



Regional Plan Association

... 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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URBAN OPEN SPACE LEADERS TO VOICE CONCERNS AT BALTIMORE MEETING

Government, non-profit, and civic open space and recreation leaders are calling for renewed federal help with urban parks and open spaces. At a special national conference on May 28-30 in Baltimore, the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors will hear concerns of leaders representing 80 percent of the nation's population.

Recently, there was a meeting of some tri-state urban area open space leaders to discuss the conference. "There is not enough publicly available open space in the right places to serve close to home recreation needs and to protect natural resources. Existing facilities are crowded and often dilapidated," said Hooper Brooks, Director of a three-year regional open space study at Regional Plan Association (RPA). RPA has submitted a case study of the New York urban region to the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors which concludes that there is a continuing need for federal funding to help states, counties and localities acquire, rehabilitate, plan for and manage open land. A trust fund is recommended.

"Healthy open space is good for the economy of the New York urban region--for tourism, recreation, public health, and for the quality of life which influences location and investment decisions. Competition to develop the region's vacant land and even existing parks has dramatically increased. With almost 10 percent of the country's population crowded into a 100-mile radius of New York City, our urban parks, playgrounds, conservation areas and community gardens, old or new, are not a luxury," said Marian Heiskell, Chairman of the New York Council on the Environment and a member of the 1960 Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC) which preceded today's President's Commission.

"This year better parks are a top priority for all Americans. New York City's 59 community boards have moved it to the top of their list. While open space problems most acutely affect the region's poor and growing minorities, everyone suffers, everyone wants relief," said Tom Fox, Director of the Neighborhood Open Space Coalition.

"We will be building an urban parks platform in Baltimore emphasizing a renewed, direct and fair relationship between the federal government and cities. In recent years non-profits have made heroic efforts to solve urban open space problems, but we cannot do it alone. We need additional financial and tax incentives, stronger leadership, and a better partnership between all levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors if we are to answer today's challenge," said Peter Stein, Vice President, The Trust for Public Land.

The "National Conference on Recreation and the American City" is co-sponsored by the City of Baltimore, the United States Conference of Mayors, and the President's Commission on Americans Outdoors.

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