



**OPEN SPACE  
INSTITUTE**

## **OSI President & CEO Kim Elliman Announces Retirement Plans**

*Longtime leader will remain in place as national search for successor is conducted.*

### **For Immediate Release**

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NEW YORK, NY (May 2, 2023)—After more than three decades at the helm of the Open Space Institute (OSI), President & CEO Christopher “Kim” Elliman today announced that he will retire in spring 2024. Elliman’s decision to step down concludes a remarkable era of programmatic and geographic expansion for OSI, during which the organization grew from a local, Hudson Valley land trust into a nationally recognized conservation leader active in 16 states in the eastern U.S. and three Canadian provinces.

Russell Reynolds Associates will conduct a national search for a successor to Elliman, who will continue to serve as president and CEO through March 2024.

“It has been the privilege of a lifetime to guide OSI’s work with partners, supporters, funders, and of course, OSI’s expert staff. Together, we have built one of the most prodigious conservation and park advocacy organizations in the nation—permanently protecting millions of acres for clean water, wildlife habitat, public recreation, and the fight against climate change, while also seeking to make parks and the land we protect more welcoming and available for all,” said Elliman. “At a time when smart, strategic conservation is needed to address today’s environmental and ecological challenges, I am confident that OSI and its gifted and dedicated staff will maintain and build on the institution’s strength and its commitment to making a lasting impact.”

Elliman also recognized the critical role the OSI Board of Directors has played throughout the history of the organization, noting that their influence and direction have helped guide staff and leadership through successful expansions, institutional change, and countless complex conservation projects.

“Kim Elliman’s knowledge of land conservation and its value to humans and nature, his insatiable appetite for innovative and creative conservation strategies, cultivation of partnerships, and his acute ability to anticipate emerging trends have made him a tremendously effective leader for OSI, as well as the nation’s conservation community,” said John Adams and Amelia Salzman, co-chairs of OSI’s board. “We are grateful for his decades of service and the remarkable team he has assembled. OSI shines because of the talented people Kim Elliman has put in place. This highly effective group of individuals is among his greatest legacies and will further cement OSI as one of the nation’s foremost conservation leaders for decades to come. Just as land protection is forever, so too, is OSI.”

During Elliman’s tenure, OSI and partners have protected more than two million acres of land, including 160,000 acres in New York State, where its work first began nearly fifty years ago.

Elliman’s leadership has supported major programmatic and geographical expansion for OSI, including:

- Creation of OSI's Parks Program, which has raised and leveraged \$183 million since 2010 to make protected land and open space more welcoming, available, and inviting to all people through the restoration and creation of more than 120 miles of trails and greenways; six new or improved visitor centers; and a decade of public advocacy that has resulted in more than a billion dollars in state-funded infrastructure investment on public lands.
- Expansion of OSI's presence in the Southeast, one of the fastest-growing regions in the U.S. Under Elliman's leadership OSI has conserved more than 74,000 acres in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia, and Florida.
- In recognition that access to land and the outdoors has not been equitable for all people, OSI and Elliman instituted a slate of internal and external initiatives aimed at embracing diversity and inclusion and creating safe and welcoming open spaces for everyone.
- Creation and expansion of programs that support newly formed local environmental groups and urban parks, invest in young leaders, and promote greater diversity in the field of conservation, through OSI's Conservation Communities Program.
- The 2003 launch of OSI's Conservation Capital Program, which has distributed more than \$122 million to partner land trusts and supported the integration of science and specialized mapping in land research and planning.

Other notable OSI accomplishments during Elliman's tenure include:

- Doubling the size of some of New York's most popular state parks, including Fahnestock State Park, John Boyd Thacher State Park, Minnewaska State Park Preserve, and Moreau Lake State Park. Elliman also oversaw OSI's efforts to create Schunnemunk Mountain State Park.
- Conserving more than 32,000 acres on and around the Shawangunk Ridge and making the land more welcoming through the creation of New Paltz's River-to-Ridge Trail; restoration of nearly 20 miles of Minnewaska's carriage roads; creation of the Lake Minnewaska Visitor Center, restoration of the Rosendale Trestle; expansion of the O&W Rail Trail; and nearly doubling the length of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail.
- Advocating for increased public funding and policies promoting strategic, science-driven land protection, including a leading role in supporting the Outdoor America Campaign, culminating in the 2020 enactment of a permanent, fully funded \$900 million federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, in addition to dozens of state and local funding initiatives.
- Honoring Indigenous communities and their connection to the land by transferring Papscanee Island, a significant cultural site protected by OSI in the 1990s, to the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Community; and doubling the size of the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historic Park in Georgia, protecting some of the most significant ancient Indigenous structures in North America.
- The permanent protection of Sterling Forest State Park in Orange County, New York. In 1997 the governors of New York and New Jersey—bolstered by land acquisitions and guidance from OSI—turned the 21,000-acre property into the largest addition to the NYS Parks System in 50 years.
- Securing the Garden State Greenway, the largest state-funded conservation investment in New Jersey history. This long-awaited linear park project will create nine miles of green space for public recreation in the most densely populated and diverse region in the U.S.

In addition to his work at OSI, Elliman has served with boards and foundations including The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; Overhills Foundation; Samuel Freeman Charitable Trust; The Wilderness Society; Yale School of the Environment Steering Committee; and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

### **About the Open Space Institute (OSI)**

The Open Space Institute is a national leader in land conservation and efforts to make parks and other protected land more welcoming for all. Since 1974, OSI has partnered in the protection of more than 2.3 million at-risk and environmentally sensitive acres in the eastern U.S. and Canada. OSI's land protection promotes clean air and water, improves access to recreation, provides wildlife habitat, strengthens communities, and combats climate change, while curbing its devastating effects.