



Pennsylvania  
**Department of Conservation  
and Natural Resources**



Pennsylvania  
**Department of Aging**



Pennsylvania  
**Department of Health**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Tuesday, August 19, 2025

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**At Codorus State Park, Shapiro Administration Unveils New Toolkit to  
Help Older Pennsylvanians Connect with the Outdoors and Improve  
Their Health**

*Developed by the Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources, Aging, and Health, the [toolkit](#) gives caregivers, long-term care facilities, and community organizations practical strategies — including indoor nature guides, low-cost adaptations, and research on 10 proven physical and mental health benefits of outdoor recreation.*

*All of Pennsylvania's 124 state parks and forests are free and open to the public.*

**Hanover, PA** – Today, members of the **Shapiro Administration** visited [Codorus State Park](#) in York County to unveil [Connecting to the Outdoors as We Age: Pennsylvania's Rx for Nature](#) — a new toolkit to help older Pennsylvanians connect with the outdoors and improve their overall health.

Developed through a partnership between the **Pennsylvania Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Aging (PDA), and Health (DOH)**, the toolkit provides practical strategies for caregivers, long-term care facilities, and community organizations. It includes guides for bringing nature indoors, low-cost facility adaptations, tips to overcome access barriers, and research highlighting 10 proven health benefits of outdoor recreation — from reducing stress and anxiety, to lowering risk of chronic disease, to improving memory, attention, and overall well-being.

“Getting outside and exploring our state parks is good for your health. We are proud to partner with Aging and Health to connect older adults with the many benefits nature

provides and help them continue the outdoor activities they love as they age,” said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. “The Shapiro Administration is committed to providing healthy, safe, and high-quality opportunities for all Pennsylvanians to get outside and enjoy our wealth of natural spaces.”

The toolkit comes as Pennsylvania was officially designated an [Age-Friendly State by AARP](#) earlier this year — a milestone recognizing **Governor Josh Shapiro’s** leadership and commitment to making the Commonwealth a place where older adults can live with dignity, independence, and support. Under **Governor Shapiro’s** leadership, Pennsylvania has delivered results for older adults, including expanding home- and community-based services, investing in caregiving, and delivering the largest tax cut for seniors in nearly two decades through the [Property Tax/Rent Rebate \(PTRR\) Program](#).

Building on the **Shapiro Administration’s** 10-year strategic plan, [Aging Our Way, PA](#), the toolkit strengthens connections between older adults and the outdoors. The plan focuses on reducing social isolation, expanding volunteer networks, and reinforcing community- and regional-level partnerships to improve and broaden services.

“Spending time outdoors improves overall well-being and quality of life as we age,” said **PDA Secretary Jason Kavulich**. “This toolkit is an important part of our *Aging Our Way, PA* plan — it creates awareness of opportunities to connect with nature and encourages older adults to enjoy the recreation and social connections that our state parks and outdoor spaces provide. I urge everyone, particularly older adults, to gather with friends and loved ones to explore Pennsylvania’s state parks and all things outside in recreation.”

DOH’s [State Health Improvement Plan](#) highlights the essential health benefits that the outdoors provides, emphasizing “affordable and accessible opportunities to be physically active, such as parks, trails, fitness events and recreational facilities, particularly in under-resourced communities,” as a key strategy to improve Pennsylvanians’ health.

“Access to nature is more than leisure — it’s a vital component of health and well-being,” said **DOH Special Advisor Dr. Rob Bonacci**. “Outdoor activities like walking, bird watching, or fishing can bring real physical and mental health benefits for older Pennsylvanians.”

DCNR’s 2025–2029 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, [Outdoor Places, Shared Spaces](#), prioritizes safe, welcoming access to and highlights the health benefits of the outdoors, including expanded ADA accessibility. The toolkit also builds on the agency’s Mosaic initiative, which promotes accessible and inclusive public lands for all Pennsylvanians.

DCNR manages Pennsylvania’s 124 free state parks, 2.2 million acres of state forestland, and supports more than 6,400 local and county parks and extensive regional

and national trail systems — resources older adults rely on for recreation, wellness, and community connection.

For more information and upcoming events, visit DCNR's [Calendar of Events](#).

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