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Sponsorship of elite off-road cycling team elevates region as premier gravel riding destination

State College, PA, Feb. 25, 2026 – The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB) and the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance (HVSEA) today announced an exciting new marketing partnership that will further position Centre County, PA, as a premier gravel riding destination while elevating the local outdoor recreation and cycling ecosystem.

The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau recently inked a three-year sponsorship agreement with the Bear National Gravel Team, the highest caliber development cycling team in the country.

“The Bear National Gravel Team is thrilled to announce our partnership with The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau. This collaboration represents a significant step forward in our mission to diversity and strengthen the competitive domestic gravel cycling scene for future generations,” said Alec Levy-O’Brien, Gravel Manager, Bear National Team. “Since our founding in 2011, we have been dedicated to fostering a more inclusive and accessible competitive cycling community. Partnering with the HVAB allows us to expand our efforts in developing emerging talent across the country, with a special focus on Pennsylvania’s vibrant cycling landscape.”

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HVAB President and CEO Fritz Smith said the partnership with the Bear National Gravel Team validates the region's incredible outdoor assets and showcases Happy Valley as a premier off-road and gravel cycling destination with national relevance.

Under the agreement, the Bear National Gravel Team uniforms will prominently feature The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau logo. This will give Happy Valley, PA, a presence at more than 10 major events in locations across the country each year.

"Sponsoring an elite gravel cycling team demonstrates an organizational commitment to growing our outdoor brand, particularly our strong gravel riding product, lifting up our local cycling community and supporting business in the process," Smith said. "We anticipate that this partnership will translate to real economic and tourism impact across the board."

In addition to wearing Happy Valley, PA, branded jerseys in competition, the team will serve as brand ambassadors for the destination. Bear National Gravel Team riders will visit the county in July to create marketing content showcasing Happy Valley, PA, attractions, outdoor recreation, and dining and shopping options.

"In the off-road cycling world, the Bear National Gravel team has a tremendous following," Smith said. "Their endorsement of Happy Valley should generate valuable exposure for the region among the cycling community and outdoor enthusiasts."

Smith said the unique destination marketing tactic complements Happy Valley, PA's reputation as a top outdoor recreation destination.

One of the Bear National Gravel team riders who will help showcase Happy Valley, PA, is Penn State University student and Centre County native Emily Stapleton.

"I'm stoked about The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau and the Bear National Gravel Team partnership," Stapleton said. "I'm grateful to have grown up in State College with amazing gravel, trail, and road riding accessible right from town. With three state forest in close proximity there are near endless options for a quick spin or half day training ride on pristine gravel or epic single track.

"I've gained the confidence to race gravel on the national level in part because training here has equipped me for anything I'll find on an elite racecourse," she added. "I am excited to see this partnership elevate the visibility of outdoor adventuring in Happy Valley."

The Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance considers the sponsorship an important step in attracting high-profile cycling events to the county and even elevating existing races such as the annual Rothrock Grit Gravel Grinder.

“The sponsorship is unique in that it highlights our amazing outdoor lifestyle through the lens of an elite off-road biking team,” said Eric Engelbarts, Executive Director of the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance. “Our gravel roads are second to none. Gaining exposure into the elite cycling world opens doors to potentially attracting more events to the area and bringing attention to our own local cycling scene.”

Smith said that when people think of gravel riding, The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau wants Happy Valley, PA, to immediately come to mind.

“Exclusive destination marketing organization sponsorship of the BEAR National team is a big step in that direction,” he said. “We look forward to a successful partnership.”

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About the Bear National Team

Since its founding in 2011, Bear National Team riders have won 60 national titles in the past six years in both mountain and cyclocross disciplines. To date, 62 different Bear National Team riders have been invited to race at World Cup and World Championship events with Team USAC in North America, South America and Europe. Bear has excelled in a race schedule that includes events as varied as the U.S. Cup MTB race series, USAC MTB Nationals, World Cup races, Canada Cup Series, Life-Time Series, and other long mountain and gravel events.