This annual report covers the 2013 accomplishments of the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Through the investments made with the Community Conservation Partnerships Program and the innovative use of technology, the Bureau’s goals and mission have been achieved and advanced to an unprecedented level.
About Us

Our Bureau’s Mission

To be a leader in establishing community conservation partnerships for advancing the greening of Pennsylvania, for protecting the Commonwealth’s natural and heritage resources, and for providing recreational opportunities for all Pennsylvanians and visitors to enjoy.

About the Community Conservation Partnerships Program:

The Community Conservation Partnerships Program combines several funding sources into one grant program. Administered by the Bureau, applications for most grant programs are accepted once a year, typically in the beginning of the year.

Types of projects eligible include:

- **Community Recreation Projects** such as acquisition of land; site plans and feasibility studies; rehabilitation and development of existing parks; comprehensive greenway and open space plans.

- **Greenway and Trails Projects** provide assistance for county and municipal greenway and open space plans; trail plans; renovation and development of trails, passive recreation areas; creation of riparian and stream buffers; renovation, construction and maintenance of trails; purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment.

- **River Conservation Projects** include river and watershed conservation plans; implementation of the conservation plans including land acquisition, development of trails, public fishing/boating access areas along river corridors and riparian buffers.

- **Technical Assistance Projects** such as the Peer and Circuit Rider grant programs strive to increase local capacity for recreation and conservation. Other projects include education, training and implementation related to natural resource conservation, recreation and parks and open space preservation.

- **Heritage Areas Program** provides assistance to the state heritage areas that have a mission to preserve and enhance natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources.

- **Conservation Landscapes** are large regions that use a place-based strategy for natural resource stewardship and advocacy. Projects focus on strategic investment conservation, recreation, sustainability and revitalization projects.

Funding sources include the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund (Key ’93), the Environmental Stewardship and Watershed Protection Act (Growing Greener), the Growing Greener Bond Fund (GG2), Act 68 Snowmobile and ATV Trails Fund, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Recreational Trails component of federal transportation funding.

Program Statistics:

- 6,091 projects with grants totaling $716 million and leveraging $749 million in local and private investment since 1995.

- 2013 Summary of Requested Funds: 370 projects requesting $99 million in grant awards and offering $128 million in local and private investment.

- 2013 Summary of Awarded Projects: 201 projects with grant awards totaling $38 million and leveraging $70 million in local and private investments.
What We Value

- Being a partner with local communities, counties, land trusts and non-profit organizations to protect and enhance Pennsylvania’s natural resources and help build attractive, sustainable communities.
- Connecting people to the places they love.
- Helping communities appreciate our natural resources by incorporating green principles and native landscaping, planting trees, using green design in buildings, protecting riparian areas and wetlands, and managing stormwater naturally.
- Supporting projects that provide: accessible, safe, close-to-home recreation facilities; trail systems that provide places to walk, bike and experience nature; critical habitat and cultural landscapes; and, public access to our rivers so they become “front doors” to vibrant, livable communities.
- Helping communities manage their growth, reduce the loss of open space and develop tools that will support responsible stewardship of our natural resources.
- Being responsive to community conservation needs and providing technical assistance, guidance and resource contacts that are timely and efficient in meeting those needs.

2013 Grant Investments

Our Community Conservation Partnerships Program continues to be strong and this past year provided over $38 million dollars for recreation, conservation and community revitalization projects statewide.

The Community Conservation Partnership Program grants supported 201 conservation and recreation projects in 62 counties. The grants funded a variety of proposals: 36 trail projects; protecting 2,718 acres of open space; 77 community parks; five river conservation projects; and 35 projects for regional and statewide heritage area, park, greenway and trail initiatives.

Some highlights of funded projects include:

- Quakertown, Bucks County, received $250,000 to further develop Krupp Site Park, a former brownfield, including an amphitheater and trail connections to adjacent sports fields, the library and a neighboring park.
- The City of Philadelphia will work with the Schuylkill River Development Corp. to use $300,000 to use an abandoned railroad swing bridge to help extend the Schuylkill River Trail across the Schuylkill near Gray’s Ferry Ave. and close a major trail gap.
- Capital Area Greenbelt plans to use $500,000 in Harrisburg and Susquehanna and Swatara townships, Dauphin County, to connect the Greenbelt to Fort Hunter Park and make traffic safety improvements at six intersections.
- Brookville Borough, Jefferson County, received $380,000 for development of a town square to include an outdoor performance venue and walkways.
- Harborcreek Township in Erie County will protect Lake Erie shoreline with $88,000 for the acquisition of 1.5 acres adjacent to the existing Shorewood Park.
- Northumberland County Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area (AOAA) Authority will further develop the AOAA with $788,007, to include the construction of off-highway vehicle facilities, trail upgrades and a trailhead.
Land Conservation:

Supporting our mission to protect “the Commonwealth’s natural and heritage resources,” Land Conservation projects result in the protection of land through either the purchase of conservation easements or property. One example is North Coventry Township, Chester County, which received a grant for a fee simple acquisition of $195,000 for the 22.5-acre Andybur Property. Bordered on three sides by the 643-acre Coventry Woods Preserve (which it will become part of), the property is within the core of “Hopewell Big Woods” and the “French and Hay Creeks Important Bird Area.” In addition to enhancing public recreation, this acquisition will further protect the “High Quality” designation of Pigeon Creek and the interior forest habitat within Coventry Woods.
In another project, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary received a grant for $100,000 to purchase a 25.3-acre parcel along its eastern approach in Albany Township, Berks County, that connects to the Appalachian Trail, Pennsylvania Game Lands 106 and Hawk Mountain lands. The property is considered highly critical for habitat protection as well as to preserve the scenic and rural integrity of the National Natural Landmark located along the Kittatinny Ridge Greenway and Important Bird Area. The project is within the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape.

**Land Conversions:**

The Bureau’s grant program has provided funding to protect open space and build parks and trails for the past several decades, and legislation was put into place to ensure the money that went into protecting open space was maintained in perpetuity for recreation and conservation purposes only. However, with changes in the economy, some communities and organizations are trying to generate income to maintain the lands set aside solely for recreation and conservation. In some cases this results in non-recreational uses that may include a building, selling the land or altering the use of the property in a way that would constitute a “conversion.”

The number of conversions has increased over the years, with Bureau staff successfully closing 71 conversions in 2013. For accomplishing this herculean task they were presented with the 2013 DCNR Team Excellence Award.

**Community Recreation and Park:**

Projects supported through the Community Parks and Conservation Division demonstrate that our program leverages community and economic resources on a local level and increases capacity for recreation and conservation. North Strabane Township Park, Washington County, received a Keystone grant of $270,000 as part of an $8.1 million project to address the recreation needs of their growing population. Twenty-three acres were added to an existing park providing room for additional baseball and softball fields, as well as a top-of-the-line synthetic turf field for soccer, football and lacrosse.

Completed in one phase, which allowed for a seamless integration of all recreational areas, the project also included five new pavilions, new restrooms, a fully equipped concession stand, a two-mile network of trails, new playground facilities, water fountains, benches, bike racks, trash receptacles, picnic tables, shade structures and numerous hand sanitation stations.

Each year DCNR and The Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society award a community with the Green Park Award. Nominations are received for parks that showcase best practices in green and sustainable design, operations and maintenance. The 2013 Green Park Award winner was Haverford Township in Delaware County for their work in adding outstanding green elements to the Haverford Reserve.
Moon Township, Allegheny County, completed their Moon Township Riverfront Park Master Plan in June 2013. This Master Plan represents the culmination of an extensive planning and public outreach effort initiated by the Township for the creation of a major new regional riverfront park along the Ohio River. The plan incorporates trendy elements such as a dog park, urban beach, landform playground, spray plaza, and a relic meadow which will make this brownfield site a premier destination for people of all ages to enjoy the Ohio River.

Community Parks and Conservation Division staff also created a new tool: Pennsylvania Interactive Sustainable Park Design Model, which presents best practices that communities and organizations can use to protect and enhance natural resources, save energy and maintenance costs, improve water quality, connect people to nature and much more.
Rivers Conservation Program:

The Bureau’s Rivers Conservation Program funded and facilitated 12 river sojourns this past year. A typical sojourn cost $40,000 for the lead organization. Sojourns provide paddling opportunities as well as education and clean-up efforts across Pennsylvania.

Public on-line voting determined the selection of the Monongahela as 2013 River of the Year, and for the first time a standardized system was implemented to support the behind-the-scenes administrative work for the voting process.

Trails:

Developing a statewide network of trails for health, recreation and economic benefits continues to be a Bureau priority. The following statistics from the Trails Advisory Committee’s 2013 annual report illustrates the impressive progress that has been made to support trail connections across Pennsylvania:

- $28 million was invested by DCNR and local matches.
- 83 miles of new trails have been added to the state total.
- 36 of 67 counties in Pennsylvania have completed DCNR trail grant projects.
- There were 56,396 unique visitors to ExplorePaTrails.com.
- Total trail count on the website is 490, with 10,945 miles of PA trails logged.

To help answer questions about existing and planned trails, their status, gaps, key partners, nearby grant projects, and other public and roadway projects affecting trails, Bureau staff along with DCNR’s Bureau of Information Technology created and launched www.BuildPATrails.com This trail planning visualization tool provides an opportunity to quickly find geographic information and also has a mobile data collection app to gather information in the field.
Partnerships:

The focus of the Partnerships Division is in their name: developing partnerships with grantees and organizations to create/increase capacity at the local level for parks, recreation and conservation. In addition to managing the Peer, Circuit Rider, Rec-TAP, Rivers, Trails, Partnerships and Heritage grants, partnerships staff were involved in the following projects and activities:

- **Webinars**  New in 2013 was the creation of five webinars that targeted recreation, conservation and park professionals; board members; and future grantees. “Budget for Success”; “Master Your Budgets”; “Recreation and Park Board Basics 101”; “ADA Webinar for Parks, Recreation and Trails”; and “Funding for Community Recreation and Conservation Projects” can all be viewed and downloaded from our Bureau website. [http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/grants/brcinteractivemapping1/trainingandworkshops/index.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/grants/brcinteractivemapping1/trainingandworkshops/index.htm)

- The 2013 Greenways and Trails Summit created an opportunity for members of the greenways and trails movement to interact with and learn from one another and leaders of the movement on a state and national level. It also provided a catalyst for dialogue among health professionals and trail providers to increase awareness of the importance of health and wellness and to build more walkable communities.

- DCNR appointed a new Bicycle Coordinator which is housed in the Bureau. The 2013 Spoke ‘n Gear Bicycle expo, a joint venture between DCNR, DEP and PennDOT brought over 40 bicycle groups, advocates, vendors and transportation officials together for National Bike to Work Day on May 17, 2013 to share knowledge and advocate for bicycle commuters. The event was kicked off by an executive bicycle ride through the capitol complex.

- The Brown Bag Luncheon Program, which brings in monthly presenters on topics of interest to staff across the department, received the 2013 DCNR Excellence Award.

- A new publication, *Pennsylvania Trail Design & Development Principles, Guidelines for Sustainable, Non-motorized Trails*, was produced by DCNR in cooperation with other bureaus to meet a recommendation from the PA Outdoor Recreation Plan (3.2).

Technology:

Technology has become integral to the Bureau’s ability to meet the needs of our grantees and partners. The Bureau’s Customer Service Division and DCNR’s Bureau of Information Technology have developed the following web-based tools for use in the delivery of services:

- The **local park validation tool** was created to provide a seamless statewide local park GIS layer using existing data sources. Stakeholders are able to input data to improve the quality and accuracy of information.
- An interactive map that provides multiple ways of finding projects that DCNR has funded for recreation and conservation projects since 1995 was created. This mapping tool gives the user the ability to search by county, grant year, conservation landscapes, funding source and many others.

- **Story Maps**, which serve as virtual visits to the wide variety of Pennsylvania’s natural wonders, recreational amenities, and conservation-focused points of interest, were created. These intelligent web maps incorporate text, photos, and interactive map-related functions, and will take you to places you may never get to see, or inspire you to visit in the near future.

- To meet the needs of inspecting the 1,500 Land and Water Conservation Fund sites that BRC is responsible for, an “app” was developed which deployed new iPad and cloud-based technology. This approach to Land & Water Conservation Fund inspections is likely to become a national model.

A DCNR department and Bureau initiative, a new **Get Outdoors PA** website was developed to make it easier for the public to access the many programs that are offered by state parks and local recreation agencies.

**Recreation and Conservation Electronic Records System (RACERS)**

Development work took place in 2013 to finalize a new grant management system that will replace the Access 97 Database. RACERS will provide a much more stable and efficient database platform. In addition, it will provide us with an opportunity to “grow” new capabilities – like a grant application/applicant interface to replace eGrants.
Heritage Areas:

Pennsylvania’s Heritage Areas continue to make Pennsylvania a better place to live, work and play thanks to their collaborative approaches and dedication to improving our core communities.

Allegheny Ridge Corporation

The Allegheny Ridge Corporation completed illustrated historical context surveys of three communities along the Mainline Canal Greenway: Huntingdon, Hollidaysburg, and Williamsburg. Collectively documenting 256 historic resources, these surveys will be used to guide future historic preservation, interpretation and recreation initiatives along the Greenway.

Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Area

For the D&L, 2013 was by far the most productive year of trail building in their 25-year history. The year saw major trail gaps eliminated as well as a variety of trail construction projects completed. Three trailheads (Black Diamond Trailhead, White Haven North, and Lehighton) were constructed along with trail crossing improvements and signage installation. In total, more than 12 miles of trail were completed.

Endless Mountains Heritage Region

Board members of EMHR voted unanimously to take the Northern Tier Buy Fresh Buy Local program under their wing. The primary goal of those who coordinate similar programs across the state is to promote local agriculture, farm stands, wineries and breweries and the grocery outlets and restaurants that support them. The initiative was given a local identity in 2007 when the Northern Tier chapter was formed by the Northern Tier Cultural Alliance (NTCA) with financial assistance from EMHR.

Lackawanna Heritage Valley

The Lackawanna River Heritage Trail had an amazing year. After much anticipation, eight new miles of trail opened in the Lackawanna Valley creating a whirlwind of excitement. The Lackawanna River Heritage Trail (LRHT) is part of a 70+ mile trail system that begins at the New York State border then south and west through Susquehanna, Wayne, Lackawanna, and Luzerne counties. The combined trail travels through 30 municipalities, including the cities of Carbondale, Scranton and Pittston.

Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor, Inc.

2013 marked the second year for the Laurel Highlands Trout Trail. This initiative was developed as a result of the Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape and stretches for 70 miles from Ligonier to Ohiopyle and the Quebec Wilds Area. A bigger and better Rendezvous was realized with a dynamic speaker, and an innovative “Trout Trail Date Night” moniker brought out young and old couples to two sold-out sessions.
Lumber Heritage Region

The Lumber Heritage Region created many new educational waysides and program materials in 2013. Some of the materials produced included the installation of signage along Redbank Valley Trail in Jefferson and Clearfield counties depicting historical and natural assets. LHR also had its CCC DVD “The Civilian Conservation Corps—A Peaceful Revolution” digitally re-mastered and produced 300 copies, with new cover art, that will be distributed to the schools and libraries in the Region.

National Road Heritage Corridor, Inc.

National Road works hard to re-vitalize south western Pennsylvania communities. In 2013 they initiated a Coordinated Transportation Study (Shuttle Bus Feasibility Study) for the Historic National Road National Scenic Byway and Laurel Highlands State Scenic Byway. NRHC secured over $380,000 in grants for the development of the Sheepskin Trail in Spring Hill Township and Point Marion Borough. Survey and design are currently underway.

Oil Region National Heritage Area

The Oil Region National Heritage Area accomplished many projects in 2013 including the construction of the southern half of the McClintock Trail, installation of wayside exhibits, rehabilitation of the Neilltown Church Building, and installation of interior finishings at the Tarbell House in Titusville. ORNHA also played an instrumental role in gathering funding and providing technical assistance to many grassroots initiatives throughout their service area.

Pennsylvania Route 6 Heritage Corridor

Pennsylvania Route 6 Heritage Corridor helps core communities realize their potential through the implementation of their Heritage Community Work Plans. In 2013, Conneaut Lake successfully raised both private and public funding to complete their streetscape project and improvements to Ice House Park and Firemen’s Beach. The coordinators developed an excellent communication plan that helped spark local interest and raised over $150,000 in private funds from residents and businesses.

Rivers of Steel Heritage Area

Rivers of Steel worked hard to bring tourism to the Pittsburgh region in 2013 by offering tours of Carrie Furnaces National Historic Landmark. Receptive Services staff continued to promote new tour packages to increase the self-sustainability of the Heritage Area and began to push outward into other counties to promote and market their heritage sites.
Susquehanna Gateway Heritage Area

In August ground was finally broken on the long-anticipated Zimmerman Center Enhancement Project. The project includes major improvements to SGHA’s waterfront site and historic building to provide high quality public recreation and heritage interpretation facilities. Key project features include a water trail landing with floating dock and canoe/kayak launch, waterfront pavilion and boardwalk, rain garden for stormwater management, pedestrian pathways, driveway and parking improvements, interpretive displays and signage, and native landscaping.

Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area

The Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area works tirelessly to promote community revitalization and economic development. In 2013 they organized events such as the Cycles and Cemeteries bike ride, Schuylkill River Sojourn, Community Bike Shares, and Pedal and Paddle Trips. They expanded the Schuylkill River Trail, launched a series of lectures and book signings, and dispersed over $350,000 in private grants to improve water in the Schuylkill River.

Conservation Landscapes:

One of the key ways DCNR is tying together the economy and the environment is its strategic effort to work in large, significant landscapes to help communities protect the sense of place and the natural assets that make them unique. Driven by a partnership approach to accomplishing conservation, recreation and revitalization goals at the regional level, Conservation Landscapes engage community leaders, other state agencies, local governments, businesses, philanthropies and nonprofits around common goals. 2013 program highlights include:

Pocono Forest and Waters

The Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority opened three new sections totaling eight more miles of the Lackawanna River Heritage Trail. Eventually the trail will run from the City of Pittston in Luzerne County to the New York border. The trail is a wonderful community asset, used by thousands of people throughout the year for health and wellness, recreation, alternative transportation, access to the river and simple enjoyment of the area’s natural beauty.

South Mountain

The South Mountain mobile phone app was launched in spring 2013. The app, featuring the natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources of the region, was designed to highlight what makes the South Mountain landscape unique and special. Users can access information about and get directions to more than 75 destinations, or explore five preset thematic tours throughout Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, and York counties. The app can be used on smartphones by searching for “South Mountain PA” on Google Play or the iTunes store.
Susquehanna Riverlands

In August the Susquehanna Riverlands partnership hosted a grant workshop to assist those interested in finding technical and financial assistance for recreation and conservation projects in their communities. About 70 people attended this event designed to help facilitate potential matching fund resources for DCNR grants and other grant programs.

Lehigh Valley Greenways

In November, DCNR Secretary Ellen Ferretti dedicated the Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center, described as the new home of environmental education in the Lehigh Valley. The facility models sustainable building practices, provides a rest stop for users of the park and Homestead Trail, and provides direct access to environmental education resources at the park. The completion of the Center has been a Lehigh Valley Greenways priority project since 2006.

Schuylkill Highlands

A comprehensive marketing strategy has been initiated in the Schuylkill Highlands that sets the stage for a new approach to promoting the region and the partnership work. A new website, which promotes the region and local activities, was complemented by a traditional brochure on the collaborative work of the partnership.

Laurel Highlands

The first phase of a sanitary/sewage project in Ohiopyle was completed in 2013. This approximately $1.1 million project is designed to eliminate infiltration of storm water into the system. This will assist with capacity issues at the treatment plant located in Ohiopyle State Park.

Pennsylvania Wilds

In 2013, the region saw the completion of DCNR’s Wildlife Center at Sinnemahoning State Park with the final installation of center exhibitry. Wildlife watching, nature photography and outdoor recreation are prominently featured in the new exhibit gallery, which also provides information to connect visitors to many other locations and features in the landscape.