

## Partnerships in Parks Initiative Standing Request for Information (RFI)

September – December 2025

In August 2025, the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) issued a new [Partnerships in Parks Request for Information](#) (RFI) to encourage businesses, non-profits, and other interested stakeholders to submit ideas for potential partnerships in Connecticut State Parks. In 2024, an original RFI was published with similar goals.

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 ideas during from September – December 2025. The ideas are listed in alphabetical order by the submitting individual or organization.

**Ecological Grazing Initiative (Raptor Ridge Farm LLC):** We propose a targeted ecological grazing initiative at eastern Connecticut state parks including Hurd State Park, Devil's Hopyard, Machimoodus, Salmon River, Day Pond, Pachaug Forest, Bartlett Brook Wildlife Management Area, Pomeroy State Park, Mooween State Park and Goodwin State Forest. The project uses goats to naturally reduce invasive species, manage hazardous understory fuel loads, and restore trails and public-use areas without machinery or chemicals. The initiative includes optional public viewing zones and educational programs that elevate visitor experiences, increase equitable access to environmental education, and draw tourism interest to under-visited parks. Operations require minimal infrastructure, no new buildings, and all equipment is portable and temporary. The financial model is flexible, creates no additional DEEP operating costs, and provides revenue to the State through either per-acre or percentage-based sharing. This partnership improves ecological health, enhances public recreation, and supports Connecticut's long-term conservation goals.

**Self-Service Kiosks (Rent.Fun):** We propose to introduce self-service kiosks that make every Connecticut State Park a destination for memorable recreation while creating a connected regional experience. Through a single mobile app, visitors will have access a wide range of activities, including kayak and paddleboard rentals, bike stations, and lawn games such as ping

pong, cornhole, bocce ball, and disc golf. Additional kiosks can be customized to match the unique character and needs of each park. Each State Park may host a full mix of kiosks or a smaller set based on visitor demand. We will work with DEEP to determine the right balance at each site. Visitors will be able to unlock and enjoy all services through the app, supported by an affordable membership plan that provides access across all participating parks. This model creates a connected experience where someone might paddle at Lake Waramaug, play ping pong at Rocky Neck, and enjoy disc golf or cross-country skiing at Mount Tom, all with the same membership. The goal is to expand access to recreation, encourage repeat visits, and strengthen Connecticut's role as a tourism destination while supporting local economic growth.

**The Perch (Matthew and Jaclyn Shea):** At Brainard Homestead State Park in East Haddam, we propose The Perch- a sustainable, eco-friendly + off-grid nature experience space designed to honor both the historic Brainard Homestead and the human-nature connection it represents. Using historical documents and photographs, we aim to replicate the original homestead as a living tribute to the site's heritage. The Perch would serve as a wellness, education and healing space. Visitors can reconnect with themselves and the land through mindfulness walks, reflective workshops, and nature-based sessions. The space would host public community days, day retreats and educational programming that align with the park's natural and cultural legacy. If the state prefers a smaller-scale project, we are open to creating a sustainable off-grid cottage in the meadow- a space that embodies the same mission of reconnection, education and ecological awareness.

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](mailto:deep.partnershipsinparks@ct.gov).