



# Memories and Vision Drive Campground Makeover

*Along the Beaverkill, just past Junction Pool, a niche for nostalgia*

*By Barbara Gref / The Visitor's Guide*

Talk to Pete Ruggiero for just a few minutes and you will be convinced.

Ruggiero is part of a family that is investing talent, sweat and substantial resources into the remake of a Trout Town staple. Over the past several months, the Roscoe Campsite has been the scene of an overhaul unlike any the campground has seen before.

A bit battered by time and the elements, the campsite was in full reconstruction mode in October of 2014. A deep makeover of the campsite was very much underway. This was not the kind of makeover that would make the creekside getaway unrecognizable, but more the kind that would take it back to the stuff of boyhood memories and then some.

The idea, said Pete: "Making it feel just like it used to feel when we were kids."

That's a tall order, but one that the group is up to.

The story of the makeover really goes back years. Pete and his family have been coming to the historic fly fishing area for three decades. Pete's mom and dad – a pair of schoolteachers from Farmingdale on Long Island – were regulars at the campground just downstream, the Twin Islands. His grandparents were part of it, too. Pete was 7 years old when the tradition began. They'd set up their "base camp" at Twin

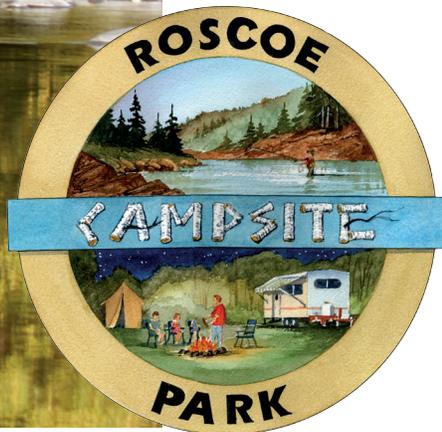
Islands, then travel all over the countryside, always returning to Roscoe. "It was almost like a summer home," he explains.

That Pete's dad was a trout fisherman to the core (he served as President of the Trout Unlimited Chapter on Long Island) played an undeniable role in the Roscoe connection as well. "We're a big fly fishing family," says Ruggiero – even as his three kids scampered from playground to creek to travel trailer on a recent chilly morning at the campsite.

Now retired, his folks helped pool the resources needed to bring the campsite back and add some modern amenities as well: "My parents felt there was a possibility that this way of life could cease." And to the Ruggiero clan, that just wasn't acceptable.

His family's story is the story of the camping community here, Pete says.

"They come not just for the fishing but for the fishing aura that surrounds the place," he says. That aura extends far beyond the streams to include an experience to remember: for the eagles flying overhead and the s'mores by the communal campfire. They come for the friends they meet with year after year and the new ones that come along. They come to be at a place that is not the Hamptons, not Fire



Island, not the Jersey Shore.

From the fly shops on Main Street to the fudge in The Little Store to Jack Yelle's watercolors of the streams and countryside, there is a certain combination of elements that add up to the vision that this new version of the Roscoe Campsite feels very connected to. New attractions such as the Roscoe Beer Company and Prohibition Distillery join with the area's excellent restaurants, stunning scenery, informative museums (from the O & W Railway Museum to the Catskill Fly Fishing Center) and the nearby Bethel Woods Center for the Arts to make for a destination that, as Pete says, is as compelling as the Grand Tetons, though without the Rocky Mountains.

"The area is not just focused on fly fishing. It gives everybody something to do," he says. "You could spend two weeks here and not see and do everything."

The group's decision to open a tourism storefront on the main street, Stewart Avenue, is a testament to that belief. Just as one might find in Jackson Hole or Estes

Park, the offerings of the campsite and of the greater area will be showcased here with the idea of promoting Roscoe and the nearby section of the Catskills. While the log-sided storefront is an extension of the campsite, it also acts as an overall tourism information hub, offering:

- Mountain bike and kayak rentals
- Sign on for the Catskill Kayak Fishing Jamboree
- Permits to boat on the nearby Pepacton reservoir (part of the New York City Watershed system)
- Steam cleaning of boats (*a requirement for reservoir boating*)

Many of these are also available at the campsite itself, as well as:

- Permanent cabin models to rent within the campsite and outside the campsite (hunters, weekend)
- A new pavilion for gatherings of fellow campers or community with live music planned from time to time

*"Making it feel just like it used to feel when we were kids," Ruggiero says.*

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While the area itself was a big draw for the campsite re-invention, one of the more important factors was a human factor.

That is where Scott Conely comes in. Conely had been the campsite manager throughout the years, seeing the ups and downs, the recessions and the floods and the even bigger floods. But he was never one to give up or throw in the literal towel.

So when Pete and the family came around with ideas, know-how and resources, Scott was up for the remake. Scott's buy-in on the plan and his on-the-ground knowledge of the history of the campsite itself, the camp regulars and the Roscoe area were essential to the new vision.

For Scott, the renaissance of the campsite and really of the Roscoe area in general, has been the rainbow after the storm. "If you were going to sit down and dream up the best case scenario," said Scott. "This is it."

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## Campgrounds

*The Roscoe-Livingston Manor area lays claim to more than a dozen state and private campgrounds that are open to the general public. Find a number of them here:*

### Beaverkill State Campground

792 Berrybrook Road, Roscoe, NY 12776 (845) 439-4281, 800-456-2267

**Butternut Grove** Cooks Falls - Roscoe, NY 12776 (607) 498-4224

Facebook / Butternut Grove Campsite

### Covered Bridge Campsite

68 Conklin Hill Road, Livingston Manor, NY 12758 (845) 439-5093

www.coveredbridgecampsite.com

### DeBruce Conservation Camp (NY State)

DeBruce Road, Livingston Manor, NY 12758 (845) 439-4627

### Hunter Lake Campground

124 Hunter Lake Drive, Parksville, NY 12768 (845) 292-3629

www.hunterlakecampground.com

ann&waynescoll@hunterlakecampground.com

Facebook / Hunter Lake Campgrounds

### Little Pond Campsite (NY State)

549 Little Pond Road, Lew Beach, NY 12753 (845) 439-5480, 800-456-camp

### Livingston Manor Covered Bridge Park (picnic, fishing)

Covered Bridge Road, Livingston Manor, NY 12758 (845) 807-0261

### Long Pond Lean-To (NY State) Willowemoc, NY 12758 (845) 439-5480

### Miller Hollow Campsite

Pepacton Reservoir (607) 363-7492 millerhollowcamp@frontiernet.net

### Mongaup Pond Campsite (NY State)

231 Mongaup Fish Hatchery Road, 10 miles NE of Route 17 (Exit 96)

Livingston Manor, NY 12758 800-456-2267, (845) 439-4233

### Onteora Scout Reservation (NY State)

Livingston Manor, NY 12758 (845) 439-5687

### Roscoe Campsite Park

2179 Old Route 17, Roscoe, NY 12776 (607) 498-5264

www.RoscoeCampsitePark.com

sconely@roscoecp.com Facebook / Roscoe Campsites

### Russell Brook Campsites

731 Russell Brook Road, Roscoe/ Cooks Falls, NY 12776 (607) 498-5416

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### Willowemoc Campgrounds

Willowemoc Road, Livingston Manor, NY 12758 (845) 439-4250

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