

Project Profile



Location:

Route 819
Dawson, PA

County:

Fayette

Description:

Renovation and
Equipment Purchase

Total Project Cost:

\$50,000



Wilderness Voyageurs Outfitters, Inc.

People:

Wilderness Voyageurs Outfitters, Inc. (WVO), owned by Eric Martin and his sister, Lynne Martin, was the first commercial white water company east of the Mississippi. Eric and Lynne wanted to complement their 35-year-old white water business at Ohiopyle. The Martins wanted to develop a unique new venture for a historically narrated still-water excursion on the Youghiogheny (Yough) River at Dawson, PA. WVO needed financing to convert the first floor of a historic bank building into a retail and rental shop with a raft storage area. They also wanted to purchase a truck and rafts for their enterprise. The unusual nature of their business made conventional financing difficult.

Progress:

The Progress Fund, a heritage travel and tourism lender, provided \$20,000 for the renovation of the historic Cochran Bank Building in Dawson to serve

as the WVO headquarters and \$30,000 for the purchase of a van and rafts for the new enterprise. Cash flow from operations is repaying the loan. The loan included funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Impact:

The loan enabled Wilderness Voyageurs Outfitters to launch the first still-water excursion on the Yough River. The Martins recognized and are developing a previously untapped venue in the eco-tourism industry. In addition to the extreme whitewater trips traditionally offered, flat-water trips provide senior citizens and families with a scenic journey into the natural and cultural history of the region. WVO also provides rock climbing, kayaking and mountain biking instruction and trips.

The Progress Fund is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

