



News from Livingston County, NY

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Contact: Julie Barry, Grants and Public Information Coordinator

Phone: 585-243-7051

Email: jbarry@co.livingston.ny.us

Governor Signs Outdoor Rx Act

Mount Morris, NY, November 16, 2020 — On November 11, 2020, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the Outdoor Rx Act, which requires the New York State Division of Veterans' Services (DVS) to review issues relating to veterans' abilities to access state parks, lands, and facilities. According to the Governor's [website](#), the Outdoor Rx Act "is the first step in identifying how New York State can better address the needs of veterans adjusting back to civilian life through outdoor activity." The legislation takes effect immediately.

Under the Act, the Director of DVS, in consultation with the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Department of Health (DOH) and Office of Mental Health (OMH) will review:

- The barriers to provide veterans with increased access to state lands and nature-based therapies. This includes transportation, handicap accessibility, cultural and mental health stigmas;
- Current state policies regarding free and discounted access to state parks, lands and recreational facilities by veterans and their families;
- Opportunities to formalize coordination between DVS, other state agencies and partner organizations;
- State lands, based on veterans' demographics, including service-connected disabled veterans which should be prioritized for access;
- Following consultation with appropriate veterans' outdoor recreation groups, recommendations to reduce barriers and better facilitate the use of state owned and managed lands for access and nature-based therapy; and
- Estimated costs of implementing recommendations and expanding access and benefits.

Jason Skinner, Livingston County's Director of Veteran Services, has been tapped to serve as co-chair of the committee created to oversee the above process. He stated, "On behalf of

Livingston County, I would like to thank the Governor for passing this crucial piece of legislation. I am truly honored to play an integral role in this effort. The Outdoor Rx Act will allow key partners to come together and develop a plan that connects veterans to outdoor-based therapies. The goal is to increase veterans' access to outdoor activities and nature as a way to promote healing and healthy living."

For more information on the Outdoor Rx Act, please contact the Livingston County Veteran Services at 585-243-7960.

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