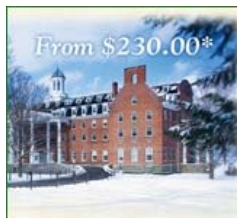


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## Concern for state parks cuts in 2010

By Andrew Beam

January 19, 2010

Parks and Trails New York voiced its discomfort over Gov. David A. Paterson not mentioning in his State of the State address a plan for protecting and creating jobs at New York state parks, and whether there would be any more cuts to funding for state parks in the 2010-2011 budget.

"Over the past 18 months the [State Park Department's] budget has been cut by 25 percent," said Shawn McConnell, director of the Campaign for Parks. If any more cuts are made then the department will begin closing parks. "We're asking for no more cuts," he said. "It would be unprecedented if any state parks closed."

Sen. Jose M. Serrano, D-Manhattan, who is chair of the Senate's Cultural Affairs, Tourism and Parks and Recreation Committee, said the state parks and green spaces play a very important fiscal role in New York. "Our state parks and green spaces have proven their potential as catalysts or economic expansion," he said, "by generating tourism, creating jobs, and strengthening our community." He also said New York cannot afford to close any of its state parks.

"If we do not strengthen our park system now, we will be faced with unprecedented closures," he said, "depriving New Yorkers of the natural wonders of our parks, as well as the economic benefits they generate."

McConnell said there is no "complete picture" of what is going to happen until the actual budget is passed.

Serrano is optimistic about Paterson's environmental agenda and said he will work with the governor to make sure "state parks are not overlooked."

"Although Paterson did not specifically mention parks and trails in his State of the State speech," Serrano said, "he has shown his commitment to environmental issues in the past."

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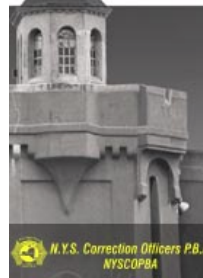
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