



# From Parcel To Preserve

## Managing Cove Mountain



As temperatures rise due to climate change, this protected corridor will become even more important for both plant and animal species that need to move to higher elevations to survive.



A 2019 report found that outdoor recreation—like the hiking, hunting and birding—brought nearly \$60 million in annual revenue to Perry County, PA.



Over the last year, volunteers from the Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club have spent 2000+ hours improving existing trails and building new ones.

The Nature Conservancy   
Pennsylvania & Delaware

The Hamer Woodlands at Cove Mountain Preserve is a nearly 1,400-acre preserve in Perry County, Pennsylvania. One of The Nature Conservancy's flagship preserves, Cove Mountain is located only 7 miles from the state capital of Harrisburg. The preserve is located along the Kittatinny Ridge, a globally recognized migratory corridor for birds and other species.

The preserve began with the purchase of 350 acres in 2017, and following 1,200 acre expansion in 2021, TNC began developing plans to improve ecological conditions and recreational opportunities at Cove Mountain. This included mapping out the site's unique features and opportunities as well as threats like invasive plants.

### HABITATS ON THE PRESERVE

There are several different soil types on Cove Mountain, ranging from the base of the mountain near the Susquehanna River up to the ridgetop, with both north and south-facing slopes. The variety of soils has also led to a variety of vegetation and forest types, with tall yellow poplar trees and dense pawpaw on the lower slope to shorter trees like sweet birch and red oak on the rockier upper slope. The variety of forest types also supports a healthy diversity of wildlife. For example, the lower slopes provide excellent nesting habitat for wood thrush and scarlet tanagers, while the upper slope could provide habitat for the threatened Allegheny woodrat.

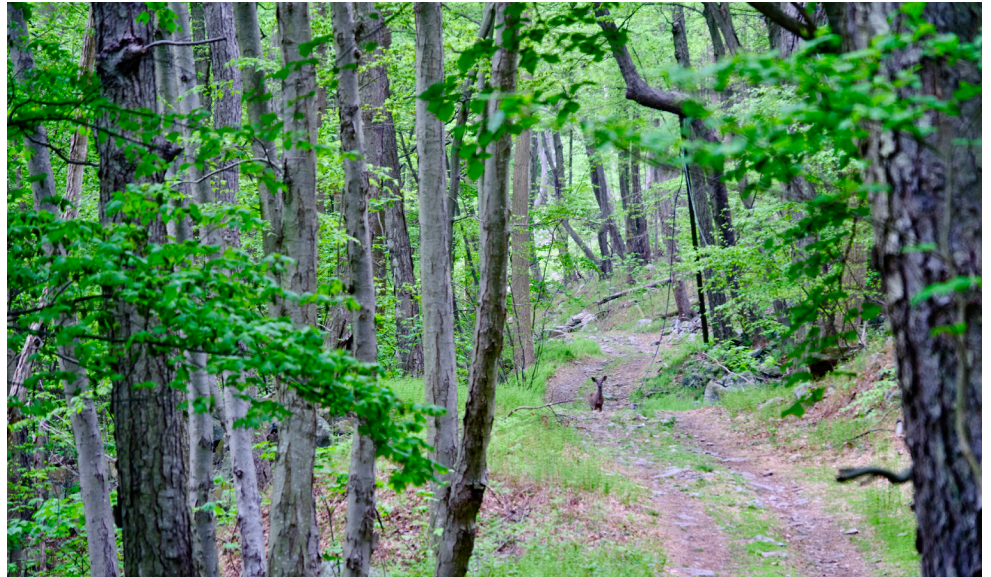


Habitat conditions on the cove mountain preserve range from pawpaw filled forests on the lower slopes (left) while the upper slope is rocky and mostly sweet birch (center). Areas with large boulders (right) provide a unique habitat feature for important wildlife species.



*“Thanks to the support of generous donors and partners, we are not only protecting Cove Mountain—we are stitching together a climate-resilient corridor in Pennsylvania’s Kittatinny Ridge. This network of protected habitat will help nature migrate and persevere in the face of climate change.”*

—Jennifer Morris,  
CEO of The Nature Conservancy



Existing trails are common on the preserve, some of which will be used as hiking trails.



Fishing in the Susquehanna River in front of Cove Mountain.

## ► LEARN MORE

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## ► SUPPORT OUR WORK

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### PHOTOS

FRONT  
Top: © Matt Kane/TNC  
Bottom L to R: © Kevin Yoder/TNC  
BACK  
Top: © Kelly O’Neill  
Middle: © Matt Kane/TNC  
Bottom: © Kevin Yoder/TNC

## VISITOR ACCESS AND USE

The preserve has an extensive network of existing trails used during timber harvests conducted by the previous landowners. Most of these trails are in stable condition, although there are spots where erosion is a concern. TNC staff will evaluate which of these trails are suitable for recreational use as-is, which ones are suitable for improvement, and which trails should be retired. We will also evaluate where to build new parking areas, as there are currently no viable options on the north side of the preserve.

## ECOLOGICAL THREATS

The Hamer Woodlands at Cove Mountain Preserve is already a wonderful place, but also has several ecological problems that TNC staff will need to address. One is non-native invasive plants—including mile-a-minute, tree-of-heaven, and Japanese stiltgrass—that outcompete native plants and reduce the quality of wildlife habitat. Another issue is the extensive amount of sweet birch on the property. Although sweet birch is a native species, such a high abundance of a single species reduces biodiversity and makes it more vulnerable to pests and disease. TNC will improve diversity by reducing sweet birch where it is outcompeting other native species and planting other climate-adapted trees where appropriate.

## MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Our vision for the Hamer Woodlands at Cove Mountain Preserve is to create a flagship preserve that:

1. Has high biodiversity and supports unique species, including those of conservation concern.
2. Is resilient to climate change impacts and helps mitigate its impacts.
3. Connects people with nature.

TNC staff plan to take advantage of the preserve’s proximity to Harrisburg and use it as a demonstration site. We will showcase the ecological improvements to land managers and policy makers, while also providing a new way for visitors to experience nature and explore the Kittatinny Ridge.



Trail improvements installed by members of the Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club include rock steps where erosion was problematic.