



Helping Communities Leverage Their Outdoor Recreation Assets

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Baileys Trail System Completes All 88 Miles, Becomes Longest Continuous Mountain Bike-Optimized Trail System East of the Mississippi

Celebration marks opening of the new Buchtel-Snow Fork Trailhead and groundbreaking for the future Baileys Visitor Center in Chauncey.

ATHENS COUNTY, Ohio – July 23rd, 2026 — The Baileys Trail System is officially complete.

Community leaders, partners, and supporters gathered today to commemorate the completion of all 88 miles of the Baileys Trail System. The celebration included the ribbon cutting for the new Buchtel-Snow Fork Trailhead and a groundbreaking ceremony for the future Baileys Visitor Center near the Chauncey-Dover Trailhead.

Spanning more than 9,000 acres of the Athens Unit of the Wayne National Forest, the Baileys Trail System offers world-class opportunities for mountain biking, hiking, trail running, adaptive cycling, and other human-powered recreation. Since construction began in 2019, the project has transformed former coal mining lands into one of Ohio's premier outdoor recreation destinations.

The completed trail system is projected to generate approximately \$5.3 million in annual economic impact, connect three trailhead communities, and leverage more than \$30 million in community investment throughout Appalachian Ohio. Already drawing tens of thousands of visitors annually, the Baileys has become a nationally recognized outdoor recreation destination, supporting local businesses and creating new opportunities for economic growth.

"What began as a vision for trails has become a catalyst for community investment, tourism, and economic growth throughout Appalachian Ohio," said Jessie Powers, Executive Director of ORCA. "The Baileys Trail System represents years of



collaboration, and today belongs to everyone who helped bring this vision to life—from our partners and funders to volunteers, local communities, and the riders, runners, hikers, and families who will enjoy it for generations."

"These improvements will help connect more people to public lands while supporting recreation, tourism, and local communities throughout Southeast Ohio," said Jason Reed, Athens District Ranger for the Wayne National Forest.

The day's celebration began with the groundbreaking for the future Baileys Visitor Center near the Chauncey-Dover Trailhead. Ohio Department of Natural Resources Director Mary Mertz and Abandoned Mine Lands Program Administrator Marissa Lautzenheiser joined project partners to commemorate the next chapter of the Baileys Trail System and continued investment in Appalachian Ohio.

The celebration then moved to the new Buchtel-Snow Fork Trailhead, where the Nelsonville-York High School Band welcomed attendees before remarks from Tim Warren, Chair of the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia and President of the York Township Trustees; Jason Reed, Athens District Ranger for the Wayne National Forest; Jay Kline, ORCA Vice Chair and President of Buchtel Village Council; John Carey, Director of the Governor's Office of Appalachia; former State Representative Jay Edwards, whose leadership helped secure critical funding for the project; and Jessie Powers, Executive Director of ORCA. The celebration concluded with a ribbon cutting marking the completion of all 88 miles of the Baileys Trail System.

The new Buchtel-Snow Fork Trailhead expands access to the trail system and serves as a new gateway for residents and visitors alike. Its close proximity to the Nelsonville-York K-12 campus also creates new opportunities for students and educators to connect with outdoor recreation and public lands.

The Baileys Trail System has also served as a catalyst for broader regional collaboration. The partnerships formed through the project helped inspire Ohio's Rolling Hills, an 18-county destination initiative that promotes outdoor recreation, tourism, and economic opportunity across Appalachian Ohio.

ORCA and its nonprofit partner, the Athens-Wayne Outdoor Asset Development Corporation (AWOADC), extend their gratitude to the many partners who helped make the Baileys Trail System possible, including Governor Mike DeWine; the Governor's Office of Appalachia's Appalachian Community Grant Program; the Ohio Department of Natural Resources; the Appalachian Regional Commission; the National Forest Foundation; the USDA Forest Service and Wayne National Forest; the Ohio Department of Development; local governments throughout the region; private

landowners; and the hundreds of volunteers, trail stewards, and community advocates who championed the project. ORCA also extends special appreciation to the Jay and Micki Brooks family for their generous land donation that made the Buchtel-Snow Fork Trailhead possible, and to the Athens Bicycle Club for its years of volunteer leadership and trail stewardship.

About ORCA

The Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA) is a council of governments advancing outdoor recreation, regional collaboration, and community development across Appalachian Ohio. ORCA manages the Baileys Trail System in partnership with the Wayne National Forest and works alongside communities across 18 counties to create healthy places, vibrant economies, and lasting outdoor experiences under the unified brand, Ohio's Rolling Hills.

Learn more at www.baileystrailssystem.org and www.orcaohio.com and ohiosrollinghills.com

High-resolution photos from today's celebration are available upon request.



(left to right) Tim Warren, Board Chair, Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia and York Township Trustee President; Jay Kline, Vice Chair, Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia and Village of Buchtel Council President; Mary Mertz, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources; Jessie Powers, Executive Director, Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia; and Marissa Lautzenheiser, Abandoned Mine Lands Program Administrator, Ohio Department of Natural Resources break ground at the Baileys Visitor Center. (left to right) Mary Mertz, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources; Miki Brooks, land owner, Jason Reed, District Ranger, Wayne National Forest; Dawn McCarthy, Wayne National Forest; Bob West, Athens Bicycle Club President; Jessie Powers, Executive Director, Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia; Tim Warren, Board Chair, Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia and York Township Trustee President; Jay Kline, Vice Chair, Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia and Village of Buchtel Council President; and John Carey, Director, Governor's Office of Appalachia cut the ribbon at the Buchtel-Snow Fork Trailhead. PHOTOS: ©Delia Palmisano/ORCA