



Pennsylvania
Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources

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**Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Kicks Off 3rd
Annual Outdoors for All Celebration in Philadelphia**

More than 25 Philadelphia outdoor recreation and conservation organizations came together to offer hands on activities, opportunities to get out on the water, education, and community connection at the kickoff event.

Three more Outdoors for All events are scheduled for July and August in Harrisburg, Lancaster, and Pittsburgh.

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources manages Pennsylvania's 125 state parks and 2.2 million acres of state forestlands, which are free and open to the public every day.

Philadelphia, PA – Today, **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** joined local officials and community organizations at [BLJ Community Rowing](#) in Philadelphia to celebrate the Commonwealth's third annual *Outdoors for All* celebration.

“Today’s event was full of energy and community spirit, and it was inspiring to see so many people and organizations come together to celebrate the simple joy of being outside,” said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. “Events like this show what access to the outdoors can mean for people, from the sense of belonging it creates to the mental and physical benefits that come with connecting with nature. This is what Outdoors for All is all about, and it is why DCNR is committed to making sure every Pennsylvanian can enjoy the outdoors in a welcoming and meaningful way.”

Kick-Off Event in Philadelphia

This year’s kickoff event brought together more than 25 regional organizations and community groups for a free, family friendly celebration on the Schuylkill River. Visitors enjoyed interactive activities, environmental education, games, music, yoga, dance, food, and the chance to try rowing and Chiliboats on the water.

"Philadelphia Parks & Recreation is proud to care for more than 10,000 acres of parks, trails, and public spaces that serve residents in every corner of our city," said **Susan Slawson, Commissioner, Philadelphia Parks & Recreation**. "Seeing families on the Schuylkill River today alongside so many dedicated community partners is a reminder that the outdoors can open doors to new experiences and bring people together in meaningful ways. We're grateful to DCNR for bringing Outdoors for All to Philadelphia and helping more people discover everything our parks and waterways have to offer."

Participating organizations included Audubon Mid-Atlantic, Awbury Arboretum, BLJ Community Rowing, Circuit Trails, Fairmount Park Conservancy, Friends of the Wissahickon, GirlTREK, Healing Through the Land, HealthELivin, IM ABLE Foundation, JSJ Food Bank, Latino Outdoors, Overbrook Environmental Education Center, Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, Philadelphia City Rowing, Philadelphia Outward Bound School, Philly River Flow Yoga, Prescribe Outside, She is Focused, and many others committed to expanding access to outdoor recreation.

"Outdoors for All" was a natural fit for us because we are a boathouse without walls—nature is our backdrop, and we work hard to be good stewards of the outdoors," said **Brannon Johnson, Owner and Head Coach of BLJ Community Rowing**. "We're excited to see DCNR intentionally building partnerships with non-traditional outdoor organizations. This approach will help expand access to outdoor experiences and create positive, long-term impacts for communities for years to come. BLJ Community Rowing has served as a bridge to the surrounding neighborhoods, introducing more than 1,000 people to the sport of rowing and creating an environment that fosters learning, personal growth, and community development. Through these connections, we help make the outdoors more accessible and welcoming to people who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to experience it."

BLJ Community Rowing, the host of this year's kickoff, is the first Black-owned and operated rowing organization in the country. Founded and led by **Brannon Johnson**, the program has worked since 2013 to make rowing accessible by expanding opportunities for people to connect with the Schuylkill River, build community, and experience the sport as a pathway to personal growth and new possibilities.

Celebrating Outdoors for All Month

Outdoors for All Day is recognized each year on July 19 to highlight Pennsylvania's commitment to welcoming, inclusive access to nature for all residents and visitors. **July is Outdoors for All Month**, expanding the celebration into a statewide series of events that bring together recreation, conservation, and environmental organizations. What began as a single celebration in Pittsburgh in 2024 has grown into four events across the Commonwealth.

These events also reflect DCNR's broader *Mosaic* initiative to strengthen community connections and ensure all people are represented and welcomed on Pennsylvania's public lands. This year's theme highlights the importance of expanding water access

and creating more opportunities for water recreation. **Upcoming free events will take place in Harrisburg, Lancaster, and Pittsburgh:**

- July 18 – [Harrisburg](#), **Italian Lake Park**, 2960 North 3rd Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110
- July 23 – [Lancaster](#), **Reservoir Park**, 832 East Orange St, Lancaster, PA 17602
- August 15 – [Pittsburgh](#), **Allegheny Commons Park**, West Ohio Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15212

All events run from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM and are supported by regional organizations and municipal leaders including the **City of Harrisburg**, **Let's Go 1-2-3**, **Friends of Reservoir Park**, the **City of Lancaster**, **Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy**, **Outdoor Inclusion Coalition**, and the **City of Pittsburgh**. All events will have Spanish and American Sign Language interpreters onsite to provide free language interpretation services for attendees.

Accessibility and Inclusion in State Parks and Forests

DCNR continues to expand accessible recreation opportunities across Pennsylvania through **new infrastructure**, **improved trip [planning tools](#)**, and **enhanced visitor resources**. The agency recently launched **expanded accessible recreation website pages that outline accessibility features at more than 100 state park and forest locations** and include a new search tool to help visitors find facilities that fit their needs.

On the ground, [new improvements](#) include **communication boards**, **colorblind glasses**, **Handy Talker communication cards**, and other tools to support visitors with diverse abilities and communication needs. DCNR also continues to invest in accessible trails, boat launches, playgrounds, wildlife viewing areas, hunting areas, and other recreation sites. **Pennsylvania now offers more than 120 miles of ADA accessible trails in state parks and 82 miles in state forests**, with additional projects underway.

Investing in Communities Through Statewide Recreation and Conservation Grants

DCNR's **Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2)** provides funding for local governments and nonprofit organizations to support recreation and conservation projects. Grants help communities develop and rehabilitate parks, plan and build trails, protect land and water resources, conduct conservation planning, and strengthen regional partnerships.

“As the homebase for the Prescribe Outside program, Awbury Arboretum is thrilled to participate in the Outdoors for All event,” said **Grace Parker, Prescribe Outside Program Director**. “Awbury's motto, Nature for All, reinforces the spirit of the day and the notion that everyone has the right to experience the many benefits of outdoor activity. Through the Community Conservation Partnerships Program grant, Prescribe Outside has not only built meaningful connections with partners within the city and

nature prescription programs across the state, but also elevated our message around the inherent value of green spaces to our health and wellbeing.”

Since 1995, DCNR has invested nearly **\$1.5 billion into more than 10,000 outdoor-related projects** across Pennsylvania. In 2026, the Shapiro Administration [announced](#) a nearly **\$82 million investment in new state funding** to support [more than 295 recreation and conservation projects across Pennsylvania](#). These investments align with DCNR’s [2025-29 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\): *Outdoor Places, Shared Spaces*](#), which outlines a roadmap to improve outdoor access, equity, and sustainability across the Commonwealth and meet the outdoor recreation needs of Pennsylvanians.

In 2025, these grants enabled the development or rehabilitation of **165+ parks**, the protection of **7,155 acres for recreation and habitat**, and the construction or rehabilitation of **nearly 70 miles of trails**, including closing **eight Priority Trail Gaps**.

Since the program began, **more than 440,000 acres** have been permanently protected, **40 percent of local parks** have received funding, and over **90 percent of Pennsylvanians live in a municipality with at least one DCNR grant project**.

If a nonprofit organization or local government is interested in applying for a C2P2 grant, DCNR staff are available to assist with questions, site visits, and guidance on preparing competitive applications. Applicants are encouraged to [contact their regional advisor](#) before starting a proposal. For more information visit [DCNR’s Community Conservation Partnerships Program webpage](#).

Outdoor Recreation and Pennsylvania’s Growing Economy

The outdoor recreation industry contributed **\$20.4 billion** to Pennsylvania’s economy in 2024 — representing 2 percent of the state’s GDP. Under Governor Josh Shapiro’s leadership the sector supports **more than 177,000 jobs** and generates **\$9.5 billion in wages**, [according](#) to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

With more than **14,000 miles of trails**, **6,500 local parks**, **125 state parks**, and **2.2 million acres of forest land**, Pennsylvania boasts one of the largest public trail systems in the eastern U.S. — positioning the Commonwealth as a leader in four-season recreation, a hub for active tourism, and making it [The Great American Getaway](#).

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