

The Friends of High Point State Park

✿ *Spring 2008*



High Point Needs Your Help!

New Jersey State Parks, as you know them now, will cease to exist under Governor Corzine's proposed 2009 budget. The proposal cuts over twenty percent of the Parks' Management budget. After years of reduced funding and hiring freezes, parks are already operating on a shoestring and these further cuts are crippling. To comply with this budget reduction, the Department of Environmental Protection has proposed the full closure of nine state parks and their historic sites as well as significant reductions in services at a number of others.

High Point State Park will be closed as of July 1, 2008

Under this budget proposal, High Point has been targeted for closure. All staff and services, including camping, swimming, the Monument, and interpretive programs, will be permanently eliminated. The gates will be closed and access to trails will be limited.

Closing down a park with as many facilities as High Point will be a massive undertaking encompassing everything from attempting to protect buildings, flushing water systems, to the storage of historic artifacts, collections, and interpretive exhibits. Full closure will take place on July 1st, but some services may be reduced earlier. For example, the beach is now not expected to open this year.

Sound dire? It is. But unless funding is restored, it is the future of High Point and New Jersey's State Parks.

What can you do?

If this is not the future you want for High Point State Park, please write or call your state representatives and tell them what High Point means to you. Ask them to increase the appropriation for the management of state parks in the 2009 budget. Remember: New Jersey State Parks, Forests, and historic sites belong to you!

Officers

Lynn Panico - Acting President
Roberta Bramhall - Secretary
Michael Bender - Treasurer

Friends of High Point State Park
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McAfee, NJ 07428

High Point State Park
1480 State Route 23
Sussex, NJ 07461

Park Office: 973-875-4800
Interpretive Center: 973-875-1471

The Friends of High Point State Park is a not-for-profit organization that fosters and supports the historical, scientific, educational, interpretive, recreational, and natural resource management activities in the Park. Our support takes the form of funds, materials, and voluntary services for which no government funds or resources are readily available.



The June meeting of the Friends will be held on Saturday, June 7, 2008 at 1:00 PM in the Interpretive Center.

Who to Contact

If you live locally (in District 24) your representatives are:

Senator Steven V. Oroho
P.O. Box 249, 25 Route 23 South
Franklin, NJ 07416-0249
(973)-827-2900

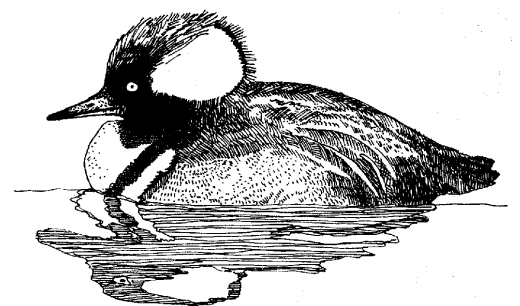
Assemblyman Gary R. Chuisano
13 Main St., Suite 8, Sparta, NJ 07871
(973)-726-0954

Assemblywoman Alison Littell McHose
13 Main St., Suite 8, Sparta, NJ 07871
(973)-726-0954

Or you can locate your legislators at:
www.njleg.state.nj.us/members/legsearch.asp

Governor John Corzine
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, NJ 08625-0001
609-292-6000

DEP Commissioner Lisa Jackson
Office of the Commissioner
401 E. State Street, 7th Floor E. Wing
PO Box 402
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402



Hooded Merganser - a common spring migrant seen on High Point's lakes

NJ Parks Now Closed for Business

Budget Cuts Force Closure of Popular Parks, Swimming and Camping Areas

Trenton – The State of New Jersey announced today that budget cuts will result in the closure of popular parks and recreational areas throughout the state. These closures come just after voters approved ballot question #3 last November, sending a clear message to our leaders that investing in open space, parks, farmland and historic sites is a priority even during fiscally challenging times.

As a result of these closures, New Jersey residents and families will experience a severe reduction in swimming and camping opportunities, the closure of many interpretive centers and the end of popular educational programs for public school children, Boy Scouts and other groups.

The devastating impact of these cuts and decades of similar cuts also highlight the need for stable funding to ensure that protected lands are well-maintained and accessible and to continue acquiring threatened lands through the renewal of the Garden State Preservation Trust this year.

12 Parks Slated for Closure or Reduced Services

Due to the \$8.8 million in cuts to the Division of Parks and Forestry, nine parks will be either closed or have their services

fully eliminated, including Monmouth Battlefield State Park, Stephens State Park, High Point State Park, Brendan T. Byrne State Forest, Round Valley Recreation Area, Parvin State Park, Jenny Jump State Forest, Worthington State Forest and Fort Mott State Park. In addition, three parks are slated for partial elimination of services and facilities, including swimming at Ringwood State Park, camping and interpretive services at D&R Canal State Park and severe reduction in hours at Washington Crossing State Park.

“No governor at any time, even during the Great Depression, has ever closed a state park,” said Jeff Tittel, Director of the New Jersey Sierra Club. “There was always an understanding that during troubled times, parks are a place for people to get together to enjoy their families and forget about their troubles. That the Corzine Administration would close these parks that the people of New Jersey purchased for their own use is unconscionable.”

“These proposed closings make the budget cuts very real for all of us who treasure New Jersey’s outdoor resources,” said Alison Mitchell, Policy Director, New Jersey Conservation Foundation. “We hope the legislature will restore the funding for these important facilities when the final budget is adopted.”

“The closure of any parks in New Jersey is a tough blow to our many volunteer members who work hard to build, maintain and protect hiking trails on many of the state’s public lands. But the closure of High Point,” stated Brenda Holzinger, New Jersey Coordinator for the NY-NJ Trail Conference, “is an even more significant issue and of much interest to people outside New Jersey’s borders because the Appalachian Trail, which is part of the US National Scenic Trails System, runs directly through the park.”

Closures to Worsen NJ’s Deficit

Not only will these closures harm New Jersey’s quality of life, but they will also damage our state and local economies and result in a decrease in state revenue. For more information on the many benefits of parks and open space, please visit www.njkeepitgreen.org/benefits.htm.

“Of all the mistaken things to do because you are short of revenue, the worst thing is to close revenue producing parks. Parks produce revenue not only through the collection of park fees, but also by supporting ecotourism, including bringing business to local restaurants, encouraging the purchase of bikes and other outdoor equipment – all of which support our state economy,” said Jim Amon, Former Executive Director of the D&R Canal Commission.

By reducing our investment in our parks, we will lose the many significant economic benefits they provide, such as spurring urban revitalization, decreasing health care cost associated with childhood asthma and obesity by promoting health lifestyles and supporting our state’s nearly \$4 billion a year wildlife-related recreation industry and significant heritage tourism industry.

“The Administration’s proposed budget cuts in the DEP Parks & Forestry division will result in complete closure of or significantly reduced public access to historic sites all over the state. At a time when heritage tourism has finally been recognized as a vital economic development tool, it is short-sighted to be closing these major historic attractions and further depressing local economies,” Ron Emrich of Preservation New Jersey.

The Keep It Green coalition urges our state leaders to listen to New Jersey voters and restore funding for the Divisions of Parks & Forestry and to create a stable funding source for preservation and operation of our natural and historic treasures through renewal of the Garden State Preservation Trust this year. This investment is not only a priority for New Jersey voters, but helps increase our state revenue during difficult budget times.

From the President...

“I think often of a wonderfully honest comment made by Paul, a fourth grader in San Diego: ‘I like to play indoors better, ‘cause that’s where all the electrical outlets are.’”

from *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv

Many children would prefer to be inside in front of a screen as opposed to being outside in nature. Why should this concern us? Children and adults grow from outdoor experiences that just can’t be found indoors. “Within the space of a few decades, the way children understand and experience nature has changed radically...Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment, but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading.” (*Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv)

New Jersey’s administration is facing large budget cuts which will close High Point State Park as well as eight others, and will lead to a significant reduction in services at several other state parks. This includes swimming, camping, interpretive programs, and more. My family, Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, and elementary school-aged class have participated and greatly benefited from those activities at High Point. It would be a terrible disservice to our communities; especially our children, to deprive them of such experiences. “Environment-based education dramatically improves standardized test scores and grade point averages and develops skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making. Even creativity is stimulated by childhood experiences in nature.” (*Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv)

Closing High Point State Park and reducing services at parks statewide means that our children will be unable to benefit from some of the awesome delights that the state of New Jersey has to offer them. Please contact your local legislators and let them know that our children are entitled to all that New Jersey has to offer; a wonderfully diverse place to grow and learn in the outdoors!

- Lynn Panico ♦