



NATURAL  
BIODIVERSITY  
*A Conservation Strategy*

2007 ANNUAL REPORT

*Strengthening Landscape Conservation*



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*Japanese knotweed along the Kiskiminetas River near Roaring Run. Photo taken by John Kocon.*



## NATURAL BIODIVERSITY

*A Conservation Strategy*

### **NATURAL BIODIVERSITY'S MISSION:**

*To conserve the native diversity of plants and animals within the ecosystem of south-central and southwestern Pennsylvania by nurturing harmonious interactions between the natural populations and communities.*

# Letter from the Director

KRISTIN SEWAK

Dear Conservation Partners,

Since its inception, Natural Biodiversity has paid equal attention to the volunteer whacking weeds, the child learning about “good” and “bad” plants, and the government partner funding programmatic activities. Such inclusiveness has been Natural Biodiversity’s strong suit, enabling the program’s leaders to develop the working partnerships needed to successfully manage invasive plant problems and restore native habitats in southwestern and south-central Pennsylvania.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2007, Natural Biodiversity achieved its guiding goal to strengthen landscape conservation, accomplishing many “firsts” along the way. We:

- Co-sponsored Outdoor Heritage, providing a week’s worth of activities for the public and an educational event for 1,000 grade school students.
- Consulted and performed management planning.
- Conducted educational workshops.
- Partnered with private landowners.
- Dealt with funding difficulties in part by mounting a first-ever donation drive.
- Used AmeriCorps members provided by a national organization.

The invasive plant problem and loss of native habitats are interconnected challenges that require the kind of collaborations that Natural Biodiversity and partners have begun to establish. Invasive plants are so woven into our landscapes that they affect ecology, agriculture, industry, property values, and our quality of life. The problems are too complex, affect too many facets of life, and are too extensive to be dealt with by any one agency or organization.

Strong, community-based leadership is necessary, and this is where Natural Biodiversity comes in. Our nonprofit program has the flexibility to attack the problem on all fronts. We have the freedom to work with government, private and public landowners, industry, citizen volunteers, schools, youth and agriculture. Our flexibility and freedom of operation are starting to pay dividends.

## MAJOR PROJECTS

In 2007, Natural Biodiversity was chosen by the Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council to lead an important project, funded by the USDA Farm Service Agency and NRCS. Statewide, the Weed Control and Wildlife Habitat Project’s aim is to control an exploding noxious-weed and invasive-plant problem on lands owned by private citizens under contract with the Conservation Reserve and Enhancement Program (CREP). Locally last year, our project provided every involved landowner with the opportunity to develop the tools necessary to gain control of their weed problems.

Because the Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council and Natural Biodiversity have been in partnership since 2004, we were able to quickly form partnerships, develop a resource guide, conduct hands-on workshops involving more than 100 participants, and create a long-term plan of action to reach beyond 2007 – all for a total project cost of only \$50,000.

This same partnership with the RC&D and its accompanying nonprofit, the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy, produced a comprehensive invasive-plant management plan for the 1,000 square-mile watershed of the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River. The NRCS Cooperative Conservation



*Kristin with a helper*

Partnership Initiative's selection of Natural Biodiversity's competitively submitted proposal resulted in funding of \$98,000 for this project.

Natural Biodiversity garnered involvement from many new partners, input from 60 concerned citizens, and data from almost 3,000 acres of CREP and public lands. Each participating landowner was given a personalized action plan for attacking the invasive plants present on his property.

Another new initiative for Natural Biodiversity in 2007 was the revival of Outdoor Heritage, an annual educational event for grade school children that had been sponsored by other organizations under various names for years but was not held in 2006. Together with the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, Natural Biodiversity hosted the two-day educational event at Summer's Best Two Weeks Camp grounds at Quemahoning Lake in Somerset County. We also expanded the Outdoor Heritage concept to coordinate more than a week of environmental events and activities for the general public that we and other regional organizations sponsored.



*Students at Outdoor Heritage*

Outdoor Heritage Week captured the attention of the regional news media, providing Natural Biodiversity with a voice it has not had before – and a potential audience of tens of thousands of area residents. Partners also secured a resolution from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and a Governor's Greeting, proclaiming April 21-27 of 2007 to be Outdoor Heritage Week in Cambria and Somerset counties. Plans were made to expand Outdoor Heritage to embrace the entire month of April in 2008.

Reaching beyond the Allegheny Mountains, Natural Biodiversity made significant enhancements and additions to its year-old website, [www.naturalbiodiversity.org](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org), in 2007. Now there is a Kids' Patch, providing year-round activities and resources for kids, parents and educators. Extensive invasive-plant species information can now be found online through 31 BioBullies fact sheets and web pages dedicated to the Alleghenies' 12 worst offenders. A discussion forum was incorporated with the goal of spurring conversation and information sharing among partners and citizens. Be sure to visit the website to see what's new, and check back often, as information and features are added frequently.

## *What is* NATURAL BIODIVERSITY?

Natural Biodiversity is a nonprofit program created to control invasive, non-native plants such as Japanese knotweed and to restore native plants within the Kiskiminetas, Conemaugh and upper Juniata rivers' watersheds. Holistic habitat-management techniques are being used to restore riparian buffers on sites throughout these drainages within Armstrong, Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Huntingdon, Indiana, Somerset and Westmoreland counties.

Natural Biodiversity emerged from an action item (Section VII, Article D, Item 3) in the Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Conservation Plan, published in 1999 by the Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Alliance and funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. That action item called for "further information on and subsequent control of invasive knotweed species in riparian areas."

In the spring of 2000, the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy and The Western Pennsylvania Watershed Program partnered on a demonstration Japanese knotweed control project along the West Penn Trail in Saltsburg, PA. This demonstration project gave birth to Natural Biodiversity and was the prototype for on-the-ground projects that remain the central focus of the program today.

Natural Biodiversity's primary goals within south-central and southwestern Pennsylvania are to:

- Reduce the presence of invasive, non-native plants through preventative and responsible use of natural and chemical controls.
- Enhance the natural diversity of native plants and animals.
- Educate people about the damage caused by invasive-plant pests and the importance of restoring biological diversity to our landscape.
- Enlist volunteers willing to tackle these challenges.

*For more information on Natural Biodiversity's program and approach to its mission, visit [www.naturalbiodiversity.org](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org).*

## OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF 2007

- ▶ There were multiple weed whackings and two native habitat plantings, for which service learning was provided to Forest Hills students and a local Boy Scout troop.
- ▶ We conducted an almost countless number of educational programs.
- ▶ More than 100 people volunteered for Natural Biodiversity and endeavors such as Outdoor Heritage, plantings, and website assistance.
- ▶ For the first time, Natural Biodiversity secured two AmeriCorps positions from the National Wildlife Federation, creating a total staff of three full-time and three part-time members. One AmeriCorps staffer, Douglas Beri, Jr., dedicated many more hours than required, which earned him Natural Biodiversity's Volunteer of the Year Award.
- ▶ We identified another population of kudzu in Apollo, Armstrong County, which is being incorporated into the 2008 state noxious weed control program.



*Whacking Japanese knotweed at the Canal Basin Park in Hollidaysburg*

While much was accomplished throughout the year, we were able to sustain only minimal operations during the Fourth Quarter of 2007 due to funding problems. This is a challenge faced by many community-based nonprofit programs: to maintain a consistency of activity, focus and financial base of support.

However, during another first-time effort, Natural Biodiversity raised more than \$2,500 through a private and corporate donor drive, which helped us to bridge the gap between funding streams. A special thanks to all who gave!

## THE FUTURE

Natural Biodiversity has proven that its partnering approach is effective and that its program leads Pennsylvania in community-based invasive plant and native habitat management. Still, we need to identify new and innovative methods to fulfill our mission. New partner outreach, volunteer involvement, strategic planning, and continued foresight will be necessary components to our program in 2008.

If Natural Biodiversity is to mature into a stable, long-term institution, we will need the help and guidance of informed and involved citizens. By our 10th anniversary in early 2010, we hope that Natural Biodiversity will have rid itself of the initial growing pains recently experienced while maintaining its focus – to conserve nature's diversity in Pennsylvania's Alleghenies.

Consider how you can help Natural Biodiversity secure its role in Pennsylvania's conservation. What do you have to offer? Time? Expertise? Funding? After all, Natural Biodiversity belongs to you. Please join us in conserving and restoring the values from which our program draws its name.

I look forward to our continued partnerships! Together, we can make the Allegheny Mountains and the rest of Penn's Woods a naturally diverse place that all can enjoy.

Kristin Sewak  
Director

## Acknowledgements

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U. S. Department of Agriculture / Natural Resources Conservation Service



# Supporters

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Cambria County Solid Waste Authority  
Concurrent Technologies Corporation  
Community Foundation for the Alleghenies  
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Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds  
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Johnstown Area Heritage Association  
Juniata Clean Water Partnership  
Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Alliance  
Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team / Conemaugh Valley Conservancy  
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National Wildlife Federation / AmeriCorps  
Nature's Way Market  
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Weed Control and Wildlife Habitat Project  
U-Save Auto Rental  
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# Outdoor Heritage

Cooped up inside and transfixed by television, computers and video games, kids are losing contact with the natural world around them. If this trend isn't reversed, future generations will know less about, care less for, and be poorer stewards of planet Earth. Studies also have linked kids' inactivity to obesity and poorer physical and mental health.



Here among the Alleghenies, Natural Biodiversity is tackling these challenges head-on with Outdoor Heritage activities and events. Working with a partner program, the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, Natural Biodiversity organized Outdoor Heritage Week from April 20-27, 2007, in Cambria and Somerset counties. The week was formalized through Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Resolution #172 and a proclamation issued by Governor Edward Rendell, which stated in part: *By taking the time to teach young people in your area about the importance of caring for our environment, you are setting a fine example that will leave a lasting legacy.*

The weeklong celebration pulled together various local, state, national and international environmental endeavors occurring around this time period. Particularly noteworthy were activities related to Earth Day, Arbor Day, National Wildlife Week, and Global and National Youth Service Days. A calendar of the area's conservation events was posted to the Outdoor Heritage website.

On April 20, 2007, the celebration kicked off with a ceremony and media event at Disaster's Edge Environmental Education Center in the Park of 1889 near St. Michael in Cambria County. State Rep. Gary Haluska of the 73rd District and Rep. Robert Bastian of the 69th District presented the Governor's proclamation and House resolution. All three Cambria County Commissioners, P.J. Stevens, Milan Gjurich and William Harris attended and spoke of the importance of conservation in our area. Twelfth District Congressman John P. Murtha's office presented certificates of appreciation to two area school districts: Forest Hills for its two-year collaboration with Natural Biodiversity to create wildlife habitat within the Park of 1889, and the Portage Area School District for its annual Earth Week celebration. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission recognized the North Star School District for its Trout in the Classroom project. At conclusion of the event, media observed Natural Biodiversity and Forest Hills volunteers plant more than 600 trees and shrubs in the Park of 1889.



# Outdoor Heritage

The culmination of the week was the two-day Outdoor Heritage Education Event held April 26-27 at Summer's Best Two Weeks campground at the Quemahoning Lake near Hollsopple in Somerset County. Almost 1,000 students from grades 3 through 9 from 11 school districts and homeschool settings participated in hands-on activities provided by more than 30 exhibitors. The 2007 theme was "Forest Regeneration."

Although it has operated under a variety of names and sponsorships over the years, Outdoor Heritage has been presenting the region's cultural and natural heritage to school students since the mid-1990s. The 2007 event was the first one produced by Natural Biodiversity and the Stream Team. Teachers and homeschooling parents surveyed gave the event high marks (on a scale of one to five with five being the highest rating):

- 4.25 for an overall rating of the Outdoor Heritage event.
- 4.00 for educational value.
- 4.25 for organization of the event.
- 75% of those surveyed said they would attend Outdoor Heritage in the future.

## PLANS FOR 2008

Natural Biodiversity and its partner, the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, planned to expand Outdoor Heritage into a month-long observance in April, 2008, with the theme, "Constructing a Greener Earth in the Alleghenies." Once again, the related activities and events of other national, state, regional and local natural-heritage organizations were to be promoted, ranging from family Earth Day activities to National Wildlife Week animal-habitat plantings. The Outdoor Heritage Education Event was scheduled for April 24-25, 2008, once again at the Summer's Best Two Weeks camp, where students were to be exposed to topics such as renewable energy resources, recycling, biological invasions, natural resource conservation and global climate change.



# Raystown Watershed

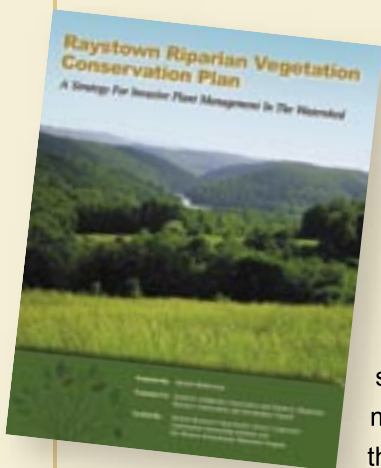
One of Natural Biodiversity's signature projects in 2007 was the development of a management plan that addressed the extent of invasive plant and noxious weed infestations, occurring throughout the 964-square-mile watershed of the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River, in Bedford, Blair, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset counties. Contained within this Raystown Riparian Vegetation Conservation Plan is a listing of the invasive species and Pennsylvania noxious weeds that were identified, control recommendations for each species, species location maps, partners, education and outreach, restoration techniques, and funding sources for potential future implementation. This plan was produced through the collaboration of individuals, private property owners, and nonprofit, state, federal, and local agencies. There were two public meetings, involving more than 60 people, which provided important guidance and information for the development of the plan. Funding was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds. Project support was provided by the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy and the Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation & Development Council.

Thirty-one landowners participated in the field assessments, which covered 2,866 acres within the watershed. The data generated was not only used to develop the Raystown plan but also to provide landowners with technical assistance on weed identification and control. Through site assessments, 12 invasive species and noxious weeds were identified as having

significant populations in the watershed. The most abundant species include: multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), curly dock (*Rumex crispus*), bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp*), and spotted knapweed (*Centaurea biebersteinii*). Less abundant – but present – species include: common reed (*Phragmites australis*), golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*), Johnson grass (*Sorghum halepense*), jimsonweed (*Datura stramonium*), shattercane (*Sorghum bicolor*), and Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*).

Not only do invasive species and noxious weeds intrude on agricultural fields, they have a detrimental impact on public recreational lands including state parks. Site assessments were conducted at four state parks: Blue Knob, Shawnee, Trough Creek, and Warriors Path. The most-abundant species found there were multiflora rose, Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), giant knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, and Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*). A small monoculture of the state noxious species jimsonweed also was identified at Shawnee State Park.

The relative threat from each species was determined based upon the extent of the invasive species or noxious weed present, its ecological impact, its potential to spread, and the difficulty of control. Multiflora rose, bull thistle, autumn olive, Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), and bush honeysuckle were found to pose the greatest threat to the agricultural lands, while garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*),



# Raystown Watershed

and Japanese barberry threaten forest ecosystems within the watershed. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Japanese knotweed, common reed, and reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) are the greatest threat to aquatic ecosystems.

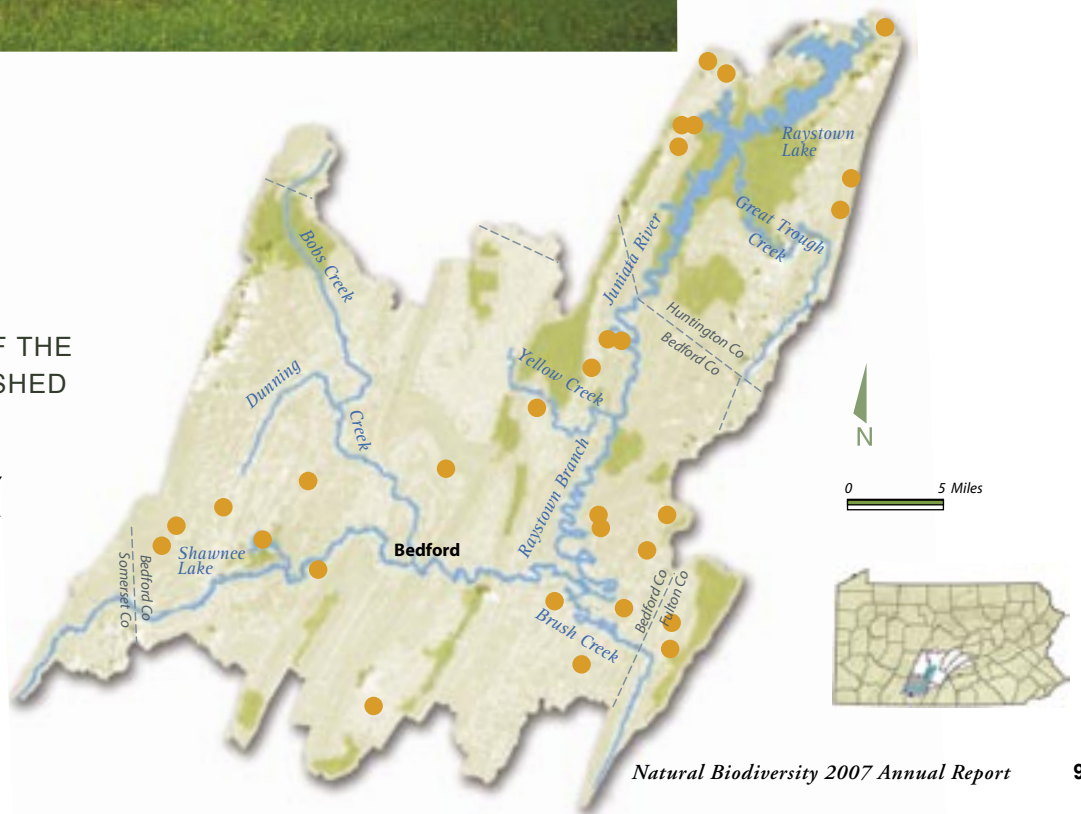
The plan recommends that control efforts within the Raystown Branch watershed should focus on these 12 high-threat species. However, species such as jimsonweed, mile-a-minute (*Polygonum*

*perfoliatum*), shattercane, and Johnson grass also were identified at a few sites. Although each of these species was only found at a minimal number of sites, their containment should be a top priority due to their presence on the Pennsylvania noxious weed list and their ability to spread rapidly. Early control of small infestations is the most cost-efficient way to keep populations to a minimum and, therefore, is recommended as a high priority.



## RAYSTOWN BRANCH OF THE JUNIATA RIVER WATERSHED

- NATURAL BIODIVERSITY PRIMARY SAMPLE AREA
- PUBLIC LAND



# Southern Alleghenies

## WEED CONTROL AND WILDLIFE HABITAT

To assist landowners involved with the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) – programs that seek to create and maintain high-quality wildlife habitat – the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) developed a Weed Control and Wildlife Habitat Technical Assistance Project. In 2007 the NRCS started to work with the nine Pennsylvania Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) councils across Pennsylvania to provide this technical assistance. The Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council contracted with Natural Biodiversity to manage the project within the Southern Alleghenies' counties of Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon, and Somerset.



The project focused upon providing information and resources to landowners that would enable them to address problems with noxious weeds and invasive plants on their properties and to identify and encourage the growth of beneficial native plants that will improve wildlife habitat. The Southern Alleghenies RC&D and Natural Biodiversity co-sponsored four workshops for landowners that focused upon plant identification, control methods, wildlife habitats and technical assistance. Landowners spent half of the workshop in a classroom setting and the other half receiving field training. Assistance also was provided by each

county's conservation district, FSA offices, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Pennsylvania Game Commission, and Conservation Land Management.

### **A TOTAL OF 117 INDIVIDUALS PARTICIPATED:**

- 28 at the June 13th meeting for Huntingdon and Blair counties.
- 30 at the June 20th meeting for Bedford and Fulton counties.
- 21 at the June 26th meeting for Somerset County.
- 38 for the June 28th meeting for Cambria County.

### **THE FOLLOWING PENNSYLVANIA PESTICIDE CREDITS WERE OFFERED AS PART OF THE WORKSHOPS:**

- 00 – Core: 2 credits.
- PC – Private Category: 4 credits.
- 01 – Agronomic Crops: 4 credits.
- 18 – Demonstration and Research: 4 credits.

# Southern Alleghenies

## **SURVEYS, RETURNED BY 52 OF THE WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS, REVEALED THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:**

- 94% felt that the workshops were informative.
- 89% agreed that the information provided was useful.
- 84% found the subject matters thought-provoking.
- 94% indicated they would attend future workshops.

Recognizing the need to continue similar endeavors beyond 2007, partners with the Southern Alleghenies project also tasked Natural Biodiversity to develop and distribute a technical assistance package and construct a detailed work plan for the region.



## **AS DEVELOPED THE PLAN INCLUDES SIX PRIMARY GOALS:**

- GOAL #1:** Continue to build upon existing partnerships and identify additional means to further educate and provide technical assistance to landowners within the Southern Alleghenies Region.
- GOAL #2:** Develop an area-wide Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) system to identify the existence of noxious weed and invasive plant populations and to report the occurrence of new plant invasions or populations when eradication or containment in those areas is still possible.
- GOAL #3:** Quantify the effects of noxious weeds and invasive plants on the agriculture and forestry industries in Southwestern and South-central Pennsylvania.
- GOAL #4:** Develop a pilot invasive-species cost-sharing program that would provide funds for the control of – and rapid response to the discovery of – noxious weeds and invasive plants on pastureland.
- GOAL #5:** Restore riparian forest buffers by promoting the use of best management practices (BMPs) on riparian areas, agricultural and forest lands to minimize accelerated soil erosion, water temperature increases, and loss of wildlife habitat due to the presence of noxious/invasive species.
- GOAL #6:** Develop and launch an initiative that encourages the creation, restoration, enhancement and conservation of wildlife habitat.

In addition to the aforementioned agencies, other partners in the Weed Control and Wildlife Habitat Technical Assistance Project include the Pennsylvania State University, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Juniata Clean Water Partnership, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

# Website Enhancements to

NATURALBIODIVERSITY.ORG

Following a comprehensive redesign and upgrade of its website, [www.naturalbiodiversity.org](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org), in 2006, Natural Biodiversity made some significant enhancements in 2007 through a collaborative effort with three consultants: Hurst Media Works, which provided project-management and web content; KH2 Design, which provided graphic arts and design; and Recharge Web Design, which developed and added the enhancements to the website.

## THREE SIGNIFICANT NEW SECTIONS WERE ADDED:

### KIDS' PATCH

([www.naturalbiodiversity.org/kids](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org/kids))

Kids' Patch was launched by Natural Biodiversity in August, 2007, as a "microsite" within the larger website, targeting elementary students, teachers, and parents. Pages within the Patch link users to appropriate grade-level activities, focusing on wildlife habitat and invasive species, and

provide links to a wide variety of other websites that contain activities and resources for kids, parents and teachers. Contributing valuable input into the design and concepts of the Kids' Patch was Natural Biodiversity volunteer and recently retired elementary school teacher, Ellen Singleton. The site was funded by USDAAPHIS with technical expertise also provided by the National Wildlife Federation.



# Website Enhancements

## ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM

([www.naturalbiodiversity.org](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org), then click on FORUM)

Launched in February 2007, the Natural Biodiversity Board provides new avenues of discussion and information sharing on Natural Biodiversity programs and projects – as well as about general issues involving invasive species and native planting. Initial forums included: General Discussion, Natural Biodiversity Volunteers, Weeding Invasives, Planting Natives, Raystown Riparian Plant Plan, and Weed Control & Wildlife Habitat assistance. Although promoted by several means, not one post was made beyond the original messages posted by Natural Biodiversity in late-February, 2007. Reasons for the lack of participation in the forum need to be explored in 2008.



## BIOBULLIES SECTION

([www.naturalbiodiversity.org/biobullies](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org/biobullies))

As part of the Southern Alleghenies Weed Control/Wildlife Habitat Technical Assistance and Raystown Riparian Vegetation Conservation Plan projects, Natural Biodiversity created fact sheets on 31 invasive plants and noxious weeds – all provided online within a new BioBullies section of the organization's website, located within RESOURCES. For 12 of the region's worst offenders, the "Disastrous Dozen," web pages were created that contain a detailed photo, description and history of each plant, as well links to more information about that plant on other websites and a downloadable flyer about the plant in PDF format. For 19 other invasive plants and Pennsylvania noxious weeds, flyers in PDF format are available for downloading and reprinting. These online resources now are available for Natural Biodiversity volunteers and anyone else who wishes to identify and become more informed about Pennsylvania's invasive plants and noxious weeds.



# Invasive Plant

## MANAGEMENT

The elimination of invasive alien plants and noxious weeds is the signature role of Natural Biodiversity – and its greatest challenge. So pervasive are invasive plant species in the Kiski-Conemaugh and Juniata watersheds that it will require substantial levels of funding and the concentrated efforts of many volunteers over many years to make significant progress in reducing the plants' presence.



Progress is being made, though. At all of the demonstration sites assessed, the number of invasive plant species have decreased. Fewer were found in 2006 compared to 2005, and fewer still were found in 2007 compared to 2006.

During 2007 weed-whacking occurred at five sites within the Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin. Japanese knotweed was removed:

- At Greenhouse Park near Tire Hill, Somerset County.
- At Hyde Park near West Leechburg, Westmoreland County.
- Along the Hoodlebug Trail near Blairsville, Indiana County.
- And at Stackhouse Park near Johnstown, Cambria County.



Led by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, which provided the personnel and herbicide treatment, kudzu vines were removed at the Keystone Economic Development Corporation property in Johnstown, Cambria County. Natural Biodiversity assisted the PDA by monitoring the kudzu population there and tagging the still-existing vines.

Two weed-whacking events took place in the Juniata River watershed:

- At Canal Basin Park in Hollidaysburg, Blair County.
- And along the Lower Trail in Huntingdon County.

# Native Restoration PROJECTS

## THREE SIGNIFICANT NATIVE-PLANTING PROJECTS WERE CONDUCTED DURING 2007:

### PARK OF 1889, ST. MICHAEL, CAMBRIA COUNTY

More than 600 individual herbaceous plants, shrubs, and trees were planted to conclude the second phase of a project started in 2006 that completed restoration of forest, wetland, and meadow areas atop a proposed campground. Involved for the second year, Forest Hills School District sent 170 sixth-grade and 15 twelfth-grade students to assist with the project. The seniors also participated in a same-day news conference kicking-off Outdoor Heritage Week in Cambria and Somerset counties. Media coverage of the service/learning project was excellent, drawing two television stations and two newspapers.



### LEIDY PARK, JACKSON TOWNSHIP, CAMBRIA COUNTY

Twelve large trees and more than 100 shrubs and herbaceous species were planted at Leidy Park, a municipal recreation facility managed by Jackson Township. This project was the first one designed – as well as planned and implemented – by Natural Biodiversity. Chad Keilman, an AmeriCorps member provided by the National Wildlife Federation, created the site plan in his role as habitat development coordinator. The project, accomplished in partnership with the township and a local Boy Scout troop, created a scenic wildlife habitat that also serves as a casual resting area for those using the site's trail and watching baseball games, ultimately increasing the aesthetic appeal of the park and potentially boosting its use by the local community.



### DOWNTOWN, CITY OF JOHNSTOWN, CAMBRIA COUNTY

Natural Biodiversity also participated in the planning and execution of the first annual "Downtown Pride" community revitalization work day on June 3, 2007. Natural Biodiversity's role was to work with the design committee, master gardeners, and volunteers and to lead the planting of boxes and ground spaces, providing a more aesthetically pleasing downtown business district. Other work that day included trash cleanup, painting, and park bench installation.

# Educational

## OUTREACH

In 2007, Natural Biodiversity reached more than 6,000 people directly through presentations and hands-on activities at various conferences, education events, and other forums. Through the media coverage that was focused upon Natural Biodiversity events and work in 2007, another 500,000 people were exposed to information on the program's happenings and activities.



### **THE MOST DRAMATIC EXAMPLES ARE DOCUMENTED IN EARLIER PORTIONS OF THIS REPORT:**

Outdoor Heritage activities framed a full week between April 20-27, 2007, and encouraged the public to become involved in initiatives including Earth Day, Arbor Day, National Wildlife Week, and Global and National Youth Service Days. Our two-day Outdoor Heritage educational event at Summer's Best Two Weeks Camp attracted 1,000 students and more than 30 exhibitors. Of special note was peer-to-peer education provided by North Star School District students, who presented their "Trout in the Classroom" project to the other students attending the event.

Our community habitat restoration projects provided 185 students of the Forest Hills School District with a service-learning experience during the Park of 1889 Habitat Restoration Project, and a Boy Scout troop with the opportunity to earn a Plant Science Horticultural merit badge during the project at Leidy Park in Jackson Township.

Kids' Patch, a community forum and informational material on invasive species were added to our website, [www.naturalbiodiversity.org](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org); and a new marketing flier was developed in-house and distributed.

# Educational Outreach

Technical assistance was provided at four workshops for CREP landowners, and a new educational package was developed and distributed as a resource. But our educational outreach efforts extended well beyond those activities during 2007.

## BEYOND THE SCHOOLHOUSE

Natural Biodiversity created a model program for the National Wildlife Federation's Schoolyard Habitats program that we call "Beyond the Schoolhouse, Quality Outdoor Learning for All." Through this program, Natural Biodiversity plans to work with partners and local K-12 public and private schools to create outdoor classrooms that can be utilized by multiple grade levels for cross-curricular purposes. Three unique components integrated into the program are:

- The state-wide Nature Mapping program.
- Handicapped accessible learning.
- Peer-to-peer educational opportunities through Outdoor Heritage and other avenues.

## EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

Natural Biodiversity staff members made dozens of educational outreach presentations to audiences ranging from professionals in the field to students and members of the general public during 2007.



## PROFESSIONAL AUDIENCES INCLUDED:

- Roach Bauer Forestry Forum, Kane, PA, in March.
- PA DCNR Staff Training Workshops at Canoe Creek State Park and Bald Eagle, PA, in June and September.
- Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited, Johnstown, PA, in July.
- PA Watershed Specialists Conference, State College, PA, in October.

## STUDENT AUDIENCES INCLUDED:

- St. Francis University Science Camp, Cambria County.
- St. Vincent Career Fair, Westmoreland County.
- Stream Team Symposium: Saltsburg High School, Westmoreland County.
- Stream Team Symposium: Johnstown High School, Cambria County.
- Neville Naturalists, Pittsburgh.
- Ohio River Watershed Celebration, Pittsburgh.
- Portage Area School District Earth Day, Cambria County.
- Cambria County Water Festival, Penn Highlands Community College.
- St. Benedict Catholic School, Cambria County.
- Conemaugh Township Area School District, Somerset County.
- Cambria Heights School District, Cambria County.
- Forest Hills School District, Cambria County.
- United School District, Indiana County.

## GENERAL PUBLIC AUDIENCES INCLUDED:

- Family Fun Day at Duman Park, Cambria County, in July.
- Wildlife Day at the Community Arts Center, Johnstown, Cambria County, in March.
- Two Public Input meetings, one in Bedford and the other in Huntingdon.



One of the goals of 2007 was to strengthen our formal citizen volunteer corps. While the existing corps did not receive the kind of attention intended at the year's outset, factors responsible for shifts in focus did help us to recruit new volunteers. Outdoor Heritage needed a sponsor, so we acted upon that opportunity, determining that children are our most precious resource. One bonus of Outdoor Heritage was the fact that the event recruited a number of new volunteers. Also, the Weed Control and Wildlife Habitat project redirected Natural Biodiversity's attention to education and outreach for private landowners, which also engaged new people of all ages.

### 2007 VOLUNTEER STATISTICS

Opportunity	New Citizens Involved	Returning Volunteers	Totals
Juniata Workshop	25		25
Raystown Public Input Meetings	62		62
Private Lands Invasive Plant Surveys	31		31
Weed Control and Wildlife Habitat Workshops	117		117
Outdoor Heritage 2007	35		35
Weed Watchers		7	7
Weed Whackers	12	10	22
Habitat Stewards™	185	4	189
Education Corps		2	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>490</b>

# Citizen Engagement

## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION PICNIC

Since 2004, Natural Biodiversity and the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team have co-hosted an Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic to honor each volunteer for his or her dedication of personal time and hard work. In 2007, the celebration's theme was, "It's Easy Being Green" and the event featured a number of locally produced "green" products as door prizes. There was a special presentation by Len and Linda Hess, Stream Team and Natural Biodiversity volunteers, who received a "Backyard Wildlife Habitat" certification from National Wildlife Federation for their Stahlstown property. More than 30 volunteers were in attendance, including Natural Biodiversity "Volunteer of the Year" Douglas Beri, Jr., who served as a National Wildlife Federation-sponsored AmeriCorps member for Natural Biodiversity in 2006-2007.



## THANK YOU!

*Special thanks go out to all 2007 Natural Biodiversity volunteers and to the 31 landowners who voluntarily participated in the Raystown Riparian Vegetation Conservation Plan field assessments by allowing access to their properties for invasive plant surveys.*



# 2007 Financials

## **FUNDING SOURCES**

From an annual perspective, the 2007 fiscal year was a successful one, with fundraising efforts generating a total program budget of \$403,730 of which \$283,730 was cash revenue. Approximately \$120,000 in non-cash matches comprised the rest of the budget and included citizen- and professional-volunteer services as well as donated goods.

## **THE FUNDING AGENCIES AND AMOUNTS RECEIVED WERE:**

- \$120,000 worth of volunteer in-kind services.
- \$100,000 from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.
- \$98,000 from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for the Raystown plan.
- \$24,000 from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for the Southern Alleghenies weed control project.
- \$18,000 from AmeriCorps National Direct (NWF), cash assistance for staffing.
- \$17,766 in corporate donations.
- \$11,264 from an anonymous private Pennsylvania foundation.
- \$11,000 from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds.
- \$3,700 in private donations.

Despite extensive efforts to reduce the percentage of the total budget funded by federal entities, federal funds still represented 59% of the total revenue received for 2007 – just below the program's average of 63% from 2000 to 2006. Natural Biodiversity's goal to diversify funding sources was partially accomplished in 2007 through a substantial increase in cash receipts from private and local sources. But we were unable to obtain targeted levels of state funding.

Since 2000, Natural Biodiversity and partners have brought federal funds totaling \$998,000 into the Commonwealth. Another \$174,263 in federal funds were committed for 2008. From 2000 through 2007, Pennsylvania has invested \$114,800 in the program – only 12% of the federal cash committed.

## **FUNDRAISING**

A total of 16 grant applications were submitted during 2007. As of the close of the fiscal year, three of the applications were funded, nine were denied, and four were still being processed. Of those funding requests that had been acted upon, only 25% of Natural Biodiversity's submissions were awarded. Our grant-based fundraising efforts need to be more thoughtful, concise, and targeted.

Throughout the year, donations totaling nearly \$8,000 were derived from businesses and individuals for specific projects. An end-of-year donor drive generated an additional \$2,500 cash by focusing upon 400 individual and corporate contacts within Cambria and Somerset counties.

# Financials

During fiscal year 2007, Natural Biodiversity developed a fundraising strategy that embraces a multi-faceted approach, including:

- Strategic and efficient grant proposal development.
- More collaboration with philanthropies.
- An enhanced partnership with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- Development of a membership structure.
- Private donor drives.
- Corporate fundraising.
- Planned giving.
- Contractual services strategies.

In addition, Natural Biodiversity developed a comprehensive list of potential funding sources totaling more than 400 entries (separate from the donor-drive list) and including private companies, foundations, state agencies, and federal programs.

## UTILIZATION OF FUNDS

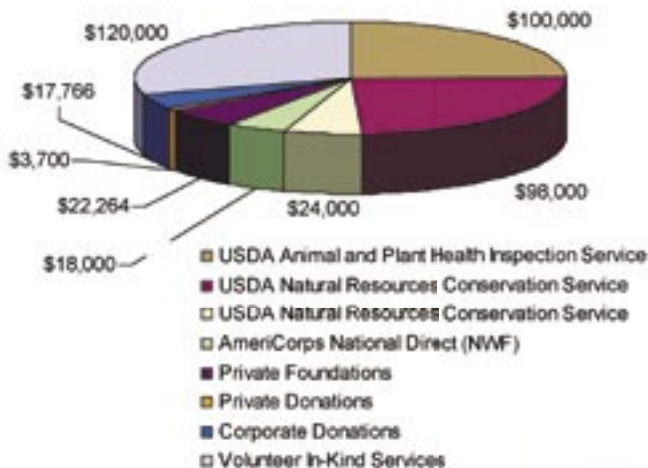
In 2007, 82% of the cash raised by Natural Biodiversity was expended upon its conservation programs, while 3% was utilized for administration, 5% for operations, and 10% for fundraising. We need to improve our return on fundraising investment, maximizing the dollars utilized for fundraising. One of the primary goals for the 2008 operating budget should be to direct at least 85% of funds into programming and projects.

## NATURAL BIODIVERSITY OPERATING BUDGET 2007

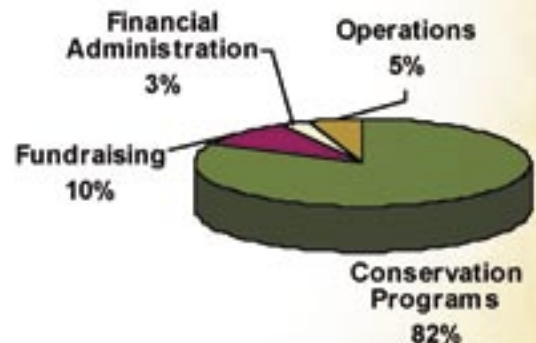
Breakdown By Source Of Funding

Total Budget = \$403,730; Total Cash = 283,730

Federal = \$240,000 (59%); Local/private = \$163,730 (41%)



## UTILIZATION OF 2007 REVENUE



# The Future

Entering its ninth year of existence, Natural Biodiversity should take steps to become a mature, stable program. Much more work needs to be done to reduce the presence of invasive species and encourage native plant growth within the region and the state of Pennsylvania. Therefore, the program needs to position itself for long-term operations and ongoing, meaningful contributions to environmental conservation within the Alleghenies and the state.

In 2008, a full-scale, professionally facilitated, strategic planning process needs to be implemented to finalize plans for Natural Biodiversity's long-term structure, to reinvigorate its approach to mission fulfillment, and to determine its top priorities. Components of the strategic plan should include a comprehensive approach to the challenge of invasive species and noxious weeds that includes education and outreach, citizen involvement, prevention, integrated pest management, early detection and rapid response, adaptive management, and new strategies – all to be developed in tandem with input from field experts. Equal attention

should be paid to removal of invasive plants and restoration of the native plant community, as well as the establishment of Natural Biodiversity's long-term mechanisms supporting implementation.

## **MORE SPECIFIC GOALS FOR 2008 INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

- Establish the Juniata Cooperative Weed Management Area that would utilize the data gathered in 2007 to contain or eliminate the relatively limited invasive-plant populations within the Raystown Branch watershed and to begin planning efforts on the neighboring Frankstown Branch.
- Implement a pilot system of Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) within Natural Biodiversity's project area that demonstrates the possibilities of a strong local, state and federal partnership. Specific efforts would focus within the Allegheny Mountains headwaters and on aquatic invasive species such as hydrilla.
- Demonstrate how plants can be utilized to perform a variety of functions at an abandoned-mine drainage (AMD) passive treatment system site.
- Create an initial "Beyond the Schoolhouse" program in conjunction with the United School District that includes the development of a curriculum guide and the design and planting of an outdoor classroom.
- Expand Outdoor Heritage into a month-long observance and make plans for an enhanced 2009 project.
- Determine Natural Biodiversity's final operating structure.



# Volunteer of the Year

DOUGLAS BERI

An Armagh area man, who hopes to specialize in terrestrial ecology someday, received Volunteer of the Year recognition for his efforts during 2007. Douglas Beri, Jr., was on staff with Natural Biodiversity during the latter half of 2006 and the first half of 2007 as an AmeriCorps member under the sponsorship of the National Wildlife Federation. But it was because of Doug's 400 hours of donated service during the summer of 2007 that he received recognition as Natural Biodiversity's top volunteer for the year.



*Kristin Sewak, Margaret Speicher and Douglas Beri*



In addition to his AmeriCorps service, Doug donated time for annual assessments at almost all of Natural Biodiversity's 19 public demonstration sites where invasive species are being removed. He launched our Schoolyard Habitats program, played a large role in school relations for Outdoor Heritage, designed marketing tools, and led much of the native habitat planting work. He also assisted with four weed whacking efforts at Greenhouse Park, Hyde Park, Stackhouse Park and along the Youghiogheny River.

Doug moved on to fill the role of the Habitat Enhancement Coordinator for the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team. He has an A.A.S. Degree in Environmental Technology from Pennsylvania Highlands Community College and is attending the Indiana University of Pennsylvania to obtain his B.S. in Environmental Biology. In the future, Doug plans to attend graduate school for terrestrial ecology, focusing on invasive plant species and wildlife habitat, and hopes to teach at the collegiate level.



## *Volunteers*

Travis Anderson  
Bruce Baker Family  
Drew Banas  
Mike Barton  
Nola Barton  
Noreen Beauregard  
Richard Beauregard  
Kay Bertolino  
Pete Bertolino  
Rick Bloom  
John Boderocco  
Katelyn Bogus  
Don Brennan  
Anthony Brezovec  
Matthew Brown  
Jim Buday  
Richard Burkert  
Wes Burket  
Danielle Cicero  
Jerry Clark  
Randy Collins  
Sierra Conahan  
Joe Costello  
Irene Costlow  
Walter Costlow  
Mallory Cunningham  
Michael Czarnota  
Kylie Daisley  
John Dawes  
Nathan DeSalvo  
Joe Diamond  
Branden Diehl  
Vanessa Dietrick  
Tim Dull  
Carla Eichman  
Jack Farster  
Clark Fisher  
Ron Foldyce  
Vanessa Funyak  
Chris Glessner

Richard Golden  
Matt Gribbin  
Kimberly Hanna-Hall  
Curtis Haschak  
Dave Haschak  
Michelle Haschak  
Scott Heiman  
Julia Herbst  
Dave Hirko  
Erika Hollis  
Jon Hordubay  
Susan Huba  
Melinda Hughes-Wert  
Dave Hurst  
Larry Hutchinson  
Linda Jones  
Carol Kelly  
John Kocon  
Joel Kosmac  
Judy Kosmac  
Mike Kuzmin Jr.  
Don Kyper  
Shawn Lasko  
Jill Latuch  
Mary Lavine  
Lauren Lazzari  
Mark Lazzari  
John & Sue Linkes Family  
Brian Madison  
Ed Makuchan  
Karlice Makuchan  
Mike Makufka  
Marissa Maloney  
Liz McDowell  
Rosemary McGlynn  
Bob McKendree  
Donna McKendree  
Mary Mock  
Ron Morris  
Kayla Myer

Susan Oram  
Eileen Orner  
Jamie Otradovec  
Lisa Pearson & Family  
Kathy Penrod  
Matt Peters  
Robb Piper  
Jason Reynolds  
Jason Rigby  
Bob Ritchey  
Elaine Ritchey  
Bruce Robart  
Joan Ross  
Lisa Rountree  
Jon Rugh  
Terry Ruparcic  
Max Sapinsky  
Diane Scheuermann  
Matt Shawley  
Monica Shedlock  
Mary Singleton  
Ellen Singleton  
Bill Smith  
Rodelle Snyder  
Megan Spain  
Rusty Spangler  
David Steele  
David Stiner  
Jackie Stinson  
Alan Swann  
Terri Swann  
Carl Trout  
Denny Tubbs  
LeeRoy Vatter  
Mike Walker  
Craig Weaver  
Beverly Wentz  
Alex Wiebaldt  
Darlene & Ernie Wilusz Family  
Jim Woomer



## *Committees*

### **RAYSTOWN PLANNING / WEED CONTROL AND WILDLIFE HABITAT DUAL-PURPOSE COMMITTEE**

Scott Alexander, Fulton County Conservation District  
Frank Burggraf, Bedford County Planning Commission  
Robert Clauto, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Tim Cole, Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry  
Jim Eckenrode, Blair County Conservation District /  
    Juniata Clean Water Partnership  
Donna Fisher, Blair County Conservation District  
Don Garner, Pennsylvania Game Commission  
Audrey Gray, Cambria County Conservation District  
David Greaser, USDA Farm Service Agency  
Scott Hammond, PennDOT  
Mike Holbay, USDA Farm Service Agency  
Erika Hollis, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
John Johnston, USDA Farm Service Agency  
Christopher Jones, Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry  
Jeff Kloss, Bedford County Planning Commission  
Jeff Krause, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Len Lichvar, Somerset Conservation District /  
    Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  
Callista Little, USDA Farm Service Agency  
Mike Makufka, Juniata Clean Water Partnership  
Dave Mankamy, Conservation Land Management  
Deb Nardone, Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited  
Andy Patterson, Huntingdon County Conservation District  
Lou Pearce, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Robb Piper, Cambria County Conservation District  
Stephen Repasky, Pennsylvania Game Commission /  
    USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Dave Scamardella, Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry /  
    Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council  
Matt Shawley, Southern Alleghenies Conservancy  
Joseph Shevchik, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Richard Stahl, Huntingdon County Planning Commission  
Dave Steele, Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and  
    Development Council  
Jim Steward, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Guy Stottlemyer, Bedford County Conservation District  
Micah Tavares, Blair County Conservation District  
Rod Thomas, USDA Farm Service Agency

Chris Tracey, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy /  
    Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program  
Rebecca Wertime, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay  
Tara Whitsel, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Bob Whittaker, Huntingdon County Conservation District  
Michael Wolf, The Pennsylvania State University  
    Cooperative Extension  
Tom Yocum, PennDOT  
Dave Young, Pennsylvania DCNR State Parks Region 3

### **OUTDOOR HERITAGE PLANNING COMMITTEE**


Travis Anderson, Pennsylvania Game Commission  
Malcolm Crittenden, Pennsylvania DEP  
Kylie Daisley, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
Amanda Deal, Somerset Conservation District  
Joseph Diamond, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau  
Ken Dranzik, Summer's Best Two Weeks @ the Que  
Jack Farster, Pennsylvania DEP Environmental Education  
Vanessa Funyak, South-central Pennsylvania Area  
    Health Education Center  
Don Garner, Pennsylvania Game Commission  
Chris Glessner, Cambria Somerset Authority  
Larry Hutchinson, Shade Creek Watershed Association  
Dave Kemp, Somerset Conservation District  
James Kissel, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary  
Lee Kring, Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps  
Len Lichvar, Somerset Conservation District  
Mike Makufka, Juniata Clean Water Partnership  
Allen Mitchell, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary  
Kristie Niekamp, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  
Kathy Penrod, National Park Service  
Robb Piper, Cambria County Conservation District,  
Lisa Rountree, Pennsylvania Highlands Community College  
Dave Sewak, The Fly Fishing Show  
Monica Shedlock, American Cancer Society  
Dave Steele, Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council  
Joe Stefko, Pennsylvania Game Commission  
Dennis Tubbs, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  
Ray Vandzura, Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps  
Dave Young, Pennsylvania DCNR State Parks Region 3



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