



North Country Connector Road Partnership: A Conservation Winner for Public Agencies and Recreation

- Allegheny National Forest
- 2009-2010
- Major partners: Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation of Natural Resources, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

Project description

A public/private watershed coalition spearheaded planning for environmental improvements to a 5.7-mile forest road. When finished, the upgraded, gated road will provide service access to Allegheny National Forest, Chapman State Park, and Pennsylvania State game lands. The road will also serve as a major non-motorized recreational trail and will improve cold water fisheries and aquatic biodiversity.



Decommissioning a roadbed adjacent to the North Country Connector.

Photo courtesy Allegheny National Forest.

Starting in September 2009, project partners will remove fish passage barriers caused by under-sized culverts on Forest Road 536, and reconstruct eroding road surfaces to reduce sedimentation to streams and nearby wetlands. Activities include grading, graveling and crowning roadbeds; redefining ditch-lines; and replacing crossings with adequately sized pipes. Nearly two miles of adjoining roadbeds that were abandoned or in disrepair have already been decommissioned.

Benefits

- Mutual benefits for the Allegheny National Forest, Pennsylvania Game Commission and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation of Natural Resources include access to their lands via the improved service road.
- Enhancement of fisheries and watershed biodiversity helps the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy with its mission to “provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations.”
- The general public will have access to a high-quality non-motorized recreational trail.
- This project would not have been done without the partnership. The partnership has allowed the Forest to respond to watershed restoration needs.

Keys to success

This project is the result of the Allegheny WINS (Watershed Improvement Needs) Coalition, a coalition of public and private agencies and individuals. “By building good relations among coalition members and watershed neighbors, and thinking outside the box,” says Nathan Welker, of the Forest’s Ecosystem Management Team, “the coalition has been able to create

partnerships to plan and implement projects, such as the North Country Connector Road, that none of us would have been able to achieve alone.”

Types of agreements

Challenge Cost Share Agreement with Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
Forest Road Agreement and Project-Specific Road Agreement with Pennsylvania Game Commission

Project costs

Reconstruct Forest Road 536 (on Forest Service and State Game Lands properties): \$186,000
Reconstruct Forest Road 536 (on State Park property): \$20,000
Decommission 1.9 miles of roadway: \$5,000

Major partner contributions

- Allegheny National Forest provided engineering services; heavy equipment and labor; guidance in materials procurement; and development of interpretive materials.
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy provided project oversight and management and technical assistance in project design and implementation.
- Pennsylvania Game Commission provided project oversight and management; heavy equipment and labor; matching funds through a timber sale; and development of interpretive materials.
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Parks provided matching funds for development of interpretive materials and design for a trailhead at Chapman Dam State Park.

Other partner contributions

- DCNR Bureau of Forestry provided technical support and interpretive materials.
- Warren County Conservation District provided technical support, especially on roadbed improvements.
- Allegheny Outdoor Club provided trail design guidance, public outreach, and volunteers.

More information

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Find this story and more at the Partnership Resource Center website: <http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/roads/success-stories.php>

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