



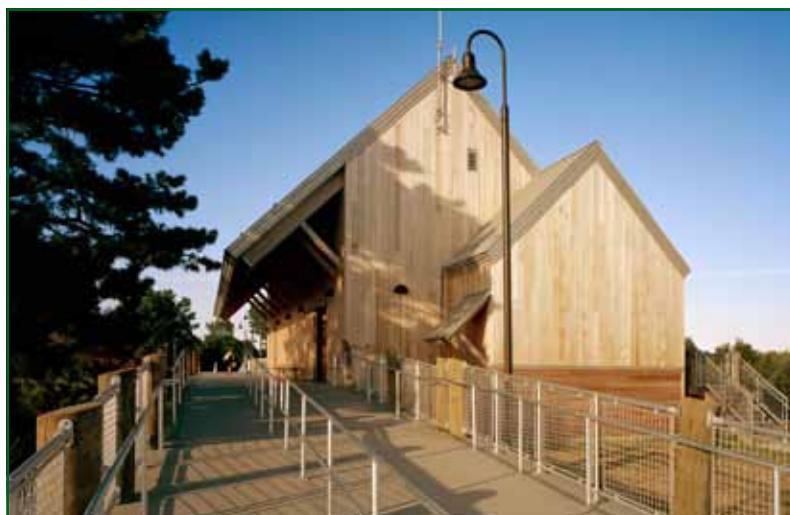
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SPRING 2013

NEWSLETTER FROM THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

State Parks are Green in More Ways than One

This year marks the centennial celebration of Connecticut's State Parks. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is continuing to move forward on an initiative to operate our parks more sustainably — to help ensure the continued enjoyment of these facilities for generations to come.



Exterior and interior views of the new award-winning building at Middle Beach, Hammonasset State Park

Photos by Woodruff/Brown Architectural Photography

Numerous improvements have been made statewide, from the smallest parks and boat launches to the largest, most utilized parks. Some green initiatives include energy and water conservation, use of renewable energy, composting systems and improved recycling.

Hammonasset State Park hosts Connecticut's largest stretch of shoreline and welcomes over one million visitors each year, making it an ideal location to showcase green improvements. Recent new construction of a building at Middle Beach won an Innovative Architecture and Design Award. It included installation of composting toilets and motion-activated lighting and the use of carefully selected building materials.

Special technology on a pole-mounted photovoltaic solar panel (2.67 KW) allows the panel to rotate and track the sun, making it 30% more efficient than stationary solar panels. The panel provides power to the Meigs Point Nature Center as well as the camp store. Any excess energy generated goes back into the electrical system for use elsewhere in the park.

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State Parks are Green ... *Continued from page 1*

Hammonasset offers 558 campsites which create a high demand for both water and electricity. In the past, campground bathhouses were lit continuously for visitor safety during the camping season. Newly installed motion sensors provide lighting when needed but power off when not in use, significantly reducing the electricity demand in these buildings. Some of these buildings have been fitted with solar tubes that bring in natural light, and solar hot water collectors, which cut down on the electricity needed to heat water. Old inefficient fixtures were replaced with new low-flow faucets, toilets and urinals throughout the park, reducing water consumption by half. To discourage littering and increase recycling in both the park area and the campgrounds, separate containers clearly marked **Trash Only** and **Recycling Only** are required of the trash hauler by state contract.

When exterior light poles throughout the park needed replacing, it was an opportunity to incorporate renewable energy. A combination of solar panels and energy-efficient LED bulbs were installed on approximately 20 replacement poles, resulting in reduced electricity use. Outdoor lighting is pointed downward so as not to contribute to light pollution but instead preserves the night sky darkness and the ability to see stars.

Other Connecticut state parks have implemented smaller-scale projects. At **Bigelow Hollow State Park** in Union, the cash registers in the ticket booths are now powered with photovoltaics, eliminating the need for paper tickets and the need to run traditional electricity into the buildings. Solar power is also being used at the parking lot of the **Gardiner Lake** boat launch in Salem. **Harkness Memorial State Park** is utilizing energy-saving LED bulbs in historic light posts. And at Connecticut's first state park, **Sherwood Island State Park** in Westport, the East Beach parking area has undergone improvements to improve drainage issues while reducing pollution from runoff, including the installation of porous pavers and a ditch system. A variety of future improvements are planned, including the renovation of the pavilion building to incorporate photovoltaic solar technology, energy efficient lighting and solar thermal hot water.

So, whether you enjoy going for a swim, following a trail or camping under the stars, visit our state parks and see how green they are in more ways than one. (www.ct.gov/deep/parks)

Raising Green Families: Reducing, Reusing and Recycling Baby Gear

This is the first of a three-part series; the author is a new mother who works at DEEP.

Congratulations, you're having a baby! Amidst all of your emotions and questions, are you thinking about raising a green family? Reducing your family's environmental footprint early will not only teach your children that environmental stewardship is important, but will help conserve natural resources for their future health and enjoyment. Reducing, reusing and recycling baby gear can be an important first step on your green family journey.

Reducing — I was astounded and overwhelmed by the multiple-page list that can be found in a number of main-stream pregnancy books and from big box baby stores. Could it be that a baby really needs a wipe warmer and multiple baby holding devices to survive her first year of life? Well, my baby and I have survived the first year and I can tell you that most items marketed as essential to raise a happy and healthy baby are not needed. Reducing the amount of new baby gear will lessen your environmental impact by reducing the amount of raw materials needed to produce the item, while reducing the carbon emissions associated with shipping

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The author's daughter models her consignment shop outfit.

Raising Green Families

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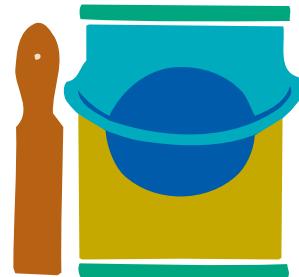
and disposing of the packaging and the spent item. Plus, you won't have to store as many baby items. Many of my mom friends regret registering for and buying so much gear. (I know, sometimes the nesting instinct can be very strong!)

Reusing — Purchasing gently-used baby gear is a great option to reduce your baby's environmental footprint. There are many great brick and mortar consignment stores, including those specializing in children's items. Online sources include stand-alone sites for children's consignment, as well as generalists such as [Freecycle](#), eBay and Craigslist. A relatively new concept for children's consignment events allows consigners to set their own prices with the organizers and volunteers selling their items during a week-long event. These events allow for larger profits for the consigner compared to traditional consignment stores and at the end of the event the organizers will donate your unsold items, if you choose, to a charity. (*Editor's Note: When buying used cribs, playpens, etc., be sure that they meet [current safety criteria](#).*)

So does being a green family mean no baby shower? I really wanted a baby shower to celebrate, but I also wanted to be green. So my friends and family did a great job of throwing me a "reuse" baby shower. Electronic invitations were sent (eliminating paper usage and the carbon emissions associated with delivery) informing guests of my request for used baby items, rather than new. (They coordinated this to make sure I didn't end up with ten strollers.) The hosts requested that the gifts be wrapped in used or reusable wrapping, such as newspaper or receiving blankets and suggested a used book in lieu of a traditional card. The invitation even listed the towns and emails of the guests in order to facilitate carpooling. The hosts continued the reuse theme during the shower by using pre-owned dishware and cutting up used boxboard for guests to write their baby advice. (I saved these in my daughter's baby book.) In lieu of party favors, the hosts donated money to plant trees to offset the carbon footprint of the party. **Having a reuse shower has the added benefit of teaching your family and friends about the importance of reducing your environmental footprint.**

Recycling — Continue the reuse cycle by consigning, donating or gifting your unwanted baby items. If your items are too loved for reuse, recycle the ones you can by finding an appropriate recycling option from DEEP's [What Do I Do With?](#) webpage.

By bringing up baby "green," you can enjoy the joys of parenthood knowing that you are being kind to both your baby and the environment.



EPP Paints and Food Service Supplies Now on Contract

State Agencies, municipalities, schools and not-for-profit organizations now have environmentally preferable products (EPP) to choose from when purchasing paint and food service supplies. The Connecticut Department of Administrative Services has awarded two new contracts that encourage the use of these green products.

The [paint and related products contract](#) makes available paints and coatings that have recycled content and are low-toxicity (low odor, low VOC emitting) products. By choosing low VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint, you reduce the harmful effects on indoor air quality; VOCs in paint can cause headaches, eye irritation, dizziness and problems with the central nervous and respiratory systems. Other paint-related environmentally preferable products are also featured in this contract, such as rollers. The [food service supplies contract](#) includes bowls, plates, cutlery, hot and cold cups, trays, napkins and paper towels, deli containers and sandwich bags. This contract promotes the use of products that are reusable, unbleached, have recycled content and are compostable. Food service products with these health and environmental attributes reduce the amount of trash needing disposal and disposal costs as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Check out the [state contracts](#) that promote EPP products and choose "green" whenever possible.

Ask Eartha

I recently hired an organic landscaping company to get my lawn in shape. They recommend three organic fertilizer applications over the season. I just heard that phosphorous fertilizer is now banned on home lawns. I'm wondering if organic fertilizer is phosphorous-free. And if not, what else can I use? Kate M., West Hartford CT

All phosphorous containing fertilizers, amendments and compost are covered by Connecticut's new law, **PA 12-155**, that addresses phosphorous pollution. The law went into effect January 1st of this year. It turns out this necessary nutrient is a major cause of the pollution to our lakes, rivers and ponds. Excess phosphorous, or more accurately "phosphate," results in algal blooms — that green, yucky stuff on freshwater ponds and lakes — that deplete oxygen and endanger fish and other aquatic creatures.

Organic fertilizers and amendments are derived from plant and animal nitrogen sources, and always contain some phosphorous. In contrast, non-organic or "synthetic" fertilizers can be manufactured without phosphorous. Most of the phosphorous in synthetic fertilizers comes from environmentally damaging mining of phosphorous-containing rock which is becoming scarce.

Either way, fertilizer use on established lawns is now limited by the need for phosphorous as determined by a soil test. The law doesn't ban phosphorous, but for an established lawn it does require that an approved lab (such as UConn, www.soiltest.uconn.edu) indicate that your soil is lacking in phosphorous by a soil test taken within the last two years. If it's lacking in phosphorous you can apply an organic fertilizer. If it's not lacking in phosphorous you can only apply one if it contains .67% or less phosphate which the new law defines as phosphorous-free.

The synthetic fertilizer industry now produces phosphorous-free fertilizers. However, all organic products will naturally contain phosphorous, as it is found in all living creatures. This includes compost, that wonderful product derived from the breakdown of leaves in our yards and towns. Leaf composts typically have low amounts of phosphorous in them and could be used to top dress established lawns,



according to Dawn Pettinelli, a soil scientist at UConn.

Phosphorous fertilizer may also be used if you are establishing new grass or repairing your lawn with seed or sod. Other things to keep in mind with the new legislation — 1) phosphorous containing lawn fertilizers can't be applied between November 15 and March 15. (UConn recommends only fertilizing between April 15 and October 15 when plants are actively growing.) 2) phosphorous containing fertilizer may not be applied on lawns less than 20 feet from a waterway like a brook, river, lake, pond or the Sound.

By the way, congratulations on deciding to go organic. If you aren't already familiar with the Northeast Organic Farming Association, you may want to check out their **lawn and yard guide for homeowners**. Also check out UConn Soil Lab's **new fact sheet** on the legislation.

Thanks for writing — keeping our waters healthy and clean is good for everyone!

Eartha

Eartha answers selected environmental questions. Email your question to judith.prill@ct.gov and watch future issues for your answer.

Visitors to Connecticut can rest easy at an eco-friendly hotel, motel or bed & breakfast.
Find out which ones are certified at www.ct.gov/deep/greenlodging



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