

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR) Rivers Conservation Program was developed to conserve and enhance river resources through preparation and accomplishment of locally-initiated plans. All plans contain a summary of available information about the water resource, which makes the document a useful educational tool. However, the substantive sections of these plans are the recommendations developed through the analysis and the action steps that will move the recommendations forward. The plans are an important tool for local governments, organizations, and businesses to aid in decision making and municipal planning.

The Beaver River was selected for study because of its potential as a recreational amenity, the current development pressures in the watershed, and a lack of a significant watershed group in the area with which to address conservation issues and opportunities.

About the Authors

The Plan was completed by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC), a statewide, non-profit organization devoted to promoting the protection of watersheds, the sustainable uses of land, and the implementation of environmental innovations. Since its founding in 1970, PEC has been centrally involved in a broad range of issues affecting the region's environmental recovery and ever-improving quality of life. More information about PEC can be found at www.pecpa.org.

The Plan was prepared by PEC staff member Janette M. Novak and former staff member Beth Brennan Fisher with analysis and planning completed by Environmental Planning and Design, LLC.

Support and Funding

DCNR's Community Conservation Partnership Program, administered by the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, awarded a Keystone, Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund grant to PEC in 2004 to complete the Beaver River Conservation and Management Plan. Matching funds were provided by the Richard King Mellon Foundation and the Beaver County Community Development Program.

The next step in the planning process is to obtain local support to seek admission of the Plan for inclusion on the Pennsylvania Rivers Registry. This registry was created to promote river conservation and recognize rivers or river segments in communities that have completed River Conservation Plans. Once registry status is achieved, municipalities and non-profits are able to apply for DCNR implementation, development, or acquisition grants based on the Plan's recommendations.

Visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us for more information about DCNR grants and to view maps and Conservation Plans from around the state.

Frequently Asked Questions about River Conservation Plans

Some communities and residents who are not familiar with the Rivers Conservation Program and the planning process have concerns about the implications of having a Rivers Conservation Plan. Following are three common questions about the program.

1. How will this project impact private property?

The Plan itself will not encroach upon private property and will not dictate what landowners can and cannot do. The Plan is an opportunity to work towards a vision for the future of the River; it is not focused on specific property owners. Recommendations may be made within the plan for general care of lands adjacent to waterways; however, it will be up to local landowners and municipalities if they want to follow these recommendations or not. Property owners are encouraged to participate in terms of developing the greater vision for the area.

2. Are you proposing land use restrictions in the viewshed of the river corridor?

A Plan may encourage updating county and municipal plans and ordinances to include things like natural resource protection zoning. Such zoning often affects new development only and such actions would then need to be adopted by county and local governments. The Plan in itself cannot require land use restrictions – only local governments can carry out such actions. If local governments pursue such zoning amendments or changes, it is required by the Municipalities Planning Code to be a public process.

3. Can the Plan enable new environmental regulations that could affect riverfront property owners or river-side industry?

The Plan itself cannot enable or force any government agency to enact new legislation. What it can do is provide information and public comments about the Beaver River that could be used as a guide in creating or amending legislation. Those types of actions generally would require a public process.

Acknowledgements

An Advisory Committee, comprised of government representatives, environmental and community organizations, and recreational interest groups identified data sources, reviewed draft Plans, and acted as liaisons to and for their community or interest group. Public input was gathered through public meetings, key person interviews, stakeholder meetings, and municipal surveys.

PEC gratefully acknowledges the following people who served on the advisory committee or contributed to the development of the Plan:

Charles Camp, Steve Craig, Matthew Cucinelli, Alan DeSanzo, Dan Donatella, Jack Erath, Bill Evans, Jim Gagliano, Megan Gahring, Tom Hamilton, Donald Inman, Helen E.

Jackson, Thomas Ketterer, Frank Mancini, John Martino, Kathryn McClure, Amy McKinney, Shirley Mesing, Larry Morley, Pashek Associates, Ed Piroli, Greg Powell, Jeanne Rarick, Laura Rubino, Tom Scuoteguazza, Joe Spanik, Todd Stevenson, Lisa Troiani, Carolyn Verszyla, Donald Wachter, Dan Woodske, Doniele Andrus.

Supplemental Information

Additional information can be found in the following documents, which are valuable resources and can be considered supplemental resources for this Plan.

- Beaver County Comprehensive Plan (1999), Gannet Fleming
- Beaver County Comprehensive Recreation and Parks Plan (2003), Pashek Associates
- Beaver County Greenways and Trails Plan (2007), Pashek Associates
- Inventory and Assessment of Historic and Heritage Sites in Beaver County (1998)
- Beaver County Riverfront Development Plan (1993), Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development
- Bridging the Confluence Communities: Building a Shared Vision for Riverfront Development (2005), Beaver Initiative for Growth, Beaver County Corporation for Economic Development
- Natural Heritage Inventory for Beaver County (1993), Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Rivers of Destiny (1999)
- Natural Heritage for Lawrence County (2002), Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Lawrence County Comprehensive Plan (2004), Lawrence County Planning Commission
- Lawrence County Recreation Study (c. 1975), Lawrence County Planning Commission
- Natural Infrastructure (2005), Southwest Pennsylvania Commission, The Heinz Endowments, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Environmental Planning & Design
- Lawrence County Greenways and Open Space Plan (2008), Lawrence County Planning Department
- North Central Beaver County Southern Lawrence County Regional Economic Development Study