

2012 Accomplishments

Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape

About the Landscape



The Laurel Highlands is one of Pennsylvania's most notable and breathtaking natural treasures. Interspersed with small, historic communities, the region features magnificent mountains, rushing streams with breathtaking waterfalls, and rolling hillsides with picturesque farmlands.

Counties:

Somerset, Fayette, Westmoreland, parts of Cambria and Bedford.

Sub-Landscapes:

Laurel Ridge, Chestnut Ridge, Stonycreek-Quemahoning, Great Allegheny Passage

Vision

By 2015, the unique character of the Laurel Highlands is protected and the region and its communities are recognized as world-class heritage/recreation destinations as well as wonderful places to live, work, and play.

Ohiopyle

The building design for the **Laurel Highlands Falls Area Visitor Center** is completed and interpretive exhibit design is 25% completed (expected opening date of spring 2014).

Developed and installed two **Green Streets wayside exhibits** to interpret the features and benefits of green streets in the borough.

Initiated an **Adopt-A-Bioswale** program in Ohiopyle Borough to recruit volunteers who will maintain the bioswales in the recently completed green streets project.

Ohiopyle Borough received a **\$1.1 million Penn Vest Grant** to renovate the sewer lines and reduce inflow and infiltration into the sewage treatment plant.

Ohiopyle Borough **transferred the operation of the water treatment plant** to Indian Creek Water Authority.

Great Allegheny Passage

The **Economic Impact Study** for the trail was completed showing \$40.3 million in direct spending.

24 trail signs and totems were developed and installed in Confluence to provide directions and indicate parking, trail access and other amenities for trail users.

Rockwood **trail head improvements** to enhance aesthetics and improve safety were completed.

The **Trail Town Reassessments** were completed for Meyersdale, Rockwood, Confluence, Ohiopyle, Connellsville and West Newton. The assessments are used to review project successes and determine future needs.

Interpretive Plan Implementation

Discover Birds and Blossoms and **Discover Rocks, Ridges and Ravines** self-guided scenic driving tours were developed and released spring 2012.

Interpretive projects and facility/infrastructure improvements were completed at **Spruce Flats Bog** including resurfacing the parking lot and repainting latrines at Laurel Summit State Park and resurfacing the bog trail, rebuilding the boardwalk, and enlarging and rebuilding the observation deck at Forbes State Forest. Interpretive waysides and kiosks were developed and installed and a brochure about the bog was printed.

A **Civilian Conservation Corps wayside** on the history of the CCC was installed at Linn Run State Park.

Core Communities

The **first whitewater release on the Stonycreek River** was held on May 18th utilizing the new Quemahoning Dam release valve that was installed last year.

The Stonycreek River was named **River of the Year 2012** and was celebrated on June 16th with a river dedication, whitewater rafting, tubing, kayak races and boating competitions and demonstrations.

A **change house at Greenhouse and Whitewater Park** was constructed.

A two day **Connecting Connellsville workshop** was held in October through a grant provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency for technical assistance for future grant opportunities.

Conservation and Recreation

Provided a **Mini Grant Program** and awarded \$85,000.00 for 18 projects with local communities, organizations and state parks and state forests friends groups.

The Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor along with Trout Unlimited and other partners developed the **Laurel Highlands Trout Trail** which included a month long schedule for May of trout and fishing related events and programs.

Recreation Infrastructure/Trails

Construction and opening of the **Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail Bridge** was completed. This \$1.3 million project provides safe passage over the turnpike, a critical connection in the 70 mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail, for backpackers and hikers as well as a crossing for snowmobiles to access trails on Laurel Ridge State Park and Forbes State Forest. The official dedication was held on May 24th.

Construction of the 3 mile **Grays Run Trail** to close the gap in the 116 mile snowmobile trail system at Forbes State Forest was completed.

Awards and Recognition

Penn DOT, Ohiopyle Borough and the Fayette County Redevelopment Authority received a **Community Transportation Award** from 10 Thousand Friends of Pennsylvania for the Route 381 Smart Transportation Project through Ohiopyle completed in 2011.

The Great Allegheny Passage was named one of the **10 Best Fall Trips of 2012** by National Geographic Magazine.



Project Goals

- Revitalize core communities and expand local and regional economies through sustainable resource use and development.
- Conserve, restore, and improve ecological, cultural, historic, and recreational resources of the region to sustain economic growth.
- Build capacity and constituency in the region to implement and maintain the revitalization of communities and sustainability of the ecological, cultural, historic, and recreational resources of the region.



More Information

For more information contact:

Kathy Frankel
(412) 880-0486
kfrankel@pa.gov
www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cli

Brad Clemenson
V. (814.659.3465)
bclemenson@pecpa.org
www.pecpa.org/Laurel_Highlands

