

Making Connections

Roots of Prosperity in New York and Pennsylvania's
Upper Delaware River Region



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Cover: Residents and visitors alike enjoy recreational boating along the Upper Delaware River amidst scenic backdrops like Kilgour Spur. © David B. Soete **Right:** Each year, cold water fishing and boating add \$305 million to the economy in Upper Delaware River communities, with the West Branch a favorite destination for anglers. © David B. Soete

FOREWORD

Forging Our Future

Spanning parts of five counties in two states, the Upper Delaware River region is a place with palpable traditions, a rural small-town feel, and a side-by-side relationship with nature. Many of us choose to live, work and do business here because of these essential characteristics.

The roots of our area's economy run deep to logging, farming, quarrying, tanneries, mills and other manufacturing that took advantage of the area's abundant natural resources and the power of its waterways. But it was well over 100 years ago when tourism began its ascent as the principal industry here, as Sullivan County historian John Conway points out. Large-scale extractive industries—and the resulting environmental damage—began to give way to

a different vision for valuing the Upper Delaware River and the forests, farmlands and communities in its reach. Or it may have been something of a return to an old way, given Native Americans' regard for the healing waters of the Delaware River.

In its early days, tourism was inseparable from the health-giving proposition of spending time here. Tuberculosis patients came here for healing. The slogan "Doctors Say Go to the Mountains—Pure Air, Pure Water, Pure Milk" attracted tourists from the 1890s to the 1940s.

Fresh air, clean water, abundant wildlife and a rural landscape are still key parts of the area's deep appeal. In the future, the economic value of our natural re-

sources may be rooted as powerfully in their ability to attract and hold business owners and high-quality employees, entrepreneurs, retirees, young families and community leaders as it is in the value these resources hold as raw materials.

As we forge the future of our region, many of us are eager for economic development that maintains our traditions, enhances the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the landscape, and creates today's version of vitality in our hamlets and small trade centers. These are the "Roots of Prosperity," a strong foundation for a prosperous economic future in the region that shares the Upper Delaware River.

Sky Ballentine
The Anthill Farm

Katharine Brown
Fox Hill Farm Experience

Nancy Furdock
Destination Hancock

Grant Genzlinger
Settlers Hospitality Group

Deborah Gorenflo
Coldwell Banker Timberland Properties

Ryanne Jennings
The Cooperage Project

Aaron Robinson
Robinson Saw Mill Works, Inc.
Chair, Upper Delaware Council

Molly Rodgers
Wayne-Pike Trails & Waterways Alliance

Jeff Skelding and Sherri Resti Thomas
Friends of the Upper Delaware River

Rev. Laurie Stuart
Publisher, The River Reporter



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Crafting Tomorrow's Economy in the Upper Delaware Region

People who live in the Upper Delaware say this is a special place. Whether natives, long-time residents, newcomers or part-timers, what they mean by “special” is remarkably similar. Topping the list? Natural beauty, clean air and water, outdoor recreation, small, friendly communities—and the river.

THE FREE-FLOWING RIVER

One of the last large, undammed rivers in the lower 48 states, the Delaware

River flows freely 330 miles along its main stem from Hancock, New York, to the Atlantic Ocean at Delaware Bay.

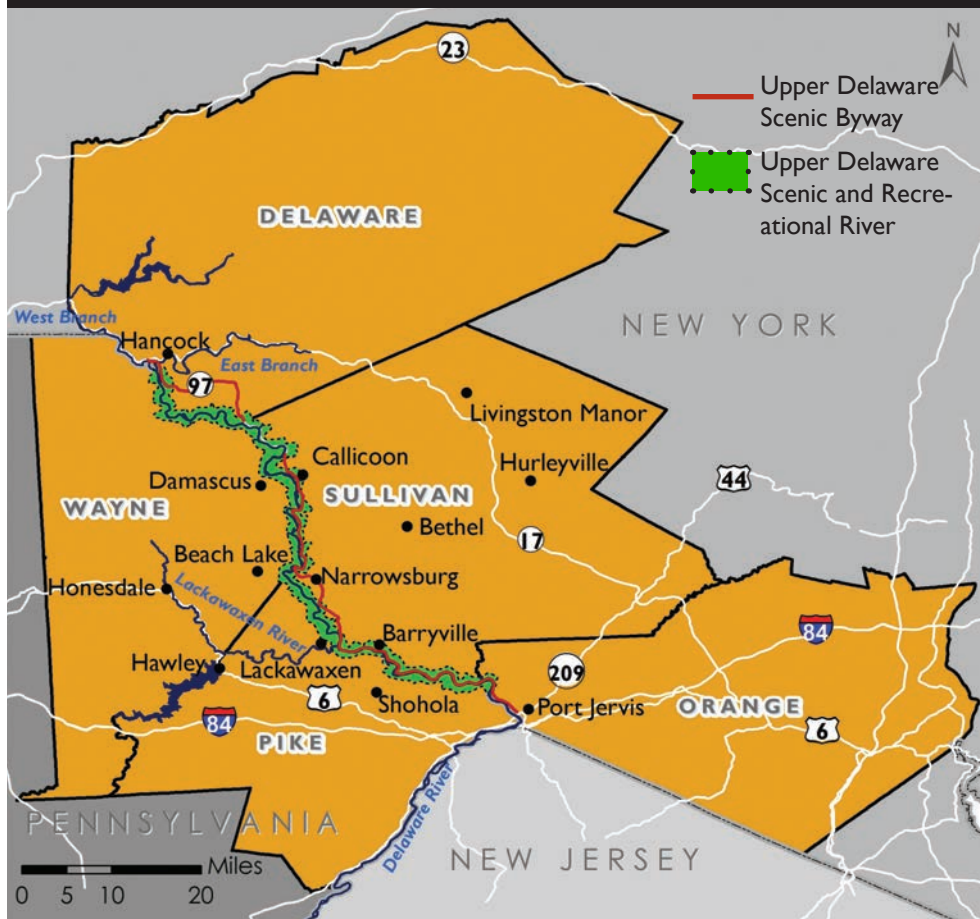
Reservoirs impounding the river's headwater streams provide about 60 percent of New York City-area residents' water supply. A robust watershed protection program avoids billions in filtration costs while releasing clean water into the river below. As it flows downstream, the Delaware remains among the clean-

est rivers in the country, in no small part due to the Upper Delaware's rural landscapes. The river is fed by tributary streams protected by forested lands and flows through a sparsely populated region patchworked with farmlands, forests and small communities.

The Upper Delaware supports one of the country's best wild trout fisheries. A reservoir management plan updated in 2017¹ provides a strong framework for

Communities, Businesses and Organizations Featured in This Report

Five-County Upper Delaware River Region: Delaware, Sullivan and Orange (NY) and Wayne and Pike (PA)



IN THE REPORT — NY

Upper Delaware River Tailwaters Coalition
Upper Delaware Scenic Byway

BARRYVILLE

Barryville Farmers Market

CALLICOON

Apple Pond Farm & Renewable Energy
Education Center
Callicoon Depot Committee
Callicoon Farmers Market

HANCOCK

Destination Hancock
Friends of the Upper Delaware River
Hancock Partners
The Hancock Town Square

HURLEYVILLE

Center for Discovery
Hurleyville Makers Lab/Artisan Studios

LIVINGSTON MANOR

Wild Roots Farm

NARROWSBURG

Gorzynski Ornery Farm
Union Works

PORT JERVIS

Port Jervis Watershed Trails

IN THE REPORT — PA

BEACH LAKE

Green Leaf Consulting Services

BOYDS MILLS

Highlights Foundation

DAMASCUS

Willow Wisp Organic Farm

LACKAWAXEN

NPS Upper Delaware Visitor Center

LAKE ARIEL

Lacawac Sanctuary

HONESDALE

The Anthill Farm
Calkins Creamery/Highland Farm
The Cooperage Project
Fox Hill Farm
Honesdale River Project
Lackawaxen Food Hub
Sawmill Cycles/NEWilderness
Stourbridge Project

SHOHOLA

Robinson Saw Mill Works

HAWLEY

Downtown Hawley Partnership
Settlers Hospitality Group
Wayne-Pike Trails & Waterways Alliance

IN THE REPORT — NY & PA

Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Delaware River Water Trail
Scenic Wild Delaware River
Upper Delaware Council
Upper Delaware Scenic and
Recreational River

addressing competing water demands in the watershed, although unpredictable water releases and temperature spikes threatening the health of this cold-water fishery are yet to be resolved.

The river is integral to the quality of life in this region—a place of recreation for locals and visitors, and a resource for businesses. Along 73 miles of the river’s length, National Park Service staff at the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River and community partners work in a unique collaboration to manage the river corridor and provide recreational access to NPS-managed sites for a quarter million visitors annually.

Within an easy drive of New York City and Philadelphia, the Upper Delaware has long attracted summer visitors and seasonal residents. In four of the five counties in the region, seasonal and recreational homes account for about a third of all housing units.²

A REAL PLACE

Part of the Upper Delaware’s appeal is that this is a real place where people live and work. The economy has changed, and is changing still. Long-term declines in manufacturing, agriculture, timber and mining mirror U.S. and global trends, as does the rise of sectors linked to provision of services. Today, government, retail trade, health care and social services account for more than 40 percent of the region’s jobs.³

Traditional industries like timber and wood products manufacturing and agriculture play a small part in the area’s economy, yet are essential to its character. They exert a powerful influence on the area’s natural beauty and rural feel.

THE NEW RESOURCE ECONOMY

Most community and business leaders interviewed for this report believe these traditional backbones of the region’s identity will be part of its future. The

caveat? They must operate compatibly with an emerging economy that depends differently on the area’s natural resources and rural landscapes. These interviewees identified communities, entrepreneurs, business owners, government and civic leaders, and youth who are building economic vitality on the shoulders of these unique assets.

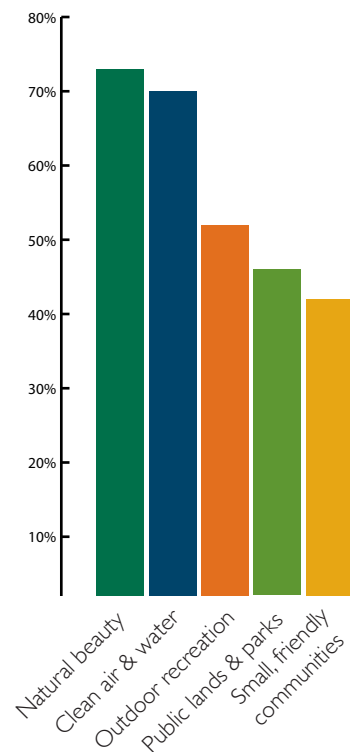
This report celebrates this emerging economy through stories from the river communities of the Upper Delaware from Hancock to Port Jervis, and further away in the watershed where the river’s influence is still felt. It introduces some of the new faces of agriculture and explores how some propose to reinvigorate the region’s forest products industry. And it gives voice to Upper Delaware residents as they ponder future challenges and opportunities.

These stories paint a picture of communities and businesses leading the way to a locally driven economy that is rooted in and sustains a remarkable, nationally significant river, working forests and farms, open spaces and genuine neighborliness. Together, they are giving rise to a new vision of long-term prosperity in the Upper Delaware River region.

Residents report natural assets are top attractors

190 Upper Delaware residents responded to our spring 2018 survey.

Top “very important” factors in decisions to move to, do business in, or stay in this area.



Recommendations

Thinking Forward

1. Update the Upper Delaware River Land and Water Use Guidelines to meet new challenges.
2. Invest in the river’s long-term ecological vitality and compatible economic activities including low-impact recreation.
3. Build and invest in local food systems.
4. Develop and market a regional brand.
5. Curate stories, experiences and destinations for visitors.
6. Support and use collaborative forums.
7. Pay attention to affordable, high-quality housing.

Working together To Take Care of the River

Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River

In 1978, Congress used the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate the Upper Delaware River as a unit of the National Park System and a component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The National Park Service (NPS) owns only 31 of the 55,575 acres within the park's administrative boundary. Most of the rest is privately owned. The park service works in a unique collaborative management arrangement with its partners (see below), guided by the Land and Water Use Guidelines and the Principles and Objectives set forth in the 1986 River Management Plan—all developed by the same NPS/community collaboration. The Plan and Guidelines apply to a narrow strip of land on either side of the river, a small but important part of the larger Upper Delaware River region.

The plan's land use management program depends on municipalities voluntarily implementing and enforcing laws, plans and ordinances including zoning regulations that preserve and enhance the cultural, ecological, geological, recreational and scenic values of the river valley.

Upper Delaware Council

Established in 1988, the Upper Delaware Council (UDC) is a formal partnership of local, state and federal governments and agencies that have joined together to manage the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. This unique collaborative management mechanism created and implements the River Management Plan, which is committed to using local land use controls and voluntary actions by landowners to protect the resources on their own private property.

Participating UDC members include the states of New York and Pennsylvania and, currently, 13 of 15 local governments that border the Upper Delaware River. The Delaware River Basin Commission is a non-voting member. The non-profit UDC operates under a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service. The UDC assists with reviews of development projects, ordinances and governmental initiatives; advocates for the river; and administers grants for municipal members. It also does outreach, education and community engagement activities.

“Leaving land use decisions in the hands of local governments is the most important step in building a cooperative working arrangement among all levels of government.”

“The adoption and enforcement of local plans, laws, and ordinances which relate to the protection of river corridor resources will be the backbone of the River Management Plan.”

From the Upper Delaware River Management Plan

Upper Delaware
Scenic and Recreational River by the numbers⁴

253,500

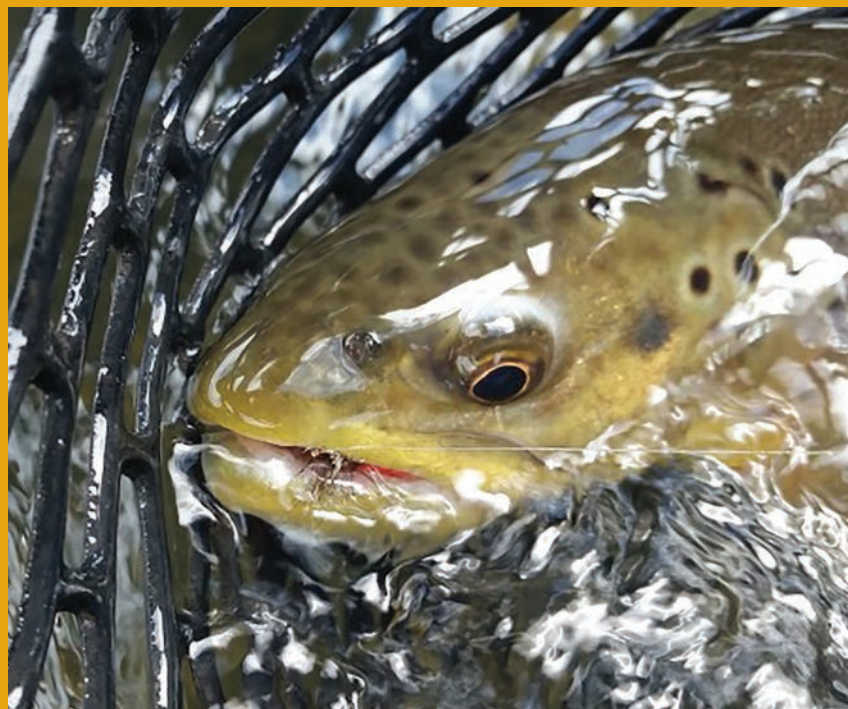
2017 visitors
to NPS sites

\$10.8 million

Visitor spending

113

Jobs supported





Upper Delaware river towns bring people together to celebrate and learn about nature and heritage

Often working with nonprofit partners and the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, river communities such as Barryville, Callicoon, Cohecton, Equinunk, Lackawaxen and Narrowsburg educate, engage and entertain through festivals, research and educational events, butterfly bike rides, tractor parades and the like.

Clockwise from top left: Annual tractor parade in Callicoon NY © Dawn J. Benko Upper Delaware BioBlitz, Starlight Lake PA © David B. Soete Honey Bee Festival in Narrowsburg NY © Joan Santo Zane Grey Festival in Lackawaxen PA © NPS Riverfest in Narrowsburg NY © Herb Clark, Sullivan County Visitors Association

**Thinking forward
Meeting New Challenges**

As we celebrate the unique character and special qualities of the Upper Delaware, we must also consider how best to balance future development so it contributes to economic vitality and protects and enhances the natural and cultural resources that embody our history and are critical to our future.

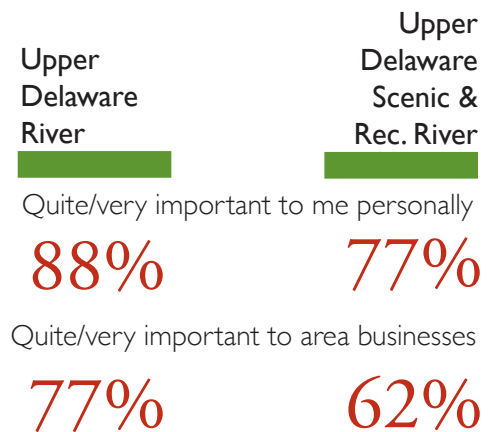
The 1986 Land and Water Use Guidelines, created jointly by local communities and the National Park Service as the foundation of a collaborative approach to management, aim for that balance. Local municipalities voluntarily adhere to these standards when developing zoning, ordinances, and plans. Land use decisions remain local, while protecting and enhancing the characteristics that led to the Upper Delaware being included in the National Park and National Wild and Scenic Rivers systems. Despite a visionary approach, these guidelines could not anticipate the full range of land uses that local municipalities would need to address 40 years later.

In the coming years, the guidelines will need updates to address new land uses such as utility-scale solar and wind energy and cell towers. These land uses provide green energy, jobs and essential communication for residents and business owners. If not properly sited, operated and maintained, they may detract from the very reasons that people visit, live, recreate and do business here. We need strong support from federal, state and local leaders and communities to find—together—innovative solutions to new challenges.

— Kristina Heister, Superintendent
Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River

Residents value the river and the NPS Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River

Combined “very important” and “quite important” responses.



Left: The Upper Delaware River supports one of the country’s best cold water wild trout fisheries.
© East Branch Outfitters

HANCOCK, NEW YORK

Reinventing a River Town

Nancy Furdock runs the summer music series in Hancock's town square. Every other week she talks with dozens of concert-goers—locals, travelers passing through, visitors with family in the area, and counselors at one of the many summer camps nearby. "Hancock is reinventing itself," Furdock says, and events like these appeal to both residents and visitors.

Hancock's town square dates only to 2013, an effort—spearheaded by Hancock Partners, a community nonprofit guided by local business leaders—to build a public space for a town that had never had one. Complete with picnic pavilion and bandstand, the park functions as a gathering place for everything from celebratory picnics for local sports teams to the Blues Brews and BBQ festival, a summer kickoff event for locals and seasonal visitors alike. Furdock says the town square helps bridge the gap between what existing Hancock businesses offer and what visitors want: "We operate a pop-up model with farmers markets, food vendors and events."

At the confluence of the West and East branches where the main stem of the Delaware River begins, Hancock is—not surprisingly—a river town.

Hancock is surrounded by fishing and river outfitters and lodging establishments catering to their customers. The National Park Service currently permits 66 fishing guides and 12 canoe liveries to operate along the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. A dozen campgrounds operate within the river corridor, while nearby communities offer additional camping and lodging. Three sizeable fly fishing resorts on the West Branch of the Delaware River—the jewel of the wild trout fishery—employ guides and seasonal staff.

Cold water fishing and boating add value to Upper Delaware economy⁵

\$305
million Annual economic activity in region's communities.

Added real estate value of second homes **\$109**
million

Hancock's connection with the river is evidenced by two fly shops, a bait and tackle shop, an outdoor store and canoe, kayak and tube rentals downtown with a river access just to the south.

Also on Hancock's Main Street is the office of Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR), a community-based watershed conservation organization focused on protecting and restoring the cold water ecosystem of the Upper Delaware River. Here, renowned wild trout fisheries are supported by exceptionally clean, cold water releases from dams on the West Branch and East Branch that control New York City water supply reservoirs, which are preserved by one of the preeminent watershed protection programs in the world.

FUDR is run by Jeff Skelding, an avid angler who grew up along the Delaware River, and Sherri Resti Thomas, an area native who kayaks the river every chance she gets. Talking to the two of them is enough to convince almost any landlubber to get out on the water. Their passion for the river carries over into their work. "I feel so fortunate to have grown up here and to witness the evolution of the river and how it is so closely tied to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic fabric of my hometown," Thomas says. "I am proud to be a native of this region. The Upper Delaware River will be a part of me forever."

FUDR is part of the Upper Delaware River Tailwaters Coalition, which brings county and municipal officials together with conservation and eco-

Left: The Hancock Town Square provides a community gathering place enjoyed by locals and visitors. © Destination Hancock **Right:** Ben Rinker and his dog Buck work an eel trap along the Upper Delaware River near Hancock, a continuation of the river's history as a working waterway. © Cindy Rinker





conomic development organizations to focus on maintaining the health of the river's headwaters. Skelding believes the region's future is tied to recognizing the natural resource value of the river. "That value is directly tied to the economic revival of this region. We need community leaders, government officials, businesses, landowners and all watershed stakeholders to recognize this connection and support new policies and programs that promote the long-term sustainability of the river."

In 2014, FUDR spearheaded an economic impact study in partnership with the Town of Hancock, funded by the Delaware County Industrial Development Agency and the Upper Delaware Council. The study found that cold water fishing and boating add \$305 million to the economy of communities along the Upper Delaware River from Callicoon to Hancock and along the East and West branches from Hancock to the dams. In addition, cold water fishing and boating add \$109 million to the real estate value of second homes in the area.⁶

In Skelding's view, "if the Upper Delaware region is to recover and

thrive economically, there needs to be a significant investment in a river-based economy that benefits people and communities. Tourism is the lifeblood of this community. We need to seize every opportunity to maximize the recreational value of the watershed and support responsible and sustainable use of the resource for the long term."

Wood products manufacturing and bluestone quarrying, once powerful engines of Hancock's economy, have waned in importance, tracking with changes in the U.S. and global economies. "I don't think Hancock will lose its traditional economy," Furdock observes. "Farming, timber and bluestone quarrying are always going to be a part of who we are. Hancock can leverage the same things we all love about living here to attract new businesses and a demographic with money to spend and invest."

Hancock sits at the top of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, which attracts some 300,000 leisure travelers annually to New York State Route 97 and its amenities. These visitors spend in the neighborhood of \$20 million in communities along the Byway.⁷ Furdock,

I feel so fortunate to have grown up here and to witness the evolution of the river and how it is so closely tied to the social, cultural, environmental, and economic fabric of my hometown.

Sherri Resti Thomas
Friends of the Upper
Delaware River

who is Vice Chair of the Byway's board, says Hancock benefits from this kind of collaboration. "It's important to be connected to our neighbors. We can attract more visitors together than we do separately, and we can learn from parts of this region that are ahead of where we are in understanding and properly marketing to our visitors."

The bottom line, says Furdock, is this: "We need to work together. Tourism can bring us a lot, but in the winter when all the visitors go home, it's the locals that make our economy tick."

FARM FORWARD

New Twists on Local Agriculture

Katharine Brown, who owns Fox Hill Farm in Honesdale, chuckled, “People thought I had three heads when I opened our barn for weddings and other events. But now, I look around and see that agritourism is getting to be much more popular, and more people are realizing that they can make their land work for them in a different way.”

The Browns also use their 50-acre farm to produce freshly cut seasonal flowers, raise grass-fed beef and pastured poultry, and offer tours and workshops in everything from bee keeping to raising chickens to birding. Their mission is as much educational as it is business. Much of what they do aims to make farming and nature more approachable to locals and visitors from New York City and Philadelphia, for whom getting out of the car on a working farm might feel like a bit much. In Brown’s experience, “people are more apt to buy local food if they see a real person on a real farm working. And the more we can preserve it, take care of it and keep it whole, the more people appreciate it.”

Her observations reflect a growing interest in “clean” and local food systems among Upper Delaware residents and in nearby urban markets. Tapping into and feeding this interest have influenced the evolution of farming in the region—often toward organic and soil-maintaining practices that reduce

agricultural impact on water quality in Upper Delaware streams and rivers. Some examples:

- Across the region, organic farmers sell produce locally and to evolving regional markets. Greg Swartz and Tannis Kowalchuk, for example, sell produce from Willow Wisp Organic Farm at farmers’ markets in Callicoon and Barryville, as well as in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Wild Roots Farm and Gorzynski Ornerly Farm operate as community supported agricultural (CSA) operations, selling their produce to members by subscription.
- As Wayne County dairy producers consider how to keep their businesses viable in the future, local and regional specialty markets will play an important role, for example, producing higher-fat milk and yogurt for niche markets in New York and New Jersey. Small-scale producers like Highlands Farm and Calkins Creamery, both owned and run by the multi-generation Bryant family, already tap into regional markets for artisanal cheeses, and now ship to every state.
- Apple Pond Farm and Renewable Energy Education Center is an 80-acre organic farm with a renewable energy system that includes wind, solar electric, solar thermal, heat pump and a truck and furnace powered by used vegetable oil. Sonja Hedlund and Dick Riseling offer farm stays, tours, classes, in-depth training workshops and apprenticeships that engage visitors in farm life and develop skills and knowledge related to farming, food production, wool working, renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- Lackawaxen Food Hub works with more than 25 regional farms and food producers who provide locally grown vegetables, meat, dairy and food products. The food hub brings a year-round supply of fresh food to the region through a multi-farm CSA and wholesale sales. The food hub serves consumers, restaurants and food-related businesses in Wayne, Pike and Lackawanna counties (PA) and Sullivan County (NY).

The more we can preserve the farm, take care of it and keep it whole, the more people appreciate it.

Katharine Brown
Fox Hill Farm Experience





Thinking forward Local Food, Local Investing

Local agriculture can't survive without local support. Frequenting farmers markets and stopping at farm stands is a start. Choosing eateries that source local food helps support an entire network of suppliers and businesses in the region's economy.

Upper Delaware farmers and food businesses could use a more direct infusion of local interest and capital, too.

Community supported agriculture is one approach that some farms and collectives use to generate capital they need to operate. CSA members pay a subscription fee, providing the resources the farmer needs to prepare, plant and cultivate a harvest that is distributed throughout the growing season to subscribers. Besides subscribing, you can contribute by volunteering your time at local farms or food hubs.

Here's another way: helping local people invest in the region's food system. Slow Money Delaware River—which launched in 2017—is part of a nationwide movement to direct local capital to local food systems. The aim is to support farmers, small-business and artisan food entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, and purveyors of local and sustainable food through direct investments from local residents. Across the country, Slow Money groups have directed more than \$66 million in local investments to some 700 organic farms and food enterprises. Person-to-person loans as small as \$7,000 have made a big difference in small, local operations, yielding returns for investors, communities and environmental quality.

— Christine Ahern, Lackawaxen Food Hub
— Sky Ballentine, The Anthill Farm

Traditional industries are essential to the region's rural character⁸

95% Forest & farm land area

Forest products & agriculture jobs 2%

Left: Offering events (like this wedding at Fox Hill Farm), educational programs and lodging are ways that area farmers are diversifying revenue streams. © Courtney Bond Photography **Above:** The Anthill Farm and many other small farms grow fresh produce for local and regional markets. Anthill farmers are implementing a land-restoring agroforestry system that will integrate an overstory of food-producing trees and bushes with rows of vegetables and grass for grazing. © The Anthill Farm

SUSTAINABLE FOREST PRODUCTS

Rethinking the Industry for Healthy Forests & Clean Water

When he was 21, Aaron Robinson bought a part-time sawmill operation in Barryville, New York, turning it into Robinson's Sawmill, a thriving international enterprise and a large local employer. After 24 years, foreign competition, costly regulations and a changing labor market prompted Robinson to close up shop in 2000. Wood is in his blood, though, and Robinson has remained active in the forest products industry, designing and distributing woodworking tools and operating a firewood business across the river in Shohola, Pennsylvania, that uses culled and low-grade wood from local mills.

Robinson is convinced the forest products industry has potential to enhance the region's economy while complementing its natural beauty and ecological health. "There's a great multiplier effect in a healthy and active forest products industry," Robinson asserts. "Few other businesses can create such a broad range of well-paid, full-time jobs, generate revenue for landowners to sustain large tracts of forest land and minimize tax burdens for municipalities. Well-managed forests can be a private investment that maintains healthy productive forest ecosystems and watersheds yielding pure water."

The key to creating a stable, modern forest industry in the Upper Delaware, Robinson says, "is encouraging the

Renewable resource extraction, when done responsibly and with input from the people involved in it locally, helps preserve the rural character of our community.

Aaron Robinson
Robinson Saw Mill Works



regional development of diverse industrial consumers of local wood fiber."

Josh Flad, forester and owner of Green Leaf Consulting Services in Beach Lake Pennsylvania, agrees. "We can drive the kind of timber management we want to see on private land by developing regional markets for the types of wood that should be removed to maintain healthy forests."

Instead of incentivizing primarily the cutting of large trees suitable for dimensional lumber—which can happen only in multi-decade rotations—Flad says the region needs markets for lower-quality and smaller wood. Managing this low-grade material, Flad says, "can increase forest health and species diversity, enhance wildlife habitat and yield higher-quality forest products over the long term." Coupled with stream-friendly practices like riparian buffers, this kind of forest management helps maintain high water quality in the region's streams and rivers.

Among the ideas that Robinson and Flad believe can help close the loop on this abundant type of wood fiber:

- Consider and incentivize the use of industrial-scale wood pellet or fiber-burning furnaces for newly proposed institutions or commercial rehab projects.
- Construct wood-fiber-fueled power plants to provide cleaner electric power to the grid while offering a steady market for low-grade timber.
- Manufacture biodegradable packaging made from wood fiber.
- Foster research and innovation that yield wood products that can be supported by sustainable harvest of the region's forests, and pursue manufacturers of clean, high-tech wood products.

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy (Bethel, NY, and Hawley, PA) is a land trust with over 14,000 acres under conservation easement. The Conservancy's focus on sustaining healthy forests is part of its commitment to protecting

Above: Small-scale timber operations can help landowners manage healthy forests and support local employment while preserving clean water.

© Delaware Highlands Conservancy **Right:** Residents and visitors alike enjoy relaxing along the region's streams and rivers. © Jumping Rocks Media; Ledges Hotel

the region's natural heritage and rural quality of life. The Conservancy works in close partnership with landowners and communities. Bringing woodland owners together to share knowledge and learn from professionals about forest management and conservation is core to its educational approach. The Conservancy connects landowners with consulting foresters to help them create sound forest management plans. Its *Shop Local Save Land* guide to wood products, professionals and resources highlights more than 200 related businesses.

From his perspective as a local business owner, Robinson says education, partnerships, and the involvement of businesses and landowners are critical to shaping the new face of a sustainable forest products industry in the Upper Delaware River region. "Open it up," says Robinson. "Don't shut it down."

Thinking forward Upper Delaware Proud

Some local businesses have been successful in expanding their sales to regional markets, especially in New York City. Their success got me thinking about how, working together, Upper Delaware businesses could do the same thing. Lots of us acknowledge that proximity to New York is an advantage. While we are not as well-known as the Hudson Valley or the Catskills, our region has long attracted vacationers, second home owners and transplants from the city.

We can build on that natural connection by developing an Upper Delaware River Valley brand for forest, agricultural and other natural resource products. This brand would indicate regional provenance and could tie into existing programs such as American Tree Farm or Sustainable Forestry Initiative for forest products, New York State Grown and Certified for agricultural products, and others.

Offered locally and to regional markets, the brand would promote the sustainable use of resources here and offer consumers an opportunity to feel connected to our communities while supporting responsible management through their buying preferences.

— Josh Flad, Green Leaf Consulting Services

Connecting Sustainable Tourism & Conservation

The Settlers Hospitality Group has been a participating member of the Delaware Highlands Conservancy's Green Lodging Partnership since its inception. Guests in our four hotels overwhelmingly support the region's clean air, clean water and open space—the very characteristics that keep them returning to the Upper Delaware region again and again. The funds contribute to the Conservancy's land protection, water preservation, education and outreach programs in a win-win for our guests and our region.

— Grant Genzlinger, Settlers Hospitality Group

\$159
million

Annual state and local tax revenue related to tourism

Tax Relief
from Tourism⁹

In four Upper Delaware counties: Sullivan and Orange (NY), Wayne and Pike (PA), 2014

\$738

Average household tax bill reduction due to tax revenues from tourism



HONESDALE, PENNSYLVANIA

Community Building Supports Local Commerce

“Honesdale is beginning to be populated by young people who left and came back,” observed Ryanne Jennings, executive director of The Cooperage Project, a nonprofit organization named for the historic downtown barrel factory that houses it.

Jennings is one of those returning natives. After a dozen years in Philadelphia, Jennings returned to Honesdale. “We wanted to raise our children close to family, so we came back, not knowing whether we could even find jobs.” Jennings took the helm of The Cooperage Project. Her husband James landed a job with Yoga International, which offers online courses, operates a downtown studio, and teaches yoga in local classrooms. James also serves on the Honesdale Borough Council.

The Cooperage Project aims to strengthen community through artisan and farmers’ markets, learning opportunities like after school programs, lectures and films, live performances and fun community events. Similarly, much of Honesdale’s home-grown revitalization effort focuses on making a better place for residents.

The Honesdale River Project, for example, is working to create walking paths and access points along the Lackawaxen River—a Delaware River tributary—as it runs through the borough. Honesdale business owner Katharine Brown observes, “This is a river town, but you’d never know it. Historically, the river was thought of as a resource for commerce. Today, it can be a different kind of resource for Honesdale, a place to recreate and enjoy nature.” Advocates believe building ways for locals to connect with the river will yield economic benefits as part of a wave of incremental changes that boost the area’s appeal to visitors, new residents and business owners.

River Project advocates believe building ways for locals to connect with the river will yield economic benefits as part of a wave of incremental changes that boost the area’s appeal to visitors, new residents and business owners.

This “locals first” approach makes sense in what Jennings describes as “a year-round community that doesn’t suffer from the deep seasonal fluctuations that a reliance on tourism can bring.” Honesdale’s downtown is largely locally owned, a mix of the expected retail and service purveyors and the unexpected—like Nhi Mundy’s Vietnamese restaurant with sister locations across the river in Callicoon and Mountaindale, Aaron Vietri’s comic book store, an olive oil and balsamic vinegar shop, and a store that sells handcrafted goods to support cancer programs.

Thinking forward Sharing Our Place

Don’t get me started. In every meeting or conversation on any related topic, someone will cut me off saying, “We KNOW. We need a hotel in Honesdale.” It’s been my mantra for years. But Honesdale isn’t really ready to support a new operation. A conversation with a local business owner spawned the idea of bootstrapping it by creating an online concierge service. The service would match visitors with the kinds of accommodations that we do have—vacation rentals, occasional use cabins, even off-season space at one of the many summer camps—and help them assemble lodging “packages” for larger groups.

I think a lot of other communities in this region could benefit from this approach to “curating” what we offer. Tell the stories that help visitors—and our neighbors—understand what is special about this place, and how to make the most of it. Our tourism bureaus, chambers of commerce and collaborative initiatives like Scenic Wild Delaware River (www.scenicwilddelawareriver.com) already offer us opportunities to develop and promote itineraries that connect communities, businesses, guide services, events, trails, parks and other attractions. Working together, we can have a larger presence on a regional, national and global stage.

— Katharine Brown, Fox Hill Farm Experience

Honesdale’s mix of downtown businesses and commercial space, expanding restaurant offerings, and wide sidewalks offer the walkability that is in growing demand as city dwellers look to relocate in smaller communities with certain urban qualities.

Daniel Corrigan, Honesdale native and Sawmill Cycles and Northeast Wilderness Experience owner, notes that incorporating more residential space into the downtown area has proven challenging. “We have great buildings and upper floor spaces that could be converted, but the requirement for two parking spaces per unit makes it hard to accomplish.” Policies like these may change if housing issues remain front and center as Honesdale progresses.

Mary Beth Wood, who directs the Wayne Economic Development Corporation, noted that the county’s concerted efforts to extend high-speed broadband service will also figure in Honesdale’s success.

The Center for Discovery Remaking Hurleyville

While Honesdale and Wayne County work out the kinks, Jennings, Corrigan, and others are forging a virtuous circle they hope will attract today's youth to make Honesdale their home. At The Cooperage Project, an afternoon "Pop-Up Club" connects middle school students with business leaders, artists, producers, professionals and educators for hands-on exploration of science, technology, math, health activities, entrepreneurial skills and potential jobs. The Cooperage Project, Sawmill Cycles and other area businesses also offer internship and youth employment opportunities.

Quality of place has become essential to business attraction and retention. For some industries it is almost as important as having a skilled workforce.

Mary Beth Wood
Wayne Economic
Development Corporation

"Community is our future," is one of four principles that drives innovation at the Center for Discovery in Hurleyville, New York. Each year, the Center provides residential, medical and education services to over 1,200 children, adults and families from the region and around the world seeking advanced care for a range of intellectual and physical challenges. The Center, based on a farm, integrates food and farming into its holistic, research-based program.

John Conway, the Center's media studio director, said the original farm and the town thrived when the railroad served the area, "but when the railroad left in 1957, the town spiraled downward." Ten years ago, the Center saw opportunity in abandoned buildings. It pursued grants and other resources to remake the town to benefit Center residents, staff, and the community.

The Center restarted the local newspaper, built an arts center, started a makers lab, and partners with people who want to operate businesses in town. A market, local foods restaurant, Italian butcher shop, artisan studios, rail trail and community-supported agriculture add to a revitalized hamlet. Hurleyville is emerging as a model for inclusive and sustainable living, a place where Center residents and community members work and learn side-by-side. Though it is outside the river corridor, it is an inspiration for community revitalization; and the Center is an important regional employer.

Center for Discovery by the numbers¹⁰

\$200 million	Annual economic impact	1,560	Employees
		>200	Live in communities along the Upper Delaware River

Clockwise from left: Arts events like this Honesdale guitar jam make connections that strengthen communities. © Tim Farrell Children's book illustrator and author Lindsay Barrett George hosts the middle school Pop-Up Club at her studio. • Children make hula hoop weavings during a summer program. • Learning about beavers and salamanders captivates young hikers at Lacawac Sanctuary. © The Cooperage Project



FORWARD MOMENTUM

Using Trails to Connect Communities and the Outdoors

By day, George Brown runs the Highlights Foundation in Boyds Mills, Pennsylvania, continuing the legacy begun in 1946 when his great-grandparents published the first issues of the children's magazine from a tiny office above a car dealership. Evenings, weekends, and sometimes over lunch, Brown is a committed member of the Wayne-Pike Trails & Waterways Alliance. The Alliance is a volunteer group working toward creating a network of connected trails in Wayne and Pike counties.

Talking about Honesdale's revitalization efforts, which were part of the impetus for the Alliance, Brown notes, "We looked around and asked, 'What do all thriving communities have and do?' One thing that jumped out was trails. We started out with the idea of putting a trail along the river, like the town of Jim Thorpe did."

The Alliance is working on three related initiatives: a trail along the route of the

privately owned and operated historic Stourbridge Rail Line, connecting Honesdale, White Mills and Hawley; trails along the Lackawaxen River, which runs through Honesdale; and trails within the borough's Apple Grove and Gibbons parks.

Alliance member Dan Corrigan, who owns the local bike shop and outdoor adventure outfitter, said the initiative has gained traction by "focusing on the big picture while engaging people in micro-projects that show success in the short term." These modest steps have resulted in three miles of trail in the two borough parks. As for the big picture, the Alliance and its partners have raised \$60,000 to match a \$40,000 state grant, enabling the group to fund a Greenways Trails Feasibility Study for the route connecting Honesdale and Hawley. The Wayne County Commission and Wayne County Community Foundation play key supporting roles.

Alliance member Molly Rodgers notes, "We know there are a lot of questions to be asked and solutions to be analyzed. We don't know the answers yet but we see the economic impact of trails in other places and we are excited about the future of trails here."

The Alliance is not alone in the Upper Delaware region in pursuing trails as a community and economic development strategy. Across the Delaware River, Sullivan County (NY) is working to complete 50 miles of the Ontario & Western rail trail from Livingston Manor to Mamakating.

Led by a volunteer workforce, Port Jervis developed 30 miles of hiking and biking trails on nearly 500 acres of watershed preserve. New York state funding will help create facilities for the trails, and the city plans to develop a campground to boost overnight visitation. Mayor Kelly Decker notes, "We envision the trail system stimulating the growth of eateries, specialty shops, family entertainment and increased visitation to the many local historical sites and breathtaking views along the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway."

A 2018 Pennsylvania Environmental Council grant to the Downtown Hawley Partnership (PA) supports completion of a trail connecting the Wayne County Historical Society Lock 31 trail to Hawley's existing trail at Riverside Park. And Lacawac Sanctuary received funding to create *Get Outside, Get Healthy!* trail guidebooks for public lands in Pike and Wayne counties.

A waterfront revitalization planning process in Sullivan County (NY) identified opportunities to develop recreation and economic activity around the Delaware River Water Trail. As a result, the county has plans in place to upgrade its river access sites.

Thinking forward Getting It Together

In this region, with its geography that spans two states and five counties, ad hoc regional collaboration is essential. There is no one body that holds the whole or has jurisdiction. Indeed, we all hold a piece of it. And with that, collaboration is mandated.

We instinctively know that we can't fix every issue by ourselves. We need to reach out to our neighbors, to the myriad organizations and institutions--across state boundaries, across county lines, across the river.

And so we have. From the Upper Delaware Council to the Callicoon Depot Committee, so many groups have come from different interests and areas of the Upper Delaware to work and plan together. Diverse communities, with specific interests, have come together in meetings that have, at their fundamental core, a certain collaborative process--taking a look at what individual or certain perspectives bring and factoring them into the whole. That process is moving from an egocentric view of the valley to an ecocentric view of the commons.

These collaborations, both small and large, have yielded, are yielding, amazing results. It is our way of thinking, collaborating, into a viable and authentic future.

— Rev. Laurie Stuart, Co-facilitator, Upper Delaware Roundtable
Publisher, *The River Reporter*



The Upper Delaware River Scenic and Recreational River connects people and nature

The national Scenic and Recreational River designation aims equally to protect the Upper Delaware River corridor's exceptional values and to provide recreational access, educate and interpret, and ensure the safety of the river's visitors. National Park Service staff, partners and volunteers welcome more than 250,000 visitors each year, helping them enjoy, understand and contribute.

Above clockwise from left: The D&H Towpath Trail along the river at Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct offers a glimpse into canal-era history. © Craig Snedeker Delaware Highlands Conservancy's winter eagle watching tours depart from the NPS visitor center in Lackawaxen, PA. © Delaware Highlands Conservancy Once endangered, bald eagles thrive along the Upper Delaware River. © Stephen Davis **Below:** Walking and biking trails like the D&H Rail Trail provide recreational opportunities and generate economic benefits. © Cindy Gerner

D&H Rail Trail by the numbers¹¹

\$371,000

2016 economic impact

4 of 5

Nonmotorized trail users bought food and drink (average spending = \$21/day)

1 of 4

Stayed overnight, an average of three nights

A multi-use trail in rural northeast Pennsylvania, the Delaware & Hudson (D&H) Rail Trail follows the boundary between Susquehanna and Wayne counties from Carbondale to the New York state line. The Lackawanna River parallels the trail to the east and separates it from the 10-mile Ontario & Western Rail Trail. The trails are part of the emerging 70+ mile long Lackawanna River Heritage Trail system.



People Matter

The People Side of Economic Vitality

People are at the heart of the region's economic vitality. From entrepreneurship to education to creating and providing experiences for visitors, supporting the people who make business tick is key to making the new economy work. Here are some ways that Upper Delaware communities are supporting the people side of economic vitality.

- Co-working and shared-equipment working and creative spaces: Union Works in Narrowsburg (NY), Stourbridge Project in Honesdale (PA), and Hurleyville Makers Lab and Artisans Studios (NY).
- Business incubators: Narrowsburg Union (NY) provides bakery, brewery and distillery facilities and space for starting and expanding food and beverage businesses. An incubator is in the works for Port Jervis, NY.
- Microbusiness support: Sullivan County Microenterprise Assistance Program.

Many local businesses are finding that the millennial generation's expressed preference for experiences over material goods is a culmination of a long-running travel reality in the Upper Delaware. Tourism here long has been about the experience of relaxation, healing and refuge. Add to that a growing interest in outdoor recreation, and the prevalence of "geotravellers" interested in sustainable travel to authentic places where they can directly experience local culture, nature and characters, and it's clear that friendly and knowledgeable locals can help create welcoming experiences for visitors.

At Sawmill Cycles, for example, Daniel Corrigan found that "we could not make it selling bikes alone. We have to have an outdoor adventure guiding business alongside it to keep our doors open." For a less-strenuous example, consider the Highlights Foundation, which long has brought children's books writers to the area for writing retreats surrounded by the Upper Delaware's natural beauty.



Port Jervis (NY), a southern gateway to the Upper Delaware River region, has built 30 miles of hiking and biking trails in its forested watershed preserve to provide recreation opportunities for residents and attract visitors. © Discover Port Jervis

Thinking forward Keep Housing Affordable

I've lived in many different places before landing in the Upper Delaware Valley where I—like the Brooklyn, Long Island and New Jersey residents who are now the bulk of my real estate clientele—found a quiet refuge close to nature and a return to simpler things. I have spent years learning the river towns from Hancock to Narrowsburg, and serving two sets of demands: newcomers looking for waterfront parcels that feel remote but are close to town, and locals struggling to find a quality home that's affordable.

I see a push-pull vision of progress here. Visitors want quiet but seek big-city amenities—fast Internet, cell service, Dunkin Donuts and Home Depot. Locals appreciate vitality but are leery of unrealistic expectations and veering from the local culture and pace of life. Many communities are slowly revitalizing. Jeffersonville now has an eye doctor and a farm-to-table restaurant. Hancock has a thriving bakery, and in Narrowsburg a new pizzeria overlooks the river. These offer services that both visitors and locals can enjoy. There's room for everyone, but we need to keep an eye on taking care of residents and preserving what draws us all here.

Housing is a central issue. I'm involved with the Sullivan County Land Bank, working to increase home ownership and make quality housing affordable. We need to focus on these issues across the region, coordinating our separate work on housing solutions—thinking, talking and planning together to address the emerging challenges we and our neighbors face.

— Deborah Gorenflo
Coldwell Banker Timberland
Properties

Summary and Local Recommendations

The stories in this report—along with many more that can be told—illustrate ways in which Upper Delaware residents, communities and business leaders are making common cause in the pursuit of a sustainable and vibrant future for this region. The river and the National Park Service unit that bears the river's name will play no small part in that future. So, too, will remaining true to the best of this region's history while forging a new path that preserves and protects the natural beauty, rural character and friendly small towns so fundamental to its past and to its long-term health and prosperity. Collaborative efforts like those described in this report can help the Upper Delaware River region prepare for future growth while sustaining what makes the region a place apart.

In addition to the stories in this report, seven recommendations are highlighted from local leaders in forestry, farming, tourism, civic engagement, real estate and public land and recreation management. These suggestions help frame a regional conversation about how to continue momentum toward a strong future.

1. Prepare to meet new land use challenges in the river corridor by working together to update the 1986 Land and Water Use Guidelines.
2. Invest in the river's long-term ecological vitality and compatible economic activities including low-impact recreation, to benefit local businesses and communities.
3. Foster participation and investment in local food systems to sustain the Upper Delaware region's rural landscapes and the local businesses that take care of this land.
4. Develop and market an Upper Delaware River Valley regional brand for forest, agricultural and other natural resource products.
5. Tell the region's stories and curate experiences and destinations to make an unfamiliar area more accessible to visitors.
6. Sustain and use collaborative forums to promote communication, shared understanding and collective action on regional issues.
7. Prioritize housing affordability for year-round residents as a regional issue with different manifestations but common solutions.

END NOTES

1. 2017 Flexible Flow Management Program Agreement (New York City Department of Environmental Protection)
2. U.S. Census Bureau. 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, housing vacancy status table
3. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System five-county socioeconomic measures report generated August 2018
4. 2017 National Park Visitor Spending Effects: Economic Contributions to Local Communities, States, and the Nation (Natl. Park Service)
5. 2014 Upper Delaware River Economic Impact Study (Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Delaware County Department of Economic Development, Town of Hancock and Upper Delaware Council)
6. *ibid.*
7. Fairweather Consulting. Final Report: An Estimate of Tourist Visitation to the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, 2014 (Town of Lumberland and Upper Delaware Council)
8. Headwaters Economics, Economic Profile System five-county socioeconomic measures, timber and agriculture reports generated August 2018
9. Saving Land Makes Cents: Tourism, Protected Lands, and Economic Development in the Upper Delaware River Region, 2016 (Delaware Highlands Conservancy)
10. The Center for Discovery: Transforming Lives through Research, Innovation and Economic Development, 2018 (Center for Discovery)
11. D&H Rail Trail 2016-2017 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis (Rails to Trails Conservancy)

For 100 years, we have partnered with community leaders and many others to make a lasting difference for America's national park system. Across the country, National Parks Conservation Association respects the role played by people who live and work near and even inside national parks in preserving and promoting the park's values.

The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River anchors the Upper Delaware River region. Strong partnerships and productive collaboration among community leaders and National Park Service staff are vital to the park's—as well as the larger region's—bright future.

As we've been learning about this park and region, time and again we've seen and heard about the challenges facing this area. Like so many communities across America, manufacturing's decline is forcing Upper Delaware residents to re-examine long-held assumptions and strategies for economic vitality—even survival.

We commissioned this report to spotlight some of the exciting, inspirational efforts underway by community leaders, and their recommendations to shape the Upper Delaware River region's future vitality. Many build on the region's history of offering “pure air, pure water, pure milk” as promoted in the late 19th to mid-20th centuries. Others leverage a “sharing economy” for the shared benefits it provides. And some are rethinking traditional activities to be more compatible with the fresh air and clean water residents and park visitors alike cherish.

The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River depends upon stewardship by and collaboration with its community neighbors. We are grateful for the vision and leadership of community leaders across the region who hold the park's enduring values close to home.

Theresa Pierno, President and CEO
National Parks Conservation Association



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