



## **\$8.9 million Five Rivers Environmental Education Center completed**

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Delmar, NY According to governor Andrew Cuomo, the new visitor center at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Albany County has been completed. The new Adventure NY initiative has also launched. The program is designed to connect New Yorkers with the state's outdoor destinations. The new \$8.9 million visitor center, funded by NY Works and the State's Environmental Protection Fund, invites visitors to explore Five Rivers' local fields, ponds, forests, birds, and history through interactive displays and exhibits.

"New York is home to world-class parks, campgrounds, outdoor recreation, as well as unparalleled natural beauty in every corner of this great state," governor Cuomo said. "The new facility at Five Rivers and our Adventure NY initiative will help connect New Yorkers and visitors alike to the great outdoors and grow the next generation of environmental stewards."

The Adventure NY initiative, included in the FY 2018 State Budget, is a multi-year outdoor recreation campaign to connect more New York families and visitors to the great outdoors. This initiative includes \$50 million to expand on existing efforts to enhance access to state land and water, rehabilitate and improve campgrounds, upgrade Department of Environmental Conservation recreational facilities, and increase public awareness of all the outdoor recreation opportunities available.

Through the Adventure NY initiative, DEC will make strategic investments to expand access to healthy active outdoor recreation; connect people to nature and the outdoors; protect New York's natural resources; and boost local economies. This initiative will support the completion of more than 75 projects over the next three years, ranging from improvements to youth camps and environmental education centers to new boat launches, duck blinds, and hiking trails.

DEC's Environmental Education Centers highlight Adventure NY's goal to connect visitors to the outdoors with year round activities. More than 70,000 visitors come to Five Rivers Center annually for public, school, and youth programs, and to walk the 10 miles of trails. The new center will be open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday and closed on Sundays and State holidays.

Green features of the new center include green building materials, wood harvested from onsite trees, green roof, solar photovoltaic system, geothermal heating/cooling system, operable windows and roof vents, low flow toilets, LED lighting and motion detection capabilities, and rain water collection and gray water system. The new center offers hands-on exhibits and displays that use the

senses of sight, sound, smell and touch, which are appropriate to persons with special needs. An electric scooter is available for use on accessible trails for persons with limited mobility, as is a brand new “freedom chair” that is specifically designed for trail use. A donated manual wheel chair will be available for use at the facility. Braille, large print and audio format guides for each trail continue to be available for loan.

The new building at Five Rivers replaces the old visitor center, which was originally a cafeteria at the Albany State Office Building Campus. Five Rivers Environmental Education Center is located at 56 Game Farm Rd.

Joined together by an outdoor classroom, the new center is adjacent to the Wendy Repass Suozzo Guided School Program building. It was built by DEC staff with state capital funding and support from the Repass family in collaboration with the Friends of Five Rivers and the Natural Heritage Trust.

Five Rivers Center encourages community involvement and participation and environmental stewardship through first-hand connection to nature. DEC’s long-standing partnership with Friends of Five Rivers is a public/private model that continues to be a showcase for inspiring and training the next generation of environmental leaders. In 1971, a group of local citizens formed Five Rivers Limited, or The Friends of Five Rivers, a not-for-profit citizens support group that helped establish the Environmental Education Center in 1972.

With nearly five million acres of public lands, DEC offers countless opportunities to connect with nature: hiking in the Catskills or Adirondacks; swimming at public beaches; camping in wilderness areas; hunting in the woods; or boating, paddling or fishing on scenic streams and lakes. Many of these lands serve as gateways to large recreation areas, and interest in New York’s outdoors is booming. New York boasts 7,500 lakes, ponds and reservoirs, more than 70,000 miles of rivers and streams, and 975 square miles of saltwater, providing endless opportunities for water-based recreation. Public lands and accessible recreation sites provide low-cost opportunities for children, and adults, to explore the great outdoors.

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center is located at 56 Game Farm Rd.

Department of Environmental Conservation commissioner Basil Seggos said, “June 14 marked the 45th anniversary of Five Rivers Environmental Education Center. With the vision and support of governor Cuomo, this state-of-the-art visitor center will draw new and repeat visitors to Five Rivers to experience the joy of connecting to nature through outdoor activities. It is the perfect place to launch Adventure NY, a multi-year outdoor recreation campaign to connect more New York State families and visitors to the State’s great outdoors. Under Adventure NY, DEC will be making critical upgrades to campgrounds and facilities to better serve people who want to enjoy our outdoors.”

New York State Office of General Services commissioner RoAnn Destito said, “From the children who encounter their first snapping turtle to the birdwatching couple that adds another species to their life list, Five Rivers has been the scene of some remarkable experiences for nature lovers of all

ages for nearly five decades. We at OGS are proud to have played a role in Governor Cuomo's efforts to expose more New Yorkers and tourists to all the environmental wonders our state has to offer, including the OGS Design and Construction team's role in the creation of the new Five Rivers visitor center."

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