



# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – February 1, 2011

**Media Contacts:** Robin Dropkin, Executive Director  
518-434-1583  
[rdropkin@ptny.org](mailto:rdropkin@ptny.org)  
[www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)

---

## Governor's budget will devastate parks—and the revenue they generate

ALBANY, NY -- Governor Cuomo's proposed Executive Budget for the State Parks agency, which reduces the parks budget by \$19 million, will result in park closings, plus more drastic cutbacks in hours and services.

"Last year 88 parks were on the chopping block in order to save the state \$11 million. How can parks not close this year with a \$19 million reduction in the budget?" questioned Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York, the statewide advocacy group. "We don't know yet how many or which ones but if the Governor's proposed budget is adopted, parks across New York will implode."

Four parks and historic sites in Upstate New York—Knox Farm in East Aurora, Woodlawn Beach in Hamburg, Joseph Davis in Lewiston and Herkimer Home near Little Falls—have already closed in the last few months due to the strain on the parks budget. Which parks will be next?

Closing parks is a bad idea – one that New Yorkers have already voted against, with their feet. Park attendance was up by 1 million visitors this year. State parks are one of the few available and affordable recreation outlets for New Yorkers still under siege in a tough economy.

"The State Parks agency should be rewarded for its success, not penalized with more drastic cuts that will tear apart the integrity of the system and threaten visitation revenue," said Dropkin.

Save money, save parks

Closing parks not only makes history – it actually loses money for the state. Patron user fees already sustain about 40 percent of the parks budget, an amount that has been steadily rising. So \$1 million in park closings or reductions in hours actually only provides \$600,000 in net direct budget savings.

In addition, every dollar cut from the parks budget loses \$5 in economic benefits to the state, according to the 2009 report, *The New York State Park System: An Economic Asset to the Empire State*. Overall, the state park system generates nearly \$1.9 billion annually in economic activity, supporting 20,000 jobs (not including state park employees).

In upstate New York, the revenue and jobs created by parks are desperately needed. Tourism is one of the few bright spots in the upstate economy, which cannot afford to lose the long-lasting jobs and services that parks provide.

Closing state parks will hurt local tourism industries and create negative economic impacts much greater than the modest savings to the state budget. The entire budget of the Office of Parks represents one less than 1/5 of one percent of the overall state budget.

## Parks already right sized

The Governor's budget reduces all agency General Fund spending by 10 percent in order to “right size” government. However, the State Parks agency has already been “right sized,” incurring an 18% cut in operating budget over the last three years, significantly more than most other agencies.

“This death by 1,000 cuts to the legacy of our magnificent state park system is a huge price for the people of New York to pay for a miniscule savings to the state budget,” concluded Dropkin.

*Parks & Trails New York is the state’s leading advocate for parks and trails, working since 1985 to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for use and enjoyment by all. Learn more at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).*