

**SENATOR JOHN J. FLANAGAN**

2nd DISTRICT

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**THE SENATE**  
**STATE OF NEW YORK**

**LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING**

Room 613  
Albany, New York 12247  
(518) 455-2071  
Fax (518) 426-6904

**DISTRICT**

260 Middle Country Road  
Suite 203  
Smithtown, New York 11787  
(631) 361-2154  
Fax (631) 361-5367

**E-MAIL:**

flanagan@senate.state.ny.us

February 12, 2010

Ms. Carol Ash, Commissioner  
Executive Offices  
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Agency Building 1  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, New York 12238

Dear Commissioner Ash:

We write in response to today's report in Newsday that Office of Parks is proposing to close as many as 10 New York State Parks on Long Island, including Caleb Smith State Park and Nissequogue River State Park. Before any list is finalized, it is critically important the public is fully informed of the impact these closures will have on park visitors, as well as the activities annually hosted at each of these venues.

Of particular concern is the fate of Tiffany Field at Nissequogue River State Park (NRSP). Tiffany Field is the result of a very unique and long term relationship between the privately-run Kings Park Soccer Club (KPSC) and Office of Parks. Going back nearly 30 years, KPSC has had an ongoing lease with the state (recently extended another 10 years) which has allowed the club to use the field year round for purposes of its soccer leagues as well as spring and summer soccer camps. Over 700 Kings Park families currently belong to the club, and over 400 additional Suffolk County families attend the camps throughout the year.

The KPSC has established a very advantageous business relationship with the Office of Parks in that the club has invested over \$1 million of private money into Tiffany Field. To this day, the club is solely responsible for maintaining the fields (irrigating, mowing, seeding, sodding, fertilizing, weeding, and draining); garbage removal; installation and maintenance of the chain link fence and locked gates around the field's perimeter; and removal of dead trees and branches. In short, KPSC provides services to the field which would otherwise have to be funded through Parks.

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Other than utilizing a hydrant from Building 96, the club is completely self sufficient and furnishes all the supplies and labor that the Office of Parks must pay for at other park locations around the state. In addition, Tiffany Field is unique in that it can be accessed off a main road (St. Johnland Road)—it does not require entry through a manned gate or through other areas of the NRSP. Hence, should NRSP have to be closed due to budgetary constraints, Tiffany Field can still function as a separate entity given its public access and the club's ongoing commitment toward maintaining the field.

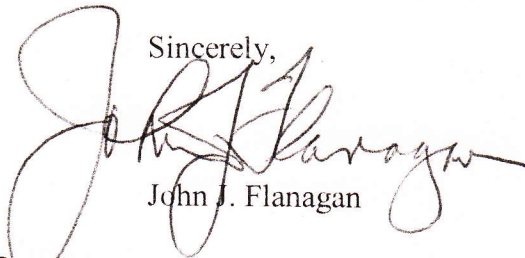
Beyond the specific concerns stated above, it is critically important that Office of Parks review and evaluate similar contractual-relationships that may exist at other park venues slated to be closed. Given the likelihood that any private organization having such a relationship will be without a home to operate and function, as in the case of Kings Park Soccer Club, every effort should be made by the Office of Parks to honor its individual contractual commitments to ensure these recreational activities continue.

In addition, we ask that the following information be provided in relation to the closures being proposed by your office:

- 1) The specific criteria used by OPRHP for developing the list of park closures;
- 2) The number of park visitors attending Caleb Smith State Park and Nissequogue River State Park in comparison to those parks that will remain open;
- 3) The amount of revenue generated at Caleb Smith State Park and Nissequogue River State Park in comparison to those parks that will remain open;
- 4) The operational expenditures for each of these facilities; and
- 5) Any other information that considered to be relevant to the decision-making process.

Your immediate attention to this request for information is appreciated, particularly given the imminent plans to close these facilities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John J. Flanagan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

John J. Flanagan

cc: Hon. Governor David A. Paterson  
Hon. Steven Englebright