



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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Commissioner

SHEILA Y. OLIVER

Lt. Governor

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2022-12

WHEREAS, on April 22, 1970, the first “Earth Day,” the Legislature created the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1D-1, *et seq.*, and empowered DEP to “formulate comprehensive policies for the conservation of the natural resources of the State, the promotion of environmental protection and the prevention of pollution of the environment of the State;” and

WHEREAS, the Legislature declared, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:8A-2, that the “provision of lands for public recreation and the conservation of natural resources promotes the public health, prosperity and general welfare and is a proper responsibility of government;” and

WHEREAS, the Legislature declared, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1L-2, “that the provision of recreational programs to all segments of the public enhances the public health, prosperity and general welfare and is a proper responsibility of the State;” and

WHEREAS, the Legislature has charged the DEP with acquiring, planning, designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining state parks and forests pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1L-2, and with promoting and encouraging the expansion and development of recreational programs on a Statewide and local basis pursuant to N.J.S.A. 13:1B-15.1; and

WHEREAS, open and green space is a precious commodity throughout New Jersey, which is especially constrained within densely developed areas of the state and within the state’s urban communities, many of which lack sufficient green spaces, tree cover, parks, and outdoor recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, all residents of the State of New Jersey, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, color, or national origin, have a right to live, work, learn, and recreate in a clean and healthy environment; and

WHEREAS, tourism in New Jersey is a multi-billion dollar industry, generating more than \$40 billion in spending annually in recent years, and of that, more than \$5 billion in annual spending on recreation, generating thousands of jobs each year; and

WHEREAS, New Jersey’s natural, cultural, and historic resources contribute to the breadth of destinations, visitors, events, and spending that supports the state’s tourism industry, including through DEP’s management of over two hundred State Parks, Forests, Historic Sites, Natural and Wildlife Management Areas across more than one-million acres throughout New Jersey; and,

WHEREAS, recognizing that DEP's mission sits squarely at the intersection of environmental, health, social and economic improvement, the Commissioner reorganized aspects of the Department between 2021 and 2022, establishing DEP's Community Investment & Economic Revitalization program, the primary function of which is to strengthen investments in natural capital and support sustainable economic growth that restores, preserves, and protects natural, cultural, and historic resources while enhancing quality of life for all New Jerseyans; and

WHEREAS, the Department represents the State in the development and implementation of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, a condition of eligibility for National Park Service Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund assistance, which must identify statewide recreation needs and opportunities and articulate a comprehensive responsive strategy; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the critical value of engaging the public and collaborating with a plurality of stakeholders with interest in the preservation, planning, and improvement of the state's natural, cultural, and historic resources, DEP wishes to establish a working group comprised of diverse voices, experiences and viewpoints who would together engage with DEP and its professionals in formulating the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan; and

NOW THEREFORE, I, Shawn M. LaTourette, the State's Commissioner of Environmental Protection, by virtue of the authority vested in me by N.J.S.A. 13:1B-3 and 13:1L-4, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. Guided by the following principles, DEP shall develop *Outside, Together! A Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for New Jersey* (Plan), which shall be produced in its final form by or before December 2023:
 - a. Expanding high-quality open space and recreational opportunities for all New Jersey residents and visitors;
 - b. Enhancing climate resilience and sustainability through acquisition and development of open and green space;
 - c. Empowering communities through investments in ecotourism and outdoor recreation;
 - d. Embracing the role of technology in conservation and outdoor recreation;
 - e. Furthering equity and environmental justice through outdoor recreation; and,
 - f. Continuing commitments to stewardship and the conservation and restoration of biodiversity.
2. There is hereby created, within the Office of the Commissioner, the Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee, which is convened by the Commissioner for the limited and express purpose of providing advice and recommendations to DEP and its professionals to inform DEP's development of *Outside, Together!* and whose sole goal shall be to help ensure that the Plan is responsive to and likely to meet the diverse needs of the public.
3. The Advisory Committee shall be chaired by DEP's Assistant Commissioner for Community Investment and Economic Revitalization (Chair), who shall solicit public



interest in service on the Advisory Committee and recommend to the Commissioner the appointment of Advisory Committee members and the formation of subcommittees responsible for advancing aspects of *Outside Together!* consistent with the principles and objectives established herein. The Chair shall solicit participation from individuals that represent business, nonprofit, environmental, and governmental entities, including relevant State agencies, chambers of commerce, conservation organizations, environmental justice organizations, business organizations, academic institutions, and county or local park stewards. The Advisory Committee shall also include representatives of the DEP Parks, Forestry & Historic Sites, Fish & Wildlife, and Green Acres programs.

4. The Advisory Committee shall aid DEP in the development of a Plan that meets the following objectives:
 - a. Identify opportunities for expanding public access to recreational assets and offerings, and improving the user experience at existing recreational assets;
 - b. Educate the public about the importance, needs, benefits and availability of open space and outdoor recreation opportunities statewide;
 - c. Identify high value open space and recreational needs and opportunities with particular focus on better serving the health and wellness of residents in underserved or overburdened communities;
 - d. Cultivate awareness and appreciation of the economic benefits of preservation, conservation, and recreation, including the co-benefits of promotion ecotourism, building resilience to climate change and extreme weather, improving sustainability, and enhancing biodiversity;
 - e. Identify policy, regulatory and legislative actions that could advance open space and outdoor recreation goals;
 - f. Encourage collaborative partnerships and programs to enhance open space and outdoor recreation at multiple levels of government;
 - g. Satisfy the National Park Service requirements to that New Jersey continues to qualify for Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund opportunities; and, importantly,
 - h. Fully engage the public to ensure an informed, inclusive, and equitable approach to the forgoing principles and objectives.

5. The Advisory Committee shall:
 - a. Be formed by the Chair within 60 days of the date of this order, comprised of individuals and subcommittees as directed herein;
 - b. Convene for the first time within 90 days of the date of this order and, thereafter, at frequent intervals as the Chair may determine to present, consider, and advance the development of *Outside, Together!* as directed herein;



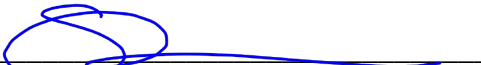
- c. Contract with an appropriate consulting firm to assist DEP in the development of *Outside, Together!* through data collection and analysis, as well as the production of outreach and other materials as may be directed by the Chair;
 - d. Immediately engage with stakeholders and the public through a series of ongoing outreach and engagement sessions intended to cultivate public awareness and ensure a full and adequate appraisal of New Jerseyans needs;
 - e. Provide multiple paths for stakeholders and the public to participate and inform development of *Outside, Together!*, such as surveys, polling, community engagement sessions, and focus group conversations;
 - f. Create or aggregate inventories and assessments of current recreation resources and identify needs and new opportunities for outdoor recreation improvements;
 - g. Create recommended policies, benchmarks, and actions to ensure fairer and more equitable distribution of outdoor recreation and conservation funds and resources;
 - h. Present the preliminary draft of *Outside, Together!* to the Commissioner for review no later than April 22, 2023; and,
 - i. Finalize *Outside, Together!* by or before of December 2023 for its ultimate submission to the National Park Service.
6. Each member of the Advisory Committee shall serve at the pleasure of the Commissioner and may be excused by the Commissioner with or without cause and shall not be compensated by the DEP or the State for their service on the Advisory Committee unless such service is attendant to their preexisting State employment.
7. DEP staff is hereby directed, upon the request of the Chair, to provide such information or support to the Advisory Committee as the Chair may determine necessary.

Nothing in this Order shall be construed to confer any legal rights upon persons or entities whose activities are regulated by DEP or any other state entity, or be construed to supersede any federal, state, or local law or create a private right of action on behalf of any person or entity or be used as a basis for legal challenges to rules, approvals, permits, licenses, policies or other actions or inaction by DEP or any other state entity.

All previous Administrative Orders that are inconsistent with this Administrative Order are hereby superseded and repealed.

This order shall take effect immediately.

Dated: April 22, 2022


Shawn M. LaTourette
Commissioner

