

New York State Council of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

2009 Annual Report





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New York State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

David A. Paterson
Governor

Carol Ash
Commissioner

Lucy R. Waletzky, M.D.
State Council Chair

The Honorable David Paterson
Executive Chamber
Albany, NY 12224

December 15, 2009

Dear Governor Paterson,

The State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is pleased to submit its 2009 Annual Report. This report highlights the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's achievements during 2009, and sets forth recommendations for New York's State Parks and Historic Sites for the coming year.

The New York State Park System is at a critical crossroads. Over the past two years, OPRHP has absorbed five rounds of budget cuts totaling 25 percent of the agency's operating budget. The agency's summer workforce has been reduced by 1,000 permanent and seasonal workers. Budgets for equipment, supplies, and service contracts have been deeply cut. As a result, in 2009 OPRHP implemented service reductions at 100 State Parks and Historic Sites (shortened seasons, days, and hours of operation, and reduced programming).

The State Parks budget has been stretched to the breaking point. If directed to absorb additional budget cuts next year, OPRHP will have no option but to begin closing State Parks and Historic Sites. Closing parks would be a terrible decision that would have a negative impact on New York's economy and on the quality of life:

- A recent study documented that New York's State Park System generates \$1.9 billion in economic activity every year – five times the agency's total annual budget. Closing State Parks will hurt local tourism industries and create negative economic impacts much greater than the modest savings to the state budget.
- State Parks generate state revenue (entrance fees, camping fees, picnic shelter rentals, etc.). Park revenues account for a third of OPRHP's operating budget. When a park is closed to reduce costs, the agency also loses revenue. Every \$1 million "saved" through park closings generates only \$650,000 in net budget savings.
- Visitation to the State Park System is up – more than 55 million residents and tourists visited State Parks in 2009. At a time when many New York families are struggling due to the economic downturn, our State Parks provide affordable, close-to-home recreational and vacation opportunities.

We urge you to avoid further cuts to OPRHP's operating budget that will lead to park closings and significant service reductions.

The State Council also respectfully requests that New York State provide \$100 million in FY2010-11 to continue the third year of the State Parks Capital Initiative. Over the past two years, OPRHP has invested \$200 million to revitalize the parks, which are suffering from a backlog of more than \$700 million of capital rehabilitation needs. Many important capital projects have been completed, and thousands of private sector construction and engineering jobs have been created.

Due to the nature of parks capital projects, the vast majority have been undertaken by small and mid-sized local construction firms, creating a greatly-needed economic stimulus for construction contractors in local communities across the state. However, much more remains to be done to provide safe and enjoyable park facilities and to repair failing roadways and water, sewer, and electrical infrastructure through the park system.

The Walkway Over the Hudson in Poughkeepsie – the 179th State Park – is a dramatic illustration of the ability of parks capital investments to lead economic development in local communities. In its first two months of operation, the Walkway has attracted more than 400,000 visitors – greatly exceeding projections of anticipated annual attendance. During construction the Walkway generated hundreds of engineering and construction jobs, and now that it's open to the public, spending by tourists and visitors will create many permanent jobs in the Hudson Valley and make neighboring Poughkeepsie a more vibrant community which is a better place to live, work, and raise families.

The State Council is doing its part. Since January, 2007, more than \$12 million in private contributions have been secured to support New York's State Parks and Historic Sites. Regional Parks Commission members continue to expand private fundraising efforts. However, private support cannot replace the state's responsibility to provide the operations and capital funding needed to maintain our State Parks, which are one of New York's great assets.

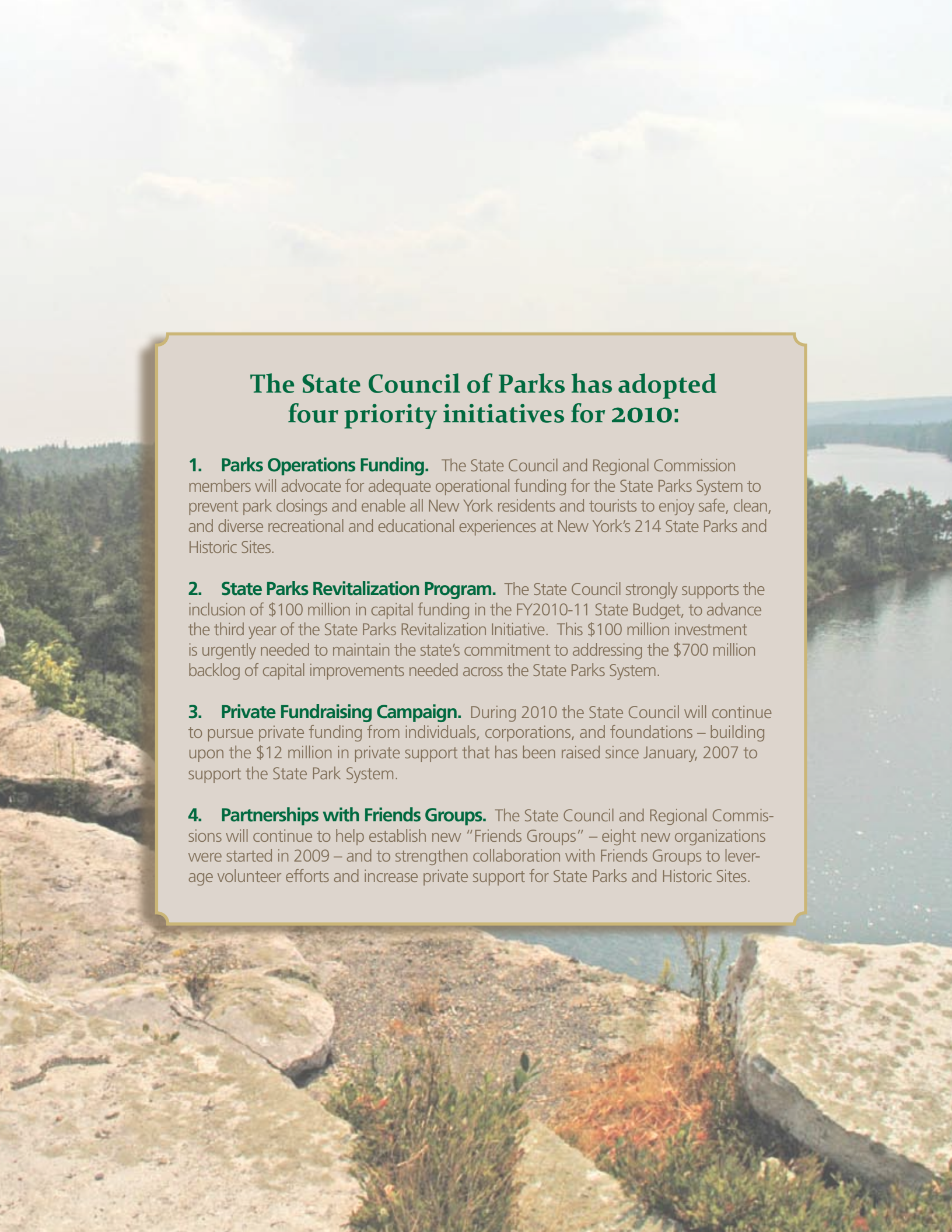
We admire your efforts as our Governor to grapple with the difficult financial issues facing the state, but we urge you to spare the park system from further operating cuts and we ask that you continue our State Parks Capital Initiative in the long-term interest of the state economy, residents, and tourists who delight in the parks' magnificent natural, historic, and cultural resources.

We would be greatly appreciative of the opportunity to meet with you to further discuss the issues and recommendations presented in this annual report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lucy R. Waletzky M.D." in a cursive script.

Lucy Rockefeller Waletzky, M.D., Chair



The State Council of Parks has adopted four priority initiatives for 2010:

- 1. Parks Operations Funding.** The State Council and Regional Commission members will advocate for adequate operational funding for the State Parks System to prevent park closings and enable all New York residents and tourists to enjoy safe, clean, and diverse recreational and educational experiences at New York's 214 State Parks and Historic Sites.
- 2. State Parks Revitalization Program.** The State Council strongly supports the inclusion of \$100 million in capital funding in the FY2010-11 State Budget, to advance the third year of the State Parks Revitalization Initiative. This \$100 million investment is urgently needed to maintain the state's commitment to addressing the \$700 million backlog of capital improvements needed across the State Parks System.
- 3. Private Fundraising Campaign.** During 2010 the State Council will continue to pursue private funding from individuals, corporations, and foundations – building upon the \$12 million in private support that has been raised since January, 2007 to support the State Park System.
- 4. Partnerships with Friends Groups.** The State Council and Regional Commissions will continue to help establish new "Friends Groups" – eight new organizations were started in 2009 – and to strengthen collaboration with Friends Groups to leverage volunteer efforts and increase private support for State Parks and Historic Sites.

State Council of Parks and Regional Park Commissions

The State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation – usually known simply as the “State Council of Parks” – is a 14-member body established by Article 5 of the state Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law (PRHPL). The State Council is comprised of the chairs of the eleven Regional Park Commissions, the chair of the State Board for Historic Preservation, and the Commissioners of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Department of Environmental Conservation.

As defined in PRHPL Section 5.09, the State Council’s powers and duties are to: a) review the policy, budget and statewide plans of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and make appropriate recommendations regarding their amendment or adoption; b) submit reports to the Governor, not less than once each year, concerning progress in the area of state parks, recreation and historic preservation, including recommendations for the future, and covering such other matters as the council may

deem appropriate; c) and act as a central advisory agency on all matters affecting parks, recreation and historic preservation.

The eleven Regional Parks Commissions, created by Article 7 of PRHPL, represent each of the state parks regions, with the exception of the Palisades (which is represented by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission) and the Adirondack & Catskill Park Region (which is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Conservation). Regional Commission members must be residents of the state and are appointed to seven year terms by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, and serve without compensation. Regional Commissions serve as a central advisory body on all matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation within their respective regions, with particular focus on the operations of the state parks and historic sites. The Commissions are also charged with reviewing and approving the region’s annual budget request prior to its submission to the Commissioner of State Parks.

State Council of Parks

LUCY WALETZKY,
Chair and Taconic Commission

DALTON BURGETT,
Allegany Commission

EDWARD AUDI,
Central Commission

DAVID BANFIELD,
Finger Lakes Commission

PETER HUMPHREY,
Genesee Commission

HERBERT BALIN,
Long Island Commission

JANET FELLEMAN,
New York City Commission

JEAN KNOX,
Niagara Frontier Commission

SAM PRYOR,
Palisades Commission

HEATHER MABEE,
Saratoga-Capital District Commission

HAROLD JOHNSON II,
Thousand Islands Commission

ROBERT MACKAY,
State Board for Historic Preservation



Niagara Falls State Park

OVERVIEW





Minnewaska State Park Preserve



Hudson River Islands State Park



Kring Point State Park

New York State Parks & Historic Sites Overview

The State Park System¹ is one of New York's greatest treasures. In the 124 years since the creation in 1885 of Niagara Reservation State Park – the oldest state park in the nation – the system has grown to 214 State Parks and Historic Sites encompassing 330,000 acres of protected lands and waters. New York's Parks and Historic Sites provide affordable outdoor recreation and education opportunities to more than 55 million visitors each year. These facilities contribute to the economic vitality and quality of life of local communities and directly support New York's tourism industry. Parks also provide a place for families and children to recreate and exercise, promoting healthy lifestyles and helping combat childhood obesity.

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is responsible for the operation and stewardship of the State Park System, as well as advancing a statewide parks, historic preservation, and open space mission. The agency is staffed by 2,100 permanent employees and more than 4,000 seasonal positions, with an "all funds" operating and capital budget of approximately \$330 million (FY2009-10 appropriations). Drawing upon these

resources, OPRHP is responsible for operating an extensive network of public recreational facilities that includes 5,000 buildings, 28 golf courses, 53 swimming pools, 76 beaches, 27 marinas, 40 boat launching sites, 18 nature centers, 817 cabins, 8,355 campsites, more than 1,350 miles of trails, extensive utility systems, 106 dams, hundreds of miles of roads, and 604 bridges.

New York's State Park System has long been recognized as one of the best and most diverse in the nation. Among the fifty states, we rank first in the number of operating facilities and first in the total number of campsites. We are fifth in total acreage and third in total annual visitation. Attendance at Niagara Falls State Park is greater than that of Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks combined, and more than twice as many people visit Jones Beach each year than visit Yellowstone. Niagara Falls is the oldest state park in the nation and Washington's Headquarters is the first property acquired with public funds for the express purpose of historic preservation and patriotic visitation.

¹ The term "state park system" as used in this report refers to New York's 179 state parks and 35 state historic sites.



Golden Hill State Park

PRIORITIES





Clarence Fahnestock State Park



Selkirk Shores State Park



Robert H. Treman State Park

State Council of Parks Priorities

The State Council of Parks has identified four priorities for 2010:

1. Parks Operations Funding.

The State Council and Regional Commission members will advocate for adequate operational funding for the State Park System to prevent park closings and enable all New York residents and tourists to enjoy safe, clean, and diverse recreational and educational experiences at New York's 214 State Parks and Historic Sites.

2. State Parks Revitalization Program.

The State Council respectfully requests the inclusion of \$100 million in capital funding in the FY2010-11 State Budget, to advance the third year of the State Parks Revitalization Initiative. This \$100 million investment is urgently needed to address the \$700 million backlog of capital improvements needed across the State Park System.

3. Private Fundraising Campaign.

During 2010 the State Council will continue to pursue private funding from individuals, corporations, and foundations – building upon the \$12 million in private support that has been raised since January, 2007 to support the park system.



4. Partnerships with Friends Groups.

The State Council and Regional Commissions will continue to help establish new "Friends Groups" – eight new organizations were started in 2009 – and to strengthen collaboration with Friends Groups to leverage volunteer efforts and increase private support for State Parks and Historic Sites.



Watkins Glen State Park

BUDGET



State Parks Operating Budget

OPRHP is a “direct operations” agency. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the agency’s operating budget goes to pay the direct costs – including permanent and seasonal staff, equipment, utilities, and similar expenses – incurred in operating New York’s 214 State Parks and Historic Sites.

The New York State Park System is at a critical crossroads. Over the past two years, OPRHP’s operating budget has absorbed five rounds of budget cuts totaling 25 percent of the agency’s operating budget. OPRHP’s summer workforce has been reduced by 1,000 permanent and seasonal workers. Budgets for equipment, supplies, and service contracts have been deeply cut. As a result, in 2009 OPRHP implemented service reductions at 100 State Parks and Historic Sites (shortened seasons, days, and hours of operation, and reduced programming).

The State Parks budget has been stretched to the breaking point. If directed to absorb additional budget cuts next year, OPRHP will have no option but to begin closing State Parks and Historic Sites. The State Council recognizes the difficult financial challenges facing New York State. Nonetheless, closing State Parks would be bad economic and public policy:

- A recent study documented that New York’s State Park System generates \$1.9 billion in economic activity each year— five times the

agency’s total annual budget. Closing State Parks will hurt local tourism industries and create negative economic impacts much greater than the modest savings to the state budget.

- State Parks generate state revenue (entrance fees, camping fees, picnic shelter rentals, etc.). Park revenues account for a third of OPRHP’s operating budget. When a park is closed to reduce costs, the agency also loses revenue. Every \$1 million “saved” through park closings generates only \$650,000 in net budget savings.
- Visitation to the State Park System is up – more than 55 million residents and tourists visited State Parks in 2009. At a time when many New York families are struggling due to the economic downturn, our State Parks provide affordable, close-to-home recreational and vacation opportunities.

FY2010-11 Operating Budget Recommendation: The State Council urges the Governor and the Legislature to avoid any further cuts to OPRHP’s operating budget. The agency has already absorbed a 25 percent budget cut. Further cuts will result in closing State Parks and Historic Sites – something that New York has never done before in the 125-year history of the State Park System.



Chittenango Falls State Park

BUDGET



State Parks Capital Budget

During 2007, OPRHP initiated a comprehensive assessment of the agency's capital rehabilitation needs, developing a detailed list of priority projects at New York's 214 State Parks and Historic Sites. The review documented a backlog of more than \$700 million in pressing capital investment project needs. New York's State Parks and Historic Sites are suffering from decades of underinvestment, with the result that too many of our facilities are deteriorated and in dire need of rehabilitation.

Many parks have significant health and safety concerns that require attention, such as outdated water supply systems, aging wastewater treatment plants that don't meet current standards, electrical systems that do not meet code, landfills that although inactive were never closed to state standards, underground petroleum storage tanks that don't meet state regulations, and dams that require rehabilitation.

Many of our park buildings and infrastructure – visitor centers, recreational facilities, cabins, campgrounds, swimming pools, nature centers, and historic buildings – are aging and deteriorating, diminishing the outdoor experience for the more than 55 million people that come to our State Parks every year. Major investments are needed to repair basic infrastructure such as roofs, heating and plumbing systems, park offices, picnic shelters, recreation fields, bathrooms, roads, parking areas, and maintenance centers. There is also a significant capital backlog at our Historic Sites, and energy-efficiency investments are needed in many aging buildings.

In recognition of the deteriorated condition of our State Parks and Historic Sites, over the past two years the Governor and the Legislature have funded a new State Parks Capital Initiative. This program, funded through a combination of parks revenues, state bonded funding, and other public and private support, has provided

\$200 million to begin the effort of revitalizing the Park System.

OPRHP has aggressively and efficiently put this funding to work. The agency has completed capital construction projects at more than 100 State Parks and Historic Sites across the state. A number of completed projects are featured in the "2009 Highlights" section of this report. These projects have created thousands of engineering and construction jobs in communities across the state. Due to the nature of parks capital projects, the vast majority have been undertaken by small and mid-sized local construction firms, creating a greatly-needed economic stimulus for construction contractors.

OPRHP has fully obligated the capital funds provided to the agency in the 2008-09 and 2009-10 state budgets. A third installment of capital funds is needed to maintain momentum on the State Parks Capital Initiative.

FY2010-11 Capital Budget Recommendation:

The State Council respectfully requests that Governor Paterson and the State Legislature provide \$100 million in capital funding in OPRHP's FY2010-11 budget to continue the third year of the State Parks Capital Initiative. Following the practice of the last two years, the Capital Initiative can be advanced through a combination of bonded funds, other sources of state, federal and private support, and state parks revenues (the State Parks Infrastructure Fund) – meaning that no state General Fund money is needed for the capital program. This investment will enable OPRHP to address a number of pressing health and safety concerns in the State Parks and Historic Sites. It will also directly support economic development by strengthening recreation and cultural tourism, which is one of the state's largest industries.



Green Lakes State Park (Bathhouse)

ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS



Annual Highlights

Grafton Lakes State Park

The mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is to provide safe and enjoyable recreation and interpretation opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic, and cultural resources. Below is a short sampling of highlights and successes achieved over the past year in each of the eleven OPRHP regions.

Allegany Region

- **Allegany State Park.** During 2009, OPRHP made a number of improvements to Allegany State Park including: continued renovation of the historic Regional Administration building – a central location for welcoming park visitors (\$700,000); completion of a new restroom and shower facility at the Cain Hollow campground (\$375,000); rehabilitation of public rental cabins in the Congdon area; remediation and closure to state standards of the former Cricks Run landfill (\$1.3 million); resurfacing 24 lane miles of deteriorated park roadways (\$1.8 million); repair of two “yellow-flagged” bridges; and removal of defunct buildings at the Red House entrance to the park. These projects were funded through the State Parks Capital Initiative.

- **Midway State Park.** The park’s drinking water system was upgraded and improvements were made to several facilities in this historic theme park, located on the shoreline of Chautauqua Lake. The \$1 million cost of these projects was funded through the State Parks Capital Initiative.



Midway State Park

- **Lake Erie State Park.** The agency reconstructed the park’s aging sewage treatment system (\$1 million), addressing a pressing health and safety issue. Design will soon begin for replacement of a deteriorated 1,200-foot underground culvert that drains through the park.

- **Master Planning.** The agency initiated the development of comprehensive Master Plans to guide future development and public uses at two facilities: Midway State Park (final plan anticipated by December 2009) and Allegany State Park (final plan scheduled for 2010).

Central Region

- **Green Lakes State Park.** On June 12, 2009 OPRHP reopened and dedicated the new Green Lakes Bathhouse, located in the center of the park’s popular public swimming beach. The new bathhouse replaced a deteriorated 1960s era structure, providing a modern, accessible, and “green” facility to serve the public’s needs. This \$2.4 million project was funded through OPRHP’s capital budget. In addition, agency officials and staff thanked the Juicy Juice Corporation for its \$350,000 donation for playground improvements at various State Parks, including a new playground at the Green Lakes beach area. The agency also continues to rehabilitate the historic “Old Administration Building” located near the beach, which is being opened for public events.

- **Chenango Valley State Park.** Page Brook, which runs through the park, has experienced severe flooding and erosion over the past several years. With the assistance of the Federal Emergency



Chenango Valley State Park

Management Agency and the State Emergency Management Office, a portion of the creek bank was stabilized in 2008, protecting the Chipmunk Bluff camp loop from further erosion. OPRHP has initiated a major project to relocate campsites near Page Brook to other areas within the park not subject to flood hazards. This \$1.1 million project will be complete in the spring of 2010 and will include improvements to the existing water and electric system, a new shower building, and new campsites in the Sunrise camp loop. Additional work includes electrical system and accessibility improvements to other existing campground loops.

- **Betty & Wilbur Davis State Park.** Thanks to an additional generous private gift of land and capital funding from Mr. and Mrs. Davis, OPRHP completed construction of a new picnic pavilion, public restroom, play area, and plantings at this Cooperstown area park.



Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park

- **Central Region Infrastructure Improvements.** Many of the parks in the Central Region are serviced by original utility systems installed in the first half of the 20th century. The region has advanced a number of projects to replace and upgrade aging and failing infrastructure. At Green Lakes State Park, the agency installed a new \$700,000 drinking water main tying into the county municipal water supply. Drinking water system improvements are also planned at Selkirk Shores State Park. A badly failing seawall was replaced at Verona Beach State Park, and deteriorated roads and parking areas are being resurfaced at Clark Reservation. At Chenango Valley State Park, the electrical system is being upgraded, and a new drinking water system is currently under design for construction in 2010.

Finger Lakes Region

- **Cayuga Lake State Park.** At Cayuga Lake, OPRHP is constructing new accessible paths in

the waterfront area. Additionally, the historic Civilian Conservation Corps picnic shelter is being repaired and rehabilitated.

- **Alan Treman State Marine Park.** OPRHP is replacing the marina's aging electrical system in this popular waterfront park on Cayuga Lake in Ithaca. The park's primary power line and transformer equipment is being replaced, and electric service upgrades are being made in the marina area.
- **Sonnenberg Gardens State Historic Site.** Sonnenberg, located in Canandaigua and operated by a non-profit organization, is one of the nation's most extensively preserved country estates from the Victorian era. OPRHP has initiated a \$3.2 million rehabilitation project that includes reconstruction of the mansion's



Sonnenberg Gardens & Mansion State Historic Park

veranda and several architectural features in the historic gardens.

- **Catharine Valley Trail.** OPRHP continues to make progress in opening sections of this recreational rail-trail that when completed will run from Watkins Glen to Mark Twain State Park near Horseheads. In 2009, the agency completed construction of a new bridge at Johnson Hollow.
- **Buttermilk Falls State Park.** With the help of federal stimulus funds for youth employment, a new overlook was constructed at the top of Buttermilk Falls. The youth crew carried tons of stone, sand, and cement up 116 steps along the side of the gorge. A Cub Scout Troop and several local high school athlete teams pitched in to complete the project.

Genesee Region

- **Letchworth State Park.** OPRHP is making major investments to replace aging infrastructure in Letchworth. At the Highbanks Campground area, new drinking water lines were installed, and contractors have started construction to replace failing septic systems at all nine restrooms in the campground. These projects will be completed prior to the 2010 camping season.
- **Hamlin Beach State Park.** In July, Genesee



Hamlin Beach State Park

Regional Chair Peter Humphrey, State Council of Parks Chair Lucy Waletzky, and Commissioner Carol Ash celebrated the opening of a new park office and police station at Hamlin Beach. The new park office, which replaces a highly-deteriorated building, features energy efficient design and construction as well as interpretive displays, enhanced communications and security features, and a conference room which is available for public meetings and programs.

- **Lakeside Beach State Park.** The region installed its first “frisbee” Disc Golf Course at Lakeside Beach located on Lake Ontario. Feedback from park visitors has been very positive and the agency is considering installation of additional courses and opportunities to hold organized disc golf tournaments.

Long Island Region

- **Brentwood State Park.** On September 25, 2009, Commissioner Carol Ash, state legislators, and community representatives announced the completion of the first phase of

improvements to this facility with the official opening of the Brentwood State Park Athletic Field Complex. The new 50-acre complex, located in an underserved community, consists of eight new synthetic turf soccer fields varying in size to accommodate all divisions of youth groups, along with two new synthetic turf baseball fields. This \$9 million project was funded primarily by a state Senate legislative item, with additional funds from OPRHP’s capital budget.

- **Bethpage State Park – United States Open Golf Championship.** Bethpage State Park hosted the 2009 United States Open Championship on the Black Course from June 15th to June 21st. Approximately 300,000 golf enthusiasts traveled to Bethpage to view the world’s premier golfers. Millions more viewed 30 hours of live television coverage. Jones Beach State Park provided spectator parking. The event generated an estimated \$75 million dollar economic impact to the metro-



Bethpage State Park - Black Course

politan New York area. Despite heavy rains during the tournament week, the U.S. Open Championship was a tremendous success.

- **Jones Beach State Park.** In 2009 OPRHP initiated a major rehabilitation of the iconic Jones Beach water tower, which had deteriorated to the point where cracks appeared on its exterior facing. This historic landmark was constructed in 1929 and holds a steel cylinder containing 316,000 gallons of fresh water, drawn from wells. The tower supplies water to facilities throughout the park including restrooms, swimming pools, drinking water fountains, park buildings, and the United States Coast Guard Station located on the

property. During construction, damage to the tower's internal steel support structure was found to be significantly worse than originally anticipated. This \$6 million project will fully restore the water tower and safeguard Jones Beach's public water supply system.

- **Caleb Smith State Park Preserve.** Over the past three years, the Nature Museum at Caleb Smith has been renovated. The museum now has interactive environmental exhibits, a new classroom for school groups, and displays of local plants and wildlife. There are also a number of exhibits highlighting the history of the property dating back to 1665. The cost of this project totaled \$350,000. Funding was provided through State Senate and Assembly Legislative items, private donations made to the Friends of Caleb Smith State Park Preserve, and OPRHP's capital budget.
- **Youth Health and Fitness Program.** Long Island State Parks partnered with Emblem Health to provide free summer youth programs to promote healthy and fit lifestyles and to reduce childhood obesity. Emblem Health donated \$7,500 to support the program and their employees managed and administered the program. The program included a half-mile summer run for children ages 5-11 and a youth basketball clinic. Emblem Health arranged for basketball legend Earl "The Pearl" Monroe to provide an exhibition with the Hofstra University basketball team.

New York City Region

- **Riverbank State Park.** During 2009, OPRHP made major investments to infrastructure rehabilitation at Riverbank State Park, which hosts more than 2.5 million visitors annually. Aging roofs and HVAC systems (which dated to the original construction of the park in the 1980s) were renovated, and the en-



Riverbank State Park

trance traffic circle was reconstructed, with investments exceeding \$6 million funded from the State Parks Capital Initiative. In addition, the "Totally Kid Carousel" was refurbished and reinstalled in the park in partnership with New York City.

- **Roberto Clemente State Park** Roberto Clemente, which welcomes 1.2 million visitors annually, was opened in 1973. The park's facilities are showing their age. OPRHP has received \$20 million from the New York City Van Cortland Park water treatment facility mitigation fund for improvements to Roberto Clemente. OPRHP is using this funding to reconstruct the park's popular aquatics complex including refurbishing the main pool and dive tank, creating a new spray area with landscaping and shade, and rehabilitating visitor locker rooms. These projects are currently under construction for completion in 2010.
- **East River State Park.** OPRHP is installing a new play area at East River, located in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. The play area will make full use of the site's industrial history as a waterfront rail road yard and feature a large wooden train along the original railroad tracks. The play area, which will be completed this coming spring, is funded through contributions from the Juicy Juice Corporation and other private sources.

Niagara Frontier Region



Old Fort Niagara State Historic Site

- **Fort Niagara State Park / Old Fort Niagara State Historic Site.** Old Fort Niagara, which features original structures dating from 1726 to 1871, was an important military fortification due to its strategic location where the

Niagara River flows into Lake Ontario. In July, Old Fort Niagara State Historic Site and Fort Niagara State Park hosted a major reenactment celebrating the 250th anniversary of the French and Indian War. The three-day event, organized by the Friends of Old Fort Niagara and agency staff, drew 40,000 visitors. OPRHP is also replacing five roofs on historic buildings using Niagara Greenway funding.

- **Evangola State Park.** OPRHP completed renovations to the historic bathhouse at Evangola, with its popular swimming beach on Lake Erie. The agency also invested in improvements to the park's roadways and parking areas.

- **Darwin Martin House.** This historic house in Buffalo, designed and built in 1903-05 and considered one of Frank Lloyd Wright's signature works, is owned by New York State and operated by the Martin House Restoration Corporation, a non-profit friends group. Over the past 15 years, the Corporation has raised tens of millions of dollars of public and private support to restore the house. In 2009, the Corporation opened the new state-of-the-art Eleanor and Wilson Greatbatch Visitor Center to orient visitors and interpret Wright's work.



Darwin Martin House

- **Niagara Falls – NorthStar Underground Railroad Interpretive Site.** OPRHP is supporting a partnership effort, led by the City of Niagara Falls, to recognize and interpret the City's important role in our nation's Underground Railroad story. The City is developing plans to rehabilitate a portion of a vacant building, adjacent to the Niagara River Gorge, to establish the NorthStar Interpretive Site. Plans are also being made to commemorate Niagara Falls State Park's 125th anniversary in 2010.



Bear Mountain State Park

Palisades Region

- **Bear Mountain State Park.** OPRHP is completely renovating the Queensboro Water Treatment Plant that provides drinking water to the entire Bear Mountain State Park complex including the picnic area, inn, park offices, lodges, pool, zoo, and other recreational facilities. The existing water supply system, which serves 1.5 million visitors annually, is more than 50-years-old. This \$2.1 million health and safety project is funded through the State Parks Capital Initiative.
- **Harriman State Park.** The agency has initiated a \$2.3 million project to rehabilitate the sewage collection system and waste water treatment plant that services the Lake Welch swimming area and Beaver Pond campground. The old sewage treatment system, which discharges to Lake Welch, does not meet current state health and safety standards. This project is critical to protect water quality and meet the needs of over half a million visitors a year that enjoy the beaches at Lake Welch. The project is funded by New York's Clean Water Program administered by the state Environmental Facilities Corporation.
- **Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site.** OPRHP is replacing the HVAC system for Washington's Headquarters Museum Building and the Hasbrouck House (\$855,000). The old, existing system is failing, and the new system incorporates energy efficiency technologies. This project is an important commitment to preserving the nation's first publicly-owned historic site.

Saratoga-Capital Region

- **Crailo State Historic Site.**

In honor of the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's voyage of discovery, OPRHP completed significant improvements to Crailo State Historic Site, a house museum located in Rensselaer devoted to the Colonial Dutch period. With help from many public and private partner organizations, OPRHP installed new interactive exhibits and expanded outreach and educational programming. The agency also installed a new energy efficient climate control system and restored the exterior of this 18th century structure.



- **Saratoga Spa State Park.** The Spa Park's picnic pavilions are popular destinations for family reunions, company events, fundraisers, and parties. Yet the picnic facilities had not been upgraded since their original construction in the 1960s and were in sore need of reinvestment. The agency completed a \$1.5 million infrastructure improvement project to renovate six pavilion/restroom complexes in the park. These upgrades meet accessibility goals, add amenities to the picnic areas, and help reduce overall maintenance expenses.



Saratoga Spa State Park

- **Moreau Lake State Park.** Moreau Lake is a popular campground, swimming beach, and day-use park located in Saratoga County at the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains. During 2009, OPRHP made \$2 million in investments to replace aging facilities, build seven new clean and efficient shower/restroom facilities to service the park's 148 campsites, and undertake important safety upgrades to the park's electric and water utilities.

Taconic Region

- **Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park.** This unique new State Park was dedicated as a Quadricentennial Legacy project by Governor David Patterson and opened to the public in October, 2009. Soaring 212 feet above the Hudson River, the 1.28-mile *Walkway Over the Hudson State Historic Park* former Poughkeepsie-Highland Railroad Bridge is the longest elevated pedestrian bridge in the world and will connect recreational rail-trails in Poughkeepsie and Highland. The \$38 million project is a partnership between New York State, the federal government, the non-profit Walkway Over the Hudson, the Dyson Foundation, Scenic Hudson, and private donors. New York's 179th state park has instantly become a resounding success, hosting as many as 15,000 visitors per day.



PHOTO: David Rocco

- **Taconic Regional Office Project.** OPRHP is completing a comprehensive renovation of the vacant Staatsburg School, located in Mills-Norrie State Park. This adaptive re-use project of a historic 1930s building is scheduled for completion in December, 2009. The project will relocate the Taconic regional office from its current outdated and cramped location in the basement of the Staatsburgh State Historic Site (where the regional offices were "temporarily" located in 1938). The project showcases environmental design elements and will receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The building also includes a new park office, conference rooms, and a large assembly space for training, events, public workshops, and meetings. This \$7.2 million project, funded in large part through a private contribution, has created dozens of construction and skilled trade jobs.
- **Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park.** "FDR" State Park hosts 500,000 visitors annually. In 2009, OPRHP completed major improvements to roadways, parking areas, and accessible paths, improv-

ing vehicular and pedestrian access to the picnic areas, swimming pool, and other popular areas of the park. The Region is also constructing a new picnic shelter and rehabilitating basketball courts, funded through a private contribution.

- **Olana State Historic Site.** The Olana Partnership, a non-profit friends group, and OPRHP completely restored and transformed the site's historic carriage barn, which houses a new visitor center, museum shop, and restroom facilities. Work included replacing the rusting metal roof with historically correct wood shakes, restoring ornamental woodwork, and re-establishing the beautiful decorative painting. These improvements are enjoyed by the many visitors to Olana as the first point of public contact at the site.

Thousand Islands Region

- **Robert Moses State Park.** In July, State Council of Parks Chair Lucy Waletzky, Thousand Islands Region Chairman Harold Johnson, Commissioner Carol Ash, and New York Power Authority President Richard Kessel opened the newly renovated beach area complex at Robert Moses State Park, located on the St. Lawrence River near Massena. They were joined by 200 local dignitaries and park supporters as they cut the ribbon on this \$1.5 million renovation project, which was funded through funds generated by the New York Power Authority's relicensing agreement for the St. Lawrence Moses/Saunders power project.



Robert Moses State Park

- **Thousand Islands Campground Improvements.** During the winter and spring of 2008-09, OPRHP completed significant improvements to campground facilities at Wellesley Island, Southwick Beach, and Westcott Beach State Parks. Eight outdated campground restroom/shower buildings were replaced with modern, accessible facilities. Contracts totaling over \$3 million, funded by OPRHP's capital budget, were awarded to local contractors creating construction jobs in the region.

New York State Park Police

The State Park Police had a particularly challenging year in 2009. In addition to providing law enforcement, security, and operational support at New York's 214 State Parks and Historic Sites, the Park Police managed security at a robust schedule of major events across the state – including the Jones Beach Air Show, the U.S. Open Golf Championship at Bethpage State Park, and rock concerts at Jones Beach Theater, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, ArtPark, and East River State Park in Williamsburg (Brooklyn).



The Taconic and Palisades Regions provided police staff to the newly opened Walkway Over the Hudson (spanning from the City of Poughkeepsie in Dutchess County to the Town of Lloyd in Ulster County). The Walkway opened in early October and has been hugely popular, attracting more than 400,000 visitors in its first two months of operation. Large crowds and heavy traffic conditions have required a regular police presence on the Walkway and surrounding parklands.

The Park Police participated in the opening ceremony at Hamlin Beach State Park (Genesee Region) for a new combined park administrative building and police station. The new facility is a state of the art station and a great asset for the Genesee region. In the Saratoga / Capital Region a new Park Police station was constructed at Grafton Lakes State Park and will be formally opened soon. The Park Police personnel in the Taconic Region are looking forward to the opening of the new regional headquarters that includes a comprehensive police facility.

The Park Police have been challenged by a significant reduction in force, stemming from state budget cuts. The annual police training academy was cancelled in both 2008-09 and 2009-10 due to the state's fiscal situation. As a result, Park Police staffing in the parks next summer will be down 25 percent (70 uniformed officers) from July 2008 levels. Park Police personnel have worked tirelessly to provide adequate patrol coverage for the new facilities and events and to cover for the vacant police officer positions.



State Board for Historic Preservation

- **NYS Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.** In July, 2009, Governor Paterson signed legislation that greatly expands and improves New York State's Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program for both residential and commercial properties. Owners of residences listed in the State or National Registers of Historic Places, located in an increased number of economically distressed areas, will now be eligible for a state tax credit of 20 percent of investments made in rehabilitating their homes. Households with annual incomes under \$60,000 will be eligible for a rebate as opposed to a credit. On the commercial side, the credit has been raised to a full 20 percent of eligible costs for listed properties in eligible census tracts, with a cap of \$5 million in credit. These amendments, along with clarifications on what entities may receive the credit, will make the program much more usable and effective. The amended program is expected to be one of the most effective economic and community development tools available in the state, generating both downtown renewal and neighborhood revitalization.
- **Cultural Resource Data Base.** The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) has received a \$1.8 million grant to undertake a major update and expansion of its existing information technology systems. Funding from the New York State Department of Transportation Enhancement Program provides 80 percent of the estimated project costs. This large scale effort is likely to take three to five years to complete and will transfer over 30 years of archival paper records to digital format, including 25,000 archeology reports, more than 250,000 building survey forms, photographs and other paper records. When complete, the expanded system will provide federal and state agencies, municipal governments, developers, and consultants with web-based, user-friendly access to the computerized records and map-based information maintained at SHPO.
- **New York State Historic Preservation Plan 2009-2013: Historic Preservation at a Crossroads.** This year, OPRHP completed an updated Five-Year Historic Preservation Plan, which was approved by the National Park Service. The plan: provides comprehensive information related to the background and current trends in the preservation movement; delineates seven major goals and a comprehensive vision for efforts by federal, state, municipal, non-profit and private entities engaged in historic preservation; and sets forth key strategies for the agency. In order to effectively implement the plan's strategies, OPRHP adopted an internal goal of further integrating historic preservation work into the agency while meeting the increased demand for preservation assistance to communities and organizations around the state. The Bureau of Historic Sites and the Field Services Bureau have been re-united as part of the Division for Historic Preservation and a review team has been appointed to analyze existing programs and services and identify proactive steps the agency can take to advance the state plan.





Statewide Stewardship Initiatives

Over the past year OPRHP launched three major initiatives to enhance the agency's stewardship of New York's 214 State Parks and Historic Sites:

- **Natural Resource Stewardship and Interpretation.**

In order to enhance stewardship and interpretation of the State Park System's incredible wealth of plants, animals, and ecosystems, OPRHP has continued an agency-wide natural resource initiative.



Examples of natural resource projects initiated during 2009 include: "daylighting" a stream at Mills-Norrie State Park (the stream previously ran through 500 feet of underground culvert – the agency removed the culvert and constructed a natural streambed); initiating a major project to expand habitat for the federally-endangered Karner blue butterfly at Saratoga Spa State Park; improving habitat for the state endangered Northern Cricket Frog at Sterling Forest State Park; developing a research and removal plan to control the highly invasive Pale-Swallow-wort at Wehle State Park, and establishing a Sensory Butterfly Garden/Meadow on an old spoils field at Allegany State Park.

- **Master Planning.** In 2008, OPRHP launched an initiative to develop 25 Master Plans over the next five years to guide management and development of State Parks and Historic Sites. Over the past two years, Master Plans have been initiated at Saratoga Spa, Caumsett, Jamesport, Minnewaska, Two

Rivers, Midway, Allegany, Robert G. Wehle, and Green Lakes State Parks.

- **Sustainability.** In 2009, OPRHP adopted an agency-wide sustainability plan, outlining strategies for incorporating energy efficiency, green design, LEED certification, recycling, and green product procurement into all of the agency's activities and programs. A number of projects and initiatives are now underway. Examples include the installation of solar panels at the Maintenance Garage in Niagara Falls, the testing of fully-electric vehicles at Green Lakes State Park, and the roll-out of our sustainability intranet site, which is regularly updated with the latest relevant news and information.

The Hugh L. Carey Empire State Games

During 2009 OPRHP organized three Empire State Games:



- **Empire State Winter Games.** The Winter Games were conducted in Lake Placid, the permanent home of the winter competitions, in February, 2009. More than 1,200 athletes competed in nine winter sports.
- **Empire State Games for the Physically Challenged.** The 25th Games for the Physically Challenged were held in May, 2009 at Mitchell Field and Nassau Community College on Long Island. More than 1,200 young athletes competed in a

variety of adapted sports and events. In October, a regional competition of this event was held at SUNY Brockport, where more than 300 youngsters enjoyed the competition.

- **Empire State Senior Games.** More than 1,600 athletes participated in the Senior Games held in June, 2009 at SUNY-Cortland.
- **Empire State Summer Games.** The 2009 Summer Games, which had been scheduled in the Hudson River Valley, were cancelled due to budget cuts stemming from New York State's unprecedented fiscal crisis. Plans are underway to restore the Summer Games in Buffalo for July, 2010. Funding will come from a mix of state support, modest increases to athlete participation fees, and a newly announced private fundraising initiative.

Conclusion

The State Council of Parks urges Governor Paterson and the State Senate and Assembly to provide OPRHP the needed operational funding to assure the safe operation and stewardship of New York's 214 State Parks and Historic Sites – and to avoid cuts that would result in closing parks for the first time ever in the park system's 125-year history.

We also urge the Governor and Legislature to include \$100 million in the FY2010-11 state budget to continue the State Parks Capital Initiative.

These efforts will sustain the State Park System's unique contributions to the health of our citizens and economically vibrant local communities across New York State.

Appendix 1:

Roles & Responsibilities of State Council and Regional Commission Members



Roles and Responsibilities: Members, State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation October 16, 2007

The State Council, created by Article 5 of PRHPL, consists of the Chairs of the eleven Regional Parks Commissions (including a representative of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission), the Chair of the State Board of Historic Preservation, the Commissioner of State Parks, and the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation. The Governor appoints the Chair and Vice Chair of the State Council. The Council meets at least four times per year through in-person meetings and conference calls. The Council's statutory responsibilities include:

- Act as a central advisory agency on all matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation.
- Review the policy, budget, and statewide plans of the agency and make appropriate recommendations regarding their amendment or adoption.
- Submit reports to the Governor, not less than once each year, concerning progress in the area of state parks, recreation, and historic preservation.

To advance these responsibilities, State Council of Parks members shall:

1. Endeavor to attend all State Council of Parks meetings.
2. During State Council meetings and through other channels, educate other Council Members, the State Parks Commissioner, and other Executive and OPRHP Staff about issues, priorities, challenges, and opportunities within their respective regions.
3. Communicate State Council and agency priorities and initiatives to all Regional Commission members. Encourage, motivate, and support fellow Regional Commissioners to enable them to fully engage in state parks issues.
4. Become educated about statewide parks, recreation, and historic preservation issues.
5. Develop and submit a written annual report to the Governor each October.
6. Undertake all responsibilities of Regional Parks Commissioners (attached).



Regional Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissions

Members' Roles and Responsibilities

October 16, 2007

The ten Regional Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissions, created by Article 7 of PRHPL, represent each State Parks region, with the exception of the Palisades (represented by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission) and the Adirondack/Catskill park region. Each Regional Commission consists of seven to fourteen members (the number for each commission is set in law). All Commission members, who must be residents of the state, are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate for seven-year terms. The Governor designates the chair of each Commission. Each Regional Commission meets at least four times per year. The Regional Commissions are charged with acting as a central advisory body on all matters affecting parks, recreation, and historic preservation within their respective regions, with particular focus on the operations of the state parks and historic sites.

To advance these responsibilities, Regional Parks Commissioners shall:

1. Endeavor to attend all Regional Parks Commission meetings.
2. Learn about the operations, priorities, and programs of the region, and participate in the annual review and approval of the regional budget. Remain in regular contact with the Regional Director. Visit as many state parks and historic sites in the region as possible, and become acquainted with regional staff and park managers.
3. Serve as an advocate for the state parks and historic sites within the region, including:
 - “Adopt” one or more state parks, or historic sites, so that every park and site in the region has a Regional Commissioner with whom they have a special relationship. Actively participate in the formation or enhancement of Friends Groups, including considering making personal financial contributions, and assisting in fundraising efforts.
 - Meet with State Legislators and other elected officials to educate them about issues, challenges and opportunities facing state parks and historic sites and advocate for state park funding and policy priorities.
4. Enlist the support of parks user groups, environmental and historic preservation organizations, land trusts, local community and business leaders, tourism officials, and other partners to advance state parks goals and priorities.
5. Become educated about parks, recreation, and historic preservation issues throughout the region, with particular emphasis on issues – such as inappropriate development, sprawl, illegal ATVs, climate change, invasive species, etc. – that threaten state parks and historic sites. Testify or appear as appropriate at environmental review hearings, local planning meetings, etc. regarding proposed projects that impact park and historic site resources.
6. Participate as appropriate in continuing education opportunities such as: attending the annual Facilities Managers conference; participating in park master planning, trailway development, and parkland designation efforts (such as Bird Conservation Areas and Natural Heritage Areas) for individual parks; and attending parks, open space, and historic preservation conferences and training programs.
7. Assist in identifying qualified individuals to fill vacant Regional Commission positions.



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