



CONNECTICUT OFFICE OF OUTDOOR INDUSTRY AND EXPERIENCES

Resources & Information

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OVERVIEW OF PARTNERSHIPS IN PARKS INITIATIVE'S NEW REQUEST FOR INFORMATION



OFFICE OF OUTDOOR INDUSTRY & EXPERIENCES

- **Agenda**
- History of the Office
- About CT State Parks
- CT Outdoor Recreation Economy
- Partnerships in Parks Initiative Original RFI
- **Partnerships in Parks Initiative New RFI**
- Next Steps
- Newsletter
- Questions & Answers

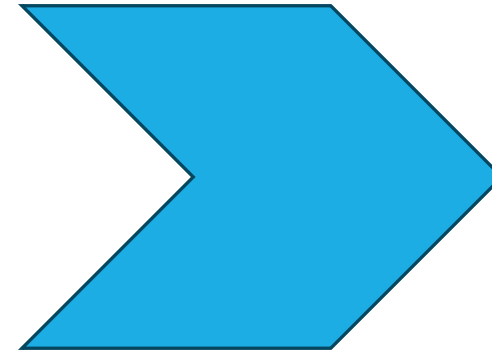
OFFICE OF OUTDOOR INDUSTRY & EXPERIENCES

History

- Established in 2024
- Environmental Conservation Branch, DEEP
- 20th State Office Nationally (at the time)
- 5th State Office in New England
- Partnerships in Parks Initiative

Guided by Three Pillars

- **Elevate outdoor recreation** for visitors in State Parks
 - Seek partnerships that enhance experiences
- **Provide equitable access** to the outdoors
 - Ensure everyone can participate
- Add or **expand tourism destinations**
 - Bolster local economic development

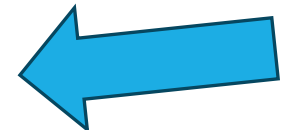


Convene

Connect

Collaborate

CONNECTICUT STATE PARKS



CT Parks Are Great! Here's why:

- 110 state parks
- 255,000 acres (parks and forests combined)
- 15 minutes (max driving distance every resident has to recreational activities in state parks)
- 117 state boat launches
- 14 state campgrounds
- 21 lifeguarded beaches
- 112 state wildlife management areas, 287,000 acres
- 2,500 miles of scenic trails
- 10% of land in CT is managed by DEEP
- 15.5 million visitors annually (2024 data)

www.CTParks.com

Other notes about Connecticut's natural resources

- 5,800 miles of rivers and streams
- 900 miles of blue blazed hiking trails
- 600 miles of shoreline
- 458 miles of Long Island Sound Coastline
- 61% of Connecticut covered in woods



Biking at Fort Trumbull State Park, New London (CTvisit)

OUTDOOR RECREATION IN CONNECTICUT

Outdoor Recreation Impact

\$5.5B outdoor recreation economy is the **second largest in New England**

\$2.5B salary and wages

9.2% **growth outpaced national average** of 9%

49,011 jobs (6.5% growth year over year)

\$70.7M state investment via Restore CT State Parks for capital projects

\$70M for Restore CT State Parks
& \$10M for recreational trails in recently passed state budget



Crescent Lake Recreation Area Loop, Southington (CTvisit)

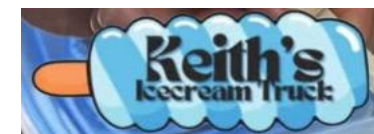
PARTNERSHIPS IN PARKS INITIATIVE

2024 Original RFI - Process to form more partnerships in state parks

- 48 ideas received
- 31 people or organizations
- 24 state parks; 6 state forests
- **Special use licenses (SULs) awarded**
- Common types of ideas
 - Concessions
 - Rentals
 - Performances
 - Event management (catering and lodging)
 - Education and stewardship
- Potential Benefits
 - New outdoor recreation opportunities
 - Engage outdoor enthusiasts and businesses
 - Revenue to Passport to Parks



Padding instruction at Hopeville Pond State Park, Griswold (Instagram@CTStateParks)



PARTNERSHIPS IN PARKS NEW RFI FOR 2025+

- Posted new RFI to encourage ongoing ideas or conversations
- Issued Public Notice to promote the opportunity
- Recorded a webinar with slide deck reviewing the new RFI

Supporting Documents

- **Overview/Long form**
- Idea Submission Template (Appendix A)
- List of State Park facilities (Appendix B)
- Public Notice
- PowerPoint slide deck
- Park visitor survey

OVERVIEW/LONG FORM

- Special Use License Call-out
 - Examples: including, but not limited to, requests for fundraiser events, trail races, seasonal mobile food and beverage trucks, historical reenactments, rowing regattas, guided programming and piloted partnerships
- Goals and Considerations
- Examples of Types of Partnership DEEP is Open to Considering
- Boundaries for Partnerships
- Examples of Current Partnerships
- Review Process
- Information and Resources
- Submission Process and Public Posting
- Confidentiality, General Terms, Conditions and Limitations

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- **Overview/Long form**
- **Idea submission template (Appendix A)**
- **List of State Park facilities (Appendix B)**
- Public Notice
- PowerPoint slide deck
- **Park visitor survey**

IDEA SUBMISSION TEMPLATE (APPENDIX A)

APPENDIX A: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI) SUBMISSION TEMPLATE

*** By submitting this form, you are acknowledging that this is an idea (not a formal proposal) and no action may be taken. ***

Please use the following template as you respond to the Request for Information (RFI). Attaching additional information such as visual, graphic, and/or data presentations using PowerPoint or Excel is encouraged.

Email completed template, which should not exceed **five (5) single-spaced pages** and attachments to deep.partnershipsinparks@ct.gov, with the subject line "Parks RFI Submission: Add Title of Idea and State Park(s) identified for use"

See RFI section VII. Submission Process and Public Posting for details.

Title:

Idea Title and State Park(s) identified for use

1. Overview

Provide a concise narrative describing conceptual ideas for new or expanded outdoor recreational opportunity/venture and include the specific park(s)/facilities to be used.

2. Recreation Services & Goals

Describe the public use and benefit to be derived from the proposed service or experience, and address the following questions:

Can you provide evidence of demand for this service (in the marketplace)?

Have you provided this service before? If so, where?

How does this service align with the goals of the Initiative (listed below)?

- Elevate Outdoor Recreation & Visitor Experience
- Increase Equitable Access to Outdoor Recreation
- Expand Tourism Destinations

3. Operations & Staffing

Describe the specific areas of the State Park(s) required to provide the proposed services, e.g.:

- Specific operations location within the park/facility
- Specific location where the proposed activity and/or safety training (if applicable) takes place
- Specific storage location with the park/facility

How much lead time is needed to setup this activity and related staffing once a concession agreement/lease contract is signed?

4. Infrastructure & Technology

Describe any infrastructure investments needed to support operations (use of existing structures or temporary structures encouraged over installing new buildings).

Describe any technology changes or investments needed to support operations.

Indicate how your organization is prepared to make relevant infrastructure investments.

5. Financial

Provide an overview of the financial model for the proposed service. DEEP understands that cost estimates may be general in nature or estimates, but any cost data that is included will be appreciated.

Please include information regarding potential revenue to the State. DEEP will not encourage partnerships that create – directly or indirectly – additional DEEP expenses or operational responsibilities

6. Sustainability

Describe how operations will minimize carbon footprint, integrate sustainability, and promote conservation of Connecticut's public lands and natural resources.

7. Summary

**** This Summary section will be posted on DEEP website after submission ****

Provide a non-confidential summary of less than 200 words that describes the proposed idea.

Please include: name of organization, title of idea and state park(s) identified for the proposed use, and how the proposed service aligns with the three goals of; elevating outdoor recreation experiences, increasing access to the outdoors and expanding tourism destinations.

LIST OF STATE PARK FACILITIES (APPENDIX B)

APPENDIX B: SPECIFIC PARK LOCATIONS & FACILITIES

DEEP is accepting submission of partnership ideas involving all existing State Parks. However, DEEP is highlighting the following facilities – most of which are located in parks that host weddings and special events – and is providing additional information to inform ideas that meet the goals and considerations of the RFI.

Detailed information and photos of each facility listed below will be posted on the Office of Outdoor Industry and Experiences webpage along with this RFI. Since these types of partnerships would involve repeated occupation of DEEP buildings, they would require a subsequent, competitive RFP process.

[Gillette Castle State Park](#): 106,000 annual visitor count



Concession Building: DEEP is seeking traditional food and beverage service ideas for this location.

[Lake Waramaug State Park](#): 50,000 annual visitor count



Concession Building: DEEP is seeking traditional food and beverage service ideas for this location which meet the goals of the RFI. The Lake Waramaug State Park concession building has been unoccupied since 2022. It is a charming building situated between the campground and day use areas of the park.

[Mount Tom State Park](#): 33,000 annual visitor count



Concession Building. DEEP is seeking open-ended ideas for this building.

[Harkness Memorial State Park](#): 254,000 annual visitor count



Eolia Mansion: The Eolia Mansion is a 42-room Roman Renaissance Classical Revival mansion descending from the Harkness family. It is a Historic Mansion with exceptional architectural significance due to the unique buildings and grounds within the estate. The Mansion is home to the highly demanded wedding and events program run by Harkness Memorial State Park. DEEP is seeking open ended concepts to restore, renovate, or revitalize the Mansion to support its long-term preservation.



Carriage House: DEEP seeks open ended concepts. A potential partnership could support the ongoing wedding service provided in the Eolia Mansion.



Rumrill Garage: DEEP seeks open ended ideas.

[Rocky Neck State Park](#) : 585,000 annual visitor count



Ellie Mitchell Pavilion: The Ellie Mitchell Pavilion is a historic Pavilion dating back to 1937. It is a two story building on the National Register of Historic Places and was built using the resources of the park itself: cobblestones from the stone walls around the park, tree trunk pillars from varying state parks, the flat fieldstones on the terrace from Devil's Hopyard State Park, and so much more. The second floor of the Pavilion hosts a unique event space for receptions, private parties, seminars, and conferences run by Rocky Neck State Park. The first floor is a unique cafeteria style space with indoor wooden picnic tables, bathrooms, kitchen hook up, and more. DEEP is seeking open ended concepts to revitalize the first floor of the Pavilion to open the space to the public.

[Gillette Castle State Park](#): 106,000 annual visitor count



Osaki House: Located next to the Connecticut River and the historic [Chester/Hadlyme Ferry](#). DEEP seeks open-ended concepts that meet the goals of the RFI.

PARK VISITOR FEEDBACK SURVEY

Public Feedback Survey: Outdoor Recreation Experiences and Opportunities in CT State Parks

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is seeking feedback from park visitors regarding the types of experiences, services and amenities they would like to see in State Parks. DEEP's Office of Outdoor Industry and Experiences is exploring new partnership opportunities that will provide elevated outdoor recreation experiences, increase access to the outdoors and expand tourism destinations.

Your information will be kept confidential. Questions 1-10 are required. Questions 11-20 are optional. We will only contact you if you sign-up to receive the newsletter (Questions 8-9).

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

1. How often do you currently visit CT State Parks? *

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seasonal
- Yearly
- Never

2. What CT State Park do you visit most? *

Enter your answer

Key Questions:

3. What outdoor recreation EXPERIENCES do you currently enjoy in CT State Parks? (Check all that apply)

4. Rank your enthusiasm for the following potential outdoor recreation EXPERIENCES to be offered in CT State Parks.

5. What new passive outdoor recreation EXPERIENCES would you like to see offered in CT State Parks you visit?

6. What AMENITIES/SERVICES do you currently enjoy in CT State Parks? (Check all that apply)

7. Rank your enthusiasm for the following potential AMENITIES/SERVICES to be offered in CT State Parks

8. What new AMENITIES/SERVICES would you like to see offered in CT State Parks you visit?

KEY CHANGES

Original RFI	New RFI
Deadline: March 1 & April 30, 2024	Deadline: None
Review Period: Annually	Review Period: Quarterly
Processing: Post summaries of suggestions on OOI&E webpage once; select concepts to implement through SUL/RFPs	Processing: Post summaries of suggestions on OOI&E webpage quarterly; evaluate ideas based on market potential and agency goals
Possible Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to SUL • Issue RFPs • No Action 	Possible Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for a meeting or additional information from the respondent • Development of new DEEP-offered service • Referral to Special Use permitting • Referral to Public Outreach (Education) • Issuance of an RFP for future partnership • No further action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Visitor Survey

NEXT STEPS

- Post New RFI
- Host Informational Meeting (post recording to webpage)
- Review submissions (ongoing)
- Post submissions in quarterly batches
- Offer “discovery calls/meetings”
- Draft RFPs – coming soon!
- Post Draft RFPs for new activities or locations for additional feedback
- Direct ideas to already established processes, such as the [Special Use License \(SUL\) program](#) or [Public Outreach, Boating Division](#) for further review
- Post Final RFP (concession agreements/leases)

SUBSCRIBE TO THE EMAIL NEWSLETTER



Office of Outdoor Industry & Experiences

Get the latest from us by signing up [HERE!](#)

Name

Email *

Role

Organization

Town



Thank You for Your Interest in Growing Connecticut's Outdoor Recreation Economy!

I am excited to introduce myself as the first Senior Advisor for the Office of Outdoor Industry and Experiences at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)! I also am pleased to share a new [Request for Proposals \(RFP\)](#) for food and beverage concessions at three State Parks.

During my first few months I have been able to visit many State Parks and

THANK YOU!

Presented by:
Jeff Shaw, Senior Advisor
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State Parks website:
www.CTParks.com

Office website:
<https://portal.ct.gov/deep-parks-partnerships>

Office Email:
deep.partnershipsinparks@ct.gov



Sunset at Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison

Stay Connected

Email Jeff	Office Webpage	State Parks - Instagram
Jeff on LinkedIn	Visit CT State Parks	State Parks - Facebook

QUESTIONS?

Please raise your hand and wait to be called on.

Raise your hand varies slightly depending on your device:

- At the bottom of the Zoom screen look for the “Raise Hand” button.
- Or at the bottom of the Zoom screen look for the “Reactions” button (smiley face), click once for more options, and then click “raise hand.”

Please remain on mute until your name is called.

