



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **GOVERNOR MOVES TO SAVE HORSE TRACKS, WHILE STIFFING A SURE BET BY SHUTTERING PARKS AND HISTORIC SITES**

**CUTTING FOUR-THOUSANDS OF ONE PERCENT OF STATE BUDGET  
ENDANGERS FACILITIES THAT GENERATE \$1.9 BILLION IN ECONOMIC  
ACTIVITY, 20,000 NON-PARK JOBS**

As Governor Paterson works on providing loans worth up to \$25 million to the New York Racing Association, the state has continued padlocking parks and shuttering historic sites across New York, using the recreational facilities relied on by millions of New Yorkers as bargaining chips in a game in which everyone is a loser.

“Everywhere I go people are asking why the parks are taking the brunt of the pain,” said Robin Dropkin, executive director of New York State Parks & Trails, which is struggling to convince lawmakers and the governor to restore \$6 million in cuts he has proposed making to the budget of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. “Even without a final state budget, other state –funded services and entities are still operating. I am outraged that the Governor is singling out parks as a bargaining chit, while giving special consideration to NYRA’s financial troubles.”

Dropkin spoke the same day that leaders of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, motivated by the budget shenanigans in Albany that have shuttered the public facilities, added America’s state parks and state-owned historic sites to the Trust’s annual list of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places.

“We recognize that states are experiencing significant fiscal challenges, but park systems and sites are a legacy created and maintained by states even through the leanest times, for the enjoyment, wellness, and enlightenment of the public,” said Richard Moe, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “In the current troubled economy, Americans are foregoing more lavish vacations and using their state parks and sites more than ever. We cannot afford to abandon these treasures now.”

Adding the state recreational facilities to the Trust's endangered sites' list came after a request from Dropkin and Jay DiLorenzo, President of the Preservation League of New York State. DiLorenzo noted that legislators vowed to restore the Governor's proposed cuts, but they remain in effect while budget negotiations are stalled.

"Now, on May 19, there is still no enacted State Budget, and the possibility of park and historic site closure has become reality, marked by locked gates and loss of services," said DiLorenzo. "This designation from the National Trust illustrates not only that the threat is real, but that New York is not alone in facing this challenge."

The Governor's standing proposal to cut \$6.3 million – four one-thousandths of one percent of the full state spending plan – from the budget of the OPRHP would force the closure of 54 state parks, and cutbacks in programs and services at 22 more. An additional 34 parks would close if the \$5 million in the Environmental Protection Fund PF slated for parks operating costs is not enacted.

Even before the budget is finalized, or lawmakers get a chance to restore the cut, the agency has already closed facilities on the hit-list, resulting in disruption to local economies and vacation plans all over the state. Weddings planned for Thacher State Park in Albany had to be moved, traditional July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks at Jones Beach on Long Island were cancelled and programming in facilities from Montauk to Niagara Falls have been shelved.

The Governor appears impervious to the fact that every dollar invested in state parks and historic sites yields \$5 in economic activity. According to a 2009 report, state parks and historic sites generate \$1.9 billion annual economic activity, including the creation of 20,000 long-term, sustainable non-parks jobs in servicing the visitors to the parks, 40 percent of whom come from outside the parks' surrounding communities.

This is the first time New York State has ever closed a park since Niagara Falls State Park became the first state park in the nation in 1885. The state did not close parks even in the depths of the Great Depression.

***STATE FACILITIES ADDED TO NATIONAL TRUST'S LIST OF  
ENDANGERED SITES WHILE ALBANY DITHERS***