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SPRING/SUMMER 2021

What Makes West Virginia Wonderful is Right Outside Your Window



Ed Gaunch
West Virginia Department
of Commerce

Ed Gaunch serves as Cabinet Secretary of the West Virginia Department of Commerce. He was appointed to this position by Governor Jim Justice in December of 2018. His prior career in the insurance industry spanned three decades, including 28 years at the Carson Agency in Charleston, West Virginia, where he served as President and Chief Executive Officer for several years.

In West Virginia, we are blessed with four incredible seasons that show us every few months how beautiful change can be. More than mere changes in the weather, these seasons show off our state's unrivaled natural beauty and bring people from all over the

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world to catch a glimpse of our wonderful mountain views and enjoy outdoor activities for the first time and on return visits. As the tourism and outdoor recreation industry in West Virginia continues to grow, our state has everything we need to fulfill that deep desire in human nature to be outside.

comes in the stillness, when you hear birdsongs fill the tree canopy above you while you enjoy a hike or when you see the majestic colors of our forests in the fall.

People who visit quickly realize this as well. That is why they continue to return.



As our state, country and world recovers from a global pandemic, the gift of the outdoors provides a tremendous opportunity and path forward for West Virginia. As more people go outside to take in the sheer beauty and peace of Almost Heaven, they quickly find out that strength, peace, the solace they seek from the pandemic and everyday life can be found right here.

As people discover the healing effects of the outdoors, we are seeing record numbers of new anglers, hunters, hikers, kayakers, rock climbers and skiers choose to come to and be in West Virginia. Because here, we all have the freedom to just simply “be.” None of this would be possible without the millions of dollars the forward-thinking Justice administration has invested in our outdoor economy. We have seen millions invested to improve our state parks' lodging and camping



facilities. Millions invested in lake, river and stream access points that attract visitors from within and outside our state. Millions invested in our fish hatcheries, stocking program and Wildlife Management Areas, which have enhanced our hunting and fishing options for anglers and hunters of all ages.

These investments not only improve our greatest assets but help us leverage our state's strengths and improve the Almost Heaven experience we deliver to the world.

As Commerce Secretary, I also have seen how important our state's readily accessible outdoors are to promote a high quality of life to employees of prospective companies. As we recruit companies from all over the world, we are seeing time and time again that quality of life and livability are of utmost importance.



As we continue to benefit from the diversification of our economy, I believe the outdoors will become even more important as people realize how much they value time to appreciate the peaceful, wonderful outdoors.

I believe that West Virginia's present is bright and that our future is great. Together, we are establishing a path forward for our state, one that allows us to enjoy a higher quality of life and appreciate the beauty that is in front of us. Let us commit to share with others the reasons why they should visit and consider following our country roads to their new home here in West Virginia, to a place that has changing seasons and a changing economy. A place that delivers wonderful benefits, outdoor opportunities for all and a place where we all belong. 

