Access to Hunting Areas

Places to Hunt in New York
For information about areas to hunt in New York, go to www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7844.html.

Private Lands
Always ASK the landowner for permission to hunt and trap on private land. If it were your land, how would you want a visitor to act?
• Be courteous — ASK permission well in advance.
• ASK what is permitted. What species can be hunted? Are tree stands allowed?
• ASK if friends can join you.
• Exercise safety—always!
• Thank the landowner.

Many landowners use “ASK permission” stickers (see page 16) on their signs which show the landowners’ willingness to allow access to their lands. Stickers are available for free from your local Regional Wildlife Office (see page 6) or from DEC Central Office, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754. For more information on hunting on private lands, visit our website: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7844.html.

Remember: Damaging bark or cutting trees, branches or plants is illegal without permission of the landowner.

Rights of way that cross private property, such as for power lines and railroads, are NOT public land. Trespassing on these areas without permission from the landowner is illegal.

FWMA cooperative areas
Through cooperative agreements under New York’s Fish and Wildlife Management Act (FWMA), Cooperative Hunting Areas provide access and management services to privately owned lands in order to increase public hunting opportunities. When using these areas, remember that you are a guest on private property. Littering and other abuses will only result in closure of many excellent hunting areas.

A word about liability
Whether or not the land is posted, New York State General Obligations Law protects landowners from liability for non-paying recreationists engaged in hunting, trapping and fishing on their property. Because of this protection, recreational liability lawsuits against rural landowners are uncommon. This protection does not apply in cases of willful or malicious failure to guard or warn against dangers.

State Lands
For information on hunting and trapping opportunities and rules governing the use of state land, contact the regional office for the county where you would like to hunt or trap (see page 6). Wildlife staff can provide information on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and Cooperative Hunting Areas. DEC Forestry staff and Forest Rangers can provide details on state forest lands and forest preserve lands. In some instances, written permission or permits are required to use state lands. These are available from DEC regional offices during normal business hours.

Motorized access to state lands
DEC has designated routes on state forests, wildlife management areas, forest preserve lands and conservation easement lands for motor vehicle use by people with a qualifying mobility disability. For a list of these opportunities, along with information on how to obtain a motorized access permit, please visit the DEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/2574.html.

Wildlife management areas
The Division of Fish and Wildlife manages about 187,000 acres of wildlife management areas (WMAs). These areas are located throughout the state and contain a variety of different types of habitat and wildlife. They are managed primarily for wildlife and wildlife-related public use.

WMAs have specific use regulations in addition to the general use regulations for state land. Hunting, trapping, and fishing are permitted, except as specifically restricted by posted notice.

On wildlife management areas, it is unlawful to:
• Camp without written permission
• Travel off-road by use of motorcycles, motor scooters, mopeds, trail bikes, snowmobiles or any other motorized vehicle, except as specifically allowed by a permit or posted notice
• Remove, cut or willfully damage or destroy living vegetation of any kind
• Construct or place a permanent structure, blind, stand or platform (including placement of nails or other hardware into trees)
• Leave any personal property when leaving the area, including leaving tree stands overnight
• Enter property posted with No Trespassing signs, except with written permission from DEC

For further information on wildlife management areas, please visit the DEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8295.html

Lands and forests
The Division of Lands and Forests manages nearly five million acres of land, located in almost every county of the state. From the remote locations of the Adirondack and Catskill mountains to the rolling hills of the western parts of the state and the forested areas on Long Island, a wide range of hunting and trapping opportunities await the outdoor recreationist.

Forest Preserves
Hunting and trapping are permitted in the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves. State-owned lands located within these preserves are designated “Forever Wild.” All state land rules and camping requirements apply to the preserves, as well as additional rules specific to certain areas. Contact the regional DEC office (see page 6) of the county where you would like to hunt or trap for more information. For further information on Forest Preserve lands, please visit the DEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/4960.html

Conservation easements
Conservation easements are tracts of privately owned property on which New York State has acquired certain public recreation rights. These rights are outlined in the easement document as well as in a recreation management plan jointly developed by the DEC and the landowner. Public hunting and trapping is allowed on many conservation easements, but due to

ASK Permission
"ASK Permission” stickers, a brochure explaining the program, Landowner Permission forms, and information about fish and wildlife conservation are available for free from DEC Regional Wildlife Offices or by writing:
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4754
OR ONLINE at www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/8371.html
the individual nature of each conservation easement, members of the public wishing to hunt or trap on a given easement property are strongly encouraged to contact a local DEC office (see page 6) of the county where you would like to hunt or trap for details on how to properly access the property and the hunting and trapping regulations unique to the easement. For further information on DEC held Conservation Easements, please visit the DEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41156.html

State forest (reforestation land)
Outside the Adirondacks and Catskills, State Forest lands are the most common type of state lands. Many recreational activities can be pursued on these lands, including hunting and trapping.

In some instances, permits are required to camp overnight on undeveloped state forest lands. Unless specifically prohibited, groups of less than 10 people may camp on state forest lands (other than developed campgrounds and wildlife management areas) for three consecutive nights without a permit. To camp for four consecutive nights or more, a permit must be obtained. Groups of 10 or more people need a permit to camp on such lands for one night.

Further information may be obtained from DEC regional offices for the county you want to camp in (see page 6). For further information on State Forest Lands, please visit the DEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/40672.html

Remember, it is unlawful to:
- Cut or injure trees (including construction of permanent tree stands, construction of natural blinds, clearing of shooting lanes around portable stands, placement of nails or other hardware into trees, or use of live trees as targets while sighting-in firearms).
- Store personal property. Tree stands or hunting blinds that do not injure a tree, and are properly marked or tagged with the owner’s name and address or valid hunting license number, may be placed during the appropriate hunting season, but must be removed within 30 days of the end of the season.
- Erect, use or maintain a building or structure.
- Deposit or leave any litter or rubbish.
- Operate a motor vehicle, including an all-terrain vehicle (ATV), off maintained roads except where specifically allowed.
- Camp without a permit when a permit is required.
- Possess a rifle, shotgun or firearm in or upon buildings or grounds used for educational purposes (see Penal Law Section 265.01-a).

State Parks
Many state parks offer waterfowl, small game and big game hunting. For more information, contact the appropriate DEC regional office (see page 6) or visit the State Parks website (www.parks.ny.gov). Call each state park to find out specific hunting and access regulations. For a listing of state parks that allow deer hunting, visit the DEC website: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/88898.html

Other Areas to Hunt
- Finger Lakes National Forest (federal): Located east of Seneca Lake in Schuyler and Seneca counties. Small and big game hunting opportunities. Special hunting permits are not required.
- Fort Drum Military Base (federal): Wildlife Management Unit 6H, located in Jefferson and Lewis counties. Over half of the 107,000-acre U.S. Army military installation is open to the public for hunting and trapping. See the Fort Drum Fish and Wildlife Management Program website for more information: https://fortdrum.isportsman.net/ or call (315) 772-9303.
- Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (federal): Located at the north end of Cayuga Lake in Seneca County. Offers big game and waterfowl hunting opportunities. This area is also open for deer hunting on a controlled basis during both the bowhunting and regular seasons. Permits are required. When deer management permit use is allowed, WMU 8J permits are valid. For current information on seasons, permits, maps and regulations visit Montezuma’s website at: www.fws.gov/refuge/Montezuma/visit/visitor_activities.html
- Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge (federal): Located east of Lockport in Genesee and Orleans counties. Offers small game and waterfowl hunting opportunities. This area is also open for deer hunting during both the bowhunting and regular seasons. For further information visit: www.fws.gov/refuge/iroquois/

Long Island:
- For a brochure on areas to hunt big game on Long Island, visit: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/88050.html
- For information on hunting seasons, permits, maps and regulations visit the Fort Drum Fish and Wildlife Management Program website for more information: https://newyorkstateparks.reserveamerica.com

DEC Campgrounds
DEC operates 52 public campgrounds in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Hunting is not permitted within these campgrounds, although some campgrounds allow camping during big game season. Unloaded firearms are allowed on public campgrounds only during the spring and fall hunting seasons for hunting. A valid hunting license is needed. Firearms cannot be discharged in the campground or day use facilities at any time. For more information on DEC’s campgrounds visit: www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7825.html

Campgrounds outside the Forest Preserves are operated by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) (see State Parks below).

For all campgrounds, reservations can be made by calling 1-800-456-CAMP or online at https://newyorkstateparks.reserveamerica.com

Licensed Guides
For information on licensed professional guides in New York, contact NYS DEC, 625 Broadway, NY 12233-2560 or visit the DEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov/permits/30969.html.

Native American Tribal Lands
Some tribal governments have made provisions for limited public hunting, trapping and fishing access, while others do not permit non-tribal members to hunt, trap or fish on their lands. Check with the governing tribal office to determine the requirements for hunting, trapping and fishing within the reservation boundaries. A special permit is required.

Use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and off-road vehicles (ORVs) is restricted on most state land.
The Young Forest Initiative: Four Years Later

The Young Forest Initiative was launched by DEC in 2015 to increase habitat management on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) for wildlife that needs young forest, including popular game species like American woodcock, ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and snowshoe hare. Young forest provides important food, cover, and nesting places for these and many other species.

So, where are we today? During the past four years, DEC biologists and foresters have been working together gathering data on habitat and wildlife at WMAs, developing Habitat Management Plans (HMPs) for each area, and starting on-the-ground work. Forty-four HMPs have been completed, and several more WMAs have drafts currently underway. To date, nearly 700 acres of young forest work has been completed, 1,200 acres are currently under contract for management, and plans in place for an additional 1,500 acres. In the years ahead, staff will continue to monitor forest regeneration and wildlife’s response to the management.

How can you help? Consider being a citizen scientist while afield. Grouse and woodcock hunters and spring turkey hunters are encouraged to participate in the annual fall grouse and woodcock hunting log and spring grouse drumming survey. These surveys help DEC track ruffed grouse and American woodcock populations. Not a small game enthusiast? Deer are often attracted to young forest areas to take advantage of the thick cover and abundant browse within easy reach. However, too many deer in an area can impact the forest regeneration, stunting growth of the young saplings and affecting which tree species can survive. Hunting helps keep the population in balance, allowing a diversity of seedlings to grow into healthy trees for the next forest generation. Consider participating in the Bowhunter Sighting Log to help monitor changes in populations of deer, turkeys, and other wildlife. To learn more about citizen scientist opportunities, visit www.dec.ny.gov/animals/1155.html.

To learn more about young forest or to view the HMP for a WMA of interest, please visit www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7768.html.
Public hunting and trapping is allowed on the conservation easements shown on these maps, but because rules and regulations are different for each conservation easement, members of the public wishing to hunt or trap on a particular easement property are strongly encouraged to contact the local DEC office (see page 6) before planning a trip.

For more information on Conservation Easements, visit: www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41156.html

Did you know in 2018, DEC Forest Rangers:
• Searched for 171 lost people
• Rescued 160 people who were injured
• Recovered 15 people who died while in the woods or on water

• Let someone know where you are going, what you are doing and when you plan to return.
• Bring a cell phone. Keep it charged. Call 9-1-1 to tell the operator you are lost or injured.
• Wear and/or carry proper clothing for the worst possible weather. Weather will happen!
• Carry plenty of drinking water, a water purification kit, food and necessary medications
• Bring two flashlights that use the same batteries, one that is hands-free such as a head lamp.
• Bring matches or a fire starter. Know how to make a fire in the rain or snow. Put the fire out when you leave.
• Carry a temporary shelter such as a nylon tarp or large heavy duty trash bag
• Bring a map of the area you are visiting and compass and know how to use each. A GPS can work well if you know how to use it and the batteries are charged.

https://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/41086.html

518-402-8839 or 518-408-5250
FIREWOOD WARNING

What’s lurking in your firewood?

Buy Local, Burn Local.
- It is illegal to bring untreated* firewood into New York State.
- It is illegal to transport untreated firewood more than 50 miles from its source or origin.
- When transporting firewood, you must carry proof of source (receipt from a vendor), origin (self-issued certificate from DEC website), or treatment (label showing treatment method).

* Treated firewood has been heated to 160°F for 75 minutes to eliminate pests living inside the wood. Treated firewood can be moved without restriction.

Failure to follow these regulations may result in a ticket.

For questions, call toll-free: 1-866-640-0652

State and federal quarantines exist that further restrict the movement of firewood. For more information, visit www.dec.ny.gov and search for “invasive insects”.

Warning: As of 2019, the Asian Longhorned Beetle and Emerald Ash Borer are pests that can be transported on untreated firewood.

2019–20 Habitat & Access Stamp

Invest in the future of New York’s wildlife habitat and outdoor recreational opportunities by purchasing a $5.00 Habitat & Access Stamp!

All funds from stamp purchases are deposited directly into the DEC Habitat Conservation and Access Account (HCAA) and used for projects aimed towards conserving habitat and increasing access to public and private lands for outdoor recreational access.

Whether you are a hunter or angler, birder or photographer, the purchase of a Habitat & Access Stamp is the perfect way to conserve New York’s remarkable wildlife heritage. Buy today at your local license issuing agent, online (www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6101.html) or by phone (1-866-933-2257).
Map produced by NYSDEC DFW, 3/15/2019