

Pennsylvania State Park System is Number Ranked #1 In the Nation

The Pennsylvania State Park system joined the ranks of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Pittsburgh Penguins, the Philadelphia Phillies, and the Hershey Bears as National Champions. On October 14th, in Salt Lake City Utah, the Pennsylvania Bureau of State Parks won the prestigious National Gold Medal Award presented by the American Academy of Park and Recreation Management in partnership with the National Recreation and Park Association, and proudly sponsored by Musco Lighting.

The Gold Medal Award, presented every two years, is the highest honor a park system can receive. Winners are determined by a panel of parks and recreation professionals that evaluate application materials with an emphasis on excellence in long-range planning, resource management, citizen support systems, environmental stewardship, program and professional development and agency recognition.



Emphasis is given to addressing the needs of those served through the collective energies of citizens, staff, and elected officials.

The other finalists were the state park systems in Georgia, Michigan and North Carolina.

“The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation congratulates the Bureau of State Parks on their accomplishment,” says Marci Mowery, President of the Foundation. “Their 1,600 dedicated staff work tirelessly to not only manage more than 300,000 acres of land for wildlife, water quality and recreation; but to meet the recreational needs of the citizen’s through innovative programming, creative budgeting, and partnerships.”

Pennsylvania has 117 state parks and three conservation areas that host more than 35 million visitors each year.

Some of DCNR’s new and innovative state park programs include:

- *Get Outdoors PA*, which offers hundreds of activities annually for people to learn about outdoor recreation opportunities such as kayaking, fishing and hiking, and learn about how the public can help protect Pennsylvania’s natural resources, their role and why they should care.
- Adventure Camp--A joint effort of the Bureau of State Parks, city parks and recreation programs, and youth organizations that exposes urban area teens to experiences in nature. More than 150 kids attended camp in eight metropolitan areas last summer.
- A “green” parks initiative to address climate change and energy consumption in Pennsylvania’s parks.
- New construction work on the system’s first nature inn at Bald Eagle State Park to expand overnight accommodations and attract new visitors.
- A dedicated volunteer and Friends Program to assist state parks meet the demands of visitors.

“The selection of the DCNR Bureau of State Parks for the prestigious 2009 National Gold Medal Award, the "Oscar" of recreation and park agency recognition, provides independent confirmation of the high quality of the state parks system available to the citizens of the Commonwealth,” says Robert Griffith, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Recreation and Parks Society. “It recognizes quality professional management; significant financial investment such as from the Keystone Fund and Growing Greener; innovative outreach through efforts like "Get Outdoors PA" and urban initiatives; and contributions made by the state parks to tourism, health and wellness, and quality recreation opportunities. We certainly need to protect these state treasures for future generations to enjoy!”

“The Gold Medal Award confirms what the more than 35 million visitors to Pennsylvania State Parks already knew,” says Mowery, “which is that our system is number one. What a great treasure to hand to the next generation”

To see the eight-minute video about Pennsylvania State Parks that was part of the award application, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us and choose the “Modern Day Legacy” icon on the homepage.