



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patrick M. Gallivan

Senator Gallivan Announces DEC Will Improve Safety at Zoar Valley

JIM RANNEY May 26, 2021

| ISSUE: **ZOAR VALLEY, DEC**



Senator Patrick M. Gallivan (R-C-I, Elma) says the Department of Environmental Conservation will increase staff and make a host of improvements to enhance safety at the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area, a 3,014 acre conservation area located in southern Erie and northern Cattaraugus counties.

Zoar Valley is known for its spectacular scenery, deep gorges, cliffs, waterfalls and dense forest. Many visitors frequent the area to hike and enjoy its system of trails, but the area also poses potential risks. DEC worked with local leaders and stakeholders, including families who lost loved ones in accidents at Zoar Valley, to develop a comprehensive plan to improve safety and enhance the visitor experience.

"Thousands of people visit Zoar Valley to enjoy its natural beauty, but the terrain can be dangerous for those who are unfamiliar with the area or stray from the marked trails," Senator Gallivan said. "I am pleased to see the DEC is taking the steps necessary to maintain the trails, ensure they are clearly marked and help warn visitors of potential dangerous conditions. I thank those who worked with the DEC to help make Zoar Valley a safer place."

Improvements implemented or planned include new and enhanced signage to mark trails and to promote the safe use of Zoar Valley. Signs will also warn visitors of particularly dangerous areas and DEC also shortened the Overlook Trail at Valentine Flats to keep visitors safely away from the rim of the gorge. New Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant and accessible trails are also being developed and should be complete in 2022.

Two newly hired Assistant Forest Rangers will begin seasonal posts at Zoar Valley before the start of the summer season. DEC is also hiring a summer intern and a Student Conservation Association Natural Resource Steward. Both will be assigned duties at Zoar Valley.

A new kiosk at the Valentine Flats and Forty Road parking areas will provide additional maps and safety messages. DEC will also issue emergency regulations this summer to restrict access to some areas, including cliff edges and along the South Branch of Cattaraugus Creek.

In addition to physical improvements at the site, DEC enhanced safety messaging and updated maps and information on its Zoar Valley MUA webpage, including Important Tips for Visitors to Zoar Valley MUA and Answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos also announced the agency will install a special memorial to recognize Brooke Walker, a 16-year-old who died in an accident at the Zoar Valley MUA in 2020, and all of those who have died accidentally at Zoar Valley.

Earlier this year, Senator Gallivan requested additional funding to support safety improvements and trail maintenance at the Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area.