

On Patrol

Real stories from Environmental Conservation Police Officers and Forest Rangers in the field

Wildfires—Greene, Herkimer, and St. Lawrence Counties

Each year, DEC Forest Rangers are called upon to fight wildfires. On June 10, Greene County 911 contacted DEC's Central Dispatch requesting Forest Ranger assistance with a wildfire in Kaaterskill Clove. Two Forest Rangers responded and arrived on scene to help local fire departments suppress the .3-acre fire. On June 11, Forest Rangers and five fire departments were called regarding a wildfire near the Town of Helena, in Brasher State Forest. The intensity of the fire increased due to dry fuels and steady 15- to 20-mph winds. ATVs, small brush trucks, and two pumps were utilized to suppress the .75-acre fire. On June 24, four Forest Rangers responded to a request to assist the Old Forge Fire Department with a backcountry wildfire on Panther Mountain, in the Town of Webb in Herkimer County. Utilizing a State Police Aviation helicopter, volunteer firefighters and Forest Rangers extinguished the one-acre wildfire.



In 2019, DEC Forest Rangers extinguished 74 wildfires that burned a total of 212 acres. Dry weather throughout the summer has increased the risk of fires, and DEC urges New Yorkers to practice the utmost safety when burning wood and brush outdoors.

Wilderness Rescue—Essex County

On July 18, two hikers got stuck on the Trap Dike Route trail at Lake Colden in the Adirondack High Peaks, and contacted DEC's Ray Brook Dispatch for assistance. The hikers exited the Trap Dike too soon and became stranded on the south side. Two Forest Rangers, the Lake Colden caretaker, and the New York State Police Aviation unit responded to assist. They performed a hoist rescue to bring the hikers safely to the base of the Trap Dike. The Lake Colden caretaker then paddled the stranded hikers and Forest Ranger Mecus to the end of Avalanche Lake, where they safely hiked out.



Illegal Commercialization of Wildlife—Queens County

Earlier this year, ECOs Lovgren and Parmelee and Investigator Harvey conducted an undercover investigation in Queens. The ECOs and the Investigator arranged a purchase of two stools made of elephant feet, an illegal commercialization of wildlife, which is a Class E felony under New York State Environmental Conservation Law. DEC has played an active role in New York's continuing efforts to stop the commercialization and poaching of elephants. The items were seized as a result of the undercover investigation, and will be used for educational purposes.

Clam Bust—Queens County

Earlier this summer, while patrolling Gateway National Park, ECOs Jarecki and McCarthy observed a large group of people taking shellfish from Jamaica Bay, an area that is not certified for shellfish harvest. The ECOs contacted U.S. Park Police for assistance with issuing summonses to 36 people. More than 2,000 illegally harvested clams were returned to the water.