



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## ALBANY'S AXE THRASHES LOCAL TOURISM ECONOMY

KINGSTON, NY (March 3, 2010)... Minnewaska State Park, the Kingston Senate House Historic Site and Walkway Over The Hudson will fall victim to Albany's axe as part of Governor Paterson's proposed closing and reduction of services of up to one hundred thirty-one (131) parks, camps and places of interest. "The economic impact will be crushing to the outdoor recreation industry that drives tourism in our county," said Comptroller Elliott Auerbach.

"I have to believe that the Governor is, as someone said, looking for change under the sofa cushion in an attempt to keep New York State afloat," said Auerbach. "What he fails to take into consideration is the huge financial blow and larger economic impact these closures will have on Ulster. Minnewaska, along with the Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point, attracts 222,000 visitors and millions of dollars into our county. That translates into well over \$250,000 in sales tax and tens of thousand of dollars in hotel and motel occupancy tax. In addition, the park employs forty-two full time and seasonal employees which places it well above the average employer in Ulster County. As the NY League of Conservation Voters put it, 'the investment in State Parks is a good one; for every dollar the state spends on parks, it gets back \$5 dollars in economic activity.' Talk about a green economy and one needn't look any further than our parks and historic sites as their visitors spend money and create an inextricable link to the well being of restaurants, lodging and retail throughout the county," the Comptroller went on to point out.

"I don't mean to undermine the Governor's efforts to find "loose change" to fill the budget gap, but a more creative – some may say pragmatic – approach, and one which has gotten the endorsement of Kingston City Mayor James Sottile, might be to ask members of the NYS Senate and Assembly to trim back 10% of their member items this year to keep all of the State park venues fully operational," said Auerbach. "We could be really courageous by going one step further to save \$150,000,000.00 toward closing the budget gap if they took a one year hiatus from doling out pork barrel money," opined the Comptroller. In addition, we may want to take a bold step and consider corporate underwriters to adopt and fund each and every location in lieu of them being shuttered."

As a county and as a state we cannot forsake the value of our "outside economy" for the mere ¼ of 1% budget fix. Nor can we afford to turn our backs without understanding the far reaching financial and physical impact it will have.

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*The mission of the Ulster County Comptroller's Office is to serve as an independent agency of the people and to protect the public interest by monitoring County government and to assess and report on the degree to which its operation is economical, efficient and its financial condition sound.*