

MUNICIPAL CLIMATE ACTION OPPORTUNITY

PLANNING FOR LANDSCAPE CONNECTIVITY

Protecting an interconnected network of undeveloped lands is one of the single most important objectives for those working to safeguard Pennsylvania's natural resources against adverse climate change impacts. Already, plant and animal communities have started to shift to more northerly locations and higher elevation sites. Creating an unbroken corridor of open spaces helps enable each species to move at its own pace as necessary, alleviating the need for direct human interventions. Biodiversity conservation also depends upon protecting a full complement of habitat types to preserve suitable environments for as many species as possible.

More and more, the Kittatinny Ridge corridor is becoming recognized as one of those critical landscapes that will play an important role in maintaining the biodiversity of the region. As a result, conservation work here is stepping up its emphasis on connectivity and ecosystem diversity, so as to best fulfill the Kittatinny's potential as both climate refuge and climate migration corridor.



View of the Kittatinny landscape from Hawk Mountain Benjamin Hayes

While conservation scientists can identify high value areas that deserve protection, it is up to local and county governments, private citizens, and land trusts to get the job done. Counties and municipalities can use the same conservation methods that have been used for other open space purposes to support regional climate-focused natural resource protection. Municipal comprehensive land use plans, multi-municipal planning, county comprehensive plans, official maps and other ordinances are all valuable tools in this endeavor. Open space and greenway planning can be updated to explicitly consider habitat connectivity along with other values such as trail network extensions or watershed protection planning. Addressing climate adaptation is a matter of updating the planning process; the protection methods remain the same.

Where to get more information

The website of the **Kittatinny Ridge Coalition** provides an overview of the importance of the connected Kittatinny landscape as a climate refuge and migration corridor.

<http://kittatinnyridge.org/protect/climate-change-resources/>

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' guide ***Pennsylvania Greenways, An Action Plan for Creating Connections*** contains information on planning connected open spaces.

http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/d_001162.pdf

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Dark green areas represent the 200,000+ acres identified for protection efforts to ensure the Kittatinny's continued status as an ecological corridor for climate change adaptation. Source: Nature Conservancy

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) issued **Municipal Resource Guide 2012** to assist local and county governments in identifying sources of funding for open space planning and related endeavors. <http://www.dvrpc.org/reports/12003.pdf>

An additional source of funds is available for the easternmost section of the Kittatinny in Pennsylvania, through the **Resilient Landscapes grant program** of Open Space Institute. http://www.osiny.org/site/DocServer/OSI_high_kitt_NJ_PA_factsheet_final.pdf?docID=12841

The **Conservation Tools** website offers several resources, including a handbook on using official maps, as well as briefs on open space referenda, prioritization of conservation resources, transfer of development rights, and urban growth boundaries. <http://conservationtools.org/>

The Trust for Public Land provides **technical assistance on open space finance** to local governments. <http://www.tpl.org/node/85613/#sm.0001mgekp3ap0dtczll1n9k29gmot>

Use of a **Conservation By Design** approach can help local governments protect important community features from development. <http://conservationtools.org/guides/9-growing-greener-conservation-by-design>

Multi-municipal plans are effective tools for connectivity planning as well. See, for example, the *Nazareth Area Multi-municipal Plan* and the *Two Rivers Area Greenway Plan*. http://elibrary.pacounties.org/Documents/Northampton_County/1874;%20Bath%20Borough/4209504432mmcp.pdf
http://bushkill.org/Two_Rivers_Area_Greenway_Plan.pdf