2026 Resilient and Connected Appalachians Grant Program Project Descriptions

Alabama

Ekvn-Yefolecv 369-acre fee acquisition in the Talladega to Flagg focal landscape. The Maskoke Ecovillage is a community of Indigenous Maskoke People who returned to their homelands after having been forcibly removed 180 years ago. The village is committed to language and cultural revitalization, ecological restoration, regenerative agriculture, natural building construction, and economic sustainability. Situated on 7,674 acres in the southern Appalachians, they are pursuing the rematriation of new lands to add to their current land base. The property will be a significant addition to the restoration goals shared by Ekvn-Yefolecv and the Alabama TNC chapter of restoring the montane longleaf pine ecosystem, as well as southeastern grasslands, the threatened red-cockaded woodpeckers, and the preservation of 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

Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy 108-acre fee acquisition in the Berkshire Wildlife Linkage. The protection of the property on Surdan Mountain Road in Sharon, Connecticut, will establish a new public preserve that connects to the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail via an existing town-owned recreation easement trail. The Surdan Mountain Preserve will permanently protect climate-resilient forest that sequesters carbon, safeguards habitat for rare and declining species, and strengthens a conserved landscape spanning thousands of contiguous acres. The property includes an exceptional scenic summit with sweeping views into New York and Massachusetts. This acquisition will ensure permanent public access while advancing long-term landscape connectivity in Northwest Connecticut.

Georgia

Dade County 650-acre fee acquisition in the Lookout and Pigeon Mountains focal landscape. This acquisition on Lookout Mountain will establish the Dade County Community Forest. The property adjoins Cloudland Canyon State Park and protects critical watershed, forest, and habitat resources within the southern Appalachian region. By conserving this large, contiguous landscape, the project strengthens climate resilience and landscape connectivity while ensuring long-term public access, stewardship, and meaningful benefits for the surrounding community.

Maine

Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust 13,836-acre conservation easement in the Northern Mountains and Headwaters focal landscape. The South Bog and Beaver Mountain project will acquire a conservation easement over 13,836 acres of forested land that includes 31 miles of streams, numerous wetlands and ponds, a 3,159’ mountain. The project will enshrine affirmative rights for public access on over 25 miles of motorized and non-motorized recreational trails and a network of interior roads for hiking, hunting, fishing, snowshoeing, and snowmobile and ATV riding, contributing to the forest products and nature-based tourism economy. The forest provides habitat for large mammals like moose and deer, federally threatened Canada lynx and 2 globally rare songbirds. A montane reserve will protect a rare subalpine fir forest and mature second growth forest (250+ yrs.) and 100' no cut riparian buffers will protect critical brook trout habitat. A range of elevations across the parcel and connectivity to other conserved lands creates opportunities for climate adaptation and resilience.

Trust for Public Land 3,638-acre fee acquisition in the Northern Mountains and Headwaters focal landscape. The project includes three parcels in Maine’s High Peaks region and will expand state public reserve lands at Crocker Mountain and Mount Abraham through acquisition by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands, and will expand the Town of Kingfield’s Shiloh Pond Community Forest, protecting the Reed Brook Falls trail and other community recreation and habitat values. Altogether the project will secure permanent public access, climate-resilient forest habitat, and regional multi-use trail connectivity. The fee acquisitions will be complemented by a separately funded 5,210-acre working forest conservation easement led by the Forest Society of Maine, bringing the larger partnership initiative to approximately 8,850 acres of connected, conserved lands.

Maine Coast Heritage Trust 6,368-acre fee acquisition in the Eastern Maine focal landscape. This project will secure a large parcel of land between Rocky Lake and Cathance stream in Edmunds Township, Washington County for transfer to the Passamaquoddy Tribe to expand their access to their ancestral lands. This acquisition and transfer of Rocky Lake North III would serve numerous other ecological and community benefits, including protection of significant watershed area; adding to significant, conserved, connected wildlife habitat; access for the Passamaquoddy to a property for managed retreat in the face of climate change; and access for the Tribe to a clean, alternative drinking water source.

Penobscot Indian Nation 11,792-acre fee acquisition in the Northern Mountains and Headwaters focal landscape. Penobscot Nation and Trust for Public Land (TPL) are partnering to protect over 31,367 acres of forestland, tributaries, and ponds in the Katahdin Region known as Wáhsehtək. The land lies in the Penobscot River watershed, the heart of the present and traditional homeland of Penobscot Nation and is adjacent to Penobscot Nation's existing land and Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument (KWW). The project is Phase 1 of a multi-phase effort.

Northeast Wilderness Trust 1,845-acre fee acquisition in the Northern Mountains and Headwaters focal landscape. This project will permanently protect a key forest property uniquely situated between the Appalachian Trail and a large body of water in Bald Mountain Twp, ME. Faced with the possibility of development on this parcel, Northeast Wilderness Trust and Trust for Public Land are partnering to secure the property with TPL leading negotiations with the seller, while NEWT will assume fee ownership of the property. This will result in permanent conservation of diverse forest, stream, and wetland habitats.

New Hampshire

Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests 1,000-acre fee acquisition in the Southern Greens to Whites focal landscape. Currently owned by S&M Forest Trust in Springfield, NH, this property adjoins thousands of acres of conservation land within the two-state, multi-partner Quabbin-to-Cardigan (Q2C) Conservation Initiative, contributing to regional connectivity and offering varied habitat types at scale that can support wildlife and natural resources on the move due to climate change. The permanent conservation of this property will forever support significant wildlife habitat, abundant natural resources, spectacular viewsheds, and opportunities for educational outreach and recreation.

North Carolina

Open Space Institute 808-acre fee acquisition in the Pink Beds to Shining Rock focal landscape. The Open Space Institute Land Trust and the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission have partnered to protect the this property and open it for public access as a State Game Land. Located in the Southern Blue Ridge Region of western North Carolina, the property represents a key inholding within a mile-wide area of undeveloped ridge and cove adjoining the 512,000-acre Pisgah National Forest. Protection of the property will support Appalachian regional biodiversity and achieve landscape-scale connectivity, providing high flow to accommodate species movement through natural areas in the face of climate change. Further, the forested landscape includes over five riparian miles and natural land buffers along NCWRC Wild Trout streams and their headwaters, as well as globally rare mountain bog habitat. Notably, NCWRC management of the site will afford new public access via a trailhead into United States Forest Service (USFS) land, with existing trails extending to Turkey Pen Gap in the National Forest. Additionally, existing structures on the property will provide housing for regional fisheries staff across the Pisgah National Forest Game Lands.

Pennsylvania

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy 365-acre fee acquisition in the Pennsylvania Wilds focal landscape. In partnership with Emporium Borough and Cameron County, WPC is pursuing the acquisition of this tract located in Shippen Township, Cameron County. Emporium Borough and Cameron County support the protection of the property for forestland conservation and recreation use close to Emporium, and for use as a trail connector from the West Creek Rail Trail to trails being developing by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) in Elk State Forest and for other recreational uses. WPC intends to convey the property to the Emporium Borough.

West Virginia

Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust 90-acre conservation easement in the Central Ridges focal landscape. Characterized by high-elevation forest on Cacapon Mountain, the Green property has high climate resiliency, landscape integrity, and healthy watershed values and supports a few acres of northern hardwood forest, uncommon in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia. Protection of this property builds upon an 8,600-acre hub of protected private and public lands in the "Connor's Hollow" priority area of Cacapon & Lost Rivers Land Trust and within a Conservation Focus Area of the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources.

Yew Mountain Center 500-acre fee acquisition in the Karst Corridor focal landscape. The project seeks to protect a large tract of mature Appalachian hardwood forest in Pocahontas County, WV that the YMC has leased from the current owner for over a decade. Ownership of this land by the Center will allow the locally-run organization to continue to provide community-enriching programs derived from the resilient forest ecosystem. Since its founding in 2016, YMC has demonstrated that conservation and rural development are mutually reinforcing goals. They aim to deepen the organization's commitment to the conservation of Appalachian ecosystems while contributing to and honoring the livelihoods and culture of the people who live here.