



**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**

# **Report to the Fall Convention of the New York State Conservation Council, Inc.**



**September 2008**

**David Paterson, Governor**

**Pete Grannis, Commissioner**

Dear New York State Conservation Council Members:


I am happy to provide to you the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) 2008 Report to the Fall Convention of the New York State Conservation Council, Inc. This report highlights many of the accomplishments DEC has made during the past year to improve management and protection of New York fish and wildlife resources and the critical habitats that support them, and to enhance opportunities to enjoy New York's tremendously diverse, high-quality natural resources.

Similar to last year, this report is slimmer than has been produced in past years and is a summary of some of the highlights and accomplishments during the past 12 months or so. A full report is available on DEC's website at: [www.dec.ny.gov/about/37709.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/37709.html) A change to this year's report format is the compilation of DEC's efforts under our agency's issue and organizational priorities:

- Connect New Yorkers to Nature
- Promote a Toxic-Free Future
- Safeguard New York's Unique Natural Areas
- Work for Environmental Justice
- Combat Climate Change
- Foster Green and Healthy Communities
- Fair and Effective Enforcement
- Partnerships and the Public
- Workforce, Science and Technology
- Sustainability of DEC's Own Operations

In the past, DEC's accomplishments were compiled by division. By combining the various divisions' efforts under DEC's priorities, I hope to enforce that, throughout the agency, we are all working together to deliver programs that continue to make New York State one of the premier paces to hunt, fish, trap and enjoy the outdoors.

Sincerely,



Pete Grannis

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*The full report is available on DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/about/37709.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/37709.html) and is organized by DEC division or office and agency priority.*

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## Connect New Yorkers to Nature

*We conserve our environment not just to protect our health and enforce the law, but so that we and future generations can experience the joy of a hike or hunt in the woods, the thrill of a swim at a clean beach or the beauty of an unspoiled view. Whether an urban waterfront park or a wilderness paddle, these connections to nature can refresh, teach and sustain us.*

*While use and demand for DEC's campgrounds, education centers and youth camps remains high, participation in hunting and fishing has declined in recent years, and the Conservation Fund ended the last fiscal year with a \$21 million deficit. Meanwhile, research has documented a shift away from outdoor activities in the general population. DEC can help reverse this trend by helping more families rediscover the natural world.*

*Under this priority area, DEC will continue to promote environmental education and outdoor experiences for all. The department will increase participation in hiking, camping, fishing, bird-watching, hunting and trapping and seek to provide state-of-the-art facilities and opportunities for high-quality outdoor experiences. DEC will make a special effort to preserve and provide access to waters and green space close to where people live and work and reach out to under-served populations. Our efforts to connect New Yorkers to nature will be conducted with the goal of providing access, increasing environmental literacy, enhancing public health and quality of life and building the next generation of New Yorkers that care about conservation.*

*Provide Recreational Opportunities* - The Bureau of Recreation's 52 campgrounds and 7 day-use areas were enjoyed by more than 1,700,000 visitors during the summer of 2007. The Belleayre Mountain Ski Center had a record-breaking year, hosting more than 180,000 skier's during the 07-08 season. The Nature Recreation Program provided nature-based programming to more than 35,000 visitors at 9 campgrounds. More than 7,500 young visitors completed the Junior Naturalist Program and earned a patch.



*Campers at North South Lake*

*ECOs Reach Out* - The Division of Law Enforcement continued its efforts to educate the public on stewardship of the state's resources and to promote safe hunting practices through individual outreach efforts by ECOs and through the more formal EAGLES Program that brings ECO volunteer instructors into classrooms. The EAGLES Program received significant financial support in 2007 in the form of a grant from Shikar-Safari Club International. All of the educational material was revised and updated, and new computer projectors for each of the nine regions were purchased with moneys from this grant.

*Advance the Catskill and Five Rivers Interpretive Center Projects* - Proposals for design and engineering services for both centers were reviewed, and consultant teams were selected in June 2008. It is expected that contracts to begin the designs will be awarded in October 2008.

*DEC Website* - The website averaged 23,576 visits a day, totaling 8,872,609 in 2007. It won a "Best of the Web" award for its innovative use of technology. The web team continues to improve

functions and add new content, including a "Purchase Your Sporting License" button on the homepage; more mapping functions; *Outdoor Discovery*, an electronic newsletter; Green Living, tips for making environmentally responsible choices; more renewable energy information, and webcast meetings of environmental boards and councils.

*Brochures and Publications* - DEC's publication production section worked closely with other department programs to create several hundred publications and displays on topics including didymo, black bears, hunting and fishing, trails and new fish and wildlife pullouts for the *Conservationist*. New outreach materials included "Don't Move Firewood," and a CD about Hudson River fishing and boating access sites.



*Public Outreach* - DPAE facilitated public meetings on proposed DEC actions, including unit management plans in the Adirondacks and Catskills. Staff responded to public and media inquiries about nuisance wildlife management, seasonal fishing limits and moratoriums on fluke and other marine fish species. DPAE gathered public input and provided information regarding eradication of invasive species, including snakehead, didymo, emerald ash borer and Asian longhorned beetle.

DPAE helped implement a report on wastewater infrastructure needs, the carbon capture and sequestration project and the "Don't Flush Your Drugs" campaign and coordinated DEC's presence at the State Fair and other events, including sporting shows and statewide conservation and wildlife management meetings.

*DEC Environmental Education Centers* - DEC's four environmental education centers—Rogers in Sherburne, Five Rivers in Delmar, Reinstein Woods in Cheektowaga and Stony Kill Farm in Wappingers Falls—offer year-round programs for school and youth groups, teachers, youth leaders, community groups and the public. Visitors to the centers total 250,000 annually.



*DEC Environmental Education Camps* - The DEC summer camp program celebrated its 60th anniversary in 2007. DEC's four summer camps serve children 12 to 17 years old, who participate in activities such as stream monitoring, bird-watching, hiking, archery, fishing, fly-tying and hunter safety. Nearly 1,200 children attended DEC camps in 2007.

*Improve Access to State Facilities for People with Disabilities* - Construction was completed for the Region 5 Phase III ADA project. This included improvements at Lake Colby Fishing Access Site (FAS), Second Pond FAS, Whey Pond FAS, Upper Saranac Boat Launch Site (BLS) and Raquette River BLS.

Construction has been completed at the South Bay Fishing Pier on Lake Champlain. This project provides 300 feet of accessible fishing pier with a covered structure on the end of it. Region 5 staff worked closely with DEC's ADA coordinator to improve accessibility by developing accessible camp sites on the Black Mountain shoreline. At Belleayre Mountain, work is proceeding on an Adaptive Snowsports Building which will house special equipment to take snowsports to the next level of accessibility.

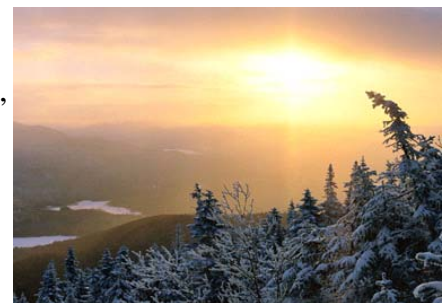


*South Bay Fishing Pier*

*Hunter Training and Shooting Sports Programs* - All new campers at DEC summer camps are offered basic hunter safety. Shooting sports is offered at Pack Forest each week, and returnees can take a bowhunter education course. Thirty percent of campers took hunter safety, including 9 percent of campers participating through the Diversity Initiative.

*Diversity Initiative* - This initiative, which enables youth from urban areas of the state to attend DEC summer camps, was strengthened with help from partner organizations, which recruited campers, distributed camperships (similar to scholarships) and helped with transportation and pre- and post-camp programs for campers. In 2007, 202 children participated in the program.

*Land Acquisition* - During the past decade, the state has announced the conservation of more than 1 million acres of land, and the overwhelming majority is open to hunting, fishing, hiking, birdwatching, camping and other outdoor recreational activities. The main highlight of the previous year's projects is the announcement by DEC and The Nature Conservancy of the protection of more than 160,000 acres of former Finch, Pruyn lands. This project is a combination of fee and working-forests easement. A primary goal of the project is to balance the public's right to hunt, hike and recreate on these lands while protecting the right of the long-established North Country hunting-club culture. Detailed quarterly lists of acquired lands, conservation easements and public fishing rights can be found on the DEC website at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5069.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5069.html).



*Project Wild and Project WET (Water Education for Teachers)* - Project Wild, funded through the Conservation Fund, prepares teachers to help students develop problem-solving skills through exploring responsible human actions toward wildlife and the environment. Project WET focuses on cultural, social and scientific issues related to water, including fish and wildlife-related activities. In 2007, about 2,700 educators attended these workshops. During past years, more than 47,000 educators have attended workshops in New York.

*Junior Big Game Hunter Mentoring* - In July 2008, Governor David A. Paterson signed into law a bill that created a special "junior hunter" mentoring program which will allow people aged 14 and 15 to hunt big game with a firearm while accompanied and supervised by an experienced adult hunter. This new law will provide new opportunities for young people to get out of the house and

experience the outdoors. The bill includes additional supervision and safety requirements for the new program to help ensure that the junior hunting experience occurs safely.

*Conservation Guides for Rare Species and Natural Communities Available* – The New York Natural Heritage Program completed conservation guides for all the rare animals, rare plants and rare or high-quality natural community types known to occur in the 10 Hudson River Valley counties—a total of more than 300 guides. Each guide provides information about one species or natural community, including its rarity, conservation issues, threats, management considerations, habitat, behavior, distribution (including a range map for New York State) and identification. Conservation guides are available on the New York Natural Heritage website at [www.guides.nynhp.org](http://www.guides.nynhp.org)

*Camden Middle School Sixth-Graders Learn about Aquatic Insects* - The lesson, “Aquatic Insects - Indicators of Water Quality” was given to seven groups of sixth-graders from Camden Middle School at the Rome Fish Hatchery. Each presentation provided information about the biology and ecology of aquatic insects, as well as a discussion of why aquatic insects are important, with an emphasis on aquatic insects as indicators of water quality. This class gave students the opportunity to examine live aquatic insects from a nearby stream and pond.

*Breeding Bird Atlas Exhibit at the NYS Museum* - Stories about shifting bird populations revealed in New York’s second *Breeding Bird Atlas* project are fascinating. The exhibit, opening in October 2008, will bring this science to the public through colorful maps, bird mounts and explanations of why bird populations are increasing or declining, as well as much of the original artwork that was commissioned for the book.

*Educators in Long Island City and Stony Brook* - Regional environmental educators in Long Island City and Stony Brook conduct teacher workshops, school education programs and displays in the New York City and Long Island areas. More than 43,541 people participated in these programs in 2007.

*After-School Conservation Club* - The After-School Conservation Club for elementary school students is conducted at ten sites in New York City and runs for ten weeks, four hours a week, involving more than 350 children each session. Inner-city students connect to nature and the urban environment and do hands-on stewardship projects, while staff learn to conduct environmental education programs. For example, in 2007, four clubs created recycling programs at their sites.

*AmeriCorps* - DEC hosts the Student Conservation Association’s Hudson River Valley AmeriCorps Program. AmeriCorps members conduct programs at DEC education centers and other sites, greatly expanding the programs and services offered to the public.

*Nature Recreation Program* - DEC conducts recreation programs, including lectures, games, crafts, music, paddle trips and hikes, for overnight and day-use visitors at DEC



campgrounds in the Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves. In 2007, more than 35,000 campers attended these programs.

*Junior Naturalist Program* - Children, ages 5 to 12, camping in forest-preserve campgrounds can earn patches by completing modules in a journal of environmental activities. More than 10,000 journals are distributed annually, and more than 6,000 patches are issued at the 39 facilities that offer the program.

*Conservationist for Kids* - Launched in December 2007 to connect youth to the outdoors, the premiere issue targeted 457 teachers and 10,000 fourth-grade students. Positive feedback led to full-scale production of three issues a year, distributed in the classroom to all 200,000 public-school fourth-graders in the state and their teachers.

*Digital Images* - DPAE processes many digital images in support of DEC programs, including, in 2007, photography of bats for outreach on whitenose syndrome.

*Conservationist* - The magazine underwent a significant redesign in 2007. *Conservationist* magazine featured articles on walleye in Lake Erie, backyard bears, trail cameras, youth turkey hunting, fly-tying, the American marten and deer hunting in the Adirondacks. Special pullout sections included New York State symbols, bats and champions of conservation. A new feature, "Ask the Biologist," answers questions about nature.



*State Land Interactive Mapper* - A new and improved State Land Interactive Mapper was released during the summer of 2008. It can be accessed on the DEC website at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45478.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45478.html). The Interactive Mapper shows seven types of recreational trails, parking lots and access points on state-owned properties managed by the Division of Lands and Forests, the overwhelming majority of which are open to hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and other recreation.

*I FISH NY* - The primary goal of the I FISH NY Program is to increase fishing participation in New York State. During 2007-08, significant accomplishments were made in school-based education, fishing clinics, fishing festivals, campground/summer camp-based education, attendance at fishing promotion events, fishing hotlines and other website information. Some specific I Fish NY accomplishments include the following:

- Fifty-eight classroom-based events were held, creating more than 5,000 contacts with school-aged kids.
- Approximately 2,700 people attended 47 fishing clinics.
- Approximately 4,800 people attended 10 large fishing festivals.
- More than 790 children and adults attended 55 fishing education programs at various DEC campgrounds and environmental education camps.
- DEC fish biologists attended various outdoor expos and fairs to promote and educate people on the great fishing in NYS.

*Enhance Department Facilities* - Construction of shower buildings is ongoing at the new Scaroon Manor Campground. Bids will be received in September for a new shower building at Meacham Lake Campground and Little Sand Point Campground with completion in fall 2009. Contracts are in the approval stage for a new electrical system at the Rollins Pond Campground. Regulatory approval is anticipated to proceed with a shoreline stabilization project in the Fish Creek Campground for construction in fall 2009. Reconstruction of the sewer system at the Meacham Lake and Poke O Moonshine campgrounds was completed. A cooperative agreement is being developed with the Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation to establish Camp Berle within the Harriman State Park. Design work and preliminary site preparations are proceeding to open this new environmental education facility next year.



*Maintenance Center at Belleayre*

Construction of the Stillwater Reservoir BLS was completed. The BLS at the Indian Lake Campground is now open, with final completion anticipated in September. Regulatory approval is anticipated for the City of Plattsburgh BLS so that construction can begin in fall 2009. Final approval of the Hudson River at Moreau BLS is on hold pending the outcome of additional archeological surveys at the site. Design work is proceeding for boat launch sites at Raquette River (Crusher) and Mattituck Creek.

Snowmobile bridge projects are planned this fall at Wilmington Notch Campground and Mossy Vly site at Perkins Clearing, using the forest preserve design approved by the APA. Vehicle bridge designs are in preliminary stages for Fish Creek in the Crogan Tract Easement, Alder Brook in the Santa Clara Tract and the Long Pond State Forest. Work is proceeding at Belleayre to construct a new maintenance center building to replace the existing one that has structural problems. Replacement of the Johns Brook Bridge reestablished a key link in the hiking trail network of the eastern High Peaks. Restoration of the historic Crown Point Pier is underway to repair severely deteriorated concrete to provide fishing and viewing access to Lake Champlain.



*Reconstructed footbridge over Johns Brook*

Work has been completed for the backup generator and residence garage structure at the Van Hornesville Fish Hatchery. Contracts are in place for the replacement of primary electric switch gear at Salmon River. Work will begin this fall during cooler weather. A new well also was drilled at Salmon River and put into service with a temporary pump. The permanent pump will be installed in late fall 2008. Work has started at the Rome Fish Hatchery to cover two pond series with a wooden enclosure to stop bird predation. Design work is progressing for a new rearing

building at Rome. At Reynolds Game Farm, a water line was installed to the remote pheasant pens to provide a permanent water supply. A generator also was furnished to facilitate feed operations. Modifications were completed in the brooder building to improve ventilation and lighting and for the installation of electric brooders.

*Sportsman Education* - More than 18,700 students completed DEC's standard (gun) hunter education course during 2007-08. More than 8,200 students completed the bowhunter education course, 1,363 completed trapper education and 253 completed a waterfowl identification course. In January 2008, New York became the 44<sup>th</sup> state to participate in the National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP). The program promotes student education, physical education and participation in the life-long sport of archery. Since the program began in New York State, 43 schools have expressed interest in it, and 18 are participating in the pilot program.

## **Promote a Toxic-Free Future**

*DEC's specific regulatory functions fall within its larger mission of protecting human health and the environment. Fulfilling that broad mandate means promoting safer, greener ways of doing business and living our lives. The key to reducing waste and creating a toxic-free future rests on reducing or eliminating the use of toxic chemicals and reducing energy, water and other resources throughout a product's life cycle. Accomplishing this involves both pollution prevention—addressing toxics and waste at their source by choosing alternative practices, redesigning products and adopting new manufacturing processes—and maximizing materials recovery through product stewardship, remanufacturing and recycling. Government has a pivotal role to play in every aspect of this transformative approach. It can invest in green chemistry and green technology, practice green purchasing, mandate safer technologies and products, provide technical assistance and influence consumer choice through education and outreach.*

*Prevention, however, is an evolving goal. Toxic chemicals are still a part of commerce, and unnecessary waste remains a challenge. Because of this, vigilant “end-of-the-pipe” controls and waste management will continue to play a fundamental role in DEC's mission—protecting human health and the environment and ensuring a level playing field for green alternatives. DEC has a long and effective history of addressing pollution in all media—air, water, soil and sediment—and these flagship programs will remain central to our mission even as we move toward a new vision of the future.*

**2007 Toxic Substances Monitoring Program** - Fish samples were collected for several monitoring programs. These included 40 largemouth bass from Onondaga Lake for mercury trend analysis, 53 lake trout from Cayuga Lake for Finger Lakes contaminant trend analysis and 15 chinook salmon and 15 coho salmon from the Salmon River Fish Hatchery for Lake Ontario contaminant trend analysis. These samples were processed, packaged and delivered to the DEC Hale Creek Field Station for analysis.

**Toxicity of Captain® (copper carbonate) Examined at Robinson Pond** - The near-shore areas of Robinson Pond in Columbia County were treated by the lake association with this pesticide to control filamentous algae. This treatment showed little toxic effect on fathead minnows held in two treated sites as compared with two untreated reference sites. Laboratory toxicity tests on brook trout conducted at the Rome Field Station indicated that this copper-based formulation is toxic to both species at levels substantially below the application rate. In addition to direct toxicity to non-target aquatic life, concern has been raised about the build up of copper in the sediments of ponds and lakes where copper-based algaecides are used. More information is needed on the toxicity and fate of these formulations to better understand the impact on fish and other aquatic life.

## **Safeguard New York's Unique Natural Assets**

*Conserving and protecting unique natural assets is at the core of DEC's mission. New York's exceptional natural resources include the coasts of Long Island, the Hudson River, the Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves, the Finger Lakes and Great Lakes, the Tug Hill Plateau and the Niagara River Escarpment. Our natural assets encompass the watersheds that provide abundant and clean water supplies, the wetlands that provide habitat and prevent flooding and the natural heritage and beauty that attracts tourists and enhances our quality of life. New York State has a long history of protecting these valuable natural assets. The department is directly responsible for more than four million acres of land and is charged with ensuring the sound stewardship of more than 15 million acres of privately owned forest lands. New York's quality of life stems in part from the quality of its water, which is maintained by healthy coasts, watersheds, wetlands, marine ecosystems and infrastructure, including flood control and wastewater-treatment infrastructure.*

*Under this priority, DEC will strive to conserve and restore watersheds; apply state-of-the-art management techniques, including ecosystem-based management; ensure sufficient water-management infrastructure; promote sound land use and planning; add unique and valuable ecosystems to the forest preserves, and protect endangered species, biodiversity and unique ecosystems.*

**Wildlife Health** - Department staff monitor wildlife to detect diseases and other threats to wildlife populations or to agriculture interests or human health. Waterfowl in New York State were sampled by DEC and USDA staff as part of a nationwide effort designed to detect highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), to date no cases have been found in North America.

Efforts continued with surveillance of chronic wasting disease (CWD) through sampling of hunter-killed deer statewide and mandatory checking of hunter-killed deer and collecting vehicle-killed deer in the Oneida-Madison County CWD Containment Area. Despite testing nearly 7,500 deer, including 1,410 deer from the containment area from April 1, 2007 through March 31, 2008, no new cases were detected. CWD surveillance began in New York in 2002, with increased efforts in 2005 after the disease was detected in five captive and two wild deer in Oneida County. Since 2002, more than 26,200 samples have been collected throughout the state, including 5,300 samples from the Oneida-Madison County CWD Containment Area, with no additional positives found.

In October 2007, the first cases of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) were found in a small number of wild white-tailed deer in New York State. Several deer carcasses from parts of Albany, Rensselaer and Niagara counties were submitted to the DEC Wildlife Pathology Unit, where tissue analysis indicated positive evidence of the disease. EHD is a virus that is transmitted from animal to animal by bites of infected midges or gnats. Documented outbreaks of EHD show that they tend to occur during late summer and early fall due to an increase in midge numbers and cease with the onset of a hard frost that kills the virus-carrying midges and the virus itself. The disease does not infect humans, so people are not at risk by handling infected deer, eating venison from infected deer or being bitten by infected midges.

White-nose syndrome (WNS) is an as yet unidentified mortality source for bats that is characterized by a white fungus on the noses or other exposed tissues of some, but clearly not all, affected animals. The apparent cause of mortality is starvation. DEC staff are playing a lead role in developing an approach to assess the cause of WNS and its impact on New York State's bat

populations.

*Water Quality Regulation Changes Increase Protection for Fish and Wildlife* - In the first change to water quality regulations since 1998, the most significant item for fish and wildlife was the adoption of a narrative-flow standard that specifically protects stream organisms by ensuring sufficient flow for the propagation and survival of fish, shellfish and wildlife. With this change, water-quality classification language now includes protection of shellfish and wildlife propagation and survival as a best use, in addition to fish. The regulations also adopted definitions for trout waters and trout spawning waters and added a section explaining the “T” and “TS” parenthesis classifications. These changes are significant because they recognize the intrinsic value of in-stream habitat for fish and wildlife.

*Wildlife Research* - With funding available from Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration and the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) Program, DEC is conducting more wildlife-related research than it has in many years. Successful long-term management of wildlife populations requires knowledge attained through rigorous science. Highlights of many survey, monitoring and research projects are included in the full report.

*Complete UMPs for All Facilities Managed by the Division of Operations* - Planning and preliminary design is proceeding on the preparation of the draft environmental impact statement/unit management plan (UMP) for Belleayre Mountain Ski Center. UMPs are in process for seven other recreation facilities.

*Implement Invasive Species Response Plans* - All campgrounds are being inspected annually by staff for early detection of invasive terrestrial plants, which are eradicated when found. Information kiosks and invasive-species drop boxes were constructed and installed this season at boat launch sites throughout the state. Staff participated in the drafting of a regulation to prevent the spread of invasive species caused by the transport of firewood. Campground staff have received awareness training and are distributing information to campers about the dangers of moving firewood.

*Reconstruct Dams* - At Colgate Lake in the Blackhead Range Wild Forest, construction of a replacement dam has been completed. At Perch River WMA, dam modifications are well along to provide an adjustable outlet structure to manage water levels. At Little Pond Campground, reconstruction of two deficient dams is expected to begin after Labor Day with completion anticipated by next spring. At Calico Pond in the Gee Brook State Forest, design has been completed for the



*Colgate Lake Dam*

breach of the deficient dam. A rehabilitation of McGregor Dam, Clinton County, is underway. When construction is completed, Miner Lake will be restored to near its original level.

*Firewood Regulation* - An emergency regulation was instituted in June 2008 to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading invasive insects and tree diseases by preventing untreated firewood from entering New York State and restricting the movement, sale and possession--within the state--of untreated firewood that originates in New York State. More information about the firewood regulation can be found at [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html)

*Invasive and Nuisance Species* - Updates and general information about giant hogweed, tent caterpillars, gypsy moth, friendly fly, Asian long-horned beetle, emerald ash borer, sirex woodwasp and hemlock woolly adelgid have been made available to the public via the DEC website at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4969.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4969.html)



*Giant Hogweed* - The Division of Lands and Forests began eradication efforts of giant hogweed at some of the nearly 400 currently known sites. A June 2008 *Conservationist* article about giant hogweed sparked many phone calls and emails from the public, who may have information about additional giant hogweed sites. The sap from this plant combined with sunlight can cause burns on the skin. More information about this plant can be found on the DEC website at [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/39809.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/39809.html)

*Fish Health and Invasive Species* – The department continues to confront exotic invasive species on all fronts. In 2007, staff engaged in many efforts to eradicate or stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. Outreach remains a critical component in the battle against invasive species. The message pertaining to curtailing the spread of invasives was delivered in many media, including our website, various brochures and the *Freshwater Fishing Regulations Guide*.

In addition to developing educational and outreach programs and materials to provide advice and direction to the public about limiting the spread of invasive species, the Bureau of Fisheries implemented a new set of biosecurity protocols to provide similar guidance to staff. These protocols were established to ensure that staff take precautions during work activities to minimize the risks of spreading fish diseases and other aquatic invasives from one location to another. These measures apply to both fish management and hatchery staff activities and include details on the application of proper boat and equipment disinfection procedures, instructions for low-risk survey techniques and directions for stocking fish in the most appropriate manner possible. On-the-ground efforts by staff to halt the expansion of invasive aquatic vegetation included hand removal of floating primrose willow (*Luwiga peploides*) in Peconic Lake and water chestnut in Otisco Lake. Region 1 staff and local volunteers removed 40 cubic yards of ludwiga from Peconic Lake in a

four-day period. In a similar effort, Region 7 staff has limited the presence of water chestnut to a single bay in Otisco Lake through annual removal efforts.

*Ledge Pond Barrier Constructed* - Bureau of Fisheries staff, with assistance from Student Conservation Association volunteers, constructed a fish barrier on the outlet of Ledge Pond. The pond historically was an excellent trout water but is now dominated by non-native yellow perch. Ledge Pond is a prime candidate for trout restoration and appears to have good potential for round whitefish. The fish barrier was constructed on the outlet to pave the way for the pond to be reclaimed in 2008 or 2009.

*Invasive Species Disposal Stations* - Bureau of Fisheries staff with design assistance from the Division of Operations have developed a “Nuisance Invasive Species Disposal Station” for installation at DEC boat launches. These stations are designed to serve as information billboards and as dedicated locations for disposal of invasive species. Stations were installed at the new Freeman’s Bridge Boat Launch on the Mohawk River and Buck Pond Campground in Region 5, with additional installations at 45 locations throughout New York State planned for spring 2008 (2008 or 2009?).

*More Than 17-Thousand Tickets Were Written by DLE in 2007-* While not equal to the extraordinary numbers from 2006, these numbers still represent a solid and diverse enforcement effort in all areas of the Environmental Conservation Law. As has been the case in recent years, fish and wildlife cases still represent the bulk of all enforcement cases, with ten-thousand tickets written. One-third of those were for fishing without a license. For the first time, marine enforcement cases occupied the second spot. This is a credit to the focused efforts of the Marine Enforcement Unit (MEU). The unit was expanded this year with the addition of a second lieutenant and a fourth SAFE boat.



*State Forests Natural Heritage Inventories* - The Division of Lands and Forests contracted with the Nature Heritage Program to identify rare and endangered species and unique natural communities on all 770,000 acres of state forests and more than 100,000 acres of forest preserve. This five-year project will be completed within the next year.

*Habitat Improvement* - Design work is progressing for the Tallapoosa and Turtle Cove wetland improvement projects within the Pelham Bay Park in NYC.

*Trail Supporter Patch* - The Division of Lands and Forests created and released the first Trail Supporter Patch in 2007. The proceeds from the sale of the patch, which costs \$5, are deposited in the Conservation Fund's Outdoor Recreation, Trail Maintenance and Development account to help maintain and enhance non-motorized trails throughout New York State. Since its release, sales of the Trail Supporter Patch have raised \$5,000. More information about the patch can be found on the DEC website at [www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/36016.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/36016.html)



## **Work for Environmental Justice**

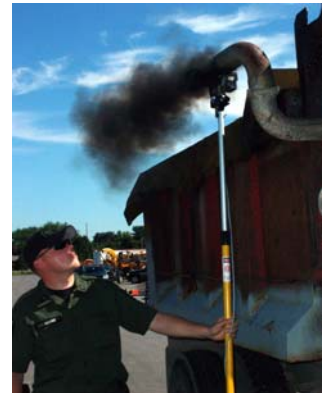
*Environmental Justice is the fair treatment of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. To achieve environmental justice, DEC must ensure that all communities enjoy the same degree of protection from environmental and public-health threats and equal access to the decision-making process. Fostering environmental justice in New York State involves a range of activities that both reduce environmental burdens and target benefits to under-served populations or areas struggling with disproportionate burdens.*

*In recognition of the importance of environmental justice, the department has an Office of Environmental Justice, as well as a Commissioner's Policy on Environmental Justice (EJ). The office recently added new staff (a chief advocate and a special counsel for community initiatives) and formed a department-wide network of professionals who will focus on a reinvigorated effort to integrate environmental justice principles into all department activities.*

**Grants Program** - Staff reviewed EJ Community Impact Grant Program applications to award funding to community organizations to address environmental and human health impacts in their neighborhoods.

**Onondaga Lake Cleanup/Habitat Restoration Negotiations** - Region 7 Fisheries staff along with other personnel from the department participated in extensive, ongoing discussions relative to how the lake, stream and upland areas that are scheduled to be cleaned up by Honeywell will be restored for use by aquatic and terrestrial organisms. Ultimately, hundreds of acres of lake stream and upland habitat will be affected by Honeywell's cleanup and restoration activities.

**ECOs Work for Environmental Justice** - The Division of Law Enforcement has increased its involvement in environmental justice issues. A very successful air-quality enforcement detail on the upper east side of Manhattan demonstrated our ability to have a positive effect on quality of life by focusing our efforts on geographic areas and resident populations that are challenged by poor air quality and associated health issues due to the locations of heavy industry, proximity to commercial traffic routes, et cetera. Plans are being developed to expand our efforts into every major urban area in the state.



## Combat Climate Change

*Human-induced climate change has been called the most pressing environmental issue of our time. Tackling this global problem requires new policies to reduce emissions and changes to the way we think, operate and fund environmental protection efforts. Climate change must be considered in our approach to natural-resource stewardship and efforts to ensure adequate environmental infrastructure for New York State's future. It requires new partnerships to share knowledge and develop effective policies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and adapt to unavoidable effects. In short, DEC needs to apply a climate-change lens to a full range of activities, such as planning, permitting, rule-making, grant-making, wildlife management, enforcement and public outreach and education. This priority involves initiatives to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions from important source categories; to encourage low-carbon design technologies; to elevate climate change awareness, research and adaptation ability; to foster carbon sequestration and sustainable forestry, and to lead other state agencies in our collective efforts to reduce emissions and adapt to changes in the climate.*

*There is ample evidence of our leadership in the climate-change arena. DEC is developing regulations for the nation's first power-plant carbon cap with an allowance auction; has adopted California's greenhouse-gas standards for new motor vehicles; has joined the Climate Registry; is a steering-committee member of the International Carbon Action Partnership; is active in the Governor's Renewable Energy Task Force, and has formed an interagency workgroup on carbon capture and sequestration. We also are exploring policies to incorporate greenhouse-gas assessments into environmental reviews and to address the various sources of significant greenhouse-gas emissions.*

*Studying the Effects of Wind-Energy Development on Birds and Bats - On January 23, 2008, the much-anticipated draft *Guidelines for Conducting Bird and Bat Studies at Commercial Wind Energy Projects* was released. This document is intended to standardize the methodologies used during pre- and post-construction bird and bat surveys at wind-energy development sites and to provide a way for meaningful comparisons of data to be made across sites and years. Wind energy is non-polluting with no gas emissions but can adversely affect birds and bats. The guidelines can be accessed at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/40899.html>.*



*Establishment of the New York State Office of Climate Change - This office was created to lead the development, in concert with other DEC programs and New York State agencies, of climate change-related programs and policies. The Office's Bureau of Climate Science and Technology uses sound science, engineering and economic principles to design solutions that will help stabilize atmospheric greenhouse-gas concentrations at acceptable levels. The Climate Programs and Partnerships Bureau works to inform, assist and empower state agencies, local governments, NGOs, institutions, businesses and individuals to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to unavoidable effects. The Office of Climate Change aims to ensure that New York State develops the full suite of responses needed for significant emission reductions and for successful adaptation to changing temperatures, sea levels, precipitation and other climate factors.*

*Climate Registry* - The department has joined the Carbon Registry as a founding reporter in New York State. The Division of Operations is working with the DEC Office of Climate Change to benchmark our carbon footprint and report to the registry. We will be using this data to analyze our carbon contributions, to identify additional reduction opportunities and to reduce our carbon footprint further.

*Forests and the Environment* - The Division of Lands and Forests has created a series of web pages which describe the importance of trees and forests in our environment. Topics include “Carbon Sequestration and Forests” and “How Plants Run the Carbon Cycle.” Additional topics will be added at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41769.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41769.html).

*Reduce Carbon Footprint* - The Division of Operations is taking action to reduce carbon and greenhouse-gas emissions of our infrastructure. We are performing comprehensive energy audits of our facilities and performing capital improvement projects to reduce both energy consumption and emissions.

*Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)* - New York State’s first mitigation program specifically focused on carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>, the principal greenhouse gas) is the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a ten-state program under which power-sector CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are reduced through cap and trade with allowances purchased in an auction. The Office of Climate Change is deeply involved in making this unprecedented program a reality--working on power plant CO<sub>2</sub> controls, reviewing applications for offsets, developing auctions for CO<sub>2</sub> allowances and assisting with the establishment of RGGI, Inc., a non-profit organization developed by the states to support RGGI programs. The first CO<sub>2</sub> allowance auction under RGGI is scheduled for September 25, 2008, with approximately 12.5 million in allowances available for purchase, offered by the states of Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Rhode Island and Vermont. The rules establishing New York’s CO<sub>2</sub> Budget Trading Program have been approved by the Environmental Board and are expected to go into effect in October 2008. With these rules in effect, New York will make CO<sub>2</sub> allowances available for the second RGGI auction, which is expected to be held on December 17, 2008.

*The Climate Registry* - The Office of Climate Change is promoting voluntary emissions reporting by New York State facilities through a national non-profit group, The Climate Registry. New York serves on the board of directors of The Climate Registry, which will provide accurate and consistent emissions inventory data to ensure that emissions reductions are equitably shared. DEC has committed to inventory and report its own emissions under The Climate Registry protocol. The Office of Climate Change is coordinating this reporting program.

*Sea Level Rise Task Force* - Because New York is a coastal state, preparing for the rise in sea levels that is predicted to result from global warming is critical. The Climate Change Office represents DEC on the New York State Sea Level Rise Task Force, which is assessing effects on the state's coastlines from rising seas and recommending protective and adaptive measures. The

task force held its first meeting on June 27, 2008; its report is due to the NYS Legislature by December 31, 2009.

*Hudson River Communities Adaptation Programs.* Much of the work of developing adaptation programs will be done by local communities and regional organizations. The DEC Hudson River Estuary Program and Climate Change Office are partnering with the Nature Conservancy's Eastern NY Chapter, the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies; the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve; Cornell University, and Sustainable Hudson Valley on the Nature Conservancy's Rising Waters Project. Rising Waters uses a series of stakeholder-driven scenarios of the future to explore the expected effects of climate change on communities and the environment and to identify realistic protection strategies.

## **Foster Green and Healthy Communities**

*DEC's job is to foster the green and healthy communities that we need for New York State's future. Our remediation programs allow cities and towns to clean up and safely redevelop contaminated land—a key aspect of smart growth. Our Air Program works toward a future where every New Yorker breathes air that consistently meets health-based standards. We are partners with municipalities in efforts to enhance recycling and to reduce and safely manage waste, and our Minerals Program works to ensure that mining activities do not pose risks to people and communities. DEC programs to protect open space, promote urban forestry and preserve wetlands help communities maintain green spaces and streetscapes. Our Water Program helps prevent pollution of rivers and streams and reduces risks from flooding. And through our unique role in implementing the State Environmental Quality Review Act, DEC has a general responsibility to protect and enhance the human environment, including existing community or neighborhood character. Moreover, certain environmental goals—reducing non-point water pollution and reducing greenhouse-gas emissions—clearly require that New York grow smarter, using new models of community design and transportation efficiency. When DEC achieves success in these programs, we are more than meeting our obligations under the law--we are helping municipalities improve the quality of life. Under this priority, DEC will continue to build even better programs and work with cities and towns to help them create the green and healthy communities that make New York a great place to live.*

*Contaminants in Wappinger Creek Studied through Fish Tissue Analysis* - Fish were collected from Wappinger Creek for contaminant analysis at the Three Star Anodizing hazardous-waste site in Wappingers Falls, Dutchess County. Sediments in the stream were found to contain elevated levels of several metals, including mercury, found at concentrations as high as 186 ppm, substantially exceeding the New York State sediment criteria of 0.15 ppm. Data from the tissue analysis will be used in conjunction with sediment data to better understand the extent of effects on the stream and to plan a remedy that is protective of fish and wildlife.

*DFWMR Joins Collaborative Effort to Clean Up the Buffalo River* - The department has entered into an inter-agency cooperative effort with the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Buffalo Riverkeepers to develop a feasibility study for the lower six miles of the Buffalo River. This reach of the river is designated as the Upper Buffalo River Area of Concern (AOC). Remedial action goals for contaminated sediment in the Upper Buffalo River AOC will be developed as part of the feasibility study, and subsequent discussion among Buffalo River stakeholders is expected to result in the selection of final cleanup objectives for specific sections of the AOC. Contaminants of concern include heavy metals, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and pesticides. The Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources (DFWMR) will be involved to assure that the final cleanup objectives are protective of fish and wildlife. Final remediation goals will focus on delisting the Buffalo River as an AOC for the Great Lakes ecosystem and creating or improving habitat for fish and wildlife in the historically industrialized river.

## **Fair and Effective Enforcement**

*Commissioner Grannis is committed to supporting the agency's enforcement efforts to ensure that violators do not benefit from noncompliance, and he also is committed to consistent enforcement across the state. These commitments will help meet DEC's ultimate goal of protecting New Yorkers and their environment. Recent multi-site consent orders covering publicly owned as well as privately owned facilities exemplify how DEC's enforcement efforts successfully translate those commitments to achieve our goal. Restructuring the Office of General Counsel, the Bureau of Environmental Crimes Investigation and the Marine Enforcement Unit has enabled DEC to better develop and implement its enforcement strategies. Creation of the new Office of Natural Resource Damages will allow for the recovery of stewardship resources from responsible parties.*

*Continued Refinements to Division of Law Enforcement Organization* - In 2007, as part of a commitment to intensify our efforts to identify and apprehend the worst offenders of both environmental quality and fish, wildlife and marine resource statutes, the division reorganized the command structure of the Bureau of Environmental Crimes Investigation (BECI). Major Scott Florence and Captain Joseph Schneider, both seasoned veterans of the division, have taken over Central Office oversight of BECI. While the nine regional captains still maintain day-to-day supervision of the investigative staff in their regions, Major Florence and Capt. Schneider are overseeing the more complex investigations, coordinating an enhanced training program, developing undercover investigative capabilities, identifying and procuring state-of-the-art surveillance equipment, opening lines of communication with the Attorney General's senior staff for prosecution of our cases and developing interstate and international intelligence contacts.

While the division's top leadership positions were stable in 2007, there was a large turnover in regional leadership. New captains were promoted in regions 2, 5, 8 and 9 in 2007 and early 2008. There also has been a sizeable turnover in field staff. The graduation of 17 ECO recruits was reported last year. This year, an additional 23 will graduate in September. This turnover is the result of the large numbers of ECOs hired from 1980 to 1984, who are now completing 25+ years of service. The commitment of the Governor's Office and DEC's Commissioner to environmental enforcement has enabled us to keep the Division of Law Enforcement at full strength as of this writing.

## **Partnerships and the Public**

*Making wise decisions in the face of today's complex environmental problems—including climate change, biodiversity loss, sprawling development and toxic exposures—requires innovation, openness and integrated policy solutions. To achieve those solutions, DEC is committed to fully engage the public and work collaboratively with public and private partners, including other state agencies, local governments, the business community and non-profit organizations.*

*Susquehanna River American Shad Restoration and Stocking Update* - Bureau of Fisheries staff in Cortland and Albany represent New York State on the Susquehanna River Anadromous Fish Restoration Cooperative (SRAFRC), which includes natural resource agencies from Pennsylvania and Maryland, as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission. The aim of the cooperative is to restore self-sustaining populations of anadromous fish species (shad and herring) throughout the watershed.

Results of the ongoing restoration effort have not been promising in recent years. After two decades of increasing numbers of American shad passage at Conowingo Dam—the first of four hydroelectric dams on the lower river--runs have declined precipitously during the past few years. In 2007, only 25,464 American shad were passed at Conowingo, of which only 192 made it past the uppermost hydro-power dam on the lower river. Record passage of American shad occurred in 2001 when 193,574 shad passed over Conowingo Dam, but each subsequent year has been substantially worse than the last.

Egg collections for the American shad restoration effort were once again down in 2007. Poor hatchery production limited the number of shad stocked in the system which, again, resulted in no shad being stocked in the New York State portions of the basin. The stocking of 500,000 American shad fry in the New York portion of the upper Susquehanna and 500,000 in the Chemung River in the vicinity of Elmira is expected to resume if and when egg collections/hatchery production improves.

*Energy Efficiency* - The Division of Operations is working with numerous state agencies to promote energy efficiency, combat climate change and increase sustainable operations across the state. We have representatives on several interagency teams, including the Advisory Council on Energy Efficiency for Executive Order 111, the Interagency Committee on Sustainability and Green Procurement for Executive Order 4, the Green Building Collaborative and others.

*Education* - We place a high value on public education in all of our environmental sustainability efforts. Our LEED-rated green buildings are equipped with educational displays highlighting the buildings' green features and promoting public sustainability. We are assisting other departmental programs in developing various education opportunities at the State Fair and at our education centers. The Division of Operations has reached out to local colleges, including HVCC and RPI, to establish a solid connection and work together on projects focusing on alternative energy and high-efficiency lighting.

## **Workforce, Science and Technology**

*DEC's success depends on maintaining a talented, diverse and well-equipped workforce. Our creative and committed staff includes engineers and scientists, attorneys, forest rangers, conservation officers, financial analysts, administrators and operations and information technology professionals. Each plays a critical role in achieving our mission. To maintain the quality of this workforce, we must update our personnel and recruitment policies and facilitate staff access to state-of-the-art science and information technology through in-house training, investment in information management and partnerships with universities, other state agencies and professional organizations.*

*ECO Academy* - Twenty-three recruits are undergoing basic training. This has been the most successful class of recruits in recent history. After the initial days of the academy in which a few of those hired always decide that police work is not for them, we have not lost a single recruit to either a change of heart, nor to failure to achieve in the academic or physical areas of the training. This success can be credited both to the dedication and skills of the training staff and the talented division members



who come in from the field to assist in training and to the quality of the selection process used by the division to recruit and evaluate candidates for the ECO position.

*Science and Technology* - The Training, Administration and Communications (TAC) Unit, shared by the divisions of Law Enforcement and Forest Protection (forest rangers), had a busy year. In addition to running back-to-back basic schools, the unit made great strides in improving communications and access to information for officers in the field. All of the state phones assigned to field officers have been converted to cellphones. Numbers are listed in the hunting and fishing guides and will stay in the listed counties if officers transfer. For the first time ever, the public has direct access to officers, not only at their home offices but also when they are in the field. In addition, each officer has been equipped with a wireless internet card for their laptop computers. Access to enforcement information for officers in the field is now possible through DEC web-based databases including: DECALS, tickets, permits and GIS information.

The 24-hour dispatch center continues to be extremely busy. The OPP Ray Brook Dispatch Center, which began 20 years ago, now operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with a staff of 10 dispatchers and one supervisor. Statewide coverage is achieved through radio, cell- phone and e-mail contact, allowing the center to immediately relay a complaint from the public or an emergency call to a ECO. Dispatchers received 80,223 phone calls in 2007, including a record 1,146 TIPP complaints. Dispatchers also received 972 e-mail complaints from the public, an increase of 21 percent compared to 2006.

## **Sustainability of DEC's Own Operations**

*Sustainability is embodied in the mission of DEC. As DEC pursues that mission, it must take the*

*opportunity to conserve energy, reduce waste and minimize the environmental footprint of its daily activities, ultimately serving as an important role model and helping to promote sustainable business practices across the state. In addition to DEC's Central Office, seven major DEC buildings have or are expected to achieve LEED certification; renewable energy technologies provide 20 percent of our electricity needs, and DEC's forestry operations were recently certified by both the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council.*

*Building Sustainability* - New construction and substantial renovation projects are designed and constructed to green building standards. We currently have eight such projects in design--under construction or completed--that are expected to attain LEED status. These buildings are designed to use substantially less energy and have a lower carbon footprint than conventional buildings.



*Reinstein Woods Visitor Center is awaiting LEED certification*

*Energy Conservation* - We are continuing to work with authorities and utilities to implement peak-load reduction programs. Advanced monitoring systems, on-site renewable power systems and emergency power-reduction programs are being installed or implemented.

*Sustainable Operations* - Division staff are participating in the department's internal sustainability work group. This is a multi-disciplinary group charged with increasing sustainable operations and outreach of our department. The Division of Operations co-chairs this team and plays an active role in its ongoing success in "greening" our infrastructure and programs.

*Increase the Fuel Efficiency of DEC's Fleet* - We are working to minimize the carbon footprint of DEC's fleet through the purchase of alternative-fueled (hybrid and flex fuel) vehicles. Last year, the department purchased 98 alternative-fueled vehicles, and steps were taken to insure that appropriate-sized vehicles were purchased. In addition, the use of biodiesel fuel at DEC facilities has been expanded. During the last year, more than 38,000 gallons of biodiesel fuel was used, and use is expected to increase in the future. Retrofitting DEC's heavy-duty diesel vehicles with the best available technology for reducing emissions has been initiated as well.



*Toyota Prius hybrid vehicle*

*Environmentally Friendly Cleaning Products* - In compliance with Executive Order #134, the division is purchasing and using cleaning products listed by OGS as environmentally friendly.

*Green Certification of DEC's State Forests* - In January 2008, 780,00 acres of state forests managed by DEC's Bureau of State Land Management earned the highly coveted status of "green certified" from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)-two organizations internationally recognized for establishing forest-management standards. With this recognition, DEC has demonstrated that the forests under its care are managed to the highest sustainability requirements. More information can be found at [www.dec.ny.gov/lands/42947.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/42947.html).

*State Lands Regulations* - The department has proposed a series of regulations (6 NYCRR Part 190 State Lands) to modernize state land management and to reduce inappropriate private uses of state lands so that state land resources are available to the public, including sportsmen and sportswomen. More information about the proposed regulations can be found at [www.dec.ny.us/regulations/2359.html](http://www.dec.ny.us/regulations/2359.html) .