

**For Immediate Release**

Contact:  
Elizabeth McKinney  
Development Manager  
[emckinney@wildlandspa.org](mailto:emckinney@wildlandspa.org)  
610-965-4397 ext. 26

Christopher M. Kocher  
President  
[ckocher@wildlandspa.org](mailto:ckocher@wildlandspa.org)  
610-965-4397, ext. 23



### **Wildlands Conservancy's Sojourn Celebrates the Lehigh River**

(Emmaus, Pa., August 5, 2009) – A record breaking 90 people per day paddled on this year's Lehigh River Sojourn with 32 of the participants making the entire 55-mile trip from Drakes Creek to Easton. The five-day whitewater rafting, canoeing or kayaking event is hosted annually by Wildlands Conservancy to help introduce people to the recreational and environmental value of the Lehigh River and educate about the importance of preserving and protecting it. This year's event raised more than \$30,000 to support the mission of Wildlands Conservancy.

This year's sojourn started off with a splash as sojourners rafted their way through the Lehigh Gorge on a dam-release weekend. For the next four days, sojourners canoed or kayaked down more than 10 miles of river a day guided by trained safety officers provided by Jim Thorpe River Adventures and Northeast PA Kayak School. Paddlers also enjoyed daily education programs and visits from blue herons, a bald eagle, snapping turtles and other resident wildlife.

“We got to see tons of wildlife.” remarks Kristina Gomez, one of the volunteer safety officers, “We even spotted a bald eagle on Bethlehem Steel property.”

Along with education programs, The Lehigh River Sojourn incorporates community involvement with sojourners camping at different locations along the Lehigh River and enjoying the sounds of various musical guests at community concerts each night.

The highlights of the trip were education programs provided by local organizations and businesses. “What makes the Lehigh River Sojourn such a success is the collaboration of more than 50 partners we work with throughout the year coming together to help promote the protection of this beautiful and critical feature in our backyard,” comments Elizabeth McKinney, development manager, “This event allows Wildlands Conservancy to educate a captive audience on how they can take an active role in reducing their impact on the environment.”

Education programs included presentations by Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) on the agency’s iConserve initiative, an overview of the revegetation project on the Kittatinny Ridge at the Lehigh Gap Nature Center, a talk by Lehigh County Executive Don Cunningham on current trail projects, a tour of the Lehigh Valley Heritage Museum, a program on sustainable development by Langan Engineering and Environmental Services and a presentation by DCNR representatives on Island Park.

This event is made possible because of the generosity of the following sponsors: C.F. Martin & Co. Inc.; Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Pennsylvania Organization of Watersheds and Rivers; Conectiv Energy Bethlehem Plant; Jim Thorpe River Adventures; Lafarge North America; Northeast PA Kayak School; Panther Creek Partners; Pocono Whitewater Adventures; PPL; Valley Preferred; Bennett Lehighton Dodge; Just Born, Inc.; Nestle Waters North America, Inc.; Northampton Borough Municipal Authority and Pretreatment Information Exchange.

For more information on Wildlands Conservancy's Lehigh River Sojourn, please contact Elizabeth McKinney, development manager, at (610) 965-4397, ext. 26 or email [emckinney@wildlandspa.org](mailto:emckinney@wildlandspa.org).

### **About Wildlands Conservancy**

Wildlands Conservancy's mission is to preserve, protect, restore and enhance the land, water, ecological and recreational resources of the Lehigh Valley and Lehigh River valley. Founded in 1973, the Conservancy has protected more than 47,000 acres of eastern Pennsylvania's farmland and wild lands, created more than 90 miles of terrestrial aquatic trails, and has educated more than 500,000 individuals on responsible environmental stewardship and management.

Wildlands Conservancy is a non-profit organization with 19 full-time staff members working out of its offices at the 77.5-acre Pool Wildlife Sanctuary in Emmaus, PA. For more information on the organization and its programs visit [www.wildlandspa.org](http://www.wildlandspa.org).

#####