S T A T E O F N E W Y O R K

5498

2015-2016 Regular Sessions

I N S E N A T E

May 14, 2015

Introduced by Sen. AMEDORE -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation

AN ACT to establish a geoparks task force to provide a plan for the identification of and make recommendations for educational opportunities associated with geological sites as geoparks throughout the state

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, REPRESENTED IN SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature hereby finds that the state is geographically rich with numerous and diverse significant geological sites. In the nineteenth century this state was a world center for the study of geology. Furthermore, the state museum along with a number of private and public institutions of higher education teach and engage in geologic research. There are at least 68 significant geological sites within the 178 state parks.

The Global Geoparks Network was established as a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization program in 1998 to seek the promotion and conservation of the earth's geological heritage, as well as fostering sustainable research, education and development by interested communities. At least 58 geoparks in 18 countries have been included in such network.

This legislature further finds that greater recognition of the state's geologic resources would foster wider education about these resources and sustainable socio-economic development, such as geotourism.

Therefore, this act establishes a geologic task force to survey and formulate a plan for identifying sites for a system of geoparks, and a management and development strategy for geoparks.

S 2. There is hereby established a geoparks task force, which shall consist of eleven members. The membership of such task force shall be as follows: the commissioner of parks, recreation and historic preservation

EXPLANATION--Matter in ITALICS (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [ ] is old law to be omitted.

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or his or her designee; the commissioner of education or his or her designee; the commissioner of environmental conservation or his or her designee; two members appointed by the governor; two members appointed by the speaker of the assembly; two members appointed by the temporary president of the senate; one member appointed by the minority leader of the assembly; and one member appointed by the minority leader of the senate. The appointed members of the task force shall be individuals with experience in the areas of geology, education, sustainable development and/or parks. The commissioner of education shall serve as chair of the task force.

S 3. On or before the first day of the twenty-fourth calendar month next succeeding the effective date of this act, the task force shall submit a report to the governor and the legislature identifying the sites with significant geological resources including, but not limited to, sites within existing state parks and other parklands in the state. The process of identification of such sites shall include: (a) consideration of opportunities for utilizing the site as part of educational programs serving both students and visitors; (b) consideration of opportunities for socio-economic development that is sustainable such as geotourism; (c) consideration of methods for conserving and enhancing geological heritage that can foster teaching geoscientific disciplines and broader environmental issues; and (d) consideration of opportunities for engaging and/or connecting with state agencies, local governments, heritage areas and private interests in the protection and management of this site.

Such report shall also include recommendations for programs to accommodate both public and private use, and strategies for management planning for protection, development and use. It shall also include an estimate of public and private costs to implement recommendations in the report.

The task force shall consult with officials and representatives of the federal government and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization with responsibilities relating to geoscience, parks, sustainable development and education relating to this act, and shall conduct three public hearings in different areas of the state while it is preparing the report.

The task force may request and shall receive from any department, division, board, bureau, commission or other agency of the state or any political subdivision thereof or any public authority such assistance and data as may be necessary to enable it to carry out its responsibilities under this act.

S 4. This act shall take effect immediately.