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Investment in parks is good for business

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By **The Post-Standard**

To the Editor:

Included in this week's flurry of economic initiatives from the Cuomo administration was some good news for New York's state park system. The \$1 billion Infrastructure Investment Act, to address the state's aging infrastructure, includes park rehabilitation. While the details are yet to come, Parks & Trails New York applauds the administration and legislative leaders for recognizing the strong connection between economic vitality and outdoor recreational opportunities.

PTNY's 2009 report, "The NYS Park System: An Economic Asset to the Empire State," showed that parks annually contribute \$1.9 billion to the state's economy — a five-to one return on investment.

Despite New York's legacy as a leader in parks and conservation and the system's importance to the state's economy, our state parks remain chronically underfunded. While the most visible threat to the park system came in 2010, when 88 parks and historic sites were threatened with closure, the real long-term threat may very well be the crumbling infrastructure.

The parks agency estimates the capital backlog at \$1 billion. The Central New York region alone faces nearly \$53 million in infrastructure needs, including new restrooms at Green Lakes State Park and rehabilitating aging drinking water and electrical systems at Chittenango Falls.

Investing in our state parks must be a part of any effort to make New York's economy sustainable and create jobs. The Infrastructure Investment Act is a positive first step in addressing this backlog and ensuring New York's parks and conservation legacy remains intact.

Robin Dropkin, executive director

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