

# Pennsylvania Wilds Conservation Landscape Initiative

Helping revitalize rural communities through sustainable tourism development

## What are people in the region saying about the Initiative?

*"[Since DCNR upgraded the state parks near our hardware/sporting goods store] browsing traffic is up ... 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." – Julie Cimino, owner, Cimino Hardware, Potter County*

*"The PA Wilds Initiative was a factor in my husband and I moving home to rural PA. We were in our late 20s and had good careers but wanted to settle down in the place we grew up. Jobs were scarce. The PA Wilds Initiative helped give us the confidence to purchase two outfitting businesses on the Allegheny River. We have since grown them by more than 600 percent, and have launched an annual river clean-up involving hundreds of volunteers." – Piper Lindell, owner, Allegheny Outfitters*

*"The Wilds' partnership philosophy, promotion of the area as a whole and stewardship messages are well thought out ... [and have] been an integral part of the rejuvenation of the Wilds region." – Joe Colosimo, SVP, Business Development Manager, Northwest Savings Bank; Chairperson, Pennsylvania Kinzua Pathways Project, Warren County*

*"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. 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." – Eric Patton, Millstone Township Supervisor, Elk County*

*"We need to have manufacturing. We need to have tourism. We have to have a mix. We can't live and die by one thing alone. If we want to bring professional people in, we need recreation assets. We need clean water. We have it all right here. It's all together and it's all intertwined." – Dick Kallenborn, Port Allegheny Borough Manager, McKean County*

## What is a Conservation Landscape Initiative?

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 locally-driven planning and community economic development revitalization efforts.

## About the Pennsylvania Wilds

The PA Wilds is a 12 ½ -county area that offers tremendous outdoor experiences, some of the best in the nation, with 29 state parks, 50 state game lands, 8 state forests, abundant wildlife and hundreds of miles of land and water trails. The amount of public land in the region — more than 2 million acres — is comparable to Yellowstone. The region is home to the largest elk herd in the northeast, some of the darkest skies in the country. Nature draws many to the region, but visitors also come to experience the area's rich oil and lumber heritage and authentic small towns.

The PA Wilds is surrounded by major tourism markets. More than 50 million people live within a day's drive of the region, making it an attractive place for many people to hunt, bike, hike, camp, fish, canoe and more.

DCNR launched the PA Wilds CLI in 2003, the evolution of an elk nature tourism project that began in the late 1990s. A collaborative effort, its aim was to revitalize communities, create lasting economic opportunities and improve quality of life – all while inspiring a stewardship ethic in residents and visitors. What began as a vision shared by state agencies and elected officials on both sides of the aisle now has transformed into a grassroots effort involving dozens of partners and champions at the local, state and federal level.



## FAST FACTS

### The Pennsylvania Wilds CLI

- Has 2 million acres of public land – as much as Yellowstone.
- Covers 25 percent of the state and holds about 4 percent of its population.
- Offers some of the best outdoor recreation opportunities in the country.
- Is also known for its robust wildlife, rich oil and lumber heritage and authentic small towns.
- Has led to increases in overnight leisure travel, trip lengths, state park attendance, small business start-ups, job creation, and tax revenues in the region.
- Is set up to leverage existing service providers, not create new bureaucratic layers.
- Has led to more and stronger partnerships across the PA Wilds region.
- Has been a national model for similar efforts around the country.

### Public Lands in the PA Wilds



## State Investments as of 2010

### DCNR Investments in the Region

As of 2010, DCNR has invested almost \$130 million in parks and forests -- building new destination facilities and upgrading trails, visitor services, signage and recreation facilities -- investments that have spurred private-sector business growth and job creation and delivered a conservation message. Partly because of their remoteness, many state parks and forests in the region had not been upgraded for many years.

One of DCNR's most visible projects, the Elk Country Visitor Center (pictured below), opened in October 2010 and saw 12,000 people come through its doors in a single weekend -- foot traffic that was passed to local shops, lodges and restaurants to help them thrive.



In addition, to investments on state lands DCNR's Growing Greener and Keystone grant programs have funded almost \$14 million in community-based recreation and conservation projects across the region.

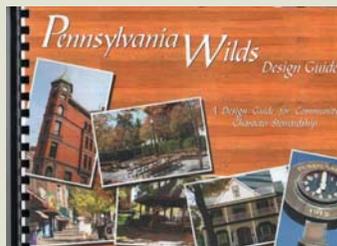
### Other Investments in the Region



DCED, a major partner in the PA Wilds CLI, has invested in the region with business financing programs for the tourism industry; community revitalization programs like Main Street; and through the PA Tourism Office, which provided \$5 million for branding and marketing the region.

## Building Regional Capacity

Several resources have been put in place to allow communities to capitalize in the PA Wilds effort. Here are a few examples:



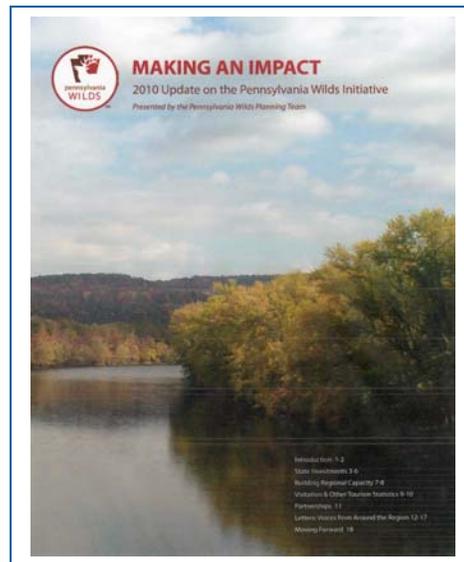
The **PA Wilds Design Guide** is an award-winning planning document that offers suggestions on how local communities can retain their rural characteristics during times of growth. Several counties have amended their comprehensive plans to include the document, and many developers and businesses have already used it to guide renovations or new construction. Grants for new signage are also part of the effort.



When people visit the PA Wilds, they want to take home something authentic that is made locally. **The PA Wilds Artisan Project** helps visitors find quality, handmade goods by publishing an Artisan Trail directory of local shops that sell "Made in the PA Wilds" products created by local artisans juried through this program. The program aims to raise the profitability of the region's many skilled artisans while meeting visitor demand.



The PA Wilds Resource Center website ([www.pawildsresources.org](http://www.pawildsresources.org)) is a clearing house for residents and local businesses. Whether looking to use the PA Wilds logo, learning more about state investments, finding resources for a tourism start-up or joining the artisan trail, it is one stop shopping to make it easy for residents to get involved.



Partnerships are a hallmark of the PA Wilds CLI. The PA Wilds Planning Team, involves more than 40 organizations representing federal, state and county government; tourism and cultural interests; education, economic development and the private sector. In 2010, the Planning Team published the 20-page report pictured above, to make the public aware of the accomplishment of this CLI and urge continued support for it at the state level. The report is available at: [www.pawildsresources.org](http://www.pawildsresources.org).

**“No initiative exists in the country on this scale and level of strategic thinking.”**

*- Society of American Travel Writers, who gave the Pennsylvania Wilds a prestigious Phoenix Award in 2007*

### More Information

For more information contact:

Meredith Hill  
PA Wilds Director, DCNR  
[mehill@state.pa.us](mailto:mehill@state.pa.us)

Tataboline Brant  
PA Wilds Small Business  
Ombudsman  
[tbrant@pawilds.com](mailto:tbrant@pawilds.com)

