



## **News for Immediate Release**

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### **State Parks Marking New Year with 'First Day Hikes' across Pennsylvania**

**Harrisburg** - Helping visitors ring in 2015 with healthy exercise and a glimpse of nature's winter beauty, the Bureau of State Parks again will sponsor free, guided hikes in 22 state parks on New Year's Day as part of America's State Parks First Day Hikes initiative in all 50 states.

"We are excited to join in hosting these hikes as part of this national effort to get people outdoors and into our parks," said Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Ellen Ferretti. "For the fourth consecutive year, First Day Hikes offer a great cure for cabin fever and a chance to burn off those extra holiday calories. What better way to welcome the new year than with an invigorating walk or hike in one of our beautiful state parks?"

Organized by the National Association of State Park Directors, the nationwide, New Year's Day hikes originated more than 20 years ago in Milton, Mass. The program was launched to promote both healthy lifestyles throughout the year and year-round recreation at state parks. State involvement has grown to the point where, for the first time in 2012, all 50 state park systems joined together to sponsor First Day Hikes.

"At the start of 2014, we hosted more than 1,000 people who hiked more than 3,320 miles in our state parks across Pennsylvania," Ferretti said. "Whether you're staying close to home or traveling, join us at one of Pennsylvania's state parks on New Year's Day!"

The following Pennsylvania state parks are participating during daylight hours January 1, 2015: Bald Eagle, Black Moshannon, Canoe Creek, Delaware Canal, French Creek, Gifford Pinchot, Hickory Run, Hills Creek, Jacobsburg, Jennings, Kings Gap and Nolde Forest environmental education centers, Marsh Creek, Moraine, Nescopeck, Parker Dam, Presque Isle, Prince Gallitzin, Pymatuning and Sinnemahoning.

Also, Ohiopyle and Raccoon Creek state parks are offering New Year's Eve or "Last Night" hikes for those who wish to ring in the New Year mid-hike. These hikes begin at 11 p.m. Dec. 31 and end around 1 a.m. Jan. 1.

"With this selection we hope to draw both novices and trail-hardened veterans alike into our state parks in what has become an annual salute to healthy exercise and the winter beauty and serenity of our 120 state parks," Ferretti said. "Weather will

dictate activities at our state parks on Jan. 1, but different hikes will match different abilities. The accent is on enjoyment.”

Participants are encouraged to log their First Day Hike adventures on social media with #firstdayhikes.

Pennsylvania State Park staff and volunteers are leading the hikes, which are usually about one or two miles, but can be longer depending on the park and its terrain. Additional details can be found at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us). Click on State Parks under “Quick Links,” then select “Events Calendar” and the date. For information on Pennsylvania’s 120 state parks, click on “Find a Park.”

“Last year we hosted 28,000 people who hiked 66,811 miles in our state parks across the country when we launched America’s State Parks First Day Hikes,” said Priscilla Geigis, president of the National Association of State Park Directors. “Think of it as the start of a new and healthy lifestyle, for the whole family. Whether you’re staying close to home or traveling, join us at one of America’s State Parks on New Year’s Day.”

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