The Pennsylvania State University

Musser Gap to Valleylands Implementation Plan

State College, Pennsylvania



Stakeholder-driven planning guides the implementation of a trail system that enhances local ecology while connecting a campus community to the cultural and natural heritage of the land.

SERVICES

Ecological Restoration Conservation Planning Climate Adaptation n 2018, Penn State University and the ClearWater Conservancy launched an initiative to conserve 355 acres of land known as Musser Gap to Valleylands. The site was envisioned as a link between State College and Rothrock State Forest and a space for learning, stewardship, and respite. After two years of intensive student, faculty, and community work conducted by PSU's Department of Landscape Architecture and the ClearWater Conservancy, the University convened a planning process to bring more granularity to the effort. Penn State wanted to explore longterm ecological and conservation needs as well as ways to make the property more accessible to students and the wider community.

Building upon the extensive site analysis, community engagement, and concept development conducted prior to our engagement, Biohabitats led an interdisciplinary design team including Andropogon Associates and NTM Engineering in developing a detailed design, phasing and costing plan to implement a series of trails and ecological enhancements throughout the site. Along with addressing the safest approaches to cross active farming zones and a busy road, the most significant issue is stewardship of the site's water resources. Throughout the process Biohabitats facilitated a work sessions with a diverse group of Penn State faculty, staff, and local stakeholders. Ecological function is woven throughout the plan, which integrates trail alignment and amenities with reforestation, meadow restoration, and stormwater management.

The final implementation plan creates a strategic vision to guide next steps for an enhanced trail system with safe pedestrian and bike access in a way that not only preserves open space and enhances regional ecology; but also honors the site's agricultural heritage by maintaining active farmland.