



# Going Outside



The Statewide

Comprehensive Outdoor

Recreation Plan

2024-2029



# Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

## Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

2024-2029



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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## GOVERNOR NED LAMONT

December 31, 2023

Dear Residents of Connecticut:

Connecticut State Parks are one of the region's premier tourism destinations and are a huge boon to our state and local economy. With 259 state parks, forests, and boat launches packed in a small geographic area, and the Passport to the Parks program which allows Connecticut residents to access state parks for free, we have some of the most accessible outdoor recreation in the country, contributing to our tremendous quality of life and making Connecticut a great place to live, work, and play. In 2022, outdoor recreation generated over \$4.6 billion in economic growth and supported nearly 46,000 jobs in our state. Demand for outdoor recreation continues to expand, with two consecutive years of double-digit percentage growth since the pandemic. It is more crucial now than ever to understand the needs and usage patterns of various users, particularly our more recent outdoor enthusiasts who have become active since the pandemic.

I thank you for your passion, feedback, emails, and collaboration during the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) process. The SCORP is a planning document that assesses the demand for the wide variety of outdoor recreational pursuits that are available here in Connecticut. The plan was prepared cooperatively by the Bureau of Recreation at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP); the Department of Recreation, Tourism, and Sport Management at Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU); the Center for Community Engagement and Social Research at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU); and a diverse advisory board composed of well-informed representatives from numerous recreation advocacy groups, land trusts, and environmental conservation organizations.

Together, the SCORP team implemented a variety of outreach efforts to ensure ample opportunity for public participation in the plan's development. Throughout 2023, CCSU implemented four stakeholder surveys, including a representative survey of all Connecticut households, a targeted survey for the households of outdoor recreation enthusiasts, a field survey of actively recreating residents, and a civic survey of recreation directors from all 169 municipalities in the state. Ultimately, 55 municipalities, 249 active recreationists, 5,210 recreation enthusiasts, and 1,010 households representing 2,870 residents of Connecticut shared their views on outdoor recreation issues of statewide and local significance and on the supply and demand for all varieties of outdoor recreation in Connecticut.

The SCORP helps Connecticut secure funding for outdoor recreation here in Connecticut, including federal support from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The recommendations and guidance outlined in this plan will assist DEEP in developing outdoor recreation initiatives, serve as a guide and data source for local, regional, and state planners, and offer a convenient reference volume for outdoor recreation providers and enthusiasts alike.

For all of these reasons, and for the simple joy of playing outside in Connecticut, I am pleased to present the 2024-2029 SCORP to the residents of our beautiful state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ned Lamont".

Ned Lamont  
Governor

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# Connecticut Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

## 2024-2029



## Statement of Purpose



The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a strategic planning document that identifies outdoor recreation issues of statewide significance and evaluates the supply of, and demand for, outdoor recreation resources and facilities in Connecticut. The SCORP provides unified guidance to state and municipal officials as they develop and expand outdoor recreation opportunities for their respective constituents.

In addition to its value as a planning document, the completion of a SCORP also satisfies a requirement of the federally administered Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which then makes Connecticut eligible to receive its annual apportionment from the LWCF State and Municipal Assistance Program. Apportionments from the LWCF can be used by the state and its municipalities to acquire new land for outdoor recreation, conservation and to construct new outdoor recreational facilities.

As the agency having the authority to represent and act for Connecticut in communicating with the Secretary of the Interior for purposes of the Land Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, which was permanently reauthorized through the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act by Public Law 116-9 in 2019, and permanently funded by the Great American Outdoors Act, Public Law 116-152, in 2020, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is pleased to present this 2024-2029 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) to the Secretary and to the people of Connecticut.

The plan is a cooperative product of DEEP staff, the SCORP Advisory Committee, the Southern Connecticut State University Department of Recreation, Tourism, & Sport Management, the Central Connecticut State University Center for Community Engagement & Social Research, and the many Connecticut residents who participated in the planning process.

Connecticut's four-season climate and its full spectrum of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems together provide virtually all forms of outdoor recreation opportunities. Meanwhile, the cultural, demographic, and economic diversity of the state's 3.6 million residents often reflect divergent priorities for the development of outdoor recreation resources. Despite the omnipresent challenge of balancing the broad-ranging needs of state residents and visitors, DEEP is confident that this SCORP fairly addresses the state's significant outdoor recreation issues and represents the best plan for the greatest number of people.

DRAFT

## Acknowledgments

### SCORP Advisory Committee

- Eric Hammerling, Connecticut Forest & Park Association, now with DEEP
- Bruce Donald, East Coast Greenway Alliance/CT Greenways Council
- Kimberly Bradley, CT DEEP Office of Trails and Greenways
- Peter Francis, CT DEEP Boating Division
- Paige Cox, Ragged Mountain Foundation
- Walker Holmes, Trust for Public Land
- Mick Ferraro, New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA)
- Amy Blaymore Paterson, Connecticut Land Conservation Council
- Keith Cagle, Connecticut Conservation Advisory Council
- Paula Burton, Connecticut Outdoor Recreation Alliance
- Diane Ciano, Connecticut Horse Council
- Neil Johnson, REI Co-op

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## Benefits of Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation provides benefits far greater than the personal enjoyment individuals derive from participation in recreational activities. Research addressing the benefits of recreational activities, particularly in outdoor settings, provides a solid justification for the allocation of resources to support facilities and programs that promote and provide for outdoor recreation.

It became evident during the height of the Covid 19 pandemic that individuals sought relief from the restrictions by seeking outdoor open spaces, particularly in parks and natural areas. Research conducted by Pennsylvania State University indicated that nearly half of the adults from across the United States participated in outdoor recreation on at least a monthly basis, and approximately 20% may have been new to outdoor recreation during the pandemic.

This trend is also supported by research conducted by the Outdoor Recreation Association (Forbes 2/2023) and the Outdoor Industry Association. Americans took up new activities in significant numbers in April, May, and June of 2020. Urban participants flocked to outdoor activities: running, cycling, hiking, bird watching, camping, and walking were widely considered the safest activities in which to participate. (<https://outdoorindustry.org/article/increase-outdoor-activities-due-covid-19/>)

Among the five activity segments measured (team, fitness, outdoor, individual and racquet) the outdoor segment saw the lowest impact due to COVID shutdowns, as just 34% of respondents said they could not participate in outdoor activities due to pandemic restrictions. Team sports were hardest hit at nearly 69%, followed by racquet sports at 55%.

Participation in outdoor recreation is to increase throughout the 2023 and beyond, with participation drivers for Americans getting outdoors being linked to their mental and physical well-being. Fifty-two percent of respondents said they will increase their outdoor activity to reduce stress, up 3% from 49% in 2022. Forty-seven percent of respondents said they will increase their outdoor activity to improve health and well-being, a 5% increase from 42% in 2022. Additionally, 26% of respondents believe they will increase their outdoor activity to reduce expenses and save money, a 9% increase from 17% in 2022.

(<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/participation-outdoor-activities-continues-increase-180100675.html>)



In a landmark case study published by National Recreation and Parks Association, *Parks Build Healthy Communities: Success Stories*, forty-four communities explained the benefits of their efforts to incorporate parks into the promotion of healthy communities. Parks were cited as the force encouraging collaborative community building, increasing physical activity, improving nutrition, supporting economic development, addressing the obesity epidemic, and reducing tobacco use.<sup>1</sup>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health and Human Services provide funding for local communities to address issues and implement policy and environmental changes that promote healthier lifestyles and reduce the risk of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, arthritis, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and cancer. Parks play a crucial role in bringing about positive health changes in communities.

Additionally, communities benefit from the increased social interaction of residents bonding with their neighbors while pursuing common interests. The environment benefits from the increased awareness of environmental issues and the importance of environmental stewardship.

The Bureau of Economic Analysis within the U.S. Department of Commerce found in 2021 that outdoor recreation activities in Connecticut added \$3.9 billion in conventional, supplementary,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers>

and associated economic activity, a 19.6% increase since 2020. The report also noted that the state supported over 44,000 outdoor-related jobs, a 13% increase from 2020. The top added-value activities in the state were a) Boating/Fishing, b) Hunting/Shooting, c) RVing, d) Motorcycling/ATVing, and e) Climbing/Hiking/Tent Camping (BEA, 2021). Furthermore, the newly released 2022 economic data documents the unprecedented impact of outdoor recreation on the economy. These numbers confirm outdoor recreation contributes more than \$1.1 trillion to the economy and supports nearly 5 million jobs and was led by the RV segment. The Outdoor Industry Association states core activities like climbing, hiking, and tent camping, grew 40% from 2019 to 2022 reflecting a diverse participant base.

Between 2016 and 2022, over 700 articles were published in professional journals and open sources that address the importance of outdoor recreation facilities and activities for our citizenry. This research indicates that there is approximately one park for every 2,266 residents in the US, 9.6 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents, and one playground for every 3,633 residents.

Parks and other outdoor amenities contribute in many ways to the quality of life of our citizens. Paramount to the continued success of Connecticut's parks, open spaces and outdoor sites is the obligation to strategically assess current and projected demands for such places in order to allocate sufficient resources to meet these needs.

In a September 21, 2023, press release, Connecticut State Governor Ned Lamont remarked: *"Connecticut State Parks are a huge part of our state's quality of life and a big reason why people are choosing to move to Connecticut, and we want to make sure people have all of the information they need to visit them."* *"These beautiful places, which offer residents and visitors an unparalleled recreation experience and provide significant economic benefits to our cities and towns, deserve a website befitting their value. [CTParks.com](http://CTParks.com) is the latest way we're helping to connect residents with their Connecticut State Parks."*

Connecticut is home to a magnificent array of state parks, cherished for their natural beauty and diverse recreational offerings. With 142 state parks and forests totaling over 255,000 acres and a network of more than 2,500 miles of scenic trails, these stunning natural landscapes offer something for all of the state's 3.6 million residents and its many visitors. Connecticut's state parks continue to rank among the top regional tourist destinations and play a significant role in the state's tourism sector and local economy. Last year, the state welcomed a staggering 17 million visitors to Connecticut's state parks and forests.



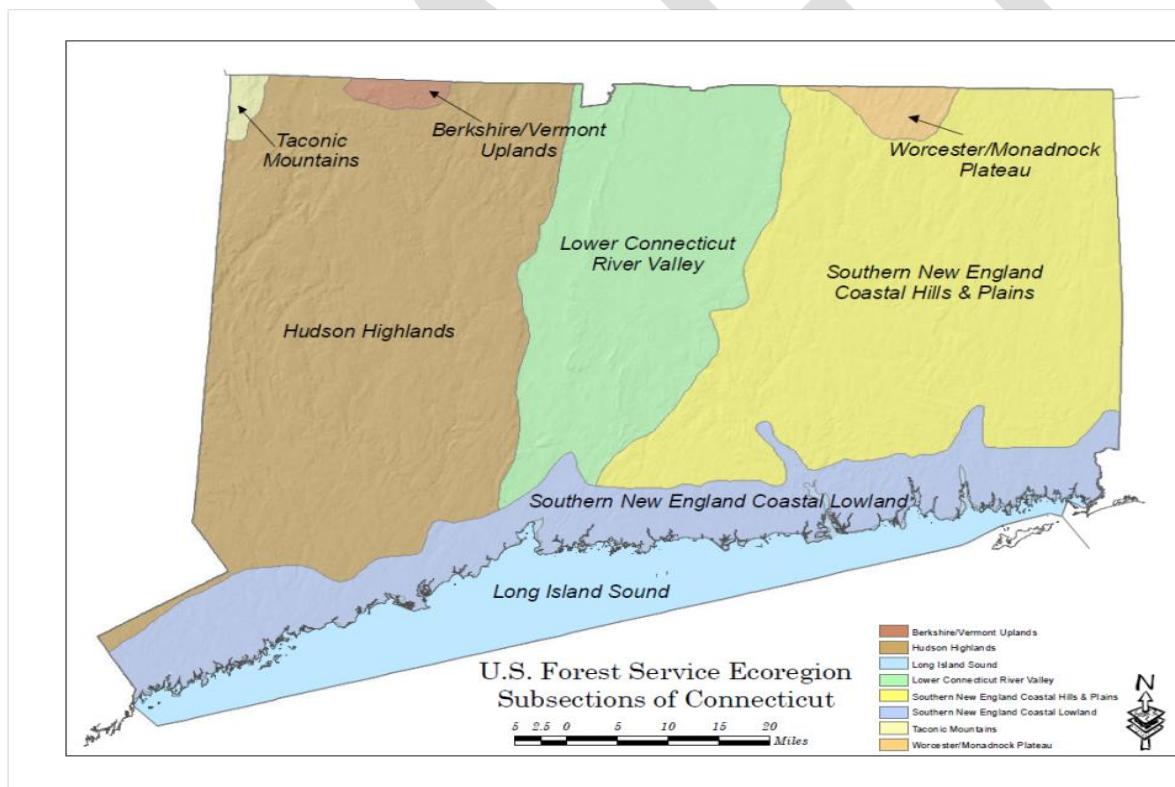


With the second largest outdoor recreation economy in New England, including 142 state parks and forests totaling over 255,000 acres and a network of more than 2,500 miles of scenic trails, these stunning natural landscapes offer something for all of the state's 3.6 million residents and its many visitors. Last year, the state welcomed a staggering 17 million visitors to Connecticut's state parks and forests.

## PART I: Connecticut

### Geography

Connecticut is the third smallest state in the union, comprised of a mere 5,009 square miles (3,205,760 acres) of land. It extends approximately 90 miles from east to west and 60 miles from north to south. Nestled between the New York City and the Boston metropolitan areas, Connecticut is bordered on the west, north, and east by New York, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island, respectively. The center of Long Island Sound forms the state's southern boundary with New York. Connecticut can be divided primarily into four distinct physiographic zones: the Southern New England Coastal Lowlands, the Lower Connecticut River Valley bisecting the state, the Hudson Highlands in the west, and the Southern New England Coastal Hills and Plains in the east. Figure 1 shows these zones and three limited areas that represent the southern extent of New England's mountainous interior zones.

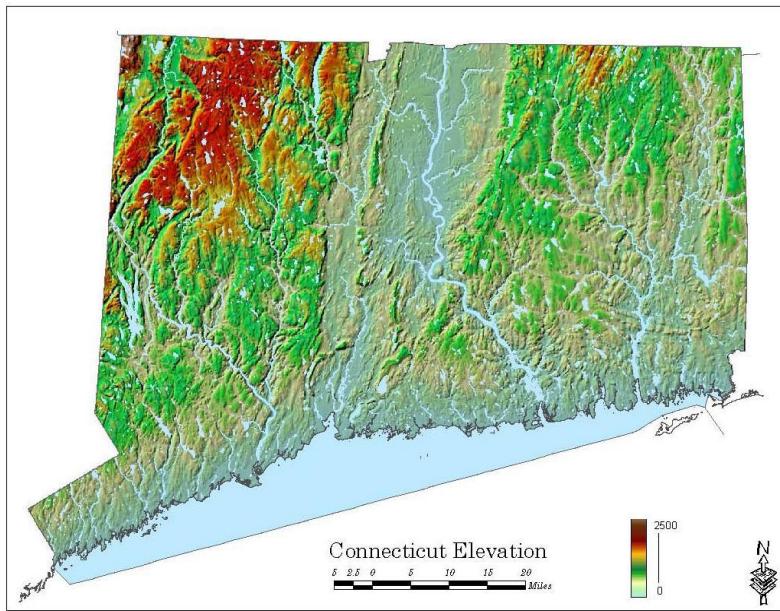


**Figure 1 U.S. Forest Service Ecoregions of Connecticut**

The Southern New England Coastal Lowlands is a narrow strip of level land that extends along the shore of Long Island Sound. This coastline is characterized by small sections of sandy beach alternating with rocky bluffs and saltwater marshes. It includes numerous small coves and inlets, creating 458 miles of actual coastal frontage.



The Lower Connecticut River Valley is a wide, north-south strip of land cradling the Connecticut and Quinnipiac Rivers. Most of the land is gently to moderately sloping with fertile agricultural soils, except for the narrow trap rock ridges that run from Long Island Sound to Massachusetts. Rising to more than one thousand feet above sea level, these ridges contain some of the last undeveloped areas in central Connecticut.



The Hudson Highlands are the southern terminus of the Green Mountain Range. Here the elevation ranges from 200 feet near the coastal plain to 2,380 feet at Mt. Frissell in Salisbury. Generally, this area is more rugged than the Southern New England Coastal Hills and Plains, though its southern hills are gentle. While the Southern New England

**Figure 2 Connecticut Elevation Shaded Relief Map**

Coastal Hills and Plains and the Hudson Highlands both have scattered pockets of good croplands, they are largely unsuitable for extensive agriculture. Most of the land is either forests or pastures.

The remaining areas of the state are hilly regions sloping gradually toward the south and the east. The Southern New England Coastal Hills and Plains are continuous with the New England Highlands in Massachusetts. Near the Massachusetts border elevations range from 500 feet to 1,100 feet, while in the southeast elevations range from 200 to 500 feet.

### Climate

Interior portions of Connecticut have a humid continental climate, characterized by large seasonal temperature differences, with warm to hot summers and cold to very cold winters. The Connecticut shoreline has a borderline humid climate, with seasonal extremes tempered by proximity to Long Island Sound, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Gulf Stream. Summers are hot and humid, and winters are mild to cool.





Precipitation levels in all portions of Connecticut remain relatively constant at roughly four inches per month throughout the year. Winter precipitation in interior portions is very often snow, averaging as much as 100 inches per year in the northwestern uplands, and areas of higher elevation frequently

maintain a snowpack throughout the winter season. Winter precipitation on the coastline and in lower elevations of the central river valley includes more rain events than the

interior and the snowpack commonly melts between snow events. Annual snowfall along the shoreline

averages 35 inches. For a detailed description of the effects of climate change in Connecticut, please refer to <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Education/Curriculum/Environmental-Curriculum---Climate-Change>

### **Ecological and Developmental History**

Before European settlement, the region's indigenous people enjoyed a rolling landscape with expansive tracts of mature broadleaf and mixed forests populated by diverse and abundant wildlife communities. Hundreds of miles of upland rivers and streams supported robust salmon runs and other abundant native fisheries, and the coastal resources of Long Island Sound contributed a maritime aspect of diversity to the region's resources. For many millennia, Connecticut's first residents enjoyed a sustainable existence in harmony with the delicate balance of its natural ecosystems. It was Connecticut as nature intended it.

Following European settlement, the landscape in Connecticut was reshaped on a broad scale. Intensive agriculture deforested 75% of the state, leaving previously stable topsoil vulnerable to erosion. Mill-based industry became widespread and hundreds of small dams built to impound storage for the mills' water wheels eventually appeared on virtually every watercourse in the state. As a result, Connecticut was indeed experiencing economic prosperity, but without the canopy and ground cover of forests to stabilize the soil and slowly meter precipitation into the watercourses, the overwhelming force of unbounded runoff swept large amounts of topsoil into the rivers and substantially contributed to stream bank erosion.

As land was cleared for agriculture, habitat and natural prey for apex predators slowly vanished and protection of vulnerable livestock made wolves and mountain lions prime targets for eradication. During the mid-nineteenth century, 97% of Connecticut residents lived dispersed in rural areas. The landscape was carved up into tens of thousands of small parcels and the pressure on wild populations of flora and fauna was intense. The prevailing wisdom of the era was man's subjugation of nature, and in this pursuit the residents of eighteenth and nineteenth century Connecticut were very successful. Wild Connecticut was pressed to the frontier.

As the industrial revolution gained momentum and mechanized agriculture made farming more efficient and productive, the state's population shifted toward urban centers. Across the state, abandoned agricultural fields began their ecological succession back to mature forests. However, even while Connecticut is now 60% forested, it will continue to live with the legacy of its historic patterns of land development.

While the population shift to urban areas helped to relax pressure on the terrestrial landscape, the expansion of industrialism only further degraded the state's watercourses with discarded byproducts of manufacturing. Toxins such as PCB's and mercury still linger in the food chain today and several fisheries are permanently closed to harvest to protect public health, while others have strict consumption advisories.

Additionally, advancements in crop fertilization and the explosion of the human population and untreated sewer systems substantially increased nutrient input into aquatic ecosystems, unnaturally accelerating the ontogeny of the state's water bodies. As the increasing availability of automobiles precipitated another demographic shift, this time into suburbia, the augmented fertilization of manicured residential and golf course lawns further compounded the nutrient loading of aquatic ecosystems, eventually leading to algae blooms in Long Island Sound that created large areas of anoxic dead zones.

For centuries, the practices of European settlers had transformed Connecticut's landscape and severely degraded the habitats upon which fish and wildlife populations depend, severely depleting the stocks upon which modern recreationists base their pursuits. Fortunately, the last half century of increasing environmental awareness has given rise to widespread public and private sector stewardship initiatives turning the tide on the environmental degradation of the preceding centuries. Habitat quality in both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems is improving, and the stocks of fish and wildlife they support are recovering. With continued environmental stewardship and concerted fish and wildlife restoration efforts, Connecticut residents are now beginning to enjoy the same rich resources as the region's original inhabitants.



## **Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency History and Structure**

During the 1960's, people were increasingly concerned about the quality of the environment. Public support for action to improve the environment led the 1971 session of Connecticut's General Assembly to create a new state agency – the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The new agency brought together numerous state boards and commissions that had been addressing issues related to the environment and the outdoors, such as the Water Resources Commission, the Board of Fisheries and Game and the Parks and Forest Commission.

The agency was split into two branches: one concerned with outdoor recreation and conservation, and the other with protection of the quality of Connecticut's air, water, and lands. Since the launch of DEP, great progress has been made in

- cleaning up the waters of Long Island Sound and inland waterbodies and watercourses
- improving air quality
- beautifying Connecticut's landscape
- the protection of natural resources
- the expansion of the network of state parks and forests
- the restoration of terrestrial wildlife and aquatic life in the state's waterways

Over the years, DEP's role also grew, as new environmental issues emerged and as it took on responsibilities delegated to the states under various federal programs. The agency's responsibilities were significantly expanded in 2011, with the passage of Public Act 11-80, giving DEP responsibility for developing and implementing state energy policy. As a result of this legislation, the name of the agency was changed to the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). As part of this change, the energy office at the Office and Policy and Management and the state's utility regulatory authority became part of DEEP.

This new structure gave Connecticut – for the first time – a state agency with a focus on Connecticut's energy future. Since then, the state has taken strong steps to expand energy efficiency programs, deploy clean energy resources, and reduce carbon emissions into our atmosphere to address climate change.

Initially, DEP had 491 full-time employees, a budget of just over \$7 million and offices scattered all over Hartford. Today, the agency has more than 950 full-time employees, a budget of more than \$170 million, an attractive main office at 79 Elm Street, Hartford, major field locations; and a



state park and forest system offering 142 locations for people to enjoy the outdoors. The management of outdoor recreation in Connecticut benefits from the organizational structure of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The department is organized into the Office of the Commissioner and three branches: 1.) Environmental Quality, 2.) Environmental Conservation, and 3.) Energy Policy and Regulation (Table 1.).



**Table 1 Agency Structure for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection**

BRANCH	BUREAU	DIVISION
Office of the Commissioner	Office of Legal, Planning & Regulatory Affairs	Office of Legal Counsel
		Office of Adjudications
		Office of Innovative Partnerships & Planning
		Office of Environmental Review & Strategic Initiatives
		Office of Climate Planning
		Office of Equity and Environmental Justice
	Office of Chief of Staff	Bureau of Central Services
		Communications, Public Affairs, and Web Publications
		Land Management
		Legislative Policies & Programs
		DAS: Human Resources
	Equal Employment Opportunity Office	OPM: Office Labor Relations
		--
Environmental Quality	Air Management	Planning & Standards
		Radiation
		Enforcement
		Engineering
	Water Protection & Land Reuse	Water Planning & Management
		Land & Water Resources
		Remediation
	Materials Management & Compliance Assurance	Office of Planning
		Emergency Response & Spill Prevention
		Engineering & Enforcement
		Permitting & Enforcement
Environmental Conservation	Outdoor Recreation	State Parks & Public Outreach
		Environmental Conservation Police
		Boating
	Natural Resources	Fisheries
		Forestry
		Wildlife
		Planning, Coordination & Fiscal Management
Energy	Energy & Technology Policy	Office of Energy Supply & Infrastructure
		Office of Telecommunications & Broadband
		Office of Affordable Housing & Energy Retrofits
		Office of Building & Transportation Decarbonization
	Public Utilities Regulatory Authority	Office of Technical & Regulatory Analysis
		Office of Education, Outreach & Enforcement
		Office of Administration & Operations
		Office of Federal, Regional & Wholesale Affairs
		Office of Legislative & Governmental Affairs

### *The Office of the Commissioner*

The Office of the Commissioner includes the Offices of Adjudications, Equal Employment Opportunity, Legal Counsel and Chief of Staff (which includes Communications, Climate Change, Environmental Justice, Planning and Program Development and Governmental Affairs). These offices provide administrative management, staff assistance, and ancillary service to aid the Commissioner and Bureau Chiefs in their efforts to carry out the mission of the agency. In addition, the Bureau of Central Services provides a wide array of services including Information Management, Engineering and Field Support, Financial Management, Human Resource Management and Purchasing.

### *Environmental Quality Branch*

The Environmental Quality Branch is comprised of the Bureaus of Air Management, Materials Management and Compliance Assurance, and Water Protection and Land Reuse. These bureaus protect the air, land, and water resources of the state by regulating air emissions, wastewater discharges and solid and hazardous wastes. Tools used include the development of regulations, policies, and standards; permitting and enforcement; air and water quality monitoring; and public outreach and education.

### *Environmental Conservation Branch*

The Environmental Conservation Branch consists of two bureaus. The Bureau of Natural Resources is charged with managing the state's natural resources (particularly fish, wildlife, and forests) through a program of regulation, management, research, and public education. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation is charged with the conservation and management of statewide recreation lands and resources through the acquisition of open space and the management of resources, including state parks, to meet the outdoor recreation needs of the public. The benefit of this organizational structure to outdoor recreation in Connecticut is the ability of the various divisions to cooperate and collaborate efficiently and effectively under the unified leadership of the Commissioner of DEEP. The ultimate beneficiaries of this streamlined structure are the outdoor recreational resources of the state and the participants who utilize them.

### *Energy Branch*

The Energy Branch consists of the Bureau of Energy and Technology Policy (BETP) and Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). BETP manages energy, telecommunication, and broadband policy issues and program deployment with the goal of establishing a clean, economical, resilient, and reliable energy and technology future for all residents. PURA is statutorily charged with ensuring that Connecticut's investor-owned utilities, including the state's electric, natural gas, water, and telecommunications companies, provide safe, clean, reliable, and affordable utility service and infrastructure. PURA's mission is essential to advancing the state's energy, economic, and environmental goals and is critical to maintaining public health and safety as well as a robust economy.

## Outdoor Recreation in Connecticut

Although a relatively small state, Connecticut is the fourth most densely populated of the fifty United States (census.gov). The *Constitution State* provides a wealth of outdoor recreation opportunities to its residents and visitors. With 458 miles of Long Island Sound coastline, direct access to the Atlantic Ocean, and hundreds of inland water bodies and watercourses, Connecticut supports most water-based forms of recreation. Due to a four-season climate, the state also provides numerous land-based recreational opportunities, all of which are accessible within a relatively short drive.



A recent report produced by CNBC ranked Connecticut as the #1 state for retirees based on health care, wellness, safety, affordability, and entertainment; **“Connecticut snagged the top spot, largely because it has more than 100 parks that retirees can spend time in, which increased the state’s wellness ranking.”** (04/26/2023). Additionally, the online travel guide, *Why This Place*, scored Connecticut as the best state in America for hiking based on the extent of hiking trails, parkland, and waterfalls.

(08/08/2023)

For all the state has to offer, however, Connecticut has no shortage of challenges for outdoor recreation. With very few large land holdings in the state and with greater than 80% of land held privately, recreational areas tend to be small in scale and scattered across the landscape in abundance. This presents challenges to activities dependent on large tracts of land, informing people of the multitude of opportunities available to them, and monitoring for unlawful or unpermitted activities. In addition, most of the state's population resides in urban areas, and public transportation is often not available to Connecticut's outdoor recreation areas and facilities.

## Major Accomplishments 2017 – 2023

### Introduction

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP or The Plan) is a planning document for Connecticut that defines a path forward for the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) as it strives to fulfill the mission of making outdoor recreation available to all residents and visitors of the state for the benefit of their health, prosperity, and enjoyment.



The Plan also provides guidance to legislators, municipal officials, land trusts, the business community, and the general public by defining a clear, five-year agency agenda to which others can easily refer and upon which they can also rely as they formulate and implement their own planning agendas for outdoor recreation and environmental conservation programs and facilities in their respective jurisdictions. For these reasons, the outdoor recreation goals and strategies set forth in a SCORP must be clearly stated and they must be based on careful consideration of present and evolving outdoor recreation issues of statewide significance.

In general terms, the DEEP's outdoor recreation goals represent a logical progression of strategic planning and proactive measures to ensure that residents and visitors enjoy an optimal experience when visiting outdoor recreation facilities throughout the state. In specific terms, the DEEP's outdoor recreation goals arise in part from public feedback regarding what visitors wish to find—or wish not to find—during their outdoor recreation experiences, and in part from the institutional knowledge of agency staff and Advisory Committee members regarding the past and current status of specific outdoor recreation facilities or trends in Connecticut.

In practice, institutional knowledge of Connecticut's outdoor recreation history and present status combines with the expressed preferences of the recreating community to establish goals that move existing DEEP programs forward in a direction that is compatible with expressed desires and that define new initiatives for future development.





Knowing where you're going is difficult unless you know where you've been. It is therefore invaluable to recall the many recent efforts of the DEEP and its partners to provide excellent stewardship of the state's resources in accordance with Connecticut's 2017 – 2022 SCORP goals, which were:

- 1. Protect, conserve, and manage Connecticut's natural, cultural, and historical resources as they support outdoor recreation.**
- 2. Provide clean, safe, well-maintained outdoor recreation areas and facilities.**
- 3. Ensure that all residents and visitors can locate and access all outdoor recreation areas and facilities.**
- 4. Promote healthy lifestyles through increased participation in outdoor recreation.**

Major examples of projects, programs, and initiatives undertaken since 2017 that support one or more of the four goals above include:

- (Goals 1,2,3,4) Connecticut parks will continue to bring people to our state, and will be in good shape thanks to the historic \$80M capital investment the Lamont administration

made over past two years to [Restore Connecticut State Parks](#) – kicking off major infrastructure improvements to roads, beaches, parking areas, bathhouses, and historic buildings including Gillette Castle, Heublein Tower at Talcott Mountain, Harkness Mansion and the Ellie Mitchell Pavilion at Rocky Neck State Park.

- (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4) Establishment of the Office of Connecticut Trails & Greenways, administered by the Division of State Parks and Public Outreach.
- (Goal 1,2) The Office of Connecticut Trails & Greenways and the Connecticut Greenways Council helped to establish 14 new greenways since 2017.
- (Goals 1, 2) DEEP's new Hazard Tree Mitigation Policy and the corresponding public website promote targeted resource management and public safety by identifying hazard trees and educating the public about causes and conditions of hazard trees.
- (Goals 1, 2) The EnCon Police Division expanded its K-9 program from four officers in 2011 to seven teams currently. The division added three new K-9s and completed rigorous training by the State Police K-9 unit for certification in search and rescue tracking and evidence recovery.
- (Goals 1, 2) EnCon Police logged a total of 159,644 calls for service between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2022. During this period, officers issued 6,358 citations and 3,650 warnings, investigated 202 accidents, and made 638 arrests.
- (Goals 1, 3) Seasonal staff called Boating Education Assistants visit state boat launches to engage with active boaters regarding clean and safe boating practices, including pump-out facilities, aquatic invasive species, no-discharge areas, wearing life jackets, and more.
- (Goals 1, 3) The Land Management Office is completing a comprehensive assessment of dedicated open space lands across the state to understand what percentage of Connecticut's land is already designated for that purpose. DEEP will use the results to set new targets and goals for land conservation efforts across Connecticut.
- (Goals 1, 3) The Urban Green and Community Garden Grants Program awarded \$1,176,666 to 20 projects in 11 different communities.
- (Goal 1) DEEP supported 78 grants through its Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program, protecting 6,751 acres of open space land and distributing \$21,590,991 in funding to local communities.
- (Goal 1) The completed \$6.7 million dollar filtration and pump infrastructure improvement project at the Quinebaug Valley State Trout Hatchery in Plainfield is an incredible synergy of DEEP's mission - providing outdoor recreation opportunities for Connecticut residents, driving tourism by offering one of the best recreational fisheries in the country, making our operations more energy efficient and saving residents money, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- (Goal 1) The installation of new filters and pumps and the rehabilitation of the hatchery's water treatment system together support more sustainable operations that will save thousands of gallons of water daily, reduce the hatchery's environmental impact, and reach the State of Connecticut closer to the goals set in Governor Lamont's Executive Order 1 in reducing the state's water consumption by 10% by 2030.
- (Goal 1) DEEP supported 53 projects totaling 6,906 acres of new outdoor recreation lands under the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program.
- (Goal 1) The Wildlife Division participated in a national #ResponsibleRecreation initiative and developed a webpage dedicated to the care and use of our state parks, forests, wildlife management areas, and natural area preserves.
- (Goal 1) More than \$2,800,000 in federal Forest Legacy funding has been used by Connecticut's Forest Legacy Program since 2017 to permanently protect 1,495 acres in Stafford. The program is also presently working on a 483-acre project in Ashford that was given \$1,450,000 in federal Forest Legacy funding by the US Forest Service.
- (Goal 1) DEEP foresters took the lead in creating an assessment tool in response to concerns about forest health. They also trained DEEP employees to recognize and document information about hazard trees to reduce public safety risks and maintain DEEP facilities open and safe for continuous use and pleasure.
- (Goal 1) Seven landscape-level Important Bird Areas (IBAs) have been designated across the state in collaboration with DEEP, Audubon Connecticut, various conservation NGOs, and private landowners.
- (Goal 1) Action plans to support trout and salmon fishing, the conservation and management of wild trout, black bass (largemouth and smallmouth) were published based on decades of fisheries science and input from the public. These plans will shape the future of fisheries management for the Agency.
- (Goals 1, 2) The Adopt a Park program was organized to support maintenance staff. Adopting volunteers have made a great impact at sites where aquatic plants were removed in swimming areas, historic Indian caves were cleaned from graffiti, trails were maintained safe enough for people and horses to use them and recreational areas with invasive plant species were returned to their natural condition, for the enjoyment and safety of visitors.
- (Goals 2, 3, 4) Established in 2019, the Connecticut Outdoor Recreation Alliance (CORA) is a broad coalition of stakeholders providing a unified voice for Connecticut's growing outdoor recreation industry engaged in a concerted effort to grow outdoor recreation by supporting the development of Connecticut's outdoor recreation economy.
- (Goals 2, 3) Nearly \$15 million in trail development grants were awarded to roughly 90 projects. A total of \$20 million (\$10 million dollars per year) has been approved in the 2024-2025 state budget to build this state grant program.

- (Goals 2,3), the Boating Division has expanded boating safety messaging through social media channels including Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram, on which it collectively has over 9,000 followers.
- (Goal 2) The new Restore CT State Parks program dedicates \$80 million in capital funding for maintenance and improvement of state park and forest recreation areas and facilities.
- (Goals 3, 4) With the new Passport to Parks program, passenger vehicles registered in Connecticut are no longer subject to parking fees at state parks and forests.
- (Goals 3, 4) The new Connecticut Trail Finder is a free, interactive mapping website designed to help Connecticut residents and visitors find hiking, walking, snowshoeing, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and paddling trails across the state. Detailed trail description pages allow users to view the trails, get essential information, and submit trip comments and photos.
- (Goals 3, 4) The new official state parks website, CTParks.com, is a comprehensive, interactive website that helps visitors identify activities and locations across the state park and forest system that align with their outdoor recreation interests.
- (Goals 3, 4) With the addition of a Mobile First Catch Center, provided through a grant from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) in 2020, the Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education (CARE) program can bring fishing to your neighborhood.
- (Goals 3, 4) The Wildlife Division has created the R3 (Recruit, Retain, and Reactivate) Plan 2020–2024 in an effort to introduce more individuals to wildlife conservation through hunting and trapping. This approach is centered on bringing in new hunters and trappers, keeping existing hunters and trappers engaged, and reactivating individuals who have hunted or trapped in the past but have stopped doing so.
- (Goal 3) A new program in the Division of State Parks and Public Outreach is providing all-terrain wheelchairs at five state parks beginning in 2024.
- (Goal 3) Wildlife created links to live-stream wildlife cameras to help make nature accessible for everyone, and community science projects provided volunteers a way to continue to contribute to research and conservation of natural resources.
- (Goal 3) The Marine Fisheries program supports “Fish with CARE” and “Learn to Fish” programs and events at publicly accessible fishing locations and works with DEEP Parks Division and coastal municipalities to maximize public access to fishing locations to allow for healthy participation and enjoyable fishing opportunities.
- (Goal 4) People Active on Trails for Health and Sustainability (PATHS) is a new interdisciplinary team at UConn committed to understanding and promoting the benefits of trails and natural resources for health, community and economic development.

- (Goal 4) The following events are scheduled for Junior Hunter Training Days in 2023: Pheasant (October 14), Waterfowl (two Saturdays in the fall, TBD), Deer (November 4 through November 11), and Spring Turkey Season (April 15 to 14). On Junior Pheasant Hunter Training Day, an additional program offered by DEEP, and several sportsmen's clubs supervise junior pheasant hunts.
- (Goal 4) Bat appreciation day has been celebrated at the Old Newgate Prison and Copper Mine in Granby, Connecticut, since 2017 as a joint effort by DEEP and the Department of Economic and Community Development. To oversee encounters with nuisance wildlife and keep an eye on population levels throughout the state, DEEP employees gather reports of bears, bobcats, and moose.
- (Goal 4) The Fisheries Division's CARE program deployed a self-pace web training in English and Spanish to introduce key concepts of fishing equipment, knot tying, places to fish, and the regulations. Other short instructional videos are published on the DEEP YouTube Channel regularly.
- (Goal 4) State Parks and Boating hosted over 15 No Child Left Inside (NCLI) events in 2023 to encourage families to explore, play, learn, and read in our CT DEEP State Parks and Forests, DEEP Nature Centers and Museums, libraries, pop-up events and programs. Additionally, CT DEEP State Parks and the CT State Library have partnered to build a statewide StoryWalk program initiative.

While recognizing the value of goals for guiding the allocation of resources, DEEP, and its partners remain pleased to advance the interests of outdoor recreation wherever those opportunities readily present themselves. In that context, it's worth noting that not all accomplishments described in the following sections are necessarily driven directly by one or more of the previous SCORP's goals. Many recent accomplishments do support the 2017-2022 goals, while others represent a continuing investment in successful legacy programs. Some are simply conversions of serendipitous opportunities. Regardless of direct connection to goals or not, the following bureau- and division-specific sections provide deeper insights into the many important accomplishments during the period since 2017.

## Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

### Land Acquisition and Management

The Land Acquisition and Management Office (LAM) is integral to the success of the SCORP and the Land and Water Conservation Fund within Connecticut. LAM implements DEEP's open space programs and is responsible for acquiring lands to be added to the Department's system of State Parks, State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, Water Access Areas, Natural Area Preserves, and other conservation and public recreation areas. LAM works in cooperation with other divisions, as well as with its federal, municipal, land trust, and water company partners,

to protect and steward open space across the state. The Land Acquisition and Management Office manages five primary programs focused on the acquisition and protection of open space in Connecticut and prioritizes its goals for acquisition in regular updates to its Green Plan.



In 1997, the General Assembly recognized the environmental threat posed by changes in land use and set statewide acreage goals for land protection. In 2001, in partnership with municipalities and a wide variety of conservation organizations, DEEP developed the first Green Plan to guide land conservation efforts statewide. There have been several iterations of this plan over the years, each one building on past accomplishments and incorporating the latest innovations and opportunities.

The last Green Plan was completed in 2015 with an expiration in 2020. With the onset of COVID-19 and a large percentage of DEEP's staff retiring between 2019 and 2022, the development of a new plan was delayed. However, the Land Acquisition and Management Office has recently rejuvenated the effort and is excited to move forward with the process of updating the Green Plan. Staff will be doing a comprehensive assessment of dedicated open space land across the state to understand what percentage of the state's land is already used for that purpose. Once that data collection effort is complete, DEEP will use those numbers to set new targets and goals for land conservation efforts across Connecticut. The updated plan

will highlight DEEP's five main program areas which include:

#### Land and Water Conservation Fund

The federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is one of the primary programs managed within DEEP's LAM office. LAM staff work with agency outdoor recreation and parks staff to develop projects, apply for funding, and manage grant expectations. Additionally, LAM staff work with municipalities to apply for funding through LWCF's Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program to increase acquisition and park infrastructure within environmental justice communities.





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### Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program

The State's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWLA) Grant Program is another LAM managed program. It provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire land for open space, and to water companies to acquire land to be classified as Class I or Class II water supply property. Project ranking is based on a series of scoring criteria which include the property's public access and outdoor recreation benefits, its alignment with DEEP's environmental justice and equity priorities, and its climate change and natural resource benefits. Between 2017 and 2022, DEEP closed on 78 grants that protected 6,751 acres of open space land and distributed \$21,590,991 in funding to local communities (See Table 1).

**Table 2 Financially Complete/Closed Grants**

Year	Acres	Number of Projects	Grant Amount (\$)
2017	895.27	14	4,283,737
2018	1,443.16	14	3,226,513
2019	434.82	9	2,522,416
2020	1,174.50	17	3,412,815
2021	1,190.14	12	3,685,250
2022	1,612.89	12	4,460,260
Total	6,750.78	78	21,590,991



#### The Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program

The Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program (RNHTP) is also managed within LAM as the Department's primary program for acquiring lands and waters to be added to the State's system of public parks, forests, wildlife management, recreational water access, and other natural open spaces. It was established by the General Assembly in 1986 to help protect and preserve Connecticut's natural heritage. Through the RNHTP, the Department handles the acquisition of land of statewide significance representing the ecological and cultural diversity of Connecticut. The focus is on unique features such as rivers, mountains, rare natural communities, scenic qualities, historic significance, important recreational resources, connections to other protected land, and access to water. This program leverages state funding with local, federal, and private funding to stretch dollars and protect additional land. Between 2017 and 2022, DEEP closed on 53 projects totaling 6,906 acres and leveraged 73% of the costs from cooperators (See Table 2).



**Table 3 DEEP Acquired Properties/Easements**

Year	Acres	Number of Projects	Cooperator Share of Cost (\$)	State Share of Cost (\$)
2017	810.76	12	3,902,000	1,013,750
2018	703.79	6	2,271,610	1,432,500
2019	1,631.41	14	5,899,120	1,120,000
2020	1709.95	9	3,752,750	2,078,600
2021	976.85	6	2,241,500	1,535,000
2022	1073.17	6	2,375,000	395,000
Total	6,905.93	53	20,441,980	7,575,850

#### Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Program

The Urban Green and Community Garden Grants Program (UGCG) is another LAM program providing funding to distressed municipalities and targeted investment communities to enhance habitat protection and the restoration of urban green spaces. The program funds urban access trails, green infrastructure, community gardens, and a variety of habitat restoration efforts. Between 2017 and 2022, UGCG awarded \$1,176,666 to 20 projects in 11 different communities.

#### Property Management

The property management section of LAM administers property rights and manages requests by outside entities. At any one time, there are approximately 100 to 200 active property management projects within the office spanning property throughout the state. Staff provide technical assistance and coordinate and plan agency responses for all DOT, federal, private, utility, and municipal large-scale projects that involve the use of DEEP land. These projects often include complicated legal documentation, historical land records research, and balancing sensitive political, economic, and environmental issues.

This section of the LAM office is integral to ensuring the protection of open space properties throughout Connecticut. The LAM office is excited about the future of land conservation in Connecticut. Recent increases in federal funding and opportunities for additional staff will help amplify existing efforts. Office staff is reassessing existing programs and identifying key areas to increase efficiency, make grant programs more equitable, and to collaborate with internal and external partners to conserve and enhance more open space across Connecticut.

## Bureau of Outdoor Recreation

### Division of State Parks & Public Outreach

Established in 1913, the mission of the Connecticut state park system is to provide natural resource-based, public recreational and educational opportunities through a system of state park and forest recreation areas, environmental centers, and nature centers that provide access to, and understanding and enjoyment of the state's historic, cultural, and, natural resources.

Public use of the system's 110 state parks and 32 state forest recreation areas, collectively representing nearly 255,000 acres or 8% of the state, has increased dramatically from 2018. Estimated attendance grew from roughly 9 million annual visitors in 2018 to approximately 17 million in 2022. Several factors contributed to this dramatic increase, but the principal factors include growing public awareness of the state's Passport to Parks program, and the Covid pandemic.

#### Passport to Parks Program

In 2018, the state introduced Passport to Parks, a program that eliminates parking fees for Connecticut registered passenger vehicles at state parks and forests, while charging a small fee on each motor vehicle registration. Existing park users at the time benefited initially in the summer of 2018 as they began to visit their favorite state parks and forest, now without a parking fee, and other state residents were becoming aware of the new benefit and began visiting their parks in increasing numbers. This new program has also removed what might have been a financial burden for our residents of limited means, as the \$5/year additional fee on motor vehicle registrations now allows all of our residents to have free parking for an unlimited number of visits to their favorite outdoor spaces.

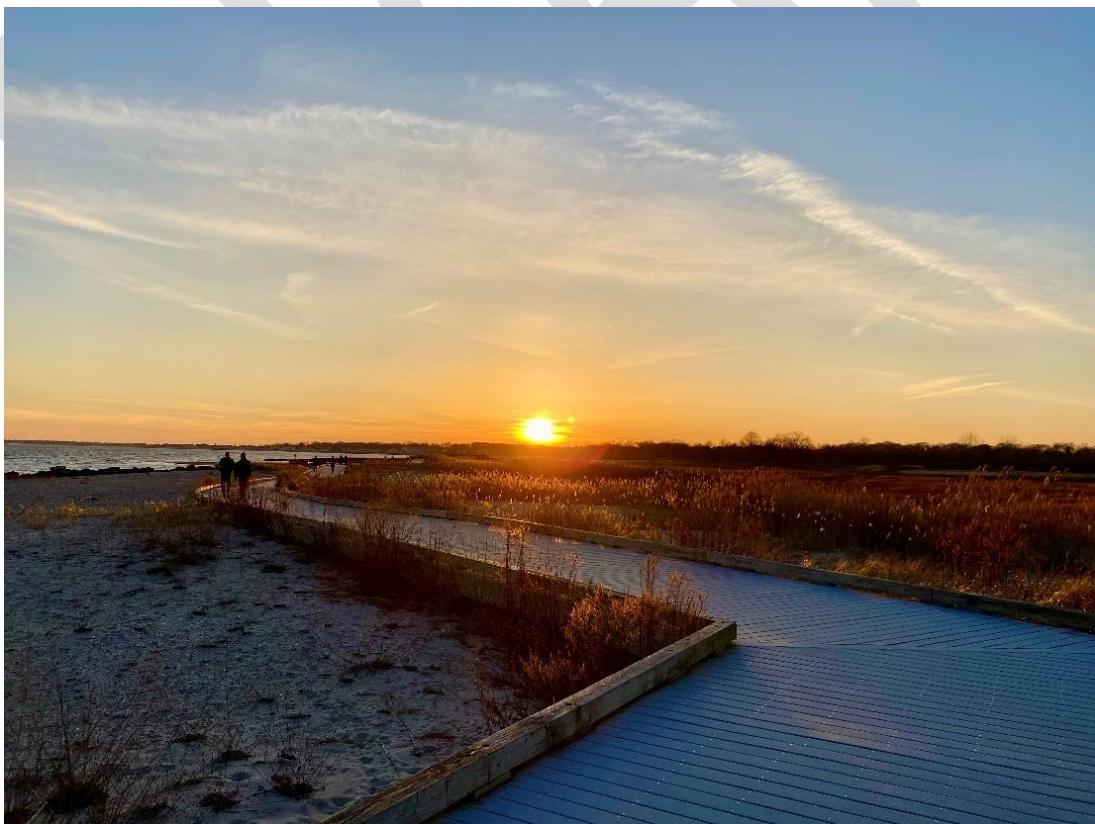
#### Park ConneCT

Data used from the 2017 SCORP indicated a need for transportation to and from CT State parks and beaches. The data was used to implement the ParkConneCT program. The ParkConneCT program, a joint effort between CTDOT and CT DEEP, was proudly announced. The goal of this service is to provide dependable and safe transportation to state parks such as Sherwood Island, Silver Sands, Osbornedale, Indian Well, Sleeping Giant, and Hammonasset Beach, all within ten minutes' walk.

From Memorial Day weekend (5/27/23) to Labor Day weekend (9/4/2023), the ParkConneCT Pilot Program was in operation. The following dates are designated as holidays during the program: Memorial Day, June 19, 2023, Independence Day weekend, July 3–4, 2023, and Labor Day, September 4, 2023. Regional access to the parks was made possible via connections to the above-mentioned parks from adjacent train stations.

## Capital Projects

The year 2020 saw the opening of a new visitor complex along the beach at Silver Sands State Park in Milford. The new facilities include public bathrooms, changing areas, a shaded picnic area, office space for staff, including lifeguards and EnCon Police, and a food concession building, all on an elevated deck with fantastic views of Charles Island and Long Island Sound. The long-needed project provides basic services for the public as well as facilities that make our staff's management of the property more efficient and effective.



DEEP is presently working with the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services, which will be managing the development project at Seaside State Park. In February Of 2023, DEEP announced \$7.1 million in Federal American Rescue Plan Act funds to implement the “passive park” design for Seaside. The Passive Park concept was one of four options identified through a Comprehensive Planning Process in which DEEP engaged with local leaders, community members, and other stakeholders. The Passive Park concept includes the removal of the deteriorated buildings; the implementation of restrooms, picnic areas, and walking trails; improvements to the shoreline area and parking area; and other elements. The project will also include historic interpretive elements regarding past uses of the site. DEEP will be conducting outreach with stakeholders that will help inform the historic interpretation that will be incorporated into the ultimate passive park design.



In 2018 Sleeping Giant State Park experienced a devastating storm, including a tornado that caused severe damage to the main picnic area at the base of the mountain, causing a year-long closure of the park. Intense work by agency staff, contractors, and volunteers removed hundreds of downed and damaged trees across the park and its trail network and reopened the park in 2019. A master planning effort was undertaken, with public input, to develop a plan for both short-term and longer-term improvement for the park. Planning work is now underway for improvements in the main parking area of the park, including the creation of a small visitor center/contact station so that visitors can orient themselves, learn about the history of the park, and ask questions of staff or volunteer docents.

A severe storm in 2022 damaged the shoreline and boardwalk at Rocky Neck State Park. Instead of replacing the boardwalk in-kind, and risk further similar damage, an innovative helical (i.e., aluminum screw) piling system was installed in the damaged section. The hope is that this new type of anchoring system will be better able to withstand damage from future coastal storms.

Ongoing improvements to campgrounds include additional water and electric sites and improved bathroom facilities at Hammonasset Beach State Park.



### Civilian Conservation Corps

The legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corp and their work in CT state forests and parks in the 1930s was honored in 2019 with the installation of 2 “Iron Mike” statues. These statues are dedicated to the thousands of young men who worked across the state, as part of a nationwide program during the depression years, to put men to work making lasting improvements to our public lands.

The first of the two statues was installed at Chatfield Hollow State Park, and the second at Pachaug State Forest. Both installations were accompanied by a large public gathering and celebration of the work of the CCCs.

### Lifeguards

Connecticut’s State Park Lifeguard Program celebrated its 100th year in 2021. The program’s long history of providing safe beach access began at Hammonasset Beach State Park in Madison and then grew to include many additional beach parks across the state. 2021 also saw the state’s lifeguard program achieve certification as a Lifeguard Agency Certified Program of the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA). The USLA represents the highest standards in certification for beach lifeguarding and open water rescuers.

### Restore CT State Parks

In 2022, DEEP allocated \$80 million to “Restore CT State Parks,” a new website that provides information and updates on programs for improving and restoring our state parks infrastructure. The state budgets of 2022 and 2023 provided unprecedented levels of capital funding for much-needed reinvestments in scores of facilities and over 1,000 buildings that the public relies upon to enjoy public lands. More than \$110 million has been committed over several fiscal years jump-starting efforts designed to address the \$250+ million of backlogged maintenance and improvement projects across the system. Updates on work accomplished and on projects being planned is available for public review on the Restore CT State Parks website. (<https://portal.ct.gov/deep/state-parks/restore-ct-state-parks>)



## Social Media

The Division has increased its social media presence and now provides real-time park closure updates to the public. The notices on Twitter (now “X”) are generated by the DEEP Dispatch Center whenever closure announcements from park staff occur for reasons such as maximum capacity, construction, storm damage, or law enforcement activity. Visitors can now learn whether their intended destination park has reached capacity or not on a given day, affording would-be visitors the opportunity to adjust plans and avoid the frustration of being turned away on a busy day.

## Hazard Tree Policy



In 2021, DEEP established a new Hazard Tree Policy and launched a website providing information to the public about significant efforts being made to address the growing problem of dead and dying trees across state properties. To reduce tree hazards to the public using our open spaces, this website educates readers about the various causes of increased tree mortality incidents, including diseases and storm impacts.

## Improving Access

The 2023 state budget included significant funding to implement a new program for providing all-terrain wheelchairs to visitors in up to five state parks. A process is currently underway to evaluate state park and forest recreation areas for deployment of the chairs and to undertake the procurement of the chairs themselves. The expectation is that the new all-terrain chairs will begin being available for visitors by the summer of 2024 or 2025.



## State Parks Education Unit

The Division of State Parks and Public Outreach manages four year-round educational centers, a statewide program, and ten seasonal interpretive centers dispersed throughout the state.

Recent initiatives include telling lesser-known historical stories, engaging, and educating the public and school students during the COVID-19 pandemic, and incorporating technologies to provide expanded learning opportunities.

### Dinosaur State Park Visitor Center and Arboretum

In the summer of 2019, the annual Dinosaur Day celebration brought in record-breaking numbers of approximately 3,000 visitors. Just seven months later, the global pandemic struck, forcing the temporary closure of the indoor visitor center. The educational staff pivoted by successfully creating fully online programming for student groups and families. This created an opportunity to continue offering hybrid and in-person options today for groups.

After years of increasingly expensive but temporary fixes for the outdated HVAC system, the State Bond Commission approved expenditures for its complete replacement.

The greenhouse was cleaned out and is utilized once again under the expertise of volunteer and seasonal botanists on staff.

New re-chargeable electrical maintenance equipment was installed to help reduce the release of air pollutants that contribute to climate change.

In summer 2023, a new purple blazed trail was added by the Eastern District Summer Trail Crew to the park expanding trail-based educational access to the Dinosaur State Park Property.





Other accomplishments include new interactive exhibits featuring laser projected images, live reptile and amphibian ambassadors at the visitor center, and school and group program slots that fill to capacity each fall and spring.

#### Kellogg Environmental Center

Located in Osbornedale State Park in Derby, this site focuses on environmentally based, professional development programs for teachers, youth group leaders, and other informal educators as well as environmental education for families, students, and youth audiences.

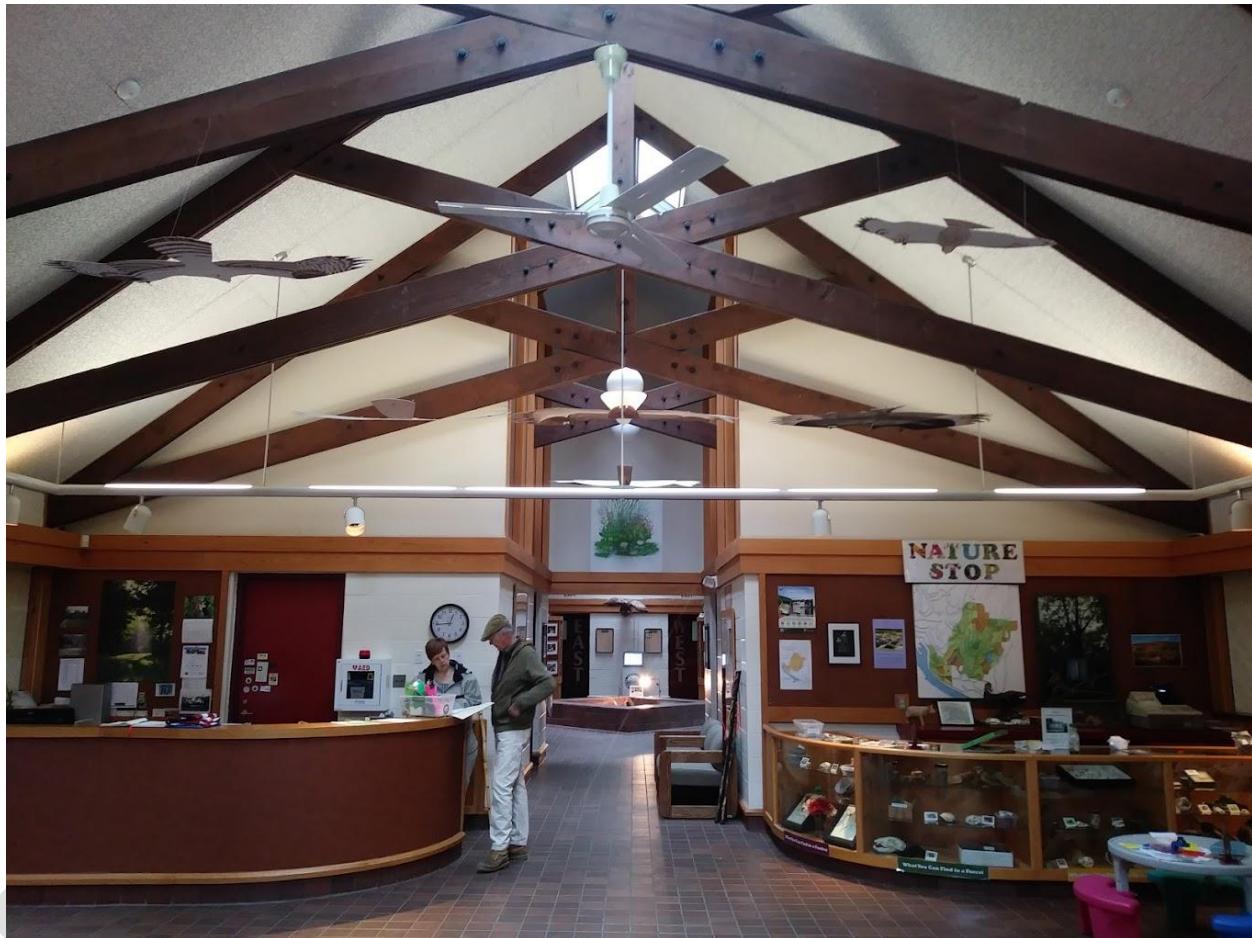
During the Covid-19 pandemic, the education team pivoted to fully online programming due to the statewide closure of indoor public spaces. The staff took a leadership role by teaching other educators and outreach leaders within and beyond the agency how to create and run purposeful virtual programs, eventually resulting in hybrid programs that incorporate both virtual and in-person components.

In 2021, staff partnered with the Common Thread Quilt Group to create the now annual “Pop of Color Outdoor Quilt Show,” providing an opportunity for the public to enjoy the arts and nature together.

This site also completed a myriad of HVAC repairs ultimately leading to a full system replacement in 2023.



Additionally, the Center provides a Connecticut artist indoor space to exhibit their works along with a monthly opening and reception.



During the pandemic, the manicured grounds of the Kellogg Estate, including one of Connecticut's 14 Historical Gardens, remained open for the public's enjoyment. In 2022, staff at the Center was honored by the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut with its highest award.

#### [\*\*Goodwin Conservation Education Center\*\*](#)

This site within the Goodwin State Forest in Hampton is staffed and managed through an agreement with the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA).

During the pandemic, a successful online "Tree School" utilized award-winning activities from Project Learning Tree, coordinated by DEEP and CFPA.

The Richard D. Haley Wildlife Garden continues to be supported by the volunteer group, Friends of Goodwin. Unfortunately, highly invasive jumping worms were discovered to be living in the native wildflower garden, thus prompting the Friends of Goodwin to cancel their annual plant sale in order to not further spread the invasive species.

A long-awaited project to restore period siding on the historic Goodwin house began in 2021. In addition, the museum was upgraded with improved wiring so that staff could utilize the vacant upstairs space, which allows the main floor areas to be more appropriately used for programs and public meeting areas.

In 2023, the outdoor Discovery Trail was selected as a prime location for a newly developed mobile app tour of Goodwin's demonstration forest.

#### **Meigs Point Nature Center**

During the height of the global pandemic, the education staff used the Facebook platform to livestream nature-based programs twice a day for five days, reaching nearly a half million views in 2020. The center re-opened in 2021 with timed rotation of visitors, assisted by volunteers from the Friends of Hammonasset.

With support from the Friends, a new deck was constructed, forming a great addition to the nature center by providing focused viewing access to the salt marsh and osprey nest platform.

In the summer of 2023, the Menunkatuck Audubon Society donated an outdoor amphitheater in memory of a beloved patron, significantly expanding outdoor teaching space.



### No Child Left Inside (NCLI)

During the 2020 season, which saw all group and indoor gatherings prohibited, the successful Great Park Pursuit outdoor family adventure was cancelled. In its place, the NCLI staff quickly pivoted by creating the Great Backyard Pursuit. This program provided fun outdoor activities via online videos that families could safely enjoy from home instead of gathering in the typical group traditions. The following summer of 2021, which encouraged families to explore the outdoors in more local settings, NCLI created the Great Outdoor Pursuit, which provided family-based activities for finding elements of nature closer to home.

In 2021, new partnerships promoting outdoor equity were formed with the Connecticut State Library's Division of Library Development, the Connecticut Association of Foster & Adoptive Families, and the Connecticut Judiciary's Court Support Services Division.

In 2023, NCLI focused on increased programing throughout the calendar year, with smaller pop-up events at libraries and parks, while maintaining multiple larger-scale outdoor recreation events with Agency and nonprofit partners.

In partnership with the Connecticut State Library, the Connecticut State Parks StoryWalks program launched with the first StoryWalk installed at Dinosaur State Park in December of 2023. To increase relevancy with public visitors, especially English language learners and families with hearing impairments, the NCLI staff is working on creating audio recordings of each of the children's books in both the Spanish and English language.



### Sky's The Limit

This year-round hiking challenge introduces the public to the state park and forest system through the creation of a themed hiking challenge. The challenge begins in early spring and provides specific locations and highlights in numerous state parks and forests for participants to find and discover. There is a new theme each year and the challenge concludes with a celebration on New Year's Day as part of the nationwide First Day Hikes program.

### Osborne Homestead Museum

On the grounds of the Kellogg Estate, within the boundaries of Osbornedale State Park in Derby, the education team created audio tours during the pandemic to educate the public about the site. Myriad self-guided audio tours continue to be used which include tours of the homestead itself, the historical garden, and a local driving tour. Narratives now include information on the lesser-told stories of the people once working on the land, such as the farm workers and ranch hands. To celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women's right to vote in the United States of America, the museum's annual holiday theme highlighted the plight of women, especially the plight of black women, many of whom continued facing state-imposed barriers to voting, such as literacy tests and poll taxes, until the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The museum has been working to improve its archive by focusing on creating a photographic inventory of its collection. In addition, the Estate is now one of 16 CT Historic Gardens recognized across the state. In 2022, a painting of the Homestead Museum and its gardens by local artist Agnes Wnuk was chosen as the winner of the Historic Gardens Poster Contest. In 2023, with financial support from the Kellogg Trustees, the staff partnered with a local performing arts collaborative to provide the inaugural Jane Austen's Pride & Prejudice through a series of weekend-long performances.

Interest in general volunteer opportunities at state parks reignited post-Covid with groups and individuals seeking ways to serve. This includes many invasive plant removal days and light trail maintenance.

Visiting historic sites was identified by residents as the second most popular outdoor recreation activity after walking/hiking. Ten seasonal historic sites and museums include:

Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park, Groton

Fort Trumbull State Park, New London

Gillette Castle State Park, East Haddam

Harkness Memorial State Park, Waterford

Putnam Memorial State Park, Redding

Stone Museum at Peoples State Forest, Barkhamsted

Heublein Tower at Talcott Mountain State Park, Simsbury

Topsmead State Forest, Litchfield

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Museum at Shenipsit State Forest, Stafford Springs

Osborne Homestead Museum, Derby.

While all indoor centers and museums were closed during the height of the global pandemic, they re-opened with the support of Friends groups and volunteers, even though many volunteers did not return immediately due to ongoing health and safety concerns.



Gillette Castle moved to online tickets for tours upon re-opening and it was successful enough that online ticketing remains in place today. In 2023, Gillette Castle seasonal staff began piloting the use of audio equipment under the guidance of the full-time education staff. This equipment is to aid those with hearing challenges in order to better hear the tour guides during their visit.

With assistance from the Division's education staff, the Fort Trumbull Visitor Center has been undergoing an in-house exhibit repair process for older exhibit components.



## Office of Connecticut Trails and Greenways Program

The Office of Connecticut Trails and Greenways, established in 2020 and administered by the Division of State Parks and Public Outreach, serves as the main contact for trails and trail-related activities within state parks and forests, and is a liaison for trails issues to agency partners including the Connecticut Department of Transportation, Department of Economic and Community Development, Department of Health, municipalities, and partner organizations.

This new office administers the Connecticut Greenways Program and the Connecticut Recreational Trails Grants Program with support from and coordination with the Connecticut Greenways Council (CGC or Council). Members of the CGC are appointed by the Governor and leaders of the General Assembly per the Connecticut General Statutes Chapter 454 Sec 23-102. Their duties include advising and assisting the coordination of state agencies, municipalities, regional planning organizations, and private citizens, and the voluntarily planning and implementation of a statewide system of greenways. The Council also provides assistance to stakeholders on the technical aspects of planning, designing, and implementing greenways. This assistance includes advice on securing state, federal, and nongovernmental grants, and establishing criteria for the designation of greenways.

The Connecticut Greenways Council and Department of Energy and Environmental Protection have designated certain greenways as greenways of state significance based upon established criteria. Connecticut Public Act 95-335 defines a greenway as a "corridor of open space" that:

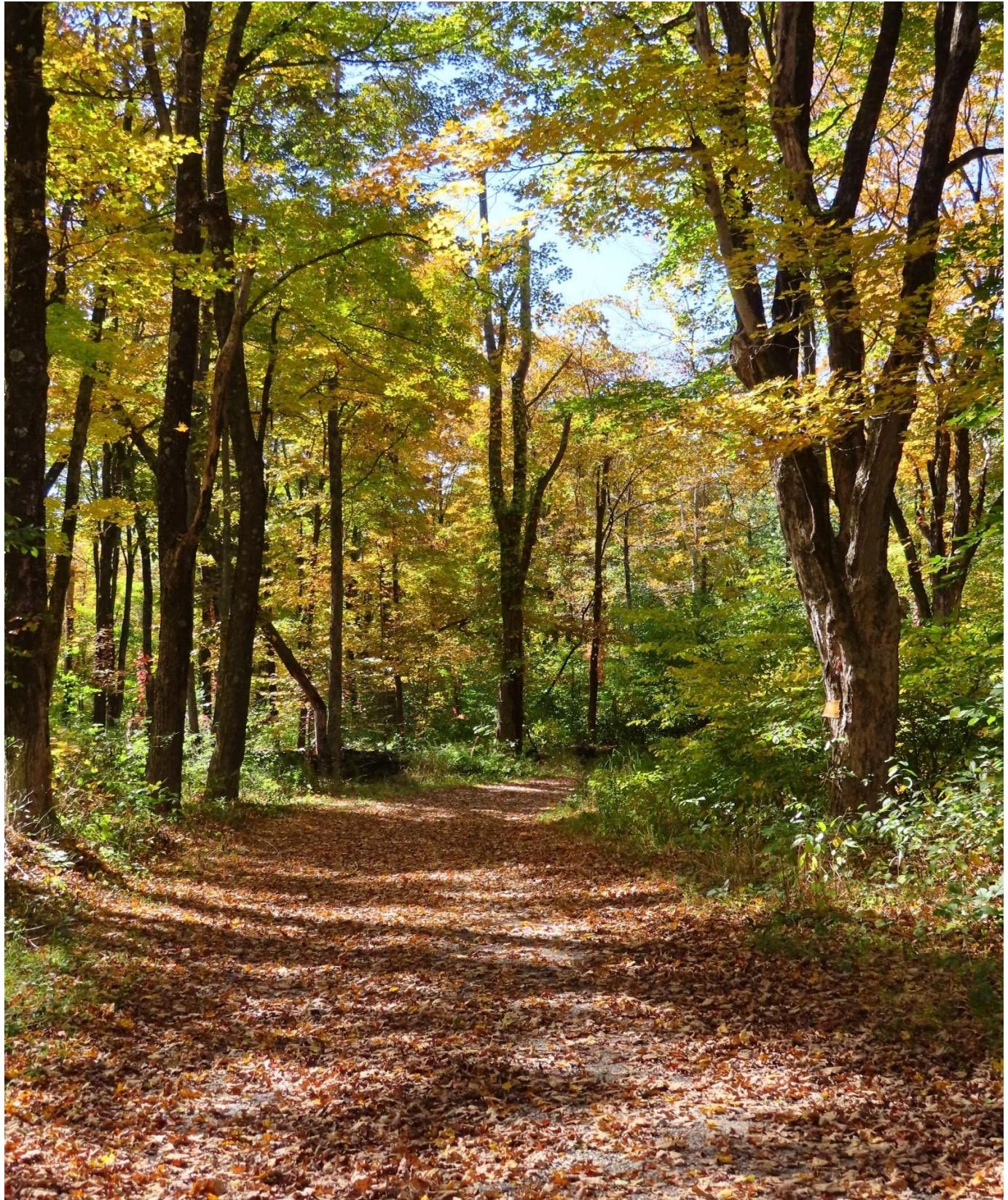
1. May protect natural resources, preserve scenic landscapes and historical resources, or offer opportunities for recreation or non-motorized transportation;
2. May connect existing protected areas and provide access to the outdoors;
3. May be located along a defining natural feature, such as a waterway, along a man-made corridor, including an unused right of way, traditional trail routes or historic barge canals;
4. May be a green space along a highway or around a village.

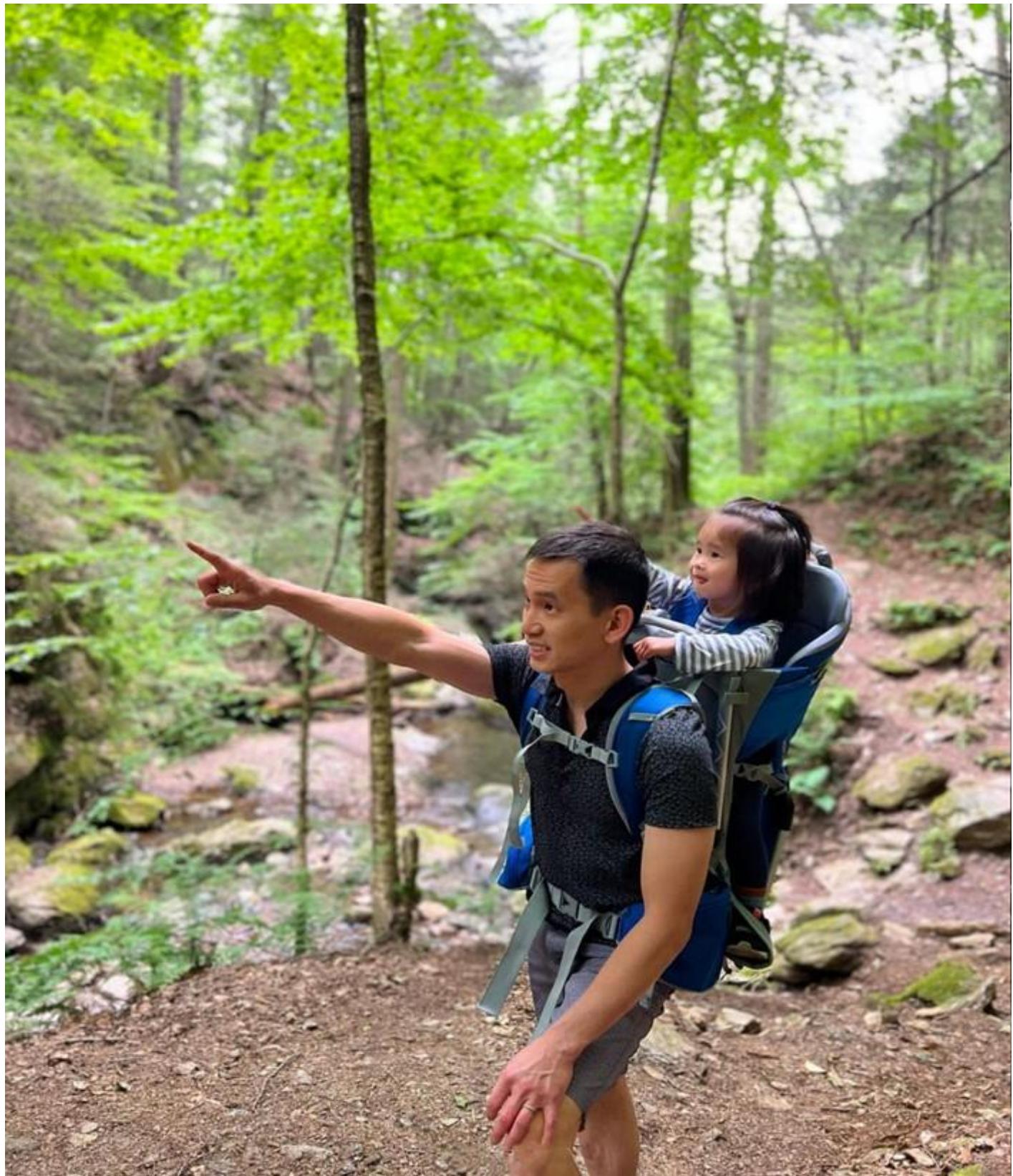


Since 2016, Connecticut has designated 14 additional greenways (Table 4), bringing the total number of officially designated greenways in the state to 96. Greenways include several state park and forest properties, most notably the Air Line State Park Trail, Hop River State Park Trail, Moosup Valley State Park Trail, and Larkin State Park Trail. Regional greenways serve multiple purposes including environmental conservation, wildlife corridors, and scenic resource protection, as well as purely recreational opportunities.





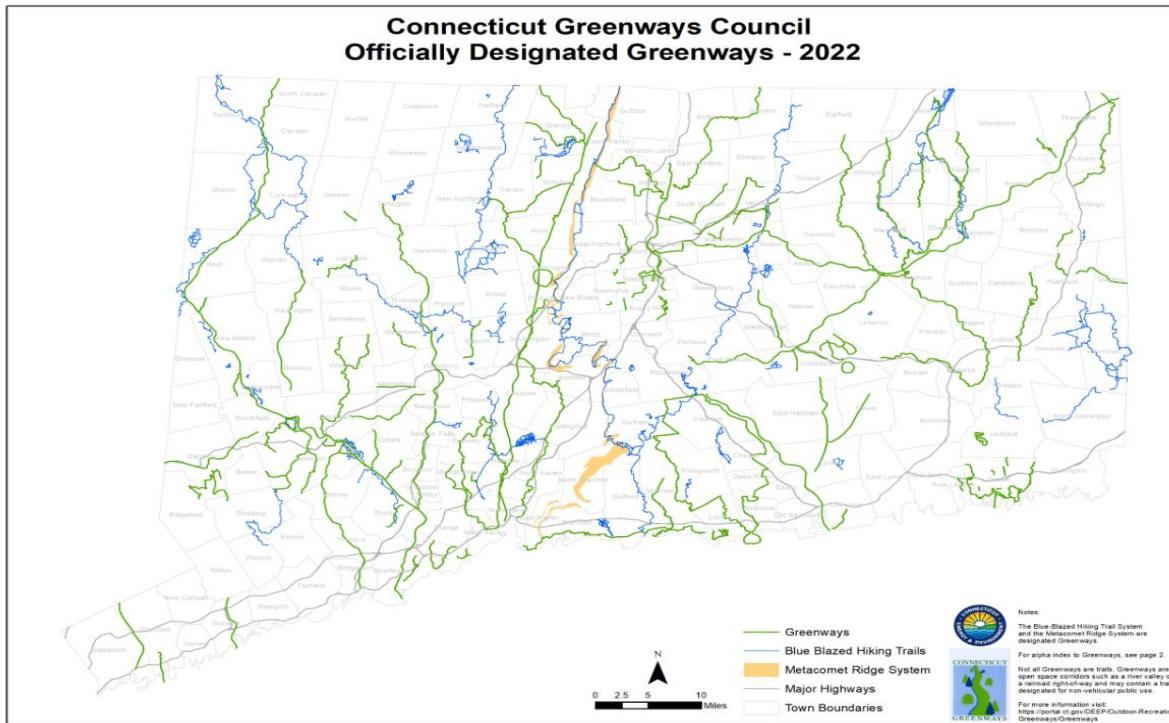




**Table 4 Official Connecticut Greenways Established between 2017 – 2022**

Greenway	Town	Year
Crosstown Trail	South Windsor	2017
New Milford River Trail Greenway	New Milford	2017
Captain John Bissel Trail	South Windsor	2018
Great Oak Greenway	Ledyard	2018
South Meadows Greenway	East Hartford	2018
Clinton Blue/Greenway	Clinton	2019
Cheney Trail	Manchester	2020
Portland Air Line Trail Spur	Portland	2021
Wethersfield Heritage Way	Wethersfield	2021
Rocky Hill Greenway	Rocky Hill	2022
Norfolk Mountain Express Rail Trail	Norfolk	2022
Groton Crosstown Greenway	Groton	2022
Tritown Trail Greenway	Preston, Ledyard, Groton	2022
The Branford Trail	Branford	2023





**Figure 3 Connecticut Officially Designated Greenways**

#### Connecticut Recreational Trails and Greenways Funding

The Connecticut Recreational Trails Grant Program was established in 2015, *per CGS Section 23-103, as amended by Public Act No. 15-190*, to provide funding to any private nonprofit organizations, municipalities, state departments and tribal governments in support of trail projects including:

- Planning, design, and construction of new trails (motorized and non-motorized).
- Maintenance and restoration of existing trails (motorized and non-motorized).
- Enhancement of access to recreational trails.
- Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment.
- Acquisition of land or easements for a trail, or for trail corridors.
- Publications, and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection as related to recreational trails.

**Table 5 Connecticut Recreational Trail Development Grants 2015 – 2023**

Grant Round	Total Allocations	Recipients
2015	\$6,715,060	35
2016-2017	\$399,916	7
2018-2019	\$3,223,731	19
2020-2021	\$2,889,878	19
2022-2023	\$8,586,115	50
Total	\$21,814,699	130

Over the past eight years, the Connecticut Recreation Trails Grant Program has awarded over 21 million dollars to 130 projects. The eligibility criteria, total value, percentage of funds allocated to each project type, and example projects are provided below.

#### Planning Projects

Planning awards of \$2,253,548 (10.3% of total CT RTP awards) were granted to projects that developed trail corridor studies and planning, baseline condition assessments, and trail management plans. Recent examples include:

- (2016-2017) Planning and design of the Nathan Hale Greenway, a multi-use trail system, on 10 miles of the former Rte. 6 Expressway land recently conveyed to the towns of Bolton and Coventry by DOT.
- (2018-2019) CT RC&D's Master Plan for the Air Line Trail State Park to include: resource inventory, wayfinding, economic opportunities, bike to work assessment, increase safe routes to schools, maintenance plan.
- (2020-2021) The City of Danbury will undertake a Danbury Trail Routing Planning Study to evaluate the best route for a multi-use trail connecting the terminus of the Maybrook Trailway East Branch Reservoir trail at the New York State border to Downtown Danbury/Tarrywile Park.
- (2022-2023) The City of Hartford was funded to study, identify, and plan vital trail connectivity opportunities between interior Keney Park trails and the Hartford Riverwalk.

## Design/ Development Projects

Design awards of \$5,200,583 (23.8% of total CTRTP awards) were granted to projects that include the conceptual, preliminary, or final design plans for trail connections including public participation, permitting, and associated studies required prior to construction. Connecticut and National RTP are important sources of design funding that provide access to a broad range of CTDOT construction funding opportunities. Examples:

- (2015-2016) Structural engineering and survey to provide the project site plan, permits, land survey, and design work for a one-mile multi-use path connecting Waterfront District of New London (transportation center) with Fort Trumbull.
- (2018-19) Preparation of construction documents for an ADA shelter, restroom, interpretive exhibit observation deck at the Connecticut Audubon Property in Pomfret adjacent to the Air Line Trail State Park.
- (2020-2021) The Town of Windsor will design a significant segment of the state and regional Connecticut riverfront trail. The proposed trail will link two of Windsor's village centers, Windsor Center and Wilson, through Windsor Meadows State Park to the broader Riverfront Recapture trail system.
- (2022-2023) The Borough of Naugatuck was funded for the design, engineering, and right-of-way acquisition for 0.5 miles of the Naugatuck Valley Greenways south of Whittemore Bridge on Maple Street.



## Land Acquisition Projects

Land Acquisition awards of \$170,000 (0.8% of total CT RTP award) were granted to projects that acquires land or easements for trail corridors. Three projects in the CT RTP have used such an award:

- (2015-16) Acquisition of 2.4 acres by Manchester Land Trust and development of 1 mile trail link. This award provided funds required to obtain access to the railroad property in order to connect the Hop River and Cheney Rail trails.

- (2020-2021) The Town of Thompson will begin work on Train Wreck Park, including an acquisition of 1.1 acres of land, which will provide a cultural amenity adjacent to the Air Line State Park Trail in that town.
- (2022-2023) The City of Shelton was funded to conduct the planning, design, and land acquisition components of a project to extend the Shelton Housatonic Riverwalk.

#### Construction/Construction Administration Projects

Construction awards of \$9,833,475 (41.1% of total CT RTP award) were granted to projects which actively construct new recreational trails or trail segments and include labor, materials, and construction administration costs. Trail construction projects represent close to half the allocated fees of the program. Example projects:

- (2015-2016) Construct a 9,300 foot, 6-feet-wide natural trail extending from an existing ADA-compliant trail segment south on the Goodwin University Campus along the Connecticut River toward Glastonbury, linking East Hartford trails at the Putnam Bridge to a regional trail network.
- (2018-2019) Construction to close a gap in the Cheney Rail Trail system in Manchester which is part of the East Coast Greenway.
- (2020-2021) The Town of Vernon will make repairs and enhancements to the Hop River Linear Park Trail (5.1 miles) and the Rockville (Section of Vernon) Spur of the Rails to Trails (4.1 miles), Hockanum River Linear Park, Dart Hill Trails (4.0 miles).
- (2022-2023) The Town of New Hartford to construct Phase I of the New Hartford Multi-Use Trail.

#### Equipment Projects

Equipment awards of \$485,677 (2.2% of total CT RTP awards) were granted to projects which purchased and leased trail construction and maintenance equipment. Equipment funds are most often a component of a more comprehensive project covering a broader range of project types. Example projects include:



- (2015-2016) The purchase of maintenance equipment- two attachments for a tractor the Farmington Heritage Trails Council purchased with their own funds to continuously manage the trail corridor.
- (2016-2017) The Last Green Valley purchased and is utilizing the upgraded High Efficiency Trail Assessment Process (HETAP}

equipment, plus training new volunteers and hosting new events. The support provided by this grant will enable the improvement of accessibility on many miles of trails.

- (2020-2021) Trail equipment, equipment rentals, and safety equipment for the Connecticut Forest and Park Association Blue-blazed trail crew which maintains over 900 miles of hiking trails in Connecticut.
- (2022-2023) Riverfront Recapture will purchase and install trail security cameras and video analytic software to report trail visitor data along the Riverwalk Trail in both Hartford and East Hartford.

### Trail Amenities/Facilities Projects

Trail amenity and facility awards of \$283,047 (1.3% of total CT RTP awards) were granted to projects that designed, built, and/or purchased parking lots, toilet buildings, signs, and benches. It is important to note that amenities are tightly incorporated into construction plans and costs, therefore this summary focuses on projects that identified amenities. Example projects:

- (2015-2016) Bike bollards and racks, trash receptacles, benches, and signage for the Hamden Center Park Spur trail connecting to the Farmington Canal Heritage trail.
- (2020-2021) The Town of Windham will improve the current condition of the Air Line Trail which includes deteriorated fencing, insufficient safety measures, signage, and other aesthetics.
- 2022-2023) The Hop River Trail Alliance, whose member towns include: Andover, Bolton, Columbia, Coventry, Manchester, Vernon, and Windham will design and install signage along the entire 20-mile length of the State-owned Hop River State Park Trail, as well as a 0.5-mile section of the Willimantic River Greenway that connects the Hop River State Park Trail and the Air Line State Park Trail.

### Publications Projects

The intent and meaning of “publications” within the statute is interpreted as “v. the act of making information or stories known to the public in a printed or electronic form.” (Cambridge Dictionary). The CT RTP is framed based on the National Recreation Trail Program, which includes qualifying projects in the “Development and dissemination of publications and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection, (as those objectives relate to one or more of the uses of recreational trails, supporting non-law enforcement trail safety and trail use monitoring patrol programs, and providing trail-related training).”

Outreach and education are eligible projects and important recipients of funds as they address CTDEEP’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion objectives as well as important statewide outdoor recreation goals, such as those identified in the CTDEEP Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. During this cycle, \$1,567,137 (7.2% of total CT RTP awards) were awarded to such projects. Examples:

- (2015-2016) CFPA Trails Weekend booklets, marketing, data collection, Great Park Pursuit; walk book, trail educational materials for distribution, signage, kiosks, maintenance equipment and materials; chainsaw training.
- (2018-2019) UConn Extension Statewide volunteer-based CT Trail Census - trail data collection and education program implemented as a pilot from 2016-2018 on 16 multi-use (bicycle, pedestrian, equestrian) trail sites across the state. Design and launch of CT Trail Finder website providing statewide access to the trail manager approved trail maps and information, building a statewide trail database for planning and development.
- (2020-2021) CFPA 30<sup>th</sup> annual CT Trails Day, DEI Hike Series, Mansfield- Nipmuck Trail/ Elementary School Connection.
- (2022-2023) Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development will guide the creation of an organization comprising the existing 12 Town Air Line State Park Trail Task Force, which will coordinate planning, development, and maintenance for the 12 Town Air Line State Park Trail.

#### Maintenance Projects

Maintenance awards of \$2,016,582 (9.2% of CT RTP awards) were granted to projects which include activities or construction to maintain the usability and sustainability of Connecticut's existing recreational trail systems. Example projects:

- (2015-2016) CTDEEP Larkin State Park Trail resurfacing, drainage repairs and parking improvements.
- (2018-2019) CFPA Statewide Maintenance of Blue-blazed hiking trails.
- (2020-2021) CTDEEP Kent Falls State Park trail repairs.
- (2022-2023) - CTDEEP will remove hazard trees along the green trail, remove and replace existing cross culverts, and resurface and remove heavy vegetation adjacent to trails in Bennett's Pond State Park.

As identified in a review of CT RTP Grant funding allocation, construction awards (\$9,833,476 or 45.1%), and design awards (\$5,200,538 or 23.8%) dominate funding allocation. Construction and maintenance combined account for 54.3% of CT RTP funding (\$11,850,056). Planning and design account for 34.1% (\$7,454,087). These two main project categories cover 88.4% of awards. Publication/Education awards account for 7.2% of CTRTP funding (\$1,567,137), Equipment 2.2% (\$485,677), and Land Acquisition 0.8% (\$175,200).

#### Connecticut Trails of Regional Significance

There are over 2,500 miles of trails across state park and forest lands, with many more publicly accessible trails on municipal, land trust, and other conservation lands. Several trails are identified as regionally significant by a range of national partner organizations and collaborations. Notable trails are identified in the following section.

### *New England Trail*

The 215-mile New England Trail (NET) includes portions of four largely contiguous trails: the Mattabesett, Menunkatuck and Metacomet Trails in Connecticut and parts of the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail in Massachusetts. The NET was designated a national scenic trail in 2009. The principal trail stewards of the NET are the staff and volunteers of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association in Connecticut, and the Berkshire Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club in Massachusetts. They are assisted by the National Park Service in managing, protecting, restoring, and caring for this scenic New England treasure.

In 2021, 275 volunteers worked to maintain the NET, with approximately 7,069 hours in volunteer time donated along the length of the trail.

### *East Coast Greenway*

The East Coast Greenway (ECG), founded in 1991, is the nation's longest connected biking and walking route. It accommodates bicyclists, walkers, runners, inline skaters, horseback riders, wheelchair users, cross-country skiers and people of all ages and abilities. It travels through 25 cities and 450 communities from Maine to Key West, Florida. Despite being smaller than most



**Figure 4** *East Coast Greenway in Connecticut.*

East Coast Greenway states, Connecticut has one of the longest stretches of the route, at 200 miles. The trail connects Stamford, Bridgeport, New Haven, and Hartford.

Currently, 54% of the trail is a safe off-road multi-use trail. Additionally, the 56-mile Farmington Canal Heritage Trail, which is Connecticut's portion of an 84-mile trail from New Haven to Northampton, Mass., is nearing completion. The East Coast Greenway follows nearly the entire length of the Farmington Canal. One short gap remains, but the final connection is currently planned, is almost 100% designed, and is already fully funded for construction to be

completed by 2026. The East Coast Greenway also follows the Air Line State Park Trail, which will be a 50+ mile trail through 12 towns in eastern Connecticut.

Between 2015 -2023, 35.1 additional miles of the East Coast Greenway were constructed or were moving to the construction phase, with allocated funding of approximately \$64.32 million.

Moving forward, 18 state and federally **funded projects**, totaling 24 miles and \$94.5 million, will be completed by 2027, which would complete over 64% of the ECG in Connecticut.

#### Trail Partners and Advocacy Groups

DEEP's Office of Trails and Greenways engages and collaborates with a broad range of partner organizations and agencies to support the planning and management of recreational trails across the state. Many of these organizations provide significant volunteer support and stewardship of recreational resources. DEEP is grateful to the many organizations who have supported trails maintenance and management throughout the state.



#### *The Connecticut Forest and Park Association*

Established in 1895, the Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA) is a strong advocate for hiking trails, maintaining 825 miles representing the Blue-Blazed Hiking Trail System. CFPA trail

volunteers contribute thousands of hours annually to the maintenance and upkeep of this statewide network of trails. Section 23-10a of the Connecticut General Statutes states, "Those portions of the Connecticut Blue-Blazed trail system which cross state property are hereby designated as state hiking trails".

In 2021, CFPA volunteers donated over 29,000 hours of in-kind work valued at over \$800,000. This work included the organization of 43 trail work parties with help from over 300 volunteers. Volunteer training opportunities attracted 130 volunteers to the eighteen training sessions. Two new volunteer positions, an Activity Leader and a Habitat Steward, were added to the CFPA structure. The Ramble Guides held 38 Rambles that connected over 600 participants to the trails, walking locations, and open spaces our state has to offer.

To attract the next generation of conservation-conscious supporters, the Junior Conservation Ambassador Program was offered to sixteen students who were able to connect to the land thanks to a volunteer organizer and the support of ten volunteer presenters. Twenty-one Land Stewards monitored the 2,100+ acres of open space and forested land that CFPA protects. This work ensures CFPA properties are appropriately utilized and also helps to strengthen CFPA's name in the community.

#### *New England Mountain Bike Association*

The New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) is a non-profit recreational trails advocacy organization with 35 chapters and over 10,000 members across 5 states. At 36 years, NEMBA is one of the oldest mountain bike advocacy organizations in the country. NEMBA's mission is to promote the best that mountain biking has to offer, steward the trail systems where members recreate, and preserve open space. NEMBA has six regional chapters in Connecticut: Central Connecticut Chapter, Housatonic Valley Chapter, Southeastern Connecticut Chapter, Fairfield County Chapter, Northwest Connecticut Chapter, and the Quiet Corner Chapter representing Northeastern Connecticut.

NEMBA leads nearly 1,000 mountain bike rides annually, hosting various skills clinics and trail-building schools. It advocates for mountain biking and recreational trails, as well as organizes hundreds of trail-building and maintenance events in scores of state parks across the New England region. It also donates more than 8,000 hours of volunteerism to our local parks and forests each year. NEMBA is committed to working with key state leaders and land managers to protect mountain biking access and allow members to give back to the trails and to the sport they love.

#### *UConn Extension - CT Trails Program*

The University of Connecticut Extension, Connecticut Trails Program, funded through the CT Recreational Trails Grant Program, supports statewide coordination, data collection, research, and publication of Connecticut's trail resources. The Connecticut Trail Census, the Connecticut

Trail Finder, and People Active on Trails for Health and Sustainability (PATHS) make up UConn's CT trail Programs.

The Connecticut Trail Census is an innovative statewide volunteer-based data collection and education program that encourages data-informed decision making and promotes active citizen participation in multi-use path monitoring and advocacy. The Trail Census includes 23 state-wide trail use counts recorded by infrared pedestrian counters and trail user intercept surveys and provides the most comprehensive estimate of multi-use trail use in the region.

The Connecticut Trail Finder is a free, interactive mapping website designed to help Connecticut residents and visitors find hiking, walking, snowshoeing, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and paddling trails across the state. Detailed trail description pages allow users to view the trails, get essential information, and submit trip comments and photos. The website includes state park and forest trails, municipal trails, land trusts, the CFPA blue-blazed trail system and beyond. The database that UConn's Center for Land Education and Research is developing for the CT Trail Finder will provide the most comprehensive state-wide inventory of trail resources, which can serve not only for public outreach but also be useful for planning trail management activities.

People Active on Trails for Health and Sustainability (PATHS) is an interdisciplinary team at UConn committed to understanding and promoting the benefits of trails and natural resources for health, community, and economic development.

#### *Last Green Valley*

The Last Green Valley is a 35-town National Heritage Corridor in eastern Connecticut and south-central Massachusetts, and is a member-supported, non-profit stewardship organization within the National Heritage Corridor. Congress designated this region as The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor, recognizing the region as a unique national resource encompassing 35 towns: 26 in Connecticut and nine in Massachusetts. The Connecticut municipalities include Ashford, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Chaplin, Coventry, Eastford, Franklin, Griswold, Hampton, Killingly, Lebanon, Lisbon, Mansfield, Norwich, Plainfield, Pomfret, Preston, Putnam, Scotland, Sprague, Sterling, Thompson, Union, Voluntown, Windham, and Woodstock. Forest and farmland make up 84% of its almost 707,000 acres, yet it lies only an hour from three of New England's four largest urban areas. Its 300,000 inhabitants reside only 2 1/2 hours from 25 million people. The location of this largely undeveloped rural island amid the most urbanized region in the nation makes it a resource of local, regional, and national importance.

The Last Green Valley serves as a significant greenway within Connecticut, and its managing organization is a key partner to the Office of Trails and Greenways, serving as a member of the Greenways Council, coordinating the annual Spring Outdoors and Walktober events, and encouraging community engagement on trails, hikes, walks and bike rides across the region.

### *The Connecticut Horse Council / Equestrian Advisory Council*

The Equine Advisory Council (EAC) was established on May 22, 2007, by Public Act 07-42 to assist the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection with issues related to the preservation of equine trails in the state. The EAC consists of the president of the Connecticut Horse Council (CHC), established in 1971, and five representatives from organizations that serve the horse industry within each congressional district statewide, in addition to one member of the Connecticut Forests and Parks Association, appointed by the minority leader of the Senate.

The goals of the council are to:

- Promote equestrian use on public lands;
- Preserve, maintain, and restore existing trails;
- Promote the development of new multi-use trails;
- Document and create maps for trails used by equestrians.



During 2022, the CHC's Volunteer Horse Patrol (VHP) had 1,808 patrols. They logged 4,000 patrol hours valued at over \$100,000 in service to the state. The VHP's 20 years of volunteer contributions total 53,505 hours, equating to services worth \$1,337,625. The VHP patrols state and private lands, monitoring trail conditions and reporting to the property owners as well as providing assistance to trail users.



The New England Trail Rider Association (NETRA) promotes the sport of safe and responsible off-road motorcycling in the New England and New York region. Over 80 competitive and recreational events are held annually across the region providing a range of opportunities. NETRA is also a steward of off-road riders' rights. They are active with every state's legislators and land managers to preserve the right to ride. NETRA has over 3,000 members and 25 member clubs, including the Berkshire Trail Riders, Central Cycle Club, Connecticut Ramblers, Meriden Motorcycle Club, Inc., Salmon River County Riders, and Pathfinders Motorcycle Club in Connecticut.

The Connecticut Off Road Enthusiasts Coalition (COREC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to lobbying and petitioning the politicians of our state to designate land exclusively for use by its off-road community, through the support of members, dealers, and other supporting organizations.





There are many organizations that partner with CT DEEP Office of Trails. Many regional collaborations of volunteers, municipal and state representatives, planners, and professionals serve to support the planning, implementation, and expansion of their trails and greenways. These organizations include the Farmington Valley Trails Council, Hop River Alliance, Norwalk River Valley Trail, Naugatuck River Greenway, Shoreline Greenway, and many others.

Regional Councils of Governments (COGS), Regional Planning Organizations, Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area, and Watershed Councils support trails and greenways throughout Connecticut as one component of the mission. COGS are key partners in coordinating and planning funding opportunities between many state agencies and bringing opportunities to local municipalities and communities.

There are over 130 land trusts in Connecticut that provide a wide range of access to open spaces and trail resources. The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC), the only statewide service provider for all Connecticut land trusts, serves as a partner to DEEP's Office of Trails and Greenways. CLCC is a leader in advocacy and policy, education and training, and technical assistance to empower Connecticut's land trusts, and ensures the long-term viability of land conservation efforts in the state.



The Connecticut Outdoor Recreation Alliance (CORA ctoutdoors.org), established in 2019, is a broad coalition of stakeholders providing a unified voice for Connecticut's growing outdoor recreation industry. Engaged in a concerted effort to grow outdoor recreation by supporting the development of Connecticut's outdoor recreation economy. CORA believes outdoor recreation is created through the intersection of resources (parks, trails, waterways, etc.), users (hikers, boaters, skiers, hunt and fish etc.) and related commercial enterprises (manufacturers, distributors, labor, retailers, hospitality). CORA has provided advisory services to enhance governmental processes related to outdoor recreation access and priorities.

## Boating Division



The Boating Division's mission is to provide boating access, and to promote safe and clean boating, on all of Connecticut's coastal and inland waters. This mission is accomplished by providing access at 117 state boat launches that feature parking, access ramps, and associated infrastructure; promoting boating safety through outreach, education, and certification; and fostering environmental stewardship through the promotion of the Clean Vessel Act program. The Boating Division works in cooperation with other agency divisions and with many federal, municipal, and boating safety partners.

The Boating Division receives financial assistance to carry out the cooperative agreement between DEEP and the United States Coast Guard and to locally support their Recreational Boating Safety

Program. This assistance allows DEEP to implement State initiatives to reduce the number of boating accidents, injuries, and deaths on Connecticut waters. Through education and outreach, strategic placement of regulatory markers, regulated events, improved access, and active law enforcement, the boaters on Connecticut's waters become more knowledgeable.

This encourages the boaters of Connecticut to have a safe, secure, and enjoyable recreational boating experience.

#### State Boat Launches

The Boating Division manages and maintains access to 117 state boat launches that are located throughout the state, including 22 that provide boating access to Long Island Sound. Each year these launches are maintained by landscaping, picking up refuse, resurfacing, line striping, concrete repairs to the ramps, and wooden dock repairs. Solar lights, ADA-accessible parking,

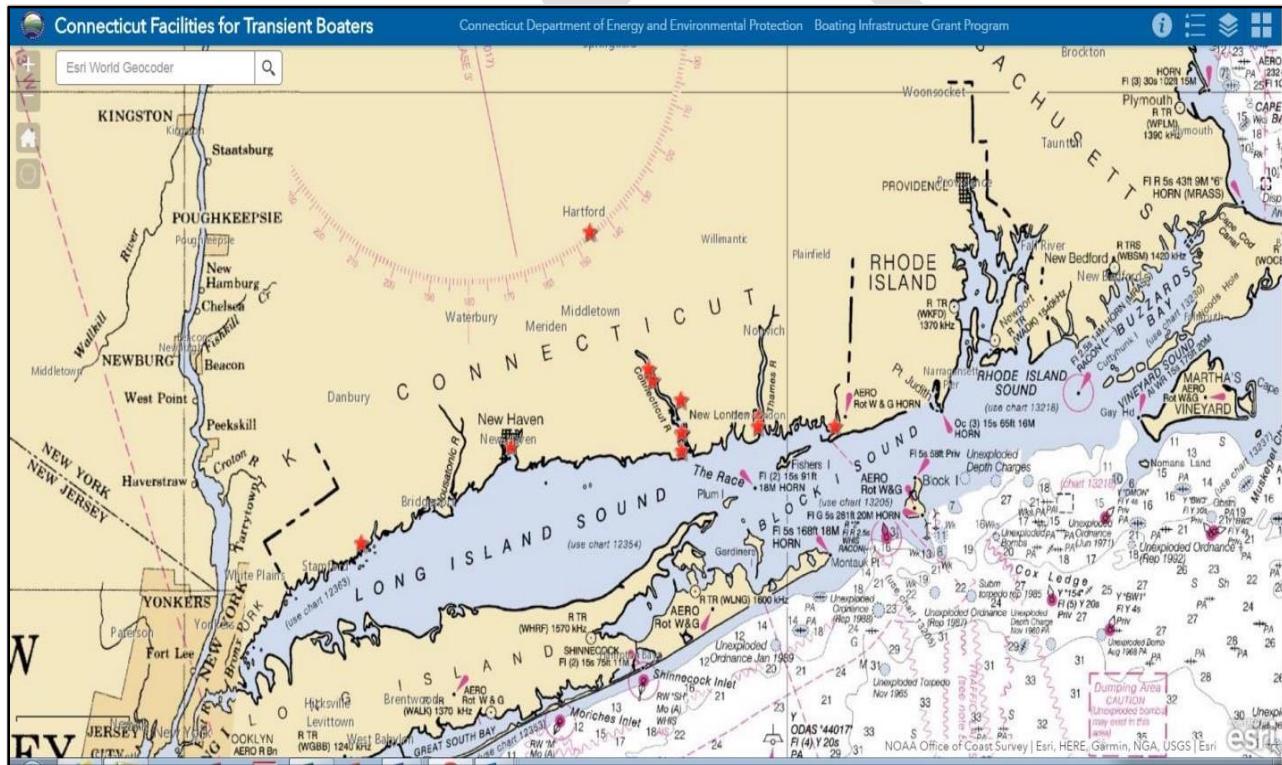
portable toilet platforms, and platform screens have been added at many boat launches. Toilet facilities are provided at 72 of the launches. In 2022, the Pachaug Pond State Boat Launch in Griswold was completely renovated.



#### Boating Infrastructure Grant Program

The Boating Division also administers the federal Boating Infrastructure Grant Program (BIG) on behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This program seeks to address insufficient facilities for transient, non-trailered boats and to connect boaters with recreational, cultural, historic, scenic, and natural resources of the United States.

BIG program funds are made available to public and private agencies, marinas, and facilities that provide transient tie-up opportunities for non-trailered boats. Eligible projects include the construction, renovation, and maintenance of publicly or privately-owned facilities including docks and moorings; upland amenities such as bathrooms, showers, laundry facilities, and picnic areas; installation of navigational aids for safe passage to the tie-up facility; and education materials. Throughout its history, twelve projects have been completed in Connecticut, all of which can be found on the DEEP interactive Facilities for Transient Boaters Facility Map<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup>



**Figure 5 Facilities for Coastal Transient Boaters**

<sup>2</sup> [www.ct.gov/deep/transientboaterfacilities](http://www.ct.gov/deep/transientboaterfacilities)

<sup>3</sup> For more information about the program please visit:

[http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2686&q=322280&deepNav\\_GID=1620](http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2686&q=322280&deepNav_GID=1620)

## Aquatic Invasive Species Control

Invasive species threaten the quality of recreational aquatic sites. To maintain the quality of Connecticut's waterbodies, the Boating Division staff have participated in several initiatives and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

For example, the Zebra Mussel Task Force, formed in 2010 in response to the discovery of zebra mussels in the Candlewood Lake area, was expanded to become a Regional Lake Task Force. The Regional Lake Task Force includes individuals and agencies with expertise in zebra mussels, DEEP staff from Inland Fisheries and Boating Divisions, and lake community residents and representatives. The scope of the water quality topics covered by the Task Force also increased to include invasive plants and blue-green algal blooms.

In 2012, Connecticut General Statute 15-180 was amended to require the inspection of vessels and trailers for aquatic invasive species (AIS) such as zebra mussels. In 2022, over 4,300 vessel inspections were completed by seasonal boating staff. Through outreach efforts, including direct conversations with boaters and a digital advertising campaign in 2022, awareness of AIS laws in Connecticut continues to improve.

## Outreach Efforts

Connecticut is a state rich with boating access and diverse waterbodies. From Long Island Sound to small inland rivers, diverse waterbodies call for specialized boating safety outreach. To broadcast safety messages that are waterbody specific and effective, the Boating Division utilizes several methods, including two outreach vessels.

The first vessel, named *Prudence*, is used on larger inland waterbodies and Long Island Sound. On waterbodies that have motor restrictions or speed limits, the Boating Division utilizes a smaller vessel that is powered by an electric outboard. This type of motor is particularly useful when accessing smaller waterbodies and gives the Boating Division a chance to interact with a broader range of boaters.

While on the water, DEEP staff educates boaters about local regulations, provides boating safety tips, and discusses other boating education-related topics. DEEP staff approaches as many boaters as possible from paddlers to those operating larger vessels. Waterbodies are targeted when boater activity is expected to be the highest, including weekends and evenings, in order to have the most impact.

The Boating Division has expanded boating safety messaging through social media channels including Facebook, X (Twitter), and Instagram, on which it collectively has over 9,000 followers. The Division posts relevant information about new regulations, updated technology, and boat launch closures. Early in the calendar year, when the water remains cold and the air warms up, there is a real danger to boaters. DEEP launched a "Cold Water" campaign in 2022

to bring more focused attention to boating during the March to May months. This campaign included an increase in safety reminders for cold water boating and ice safety.

For more boater information on safety topics and regulations, the Boating Division also publishes an annual Connecticut Boater's Guide magazine. The agency distributes 75,000 hard copies of this guide each year and provides digital options in both English and Spanish.

Seasonal staff called Boating Education Assistants, or BEAs, visited state boat launches to interact with boaters to discuss clean and safe boating including pump-out facilities, aquatic invasive species, no discharge areas, wearing life jackets, and more. BEAs conduct voluntary Vessel Safety Checks and Aquatic Invasive Species Inspections and report launch conditions.

For more information about these vessels or other outreach programs, please visit the website: <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Boating/Boating-and-Paddling>

### Safe Boating Classes and Certification

Mandatory education for the operation of boats in Connecticut started in 1992. The safe boating course began by teaching about boating safety and has evolved to include safe personal watercraft operation in 1999, and safety while engaged in towed watersports in 2015. With the assistance of volunteer instructors, the Boating Division provides education to an average of 1,800 students each year. In response to COVID, safe boating courses were approved for teaching in a virtual classroom in addition to the traditional classroom setting and this method continues today.

### Clean Water Management



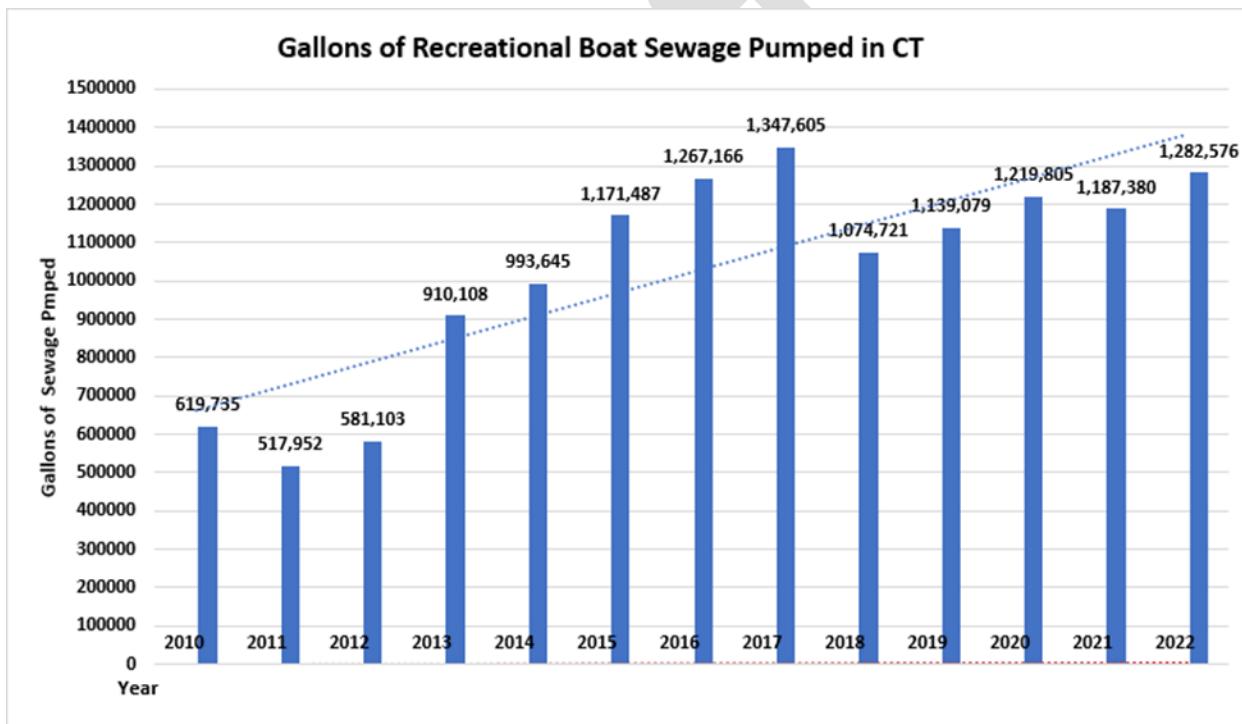
Clean water and clean air make boating experiences more enjoyable. By becoming aware of some of the environmental hazards that are associated with boating, and using sound environmental boating practices, boaters are educated by the Division to help protect our resources and ensure the future health of Connecticut's waters. In 2022, there were 2,971 clean boater pledges received.

Since its inception, the Federal Clean Water Act has prohibited the discharge of untreated sewage from vessels in all of Long Island Sound. Connecticut's coastal waters from the Rhode Island state boundary

in the Pawcatuck River to the New York State Boundary in the Byram River and extending from shore out to the New York state boundary have been designated by EPA as a federal No Discharge Area. In these waters, the discharge of any sewage from any vessel is prohibited.

Facilities funded under this program provide free pump-out services to recreational boaters statewide.

The Boating Division has awarded approximately \$8.5 million in Clean Vessel Act Grant funds to qualifying projects that provide boat sewage disposal facilities. The Boating Division provides a pump-out vessel on Candlewood Lake as well. An interactive web app was created so that boaters can easily locate a pump-out facility or pump-out boat from their smartphone or tablet. Visit: [www.ct.gov/deep/pumpoutdirectory](http://www.ct.gov/deep/pumpoutdirectory).



**Figure 6 Gallons of Recreational Boat Sewage Pumped**

The Division is positioned to continue educating boaters about clean and safe boating. The Division achieves these goals through the deployment of Boating Education Assistants at state boat launches, through boating safety classes and outreach events at boat shows and other on-water venues, and through innovative educational programming.

#### Division of State Environmental Conservation Police

The Division of State Environmental Conservation Police (EnCon) mission is natural resource protection and public safety through education, outreach, and enforcement. EnCon added 8 new positions in 2022 and 2023 due to state budget support from Governor Lamont and the

legislature, resulting in 62 sworn officer positions statewide. Encon is completing the hiring process for these positions which will help address increased enforcement needs stemming from the spike in demand for outdoor recreation, increased park visitation, and elevated human-bear conflicts.

The Division is composed of certified police officers with the primary responsibility for enforcing the state's wildlife, commercial and recreational fishing, and boating laws, and providing traditional law enforcement services in Connecticut state parks and forests.

EnCon also enforces Connecticut's off-road vehicle statutes to prevent environmental degradation of sensitive landscapes. These efforts improve the quality of life for our citizens that recreate in Connecticut state parks and forests and on the waterways of our state.



The Division of State Environmental Conservation Police has maintained two public outreach trailers outfitted for use at public events to highlight the Division's mission of natural resource protection and public safety through education, outreach, and enforcement. These public outreach trailers are taken to events including large agricultural fairs, boat shows, hunting and fishing shows, and public safety events done in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies. This gives uniformed officers the opportunity to interact with the public in a positive setting and to respond to questions about a variety of topics ranging from wildlife concerns to boating safety requirements. From 2017 through 2022, officers from the EnCon Police Division participated in 1,469 public outreach events.

The EnCon Police Division has continued to expand the K-9 program from four officers selected for the unit in 2011 to seven teams currently. In 2022, the division added three new K-9s to the teams and completed three weeks of rigorous training by the State Police K-9 unit and were certified in search and rescue tracking and evidence recovery. From 2017 through 2022, the K-9 unit's skills and abilities were called upon 456 times to assist in the search for lost and missing persons and the location of evidence.

In 2015, the Division began efforts to initiate a new program called Connecticut Operation Game Thief. The goals of the program are to promote outdoor recreation including hunting and fishing, bring awareness to the public of the consequences of poaching, be a recruiting tool

for the profession of conservation law enforcement, and identify and apprehend wildlife violators. This effort is still under development with significant progress being made during 2022, with the division sending an officer to the annual International Wildlife Crimestopper's meeting. The division has plans to follow through with this program in the coming years.

In 2020, Connecticut required, as part of a sweeping police accountability bill, that all law enforcement officers be outfitted with body-worn cameras and dash cameras in patrol vehicles by July 1, 2022. EnCon Police met that requirement by outfitting officers with body-worn cameras and dash cameras while working diligently to update our policy and procedures to meet state-mandated police accreditation standards for 2023. The accreditation standards will ensure that EnCon Police are following nationwide best practices in order to be responsive to and serve our constituents in a professional manner.

During the period January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2022, EnCon Police logged a total of 159,644 calls for service. In this period, officers issued 6,358 citations and 3,650 warnings, investigated 202 accidents, and made 638 arrests. EnCon staffing levels throughout the 5-year period ranged from as low as 44 officers to 50 officers as we saw the retirement of several experienced officers and the hiring of new officers during this time. For 2023, EnCon Police will work to fill vacancies from retirements and add 5 new officers with funding appropriated from the 2022 state budget.

## Bureau of Natural Resources

The Bureau of Natural Resources (BNR), like many other entities, faced many challenges in 2020. Connecticut's State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, Water Access Areas, fishing access locations and piers, and Natural Area Preserves all experienced unprecedented increases in public use during the pandemic as people sought solace in nature and pursued more independent forms of recreation. While this increased interest and activity presented challenges in terms of facility capacity, it also created a unique opportunity to engage with new audiences, foster a love of nature and the outdoors, increase awareness of conservation issues facing fish, wildlife, and their habitats, and help us reimagine how we engage with people. An area of focus for the Bureau of Natural Resources is addressing the impacts of climate change on our ecosystems. Creating healthy, more resilient habitats helps fish, wildlife, and people. Significant new federal investments have enabled a focus on increasing urban tree canopy cover and sustaining urban trees and riparian areas as places for refuge and recreation from urban heat island stress. Our globalized economy has contributed to an increased occurrence of new and emerging invasive insects, non-native plants, and new diseases which all have negatively impacted our natural resources. Climate change has exacerbated extreme seasonal weather patterns resulting in both drought and flood conditions, sea level rise, and increased storm intensity. These stressors have combined to amplify management challenges and the complexity of actions needed to ensure outdoor activities remain accessible and enjoyable, and our fish and wildlife resources, and the habitats they rely on, are here for future generations to enjoy.



*Connecticut Wildlife Magazine* continues to be popular, with articles about inland and marine fisheries, forestry, and wildlife, and encouraging the interest of all outdoor enthusiasts. *Wildlife Highlights* and *Hunter Highlights* are monthly and quarterly electronic newsletters that provide tips on wildlife-associated recreation, outdoor safety, and wildlife conservation. These digital resources reach over seven thousand and nearly two thousand readers, respectively.

The Conservation Advisory Council (CAC) was established to a.) enhance communication and the exchange of information among, and between sportsmen and conservation organizations and the DEEP involving the management of natural resources, b.) identify and address issues that affect the users of outdoor recreation areas and natural resources, and c.) advise and assist the DEEP in matters involving the management of natural resources and outdoor activities. The CAC consists of conservation and outdoor sports organizations whose activities are enhanced or

affected by the Bureaus of Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation. Members of the Council are recommended by the sitting Council and appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, to include up to 25 regular members, five members at large, and 10 emeritus members.

DEEP staff and many DEEP-produced educational materials are involved in the Connecticut Envirothon. The Connecticut Envirothon is a natural resource-based education program started in 1992 by the state's Soil and Water Conservation Districts. High school students work in teams led by a teacher/advisor. During the school year, teams receive curriculum materials and are invited to a series of training workshops in the Envirothon study areas of Soils, Aquatics, Wildlife, Forestry, and a Current Environmental Issue. These workshops are presented by foresters, soil scientists, aquatic ecologists, wildlife biologists, and many others. Students benefit from meeting people working in a broad range of environmental careers. Teachers also benefit and find the program a wonderful source of networking and professional growth for their own careers. A spring competition among teams results in a state winner. The winning team earns the chance to represent Connecticut at the North American Envirothon, a weeklong event held at a college campus in the summer. They compete with about 60 teams from across the USA and Canada for scholarships and other prizes. Many Envirothon alumni go on to further study leading to environmental careers and are eligible for special scholarships.

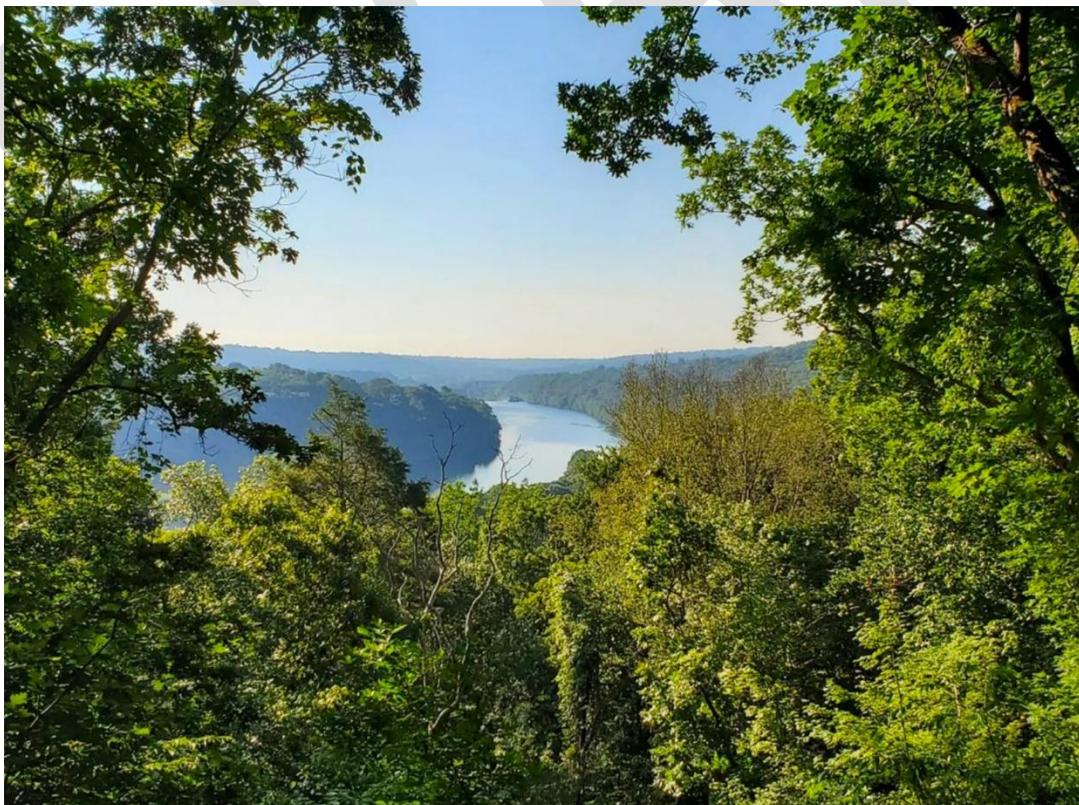
While 2020 halted many in-person recreational events, it provided an opportunity to reimagine how we connect with people and how we can help them engage with nature regardless of where they are. The Wildlife Division created activities that could be done at home either to supplement online learning or to provide wildlife associated recreational opportunities for your backyard, balcony, or neighborhood greenspace. Links to live-stream wildlife cameras helped make nature accessible for everyone, and community science projects provided volunteers a way to continue to contribute to research and conservation of natural resources. The increased interest in outdoor recreation provided an avenue to teach about the importance of caring for natural resources and recreating responsibly. The Wildlife Division participated in a national #ResponsibleRecreation initiative and developed a webpage dedicated to the care and use of our state parks, forests, wildlife management areas, and natural area preserves.

In 2016, the most recent survey reported 101.6 million Americans 16 years old and older, 40% of the U.S. population, enjoyed some form of fishing, hunting or wildlife-associated recreation. Outdoor recreation is a huge contributor to our nation's economy, and expenditures by hunters, anglers, and wildlife-watchers were \$156.3 billion. This equates to 1% of Gross Domestic Product; one out of every one hundred dollars of all goods and services produced in the U.S. is due to wildlife-associated recreation. (U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. 2016 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.)

## Forestry Division

Programs within the Division of Forestry focus on working with partners to protect, enhance, and ensure the resiliency of Connecticut's forest resources. These programs encourage private landowners to practice responsible long-term forest management applying science-based management techniques. Private landowners possess 72% of Connecticut's forest, with more than two-thirds of that owned by families or individuals. The Division protects Connecticut's forest resources from the effects of fire, insects, disease, and misuse, provides accurate and timely information about Connecticut's forest resources, certifies forest practitioners, manages the large blocks of contiguous forestland in state forests, engages municipalities and citizens in the work of urban forestry, and encourages the local forest industry.

In 2020, the Forestry Division completed a full update of the State Forest Action Plan. The Forest Action Plan is a document intended to guide the management of forests by the DEEP Forestry Division and the State's forest conservation partners (academia, extension, non-profits, regional organizations, municipalities, and private landowners). Input from these partners, as well as the public, was imperative to preparing a robust guidance document. The State Forest Action Plan is meant to complement other statewide plans including Connecticut's Wildlife Action Plan (CTWAP), Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), the Green Plan, the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) Plan, and the Policy on Resilient



Forests for Connecticut's Future (PRFCT Future) report. Since 2017, Connecticut's Forest Legacy Program has permanently protected an additional 1,495 acres in Stafford using more than \$2,800,000 in federal Forest Legacy funding and is currently working on a 483-acre project in Ashford that was awarded \$1,450,000 in federal Forest Legacy funding by the US Forest Service.



This project will be added to Connecticut's existing Forest Legacy Program project list totaling 9,621 acres, with interests valued near \$24,000,000, using just over \$11,000,000 in federal funds.

The US The Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have provided a significant amount of money since

2017 in the form of grants and technical assistance, with guidance from the Forestry Division to private landowners and non-profits to improve Connecticut's forests. The US Forest Service has awarded \$775,000 in competitive grants to Connecticut government and non-profit agencies with additional funding through multi-state projects. Through NRCS, from 2017 to 2022, more than \$2 million was awarded to private landowners to complete forestry improvement projects and young forest habitat projects and to prepare forest stewardship plans offering guidance to ensure management of forest resources in Connecticut are following science-based methods and practices.

In 2018, the Forestry Division, working with the Wildlife Division, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and private landowners, began working to increase the acreage of young forest habitat on state and private land to benefit wildlife species. Young forest habitat benefits at least fifty species of Greatest Conservation Need (GCN) and provides both structural and age diversity which can improve resiliency to climate change.

Since 2017, numerous challenges have arisen affecting forests throughout the state, including state-owned forest lands. Drought, spongy moth, beech leaf disease, and emerald ash borer have significantly impacted forest health and wildlife habitat, and there has been an increase in recreational uses across state lands resulting from the COVID-19 epidemic.

These challenges have presented opportunities to foresters working within the State Lands Management program. In response to forest health issues, DEEP foresters led the development of an assessment tool, and trained DEEP staff to identify and record hazard tree information to

mitigate public safety concerns to help keep DEEP facilities open and safe for continued use and enjoyment. Since the emergence of COVID-19, there has been an increased interest in forest management activities on state lands as recreational use has expanded. In 2020, foresters began hosting field walks prior to implementing forestry projects with the objective of improving communications between foresters and the community and sharing information about the forest resource and management strategies DEEP has developed for each area. These outreach events have been well received by the public and will continue for future projects. Also, in addition to traditional passive recreational uses such as hunting, hiking, and birding on state forest land, there has been a significant increase in active recreational uses such as unauthorized motorized vehicle use, as well as illegal trail creation and unauthorized use. Responsible trail use begins with the planning and development of an authorized trail system that is designed to minimize environmental impact on resources and habitat while providing recreational users the opportunity to discover and enjoy the forests of Connecticut.

DEEP's Forest Protection Program has also been working in response to these issues. In Pachaug State Forest, work is being conducted utilizing multiple US Forest Service Wildfire Risk Reduction grants to reduce excessive fuel loads and hazards and create fire breaks that would help protect firefighters and increase public safety along roads and trails in heavily impacted areas of the forest. This work began in 2018 and is expected to continue through 2024. Additionally, work has been initiated to restore a sand barren ecosystem at Hopeville Pond State Park, specifically a pitch pine grassland community. This rare ecosystem provides habitat for several species of concern, including the buck moth. Without the disturbance of fire, it is anticipated that the pitch pine stands would be lost to natural competition and the opportunity to perpetuate the sand barren ecosystem will greatly diminish.

The Service Forestry Program informed the development of Connecticut's first and only Master Woodland Manager Program alongside Connecticut Forest and Park Association. In its first year and with the help of Service Forestry and other program partners (Audubon Connecticut, UConn, CLCC, CAES), this landowner education program engaged 34 landowners from 31 (of 169) municipalities. These participants completed 92 hours of field-based learning and 15 hours of virtual learning, which ultimately prepared participants to steward 12,358 forest acres throughout Connecticut. This Program has been so successful that there continues to be an applicant waitlist each year.

The State Urban Program Coordinator developed and proposed legislation, which was successfully passed in 2023, resulting in a statewide goal to increase urban tree canopy cover by 5% by 2040. Additionally, \$1 million in Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) funds and \$500,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were dedicated to urban forestry in 2020 and 2022, respectively. These funds have yielded successful municipal and non-profit grant programs, with an emphasis on capacity building and urban forest stewardship in historically

underserved and vulnerable communities. Urban forestry is at the center of forestry-related policy development, statewide initiatives, and stewardship, as well as being integral to the 2020 Forest Action Plan and the 2021 Governor's Council on Climate Change.

### **Fisheries Division – Inland**

A major role of the DEEP Fisheries Division is to conserve and actively manage Connecticut's fish and fisheries. Current estimates indicate recreational fishing provides approximately 436 million dollars to Connecticut's economy. In addition to an economic benefit, well-managed fisheries provided benefit to an informed public, one that appreciates the ecological value of our fisheries.

#### **Fish Management**

The Inland Fisheries Management program seeks to create and maintain a diverse suite of recreational fishing opportunities for the public. Both cold water (trout and salmon) and warm water (e.g., black bass, walleye, northern pike, and channel catfish) fisheries are managed primarily through stocking and/or regulations. These practices result in our trout management areas, bass management lakes, community fishing waters, and many other management types. Central to providing high-quality angling opportunities are management plans, which outline actions and management strategies. Currently, Fisheries Division biologists are operating under a Salmonid Action Plan, a Bass Action Plan, and a Wild Trout Conservation and Management Plan, each of which were developed with input from the angling public. A comprehensive Warmwater Fisheries Action Plan is being drafted.

## Fish Culture

The foundation of recreational fishing in Connecticut is the State Fish Hatchery System, which began in 1899 with the first state-run trout hatchery, located in Windsor Locks. Three facilities currently produce all trout and salmon stocked by the Fisheries Division, to support recreational fishing. The largest is the Quinebaug Valley Trout Hatchery in Plainfield. Built-in 1973, this facility rears and stocks nearly 400,000 adult trout annually. The Burlington State Fish Hatchery, built in 1923, supports the unique programs of; Kokanee (sockeye salmon), one of the only active recreational fisheries east of the Mississippi River and the “Survivor Strain” brown trout fishery in the West Branch Farmington River. The facility and staff produce over 100,000 adult-sized trout and over 150,000 Kokanee fingerlings annually. The final facility, Kensington State Fish Hatchery, built in 1932, focuses on Atlantic salmon, both maintaining the genetics of the Connecticut River strain as well as producing fish specifically to support unique recreational fishing for Atlantic salmon on the Naugatuck and Shetucket rivers. This facility also rears and stocks the “Seeforellen Strain” brown trout, a strain that can reach large size in some of Connecticut’s trout management lakes.

## Habitat Conservation and Enhancement

The Habitat Conservation and Enhancement (HCE) program serves as a vital liaison between the Fisheries Division and other DEEP programs holding primary permitting responsibility for regulated activities potentially impacting fish populations and their habitats.

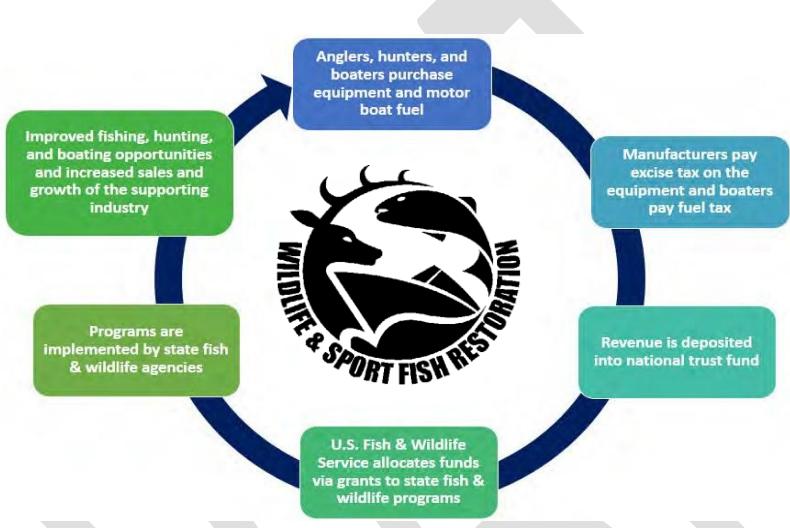
HCE staff interact directly with federal, state, and local regulatory and planning agencies, as well as private conservation organizations and individuals, to provide timely information to conserve, restore and enhance the state's aquatic environments.

On average, staff annually review over 200 projects and activities that have the potential to affect fish habitat and fish populations. For many of these projects, staff provide recommendations to applicants and regulatory staff that result in the protection, restoration, or enhancement of fish habitat and ensure that fish populations are not harmed. For example, recommendations for new culverts might request design changes relative to culvert slope and outlet elevation to ensure that fish can enter and swim through the culvert. Recommendations



often include restricting the time-of-year when instream work can be done to protect spawning fish.

The HCE program also manages the introduction of sterile grass carp for the use of aquatic vegetation control in Connecticut's lakes and ponds. Permits are needed to release grass carp into state waters and the HCE program has established criteria such as onsite inspections and screening requirements that must be met to obtain such permits. Annually, over 125 permit applications for stocking triploid grass carp are processed.



**Figure 8 Wildlife and Sport Fishing Restoration Plan**

#### Diadromous

The Diadromous Fish Restoration Program seeks to restore runs of Connecticut's migratory fish species. These include the anadromous alewife, blueback herring, American shad, and sea lamprey which spend most of their adult lives at sea, but must return to freshwater to spawn, as well as the catadromous American eel, which spend most of their adult lives in freshwater but must return to saltwater to spawn. Program staff strive to maintain, enhance, or recreate migratory fish runs using a variety of strategies including removing dams and other migratory barriers, constructing and operating fishways, transplanting fish, building partnerships, and providing public outreach to raise awareness about the importance of these keystone species.

#### Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education (CARE):

The Connecticut Aquatic Resource Education (CARE) program, established in 1986, strives to recruit people to the sport of fishing through a diverse set of free educational courses and hands-on experiences. A primary focus is to provide the skills and confidence to beginner anglers so they may choose fishing as an activity of choice through a combination of web-based

training, instructional videos, in-person and virtual classes, and fishing events. The program offers ice fishing, trout fishing, warm water pond fishing, saltwater fishing, fly fishing, and women only fishing events. CARE partners with organizations and municipalities to bring a successful first fishing experience to anglers of every age across the state in rural, suburban, and urban communities.

In 2019, Connecticut was one of ten states to be awarded a "Mobile First Catch Center", a graphic-wrapped cargo trailer designed to haul all the gear needed to facilitate "pop up" fishing events statewide to help introduce people to fishing.



The global pandemic of 2020 prompted a shift in CARE programs to include virtual classes featuring self-paced, online learning, with video content. In addition to greatly expanding the fishing instruction video library, the CARE program launched a self-paced web-based introduction to fishing courses in English and Spanish. The course, based on the CARE Intro to Fishing curriculum, was key to continuing to engage people during the COVID-19 pandemic when in-person gatherings were not possible. The course continues to be popular due to the flexibility for people to participate when and where convenient.

With the addition of a Mobile First Catch Center, provided through a grant from the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation (RBFF) in 2020, the CARE program can bring fishing to your neighborhood. In 2021, over 4,100 people attended one of 139 events crossing 41 towns. A second grant from RBFF provided funding to purchase equipment used for a "beginner fishing kit", which is distributed to participants at one of our "First Catch Events". Crucial to assisting the CARE staff reach as many people as possible are certified volunteer

fishing coaches who donated 2,877 hours in 2021 providing \$163,646 in-kind match for our Federal Sport Fish Restoration Grant.

### Recruitment, Retention, Reactivation (R3)

The Connecticut DEEP Fisheries Division has developed an Angler R3 Plan to build upon prior R3 actions and to ensure our efforts are relevant moving forward. Our R3 efforts are structured into three different themes: Opportunities and Access, Adult-Onset Participation, and Feeding the Flame. Each theme has a hierarchy of goals, objectives, and details needed for implementation.

Examples of recent successful activities and campaigns include the implementation of an online angler recognition submission process, which includes the Youth Fishing Passport – Fishing Challenge, Tiger-Tamer campaign (free T-shirts to people who caught a Tiger Trout), and a “Take a Friend Fishing” campaign to encourage existing anglers to share their passion for fishing with others.

### Fisheries Education and Outreach



The distribution of relevant fishing information is key to maintaining relevant and timely communication with those who are interested in fish and fishing. The Fisheries Division uses a multi-faceted approach including social media (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube), webinars, a monthly e-newsletter (*CT Fishin Tips*), articles in Connecticut Wildlife Magazine, email, trout stocking reports, and an interactive stocking map. Public presentations at various sporting clubs, groups, associations as well as television and radio interviews, along with Facebook Live sessions and webinars, deliver our message to a variety of audiences.

### Conservation Partners

The Fisheries Division receives support and partnership from many local and regional conservation organizations involved in angling, boating, fisheries management, aquatic habitat protection, and fish passage. These groups provide hundreds of hours of volunteer effort annually teaching Connecticut Aquatic Resources Education (CARE) programs, cleaning streams and rivers, enhancing aquatic habitat, assisting with fish stocking, participating in community science projects, testifying, and helping to address invasive species issues. Generous conservation partners include the Connecticut Fisheries Advisory Council, Trout Unlimited,

Connecticut River Salmon Association, Connecticut River Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, and dozens of local private fish and game clubs.

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Wildlife/Federal-Funding-for-Fish-and-Wildlife>

#### **Fisheries Division – Marine**

The Marine Fisheries program has been entrusted with managing and conserving marine natural resources (ecosystems) for all citizens of the state. This program oversees an area encompassing 618 miles of coastline, 1,300 square miles of Long Island Sound and three major river systems, estuaries of the Connecticut, Thames, and Housatonic Rivers. Long Island Sound is steeped in cultural and historical traditions utilizing common property resources which support outdoor recreation. Approximately 95% of state residents live within 50 miles of the Long Island Sound and another 150,000 enjoy recreational fishing in the waters of the Sound. Marine Fisheries manages important recreational fish and invertebrate species for all citizens of the state to enjoy and have access to.



The Marine Fisheries Program continues to work with federal, other state partners and municipalities on sustainable fisheries management, while maintaining the health of this diverse fishery resource. The Marine Fisheries Program strives to acquire coastal access to protect and support important fisheries habitat, while also allowing constituents to participate in outdoor recreation. Outdoor recreation relevancy is determined through surveying constituents, determining their needs, and more importantly, exceeding their expectations as it applies to Connecticut's natural cultural and historical resources. Lastly, the Program strives to better understand the impacts of recreation on natural marine ecosystems in order to make informed decisions to protect, conserve and manage these important resources of this state.

The Marine Fisheries Program actively participates in DEEP's priority to acquire property or easements to facilitate safe public access for fishing, supporting the Bureau of Natural Resources' mission to create, maintain, and improve important public fishing access areas. The Program also collaborates with the Boating Division to make improvements to state-owned boat launches, while specifically working with DEEP Parks Division and coastal municipalities to maximize public access for fishing opportunities. In a continuous effort to maintain safe natural fishery resources, Marine Fisheries supports efforts to manage and control aquatic invasive species that potentially could affect outdoor recreation areas, facilities, and the important recreational fish species anglers seek. Through marine angler surveys, specific outdoor recreation issues are identified in order to determine the supply of (inventory) and demand for outdoor recreational resources and facilities along Connecticut's coastline.



The Marine Fisheries program works closely with other divisions and programs within DEEP to acquire property or easements to facilitate public access for fishing. It develops relationships, partnering with municipalities and non-government organizations, to increase public access for fishing along the 96 miles of coastal shoreline access.



The Marine Fisheries Program creates multi-lingual web and print content and signage to better communicate public fishing access and outdoor recreational fishing opportunities. In cooperation with the DEEP Parks Division and coastal municipalities, public access to as many diverse fishing locations throughout the marine ecosystem are maximized while striving to maintain and improve fishing access for persons with disabilities. Lastly, an additional important focus is determining whether all citizens have access to outdoor recreational opportunities, including those in underserved communities.

The Marine Fisheries program supports “Fish with CARE” and “Learn to Fish” programs and events at publicly accessible fishing locations and works with DEEP Parks Division and coastal municipalities to maximize public access to fishing locations to allow for healthy participation

and enjoyable fishing opportunities. Through the support of these “Learn to Fish” programs promoting healthy lifestyles through the creation of digital content for social media platforms, the connection between recreational fishing and healthy lifestyles is demonstrated. This will ultimately increase participation in outdoor activities supporting our mission. These public outreach programs expand public/private partnerships and relationships to increase outdoor recreation participation.



A priority of Marine Fisheries is to provide access opportunities through funding and/or technical guidance to underserved communities, especially in Environmental Justice Communities, striving to develop relationships and build trust to expand recreational opportunities. Marine Fisheries offers technical assistance by providing guidelines to outdoor recreational facilities so as to maximize and expand outdoor participation by all constituents. Ultimately these efforts are to provide opportunities for people of the state of Connecticut “To Go Outside” and enjoy the health benefits. Supporting conservation by increasing participation is fundamental to this mission.



## **Wildlife Division**

The mission of the Wildlife Division is to advance the conservation, use, and appreciation of Connecticut's wildlife resources. Wildlife are inventoried, monitored, and managed to maintain healthy populations, including endangered and threatened species. Annually, hundreds of volunteers help inventory and monitor wildlife in partnership with the Wildlife Division. To support a diversity of wildlife and wildlife habitats, the Wildlife Division manages a diverse array of habitat types in Wildlife Management Areas, State Forests, Natural Area Preserves, and some State Parks. Educational programs and technical assistance are provided to enhance privately owned habitats, manage nuisance wildlife, and promote an appreciation for the value of Connecticut's wildlife. Environmental Reviews ensure that projects on state lands, using state funds, or requiring state permits, do not impact species that are listed as endangered, threatened, or special concern under Connecticut's Endangered Species Act.





The Wildlife Division manages and maintains a system of 109 Wildlife Management Areas that provide important habitat for wildlife and areas for the public to pursue wildlife-based recreation. Public hunting opportunities are offered on state-owned, privately owned required habitats with the Wildlife Division regulating hunting seasons and bag limits for harvestable wildlife species statewide. With volunteer assistance, conservation education and safety programs are provided to promote safe and ethical hunting practices. The mission and actions of the Wildlife Division are closely aligned with DEEP strategic goals as we strive toward: “safeguarding, enhancing, and promoting Connecticut’s environment and natural resources...” and “promoting environmental and energy justice by applying equity, diversity, and inclusion lenses to policy development [and] program implementation...”

Connecticut’s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) was updated in 2015, establishing a conservation blueprint for proactively conserving Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and their habitats. In addition to updating Connecticut’s SGCN list, the SWAP describes key habitats and communities. The 2015 Plan was expanded to include 100 plant SGCN. A total of 67 animal SGCN were added, while 75 were removed. The 2015 SGCN list includes 26 mammals, 95 birds, 31 reptiles and amphibians, 73 fish, 242 invertebrates, and 100 plants.

To guide conservation, the Plan details threats and stressors that impact SGCN and key habitats and prescribes conservation actions to address those threats. In addition to these elements, originally established in the 2005 plan, the 2015 revision includes information on climate change, energy development, and emerging diseases.



The SWAP discusses threats posed by outdoor recreation including the encroachment of humans into natural areas, the degradation of habitat by motorized vehicles, the degradation of habitat by the blazing of unauthorized trails, and adverse impacts like disturbance, litter, and injury. Actions to deal with these threats include developing best management practices for sensitive species, increasing public awareness and stewardship, and creating outreach materials promoting responsible recreation. Participation by conservation partners, academic institutions, and the public is key to making the Wildlife Action Plan an effective tool for conserving Connecticut's diversity of wildlife resources for future generations. DEEP has initiated a revision to the SWAP, due in 2025. As part of that effort, DEEP plans to conduct user surveys with existing and new stakeholders to better understand how to make the 2025 SWAP relevant and accessible to a wider audience. Connecticut's fish and wildlife diversity serves as a significant recreational attraction for residents and tourists alike and the SWAP provides a blueprint to recover declining species and keep common species common.

#### **Endangered Species**

The presence of endangered species in the state reminds us that our environment is fragile and subject to degradation if not properly cared for by all. While some recreation can be a threat to

wildlife species, recreationists, through activities such as wildlife viewing and bird watching, can help to further support the efforts of the DEEP to protect these valuable resources. The DEEP has a long record of success in identifying and intervening in the management of threatened and endangered species.

In 1986, when the piping plover was added to the federal Endangered and Threatened Species List as a threatened species, only 20 pairs nested on nine Connecticut beaches. Thirty years later, in 2022, Connecticut had a record 66 pairs of plovers nesting on 17 beaches. This success is due to a large, collaborative effort including the US Fish and Wildlife Service, DEEP, Audubon Connecticut, the Connecticut Audubon Society, and the Nature Conservancy. This alliance protects shorebirds across the state using string fencing, volunteer monitors, and outreach campaigns to “share the shore.” Importantly, this effort has meant that beaches have not been closed due to nesting birds, but rather that success has come alongside responsible coastal recreation. Connecticut’s Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern Species list offers some direct protection. Listed species are included in the Natural Diversity Database, which provides environmental reviews for projects on state property, when state funds are used, or when state permits are required. The list was last updated in 2015, to include the addition of the following species: three bat species (little brown, tricolor, and northern long-eared bats) that have suffered dramatic population declines due to the spread of white-nose syndrome are now on the endangered list. Since their state listing, northern long eared bats have been federally listed, tricolored bats have been proposed for federal listing, and little brown bats and spotted



turtles are being considered as candidates Northern diamondback terrapin and spotted turtle are threatened by the fragmentation and loss of suitable wetland habitats, collection for the pet trade, and disease for federal listing, and road mortality.

The Wildlife Division's Natural Diversity Database and Conservation Compliance program administers the State's Natural Diversity Database (NDDB) that maintains spatial data related to the occurrence of State-listed plants and animals to help protect Connecticut's native biological diversity. The database is informed by DEEP research along with many observations submitted by conservation groups, the local scientific community, and the public as they make observations while afield.



The Endangered Species/Wildlife Income Tax Check-Off Fund is voluntarily supported by Connecticut's state income taxpayers to support efforts aimed at helping Connecticut's endangered species, natural area preserves, and watchable wildlife. Some projects funded through this mechanism include botanical field surveys, habitat restoration for the ghost dune tiger beetle, preserving chimney swift roosts through education, Indiana bat study, monitoring SGCN bird species in shrub land and forest interior habitats, purple martin research, State-listed plant field work, monitoring ospreys using citizen science, stream salamanders living within exurban watersheds, installation of monofilament fishing line receptacles, conservation and stewardship of State endangered and threatened species, assessment of heavy metal and organic contaminants in snapping turtles, and webcams streaming a feed from a bat colony.

## Hunting

In Connecticut, approximately 50,000 hunters spend millions of dollars annually while enjoying one million days a year in the field. Hunting is permitted at most Wildlife Management Areas and State Forests and infrastructure such as parking lots, service roads, wetland impoundments, and handicapped accessible hunting blinds are installed and maintained by the Wildlife Division to facilitate these activities. Additionally, 45 properties not owned by DEEP are open for hunting through cooperative agreements, totaling over 45,000 acres. Three Wildlife Management Areas are designated as Dog Training Areas where hunting dogs may be trained year-round; and four Wildlife Management Areas are designated as Field Trial Areas which can accommodate field trial activities and sanctioned events (competitive events involving dogs).

Pheasant hunting is made possible through stocking efforts by DEEP staff and volunteers. Approximately 22,000 pheasants are purchased and released annually during the fall pheasant hunting season at 37 public hunting areas statewide. Pheasant hunting is seen as an important activity for hunter recruitment, retention, and reactivation in light of long-term declining trends in hunting and trapping participation. The Wildlife Division has developed a plan to reverse this declining trend in hunting and trapping participation – the R3 (Recruit, Retain, and Reactivate) Plan 2020-2024. This plan focuses on recruiting new hunters and trappers, retaining interest and participation by current hunters and trappers, and reactivating those who have hunted or trapped in the past but no longer participate in these activities. Several web-based [Hunting Roadmaps](#) have been developed to help new hunters better navigate the process of becoming trained, qualified, and licensed to hunt in Connecticut.

Hunting and shooting sports support a significant amount of land and resource conservation in Connecticut. Fishing and boating support a significant amount recreational access and resource conservation in Connecticut. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) administers the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program in which excise taxes are collected on the sale of fishing equipment and motorboat fuels as established by the Pittman-Robertson, Dingell-Johnson, and Wallop-Breaux Acts. These funds are then distributed to state agencies to fund recreational fishing, public boating access improvements, fisheries research, and habitat management. Millions of dollars are delivered annually through this program demonstrating an exceptional user-pay user-benefit model wherein anglers are directly contributing to conserving the resources they utilize and enjoy while providing significant benefits to the public.

The Connecticut Migratory Bird Conservation Stamp (aka Duck Stamp) is a required endorsement that hunters must purchase in order to pursue migratory game birds. Ninety-nine percent of the funds derived from the sale of these endorsements is used to protect and enhance wetland habitat that support wildlife and wildlife-associated recreational activities—

while providing a variety of broad ecosystem services that increase the integrity and resilience of Connecticut's natural landscape. The Duck Stamp is available for purchase to anyone interested in supporting wetland conservation.

Hunting in Connecticut is currently prohibited on Sundays except for private land archery deer hunting. DEEP submitted testimony in 2023, supporting legislation which would have allowed Sunday hunting. Although the legislation did not ultimately pass, DEEP is supportive of providing a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities, including hunting, and has demonstrated that multiple recreation users can safely and concurrently recreate on public lands.

#### Conservation Partners

The Wildlife Division receives support and partnership from many local and regional conservation organizations involved in hunting, trapping, shooting sports, wildlife conservation, plant conservation and land conservation. These groups provide thousands of hours of volunteer effort annually teaching Conservation Education/Firearms Safety (CE/FS) programs, cleaning up litter, building and monitoring nesting boxes, conducting habitat management, conducting wildlife surveys, testifying, and mitigating nuisance wildlife issues. Additionally, many of these groups provide direct financial support to the Division by donating equipment for habitat management, seed and plant material for habitat enhancement projects, and educational signage. Additionally, significant funding has been contributed to construction and engineering projects including several wetland impoundment restoration projects and tidal marsh adaptation projects which provide critical wetland habitat for a large array of wildlife and have increased the opportunity for waterfowl hunting and other forms of wildlife-associated recreation. Collectively, the value of the time and materials donated provides tens of thousands of dollars of match for grants annually, allowing DEEP to leverage Federal resources to advance the goals of the Division. Generous conservation partners include Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, Connecticut Waterfowl Association, Delta Waterfowl, Northwest Connecticut Sportsman's Council, Ruffed Grouse Society, Connecticut Trappers Association, Friends of Connecticut Sportsmen, Audubon Connecticut, Connecticut Audubon Society, Connecticut Ornithological Association, Connecticut Botanical Society, The Nature Conservancy and dozens of local private fish and game clubs.

#### Conservation Education/Firearms Safety

The Conservation Education/Firearms Safety program has 300 volunteer instructors who have donated more than 1,000 hours of service per year. These dedicated instructors have taught and encouraged tens of thousands of students in firearms, bow-hunting, and trapping to participate in recreational hunting and trapping. Additionally, the program has added classes to provide education about the cleaning, preparation, and cooking of game animals. Public shooting ranges provide an opportunity for target practice and recreational shooting, the

Wildlife Division will continue to explore opportunities to create or expand infrastructure for public shooting ranges.

### Junior Hunter Training Day Events



Connecticut designates specific days when experienced adult hunters are encouraged to take a youth hunting, helping them learn safe and effective hunting practices, develop observational skills, and gain the confidence and a comfort level they need to discover a passion for hunting and the outdoors. On these days, licensed junior hunters (12 to 15 years of age) may hunt when accompanied by a licensed adult hunter 18 years of age or older. The adult mentor may not carry a firearm and must remain within physical contact in a position to always provide direct supervision and instruction.

Each year, Junior Hunter Training Days are planned for Spring Turkey Season, Waterfowl Season (two Saturdays each Fall), Pheasant Season, and Deer Season. Additionally, DEEP will offer mentored junior pheasant hunts on Junior Pheasant Hunter Training Day on State Land, and several sportsmen's clubs offer additional junior pheasant hunts on private land throughout the fall. These are staffed with Certified Volunteer Hunter Safety Instructors and experienced hunters, along with bird dogs and handlers.

### Master Wildlife Conservationist Program

Master Wildlife Conservationists (MWCs) are provided training through the DEEP Wildlife Division and are committed to assisting DEEP and other environmental organizations with research, habitat management, and outreach efforts. MWCs presented wildlife-related programs at libraries, schools, nature centers, and other environmental organizations and assisted with events associated with the No Child Left Inside® program.

### Public Awareness and Education

Connecticut's wildlife is remarkably diverse. The state has 84 species of mammals, 335 species of birds, 50 species of reptiles and amphibians, 169 species of fish, and an estimated 20,000 species of invertebrates. Wildlife-viewing participation continues to grow in popularity.

To engage constituents across the state, the Wildlife Division has increased its online offerings. Wildlife Highlights, a free electronic newsletter for anyone interested in Connecticut's wildlife

and the outdoors, became available in 2016 and currently has approximately 6,500 subscribers. Hunter Highlights, an electronic newsletter geared toward hunters, was launched in the fall of 2020 and has approximately 1,500 subscribers. In addition to newsletters, the Wildlife Division has a significant social media presence, with about 1,700 on X (Twitter), 5,000 followers on Instagram, and 48,000 followers on Facebook. DEEP uses iNaturalist to run several community science projects such as reporting backyard bee inventories. The Wildlife Division also maintains an extensive library of informative web pages and fact sheets including information about species, advice on managing land for wildlife, and technical assistance on dealing with nuisance wildlife.



Belding Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Vernon, and Sessions Woods WMA in Burlington, serve as educational destinations for school groups, summer camps, and college students. Belding is visited by approximately 500 third and fourth-grade school children each year along with roughly 200 summer program attendees and 40 college students. Monthly programs for the public at Sessions Woods WMA are attended by approximately 25 people per program.

Viewing platforms, boardwalks, blinds, and educational signs were constructed at various DEEP locations statewide, to provide the public the opportunity to observe and photograph wildlife in its natural habitat and at the same time increase public awareness of the diversity and complexity of Connecticut's natural resources. The Wildlife Division creates, maintains, and updates these recreation opportunities and the infrastructure like parking areas, gates, bathrooms, and trash cans at WMAs across the state.

## Habitat Management

The Wildlife Division works to enhance and sustain wildlife habitat throughout Connecticut. Maintaining sustainable populations of wildlife requires suitable habitats. State-owned conservation land provides tracts of undeveloped space that contain a diversity of habitats, and habitat management can further enhance these spaces— supporting wildlife and the wildlife-associated recreation that relies on them.

Habitat conditions are continuously evaluated, and a variety of land management techniques are prescribed by wildlife biologists and accomplished by DEEP staff and partners as needed



including mowing, prescribed burning, planting, agriculture, invasive plant control, silvicultural treatments, wetland management, and coastal adaptation. The Division’s Habitat Program seeks to conserve both common species and SGCN by providing a diversity of high-quality habitats including forests of varying ages and types, coastal and inland wetlands, grasslands, and shrublands in support of Connecticut’s State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP).

In accordance with the goals of this Plan (Goal 3, Strategy I) and the SWAP, the Wildlife Division will take and support measures to identify and mitigate unauthorized activity that threatens natural resources and wildlife-associated recreation on State Land, including: littering, unleashed dogs, unauthorized operation of motorized vehicles, and the creation and use of unauthorized trails.

## Young Forest Initiative

The Wildlife Division works cooperatively with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the Wildlife Management Institute (WMI) and various non-governmental organizations and private

landowners to implement priority habitat management in support of the Regional Young Forest Initiative for At-Risk Species. The goal of the initiative is to increase the quantity and quality of young forest habitat essential to New England cottontail, American woodcock, and over 50 other SGCN in support of the SWAP, the New England Cottontail Conservation Strategy and CT's American Woodcock Management Plan. Wildlife biologists and State Foresters plan and execute relevant habitat management on State-owned land, and technical and financial assistance is provided to non-industrial private forestland owners wishing to implement practices through the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program. Silvicultural treatments play an important role in the conservation of biological diversity in forested ecosystems.



### Important Bird Areas

DEEP, Audubon Connecticut, other conservation NGOs, and private landowners have partnered to designate seven landscape-level Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in the state. This partnership of stakeholders works together to protect, restore, enhance, and increase awareness about these critical areas. IBA designation helps prioritize the conservation of these critical habitats and helps land managers ensure that outdoor recreation is compatible with birds and wildlife. People may visit or live near an IBA and be unaware of its value to birds and other wildlife. But once engaged, they become familiar with the birds the IBA protects, make an effort to prevent disturbing the birds or their habitat, and may become active stewards. To date, 40 IBAs have been publicly recognized in Connecticut.



The seven landscape-level IBAs, including state-owned as well as privately held lands being recognized, include:

- Great Meadows: This IBA includes lush farmland and forested wetlands along an 8-mile stretch of the Connecticut River in Wethersfield, East Hartford, Glastonbury, and Rocky Hill.
- Mouth of the Connecticut River: This area is located in Old Lyme and Old Saybrook. It includes the Roger Tory Peterson Wildlife Area and the Ragged Rock Creek Wildlife Management Area.
- Lyme Forest Block: This area includes lands in several towns within Middlesex and New London Counties. Among state lands in this IBA are Devil's Hopyard State Park, Babcock Pond Wildlife Management Area, Zemko Pond Wildlife Management Area, Eightmile River Wildlife Management Area, Nehantic State Forest, Selden Neck State Park, and Beckett Hill State Park.
- Macedonia Forest Block: This area is located in Kent and Sharon. It includes Audubon Sharon and Macedonia Brook State Park.
- Meshomasic Forest Block: This area covers lands in Hartford and Middlesex Counties, including Meshomasic State Forest and Gay City State Park.
- Miles Wildlife Sanctuary and Housatonic State Forest Block: This area is located in Sharon and Lakeville and includes Housatonic State Forest and the Audubon Miles Wildlife Sanctuary.
- Shepaug Forest Block: This area includes forested lands along a 15-mile stretch of the Shepaug River in Washington and Roxbury.

### Species Management

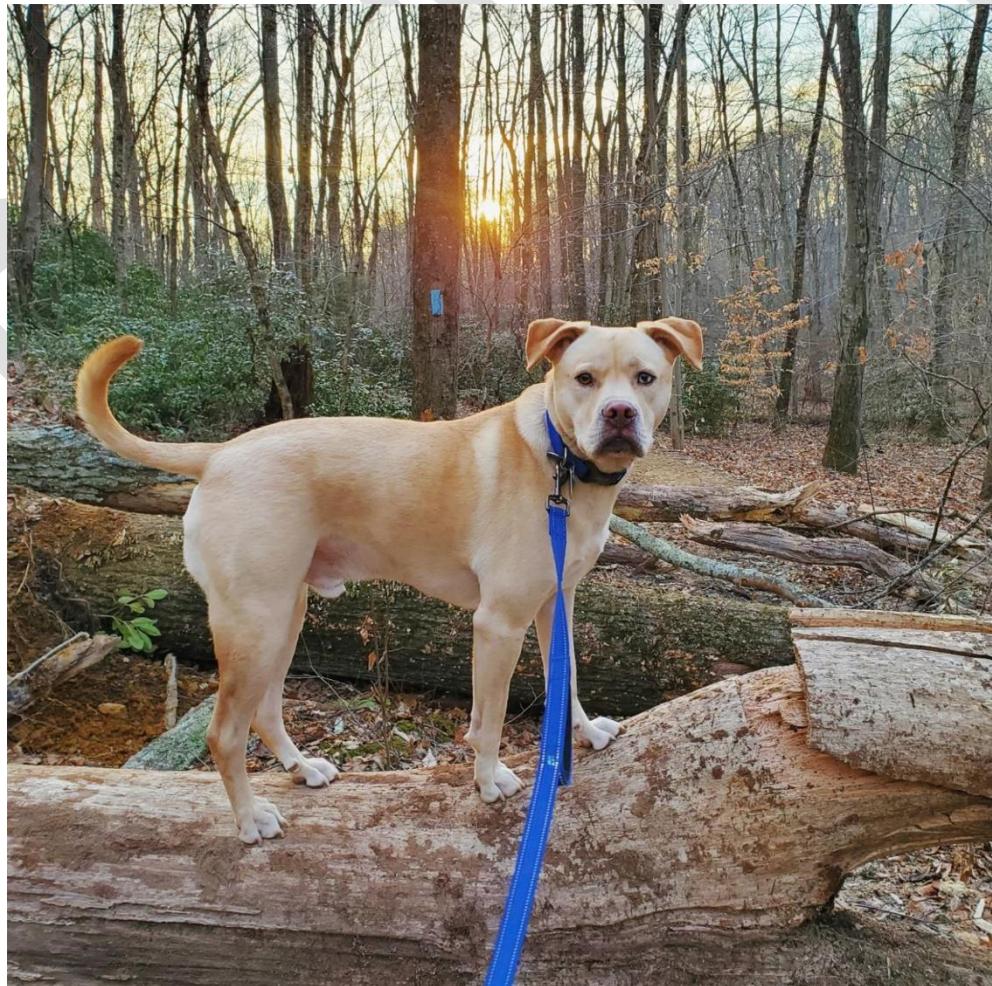
The Wildlife Division oversees many projects to conserve and manage wildlife species statewide. Many of those species are relevant to outdoor recreation. With the help of volunteers and nonprofit partners, DEEP monitors bald eagles, peregrine falcons, ospreys, and beach nesting birds. With these data, DEEP staff protect these species from human disturbance. The Wildlife Division and the University of Connecticut are leading an effort to conduct an extensive Connecticut Bird Atlas. This multi-faceted project focuses on breeding and wintering birds. The first Connecticut Bird Atlas was published in 1986. This update began in 2018 and is concluding in 2023.

Since 2011, the Wildlife Division has been conducting, with the help of volunteers, acoustic monitoring surveys on twelve 20-mile transects to determine the species and abundance of bats across the state. DEEP staff are also conducting surveys to monitor populations of spotted turtles, wood turtles, box turtles, bog turtles, and timber rattlesnakes and protect these sensitive reptile species from human disturbance. DEEP monitors freshwater mussel species that are impacted by water quality and levels. Since 2017, DEEP and the Department of

Economic and Community Development have jointly hosted a bat appreciation day celebration at the Old Newgate Prison and Copper Mine in Granby, CT. DEEP staff collect reports of wild turkey, ruffed grouse, moose, bobcats and bears as part of statewide efforts to monitor population levels and manage nuisance wildlife encounters. Connecticut has an abundant bear population with over 10,000 sightings reported in 2022. In 2022, around 4,000 bobcat reports and 79 moose sightings were submitted.

#### Summary of Accomplishments 2017 - 2023

The materials presented in the previous section represent some, but not all, of the innovative programs, public outreach, facility improvements, and management activities of the DEEP over the past five years. For further information regarding a particular division in the DEEP, the reader is encouraged to go to the DEEP website at <http://www.ct.gov/dep/site/default.asp> to learn more about the contributions made to the quality of life in Connecticut through DEEP initiatives.



# PART II

# The Plan



## Goals and Strategies

The following section presents Connecticut's three main outdoor recreation goals with correlating strategies and available data to help guide the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) decision-making processes for the next five years.

Goal development for the 2024-2029 SCORP involved members of the SCORP Advisory Committee, DEEP Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (BOR) staff, and faculty from Southern Connecticut State University Department of Recreation, Tourism and Sport Management. Central Connecticut State University's Center for Community Engagement and Social Research developed data derived from public surveys administered to various stakeholders throughout Connecticut to provide direction to the process.

Goals were created based on the need to build upon past success and address needs raised in the public surveys conducted by the Center for Public Policy and Social Research. In addition to the three goals presented below, this strategic planning process identified general strategies and supportive data to guide and measure progress toward the mission of the SCORP.

For the purposes of this report, goals are broad primary outcomes over a predefined time period. Strategies are planning concepts that allow for the maximum realization of the benefits of achieving a particular goal. Each goal may have several strategies providing direction for the allocation of resources and the design of agency efforts over time. Supportive data may result from quantitative survey results and from the focus groups conducted by the Center for Public Policy and Social Research. Additional data reflects the initiatives proposed by the various DEEP divisions as they continue to fulfill their objectives.

These goals represent a commitment by DEEP to continue to be responsive to the needs of Connecticut residents while responsibly managing the available resources to realize the greatest return on investments made to the outdoor recreation system.

### **Connecticut's 2024 – 2029 Outdoor Recreation Goals**

**Goal 1 – Provide equitable and sustainable access to outdoor recreation in Connecticut.**

**Goal 2 – Enhance visitor experience and tourism by providing welcoming, safe, and well-maintained outdoor recreation areas and recreation amenities.**

**Goal 3 – Address the threats of climate change to outdoor recreation and the conservation of natural, historic and cultural resources by working together with outdoor recreation participants to implement climate and conservation action.**

## SCORP Goals

- Goals are broad primary outcomes over a predefined time period

## Strategies

- Strategies are planning concepts that allow for the maximum realization of the benefits of achieving a particular goal



## Goal 1- Provide equitable and sustainable access to outdoor recreation in Connecticut.

### **Strategies:**

- A. Develop diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives for existing open spaces and outdoor recreation areas through collaboration with diverse stakeholders.
- B. Increase awareness of and accessibility to outdoor recreational opportunities by implementing public outreach campaigns geared toward traditionally underserved populations.
- C. Increase accessibility by reducing real and perceived barriers to visiting outdoor recreation facilities.
- D. Assess the distribution of open spaces throughout the state and increase land protection efforts in areas lacking existing opportunities.
- E. Identify, increase, and promote the availability of public transportation serving outdoor recreation areas and facilities.
- F. Develop policies and guidelines for facilities, parks, and natural areas that include measures to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment while protecting and conserving natural, cultural, and historical resources.
- G. Collect and analyze user demographic data to improve recreational resource allocation and better serve user groups.
- H. Assess and address historical bias in program development, site names and outreach methods.
- I. Increase educational programming that highlights environmental and recreational contributions from historically underrepresented groups.
- J. Increase adapted outdoor recreation pursuits for people with disabilities.

### **Strategy 1A. Develop diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives for existing open spaces and outdoor recreation areas.**

#### ***Supportive data:***

Based on the data developed in the 2023 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Survey (SORS), DEEP performance in this area is acceptable with some additional effort required to address the needs of individuals with disabilities. New initiatives should be considered and developed to further this strategy.

**Question 11** of the SORS included 21 categories of constraints to participation:

*If there are reasons preventing you or members of your household from using OUTDOOR recreation facilities in Connecticut, please indicate them by selecting all that apply from the list below.*

Forty three percent of the respondents (n=436) to the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Survey indicated that they were fully able to access outdoor recreation facilities and activities (#1 ranked response). Five percent cited a lack of accessibility for people with disabilities (#15 ranked response), while 3% cited language barriers, 3% cited a lack of visitor diversity (#20 ranked response), and 2% mentioned a lack of staff diversity (#21 ranked response).

DEEP divisions plan collectively seek to expand upon their efforts at outreach to underserved communities. (See Appendix A: Division Action Plans).

Municipalities play an important role in DEI initiatives. The 2023 Municipal Survey results indicate a mixed assessment of efforts to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion.



**Question 9** Now, thinking about the various age groups or clusters of people you serve, please indicate whether or not you are currently able to adequately meet their needs. Following this question, you will have an opportunity to indicate the problems you face in serving each group.

Fifty six percent of responding municipalities (n=55) reported that they are able to address the needs of people with disabilities while 44% stated they were unable to do so. The need for more areas to accommodate these individuals was ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in specifying the constraints to meeting the needs of this population. Insufficient resources was the top ranked cause. This perspective is further reinforced by responses to Question 22 with general and playground specific resources reported as being inadequate for persons with disabilities

**Table 6 Popular Resources for Individuals with Disabilities**

**Question 16** identified the most popular resources currently available to individuals with disabilities.

SPECIFIED RESOURCES COMBINED	Percentage
Parks/playgrounds/gardens/picnic areas	60%
Trails/paths	31%
Pools/aquatics/fishing	23%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts)	15%
Beaches	15%
Outdoor recreation (facilities, leagues, fields, courts, parks, courses)	10%
Indoor facilities (senior center, recreation centers, bowling)	6%

Municipal Survey **Question 26** specifically addresses efforts by municipalities regarding any action to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion for their residents. Given that 18% said “no” and 33% were “not sure” suggests that additional awareness training may be warranted, potentially led by DEEP initiatives.

**Q26.** *In your town, are you aware of any action being taken in the sphere of outdoor recreation to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among the people you serve?*

**Table 7 DEI Awareness**

Response Category	Percentage (n = 55)
Yes	49%
No	18%
Not Sure	33%

**Q26a. Please elaborate on any action or inaction in your town regarding the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion among the people you serve.**

**Table 8 Municipal DEI Actions**

Response Category (5 most common coded responses)	Rank (n = 19)
Open bi-lingual facilities	1
Grants and funding for facility upgrades and projects	2
Town programs/policies	3
Inclusive/Equity/Diversity programs active or in development	4
Staff training and accommodations	5

**Strategy 1B. Increase awareness of, and accessibility to, outdoor recreational opportunities by implementing public outreach campaigns geared toward traditionally underserved populations.**

***Supportive data:***

Communication and outreach are critical elements to the current and future relevance and success of the DEEP mission. It has become increasingly clear that a multimedia approach to communication best serves this goal. The Covid pandemic amplified the importance of web-based communication in order to inform residents of opportunities and restrictions regarding facility availability. Continued refinement of the use of social media, including messaging in languages other than English, will enhance this approach.

The following data from the Statewide Survey may guide future efforts in improving communication and outreach.

**Question 11 If there are reasons preventing you or members of your household from using OUTDOOR recreation facilities in Connecticut, please indicate them by selecting all that apply from the list below.**

Thirteen percent respondents to the Statewide Survey (n=127 ranked 4<sup>th</sup> of 21 choices) indicated that “Do not know what is being offered” prevented them from using outdoor recreation facilities. Additionally, Question 11B indicated that a lack of or unclear maps was also an impediment to resource usage. To increase the effectiveness of communication, it is critical to identify the methods of information access used by the residents. Question 12 of the Statewide Survey identified the means by which residents accessed information about recreational facilities and activities in the local communities.

**Table 9 Means of Information Access**

Means of Information Access
Websites/internet (n=631)
Word of mouth (n=515)
Social media (n=404)
Newspaper (n=309)
Maps and road signs (n=277)
Television (n=254)
Tourist information center (n=190)
Program fliers (n=168)
Town mailings (n=168)
Visited/Called Parks & Rec Office (n=161)
Radio (n=143)
Magazines (n=108)
Club membership newsletters (n=86)
Other (n=14)

These results mark a change from the previous Statewide Survey (2017) data in that web-based information sources now outrank word of mouth, an increase from 58% in 2017 to 63% in 2023, as the most common means of learning about outdoor recreation facilities. Social media was identified in 2017 as one of the primary modes of communication, a factor that has increased to 40% in the most recent survey. Word of mouth, ranked second, dropped in significance from 59% in 2017 to 51% in 2023.

**Strategy 1C. Increase accessibility by reducing real and perceived barriers to visiting outdoor recreation facilities.**

***Supportive data:***

The 2023 CCESR survey of the 169 municipalities in the state (July 2023) revealed that town officials report that accessibility issues and inadequacies exist at 17% of their outdoor facilities. An additional 13% of municipalities reported the need to improve public transportation to their facilities, while 10% cited the need for directional and interpretive signage. Forty four percent of respondents indicated that they are not currently able to meet the needs of people with

disabilities relative to their access to outdoor recreation facilities. The top ranked reason for this shortfall was attributed to insufficient resources including funding and space.

The DEEP Passport to Parks Program, instituted in 2018, is supported through a \$10 fee that is being applied through the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to non-commercial vehicles that have new registrations, renewals, and plate transfers. A state of Connecticut license plate on a car allows residents free access to state parks, thereby reducing and/or eliminating barriers to resident visitors.

**Strategy 1D. Assess the distribution of open spaces throughout the state. Increase land protection efforts in areas lacking existing opportunities.**

***Supportive data:***

The Land Acquisition and Management staff will be completing a comprehensive assessment of the open space land across the state to understand what percentage of the state's land is already used for that purpose. Once that data collection effort is complete, DEEP will use those numbers to set new targets and goals for land conservation efforts across Connecticut. The updated Green Plan will highlight five main program areas including:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program
- The Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program
- Urban Green and Community Garden Grant Program
- Property Management

**Strategy 1E. Identify, increase, and promote the availability of public transportation serving outdoor recreation areas and facilities.**

***Supportive data:***



The Park Connect Program <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/State-Parks/Park-Connect> marks the collaboration between the DEEP and the Connecticut Department of Transportation to provide safe and reliable transportation within ten minutes to six state parks and beaches. The service was provided in 2023 from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Current access is reported to be:

Automobile (n=860)	86%
Bicycle (n=280)	28%
Boat (n=78)	8%
Bus or train (n=144)	14%
Walk (n=525)	52%
Other (n=17)	2%



#### **Strategy 1F. Policies that foster inclusion while protecting resources.**

##### ***Supportive data:***

The Office of Trails and Greenways Recreational Trails Grant Program supports projects that include outreach and education programs that address the DEEP's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Objectives including the CT Trail Finder website <https://www.cttrailfinder.com/>

**Q26** in the Town Officials Survey 49% (n = 55) of respondents were aware of actions being taken in the sphere of outdoor recreation to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among people served. Similarly, 47% (n = 55) noted they were aware of any action being taken regarding the protection of municipal open space from environmental degradation or overuse (Q25).

#### **Strategy 1G. Collect and analyze user data to improve resource allocation and better serve user groups.**

##### ***Supportive data:***

2023 Demographic Data

##### **Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts Survey**

Data provided by CCESR (n = 4,519) identify respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast survey to be from all eight counties in Connecticut and comprised of 68.2% males, 30.7% females, 0.8% non-binary and 0.3% other. Individuals reporting their age as 55+ made up 47% of those responding to this survey, with 93.5% reporting to be other than Hispanic, Latino or Spanish

ancestry, with 92% being Caucasian and 99% listing English as the primary household language. 89% of respondents reported an annual household income over \$50,000 with a full 31% identifying their household income in excess of \$150,000. Almost 100% reported at least a high school diploma with 66% reporting a college degree or post graduate degree. 12% reported that a household member had a medical condition related to physical and or mobility limitations. The Avid Enthusiast response are not representative of the general population in Connecticut regarding demographics or activity choices.

### **Statewide Outdoor Recreation Survey**

The demographic data from the statewide survey indicate noticeable differences with the Outdoor Enthusiast Survey. All eight counties were represented with 50% of respondents residing in Hartford and New Haven counties. Nearly 49% of respondents were male with 51% identifying as female. Alternatives such as binary gender identification were not present in the survey. The majority of respondents, 56%, reported their age to be between 25 – 54 years old. 27.4 % reported their ancestry to be Hispanic, Latino or Spanish. Additionally, 65% reported Caucasian ethnicity with 18% Hispanic/Latino, and 13% African American. Ninety one percent identified English as the primary household language with 7% speaking Spanish at home. Furthermore, 53% reported a household income over \$50,000, with only 20% reporting income over \$150,000. Finally, 97% reported at least a high school degree, with 49% having undergraduate or graduate degrees.

It is evident from the two surveys distributed to Connecticut citizens that there is a significant difference between the two groups regarding their demographic make-up. According to the US Census Bureau (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CT/PST045222>) the general population of Connecticut (n=3,626,205) is 64% white non-Hispanic or Latino, 18% is Hispanic/Latino, and 13% is African American

Similar data was gathered in the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Survey (n=1010) providing detailed demographic information and a five-tiered inquiry regarding outdoor land-based and water-based activities preferences and frequency of use.

Respondents identified their *top five land-based activities* to be walking/hiking 69%, visiting historic sites 35%, running 30%, road/neighborhood biking 25%, biking in parks 23%. Frequency responses indicate “a few times a month” as the median level of participation in these five activities.

The *top five water-based activities* are activities at the beach 59%, swimming in fresh/salt water 46%, swimming in outdoor pools 38%, canoeing/kayaking/paddleboarding 18%, motor boating/jet skiing 18%.

Frequency indicators suggest “less than once a month” as the median level of activity for seasonal activities. Eighty two percent of the respondents (n=642) indicated visiting a state-

owned property between 1 and 10 times annually, with 92% rating the condition of the properties as excellent to good. Less than 1% rated them as poor.

The response for municipal facilities (n=656) indicates that these facilities were visited 1 to 10 times annually by 71% of the participants. Eighty eight percent rated the condition of the facilities to be excellent or good.

**Question 7a:**

The perceived need for additional access or improvements to the facilities did not indicate a majority response for any of the 36 recreational areas identified in Question 7 of the survey. A majority of respondents for the same 36 facilities stated that the present conditions somewhat or mostly met the needs of each household.

**Question 13** *Please indicate if you feel that “the state of Connecticut and your local community should increase funding, maintain the same funding, decrease funding, or you are not sure for each action”* Respondents (n=1010) provided the following opinions on funding

**Table 10 Attitudes Towards Funding**

	Increase Funding	Maintain	Decrease	Not Sure
Maintain and improve existing outdoor facilities	43%	42%	4%	11%
Develop new outdoor recreation activities	43%	38%	7%	13%
Provide additional recreation programs and activities	39%	42%	6%	13%
Improve advertising and information regarding existing outdoor facilities and programs	28%	49%	9%	14%
Acquire open space	34%	41%	9%	16%
Sustain and enhance natural habitats that support hunting, wildlife viewing, birding, and hiking	40%	41%	7%	12%
Other	12%	22%	5%	61%

**Question 14** Please indicate which THREE of the actions listed below you would most support increasing funding for by dragging the items from the column on the left into the box on the right.

A further analysis suggests that “maintaining existing outdoor facilities and sustain and enhance natural habitats that support activities such as hunting, wildlife viewing, birding, and hiking enhancing natural habitats were seen as the most important areas for increased funding.”

**Strategy 1H. Assess and address historical bias in program development, site names and outreach methods.**

***Supportive data:***

This strategy will be implemented and tracked during the 2024-2029 plan period.

**Strategy I. Increase educational programming that highlights environmental and recreational contributions from historically underrepresented groups.**

***Supportive data:***

While some efforts to accomplish this are presently evident in the Outreach efforts, DEEP divisions will develop tactics to meet this strategy in subsequent years through their division action plans.

**Strategy J. Increase adapted outdoor recreation pursuits for people with disabilities.**

***Supportive data:***

DEEP is currently in the process of purchasing ten all-terrain wheelchairs for park use.





Goal 2- Enhance visitor experience and tourism by providing welcoming, safe, and well-maintained outdoor recreation areas and recreation amenities.

**Strategies:**

- A. Improve outdoor recreation infrastructure to increase access and add amenities that serve diverse populations.
- B. Prioritize sustainable practices to improve the cleanliness of facilities and outdoor areas.
- C. Ensure visitor safety and protect facilities and resources through monitoring of unlawful or unpermitted activity and ensure appropriate methods of enforcement and compliance.
- D. Increase technologically innovative interfaces to enhance customer service and visitor expectations.
- E. Increase resources to repair, improve, and replace infrastructure and recreational amenities that support the public's use of facilities.
- F. Create and implement volunteer programs to help supplement staffing and increase engagement with visitors and volunteer organizations.
- G. Assess where there are gaps in recreational access; and acquire land to ensure that amenities are available to all while exploring collaboration with outdoor recreation organizations (businesses and nonprofits) to offer additional tourism and outdoor recreation services in State Parks.

**Strategy 2A. Improve outdoor recreation infrastructure to increase access and add amenities that serve diverse populations.**

***Supportive data:***

Fifty percent or more of the respondents to the Statewide Outdoor Recreation Survey were completely satisfied with the activities listed below.

**Q7. Please indicate whether you or any member of your household have a need or desire for additional access to each of the outdoor recreation facilities listed below**

**Table 11 Facility Access Level of Satisfaction**

Activity	Completely Satisfied	Need or Desire for Improvement
Paved multi-use trails (n=1,005)	57%	27%
Unpaved multi-use trails (n = 993)	57%	24%
Unpaved single use trails (n = 996)	57%	20%
ADA accessible trails (n = 991)	50%	15%
Picnic areas/shelters (n = 985)	51%	31%
Historic sites and areas (n = 980)	52%	27%

However, there is still room for improvement with outdoor amenities and facilities in Connecticut. Respondents noted a higher need or desire for improvement in the following activities:

**Table 12 Improvement Assessment by Participants**

Activity	Need or Desire for Improvement
Nature preserves and bird watching areas (N = 971)	26%
Freshwater and saltwater swimming areas	26%
Outdoor public pools, water parks, and splash pads (N=976)	27%

In addition, the following activities were rated as either *needs somewhat met* or *needs not met at all* ratings. **Q7A** This suggests that approximately 60-80% of respondents do not perceive that their needs are being adequately satisfied at the present time.

**Q7A.** For each *OUTDOOR* recreational facility, please rate how well the needs of your household are being met in terms of access or desire for improvement.

**Table 13 Needs Assessment for Facilities**

Activity	Needs Not Met at All	Needs Somewhat Met	Needs Mostly Met
ADA accessible trails (n = 149)	24%	56%	20%
Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing trails (n = 136)	25%	48%	27%
ATV areas (n= 159)	29%	42%	29%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling areas (n = 154)	29%	40%	31%
Snowmobiling areas (n = 127)	28%	45%	27%
Sledding areas (n = 230)	26%	47%	27%
Ice skating or hockey areas (n = 176)	24%	50%	26%
Bicycle playgrounds (n = 225)	27%	44%	29%
Biking Pump tracks (n = 155)	30%	45%	25%
Pickleball courts (n = 123)	28%	44%	29%
Volleyball courts (n = 158)	29%	45%	26%
Disc golf courses (n = 107)	23%	49%	28%
Boating access for motor boating, jet skiing, sailing, or paddle sports (n = 144)	23%	51%	26%
Snorkeling and scuba diving areas (n = 140)	34%	38%	28%
Overnight camping areas (RV or Tent sites) (n = 201)	24%	48%	27%
Overnight Camping Areas (Cabin, Yurt, or 'Glamping' sites) (n = 191)	28%	44%	28%
Archery or shooting sport areas (n = 147)	32%	45%	23%

The results provide guidance for outdoor recreation providers to grow and develop new amenities that could attract new visitors/participants to our state's parks and natural areas.

Additionally, participants in the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey reported improved access/options, limited places to ride (ATV/Dirt Bikes), lack of facility/area/trail upkeep or

maintenance, and parking were some of the reasons participants gave that could help increase their access or enjoyment of activities.

**Strategy 2B. Prioritize sustainable practices to improve the cleanliness of facilities and outdoor areas.**

***Supportive data:***

Bedino-Rung, Mowen, and Cohen (2016) suggest that parks with “beautiful or interesting” aesthetics could be a motivating factor for users engaging in physical activity. Additionally, “park users are more likely to visit a park where the features are maintained on a regular basis and shun those places containing elements that are in disrepair... Parks that are not maintained... could contribute to people’s perceptions of safety within the park, which likely impacts their use” (Bedino-Rung, Mowen, & Cohen, 2016).

***Outdoor Enthusiast Survey***

**Q5.d** *In your opinion, what are the most pressing needs of the outdoor recreation areas that you visit? Please indicate a specific recreation area if you have one in mind. (n = 3342)*

Respondents ranked Litter/Maintenance in outdoor recreation areas number 1 as the most pressing need to be addressed. Additionally, “litter” rated as the most significant issue they encounter when engaging in outdoor recreation activities.

**Q4.** *What is the most significant issue that you encounter when engaging in any of the activities you listed?*

Litter was identified as the most significant issue for participants 17% (n = 4890)

***From the Municipality Survey***

***SECTION 2: FACILITY CONDITION***

**Q7.** *In the following table, please indicate the overall condition of each type of recreational facility that your community offers. Percentages were displayed when 40% or more of respondents' ratings were clustered around the rating of Need Improvement or Poor.*

***Table 14 Overall Condition of Recreational Facilities***

Activity	Condition (Need Improvement or Poor)
Camping (n = 15)	60%
Fields – Lacrosse (n = 34)	44%
Courts – Volleyball (n = 31)	46%
Swimming, Beaches, or Outdoor Pools (n = 47)	40%
Winter Sports (n = 39)	49%

### ***Connecticut Trails and Greenways Program Initiatives:***

As identified in a review of Connecticut Recreation Trails Programs Grant funding allocation, Construction awards (\$6,396,654.08, 48.4%), and Design awards (\$2,581,040.20, 19.5%) dominate funding allocation. Construction and maintenance combined account for 62.3% of CT RTP funding (\$8,203,450.08). Planning and design account for 27.2% (\$3,601,997.60). These last two main project categories cover 89.5% of awards. Specifically, amenity and facility awards funded over \$211,000 in projects including trail amenities/facilities, parking lots, toilet buildings, signs, and benches.

### **Strategy 2C. Ensure visitor safety and protect facilities and resources through monitoring of unlawful or unpermitted activity and ensure appropriate methods of enforcement and compliance.**

#### ***Supportive data:***

With very few large land holdings in the state and with greater than 80% of land held privately, Connecticut's recreational areas tend to be small in scale and scattered across the landscape in abundance. This presents challenges to activities dependent on large tracts of land, for accommodating multiple user groups, and monitoring of unlawful or unpermitted activities.

#### **State Environmental Conservation Police**

During the period January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2022, EnCon Police logged a total of 159,644 calls for service. In this period, officers issued 6,358 citations and 3,650 warnings, investigated 202 accidents, and made 638 arrests. The staffing levels throughout the 5-year period ranged from as low as 44 officers to 50 officers due to the retirement of several experienced officers and the hiring of new officers during this time

#### ***Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey***

For the specific activities reported by participants in the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey, the *behavior of other visitors: littering, vandalism, unleashed dogs (Activity 1, Q3A)* and *maintenance issues: vandalism, poor upkeep, dirty facilities... (Activity 2, Q3A)* were identified as impacting their recreation experience.

### **Strategy 2D. Increase technologically innovative interfaces to enhance customer service and visitor expectations.**

#### ***Supportive data:***

"Agencies use customer engagement tools that collect insights shared by their customers and tap market research data resources to better understand the demographic trends of their populace" (NRPA, 2016). "By merging data and technology, agencies are better able to improve

the customer experience and feedback, as well as improve engagement among community members who might otherwise not be heard.” (Bhatt, 2017).

As mentioned in the opening section of this report, a new state park website, CTparks.com, was made available in September that includes:

- A user-friendly ParkFinder Tool that helps users identify nearby State Parks based on their current location;
- An event management system that highlights activities happening in and around the State Parks;
- A user-generated content feature that captures social media content shared by actual visitors to the State Parks;
- A “While You’re Here” function that highlights nearby restaurants, shops, hotels, and attractions;
- ADA and multi-language support;
- Existing links from the State Parks pages on the portal.ct.gov/DEEP website will redirect to the new website

Additional technological innovations include the CT Park Finder, Trail Finder and CT Coastal Access Guide



**Strategy 2E. Increase resources to repair, improve, and replace infrastructure and recreational amenities that support the public's use of facilities.**

***Supportive data:***

RTP grant funding opportunities help cover costs of repair, maintenance, and improvements to trail systems in Connecticut. Refer to data narrative in strategy 2B.

With the implementation of the Passport to the Parks funding program, several services were to be restored throughout the park system including:

Hours of operation at the state's museums and nature centers will be restored from Memorial Day to Labor Day, including those at Dinosaur, Gillette Castle, Meigs Point Nature Center, and Fort Trumbull.

Four campgrounds will reopen:

- Devil's Hopyard (East Haddam) – Opening day of fishing season through Labor Day
- Green Falls (Voluntown) – Opening day of fishing season through Labor Day
- Macedonia Brook (Kent) – Opening day of fishing season through Labor Day
- Salt Rock (Sprague) – Weekend before Memorial Day through Labor Day

Spring camping will be restored at the following locations:

- American Legion and Peoples State Forests (Barkhamsted) – Opening day of fishing season through Labor Day
- Mount Misery (Voluntown) – Opening day of fishing season through Labor Day

Fall camping will be restored at the following locations:

- Hammonasset Beach (Madison) – Weekend before Memorial Day through Columbus Day
- Rocky Neck (East Lyme) – Weekend before Memorial Day through the end of September
- Housatonic Meadows (Sharon) – Weekend before Memorial Day through Columbus Day
- Hopeville Pond (Griswold) – Weekend before Memorial Day through the end of September

Out-of-state vehicles will still be charged parking fees ranging from \$7 to \$22 depending on the park and time of day. (DEEP news release 02/06/2019)

**Strategy 2F. Create and implement volunteer programs to help supplement staffing and increase engagement with visitors and volunteer organizations.**

***Supportive data:***

In addition to municipal efforts to promote DEI, DEEP divisions and partnering organizations also need to identify inclusive opportunities along with the need to conserve open space resources through proper stewardship. CCSU data highlighted that Trail building/maintenance/conservation/volunteering was most popular in Litchfield and Tolland Counties (both with 11% participation), as well as Windham County (10% participation).

***Table 15 Volunteer Organizations***

Volunteer Organizations
Connecticut Forest and Park Association
Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association
Friends of Connecticut State Parks
Connecticut Office of Tourism
New England Mountain Bike Association
Connecticut Horse Council
DEEP Internship Program



### **Avid Outdoor Recreation Enthusiast Survey**

**Q9. Are you a member of a club or organization whose purpose or mission is the enjoyment or support of outdoor recreation in some form?**

60% of the Avid Outdoor Recreation Enthusiast Survey respondents reported active memberships in outdoor clubs with the top-rated purpose of the organization to be the support, preservation, and conservation of land.

**Table 16 Outdoor Club Membership**

Outdoor Club Membership Recreation (Top 5 responses)	Total (N = 2,678)
Land Trust/Conservation Clubs	1
Sportsman, Fish & Game, Land & Game Clubs	2
Audubon/Bird/Ornithology Club	3
Mountain Bike Clubs	4
Hiking/Mountain Clubs	5

**Strategy 2G. Assess where there are gaps in recreational access; and acquire land to ensure that amenities are available to all while exploring collaboration with outdoor recreation organizations (businesses and nonprofits) to offer additional tourism and outdoor recreation services in State Parks.**

***Supportive data:***

Staff will be doing a comprehensive [presumably GIS-based] assessment of dedicated open space land across the state to understand what percentage of the state's land is already used for that purpose [and where the uses are presently concentrated or not]. Once that data collection effort is complete, DEEP will use those numbers to set new targets and goals for land conservation efforts across Connecticut.

Responses to the surveys could be skewed towards more white and wealthy areas of the state, which may make determining gaps in access a challenge. Urban centers in the state did not respond to the survey which does not aid in identifying gaps in services.

**Table 17 Survey Response by County and Town**

Towns by County*								
Hartford	Fairfield	New Haven	Litchfield	New London	Middlesex	Tolland	Windham	
Avon	Brookfield	Bethany	Canaan	Colchester	Chester	Ellington	Killingly	
Bristol	Danbury	Branford	Goshen	East Lyme	Cromwell	Hebron	Plainfield	
Burlington	Newtown	Guilford	Litchfield	Griswold	Deep River	Mansfield	Putnam	
Canterbury	Norwalk	North Branford	Morris	Groton	East Hampton	Somers	Thompson	
East Windsor	Ridgefield	Wallingford	Norfolk	Lisbon	Middletown	Vernon		
Glastonbury	Weston		Plymouth	Preston	Old Saybrook			
Newington			Roxbury		Westbrook			
Simsbury			Salisbury					
West Hartford			Thomaston					
Wethersfield			Washington					
			Watertown					
			Winchester					

\*Six responding towns did not self-identify.

Goal 3- Address the threats of climate change on outdoor recreation and the conservation of natural, historic and cultural resources by working together with outdoor recreation participants to implement strategies for habitat preservation, conservation, decarbonization, and climate change mitigation, adaptation resilience and education.

**Strategies:**

- A. Foster community engagement, relevancy and stewardship in outdoor recreation, community science, and conservation efforts.
- B. Plan for and invest in outdoor recreation infrastructure that is resilient to the effects of climate change, such as floods and severe weather.
- C. Lower operating costs and reduce the carbon footprint of outdoor recreation in Connecticut through sustainable operations.
- D. Connect communities to trails by promoting trail networks that offer effective transportation alternatives and reduce emissions.
- E. Provide Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers at outdoor recreation destinations to ensure accessibility for electric vehicle drivers.
- F. Incorporate climate change information in experiential educational materials provided at outdoor recreation and natural resource destinations (nature centers, museums, etc.).
- G. Increase residents' understanding of both the benefits of outdoor recreational activities and the historical, cultural, and natural resource value of outdoor spaces.
- H. Create healthy, resilient, and connected habitats to protect and enhance nature and the economic, recreational, and physical and mental health benefits it provides.
- I. Assess, monitor, remediate, and reduce the negative impacts of recreational activity on the environment.
- J. Communicate how natural resource management strategies are addressing threats from climate change and can produce more resilient natural spaces and ensure future fish and wildlife-based recreation opportunities.
- K. Connect communities to trails and multiuse paths that offer effective transportation alternatives reducing emissions and natural corridors through the promotion of interconnected greenway systems and trail networks.

**Strategy 3A. Foster community engagement, relevancy and stewardship in outdoor recreation, community science, and conservation efforts.**

***Supportive data:***

In 2021, NRPA published the Engaging Diverse Groups in Building Community Resiliency through the Stewardship Guide which found that “Advocates, stewards and volunteers are key to the success of ecologically balanced park projects and spaces. They provide vital assistance in the advocacy, establishment, maintenance, and educational outreach needed to ensure these

spaces are in harmony with nature, well-maintained and a welcoming place for all" (p. 3). The guide noted "according to national research NRPA conducted in 2020, we know that this population generally skews older, whiter, and wealthier than the community as a whole. To ensure the sustainability and success of our natural resource programs and parks, we need to make certain our advocates and stewards reflect the communities these spaces serve".

#### Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey

**Q9.** *Are you a member of a club or organization whose purpose or mission is the enjoyment or support of outdoor recreation in some form?*

60% of respondents (N = 4,753) identified being part of a club or organization or club. Specifically, respondents they were part of these types or organizations:

**Q9A.** *If yes, please indicate the name of the organization*

**Table 18 Avid Outdoor Recreation Enthusiast Club Memberships**

Response Category (Top 5 responses)	Multiple responses accepted	Total (n = 2,678)
Land Trust/Conservation Clubs		1
Sportsman, Fish & Game, Land & Game Clubs		2
Audubon/Bird/Ornithology Club		3
Mountain Bike Clubs		4
Hiking/Mountain Clubs		5

**Q9B.** What is the purpose and/or goals of the organization?

**Table 19 Outdoor Club Purpose/Mission**

Response Category (Top 5 responses)	See corresponding organizations above, coded from responses	Total (n = 2,384)
Promote Support, Preservation, and Conservation of Land		1
Promote Fishing, Hunting, Riding, Shooting, etc.		2
Promote/Provide Safety		3
Promote Restoration and Education		4
Provide Resources, Land, & Opportunities for People		5

This population could be a valuable resource to increase community engagement in outdoor recreation and conservation efforts.

**Strategy 3B. Plan for and invest in outdoor recreation infrastructure that is resilient to the effects of climate change, such as floods and severe weather.**

As a coastal state, Connecticut is positioned to be a leader in the adoption of resilient infrastructure. DEEP has implemented numerous initiatives to address climate change. Specific initiatives, legislation, and guidelines can be found in the Appendix.

**Strategy 3C. Lower operating costs and reduce the carbon footprint of outdoor recreation in Connecticut through sustainable operations.**

Moving away from fossil fuels to electric power can help reduce the carbon footprint in parks. Transportation is responsible for approximately 28% of the annual Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in the United States (NPS.gov, n.d.). According to Dolesh (2023) in an article in the National Recreation & Parks Association magazine, “Park and recreation agencies have an opportunity now to plan, budget and implement a changeover to electric power that positions them for more cost-efficient operations and a more reliable and resilient future that demonstrates a commitment to sustainability.”

**Strategy 3D. Connect communities to trails by promoting trail networks that offer effective transportation alternatives and reduce emissions.**

Connecticut is fortunate to have a wide variety of volunteer organizations that are dedicated to the establishment, promotion, and continued support of alternative modes of transport related to their individual areas of interest. Many regional collaborations of volunteers, municipal and state representatives, planners, and professionals serve to support the planning, implementation, and expansion of their trails and greenways. Please refer to SCORP pages 57-76 for more information regarding these activities.

**Strategy 3E. Provide Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers at outdoor recreation destinations to ensure accessibility for electric vehicle drivers.**

This strategy aligns with a Connecticut DEEP State initiative “The Electric Vehicle Roadmap for Connecticut (EV Roadmap)” which represents a comprehensive strategy for accelerating the deployment of electric vehicles (EVs) through policies and regulatory tools addressing transportation equity, purchasing incentives, consumer education, charging infrastructure expansion, consumer protection, integration of EVs into the electric grid, utility investment, and utility rate design.

Furthermore, The US Department of Transportation (DOT) (2023) highlighted the impact of increased EV infrastructure related to local health and economic benefits, reduction of GHGs, and opportunities to reach a larger population in more rural or traditionally underserved communities. In addition, the Department of Energy (2023) noted the EV sales in the United States continue to increase. Therefore, the need for more charging stations in non-traditional areas like parks and outdoor recreation areas will be needed.

**Strategy 3F. Incorporate climate change information in experiential educational materials provided at outdoor recreation and natural resource destinations (nature centers, museums, etc.).**

Various sections of the Division Accomplishments identify and explain the effective use of experiential programming in support of the overall mission of DEEP and the objectives of each division as they relate to climate change.

**Strategy 3G. Increase residents' understanding of both the benefits of outdoor recreational activities and the historical, cultural, and natural resource value of outdoor spaces.**

***Supportive data:***

There are numerous wellness benefits from getting outdoors including physical, mental, social, and community (Wellness, 2021). A survey by the National Recreation and Parks Association found that local parks or picnic areas are among the favorite outdoor places Americans visit to experience the health benefits of nature (NRPA, 2019). Other areas noted were lakes, riverfronts, or beaches (56%), local parks or picnic areas (55 %), trails or campsites (36 %). “Parks provide a connection to nature, which studies demonstrate relieves stress levels, tightens interpersonal relationships and improves overall mental health.” (NRPA, 2019).

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/features/wellness-benefits-great-outdoors>

<https://www.nrpa.org/about-national-recreation-and-park-association/press-room/local-parks-among-the-top-outdoor-areas-americans-visit-to-experience-the-health-benefits-of-nature/>

Outreach programs identified by the State Parks Education Unit demonstrate an awareness of, and effort to, address this issue.

**Strategy 3H. Create healthy, resilient, and connected habitats to protect and enhance nature and the economic, recreational, and physical and mental health benefits it provides.**

The benefits that sustainable habitats provide through ecosystem service support our day-to-day lives. Healthy habitats help keep our drinking water clean, protect us from storms and flooding, and support outdoor recreational activities like hiking, camping, boating, fishing, and tourism. (<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/habitat-conservation/value-habitat#:~:text=Nature's%20Benefits,boating%2C%20fishing%2C%20and%20tourism>

The Connecticut DEEP fosters healthy habitats by implementing conservation policies, investing in green infrastructure, promoting sustainable land use practices and effectively communicating both its goals and outcomes to residents and visitors. Connecting habitats through ecological corridors enhances biodiversity. This approach protects nature, boosts economic opportunities, and contributes to the well-being of citizens through recreation, physical health, and mental wellness

**Strategy 3I. Assess, monitor, remediate, and reduce the negative impacts of recreational activity on the environment.**

***Supportive data:***

Through the combined efforts of the DEEP divisions, the involvement of many of the 169 municipalities and the many recreational clubs and interest groups throughout the state, the importance of assessing, monitoring, and remediating the negative impacts of recreational activities is an important element of both the management of each resource and its use by the public. Examples of these efforts comprise much of the information regarding the accomplishments mentioned earlier in this report.

**Strategy 3J. Communicate how natural resource management strategies are addressing threats from climate change and can produce more resilient natural spaces and ensure future fish and wildlife-based recreation opportunities.**

***Supportive data:***

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, “Climate change will alter the dynamics of outdoor recreation and the infrastructure that supports it in a number of ways, and these effects will vary greatly by season, geographic location, and population demographic... To help managers thoughtfully consider how to respond to the effects of climate change on outdoor recreation, the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science’s Climate Change Response Framework have designed a free download menu of climate adaptation strategies and approaches relevant to the conservation and management of natural resources for outdoor

recreation.” for a full description of this document. <https://forestadaptation.org/recreation-menu>; <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/24/7030>;

The individual divisions of DEEP include directed strategies to address the need for informed decisions regarding the resiliency of natural spaces. The reader is advised to refer to the division reports appearing earlier in this document, and the Action Plans for each division beginning included in the Appendices. Additional information, including over 50 online publications covering topics including Connecticut Outdoor Guides, Responsible Recreation, Outdoor Learning Resources, and online newsletters, is available to the general public and can also be accessed through the DEEP official website portal.ct.gov/DEEP.

**Strategy 3K. Connect communities to trails and multiuse paths that offer effective transportation alternatives reducing emissions and natural corridors through the promotion of interconnected greenway systems and trail networks.**

Communities across Connecticut are both aware of and actively involved in addressing the need to engage in alternative means of accessing municipal and state facilities. Construction awards of \$9,833,475 (41.1% of total CT RTP award) were granted to projects which actively construct new recreational trails or trail segments and include labor, materials, and construction administration costs. Trail construction projects represent close to half the allocated fees of the program. (SCORP p.66)

DEEP’s Office of Trails and Greenways engages and collaborates with a broad range of partner organizations and agencies to support the planning and management of recreational trails across the state. There are many organizations that partner with CT DEEP Office of Trails. There are over 2,000 miles of trails across state park and forest lands, with many more publicly accessible trails on municipal, land trust, and other conservation lands.



# PART III:

## The Data

DRAFT



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# CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection

## 2024–2029 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Data



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### OVERVIEW

This study represents a collaboration between the state of Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Center for Community Engagement and Social Research (CCESR) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). In October 2022, CCESR was commissioned to collect data and provide analysis to assist DEEP with drafting and assembling the 2024–2029 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The data collected will help DEEP evaluate the supply and demand of public outdoor recreation resources throughout Connecticut.

To capture the attitudes and behaviors of various stakeholders in the state, four separate surveys were issued: one to town officials, a second to avid outdoor enthusiasts, a third to Connecticut's general population, and a fourth to current recreationalists. Additionally, four focus groups offered a qualitative lens into topics regarding the barriers to recreation and the concerns of Connecticut residents. Drawing on data from the 2005–2010, 2011–2016, and 2017–2022 SCORP reports, this document provides valuable insight into longitudinal outdoor recreation trends in the Nutmeg State.

One methodological objective of the survey issued to Connecticut's general population was to provide a sample closely mirroring the overall demographic profile of the state. Having met this objective, the results of this survey, the 2023 Statewide Demand Assessment Survey (hereafter Statewide Survey or Statewide Outdoor Recreation Survey) can be reasonably generalized to the state's population as a whole. This conclusion is made because the 2023 Statewide Survey's sample closely mirrors Connecticut's 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) figures. Given that the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey was not offered randomly, that profile of study participants was not expected to closely mirror census figures. Instead of generalizability to the general population, the goal of the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast survey was to capture the sentiments of self-identified avid outdoor enthusiasts.

New for this SCORP, a survey was distributed to current recreationalists—individuals who were actively recreating in a DEEP facility at the time of the survey's distribution. The goal of the survey was to better understand recreation habits, establish baseline demographic information of current users, and identify constituent needs. This survey was non-random in its distribution, with the goal of capturing recreationalist sentiment during or immediately after their visit to a DEEP facility. Given the late timeline of distribution, analysis of this survey is limited to the Annotated Questionnaire.

Finally, a survey was distributed to Connecticut's town officials. Litchfield was the most well-represented county, with slightly more than one-in-five survey participants (22%) representing

that area. Hartford was the second-most represented county, with slightly less than one-in-five (18%) participants hailing from that geographical area. Most respondents (91%) were associated with their town's parks and recreation department.

Numerous methodological limitations impact the findings presented throughout this report, including the Executive Summary. Readers are encouraged to consult [Section VII: Methodological Limitations](#) to gain a better understanding of bias in this study and its possible effect on data interpretation.

## ASSESSING SUPPLY

In 2005, the Center for Population Research (CPR) at the University of Connecticut undertook the task of establishing the first comprehensive database of outdoor recreational facilities and resources in the state. To construct the database, the state drew upon survey responses and interviews with local and state officials to comprise a list of “discrete identifiable recreation places” (DIRPs) for each of the state’s 169 municipalities. For each DIRP, information was provided for more than 50 characteristics related to the facility or resource, when possible. The 2011 SCORP took a more qualitative approach to assessing the supply of DIRPs in Connecticut; however, some quantitative techniques were used. In an effort to provide updates to the DIRP database, town officials were asked to indicate what additions and/or renovations had been made to recreational facilities in their municipality.

Starting in 2017, town officials were asked to provide the total acreage of open space land for both “active” and “passive” outdoor recreation use. Examples of “active” outdoor recreation facilities included sports fields, playgrounds, swimming pools, golf courses, and skate parks. Meanwhile, examples of “passive” outdoor recreation facilities included hiking and nature trails, rails-to-trails, town greens, non-developed fields, wildlife observation areas, hunting sites, and fishing sites. In 2023, more total acreage is dedicated to passive outdoor recreation use compared to active outdoor recreation use. More than two-in-five of the 55 towns in the sample (45%) feature 301 acres or more dedicated to passive recreation, a percentage that is cut in half when looking at the same number of acres dedicated to active recreation (22%).

The condition of local and state parks was assessed through ratings given by Connecticut residents on the Statewide Survey. In 2023, over nine-tenths of respondents (92%) rated state-owned outdoor recreation areas as “excellent” or “good,” continuing the longitudinal trend of demonstrated improvement. This percentage represents a four-percentage-point increase from 2017 (88% rating “excellent” or “good”) and a ten-percentage-point increase from 2005 (82%). Municipal-owned outdoor recreation areas also received high marks, with just shy of nine-in-ten (88%) indicating a response of “excellent” or “good.” This percentage represents a marginal increase from 2017 (87%), and a more modest increase from 2005 (81%).

Town officials in 2023 were generally less satisfied with the condition of recreational facilities than reported in the 2017 SCORP. Town officials were asked to rank the conditions of town facilities as either “excellent,” “good,” “needs improvement,” or “poor.” Similar to the 2017 SCORP, town officials were most satisfied with artificial turf fields, with 63% rating these facilities to be in “excellent” condition. Golf courses (53%) also received a high percentage of “excellent” ratings, representing a 5% increase since 2017. After this, a profound drop-off in “excellent” ratings is observed. Facilities with the highest percentage of “poor” ratings included volleyball courts (23%), camping (20%), hunting (16%), tennis courts (14%), winter sports (13%), boating (12.5%), and basketball courts (11%). Along with this, lacrosse fields, multi-use fields, gardens, swimming (beaches and pools), winter sports, playgrounds, and camping were amongst the highest ratings by town officials of “needs improvement.”

Compared to 2017 findings, town officials offer mixed ratings regarding their ability to meet many recreational needs of their communities. Out of the eleven court and field facilities surveyed, six areas registered higher insufficiency ratings. The court and field facilities deemed insufficient to meet demand were tennis courts (18% increase), artificial turf fields (17% increase), football fields (7% increase), multi-use fields (5% increase), golf courses (3% increase), and basketball courts (3% increase). Areas seen as sufficient for demand include baseball/softball fields (10% decrease in insufficiency rating), volleyball courts (7% decrease), soccer fields (3% decrease), and natural turf fields (2% decrease).

When it comes to facilities other than courts and fields, town officials offered slightly more positive ratings regarding their ability to meet the recreational needs of their communities in 2023. When compared to 2017, five of thirteen areas registered higher insufficiency ratings. The largest increases in insufficiency ratings were observed in paved trails (31% increase when compared to general trails in 2017), gardens (22% increase), swim areas/beaches/pools (12% increase), historic/educational sites (11% increase), and playgrounds (1% increase). In contrast, areas seeing a decline in insufficiency ratings included picnic areas (18% decrease), winter sports (11% decrease), boating access (8% decrease), fishing access (4% decrease), hunting (3% decrease), and camping (2% decrease).

Finally, respondents to the Town Officials Survey were asked to identify which “support components” were inadequate at any of the facilities in their community. “Support components” are considered resources that make it easier and/or more enjoyable to practice outdoor recreational activities in a given recreational area. For example, restrooms are considered a support component because they allow individuals to stay longer in an area. Public transportation to a facility remains the most inadequate support component; however, this percentage has decreased dramatically since the 2017 SCORP. In 2017, 31% of all towns identified public transportation as an inadequate support component. This percentage dropped 18% in the 2023 SCORP, with only 13% of respondents rating public transportation as

inadequate. In fact, nearly all support components improved with most component's ratings of inadequacy dropping 4%–20% since 2017. The most dramatic improvement was seen in public restrooms, where only 8% of all town officials cited inadequate components versus 31% in 2017. Public transportation (13%), directional or interpretative signage (10%), and accessibility for persons with disabilities (10%) were the most concerning for Connecticut town officials. While these were the highest concerns of town officials, their inadequate rating decreased substantially since 2017. This means that, overall, there have been improvements in these areas of concern between 2017 and 2023.

## **ASSESSMENT OF DEMAND**

In the 2023 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Survey, the most popular outdoor land-based activity was running, walking, or hiking, with more than eight in ten (83%) households reporting participation in the last twelve months. From there, a sizable drop-off is witnessed, with the second most popular household activity being visiting historic sites/areas (41%). Other activities with participation rates in the 30% to 40% range include basketball/volleyball (36%), road biking/biking in neighborhoods (36%), bird/wildlife watching (35%), and nature/wildlife photography (30%).

Mirroring 2017 findings, the two least popular activities among the residents surveyed were horse camping (4% household participation rates) and disc golf (5%). Ultimate Frisbee (5%), hunting/trapping (7%), and pickleball (7%) also registered comparatively low household participation rates. However, some of these low-participation activities—notably pickleball—will likely be an area of increasing interest moving forward. Town officials repeatedly cited pickleball's popularity in their respective municipalities, with two-thirds of officials (67%) identifying it as the outdoor recreation activity most likely to gain popularity over the next five to ten years.

Among land-based activities, the biggest drop in participation from 2017 to 2023 was observed in visiting historic sites/areas, down 14.5% (from 55% in 2017 to 41% in 2023). Meanwhile, the largest increase from 2017 to 2023 was in basketball/volleyball (up almost 5% from 31.3% in 2017 to 36.1% in 2023) followed by mountain biking (up over 4% from 11.2% in 2017 to 15.5% in 2023) and multi-use trail biking (up nearly 3% from 12.5% in 2017 to 15.4% in 2023).

Turning to water-based sports, activities at the beach were the most common water-based activity, with three-in-five households (59%) indicating that they participated in these activities over the past year. This is followed by swimming activities, with 47% participating in fresh/saltwater swimming and 41% swimming in pools. All other water-based activities had participation rates lower than 25%. The least common water-based activities include some of the more physically demanding activities with comparatively high barriers to entry, such as water skiing, tubing, or wakeboarding (12%), snorkeling or scuba diving (10%), and sailing (9%).

While the most common activities reported by Connecticut households in 2023 were activities at the beach/swimming, participation rates dropped across these activities from 2017 to 2023. Swimming in outdoor public pools saw the largest drop, from 57% in 2017 to 41% in 2023. Activities at the beach fell from 67% to 59%, and swimming in freshwater/saltwater fell from 53% to 47%. It is possible that some of these changes could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the prospect of social distancing may have increased concerns about public pools. A lack of staffing at these facilities could be another factor. In the summer of 2023, some Connecticut municipalities had to limit the hours of their public pools, if not close certain facilities entirely, due to lifeguard shortages.

Aside from the decline in beach/swimming activities, the level of participation in water-based activities in the 2023 survey was mostly comparable to the 2017 survey. Wider differences were observed between 2005 and 2017/2023, which as previously stated, may be partially attributed to methodological changes in how the survey was distributed.

As with participation rates for land-based activities, frequency rates also revealed walking/hiking at the top of the list: 46% reported walking or hiking several times a week. In addition, over one-quarter (29%) reported walking or hiking a few times a month. Running was pursued frequently also, with 37% of households running several times a week and an additional 33% running a few times a month. Both categories saw a slight uptick from 2017 to 2023. Geocaching, letterboxing, and/or mobile application gaming have remained popular since 2017, with 40% percent of households engaging in these activities several times per week and 22% engaging in them a few times per month in 2023. These rates closely match those in 2017, reflecting the presence of a solid niche group for these activities. Bird watching was also found to be a popular activity, with 27% of respondents participating several times a week and 33% participating a few times a month.

Several land-based activities stand out for their low frequency rates. Among these are four cold-weather categories: sledding, ice skating or hockey, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, and downhill skiing or snowboarding. For sledding, which was the least frequent among this group, two-thirds (67%) reported that engagement was seldom or less than once a month. Similarly, over half of those who engaged in downhill skiing/snowboarding (52%) or cross-country skiing/snowshoeing (54%) reported the same. It is understandable that these activities showed a much lower frequency rate, as they are largely dependent on the abundance of snow, and winter weather was mild this past year.

Tent camping showed the lowest frequency of participation, with six-in-ten (66%) campers engaging in this activity on a less-than-once-a-month or seldom basis. Backpack camping sits at the bottom of the chart as well. Since camping tends to require a higher degree of planning and preparation than the other activities surveyed, it is understandable that its participation frequency rate would be lower.

Turning to water-based recreation, activities with the highest rates of household participation included activities at the beach, swimming in freshwater/saltwater, and swimming in outdoor pools. However, in terms of frequency, only swimming in outdoor pools remained at the top of the list. While a majority of households (59%) reported engagement in beach activities within the past year, only 35% reported doing so a few times per month or more. Reports for swimming in freshwater/saltwater were similar with 47% of households enjoying the activity, but only 37% participating at least a few times per month. In contrast, swimming in pools had slightly lower participation (41%) but higher frequency with 47% participating a few times per month or more. It is possible that respondents included use of their own personal outdoor pools when considering the frequency of participation, which would naturally lead to a greater incidence of participation. Future surveys may wish to highlight “public outdoor swimming pools” when describing this activity.

In contrast, while freshwater fishing or ice fishing (23%) and water-based wildlife/marine-life viewing (18%) had modest levels of household participation, they floated to the top of the list in terms of frequency of participation: a strong 65% reported fishing at least once per month and 67% confirmed viewing wildlife at least once per month.

The water-based recreation activities with the lowest participation rates, water skiing/tubing/wakeboarding (10% household participation), snorkeling/scuba diving (10% household participation), and sailing (9% household participation), also were practiced least frequently. Additionally, participants canoed, kayaked, or used a paddleboard infrequently. This pattern is unsurprising since activities such as swimming and fishing require minimal equipment compared to scuba diving, sailing, and water skiing/tubing/wakeboarding. Additionally, these activities require higher financial input and extensive training to be performed successfully. Snorkeling and scuba diving also tend to be popular in tropical waters, implying costly travel for participants based in Connecticut.

Shifting focus to avid outdoor enthusiasts, it is helpful to review the characteristics of this active and engaged population. Powerful trends emerged in examining the relationship between outdoor activity engagement and demographic variables. Among the avid outdoor enthusiasts who identified hunting or trapping as one of their preferred (top five) activities, 94% of them were male. In 2023, other preferred activities that were more popular among males than females included target/trap shooting or archery (94% male), fishing (90% male), golf (87% male), dirt biking/motorcycling (84% male), and off-roading/four-wheeling (84% male). Activities that were more popular among female avid outdoor enthusiasts than male outdoor enthusiasts included horse camping (94% female), horseback riding/showing (87% female), and swimming, wading, and river tubing (57% female). Among all avid outdoor enthusiasts who identified basketball as one of their preferred activities, 6% were nonbinary.

From an economic viewpoint, for land-based activities, disparities in participation between lower and higher income households were most pronounced for golf, skiing/snowboarding, and ice skating/hockey, with wealthier households being more likely to engage in these activities. Activities that showed a relatively even proportion of individuals from each of the three income brackets included geocaching/letterboxing, soccer, rollerblading/skateboarding, basketball, and football/lacrosse/field hockey/rugby. In general, households with higher annual incomes engaged more in outdoor recreational activities. Camping (backpack camping, RV/trailer camping, and tent camping) and volleyball were the only land-based activities for which households with incomes below \$100,000 had participation rates exceeding those with household incomes of \$100,000 or more.

For water-based outdoor recreational activities, a consistent pattern emerged in which higher household income predicted greater participation in all activities except freshwater/ice fishing and saltwater fishing.

An examination of the relationship between income and participation in outdoor recreational activities among outdoor enthusiasts generally supported the findings of the Statewide Survey. It should be noted that even more respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey reported higher income than respondents to the Statewide Survey. Nearly three in five respondents (57%) reported incomes over \$100,000, while only two of five respondents (38%) to the Statewide Survey fell into this income bracket.

To assess the extent to which state- and municipal-owned outdoor recreation areas are being used by households from the general population of Connecticut, respondents were asked how often they visited each of these areas over the past twelve months. Interestingly, little difference is apparent between household visitation data from 2017 and 2023. Households were roughly as likely to have visited municipal-owned areas (66% of households) as state-owned areas (64% of households) in the past year. However, municipal-owned areas attracted a larger subset of frequent visitors (20+ visits), approximately 9% more than state-owned areas. Of those households indicating that they had visited a municipal-owned area within the past twelve months, slightly less than one-in-six (16%) had visited twenty or more times.

Comparatively, slightly less than one-in-fourteen (7%) households reported visiting a state-owned park twenty or more times. More than half of the households (55%) that reported visiting a state-owned park in the past year made one to five visits, with slightly more than one-quarter of reporting households (27%) making six to ten visits. Ease of accessibility (i.e., shorter distance to the location from one's residence) may account for the more frequent visits to municipal-owned recreation areas than to state-owned recreation areas.

In the Town Officials Survey, respondents were asked to report whether their town was currently able to meet the outdoor recreation needs of each of six different age groups. Overall, viewpoints of town officials remained relatively stable since 2017, with mostly modest

decreases emerging in 2023. The most notable decrease was for children aged 5–12 years (down 12%). Another notable decrease was found for children aged 0–5 (down 6%). Rates in which town officials reported being able to meet the needs of 13- to 19-year-old residents, 19- to 55-year-old residents, and seniors remained relatively stable since 2017. There were slight decreases, peaking at 3%, among these age categories. In addition to specifying whether the needs of each age group are being met, town officials were also given the opportunity to provide insight on issues that are related to these needs. Several topics emerged among the open-ended responses. Most mentioned was insufficient resources, whether it be funding, space, and/or staff. This was followed by a lack of programs to accommodate younger adults and children, lack of accommodations for seniors, outdated outdoor recreation spaces, and the need for more areas to accommodate people with disabilities.

Respondents to the Statewide Survey were asked to indicate whether they or any member of their household had “a need or desire for additional access” to each of 31 recreational facilities. The SCORP data collection effort has illustrated a consistent longitudinal need for picnic areas/shelters from 2005 (64%) to 2023 (60%). There has been a significant increase in the need for volleyball/tennis/basketball courts (49%) across the state compared to 2005 (35%). Significant decreases were observed this year in the need for fresh/saltwater swimming (42%), historic sites and areas (42%), paved multi-use trails (43%), nature preserves and bird watching areas (42%), and outdoor public pools/water parks/splash pads (44%).

Categories such as bicycle playgrounds, biking pump tracks, snowmobiling areas, and pickleball courts were new to this year’s survey, leaving no ability to compare these categories to previous versions of the SCORP report. Among comparable facilities, a notable increase in need is observed from 2017 to 2023 in off-road motor/dirt biking/motorcycling areas, which jumped from 12% to 32%. Other slight increases include ADA-accessible trails (going up to 24% from 17%), snorkeling/scuba diving (going up to 22% from 16%), and cross-country skiing/snowshoeing trails (going up to 21% from 14%).

Town officials were asked to identify which outdoor recreation facilities or programs not currently provided in their community should be provided. Slightly more than half (51%) cited indoor/outdoor recreation facilities – non-aquatic (such as fields and courts) as their most pressing need. This was followed by “other” responses (13%). Other facilities or programs that registered were trails (10%), pool/aquatic facilities (8%), community events/programs (8%), parks (6%), and community/senior/teen centers (4%).

## **BARRIERS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION**

Connecticut residents were asked to indicate reasons preventing them or members of their household from using outdoor recreation facilities in the state. Over half (57%) of all Connecticut residents identified at least one obstacle to recreation. Compared to 23% of all

residents indicating fees as the number one barrier in 2017, lack of available parking is the top-cited barrier in 2023 (15%). Not too far behind were residents not knowing what was being offered (13%), distance from residence (12%), and lack of well-maintained facilities (12%). Other respondents indicated the following barriers to participation: fees (11%), not knowing facility location (11%), and lack of well-maintained parks (11%). Some respondents offered alternate responses, which included: being too busy/lack of time, unclear or unavailable maps, worries of bugs (ticks specifically), and inability to access places due to car or location issues.

For each of their top five activities, avid outdoor enthusiasts were asked to what extent their needs for outdoor recreation facilities or resources were being met. Those indicating that their needs were not being “completely met” were asked to identify what problems they experienced. For each activity, the top five most frequent problems were coded from responses. Limited and/or lack of access (20%) was the top-cited barrier to the enjoyment of outdoor recreation. Trail-related issues (16%) and parking access (16%) were the next most popular responses, followed by maintenance concerns (12%). To get a broader sense of what avid outdoor enthusiasts think, a follow-up question was asked to all survey participants (not just those saying their recreation needs were not met). Among this larger grouping of avid outdoor enthusiasts, respondents cited litter as the most significant issue impacting their participation in outdoor recreation activities (17%). Notably, 16% cited that there is no significant issue impacting their outdoor recreation activity. Approximately one-in-ten avid outdoor enthusiasts cited recreational user conflict (12%), parking (10%), alternate (other) responses (10%), or crowding (9%) as the most significant issue they have faced.

All respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey were asked to identify what they believed to be the most pressing needs of the outdoor recreation areas that they visit. Themes were coded from open-ended responses. Broadly, enthusiasts described needs related to litter/maintenance (trash/overgrown greenery/lack of trail upkeep), parking (not enough, not horse-trailer accessible), motorized/all-terrain vehicles (limited riding areas, disturbing others in illegal areas), hunting (non-hunters in designated areas, lack of awareness), and enforcement of rules (lack of supervision/safety, illegal activity).

Finally, statewide survey participants were also asked how they best learn about outdoor recreational facilities, resources, and activities in Connecticut. The internet has replaced word of mouth as the most popular source of learning, with over three-in-five respondents (63%) turning to the internet for information. Word of mouth (51%) and social media (40%) were the next most common ways of learning about outdoor recreational facilities and/or activities in their local community.

## PROJECTIONS OF FUTURE TRENDS AND FUNDING DIRECTIONS

Pickleball was the recreational activity most frequently projected by town officials to gain popularity over the next five to ten years, with nearly six-in-ten (67%) officials citing this response. This represents a change from 2017, when walking and hiking, as well as demand for associated facilities (e.g., paved and unpaved single- and multi-use trails), were the activities projected to gain the most popularity. In contrast, activities such as tennis (24%), outdoor sports such as football, baseball/softball, and basketball (20%), and organized/youth sports activities and/or programs (12%) were predicted to lose popularity over the next five to ten years. Notably, the most common response by town officials indicated uncertainty over which activities will become less popular in this timespan, with nearly two-in-five officials selecting this option (39%).

Picnic areas and shelters, followed by paved multi-use trails, were the facilities most frequently noted as top priorities by state residents in 2023—a continuation of the trend seen in 2017. Fourteen percent of 2023 survey respondents chose picnic areas/shelters as their most important facility (out of their top three) to develop in both municipal- and state-owned areas. Meanwhile, paved multi-use trails garnered 12% and 10% in municipal- and state-owned areas, respectively. While the rank-order of facilities rated by residents as most important to develop in municipal- and state-owned was somewhat similar between 2017 and 2023, there are occasions where the degree of importance of a particular facility differs significantly between the two survey measurements. Since 2017, a noticeable decline in the desire for access to swimming areas was observed. Swimming areas (freshwater/saltwater) exhibited a large reduction between degree of need in 2017 and degree of need in 2023, which was also true for outdoor pools and playgrounds. Such results may have been influenced by the social distancing policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have affected the popularity of these types of collective recreation activities. A lasting concern towards utilizing shared spaces with high-traffic touchpoints, as pools and playgrounds have, could still be a concern for residents.

Many Connecticut residents showed interest in how funding is distributed when it comes to outdoor recreation, both locally and statewide. To measure the importance given by state residents to funding allocation, respondents were asked to consider specific initiatives related to outdoor recreation. State residents equally support increasing funding for the maintenance and improvement of existing recreational facilities with the development of new facilities (both 43%). These initiatives were slightly preferred over increasing funding for additional programming/activities (39%). The 2023 findings suggest that residents are least supportive of increasing advertising for/information about facilities and other actions, with only 28% supporting increased funding in this area (down 6% from 2017 and down 10% from 2005). Notably, town officials echoed residents' funding priorities, with officials indicating that improving and maintaining existing facilities were top priorities.

For state-owned outdoor recreation areas, about three-quarters of state residents showed some level of support for an increase or implementation in fees to help pay for operating expenses. Over a quarter of residents (29%) indicated being “very supportive” of a fee increase while almost half (45%) indicated that they were “somewhat supportive.” For local recreation areas, residents were marginally less supportive of fee increases for improving their municipal facilities, with 69% indicating they are “very” (28%) or “somewhat” (41%) supportive. One-in-five (20%) residents are not supportive of fee increases for improving the municipal facilities, while 11% are unsure.

Overall, constituent views regarding funding across the surveyed initiatives remained relatively consistent between 2017 and 2023. Notably, a very small percentage think that DEEP should decrease funding. For every funding initiative surveyed, the percentage of respondents who believe there should be a decrease in funding was below 10%. This suggests that most Connecticut residents want to see either an increase in funding or for current funding to be maintained.

### **FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS**

Two groups of avid outdoor enthusiasts, each consisting of five individuals, convened virtually via Microsoft Teams. Individuals were identified through two means of recruitment—via informal conversations CCESR staff had with facility visitors while advertising the Current Recreationalist Survey, as well as via emails and phone calls that the staff received regarding this project more broadly. The results of these focus groups were non-representative beyond those who participated in this portion of the study. The enthusiasts participated in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities, including mountain and road biking, trail running and walking, pond hockey, lake and ocean swimming, ATV riding, hunting, and outdoor archery.



Consistent with views expressed in the other 2023 surveys, focus group participants expressed mixed opinions regarding the extent to which their needs were met. In one focus group, a comparison quickly emerged between pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic feelings. Many participants reported feeling that their outdoor recreation experiences in

Connecticut have changed substantially since the pandemic. When prompted to elaborate by CCESR staff, two interconnected themes emerged as prominent responses. First, avid outdoor enthusiasts pointed to an increase in fellow users who disregard DEEP facility policies. They described a dramatic uptick in selfish behavior, with other users being inconsiderate of shared space. Specific areas of concern included an observed increase in marijuana use, vandalism, the use of speakers to play explicit music, unleashed dogs, and illegal use of space that contributes to user conflict (such as riding ATVs on trails or powerboats being driven at excessive speeds in no-wake zones). Second, avid outdoor enthusiasts expressed frustration at the lack of enforcement of facilities policies, which they felt emboldened users to continue neglecting regulations. Participants strongly felt that DEEP staff have been more reluctant to enforce regulations since the pandemic. Avid outdoor enthusiasts welcomed the idea of stricter enforcement as a means of making their outdoor recreation experience more enjoyable, as well as a means of maintaining the conditions of the facilities that they frequent. They want rangers and other DEEP staff to have more power in dealing with facility users as they see violations occurring.

Similar to 2017, avid outdoor enthusiast focus group participants expressed concern over their inability to practice preferred activities safely, legally, or as freely as they desired. This finding was especially true of ATV riders and hunters. Avid outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy these activities voiced concern over several legal barriers. Hunters described regulations concerning the type and number of animals they can hunt, land-use laws, and Sunday hunting restrictions. ATV enthusiasts pointed to their inability to ride on state land. These criticisms then transitioned to a discussion of how Connecticut does not have a welcoming culture towards certain activities. This was expressed by hunters, mountain bikers, and ATV riders. New Hampshire was praised for how the state embraces these activities, evidenced by their laws and facilities. Their multi-use trail system that allows for ATV riding was cited as one example of an activity-friendly facility. Avid outdoor enthusiasts called for a lifting of restrictions so they could either have legal access to their activity (ATV riders) or an expansion of existing legal access (hunters).

Both of the avid outdoor enthusiast focus groups concluded on a similar note—with participants expressing a love for the natural beauty of the state. A primary challenge the groups saw for DEEP was to effectively promote the fact that Connecticut has such natural beauty available for residents to enjoy. Echoing sentiments expressed in 2017, participants expressed concern that fellow residents may be unaware of the natural resources right in front of them.

Two focus groups of limited recreationists were also established, with recruitment taking place via three main outlets: emails that the CCESR staff received concerning this project, word-of-mouth from CCESR staff, and through informal conversations that transpired while recruiting

for other elements of this project. “Limited recreationists” are defined as those who self-identify as experiencing significant barriers to outdoor recreation. Some of these limited recreationists engaged in infrequent outdoor recreation, such as walking on a rail trail once a month, while others engaged in zero outdoor activities.

First, the most prominent barriers to recreation were discussed with limited recreationalists. Participants described the challenge of fitting recreation into their busy schedules. Many participants held numerous jobs and had family and/or caretaking responsibilities. Some were going to school as well. These barriers compounded with their perceived inability to enjoy shared space at DEEP facilities. Some participants described not having a good time at the DEEP facilities, particularly beach locations, which negatively influenced their desire to engage in future usage at any location. Similar to avid outdoor enthusiasts, these individuals pointed to the behavior of other users as a major concern. They described other facility-users as selfish and inconsiderate. The playing of loud music, often with multiple speakers overlapping one another, was the most discussed concern. The observation of illegal drug use was also discussed, as was the unwanted smell of marijuana.

At the same time, limited recreationalists described having quality outdoor recreation choices available to them locally. Municipal parks and trails were seen as convenient alternatives. The ease of parking at these local facilities was seen in a highly favorable light, as was the versatility of these facilities. One example that was applauded for its versatility was Stanley Quarter Park in New Britain, which features a playground, paved and unpaved trails, birdwatching opportunities next to the pond, a skate park, baseball diamonds, and a large multi-use field. The common sentiment was that when participants had margin in their schedule to enjoy the outdoors, saving time (via the commute and parking) was very important.

Limited recreationalists were asked to comment on the degree to which they felt facility overcrowding was an issue at the DEEP locations that they visit. They felt it was a big area of concern, especially during the summer. Some valuable ideas emerged when participants were asked to brainstorm suggestions on how DEEP could better navigate crowding concerns. One suggestion that was universally applauded was the idea of allowing users to opt-in to a DEEP text-messaging system. Users could specify the types of updates that they would like to receive via text, including parking lot closures. Participants warned against an over-reliance on social media communication, suggesting that would not reach certain demographics. Even younger participants echoed this concern, saying that they avoid social media usage completely. Notably, across all age groups represented, limited recreationalists indicated that they would prefer text messages over communication made via social media.

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## SECTION I: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

### ABOUT THIS STUDY

This study is a collaboration between the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) and the Center for Community Engagement and Social Research (CCESR) at Central Connecticut State University (CCSU). In October 2022, CCESR was commissioned to collect data and provide analysis to assist DEEP with drafting and assembling the 2023–2028 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The data collected will help DEEP evaluate the supply and demand of public outdoor recreation resources throughout Connecticut.

To capture the attitudes and behaviors of various stakeholders in the state, four separate surveys were issued: one to town officials, a second to avid outdoor enthusiasts, a third to Connecticut's general population, and a fourth to current recreationalists. Additionally, four focus groups offered a qualitative lens into topics regarding the barriers to recreation and the concerns of Connecticut residents. Drawing on data from the 2005–2010, 2011–2016, and 2017–2022 SCORP reports, this document provides valuable insight into longitudinal outdoor recreation trends in the Nutmeg State.

### REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SCORP METHODOLOGIES

#### 2005–2010 Plan

The 2005–2010 SCORP was developed utilizing two key components: supply and demand. Information concerning supply was captured in a detailed inventory of Connecticut's outdoor recreational properties and facilities. These properties and facilities could have been owned by the federal, state, or municipal governments. They also could have been owned by a nonprofit and/or commercial business. In fact, property-ownership was often distributed between multiple parties.

Meanwhile, demand for outdoor recreational facilities was retrieved via several surveys, like that of the Statewide Demand Survey, which was sent to 2,238 individuals in the state's general population. Additionally, demand was gauged from three other surveys that were distributed to different audiences. One was sent to municipal recreation officials, while another survey was sent to Connecticut's expert or avid outdoor recreationists. The final survey was not conducted by DEEP or the University of Connecticut's Center for Population Research; rather, it was sourced from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Survey of Recreation and the Environment

(2004). Finally, demand for outdoor recreational facilities was gathered from three public meetings at sites across Connecticut.<sup>4</sup>

#### 2011–2016 Plan

The 2011–2016 SCORP employed many similar strategies to the 2005–2010 SCORP; however, the 2011–2016 SCORP was designed to collect information on the changes since the 2005–2010 SCORP. Five key methods were utilized: (1) A thorough agency review that entailed interviewing twenty DEEP employees, who provided qualitative insights into accomplishments and new agency initiatives undertaken since the prior SCORP; (2) nine SCORP Advisory Board meetings, giving a diverse grouping of stakeholders the ability to vocalize statewide concerns, as well as important new initiatives regarding outdoor recreation; (3) four public meetings, held in four quadrants of the state, to allow for public input into the SCORP; (4) a non-random questionnaire electronically distributed to 741 individuals, with the intention of understanding emerging demands for outdoor recreation since 2005; and (5) a municipality query, completed by twelve towns that sought to update DEEP’s understanding of new and/or renovated outdoor recreation facilities.

#### 2017–2022 Plan

Seeking to build on the robustness of the 2011–2016 plan, the 2017–2022 SCORP used both qualitative and quantitative measurements. Key to this effort was the deployment of three surveys: (1) the Statewide Demand Assessment Survey, a fully online, non-probability survey of 2,026 Connecticut residents; (2) the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey, a fully online, non-random survey of 2,649 self-identified avid outdoor enthusiasts; and (3) the Town Officials Survey, a multimodal survey of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities. Fifty-five towns responded to the Town Officials Survey via either telephone or electronic distribution, with recreation directors serving as the initial point of contact.

In addition, four qualitative focus groups were assembled to correlate with the quantitative method. Two groups, each containing five individuals, consisted of avid outdoor enthusiasts. The remaining two groups, also containing five individuals per group, consisted of those who perceive significant barriers to the use of Connecticut’s outdoor recreation resources. Focus group locations included the Eastern Connecticut State University and Central Connecticut State University campuses. Data from these focus groups were interspersed throughout the report, with a summary of major themes being offered in Section VI.

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<sup>4</sup> 2005–2010 SCORP, page i of Executive Summary

## METHODOLOGY FOR THE 2024–2029 PLAN

Four separate surveys were distributed as part of the data collection effort for the 2024-2029 SCORP:

### Statewide Demand Assessment Survey

To measure the demand for public outdoor recreation resources throughout the state, CCESR executed the Statewide Demand Assessment Survey (hereafter referred to as the Statewide Survey), which was an online, non-probability survey of 1,010 Connecticut residents. By using quotas, the survey sample closely mirrors the state demographics as they apply to geography, gender, household income, and ethnicity. This means that, based on these four demographic categories, findings from the Statewide Survey can be reasonably extrapolated to those of Connecticut residents more broadly. The online survey was distributed electronically in English.

### Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey

In order to better understand the recreation habits and needs of those who are passionate about outdoor activity in the state, CCESR conducted the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey, which was an online, non-random survey of 5,210 avid outdoor enthusiasts. Referred to as “Avid Users” in previous SCORPS, this group of survey-takers have self-identified as those who currently participate in outdoor recreation activities. The survey was distributed via numerous channels, including listserv contacts from SCORP Advisory Committee members and CCESR social media accounts. The survey was distributed electronically in English, with a Spanish version available upon request.

### Town Officials Survey

In order to update DEEP’s understanding of public outdoor recreation resources throughout Connecticut, CCESR conducted a multi-modality survey of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities. Participation was initially solicited via email, with telephone calls made to outstanding towns. Fifty-five towns responded to the Town Officials Survey, with recreation directors serving as the initial point of contact. In circumstances where the recreation director was unable to answer the survey questions, additional town/city officials were contacted on an as-needed basis. The survey was administered both electronically and via telephone in English.

### Current Recreationalist Survey

New for the 2024–2029 SCORP, CCESR conducted a survey of current recreationalists. CCSU students and University Assistants visited a total of sixty-four DEEP facilities to spread awareness about the survey. A combination of flyers, yard signs, and postcards were utilized, with each item containing a QR code to the survey as well as a phone number. A total of 249 current recreationalists shared their views on issues related to diversity and inclusion, expenditures related to facility visits, and facility needs. The survey was distributed electronically in English, with a Spanish version available upon request.

## Focus Groups

Four qualitative focus groups were assembled to correlate with the quantitative data. Each focus group included five individuals. Two groups consisted of avid outdoor enthusiasts and two groups consisted of those who perceived significant barriers to the use of Connecticut's outdoor recreation resources. Two focus groups were conducted in person on the CCSU campus, while the other two were conducted virtually. Data from these focus groups are interspersed throughout the report, with a summary of major themes being offered in Section VI of this report.

## Methodological Limitations

It is important to point out the methodological limitations of this study—including the implications of those limitations when attempting to interpret the data presented throughout this document. We point out the most prominent limitations of each survey, as well as the focus groups, in Section VII: Methodological Limitations. Readers are encouraged to visit this section of the report to gain valuable insight into issues surrounding data generalizability and extrapolation.

# STATEWIDE DEMOGRAPHICS

## Overview

This statewide demographic profile reflects the latest population estimates made available by the United States Census Bureau. The statistics cited are from the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates, which is conducted every year by the Census Bureau. When it is not a census year, the ACS provides the most accurate and up-to-date information for population statistics. Overall, the demographics covered in this section include population density, age, race/ethnicity, income, and education. These statistics depict how Connecticut demographics have changed since the last SCORP, thus, aiding where state investments and resource allocation should be targeted.

## Population Density

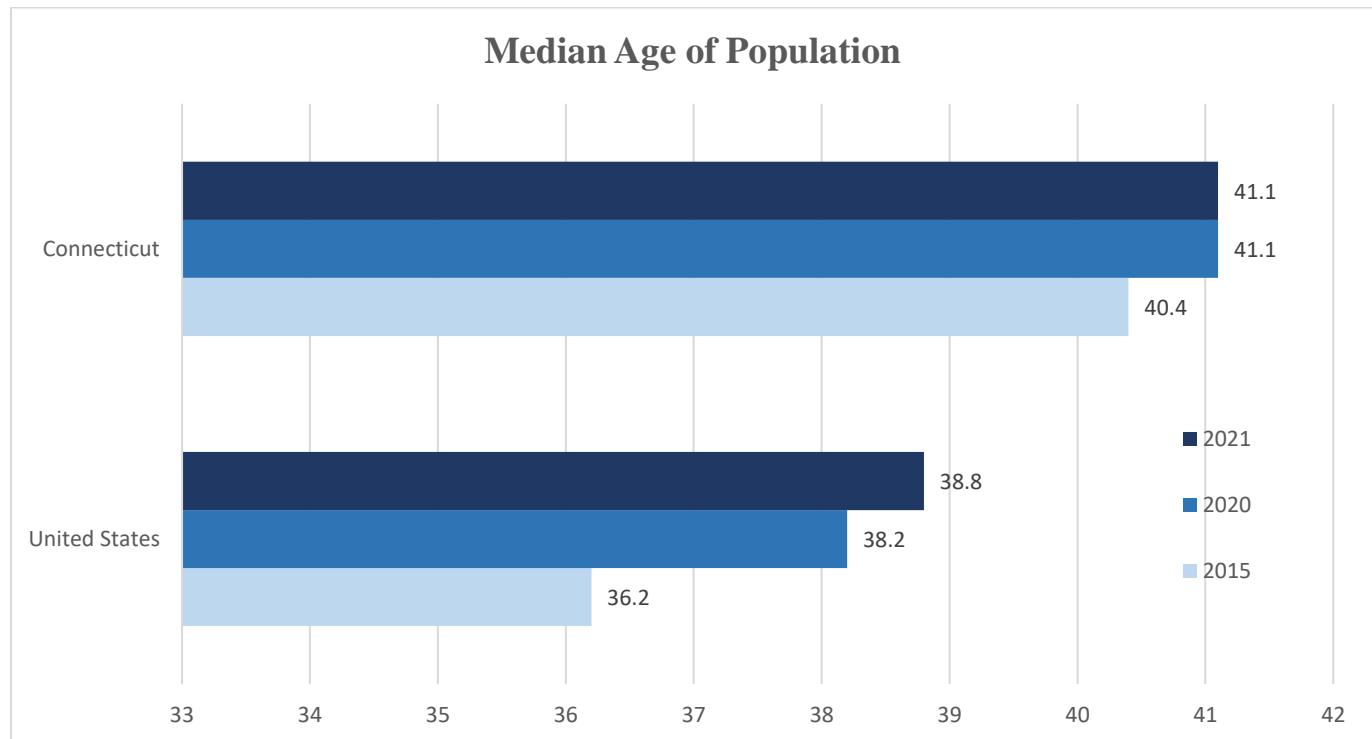
According to 2021 ACS data, Connecticut's population is 3,605,597, marking a negligible decrease (0.01%) decrease since the 2020 census. Similar to 2020, three-quarters (75.3%) of Connecticut residents are concentrated in Fairfield, Hartford, and New Haven counties. All Connecticut counties except Fairfield and Hartford have experienced recent declines in population, with Litchfield County experiencing the largest drop.

## Age

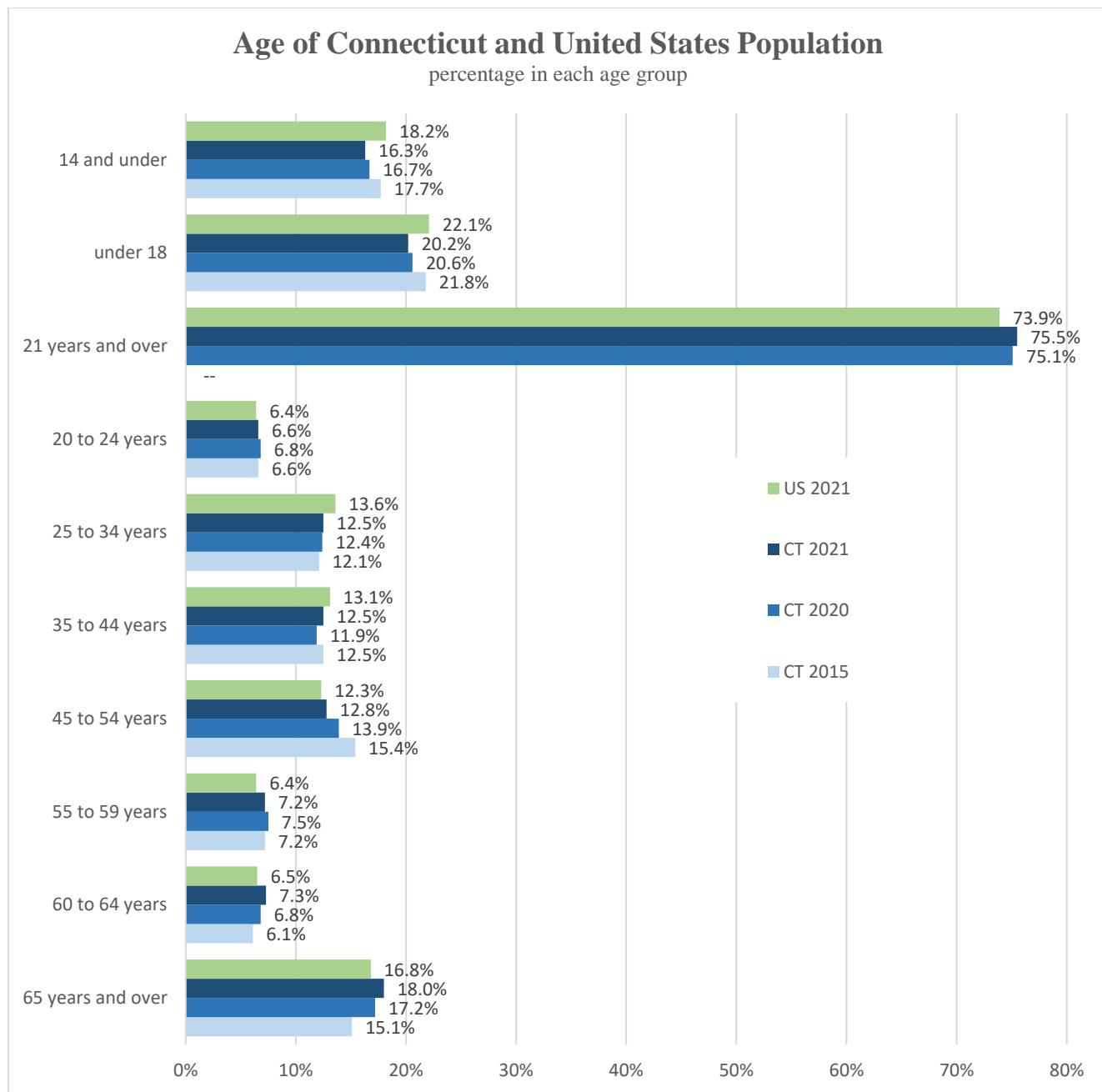
Connecticut's median age was above the national median age in 2020 and remained so (unchanged) in 2021 (see Figure 1-1). The state's median age of 41.1 years in 2021 was up 0.7 years from the median age of 40.4 in the 2015 ACS. The national median age increased over the same time—to 38.8 years (2021 ACS), an increase from 38.2 in 2020 (up 0.6 years) and from

37.6 in 2015 (up 1.2 years). A closer look at the various age groups provides a better understanding of the state's residents, including where age shifts are occurring and where they are not. Since the demographics of the 2023 Statewide Survey generally reflect those of Connecticut overall, this data can provide a helpful backdrop to this report (see Figure 1-2). Connecticut's adult population (defined as 21 years and older) accounted for 75.5% of the total state population in 2021 according to the ACS (only a slight change from 75.1% in 2020). The senior citizen cohort (65 and older) is trending upwards in the state, as it represented 18% of the state population in 2021, 17.2% in 2020, and 15.1% in 2015. This extends to the 60-to-64 age group as well (7.3% in 2021, 6.8% in 2020, 6.1% in 2015). In contrast, the cohort of 45 to 54 years of age has experienced a decline, representing 12.8% in 2021 and 13.9% in 2020, and 15.4% in 2015. Census data also shows a decline in the percentage of children aged 14 and younger, which was 16.3% in 2021, 16.7% in 2020 and 17.7% in 2015. The percentage of children overall has declined in the state with the 'under 18' age group sliding to 20.2% in 2021 from 21.8% in 2015. Numbers for the young adult group (20–24 years) have seen little movement over the past few years, with 6.6% falling into this category in 2021.

In comparing Connecticut demographics to national percentages, the state falls short in most youth cohorts and comes in high among the older groups. Children under age 18 represent 20.2% of Connecticut and 22.1% of the nation. The 25-to-34 age cohort represents 12.5% and 13.6%, respectively, and the 65-and-older group represents 18% and 16.8%, respectively.



**Figure 1-1: Median Age of Population – Connecticut and United States**



**Figure 1-2: Age of Connecticut and United States Population by Age-group Cohorts**

#### Race and Ethnicity

Although Connecticut's racial and ethnic diversity is increasing, there remains a larger percentage of Non-Hispanic White residents relative to the national average. In 2021, those that identified as White (one race) in the state equated to 65.3% (74.2% in 2020) of the population, while the national average was 61.2% (70.4% in 2020). This decline in the percentage of the population identifying as White (one race) indicates that Connecticut's diversity is expanding. Among some groups the expansion is very slight and gradual while

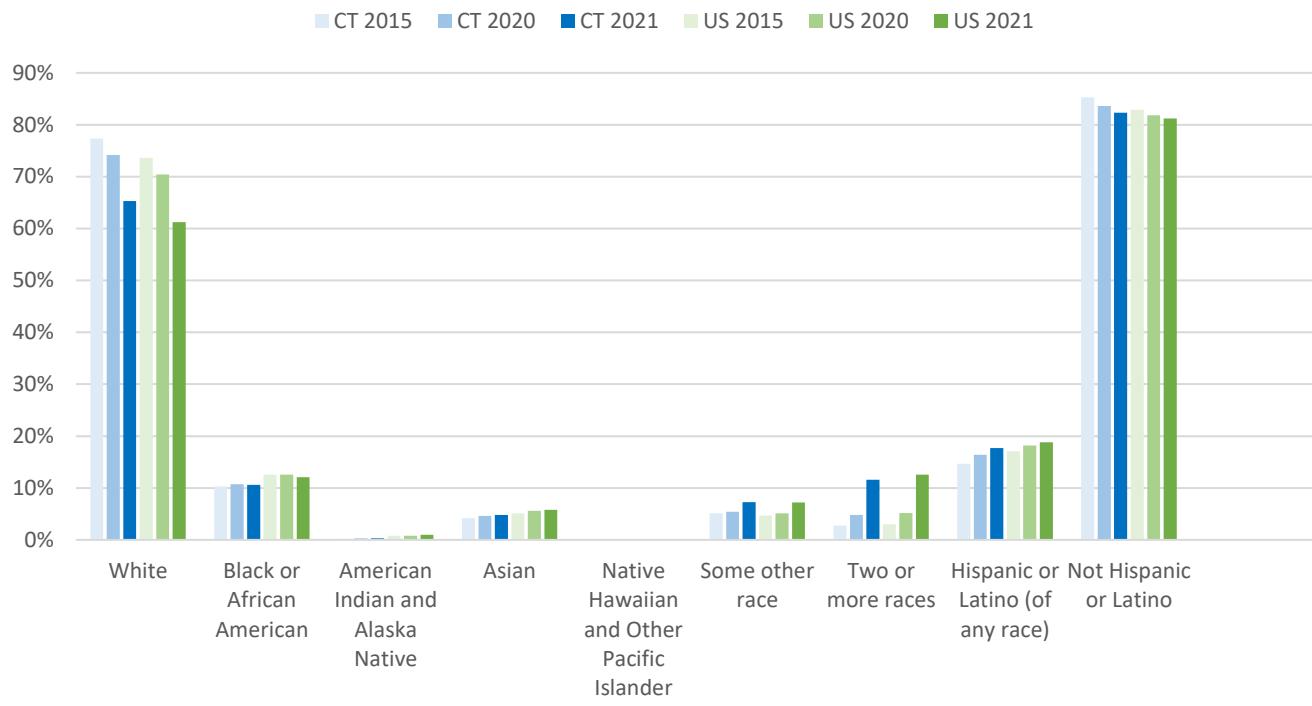
among others, such as those reporting “two or more races,” more considerable growth is evident. A glance at the data for all groups, from 2021, 2020 and 2015, provides a picture of the demographic landscape and an overview of where trends may exist and where they do not (see Figure 1-3). The 2021 ACS data reported 10.6% Black or African American (a negligible 0.1% decrease from 2020 but 0.3% increase from 2015), 0.3% American Indian and Alaska Native (unchanged from 2020 and minimal 0.1% increase from 2015), 4.8% Asian (up 0.2% from 2020 and up 0.6% from 2015), and 7.3% “some other race” (up 1.9% from 2020 and up 2.2% from 2015). Those reporting two or more races represented 11.6% (6.8% increase from 2020 and 9% increase from 2015). Less than 1% identified as Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander. Nationally, the corresponding figures are as follows: 12.1% Black or African American (0.5% decrease from 2020 and 2015), 1.0% American Indian and Alaska Native (no change from 2020 and up 0.2% from 2015), 5.8% Asian (0.2% increase from 2020 and 0.7% increase from 2015), 7.2% “some other race” (2.1% increase from 2020 and 2.5% increase from 2015), 12.6% two or more races (7.4% increase from 2020 and 9.6% increase from 2015), and 0.1% (no change) Native Hawaiian or another Pacific Islander.

As for ethnic origins, the U.S. Census Bureau only collects two ethnicities, which are Hispanic or Latino origin and Non-Hispanic or Latino. Over four-fifths (82.3%) of Connecticut’s 2021 population classify themselves as Non-Hispanic or Latino (1.3% decrease from 2020 and 3% decrease from 2015), while 17.7% identify as having Hispanic or Latino origins (1.3% and 3% increase, respectively). As was the case for racial demographics, Connecticut has a larger population of Non-Hispanic/Latino persons compared to the national average. According to 2021 data, 81.2% of the United States population are Non-Hispanic/Latino and 18.8% (0.6% increase from 2020 and 1.7% increase from 2015) have Hispanic or Latino origins.



## Race Distribution for Connecticut's and United States' Populations

percentage in each group



**Figure 1-3: Race Distribution for Connecticut's and United States' Populations**

### Income

In 2021, the ACS issued by the U.S. Census Bureau showed that Connecticut's per capita income was \$48,146 (\$8,716 increase compared to the 2015 ACS), which is notably higher than the national average of \$38,332 (\$8,353 increase). The state's median household income is \$83,771 (\$12,425 increase), and the median family income is \$106,576 (\$15,188 increase). On the national level, the median household income is \$69,717 (\$13,942 increase), while median family income is \$85,806 (\$17,546 increase).

### Education

In 2021, educational attainment levels of Connecticut's adult population (25 years and older) were higher than the national average. As a state, 91.1% of the population had a high school degree or higher (0.2% increase from 90.9 in 2020 and 0.9% increase from 90.2 in 2015), while the national figure in 2021 was 89.4% (up 0.9% from 88.5% in 2020 and up 2.3% from 87.1% in 2015). Furthermore, 42.1% (2.1% increase from 40% in 2020 and 3.8% increase from 38.3% in 2015) of Connecticut's population had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 35.0% (up 2.1% from 32.9% in 2020 and up 4.4% from 30.6% in 2015) across the United States.

## Conclusions

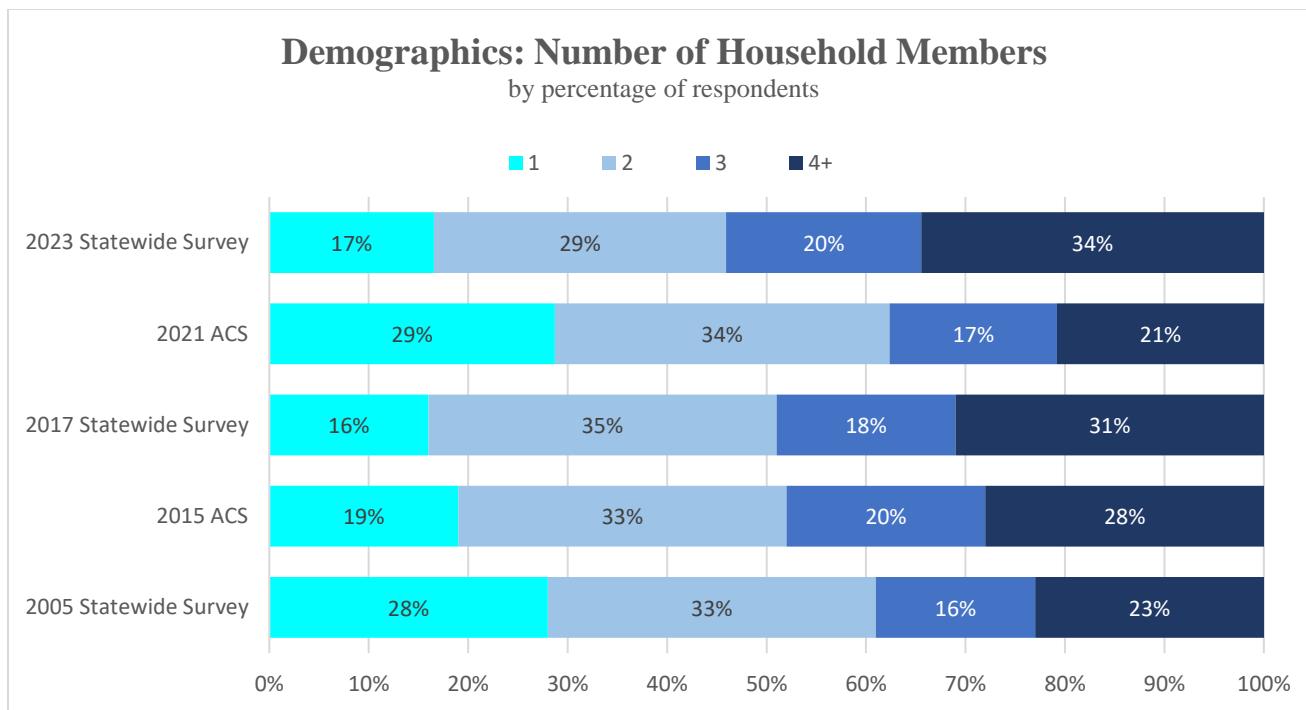
One of the methodological objectives of this study's 2023 Statewide Survey was to offer results that could be reasonably generalized to the state's general population. This objective was met. The demographic profile of the 2023 Statewide Survey closely mirrored that of Connecticut's 2021 ACS figures. Given that the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey is non-random, that profile of study participants was not expected to closely mirror census figures. Instead of generalizability to the general population, the goal of this survey was to capture the sentiments of self-identified avid outdoor enthusiasts.

Throughout the upcoming section, demographic comparisons are made between the Statewide Survey, Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey, and 2021 ACS figures. Also, when data is available, demographic comparisons are made between the 2017 and 2023 SCORP surveys. These comparisons provide a valuable snapshot as to how survey demographics have changed between the SCORP reports.

## STUDY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

### Number of Individuals per Household

Study participants taking the 2023 Statewide Survey were asked to identify the number of individuals living in their household. Overall, among the respondents to the 2023 Statewide Survey, the most common household size reported was four or more members (34%), followed by two-member households (29%) and three-member households (20%). The least common household was those who live alone (17%) (see Figure 1-4). Sizeable differences emerged in comparison to the 2021 ACS data. When considering these differences, note that while the 2023 Statewide Survey used quotas to collect a survey sample that closely mirrors the demographic profile of the state, the number of individuals per household was not one of those quotas. While the differences outlined below are, therefore, not entirely unexpected, they are certainly worth observing. The differential is most evident when looking at the ends of the scale. In the 2023 Statewide Survey, only 17% of respondents reported living alone, while the 2021 ACS data shows 29% of residences are single-person households. At the other end of the scale, 34% of respondents to the 2023 Statewide Survey said they live in households with four or more people, whereas the 2021 ACS reports only 21% in this category. The differentials for mid-size households were smaller—5% difference for two-member households and 3% difference for three-member households.

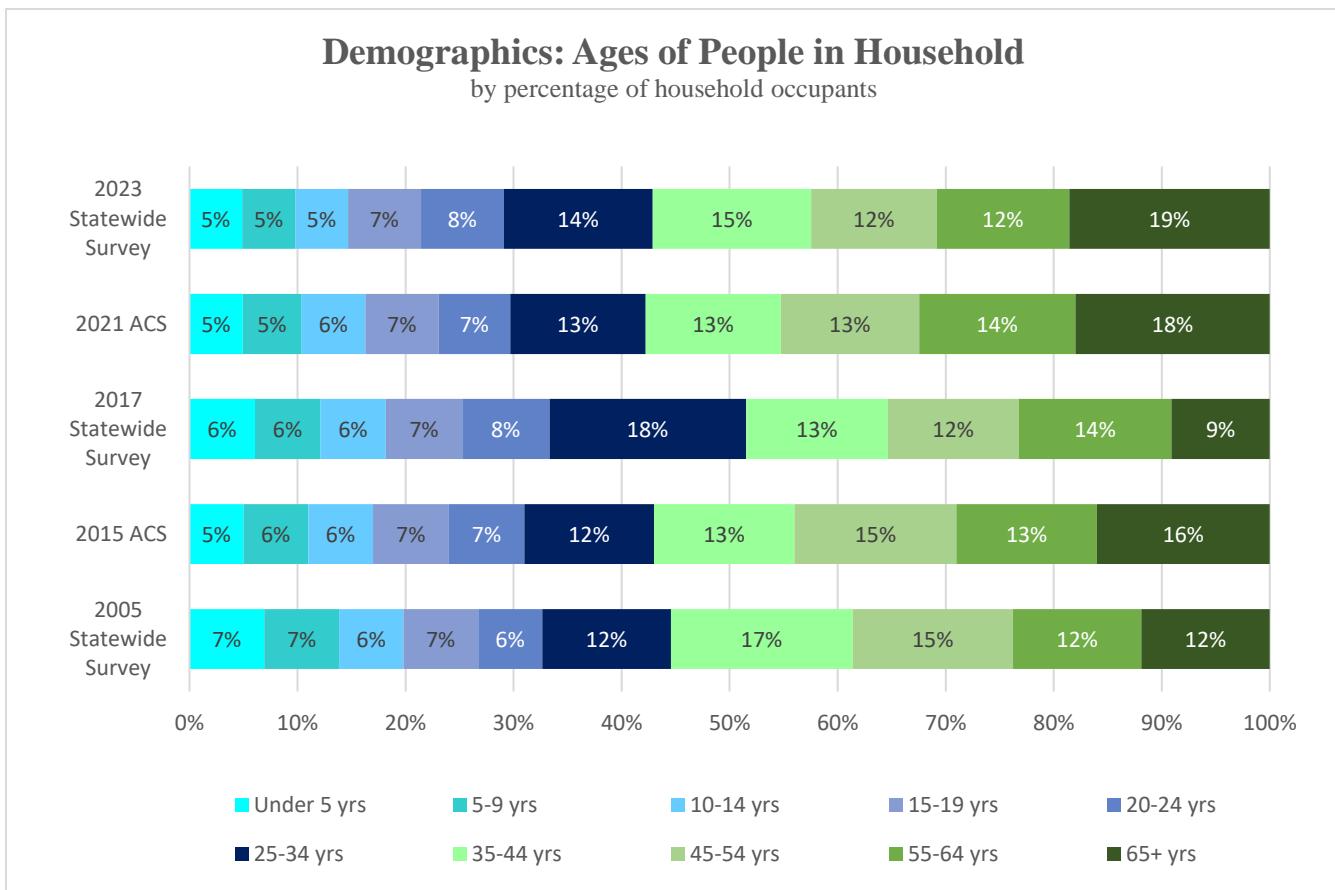


**Figure 1-4: Number of Household Members (2005–2023)** (Note: some rows may not total to 100% due to rounding.)

#### Age of People in Household

Study participants were asked to identify their age and the ages of those living in their household. Respondents were provided with categories consisting of either five-year or ten-year increments. In the 2023 Statewide Survey, more than three quarters (80%) of the household individuals are aged 20 years and older (see Figure 1-5). This finding is consistent with data from the 2021 ACS, which reports that those 21 years and older equate to 75% of household occupants. Indeed, comparing the 2023 Statewide Survey to the 2021 ACS, all of the age-group percentages are closely matched, with no more than a 2% differential for any category. In the 2023 Statewide Survey, household occupants with the largest representation were those in the 65 and older age group (19%), followed by those in the 35 to 44 age group (15%), and the 25 to 34 age group (14%). Those in the 45 to 54 and 55 to 64 categories represented 12% each. The percentages drop for the younger cohorts, with only 8% of household occupants falling into the 20 to 24 range, 7% in the 15 to 19 range and 5% for each of the youngest age groups, 10 to 14, 5 to 9, and under age 5.

In comparison to the 2017 Statewide Survey, the age distribution in 2023 is relatively similar. The household age distribution in 2023 for those aged 25 and over represented a slightly larger portion of the household—72% vs. 66%—(see Figure 1-5). This can be explained by a decline in the share of individuals aged 35 and over (58% vs. 48%), while the young adult population (25–34 years) has declined (14% vs. 18%).



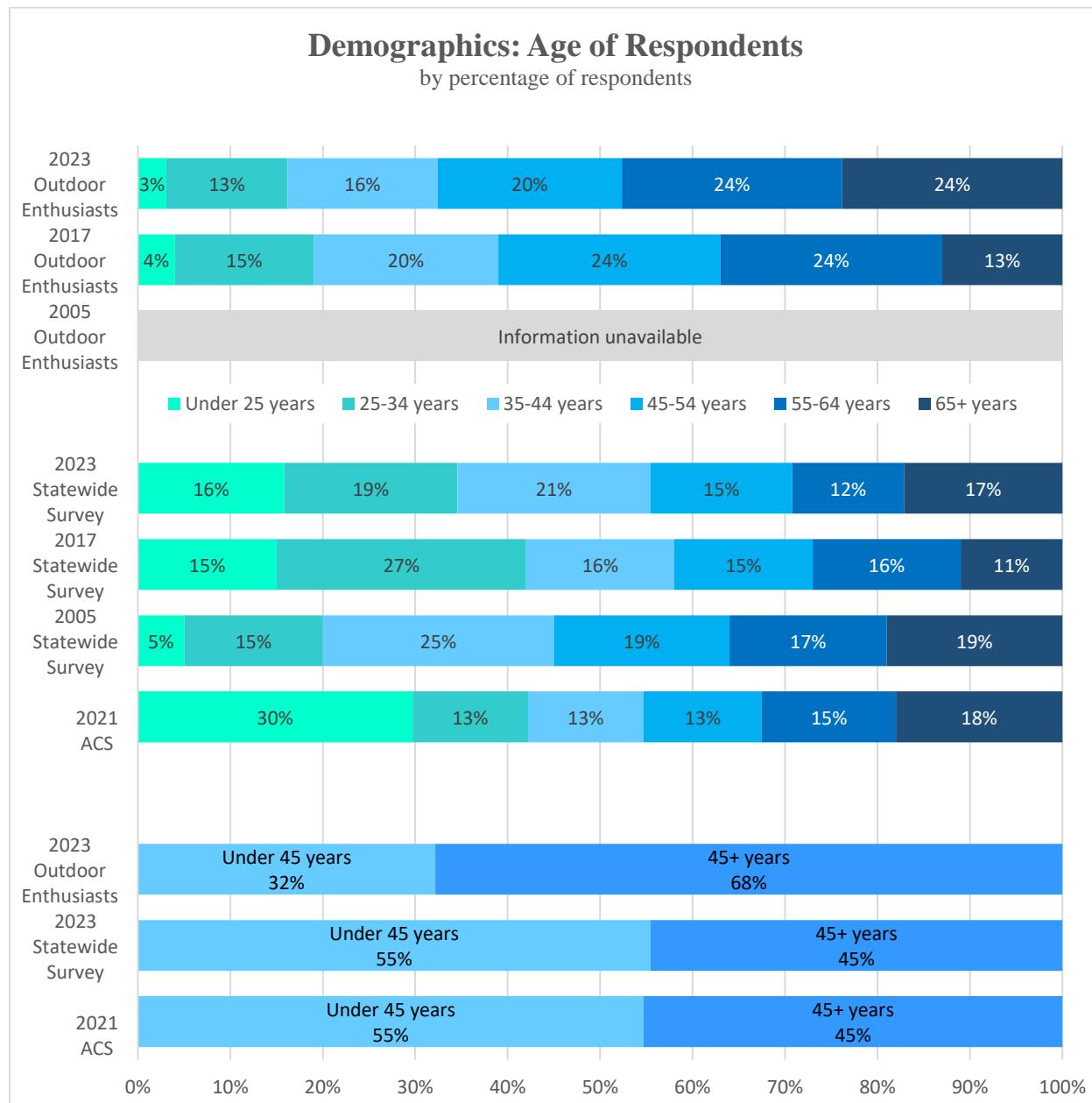
**Figure 1-5: Ages of People in Household (2005–2023)** (Note: some totals do not add to 100% due to rounding)

#### Age of Respondents

Study participants were asked to identify their age range, with categories consisting of either five- or ten-year increments. In the 2023 Statewide Survey, 16% percent of study participants were under the age of 25, and roughly the same amount (17%) were 65 and older (see Figure 1-6). The remaining two-thirds fell within the 25–64 age group. Consolidating age groups into three cohorts, under 35, 35–54, and 55 and older, the data shows a reasonably even distribution of 35%, 36%, and 29%, respectively. Notable in Figure 1-6, avid outdoor enthusiasts were found to represent an older demographic. Considering the same three cohorts, the percentages were 16%, 36% and 48%, respectively. The older group (age 55+) has a much stronger representation among avid outdoor enthusiasts. The 2021 ACS reports that almost half of Connecticut residents (45%) were over the age of 45, acting as a median indicator. While about two-thirds of 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts (67.5%) were over 45, less than half (45%) of 2023 Statewide respondents fell into that same category.

Results from the 2023 Statewide Survey seem to indicate a higher share of older populations

(those above 45) than the 2017 results. In 2017, 42% of respondents were over the age of 45, increasing slightly to 45% in 2023 (see Figure 1-6). In the 2023 study, over half (56%) of all study participants were under the age of 44—a figure that was slightly higher in 2017 (58%). It is important to note that in 2017 and 2023, due to CCSU’s Institutional Review Board restrictions, study participants (across all surveys) could not be minors (individuals under the age of 18).



**Figure 1-6: Age of Respondents (2005–2023)**

#### Race and Ethnicity

Study participants were asked to identify their ethnicity from multiple options. Results from the 2023 Statewide Survey indicated that less than two thirds (65%) identified as White/Caucasian,

while just above one-in-ten (13%) identified as African American or Black, and 18% identified as Hispanic/Latino (see Figure 1-7). This marks a diversification trend of the ethnic/racial backgrounds of study participants since the 2017 Statewide Survey, where 76% percent identified as White/Caucasian, 12% African American or Black, and 8% of participants identified as Hispanic/Latino. The remainder of 2023 respondents indicated that they were Asian American (4%), or a different ethnic category (0.1%). Notably, in a separate survey question, more than a quarter (27%) of participants indicated that household members were of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ancestry, a 14% increase from 2017 (see Figure 1-8)—a figure that exceeds the 2021 ACS findings (18%). It is beyond the scope of this report to provide a detailed analysis as to why these demographic shifts are taking place. The reasons are likely complex and may involve various forces, such as economics, immigration, cultural factors, political considerations, and more.

In comparison with the Statewide Survey, the 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey featured a significantly less diverse respondent base that is not representative of the overall demographic groups in Connecticut. Most (92%) study participants self-identified as White/Caucasian, while 6% identified as Hispanic/Latino, and the remainder either reported “other” (5%), Asian American/Pacific Islander (1%), or African American (1%). Beyond noting that the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey was not random in its distribution, it would be speculative to offer reasons based on this data as to why certain demographic groups were underrepresented compared to the 2023 Statewide Survey.

## Demographics: Ethnicity of Survey Respondents

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)

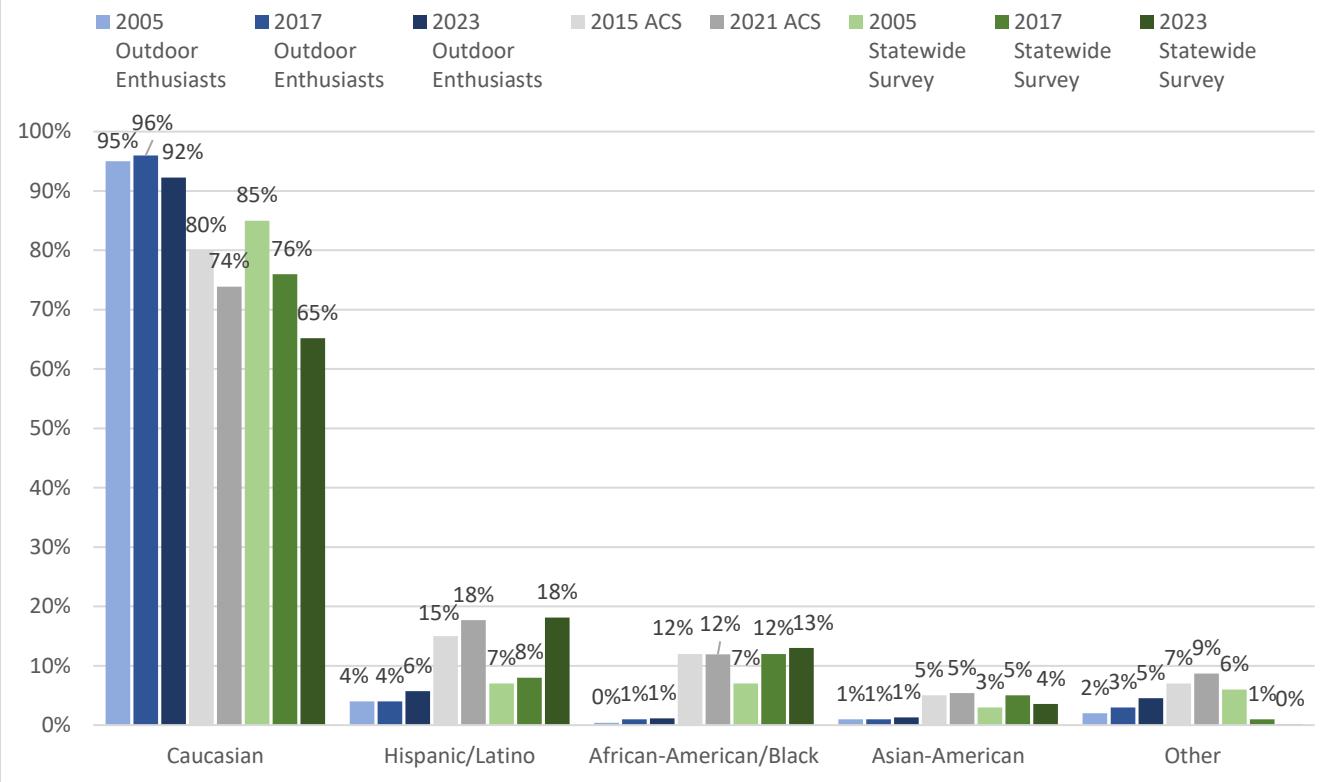
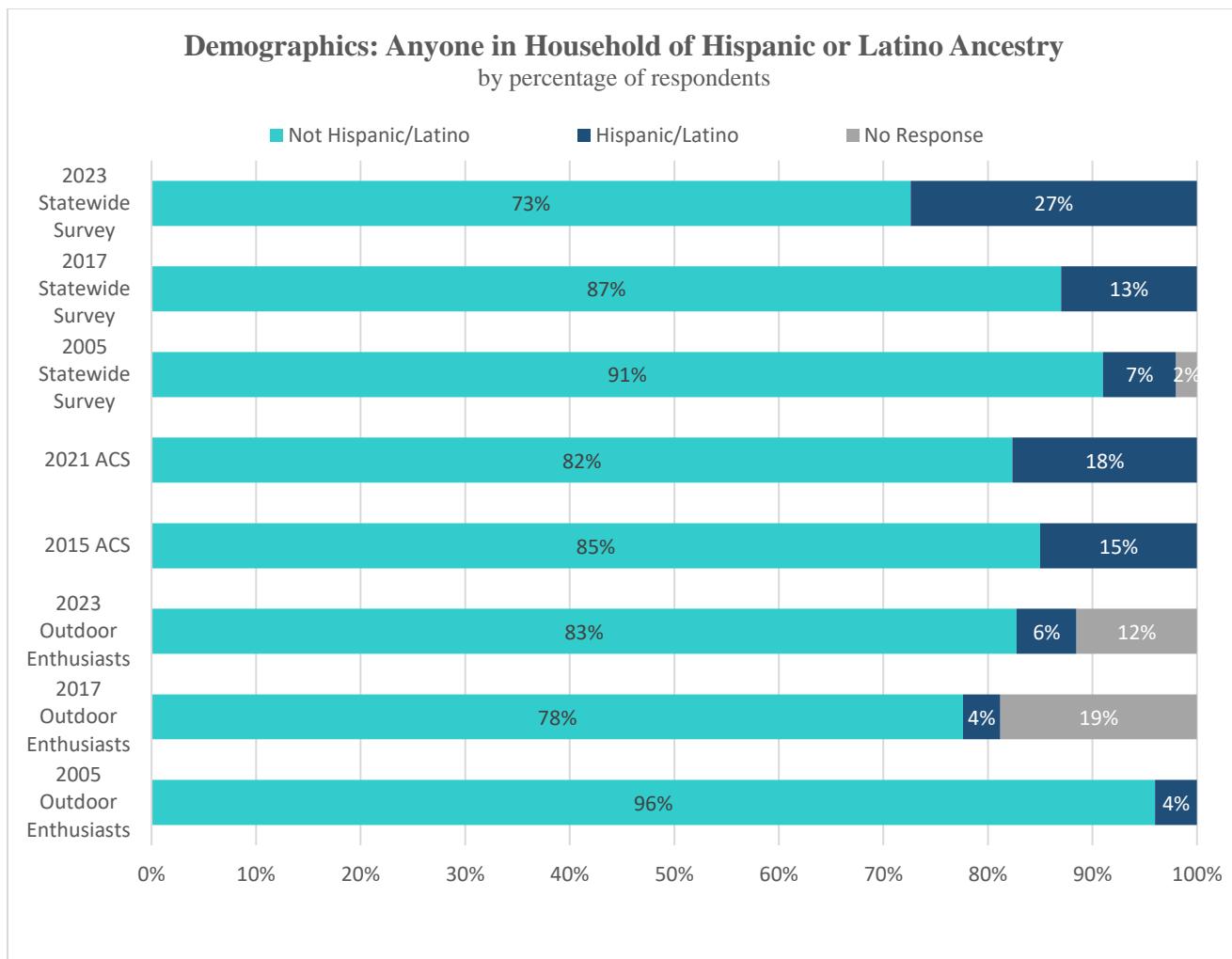


Figure 1-7: Ethnicity of Respondents (2005–2023)



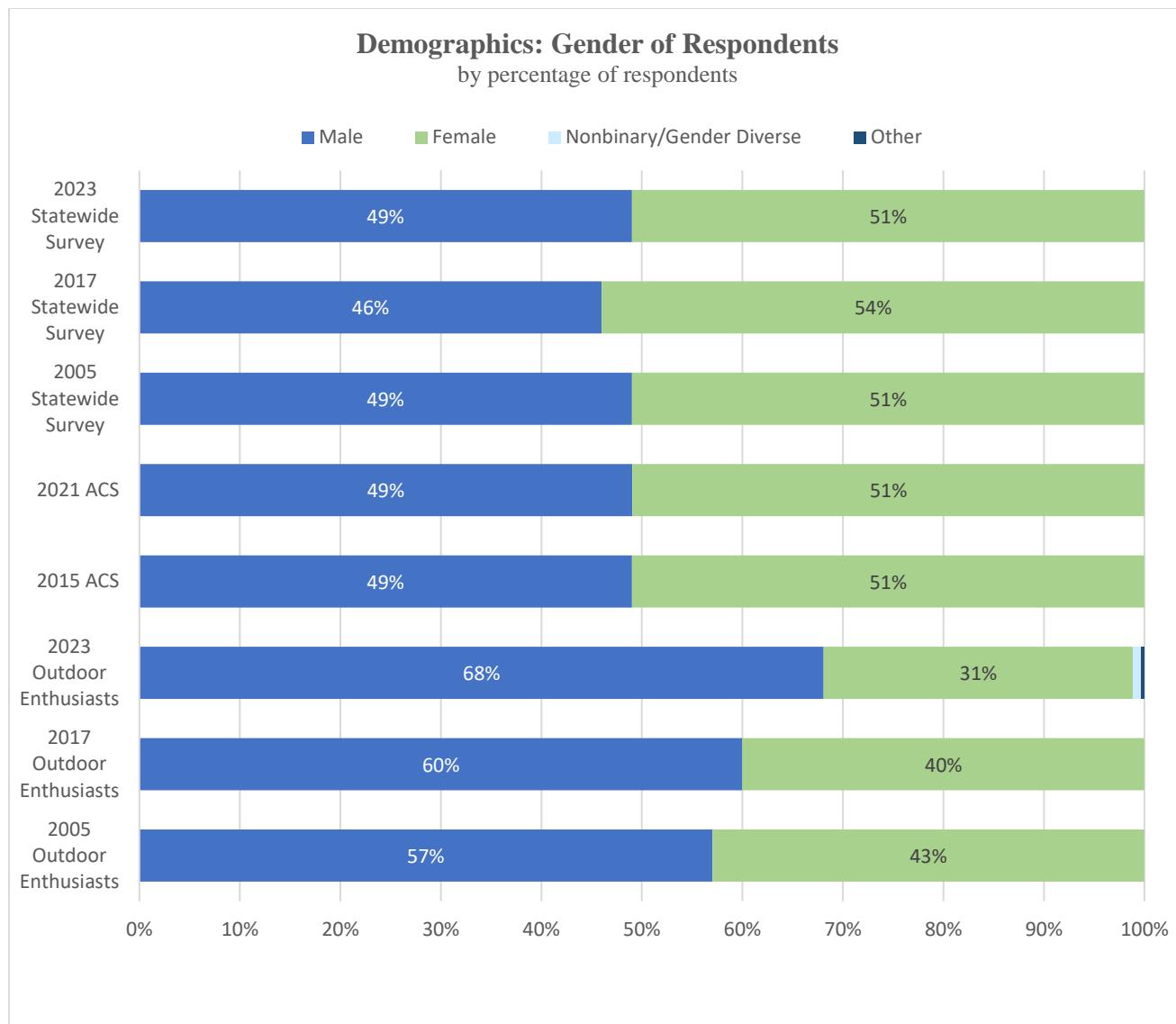


**Figure 1-8: Hispanic/Latino Ancestry of Respondents (2005–2023)**

#### Gender

Study participants were asked to self-identify as either male or female. A slim majority (51%) of 2023 Statewide Survey-takers self-identified as female, while the remainder (49%) identified as male (see Figure 1-9). This represents a slight uptick in female participants (up 3 percentage points) compared to the 2017 Statewide Survey; however, it is a direct reflection of the 2021 ACS, which reveals that 51% of Connecticut residents are female.

The 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey provided two additional gender options beyond female/male: “Non-binary/Gender-diverse” and “Other.” The survey also allowed for open-ended text entry responses or for respondents to skip the question entirely. Among those who answered the question, the results indicate 68% Male, 31% Female, 0.8% Non-binary/Gender-diverse, and 0.3% Other. Note also that over 9% of respondents chose to skip this question entirely.



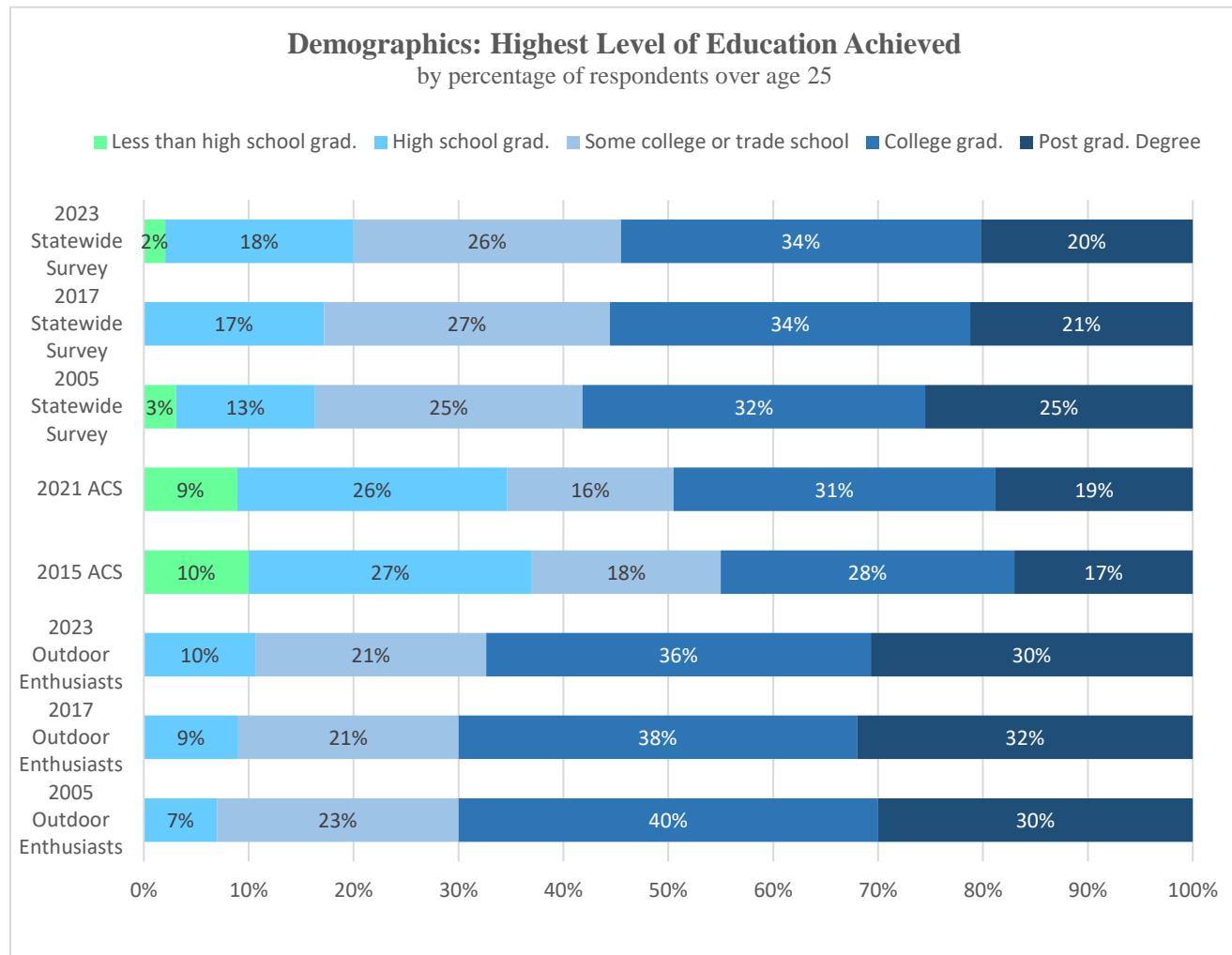
**Figure 1-9: Gender of Respondents (2005–2023)**

#### Education

More than half (54%) of participants over the age of 25 in the 2023 Statewide Survey cited having a college degree or more, with one-fifth (20%) indicating that they possess a post-graduate degree (see Figure 1-10). Meanwhile, more than a quarter (26%) had some college or trade school training, while the remainder had a high school diploma (18%) or did not graduate from high school (2%). The 2023 Statewide Survey sample is slightly more educated than estimates produced by the 2021 ACS which reports that 9% of Connecticut residents have less than a high school diploma, 26% have a high school degree or equivalent, 16% have some college or trade school, and 50% have a college degree or higher.

Compared to both the 2023 Statewide Survey and 2021 ACS, the 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey sample had higher levels of formal education. Two-thirds (66%) of avid outdoor

enthusiasts obtained at least a college degree—12% more than participants in the 2023 Statewide Survey (54%) and 16% more than respondents of the 2021 ACS (50%).



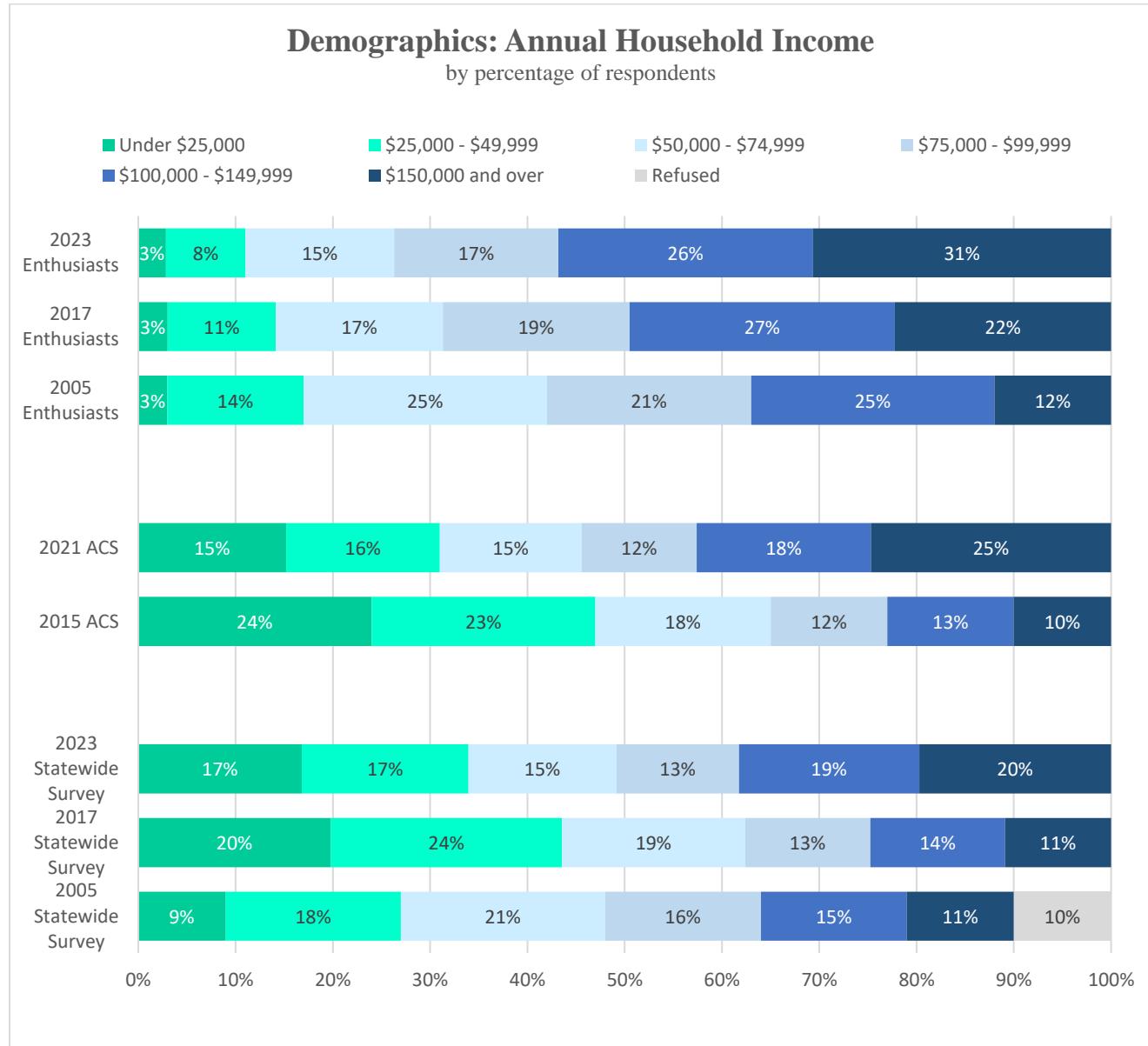
**Figure 1-10: Education of Respondents (2005–2023)**

#### Income

Participants were asked to identify their annual household income, with categories ranging from under \$15,000 to \$200,000 or more. Some income categories have been consolidated to provide comparative analysis across surveys and ACS data, for instance, the highest income category in this analysis is \$150,000 or more. Just over half of 2023 Statewide Survey and 2021 ACS participants (52% and 55%, respectively) indicated that their household income was \$75,000 or more (see Figure 1-11). Meanwhile, nearly three quarters (74%) of 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey respondents indicated that their household income was \$75,000 or more.

The most common response for 2023 Statewide Survey participants was the \$150,000+ category (20%), a considerable increase from 2017 when only 11% (lowest) reported income in

this \$150,000+ category. Among 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey respondents, this category was even higher. Nearly one-third (31%) of enthusiasts reported income of \$150,000 or more in 2023. In fact, the share of avid outdoor enthusiasts with an annual household income of \$150,000 or more has been steadily increasing; this group represented 12% in 2005, 22% in 2017, and now 31% in 2023. Other income groups have either held fairly steady over time (\$100,000–\$149,000 and under \$25,000) or declined (all other groups).

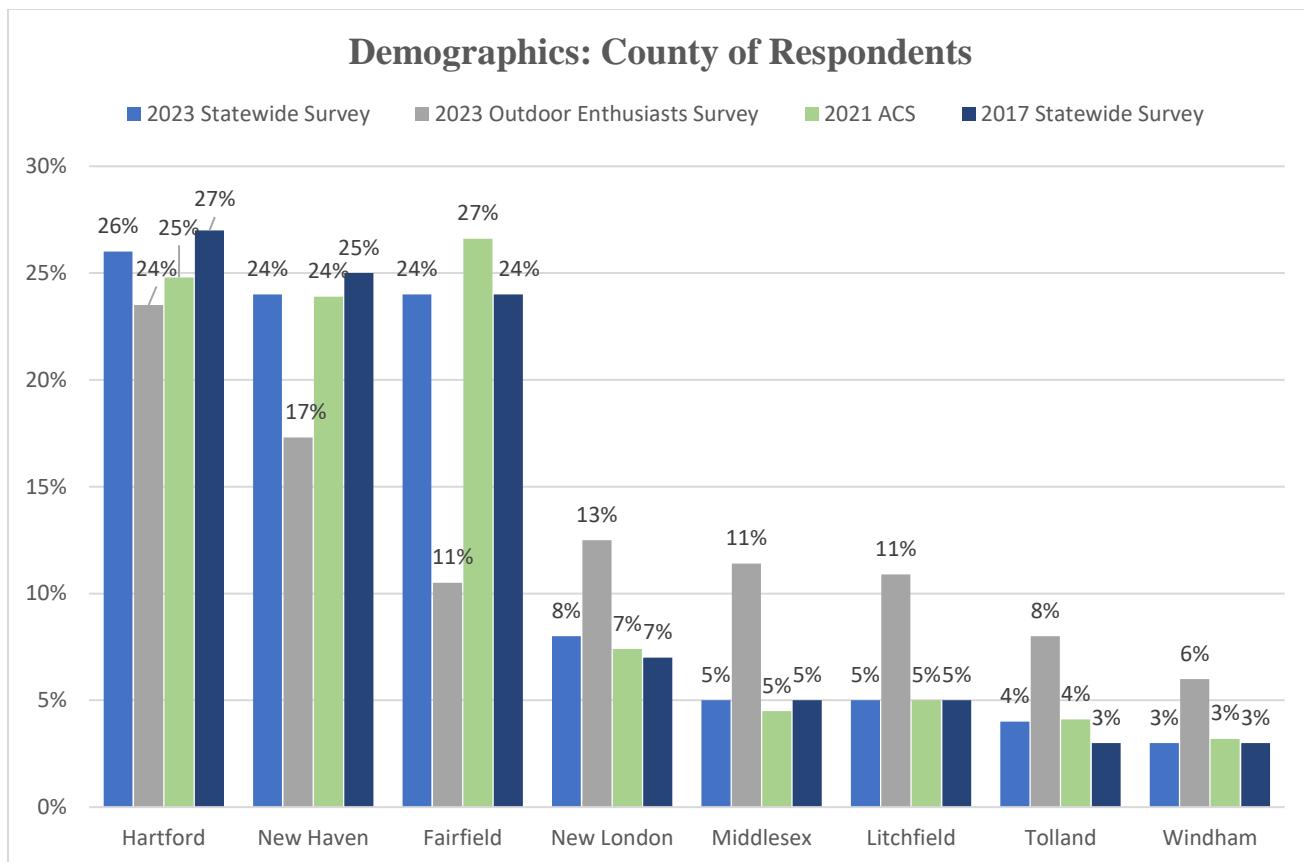


**Figure 1-11: Annual Household Income of Respondents Excluding Refusals (2005–2023)**  
(Note: Totals may not add to 100% due to rounding)

## Region

Hartford was the most represented county in the 2023 Statewide Survey, with slightly more than one-quarter (26%) of respondents residing within this county (see Figure 1-12). New Haven County and Fairfield County each accounted for nearly one-quarter (both 24%) of study participants. The remainder of study participants resided in New London (8%), Litchfield (5%), Middlesex (5%), Tolland (4%), and Windham (3%) counties. This breakdown closely matches 2021 ACS figures and is nearly equal to what was reported in the 2017 Statewide Survey.

Similar to the Statewide Survey, Hartford (23.5%), New Haven (17.3%), and Fairfield (10.5%) counties were the most well-represented geographical areas in the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey. With that said, there was a lower concentration of participants in these counties. Slightly over half (51.3%) of Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey respondents live in these areas, compared to nearly three-quarters (74%) of Statewide Survey respondents. The remaining five counties were overrepresented compared to both the 2021 ACS and the 2023 Statewide Survey, with New London (12.5%), Middlesex (11.4%), Litchfield (10.9%), Tolland (8%), and Windham (6%) counties constituting the remainder of the sample. Several factors could be at play regarding the over- and underrepresentation of certain counties. As shown in Figures 1-6 to 1-11, respondents to the 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey have demographic characteristics that differ from the 2023 Statewide Survey respondents. For example, on average, the Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts tend to be older, have higher incomes, and are more educated. It is, therefore, not surprising that the county distribution would show some differences as well, reflecting the demographic differences across the counties. Furthermore, as will be reviewed later in this report (Figures 3-25 to 3-28), the 2023 Statewide Survey data reveals that residents of some counties appear to be “more active” than those of other counties. Therefore, an overrepresentation of residents in “more active” counties among the 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts would be reasonable to expect.



**Figure 1-12: County of Respondents Sorted by County Representation (2017–2023)**

#### Demographics of Town Officials

While all 169 municipalities were invited to participate in the Town Officials Survey, only 55 municipalities elected to respond. Notably, all 55 municipalities self-identified, making it possible to track participation. The plurality of municipalities was from Litchfield County (22%), while a slightly smaller percentage was from Hartford County (18%). The remainder were from Middlesex County (13%), Fairfield County (11%), New London County (11%), New Haven County (9%), Tolland County (9%), and Windham County (7%). Table 1-1 identifies the municipalities that participated in the 2017 and 2023 surveys, categorized by county respectively. Meanwhile, Figure 1-13 illustrates how the percentage of municipalities that participated in the 2023 survey, categorized by county, compares to actual county population percentage in Connecticut.

Readers are advised to use caution in generalizing findings among these 55 municipalities to all 169 municipalities in the state. While the sample makes up 33% of the state's municipalities, it may not evenly represent various characteristics such as population or property type (urban, suburban, or rural). For example, the five most populous cities did not participate in the study. These five urban areas (Bridgeport, Stamford, New Haven, Hartford, and Waterbury) account for 18% of the state's population. In fact, among the 25 most populous towns in Connecticut, only

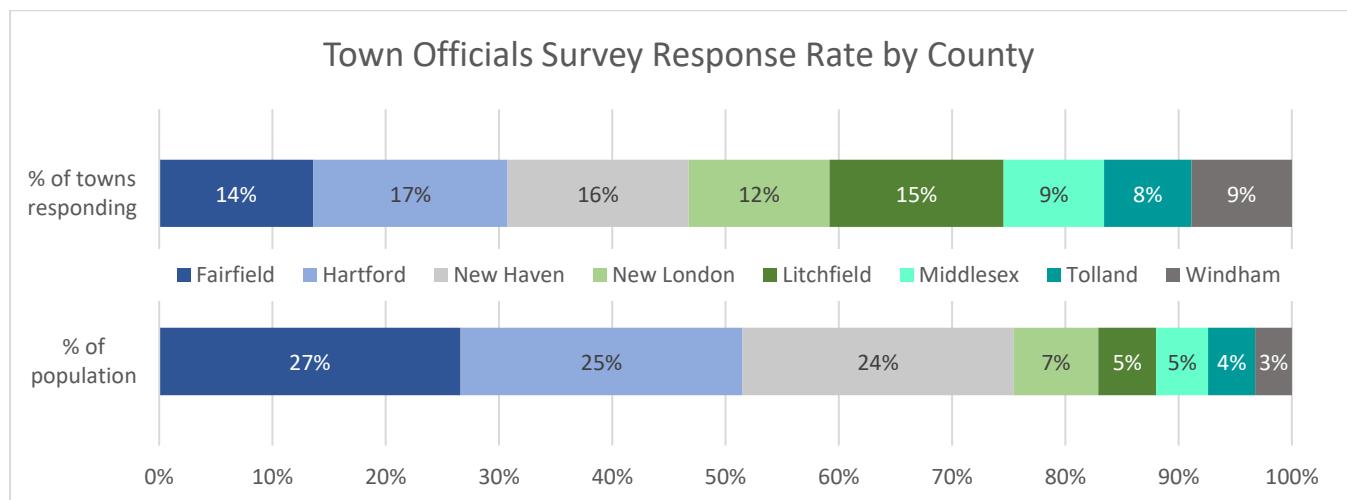
six responded to the survey: Norwalk (#6), Danbury (#7), West Hartford (#9), Bristol (#14), Middletown (#20), and Wallingford (#21). This urban contrast is an example of the limitations in generalizing the sample of 55 to all 169 towns in the state. The circumstances in each town which led officials to complete the survey or not to complete it cannot be ascertained based on the available data.

**Table 1-1: Municipalities Represented in the 2017 & 2023 Town Officials Survey**

Hartford		Fairfield		New Haven		Litchfield	
2017	2023	2017	2023	2017	2023	2017	2023
Avon	Avon		Brookfield		Bethany		Canaan
Berlin			Danbury	Branford	Branford	Goshen	Goshen
Bristol	Bristol	Darien		Guilford	Guilford	Kent	
Burlington	Burlington	Fairfield		Madison		Litchfield	Lichfield
Canton	Canton	New Canaan		Milford			Morris
E. Windsor	E. Windsor	Newtown	Newtown	New Haven			Norfolk
Glastonbury	Glastonbury	Norwalk	Norwalk		North Branford		Plymouth
Granby		Redding		Southbury			Roxbury
Marlborough		Ridgefield	Ridgefield		Wallingford		Salisbury
Newington	Newington	Shelton		Wolcott			Thomaston
Simsbury	Simsbury	Stamford					Torrington
S. Windsor		Stratford					Washington
	West Hartford	Trumbull					Watertown
Wethersfield	Wethersfield	Weston	Weston				Winchester
							Woodbury
<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>

New London		Middlesex		Tolland		Windham	
2017	2023	2017	2023	2017	2023	2017	2023
Colchester	Colchester		Chester	Coventry			Killingly
East Lyme	East Lyme	Clinton			Ellington		Plainfield

	Griswold		Cromwell	Hebron	Hebron	Putnam	Putnam
Groton	Groton		Deep River	Mansfield	Mansfield		Thompson
	Lisbon	Durham			Somers		
	Preston		East Hampton		Vernon		
Waterford		E. Haddam					
			Middletown				
			Old Saybrook				
	Westbrook	Westbrook					
<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>



**Figure 1-13: 2023 Town Officials Survey Responses by County**

As indicated in Figure 1-14, most respondents (91%) were associated with their town's parks and recreation department, primarily as director or superintendent. This was a slight change from the demographics reported in the 2017 SCORP, where 86% of respondents were associated with their town's parks and recreation department. In 2023, a slightly greater percentage of respondents identified as working for the selectman or mayor's office (3.6%) or in some other office (5.5%).

## What Town/Department Are You Associated With?

by percentage of Town Officials/respondents

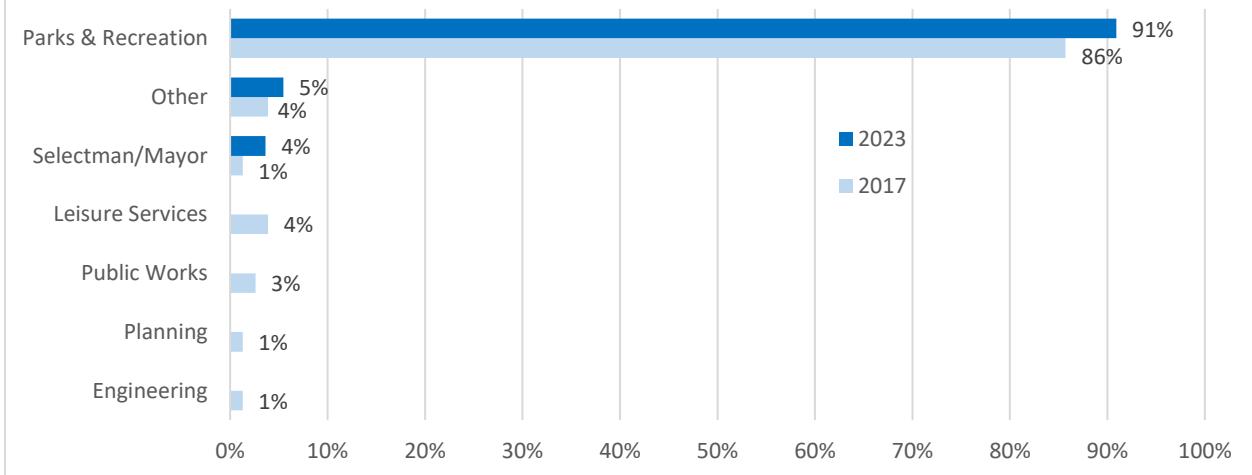
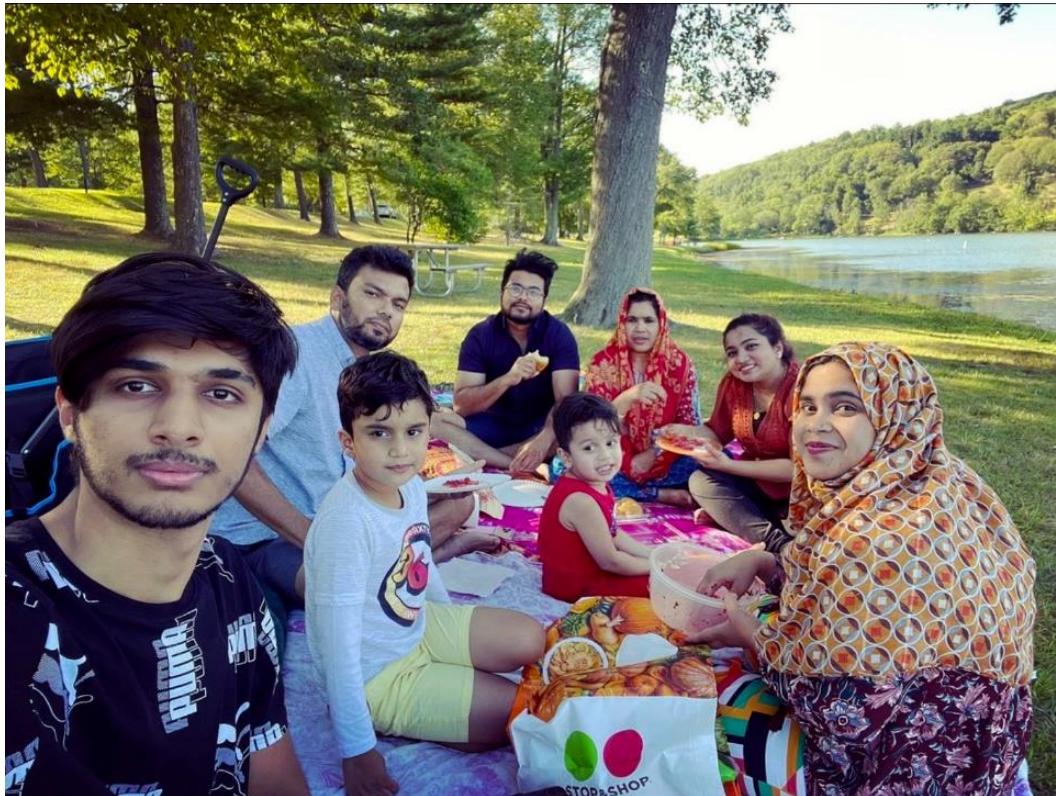


Figure 1-14: Associations of Town Officials (2017 & 2023)



## SECTION II: ASSESSING SUPPLY

### MEASURING INVENTORY: SUPPLY OF STATE RECREATION FACILITIES

#### Construction of the DIRP Database

In 2005, the Center for Population Research (CPR) at the University of Connecticut undertook the task of establishing the first comprehensive database of outdoor recreational facilities and resources in the state. This database was intended to serve as an up-to-date, validated, and publicly accessible resource for both administrators and residents in the state. It was proposed that information contained within the database could be used to assess funding requests and to help prioritize and plan recreational development efforts by location. For residents, this database would ideally serve as a searchable central resource for recreational opportunities in the state. Residents would be inclined to use the database because most of Connecticut's recreational areas are small and scattered; thus, unknown to the public. Indeed, "I do not know what is being offered" and "I do not know the locations of facilities" were cited as the two main reasons respondents to the 2005 Statewide Survey did not use recreational facilities more often (36% and 27%, respectively).

To construct the database, the state drew upon survey responses and interviews with local and state officials to comprise a list of "discrete identifiable recreation places" (DIRPs) for each of the state's 169 municipalities. For each DIRP, information was provided for more than 50 characteristics related to the facility or resource, when possible. Some of the characteristics included are as follows: size, ownership, condition, restroom availability, parking availability, and accessibility for persons with disabilities. As well, information regarding the existing space or resources needed to practice various sports and other outdoor recreational activities is included. Also, the number and/or length/size of individual areas (fields, courts, trails, etc.) within each DIRP is specified. For more information on the total recreational components enumerated among all DIRPS in 2005, please refer to the 2017 SCORP data report.

#### Updates to the Database in 2011

The 2011 SCORP took a more qualitative approach to assessing the supply of DIRPs in Connecticut; however, some quantitative techniques were used. In an effort to provide updates to the DIRP database, town officials were asked to indicate what additions and/or renovations had been made to recreational facilities in their municipality. Twelve towns responded in 2011. Overall, since 2005, town officials reported nearly a 27% increase in the number of sites either newly added to the inventory or newly renovated, with roughly half (49%) being new and the remainder (51%) being completely renovated. To review the additions to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Supply logged in 2011, please refer to the 2017 SCORP data report.

Of the 22 categories queried in 2011, only hunting and camping accommodations were characterized by no increases or improvements from 2005 to 2011. The number of sites with boating, fishing, and winter sports access also showed low rates of development, each with increases of less than 10% among the twelve municipalities reporting. Resources with the largest increases were gardens (171%), historic or educational sites (100%), tennis courts (81%), and trails (52%).

In noting these differences, it is important to consider the nature of the development (i.e., new or renovated). For instance, while both trails and tennis courts showed significant development over the six-year timespan, 80% of the developments to trails were new facilities, while 90% of tennis court developments were classified as renovations to existing structures. It is recommended that tennis courts be resurfaced every four to eight years; thus, emphasizing why most developments of this resource take the form of renovations. At the same time, well-maintained trails do not frequently require renovation; therefore, developments reflect an expansion of trail networks consistent with the state's recreational initiatives. These findings are consistent with the fact that survey respondents consistently indicated a much greater need or desire for additional access to trails than for tennis courts. Too, there is a large gap in the number of individuals and households who utilize each of these resources, with trails being much more popular.

Multi-use fields, playground areas, and picnic areas all had a relatively high proportion of new versus renovated facilities, while the opposite was true for baseball/softball fields, basketball courts, and sites with handicap access. Again, these results are encouraging because the new facilities being developed align with those that survey respondents consistently identify as recreational priorities. Too, these developments suggest that many facilities are being retrofitted to accommodate persons with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

#### Status and Future Directions of the Database

As mentioned previously, “I do not know what is being offered” (36%) and “I do not know the location of facilities” (27%) were the top barriers to recreational participation for respondents to the 2005 Statewide Survey. In 2023, over half (57%) of all respondents identified at least one barrier to recreation. Compared to 23% of all residents indicating fees as the number one boundary in 2017, lack of available parking was the top-cited boundary in 2023 (15%). Not too far behind were residents not knowing what was being offered (13%), distance from residence (12%), and lack of well-maintained facilities (12%). Other respondents indicated the following barriers to participation: fees (11%), not knowing facility location (11%), and lack of well-maintained parks (11%). Some respondents offered alternate responses, which included being too busy/lack of time, unclear or unavailable maps, worries of bugs (ticks specifically), and inability to access places due to car or location issues. While these findings suggest that the

state's overall effort to disseminate information about recreational facilities has been effective, there is certainly room for improvement.

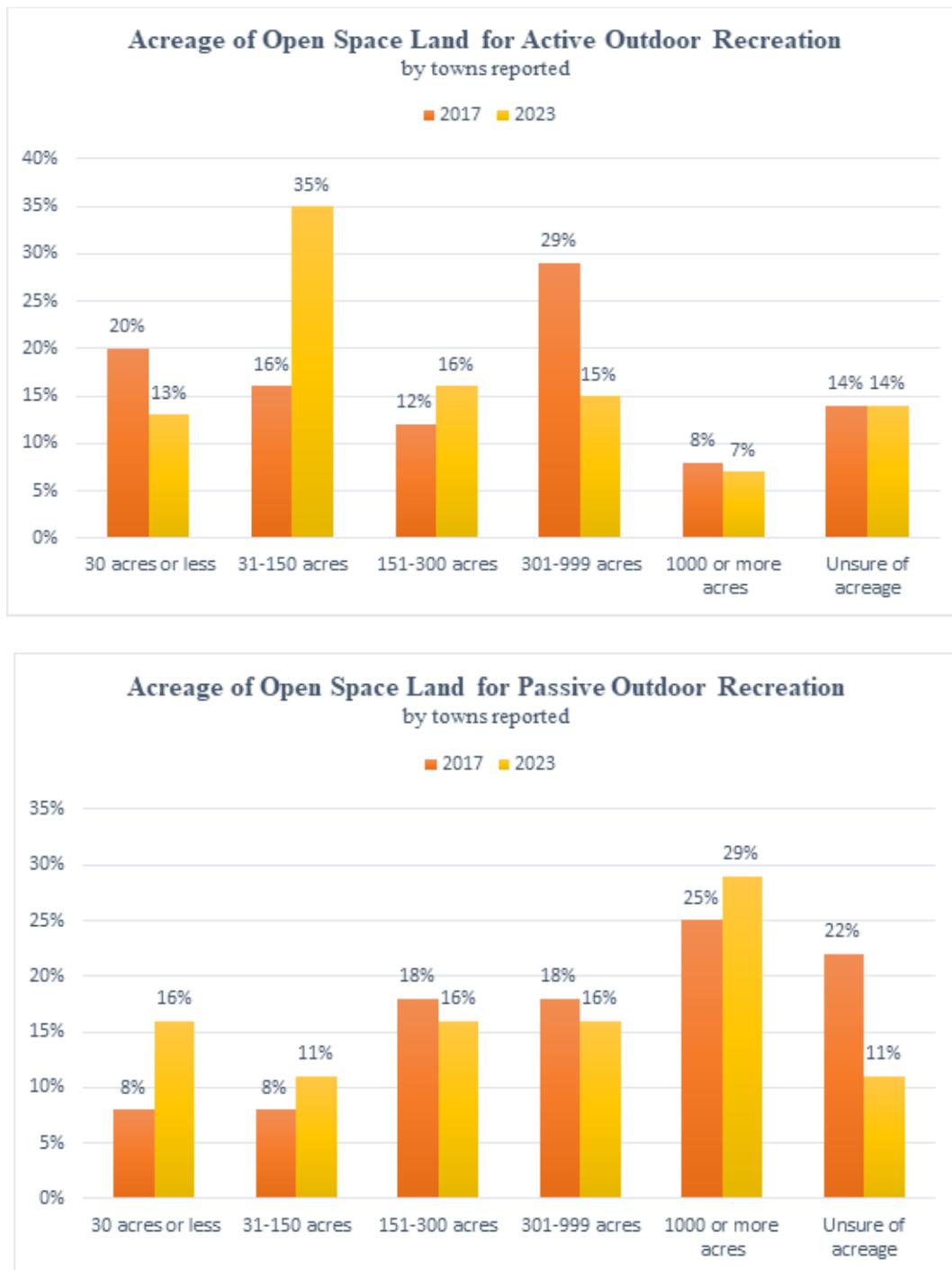
At the time of the publication of the 2005 and 2017 SCORP reports, Connecticut did not have a single, centralized resource for residents to find information about recreational opportunities in the state. Online access to the Connecticut Coastal Access Guide (CCAG), a platform that allows users to search for shoreline facilities based on factors such as activities, features, services, and geographic regions, was established by the University of Connecticut and DEEP in 2011.

Another online resource, WalkCT, was developed by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association to provide information on publicly accessible trails located in one's vicinity. In Fall of 2023, DEEP launched the new official state parks website. This resource allows site visitors to explore the Connecticut parks, find programs and events, plan a visit, access park information, and more. While these are excellent steps forward, the need for a single comprehensive database inclusive of all facility types persists.

#### Measuring Open Space

In 2023, town officials were asked to provide the total acreage of open space land for both "active" and "passive" outdoor recreation use. Examples were provided to further help participants differentiate between "passive" and "active." Examples of "active" outdoor recreation facilities included sports fields, playgrounds, swimming pools, golf courses, and skate parks. Meanwhile, examples of "passive" outdoor recreation facilities included hiking and nature trails, rails-to-trails, town greens, non-developed fields, wildlife observation areas, hunting sites, and fishing sites. The results of this query are depicted in Figure 2-1.

More acreage is dedicated to passive outdoor recreation use compared to active outdoor recreation use. More than two-in-five towns (45%) feature 301 or more acres for passive recreation. This is slightly more than the 43% reported in 2017. There are significantly fewer towns that have 301 or more acres dedicated to active recreation (22%) in 2023. Additionally, this represents considerably less than the 37% of towns that reported 301 acres or more for active recreation in 2017. Almost three-in-ten (29%) towns reported having 1,000 or more acres dedicated to passive recreation use, which is substantially more than the 7% of towns with 1,000 acres dedicated to active recreation use. More town officials are becoming aware of their total acreage for passive recreation use, as the percentage of respondents who reported being unsure about the acreage was cut in half in 2023 (11%). The percentage of town officials who were unsure of active outdoor recreation acreage in their town stayed constant (14%) from 2017 to 2023. When considering these results, consider that the 2017 and 2023 iterations of the Town Officials Survey attracted a largely different set of participating municipalities (Table 1-1). Therefore, the data differences observed between 2017 and 2023 are likely due to the natural variability inherent between the two samples more than an actual shift in open space dedicated to active and passive outdoor recreation.



**Figure 2-1: Acreage of Open Space for Active and Passive Recreation (2017 & 2023)**

## ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF SUPPLY

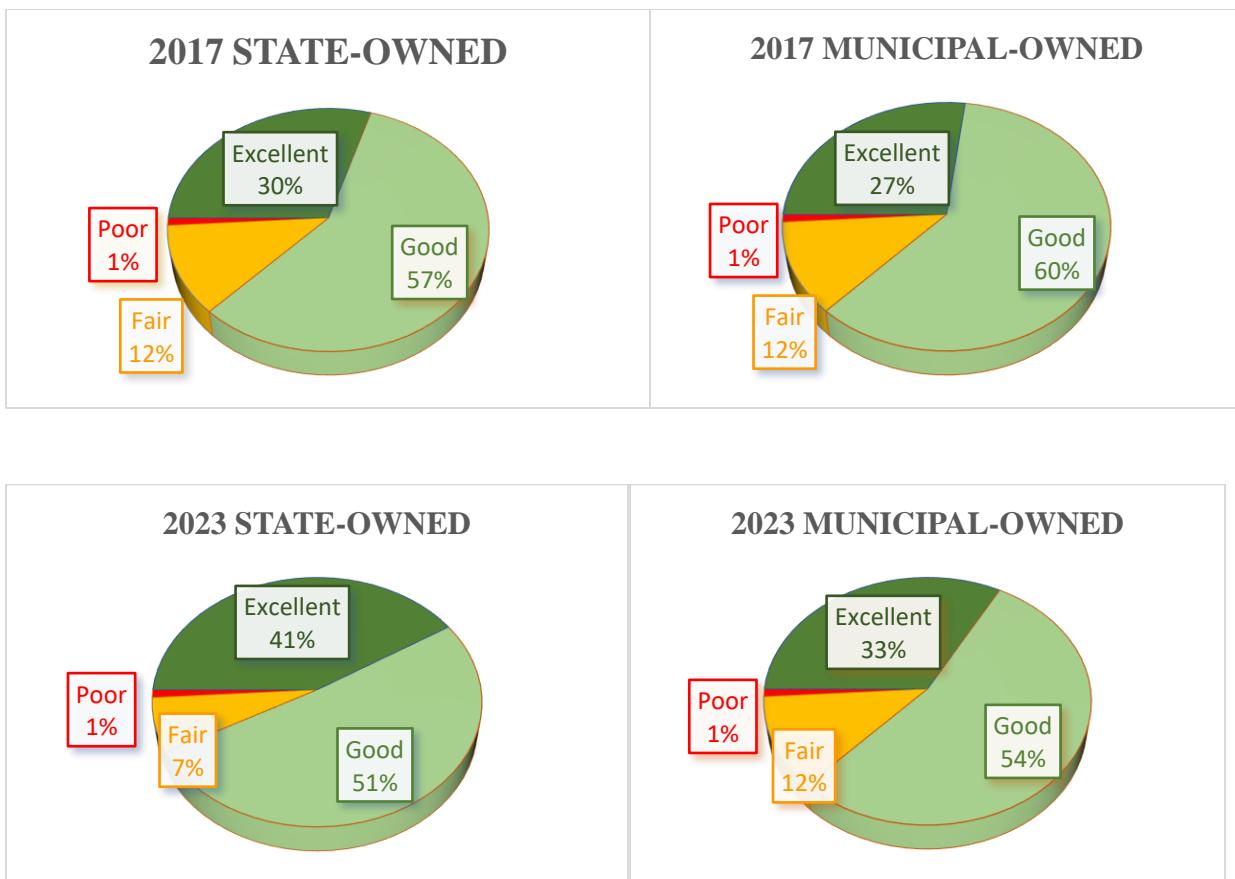
### Constituent Ratings of Facility Conditions

The condition of local and state outdoor recreation facilities was assessed through ratings given

by Connecticut residents on the Statewide Survey. Figure 2-2 shows these results along with a comparison to data reported in the 2017 SCORP.

Regarding state-owned outdoor recreation facilities, over nine-tenths of respondents (92%) rated facilities as “excellent” (41%) or “good” (51%) in 2023. Less than one-in-ten respondents (7%) rated facilities as “fair,” while the remaining 1% rated them as “poor.” These findings represent an improvement from 2017, in which only 88% rated state-owned outdoor recreation facilities as “excellent” or “good.”

Turning to municipal-owned outdoor recreation facilities, nearly nine-tenths (88%) rated facilities as “excellent” (33%) or “good” (54%) in 2023. The remaining respondents (13%) rated facilities as “fair” (12%) or “poor” (1%). These findings are consistent with those observed in 2017, a year in which 87% of respondents rated municipal-owned outdoor recreation facilities as “excellent” or “good.”



**Figure 2-2: Residents’ Rating of State and Local Park Conditions (2017 & 2023)**

The 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey allowed respondents to give additional comments on issues that they encountered when engaging in their activities. Litter (17%) was listed as being the most significant issue, followed by parking (10%), recreational user conflicts (10%), and crowding (9%). Avid outdoor enthusiasts were also asked about what they liked the most about

the outdoor recreation areas that they use. The top five coded responses included well-preserved and accessible trails, variety and diversity in outdoor recreation area options, convenience in proximity and access, beautiful scenery, and positive communities that are not overcrowded.

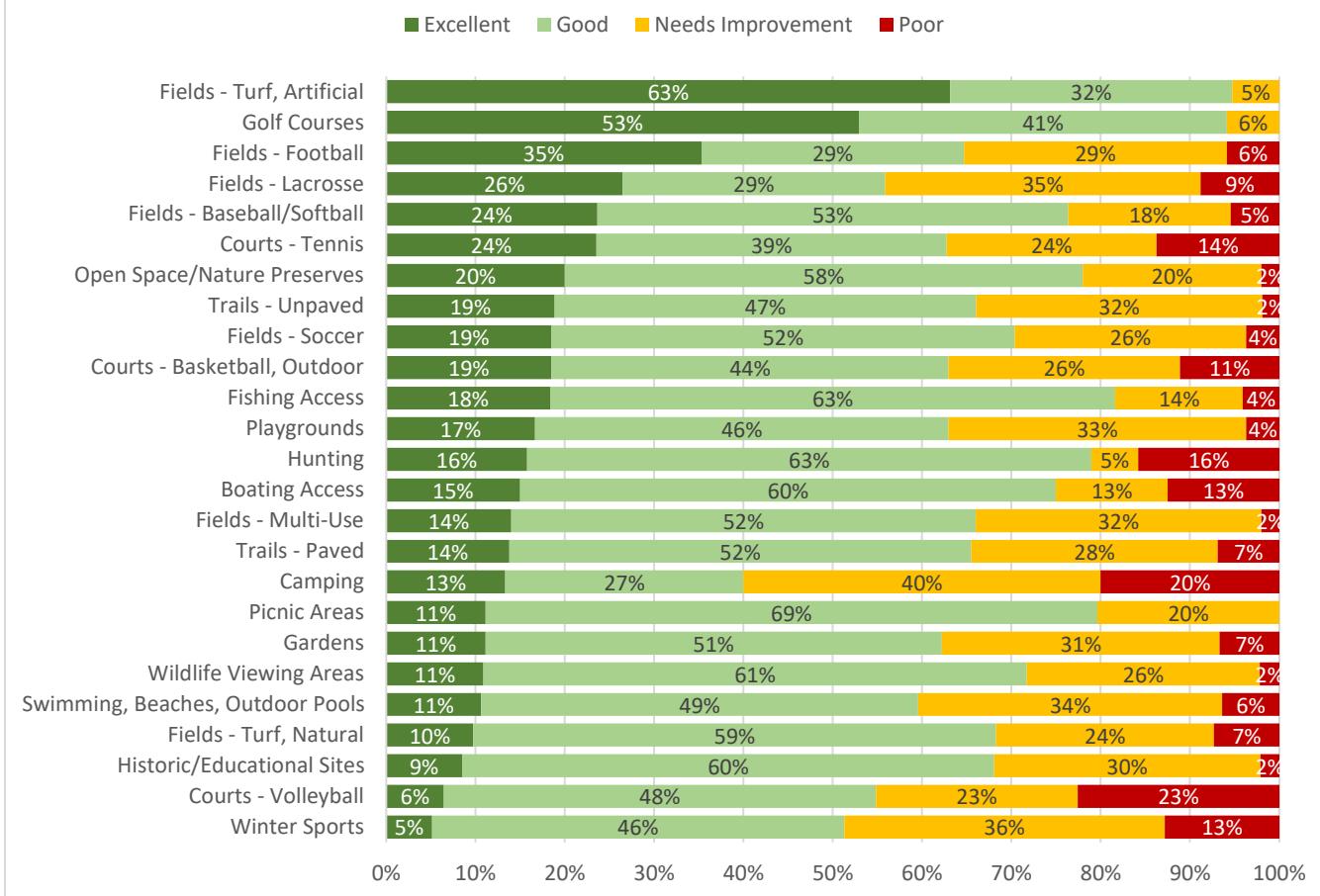
#### Town Official Ratings of Facility Conditions

Town officials in 2023 were generally less satisfied with the condition of recreational facilities than reported in the 2017 SCORP. However, it should be noted that while respondents to the Statewide Survey were asked about the general condition of local and state parks, respondents to the Town Officials Survey were asked about the condition of more activity-specific facilities. Given this, a direct comparison should not be made in this case because the general rating of local park conditions may or may not correspond to ratings of recreational facilities contained within a park. Further, some categories of town facilities have changed from the 2017 SCORP, such as the addition of football fields, wildlife viewing areas, and nature preserves.

Figure 2-3 displays town officials' ratings of the condition of various recreational facilities within their respective towns. Similar to the 2017 SCORP, town officials were more satisfied with artificial turf fields, with 63% rating these facilities to be in "excellent" condition. Subsequently, with an increase of 5% since the 2017 SCORP, 53% of respondents rated golf courses as being in "excellent condition." Facilities with the highest percentage of "poor" ratings included volleyball courts (23%), camping (20%), hunting (16%), tennis courts (14%), winter sports (13%), boating (13%), and basketball courts (11%). Along with this, camping, lacrosse fields, multi-use fields, gardens, swimming (beaches and pools), winter sports, playgrounds, and camping were amongst the highest ratings by town officials of "needs improvement."

Correspondingly, town officials' "excellent" ratings for swimming, beaches, and pools have decreased 24% since 2017. Along with this, the 2017 SCORP reported no ratings of poor conditions for swimming, beaches, and pools, whereas the 2023 SCORP reported 6% of poor conditions for this category. Further, "poor" ratings of volleyball courts have increased 20% since the 2017 SCORP. In 2017, only 3% of town officials rated volleyball courts as being in "poor" condition, whereas in the 2023 SCORP, 23% of town officials rated these facilities as being in "poor" condition.

## Condition of Town Facilities as Rated by Town Officials



**Figure 2-3: Town Officials' Ratings of Facility Conditions (2023)**

Generally, town officials indicated better facility conditions in 2017 than in 2023. Facilities with the most deterioration included swimming (beaches and pools), tennis courts, trails, baseball/softball fields, playgrounds, multi-use fields, and historic/education sites, which showed a 5%–10% decrease in “excellent” responses. More improvement was seen with picnic areas, hunting, fishing access, and golf courses, which were characterized by a 5%–10% increase in “excellent” or “good” responses. However, despite improvements, many of the facilities still show a relatively high percentage of “poor” and “needs improvement” ratings, which indicates that upgrades are still needed.

Winter sports, camping, and gardens showed a 7% increase in “poor” conditions; however, the greatest concerns were volleyball courts and hunting areas. Volleyball courts showed a 20% increase in “poor” responses from town officials, while hunting areas showed a 16% increase in “poor” responses from town officials. While it is unclear exactly what factors town officials might consider when rating the conditions of these facilities, data from the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey suggests that crowding and inadequate stocking/management are central

issues for hunting areas. It is interesting to note that while hunting had one of the highest percentages of poor facility conditions, a little over half (54%) of respondents reported that their community had sufficient resources to meet the demand of this activity. However, this does not hold true to the supply and demand responses of volleyball courts. Nearly three-in-five municipal survey respondents (58%) reported that their community had insufficient resources to meet the demand of volleyball courts, which could be one explanation for the 20% increase of “poor” responses when asked about facility conditions.

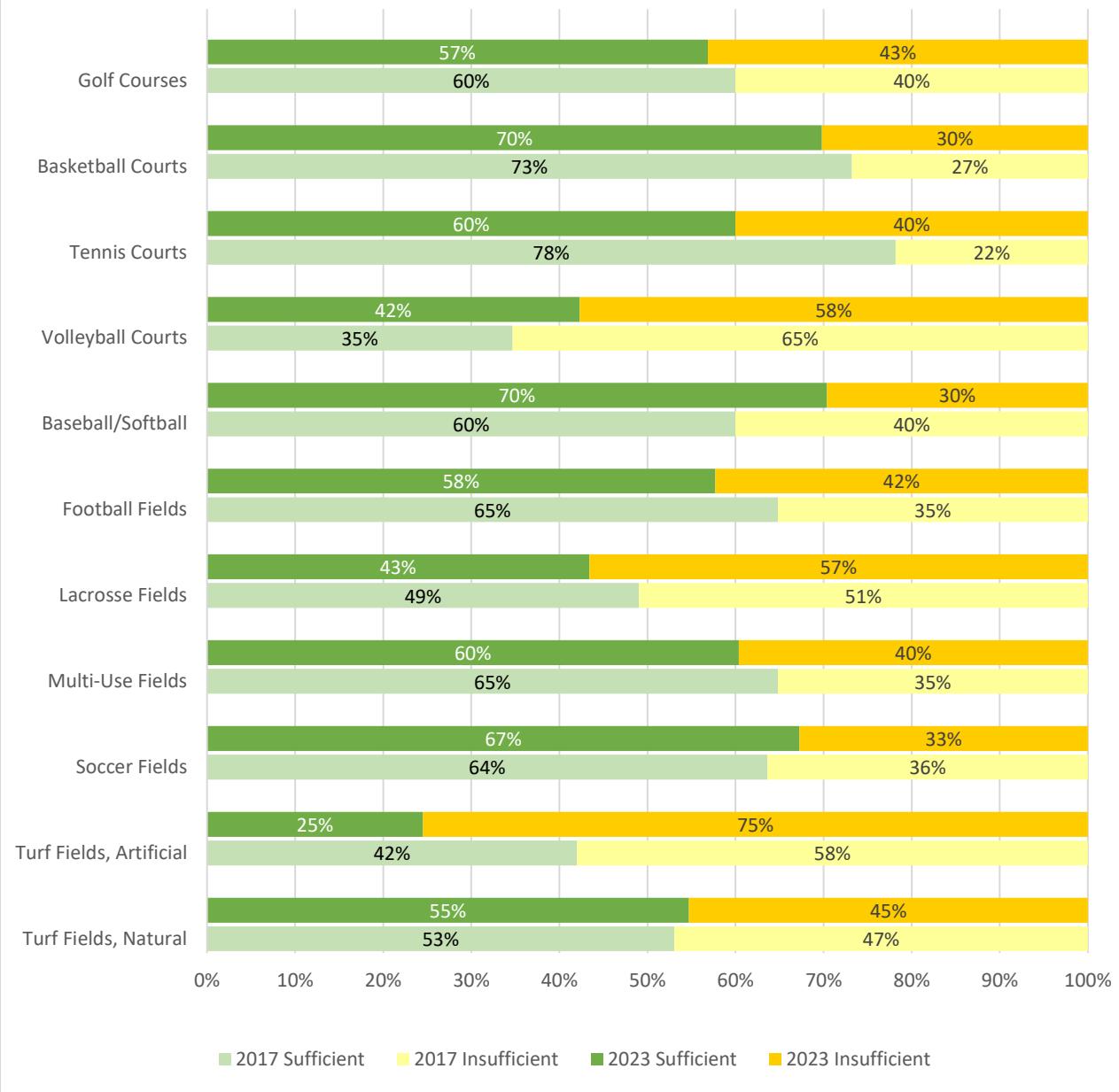
#### [Town Official Ratings of Facility Supply](#)

To understand a more detailed assessment of community needs, respondents to the Town Officials Survey were asked to rate various facilities as “sufficient” or “insufficient” for meeting supply and demand in their town. Figures 2-4 (courts and fields) and 2-5 (all other) display the results from the town officials surveyed in 2023, as well as comparison data from the town officials surveyed in the 2017 SCORP. Direct comparisons with the 2005 version are difficult since that survey included an option of “more needed in the future,” which was not included in 2017 or 2023 versions. For this reason, data from 2005 is not represented in the figures below.

Of eleven court and field facilities, six registered lower sufficiency ratings in 2023 than in 2017, including tennis courts (18% decrease), artificial turf fields (17% decrease), football fields (7% decrease), multi-use fields (5% decrease), golf courses (3% decrease), and basketball courts (3% decrease). Areas rated as increasingly sufficient for demand in 2023 include baseball/softball fields (10% increase), volleyball courts (7% increase), soccer fields (3% increase), and natural turf fields (2% increase).

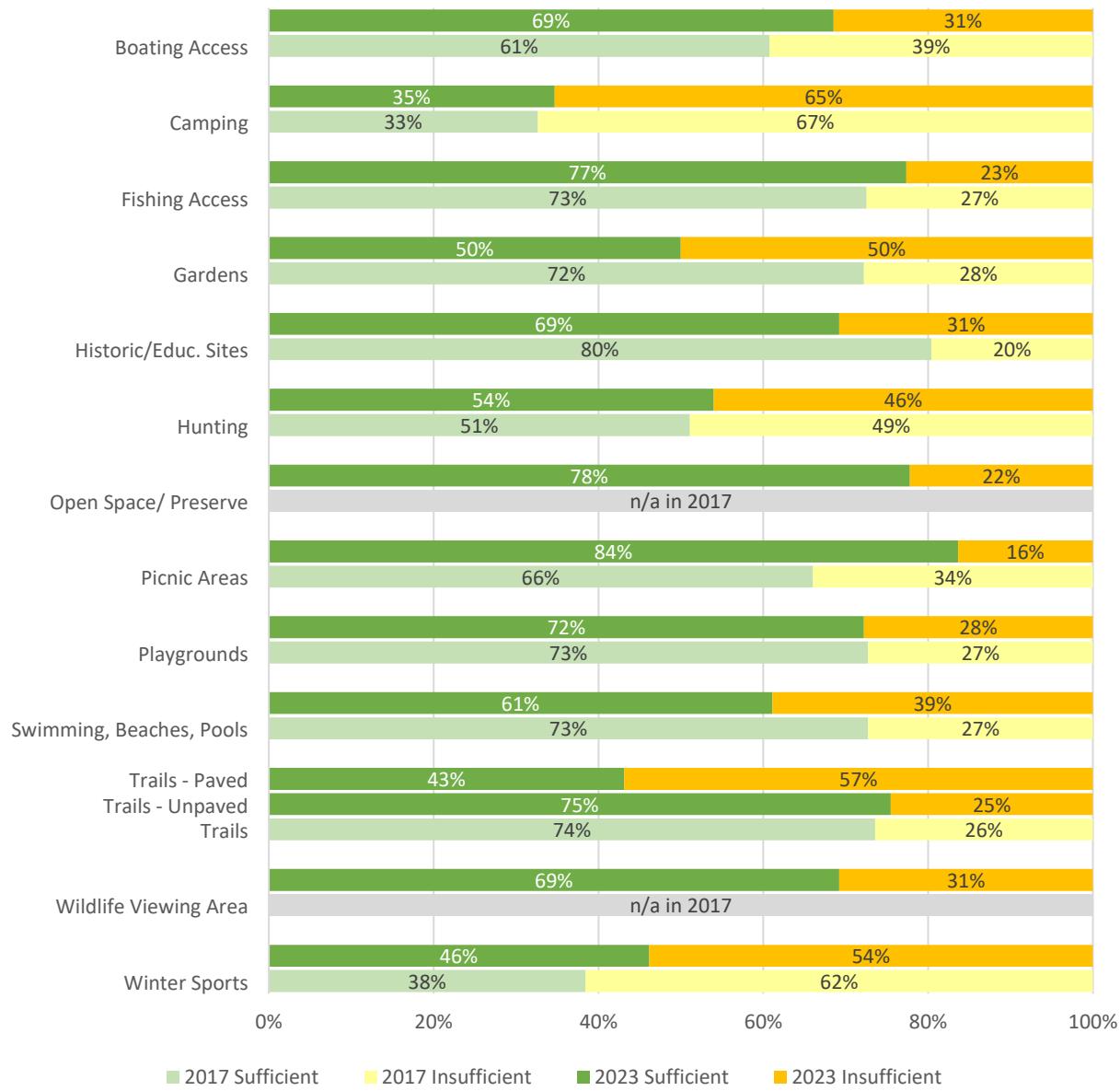
For facilities other than courts and fields, five of thirteen categories registered lower sufficiency ratings when compared to 2017. The largest decreases in sufficiency ratings were observed in paved trails (31% decrease), gardens (22% decrease), swim areas/beaches/pools (12% decrease), and historic/educational sites (11% decrease). Areas registering an increase in sufficiency ratings included picnic areas (18% increase), winter sports (11% increase), boating access (8% increase), fishing access (4% increase), hunting (3% increase), and camping (2% increase). Wildlife viewing areas and open space/preserves were not categories present in 2017 and therefore are excluded from the comparison.

## Supply Ratings of Local Facilities - Courts & Fields



**Figure 2-4: Town Officials' Ratings of Facility Supply - Courts & Fields (2017 & 2023)**

## Supply Rating of Local Facilities - All Others



**Figure 2-5: Town Officials' Ratings of Facility Supply – All Other (2017 & 2023)**

A direct comparison of resource sufficiency ratings between the Statewide and Town Officials surveys is difficult due to a difference in the rating scales used. However, combining the “needs not at all met” and “needs somewhat met” categories of the Statewide Survey could reasonably be considered a basis for comparison with town officials who rated their supply of facilities as insufficient. Seven-in-ten respondents (70%) in the Statewide Survey and nearly six-in-ten (57%)

in the Town Officials Survey rated paved trails as insufficient, meaning there is a need for more or better paved trails in the state. Another resource worth noting is campsites, as nearly three-quarters (72%) in the Statewide Survey and almost two-thirds (65%) in the Town Officials Survey rated the facilities as insufficient. There also seems to be a consistently insufficient rating for snowmobiling, sledding, skating, and other winter sports. Seven-in-ten respondents (70%) to the Statewide Survey rated winter facilities as insufficient, with more than half (54%) of Town Officials sharing this same sentiment.

There were some contrasting ratings for facilities across both surveys. A majority of respondents in the Statewide Survey felt most facilities did not meet, or only somewhat met, demand (70% or more on most facilities/areas), while the majority of respondents to the Town Officials Survey rated most facilities as sufficient (60% or more on many facilities/areas). In the



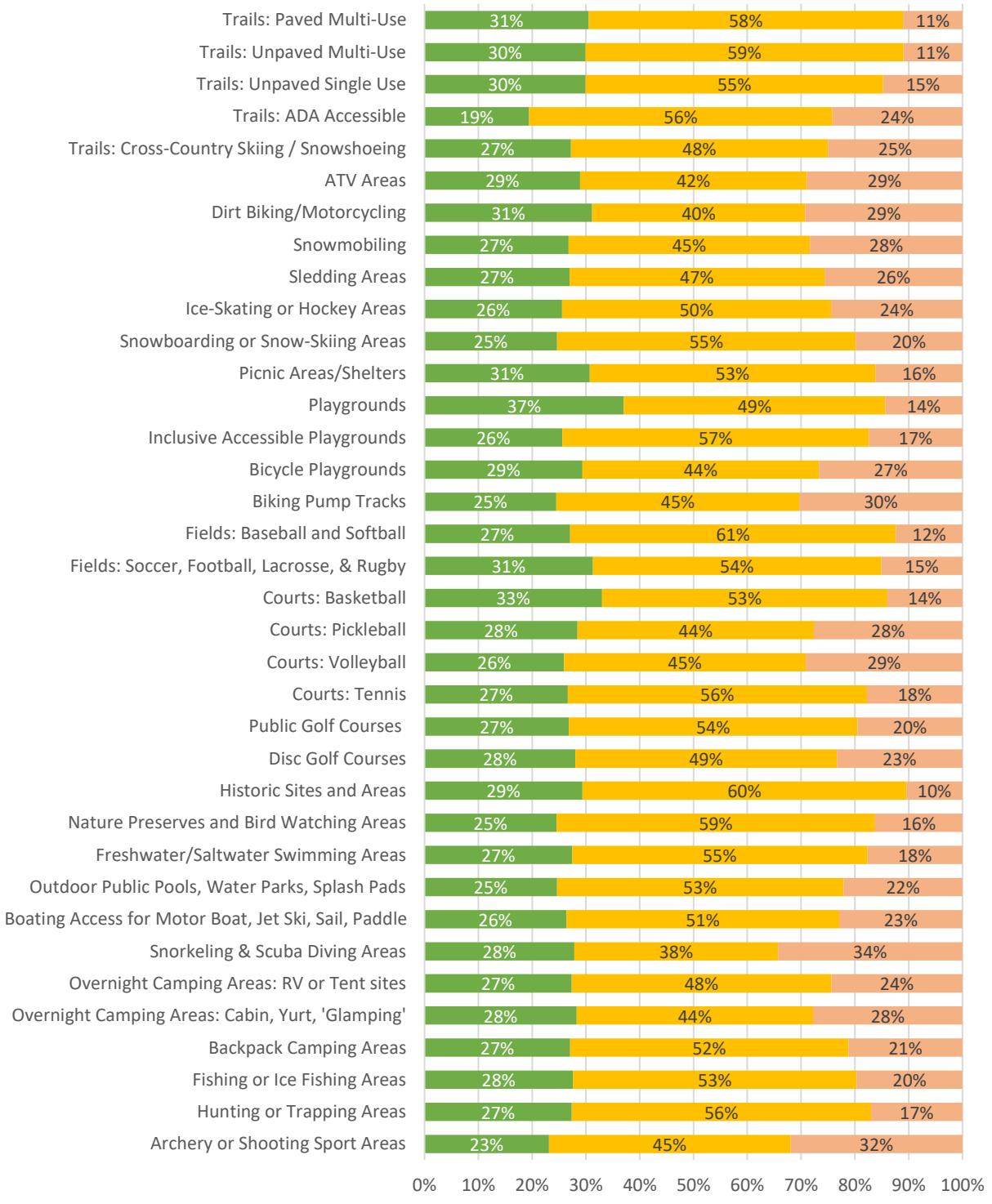
Statewide Survey, facilities that best met respondents' needs were playgrounds (37%) and basketball courts (33%), while the least met need was ADA-accessible trails (19%). However, as evidenced in Figure 2-6, the overall variation in needs across facilities was minimal in the Statewide Survey (19% to 37%). Respondents to the Town Officials Survey felt most capable of meeting the needs for picnic areas (84%), open space/nature preserves (78%), and fishing access (77%). Picnic area sufficiency ratings increased from 66% in 2017, and fishing areas increased from 73% in 2017.

(Open space/preserves was not rated in 2017.) Sufficiency ratings declined for other facilities from 2017 to 2023—most dramatically for gardens (from 72% to 50%), tennis (from 78% to 60%), artificial turf fields (42% to 25%), and historical areas/educational sites (from 80% to 69%).

## 2023 Statewide Survey - Meeting Household Needs In Terms of Access or Desire for Improvement

by percentage of respondents

■ Needs mostly met ■ Needs somewhat met ■ Needs not at all met



**Figure 2-6: State Residents Rate Household Needs (2023)**

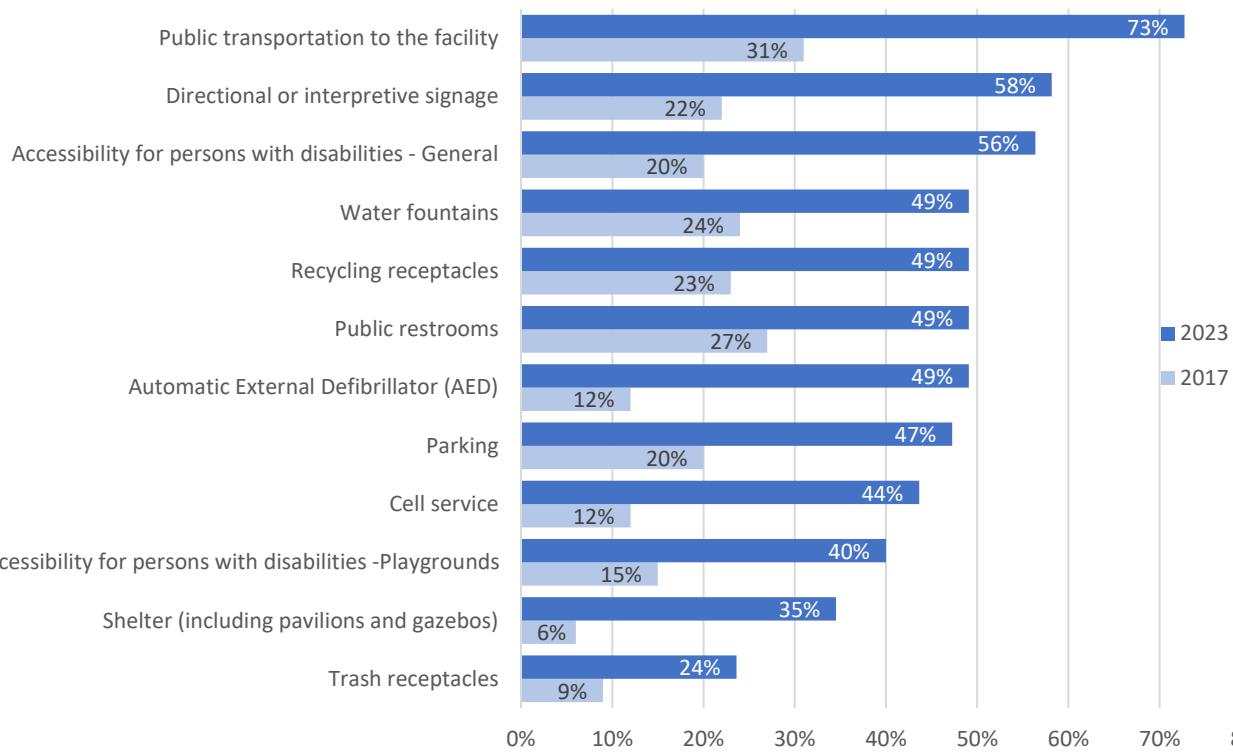
**Town Official Ratings of Support Components**

Finally, respondents to the Town Officials Survey were asked to identify which “support components” were inadequate at any of the facilities in their community, with selection of multiple responses permitted (see Figure 2-7). “Support components” are resources that make it easier and/or more enjoyable to practice outdoor recreational activities in a given recreational area. For example, restrooms are considered a support component because they allow individuals to stay longer in an area. In reviewing the results shown in Figure 2-7, it is important to note that there are differences between the 2017 and 2023 Town Officials Survey samples. Among the 55 municipalities represented in the 2023 Town Officials Survey, 24 of these towns were also represented in the 2017 survey. With just 44% overlap, direct comparisons between 2023 and 2017 survey results should be viewed with caution. More than half of the towns that completed the 2023 survey did not participate in the 2017 survey, and vice versa. Furthermore, even among the towns represented in both 2023 and 2017, it is possible that the surveys were not completed by the same town employee in both years. With this in mind, the results can certainly provide insight into current needs and trends, as broad similarities do exist.

In both 2023 and 2017, public transportation to a facility was rated as the most inadequate support component. Similarly, in both studies, items with the lowest ratings—those components deemed to be the most adequate (or least inadequate)—were trash receptacles and shelters, including pavilions and gazebos. The largest differences reported were for public transportation and Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs). In 2023, nearly three quarters of municipalities reported that public transportation is inadequate, while in the 2017 SCORP, only 31% of town officials identified public transportation as an inadequate support component. In 2023, nearly half (49%) of respondents rated AEDs as inadequate, while in 2017 only 12% of officials found AEDs to be inadequate. Again, the underlying reasons for these differences could be based on the individual municipalities that participated in each survey, the particular employees that responded to each survey, or a variety of other factors. Looking only at 2023 results, aside from public transportation, the components most concerning for Connecticut town officials were directional or interpretative signage (58%) and accessibility for persons with disabilities – general (56%).

## Inadequate Facility Components as Rated by Town Officials

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



**Figure 2-7: Town Officials' Ratings of Inadequate Facilities (2017 & 2023)**

## SECTION III: ASSESSING DEMAND

### PROFILE OF PARTICIPATION: STATEWIDE OUTDOOR RECREATION

To assess demand, this section begins with a profile of participation in outdoor recreation. The questions this section seeks to answer include the following: who participates in outdoor recreation activities, where, and how often? This section concludes by answering the question of how well activity needs are being met in Connecticut.

#### Household Participation

A total of 1,010 state residents completed the Statewide Survey, which asked respondents to report the number of household members who, within the past year, participated in each of thirty-six outdoor recreational activities listed. Since respondents were also asked to report the total number individuals in their household, both household participation rates (based on percentage of respondents) and estimated total population participation rates (based on percentage of total household members) can be calculated for this survey. Although both of these participation rates can be calculated, the following analysis focuses on household participation rates because it more accurately defines the activities that have wide appeal across age groups and varying interests.

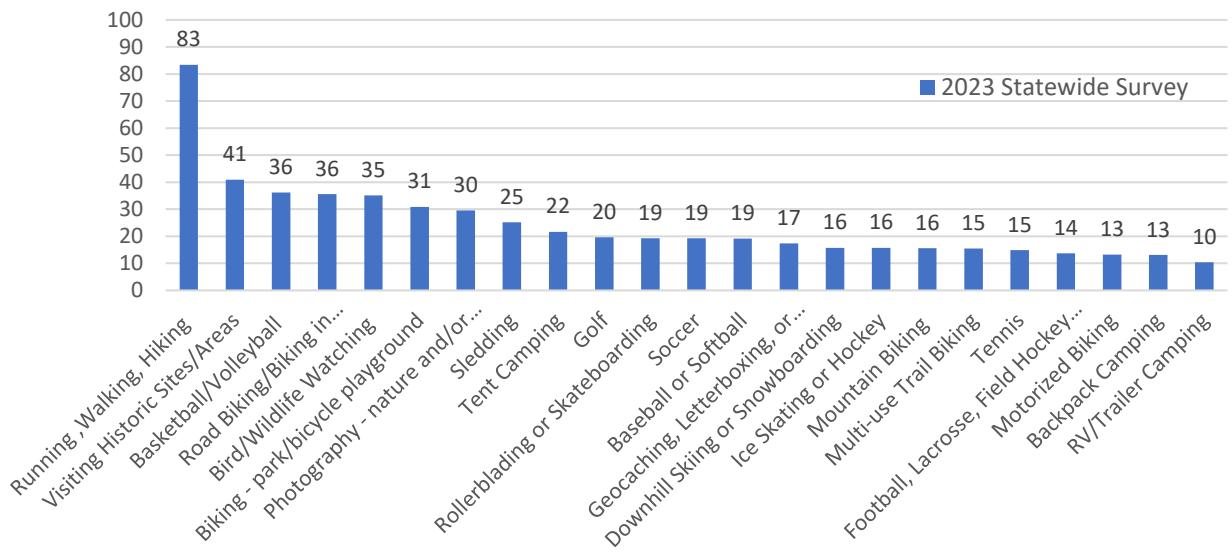
#### Rate of Participation – Land-Based Activities

The 2023 Statewide Survey presented respondents with a list of 36 (plus “other”) land-based outdoor recreational activities from which they could select, indicating household participation. Presented in Figure 3-1 are the percentages of household participation in 23 land-based activities as reported by respondents. This chart shows only those activities with participation rates of approximately 10% or higher. Those with lower percentages are shown in a separate chart (See Figure 3-3.) Also, for the purposes of comparison with the previous 2017 and 2023 SCORP surveys, and for more efficient analysis, several of the 36 activities were grouped together (for example, running was combined with walking/hiking.) All combined activities are shown in Figure 3-2.

As seen in Figure 3-1, running, walking, and hiking are, by far, the most common activities with over 83% of respondents reporting that members of their household participated in this activity within the past twelve months. Activities with participation rates around the 30% to 40% range include low physical-impact activities such as visiting historic sites (41%), bird/wildlife watching (35%), and nature/wildlife photography (30%), as well as more physically vigorous activities such as basketball/volleyball (36%) and road biking/biking in neighborhoods (36%).

## Household Participation Rates in Land-Based Activities

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



**Figure 3-1: Household Participation Rates in Land-Based Activities (2023)**

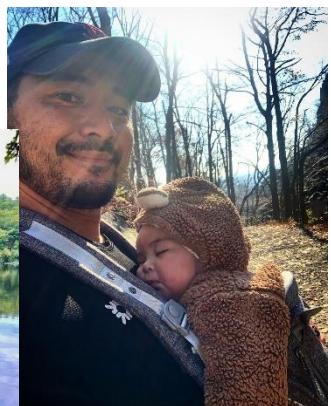
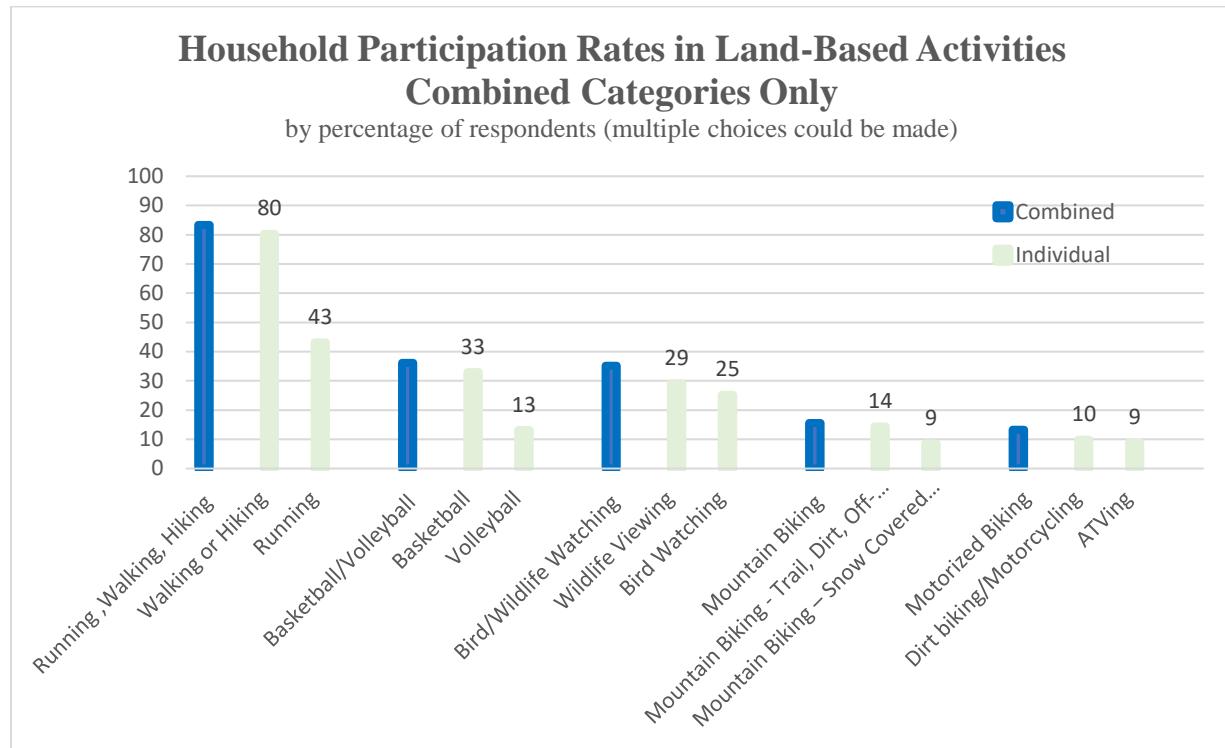
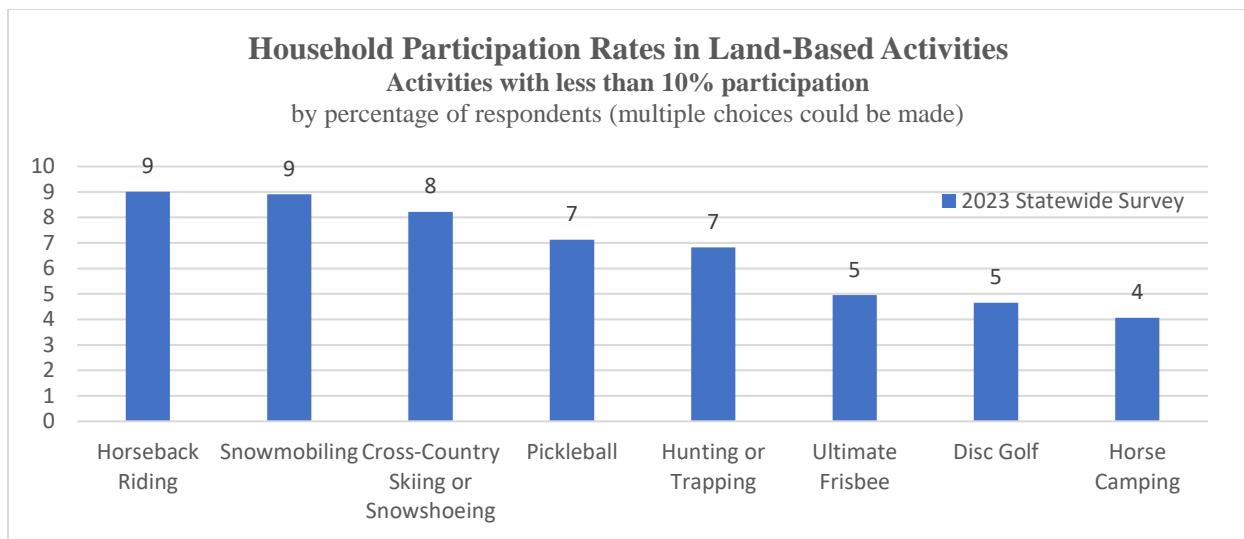


Figure 3-2 illustrates some of the combined activity categories. This analysis brings perspective on household participation rate in certain activities when isolated from their larger categories. In the running, walking, and hiking category, the data shows that walking/hiking is the most common activity (80% of households participating) while running is less frequent (43%). Similarly, basketball (33%) has greater participation than volleyball (13%). In the mountain biking category, 5% more households participate in trail, dirt, and off-road biking (14%) over winter fat biking/snow-covered trail biking (9%). Within the bird/wildlife category, wildlife viewing (29%) is slightly more common than bird watching (25%).



**Figure 3-2: Household Participation Rates in Combined Land-Based Categories (2023)**

As shown in Figure 3-3, the activities with the lowest participation rates (less than 10%) include sports recently emerging in popularity, such as pickleball, activities with higher cost of entry, such as RV camping, horseback riding, and horse camping, or niche activities that have historically had less participation, such as disc golf or ultimate Frisbee. Some of these activities, notably pickleball, will be an area of interest in future surveys. Town officials repeatedly cited its popularity in their respective municipalities, with two-thirds of participants (67%) identifying it as the outdoor recreation activity most likely to gain popularity over the next five to ten years.



**Figure 3-3: Household Participation Rates in Land-Based Activities – Less than 10% (2023)**

In order to provide longitudinal analysis, efforts were made to maintain a common list of outdoor recreation activities relative to 2005 and 2017 SCORP projects. However, to capture new and emerging activities, several new activities were added to the 2023 survey at the suggestion of SCORP Advisory Committee representatives. Therefore, some activities cannot be compared over the years. Table 3-1 shows the entire list of land-based activities that were included in the different iterations of the surveys.

**Table 3-1: Survey Category Comparison of Land-Based Activities (2005–2023)**

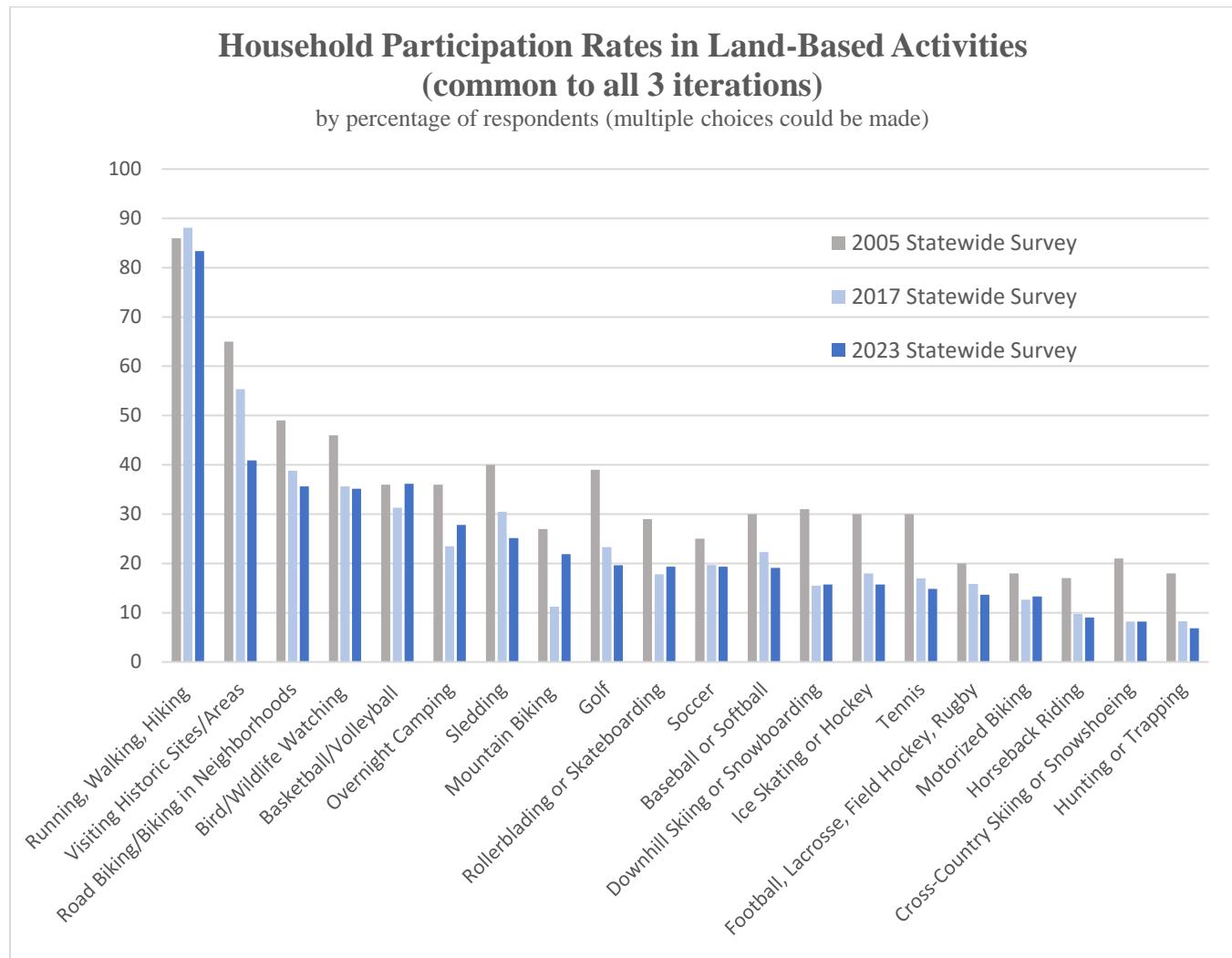
2005	2017	2023
Running, walking or hiking	Running Walking or hiking	Running Walking or hiking
Road biking/biking in neighborhoods	Road biking/biking in neighborhoods	Road biking/biking in neighborhoods
Mountain biking or trail biking	Mountain biking  Multi-use trail biking	Mountain Biking – trail, dirt, off-road Mountain Biking – snow covered trails, winter fat biking Biking – park/bicycle playground Multi-use trail biking
Rollerblading or skateboarding	Rollerblading or skateboarding	Rollerblading or skateboarding
Horseback riding	Horseback riding	Horseback riding
Motorized biking	Motorized biking, i.e., dirt, ATV	ATVing

		Dirt biking/motorcycling
		Snowmobiling
Downhill skiing or snowboarding	Downhill skiing or snowboarding	Downhill skiing or snowboarding
Cross country or snowshoeing	Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing	Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing
Sledding	Sledding	Sledding
Ice skating or hockey	Ice skating or hockey	Ice skating or hockey
Overnight camping	Tent camping	Tent camping
	RV/trailer camping	RV/trailer camping
	Horse camping	Horse camping
	Backpack camping	Backpack camping
Bird watching or wildlife viewing	Bird watching or wildlife viewing	Bird watching
		Wildlife viewing
—	—	Photography – nature and/or wildlife
Visiting historic site or museums	Visiting historic sites/areas	Visiting historic sites/areas
Hunting or trapping	Hunting or trapping	Hunting or trapping
Tennis	Tennis	Tennis
—	—	Pickleball
Basketball or volleyball	Basketball or volleyball	Basketball
		Volleyball
Football, lacrosse, field hockey, or rugby	Football, lacrosse, field hockey, or rugby	Football, lacrosse, field hockey, or rugby
Baseball or softball	Baseball or softball	Baseball or softball
Soccer	Soccer	Soccer
Golf	Golf	Golf
—	Disc golf	Disc golf
—	Ultimate Frisbee	Ultimate Frisbee
—	Geocaching, letterboxing, or mobile app games	Geocaching, letterboxing, or mobile app Games

Figure 3-4 compares only those activities that were common across the different survey years. As noted in the 2017 SCORP, it appears that many activities saw a decline in participation from 2005 to 2017. The same seems to hold true comparing 2005 to 2023. However, based on the survey methodology and demographic changes from 2005 to 2017/2023, it is more fitting to

compare 2017 and 2023. In 2005 and 2017, responses were collected via telephone and mail surveys, while the 2023 survey was administered exclusively online. In addition, the 2005 sample was less ethnically diverse than the two more current samples. In 2005, 85% of the sample identified as Caucasian/White, compared with 76% in 2017 and 65% in 2023. Hispanic percentages increased from 7% in 2005 to 8% in 2017 and to 18% in 2023.

For most activities, the data indicates that the 2017/2023 behaviors are more alike than in 2005. While this cannot be said decisively, it is possible that much of the change observed from 2005 to 2017 was due to methodological and/or demographic shifts.



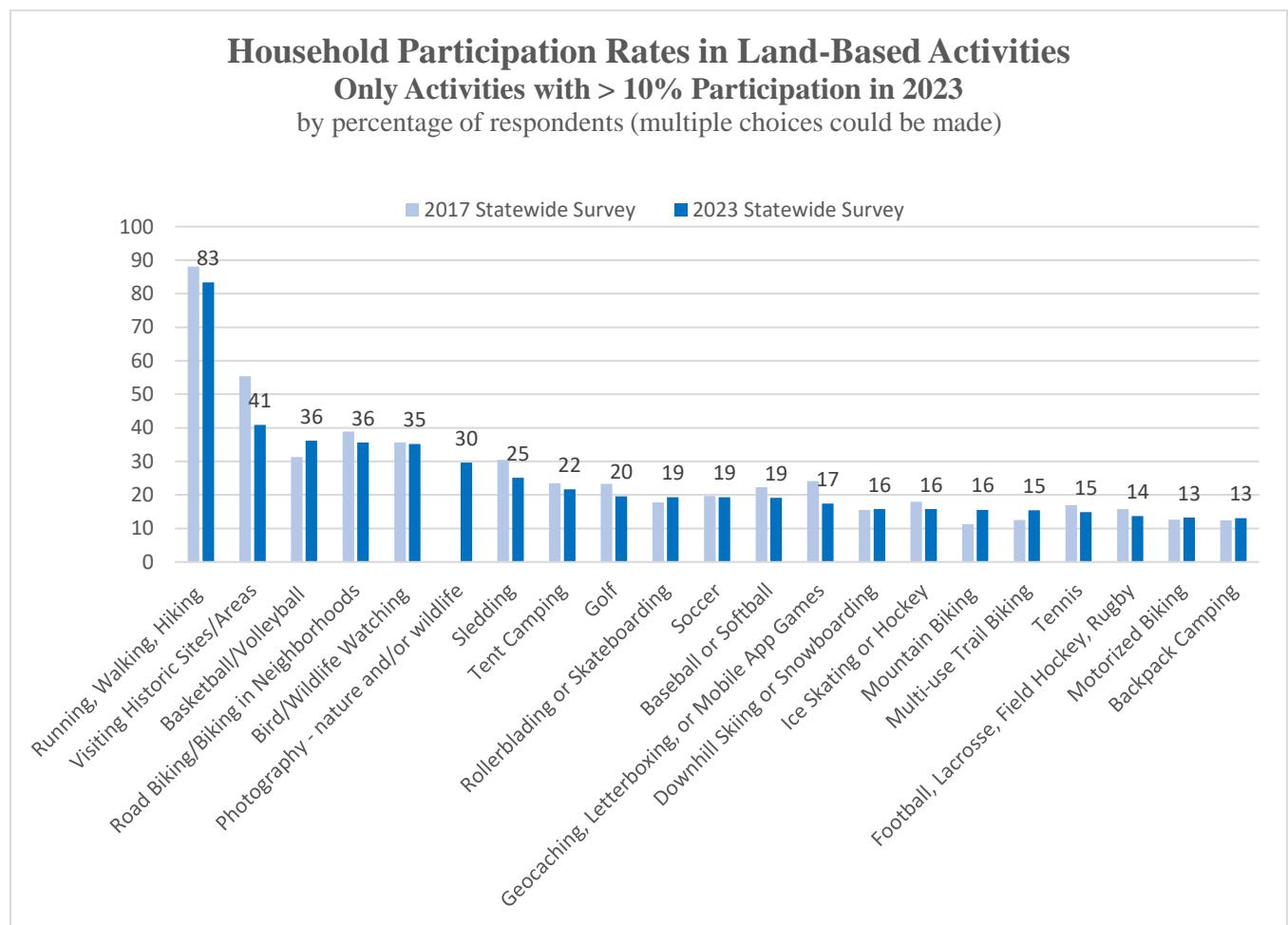
**Figure 3-4: Household Participation Rates in Land-Based Activities—Common to all three iterations (2005–2023)**

The biggest drop in participation from 2017 to 2023 was observed in visiting historic sites/areas (see Figure 3-5), down 14% (from 55% in 2017 to 41% in 2023). Meanwhile, the largest increase from 2017 to 2023 was in basketball/volleyball (up 5% from 31% in 2017 to 36% in 2023)

followed by mountain biking (up 4% from 11% in 2017 to 15% in 2023) and multi-use trail biking (up nearly 3% from 12% in 2017 to 15% in 2023).

Nine activities showed very small upticks in participation, less than 2%, or no change at all: rollerblading/skateboarding, downhill skiing/snowboarding, motorized biking, backpack camping, cross country skiing/snowshoeing (8% in 2023), and horse camping (4% in 2023). One commonality among many of these activities is the relatively high financial barrier to participation compared to other free or low-cost activities. This financial barrier to entry may help partially explain both the relative lag in participation, as well as lack of growth in these respective activities.

Participation levels decreased for the remaining activities. In addition to the decline in participation seen for visiting historic sites/areas, declining participation was also reported from 2017 to 2023 for geocaching/letterboxing/mobile app gaming (down 7%), sledding (down 5%), and running/walking/hiking (down 5%). For the other activities in which a decline was observed, changes were more modest, with decreases of 4% or less.



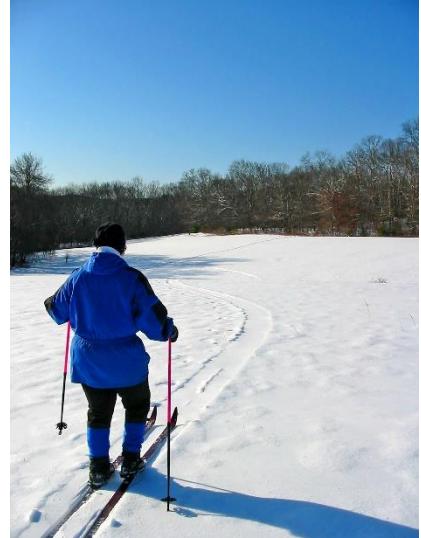
### Figure 3-5: Household Participation Rates in Land Based Activities (2017 & 2023)

#### Rate of Participation – Water-Based Activities

The 2023 Statewide Survey presented respondents with a list of twelve (plus “other”) water-based outdoor recreational activities from which they could indicate household participation. Presented in Figure 3-6 are the percentages of household participation in these water-based activities as reported by respondents.

Activities at the beach were the most common water-based activity, with three-in-five households (59%) participating in this activity over the past year. This is followed by swimming activities, with 47% participating in fresh/saltwater swimming and 41% swimming in pools. All other water-based activities had participation rates lower than 25%.

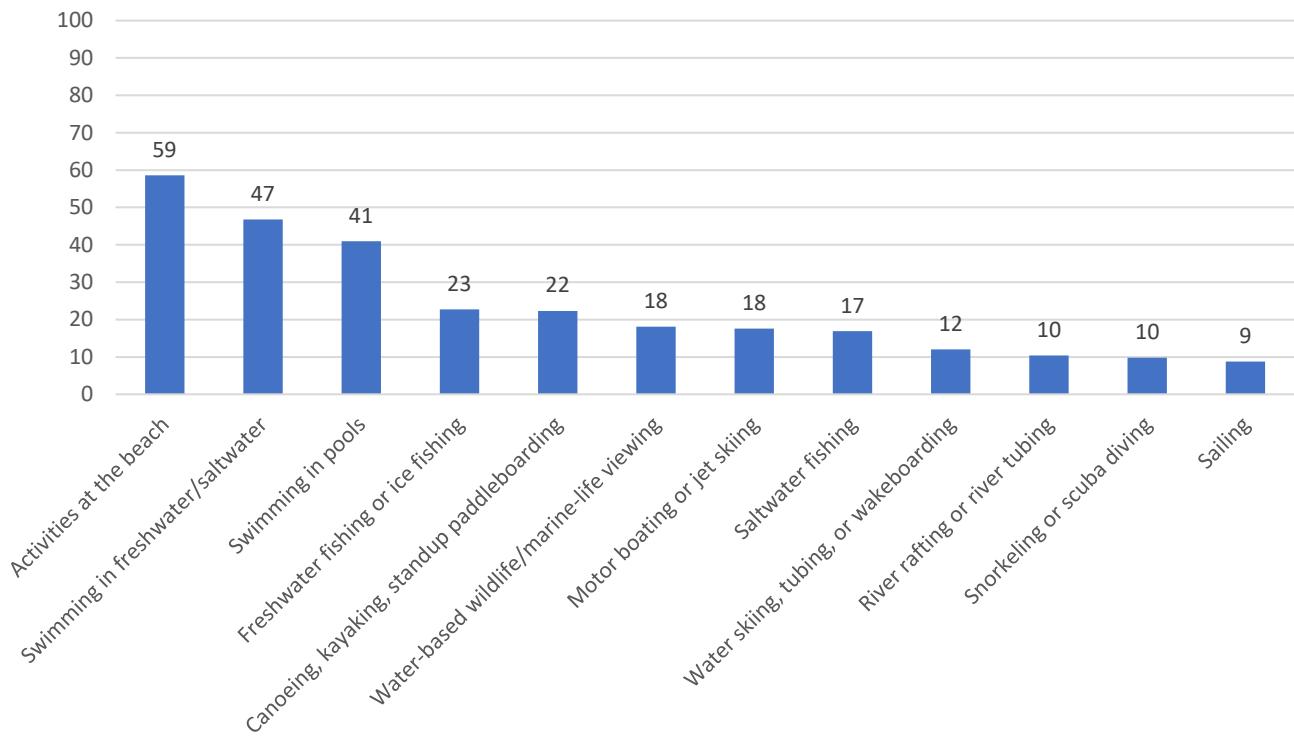
The least common water-based activities include some of the more “adventurous” and physically demanding activities such as water skiing, tubing, or wakeboarding (12%), snorkeling or scuba diving (10%), and sailing (9%). The low incidence rates associated with these activities could be due to several factors, including the relatively high cost of entry, the level of skill required for these activities, and the need for permits and/or certifications. Further, snorkeling and scuba diving tend to be more popular in tropical waters where ecosystems such as coral reefs represent a bigger attraction to recreationalists.



## Household Participation Rates in Water-Based Activities

2023 Statewide Survey

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



**Figure 3-6: Household Participation in Water-Based Activities (2023)**

As was done with the land-based activities, efforts were made to maintain a common list of outdoor water-based activities relative to the 2005 and 2017 SCORP projects. To capture a more comprehensive list of activities, a new item was added to the 2023 survey at the suggestion of SCORP Advisory Committee representatives. Table 3-2 below shows the entire list of water-based activities that were included in the different iterations of the surveys.

**Table 3-2: Survey Category Comparison of Land-Based Activities (2005–2023)**

2005	2017	2023
Swimming in pools	Swimming in outdoor pools	Swimming in outdoor public pools
Swimming in freshwater/saltwater	Swimming in freshwater/saltwater	Swimming in freshwater/saltwater
Activities at the beach	Activities at the beach	Activities at the beach
Motor boating	Motor boating or jet skiing	Motor boating or jet skiing
Sailing	Sailing	Sailing
Canoeing, kayaking, or tubing	Canoeing, kayaking, or stand-up paddleboarding	Canoeing, kayaking, or stand-up paddleboarding
Water skiing or jet skiing	Water skiing, tubing, or wakeboarding	Water skiing, tubing, or wakeboarding
—	River rafting or tubing	River rafting or river tubing
Snorkeling or scuba diving	Snorkeling or scuba diving	Snorkeling or scuba diving
Freshwater fishing or ice fishing	Freshwater fishing or ice fishing	Freshwater fishing or ice fishing
Saltwater fishing	Saltwater fishing	Saltwater fishing
—	—	Water-based wildlife viewing / marine-life viewing

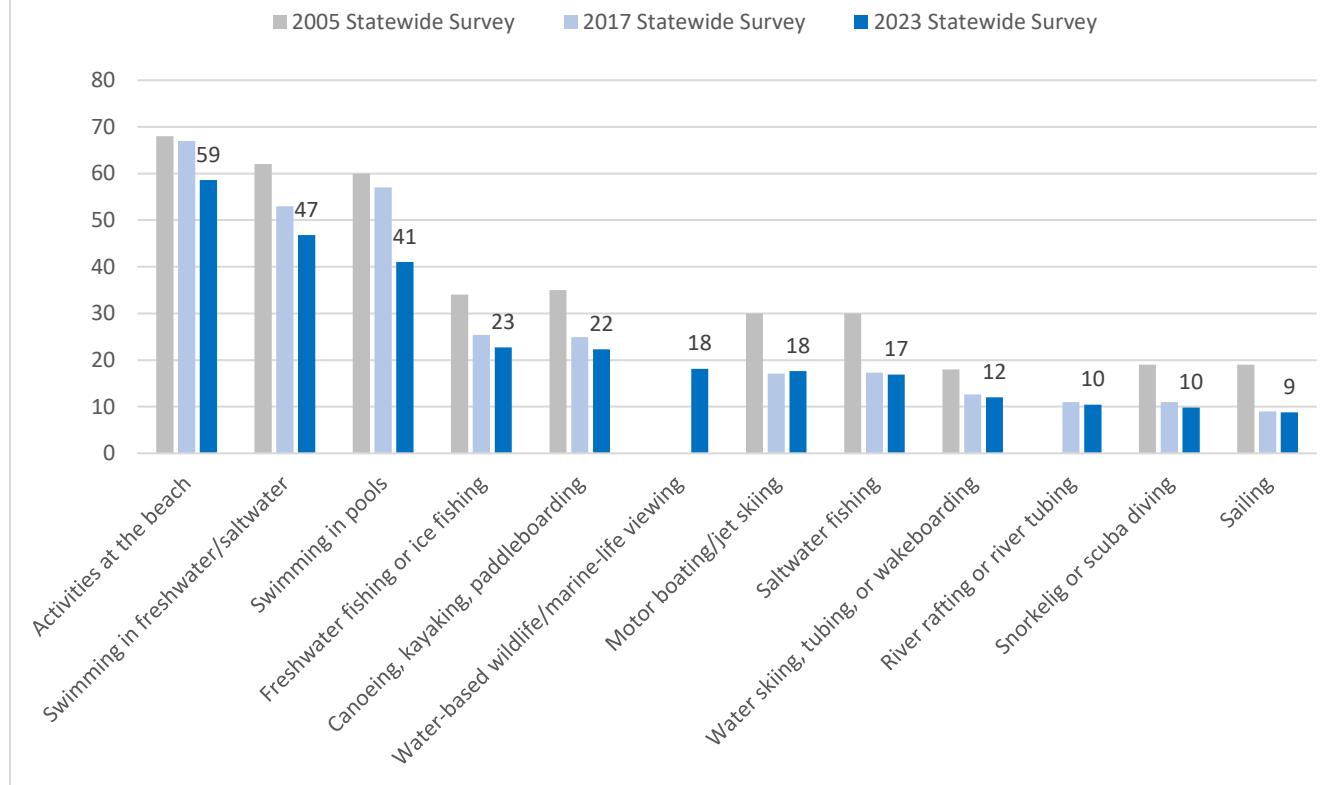
As shown in Figure 3-7, while activities at the beach/swimming were the most common ones reported in 2023, participation rates dropped across all activities from 2017 to 2023. Swimming in outdoor public pools saw the largest drop, from 57% in 2017 to 41% in 2023. Activities at the beach fell from 67% to 59%, and swimming in freshwater/saltwater fell from 53% to 47%.

It is possible that some of these changes could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the prospect of social distancing may have increased concerns about public pools. A lack of staffing at these facilities could be another factor. In summer 2023, some Connecticut municipalities limited hours of their public pools or closed certain facilities entirely due to lifeguard shortages.

Aside from the decline in beach/swimming activities, the level of participation in water-based activities in 2023 was mostly comparable to 2017. Wider differences were observed between 2005 and 2017/2023, which, as previously stated, may be partially attributed to methodological changes in how the survey was distributed.

## Household Participation Rates in Water-Based Activities

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



**Figure 3-7: Household Participation in Water-Based Activities (2005-2023)**

### Frequency of Participation – Land-Based Activities

In addition to reporting the number of household members who participated in each activity, respondents to the Statewide Survey were asked to indicate the average frequency with which household participants engaged in these activities. Respondents were asked to rate this frequency on the following scale:

- 1: seldom/never
- 2: less than once per month
- 3: at least once per month
- 4: a few times per month
- 5: several times per week

Figure 3-8 ranks land-based recreation activities from the Statewide Survey by the ‘several times per week’ category, providing insight as to which activities are enjoyed with the most, or least, regularity. Indeed, some activities appear to occur on a routine or consistent basis, while others are much more occasional. To provide further depth, the scale above was converted to an “average monthly participation” value as shown in Figure 3-9. This allows for a more

practical quantitative view of the overall frequency data for each activity. The scale values are as follows: seldom/never = 0, less than once per month = 0.5, at least once per month = 1, a few times per month = 2, and several times per week = 10. (The value of 10 assumes an average of two or three times per week. In fact, all categories are valued conservatively and can be reasonably viewed as minimum frequency values.) The values for all respondents were averaged to produce an “average monthly participation” value for each activity. So, a value of 2.5 for golf, for example, indicates that golfers hit the links 2.5, or two to three times per month, on average.

## Frequency of Participation in Land-Based Activities

■ Seldom or Never ■ Less than Once a Month ■ At least Once a Month ■ A few times a Month ■ Several times a Week

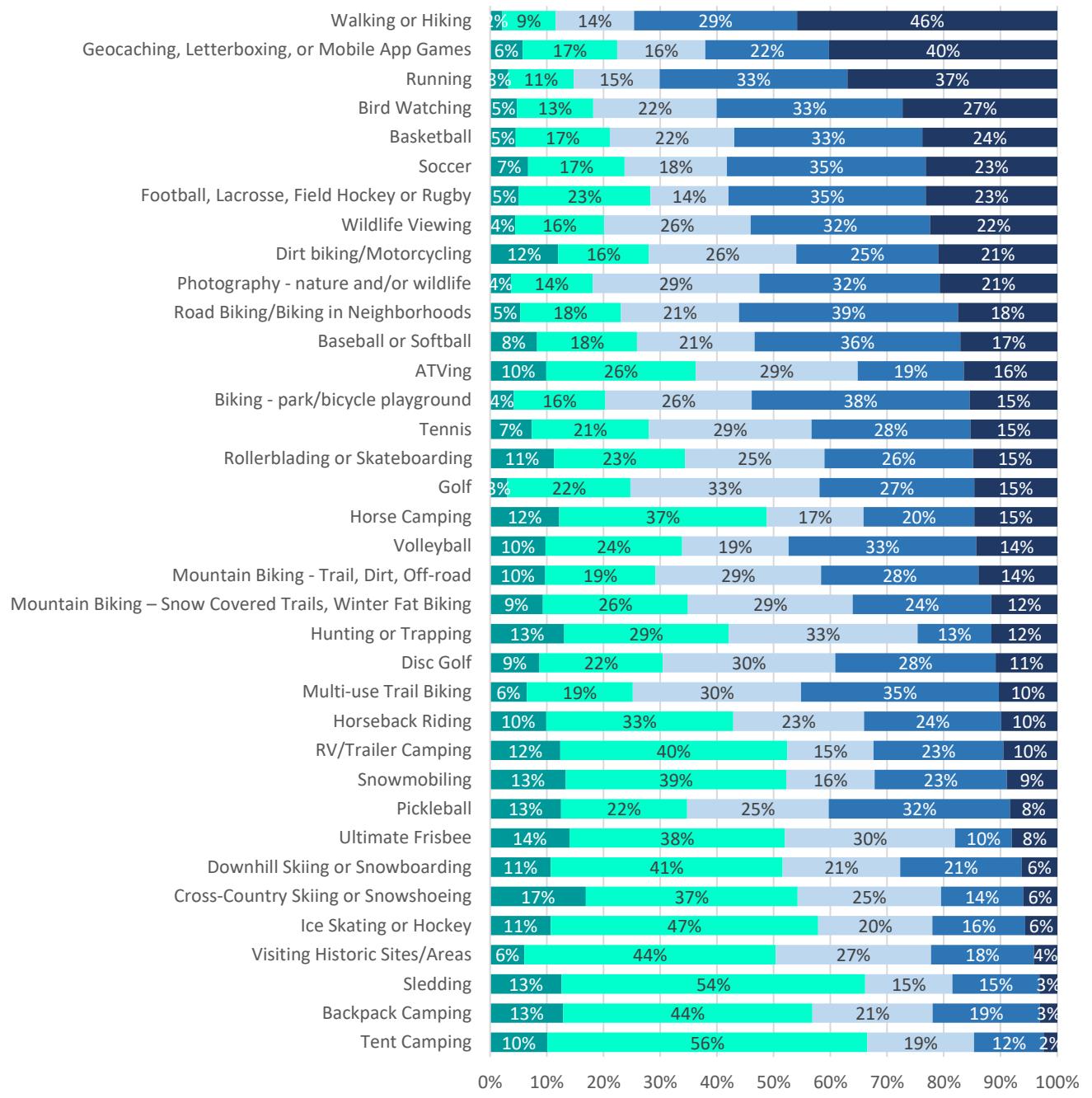
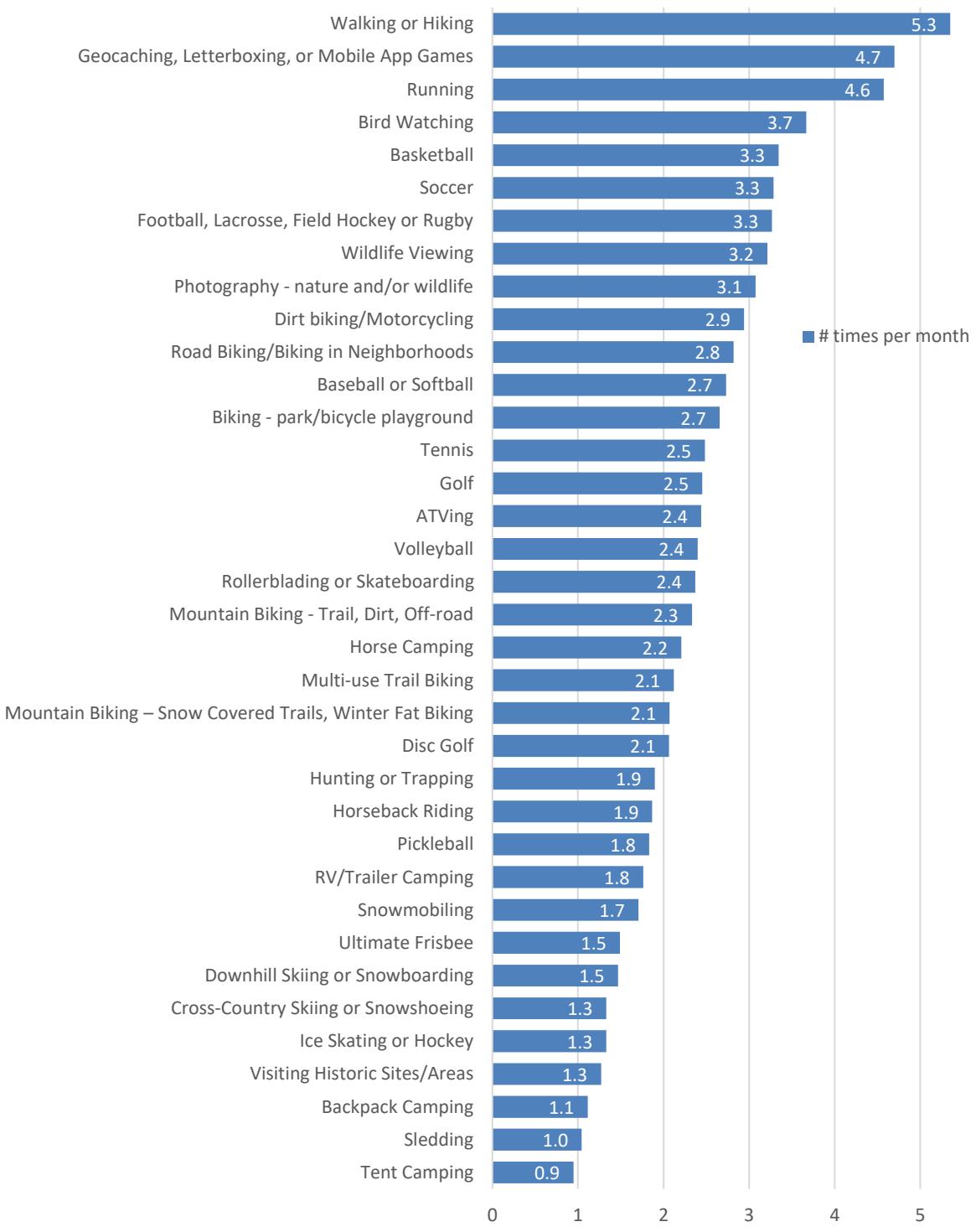


Figure 3-8: Average Frequency of Participation in Land-Based Activities (2023)

## Average Monthly Participation in Land-Based Activities

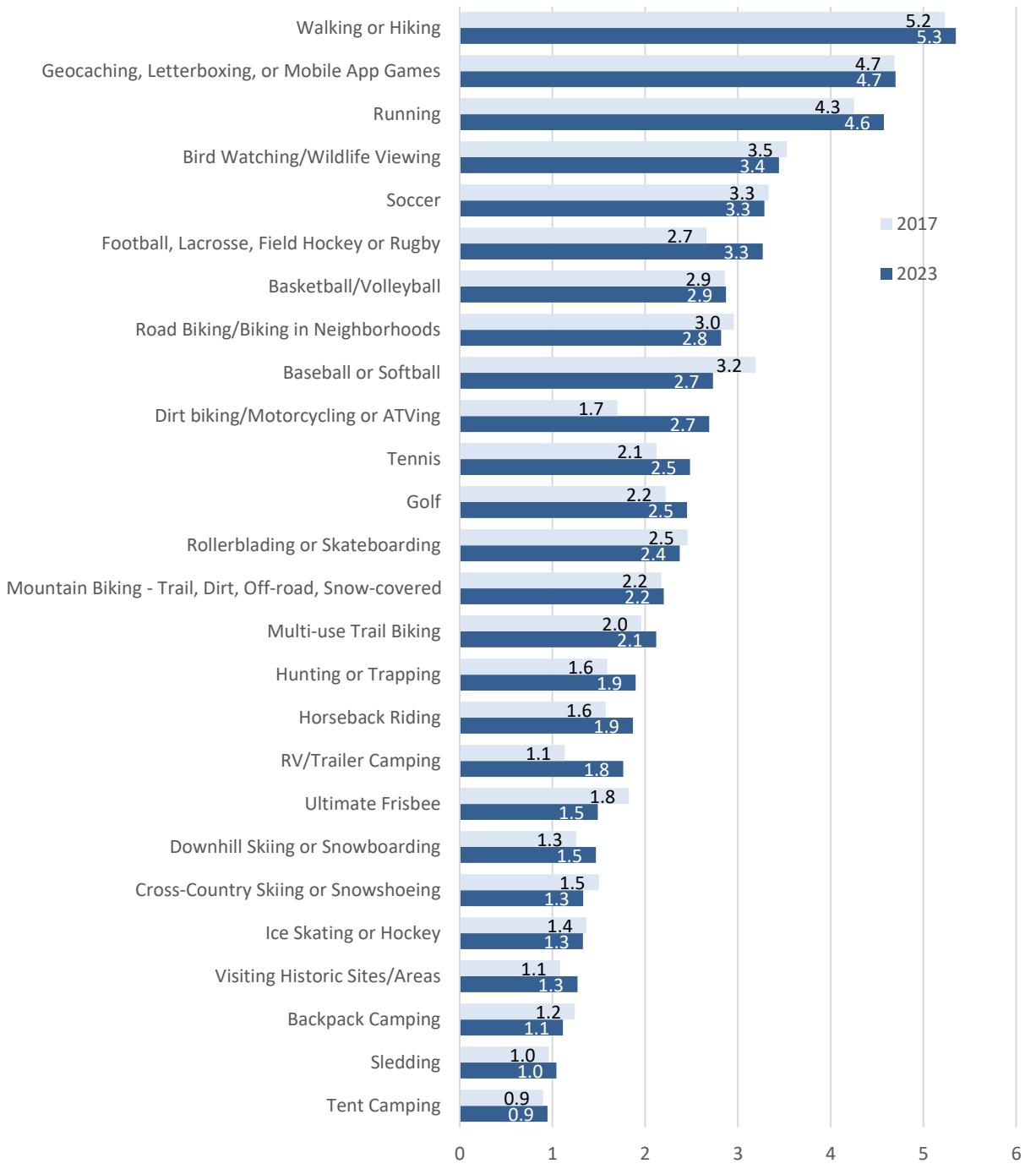
by household, number of times per month



**Figure 3-9: Average Monthly Frequency of Participation in Land-Based Recreation Activities with Select Combined Categories Broken Out (2023)**

## Average Monthly Participation in Land-Based Activities

Only among activities common to both surveys  
by household, number of times per month



**Figure 3-10: Average Monthly Frequency of Participation in Land-Based Recreation Activities Common to 2017 and 2023**

Similar to findings presented in the section concerning participation rates for land-based

activities, walking/hiking sits at the top of the list when it comes to the frequency of engagement with 46% of respondents engaging in it several times a week, while over one-quarter (29%) engaged in it at least a few times a month. Running was also a frequently practiced activity, with 37% reporting running several times a week and 33% reporting running at least a few times a month. These results are not surprising as participants can easily engage in walking, hiking, and running with little to no cost. Trails are found throughout the state, and sidewalks or pathways are located in many of Connecticut's municipalities. Therefore, individuals and households have fewer barriers preventing them from engaging in these activities compared with others.

Geocaching, letterboxing, and/or mobile application gaming have remained popular since 2017, with 40% of households engaging in these activities several times per week and 22% engaging in them a few times per month in 2023. These rates closely match those in 2017, reflecting the presence of a solid niche group for these activities. Bird watching was also found to be a popular activity in 2023, with 27% of respondents participating several times a week and 33% participating a few times a month.

Three categories of team activities stood out as the most popular in 2023. Basketball (24%), soccer (23%), and the combined category of football/lacrosse/field hockey/rugby (23%) were practiced several times a week by respondents. Those who practiced these activities at least a few times a month amounted to 33%, 35%, and 35%, respectively.

Several land-based activities stand out for their low frequency rates. Among these are four cold-weather categories: sledding, ice skating or hockey, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing, and downhill skiing or snowboarding. For sledding, which was the least frequent among this group, two-thirds (67%) reported that engagement was seldom or less than once a month. Similarly, over half of those who engaged in downhill skiing/snowboarding (52%) or cross-country skiing/snowshoeing (54%) reported the same. It is understandable that these activities showed a much lower frequency rate, as they are largely dependent on the abundance of snow, and winter weather was comparatively mild this past year.

Tent camping also showed the lowest frequency of participation, with six-in-ten (66%) campers engaging in this activity on a less than once a month or seldom basis. Backpack camping sits at the bottom of the chart as well. Since camping tends to require a higher degree of planning and preparation than the other activities surveyed, it is understandable that its participation frequency rate would be lower.

The average number of times per month that households participated in any land-based activity was also measured. Compared to 2017 figures, 2023 responses indicated a very slight growth in average monthly participation across twelve of twenty-six activities listed. Overall, 2023 results largely aligned with the frequency of participation figures observed in 2017. Walking/hiking was

again at the top of the list with 5.3 average times per month, followed by geocaching/letterboxing/mobile app games at 4.7 average times per month. Running followed in third place with 4.3 average times per month.

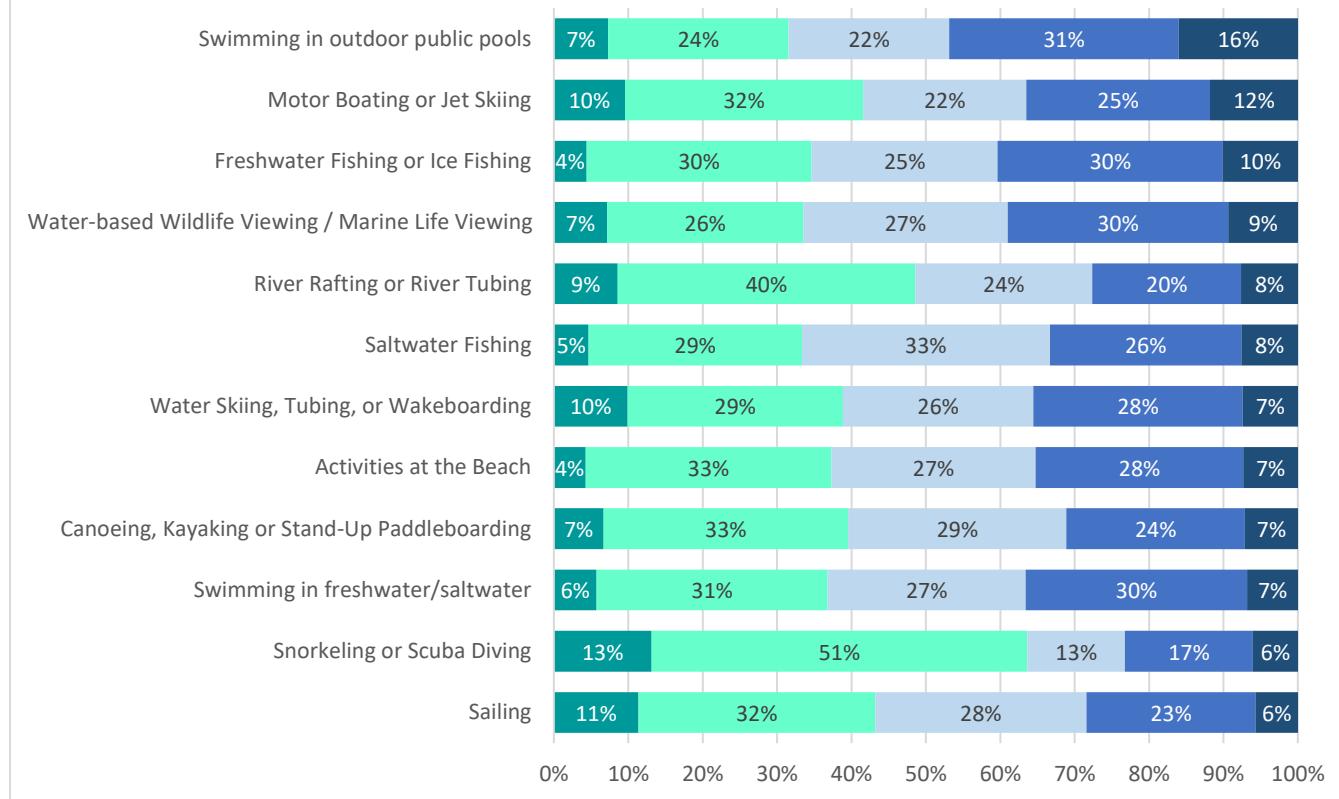
It is no surprise that once again sledding, tent camping, cross-country skiing/snowshoeing, downhill skiing/snowboarding were at the bottom of the list, with these being the lowest figures averaging monthly participation in land-based activities.

#### Frequency of Participation – Water-Based Activities

Figure 3-11 ranks water-based recreation activities from the 2023 Statewide Survey by the ‘several times per week’ category, providing insight as to which activities are enjoyed with the most, or the least, regularity. Because some activities may occur regularly but not frequently, and in an effort to provide further depth to the analysis, the scale above was converted to an “average monthly participation” value as shown in Figure 3-12. This allows for a more practical quantitative view of the overall frequency data for each activity. The scale values are as follows: seldom/never = 0, less than once per month = 0.5, at least once per month = 1, a few times per month = 2, and several times per week = 10. (The value of 10 assumes an average of two or three times per week. In fact, all categories are valued conservatively and can be reasonably viewed as minimum frequency values.) The values for all respondents were averaged to produce an “average monthly participation” value for each activity. So, a value of 1.5 for sailing, for example, indicates that sailors are on the water 1.5 times, or one to two times per month, on average.

## Frequency of Participation in Water-Based Activities

■ Seldom or Never ■ Less than Once a Month ■ At least Once a Month ■ A few times a Month ■ Several times a Week



**Figure 3-11: Average Frequency of Participation in Water-Based Activities (2023)**

## Average Monthly Participation in Water-based Activities

by household, number of times per month

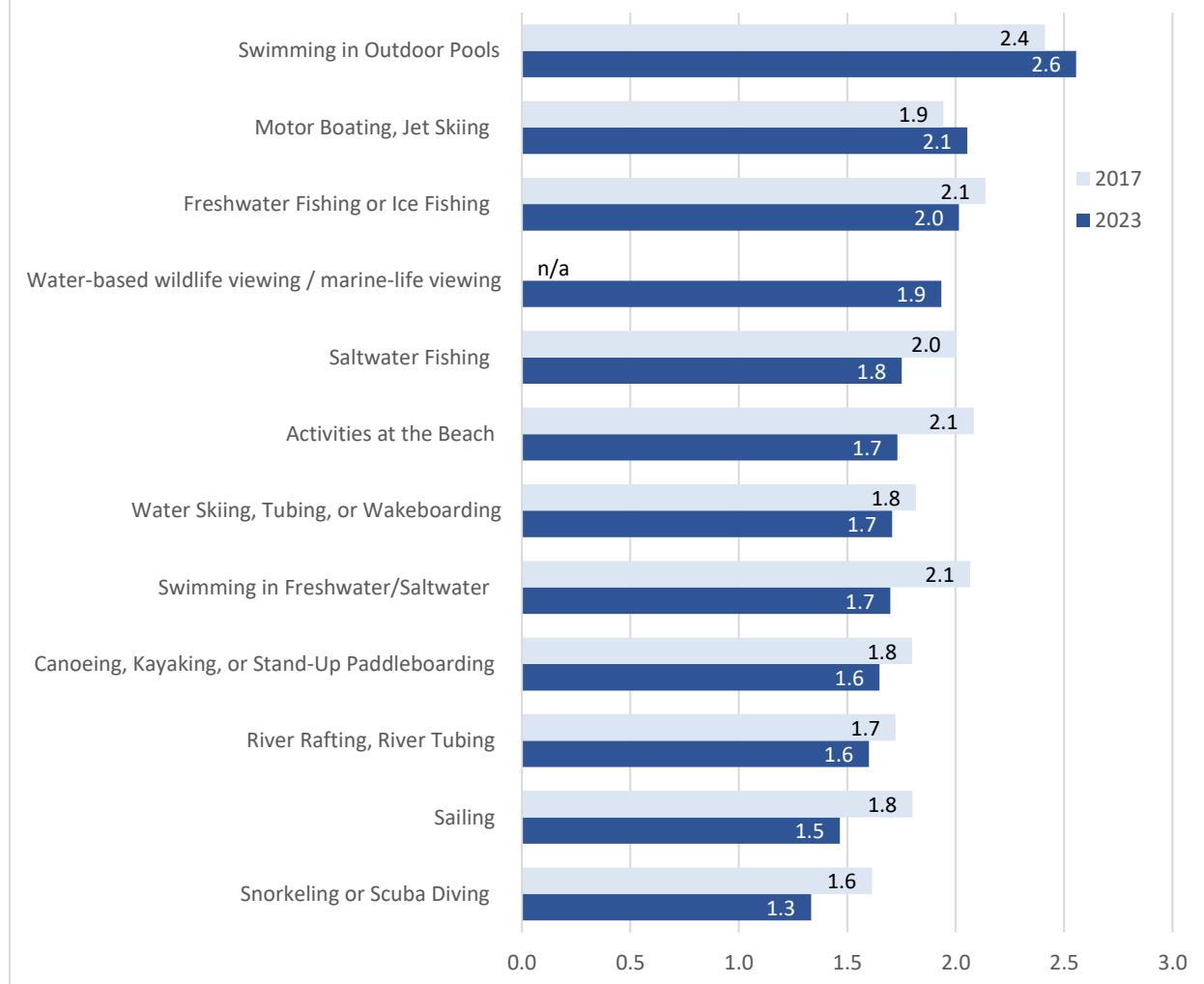


Figure 3-12: Average Frequency of Participation in Water-Based Recreation Activities Common to 2017 and 2023

Turning to water-based recreation, activities with the highest rates of household participation included activities at the beach, swimming in fresh/saltwater, and swimming in outdoor pools. However, in terms of frequency, only swimming in outdoor pools remained at the top of the list. While a majority of households (59%) reported engagement in beach activities within the past year, only 35% reported doing so a few times per month or more. Reports for swimming in freshwater/saltwater were similar with 47% of households enjoying the activity, but only 37% participating at least a few times per month. In contrast, swimming in pools had slightly lower participation (41%) but higher frequency with 47% participating a few times per month or more. It is possible that respondents included use of their own personal outdoor pools when considering the frequency of participation, which would naturally lead to a greater incidence of

participation. Future surveys may wish to highlight “public outdoor swimming pools” when describing this activity.

In contrast, while freshwater fishing or ice fishing (23%) and water-based wildlife/marine-life viewing (18%) had modest levels of household participation (as shown in Figure 3-7 above), they showed much more activity in terms of frequency of participation: a strong 65% reported fishing at least once per month and 67% confirmed viewing wildlife at least once per month. (Figure 3-11.)

The water-based recreation activities with the lowest rates of participation were river rafting/river tubing (49% seldom/never or less than once a month), snorkeling/scuba diving (64% seldom/never or less than once a month), and sailing (43% seldom/never or less than once a month). Further, these activities were practiced with the lowest average frequencies of 1.6, 1.3, and 1.5 times per month, respectively. These findings are not surprising because activities like swimming and fishing require minimal equipment, expenses, and preparation compared to snorkeling/scuba diving, sailing, and river rafting/river tubing.

## **PROFILE OF PARTICIPATION: AVID OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS**

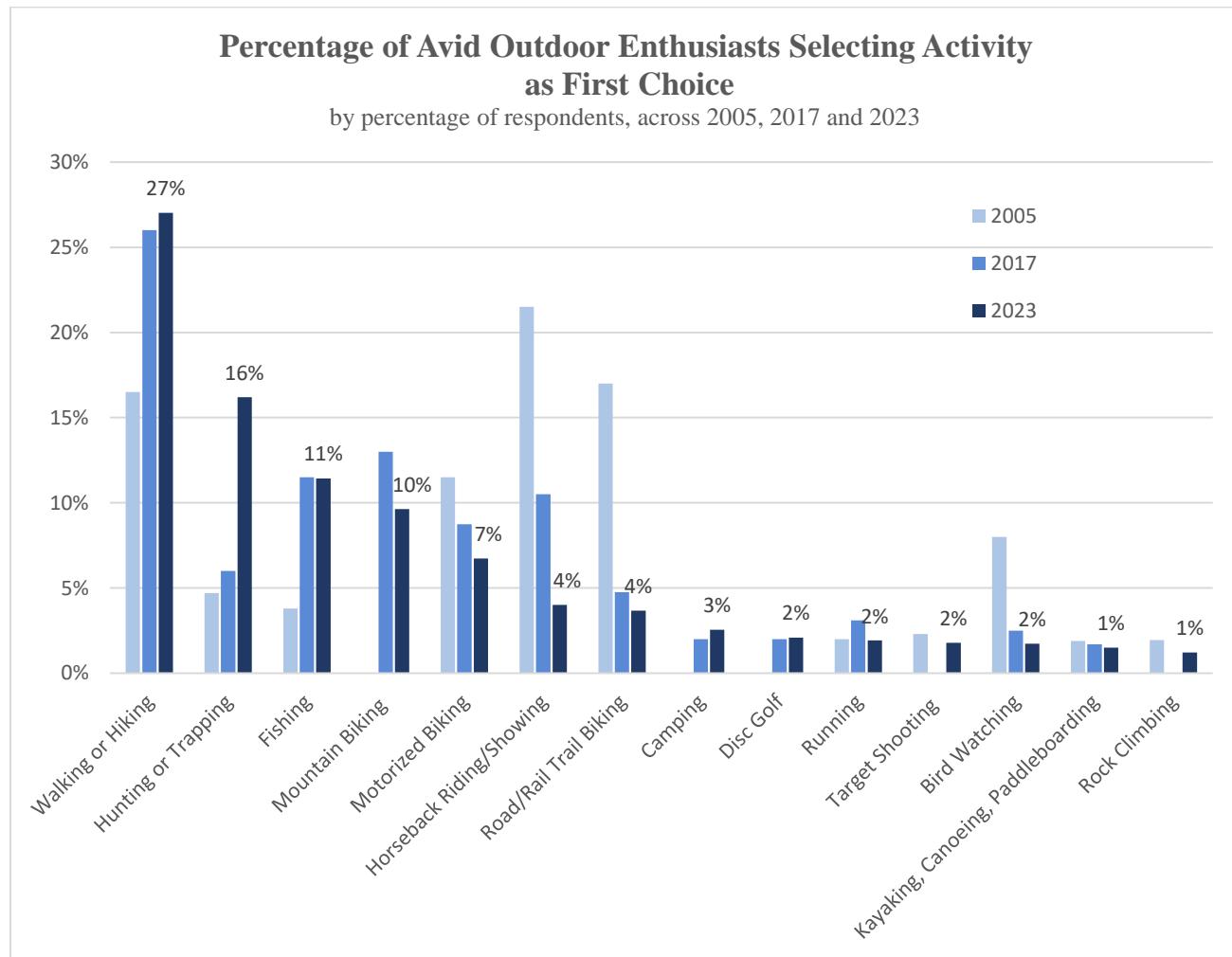
### **Rate of Participation – Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts**

The Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey was designed to measure the needs of individuals who participate in outdoor recreational activities most frequently. It differed from the Statewide Survey in that it asked respondents to self-report up to five outdoor recreation activities that they practiced most frequently rather than choose from a predetermined list of activities. As a result, participation rates from the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey should not be directly compared to those from the Statewide Survey because they do not reflect actual participation rates, they reflect the percentage of respondents who mentioned an activity among their top five.

Still, a general comparison between these two surveys is illuminative. Consistent with results from the Statewide Survey, walking, running, and hiking were the most popular activities among avid outdoor enthusiasts. Road biking, wildlife viewing, and tent camping were also activities that showed a relatively high degree of participation on both surveys. Other activities, specifically motorized biking (including ATVs, dirt bikes, and other off-road vehicles), mountain biking, hunting/trapping, and horseback riding, showed a comparatively low percentage of household participation in the Statewide Survey compared to the frequency with which they were mentioned by avid outdoor enthusiasts. This suggests that while these activities are practiced by a small portion of the state’s population, its participants tend to show a high degree of engagement. This contrasted with visiting historic sites, sledding, and ball/racket sports (e.g., basketball, baseball, tennis, etc.), which are practiced by a greater number of Connecticut households in the Statewide Survey, with seemingly less engagement reflected in

the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast survey.

The percentage of avid outdoor enthusiasts who chose each of the twelve most-mentioned activities as their first choice is depicted in Figure 3-13, along with comparisons from the 2017 and 2005 SCORP reports. In some instances, methodological differences prevent direct comparison; specifically, compared to 2017 surveys, a few activities have been categorized under different names or combinations in the 2023 SCORP report. Collectively, nine-in-ten (91%) respondents to the Outdoor Enthusiast Survey in 2023 chose one of the top twelve reported activities as their first-choice activity.

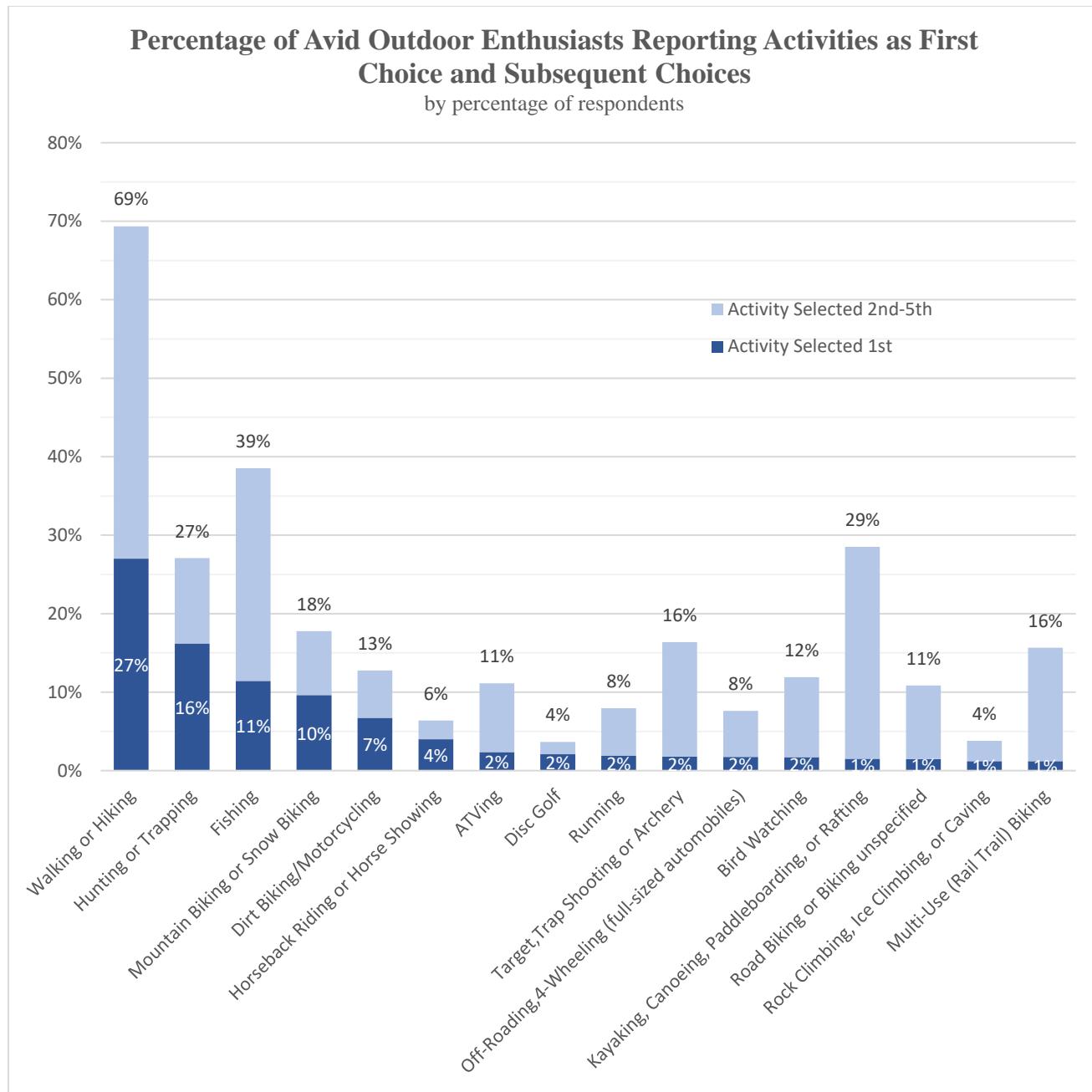


**Figure 3-13: Percentage of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts Selecting Activity as First Choice (2005–2023)**

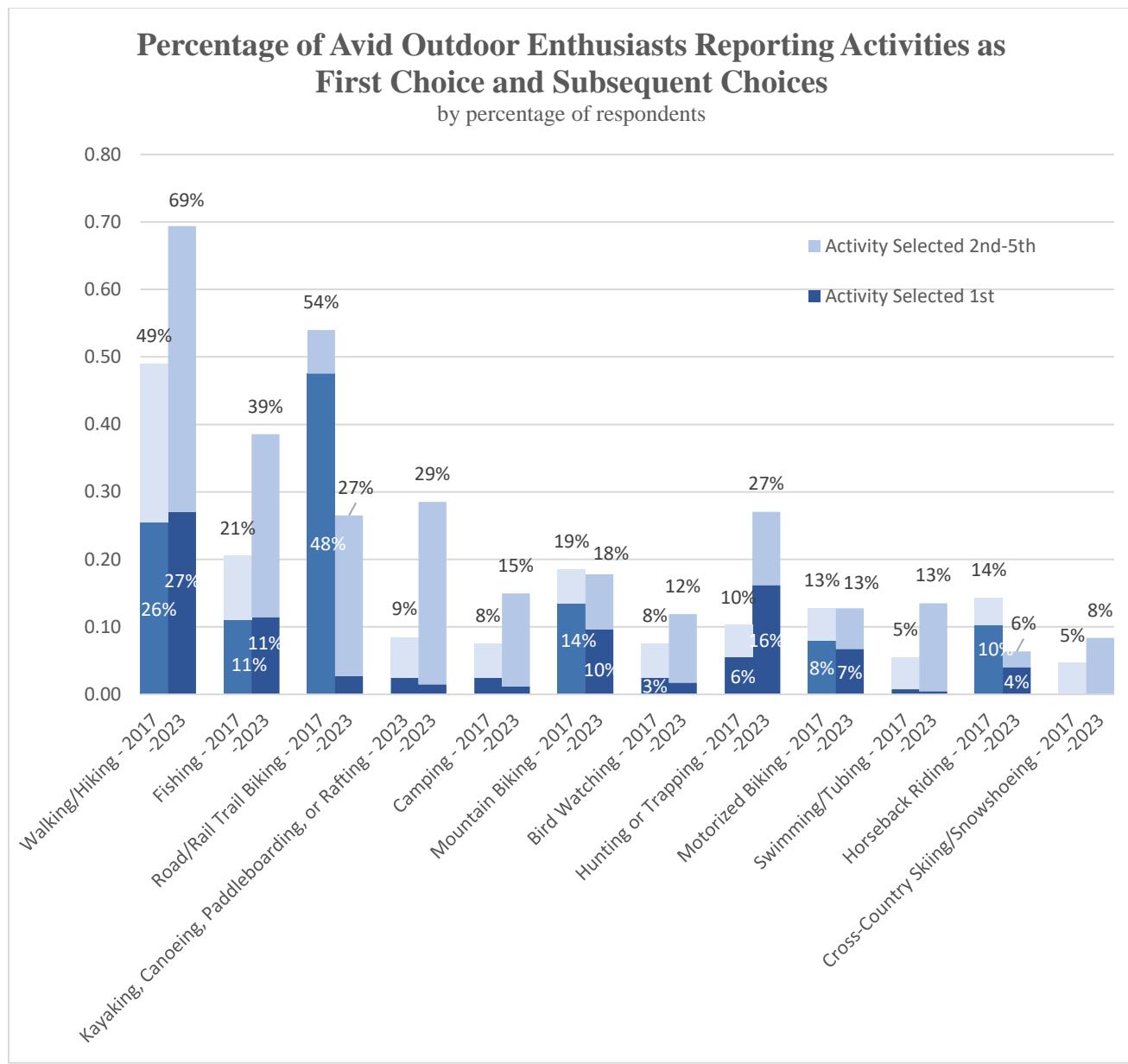
Looking at the participation rates of avid outdoor enthusiasts between 2017 and 2023 reveals that walking and hiking maintained the same place in first-choice ratings, with 27% reporting either walking or hiking as their first-choice activity in 2023 compared to 26% in 2017. Road or rail trail biking (1% decrease), horseback riding (6% decrease), and motorized biking (2%

decrease) showed declines in first-choice ratings from 2017 to 2023. In interpreting these findings, it is important to remember that the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast was non-random in its distribution. This means that certain activities may be over or under-represented compared to actual engagement rates.

Interestingly, the relative frequency with which activities were mentioned differed somewhat when looking at all activities reported by avid outdoor enthusiasts (among top five choices), rather than only those reported as an individual's top choice. Figure 3-14 shows that activities like mountain biking, horseback riding, and motorized biking were chosen more often as first-choice activities than overall (top five), suggesting that these activities are those which garner participants who tend to be more engaged.



**Figure 3-14: Overall and First-choice Activities of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts (2023)**



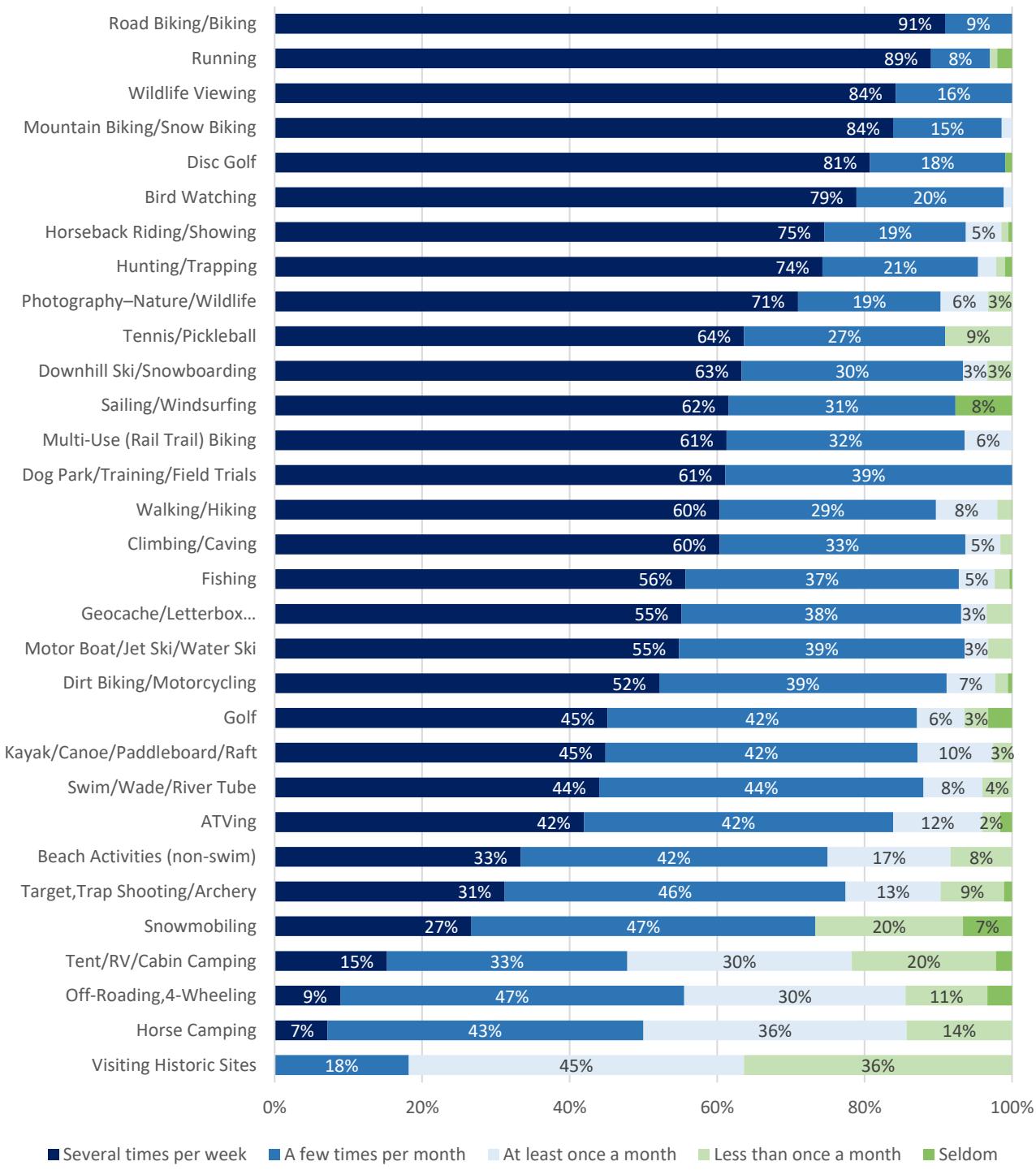
**Figure 3-15: Overall and First-choice Activities of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts (2017 & 2023)**

#### Frequency of Participation – Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts

Figure 3-16 shows the participation frequency in first-choice recreation activities for avid outdoor enthusiasts. As expected, enthusiasts engaged in these activities more frequently than individuals in the general population, evidenced by a higher percentage of “several times a week” frequency ratings. Only snowmobiling, off-roading, beach activities, target/trapping, tent camping, and horse camping showed a greater proportion of enthusiasts participating a few times a month than several times a week.

## Frequency of Participation by Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts in First Choice Activities

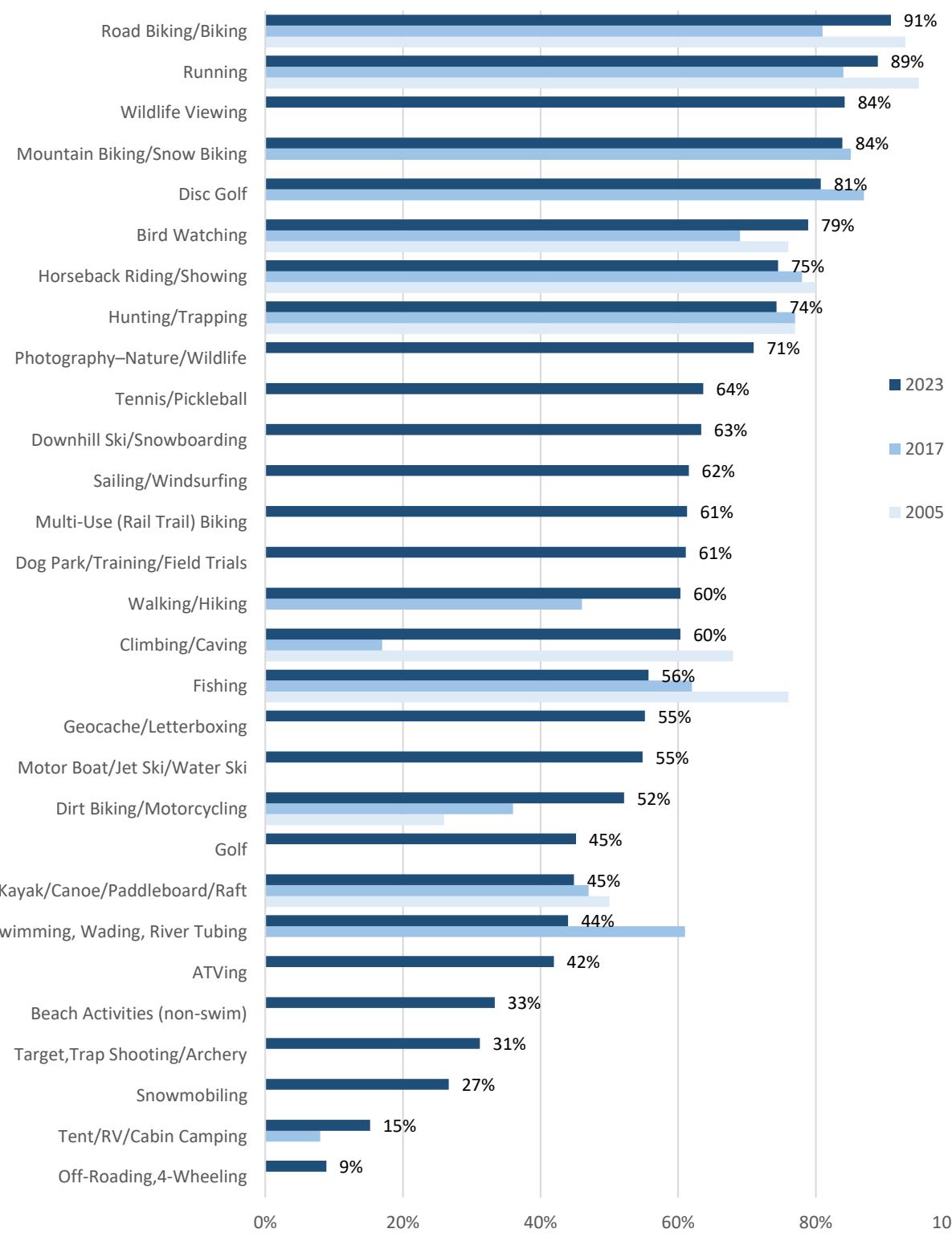
by percentage of individuals reporting each activity, 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts



**Figure 3-16: Frequency of Participation in Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts' First-Choice Activities (2023)**

In comparing 2017 to 2023, some differences are apparent in terms of frequency of participation among avid outdoor enthusiasts (Figure 3-17). Activities such as horseback riding, hunting/trapping, and kayaking/canoeing/paddleboarding showed little to no difference between 2017 and 2023, while others (walking/hiking, bicycling, and bird watching) showed an increase in weekly participation from 2017 to 2023. Swimming/tubing showed a 17% decrease in enthusiasts participating several times per week, which might suggest that this activity has become less preferred among enthusiasts. This could also be explained by the fact that the 2023 survey combined swimming with tubing and wading, while in 2017 the latter was excluded.

## Percentage of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts Participating in First Choice Activity Several Times per Week



**Figure 3-17: Percentage of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts Participating in First-choice Activity Several Times Per Week (2005–2023)**

### PROFILE OF PARTICIPATION: STATEWIDE DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS



In addition to participation and frequency of engagement rates, potential correlations with demographic variables were explored, namely: gender, age, income, and county of residence.

#### Gender

Since the Statewide Survey asked respondents to provide information generalized across all members of their household, it was not possible to look at the relationship between gender and participation in specific activities for that survey. Thus, it should be noted that the following discussion of gender differences is based solely on responses to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey and may not be generalizable to the general statewide population. Figure 3-18 shows the proportion of participants by gender for activities with fifty or more respondents.

## Gender of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts

by percentage of activity participants

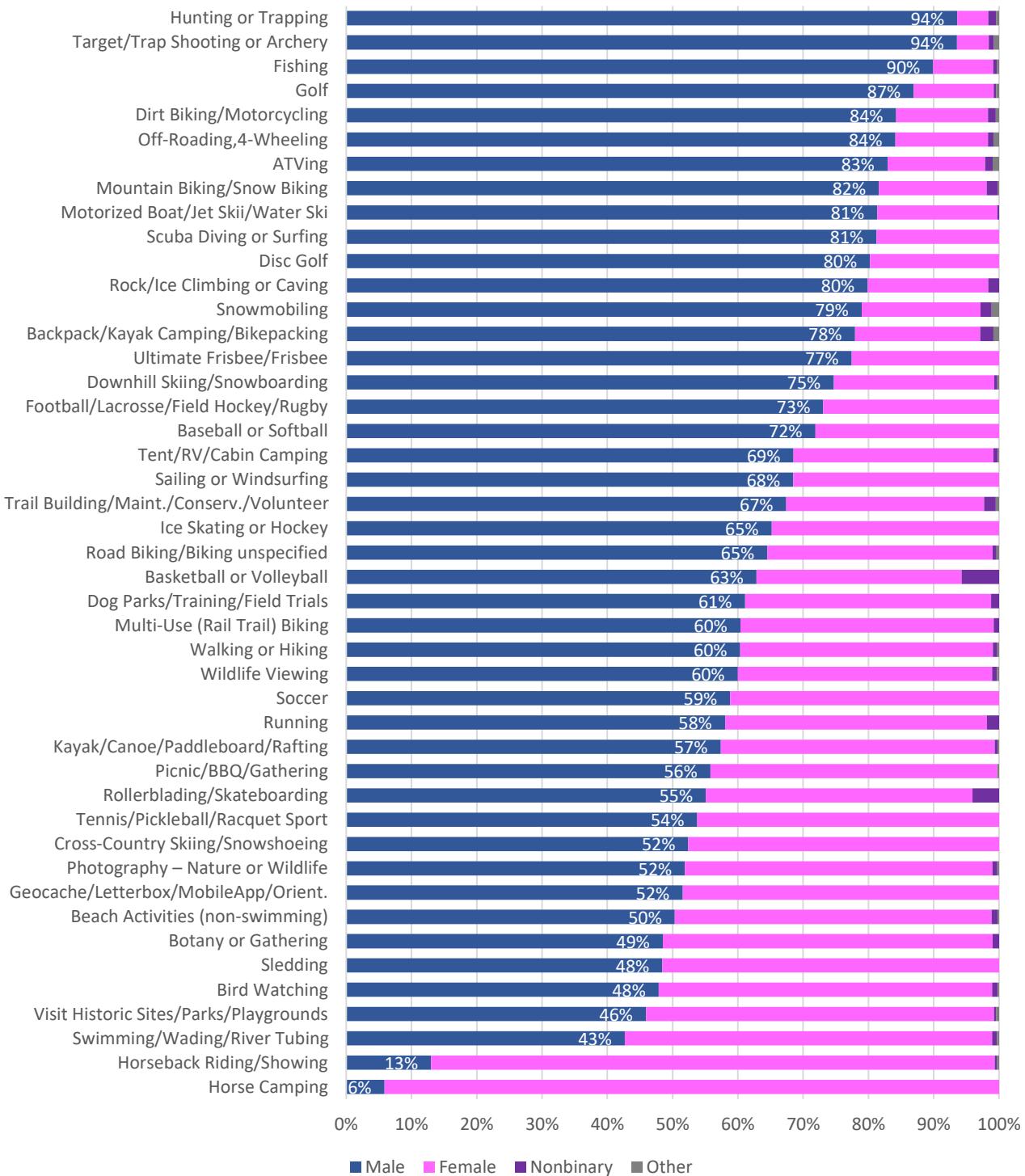
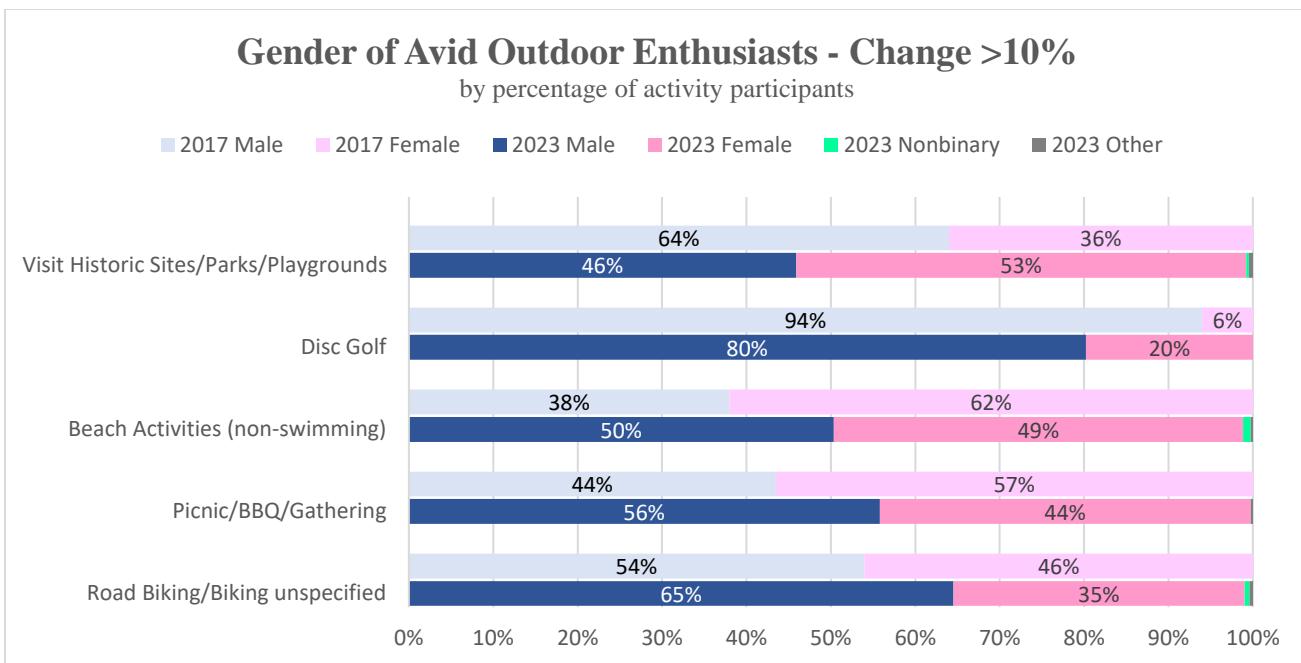


Figure 3-18: Gender of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts in Recreational Activities (2023)

It is evident that male, female, and nonbinary avid outdoor enthusiasts exhibited different patterns of outdoor recreational activity. While some activities such as cross-country skiing/snowshoeing, photography, beach activities (non-swimming), botany or gathering, sledding, and birdwatching were practiced by relatively equal proportions of male and female respondents, others showed a strong tendency to be practiced by a particular gender. Among the avid outdoor enthusiasts who identified hunting or trapping as one of their preferred (top five) activities, 94% of them were male. Notably, hunting and trapping attracted the same proportion of male enthusiasts as found in the 2017 avid outdoor enthusiast survey. In 2023, other preferred activities that were more popular among males than females included target/trap shooting or archery (94% male), fishing (90% male), golf (87% male), dirt biking/motorcycling (84% male), and off-roading/four-wheeling (84% male). Activities that were more popular among female avid outdoor enthusiasts than male outdoor enthusiasts included horse camping (94% female), horseback riding/showing (87% female), and swimming, wading, and river tubing (57% female). The two activity categories with the highest percentage of non-binary participants were basketball or volleyball (6%) and rollerblading or skateboarding (4%).

In general, males exhibited a higher rate of participation in most outdoor recreational activities compared to females and nonbinary survey participants, and thus, comprised the majority of participants for most of the activities shown. It is important to note, however, that the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey has historically attracted more male participants—a trend that was even more emphasized in 2023. This year, nearly seven-in-ten participants (68.2%) were male. This represents a notable uptick from both 2017 (60%) and 2005 (57%).

While the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey has historically attracted more male participants than female (and nonbinary as of 2023), one can still parse out valuable patterns regarding gender and activity. Interestingly, there were only a few activities in which sizable gender shifts were observed between 2017 and 2023. Figure 3-19 illustrates activities that witnessed a sizable change (10% or greater) among the gender of participants since the last SCORP. The largest declines among males were observed in visiting historic sites/parks/playgrounds (down 18%) and disc golf (down 14%). The largest increases in male participation were seen in non-swimming beach activities (up 12%), picnic/BBQ/gathering (up 12%), and road biking/biking unspecified (up 11%).



**Figure 3-19: Recreational Activities Seeing Highest Percentage of Change (10% or More) in Gender of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts (2017 & 2023)**

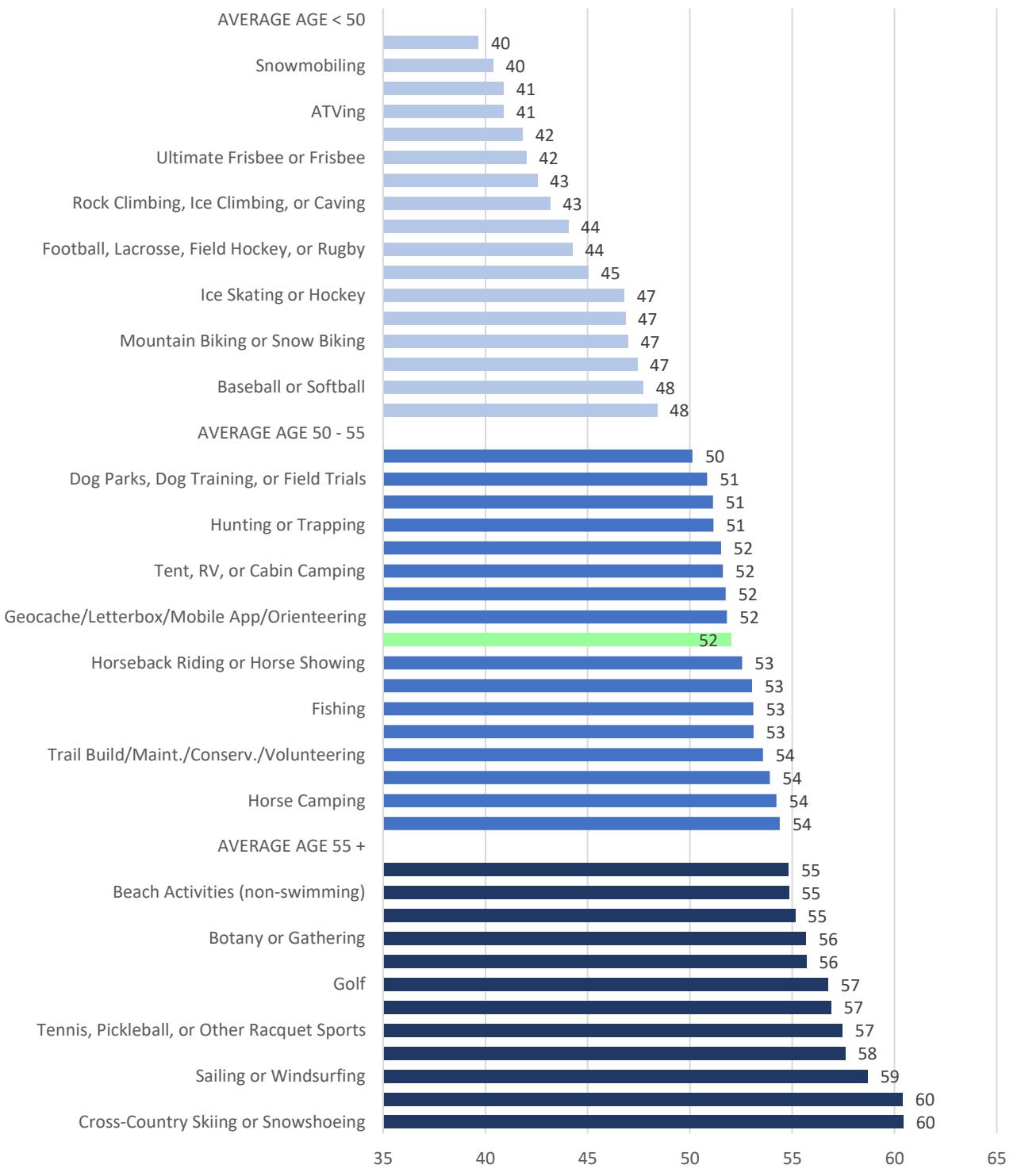


#### Age

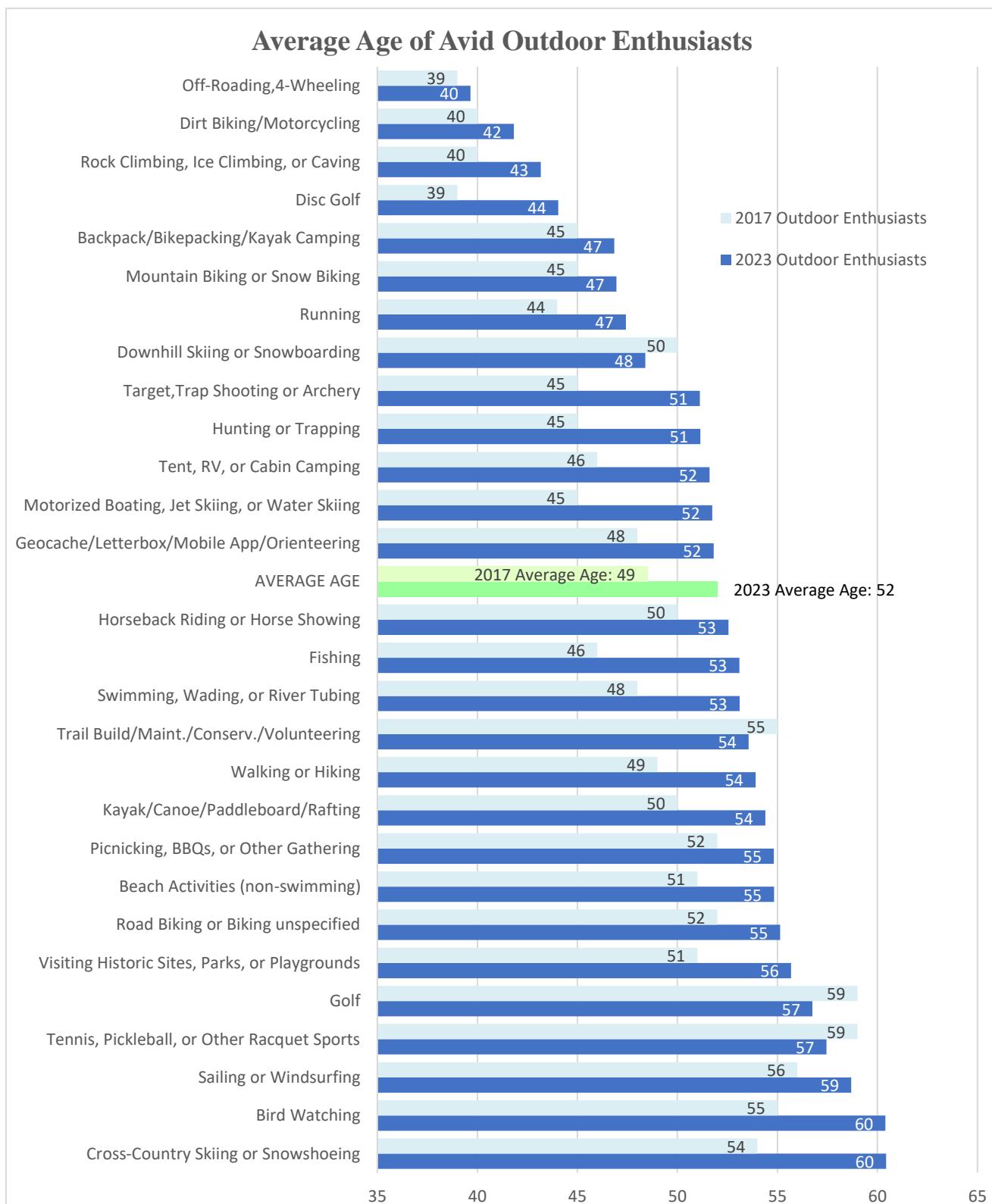
Again, due to the nature of responses to the Statewide Survey, it was not possible to accurately link the age of participants to specific activities. Age could be more directly linked with specific activities via the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey. The average age of individuals reporting each activity is displayed in Figures 3-20 and 3-21. The overall median age of respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey was 52, an increase of three years from 2017. Unfortunately, comparisons cannot be made to the 2005 SCORP because the average age of outdoor enthusiasts was not reported. For this reason, only 2017 and 2023 findings are discussed.

## Average Age of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts

2023 Survey



**Figure 3-20: Average Age of Avid Participants in Recreational Activities – Sorted by Decade (2023)**



**Figure 3-21: Average Age of Avid Participants in Recreational Activities (2017 & 2023)**

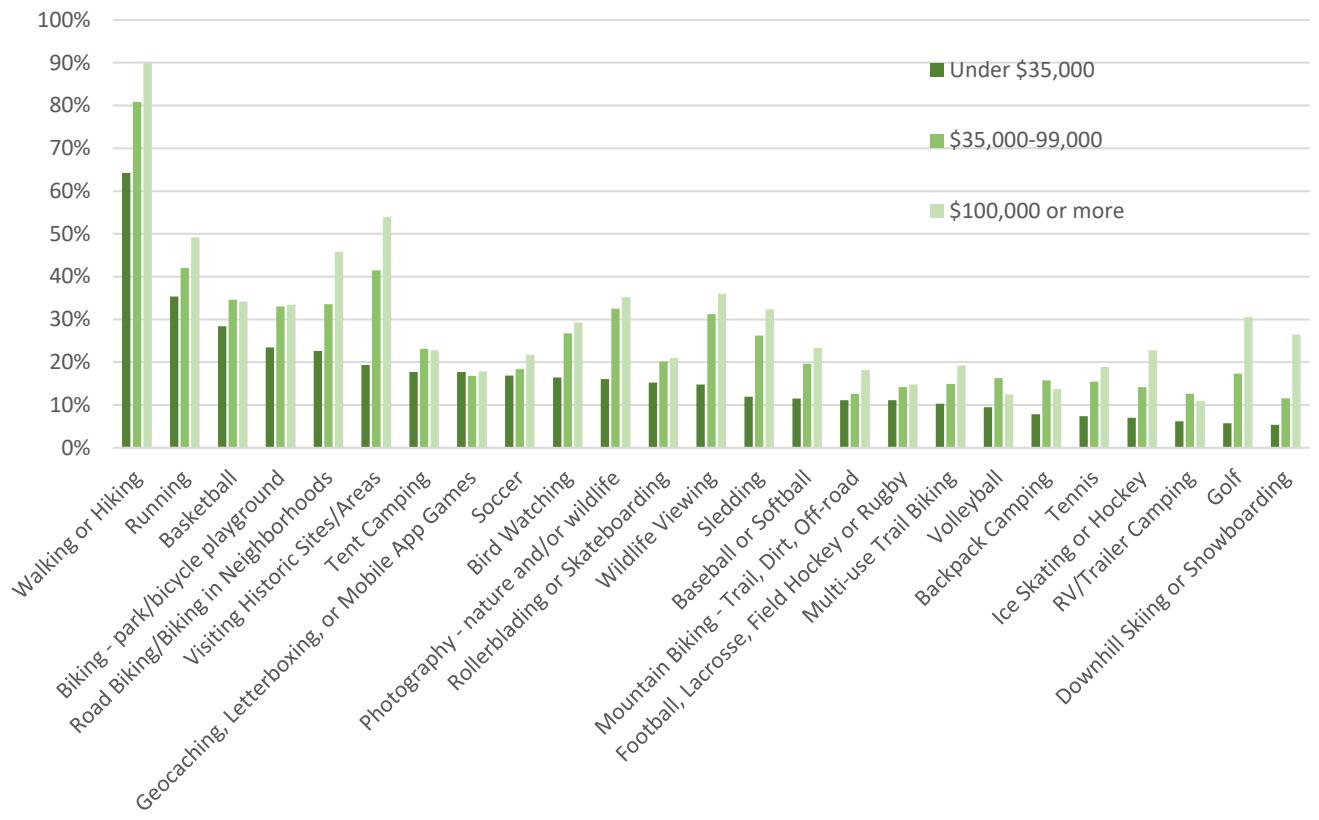
In 2023, the average age of avid outdoor enthusiasts increased by three years from the prior SCORP (from 49 in 2017 to 52 in 2023). Commensurate with that is an increase in average age across almost all activities surveyed. The exceptions to this were downhill skiing or snowboarding (decrease of two years in average age), trail building/volunteering (decrease of one year), golf (decrease of two years), and tennis/pickleball/racquet sports (decrease of two years). The most popular activities among the older demographic of 2023 avid outdoor enthusiasts were cross country skiing or snowshoeing (average age of 60), bird watching (60), sailing or windsurfing (59), tennis/pickleball/racquet sports (57), and golf (57). In 2017, other than cross country skiing or snowshoeing (54), these activities, along with trail building/maintaining/volunteering (56), were also the most popular among the oldest demographic of avid outdoor enthusiasts. The most popular activities among younger 2023 avid enthusiasts were off-roading or four-wheeling (average age of 40), dirt biking/motorcycling (42), rock climbing/ice climbing or caving (43), and disc golf (44). This is consistent with the findings from 2017, where these activities were also most popular with the younger age groups.

#### Income

Household income was a variable that applied to all members reported on the Statewide Survey; thus, the relationship between this variable and the type of activities practiced could be examined. Figures 3-22 and 3-23 depict the percentage of households who reported engaging in each land- and water-based activity. For land-based activities, the disparities in participation between lower and higher income households were most pronounced for activities such as golf, skiing/snowboarding, and ice skating/hockey, with wealthier households being more likely to engage in these activities. Interestingly, activities such as walking and hiking, biking, visiting historical sites, wildlife viewing and sledding also showed significant income disparity, with higher levels of participation from higher income households. Activities that showed a relatively even proportion of individuals from each of the three income brackets included geocaching/letterboxing, soccer, rollerblading/skateboarding, basketball, and football/lacrosse/field hockey/rugby. In general, households with higher annual incomes tended to engage in more outdoor recreational activities. Camping (backpack camping, RV/trailer camping and tent camping) and volleyball were the only land-based activities for which households with incomes below \$100,000 had participation rates exceeding those with household incomes of \$100,000 or more. For water-based outdoor recreational activities, a consistent pattern emerged in which higher household income predicted greater participation in all activities except freshwater/ice fishing and saltwater fishing.

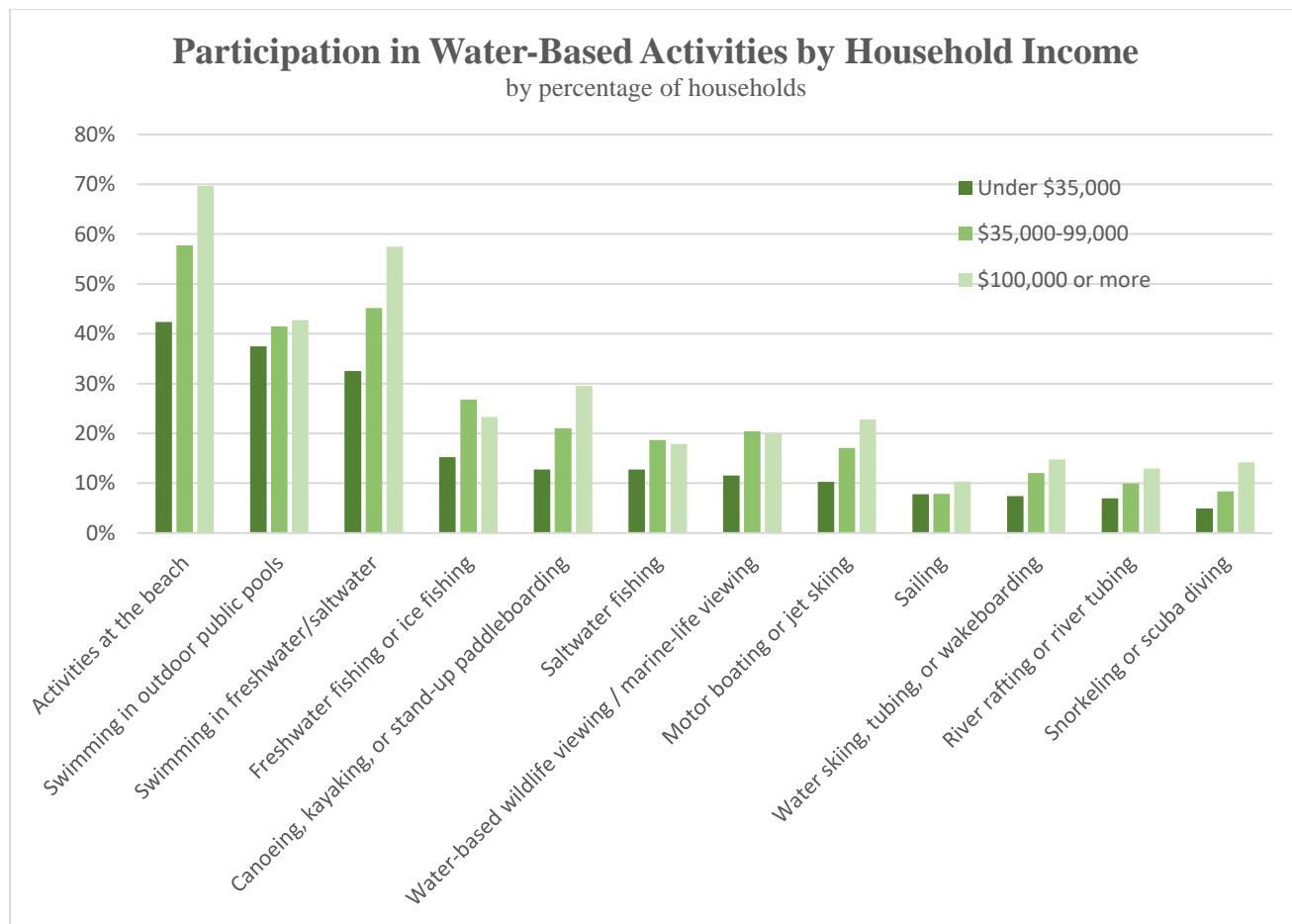
## Participation in Land-Based Activities by Household Income

by percentage of households, only activities with participation >10%



**Figure 3-22: Participation in Land-Based Activities by Household Income - Excluding Activities with Less than 10% Participation (2023)**

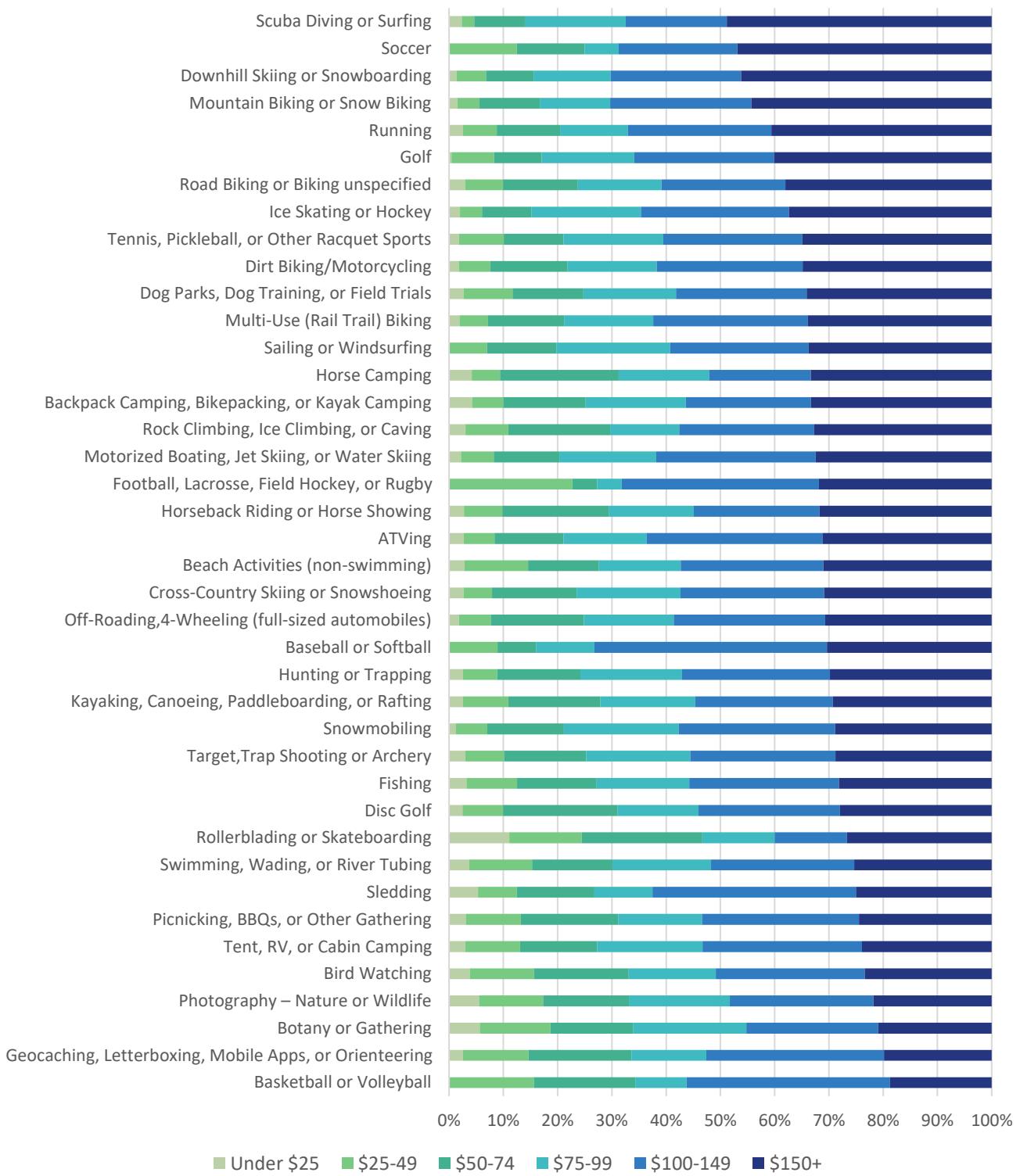




**Figure 3-23: Participation in Water-Based Activities by Household Income - Excluding Activities with Less than 10% Participation (2023)**

An examination of the relationship between income and participation in outdoor recreational activities among enthusiasts generally supported the findings of the Statewide Survey and is depicted in Figure 3-24. That is, activities such as golf, skiing/snowboarding, cross-country skiing/snowshoeing, ice skating/hockey, and non-swimming beach activities tended to be practiced more frequently by those with higher incomes. Meanwhile, those with lower incomes tended to practice activities such as roller blading/skateboarding and volleyball/basketball more often. At the same time, other activities such as baseball/softball, mountain biking, geocaching/letterboxing, fishing, hunting/trapping, and disc golf showed a stronger positive relationship with income among outdoor enthusiasts than among statewide households. The exact reason for this discrepancy is unclear; however, it may be at least partially a result of the greater average income among respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey compared to respondents to the Statewide Survey. Over half (57%) of respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey reported incomes over \$100,000 and less than two fifths (38%) of respondents to the Statewide Survey fell into this income bracket.

## Income Distribution by Activity - Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts



**Figure 3-24: Income Distribution of Outdoor Enthusiasts by Activity, in thousands of dollars (2023)**

## County

The rate of participation in outdoor recreational activities among Connecticut households was compared by county for both the Statewide and Avid Outdoor Enthusiast surveys. Results from the Statewide Survey are discussed in depth below, followed by a discussion of the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey. Results are presented in graphical form as Figures 3-25 through 3-28. It should be noted that due to the low sample size associated with some combinations of counties and activities, data from this section should be interpreted with caution.

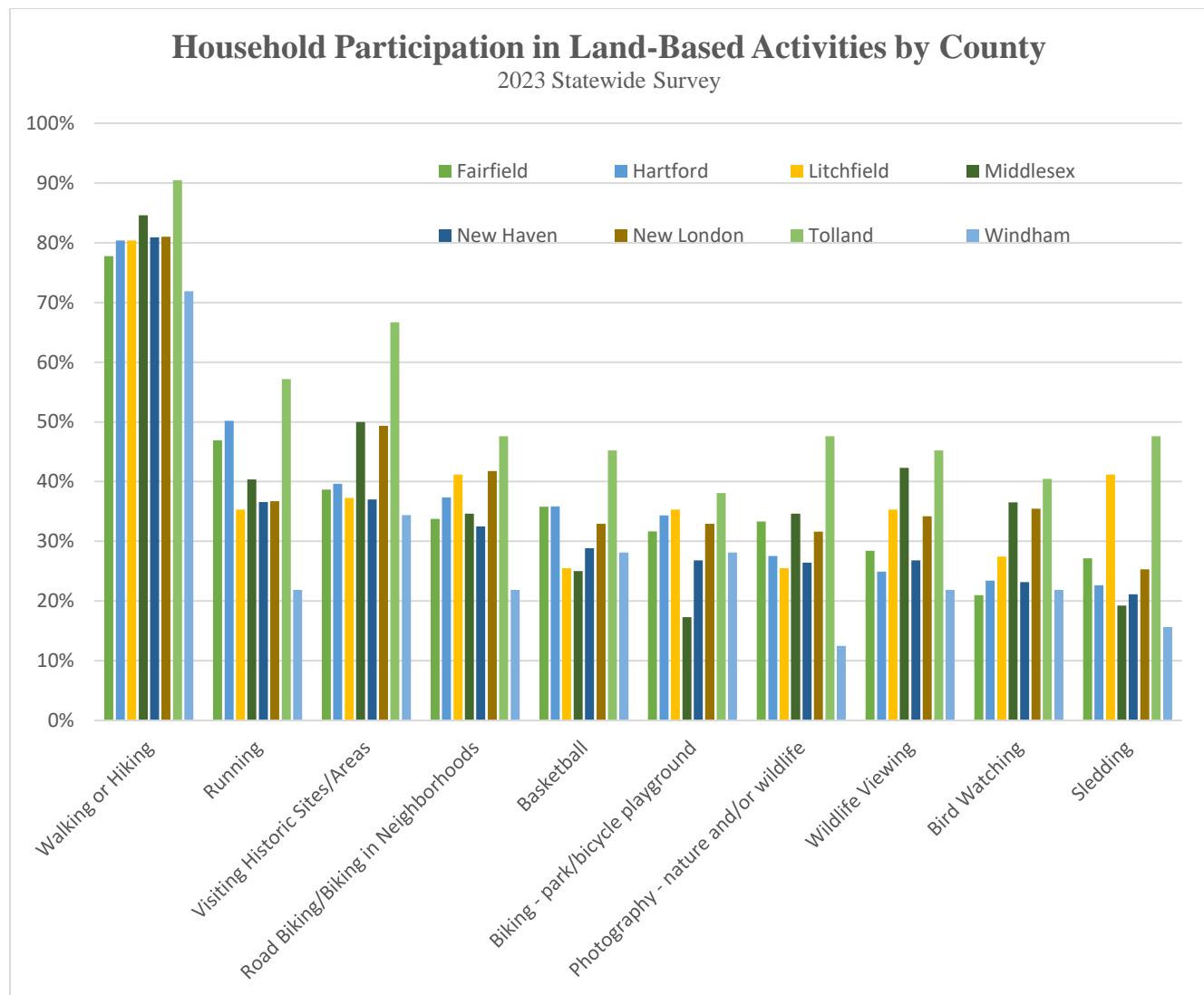
On the Statewide Survey, horseback riding was most popular among households in Litchfield and New London counties (16% and 13% participation compared to 5%–12% for all other counties). Motorized biking was most popular in New London and Middlesex counties (both 17% participation) and was least practiced in New Haven County (8% participation). It may be worth noting that Litchfield and Middlesex counties contain the three largest “focus areas” identified by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Connecticut Resource Protection Project in *The Connecticut Green Plan: Open Space Acquisition*, which was developed in 2001 and is described in detail in the 2005 SCORP report. Since horseback riding and motorized biking are activities that require relatively large areas of open space to practice, the acquisition of open land in Litchfield and Middlesex Counties may, at least, partially account for the popularity of these activities in those regions.

Bird watching or wildlife viewing was most practiced in Middlesex and Tolland counties (both 50% participation). Notably, parts of Middlesex County are located on the shore, and the Connecticut River goes through the county. Additionally, Tolland County is a part of what has been described as “the quiet corner” of Connecticut. These areas would naturally be well-suited for such activities because bird and wildlife viewing require a certain degree of tranquility in the environment. Middlesex, Litchfield, and New London were the most popular counties for freshwater fishing (with 31%, 29% and 29% participation, respectively), and these counties can be described as among the most rural in Connecticut. Similarly, hunting or trapping was practiced most in Tolland, Middlesex, and New London counties (12%, 10%, and 9% participation, respectively).

Downhill skiing or snowboarding was most popular among residents of Fairfield County (22% participation) and Tolland County (21% participation), and least popular among residents of New Haven County (11% participation), Middlesex County (10% participation), and Windham County (6% participation). Fairfield and Tolland counties are characterized by the highest income rates in Connecticut, while New Haven and Windham Counties are among the lowest. As downhill skiing and snowboarding were shown to be practiced more frequently by households with higher incomes, this pattern of findings makes sense. The pattern of participation for cross-country skiing or snowshoeing was less evident, with the highest levels of household participation occurring in Fairfield, New Haven, and New London Counties; the lowest was in

Tolland, Middlesex, and Windham Counties.

Finally, it is notable that New Haven and Windham counties showed particularly low rates of canoeing/kayaking/stand-up paddleboarding, motor boating/jet skiing, water skiing/tubing/wakeboarding, and river rafting/river tubing, and moderately lower rates of beach activities and swimming in freshwater/saltwater compared to other counties. At the same time, these counties were characterized by a moderately elevated rate of swimming in outdoor public pools and saltwater fishing. While not an all-encompassing explanation, it is worth noting that the 2005 SCORP report found that Windham County had a noticeable shortage of Connecticut water utility properties. As measured in the DIRP database, water utility properties are areas that offer beaches, swimming opportunities, and non-motorized or electric boating to state residents.



**Figure 3-25: Household Participation in Land-Based Activities by County (2023)**

## Household Participation in Water-Based Activities by County

2023 Statewide Survey

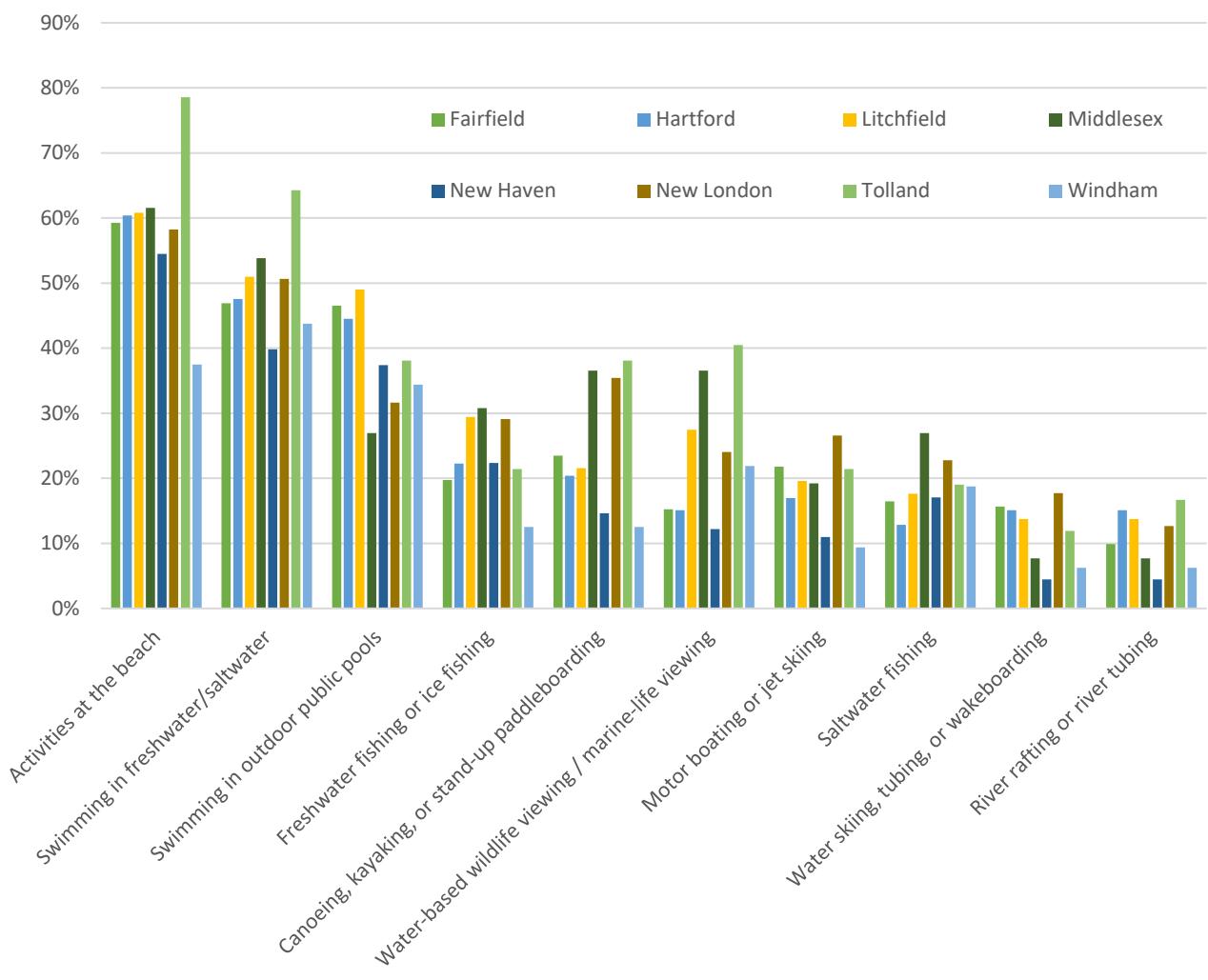


Figure 3-26: Household Participation in Water-Based Activities by County (2023)



## Most Popular Land-Based Activity by County

2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts Survey

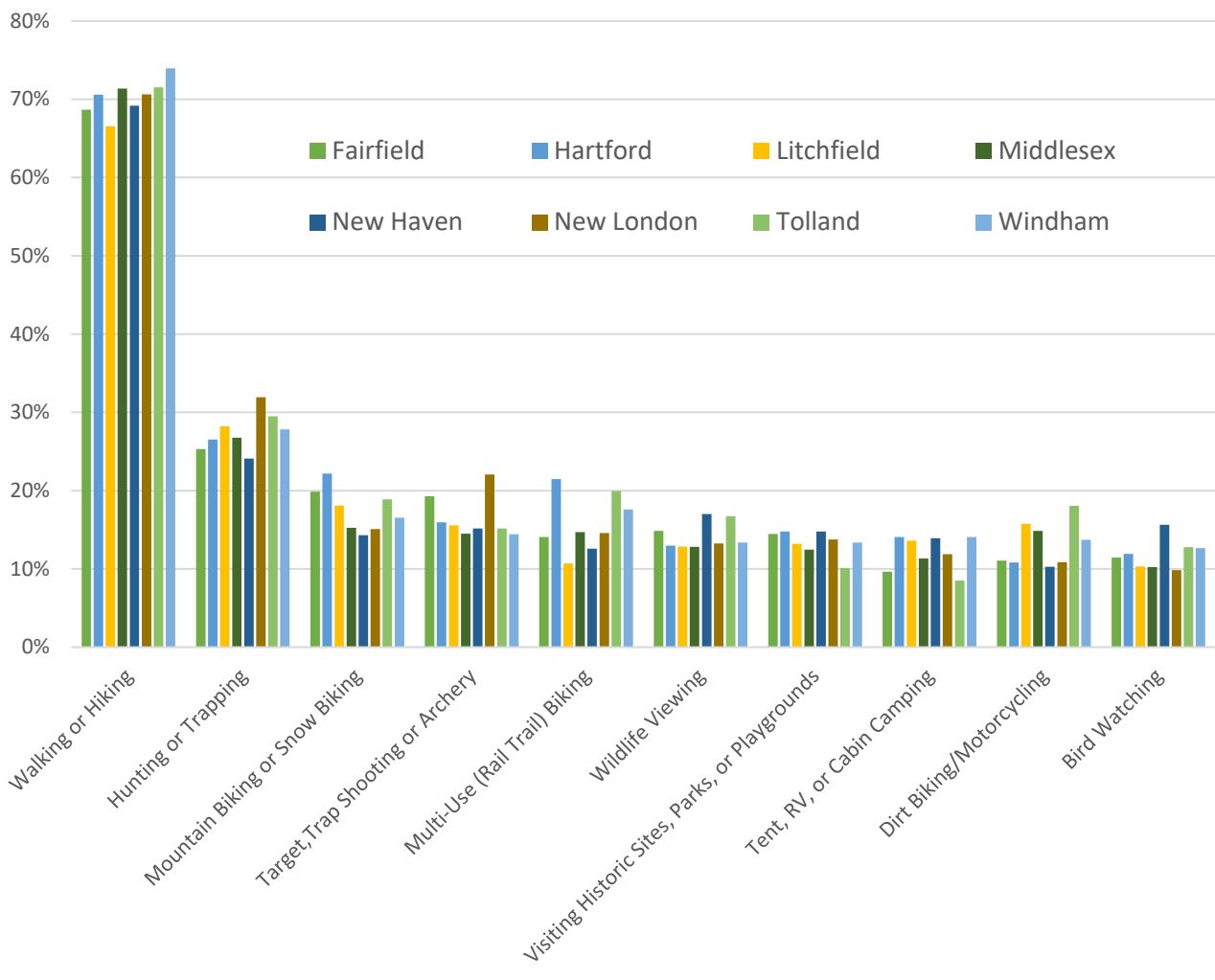
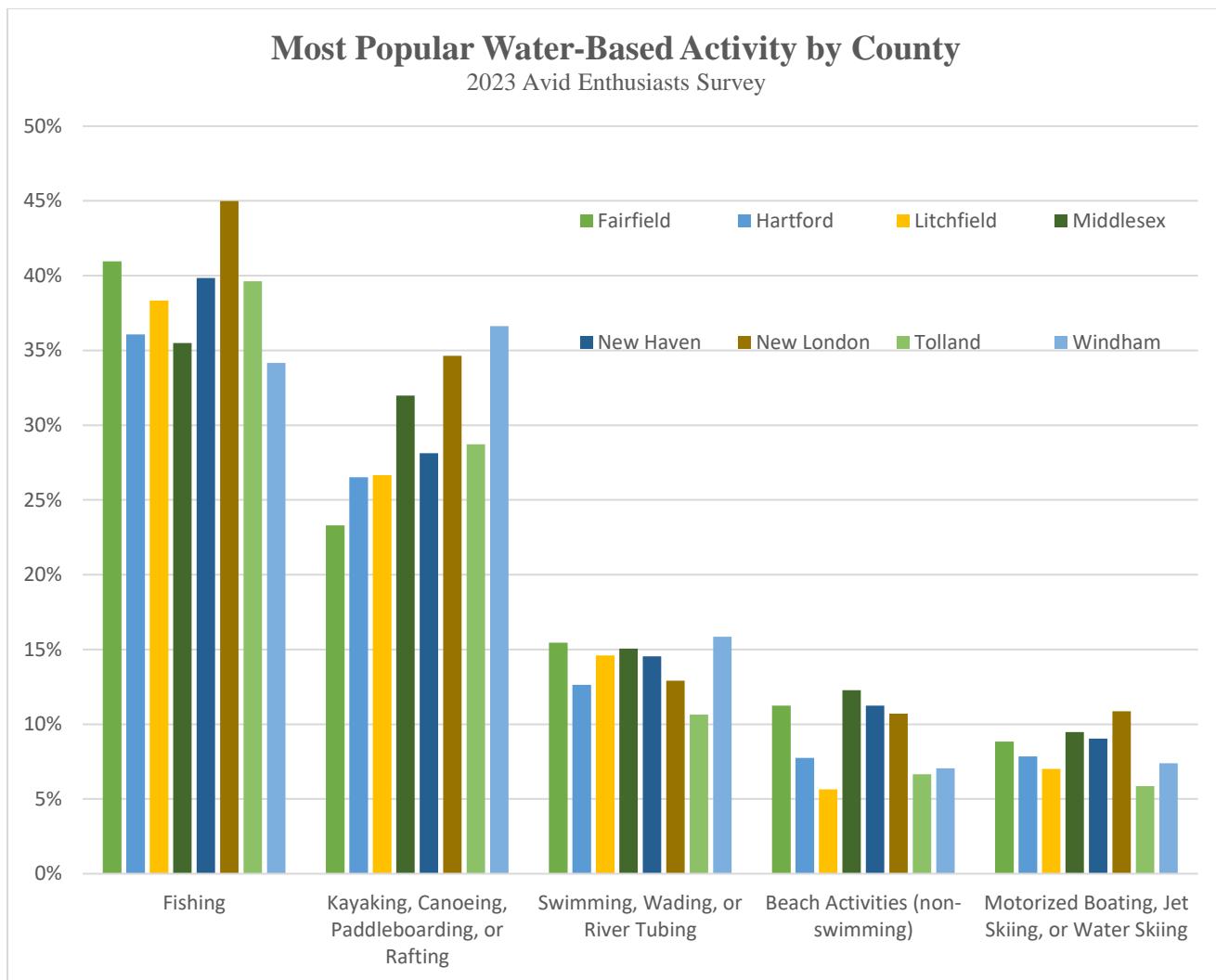


Figure 3-27: Most Popular Land-Based Activities of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts by County (2023)



**Figure 3-28: Most Popular Water-Based Activities of Enthusiasts by County (2023)**

On the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey, dirt biking/motorcycling was most popular among outdoor enthusiasts in Tolland County (18% participation), Middlesex, Litchfield, and Windham Counties (all with 14% participation), with the rest of the counties seeing participation rates between 7%–11%. Similarly, off-roading/four-wheeling was most popular in Litchfield County (11% participation) and Middlesex County (10% participation), with the rest of the counties seeing participation rates between 5%–8% (not depicted).

Road biking was most popular in Hartford County (15% participation), Fairfield County, and New London County (both 12% participation rate). Other counties saw participation rates between 7%–11%. Hartford and New Haven counties can be described as more urban, which may partially explain this difference in use. Backpack camping/bikepacking/kayak camping were most popular in Fairfield, New Haven, New London, and Windham counties (all with 8% participation). Other counties had between 6%–7% participation. Running was most popular in

Fairfield, Hartford, and Middlesex Counties (all with 9% participation). Participation rates for other counties were between 5%–8%.

Picnicking/BBQs were most popular in New Haven County (10% participation) and Fairfield County (9%) participation. Participation rates were between 7%–8% for all other counties. Dog parks/dog training/field trails were most popular in Tolland County (10% participation) and Fairfield County (8% participation). Other counties saw participation rates between 5%–7%. Geocaching/letterboxing/mobile apps/orienteering had participation rates between 2%–4% (Windham County had 4% participation).

Horseback riding/horse showing was most popular among outdoor enthusiasts in Windham County (13% participation), Tolland County (9% participation), and Litchfield and Middlesex counties (both with 8% participation). These four counties can be described as among the most rural counties in Connecticut. The rest of the counties saw participation rates between 4%–7%. Similarly, horse camping was most popular in Windham, Tolland, and Fairfield (all with 4% participation).

Rock climbing/ice climbing/caving participation rates across the counties were between 2%–5%, with Litchfield County having the highest rate of participation at 5%.

Trail building/maintenance/conservation/volunteering was most popular in Litchfield and Tolland Counties (both with 11% participation), as well as Windham County (10% participation). Other counties saw participation between 5%–9%. Nature/wildlife photography was most popular in Tolland County (11% participation), with New Haven and New London Counties being just behind (both with 10% participation). Participation rates were between 7%–8% for all other counties. Botany/gathering had participation rates between 3%–6% (Windham County had 6% participation).

Golf was most popular in New Haven County (7% participation) and Hartford County (6% participation). Participation rates were between 2%–5% for all other counties. Disc golf was most popular in Tolland County (5% participation), with all other counties being between 3%–4% participation. Tennis/pickleball/racquet sports had participation rates between 1%–4% (Fairfield County had 4% participation).

Downhill skiing/snowboarding was most popular among outdoor enthusiasts in Litchfield and Hartford Counties (both with 12% participation), and in Fairfield County (10% participation). Other counties saw participation rates between 2%–8%. Similarly, cross-country skiing/snowshoeing was also the most popular in Litchfield and Hartford Counties (both with 11%). Other counties saw participation rates between 6%–9%. Snowmobiling had participation rates between 2%–6% (Litchfield County had 6% participation). Ice skating/hockey had participation rates between 1%–4%.

Finally, sailing/windsurfing had participation rates between 1%–4% (New London County had

4% participation). Scuba diving/surfing had participation rates between 1%–2% (New London and Fairfield Counties had 2% participation).

#### Town Officials' View of Activity Trends

For a different perspective on recreation trends, town officials were asked which activities have shown an increase and decrease in participation over the past five to ten years. The results of this perspective are presented in Table 3-3. When comparing 2017 and 2023 SCORP reports, there is a current trend in the decreasing of participation in activities such as tennis, baseball/softball, and adult programming. Also, consistent with the Statewide Survey, people participate significantly in activities such as trails and pickleball.

**Table 3-3: Activity Participation Rates Over the Past Five to Ten Years as Ranked by Town Officials (2017 & 2023)**

INCREASED PARTICIPATION		DECREASED PARTICIPATION
<b>2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Summer Camp</li><li>- Lacrosse</li><li>- Walking</li><li>- Trails</li><li>- Pool Use</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Baseball/Softball</li><li>- Adult Programming</li><li>- None</li><li>- Other Outdoor Sports</li><li>- Tennis</li></ul>
<b>2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Pickleball</li><li>- Summer/Day Camps</li><li>- Hiking/Walking Trails</li><li>- After-school Programs</li><li>- Organized Sports</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sports Leagues/Fields/Courts (indoors/outdoors)</li><li>- Baseball/softball</li><li>- Tennis</li><li>- Other (adult programming, Fitness class, playgrounds, etc.)</li><li>- None</li></ul>

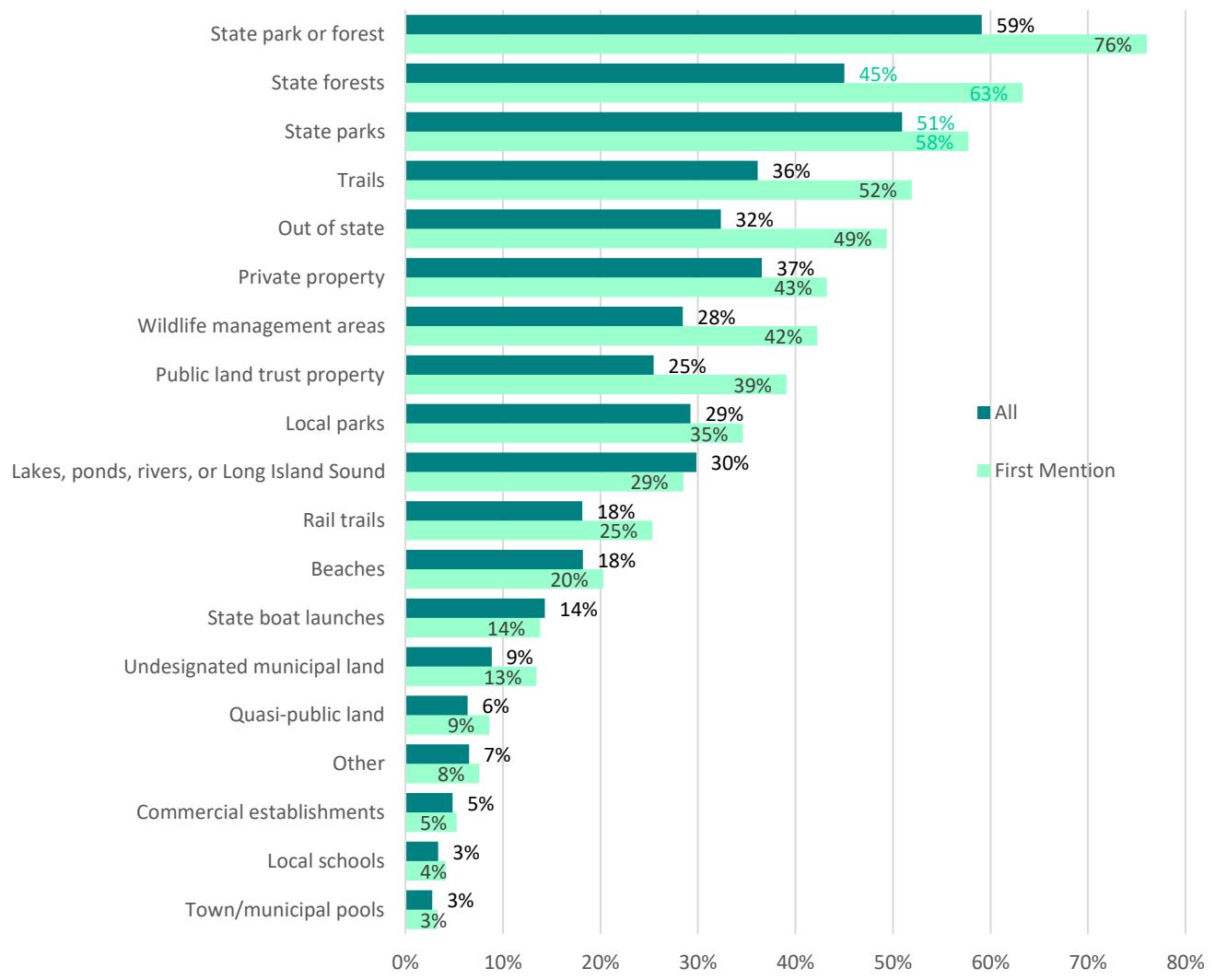
#### PROFILE OF PARTICIPATION: WHERE DO PEOPLE RECREATE?

##### Location of Recreation Participation by Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts

Respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey were asked to identify the locations where they practice their most preferred outdoor recreation activity, with multiple responses being accepted. Figures 3-29 and 3-30 compare the preferred practice locations of enthusiasts' first-choice (favorite) activities to those of all activities in the aggregate. It is important to note that, due to multiple responses being accommodated, location percentages may be more sizable than if only one response was permitted.

## Places Where Outdoor Enthusiasts Engage in Activities

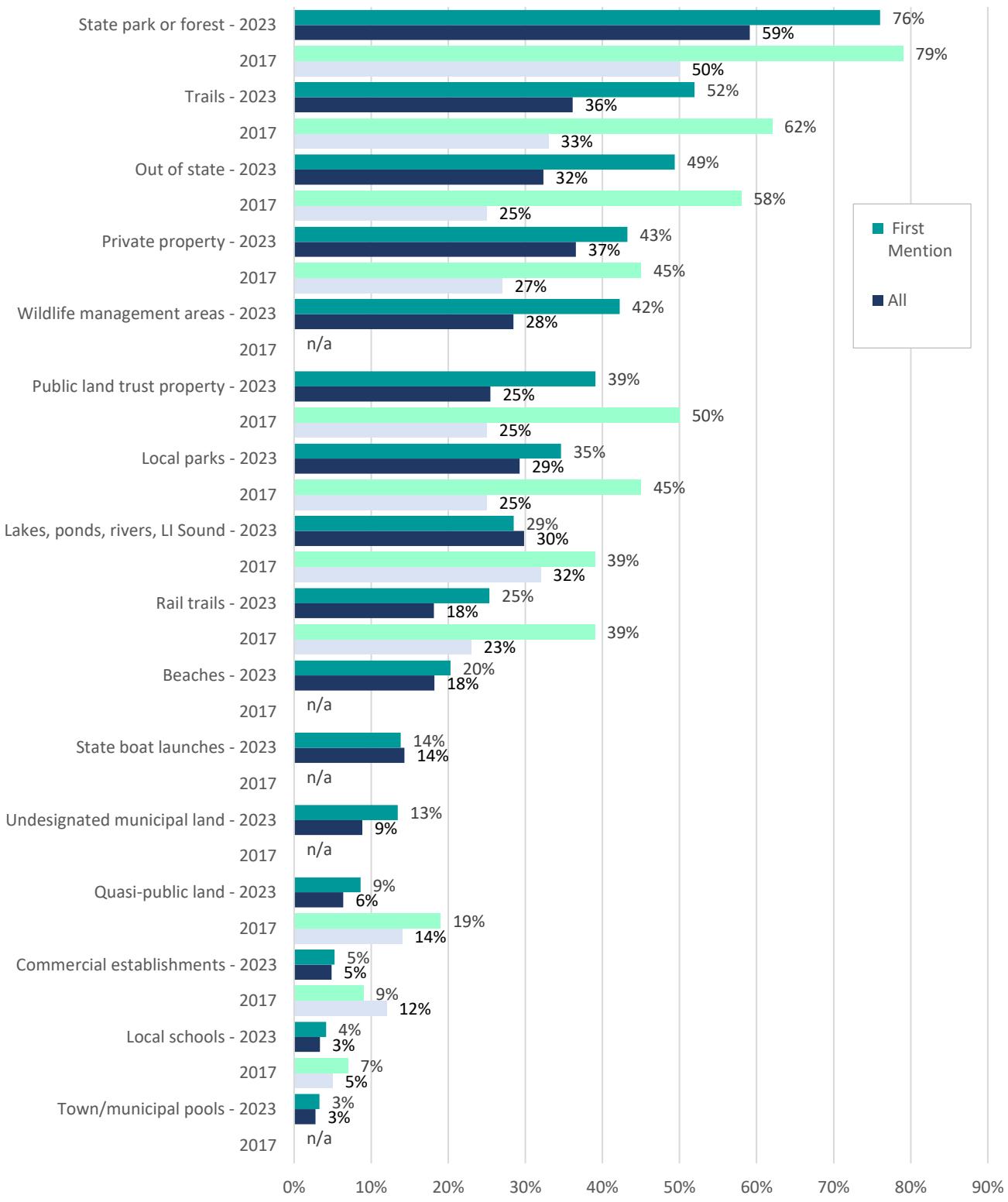
by percentage of total activities reported (multiple choices could be made)



**Figure 3-29: Places Where Outdoor Enthusiasts Engage in Activities as Percentage of First Mention and All Activities Cited (2023)**

## Places Where Outdoor Enthusiasts Engage in Activities

by percentage of total activities reported (multiple choices could be made)



### **Figure 3-30: Places Where Outdoor Enthusiasts Engage in Activities as Percentage of First Mention and all Activities Cited (2017 & 2023)**

Survey results showed that outdoor enthusiasts tend to practice their favorite activity in a wider variety of locations than lower-ranked activities, with significantly higher percentages for nearly all locations. This finding is unsurprising, as respondents were instructed to identify their first-choice activity, defined as the “first mention,” as the one in which they participated most frequently or to which they were most devoted. Subsequently, individuals who are more devoted to an activity will practice that activity in a wider variety of places whether they visit these locations for the primary purpose of engaging in this activity or not.

State forests were the most popular activity location, with more than six-in-ten (63%) outdoor enthusiasts practicing their favorite activity here. More than half (58%) practice their favorite activity in state parks, while a slightly smaller percentage (52%) participate on trails. Nearly half of all respondents (49%) reported practicing their preferred activity out of state, and 43% reported practicing their preferred activity on private property. Similar to 2017 results, outdoor enthusiasts in 2023 were less likely to practice their favorite activity at a commercial establishment (5%).

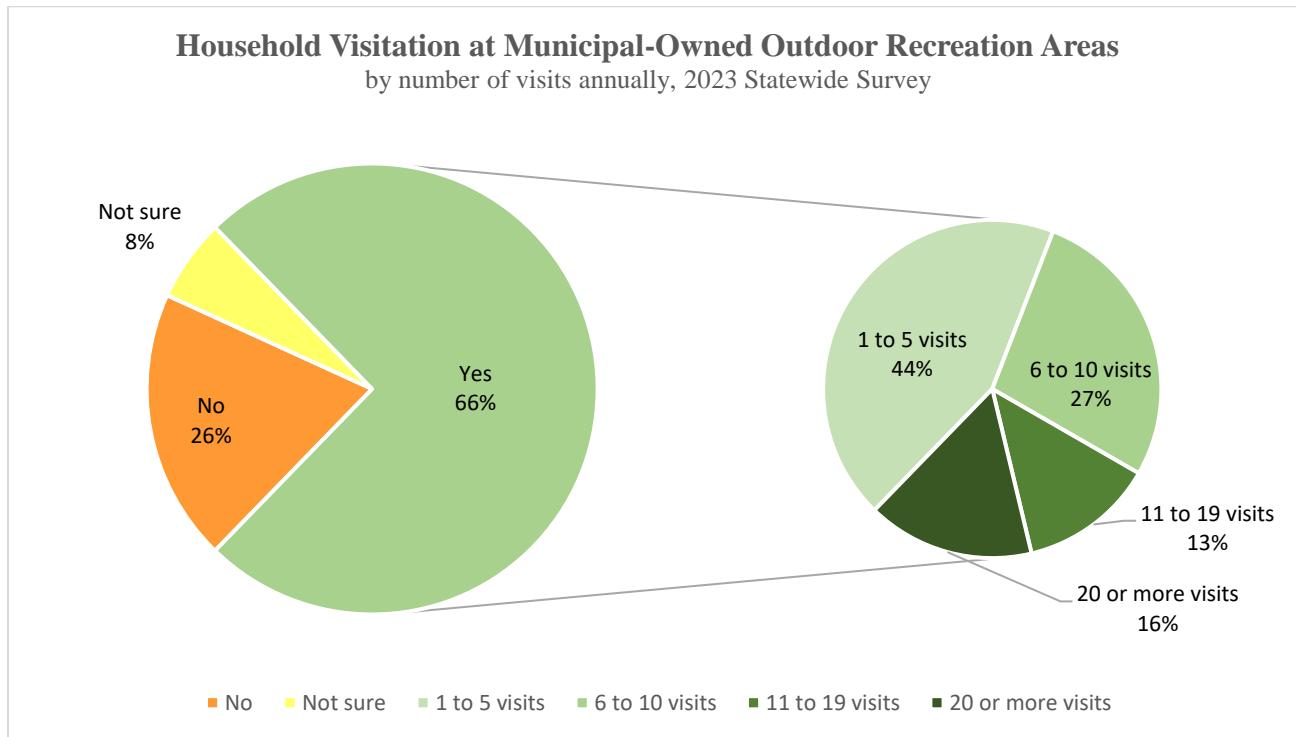
In comparison to 2017, the 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast survey revealed notable changes regarding the location of activities mentioned “first” (top or favorite activity) compared to “all mentions” (up to five activities). While 76% of participants reported state parks or forests as their first-mentioned (top or favorite) location, down 3% from 79% in 2017, 59% of participants mentioned these same locations overall. This is a noticeable growth from 50% in 2017; meaning that although less people mentioned state parks or forests first, more people mentioned state parks or forests in general. The same thing could be said for private property. While 43% mentioned private property as their first location of engagement compared to 45% in 2017, there were more overall mentions in the five total activities each participant reported in 2023 (37%) than in 2017 (27%).

#### **State and Municipal Park Visit Frequency**

The clear reliance on state parks and forests (and to a lesser extent local parks) as places for outdoor enthusiasts to recreate emphasizes the importance of these facilities to those individuals most enthusiastic about outdoor recreation. To assess the extent to which state- and municipal-owned outdoor recreation facilities are being used by households from the general population of Connecticut, respondents to the Statewide Survey were asked how often they visited each of these outdoor recreation areas over the past twelve months. Results from this inquiry are depicted in Figures 3-31 and 3-32.

Households were roughly as likely to have visited municipal-owned areas (66% of households) as state-owned areas (64% of households) in the past year. However, municipal-owned areas

attracted a larger subset of frequent visitors (20+ visits), approximately 9% more than state-owned areas. Of those households indicating that they had visited a municipal-owned area within the past twelve months, slightly less than one-in-six (16%) had visited twenty or more times. Comparatively, slightly less than one-in-fourteen (7%) households reported visiting a state-owned park twenty or more times. More than half of the households (55%) that reported visiting a state-owned park in the past year made one to five visits, with slightly more than one-quarter of reporting households (27%) making six to ten visits. Ease of accessibility (i.e., shorter distance to the location from one's residence) may account for the more frequent visits to municipal-owned recreation areas than to state-owned recreation areas.

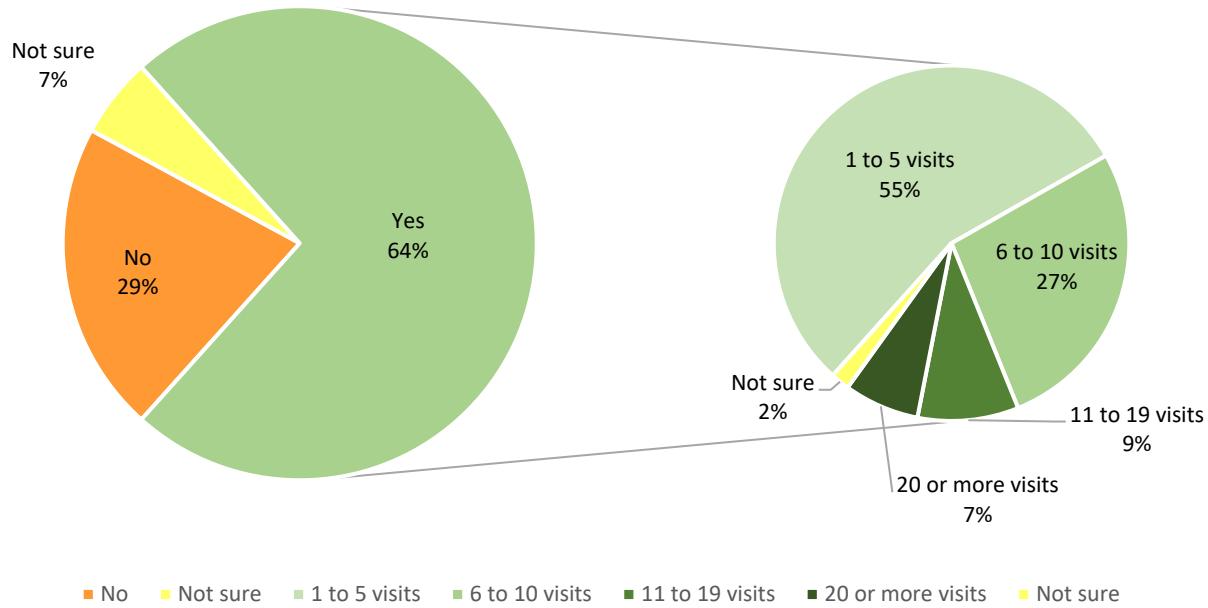


**Figure 3-31: Household Visitation at Municipal-Owned Outdoor Recreation Areas**



### Household Visitation at State-Owned Outdoor Recreation Areas

by number of visits annually, 2023 Statewide Survey



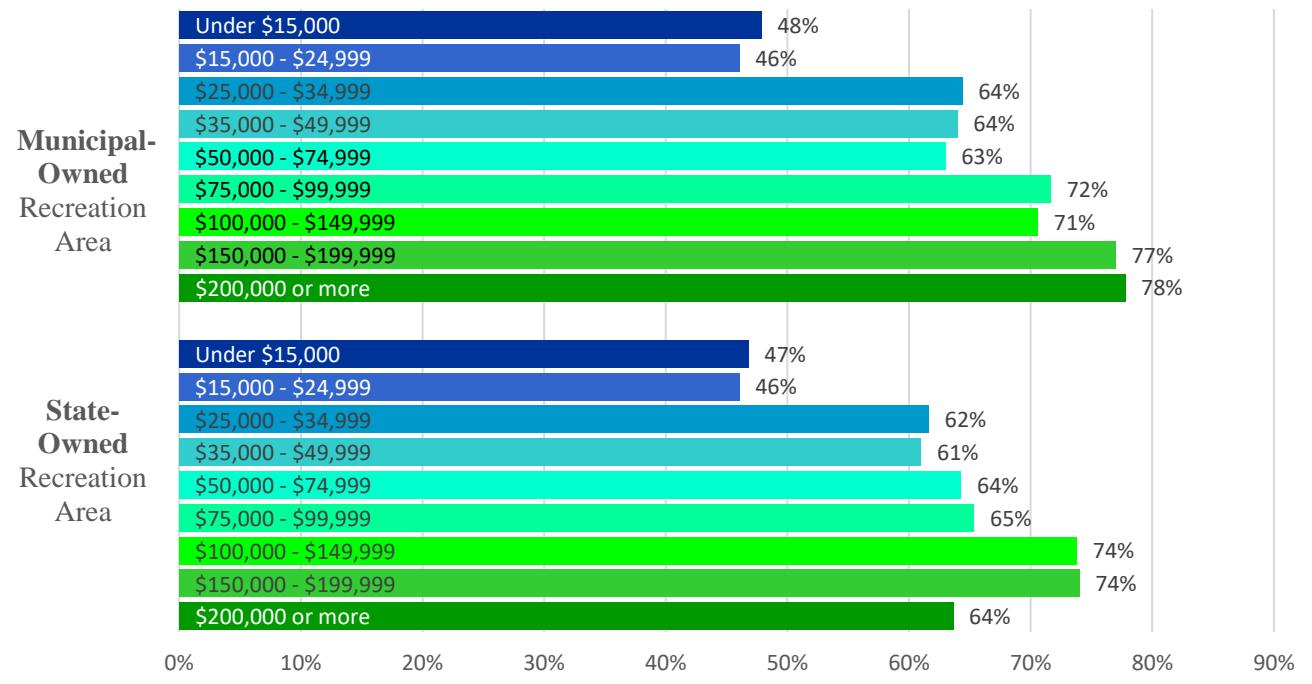
**Figure 3-32: Household Visitation at State-Owned Outdoor Recreation Areas**

In addition to visitation rates for municipal- and state-owned outdoor recreation areas among Connecticut residents, an inquiry was made into visitation rates among those coming from different household income brackets. Figure 3-33 is a representation of households from each income bracket who reported visiting outdoor recreation areas at least once within the past year, whether it be municipal- or state-owned. Figures 3-34 and 3-35 show the visitation rates to municipal- and state-owned areas based on household income.

Households with incomes between \$15,000 and \$24,999 were least likely to have visited a state or municipal outdoor recreation area within the past year, with 46% visiting both municipal- and state-owned areas. This was followed closely by households with incomes below \$15,000, with 48% and 47% visiting municipal- and state-owned areas. The households most likely to have visited a state-owned recreation area within the past year were those with incomes between \$100,000 and \$150,000, as well as those incomes between \$150,000 and \$200,000—with 74% of participants reporting visits. Those with incomes of \$200,000 or more were most likely to visit municipal-owned areas (78%), followed by incomes between \$150,000 and \$200,000 (77%). There was a positive correlation between higher income and higher likelihood to have visited state- or municipal-owned outdoor recreation areas. The only noticeable drop in percentage of households happened among those who had an income of \$200,000 or more, specifically in visiting state-owned recreation areas.

## Percentage of Households Visiting Outdoor Recreation Areas

by household income, 2023 Statewide Survey

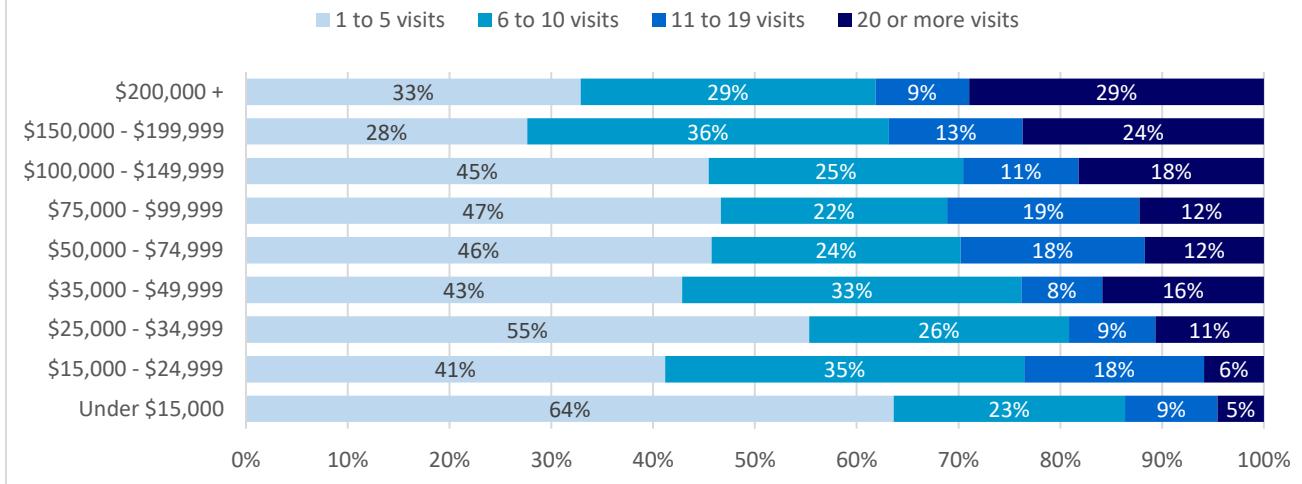


**Figure 3-33: Percentage of Households Visiting Outdoor Recreation Areas**

In terms of frequency, households with higher incomes generally reported visiting municipal-owned areas more frequently than households with lower incomes. Nearly a third (29%) of households with incomes above \$200,000 visited municipal-owned areas twenty or more times in the past year. This group was followed closely by those in the \$150,000–\$199,999 range with almost a quarter (24%) visiting municipal-owned areas twenty or more times. In contrast, households with incomes in the three lowest categories, under \$15,000, \$15,000-\$24,999 and \$25,000-\$34,999, were the least likely to visit twenty or more times (5%, 6%, and 11%, respectively). Those in the under \$15,000 category were most likely (64%) to visit municipal-owned areas only one to five times. This group was also the most likely (70%) to have only one to five visits to state-owned areas. Very few households in the lowest income bracket visit either municipal-owned (5%) or state-owned (2%) areas 20 or more times. The disparity across the different income levels could be attributed to lack of transportation (personal vehicle, bike, etc.) and/or funds for alternate transportation (bus, taxi, Uber, etc.) or lack of free time. However, there may be other factors in play, because although the relationship between income and frequency of visits appears reasonably linear for municipal-owned recreation areas, it is less so for state-owned areas.

## Annual Frequency of Visits to Municipal Recreation Areas

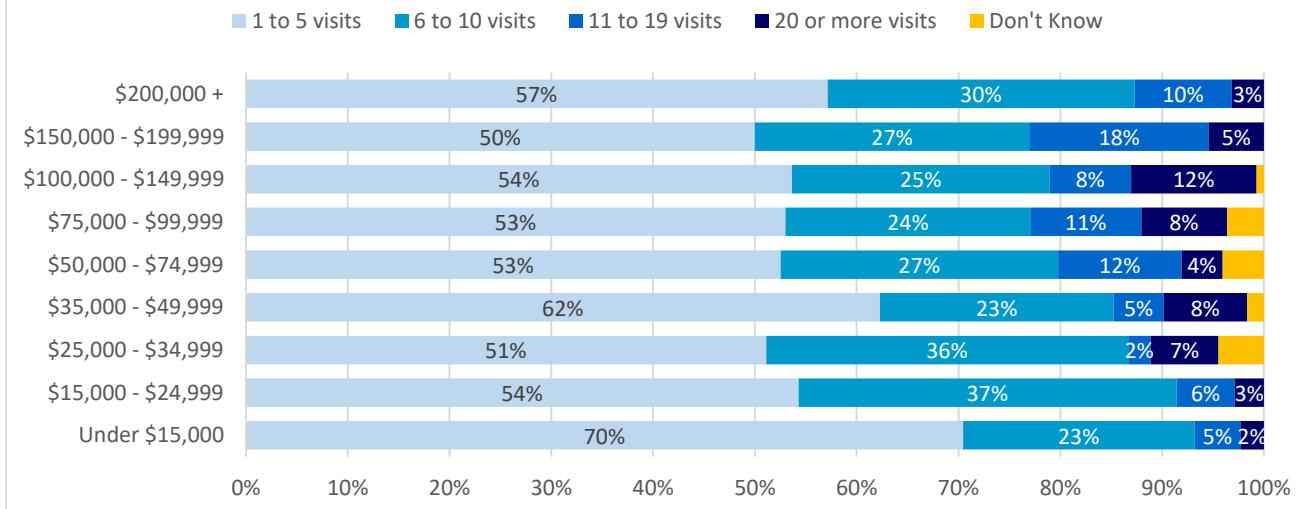
by household income, 2023 Statewide Survey



**Figure 3-34: Annual Frequency of Visits to Municipal-Owned Outdoor Recreation Areas**

## Annual Frequency of Visits to State Recreation Areas

by household income, 2023 Statewide Survey



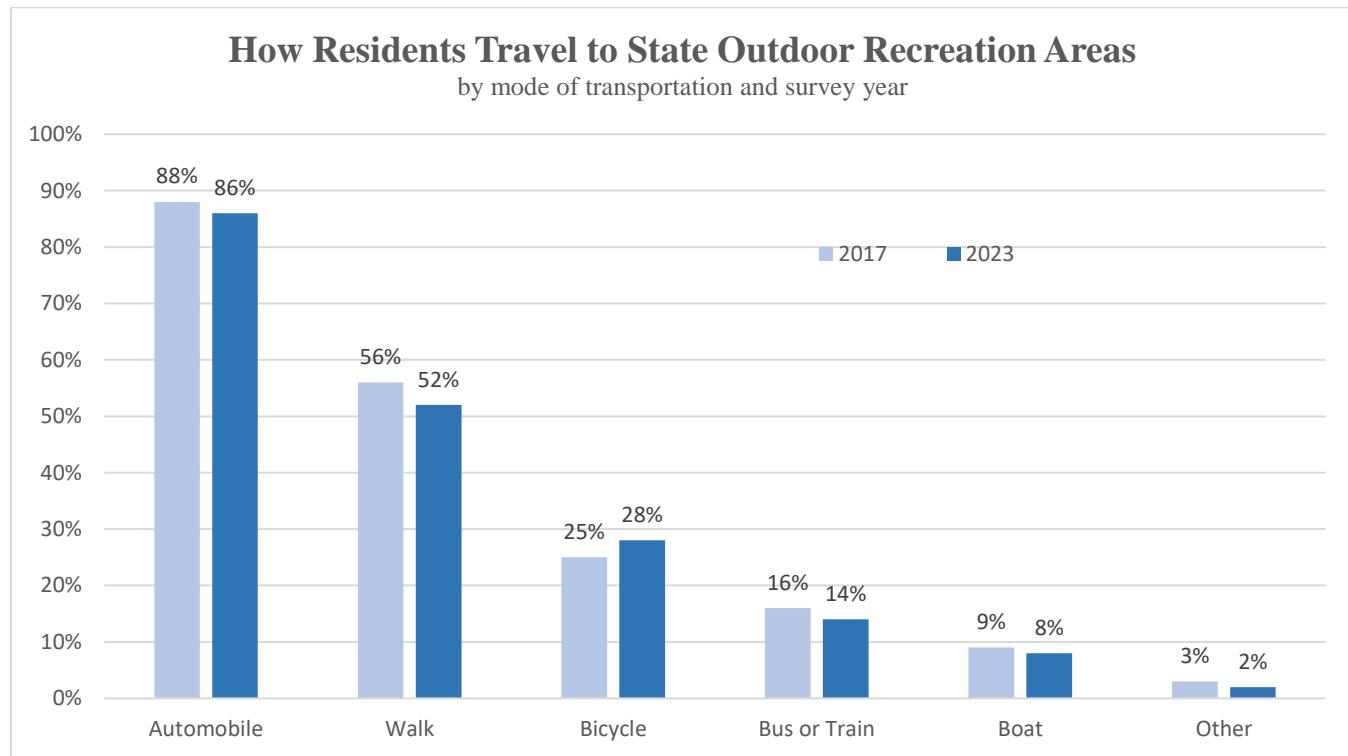
**Figure 3-35: Annual Frequency of Visits to State-Owned Outdoor Recreation Areas**

## ASSESSING MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

Connecticut residents were asked to identify the different ways in which they or members of their household travel to outdoor recreation areas in their local community and/or throughout the state. The results of this inquiry can be found below in Figure 3-36. As expected, most residents (86%) travel to outdoor recreation areas via automobile. However, about half (52%)

of households responding to the Statewide Survey reported walking to outdoor recreation areas, while more than a quarter (28%) of households reported biking. Encouragingly, these figures suggest that many state residents have access to, and make use of, the outdoor recreation areas within walking or biking distance of their place of residence.

Nearly one-in-seven respondents (14%) use public transportation to travel to outdoor recreation areas in Connecticut. Approximately one-in-twelve respondents travel via boat (8%), and a small share (2%) travel via alternate options such as motorcycle, scooter, moped, human locomotion (skateboarding/running), or surprisingly, even via airplane.



**Figure 3-36: How Residents Travel to State Outdoor Recreation Areas**

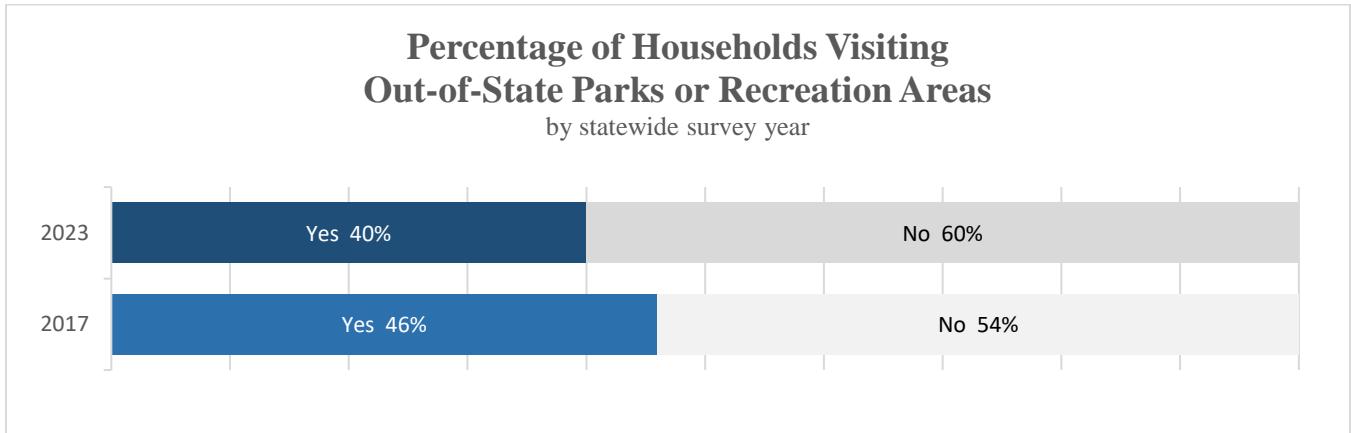
#### DEMAND FOR OUT-OF-STATE OUTDOOR RECREATION

Many residents report engaging in recreational activities out of state. Starting in 2017, the SCORP surveys began collecting data on several factors related to residents' use of outdoor recreational areas outside the state. The states most visited by respondents to the Statewide Survey in order of popularity were Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Florida, and New Hampshire.

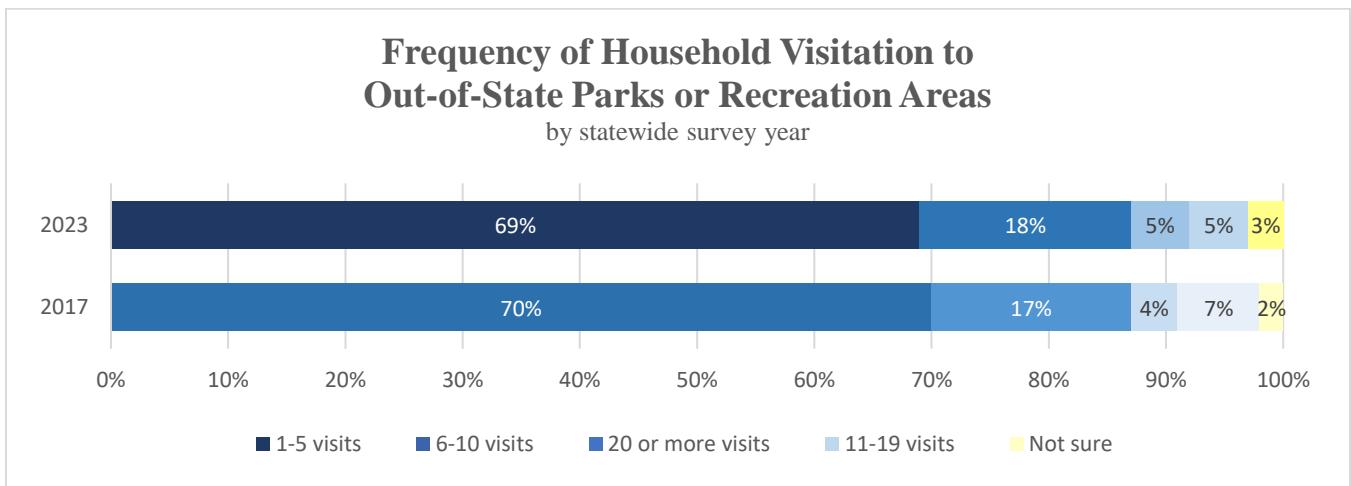
##### Frequency of Out-of-State Recreation

Respondents to the Statewide Survey were first asked if they or a member of their household had visited any out-of-state recreation areas in the past year. In 2023, the percentage of Connecticut residents reporting that they visited an out-of-state park or recreation area

declined slightly (6%) from 2017. Most respondents (60%) reported that they had not visited any outdoor recreation area outside of Connecticut. Of the remaining 40% who did visit out-of-state areas, 69% made between one and five visits, while 31% visited these areas six times or more. Only 5% of remaining respondents (or 2% of all Connecticut residents) visited out-of-state areas twenty times or more. These figures, as well as the data from both 2017 and 2023, are displayed in Figure 3-37.



**Figure 3-XX: Percentage of Households Visiting Out-of-State Parks or Outdoor Recreation Areas**



**Figure 3-37: Frequency of Household Visitation to Out-of-State Parks or Outdoor Recreation Areas**

Respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey were also asked whether they practiced each of their top five activities at outdoor recreational areas outside of the state. Unsurprisingly, these enthusiasts were more likely to utilize out-of-state areas than members of the general population, with half (50%) reporting that they had practiced their top-ranked activity at an out-of-state recreation area within the past year, compared to 40% of state households.

### Reasons for the Use of Out-of-State Recreation Areas

It is worth noting that a large portion of respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey indicated many different reasons as to why they travel out of state to participate in different outdoor activities. These reasons included: better conditions, better facilities, new or more trails, a change in scenery, for vacation or work, and lack of variety or accessibility in their own state.

Respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey who indicated that they practiced any of their reported activities out of state were asked to explain their reasons in an open-ended response. Table 3-4 shows the results of this query, with the top five categories being coded from individual free responses.

In 2017, the reasons that avid outdoor enthusiasts traveled out of state for their top-ranked activity included variety/vacation (52%), accessibility (12%), restrictions/permit processes (12%), safety/maintenance (9%), or to attend events (6%). Many of these themes were echoed in the 2023 data. In 2023, avid outdoor enthusiasts cited trail-related concerns, indicating they desire more trails, better trails, and different trails. They also cited various regulations and restrictions such as the limited number of legal places to ride ATVs and dirt bikes in Connecticut, limited hunting opportunities, and constraints on backpacking and camping. Avid outdoor enthusiasts reported that they are generally looking for more—more land, more access, more challenging terrain, and more variety. Similarly, they desire something different—different scenery, different species, different trails, or different habitats. In addition to traveling out of state for more opportunities and variety, avid outdoor enthusiasts leave the state in search of experiences that are better overall—better fishing, better hunting, better beaches, better conditions, and better terrain.

With thousands of open-ended responses, categorizing the data in a manner that would allow for direct comparison across the 2017 and 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast surveys was challenging. Furthermore, many individuals in the 2023 survey referenced multiple reasons for traveling out of state within their open-ended response. Entries such as “better access to beaches for family vacation” could be coded into multiple categories such as “accessibility,” “vacation” or “beaches.” Although the major themes shown below reflect the most commonly stated reasons, it is helpful to recognize that significant overlap exists across the categories.

Nevertheless, significant factors common to both 2017 and 2023 are the desire for both increased access to, and less restrictions on, certain activities—a finding that materialized in both the qualitative and quantitative data. In focus groups with avid outdoor enthusiasts, participants called out the inability to legally ride ATVs on state land. Similarly, hunters noted limitations on their ability to engage in their activity, citing both location and seasonality issues.

**Table 3-4: Reasons Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts Participate in Recreation Out of State (2023)**

2023 Outdoor Enthusiasts	
10 Most Common Reasons for Out-of-State Outdoor Recreation by Outdoor Enthusiasts	
Beaches	Ocean access, bigger/better beaches, more public access, cleaner, quieter, not LI Sound, etc.
Camping	Too regulated in CT, out-of-state campsites less crowded, more options, better conditions.
Fishing	Better fishing, better access, variety of locations/species, different seasons, better regulated, stocked better, etc.
Hunting	Allow Sunday hunting, fewer restrictions/regulation (including firearm use), more land, better/more game, less crowded.
Mountains	Bigger/taller, more scenic, more challenging, better conditions, more options, etc.
Regulation/Restrictions	No legal land to ride motorized vehicles (ATVs, dirt bikes, four-wheel, etc.) in Connecticut. State legal restrictions also push enthusiasts out of state for hunting, backpacking, and camping.
Snow	More snow, better snow, overall better weather conditions.
Trails	Bigger, longer, more scenic, more varied, etc.
Vacation	Enjoy the outdoors on trips with family, friends, groups.
Variety	Both in terms of enjoying a wider variety of activities and in doing the same activities in new, different, more exciting places.

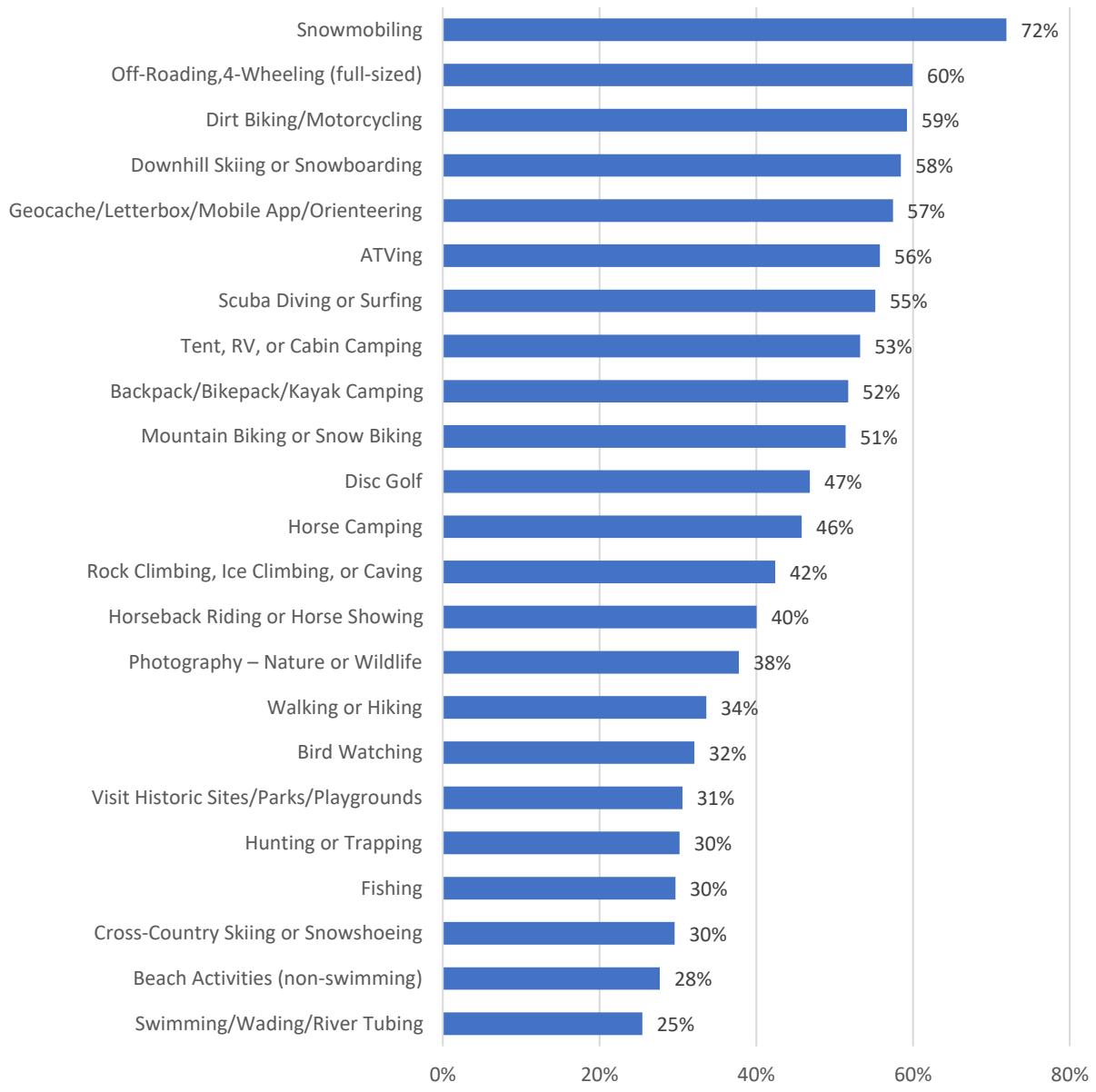
#### Outdoor Activities Practiced Out of State

Figure 3-38 depicts the proportion of outdoor recreation enthusiasts who reported practicing that activity at an out-of-state recreational facility within the past year. Among 2023 outdoor enthusiasts, snowmobiling (72%) was the top activity practiced out of state. This was followed by off-roading/four-wheeling—full sized (60%), dirt biking/motorcycling (59%), downhill skiing or snowboarding (58%), geocaching/letterboxing/mobile app games/orienteering (57%), and ATVing (56%). Activities with the least amount of out-of-state participation included sledding (3%), tennis/pickleball/other racquet sports (4%), ice skating or hockey (4%), and softball or baseball (5%) (see Figure 3-39).

## Participation in Activities Out of State, 25% or higher

by percentage of participants reporting each activity, 2023 Outdoor Enthusiasts

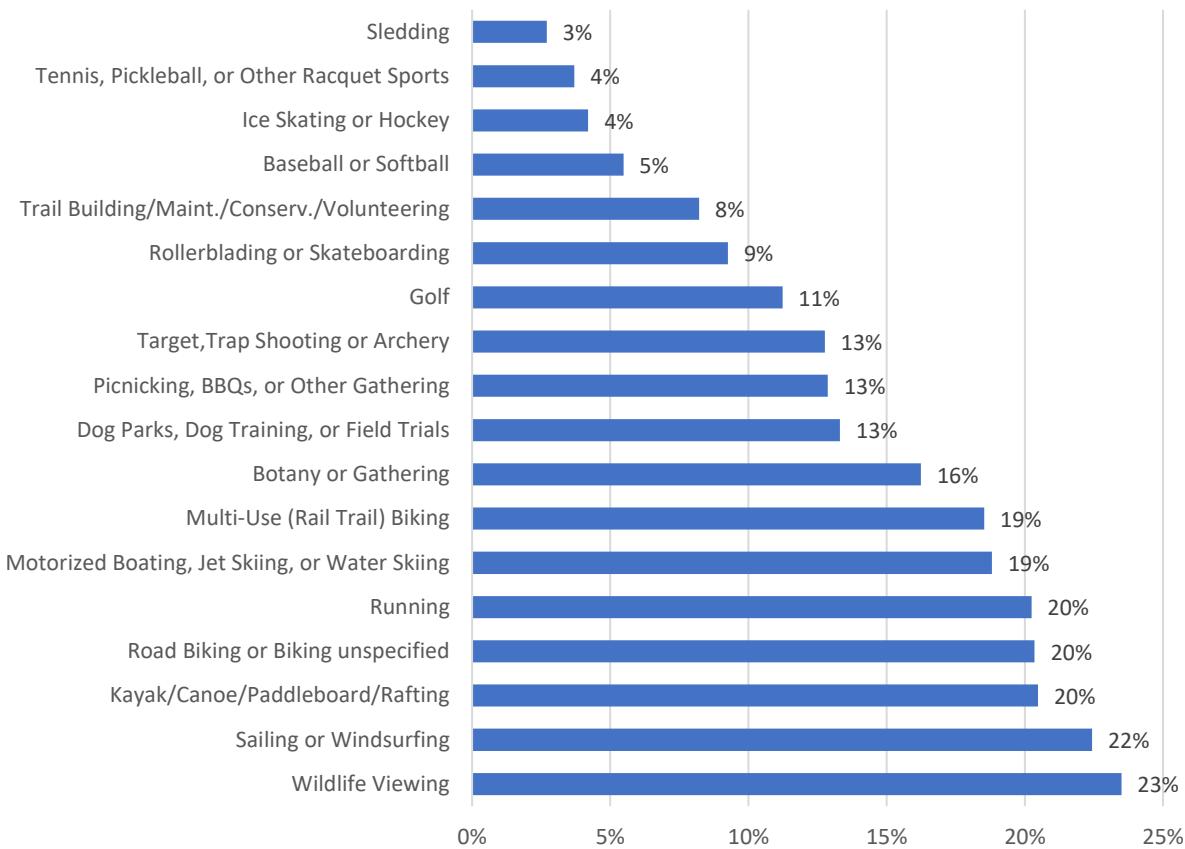
(Activities with fewer than 50 participants not shown)



**Figure 3-38: Participation in Activities Out-of-State Activities Rating 25% or Higher (2023)**

## Participation in Activities Out of State, less than 25%

by percentage of participants reporting each activity, 2023 Outdoor Enthusiasts  
(Activities with fewer than 50 participants not shown)



**Figure 3-39: Participation in Activities Out-of-State Activities Rating Under 25% (2023)**

Figure 3-40 compares 2017 and 2023 avid enthusiasts' participation in activities out of state. Some activities were new in 2023 and are not reflected on this chart; only activities in which a longitudinal comparison can be made are listed. Off-roading/four-wheeling (full-sized) took the top spot in both 2017 and 2023. Open-ended response questions on the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey, as well as information gathered from focus groups, provide insight into this association. Of respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey, 13% cited better and different trails as a reason for visiting out-of-state facilities for their top-ranked activity. An equal percentage (13%) cited that they engage in their top-ranked activity out of state due to having limited legal places to ride in Connecticut (specific to ATVs and dirt bikes). Legal access to riding facilities was mentioned by outdoor enthusiasts as an important concern, noting that there were no facilities in the state available for practicing these activities. Indeed, the CT DEEP

website confirms that, short of pending legislation, “it is still illegal to operate an ATV on state land.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to ATV use, the issue of legal access and restrictions emerged as a chief concern across several other activities—a reality that drives some Connecticut recreationists out of state. Hunters and trappers, for example, indicated several legal concerns that send them outside of state lines where regulations related to seasons, type and limit of hunted animals, permitted firearms, land-use laws, and Sunday hunting are more relaxed.

Avid enthusiasts who participated in focus groups expressed that Connecticut does not have a welcoming culture towards certain activities. This was expressed by hunters, mountain bikers, and ATV riders, in particular. New Hampshire was praised for embracing these activities, evidenced by their laws and facilities. New Hampshire features a large, interconnected rail trail system that permits ATV and trail bike usage.

Slightly more than one-in-nine (11%) outdoor enthusiasts reported traveling out of state to access either more challenging or accessible facilities. They also cited the need for bigger recreation areas compared to the ones found in Connecticut. A smaller cohort of enthusiasts (8%) also cited other states as having better beaches, scenery, and hunting/fishing availability.

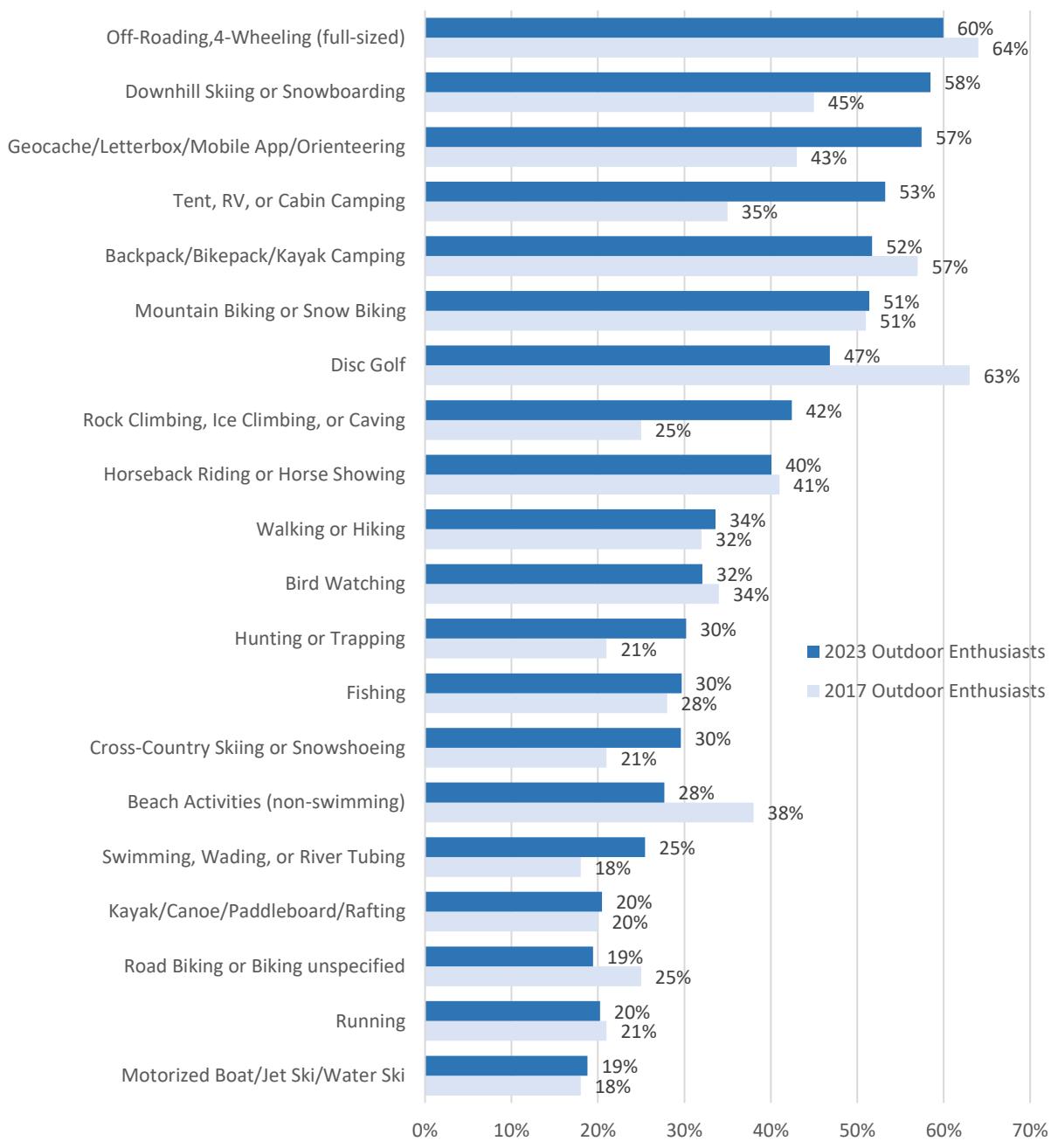


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<sup>5</sup> <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Outdoor-Recreation/ATV-Policy>

## Outdoor Enthusiasts' Participation in Activities Out of State

percentage of participants recreation type and survey year



**Figure 3-40: Outdoor Enthusiasts' Participation in Activities Out of State**

### TOWN OFFICIALS IDENTIFY AGE-GROUP DEMANDS

Understanding Age-Group Activity Demands

For another perspective on popular recreational activities in the state, respondents to the Town

Officials Survey were asked to list the two most popular resources or activities provided by their town for the following groups: families, preschool children 0–4, children 5–12, adolescents, adults, seniors, and the newest addition to this year's survey: people of all ages with disabilities. The most frequent responses for each group in 2005, 2017, and 2023 are presented in Table 3-5. Because it was an open-ended survey question, response categories were derived from individual responses. Overall, the number of resources and activities cited from 2005 to 2023 have grown in every age category.

**Table 3-5: Ranking of Most Popular Town Activities/Resources by Town Officials (2005–2023)**

	SCORP 2005	SCORP 2017	SCORP 2023
<b>Families</b>	Swimming Sports Playgrounds Picnic areas	Beaches, lakes, ponds Parks and picnic areas Special events Athletic fields Swimming pools	Athletic fields/courts/facilities Playgrounds Aquatics/swimming/pools Ponds/lakes/beaches/boating/ kayak rentals Parks/pavilions Special events Summer camps/after school programs Hiking/hiking trails
<b>Pre-School Children (0–4)</b>	Swimming Recreation programs Picnic areas Playgrounds	Playgrounds Swimming pools Recreation programs Beaches, lakes, ponds	Playgrounds Aquatics/swimming/pools Parks/pavilions/walking paths/trails Sports programming/playgroups/fields/facilities Community events/resources/library Day camps/programming (non-sport)/classes Beaches/lakes
<b>Children (5–12)</b>	Playgrounds Recreation programs Swimming Sports	Recreation programs Fields Sports or playgroups Playgrounds	Fields/courts Playgrounds Aquatics/swimming/pools Day camps/programming (non-sport)/classes Sports programming/playgroups Community events Parks/walking paths/trails Beaches/lakes
<b>Adolescents</b>	Sports leagues Recreation center Skiing	Fields Sports or playgrounds Camps/programming Skate parks	Fields/courts/facilities Sports programming/playgroups Skate parks Parks/walking paths/trails Summer camp/programming (non- sport)/adventure camp/classes Aquatics/swimming/pools

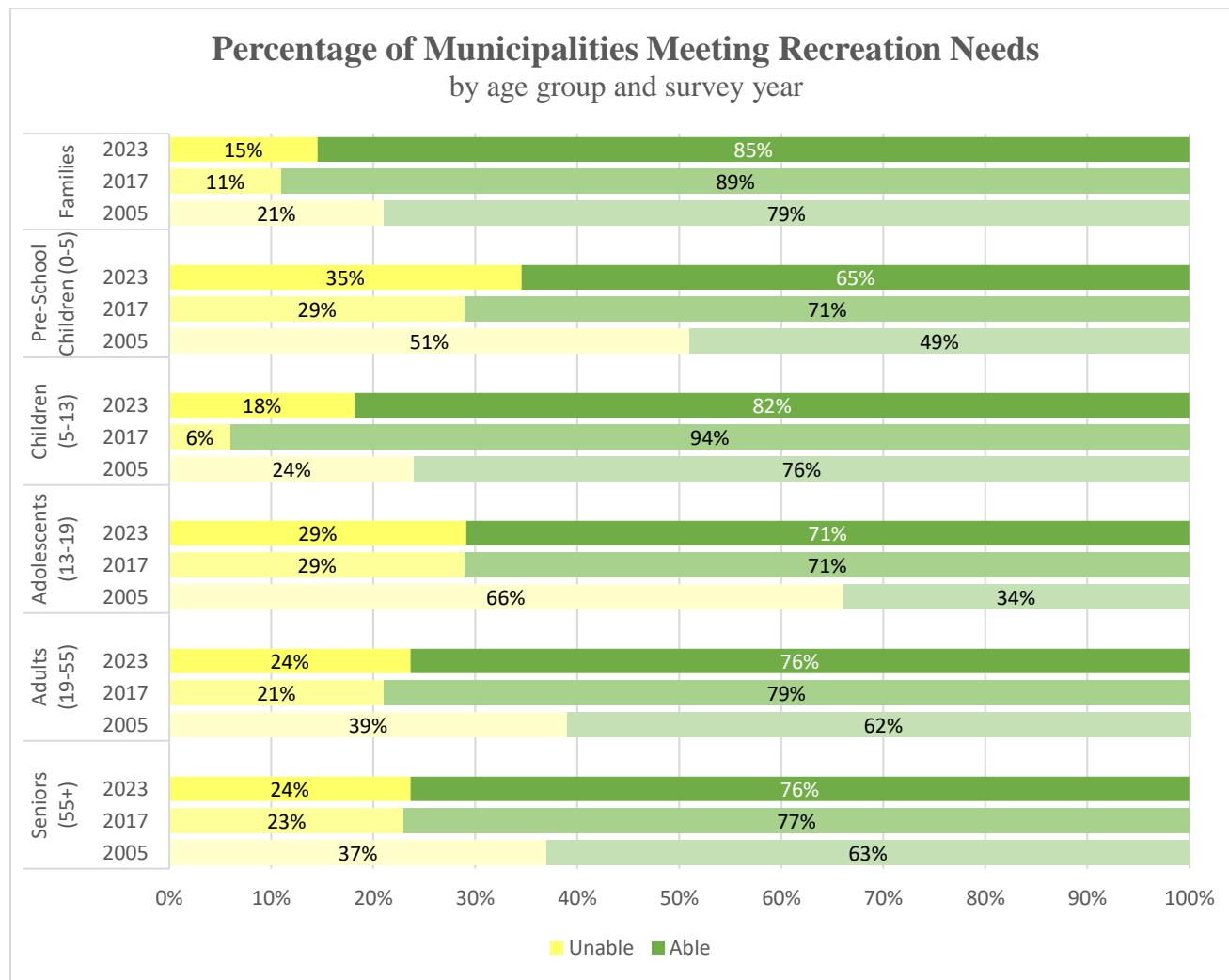
		SCORP 2005	SCORP 2017	SCORP 2023
				Beaches/lakes Social/community events
<b>Adults</b>	Sports leagues Fitness facilities Walking/hiking trails Swimming	Walking/hiking trails Sports Trips, programs, or events Parks and picnic areas	Trails/paths Sports Outdoor recreation facilities Trips/programs/special events Beaches Pools/aquatics	
<b>Seniors</b>	Community centers Fitness facilities Trips Swimming Walking trails	Walking/hiking trails Trips, programs, or events Parks and picnic areas Fitness facilities/classes	Outdoor recreation facilities Trails/paths Parks/gardens/picnic areas Indoor facilities Trips/programs/special events Beaches Fitness classes Pools/aquatics	
<b>People with Disabilities</b>				Parks/playgrounds/gardens/picnic areas Trails/paths Pools/aquatics/fishing Trips/programs/special events Beaches Outdoor recreation Indoor facilities

The officials surveyed were also asked to report whether their town was currently able to meet the outdoor recreation needs of each of the six age groups. Figure 3-41 shows responses from 2005, 2017, and 2023. Overall, viewpoints of Town Officials have remained relatively stable since 2017, with mostly modest decreases emerging in 2023.

The most notable decrease was for children of 5–12 years of age, going from 94% in 2017 to 82% in 2023. Another notable decrease was found for children from 0 to 5 years old (71% in 2017 to 65% in 2023). Rates in which town officials report being able to meet the needs of 13- to 19-year-olds, 19- to 55-year-olds, and seniors remained relatively stable since 2017. There have been slight decreases, peaking at 3%, in most of the categories.

In addition to specifying whether the needs of each age group are being met, town officials were also given the opportunity to provide insight on issues that are related to these needs. Several topics emerged among the open-ended responses. Most mentioned was insufficient resources, whether it be funding, space, and/or staff. This was followed by a lack of programs to accommodate younger adults and children, lack of accommodations for seniors, outdated outdoor recreation spaces, and the need for more areas to accommodate people with

disabilities.



**Figure 3-41: Percentage of Municipalities Meeting Recreation Needs**

### ASSESSING DEMAND FOR ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

With a better understanding of who participates in various outdoor recreation activities, we turn our attention to understanding the extent to which facility needs are being met throughout Connecticut.

#### Residents Rate Demand for Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Respondents to the Statewide Survey were asked to give insight on whether they or members of their household had a “need or desire for additional access” to each of 31 recreational facilities. Figures 3-42 and 3-43 show the percentage of respondents who indicated a need for each facility in 2005, 2017, and 2023.

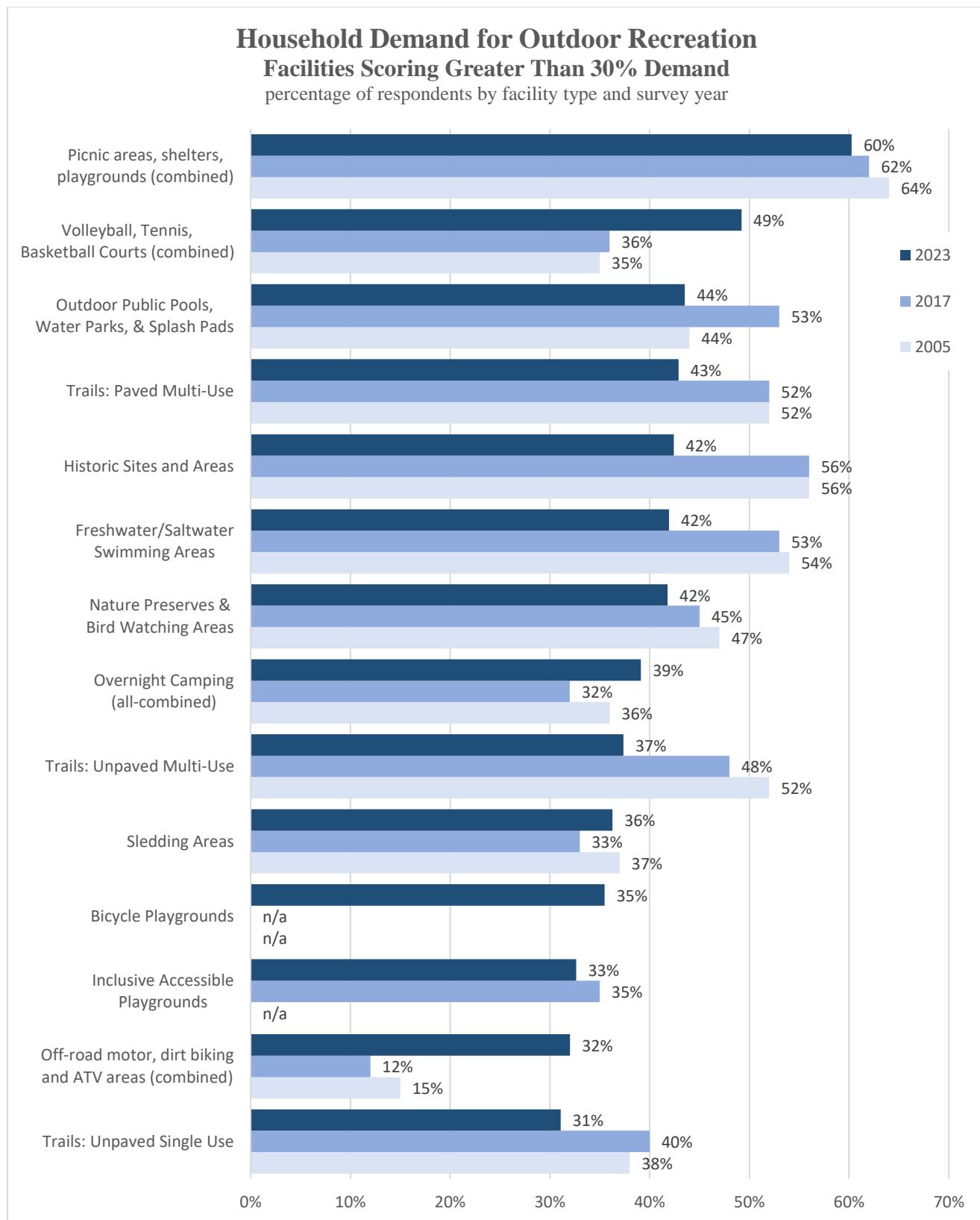
The SCORP data collection effort has illustrated a consistent longitudinal need for picnic areas/shelters from 2005 (64%) to 2023 (60%). There has been a significant increase in the need

for volleyball/tennis/basketball courts (49%) across the state compared to 2005 (35%). Significant decreases this year in need were observed for fresh/saltwater swimming (42%), historic sites and areas (42%), paved multi-use trails (43%), nature preserves and bird watching areas (42%), and outdoor public pools/water parks/splash pads (44%).

Categories such as bicycle playgrounds, biking pump tracks, snowmobiling areas, and pickleball courts were new to this year's survey, leaving no ability to compare these categories to previous versions of the SCORP report. Other slight increases include ADA-accessible trails (going up to 24% from 17%), snorkeling/scuba diving (going up to 22% from 16%), and cross-country skiing/snowshoeing trails (going up to 21% from 14%).

Much like 2017, this year's survey asked participants to indicate "a need or desire for additional access" to each of the facilities, as well as only indicating "yes" if their needs were entirely met. Thus, percentages from 2017 and 2023 have bigger discrepancies in comparison to the 2005 version of the SCORP report.





**Figure 3-42: Household Demand for Outdoor Recreation, Facilities Scoring > 30% Demand**

## Household Demand for Outdoor Recreation

### Facilities Scoring Less Than 30% Demand

percentage of respondents by facility type and survey year

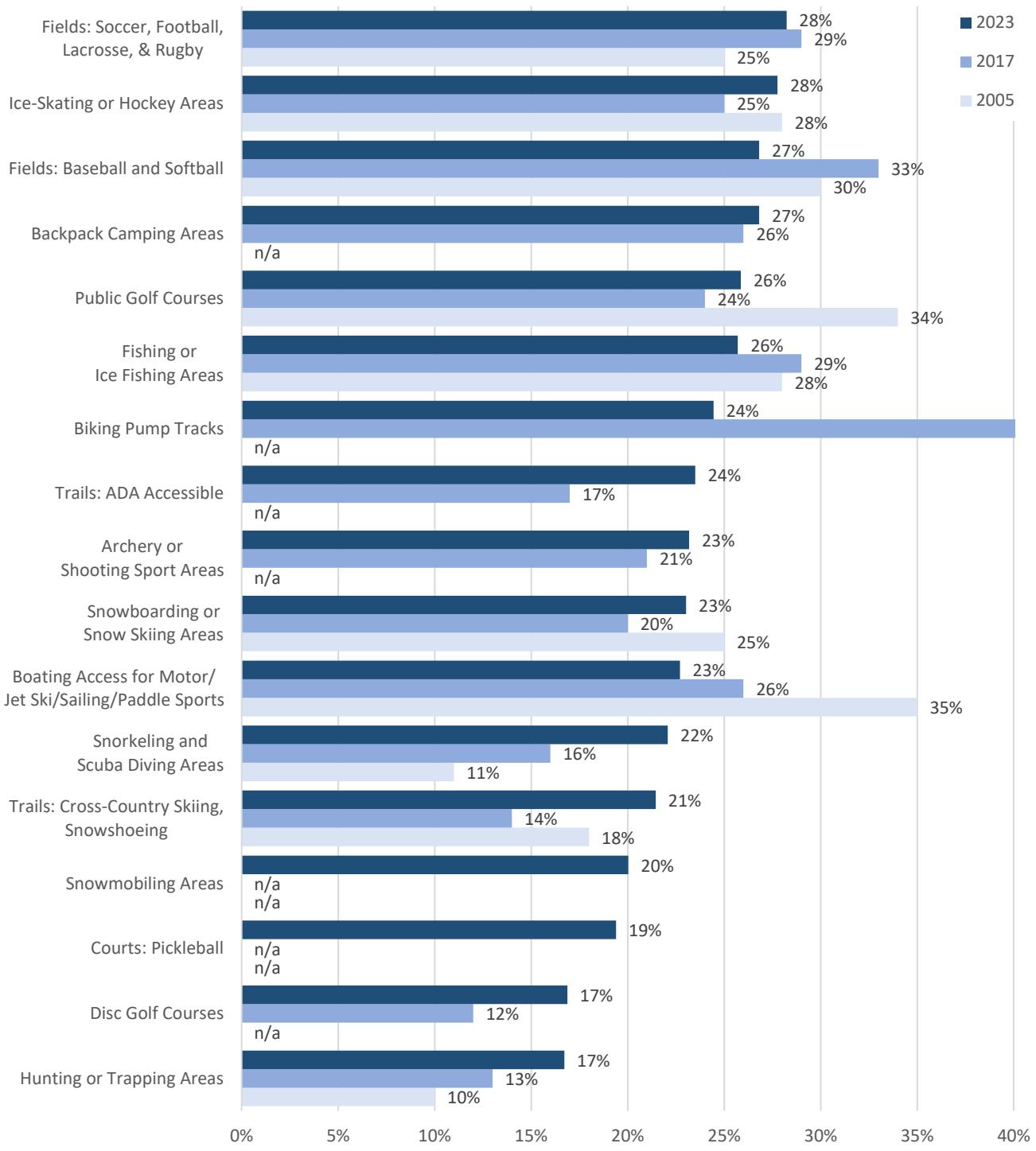
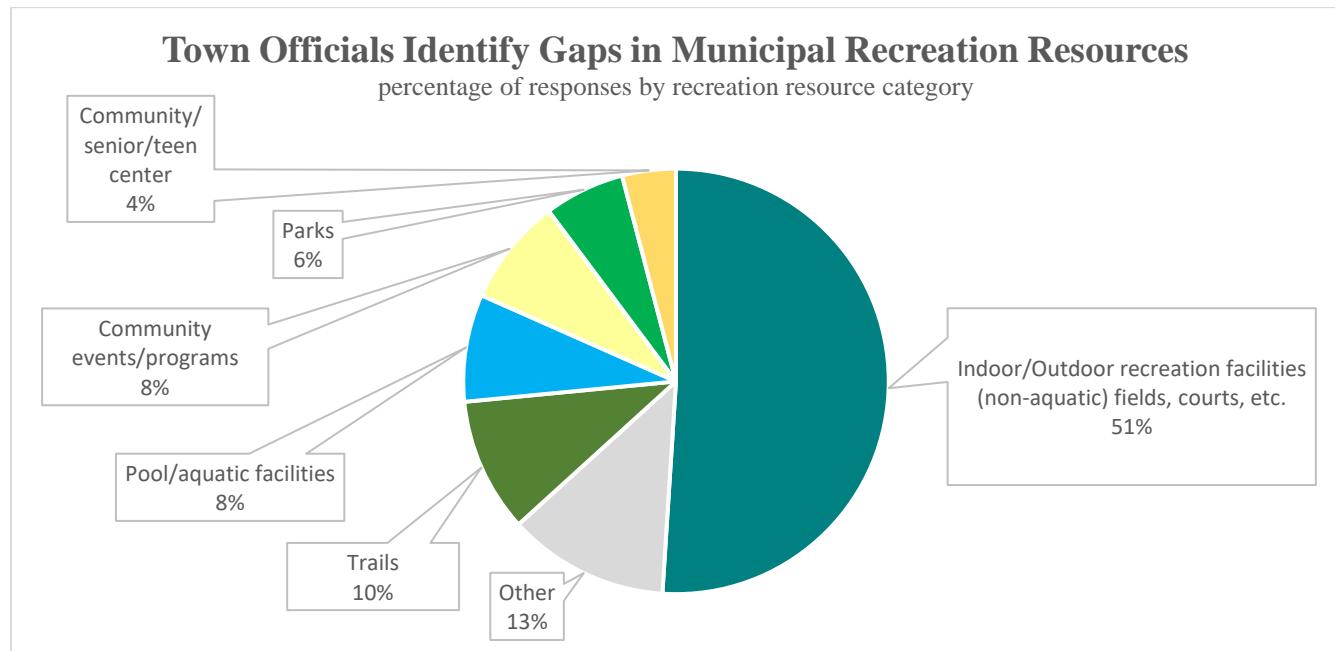


Figure 3-43: Household Demand for Outdoor Recreation, Facilities Scoring < 30% Demand

## Town Officials Rate Demand for Outdoor Recreation Facilities

Respondents to the Town Officials Survey were asked to identify which outdoor recreation facilities or programs not currently provided in their community should be provided. Up to two open-ended responses were accepted, many of which were ultimately combined to provide a more holistic picture of perceived gaps in municipal offerings. These results are presented in Figure 3-44.

Fully half of town officials (51%) cited indoor/outdoor recreation facilities – non-aquatic (such as fields and courts) as lacking among municipal facilities. This was followed by “other” responses (13%). Trails (10%), pool/aquatic facilities (8%), and community events/programs (8%) were also cited by officials. Also registering responses were parks (6%) and community/senior/teen centers (4%).



**Figure 3-44: Town Officials Identify Gaps in Municipal Recreation Resources**

**The 2023 Town Officials Survey illustrates a clear need or desire for indoor/outdoor recreation facilities (non-aquatic) (51%), replacing aquatic facilities from 2017 for the top-rated need. Still, nearly four-in-ten respondents (38%) to the Statewide Survey reported that at least one member of their household swam in an outdoor pool during the past twelve months, reflecting ongoing community demand for aquatic facilities.**

Notably, across all water-based activities in the Statewide Survey, swimming in outdoor pools had the highest participation frequency, with nearly half (47%) of all swimmers utilizing outdoor pools at least “a few times a month” or “several times a week.”

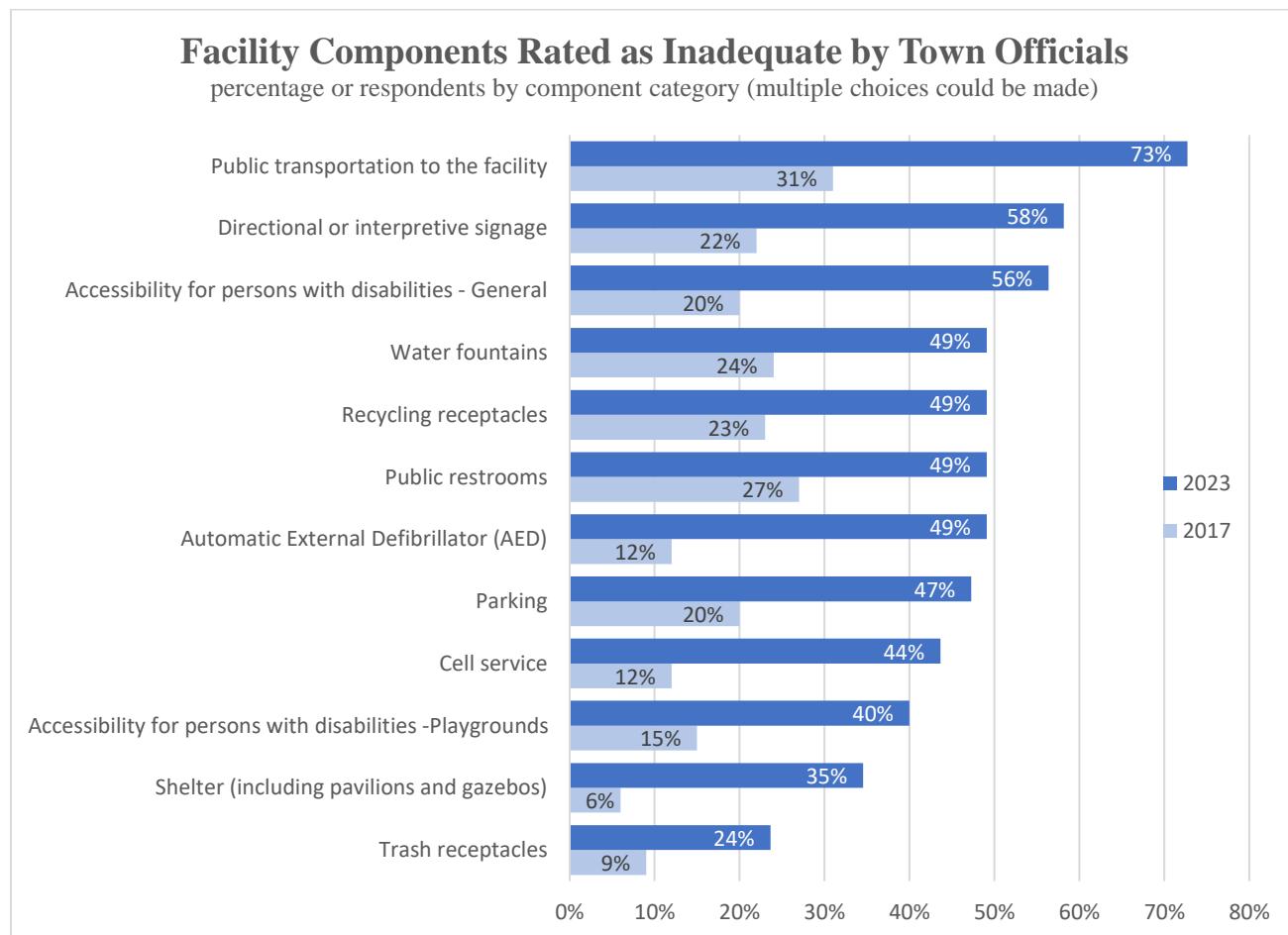
After “other” underrepresented resources, trails were viewed as the third most important to develop, with one-in-ten (10%) town officials suggesting them for their communities.

Connecticut residents agree that there is a gap between supply and demand in this area.

ADA accessibility should be a prominent consideration for any town considering the addition of trail resources. Nearly 4% of all state residents (roughly 125,000 individuals) feel that their needs are “not at all met” when it comes to ADA accessibility with Connecticut’s trails.

#### Town Officials Rate Support Components

Town officials were asked to indicate which support components were inadequate at any of the outdoor recreation facilities in their community (Figure 3-45). Notably, a dramatic uptick in inadequate ratings was observed across all 12 facility components measured. The largest increase in inadequate ratings was seen with public transportation to the facility (42% increase in inadequacy ratings). This was followed by a sizable increase in inadequacy ratings associated with automatic external defibrillators (37% increase), directional or interpretive signage (36% increase), as well as accessibility for persons with disabilities – general (36% increase). Other areas of large concern included cell service (32%) and shelter – including pavilions and gazebos (29% increase).



**Figure 3-45: Facility Components Rated as Inadequate by Town Officials**



## SECTION IV: BARRIERS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION

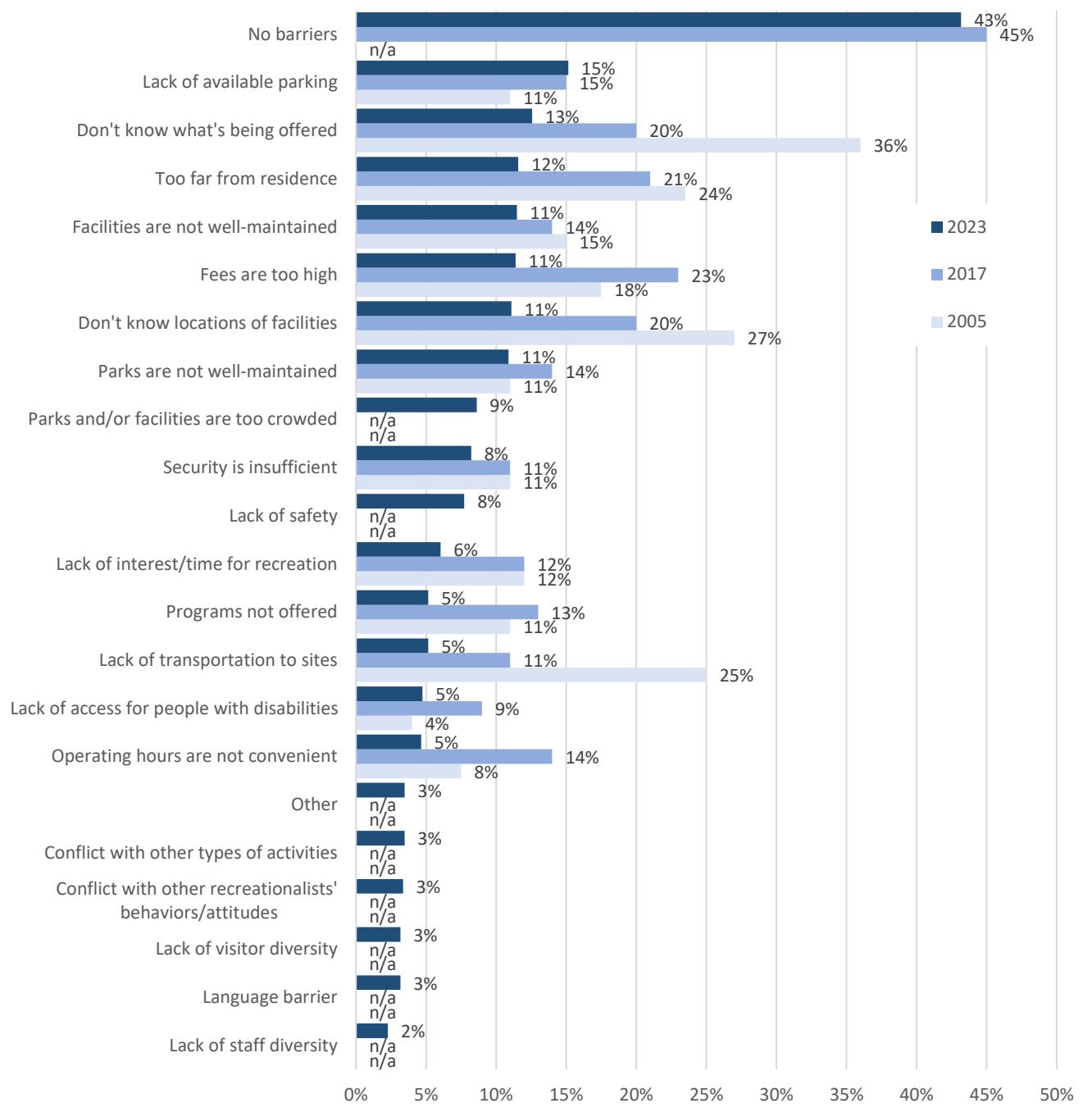
### RESIDENTS IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION

Connecticut residents were asked to indicate reasons preventing them or members of their household from using outdoor recreation facilities in the state. Figure 4-1 shows that over half (57%) of all respondents identified at least one barrier to recreation. Compared to 23% of all residents indicating fees as the number one boundary in 2017, lack of available parking is the top-cited boundary in 2023 (15%). Not too far behind were residents not knowing what was being offered (13%), distance from residence (12%), and lack of well-maintained facilities (11%). Other respondents indicated the following barriers to participation: fees (11%), not knowing facility location (11%), and lack of well-maintained parks (11%). Some respondents offered alternate responses, which included: being too busy/lack of time, unclear or unavailable maps, worries of bug (ticks specifically), and inability to access places due to car or location issues.



## Barriers to Participation in Outdoor Recreation for Residents

percentage of respondents by barrier category (multiple choices could be made)

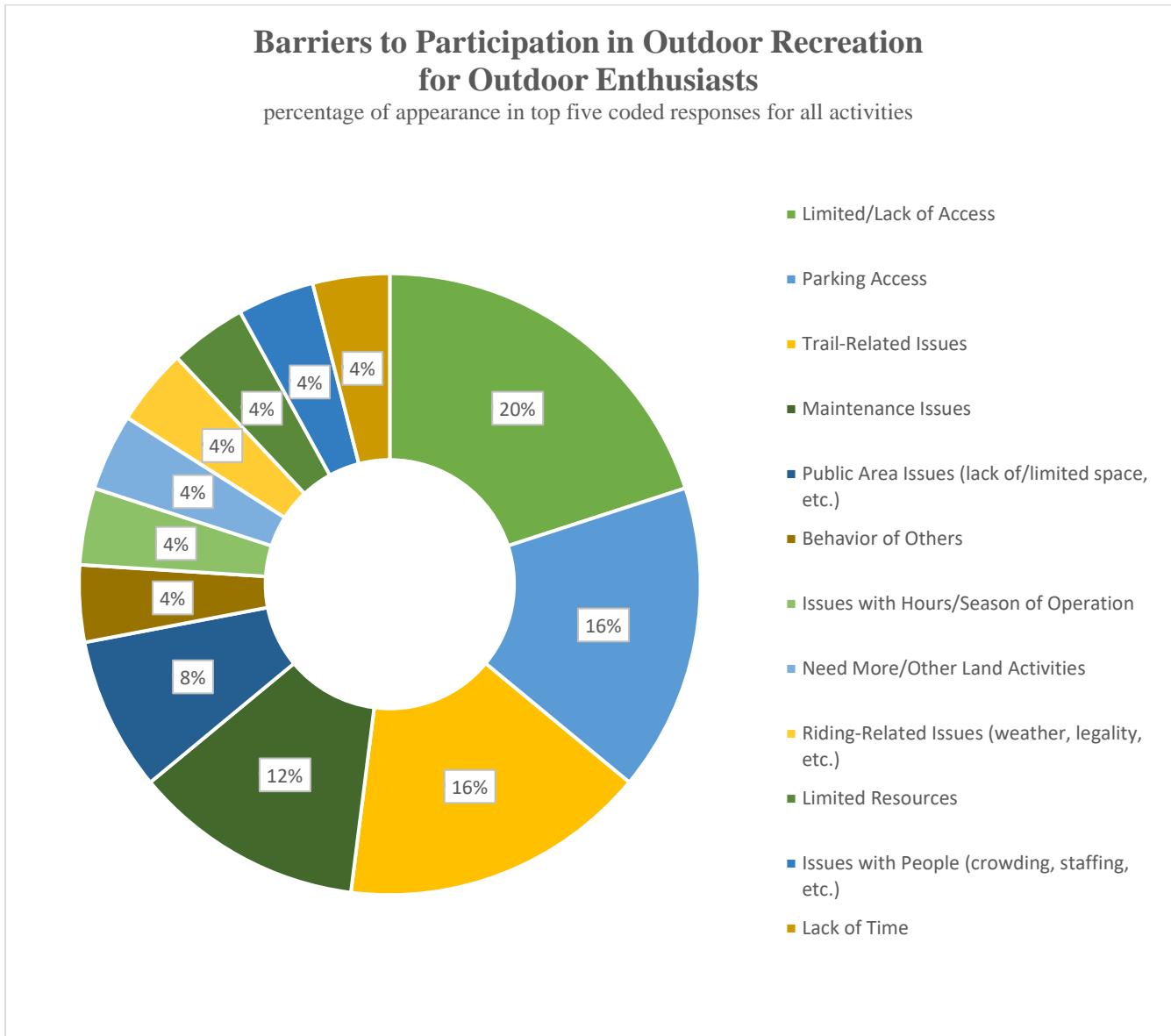


**Figure 4-1: Barriers to Participation in Outdoor Recreation for Residents**

### AVID OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO OUTDOOR RECREATION

For each of their top five activities, outdoor enthusiasts were asked to what extent their needs

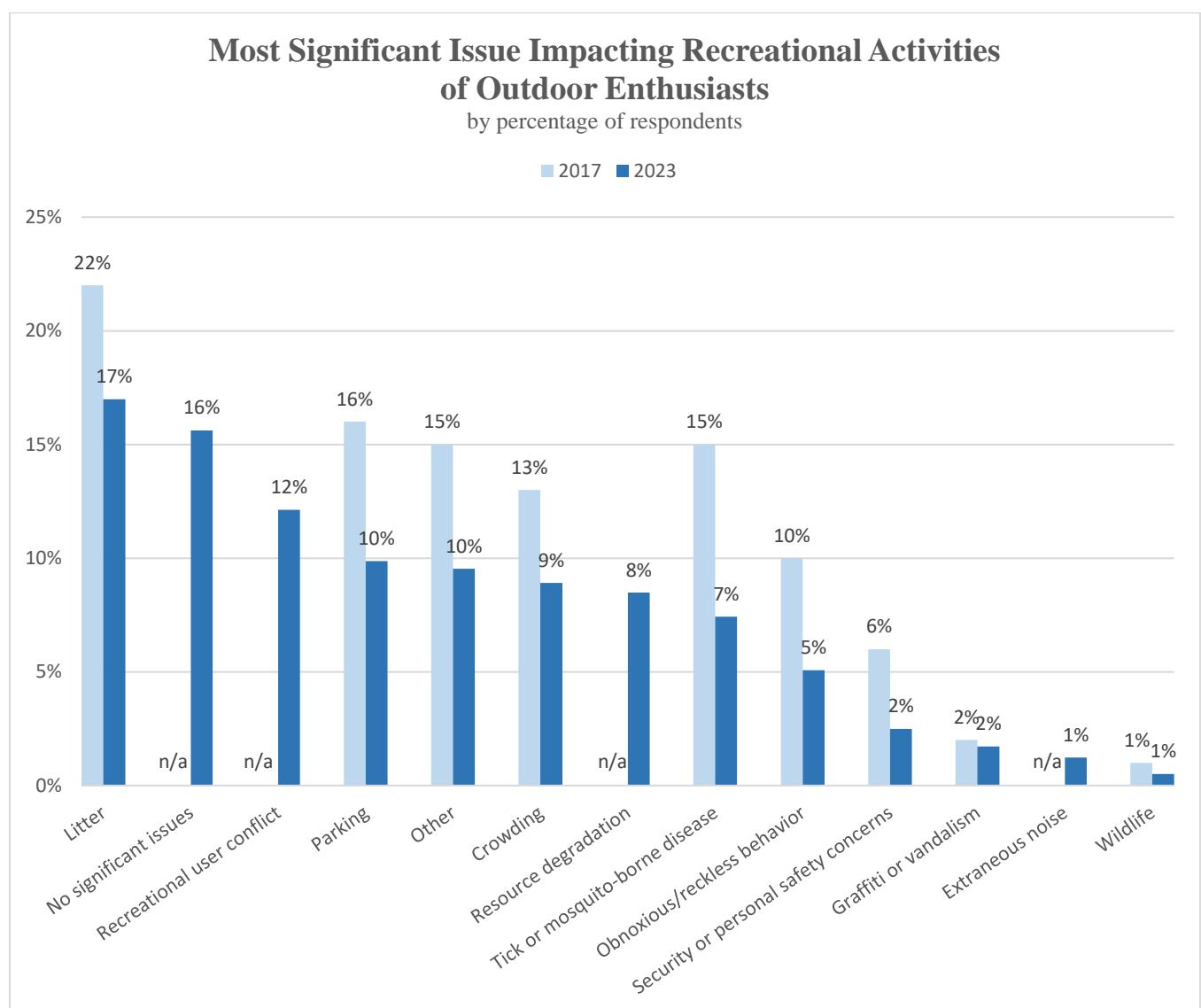
for outdoor recreation facilities or resources were being met. Those indicating that their needs were not being “completely met” were asked to identify what problems they experienced. For each activity, the top five most frequent problems were coded from responses. Out of 25 total coded responses, Figure 4-2 shows the percentage in which each response appeared in the top five responses for all activities. Limited and/or lack of access (20%) was the top-cited barrier to the enjoyment of outdoor recreation. Trail-related issues (16%) and parking access (16%) were the next most popular responses, followed by maintenance concerns (12%).



**Figure 4-2: Barriers to Participation in Outdoor Recreation for Outdoor Enthusiasts**

Outdoor enthusiasts were then asked to identify the most significant issue they encountered when engaging in any of their top five outdoor activities. Unlike the question discussed above, which was only asked to those who indicated that their outdoor recreation needs were not

“completely met,” this question presents more of a general sentiment towards outdoor recreation. Here, two other major points are worth noting. Unlike the prior question, only one answer choice could be identified by each respondent. Further, this question required participants to select from closed-ended answer options, while the prior question was completely open-ended. As depicted in Figure 4-3, 17% of outdoor enthusiasts cited litter as the most significant issue impacting their participation in outdoor recreation activities. Notably, 16% cited that there is no significant issue impacting their outdoor recreation activity. Approximately one-in-eight outdoor enthusiasts (12%) cited recreational user conflict and one-in-ten (10%) cited parking, alternate (other) responses (10%), or crowding (9%) as the most significant issue they have faced.



**Figure 4-3: Most Significant Issue Impacting Recreation of Outdoor Enthusiasts (2017 & 2023)**

Finally, all respondents to the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey were asked to identify what they believed to be the most pressing needs of the outdoor recreation areas that they visit (Table 4-

1). Themes were coded from open-ended responses, with multiple responses being accepted. Due to the thousands of responses, the top five most common responses were coded and ranked. Broadly, enthusiasts described needs related to litter/maintenance (trash/overgrown greenery/lack of trail upkeep), parking (not enough, not horse-trailer accessible), motorized/all-terrain vehicles (limited riding areas, disturbing others in illegal areas), hunting (non-hunters in designated areas, lack of awareness), and enforcement of rules (lack of supervision/safety, illegal activity).

**Table 4-1: Most Pressing Needs of Recreation Areas Reported by Outdoor Enthusiasts (Top five coded from responses–2023)**

Most Pressing Needs of Recreation Areas Reported by Outdoor Enthusiasts	
Litter/Maintenance – trash, overgrown greenery, lack of trail upkeep	1
Parking – not enough, not horse trailer accessible	2
Motorized/All-Terrain Vehicles – limited riding areas, disturbing others in illegal areas	3
Hunting – non-hunters in designated areas, lack of awareness	4
Enforcement of Rules – lack of supervision/safety, illegal activity	5

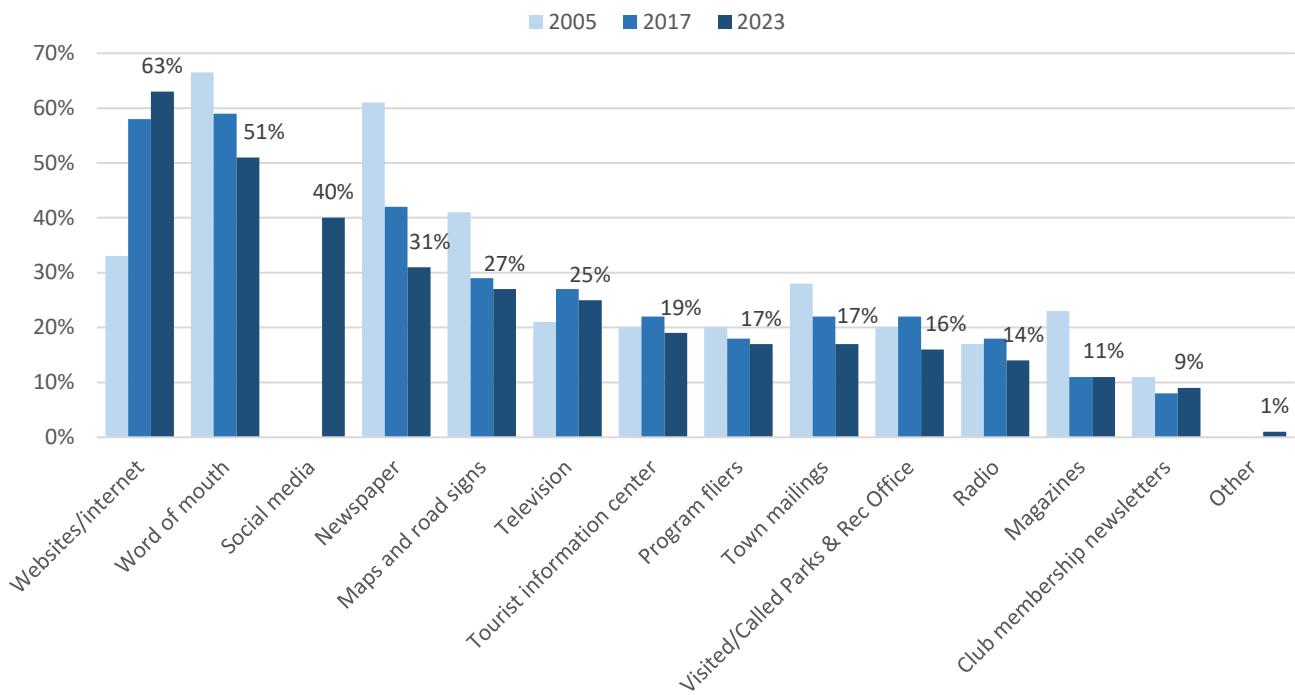
## HOW CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS LEARN ABOUT RECREATION FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

Finally, Figure 4-4 below shows the different ways that respondents to the Statewide Survey learn about Connecticut's outdoor recreational facilities and/or activities. In 2023, the most common means by which residents learned about facilities was through the internet or websites (63%). This is a very significant jump from both 2005 (34%) and 2017 (58%). This could be due to both the ongoing growth of technology, as well as increased access to that technology. Other ways in which residents find out information, such as maps/road signs, television, and program fliers, remained at similar rates compared to 2017. Newspapers went down significantly, dropping from the 2017 rate of 42% to 31% in 2023.

In 2023, word of mouth (51%) and social media (40%) were the next two most common ways, right below digital advertising, that people learned about outdoor recreational facilities and/or activities in their local community. Word of mouth is still a significant manner of communication; however, social media platforms have continued to become more popular in recent years. This not only includes applications such as Facebook and Twitter, but also new popular platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok.

## How Residents Learn About Recreation Facilities and Activities

by mode and survey year (multiple choices could be made)



**Figure 4-4: How Residents Learn About Recreation Facilities and Activities**

Participants in one of the limited-recreationalist focus groups suggested customizable text messaging from DEEP. Specifically, these individuals welcomed the idea of being able to select the facilities about which they could receive information. Universally applauded was the idea of receiving text updates regarding parking lot closures at beach locations. Also desired was the ability to receive text updates regarding special events being held at their favorite facilities. Participants expressed less desire for finding facility information by social media. Numerous participants in the limited-recreationalist focus groups mentioned that they do not use social media. Notably, this sentiment was echoed across age groups—from college students in their twenties to seniors in their sixties. Developing a targeting plan that expands social media, such as an opt-in text system, would be fruitful.

## SECTION V: PROJECTIONS OF FUTURE TRENDS AND FUNDING DIRECTIONS

### TOWN OFFICIALS PROJECT TRENDS AND NEEDS

Town officials were asked which outdoor recreation activity or activities provided by their department were predicted to gain and/or lose popularity in the next five to ten years. This is represented in Table

5-1 along with predictions from 2017's SCORP report. Open-ended responses were coded, with multiple responses being accepted per participant. Considering that participation trends in most activities included in the Statewide Survey have consistently gone down since 2005, it is difficult to discern the popularity trends of individual activities. Otherwise, most predictions appear to be consistent with recent trends in recreation.

The popularity of activities such as pickleball, all other indoor/outdoor sports, walking/biking/cycling/skating, programming/group activities, or “other” activities as well as their associated facilities suggest that these activities will gain popularity over the next five to ten years.

Pickleball, specifically, has grown in popularity and participation from the 2017 reports; therefore, it can be expected to continue to grow in popularity in the near future. On the contrary, activities such as tennis, outdoor sports (football, base/softball, basketball), and organized/youth sports activities and/or programs are predicted to lose popularity over the next five to ten years. It is also worth noting that 39% of coded responses from participants indicate that the loss of popularity is not applicable, or they are unsure of a predicted loss within the next five to ten years of any activities.

**Table 5-1: Activities Predicted by Officials to Gain or Lose Popularity over the Next 5-10 Years (2017 & 2023)**

Gain Popularity		Lose Popularity
<b>2017</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Walking/Hiking</li><li>- Day/Summer Camps</li><li>- Beach Activities</li><li>- Disc Golf</li><li>- Cycling</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Organized Youth Sports</li><li>- Other (Triathlon, Pickleball)</li><li>- Tennis/Golf</li><li>- Playgrounds</li><li>- Fitness/Dance Classes</li></ul>
<b>2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Pickleball (67%)</li><li>- Sports (Indoor/Outdoor) (19%)</li><li>- Walking/Biking/Cycling/Skating (6%)</li><li>- Programming/Group Activities (4%)</li><li>- Other (4%)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- N/A or Unsure (39%)</li><li>- Tennis (24%)</li><li>- Other Outdoor Sports (Football, Baseball/Softball, Basketball) (20%)</li><li>- Sports Activities (Camps/Youth/Organized, etc.) (12%)</li><li>- Other Activities (Fishing/Arts and Crafts/Skating) (5%)</li></ul>

## RESIDENTS RANK THE MOST IMPORTANT FACILITIES TO DEVELOP

To prioritize the demand for outdoor recreational facilities among Connecticut households, respondents to the 2023 Statewide Survey were asked to indicate their opinion as to the top three most important facilities to develop in municipal- and state-owned recreation areas. Figures 5-1 and 5-2 show the percentage of respondents who chose each of the eighteen recreation facilities as their first, second, and third choices for municipal-owned outdoor recreation areas, while Figures 5-3 and 5-4 show the same information for state-owned recreation areas. To assess trends over time, comparison data from the 2017 SCORP report is also included.

Picnic areas and shelters, followed by paved multi-use trails, were the facilities most frequently noted as top priorities by state residents in 2023, which is consistent with 2017 data. Fourteen percent of 2023 survey respondents chose picnic areas/shelters as their most important facility to develop in both municipal- and state-owned areas, while paved multi-use trails garnered 12% and 10% in municipal- and state-owned areas, respectively. Since facilities such as picnic areas/shelters and paved multi-use trails are used by much of the general population and do not require any recreational skill to utilize, their popularity among the residents of Connecticut is not surprising.

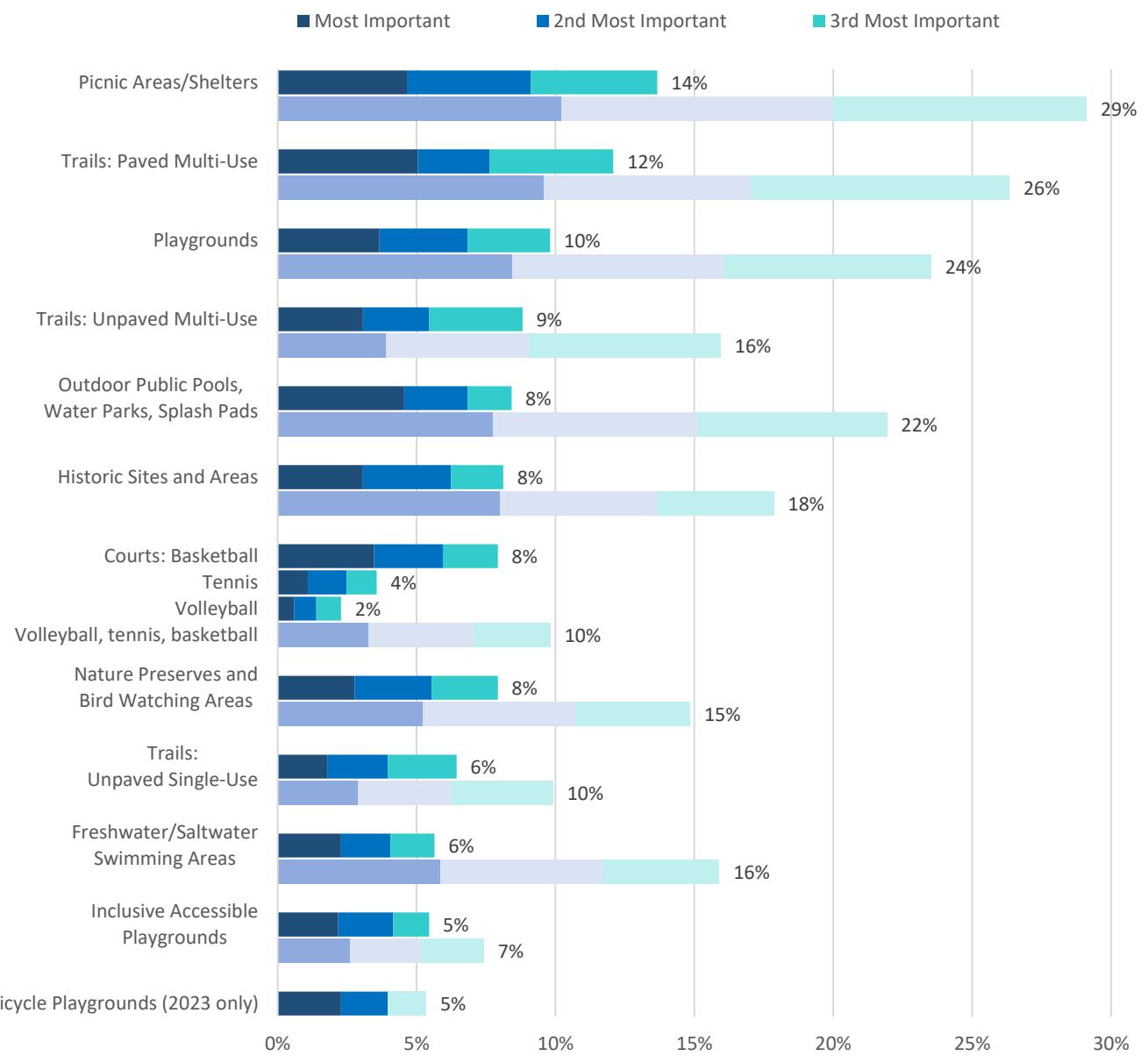
While the rank-order of facilities rated by residents as most important to develop in municipal- and state-owned areas was somewhat similar between 2017 and 2023, there are occasions where the degree of importance of a particular facility differs significantly between the two survey measurements. Swimming areas (freshwater/saltwater) exhibited a large reduction between degree of need in 2017 and degree of need in 2023, which was also true for outdoor pools and playgrounds. Such results may have been influenced by the social distancing policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have affected the popularity of these types of collective recreation activities. A lasting concern towards utilizing shared spaces with high-traffic touchpoints, as pools and playgrounds have, could potentially continue to be an issue in the future.

Trails (paved, unpaved, multi-use, and single-use) showed downward change in degree of importance assigned by survey respondents between 2017 and 2023 for both municipal- and state-owned facilities. Historic sites/areas, fishing, golf courses, and nature preserves/bird watching all showed evidence of decreased importance to Connecticut residents in 2023 compared to 2017. It is unclear whether this decrease reflects less interest in these recreational activities among the population over time, or a situation in which better-met needs have resulted in less desire for additional development in these activities. Nevertheless, these facilities are likely to be a lower priority for recreational development at both a state and local level.

## State Resident Support for Developing Municipal Recreation Areas

by recreation category and survey year for support greater than 5%

(upper bars represent 2023 and lower bars represent 2017)

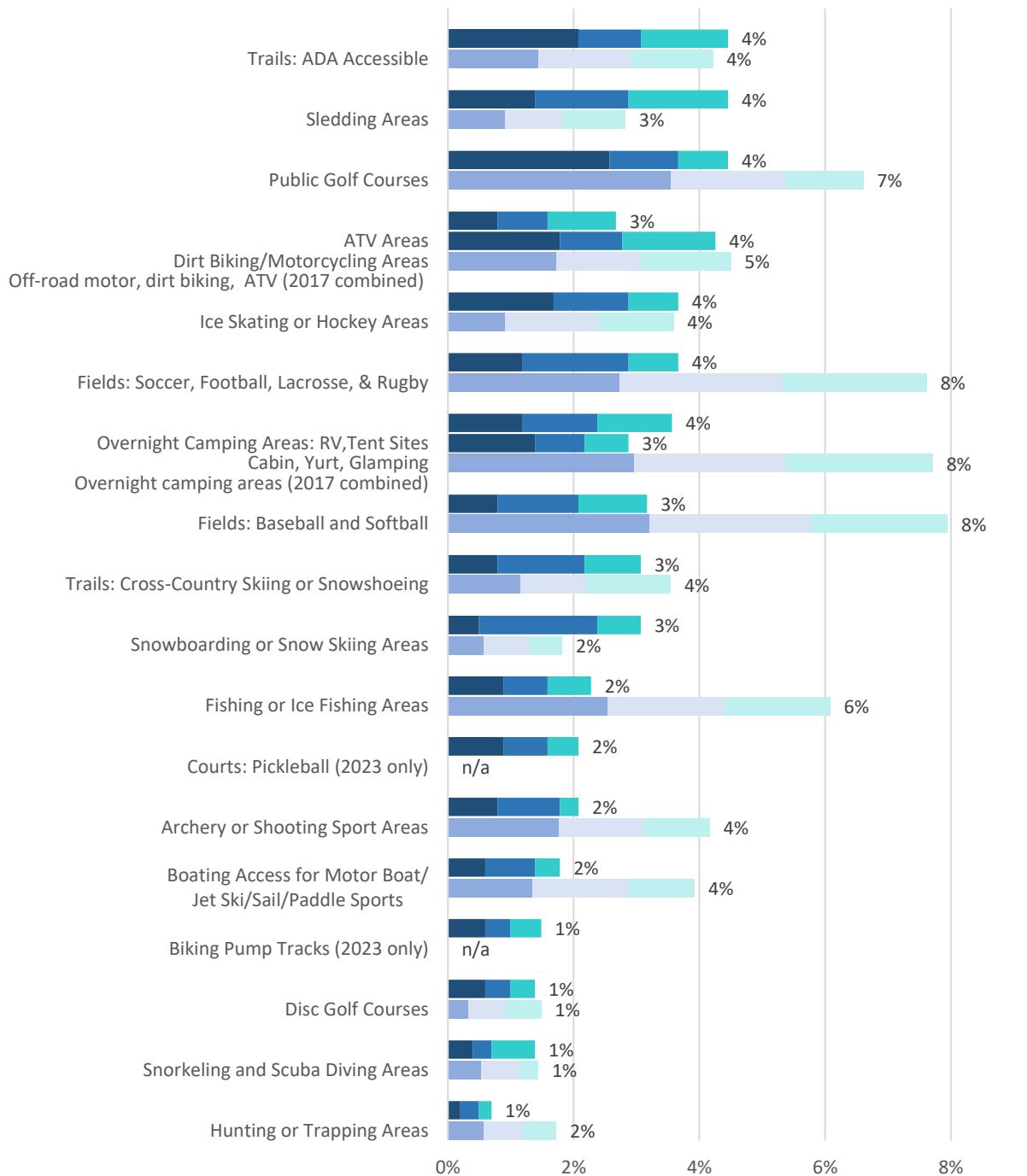


**Figure 5-1: State Resident Support for Developing Municipal Recreation Areas (>5% Support)**

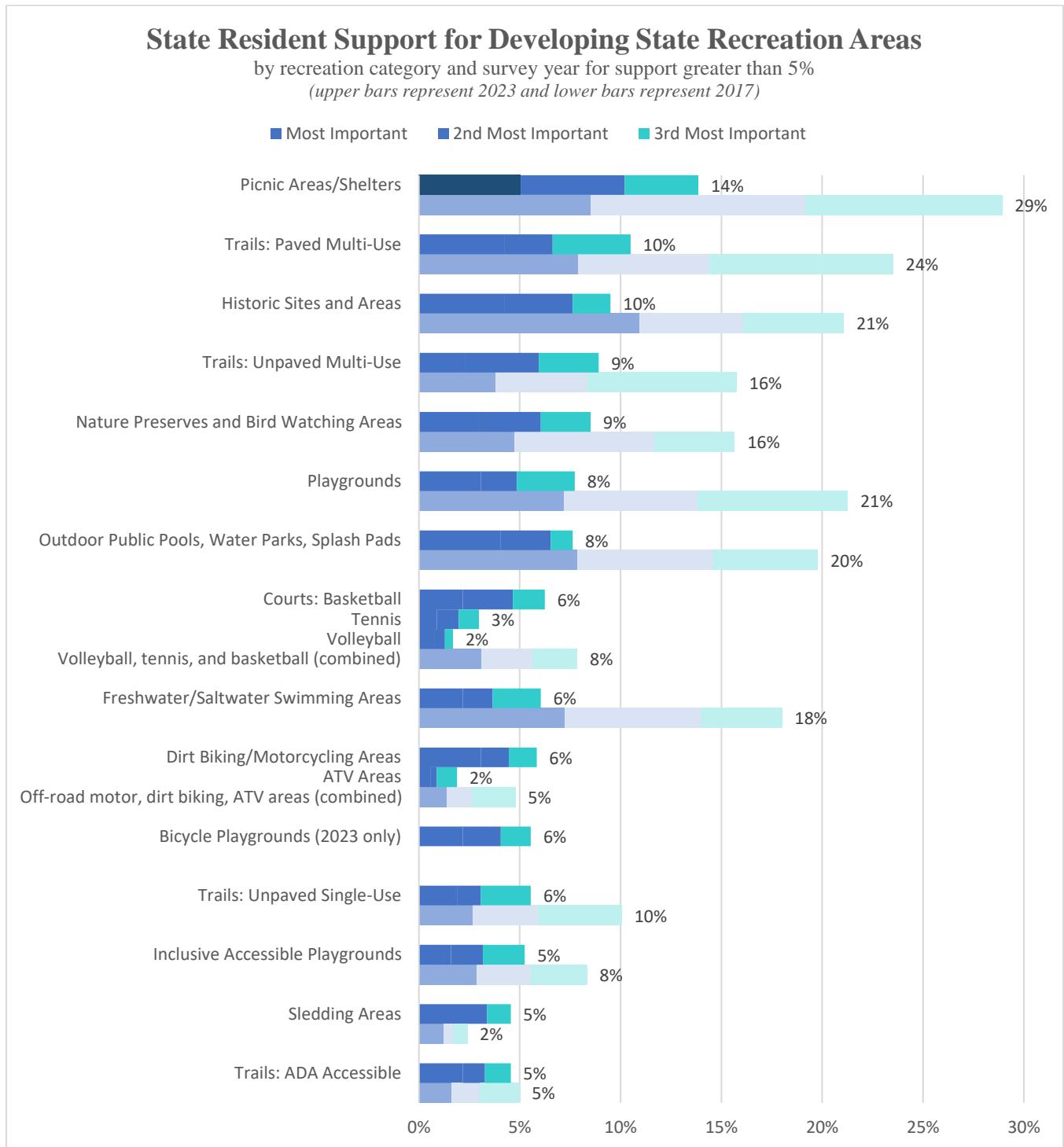
## State Resident Support for Developing Municipal Recreation Areas

by recreation category and survey year for support less than 5%  
(upper bars represent 2023 and lower bars represent 2017)

■ Most Important ■ 2nd Most Important ■ 3rd Most Important



**Figure 5-2: State Resident Support for Developing Municipal Recreation Areas (<5% Support)**



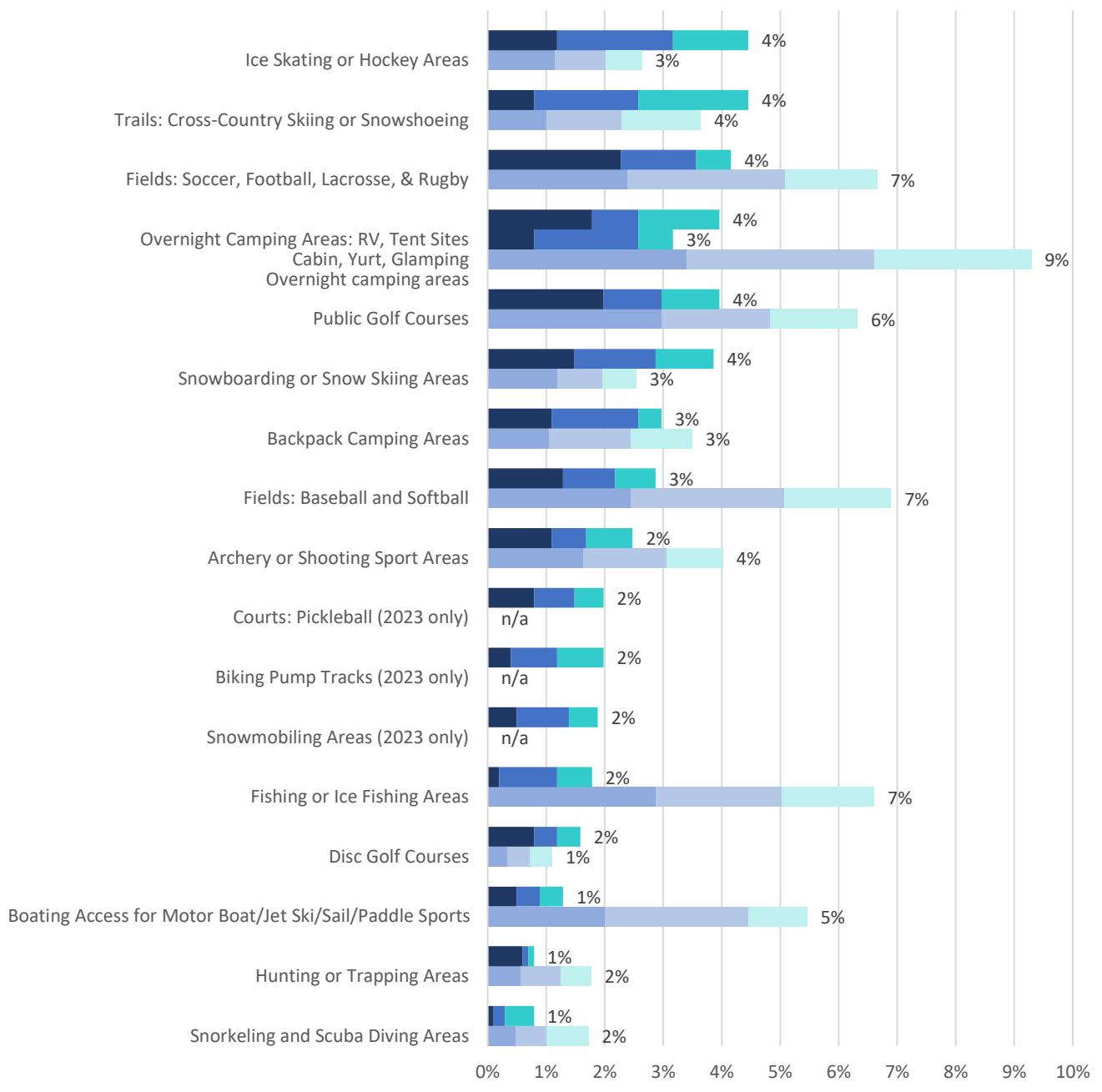
**Figure 5-3: State Resident Support for Developing State Recreation Areas (>5% Support)**

## State Resident Support for Developing State Recreation Areas

by recreation category and survey year for support less than 5%

(upper bars represent 2023 and lower bars represent 2017)

■ Most Important ■ 2nd Most Important ■ 3rd Most Important



**Figure 5-4: State Resident Support for Developing State Recreation Areas (<5% Support)**

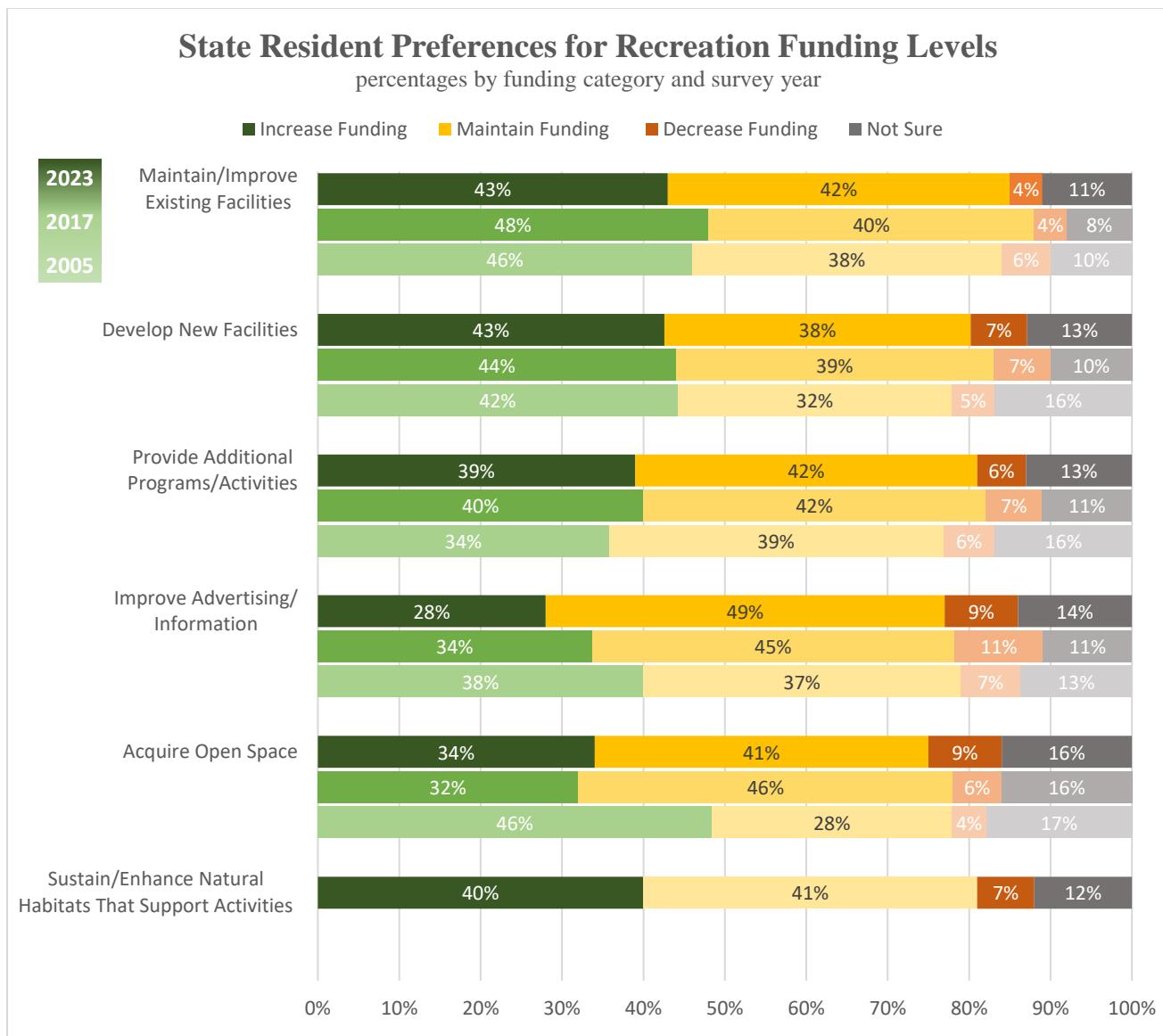
## FUNDING FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION

As potential outdoor recreationalists, many Connecticut residents have an interest in how funding is distributed when it comes to outdoor recreation locally and statewide. To measure the importance given by state residents to bring forward funding suggestions, respondents to the Statewide Survey were asked to consider the following initiatives related to outdoor recreation:

- Maintain and improve existing outdoor facilities
- Develop new outdoor recreation activities
- Provide additional recreation programs and/or activities
- Improve advertising and information regarding existing outdoor facilities and programs
- Acquire open space
- Sustain and enhance natural habitats that support activities such as hunting, wildlife viewing, birding, and hiking
- Other actions

The first thing respondents were asked to indicate was if they felt the state and/or their local community should increase, maintain, or decrease funding for each of the actions listed. Figure 5-5 shows the results of this inquiry, along with a comparison from data from the 2017 and 2005 SCORP reports. The category of sustaining and enhancing natural habitats that support certain activities was a new addition to the 2023 survey; thus, no longitudinal comparison is offered. The 2023 findings suggest that residents are least supportive of increasing advertising for/information about facilities and other actions, with only 28% of residents wanting to see increased funding in this area (down 6% from 2017 and down 10% from 2005). Developing new outdoor recreation activities (43% desiring an increase in funding), as well as maintaining and improving existing facilities (43% desiring an increase in funding), are at the top when it comes to the support behind an increased funding.

Between 2017 and 2023, constituent views regarding funding remained relatively consistent. Additionally, very few think that DEEP should decrease funding (less than 10% for all categories). This suggests that, overall, a strong majority of Connecticut residents want to see either an increase in funding or for funding to be maintained.

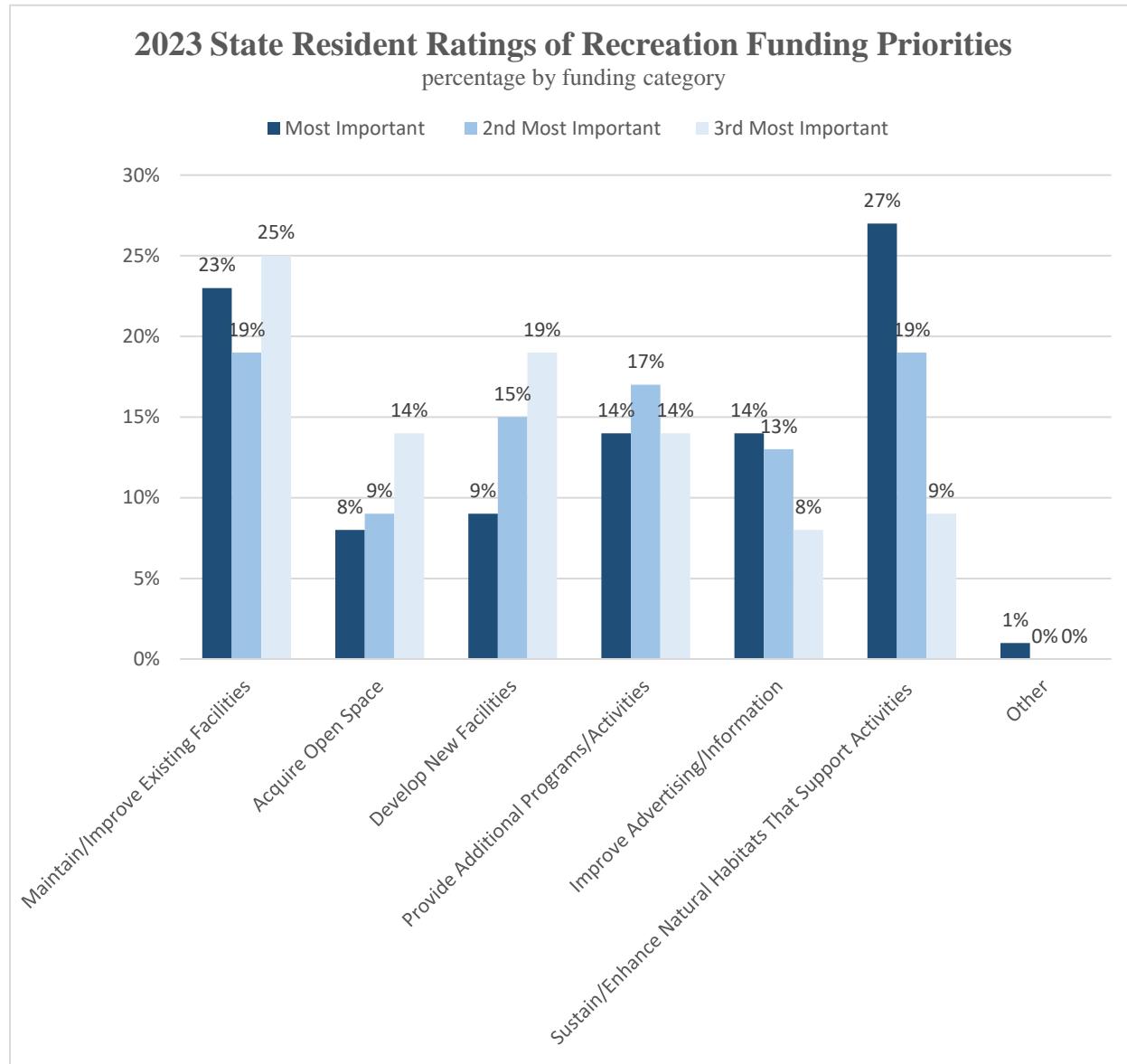


**Figure 5-5: State Resident Preferences for Recreation Funding Levels**

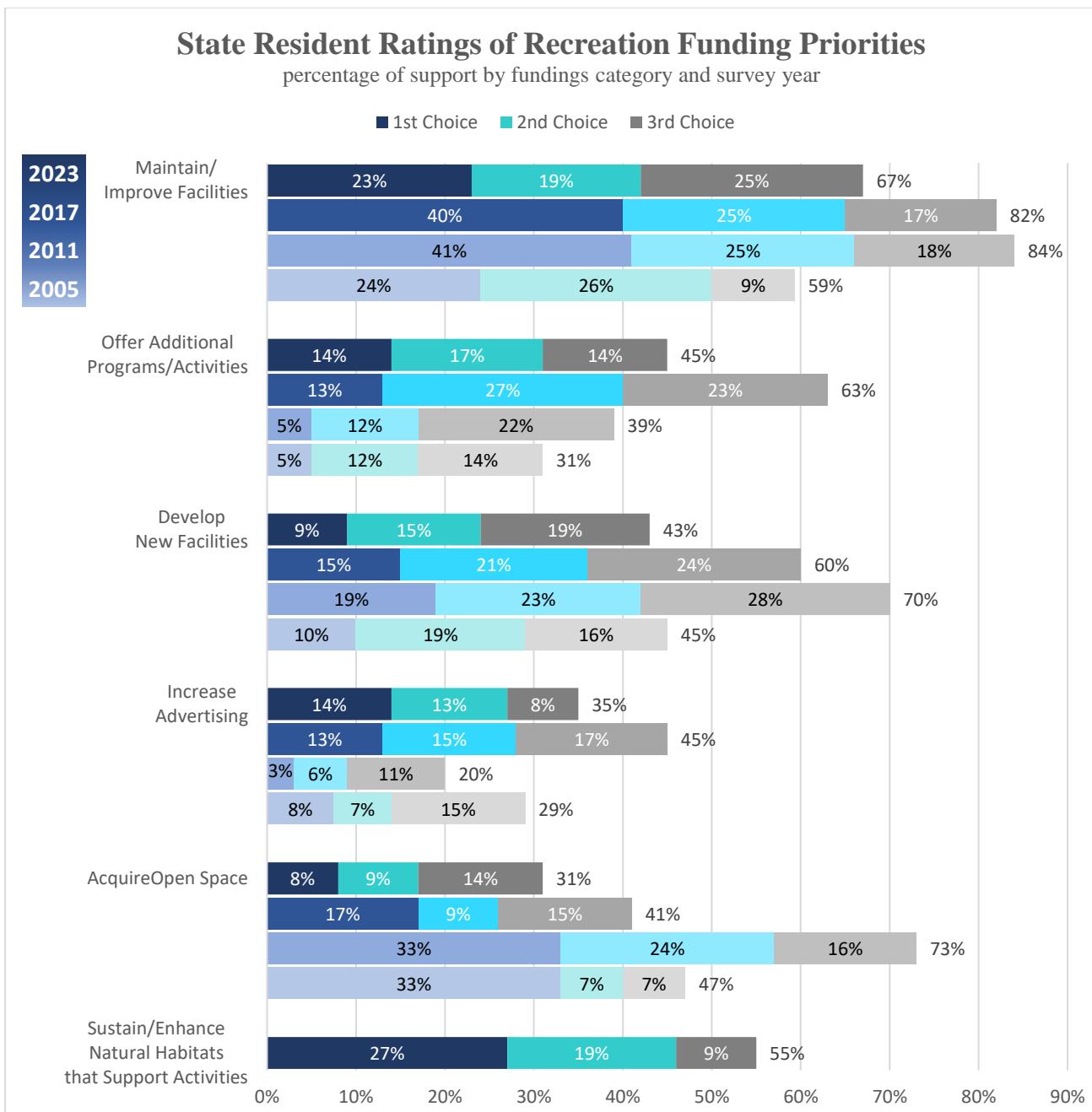
To get a more detailed idea of residents' priorities for outdoor-recreation funding, respondents were asked to rank the top three of six actions they most supported funding. Figures 5-6 and 5-7 display the results from this year along with data from past versions of the SCORP reports. Consistent with the Figure 5-5 showing the 2023 data, residents most support maintaining and improving existing facilities, with 23%, 19%, and 25% choosing it as their first, second, or third most important funding action, respectively. Respondents to the survey in 2023 indicated comparable levels of support for increased funding of sustaining and enhancing natural habitats that support certain activities, with 55% including them in their top three.

Less support was shown for increasing advertising and information, acquiring open space, and developing new activities, with 35%, 31%, and 43%, respectively, including these actions in their

top three. All actions experienced a decrease in support levels from 2017 to 2023. It is fair to say that, while people would like new spaces and new activities, they show more support for the maintenance and improvement of the space and activities they currently have.



**Figure 5-6: 2023 State Resident Ratings of Recreation Funding Priorities**



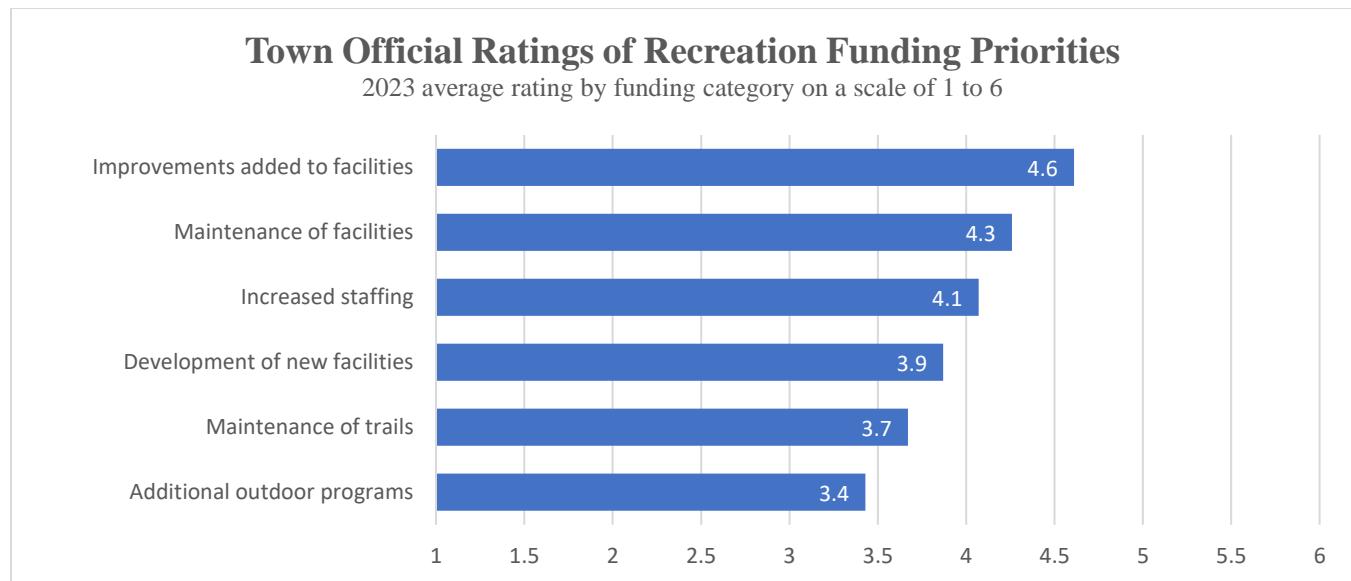
**Figure 5-7: State Resident Ratings of Recreation Funding Priorities**

#### Town Official Ratings of Recreation Funding Priorities

Town officials were asked to rate six outdoor recreational needs in their community on a scale of 1–6, with 1 being the least pressing and 6 being the most urgent need. These needs closely mirror the funding initiatives presented to Statewide Survey respondents, and they include the building of new facilities, improvements to or maintenance of existing facilities, increased staffing, and additional programming. The results of this inquiry are presented in Figure 5-8. Connecticut town officials indicated that their most urgent needs were to improve and

maintain existing recreational facilities, with average ratings of 4.6 and 4.3, respectively. Increased staffing followed in importance with an average rating of 4.1. Maintaining existing trails, offering additional programming, and developing new facilities were rated as somewhat less urgent, with averages of 3.7, 3.4, and 3.9, respectively, though still clearly important concerns for town officials.

Overall, these findings are consistent with those from the Statewide Survey, in which residents indicated a clear preference for maintaining or improving existing facilities (85%) as well as for developing new facilities or programming (81%). Connecticut is already host to a wide variety of outdoor recreational resources, which collectively possess significant maintenance needs. In both the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey and two enthusiast focus groups, avid recreation users identified improvements such as better parking accommodations, more trail marking/signage and connectivity, and provision of amenities such as bathrooms, water sources, and rest stations as some of the more pressing needs of recreational areas.



**Figure 5-8: Town Official Ratings of Recreation Funding Priorities in 2023**

#### Measuring Support for Fee Increases

In the Statewide Survey, state residents were informed of possible increases in operating costs due to improvements to the outdoor recreation facilities and activities. They were then asked about their level of support for fee adjustments for outdoor recreation facilities and resources. The results of this inquiry are shown in Figure 5-9.

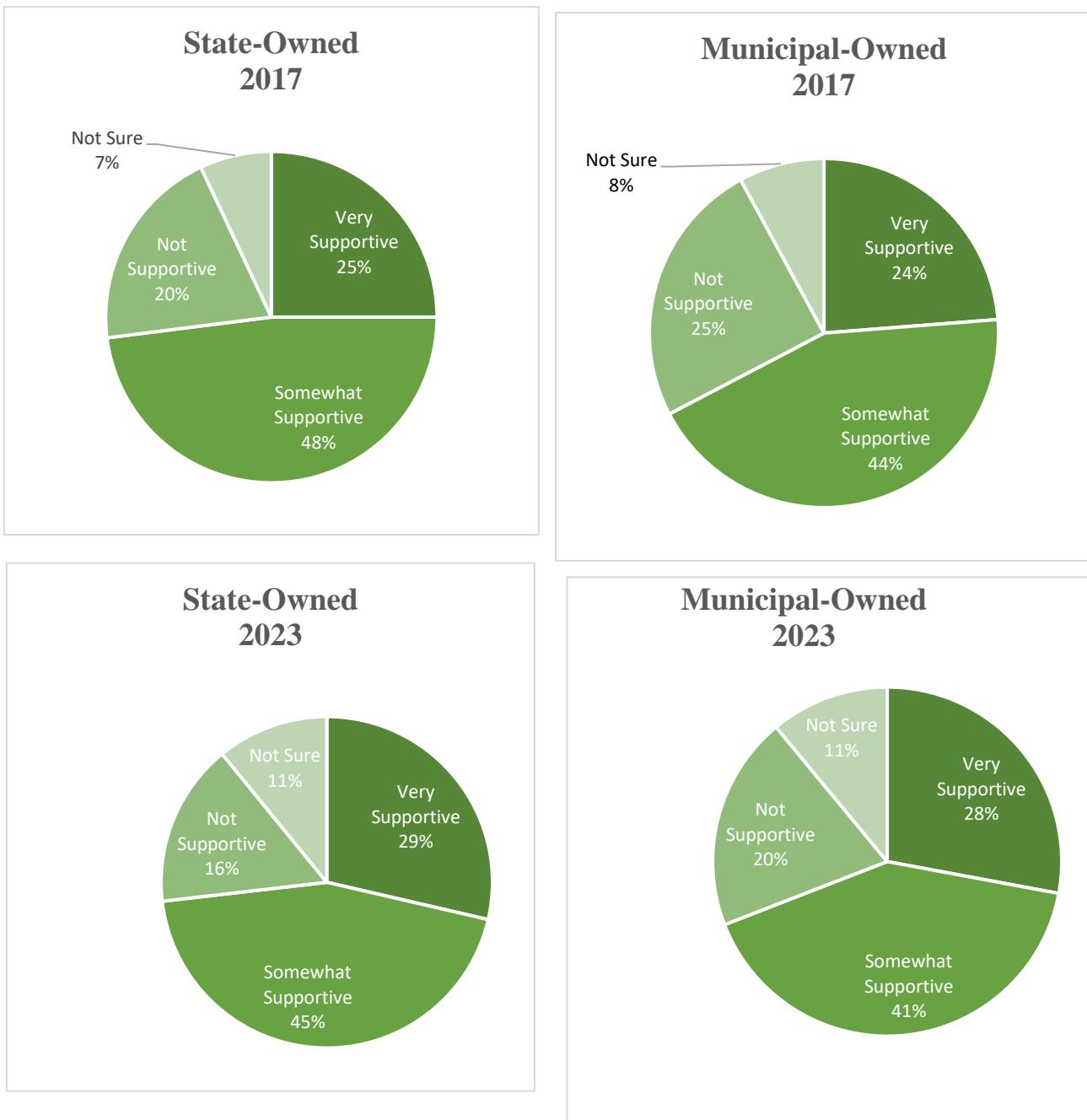
For state-owned recreation areas, about three-quarters of respondents showed some level of support for an increase or implementation in fees to help pay for operating expenses. Over a quarter of residents (29%) indicated being “very supportive” of a fee increase while almost half (45%) indicated that they were “somewhat supportive.” Slightly fewer than one-in-six residents



(16%) are not supportive of a fee increase, while the remaining 11% are not sure.

For local recreation areas, residents were marginally less supportive overall, with a total of 69% indicating they are “very” (28%) or “somewhat” (41%) supportive. One-in-five (20%) residents are not supportive of fee increases for improving the local community while 11% are unsure.

When it comes to supporting the adjustment of fees to improve outdoor recreation facilities, programs, and services, the amount of support is virtually unchanged from 2017 to 2023. In 2023, 74% indicated support (“very” or “somewhat”) for funding state-owned outdoor recreation areas, and in 2017 this percentage was 73%. At the local level, overall support in 2017 was 68% (24% “very” and 44% “somewhat”) and in 2023 it was 69% (28% and 41% respectively).



**Figure 5-9: Residents' Support Levels for Increased Facility Fees in 2017 & 2023**

(Note that percentages may total more than 100% due to rounding.)

## SECTION VI: FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

### AVID OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS

Two groups of avid outdoor enthusiasts, five individuals each, convened virtually via Microsoft Teams. Individuals were identified through two means of recruitment—via informal conversations CCESR staff had with facility visitors while advertising the Current Recreationalist Survey, as well as via emails and phone calls that the staff received regarding this project more broadly. The results of these focus groups were non-representative beyond those who participated in this portion of the study. The enthusiasts participated in a wide range of outdoor recreation activities, including mountain and road biking, trial running and walking, pond hockey, lake and ocean swimming, ATV riding, hunting, and outdoor archery.

Avid outdoor enthusiasts were asked whether their needs were completely met while engaging in their favorite activity, and if not, why. Participants expressed mixed opinions regarding the extent to which their needs were met, a finding that correlates with 2023 survey findings. In one focus group, a comparison quickly emerged between pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic feelings. Many participants reported feeling that their outdoor recreation experiences in Connecticut have changed substantially since the pandemic. When prompted to elaborate by CCESR staff, two interconnected themes emerged as prominent responses. First, avid outdoor enthusiasts pointed to an increase in fellow users who disregard DEEP facility policies. They described a dramatic uptick in selfish behavior, with other users being inconsiderate of shared space. Specific areas of concern included an observed increase in marijuana use, vandalism, the use of speakers to play explicit music, unleashed dogs, and illegal use of space that contributes to user conflict (such as riding ATVs on trails or powerboats being driven at excessive speeds in no-wake zones). Second, avid outdoor enthusiasts expressed frustration at the lack of enforcement of facilities regulations, which they felt emboldened users to continue neglecting regulations. Participants strongly felt that DEEP staff have been more reluctant to enforce regulations since the pandemic. Avid outdoor enthusiasts welcomed the idea of stricter enforcement as a means of making their outdoor recreation experience more enjoyable, as well as a means of maintaining the conditions of the facilities that they frequent. They want rangers and other DEEP staff to have more power in dealing with facility users as they see violations occurring.

Similar to 2017, avid outdoor enthusiasts expressed concern over their inability to practice preferred activities safely, legally, or as freely as they desired. This finding was especially true of ATV riders and hunters. Enthusiasts who enjoy these activities voiced concern over several legal barriers. Hunters described regulations concerning the type and number of animals they can hunt, land-use laws, and Sunday hunting restrictions. ATV enthusiasts pointed to their inability

to ride on state land. These criticisms then transitioned to a discussion of how Connecticut does not have a welcoming culture towards certain activities. This was expressed by hunters, mountain bikers, and ATV riders. New Hampshire was praised for how the state embraces these activities, evidenced by their laws and facilities. Their multi-use trail system that allows for ATV riding was cited as one example of an activity-friendly facility. Avid outdoor enthusiasts called for an easing of restrictions so they could have legal access to their activity (ATV riders) or an expansion of existing legal access (hunters).

Both enthusiast focus groups concluded on a similar note—with participants expressing a love for the natural beauty of the state. A primary challenge the groups saw for DEEP was to effectively promote the fact that Connecticut has such natural beauty available for residents to enjoy. Echoing sentiments expressed in 2017, participants expressed concern that fellow residents may be unaware of the natural resources right in front of them.

### **LIMITED RECREATIONISTS**

Two groups of five limited recreationists were established, with recruitment taking place via three main outlets: emails that the CCESR staff received concerning this project, word-of-mouth from CCESR staff, and through informal conversations that transpired while recruiting for other elements of this project. “Limited recreationists” are those who self-identify as experiencing significant barriers to outdoor recreation. Some of these limited recreationists engaged in infrequent outdoor recreation, such as walking on a rail trail once a month, while others engaged in zero outdoor activities.

The most prominent barriers to recreation were discussed with limited recreationalists. Participants described the challenge of fitting recreation into their busy schedules. Many participants held numerous jobs and had family and/or caretaking responsibilities. Some were going to school as well. These barriers compounded with their perceived inability to enjoy shared space at DEEP facilities. Some participants described not having a good time at the DEEP facilities, particularly beach locations, which negatively influenced their desire to engage in future usage at any location. Similar to avid outdoor enthusiasts, these individuals pointed to the behavior of other users as a major concern. They described other facility-users as selfish and inconsiderate. The playing of loud music, often with multiple speakers overlapping one another, was the most discussed concern. The observation of illegal drug use was also discussed, as was the unwanted smell of marijuana.

At the same time, limited recreationalists described having quality outdoor recreation choices available to them locally. Municipal parks and trails were seen as convenient alternatives. The ease of parking at these local facilities was seen in a highly favorable light, as was the versatility of these facilities. One example that was applauded for its versatility was Stanley Quarter Park in New Britain, which features a playground, paved and unpaved trails, birdwatching

opportunities next to the pond, a skate park, baseball diamonds, and a large multi-use field. The common sentiment was that when participants had margin in their schedule to enjoy the outdoors, saving time (via the commute and parking) was very important.

Limited recreationalists were asked to comment on the degree to which they felt facility overcrowding was an issue at the DEEP locations that they visit. They felt it was a big area of concern, especially during the summer. Some valuable ideas emerged when participants were asked to brainstorm suggestions on how DEEP could better navigate crowding concerns. One suggestion that was universally applauded was the idea of allowing users to opt-in to a DEEP text-messaging system. Users could specify the types of updates that they would like to receive via text, including parking lot closures. Participants warned against an over-reliance on social media communication, suggesting that would not reach certain demographics. Even younger participants echoed this concern, saying that they avoid social media usage completely. Notably, across all age groups represented, limited recreationalists indicated that they would prefer text messages over communication made via social media.



## SECTION VII: METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

It is important to point out the methodological limitations of this study—including the implications of those limitations for readers of this report. We point out the most prominent limitations of each survey, noting that this discussion should not be considered exhaustive. Every effort was made to minimize limitations during the data collection process. With that said, recruiting a survey sample that precisely mirrors a target population is often unrealistic and not possible due to practical considerations such as participant availability, project timelines, and more. In that vein, while the research team sought to maximize data precision, exact precision was not a realistic expectation.

### STATEWIDE SURVEY

The 2023 Statewide Survey was designed to approximate opinions of the Connecticut population based on demographic quotas pertaining to gender, race/ethnicity, county of residence, and household income. While these quotas were generally satisfied, they were not universally met to the exact specifications. As one example, looking at household income in Figure 1-11, the 2023 Statewide Survey skews slightly (3-4%) to a lower income population. Turning to ethnicity (Figure 1-3) as another example, Caucasians are underestimated (65% in the 2023 Statewide Survey vs. 74% in the 2021 ACS), while those with Hispanic ancestry are overestimated (18% in the 2021 ACS vs. 27% in the 2023 Statewide Survey). These are just two of many examples that can be observed in the data. While best efforts were made to meet the demographic quotas, ultimately, the 2023 Statewide Survey does not represent a precise mirror of the Connecticut population. Throughout this report, we use the phrase “closely mirrors” in describing the extent to which the 2023 Statewide Survey represents the Connecticut population. This is an acknowledgement that the survey sample is reflective of the Connecticut population in many ways, but not in totality.

Turning to demographic variables not utilized in the quota sampling, more sizable discrepancies are observed between the 2023 Statewide Survey sample and 2021 ACS findings. As one such example, the demographics section of this report illustrates how the 2023 Statewide Survey sample compares to 2021 ACS findings on the number household members. Figure 1-4 on page 22, representing the number of household members, shows that the number of single-person households is underrepresented in the 2023 Statewide Survey by 12% (17% in the 2023 Statewide Survey vs. 29% in the 2021 ACS), while the number of households with 4 or more members is overrepresented by 13% (34% in the 2023 Statewide Survey vs. 21% in the 2021 ACS). The term “Connecticut residents” is used throughout this report as a designator of the opinions collected in the 2023 Statewide Survey. Readers are encouraged to regard this term as a strong—but not precise—estimation of the actual opinions of Connecticut residents.

## AVID OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST SURVEY

The 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey was designed to capture the sentiments of self-identifying Connecticut “avid outdoor enthusiasts.” This survey was distributed using non-probability sampling, meaning that every element of the population did not have an equal chance of selection for this study. It is not possible to approximate the margin of error in this survey’s findings, as the true population is not known. This means that the findings presented throughout this report may vary, to unknown degrees, compared to the actual population of Connecticut avid outdoor enthusiasts.

One of the areas of ambiguity in this survey is that there is no firm definition for what constitutes an “avid outdoor enthusiast.” This means that individuals who received this survey had to discern, without guidance from the researchers, what that term meant. The lack of guidance was purposeful. Ultimately, participation hinged on whether or not a survey recipient identified with a subjective term—which raises a clear concern of self-selection bias. Beyond actual outdoor activity participation levels, there may be systematic differences in the types of people who are more likely to self-identify with the “avid outdoor enthusiast” label. For example, the sample for the 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey was comprised of significantly more men than women (68.2% men to 30.7% women, with the remainder identifying as non-binary/gender diverse or other). With 4,732 individuals responding to this gender question, a very sizable participation number, this finding raises questions about why the gender disparity exists. While one cannot say definitively, it is possible that men are more culturally inclined or motivated to identify as an “avid outdoor enthusiast.” Ultimately, it is not possible to measure the degree of error introduced by this self-selection bias; thus, the research team does not know how far the opinions expressed by participants may stray from those held by the actual population of Connecticut avid outdoor enthusiasts.

Further, this survey was distributed in a non-random way. This means that the researchers did not have direct control over how this survey was disseminated. The survey link was initially shared by the researchers through identifiable channels; however, the link was subsequently shared widely among interested parties, networks, and organizations. This introduces a bias of unknown extent into the findings. One example of how this bias manifest in the data can be seen in Figure 3-14, which illustrates the preferred (overall and first-choice) activities of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts. The findings suggest that 16% of 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts identified hunting or trapping as their first-choice activity, with an additional 11% citing hunting or trapping as their second- through fifth-preferred activity. This means that, collectively, 27% of all survey-takers identified hunting or trapping as one of their top-five preferred activities. Given the nonrandom method of distribution, it is reasonable to conclude that hunters and trappers, as one example, were overrepresented in the Avid Outdoor Enthusiast sample. It should be noted that activity overrepresentations are interesting datapoints in themselves, as

they speak to a motivation to be heard.

The term “Avid Outdoor Enthusiast” is used throughout this report as a designator of the opinions collected in the 2023 Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey. This descriptor references the 5,210 individuals who elected to participate in this survey. It is unknown how, or the extent to which, the findings from these individuals may vary from the actual population of Connecticut Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts.

## **TOWN OFFICIALS SURVEY**

The 2023 Town Officials Survey was designed to capture the opinions of town officials from all of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities. While every effort was made to encourage participation from all 169 municipalities, including both email and phone call inquiries, only 55 municipalities responded to the survey. It is important to note that these 55 participating areas do not constitute a representative sample of all of Connecticut’s towns and cities.

In 2023, 33% of Connecticut municipalities participated in the Town Officials Survey. Looking at the populations of these areas, we see that the towns and cities represented are collectively less populous than the actual average population of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities. More specifically, the average population of the 55 participating municipalities was 19,772, with a median of 12,336. The actual average population of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities, according to 2022 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, is 21,457, with a median of 12,537. Notably, the five most populous cities in Connecticut did not participate in the 2023 survey. Looking more broadly, among the 25 most populous municipalities in Connecticut, only six responded to the 2023 survey: *Norwalk (#6), Danbury (#7), West Hartford (#9), Bristol (#14), Middletown (#20), and Wallingford (#21).* This urban contrast is one example of the limitations in generalizing the sample of 55 to all 169 municipalities in the state.

*When comparing the 2017 and 2023 Town Officials Survey samples, clear demographic departures exist.* The average population of the municipalities represented in the 2017 Town Officials Survey sample is 28,070, with a median of 19,791. Contrasted with the same measures of central tendency observed in the 2023 sample, sizable differences are apparent. This is particularly notable for a state in which the largest municipality population is 148,377 (Bridgeport) and the smallest is 794 (Union). While 24 towns and cities participated in both the 2017 and 2023 iterations of the survey, the majority of areas represented did not overlap. When coupled with possible changes to town staff members responding from year to year, the limitations of this study’s comparative data become even more pronounced.

There are sections of this report in which sizable differences are observed between the 2017 and 2023 Town Officials Survey results. For example, Figure 2-1 on pages 36-37 illustrates the acreage of open space for active and passive recreation as reported by town officials. In 2017, 29% of towns reported having 301–999 acres of open space dedicated to active outdoor

recreation—a percentage that dropped to 15% in 2023. These findings invite the question—what happened to that acreage? When considering results like this, it is important to remember that the 2017 and 2023 iterations of the Town Officials Survey attracted a largely different set of participating municipalities. In this specific example, the data differences observed between 2017 and 2023 are likely due to the natural variability inherent between the two samples more than an actual shift in open space acreage dedicated to active outdoor recreation. When looking at 2023 findings in isolation, it is important to remember that the sample is not a mirror of all Connecticut municipalities—only those that elected to participate. When attempting to interpret comparisons between 2017 and 2023 findings, these data departures become even more relevant.

### **CURRENT RECREATIONALISTS SURVEY**

The 2023 Current Recreationalists Survey was designed to capture the opinions of current and/or recent visitors to DEEP facilities. While the analysis of this survey is limited to the Annotated Questionnaire, it is still important to highlight some of the limitations of how this information was collected.

The distribution of this survey called for the research team to visit DEEP facilities to raise awareness about the study. Facility visits took one of two forms: (1) distributing signage, or (2) distributing signage in conjunction with having a sustained presence at the location lasting no fewer than two hours. For signage-only visits, researchers passed out postcards with QR codes linked to the survey to those in the immediate area, hung posters, and displayed yard signs advertising the study. For sustained visits, researchers did these same tasks while also interacting with facility visitors for a minimum of two hours. The majority of sustained visits lasted three hours or more.

The CT DEEP features four different facility types—State Parks, State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, and State Boat Launches. To identify which specific areas would be visited, a listing of all facility locations, categorized by facility type, was provided by DEEP and randomized by the CCSU research team. Post-randomization, the first five locations for each facility type were targeted for sustained visitation and the subsequent eight for signage only. The researchers then randomized days of the week and visitation time windows, with rank order connecting these results to specific facilities for sustained visits. This process was executed in an attempt to ensure that a wide range of locations, days, and times were represented in site visits.

Out of 359 total facilities, 20 were identified for sustained visitation and 32 for signage only via this random process. An additional 12 facilities were selected based on two factors. The first was geographical convenience; meaning, the facility was identified as being within a reasonable driving distance of, or along the driving route to, one of the randomized locations. The other

factor was the direct request of DEEP; meaning, DEEP asked CCSU to visit a specific facility on a particular day.

Due to practical considerations, some of the visitation times and days had to be adjusted from those initially identified via random selection. Factors such as weather and personnel availability resulted in the randomized outcomes not being wholly observed. For example, with a few exceptions, researchers generally did not engage in sustained visits on days with heavy rain. While every attempt was made to meet the randomized schedule, practical limitations resulted in some departures from that goal.

Using the method of selection described, the majority of DEEP facilities were not visited in any capacity. Further, selected locations were only visited once and for a very limited time. While the intention was for signage to help raise awareness about the survey, the longevity of that signage was not known. Signs could have been removed by facility visitors or blown down by wind, among other things.

Ultimately, the 2023 Current Recreationalists Survey attracted 249 participants. In a state with a population of over 3.6 million residents, an incredibly large volume of people visited DEEP facilities during the study period without being made aware of, or participating in, this survey. When reviewing the data presented in the 2023 Current Recreationalists Survey Annotated Questionnaire, it is important to keep the scope of this sample in mind. It is unknown how, or the extent to which, the findings from these 249 individuals may vary from the actual population of Connecticut Current Recreationalists.

## **FOCUS GROUPS**

Finally, this research involved the assembly of four focus groups. The objective of these focus groups was to capture more in-depth perspectives from members of two different study cohorts—Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts and Limited Recreationalists. The groups were assembled after all quantitative data was collected, allowing the research team to further investigate some of the survey findings.

Looking at the Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts, two groups, each consisting of five individuals, convened virtually on Microsoft Teams. Demographically, the first group comprised of three males and two females. Three individuals identified as Caucasian, one as Hispanic, and one as African American. The ages of participants ranged from 22 to 58. The second focus group of Avid Outdoor Enthusiasts comprised of three males and two females. Two participants identified as African American, one as Asian, and the remainder (2) as Caucasian. The ages of participants ranged from 20 to 62.

Turning to the Limited Recreationalists, two groups, each consisting of five individuals, convened on the CCSU campus in New Britain. Demographically, the first group was comprised of three females and two males. Three individuals identified as Caucasian and two as Hispanic.

The ages of participants ranged from 19 to 48. Within the second group, three males, one female, and one non-binary individual participated. Four participants identified as Caucasian and one as African American, with ages ranging from 19 to 53.

The purpose of this focus group methodology was not to produce findings that could be extrapolated to an entire population. Rather, the purpose was to get a glimpse into perspectives that could be further considered, and measured more systematically, moving forward. To that end, the focus group findings solely represent the opinions of those who participated in each respective group. They are not to be generalized beyond those individuals.

## SECTION VIII: STATEWIDE OUTDOOR RECREATION DEMAND ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE

### **SURVEY INTRODUCTION**

This fifteen-minute online survey is designed to help the development of a new Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). In order to include the viewpoints of as many of Connecticut's residents as possible, you are invited to participate in this survey. You will be asked to complete an online survey in which you will share your thoughts and experiences on outdoor recreation priorities in our state. You must be a Connecticut resident and at least 18 years old to participate. Before agreeing to participate, please read the following information carefully.

Your privacy will be protected at all times. Your participation and survey responses are anonymous, meaning that the information you provide cannot be identified or tied to you. You may discontinue your participation at any time. This information has been provided so you know what to expect if you participate in this study. Your consent will be implied by your completion and submission of this survey. The data collected will be used to help inform the upcoming Connecticut Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. To convey that you understand and agree to participate, please press the right arrow found below.

Thank you for making our state a better place to live!

*This study has been reviewed and approved by the CCSU IRB (Protocol #10271).*

## SECTION 1: FILTER & QUOTAS

S1. Do you currently reside in the state of Connecticut? (If no, survey was concluded)

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
Yes	100%
No	0%

S2. What is your home zip code? (top 10 zip codes presented in table)

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
06457 (N = 25) Middletown	3%
06010 (N = 22) Bristol	2%
06511 (N = 19) New Haven	2%
06053 (N = 18) New Britain	2%
06360 (N = 18) Norwich	2%
06484 (N = 18) Shelton	2%
06516 (N = 17) West Haven	2%
06810 (N = 17) Danbury	2%
06066 (N = 15) Vernon	2%
06514 (N = 15) Hamden	2%

S3. What county do you reside in?<sup>6</sup>

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
Hartford County	26%
New Haven County	24%
Fairfield County	24%
New London County	8%
Middlesex County	5%
Litchfield County	5%
Tolland County	4%
Windham County	3%

S6. What is your annual household income?

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
Under \$15,000	9%
\$15,000 – \$24,999	8%
\$25,000 – \$34,999	7%
\$35,000 – \$49,999	10%
\$50,000 – \$74,999	15%
\$75,000 – \$99,999	13%

<sup>6</sup> Note: For this table and all other tables, the sum may not add to 100% because of rounding.

\$100,000 – \$149,999	19%
\$150,000 – \$199,999	10%
\$200,000 or more	10%

S4. What is your gender?

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
Female	51.1%
Male	48.9%

S5. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?

Response Category <i>Multiple responses accepted</i>	Total N = 1,010
Caucasian	65%
Hispanic/Latino	18%
African-American	13%
Asian-American	4%
Other	0.1%

## SECTION 2: DEMOGRAPHICS

D1. Are you or other members of your household of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish ancestry?

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
Yes	27.4%
No	72.6%

D2. What is the primary language you speak in your household?

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
English	91%
Spanish	7%
Arabic	0%
Bengali	0%
Hindi/Urdu	0.1%
Japanese	0.1%
Korean	0%
Polish	0.2%
Portuguese	1%
Russian	0.2%
Other	1%

D2B. “Other” responses:

Response Category (Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
Telugu	1

German/Dutch	2
Mandarin	3
Marathi	4
Chinese	5
Cape Verdean Creole	6

D3. What is the highest level of education you have received?

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
Less than high school graduate	3%
High school graduate	22%
Some college or trade school	27%
College graduate	32%
Post graduate degree	17%

D4. What is your age?

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
10–14 years	—
15–19 years	4%
20–24 years	12%
25–34 years	19%
35–44 years	21%
45–54 years	16%
55–64 years	12%
65+ years	17%

D5. Counting yourself, how many people live in your household?

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
1	17%
2	29%
3	20%
4	20%
5	8%
6	4%
7	2%
8	1%
9	0.3%
10+	0.3%

D6. Counting yourself, how many people in your household fall into each age category? [Please review each age category carefully. If nobody in your household is of a particular age category, type '0' or leave that item blank.]

Response Category <i>Percentage of households reporting at least one person in age category</i>	Total N (respondents) = 1,010 Total N (all households) = 2,870 <sup>7</sup>
Under 5 years	13%
5–9 years	16%
10–14 years	16%
15–19 years	19%
20–24 years	20%
25–34 years	26%
35–44 years	31%
45–54 years	25%
55–64 years	22%
65+ years	27%

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<sup>7</sup>Percentages represent the proportion of total household members reported in the sample (N = 2,870) falling into each age category.

D7. Do you or other members of your household have any of the following health conditions? Check all that apply, or “none” if no condition is present.

Response Category <i>Multiple responses accepted, total N varies by response option</i>	Percentage
Blindness or a vision impairment that requires the use of readers, a guide animal, or equipment while walking (N=51)	5%
Deafness or hearing loss that requires the use of a hearing aid or other devices (N=71)	7%
Physical or mobility limitation that makes walking or climbing steps difficult, or requires the use of a wheelchair, cane, walker, or other aide (N=139)	14%
None (N=878)	78%

## ACTIVITIES INTRODUCTION

The SCORP is a plan for OUTDOOR recreation; however, many activities can be enjoyed outdoors or indoors. For the purposes of this survey, please only consider the occasions when recreation occurs outdoors. For example, if you swim at an indoor pool for exercise, and you occasionally swim at an outdoor pool during the summer, please consider only the outdoor swimming activities in your responses to this survey.

## SECTION 3: OUTDOOR LAND-BASED ACTIVITIES

Listed below are various OUTDOOR, LAND-BASED recreation activities that Connecticut residents can participate in within their local home communities or throughout the state. For each activity, please indicate how many members of your household have participated in the activity during the past 12 months.

Q3A. Counting yourself, how many members of your household have participated in each OUTDOOR, LAND-BASED activity during the past 12 months? *[Please review each activity carefully. If no one in your household participates in an activity, write “0” for the number of household users or leave that item blank.]*

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Percentage of total household members reported</i>	<b>Total N (respondents) = 1,010</b> <b>Total N (all household) = 2,870<sup>8</sup></b>
Running	30%
Walking or hiking	69%
Road biking/biking in neighborhoods	25%
Mountain biking – Trail, Dirt, Off-road	9%
Mountain Biking – Snow Covered Trail, Winter Fat Biking	6%
Biking – park/bicycle playground	23%
Multi-use trail biking	11%
Rollerblading or skateboarding	12%
Horseback riding	5%
Horse camping	3%
ATVing	6%
Dirt biking/Motorcycling	6%
Snowmobiling	6%

<sup>8</sup> Percentages represent the proportion of total household members reported in the sample (N = 2,870) participating in each activity.

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Percentage of total household members reported</i>	<b>Total N (respondents) = 1,010</b> <b>Total N (all household) = 2,870<sup>8</sup></b>
Downhill skiing or snowboarding	<b>11%</b>
Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing	<b>5%</b>
Sledding	<b>21%</b>
Ice skating or hockey	<b>10%</b>
Backpack camping	<b>9%</b>
Tent camping	<b>18%</b>
RV/trailer camping	<b>10%</b>
Bird watching	<b>17%</b>
Wildlife Viewing	<b>22%</b>
Photography – nature and/or wildlife	<b>19%</b>
Visiting historic sites/areas	<b>35%</b>
Hunting or trapping	<b>4%</b>
Tennis	<b>9%</b>
Pickleball	<b>5%</b>
Basketball	<b>21%</b>
Volleyball	<b>8%</b>
Football, lacrosse, field hockey, or rugby	<b>8%</b>
Baseball or softball	<b>11%</b>
Soccer	<b>12%</b>
Golf	<b>12%</b>
Disc Golf	<b>3%</b>
Ultimate Frisbee	<b>3%</b>
Geocaching, letterboxing, or mobile app games	<b>13%</b>
Other	<b>2%</b>

Q3B. Please indicate approximately how often you or members of your household have participated in each OUTDOOR, LAND-BASED recreation activity during the past 12 months (or, if the activity is seasonal, during the most recent season). If more than one person in your household participated in the activity, record the average frequency that all members of your household participate. *Note: activity was only asked if Q3 indicated that participation in an activity occurs.*

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	<b>Seldom or Never</b>	<b>Less than Once a Month</b>	<b>At least Once a Month</b>	<b>A few times a Month</b>	<b>Several times a Week</b>
Running (N=435)	<b>3%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>37%</b>
Walking or hiking (N=804)	<b>2%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>46%</b>
Road biking/biking in neighborhoods (N=360)	<b>5%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>18%</b>
Mountain biking – trail/dirt/off-road (N=144)	<b>10%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Mountain biking – snow covered trails/winter	<b>9%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>12%</b>

Response Category <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	Seldom or Never	Less than Once a Month	At least Once a Month	A few times a Month	Several times a Week
fat biking (N= 86)					
Biking– park/bicycle playground (N= 310)	4%	16%	26%	38%	16%
Multi-use trail biking (N=155)	7%	19%	30%	35%	10%
Rollerblading or skateboarding (N=195)	11%	23%	25%	26%	15%
Horseback riding (N=91)	10%	33%	23%	24%	10%
Horse camping (N=41)	12%	37%	17%	20%	15%
ATVing (N= 91)	10%	26%	29%	19%	17%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling (N= 100)	12%	16%	26%	25%	21%
Snowmobiling (N= 90)	13%	39%	16%	23%	9%
Downhill skiing or snowboarding (N=159)	11%	41%	21%	21%	6%
Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing (N=83)	17%	37%	25%	15%	6%
Sledding (N=254)	13%	54%	15%	15%	3%
Ice skating or hockey (N=159)	11%	47%	20%	16%	6%
Backpack camping (N=132)	13%	44%	21%	19%	3%
Tent camping (N=218)	10%	56%	19%	12%	2%
RV/trailer camping (N=105)	12%	40%	15%	23%	10%
Bird watching (N= 253)	5%	13%	22%	33%	27%
Wildlife Viewing (N= 293)	4%	16%	26%	32%	22%
Photography – nature and/or wildlife (N= 299)	4%	14%	29%	32%	21%
Visiting historic sites/areas (N=413)	6%	44%	27%	18%	4%
Hunting or trapping (N=69)	13%	29%	33%	13%	11%
Tennis (N=150)	7%	21%	29%	28%	15%
Pickleball (N= 72)	13%	22%	25%	32%	8%
Basketball (N= 332)	5%	17%	22%	33%	24%
Volleyball (N= 133)	10%	24%	19%	33%	14%
Football, lacrosse, field hockey, or rugby (N=138)	5%	23%	14%	35%	23%
Baseball or softball (N=193)	8%	18%	21%	36%	17%
Soccer (N=194)	7%	17%	18%	35%	23%
Golf (N=198)	3%	22%	33%	27%	15%
Disc golf (N=46)	9%	22%	30%	28%	11%
Ultimate Frisbee (N=50)	14%	38%	30%	10%	8%
Geocaching, letterboxing, or mobile app games (N=174)	6%	17%	16%	22%	40%
Other (N= 253)	62%	10%	6%	10%	13%

## SECTION 4: OUTDOOR WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES

Q4A. Counting yourself, how many members of your household have participated in each OUTDOOR, WATER-BASED activity during the past 12 months? [Please review each activity carefully. If no one in your household participates in an activity, write “0” for the number of household users or leave that item blank.]

Response Category <i>Percentage of total household members reported</i>	Total N (respondents) = 1,010 Total N (all household) = 2,870 <sup>9</sup>
Swimming in outdoor pools	38%
Swimming in freshwater/saltwater	46%
Activities at the beach	59%
Motor boating or jet skiing	15%
Sailing	6%
Canoeing, kayaking, or stand-up paddleboarding	18%
Water skiing, tubing, or wakeboarding	10%
River rafting or river tubing	8%
Snorkeling or scuba diving	8%
Freshwater fishing or ice fishing	18%
Saltwater fishing	12%
Water-based Wildlife Viewing/Marine Life Viewing	16%
Other	1%

Q4B. Please indicate approximately how often you or members of your household participated in each OUTDOOR, WATER-BASED recreation activity during the past 12 months (or, if the activity is seasonal, during the most recent season). If more than one person in your household participated in the activity, record the average frequency that all members of your household participate.

Response Category <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	Seldom or Never	Less than Once a Month	At least Once a Month	A few times a Month	Several times a Week
Swimming in outdoor pools (N=412)	7%	24%	22%	31%	16%
Swimming in fresh/saltwater (N=470)	6%	31%	27%	30%	7%
Activities at the beach (N=587)	4%	33%	27%	28%	7%
Motor boating or jet skiing (N=178)	12%	32%	22%	25%	12%
Sailing (N=88)	11%	32%	28%	23%	6%
Canoeing, kayaking, or stand-up paddleboarding (N=)	7%	33%	29%	24%	7%
Water skiing, tubing, or wakeboarding (N=121)	10%	29%	26%	28%	7%
River rafting or river tubing (N=105)	9%	40%	24%	20%	8%
Snorkeling or scuba diving (N=99)	13%	51%	13%	17%	6%

<sup>9</sup> Percentages represent the proportion of total household members reported in the sample (N = 2870) participating in each activity.

Freshwater or ice fishing (N=228)	8%	30%	25%	30%	10%
Saltwater fishing (N=171)	5%	29%	33%	26%	8%
Water-based Wildlife Viewing/Marine Life Viewing (N= 182)	7%	29%	33%	26%	8%
Other (N= 157)	69%	10%	8%	10%	4%

## SECTION 5: STATE-OWNED OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS

Connecticut's SCORP addresses both state-owned and municipal-owned recreation areas. These areas are managed by different agencies and receive funding from different sources. Please note that this survey will ask separate questions concerning state-owned and municipal-owned areas. If you don't know whether an area you use is state or municipal, please select "don't know."

Q5. Have you or members of your household visited any STATE-OWNED outdoor recreation areas during the past year? Examples include state parks and forests, wildlife management areas, boat launches, etc.

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
Yes	64%
No	29%
Don't know	7%

Q5A. Approximately how many times did you or members of your household visit STATE-OWNED outdoor recreation areas during the past 12 months? (only asked if Q5 = YES)

Examples include state parks and forests, wildlife management areas, boat launches, etc.

Response Category	Total N = 6,42
1 to 5 visits	55%
6 to 10 visits	27%
11 to 19 visits	9%
20 or more visits	7%
Don't know	2%

Q5B. Overall, how would you rate the condition of all the STATE-OWNED outdoor recreation areas you visited? (only asked if Q5 = YES)

Response Category	Total N = 6,42
Excellent	41%
Good	51%
Fair	7%
Poor	<1%

## SECTION 6: MUNICIPAL-OWNED OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS

Municipal parks in Connecticut are open to all visitors (not just town residents). When

responding to questions about recreation areas in your local community, please consider your activities in ALL municipal-owned recreation areas in Connecticut, whether the recreation area is located in your town or in another nearby.

Q6. Have you or members of your household visited any MUNICIPAL-OWNED outdoor recreation areas during the past 12 months? Examples of municipal-owned outdoor recreation areas include town parks and greens, playgrounds, public school properties, or local open space areas.

Response Category	Total N = 1,010
Yes	<b>66%</b>
No	<b>26%</b>
Don't know	<b>8%</b>

Q6A. Approximately how many times did you or members of your household visit MUNICIPAL-OWNED outdoor recreation areas during the past 12 months? (only asked if Q6 = YES) Examples of municipal-owned outdoor recreation areas include town parks and greens, playgrounds, public school properties, or local open space areas.

Response Category	Total N = 656
1 to 5 visits	<b>44%</b>
6 to 10 visits	<b>27%</b>
11 to 19 visits	<b>13%</b>
20 or more visits	<b>16%</b>



Q6B. Overall, how would you rate the condition of all the MUNICIPAL-OWNED outdoor recreation areas you visit in your local community? (only asked if Q6 = YES)

Response Category	Total N = 665
Excellent	33%
Good	55%
Fair	12%
Poor	<1%

## SECTION 7: ACCESS AND IMPROVEMENT

Q7. Please indicate whether you or any member of your household have a need or desire for additional access to each of the outdoor recreation facilities listed below. If you are completely satisfied, select “NO.”

Response Category <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	Yes	No	N/A - no interest
Paved multi-use trails (N=1005)	27%	57%	16%
Unpaved multi-use trails (N=993)	24%	57%	18%
Unpaved single use trails (N=996)	20%	57%	22%
ADA accessible trails (N=991)	15%	50%	34%
Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing trails (N=992)	14%	44%	41%
ATV areas (N=990)	16%	38%	45%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling areas (N=987)	15%	37%	45%
Snowmobiling Areas (N=984)	13%	38%	47%
Sledding areas (N=986)	23%	41%	34%
Ice skating or hockey areas (N=981)	17%	40%	40%
Snowboarding or snow skiing areas (N=982)	15%	40%	43%
Picnic areas/shelters (N=985)	31%	51%	16%
Playgrounds (N=984)	25%	49%	24%
Inclusive accessible playgrounds (N=983)	21%	46%	31%
Bicycle Playgrounds (N=983)	22%	39%	36%
Biking Pump Tracks (N=982)	15%	39%	43%
Baseball and softball fields (N=977)	17%	47%	33%
Soccer, football, lacrosse, and rugby fields (N=981)	18%	45%	35%
Basketball courts (N=979)	21%	45%	31%
Pickleball courts (N=978)	12%	41%	44%
Tennis Courts (N=977)	17%	42%	38%
Volleyball courts (N=970)	16%	40%	40%
Public golf courses (whether used for golf, walking, running, sledding, skiing, or other activity) (N=972)	16%	44%	37%
Disc golf courses (N=973)	11%	39%	47%
Historic sites and areas (N=980)	27%	52%	18%
Nature preserves and bird watching areas (N=971)	26%	47%	23%

Response Category <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	Yes	No	N/A - no interest
Freshwater/saltwater swimming areas (N=973)	26%	46%	24%
Outdoor public pools, water parks, & splash pads (N=976)	27%	45%	25%
Boating access for motor boating, jet skiing, sailing, or paddle sports (N=967)	14%	43%	39%
Snorkeling and scuba diving areas (N=968)	14%	37%	45%
Overnight camping areas (RV or Tent sites) (N=971)	20%	40%	37%
Overnight camping areas (Cabin, Yurt, or 'Glamping' sites) (N=974)	19%	39%	39%
Backpack camping areas (N=971)	17%	38%	41%
Fishing or ice fishing areas (N=972)	16%	42%	39%
Hunting or trapping areas (N=970)	11%	36%	49%
Archery or shooting sport areas (N=973)	15%	35%	47%
Other (N=658)	5%	23%	37%

Q7A. For each OUTDOOR recreational facility, please rate how well the needs of your household are being met in terms of access or desire for improvement.

Response Category <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	Needs not at all met	Needs somewhat met	Needs mostly met
Paved multi-use trails (N=272)	11%	59%	31%
Unpaved multi-use trails (N=237)	11%	59%	30%
Unpaved single use trails (N=197)	15%	55%	30%
ADA-accessible trails (N=149)	24%	56%	20%
Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing trails (N=136)	25%	48%	27%
ATV areas (N= 159)	29%	42%	29%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling areas (N= 154)	29%	40%	31%
Snowmobiling areas (N= 127)	28%	45%	27%
Sledding areas (N=230)	26%	47%	27%
Ice skating or hockey areas (N=176)	24%	50%	26%
Snowboarding or snow skiing areas (N=146)	20%	56%	25%
Picnic areas/shelters (N=316)	16%	53%	31%
Playgrounds (N=251)	14%	49%	37%
Inclusive accessible playgrounds (N=207)	17%	57%	26%
Bicycle playgrounds (N= 225)	27%	44%	29%
Biking Pump tracks (N= 155)	30%	45%	25%
Baseball and softball fields (N=170)	12%	61%	21%
Soccer, football, lacrosse, and rugby fields (N=179)	15%	54%	31%
Basketball courts (N=215)	14%	53%	33%
Pickleball courts (N= 123)	28%	44%	29%
Volleyball courts (N=158)	29%	45%	26%
Tennis courts (N= 169)	18%	56%	27%

Response Category <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	Needs not at all met	Needs somewhat met	Needs mostly met
Public golf courses (whether used for golf or walking, running, sledding, skiing, or other activity) (N=164)	20%	54%	27%
Disc golf courses (N=107)	23%	49%	28%
Historic sites and areas (N=269)	10%	60%	29%
Nature preserves and bird watching areas (N=265)	16%	59%	25%
Freshwater/saltwater swimming areas (N=266)	18%	55%	27%
Outdoor pools, water parks, and splash pads (N=276)	22%	53%	25%
Boating access for motor boating, jet skiing, sailing, or paddle sports (N=144)	23%	51%	26%
Snorkeling and scuba diving areas (N=140)	34%	38%	28%
Overnight camping areas (RV or Tent sites) (N=201)	24%	48%	27%
Overnight Camping Areas (Cabin, Yurt, or 'Glamping' sites) (N= 191)	28%	44%	28%
Backpack camping areas (N=170)	21%	51%	27%
Fishing or ice fishing areas (N=163)	20%	53%	28%
Hunting or trapping areas (N=106)	17%	56%	27%
Archery or shooting sport areas (N=147)	32%	45%	23%
Other (N=22)	23%	46%	32%

Q8. Please select the three facilities most important (maximum of three) to your household to develop in municipal-owned outdoor recreation areas.

Response Category <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	Most important	2 <sup>nd</sup> most important	3 <sup>rd</sup> most important
Paved multi-use trails (N=122)	5%	3%	5%
Unpaved multi-use trails (N=89)	3%	2%	3%
Unpaved single use trails (N=65)	2%	2%	3%
ADA-accessible trails (N=45)	2%	1%	1%
Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing trails (N=31)	1%	1%	1%
ATV areas (N=27)	1%	1%	1%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling areas (N= 43)	2%	1%	2%
Snowmobiling Areas (N= 22)	<1%	1%	1%
Sledding areas (N=45)	1%	2%	2%
Ice skating or hockey areas (N=37)	2%	1%	1%
Snowboarding or snow skiing areas (N=31)	1%	2%	1%
Picnic areas/shelters (N=138)	5%	5%	5%
Playgrounds (N=99)	4%	3%	3%
Inclusive accessible playgrounds (N=55)	2%	2%	1%
Bicycle playgrounds (N= 54)	2%	2%	1%
Biking Pump Tracks (N= 15)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Baseball and softball fields (N=32)	1%	1%	1%

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	<b>Most important</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> most important</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> most important</b>
Soccer, football, lacrosse, and rugby fields (N=37)	1%	2%	1%
Basketball courts (N= 80)	4%	3%	2%
Pickleball courts (N= 21)	1%	1%	<1%
Tennis courts (N= 36)	1%	1%	1%
Volleyball courts (N=23)	<1%	1%	1%
Public golf courses (whether used for golf or walking, running, sledding, skiing, other) (N=45)	3%	1%	1%
Disc golf courses (N=14)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Historic sites and areas (N=72)	3%	3%	2%
Nature preserves and bird watching areas (N=80)	3%	3%	2%
Freshwater/saltwater swimming areas (N=57)	2%	2%	2%
Outdoor public pools, water parks, and splash pads (N=85)	5%	2%	2%
Boating access for motor boating, jet skiing, sailing, or paddle sports (N=18)	<1%	1%	<1%
Snorkeling and scuba diving areas (N=14)	<1%	<1%	1%
Overnight camping areas (RV or tent sites) (N=36)	1%	1%	1%
Overnight camping areas (Cabin, Yurt, or 'Glamping' sites) (N= 29)	1%	1%	1%
Backpack camping areas (N=25)	1%	1%	<1%
Fishing or ice fishing areas (N=23)	1%	1%	1%
Hunting or trapping areas (N=7)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Archery or shooting sport areas (N=21)	1%	1%	<1%
Other (N=2)	<1%	<1%	N/A

Q9. Please select the three facilities most important (maximum of three) to your household to develop in state-owned outdoor recreation areas.

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	<b>Most important</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> most important</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> most important</b>
Paved multi-use trails (N=106)	4%	2%	4%
Unpaved multi-use trails (N=90)	2%	4%	3%
Unpaved single use trails (N=56)	2%	1%	3%
ADA-accessible trails (N=46)	2%	1%	1%
Cross-country skiing or snowshoeing trails (N=45)	1%	2%	2%
ATV areas (N=19)	<1%	<1%	1%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling areas (N= 59)	3%	1%	1%
Snowmobiling areas (N=19)	<1%	1%	<1%
Sledding areas (N=46)	2%	2%	1%
Ice skating or hockey areas (N=45)	1%	2%	1%
Snowboarding or snow skiing areas (N=39)	2%	1%	1%
Picnic areas/shelters (N=140)	5%	5%	4%
Playgrounds (N=78)	3%	2%	3%

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Total N varies by activity</i>	<b>Most important</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> most important</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> most important</b>
Inclusive accessible playgrounds (N=53)	2%	2%	2%
Bicycle Playgrounds (N= 56)	2%	2%	2%
Biking Pump Tracks (N= 20)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Baseball and softball fields (N=29)	1%	1%	<1%
Soccer, football, lacrosse, and rugby fields (N=42)	2%	1%	<1%
Basketball courts (N= 63)	2%	3%	2%
Pickleball courts (N= 20)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Tennis courts (N= 30)	1%	1%	1%
Volleyball courts (N=17)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Public golf courses (whether used for golf or walking, running, sledding, skiing, other) (N=40)	2%	1%	1%
Disc golf courses (N=16)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Historic sites and areas (N=96)	4%	3%	2%
Nature preserves and bird watching areas (N=86)	3%	3%	3%
Freshwater/saltwater swimming areas (N=61)	2%	2%	2%
Outdoor public pools, water parks, and splash pads (N=77)	4%	3%	1%
Boating access for motor boating, jet skiing, sailing, or paddle sports (N=13)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Snorkeling and scuba diving areas (N=8)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Overnight camping areas (RV or Tent sites)(N=40)	2%	1%	1%
Overnight Camping Areas (Cabin, Yurt, or 'Glamping' sites) (N= 32)	<1%	2%	<1%
Backpack camping areas (N=30)	1%	2%	<1%
Fishing or ice fishing areas (N=18)	<1%	1%	<1%
Hunting or trapping areas (N=8)	<1%	<1%	<1%
Archery or shooting sport areas (N=25)	1%	<1%	<1%
Don't know/did not specify	0%	9%	15%

Q10. Please check ALL the ways that you and members of your household travel to use OUTDOOR recreation facilities in your local community and throughout the state of Connecticut.

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Multiple responses accepted. N varies by mode of transportation</i>	
Automobile (N=860)	86%
Bicycle (N=280)	28%
Boat (N=78)	8%
Bus or train (N=144)	14%
Walk (N=525)	52%
Other (N=17)	2%

Q10B – “Other” responses:

<b>Response Category (Coded from responses)</b> <i>Multiple responses accepted. N varies by mode of transportation</i>	
“Other” – not specified (N=1)	<1%
Motorcycle/Scooter/Wheelchair/Moped (N=5)	<1%
Human locomotion/Running/Skateboard (N=3)	<1%
Airplane (N=1)	<1%

Q11. If there are reasons preventing you or members of your household from using OUTDOOR recreation facilities in Connecticut, please indicate them by selecting all that apply from the list below.

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Multiple responses accepted. N varies by answer choice</i>	<b>Percentage</b> <i>Sorted by %</i>
Not applicable, as I am fully able to use outdoor recreation facilities and activities (N=436)	<b>43%</b>
Lack of available parking (N=153)	<b>15%</b>
Don't know what's being offered (N=127)	<b>13%</b>
Too far from residence (N=117)	<b>12%</b>
Facilities are not well-maintained (N=116)	<b>12%</b>
Fees are too high (N=115)	<b>11%</b>
Don't know locations of facilities (N= 112)	<b>11%</b>
Parks are not well-maintained (N=110)	<b>11%</b>
Parks and/or other facilities are too crowded (N= 88)	<b>9%</b>
Security is insufficient (N=83)	<b>8%</b>
Lack of safety (N= 78)	<b>8%</b>
Lack of interest/time for recreation (N=61)	<b>6%</b>
Lack of transportation to sites (N=52)	<b>5%</b>
Programs not offered (N=52)	<b>5%</b>
Lack of access for people with disabilities (N=48)	<b>5%</b>
Operating hours are not convenient (N=47)	<b>5%</b>
Conflict with other types of activities (example: too many walkers/bikers, conflicts with wildlife photography) (N= 35)	<b>4%</b>
Other (N=35)	<b>4%</b>
Conflicts with other recreationalists' behaviors/attitudes (N= 34)	<b>3%</b>
Language barrier (N= 32)	<b>3%</b>
Lack of visitor diversity (N= 32)	<b>3%</b>
Lack of staff diversity (N= 23)	<b>2%</b>

Q11B – “Other” responses:

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
N/A, None, None of the above	1
Too busy/Lack of time	2
Unclear/Unavailable maps	3
Worries of bugs (ticks)	4
Inability to access places (car problems, location problems, etc.)	5

Q12. Please check ALL the ways you learn about OUTDOOR recreation facilities and/or activities in your local community and throughout the state of Connecticut.

Response Category <i>Multiple responses accepted. N varies by response option</i>	Percentage <i>Sorted by %</i>
Websites/internet (N=631)	63%
Word of mouth (N=515)	51%
Social media (N=404)	40%
Newspaper (N=309)	31%
Maps and road signs (N=277)	27%
Television (N=254)	25%
Tourist information center (N=190)	19%
Program fliers (N=168)	17%
Town mailings (N=168)	17%
Visited/Called Parks & Rec Office (N=161)	16%
Radio (N=143)	14%
Magazines (N=108)	11%
Club membership newsletters (N=86)	9%
Other (N=14)	1%

Q12B – “Other” responses (most overlapped with options presented above)

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
None or “I Don’t”	1
Maps or passing by	2
“Apps”	3
During COVID when places were closed	4
Senior center	5

Q13. The following is a list of actions that the state and your local community fund to provide OUTDOOR recreation facilities and activities in Connecticut. Please indicate if you feel that the state of Connecticut and your local community should increase funding, maintain the same funding, decrease funding, or you are not sure for each action.

Response Category <i>Total N = 1010</i>	Increase funding	Maintain funding	Decrease funding	Not sure
Maintain and improve existing outdoor facilities	43%	42%	4%	11%
Develop new outdoor recreation activities	43%	38%	7%	13%
Provide additional recreation programs and activities	39%	42%	6%	13%
Improve advertising and information regarding existing outdoor facilities and programs	28%	49%	9%	14%
Acquire open space	34%	41%	9%	16%
Sustain and enhance natural habitats that support activities such as hunting, wildlife viewing, birding, and hiking	40%	41%	7%	12%
Other	12%	22%	5%	61%

Q14. Please indicate which THREE of the actions listed below you would most support increasing funding for by dragging the items from the column on the left into the box on the right.

<b>Response Category</b> <i>Total N varies by response option</i>	<b>Most important</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> most important</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> most important</b>
Maintain and improve existing outdoor facilities (N=674)	<b>23%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>25%</b>
Acquire open space (N=309)	<b>8%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Develop new outdoor recreation activities (N=440)	<b>9%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>19%</b>
Provide additional recreation programs and activities (N=450)	<b>14%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>14%</b>
Improve advertising and information regarding existing outdoor facilities and programs (N=352)	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>8%</b>
Sustain and enhance natural habitats that support activities such as hunting, wildlife viewing, birding, and hiking (N= 550)	<b>27%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>9%</b>
Other (N=1)	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

Q15A. Improvements to outdoor recreation facilities and activities may increase operating costs. Which one of the following statements best describes your level of support for implementing or increasing the fees for outdoor recreation facilities, programs, and services that you use in STATE-OWNED outdoor recreation areas to help pay for increased operating expenses?

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 1,010</b>
Very supportive	<b>29%</b>
Somewhat supportive	<b>44%</b>
Not supportive	<b>16%</b>
Not sure	<b>11%</b>

Q15B. Which one of the following statements best describes your level of support for implementing or increasing the fees for outdoor recreation facilities, programs, and services you use IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY to help pay for increased operating experiences?

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 1,010</b>
Very supportive	<b>28%</b>
Somewhat supportive	<b>41%</b>
Not supportive	<b>20%</b>
Not sure	<b>11%</b>

## **SECTION 8: OUT-OF-STATE RECREATION**

Q16. During the past year, have you or members of your household visited any parks or outdoor recreation areas NOT in Connecticut?

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 1,010</b>
Yes	<b>40%</b>
No	<b>60%</b>

Q16A. If yes, where did you go? List all that apply.

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
Massachusetts	1
Rhode Island	2
New York	3
Florida	4
New Hampshire	5

Q16B. Approximately how many times did you or members of your household visit OUT-OF-STATE parks or outdoor recreation areas during the past 12 months?

Response Category	Total N = 400
1 to 5 visits	28%
6 to 10 visits	7%
11 to 19 visits	2%
20 or more visits	2%
Don't know or don't recall	1%

Q16C. Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of OUT-OF-STATE parks or other outdoor recreation areas?

Response Category	Total N = 400
Excellent	17%
Good	21%
Fair	2%
Poor	<1%

## CONCLUSION

The Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection thanks you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is extremely valuable for making the state a better place to live. Should you have any questions or comments about this survey, please contact Dr. Diana Cohen, Professor of Political Science at Central Connecticut State University. She can be reached via e-mail at [cohendit@ccsu.edu](mailto:cohendit@ccsu.edu), or via telephone at 860-832-2962.

## SECTION IX: AVID OUTDOOR ENTHUSIAST SURVEY ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE

### INTRODUCTION

**Dear Avid Outdoor Enthusiast:** This survey is designed to help the development of a new Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). In order to include the viewpoints of as many of Connecticut's residents as possible, you are invited to participate. You will be asked to complete a fifteen-minute online survey in which you will share your thoughts and experiences on outdoor recreation priorities in our state. You must be a Connecticut resident and at least 18 years old to participate. Before agreeing to participate, please read the following information carefully.

Your privacy will be protected at all times. Your participation and survey responses are anonymous, meaning that the information you provide cannot be identified or tied to you. You may discontinue your participation at any time. This information has been provided so you know what to expect if you participate in this study. Your consent will be implied by your completion and submission of this survey. The data collected will be used to help inform the upcoming Connecticut Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. To convey that you understand and agree to participate, please press the right arrow found below. Thank you for making our state a better place to live!

*This study has been reviewed and approved by the CCSU IRB (Protocol #10271).*

### SECTION 1: ACTIVITIES

Please think about the various outdoor recreation activities that you enjoy. In the table below are five headings titled "ACTIVITY ONE," "ACTIVITY TWO," "ACTIVITY THREE," "ACTIVITY FOUR," and "ACTIVITY FIVE." In the space next to Activity One, please indicate the activity in which you participate most frequently, is most important to you, or to which you are most devoted. In the space next to Activity Two, please indicate the activity in which you participate second most frequently, is second most important to you, or to which you are second most devoted. Please repeat this process for Activities Three through Five. If you do not have five activities in mind, please complete as many as possible.

## ACTIVITY ONE

Response Category	Total N = 5,210
Walking or Hiking	<b>27.0%</b>
Hunting or Trapping	<b>16.2%</b>
Fishing	<b>11.4%</b>
Mountain Biking or Snow Biking	<b>9.6%</b>
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling	<b>6.7%</b>
Horseback Riding or Horse Showing	<b>4.0%</b>
ATVing	<b>2.4%</b>
Disc Golf	<b>2.1%</b>
Running	<b>1.9%</b>
Target/Trap Shooting or Archery	<b>1.8%</b>
Response Category ACTIVITY ONE CONTINUED	Total N = 5,210
Off-Roading/Four-Wheeling (full-sized automobiles)	<b>1.7%</b>
Bird Watching	<b>1.7%</b>
Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, or Rafting	<b>1.5%</b>
Road Biking or Biking unspecified	<b>1.5%</b>
Rock Climbing, Ice Climbing, or Caving	<b>1.2%</b>
Multi-Use (Rail Trail) Biking	<b>1.2%</b>
Tent, RV, or Cabin Camping	<b>0.9%</b>
Golf	<b>0.6%</b>
Motorized Boating, Jet Skiing, or Water Skiing	<b>0.6%</b>
Photography – Nature or Wildlife	<b>0.6%</b>
Downhill Skiing or Snowboarding	<b>0.6%</b>
Geocaching, Letterboxing, Mobile Apps, or Orienteering	<b>0.6%</b>
Swimming, Wading, or River Tubing	<b>0.5%</b>
Wildlife Viewing	<b>0.4%</b>
Dog Parks, Dog Training, or Field Trials	<b>0.3%</b>
Snowmobiling	<b>0.3%</b>
Horse Camping	<b>0.3%</b>
Sailing or Windsurfing	<b>0.2%</b>
Beach Activities (non-swimming)	<b>0.2%</b>
Tennis, Pickleball, or Other Racquet Sports	<b>0.2%</b>
Visiting Historic Sites, Parks, or Playgrounds	<b>0.2%</b>
Trail Building, Maintenance, Conservation, or Other Volunteering	<b>0.2%</b>
Botany or Gathering	<b>0.2%</b>
Picnicking, BBQs, or Other Gathering	<b>0.2%</b>
Backpack Camping, Bikepacking, or Kayak Camping	<b>0.1%</b>
Ice Skating or Hockey	<b>0.1%</b>
Cross-Country Skiing or Snowshoeing	<b>0.1%</b>

Soccer	0.1%
Baseball or Softball	0.1%
Astronomy, Stargazing, Astrophotography*	0.1%
Hang Gliding, Paragliding*	0.1%
Basketball or Volleyball	0.1%
Scuba Diving or Surfing	0.0%
Metal Detecting*	0.0%
Sledding	0.0%
Ultimate Frisbee or Frisbee	0.0%
Auto Racing*	0.0%
Night Vision*	0.0%
RC Flying, Boating*	0.0%
<b>Response Category ACTIVITY ONE CONTINUED</b>	<b>Total N = 5,210</b>
Dog Walking*	0.0%
Wildlife Tracking*	0.0%
*Indicates “Other” activity written in by respondent	

**Please answer the following questions regarding your participation in ACTIVITY ONE.**

Q1. In the past twelve months or during its “season,” how often did you participate in ACTIVITY ONE?

Response Category	Total N = 5,210
Seldom or never	1%
Less than once a month	2%
At least once a month	6%
A few times per month	28%
Several times per week	63%

Q2. Please check all the different types of places where you practice ACTIVITY ONE.

Response Category	Total N = 5,210
<i>Multiple responses accepted</i>	
State parks	58%
State forests	63%
Wildlife management areas	42%
State boat launches	14%
Trails	52%
Out of state	50%
Public land trust property	39%
Undesignated municipal land	14%
Local parks	35%

Town/municipal pools	3%
Local schools	4%
Private property	43%
Lakes, ponds, rivers, or Long Island Sound	29%
Rail trails	25%
Quasi-public land	9%
Commercial establishments	5%
Beaches	20%
Other	8%

Q2A If you indicated that you practice ACTIVITY ONE out of state, please elaborate why you travel out of state for this activity.

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 2,413
Trail Related – more, better, different, CT lacking	13%
Riding ATV/Dirt Bikes – limited legal places to ride in CT	13%
Looking for More – more land, more access, more challenging, etc.	11%
Something Different/Variety – scenery, species, trails habitats, etc.	11%
Bigger and Better – better fishing, better hunting, better beaches, etc.	8%
Frequent Traveler – for work, vacation, visit family, adventure, etc.	5%
Hunting Related – Sunday hunting, more land, hunter-friendly, etc.	4%
Fishing Related – better fishing, more species, more access, etc.	3%

Q2B If “Other” place, please describe (e.g., location, terrain, services).

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 324
Roads – State, Private, Local, Public	1
Private Properties – land, clubs, facilities, etc.	2
Dams and Trails – Thomaston Dam, Stevenson Dam, Pachaug	3
Golf Courses – private, local, public	4
Trails, Streets – private or public	5

Q3 In your use of these outdoor recreation facilities or resources would you say that your needs are

Response Category	Total N = 5,210
Completely met	35%
Partially met	46%
Barely met	12%
Not met at all	7%

Q3A If you provided any response other than “Completely met,” please elaborate on your outdoor recreation needs. What problems do you experience in your enjoyment of the activity? What would you like to see done to increase access or enjoyment?

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 2,999
Lack of legal or sufficient access	1
Behaviors of other visitors (littering, vandalism, unleashed dogs)	2
Parking Access	3
Lack of facility/area/trail upkeep or maintenance	4
Concerns over hours/seasonality of activities	5



## ACTIVITY TWO

Response Category	Total N = 5,108
Walking or Hiking	17.3%
Fishing	13.8%
Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, or Rafting	6.4%
Hunting or Trapping	5.9%
Multi-Use (Rail Trail) Biking	5.0%
Mountain Biking or Snow Biking	3.7%
Target/Trap Shooting or Archery	3.6%
ATVing	3.4%
Road Biking or Biking unspecified	3.1%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling	3.1%
Bird Watching	2.7%
Running	2.4%
Downhill Skiing or Snowboarding	2.4%
Wildlife Viewing	2.0%
Swimming, Wading, or River Tubing	1.9%
Off-Roading/4-Wheeling (full-sized automobiles)	1.7%
Horse Camping	1.6%
Motorized Boating, Jet Skiing, or Water Skiing	1.6%
Dog Parks, Dog Training, or Field Trials	1.5%
Tent, RV, or Cabin Camping	1.4%
Visiting Historic Sites, Parks, or Playgrounds	1.4%
Photography – Nature or Wildlife	1.4%
Cross-Country Skiing or Snowshoeing	1.4%
Beach Activities (non-swimming)	1.3%
Trail Building, Maintenance, Conservation, or Other Volunteering	1.3%
Golf	1.0%
Backpack Camping, Bikepacking, or Kayak Camping	1.0%
Horseback Riding or Horse Showing	0.9%
Picnicking, BBQs, or Other Gathering	0.7%
Botany or Gathering	0.6%
Rock Climbing, Ice Climbing, or Caving	0.6%
Snowmobiling	0.6%
Disc Golf	0.5%
Sailing or Windsurfing	0.5%
Tennis, Pickleball, or Other Racquet Sports	0.4%
Geocaching, Letterboxing, Mobile Apps, or Orienteering	0.4%
Ice Skating or Hockey	0.4%
Rollerblading or Skateboarding	0.2%

Response Category ACTIVITY TWO CONTINUED	Total
Baseball or Softball	0.2%
Sledding	0.2%
Scuba Diving or Surfing	0.1%
Ultimate Frisbee or Frisbee	0.1%
Basketball or Volleyball	0.1%
Football, Lacrosse, Field Hockey, or Rugby	0.1%
Gardening*	0.1%
Soccer	0.0%
Astronomy, Stargazing, Astrophotography*	0.0%
Hang Gliding, Para Gliding*	0.0%
Auto Swap Meets / Car Shows*	0.0%
Backcountry Skiing*	0.0%
Motorcycle Riding*	0.0%
*Indicates “Other” activity written in by respondent.	

**Please answer the following questions regarding your participation in ACTIVITY TWO.**

Q1. In the past twelve months or during its “season,” how often did you participate in ACTIVITY TWO?

Response Category	Total N = 5,084
Seldom or never	4%
Less than once a month	12%
At least once a month	18%
A few times per month	36%
Several times per week	30%

Q2. Please check all the different types of places where you practice ACTIVITY TWO.

Response Category <i>Multiple responses accepted</i>	Total N = 5,108
State parks	50%
State forests	45%
Wildlife management areas	28%
State boat launches	17%
Trails	36%
Out of state	32%
Public land trust property	23%
Undesignated municipal land	8%
Local parks	28%
Town/municipal pools	3%
Local schools	3%
Private property	34%
Lakes, ponds, rivers, or Long Island Sound	30%
Rail trails	19%
Quasi-public land	6%
Commercial establishments	4%
Beaches	17%
Other	7%

Q2A If you indicated that you practice ACTIVITY TWO out of state, please elaborate why you travel out of state for this activity.

Response Category ( <i>Coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 1,475
Trail Related – more, lacking, better, dog friendly, etc.	1
More – opportunities, areas, variety, activities, etc.	2
Better – better fishing, hunting, beaches, opportunities, etc.	3
Riding dirt bikes/ATV – limited places to ride in CT, no access, etc.	4
Traveling Related – vacation, camping, adventure, work, etc.	5

Q2B If "Other" place, please describe (e.g., location, terrain, services).

Response Category ( <i>Coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 319
Roads – local, state, town, public	1
Local Areas – mountains, skiing, etc.	2
Private Areas – clubs, golf courses, parks, gun ranges, etc.	3
Neighborhood Areas – sidewalks, streets, etc.	4
Long Island Sound	5

Q3 In your use of these outdoor recreation facilities or resources would you say that your needs are:

Response Category	Total N = 5,018
Completely met	51%
Partially met	34%
Barely met	9%
Not met at all	6%

Q3A If you provided any response other than "Completely met," please elaborate on your outdoor recreation needs. What problems do you experience in your enjoyment of the activity? What would you like to see done to increase access or enjoyment?

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 2,031
Limited/Lack of Access – generally or legally	1
Trail Related Issues – need more, limited access, damaged, etc.	2
Land Issues – need more for hunting, biking, and other activities	3
Maintenance Issues – vandalism, poor upkeep, dirty facilities, etc.	4
Limited/Lack of time	5

### ACTIVITY THREE

Response Category ACTIVITY THREE	Total N = 4,905
Walking or Hiking	13.0%
Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, or Rafting	8.0%
Fishing	7.3%
Target/Trap Shooting or Archery	5.5%
Multi-Use (Rail Trail) Biking	4.9%
Swimming, Wading, or River Tubing	3.5%
Wildlife Viewing	3.2%
Visiting Historic Sites, Parks, or Playgrounds	3.1%
Road Biking or Biking unspecified	3.0%
Tent, RV, or Cabin Camping	2.8%
Bird Watching	2.8%
Hunting or Trapping	2.7%
Off-Roading/4-Wheeling (full-sized automobiles)	2.5%
ATVing	2.5%
Beach Activities (non-swimming)	2.5%
Downhill Skiing or Snowboarding	2.5%
Motorized Boating, Jet Skiing, or Water Skiing	2.3%
Cross-Country Skiing or Snowshoeing	2.3%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling	2.3%
Mountain Biking or Snow Biking	2.2%
Trail Building, Maintenance, Conservation, or Other Volunteering	2.1%

Response Category ACTIVITY THREE	Total N = 4,905
Running	2.0%
Photography – Nature or Wildlife	1.9%
Dog Parks, Dog Training, or Field Trials	1.8%
Backpack Camping, Bikepacking, or Kayak Camping	1.6%
Picnicking, BBQs, or Other Gathering	1.6%
Golf	1.4%
Botany or Gathering	1.2%
Snowmobiling	1.2%
Rock Climbing, Ice Climbing, or Caving	0.7%
Geocaching, Letterboxing, Mobile Apps, or Orienteering	0.6%
Horseback Riding or Horse Showing	0.6%
Ice Skating or Hockey	0.6%
Sailing or Windsurfing	0.5%
Tennis, Pickleball, or Other Racquet Sports	0.4%
Disc Golf	0.4%
Sledding	0.4%
Rollerblading or Skateboarding	0.3%
Scuba Diving or Surfing	0.3%
Horse Camping	0.2%
Soccer	0.2%
Baseball or Softball	0.2%
Basketball or Volleyball	0.2%
Football, Lacrosse, Field Hockey, or Rugby	0.1%
Ultimate Frisbee or Frisbee	0.1%
Astronomy, Stargazing, Astrophotography*	0.1%
Auto Racing*	0.0%
Dog Walking*	0.0%
Gardening*	0.0%
Motorcycle Riding*	0.0%
History Reenacting*	0.0%
Bushcraft*	0.0%
*Indicates “Other” activity written in by respondent.	

Please answer the following questions regarding your participation in ACTIVITY THREE.

Q1. In the past twelve months or during its “season,” how often did you participate in ACTIVITY THREE?

Response Category	Total N =4,862
Seldom or never	5%
Less than once a month	22%
At least once a month	24%
A few times per month	29%
Several times per week	19%

Q2. Please check all the different types of places where you practice ACTIVITY THREE.

Response Category <i>Multiple responses accepted</i>	Total N =4,905
State parks	46%
State forests	37%
Wildlife management areas	23%
State boat launches	14%
Trails	31%
Out of state	26%
Public land trust property	21%
Undesignated municipal land	7%
Local parks	26%
Town/municipal pools	2%
Local schools	3%
Private property	34%
Lakes, ponds, rivers, or Long Island Sound	29%
Rail trails	17%
Quasi-public land	5%
Commercial establishments	5%
Beaches	16%
Other	6%

Q2A If you indicated that you practice ACTIVITY THREE out of state, please elaborate why you travel out of state for this activity.

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 1,129
More – access, land, options, etc.	1
Trail related – lacking in CT, more, better, etc.	2
Better – trails, fishing, options, beaches, etc.	3
Riding ATV/Dirt Bikes – limited legal places to ride in CT	4
Variety	5

Q2B If “Other” place, please describe (e.g., location, terrain, services).

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 268
Roads – Public, State, Local, etc.	1
Town Areas – streets, properties, trails, facilities, etc.	2
Private Areas – lands, clubs, etc.	3
Clubs – shooting, fitness, game, fishing, etc.	4
Golf Courses	5

Q3 In your use of these outdoor recreation facilities or resources, would you say that your needs are

Response Category	Total N = 4,796
Completely met	57%
Partially met	28%
Barely met	8%
Not met at all	7%

Q3A If you provided any response other than “Completely met,” please elaborate on your outdoor recreation needs. What problems do you experience in your enjoyment of the activity? What would you like to see done to increase access or enjoyment?

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 1,597
Lack of/Limited Access	1
Trail Related Issues – lack of, limited, etc.	2
Public Area Issues – limited access, need facilities, more land, etc.	3
Parking Issues – lack of, need for more space, better, etc.	4
Riding Related Issues – no legal places, no trails, bad conditions, etc.	5

## ACTIVITY FOUR

Response Category ACTIVITY FOUR	Total N = 4,552
Walking or Hiking	9.4%
Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, or Rafting	9.2%
Wildlife Viewing	4.7%
Fishing	4.6%
Swimming, Wading, or River Tubing	4.5%
Visiting Historic Sites, Parks, or Playgrounds	4.5%
Tent, RV, or Cabin Camping	4.1%
Target/Trap Shooting or Archery	4.0%
Picnicking, BBQs, or Other Gathering	3.5%
Bird Watching	3.2%
Multi-Use (Rail Trail) Biking	3.1%

Response Category ACTIVITY FOUR	Total N = 4,552
Beach Activities (non-swimming)	3.0%
Cross-Country Skiing or Snowshoeing	3.0%
Motorized Boating, Jet Skiing, or Water Skiing	2.5%
Backpack Camping, Bikepacking, or Kayak Camping	2.4%
Trail Building, Maintenance, Conservation, or Other Volunteering	2.4%
Road Biking or Biking unspecified	2.4%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling	2.3%
Hunting or Trapping	2.3%
Photography – Nature or Wildlife	2.3%
ATVing	2.3%
Downhill Skiing or Snowboarding	2.1%
Dog Parks, Dog Training, or Field Trials	1.9%
Off-Roading/Four-Wheeling (full-sized automobiles)	1.9%
Mountain Biking or Snow Biking	1.6%
Golf	1.5%
Botany or Gathering	1.4%
Running	1.3%
Snowmobiling	1.1%
Tennis, Pickleball, or Other Racquet Sports	0.9%
Ice Skating or Hockey	0.9%
Geocaching, Letterboxing, Mobile Apps, or Orienteering	0.8%
Rock Climbing, Ice Climbing, or Caving	0.7%
Horseback Riding or Horse Showing	0.6%
Sailing or Windsurfing	0.5%
Disc Golf	0.5%
Sledding	0.5%
Baseball or Softball	0.4%
Scuba Diving or Surfing	0.3%
Rollerblading or Skateboarding	0.3%
Basketball or Volleyball	0.2%
Horse Camping	0.2%
Soccer	0.2%
Ultimate Frisbee or Frisbee	0.1%
Gardening*	0.1%
Football, Lacrosse, Field Hockey, or Rugby	0.1%
Searching for Gems, Rocks*	0.0%
Hang Gliding, Para Gliding*	0.0%
Foraging*	0.0%
Metal Detecting*	0.0%

Response Category ACTIVITY FOUR	Total N = 4,552
Tae Kwon Do, Meditating*	0.0%
*Indicates "Other" activity written in by respondent.	

**Please answer the following questions regarding your participation in ACTIVITY FOUR.**

Q1. In the past twelve months or during its “season,” how often did you participate in ACTIVITY FOUR?

Response Category	Total N = 4,492
Seldom or never	8%
Less than once a month	29%
At least once a month	24%
A few times per month	24%
Several times per week	14%

Q2. Please check all the different types of places where you practice ACTIVITY FOUR.

Response Category <i>Multiple responses accepted</i>	Total N = 4,552
State parks	47%
State forests	36%
Wildlife management areas	22%
State boat launches	13%
Trails	28%
Out of state	24%
Public land trust property	19%
Undesignated municipal land	7%
Local parks	27%
Town/municipal pools	3%
Local schools	2%
Private property	33%
Lakes, ponds, rivers, or Long Island Sound	30%
Rail trails	14%
Quasi-public land	5%
Commercial establishments	5%
Beaches	18%
Other	5%

Q2A If you indicated that you practice ACTIVITY FOUR out of state, please elaborate why you travel out of state for this activity.

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 933
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More – scenic areas, variety, land, opportunities, etc.	1
Traveling Reasons – vacation, trips, work, etc.	2
Better – beaches, trails, opportunities, access, etc.	3
Lack of/Need for more access	4
Legal reasons – no legal areas, limited areas, etc.	5

Q2B If “Other” place, please describe (e.g., location, terrain, services).

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 197
Roads – public, town, local, etc.	1
Properties – town, public, etc.	2
Golf Courses – public, town, municipal, etc.	3
Campgrounds – private, out of state, etc.	4
Clubs – fishing, guns, boat, etc.	5

Q3 In your use of these outdoor recreation facilities or resources would you say that your needs are:

Response Category	Total N = 4,422
Completely met	62%
Partially met	25%
Barely met	7%
Not met at all	6%

Q3A If you provided any response other than “Completely met,” please elaborate on your outdoor recreation needs. What problems do you experience in your enjoyment of the activity? What would you like to see done to increase access or enjoyment?

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 1,339
Limited/Lack of Access	1
Trail Related Issues – limited, lack of, unmaintained, etc.	2
Maintenance Issues – unclean water, boating areas, parks, etc.	3
Parking Issues – Lack of, Limited Space, etc.	4
Limited Resources – dog parks, trails, etc.	5

## ACTIVITY FIVE

Response Category ACTIVITY FIVE	Total N = 4,249
Walking or hiking	7.0%
Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, or Rafting	6.6%
Visiting Historic Sites, Parks, or Playgrounds	6.1%
Wildlife Viewing	5.7%
Tent, RV, or Cabin Camping	4.9%
Swimming, Wading, or River Tubing	4.7%

Response Category ACTIVITY FIVE	Total N = 4,249
Fishing	4.3%
Picnicking, BBQs, or Other Gathering	3.6%
Trail Building, Maintenance, Conservation, or Other Volunteering	3.3%
Beach Activities (non-swimming)	3.2%
Target/Trap Shooting or Archery	3.2%
Photography – Nature or Wildlife	3.1%
Backpack Camping, Bikepacking, or Kayak Camping	3.1%
Multi-Use (Rail Trail) Biking	2.8%
Bird Watching	2.7%
Cross-Country Skiing or Snowshoeing	2.7%
Hunting or Trapping	2.7%
Motorized Boating, Jet Skiing, or Water Skiing	2.3%
Downhill Skiing or Snowboarding	2.1%
ATVing	2.0%
Dog Parks, Dog Training, or Field Trials	2.0%
Mountain Biking or Snow Biking	1.8%
Road Biking or Biking unspecified	1.8%
Botany or Gathering	1.7%
Off-Roading/Four-Wheeling (full-sized automobiles)	1.7%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling	1.6%
Golf	1.3%
Snowmobiling	1.0%
Tennis, Pickleball, or Other Racquet Sports	1.0%
Running	0.9%
Rock Climbing, Ice Climbing, or Caving	0.9%
Disc Golf	0.9%
Geocaching, Letterboxing, Mobile Apps, or Orienteering	0.8%
Baseball or Softball	0.8%
Horseback Riding or Horse Showing	0.7%
Ice Skating or Hockey	0.6%
Sledding	0.6%
Sailing or Windsurfing	0.5%
Scuba Diving or Surfing	0.5%
Ultimate Frisbee or Frisbee	0.4%
Football, Lacrosse, Field Hockey, or Rugby	0.4%
Rollerblading or Skateboarding	0.4%
Basketball or Volleyball	0.3%
Horse Camping	0.3%
Soccer	0.3%

Response Category ACTIVITY FIVE	Total N = 4,249
Gardening*	0.2%
Cutting Firewood, Yardwork*	0.1%
Metal Detecting*	0.1%
Dog Walking*	0.1%
Searching for Gems, Rocks*	0.1%
Driving in Countryside, Sightseeing*	0.0%
Wildlife Rehab, Maintain Habitat*	0.0%
Astronomy, Stargazing, Astrophotography*	0.0%
Auto Racing*	0.0%
Foraging*	0.0%
RC Flying, Boating*	0.0%
Auto Swap Meets / Car Shows*	0.0%
Tae Kwon Do, Meditating*	0.0%
Tree Climbing*	0.0%
*Indicates "Other" activity written in by respondent.	

**Please answer the following questions regarding your participation in ACTIVITY FIVE.**

Q1. In the past twelve months or during its “season,” how often did you participate in ACTIVITY FIVE?

Response Category	Total N = 4,173
Seldom or never	12%
Less than once a month	32%
At least once a month	21%
A few times per month	22%
Several times per week	13%

Q2. Please check all the different types of places where you practice ACTIVITY FIVE.

Response Category	Total N = 4,249
<i>Multiple responses accepted</i>	
State parks	47%
State forests	36%
Wildlife management areas	22%
State boat launches	12%
Trails	27%
Out of state	24%
Public land trust property	20%
Undesignated municipal land	7%
Local parks	27%

Town/municipal pools	3%
Local schools	4%
Private property	33%
Lakes, ponds, rivers, or Long Island Sound	28%
Rail trails	12%
Quasi-public land	6%
Commercial establishments	5%
Beaches	17%
Other	5%

Q2A If you indicated that you practice ACTIVITY FIVE out of state, please elaborate why you travel out of state for this activity.

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 869
Better – opportunities, environment, fishing, beaches, etc.	1
Lack of – trails, legal areas, variety, etc.	2
More – trails, opportunities, ski areas, access, availability, etc.	3
Traveling Reasons – Vacation, Work, etc.	4
ATV/Dirt Bike Issues – lack of legal areas, trails, etc.	5

Q2B If “Other” place, please describe (e.g., location, terrain, services).

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 180
Public Roads	1
Local Roads	2
Town Property, Fields, Parks, Land, etc.	3
Private Areas – ranges, pools, etc.	4
Clubs – golf, rifle, fish, game, etc.	5

Q3 In your use of these outdoor recreation facilities or resources would you say that your needs are

Response Category	Total N = 4,114
Completely met	62%
Partially met	24%
Barely met	8%
Not met at all	6%

Q3A If you provided any response other than “Completely met,” please elaborate on your outdoor recreation needs. What problems do you experience in your enjoyment of the activity? What would you like to see done to increase access or enjoyment?

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 1,197
Limited/Lack of Trails	1
Need for More/Better Access – fields, trails, space, etc.	2
Lack of public areas – legal spaces,	3

Issues with people – crowding, parking, staffing, etc.	4
Parking Issues – lack of, limited space, etc.	5

## SECTION 2: ISSUES, NEED, AND FEEDBACK

Q4 What is the most significant issue that you encounter when engaging in any of the activities you listed?

Response Category	Total N = 4,890
Litter	17%
I do not encounter any significant issues	16%
Recreational user conflict (e.g., mountain bikers interfering with walkers or vice-versa)	12%
Parking	10%
Other	10%
Crowding	9%
Resource degradation	8%
Tick or mosquito-borne disease	7%
Obnoxious/reckless behavior	5%
Security or personal safety concerns	2%
Graffiti or vandalism	2%
Extraneous noise	1%
Wildlife	1%

Q4A If “Other”, please describe the issue you have in mind.

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 456
Loose/Unleashed Dogs	1
Limited Access	2
Lack of land, areas to ride, facilities, staff, etc.	3

Q5 In your opinion, what are the most pressing needs of the outdoor recreation areas that you visit? Please indicate a specific recreation area if you have one in mind.

Response Category <i>(Coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 3,342
Litter/Maintenance – trash, overgrown greenery, lack upkeep of trails	1
Parking – not enough, not horse trailer accessible	2
Motor Vehicles – limited riding areas, disturbing others in illegal areas	3
Hunting – non-hunters in designated areas, lack of awareness	4
Enforcement of Rules – lack of supervision/safety, illegal activity	5

Q6 What do you like most about the outdoor recreation areas that you use?

Response Category (Coded from responses)	Total N = 3,395
Trails – well marked and maintained, preserved, accessible, abundance	1
Variety/Diversity – many options, variety of terrain, many shared uses	2
Convenient – proximity, close to residence, free access	3
Beauty – scenery/views, wildlife, quiet, peaceful	4
People – positive community, not overcrowded	5

Q7 If you indicated that you participate in any of your five activities out of the state, please explain why.

Response Category (Coded from responses)	Total N = 2,885
Better – opportunities, fishing, facilities, conditions, etc.	1
Trails – new, better, more, etc.	2
Travel related – change of scenery, vacation, work, etc.	3
Lack of – public/legal areas, variety, activities, etc.	4
Accessibility – limited or lack of	5

Q8 Is there anything else you would like to say about your current or future outdoor recreation usage and/or needs?

Response Category (Coded from responses)	Total N = 2,279
Keep trails maintained, regulated by rules, expanded, etc.	1
Accountability, accommodation, and accessibility for people	2
Hunting – legal Sunday hunting, more public access, legal bear hunting, etc.	3
More access/availability of parks and land	4
Better – staff, access, recreation, places, fishing, etc.	5

### SECTION 3: OUTDOOR CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Q9 Are you a member of a club or organization whose purpose or mission is the enjoyment or support of outdoor recreation in some form?

Response Category	Total N = 4,753
Yes	60%
No	40%

Q9A If yes, please indicate the name of the organization.

Response Category (Top five responses) Multiple responses accepted	Total N = 2,678
Land Trust/Conservation Clubs	1
Sportsman, Fish & Game, Land & Game Clubs	2
Audubon/Bird/Ornithology Club	3
Mountain Bike Clubs	4
Hiking/Mountain Clubs	5

Q9B What is the purpose and/or goals of the organization?

<b>Response Category (Top five responses)</b> <i>See corresponding organizations above, coded from responses</i>	<b>Total N = 2,384</b>
Promote Support, Preservation, and Conservation of Land	<b>1</b>
Promote Fishing, Hunting, Riding, Shooting, etc.	<b>2</b>
Promote/Provide Safety	<b>3</b>
Promote Restoration and Education	<b>4</b>
Provide Resources, Land, Opportunities, etc. for People	<b>5</b>

## SECTION 4: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Q10 What is your home zip code?

<b>Response Category (Top ten responses)</b>	<b>Total N = 4,519</b>
06457 Middletown	<b>1.9%</b>
06010 Bristol	<b>1.7%</b>
06415 Colchester	<b>1.6%</b>
06492 Wallingford	<b>1.4%</b>
06790 Torrington	<b>1.3%</b>
06424 East Hampton	<b>1.3%</b>
06076 Stafford Springs	<b>1.2%</b>
06002 Bloomfield	<b>1.2%</b>
06423 East Haddam	<b>1.1%</b>
06013 Burlington	<b>1.1%</b>

Q11 In which Connecticut county do you reside?

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 4,726</b>
Hartford County	<b>23.5%</b>
New Haven County	<b>17.3%</b>
Fairfield County	<b>10.5%</b>
Litchfield County	<b>10.9%</b>
Middlesex County	<b>11.4%</b>
Windham County	<b>6.0%</b>
New London County	<b>12.5%</b>
Tolland County	<b>8.0%</b>

Q12 What is your gender?

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 4,732</b>
Male	<b>68.2%</b>
Female	<b>30.7%</b>
Non-binary/gender diverse	<b>0.8%</b>
Other	<b>0.3%</b>

Q13 What is your age?

Response Category	Total N = 4,536
10–14 years	0.1%
15–19 years	0.4%
20–24 years	2.6%
25–34 years	13.1%
35–44 years	16.2%
45–54 years	19.9%
55–64 years	23.7%
65+ years	23.9%

Q14 Are you or other members of your household of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish ancestry?

Response Category	Total N = 4,610
No	93.5%
Yes	6.5%

Q15 Which of the following best describes your race (check all that apply)?

Response Category	Total N = 4,716
<i>Multiple responses accepted</i>	
White/Caucasian	92%
Native American	2%
African American/Black	1%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%
Other (Hispanic, Arab-American, Cuban)	3%

Q16 What is the primary language spoken in your household?

Response Category	Total N = 4,660
English	99.0%
Other	0.4%
Spanish	0.4%
Portuguese	0.1%
Polish	0.1%
Russian	0.0%
Arabic	0.0%
Bengali	0.0%
Japanese	0.0%

Q17 What is your annual gross household income?

Response Category	Total N = 4,197
Under \$25,000	3%
\$25,000–\$49,999	8%

\$50,000–\$74,999	15%
\$75,000–\$99,999	17%
\$100,000–\$149,999	26%
\$150,000 and over	31%

Q18 What is the highest level of education that you have obtained? If you are currently enrolled in school, indicate the highest degree received.

Response Category	Total N = 4,588
Less than high school graduate	0.4%
High school graduate	11.2%
Some college or trade school	22.2%
College graduate	36.3%
Post graduate degree	29.9%

Q19 Do you or other members of your household have any of the following health conditions? (Check all that apply, or "none" if no condition is present).

Response Category <i>Multiple responses accepted</i>	Total N = 4,733
Physical or mobility limitation that makes walking or climbing steps difficult, or requires the use of a wheelchair, cane walker, or aide	12%
Hearing loss that requires the use of a hearing aid or other devices	9%
Blindness or a vision impairment that requires the use of readers, a guide animal or equipment while walking	2%
None	77%

## CONCLUSION

The Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection thanks you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is extremely valuable for making the state a better place to live. Should you have any questions or comments about this survey, please contact Dr. Diana Cohen, Associate Professor of Political Science at Central Connecticut State University. She can be reached via e-mail at [cohendit@ccsu.edu](mailto:cohendit@ccsu.edu), or via telephone at 860-832-2962.

## SECTION X: TOWN OFFICIALS SURVEY ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE

### SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION & TOWN DEMOGRAPHICS

As part of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), we ask you to respond to the following questions about the condition of resources, their use, and your town's needs and priorities.

Q1. Select the town that you represent or will comment on.

Towns by County*								
Hartford	Fairfield	New Haven	Litchfield	New London	Middlesex	Tolland	Windham	
Avon	Brookfield	Bethany	Canaan	Colchester	Chester	Ellington	Killingly	
Bristol	Danbury	Branford	Goshen	East Lyme	Cromwell	Hebron	Plainfield	
Burlington	Newtown	Guilford	Litchfield	Griswold	Deep River	Mansfield	Putnam	
Canterbury	Norwalk	North Branford	Morris	Groton	East Hampton	Somers	Thompson	
East Windsor	Ridgefield	Wallingford	Norfolk	Lisbon	Middletown	Vernon		
Glastonbury	Weston		Plymouth	Preston	Old Saybrook			
Newington			Roxbury		Westbrook			
Simsbury			Salisbury					
West Hartford			Thomaston					
Wethersfield			Washington					
			Watertown					
			Winchester					

\*Six responding towns did not self-identify.

Q2A. What town department are you associated with?<sup>10</sup>

Response Category	Total N = 55
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<sup>10</sup> Note: For this table and all other tables, the sum may not add to 100% because of rounding.

Parks & Recreation	<b>90.9%</b>
Selectman/Mayor's Office	<b>3.6%</b>
Other	<b>5.5%</b>

Q2B. If you selected “other” in the previous question, please indicate the department that you are associated with.

Response Category	
Community Activities	<b>N = 1</b>
Community Services	<b>N = 1</b>
Youth & Family Services	<b>N = 1</b>

Q3. If you are directly employed by, or associated with a town agency, indicate your title.

Response Category	Total N = 55
Parks & Recreation Director/Superintendent	<b>87%</b>
Other	<b>13%</b>

Q4. If you are not directly associated with, or employed by a town agency, but you are associated with an independent organization or state agency that has information on recreation, please indicate the name of the organization.

Response Category	Total N = 0
No responses offered	—

Q5. In your town, what is the total acreage of open space land set aside specifically for active outdoor recreation use? For the purposes of this question, active outdoor recreation facilities include facilities that are primarily: sports fields, playgrounds, swimming pools, golf courses, or skate parks.

Response Category	Total N = 55
30 acres or less	<b>13%</b>
31–150 acres	<b>35%</b>
151–300 acres	<b>16%</b>
301–999 acres	<b>15%</b>
1,000 or more acres	<b>7%</b>
Unsure of acreage	<b>14%</b>

Q6. In your town, what is the total acreage of open space land set aside specifically for passive

outdoor recreation use? For the purposes of this question, passive outdoor recreation facilities include facilities that are primarily: hiking and nature trails, rails-to-trails, town greens, non-developed fields, wildlife observation areas, or hunting and fishing sites.

Response Category	Total N = 55
30 acres or less	<b>16%</b>
31–150 acres	<b>11%</b>
151–300 acres	<b>16%</b>
301–999 acres	<b>16%</b>
1,000 or more acres	<b>29%</b>
Unsure	<b>11%</b>

## SECTION 2: FACILITY CONDITION

Q7. In the following table, please indicate the overall condition of each type of recreational facility that your community offers.<sup>11</sup>

### BOATING ACCESS Mean: 2.23

Response Category	Total N = 40
Excellent	<b>15%</b>
Good	<b>60%</b>
Needs Improvement	<b>12.5%</b>
Poor	<b>12.5%</b>

### CAMPING Mean: 2.67

Response Category	Total N = 15
Excellent	<b>13%</b>
Good	<b>27%</b>
Needs Improvement	<b>40%</b>
Poor	<b>20%</b>

<sup>11</sup> Means for this section are calculated on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 = “Excellent” and 4 = “Poor.” The lower the mean, the better the overall condition of the facility.

**COURTS – BASKETBALL****Mean: 2.30**

Response Category	Total N = 54
Excellent	19%
Good	44%
Needs Improvement	26%
Poor	11%

**COURTS – TENNIS****Mean: 2.27**

Response Category	Total N = 51
Excellent	24%
Good	39%
Needs Improvement	24%
Poor	14%

**COURTS – VOLLEYBALL****Mean: 2.61**

Response Category	Total N = 31
Excellent	7%
Good	48%
Needs Improvement	23%
Poor	23%

**FIELDS – BASEBALL/SOFTBALL****Mean: 2.05**

Response Category	Total N = 55
Excellent	24%
Good	53%
Needs Improvement	18%
Poor	5%

**FIELDS – FOOTBALL****Mean: 2.06**

Response Category	Total N = 34
Excellent	35%
Good	29%
Needs Improvement	29%
Poor	6%

**FIELDS – LACROSSE****Mean: 2.26**

Response Category	Total N = 34
Excellent	27%
Good	29%
Needs Improvement	35%
Poor	9%

**FIELDS – MULTI-USE****Mean: 2.22**

Response Category	Total N = 50
Excellent	14%
Good	52%
Needs Improvement	32%
Poor	2%

**FIELDS – SOCCER****Mean: 2.15**

Response Category	Total N = 54
Excellent	19%
Good	52%
Needs Improvement	26%
Poor	3%

**FIELDS – ARTIFICIAL TURF****Mean: 1.42**

Response Category	Total N = 19
Excellent	63%
Good	32%
Needs Improvement	5%
Poor	—

**FIELDS – NATURAL TURF****Mean: 2.29**

Response Category	Total N = 41
Excellent	10%
Good	59%
Needs Improvement	24%
Poor	7%

**FISHING ACCESS****Mean: 2.04**

Response Category	Total N = 49
Excellent	18%
Good	63%
Needs Improvement	14%
Poor	4%

**GARDENS****Mean: 2.33**

Response Category	Total N = 45
Excellent	11%
Good	51%
Needs Improvement	31%
Poor	7%

**GOLF COURSES****Mean: 1.53**

Response Category	Total N = 17
Excellent	53%
Good	41%
Needs Improvement	6%
Poor	—

**HISTORIC/EDUCATIONAL SITES****Mean: 2.26**

Response Category	Total N = 47
Excellent	8%
Good	60%
Needs Improvement	30%
Poor	2%

**HUNTING****Mean: 2.21**

Response Category	Total N = 19
Excellent	16%
Good	63%
Needs Improvement	5%
Poor	16%

**OPEN SPACE/NATURE PRESERVES****Mean: 2.04**

Response Category	Total N = 50
Excellent	20%
Good	58%
Needs Improvement	20%
Poor	2%

**PICNIC AREAS****Mean: 2.09**

Response Category	Total N = 54
Excellent	11%
Good	69%
Needs Improvement	20%
Poor	—

**PLAYGROUNDS****Mean: 2.24**

Response Category	Total N = 54
Excellent	17%
Good	46%
Needs Improvement	33%
Poor	4%

**SWIMMING, BEACHES, OR OUTDOOR POOLS****Mean: 2.36**

Response Category	Total N = 47
Excellent	11%
Good	49%
Needs Improvement	34%
Poor	6%

**TRAILS – PAVED****Mean: 2.28**

Response Category	Total N = 29
Excellent	14%
Good	52%
Needs Improvement	28%
Poor	7%

**TRAILS – UNPAVED****Mean: 2.17**

Response Category	Total N = 53
Excellent	19%
Good	47%
Needs Improvement	32%
Poor	2%

**WILDLIFE VIEWING AREAS****Mean: 2.20**

Response Category	Total N = 46
Excellent	11%
Good	61%
Needs Improvement	26%
Poor	2%

**WINTER SPORTS****Mean: 2.56**

Response Category	Total N = 39
Excellent	5%
Good	46%
Needs Improvement	36%
Poor	13%

**SECTION 3: FACILITY SUPPLY & DEMAND**

Q8. Now considering the same group of recreational facilities, please indicate, based upon both your research and the comments from the community, whether or not your community has sufficient resources of each type to meet the demand.

**BOATING ACCESS**

Response Category	Total N = 54
Sufficient	68.5%
Insufficient	31.5%

**CAMPING**

Response Category	Total N = 49
Sufficient	35%
Insufficient	65%

## COURTS – BASKETBALL

Response Category	Total N = 53
Sufficient	70%
Insufficient	30%

## COURTS – TENNIS

Response Category	Total N = 55
Sufficient	60%
Insufficient	40%

## COURTS – VOLLEYBALL

Response Category	Total N = 53
Sufficient	42%
Insufficient	58%

## FIELDS – BASEBALL/SOFTBALL

Response Category	Total N = 54
Sufficient	70%
Insufficient	30%

## FIELDS – FOOTBALL

Response Category	Total N = 52
Sufficient	58%
Insufficient	42%

## FIELDS – LACROSSE

Response Category	Total N = 53
Sufficient	43%
Insufficient	57%

## FIELDS – MULTI-USE

Response Category	Total N = 53
Sufficient	60%
Insufficient	40%

## **FIELDS – SOCCER**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 55</b>
Sufficient	<b>67%</b>
Insufficient	<b>33%</b>

## **FIELDS – ARTIFICIAL TURF**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 53</b>
Sufficient	<b>24.5%</b>
Insufficient	<b>76.5%</b>

## **FIELDS – NATURAL TURF**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 53</b>
Sufficient	<b>55%</b>
Insufficient	<b>45%</b>

## **FISHING ACCESS**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 53</b>
Sufficient	<b>77%</b>
Insufficient	<b>23%</b>

## **GARDENS**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 54</b>
Sufficient	<b>50%</b>
Insufficient	<b>50%</b>

## **GOLF COURSES**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 51</b>
Sufficient	<b>57%</b>
Insufficient	<b>43%</b>

## **HISTORIC/EDUCATIONAL SITES**

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Total N = 52</b>
Sufficient	<b>69%</b>
Insufficient	<b>31%</b>

## HUNTING

Response Category	Total N = 50
Sufficient	54%
Insufficient	46%

## OPEN SPACE/NATURE PRESERVES

Response Category	Total N = 54
Sufficient	78%
Insufficient	22%

## PICNIC AREAS

Response Category	Total N = 55
Sufficient	84%
Insufficient	16%

## PLAYGROUNDS

Response Category	Total N = 54
Sufficient	72%
Insufficient	28%

## SWIMMING, BEACHES, OR OUTDOOR POOLS

Response Category	Total N = 54
Sufficient	61%
Insufficient	39%

## TRAILS – PAVED

Response Category	Total N = 51
Sufficient	43%
Insufficient	57%

## TRAILS – UNPAVED

Response Category	Total N = 53
Sufficient	75.5%
Insufficient	24.5%

## WILDLIFE VIEWING AREAS

Response Category	Total N = 52
Sufficient	69%
Insufficient	31%

## WINTER SPORTS

Response Category	Total N = 52
Sufficient	46%
Insufficient	54%

## SECTION 4: AGE CLUSTER SUPPLY AND DEMAND

Q9. Now, thinking about the various age groups or clusters of people you serve, please indicate whether or not you are currently able to adequately meet their needs. Following this question, you will have an opportunity to indicate the problems you face in serving each group.

### FAMILIES

Response Category	Total N = 55
Able	85.5%
Unable	14.5%

### PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN, AGES 0–4

Response Category	Total N = 55
Able	65.5%
Unable	34.5%

### CHILDREN, AGES 5–12

Response Category	Total N = 55
Able	82%
Unable	18%

### ADOLESCENTS, AGES 13–18

Response Category	Total N = 55
Able	71%
Unable	29%

### ADULTS, AGES 19–54

Response Category	Total N = 55

Able	76%
Unable	24%

### SENIORS, AGES 55+

Response Category	Total N = 55
Able	76%
Unable	24%

### PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, ALL AGES

Response Category	Total N = 55
Able	56%
Unable	44%

Q9A. For any group in which you indicated that needs were not being adequately met, please specify what is lacking.

Response Category (Five most common coded responses)	Response Rank
Insufficient resources (funding, space, and/or staff	1
Not enough programs to accommodate the desire of younger adults and children	2
Lack of/not enough accommodations for seniors (senior programming, better access to parking areas, additional courts)	3
Outdated outdoor recreation spaces (playgrounds, courts, fields, etc.)	4
More areas to accommodate people with disabilities	5

## SECTION 5: ACTIVITY SUPPLY

Q10. What are the two most popular resources or outdoor activities you supply for families?

### RESOURCE/ACTIVITY ONE

Response Category (coded from responses)	Total N = 53
Athletic Fields/Courts/Facilities	23%
Ponds/Lakes/Beaches/Boating/Kayak Rentals	17%
Playgrounds	17%
Parks/Pavilions	13%
Aquatics/Swimming/Pools (indoor or outdoor)	11%
Summer Camps/After School Programs	8%

Special Events (trunk or treats/fairs/concerts/community events)	6%
Hiking/Hiking trails	6%

## RESOURCE/ACTIVITY TWO

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 53
Aquatics/ Swimming/ Pools (indoor or outdoor)	19%
Athletic Fields/ Courts/ Facilities	15%
Playgrounds	15%
Ponds/ Lakes/ Beaches/ Boating/ Kayak Rentals	13%
Parks/ Pavilions	11%
Special Events (trunk or treats/fairs/concerts/community events)	11%
Summer Camps/ After School Programs	8%
Hiking/ Hiking Trails	8%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES COMBINED

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 53
Athletic Fields/ Courts/ Facilities	36%
Playgrounds	32%
Aquatics/ Swimming/ Pools (indoor or outdoor)	30%
Ponds/ Lakes/ Beaches/ Boating/ Kayak Rentals	26%
Parks/ Pavilions	23%
Special Events (trunk or treats/fairs/concerts/community events)	13%
Summer Camps/ After School programs	13%
Hiking/ Hiking trails	13%

Q11. What are the two most popular resources or outdoor activities you supply for pre-school children, aged 0-4?

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY ONE

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 50
Playgrounds	58%
Aquatics/ swimming/ Pools (indoor & outdoor)	12%
Day Camps/ Programming (non-sport)/ Classes	8%
Sports Programming/ Playgroups/ Fields/ Facilities	8%
Parks/ Walking Paths/ Trails	8%
Community Events/ Resources/ Library	4%

Beaches/Lakes	2%
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### SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY TWO

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 48
Aquatics/Swimming/Pools (indoor & outdoor)	29%
Playgrounds	15%
Parks/Pavilions/Walking Paths/Trails	15%
Community Events/Resources/Library	13%
Beaches/Lakes	10%
Sports Programming/Playgroups/Fields/Facilities	10%
Day Camps/Programming (non-sport)/Classes	8%

### SPECIFIED RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES COMBINED

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 50
Playgrounds	72%
Aquatics/swimming/pools (indoor & outdoor)	40%
Parks/pavilions/walking paths/trails	20%
Sports programming/playgroups/fields/facilities	16%
Community Events/Resources/Library	12%
Day camps/programming (non-sport)/classes	10%
Beaches/lakes	10%

Q12. What are the two most popular resources or outdoor activities you supply for children, aged 5–12?

### SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY ONE

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 53
Fields/Courts	32%
Playgrounds	23%
Day camps/programming (non-sport)/classes	21%
Sports programming/playgroups	9%
Aquatics/swimming/pools (indoor & outdoor)	8%
Parks/walking paths/trails	6%
Community Events (outdoor movie/trunk or treat/easter egg hunt/etc.)	2%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY TWO

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 52
Aquatics/swimming/pools (indoor & outdoor)	23%
Fields/Courts	21%
Playgrounds	12%
Sports programming/playgroups	12%
Day camps/programming (non-sport)/classes	10%
Beaches/lakes	8%
Parks/walking paths/trails	8%
Community Events (outdoor movie/trunk or treat/easter egg hunt, etc.)	8%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES COMBINED

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 53
Fields/Courts	47%
Playgrounds	34%
Aquatics/swimming/pools (indoor & outdoor)	28%
Day camps/programming (non-sport)/classes	26%
Sports programming/playgroups	17%
Community Events (outdoor movie/trunk or treat/easter egg hunt/etc.)	13%
Parks/walking paths/trails	8%
Beaches/lakes	8%

Q13. What are the two most popular resources or outdoor activities you supply for adolescents, aged 13–18?

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY ONE

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 54
Fields/courts/facilities (indoor or outdoor)	48%
Sports programming/playgroups	17%
Parks/walking paths/trails	11%
Summer camp/programming (non-sport)/adventure camp/classes	9%
Skate parks	9%
Beaches/lakes	4%
Aquatics/swimming/pools (indoor & outdoor)	2%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY TWO

Response Category ( <i>coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 48
Fields/courts/facilities (indoor or outdoor)	42%
Sports programming/playgroups	13%
Summer camp/programming (non-sport)/adventure camp/classes	13%
Skate parks	10%
Parks/walking paths/trails	8%
Beaches/lakes	6%
Aquatics/swimming/pools (indoor & outdoor)	6%
Social/community events	2%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES COMBINED

Response Category ( <i>coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 54
Fields/courts/facilities (indoor or outdoor)	69%
Sports programming/playgroups	22%
Skate parks	19%
Parks/walking paths/trails	19%
Summer camp/programming (non-sport)/adventure camp/classes	17%
Aquatics/swimming/pools (indoor & outdoor)	9%
Beaches/lakes	6%
Social/community events	2%

Q14. What are the two most popular resources or outdoor activities you supply for adults, aged 19–54?

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY ONE

Response Category ( <i>coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 54
Trails/paths	22%
Sports (including leagues, courts, facilities, and fields)	22%
Outdoor recreation facilities (courts, parks, courses, etc.)	22%
Parks/gardens/picnic areas	11%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts, local/community events, classes)	9%
Beaches	9%
Pools/aquatics	4%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY TWO

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 53
Sports (including leagues, courts, facilities, and fields)	26%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts, local/community events, classes)	23%
Trails/paths	21%
Outdoor recreation facilities (courts, parks, courses, etc.)	13%
Beaches	6%
Parks/gardens/picnic areas	6%
Pools/aquatics	6%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCES COMBINED

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 54
Trails/paths	41%
Sports (including leagues, courts, facilities and fields)	39%
Outdoor recreation facilities (courts, parks, courses, etc.)	31%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts, local/community events, classes)	26%
Parks/gardens/picnic areas	17%
Beaches	13%
Pools/aquatics	9%

Q15. What are the two most popular resources or outdoor activities you supply for seniors, aged 55+?

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY ONE

Response Category <i>(coded from responses)</i>	Total N = 53
Outdoor recreation (facilities, leagues, fields, courts, parks, courses)	28%
Trails/paths	25%
Indoor facilities (senior center, recreation centers)	13%
Parks/gardens/picnic areas	13%
Beaches	9%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts)	6%
Fitness classes	4%
Pools/aquatics	2%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY TWO

Response Category ( <i>coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 45
Outdoor recreation (facilities, leagues, fields, courts, parks, courses)	56%
Trails/paths	27%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts)	7%
Parks/gardens/picnic areas	4%
Pools/aquatics	2%
Fitness classes	2%
Indoor facilities (senior center, recreation centers)	2%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCES COMBINED

Response Category ( <i>coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 53
Outdoor recreation facilities (tennis courts, skate parks, golf courses)	64%
Trails/paths	45%
Parks/gardens/picnic areas	15%
Indoor facilities (senior center, recreation centers)	15%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts)	11%
Beaches	9%
Fitness classes	4%
Pools/aquatics	4%

Q16. What are the two most popular resources or outdoor activities that you supply for people with disabilities, all ages? (Multiple responses accepted per participant)

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY ONE

Response Category ( <i>coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 48
Parks/playgrounds/gardens/picnic areas	40%
Trails/paths	23%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts)	15%
Pools/aquatics/fishing	10%
Beaches	8%
Indoor facilities (senior center, recreation centers, bowling)	2%
Outdoor recreation (facilities, leagues, fields, courts, parks, courses)	2%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCE/ACTIVITY TWO

Response Category ( <i>coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 38
Parks/playgrounds/gardens/picnic areas	37%
Pools/aquatics/fishing	16%
Outdoor recreation (facilities, leagues, fields, courts, parks, courses)	13%
Beaches	11%
Trails/paths	11%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts)	8%
Indoor facilities (senior center, recreation centers, bowling)	5%

## SPECIFIED RESOURCES COMBINED

Response Category ( <i>coded from responses</i> )	Total N = 48
Parks/playgrounds/gardens/picnic areas	60%
Trails/paths	31%
Pools/aquatics/fishing	23%
Trips/programs/special events (road races, concerts)	15%
Beaches	15%
Outdoor recreation (facilities, leagues, fields, courts, parks, courses)	10%
Indoor facilities (senior center, recreation centers, bowling)	6%

## SECTION 6: OUTDOOR RECREATION TRENDS & NEEDS

Q17. Which outdoor recreation activity/activities provided by your department have shown an increase in participation over the past five to ten years, if any? (Multiple responses accepted per participant)

Response Category ( <i>Five most common coded responses</i> )	Response Rank
Pickleball	1
Summer/Day Camps	2
Hiking/Walking Trails	3
After School Programs	4
Organized Sports	5

Q18. Which outdoor recreation activity/activities provided by your department have shown a decrease in participation over the past five to ten years, if any?

<b>Response Category (coded from responses)</b>	<b>Total N = 45</b>
<i>Multiple responses accepted. N varies by response category</i>	
Sport Leagues/Fields/Courts (indoor or outdoor) (N= 12)	<b>27%</b>
Baseball/softball (N=11)	<b>24%</b>
Tennis (N=9)	<b>20%</b>
Other (adult programming/arts and crafts/fitness classes/playgrounds) (N=8)	<b>18%</b>
No activities have shown a decrease in participation (N=5)	<b>11%</b>

Q19. Which outdoor recreation activity/activities do you predict will **gain** popularity in your community over the next five to ten years?

<b>Response Category (coded from responses)</b>	<b>Total N = 53</b>
Pickleball	<b>67%</b>
Sports (Indoor or Outdoor; not including pickleball)	<b>19%</b>
Walking/Biking/Cycling/Skating	<b>6%</b>
Programming/Group activities	<b>4%</b>
Other	<b>4%</b>

Q20. Which outdoor recreation activity/activities do you predict will **lose** popularity in your community over the next five to ten years?

<b>Response Category (coded from responses)</b>	<b>Total N = 41</b>
Not Applicable or Unsure	<b>39%</b>
Tennis	<b>24%</b>
Other Outdoor Sports (football, base/softball, basketball)	<b>20%</b>
Sports Activities (camps/youth/organized/etc.)	<b>12%</b>
Other activities (fishing/arts and crafts/skating)	<b>5%</b>

Q21. State which outdoor recreation facilities or programs not currently provided in your community should be provided. (Up to two answers were coded)

#### **SPECIFIED FACILITY/PROGRAM ONE**

<b>Response Category (coded from responses)</b>	<b>Total N = 48</b>
Indoor/Outdoor recreation facilities (non-aquatic) (fields, courts, etc.)	<b>51%</b>
Other	<b>13%</b>
Trails	<b>10%</b>
Pool/aquatic facilities	<b>8%</b>
Community events/programs	<b>8%</b>
Parks	<b>6%</b>
Community/senior/teen center	<b>4%</b>

#### **SPECIFIED FACILITY/PROGRAM TWO**

<b>Response Category (coded from responses)</b>	<b>Total N = 27</b>
Indoor/Outdoor recreation facilities (non-aquatic) (fields, courts, etc.)	<b>30%</b>
Pool/aquatic facilities	<b>22%</b>
Parks/playgrounds	<b>15%</b>
Trails	<b>11%</b>
Other	<b>11%</b>
Community events/programs	<b>7%</b>
Community/senior/teen center	<b>4%</b>

#### **SPECIFIED FACILITIES/PROGRAMS COMBINED**

<b>Response Category (coded from responses)</b>	<b>Total N = 75</b>
Indoor/Outdoor recreation facilities (non-aquatic) (fields, courts, etc.)	<b>43%</b>
Pool/aquatic facilities	<b>13%</b>
Other	<b>12%</b>
Trails	<b>11%</b>
Parks/playgrounds	<b>10%</b>
Community events/programs	<b>8%</b>
Community/senior/teen center	<b>&gt;1%</b>

Q22. Please indicate which, if any, of the following support components are inadequate at any of the facilities in your community (select all that apply).

Response Category	Total N = 318
<i>Multiple responses accepted. N varies by response category</i>	
Accessibility for persons with disabilities – General (N=31)	10%
Accessibility for persons with disabilities – Playgrounds (N=22)	7%
Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) (N=27)	8%
Cell service (N=24)	8%
Directional or interpretive signage (N=32)	10%
Parking (N=26)	8%
Public restrooms (N=27)	8%
Public transportation to the facility (N=40)	13%
Recycling receptacles (N=27)	8%
Shelter (N=19)	6%
Trash receptacles (N=13)	4%
Water fountains (N=27)	8%
Other (N=3)	1%

Q23. Thinking about the needs of your community, please rate the following in order of importance, with “1” being the least pressing and “6” being the most urgent.

Response Category	Total N = 54
<i>Average ratings reported on a 1-6 scale</i>	
Improvements added to existing facilities	4.61
Maintenance of existing facilities	4.26
Increased staffing	4.07
Maintenance of existing trails	3.67
Offer additional outdoor programs	3.43
Development of new facilities	3.87

## SECTION 7: MUNICIPAL AWARENESS AND ACTIVITY

Q24. How important is the issue of protecting municipal open space from environmental degradation to the municipal leadership in your community?

Response Category	Total N = 55
Very Important	65.5%
Somewhat Important	32.7%
Not at all Important	—
Not Sure	1.8%

Q25. Within your municipal government, are you aware of any action being taken regarding the protection of municipal open space from environmental degradation or overuse?

Response Category	Total N = 55
Yes	47.3%
No	16.4%
Not Sure	36.4%

Q25a. Please elaborate on any action or inaction in your town regarding the protection of municipal open space from environmental degradation or overuse.

Response Category (Five most common coded responses)	Total N = 19
Acquisition of/planning to acquire open space/land	1
Grants for projects	2
Town programs/policies	3
Financial obstacles	4
Properties or fields in disrepair	5

Q26. In your town, are you aware of any action being taken in the sphere of outdoor recreation to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion among the people you serve?

Response Category	Total N = 55
Yes	49%
No	18%
Not Sure	33%

Q26a. Please elaborate on any action or inaction in your town regarding the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion among the people you serve.

Response Category (5 most common coded responses)	Total N = 19
Open/Bi-lingual Facilities	1
Grants and funding for facility upgrades and projects	2
Town programs/policies	3
Inclusive/Equity/Diversity programs active or in development	4
Staff training and accommodations	5

## CONCLUSION

The Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection thanks you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is extremely valuable for making Connecticut a better place to live. Should you have any questions or comments about this survey, please contact Dr. Diana Cohen, Professor of Political Science at Central Connecticut State University. She can be reached via e-mail at [cohendit@ccsu.edu](mailto:cohendit@ccsu.edu), or via telephone at 860-832-2962.

## SECTION XI: CURRENT RECREATIONALISTS ANNOTATED QUESTIONNAIRE

### SURVEY INTRODUCTION

This fifteen-minute survey is designed to help the development of a new Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Before agreeing to participate, please read the following carefully.

Your privacy will be protected at all times. Your participation and survey responses are anonymous, meaning that the information you provide cannot be identified or tied to you. This information has been provided so you know what to expect if you participate in this study. Your consent will be implied by your completion and submission of this survey. The data collected will be used to help inform the upcoming Connecticut Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. To convey that you understand and agree to participate, please press the right arrow found below.

Thank you for helping to make Connecticut a better place to live!

### SECTION 1: SCREENER

S1. Are you a Connecticut resident?

Response Category	Total N = 249
Yes	98%
No	2%

S1a. If you responded “No” in the previous question, in which state do you live?

Response Category	Total N = 5
New York	40%
Massachusetts	40%
Georgia	20%

S2. During the past 12 months, have you participated in outdoor recreation in the State of Connecticut? This may include activities at local parks or playgrounds, or state parks, forests, boat launches, or other open spaces or waterways. (If no, survey was concluded)

Response Category	Total N = 249
Yes	100%
No	0%

## SECTION 2: ATTITUDES

Q1A. Please read each of the following statements, and, using the five-point scale shown below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

Response Category	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I always feel safe when I visit state parks and recreation facilities.	9%	6%	6%	29%	50%
Important information, such as guidelines and regulations, is usually posted clearly at the sites I visit.	6%	10%	12%	36%	36%
Other people at the sites I visit typically follow the rules and regulations.	14%	20%	11%	45%	10%
State Park Staff and Environmental Conservation Police do a good job of enforcing the rules at the places I visit.	11%	15%	23%	29%	22%
I have had negative experiences in terms of the behavior of other people at outdoor recreation sites (such as rude, unruly, unsafe behavior).	33%	18%	13%	24%	12%
I enjoy outdoor recreation with large groups of family members and/or friends.	10%	17%	32%	20%	22%
I don't mind visiting outdoor recreation areas when they are crowded.	21%	35%	16%	25%	3%
I wish there were programs to foster a broader/more diverse population at the outdoor recreation sites I visit.	12%	11%	45%	14%	18%
We need more outdoor recreation locations that are natural, undeveloped and free from structures and parking areas.	4%	10%	23%	25%	38%

Q1B. Please continue to read each of the following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

Response Category	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
I only visit outdoor recreation sites that are close to my home. I don't want to travel very far to get to a park or outdoor facility.	20%	34%	16%	23%	7%
I usually go to one location/park when I participate in outdoor recreation. I go to the same place almost every time.	19%	27%	13%	31%	10%
I would visit outdoor recreation areas more often if public transportation could take me directly to and from the sites.	33%	18%	32%	7%	10%
I like going to state parks and recreation facilities because they are free or very low cost.	2%	2%	12%	17%	66%
When I participate in outdoor recreation, I usually spend money at local businesses nearby, such as restaurants, gift shops, gas stations, etc.	3%	7%	14%	42%	34%
Public funding should be increased to expand outdoor recreation sites.	4%	6%	12%	22%	56%
Preserving local undeveloped spaces are important to me.	<1%	2%	6%	21%	71%
Wildlife management areas and other outdoor recreation sites are managed in a way that maintains a healthy environment and healthy wildlife populations.	3%	7%	15%	36%	39%

### SECTION 3: LOCATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Q2. Which outdoor recreation LOCATIONS in Connecticut have you visited during the past 12 months? *(Select all that apply)*

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option.</i>	
State Parks (N = 234)	94%
Trails (N = 213)	86%
Local Parks (N = 195)	78%
Lakes, Ponds, Rivers or Long Island Sound (N = 192)	77%
State Forests (N = 176)	71%
Beaches (N = 167)	67%
Public Land Trust Property (N = 147)	59%
Multi-Use Paths (Rail Trails) (N = 129)	52%
Wildlife Management Areas (N = 124)	50%
State Boat Launches (N = 112)	45%
Private Property (N = 70)	28%
Local Schools (N = 54)	22%
Town/Municipal Pools (N = 52)	21%
Quasi-Public Land (N = 44)	18%
Undesignated Municipal Land (N = 41)	17%
Commercial Establishment (N = 30)	12%
Other (N = 15)	6%

Q3. Which outdoor recreation ACTIVITIES have you done in Connecticut during the past 12 months?

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option.</i>	
Walking or Hiking (N = 236)	95%
Visiting Historic Sites/Areas (N = 145)	58%
Swimming, Wading, or Tubing (N = 143)	57%
Beach Activities (non-swimming) (N = 137)	55%
Wildlife Viewing (N = 135)	54%
Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, or Rafting (N = 132)	53%
Dog Walking (N = 130)	52%
Nature/Educational Center Visit (N = 125)	50%
Picnicking, BBQs, or Other Gathering (N = 119)	48%
Photography – nature and/or wildlife (N = 112)	45%
Bird Watching (N = 106)	43%
Fishing (N = 80)	32%
Multi-Use (Rail Trail) Biking (N = 76)	31%
Road Biking (N = 69)	28%
Tent, RV, or Cabin Camping (N = 70)	28%
Running (N = 68)	27%
Dog Parks, Dog Training, or Field Training (N = 67)	27%
Trail Building, Maintenance, or Conservation (N = 63)	25%
Sledding (N = 59)	24%
Mountain Biking (N = 57)	23%
Volunteering – related to outdoor recreation (N = 57)	23%
Botany or Gathering (N = 56)	23%
Motorized Boating, Jet Skiing, or Water Skiing (N = 56)	23%
Snowshoeing (N = 52)	21%
Golf (N = 44)	18%
Downhill Skiing or Snowboarding (N = 41)	17%

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option.</i>	
Geocaching, Letterboxing, Mobile Apps, or Orienteering (N = 34)	14%
Backpack Camping, Bikepacking, or Kayak Camping (N = 34)	14%
Park/Bicycle Playground Biking (N = 33)	13%
Ice Skating or Hockey (N = 32)	13%
Tennis (N = 31)	12%
Pickleball (N = 30)	12%
Hunting or Trapping (N = 29)	12%
Soccer (N = 28)	11%
Target/Trap Shooting or Archery (N = 28)	11%
Herping (looking for amphibians and reptiles) (N = 27)	11%
Basketball (N = 25)	10%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling (N = 25)	10%
Cross-Country Skiing (N = 25)	10%
Disc Golf (N = 23)	9%
Baseball or Softball (N = 22)	9%
Sailing or Windsurfing (N = 21)	8%
ATVing (N = 20)	8%
Volleyball (N = 20)	8%
Odd-Reading/Four-Wheeling (full sized automobiles) (N = 19)	8%
Rock Climbing or Caving (N = 17)	7%
Snowmobiling (N = 17)	7%
Scuba Diving or Surfing (N = 16)	6%
Flat Tire Biking (in the snow) (N = 16)	6%
Ultimate Frisbee/Frisbee (N = 15)	6%
Football, Lacrosse, Field Hockey or Rugby (N = 14)	6%
Rollerblading (N = 12)	5%
Skateboarding (N = 11)	4%

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option.</i>	
Other (N = 10)	4%
BMX Biking (N = 10)	4%
Horseback Riding or Showing (N = 9)	4%
Ice Climbing (N = 5)	2%
Horse Camping (N = 4)	2%

Q4A. Which activity have you done MOST OFTEN during the past 12 months? (Select one activity)

Response Category	Total N = 249
Walking or Hiking	42%
Dog Walking	13%
Fishing	6%
Mountain Biking	5%
Running	4%
Hunting or Trapping	3%
Motorized Boating, Jet Skiing, or Water Skiing	3%
Multi-Use (Rail Trail) Biking	2%
Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, or Rafting	2%
Swimming, Wading, or Tubing	2%
Bird Watching	2%
Photography – nature and/or wildlife	2%
Road Biking	1%
Park/Bicycle Playground Biking	1%
Off-Roading/Four-Wheeling (full sized automobiles)	1%
Beach Activities (non-swimming)	1%
Trail Building, Maintenance, or Conservation	1%
Volunteering – related to outdoor recreation	1%

Response Category	Total N = 249
Wildlife Viewing	1%
Target/Trap Shooting or Archery	1%
Soccer	1%
Geocaching, Letterboxing, Mobile Apps, or Orienteering	<1%
Picnicking, BBQs, or Other Gathering	<1%
Visiting Historic Sites/Areas	<1%
Rock Climbing or Caving	<1%
Nature/Educational Center Visit	<1%
Tent, RV, or Cabin Camping	<1%
Dog Parks, Dog Training, or Field Training	<1%
Tennis	<1%
Golf	<1%
ATVing	<1%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling	<1%
Baseball or Softball	<1%
Basketball	<1%
Other	<1%

Q4B. At which Connecticut location does this activity take place MOST OFTEN? (Select one location)

Response Category	Total N = 249
State Parks	36%
Trails	17%
State Forests	12%
Lakes, Ponds, Rivers or Long Island Sound	7%
State Boat Launches	4%
Beaches	4%
Multi-Use Paths (Rail Trails)	4%

Wildlife Management Areas	3%
Local Parks	3%
Public Land Trust Property	3%
Other	3%
Private Property	2%
Local Schools	<1%
Undesignated Municipal Land	<1%
Quasi-Public Land	<1%
Commercial Establishment	<1%

Q4C. How often did you participate in the activity you selected at the location you selected during the past 12 months?

Response Category	Total N = 247
Daily or more than once a day	14%
Several times per week	45%
About once per week	18%
A few times per month	19%
Less than once per month	4%

#### SECTION 4: MOST RECENT ACTIVITY

Now, we'd like to ask a few questions specifically about your most RECENT outdoor recreation activity—something you did (or are doing) today, or within the past few days, weeks or months.

Q5A. Which activity have you done MOST RECENTLY? (Please select one activity)

Response Category	Total N = 249
Walking or Hiking	37%
Dog Walking	17%
Fishing	6%
Running	5%
Mountain Biking	4%
Multi-Use (Rail Trail) Biking	4%
Motorized Boating, Jet Skiing, or Water Skiing	4%

Kayaking, Canoeing, Paddleboarding, or Rafting	3%
Swimming, Wading, or Tubing	3%
Beach Activities (non-swimming)	2%
Rock Climbing or Caving	1%
Road Biking	1%
Park/Bicycle Playground Biking	1%
Off-Roading/Four-Wheeling (full sized automobiles)	1%
Visiting Historic Sites/Areas	1%
Nature/Educational Center Visit	1%
Volunteering – related to outdoor recreation	1%
Bird Watching	1%
Botany or Gathering	1%
Photography – nature and/or wildlife	1%
Tent, RV, or Cabin Camping	1%
Hunting or Trapping	1%
Dirt Biking/Motorcycling	<1%
BMX Biking	<1%
Geocaching, Letterboxing, Mobile Apps, or Orienteering	<1%
Picnicking, BBQs, or Other Gathering	<1%
Trail Building, Maintenance, or Conservation	<1%
Wildlife Viewing	<1%
Baseball or Softball	<1%
Soccer	<1%
Golf	<1%

Q5B. At which Connecticut location did this activity take place MOST RECENTLY? (Please select one location)

Response Category	Total N = 249
State Parks	48%
State Forests	11%
State Boat Launches	8%
Trails	7%
Multi-Use Paths (Rail Trails)	7%
Local Parks	3%
Wildlife Management Areas	2%
Beaches	2%
Lakes, Ponds, Rivers or Long Island Sound	1%
Undesignated Municipal Land	1%
Other	1%
Private Property	<1%
Quasi-Public Land	<1%

Q6. Please enter the name of this location (for example Hammonasset, Sleeping Giant, etc.)

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
Harkness (memorial, state park)	1
Farmington Canal/River Trail	2
Sherwood Island	3
Wadsworth (falls, state park)	4
Camp Columbia	5

Q7. When did you participate in this most recent outing?

Response Category	Total N = 249
Spring (March – May)	4%
Summer (June – August)	74%
Fall (September – November)	22%

Q8. Which day/days did your visit take place? (Select all that apply)

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option.</i>	
Weekday (Monday through Friday) (N = 182)	73%
Weekend (Saturday and/or Sunday) (N = 154)	62%
Holiday (ex. Memorial Day weekend, July 4 <sup>th</sup> , Labor Day weekend, etc.) (N = 53)	21%
Not Sure/Don't Recall (N = 1)	<1%

Q9. What was the primary mode of transportation that you used to get to/from this location?

Response Category	Total N = 249
Personal Vehicle – Car, Van, Truck, Motorcycle, Scooter, etc.	90%
Walk	6%
Bicycle or Other Non-Motorized Wheeled Transportation	4%
Other	<1%

“Other” Responses

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
Train	1
Bike	2
Vessel	3

Q9A. Where did you park your vehicle at this location? (Responded to this question if their response to Q9 was “Personal Vehicle – Car, Van, Truck, Motorcycle, Scooter, etc.”)

Response Category	Total N = 223
In an official parking lot or designated parking area	95%
In an undesignated or unofficial space – a nearby neighborhood, private business, on the street, etc.	5%

Q9A1. Did you consider going to a different facility instead of parking in an undesignated space? (Responded to this question if their response to Q9A was “In an undesignated or unofficial space – a nearby neighborhood, private business, on the street, etc.”)

Response Category	Total N = 11
No	100%
Yes	0%
Not Sure/Don't Recall	0%

Q9A2. Why did you stay at this location instead of going to another facility? (*Select all that apply*) (Responded to this question if their response to Q9A was “In an undesignated or unofficial space – a nearby neighborhood, private business, on the street, etc.”)

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option.</i>	
It's usually not a problem to park in an undesignated space (N = 6)	54%
Other (N = 2)	18%
I only wanted to go to that particular facility (N = 2)	18%
I was meeting up with other people at that facility (N = 2)	18%
I didn't want to travel any further (N = 1)	10%
There were other cars parked in the undesignated areas, so I just followed their lead (N = 1)	10%

Q10. How far did you travel to get to this location? Please use your best guess.

Response Category	Total N = 249
Less than 5 miles	45%
Approximately 5–10 miles	25%
Approximately 10–20 miles	16%
Approximately 20–30 miles	10%
Over 40 miles	4%
Not sure	<1%

Q11. Did you spend the night away from home in order to participate in this activity?

Response Category	Total N = 249
Yes	3%
No	97%

Q12A. What type of overnight accommodations did you use for this outing? (*Select all that apply*) (responded to this question and Q12B only if their answer to Q11 was “yes”).

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option</i>	
Other (N = 3)	37.5%
Camping – Cabin/Yurt (N = 2)	25%
Camping – RV (N = 2)	25%
Camping – Tent (N = 2)	25%
Hotel/Motel (N = 2)	25%
Relative or Friend’s House (N = 2)	25%
Bed and breakfast (N = 1)	12.5%
Airbnb, VRBO or similar rental of a private residence (N = 1)	12.5%

Q12B. How many nights did you spend away from home?

Response Category	Total N = 8
One night	37.5%
Two nights	12.5%
Three nights	12.5%
Four nights	12.5%
More than one week	25%

Q13. What were your primary motivations for participating in the activity?

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option</i>	
Enjoy nature, outdoors, wildlife, etc. (N = 211)	85%
Enhanced physical, mental or spiritual well-being (N = 193)	76%
Participate in something that is free or inexpensive/affordable (N = 125)	50%
Have fun, adventure, or enjoy something new (N = 111)	46%
Socialize with family/friends (N = 72)	29%
Other reason (N = 31)	12%
Participate in a group/club outing (N = 15)	6%
Volunteer for an event (N = 5)	2%

Q14. How many people were in your group during this recent activity? (Including yourself)

Response Category	Total N = 246
I was by myself	37%
2	33%
3	10%
4	9%
5	3%
6 or more	8%

Q15. How crowded was the location on the date of your most recent visit?

Response Category	Total N = 246
Light	66%
Moderate	30%
Heavy	5%

Q16. What purchases did you make at or near your destination for your most recent outing? Please only consider purchases in the same town or the immediate proximity of where your activity took place. (Select all that apply)

Response Category	Percentage
<b><i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies by response option</i></b>	
Gas for car, boat, motorcycle, RV, etc. (N = 109)	44%
None. I did not purchase anything (N = 97)	39%
Food/drink to go (deli, snacks, drinks, ice cream, etc.) (N = 96)	39%
Food/drink on site (restaurants, bars, food trucks, etc.) (N = 34)	14%
Supplies (sunscreen, bug spray, books, charcoal, batteries, etc.) (N = 27)	11%
Clothing/Gear (boots, backpacks, hats, swimsuits, jackets, etc.) (N = 17)	7%
Outdoor equipment purchase or rental (kayaks, surf boards, beach chairs, tents, skis, etc.) (N = 14)	6%
Permits (fishing, hunting, etc.) (N = 12)	5%
Other (N = 9)	4%
Parking fee/Parking pass or permit (N = 5)	2%
Overnight accommodations (hotel/motel, camping, Airbnb, vacation rental, etc.) (N = 3)	1%
Admission fees/Tickets/Reservations (N = 3)	1%
Souvenirs, gifts, mementos (N = 1)	<1%

Q16A. How much did you spend at or near this outdoor recreation site, **excluding lodging**. Please consider all purchases you made throughout the duration of your visit. (Only responded to this question if their response in Q16 was “None. I did not purchase anything”)

Response Category	Total N = 152
Less than \$100	84%
\$100 - \$499	11%
\$500 - \$999	2%
\$2,000 or more	1%
Not sure/Don't recall	2%

## SECTION 5: INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Now, we would like you to recall how you learned about this location.

Q17. How did you first find out about the location you visited most recently? (*Select all that apply*)

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies based on response option.</i>	
Word of Mouth (friends, family, coworkers, etc.) (N = 133)	53%
Other (N = 66)	27%
Maps or Road Signs (N = 47)	19%
Internet (N = 41)	17%
Club/Group Membership (N = 12)	5%
Parks and Recreation Office (N = 9)	4%
Social Media (N = 8)	3%
Town Office or Library (N = 5)	2%
Newspapers, Magazines, TV, or Radio (N = 2)	1%
Tourist Information Center (N = 2)	1%

“Other” responses

Response Category (5 Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
“I live nearby/in the area”	1
“I grew up in/near the town/area”	2
“I have been going there for many years”	3
“I drove/passed by/found it”	4
“I work there”	5

Q18. Before leaving home to visit this location, did you seek out any specific information about the site, either by going online or by calling the facility?

Response Category	Total N = 249
No	78%
Yes	19%
Not sure/Don't recall	3%

Q18A. What type of information did you search for? (*Select all that apply*) (Respondents only asked this question and Q18B if their answer to Q18 was “Yes”)

Response Category	Percentage
<b><i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies based on response option</i></b>	
Directions to the site (N = 23)	9%
Maps or pictures of the recreation site (N = 23)	9%
Weather information (N = 20)	8%
Parking information (N = 18)	7%
Hours of operation (N = 18)	7%
Entry fees, permits (N = 13)	5%
Information about the surrounding areas – attractions, restaurants, shopping, etc. (N = 11)	4%
Reviews from others who have visited the site (N = 10)	4%
Rules and regulations (no alcohol, designated swimming areas, campfires, etc.) (N = 11)	4%
Type of facilities available at the site (bathrooms, showers, shelter, picnic tables, etc.) (N = 10)	4%
Safety advisories (fire warning, bacteria levels, currents, winds, etc.) (N = 5)	2%
Unscheduled closings due to crowds/parking lots full (N = 5)	2%
Unscheduled closings due to weather conditions (N = 2)	1%
Other information (N = 3)	1%

Q18B. Which resources did you use to seek this information? (*Select all that apply*)

Response Category	Percentage
<b><i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies based on response option</i></b>	
Website of CT DEEP (N = 25)	10%
General internet search (N = 23)	9%
Other (N = 6)	2%
Social media account of CT DEEP (N = 6)	2%
Website of town where site is located (N = 6)	2%
Social media account of town where site is located (N = 3)	1%

## SECTION 6: SATISFACTION

Q19A. Overall, how satisfied are you with your recent outdoor recreation experience?

Response Category	Total N = 249
Extremely dissatisfied	2%
Somewhat dissatisfied	4%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	4%
Somewhat satisfied	28%
Extremely satisfied	62%

Q20. Do you have any suggestions as to how your outdoor recreation experience can be improved? Please explain.

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
More parking, staff, facilities, docs, hunting areas, etc.	1
Better maintenance	2
More garbage cans/waste bins	3
More/Better law/rule enforcement	4
More trees, restrooms, funding, open space, etc.	5

Q21. In the next 12 months, how likely are you to engage in this same activity again at the same location?

Response Category (coded from responses)	Total N = 249
Extremely unlikely	5%
Somewhat unlikely	2%
Neither likely nor unlikely	4%
Somewhat likely	10%
Extremely likely	79%

## SECTION 7: BARRIERS

Q24A. Regarding your outdoor recreation activities in general, please identify any barriers you experience that curtail or hinder your recreation. (*Select all that apply*) (If respondent selected “none of these,” they were brought to the next section)

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies based on response option.</i>	
None of these (N = 65)	26%
Lack of time (N = 50)	20%
Inappropriate behavior of other people at the location (N = 49)	20%
Too crowded (N = 49)	20%
Weather conditions (N = 44)	18%
Facilities damaged/overused (N = 39)	16%
Lack of available parking (N = 31)	12%
Condition of facilities (N = 27)	11%
Other (N = 25)	10%
Lack of available/appropriate facilities (N = 21)	8%
Don't know what is being offered/location of facility (N = 18)	7%
Safety/security concerns (N = 18)	7%
Visitors smoking at the site (N = 17)	7%
Too far from residence (N = 17)	7%
Costs are too high (N = 12)	5%
Rules and regulations of facilities (N = 11)	4%
Lack of access for people with disabilities (N = 11)	4%
Don't have the right equipment (N = 9)	4%
Participate in other hobbies that are not outdoors (N = 9)	4%
Too much pollution (N = 8)	3%
New to activity and need support learning techniques (N = 6)	2%
Lack of interest (N = 4)	2%
Lack of transportation to sites (N = 4)	2%
Physical limitations (N = 3)	1%

Q24B. Which of these barriers is the most problematic in limiting your outdoor recreation? (Respondents were asked this question if they selected more than one barrier in the previous question as well as not selecting “none of these”)

Response Category	Total N = 121
Lack of time	16%
Too crowded	13%
Inappropriate behavior of other people at the location	11%
Weather conditions	9%
Condition of facilities	7%
Other	7%
Facilities damaged/overused	6%
Too far from residence	5%
Lack of available parking	5%
Rules and regulations of facilities	3%
Safety/security concerns	3%
Lack of available/appropriate facilities	3%
Don't have the right equipment	2%
Don't know what is being offered/location of facility	2%
Lack of access for people with disabilities	2%
Participation in other hobbies that are not outdoors	2%
Lack of interest	2%
Lack of transportation to sites	2%
Costs are too high	1%
New to activity and need support learning techniques	1%
Too much pollution	1%
Visitors smoking at the site	1%

## SECTION 8: CROWDING/PARKING/ONLINE INFO

DEEP is currently exploring solutions to resolve issues related to overcrowding.

Q26. If DEEP began to post real-time capacity information online about various popular facilities, such as Rocky Neck State Park and Hammonasset Beach State Park, how likely would you be to check these updates prior to leaving your home?

Response Category	Total N = 249
Very likely	51%
Somewhat likely	8%
Somewhat unlikely	29%
Very unlikely	12%

Q27. When you seek information about an outdoor recreation facility in Connecticut, where do you first look for this information? (Select all that apply)

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies based on response option.</i>	
State of Connecticut website (N = 137)	55%
General internet search (N = 98)	39%
All Trails website (N = 66)	27%
Word of Mouth (Friends, Family, Co-workers, etc.) (N = 38)	15%
Town/Municipality website (N = 38)	15%
CT Trails Finder website (N = 24)	10%
Maps or Road Signs (N = 19)	8%
Other (N = 16)	6%
Trail Forks website (N = 13)	5%
Other social media site (N = 12)	5%
Other website (N = 10)	4%
State of Connecticut social media (N = 10)	4%
Parks and Recreation Office (N = 7)	3%
Recreation club/group website (N = 8)	3%
Town/Municipality social media (N = 6)	2%
Recreation club/group social media (N = 5)	2%

Newspapers, Magazines, TV, or Radio (N = 6)	2%
Town Office or Library (N = 6)	2%
Tourist Information Center (N = 3)	1%
Club/Group Membership (Sports, Athletic, Outdoors Club, etc.) (N = 2)	1%

Q28. How often do you use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or others?

Response Category	Total N = 246
Several times a day	46%
About once per day	13%
Every few days	10%
About once a week	2%
A few times per month	3%
Rarely/Never	26%

Q29. Which social media platforms do you use most often? (Respondents were only asked this question if they responded anything other than “rarely/never” in the previous question) (*Select all that apply*)

Response Category	Percentage
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies based on response option.</i>	
Facebook (N = 112)	45%
Instagram (N = 104)	42%
TikTok (N = 24)	10%
Snapchat (N = 20)	8%
Twitter (N = 18)	7%
Other (N = 14)	6%
Pintrest (N = 7)	3%

## SECTION 9: DEEP OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

Q31. Do Connecticut outdoor recreation facilities accommodate those who have special needs due to physical disabilities?

Response Category	Total N = 241
Yes	36%
No	7%
Not sure	57%

Please explain.

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
“Some locations do”	1
“Not many/Not very well”	2
“Depends on the facility”	3
“Most locations do”	4
“Not sure/Difficult to answer”	5

Q32. Do you feel that Connecticut state parks are a welcoming environment for people of all races, gender, ages, sexualities, and religions?

Response Category	Total N = 246
Yes	82%
No	5%
Not sure	13%

Please explain.

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
No barriers/prohibitions for anyone (race, gender, etc.)	1
Not applicable to outdoor recreation activity	2
Some locations have no staff/visitor diversity or have staff issues	3
Depends on the location	4
Crowds and/or wealthier people are being catered to	5

D1. During the past 12 months, have you traveled outside of the State of Connecticut to participate in outdoor recreation activities in another state?

Response Category	Total N = 249
No	27%
Yes	73%

D1A. Please tell us why you travelled outside of Connecticut for recreation. (Respondents were only asked this question if their response to previous question was “yes”)

Response Category (5 Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
Vacation	1
Visiting family/friends	2
To travel/explore	3
To experience/try new things	4
Hiking, camping, other recreational activities	5

## SECTION 10: DEMOGRAPHICS

The next few questions are designed to help officials learn more about park users in an effort to serve them better, however, these questions are optional.

D2. What is your 5-digit zip code? (Top 10 zip codes presented in table)

Response Category	Total N = 189
06385	5%
06340	2%
06457	2%
06010	2%
06320	2%
06511	2%
06013	2%
06019	2%
06082	2%
06438	2%

D3. How would you describe your racial or ethnic background?

Response Category	Total N = 237
White non-Hispanic/Latino	82%
Hispanic or Latino	5%
Other	4%
Two or more races	3%
Black or African American	3%
Asian or Asian American	2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	<1%

“Other” responses

Response Category (Five Most Common Responses)	Response Rank
Mixed Caucasian	1
Haitian	2
Italian American	3
Middle Eastern	4
Caribbean West Indian	5

D4. What is your highest level of education?

Response Category	Total N = 227
Less than high school graduate	<1%
High school graduate	5%
Some college or trade school	18%
College graduate	41%
Post graduate degree	36%

D5. How many people currently live in your household, including yourself?

Response Category	Total N = 224
1	9%
2	49%
3	18%
4	16%
5	7%
10 or more	1%

Q84. How many children under the age of 18 currently live in your household?

Response Category	Total N = 216
None	72%
1	14%
2	11%
3	2%
4	0%
5	0%
6	0%
7	0%
8	0%
9	0%
10 or more	<1%

D6. What is your household's total annual income?

Response Category	Total N = 207
Under \$25,000	5%
\$25,000–\$49,999	4%
\$50,000–\$74,999	10%
\$75,000–\$99,999	22%
\$100,000–\$149,999	29%
\$150,000 or more	31%

D7. What is your current age?

Response Category	Total N = 235
Under 18	<1%
18 – 24	9%
25 – 34	13%
35 – 44	13%
45 – 54	17%
55 – 64	23%
65 – 74	20%
75 – 84	4%
85 or older	1%

D8. With what gender do you identify?

Response Category	Total N = 229
Male	50%
Female	45%
Gender diverse/non-binary	1%
Prefer not to say	4%

D9. Do you or other members of your household have any of the following health conditions?  
(Select all that apply)

Response Category	Total N = 238
<i>Multiple responses accepted; total N varies based on response option.</i>	
None (N = 176)	74%
Other condition (N = 12)	11%
Physical or mobility limitation (N = 27)	11%
Deafness or hearing loss (N = 12)	5%
Blindness or a vision impairment (N = 2)	1%

## CONCLUSION

Central Connecticut State University and The Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is extremely valuable.

Should you have any questions or comments about this survey, please contact Dr. Diana Cohen, Professor of Political Science at Central Connecticut State University via e-mail at [CCESRfeedback@ccsu.edu](mailto:CCESRfeedback@ccsu.edu) or telephone at 860-438-1026.



## Appendix

### **Appendix A. Division Action Plans**

#### **Long Island Sound Blue Plan**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Coastal-Resources/LIS-Blue-Plan/LIS-Blue-Plan-Final-Draft>

#### **Green Plan**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Open-Space/The-Green-Plan>

#### **Wildlife Action Plan**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Wildlife/CT-Wildlife-Action-Plan/CT-2015-Wildlife-Action-Plan#Review>

#### **Clean Water Fund Priority List**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Municipal-Wastewater/Financial-Assistance-for-Municipal-Wastewater-Projects>

#### **Comprehensive Energy Strategy**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Energy/Comprehensive-Energy-Plan/Comprehensive-Energy-Strategy>

#### **Comprehensive Materials Management Strategy**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Waste-Management-and-Disposal/Solid-Waste-Management-Plan/Comprehensive-Materials-Management-Strategy>

#### **Connecticut Coastal Land and Estuarine Land Conservation Program Plan**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Coastal-Resources/Coastal-Management/Coastal-Land-Use-Planning>

#### **CTY Forest Action Plan**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Forestry/CT-Forest-Action-Plan>

#### **Connecticut's Plan for Conservation and Management of Wild Trout**

[https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/fishing/fisheries\\_management/Wild-Trout-Management-Plan-Final-01202022.pdf](https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DEEP/fishing/fisheries_management/Wild-Trout-Management-Plan-Final-01202022.pdf)

#### **Conservation and Load Management**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Energy/Conservation-and-Load-Management/Conservation-and-Load-Management>

#### **Climate Change Roadmap**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Climate-Change?page=2>

#### **Connecticut Integrated Resource Planning**

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Energy/Integrated-Resource-Planning/Integrated-Resource-Planning>

## Appendix B: Open Project Selection Process

Resources made available to Connecticut through the Land and Water Conservation Fund's State and Municipal Assistance Program will be allocated to projects that align most closely with the recommendations presented in this SCORP. To objectively facilitate this process, Connecticut has developed a systematic Open Project Selection Process (OPSP). The OPSP is designed to provide equal opportunity to all interested parties for the consideration of their project proposals, and to assist program administrators with identifying the proposals that best contribute to the fulfillment of this SCORP's recommendations.

When a grant round is announced, the OPSP is a progression of the following stages:

- Notification to interested grant applicants that funding is available
- Communication of project eligibility requirements to grant applicants
- Assistance with the preparation of grant applications
- Ranking of proposals by applying an impartial scoring system
- Review of top ranked proposals and selection of projects that provide the greatest benefit to the people of Connecticut

The ranking system numerically scores proposals by awarding point values to more than 50 separate criteria falling into the following 12 categories:

- Previous grant performance of the applicant
- Current ownership status of the proposed facility
- Relevance to general statewide SCORP issues
- Contribution to specific SCORP recommendations
- Applicability to public demand for facilities
- Relevance to local or regional facility needs
- Extent of public participation in proposal development
- Project funding and relative prosperity of the community
- Project location relative to accessibility by targeted or distressed communities
- Environmental and historic quality considerations
- Capital development or renovation considerations
- Facility acquisition considerations

While the ranking system seeks to objectively incorporate considerations for all merits of

a proposed project, the final selection of projects must sometimes account for contingencies not anticipated by the standardized ranking criteria.

- Key properties can only be acquired when they are placed on the market by willing sellers
- Market conditions with low property values and low interest rates are encountered very infrequently
- Natural disasters can suddenly undermine critical infrastructure

CT's OPSP is intended by design to provide equal consideration and opportunity for all project proposals, and in most cases the impartial ranking system serves this purpose. But the ultimate standard for project merit should be for the greatest service provided to the people of Connecticut.

## Appendix C: Wetlands Management Information

Within the State's borders there are approximately 450,000 acres of wetlands, 6,000 miles of streams and rivers, over 2,000 lakes and reservoirs, and 600 square miles of estuarine water in Long Island Sound. Managing these precious resources for today and tomorrow is one of DEEP's most critical missions.

Water is Connecticut's most precious natural resource, critically important to public health, the environment and the economy, while supporting rich and diverse water-based recreational opportunities. Water is also Connecticut's most vulnerable natural resource, as expanding development places increasing pressure on water supply, water quality, and the very lands that support the many ecological functions essential to both. In the context of land and water conservation priorities, the conservation value of wetlands is second to none.

Hydrologically, wetlands function like sponges by temporarily absorbing surface runoff and gradually releasing it. This helps not only to moderate flood events, it also helps stabilize the water supply for the plants and animals that depend on it. Wetlands also function like filters for surface waters as they seep through complex ecological communities on the way to recharging underground freshwater aquifers. The same underground aquifers, in turn, supply critical base flows in rivers and streams during the hot, dry summer months, when surface runoff is limited, and tree roots rapidly pull moisture from the soil during transpiration.

Ecologically, wetlands of all kinds support highly diverse and abundant biological communities, from Atlantic White Cedar Swamps, to tidal marshes, to open lakes and flowing rivers.

While all plants and animals rely on some amount of water for survival, many of Connecticut's threatened and endangered species rely entirely upon the unique ecological communities that exist only in wetlands. Many other migratory species rely on them seasonally as part of their annual migration corridors. Recreationally, wetlands are prime destinations for many users pursuing a variety of activities. The complex ecological communities that arise from various types of wetlands provide abundant bird watching and other wildlife viewing opportunities. Waterfowl hunters are drawn to wetlands for the many resident and migratory game species found there, and anglers in Connecticut pursue a wide variety of game species in lakes and streams across the state. Boaters of all kinds naturally rely on surface water resources for everything from sailing, to waterskiing, to personal watercraft, but those who choose to paddle to their destinations often find the greatest access to the widest variety of settings. Some visitors are simply seeking a cool swim on a hot day, while others visit wetlands for nothing more than the tranquility derived from their aesthetic appeal.

Economically, wetlands not only supply crucial water needs for Connecticut agriculture, commerce and industry, they help to mitigate expensive property damages resulting from flood events and they contribute substantially to providing local, potable drinking water to a great

many residents. Aside from the hydrologic benefits to the state's economy, wetlands create jobs in the outdoor recreation industry for those who provide equipment, supplies, and services to the sporting public, as well as for others in the general community who provide sporting visitors with basic services such food and lodging.

Unfortunately, wetlands in Connecticut are not nearly as abundant today as they were historically. In the centuries since European settlement began, the total area of wetlands in the state has decreased from an estimated 800,000 acres or more to less than 466,000 acres.

#### Wetland Management Legislation and Implementation

The Connecticut DEEP acknowledges the importance of wetland management and protection and thereby commits to Floodplain Management and Wetland Protection, Executive Orders 11988 and 11990.

Executive Orders 11988 and 11990 direct the federal agency to avoid, to the extent possible, the long and short term adverse impacts associated with modifying or occupying floodplains and wetlands. They also require federal agencies to avoid direct or indirect support of floodplain or wetland development whenever there is a practical alternative.

For LWCF purposes, the State/project sponsor must comply with these executive orders. If implementing the LWCF project would result in an adverse impact to a federal or state regulated floodplain or wetland, a statement of finding must be included in the EA or EIS documenting the State/local sponsors coordination efforts with responsible state and federal authorities, a description of affected floodplain and wetland resources, alternatives considered to developing in the floodplain and/or wetland, and actions to avoid, minimize and/or mitigate impacts.<sup>1</sup>

Early in the conceptual development of an LWCF proposal, the State shall encourage LWCF project sponsors to document their planning and analysis process, including all efforts to reach out to the interested and affected public and agencies. These stakeholders should be invited to provide input early in the planning process and before any environmental analysis formally begins so the sponsor can clearly communicate the purpose and need for the project and give them an opportunity to provide any information that could be useful for scoping out the LWCF proposal and considering its potential impact on resources.<sup>2</sup>

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