

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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On Earth Day, Explore Pennsylvania's Natural Resources

By

Susan Corbett

First Lady of Pennsylvania

To honor Earth Day on Sunday, I am excited to take a moment to recognize some of the amazing educational facilities and outdoor attractions in Pennsylvania that showcase our continued conservation efforts and make the commonwealth a premier destination for eco-tourism and environmental education.

Pennsylvania is home to 117 state parks and more than 2 million acres of forests, along with national parks and recreational areas. We have been a model for forestry and conservation throughout our nation's history, beginning with former Gov. Gifford Pinchot. Pinchot was Pennsylvania's 28th governor and first ever chief forester of the U. S. Division of Forestry.

Today, our state continues that tradition, offering access to top-notch educational facilities and programming, as well as developing new sites and conservation centers that highlight the efforts to protect and conserve our natural resources.

For instance, visitors can experience nature firsthand at the [Pocono Environmental Educational Center](#) located within the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area in the scenic Pocono Mountains.

That center is one of the most respected and recognized residential environmental education centers in the northeastern United States, promoting sustainable living, environmental education and appreciation for nature. The center offers educational programming for visitors ranging from outdoor enthusiasts to the novice traveler looking to learn more about the region's natural surroundings.

Another premier destination for eco-tourism and environmental education is the [Tom Ridge Environmental Center](#) in Erie. Known as the "gateway to Presque Isle," the center serves

as a visitor center and research facility, offering interpretive exhibits, a theater, research laboratories and more, all with the goal of teaching visitors about the unique eco-systems of Presque Isle State Park.

A scenic, 3,200-acre peninsula on the southern shore of Lake Erie, Presque Isle is a National Natural Landmark with sandy coastlines, picturesque views of Lake Erie and numerous opportunities for outdoor recreation including swimming, boating, fishing, birding, hiking and bicycling.

In addition to the diverse outdoor activities, the state offers a variety of options to sleep under the stars in our parks. Visitors will find many different options from traditional camping and Mongolian-style yurts to a unique stay at the new, eco-friendly [Nature Inn](#) at Bald Eagle State Park near State College.

The first of its kind in Pennsylvania's state park system, the Nature Inn invites visitors to enjoy an inside alternative to camping with the cozy feel of a bed and breakfast. The Nature Inn recently received a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design gold certification by the U.S. Green Building Council for the project's reduced storm water runoff, habitat restoration, rainwater harvesting system, guest room energy monitoring and programs that focus on outdoor recreation and stewardship.

Inside, the inn features work by local artisans and prints by John James Audubon, the world-renowned ornithologist, naturalist and artist, as well as themed rooms that correspond with the premier interpretive birding opportunities in the park. Outside, visitors can step into Bald Eagle State Park to hike, boat, fish, hunt, view wildlife and more.

Pennsylvania is truly blessed with rich natural resources and successful conservation facilities. As we celebrate Earth Day, I hope you will take a moment to get outside and explore our great Commonwealth.

Links:

[DCNR Secretary: Elimination Of Keystone Funds Is Permanent](#)

[Governor's Budget Cuts Environment Again, Keystone Fund Zeroed Out](#)

[\\$1.8 Billion Cut/Diverted From Environmental Programs Over Last 10 Years](#)