

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.

State Park and Local Business have Mutually Beneficial Relationship

Since 2017, Joe Tackett has owned and operated Tackett's by the Lake (**Facebook.com/Tacketts-by-The-Lake-264080947371278**). The nature of the business has evolved over the years, now Tackett's sells and services golf carts and offers onsite plasma cuttings of decorative signs, blacksmithing, metal working, and a gift shop that sells a variety of products including wind chimes and campfire accessories. On their property in Patton are several other businesses that rent from Tackett. Connelly's Barbershop; Lakeside Portraits, a photography studio; and Tackett's Country Cottage, an AirB&B. This little business development along Lake Road in Patton experienced their best year yet amidst a global pandemic.



Tackett's by the Lake is located just outside Prince Gallitzin State Park and Joe estimates about 25% of their customers are going to or from the park. With state park and forest visitation up exponentially this year, Joe estimates that the exposure they received by being near the park helped make 2020 their best year yet, dollar wise. Because of the pandemic, Joe believes folks were camping as a way to enjoy a vacation in a safe environment. Those campers stopped by Tackett's by the Lake to purchase accessories for their campsite.

The relationship between Tackett's and Prince Gallitzin is mutually beneficial. Joe has helped the park with repairs to their boat docks. Joe loves being near the park and said that it is a "lifelong career." After leaving the corporate world to start his own business and move to the area, Joe's attitude and work environment has completely changed.



Teaching the next generation of welders. Photo Tackett's by the Lake, Facebook page.

His enthusiasm for his work radiates to his employees; when the employees speak to the customers that excitement translates. Joe also gives the park some credit for his happy customers. "Customers are in a good mood by coming to the park, enjoying what they have, and happy customers translates to more business," said Joe.

While at work, Joe will ask customers what brings them to the area. Overwhelmingly the answer is the park. "I've never heard anyone complaining [about the park]. The staff is friendly, campground is clean, Prince Gallitzin is doing a great job."

Joe visits Prince Gallitzin with his family taking advantage of the beach and hiking trails. They saw the impact of increased visitation this summer. Joe believes a little more investment into some maintenance issues would keep visitation trending upward. "If they would invest money, improve the beach that could increase traffic and revenue to the area." He said. "They have the same struggle as everyone, a budget they need to work within. I know they have to prioritize and they are doing a great job."

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