STATE OF NEW YORK

8718--A

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 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

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. 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 develop and implement a plan for the increased use of such state parks for farming, gardening, and introduction of pollinator-friendly plant species across the state. Such land assessment and plan shall include, but not be limited to:

1. An assessment of suitable areas of land in each state park for establishing floral and vegetable garden plots and introducing pollinator-friendly plant species. The following criteria shall be considered in conducting such assessments:

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

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

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

(d) 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

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

2. A map of each state park deemed to have met the criteria under subdivision one of this section along with a sketch of the area deemed to have met such criteria and such park's estimated size;

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

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3. 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; and

4. 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:

(a) boys and girls clubs;

(b) girl scouts and boy scouts groups;

(c) local gardening clubs;

(d) senior living programs;

(e) BOCES programs;

(f) Future Farmers of America clubs; or

(g) 4-H gardening clubs.

§ 3. The land assessment directed to be completed under section two of this act shall be completed no later than one year after the effective date of this act, when upon such date, the implementation of the plan developed pursuant to section two of this act shall begin.

§ 4. This act shall take effect immediately.