

Pennsylvania's
Office of
Outdoor
Recreation



Pennsylvania
Office of Outdoor
Recreation

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Pennsylvania's Office of Outdoor Recreation

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BREAKING

Fatal fire in Franklin Township

Shapiro launches Office of Outdoor Recreation while visiting Connellsville

By JAMIE RANKIN | Aug 31, 2023 Updated Oct 5, 2024



Gov. Josh Shapiro (at podium) speaks during the launch of the Office of Outdoor Recreation on Thursday at Yough River Park in Connellsville. Also present, from left, are Fayette County commissioners Dave Lohr, Scott Dunn and Vince Vicites; Connellsville Mayor Greg Lincoln; Jessica Turner, Outdoor Recreation Roundtable president; Nathan Reigner, Office of Outdoor Recreation director; Cindy Adams Dunn, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources secretary; and Rick Siger, Department of

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Pennsylvania's Office of Outdoor Recreation



**Editorial: New Pa. outdoor recreation
office is government done right**



THE EDITORIAL BOARD
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Mission

Unite, grow, and strengthen Pennsylvania's **outdoor economy**

Outdoor Recreation Industry



Community & Economic Development



Green Infrastructure & Public Health Cost Savings



PA's Outdoor Recreation Economy

A RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation industry drives innovation, incubates entrepreneurs, improves our health and the health of our communities, and turns happy visitors into future Pennsylvanians.

In Pennsylvania, outdoor recreation contributed nearly:



\$20.4 billion
to PA's Economy
177,000
Jobs in 2024

The outdoor recreation industry is **2% of Pennsylvania's gross domestic product.**

Nationally, outdoor recreation contributed:



\$1.3 trillion
Gross Economic Output
5.2 million
Jobs in 2024

Pennsylvania ranks **8th in the nation in outdoor industry size and total employment.**

The direct economic impact of outdoor recreation surpasses many other industries such as oil and gas extraction, utilities, trucking, and warehousing.

PA RANKS IN THE TOP TEN IN THE NATION IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY FOR:



BICYCLING



CLIMBING



HIKING



TENT CAMPING



RVING



EQUESTRIAN ACTIVITIES



HUNTING



ATVING

OUTDOOR RECREATION MANUFACTURING

(snowboards, RVs, truck covers, knives, bicycles, climbing gear, energy bars, and more)

\$3 billion
in outdoor recreation manufacturing
30% growth
in outdoor recreation manufacturing since 2022



54% job growth
in outdoor recreation manufacturing jobs since 2022

OUTDOOR RECREATION AND TOURISM

(outdoor recreation more than 50 miles from home)



\$6.2 billion
in outdoor recreation-based tourism
\$1.2 billion
in lodging during outdoor recreation visits



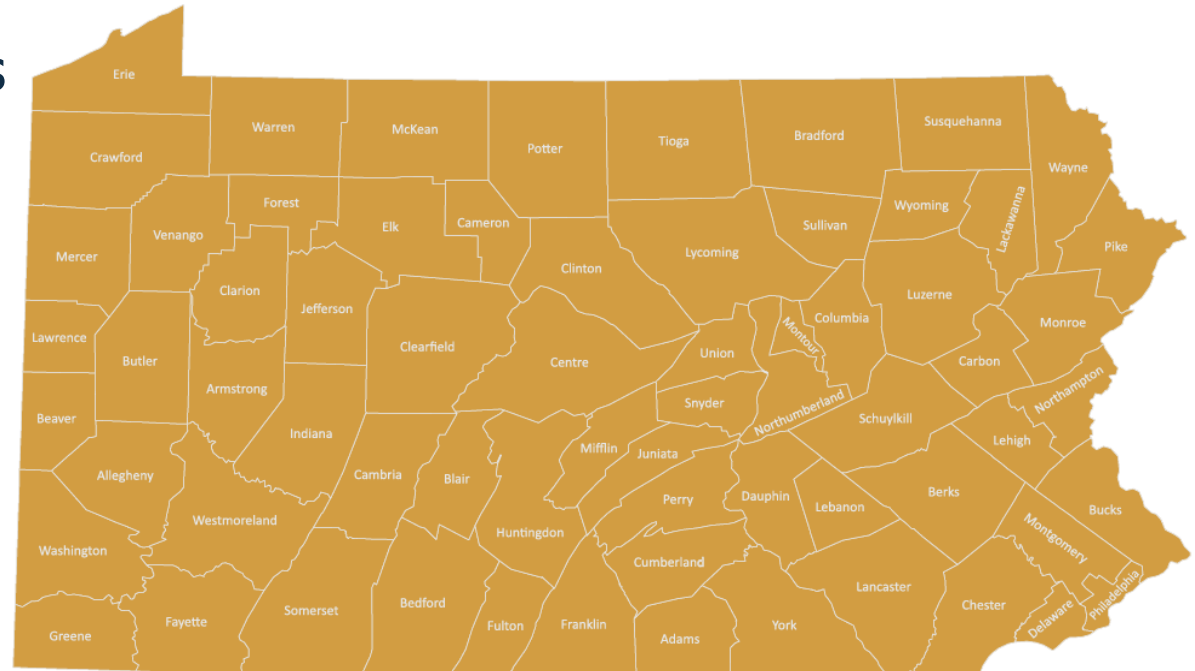
To learn more about Pennsylvania's outdoor rec economy, contact the Office of Outdoor Recreation >>

All data sourced from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, 2026



Next Step – County-level data for PA

- County-level
- Total economic impact (i.e., indirect, direct, induced), jobs, compensation
- Alignment with adjacent benchmarking data
- Leverage data streams for updating
- Industry subsectors and activities





OUTDOOR BUSINESS ALLIANCE — OF PENNSYLVANIA —



Elevating Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation industry

Stay in the know on developments and news of the OBA PA.

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="SIGN UP"/>
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www.OBAPA.org

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Honorable State Representative Mary Jo Daley

Chair, House Tourism, Recreation, and Economic Development Committee

Lutricia Eberly

*Executive Director
Pennsylvania Outdoor Recreation Association*

Sierra Fogal

*Co-Owner
Pocono Whitewater & Pocono Biking*

Brannon Johnson

Owner, BLJ Community Rowing

Tom Gilbert

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Pennsylvania Environmental Council*

Nick Gilson

*President
Gilson Snow*

Steve McKnight

*President & CEO
Blair Alliance for Business & Economic Growth*

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PA OUTDOOR ECONOMY SUMMIT + INDUSTRY EXPO

APRIL 26-28, 2026

BE PART OF THE MOVEMENT SHAPING PENNSYLVANIA'S OUTDOOR FUTURE!

Join us for the inaugural PA Outdoor Economy Summit & Industry Expo – where visionaries, innovators, and leaders across the outdoor recreation world come together to build the future of our state's outdoor economy.

Hosted by the Outdoor Business Alliance of Pennsylvania, this first-of-its-kind event is your chance to connect, collaborate, and create lasting impact. Whether you're driving growth in parks and trails, championing community development, or leading outdoor-focused nonprofits, this summit is where opportunities expand and partnerships take root.

April 26–28, 2026

The Penn Stater Hotel & Conference Center – State College, PA

Immerse yourself in inspiring keynotes, interactive breakout sessions, and outdoor adventures that celebrate the spirit of Pennsylvania's great outdoors. You'll leave with new insights, valuable connections, and a renewed sense of purpose. Panelists & speakers are being confirmed, [check out the evolving agenda here.](#)

www.obapa.org

You see that you can actually strengthen a Main Street by investing more in outdoor rec and the outdoor economy, so we put more resources into it. We hired more people to do that work, partnering with local chambers of commerce, local outdoor organizations.

We're seeing a real positive ROI, a positive return on investment, there. We're going to continue to make those investments."

Governor Josh Shapiro, 1/15/25
Tribune-Democrat

PNC FIELD

IT ALL
STARTS
HERE.

US.
FOODS

PEPSI

#1 KIA DEALER IN NEPA
PERFORMANCE KIA

the River
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Save
Neighborhood
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EXPRESS
CAR WASH
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on City

PENNSYLVANIA
THE GREAT AMERICAN GETAWAY



BOMBARD 13
ROBINSON 42
LEGG 14
396

[DCED](#) > [Programs](#) > [Marketing to Attract Tourists](#)

Marketing to Attract Tourists

[PDF Guidelines](#) [PDF Co-Op Grant Guidelines](#) [PDF Secure More in Sports Gra](#)

[PDF Big Stage Events Grant Guidelines](#) [Apply](#) [Contact Us](#)

Overview

The Marketing to Attract Tourists Program provides funding to support the tourism sector throughout Pennsylvania in attracting the 72 million people who live within a four-hour drive of Pennsylvania to experience The Great American Getaway.

In order to increase awareness of the thousands of quintessential getaway experiences throughout Pennsylvania, the primary goal of the program is to fund projects that increase awareness of Pennsylvania's destinations and attractions through marketing and advertising initiatives.

- **The Great American Getaway Co-Op:** open to destination marketing organizations and tourism-related businesses who partner to develop an outdoor, culinary, historical/cultural, or urban travel experience that will inspire visitors to discover Pennsylvania: The Great American Getaway.
- **Secure More in Sports:** open to entities which attract and secure new consumer, league, youth, amateur or professional sporting events to Pennsylvania that will result in a large influx of visitors who will stay for two or more nights. Grants can be used for marketing and sales outreach, bid fees, rights, and other expenses associated with the ability to pitch and win a bid.



**PENNSYLVANIA
GETS IT DONE.**

GILSON
PA

GILSON
SNOWBOARDS - SKIS - APPAREL

A Ten-Year Strategic Plan for Economic Development in Pennsylvania

2024-2033

**PENNSYLVANIA
GETS IT DONE.**

Goals and Strategic Initiatives



Invest in Our Economic Growth to Compete.

We want our Commonwealth to be a place where we prioritize economic development investments, and where those investments result in real opportunities for our businesses, communities, and residents.

- Boost state investment in site development, preparedness, and marketing
- Expand support for small businesses with a focus on historically disadvantaged businesses and workers
- Streamline programs and increase funding for Pennsylvania's economic development toolkit
- Invest in tourism and recreational asset development to drive economic growth



Make Government Work at the Speed of Business.

We want our Commonwealth to be a place where all companies find an attractive business environment to innovate and thrive.

- Cut through red tape and foster collaboration across state agencies
- Reform state permitting processes with a focus on customer experience
- Reinvent and Invest in the PA Department of Community and Economic Development



Open Doors of Opportunity for All Pennsylvanians.

We want our Commonwealth to be a place where every Pennsylvanian can secure a family-sustaining job and a meaningful career.

- Keep Pennsylvanians in Pennsylvania through internships, apprenticeships, and experiential learning opportunities
- Double down on workforce training and pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs
- Realign Pennsylvania's higher education system to meet our workforce needs
- Provide second chances and grow our workforce



Innovate to Win.

We want our Commonwealth to be a place where innovators become entrepreneurs and new discoveries enable our people and companies to succeed.

- Accelerate investments in priority industry sectors & entrepreneurial ecosystems through a newly established Pennsylvania Innovation Fund
- Launch Pennsylvania Problem Solvers startup competitions to find entrepreneurial solutions to our pressing challenges
- Establish industry & higher education innovation councils to provide government with real world counsel from business and thought leaders
- Start Buy Pennsylvania Initiative to align supply chain network and boost in-state collaboration



Build Vibrant and Resilient Regions.

We want our Commonwealth to be a place where every community flourishes and provides for the needs of all their residents and businesses.

- Launch the Pennsylvania Regional Challenge to incentivize regional growth
- Support communities by investing in downtowns and main streets
- Compete for federal funding to improve infrastructure and support businesses and workers
- Expand availability of housing



Invest in Tourism and Recreation Asset Development to Drive Economic Growth

Renew focus on tourism and outdoor recreation to strengthen regional economies, create and enhance quality of life for Pennsylvania residents.

As one of the largest industries in Pennsylvania, tourism generates over \$66 billion per year in total economic impact and accounts for more than 450,000 jobs across the Commonwealth.⁴⁰ The industry includes subsectors like hospitality, transportation, regional attractions and entertainment, and travel tours and serves as a powerful economic engine in every corner of Pennsylvania. With minority populations making up roughly 50% of workers employed in the tourism industry and small businesses making up 80% of tourism-based businesses, increased investment in the tourism industry will assist in bridging equity divides and help to lift up all Pennsylvanians.⁴¹

To realize the full potential of Pennsylvania's tourism industry, the state government will adopt a new and modern model of destination marketing through stakeholder engagement, distributed marketing, and catalytic destination development. With Pennsylvania's outdoor industry accounting for 1.8% of state gross domestic product and building on the success of the Office of Outdoor Recreation, we will continue to make significant investments in the outdoor economy to both amplify its economic output and enhance the quality of life for Pennsylvania residents.⁴² With increased funding and a refreshed focus, we will create and implement a new tourism strategy that adapts to modern times to help the industry and those employed within it to thrive for years to come.

OUTDOOR PLACES, SHARED SPACES

Pennsylvania's 2025-2029 Statewide
Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan



PRIORITIES AND GOALS



Promoting Community and
Economic Development



Advancing Health
and Wellness



Supporting Access
and Inclusion



Addressing Infrastructure
and Maintenance



Progressing on
Sustainability and Climate



Promoting Community and Economic Development

The benefits of outdoor recreation to community and personal wellbeing has long been understood. What is becoming clearer is how investment plays a significant role in a community's economic wellbeing. Pennsylvania's \$19 billion outdoor recreation sector is no longer quiet, and businesses, local governments, and visitors are seeing the positive communal and economic value of strong connections to natural resources. Regardless of these benefits and strong public support, there needs to be an intentionality in development where communities are prioritized, amenities are not only for tourists, new and existing businesses are supported, and infrastructure is maintained and well designed to lay lightly on the landscape.



Many people experienced the physical and mental wellbeing of stepping onto a trail or into a park during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Recreation areas, both rural and urban, exploded with the Outdoor Industry Association reporting the total number of outdoor recreation outings hitting an all-time high in 2021.¹² Even before the pandemic, people experienced the value of being outdoors. According to a 2018 study by Pew Research, "being outdoors" provided a great deal of meaning on par with spending time with friends, caring for pets, or listening to music.¹¹ Pennsylvania is understanding the social and economic value of outdoor recreation as well. According to the most recent federal data Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation economy is creating strong communities and grew at a faster rate than the general Pennsylvania economy (which also grew). In 2023 the Commonwealth's Outdoor Economy was worth \$19 billion, approximately 1.9% of State GDP, and growing at a rate of 9.6% from 2022. This translates to more than 168,000

jobs and puts Pennsylvania's outdoor industry in the top 10 largest in the country.¹²

Being a state rich in natural resources with close proximity to major population centers such as Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Cleveland, and New York City, (in addition to its own metropolitan regions of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia), Pennsylvania has the opportunity to translate those natural resources to visitor experiences. Extractive industries at the turn of the 19th century took advantage of this proximity and generated immense wealth and shaped the modern labor class; however, they also changed the state's natural landscape. Now, after dedicated work from environmental pioneers and a conservation minded public, the state's natural resources, and its half-day drive proximity to more than 20% of the U.S. population make it a fantastic place for people to live, do business, **and** protect natural assets.

Priority Area: Promoting Community & Economic Development

Goal & Action Item	Key partners
1) Support communities in creating vibrant and resilient regions through outdoor economic development.	
A) Connect communities to local and regional outdoor recreation through trails, safe on-road networks, waterways, and other infrastructure.	DCED; DCNR; Economic Development Organizations; Municipalities/Counties; Statewide Conservation & Recreation Organizations
B) Provide best practices for recreation planning to create welcoming places and provide quality services for residents and visitors.	DCED; DCNR; Economic Development Organizations; Municipalities/Counties; MPO/RPO
C) Expand, enhance, and modernize the use of data to support recreation planning, management, and engagement.	DCNR; PGC; PFBC; DCED; DOH; PennDOT; Economic Development Organizations
D) Deliver outdoor recreation as a strategic tool for economic development.	DCED; Economic Development Organizations
2) Further activate Pennsylvania as a hub for outdoor recreation and adventure for all people.	
A) Convene a commercial recreation summit to facilitate dialogue about best practices for events, guiding, and conducting business on public and private natural lands.	DCNR; PFBC; DCED; Statewide Conservation & Recreation Organizations
B) Build Pennsylvania's brand as a national leader in outdoor recreation through tourism, innovation, product development, and industry expertise.	DCED; Destination Marketing Organizations; Economic Development Organizations
C) Develop a clear and cohesive agreement and permit process for special, commercial, and organized activities on DCNR managed lands.	DCNR
3) Develop and support Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation industry and its businesses and workforce.	
A) Develop outdoor recreation incubators, accelerators, innovation hubs, and similar to support outdoor recreation business and workforce development.	DCNR; DCED; Economic Development Organizations
B) Grow the capacity to assess, plan, design, build, and maintain natural surface trails.	DCNR, Charitable Foundations; Statewide Conservation & Recreation Organizations; Municipalities/Counties

¹¹ <https://outdoorindustry.org/article/2024-outdoor-participation-trends-report/>

¹² <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2018/11/20/where-americans-find-meaning-in-life/>

¹³ <https://www.bea.gov/news/2024/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2023>




Forests for All

A Plan for Pennsylvania's Forests and People

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Bureau of Forestry Strategic Plan 2025

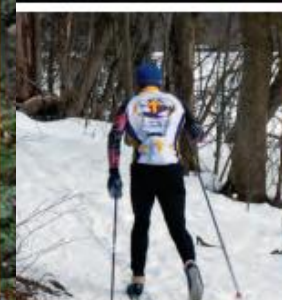


Pennsylvania
Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources
Bureau of Forestry

**Penn's
Parks**
FOR ALL

A Plan for Pennsylvania's
**State Parks
of Tomorrow**





Growing Outdoor Recreation for Pennsylvania

CONCLUSIONS REPORT AND ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE

Strategic Priority: Build Capacity within Pennsylvania's Outdoor Industry

In comparison to other industries of its size and impact in Pennsylvania, the outdoor industry is underdeveloped, undercoordinated, and under recognized as a sector of our economy. The Office will help foster organization within the outdoor industry, understanding and empowering our outdoor workforce, and more effectively communicating its value to Pennsylvania's economic competitiveness, quality of life, and sense of place.

ORGANIZE THE OUTDOOR INDUSTRY

- Support the formation of an outdoor business alliance through which the outdoor industry can organize.
- Develop outdoor innovation hubs or clusters to achieve critical mass and synergy across production and value chains.
- Develop and maintain databases of Pennsylvania's outdoor businesses and foster communication and collaboration among them.
- Hold business pitch contests, incubator/hack events, and support 'leaps' in business growth.
- Identify gaps in Pennsylvania's outdoor industry and coordinate programs to support filling them.
- Expand access to capital and technical supports for outdoor businesses.
- Develop 'one-stop' and decision-tree resources to help outdoor businesses with permitting, regulations, access to entrepreneurship supports, and reduction of up-front barriers to participation in the outdoor economy.
- Support small business and local competitiveness in the outdoor economy.

DEVELOP THE OUTDOOR WORKFORCE

- Conduct a study of Pennsylvania's current outdoor workforce, needs for the future, and pathways to satisfying workforce needs.
- Support outdoor industry apprenticeship and mentorship programs.
- Foster connections between outdoor employers and educational institutions to enhance both professionalization and equitable inclusion in the outdoor workforce.
- Expand outdoor recreation knowledge within related professions (e.g., economic development, planning and engineering, conservation, health care) through professional development, continuing education, and bootcamp modules.
- Elevate and stabilize compensation, benefits, working conditions, and professional status of outdoor workers, especially those in seasonal, service, and field-based positions.
- Leverage outdoor workforce as a tool for retaining and attracting competitive workers in both urban and rural areas.



BB

I am very excited to see our state moving in this direction. Thank you for connecting with the user groups and outdoor community as a whole.

JOE FORTE, PALMERTON, EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA ALLIANCE OF CLIMBERS



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Appalachian Development Plan

June 1, 2024



George B. Stevenson Dam Reservoir
Carbon County, PA



ARC Goal 4 – Building Regional Culture and Tourism

Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by preserving and investing in the Region's local, cultural heritage, and natural assets.

State Objective 4.1:

Pennsylvania will invest in tourism and outdoor recreational asset development to drive economic growth.

- PA Strategy (4.1.1) Develop initiatives to support tourism expansion, including heritage and eco-tourism development, through assessments, technical assistance, and marketing campaigns.
- PA Strategy (4.1.2) Promote asset-based development opportunities by encouraging economic and community development organizations to utilize their historical, environmental, and cultural resources.
- PA Strategy (4.1.3) Promote regional development, preservation and entrepreneurship along PA's vast river network, greenways, forests, trails, and other natural assets.
- PA Strategy (4.1.4) Promote asset-based entrepreneurial development based upon historical, cultural, structural, and geographic resources.
- PA Strategy (4.1.5) Increase domestic and international leisure travel to the Commonwealth to grow the tourism industry's economic impact.
- PA Strategy (4.1.6) Collaborate with industry stakeholders and partners to develop and implement cooperative marketing initiatives.
- PA Strategy (4.1.7) Preserve the natural, cultural, and heritage assets that abound throughout Pennsylvania and educate citizens on the value of our Appalachian region.

State Objective 4.2:

Pennsylvania will build capacity within the outdoor industry.

- PA Strategy (4.2.1) Support outdoor business alliances to build capacity and organize the industry.
- PA Strategy (4.2.2) Develop outdoor innovation hubs or clusters to achieve critical mass and synergy across production and value chains.
- PA Strategy (4.2.3) Expand access to capital and technical supports for outdoor businesses.

State Objective 4.3:

Develop the outdoor workforce.

- PA Strategy (4.3.1) Support outdoor industry apprenticeship and mentorship programs.
- PA Strategy (4.3.2) Foster connections between outdoor employers and educational institutions to enhance both professionalization and equitable inclusion in the outdoor workforce.
- PA Strategy (4.3.3) Expand outdoor recreation knowledge within related professions (e.g., economic development, planning and engineering, conservation, health care) through professional development, continuing education, and bootcamp modules.

State Objective 4.4:

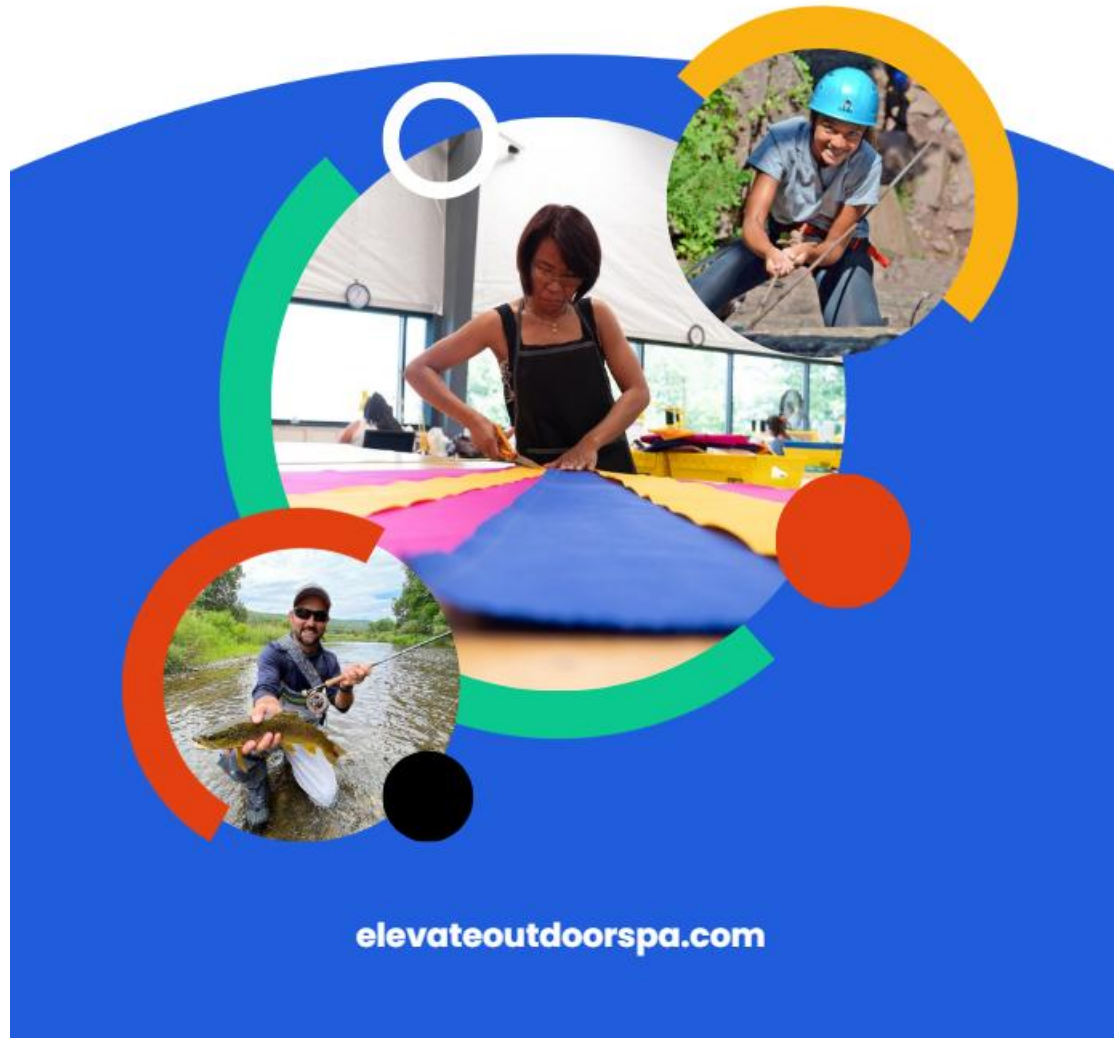
Prepare the outdoors for Pennsylvania's future.

- PA Strategy (4.4.1) Develop 'on-ramps' for individuals, including students, and organizations to develop toward leadership roles in Pennsylvania's future outdoor economy and recreation system.
- PA Strategy (4.4.2) Advance a long-term understanding of PA's outdoor needs and incorporate it into planning and development efforts.

ELEVATE

Business Engagement Workshop

March 2025



elevateoutdoorspa.com

Top Priorities for Consideration



Business Growth and Development Services

How might we increase services to directly support the creation and sustainability of outdoor recreation businesses?



Marketing Support

How might we ensure that outdoor recreation businesses, and the state's outdoor industry as a whole, receive adequate marketing support and attention?



Workforce Attraction, Development, and Retention

How might we ensure that Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation businesses are equipped with a skilled workforce, and that outdoor careers are aspirational and family-sustaining?



Advocacy

How might we best support the outdoor industry in achieving a more favorable environment to do business in Pennsylvania?



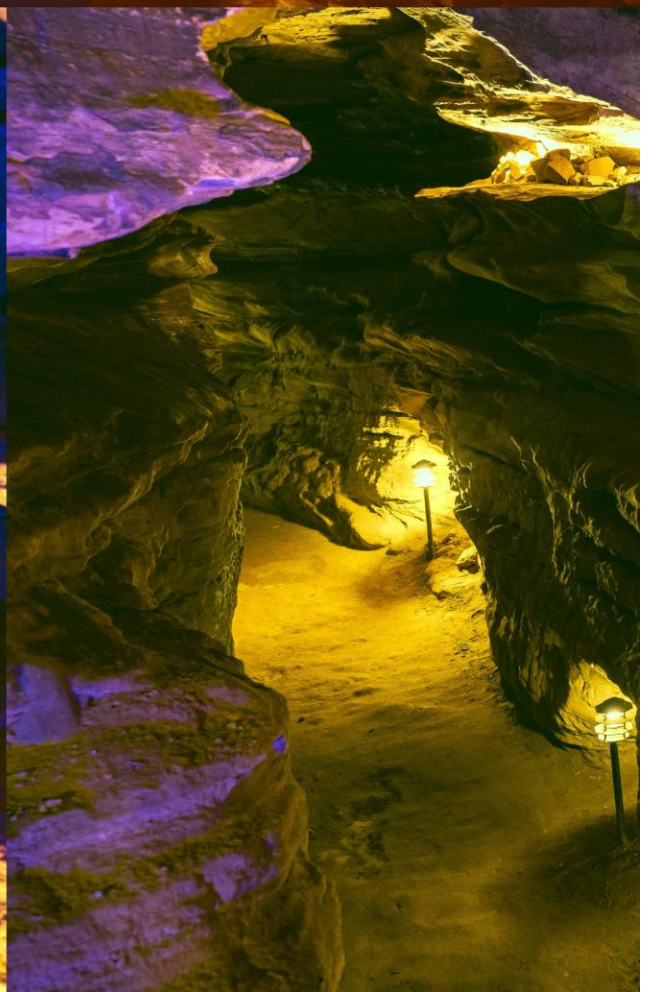
Peer Networking with Other Businesses

How might we better connect Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation businesses to share experiences, knowledge, and best practices?



Access to Capital, Funding, and Financing

How might we ensure that Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation businesses have access to capital and financing opportunities that support business creation, continuity, and growth?



A group of people are sitting around a campfire at night. The fire is bright and central, illuminating the scene. People are wearing casual clothing, including hoodies and jackets. The background is dark, suggesting a nighttime outdoor setting. The overall atmosphere is warm and social.

Thank you very much
There's always room for one more around the campfire!

Nathan Reigner, PhD
Director of Outdoor Recreation
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