



PRESS RELEASE

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State Parks to Close

Governor Patterson's 2010-2011 Budget Proposal slashes State Park funding, inescapably forcing park closings

If the Governor's budget proposal is enacted, State Parks' operating budget will have been slashed 40 percent over the last two years, resulting in the closing of many state parks, asserts Parks & Trails New York, the not-for profit advocate for New York's state park system.

Park closings will exacerbate New York State's economic woes. A 2009 report found that New York's State Park system generates \$1.9 billion for private businesses and supports 20,000 jobs. The state enjoys \$5 in benefits for every \$1 it invests in its parks. A commitment by Governor Paterson to the state's park system makes complete fiscal sense, and would likely enhance New York's economic recovery--especially in upstate New York, home to many State Parks.

"The state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) will have to decide how many parks to close, and which ones. But with a cut in funding of this magnitude, we know for certain that there will be significant closings," said Parks & Trails New York's Executive Director Robin Dropkin.

Over the last 18 months State Parks' budget was cut 25 percent, resulting in the loss of nearly 1,000 permanent and seasonal staff. The funding cuts and reduction in staff led to reduced services and programming. State Parks warned last month that if the agency suffered any more significant funding loss, it would have no choice but to close a number of State Parks and Historic Sites. If the current budget proposal is enacted, State Parks will certainly have to close many parks and historic sites.

OPRHP oversees 214 State Parks and Historic Sites, encompassing 325,000 acres of lands and waters, which are visited by over 55 million people each year. Last year, the agency received only \$263 million--accounting for less than one-quarter of one percent of the overall State Budget. The 2010-2011 proposal allocates only \$230 million to the agency, reducing funds by \$33 million.

“It will be tragic if any parks are forced to close this year,” said Dropkin. “They provide New Yorkers with affordable, nearby recreation, and they provide our communities with sustainable, long-lasting jobs. New York absolutely cannot afford to lose any of its state parks.” She noted also that the cost of reopening a park, once closed, is substantial – raising the likelihood that at least some of the coming closings will be permanent, not temporary.

New York cannot afford to close any of its parks. For every park closed a community will lose a vital economic and recreational resource.

For more on the economic impact of state parks view the full report from the Political Economy Research Institute, *NYS Park System: An Economic Asset to the Empire State--*
http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/advocacy/peri_full_report.pdf.

Parks & Trails New York is a statewide advocacy organization that works to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout our state for use and enjoyment by all. Learn more at our website: www.ptny.org

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