

# Lehigh Valley Greenways *Conservation Landscape Initiative* 2010 Accomplishments

## Fast Facts



### Counties

Lehigh and Northampton

### Sub-Landscapes

Within Lehigh and Northampton counties are six sub-landscapes. The **Two Rivers Area** features the confluence of the Lehigh and Delaware rivers and Jacobsburg State Park. Located to the south, the **Lehigh Valley Highlands** are focused on balancing development pressures within a traditional agriculture setting. The **Martins Jacoby Watershed** contains a wetland habitat at the Minsi Lake Preserve. The Trexler Nature Preserve is located within the **Jordan Creek Greenway**. Pennsylvania's longest contiguous forested ridge, the **Kittatinny Ridge** (Blue Mountain), is located to the north, and is an important birding area and home to the newly expanded Lehigh Gap Nature Center. These six special places are connected by the **D&L Trail** as it follows the historic transportation path that brought anthracite coal to market.

## What is a Conservation Landscape?

The Conservation Landscape Initiative 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.

Since 2004, the Lehigh Valley Greenways has been striving to connect natural and cultural resources across the Lehigh Valley through greenways and trails that link urban areas to outdoor experiences, protect watersheds, and retain the character of the landscape, the region's heritage and the community. The following "Top Ten" represents some of our work in 2010.

## 2010 Top Ten Accomplishments

1. **First Lehigh Valley Trails Summit held at DeSales University.** Over 120 participants from nonprofit organizations, municipalities and consultants participated in the two-day event. A big highlight was the mobile workshops. Also at the event, county executives recognized our three Lehigh Valley leaders, recipients of PEC's 40 under 40 awards: Sherry Acevedo, Tim Dugan, and Chris Kocher.
2. **Opening of two state-of-the-art environmental education centers.** The Trexler Environmental Education Center opened in May; Lehigh County's first "green" building and also a satellite office facility for DCNR's William Penn Forest District. In July, a 10-year-old vision to turn a Superfund site into a nature center was celebrated when Lehigh Gap Nature Center opened its doors to its new green visitor and education building.
3. **Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton all celebrated major groundbreaking and ribbon cutting events.** Allentown opened its new Cedar Beach destination playground, completed its plan for connecting the city's parks bike/ped trails and advanced its first project with Martin Luther King Blvd. Bethlehem opened its world-class Skateplaza; renovated Higbee Park with the PA League of Cities, and broke ground for the Bethlehem Greenway. Easton completed a "road diet" for Larry Holmes Drive and, in partnership with the Bushkill Stream Conservancy, the Sullivan Park Wetland renovation.
4. **A banner year for the Delaware and Lehigh Trail in the Lehigh Valley.** The partnership of D&L, Wildlands Conservancy, and Lehigh County secured the remaining six segments of trail right-of-way equaling 1-mile to add to the previously purchased 11.3 miles of continuous railroad right-of-way in Lehigh County. Lehigh County and D&L constructed 2.7 miles opening up access to the Lehigh River with 6.5 miles currently under construction. 2010 concluded with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission awarding the D&L with \$488,000 in PennDOT enhancement funds for trail improvements from Northampton Borough to North Catasauqua. This additional funding will help construct 1.2 miles of trail and resolve an infrastructure challenge which obstructs the trail by 2012.

5. **Progress made on the Two Rivers Area Trail.** Four municipalities made huge progress on their trail sections of this 15-mile trail system. Wilson Borough completed its ¾ mile of trail. Bushkill Township is currently constructing 2.5 miles through a partnership with DCNR’s Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center. Palmer Township completed design of 1-mile of trail. The City of Easton completed design and bid its 3-mile trail. D&L coordinated an outstanding Trail Crossing Workshop with PennDOT District 5 and Central Office to improve pedestrian and trail access in the Lehigh Valley and beyond.
  
6. **The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission becomes the first Pennsylvania county to begin actively implementing the Appalachian Trail Zoning Legislation.** LVPC staff completed an assessment of Bushkill and Plainfield townships to “test out” the AT checklist assessment tool and developed this guidebook: *Protect the Trail: A Guide to Protecting the AT for Lehigh Valley municipalities.*
  
7. **Wildlands Conservancy completed the Jordan Creek Greenway Plan and began implementing.** The conservancy secured over \$2 million in state, county, and Trexler Trust Foundation funding to begin a five-year implementation effort. Funding has been secured for the first trail section in Whitehall Township with a DCNR grant award of \$230,000 and PennDOT funding award of \$449,500. A picturesque artist rendering of the proposed trail was created and presented to major landowners along the greenway to visualize trail route and secure by-in. South Whitehall Township completed a feasibility study for a pedestrian crossing of Cedar Crest Boulevard.
  
8. **Martin’s Jacoby Watershed “Super Volunteer” John Mauser completed eight riparian buffer projects with in-stream aquatic habitat improvements for \$90,000 (6 more than planned); one area’s habitat improved so significantly biological testing proved stream is healthy producing native wild brown trout.** PA Fish & Boat Commission biologist sampling proves Martins Creek can be upgraded to classification and management as a Class A Wild Trout Waters. Brown trout biomass is four times higher than minimum biomass for Class A designation.
  
9. **Conducted first ever bus tour of sustainable parks in Northampton County.** Due to overwhelming response, the bus tour became a double-bus tour with a total of 105 participants. Seven great examples of ways to plan and manage land in a healthier, more environmentally friendly way while saving money were part of the tour. Plans are in the works to fill four buses for a similar tour that will be held in Lehigh County in June.
  
10. **Lehigh Valley Greenways featured in the Pennsylvania Conservation Landscape Initiatives Report.** Lehigh Valley was one of two featured case studies; a five year summary report is near complete.



**For More Information**

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