

NYC Watershed Recreation

A newsletter for the outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy the lands and waters of the New York City water supply



**Environmental
Protection**

Spring 2016

Cover photo: An angler on Pepacton Reservoir caught this spectacular brown trout in 2015.

Photo by Charles Somelofski

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Watershed Recreation

2016 EVENTS



A young angler casts her line into Pepacton Reservoir during Family Fishing Day last June. More than 300 people participated in DEP's public fishing events in 2015.

Experience the Watershed

Outdoor enthusiasts are always telling us that the scenic waters and lands of the New York City water supply offer some of the best recreation anywhere in the Northeast. To experience these great outdoor spots, we hope you'll join DEP for one of our free public events in 2016. Hundreds of people joined us last year for family fishing days at our reservoirs, educational programs that focused on wetland ecology and hunting, scenic hiking expeditions and more. DEP is planning to host many of those same events this year, along with some new ones.

The calendar on this page is just a small sample of the public events we are planning. Visit our website at www.nyc.gov/DEP, or follow us at [Facebook.com/NYCWatershed](https://www.facebook.com/NYCWatershed) for exact times, locations, additional events and other updates.

May 15 - Wetlands Tour in Westchester County - Wetland ecologists will lead an educational tour of two neighboring wetlands in the Town of Armonk, focusing on the unique plants and animals that live in the wetland habitat.

June 12 - Family Fishing Day at Ashokan Reservoir: Experts will teach kids how to fish at one of NYC's most scenic reservoirs. Bait and fishing poles will be provided. Bring your own if you have them! This event in Ulster County is co-sponsored by New York State DEC.

June 18 - Family Fishing Day at Cannonsville Reservoir - Experts will teach kids how to fish. Bait and fishing poles will be provided to those who don't have their own. This event in Delaware County is also co-sponsored by New York State DEC.

July 9 - Wetlands Tour at Yankeetown Pond: Wetland ecologists will lead a tour of this unique site in the Ulster County Town of Woodstock, focusing on the plants and animals that live in the wetland habitat.

July 16 - Family Fishing Day at Lake Gleneida: Experts will teach kids how to fish. Bait and fishing poles will be provided for those who don't have their own. This event in Putnam County is co-sponsored by New York State DEC.

Oct. 2 - Reservoir Cleanup Day: Join dozens of volunteers to keep our forests and reservoir shorelines free of debris! DEP's annual cleanup is part of an international effort to remove shoreline debris from beaches, lakes and other popular waterbodies around the world.

New Stocking Projects Diversify Reservoir Fisheries

By Tom Baudanza, DEP Fisheries Biologist

New York City Water Supply Reservoirs and tailwaters continue to provide some of the best fishing in the Northeast - and many of these waters are within an hour's drive from the five boroughs. Along with the potential for catching trophy or record-breaking fish, these waters provide tranquility and remoteness not common to southern New York.

DEP and the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have worked on some initiatives to improve fishing at these locations. The stocking of tiger muskellunge (muskies) at Middle Branch Reservoir has been a success story. Tiger muskies were first stocked there in 2003 and have been stocked each year since. As a result, anglers have caught muskies over 40 inches! Stocking by boat has likely helped with these improved returns by allowing for better dispersal and survival of young fish. These top-predator fish are also sterile and, as such, will not disrupt the trophic balance of the reservoir. Similar experimental stocking at New Croton and Muscoot reservoirs did not yield strong results.

Another new initiative is a 5-year experimental walleye stocking program at Titicus Reservoir. 2015 was the second year of stocking. Surveys documented excellent growth rates with fish older than 1 year approaching legal size. The excellent forage base in the reservoir appears to be helping the walleye grow exceptionally well.

2015 was also the last year of a 5-year experiment to stock walleye at Schoharie Reservoir. The reservoir will continue to be stocked on a maintenance schedule of every even-number year. Natural walleye recruitment in the reservoir is limited by alewife predation and stocking 1-inch fry has helped improve the fishery. Legal-size fish are abundant enough to result in decent catch rates as reported by anglers, and stocking should continue to improve this fishery.

In the interest of protecting the environment, please remember to do your part. If you carry it in, carry it out! I want to wish you a good year of fishing in 2016!



An angler at Rondout Reservoir.

A Digital Newsletter for Watershed Recreation

DEP recently sent its first e-newsletter to more than 81,000 people who enjoy fishing, hiking and other outdoor activities in the watershed.

Because there are so many watershed project and events to share, DEP will be using this digital tool to keep in touch with those who enjoy recreating on watershed lands and reservoirs. Keep any eye on your inbox for upcoming newsletters and other dispatches, which will include information about upcoming events – including family fishing days and hikes – and important reminders to renew your access permits your boat tags. DEP will also send important bulletins about temporary reservoir closures or projects that might affect some of our recreation lands.

Recipients of this e-newsletter have the option to unsubscribe – but we hope you'll stay with us!

Because DEP recognizes that recreation enthusiasts are our unofficial eyes and ears in the watershed, we are eager to stay in touch with you and share news about the scenic areas you enjoy.

If you did not receive our first digital newsletter, or if you think DEP has incorrect contact information for you, please email us at recreation@dep.nyc.gov or give us a call at (800) 575-5263 (LAND).

Also, please take a minute to join our watershed Facebook page, which also includes announcements, photos and other DEP news. It can be found at [Facebook.com/NYCWatershed](https://www.facebook.com/NYCWatershed).



Rentals Spur Increase in Recreational Boating

By Charles Laing, DEP Recreation and Property Manager

DEP's recreational boating program attracted a record 1,463 visitors in 2015, the largest year-over-year increase since the program began. More than half those visitors kept boats at the reservoirs and likely used them multiple times during the year. DEP permits the use of kayaks, canoes, sculls and small sailboats on four of its reservoirs in the Catskills - Cannonsville, Neversink, Pepacton and Schoharie. Use of the program has increased by 50 percent since it began in 2012.



A kayaker enjoys Pepacton Reservoir during autumn.

Much of the recent increase in use can be attributed to the popular rental program. Rental kayaks and canoes are available at 10 different launch sites around the four reservoirs. These boats - which improve the ease of access for visitors or those who don't own a boat - are stored on racks alongside each reservoir and rented for day-use by local businesses in the Catskills. Use of the rental boats nearly doubled in 2015. A total of 683 visitors rented boats to access the reservoirs, compared to 346 the previous year.

The rental program is administered with significant help from the Catskill Watershed Corporation, which provided the racks at boat storage sites along the reservoirs. The group also administers the process for vetting and approving rental vendors.

Local residents who own a boat may also store their kayak, canoe or scull alongside the four reservoirs. Each boat must be inspected and steam cleaned before it can be used on the reservoirs. Those interested in boating can get more information by calling one of the DEP offices listed on the back of this newsletter. Steam cleaning ensures the boats are free of invasive plants, animals and microorganisms that can harm water quality or clog water intake structures. DEP's land management staff check boats stored at the reservoirs to ensure they have the proper tags. For more information about boat rentals and steam cleaning vendors, visit www.TheCatskillRegion.com.

Recreational Boating by the Numbers...

	2012		2013		2014		2015	
	Tags only	Tags only	Tags	Rentals	Tags	Rentals	Tags	Rentals
Cannonsville	108	108	99	0	84	0		
Pepacton	676	620	555	136	538	302		
Neversink	125	260	107	159	99	260		
Schoharie	74	86	65	51	59	121		
Total	983	1,074	826	346	780	683		
	Combined Total		1,172		1,463			

Healthy Forests are Key to Water Quality

By Ryan Trapani, Education Forester at the Catskill Forest Association

Nature is responsible for the purity and quality of water that comes from the Catskill Mountains. Rain droplets that fall on the Catskills retain their purity as they filter through the mountains' abundant stone, rock, and gravel before trickling down to numerous valleys below. Standing upon Ashokan High Point or Wittenberg Mountain reinforces another filtering agent: trees. A broad forest canopy stretches across the ridges and into the hollows. Trees are a great way to catch the sky's pounding rainstorms and quickly diffuse their energy and erosive tendencies - a function that is extremely desirable for clean drinking water.

A more recent challenge in conservation is the lack of new growth on the forest floor, or the creation of barren forest understories. In other words, the forest floor has been browsed down, leaving few tree seedlings, shrubs, and herbaceous growth remaining. The few plants that eke out a living normally qualify as non-native or invasive because deer don't like to eat them.

Are deer the only culprit? Deer are surely a key plant consumer in the forest matrix. A single deer can consume 4-6 pounds of buds per day, adding up to a ton or more of missing plants in the forest throughout the year. For example, a healthy sugar maple or red oak tree during a good seed year can translate into hundreds of tiny seedlings beneath it. However, both maple and oak are highly preferred by deer who can wipe out seedlings before the next growing season. When deer significantly remove plants below 5 feet, other wildlife species can also be harmed because this vegetation provides food and cover from predators.



A deer along watershed property in Delaware County

Watershed managers – like New York City DEP – are concerned that a barren understory may affect long-term water quality because there are fewer roots and leaves to slow down the running water and hold the sediment in place.

With the exception of forest management efforts by groups like DEP, the Catskill Forest Association and the Watershed Agricultural Council, forests today are mostly left alone. This hands-off trend has its own outcomes. In areas where humans are not managing the forests to open their floors to sunlight, only plants and trees that withstand shade will grow - think maple, beech, birch, and hemlock. In addition, hands-off management eventually leads to older trees where sunlight is further limited upon the forest floor. Since there is less growing under these shady circumstances, deer have less to eat and their impacts can be greater.

Solutions to forest regeneration and sustainable forest management are complex. Three factors require attention: competing vegetation, deer, and sunlight.

Competing vegetation may involve removing plant species that are

considered invasive, or that interfere with more desirable and beneficial species. In other instances, there may simply be too many deer eating the young forests before they can grow. Increased hunting may be needed in these cases to prevent over-browsing. The last strategy addresses the management of sunlight in the forest through forestry practices. Good forest management influences the size, species, and age class composition of a forest and ultimately can address one of the Catskills' most challenging conservation problems – forest regeneration.

The goal of forestry is to think about what you're leaving behind if you decide to cut or not cut a tree. Whether you own many wooded acres or just a few, your land makes up part of the entire Catskills forest. The forest floor in your back yard is the future of all the Catskills. If you were a deer, what is there to eat? Can a grouse survive under there? Can it be improved? Ask a forester for things you can do today that will improve our forests tomorrow. More information can be found at: www.catskillforest.org.

Recreation with a Splendid View of the Catskills

By John Staby, DEP Project Manager

In this edition of our recreation newsletter, we will focus on a DEP property open for recreation on each side of the Hudson River. DEP has over 300 parcels of land open for public recreation. By highlighting two parcels - one here and another on the next page - we aim to help visitors find a new spots worth exploring in the watershed.

In the Catskills we've chosen to highlight the Huntersfield Creek Recreation Unit. This beautiful hillside unit is located about 2 miles south of Schoharie Reservoir in the Greene County town of Prattsville.

The unit comprises 393 acres of land purchased by DEP for watershed protection in 2002. It was opened for public recreation a short time later in the spring of 2003. This property is classified as a Public Access Area open to hunting, hiking, fishing (where available) and trapping without the requirement of a DEP Access Permit.

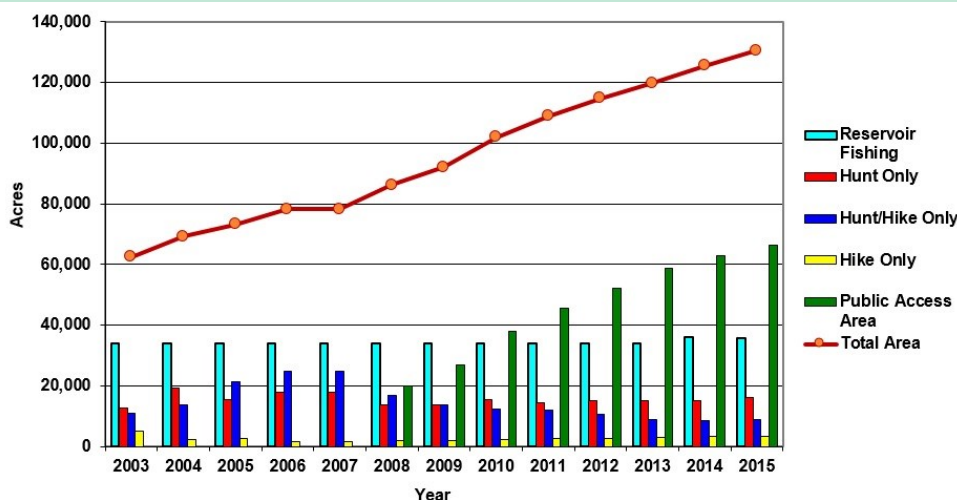
This piece of the Catskills has it all, from thick forests to open meadows. At the top of the property, hikers are rewarded with a bird's-eye view of the Schoharie Creek as it meanders toward the reservoir. Access to the property is located on a small section of road frontage on Main Street in Prattsville or from Huntersfield Road.



Schoharie Valley from Huntersfield Creek Unit

Huntersfield Creek is still a work in progress. DEP is partnering with the Town of Prattsville to create a defined hiking trail that will connect this parcel to the Pratt Rock public park to the east. This special park features a vertical rock face that includes several stone carvings. The rock was originally a monument for George W. Pratt, who was killed in the Civil War. It is considered the first memorial of any kind for the Civil War, and it is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places. More information can be found at www.greatnortherncatskills.com/arts-culture/zadock-pratt-museum.

Watershed Access Continues to Grow as DEP Opens More Parcels



DEP continues to steadily improve access for anglers, sportsmen and other outdoor enthusiasts. Since 2003, the number of City-owned acres open for recreation has more than doubled, from 62,461 to 130,545. DEP has also tripled the number of Public Access Areas, which allow recreation without a permit. This program began in 2008 with 20,009 acres, and it has grown to include more than 66,000 acres in the Catskills.

A Great Spot for Hiking, Fishing in Putnam County

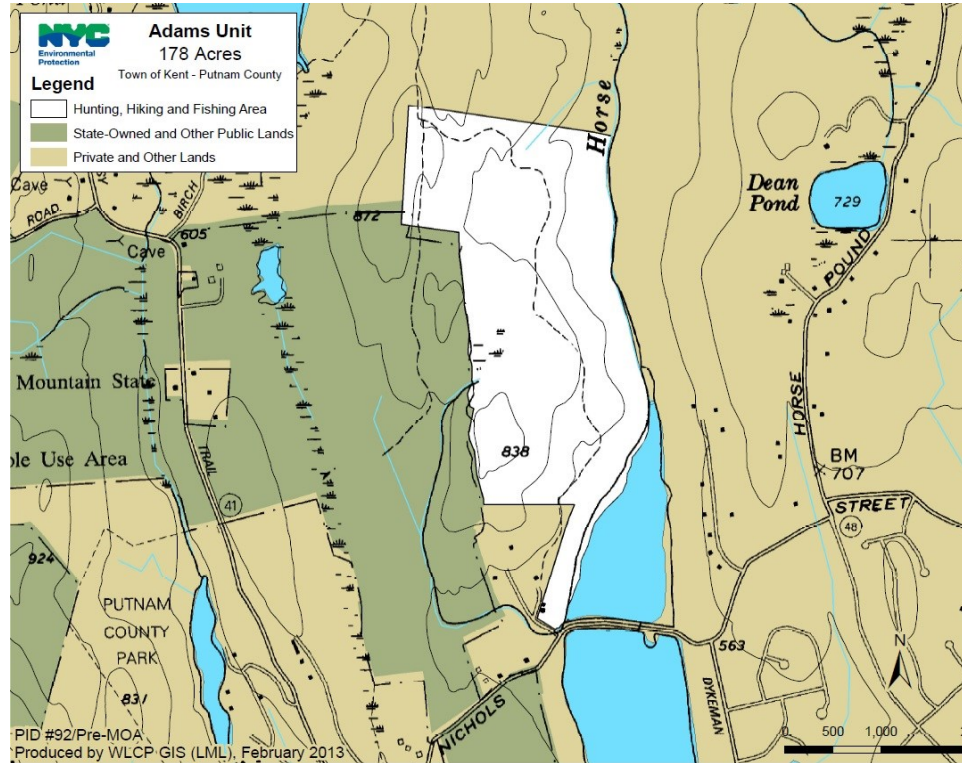
By Lori DiLorenzo, DEP Lands Supervisor

If you're looking for a great place in the Hudson Valley to hike among hardwood forests and fish for trout and bass, we suggest trying DEP's Adams Recreational Unit.

The Adams Recreational Unit, located in the Town of Kent, Putnam County, comprises 178 acres. Access to this parcel requires a free DEP Access Permit, and the allowable uses include hunting, hiking and fishing. Please remember that mountain biking is not allowed on the DEP lands in this area.

The Adams unit provides a prime starting point for longer hikes onto the neighboring and very popular Ninham Mountain Multiple Use Area, which is located to the west and operated by New York State. More information about Ninham Mountain can be found on the state DEC website at www.dec.ny.gov/lands/34773.html.

The topography of this recreation unit ranges from 600-870 feet in elevation. An old woods road meanders up through the hardwood forest and scattered clearings toward the top of a ridge. The property includes Horse Pound Brook, one of the main tributaries rippling south into the West Branch Reservoir. The unit is great for stream fishing, as you can follow the brook to its mouth at the reservoir. This unit offers a



fairly unique opportunity to fish a stream or open water. As reported by local sportsman Ed "Digger" Adams (for whom the unit is named), many native Brook Trout were caught here throughout the years.

Fishing continues to be good at this location. Because the Adams unit is known to be one of the first locations to freeze during winter, it is also a popular spot for early ice fishing.

The Adams Unit is accessible from Nichols Road – also known as Little Falls Road – where limited parking is available.

Watershed Steward Program to Begin with Volunteers at Pepacton, Kensico

Are you interested in keeping reservoir shorelines, boat launch areas, and popular fishing spots free of debris? In 2016, DEP is piloting a Watershed Steward Program at Pepacton and Kensico reservoirs to protect the natural resources that surround them. Volunteer watershed stewards will be trained on the Recreation Rules and what they can do to help keep New York City's reservoirs great places to recreate. Once trained, stewards will be asked to adopt a boat area or launch site and keep an eye on it throughout the year. They will report any observed problems like invasive species, trash, problem boats, and more. They will also act as ambassadors to share information with interested anglers and boaters. If you meet any of DEP's volunteer stewards please share your experiences, express your concerns, or ask them questions. For more information on how you can help, contact us at 1-800-575-LAND.



Reservoir Cleanup Day 2015

Contact Us

To get a free DEP Access Permit online, visit www.nyc.gov/dep/accesspermit.

For immediate help with access permits, maps of recreation areas, recreation rules, up-to-date recreation area lists and other information about outdoor recreation on city lands and waters, visit DEP website at www.nyc.gov/dep and click on the "Watershed Recreation" link on the home page.

For permit inquiries:

Email: recreation@dep.nyc.gov
Call: 1-800-575-LAND

DEP Access Permits
71 Smith Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401

For information about specific recreation areas, reservoirs, boat storage and programs, call the DEP regional office for that area:

Ashokan (Ashokan Reservoir)
(845) 657-2663

Carmel (East-of-Hudson Lands)
(845) 808-1750

Downsville (Pepacton and Cannonsville Reservoirs) - (607) 363-7009

Gilboa (Schoharie Reservoir)
(607) 588-6231

Grahamsville (Neversink and Rondout Reservoirs) - (845) 334-7152

Mahopac (East-of-Hudson Reservoirs)
(914) 232-1309

To report dangerous or suspicious activity, water quality threats, or fish kills on city-owned reservoirs and lands call the DEP Police at 888-H2O-SHED (426-7433).

Watershed "Eyes and Ears"

By Paul Lenz, Deputy Chief of
DEP Natural Resources Division

We've said it before: the outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy watershed recreation are the eyes and ears that watch over New York City's lands and reservoirs. We've had several recent examples of folks letting us know about suspicious activity that resulted in tickets being issued. In some cases, DEP Access Permits were also suspended. Here are a few examples:

- A concerned citizen stopped by DEP's Grahamsville Police Precinct to alert us of someone on water supply land that was not open for recreation. They also heard a gunshot. The complainant jotted down the license plate number and a vehicle description. After the subject was found and interviewed, DEP Police issued tickets for shooting from a public highway, shooting 500 feet from a dwelling, and four violations including trespass, illegal possession of wildlife, improper tagging and shooting in a restricted area.

- DEP Eastview Precinct received an anonymous call that gunshots were heard coming from a DEP recreation unit open for hiking only. A DEP Police investigation discovered that two individuals shot two does on hiking-only property. The land was clearly marked with DEP signs. Police confiscated the deer and dropped them off at a local food bank. Tickets were issued.

- DEP Police were advised by an anonymous hunter of a tree stand, trail camera and salt block on a Public Access Area. Police found the items and also noticed several trees cut for a shooting lane. The cut trees

were larger than allowed per DEP Recreation Rules. The items were confiscated and Police tracked down the violator. Police returned the tree stand and trail camera and several tickets were issued.

- While on foot patrol after big game hunting season ended, DEP Police found several tree stands left on City land. Some were marked with the users name, Access Permit and telephone as required by our recreation rules. Others were not. Stands left after the big game season were confiscated and Police called the owners if we had their information to pick them up. A reminder: temporary tree stands and blinds may be used during big-game season only if they do not damage trees, are clearly labeled and are removed after the season.

Recreation users are reminded to call 888-H2O-SHED (426-7433) if they see suspicious activity on water supply land. Dial 911 for emergencies. Jotting down physical descriptions, locations, or vehicle and license plate information is always helpful for the police.

The vast majority of those who use City lands and waters are courteous, law-abiding, and take pride in the stewardship of our natural resources. However, we have noticed an increase in the amount of garbage and trash, especially around our reservoirs. Discarded fishing line, lure packages, and cans and bottles can be observed at many locations. Let's all do our part to keep these areas clean and abide by the laws and rules that govern the use of these lands.