§ 39.01 Legislative findings and intent. The Niagara River corridor is of unique ecological, cultural and economic importance to western New York connecting Lake Erie and Lake Ontario communities and ecologies. This corridor has played an important role in the history of the Niagara Frontier and it can and should continue to define the western New York experience into the twenty-first century. Niagara Falls is a National Natural Landmark under state stewardship for more than a century that draws more than fourteen million visitors from throughout the world to the region each year. The cities of Niagara Falls and Buffalo are at the heart of the river corridor where much of their waterfront has in the past been dedicated to industrial uses. During the last few decades those uses have begun to wane and there is now an opportunity to redefine the waterfront in a way that creates a balance of economic interests with a welcoming waterfront environment. For more than a century there have been those who have expressed a vision for the Niagara river corridor of a necklace of open space and conservation areas spread along the river. With many areas no longer being used for heavy industry it is now time to complete that vision. Many areas have established parks along the corridor including eleven state parks and fourteen local parks. New York state's only National Scenic Byway, the Seaway Trail, runs through the entire corridor. It is the intent of the legislature to establish the Niagara river greenway commission as a cooperative regional organization established to work with participating state agencies, municipalities, organizations and residents in order to implement or cause to be implemented a linear system of parks and conservation areas that will, consistent with the purpose of the commission as set forth in this article, redefine the Niagara riverfront by increasing landside access to the river; creating complementary access to the greenway from the river; augmenting economic revitalization efforts, and celebrating the region's industrial heritage.