



March 30, 2009

Honorable David A. Paterson
Office of the Governor
State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Paterson,

On behalf of the Nissequogue River State Park Foundation, I want to thank the Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation for addressing the concerns and aspirations of our residents regarding the future of the Nissequogue River State Park (NRSP) on Thursday, March 26th. The staff from State Parks was very professional and respectful. However, many of us left bewildered and frustrated with the state's refusal to commit to maintaining the entire property as parkland. The cost associated with cleaning up the property should have no bearing on the state's decision to keep the site a park. The state is ultimately responsible for the clean-up of the property after 100 years of use as a state hospital. Your personal commitment to this park would be extremely well received and appreciated by our community and would honor your commitment to protect and improve our environment. It would also allow us, after 12 long years, to finally begin to establish a park that meets the recreational and cultural needs of the residents of our state. As you are probably aware, the NRSP is adjacent to Sunken Meadow State Park, the Long Island Sound and the Nissequogue River. It also has environmental, recreational, cultural and historical significance for many of our residents who belong to various organizations throughout the area. This includes: Kings Park Soccer, Kings Park Youth, Long Island Trail Lovers Coalition, Airmid Theater, Nissequogue River Steering Committee, Kings Park Heritage Museum, Smithtown Historical Society, Caleb Smith Foundation and many others.

Enclosed are copies of a conceptual master plan for the park that the foundation recently created with the help of Saratoga Associates, a highly regarded landscape architectural firm. Copies of the plan were displayed and handed out at last week's meeting and were greeted with tremendous enthusiasm from many of our residents who were in attendance. The conceptual plan illustrated on these maps represents the foundation's recommendations to State Parks for the exciting potential adaptive reuses of the park's buildings and grounds. The foundation has stated and demonstrated repeatedly that transforming the property from a former state hospital into a state park requires commitment, vision and planning. We have a tremendous opportunity to create a unique self sustaining park that could provide many benefits to the people of our state. It's time to work together to bring an agreed upon vision and plan for this park to life.

Public-Private partnerships have succeeded in supporting parks across the state including at Jones Beach and Saratoga Spa State Parks. The foundation believes public-private partnerships could also help finance the restoration and maintenance of the buildings and grounds in the NRSP. Through the proper planning, the entire park could be self sustaining and potentially become profitable for the state. Establishing public-private partnerships on the property should also help stimulate the local economy and enhance our residents' quality of life. In our judgment, a master plan for the park must first be created to help the state identify what buildings and areas of the park can be appropriately and productively reused for recreational and cultural purposes. A committee should then be established to initiate, plan and organize public/private business interest in the property.

We hope State Parks will embrace our concept and vision for this beautiful 520 acre park. This includes preserving the connection and history our community has with the property. The foundation is looking forward to working with you, State Parks, our local representatives and our community leaders to establish a park that will provide an inspirational, enjoyable and safe park experience for all the residents of our great state - 11 million of which live within a 1 hour drive of this park.

Sincerely,

Michael Rosato
Nissequogue River State Park Foundation

cc: Commissioner Carol Ash