



## **Vision**

Working as a synergistic whole, the Kittatinny Coalition draws on collective strengths and broad knowledge to protect the 185-mile long Conservation Landscape that is the Kittatinny Ridge (or the KRCL). We advocate for unbroken forest to provide:

- protected headwater sources for clean and plentiful water for surrounding communities;
- a scenic Appalachian Trail system experience;
- outdoor recreational opportunities that are welcoming, safe and available to all;
- safe passage for resident and migratory wildlife; and
- natural areas and open spaces which enrich the human mind and spirit.

A naturally healthy and thriving Ridge advances the region's economies. We aspire to have the Ridge listed as a National Heritage Area and a nationally protected corridor under the Wildlife Corridors Conservation Act. Because of its cooler climate, ample fresh water and abundance of other natural resources, the region has become an increasingly attractive and safe haven to live, work and play, earning designation as the nation's first Climate Change Refuge.

The Kittatinny Coalition is the ultimate champion for the Kittatinny Ridge, leading and coordinating in the generation of funding, research, education, land acquisition, and community involvement along the Ridge. It is a powerful and inclusive alliance where all who love the Ridge gather and work together to protect it. All are welcomed to support and enjoy this national treasure.

## **Guiding Principles**

***Conserving the ecological integrity of the Kittatinny Ridge:*** The Kittatinny Ridge functions as a critical migratory corridor, a climate resilient landscape, and habitat for a wide array of species. Utilizing current science, advocacy, stewardship, and land protection, the Coalition works to conserve the Ridge and its ecological integrity as a large, interconnected landscape.

***Serving as a voice for all communities:*** Communities along the Kittatinny Ridge are culturally, economically, and demographically diverse. The linear nature of the Ridge can also create a disconnect between the communities who share it. The Coalition serves as a platform for community voices and stories, bringing local perspectives to this regional landscape. As a voice for the Kittatinny Ridge, we build trust and awareness among its communities and interest groups locally (e.g. birders, hunters, watershed groups, etc.), and promote recognition of the landscape's importance at a state and a national level.

***Preserving a sense of place:*** The Ridge is a place to find solitude, recreate, and connect with the land. The values, cultures, history, economies, and stories of local communities - hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians strong - are tied to the Ridge and its valleys. We are committed to conserving the natural landscape for the spiritual and intellectual well-being of those who call it home.

***Building success and strength through a shared vision and collaboration:*** The Coalition is a diverse network of stakeholders from both the private and public sectors. We are scientists, educators, land stewards, land trusts, farmers, foresters, researchers, naturalists, and members of many local municipalities, counties, and state agencies committed to protecting our natural and cultural heritage. We all bring different reasons why we work to conserve the Ridge, and we find strength, flexibility and inspiration in that diversity.

***Committing to thriving, resilient communities:*** The KRCL includes 12 counties, 136 municipalities, and portions of the Delaware, Lehigh, Schuylkill, and Susquehanna River watersheds. Millions of people depend on the clean air and water, timber, and agricultural products produced by the Ridge and its rural Corridor. Maintaining clean water, farmland soils, healthy forests, grasslands, and wetlands will build resiliency and enable the region to thrive economically for generations to come.

## **Goals, Strategies and Desired Outcomes**

### **Goal #1:**

**Identify and protect biologically important land and open space to advance wildlife and water conservation along the Ridge.**

#### **Five-year Outcomes:**

- Strategic Conservation Plan completed
- Increased number of priority parcels pursued and protected annually
- The funds dedicated specifically to land and water protection is grown to enable an increase the pace of land protection annually

## Strategies:

1. Complete a comprehensive Strategic Land Conservation Plan. The Plan will explicitly:
  - Integrate existing conservation, zoning and land use studies and plans – including the PA Wildlife Action Plan and the PA Forest Action Plan – in support of establishing protection priorities.
  - Identify gaps in and barriers to strong land protection, forest management plans, and wildlife and water conservation along the Ridge.
  - Identify and map highest priority land parcels, recreational assets, and water and wildlife stewardship areas.
2. Develop and implement a program to reach out proactively to landowners in high priority areas to help them understand the role their land plays in advancing resiliency, their conservation options, cultivate their interest in preserving their land, and introduce the Coalition (and/or its partners) as an organization that can help.
3. Enlist Coalition partners in the pursuit and protection of other assets as prioritized.
4. Distinguish and grow land and water protection funds year over year to increase our agility to pursue, and succeed in, land protection efforts.

## Goal #2:

**Build community identification with, and ownership in, the Kittatinny Ridge as a critical/valued natural asset.**

## Five-year Outcomes:

- The Kittatinny Ridge is a recognized brand across the Ridge
- Increased sense of place within each region inclusive of the Ridge as a natural asset
- Rise in the number and diversity of the populace who are actively supporting the protection of the Ridge

## Strategies:

1. Invest in market research and the development of market profiles to further understand the value the populace places in, and their relationship with, the Ridge overall, messages and experiences that may resonate more regionally, and stimulate preservation action.
2. Develop a place-based brand for the KRCL as a whole as a treasured natural resource.
3. Generate, and encourage the generation by other stakeholders, of collateral materials, tools and stories fully reflective of the brand.

4. Support partners and/or regional leadership in the creation of *pilot* education, engagement and communications initiatives which utilize the Kittatinny brand and incorporate more specific place-based knowledge.
5. Facilitate community and/or county leadership connecting with and learning from each other; a “cultural” exchange if you will (assuming cultures across the KRCL are disparate).
6. Assist partners and/or regional leadership in the development of landscape-scale community engagement, communications and specific campaign planning in support of land and water stewardship, and protection priorities and policies.
7. Systematically and consistently communicate progress in advancing protection priorities and their impact among decision-makers, partners and the general public.

### **Goal #3:**

**Collaborate with counties, municipalities, and other organizations along the Ridge to contribute to their collective understanding of the ecological, economic, recreational, and social values of protecting the Ridge and advance the adoption of land-use, sustainability and climate resiliency plans, and programs and policies which foster its natural health.**

#### **Five-year Outcomes**

- 50% or more of County Comprehensive Plans fully incorporate the KRCL
- A minimum of 33% of municipalities in the KRCL have updated their plans, regulations or programs to include goals aligned with the KRCL needs, including resource sustainability and climate resiliency
- Officials in 75% of the KRCL regularly participate in annual or bi-annual meetings, training sessions and/or outdoor experiences
- Mini-grants awarded to counties, municipalities, and other organizations

#### **Strategies**

1. Incorporate the KRCL and its conservation goals into all county comprehensive and open space plans within the corridor.
2. Identify sustainable community development models in PA and beyond and match models to community needs along the KRCL.
3. Integrate the KRCL, sustainability, and resiliency into local comprehensive plans and land use regulations and policies in partnership with county planning departments.
4. Increase county and municipal capacity to conserve the KRCL through training, outdoor experiences and technical assistance.

5. Incentivize the adoption of county and municipal plans, regulations and programs that help protect the KRCL through mini-grant programs.
6. Pursue award designation of the Ridge as a Sentinel Landscape.
7. Pursue designation as the Nation's first Climate Change Refuge.

#### **Goal #4:**

**Promote science as a basis for the Coalition's recommendations/actions by enlisting support from academicians and scientists who generate research that is relevant to the Ridge as a Conservation Landscape and to the goals of the Coalition.**

#### **Five-year Outcomes**

- Annual or biennial Science Summit
- A functioning mini-grants program for science research
- Research substantively applied to other Coalition goals and strategies

#### **Strategies**

1. Summarize existing research and make it readily accessible to stakeholders along the KRCL.
2. Identify research needs (gaps) that would advance progress on other Coalition goals and recruit/request proposals to fill gaps.
3. Re-launch mini-grant program in support of applicable research.
4. Organize and host science summits.
5. Identify and expand access to research by colleagues, organizations and the public nationally and internationally in support of the KRCL's national and global significance.

#### **Goal #5:**

**Develop and clarify Coalition roles and operational processes to ensure progress on the goals articulated in this Plan and the protection of the KRCL.**

#### **Five-year Outcomes**

- Pace of KRCL protection increased year over year

- Coalition has expanded and diversified to include key influencers and decision-makers throughout the KRCL
- Coalition members report increased levels of satisfaction and engagement

### **Strategies**

1. Develop and adopt new organizational structure, inclusive of defined and documented individual roles and committee charters
2. Develop an MOU for the Coalition which further codifies the collaboration desired and decision-making processes.
3. Enlist key influencers and decision-makers to serve on Coalition committees as designed.
4. Advance engagement, communications and decision-making through quarterly and annual meetings, including but not limited to science summits

### **Goal #6:**

**Create and adopt fiscal management and budgeting procedures to align grant allocations and other potential funding with Coalition priorities.**

### **Five-year Outcomes**

- Available resources are invested in projects generated at the local and regional level
- Increase in fiscal resources available to advance protection priorities

### **Strategies**

1. Fiscal agent is identified and contracted to manage Coalition resources
2. Fund development, budgeting, and mini-grant procedures are developed, codified and disbursed as designed
3. Pursue additional capital which aligns with Coalition goals and protection priorities.