



Pennsylvania
**Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources**

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**Shapiro Administration Expands Boyd Big Tree Preserve
Conservation Area in Dauphin County with 12-Acre Addition and New
Trailhead, Boosting Recreational Access to Harrisburg Suburbs**

*Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area now reaches Lower Paxton Township,
Dauphin County's largest municipality.*

*Addition of the 12-acre parcel, formerly known as Hocker Park, adds a new parking
area and trailhead to the 1,068-acre park.*

*DCNR manages Pennsylvania's 125 state parks and 2.2 million acres of state
forestlands, which are free to the public and offer year-round opportunities to connect
with nature.*



Harrisburg, PA – The Shapiro Administration is expanding public access to **Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area** with the addition of a 12-acre parcel in Lower Paxton Township, Dauphin County's largest municipality.

The parcel, formerly known as Hocker Park, adds a new parking area and trailhead to the 1,068-acre conservation area and its 12 miles of trails, providing residents of the Harrisburg region with additional opportunities to hike, experience nature, and enjoy the outdoors. The expansion advances the [2025–2029 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan \(SCORP\)](#), Pennsylvania's five-year blueprint for expanding and enhancing outdoor recreation across the Commonwealth through **Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**.

"Pennsylvania's state parks and public lands are an important part of what makes our Commonwealth a great place to live, work, and raise a family, and we're continuing to make investments that give more Pennsylvanians access to them," said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. "This addition expands Boyd Big Tree Preserve into Lower Paxton Township and gives more people in the Harrisburg region a place to hike, enjoy nature, and connect with the outdoors close to home. DCNR is proud to work with local conservationists to protect these lands and expand public access."

Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area straddles Blue Mountain and provides habitat for deep-forest birds, including warblers, as well as a variety of wildlife and native plants. During the summer and fall, wildflowers such as butterfly weed fill the old field and attract field birds and numerous species of butterflies. Visitors can hike the conservation area's trails, watch wildlife, participate in state park programs, and enjoy other outdoor recreation opportunities.

"For many years, the park has served as a trailhead and access point to the Blue Mountain Ridgeline," said **Lower Paxton Township Supervisor Kate Scheib**. "People have been hiking this trail for a long time, but what many may not have, not all the land you were crossing is publicly owned. That's what makes celebrating today so significant. On behalf of the Lower Paxton Township Board Supervisors ... I want to thank DCNR, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy, the participating landowners and everyone else who has made this connection possible."

Boyd Big Tree's history begins with a donation from Alexander Boyd in 1999. Boyd donated 914 acres to DCNR's Bureau of State Parks. Planning and support from The Nature Conservancy, along with additional acquisitions and donations from the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and Lower Paxton Township, were integral to creating the current 1,068-acre footprint of Boyd Big Tree.

"[This project] took a lot of work and time and effort, but it also involved funding from DCNR, the Nature Conservancy and the Boyd Foundation," said **Peggy Fogarty, executive director of the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy**. "Thankfully into the future, the community can enjoy this property."

“We’re thrilled to be a part of this story and it’s a story of partnership, patience, and it’s a story of the [Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape](#),” said Evan Endres, Pennsylvania government relations director for The Nature Conservancy. “Right where we’re standing is a superhighway of life: birds, animals, amphibians, reptiles move through [this space]. This is a real section of refuge.”

“This is such a great piece of our outdoor ecosystem, and we are blessed here in Central Pennsylvania to have so many puzzle pieces of state parks, game lands, or other public lands we can enjoy,” said **State Representative Nathan Davidson**. “I grew up hiking in these mountains with my dad ... and just this year I brought my [children] to Boyd Big Tree. Hopefully someday, they’ll be lucky enough to pass it on.”

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](#).

Visit [DCNR’s website](#) for more information about Boyd Big Tree Preserve Conservation Area and find more information about events on public lands [here](#).

Photos and video of the event are available [here](#).

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