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# Department of Environmental Protection Opened Nearly 6,000 Acres of Watershed Land for Recreation in 2013 and Added New Programs to Support the Catskills Tourism Industry

**City has Nearly Tripled the Inventory of Water Supply  
Land Open for Recreation Without a Permit**

**New Programs for Boating and Certified Guides Attract  
Visitors and Boosts Local Business**

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Carter Strickland today announced that more than 5,900 acres of City-owned land across the watersheds were opened for the first time for public recreation in 2013. In addition, DEP also established new recreation opportunities on lands and reservoirs that were already open to watershed residents and visitors. DEP worked with its partners to establish new hiking trails, create a rental boating program at four reservoirs in the Catskills, and to allow state-licensed outdoor guides to lead hiking, fishing, and other tours on water supply lands for the first time.

“In addition to opening thousands of new acres last year, DEP also explored how the existing recreation areas could be used in new ways to strengthen the tourism economy and expand outdoor activities in the Catskills,” Strickland said. “New programs – such as those for rental boats and licensed guides – have provided new ways for residents of the watershed and New York City, and visitors from across the northeast, to enjoy the scenic beauty of the region.

**More Information**

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These initiatives help to support tourism related jobs and underscore the City's commitment to our neighbors in the watershed."

DEP opened 5,977 acres of land for recreational use in 2013, of which 5,842 are public access areas that can be used without a permit. Use of the remaining 135 acres requires a DEP access permit that is available free of charge on the DEP website. The newly opened properties include 2,889 acres in Delaware County, 2,084 acres in Greene County, 487 acres in Ulster County, 279 acres in Sullivan County, and 103 acres in Schoharie County. DEP also removed permit requirements from 1,771 acres in the Catskills, making them even easier for the public to use. 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 nearly tripled, from 20,009 to 59,813. In total, DEP has opened more than 118,000 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 the 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 on the DEP website by clicking [here](#).

The City's expansion of recreational opportunities across the watersheds in 2013 went far beyond access to new lands. DEP also saw record participation in existing recreation programs, and worked with its nonprofit partners to create new opportunities to help boost tourism, outdoor recreation, and quality of life. Some highlights include:

- A record year for recreational boating at Cannonsville, Neversink, Pepacton and Schoharie reservoirs. Watershed residents and visitors from across seven states used recreational boats more than 1,000 times. About 63 percent of those visits were by residents of the five watershed counties, while 14 percent of the tags were issued to residents of the five boroughs of New York City or Long Island.
- 2013 also marked the first year of a new initiative that allowed local businesses to store rental boats, including kayaks and canoes, at 10 launch sites alongside the four reservoirs. The seven businesses that participated in the program rented more than 300 boats to visitors. The program was 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.
- Began a pilot program for the use of electric trolling motors for fishing at Cannonsville Reservoir. The program issued 112 tags to fishermen from New York, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania this year. DEP is currently reviewing the program to determine whether any changes should be made for the 2014 season.
- State-certified outdoor guides were allowed to use City-owned lands and reservoirs for the first time ever. Currently, 23 guides have received permits to offer fishing, hunting, and hiking tours that have long been a hallmark of the Catskills. They include 10 certified guides from Ulster County, eight from Delaware County, four from Greene County, and one from Sullivan County. The state certification process requires guides to know first aid, CPR, and water safety.
- DEP worked with the Catskill Mountain Club to open a 5.3-mile round trip hiking trail on water supply land that includes a scenic view of Pepacton Reservoir. The trail, located in the Delaware County town of Andes, is located just off Route 30, across from the Shavertown Bridge boat launch site. The trail is the fourth that DEP has opened with nonprofit partners in the Catskills.
- DEP also worked with the Finger Lakes Trail Conference to complete the second phase of a trail just north of Cannonsville Reservoir. The Finger Lakes

Trail System includes the main trail from the Pennsylvania-New York border in Allegany State Park to the Long Path in the Catskill Forest Preserve. In 2013, the nonprofit group relocated 9.5 miles of the trail inside the watershed that had previously run along public roads. DEP issued a permit that allowed the trail system to move that section into woods and fields owned by the City. The low-impact hiking trail primarily follows existing trails and old rail tracks.

“By expanding access to its lands and reservoirs, and the type of recreation that is allowed, New York City is supporting the tourism goals of the Catskills and providing visitors with new ways to enjoy the natural beauty of the region,” said Richard J. Remsnyder, president of the Catskill Association for Tourism Services that promotes the four-county area comprising Delaware, Greene, Sullivan and Ulster. “We applaud the City’s new initiatives for boating and outdoor guides, which are helping to strengthen a tourism industry that employs thousands of people and pumps more than a billion dollars into the Catskills every year.”

Catskill Watershed Corporation Executive Director Alan Rosa said, “The Catskills and recreation go together like bread and butter. My family has enjoyed hunting and fishing in these hills for generations. It’s nice to think that people well into the future will be making memories here, too, and helping the regional economy in the process.”

And Catskill Center Executive Director Alan White said, “The Catskill Center appreciates the many recreational opportunities created by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) through new partnerships. A great example of this was the opening of the Shavertown Trail in August 2013. By partnering with the Catskill Mountain Club and the Town of Andes, DEP lands adjacent to the Pepacton Reservoir have become the location of an ideal, new hiking trail. The trail was built by volunteers from the community and offers an exceptional recreational opportunity for the public to enjoy.”

Expanding recreational opportunities in the watershed is one of the goals outlined in Strategy 2011-2014, a comprehensive strategic plan that outlines 100 distinct initiatives to help ensure that DEP is the safest, most efficient, cost-effective and transparent water utility in the nation. The entire plan can be viewed on DEP’s website.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8.3 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam, and Westchester counties. 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 employs nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$68 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.5 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 over \$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 [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep), like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nycwater](https://www.facebook.com/nycwater), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/nycwater](https://www.twitter.com/nycwater).

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