Esri’s Story Map Crowdsourcing template was used as a starting point to create a mobile application for New Yorkers and other visitors to share their favorite recreational experiences. The template leverages ArcGIS Online’s platform for map data collection, management, and sharing over the web. The template was customized to align with the OPD’s Gateway site, including branding and terminology.

Users can post pictures and stories as a guest or using Facebook, Google, or ArcGIS Online credentials. The current version allows uploads of photos, a title, and caption for the recreational experience. Future functionality will include more questions to describe user experience. View the application at http://opdgig.dos.ny.gov/#/aboutCSA

The New York Office of Planning and Development (OPD) Geographic Information Gateway harvests recent Facebook activity for recreational locations throughout New York including check-ins, likes, and new posts. The data allows managers and the public to spatially visualize near real-time recreational usage.

A nightly script extracts number of “Likes”, “Check-ins”, and “Posts in the Past Week” for over 50 recreation site Facebook pages from Facebook's API. Recreation sites include state parks, summits, campgrounds, and beaches, among others. The data gives a near real-time mood map of recreation activity in the state.

Close attention was paid to Facebook's privacy agreement to ensure the extraction and storing of data is in full compliance. Only aggregated data is stored rather than personal account and post information.

By capturing Facebook statistics for pages on a weekly time-step, temporal and geographic trends can be evaluated to understand variations in visitation, which locations receive more or less visitation than others, and what times of year may be busiest for specific locations.

In the future, OPD would like to expand data extraction to help understand use by activity type and by user characteristics. To extract this kind of data, considerations about data privacy will need to be addressed so that personal information is not retained.