

## **THE PARK ADVOCATE**

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Dear Senator Flanagan,

As you may know, I have been speaking with Ray these last few weeks regarding the topic of a master plan for the Nissequogue River State Park.

Due to your diligent efforts, there has finally been movement towards the remediation of this property, but there still remains resistance by the State to fully commit to this property as park.

Some examples include their failure to refer to the more than 500 acres as the Nissequogue River State Park, choosing instead to reference it as the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center, both in word and writing. There is not one document I can find, aside from the December 22, 2006 letter of transference and letters from your office, wherein any NYS entity refers to this entire parcel as the Nissequogue River State Park.

Upon inspection of the tax records of this property, the 368 parcel continues to be listed under the auspices of the Office of Mental Health.

Each and every time the issue of future use of the property is mentioned, NYS Park's responds that no decision can be made until there is a master plan, but each time a master plan is requested, the answer is always that a decision will be made at some future date.

For this community, there still remains the very real possibility that the State will, at some point, move to rid itself of some or all of this property. The concern that the acquisition of the 365 acres could be invalidated with a stroke of a pen is as legitimate now as it was in March of 2008 when you introduced legislation, specifically Bill Number S7155, which would have legislatively added these acres to the Nissequogue River State Park. As you stated then, "So let's put it in statute and make it crystal clear."

This Park, which you and this community fought so hard to create, will not truly be safe until the State commits to a master plan. In October of 2010 you stated that you were working with Parks to fund the master plan. This was good news then and the significance of this step is even more important today. As the property gets remediated with the funds you secured, the attraction of this property to others escalates.

Remaining parkland is not only a promise that was made to the Kings Park community almost seven years ago, it is important to the health of the Kings Park School District. In 2011, the State paid taxes to the school district in the amount of \$1,972,706, based on the entire 527 acre parcel. I know you are keenly aware how important this money is to the district, in light of unfunded mandates, pension costs, and these difficult economic times. Losing any of this revenue would bring this district to its knees.

So I again reach out to you, as I have done many times before, to continue to protect the Kings Park community and the future of the Nissequogue River State Park by requesting New York State Parks provide a date certain to begin the master plan process for this Park.

Thank you,

Linda Henninger