



Partnerships in Parks Initiative Request for Information (RFI)

Summary of Ideas Submitted to the Initial RFI in 2024-2025

In January 2024, the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) issued a [Partnerships in Parks Request for Information \(RFI\)](#) to encourage businesses, non-profits, and other interested stakeholders to submit ideas for potential partnerships that could help elevate outdoor recreation and visitor experiences, increase access to the outdoors and expand tourism destinations in Connecticut State Parks.

DEEP values the importance of transparent, public communication around any initiative that involves Connecticut State Parks. Respondents were required to submit non-confidential summaries of their potential partnership concepts to be posted on the DEEP website for awareness.

DEEP received the following concepts, listed in alphabetical order by the submitting individual or organization.

Catering & Event Management (A Thyme to Cook): We propose a 3-phase approach to conserving, expanding and maintaining engaging spaces and venues for the public through building management and events program promotion. We would ensure DEEP guidelines, goals and initiatives are followed and met while developing and implementing long-term revenue stream sources through the environmentally sound use of land and event spaces at Harkness Memorial State Park. We believe any plan should be sustainable and innovative, with marketable ideas while highlighting the historic beauty of the existing structures. Our proposed initiatives include vibrant, exciting and equitable public use, education, increased tourism, and revenue-positive growth.

Installing Disc Golf Courses (Adam Goodman): Disc golf is one of the fastest-growing recreational and professional sports in the world. It provides a fun, healthy, quality, outdoor activity that stimulates both mind and body by combining elements of strategy, skill, and athleticism. It is a lifetime sport which is easy to learn and accessible to people of all ages and fitness levels. Players from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds can participate without financial barriers because discs are inexpensive, only one is needed to play, and most courses are free. The need for more courses is constant as the sport continues to grow in popularity. Since 2020, more players have become active members of the Professional Disc Golf Association than joined in the previous 35+ years. This submission proposes a partnership between Connecticut disc golfers and the state to provide a recognized process for installing disc golf courses throughout various state parks. Investing in a disc golf course can contribute to a region's revitalization efforts by attracting new visitors and enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Music and Movement (Ballet Theatre Company): Ballet Theatre Company will present a live, outdoor performance series featuring Antonio Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" titled Music & Movement. The performance will highlight classical music. The performers include a professional musical quartet and six professional ballet dancers. The musical quartet will be composed of a violinist, a cellist, a violist, and a flutist. Choreographer Stephanie Dattellas will collaborate with local violinist, Mirela Panaitisor, a Principal-2nd for West Hartford Symphony Orchestra and owner of the The New Old School of Music in West Hartford. The performance series will include performances presented at Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford and Topsmead State Park in Litchfield.

Electric Bike Rentals (Be Brave Ventures): Experience your favorite park or trail in a new and exciting way! On an E-Bike! Be Brave Ventures, LLC is offering Fat Tire Electric Bike rentals delivered direct to you at select State Parks and Nature trails located in central and eastern Connecticut. Rentals times vary from three hours to multiple days, tailored to your needs with personalized service and care. What does your fun day look like?

Bookstore (Bennett's Books): Bennett's Books, the community focused bookstore nestled in the center of beautiful Deep River, seeks to expand its reach (and generosity) by opening a satellite location at Hammonasset Beach State Park. With a location at the beach, the popular and well loved shop will provide an extremely convenient place for park visitors to pick out great "beach reads" at very affordable prices. Additionally, another location will allow Bennett's Books to bolster its community programs which include a food pantry and refrigerator (accessible 24 hours a day), medical equipment lending program, bicycle repair courtesy station, community seed library and plant share, free books for low income children and families, fundraisers for community groups and organizations, and scholarship program. Books and reading are vitally important to individuals and society and increasing access to books in a safe and welcoming atmosphere benefits everyone. Having a bookstore at Hammonasset will increase the quality of the park and the money raised will do good throughout the state.

Two-Day Music Festival (C3 Ventures): Two-day, multi-stage, family-friendly music festival in late fall 2025 with over 30 artists performing across two to three stages in Fairfield County. Highlighting the best of Connecticut with local food & beverage offerings.

Kayak Rentals (Candlewood Kayak Rental): Deliver kayaks for rental to Squantz Pond and Squantz Cove boat launches.

Snack & Drink Concession (Clark Outdoors): Snack and drink concession at Lake Waramaug State Park in 2024 if there isn't one already.

Lessons & Scenic Boat Rides (Connecticut Watersports): Connecticut Watersports seeks to partner with DEEP to provide guided watersports lessons and scenic lake tours on Bantam Lake, Connecticut's largest natural public lake via the Bantam Lake State Boat Launch and Marina. Currently Bantam Lakes beauty goes largely unnoticed by the public as there is no way to explore the lake first-hand without owning a boat, as it remains a highly privatized lake. Connecticut Watersports has the vessels, staff and resources to provide safe, guided watersports and scenic boat tours to the general public of all ages and ability levels including those with ADA considerations. Connecticut Watersports would utilize a limited number of parking spaces at the State Boat Launch, utilize the existing public boat dock for guest pickup and offer a free life jacket loaner program to the public. Connecticut Watersports aims to share the beauty of Connecticut's largest natural lake and provide experiences that may not otherwise be feasible due to

equipment, expertise and expense considerations.

Dinosaur-Themed Art Activities (Deidre Sassano): Educational and fun in content, in theme and in technique, for all ages. Custom-designed Art Program at Dinosaur State Park to encourage the wonder and creativity of our visitors while educating about dinosaurs and ancient life.

Annual Camping/Cycling Event (East Haddam Land Trust): The beautiful grounds of Sunrise State Park will be opened for an overnight camping and a cycling event during a magical weekend in late spring or summer in 2025. Visitors will arrive Friday after 2:00 pm and leave by Sunday at 2:00 pm. Undeveloped tent and car camping sites will be available. Sanitation facilities, potable water, and food trucks will be on site. This donation-based event is \$100 per person, and all proceeds go to support East Haddam Land Trust.

Night Sky Gazing (East Haddam Land Trust & Friends of Machimoodus): East Haddam Land Trust and the Friends of Machimoodus propose to host twice monthly stargazing events at Machimoodus/Sunrise State Parks. These events will be open to the public, start 30 minutes after sundown, and last approximately two hours. These events will run from April through November, one or two Friday evenings per month, depending on the weather. We are not ready to go live at a state park. We will practice a few times at other locations to develop this program. However, we would like to have the flexibility to use Machimoodus/Sunrise as early as 2024 and hopefully 2025.

"Jammin on the Salmon" Music Event (East Haddam Land Trust & Friends of Machimoodus): You are invited to relax on the banks of the Salmon River in Sunrise State Park to enjoy live music emanating from a natural amphitheater at our first annual "Jammin on the Salmon" celebration of music, the outdoors, and land preservation. This family-friendly event will start at noon and finish at 10:00 pm on Sunday, September 15, 2024. Requested donation at the door is \$40 per adult, \$20 per teen, and humans under 13 years of age are free. Nonrefundable advance tickets are \$35 per adult and \$15 per teen at ehlt.org. Leashed dogs are allowed. We will have childrens' activities, food trucks, sanitation facilities, and vendors. Please BYOB. Please see ehlt.org for band line-up and other details as they become available. Proceeds of this event will help fund East Haddam Land Trust's and Friends of Machimoodus work.

Restaurant and Catering (Elegant Banquets): Elegant Banquets would like to manage and develop the Eolia Mansion at Harkness Memorial State Park. The vision includes constructing an architecturally appropriate extension (which would serve as a state-of-the-art ballroom) on the Long Island Sound (south) side of the building. Additional upgrades would include the kitchen, bathrooms and air conditioning. The establishment of an expanded, successful business by seasoned professionals brings many benefits to the local community, which are readily acknowledged in the towns where we operate.

Food & Beverage Services, Group Event Services, & Equipment Rentals (ExplorUS): Expanding on Rocky Neck State Park's already established reputation as a busy beach and event site, our proposal presents a plan to improve and add visitor services. Revamping the food concession, introducing recreational equipment rentals, and enhancing the event services will complement the Park's existing attractions and solidify its appeal as a thriving hub for outdoor recreation and leisure for locals and tourists alike.

Group Event Services (ExplorUS): We propose to transform the historic Gillette Castle attraction and its surrounding areas into an event venue, with the concession building supporting these events with food and beverage operations. The outdoor space at the concession building could also be used for live entertainment and group events. These concepts align with the State's objectives of elevating outdoor recreation experiences and expanding current event venues to become celebration and group gathering destinations within Connecticut.

Group Events & Lodging (ExplorUS): ExplorUS proposes expansion of Harkness Memorial Park's amenities to include overnight lodging and more space for event operations. This will not only elevate the outdoor recreation offerings but also responds to the growing demand for unique and convenient event venues. By enhancing the Park's historic assets, we aim to attract more visitors, boost revenue, and provide the community with an improved asset that promotes memorable experiences.

EDM Summer Beach Parties (Felicia & Sutton Lindau): We propose to offer a series of three summer evening EDM beach parties in June, July and August at Sherwood Island State Park, targeting primarily 20-somethings. The stage would be set on the parking lot or flat field facing the beach, and participants would dance in the sand, monitored and protected by event staff. If noise is of great concern, we could make these "silent disco" parties and use headphones for all participants.

Escape Room/Scavenger Hunt (Felicia Lindau): For the beautiful outdoor weather from June through October, we'd love to offer paid groups an experience that combines the fun of an outdoor scavenger hunt with the challenge and intensity of a timed Escape Room. We'd like to pilot this offering in Dinosaur State Park in 2025.

Outdoor Summer Cinema (Felicia Lindau): We propose to offer summer evening outdoor cinema events, like a drive-in movie but using bean bag beds, chairs, and picnic blankets instead of cars, enhanced by a food truck court and the option for VIP experiences offered from mid-June to Labor Day in Sherwood Island State Park.

Food Truck Weekends (Friends of Gillette Castle State Park): The Friends of Gillette Castle State Park would like to ensure that refreshments are available at the park during the 2024 summer season. We would like to organize "Festive Food Truck Summer Weekends" and host a rotating collection of interesting food trucks at the park. In addition to providing visitors to the Castle with easy access to refreshments, we propose to have the food trucks operate in the evenings until the park closes at sunset. This would enable local residents to come enjoy late afternoons at the park with their favorite beverage while enjoying delicious food and the beautiful views and atmosphere of Gillette Castle State Park.

Osaki Education Center (Friends of Gillette Castle State Park & Others): We propose to use the Osaki house and the adjacent land on the bank of the Connecticut River as a center for environmental and cultural education. The Osaki Education Center (OEC) will have year-round outdoor educational materials and gardens that all visitors can enjoy. The center will also have interior exhibits and specific educational programs to support local schools and groups interested in learning more about Japanese immigration, the history, geology and environment of the Connecticut River. We propose to enhance and expand the visitor experience at Gillette Castle State Park to include the rich story of Yukitaka Osaki and immigrants like him. We intend to preserve his home and develop it in a way that suits the

character and history of this unique gentleman.

Welcome Center (Friends of Goodwin Forest): Create a welcome center and educational programming at Goodwin Conservation Center using the museum behind the main house, with access to restrooms in the main house.

Restoration of Historic Vegetable Garden (Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park): The Friends of Harkness proposes to recreate the historic vegetable garden on the grounds of the former Harkness estate as part of an illustrative historic reconstruction of the working Harkness estate, now Harkness Memorial State Park in Waterford. Plans and plantings will be derived initially from archival records of what was grown by agricultural staff and ordered by the cook on the estate. The purposes of this project are for historic and educational gardening programming. The project will also involve the construction of a temporary hot house on the foundations of the east wing of the now dismantled greenhouse and the resurrection of the cold frames east of the greenhouse. The Friends will continue to leverage its already robust volunteer apparatus to plant, maintain, and harvest the produce grown each year, as well as conduct planning, planting, and preservation exhibitions as part of FOH's public educational programming in the hot house.

Restaurant/Tea House (Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park): Currently there is no food service at Harkness Memorial State Park. The Friends of Harkness (FOH) proposes to repurpose the Rumrill House Garage on site to serve as an indoor seating area for catering/food truck vendors. FOH would provide chairs/tables and handicapped accessible picnic tables for the building. FOH would solicit and schedule weekend Food Truck dining opportunities to enhance current visitor experiences at Harkness Memorial State Park. We believe this offering would stimulate increased park attendance and generate a significant revenue potential for the maintenance of the park buildings and grounds

Themed Food & Family Nights (Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park): The Friends of Harkness proposes to offer a summertime, mid-week Themed Food and Family Night at Harkness Memorial State Park. This project would offer families a fun mid-week summertime break from cooking. It would give families an easy and organized destination to be together and enjoy the beauty of Harkness Memorial State Park. We believe this offering would stimulate increased park attendance and generate a significant revenue potential for the maintenance of the park.

Management of Eolia Mansion (Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park): The Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park proposes to administer the operation of Eolia Mansion at Harkness Memorial State Park in partnership with the Parks Department at DEEP. In so doing, they plan to improve the museum quality of the mansion, more fully realize the revenue potential of the venue, and provide greater public access through tours and educational events.

Renovation & Preservation of the Yellow Farmhouse (Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park): The Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park proposes to restore, renovate, and improve the historic Yellow Farmhouse at Harkness Memorial State Park as an overnight rental venue to complement the Mansion as an accommodation for wedding parties, for rehearsal dinners and other gatherings for up to 75 non-overnight guests. Brides can use the house in concert with their weddings at the Mansion and may then ride by horse and carriage to and from the mansion for their wedding.

Restoration of the Sports Complex Wing of the Carriage House (Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park): The Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park proposes to restore, renovate, and improve the Squash Court in the Sports Complex and associated spaces and facilities in the Carriage House for public use as a Squash Club and Rental Venue in order to sponsor public use of the Squash Court and accommodate smaller, more intimate gatherings and meetings than the mansion might afford.

Combined Management of Eolia Mansion, Yellow Farmhouse, and Carriage House Sports Complex (Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park): The purpose of this RFI is to demonstrate the savings and efficiency of partnering with the Friends of Harkness Memorial State Park for the improvement, management, and administration of Eolia Mansion, the Yellow Farmhouse, and the Sports Complex in the Carriage House in order to achieve increase revenue for the park through revitalization and expanded programming of the currently underused and, in some cases, neglected assets of the park. The proposal for each of these three buildings may be entertained separately, however considering them together presents the opportunity for efficiencies in management, cleaning, and maintenance fees in their ongoing operation.

Discover Connecticut: Sky's the Limit (Kate Pipa): The idea is to introduce a captivating user-generated video series celebrating Connecticut's natural wonders. Join us as we journey through the state's picturesque state parks, unveiling breathtaking hiking trails, diverse wildlife, and invigorating activities. Immerse yourself in the tranquility of nature while discovering local cafes and eateries nestled in the vicinity, perfect for a delightful afternoon escape. Stay tuned as we showcase the beauty and charm of Connecticut's state parks, inviting you to explore, indulge, and connect with the great outdoors. Follow along on social media for some great ideas around that state that will inspire your next adventure!

Kids Mountain Bike Camps (KC&E Adventures): KC&E Adventures proposes hosting Kids Mountain Bike Camps in Huntington State Park and Nassahegon State Forest during Summer 2024. Established in 2015, our camps prioritize teaching fundamental mountain biking skills in a safe, supportive environment to children aged 7-13. We aim to instill a lifelong passion for outdoor activities and promote responsible trail usage. Huntington State Park and Nassahegon State forest offer ideal settings to cater to riders of all levels, from beginners to advanced, drawing participants from Fairfield, Litchfield, and Hartford counties. Our operations ensure a 5:1 camper-to-instructor ratio, with activities running Monday to Wednesday, 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. Camp activities include bike checks, warm-ups, drills, and application rides on designated trails. By providing structured guidance and fostering a love for outdoor recreation, we aim to create a new generation of skilled and responsible park users. We have a successful track record of similar programs in Vermont and look forward to bringing our expertise to Connecticut's parks, enriching the community for years to come.

Youth Celebrity and Entrepreneur Summer Explosion Tour (KIEDC): KIEDC.com proposes the Youth Celebrity and Entrepreneur Summer Explosion Tour, a groundbreaking event designed to empower and showcase young talent in film, acting, modeling, and various talent competitions. Scheduled across five picturesque Connecticut State Parks, this two-day extravaganza aims to inspire the next generation of artists and entrepreneurs.

Paddleboard Rentals (Kingfisher Adventures): Kingfisher Adventures, LLC proposes to offer walk-up paddle board rentals on Lake Wintergreen, staged at the beach near the parking area at 55 Main Street, Hamden. Beginner-level, highly stable paddleboards will be provided, along with paddles and life vests equipped with a safety/emergency whistle. Customers will be required to sign a liability waiver, as well

as swim waiver attesting to swimming competency. Kingfisher requires that all customers also read and then agree to follow safety and usage protocols (i.e. do not remove life vests, no swimming, respect the natural habitat and do not disturb wildlife, only use whistles in case of emergency, etc). Youth ages 12 & up may participate only if accompanied by an adult in a one-to-one ratio; youth below age 12 are encouraged to participate in kayaking at one of Kingfisher's "walk-up" kayak locations. When necessary, Kingfisher provides basic paddling instructions, but not professional lessons or courses. Proposed operating hours are seasonal, May through October, weekends only, from approximately 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Read more about Kingfisher and its other locations at kayakhaven.com.

Visitor Center, Educational Hub & Headquarters (Last Green Valley): The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) is proposing to invest in the James L. Goodwin Conservation Center in Hampton to create a visitor center, educational hub and headquarters for The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor. TLGV will provide unique programming and visitor services, expand the appeal of the Goodwin Center as a tourism destination with enhanced facilities and creative marketing, and provide equitable and sustainable access to the outdoors with input from diverse stakeholders, inspired programming and thoughtfully designed facility improvements. A new headquarters at the Goodwin Center will strengthen and solidify the work TLGV and all of its partners are doing to promote and protect The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor (also a Connecticut Heritage Area), and it will serve as a symbolic and visible space for a vibrant regional identity.

Environmental Education & Stewardship (Mystic Aquarium): At Mystic Aquarium, we are passionate advocates for ocean conservation. We champion sustainable practices within our aquarium and strive to educate and activate environmental stewards of all ages to engage in nature, live sustainably, and act as agents of change for the environment. We propose to partner with the local coastal state parks of Bluff Point, Rocky Neck and Hammonasset Beach to provide impactful environmental education- and conservation-focused programs for individuals and families to get directly involved in protecting our ocean planet through habitat restoration, coastal clean-ups, and biodiversity studies of threatened species. Designed to be inclusive and adaptable, we aim to eliminate barriers that may prevent participation in environmental stewardship action. We propose to host regularly scheduled environmental education programs that make participants more comfortable in nature, lay the groundwork for lasting family memories, and assist in the development of lifelong conservation values. These programs have the potential to bring new audiences to the state parks, creating opportunities for the parks to engage and educate in a new way.

Kids Ride the Parks (New Haven Public Schools): We are looking to bring safe and fun recreational and travel via cycling to more New Haven secondary school students. The "Rule the Road" physics and traffic safety course in New Haven Public Schools will address physics, repair and safe road operations of bicycles. Students and staff in the cycling course will work together to plan and run recreational bicycle rides from New Haven to interesting local destinations. Many of our students reside in New Haven's environmental justice communities. Outdoor access is frequently limited. Visitation to State Parks is not at all diverse. This submission is intended to extend a conversation around curbing this trend. We are motivated to develop partnerships to provide New Haven youth the equitable access to outdoor spaces such as our State Parks and opportunities for active transportation to, during and home after the school day.

Kayak, Paddleboard, and Bicycle Rentals (Scoot & Paddle): Professional outdoor adventure company offering a diverse range of kayak, paddleboard, and bicycle rentals for outdoor recreation at Indian Well

State Park in Shelton from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Kayak, Paddleboard, and Bicycle Rentals (Scoot & Paddle): Professional outdoor adventure company offering a diverse range of kayak, paddleboard, and bicycle rentals for outdoor recreation at Silver Sands State Park in Milford from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Our Resilient Parks Nature Walks (Sea Grant CT - UCONN): Our State Parks encompass a wide range of the beautiful and critically important coastal habitats in Connecticut. In the reality we now face of a changing climate, these parks are being impacted like the rest of the state. There is good news however: conserving these ecosystems can make our communities more resilient to climate impacts. Connecticut Sea Grant's Adapt Connecticut program proposes a series of nature walks themed around the diverse coastal ecosystems and how they contribute to a resilient Connecticut. The talks will be free and open to the public and led by a Connecticut Sea Grant extension educator. We will discuss the causes, signs, and solutions to beach erosion, how salt marshes make our coast more resilient, and the value of beach and dune habitat.

Paddle with Your Pup (SUP Sisters CT): We propose to allow guided stand-up paddleboard instruction by the SUP Sisters CT, LLC for humans and their dogs in certain dog-friendly State Parks with water bodies that allow for stand-up paddleboarding. Lessons would primarily be conducted by appointment in advance. Lessons would not exceed six total boards (two instructors, four humans, and four dogs), although we expect a majority of lessons to be four boards (two instructors, two humans, and one to two dogs). The parks we propose utilizing include parks that allow on-leash dogs and are well-suited for paddleboarding. Activities involving dogs are a widely-accepted and sought after type of tourism. Particularly, post-pandemic, many people adopted dogs and are looking for opportunities to get them outside, enriched, and having fun together. This guided experience would increase exposure and use of the State Park system and have a minimal environmental impact.

Educational Information for Climbers (The Ragged Mountain Foundation): The Ragged Mountain Foundation would like to partner with DEEP to place educational kiosks at popular climbing destinations within the state. As an access, advocacy, and environmental organization, these educational kiosks will highlight climbing site best practices, leave-no-trace ethics, the history of the climbing site and describe the local flora and fauna. The RMF will agree to run a series of trail days to improve the trail systems used by climbers. The RMF will also be the voice of the climbing community to bring up climbing related issues with DEEP. The RMF will work closely with DEEP to ensure that the climbing resources are managed properly according to the standards that the state would like to see.

Glamping (Timberline Glamping Company): Timberline Glamping Company proposes to provide, operate and maintain six furnished Glamping accommodations within designated areas of Hammonasset Beach State Park Campground. Timberline's goal is to provide guests with a new and different way to enjoy the outdoors and state parks. Providing guests with the traditional camping experience outside without sacrificing comfort, luxury and style inside their accommodations.

Outdoor Live Performance Events (Waldron's Studio 88): Waldron's Studio 88 is proposing to use the Manfield Hollow State Park area between the Kirby Mill and Mansfield Hollow Dam to host monthly outdoor, community inclusive public performances for all to enjoy. Performances will consist of a variety of live entertainment ranging from local "open mic" to professional performances. The location provides

for a “natural amphitheater” effect and a bucolic location to enjoy the park, the water fall, and the Natchaug River.

Guided Kayak Eco Tours and Rentals (Wanderlust Adventures, LLC): Wanderlust Adventures, LLC, is a fully licensed, locally owned small business offering guided kayaking tours through Connecticut’s diverse and ecologically rich waterways. These include forested rivers, freshwater tidal marshes, salt marshes and tidal rivers – many of which are accessible only by boat. Our small-group tours (typically 6-8 guests accompanied by 2 experienced guides) provide safe, low-impact access to remote natural areas. We propose to use several state-operated boat launches across Connecticut as a brief entry and exit points. All equipment is stored off-site and transported in as needed, and no more than three tours are conducted per week to prevent overuse of a single location. Each tour includes paddling instruction, safety training, Leave No Trace education, and guided ecological interpretation. This immersive experience fosters a deeper appreciation of Connecticut’s natural heritage and encourages responsible outdoor recreation.

Concession Stand (West Shore Seafood): West Shore Seafood proposes to partner with DEEP to operate Lake Waramaug State Park's concession stand, offering a sundry market and snack bar. The aim is to enhance visitor experiences by meeting essential needs and providing enjoyable amenities. Operations will utilize the existing building, with West Shore Seafood providing equipment and staffing, including a SERVSAFE-certified manager. Operating hours will vary seasonally. Infrastructure will be upgraded as necessary, with wifi available at a nominal fee for guests. Marketing efforts will include social media promotion. Financially, standard markups will be applied, and internet fees will help cover costs. The state will receive rent and security deposits. Sustainability practices, including recycling and green packaging, will be maintained.

Farmers Market (Westport Farmers Market): Westport Farmers' Market would evaluate the potential of moving the successful farmers' market to Sherwood Island from May to November. The consideration would provide accessibility of fresh locally grown and curated food to a larger reach within Fairfield County and beyond. WFM would support the efforts of the Park Service through programming focused on sustainability, nature and health. The partnership would allow WFM to expand their shopper base while providing accessibility, bathrooms, electricity, walkable areas and handicap access, thus creating a weekly outdoor outing focused on health and community.

Self-Serve Kayak & Paddleboard Rental Kiosks (Whenever Watersports): Whenever Watersports proposes to enhance access to on-water recreation in State Parks through self-serve kayak paddleboard rental kiosk programs. Our proven model, already successful in numerous state and city parks across the country, offers convenient and affordable access to paddlesports. By strategically installing kiosks in multiple State Parks, we aim to meet the growing demand for water-based recreation. Our operations prioritize affordability, convenience, and community engagement. Through our kiosks, visitors can enjoy hassle-free access to kayaks and paddleboards during all park hours, fostering memorable outdoor experiences. With Whenever Watersports, State Parks can provide visitors with exciting opportunities for recreation and exploration while making the most of their resources.

Yoga In Our City (Yoga in Our City): Yoga In Our City is a non-profit organization providing yoga instruction and wellness education. Our City Parks program is our flagship program offering a schedule of 600+ yoga classes in 22 public parks in six cities across Connecticut, all free to participants. We propose expanding our work into various State Parks. Simply put, we imagine leading a yoga class at a

State Park. The attraction is the unique experience to connect in nature at a beautiful facility with family, friends, and neighbors

Partnerships with State Parks commonly are formalized through a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process. The concepts submitted to this RFI will help DEEP identify the types of outdoor recreation services that partners may be interested in providing, which will help DEEP design potential subsequent RFPs. DEEP will invite public comments on draft RFPs that may result from this process.

Additional questions or comments may be directed to deep.partnershipsinparks@ct.gov.