



The Bucket and Buoy

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE JBLC

Dennis M. Kane, Editor

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Pressure Mounts

(Editor's Note: The articles on pages one and two appeared in the Albany Times-Union.)

Lawmakers: Need Cash Now!

Friday, April 16, 2010.

By **JIMMY VIELKIND**, Capitol Bureau.

As the state enters its third week without a budget, two legislators are calling for parks funding to be included in the emergency spending bills Gov. David Paterson is drafting to fund the bare necessities of the state.

The budget was due April 1, and delays mean that the 41 parks and 14 historic sites that Paterson proposed for funding cuts do not have money for staff. The Assembly and Senate passed budget proposals that restored the \$6.3 million Paterson hoped to save through the closures, but an overall budget agreement has not been finalized.

"While we remain confident that a budget agreement will soon be reached in a manner which will prevent closures to state parks and historic sites, in the interim we must adequately fund" the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Sen. Jose Serrano and Assemblyman Steve Englebright wrote in a joint letter to Paterson.

"The continued passage of extender bills (or the lack of a current state budget) could prevent the opening of 34 state parks come May unless future extender bills provide sufficient funding to allow OPRHP to begin preparing for the upcoming summer season."

A spokesman for Paterson confirmed he had received the letter, but the Governor doesn't seem ready to budge.

"I'm not putting anything into that appropriation other than what is absolutely needed," he said Thursday morning on WOR 710-AM. The Governor also criticized federal officials, who threatened last month to withhold billions of dollars of funding to the state if Paterson closes the parks, claim-

to federal funding used to fund the purchase and improvement of some of the parks. "It was a very disappointing letter, coming from the federal government, intruding on how we run New York state and how we balance our budget, when in fact it's the same federal government that collects \$86.7 billion more in taxes than we get back," Paterson said. "When is somebody going to get that we're in a recession? Of all people, I would have thought that the federal government would have known that."

The federal threat -- communicated by the National Parks Service -- was made at the public urging of Rep. Maurice Hinchey, D-Ulster County. "The federal government isn't interfering," Hinchey told the Times Union on Thursday. "The federal government is just reminding the governor that there are places like the state park in New Paltz that were helped to be initiated by federal contributions." Hinchey, a former assemblyman, repeated his position that parks are an economic driver.

Finally, a group representing companies who hope to drill for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale formation recommended parks funding be restored by selling drilling leases on state land. A moratorium on gas drilling is in place in the region as the state develops environmental guidelines associated with the drilling.

Gas drillers recommended proceeds from the sales could be invested in the Environmental Protection Fund, which has been raided in recent years to plug budget deficits.

Several environmental groups, who are lobbying for the strictest regulation of drilling, called the drillers' proposal a "stunt."

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Feds: Risk millions if state parks close. State move to shut facilities draws warning from National Parks Service.

By **JIMMY VIELKIND**, Capitol Bureau.
Friday, April 9, 2010

ALBANY -- Federal officials are threatening to withhold millions of dollars in funding to the state if the Paterson administration pushes forward with its plan to close parks around the state.

In a letter dated March 31, National Parks Service Northeast Regional Director Dennis Reidenbach wrote that the move would put New York in "non-compliance" with the requirements for taking funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund and Federal Land for Parks Program.

"Also, NPS may initiate suspension and debarment procedures to have all Federal funds (e.g. Recreation, Housing, Transportation, Education etc.) withheld from the State of New York," Reidenbach wrote. "In addition, closure of any park acquired through FLP could result in reversion of the property to Federal ownership and subsequent sale of the property."

Gov. David Paterson proposed the closure of 41 parks and 14 historic sites -- the majority of which, Reidenbach wrote, have received federal funds. The cuts are slated to save \$6.3 million.

Eileen Larrabee, a spokeswoman for the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, said they don't believe the proposed closures put the state in violation.

"We are as committed to these parks and these public spaces as anybody else. We are dealing with the current fiscal crisis, and we simply do not have the funding to open all of these parks right now," she said.

"Ultimately we believe that these closures are temporary and not permanent, and we're not converting the land. We would assert that the funding is not jeopardized."

New York received \$1.4 million from the LWCF last year, and is slated to receive just under \$1.9 million this year. Larrabee said that has been "diminished" from around \$20 million a year, which has made it difficult to keep up with needed maintenance.

OPRHP Commissioner Carol Ash did not raise the federal threat during a Thursday meeting of the state Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation. She told the committee that if the new state budget is delayed beyond early May, it could threaten state plans to open 34 parks that now depend on added funding from the state Environmental Protection Fund under Paterson's proposed budget.

Parks officials are currently hiring seasonal workers for the parks.

Capital Region parks on the list include Grafton Lakes State Park, Cherry Plain State Park, and Fort Crailo State Historic Site, all in Rensselaer County; Minekill State Park in Schoharie County; and Peebles Island State Park in Saratoga County. Also, the Victoria Pool in Saratoga Spa State Park would be closed. Parks Service spokesman Phil Sheridan said the law was clear that lands needed to stay open for public recreation "in perpetuity," and the principle was important.

"Our only recourse is that there is a significant penalty if you fail to live up to that pledge," Sheridan said. "It is very tough budgetarily. However, the fact remains that people accept these and accept certain responsibilities. As private citizens, if we accept money for certain things it would annul the contract if we did things with it that we didn't say we were going to do."

He said Reidenbach's letter was prompted by U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey, D-Ulster County, who questioned Parks Service officials about the LWCF provisions and requested they communicate their position to the Paterson administration. The letter, which Hinchey posted on Facebook earlier this week, was the result.

The public has no less need for recreation opportunities and access to open space in times of economic hardship," Reidenbach concluded. "If anything, the need for recreational opportunities is greater now, not only due to leaner economic times but also because of the increasing personal, community, and environmental health issues associated with more sedentary lifestyles and lack of contact with the nature."

Lifeguards always on the lookout to keep swimmers safe.

NYSUT News Wire - August 28, 2009



The members of the Jones Beach Lifeguard Corps/New York State Lifeguard Corps see their affiliation with NYSUT as a pathway to improving work conditions and keeping the public safer. Pictured at right: three new NYSUT members participate in a rescue drill at Robert Moses State Park. Photo by Miller Photography

“No one drowns looking at the ocean.” That's one of the first maxims that a new ocean lifeguard in New York state learns. It's all part of reading the body language of the hundreds of swimmers in the churning surf. That effort has one goal: keeping beachgoers safe so they never even get close to drowning. "The scary part of the ocean is, you don't get a second chance," says Bruce Meiowitz, an ocean lifeguard for 41 years and now first vice president of the Jones Beach Lifeguard Corps/New York State Lifeguard Corps, since February, an affiliate of United University Professions, NYSUT's only statewide local. "This summer, we've run thousands of rescues. No one drowns looking at the ocean", Meiowitz explains, because a panicked swimmer looks back toward the beach and the lifeguards.

An almost indiscernible struggle by two children swimming at Long Island's Robert Moses State Park one recent afternoon in the heavy surf from Hurricane Bill was all it took for lifeguards to interrupt a drill and go into action for real. In less than a minute, the children were on the beach – shaken but safe. Prevention and safety are the core of the lifeguard's credo, which is in keeping with NYSUT's mission of health and safety. That's why the lifeguards at New York's public beaches and pools want their equipment upgraded, training standardized and their support services – such as the number of police officers at the beach – increased.

For example, Meiowitz said, lifeguards might have gotten to a drowning man two weeks ago at Robert Moses more quickly if a passerby had known how to call for help. The man had gone swimming in unguarded water; a woman who saw him ran a half mile to a lifeguard stand. Signs posted in such areas with the telephone number of the nearest lifeguard office might help prevent another such tragedy.

(Continued on next page.)

Surf safety

Ocean swimmers at the start of hurricane season should keep in mind these safety tips from lifeguards:

- Never turn your back on the ocean; keep the surf in view even when you head back to the beach.
- Never swim in unguarded waters or after hours. The waters around New York City and Long Island have unpredictable and dangerous currents, and only guarded beaches are suitable for swimming.
- Keep alert for the lifeguard's whistle; one long blast is a caution signal to swimmers. If you hear the whistle, look up and see if it's meant for you. And then follow the lifeguard's signals or instructions.
- Read the posted warnings about rip currents, which can cause a swimmer to struggle until exhausted. Learn how to get out of a rip current by swimming horizontal to the beach, or by relaxing until the current's force lessens - which usually occurs within easy reach of the beach. Struggling against the rip current creates panic and exhaustion.

The lifeguards see their affiliation with NYSUT as a pathway to improving work conditions and keeping the public safer. Their commitment shows. They train year-round, and many work as lifeguards into their 50s, 60s and even 70s. Regardless of their age or experience, however, all lifeguards undergo strenuous physical exams throughout their careers.

We're really excited to be hooked up with NYSUT; I know as a teacher the great things we do through NYSUT," says Brian McDonald, a math and physical education teacher at Garden City High School, and a lifeguard for 22 years.

The lifeguards come from all professions, and include teachers, electricians, executives, physicians and firefighters. There are young lifeguards whose parents did the job, among them Brittany Boehm, 24. Her father, Bruce Boehm, was a lifeguard who worked for Cantor Fitzgerald and died in the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. "He taught us about oceans," Boehm says of her father. And the ocean, in turn, teaches the lifeguards. After they help a swimmer out of the water – be it an intervention or an all-out rescue – the lifeguards "talk about how we did, so we do better next time, because there is virtually no margin for serious error," Meirowitz says. "We're talking people's lives here."

Surfer drowns in choppy waters off Rockaways

By ADAM NICHOLS

Last Updated: 4:34 PM, November 12, 2009

Posted: 4:27 PM, November 12, 2009

A surfer drowned today after the leash on his board became tangled on a Queens jetty and storm-churned surf pounded him underwater, police said.

The man, who has not yet been named but was 36, was only feet off the Rockaways shore when firefighters reached him at 9.25 A.M. He suffered a heart attack and was dead on arrival at Peninsula General Hospital.

He was knocked off his board by waves that were nearly eight feet high, churned up by the remnants of Hurricane Ida, which is roaring up the East Coast.

Cops said the leash that tethers a board to a surfers ankle had gotten snagged on a jetty off 96th Street, leaving the man unable to escape the crashing waves.



Huge waves crash on the jetty where a surfer died earlier today at Rockaway Beach in Queens.

Stay Connected

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The JBLC is a chapter of the NYSLC, so NYSLC news is pertinent to you as well.

To access the **Jones Beach Lifeguard Corps** website, click here

www.jblc.net

To access the **New York State Lifeguard Corps** website, click here

www.nyslc.net