Pennsylvania
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, October 30, 2026

MEDIA CONTACTS:
DCNR, Maddy Neff, madneff@pa.gov, 717-585-3136

In Somerset County, Shapiro Administration Invests Nearly $1 Million in Infrastructure Improvements at Mount Davis in Forbes State Forest, Pennsylvania's Highest Natural Point

Upgrades include entrance and parking improvements, new interpretive displays, and a fully refurbished observation tower.

Since taking office, Governor Josh Shapiro and his Administration have committed more than $246 million to modernize state parks and forests through critical infrastructure improvements.

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.

Salisbury, PA – The **Shapiro Administration** is investing **nearly $1 million** in improvements at **Mount Davis**, Pennsylvania's highest natural point, to enhance visitor access, improve safety, and upgrade amenities at this popular destination in **Somerset County's** **Forbes State Forest** — one of the Commonwealth's most unique natural and historical landmarks.

Today, **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** visited Mount Davis to highlight the $986,000 infrastructure investments, which includes a refurbished observation tower, new interpretive displays and signage, and improvements to the entrance road and parking area.

"Mount Davis is the highest point in Pennsylvania and one of the most distinctive places in Pennsylvania's state forests," said **Secretary Dunn**. "Visitors come from across the country and around the world to experience this site, which is why continued investment in access and safety matters so much. This landmark reflects the stunning beauty and

outdoor recreation opportunities that make the Commonwealth a destination for visitors from near and far."

The Mount Davis improvement projects include:

- **Entrance Road and Parking Upgrades**: The project included resurfacing the entrance road and parking lots with asphalt and completing associated drainage improvements near the intersection of South Wolf Rock Road and Mount Davis Road. The parking lot includes accessible spaces and a designated area for buses to safely turn around.

- **Observation Tower Repairs**: The Mount Davis Observation Tower underwent its first major refurbishment in years. Contractors partially disassembled the steel structure, removed corrosion and old paint, blasted and repainted all surfaces, and reinstalled all platforms, stairs, and components. A containment system ensured safe removal of debris during repairs.

- **Updated Interpretive Signage and Displays**: DCNR staff worked with the Gecko Group to update the full array of more than 30 interpretive displays and navigational signs. A new informational kiosk was installed to provide better orientation for visitors as they explore the High Point area.

The interpretive upgrades were designed to help visitors understand what they can see and do at the High Point, learn about the natural and cultural history of Mount Davis, and appreciate the conservation work happening across Pennsylvania's state forests. These improvements aim to ensure that visitors from across the country and around the world feel welcomed, informed, and inspired to learn more about the region's unique topography, climate, heritage, and ecological value.

"Mount Davis is a special part of the Deer Valley YMCA Family Camp experience, from exploring its hikes and trails to the drive back to camp that so many of our campers look forward to," said **Jay T. Summerville, Senior Program Director at Deer Valley YMCA Family Camp**. "Through our environmental education program, we help campers turn time outdoors into opportunities to learn, build confidence and develop a lifelong appreciation for nature. We've begun meeting with the Forbes State Forest team and look forward to working closely with them to support these experiences for generations of campers."

Mount Davis, rising 3,213 feet above sea level, is a defining feature of Forbes State Forest. The forest spans nearly 59,000 acres across Fayette, Somerset, and

Westmoreland counties and is named for Gen. John Forbes, who ordered the construction of a military road from Bedford to Fort Pitt in 1758. The Commonwealth purchased most of the Mount Davis property in 1929. Visitors to the area enjoy a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities, including hiking, fishing, mountain biking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, picnicking, and snowmobiling, as well as the ADA-accessible Bog Trail in the Spruce Flats Bog and Wildlife Area. Mount Davis is in the Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape and the National Road Heritage Corridor.

The Highpointers Club, an organization dedicated to visiting the highest points in each state and a long-time supporter of the Mount Davis site, has been an ongoing collaborator in promoting and enhancing the area.

“Highpointers Club members from across America enjoy visiting Mount Davis, the highpoint of Pennsylvania,” said **Dave Covill, President, The Highpointers Foundation**. “The ease of access from an interstate highway, combined with an excellent paved road to the summit parking area, make it easy for travelers to plan a stop here. Most Highpointers make the scenic and safe climb of the tower to look out over the treetops, taking in the rolling hills of southwestern Pennsylvania. The Highpointers Foundation has appreciated the opportunity to work with the rangers to create a bench at the summit and look forward to future cooperation to help make visitation even more enjoyable. We congratulate the forest management on the construction of the new interpretive panels at the summit. All visitors enjoy reading about history, geography, and local visitation conditions.”

Investing in Local Communities, Conservation, and Recreation

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 *The Great American Getaway*. Under **Governor Josh Shapiro’s** leadership, the Administration has closed three of the Top 10 Trail Gaps, with work advancing to close five more.

“Laurel Highlands PA is a premier destination in the Commonwealth,” said **Ann Nemanic, Executive Director, Laurel Highlands Tourism**. “Visitors are familiar with the region’s iconic tourism assets such as Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, Ohiopyle and Laurel Caverns state parks, the Flight 93 National Memorial, and the Great Allegheny Passage Bike Trail, but Mount Davis offers a new discovery for many. A recent social media reel on Mount Davis saw 475,000 views in a short 10-day span, that’s evidence that people want to see more of what our region has to offer. For hikers,

cyclists, and casual walkers, Mount Davis is an outdoor recreation destination and a key reason why visitors come to the Laurel Highlands. Over the past 12 months, 42 percent of all visitors to Somerset County participated in some sort of outdoor experience. Mount Davis being one of them — and, we all know, some of the best fall foliage images are captured from atop the Mount Davis Observation Tower."

Since taking office, **Governor Shapiro and his Administration** have committed **more than $246 million** to modernize state parks and forests through critical infrastructure improvements. **Governor Shapiro** has prioritized investments that improve Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, grow the outdoor recreation economy, and enhance quality of life for residents. Outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania generates **$20.4 billion** annually and supports more than **177,000 jobs**.

DCNR's Bureau of Facility Design and Construction manages design and construction of Pennsylvania's state park and forest infrastructure projects and has been a leader in implementing DCNR's commitment to LEED Certified Buildings and sustainable infrastructure on public lands — including a $7.5 million new visitor center at Marsh Creek State Park seeking LEED certification. Learn more about buildings on public lands on DCNR's website.

Visit the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources website for more information about Forbes State Forest and check out DCNR's Calendar of Events for events on public lands.

See photos and video from the event at PAcast.com.

###