



STRENGTHENING + INSPIRING COMMUNITIES IN THE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS



PA WILDS CENTER
FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

*Ohio Outdoor Recreation Economy Conference
July 22, 2025*

Where our community has come from.



Market Opportunity:
80 Million
People live
within a
6-Hour Drive



(ALMOST) THREE HOURS
FROM ANYWHERE!



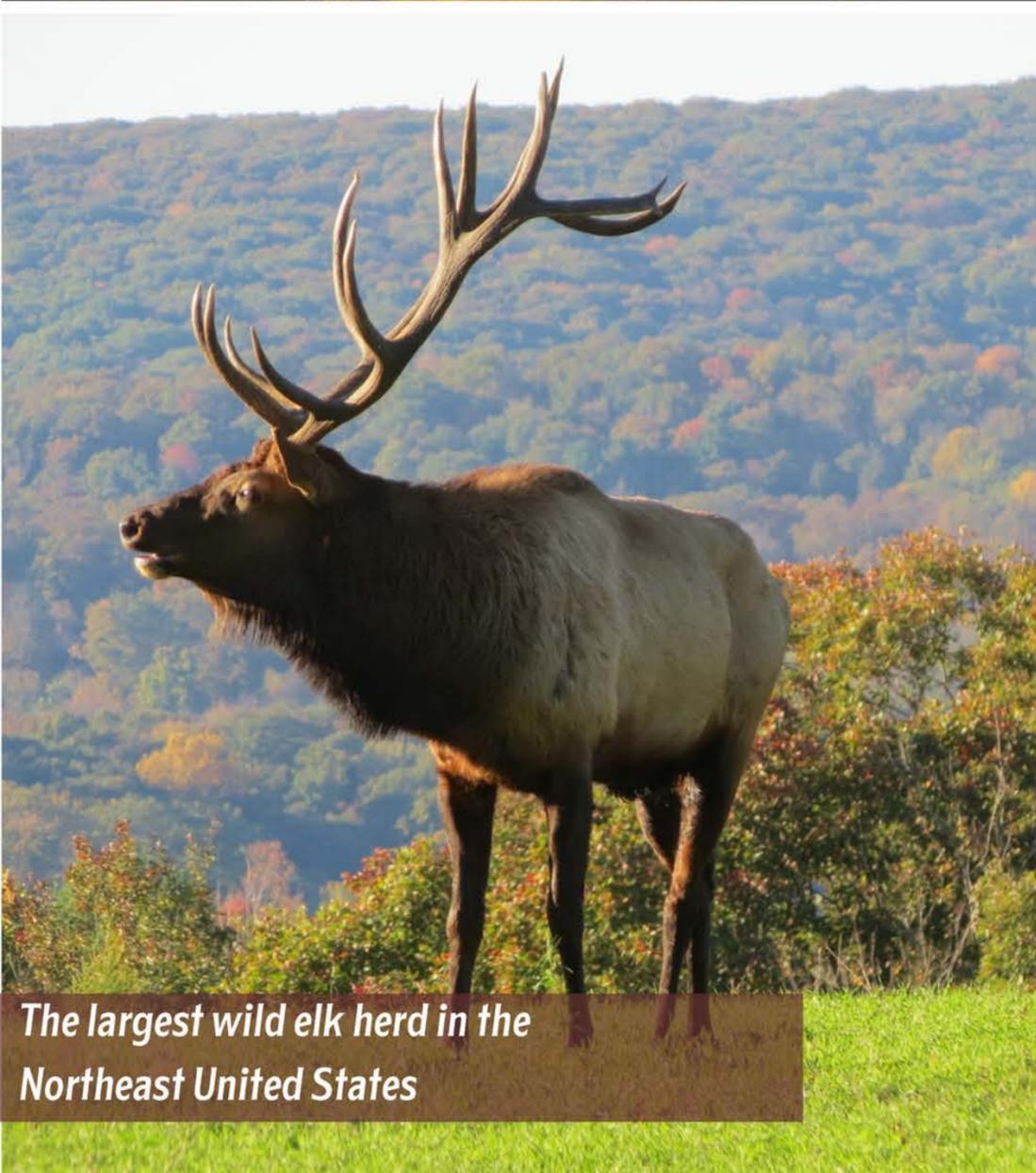
2+ million acres of public land; hundreds of miles of trails



The world's second certified International Dark-Sky Park



29 state parks, 8 state forests, 50 state game lands



The largest wild elk herd in the Northeast United States



Two National Wild & Scenic Rivers



The Allegheny National Forest (ANF), Pennsylvania's only National Forest



What we are trying to solve.



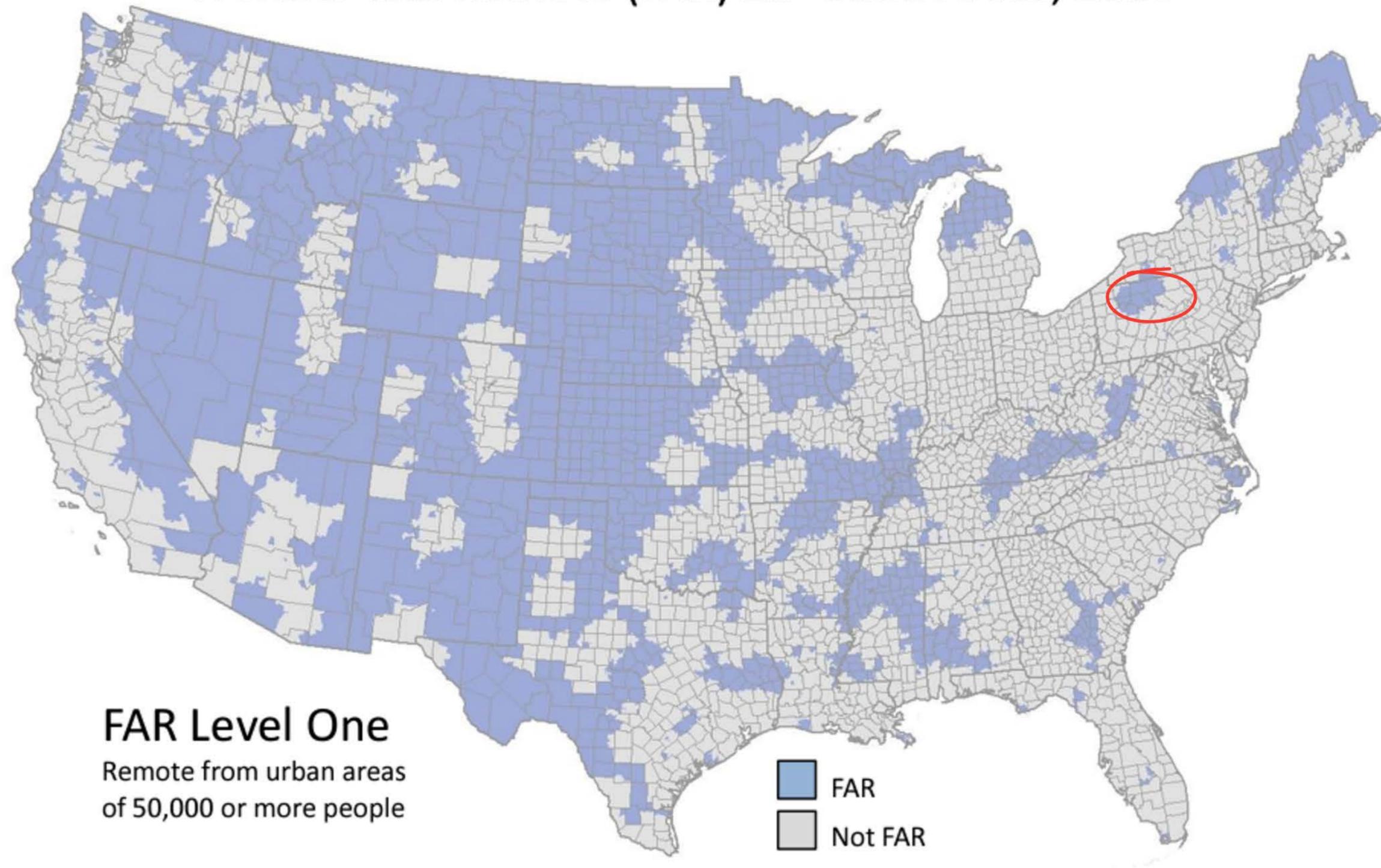
BUILDING AN OUTDOOR REC ECONOMY WITH COMMUNITY FIRST IN MIND

“To strengthen and inspire communities in the PA Wilds”



- Build local/regional wealth through small businesses
- Diversify local economies
- Inspire stewardship
- Improve quality of life
- Attract investment
- Retain population

Frontier and Remote (FAR) ZIP-Code Areas, 2000



FAR Level One

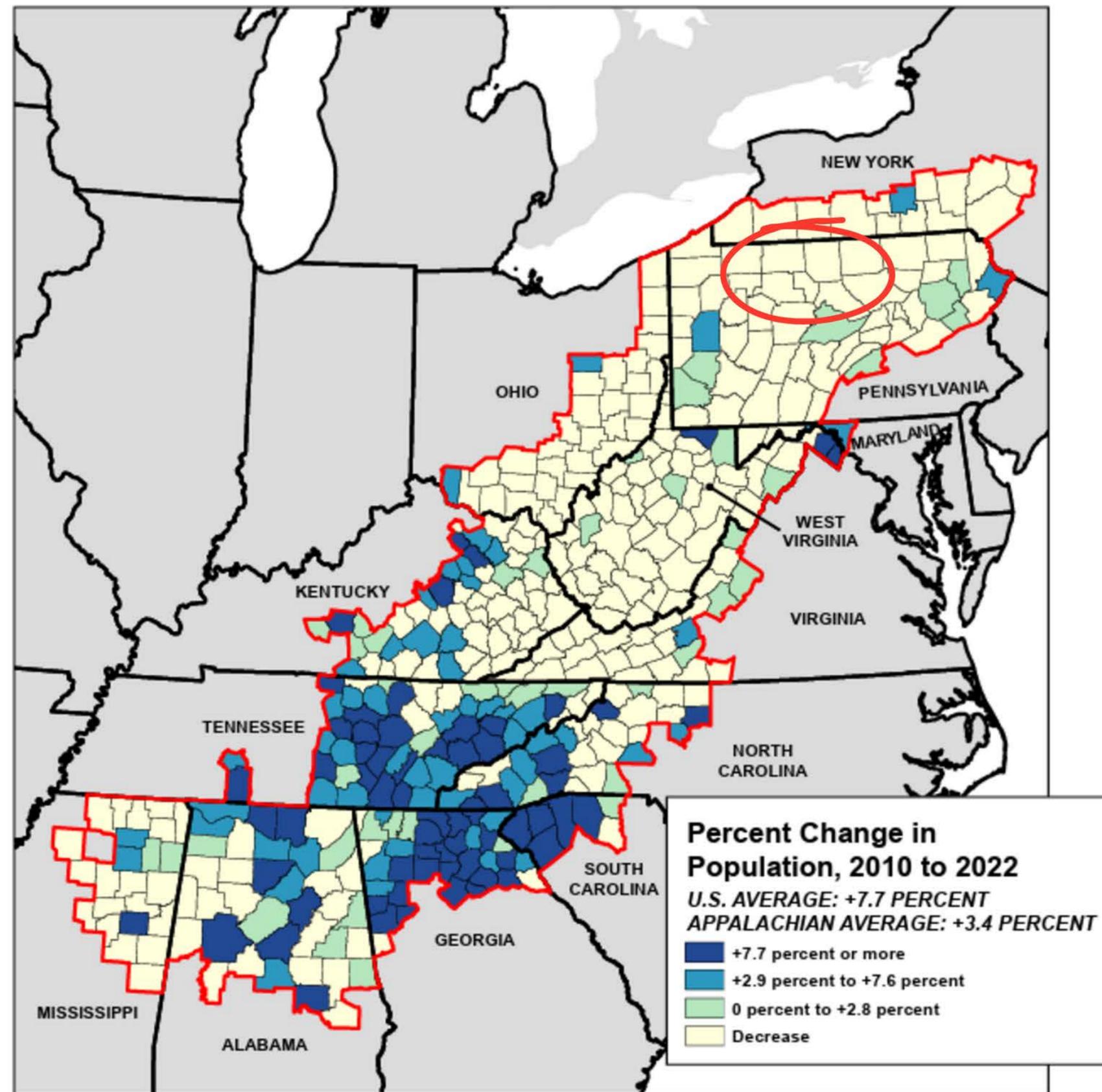
Remote from urban areas of 50,000 or more people

-  FAR
-  Not FAR

FAR level one includes ZIP Code areas with majority populations living 60 minutes or more from urban areas of 50,000 or more people.

Source: Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Center for International Earth Science Information Network, and ESRI.

Figure 1.2: Population Change in the Appalachian Region, July 1, 2010 to July 1, 2022



Map Title: Population Change in the Appalachian Region, July 1, 2010 to July 1, 2022
Data Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Vintage 2020 and 2022 Population Estimates.

‘Too many old people’: A rural Pa. town reckons with population loss

There is a deepening sense of fear as population loss accelerates in rural America. The decline of small-town life is expected to be a looming topic in the presidential election.

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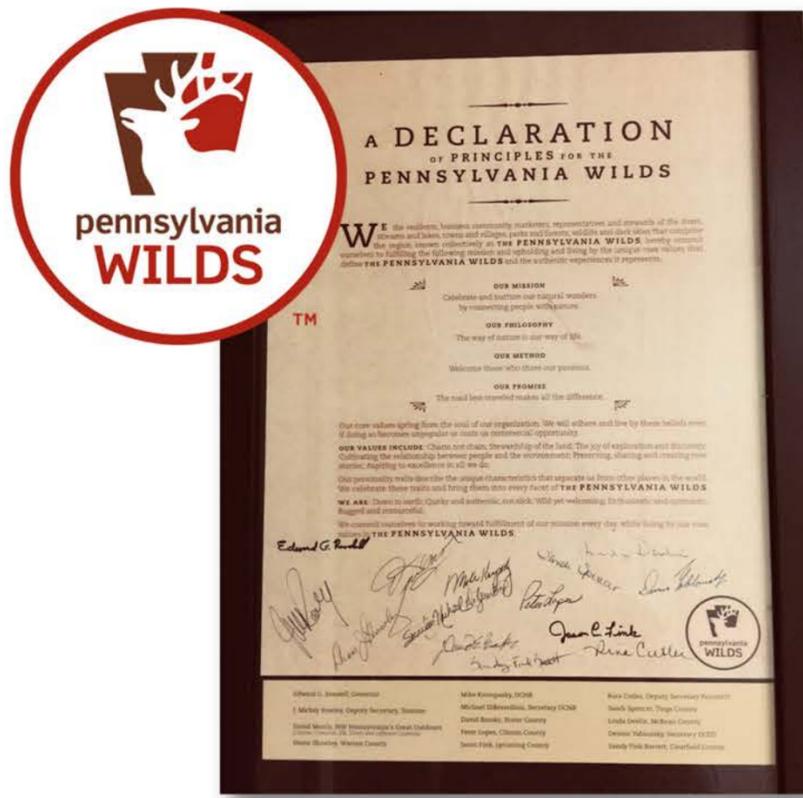
Lucky to
live here

pennsylvania WILDS™

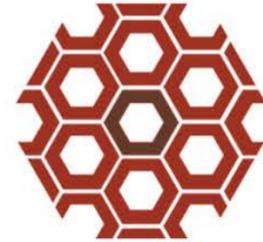


What we've done.





PA Wilds Brand developed 2003-2005



PA WILDS CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

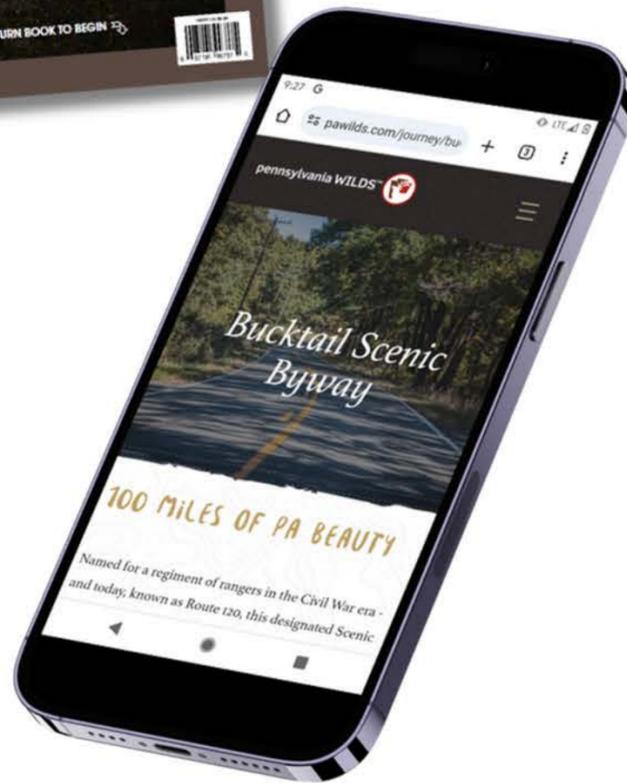


PA Wilds Planning team: formed 2006

- 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, led by a nonprofit board of directors based in the region.
- Founded in 2013, grew organically out of the Conservation Landscape effort.
- Mission: Integrate conservation and economic development to strengthen and inspire communities in the PA Wilds.
- Sustained through partnerships, program fees, philanthropic giving, grants and entrepreneurial activities related to the PA Wilds brand.
- Administrative home for the PA Wilds Planning Team.



Regional Planning
+ Partnerships



Regional Branding
+ Marketing

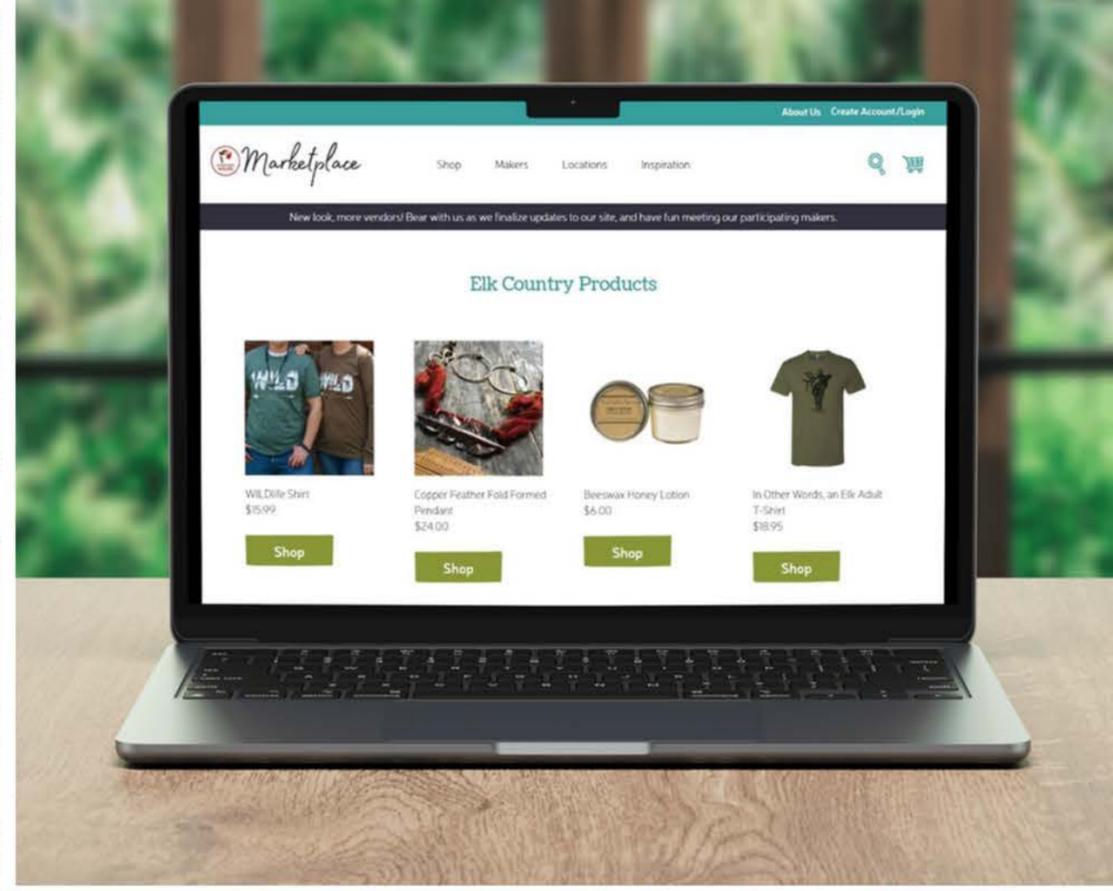
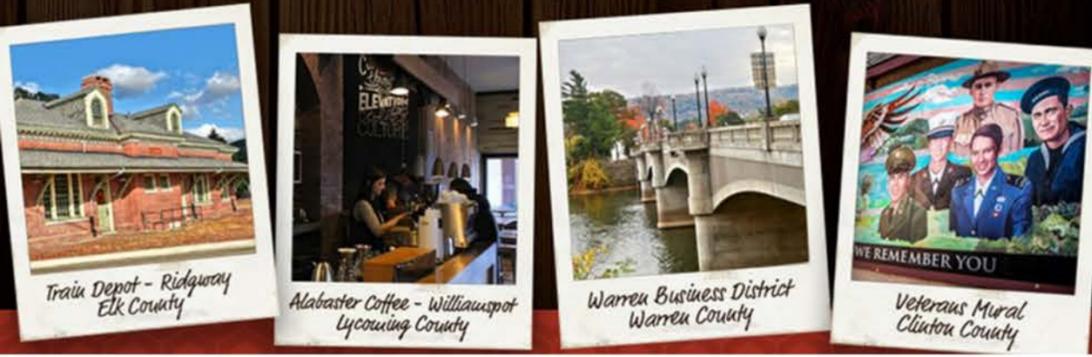


Recreation Infrastructure



DESIGN GUIDE for Community Character Stewardship

Second Edition



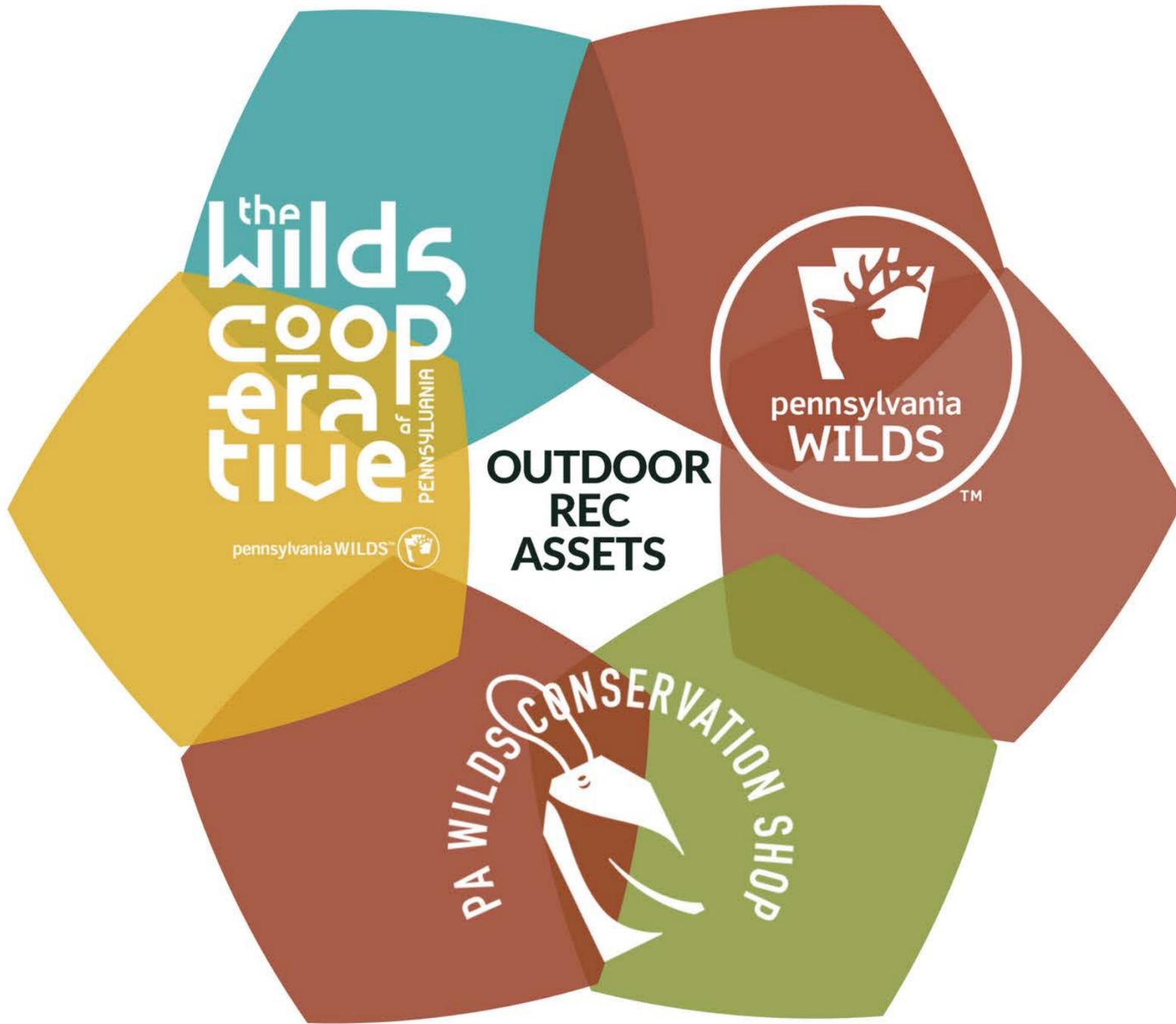
Community Character
+ Natural Resource Stewardship

Small Business Development
+ Entrepreneurship

Market Access

What we've observed.





Stage 5

Ecosystem Maturity (Estimated 2038 and beyond)
 Expansion levels off. Ecosystem partnerships, governance and systems are high-functioning. Wide variety of rural businesses benefit from the ecosystem. Ecosystem sustained by its own high-mission impact revenue-generating programs.

Stage 4

Ecosystem Expansion (2023 – 2038)
 Current Stage. To include major expansion of sustainable commerce and licensing programs, continued expansion of the number of businesses participating in the ecosystem, and evolution of governance frameworks.

Stage 3

Ecosystem Growth (2018 – 2022)
 PA Wilds Center begins growing ecosystem programs to increase impact and sustainability. Studies and planning completed to inform future growth.

Stage 2

Ecosystem Startup (2013 – 2018)
 Major pillars launched or reorganized under a single nonprofit (PA Wilds Center) to create a synergistic ecosystem.

Stage 1

Ecosystem Pre-Development/Ideation (2003-2013)
 Needs identified, basic capacity and regional brand established.

ECOSYSTEM STAGE DEVELOPMENT

Needs -->

- Experience based services + products
- Small business support
- Asset maintenance
- Resident attraction + retention
- Funding

“What if...” -->

We committed to supporting our local businesses and communities in our decision making process?

“How can we...”-->

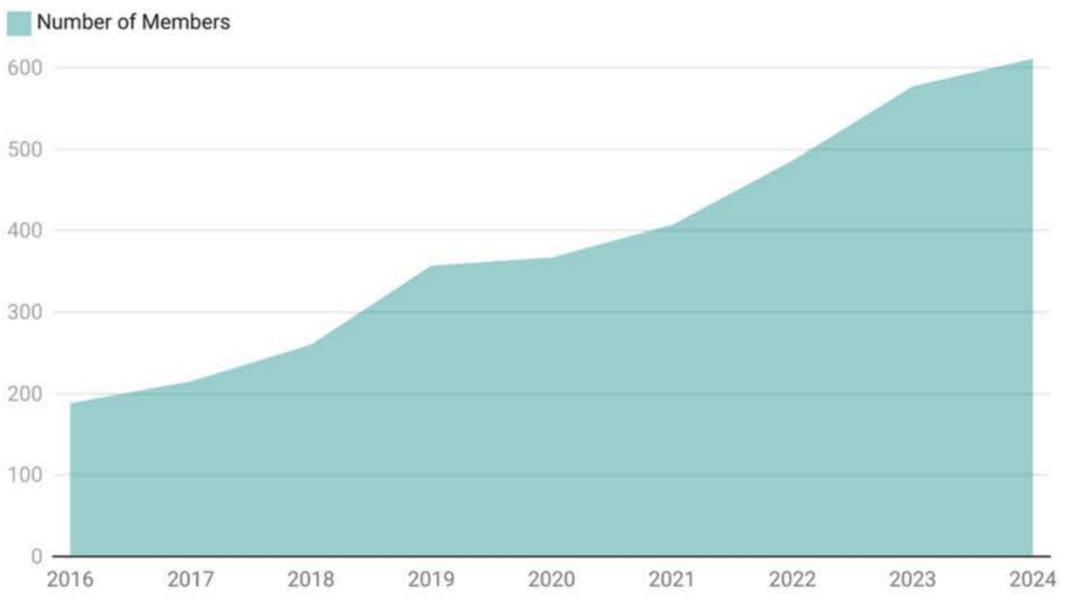
- Create market access for our creative makers?
- Drive foot traffic beyond and between our largest assets?
- Connect our local businesses to resources and professional development?
- Tell an authentic story for the region?
- Leverage investments and funding across partnerships?
- Attract remote workers and college graduates to “test drive” living here?

Programs -->

- Wilds Cooperative of PA
- PA Wilds Conservation Shop
- Check out for Charity Campaign
- Pawilds.com
- Wilds Are Working

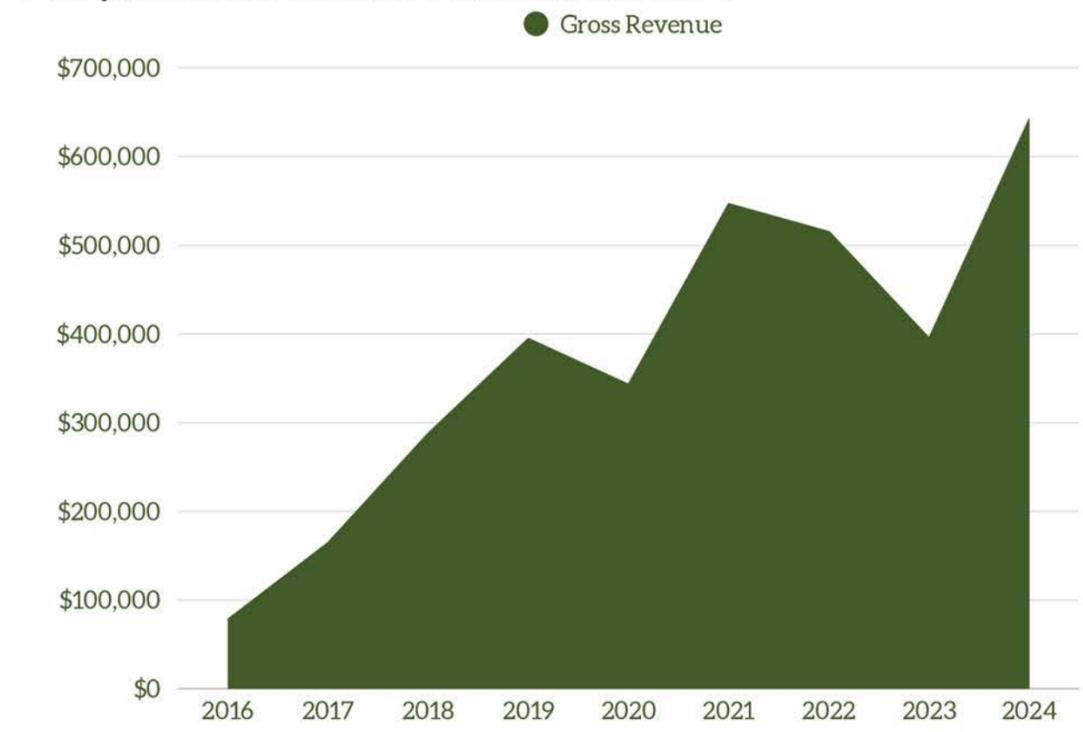
Test -> Fail -> Correct

WCO Membership Growth (2016-2024)

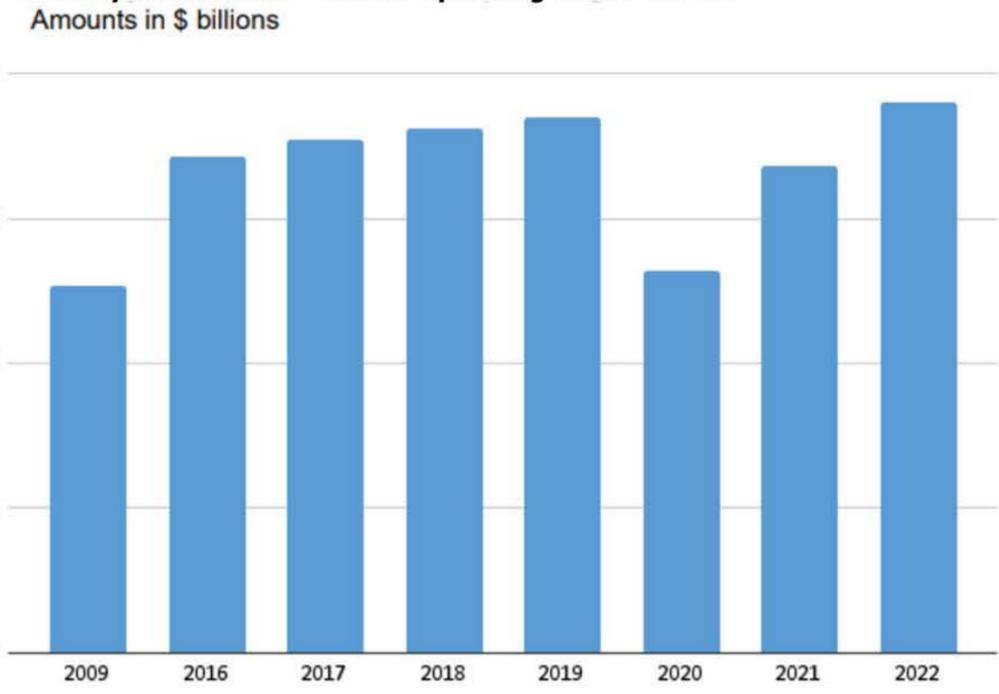


Source: PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc. • Created with Datawrapper

Pennsylvania Wilds Commerce Platforms (2016-2024)



Pennsylvania Wilds - Visitor Spending (2009-2022)



Source: Tourism Economics



HOW IS THIS MOVEMENT WORKING?

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES TO LEVERAGE THE POWER OF THE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS PLACE-BASED BRAND + THE REGION'S INCREDIBLE NATURAL ASSETS



Highly integrated and designed to complement (not duplicate) services already offered by partners



A VALUE CHAIN NETWORK FOR GOOD

The Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania (WCO) is a Value Chain that has grown to more than 700+ members. There are no dues.

A Value Chain is a network of people, businesses, organizations, and agencies addressing a market opportunity to sell local products and place-based experiences.

The Wilds Cooperative of PA Value Chain helps businesses and communities leverage the PA Wilds brand to grow and thrive.



WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO JOIN THE WILDS COOPERATIVE?

"Charm Not Chain"



CREATIVE MAKERS

artisans who make products that allow visitors to take home a piece of the PA Wilds and offer the creative services to help tell our region's story and support other businesses



EXPERIENCE MAKERS

hospitality or cultural establishments that foster memories and add to the region's charm

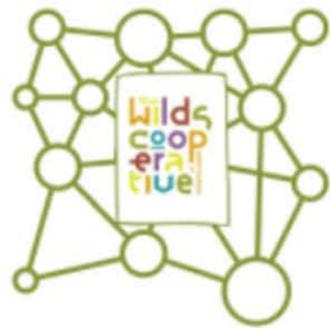


RESOURCE PARTNERS

community partners and service or resource providers that support businesses, the environment, or production, and helping the region thrive

BENEFITS OF WILDS COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP

Free / No Annual Dues



MAKE CONNECTIONS

Make peer connections via the WCO directory, member meetings and promotions on PAWilds.com



SELL PRODUCTS

Sell products wholesale at PA Wilds Conservation Shops or retail on the PA Wilds Marketplace



USE THE PA WILDS LOGO

Leverage the PA Wilds brand on your marketing materials or merchandise



WCO BRANDING TOOLS

Let people know you're part of a network of small businesses and organizations that value sustainability



LEARN NEW SKILLS

Access tools and resources from service providers in the PA Wilds and beyond

BRANDED MARKETS



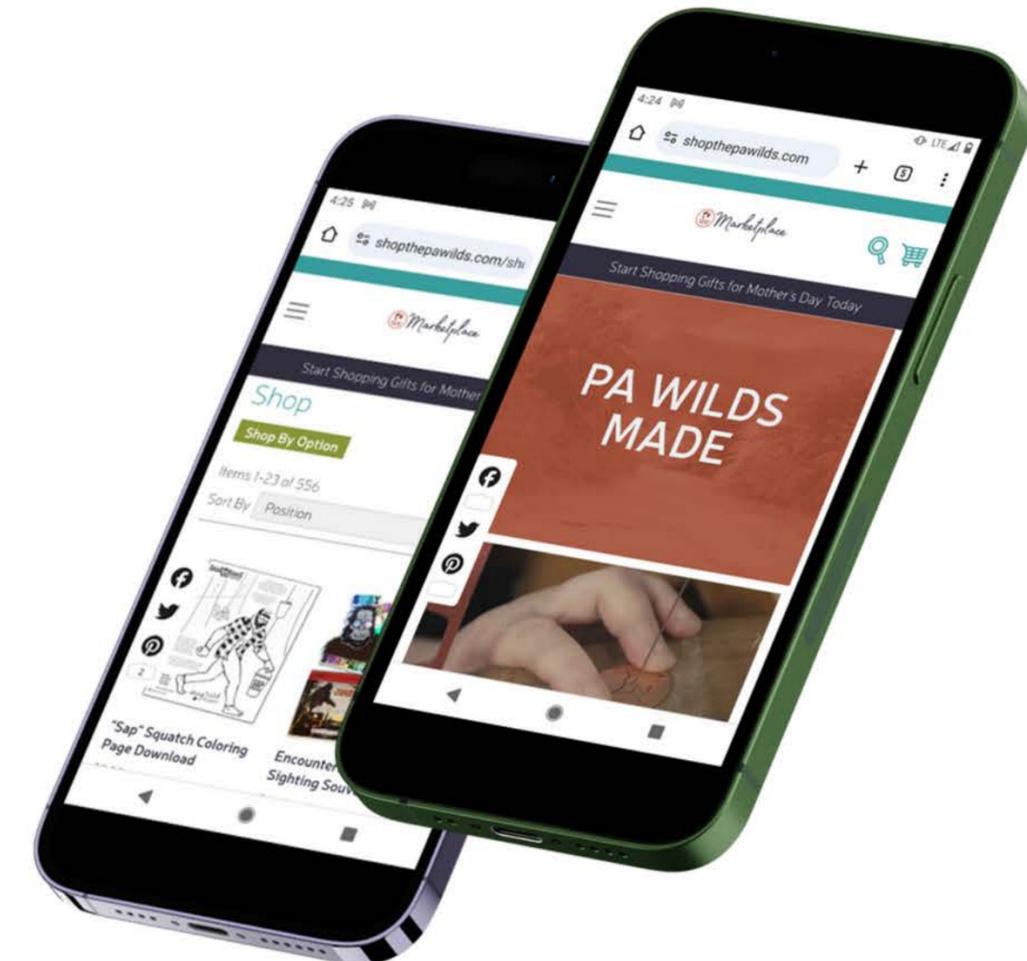
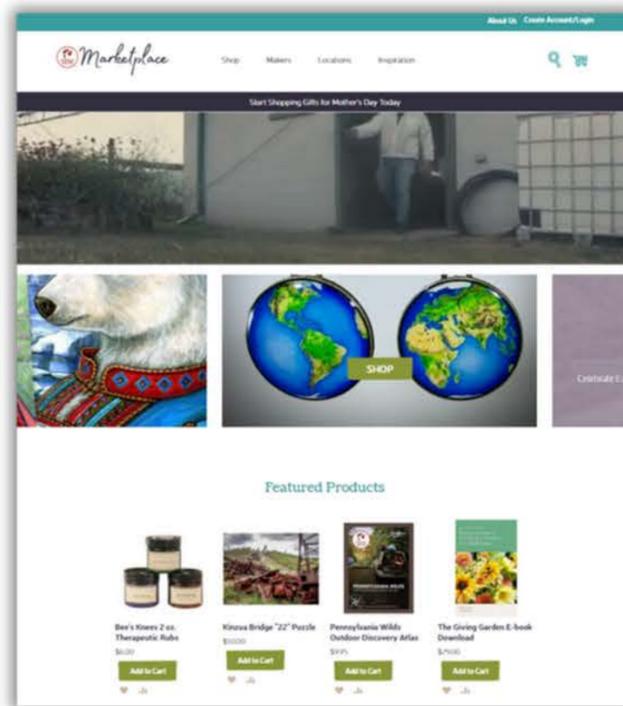
- Physical gift shops tied to PA Wilds public lands and communities
 - PA Wilds Conservation Shop at Kinzua Bridge opened 2016
 - PA Wilds Conservation Shop at Leonard Harrison opened as a mobile unit in 2021, moved into brick-and-mortar in 2024
 - Third location along Knox-Kane Rail Trail in Marienville, opened 2024
- Made possible by public-private partnership and long-term agreement
- Help to economically activate public lands for local community
 - 90% of products sourced from local artists participating in WCO



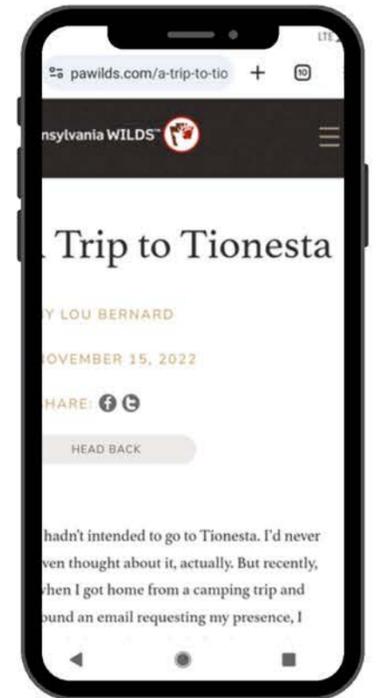
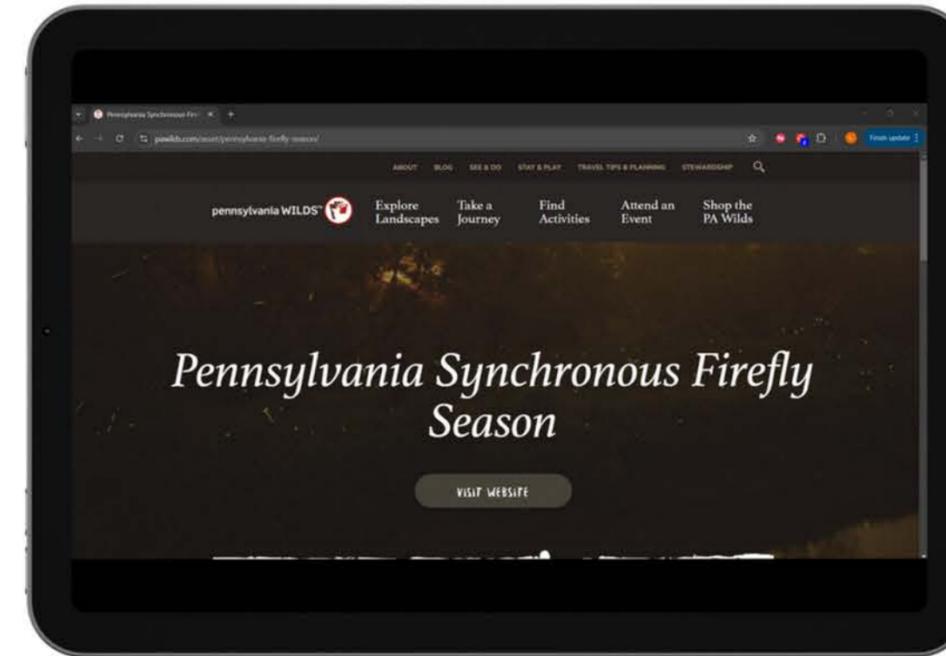
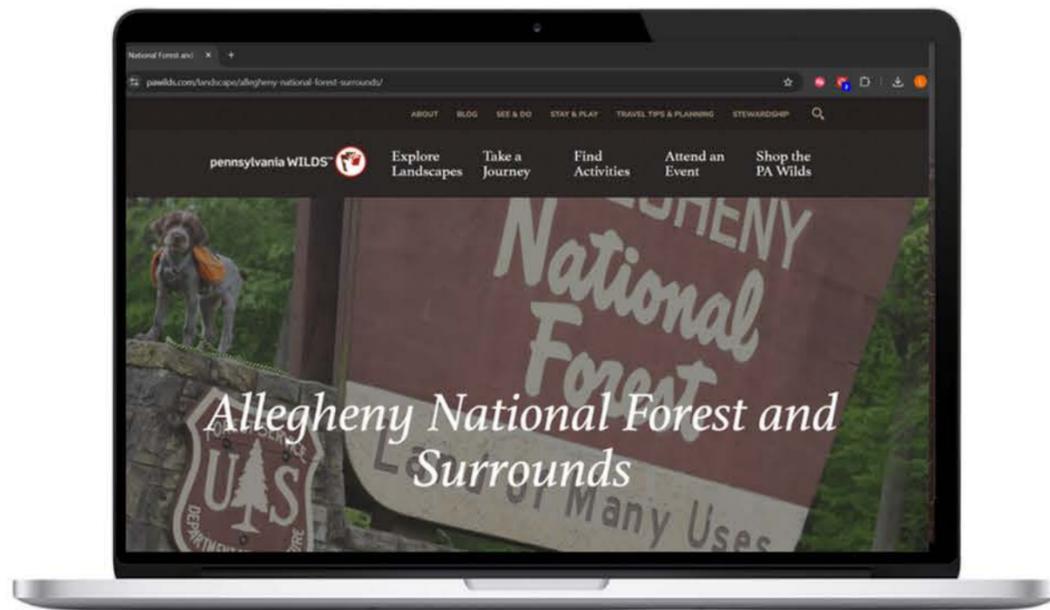
BRANDED MARKETS

THE PA WILDS MARKETPLACE AT SHOP.PAWILDS.COM

- PA Wilds branded maker marketplace for regional artisans - launched in 2021
- Supports and simplifies ecommerce transactions
- 40+ participating individual artisans, others onboarding



REGIONAL MARKETING

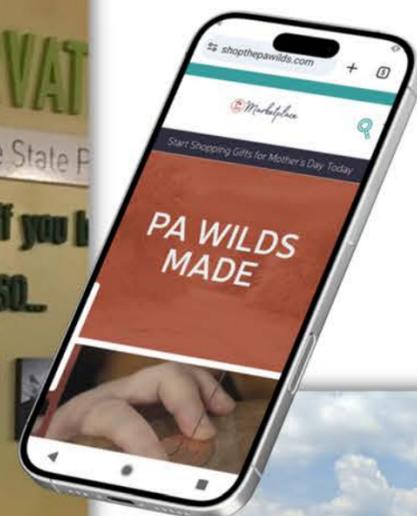


- Regional Marketing via PAWilds.com integrated into the ecosystem in 2016-17.
 - Packaged region by sub-landscapes.
- Site drives digital and physical foot traffic to the region's communities to support businesses, organizations + events
 - Public-facing businesses in Wilds Cooperative promoted for free on PAWilds.com
- Outdoor Discovery Atlas update + future maps

SOME HIGHLIGHTS

- Page Views - ~500,000/year
- Visitation from 189 countries
- Combined Social Media Following - 60,000
- Google AdWords In-Kind Grants - \$120,000/year

INVESTING IN STEWARDSHIP



Charity Checkout for Conservation Campaign at PA Wilds Conservation Shops and on the PA Wilds Marketplace encourages shoppers to donate to make a difference at PA Wilds State Parks and Forests.



100% of the proceeds help the PA Parks and Forests Foundation fund special projects in the state parks and forests in the Pennsylvania Wilds!

More than \$60,000 raised since campaign launched in 2019.

- Updating interpretative signage at select parks
- Viewfinders at select parks and forests in the region (10 total) to enhance the fall foliage experience for colorblind travelers.

COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP: PA WILDS PLANNING TEAM



WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RESULTS SO FAR?

REGIONAL MARKETING



- \$1.9B tourism industry (2022)
- 36,000+ Facebook followers
- 24,000+ Instagram followers
- 500,000+ pageviews on PAWilds.com per year

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



- 700+ members
- Professional development program participants
- 157 new jobs created, 234 jobs retained between 2019-2022

BRANDED MARKETS



- 40+ Conservation Shop vendors
- ~40 Marketplace sellers
- \$2M+ in local products sold since 2016
- \$1M+ invested in regional businesses since 2016

STEWARDSHIP



- \$60,000+ raised for public lands maintenance projects
- New site sections for Leave No Trace & stewardship messaging
- 12 businesses participating in PA Wilds Leave No Trace Program

What we've learned.





STAY AUTHENTIC

A declaration of principles FOR THE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS TEAM

We the residents, business community, marketers, planners, representatives and stewards of the rivers, streams and lakes, towns and villages, parks and forests, wildlife and dark skies that comprise the region known collectively as THE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS, hereby commit ourselves to fulfilling the following mission and upholding and living by the unique core values that define THE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS and the authentic experiences it represents.

OUR MISSION

Celebrate and nurture our natural wonders by connecting people with nature.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

The way of nature is our way of life.

OUR METHOD

Welcome those who share our passions.

OUR PROMISE

The road less traveled makes all the difference.

Our core values spring from the soul of our organization. We will adhere and live by these beliefs even if doing so becomes unpopular or costs us commercial opportunity.

OUR VALUES INCLUDE

Charm not chain | Stewardship of the land | The joy of exploration and discovery
Cultivating the relationship between people and the environment
Preserving, sharing and creating new stories | Aspiring to excellence in all we do

Our personality traits describe the unique characteristics that separate us from other places in the world.

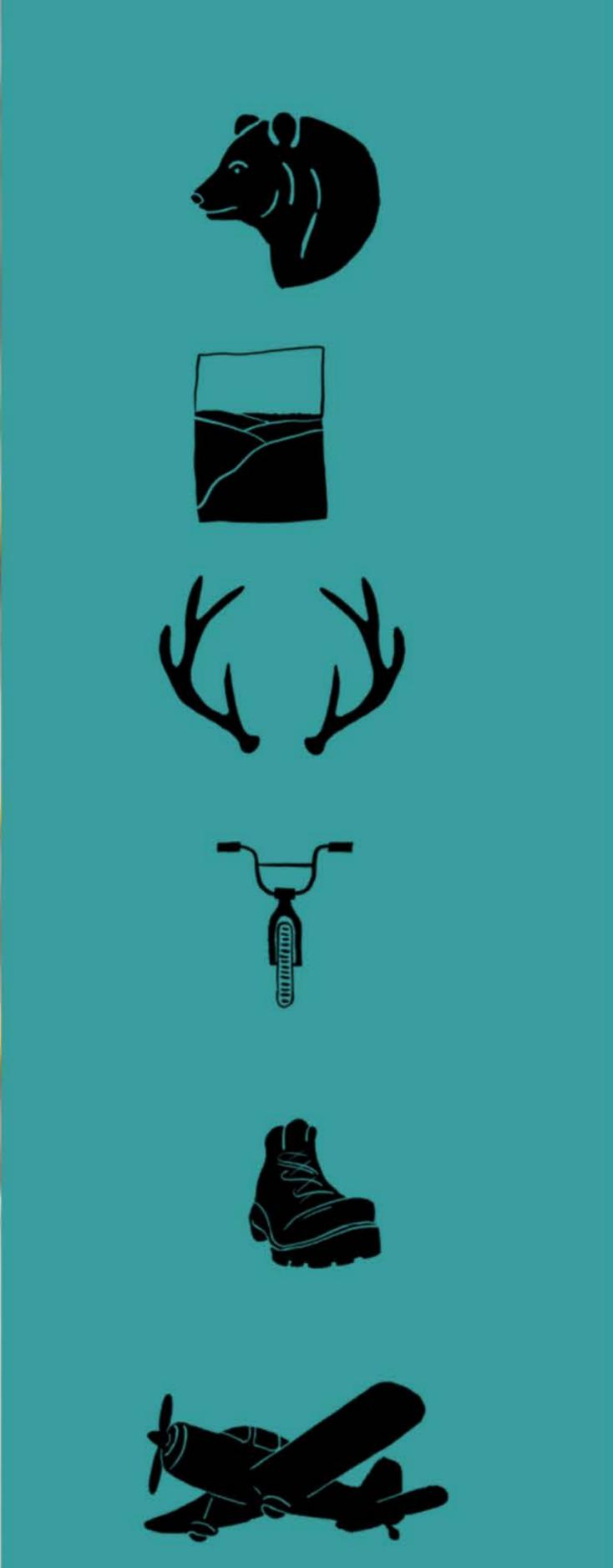
We celebrate these traits and bring them into every facet of THE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS.

WE ARE: Down to earth; Quirky and authentic, not slick; Wild yet welcoming, Enthusiastic and optimistic; Rugged and resourceful. We commit ourselves to working TOGETHER to fulfill our mission every day, while living by our core values in THE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS.



- Pilot year
- Pair 4 artisans with 4 manufacturers
- Collaborate to create PA Wilds licensed products
- Invest in inventory, artisan designs, professional development, marketing, 3PL distribution
- Strengthens B2B opportunities







***Custom PA Wilds Font –
a revival of the "Niagara Series"
from the Keystone Type Foundry
found in a specimen from 1907***





// PA WILDS ARTISAN COLLABORATIVE //

LETTERPRESS PRINTED PA WILDS ART PRINT

This poster designed for the 2025 PA Wilds Collaborative Series contains a secret waiting to be discovered – a quiet riddle of repetition, a pattern with purpose. Each of the six posters contains a hidden element repeated six times. Sometimes they're nestled in plain sight. Other times, they require a second look. These "six little somethings" are my subtle nod to the idea that every landscape in the Pennsylvania Wilds is one of six – a unique part of a greater whole.

Allegheny National Forest + Surrounds

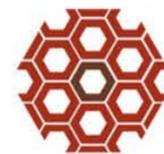
With over 16,000 miles of flowing water and thousands of trout-filled streams, something is always stirring just out of sight – from darting fish to tiny mollusks nestled along the riverbed. The PA Wilds runs deep.

Look closely — six small mollusks are hidden in the scene, quietly reminding us that even the tiniest lives shape the ecosystem.



ARTWORK BY JULIE MADER LLC
PROUDLY PRINTED IN THE PENNSYLVANIA WILDS
LAUGHING OWL PRESS • KANE, PA

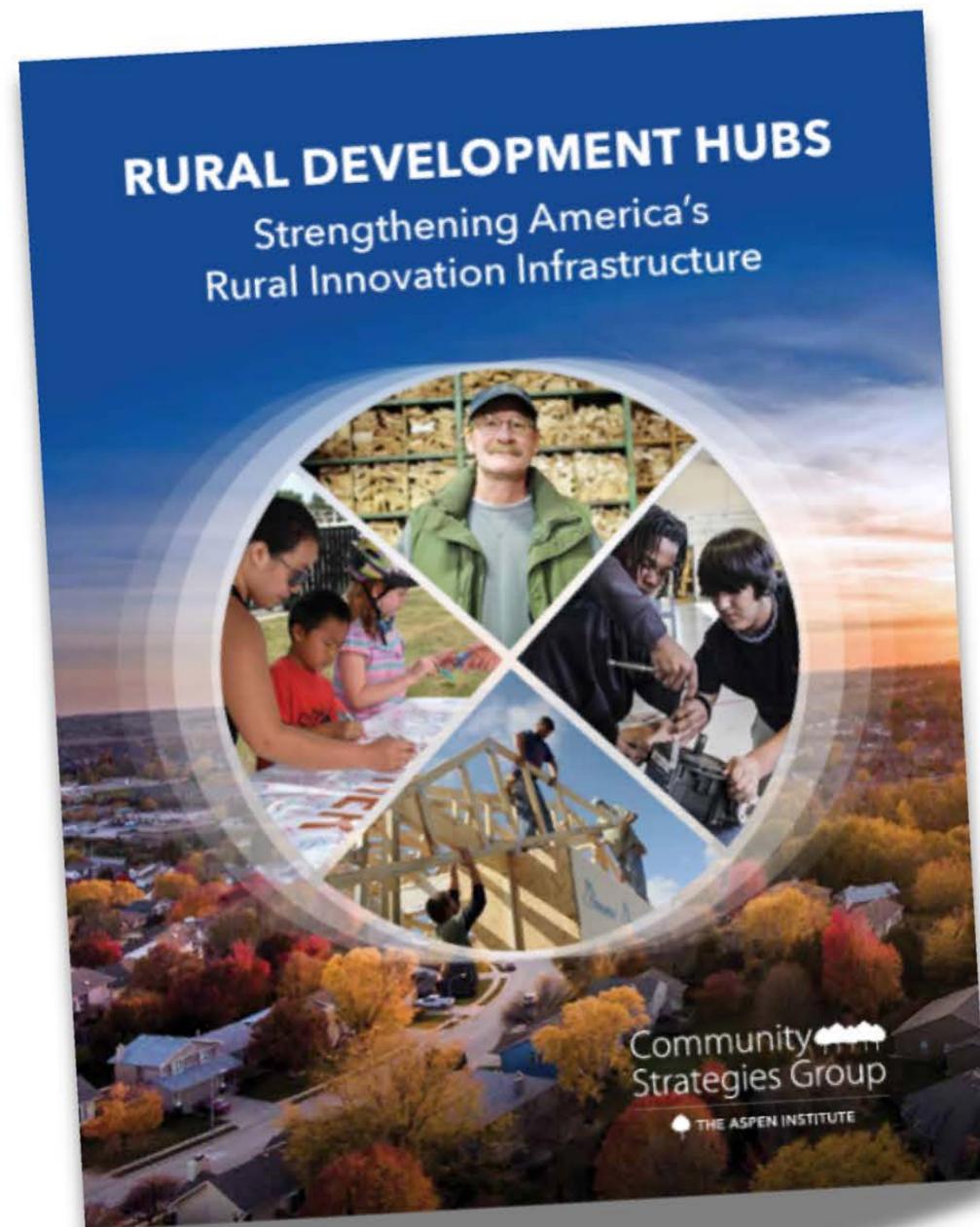
× PAWXJM_ANF ×



COLLABORATION IS VITAL



SUPPORTING REGIONAL COLLABORATION



The “What ifs” and “How can we...”

- Rural Capacity
- Capital
- Technical Assistance
- Technology Based Tools

EVOLVING TOOLS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT



**PLACEMAKER
COLAB**



Playbook Library & Consulting

- Platform Marketing & Supply Chain Development
- Technical Assistance & Strategic Support
- Peer Learning & Ecosystem Building

Amplifying rural communities to thrive.

Placemaker Market Platform

- System Management
- Data & Analytics
- Workflow Automation

FIND US ONLINE

NETWORK



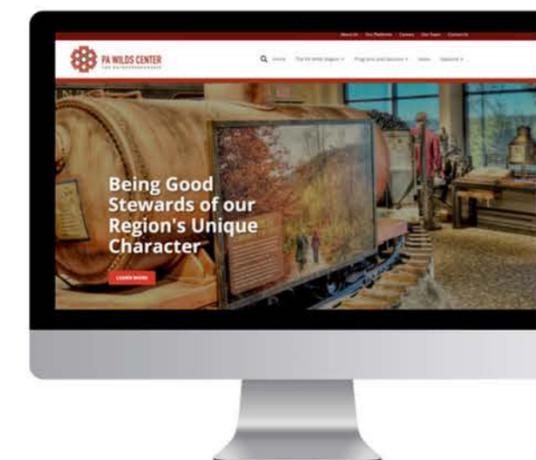
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VISIT + SHOP



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