

For Immediate Release

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Hinchey Confirms With Director of National Parks Service:
Federally-Funded State Parks in New York
Must Remain Open to the Public

Congressman Working to Reverse Proposal to Close 55 State Parks and Historic Sites

Washington, DC - In response to concerns raised by Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) about Governor Paterson's proposal to close 55 state parks and historic sites, the head of the National Park Service (NPS) told the congressman this week that the state cannot move forward with such a plan for parks that receive federal funding. The clarification from NPS Director Jon Jarvis, which came in response to a question from Hinchey during a House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior hearing, lays the groundwork for a dramatic reversal of the governor's plans since most of those parks in New York receive federal funding and must remain open to the public.

"While the state is facing very difficult fiscal challenges, closing state parks would actually make the budget even worse because it would cut off all of the revenue for local businesses and communities that is generated by New Yorkers and visitors spending time at those parks and in the surrounding areas," Hinchey said. "The plan to close state parks in New York would be a huge mistake and now we've received confirmation from the National Park Service that such closures aren't even allowed in parks that receive federal funding. At a time when families are struggling to make ends meet, state parks are a form of free or low-cost recreation that should be promoted, enjoyed and cherished. I am committed to doing everything I can to ensure these parks remain open to the public."

During the hearing, Hinchey noted that a majority of the sites that Governor Paterson proposed to close have received federal funds through the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. Director Jarvis indicated that the law contains statutes to protect federal investments, and agreed to inform Governor Paterson regarding the provisions, which require federally funded state parks and historic landmarks to remain open to the public.

On February 19, Governor Paterson announced his plan to close 41 state parks and 14 historic sites, and reduce services at 23 additional facilities. Congressman Hinchey has long been a champion of the New York state park system, which is the oldest in the nation and contains 178 parks and 35 historic sites. As a member of the New York State Assembly, Hinchey worked to strengthen the state park system and authored the legislation that led to the creation of the Hudson River Valley Greenway, creating a process for voluntary regional cooperation among 264 communities within 13 counties that border the Hudson River. The Greenway is an innovative state-sponsored program created to facilitate the development of a regional strategy for preserving scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making.