ABOUT THE KITTATINNY COALITION

MISSION
The Kittatinny Coalition is an alliance of organizations, agencies, and academic institutions working with municipal officials and private landowners to conserve the natural, scenic, cultural, and aesthetic resources of the Kittatinny Ridge and Corridor.

The Coalition identifies and helps protect priority places, promotes collaborative science-based research along the corridor to inform management practices and conservation recommendations, fosters effective local stewardship, promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, and increases public awareness and appreciation of the importance of the Ridge and Corridor.

VISION
To preserve the integrity of the Kittatinny Ridge and Corridor, a rugged, forested mountain surrounded by a mosaic of working lands, healthy streams, and pastoral beauty.

To preserve, in perpetuity, this critical linkage of the Appalachian Mountain ecosystem, stretching across Pennsylvania from the Delaware Water Gap to the Maryland border, including the abundant, un-fragmented forest for wildlife; fresh air; a safe, unobstructed passage for resident and migratory wildlife; headwater sources of clean and plentiful water for surrounding communities; a wild, scenic Appalachian Trail system experience; outdoor recreational opportunities; and wild areas to enrich the human mind and spirit.

2012 Participants
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Audubon Pennsylvania
Berks Conservancy
Central Pennsylvania Conservancy
Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor
East Stroudsburg University
Fort Indiantown Gap National Training Center
Hawk Mountain
Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center
Keystone Conservation Trust
Lebanon County Conservation District
Lebanon County Planning Department
Lebanon Valley Conservancy
Lehigh Gap Nature Center
Lehigh Valley Audubon Society
Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Manada Conservancy
Moravian College
Muhlenberg College
PA Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources
Pennsylvania Game Commission
Philadelphia Trail Club
The Nature Conservancy
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Wildlands Conservancy
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Kittatinny Coalition, lead by Audubon Pennsylvania and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, works in concert with a host of partner organizations and agencies along the length of the Kittatinny Ridge and appreciate their assistance in the production of this report and, most critically, conserving the Ridge. We appreciate the support of The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and other funders. The continued commitment and dedication of each participating organization is critical to ensuring the successful conservation of the Ridge.

Each partner on the Ridge plays a unique role in advancing conservation. Land trusts are assisting private landowners in protecting their properties through conservation easements. County planning commissions/departments provide their municipalities with the tools necessary to protect their most sensitive natural resources. Municipalities, through their supervisors/council members, planning commissions and Environmental Advisory Councils, have contributed by ensuring that their ordinances and projects lay the groundwork for conservation of their portion of the Ridge.

This report was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, Environmental Stewardship Fund, under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation. Other funding for this project was provided by private foundations.

Special thanks to the Lehigh Gap Nature Center and Fort Indiantown Gap National Guard Training Center for hosting the regional Kittatinny Coalition meetings this year.

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS
Jeanne Barrett Ortiz and Paul Zeph, Audubon PA
Kittatinny Coalition Partners
Photographers, as credited

Cover Photo: North side of the Kittatinny Corridor along the Susquehanna River in Penn Township, Perry County looking east into Dauphin County. Cove Mountain is in the foreground, which becomes Peter’s Mountain on the east side of the Susquehanna. Crossing the river (left side of photo) is the Clark’s Ferry Bridge where northeast-bound Appalachian Trail hikers walk across from Duncannon, then climb up onto Peter’s Mountain to continue their trail adventure.

For additional information contact: Jeanne Barrett Ortiz at (215) 519-5648 or jortiz@audubon.org
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the third State of the Kittatinny Report produced annually by the Kittatinny Coalition. It is designed to document the assets of the Kittatinny Ridge, track its health, identify and mitigate threats to the Ridge’s condition, and highlight conservation contributions of Coalition partners.

This Report is intended to give a snapshot of the Kittatinny Ridge Corridor, updating residents, municipal officials, conservationists, and policy makers on the progress that has been made conserving the Ridge and remaining areas of concern.

The State of the Kittatinny Report is part of the Kittatinny Ridge and Appalachian Trail Project supported by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and other funding partners.

Report Format
A major milestone for the Kittatinny Coalition in 2012 was finalizing a new mission, vision, goals, and conservation measurements to guide the next decade of work. The information in this report is organized into eight sections reflecting the Kittatinny Coalition’s eight newly adopted goals, under the following headings:

- Native Habitat
- Conserved Land
- Wildlife Conservation
- Water
- Connected Citizens
- Heritage Landscapes and Thriving Communities
- Enhanced Recreation
- Research-based Conservation

Each section begins with an introduction to the goal followed by progress toward its measurement. This format provides a baseline for future evaluation and allowing trends to be monitored and assessed, ultimately painting a picture of the “State of the Kittatinny Ridge.”

In This Report
Enjoy learning more about the Kittatinny Ridge—or “endless mountain.” That it is a globally significant migratory pathway for raptors in Pennsylvania and home to the Appalachian Trail. The Kittatinny is also home to the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge—only the third such area designated in Pennsylvania. That Kittatinny forests and waters support thousands of Pennsylvanians and species of special concern, including the Pennsylvania threatened Allegheny woodrat and Eastern small-footed myotis (bat). And we have charted the migration of thousands of signature birds along the Kittatinny in the fall of 2012.

Sustaining the health of Kittatinny Ridge is a challenge due to formidable threats identified in this report, such as commercial, residential, and energy development, invasive species, and a changing climate.

That is why the Kittatinny Coalition partners are highly motivated to achieve the multifaceted goals they have established to understand and conserve the Ridge.

We feature in this report numerous accomplishments of Coalition partners, including: Lehigh Gap Nature Center’s restoration of a superfund site to super habitat; Berks Conservancy’s protection of its first organic farm; a Golden Eagle research project, Blue Mountain Wildlife being named Conservation Organization of the Year; the Cherry Valley Festival and BioBlitz; Natural Lands Trust’s municipal zoning assessments to help local officials comply with the Appalachian Trail Act; and the Lehigh Gap Nature Center’s exceptional first “Science Summit.”

The Kittatinny Ridge and Appalachian Trail Project, tracked through the annual State of the Kittatinny reports, helps the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources implement its Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The plan includes a statewide assessment of outdoor recreation needs and supplies and an action plan to enhance outdoor recreation. See Appendix II for more information about SCORP.

For more information about the Kittatinny Ridge and Appalachian Trail Project and the Kittatinny Coalition, please go to our website at www.kittatinnyridge.org.

Above all, please contact us to learn more about the Ridge and how you can play a role in conserving this highly treasured Pennsylvania landscape.
ABOUT THE KITTATINNY RIDGE

The Kittatinny Ridge—known as Blue Mountain for much of its length—runs through Pennsylvania for 185 miles, from the Delaware River to nearly the Mason-Dixon Line.

The Ridge is the first prominent landscape feature you encounter as you move north or west from Philadelphia and marks the entrance into Pennsylvania’s Ridge and Valley region.

It is one of the Commonwealth’s most treasured landscapes, providing the scenic backdrop to life in twelve counties. The Ridge is home to the world-famous Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, and many game lands, ski areas, and local parks. It is a migration corridor used by tens of thousands of hawks, eagles, and falcons each fall, and home to many endangered and threatened species.

The Kittatinny Ridge provides residents of eastern Pennsylvania with many valuable amenities: clean and reliable drinking water; a wide range of hiking and camping adventures; extensive hunting and fishing opportunities; a spectacular fall raptor migration; breathtaking scenery, both from the top of the ridge and from miles away; and eco-tourism income from the many visitors to the region’s parks, trails, and game lands.

Like most natural areas along the eastern U.S., the Kittatinny Ridge faces a host of formidable threats, especially habitat loss from residential and commercial development. While the Ridge contains many parks and game lands, two-thirds of the forested ridge is privately-owned and vulnerable to development, from ridge-top homes to the siting of wind turbines and high-voltage transmission towers. Disturbing large tracts of unbroken forest will result in degraded habitat for wildlife and decreasing water quality. Overabundant white-tailed deer, invasive exotic plant species, and a changing climate provide added stresses to this natural landscape.

Due to these threats and its unique natural resources, the Kittatinny Ridge has been the focus of conservation efforts for many years.

A diverse coalition of agencies, conservation groups, and institutions formed in 2000 to focus collective effort on public awareness of this valued resource, and seek protection of the ridge and adjacent valley lands.

The Kittatinny Ridge website (www.kittatinnyridge.org) provides extensive information, maps, photos, and ways for municipalities and landowners to protect their local piece of the “endless mountain.”

Photo: DGS/Commonwealth Media
Native Habitat

Goal: Maintain and/or restore a healthy mosaic of high-quality native habitats throughout the Kittatinny Ridge

The intact forests of the Kittatinny Ridge provide critical habitat for many species of wildlife that cannot survive in the more developed valleys below. The surface-rock areas and outcroppings, older growth areas, scrub/shrub openings, herbaceous fields, and pockets of wet woods all form patches of diverse habitat within large blocks of unfragmented forest.

This habitat matrix supports a variety of species of special concern, including the Pennsylvania threatened Alleghe-ny woodrat and Eastern small-footed myotis (bat).

This diverse forest matrix supports healthy populations of songbird species, including the Cerulean and Golden-winged warblers and is used by more than 100 species of other birds during nesting or migration. These same habitats also support many game species, including black bear, bobcat, wild turkey and ruffed grouse, not to mention an over-abundance of white-tailed deer.

Also present in certain locations along the ridge are other mammals, including porcupine, beaver, red-backed vole, fisher, and pygmy shrew.

Hundreds of small, cool, shaded streams that flow off the ridge to the north and south are home to more than 34 species of freshwater fish, and include riparian wetland areas for other species of plants and animals.

The irregular terrain of the forested slopes result in depressions that trap water in the spring or fall when runoff or precipitation is high, creating hundreds of seasonal pools. These ponds are highly-valued habitat areas for numerous species of salamanders, frogs, toads, and crustaceans like fairy shrimp.

Development of any kind is the biggest threat to these high-quality habitats, so any new buildings or roads result in diminished habitat for mammals, birds, reptiles or amphibians.

2012

The Kittatinny Coalition developed its mission, vision, and goals and measurements in 2012. The Coalition started working on measuring progress towards this goal, native habitat. The Coalition’s first objective is to conduct a baseline land cover analysis of the Ridge to determine current types and quantities of habitats. Its second objective is to develop and implement a plan for protecting or restoring the mosaic of habitats throughout the Kittatinny Corridor needed to support migrating raptors, nesting songbirds, and species of conservation concern. Coalition progress toward these objectives will be shared in future State of the Kittatinny reports.
In the history of the Federal Superfund program, beginning in 1980, there has been exactly one transformation of a National Priorities Superfund Site into an environmental education center. That transformation has taken place over the past decade at Lehigh Gap where the Lehigh River bisects the Kittatinny Ridge (an Audubon Important Bird Area) at the junction of Carbon, Lehigh, and Northampton counties. There, a small group of dedicated volunteers set out to revegetate a barren mountain, most often referred to as a “moonscape,” and turn it into a public access park, wildlife refuge, and outdoor classroom and research lab.

This group, known then as the Wildlife Information Center, did not set out to be the first to effect such a transformation. They were just trying to fix a problem, and it fit with their long-term goal of creating an environmental education center. Though originally seeking an old farm from which to create their nature center, one of the Board members, Grant White, had the vision to see that we could transform the barren, metal-contaminated slopes of the Kittatinny into an interesting and valuable wildlife habitat. With support of their Board of Directors, Executive Director Dan Kunkle took the idea and ran with it beginning in 2002. Within a year, the group had purchased 750 acres from three private landowners, and the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge was born.

The conservation task of healing the land was first on the agenda, and in May 2003, the reclamation work began. Fifty-six one-acre test plots of native prairie grasses were planted and over the next three years, grew and thrived. This led to a decision to revegetate the entire denuded area on the Refuge – about 400 of the 750 acres. In 2006, the full scale planting was accomplished and what is locally known as the Blue Mountain had turned green.

By this time, the Wildlife Center had registered a new name and began doing business as Lehigh Gap Nature Center (LGNC). One of the first steps undertaken to make the site a public asset was the development of a trail system. For help with this, LGNC turned to the Allentown Hiking Club, one of its many partners. Club members not only designed but also volunteered to build the trail system at the refuge.

Approximately eight miles of new hiking trails were integrated with two existing major trails – the Appalachian Trail on top of the ridge and the Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) Corridor Trail along the Lehigh River. The refuge opened to the public for outdoor recreational use in 2003 and the trail system was built over the next two years.

Simultaneously with the revegetation and trail work, the education program was developed and prospered. Classes from the surrounding school districts began visiting on field trips that were developed by the Center’s volunteers. Beginning in 2004, students from pre-K to university graduate students were visiting the Refuge to learn about the remarkable transformation – what PPL Electric’s Community Affairs Director Bert Daday re-
ferred to as “the Miracle of Lehigh Gap.” With completion of a new visitor and education center in 2010, visitation soared – to between 4,000 and 5,000 students each year.

In addition to education programming, the Center also partners with numerous colleges and universities throughout the region as an ecological research field site. Dr. Diane Husic from Moravian College in Bethlehem, PA, serves as the volunteer Research Director at LGNC. Several dozen students have completed undergraduate or graduate research projects at Lehigh Gap and many of those contributed to our knowledge of the refuge’s ecology and helped inform its management. Some of these studies were also vital components of our ecological assessments that were completed in 2007 and 2010 (see http://lgnc.org/resources/reports).

As the education and research programs flourished, the conservation work continued. While the grasses thrived, leaders at the Nature Center knew that grass alone does not provide quality habitat. So they began introducing various flowering forbs to the grassland via seeds as early as 2004, and later continued scattering seeds and planting plugs, all with volunteer effort.

Much work has also been done controlling invasive species, especially butterfly bush, which is rampant at Lehigh Gap and would have taken over the grassland if left unchecked.

In addition, the natural process of succession has begun and native gray birches are moving into the grassland quickly and shading out the grasses. Normally, this would be welcome as the first stage of a return to the natural forest on the Kittatinny; in this case, however, there are two problems. One is that a healthy, diverse forest is unlikely to result because of grazing pressure by deer removing many desirable species, such as the oaks, and leaving only a few species that deer do not eat. The other is that, while the grasses take up small quantities of the metals and deposit them on the surface, birches take up about ten times more metal, contaminating the surface litter with higher concentrations of the persistent pollutants.

In 2013, with EPA support and approval, LGNC conducted its first test burn on the site to learn whether or not fire could be a viable and valuable management tool at the refuge to maintain grassland on the site. If it is successful (they will know in a year or two), and the grassland can be maintained, it is possible that the U.S. Army may transplant rare Regal Fritillary butterflies to the Lehigh Gap Wildlife Refuge to aid its declining eastern population.

Perhaps the most remarkable part of the LGNC story is that all of this was carried out by volunteers. With numerous partnerships and a solid core of 30-40 volunteers and a larger volunteer network that has included more than 350 people in the past decade, LGNC has been progressing in its vision as stated in its most recent strategic plan:

The vision of Lehigh Gap Nature Center remains a vision of hope. We have turned a mountainside that was viewed as a hopeless, polluted moonscape into a landscape of inspiration for current and future generations. In telling our story and continuing our conservation, education and research work, we seek to inspire others to do what some judge as impossible for our planet – to restore its functions and beauty where it has been damaged and to protect those places that remain ecologically healthy. We seek to connect a diverse array of people to nature, and in doing so, build a base of support for conservation in succeeding generations.

A dedicated group of volunteers at Lehigh Gap Nature Center have transformed a Superfund site into a super habitat on the Kittatinny Ridge.

—Submitted by Dan Kunkle, Lehigh Gap Nature Center
The Kittatinny Ridge in Pennsylvania consists of over 330,000 acres of land covering a 185-mile stretch from the Delaware River to the Mason-Dixon Line. We can learn a lot about the Ridge by looking at the condition and use of the land itself.

Most of the Ridge’s critical functions are dependent on having the vast majority of the Ridge remain forested.

Forests protect headwater streams, provide wildlife habitat, prevent erosion, and create scenic beauty, especially during the fall. For many species of nesting songbirds it is critical to maintain large tracts of forest habitat. It is also important to minimize the coverage of impervious surfaces such as pavement, which prevent rainwater from infiltrating and cause increased stormwater runoff and decreased water quality.

In 2012 we calculated that land conservancies along the Kittatinny, including the Pocono Heritage Land Trust, Wildlands Conservancy, Berks Conservancy, Lebanon Valley Conservancy, Manada Conservancy and Central Pennsylvania Conservancy have protected over 23,000 acres of land within the Kittatinny Ridge corridor.

To help Coalition partners build relationships with additional landowners on the Ridge, Audubon PA initiated a voluntary “land registry” program. The program includes a free framed print of a Ridge scene painted by a local artist, Audubon PA and the local conservancy’s contact information, and a one-year free membership to the National Audubon Society. Twelve landowners registered in 2012.

Woodland owned by the Izaak Walton League Chapter of Lebanon County buffering a new canoe launch entrance and recreational trail for Swatara State Park, was permanently protected in 2012 via a conservation easement held by the Lebanon Valley Conservancy.

Photo: Lebanon Valley Conservancy, Inc.
**Land Protected in Kittatinny Corridor by Conservancy Partners: 2012**

**Berks Conservancy**
Conservation Easement  
**169.40 acres**  
Berks County

**Lebanon Valley Conservancy**  
Conservation Easement  
**36.96 acres**  
Lebanon County

**Manada Conservancy**  
Conservation Easement  
**1.02 acres**  
Dauphin County

**The Nature Conservancy**  
Fee Acquisition  
**19.82 acres**  
Northampton County

Fee Acquisition, **90.18 acres**, Monroe County

**Wildlands Conservancy**  
Conservation Easement  
**63.40 acres**  
Lehigh County

Fee Acquisition  
7 small tracts  
**32.48**  
Northampton and Lehigh Counties

**Total acreage: 413.26³**

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**CONSERVATION IN ACTION:**  
**FIRST ORGANIC FARM PROTECTED BY THE BERKS CONSERVANCY**

Permanent protection of the Great Bend Organic Farm along the Kittatinny Ridge contains source water, wetlands, woodlands and over a mile of frontage on the Schuylkill River. The management of the property make significant contributions to water quality and quantity of the Schuylkill River.

Over 169 acres in West Brunswick Township along the Kittatinny Ridge in Schuylkill County was permanently protected in 2012. More than 60% of the land is woodlands and wetlands and Schuylkill River frontage. This farm also has high standards for management of their farm and woodlands.

The farm contains great land and water habitat with local breeding species of animals and birds along with being a habitat for migratory species of birds and aquatic life. Thanks to our partners, the Schuylkill County Conservancy, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and the landowner for making this a successful conservation easement.

—Submitted by Kim Lewis
Berks Conservancy

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*Photo: Berks Conservancy*

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**For More Information Contact:**
Berks Conservancy  
25 N. 11th Street  
Reading, PA 19601  
610-372-4992  
[www.berks-conservancy.org](http://www.berks-conservancy.org)
Wildlife Conservation

Goal: Conserve all native species occurring within the Kittatinny Ridge corridor, including state—and federally-listed species, and those that occur exclusively as migrants.

From black bears to bog turtles, the Kittatinny Ridge is home to wildlife large and small. A well-known haven for migratory and resident birds, the Ridge also provides habitat to insects, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. The Ridge’s forests are prime habitat for nesting songbirds, provide resting places for migrant raptors, and host a diversity of other species. The streams, springs and wetlands of the Ridge are filled with tiny invertebrates that form the base of a food chain that support native brook trout.

For some rare species, like the small-footed bat and Allegheny woodrat, it is the Ridge’s rocky slopes and outcrops that provide habitat. No matter when or where you look, you will find wildlife species utilizing the abundance of food, water and shelter provided by the Kittatinny Ridge.

2012

One objective of the Kittatinny Coalition is to increase the public awareness and appreciation of native species and engage people, including school groups, in citizen science monitoring programs. In 2012 Audubon PA staff held and incorporated citizen science into 3 teacher workshops for Lebanon, Lancaster, Dauphin, Perry, and Cumberland counties reaching a total of 49 teachers. They also offered 2 field trips to Waggoner’s Gap for a total of 120 students and 18 adults as well as 10 in-school citizen science programs in the Carlisle school district.

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<th>Turkey Vulture</th>
<th>Osprey</th>
<th>Bald Eagle</th>
<th>Northern Harrier</th>
<th>Sharp-shinned Hawk</th>
<th>Cooper’s Hawk</th>
<th>Northern Goshawk</th>
<th>Red-shouldered Hawk</th>
<th>Broad-winged Hawk</th>
<th>Red-tailed Hawk</th>
<th>Rough-legged Hawk</th>
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<th>American Kestrel</th>
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**Total**

7 — Number of Important Mammal Areas in the Kittatinny Ridge corridor. Designated by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey, these sites harbor significant populations of mammal species of special conservation concern, including the Allegheny woodrat and several species of bats.

1500+ — Estimated population of the regal fritillary butterfly at Fort Indiantown Gap. The regal is a rare butterfly species that indicates the presence of high quality grasslands.

7% — Annual increase in Bald Eagles counted at Hawk Mountain between 1974 and 2004. One of the nation’s greatest conservation success stories, counts from this site have been critical in documenting the comeback of America’s national symbol.
Starting in 2008, Dr. Todd E. Katzner (West Virginia University) and Jane L. Rodrigue (U.S. Forest Service) began to undertake a comprehensive study of wildlife scavengers in remote forest locations throughout the Appalachians and the upper midwest. Using camera trap sites with roadkill deer carcasses as a lure, golden eagles were the initial target for the researchers. This species nests in northeastern Canada but spends the winters in unknown locations within the Appalachians. Soon after beginning the study, some of the bait sites were found to be attracting other species of conservation concern, including spotted skunks, grey fox, fisher, red-shouldered hawk, northern goshawk and bald eagle, so the study was then expanded to include these and other predator birds and mammals.

Several camera trap sites were included along the Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Corridor, including in Carbon and Northampton counties.

A female golden eagle was netted and captured at the Tuscarora State Forest site in February 2012 and fitted with a telemetry unit to track her location year round. Available at the site’s Facebook page are several photo and video albums from the “Golden Eagle Research Project”: www.facebook.com/pages/Tuscarora-State-Forest/ 156162057781514?sk=photos_albums

“We’ve gotten huge amounts of basic ecological and behavioral data that we would have never known anything about,” he said Todd Katzner. “It’s all new. And it’s amazing. This telemetry gives us so much insight into what these birds are doing,” he said.

This is an on-going project with a lot of analysis of data and images yet to be completed. As reports are published, they will be made available at www.katznerlab.com.

For More Information Contact:
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Audubon PA
1201 Pawlings Road
Audubon, PA 19403
Phone: 215-519-5648

Photos: from trail cameras at the research site in the Tuscarora State Forest
CLEAN WATER

DISCOURAGE LOSS OF HABITAT AND WORK WITH MUNICIPALITIES TO MINIMIZE IMPERVIOUS SURFACES IN THE KITTATINNY CORRIDOR

The Kittatinny Ridge includes the headwaters to numerous streams, and countless seeps and springs. The Ridge’s lush forests filter contaminants out of rainwater, providing a valuable service to residents in the valley who use both groundwater wells and municipal water supplies.

The streams that start on the Ridge are popular fishing destinations, and provide habitat for many other species. While wetlands make up a rather small portion of the Kittatinny Corridor, they include some unique habitats. Nowhere is this more evident than along the Cherry Creek in Monroe County. Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge - only the third such area designated in Pennsylvania—was established in 2008 to protect the 85 rare or threatened species that inhabit the area.

The Kittatinny Coalition developed its mission, vision, goals, and measurements in 2012. One of the goals, related to water, is still under construction. The goals and measurements that are being developed will be aligned with local watershed plans, help communicate the importance of surface and groundwater coming off of the Kittatinny, and will help meet the goals established for the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.

3 — Exceptional Value Watersheds within the Kittatinny Ridge Corridor. These areas with top water quality are afforded additional protections against degradation from additional development in the watershed.8

783 — Miles of impaired streams in the Kittatinny Ridge Corridor, out of a total of 5,774 miles of streams. While many pristine streams begin on the Ridge, over 13% of the area’s streams are impaired, making it clear that there is plenty of work left to be done to restore degraded habitats and improve water quality.9
There are many nonprofit, local government, and volunteer organizations that work in Berks County that aid in enhancing our streams and work to keep them clean. These groups plan projects that improve water quality, prevent water pollution from entering the streams, educate others about the importance of pollution prevention, and/or organize special projects.

One group in particular that has been working in the Kittatinny area is Blue Mountain Wildlife Inc. The mission of the local nonprofit group is to preserve and conserve the wildlife and wetlands along the scenic Schuylkill River.

Blue Mountain Wildlife has focused their work along the Kernsville Dam in Hamburg, PA. They organize annual clean up days where volunteers help pick up discarded litter and garbage that has made its way to the Schuylkill River along the Kernsville Dam area. Making sure litter is properly disposed of is not only important because it makes the area look better, but it is also important for the health of the various wildlife that depend on the stream for their home, food, and water.

Also, Blue Mountain Wildlife maintains a constructed wetland area that is one-half acre in size that is surrounded by recreational trails. Wetlands are vital places in our landscape that help keep our streams and environment healthy. Wetlands can filter out water pollution that would otherwise flow into streams and cause unhealthy conditions for aquatic wildlife and make the water unhealthy for drinking, fishing, or swimming. Some of the pollutants that wetlands can filter are excess nutrients, sediments, and metals. Wildlife such as birds and butterflies are usually found in and around wetlands as they provide food and water.

In 2012, Blue Mountain Wildlife was awarded the Conservation Organization of the Year by the Berks County Conservation District for all of the outstanding projects that they have completed and continue to work on that improves the health of the Schuylkill River so that we have clean water to drink and to enjoy.

—Submitted by Kate Keppen
Berks County Conservation District

Conservation in action: Blue Mountain Wildlife Named Conservation Organization of the Year in Berks County

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Building a constituency for the Kittatinny Ridge is critical for conserving the ridge and Appalachian Trail, since people will have a significant impact on the future of this ecologically significant and treasured landscape. For example, landowners of large properties decide whether to develop or protect their land. They may or may not implement proper stewardship practices on their properties. Municipal officials decide whether or not to pursue conservation-oriented land use regulations and open space funding mechanisms that preserve valuable pieces of land. Residents remove and install plants in their yards. School teachers educate children about the environment and the importance of physical exercise. Hikers and tourists experience breathtaking views, view wildlife, and enjoy the peace and solitude of special places along the ridge.

Reaching people that live on and appreciate a 187-mile ridgeline is a challenge, requiring a variety of communications methods. The Kittatinny Coalition has adopted a multi-prong strategy including social media such as Facebook, e-news, and a blog; a website at www.kittatinnyridge.org; this State of the Kittatinny report; partnerships with tourism bureaus; municipal recognition programs such as ATC’s “AT Community Partner” and Audubon PA’s “Bird Town” programs; involvement in local festivals and other events; and offering workshops for teachers and school districts.

The Kittatinny Coalition aims to nurture a citizenry that is knowledgeable about the strong connections among environmental stewardship, community character, quality of life, economic competitiveness along the Kittatinny and will make conserving the ridge a top priority.

2012

- Planted wildflowers with more than 30 volunteer scouts and parents at the Lehigh Gap to help create a home for the Regal Fritillary butterfly
- Participated in the Cherry Valley Festival at the Josie Porter Farm in Stroudsburg
- Created a teachers’ listserv for 150 teachers in Kittatinny Ridge school districts
- Held 1 workshop in Lebanon and Lancaster counties and 2 workshops for Dauphin, Perry, and Cumberland counties reaching a total of 49 teachers
- Organized 2 field trips to Waggoner’s Gap for 120 students and 18 adults
- Published and distributed the second annual State of the Kittatinny report
- Maintained the Kittatinny Coalition website at www.kittatinnyridge.org
- Maintained social media including a quarterly e-news, blog, and Facebook page

Find the “Kittatinny Ridge and AT Project” on Facebook
CONSERVATION IN ACTION:
2012 CHERRY VALLEY FESTIVAL

On June 16, the second annual Cherry Valley Festival was held to celebrate the unique natural environmental qualities of the valley and raise awareness of conservation efforts underway. This community outreach event was organized by the Friends of Cherry Valley (FOCV), a non-profit organization committed to preserving, protecting and enhancing the natural resources and scenic beauty of Cherry Valley.

The Cherry Valley Festival was held at The Josie Porter Farm, home of Cherry Valley Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) on Cherry Valley Road, south of Stroudsburg, PA and was free to the public.

Educational events included presentations on aquatic critters, local amphibians and reptiles and raw food demonstrations. There were also nature walks and Josie Porter farm tours. Live entertainment included acoustical music throughout the day provided by the Pocono Bluegrass & Folk Society. The highlight of this year’s festival was the report out and conclusion of the “BioBlitz” organized by the Monroe County Conservation District at the Josie Porter Farm at 3:00 pm on Saturday, June 16 the day of the festival. The local community was encouraged to participate in the BioBlitz event. It involved an intense period of biological surveying in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area. Groups of scientists, naturalists and volunteers conducted an intensive field study in a short 24 hour time period. The goal of the BioBlitz was to raise public interest in biodiversity.

The BioBlitz counted a total of **1,078** different species of plants and animals on the property. The property contained excellent diversity with a wide range of species. The small size of the property allowed for a very complete inventory and all the teams did an excellent job. The number of species counted was very encouraging and goes to show the overall biodiversity of this piece of open space property.

Having the BioBlitz in conjunction with the Cherry Valley Festival definitely added to the overall idea of public involvement with the Blitz. It was estimated that close to 600 hundred people visited the BioBlitz tent and learned more about the process and biodiversity in general.

—Submitted by Gary Bloss, Josie Porter Farm

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The Kittatinny Ridge has long been an important home for human communities. Boulder fields and rock outcroppings are thought to have been used by Native Americans for spiritual purposes. Today over 300,000 people live in the numerous boroughs and townships along the ridge. A growing number of Pennsylvanians depend on the natural resources of the ridge for their business, their recreation, their drinking water, or their home.

Over the past century, the ridge has been a popular place for people to recreate, and as a result a third of the forested slopes are currently protected as state game lands, state forests, state parks, national park and recreation areas. This vast network of public lands draws outdoor enthusiasts, who support local businesses including gas stations, restaurants, hotels, and other merchants bringing additional revenue to the region and supporting local jobs. The ridge’s forests and open spaces also perform “ecological services” such as decreased flooding and erosion and filtering pollution, which save taxpayers from incurring additional expenses.

Finally, Beautiful rural scenery and easy access to recreational opportunities are desirable features for many househunters, and national surveys have shown that they have a positive impact on property values.

Despite many areas being protected, two thirds, or more than 300,000 square miles of the ridge are privately owned and vulnerable to degradation. How that land is used falls heavily in the hands of local officials, who have local land use control and a legal obligation uphold Article 1, Section 27 of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

“The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come.”

The Kittatinny Coalition is actively reaching out to local officials with research results, tools, and assistance to help them retain their desired quality of life and preserve the natural resources upon which other human and wildlife communities depend.
**Heritage Landscapes and Thriving Communities, Continued**

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2012

- Kittatinny Coalition partners gave several presentations about the Kittatinny Ridge and A.T. to municipalities, conservancies, and authorities.
- Quarterly countywide Environmental Advisory Council meetings were held in Northampton and Berks counties. Meetings focused on protecting open space, GIS projects, sharing ideas and accomplishments.
- ATC launched a mini grant program to work with communities to preserve and enhance the Appalachian Trail experience and Kittatinny Ridge landscape for future generations.
- The Kittatinny Ridge was divided into 8 sub-landscapes to inventory and promote regional assets: the Delaware Water Gap, Lehigh Gap, Hawk Mountain—The Pinnacle, Swatara Gap, Susquehanna Water Gaps, Capitol Area, North Mountain, and The Tuscaroras.
- Two Return on Conservation studies were initiated for Monroe and Cumberland counties.
- Communication tower guidelines were drafted for Kittatinny Ridge municipalities.

**Environmental Advisory Councils (EAC):** 17 Ridge municipalities have appointed local experts to advise municipal supervisors or council members with a variety of environmental issues, including everything from habitat restoration to recycling. EACs have been the impetus for many conservation advances within Ridge municipalities, and often are able to attract significant grant funding for their work.

**Zoning:** A zoning ordinance helps manage growth and conservation by designating appropriate land uses throughout the municipality and setting standards. Without zoning, landowners can develop their properties subject only to state and federal environmental regulations. 36 Ridge municipalities do not have a municipal zoning ordinance.

**Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances (SALDO):** A SALDO—found in 116 Ridge municipalities—applies any time a land owner proposes to subdivide a tract of land for any use or development involving a group of two or more residential or nonresidential buildings or a single nonresidential building.

**Comprehensive Plans:** 117 Ridge municipalities have a comprehensive plan, which documents a municipality’s vision for its future. Comprehensive plans inform future decisions on land use. 65 municipalities are participating in a multi-municipal cooperative comprehensive plan which covers a larger area and more than one municipality.

**Official Maps:** Only three municipalities are using this powerful tool to help conserve their most critical natural areas.
The Appalachian Trail Act of 2008, also known as Act 24, requires municipalities along the trail to:

"preserve the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the trail and to conserve and maintain it as a public natural resource."

In partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Natural Lands Trust (NLT) evaluated land use codes for 12 communities along the Appalachian Trail (AT) in 2012 to help local officials comply with Act 24.

NLT reviewed land use regulations – zoning ordinances, and subdivision and land development ordinances (SLDO) - for 12 of the 58 Townships along the AT. The review furthered the extensive research, municipal data gathering and development of land use principles developed by Wallace Roberts Todd for their Conservation Guidebook for Communities Along the Appalachian Trail.

NLT staff evaluated the land use regulations against three land use principles: 1) zoning oriented towards landscape conservation; 2) mandates and incentives for conservation design; and, 3) addressing potentially high impact uses. The 12 pilot communities were selected by ATC and PA Audubon staff, with the goal of achieving geographic diversity as well as reviewing regulations with varying degrees of sophistication.

Changing land use regulations requires willing municipal officials, the financial resources needed to update the regulations and often, professional assistance from outside the municipality. If the A.T. runs through your community and you would like assistance complying with Act 24, please contact the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at (717) 258-5771.

A copy of the Guidebook shown below can be found on the Kittatinny Ridge website at:

The Kittatinny Ridge is a place we go to re-connect with nature by taking part in our favorite pastimes. Hikers, photographers, painters, birdwatchers, and curiosity seekers flock to the Ridge in all seasons, but especially in the fall when the foliage is spectacular and kettles of migrating raptors fill the skies.

Hunters frequent the multitude of State Game Lands on the Ridge, as well as private lands. Anglers may not visit the Ridge itself very often, but nearly every quality stream in the region has its headwaters on the Ridge. The Kittatinny Ridge has something for everyone and hundreds of thousands take advantage of this treasured recreational resource each year.

A spectacular view of Cumberland County can be seen from Flat Rock in the Tuscarora State Forest above Colonel Denning State Park.

2012

In 2012, staff of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy:

- Coordinated a Lebanon County Trails Roundtable engaging trail and tourism stakeholders in Lebanon County to discuss opportunities for collaborative trail planning, development and promotion.
- Assisted with incorporating Appalachian Trail, area recreation and conservation services information into the Reed Township, Dauphin County, web site.
- Assisted with design and development of an Appalachian Trail Community interpretive panel in Duncannon Borough through coordination with the Susquehanna Greenway River Towns initiative.
- Coordinated a Norfolk-Southern employee volunteer workday clearing up/evening out the Ann St. River Arch floor in Duncannon Borough to improve pedestrian/recreational boating access.
- Provided technical assistance in moving the Apple Tree Alley Walk pedestrian/bike path project in Duncannon Borough towards implementation, including developing an Apple Tree Alley economic opportunities factsheet; developing a phased implementation plan and making various presentations to Borough Council; facilitating communication and coordination with funding agencies and business community supporters; and grant-writing assistance.

192,550 — Visitors in 2010 to four State Parks on the Kittatinny Ridge—Boyd Big Tree Preserve, Colonel Denning, Fowler’s Hollow, and Swatara.12

7 — Active hawk watch sites are on the Kittatinny, nearly half of all the hawk watch sites in Pennsylvania. Experienced watchers keep official counts — used by scientists to monitor population levels, but also help teach beginners the keys to identifying the 16 species of raptors that regularly use the Ridge.13

631 — Hikers completed the 2,178-mile Appalachian Trail in 2010. An estimated 3 to 4 million local hikers use some portion of the trail each year. The Keystone State hosts 229 miles of “the A.T.” mostly on the Kittatinny Ridge, and has 50 trailhead parking areas for easy access.14

60,705 — Fishing licenses purchased by residents in communities along the Ridge in 2007. Most anglers in Pennsylvania travel less than 20 miles from home.15
Conservation in Action: The Northern Lebanon Comprehensive Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plan

In 2009, Bethel, East Hanover, Swatara and Union Townships, Jonestown Borough, Fort Indiantown Gap and the Northern Lebanon School District formed the Northern Lebanon Recreation and Park Commission to provide recreation services that they were trying to provide alone. Since its inception, the Commission has introduced programs at a variety of public and private parks and recreation facilities. After nearly three years of successfully piloting a variety of programs, special events, and day trips for all ages, the Commission needed a comprehensive recreation plan to focus and renew its mission.

In 2012 the Commission embarked on a Northern Lebanon Comprehensive Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plan. The plan was prepared by a Steering Committee of the Northern Lebanon Recreation & Parks Commission, assisted by Gannett Fleming Inc. and Recreation and Parks Solutions. The Steering Committee included the Commission Director and representation from each member municipality and the school board, as well as Audubon Pennsylvania, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and Lebanon County Planning Department.

Primary tasks to complete the plan included 6 steering committee meetings, 3 public meetings, an online survey and key stakeholder interviews.

The survey revealed information that other communities may find interesting:

- Most people are active in spring, summer, and fall – more than 80% of activities occur then. But winter is no less - 58% of activities occur during the colder months.
- Most people are active in recreation in the evening (73% of activities), followed by afternoon (55%).
- Most people engage in recreation activities weekly (58%).
- 37% of activities are less frequent but still occur monthly.
- Many people enjoy recreating with either family and friends.
- Many people have participated in their recreation activities for a long time – many from childhood or their young adult years – and expect to continue “forever” or, well, “until I’m dead.”

People are interested in engaging in new and different types of recreation. They had ideas for additional recreation activities and events. They are also interested in teaching, coaching, etc.

The newly adopted plan is by no means gathering dust. The commission already has implemented several recommendations including: drafting a new mission statement, launching a new website (www.nlrecreation.org), reorganizing the Commission and welcoming new board members, applying for a grant, installing recreation registration software, developing new rates, and designing a new logo.

They also adopted a new tag line and Mission Statement, which the Commission is well on its way to achieving:

“To enhance the lives of all northern Lebanon residents by providing affordable, close to home recreation opportunities.”

Photos: Suzanne Guirate. L to R: 1) hike to Bordner’s Cabin, 2) preschool in the pumpkin patch, 3) candy making class, and 4) youth art
Each of the goals put forth by the Kittatinny Coalition have one important thing in common; each is guided and supported by the final goal of Research-Based Conservation.

If the goal is to maintain and restore native habitats, we first need to understand what types of habitats exist along the ridge and to what extent. If we want to conserve wildlife along the Ridge, then we need to have a good idea of what types of wildlife make the Ridge their home and in what numbers.

Because this prominent feature of the landscape boasts unique natural resources and unfragmented forest blocks, it is often the chosen location for many ecologically oriented studies.

Recognizing that much useful research is already taking place along the Ridge, the Coalition is trying to bring these researchers together in order to share and gather data that can be used to inform the management and conservation of the Ridge.

In 2012 the Kittatinny Coalition determined:

*In order to establish sound conservation goals and management plans for the Kittatinny landscape, it is critical to have good scientific data on habitat quality, biodiversity, and the impact of various environmental stressors on the wildlife, natural systems, and ecosystem functions of the Kittatinny.*

This led to the first “Science Summit” hosted by the Lehigh Gap Nature Center, which brought together all the researchers engaged in ecologically oriented research in the Kittatinny Corridor in eastern Pennsylvania. The summit, described in more detail on the following page, drew nearly 60 attendees. Projects like this National Park Service Headwater Stream Study, conducted for the Appalachian Trail, are likely to support management and other studies done along the Ridge.

Coalition progress on the database will be shared in future State of the Kittatinny reports.
**Conservation in action: the 2012 science summit and Appalachian trail-related research**

**Science Summit**

On April 20th the first annual Kittatinny Coalition Science Summit was held at Lehigh Gap Nature Center in Slatington, PA.

The purpose of the summit was to bring together organizations, agencies, researchers, and community leaders who are all interested in preserving and protecting the Ridge. By connecting these groups and encouraging the exchange of information, participants are better able understand the breadth of research and management that is taking place along the Ridge.

Understanding what is known about the Ridge and what still needs to be studied, has helped these groups gain a big-picture view of science-based research efforts. Awareness of the available resources and deficiencies should help to inform future research and conservation efforts designed for the Ridge.

During the Science Summit several individuals presented on the work that has been done on their portion of the Ridge. One such presentation was provided by Marian Orlousky, who had recently been hired as the Northern Resource Management Coordinator for the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC). Marian provided an overview of the research which has been done along the portions of the A.T. which follow the Kittatinny Ridge.

**Appalachian Trail-related Research**

Projects which have been conducted along the A.T. in the past include studies like the A.T. mammal inventory, a base-line water quality inventory and vegetation mapping. Projects such as phenology monitoring, rare plant monitoring, invasive inventories and American chestnut surveys are all currently taking place along the trail.

Meanwhile, the Vital Signs monitoring program is a long-term study which is ongoing along the A.T. and the Ridge.

Beyond the studies held by the ATC and National Park Service, a multitude of other researchers conduct studies on the A.T. each year; many of these projects also align with the Kittatinny Ridge, and further support the pool of available information.

Knowing that such studies have been done is valuable for other individuals and institutions who are interested in conducting research or conservation efforts on the Ridge. In many cases, the research which has been done by one group could be useful or supportive to another group.

By partnering and sharing information, groups can work together to more effectively and efficiently protect the Ridge.

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Volunteers from the Delaware Valley Appalachian Trail Club survey American Chestnut trees along the Appalachian Trail near Smith Gap. Data that the club collects is shared with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and researchers from the American Chestnut Foundation.

—Submitted by Marian Orlousky, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
DATA SOURCES

1. National Land Cover Gap Analysis Project, February 2010
2. The Nature Conservancy Secured Areas database and National Conservation Easement database
3. Audubon PA, with input from land conservancies
5. Joseph Hovis, wildlife biologist at Fort Indiantown Gap; personal communication
8. PA Dept. of Environmental Protection, via the Environmental Resources Research Institute
9. PA Dept. of Environmental Protection—Office of Water Management, Bureau of Water Supply and Wastewater Management, Water Quality Assessment and Standards Division
11. Audubon PA, with input from multiple county planning offices and municipalities
12. Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
13. Pennsylvania Birds 24:4
15. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

Additional Resources

Appalachian Trail
Appalachian Trail Conservancy, www.appalachiantrail.org

Birds
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, www.hawkmountain.org
Hawk Migration Association of North America, HakcCount, www.hawkcount.org

Conservation Tools

Economics of Nature Tourism

Environmental Advisory Councils (EACs)

Natural Resources
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, www.dcnr.state.pa.us

Wildlife
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, www.fish.state.pa.us
Pennsylvania Game Commission, www.pgc.state.pa.us
The Kittatinny Ridge and Appalachian Trail Conservation Project, implemented through the Kittatinny Coalition, helps the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources implement the 2009-2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). DCNR publishes SCORP every five years to be eligible to receive federal Land and Water Conservation Funds.

The plan is designed to direct LWCF funds that may come to the state. The plan includes a statewide assessment of outdoor recreation needs and supplies and an action plan to enhance outdoor recreation. Additional requirements include an update on the status of the state’s wetland resources and extensive opportunity for public participation.

The goals of the Kittatinny project are to conserve native habitat, land, wildlife, and clean water; create a citizenry knowledgeable about the reasons for conserving them; help communities retain their quality of life; promote the expansion of compatible recreational resources; and facilitate and promote scientific study of the Ridge.

The SCORP survey results support current Kittatinny Ridge Initiatives:

- Walking is the most popular outdoor recreation activity. (p. 17)
- Visiting historic sites, wildlife viewing, night sky-viewing, and bird watching are all enjoyed by at least a third of survey respondents. (p. 17)
- Most recreational activities take place close to home. (p. 17)
- 54% of respondents said natural or wild areas should be increased; 42% said they should be improved. (p. 20)
- Respondents ranked protecting wildlife habitat and wild resources and acquiring and protecting open space as two categories most deserving of public funding (p. 22) and high priorities for residents. (p. 23)
- Recreational planners should note the high priority placed by the public on development and maintenance of trails for walking and bicycling, with specific emphasis on linking communities with natural areas and outdoor recreation resources. (p. 23)
- Among social or experiential issues, providing access to outstanding natural scenery was of the highest importance. (p. 37)
A number of SCORP recommendations also are implemented through the Kittatinny project:

- Expand and promote PALTA’s Conservation Tool Box. (Recommendation 1.6 A)

- Conduct new or update existing research on the economic benefits of outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania. (Recommendation 1.8)

- Expand environmental education and interpretive programming in state and local parks, and seek opportunities to provide upgraded/additional visitor and education centers, wildlife viewing areas, and active outdoor recreation facilities. (Recommendation 2.1 C)

- Develop new and/or coordinate existing curricula and training to link outdoor recreation with personal outdoor stewardship to meet Health, Safety, and Physical Education, Environment and Ecology, Geography, Civics and Government academic standards. (Recommendation 2.3 A)

- Work with existing outdoor recreation-focused clubs to package and coordinate current offerings, identify and address membership needs; and develop partnerships with state and local outdoor recreation venues. (Recommendation 2.4 B)

- Identify and implement projects linking historic or cultural features with trails or other recreational amenities. (Recommendation 2.5 D)

- Provide electronic and printed interpretive materials to facilitate self-guided hikes on which trail users will have the opportunity to learn about Pennsylvania’s natural and cultural history. (Recommendation 3.5 A)

- Work with CLI leaders, county planners, and economic development staff to identify areas that need more recreation and marketing to benefit local economies. (Recommendation 4.3 A)

- Provide professional development to physical education teachers and other appropriate school personnel to provide lifelong outdoor recreation skills, in partnership with local outdoor recreation providers and facilities. (Recommendation 2.3 B)

- Provide professional development, technical assistance and support to school staff in the development/revitalization and use of outdoor learning facilities and green space on school grounds. (Recommendation 2.3 C)

- Develop and support community-based and university outing clubs to facilitate easy, consistent, close-to-home outdoor recreation programming for residents and students. (Recommendation 2.4 A)