



Pennsylvania  
Department of Conservation  
and Natural Resources

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Wesley Robinson, [werobinson@pa.gov](mailto:werobinson@pa.gov), 717.877.6315

**Shapiro Administration Kicks Off Summer Outdoor Recreation Season at Bald Eagle State Park in Centre County**

*Through the “Pennsylvania: The Great American Getaway” campaign and “Still Open. Still Awesome.” initiative, the Shapiro Administration is reminding residents and visitors that Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests remain open, welcoming, and ready for adventure.*

*The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources saw a 30 percent increase in campsite reservations this spring compared to this time last year — reflecting growing demand for outdoor experiences across the Commonwealth.*

*Outdoor recreation continues to drive jobs, tourism, and quality of life in Pennsylvania — thanks to Governor Josh Shapiro's commitment to expand public access, invest in outdoor infrastructure, and create economic opportunity statewide.*



**Howard, PA** – Today, ahead of Memorial Day weekend, the **Shapiro**

**Administration** visited Bald Eagle State Park in Centre County to officially kick off Pennsylvania's summer outdoor recreation season — highlighting the Commonwealth's continued infrastructure investments, growing tourism economy, and the broad appeal of its state parks and forests.

Through the [Pennsylvania: The Great American Getaway](#) campaign and the **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**'s "[Still Open. Still Awesome.](#)" initiative, Pennsylvania is welcoming residents and visitors alike to explore its **124 state parks, 2.2 million acres of forestland, and more than 7,000 campsites** — offering affordable, accessible, and unforgettable outdoor experiences for everyone.

"Memorial Day marks the unofficial start of summer, and we want people to know: Pennsylvania's public lands are open, awesome, and waiting to welcome you," said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. "From scenic hikes and peaceful lakes to campfires under the stars, there's something for everyone in our state parks and forests. Governor Shapiro is making strategic investments to ensure these spaces remain enjoyable to all."

As some federal campgrounds reduce operations due to staffing shortages, Pennsylvania's state parks experienced a nearly **30 percent increase** in campground reservations earlier this spring. That upward trend has continued as we head into the busy summer months.

Today's event took place at the newly completed White Pine Camping Loop at Bald Eagle State Park — a \$1.9 million state-funded project that added 22 full-service, pet-friendly RV sites to the park's existing mix of nearly 200 campsites, cottages, yurts, and the popular Nature Inn at Bald Eagle. Bald Eagle spans 5,900 acres and is home to Foster Joseph Sayers Lake, named in honor of a [Pennsylvania native](#) who received the Medal of Honor after being killed in action in World War II. DCNR paused for a moment of silence at the lake to recognize those who have sacrificed their lives in service to our country.

"We are fortunate to have six beautiful state parks in Centre County, each with its own unique charm and opportunities for adventure," said **Centre County Commissioner Chair Mark Higgins**. "Thanks to the help of DCNR, we are able to keep our parks accessible, well-maintained, and ready to accommodate tens of thousands of visitors per year."

"Happy Valley, Pennsylvania, is where adventure and authenticity come together," said **Happy Valley Adventure Bureau President and CEO Fritz Smith**. "With more than 750,000 acres of nearby public lands, six state parks, and renowned recreation areas like [Rothrock State Forest](#) and [Harvest Fields Community Trails](#), we offer something for every outdoor enthusiast. Whether hiking, biking, fishing, birding, or geocaching on the Happy Valley GeoTour, each experience is a chance to reconnect with nature and rediscover small-town charm. Every trail explored and every overnight stay directly supports the local businesses, hospitality partners, and passionate

communities that make Happy Valley a truly unforgettable place to visit — and return to."

This investment at Bald Eagle is part of **Governor Josh Shapiro's** commitment to modernize Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, with **\$120 million** in infrastructure improvements completed since January 2023. The Governor's [2025-26 proposed budget](#) includes **\$5 million** in new funding to expand and enhance public lands — including the expansion of Lehigh Gorge State Park to include Glen Onoko Falls Trail and the creation of Pennsylvania's 125th state park at Laurel Caverns in Fayette County, the state's first subterranean park.

Since day one, **Governor Shapiro** has made [strategic investments](#) to elevate outdoor recreation, transforming it into a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's economy and communities. These efforts are driving economic growth, fostering entrepreneurial opportunities, and creating jobs across the Commonwealth.

In 2023, Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation industry contributed **\$19 billion** to the state's economy — a 10 percent increase over the previous year — and now represents 2% of the Commonwealth's gross domestic product. According to [new data](#) from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the industry now supports more than 168,000 jobs that provide \$9 billion in wages and salaries to Pennsylvanians.

"Pennsylvania's public lands are the foundation of the Commonwealth's \$19 billion outdoor recreation industry and central to supporting the 9,000 businesses, and 168,000 jobs in the sector," said **Pennsylvania Director of Outdoor Recreation Nathan Reigner**. "We are fortunate to have such great places to play, relax, and maybe even do a little remote work. These spaces are vital not only for our health and wellbeing but for supporting jobs and businesses that power Pennsylvania's growing outdoor economy."

## Plan Your Great American Getaway

Reserve campsites, cabins, yurts, and pavilions at [visitPAParks.com](https://visitPAParks.com) or by calling **888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757)**, Monday through Saturday, 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Many parks have weekday availability and discounted non-peak rates.

DCNR relaunched its gift certificate program, available [online](#) and at park offices, which can be used for lodging reservations, pavilion rentals, and state-operated retail purchases.

Public lands offer a wide range of outdoor activities spanning from ATV riding to whitewater boating. Visit DCNR's website for more information about [what to do at state parks](#) and [where to go](#) on public lands, including local parks and for scenic views. DCNR encourages Pennsylvanians to check its [Calendar of Events](#) for seasonal programming happening across the state.

As part of **National Safe Boating Week**, May 17-23, DCNR reminds visitors to follow basic safety tips on the water: always wear a life jacket, never boat under the influence, and check the forecast before heading out. Visitors should also follow [Leave No Trace](#) principles to keep public lands clean, safe, and welcoming for everyone.

As **DCNR marks its 30th anniversary** in 2025, the **Shapiro Administration** remains focused on delivering safe, welcoming, and well-maintained public lands for all. Whether you're exploring a scenic overlook, casting a line into a quiet lake, or spending the night in a state park — Pennsylvania's parks and forests are ready for your next adventure.

Visit [DCNR's website](#) for more information about state parks, events, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

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