

News for Immediate Release from DCNR

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Winter Playground Awaits Visitors to PA State Parks, Forests

Harrisburg – Pennsylvania’s forest and park system offers a wide range of ways for visitors to enjoy spending time outdoors during the winter, according to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

“Our state parks roll out the ‘welcome mat’ to winter visitors entering a new world of outdoor excitement and adventure,” said DCNR Secretary Richard Allan. “We invite families to find a steep hill at a nearby state park and take the sleds for a spin, or stroll on a trail and enjoy the beauty and peace winter landscape offers.

“Our snowmobile and ATV trails are now open, and hunters and anglers will be seeking out our state forests and parks for late-season hunting and ice fishing.”

To view scheduled activities around the state, visit www.getoutdoorspa.state.pa.us.

“The Nature Inn at Bald Eagle now is an established, popular component of our park system, offering a great launching point for winter activities like cross-country skiing at Bald Eagle State Park or for other outdoor adventures in the Pennsylvania Wilds,” Allan said.

The Nature Inn (<http://natureinnatbaldeagle.com/>) offers modern overnight accommodations and breakfast. Guests can relax in front of a large stone fireplace in the great room to warm up after outdoor activities.

This season, snowmobile riders in state forests and parks have access to 2,894 miles of marked joint-use state forest roads, closed roads, and trails in 18 of the state’s 20 state forest districts and 32 state parks. Winter ATV trails stretching more than 170 miles in seven state forest districts opened Dec. 11.

Snowmobile enthusiasts are reminded Bureau of Forestry snowmobile maps have been updated to reflect considerable changes linked to gas operations and recent storm damage. Maps can be found at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/recreation/snowmobile/smplacestoride/snowmobiletrailmaps/index.htm>.

Starting Dec. 13, DCNR will provide condition updates on its toll-free, snowmobile hot line, 1-877-SNOMBLE (1-877-766-6253). Recorded messages, providing reports on snow depths and trail conditions across the state, are updated at about noon each Tuesday and Thursday. DCNR also provides weather and condition reports online for state parks and forests.

Snowmobile enthusiasts will find maps, conditions, and other detailed information at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/recreation/snowmobile/index.htm>.

Updated ice conditions—important to skaters and winter anglers—and snow depths also are available.

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.

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.

For cross-country skiers, 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; Denton Hill State Park, Potter County; and Camelback (Big Pocono State Park), Monroe County. Skiing again is not being offered this season at Laurel Mountain, Westmoreland County.

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.

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.

Several state parks have winter cabin rentals available. Cabin reservations can be made online at www.visitPAparks.com or 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.

For details on ice and snow conditions, or winter festivals at state parks and forests, visitors also may call the nearest state park or state forest district office. For general information, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us or call 717-783-7941 (Bureau of Forestry) or 717-772-0239 (Bureau of State Parks).