



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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ICYMI: Shapiro Administration Investments and Support Help Expand Pennsylvania's \$19 Billion Outdoor Recreation Industry, Create Over 4,000 New Jobs

Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation economy has grown by \$2 billion — a 10 percent increase since he took office — supporting more than 168,000 jobs and delivering \$9 billion in wages and salaries to Pennsylvanians.

At the REI store in Mechanicsburg, Governor Shapiro announced new steps his Administration is taking to foster collaboration and support outdoor recreation businesses.



Mechanicsburg, PA – Yesterday, **Governor Josh Shapiro** announced new steps his Administration is taking to help outdoor businesses grow, connect with workers, and compete in Pennsylvania’s economy. Joined by **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Dunn**, **DCNR Director of Outdoor Recreation Nathan Reigner**, **REI President & CEO Mary Beth Laughton**, and **Aliner President & CEO Brett Randall** at the REI store in Cumberland County, Governor Shapiro laid out concrete steps to grow the outdoor recreation economy, following the Administration’s work to grow the \$19 billion industry, which now supports more than 168,000 jobs statewide.

From day one, Governor Shapiro has made outdoor recreation and tourism a central part of his economic development strategy. In 2023, he launched the **Office of Outdoor Recreation** to connect Pennsylvania’s public lands, businesses, and workers — and in 2024, created the **Outdoor Business Alliance of Pennsylvania (OBA PA)**, a statewide network now implementing a business growth plan shaped by more than 1,000 Pennsylvania companies and industry leaders. When it was launched in 2023,

Pennsylvania became the largest state in the nation with a dedicated office focused on the outdoor recreation industry.

“Pennsylvania is a national leader in outdoor recreation — and my Administration is competitive as hell to make sure we’re at the very top,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “When we invest in outdoor recreation, we create good-paying jobs, support thriving main streets, and build stronger rural and urban economies. Two years ago, we stood up the Office of Outdoor Recreation to put Pennsylvania on the map – and today, we’re delivering real results for small businesses, workers, and communities across our Commonwealth.”

Pennsylvania’s outdoor recreation industry grew by 10 percent since Governor Shapiro took office — adding \$2 billion to the state’s economy and nearly 4,000 new jobs. The industry now represents 2 percent of the Commonwealth’s GDP and provides \$9 billion in wages and salaries to Pennsylvanians, according to the [U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis](#).

“Our state parks and forests are not only places to connect with nature – they are the foundation of Pennsylvania’s thriving outdoor recreation industry,” said DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn. “These public lands drive tourism, support small businesses, and help make Pennsylvania a premier destination for outdoor recreation.”

Launched in March 2024 with \$50,000 from the Commonwealth and \$200,000 in private seed funding from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, OBA PA is a direct result of a year-long engagement process that connected with more than 1,000 businesses statewide. At REI, Governor Shapiro and Director Reigner announced that OBA PA will be focused on four core priorities:

- **Supporting Small Business Growth** by providing resources, technical assistance, and trainings to support rural and urban outdoor startups.
- **Spurring Workforce Development** through job matching programs and regional convenings to connect employers and workers.
- **Increasing Access to Capital** by establishing the new *Elevate Outdoor Business Grant Program* and an outdoor funders network to help entrepreneurs scale.
- **Fostering Industry Collaboration** with statewide and national events – including the first-ever Pennsylvania Outdoor Industry Expo – to connect businesses, investors, and industry leaders.

“We heard directly from businesses across Pennsylvania that outdoor recreation is a driver of growth – and they need help to scale and hire,” said **Nathan Reigner, Pennsylvania’s Director of Outdoor Recreation**. “The Alliance is a direct response to what we heard – it’s about connecting businesses to resources, growing the workforce, and making sure outdoor recreation companies have what they need to thrive.”

“The Outdoor Business Alliance is proving that when we bring together government, private partners and the outdoor business community, we can create an environment where businesses succeed, communities thrive, and Pennsylvania’s outdoor industry continues to grow,” said **Silas Chamberlin, Interim Executive Director, Outdoor Business Alliance of PA.**

The announcement was held at **REI’s Mechanicsburg store**, which opened in 2021 and was named “Best in the Nation” in 2024 – a recognition awarded by company leadership based on performance and co-op member feedback. Across Pennsylvania, REI employs nearly 800 people in four stores and a Bedford distribution center, and it sells products from more than a dozen Pennsylvania-based companies including Dansko Footwear, Organic Climbing, Vargo Outdoors, and Zippo.

“We’re made up of over 25 million members who share a love for life outside,” said **REI President & CEO Mary Beth Laughton.** “For more than 85 years, our mission has been to inspire and enable a life outside for everyone. And that’s definitely not just a tagline. It is how we live, how we connect, and how we protect the places that make that possible. And here in Pennsylvania, that mission is thriving.”

Pennsylvania-based manufacturers like **Aliner** — the 14th largest RV manufacturer in the U.S., headquartered in Mt. Pleasant — also played a key role in shaping OBA PA. Aliner employs about 95 Pennsylvanians, sources from 25 local suppliers, and generates approximately \$4 million in in-state sales annually.

“We’re proud to build opportunity here in Pennsylvania — not just campers, but jobs and partnerships,” said **Brett Randall, President & CEO of Aliner.** “This kind of support shows that Pennsylvania is serious about growing the outdoor economy.”

Building on Pennsylvania’s Outdoor Recreation Economy

Pennsylvania’s 124 state parks and 2.2 million acres of state forestland form the foundation of the outdoor economy, drawing millions of visitors every year and fueling small businesses in every region. Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests are free and open to the public.

Since taking office, Governor Shapiro has delivered historic investments and new opportunities to grow the industry:

- **\$122 million for state park and forest infrastructure** — the largest investment in decades.
- **\$15 million for tourism marketing** in the 2024–25 budget to attract more visitors and support main street businesses.

- **\$1.3 million to expand ATV access and trail infrastructure** statewide.
- ***Pennsylvania: The Great American Getaway*** — the Commonwealth’s new tourism brand and campaign launched in 2024.

In 2023 alone, 197 million visitors spent \$47.9 billion across Pennsylvania, supporting more than 507,000 jobs and generating \$4.8 billion in state and local tax revenue.

Governor Shapiro's [2025-26 proposed budget](#) includes **\$5 million** in new funding to expand and enhance public lands — including the expansion of Lehigh Gorge State Park to include Glen Onoko Falls Trail and the creation of Pennsylvania’s 125th state park at Laurel Caverns in Fayette County, the state’s first subterranean park. It also includes **\$65 million to prepare for America’s 250th birthday**, including new investments in tourism promotion and regional event security.

From day one, **Governor Shapiro** has made [strategic investments](#) to elevate outdoor recreation, transforming it into a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's economy and communities. These efforts are driving economic growth, fostering entrepreneurial opportunities, and creating jobs across the Commonwealth.

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