

NEWS
DEBBY KE
DEBORAH
DOUGLAS
Associate

EDITORIALS

"Where there is no vision, the people perish."

OPINION


Parks in peril

State should release the list of places that will be affected by budget cut

Chill winter is upon us, but now is the moment to begin planning for summer recreation. That's because the state parks budget is facing a 16 percent reduction, or \$29 million, and Commissioner Carol Ash testified Tuesday that it will mean closing parks and historic sites this summer.

Which ones? Well, that's a good question. The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation should release the list now. The public needs to know, before the budget is finalized, which pools, campsites, marinas, golf courses and beaches will be closed for business come Memorial Day. Jones Beach's July Fourth fireworks could be endangered.

There's a need to economize in these tight times, but parks have suffered a disproportionate share. Cutting too much out of recreation is pound-foolish. Public resources are one of the few things people can rely on when their wallets are thin. Parks department figures show that 1.9 million more people used its facilities last year than in 2008. Cabins and campsites were booked for more nights than at any other time in history. Besides, many of Long Island's treasures, like the golf courses at Bethpage State Park, draw economic activity here.

Albany needs to tell us now which facilities it would close or where it would cut summer service. Difficult choices must be made, but we need to make sure they're the best choices, too. 

*1-28-10
Albany*