

NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION (OPRHP)
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INTERAGENCY TASKFORCE
DRAFT ACTION AGENDA

I. General Recommendations and Agency Actions

Recommendation 1: Provide for Increased Community Representation and Access to Decision Making Processes

Action Agenda

- Each of the eleven parks regions has a statutorily established advisory body known as a Regional Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Commission. Each Parks Commission has at least seven commissioners who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Commissioners are appointed for seven-year terms. There is much potential for increasing environmental justice community representation on these commissions. OPRHP will work to increase minority representation on its Regional Parks Commissions.
- OPRHP offers extensive information about its various grants programs on its website and through informational workshops that are held across the State each spring in advance of the application deadline. Within available resources, OPRHP will reach out to organizations and municipalities in environmental justice communities that could be eligible for these grants programs and make them aware of the availability, requirements, and information sessions for these programs.

Recommendation 2: Continue Collaboration with the Environmental Justice Community

Action Agenda

- As OPRHP develops master plans for its facilities, as well as other planning documents and project designs, it will enhance the participation of environmental justice communities by consulting with organizations and municipal leaders from those communities that may have an interest in the plan or project proposed for OPRHP facilities.

Recommendation 6: Give Priority to Environmental Justice Communities in Relevant RFP requirements, Scoring Systems for Funding, Assistance and Training Programs

Action Agenda

- OPRHP's municipal parks, historic preservation and heritage areas grants programs are funded through the EPF, and pursuant to statute a minimum of 25% of those grants must be awarded annually to "underserved communities." A recently enacted statute (Chapter 377 of the Laws of 2008) builds on this program by allowing these OPRHP grants to fund up to 75% of the project cost in underserved areas, as opposed to the 50% funding cap that applies in other areas of the State. OPRHP is drafting regulations to allow for implementation of these new provisions for the 2009 grants cycle of funding.

- In 2008, with funding provided in the budget by the Governor and Legislature, OPRHP launched an initiative to revitalize its parks and historic sites, which are facing a \$650 million backlog of capital needs. Much of the work is being handled by local contractors, and goals are built into the scoring system for minority and women-owned businesses. OPRHP will continue to seek out MWBE businesses to implement the program if any additional funding for this initiative is included in the 2009-10 State Budget.
- OPRHP provides numerous businesses with the opportunity to run concessions in state parks – everything from hotels to food concessions to recreational activities such as rafting and horseback riding. These concessions are made available through RFPs that include goals for minority- and women-owned businesses participation. OPRHP will continue to seek out MWBE businesses to provide these important services at the State’s parks and historic sites.
- In 2006, New York State established in statute (Chapter 547 of the Laws of 2006) an historic preservation tax credit program. The program has a residential and a commercial component, with the residential component limited to economically distressed communities. OPRHP administers this program and has commenced outreach to those communities that are eligible for the residential tax credit, but to date very few homeowners have taken advantage of the program. OPRHP will increase its outreach efforts and will continue to advocate for expansion of the program to cover more costs, to offer more meaningful benefits to low-income applicants and to include a larger number of distressed communities.

Recommendation 7: Prioritize Enforcement Actions and Pollution Reduction Programs and Resources in Environmental Justice Communities

Action Agenda

- While some State parks and historic sites are located in environmental justice communities, many are not, but still serve those communities by providing outdoor, recreational and cultural opportunities to regular and occasional visitors from low-income areas and communities of color. While public transportation is available to many of OPRHP’s facilities, in some cases it is onerous to utilize and in other cases it is not provided at all. OPRHP will work with public transportation authorities and agencies across the state to increase the availability of public transportation from environmental justice communities to State parks and historic sites.

Recommendation 8: Diversify and Green the Workforce

Action Agenda

- OPRHP generally hires approximately 5,000 seasonal workers each year. These employees serve in a wide variety of capacities ranging from environmental educators to toll-booth operators to cleaning staff and public safety rangers. OPRHP will set regional goals for increasing the number of minority applicants and hires for these seasonal positions. This

will require increased outreach to environmental justice communities in order to achieve its goals.

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