



**PA WILDS CENTER**  
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP



**2020, 2021 COMBINED  
ANNUAL REPORT**



# CEO's MESSAGE

Two major events bookended the PA Wilds Center's work in 2020 and 2021. On one end was the COVID-19 pandemic, and on the other was our region's selection as a finalist in the national Build Back Better Regional Challenge competition.

The pandemic dealt a major blow to tourism globally, as travel ground to a halt during mandated shutdowns. Traveler spending in Pennsylvania declined by a whopping 37% in 2020. In the Pennsylvania Wilds, we saw visitor spending drop by \$530M, to its lowest level since 2009.

Like so many of our partners, our nonprofit swung into action. We pivoted pawilds.com and our other visitor-oriented channels to reflect appropriate travel advisories. We closed (and later reopened) our flagship PA Wilds Conservation Shop, temporarily reassigning our store staff to interview the hundreds of rural businesses participating in our network to document how the pandemic was impacting their operations. We published a white paper on our findings and shared it with elected officials. We launched a Facebook live series that paid rural small businesses to share pivots and reopening strategies, and we set up online sales events to help rural makers replace lost festival revenues. Behind the scenes, we helped get the PA Wilds region listed as a priority funding area under a statewide grant program for Main Street-type businesses.



**We are really proud of this work and inspired by the many small businesses in the Pennsylvania Wilds that found ways to innovate and grow during this challenging time.**

The pandemic fundamentally changed the ways in which many Americans value the outdoors. Today there is an increased attention paid toward equity and access to the outdoors, and across the board there is a growing recognition for outdoor recreation as an economic driver – especially for rural areas, like the PA Wilds, that are so plentiful in public lands and other recreation assets.

These national shifts validated the work our region has been collectively advancing for 20 years to grow our outdoor recreation sector to diversify local economies, improve quality of life, inspire stewardship, attract investment and retain population. The year 2020 outstanding, rural PA has seen tremendous results from these investments, including record-breaking growth in visitor spending in the years leading up to the pandemic, many small business startups and expansions, inspiring stewardship efforts, increased pride of place, and resiliency. Even the stark 2020 tourism report notes that our region's positioning as an outdoor recreation destination resulted "in a less severe decline than experienced by some of the other PA tourism regions."

Throughout 2020 and 2021, the PA Wilds Center continued to push the work of the PA Wilds forward. We finished construction on the PA Wilds Media Lab, opened our second location of the PA Wilds Conservation Shop, and developed a new online marketplace, ShopThePAWilds.com. All of these things are part of a larger entrepreneurial ecosystem that is helping rural entrepreneurs reach new markets with their products and services – and growing rooted local and regional wealth in the process. Many more accomplishments are included in the pages ahead.

When the national Build Back Better Regional Challenge Competition was announced in fall 2021, the PA Wilds Center spearheaded an application on behalf of the region, becoming one of 60 finalists out of 529 applications to be selected to compete for \$50M in federal investment. Our region was the only outdoor rec industry cluster to make it to the final round.

While rural PA was not ultimately selected for the big prize, the opportunity to think big with our partners, and the nine months of intense planning that followed, changed us. While our true north remains the same, grounded as ever in our mission of marrying conservation and economic development to strengthen and inspire rural communities in the PA Wilds, we now have a much more detailed road map on where we need to go over the next decade and how to sustain this work so it can be handed off to the next generation.

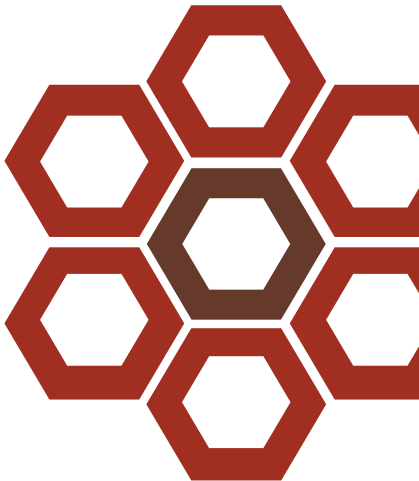
A couple of truths settled out of all this activity for me. One is that we are not in this alone. The PA Wilds Center may lead the PA Wilds strategy, but it has always been a collective effort. I've always known that – it's part of what attracted me to this work 15 years ago and gave me the courage to found the Center. However, it was galvanizing to have this collectiveness reaffirmed in such a big way over the last two years – both by the inspiring projects brought forth by our partners and through the 151 pages of support letters that arrived for our region's Build Back Better Regional Challenge application. The letters came from every quarter – big and small businesses; local, state and federal government; conservation and economic development; local and national philanthropic foundations and nonprofits; local artists; and titans of industry. The letters are stunning in their heartfelt support for the difference the Wilds work is making, and how further investment is needed and the good it can do.

Another truth is that outdoor recreation remains a powerful, growing opportunity for rural PA. As I write this, the eighteenth state has established an Office of Outdoor Recreation, and the federal Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) has just released the latest data showcasing the record-breaking year the outdoor recreation economy had in 2021. The data shows \$862 billion in economic output, comprising 1.9% of the U.S. GDP. According to the report, \$14 billion was added to Pennsylvania's GDP from outdoor recreation, up 22% from 2020.

"The BEA data underscores how important it is to invest in public lands, waters, and recreation infrastructure," said Jessica Turner, president of the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, a national organization. "From the creation of jobs and increased profit for small businesses in local economies, to larger boons to our national economy, this sector is a consistent driver, even in times of economic uncertainty. The strength of the outdoor recreation economy reflects what many in the industry have long known to be true: there are infinite benefits that come from more people spending time outdoors, and they'll only grow with continued investment."

On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff, thank you to everyone who is helping to grow this industry in a responsible, holistic way in the Pennsylvania Wilds. We are excited for the future.

*Tataboline Enos*  
Tataboline Enos, Founder & CEO



# USING THIS REPORT

## Section Guide

Bring .....	pages 4-5
Unify .....	pages 6-7
Deliver .....	pages 8-10
Steward .....	pages 11-12

## Other Information

Key Financial Highlights .....	page 13
Stakeholders.....	page 14

## What is included in each section?

- Highlights of activities and initiatives within each of these strategy areas
- Key numbers, statistics and results
- Information about how you can help

Timeframe: Activities and data presented in this Combined Annual Report are based on two calendar years, from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021.

# ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

## Conservation + Economic Development



*Our mission is to integrate conservation and economic development in a way that strengthens and inspires communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds.*

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc. (PA Wilds Center) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Our work is sustained through partnerships, program fees, philanthropic giving, grants, volunteers and entrepreneurial activities related to the Pennsylvania Wilds brand.

PA Wilds Center is the designated external lead nonprofit for the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' PA Wilds Conservation Landscape program. In this role, the Center helps facilitate and coordinate investment by public and private partners at the local, state and national level in the effort to grow the region's outdoor recreation economy as a way to help diversify local economies, inspire stewardship, attract investment, improve quality of life and retain population.

PA Wilds Center is the administrative home for the PA Wilds Planning Team, a 13-county stakeholder group formed through a groundbreaking Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement. The Planning Team helps shape the Center's programs and services.



**PA WILDS CENTER**  
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**CEO**

Ta Enos

**COO**  
Abbi Peters

**CFO**  
Julie Iaquinto

**Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Director**  
LaKeshia Knarr

**Sustainable Commerce Director**  
Libby Bloomquist

**Finance & HR Assistant**  
Lucia Handwerger

**Executive Financial Manager**  
Carol Szymanik

**Brand Partnerships and Licensing Manager**  
Hannah Brock

Contracted Content Managers + Creators

PA Wilds Conservation Shop at Leonard Harrison State Park  
Community Connectors Seasonal Staff

PA Wilds Conservation Shop at Kinzua Bridge State Park

**Key Holder**  
Ashley Fosbrink

**Community Connectors**  
Jason Burt + Seasonal Staff



### PA WILDS CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE

DCNR's External Lead Partner Organization

Works with DCNR to help facilitate a place-based regional strategy that integrates conservation, outdoor recreation and economic development.



### PA WILDS PLANNING TEAM

**Logistical & Meeting Support**  
Potter County Education Council

The Planning Team's work helps shape the Center's programs and services for rural businesses and communities.

# BRING

**OUR VISION** - Strengthen the Pennsylvania Wilds as a premier outdoor recreation destination and lifestyle brand and help grow PA's ranking as a top US state for annual consumer spending on outdoor recreation. Attract investment to grow our region's economy, improve quality of life for residents, and attract new residents and workforce.

## Major Wins in the Last Two Years

Awareness of the Pennsylvania Wilds as an authentic outdoor recreation destination and lifestyle brand continues to grow thanks to the collective effort of many individuals and organizations. Over the last two years, PA Wilds Center sustained consistent growth of website and social media users and followers, worked with travel writers to highlight PA Wilds assets, helped tell the region's story on the PA Wilds Are Calling blog, provided photos and interviews to national media outlets, offered in-person tours and traveled for events when possible, while balancing the safety of visitors and residents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- PA Wilds Center continued operating the regional visitor site, pawilds.com, to encourage visitation to the region's rural communities and businesses, in addition to maintaining multiple social media channels related to the PA Wilds as a visitor experience.
- PA Wilds Center proudly secured and began implementing an in-kind grant from Google that will help build a digital following for pawilds.com and drive physical and digital foot traffic to the region in support of community revitalization and stewardship efforts in the region. The grant is for up to \$10,000/month in AdWords credits (up to \$120,000/year) in perpetuity.

### Telling Our Region's Story

175

42%

PA Wilds published 175 blogs to the PA Wilds Are Calling blog (pawilds.com/blog) over the two year period thanks to volunteer contributions, content collaborations with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and others, and submissions from contracted writers.

25%

2020 saw a 42 percent increase in website users over 2019, and a 35 percent increase in page views. 2021 saw a 25 percent increase in website users over 2020, and a 9.92 percent increase in page views.

35%

9.92%

"We have been a member of the PA Wilds Organization since 2006, and attribute their support as a crucial part of our ability to sustain our business in our rural area. We have attended workshops, dinners and planning meetings, all of which provided an extra measure of confidence in our ability to succeed in an economically challenged area."

**-Debra Adams, Gateway Lodge**

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Sign up for our newsletter at PAWilds.com.
- Encourage five friends to check out PAWilds.com and follow us on our blog, The Pennsylvania Wilds Are Calling.
- Like us on facebook.com/thepawilds
- Follow us on Instagram @thepawilds
- Use our hashtags on your next outdoor adventure #pawilds #pawildsmade #pawildsproud.
- Show us YOUR Pennsylvania Wilds! Good at writing, video or photography and passionate about the Pennsylvania Wilds? Consider contributing content at PAWilds.com/submit.



- After roughly a decade since the last regional map was produced, PA Wilds Center finalized the PA Wilds Outdoor Discovery Atlas and implemented a distribution plan for it. The Atlas serves as a 40+ page visitor map and guide to the PA Wilds region, and it includes a special focus on the region's more than 2M acres of public lands. Distribution plans included selling the Atlas at PA Wilds Conservation Shops, as well as sharing free copies to state parks, regional Destination Marketing Organizations and Heritage Areas for resale to support their missions in the landscape. Wholesale copies were also made available to members of the Wilds Cooperative of PA so regional businesses could purchase and sell copies for a small profit as well. In addition, digital versions were made available for free download at [PAWilds.com/outdoor-discovery-atlas/](https://PAWilds.com/outdoor-discovery-atlas/), which have been downloaded by hundreds of visitors.
- When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, PA Wilds Center repositioned all regional marketing and related platforms to reflect appropriate travel advisories and restrictions.
- The PA Wilds region was covered by dozens of local and national media, including CNN, The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Daily Yonder, leading to more than 3.45M estimated lifetime views of these media mentions. We've captured the coverage in our Digital Media Coverage Book. PA Wilds Center also worked with travel writers and supported content sharing for publication photo requests, including those from AAA, Travel + Leisure, Destination Stewardship Council, Appalachian Regional Commission, and the PA Tourism Office.



PA Wilds Center COO Abbi Peters is interviewed while at the 2020 PA Farm Show in collaboration with the PA Council on the Arts.



- In addition to media reports, the PA Wilds was featured in statewide national reports, including The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable Rural Economic Development Toolkit in 2021. This report looks at best practices from 60 rural communities or regions across the nation that are working to grow their outdoor rec industries. The PA Wilds is among those featured. The Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, a national coalition of outdoor recreation trade associations, spearheaded the report in partnership with Oregon State University's Outdoor Recreation Economy Initiative and the National Governors Association Outdoor Recreation Learning Network.
- PA Wilds Center also participated in special events to build awareness about the PA Wilds brand, including hosting a booth at the PA Farm Show in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

## Special thanks to our 2020-21 funders and donors

Appalachian Regional Commission  
 Ben Franklin Technology Partners • Citizens & Northern Bank  
 Community Partnerships RC&D • County governments (in support of the PA Wilds Planning Team)  
 First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania  
 North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission • Pennsylvania Council on the Arts  
 Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development  
 Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
 Private-sector corporations and individual donors  
 Richard King Mellon Foundation • The Conservation Fund  
 U.S. Economic Development Administration • United States Department of Agriculture  
 West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund • Whirley- Drinkworks

**OUR VISION** - Build and steward a resilient, high-performing partnership around the Pennsylvania Wilds effort that engages the private sector, foundation, nonprofit and government sectors.

## Major Wins in the Last Two Years

Unifying our Pennsylvania Wilds region involves coalescing insights and input from many organizations and stakeholders throughout the region and state, leading to a better understanding of our region and how partners are connected to each other. The PA Wilds Center worked throughout 2020-2021 to maintain core partnerships and develop new relationships, allowing us to offer incredible new opportunities. PA Wilds Center continued to serve as the external lead nonprofit for the PA Wilds Conservation Landscape, a program of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) that focuses on partnerships and place-based investments to help build sustainable communities. PA Wilds Center facilitates core partnerships of the Conservation Landscape, including being the administrative and fiscal home of the PA Wilds Planning Team and spearheading the Champions of the Pennsylvania Wilds Awards. In addition, PA Wilds Center continues to assist local communities in tying their projects to PA Wilds strategies to improve competitiveness for investment.

- Between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2021, the PA Wilds Planning Team held 11 regular stakeholder meetings in addition to committee work and meetings.
- Projects supported by the PWPT include a Rapid Response grant to Potter County to assist with the design of outdoor farm market sites along Route 6; the formation of the Grid-scale Solar Task Force to assist counties with land use issues surrounding grid-scale solar energy projects; and support of the PA Wilds Climate Change Workshop held in Benezette to help resource managers, conservation professionals, county planners, and other stakeholders to address challenges of a changing climate in the PA Wilds Conservation Landscape. This has led to the formation of the PA Wilds Climate Network.
- PA Wilds Center and the PA Wilds Planning Team conducted outreach via zoom meetings with the region's county commissioners to update them on the PA Wilds effort. State partners at DCNR and the PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) participated in these meetings.
- PA Wilds Center began work with Ben Franklin Technology Partners, PA Technical Assistance Program (PennTAP), and Small Business Development Centers serving the region to implement an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) POWER project, "Igniting Innovation in the PA Wilds Region," which leverages the region's outdoor rec cluster to support technology-based entrepreneurship. This project will include three "Big Idea Contests" that offer prizes up to \$50,000 between 2022-2024 to help demystify the innovation roadmap for rural entrepreneurs and unlock latent innovation, including outdoor recreation-related products.

32

PA Wilds Center staff conducted 32 presentations about PA Wilds effort and the Center's programs and services, reaching 799 participants. Also, PA Wilds Center published blogs and press releases and distributed newsletters to keep local stakeholders informed and engaged in the PA Wilds effort.

799

- PA Wilds Center also began work with Ben Franklin Technology Partners on the “Central PA Graduate Retention Initiative,” funded via an ARC Area Development Grant, which leverages the cluster’s place-making and branding efforts to attract remote workers in a pilot program offered in two PA Wilds communities.
- Although the in-person PA Wilds Dinner was canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to the global pandemic, PA Wilds Center pivoted in 2021 to a new, temporary format. The 2021 Champions of the PA Wilds Awards celebrated individuals, businesses, events and places from across the region that are doing outstanding work related to the PA Wilds effort. However, instead of the awards being distributed at a large dinner, winners were invited to be recognized at the county level, where County Commissioners played a role in uplifting the winners and they were celebrated online with videos and photos.



- The Pennsylvania Wilds was highlighted in statewide and national reports looking at models for communities. One of those reports, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources’ report, “Pennsylvania Conservation Landscapes – Models for Successful Collaboration,” outlines the growing outdoor recreation industry. This report also positions the region as a model for how the Conservation Landscape program is gaining traction and creating real value for communities. Another report by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), in partnership with University of Tennessee Knoxville and Collective Impact, “Extending Our Welcome: Trends and Strategies for Tourism in Appalachia” looks at the history of tourism in Appalachia and makes recommendations for communities looking to employ it as an economic strategy. It features case studies from the PA Wilds, including Straub Brewery in Saint Marys.



- PA Wilds Center presented and shared the region’s story in statewide and national forums, including with the University of Colorado at Boulder via digital interviews to include as a case study for a new online graduate certificate it is offering; the Rural Community Action Assembly’s program “Outdoor and Small-Town Tourism, Entrepreneurship, and Economic Development,” which was co-hosted by the Philadelphia Fed’s Community Development and Regional Outreach Department, Penn State’s Center for Economic and Community Development, and the Center for Rural Pennsylvania; and a story about the PA Wilds in the Living Landscape Observer, a newsletter/website dedicated to providing observations and information on the emerging fields of landscape scale conservation, heritage preservation, and sustainable community development. In addition, PA Wilds Center helped organize a multiple-day visit to the region by the Richard King Mellon Foundation, one of the 50-largest foundations in the world.

- Beginning in September 2021, PA Wilds Center began the coordination of a regional application to the U.S. Economic Development Administration’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge competition. The PA Wilds was one of 60 finalists selected out of 529 applications nationwide, and the only outdoor recreation industry cluster to make it to the final round, competing for \$50M in federal investment. While the PA Wilds was not selected for a Phase 2 award, the intense planning and increased visibility on the regional work are helping to set it up for future investment.



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Sign up for the PA Wilds Center’s newsletter at [PAWildsCenter.org](http://PAWildsCenter.org).
- Thank your county commissioners for investing in the Pennsylvania Wilds work.
- Tell your state legislator why the Pennsylvania Wilds effort matters to you.
- Attend the PA Wilds Annual Awards Dinner; learn more at [PAWildsCenter.org/programs-and-services/awards-dinner](http://PAWildsCenter.org/programs-and-services/awards-dinner)

“Much of the growth that I have seen already in my community and in my business is largely due to the efforts of the PA Wilds. I became a member of the Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania shortly after PA Made became an official business in 2017 after being recruited by Abbi Peters, the current COO of the PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship. My time with the PA Wilds Center has been more beneficial to PA Made than I ever expected.... The community, skills, networking, and business support that being a Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania member has provided me is immeasurable. It’s truly a pleasure to work with the PA Wilds Center and to own a business in the region.”

**-Mickayla Poland, PA Made Art & Clothing Company**



# DELIVER

**OUR VISION** - Build an entrepreneurial ecosystem tied to the region's lifestyle brand and public lands that helps move millions of dollars annually in local products and services and helps rural businesses and communities thrive.

## Major Wins in the Last Two Years

The global pandemic fundamentally changed the ways in which many Americans value the outdoors; there is an increased action toward equity and access to the outdoors, and across the board there is a growing recognition for the value of outdoor recreation as a rural economic development driver. These shifts have served to validate and accelerate the PA Wilds effort. At the heart of the PA Wilds Center's work in the region is an entrepreneurial ecosystem designed to help activate recreation assets and grow rooted local and regional wealth. Entrepreneurial ecosystems help incubate creativity and innovation and marshal resources and connections to help entrepreneurs succeed. The PA Wilds Entrepreneurial Ecosystem has many components, including The Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania, a free value chain network of hundreds of rural place-based businesses; sustainable commerce platforms tied to the Pennsylvania Wilds brand that help improve market access for rural entrepreneurs; branding and marketing opportunities; and referral systems to connect rural businesses and entrepreneurs to capital and professional development opportunities.

- With support from the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania, PA Wilds Center contracted with the Innovative Manufacturers Center (IMC) through a bid process to help boost business participation from Lycoming County in the entrepreneurial ecosystem and its related supply chain, and to build more awareness locally about outdoor recreation opportunities in the PA Wilds.

- PA Wilds Center hired a Brand Partnerships & Licensing Manager to oversee and grow the PA Wilds Licensing Program, with a goal of helping more businesses leverage the PA Wilds brand and bring new products to market to meet demand. The Licensing Program allows for merchandising and marketing uses of the trademarked PA Wilds logo by local businesses, nonprofits and events. PA Wilds Center manages the trademark for the public good under a long-term public-private partnership with PA DCED.



PA Wilds Center representatives accept a grant from the Williamsport-Lycoming Community Fund at the First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania. Pictured, from left: Brian Bluth, FCFP Board Chair; LaKeshia Knarr, PA Wilds Center Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Director; Jason Fink, PA Wilds Center board member and President/CEO of the Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce; and Jennifer Wilson, FCFP President & CEO.

- Encouraged more business-to-business sales within the ecosystem by publishing the 2021 PA Wilds Buyer's Guide, a free tool that helps individuals or retailers source regionally-made products and services. The Buyer's Guide organizes artisan products by medium and showcases businesses selling PA Wilds branded products, providing opportunities for retailers to acquire PA Wilds merchandise for their stores or businesses. Businesses featured in the guide are part of the WCO.

- Several professional development opportunities and referrals to technical service providers were offered, including a collaboration with The Covation Center to implement a 10-week professional development course, the PA Wilds PACE Program, which was designed to help scale rural businesses. Eleven businesses graduated from the 2020 course. PA Wilds Center staff also worked one-on-one with rural companies in the ecosystem to help connect them to PA Wilds opportunities and to financial and technical resources offered by partner organizations such as DCED, Local Development Districts, Industrial Development Corps., Small Business Development Centers, PennTAP, The Progress Fund and others.



PA Wilds Center COO Abbi Peters speaks to the 2020 PA Wilds PACE Program cohort during the kickoff event in 2020.

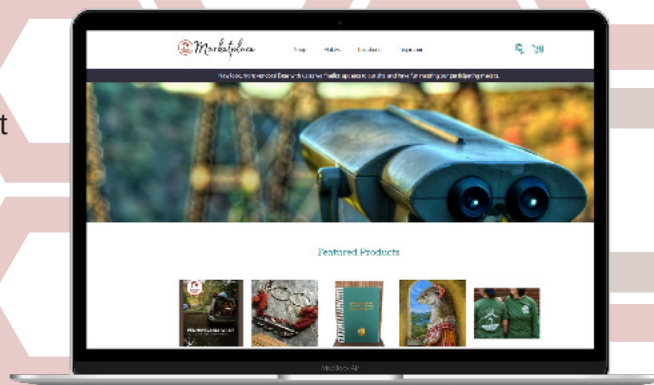


The PA Wilds Center team hangs a copy of the original Declaration of Principles for the Pennsylvania Wilds Team at the PA Wilds Media Lab

- Renovations were completed at the PA Wilds Media Lab, the first physical office and program space of the PA Wilds Center, with the support of the West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund, USDA, Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Collins Companies Foundation, Northwest bank, DCNR, and others. Located in Kane, PA, the 5,000 square foot space will support the Center's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Media Lab will have an audio-visual room, product photography room, classroom space and related tools and technologies. The space will also feature interpretive educational exhibits about energy-efficiency upgrades to the older main street building, as well as on the region's public lands, maker culture and locally-sourced forest products.
- PA Wilds Center collaborated with Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group, The Conservation Fund and Lumber Heritage Region to source and interpret local wood products for the space. In 2021, PA Wilds Center received occupancy permit for the PA Wilds Media Lab and began outfitting the space with tech, furniture and interpretive displays with funding support from North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission, the Economic Development Administration and others. A grand opening is slated for 2023.

***PA Wilds Center continued efforts to expand market access for rural entrepreneurs by standing up new regional commerce infrastructure tied to the PA Wilds brand. These efforts include:***

- Physical PA Wilds Conservation Shops help rural makers and businesses reach new markets, lessen burden on busy rural state parks, and promote the PA Wilds brand. Closed during mandated shutdowns due to COVID, PA Wilds Center invested in new reopening strategies that allowed for social distancing and adherence to state and federal guidelines. Once reopening occurred, tens of thousands of visitors who flocked to outdoor recreation/public lands amid the pandemic were served.
- Developed and launched a new marketplace website, ShopthePAWilds.com, that allows rural businesses in the PA Wilds to sell direct to consumers but with the added marketing power of the regional brand. With funding support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), Erie-based MakerPlace Inc. was hired through a competitive bid process to develop, brand and soft launch the site. PA Wilds Center staff worked with a cohort of 10 small businesses to launch the beta version of the PA Wilds Marketplace at ShopThePAWilds.com in early 2021.





- In June 2021, PA Wilds Center opened a second PA Wilds Conservation Shop as a mobile unit at Leonard Harrison State Park thanks to funding support from EDA and the Richard King Mellon Foundation.
- With funding support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, PA Wilds Center, in coordination with DCNR, hired InScale architects through a competitive bid process to work on a site plan and cost analysis for rehabbing two empty, historic structures at S.B. Elliott State Park off Interstate 80 at the start of the Elk Scenic Drive to create a PA Wilds Conservation Shop and interpretive experience at the park.

#### ***In response to COVID, PA Wilds Center:***

- Conducted outreach to the WCO to better understand the impacts of the pandemic on small businesses in the PA Wilds. The results were published in a white paper, Early Impacts of COVID-19 on the Rural Pennsylvania Wilds Initiative. The paper was shared with state partners, local, state and federal legislators serving the region, and stakeholder networks.
- Teamed up with The Progress Fund, a Community Development Financial Institution that serves the PA Wilds region, to assist with communications in the PA Wilds around a statewide grant program for Main Street-type businesses. The program targeted businesses with 25 or fewer full-time employees and \$1M or less in gross annual sales and provided grants of \$5,000-\$50,000. The Center helped get the PA Wilds region established as a priority investment area under the program, assisted with in-region public communications, and also set up a temporary call center to help small businesses through the application process.
- Hosted the online PA Wilds Makers Market. The event featured live business spotlights, including demonstrations or tours; pre-recorded videos; and live posts and interactions with business owners. The first two PA Wilds Makers Market were held in 2020 when festivals, an important revenue stream for rural artisans, were shuttered due to the global pandemic. The third event was held October 23, 2021. PA Wilds Center managed technical and marketing support for the event, which will become an annual event tied to the PA Wilds Marketplace.
- Launched a Facebook live interview series, Wilds Are Working: Rural Entrepreneurs in Uncharted Times, that paid small rural businesses \$250 to share pivots and reopening strategies amid the COVID public health crisis. The series ran from May to August and included 20 interviews with rural entrepreneurs and organization leaders. The series garnered more than 6,000 views, reached an estimated 17,350 people and led to more businesses joining our ecosystem.



Representatives from PA Wilds Center and DCNR gathered for a ribbon cutting ceremony at the PA Wilds Conservation Shop at Leonard Harrison State Park.

#### **HOW YOU CAN HELP**

- Shop with us at [ShopthePAWilds.com](http://ShopthePAWilds.com) - encourage a friend to, too!
- If you are involved in providing products or services to the traveling public, consider joining the Wilds Cooperative of PA (WCO) at [WildsCoPA.org](http://WildsCoPA.org) - it's FREE!
- Follow the Wilds Cooperative of PA on Facebook and Instagram @WildsCooperativeofPA
- Keep more dollars local by buying or sourcing products to the WCO. Search the full directory at [WildsCoPA.org/our-members](http://WildsCoPA.org/our-members).

# STEWARD

**OUR VISION** - Steward and reinvest in our region's public lands and natural assets, unique community character and rural lifestyle; sustain our organization and vision so these can be handed off to the next generation.

## Major Wins in the Last Two Years

Our region's rugged, forested landscape is home to our world famous elk, the reason for our dark night skies, and the foundation for some of our region's major industries. The PA Wilds is home to the greatest concentration of public lands in the Commonwealth – more than Yellowstone National Park. Our natural landscape shapes our rural communities, draws visitors from around the globe, and has inspired a whole cottage industry of artisans and niche outfitters. PA Wilds Center is proud to work with partners to help steward the region's natural assets, and the vision for the PA Wilds effort, so they can be enjoyed and championed by future generations.

PA Wilds Center's stewardship work goes across all lanes of its work. Below, major wins are broken down into three core areas: Programs & Services, Partnerships and Organizational Stewardship.

### *Programs & Services*

- Launched and updated a new stewardship section of PAWilds.com to promote stewardship by visitors and residents (PAWilds.com/stewardship).
- Launched and operated a charity checkout campaign at the PA Wilds Conservation Shop at Kinzua Bridge State Park and Center's online store, ShopthePAWilds.com, collecting nearly \$25,000 during 2020 and 2021. 100% Monies raised are donated to the PA Parks & Forest Foundation (PPFF) to reinvest back into state parks and forests in the PA Wilds region. This is an ongoing campaign. PPFF has documented \$500M in maintenance needs at state parks and forests in the region. First projects funded through this initiative included PA Wilds interpretive panels for several state parks in the region to assist in orientating visitors with the large PA Wilds landscape.
- Promoted the PA Wilds Design Guide for Community Character Stewardship, a free resource for rural communities developed by the PA Wilds Planning Team.
- Operated two free Outdoor Industry Exploration Series courses for high school students through the state's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program.
- Featured in an article by The Destination Stewardship Center, Doing It Better: The Pennsylvania Wilds.

### *Partnerships*

- Worked with DCNR to hire a recreation planner consultant to update DCNR's 2006 Recreation Plan for PA Wilds. This foundational report helped guide DCNR's outdoor recreation investments in the region when the PA Wilds first launched. The update to the report will help memorialize the relationship between DCNR and the Center, identify gaps/opportunities from the first Rec Plan, and inform future investments by a variety of stakeholders, including PA Wilds Center. Watch for the report in 2023.



"We are grateful for the work that the PA Wilds has done for our community! Our little town of Kane, PA is evolving into a charming tourist town. The Kinzua Bridge/New Visitor Center has brought so many people to our area to enjoy our new restaurants, have a drink at one of the new distilleries/breweries and even tour our retail garden center. The exposure has helped our landscape company branch out into new areas of PA that we had never worked in before! Thank you, Pennsylvania Wilds!!"



- Assisted the PA Game Commission in a new “Elk Smart” campaign aimed at educating visitors about safe elk watching practices, and began discussions with Leave No Trace about a customized Tourism Partnership that will include custom stewardship language based on the Seven Principles of Leave No Trace for the PA Wilds region.
- Continued to collaborate with the West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund on its efforts to retrofit a commercial Main Street building in the PA Wilds to “Passive House” standards, the first effort of its kind in America. In addition to being an inspired rural development model, the project will expand space and accessibility at the adjoined PA Wilds Media Lab.



1. GIVE ELK SPACE.  
AT LEAST 100 YARDS.
2. NEVER FEED ELK.  
IT'S DANGEROUS & ILLEGAL.
3. DON'T NAME ELK.  
LET WILD BE WILD.
4. DO YOUR PART.  
IF YOU SEE SOMETHING,  
SAY SOMETHING.

Brought to you by ELK SMART partners:



- Coordinated a regional sign on letter to the Maryland Air National Guard asking for more information about proposed low-level training flights over a large portion of the PA Wilds region.
- Participated in a PA Wilds Climate Workshop in August 2021 that was held by the PA Wilds Planning Team's Natural Resources Committee and Headwaters RC&D to explore regional climate issues, challenges, and initiatives in the PA Wilds. This workshop kicked off the development of a “PA Wilds Climate Network” to conduct regular gatherings in the PA Wilds region to identify and address local environmental topics and issues and provide climate change resources and education.
- Continued development of a multi-year video series designed to tell the story of the Wilds through the great work of the Center's public and private sector partners, under the Wilds Are Working theme. The video on the PA Outdoor Corps, a workforce development program that introduces youth to careers in the outdoors, conservation and forestry fields by paying them to work on crews that do improvements on public lands in the region, was released.

### Organizational Stewardship

- Developed an online learning system to help train staff and stakeholders on PA Wilds history, impacts, stakeholder structures, programs and resources was finalized. In addition, a Communications Plan to assist staff and stakeholders with consistent messaging around PA Wilds programs, services and stakeholder groups was created.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

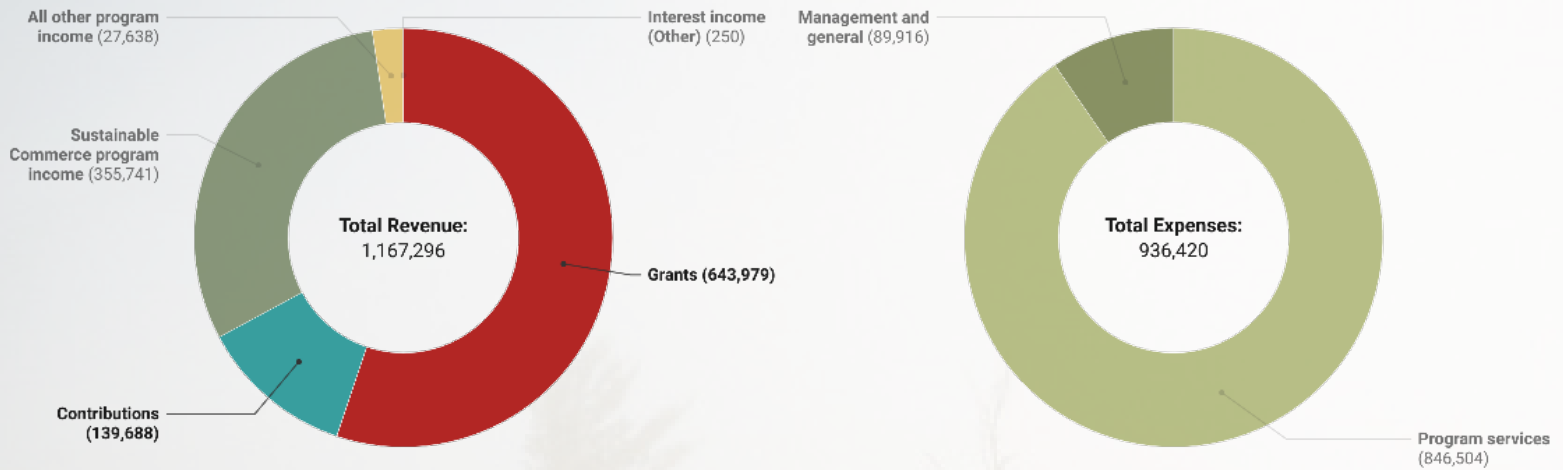
- Check out stewardship resources at [PAWilds.com/stewardship](http://PAWilds.com/stewardship).
- Encourage your municipal officials and business community to utilize the PA Wilds Design Guide, available on [PAWildsCenter.org](http://PAWildsCenter.org).
- Volunteer for a conservation stewardship project in the Pennsylvania Wilds! Contact your county Conservation District about potential projects.
- Follow PA Wilds Center on LinkedIn and YouTube



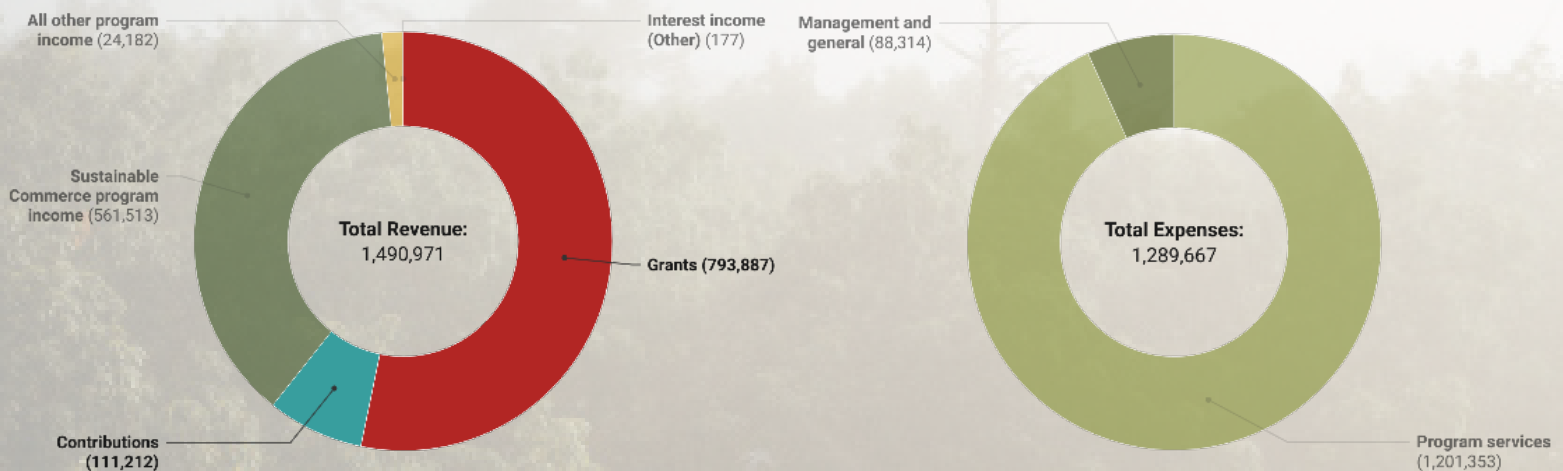
The Wilds Are  
Working: The PA  
Outdoor Corps

# KEY FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

## 2020 Revenue & Expenses



## 2021 Revenue & Expenses



Grants include government and nonprofit sources; Contributions include corporate, foundation and individual sources. Sustainable Commerce program revenue from 2020 represents revenue from the PA Wilds Conservation Shop at Kinzua Bridge State Park, as well as our online store at ShopthePAwilds.com, while the 2021 Sustainable Commerce revenue also includes our mobile Conservation Shop at Leonard Harrison State Park.

The Sustainable Commerce program, a cornerstone of the nonprofit's Entrepreneurial Ecosystem, improves market access for rural makers and other local entrepreneurs while filling gaps in visitor services and supporting long-term sustainability of the ecosystem. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are invested each year in purchasing products from local companies for resale at PA Wilds Conservation Shops; ShopthePAwilds.com enables locally-owned companies to sell direct to consumers. To learn more about how to join the ecosystem, go to WildsCoPA.org. Membership is free for local companies.

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship (PA Wilds Center) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The official registration and financial information of PA Wilds Center may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement. This organization is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

"As a largely virtual organization, and one that values efficiency, PA Wilds Center is able to maintain low overhead. In 2020, 90% of revenues raised went to programs. In 2021, 93% of dollars did."



## PA WILDS CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### OFFICERS

**Chair: Kate Brock**, Executive Director, Community Education Center of Elk & Cameron Counties  
**Vice President: Sam MacDonald**, President, Elk County Catholic School System  
**Treasurer/Secretary: Shane Oschman**, Executive Director, City of Bradford Office of Economic and Community Development

### MEMBERS

**Katherine deSilva**, Clinton County Planning Director and Vice Chair of the PA Wilds Planning Team  
**Scott Dunkleberger**, Retired, PA Department of Community and Economic Development  
**Jason Fink**, President/CEO, Williamsport/Lycoming Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau  
**Nick Hoffman**, Community Initiatives Coordinator, Varischetti Holdings  
**Kathleen Jones**, Manager of Retail Marketing, Zippo  
**Matt Marusiak**, Land Protection Manager, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
**Beth Pellegrino**, Partner/Senior Consultant, J.L. Nick & Associates

### EX OFFICIO

**Meredith Hill**, Director of the PA Wilds and Conservation Landscape Program, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
**Deborah Pontzer**, Economic Development And Workforce Specialist, Congressman Glenn Thompson's Office

## PA WILDS PLANNING TEAM

### OFFICERS

**Chair: Will Hunt**, Director, Potter County Planning Commission  
**Vice Chair: Katie DeSilva**, Director, Clinton County Planning Commission  
**Treasurer/Secretary: Tracy Gerber**, Director, Elk County Planning Department

### COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP

**Land Use Committee Chair: Jerry Walls** (Retired, Lycoming County Planning Department)  
**Community Development Committee Chair: Dan Glotz** (Warren County Planning and Zoning Department)  
**Natural Resources Committee Chair: Matt Marusiak** (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy)

### MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Cameron County Office of Community and Economic Development  
Centre County Planning & Community Development  
Clarion County Department of Planning & Development  
Clearfield County Department of Planning  
Clinton County Planning Commission  
Elk County Planning Department  
Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department  
Jefferson County Department of Development  
Lycoming County Planning and Community Development  
McKean County Planning Commission  
Potter County Planning Commission  
Tioga County Planning Commission  
Warren County Planning and Zoning Department  
Potter County Education Council  
Headwaters Charitable Trust  
Lumber Heritage Region  
PA Route 6 Alliance  
PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship  
Susquehanna Greenway Partnership  
North Central PA Planning and Development Commission  
Northern Tier Planning and Development Commission  
Northwest PA Planning and Development Commission  
SEDA-COG  
PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
PA Fish and Boat Commission  
PA Historical and Museum Commission  
PA Lumber Museum  
County Commissioners Association of PA  
PA State Association of Boroughs  
PA State Association of Townships  
U.S. Forest Service/Allegheny National Forest  
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy





"Becoming a professional member of the PA Wilds Artisan Network has had a two-fold benefit on my business. First, I am now part of a diverse creative community even though I live and work in a rural, fairly isolated part of the state. Secondly, I am part of a larger community of entrepreneurs within an organization that is solely dedicated to our growth and success. The work of The PA Wilds has broadened the reach of my business and provided valuable resources for networking, collaboration, publicity and support... I appreciate that The PA Wilds is working for all of us."

**-Marie Lewis, Pine Springs Pottery**

"The PA Wilds coalition is highly knowledgeable, networked and professional but importantly is safe and approachable for all. This approachability is critical in supporting diversity in regional businesses and recreation users commonly missed by traditional business or tourism groups. Startup businesses in our area have few resources for advice and assistance and the probability of the success and growth of these entrepreneurs is strongly boosted by the guidance of the PA Wilds Center. For example, via the PA Wilds Marketplace regional businesses can have their goods into the eyes of a large public audience they would never be able to garner solo, catapulting many into hiring and business growth."

**-Josh Helke, Organic Climbing and Nittany Mountain Works**

"Far too often, rural communities are "left behind" by funding agencies. While the population of rural areas in Pennsylvania has declined in recent decades, and with it many economic opportunities, the Pennsylvania Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship has been at the forefront of efforts to ensure a vibrant and sophisticated business environment that sustains population and ensures economic growth."

**-Kyle C. Kopko, Ph.D., Center for Rural Pennsylvania**

"The Conservation Fund has invested deeply in the region for decades through our Working Forest Fund and Conservation Leadership Network programs. Outdoor recreation has soared in recent years, now contributing \$1.85B annually to the regional economy. This success is a direct result of two decades of investment from state, local, and philanthropic partners committed to the PA Wilds. Now supported by the greatest concentration of public lands in the Commonwealth, the region needs a new era of investment to develop the infrastructure, workforce, and financing opportunities to reach its full potential.... The PA Wilds is on the cusp of a major transformation, from reliance on the boom-and-bust cycles of extractive industries to an entrepreneurial ecosystem that thrives on the rich natural resources of the region. The PA Wilds Center has led that work and built a strong constituency and network of support to guide this region into a new era of economic resiliency."

**-Lawrence A. Seltzer, The Conservation Fund**