



News for Immediate Release

Dec. 11, 2014

Pa. State Parks, Forests Offer Visitors a Winter Playground

Harrisburg – The calendar may say winter still is weeks away, but Pennsylvania’s state forest and park systems again are rolling out the welcome mat for visitors intent on enjoying cold-weather outdoor fun.

“Winter has made an early entry across the state and as temperatures drop and snow and ice begin to accumulate, our state forests and parks extend an invitation to head for woodlands, lakes and trails,” said Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Ellen Ferretti. “There’s a new world of fun and adventure awaiting the outdoors enthusiast.

“We are hoping families seek out a sledding hill at a nearby state park or stroll on a forest trail and enjoy the beauty and peace winter landscapes offer,” Ferretti said. “For others, snowmobile and ATV trails soon will be opening, and hunters and anglers will be heading to our state forests and parks for late-season hunting and ice fishing.”

Below is a list of activities and events that visitors can explore this winter:

Winter events: When winter weather cooperates, state parks and forests also are the scene of coordinated winter festivals with games, dog-sled races, sleigh rides and fun competitions for families. To view scheduled activities around the state, visit www.getoutdoorspa.state.pa.us.

Overnight stays: The Nature Inn at Bald Eagle State Park offers a great base for winter activities like cross-country skiing, ice fishing and other outdoor adventures in the Pennsylvania Wilds. It offers modern overnight accommodations and breakfast, as well as a large stone fireplace in the great room to warm up after outdoor activities.

Several state parks have winter cabin rentals available. Cabin reservations can be made by calling the toll-free information and reservation line, 1-888-PA-PARKS (1-888-727-2757). It operates Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Snowmobiling/ATV riding: The season begins Sunday, Dec. 14, and closes April 1, 2015, in state forests and parks where conditions permit. Snowmobile riders in Pennsylvania’s state forests and parks have access to almost 3,000 miles of marked joint-use state forest roads, closed roads, and trails in 18 of the state’s 20 state forest districts and in 32 state parks. More than 170 miles of winter ATV trails in seven state forest districts also open Dec. 14, including the Dixon Miller ATV Trail in

Tunkhannock Township, Monroe County, which is reopening after a two-year closure.

“The reopening of this 15-mile trail in Delaware State Forest comes at a time when ATV enthusiasts are returning to state forestland trails across the state, and after the Dixon Miller ATV Trail has undergone a two-year period of extensive repairs and improvements,” Ferretti said.

Beginning Dec. 16, DCNR will provide condition updates toll-free through 1-877-SNOMBLE (1-877-766-6253); or 717-787-5651. Recorded messages, providing reports on snow depths and trail conditions across the state, will be updated around noon each Tuesday and Thursday.

Snowmobile enthusiasts will find maps, conditions, and other detailed information at www.dcnr.state.pa.us (select “State Forests,” then “Recreation”). Snowmobile maps are updated to show storm damage and other conditions that may affect the trails.

All snowmobiles and ATVs in Pennsylvania must be registered with DCNR’s snowmobile/ATV Unit. For more information on registration, call toll-free 866-545-2476, or visit DCNR’s website.

Skiing: For the cross-country skiing enthusiast, more than 330 miles of marked cross-country ski trails are offered on Pennsylvania’s more than 2.3 million acres of state forestland. Also available are nearly 400 miles of groomed and un-groomed cross-country ski trails in 73 state parks. Downhill skiing is offered at Blue Knob State Park, Bedford County, and Camelback (Big Pocono State Park), Monroe County. Skiing is not being offered this season at Laurel Mountain, Westmoreland County, and Denton Hill, Potter County.

Other Activities: Most state parks with bodies of water are open, weather permitting, for ice-skating, ice fishing and ice boating.

Sledding and tobogganing also are available at many parks.

Updated state park ice conditions and snow depths are available at www.dcnr.state.pa.us. Select “Find a Park,” “Things to Do,” and then “Enjoy the Winter.” Visitors also may call the nearest state park or state forest district office.

Hunting: Archers, muzzle-loaders and other late-season hunters are reminded that more than 400 miles of normally gated state forest roads were opened for the late fall and early winter seasons to provide easy access to often remote areas. As much as 3,040 miles had been open to hunters, but openings and closings are at the discretion of local forestry officials and are weather-dependent. Hunters are urged to check with forest district offices about specific roads.

Media contact: Terry Brady, 717-772-9101

###

