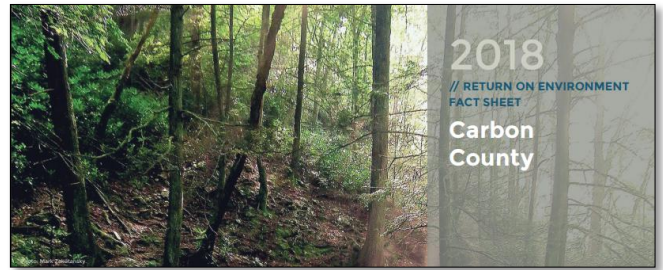




# State of the Kittatinny Report 2022



[https://kittatinnyridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/KIT\\_ROE\\_carbon\\_factsheet\\_2.pdf](https://kittatinnyridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/KIT_ROE_carbon_factsheet_2.pdf)

Welcome to the 2022 State of the Kittatinny report! Enjoy this review of partners’ achievements, community education and engagement, habitat enhancement, land protection efforts, mini-grant projects, and more!

## Highlight: Carbon County Open Space Referendum

In 2022, Carbon County voters approved the Carbon County Water, Farms, and Land referendum - a \$10 million bond issue to support farmland preservation and natural lands conservation.

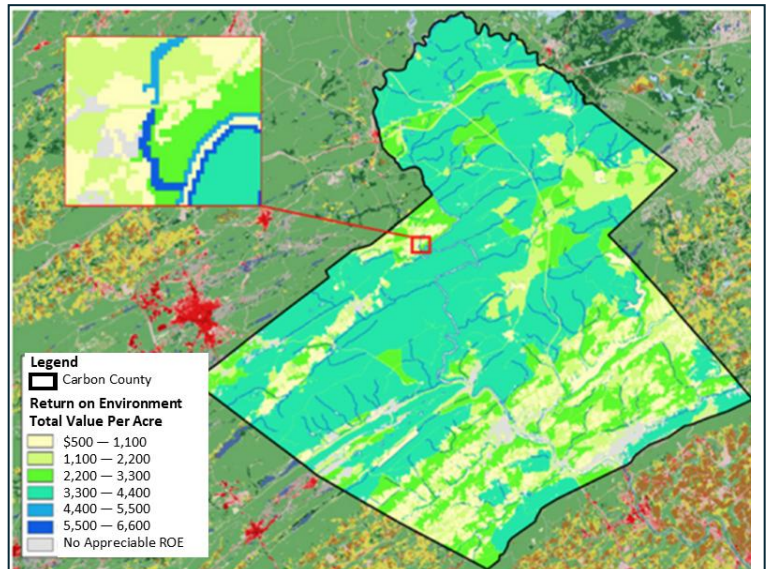
This means:

- The bond provides local match funds, a limitation often encountered if efforts to protect lands.
- Carbon County can borrow up to \$10 million over 20 years.

County commissioners determined that it is in the best interest of residents and future generations to acquire land to protect water resources, preserve agricultural lands, and protect wildlife habitat and natural areas.

The bond followed the 2018 [Carbon County Return on Environment](#) (ROE) report that demonstrated the value of open space to the local economy, welfare, and quality of life. A [Nature and Commerce Committee](#) was created to promote conservation-oriented programs, plans, and policies that help grow the local economy.

Want to learn more? Visit [WeConservePA’s Municipal Open Space Programs and Referendums](#).



While difficult to see at this scale, the highest ROE is in green corridors along streams and creeks, with the second highest being ridges and slopes (shown in darker greens and blues).

Image courtesy of: [https://kittatinnyridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/KIT\\_ROE\\_carbon\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://kittatinnyridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/KIT_ROE_carbon_report_final.pdf), page 10.

Parks	Visitation	Annual Spending	Jobs
		(2017, in \$Millions)	
Beltville State Park	223,047	\$13.45	166
Lehigh Gorge State Park	147,977	\$12.99	206
Hickory Run State Park	115,278	\$11.82	177
D&L Trail	70,000	\$7.51	Unavailable

The value of state parks and local recreational resources.  
*Courtesy of the Carbon County Return on Environment Report, 2018.*

Carbon County’s open spaces provide natural system services and recreational and property-value benefits estimated at **\$800 million annually**.

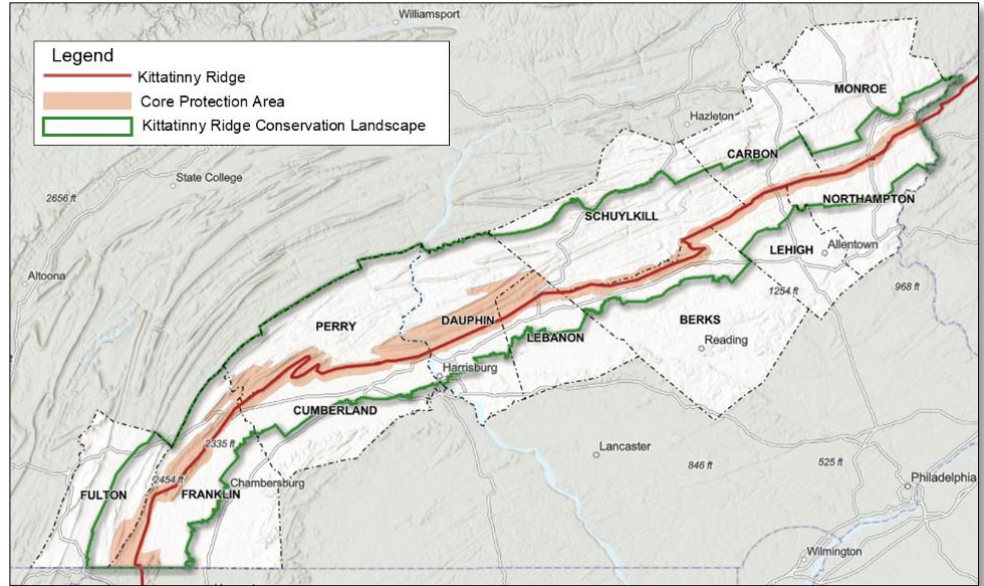
# Goal #1 - Conserve Land

## Protecting Land: Conservation Landscape vs Core Protection Area

Through 2022, about 481,170 acres of the Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape (green boundary below) – approximately 22% of the Landscape’s 2,156,900 acres – have been protected under public ownership or with easements. View a [map and more details here](#) about preserved land across the entire Conservation Landscape.

In 2015, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) received funding from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to form the **Kittatinny Land Protection Partnership (LPP)** with the goal to accelerate the pace of land protection along the Kittatinny Ridge Core area.

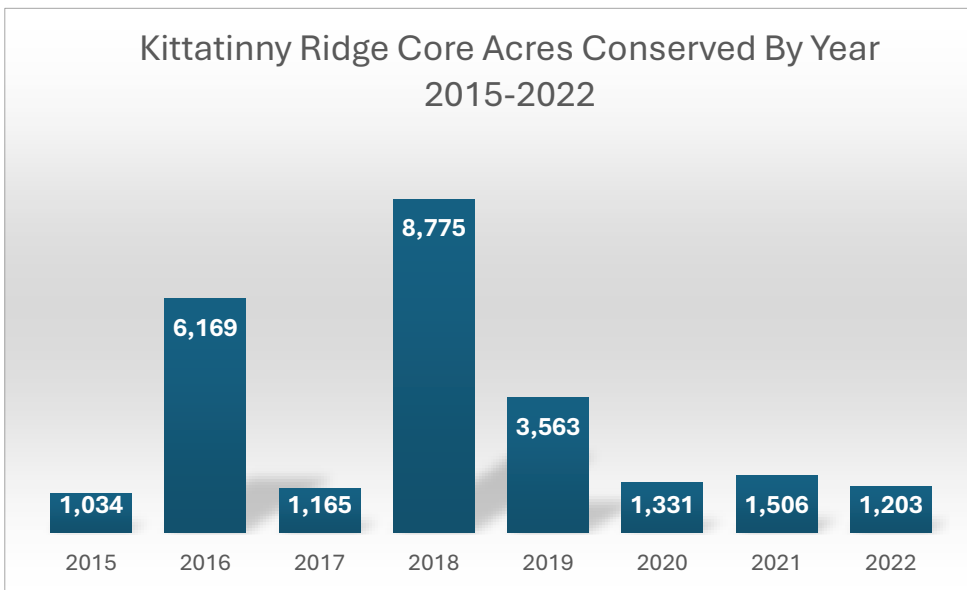
The Core Protection area (shaded on map) represents a smaller geographic area of the overall Conservation Landscape and is considered the most ecologically important section of the Ridge. Visit TNC’s [Resilient & Connected Network](#) online resource and mapping tool to learn more.



Map showing the Kittatinny Ridge, the Core Protection Area, and the Conservation Landscape  
*Courtesy Shippensburg University, Center for Land use and Sustainability*

This Core area has been designated as a resilient climate corridor of continental importance, a Globally Important Bird Area (IBA) and is also home to many miles of the Appalachian Trail.

The LPP has a goal to conserve 50,000 acres of the Core area across the Ridge by 2030. Since its formation and through the end of 2022, the LPP, led by TNC and including six land trusts and many other partners, has conserved approximately 24,807 acres out of its 505,000 acres, about 5% of the Core area.



### Habitat Enhancement Along the Ridge

In 2021, the KRCL program helped to restore a **one-acre plot** at TNC’s Hamer Woodlands at Cove Mountain. The site was planted with a diverse array of fruit-bearing shrubs to provide a structurally complex habitat for spring and fall bird migration. Avian responses to increased habitat are being tracked. Visit [here](#) to learn more.

*See p. 3 for more about Hamer Woodlands.*

## Goal #2 – Build Community Identity around Shared Natural Systems



View of the Cumberland Valley from Waggoner's Gap  
*Courtesy Audubon PA.*

### Transfer of Waggoner's Gap Hawkwatch to PA Game Commission

National Audubon Society's 138-acre hawkwatch site, Waggoner's Gap, has been transferred to the PA Game Commission as part of SGL 230.

The site, known for its breathtaking views to the north and south, has been a site for migratory bird data collection for nearly 70 years. Volunteer and paid counters record up to 25,000 raptors per fall season. Under the PGC, the site will remain accessible to the public and migration counts will continue. The PGC will also host on-site education programs.

**Want to go?** Waggoner's Gap is located on Route 74 north of Carlisle at the top of the Kittatinny Ridge. Follow migration counts [here](#).

### Appalachian Audubon Society Kicks off Lights Out Harrisburg to help Migrating Birds

[Lights Out Harrisburg](#) takes place during peak spring and fall migration: April 1<sup>st</sup>-May 31<sup>st</sup> and August 15<sup>th</sup>-November 15<sup>th</sup> each year.

Up to one billion birds die in the U.S. each year colliding with buildings during migration. Most birds fly at night, navigating with the constellations. Bright lights can cause disorientation, resulting in collisions with buildings or windows. Fatalities are also caused by using extra energy flying around in confusion.

Partners of the Lights Out Harrisburg Coalition commit to turning off (and/or dimming) exterior and interior lights between 12am and 6am during migratory seasons. These efforts will save countless migratory bird lives each year.



Migration is full of hazards, and reducing or eliminating artificial lighting is one way we can help birds. Everyone can participate – building owners, municipalities, and residents.

**Visit:** [Lights Out Factsheet](#).

## Goal #3 – Sustain and Expand Outdoor Recreation Resources and Access

### Expansion of Hamer Woodlands at Cove Mountain Worth a Visit

In 2017, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased 350 acres of [Hamer Woodlands at Cove Mountain](#) in Perry County. In 2021, the PA/DE chapter expanded the Preserve by 1,200 acres, creating a 14-mile stretch of protection, and helping the Appalachians remain connected, healthy, and more climate resilient into the future.

The Preserve hosts a variety of forest habitats including pawpaw and poplar along the lower slopes, and sweet birch and red oaks among the rocky upper slopes. Unique large boulder features could provide habitat for important wildlife species, such as the threatened Allegheny woodrat. Cove Mountain is home to at least nine species of bats.

**Want to go?** Hamer Woodlands at Cove Mountain is open daily to the public. View [trial map here](#).



Susquehanna River view from Hamer Woodlands trail.  
*Courtesy Noah Kaplaniak-The Nature Conservancy*

## Reporting Out on KRCL Mini-Grants

The [KRCL Mini-Grant Program](#) helps partners protect this important and cherished ridgeline by offering funding for projects through an annual grant cycle. Grants up to \$10,000 are awarded to support projects that help advance the [KRCL's strategic goals](#).

Two mini-grants were completed in 2022, totaling \$19,750 with \$32,536 in match for a **grand total of \$52,268**. This year's projects include:



Mayapple

Courtesy Sara Chudnovsky, Berks Nature

**Berks Nature** conducted *Community Outreach and Capacity-Building along the Kittatinny Ridge in Berks and Schuylkill Counties*. The project used three strategies to deepen engagement with communities along the Kittatinny in Berks and Schuylkill Counties:

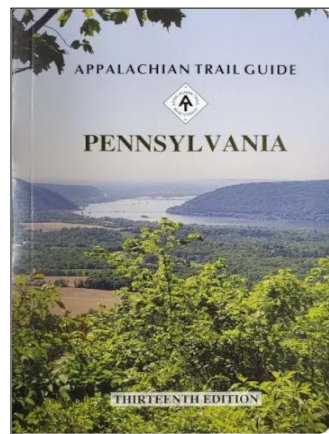
- Implemented programs with place-based groups
- Promoted the Kittatinny Ridge at local fairs
- Promoted the [Appalachian Mountain Club's iNaturalist](#) community science project [Crowdsourcing Flower Phenology Along the Appalachian Trail](#).

View [this video](#) to learn more.

**Keystone Trails Association** produced 2,500 copies of the *13th edition of the Appalachian Trail Guide – Pennsylvania*, an essential reference for trail users. The new Guide includes:

- Detailed trail descriptions with distances for all 230.2 miles of the Appalachian Trail located within the borders of PA;
- Partner information, trail history, leave no trace, trip planning, cultural and natural features, and trail section details;
- Narrative about the Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape and stewardship;
- A special dedication to Maurice Forrester Jr., a long-time editor of earlier editions.

This project was a collaboration between KTA and various hiking club chapter members.



Courtesy Keystone Trails Association

**Find the Guide [here!](#)**

**Interested in a mini-grant?** Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations with tax-exempt status 501(c)(3), municipalities, and educational institutions. Grant awards require a 1:1 local match in the form of cash and/or eligible non-cash (in-kind) services. Visit [KRCL mini-grants here](#) or [multi-county grants here](#).



Courtesy Shippensburg University, Center for Land use and Sustainability

## Goal #4 – Support Nature-Based Economic Development

### Sustainable Business Highlight

The KRCL calls upon many partners to advance its mission of protecting and promoting the Ridge, including state and federal agencies, municipalities, land trusts/conservancies and other conservation-based non-profits, institutes of higher education, and more. We also uplift sustainable businesses that help make living in and visiting the KRCL region rich, rewarding, and fun. These businesses offer a variety of services including outdoor recreation, healthy food, and cultural experiences. We appreciate our sustainable business partners and the value they bring to the region.

In 2022, we celebrate the **Lehigh Outdoor Center** (LOC). The LOC is located on the east side of Lehigh, south of Jim Thorpe, with easy access to both the Lehigh River and the Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) National Heritage Corridor. Interested in paddling? The LOC offers varying levels of guide services with Jim Thorpe River Adventures, including Introductory, EasyWater, and BigTime whitewater. If you'd rather pedal, the LOC offers bike sales and rentals, and shuttling services whether you rent from them or not. Rentals include helmets, a water bottle, and other accessories for a safe and successful ride. Their website provides trail descriptions with distances, difficulty, and other helpful information to help plan your day. Stock up on gear and clothing in the shop, and rest and restore at their café after your adventure.



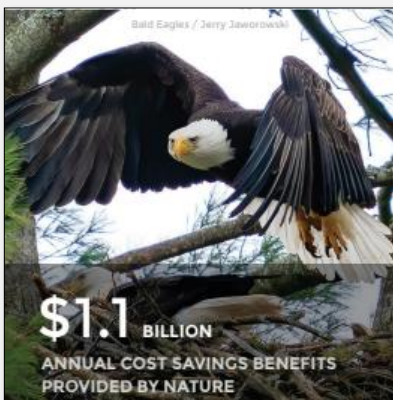
**123 Lehigh Drive Lehigh, PA**  
**Phone: 610-377-1230**  
**lehighoutdoorcenter.com**  
**Hours: Open 9-6 daily**



### Nature is Serious Business: Monroe County and Swatara Creek Return on Environment (ROE) Studies

By the end of 2022, 8 out of 12 Ridge counties have completed ROE studies, and several watershed-based and municipal ROEs have emerged. By recognizing and implementing actions steps to maximize nature's ecosystem services, these communities can:

- Avoid costs for services provided by natural system
- Experience public health savings
- Recognize revenue from local recreation
- Acknowledge open space and/or water premium on property values
- Use ROE results to frame county and municipal programming



[https://kittatinnyridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/KIT\\_ROE\\_monroe\\_factsheet\\_PRINT.pdf](https://kittatinnyridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/KIT_ROE_monroe_factsheet_PRINT.pdf)

#### Monroe County ROE

The Kittatinny Ridge, the Pocono Plateau, stream corridors, and uplands of Monroe County are all part of its natural and cultural legacy. These natural resources, along with the County's proximity to major metropolitan areas, create a thriving tourism and recreation economy. Natural beauty is one of the most popular reasons people choose to live in the County.

In [Monroe 2030](#), county officials and residents acknowledge complex issues that shift priorities. Understanding the financial value of nature offers a way to balance growth while maintaining connected, climate-resilient landscapes that support a strong economy.

Visit the ROE report [here](#), the factsheet [here](#), and interactive map [here](#).

## Swatara Creek Greenway ROE

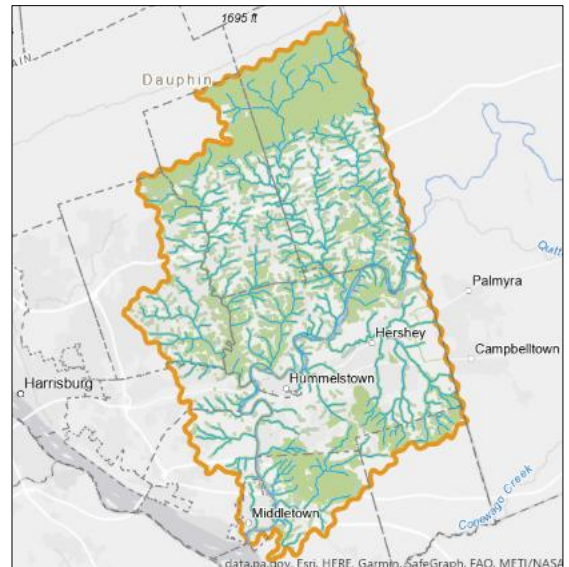
The [Swatara Creek Greenway ROE Findings](#) highlight the value through the lens of a [Green Ribbon Landscape](#). Manada Conservancy collected ROE data in a useful online format, including a website informing [conservation decisions](#), links to ROE products and evaluations, and conservation planning tools and apps.

Manada Conservancy also put the ROE into action by prioritizing land protection projects and using ROE resources to promote its [Swatara Creek Greenway](#) program.

**For more** about ROEs, including methodology and references, visit [kittatinnyridge.org](https://kittatinnyridge.org) and select Explore.

Riparian Areas and Green Ribbon Landscapes Map

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/980a70922a11457d8916503a7bc0e7f9/page/ROE-Findings/?draft=true>



## Goal #5 – Build a Strong and Diverse Partner Network

### Native Plantings along D&L Trail in Lehigh

Parkland Nurseries, Lehighon Borough, Lehighon Downtown Partnership, and the Lehighon Shade Tree Commission designed and installed a *native plant garden project* along the [D&L Trail](#), near a scenic overlook along the west bank of the Lehigh River. Volunteers installed 800+ perennials in a space that was previously mowed grass.



Before (left) and after (right). Courtesy Audubon Mid-Atlantic and tnonline.com.

### Harrisburg Garden Supports Urban Agriculture

Harrisburg Area YMCA's Camp Curtin Branch partnered with the Harrisburg Garden Partners Group to build support for community agriculture and food access at the *YMCA Camp Curtin Branch Urban Garden*. The KRCL and Audubon Mid-Atlantic, with funding by the Donald B. Dorothy L. Stabler Foundation and PA DCNR is installing bird-friendly native plants to pollinate the crops, enhance bird habitat, and beautify the space to encourage residents to install native plants at home. [Learn more here!](#)



Courtesy <https://kittatinnyridge.org/native-garden-in-harrisburg-supports-urban-agriculture>