

# **New York State Legislature Agrees To Restore Funding For Parks**

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ALBANY \_ State lawmakers are seeking to restore \$11 million to keep open 55 parks and historical sites that Gov. David Paterson sought to close in the 2010-11 fiscal year.

The state Assembly and Senate are separately recommending about \$11 million in restorations to keep the parks open. The sides will work with Paterson to reach a budget deal by the April 1 deadline.

The Assembly will release their budget proposal on Wednesday, which includes \$11.25 million to keep the parks open.

The Senate earlier this week also proposed to restore park aid, and they are holding a news conference with parks advocates today to announce their support to keep parks open.

"We are in agreement that there should be restoration," said Assembly Parks Committee Chairman Steven Engelbright, D-Suffolk County. "We still have to work out between the two houses the source of that restoration, but the sum is about the same and the goal is exactly the same."

Parks advocates have derided Paterson's proposal in January to lower aid for state parks by \$29 million, a 16 percent cut from the current fiscal year, which ends March 31.

The cuts led the parks department to announce massive closures and service reductions across the state. The 125-year-old park system is the oldest in the nation with 178 parks and 35 historic sites.

The \$11 million will be enough to keep the parks open, but the agency will still face cuts in operating aid and has \$650 million in capital needs, Engelbright said.

The potential park closures were also complicated by federal law that bars the state from closing parks that receive federal funding.

But state parks officials said they would no choice but to close parks or reduce services at places that have received federal funding. The National Park Service provided the state \$1.4 million last year for parks.