will formalize the remaining networks. This ranking system utilizes data on resource availability, ecological concerns, social and community factors, and public health to guide the team's annual work plans. Specifically, the following information about each trail network is incorporated:

1. <u>Trail Visibility</u>: Trail networks with more visible access points are ranked higher for formalization since these networks are candidates for higher foot traffic.

2. <u>Wetlands</u>: Trail networks are ranked higher where trails intersect wetlands due to the sensitivity of wetland habitats and the need to ensure they are not at risk of trampling.

3. <u>Residential Reach</u>: Trail networks in parks with higher populations in walking distance (0.25mi) are ranked higher under the assumption that these trails will serve more local community members.

4. <u>Planned Work</u>: If the trail network is in a park that has planned construction, this network will be weighted higher to leverage existing resources and care being directed into the park.

5. <u>Air Quality</u>: Trail networks in locations with higher respiratory risk[2] are weighted higher on the basis that access to natural spaces is more important to residents where air quality is lower.

6. <u>Community Science Visits</u>: Trail networks in parks with higher numbers of community science visits (eBird & iNaturalist) are ranked higher due to known high trail usage by community science participants.

7. <u>Dedicated Personnel</u>: Trail networks in parks with dedicated staff and volunteer bases are ranked higher since the prevalence of existing stewards results in longer-term, more sustainable maintenance to care for the trails.

8. <u>Facilities</u>: Trail networks in parks with more facilities are ranked higher, under the rationale that parks with more facilities will attract more visitors.

9. <u>Data Quality</u>: Trail networks with the newest/highest quality spatial data are ranked higher, since higher quality data makes formalization work-planning more reliable and easier to implement quickly.

For a more in-depth explanation on how we prioritize trail networks for formalization you can watch the following presentation: **[Prioritizing Trails in New York City](#)**

If you have further questions, please contact Julia Raskin, Trails Program Manager: Julia.Raskin@naturalareasnyc.org.

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[1] "Formalize" - to bring a trail under a consistent standard of care and design so that it is accessible and navigable to the public.
[2] EJSCREEN Index for National Scale Air Toxics Assessment Respiratory Hazard within 0.25 mile of the trail area

2022 Park Formalization List				
Staten Island	**Queens**	**Manhattan**	**Bronx**	**Brooklyn**
La Tourette	Kissena Park	Riverside Park	Soundview Park (Harding)	McGuire Fields
High Rock Park	Udalls Cove	Fort Washington		
Blood Root Valley	Willow Lake			
WIllowbrook Park				
Willowbrook Parkway				
Richmond Parkway				
Deere Park				
Reed's Basket				
Arden Heights Woods				
Fairview Park				
Jones Woods				
Blue Heron Park				