This booklet provides ideas for activities you can take within Pennsylvania state parks and forests to celebrate the 125-year anniversary. Select one or more actions, check the box, journal your thoughts, take photos, and have some fun in the process!

A special gift is available to anyone who completes three or more of the activities listed in this booklet. Just take a photo of your activities and send it to 125anniversary@paparksandforests.org.

With 121 state parks covering nearly 300,000 acres and 20 forest districts spanning 2.2 million acres across Pennsylvania, there are endless opportunities to get outdoors and explore! What you do there is not as important as simply being there, as time spent outdoors has many health benefits.

Currently, Pennsylvania ranks as the 17th most obese state in the country. According to the Penn State University study, “Obesity Threatens America’s Future,” by 2020 57 percent of Pennsylvanians will be obese and related health care costs will surpass $13.5 billion. The study goes on to show that reducing the average body mass index in Pennsylvania by only five percent could mean an $8 billion-dollar savings in health care costs in the next 10 years and $24 billion in the next 20 years. There is strong evidence that when people have access to parks and forests they exercise more, leading to a reduction in obesity.

The National Institutes of Health have shown that being more fit leads to a reduction in time spent being sick, which has benefits to productivity and quality of life. In fact, visiting state parks and forests can reduce medical costs as studies show that 60 to 90 percent of doctor visits are attributed to stress-related illnesses and symptoms. Spending time in Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests can reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, lower your blood pressure, and help you achieve a healthier lifestyle.

How will you spend your 125 hours in Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests? Use the space below to journal about your experiences. Make a note of the places you visited, the activities you did while you were there, any special thoughts or experiences that you had, who was with you, etc. The other activities in this booklet will give you a sense of the many activities that can take place in a state park or forest. For other ideas, visit www.dcnr.pa.gov. And if you would like to share some of your thoughts with PPFF, please send those to us at 125anniversary@paparksandforests.org.

If posting images to social media, please use the following hashtags:

#PAPARKSANDFORESTS #PARKFORESTS125
Volunteerism has been shown to be good for your mental and physical health. While park and forest staff do a great job, they rely on volunteers like you to help run educational programs, maintain trails, raise funds for special projects, and organize festivals and other events.

One option for volunteering is through the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF) and one of our 40 Friend Groups or through our Stewards of Penn’s Woods Program.

To see a list of all friends groups, go to: www.paparksandforests.org/friends-groups/what-is-a-friends-group. If your favorite state park or forest doesn’t yet have a friends group, consider starting one. PPFF has resources to assist you. Visit www.paparksandforests.org/initiatives/stewards-of-penns-woods/ to become a steward, or check out our calendar for a wide assortment of volunteer opportunities: www.events.paparksandforests.org/.

If you are not ready to commit to formal volunteer activities but still want to do your part, why not considering doing one or more of the following the next time you are at a state park or forest? These activities are described in more detail elsewhere in this booklet.

- Pick up trash while on a hike
- Attend an invasive plant pull
- Tell your friends why Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests are important
- Raise funds for one of the needs list items in your favorite state park or forest

Use the space below to keep a record of your volunteer time.
What did you do and where did you do it? Who else was involved?
What were your feelings during and after the volunteer activity? How do you plan to stay involved?

If posting images to social media, please use the following hashtags:

#STEWARDSHIP #PAPARKSANDFORESTS #PARKSFORESTS125

Facebook: @PENNSYLVANIAPARKSANDFORESTSFUNDATION Twitter: @PAPFF Instagram: @PAPARKSANDFORESTS

PAPARKSANDFORESTS.ORG
Litter is a problem across Pennsylvania. According to PennDOT, areas with a litter problem usually have higher crime, lower property values, and less pride in the neighborhood. In our state parks, litter can kill or stunt plant growth, harm or kill animals if they eat it or get caught in it, and make these public lands unpleasant for recreation. Removing litter costs millions of dollars each year in Pennsylvania, and more than $11 billion across the country according to Keep America Beautiful. Do your part: properly dispose of all trash (i.e. not littering), recycle, and pick up and disposing of litter that you see.

2018's hottest fitness trend seems to be “plogging”, which is picking up litter while jogging. Started in Sweden, this activity has two benefits: physical fitness and environmental health. All you need to do is add a small bag to your jogging routine. When you see a piece of litter, pick it up, put it in your bag, and dispose of it later. Imagine how much litter could be removed by the nearly 64 million Americans who say they run or jog each year!

Not into jogging? This activity can also be accomplished while biking, hiking, or paddling! Consider joining a stewardship day at one of our state parks and forests. If you notice illegal dumping, report it to the state forest or park. Be an extra set of eyes and ears, and educate the public on the impacts of disposing of litter and trash illegally. Where will you pick up 125 pieces of litter? Will you do it as part of an organized group, with your family, or on your own?

Use the space below to journal about your experience.

What were the most common types of litter that you found?

Over the course of the year did you notice less litter in your state park or forest?
According to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), walking is the most popular outdoor activity in the Commonwealth, and for good reason. Walking is a powerful cardio workout that can lower your risk of heart disease, improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels, build strength, improve balance, help control weight, and improve mood, according to WebMD. Walking outdoors is more effective at lowering stress and anxiety levels than running on a treadmill because the time spent in nature helps you relax and forget about the troubles of the day, according to a study by Harvard University.

There are 1,470 miles of trails within Pennsylvania state parks and 964 miles of hiking only trails and more than 4,000 shared use (non-motorized) trails in our state forests. These include portions of the world-renowned Appalachian Trail, as well as shorter trails like the Chuck Keiper Trail in Sproul State Forest and the Mid State Trail that passes through numerous state parks. To find a great hiking trail near you, visit www.explorefatrails.com.

Once you know where to go, make sure you have the appropriate footwear, clothing, and accessories that you might need, such as trekking poles, a map, and of course, a water bottle and snack. Bring a friend or two along for the journey or go it alone (but first let someone know of your plans—where you will be hiking, when you plan to return, etc). Spend an hour or backpack for a few days. No matter which state park or forest trail you choose, you are sure to have a great adventure!

Use the space below to journal about your hiking experiences.
Where did you go? Who went with you?
How long did it take you to hike all 125 miles?
What sights and sounds did you encounter?
Will you go back to that trail in the future or find a new one to explore?

If posting images to social media, please use the following hashtags:

#HIKING #PATRAILS #PAPARKSANDFORESTS #PARKSFORESTS125
If hiking 125 miles is too much for you, consider walking the distance of 125 blazes. A blaze is a painted mark or sign on a tree (or rock) used to help hikers know which trail they are on and whether it is a shared-use trail. In Pennsylvania state parks and forests, a diamond-shaped blaze marks a motorized trail (open to ATVs and snowmobiles) while a 2” by 6” rectangular blaze denotes a non-motorized trail. Typically, red blazes are used for shared-use trails (those open to horseback riders, hiking, and mountain bikers). Side trails and local footpaths are marked with yellow blazes. Exceptions to the rule include the following foot-traffic only trails:

- When out hiking you may encounter a double blaze, which means “caution” or “heads up”. Double blazes are two rectangles painted one above the other and used 20 to 50 feet prior to an abrupt turn in the trail or a trail junction. The direction of a turn is shown by the top blaze being offset to one side or the other of the bottom blaze. For instance, when the top blaze is positioned to the left of the bottom blaze, the trail will make a sharp or abrupt turn to the left. You may also encounter what appears to be a double blaze, but it is the size of a single blaze and comprised of two different colors. This is used to indicate two trails that briefly share the same path.

The distance between 125 blazes cannot be assumed, as there is no standard measurement. Generally, blazes are set at a distance so that you can see the next blaze while standing at the previous one. DCNR recommend 6 blazes per mile for conspicuous trails and one every 150 feet in areas where the trail is difficult to follow. So, hiking the distance of 125 blazes would be no more than 21 miles using those assumptions.

Use the space below to journal about your experiences hiking 125 blazes. What trail(s) did you choose and why? What did you see on your trip? How many miles did you cover? What was the overall experience like?

The Tuscarora Trail, part of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, is marked with blue blazes.

The Appalachian Trail, a National Scenic Trail, is marked with white blazes, and blue blazes are used on Appalachian Trail side and connecting trails.

The Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail, a National Scenic Trail, and the Horseshoe Trail, connecting Valley Forge to the Appalachian Trail, are marked with yellow blazes.

The Loyalsock Trail, a State Forest Hiking Trail, is marked with red and yellow blazes.

The Baker Trail, a State Forest Hiking Trail, the North Country Trail, a National Scenic Trail, and the Mason Dixon Trail, connecting the Appalachian Trail to the Brandywine Trail, are marked with blue blazes.

The Standing Stone Trail in south Central PA is marked with orange blazes.

The Lost Turkey Trail is marked with red blazes.

If posting images to social media, please use the following hashtags:

#HIKING #PATRAILS #PAPARKSANDFORESTS #PARKSFORESTS125
Riding a bike has many health benefits, according to Harvard Medical School. It is easier on your joints than walking and running, it provides an aerobic workout that is good for your heart, brain, and blood vessels, it builds leg and core muscles, it helps with balance and building endurance, and it can help increase bone density. And since you can go faster on a bike than you could on your feet, you get to see more of an area in the same amount of time.

Bike riding in a Pennsylvania state park or forest can be as calming or as adventurous as you want. You can take a relaxing ride on the flat and scenic Pine Creek Rail Trail, which USA Today named one of the best places in the world to ride a bicycle. The 65-mile trail runs from just north of Wellsboro to Jersey Shore, where Pine Creek meets with the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, and passes through Leonard Harrison and Colton Point state parks. Or choose another long or short trail; more information about cycling in state parks can be found at www.dcnr.pa.gov/Recreation/WhatToDo/Biking/Pages/default.aspx.

For those looking to pick up the pace, you can go mountain biking on the more than 3,800 miles of state forest trails open to mountain biking, 477 miles of which are designated and maintained specifically for mountain bikes. Or go to one of the 32 state parks that have designated mountain bike trails, including Blue Knob, Codorus, Moraine, and Ohiopyle. More information about mountain biking in state parks and forests can be found at www.dcnr.pa.gov/Recreation/WhatToDo/MountainBiking/Pages/default.aspx.

Regardless of how you cycle your 125 miles, use the space below to journal about your biking experiences.
Which state park(s) or forest(s) did you cycle in? Who did you ride with?
What sights and sounds did you experience along the way? How did you feel when you were done?
There's nothing quite like a day spent paddling down a river or stream, enjoying the scenic beauty of nature, listening to the water, and getting some exercise to boot. In fact, the Livestrong Foundation says that paddling is a great form of aerobic exercise that can increase endurance, improve heart health, better regulate cholesterol and blood sugar levels, lower blood pressure, strengthen your lungs, and burn calories leading to weight loss. Paddling also reduces stress and anxiety levels and alleviates feelings of depression. Plus, it's a lot of fun!

There are many opportunities to paddle a canoe, kayak or stand up paddle board in Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, with lakes, rivers, and streams galore.

There are numerous designated water trails across the Commonwealth. Water trails are boat routes suitable for canoes, kayaks and small motorized watercraft and are comprised of access points, boat launches, day use sites, and even overnight camping areas in some places. Pennsylvania water trails include the 126-mile-long Juniata River Water Trail, which begins at Canoe Creek State Park, the 85-mile-long Youghiogheny River Water Trail that runs through Ohiopyle State Park, and 250-mile-long Delaware River Water Trail that runs through Delaware Canal State Park. Other water trails can be found at www.explorepatrails.com.

Don't have your own canoe or kayak? Many of our state parks and forests offer boat rentals and there are also outfitters across the Commonwealth where you can rent by the hour or day for your paddling adventure. Regardless of whether you own, borrow, or rent, make sure it has a valid launch sticker affixed to its side. More information on paddling in state parks and forests can be found at www.dcnr.pa.gov/Recreation/WhatToDo/KayakingandCanoeing/Pages/default.aspx.

Once you return from your paddling excursion, use the space provided below to journal about your experience.
Where did you paddle? What did you see while on the water?
Did you meet any other people? What was your overall feeling as your trip ended?

If posting images to social media, please use the following hashtags:
#PADDLING #PATRAILS #PAPARKSANDFORESTS #PARKSFORESTS125

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PAPARKSANDFORESTS.ORG
A native plant is one that existed in Pennsylvania prior to European colonization. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), there are approximately 2,100 native plant species in the Commonwealth. Native plants provide many benefits to the environment: they provide food for wildlife and attract insects that are then eaten by birds. Because they have adapted in concert with our climate they tend to be easier and cheaper to maintain than non-native plants, requiring much less (or no) irrigation, fertilizer, and pruning. And many native plants provide beauty to a landscape.

On the other hand, DCNR states that there are approximately 1,300 non-native plants that are established in our forests and fields. A small percentage of these are considered “invasive”, meaning that they grow quickly, spread to new areas, and outcompete native plants. These plants should never be planted deliberately. The safest bet is to choose native plants whenever possible to avoid starting the next invasion.

How do you go about selecting the right native plant for a site? There are many items to take under consideration, including the amount of sunlight, whether the area is wet or dry, how large the plant will get, etc. Check out www.iconservepa.org for searchable lists of native plants and the sites on which they grow best, as well as planting techniques and garden templates. Take part in a planting event at a state park or forest, or consider using native plants at your home, creating corridors of habitat for wildlife and insects.

Use the space below to sketch your planting or describe what you did in words. Which types of plants did you choose and why? What insects and animals do you see feeding on or living on the plants? Describe the colors and scents of the flowers, the shapes of the leaves, and other descriptions of the plants.
Spotted lanternflies are insects that are not native to Pennsylvania and are in fact considered to be “invasive” because of the damage they can do to trees, grapes, hops, apples, and other valuable plants. These inch-long Asian insects were discovered in Berks County, Pennsylvania in 2014 – the first discovery of the insect in the United States. Since then, adult spotted lanternflies can be seen as early as the middle of July. When at rest, the adults have a black head and grayish wings with black spots. The tips of the wings are a combination of black rectangular blocks with grey outlines. When startled or flying insect will display hind wings that are red at the base and black at the tip with a white stripe dividing them. The red portion of the wing is also adorned with black spots. The abdomen is bright to pale yellow with bands of black on the top and bottom surfaces. While a poor flyer, the spotted lanternfly is a strong jumper.

If you suspect a spotted lanternfly infestation, take a photo of the insect and/or egg mass and send it to the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture at bedbug@pa.gov. All confirmed spotted lanternfly egg masses should be scraped off whatever plant it is on, double bagged, and thrown in the trash, or placed in alcohol or hand sanitizer to kill the eggs and adults. The Department of Agriculture requests that you then report the finding to them at www.paplants.pa.gov/EntomologySurveyExternal.aspx.

Unfortunately, spotted lanternflies are not the only invasive insect in Pennsylvania wreaking havoc on our trees and other plant species. Others include the hemlock wooly adelgid and hemlock elongate scale that attack our state tree, the Eastern hemlock, the emerald ash borer that attacks all species of elm trees, and the Asian long-horned beetle that attacks primarily maple trees. To learn how to identify and manage these insects go to: www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/ForestsAndTrees/InsectsAndDiseases/Pages/default.aspx.

Use the space below to journal about your experience.
Where did you find the insects? Did you have help identifying them?
Did you find it difficult to harm the insects, even knowing the destruction they can cause?
What are some steps you can take in the future to prevent the spread of other invasive insects?
The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) defines invasive plants as those species that are not native to the state, grow aggressively, and spread and displace native vegetation. Invasive plants are generally undesirable because they are difficult and costly to control and can dominate whole habitats, making them environmentally destructive in certain situations. A list of plants they consider to be invasive can be found at [www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20026634.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20026634.pdf).

Invasive plants should be removed from the environment whenever possible, but it is important to accurately identify the plant species in question first, then determine the best way to eradicate it. Some methods of removal can do more harm than good. DCNR has several resources to get you prepared at [www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20033074.pdf](http://www.docs.dcnr.pa.gov/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20033074.pdf).

You can also help prevent the spread of invasive plants while you are hiking, biking, or paddling through a state park or forest. Fact sheets geared specifically to different types of recreation can be found at [www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/InvasivePlants/ReduceInvasiveHitchHikers/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/WildPlants/InvasivePlants/ReduceInvasiveHitchHikers/Pages/default.aspx).

Check the PPFF calendar of events for invasive plant pulls across the state or check with your local community. Perhaps you have invasive species on your property that could also be removed.

Use the space below to sketch your planting or describe what you did in words. Which types of plants did you choose and why? What insects and animals do you see feeding on or living on the plants? Describe the colors and scents of the flowers, the shapes of the leaves, and other descriptions of the plants.

If posting images to social media, please use the following hashtags:

#INVASIVEPLANTS #PAPARKSANDFORESTS #PARKSFORESTS125

Facebook: [@PENNSYLVANIAPARKSANDFORESTSFOUNATION](https://www.facebook.com/PA-ParksAndForests-178414435654819)  Twitter: [@PAPFF](https://twitter.com/PAPFF)  Instagram: [@PAPARKSANDFORESTS](https://www.instagram.com/paparksandforests/)

PAPARKSANDFORESTS.ORG
Evidence demonstrates the damaging effects technology can have on our health. According to research done at UCLA, excessive amounts of screen time, especially at night, can impact our sleep and weight. The bright light of our smartphones and laptops reduces levels of the hormone melatonin, which regulates sleep, and decreases leptin, which makes you feel full. At the same time, bright light increases ghrelin, which makes you feel hungry. So, the more time we spend with our screens can make us gain weight not just because we are moving less, but because of their effect on our sleep cycles.

Screen time, especially for children and teens, also impacts the way their brain is wired, says Dr. Mari Swindle, author of the book, “i-Minds”. Swindle says that when a child is staring at a screen they tend to ignore the world around them, so they are not learning as much language from conversations. When teens choose to text someone, rather than talk one-on-one, they don’t effectively learn social skills, which can hurt them in relationships and on the job.

For some it can be difficult to imagine going even one hour without technology, but the benefits can be real and lasting. Forbes Magazine came up with 5 reasons to unplug. They include recharging your inner battery to reduce the feelings of stress, improving your concentration and ability to focus, and becoming a nicer person in general.

While you’re at it, use the space below to journal about the 125 hours you spent tech-free.

What was most difficult to give up?
What was the reaction of people around you to your decision?
Did you convince anyone else to give it a try?
How will you look at technology moving forward?

Here are some suggestions for undergoing a “digital detox”:
- Get rid of unnecessary electronic equipment and phone apps.
- Write in a journal, rather than on social media sites.
- Reach out to friends in person or write them a letter.
- Get outdoors and go for a hike, preferably with friends and family members.
- Keep yourself busy with old hobbies like reading, knitting, or painting so you don’t feel the urge to check your email.
They say a picture is worth a thousand words, so why not show your love for Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests through a 125-picture photo essay? You can capture the natural and man-made beauty of these public lands by taking photos of the plants, geologic features, streams, wildlife, historic structures, scenic vistas, and other special features. Include photos of yourself and your family and friends having fun in the outdoors.

Once you have captured something special, why not consider posting it to social media? The PA Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF) has:

Facebook  @PAPARKSANDFORESTSFOUNDATION
Twitter       @PAPFF
Instagram    @PAPARKSANDFORESTS

When posting to your own social media sites, use some of the hashtags listed below to show your support for the 125th anniversary of Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests.

#PAPARKSANDFORESTS  #PARKSANDFORESTS125

Not on social media?
You can still share your photos with PPFF by sending a couple in an email to 125anniversary@paparksandforests.org. That way we can post to our sites or use them in an upcoming newsletter issue (with your permission, of course!).
You know how special Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests are, but do your friends and family? Does your neighbor, your boss? Why not share with them some fun facts that will help them appreciate these public lands as much as you do? You can do this in person or via your social media accounts. The following are a small sampling of what we think makes Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests special, but feel free to add your own impressions to the list!

- The more than 40 million visitors a year to Pennsylvania’s state parks and state forests generate more than $1 billion a year for our economy through visitor purchases of hotel rooms, dinners, souvenirs, and other amenities.
- The return on taxpayer investment in our state parks alone was estimated at nearly $12.41 for every $1 invested, according to a 2012 study by Penn State University.
- Pennsylvania’s 121 state parks were recognized in 2009 as the best state park system in the nation from the National Recreation and Park Society.
- Pennsylvania has a nationally-recognized Forest Stewardship Council certified sustainable state forest system with 2.2 million acres within 49 of the state’s 67 counties.
- Spending time in our state parks and forests is great for your health. Studies show that outdoor recreation reduces stress, anxiety and depression, lowers the risk of obesity, helps regulate blood sugar and cholesterol levels, and reduces your risk of cardiovascular issues.
- Pennsylvania state parks and forests provide many ecosystem services, including clean air and water. In fact, our forests act as a 2.2 million-acre water treatment system.
- There are so many recreational opportunities at Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests including, 180 boat ramps, 56 swimming beaches, 50 fishing piers, 18 swimming pools, 280 cabins, 4 ski areas, 2 golf courses, and 2 model airplane airports, among so much else!

Once you have shared some of these fun, important facts about Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests, use the space below to journal your thoughts about the experience. Which facts did you choose to tell and why? Who did you tell? How did you tell them? What was their reaction? Did you get a chance to take them to a state park or forest to show them firsthand?

If posting images to social media, please use the following hashtags:

#PAPROUD #PAPARKSANDFORESTS #PARKSFORESTS125
Did you know that the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF) is the official nonprofit fundraising arm of our state parks and forests? Started in 1999, PPFF’s mission is to inspire stewardship of Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests through public engagement in volunteerism, education, and recreation.

PPFF serves as the nonprofit umbrella to more than 40 volunteer Friends Groups, which focus on a specific state park or forest and donate tens of thousands of hours each year improving the site. From trail maintenance to leading educational programs to raising funds for park improvements, PPFF’s Friends Groups help state park and forest staff in myriad ways.

When you help raise money for or donate to PPFF, you can be confident knowing that your funds will go to direct improvements within state parks and forests. There are several ways that you can participate. For instance, there are various levels of membership in PPFF, from a “friend” level at $25 per year to a “family” membership at $35, all the way up to the Conservation Legacy Society membership at $25,000. No sum is too small or too large to help Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests. Members receive invitations to special events, discounts at participating businesses, and more. You can make living gifts to support specific projects such as playground construction, vegetation for a native plant gardens, and adoption of a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) structure, or memorial gifts to recognize the passing of someone important in your life.

There are also options for planned giving, workplace giving, and corporate giving. The options are nearly endless. Visit [www.paparksandforests.org/support/ways-to-give](http://www.paparksandforests.org/support/ways-to-give) to learn more about these options.

You can directly support a needs list project. Review the list at: [www.paparksandforests.org/support/parks-forests-needs-list/](http://www.paparksandforests.org/support/parks-forests-needs-list/).

Once you have helped raise or donated $125, use the space below to journal about your experience.

How did you raise the funds? Did you hold a bake sale, ask friends to chip in, or write out a check?

What was your main reason for contributing to PPFF rather than another charity?

Why are Pennsylvania state parks and forests special to you?