



New York State Council of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

2007 ANNUAL REPORT





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New York State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Eliot Spitzer
Governor

Carol Ash
Commissioner

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

November 2007



Dear Governor Spitzer:

Greetings from the State Council of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

The Council comprises the Chairs of the eleven Regional Park Commissions, the Chair of the State Board for Historic Preservation, and the Commissioners of State Parks and Environmental Conservation.

We are very happy to submit to you the State Council of Parks' 2007 Annual Report. The report describes the State Council's priorities for 2008, highlights the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's achievements over the past year, and sets forth recommendations for improving the stewardship of New York's 213 State Parks and Historic Sites which have nearly 60 million yearly visitors.

While New York's State parks face many challenges and opportunities, one issue is paramount: the state park system has suffered from decades of underinvestment, with the result that the parks have developed a \$650 million backlog of urgent capital projects. These include health and safety concerns (outdated sewage treatment, water supply, and electrical systems; improperly closed landfills; underground tanks; and aging dams); pressing rehabilitation needs (deteriorated campgrounds, bathhouses, swimming pools, recreation facilities, historic structures, nature centers, roads, bridges, and boat launches); provision of public access to newly acquired parks; and natural resource stewardship projects.

The state park system is an irreplaceable public asset that provides unparalleled recreation opportunities, enhances the health of its citizens, supports the state's economic vitality and quality of life, and harbors irreplaceable ecosystems and natural resources. A major new state effort is needed to return New York's parks to preeminence as the best state park system in the nation. A renewed state investment in our parks and historic sites will serve as a model nationally as well.

Commissioner Ash's visionary leadership, including establishing realistic numbers for the statewide aging infrastructure problems faced by our State Parks and Historic Sites has energized the State Council of Parks. Accordingly, we look forward to helping Commissioner Ash's efforts by assuming a new, more active role in addressing the funding of infrastructure needs of the individual parks and sites in our regions.

The State Council of Parks is very appreciative of the public statements you have made in the past several months acknowledging the need to invest in the state parks. We respectfully recommend that New York State commit to investing \$650 million over the next four years in capital improvements to the state park system, beginning with a capital appropriation of at least \$150 million in the FY2008-09 State budget. The Council also recommends that OPRHP be provided additional professional staff to enhance the agency's operations, facilities maintenance, and engineering programs.

We would welcome the chance to meet with you and further outline the challenges facing our beautiful parks and historic sites.

With warm regards and appreciation of all your efforts as our Governor

Lucy R. Waletzky M.D.

Lucy R. Waletzky, M.D.
Chair

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STATE COUNCIL OF PARKS



Sitting: Julie Canfield, DEC, Andy Beers, Executive Deputy, NYS Parks, Carol Ash, Commissioner, NYS Parks, Lucy Waletzky M.D., Chair/Taconic Commission, Heather Mabee, Saratoga-Capital Commission, Edward Audi, Central Commission.
Standing: Dalton Burgett, Allegany Commission, Edward Cox, New York City Commission, Peter Humphrey, Genesee Commission, Linda Jackson, Finger Lakes Commission, Robert MacKay, State Board of Historic Preservation, and Harold Johnson II, Thousand Island Commission.

State Council of Parks and Regional Park Commissions Composition, Powers and Duties

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 State Parks and Environmental Conservation.

As defined in PRHPL Section 5.09, the State Council’s powers and duties are to: Review the policy, budget and statewide plans of Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and make appropriate recom-

mendations 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, including recommendations for the future, and covering such other matters as the council may deem appropriate; 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

*Lucy Waletzky,
Chair and Taconic Commission*

*Dalton Burgett,
Allegany Commission*

*Edward Audi,
Central Commission*

*Linda Jackson,
Finger Lakes Commission*

*Peter Humphrey,
Genesee Commission*

*Herbert Balin,
Long Island Commission*

*Edward Cox,
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*

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.



4 Priorities for 2008

Over the past six months, the State Council of Parks has reviewed its operations and activities, and identified several priorities for the coming years:

1. The Council will focus particular emphasis on the single largest challenge facing the State Parks and Historic Sites – the need to significantly increase OPRHP’s capital budget to address the rehabilitation and reconstruction of aging infrastructure across the State parks system;

2. Park Commission members will be encouraged to become fully educated about the challenges and opportunities facing the parks and sites in their region – and to advocate for park and historic site needs with elected officials, community leaders, and parks and historic preservation organizations;

3. The State Council and Regional Commissions will work to strengthen “friends groups” to leverage volunteer efforts to support State Parks and Historic Sites; and

4. Commission members will be encouraged to participate in private fundraising efforts to advance high priority capital projects.

In addition, State Council Chair Lucy Waletzky and Commissioner Carol Ash will regularly attend Regional Commission meetings to facilitate their active engagement and keep them fully informed of ongoing parks and historic site activities throughout the State. These priorities are summarized in a new “Roles and Responsibilities” document attached as an Appendix to this report.



New York State Parks and Historic Sites Overview

The State Park system¹ is one of New York's greatest treasures and is the finest in the nation. In the 122 years since the creation of Niagara Reservation State Park in 1885 – the oldest state park in the nation – the system has grown to 213 State Parks and Historic Sites encompassing 325,000 acres of protected lands and waters. New York's Parks and Historic Sites provide affordable outdoor recreation and education opportunities to

almost 60 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 clean water and clean air and habitat for plants, wildlife, and ecosystems, and protect historic resources and cultural landscapes that are defining features of New York State.

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is responsible for the operation and stewardship of the state park system, as well as advancing a statewide parks, historic preservation, open space protection, and smart growth mission. The agency is staffed by 2,240 permanent employees and more than 5,000 seasonal positions, with an "all funds" operating budget of approximately \$260 million. Drawing upon these resources,



Niagara Falls State Park



Lake Taughkanic State Park

OPRHP is responsible for operating an extensive network of public recreational facilities that includes 5,000 buildings,

29 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 State's Park system has long been recognized as a national leader. 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 com-

bined, 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



Jones Beach State Park

visitation. The Bethpage Black was the first publicly-owned golf course to host the U.S. Open Golf Championship. The 109th United States Open Championship® will return there in 2009.



¹ The term "state park system" as used in this report refers to New York's 178 State Parks and 35 State Historic Sites.



Sterling Forest® State Park



Indian Hills Golf Course

2008-09 Fiscal Year Budget Recommendations

As summarized in the “Annual Highlights” section of this report, over the past year OPRHP has launched a number of positive projects and initiatives to enhance the parks and historic sites. However, New York State’s parks and historic sites face very significant challenges. Simply stated, the State parks system is suffering from decades of underinvestment, with the result that the parks’ recreational facilities and infrastructure are stretched to the breaking point. Many parks have significant health and safety concerns that require attention, such as outdated water supply systems, wastewater treatment plants, electrical systems, and dams. In addition, many of our park buildings and infrastructure – our visitor centers, recreational facilities, cabins, campgrounds, swimming pools, nature centers, and historic buildings – are aging and deteriorating, diminishing the outdoor experience for the nearly 60 million people that come to our parks every year. And, in the last twelve years, the State parks system has expanded by more than 25%, with 66,000 acres and 26 new parks. We need to provide basic amenities and recreational facilities to allow the public to fully enjoy these new parks.

While the challenges facing the State park system have been growing, OPRHP’s capital budget has not. State parks has fewer capital dollars today than it had twelve years ago. Similarly, over this period the agency lost approximately 250 full-time staff positions that were devoted

to maintaining and operating our parks and historic sites across the agency’s eleven park regions.

Last fall, a statewide parks advocacy group, Parks and Trails New York, issued an independent report entitled “Parks at a Turning Point: Restoring and Enhancing New York’s State Park System.” This report recognized New York’s magnificent parks and historic sites, but highlighted urgent capital and operations funding needs for the agency. The Parks and Trails report made several recommendations, most notably calling for a major new capital investment initiative to re-invigorate the State parks and historic sites.

This year’s state budget (FY2007-08) is an important first step in recognizing State Parks’ funding needs. The agency’s total budget included a 5% increase (\$10.7 million) over the adjusted amount available in FY 2006-07 and a 10% increase in General Fund support for State Parks. The budget restored 52 agency staff positions, which the agency allocated as follows: 14 positions to staff new facilities and parks coming on line this year; 10 additional facility maintenance positions; 13 additional Park Police positions; 10 new environmental stewardship positions; and five new positions in the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau. The budget also provided new funding to operate newly-acquired and developed parks, including Midway State Park, Two Rivers State Park, and the Indian Hills Golf Course in the Southern Tier; Sterling

Forest®, Fort Montgomery, and the Purple Heart Hall of Honor in the Hudson Valley; and the Springbrook Golf Course at Fair Haven Beach, the redeveloped camping areas at Robert Moses and Coles Creek State Parks, and improvements along the Canalway Trail in Central New York. In addition, the budget provided an increase of approximately \$5 million to OPRHP’s capital budget.

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Capital Investment Needs

The funding increases provided to State Parks this year will support vitally important positions and projects and is greatly appreciated. However, more needs to be done. OPRHP has initiated a comprehensive assessment of the agency's capital investment needs, developing a detailed list of priority projects at each of New York's 213 State Parks and Historic Sites. To date this assessment has identified more than 770 critical capital projects with a total cost exceeding \$650 million. OPRHP's capital needs have been categorized into four areas:

- **Health and Safety Projects (Total = \$95 million).** Through its ongoing environmental audit program, OPRHP has identified out-of-compliance sewage treatment and



Electrical panel at Clarence Fahnestock State Park

drinking water supply systems, underground petroleum tanks, dams and bridges that have been flagged as potential hazards, inactive landfills that were never properly closed, and substandard electrical systems.



Bleachery at Peables Island State Park

- **Remediation of Existing Facilities (Total = \$440 million).** This category is by far the largest, comprising more than 60% of OPRHP's total identified capital need. It encompasses capital maintenance and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure in the parks and historic sites – replacing facilities that invariably wear out over time such as roofs, heating and plumbing systems, contact stations, campgrounds, boat launches, picnic shelters, recreation fields, pools and swimming areas, visitor centers, bathrooms, roads, parking areas, and maintenance centers. It also includes a significant backlog of repair and maintenance needs for historic buildings and structures at our historic sites, as well as energy-efficiency investments in aging buildings. The Needs Assessment does not attempt to capture every possible existing need in this category, but rather catalogues high priority needs that require attention.

- **New Facilities Development (Total = \$85 million).** This category captures capital investments needed to develop new facilities – primarily public use amenities at the many new State parks acquired over the past decade.

Many of our newest parks consist of a sign, a car pull-off, and little else. Investments are needed to



Basketball court at Allegany State Park

create contact stations, parking areas, restrooms, picnic and swimming areas, marked trails, to make these new acquisitions available to the public.

- **Natural Resource Stewardship (Total = \$35 million).** The State Parks' natural resources – plants, wildlife, and ecosystems – face many threats, such as pollution of lakes and rivers, impaired wetlands, invasive species, soil erosion, global warming, and sea level rise. The Needs Assessment identifies a number of park-

Capital Investment Needs . . . *continued*

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specific projects to restore habitats and ecosystems needed to assure that natural resources in the State parks remain “unimpaired for future generations.”

To date this assessment has identified more than 770 critical capital projects with a total cost exceeding \$650 million.

OPRHP’s principal source of capital funding is the State Park Infrastructure Fund (SPIF), a dedicated revenue fund which is derived from a portion of park user fee revenues and contract payments. Over the past ten years, SPIF capital funds have averaged \$26.1 million

annually. However, more than \$6 million of agency staffing costs for engineering services and preventive maintenance, previously paid for by the State’s General Fund, were transferred to SPIF, leaving less than \$20 million for actual projects annually. The annual “project funding amount” available through SPIF today is actually less than the agency’s pre-SPIF capital budget.

When it was enacted in 1992, the State Park Infrastructure

Fund was envisioned as a \$300 million, ten-year commitment to address an identified backlog of capital and infrastructure needs, to be comprised of a \$9 million State General Fund component matched to a \$21 million in user fees. The intent of the legislation was that agency capital investments would grow as user fees grew, enabling the agency to address its long-term needs. However, although agency revenues more than doubled (from \$36 million in FY1991-92 to \$81 million in FY2006-07), funding available for SPIF capital projects actually decreased. As a result of State budget cuts, the original commitment



Parking lot at Clarence Fahnestock State Park

to provide a \$9 million annual General Fund “match” component was eliminated, and as noted above more than \$6 million in overhead staff costs were transferred from the General Fund to SPIF. Over this same time period, the size of the State park system grew by more than 25% and 26 new State parks were added.

Although SPIF is the agency’s primary capital funding program, OPRHP receives smaller amounts of capital funds from other sources including the Environmental Protection Fund, the federal Land & Water Fund, mitigation payments, and private contributions. Combining SPIF

and these other sources, approximately \$40 million is available to OPRHP this year (FY2007-08) to undertake capital construction projects. This level of capital funding is inadequate to address the very large backlog of urgent capital needs facing the agency. Plain and simple, \$40 million annually cannot begin to address capital needs that exceed \$650 million.

New York State must significantly increase capital funding for the State parks and historic sites. We applaud Governor Spitzer’s recent statements acknowledging the need to increase New York’s investment in the State park system and directing Commissioner Carol Ash to develop a funding plan to address this critical need. Given the magnitude of the needs, this challenge can only be solved through a sustained, comprehensive effort. The State Council of Parks recommends that New York State commit to investing \$650 million over the next four years in capital improvements to the state park system, beginning with a capital appropriation of at least \$150 million in the FY2008-09 State Budget.

In addition to increased capital funding, the State Council of Parks recommends that that FY2008-09 budget authorize the restoration of OPRHP staff positions to enhance the agency's capacity in several high-priority areas:

- **New Facilities Operations.**

OPRHP requires additional staff to operate several newly opened and expanded parks. For example, the agency has assumed increased security and maintenance responsibilities due to the transfer of the remainder of the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center to Nissequogue River State Park on Long Island.

- **Skilled Maintenance Staff.**

We appreciate the restoration of 10 maintenance positions in this year's budget. However, they represent only a fraction of the many skilled trades positions lost over the past decade. Increased maintenance staff – carpenters, electricians, plumbers, stone masons, and mechanics – are needed to maintain the parks' extensive infrastructure.

- **Engineering / Capital Projects Management.**

Additional engineering and contract management staff are needed to enable OPRHP to efficiently design, permit, and oversee the agency's capital construction program.



Nissequogue River State Park



Robert V. Riddell State Park



Achievements of Parks and Historic Sites in 2007

Despite the size and scope of unmet capital funding needs, OPRHP continues to make great strides in advancing the agency's mission, which is "The mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation 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." The agency is fortunate to have a talented and hard-working staff, comprised of 2,240 permanent staff and more than 5,000 seasonal positions, that are dedicated to provide high-quality recreation and educational experiences for the more than 55 million people that visit the State Parks and Historic Sites every year. Below is a short sampling of highlights and successes achieved over the past year.

- **Allegany State Park Black Bear Management Program.** The Allegany Region implemented a significant change in the process of disposal of refuse generated by the one million plus visitors to Allegany State Park by constructing new



Allegany State Park

Allegany Region



Midway State Park

centralized, bear-proof refuse collection and recycling centers in the Quaker and Red House areas. The centers have been well received by a supportive public and have proven very effective in keeping black bear and other wildlife away from the refuse, as well as providing an additional benefit of reducing operating costs. The public education component of the plan was expanded and the enforcement of park rules and regulations was increased this year to fully implement the region's Black Bear Management Program.

- **Midway State Park Grand Opening.** On May 25, 2007, the Allegany Region opened Midway State Park as a new State Park facility. This historic park, located on the shoreline of Chautauqua Lake, is one of the oldest amusement parks in nation and is the only facility of its kind in our system. Midway is also the first State Park added in the Allegany region during the past 50 years. Allegany Regional Commissioner Chair Dalton Burgett played a leadership role in the creation of this new park.

Central Region

- **Green Lakes State Park Old Administration Building.**



Green Lakes State Park

OPRHP staff are undertaking a restoration of the historic Old Administration Building,

designed by Laurie Cox and built in 1929.

Restoration completed to date, at cost of \$50,000, includes a new roof, updated electrical, new light fixtures, and door, window, and exterior stair repair. After 20 years of non-use, the building is now available for event rentals, with the next phase seeking to make the structure handicapped accessible, including new restrooms, and repair of badly deteriorated exterior masonry.

- **Betty and Wilbur Davis State Park.** Betty and Wilbur Davis donated this 205-acre property to OPRHP in 2000, and since then have provided private financial



Betty & Wilbur Davis State Park

contributions totaling \$1.3 million that have enabled OPRHP to construct six contemporary cabin-style vacation rentals on this passive-recreation park. OPRHP provided all design and engineering services, from concept planning to construction management/supervision, to complete the cabin project over three years. Work continues today to improve picnic areas, shelters, trails and fishing access.

Finger Lakes Region

- **Soaring Eagles State Golf Course.** OPRHP is nearing the completion of a new clubhouse at



Soaring Eagles State Golf Course

Soaring Eagles Golf Course. State Parks completed the majority of the construction with our own staff at a total cost of \$850,000, funded through SPIF. The old clubhouse was in very poor condition and State Parks has received many positive compliments about the new facility.

- **Taughannock Falls State Park Summer Concert Series.** OPRHP organized a seven-week concert series on Saturday evenings in July



Taughannock Falls State Park

and August. Park staff organized the entire event, booking the music, sound system contract, posters, brochures and working with the private sector securing the sponsorships. The series, held on the lawn overlooking Cayuga Lake, was very successful and was enjoyed by thousands of visitors.

Genesee Region



Lakeside Beach State Park

- **Lakeside Beach State Park Campground Rehabilitation.** OPRHP rehabilitated the electrical system supporting the 274-site

campground at Lakeside Beach (the campground was closed in 2006 when the electric system failed). All sites were upgraded to 30- or 50-amp service, new stone camper pads were installed, drainage was significantly improved, and the campground roads were repaved as part of this \$1.5 million project.

• **Hamlin Beach State Park Interpretive Program.** A long-term seasonal employee with a teaching background in environmental

sciences was hired to establish an Interpretive Program at Hamlin Beach State Park. He is developing regularly scheduled programs, special events, roving interpretation, community outreach programs and is assisting the seasonal Camper Recreation staff.



Hamlin Beach State Park

offices for the Arboretum staff. The regional archives house more than 100,000 photographic negatives, photographs, and reel to reel films and thousands of engineering design plans detailing the history of Long Island State Parks from the 1920s through the 1980s.

• **Caumsett State Historic Park Mansion Restoration.** During May and June, OPRHP and the Caumsett Foundation hosted a Designer Showcase in the Main House Mansion. The showcase organizers completed a major renovation of the mansion including structural improvements, amenity enhancements, and donated equipment valued at more than



Caumsett State Historic Park

\$500,000. In addition, over a \$120,000 was raised for the Caumsett Foundation and State Parks received \$5,000 for improvements at Caumsett.

• **Playground Improvements.** The Long Island Region has initiated a replacement program of antiquated playground equipment to enhance recreational opportunities and meet safety standards at a number of State Parks

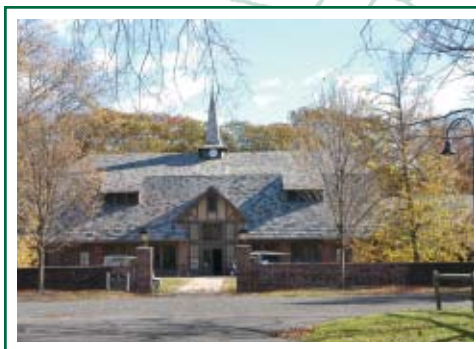


Long Island Region

including Heckscher, Hither Hills, Hempstead Lake, Valley Stream, Orient, Wildwood, Bethpage and Nissequogue River. To date, the region has expended more than \$300,000 funded through agency capital and OTPS funds, the Natural Heritage Trust, and the non-profit Foundation for Long Island State Parks.

Long Island Region

• **Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park Visitors Center.** In June, OPRHP



Planting Fields Arboretum State Historic Park

celebrated the opening of the new Visitor Center and Regional Archives in the renovated Hay Barn at Planting Fields

Arboretum. Funded through \$5 million in state funds and \$3 in private gifts through the Planting Fields Foundation, the Visitor Center includes interpretive displays, a gift shop, food service café, expanded horticultural library, interactive activities for children, classrooms and public meeting space, and administrative

New York City Region

- **East River State Park Opening.** On July 3, OPRHP opened the new East River State Park

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East River State Park

in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. This 7.5-acre reclamation of the former industrial Brooklyn Eastern District Terminal site anchors the planned revitalization of New York City's Greenpoint-Williamsburg waterfront.

- **Roberto Clemente State Park Restoration.** This summer, OPRHP initiated a major rehabilitation of Roberto Clemente State Park in the Bronx. This multi-year, \$20 million initiative will be entirely funded through mitigation dollars provided by New York City



Roberto Clemente State Park

Department of Environmental Protection, as part of the settlement for the construction of the City's new water filtration plant in Van Cortlandt Park. The project will include rehabilitation of aquatic facilities, basketball courts, softball and soccer fields, and picnic areas.

Niagara Frontier Region

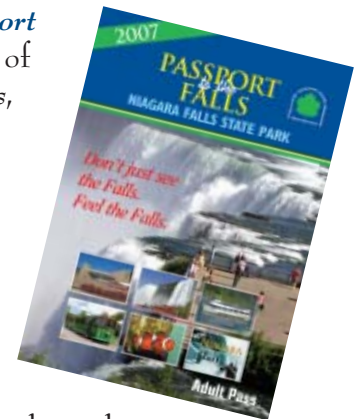
- **Niagara Falls State Park Visitor Center Theatre.** In May, OPRHP opened the newly



Niagara Falls State Park Visitor Center

improved Adventure Theatre within the Niagara Falls State Park Visitor Center. Destination Cinema, private concessionaire, entered into a five-year license with State Parks and invested \$500,000 in capital funds to rehabilitate the former Festival Theatre and operate their film, "Niagara, Miracles, Myths and Magic", a film which provides an interpretation of the history and geology of Niagara Falls. Attendance in the theater has far exceeded expectations. Additionally, OPRHP will allocate the \$100,000 concession license fee to make repairs to the leaking roof of the Visitor Center.

- **Niagara Falls "Passport to the Falls".** The sale of the *Passport to the Falls*, which allows park visitors to access the major venues within Niagara Falls State Park, has increased dramatically in 2007. This year OPRHP enhanced its marketing effort within the park and in the community. Despite increasing the cost of the Passport by \$3, OPRHP has realized a 38% increase numbers of Passports sold and a 64% increase in revenue, amounting to a \$1.3 million increase through Labor Day.



Palisades Region

- **Harriman State Park Water Systems.** The 46,600-acre Harriman State Park, located within 20 miles of New York City, includes beaches, cabins, campsites, and 31 group camps serving 190,000 children and adults. OPRHP

Saratoga-Capital Region

- **Saratoga Performing Arts Center Rehabilitation Project.** OPRHP and SPAC completed an entire renovation of the interior of the SPAC amphitheater, including new seating and upgrade of the ballet rehearsal halls. The



Saratoga Performing Arts Center

first major rehabilitation of the amphitheater since it opened in 1966, the project was a key component of the current SPAC

turnaround and revival. Funding was provided through \$2.1 million of State Parks funding and a \$2.0 million legislative member item.

- **Moreau Lake State Park Bathhouse Renovation.** OPRHP renovated the deteriorated 1970's bathhouse to meet public



Moreau Lake State Park

expectations and current ADA requirements at a cost of \$200,000. The beach at Moreau Lake State Park is one of the region's top attractions. The new family changing rooms and other modern bathhouse features opened on the July 4th weekend.



Harriman State Park

rehabilitated the park's water system to meet new federal potable water quality standards. In a three-year, \$12.2 million project completed last April, OPRHP constructed 2 new water treatment plants, 3 water storage tanks, 1 water pumping station, 17.25 miles of new water distribution lines.



National Purple Heart Hall of Honor

- **National Purple Heart Hall of Honor.** The new National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, located in New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site, is the nation's only permanent archive, educational center and memorial solely dedicated to Purple Heart recipients and commemorating their extraordinary sacrifices. Many years in the making, construction was completed in November, 2006 and including the main building with gallery/exhibit spaces, data terminals, video recording studio, multi-purpose conference/classroom space, court yard, parking, lighting, and landscaping. Funding for this \$5.9 million project was secured from a variety of sources including the EPF, SPIF, ESDC, and HUD.

Taconic Region

- **Lake Taghkanic State Park Recreation Hall Project.** Utilizing a mix of SPIF and Snowmobile Grant Funds, OPRHP renovated

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Lake Taghkanic State Park

this building located in the campground into a modern “family friendly” facility including winterized bathroom facilities for four-season use. The project was completed by OPRHP’s Capital Construction crew at a cost of \$125,000.

- **Taconic State Park Copake Falls Cabins.** OPRHP’s Capital Construction crew completed the refurbishment of another Greenwich Camp cabin into a full-service rental cabin which



Taconic State Park

opened for rental in April. These buildings were deteriorated and unusable before the renovations and have been very well received by the public. The \$100,000 project included funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) with a 50% match from SPIF.

- **Mills-Norrie State Park Staatsburgh School Rehabilitation.** OPRHP has received a major gift from Council Chair Dr. Lucy Waletzky that will enable the agency to adaptively reuse the vacant Staatsburgh School property as the new



Mills Norrie State Park

Taconic Regional Headquarters. The restoration will receive LEED green building certification.

Thousand Islands Region

- **Robert Moses and Coles Creek State Parks Rehabilitation.** OPRHP is in the third year of construction on a five-year project to completely rehabilitate and expand recreational



Robert Moses State Park

facilities at Robert Moses and Coles Creek State Parks in St. Lawrence County. The \$11.2 million project is funded by the New York Power Authority (NYPA) as the result of a relicensing agreement between NYPA, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), and OPRHP.

- **Rock Island Lighthouse.** OPRHP received a \$900,000 federal transportation enhancement



Rock Island Lighthouse

grant (SAFETEALU) for the rehabilitation and interpretation of Rock Island Lighthouse Station located in the St. Lawrence River in the heart of the Thousand Islands. The grant, to be matched with \$200,000 in State funds, will expand dockage; provide water, sewer and electrical services on the island; rehabilitate the lighthouse, keeper's quarters and four other associated buildings; and establish a maritime museum interpreting the role of Rock Island Light in the overall history of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

State Board for Historic Preservation

- **New York State Historic Preservation Plan.** OPRHP has initiated the development of New York's 2007-2011 State Preservation Plan. The planning process will heighten preservation awareness, educate a diverse audience about the benefits of preservation, and develop strategic goals that expand preservation and community improvement efforts around the state. The planning process, conducted in cooperation with the National Park Service, also helps to engage and inform the public about how preservation and planning can be used together to improve and enhance the quality, character, and economic vitality of neighborhoods and communities across New York.



- **Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program.** New York State's first-ever tax incentives for rehabilitation of historic commercial and residential structures were enacted in 2006. Under this new State legislation, State and National Register-listed *residential* structures in distressed areas are eligible for a state income tax credit covering 20% of rehabilitation costs, up to a maximum credit of \$25,000. In addition, National Register-listed or -eligible *commercial* properties that qualify for the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit now qualify for an additional New York State credit amounting to 30% of the federal credit value, up to a maximum State credit of \$100,000. New York State is a national leader in use of the federal credit, and a state-level incentive will further catalyze federal credit use and economic and rehabilitation activity.

Statewide Initiatives

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In addition to the central focus on revitalizing the State Parks and Historic Sites through increased capital funding, OPRHP has identified three additional priority themes for the agency:

- **Natural Resource Stewardship and Interpretation.** OPRHP is enhancing its capacity to understand, conserve, and interpret the incredible wealth of plants, animals, and ecosystems that reside with the State parks and historic sites. This year, the agency is adding 10 new natural resource stewardship staff along with two new Natural Heritage program scientists. Later this year, OPRHP will initiate the development of an Environmental Interpretation Plan that surveys existing education efforts across the agency and sets forth strategies for expanding our environmental programming efforts. The agency has also launched a renewed commitment to completing Master Plans to guide management and development of the State Parks. Eleven State parks have been selected for Master Plans over the next several years: Saratoga Spa, Caumsett, Jamesport, Minnewaska, Two Rivers, Midway, Allegany, Fahnestock, East River, Wellesley Island, and Green Lakes.
- **Connections and Smart Growth.** In addition to managing the state parks and historic sites, OPRHP is charged with advancing a statewide parks, recreation, open space, and historic preservation mission. The agency must ensure that landscapes and buffer lands that surround the parks are protected from encroaching development and incompatible land uses. OPRHP should foster the development of “connections” of protected lands, greenways, and trails so that people and wildlife can move across New York’s landscapes. And the agency should engage in “Smart Growth” efforts in local communities across the state. As a first step in this effort, OPRHP has launched a comprehensive review of its various grant

programs, including the Environmental Protection Fund. The goal is to enhance the effectiveness of these programs through which the agency distributes more than \$30 million annually in matching grants to local governments and non-profit organizations.

- **Sustainability.** OPRHP has adopted a goal of becoming a leading state agency incorporating energy efficiency, green design, LEED certification, recycling, and green product procurement into all of the agency’s activities and programs. The agency has hired a new Sustainability Coordinator to lead these efforts. State Parks already has the largest alternative-fueled vehicle fleet of any state agency, and the agency is testing new prototypes of electric vehicles and equipment.

Conclusion

These accomplishments demonstrate that OPRHP has a strong foundation to build on – to put to good use increased capital funding to revitalize New York’s State Parks and Historic Sites – returning New York’s State Parks and Historic Sites to the best park system in the nation.






Appendix 1: Roles & Responsibilities of State Council and Regional Commission Members



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

September 14, 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

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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