STATE OF NEW YORK

8718

IN SENATE

March 4, 2024

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

AN ACT in relation to enacting the "parks are growing act"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "parks are growing act".

§ 2. 1. The commissioner of parks, recreation and historic preservation shall, in conjunction with the commissioner of agriculture and markets and the commissioner of environmental conservation, conduct a land assessment of New York state parks regarding the current condition of such state parks, and shall determine cost estimates for the increased use of such state parks for farming, gardening, and introduction of pollinator-friendly plant species across the state as provided under subdivision 2 of this section.

2. The land assessment and cost estimates conducted under subdivision 1 of this section shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) an assessment of suitable areas of land in each state park for establishing floral and vegetable garden plots and introducing pollinator-friendly plant species, and cost estimates for establishing such plots and introducing such species. The following criteria shall be considered in conducting such assessments and cost estimates:

(i) locations easily accessible by walking and/or car;

(ii) locations of continuously undisturbed, arable land of at least half an acre in size;

(iii) locations with soil types suitable for growing flowers and crops;

(iv) locations deemed appropriate for plants native to the state, composed of a variety of nectar and pollen-rich flowers with a wide range and variety of shapes, sizes, and colors that blossom at various times throughout the year; and

(v) locations that will enhance enjoyment of the park by the general public;

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

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(b) a map of each state park deemed to have met the criteria under subdivision (a) of this section along with a sketch of the area deemed to have met such criteria and such park's estimated size;

(c) for each state park, a list of the native plants and/or crops that could be expected to grow in each such park, based upon the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map for each region;

(d) an estimate of costs associated with the creation and annual maintenance of garden plots in each park deemed to have available land; and

(e) a list of local organizations which may provide partnership in service of the annual maintenance of each state park's garden plots. Such organizations may include but shall not be limited to:

(i) boys and girls clubs;

(ii) girl scouts and boy scouts groups;

(iii) local gardening clubs;

(iv) senior living programs;

(v) BOCES programs;

(vi) Future Farmers of America clubs; or

(vii) 4-H gardening clubs.

§ 3. The commissioner of parks, recreation and historic preservation, in conjunction with the commissioner of agriculture and markets and the commissioner of environmental conservation, shall submit the land assessments and cost estimates conducted pursuant to this act to the governor, the speaker of the assembly, and the temporary president of the senate no later than six months following the effective date of this act.

§ 4. This act shall take effect immediately.