

# South Mountain Partnership Conservation Landscape Initiative

## Fast Facts



### Counties

Adams, Cumberland, Franklin and York

### Sub-landscapes

Whiskey Springs, Antietam Creek Watershed and East Mountain Faces

### Population growth

Population growth increase in the last 5 years averaging over 12-15 percent in Adams, Franklin, York, and Cumberland counties

### Development increase

In the last 10 years in Adams County, approximately 3,750 acres has been lost to development each year

## What is a Conservation Landscape Initiative?

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.

## The Land Brings us Together

South Mountain and the area that surrounds it was created millions of years ago when the land that was derived from volcanoes and covered by oceans buckled and rose. Communities surrounding South Mountain have thrived off the fertile limestone agricultural lands, the timber that fed the iron furnaces, the plentiful game and wildlife, and off the abundance of pure spring water that is captured by the mountains permeable soils and released into the valleys.

A rich cultural heritage developed in communities like Gettysburg, Chambersburg and Carlisle, and many smaller quaint villages.

The foresight of visionaries like Joseph Rothrock and Gifford Pinchot have protected thousands of acres of state forest land in the region that include the greatest concentration of seasonal pools in any forested area in the state. It is a place that influenced our state and country's conservation movement.

It is partly this scenic quality that has brought intense growth pressure surrounding the mountain. The looming problem confronting this region bordering the Maryland line is the increasing development pressure rippling out from the Baltimore/Washington D.C. metropolitan areas. The area is changing fast and opportunities to foster smart growth and to conserve high value lands need to be capitalized on quickly to protect this unique landscape.

## Vision

South Mountain's land and heritage have given birth to a partnership to protect its "sense of place." The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and its lead outside partner the Appalachian Trail Conservancy have championed the South Mountain Partnership to encourage and promote the further appreciation and protection of the intrinsic geographic, geologic, biologic and heritage resources and

value of the South Mountain Landscape and the important connection that these have to the quality of life and place in the region, its sustainability and to a strong economy.

With its fertile farmlands, clean waterways, renowned trout streams and vast woodlands, the more than 400,000-acre South Mountain region is truly blessed, but it is a fragile environment that must be protected.

## About South Mountain

The primary boundary of the landscape in south-central Pennsylvania is the South Mountain section at the northern end of the Blue Ridge Mountains -- a narrow mountain range extending through Virginia and Maryland into Pennsylvania. The area serves as an "interstate greenway" -- a large, linear corridor six to seven miles wide that links Pennsylvania with southern natural areas. It extends about 40 miles in a northeast to southwest direction connecting Adams, Cumberland, Franklin and York counties.

The greenway is a migratory corridor for a federally-listed endangered bat, the saw-whet owl and many other species.

In the middle of all this are South Mountain and the 85,000-acre Michaux State Forest; Caledonia, Pine Grove Furnace and Mont Alto state parks; and Kings Gap Environmental Education Center. This is one of the largest intact forests between Harrisburg and Washington D.C. Bordering these public lands are significant, unprotected forest and wetland tracts of high natural value.

It is estimated that 80-85 percent of the water from the mountain recharges the streams, wells and underground aquifers of the Cumberland Valley. From the mountains flow many high quality-cold water fisheries like the Yellow Breeches, and the world-famous LeTort Springs. At the toe slopes of the mountain are many vernal pools abundant with life that act as catch basins where water can seep back into the aquifer.

## Partnership

The partners in the South Mountain Conservation Landscape Initiative have a wide array of expertise, representing state and local governments, non-profit organizations and educational institutions. They are working together to protect the quality of life in the region and its sense of place.

South Mountain is host to globally significant natural, cultural and recreational resources that contribute to the economic well being of the region. The South Mountain Conservation Landscape Initiative provides an opportunity to work together to ensure that these resources are sustained for today's communities and future generations.

## Plan

### Engagement with Land Planning

Land use planning is seen as the key to guiding the region's sense of place. The partnership is working to encourage and empower local governments and market forces to embrace a vision of growth that is in balance with sustainable development and conservation of cultural and natural resources.

### Promoting Local Agriculture

The partnership is working to maintain local farmer's viability by promoting agri-tourism, marketing local foods and working with farmers to preserve their lands through local land trusts. It strives to provide farmers with methods that foster better environmental stewardship of their farms.

### Conservation of Natural Resources

Together, the partners hope to get the message to the public and municipalities about the critical role natural resources play in South Mountain communities. It is working to conserve lands that are critical to the communities drinking water supply, diversity of plants and animals and forest health.

### Development of Business and Tourism

Growth and protection of the region's sense of place don't have to be at odds. The partnership promotes and hopes to encourage growth of small businesses that revitalize local communities and are based on the abundance of recreational

and heritage tourism opportunities. Sound development practices are championed by the skilled expertise of key partners.

### Growing Recreational Opportunities

Within the heart of the South Mountain region exists an abundance of state forest and parks. Out-of-state and local users make full use of the area's recreational opportunities; in the summer the mountain becomes a regional hub for vacationing. The partnership is working to grow new opportunities, as well as improve the current recreation programs, with an emphasis on recreation that promotes the appreciation of the area's cultural and natural resources.

### Protecting Cultural Heritage

The South Mountain region has a history that is rich and complex. Native Americans used the Cumberland Valley as a major route. Iron forges manufactured cannon balls used during the Revolutionary War and George Washington led his army through the valley while fighting for our country's independence. The French and Indian War pockmarked the region. Later, the civil war left a heavy imprint on the land. For many years escaping slaves walked trails along the spine of South Mountain on the Underground Railroad. There are many layers of stories the partnership is working to tell and preserve.



### Project Partners include:

- Pennsylvania departments of Conservation and Natural Resources, Community and Economic Development, Environmental Protection and Transportation
- Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- Central Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Farm and Natural Lands Trust of York County
- Civil War Preservation Trust
- Land Conservancy of Adams County
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Conservation Fund
- Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton and York County planning offices
- County Conservation District of Adams County
- The National Park Service
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- PA Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation
- PA Game Commission
- PA Fish and Boat Commission
- Adams County Department of Environmental Services
- National Park Service
- Gettysburg Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau
- Franklin County Visitors Bureau
- Audubon of Pennsylvania
- Civil War Preservation Trust
- Shippensburg University
- Pennsylvania State University
- Penn State Cooperative Extension

## More Information

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SOUTH MOUNTAIN  
PARTNERSHIP



pennsylvania  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES