



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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Contact: ra-gvgovpress@pa.gov

Governor Shapiro Opens New Lehigh Gorge State Park Access Point, Highlights Budget Investments in Pennsylvania State Parks

Governor Shapiro's budget would invest \$112 million to maintain and improve infrastructure in our state parks and forests – the single largest investment in decades



White Haven, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** visited Lehigh Gorge State Park in Luzerne County to open a new park access point and highlight his budget's proposed investments in state parks, forests, and trails to make them safe and accessible for every Pennsylvanian.

In March, the Governor [unveiled](#) his commonsense budget proposal filled with solutions to the most pressing issues Pennsylvanians face – including investments to make Pennsylvania communities safer and healthier, grow the economy, safeguard the environment, and support local businesses.

“Pennsylvania is home to some of America's best parks, trails, and forests. This weekend, Pennsylvanians will head outdoors with family and friends for the unofficial start of the summer

season and take advantage of all the opportunities the Commonwealth's 12,000 miles of trails and beautiful rivers and lakes have to offer," said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. "Our state parks and outdoor recreation industry are key to our economy – hosting nearly 40 million visitors each year and boosting local businesses and the local economy in and around our parks. My budget's key investments will help grow our economy while creating more opportunities for Pennsylvanians to enjoy the outdoors and spend time with their friends and families.

Pennsylvania's 124 state parks attract 40 million visitors annually, with about a quarter of them visiting from out of state. Outdoor recreation adds \$14 billion annually to Pennsylvania's economy and supports 150,000 jobs. The Governor's budget proposal includes \$112 million to improve our parks and forests, and the new Office of Outdoor Recreation will connect our natural resources and parks with local businesses and put Pennsylvania on the map as a leader in outdoor recreation.

During today's visit, the Governor met outdoor outfitters whose businesses have benefited from investments made in the park that follows the Lehigh River through Luzerne and Carbon counties, and partners working to complete the D&L Trail that runs through Lehigh Gorge.

"It's moments like these where we're celebrating wonderful infrastructure like this that have been a bit too rare over the last three decades," said **Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Cindy Dunn**. "The public lands and parks of Pennsylvania need to make people feel safe and welcome. Governor Shapiro understands and grasps the advantage that we have in Pennsylvania with these wonderful natural assets and how to bring them to bear to even serve the public of Pennsylvania."

"The Lehigh River provides accessible outdoor recreation for the entire tri-state area. It is a tourist destination that draws hundreds of thousands of tourists a year and provides an outdoor outlet to a diverse audience. This is only possible because of the work of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to protect and improve the state park so that it continues to thrive with increasing numbers of visitors," said **Pocono Whitewater Operations Manager Sierra Fogal**. "With the current support from the newly created Office of Outdoor Recreation, Director Hollis, Secretary Dunn, and Governor Shapiro, I'm confident that Pennsylvania will stay committed to these outdoor resources for our own personal enjoyment, as well as the tourism and outdoor recreation industry that is a main economic driver in this region."

"White Haven and trail users from across the nation are thrilled that we have a reopening of the DNL Trail north and south of the town, and we now have a continuous route from the Black Diamond Trailhead all the way to North Catasauqua in Northampton County, totaling 59.8 miles of connected and improved DNL trail," said **Director of Trails & Conservation at Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor Elizabeth Rosencrans**. "Our goal of reaching over 165 miles wouldn't be possible without partners like the Commonwealth and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, as well as the local communities. With continued support, we're well on our way to becoming the longest multiuse trail and Pennsylvania."

In order to create more opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors and connect our natural resources with local business to support our economy, [Governor Shapiro's budget](#) includes:

- \$112 million to maintain and improve infrastructure in parks and forests
- \$2.8 million to support operating needs for the management and safety of public lands and create a new Office of Outdoor Recreation

With about half a million visitors annually, [Lehigh Gorge State Park](#) runs from the outlet of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Francis E. Walter Dam at the northern end, to the town of Jim Thorpe at the southern end. A \$7.4 million project recently completed at the White Haven Access Area makes it easier for visitors to enjoy opportunities for whitewater boating and hiking/biking at the park.

Learn more about Governor Shapiro's budget and plans to enable a new generation of Pennsylvanians, and visitors from across the world, to enjoy our parks, trails, and forests [here](#). Visit DCNR's website for more information on [Pennsylvania's 124 state parks](#), and learn more about the vision for the 165-mile [D&L Trail](#) from the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor.

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