

# ECOTONES

SPRING  
2024

# 50 YEARS





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Berksnature.org

@berksnature  
@BerksNature



// A song sparrow stands on a branch surrounded by crabapple blossoms //

// Cover: Students enrolled at the Berks Nature Preschool plant a tree together //

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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

## Fifty years - We have a lot to be grateful for.

Fifty years ago, some concerned and forward-thinking volunteers came together to create the Berks County Conservancy (now Berks Nature). Like in many communities at this time, land trusts were created in response to development pressures on the land.

Our original flyer and articles of incorporation in 1974 outlined Berks Nature's mission as: "land protection and environmental education for the quality of life of our neighbors." Today, just as it was 50 years ago, we believe that nature is essential to our quality of life and that land protection and environmental education are key to stewarding the environment for generations to come.

But in 50 years, we have also added programs to connect people to the nature we protect; watershed restoration, urban access to green spaces, and conservation greenways creation to name a few. Through the years, some parts of our mission have ebbed and flowed in response to funding and community need, but our core commitments remain the same: land protection and environmental education.

Our tools too have changed over the years. There was no email in 1974, no sophisticated mapping or GIS, and fewer financial resources available to us. Today we have online tools that have revolutionized the way we make strategic decisions for land protection. We are also fortunate to have a resource in We Conserve PA, our state-wide land trust

association who curates tools and legal documentation for establishing conservation easements across the Commonwealth.

But technology does not replace the "kitchen-table conversations" we have with landowners across our county. It is this relationship building that will maintain and sustain the quality of our work well into the future.

As such, we have launched our "50 Conversations for 50 Years" public forum series and have had a few gatherings already. I am thoroughly energized by our conversations, and grateful, as these conversations will help us plan and prioritize the county's environmental needs for the next 50 years.

I know the environmental challenges we face may seem daunting, but we must continue to rise and face them. The balance between the quality of our environment – the land, air, and water – with economic progress is vital not only to our livelihood but also to the sustainability of all life on earth.

"Think globally and act locally" is as true today as it was in 1974. The world may look different, but our commitment stays the same and what a privilege it has been for Berks Nature to work in this community for 50 years.

Sincerely,



Kimberly J Murphy  
President

## // MEET THE TEAM //

### BERKS NATURE STAFF

Kimberly J. Murphy  
*President*

Andrew Fetterman  
*Vice President for Land and Conservation*

Lawrence E. Lloyd  
*Senior Ecologist*

Jeremy Haymaker  
*Trails & Preserve Specialist*

Brooke Leister  
*Land Protection Specialist*

Ryan Brett  
*Land Protection Specialist*

Ruth Nunez  
*Community Garden Coordinator*

Allison Mackley  
*Vice President for Education*

Michael J. Griffith  
*Environmental Education Coordinator & Watershed Specialist*

Melissa Acosta  
*Community Educator*

Anne Muvdi  
*Nature Preschool Director and Eco-Camp Director*

Joan Marten  
*Nature Preschool Teacher*

Laura Carson  
*Nature Preschool Teacher*

Lynn Walker  
*Nature Preschool Assistant Teacher*

Jenn Bartley  
*Nature Preschool Assistant Teacher*

Amber Schenck  
*Nature Preschool Assistant Teacher*

Elizabeth Danovich  
*Nature Preschool Assistant Teacher*

Tami J. Shimp  
*Vice President for Development & Community Relations*

Regan Moll-Dohm  
*Director of Communications*

Kaitlyn Tothoro  
*Events & Visitor Experience Manager*

Becky Seel  
*Volunteer Engagement Coordinator & Educator*

English Dawson  
*Community Engagement and Outreach Assistant*

Dawn McDonough  
*Office Management and Donor Support Specialist*

Brian Birchak  
*Facilities Manager*

Melina Hart  
*Controller*

### BERKS NATURE AMBASSADORS

Our newest group of Ambassadors is currently in training! Berks Nature will be proudly graduating its largest class of Ambassadors this year, adding 20 new Ambassadors to this impressive list.

Elizabeth Richmond  
Bryan Wang  
Chris Daubert  
\*Dina Geracimos Wert  
Lana Wolfe  
Lauren DeLong  
Tracy Barlet  
Carl Cesarz  
Amy Deviney  
Geoffrey Burkholder  
Hannah Salvatore  
Karen Nierle  
Susan Monk  
Diana Rodriguez  
Sharon Hussar

Becky Williams  
Constance Cammarano  
Javius Galan  
Mark Beard  
Meghann Clark  
Michelle Dalton  
Richard Cattermole  
Susan Drake  
Holly Metzgar  
Ian Metzgar  
Jan Gernshiemer  
Jeffery Slaymaker  
Kathy Grim  
Suzanne Dillman  
Andrea Bensusan

Elias Peters  
Elizabeth Harris  
Jayne Park-Martinez  
Karen Nein  
Michele Means  
Alicia Sprow  
Brittany Potter  
Charles Randazzo  
Sandy Grajewski  
Jennifer Stinson  
Jerry Griffith  
Karin Wulkowicz  
Lindsay Scarola  
Mark Priebe  
Pat Catucci

Risa Marmontello  
Scot Case  
Carl Kaucher  
James Hufford  
Nelson Weber  
Gretchen Platt  
Jessica Marino  
Kate Houlne  
Lee Englehart  
Lena Hunter  
Marie Mengel  
Kim Smyre  
Dwayne Henne  
Deb Chestnut  
Bonnie Sekulski

Bryn Heist  
Ryck Spengler  
Rebekah Hinchcliffe  
Katie Montgomery  
Pam Washington  
David Beyer  
Eileen Beyer Curry  
Emma Fogel  
Rod Fizz  
Carl Fisher  
Carol Fisher



// MEET THE TEAM //

## 2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Christin J. Kelley  
*Chair*

David J. Breitegam  
*Vice Chair*

Beth M. Kohl  
*Corporate Secretary*

Nicholas Bieber  
*Treasurer*



### DIRECTORS

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*Kozloff Stoudt Attorneys*

Nicholas Bieber  
*Herbein + Company, Inc.*

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*Herbein + Company, Inc.*

Kirsten Deysher  
*Entech Engineering, Inc.*

Jeffrey C. Euclide  
*Retired*

Christopher J. Hartman  
*Hartman, Valeriano, Magovern & Lutz, P.C.*

Darryl Jenkins  
*Chester Water Authority*

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*Jenklein LLC and FM&C*

Timothy F.W. Keeler  
*ProAsys, Inc.*

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*Barley Snyder*

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Sharon Mast  
*Spark Solutions & Support*

Tanya Melendez  
*18th Wonder Improvement Association*

Rodney Ridley  
*Alvernia University*

\*Dina Geracimos Wert  
*Pennsylvania Department of Education*

## LOSS OF A FRIEND



Dr. Dina Wert was a distinguished public educator for over 34 years: teacher, school counselor, principal. Berks Nature first met Dina in 2009 after she opened the LEED certified Green Valley Elementary School in 2006. Dina empowered staff to create an environmentally connected curriculum and constructed an outdoor space to support nature found literally in the school's backyard. The work was supported by local community resources including Berks Nature. Dr. Wert received the National Distinguished Principal award (2013) and worked with educators at the state and national level.

Dina joined Berks Nature's Board of Directors in 2021 and became a Berks Nature Ambassador that same year. She later lent her leadership to the Berks Nature Education Committee. Dina will be remembered always with a smile on her face, wearing her tan Ambassador vest and helping with field trips to connect children with nature. She was a highly talented educator with a great sense of humor, and we thank her husband David, her children Stephanie and Andrew; and Ellie, her beloved Bernedoodle for sharing her with us.

We were fortunate to consider Dina part of the Berks Nature family these past few years. She will be greatly missed.

## MEET THE TEAM

### RYAN BRETT // Land Protection Specialist

Prior to joining Berks Nature, Ryan was a microbiologist working in municipal wastewater and safe drinking water compliance. However, his academic focus – boasting a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science from Albright College – had primarily centered on tidal wetland and temperate forest ecology as well as environmental ethics. The opportunity to join Berks Nature – first as a trails and preserves stewardship volunteer and then as a Land Protection and Stewardship Specialist in 2023 - made much better use of Ryan's skillset and aligned more closely with his personal passions.

Ryan was born and raised in Berks County and has, since his youth, spent much of his time outdoors fishing with his father



along the Schuylkill River, Hopewell Lake Campground, and Scott's Run Lake. In his free time, Ryan loves hiking and walking trails with his dogs. Ryan is driven to continuously learn about the land upon which we live and teach others about its crucial importance for recreational, environmental, civic, and educational purposes.

### LAURA CARSON // Nature Preschool Teacher

Laura graduated from Edinboro University with a degree in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education. While at college she completed a work study at the campus' Child Care Center. Laura has since enjoyed a colorful and diverse career working as an aide in group homes for adults, a Youth Services Librarian, and in several youth education positions as a substitute teacher, kindergarten teacher, and lead teacher in a "threes and fours" classroom. When she wasn't in the classroom, Laura was volunteering for her local library and with One by One Cat Rescue.

The outdoors has been a large part of Laura's life. Much of her youth was spent on her grandfather's dairy farm, camping, or simply exploring the woods

of her own backyard. As an adult, Laura is finally getting back outside by taking to the trails and hiking in her free time. She has throughout her life experienced firsthand the benefits of being outdoors and is excited to share those lessons with Berks Nature's Nature Preschoolers.



### RUTH NUNEZ // Community Garden Coordinator

Music and community development have been a life-long passion for Ruth. From a young age, she was drawn to the power of music to bring people together and create positive change in the community and their lives. This drive led Ruth to pursue a career in music education, where she learned to harness the power of music to inspire and uplift communities. In a similarly creative pursuit, Ruth now works as a beauty artist, where she helps her clients see and appreciate the beauty within themselves and the world around them.

In all of Ruth's endeavors - whether in music, community development, nature, or beauty – she is driven by a deep sense of responsibility to protect the environment. Like Berks Nature, Ruth

believes that spending time in nature is essential for our physical and mental well-being. From cooking with organic food, to hiking, to tending her garden, Ruth strives to incorporate outdoor experiences into her daily life and finds both solace and inspiration from the natural world.



// 1974-1984 //

# THEIR AIM IS SAVING OPEN LAND IN BERKS

“Our Maker was generous in giving us good land in Berks County. We have plenty of room in which to grow. Let’s just be sure we’ll always have room to breathe.”

1977  
Paul Edelman  
President of the Board

// Opposite Left: Newspaper clipping from Reading Eagle announcing the creation of Berks Nature (Berks County Conservancy at the time) //

// Opposite Top Right: Berks Nature’s original flyer //

// Opposite Bottom Right: Berks Nature’s first easement, the Thun Farm //


After years of mounting activism, the environment took center stage in our public and political consciousness in the 1970s. Americans were unequivocal in their rejection of the status quo, which had created a nation where rivers caught fire, poisonous pesticides laced the land, and green, open spaces buckled under the advancing force of development.

National momentum birthed local action. In April 1974, Berks County Conservancy was founded to protect the ecological and historic legacies of Berks County’s landscape from surging development pressure.

The very idea of Berks Nature was conceived by twin brothers Louis and Ferdinand Thun. The brothers convened a group of community leaders and leveraged seed funding, from which two complementary organizations were born: the Schuylkill River Greenway Association, which received Ferdinand’s attention, and the Berks County Conservancy (now Berks Nature), became the main interest of Louis.

As a charitable land trust, Berks County Conservancy could both acquire land for protection outright and accept conservation easement donations of private properties, thereby elevating the ecological, cultural, and scenic values of a parcel over its development potential.

Fifty years later and while much has changed, many things too have stayed the same. As stated in our original Articles of Incorporation, Berks Nature’s purpose remains to engage in such charitable, scientific, and educational activities that conserve land, forests, and waters with scenic, ecological, or historic significance. We still cherish their community’s heritage with the land and believe that nature is essential for our quality of life.

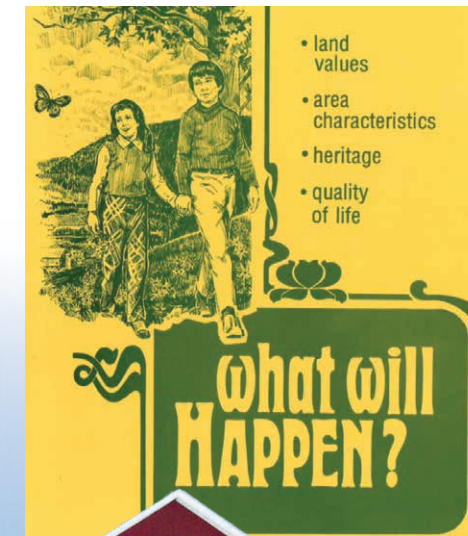
Today, we are known as Berks Nature, and we remain the leading agent for the conservation of the environment in Berks County. 

Reading Eagle - July 11, 1974 "Their Aim is Saving Open Land in Berks".



### New Group Is Formed Here


Members of the board of directors of the newly formed Berks County Conservancy look over the charter application approved by the Pennsylvania Department of State. The conservancy plans to acquire open space land in the county and preserve it for public use. Sitting are Atty. Paul H. Edelman, president of the board who extensively researched the possibility of operating a successful conservancy, and Mrs. William R. Davis, Bernville R.D. 2, secretary. Standing from left: John A. Beard Jr., 37 Hummingbird Road, Wyomissing, treasurer, and Jacob R. Bowers, 3439 Raymond St., Laurel-dale, vice president.—Eagle Photo.



- land values
- area characteristics
- heritage
- quality of life




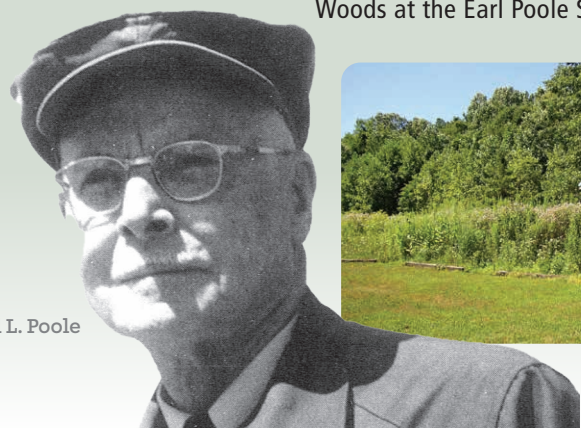
1974

 THE BERKS COUNTY CONSERVANCY (NOW KNOWN AS BERKS NATURE) is incorporated on April 26, 1974. Edward C. Edgar is instated as the Conservancy’s first Executive Director.



1975


 BERKS NATURE ACCEPTS ITS FIRST PROPERTY DONATION: a 10-acre parcel from the Bortz family (ultimately becoming Bob’s Woods at the Earl Poole Sanctuary).



Dr. Earl L. Poole



1977


 THE WYOMISSING FOUNDATION DONATES the 29.3 Ontelaunee Wetlands Preserve to Berks Nature to be managed as a public nature preserve.




The Old Mill in Wyomissing, Berks Nature’s original headquarters

1978

1979

 BERKS NATURE MOVES ITS OPERATIONS into its first headquarters at The Old Mill in Wyomissing. This office space was shared with Berks Nature’s sister organization: the Schuylkill River Greenways.

 BERKS NATURE INSTALLS ITS FIRST CONSERVATION EASEMENT with the Thun Family, protecting 83.75 acres of scenic and historically significant farmland in Lower Heidelberg Township. In protecting this property, Berks Nature firmly establishes farmland preservation as an organizational priority.

 BERKS NATURE OWNS 68 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE and holds 1 conservation easement, totaling 83 acres.

// 1974-1984 //

# THE GIFT OF LAND

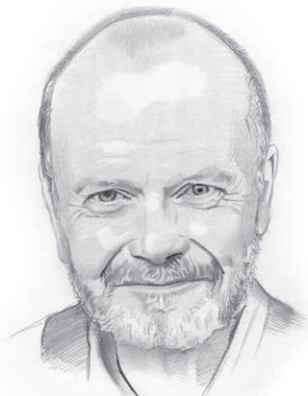
“We are limited in how we can serve the goals of conservation and preservation throughout Berks County. We do not have the financial means to purchase endangered or desirable properties, nor do we have the condemnation power of certain governmental entities. But despite these limitations, we can be effective through acceptance of land donations, the establishment of conservation easements...and, sometimes more importantly, the speed in which we can act...”

1982 | Edward C. Edgar | Director of Berks Nature 1974 – 1980




// Above Right: Robert C. "Bob" Fleming //

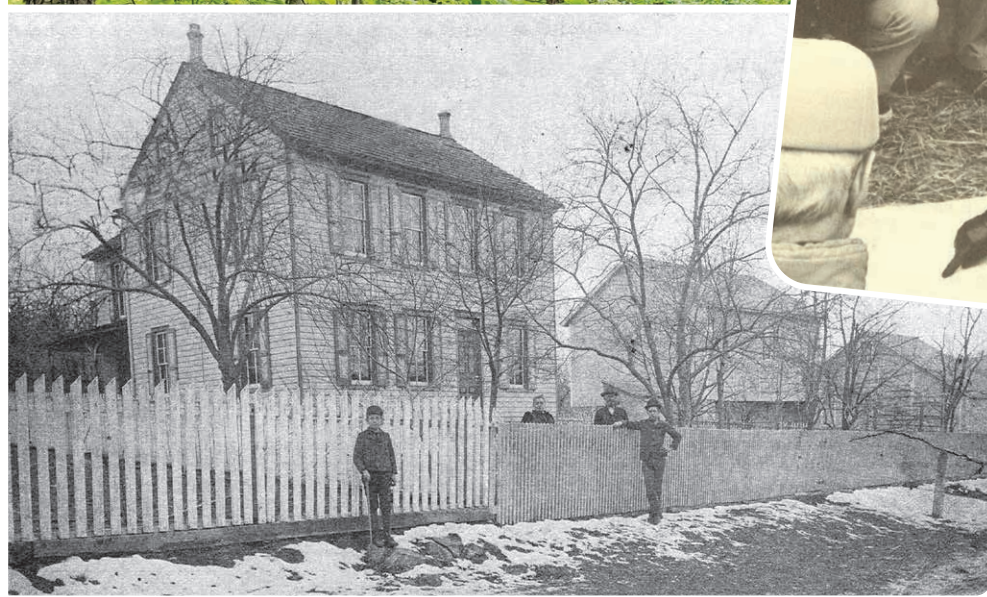
// Above and Opposite Right: Views of the Bob's Woods Preserve when it was still a working farm and orchard //



The barn and bygone cider press have since been removed, and much of the land has returned to forest. Even when remnants of the land's farming heritage still stood, the natural features of these properties – the riparian valley flush with native wildflowers and the dynamic edges between field and forest – provided rich and varied habitat for a considerable abundance of wildlife.

The diversity of birds in particular granted the land its first name: the Earl Poole Sanctuary, in honor of famed ornithologist and artist Dr. Earl L Poole.

Berks Nature continues to steward this nature preserve as both a peaceful retreat for nature lovers and wildlife sanctuary under a new name: Bob's Woods at the Earl Poole Sanctuary, in memory of Robert C. "Bob" Fleming, an outdoor enthusiast and long-time resident of the Oley Hills. 

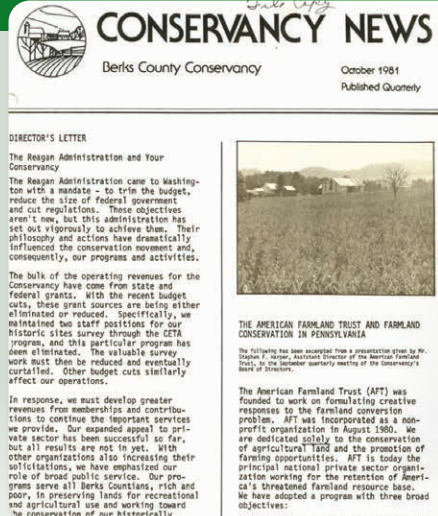


// Above: Members of Berks Nature and the Baird Ornithological Club planning for the future use of the recently established Poole Sanctuary in 1981 //

// Woodland stream at Bob's Woods at the Earl Poole Sanctuary //

1980

**E. GARRETT BRINTON** takes over as Executive Director.



1981

**HISTORIC SITES PLAQUE:** Berks Nature launches Historic Sites Plaque program.



1982

**DENNIS COLLINS** becomes the Executive Director.

Newspaper clipping celebrating Berks Nature's Historic Sites Plaque program

1983

Berks County snowscape of protected farmland

1984

Berks Nature's first newsletter

// 1985-1994 //

# RECOGNIZING A RICH AND RURAL HISTORY

“In rural Berks townships, the historic buildings cannot be separated from their setting...the whole landscape having a nineteenth-century historic character.”

1987  
Phoebe Hopkins  
Executive Director 1991 - 1999

For six years, Berks Nature embarked on a comprehensive survey of Berks County's historic and rural landscape, establishing a county-wide register of historic sites and sparking widespread interest in historic preservation.

Finding no county-wide historic preservation program, Berks Nature rose to meet this community need, taking responsibility for identifying historic sites, nominating structures and even municipalities for the National Register of Historic Places, and other preservation initiatives.

One such initiative was the Historic Sites Plaque Program.

After completing the historic sites survey, Berks Nature offered plaques to qualifying buildings that both recognized the historic character of the structure and acknowledged the passionate people shepherding these cherished pieces of Berks County's heritage.

Criteria for attaining a Historic Sites Plaque emphasized architectural merit and integrity, but were intentionally more lenient than the stringent standards of the National Register of Historic Sites in order to recognize the many structures – an estimated 250 sites – that have played an influential role in shaping Berks County.

The plaques also called public attention to the many cultural resources that freckle the bucolic communities of Berks County.

Ultimately, the call of nature took precedence and by 2010 Berks Nature had transferred their records of the historic sites surveys and local nominations to the National Register to the Berks History Center

With a public library of historic documents and expertise in historical archives, the Berks History Center was better suited to provide proper, long-term care for these records, giving Berks Nature the space to turn their full attention to Berks County's natural and open spaces.



// Above: One of the plaques awarded through Berks Nature's Historic Sites Plaque Program //

// Left: Historic Resource Survey Form used by Berks Nature to classify Berks County's historic structures //



// Left: 1993 Staff Photo (Left to right) Phoebe Hopkins, Carole Epher, Joe Hoffman, Ann Orth, Joanne Sweeney and Cindy Miller //

// Right: Earth Day 1992 Display Board //

1985

1986

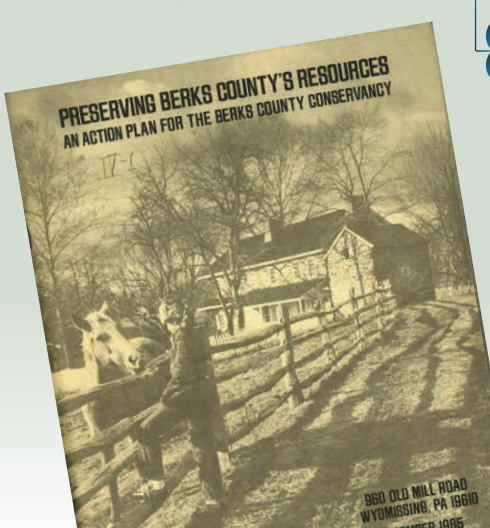
1987

1988

1989

1990

1991



**THE SIX-YEAR HISTORIC SITES SURVEY** is completed and Berks Nature refocuses historic preservation efforts on local nominations to the National Register and their Historic Site Plaque program.

**BERKS NATURE OWNS AND MANAGES 121 ACRES** of open space and holds 10 conservation easements, totaling 326 acres.

**PHOEBE HOPKINS** becomes Executive Director.

Left to Right: Phoebe Hopkins, President of Berks Nature in 1991, Fred Levering, President of the Board, and Ilse Morning, a member of Berks Nature's Board of Directors and instrumental land preservation advocate in the Oley Hills



// 1985-1994 //

# NEVERSINK MOUNTAIN: REGIONAL WONDER, COMMUNITY FOREST



// Above: The historic Neversink Mountain railroad //

// Right Background: Blooming mountain laurel //

// Right: Hikers on Neversink Mountain //

Reading is sheltered by two sister peaks.

To the east stands Mount Penn (arguably the more popular of the sisters).

To the south, Neversink Mountain, whose name is derived from the indigenous Lenape word, "navasink," meaning "at the promontory," watches over the complex ecotone between the City of Reading and the verdant valley of the Schuylkill River.

Neversink Mountain once hosted a spectacular, albeit ephemeral, resort community attracting pleasure seekers from as far as Philadelphia through the 1930s. After the hotels had burned down, the mountain's trees timbered, and its lithic soils quarried, the people of Reading stopped paying much attention to their guardian in the south.

An important few were able to look past Neversink's wounds and found a conservation opportunity lay in waiting among the boulders and oaks.

First to notice was the Pennsylvania Heritage Program (PNHP), which, in 1992, published a Natural Heritage Area Inventory (NHA) to prioritize the County's most critical and sensitive historic, scenic, and natural resources.

Among the NHA's top sites, Neversink Mountain rose to prominence, for harboring a remarkable concentration of sensitive biodiversity, especially considering the mountain's urban proximity.

These findings marked a new era of recognition and protection for Neversink Mountain, a county-wide commitment reflected both in the 1994 Berks County Open Space and Recreation Plan and in Berks Nature's land protection priorities.

After receiving a major grant from the William Penn Foundation in 1988, Berks Nature launched our first wave of land acquisitions and easements on Neversink Mountain. The campaign also found an ally

in the Clinton Earl Trust, a giant in Berks County conservation.


Over the next 10 years, in cooperation with Berks County and the City of Reading, Berks Nature facilitated the acquisition of over 450 acres on Neversink Mountain. Today, a total of 540 acres are owned or leased by Berks Nature for management and public use and another 55 acres are preserved under private conservation easements.

Berks Nature continues to serve as the mountain's primary steward, and in the scars of the mountain's past injury hope and healing have taken root.

Over nine miles of hiking trails now trace the abandoned railway tracks, allowing people to explore and enjoy Neversink's natural gifts without further fragmenting its wildlife habitats.

Thanks to some progressive thinking and partnership between the Metropolitan Edison Company (Met-Ed) and Berks Nature,

the forest clearing cut for an electricity transmission line is managed as a successional grassland that supports several sensitive species.

Neversink Mountain is what we call a "community forest", a unique nature preserve intentionally managed to benefit the local Reading community while respecting a commitment to protect and nurture the mountain's sensitive biodiversity. 



## 1992

- **THE PENNSYLVANIA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM** published a Natural Heritage Area Inventory (NAI) of the County's most critical and sensitive natural areas. The top sites prioritized by the NAI included the Kittatinny Ridge, Neversink Mountain, and Pine Swamp.

## 1993

- **EDWARD UNTERKOFER AND HIS WIFE MILDRED UNTERKOFER** protect their 409-acre farm in Center Township, the largest conservation easement in Berks Nature's portfolio to this day. The donation both symbolized the farming community's commitment to their agricultural heritage and granted a competitive edge to neighboring farms seeking protection through the County's agricultural easement program.
- **BERKS NATURE PURCHASES AND THEN ORCHESTRATES THE PRESERVATION OF CHARMING FORGE**, an 1800s ironmaking community on the National Historic Registry. The property, which was later split up and sold to several conservation buyers, spans 205 acres and the Marion, Heidelberg, and North Heidelberg townships.



Edward and Mildred Unterkofler tending to their Center Township farm (photo credit: Karen A. Harle)



## 1994

- **NEVERSINK MOUNTAIN PRESERVE** rises to the top of Berks Nature's, and the Greater Reading Area's, conservation priorities.






// 1995-2004 //

## RECOMMITTING TO MISSION

“Anyone who lives or visits here knows Berks County is a beautiful part of the country. Keeping it beautiful is a job for all of us.”

1997  
Phoebe Hopkins  
Executive Director 1991 - 1999

The late 1990s and early 2000s were a chapter of Berks Nature’s history punctuated by a series of tremendous conservation victories as well as several internal shifts in policy and leadership. As Berks Nature turned 25, we recommitted to our mission of land preservation and adopted a more proactive, strategic, and at times aggressive, approach to conservation. Consequently, we forged new partnerships, relied on both easements and advocacy to protect the County’s sensitive natural areas, and even expanded the scope of our conservation efforts beyond Berks’ boundaries.

These were dynamic times as the organization grappled with the natural tension and discomfort that coincides with great change. Like a wildfire blazes through a rolling grassland, the internal instability and shuffling of leadership appeared, at first glance, like a force of destruction. But fire is essential for the health and vigor of grassland ecosystems. From the blackened fields, green grass sprouts to life and colorful wildflowers burst into bloom. From this period of disturbance and succession, so too did Berks Nature rise up, revitalized with a new, focused direction. 

// Opposite: Poster commemorating Berks Nature’s 25th Anniversary //

// Opposite Background: The City of Reading’s Waterworks building and Berks Nature’s headquarters starting in 2001 //

// Right and Below: Scenes from the historic Dreibelbis Farm //



1995

1996


1997

1998

1999



○ **BERKS NATURE PERMANENTLY PROTECTS THE HISTORIC DREIBELBIS FARM** – the second oldest continuously owned family farm in Berks County - under a conservation easement. The 177-acre farm in Richmond Township is widely recognized as a treasure of archeological and historical significance, earning it a place on the National Register of Historic Places.

 **BERKS NATURE CELEBRATES ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY** and with it embraces a new strategic focus for the future. With this milestone, Berks Nature adopts a new logo, hires new staff (including a new Executive Director in Jerry Johnson), and commits to a new mission: Berks County Conservancy is committed to the active and aggressive preservation of our natural and historic heritage as well as the adoption of more effective and sustainable land use practices.

○ **BERKS NATURE OWNS AND MANAGES 270 ACRES** of open space and holds 43 conservation easements, totaling 2,842 acres.



// 1995-2004 //

# WHERE LAND MEETS WATER



// Opposite: The Lobachsville Trout Hatchery, in the Pink Creek watershed //

A river does not simply flow over the land, it experiences the land: its chemistry reflects the geology, its currents churn from runoff; its constitution feels the land's sickness. Clean water requires healthy landscapes.

As a land trust, Berks Nature realized our work was as much about the land as it was the water and in the 1990s our strategic priorities expanded to acknowledge this vital connection.

Using new grant funding provided by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR), Berks Nature began developing protection plans for Berks County's major watersheds, orchestrated \$5.9 million in federal funds for the Tulpehocken Creek watershed, and joined local resistance to protect the pristine Pine Creek.

The Pine Creek is an Exceptional Value stream: a classification granted by the PA DEP to rivers and streams of outstanding ecological, recreational, or regional

significance. But the Pine Creek watershed faced disaster when its notoriety caught the gaze of the Wissahickon Water Company's commercial interests.

In the 1990s, the Wissahickon Water Company sought to purchase the Lobachsville Trout Hatchery – a 44-acre tract of land on the border of the Pike and Oley Townships in the Pine Creek Watershed – to build a water bottling plant.


The plant would extract as much as 288,000 gallons a day from the pure groundwater below, to ship and sell as luxurious bottled water.

After three years of battle, the PA Environmental Hearing Board ruled in favor of the Pine Creek Watershed Association and the Pike Oley District Preservation Coalition, who argued that a commercial withdrawal of this scale jeopardized the functionality of the Pine Creek's sensitive wetland nexus, which are phenomenal both in their water quality and biodiversity.

The Wissahickon Water Company's permit was defeated, but the war was not over.

Berks Nature, the Pine Creek Watershed Association, and the Pike Oley District Preservation Coalition set to work fundraising \$200,000 to purchase the development rights for the trout hatchery. Finally in October 2000, Berks Nature established a conservation easement for the Lobachsville Trout Hatchery, protecting the land from development in perpetuity.

The Lobachsville Trout Hatchery battle and subsequent easement galvanized community support for watershed protection and paved the way for Berks Nature to establish several other conservation easements across the Oley Hills.

These conservation victories are a testament to the power of community united by purpose. As Margaret Mead so aptly stated, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." 




Kim Murphy, President of Berks Nature in 2004, explores one of Berks Nature's protected properties in the Oley Hills



Aerial view of the Tulpehocken Creek, part of the Schuylkill River Watershed



## 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004

 **THE LOBACHSVILLE TROUT HATCHERY IN PIKE TOWNSHIP** is permanently protected thanks to the collaborative effort of Berks Nature, the Pine Creek Watershed Association, and the Pike-Oley District Preservation Coalition.

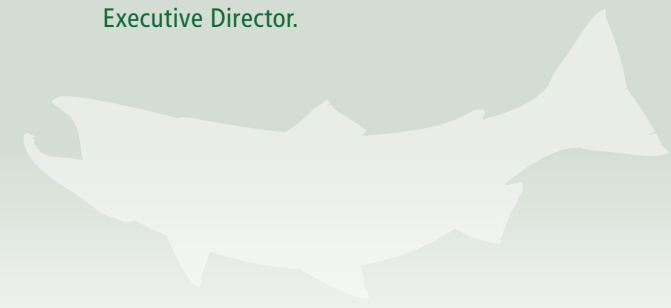
 **TERRY KAUFFMAN BECOMES EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** – and in the same year, Berks Nature leases and restores the City of Reading Waterworks building to act as our new headquarters. This is Berks Nature's first exclusive office building, intentionally located in Reading to underscore the importance of urban revitalization.

 **RICHMOND TOWNSHIP PLANS TO ERECT A SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT** for the Village of Virginville on the Dreibelbis Farm. Berks Nature successfully assists the Farm in rebuking these efforts, and the sewage treatment plant is relocated elsewhere.

 **VERLIN RENNEN, JR.** takes over as Executive Director.

 **KIM MURPHY** joins Berks Nature as their President.

 **BERKS NATURE JOINS FORCES WITH OTHER LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERS** under the banner of the Schuylkill Action Network (SAN). The SAN organizes action and advocacy for the entire Schuylkill River watershed, leading to the establishment of the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund, a grant program still active today to award private funding for implementing water quality best management practices in the Schuylkill watershed.



// 2005-2014 //

# MY PLACE IS THE OLEY HILLS

“When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

Aldo Leopold

At the close of the 20th century, Pennsylvania had one of the highest rates of land development in the United States, ranking 5th in the country in land conversion rate. Much of this suburban sprawl claimed prime farmland and forest, well removed from traditional urban centers, threatening the historic, rural landscapes of the Commonwealth.

Berks County was no stranger to this developmental pressure, nor were the Oley Hills.

After rebuking the Wissahickon Water Company's bottling plant proposal in 2000, the Oley Hills community galvanized around land protection, taking a proactive approach to defending their home.

Whereas the Oley Valley is underlain by limestone, gifting the basin with superior farmland, the Reading Prong formation

sustains the Oley Hills. Contrasting the farms of the valley, 27,000 acres of forest blanket 75% of the region's rugged slopes, making the Oley Hills one of the largest intact swaths of woodland in Berks County.

Hidden among this furrowed forest, 60 miles of pristine rivers spill over the Oley Hills' rocky terrain. Six of the Hills' streams have earned Exceptional Value designation, an esteemed moniker granted to just 4% of all Pennsylvania streams. Taken together, these waterways represent the region's most valuable watersheds.

But unlike the Oley Valley, which had enjoyed success protecting its agricultural heritage through the Berks County Agricultural Land Preservation (BCALP) easement program, there were no Federal, State, or County-sponsored initiatives to protect the rugged woodlands and pristine waters of the Oley Hills.

In a truly grassroots movement, protection of the Oley Hills stemmed entirely from the community's own resources, propelled by a deeply rooted land ethic; a belief that this land was a special part of the community's lives, heritage, and future, deserving of respect and protection in perpetuity.

The Pine Creek Watershed Association, who had also deflected the Wissahickon Water Company's proposal, helmed the effort. In partnership with the Pike Oley District Preservation Coalition, Pine Creek Watershed Association leveraged their local network and found funding to identify and purchase development rights from willing residents.

From there, Berks Nature stepped in, leveraging support from the William Penn Foundation and utilizing our expertise as a charitable land trust to hold the conservation easements.

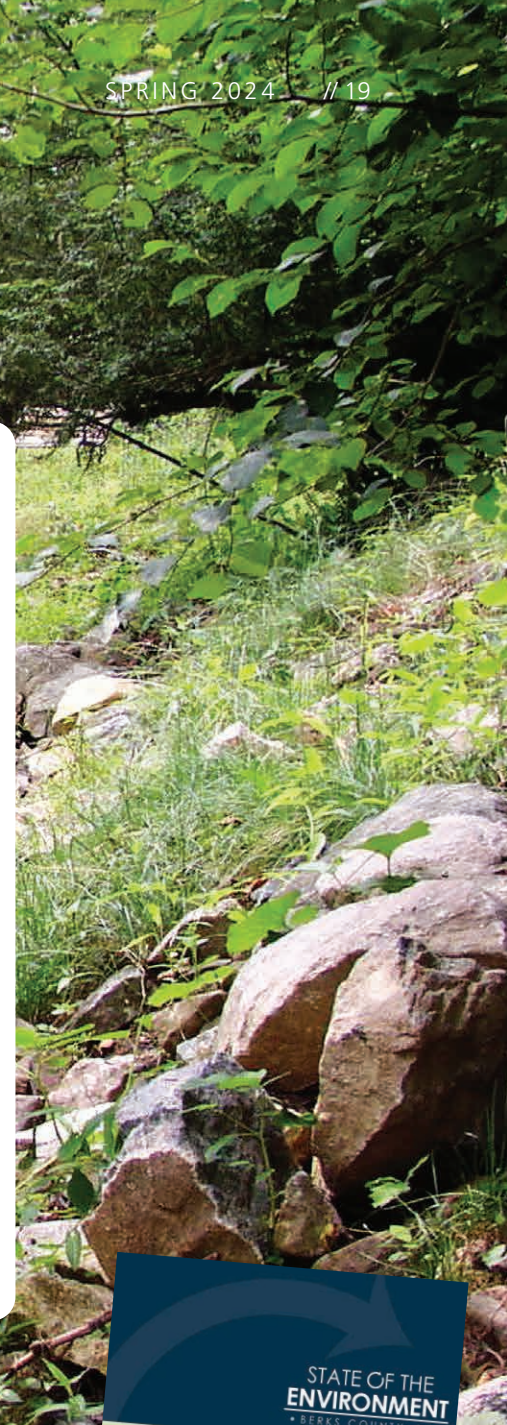
With so much common ground to share, enthusiasm for conservation easements spread readily across the Hills.

The first 104 acres came in 2003, then another 56 acres a year later in 2004. In that same year Berks Nature placed a conservation easement on the 23-acre Lobachville Wetland; 184 acres of the Oley Hills protected in one short year.

On the national stage, 2004 marked the passing of the Highlands Conservation Act, which formally recognized the conservation value of the Pennsylvania Highlands region and explicitly acknowledged the Oley Hills as a conservation focal area for its exceptional natural, recreational, and cultural resources.

But this recognition came with a warning: the Oley Hills drew national attention both for its ecological and cultural value as well as

// Right: The Pine Creek, an exceptional value waterway //



Trail Ambassadors at Angelica Creek Park

2005

- BERKS NATURE CONVENES THE GREATER READING TRAIL PARTNERSHIP, an assemblage of numerous organizations and agencies who together work to connect all of Greater Reading's fantastic and under-utilized greenways. The Partnership prioritized nearly 90 projects to improve the accessibility and connections between recreational opportunities and trails in the Greater Reading area.
- BERKS NATURE LAUNCHES A COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM in the City of Reading, providing garden plots for residents of Reading to tend and grow for themselves.

Buttonwood Community Garden in Reading

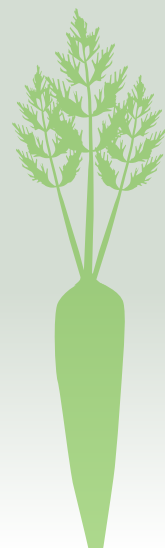
2006



2007

- BERKS NATURE'S FIRST GEOGRAPHY-BASED LAND PROTECTION STRATEGY picks up momentum in the Oley Hills.

2008



2009

- BERKS NATURE LAUNCHES THE TRAIL AMBASSADOR PROGRAM, the predecessor to the modern-day Berks Nature Ambassadors program. Today, the Ambassador program has trained 75 community volunteers to help Berks Nature monitor water quality, steward our public preserves, and deliver quality environmental education programming to Berks County's youth.
- BERKS NATURE PUBLISHES THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT. The publication and accompanying breakfast reception summarizes the status of 25 environmental indicators for Berks County's land, water, air, energy, and waste with the intention of increasing engagement with and inspiring action towards the protection of our County's natural resources.

// 2005-2014 //

# MY PLACE IS THE OLEY HILLS, CONT.



// Bridge over the Pine Creek //

its vulnerability, as an area lacking permanent protection of its critical natural assets.

Fortunately, the passing of the Highlands Conservation Act established new funding to support the stewardship and protection of the entire Highlands region and with new funding came new opportunities for Oley.

Thanks to the Pine Creek Watershed Association's networking, Berks Nature already had a queue of 50 Oley Hills residents eager to ease their land and take advantage of these new financial resources. In 2011 Berks Nature and the Oley Hills became the first Pennsylvania-based recipients of the Highlands Conservation Fund grant, using this award to secure three more conservation easements totaling 290 acres.

During this time, the Oley Hills began garnering local attention as well, funneling additional funding for land protection

into the region. Using the Pike Township Municipal Land Preservation program, a joint effort between Pike Township and the County to split the cost of purchasing easements, Berks Nature established six new conservation easements in the Oley Hills in 2011.

Since 1989, Berks Nature has helped place approximately 3,200 acres of the Oley Hills under conservation easements, protecting these properties from development in perpetuity. These efforts represent Berks Nature's first campaign that intentionally prioritized a geographic region for focused conservation.

Today community-based conservation, in which conservation efforts build upon the foundation of a community's pre-existing land ethic, is Berks Nature's primary strategy for protecting Berks

# “Berks Nature is the leading agent for the conservation of the environment in Berks County.”

Berks Nature's Mission Statement

County's ecological resiliency and cultural integrity. Approaching conservation this way has led to stronger relationships and more contiguous, long-term protection of nature's systems and gifts.

From Maiden Creek Township to the Kittatinny Ridge, to name a few recent community-based conservation efforts, the Oley Hills set in motion Berks Nature's powerful strategy for conservation, one that elevates grassroots conservation, synergizes with regional initiatives, and amplifies the profound connections between Berks County's people and this special place they call home. 🌿



// Phoebe Hopkins, President of Berks Nature 1991-1999, alongside volunteers installing stream bank stabilization measures //



2010

○ THE SUMMER ECO-CAMP, and other environmental education programs are launched at Angelica Creek Park.



2011



Scenes of Berks Nature's public environmental education programs at Angelica Creek Park

2012

2013

○ BERKS NATURE AND ALVERNIA UNIVERSITY LEASE ANGELICA CREEK PARK from the City of Reading in a unique and innovative arrangement that found two private entities managing and operating a city-owned, public park.

○ BERKS NATURE IS INVITED TO JOIN THE ALLIANCE FOR WATERSHED EDUCATION, a coalition of 22 environmental education centers with the shared mission of enhancing appreciation, knowledge, and stewardship of the Delaware River Watershed.



Larry Lloyd, Berks Nature's Senior Ecologist, plants trees along Angelica Creek.

2014

○ BERKS NATURE OWNS AND MANAGES 413 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE and holds 115 conservation easements, totaling 7,066 acres.

Groundbreaking ceremony to renovate Angelica Creek Park's former boathouse into the Angelica Exploration Center, a place for Berks Nature to run environmental education programs for the public



// 2015-2024 //

# NATURE-BASED LEARNING TAKES ROOT

## HOW WOULD YOU WANT YOUR INVESTMENT IN BERKS NATURE RETURNED TO YOU?



In trees planted or waterways cleaned? Maybe in acres protected or history recorded?

In 2005, a series of strategically distributed focus groups posed these very questions to the citizens of Berks County.

When forced to choose just one, the County was in unanimous agreement: invest in environmental education.

It was also at this time that we, as a nation, were introduced to the concept of "nature-deficit disorder," a phrase coined by Richard Louv, author of the international bestseller *Last Child in the Woods*. The book drew an explicit, research-driven connection between nature and the physical and emotional health of children, launching a nationwide movement to reconnect with the great outdoors.

// Visitors enjoying a walk through Angelica Creek Park's wetlands //

As the tides of our national and local consciousness turned towards the outdoors and Berks Nature found new leadership under Kim Murphy, a former educator herself, it was indeed a fortuitous time for Berks Nature to reinvest in environmental education.

First, Berks Nature would need to find a home for our new nature center; once more, timing was on our side.

In 2001, the Angelica Creek Dam breached and the impounded lake drained, revealing a sorely degraded floodplain, choked with a century's worth of sediment.

Instead of rebuilding the dam, the City of Reading chose to restore the Angelica Creek floodplain, utilizing its wetland nexus as a natural stormwater mitigation measure, and reinvest in Angelica Creek Park's recreational infrastructure.



"We remind ourselves constantly that we are heirs to an exceptional past, custodians of a challenging present, and architects of a limitless future. We can only hope that, with the continued help of hundreds of dedicated people, we can measure up to the responsibilities and realize the opportunities which lie before us."

Louis R. Thun, Founder of Berks Nature

// Child "fully immersing" themselves in nature-based learning at Angelica Creek Park with Berks Nature //

2015

**ORGANIZATIONAL REBRANDING CAMPAIGN** officially changes Berks County Conservancy into Berks Nature to better reflect the full scope of our services and activities.



2016

2017

**BERKS NATURE OPENS THE NATURE PLACE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER** in Angelica Creek Park. The Nature Place earns LEED Gold Certification for its sustainable building features prioritizing resource and energy efficiency and climate change mitigation.



2018



2019

2020

**THE GLOBAL OUTBREAK OF COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS** forces The Nature Place to close and Berks Nature to pivot and find creative solutions for serving nature and the Berks County community during the widespread shutdown.

Student attending Berks Nature's Camp for School during the Covid-19 Pandemic to receive supervision from Berks Nature's educators during virtual learning



Right 3 Images: Children of all ages enjoy learning and playing at The Nature Place at Angelica Creek Park

// 2015-2024 //

# NATURE-BASED LEARNING TAKES ROOT, CONT.



// Above: Students exploring Angelica Creek during a field trip to The Nature Place //

// Right: Caption: Joan Marten, Nature Preschool Teacher, leads preschoolers through a circle time activity in the Nature Play Zone //

The 75-acre Angelica Park had it all: proximity to Reading, newly blazed trails with connections to a regional trail network, water access, and other wildlife habitats from wooded hills to flowering meadows. It also had a building to host educational programming: a boathouse built for recreation on the formerly impounded lake.

With a site selected, designing the physical nature center's structure began. Berks Nature hired GWWO Architects, a firm with an impressive portfolio of experience building sustainable, energy-efficient nature centers across the country. Their task: design a building with grounds that both demonstrated and inspired nature-based living.

The result, a LEED Gold-certified nature center with an immersive campus of native plantings and opportunities for outdoor play, became a place for nature to thrive and nature lovers to roam: The Nature Place.

After several years of holding public programs and a summer Eco-Camp out of the park's former boathouse, Berks Nature finally opens The Nature Place environmental education center in 2017.

Louv wasn't the only one advocating for a return to nature in the early 2000s. Ken Finch, founder of the Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood, was embarking on an effort to create a nationwide network of nature preschools, where students could play and explore all day, every day, rain or shine.

While still designing The Nature Place, Berks Nature brought Finch to Angelica Creek Park. Inspired by this consultation, Berks Nature integrates a nature preschool into their planning and in 2018, the Nature Preschool welcomes its first class of students.

While nature-based education isn't a new concept nationally or globally, Berks Nature's Nature Preschool was one of the first of its kind in Berks County. The Nature Preschool embodies the pedagogy of nature-based early childhood education: activities involve less materials and request more imagination; mindfulness practice in the form of sit spots and even yoga are all regular occurrences; and most of the day is spent outside, often in the Nature Play Zone.

The Nature Place is Berks Nature's answer to the community's call first heard during the 2005 focus group meetings. Through the 2000s, the campus and Berks Nature's educational opportunities proactively adapted to serve the County's emerging needs.

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to close their doors, Berks Nature

launched a Camp for School program. From safely spaced cubicles within The Nature Place's classrooms, Berks Nature's educators helped students stay on task with their individual virtual learning throughout the school day.

But when class was dismissed, everyone went outside. The students hiked, played in the nature play zone, or simply paused to breathe the fresh air and rest.

The Nature Place continues to be a place of both learning and healing.

From garden seeds sowed to floodplain trees planted; from field trips to creek currents; from echoes of tree-climbing elation to wetland symphonies of *conk-la-ree*; in Angelica Creek Park, new life takes root and the next generation of nature's guardians finds their place. 🌱



Groundbreaking ceremony for The Nature Place

2021

2022

- **BERKS NATURE OPENS THE ROOKERY**, a substantial, rooftop addition to The Nature Place to better host school field trips as well as larger, private events and re-opens The Nature Place to the general public once more.
- **THE ONTELAUNEE WETLANDS PRESERVE** is officially opened to the public as a nature preserve.

2023

- **BERKS NATURE HOSTS** a grand re-opening of the Ephraim Malickson Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **BERKS NATURE ACQUIRES DENT-GUNDRY WILDLIFE PRESERVE**, which is closed to the public to be stewarded for its wildlife habitat.
- **BERKS NATURE OWNS AND MANAGES 997 ACRES OF OPEN SPACE** and holds 143 conservation easements, totaling 10,014 acres.

2024

- **THE LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION** awards Berks Nature national accreditation for meeting the highest national standards for professional excellence and conservation permanence.



Trail through Ephraim Malickson Wildlife Sanctuary (Tekene 2)

# THE FUTURE BELONGS TO NATURE



Forward thinking is in our nature. From Berks Nature's inception, our founders used observations from the present to prepare for and proactively influence the future. It was this innovative and community-informed leadership that has put us where we are today:

**A county where 25% of the total acreage is protected under easement or government ownership;**

**A county where 86% of its municipalities work jointly to plan for sustainable growth;**

**A county that harbors 20 Exceptional Value or High Quality streams;**

**A county ranked 3rd in the nation for agricultural preservation.**

But as we take stock of our world today, we can see plainly that more work is needed to not only address the still lingering threats discerned by Berks Nature's founders now fifty years ago, but also to resolve emerging issues that we as a community currently face.

Despite the glimmer of pristine watersheds sheltered by the County's lush woodlands, about 65% of Berks County's stream miles are considered impaired by the PA Department of Environmental Protection and mean impervious cover has exceeded the functional threshold in eight Berks County watersheds.

Garbage from distant locales is increasingly filling Berks County's landfills; in 2022, 80% of the waste buried in Berks County came from outside of the county and more than 39% of it came from outside of Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, there is also no evidence to suggest that Berks County's residents are making any significant effort to reduce their individual waste generation either.

While local enthusiasm for the outdoors is high, many areas reserved for Berks County's greenway network have also been designated for future development, leading to 10,456 acres of encroachment into outdoor recreation spaces.

These threats are exacerbated by globally shifting climate patterns.

Since the late 1800s, Earth's temperature has increased by about 1.8°F and at our current pace, by the end of the century, global temperatures could climb 3.6-7.2°F. This may not seem like much, but this increase is similar in magnitude to the temperature change that melted the Ice Ages and rose sea levels by 400 ft, but 50 times faster.

Pennsylvania, and Berks County, are already feeling the effects of this change.

The last 22 years have been Pennsylvania's hottest. Temperatures in the Commonwealth have risen almost 2°F since the beginning of the 20th century and extreme heat, days reaching temperatures above 90°F, are also on the rise.

The 6-year period between 2015 and 2020 were Pennsylvania's wettest years on record. Not only is more rain falling in Pennsylvania, but the magnitude, frequency, and intensity

of extreme rainfall events, dropping two or more inches of rainwater at a time, are also increasing.

As it was 50 years ago, the success of Berks County's natural resource management and conservation will rely on the investments of our community as a whole. As such, in planning for the next 50 years Berks Nature is consulting both the most recent, environmental data as well as you, our community, for direction.

During the 2023 annual State of the Environment Breakfast, Berks Nature posed this question to an audience of over 300 Berks County residents, students, and policy-makers: in one word, what concerns you most about the environment? The word cloud generated from these responses was telling: pollution, climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability; in short, keeping nature healthy and functional for generations to come in the face of globally shifting conditions.

In Berks County, that means focusing on water, specifically stormwater management; air, the number of "bad" air days experienced in Berks; and the abundance of waste

disposed of within the county (despite often originating outside of Berks' borders).

What will Berks Nature's role be in readying our county for a sustainable future? In a series of public forums called "50 Conversations for 50 Years," we once more look to our community.

Though these conversations are still underway, some early and conspicuous trends have already been revealed. With our time, financial, and human resources Berks County has unequivocally prioritized land protection and environmental education.

It is a call all too familiar to Berks Nature. For 50 years ago, in 1974, our founders drafted articles of incorporation which state our purpose as: "To engage in such charitable, scientific, and educational activities...deemed most appropriate to the conservation and preservation of land, forests, and waters with scenic, biologic, geologic, ecological, scientific, historic, or recreational interest or significance."

Land protection and environmental education for the quality of life of our neighbors; today and in perpetuity. 🌿

"The future will belong to the nature-smart—those individuals, families, businesses, and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of the transformative power of the natural world and who balance the virtual with the real. The more high-tech we become, the more nature we need."

Richard Louv

## JOIN THE Conversation!

Berks Nature works hard every day to protect the environment and connect people to the nature all around them. In celebration of our 50th Anniversary, Berks Nature is not only reflecting on the accomplishments of our past, but also looking forward at our goals for the future. Who better to guide the next 50 years of environmental action, protection, and education than the residents, outdoor enthusiasts, and conservation champions that call Berks County home?

**Make your voice heard by participating in our 50 Conversations for 50 Years public forum series!**

Participation is easy: Select and register for a date that works for you by going online to [support.berksnature.org/free-events](https://support.berksnature.org/free-events). Then simply show up and enjoy informal conversation with like-minded people!



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**Berks Nature thanks you, its generous supporters, for your continued donations and commitment.**

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Every effort has been made to ensure that this list is complete and accurate.

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 Nelson & Grace Weber  
 Randy & Dawn Weidner  
 Weis Markets  
 John & Mary Jo Weishampel  
 Gail Werner  
 Dina Wert  
 Deborah White  
 Bill & Jody Widing  
 Carl & Kathy Wiest  
 David & Elaine Wiley  
 Robert Wink  
 Elizabeth Wolfe  
 Susan Wolfe  
 Woman's Club of Spring Township  
 Julia & Robert Wright  
 Barbara Yerger  
 Mark Yoder  
 Mary Young  
 Michael Youtz  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Zacharias  
 Joe & Lidia Zidik

**PARTNERS - GRANTORS -  
GOVERNMENT**

American Rivers  
 Appalachian Trail Conservancy  
 Berks Area Mountain Bike Association  
 Berks Community Hiking Club  
 Berks County Conservation District  
 Berks County Horticulture Club  
 Berks County Redevelopment Authority  
 Bern Township  
 Bethel Township  
 Blue Mountain Eagle Climbing Club  
 Borough of Kutztown  
 Borough of Mount Penn  
 Borough of Shillington  
 Borough of Topton  
 Borough of Womelsdorf  
 Brecknock Township  
 County of Berks  
 Dreibelbis Farm Historical Society  
 Jefferson Township Board of Supervisors  
 Maiden creek Township Authority  
 Marion Township  
 Marion Township Rod & Gun  
 National Audubon Society, Inc.  
 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
 National Wildlife Federation  
 Natural Lands  
 PA Dept. of Conservation &  
 Natural Resources  
 PA Fish & Boat Commission  
 Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Inc.  
 Pennsylvania Heartland Herb Society  
 Pinecreek Valley Watershed Association  
 Schuylkill River Greenways  
 Senator Judith Schwank  
 Spring Township Parks & Recreation Dept.  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 United Way of Greater Lehigh Valley  
 Wyomissing Area Garden Club  
 WeConserve PA  
 Wildlife Information Center Inc.  
 Windsor Township

**FOUNDATIONS**

Amazon Smile Foundation  
 American Endowment Foundation  
 Bellman Fund for Berks Nature of the  
 Berks County Community Foundation  
 Berks County Community Foundation  
 Blackbaud Giving Foundation  
 The Breidegam Family Foundation  
 Charities Aid Foundation of America  
 The Essential Foundation  
 Exelon Foundation Employee  
 Giving Campaign  
 FirstEnergy Foundation  
 Fleming Foundation  
 Gilmore Henne Community Fund of the  
 Berks County Community Foundation  
 GlaxoSmithKline Foundation  
 Henry Janssen Foundation  
 Holleran – Donor Advised Fund of the  
 Berks County Community Foundation  
 Nick & Risa Marmontello Fund of the  
 Berks County Community Foundation  
 The Neag Foundation  
 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
 Earl and Helen Poole Memorial Fund  
 of the Berks County Community  
 Foundation  
 The Roberts Family Fund for Stream  
 and Wetland Preservation of the Berks  
 County Community Foundation  
 Jay and Elaine Rosenson Fund of the  
 Berks County Community Foundation  
 TOP Jewish Foundation, Inc. – Port  
 Family Endowment Fund  
 William Penn Foundation  
 The Wyomissing Foundation  
 Youth and Philanthropy Fund of the  
 Berks County Community Foundation

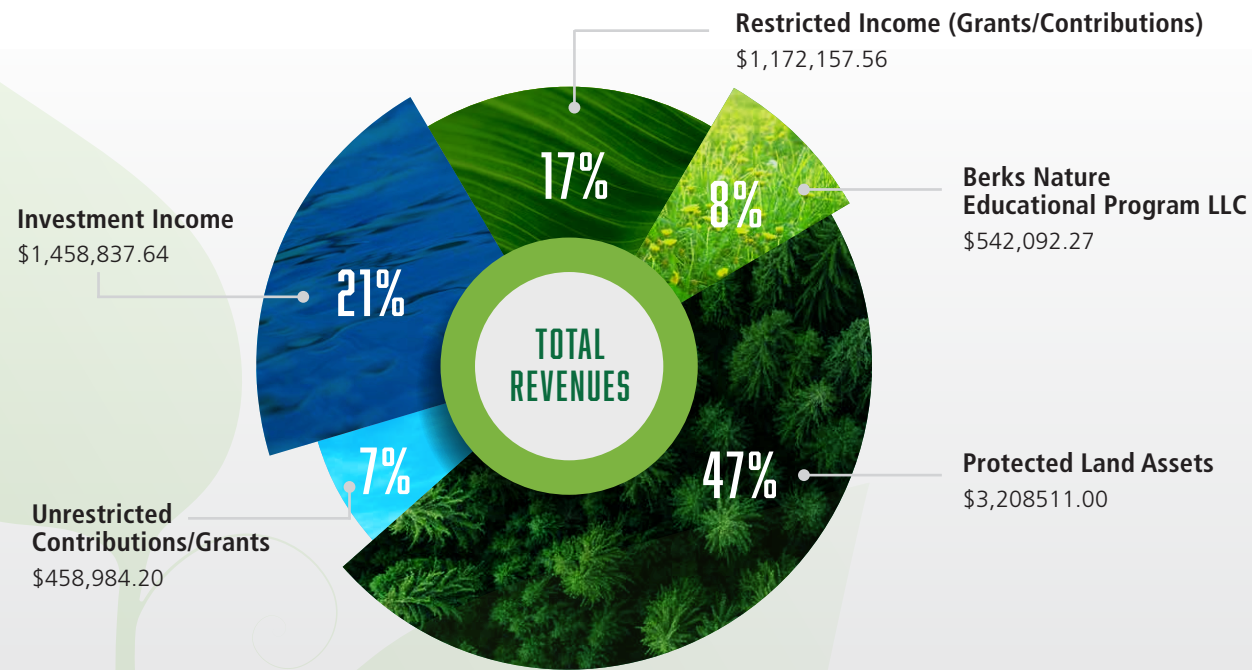
**MEMORIAL GIFTS**

In Memory of William Beadle  
*Stanley Furrow*  
*Gipprich Jewelers, Inc.*  
*David Goldthorp*  
*Maureen Majka*  
*Pennsylvania Heartland Herb Society*  
*Benjamin & Amy Schiavone*  
*Gail Seeley*  
 In Memory of Christopher D. Kane  
*Joe & Lidia Zidik*  
 In Memory of Talya Mazuz  
*Haia & Meir Mazuz*  
 In Honor of Jan Gernsheimer  
*Friedens United Church of Christ*  
 In Honor of Patty & Chick Minehart's  
 50th Wedding Anniversary  
*Dan & Ellen Huyett*  
 In Honor of John Spang  
*Anonymous*

// 2023 FINANCIAL REPORT //

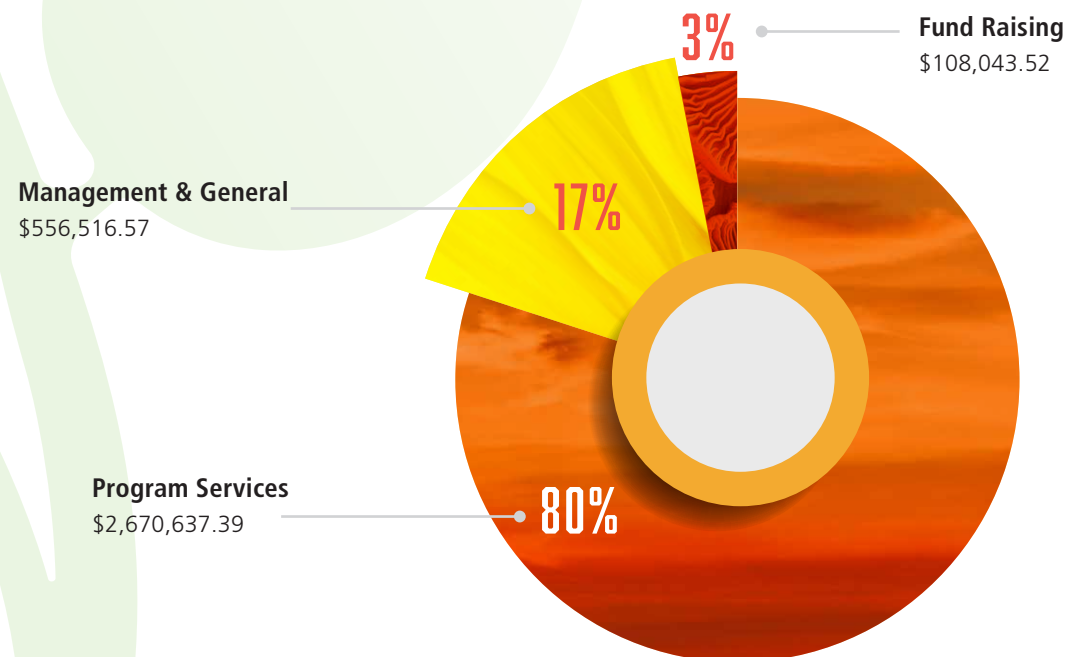
BERKS NATURE (& BNEP LLC)

**TOTAL NET INCOME // \$3,505,385.19**



**TOTAL REVENUES // \$6,840,582.67**

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES // \$3,335,197.48**



# CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF SERVING NATURE WITH US

In 2024, we look back on 50 years and plan for 50 more – will you join us? There are more ways than ever to support local conservation!



## GIVE THE GIFT OF NATURE!

For the past 50 years, donations from people like you – champions of nature – have made Berks Nature’s work possible. But there is still more to be done to protect Berks County’s natural resources and that vital connection between people and nature.

In celebration of our anniversary, and to support 50 more years of conservation in Berks County, consider giving the gift of nature this year! Now is the perfect time to lend a hand to local conservation with a monthly gift to Berks Nature.

We know firsthand that great change often takes many little steps. With a monthly donation to Berks Nature, your gift, no matter the size, can support the conservation of our natural resources and ecosystems on a much greater scale, all year round.

To begin your year-round support of local conservation, simply visit our Donate page, choose your gift amount, and then select "Giving Level Monthly" from the drop-down menu.



## 50 ACTIONS FOR NATURE

Berks Nature has collected 50 actions for you to take - at home, at work, and in your community - to help you get started with some new, greener habits this year! We challenge you to complete as many of these actions as you can this year, and earn some cool prizes in the process!

Take the Challenge and print out your score sheet from Berks Nature’s website today! If you complete AT LEAST 25 of the 50 Actions for Nature, you can submit your score sheet to officially join the contest. All participants will receive a commemorative sticker and be entered to win a variety of prizes.



## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Who better to guide the next 50 years of environmental action, protection, and education than the residents, outdoor enthusiasts, and conservation champions that call Berks County home? Join Berks Nature throughout 2024 at our 50 Conversations for 50 Years public input forums. To participate, visit Berks Nature’s Free Events page!

Feeling nostalgic? Reminisce with us by sharing your story! What are your favorite memories from Berks Nature? What do you love about our work, our preserves, or our people? How did you find us and what keeps you coming back?



[BERKS FREE EVENTS PAGE](#)



575 St. Bernardine Street, Reading, PA 19607  
(610) 372-4992  
[Berksnature.org](http://Berksnature.org)

# DONATE TODAY



Any donation made to Berks Nature will qualify you as a Champion of Nature. Champions of Nature receive recognition in our annual report, regular Berks Nature mailings, digital updates, and more!

Your contribution will stay in Berks County to help us protect nature! At Berks Nature, **we believe that nature is essential to our quality of life.**

- Scan our QR code to donate online or go to [support.berksnature.org](http://support.berksnature.org)
- If you prefer to donate by check, make payable to Berks Nature and mail to: Berks Nature, 575 Saint Bernardine Street, Reading PA 19607
- Text **NATURE** to **20222** to make an instant \$20 donation
- Visit [berksnature.org/ways-to-give](http://berksnature.org/ways-to-give) to learn about more ways to support our organization!

Thank you for becoming a Champion of Nature. Together we will make a difference.  
We invite you to become involved with Berks Nature in many ways from attending our public events and programs to volunteering!

[LEARN MORE AT BERKS NATURE.ORG](http://LEARN MORE AT BERKS NATURE.ORG)