As Pennsylvanians, we are attached to our special places. We are part of a strong outdoor culture borne from a traditional natural resource-based economy and a vibrant hunting, fishing and hiking tradition. Pennsylvania is also a state that has more of a regional identity than a statewide identity. Our geology and geography have contributed to this and so has our history and culture.

Penn’s Woods also lives up to its name; 60 percent of the landscape is forested. Wild and natural areas capture the beauty of the past; 120 state parks, 2.2 million acres of state forests, 1.3 million acres of state game lands and the 500,000-acre Allegheny National Forest serve as the foundation for outstanding recreation, scenic beauty and tourism.
ELEMENTS OF CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE INITIATIVES

Some of the elements that the seven conservation landscapes have in common include:

 Sense of Place. These areas have a sense of place, distinctive qualities and regional identity that goes beyond and is not limited by political boundaries.

 Readiness. Local government, community leaders and DCNR partners are ready to participate in a region-wide effort often because of threats or opportunities such as changes in the economic base, depopulation or urban sprawl.

 Engagement. DCNR and partners convened a civic engagement process that brings people of the region together to identify common values and concerns and set goals and implement a workplan.

 Strategic Investments. State agencies with regional and statewide partners provide high-level leadership, financial support and technical assistance, as well as fund key grants as possible.

 DCNR Interests and Lands. The presence of state parks and forests in the region provide the foundation for the landscape as well as a state government staff member who can help guide the initiative.

development. Additionally, about 28 percent of Pennsylvania is in agriculture, lending to the rural economy as well as the character and scenic beauty of our state. Pennsylvania’s communities provide a wealth of local parks and trails supporting close to home recreation and quality of life attributes.

All of these factors have contributed to the success of a new way of looking at regional conservation planning, recreation and local revitalization. Our history is based on an economy derived from the natural resources and our future is as well, especially if we work to attach our destiny to the special places we have.

As the state’s natural resource agency and primary conservation and recreation technical support and funding source for communities, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has refocused its expertise. Instead of working exclusively on individual parks or trails, or within state park and forest boundaries, we are taking a broader, more regional approach in areas dubbed conservation landscapes. By driving strategic investment around conservation, community revitalization, conservation and outdoor recreation projects within a landscape, you can profoundly affect local communities. Simply put: work to save special regions of the state and you save the lifestyles they offer to citizens and benefits they offer to visitors.

Conservation Landscape Initiatives are driven by a partnership approach to accomplishing conservation, recreation and revitalization goals at the regional
level. As it was formulating this initiative, DCNR found that local entities struggled with visioning, planning and implementing projects that assure resource conservation and community revitalization. By getting community leaders, other state agencies, local governments, businesses, philanthropies and nonprofits all engaged around a common goal – motivated by a sense of place – it is much easier to tackle effective land use planning, investment, citizen involvement and revitalization.

Through these landscapes initiatives, DCNR is working closely with partners and communities on issues such as:

- Creating sustainable development within local communities
- Protecting greenways
- Creating walking and biking trails
- Protecting habitats
- Acquiring conservation lands
- Reducing forest fragmentation

Work is well underway in seven conservation landscapes throughout the state: Pennsylvania Wilds, Lehigh Valley Greenways, Lower Susquehanna, Laurel Highlands, South Mountain, Schuylkill Highlands and the Pocono Forests and Waters.

While each of the seven landscape initiatives has unique qualities and sometimes dramatically different goals, they share these core principles:

- Planning is driven by needs of local residents and officials
- Land conservation is accomplished though conserving natural areas, wildlife habitat, river and watershed protection, trail and other nature-based recreational development, enhancement of existing public lands
- Community revitalization focuses on bringing new life to small towns through nature-based tourism and recreation or re-thinking small and mid-sized cities as hubs linked via the green infrastructure of the surrounding landscape and connected via a system of local trails
- Partners who work together to establish the vision, goals, and action steps for the landscape based in a model of community empowerment where all the members of the partnership have input into the decisions

The seven conservation landscapes operate under these principles to advance the issues and opportunities listed above. A good example of planning is the Lehigh Valley Greenway’s five focal landscape corridors that are based on the bi-county (Lehigh / Northampton) County Open Space and Greenway Plan.
This strong tie-in with local government garners support at the local level plus assures that a public process has been in place and that the needs of the community are reflected. On the Lower Susquehanna, DCNR and partners are using Lancaster and York counties’ comprehensive plans, as well as the Susquehanna Greenway Plan to inform the vision and goals to create a unique conservation and recreation asset in the lower Susquehanna.

Land conservation is a feature of all seven CLIs, but none have conserved more land than the Poconos Forest and Waters with approximately 40,000 acres conserved. In the Schuylkill Highlands, strategic land conservation efforts have linked French Creek State Park to the Schuylkill River Trail, and conserved parcels on important watershed conservation areas.

All seven landscape areas include robust civic engagement at many levels. In PA Wilds, a 12-county planning team comprised of the county planners steers the work of the initiative. They are so committed to this approach of working together that the County Commissioners Association of PA adopted a resolution to continue this approach, and they were recently recognized through the Governor’s local government award program.

Community revitalization is also a feature of all seven landscapes. The trail towns of the Great Allegheny Passage in Laurel Highlands support the local economy with $40 million in direct spending! The small business ombudsman in the Pennsylvania Wilds has helped spawn and connect businesses in communities throughout the 12-county region and create a “PA Wilds Brand.” Agriculture is the number one industry in Pennsylvania and nowhere is it more important to the local economy than the orchards and farms surrounding the South Mountain. The South Mountain Partnership has found common interests with the farm community and helps promote the “buy local” concept and connect farmers to recreationalists and tourists.

In conclusion, this approach to conservation, recreation and economic revitalization works well and can be used at many levels. Conservation Landscape Initiatives will continue to deliver beneficial results to local communities, visitors and the next generation of Pennsylvanians.
Strategic Investments Paying Dividends for Rural Communities

by Meredith Hill, DCNR Director, Pennsylvania Wilds
The PA Wild’s overall aim is to create a regional destination for outdoor recreation that will revitalize communities, create lasting economic opportunities, and improve quality of life—all while inspiring a stewardship ethic in visitors and residents. This is about outdoor recreation-based sustainable tourism and an economic opportunity that can’t be outsourced overseas.

Begun more than a decade ago, the Pennsylvania Wilds is the “grand daddy” of the Conservation Landscape Initiative, spearheaded by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The collaborative efforts in northcentral Pennsylvania paved the way for creation of the landscape approach throughout many other regions of the state.

**Four Primary Goals for PA Wilds:**

1. Ensure stewardship of the public lands and character of the region’s communities;
2. Support and grow private businesses such as accommodations, services, and locally made products;
3. Promote the renewal of the region’s communities and appropriate community planning; and
4. Invest in public infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience in the Pennsylvania Wilds.
Constituting almost a quarter of Pennsylvania’s land area and larger than nine U.S. states, this 12 ½ county region boasts 2.1 million acres in public land and compares in scale and potential to Yellowstone and the Great Smoky Mountains. It encompasses 29 state parks, eight state forests, 50 state game lands, the Allegheny National Forest and two nationally designated Wild and Scenic rivers. Wildlife is abundant and features the largest elk herd in the northeastern part of the nation. Water resources include many of the state’s finest headwaters and the night skies are so dark they have received international recognition.

The basic premise behind the Pennsylvania Wilds is that the region’s remoteness and ruggedness, its sparse population and large public landholdings — features that are often seen as obstacles to economic development — can be transformed into valuable economic assets through natural and heritage tourism. Ready access to a market of nearly 50 million people who live within a day’s drive provides even more power to this idea.

When the Pennsylvania Wilds concept was launched, some of its strongest supporters wondered if it could work. Not only did the Initiative introduce new ideas, it required genuine buy-in at the most grassroots level in order to thrive. It also called for a high degree of collaboration between state and local governments, federal partners and the private and public sectors — a tall order anywhere, but particularly so in a region so large and decentralized as Pennsylvania.

Many people in the region at first eyed the effort cautiously. “There’s no way an increase in tourism will affect us positively,” Millstone Township Supervisor Eric Patton told Pennsylvania Township News in 2005. Patton worried that more visitors would lead to more problems, such as more litter and “a proclivity to use township land as a bathroom.”

It was a valid concern — one echoed in various degrees in other places around the region. Patton lived and worked along the National Wild and Scenic Clarion River. Efforts to restore the Clarion started in the 1990s. By the time the Pennsylvania Wilds was launched, it was considered one of the region’s most scenic and remote water trails. Already there were problems as more fishermen, campers, paddlers and others sought access to the river. There were no public restrooms. No signage. People trespassed on private land. How could more visitors be a good idea?

Eric Patton is now one of the initiative’s staunchest supporters, and his story illustrates what partners believe to be one of the initiative’s greatest accomplishments: that it has earned a reputation for listening to local concerns and trying to find creative ways to address them for the betterment of our communities.

In Patton’s case, that came in the form of the Clarion River Municipal Partnership (CRMP), which was born at a PA Wilds workshop and brought together the numerous municipalities, counties, and state and federal public landholders along the river to tackle the issues.

Patton said the increased attention on the region’s small communities through the PA Wilds Initiative has turned out to be a blessing, not a curse. In his case, he said, it has helped secure over $1.2 million in The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding for highway construction in Millstone and Spring Creek townships. Patton notes that initially it was a few smaller DCNR grants that got them started, paving the way for local buy-in and additional grant leveraging options.
“The PA Wilds has provided a common focus that has brought a wide range of federal, state, and local agencies together to work on mutual issues we all face,” Patton said recently. “It has helped us think about the area from a regional standpoint. Another very important aspect of the Wilds is how it has fostered pride in our local communities among the residents, not just visitors to the region.”

In April 2012, DCNR Secretary Richard Allan gathered with CRMP members along the banks of the Clarion to congratulate the group on their accomplishments that include new signage along the river, additional access and camping areas with restrooms, a river-trail map, improved roads, and a summer field school along the river for local youth.

As the CRMP illustrates well, coming together with shared interests and building new partnerships, especially in a region as large as the PA Wilds, is essential to success. Another group embracing this approach is the PA Wilds Planning Team who has played a vital role in moving the effort forward since it was established in 2005. The team was formed through a ground-breaking Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement – the largest geographically of its kind in Pennsylvania. It set a solid foundation for the counties in the region to work together in support of initiative goals and, in particular, to ensure that local community character would not be negatively impacted by increased tourism. More than 50 state, local, regional and federal stakeholders involved have collectively accomplished many things, most notably

Kinzua Bridge State Park “Skywalk” observation platform
forging collaboration across municipal boundaries; working together to secure regional funding from a variety of sources to help local communities with issues around tourism development; promoting responsible planning to local communities; creating the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship; and supporting more business outreach through the work of PA Wilds Small Business Ombudsman.

In recognition of its success, the Planning Team received the 2012 Governor’s Award for Local Government Excellence in the “Building Community Partnerships” category.

Marrying Conservation and Economic Development

One of the promises of the Pennsylvania Wilds Initiative was jobs.

Ta Brant Enos, the PA Wilds Small Business Ombudsman, is familiar with the topic. Her job is to work with new and growing tourism businesses in the region. In the last two years she’s worked with more than 230 entrepreneurs and business owners – people who have gone on to create more than 117 jobs.

“People sometimes misinterpret that the PA Wilds Initiative is about making this area a playground for people from the city,” Enos said. “But it’s really about us. Our region has seen decades of job losses and population declines. Our kids go away for college or jobs and

“We have seen an increase in sales in not only camping supplies but in almost every department since the lake has reopened. Browsing traffic is up as well, which is always good for future sales.”
don’t come back. We want that to stop. Tourism can’t solve everything, but it is part of the answer. It’s something done in addition to other industries, not instead of them. Visitors help restaurants, cafes, outfitters, stores, lodges – our friends and neighbors – stay in business, create new jobs and add new products and services that residents need and want. Tourism can help diversify our local economies and makes our communities more vibrant, which in turn helps to attract or retain businesses in other industries. It works on a lot of levels.”

Enos has experienced this first-hand. The PA Wilds Initiative helped lure her and her sister, Piper VanOrd, back to rural Pennsylvania in 2006. Like many young people from the region, they left and started careers elsewhere. Enos was a news reporter and VanOrd an air traffic controller. They came to the realization that they wanted to move home, to rural Warren County, and raise their families in the place they’d grown up. But jobs were scarce.

When VanOrd read about the PA Wilds Initiative, it helped give her the confidence to move home and purchase two ailing canoe and kayak liveries on the Allegheny River. “It helped to know there was an organized effort underway to grow the region’s outdoor tourism industry,” Piper VanOrd explained recently.

Enos soon followed to help run the businesses (she took a job with PA Wilds two years later). The livery business, Allegheny Outfitters, has grown by about 300 percent, and just last year, it expanded to a year-round outfitter, branching out into hiking and opening a gear store and outdoor trip planning center in downtown Warren. The business has created several new jobs and also published a popular river paddling guide that has helped to pass their robust foot traffic to other businesses.

Partnering with the U.S. Forest Service, PA DCNR, local manufacturers, banks, business organizations and outdoor groups, Allegheny Outfitters also organizes and sponsors an annual five-day river clean-up.

“The PA Wilds has helped all these efforts,” VanOrd said. “We use the PA Wilds logo on many of our products and have had customers reference Pennsylvania Wilds advertising.”

Strategic DCNR Investments Pay Dividends

As hoped, DCNR’s strategic infrastructure investments are becoming economic engines for communities.
Since 2003, the agency has built key destination facilities in the region, such as the new Elk Country Visitor Center, the Nature Inn at Bald Eagle, the Wildlife Center at Sinnemahoning State Park and the Kinzua Bridge State Park “Skywalk” observation platform. In addition to these higher profile signature investments, DCNR also upgraded trails, restrooms, signage, campsites and other basic recreational infrastructure at most of its 29 state parks and eight state forests in the region. It has also provided grant funding to assist communities with recreation projects that dovetail with PA Wilds goals and to link the region’s heritage and cultural attractions to the nature and outdoor recreation offerings in the region by supporting the activities of the Lumber Heritage Region and PA Route 6 Heritage Corridor organizations.
Making these kinds of investments in the region has really paid off for the rural communities that call the Wilds home. Julie Cimino knows firsthand. She and her husband own a hardware and sporting goods store about six miles away from Lyman Run State Park, which was targeted for upgrades through the PA Wilds Initiative. A dam at Lyman Lake was repaired, allowing the once-popular swimming area to reopen.

“We have seen an increase in sales in not only camping supplies but in almost every department since the lake has reopened,” Cimino said recently. “Browsing traffic is up as well, which is always good for future sales. From 2007 to 2008, sales jumped $100,000, and from 2008 to 2009, sales have jumped another $100,000. This is really incredible for a very rural area and also given the economic climate.”

The Ciminos went on to create new jobs and open a second business, a rental cabin, two miles away from the park and five miles from Cherry Springs State Park. They had a solid first year, with little advertising. “Most renters have just gone by the cabin and taken the number off the sign on their way to the state parks,” Cimino said.

Upgrading recreation facilities doesn’t just benefit tourists or bottom lines, either – it provides new opportunities for residents. Cimino is a case in point. She and her husband spent a lot of time at Lyman Run as kids, and were touched when it reopened for reasons that had nothing to do with their business. “We were thrilled to be able to share it with our children the last two summers and make it part of their memories growing up in the PA Wilds,” she said.

The economic indicators being measured back up the stories we hear in the field: there have been increases in the region’s state park attendance (3.3 percent), overnight leisure travel (5.3 percent), visitor spending (6.3 percent), tourism employment (.5 percent), state sales tax revenues from tourism categories (2.7 percent) and hotel tax revenues (13.1 percent). These statistics and the stories behind them are explored in more detail in a report the Planning Team published called “Making An Impact: 2010 Update on the Pennsylvania Wilds Initiative.” The report is available for free at www.pawildsresources.org.

For the last decade, the Pennsylvania Wilds initiative has been a driving force for state investments and unparalleled regional cooperation. It has made steady progress against its goals and is flourishing. Marcellus gas drilling and tight funding budgets certainly bring challenges to this work in the region but with them come new opportunities as well. It will be the strength of stakeholder partnerships and on-going commitment by business and community leaders in the region that will ensure the initiative’s future.

Check out this inspiring YouTube video about the work of the PA Wilds initiative. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxX3ppeStsk

We have seen an increase in sales in not only camping supplies but in almost every department since the lake has reopened,”
Harnessing Partnerships for Better Parks & Rec

by Kendra J. Briechle, The Conservation Fund’s Conservation Leadership Network

Are CLIs Pennsylvania’s best kept secret for creating better parks and recreational opportunities? CLIs have spawned new and stronger on-the-ground partnerships that are making the difference in Pennsylvania’s communities. But perhaps lesser known is how CLIs are enhancing the park and recreation opportunities within these special landscapes.

As this issue highlights, in 2007, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources launched the Conservation Landscape Initiatives as a new approach to managing state forests and parks in the context of the regions they were located. Rather than focusing only on the land it manages, DCNR promotes the state lands within CLIs as integral to the broader landscape, including the surrounding communities and their desire for economic prosperity, vitality, and sense of place.

Since 2006, The Conservation Fund (TCF) has worked in partnership with DCNR and six of the CLIs on developing collaborative efforts and action plans. Through this experience and our work nationwide fostering conservation solutions between disparate partners, we laud the Conservation Landscape Initiatives as one of the nation’s most creative approaches to “balancing nature and commerce in communities that neighbor public lands”. (A course by this same name, offered by The Conservation Fund, has catalyzed several CLI teams. More information is listed at the end of this article.)

These Pennsylvania CLI success stories demonstrate how these regional landscapes have harnessed their partnerships to promote even better park and recreation opportunities.

**Laurel Highlands CLI**

Recognizing the different needs, unique qualities and geography is key to creating strong CLIs. The life of the Laurel Highlands CLI launched on the connection between the tiny ½-square-mile borough of Ohiopyle and the surrounding 20,500 acres of the Ohiopyle State Park.
Lehigh Gorge

Pennsylvania CLI success stories demonstrate how these regional landscapes have harnessed their partnerships to promote even better park and recreation opportunities.

A team of eight borough, business, tourism, and DCNR leaders attended the national Balancing Nature and Commerce course in 2008 to focus on the borough-park connection and hone in on joint planning and strategies for local outreach, citizen buy-in, and messaging to develop a strategic shared vision. Two projects illustrate the success of strengthening that connection and achieving mutual benefits. First, DCNR, Ohiopyle State Park, the borough, and other partners worked together to revitalize the municipal park and playground in the center of Ohiopyle. Owned by the borough, the Stewart on the Green, which opened in 2011, hosts resident families as well as Ohiopyle park visitors. The playground, basketball court, and picnic shelter make up a small project, but the

Pennsylvania CLI success stories demonstrate how these regional landscapes have harnessed their partnerships to promote even better park and recreation opportunities.

park’s renovation speaks to the power of how “starting small, thinking big” can breed future success. In the words of John Hallas, former park operations manager at Ohiopyle State Park, the
joint renovation and partnership for the playground helped “win the hearts and minds of residents” to the benefit of the CLI partnership.

Later projects focused on the shared lifeblood of park and borough: the waters of the Youghiogheny River Gorge. The “Yough’s” whitewater and water quality are critical to locals and visitors alike. Through its Green Streets project, the borough recreated streetscapes while solving the park’s stormwater problems through on-site management. Green Streets improved the visitor and resident experience by creating a more pleasing streetscape and preventing stormwater drainage into the river.

The effort blossomed into a more comprehensive program to address the shared inflow and infiltration problems, including broken sewers and drain pipes. The park and borough leveraged $100,000 in design funds from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and DCNR, with approval from the Department of Environmental Protection, and applied for a $1 million grant from PennVest. That grant will rehabilitate the aging sewer lines, separate storm water and sewer water, and stop downspout drainage into the sewer.

Next up is the Fall 2012 groundbreaking for the Laurel Highlands Falls Area Visitors’ Center in Ohiopyle State Park. The Federal Highway Administration awarded the visitors’ center $4 million in federal funds toward the overall project cost of $6.8 million.

Hallas notes the national Balancing Nature and Commerce course provided a catalyst to sustain the initiative and provide the long-view essential to making the partnership work.
course also helped Hallas and other park staff to understand how the CLI approach toward partnerships wasn’t creating more work but instead fostering greater efficiency through engagement and agreement. These efforts demonstrate how the CLIs enhance parks and recreation opportunities as well as benefit the neighboring communities.

**South Mountain CLI**

The South Mountain Partnership hosted a place-based Balancing Nature and Commerce workshop in spring 2010. TCF tailored the program for the South Mountain region, setting up collaborative planning and project development among eight teams.

In the short time since the workshop, all the teams have made significant progress on their varied action plans. The Cumberland Valley Rails-to-Trails Council is a standout for how the partnerships have resulted in the development of multi-municipal trails. According to Kim Williams with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and co-lead of the Partnership, the workshop helped elevate the status of the Cumberland Valley Trail and cultivated the essential partnerships for securing Transportation Enhancements funds to extend the trail into downtown Shippensburg.

Recently, the South Mountain Partnership designated the Cumberland Valley Trail as the region’s highest priority trail project, leading DCNR to award the Trail Council with the funds to acquire missing right-of-way segments. Such success has spurred the interest of other municipalities in creating multi-municipal trails. The South Mountain Partnership continues to catalyze similar trail connections such as a connector between Chambersburg and Caledonia State Park.

One of the most compelling South Mountain projects took place at Camp Michaux, where numerous partners have come together through leadership of the Cumberland County Historical Society to combine hiking opportunities with interpretation of the camp’s history as a World War II interrogation camp of German and Japanese prisoners. Volunteers, led by the Society’s David Smith, worked with community and park partners to document the camp’s history, stabilize structures, clean up vegetation, and install interpretive panels. The result is a unique place where, Williams notes, “heritage meets recreation,” enhancing the community understanding and the parks and recreational possibilities.

CLIs provide that nexus. Working in partnerships at the landscape level enables diverse partnerships that find shared purpose through the opportunities unique to a place. CLIs have found success in creating better communities, enhancing community character, and strengthening local economies—and using parks and recreation to help achieve those goals. Whether you live and work in a CLI or not, the CLI approach can contribute to the ongoing success and vitality of Pennsylvania’s landscapes—and better park and recreational opportunities statewide.

Kendra J. Briechle has worked with a wide range of partners through The Conservation Fund’s Conservation Leadership Network over the last 9 years. For more information about The Conservation Fund, our work in Pennsylvania, and the Balancing Nature and Commerce in Communities Neighboring Public Lands course, please see www.conservationfund.org or contact me at kbriechle@conservationfund.org.
CONSERVATION LANDSCAPES INITIATIVES

Partnerships

Gene Espy: Living His Dream

Gene Espy. He loved being in the outdoors. He hiked the Appalachian Trail for 4,500 miles. He loved the outdoors, camping and hiking. He was a naturalist and a conservationist. He loved the beauty of nature and the tranquility of the great outdoors.

Grandma Gensewood: A Hiker for the Ages

Grandma Gensewood was a hiker for the Ages. She loved the outdoors and the beauty of nature. She hiked the Appalachian Trail for 4,500 miles. She was a naturalist and a conservationist. She loved the beauty of nature and the tranquility of the great outdoors.
Create Success for South Mountain CLI

The South Mountain Partnership, formed in June of 2006, to create awareness of recreational and cultural amenities of the four-county region in southcentral Pennsylvania, has used public-private partnerships to advance two unique projects at Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

The Appalachian Trail Museum Society was formed around 2000 in hopes of establishing a museum that would raise awareness of the “AT,” its creation, influential people and hiker culture. While searching for a location to house this museum, a vacant historic grist mill at the park was made an option. The park, also known as the unofficial halfway point of the 2,181 mile Appalachian Trail, made for a great location. In 2009 the Museum Society entered into a lease agreement with DCNR and in April of 2010 construction began to transform the old mill into the world’s first hiking museum. Two short months later, after 800 hours of volunteer service, 700 hours of donated professional service and $75,000 of donated materials and design, a museum was born. Initial studies estimated that the site would see 2,000 visitors annually, but after only two completed seasons, 15,000 visitors have passed through the museum doors. Along with being a destination within the park, the museum has also assisted the park with marketing and press, providing volunteers, sponsoring weekly programs and holding numerous special events. As the museum enters into its third season, plans are in the works to expand to two additional
floors of exhibit space including a children’s learning area and outdoor exhibits.

The Partnership also pulled together unlikely partners in the rehabilitation of the Ironmaster’s Mansion. The Youth Hostel housed in the Ironmaster’s Mansion and its lease holders were ending their lease with DCNR in 2010. The building, which had not seen repairs since the 1980s was seeing a decrease in use and increase in maintenance needs.

Through connections with the CLI, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy took an interest in the building as a potential location for environmental education. The Conservancy coordinated renovations with volunteers and donated professional services. All walls and floors were stripped and then repainted, new higher efficiency windows were installed, new bunk beds, furniture and an upgraded kitchen were added and interior designs and exterior landscaping livened up the 1829 historic mansion.

In the same spirit as the Appalachian Trail Museum, countless hours of time and thousands of dollars of donated supplies and monies went into this large-scale restoration project, and in May of 2011, the Ironmaster’s Mansion was ready for its grand reopening.

Now, along with being a site for overnight accommodations for hikers on the trail (who could get warm showers, sleep in a clean bed and get a spaghetti dinner and waffle breakfast for only $25), the mansion also serves as a premier location to hold programs, teacher workshops, overnight camps and weddings. Through an additional partnership with the Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau, reservations of events are made easy and stress-free. The partnership with the Ironmaster’s Mansion has brought a number of new programs and special events to the park and more are slated for overnight and day camps for school students.

Through the South Mountain CLI Partnership other benefits to the park have been created including a grant program that has benefited entities that operate in the park, the formation of the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace and other special events including the South Mountain Speaker Series. The CLI has also spurred an increased relationship and coordination of efforts with neighboring Kings Gap and Colonel Denning state parks and Michaux State Forest. The future of both the South Mountain CLI and park look very bright as the partnership has become a sustainable one with everyone’s best interest being promoting its vast resources of the CLI.
Do you need a Floating Dock? A.D.A. Beach Access or a Wet Land Nature Trail?

Superdeck Systems have new improved decks, docks, boat launches, fishing piers, beach and swim facilities.

Beach Access and

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The Water and Marsh.
Pennsylvania Wilds is a 12 ½ county region that offers tremendous outdoor experiences, on the more than 2 million acres of public land, equivalent to that of Yellowstone! The region is home to the largest elk herd in the northeast and some of the darkest skies in the country. It is one of the most rural and sparsely populated regions of Pennsylvania, containing only 4.1 percent of the state’s population.

Accomplishments include development of signature visitor destinations and strategic infrastructure investments in DCNR’s state parks and state forests; regional tourism marketing; grants and loans for small business development; grants for community park, trail and partnership projects; a design guide to support community character stewardship; and an artisan initiative to help improve the visibility and profitability of artisans and arts-related businesses.

The Laurel Highlands is located an hour east of Pittsburgh in Southwestern Pennsylvania and is defined by three Allegheny Plateau ridges: Chestnut Ridge, Laurel Ridge and Allegheny Ridge. With more than 100,000 acres of public lands, scenic vistas and gorges, diverse wildlife and outdoor recreation opportunities ranging from whitewater to the Great Allegheny Passage rail-trail, the region is a destination for visitors from Pittsburgh, Ohio and the Mid-Atlantic. The region’s economy is migrating from resource extraction to natural assets based on the quality experience for residents and visitors.

Accomplishments include a unique joint master plan between Ohiopyle Borough and Ohiopyle State Park; support of the Trail Town Program, which helps communities maximize the economic benefit of the Great Allegheny Passage; and implementation of the Laurel Ridge Comprehensive Interpretive Plan.

The South Mountain Partnership focuses on a four-county area encompassing over a million people who benefit from the mountain’s spring water and abundance of recreation opportunities. The northern-most prong of the Blue Ridge Mountains, South Mountain includes 85,000 acres of Michaux State Forest, three state parks, 60 miles of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and some of the best trout fishing in Pennsylvania. Additionally, communities like Carlisle, Chambersburg, and Gettysburg are an important part of the landscape’s fabric, stitched together with a patchwork of some of the best agricultural lands in the nation.

Accomplishments of the Partnership include permanent protection of nearly 4,000 acres of natural lands and a strong alliance of visitor bureaus jointly promoting the South Mountain region’s natural and cultural assets. The Partnership plays a key role in facilitating and funding the development of projects relating to trail development, heritage preservation, tourism initiatives, and working with communities and planning agencies to maintain and enhance the region’s quality of life and sense of place.
Poconos Forests and Waters covers a six-county area in northeastern Pennsylvania. It has a rich and diverse past, ranging from Colonial settlements along the rivers and valleys, industrial development and extractive uses, to the outdoor leisure and vacation mecca of the Pocono Plateau. The landscape includes one of the state’s largest concentrations of public lands, abundant water resources with 4,700 miles of streams and 47,000 acres of lakes and ponds, and miles of recreational trails. Due to tremendous population growth pressures in recent years, the landscape and its natural assets are threatened. Accomplishments include permanent protection of more than 40,000 acres; cooperative planning and implementation of open space goals; outdoor recreation planning and development; and support for the new Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

Lehigh Valley Greenways is located in the third largest metropolitan area in the state and includes Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton. There is little DCNR owned land, but at the heart of it is Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center, a key community asset that will be further developed in 2012. The initiative’s accomplishments include supporting the development of Jacobsburg and two other nature centers – Trexler Nature Preserve and the Lehigh Gap Nature Center; connecting residents with nature on more than 28 miles of new trails; continuing to complete the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor through the Valley; and providing technical assistance and funding to help communities respond to growth pressure, protect ecological areas and improve urban parks.

The Lower Susquehanna focuses on the Susquehanna River and its core river town communities in Lancaster and York counties. The largest natural area and recreation land holders are utility companies. Protecting the river means protecting this greenway corridor (approximately 13,000 acres of utility lands) and using it as the foundation for an economic development, community sustainability and conservation stewardship strategy for the two counties.

Major accomplishments include a signed sales agreement protecting – through fee simple acquisition and conservation easements – 324.5 acres, some of which will become a state park; continued development of the Northwest River Trail, which will stretch 14 miles along the river corridor; and community downtown and riverfront park rehabilitation in Marietta, Wrightsville, and Columbia.

Schuylkill Highlands encompasses a large geography at the nexus of the Schuylkill River Watershed and the Pennsylvania Highlands. Significant natural resources include the Hopewell Big Woods, the largest unbroken forest between Washington, D.C. and New York City; 600 miles of Exceptional Value streams; Valley Forge National Park; Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site; the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area; and French Creek State Park. The Schuylkill River Bike and Water Trail extends through the middle of this landscape linking together recreational hubs, parks and trail towns.

Accomplishments include protection of over 3,000 acres of critical habitat; construction of many miles of bike and walking trails; an economic development strategic plan for river and woodland gateway towns; and a highlands greenway protection and outreach plan.