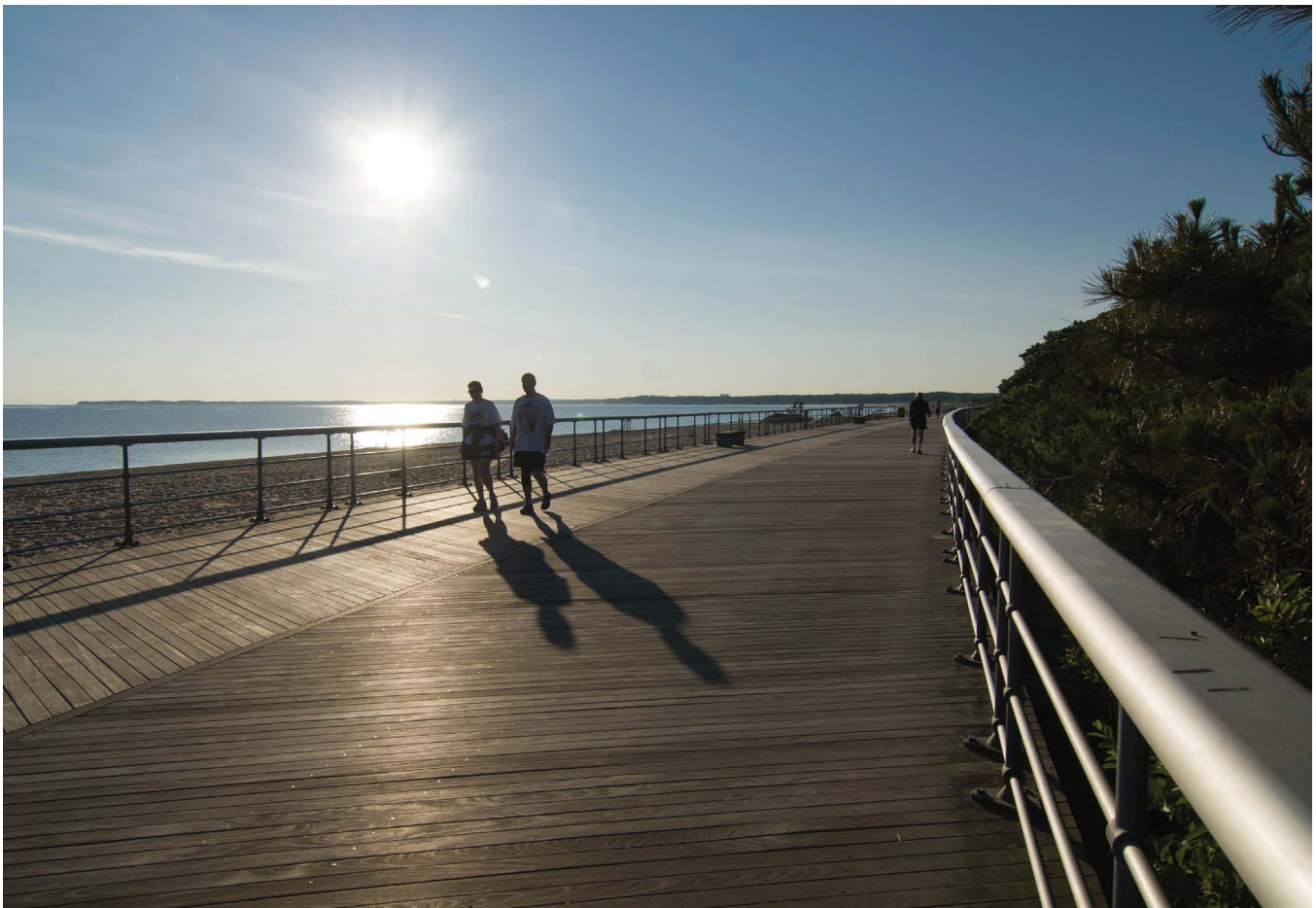


# The Pulse of Parks:

## A look at who's visiting Sunken Meadow State Park

A REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE'S ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK STATE PARKS WINTER 2016



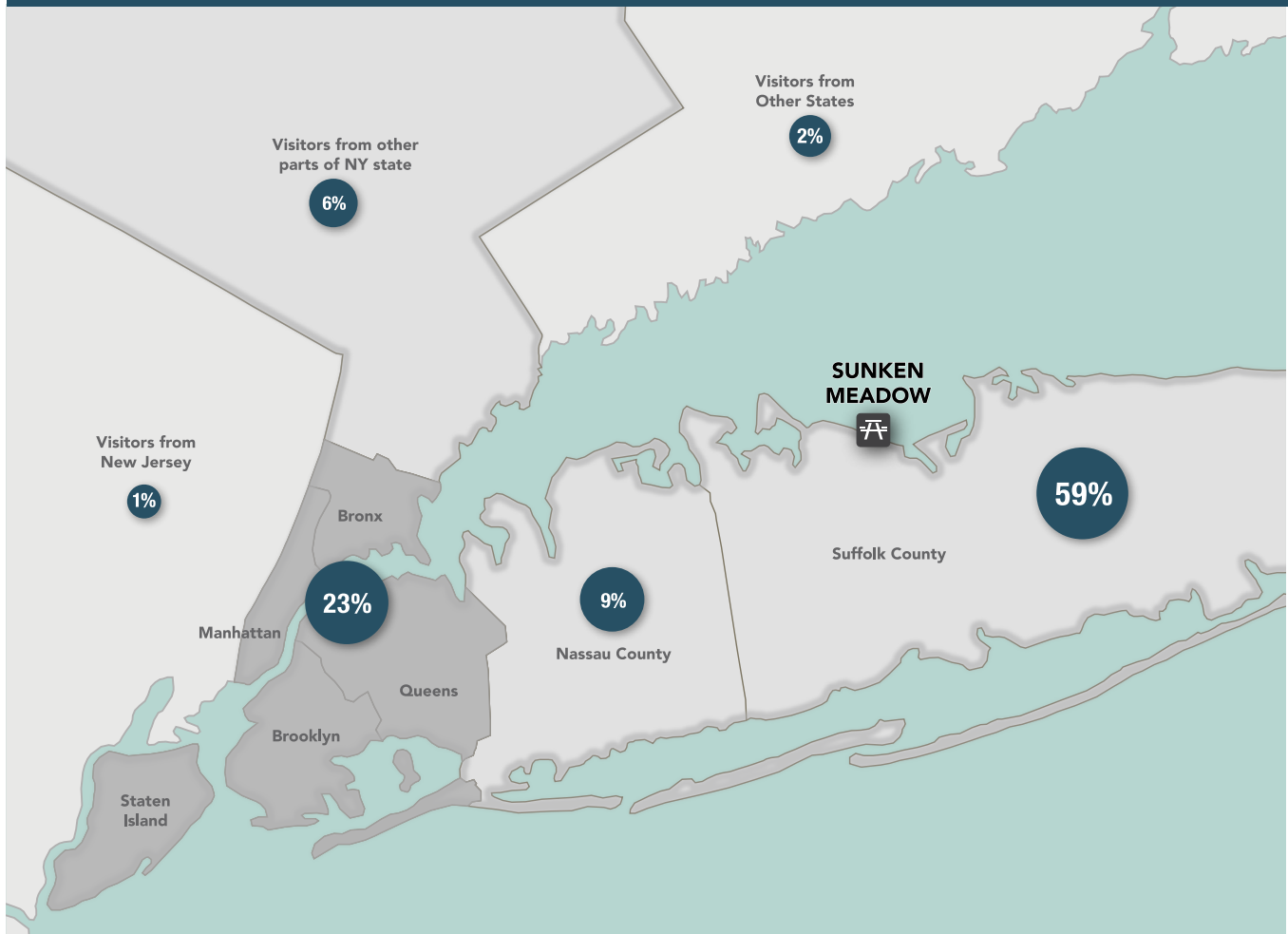
**"We love soaking  
up the clean  
air and water.  
We always go  
home completely  
relaxed."**

### A backyard park on the Long Island Sound

Loved as an expansive "backyard" where millions of Long Island residents gather with friends and family, Sunken Meadow State Park offers a welcoming beach, six miles of walking and hiking trails, and a lengthy boardwalk overlooking the beautiful Long Island Sound. Bustling week-round, the park becomes a celebration of cultural diversity on weekends, as visitors travel from Long Island and New York City for picnics and get-togethers.

A favorite for all ages, Sunken Meadow offers visitors the chance to picnic under the trees, swim in the calm waters of the Sound, or play soccer, softball, or golf with friends. Read on for insights about the park's diverse users, offerings, and regional economic impact.

## Sunken Meadow visitors by origin



### Visitors come from Long Island and beyond

Sunken Meadow attracts nearly 2.5 million visitors yearly, with about 70 percent of all people arriving from Long Island. Across the board, these local visitors note the park's beauty and its proximity for why they visit again and again.

About a quarter of all visitors, or 414,000 people, arrive from one of New York City's five boroughs, enjoying a much-needed and convenient escape from city life, particularly on weekends.



---

**"Never disappoints...Sunken Meadow has something for everyone."**

---

---

**"The kids love it here and they always have fun"**

---

---

**"We will always return here, we love it!"**

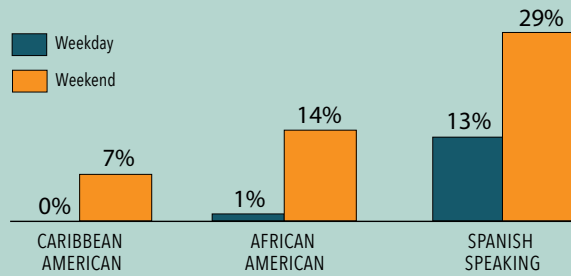
---

---

**"The beach is great and the boardwalk is the best we've seen."**

---

## Sunken Meadow attracts more diverse visitors on the weekend



## Oasis of calm in a metropolitan area

Sunken Meadow’s convenience draws many “repeat customers.” On average, patrons visit 36 times per year, praising the park as an “oasis” of calm that’s convenient to the city. The park’s collection of unique offerings, such as six miles of walking/hiking trails and water sports, plus scenic venues for parties and gatherings, are also top draws.

## A park on the rise

Recognizing their importance to all New Yorkers, Governor Cuomo and the state legislature have taken strong steps to increase funding to repair, improve, and enhance state parks. At Sunken Meadow State Park, these improvements have included upgrades to the golf course, new restroom amenities (with additional family-friendly restrooms), improved lifeguard amenities, new playground units, and the installation of environmental classrooms and displays. All together, these investments in Sunken Meadow have improved safety and the visitor experience at the popular park. Park Manager Jeff Mason welcomes the changes, noting that the public is “ecstatic” about these improvements.



## Diversity makes Sunken Meadow thrive

Sunken Meadow’s many outdoor offerings bring scores of visitors from all walks of life—a factor that is key to the park’s success. While most visitors self-identified as white, almost 30 percent self-identified as other races—mainly Hispanic, but also African-American, Italian-American, Asian-American, and others.

Weekends, especially, see an increase in the vibrant diversity of visitors to Sunken Meadow. Notably, Spanish-speaking visitors more than doubled on weekends (13 percent up to 29 percent), while the number of African-American visitors expanded from one percent on weekdays to fourteen percent on Saturday and Sunday. These weekend visitors are key to success for Sunken Meadow, which is busy on weekdays and bustling on weekends.



Photo: Save the Sound

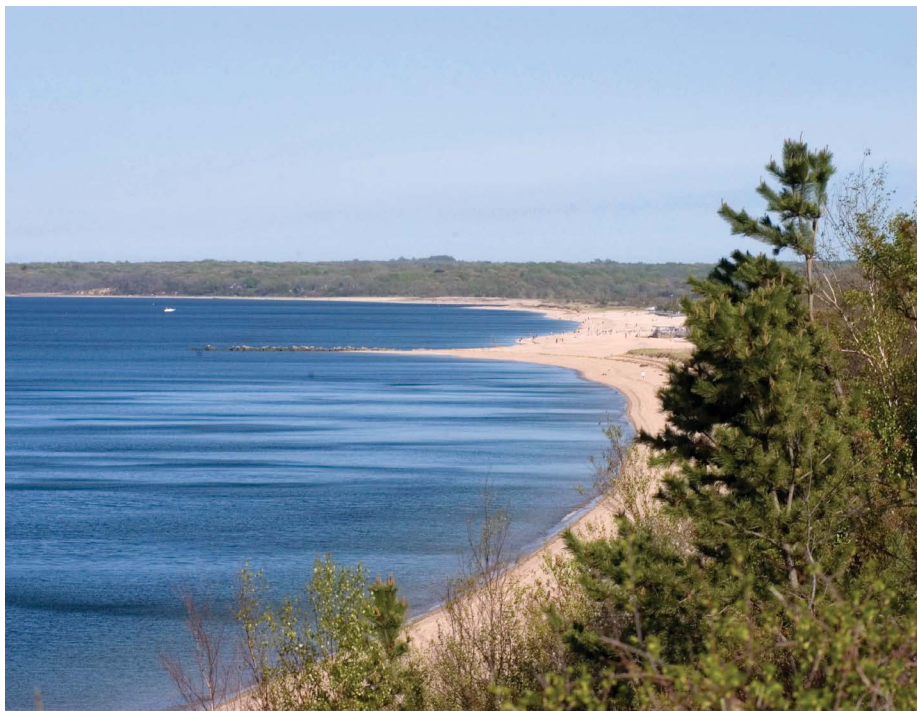
## A multi-million dollar impact

Visitors to Sunken Meadow have an economic impact on the region and the state of New York. Many people stop to make retail purchases or to buy food or drinks en route to or from the park at businesses in Commack, Bay Shore, Northport, Cold Spring Harbor or Kings Park. Stores in New York City also see an impact from Sunken Meadow.

In total, regional economic impact from park visitors is about \$16.4 million. However, this number only accounts for retail—not jobs created by the park itself or other economic impacts—meaning the true impact from Sunken Meadow is still higher.



## Open Space Institute and New York State Parks



The Open Space Institute protects scenic, natural, and historic landscapes to provide public enjoyment, conserve habitat and working lands, and sustain communities. Over the past 40 years, with nearly 80 conservation initiatives, OSI has added more than 40,000 acres to the 335,000-acre New York State Park system.

### For more information

This issue of *The Pulse of Parks* is part of a series of New York State Park user demographic studies. Previous reports have focused on Bear Mountain State Park, Fahnestock State Park, Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Jones Beach State Park, Harriman State Park's Lake Welch, and Walkway Over the Hudson, and are available for download at:

[www.osiny.org/Publications\\_Alliance](http://www.osiny.org/Publications_Alliance).

The Open Space Institute's Alliance for New York State Parks works to protect and enhance state parks and historic sites for present and future generations. To learn more, visit: [www.osiny.org/alliance](http://www.osiny.org/alliance)



[www.osiny.org/alliance](http://www.osiny.org/alliance)

### About this study

The Open Space Institute, with the support of the Dyson Foundation, commissioned a visitor survey of Sunken Meadow State Park. The study, aimed at finding out who visits the park and how they value it, was conducted by the Economic & Strategic Planning Consultancy of Randall Gross/Development Economics.

Surveyors conducted a quantitative demographic study of 432 visitors over fourteen weekdays, nine weekend days, and the Labor Day holiday, over the months of July through September 2014. The sample presents with a 4.86% margin of error at the 95% confidence level. The results are meant to inform park planning and communication efforts and also to provide input on specific questions relating to park utilization.

Photos: John Williams/LI Regional Photographer/New York State Parks