



REGIONAL PLAN ASSOCIATION, INC.

... a research and planning agency supported by voluntary membership to promote the coordinated development of the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Region.

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE
Monday, September 26, 1960

The New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan region has fallen far behind in providing parks for its existing population and must take immediate decisive action to meet growing demands for all forms of recreation, a two-year study, released today (Monday, September 26th), concludes.

The Study -- the Park, Recreation and Open Space Project -- is jointly sponsored by the Metropolitan Regional Council, consisting of the region's top locally elected officials and the Regional Plan Association, a private citizens' organization. Its final report was released at City Hall, New York, by Mayor Robert F. Wagner, the Council's chairman; Amory H. Bradford, RPA President and the Project's Joint Steering Committee, headed by Griffith E. Harris, First Selectman of Greenwich, Conn., and Otto L. Nelson, Vice-President of the New York Life Insurance Co., and a Vice-President of RPA.

The Project's final report, entitled "The Race for Open Space," recommends substantial increases in the acreage of permanent open space, state and county parks, local recreation areas and ocean-front beaches in the tri-state metropolitan region. The final report was prepared by Stanley B. Tankel, the Project's staff director. The recommendations also call for immediate action for the preservation and proper development of ten regional park sites: Delaware Valley, Island Beach State Park, Lake Wawayanda Round Valley and Sandy Hook, in New Jersey; Fire Island, Lloyd Neck, Moriches Inlet to Montauk, and Shawangunk Mountains, in New York State; and the Taconic Tri-State Park in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts.

To keep pace with the region's estimated growth the Project recommends an increase in permanent open space of 1,100 square miles, including lands for public parks and recreation facilities, conservation areas and residential commons. The cost of acquiring the proposed additional recreation land is estimated at about \$1.9 billion.

Specifically, the Project recommends:

To keep pace with estimated urban growth an increase in permanent open space in the region from 600 to 1,700 square miles.

The region's 300 square miles of public parks should be expanded to 1,160 square miles.

Local recreation acreage in the tri-state region should be tripled from 60,000 acres in 1958 to 176,000 acres in 1985.

County and state parks accommodating all day activities should be increased from their present 124,000 acres to 566,000 acres by 1985.

County park land should increase nine-fold from the present 30,000 acres to 269,000 acres.

The three states should acquire an additional 173,000 acres in the mountains and all of the remaining 63 miles of undeveloped ocean front.

Each county and each community should evolve its own residential open space plan for its residential districts.

Sub-dividers should be required, in suitable areas, either to dedicate a percentage of each sub-division for park land or to pay a fee to a municipal park fund in lieu of such a land contribution. Also endorsed is the principle of "clustering."

Also recommended are a number of steps to minimize out-of-pocket public expenditures in acquiring new recreation lands.

The Project urges approval of New York State's forthcoming \$75 million park acquisition bond issue and urges New Jersey and Connecticut to adopt a similar program.

With respect to the limitation of park use to residents of a particular community the project states, "The only answer to park restrictions is more parks, especially State Parks."

The report states, "There is literally no physical space in their home municipality adequate to serve the all-day recreation needs of the people in New York City, Newark, Hudson County and other densely populated areas in the center of the Region. It is impractical to expect this need to be met in the parks of outlying counties except to a limited degree by the home counties of the land-shy communities. Clearly, the major responsibility here rests with the states, possibly backed by federal programs. With increasing income and mobility for all population groups, more city people will be looking for

outdoor recreation opportunities and state park agencies will be confronted with a substantial rise in demand for their facilities. If the states do not meet these demands, the densely populated cities will have to consider acquiring parks outside their own boundaries."

The Project urges the Federal Government to coordinate the workings of the various federal agencies affecting land use. The Project's report states "Although it has not yet appeared to realize it, the Federal Government determines more than any other level of government what kind of a region this shall be."

The Project recommends creation of an Open Space Foundation with a privately financed revolving fund which would be used to acquire crucially important properties with the purpose of reselling them at cost to the states when they are in a position to acquire the land for park purposes. The Project also suggests that municipalities take steps to assure that golf course properties will not be developed.

In its findings the Project's report states that the pace of park acquisition is declining relative to the region's growing population. It concludes that the demand for all forms of outdoor recreation will increase at an unprecedented pace during the next 25 years citing such factors as population growth, increase in per capita income, more leisure time and ease of travel.

At present, the region has about 2,000 square miles of developed land out of a total of 7,000 square miles. The Project predicts that in the next 25 years developed land in the region will at least double and may triple. According to the Project, only 4 percent of the region's population live in communities which meet the minimum standards of the National Recreation Association for 10-acres of park per 1,000 population.

"The region's 550 municipalities are woefully deficient in recreation acreage," the report concludes.

In light of the impending growth and spread of the region's population, the ocean beaches can be of optimum recreation and conservation value only if they are publicly owned, the report asserts, further noting that the intensively built up New Jersey shore is a great waste of a scarce natural asset and provides a vivid picture of the consequences of inaction.

Noting that water pollution is a regional problem the Project warns that unless it gets on with its marginal sewage program, New York City's recreation potential will be in serious jeopardy.

It also urges outlying counties to make sure that their sewage collection and treatment plants are keeping up with the region's population explosion.

The Project was financed from a grant of \$60,000 by the Old Dominion Foundation,

supplemented by grants from the Taconic Foundation and the Victoria Foundation made to the Regional Plan Association. It previously released three reports published by the Regional Plan Association -- "The Law of Open Space" by Shirley A. Siegel, "The Dynamics of Park Demand" by Marion Clawson, and "Nature in the Metropolis" by William A. Niering.

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