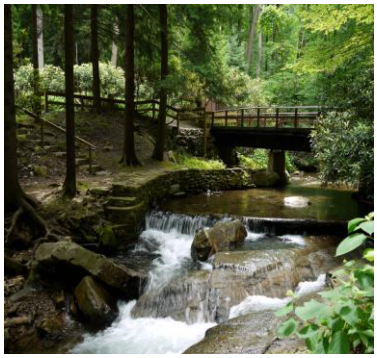
2011 Accomplishments
Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative

About the Initiative



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, Stoneycreek-Quemahonning, 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

Received $4 million grant from Federal Highway Administration National Scenic Byways Program to construct the **Laurel Highlands Falls Area Visitor Center.**

Completed the $1.9 million Smart Transportation **Route 381 Project** that included a reduced speed limit, improved 58 parking spaces, bike lane, crosswalks, new ADA curbing, storm water culverts and paving.

Completed $600,000.00 **Stewart on the Green** community park project that included playground, green space, rain gardens, pavilion and parking.

Ohiopyle Energy Fair funded with $50,000.00 from West Penn Power and coordinated by Pennsylvania Environmental Council was held in October with 30 vendors and over 200 participants.

Legislation was introduced and passed to **exchange 2.65 acres** of park land to be developed for residential use with a parcel of borough land on the river corridor.

Sub division plan for the 2.65 acre parcel added to Ohiopyle Borough was approved.

National Scenic Byways grant for $72,000.00 received for feasibility study for **shuttle bus system** along the National Road and Laurel Highlands Scenic Byway.

Great Allegheny Passage

Trail Town kiosk was installed in Ohiopyle at the Train Station.

Train caboose in Connellsville was restored to be used as an information center.

Completed the $1.3 million **underpass in Garrett** that enables bicyclers to avoid crossing Berlin Street.

Interpretive Plan Implementation

Discover Fall self-guided scenic driving tour was revised for 2011. **Discover Birds and Blossoms** and **Discover Rocks, Ridges and Ravines** self-guided scenic driving tours to be released spring 2012.

Grant from Progress Fund for $5,200.00 secured to develop two **waysides exhibits** to interpret the Ohiopyle Green Streets project (waysides to be installed spring 2012).

Bureau of State Parks initiated a contract with The 106 Group from St. Paul, MN to begin working on the exhibit design for the new **Laurel Highlands Falls Area Visitor Center** at Ohiopyle State Park. Exhibits will reflect DCNR and National Scenic Byways messaging.

Completed the Phase 1 rehabilitation work at the **Brown Cemetery** on Laurel Ridge State Park. Developed partnership with Johnstown Area Heritage Association to continue restoration of cemetery and to interpret the site.

Stoneycreek-Quemahonning

Release Valve was installed and tested. Dedicated in May, the first whitewater release is scheduled for spring 2012.

Conservation and Recreation

Conservation and Trail Summit held on April 4th with 200 participants.

Developed a **Mini Grant Program** and awarded $100,000.00 for 14 projects with local communities and state parks and state forests friends groups.

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy **protected six new properties** totaling 556 acres in the Laurel Highlands in 2011.

DCNR and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, along with numerous partners, held a **ceremony at the Countryman Tract** in Somerset County, recognizing the conveyance of this 137 acre tract to Laurel Hill State Park.

Conservation Coalition Conference held on November 7th with 60 participants.

Secured $45,000.00 to create a **scenic corridor protection plan** for the Great Allegheny Passage, scenic by-ways and heritage corridors in the Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape in Somerset, Fayette, and Westmoreland Counties.

Recreation Infrastructure/Trails

Rehabilitation of portions of **the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail** was hosted by American Hiking Society Volunteer Vacation. Replaced many foot bridges along the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail and improved over 1 mile of trail.

Expanded the **Trailhead Parking/Cross Country Ski Parking** off of Route 653 for Laurel Ridge State Park.

Awards

Ohiopyle Borough received **2011 Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society Local Government Award** for their leadership in partnering with Ohiopyle State Park and other partners to advance conservation and recreation in this unique community.

Ohiopyle Borough received **2011 Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation Presidents Award** for pulling together with Ohiopyle State Park and many partners to preserve, protect and improve this unique and special community.

The Progress Fund received the **Wachovia Wells Fargo NEXT Award** for its development and implementation of the first Trail Town Program®. The program supports and lends capital to small businesses involved in outdoor recreation and the tourism industry along the Great Allegheny Passage.

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

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