

2025 Resilient and Connected Appalachians Grant Program

Project Descriptions

Alabama

Ekvn-Yefolecv: The Maskoke Ecovillage in southern Alabama is a community of Indigenous Maskoke People who returned to their homelands after having been forcibly removed 180 years ago. Situated on 6,824 acres in the southern Appalachians, they are pursuing the rematriation of an additional 560 acres where they will continue to pursue linguistic and cultural revitalization, ecological restoration, regenerative agriculture, natural building construction, and economic sustainability. Additionally, they are working to restore the montane longleaf pine ecosystem, southeastern grasslands, the threatened red-cockaded woodpeckers, and biologically diverse streams that are designated as Outstanding Alabama Waterways. This project supports ecological restoration, ecosystem services, Indigenous Maskoke cultural lifeways and traditional education, and economic development.

Connecticut

Cornwall Conservation Trust: Is acquiring 90 acres of forest, wetlands, and ridgeline on Furnace Brook Road in Cornwall. The property lies on the forested slopes of Dean Hill, across the road from Wyantenock State Forest and up the hill from the Housatonic River. It is in the Berkshire Wildlife Linkage, an area of high climate resilience and flow, and supports a wide array of wildlife and plants including four state-listed species.

Kentucky

Kentucky Natural Lands Trust: This project aims to safeguard a ~1,450-acre forested tract on Little Black Mountain within the most biodiverse region of Appalachia. The tract is within The Nature Conservancy's Critical Focal Landscape and dovetails with a priority focus area of the Kentucky Chapter.

Maine

Forest Society of Maine: The Sunkhaze Stream Forest project will conserve 1,000 acres of family-owned forestland that abuts Sunkhaze Meadows National Wildlife Refuge. A conservation easement will conserve exceptional ecological values and ensure that future forest management activities will sustain and enhance the land's climate resilience. Bisected by Sunkhaze Stream, the project is home to small gorges, a deer wintering area, wetlands, wet meadows, and habitat for inland wading birds, Eastern brook trout, Atlantic salmon, wood turtles, and many other species. The wetlands on the project property fall within an Atlantic Coast Joint Venture focus area for inland wading birds and waterfowl. The land is and will remain accessible to the public for traditional recreational activities such as walking, skiing, hunting, and fishing.

Mahoosuc Land Trust: This project will conserve Tumbledown Dick Mountain, a 978-acre ecological and recreational community and regional resource connecting critical habitats in the Mahoosuc Region. It will support abundant biodiversity and critical connectivity for species to move across the landscape as the climate and environment change, inspire care for the lands, and build the capacity to manage them by directly involving local communities in a conservation planning process that ensures community benefits; and bring resources to the local community, especially through partnerships with other organizations dedicated to bringing resources to underserved and economically challenged communities.

Massachusetts

The Berkshire Natural Resources Council: The Depot Brook Corridor Project will permanently conserve 250 acres of land in Washington, Massachusetts. The tract is within a half mile of the Appalachian Trail and within a focal area of the Resilient and Connected Network, builds landscape connectivity, and protects forest and cold-water stream habitat in the eastern Berkshires that add to wildlife and climate resiliency. Once conserved, the land can be used by community members for passive recreation and eventually as an additional site for BNRC's extensive Community Engagement outdoor education and recreation programs.

The Trustees of Reservations: This project will acquire the 212-acre Beaver Brook Golf Course in Williamsburg and Northampton, Massachusetts. Once protected, The Trustees and its partners, the Hilltown Land Trust and the municipalities of Williamsburg and Northampton, will engage the community in planning for ecological restoration and public access that will attract diverse audiences, highlight this property's location along a regional bus route, create ADA accessible trails, and provide community engagement and education programs.

New Hampshire

Northeast Wilderness Trust: NEWT is working to establish the 2,079-acre Spruce Ridge Wilderness Preserve, a property in Grafton County, NH that is home to vast forests, headwater streams, and wetlands. The property is located at the heart of a well-connected landscape and adjacent to the Appalachian Trail, making it a high priority for conservation. Once conserved, Spruce Ridge Wilderness Preserve will serve as a vital core wilderness area facilitating regional habitat connections and creating new opportunities for those in nearby communities to experience wilderness.

New York

The Lake George Land Conservancy: LGLC will acquire 506 acres of land on the shores of Lake George. This property, called "Pilot Knob Mountain", connects to 21,000 acres of protected NYS DEC Wild Forest and is specifically identified as priority in the 2016 NYS Open Space Plan. The Pilot Knob Mountain property contains 1.6 miles of Class AA stream that flows into Lake George, steep slopes that are subject to erosion, high-quality forested land, and aquatic and terrestrial wildlife habitat; these features indicate that the property is a high priority area for climate change resiliency. Under LGLC's protection, the conserved area will create an interconnected network of protected land that supports wildlife habitat flow through the climate and biodiversity crises, while offering numerous community benefits.

North Carolina

The Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina: Foothills is acquiring 1,528 acres in the Eastern Blue Ridge Foothills of northern Rutherford County, North Carolina. This project will protect 4 miles of major streams in the Second Broad River watershed, and will ensure the conservation of the Mike Mountain Natural Area with many rare species and natural communities (as designated by the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program). This project is an important initiative to expand a permanent, 64,000-acre conservation corridor between the South Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Mainspring Conservation Trust: Mainspring, in partnership with the Open Space Institute, will acquire 4,563 acres in the Snowbird and Cheoah Mountains, connecting over a million acres of public lands and protecting critical wildlife habitat and corridors, pristine trout streams, and unlocking management and access opportunities on existing conserved land in the Nantahala National Forest. The project will advance the creation of the only State Park in far western NC, which will bring accessible outdoor recreation to the backcountry and

boost sustainable economic growth of surrounding underserved communities. This landscape-scale conservation will enhance regional climate resilience and ecosystem health in the Southern Blue Ridge.

Pennsylvania

Manada Conservancy: The Fishing Creek Valley acquisition will protect 186 acres of woodland within an area of high conservation value located in Middle Paxton Township, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania which is facing extreme development pressure. This acquisition will connect protected lands and expand public access and outdoor recreational opportunities within a ten-minute drive of the urban center of the Harrisburg capital region. Additionally, the acquisition will protect a critical portion of the state designated Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape and federally designated Kittatinny Ridge Sentinel Landscape, a landscape recognized for forest connectivity, habitat, and climate resiliency.

Virginia

The Shenandoah Valley Conservancy: SVC is partnering with ND Ponics, an indigenous-led nonprofit dedicated to the protection and stewardship of land within the traditional territory of the Yésah people, to place a conservation easement on 788 acres of high-elevation valley atop Short Hills Mountain. This project provides an exceptional opportunity to conserve a large, ecologically rich, and highly resilient and connected site with an equitable conservation outcome.

Vermont

The Vermont Department of Forests: The Worcester Woods III Conservation Project, the third and final phase of the broader Worcester Woods conservation vision, seeks to protect 3,748 acres of working forestland in Woodbury, Vermont through a conservation easement that restricts development, ensures sustainable forestry, secures public access in perpetuity, and builds upon the success of the first two phases. The project will protect a significant block of locally-owned forestland, and is located within one of the Resilient and Connected Appalachians Network focal areas identified by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), as well as the regionally significant Worcester to Northeast Kingdom wildlife linkage identified by the Staying Connected Initiative (SCI). The project also contains significant ecological values, as it will benefit over 100 Species of Greatest Conservation Need and protect 571 acres of wetlands and ponds and 18 miles of surface water frontage.