



**Parks & Trails New York
Adirondack Council
Audubon New York
Natural Resources Defense Council
Scenic Hudson
Sierra Club- Atlantic Chapter**

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**Groups Call on Governor Paterson to Fund State Park System
*Second Installment of \$100 Million Needed to Continue Park and Historic Site Revitalization
and Provide Economic Stimulus - More than 4,000 Postcards Received Urging Governor
Paterson's Support***

(Albany, NY) -- New Yorkers love their parks. That message was clearly sent when Parks & Trails New York delivered more than 4,000 postcards to Governor Paterson from people across the state urging him to provide a second installment of \$100 million in capital funding for State Parks in next year's state budget.

Representatives from leading parks and environmental organizations have also joined forces to urge Governor Paterson to continue the revitalization of New York's state parks and historic sites by providing a second installment of bonded capital funding for State Parks. The groups also call for the necessary operational funds to enable the agency to fulfill its mission of providing public access to New York's natural and cultural treasures and ensuring that those treasures are protected for future generations.

Years of underinvestment and lack of resources have left the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation with a backlog of capital projects of more than \$650 million. In 2008 Governor Paterson and the state legislature recognized the challenges the agency is facing and provided a total of \$132 million in capital funding for park and historic site projects - the largest infusion of capital in the agency's history. This investment was a significant step toward overcoming the enormous capital backlog, but it was just the first step in what must be a multi-year effort to revitalize New York's unparalleled state park system.

New York's state parks and historic sites are its crown jewels. They provide opportunities for recreational and cultural activities that enable each of us to improve our physical well being, lift

our spirits, and learn about both the natural world and our rich heritage. And, with more than 55 million visitors annually, the state park system plays a vital role as part of the state's economic engine. "State parks and historic sites are economic drivers, often in areas of the state that have few others," said Tim Sweeney, the Director of the Campaign for Parks at Parks & Trails New York.

"As more residents are traveling locally and recreating closer to home, the infrastructure of the State Parks system must be upgraded to make these places safe and attractive destinations," said Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director of Audubon New York. "We are not oblivious to the dire economic challenges facing our state, but further delaying these vital health and safety projects will result in greater liability exposure and higher costs down the road. Continuing this investment now will yield great returns through job creation and increased ecotourism, which is already contributing \$1.6 billion to the state economy each year."

"Investing in the infrastructure of our state parks system will help New York remain competitive during challenging economic times," said Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy for Scenic Hudson. "In fact, a recent nationwide survey of 2,000 corporate executives, site-selection consultants and real estate brokers conducted by the *Hudson Valley Economic Development Corporation* revealed that the words most associated with the Hudson Valley were 'scenic beauty' and 'nature.' Respondents also regarded the valley's quality of life as one of the region's greatest strengths."

"The Adirondack Park's famous mountains, forests and waters are only a part of its rich heritage. Historic sites are everywhere in the Adirondacks and they are very important to the Park's tourism-based economy," said Brian Houseal, executive director of the Adirondack Council, an environmental research, education and advocacy organization. "Nine million visitors come here each year, many to see a place that has been a crossroads of American history since 1609."

"Historical markers dot the Adirondack landscape, noting the sites for ancient military encampments, forts, battle sites, pioneer homesteads, cemeteries and national landmarks. Some are in better shape than others. All of them are vital to the Adirondack tourism experience and deserve to be preserved. That requires adequate funding."

"To date, there have been over 1000 jobs created as a direct result of the ongoing parks revitalization, with work taking place in 57 of the state's 62 counties. Clearly the revitalization of the state park system is creating statewide economic benefits," Sweeney added.

"Investing in our future using bonded capital is exactly what bonds are intended for," said Norreida Reyes, Conservation Director of the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter. "We need to invest now before parks capital needs become insurmountable."