



Executive Summary:

PPL, a Pennsylvania utility company, owned and managed the 966-acre Montour Environmental Preserve near Washingtonville, PA. This site was highly valued by nearby communities for a variety of recreational opportunities in and around the Preserve's 165-acre centerpiece, Lake Chillisquaque.

PPL engaged Conservation Economics (CE) to find sources of revenue for this site that would protect the environment, allow for continued recreational use and be accepted by the neighbors and surrounding community.

Conservation Economics:

- Performed a thorough assessment of the Preserve's natural resources, its historical and existing infrastructure, and the community's perspective of the property
- Made recommendations for sustainable uses of the land that aligned with PPL's mission, vision and values as well as the needs of the adjacent communities
- Recommended a plan for making the Preserve financially self-sufficient

Client Challenge:

The Montour Environmental Preserve is a popular site for hiking, fishing, hunting, picnicking, birding and environmental education. PPL's active management of the site and its facilities provided visibility and good relations with the community, but the costs of staffing and maintenance have been growing.

PPL has a strong commitment to reducing their impact on the environment, strengthening and enriching the communities in which they operate, and conserving natural resources for future generations. With these values in mind, the company wanted to find sources of revenue that would make the Preserve financially self-sufficient to reduce the operational burden on the company while continuing to provide recreational opportunities for the community.

Self-sustaining Recreational Facilities

Conservation Economics Solution:

PPL engaged Conservation Economics to assess the potential uses for generating revenue on the Montour Environmental Preserve to cover the costs of staffing and maintenance.

Conservation Economics:

- Completed a comprehensive inventory of the Preserve's valuable assets
- Conducted interviews with neighbors, local officials and business leaders
- Performed an analysis of income-generating current and potential new uses
- Developed a high-level pro forma financial analysis of the recommended uses
- Made strategic recommendations for implementation.

CE screened more than 50 sustainable uses and identified eleven with potential to generate revenues in a manner consistent with the company's mission. Viable options included carbon sequestration, sustainable timber management, maple sugaring, eco-lodging, eco-adventure, environmental education, leasing of sites, solar power, conservation easements, conservation-based development, and land donation/sale. In addition, CE facilitated conversations about the possible conservation of the site with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

The initial economic review suggested that returns would depend on further consideration of long-term vs. short-term opportunities, capital investment vs. outsourcing, and innovative combinations of multiple uses.

Results:

Talen Energy has taken over ownership of the Montour Preserve which is currently managed by the Montour Area Recreation Commission. They are currently evaluating CE's recommendations.