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NEWS RELEASE

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Central PA Conservancy, Diakon Lutheran Ministries Partner to Permanently Protect Wilderness Center and Native Plant Nursery

The [Central Pennsylvania Conservancy](http://www.centralpaconservancy.org) and [Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries](http://www.diacon.org) recently collaborated to record conservation and trail easements on the property of the [Diakon Wilderness Center](http://www.diacon.org), located on the mountain above Boiling Springs, Cumberland County.

The easements will provide public access to a section of land that connects state game lands and the [Appalachian Trail](http://www.appalachiantrail.org), as well as protect portions of the 170-acre Wilderness Center property from future development, says Scott Habecker, Diakon president/CEO, who was involved in the years-long process.

"We applaud Diakon for both the vital service they provide to our communities' youths and their dedication to preserving the environment," says Anna Yelk, executive director of the conservancy, an accredited, nonprofit land trust based in nearby Carlisle.

"These easements are the culmination of several years of partnering, planning, fundraising and completing a forest-management plan, a baseline documentation report and legal instruments," Yelk explains. Financial support for CPC's first easement purchase project was funded by Cumberland County's Land Partnerships Program and the [Appalachian Trail Conservancy's](http://www.appalachiantrail.org) Wild East Action Fund.

The effort reflects the Center's long-time focus on sustainability, conservation and preservation, and on giving back to the community, says Jason Brode, executive director for Diakon Youth Services.

The Diakon Wilderness Center property, he says, is bordered on three sides by Pennsylvania State Game Lands 305 and the Appalachian Trail Corridor on the east.

Little Dogwood Run, a tributary of Yellow Breeches Creek, runs through the property. About 140 acres of the protected 170-acre Diakon property are forested, offering an undisturbed view of woodland from the adjacent Appalachian Trail and Center Point Knob a short distance away.

In fact, the Wilderness Center property was at one time much larger but a focus on conservation created the surrounding state game lands.

“The current effort with the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy will prevent development of property around our Center operation and enhance the existing trail system that is available to the public,” says Brode.

The conservation easement held by CPC includes a trail easement that provides a section of public access that connects the state game lands and the Appalachian Trail.

While the Center hosts an annual Outdoor Adventure Challenge, a 5k trail run/walk, to raise funds for the youth programs, one of its key conservation emphases arises through the [Diakon Wilderness Greenhouse and Native Plant Nursery](#).

“The greenhouse not only serves patrons throughout the region, but also offers Center students a chance to engage in alternative and outdoor education, connecting them to positive experiences that encourage growth and community connections,” says Brode. “The greenhouse program has played a significant role in the restoration of flora and native habitats in the region and has become a pivotal part of our school curriculum, as well as our workforce-development offer for the youths we serve.”

The Center has not only incorporated the caring for natural resources as part of their established goals, but also has supported conservation partnerships in the region and, through the conservation easement, saved 170 acres of woodland and wetlands from future development with a commitment to sustainable forestry and good management.