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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE OLANA PARTNERSHIP ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF NEW PRESIDENT

Sean E. Sawyer Appointed as Washburn and Susan Oberwager President



Sean E. Sawyer, Ph.D.

Photo by Martyn Gallina-Jones

May 12, 2015 – Hudson, NY - **The Olana Partnership (TOP)** announced today that Sean Sawyer has been appointed as the Washburn and Susan Oberwager President. He will join Olana on May 18. Mr. Sawyer's appointment comes as the result of a national search to find a visionary, strategic thinker and operational leader for TOP's staff, programs, and mission.

David Redden, Chairman of TOP, describes the board as thrilled with the appointment: "Sean's experience with historic properties, his academic training as a historian, and his fundraising abilities, together with his excitement in being part of the vibrant Hudson Valley, all made him the inevitable choice."

Rose Harvey, New York State Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, stated: "The public/private partnership between the State and The Olana Partnership has done so much to advance the restoration of Olana – both the house and its landscape - and to make it available to the public in so many creative ways. Sean's arrival comes at a crucial moment when Governor Andrew Cuomo's NY Parks 2020 parks revitalization plan can greatly leverage private support for one of the great jewels in the crown of the New York Park system, Olana."

Mr. Sawyer said: "I am thrilled to accept the position of President of The Olana Partnership and look forward to working with New York State Parks, local communities and Olana's supporters everywhere to enhance Olana's identity as a vibrant place of recreation, learning and inspiration for a broad and diverse audience."

TOP is especially grateful to Rena Zurofsky, who served most capably as Interim President from January to May. Among her achievements is the opening of *River Crossings*, the contemporary art exhibition in which Olana and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site collaborated.

No announcement about succession at The Olana Partnership could be written without acknowledging the extraordinary contribution of Sara Griffen, who led TOP for 25 years before retiring in December 2014.

Mr. Sawyer has served most recently as Executive Director of The Royal Oak Foundation, the American partner of the National Trust of England, Wales & Northern Ireland, since 2010. He strategically strengthened the Foundation's partnership with the National Trust and substantially enhanced all areas of its work. As Executive Director of the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum in Brooklyn from 2001 to 2007, he brought the small farmhouse museum to national attention with innovative educational and cultural programs in partnership with New York City's Department of Parks & Recreation and the Historic House Trust of New York City. During his tenure Wyckoff was recognized as a national model for civic engagement by the National Parks Service.

Mr. Sawyer received a B.A. from Princeton University and a Ph.D. from Columbia University. He has taught at Columbia, Fordham and Harvard universities as well as The Parsons/New School Master's Program in the History of Decorative Arts & Design. He was a founding member of the Board of Directors of the Dyckman Farmhouse Museum Alliance, which supports the Dyckman Farmhouse Museum in Inwood, northern Manhattan, where he and his partner, Michael Susi, have lived for 23 years. They will establish a household in Hudson this summer.

About Olana and The Olana Partnership

The eminent Hudson River School painter Frederic Edwin Church (1826-1900) designed Olana, his family home, studio, and estate, as an integrated environment incorporating architecture, art, landscape, and conservation ideals. Considered one of the most important artistic residences in the United States, Olana is a 250-acre artist-designed landscape with a Persian-inspired house at its summit, embracing unrivaled panoramic views of the vast Hudson Valley.

Olana State Historic Site, a historic site administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Taconic Region, is a designated National Historic Landmark and one of the most visited sites in the state. The Olana Partnership, a private not-for-profit education corporation, works cooperatively with New York State to support the restoration, development and improvement of Olana State Historic Site. 2016 will mark the 50th Anniversary of this public/private partnership. To learn more about Olana and The Olana Partnership, please visit www.olana.org.