



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Parks, Recreation
and Historic
Preservation

Adirondack
Park
Agency

DEC, State Parks, and Adirondack Park Agency Announce Virtual Public Forums on Inclusivity, Accessibility, and Sustainability in the Outdoors

Lunchtime Sessions Feature Introduction by Kimberly T. Hill, Chief Disability Officer for Governor Kathy Hochul

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), in collaboration with the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), are hosting a two-part webinar series on integrating inclusivity, accessibility and sustainability in providing access to State lands. These public forums are part of the State's ongoing efforts to advance Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and increase opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to recreate together in the outdoors. In each session, Janet Zeller, a national expert on accessibility of outdoor recreation for people with disabilities, will give a presentation followed by a discussion period facilitated by the DEC/APA Accessibility Advisory Committee. The committee consists of representatives of people with disabilities who are focused on improving accessibility of opportunities for outdoor recreation across New York State.

"Improving the accessibility of State lands to people of all ages and abilities is a core part of DEC's ongoing efforts to expand the diversity and inclusivity of the recreating community," **said Commissioner Seggos.** "For us, inclusivity means reevaluating how we welcome all people with historically limited access to outdoor recreation and going above and beyond to rectify past inequities in the spectrum of people recreating on our public lands. I particularly want to thank our partners, the New York Association on Independent Living, Association on Aging in New York, SUNY Cortland's Inclusive Recreation Resource Center, Natural Areas Conservancy, and Parks & Trails New York for their outreach and assistance to encourage New Yorkers to join us for these forums."



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"New York State Parks welcomes all visitors to explore these special public places, and we are committed to providing an ever-increasing range of inclusive, accessible opportunities," **said State Parks Commissioner Erik Kulleseid.** "We look forward to productive discussions about offering a wide range of options for outdoor recreation for everyone regardless of ability."

"The APA is proud to participate with the DEC, OPRHP and all the committed partner organizations on these important informational forums to increase awareness and improve accessibility to the outdoor recreational opportunities that exist in New York State," **said APA Executive Director**

Barbara Rice. "Under the leadership of Governor Hochul, we will continue to do our part to ensure the Adirondack Park is a welcoming and inclusive place, and its magnificent natural wonders are accessible to people of all abilities."

About the Session Series

Mobility Devices on Public Lands: Is it a Wheelchair or Other Power-Driven Mobility Device?

Tuesday, May 10; Noon-1:30pm

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that any mobility device that meets the definition of a wheelchair must be allowed everywhere that the public can go. This session will include an overview of the required factors for public entities to consider in evaluating which mobility devices meet the definition of a wheelchair and which are considered Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices.

Presenter: Janet Zeller. Discussion facilitator: Jason Thurston, Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee; Outreach Coordinator at John Dillon Park in the Adirondacks.

[Register for the May 10 session](#)

Sustainable Trails and Accessibility: How to keep our wild lands wild while being more inclusive

Tuesday, May 17; Noon-1:30pm

This session will provide an overview of accessible and sustainable trail design and how to integrate sustainability and accessibility in keeping with the federal standards for accessible trails. Integration of these factors results in trails that reduce environmental impacts and open the outdoors to hikers of all abilities while maintaining the character of the trail and reducing trail maintenance.

Presenter: Janet Zeller. Discussion facilitator: Lisa Tarricone, Member, Accessibility Advisory Committee; Executive Director, Taconic Resources for Independence, Poughkeepsie.

[Register for the May 17 session](#)

American Sign Language interpretation and closed captioning will be available at each session. For questions about additional assistance to accommodate participation, submit a request with your registration by April 27. For more information, email accessibility@dec.ny.gov or call 518-402-9295.

Registration information for these public forums can also be found in the [press release](#) on the DEC website.

Introduction by Kimberly T. Hill



Kimberly T. Hill, Chief Disability Officer for Governor Kathy Hochul, will provide an introduction to the sessions. Hill most recently served as the Analyst for the New York State Assembly Committee on People with Disabilities and previously served as Director of the Assembly Task Force on People with Disabilities, which focused on issues pertaining primarily to people with physical and sensory disabilities. With the Task Force, she worked with disability advocates, chairpersons, and staff on priority issues, which led to the passage of bills such as the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council, Nursing Facility Transition and Diversion Waiver, Medicaid Buy

In Program, and codification of Titles II and III of the ADA into State law. Hill also coordinated 24 Legislative Disabilities Awareness Days for the Assembly, during which hundreds of people gathered each year to inform legislators, staff, and others about disability issues and recognized the achievements of people with disabilities and advocates alike.

Presentations by Janet Zeller



Janet Zeller has worked in the field of accessibility for more than four decades. Zeller was the National Accessibility Program Manager for the U.S. Forest Service for the last thirty years, responsible for coordinating accessibility of outdoor recreation programs and facilities across the 193 million acres of the National Forest System. Zeller's focus is on integrating accessibility and sustainability in the outdoors, so people of all ages and abilities can recreate together while minimizing environmental impacts and maintaining the natural character of the setting. She has worked with and provided trainings for organizations, states, and federal agencies throughout the U.S., and is a lifelong outdoor recreationist, including the past 35 years since a wheelchair became her means of

mobility

For more information about accessible recreation on New York State lands, see the [accessibility page at DEC](#) and [accessibility page at State Parks](#) websites.

Partners

New York Association on Independent Living
Association on Aging in New York
SUNY Cortland's Inclusive Recreation Resource Center
Natural Areas Conservancy
Parks & Trails New York

