

Jones Beach visitors surge

State park was 2nd-hottest for crowds in 2017

BY JOAN GRALLA
joan.gralla@newsday.com

Last summer's weather might not have been perfect for sun-lovers, but the outdoors in 2017 drew another record number of visitors to New York State Parks.

Especially on Long Island. Its 31 state parks were visited by about 805,000 more people in 2017 than the year before, according to the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

All of the rest of the state's parks and historic sites only saw attendance climb by just under 154,000.

The grand total of visitors rose to 71.5 million, up from 70.6 million last year, according to Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, though the busy summer months saw some inclement weather.

Cuomo attributed the record year to his \$900 million, 10-year-plan to reverse decades of neglect.

So far, the state parks department has undertaken more than 700 upgrades. "We have modernized the oldest state park system in the nation by making strategic investments that help entice more and more visitors to this great state to make memories with family and friends, while experiencing the natural beauty found in every New York community," Cuomo said in a recent statement.

Between 2011, when he took office, and 2017, attendance at all 180 state parks and 35 historic sites climbed 13.6 million — a 23 percent rise, he said.

On Long Island, Wantagh's

Jones Beach State Park again was the state's second-most visited park, trailing only Niagara Falls, the data showed.

More than 9.4 million people marveled at Niagara Falls, a 1 percent decline.

Jones Beach drew 5.95 million people, a 1 percent increase.

Popular concerts helped offset the rain and clouds.

"It was a great lineup; it looks like Jones Beach attendance would have been lower except for the fact that we had a great season at Northwell Health at the Jones Beach Theater," said George Gorman, state parks deputy regional director for Long Island.

Jones Beach also is undergoing \$65 million in renovations; one of the latest improvements is the \$18 million Boardwalk Café, scheduled to open in early summer.

Last summer's showers did clip attendance at some Long Island state parks, officials said.

Brentwood State Park suffered the biggest drop, down 24 percent, to 743,853.

Attendance slid 5 percent at Babylon's Robert Moses State Park, to just over 4 million.

Eight percent fewer people came to Captree State Park, in Babylon and Islip, and Farmingdale's Bethpage State Park.

The total for Captree was 1.3 million; Bethpage's was 757,651.

Still, some parks did achieve strong gains.

Smithtown's Sunken Meadow State Park saw attendance spike 23 percent, to nearly 3.6 million. Montauk Point State Park attracted 19 percent more visitors, hitting just under 1.2 million. East Islip's Heckscher State Park drew about 1.07 million people, up 6 percent.

"We experienced a rainy peak season last year, which makes these record-breaking numbers all the more impressive," Randy Simons, a parks spokesman, said by email.

A little off the top

State Police respond Monday after the top of a truck struck an overpass on the southbound Meadowbrook State Parkway in Uniondale.



JIM STAUBITZER

Plan to withhold Suffolk election aide's pay delayed

BY RICK BRAND
rick.brand@newsday.com

Suffolk Comptroller John Kennedy has put off plans to withhold election worker Marisol Martinez's pay over alleged violations of the county nepotism law, after the county attorney warned Kennedy may be pre-empted under state election law.

Kennedy said he received a con-

fidential legal opinion from County Attorney Dennis Brown saying the county legislature cannot do anything to keep board personnel from conducting elections, a state function. Brown also told Kennedy he would have to sue to stop or recoup payments.

The \$92,000-a-year promotion for Martinez, sister-in-law of Legis. Monica Martinez (D-Brentwood), to a \$138,900-a-year

job as Hispanic outreach coordinator was disclosed earlier this month.

Election officials did not initially put forward a required nepotism resolution. The measures allow lawmakers to authorize hiring and promotions of relatives of elected officials and county managers in non-Civil Service jobs.

The elections board also

failed get legislative approval when Marisol Martinez first was hired as a \$45,994-a-year assistant elections clerk three years ago. Kennedy had said he would withhold that salary until the county legislature votes to authorize Martinez's hiring and promotion.

The comptroller said he is reviewing Brown's opinion and in the meantime will delay action.

Newsday

Long Island Office
235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY
11747-4250

On the Web
For a list of Newsday departments, their emails and telephone numbers, go to newsday.com/contact

For Reprints, Rights & Permissions
NewsdayReprints.com

Home Delivery
800-NEWSDAY
(800-639-7329)

Newsroom 631-843-2700

Place an Ad/Change an Ad
631-843-AD (7653)

Letters to the Editor
Email letters@newsday.com

CORRECTIONS

Newsday strives for the highest level of accuracy and fairness and is committed to promptly correcting errors. Readers can report problems or concerns about content in the paper or on Newsday.com by visiting newsday.com/corrections, calling 631-843-2700 or writing to 235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY 11747, Attention: Corrections.

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1907 President Theodore Roosevelt signed an immigration act which excluded "idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons, epileptics, insane persons" from being admitted to the United States.
1938 Anthony Eden resigned as British foreign secretary following Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's decision to negotiate with Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.
1962 Astronaut John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth as he flew aboard Project Mercury's Friendship 7 spacecraft, which circled the globe three times in a flight lasting 4 hours, 55 minutes and 23 seconds before splashing down safely in the Atlantic Ocean 800 miles southeast of Bermuda.

1987 A bomb left by Unabomber Ted Kaczynski exploded behind a computer store in Salt Lake City, seriously injuring store owner Gary Wright.

2003 A fire sparked by pyrotechnics broke out during a concert by the group Great White at The Station nightclub in West Warwick, Rhode Island, killing 100 people and injuring about 200 others.