

Live,
Grow,
Lead
Healthy.

Adams,
Cumberland,
Franklin &
York Counties



**SOUTH MOUNTAIN
PARTNERSHIP**
CONSERVATION NETWORK

YEAR IN REVIEW

2025

COLLECTIVE *impact* OF THE PARTNERSHIP

We surveyed our partners to gather the collective impact of our shared efforts in the region in 2025. 16 of our 63 partners responded.

SMP'S *impact*

The following metrics provide a snapshot of South Mountain Partnership's (SMP's) impact in advancing conservation, collaboration, and community vitality across the region.

152 with **9,071**
EVENTS ATTENDEES

105,156

DIGITAL AUDIENCE REACH
via social media, e-newsletters, etc.

6,760
ACRES OF LAND PROTECTED

146.2
EXISTING TRAIL MILES IMPROVED

5,755

ACRES OF AGRICULTURAL BEST
PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED

\$5,667,070
IN EXTERNAL GRANTS
(non-DCNR funds)

Partners that
responded to the
collective impact
survey:

Adams County Trout Unlimited
Land Conservancy of Adams County
Michaux State Forest, BOF, DCNR
Penn National Golf Course Community
Appalachian Mountain Club | Capital RC&D
Central Pennsylvania Conservancy | CVRTC
Farm & Natural Lands Trust of York County
Franklin County | Friends of Michaux State Forest
Keystone Trails Association | Trust for Public Land
Strawberry Hill Foundation, Inc. | York County Rail Trail Authority
Cumberland County Planning, Cumberland County Conservation District,
Clean Water Cumberland

334
EVENT ATTENDEES
63
PARTNER
ORGANIZATIONS

37
PARTNERS HIGHLIGHTED
at SMP events

66
JOBS
POSTED
regional board

520
PARTNER
EVENTS
on calendar

56
FUNDING
OPPORTUNITIES
on website

\$58,800
IN GRANTS AWARDED
by SMP

\$117,265
LOCALLY INVESTED
in contractors & projects

35
COMMITTEE
MEMBERS

313
RESPONDENTS
to community
survey

36,000
ACTIVE WEBSITE
VISITORS

464,800
REACH ON
FACEBOOK



State of the Region

State of the Region (SOTR) Action Projects are going strong in 2025! State of the Region Implementation project, updating our Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) data, held its final field season in 2025. This project is remarkable because it updates over 20-year-old data that helps protect sensitive species and habitats, and it's supported by all four counties, Western PA Conservancy, and the South Mountain Partnership. Check out some of the numbers below.



METRICS FOR NHI UPDATE

Survey sites included caverns, grasslands, and water.

60+
SITES
VISITED

118
AREAS
ASSESSED
for botanical
species and
habitats of special
concern

50
PLANT TAXA
DOCUMENTED

30
AREAS
ASSESSED
for zoological
species and habitats
of special concern
(includes grassland
bird and aquatic
species)

State of the Region Implementation Regional Trail Coalition kicked off in 2025 with feedback gathered from all of the Partnership at our spring meeting. That feedback helped us finalize our RFP and select a contractor. Look for next steps in early 2026.

Explore more about SOTR at southmountainpartnership.org

Completing Our Three-Year Strategic Plan

In 2025, SMP completed its 2022-2025 Strategic Plan—an important milestone driven by our collaborative network of volunteer leaders, partners, and staff across the region. Guided by five volunteer committees and supported by the Institute for Conservation Leadership, the plan remained grounded in local priorities while adapting to emerging challenges and opportunities through quarterly review by the Leadership Committee.

The plan delivered meaningful progress, including:

- **A new website, logo, and strengthened communications**, increasing visibility of partner roles, projects, and successes.
- **A revitalized "Power of the Partnership" Celebration**, boosting attendance and deepening connection through a renewed focus on regional culture and collaboration.
- **The first-ever State of the Region report**, developed with more than 30 partners to assess environmental and public health, identify priority conservation areas, and recommend actions to address six key regional challenges—now moving into implementation.



These achievements were made possible by 35 committee members and 63 partner organizations. As we approach our 20th anniversary in 2026, SMP is building on this momentum through new strategic planning, advancing regional conservation and trail initiatives, strengthening public land coordination, and expanding the reach of research and communications efforts to protect the health and vitality of the South Mountain region.

Grants

SMP grants support initiatives within our community that further the goals of the Partnership and advance the capacity of partners throughout the region. Below are the projects funded in 2025:



Mini-Grants

The Conococheague Institute - Native Habitat Restoration - \$2,500

This project will create a native foundation garden around the birding wetlands area and a native welcome garden. The project will be implemented with the help of local high school student volunteers.

Cumberland Valley Rails to Trails Council - Middle Spring Greenway - \$15,000

The Middle Spring Greenway from Martin Ave. to Burd St. will connect the Cumberland Valley Rail Trail Shippensburg Station trailhead to the new Library Square site in downtown Shippensburg.

Gettysburg College Advancing Science Program - South Mountain K-12

Geoheritage Story - \$14,100

AdvSci will create a K-12 geoheritage story linking PA science standards to the south mountain landscape, with lesson plans and loaner kits to help teachers and students explore local science concepts.

Social Enterprise Institute USA - Caledonia State Park Watershed Assessment

- \$8,900

Geomorphological assessment of Caledonia State Park waters, with detailed recommendations for enhancing ecological functions and values.

South Middleton Township - Boating and Fishing Accessibility Improvements -

\$7,500

The South Middleton Township Boating and Fishing Accessibility Improvements project will result in an easily accessible concrete canoe/kayak launch along the Yellow Breeches Creek across from South Middleton Township Park.

Flex Grants

Southampton Township - Furnace Run Park Habitat Restoration - \$2,000

This project will convert 80 acres of acquired agricultural land into natural habitat that will strengthen the capacity for local wildlife and ensure desirable native plant and animal communities.

Southern Appalachian Woodland Network in PA - Woodland Conservation Stewardship and Training - \$750

Delivery of year-round education and training in woodland stewardship best practices for forest landowners and enthusiasts that will help achieve effective conservation of forest land in Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, and adjoining counties.

Perry Yingling - Kestrel NestWatch - \$1,050

Build nest boxes to provide adequate nesting habitat and to benefit Kestrel research by contributing to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology NestWatch citizen science project.



Research Grants

Shippensburg University - Warehouse Development and Air Quality - \$4,000

The development of warehouses and local air quality will be studied in Cumberland and Franklin counties.

Franklin and Marshall - Investigating Sources of Water Discharging - \$3,000

Sources discharging from The Bubble (Boiling Springs) and the Huntsdale Fish Hatchery Springs will be studied.



Partnership Committee Members

Join us in thanking and recognizing these individuals who have shared so much of their time and wisdom with the Partnership.

WANT TO HELP?
Join a committee today!

Leadership Committee

Roy Brubaker	Michaux State Forest
Quentin Clapper	Franklin County Planning
Elizabeth Grant	Cumberland County Planning
Sarah Kipp	Land Conservancy of Adams County
Sarah Merritt	PA Council for the Arts
Patti Nitterhouse	Penn National
Brendan Salyards	York County Economic Alliance
Holly Smith	Shippensburg University: Center for Land Use and Sustainability
Rob Thaeler	Adams County Planning
Quentin Clapper	York County Planning
Anne Walko	Cumberland County Planning



Fundraising Action Team

Dan Brannen	Strawberry Hill
Mike Eschenmann	Retired
Mary Ann Leidig	Retired
Sarah Merritt	PA Council on the Arts
Janet Pollard	Franklin County Visitors Bureau
Martina White	Retired

Communications Committee

Jared Abell	Trust for Public Land
Melodie Anderson- Smith	Retired
Meghan Clark	Michaux State Forest
Stacey Cornman	Cumberland Area Economic Development Corporation
Andrew Gehman	2085 Productions
Janet Pollard	Franklin County Visitors Bureau



Program Committee

Elizabeth Grant	Cumberland County Planning
Frank Grumbine	PA Historical and Museum Commission
Onnolee Jansen	PA DCNR, Kings Gap
Sarah Merritt	PA Council on the Arts
Patti Nitterhouse	Penn National
Amy Renshaw	Volunteer
Brendan Salyards	York County Economic Alliance
Rob Thaeler	Adams County Planning
Denise Tushingham	York County Rail Trail Authority

Research Corps & Science Summit Committee

Joe Baker	Retired
Maria Bruno	University of Nevada, Reno
Suzanne Hartley	PA DCNR
Larry Klotz	Retired
Holly Smith	Shippensburg University: Center for Land Use and Sustainability
Aura Stauffer	PA DCNR



South Mountain Partnership Committees are networks of people that lead conservation efforts by providing strategic counsel, infrastructure, and organizational management. We can only operate through the support of diverse and active committees that move the organization forward through programming, communications, and special initiatives.

The South Mountain Partnership is financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, the Environmental Stewardship Fund, and under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.



SMP in the Community

In 2025, SMP strengthened collaboration and capacity across the region by convening, educating, and supporting its partners in multiple ways.

- **294 partners engaged** through three signature in-person events:
 - Winter meeting at Keystone Kidspace (York)
 - Spring meeting at Oakside Community Park (Biglerville)
 - Power of the Partnership Celebration at Kings Gap Environmental Education Center (Carlisle)
- **2 Lunch and Learn webinars** supported 30 partners in improving applications to SMP and PA DCNR-funded programs and using State of the Region data to strengthen projects.
- **1 Walk and Talk** cohosted with the Franklin County Visitors Bureau engaged ~30 participants at the Monterey Pass Battlefield, highlighting the region's cultural and natural assets.
- **2 Topophiliac Support Group meet-ups** at Big Hill Cider fostered peer support and connection among conservation professionals dedicated to place-based work.

Thank You to Our Donors

Currently, the Friends of the South Mountain Partnership fund yearly Flex Grants to the community, in addition to supporting Partnership events and opportunities. Join us in thanking and recognizing these donors.

Sponsors

Cumberland Area Economic Development Corp.
Cumberland County Food System Alliance
Explore York

Franklin County Visitors Bureau
Members 1st Credit Union
Penn National Golf Course

Salzmann Hughes, PC
York County Trail Towns

Friends of South Mountain Partnership Donors

Alana Anderson
Melodie Anderson-Smith
Judy Bailey
Michael Barlup
Daniel Brannen
Cheryl Burns
Julia Chain
Allen Dieterich-Ward
Karen Dixon
Josh Donaldson
Keith Finkenbinder

Andrew Gehman
Maureen Hoffman
Tracy Holliday
Donald Horn
Carmen James
Onnolee Jansen
Marty Karsteter Qually
Amanda Key
Sarah Kipp
Luisa Lassova
Brook Lenker

Richard Lewis
Dan Liberatore
Jim Mader
David Maher
Sarah Merritt
Curt Musselman
Brendan Salyards
Bob Schmidlein
Mary Soderberg
David Topper
Denise Tushingham



Bryan Van Sweden
Julie Vastine
Susan Waybright
Andre Weltman
Anna Yelk

The Friends of the South Mountain Partnership is a Project of the Foundation for Enhancing Communities, fiscal sponsor, and secures tax-deductible donations from individuals and businesses to ensure that SMP is a resilient and powerful force for good in our region.

GET INVOLVED

DONATE



OUR *landscape* OUR *home*

Despite the different opinions, perspectives, and worldviews that each of us carry, we all share a common trait: we call the South Mountain landscape home. We believe in the power of this common ground to build conversation around the future of this landscape--and our future while living within this landscape. SMP brings people together across geo-political and sectorial boundaries to highlight the importance of our landscape and take action to secure its future.

Partner with us to ensure a bright future for our home.

MEET OUR *team*



KATIE HESS
Director of Pennsylvania
Landscape Conservation

Appalachian Trail
Conservancy
khess@appalachiantrail.org



JULIA CHAIN
Program Manager of the
South Mountain Partnership

Appalachian Trail
Conservancy
jchain@appalachiantrail.org



TYLER SEMDER
DCNR Internal Lead

PA DCNR
Bureau of Recreation
and Conservation
tsemder@pa.gov

southmountainpartnership.org



The **South Mountain Partnership** is managed as a public-private partnership by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy.