

## Cuts to N.Y. parks hurt economy

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The firing of Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Pete Grannis because of a memo outlining the dire consequences of further cuts to the agency, which has suffered a 23 percent reduction of its work force since fiscal year 2007-2008, is deeply unfortunate.

Mr. Grannis always has been a strong advocate for protecting New York's air, land and water.

The DEC is not the only environmental agency "hanging by a thread." Over the last three years, the operating budget of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has suffered an 18 percent reduction and has lost more than 1,400 permanent and seasonal staff. The agency has been ordered to cut 60 more staff by year end.

These cuts have resulted in shortened days, hours and seasons of operations -- at a time when park visitation is up, to 57 million people. An independent study commissioned by Parks & Trails New York revealed that the state park system contributes \$1.9 billion annually to the state's economy, a 5-to-1 return on investment.

Last spring, 88 parks were threatened with closure to save a mere \$11 million, a proposal that was greeted with public outrage. More cuts to the parks budget, which is only one quarter of 1 percent of the total state budget, will certainly result in park closures, infuriate the public and do little to improve the state's fiscal situation.

It is simply penny-wise and pound-foolish, as well as a violation of the public trust, to keep cutting the state parks budget.

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