

## About ClearWater Conservancy

The mission of ClearWater Conservancy is to promote conservation and restoration of natural resources in central Pennsylvania through land conservation, water resources protection, and environmental outreach to the community. ClearWater has conserved nearly 3,750 acres of land through conservation easements and conservation partnerships resulting in public ownership of unique habitats and landscapes.

## About our Conservation Action Plan for Nittany Valley

ClearWater Conservancy and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy have joined forces to create a Conservation Action Plan for the Nittany Valley in Centre County. WPC identified the Nittany Valley as one of eight priority areas for protection, conservation, and restoration of land and water that supports native plants, animals, and important habitats.

The conservation targets for the Nittany Valley include: forested ridges and large, contiguous valley forests; world-renowned limestone streams; Central Pennsylvania barrens ecosystems; vernal pools; limestone cliffs and glades; and subterranean ecosystems.

## About the Campaign for Conservation

ClearWater Conservancy has launched a Campaign for Conservation to implement the Conservation Action Plan for Nittany Valley and pick up the pace of conservation in central PA. Several proactive conservation projects are currently underway in the Scotia Barrens, along Spring Creek's ribbon of green, and in our forested ridges. Additionally, ClearWater needs the flexibility to respond to conservation opportunities that come to light.

We need financial investments from conservation-minded citizens to advance our Conservation Strategies and protect the places that matter most in the heart of Pennsylvania. Your contribution will be greatly leveraged with grant and foundation funding for specific conservation transactions. Please give generously! Thank you for your support.

*Everyone working together to conserve natural beauty  
and the environment in the heart of Pennsylvania*

Special thanks to Musser Gap partners:  
PA Department of Conservation and  
Natural Resources, PA DCNR Bureau of  
Forestry, State College Borough Water  
Authority, Ferguson, Harris, College,  
Halfmoon, and Patton Townships, State  
College Borough, Altrusa International of  
Centre County, Huplits Foundation and  
Omega Bank.



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## ClearWater Conservancy

# Stories of Land, Water, and People

## Musser Gap Magic

Protecting an Extraordinary Drinking Water  
Resource and a Whole Lot More

“In Pennsylvania, a well that produces 200 gallons per minute is unique”, says Max Gill, the Executive Director of the State College Borough Water Authority. “The Harter and Thomas wells produce 3,000 gallons per minute, making them extraordinary.”

Musser Gap, a 423-acre mountain gap on Tussey Ridge between Shingletown Gap and Pine Grove Mills that was purchased by ClearWater Conservancy on August 8, 2006, recharges the groundwater in the vicinity of the Harter and Thomas wellfields. These wells provide drinking water to 38,000 residents in the State College area.



Matt Dallos

The Harter and Thomas wells have been supplying the area with high-quality drinking water since the 1940s, but a proposed residential development in Musser Gap could have had a huge impact as new pollutants percolated into the groundwater system and migrated toward the wells.

State College Borough Water Authority ended up being a major funding partner in the purchase of Musser Gap. “As the acquisition project progressed, State College Borough Water Authority conducted dye-trace testing to find out how quickly potential pollutants would show up in the drinking water wells,” according to Katie Ombalski, Conservation Biologist and project manager for the Musser Gap purchase. “Under low stream flow conditions, the dye showed up in the wells in about three weeks; in high flow conditions, it took only two days.”

Mountain gaps serve as primary contributors to groundwater recharge in the Spring Creek Watershed. In addition, any contamination introduced through these mountain gaps can quickly reach the groundwater aquifers that they feed.

Musser Gap is the single largest purchase in ClearWater’s history. The land was purchased from a private landowner who planned to de-

velop the area. Ferguson Township, the municipal home of Musser Gap and also a strong funding partner for the acquisition project, was concerned about the development proposal but, due to zoning regulations, could not prevent it.

ClearWater Conservancy noted the development challenges on this environmentally sensitive site and also realized the amazing conservation potential of the property. Conserving Musser Gap would protect vital water resources, forested wildlife habitats, and treasured recreational opportunities for future generations.



Don Bryant

Musser Gap is part of the Tussey Mountain Important Bird Area. Tussey Mountain is a noted flyway for spring-migrating raptors. Each year the Tussey Mountain Hawkwatch records the highest number of spring migrating golden eagles east of the Mississippi.

The mature and largely-unfragmented deciduous forest provides important habitat for nesting forest-interior Neotropical migratory birds.

Musser Gap is also adjacent to Rothrock State Forest and the Stone Mountain Important Bird Area.

This project’s recreational value rivals its ecological value. Musser Gap provides an

“These wells are very productive and will be able to serve the community essentially forever.”

~ Max Gill

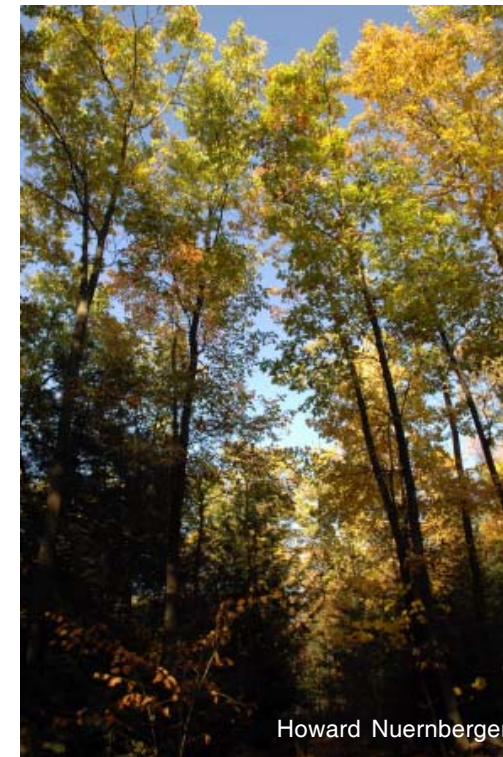
alternative entrance to the Rothrock State Forest one gap west of the much-loved but over-used Shingletown Gap. In fall 2007, ClearWater will officially transfer ownership of Musser Gap to the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, which will use it as a new recreational gateway into Rothrock State Forest and develop some much-needed trail-head facilities along Musser Gap’s Route 45 entrance. The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources stepped up as the project’s largest funder, truly making the Musser Gap acquisition possible.

Altogether, ClearWater was able to secure \$2.2 million to purchase this property through state grants and budgets, municipal and authority contributions and grants, and a loan and generous donation from Omega Bank.

“The strength of ClearWater Conservancy is our ability to reach out to partners and gather together the financial resources to protect important pieces of property,” said former ClearWater President, Walt Ebaugh. “But projects like Musser Gap take an incredible amount of staff and volunteer time and organizational financial resources before they even get to the fundraising stage. It is a lot of work to protect places like Musser Gap.”

One person, specifically, made the purchase of Musser Gap possible, Katie Ombalski, ClearWater’s Conservation Biologist. “Without her it is very doubtful that this would have been able to happen,” said Max Gill, “It was her idea, and she just refused to give up.”

“When future generations walk through Musser Gap, they may not realize the effort that went into saving this piece of forest, but they will certainly appreciate its beauty,” said Ferguson Township Supervisor Steve Miller. “The joint effort of six Centre Region municipalities, the State College Borough Water Authority, and DCNR were important, but the work of ClearWater Conservancy, and especially Katie Ombalski, were the key to making it happen.”



Howard Nuernberger