

Pennsylvania's state parks and forests are engines of economic strength and businesses located near them frequently benefit from "location, location, location."

The COVID-19 Pandemic affected all of us in profound ways. For Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, it meant an increase in visitor numbers across the board which also meant, in the case of many of these small ventures, an increase in business.

The Foundation is happy to share their stories.

Small Business Prospers from Location in Leonard Harrison State Park

If you enjoy visiting the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon, make sure you stop by Miller's Purely Maple. (MillersMaple.com). For 25 years, Dale Miller and his wife Melanie have produced high-quality maple products. Dale started tapping trees and boiling syrup as a hobby, but eventually that hobby turned into a family business. They produce an average of 1,000 gallons of syrup per year.

They have a trailer set up in Leonard Harrison State Park where they sell their homemade maple products. When Pennsylvania shut down due to COVID-19, people flocked to the state parks. Dale estimates that they had a 50% increase in profit this year from the uptick in visitation.



"We enjoy being in a state park and meeting people from far away and showing the people what we have to offer. A lot of people come from cities and don't always have experiences with the outdoors," says Dale.



Dale Miller tapping a tree. Photo by Bill Crowell, "Creative Makers of the Pennsylvania Wilds-A Traveling Public Art Show" sponsored by the Wilds Cooperative.

When it comes to Pennsylvania investing in the state parks and forests, Dale says it is imperative. When he looks at Leonard Harrison State Park, he sees many opportunities for improvement. All the facilities need a facelift, starting with the visitor center. On busier days, the bathrooms do not suffice. Increased funding to state parks can help to improve infrastructure and satisfy other needs that state parks have.

Investing in state parks and forests help nearby small businesses like Miller's Purely Maple. To learn about ways that you can help support Pennsylvania's parks and forests, visit the Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation website at PAParksAndForests.org.