

# Working On The Pennsylvania State Parks Of Tomorrow

By: DCNR

DCNR has been hard at work implementing Pennsylvania's plan to sustain state parks and make them welcoming to all since the release of the strategic plan Penn's Parks for All (PDF) in July 2021.

The plan includes five categories of action steps to ensure generations to come feel connected to their state parks and have opportunities to learn and play outdoors.

## Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

The department is examining the state park system to better respond to public demand for outdoor recreation activities and to adjust to a shift in user interests and needs.

In September 2022, Governor Wolf announced the locations for three new parks being added to the 121-state park system to create new recreational opportunities to meet high demand and to conserve nearly 3,500-

acres of vital natural and cultural resources.

Land acquisitions secured more than 500 additional state park acres for hunting and several new stream-access opportunities for anglers.



## Overnight Accommodations in Pennsylvania State Parks

To help meet growing demand state-wide for all types of overnight accommodations, a variety of additions or improvements have been made.

Two new "Friends and Family Great Gathering Sites" sites were added to Shawnee State Park in Bedford County, to support the increase in larger social-group camping.

DCNR is drafting a concession lease agreement to try out glamping services within the French Creek State Park Complex in southeastern Pennsylvania with an anticipated rollout for the pilot program in 2023.

The very popular Ricketts Glen State Park in Columbia, Luzerne, and Sullivan counties added campground sites that include hookups for electricity, water, and sewer to accommodate growing demand for RV sites.

Lackawanna, Pymatuning, Promised Land, Bald Eagle, Locust Lake, Chapman, Moraine, and Ohiopyle state parks also are in the process of adding full-service campground sites.



## State Park Services and Facilities

Evaluations are underway at each state park to determine if there are barriers restricting park access or usefulness, particularly for new and diverse users, and if there are improvements that can better accommodate needs.

To help promote state parks as welcoming locations for diverse cultural groups, various materials and programs are being developed in Spanish for parks that have high numbers of Latino visitors.

Fact sheets and park recreational guides in Spanish are now available at Nolde Forest, Neshaminy, and Beltzville state parks, with many others underway.

State park agreements with concession operators are now including language designed to help minimize waste, reduce resource consumption and litter, and prevent plastic pollution.

Work is underway to hire six additional State Park Officers across the commonwealth to help deal with a variety of operational issues including increased visitor usage.

## Conserving Natural and Cultural Resources in State Parks

Responsible stewardship of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of state parks is part of DCNR's mission and is challenged by increasing numbers of visitors and environmental factors such as invasive species and stormwater runoff.

A Night Sky Policy for DCNR is being drafted to promote the enjoyment and viewing of the night sky at dozens of parks statewide.

An assessment is underway to determine each park's level of "darkness," based on the impact of surrounding sources of light pollution to the park's environment.

Conservation partners aided state park staff in completing numerous stream, lake, and wetland improvements in 2022.

Stream restoration, including acid mine drainage mitigation and floodplain restoration, was accomplished at five state parks. Improvements to lake fish habitat and angler access was accomplished at 10 parks; and a large wetland restoration project has started at one park.

A new statewide aquatic biologist position was created in the Bureau of State Parks to assist in data analysis to better inform on critical resource needs and best practices. Seven parks each added two new electric vehicle (EV) chargers totaling 14 new chargers for 2022, bringing the total number of EV chargers in parks to 38 locations.

In addition, two more electric motorcycles were purchased for state park ranger operations.

## Paying for Parks

DCNR is working to reduce costs and improve efficiencies; pursue external funding; and respond to public feedback to increase commonwealth funding for state parks without any impacts on visitors.

Forty-four additional state park employees were trained in EnergyCAP, a software program that evaluates the energy usage of each meter in every park and can identify inefficiencies or equipment malfunctions, thereby saving money.

**To see all the improvements go to <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/>.**

