

A Promising Future Underway for Pennsylvania's Outdoor Economy

By DCNR

PA. - With bicyclists rolling by, the setting was perfect on the last day of August one year ago when Governor Josh Shapiro announced the formation of Pennsylvania's Office of Outdoor Recreation in Connellsville, Fayette County.

With a river and trail fueling its growth and prosperity, the town was symbolic of the power and potential of outdoor recreation that could be harnessed with a new office.

It's been a year since the office was formally announced and structure created inside the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, but the work to lift up the outdoor economy had begun in earnest a year before, with the hiring of the state's first Director of Outdoor Recreation, Dr. Nathan Reigner.

Office of Outdoor Recreation Director Dr. Nathan Reigner speaks with outdoor economy stakeholders. Bicycles appear behind.

Reigner immediately got to work soliciting feedback from stakeholders engaged in the outdoor economy, convening listening and strategy sessions, hosting webinars, and making countless new connections with businesses, economic development organizations, non-profits, and government entities.

Silas Chamberlin, Chief Strategy Officer at York County Economic Alliance, a key contributor to the office's vision and formation, sees an immediate impact from the work.

"After only one year, the Office of Outdoor Recreation has exceeded expectations in galvanizing the outdoor recreation economy and its stakeholders," said Chamberlin.

"Travel to any community in the state and chances are they've heard of the office, are following its growth with excitement, and are -- often for the first time -- talking about their community's parks, trails, and rivers as economic assets. This Commonwealth-wide interest reaffirms the many opportunities the office has to bring together and fully leverage Pennsylvania's massive outdoor sector."



Growing Outdoor Recreation in Pennsylvania

A store featuring kayaks, paddles, towels and other miscellaneous outdoor recreation items. Shortly after its formation last August, the office produced its conclusions report and roadmap for the future from those conversations and feedback.

The Growing Outdoor Recreation for Pennsylvania Report and Roadmap (PDF) is the synthesis and compilation of the hundreds of voices who participated in the year-long engagement process.

The report outlined foundational principles, strategic priority areas, and more than 50 action items to unite, grow, and strengthen Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation economy.

One of the first action items to begin in the first year is Pennsylvania's Outdoor Business Alliance project, unveiled at Gilson Snow by Governor Shapiro in February.



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