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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# Friends of Westchester County Parks Announces Study to Determine Economic Benefits of County's Parks

**YONKERS (June 28, 2011)** -- Intuitively everyone knows that parks enrich our communities and have a positive impact on our lives. The question no one seems to be able to answer is: What is the value of the economic benefits that parks provide?

In an effort to answer the question, The Friends of Westchester County Parks (FWCP) announced today that it has commissioned an Economic Impact Study which will outline the economic benefits generated by the county's parks. As part of its mission to secure adequate funding for Westchester's award-winning park system, FWPC has retained Indianapolis-based PROS Consulting to conduct the study.

"With park budgets across the nation shrinking, the time is right for us to evaluate the economic impact and value of our parks, said FWCP Board Chair Elizabeth Bracken-Thompson. "The study should provide valuable data as future budgets for the county's parks system are formulated."

PROS Consulting is charged with determining the economic and fiscal impacts generated by the diverse offerings of the parks operated by the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. Two other properties owned by the department – Playland Park and the County Center – are the subject of separate studies. PROS will synthesize and consolidate the findings and data from those two studies and produce a comprehensive report on the overall system.

The PROS Team has worked on more than 700 projects in over 46 states and numerous projects internationally in seven countries. PROS is a full-service management consulting and planning firm focusing on services to government and not-for-profit agencies. The firm was formed in 1995 specifically to serve the park, recreation, and leisure services industry. PROS has conducted studies for some of the largest parks systems in the country, including Florida's Sarasota County Parks and Recreation and Michigan's Genessee County Parks.

The study will culminate with a final report submitted by PROS no later than November 15. Some of the specific components to be included in the report are:

- Determination of the value of the open space and parks managed by Westchester County, through collecting, processing and analyzing relevant data.
- Valuation of the costs of government services such as roads, sanitation, utility distribution, waste management and security, if these park lands were to be developed.
- Estimates of visitor expenditures that are applicable to Westchester County Parks, programs, conservation areas, open space and active facilities.
- Estimate of the economic benefits (positive or negative) of the park system in terms of health care avoidance.
- The cost savings related to environmental benefits of water, air and storm water controls.
- The impact of the parks on the decision-making process for businesses to relocate or remain in Westchester County.

FWPC is the only organization dedicated exclusively to promoting and supporting Westchester County parks. FPWC, which is governed by a Board of Trustees, secures and administers private funds that support the mission of the Westchester County Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. Funds raised through membership fees and donations are used for the sole benefit of Westchester's parks. All donations are tax deductible.

For more information, visit Friends of Westchester County Parks at [friendsofwestchesterparks.com](http://friendsofwestchesterparks.com)