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Department of Environmental Protection Opened More Than 4,800 Acres and Enhanced Recreation Opportunities in the Watershed In 2014

New hiking trails and expanded hunting privileges underscore year of expanded access

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced that more than 4,800 additional acres of city-owned property across the watershed were opened for public recreation for the first time in 2014. In addition, DEP worked with its partners to establish two new hiking trails, and worked with the state to expand hunting privileges on nearly 12,000 acres of property through deer management assistance permits.

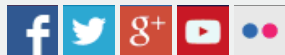
"DEP has continued to find ways to expand and enhance the opportunities for hiking, fishing and other outdoor activities on our lands and reservoirs," **DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd** said. "We are happy to see that thousands of people from the watershed and New York City, along with visitors from across the northeast, are enjoying the scenic beauty of the Catskills and Hudson Valley. In 2015, DEP will continue to work with our partners in the region to improve the access and programs that help support the tourism and outdoor recreation economies that are so important to communities in the watershed."

"The Catskill Mountains have long been known as a popular tourism destination and vacation retreat by a great number of visitors," said **Mary Beth Silano, president of the Catskill Association for Tourism Services**. "Our forests, mountains and waterfalls inspired generations of painters, poets and storytellers, and today it is these features that attract hundreds of thousands of tourists to our

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area. The opening of DEP properties significantly enhances outdoor recreation in the Catskill Mountains, to our visitors and residents alike.”

“The Catskill Center applauds the ongoing efforts by NYC DEP to improve access to our watershed lands,” **Catskill Center Executive Director Alan White** said. “Outdoor recreation is and will continue to be a major draw to the Catskills region and a tremendously vital piece of our economy. By continuing our work to improve access to the scenic natural beauty of the Catskills we can remove barriers to the region – by reducing permit requirements, for example, or the enhanced development of regional trails – ultimately benefiting the local communities of our region, including New York City.”

DEP opened 4,820 additional acres of land for recreation use in 2014, of which 4,143 are public access areas that can be used without a permit. Use of the remaining 677 acres requires an access permit that is available free of charge on the DEP website. The newly opened properties include 2,626 acres in Delaware County, 1,248 acres in Greene County, 444 acres in Putnam County, 200 acres in Schoharie County, and 302 acres in Ulster County. DEP also removed permit requirements from 1,287 acres in the Catskills, making them even easier for the public to enjoy. DEP first established public access areas in 2008 to allow recreation without permits on certain watershed lands. Since then, the number of acres open for recreation without a permit has more than tripled, from 20,009 to 63,612. In total, DEP has opened 126,107 acres of lands and reservoirs for fishing, hiking, hunting and other forms of low-impact recreation.

Many of these recreation areas are open year-round, including during winter for activities such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Those using the recreation areas should pay careful attention to posted signs that outline the allowable uses. That information, along with a list of recreation areas, can also be viewed in the [Recreation Areas](#) section on the DEP website.

The city’s expansion of recreational opportunities across the watershed in 2014 went beyond access to new lands. DEP also saw increased participation in existing recreation programs, and worked with its nonprofit partners and the State of New York to support tourism, outdoor recreation and quality of life with new programs. Some highlights include:

- The recreational boating program at Cannonsville, Neversink, Pepacton and Schoharie reservoir tallied 1,182 total visits, an all-time high for the program since it began in 2012. That total includes 355 visitors who rented a kayak or canoe from one of the six watershed businesses that store and rent boats from alongside the reservoirs. The rental program is administered with significant help from the Catskill Watershed Corporation, which funded 30 storage racks for the boats and administered the process to vet and approve the rental businesses. About 59 percent of the boating visits were by residents of the five watershed counties, while 15 percent were from the five boroughs of New York City, or Long Island.
- 2014 was the second year for a pilot program that allowed the use of electric trolling motors for fishing at Cannonsville Reservoir. The program issued 64 tags to fishermen this year, and DEP expects to continue the pilot program at Cannonsville only in 2015.
- The number of state-certified outdoor guides offering fishing, hiking and other expeditions on city-owned property also expanded in 2014. A total of 29 guides are now permitted by the city to offer guided outdoor trips that have long been a hallmark of the Catskills. That’s up from 23 guides that registered when the program began in 2013. The state certification process requires the guides to know first aid, CPR, and water safety.
- DEP worked with the Catskill Mountain Club to open a 3.7-mile trail on water supply land in the Delaware County town of Andes. The trail, which meanders through a landscape of meadows, forest and apple trees, attracted more than 800 people in 2014.

DEP also worked with the Putnam County Land Trust, the Town of Southeast, Concerned Residents of Southeast, and Boy Scout Troop 440, to open a 1-mile recreation trail alongside the Diverting Reservoir in Putnam County. The trail will provide new outdoor recreation opportunities to the neighboring Village of Brewster, and soon connect to a bike trail that is being developed.

- In addition, DEP worked with the state Department of Environmental Conservation to expand a deer management program to include 11,948 acres around Ashokan, Cannonsville and Neversink Reservoirs. Deer Management Assistance Permits were issued to 280 hunters to help control deer populations on lands immediately adjacent to these reservoirs. Deer in large numbers can inhibit the regeneration of forests that serve as an important natural filter for water before it enters the reservoirs.

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of high quality water each day to more than 9 million New Yorkers. This includes more than 70 upstate communities and institutions in Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties who consume an average of 110 million total gallons of drinking water daily from New York City's water supply system. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$70 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.7 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program with nearly \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on [Facebook](#), or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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