

Western PA Business Plan for Healthy Forests and Freshwater Habitats

Over 75 years the Richard King Mellon Foundation has committed approximately \$1 billion to conserve and restore critical habitats in Pennsylvania and nationally, to promote sustainable economic development, and to create livable communities. In the process, the Foundation has protected more than four million acres of precious lands across the country and has helped to make Pittsburgh an internationally recognized center for sustainability. The new Strategic Plan builds on and extends this history of thoughtful environmental stewardship, while also supporting efforts to activate those conserved lands to promote sustainable rural economic development.

The Foundation supports the restoration and enhancement of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems in high priority landscapes identified through the Western PA Business Plan for Healthy Forests and Freshwater Habitats. The Foundation will also consider investments in other landscapes, where it has made historic investments in habitat conservation or that it determines are high priorities.

Western Pennsylvania Conservation and Restoration Strategy Background: The Richard King Mellon Foundation (Foundation) worked closely with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to develop the Western Pennsylvania Restoration Plan. It is a comprehensive strategy to guide the Foundation's investments with a goal, by 2030, to improve and protect critical aquatic and forest habitat in Pennsylvania's western counties. Following successful implementation of the initial plan from 2015 to 2020, the Foundation has re-committed to the overall approach for the next five years, with revised goals and strategies detailed in a phase 2 plan.

The region is a biologically and geographically rich and diverse landscape defined by extensive stream and river networks, prolific forests, and, consequently, extensive human disturbances on the landscape that threaten the sustainability and capacity to expand the habitat range of avian and aquatic species of interest. The plan identifies a clear set of measurable outcomes for species' responses to habitat improvement and to which investments can be directed. By identifying a clear set of measurable outcomes, investments are strategically directed, and provide a framework to facilitate leveraging of public and private resources.

The plan has been developed in consultation with key federal and state agencies and is informed by non-governmental organizations that are committed to the conservation and stewardship of western Pennsylvania's outstanding habitat, species, and watersheds. To determine if progress is being made, the plan includes a list of aquatic and avian species that are considered long-term indicators of success. The indicator species were identified in conjunction with the experts listed above and link to specific habitats where improvements are sought. The species, which have been updated for the phase 2 plan, include:

- Golden-winged warbler
- Wood thrush
- Cerulean warbler
- Eastern brook trout
- Eastern hellbender
- Native freshwater mussels

All proposed conservation and restoration efforts will be evaluated relative to their impact on these species.

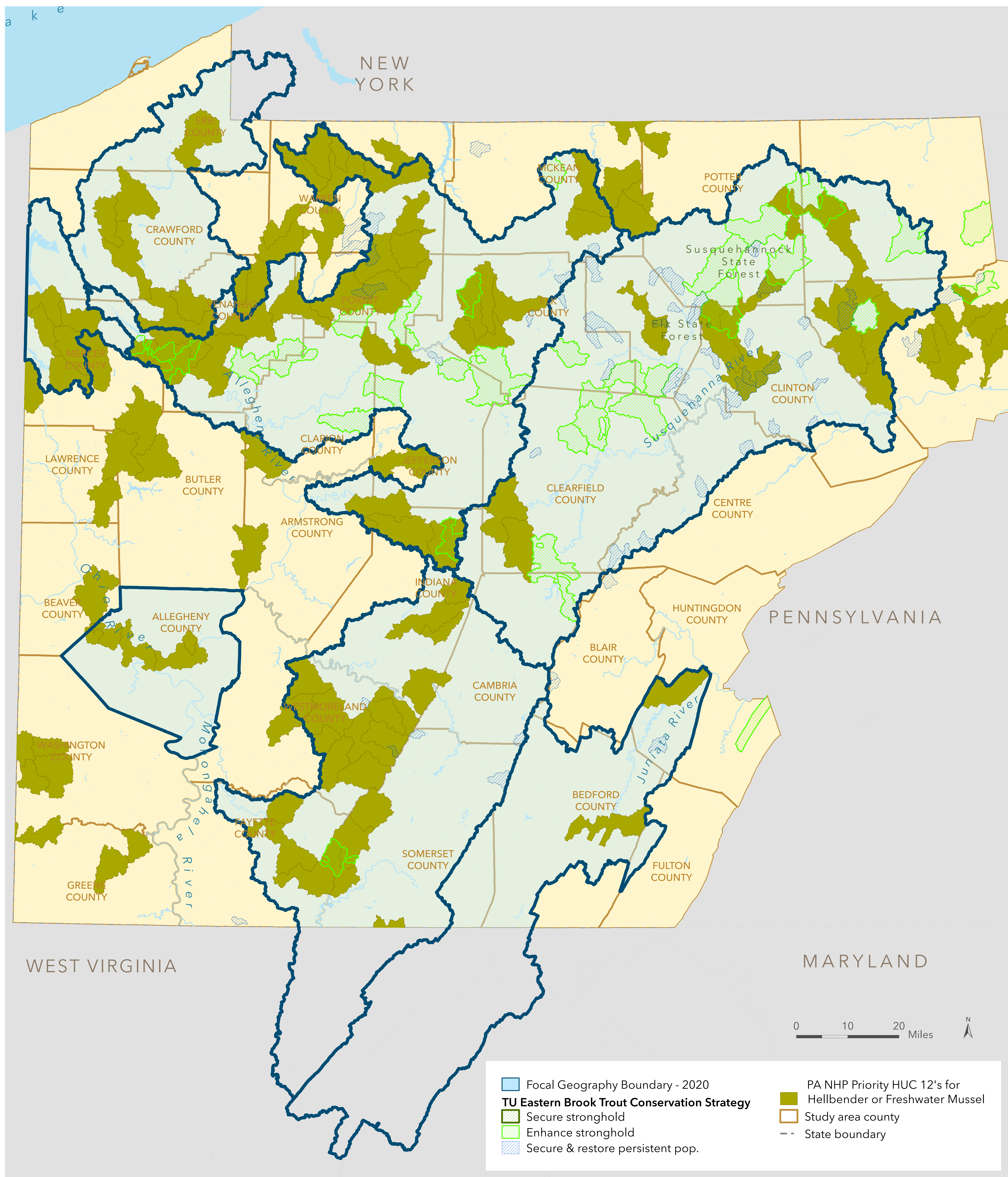
The plan also includes specific landscapes that have been identified for investment and which have been updated for phase 2. Projects that address conservation and restoration in those landscapes will receive the greatest attention and support from the Foundation. A map of the landscape is available below.

All projects must occur within those seven landscapes and describe restoration in terms of the following goals, which are likely to be updated in five years:

- Manage 140,000 acres as part of dynamic forest restoration blocks
- Develop 10 watershed habitat restoration plans
- Restore 3,000 acres of riparian habitat and improve 300 stream miles of habitat
- Remove or rectify 25 barriers to aquatic organism passage
- Open 170 miles of upstream habitat to aquatic species movement
- Implement 25 miles of dirt and gravel road best management practices
- Implement 50,000 acres of agricultural best management practices
- Restore 1,500 acres of abandoned minelands
- Treat 1,000 acres of developed land with green stormwater infrastructure
- Reach 100,000 landowners with targeted information about how to implement conservation on their lands
- Match RKMF investment dollar-for-dollar from other private and public sources; projects which show more than a 1-to-1 match may score higher.

All projects must describe how the proposed restoration effort will help accomplish one or more of the outcomes listed below. Projects that show multiple outcomes may score higher.

- Protect 30,000 acres of forestland
- Restore 17,000 acres of early successional forest habitat supporting 2,040 golden-winged warbler breeding territories
- Restore 70,000 acres of mature forest habitat supporting 5,600 wood thrush breeding territories
- Restore 53,000 acres of late successional forest habitat supporting 12,720 cerulean warbler breeding territories
- Reduce annual nitrogen and phosphorus runoff to surface waters by 6,000 and 1,800 pounds, respectively
- Reduce sediment runoff and erosion by four million pounds annually
- Increase urban stormwater storage capacity by 70 million gallons per year
- Increase Eastern brook trout populations in 10 targeted sub-watersheds
- Increase occupancy by Eastern hellbender in two targeted sub-watersheds
- Re-establish mussel populations in two targeted sub-watersheds
- Change the behavior of 2,000 individuals who adopt new conservation practices



Western PA Restoration Strategies

REGIONAL FOCAL GEOGRAPHIES - 2020 OVERLAP WITH HELLBENDER AND MUSSEL PRIORITY HUC 12'S AND BROOK TROUT PRIORITY PATCHES