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June 18, 2024

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Agriculture Secretary Joins Local Ag Educator to Climb Blue Knob State Park's Tallest Tree to View Lasting Impact of Investments in Sustainable Forestry

Governor Shapiro's Budget Invests in Growing Strength of Pennsylvania's \$39 Billion Forest Products Industry and Recreation

Claysburg, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding joined Danville Area High School agriculture teacher and forester **Van Wagner** at **Blue Knob State Park** in Bedford County to raise awareness of Pennsylvania's hardwood forests, and the investments of the **Shapiro Administration** in agriculture and recreation to grow help grow Pennsylvania's economy.

"The value of our forests extends far beyond the \$39 billion our hardwoods industry feeds into our economy every year," **Secretary Redding** said. "Parks like Blue Knob serve as crucial hubs for tourism and recreation, offering opportunities to recharge physically and connect with nature and family. These valuable resources won't be around in the future just because we like them. The **Shapiro Administration** is investing in the forest management practices that ensure that the forests, and the jobs and families who rely on them will be here in the future."

During the hike, Wagner climbed the tallest tree in the park, the 46th climb of his '67 Trees on 67 Mountains in 67 Counties' project.

"Pennsylvanian's forests are a treasure — financially, spiritually, culturally, and ecologically," **Wagner** said. "My goal of climbing the highest tree on the highest mountain in all 67 counties is an effort to remind Pennsylvanians that they are all part of the conversation of forest management in our commonwealth. Our forests require management in order to remain healthy, and it is my hope that everyone will play an active role in the conversations about managing our forests for today, and for the centuries to come."

Blue Knob State Park offers scenic views and serenity across 6,128 acres of land, providing opportunities to explore more than 23 miles of hiking, 19 miles of mountain biking, overnight camping, swimming, hunting, birding, and history.

“Pennsylvania’s forests are more than just beautiful places for people to play outside, they are the natural capital from which our outdoor recreation economy grows and pays dividends,” said **Director of Pennsylvania’s Office of Outdoor Recreation Nathan Reigner**. “Investments in our forests are investments in the quality of our communities, the vibrance of our economy, and the competitiveness of our commonwealth.”

Governor Josh Shapiro’s [2024-25 budget](#) feeds growth in Pennsylvania agriculture, including the state’s \$39 billion forest products industry, through smart investments in economic development, job creation, and innovation. The budget supports the state’s hardwood producers and others in Pennsylvania’s leading forest products industry through a \$725,000 investment in the PA Hardwoods Development Council, as well as PA Farm Bill Specialty Crop Grants, Agriculture Promotion Grants, and research funding to provide tangible solutions to challenges facing the industry.

These and other investments in the 2024-25 budget complement Governor Josh Shapiro’s [Economic Development Strategy](#) that recognizes agriculture along with life sciences, manufacturing, robotics, technology, and energy as key to our future economic success.

Learn more about investments in a strong future for Pennsylvania agriculture at shapirobudget.pa.gov.

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