

Bipartisan Budget Follows Through On Governor Shapiro's Promise To Protect Pennsylvania's State Parks And Forests And Spur Economic Development Through Outdoor Recreation

By Wesley Robinson

Harrisburg, PA -- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today highlighted the significant investments in public lands and outdoor recreation in the commonsense bipartisan budget recently signed into law by Governor Josh Shapiro.

Pennsylvania's 2023-24 budget provides \$112 million to maintain and improve infrastructure in parks and forests, which is single largest investment in decades.

Additionally, the budget proposes \$2.8 million to support operating needs for the management and safety of our public lands and the creation of a new Office of Outdoor Recreation.

"As people seek more time outdoors with their friends and families, it is important we make investments that help provide positive experiences for those visiting parks and forests and support Pennsylvania's growing outdoor recreation economy," Dunn said. "Thank you to Governor Shapiro and the Pennsylvania General Assembly for supporting these important investments in the infrastructure and operations on our public lands. We will put this funding to good use as we continue to be positive stewards of our state parks and forests for future generations."

The agency's large public land system contains not only natural areas, but many roads, bridges, dams and structures, most of which were built more than 50 years ago -- the infrastructure investments in this budget will be critical in addressing DCNR'S backlog of needed infrastructure work.

"The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation [PPFF] applauds Governor Josh Shapiro and the Pennsylvania General Assembly for recognizing the important role that state parks and forests play in Pennsylvania," said PPFF President Marci Mowery. "Two-thirds of Pennsylvanians (PDF)Opens In A New Window agreed that state government should prioritize public lands infrastructure and we are grateful to see Governor Shapiro delivering for Pennsylvanians with these substantive investments in public lands. Not only do these places support a robust outdoor economy, they are important for the physical, mental and emotional health of the citizens of the Commonwealth while also pro□

Also included in the budget is funding to support the creation of Pennsylvania's Office of Outdoor Recreation.

This new office is focused on helping leveraging Pennsylvania's diverse and exceptional natural spaces to help grow the outdoor recreation industry, which adds \$14 billion to Pennsylvania's economy, accounts for 152,000 jobs and 1.6 percent of the state's GDP.

"We hired Pennsylvania's first Director of Outdoor Recreation in 2021, and less than two years later, we are the largest of the 18 other states that have an Office of Outdoor Recreation," Dunn noted. "We see the outdoors as a means to transform health and wellness in the Commonwealth, and as a way to create meaningful economic opportunities in our communities. This is an exciting step forward for the future of our outdoors."

"We are thrilled to see this announcement of a new state office of outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania, becoming not just the 19th state to create such an office but also the largest state by population," Outdoor Recreation Roundtable President Jessica Turner said. "We have been especially impressed to see all that Director Nathan Reigner has already accomplished in his time in the role, from activating stakeholders around the Commonwealth and promoting economic development to expanding outdoor access to all Pennsylvanians. Our members across the \$862 billion outdoor recreation economy are celebrating and thank the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Governor Shapiro for supporting this important effort to create this office."

Governor Josh Shapiro signed into law a commonsense, bipartisan budget for fiscal year 2023-24 that delivers on his top priorities to create a stronger economy, safer and healthier communities, and better schools.

This budget makes historic investments in Pennsylvania children's education, supports businesses and speeds up permitting, helps older adults stay in their homes, protects and strengthens communities, and ensures law enforcement and first responders have the resources they need.

DCNR manages 124 state parks, 2.2 million acres of state forest land, and works with local governments and municipalities to provide grants, planning, and other resources to communities across Pennsylvania.

Visit DCNR's website for more information about the agency and check out DCNR's Calendar of Events for events on public lands.

Rossi Auto Group Announces New Beneficiary for the 14th Annual Festival of Trees!

By Brittany Powelson

WASHINGTON, NJ (August 2023) We're in the heat of summer, a time when many are thinking about vacations, barbecues and family reunions. For Rossi Auto Group (Rossi), it means getting ready for the holiday season!

Rossi is excited to announce a new beneficiary of their 14th annual Festival of Trees. Warren County Habitat for Humanity will join longtime recipient Abilities of Northwest Jersey for this year's Festival. The event is scheduled for Thursday, December 7th, 2023 from 5:30-8:30 PM and sponsorship opportunities are available.

The Festival of Trees transforms Rossi Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram into a dazzling winter wonderland. Trees are sponsored by individuals, families, companies, and organizations. Each tree is beautifully decorated by the sponsor or a volunteer during the week leading up to the event. On December 7th, guests will be welcomed by the sounds of holiday music, the warmth of Christmas cheer, and of course, Christmas trees as far as the eye can see! See below for information on how to sponsor.

"It is an honor to work with these two great organizations that provide extraordinary support to many families in our community," Patti Sue Rossi of Rossi Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram commented. Rossi Auto Group covers all event expenses, so 100% of every donation goes directly to the organizations.

Since its beginning in 2010, the event has raised over \$400,000 for local non profits. If you would like to contribute to this mission and are interested in sponsorship opportunities, information is available on the website at www.RossiFestivalOfTrees.com. Tickets for admission can also be purchased at the same link.

