



# GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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**In Fayette County, Governor Shapiro Announces the Grand Opening  
of Laurel Caverns State Park, Pennsylvania's First Underground State  
Park**

*As the first state park designation since 2022, Laurel Caverns State Park is  
Pennsylvania's 125th state park.*

*The park was donated to the Commonwealth by the Cale family, who opened the park  
in 1964 and created the Laurel Caverns Conservancy in 1986 to manage its operations.*

*Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation economy has  
grown by \$3.5 billion, supporting approximately 177,000 jobs.*



**Farmington, PA – Today, Governor Josh Shapiro and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn announced the opening of Laurel Caverns State Park with local leaders in Fayette County. Now the 125th state park and first subterranean state park in Commonwealth history, the Caverns will help expand Pennsylvania’s outdoor recreation economy which contributed \$20.4 billion to Pennsylvania’s economy in 2024 and supported approximately 177,000 jobs.**

Pennsylvania’s outdoor recreation industry is made up of 6,400 local parks — including 125 state parks — more than 14,000 miles of trails, and over 84,000 miles of waterways. Under the **Shapiro Administration’s** leadership, the industry has **added \$3.5 billion** and approximately **12,000 new jobs** to the Commonwealth’s economy.

“Parks like Laurel Caverns give our kids a new place to learn, our families a place to make memories, and all of us a chance to get away, take a breath, and just enjoy nature,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “Pennsylvania’s state parks are an incredible asset to our Commonwealth and our economy – and when we invest in outdoor recreation, we

not only create good paying jobs, but by bringing people together, we also invest in the wellbeing of our neighbors and the future of our Commonwealth.”

Approximately 50 miles from Pittsburgh, Laurel Caverns is a 435-acre park centered around the largest and deepest limestone cave in Pennsylvania, which includes four miles of wide cave passages that go as deep as 476 feet and the largest bat shelter in the Northeast. The Caverns attract 50,000 annual visitors and will officially reopen to the public on Earth Day, April 22, to remain open until October.

“Pennsylvania’s state parks are already second to none and we are improving the system with this addition of Laurel Caverns State Park,” said **DCNR Secretary Adams Dunn**. “We are excited to open this new park and welcome all visitors to experience the uniqueness of our 125th state park up close—whether it’s the hiking trails and recreational opportunities, or the geological splendor of the caverns.”

DCNR plans to make initial upgrades to enhance visitors’ experiences at the park, with several improvements currently underway, including **electrical upgrades; improved accessibility** in parking spaces, entryways, and bathrooms; and **routine updates to the foundation and structural system of the visitor center**.

“Right here in our backyard, we have one of the most unique natural attractions in the country,” said **Fayette County Commissioner Vince Vicites**. “Laurel Caverns already brings about 50,000 visitors each year and today’s designation will help bring even more — that means more support for our local businesses, restaurants, and workforce. This is a major win for Fayette County.”

“Every day, we welcome so many people to the county and today builds on momentum to give people another reason to visit, to explore, and to really impact our local economy,” said **Muriel Nuttall, Executive Director of the Fayette Chamber of Commerce**. “With Laurel Caverns’ state park designation, we’re adding something that is truly one of a kind to Fayette County.”

The Caverns’ state park designation — Pennsylvania’s first since 2022 — was made possible through the park’s donation to the Commonwealth by David and Lilian Cale who created the Laurel Caverns Conservancy to manage the park’s operations in 1986 after David’s family opened the park in 1964.

“Our state parks are rich in history and have some of the most dedicated community members to help the parks thrive,” said **Corie Eckman, Park Manager of Laurel Caverns State Park**. “Thanks to the Cale Family, the Laurel Caverns have allowed generations of visitors to experience the beauty beneath its surface and it has been my privilege to help in the park’s transition to the Commonwealth.”

Like all Pennsylvania state parks, entrance and participation in recreational activities such as hiking, birding, and picnicking will remain free at the Caverns, but fees to enter the cave for one of five guided or self-guided tours will remain in place throughout the 2026 season as management transitions to DCNR.

## **Shapiro Administration’s Record on Outdoor Recreation**

Continuing to fully fund the Tourism Office in his [2026-27 proposed budget](#), **Governor Shapiro** has made outdoor recreation and tourism a central part of his economic development strategy, positioning Pennsylvania as a leader in outdoor recreation.

- In May 2024, the Shapiro Administration unveiled the [Great American Getaway](#), to encourage more people to visit the Commonwealth.
- In the FY 2023-24 budget, **Governor Shapiro** secured **\$422,000** to launch the **Office of Outdoor Recreation**, helping connect Pennsylvania's public lands, businesses, and workers.
- Since 2023, the **Shapiro Administration** has completed **\$228 million in infrastructure improvements** across Pennsylvania's public lands.

The **Shapiro administration** encourages every Pennsylvanian to experience all the benefits of the outdoors.

Visit DCNR's [website](#) to learn more about Laurel Caverns State Park and find more information about events on public lands [here](#).

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