



# Rural Futures



NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

**Summer - Fall 2014 ISSUE**

## New York State's Historic Amusement Parks

A roller coaster train sits in a station loaded with 20 riders ready to begin their journey. After departing, they make their way up the lift hill, a regular “clink-clink-clink” sound adding to their anticipation as the train progresses higher. At the top of the 75-foot tall first hill, the train seems to pause before plummeting down. Some riders firmly grip their lap bars as their hearts pound; others raise their arms into the air and whoop with delight. In just a minute or so, the riders are back in the station, smiling after being whisked through the coaster’s figure-eight layout, around a quick little helix, and into a surprise tunnel.

It is the completion of yet another journey for the oldest roller coaster in New York State, the 94-year-old Jack Rabbit. This classic ride is located at the nation’s fourth oldest amusement park: Seabreeze Amusement Park in Rochester.



An early photo of the Jack Rabbit roller coaster at Seabreeze Amusement Park.  
(Photo courtesy of Seabreeze Amusement Park)

Tourism is key to New York State’s economic health, and amusement parks are often a favorite place for families to visit during the summer months. The colorful sights, the enticing aromas of food, and even the delighted screams of riders weave a tapestry of fun showcased by these tourist attractions.

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## Summer 2014 Rural Futures

### NEWS OF INTEREST ABOUT RURAL NEW YORK STATE

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Commission on Rural Resources

The NYS Legislative Commission on  
Rural Resources is a joint bipartisan  
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For many decades, New York's parks have played prominent roles within the history of the amusement park industry and the development of tourism in the State.

Many historical accounts of amusement parks and their innovative rides often focus on the development of urban beachfront attractions like Coney Island or the creation of mega-parks like Disney, Universal, and other companies. Yet, Upstate New York has played an important role in the growth of this industry that is enjoyed by millions.

### Parks in the Adirondacks

In particular, a number of parks in the Adirondacks became trendsetters in the industry. Parks like Santa's Workshop, Storytown USA, Land of Make Believe, Enchanted Forest, and Magic Forest came into existence in the late 1940s and early 1950s.



Visitors to Enchanted Forest Water Safari enjoy a water slide.  
(Photo courtesy of Enchanted Forest Water Safari)

Some, like the Land of Make Believe, no longer exist. Others, like Magic Forest in Lake George and Santa's Workshop in North Pole, New York, retain their original charm.

In particular, Santa's Workshop, with its focus on the Christmas holiday, may very well be the first theme park in the nation, inspiring people like Walt Disney. The other four parks also started as theme parks with storybook tales and nursery rhymes at the core of their character.

*(Continued on page 3)*



The historic Comet roller coaster at The Great Escape.

## Upstate New York Amusement Parks

### Darien Lake Theme Park Resort

Darien Center, NY  
darienlake.com

### Eldridge Park

Elmira, NY  
eldridgepark.us

### Enchanted Forest Water Safari

Old Forge, NY  
watersafari.com

### The Great Escape & Splashwater Kingdom

Lake George, NY  
sixflags.com/greatescape

### Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum

North Tonawanda, NY  
carrouselmuseum.org

### Hoffman's Playland

Latham, NY  
hoffmansplayland.com

### Magic Forest Family Fun Park

Lake George, NY  
magicforestpark.com

### Martin's Fantasy Island

Grand Island, NY  
martinsfantasyisland.com

### Midway State Park

Bemus Point, NY  
nysparks.com/parks/167

### Olcott Beach Carousel Park

Olcott, NY  
olcottbeachcarouselpark.org

### Santa's Workshop

Wilmington, NY  
northpoleny.com

### Seabreeze Amusement Park

Rochester, NY  
seabreeze.com

### Sylvan Beach Amusement Park

Sylvan Beach, NY  
sylvanbeachamusementpark.com

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Along the way, some of these parks adjusted their focus. Enchanted Forest embarked on a new direction in the late 1970s when they began adding water rides, becoming a first-of-its-kind water park in New York State. The park is now known as Enchanted Forest Water Safari.

Storytown USA experienced significant change and additions throughout its history. The original owner, Mr. Charles R. Wood, added themed areas such as Ghost Town and Jungleland. The park expanded as additional rides were added, and it was eventually renamed The Great Escape. This year, the park is celebrating its 60th anniversary. While there are plenty of big thrill rides, such as the Comet, a historic wooden roller coaster relocated from Crystal Beach, Ontario, the park also recognizes the importance of its history. The Great Escape continues to refurbish many of its earliest attractions. Today, there is even a small museum at the park honoring its longest and most recognizable employee. For 50 years, the late Marshal Wild Windy Bill McKay deputized young visitors, leading them through the streets of Ghost Town in search of bank robbers. Thousands of children treasured the badges that he provided to his newly minted deputies.

### Lakeside Amusement Parks

Unsurprisingly, many parks are located near water. Seabreeze offers wonderful views of Lake Ontario. Sylvan Beach Park, with its Galaxi roller coaster and, perhaps most notably, its historic dark ride called Laffland, is located on the shore of Oneida Lake. Elmira's Eldridge Park, an amusement park that disappeared a few decades ago, is located alongside Eldridge Lake. Eldridge Park is currently in the midst of a successful rebirth, with rides being added annually.

### Western New York

Western New York has its share of attractions too. Darien Lake Amusement Park, located in rural Genesee County, boasts the tallest roller coaster in New York State, a 208-foot tall behemoth called Ride of Steel. The park offers a wide range of thrill, family,

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and kiddie rides, along with many entertainment options. For those who want to stay nearby, the park operates a lodge and campground adjacent to the park.

Also in Western New York, there is Midway State Park, a small amusement park located on Chautauqua Lake. It is unique due to its inclusion within New York's collection of State Parks, and it, too, has a long history. Established in 1898, the park was created to be an entertainment venue on a trolley line. This placement, like many amusement parks of its era, was meant to encourage people to ride the trolley on weekends.

### A History of the Rides

Interestingly, many of the rides at these parks – especially the kiddie rides – have their manufacturing origin in New York State. The Allan Herschell Company was founded in

1915 in North Tonawanda, initially producing carousels with hand-carved wooden horses. Later the company expanded its ride offerings to include other kiddie and adult rides, many offering an interactive ride experience. Many of New York's parks operate Herschell creations that continue to thrill their guests. The Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum in North Tonawanda offers patrons the opportunity to learn more, and a kiddieland at the museum lets children experience the history directly.

Even today, many tourists from across the State, and from other states and nations, love to visit New York's amusement parks. As these visitors explore storybook-themed villages, stroll through the Wild West, visit with Santa, and ride on lovingly maintained historic rides, they are continuing a long tradition of tourism in New York State. Some of these parks may be tucked away, a little off the beaten path, but well worth the visit!

## A Fond Farewell to a Beloved Amusement Park

Individual entrepreneurs built and developed most of New York State's amusement parks. Many continue as family businesses.

For 62 years Hoffman's Playland in Latham, New York has provided affordable fun for area families. Sadly, this year will be its last season of operation. As it happens in the amusement park industry, parks do come and go. Many do not last as long as Hoffman's.

Mr. David Hoffman, the current owner, has invested many years into the operation of the park. Throughout the years, he bought and refurbished a number of rides. Many of the rides are unique. Some are quite rare. It is clear that Mr. Hoffman and the park staff put great care into maintaining and operating the rides.

For example, there are the bumper cars, called Lusse Auto Skooters. The company that manufactured them no longer exists, yet the bumper cars at Hoffman's Playland retain their original charm and characteristics. They are nimble, fast, and hard-hitting, enabling riders to fishtail their cars around corners and even spin their opponents 180 degrees. This style of bumper cars, with their sleek lines, can only be found in a handful of parks worldwide.



Rides at Hoffman's Playland, including a Herschell kiddie roller coaster.

The park has always been a family business. Mr. Hoffman's father built the park on what was originally a turkey farm. It was a risky investment. The first ride, a carousel, cost \$14,250 – equivalent to buying a house. With hard work, the risk paid off, and generations of families have visited the park.

It will be sad to lose a special place in New York where so many fond memories were created. Yet, there is hope that the rides, which have been impeccably maintained, will go on to another location for future generations to enjoy.

## Transitions

For the last two years, Caitlin McGowan has served as the Director of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. We are sad to announce that Caitlin is leaving the Commission to pursue a Ph.D. in Political Science at Georgetown University. We wish Caitlin all the best in her future endeavors, and we are grateful for her leadership and dedicated service.



Jillian Kasow

At the same time, we welcome Jillian Kasow as the Commission's new Director. Jillian is an attorney and a graduate of Albany Law School. She received her undergraduate degree from Columbia University. Previously, she served as Assistant Counsel for the New York State Senate Majority Counsel's Office where she was assigned to the

following committees: Energy and Telecommunications; Agriculture; Environmental Conservation; and Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks, and Recreation. Most recently, she worked as an attorney at the law firm of Harris Beach PLLC where she focused on energy and environmental law and contributed to the firm's NY MuniBlog. She also volunteers her time as a member of the NYSBA Environmental Law Section's Executive Committee and as a member of the City of Albany's Sustainability Advisory Committee. Jillian's experience will be invaluable in new her role leading the Commission.

**Farewell and best wishes, Caitlin!**

**Welcome aboard, Jillian!**



## Agriculture in the Budget

*The Young Farmers NY Initiative and Other Agriculture Programs*

Included in the 2014-2015 State Budget are a number of items introduced by the State Senate as part of the "Young Farmers NY Initiative." These provisions are designed to support the strong tradition of family farming by helping young people begin a career in agriculture.

Key components of the plan include the following:

- The creation of a new Beginning Farmer Innovation Grant Fund, which includes \$615,000 to encourage beginning farmers to bring their innovative ideas to fruition as they start-up and expand their farms in New York.
- A Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Program in the amount of \$100,000, which will ease the financial burden faced by recent college graduates.
- Estate Tax reforms that will raise the exemption threshold from \$1 million to \$5.25 million over a three-year period. This will impact thousands of family farms in the State and encourage the preservation of these farms from one generation to the next.
- The budget increases funding for the FFA (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America), to support the education and development of the future leaders of New York's agricultural industry.

Additionally, the budget includes funding to expand the marketing of New York's agricultural products including dairy, apples, berries, and maple. It also includes support for the vital agricultural research and educational programs that help strengthen and expand New York's leading industry.

Finally, the budget includes funding focused on farm safety. For example, continued funding for tractor rollover protection grants will help farmers retrofit their tractors with safety systems that are proven to save lives in the event of a rollover.

## Supporting the Small Farm

Dr. Anusuya Rangarajan is leading an effort to support one of New York State's most vital small business sectors – the small farm. Dr. Rangarajan serves as the Director of the Cornell Small Farms Program, an organization that supports the development and sustainability of small farms throughout New York State.

But what exactly is a small farm?

Small farms are often defined by their earnings or by the amount of land that is farmed. Perhaps the most common current definition is a farm that generates less than \$250,000 annually in gross income.



Dr. Rangarajan takes a somewhat broader approach. “Chances are, if you think you are a small farm – you are,” she said.

It means that the Small Farms Program serves a diverse range of farmers and agricultural organizations. This includes farmers who are well established, as well as many who are just beginning to farm, such as young farmers or others in the midst of a career change. The resources created by the program also prove to be helpful to other agricultural businesses, non-profits, and organizations.

The program's website is an ideal starting point for someone looking for small farm resources. There are links to a wide range of events, training programs, and conferences of interest to farmers. It is also packed with useful research, news items, and publications.

For example, the program's most popular publication is the *Guide to Farming in New York*. It is updated annually and contains a wealth of information on financial issues, zoning, marketing, labor issues, regulatory requirements, and much more.

Social media plays an important role, too. In addition to an active Facebook page and Twitter account, the program also provides a long list of informational and “how-to” videos on their YouTube channel.

One major focus for the program is the Northeast Beginning Farmers Project. The project began in 2006, initially centered on New York State and later expanding outside the State. It provides new and prospective farmers with access to a long list of online, interactive, six-week-long courses that provide extensive insight into starting and building a successful farm.

Another area of activity for the Small Farms Program is helping farms who want to transition from direct marketing to wholesale. Direct marketing certainly has its place on many small farms, but it can be fatiguing and time-consuming. Even on a smaller scale, there are opportunities for efficiency with recent developments related to the creation of food hubs, community supported agriculture agreements, and interest from restaurants in locally-grown food. The program helps small farms navigate a transition to these new markets.

Sustainable energy is another topic of importance to small farms. Energy conservation and investment in renewable energy can result in significant cost savings and a positive environmental impact. The Small Farms Program provides access to hour-long webinars and virtual farm tours to examine these opportunities in more detail.

Along the way, the program has developed partnerships with many different organizations. That certainly includes the various Cooperative Extension offices, where at least one person in each county office assists with issues related to small and beginning farms. Other organizations vital to the mission include New York FarmNet, the New York Farm Viability Institute, and many other government, non-profit, and municipal organizations. Of course, the leadership and insight provided by many small farmers is also of great value to the organization.

Dr. Rangarajan looks forward to increasing the outreach of the Small Farms Program. She is developing ways to encourage women, minority, and veteran ownership of small farms. She also sees the need to create support systems for small farms that have existed for only a handful of years. When a small farm reaches an age of four to seven years old, it often becomes time to carefully review and change its strategy. The Small Farms Program hopes to help small farms during this challenging time frame by developing instructional materials, providing training, assisting with strategic planning, and connecting small farm owners with consultants.

In many ways, small farms are at the heart of New York's agricultural heritage. The Small Farms Program is a great resource that helps keep that heartbeat strong and steady.

*For more information about the Small Farms Program, please visit [smallfarms.cornell.edu](http://smallfarms.cornell.edu). A link on this page provides visitors with the opportunity to sign up for the Small Farms Bi-Monthly Update. Information on the Northeast Beginning Farmers Project can be found at [nebeginningfarmers.org](http://nebeginningfarmers.org).*

## Caterpillar Detective

*The New York State Entomologist*

In recent years, careful outdoor observers likely noticed a significant decrease in the monarch butterfly population in New York State.

These butterflies arrive in the State during one of the longest migrations in the animal kingdom. Annually, monarch butterflies leave their overwinter site in central Mexico to fly north into the United States and Canada. They travel thousands of miles before arriving in New York. It is a journey that takes multiple generations of butterflies to complete. Prior to the onset of winter, yet another generation flies south to complete the cycle.

Deforestation of mountaintops in Mexico where monarchs overwinter, along with a dramatic decline in the number of milkweed plants along their migration routes, are directly impacting monarchs. The butterflies lay their eggs on milkweed plants, and the caterpillars use it as their source of food. Therefore, a decline in milkweed directly translates into a much lower population of the monarch butterflies. While monarch butterflies are not at risk of extinction, this particular migration pattern that brings monarchs to New York is.

The account of this familiar insect serves as an example of the importance of research being conducted by scientists like Dr. Timothy McCabe, who serves as the New York State Entomologist.

Dr. McCabe was an early collector of insects and spiders, often scooping them up with his bare hands before he was even five years old. In his current role, he conducts research focused on Noctuidae, a family of moths found within the order Lepidoptera, the scientific classification for butterflies and moths.

As a trained taxonomist, Dr. McCabe works to identify, classify, and describe the life cycles of species he studies. It is a detailed process that includes careful study of insect behavior, identification of host plants, documentation of feeding schedules, and much more. The process he follows is an organized method for unraveling a complicated mystery, one that requires a wide range of knowledge of plants and insects.

"I guess you could call me the Caterpillar Detective," said Dr. McCabe.

In his role as State Entomologist, he also manages the State's collection of over a million insect specimens. It is an extensive collection dating back to 1835, housed in rows of metal cabinets in an interior room at the New York State Museum. Each cabinet contains wooden drawers with specimens meticulously pinned



Dr. Timothy McCabe, the New York State Entomologist, stands next to a large yellowjacket nest that he collected from a farm in Washington County, New York.

and labeled. They can be as small as a pinhead, or as large as the Cecropia moth, New York's largest insect. Carefully controlled environmental conditions ensure that specimens remain in pristine condition.

Dr. McCabe also spends much of his time responding to insect-related inquiries. When he first started the job in 1976, he received 3,000 calls annually seeking information on the identification and control of insects and spiders. With the increasing availability of information online, those calls have decreased dramatically. Still, he often finds himself reassuring a caller that they are not dealing with a venomous spider, or assisting with the identification of a specimen. On occasion, he has even testified in court or conducted forensic entomology to help law enforcement with a case.

The availability of such an extensive collection, along with the research being conducted by Dr. McCabe and other entomologists like him, can be invaluable. The collection serves as an important historical record of how a species may have changed over the years, or about which species have been found in particular locations within the State.

The research helps land managers understand the impact of their decisions on insect, plant, and other animal populations. It can be especially important when deciding the best time to conduct controlled burns, or even the type of lighting that is used in a region.

It is also vital in the process of pest control. An example comes from the tachinid flies that were introduced as a method to control the invasive gypsy moth population. While the flies did parasitize gypsy moth larvae, the multiple annual broods of the

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## In Pursuit of Durable Communities

*The Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes*

Sustainability is a term often used to describe ideal communities these days, especially in conjunction with economic development, agriculture, and the environment.

Instead, Professor Brett McLeod prefers to use the term *durability*. As an Associate Professor of Forestry and Natural Resources at Paul Smith's College, he researches and teaches this topic at length. Prof. McLeod is pursuing his PhD, and much of his work is focused on studying and building durable communities, characterized as long lasting and resilient to change.

The concept of durable communities is also closely related to his involvement in establishing the Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes (ACWL), a joint effort between Paul Smith's College and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Franklin County. The official kick-off for the ACWL took place in April.



Draft Horse Power Workshop at the Adirondack Rural Skills & Homesteading Festival. (Photo courtesy of the Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes)

The focus of the ACWL is threefold: sustainable agriculture, nature-based tourism, and ecologically-based forest management in the Adirondacks. It is intended to function as a clearinghouse for policy and practice related to working landscapes. Prof. McLeod sees it as an organization that will help groups and communities find the resources they need in the process of building durable communities in New York State's North Country.

Currently, the ACWL is located at Paul Smith's Visitor Interpretive Center, which offers a wide range of educational programs and environmental activities, making it an ideal location. Furthermore, the direct connection to faculty and students at Paul Smith's College provides the Center with access to a broad base of knowledge of working landscapes.

Yet, the ACWL is not designed to function in strictly an academic sense. It is meant to provide practical experience. These include courses, workshops, and events that demonstrate a wide range of skills. Events cover topics including farming and gardening, traditional arts, and community outreach.

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Cecropia moth specimens, New York State's largest insect, included in the insect collection at the New York State Museum.

flies also sought out many other native species of moths and butterflies – devastating their populations.

And certainly, in the case of the monarch butterfly, detailed research has identified the disappearance of milkweed as key to their decline in New York.

These days, Dr. McCabe does not get into the field as often as he would prefer, but he continues to study, collect, and document the life cycle of insects in New York State. And just as he did at five years old, many of those insects are still collected in his own backyard.

*Dr. McCabe works at the New York State Museum in Albany. For more information about the museum, including the option to sign up for email updates, visit the museum's website at [www.nysm.nysed.gov](http://www.nysm.nysed.gov).*

The practical resources provided by the ACWL fit especially well with Prof. McLeod's educational and work background. His experience includes time spent as a professional competitor in timber sports, along with time living and working in rural Alaska and Latin America. "I'm not an academic," said Prof. McLeod, "I'm a pracademic."

Prof. McLeod is concerned that many issues in the Adirondacks are often portrayed from one of two perspectives: either preservation or exploitation of the area's natural resources. Doing so creates an economic versus environmental framework. Yet, these two points of view do not exist in isolation from one another. Instead, the ACWL will promote the interactivity between these two perspectives, and address working landscapes issues on a regional level. Ultimately, the goal is to build robust communities in the Adirondacks.

"This is good for the local economy and good for the environment," said Prof. McLeod.

*For more information about the Adirondack Center for Working Landscapes, contact Prof. Brett McLeod at [bmcleod@paulsmiths.edu](mailto:bmcleod@paulsmiths.edu).*

## USDA Rural Development

*An Interview with the Rural Housing Service Program Directors*

The mission of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development agency includes a commitment to housing in rural areas. The Program Directors of the Rural Housing Service – Ms. Jennifer Jackson for Single Family Housing, and Mr. Michael Bosak for Multi-Family Housing – took time to answer questions about their important roles within USDA Rural Development.

**Question: Please tell us about the USDA's Single Family and Multi-Family Housing Programs and how they work with rural New York Residents.**

**Jennifer Jackson:** USDA's Rural Housing Service provides homeownership opportunities to low and moderate-income applicants through our Section 502 Direct and Guaranteed Loan Programs. There is no down payment required for either of these home purchase programs, and we can often finance some or all of the closing costs. In addition, we have a Section 504 Home Repair Loan and Grant Program available for certain qualifying rural homeowners. Home repair funds are offered at a fixed interest rate of one percent, and can be used to repair, modernize, or make a home handicapped accessible. Grants may be available to applicants age 62 or over to remove health or safety hazards and/or to make a home handicapped accessible, as long as they are not repaying a previous loan.

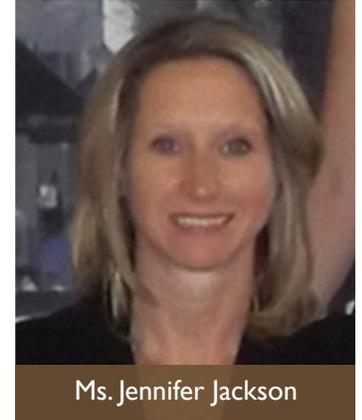
**Michael Bosak:** The Multi-Family Housing Program offers rural rental housing loans to provide affordable multi-family rental housing for very low, low-and-moderate income families – including the elderly and persons with disabilities. This is primarily a direct mortgage program for eligible borrowers to build new, or fix and improve, existing units that are already in the Rural Development Multi-Family Housing Program. This program also provides rental assistance to subsidy-eligible families if and when it is available, and it partners with other organizations including New York State Homes and Community Renewal and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development who sometimes provide additional rental subsidies to improve the affordability of these rental units.

**Q: How is the Rural Housing Service working with New York communities and residents to get the word out?**

**JJ & MB:** Our Community Development Specialists throughout New York work with various state or regional partners and organizations to help maintain a visible presence in the State. We attend informational sessions, home shows, and local fairs. We conduct or attend roundtables, or we will meet with community leaders and elected officials as requested. Press releases, newsletters, and publications like this are also a great



Mr. Michael Bosak



Ms. Jennifer Jackson

way for us to get the message out about the great programs we can offer rural communities. Each of these methods, along with a grassroots word-of-mouth campaign, helps us to reach those who need our assistance most. There is also networking among the various rural rental housing associations, owners, and managers to ensure that the latest information, regulations, and trends are discussed with those professionals.

**Q: What kind of funding was available last year?**

**JJ:** In fiscal year 2013, our Single Family Housing programs assisted more than 2,600 people throughout rural New York, to purchase or repair their homes – infusing over \$295 million into our economy. It is important to note that our programs and assistance are available all year, unlike other USDA Rural Development programs that may have specific time windows or suspense dates. Our staff processes applications year round.

**MB:** In 2013, the Multi-Family Housing Program helped more than 3,800 rural New Yorkers with rental assistance throughout the state, totaling over \$18 million. Our programs also operate on a year round basis, and we are always available for any questions that may come up.

**Q: What other information do you have to share with our readers?**

**JJ:** Your readers should know that each June, USDA celebrates National Home Ownership Month. During that time we raise awareness about the vital role home ownership plays in improving the lives of rural residents, as well as creating economic opportunities throughout New York and the United States.

**MB:** There are a number of ways for people to learn more about our programs, check their eligibility for assistance, or get answers to their questions. We encourage anyone interested in learning more to visit our website and click on Housing, or contact us by phone.

*For more information visit [www.rurdev.usda.gov/nyhome.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/nyhome.html) or call (315) 477-6400 to be connected to the appropriate regional office/program specialist.*

## Adventures in Camping

For many people, summer or fall means it is time to take a trip to a campsite. It is an opportunity to hike in the woods, to visit stunning waterfalls, to relax on a lakeside beach, or to simply enjoy the peaceful sounds of nature. At night, small campfires glow as people gather around them to sing, roast marshmallows, and tell spooky stories. Sharp snapping sounds punctuate the air as campfires send sparks sailing into the sky; tiny pinpricks of light glow briefly and fade into the darkness.

These are but a few of the adventures that can be experienced, and memories waiting to be made, during a camping trip to one of New York's State Parks.

There are 15,000 campsites at 113 state campgrounds, just waiting for visitors to experience a diversity of recreation. There are opportunities to reserve campsites for tents, trailers, and recreational vehicles. In many places, visitors can stay in cabins or furnished cottages – or possibly even a yurt, a circular tent-like structure with a wooden lattice frame and canvas sides.

Finally, one very important note about those memory-making campfires: the Department of Environmental Conservation prohibits bringing firewood into the State unless it has been heat-treated to kill certain invasive species. Similar, untreated



firewood cannot be transported more than 50 miles from its origin. Following these and other rules will help prevent the spread of destructive invasive species such as the Emerald ash borer, the Asian long-horned beetle, and many others.

*The 2014 New York Camping Guide is available online at [nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nysparks/ny\\_campingguide2014](http://nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/nysparks/ny_campingguide2014). To make a reservation for a campsite, please call 1-800-456-CAMP or visit [newyorkstateparks.reserveamerica.com](http://newyorkstateparks.reserveamerica.com). For more information about regulations for moving firewood, please visit [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html).*



Participants wearing t-shirts that say "Sally's Hootenanny" set a world record for the most people singing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." (Photo courtesy of Ms. Lisa Patterson)

## 43 Years and a World Record

### *The Hootenanny at Allegany State Park*

Visitors to Allegany State Park on a Thursday night in the summer are likely to come across a large crowd singing and dancing at the park's amphitheater. But this is no ordinary hootenanny. It is *the* Hootenanny, an event that has taken place nearly every week in the summer for the past four decades.

The origins of the Hootenanny begin 43 years ago when Ms. Sally Marsh, who was working at Allegany State Park, brought her guitar to play music for park guests gathered around a campfire. In the years that followed, the event grew in popularity and was moved to the Amphitheater. Throughout that time, Ms. Marsh has continued to share her love of music and her enthusiasm with hundreds of participants. The Hootenanny occurs regardless of weather conditions. Only on a very few rare occasions has the event not occurred.

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## Summer Means Time for Fun at the Fair

Nearly a million guests visited the nation's oldest state fair over a 12-day period ending on Labor Day, twice setting daily attendance records. Since 1841, the Great New York State Fair has operated nearly every year, save for a pause during World War II when the military used the fairgrounds. It continues to showcase the State's extensive history of innovation in agriculture and other industries.

Visitors experienced a wide range of agricultural exhibits, including the return of the dairy birthing center. There were daily opportunities to participate in Taste NY wine and cheese seminars. A diverse lineup of performers provided entertainment, and midway rides of all shapes and sizes spun, twisted, and delighted riders.

Of course, palates were tempted by the wide array of delicious food.



With that combination, it is no surprise that the New York State Fair recently earned high praise nationally when it was ranked as the fourth best in the country by Yahoo and top of the list by Hopper.com.

This summer also provided avid fairgoers with many opportunities to visit County and Youth Fairs across the State. Throughout the summer, fairs took place from Chautauqua to Washington, and Orange to Clinton Counties – providing entertainment, education, and excitement.

*The New York State Fair took place near Syracuse from August 21 through September 1. For a complete list of fairs in New York State, visit [agriculture.ny.gov/fairshome.html](http://agriculture.ny.gov/fairshome.html) or [nyfairs.org](http://nyfairs.org).*



*(Continued from page 10)*

For many families, it has become an integral part of their summer activities. Many people who attended as children now bring their own children to experience this opportunity to sing, dance, and laugh together.

Those who are looking for proof of the event's popularity need only search among the Guinness World Records. Just last summer, 355 people joined with Ms. Marsh to set a world record for the number of participants singing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." The participants sang 18 verses of the song, with great gusto, to officially lay claim to the record.

Ms. Jo Patterson, a friend of Ms. Marsh and a long-time fan and participant in the Hootenanny, has described the importance of the Hootenanny to the region. "Our region has been blessed with the beauty and bounty of Allegany State Park. Sally Marsh, and her Hootenanny, has for 43 years been a continuous and driving ambassador for Allegany, helping our 'Gem of the Southern Tier' to shine brightly for years to come," said Ms. Patterson.

It's not just a sing-along. It's a time-honored tradition.

*To learn more about Allegany State Park, please visit [nysparks.com/parks/11/details.aspx](http://nysparks.com/parks/11/details.aspx).*

## An Introduction to the New York State Recreation and Park Society

New York State has more than four million acres of land managed by different federal, state, and municipal organizations, open for public recreation. We rank third in the United States for state park lands, totaling 1.4 million acres, and first in the nation for the number of state parks with 1,416 state park sites. Is it any wonder that New Yorkers are proud of their parks?

New York's green spaces provide substantial benefits to public health. We all know the rewards received from regular outdoor exercise. What is becoming more apparent through recent studies are the benefits that green spaces provide to mental health. In 2012, the World Health Organization cited depression as the leading cause of disability worldwide. Indeed, regular visits to local parks will surely continue to play an important role in multi-faceted approaches to maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

The New York State Recreation and Park Society (NYSRPS) works closely with park and recreational staff throughout the State, providing opportunities for continuing education, networking, grant writing assistance, and up-to-date information on the issues that affect park and recreation professionals. NYSRPS' database of vendor members offers professionals the



resources they need to maintain the high quality recreational activities and parklands to which New Yorkers are accustomed.

As NYSRPS celebrates their 75th anniversary, they are honored to partner with park and recreation professionals and vendors, helping them to bring health and wellness to communities throughout the state.

*For more information about the New York State Recreation and Park Society, please visit [NYSRPS.org](http://NYSRPS.org).*

## Legislative Recap: Broadband Expansion



Rural regions in New York State face an array of challenges. At the core of many of these issues is a recurring theme – limited access to broadband. Expanding broadband availability opens the door to innovation in healthcare, education, economic development, job growth, technological advancement and much more.

A bill that was recently passed in the State Senate speeds up the process that certain broadband providers, called Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers (ILECs), go through to access federal loans designated for broadband expansion.

ILECs are regulated by the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC). When they were first established, ILECs were designated as “telephone and telegraph” companies. Because broadband technology had not yet come into existence, it was not listed as a service provided by these companies.

Under current law, the PSC must approve any loans before they are accepted by ILECs. Because the PSC does not regulate broadband, there is a natural conflict with the requirement that the PSC approve these federal loans.

Currently, there are millions of dollars in federal loans available for use in projects that expand broadband availability in rural areas, including programs through the United States Department of Agriculture. Unfortunately, ILECs have difficulty accessing these funds due to restrictions in existing law.

To resolve the issue, this bill clarifies that the federal broadband funds are not subject to the required PSC review.

*Senate Bill 5863-A is sponsored by Senator Catharine Young, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. The bill was also passed in the Assembly and will be sent to the Governor to be signed into law.*

## Legislative Recap: Promoting Precision Agriculture



New York's farmers have a long history of developing and using innovative technology to grow and strengthen the agriculture industry in the State. One such method gaining increasing attention is precision agriculture.

Precision agriculture is a method of managing farmland by measuring a wide range of variables including soil conditions, crop yields, topography, and more. When this data is associated with precise locations within a field, farmers are able to make site-specific adjustments to improve the management of their farmland. Global positioning systems (GPS), specialized sensors, and other technology are important components of precision agriculture.

By using precision agriculture techniques, farmers are able to adjust the amount of seeds, water, soil nutrients, and pesticides to ensure that only the necessary amounts are used in specific areas. Doing so can lower costs, improve

crop yields, and reduce the environmental impact of fertilizer and pesticide runoff.

A bill passed recently in the State Senate addresses this important issue.

The bill requires the Commissioner of Agriculture and Markets to conduct a review, including a cost benefit analysis, of the use and development of precision agriculture in New York State. The New York State Broadband Office would also be involved in the assessment to include recommendations that address shortcomings in rural broadband access, likely one of the biggest obstacles to wider implementation of precision agriculture.

*Senate Bill 6543-B is sponsored by Senator Catharine Young, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. The bill was also passed in the Assembly and will be sent to the Governor to be signed into law.*

### It's Time to Apply - USDA's Rural Community Development Initiative

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced they are seeking applications for funding through the Rural Community Development Initiative. It is designed to help rural areas strengthen and develop projects related to housing, community facilities, and economic development.

The funding will be given to intermediary organizations that provide financial and technical assistance to qualified recipients. The intermediary organization must provide

matching funds. Recipients can include low-income rural communities, federally recognized tribes, or non-profit community-based and development organizations.

Applications are due November 12, 2014.

For more information, please visit [www.rurdev.usda.gov/HAD-RCDI\\_Grants.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/HAD-RCDI_Grants.html).

## Legislative Recap: Improving Access to Telehealth and Telemedicine

Telehealth and telemedicine have the potential to transform access to healthcare throughout the State, particularly in rural areas where access and availability remain prominent concerns. These services are additional resources that provide patients with access to medical expertise otherwise not available. They function as complementary services to in-person care.

A bill passed recently in the State Senate and Assembly would improve access to telehealth and telemedicine services for residents throughout the State.

The bill provides patients with the ability to utilize telehealth and telemedicine

technologies for services that would otherwise be covered if such services were administered in-person.

As healthcare delivery continues to change with new state and federal requirements, it is vital that the State work with providers to create flexible, innovative models that will improve patient care and maintain quality services throughout New York.

By expanding options for telehealth and telemedicine services, this bill will provide patients with more opportunities to seek the care they need much closer to home. Patients will have greater access to a wide range of healthcare providers and services. They are also less likely to

face costly hospitalization, experience better continuity of care, and remain more closely connected to their existing support systems. As demonstrated in recent studies, telehealth and telemedicine services result in better outcomes for patients, and these services provide for greater peace of mind.

*Senate Bill 7852 is sponsored by Senator Catharine Young, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. The Assembly version of this bill is sponsored by the Commission's Co-Chair, Assemblywoman Addie Russell. The bill will be sent to the Governor to be signed into law.*

## Legislative Recap: Virtual Learning

For many students in New York State, the classroom experience is being transformed through the implementation of virtual learning initiatives.

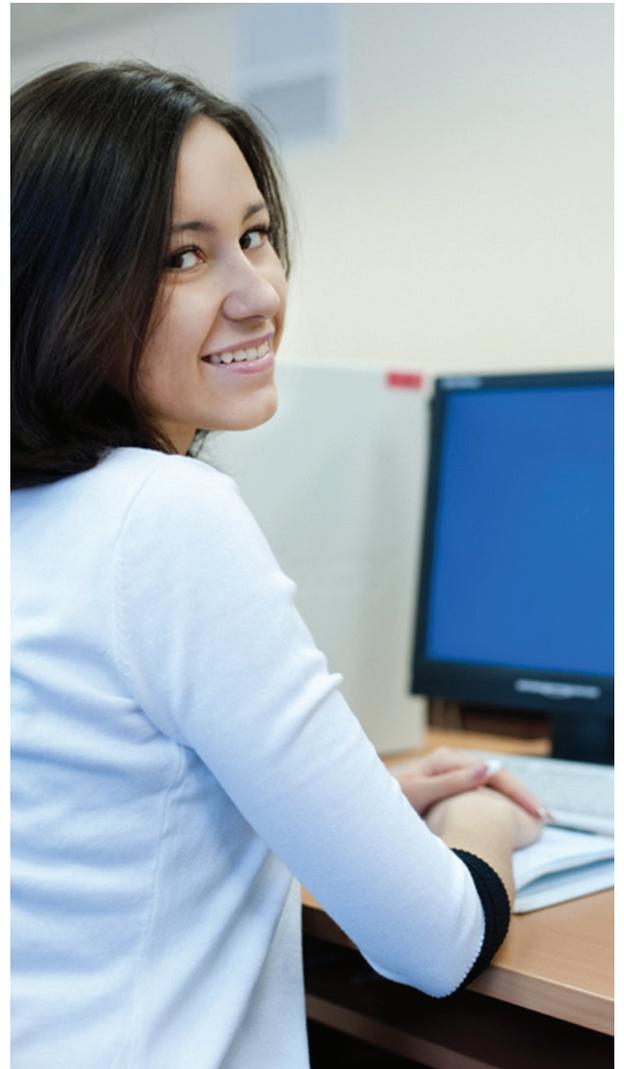
To encourage the development of these educational resources, a bill passed recently in the State Senate calls for the creation of a statewide online and blended learning program. It directs the Commissioner of Education to establish an Online Learning Advisory Council and to make recommendations regarding the development and delivery of such services.

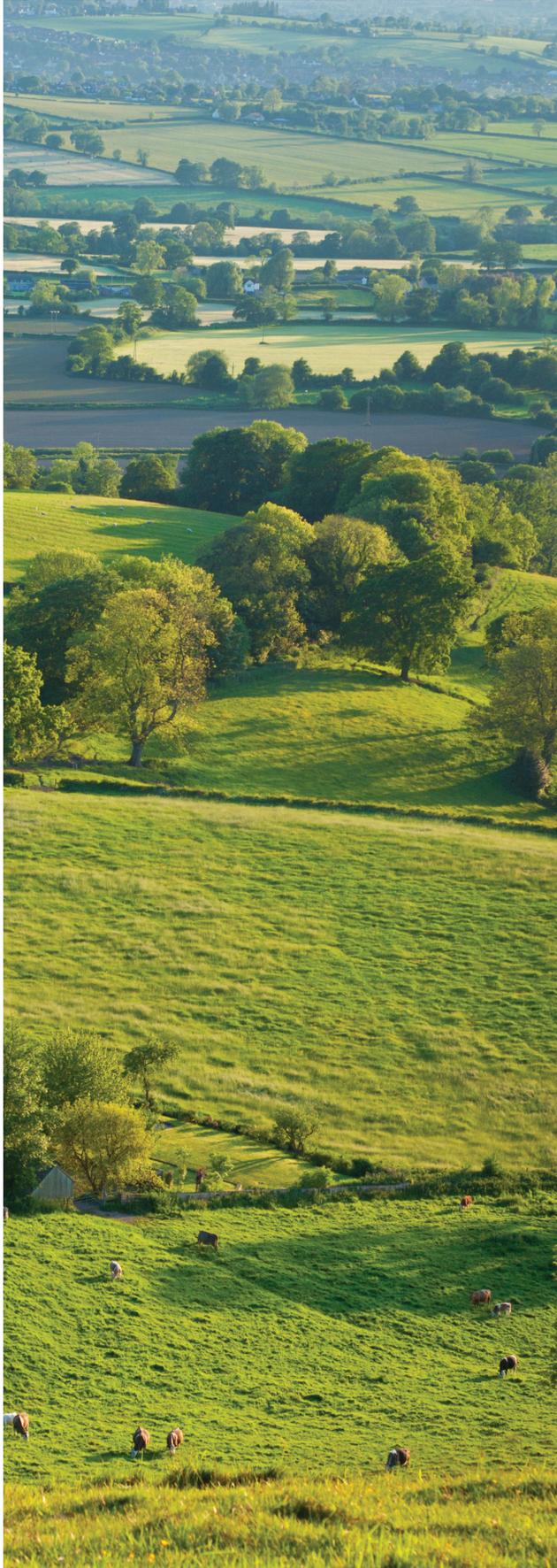
Virtual learning programs include online courses as well as blended learning initiatives that combine both a physical location with online resources. They provide schools with cost-effective opportunities to offer students innovative coursework and educational resources otherwise not available. Examples include a wide range of advanced placement and other college preparatory classes, often conducted in cooperation with other school districts within the State.

Another example is the concept of the “flipped classroom.” It is a blended learning technique where the typical roles of lectures and homework are reversed. Before arriving in the classroom, students watch video lectures that were recorded by their teachers. The discussion and application of the lecture material takes place in the classroom, rather than as a traditional homework assignment.

While a number of schools are using virtual learning systems to provide students with access to unique courses and instruction, access to these tools need to be provided statewide.

*Senate Bill 5509-C is sponsored by Senator Catharine Young, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. The bill was also passed in the Assembly and will be sent to the Governor to be signed into law.*





## Legislative Recap: Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) throughout New York are on the front lines of protecting the State's natural resources, helping landowners, preventing floods, fighting the spread of invasive species, and educating the public. Two bills, recently passed in the State Senate and Assembly, provide SWCDs with additional tools they need to accomplish their ambitious mission.

### Conservation Education

Conservation education is already a priority for SWCDs because of its importance in protecting New York State's natural resources. The first bill memorializes SWCDs' educational role in maintaining healthy lands and waterways. Doing so ensures accessibility to clean drinking water, fresh and healthy locally-grown produce, and lands and waterways used for recreation and tourism. Educational examples include classroom education for elementary and high school students, conservation field days, public outreach efforts, courses for landowners, and stormwater management programs for contractors and municipalities. By making educational programming an official function of SWCDs, this bill takes a proactive approach toward strengthening natural resource conservation.

### Fighting Invasive Species

Protecting New York's land and waterways from invasive species is a growing priority, and the second bill includes this critical role within the mission of SWCDs. The impact of invasive species can be devastating. They displace or destroy native species, contaminate land and waterways, and cause economic difficulties for farmers, landowners, and communities. SWCDs have the technical, educational, and administrative capability to implement programs that help in the prevention, identification, remediation, control, and eradication of invasive species. Therefore, providing SWCDs with the statutory authority to do so only makes sense.

*Senate Bills 4356-A and 4396-A are sponsored by Senator Catharine Young, Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources. The Assembly versions of these bills are sponsored by the Commission's Co-Chair, Assemblywoman Addie Russell. The bills were recently signed into law by the Governor.*



## SAVE THE DATES!



 **NYS Rural Housing Coalition, Inc.**  
**35th Annual Conference**  
**September 15-17, 2014**  
Lake Ontario Conference Center, Oswego, NY  
[ruralhousing.org/events](http://ruralhousing.org/events)

 **The Adirondack Rural Skills & Homesteading Festival**  
**September 27, 2014**  
Paul Smiths Visitor Interpretive Center  
Paul Smiths, NY  
[adirondackvic.org](http://adirondackvic.org)

 **New York State Association for Rural Health**  
**13th Annual Conference**  
**September 18-19, 2014**  
The Craftsman Inn & Conference Center, Fayetteville, NY  
[nysarh.org](http://nysarh.org)

 **New York Farm Bureau State Annual Meeting**  
**December 9-11, 2014**  
Radisson Hotel  
Rochester, NY  
[nyfb.org](http://nyfb.org)

**If you have any suggestions for upcoming editions,  
Please email the Commission at [RURALRES@NYSENATE.GOV](mailto:RURALRES@NYSENATE.GOV)**