

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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County Executive Says Closure of Long Point State Park Makes No Sense

Edwards says closing would cost State hundreds of thousands of dollars

Mayville: -- Chautauqua County Executive Gregory J. Edwards, who has openly criticized a plan to close Long Point State Park, has even more concerns after receiving numbers on the savings New York State could achieve through the park's closure.

On Friday, February 19, New York Governor David Paterson, along with Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Commissioner Carol Ash recommended that Long Point State Park, which is located outside of Bemus Point, be closed this year. It's part of an overall plan to close 41 parks and 14 historic sites when the new budget year begins April 1, 2010. Paterson has claimed the State would save \$6.5 Million through these closures.

Today (February 26), Edwards received word on exactly how much New York State could save by shuttering Long Point State Park.

"It was reported to me from Chautauqua County Sports Fishing Hunting Director Craig Robbins, who spoke directly with State Senator Catharine Young, that the savings to NYS by closing Long Point would be \$43,000," Edwards exclaimed.

Edwards was shocked by the low number, and went on to point out that County sponsored events that take place at Long Point State Park bring in significantly more money than what would be saved by closing the park.

"One weekend fishing tournament alone that utilizes Long Point's facilities brings in hundreds of thousands of dollars to Chautauqua County," Edwards explained. "So to close down Long Point State Park is ridiculous, and calls into question the logic being used by the people working closely with Gov. Paterson."

On February 22nd, Edwards requested records from NYS Parks, Western District Director Mark Thomas on what the State's net cost was to run Long Point. Those have yet to be delivered.

"I also find it frustrating that the first that I heard about the plan was from reports provided by the local media, and not from the Governor's office," Edwards said.

Since the announcement was made February 19, Edwards has spoken repeatedly with Robbins, Senator Young and Director of the Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau Andrew Nixon regarding the huge impact Long Point has on the area's tourism.

"There are groups and organizations that have already booked the park for fishing tournaments and other events this year," Edwards said. "Long Point is one of only 5 public boat launches along Chautauqua Lake, and closing the park would be extremely detrimental to residents from Chautauqua County and visitors who use the park."

In regards to the fight to keep Long Point State Park open, Edwards said he has spoken with organizer Steve Hayes, who has formed a group called "Friends of Long Point". The group plans a rally for the park at the Long Point Park marina/boat launch parking lot on the afternoon of Saturday, March 6, 2010 beginning around 1:30 p.m.

Edwards concluded by saying that Long Point State Park attracts hundreds of visitors each year to Chautauqua County, and also brings in valuable revenue dollars to the region.

"The park is a huge asset to the region that provides inexpensive recreational and outdoor experiences," Edwards said. "I remain committed to continuing the investigation into the short-sighted plan to close Long Point State Park."

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