



NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

CAROL ASH
Commissioner

DAVID A. PATERSON
Governor

February 26, 2010

Honorable John J. Flanagan
New York State Senate
Room 613 – LOB
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Flanagan:

I write in response to your February 12th letter seeking information regarding OPRHP's recent announcement that Nissequogue River State Park and Caleb Smith State Park have been identified for closure.

Closing State Parks and Historic Sites is obviously a very painful action for our agency – but this action is necessary to absorb the substantial reductions to OPRHP's operating budget in response to the ongoing fiscal crisis facing New York State. Over the past three years the agency's operating budget has been reduced by a total of 35 percent. Given the fact that 85 percent of the our operating budget is spent on the costs of running New York's 213 State Parks and Historic Sites, the agency has no choice but to close a significant number of facilities.

To respond to the specific questions in your letter:

- **Criteria for Park Closures.** Financial factors – operating expenses and facility revenues – are the primary criteria OPRHP used to develop the list of 55 State Parks and Historic Sites identified for closure. We focused closures on facilities that are expensive to run in comparison to the amount of revenue they generate – in other words these facilities require a significant state subsidy to cover operating costs. Conversely, we did not propose to close any facilities that generate revenues in excess of operating expenses or that “break even.” In addition, we focused closures on facilities with relatively low attendance, thereby minimizing the number of impacted park and historic site visitors.
- **Caleb Smith State Park.** The annual visitation to Caleb Smith is 30,690 visitors (calendar year 2009). The park brings in \$36,910 in annual revenue. Closing the park will eliminate \$150,743 in expenses, generating a net savings of \$113,833.

- **Nissequogue River State Park.** The annual visitation is 87,516. The park brings in \$155,489 in revenue. Closing the park will eliminate \$466,103 in expenses, generating a net savings of \$310,614.
- **Tiffany Field Soccer Field.** As noted in your letter, the Kings Park Soccer Club operates and maintains this soccer field at its own expense (OPRHP does not incur any expenses for the field). The soccer field is located adjacent to a public road and is outside the entrance gate to Nissequogue River State Park. While the agency has not finalized the details of how it will "close" this park, our preliminary thinking is that the Soccer Club would continue to operate the soccer field pursuant to the current arrangement.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions regarding these facilities.

Sincerely,



Carol Ash
Commissioner