

## Alcohol Use in State Parks and Forests

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### Issue

Are alcoholic beverages allowed in Connecticut state parks and forests?

### Summary

Alcoholic beverages are allowed in many state parks and forests, but not on beaches, boardwalks, or other posted locations. The authority to ban alcoholic beverages at these locations derives from a state law that authorizes the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) commissioner to ban possessing or consuming alcoholic beverages on lands under his control, which includes parks and forests ([CGS § 23-4](#)). State regulations also allow the commissioner to institute a temporary ban for a specific area to protect public safety.

Alcohol possession and consumption is currently banned at 23 state park or forest areas, which include three parks with temporary bans. For areas where alcohol use is allowed, there are specific restrictions such as beer may not be in containers greater than one liter.

Failing to abide by the state's state park alcohol use requirements is an [infraction](#), punishable by a \$75 fine.

### Parks and Forests with Alcohol Bans

The commissioner prohibits alcohol use at state parks and forests, including campgrounds, primarily through regulations. Current regulations prohibit alcohol use at the following 20 parks and forests:

1. Bigelow Hollow State Park;
2. Black Rock State Park and campground;

3. Burr Pond State Park;
4. Eagleville Dam;
5. Hopeville Pond State Park and campground;
6. Housatonic Meadows State Park and campground;
7. Indian Well State Park;
8. Kent Falls State Park;
9. Kettletown State Park and campground;
10. Macedonia Brook State Park and campground;
11. Mansfield Hollow State Park;
12. Mashamoquet Brook State Park, East Killingly Pond area;
13. Miller's Pond State Park;
14. Nepaug State Forest, which includes Satan's Kingdom state recreational area;
15. Osbornedale State Park;
16. Pachaug State Forest, Mt. Misery and Green Falls campgrounds;
17. Scantic River State Park;
18. Silver Sands State Park;
19. Squantz Pond State Park; and
20. Sherwood Island State Park ([Conn. Agencies Regs. § 23-4-1\(e\)\(1\)](#)).

The regulations also allow the commissioner to impose temporary bans, for up to 90 days, on the possession and consumption of alcohol at specific recreation areas if the commissioner determines that the alcohol use is creating public safety issues [Conn. Agencies Regs. § 23-4-1\(e\)\(2\)\(D\)](#).

According to DEEP, three such bans are currently in place, through October 1, 2018: at Gardner Lake State Park, Lake Waramaug State Park, and Quaddick Lake State Park.

#### ***History of State Park Alcohol Ban***

By October 1999, the Department of Environmental Protection (now DEEP) commissioner had banned alcohol use in 13 state parks under the statutory authority to maintain order, safety, and sanitation in the lands under the commissioner's control.

According to OLR report [2002-R-0604](#), he expanded the ban in early 2000 to generally apply to all state parks, forests, and campgrounds because of alcohol related incidents on state land.

During the 2001 session, the legislature passed [PA 01-150](#) that, among other things, allows the commissioner to ban alcohol use in lands under his control, but requires adopting a regulation to do so for lands without a ban in place as of October 1, 1999. In effect, this eliminated the 2000 ban, except at the 13 parks where alcohol was previously banned.

Since 2001, regulations have been adopted that prohibit alcohol use at the 13 parks and campgrounds with a ban existing in October 1999 and at seven additional parks and forests.

## Other Alcohol Restrictions

In parks and forests where alcohol use is allowed, the following rules apply:

1. alcohol is prohibited on beaches, boardwalks, or other posted areas;
2. beer containers may not exceed one liter in size; and
3. alcohol sales must be authorized by the commissioner in writing ([Conn. Agencies Regs. § 23-4-1\(e\)\(2\)](#)).

Additional requirements apply to individuals who rent facilities at certain state parks for an event and intend to provide alcoholic beverages, but do not retain a caterer to provide service. The individuals must (1) employ a bartender or other server to serve the alcoholic beverages and (2) provide the commissioner with proof of liquor liability insurance. Guests may not bring alcoholic beverages into certain specified buildings. These requirements apply to Rocky Neck, Fort Trumbull, and Putnam Memorial state parks ([Conn. Agencies Regs. § 23-4-21](#)).

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