

Penn's Woods

Largest Pennsylvania Land Deal Good for Forests, Local Economy

It's Spring and the hulking elk knows it's time to part ways with her herd. She moves stealthily amidst the awakening landscape, through a labyrinth of thick tree trunks and pockets of greening farm and grasslands, sensing out a secluded safe haven. The time soon will come for new life, and a rickety, young calf will take its first timid steps somewhere deep inside the woods of Elk County, Pennsylvania.

The odds of survival are good for this newborn, which in time will require a range encompassing hundreds of square miles. This part of the state, with its rolling, richly forested hills and lush, fertile valleys, is an ideal backdrop for healthy populations of elk, as well as other wide-ranging animals like bear and river otter. Humans, too, rely upon this vast, resource-rich landscape, and have for generations relied on the region's forests for their livelihoods.

In an effort to protect this prime forestland—home to the largest elk herd east of the Mississippi—as well as local jobs in the timber industry, The Nature Conservancy recently partnered with private timber investment organization Conservation Forestry LLC to develop a conservation deal that's good for both people and nature.

"This marks our single largest protection effort ever in Pennsylvania," says Conservancy State Director Bill Kunze of the nearly 10,000-acre Elk Timberlands conservation easement. "And it will be one of the largest private land deals in state history."

Nestled between the half-million-acre Allegheny National Forest and the 1.5 million acres of state forest and game lands to the east, the agreement helps to fill in a protection gap within the largest unbroken forest between New York City and Chicago.

Conservation Forestry purchased the land, and the Conservancy will hold a conservation easement. "The easement limits future development on the land," says Director of Conservation Operations Todd Sampsell, "but at the same time allows for sustainable timber harvesting."

To ensure the lands are well managed, the Conservancy will conduct annual inspections to verify compliance with standards established by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), a non-profit which promotes the responsible management of forests.

Sampsell says that this kind of agreement embraces what he calls a "working woodlands" approach, in which both ecological and economic needs are taken into consideration.

"This project is a great example of the way The Nature Conservancy works to help nature, people, and their communities," he says.

With a wood industry valued at more than \$5 billion, the economy of Pennsylvania is linked strongly to its forests. But Penn's forests mean more to its people than jobs and money. Sampsell says the conservation easement takes that into consideration.

"Ecotourism is big in this state," he says. "Under the agreement, much of the land will be open to the public for hunting, fishing and hiking."

As for those looking to watch wildlife, Sampsell is certain they won't be disappointed.

"The property will be open for hiking, and we see lots of wildlife, including elk, moving through it."

The Conservancy must obtain funding for the project by March 2010 in order to purchase the easement and protect this important and beautiful place for generations to come.



Above: More than 9,000 acres will be protected under the Elk Timberlands easement. © George C. Gress/TNC
Below: A small herd of elk: calves, cows and a bull © George C. Gress/TNC



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I am happy to report great conservation news! Over the past 18 months, The Nature Conservancy has been instrumental in advancing the protection of almost 35,000 acres in Pennsylvania. The biggest piece of that—more than

20,000 acres—came with the declaration of Pennsylvania's third National Wildlife Refuge, the result of decades of hard work with local partners and government leaders. But that wasn't our only large-scale success. We also purchased an option to buy an easement protecting 9,600 acres of intact forest at Elk Timberlands, in a transaction that will not only protect ecological values but also preserve jobs in Pennsylvania's important forest economy. (you can read more about this late breaking story at nature.org/paupdate.) I'm proud to say that these and other successes set a record pace for conservation in Pennsylvania.

As I write this, however, I am also giving thought to today's economic reality. We are enormously grateful to you, our members, who have continued to support us in these uncertain times and make these successes possible.

We know that many of you are making tough decisions about your charitable donations this year. The strong support you have shown demonstrates your belief in the importance of our mission, and your confidence in our ability to carry it out.

We too are making hard decisions. Expenses must be reduced, yet our mission simply cannot wait. Special places like the Appalachian forests, Pennsylvania's great river systems, and lovely hidden corners like Cherry Valley all demand our attention and dedication now, not when it might be too late.

Like all challenges, this one brings opportunity. In Pennsylvania, lower land prices and reduced development pressures will offer unexpected and more affordable land deals. Our job is to make sure that we can take advantage of the very best of these opportunities, even with reduced resources, in ways that best advance our mission to ensure the web of life here and around the world.

Again, thank you for your support. We know that you care deeply about nature and believe in the science-based, collaborative approach of The Nature Conservancy. We couldn't do it without you. Your help will ensure that our pace does not slacken, that our focus is sharper than ever, and that we continue to protect the woods, streams, plants, and animals that make Pennsylvania special.

Sincerely,

BILL KUNZE
Pennsylvania State Director

Your Chapter at Work Across Pennsylvania

The Conservancy advanced the protection of nearly 35,000 acres across Pennsylvania over the past 18 months and was instrumental in establishing a new National Wildlife Refuge.

1. **Monroe, Northampton counties** // Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge // 20,466 acres
2. **Elk County** // Elk Timberlands Working Forest Easement // 9,650 acres
3. **Adams County** // South Mountain // 2,658 acres //
4. **Lackawanna County** // Eales Preserve at Moosic Mountain // 750 acres
5. **Blair County** // Brush Mountain Woodlands // 640 acres

6. **Monroe County** // Long Pond Preserve // 521 acres

7. **Chester County** // Edward Woolman Preserve at Great Marsh // 150 acres

8. **Monroe County** // Thomas Darling Preserve at Two-Mile Run // 125 acres

9. **Erie County** // Fette Island in French Creek // 42 acres

10. **Northampton County** // Minsi Lake Corridor // 18 acres



Read more about these conservation projects on nature.org/paupdate.

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Threatened Wildlife Protected in Western Pennsylvania Mountains

Insect-hungry bats—an increasingly rare part of nature's system of "pest" control—cruise nightly spring through fall from their colony in nearby Canoe Creek State Park to hunt in the forests of the Conservancy's new Brush Mountain Woodlands, a 640-acre tract overlooking Altoona. They're part of the largest maternity colony of little brown bats in Pennsylvania, a colony that also includes federally endangered Indiana bats.

Beyond their importance to the bats, the Brush Mountain Woodlands are part of a large, intact forest area which are a high conservation priority within the Central Appalachians. Across six states, Conservancy staff and scientists are working on the Central Appalachians initiative to save one of the Earth's healthiest, most biologically diverse deciduous temperate broadleaf forests.

Brush Mountain Woodlands are a critical addition to the Conservancy's Working Woodlands program, an innovative approach to forest conservation which champions sustainable management on a network of private forest lands that buffer priority core forest areas, and provide important wildlife habitat, watershed protection and carbon sequestration capacity.

Brush Mountain Woodlands' mixed oak and hickory forest contains rocky outcroppings that provide habitat for rare and threatened species like the Allegheny woodrat and timber rattlesnake, as well as more common species like black bear and wild turkey.

The Conservancy will work to restore a healthy forest at Brush Mountain Woodlands. Some old logging roads will be reforested or



Brush Mountain Woodlands harbor threatened Pennsylvania wildlife. © dhaluza

planted in grasses beneficial for wildlife, while others will be made into trails. Public access will be encouraged for hiking, birding and just enjoying nature, and the Woodlands will be open for hunting.

Join the Conservancy on a video tour of Brush Mountain Woodlands at nature.org/paupdate.

Expanded Preserve Protects Rare Species, Invites Visitors

Moosic Mountain, with its sweeping vistas and hidden glens, was long a favorite hiking and picnicking destination for families in the Scranton area. But in recent years, it fell into disuse, with illegal dumping and illegal ATV traffic that threatened the area's 18 rare species and detracted from its natural beauty.

But now, the birders, hikers, bicyclists, and dog-walkers are back at beautiful Moosic Mountain. Over the past eight years, The Nature Conservancy has purchased 1,800 acres on the mountain, recently adding 300 more to its Dick and Nancy Eales Preserve there. And thanks to an extraordinary group of Conservancy volunteers, devoting

over 775 hours of skilful planning and backbreaking labor, the mountain is once again a perfect setting for family picnics, bird watching, and berry picking. Over the past year, they have carved eight

miles of carefully designed biking and hiking trails through the rocks, knee-high heath and blueberry bushes of the preserve.

The trails lead through lovely heath lands and forest glens, past hidden streams, and to outcroppings with spectacular views.

Until the trails went in, many of the preserve's loveliest spots were unknown, even to Conservancy staff. Now, the Conservancy is delighted to see nature lovers and families enjoying its beauty without damaging the unique and delicate plants and animals that live in this wild retreat of rugged ridge-top barrens and one of the largest intact scrub oak/heath communities left in North America.



New trails offer Conservancy members access to Moosic Mountain's rare species, migratory bird viewing, and scenic views. © donXfive/Creative Commons

New Refuge is a Model for Populated Areas

A wood duck glides through the waters of Cherry Creek, with ducklings in tow, unnoticed by the family enjoying a backyard barbecue or the farmer plowing on the other side of the stream.

“This quiet scene is typical of Cherry Valley, which nestles below the Kittatinny Ridge within an easy two hour drive from both Manhattan and Philadelphia. And it is the site of American’s newest National Wildlife Refuge,” says the Conservancy’s Bud Cook, who has been protecting natural treasures in Monroe and Northampton counties for more than 20 years. He has spent the last decade working with federal officials to declare this landscape of farms, forests and wetlands as Pennsylvania’s third national refuge.

Less than 75 miles from Manhattan, Cook, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and scores of Conservancy partners have found a solution to balancing the needs of

threatened species like the tiny bog turtle and spreading globe-flower with those of the 9,000 people who also live within the refuge boundaries.

“What they created is a powerful model for future National Wildlife Refuges in populated areas,” says Bill Kunze, the Conservancy’s Pennsylvania State Director. “Cherry Valley is the first National Wildlife Refuge to be created in the northeast in nearly a decade. Like much of the northeast, Cherry Valley’s precious habitat is intertwined with working farms, and is in the crosshairs of development from metropolitan areas like Philadelphia and New York City. The solution is bringing conservation and the community together to protect the common ground that serves both interests.”

According to Cook, the interest to protect Cherry Valley was there from the beginning – in fact community support

for the concept of a wildlife refuge has been strong and growing for several years. But it took nearly a decade to figure out

how best to protect the rare species without changing the rural lifestyle of the Poconos. With conservation science from around the world and international experience about communities living within a protected landscape, the Conservancy and a team of federal experts helped Cherry Valley determine the feasibility of the new wildlife refuge and gained the essential support of U.S. Congressmen Paul E. Kanjorski and Charles W. Dent, along with U.S. Senators Robert P. Casey, Jr. and Arlen Specter.

With 6,000 acres already protected through past efforts by the Conservancy and others, the federal government designated Cherry Valley as a National Wildlife Refuge on December 28, 2008.

Establishment of the refuge authorizes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to acquire up to 20,466 acres within the refuge boundaries.

Read the full story at: nature.org/paupdate.



Clouds over Cherry Valley © John and Keturah

Leave a Legacy for Future Generations



Red-winged blackbird nest in Cherry Valley © George C. Gress / TNC

What better legacy is there to leave than protecting the Earth for generations to come? There are many easy ways to include the Conservancy in your will or estate plan, including naming the Conservancy the direct beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k) or life insurance policy. Whether you are taking those first important steps toward planning your estate or are in the process of updating your plans, The Conservancy is here to help. Our expert gift planners have tools to assist you in creating your own unique conservation legacy.

Don't let another day pass by.

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Please consult a qualified financial advisor before making a gift.

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Thank you to the partners and officials

Playing key roles in designating the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge were: U.S. Representatives Paul E. Kanjorski and Charles W. Dent, U.S. Senators Robert P. Casey, Jr. and Arlen Specter, Gov. Edward G. Rendell and state agencies, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director H. Dale Hall, and The Friends of Cherry Valley. The Nature Conservancy received financial assistance supporting the study through a gift from John S. Potter, Jr., in memory of his wife Margaret Price Potter.