

# Recreation



The Inland Bays and their watersheds are a major provider of tourist-based income and recreation. Many thousands of visitors enjoy going to the beach, fishing, pleasure boating, clamming, crabbing, hunting, and other recreational pursuits. The adjacent public lands are used for hiking, hunting, wildlife watching, and other outdoor activities, as well as a means of gaining access to the bays themselves. The Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin contains four state parks, two state wildlife areas, two state fishing areas, eight public boat launches, and one publicly-owned marina.



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Studies have shown that the beaches and outdoor recreation are the primary reasons tourists visit coastal Sussex County. The four state parks in the area — Delaware Seashore, Fenwick Island, Holts Landing, and Cape Henlopen — comprise about 8,100 acres. This is approximately 43% of the acreage in Delaware's state park system, taking in more than 14 miles of Delaware's Atlantic coast. Cape Henlopen and Delaware Seashore are the two most visited parks in the state park system. Most of the visitors come from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Castle County.



Recreation and tourism in the Inland Bays area accounts for more than \$250 million a year.

The recreation and tourism that surround Delaware's Inland Bays account for more than \$250 million annually. Decline in water quality can threaten the area's tourism industry, as fish stocks become depleted, odors from decaying sea lettuce fill the air, and threats of *Pfiesteria* loom. Improving the water quality of the Inland Bays is vital to maintaining the county's booming tourism industry and recreation along Delaware's beaches.

## COMMUNITY-BASED RECREATION

In addition to the state recreation areas and beaches that draw tourists to the Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin, the basin's year-round residents have a need for close-to-home recreational opportunities. While Sussex County government provides no recreation services or facilities for its residents, several municipalities within the basin operate parks that help to meet the recreation needs of their residents.

Within the Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin are more than 100 acres of municipal parkland,



Delaware Seashore (shown above) and Cape Henlopen are the two most visited parks in Delaware's state park system. Most visitors come from Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New Castle County.

providing playgrounds, picnic areas, ball fields, and other recreational amenities to residents. Though these parks provide recreational opportunities for residents, they do not meet all of the basin's community recreational needs.

In Delaware's 1996 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), several needs were consistently reflected throughout the state. These include historic and nature education; programs for people with disabilities, teens, and seniors; public swimming pools; playgrounds and tot lots; trails and pathways; and camping areas. In addition to these statewide needs, residents of the Inland Bays/Atlantic Ocean Basin expressed a need for ball fields, fishing and boating access, and organized sports leagues.

The SCORP research showed that Sussex County residents have the greatest need for outdoor recreation facilities and programs in the state. One of the issues identified in the 1996 SCORP is the lack of recreational facilities available to Sussex County residents. At this time, Sussex County government has no plans to begin providing these services for its residents.



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*"Everything we need to live comes from Mother Earth, including our humanity, happiness, and joy. If we take care of the blanket of life, she will continue to provide and care for us. But if we destroy it and our connection to her, we will lose our humanity in the process."*

— Charles Clark IV  
Assistant Chief, Nanticoke Indian Tribe