



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Wolf Administration Announces Acquisition of 5,600-Acre Property in Schuylkill, Luzerne Counties for Motorized Recreation Area

Landmark Budget Allocation Will Also Mean Three New State Parks

McAdoo, PA – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today announced the acquisition of a 5,600-acre parcel of land that will be developed into a motorized recreation area in the Weiser State Forest in Schuylkill and Luzerne counties.

The acquisition was made possible by the nearly \$700 million secured by Governor Tom Wolf in the 2022-23 budget for conservation, recreation, and preservation throughout the commonwealth. The funding will also allow development of three new state parks in locations to be announced later this year.

“We at DCNR are very excited to announce the acquisition of this property and look forward to it being developed into the Catawissa Recreation Area, the first such area within our state forest system,” Dunn said. “As the statewide leader, DCNR works to expand outdoor recreation across the commonwealth, and this is an exciting new opportunity that we believe will help strengthen the region’s reputation as a destination.”

DCNR acquired the land with funding designated in [Pennsylvania’s 2022-23 budget](#), to provide diverse motorized recreation opportunities. The department is working with a consultant to develop and implement a motorized recreation plan, which will include community and stakeholder feedback.

The Catawissa Recreation Area includes land that comprised the site of an off-highway vehicle park, Paragon Adventure Park, that closed more than 10 years ago.

“This is an important step for expanding motorized recreation in Pennsylvania and of a type of outdoor recreation where we see growing interest,” DCNR Deputy Secretary John Norbeck said. “Acquiring these lands also helps us achieve a number of conservation goals including improving and protecting water quality, restoring degraded lands, conserving ecological resources, and providing education opportunities to the visitors and the surrounding community.”

The property has significant ecological value as a large contiguous tract of forest including sensitive plant habitats, high quality tributaries to the Catawissa Creek, and the presence of a stand of old-growth hemlock. In addition to enhancing motorized recreation in Pennsylvania, the new area will provide opportunities to manage natural resources, restore water quality, and rehabilitate [abandoned mine lands](#) in the area.

“Our state forest team is equally as thrilled for the motorized recreation area as we are the conservation work that will be done to restore the Catawissa Creek Watershed,” State Forester Ellen Shultzabarger said. “The legacy of this project will result in long-term protection of plant and animal habitats, cleaning up the source of acid mine drainage discharges and creating a new asset in the region.”

DCNR rangers will be patrolling the site to manage existing activity and control unauthorized use until the motorized recreation area opens, which is expected in the summer of 2024.

Outdoor recreation is responsible for nearly \$12 billion in economic impact and thousands of jobs across Pennsylvania, making the addition of the Catawissa Recreation Area a key piece in growing contributions from the commonwealth’s outdoor recreation sector.

“Visiting a recreation area like Catawissa is not just a fun way to spend a day in nature with family and friends. It makes an important contribution to the prosperity of Pennsylvania’s rural communities,” Director of Outdoor Recreation Nathan Reigner said. “Each year, motorized outdoor recreation contributes more than \$350 million to Pennsylvania’s economy, a contribution that directly benefits small businesses, such as vehicle dealers and repair shops, restaurants, gas stations, and accommodations close to destinations like Catawissa as well as in riders’ hometowns.”

State forest officials will manage the land until planning is complete and a contractor assumes control of operations. The project serves as a new model for utilizing Liquid Fuels funds and state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) restoration funds to conserve land while also expanding opportunities for ATVs, dirt bikes, off-highway vehicles and other forms of recreation.

Visit [DCNR’s website](#) for more information about motorized recreation and state forests.

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