

# The Progress Fund

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## **Whitewater Guide Purchases Business in Calmer Waters**

Former Mountain Streams & Trails Operations Manager, Donnie Hasch, recently completed the purchase of the assets of a long existing canoe rental and livery operation located on Layton Road, just outside of Perryopolis. Hasch, operating under the formal name of Bottom Yough Outfitters, Inc., plans to retain the well-known business name of *Hazelbaker Recreational Services*.

Hazelbaker's, founded by Cal Hazelbaker over 20 years ago, has overseen thousands of canoe enthusiasts and fishermen down the Class I water located on lower section of the Youghiogheny River. Cal and Faith Hazelbaker plan to retire to Florida later in the year. Patrons generally congregate in Layton at the fully stocked bait shop and check-in area and then are transported to the put-in location in Dawson.

“It has always been a goal of mine to own a business associated with the river that I love and have spent so many hours paddling,” said Mr. Hasch. “When the opportunity to purchase Hazelbaker's was presented to me, it was like a dream come true. Cal and Faith Hazelbaker have been great to work with throughout the process and have left me with a stable and well-respected entity in Fayette County.”

Hasch, originally from West Mifflin in Pittsburgh's South Hills, built his first waterborne craft at age 12, a fiberglass canoe, using his Mom's curtains. His family spent many vacations on the Cheat River, where he learned the boating and paddling skills that are now his livelihood.

“We are delighted to be able to provide financing for this young entrepreneur who loves the Youghiogheny and its surrounds,” said Progress Fund Loan Officer, Diane Wiegman. “The proximity of Hazelbaker’s to the Yough River Trail and its role in local tourism makes this loan a perfect fit for The Progress Fund and it’s mission.”

The Progress Fund provided \$92,000 in financing to Bottom Yough Outfitters, Inc. for the purchase of the business assets of Hazelbaker’s. The Progress Fund is a spin-off of Congressman Murtha’s Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission. The Fund is an equal opportunity lender whose mission is to create economic opportunity by lending needed capital and providing technical assistance to the small travel tourism-related businesses industry in a nine country rural region of southwestern Pennsylvania. The Fund’s loan portfolio includes 65 loans, which have created over 160 jobs. The Progress Fund has also provided loans in Fayette County to the owners of the Inn at Lenora’s, Fabrizi’s Restaurant, and Wilderness Voyaguers Outfitters to name a few.

“I am pleased that The Progress Fund is creating jobs in the heritage tourism industry for our region and wish them good luck,” said Congressman Murtha.

The Progress Fund partnered with Fay-Penn Economic Development Council, which provided \$40,000 in subordinate financing, and National City Bank, which provided \$92,000 to provide the necessary financing package for this transaction

Hazelbaker’s offers trips to families and organized groups such as the Boy Scouts and church youth organizations and also to individuals who wish to undertake the 4-6 hours float trip, which usually begins in Dawson and ends in Layton. In addition to canoe trips, Hasch plans to improve the picnic areas and add bike rentals and a shuttle service for Yough River Trail users.

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