



# Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape

## Fast Facts



The **Schuylkill Highlands** is a place to protect and guide our future. This diverse and extraordinary landscape of national significance in southeastern Pennsylvania, with its splendid vistas, quiet woodlands, pristine headwaters, rolling farmlands, and deep cultural and historic past includes:

- Largest unbroken forest between Wash DC and NYC
- 725 miles of Exceptional Value and High-Quality streams
- Source of drinking water for 1.75M people
- Schuylkill River and Perkiomen Bike & Water Trails
- High concentration of cultural sites
- 3 National Parks, 5 State Parks, 10 Important Bird Areas
- 24% of the 1.2 million total acres are protected
- Federally threatened species and critical habitat areas for wildlife

### Counties:

Berks, Chester and Montgomery, Bucks, Lancaster, Lebanon.

## What is a Conservation Landscape?

The Conservation Landscape is a place-based strategy for natural resource stewardship and advocacy in key landscapes across our state where there are strong natural assets and local readiness and support for land conservation, locally-driven planning, and community economic revitalization efforts.

## Vision

The Schuylkill Highlands Partnership is working together to preserve, restore and enhance the natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources while encouraging sustainable practices and compatible economic development to create healthy and vibrant communities.

## Region

The Schuylkill Highlands encompasses a large geography at the nexus of the Schuylkill River watershed and the Pennsylvania Highlands. The natural resources within this landscape are significant in America's history, from iron and steel heritage to the headwaters of streams and rivers that provide water to the region. The Highlands region was designated by an Act of Congress, *The Highlands Conservation Act*, declares the area to be nationally significant. The Schuylkill River is within a National and State Heritage Area and as such, the preservation, interpretation and celebration of the river's industrial heritage and recreational assets can support new economic growth in cultural, eco and heritage tourism.

## Our Collaboration

The Schuylkill Highlands Partnership integrates the inspiration and action of many local, county and state government partners, land trusts, and nonprofit

organizations. The partnership devotes its attention and expertise to protecting and preserving this critical landscape in a manner that will enable its vibrant sustainable economic future. The partners have a deep commitment to working together in certain places of unsurpassed natural resource value.

## Our Goals

**Collaboration & Engagement:** Create opportunities for unique multi-county and multi-agency partnering for approaches to issues, problem solving, project work and region-wide policy that support the quality of life of residents and conservation values.

**Recreation, Trails, and Interpretive Experiences:** Connect residents and visitors to the outdoors through the development of a regional network of interconnected recreational trails to key destinations and amenities to deepen the interpretive experiences.

**Economic Vitality and Natural Resource-Based Tourism:** Promote visitor experiences and business services consistent and appropriate in scale and intensity to the natural, historic, and cultural resources within the area.

**Conservation of Natural Resources:** Conserve at least 50% of the region's most critical habitat and watershed headwaters and provide stewardship of the key natural resources.



## Key Initiatives

### Trails

Complete the Schuylkill River Trail from Valley Forge to Schuylkill County with access points to and from the communities along the river.

Create a network of interconnecting trails from the Schuylkill River Trail to gateways, places of interest, and neighborhoods.

### User Experiences

Expand outdoor learning opportunities and outdoor recreational opportunities within the landscape.

### Nature-Based Tourism

Encourage events to promote the area's cultural heritage and outdoor recreational opportunities.

### Compatible Economic Development

Develop and implement projects that support economic growth of the towns along the river and gateways to the Hopewell Big Woods, a 73,000-acre conservation and outdoor recreation area. Encourage people to come to bike, walk, camp, kayak, bird watch, photograph, orienteer, horseback ride, geocache, and to explore the back roads and enjoy the many natural, cultural, recreational, and historical places in this richly diverse landscape.

### Land Use, Open Space and Natural Resource Protection

Implement sustainable actions and advanced approaches for land use, open space, and natural resource protection.

### Public Outreach

Provide forums for public outreach and education to local communities, municipal governments, and organizations.

### Promote Local Agriculture

Connect residents to locally grown foods, support local farmers' viability and work to preserve farmland and encourage best stewardship practices.

### Mini-Grant Program

Provide small grants to advance nature-based eco-tourism, outdoor recreation, and natural resource project work in the Schuylkill Highlands landscape

### Land Protection

Protect and steward a sizable number of acres of the most critical habitat in the landscape that contain important ecological lands, water resources, wildlife habitat, geological features, and recreational opportunities.

### Highlands Area

Implement strategies for the protection of natural resources from Green Lane/Unami Hills/Perkiomen Uplands to Oley Hills/Oley Valley to Monocacy Hill/Daniel Boone Park area to the Hopewell Big Woods.

## Partnerships

### Steering Committee

Natural Lands Trust; Berks Nature; French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust; Heritage Conservancy; Berks, Bucks, Chester, and Montgomery Counties; Schuylkill River Greenways ; National Park Service; Friends of Hopewell Furnace; Rodale Institute; Audubon PA; Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation; AMC Highlands Coalition; PA DEP SAN; Colebrookdale Railroad; Perkiomen Watershed Association; and Green Valley Watershed Association along with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

### Project Partners

- Federal , state, regional and local government entities
- Land Trusts, watershed associations, and conservation non-profits
- Tourism and Economic Development Councils
- Universities and Colleges
- Transportation Associations
- Local businesses

### For Further Information See:

<https://www.schuylkillhighlands.org/>



Photo by Fred Weyman



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