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The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau Board of Directors announces new leadership

State College, PA, May 20, 2026 — On Tuesday, May 19, The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB) Board of Directors unanimously voted to appoint Eric Engelbarts as President and CEO.

Engelbarts, who serves as Executive Director of the Happy Valley Sports & Entertainment Alliance (HVSEA) and was appointed HVAB Deputy Director in January 2026, replaces Fritz Smith, who resigned his position on May 14.

“Eric has been deeply involved in the organization’s day-to-day operations, financial planning, staff leadership and continued modernization efforts for the past several months” said HVAB Board Chair David Capperella. “The Board is confident Eric will provide steady leadership as we work together to position Happy Valley, PA for the next phase of tourism economic growth.”

Centre County Commissioner and HVAB Board Member Amber Concepcion said the county is “proud of the tremendous work The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau has been doing to expand tourism to record levels across Centre County.”

“The continued success of this organization remains a priority for the commissioners,” she said.

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Engelbarts said he is honored to serve as the new president and CEO of The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau.

“I look forward to working closely with our partners across the tourism, hospitality, business, and community sectors,” he said. “The HVAB has achieved record levels of visitation and visitor spending while building strong community relationships that enhance both the visitor experience and the quality of life for those who call Happy Valley home.

“As we look ahead, we are working strategically and thoughtfully with our stakeholders and community partners to prepare for a promising new era of leisure, business, and sports tourism growth.”

Engelbarts said the vision forward is to build on this foundation so that Happy Valley can be elevated as a world-class destination where people want to visit, live and work and more fully realize the value a strong visitation economy brings to Centre County.

Capperella said Engelbarts brings extensive experience and a track record of success in the sports and entertainment field. He joined the HVSEA as its first executive director in 2023. He previously served as executive director of Michigan Sports Alliance, where he created and grew the State Games of Michigan. Prior experience also includes time with the Alabama Sports Festival, West Michigan Sports Commission and the National Congress of State Games.

Engelbarts received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Recreation, Park and Tourism Administration from Western Illinois University in Macomb, IL, and a Master of Education in Sport Management and Recreation from Springfield College in Springfield, MA.

He will continue to oversee HVSEA activity as he assumes new responsibilities as HVAB president and CEO.

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