

**HEALTH-ACROSS-ALL-POLICIES**  
**Prevention Through Outdoor Recreation**

**Here are ways that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is making New Yorkers Healthier.**



Adventure NY is improving access to New York's great outdoors.

New York's breathtaking natural resources are unique, abundant and open to everyone. The opportunities abound, from hunting and fishing, to hiking and rock climbing, swimming and boating, or simply relaxing in a tent under the stars.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) plays a vital role in both protecting our natural resources and providing opportunities for people to enjoy them. Under Governor Cuomo's Adventure NY program, DEC is making critical upgrades to State campgrounds and facilities to better serve people who want to enjoy our outdoors.

Adventure NY supports initiatives to address four strategic priorities:

1. Expand access to healthy, active outdoor recreation.
2. Connect people with nature and the outdoors.
3. Protect New York's natural resources.
4. Boost local economies.

These investments come at a critical point in time, as the need for outdoor recreation has never been greater. Childhood obesity has doubled over the past 20 years, and the average American child spends as few as 30 minutes in unstructured outdoor play each day, as compared to more than seven hours each day in front of an electronic screen. Accessible state lands, parks, and other recreational facilities promote physical activity, an important element of overall wellness.

Research has shown that children who have a connection to nature are more likely to do well in school and have increased engagement and focus. Public lands and accessible recreation sites provide low-cost opportunities for children (and adults) to explore the great outdoors and feel part of nature.

DEC is promoting good health by:

- Reimagining and better utilizing our environmental education centers and children's camps to attract a wider audience, including urban users, to the great outdoors.
- Implementing and expanding outreach initiatives—such as I BIRD NY, I FISH NY, Connect Kids, and New York's First-Time Camper Program—to encourage more New Yorkers, especially families from underserved communities, to connect with nature and outdoor recreation.
- Improving accessibility and information about our resources so New Yorkers and visitors of all abilities can enjoy the outdoors.
- Promoting the state's great outdoors by recruiting and re-engaging all outdoor enthusiasts, especially hunters and anglers.

All these activities help address the Prevention Agenda Priorities:

- **Prevent Chronic Diseases -**  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic\\_diseases/focus\\_area\\_1.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic_diseases/focus_area_1.htm)
- **Promote a Healthy and Safe Environment -**  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/plan/healthy\\_environment/focus\\_area\\_3.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/healthy_environment/focus_area_3.htm)

**Learn more about Adventure NY and all the many activities there are to enjoy outdoors:**  
<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/>.

**First-Time Camper Program**  
**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the**  
**Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation**



First-time campers ready for adventure.

Camping is a rewarding experience that is one of the best ways for families to connect to nature and spend time with each other in the great outdoors and it's very affordable. Long-time campers know the enjoyment and rewards of sleeping under the stars, but for those who have never slept in a tent before, spending the night outdoors can be an unfamiliar adventure. New York State's **First-Time Camper Program**, launched in 2017, makes trying camping for the first time easy by providing a turnkey camping experience for families, especially those from underserved communities that have never camped before.

The new campers are provided with a family tent, sleeping bags, sleeping pads, camp chairs, lantern, and even firewood. A Camping Ambassador meets families at the campsite and help them get camp set up with a camping 101 lesson. Bathrooms and hot showers are a short walk from the campsites. To make the weekend getaway even more enjoyable, campers have an opportunity to learn from experts how to fish, hike, bird watch, paddle and more, all while having fun and making memories that last forever.

Author Richard Louv's book Last Child in the Woods shone a light on America's growing disconnect with nature—coining it “Nature Deficit Disorder.” Initiatives such as the First-Time Camper program will give families a unique opportunity to explore and appreciate the natural world around them.

**First-Time Camper Program** addresses the following Prevention Agenda Priorities:

- **Prevent Chronic Chronic Diseases** –  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic\\_diseases/focus\\_area\\_1.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic_diseases/focus_area_1.htm)
- **Promote a Healthy and Safe Environment** –  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/plan/healthy\\_environment/focus\\_area\\_3.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/healthy_environment/focus_area_3.htm)

**More information on the First-Time Camper Program is available here:**

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/109909.html>

**Watch this video on the program:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8IMcCTLYbp8>

**Learn more about DEC campgrounds:** <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/camping.html>

**I Bird NY supported by the  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**



Kids learn how to get started birdwatching through I Bird NY.

Birding is a fun activity that everyone can enjoy. From Montauk to Buffalo, New York is home to a vast array of amazing habitat that supports over 450 different bird species. Bird watching is one of the fastest growing outdoor recreational activities that can be enjoyed by all ages and experiences, plus it's a great way to get outdoors. You don't need a lot to get started bird watching; just a good pair of binoculars, a desire to be outdoors and a destination.

**I Bird NY** is a statewide initiative to make getting started with birdwatching easy and fun. A central website was developed to provide tools and resources, as well as a statewide calendar of upcoming birding events. Signs with the I Bird NY logo were installed at dozens of Bird Conservation Areas and other destinations across New York to better identify great locations for birdwatching. DEC also announced two birding challenges, one for kids and one for adults.

**I Bird NY** addresses the following Prevention Agenda Priorities:

- **Prevent Chronic Diseases -**  
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- **Promote a Healthy and Safe Environment -**  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/plan/healthy\\_environment/focus\\_area\\_3.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/healthy_environment/focus_area_3.htm)

For more information, visit: [www.IBirdNY.org](http://www.IBirdNY.org)

**[THIS IS PENDING AND EMBARGOED]**

**Outdoors Day supported by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**



Kids learn how to fish - and catch their first fish! - at a DEC event.

More and more people are looking for opportunities to try new activities in a guided setting. By providing easy, introductory experiences, we can encourage participants to get involved with outdoor recreation on their own.

In his 2017 State of the State, Governor Cuomo announced that New York state would host Outdoor Days. Two successful events were piloted in 2017.

In 2018, DEC and State Parks hosted an expanded Outdoors Day on June 9<sup>th</sup> in conjunction with National Get Outdoors Day. Events were held in every region of the state.

Events were free and open-house style with a host of outdoor recreation experiences for visitors to try. Activities included fishing, paddling, hiking, bird watching, archery, nature photography, camping, outdoor safety, Leave No Trace principles, adaptive equipment/opportunities and more.

**Outdoors Day** addresses the following Prevention Agenda Priorities:

- **Prevent Chronic Diseases -**  
[https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention\\_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic\\_diseases/focus\\_area\\_1.htm](https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic_diseases/focus_area_1.htm)

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**Link:** <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/113380.html>