

# Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

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## Conservation Program Overview

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy's Conservation Program is responsible for delivering projects and activities to achieve WPC's mission of protecting, conserving and restoring land, water and habitats throughout the region.

### Locations

WPC's Conservation Program has community-based staff throughout the region:

- Elk County – The Allegheny Project Office
- Westmoreland County – The Laurel Highlands/Ligonier Valley Project Office
- Indiana County – The Freshwater Conservation Center
- Bedford County – The Sideling Hill Creek Center
- Erie County – Northwest Field Station at Lake Pleasant
- Dauphin County – PA Natural Heritage Program (eastern staff office)
- Allegheny County – Pittsburgh headquarters
- (Fayette County – Fallingwater and administrative staff)

### Conservation Programs by Department

#### **Pennsylvania Natural Heritage**

This program collects and manages ecological information about Pennsylvania. The information is generated mostly through fieldwork by a large staff of scientists (botanists, ecologists, zoologists). The data is managed in a statewide database – housed at the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources – and is utilized for permitting decisions. Decision makers who desire to include conservation planning in the areas of economic development, land use and other planning also use the information.

#### **Conservation Science**

This program applies scientific information to identify the most important places for WPC and its partners to make conservation investments, and guides the development of conservation projects through the lens of science. Recently, WPC developed a "Conservation Blueprint" to visually represent the most important forests and watersheds in need of conservation and restoration.

#### **Freshwater Conservation**

This program works to protect and restore Pennsylvania watersheds through a variety of on-the-ground projects in priority areas. The program is well known by local watershed groups that receive technical assistance from WPC water specialists and planners. Restoration projects often focus on working with farmers and agricultural producers to decrease water pollution from poor farming methods; working to remediate degraded water quality from past coal mining activity; and correcting erosion hotspots caused by poorly maintained dirt roads in rural areas.

#### **Forestland Conservation**

This program protects the most ecologically significant lands in the state through a variety of methods. Emphasis is placed on working with private landowners who are voluntarily taking measures to permanently conserve priority lands by working with WPC. The program also directly purchases important land tracts. Historically, the organization has conserved natural areas and permanently protected more than 216,000 acres, and created numerous state parks, game lands and state forests. This program stewards WPC holdings and monitors 73 conservation easements on private lands.

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