



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Our Best Kept Secrets Can Help Boost Our Economy

PATTY RITCHIE July 26, 2011

A few weeks ago, I spent the weekend with my family at Eel Weir State Park, one of New York State's best kept secrets among its 178 state parks and historic sites.

Located on the Oswegatchie River, just two miles from Black Lake, Eel Weir was honored a few years ago by a national park organization for its outstanding canoe access. With just 38 campsites, a picnic area, and a pavilion, locals know it as a terrific place to relax, picnic, camp and catch bass.

While I was there, it struck me how little most of us know about the individual New York State Parks outside of our immediate neighborhoods.

Few people outside of the North Country know about our island parks that you can only reach by boat like Cedar Island Park in Chippewa Bay, Waterson Point State Park or Canoe Picnic Point State Park on the St. Lawrence River.

Most golfers don't realize our state parks offer courses at St. Lawrence State Park outside Ogdensburg in St. Lawrence County, Battle Island State Park near Fulton in Oswego County or Wellesley Island State Park near Alexandria Bay in Jefferson County.

Ever wonder what it would be like to take the family to an estate? Little known Robert G. Wehle State Park, near Henderson, the newest park in the Lake Ontario region, offers a main

house, a guest cottage, a studio and formal gardens that can accommodate up to eight people.

Looking for something a little more modest? You can rent cabins for \$190 a week at DeWolf State Park, Welleseley Island, Kring Point State Park or Canoe Picnic Point State Park.

Or you can just enjoy majestic beaches on Lake Ontario's Southwick Beach State Park or Westcott Beach State Park near Henderson or Sandy Island Beach State Park or any of the outstanding St. Lawrence River beaches in St. Lawrence and Jefferson counties.

You can help me make people across Central and Northern New York aware of our parks by voting for your favorite State Park at my Senate website —[www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov)— that asks residents to select from nearly two dozen State Parks in Oswego, Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties. I'll be using the information to build awareness of tourism and recreational treasures in our own backyard.

Last week, when our State was in the grip of a sweltering heat wave, I reached out to Governor Andrew Cuomo to ask for his help to assist New Yorkers who wanted to beat the heat. The governor extended the swimming hours at Central and Northern New York beaches and pools and thanked me for my leadership in helping to find ways to cope with the soaring temperatures.

Each year, more than 4 million people visit State Parks in Central New York and the Thousand Islands Region, spending more than \$200 million in nearby stores, and helping support 2,500 local jobs.

By joining my effort to educate people about your favorite State Park, we can help encourage more people to visit our communities, shop at our stores, eat at our restaurants and enjoy nearby tourist attractions. Instead of taking their money to vacation spots in

other states, you can help me show why folks need to consider taking their next vacation at New York's hidden treasures.