Natural Lands (https://natlands.org/)

Camp Hidden Falls saved

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By Natural Lands

Collaboration Finds a Conservation Solution for Beloved Girl Scout Camp

MEDIA, Pa., April 25, 2018—A 1,054-acre former Girl Scout camp near Dingmans Ferry has become part of the National Park Service's Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, permanently protecting it from development.

In 2012, the Girl Scouts of Eastern Pennsylvania (GSEP) made the difficult decision to close Camp Hidden Falls located in the Pocono Mountains, the result of efforts to consolidate camp operations across the region and improve facilities at their remaining sites. To ensure the property would be preserved, GSEP turned to the conservation community including Natural Lands and Delaware Highlands Conservancy.

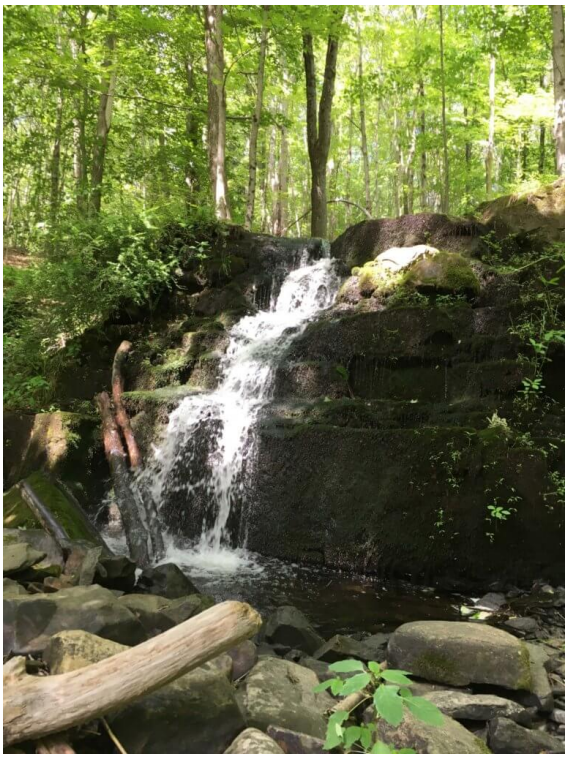

Photo: Kyle Shenk

After five years of complex negotiations, during which time Natural Lands was able to find a conservation buyer and secure grant funds to pay for the purchase, all the pieces came together. The Conservation Fund purchased the property in May 2017 and transferred it to the National Park Service on April 23.

The breathtakingly beautiful former camp land includes more than two miles of pristine streams, eight "hidden" waterfalls, and 45 acres of wetlands teeming with wildlife. The bulk of the property is wooded, offering essential habitat for a myriad of raptors and songbirds. The property is an important acquisition that will help make a future connection between the 70,000-acre Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area and 20,000 acres of Delaware State Forest.

"For generations, Girl and Boy Scouting has been a way for kids to experience nature in a deeply personal way. These vivid experiences—like sinking your toes into the mud at the bottom of a swimming pond, learning to build a campfire, or finding the constellations on a starry night—can catalyze a life-long love of the natural world," said Molly Morrison, president of Natural Lands and Girl Scout alum. "Natural Lands applauds GSEP for finding a conservation solution for Camp Hidden Falls, and we're so glad to have helped make it possible."

Photo: Kyle Shenk

Since 1996, Natural Lands has helped preserve nearly 8,500 acres of current and former Girl and Boy Scout Camps in the region.

This conservation effort was made possible with funding from the Middle Delaware Mitigation Fund, established in 2012 by PPL and PSEG as compensatory mitigation for impacts resulting from the upgrades to the Susquehanna-Roseland transmission line. The mitigation fund is administered by The Conservation Fund in partnership with the National Park Service.

"The memories we make in the outdoors learning, exploring and building friendships are some of the most poignant and lasting," said Kyle Shenk, Pennsylvania state director with The Conservation Fund. "We're honored to help facilitate the permanent protection of this land with GSEP, Natural Lands, and the National Park Service so that the legacy of this special place can live on into the future."

Additional funding was provided by the Open Space Institute's Delaware River Watershed Protection Fund, capitalized by the William Penn Foundation, and its Resilient Landscapes Fund, which receives funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; as well as from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) through the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation's Community Conservation Partnerships Program.

Kim Fraites-Dow, chief executive officer of GSEP, expressed her organization's satisfaction with the outcome. "After a multi-year study and thoughtful decision-making process and analysis, our council made the difficult decision to divest of this property. We were committed to finding a conservation solution and are pleased that through the addition of this essential large parcel to the Delaware Water Gap, our partner, the National Park Service, will be able to provide contiguous access to an exceptionally beautiful part of Pennsylvania, and that this land will be preserved for future generations."

"The acquisition of the property provides a critical link in connecting federal and state lands and in creating a larger mosaic of contiguous, protected lands in the region," said Kristy Boscheinen, NPS project manager and environmental compliance officer for the park. "The Girl Scouts were excellent stewards of the land for decades, protecting its forests, wildlife, rocky outcrops, and the 'Hidden Falls' themselves, and we are proud to be stewards of this important property in perpetuity. We also want to extend our gratitude to all of the partners who worked with us to bring this to fruition, including The Conservation Fund, Natural Lands, and Delaware Highlands Conservancy. Future generations can now enjoy another special place within Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area."

"The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is proud to be a player in this team effort that surely is a major win for all those who value protection of pristine, unspoiled places," said DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn. "Watershed and wildlife protection, public access, and the future connection of two large public land areas—it's all here in this transfer of Camp Hidden Falls to the National Park Service's Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area."

"The Open Space Institute is proud to have partnered in conserving this forested property, which will provide clean drinking water and the climate-resilient habitat to help species to persist and migrate as the climate changes," said OSI Executive Vice President Peter Howell. "The Open Space Institute applauds the work of The Conservation Fund, Natural Lands and the Delaware Highlands Conservancy for completing this regionally significant conservation transaction."

Natural Lands is dedicated to preserving and nurturing nature's wonders while creating opportunities for joy and discovery in the outdoors for everyone. As the Greater Philadelphia region's oldest and largest land conservation organization, Natural Lands has preserved more than 125,000 acres, including 43 nature preserves totaling more than 23,000 acres. Some 2.5 million people live within five miles of land under the organization's protection.
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National Park Service cares for America's 417 national parks and work with communities across the nation to help preserve local history and create close-to-home recreational opportunities. Learn more at www.nps.gov (http://www.nps.gov).

Images: http://bit.ly/2HCrYQ4 (http://bit.ly/2HCrYQ4)

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