

ACHIEVEMENTS REPORT

The Kiski Basin & Environs Initiative: Johnstown, PA

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The Kiski Basin & Environs Initiative (Kiski) is directed by the Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Alliance, in collaboration with Pennsylvania State University, the PA Urban & Community Forestry Council, the PA DCNR-Bureau of Forestry, and various local partners in the Johnstown, PA area. Beginning in 1998, the program undertook projects which recognized the critical roles of both natural and cultural resources in creating and sustaining a viable economic future. Some of the long-range goals of the initiative are improved land use planning, establishment of eco-tourism services and facilities, conservation and preservation of natural and cultural resources, economic development, assistance in rural fire protection programs, enhancement of urban and community forests, and educational workshops and training sessions aimed at increasing the awareness of regional problems, opportunities, and solutions.

The over-arching objectives of the initiative are to correct past land use abuses, particularly stream damage from mining practices, involve local citizens and organizations in implementing solutions to the problems, and revitalize the area through conservation and appropriate economic development. The initiative includes assembling technical resources to assist local units of government implement community planning and development strategies. An initial funding level of \$60,000 for 13 projects in 1998 is expected to increase to \$200,000 in 1999.

Accomplishments in 1998:

Gathering information and mapping it in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) format to begin better planning and development strategies for using natural resource stewardship to enhance the economic and social revitalization of the region.

Enhancing the community forest resources of the area with tree plantings.

Stabilizing streambanks with riparian tree plantings and assisting with remediation efforts of degraded streams.

Increasing public use of recreation sites, trails, and other areas through tree plantings, improving parking areas, and other efforts designed to increase community pride and eco-tourism opportunities in the area.

Helping complete a environmental education nature trail, which is handicapped accessible, in Cambria County.