



State of Connecticut  
Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Gina McCarthy  
Commissioner  
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## Department of Environmental Protection Initiatives

### “No Child Left Inside”

Children don't go out and play much anymore. They don't ride bikes, climb trees, or catch frogs as often as their parents did. For many reasons, children today spend a great deal of time indoors. If we want our children to be healthy and our state to be left in the hands of another generation of strong environmental stewards we must do something. DEP's "No Child Left Inside" initiative will seek to attract Connecticut families, including those in our urban areas, to the wide range of recreational opportunities available throughout the state in our parks and forests. Our goal is to unplug our kids from their computers and reconnect them into the natural world.

### Major Action Areas

The major action areas of the No Child Left Inside initiative are:

- ❖ Increasing public awareness of the recreational, cultural, and historical opportunities available through the state's park and forest system using an outreach and marketing campaign. This effort will build upon the research and findings of the recently completed *Connecticut's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*.
- ❖ Enhancing the public's experience when they visit a state park, forest, or wildlife management area by providing information about the physical and natural features of the park, forest, or wildlife management area, the recreational opportunities that are available, and the history.
- ❖ Fostering the development of future generations of environmental stewards.

- ❖ Developing partnerships with other state agencies, municipalities, universities, schools, non-profit organizations, and private entities to help support the state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas. Through these partnerships, the Department will participate in collaborative efforts to address issues such as healthy lifestyles, science-based education, and opportunities in our urban areas.

## **Partners**

These actions will be primarily the efforts of the Department's recreational and natural resource programs. The Department will also draw upon the assistance of a diverse group of staff from programs throughout the agency including the Department's education program, communications office, and many of the Environmental Quality branch programs.

Outside stakeholders include environmental non-profits that focus on outdoor recreation, the Department's parks, and fish and wildlife opportunities including the Friends of Connecticut State Parks, Connecticut Forest and Park Association, SCORP steering committee, various other individual state parks "Friends" groups, sportsmen's clubs, and conservation organizations. The Department will also draw upon individuals, interfaith organizations, municipalities, business and industry, among others. In addition, the Department is exploring collaborative efforts with other state agencies such as the Departments of Education, Public Health, Social Services and Transportation as well as federal agencies including the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service.

## **Key Items and Activities**

### **Outreach**

- Continue to expand a marketing campaign initiated in October 2005 to increase awareness about the opportunities available to the public at Connecticut's state parks and forests.
- Develop programs for the "Great Park Pursuit" – the centerpiece to the Department's No Child Left Inside marketing campaign. The Great Park Pursuit adventure challenge will be launched in May and conclude at the end of June. The Great Park Pursuit will be of a similar format to the "Amazing Race" show currently airing on CBS. Participants, primarily families, will have the opportunity to visit a number of state parks and forests over a nine-week period and compete in various challenges at those parks. The challenges will be linked to the general theme of each of the state parks and forests hosting events (e.g., historic sites, shoreline parks, forests, etc.).
- Develop outreach materials for DEP state parks and forests: publish an updated state parks brochure; and develop and publish a state parks and forest map.

- ❑ Promote public use of trailways in Connecticut. Continue to partner with the Connecticut Forest and Park Association. Develop new trails and greenways maps and brochures.
- ❑ Participate in more local and regional fairs and shows including the Durham Fair, Culture and Tourism's "Destinations" show, CMTA's Boat Show, and the Big E. Part of this effort will be the development of a state parks and forest display pictorially presenting the many opportunities available to the public.
- ❑ Expand opportunities at our state parks for visitors that come to the state via cruise ships. This effort will also involve providing greater information on Connecticut state parks and forests to cruise ship lines that travel into the region. Completion of the Thames Maritime Heritage Park in New London will bolster these efforts.

### **Activities**

- ❑ Explore options and opportunities to support organizations and recreation centers in the state's urban areas with the goal of providing greater opportunities for the children who live in the state's urban areas to experience the outdoors.
- ❑ Evaluate the potential to develop more pocket parks in the state's urban areas.
- ❑ Translate park and forest information into multiple languages to reach a more diverse audience.
- ❑ Develop "Friday Hikes Program" to promote routine visits to state parks and forests throughout the state of employees and volunteers from participating public and private partners.
- ❑ Develop a program to provide state parks passes to the 127 main library branches in towns and cities throughout Connecticut. The libraries will make the passes available for families to "borrow" and spend a day visiting state parks and forests throughout the state. Accompanying the park pass will be the book "*A Shared Landscape*" to provide information on the opportunities available.
- ❑ Explore the re-establishment of a summer music program at Harkness Memorial State Park.
- ❑ Create a new series of letterboxes in all 32 state forests to enhance interest in and visitation to Connecticut's state forests.
- ❑ Identify opportunities to create additional wildlife watching areas and expand wildlife educational programs at DEP facilities. In addition, develop programs that allow children to participate in other family-oriented recreational activities associated with the outdoors such as youth hunting days and the national Step Outside program.

- ❑ Encourage fishing as an outdoor family experience through the Connecticut Aquatic Resource Education (CARE) classes and the City Fishing Program geared towards urban youth.
- ❑ Continue the management of the state's 11 Trout Parks to provide enhanced fishing opportunities for children and families. Trout parks are stocked regularly during the fishing season increasing the likelihood that children who visit the state's trout parks will have a successful visit.

## **Education**

- ❑ Improve the Connecticut State Park Interpretive Program through improved recruitment and training, and encourage year round visitation to Connecticut's state parks and forests.
- ❑ Co-sponsor the Connecticut Outdoor Environmental Education Association Conference – theme: No Child Left Inside – March 31, 2006.
- ❑ Work with schools throughout the state to develop outdoor classrooms – previously successful efforts in Hartford. Looking to New Haven and Derby.
- ❑ Expand Forest Forensics program to introduce students to woodland habitats and help them understand how Connecticut forests are managed.
- ❑ Conduct the following Nature Center activities: complete renovations at the Meigs Point Nature Center at Hammonasset Beach State Park; start construction of a nature center at Sherwood Island State Park; and explore the establishment of a nature center at Gillette Castle State Park.
- ❑ Complete introductory movie for Dinosaur State Park highlighting some of the outdoor as well as indoor features of the park and trackway.
- ❑ Continue to offer the basic boating classes and AquaSmart Water Safety Program in schools.
- ❑ Continue to develop both the Sessions Woods and Belding wildlife management areas as youth-oriented wildlife education destinations.
- ❑ Continue to work with scout programs and school groups on science offerings outside of the classroom – field study and monitoring techniques.
- ❑ Improve coordination of DEP's environmental education programs to enhance the Department's ability to put more natural resource-based information into the hands of students and teachers throughout the state.

## **Partnerships**

- ❑ Foster links between sister agencies to provide greater opportunities for children and families: Department of Children and Families (DCF) – a program for foster families; Department of Public Health (DPH) – promote health-based concepts such as the development of greenways and other recreational outlets; Department of Education (DOE) – science-based curriculum.
- ❑ Work with Department of Transportation (DOT) and senior citizen centers to identify transportation opportunities available and in proximity to Connecticut's 104 state parks. This effort will include an assessment of bus lines and exploration of the possible expansion of routes from Connecticut's urban areas to state parks and forests.
- ❑ Partnership with Culture and Tourism to aggressively promote opportunities available in Connecticut to state residents and the region. Develop information on thematic parks and historic sites.
- ❑ Pursue legislation to establish a Connecticut State Park Foundation to help provide resources to state park endeavors.
- ❑ Enhance relationships with the Friends of Connecticut State Parks and the individual state parks "Friends" groups. Improve information exchange and better coordinate activities. Finalize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with "Friends" groups to allow for improvement activities in state parks.

For more information on the No Child Left Inside Initiative and activities please contact Diane Joy, DEP's No Child Left Inside Coordinator, at (203) 734-2513 or e-mail [diane.joy@po.state.ct.us](mailto:diane.joy@po.state.ct.us).