

FY07 HIGHLANDS CONSERVATION ACT

Project Details

Project Name: Oley Hills

Location: District, Pike, and Rockland townships in Berks Co.

Acreage: 2,263

HCA Request: \$2,263,000



Photo: T.L. Gettings/Wildlands Conservancy

Pennsylvania's Oley Hills Project is an initiative of the Berks County Conservancy for the protection of critical natural resources on 27,144 acres in the Berks County townships of District, Pike, and Rockland. The Oley Hills region lies in the geographic core of the Reading Prong and the Pennsylvania Highlands, which was recently designated a Federal Conservation Region. The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) recently designated the Highlands as a Statewide Significant Greenway and has approved grant applications for purchasing development rights here.

Five of the 12 State-designated Exceptional Value (EV) watersheds within the Schuylkill River system are located in the Oley Hills Project area. These EV watersheds provide millions of people with clean drinking water. The PA Natural Heritage Program, which inventories natural communities and species of concern, lists 15 occurrences in the Oley Hills, making it the most biologically diverse area in Berks County. The region is also witnessing forward thinking regional planning under the guidance of the Berks County Planning Commission. Pike, District, and Rockland townships are

developing Conservation Areas within their Joint Comprehensive Plans and, through Growing Greener ordinances, are taking steps to employ Smart Growth techniques.

In FY07, \$2,263,000 is needed from Highlands Conservation Act funding to preserve 2,263 acres in the Oley Hills and safeguard the groundwater and surface water health of Berks County and the entire Schuylkill River Watershed.

The Highlands region is 3.5 million acres of forest, farmland, and rugged hills extending from south-central PA, through NJ and NY into northwestern CT. These eastern-most ridges of the Appalachian Mountains form a greenbelt for the Philadelphia-New York City-Hartford metropolitan area. The Highlands provide clean drinking water to over 15 million people and are home to over 250 endangered, threatened, and rare species.

For more information:

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Project Highlights

- Protection for critical drinking water supplies
- Cold water streams containing wild trout
- Rare natural communities and species present
- Exceptional scenic vistas