



Pennsylvania
**Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources**

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MEDIA CONTACT: Madalyn Neff, madneff@pa.gov, 717.585.3136

**Shapiro Administration Upgrades Education Hall at Nolde Forest
Environmental Education Center to Enhance Student and Visitor
Experience**

The Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center — a hub for hands-on environmental learning for over 50 years — sees more than 4,000 K-12 students visit annually, and investments in McConnell Hall, classroom renovations, and statewide infrastructure will enhance these spaces, support tourism, and drive growth.

Reading, PA — Today, **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** visited Berks County to celebrate the completion of a \$436,000 renovation of C.H. McConnell Environmental Education Hall at Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center. This investment is part of the **Shapiro Administration's** broader commitment to modernizing state parks and forests, with \$120 million in infrastructure improvements completed since January 2023.

“Governor Shapiro is making strategic investments to improve our state parks and forests so they remain accessible, educational, and enjoyable for all Pennsylvanians,” said **Secretary Dunn**. “This renovation at Nolde Forest strengthens our commitment to conservation, education, and community engagement.”

Governor Josh Shapiro's [2025-26 proposed budget](#) builds on this momentum with \$5 million in new funding to expand and improve state parks across Pennsylvania. This includes establishing the Commonwealth's 125th state park at Laurel Caverns in Fayette County — the first subterranean state park — highlighting the stunning natural beauty of the caverns and further boosting tourism.

Investing in Education, Accessibility, and Community Engagement

For more than 50 years, Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center has served as a hub for hands-on environmental education, engaging over 4,000 K-12 students annually. The recent renovations to McConnell Hall include:

- Expanded ADA-compliant restroom facilities to improve accessibility.
- Updated electrical and plumbing systems for a safer and more efficient space.
- Improved water management and insulation to enhance sustainability.

“These investments have a ripple effect beyond the dollars spent,” said **Brent Erb, DCNR Environmental Education Center Manager**. “By enhancing this space, we are ensuring that future generations of students, educators, and community members continue to benefit from the programs and resources Nolde Forest offers.”

Located just outside Reading, Nolde Forest’s 725-acre landscape and 10 miles of trails provide immersive educational experiences in an urban setting. Established in 1966 as Pennsylvania’s first environmental education center, Nolde Forest has a rich history of conservation and learning. The site’s partnerships with organizations such as Friends of Nolde Forest, Olivet Boys and Girls Club, and local universities further its mission of fostering environmental stewardship and community involvement.

Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center is located in the [Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape](#) and the [Schuylkill River Greenways National and State Heritage Area](#), and plays a key role in Pennsylvania’s outdoor recreation and conservation efforts.

Last year, **Governor Shapiro** launched [Pennsylvania: The Great American Getaway](#), the Commonwealth’s new tourism brand. Pennsylvania’s state parks are central to this initiative, providing free outdoor recreation while supporting local economies. With over 725 million visits nationwide each year, state parks generate billions in economic activity and serve as vital, close-to-home resources that enhance quality of life.

Visit [DCNR’s website](#) for more information about Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center and its programs.

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