



## State Parks and Forests Through the Seasons Photo Contest

### Freedom to Explore: Celebrating 250 Years of Pennsylvania's Outdoor Heritage

The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation is pleased to announce the 2026 State Parks and Forests Through the Seasons photo contest with categories encouraging you to join with us in honoring our shared past, celebrating today's adventures, and inspiring a future where all people belong in the outdoors.

The contest's six categories offer a prize to each of three photographs from each category as follows:

- PPFF's blue ribbon panel of experts (chosen solely at PPFF's discretion) will select a Judges' Choice in each category prior to the photos being made available for public voting on the PPFF Facebook page.
- Those photos and any other photos from these photographers (a photographer may only win one prize) will be removed from the balance of the contest. When voting opens on our Facebook page, the top vote-getter in public voting will be named People's Choice in that category.
- Second prize in the category will likewise be chosen by popular vote.

The top vote-getter among **all** submissions will be named the People's Choice Best in Show and a Judges' Choice Best in Show chosen from **all** submissions will also be selected. Award winners may be included on our website, Facebook page, and other electronic and print communications. Award winning photographs may also be showcased in photo exhibitions at locations and times to be determined.

**Prizes:** We have traditionally offered state park gift cards to our winning photographers and expect them to be available for 2026; however, PPFF reserves the right to substitute another gift card in the event the DCNR cards are unavailable.

- Both Best in Show winners (People's Choice and Judges' Choice) receive a \$75 gift card.
- The People's Choice and Judges' Choice winners in each category receive a \$50 gift card.
- The runner-up in each category receives a \$25 gift card.

#### **Categories:**

- **Pursuit of Happiness**
  - Joy, play, quiet moments, relaxation in nature.
- **Freedom to Belong**
  - People of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities enjoying public lands; inclusive recreation.
- **Voices of the Land**
  - Stories of place—historic structures, cultural sites, Indigenous landscapes, CCC legacy, and ecological features.
- **We the Stewards**
  - Volunteers, conservation work, community caretaking, youth programs, trail crews.
- **Paths Through Time**
  - Natural and cultural heritage; landscapes that witnessed centuries of change; "then & now" recreation.

- **Young Photographer (ages 12-17)**
  - We encourage young photographers to use the five categories to guide their submissions.

Please read the guidelines below before entering. All photographs must adhere to these standards.

### **Guidelines:**

All photos must be submitted by noon on September 30, 2026 for consideration with the voting period to be publicly announced after that.

**All photos must have been taken in a Pennsylvania state park or state forest. Please note: photos not taken in a Pennsylvania state park or forest will not be entered.**

Email your entries to the Foundation at ***photocontest@paparksandforests.org***.

Each submission must be in .jpg form and be identified with your name, the category entered, and the state park/forest in which the photograph was taken. **(For Example: *JohnSmith.beyondthetrail.forbessf.jpg*)**

Photos not labeled correctly WILL be rejected. The photo contest has grown over the course of the last few years, with hundreds of photographs entered. PPFF simply does not have the staff or volunteers to rename entries. A request (not a mandate) from the staff and volunteers who handle the entries: Consider giving your name an initial cap – JohnSmith as above instead of johnsmith. We have misunderstood names in the past and do not want to do that!

**Photos must be assigned to a category by the contestant and can only be entered into one category.** A maximum of 3 photos per entrant will be accepted in any one category. ***Note: Only one prize will be awarded per person. Should a photographer receive the most votes in more than one category, PPFF reserves the right to select from which category the prize will be awarded.*** Judges' Choice selections are made before the contest opens for public voting and any other photographs taken by a Judges' choice winner are removed from the contest before voting begins and are displayed in a separate Facebook photo album.

***When submitting photos, please include your name, address, telephone, and email address in the email. Also, we ask that if a person is visible in the picture that their name and contact information be included.***

Photographs that do not depict behavior in accordance with Leave No Trace principles will not be accepted.

- Plan ahead and prepare.
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Leave what you find.
- Minimize campfire impacts (be careful with fire).
- Respect wildlife.
- Be considerate of other visitors.

You do not have to be a member of the Foundation to enter the contest. Our contest is open to anyone.

Photos must be submitted by the photographer. (No third party submissions.)

Submitted photos should be original and previously unpublished in a commercial endeavor.

By submitting photos, entrants agree that they are freely licensing, without compensation, all uses of the images in perpetuity by PPFF, including posting the photo/s to the PPFF website and Facebook page or any other electronic and printed media and allow their photos, names, and general location to be published in the newsletter and/or website or any other electronic or printed media, currently and in the future.

Winners in the individual categories and overall “best in show” categories agree that PPFF may share their contact information (upon request) with their legislators or local media for purposes of follow-up and congratulations!

Entrants retain ownership and all other rights to future use of their photographs. Photographers are always given credit for their photographs in PPFF publications and posts and links to the original source provided whenever possible.

Voting will take place on the PPFF Facebook page with a "like" to the photo. Each person may only vote for a photograph one time but you may vote for as many photos as you wish.

Winners will be announced as soon as practicable after the conclusion of the contest and published in the Spring issue of the *Penn's Stewards* newsletter.