Lehigh Valley Greenways
Conservation Landscape Initiative

Fast Facts

Counties
Lehigh and Northampton

Sub-Landscapes
Within Lehigh and Northampton counties are six sub-landscapes. The **Two Rivers Area** features the confluence of the Lehigh and Delaware rivers and Jacobsburg State Park. Located to the south, the **Lehigh Valley Highlands** are focused on balancing development pressures within a traditional agriculture setting. The **Martins Jacoby Watershed** contains a wetland habitat at the Minsi Lake Preserve. The Trexler Nature Preserve is located within the **Jordan Creek Greenway.** Pennsylvania's longest contiguous forested ridge, the **Kittatinny Ridge** (Blue Mountain), is located to the north, and is an important birding area and home to the newly expanded Lehigh Gap Nature Center. These six special places are connected by the **D&L Trail** as it follows the historic transportation path that brought anthracite coal to market.

What is a Conservation Landscape?

The Conservation Landscape Initiative is a place-based strategy for natural resource stewardship and advocacy in key landscapes across our state where there are strong natural assets and local readiness and support for land conservation, locally-driven planning, and community economic revitalization efforts.

Vision

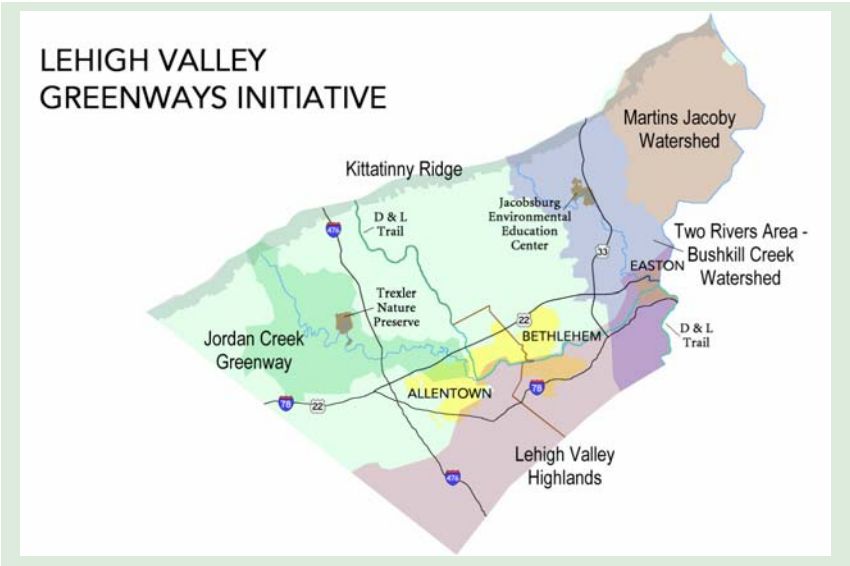
By 2015, greenways and trails connect natural and cultural resources across the Lehigh Valley linking urban areas to outdoor experiences, protecting watersheds, and retaining the character of the landscape, the region's heritage and the community

Region

Located just 90 miles from New York City in eastern Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley includes Lehigh and Northampton counties. While the Valley may be best known for the cities of Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton, it is rich in natural resources. Wildlife, scenic views, farmland and open space landscapes define this region. Assets include the imposing Blue Mountain to the north, the picturesque South and Lehigh mountains to the south, and the Great Valley's fertile farmlands in between. The Lehigh and Delaware rivers and many small streams beckon boaters, anglers and serve as sources of drinking water. These waterways and their surrounding fields and forests are critical habitat.

The Lehigh Valley's population is expected to increase 22 percent by 2030 to over 750,000 people, putting its natural resources at risk.

Residents have been outspoken in their desire to maintain and improve their quality of life. They recognize the value of their surrounding land, cultural assets and recreational outlets that include:
Land. Over 41,000 acres of protected state, county and locally owned lands are conserved for public enjoyment including the 1,168-acre Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center; 1,108-acre Trexler Nature Preserve; and 1,000-acre Greater Minsi Lake Corridor.
Trails. Almost 300 miles of trails weave through the landscapes and connect people to local communities. An additional 50 miles is proposed. The Appalachian Trail and D&L Trail provide long distance trail connections to other counties.
Water. Six high-quality watersheds provide a water supply to Lehigh Valley residents. Mature forests, vernal pools and wetlands help the region retain this high water quality.



Plan

Building on a strong foundation, the strategy focuses on four goals:

1. Land Conservation & Restoration
2. Outdoor Recreation & Trail Connections
3. Community Revitalization
4. Local Education & Outreach

Areas of concentration include:

- Preserving unprotected natural areas and watersheds
- Restoring riparian buffer
- Creating greenways and trails that connect people and outdoor recreation experiences with valued natural, recreational and cultural resources
- Revitalizing cities by integrating green infrastructure into riverfront development, greenways, trails and neighborhood projects
- Increased understanding and use of smart growth land use practices to create more livable and sustainable communities

Accomplishments

Since 2004, the Lehigh Valley Greenways Initiative has:

- Conserved more than 1,200 acres through acquisition of or easements on critical habitat and natural areas
- Planned or constructed environmental education centers at Jacobsburg State Park, Trexler Nature Preserve and Lehigh Gap Nature Center
- Built more than 28 miles of trails connecting communities and greenways
- Restored 10 stream segments along the Bushkill Creek, Martins Creek, Jordan Creek, and Lehigh River with 3500+ native plants
- Planted close to 3,000 native trees in Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton in cooperation with Urban Forestry initiatives, Trexler Nature Preserve, and Lehigh Valley TreeVitalize
- Established 24 Environmental Advisory Councils
- Published *Leaders in the Field* booklet highlighting Lehigh Valley's seven successful municipal open space referendums
- Created four model regulations for environmental protection of natural resources

Partnership

The Lehigh Valley Greenways partnership includes nearly 25 state, local and regional organizations collaborating to advance this vision across five Lehigh Valley sub-landscapes:

- **Local Lead & Administrative Partner -** Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor
- **State Agencies -** PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources and PA Department of Environmental Protection, PA Fish & Boat Commission
- **Conservancies -** Wildlands Conservancy, Heritage Conservancy, Natural Lands Trust and The Nature Conservancy
- **Lehigh & Northampton County Agencies -** Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, 21st Century Open Space Initiative, Green Future Fund, Conservation Districts, Parks Departments and Department of Community & Economic Development
- **Non-Profit Organizations -** Bushkill Stream Conservancy, Martins Jacoby Watershed Association, PA Environmental Council, Lehigh Gap Nature Center

For More Information

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