



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose M. Serrano

## Serrano Thrilled with Memorial Day Weekend Attendance at State Parks

JOSÉ M. SERRANO June 4, 2010

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"I am so thrilled and excited to learn of the major increase in park attendance that we are currently seeing. Now more than ever, we should recognize the significance that State Parks hold for the people of New York," stated Senator José M. Serrano after the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation announced that with 1.17 million visitors over Memorial Day weekend (May 29-31), attendance at State Parks soared by 245,296 visitors. This translates to a 17 percent increase from the 2009 holiday weekend.

Serrano, who is the Chair of the Senate Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, was a vocal advocate in the fight to keep State Parks open, after Governor David A. Paterson proposed budget cuts that would have padlocked many parks throughout the state.

"Had our parks been closed, the people of our state would have been deprived of one of our greatest natural resources," said Serrano. "Our communities' access to recreational and physical activities would have been greatly diminished. Additionally, the state would have lost significant revenue that, if Memorial Day weekend is any indication, will increase considerably from last summer."

In addition to the increase in overall park visitors, the amount of State Park system campsites that were occupied over the holiday weekend increased by a whopping 88 percent when compared to last year. There was also a significant increase in sales of the Empire Passport, an annual pass that provides unlimited use of most of New York's State Parks.

"Just as the state is undergoing a financial crisis, so is the average New Yorker," said the Senator. "State Parks and Historic Sites are a worthwhile, economical alternative to expensive summer retreats, as they offer varied educational, recreational and relaxation opportunities that every New Yorker can enjoy." He continued, "Thanks to the hard work and support of vocal parks advocates throughout our communities, Parks Commissioner Carol Ash and her staff, and the people of our state, we can all look forward to a thriving summer park season."