

Subject: Fwd: Update from Comm. Jackson

>>> Commissioner 5/7/2008 11:02 AM >>>

I would like to share some news with respect to the Department's budget planning process. As you know, we did roll out a preliminary Reduction In Force (RIF) Plan primarily affecting our State Parks on April 1, 2008. Since that time our Governor has publicly supported keeping services in our State Parks open. This, of course, is very good news. At the same time, the Governor has asked us to review the full range of funding options potentially available to financially support parks operations on a going forward basis.

Given the Governor's direction, the Department did not proceed to issue 45 day notice letters yesterday, which was the time frame to administer layoffs effective July 1, 2008. In the days and weeks ahead we will seek to identify a fiscal plan to maintain parks services to the extent possible. In the interim, I want you to know that no immediate plans exist to submit a RIF Plan.

In these difficult fiscal times Governor Corzine has asked all Departments of State government to identify innovative ways to change our business practice to streamline operations and administer cost effective programs. We currently have our external Permit Efficiency Review Task Force reviewing ways to improve our operations in line with the Governor's charge. Our attention also must focus on similar innovation throughout our State Parks to enable us to continue to offer critical recreation services to our public while maintaining a balanced budget. Now, more than ever, we need to remain vigilant in addressing our Governor's clear vision of fiscal responsibility in State government. I ask for your continued patience and ongoing cooperation as we address our Fiscal 2009 budget.

I will reach out to you once again as more information becomes available.

Lisa P. Jackson
Commissioner