

# ***Dutchess County Parks to be Smoke Free***

***Poughkeepsie***... Dutchess County Executive Marcus J. Molinaro today announced that smoking is prohibited in all Dutchess County Parks effective July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012 to protect park visitors from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

“Our county parks are beautiful, welcoming retreats for families and visitors to gather and enjoy the great outdoors. We want to ensure the cleanest and safest environment, while preserving the pristine quality of a park visit,” said County Executive Molinaro. “Smoke free parks are a key part of a healthy community.”

The No Smoking Policy will be in effect at all Dutchess County Parks which include:

- Bowdoin Park in the Town of Poughkeepsie
- Dutchess Stadium in the Town of Fishkill
- Dutchess Rail Trail
- Harlem Valley Rail Trail
- Wilcox Park in the Town of Milan
- Quiet Cove Riverfront Park in the Town of Poughkeepsie

According to 2010 Community Tobacco Survey conducted by Baruch College Survey Research on behalf of SmokeFree Dutchess:

- 77% of Dutchess County residents support restricting smoking in parks and playgrounds
- 94% of Dutchess County residents believe exposure to secondhand smoke is harmful

“Smoking is a major risk factor for a number of chronic illnesses including cancer, cardiovascular disease, and respiratory disease, such as emphysema. Providing as many smoke-free environments as possible helps prevent these illnesses,” said Dutchess County Commissioner of Health Dr. Michael Caldwell. “Our County Parks are the ideal places to promote healthy lifestyles... resident can engage in the many outdoor activities that offer positive health benefits such as increased physical activity, vitamin D exposure, immunity and better sleep, and can now do so in a smoke free environment. This healthy new policy will help keep Dutchess County ranked as one of the healthiest counties in New York State.”

SmokeFree Dutchess, a community partnership organization dedicated to reducing the risk of cancer, heart disease, and other tobacco-related diseases by lowering the prevalence of tobacco use through community programs in prevention education, cessation, and advocacy, provides numerous reasons why parks and playgrounds should be tobacco-free:

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies secondhand smoke as a class A carcinogen, a substance known to cause cancer in humans. A 2006 Surgeon General report concluded there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to suffer from ear infections and reduced lung function.
- Secondhand smoke levels in outdoor public places can reach levels as high as those found in indoor facilities where smoking is permitted.
- Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world. They are highly toxic and dangerous to children and animals. Small children are at risk of swallowing, choking or burning themselves with discarded butts and suffering nicotine poisoning.

When he served in the Dutchess County Legislature, County Executive Molinaro was the sponsor of the 2003 Dutchess County Clean Indoor Air Law, prohibiting smoking in most indoor and enclosed outdoor public places. “Our county parks smoke free policy is the logical extension of a public health policy adopted 9 years ago. We join many municipalities and the State of New York and ensure a healthier environment for all Dutchess County residents and visitors,” said Molinaro.

Ellen Reinhard, Director of SmokeFree Dutchess said, “I applaud County Executive Molinaro and Dutchess County Government for taking this proactive step to creating a healthier environment in the County’s parks. The reasons for doing it are clear: even a little secondhand smoke can be dangerous, cigarette butt litter is toxic and clean up is costly to taxpayers. Parks are meant for enjoying clean air, natural beauty and health activities.”

SmokeFree Dutchess is partnering with Dutchess County government to promote the new policy and will be providing signage for all county parks utilizing grant funding from the New York State Tobacco Control Program.

Currently, there are several municipalities in Dutchess County with Tobacco Free Park/Playground policies in addition to Dutchess County Government. Those municipalities include:

City of Poughkeepsie  
Town of Clinton  
Town of Hyde Park  
Town of Pawling  
Town of Poughkeepsie  
Town of Rhinebeck  
Town of Wappinger  
Village of Tivoli  
Village of Wappinger Falls

The Dutchess County Parks No Smoking policy will be enacted under a “Commissioner’s Order” that was signed today by Dutchess County Public Works Commissioner Charles Traver pursuant to the Rules and Regulations for Dutchess County Parks at the request of County Executive Molinaro. The order is one of the last formal acts of Commissioner Traver, who retires from County Government service on Friday, June 30<sup>th</sup> after nearly 40 years of service to the residents of Dutchess County.

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