



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

## Senator Flanagan Calls On New York State To Keep Its Commitment To The Future Of Nissequogue River State Park

JOHN J. FLANAGAN March 1, 2010

| ISSUE: **STATE PARKS**

In an effort to protect the work of the Kings Park community, Senator John Flanagan (2nd Senate District) has demanded the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissioner Carol Ash guarantee that the current financial problems facing the state will not be used as an excuse to reverse their obligation to rehabilitate the expanded Nissequogue River State Park.

His call follows the recently announced proposal by the OPRHP that will affect the operation of eleven state parks on Long Island. The proposal calls for the closing of six of the parks on Long Island including both Caleb Smith and Nissequogue River State Parks.

In a letter delivered to Commissioner Ash and Governor David Paterson, Senator Flanagan sought to get assurances that the future of the park would not become a victim of the state's current budget problems.

Senator Flanagan wrote his letter on behalf of the residents of his district who fought so hard to protect this valuable piece of open space as state parkland.

“While I am unwilling to accept the closure of any state parks and am actively pushing Commissioner Ash to reconsider the entire proposal, it is imperative that the state keeps its promise to this community regardless of any temporary fiscal challenges. The expansion of this park was put in place due to the exceptional efforts of the community and their work must be honored. Commissioner Ash and Governor Paterson owe it to everyone involved to respect their work and to immediately affirm their commitment today.”

Senator Flanagan has been working with the community to preserve the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center and together they were successful in protecting 365 acres by stopping a proposed sale of the land to a developer and transferring it into the existing Nissequogue River State Park in 2006. Additionally, Senator Flanagan was able to secure \$29 million for cleanup of the land to make sure that it is open to the public.

While the long-term future of the Nissequogue River State Park is of vital importance, Senator Flanagan is equally committed to ensuring that the park remains open this year. To that end, he also used his letter to Commissioner Ash asking for all the details behind the proposed park closures and vowed to keep Nissequogue River State Park and Caleb Smith State Park open to the public.

To make sure that the voices of those in the community are heard on this matter, Senator Flanagan has also set up an online petition on his website. Anyone wishing to join the fight to keep the parks open should [click here](#).

[Click here to view Senator Flanagan discuss the OPRHP's proposal](#)

## **TEXT OF THE LETTER TO COMMISSIONER ASH**

February 25, 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:

It has been almost two weeks since I wrote you regarding your agency's proposal to close as many as 10 State Park facilities on Long Island. Prior to writing, I had a telephone conversation with your senior staff who assured me that a written response would be immediately forthcoming, particularly since your plan appeared to be close to implementation.

Instead of receiving a prompt written response, I continue to read in Newsday and in press releases the unfolding details of your park proposal, including some of the budgetary figures I specifically asked for in my letter. It is clear from all the news accounts that the information I requested was already compiled by your department as part of the behind-the-scenes planning for this proposal. The fact that the information was not provided immediately to my office is unacceptable.

First, you should know that going forward I will be advocating for the complete reversal of your plans to close any of the State Parks on Long Island. Second, I will vigorously fight against any attempts by the Office of Parks to use this as an opportunity to divest itself from jurisdiction over and responsibility for remediating and redeveloping all the property located at the former Kings Park Psychiatric Center, which is now part of the Nissequogue

River State Park.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

John J. Flanagan

P.S. – I still expect to receive a response to my letter of February 12, 2010.