

NYC Watershed Recreation

A newsletter for the outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy the lands and waters of the New York City water supply



**Environmental
Protection**

2018

Cover photo: This family cheered after catching a panfish at DEP's Family Fishing Day at Lake Gleneida last summer.

In This Issue

2018 Recreation Events.....	2
Guide for reservoir paddling	3
Hitching a ride to the outdoors.....	4
Flood buyouts yield fishing access.....	4
Boating news and notes.....	5
Rail trail coming to Ashokan.....	6
Meet your watershed stewards.....	7
Upgrades at historic tower.....	8
Contact DEP	8

Watershed Recreation

2018 EVENTS



A youngster enjoys an afternoon bike ride at Ashokan Reservoir. The walkway atop its dam and dikes attracts an estimated 300,000 visits each year.

Experience the Watershed

We hear more and more of your stories every year. Some tell us about the “big one” they caught while fishing on our reservoirs. Others boast about the out-of-town friends they took hiking on watershed trails, or the secluded hunting spot they found in a forest that was just opened to the public. Many of the stories you shared with DEP over the past year have a common theme - there is more and easier access to the outdoors. With more than 135,000 acres of water supply land and water open for recreation, DEP is eager to share our slice of nature with watershed residents and visitors.

The calendar on this page is a sample of the public events we are planning for 2018. Exact dates and times will be posted throughout the year on our website www.nyc.gov/DEP, or Facebook at [Facebook.com/NYCWatershed](https://www.facebook.com/NYCWatershed). Outdoor enthusiasts can also sign up for DEP’s recreation e-newsletter by emailing us at Recreation@dep.nyc.gov

Spring - Family Fishing Day at Ashokan Reservoir: Experts will teach participants to fish at one of NYC’s most scenic reservoirs. Bait and fishing poles will be provided. Bring your own if you have them! This event in Ulster County is co-sponsored by New York State DEC.

Spring - Family Fishing Day on the Croton System: Experts will teach participants how to fish on a NYC reservoir east of the Hudson River. Bait and fishing poles will be provided for those who don’t have their own. This event in Putnam County is co-sponsored by New York State DEC.

Autumn - Guided hike at High Point Mountain: Join DEP, New York State DEC, and the Catskill Mountain Club for a guided hike up High Point Mountain in the Catskills. The trail includes a scenic view of Ashokan Reservoir. DEC will provide information about the history of the Catskill Park, and DEP will share about the history and operation of the largest municipal water supply in the United States.

Autumn - Reservoir Cleanup Day: Join hundreds of volunteers to keep our forests and reservoir shorelines free of debris! DEP’s annual cleanup is part of an international effort to remove shoreline debris from beaches, lakes and other popular waterbodies around the world.

A simple guide to paddling on NYC reservoirs

Recreational boating is one of the most popular outdoor activities on New York City's water supply reservoirs in the Catskills. What's more, you no longer need to own a kayak or canoe to enjoy a day on the water.

Rental boats are making it easier for anyone to access the four reservoirs that are open for paddling. The popularity of rental boats has surged in recent years. Nearly 1,000 people rented a boat from local businesses to paddle on the City's reservoirs in 2017. That's about three times more people than when the rental program started in 2014.

So how can you take advantage of the program to enjoy easy access and a fun day on the reservoirs? Here's a step-by-step guide to rental boating.

1) **Choose a reservoir and get a free permit** - Paddling is allowed at Cannonsville, Pepacton, Neversink and Schoharie Reservoir. But first you need your free DEP Access Permit. This can be obtained and printed from your home computer by going to www.nyc.gov/dep/accesspermit.

2) **Find a rental business** - Local businesses rent boats to be used at each of the reservoirs. Our partners at the Catskill Watershed Corporation keep an up-to-date list of participating businesses on their website at www.cwconline.org/reservoir-boating. Call ahead or visit the rental vendor's website to make a rental reservation.

3) **Get your boat** - Rental boats are stored at each reservoir on racks that are adjacent to the launch sites. This means no roof racks, very little lifting, and easy access! Some rental businesses will give you a key to unlock the boat for yourself, and others will meet you at the site to retrieve the boat from the rack and help you launch onto the water.

4) **Paddle and enjoy** - Set out onto the water and enjoy this unique opportunity to soak in the scenic beauty of the Catskills. The reservoirs include great views of the surrounding mountains and waterfalls. Many paddlers also report seeing wildlife during their excursions, including bald eagles, beavers, deer and the occasional black bear. Please remember that safety comes first! Wear a life vest at all times, and pay close attention to your route so that you can find your launch at the end of your trip.



Taking public transportation to the great outdoors

Trains out of Grand Central Terminal aren't just for those carrying briefcases or wearing business suits. City residents can also grab their fishing rod or hiking boots to head northward for an outdoor adventure on properties around the water supply system.

An hour-long ride on Metro-North's Harlem Line lands you almost within casting distance of a stream or a reservoir, or a short walk from a hiking trail.

These outdoor spots are open to all with a valid DEP Access Permit and a state license if you're fishing. Using the DEP RecMapper (www.nyc.gov/dep/recmap) one can easily find outdoor recreation near railroad stops, accessible by foot, bike, taxi or Uber. (Cyclists will need to have a Metro-North bike pass.)

Katonah is the first stop with great recreation offerings. Hikers looking for some adventure will need to travel a bit farther to reach a forest on DEP property. A roughly 20-minute bike ride or a 6-minute taxi ride along State Route 35 will bring you to the Angle Fly Recreation Unit, which is nestled between Muscoot and Amawalk reservoirs. Visitors can explore more than 10 miles of trails there, which can be especially rewarding for leaf peepers in the fall.

The next stop brings visitors to Goldens Bridge. If you own a boat at the Muscoot East Recreation Unit, your vessel is just steps from the train. If you don't have a boat, no worries. Plenty of fish are caught by those who fish from the shore of the reservoir.

Grab some coffee in town and walk along Old Bedford Road to access this recreation unit.

Our last stop is Metro-North's Croton Falls station. Two popular trout fishing streams, the Croton River's east and west branches, are easily accessible behind the Croton Falls stop. Anglers who enjoy fly fishing can toss bass bugs or caddis flies, catching a variety of species along several miles of well-producing streams.

Be sure to check reservoir levels and USGS stream gauges before boating or fishing. Keep an eye on the weather, too. Safety is paramount, so always dress appropriately and stay hydrated. Also remember to leave no trace when you're recreating outdoors. Take any trash with you to protect our natural resources from unsightly litter.



Flood buyouts create new access for fishing

New public fishing areas are coming to some streams in the Catskills because of a DEP-funded program to mitigate the damage of large storms.

For example, anglers will have access to an additional 400 feet along the Esopus Creek in Shandaken when trout fishing season begins on April 1. This stretch once included a house and several cottages. But those structures were taken down as part of a flood buyout program that removes damaged structures and, in some cases, replants the streambanks to minimize erosion in the future.

DEP began offering voluntary buyouts a few years after tropical storms Irene and Lee inflicted historic damage on the Catskills. The program sought to purchase streamside buildings that were repeatedly damaged by storms but did not qualify for previous federal or local buyouts.

The program aims to protect the water supply from pollution and help homeowners who might otherwise struggle to sell their properties on the open market. The buyouts come with another benefit - most of the properties will be opened for fishing and other public access along streams and rivers.

Boating updates: Nighttime, maps and contact info

Thousands of boaters who set out on New York City's reservoirs each year know how great a day on the water can be. Here's some information to make your season more safe and enjoyable.

Boat at night, bring the light

Fishing by boat at night is allowed on the City's reservoirs. In the summertime, many anglers head for the water long before dawn to beat the heat. But we ask that you take a few precautions to be extra safe.

- Please have a visible light or lantern with you while on the water at night. It's the law. A battery powered light that clamps to the stern of your boat is inexpensive if you don't want to use a lantern.
- While not required, placing reflective tape on both sides of the boat and on the stern above the waterline helps make you more visible in the dark.
- Don't forget a whistle or horn. State law requires boaters to carry a sound-producing device.

More information about the state's navigation laws can be found on the state parks website at www.parks.ny.gov.

Darkness can make that familiar reservoir you've fished every year seem larger and shoreline landmarks can seem non-existent. Don't forget a personal flotation device for all onboard. DEP encourages all anglers to wear a life vest while fishing at night.

Reservoir Boating Map Updates

Boaters currently rely on signs to identify where they can and cannot boat. DEP this year will update its angler maps with these restrictions clearly marked. Descriptions will also be provided to be sure boaters understand what areas are off limits.

We also plan to add these areas to the DEP RecMapper (www.nyc.gov/dep/recmap) so boaters with a smart phone can access this tool in the field to see exactly where restricted areas are located. These areas are located near hazardous features, like dams and spillways, and around sensitive infrastructure.

Angler maps can also be found on the DEP website by visiting www.nyc.gov/dep/recreation.

Don't forget to update your contact info

DEP annually processes thousands of boat tag renewals for the more than 13,000 boats stored on the reservoirs. DEP will send owners a renewal form in the spring of the year when their boat tags will expire. Tag holders then have until Sept. 30 to return the renewal form. If you move or your contact information changes, it is possible you won't receive the renewal notice. Your boat tag will then become invalid and DEP will remove your boat from the reservoir.

You can avoid this by updating your contact information stored in our system, including your correct phone number and email address. This will allow DEP to send additional reminders to expiring tag holders. You can update your information by contacting the Access Permit Office at 1-800-575-LAND or emailing Recreation@dep.nyc.gov.



Work begins on the Ashokan Rail Trail



The Ashokan Rail Trail will be constructed on a former rail corridor, shown above. The recreational trail, set to open in 2019, will include beautiful panoramic views of the reservoir.

A world-class rail trail will begin construction this year on the northern shore of Ashokan Reservoir.

The trail will be located along 11.5 miles of an old rail corridor that has not been used commercially for decades. The corridor will be refurbished as a recreational trail, providing spectacular views of the reservoir and the Catskill Mountains. The project is being led by Ulster County in collaboration with DEP. The Ashokan Rail Trail is expected to open in 2019.

Work on the trail began in January when contractors started to remove rail, railroad ties and hazardous trees from the corridor. Contractors will then upgrade some drainage along the linear path and install a crushed stone surface for the finished trail.

In addition to providing \$2.5 million for the trail project, DEP also agreed to construct and maintain three trailheads. These include one outside of Boiceville, a central trailhead near Shokan, and an eastern access point near Basin Road in West Hurley.

The trailhead near Boiceville will be off Route 28A. It is part of a larger contract to replace a large bridge, known as the Five Arches Bridge, that spans the

Esopus Creek. This work is scheduled to be completed in 2022. DEP plans to create temporary parking and trail access until then.

A design for the central trailhead was created by students at the Conway School in Massachusetts. DEP is designing the eastern trailhead near Basin Road to take advantage of existing parking and access near the Woodstock Dike.

Public access around active worksites will be restricted during construction of the trail. DEP and Ulster County will work together to minimize the duration of these recreation closures, but some will be necessary to protect public safety. Closure notifications will be posted on the DEP website and at entry points along Route 28.

When completed, the trail will provide a new recreational amenity for local residents and visitors, and a venue for New York City residents to learn about their drinking water supply. A stewardship committee established by the City and Ulster County will meet regularly to ensure a safe and fun recreational experience for all who use the trail.

Who are the stewards in the watershed?

DEP recently started a Watershed Stewardship Program to harness the energy of those who love recreating on water supply lands and waters. The stewards are volunteers who help DEP protect our natural resources while acting as ambassadors by sharing information with other outdoor enthusiasts. Those interested in joining the program can email DEP at Recreation@dep.nyc.gov or by calling 1-800-575-LAND.



Who: Ken Hashimoto

Hometown: Westchester County, NY

Recreation background: Began saltwater fishing when he was 7 off Long Island and New Jersey. Started fishing on NYC reservoirs in 1983. Moderator on WestchesterFishing.com forums for the past decade. Also an avid hunter and scuba diver.

Favorite reservoir and activity: I would consider Kensico to be my favorite, as it has a structure unlike the others. It is reminiscent of a northern oligotrophic lake (low nutrient levels) with sharp rock structures, cold and deep water, and fish species to match. At the same time, its northern parts offer a shallower, warm-water fishery.

Memorable experience on DEP property: I'd have to say my unexpected encounters with wildlife. I saved a swimming squirrel, saw a black bear swimming across Kensico Reservoir, and had an osprey swoop down and take a fish I just released.

What do you tell others about watershed recreation? The reservoirs are a hidden gem for those who want to pursue that trophy fish. It's also a very secluded place where you can relax in the outdoors despite the close distance to the City.

Why do you enjoy being a watershed steward? I would often see situations and conditions at the reservoir that I wished something could be done about. Now I have direct access to DEP's recreation program. I think I can speak for all the stewards in saying we want to preserve the beauty and the cleanliness of the reservoirs. We've already seen boat areas that are cleaned and permit holders participating in events to preserve the beauty of the watershed.



Who: Ann Roberti

Hometown: Andes, NY (Delaware County)

Recreation background: Started hiking when she arrived in the Catskills 30 years ago. Member of the Catskill 3500 Club and the Catskill Mountain Club. Helped to develop hiking trails on DEP property and kayaks several times a week on NYC reservoirs.

Favorite reservoir and activity: I love kayaking on Pepacton Reservoir. It's different during every season. In the spring when the water is high you can paddle quite far upstream, and during the summer you can see neat rock formations at the bottom of the reservoir.

Memorable experience on DEP property: One day we paddled with friends and didn't see any wildlife. So we kept going and going. Then we saw two bald eagles, two beavers, and a fawn swimming across the reservoir.

What do you tell others about watershed recreation? It's so serene and amazing to be out on the water. But the hiking trails on DEP property are also a good introduction to hiking because none of them is particularly hard and they have great views.

Why do you enjoy being a watershed steward? It's great to share the rules with people, pick up garbage that's left behind and feel good about keeping the reservoir area clean. We also take people out on the reservoir who've never been before. Several of them bought boats the next day. It changes their outlook on being outdoors.

Contact Us

To get a free DEP Access Permit online, visit www.nyc.gov/dep/accesspermit.

For immediate help with access permits, maps of recreation areas, recreation rules, up-to-date recreation area lists and other information about outdoor recreation on city lands and waters, visit DEP website at www.nyc.gov/dep and click on the "Watershed Recreation" link on the home page.

For permit inquiries:

Email: Recreation@dep.nyc.gov
Call: 1-800-575-LAND

DEP Access Permits
71 Smith Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401

For information about specific recreation areas, reservoirs, boat storage and programs, call the DEP regional office for that area:

Ashokan (Ashokan Reservoir)
(845) 657-2663

Carmel (East-of-Hudson Lands)
(845) 808-1770

Downsville (Pepacton and Cannonsville Reservoirs)
(607) 363-7009

Gilboa (Schoharie Reservoir)
(607) 588-6231

Grahamsville (Neversink and Rondout Reservoirs)
(845) 334-7152

Mahopac (East-of-Hudson Reservoirs)
(914) 232-1309

To report dangerous or suspicious activity, water quality threats, or fish kills on city-owned reservoirs and lands call the DEP Police at 888-H2O-SHED (426-7433).

DEP will upgrade historic tower

DEP recently removed trees that secluded a historic tower at Ashokan Reservoir, clearing the way for a project to create a public gathering space at the site.

The project removed trees and vegetation around the J. Waldo Smith Monument, a triangulation tower named for the chief engineer who oversaw design and construction of the Catskill Water Supply System, which includes Ashokan Reservoir and the Catskill Aqueduct.

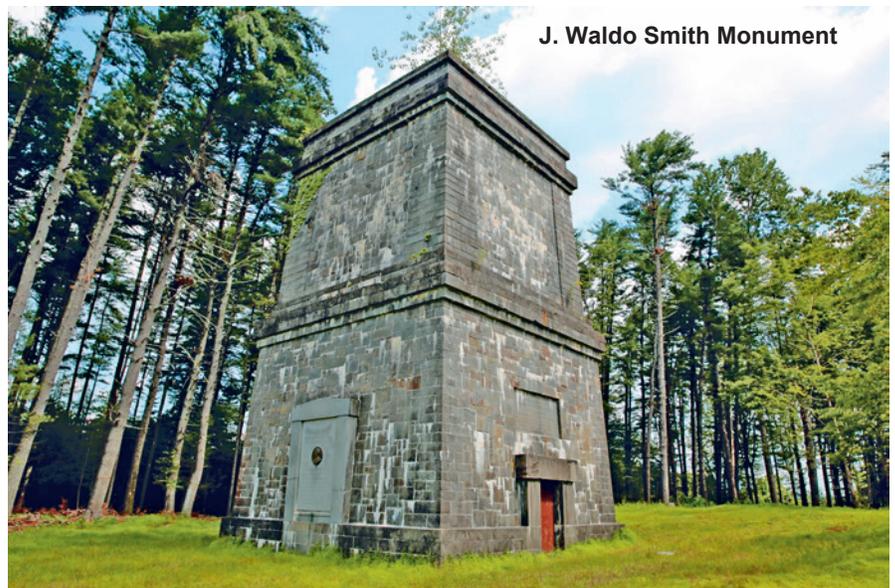
Tall trees and dense plants grew around the tower, which was used as a reference point for surveyors' measurements during construction of the reservoir more than a century ago. Recently completed forestry work has made the area safer, restored the public's view of the monument, and set the foundation for public access to the site in the future.

DEP removed many problem trees in 2016. Planted more than 100 years ago, many of the red pines were dead, dying or threatening to fall onto the monument. In 2017, workers cleaned up much of the wood and limbs that were left behind.

Workers also removed invasive Japanese barberry plants from the site. Barberry forms dense stands, displacing native plants and reducing wildlife habitat and food. The removal of trees and invasive plants will allow more native vegetation to grow by opening the area to sunlight.

The 110-year-old tower was built atop Winchell Hill, a high point near the construction of the dam and dikes that formed Ashokan Reservoir. The tower was originally dedicated in 1908 for New York City Mayor George McClellan, who advocated for the construction of the water supply. The stone tablet to memorialize Smith, a prominent and beloved engineer, was added in 1936.

DEP plans to rehabilitate the monument as part of a program to upgrade infrastructure at Ashokan Reservoir starting in 2023. Along with stabilizing the structure itself, DEP plans to create a public gathering space at the monument, which is located along the popular recreation path that runs atop the dam and dikes on the south side of the reservoir.



J. Waldo Smith Monument