



Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Monday, Dec. 18, 2023

RHODE ISLANDERS INVITED TO KICK OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH #FIRSTDAYHIKE AT GEORGE WASHINGTON STATE CAMPGROUND

PROVIDENCE, RI – The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) invites Rhode Islanders to kick off 2024 and celebrate the New Year by joining a #FirstDayHike at [George Washington State Campground](#) in Chepachet on Monday, Jan. 1, 2024. First Day Hikes are part of a nationwide initiative led by [America's State Parks](#) to encourage people to get outdoors. Nearly 1,000 visitors attended DEM's [2023 First Day Hike at Fort Wetherill State Park in Jamestown](#), an attendance record. 2024's hike, the eighth such event DEM has hosted, is set for 10 AM to 1 PM.



George Washington State Campground in Chepachet.

"DEM is excited to once again ring in the New Year outdoors at one of Rhode Island's beautiful properties and is a great opportunity to see scenic George Washington State Campground, especially for those who have never visited before," said DEM Director Terry Gray. "First Day Hikes are part of [DEM's Strategic Plan](#) to promote our state's natural resources by encouraging people to visit RI's natural areas and state parks as part of an active and healthy lifestyle. This popular annual event also serves as an occasion to communicate DEM's mission, programs, and goals to engage with the public we serve."

DEM will be offering commemorative pins to participants. Divisions of [DEM's Natural Resources Bureau](#) will be on hand offering information about agency programs and services. Leashed dogs are allowed if the leash is no longer than six feet. Local Girl Scout Troops will be selling refreshments and hot chocolate. Children must be always accompanied by an adult. The 1.5-mile walk is on uneven ground. The walk will be held rain or shine, so DEM encourages participants to dress accordingly. Although [fluorescent orange clothing](#) is not required for the guided hike since it is within the state campground, [with hunting season in full swing](#), DEM recommends that attendees wear [200 square inches](#) (hat or vest) in case they plan on extending their hike into the surrounding management area.

Located within the 4,000-acre George Washington Management Area and on the shores of Bowdish Reservoir, the overnight 100-acre George Washington Memorial Camping Area was first owned by the U.S. Government in the 1930's and developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The State acquired the property in 1968 and it is now a seasonal, overnight camping facility with nearly 80 well-spaced gravel sites suitable for tents, trailers, and RV's and four primitive cabins offering a multitude of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.

First Day Hikes began more than three decades ago, at the Blue Hills Reservation state park in Massachusetts in 1992. Since 2012, all 50 states have participated. America's State Parks hopes to make 2024 a record-breaking year as the annual event approaches major milestones, including inching closer to 1 million miles hiked and 500,000 participants in the program's history.

For more information on the First Day Hike, please visit the [RI State Parks website](#). For information on DEM programs and initiatives, visit www.riparks.ri.gov/hikes. Follow RI State Parks on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ristateparks or Instagram (@ristateparks).

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