

## CHAPTER 5: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public comments are an important component of the planning process, as they help to form the basis for the watershed analysis and management recommendations. Comments were gathered from an advisory committee, the municipalities, and the general public.

### Advisory Committee

The advisory committee's role was to assist in research, guide the direction of the Plan, suggest ideas for recommendations, act as liaisons to their community/group, and to review the draft Plan and maps. Advisory committee members are listed in the introduction under acknowledgements.

At the first committee meeting in March 2005, members were asked to answer some questions about the river. The responses are found in the following survey.

#### ***What special or important places should be recognized and protected in the Beaver River Corridor?***

- Isolated gorge between Wampum Dam and Eastvale Dam (mature growth hardwoods on steep slopes)
- Islands in Lawrence County
- West Pittsburgh swamps
- Connecting greenway from Little Beaver Creek to Beaver River
- Native American caves, paintings at Beaver/Lawrence County line
- Buttermilk Falls and Quarry in Homewood
- James Wood/Homewood Iron Furnace in North Sewickley
- Rock Point Park in Wayne Township
- Steep slopes/rock ledges in North Sewickley/Big Beaver
- Large trees located along the river
- Islands
- Natural areas on the county NHIs
- River in northern Beaver County
- Bridgewater Riverfront Park and extension
- Big Rock Park in New Brighton
- New Brighton fishing park
- Girard Lock wall in Rochester Borough
- Flag Plaza in Rochester Borough

#### ***What are the major problems or issues affecting the natural quality and recreational potential of the Beaver River?***

- Steep slopes and railroad right-of-way prevents access
- No access between Beaver Falls and Wampum
- Hot water outfall affecting water quality – from Orion Energy
- No access on upper River
- Logging on steep slopes in watersheds
- Difficult access in Big Beaver (steep slopes and railroad)

- Potential development impacting the visual integrity of the river valley
- Uncontrolled logging practices
- Privately-owned lands in Beaver Falls
- Dams
- Blockhouse Run sediment
- Steep topography in Rochester Township
- McKinley Run sediment
- Sediment deposits at mouth of River
- Brady's Run sediment
- Privately-owned land in Fallston
- Beaver Falls/New Brighton bridge pier

***How are these problems or issues being addressed or how would you propose to address them?***

- Negotiations with railroad
- Upper Beaver Valley Region is addressing uncontrolled development and logging
- Funding
- County and municipal support
- Vision plan

***Are you aware of any current projects and studies along the river?<sup>1</sup>***

- Route 18 Corridor Plan
- Multi-municipal comprehensive plan for Big Beaver, New Galilee, Homewood, and Koppel
- Beaver River Rails-to-Trails from Beaver Falls to Wampum

***What projects/improvements would you like to see in the Beaver River corridor in the next 10 years?***

- Create access to the river for recreation purposes
- Conservation of the forested slopes
- Boat access
- Wetland opportunities from sand and gravel operations
- Greenway with trails
- Rails-to-trails system
- Connector trail to Buttermilk Falls Park site and other heritage sites
- Mixed use development along Route 18 with recreational linkage to the river valley
- Beautification projects and communication with industries
- Dredge lower Beaver River
- Historical and informational markers in parks and riverfronts

***How can we make the plan a useful document for you?***

- Explain how to use the river valley in Big Beaver
- Create feasible goals that can be implemented

---

<sup>1</sup> A complete list of plans, including those not mentioned at this meeting, appears in Chapter 1.

## **Municipalities**

Twenty-six communities are located within the Beaver River watershed study area. Nine of these communities responded to a Watershed Protection Inventory survey intended to identify existing policy and land patterns relevant to potential watershed planning and management. This Inventory was developed by the Center for Watershed Protection ([www.cwp.org](http://www.cwp.org)). A copy of the Inventory is shown in Appendix 5.

### ***Issues***

In analyzing survey responses, a series of issues and observations emerge. Many of the responses confirm concerns expressed by the public that communities of the Beaver River Watershed possess few controls to manage/conservate existing natural resources. Municipal responses illuminate the following issues:

- Communities generally lack natural resource-related development controls.
- Control of stormwater run-off/erosion & sedimentation is minimal and property owners are primarily responsible for its management.
- Besides State and/or Federal controls that may apply, few local provisions exist to control impacts on stream edges.
- There are currently no formal policy mechanisms that control the ability or location of infrastructure expansion within the Study Area.
- Although oriented toward grey infrastructure, some multi-municipal planning collaboration currently occurs among communities in the Watershed.

The following observations related to development patterns/policies, environmental resources, infrastructure and outreach also emerged from the communities' responses.

### ***Observations***

#### *Development Patterns/Regulations*

- All respondents expressed that they do not take into account (or do not know) the impacts of their land use decisions on water resources.
- Development flexibility in regard to coverage, massing (clustering), and open space preservation/conservation is generally not encouraged and most times is not permitted as part of community policy.
  - a. Big Beaver Borough allows conservation developments
  - b. Brighton Twp. encourages developers to design for existing conditions
  - c. Patterson Twp. features open space management techniques such as consolidation of open space, minimum percentages of managed natural areas, etc.

- Several, but not all, respondents require Erosion and Sedimentation (E & S) controls as part of the site development process.
- Two of the responding communities carry the responsibility of maintaining stormwater run-off. In the remaining municipalities, land owners are responsible for such maintenance.
- Requirements for the use of porous materials (e.g. driveway paving) to reduce stormwater runoff is not widespread.
  - a. Several communities permit porous materials for single-family homes' driveways.
  - b. One of the responding communities allows "two track" designed driveways; nearly half of responding communities allow shared driveways in residential areas.
- No responding communities require parking lot landscaping.

#### *Environmental Resources*

- Only one responding community addresses open space conservation (via conservation easements) and is aware of the presence of critical habitats.
- Several, but not all, responding communities require developers to identify environmental issues before engineering and site planning is done.
- Half of the responding communities restrict development based on steep slopes or sliding soils and mining. Half also require or currently possess information related to soils and mining discharge.
- Road salt is the primary substance used for winter de-icing.

#### *Infrastructure*

- Almost all responding communities have a stormwater ordinance and participate in some sort of infrastructure-oriented (water/sewer) multi-municipal effort (need design years used).
- Only one community (Big Beaver) limits infrastructure extension to control development in specific areas.

#### *Outreach*

- None of the responding communities has GIS capabilities.
- When watershed education occurs, the primary recipients are residential land owners; no one currently aims outreach toward non-residential uses.

### **General Public**

The first two public meetings were held in October 2005 to introduce the public to the Beaver River Conservation and Management Plan and to gather information about the River. Questions similar to those asked in the advisory committee's questionnaire were asked, and responses are summarized below.

**Public Meeting  
October 3, 2005  
Beaver Falls  
(10 people)**

- There is a siltation problem in the lower Beaver River due to silt from Brady's Run, Hamilton Run, and Blockhouse Run. Siltation impacts docks and fishing. Army Corps of Engineers did a reconnaissance study on dredging the area. The cost-benefit ration for having the Corps dredge the area was not reached. Local match money to complete the project would be needed as well. Lower 2.5 miles needs to be dredged.
- Gorge through Beaver Falls and Big Beaver should be protected. Limited access to upper river has secured its scenic quality. A trail is needed for hikers. The riverbanks are in good shape. Big Beaver has a RR bridge crossing the river, but no way to get there. There is a problem gaining access because of the railroads. Hillsides have been logged in the past, but the railroad has preserved many of the trees. Geneva College could use an access to the river to establish a rowing program (Eastvale docks – Beaver Falls Boat Club). Historic points of interest should be noted along with notable flora, fauna, and geologic features by way of informative signage. Non-intrusive overlooks are possible. A water trail is possible, but motorized boats should be kept to a minimum. Limited camping and fishing access points may be added.
- Link riverfront projects and enhance pedestrian access. Create steps to Rochester-Bridgewater Bridge or use a hill climber (mini-incline).
- Did Shenango Reservoir let water out during flood last year? Typically, flooding is caused by a backup of the Ohio River.
- Continue trail along lower part of Beaver River. (See trail plan)
- Stormwater Management is needed on tributaries (no Act 167 plans; 32 MS4 communities).
- Re-establish a crossing of the Beaver River at the former 10<sup>th</sup> St. Bridge. The landside trail can take you to the bridge.
- Study the fish and wildlife of the region and develop a curriculum for elementary, junior high, and high schools in Beaver County, especially in those schools close to the river. Voyager comes at least twice per year to serve approximately 5 school districts and conduct adult education programs in the evening.
- Clean up abandoned poles from former docks. This is a safety issue for boaters, especially at night. Area by Riverside carwash and Kelley's station is the worst. Fish and Boat Commission should mark the areas until the clean-up.
- Establish a tour boat excursion from the Beaver Falls-Eastvale area (former railroad station at Geneva College) to Rock Point.

- Not a lot of illegal dump sites because of limited access. West gate has a dump. Inactive dumps include the Beaver Falls city dump and the Koppel dump.
- Bridgewater solicitor is amenable to installing public docks at Docker's restaurant.
- Mouth of Clarks Run could be a potential site for water trail "resting site." Not accessible to roads (owned by Big Beaver).
- Section of steep slopes on west side of river just below Homewood – property may belong to Big Beaver – if so, could be a potential access site (this may be near the Turnpike Interchange).
- Motor boats' northern boundary is the county line – too hard to navigate above that.
- Rock Point and Eastvale docks have, in the past, been amenable to non-motorized users – not sure of current status.

**Public Meeting  
October 5, 2005  
Wampum  
(12 people)**

- Fishing and boating access areas do exist, but many of them are on private property. There is a boat access area near Snake Run, under the bridge, where it is very shallow, on the Wayne Township side of the river. The Wampum side is very steep. Signage is needed for access areas not on private property. The Wampum disposal site has access to the river, but the water is deep. Potential access areas should be documented even if they are private so that landowners can be contacted about purchase or easements.
- Good water quality is needed for fishing. Do we know if the fish are safe to eat? Does the PA Fish and Boat Commission stock here? Someone (EPA?) was testing quality of Snake Run. Conservation District primarily works on water quality of Shenango River because it is a state priority. Conservation grants exist on Hell Run and North Fork of Little Beaver.
- People watch trout stocking in Volant, maybe it can be done here.
- Lawrence County is going to create a greenway and open space plan. North Country Trail cuts through Wampum.
- Water trail is a good idea.
- Does timbering disturb river? Erosion and Sedimentation plans are needed for this activity.

- PA Cleanways is active in the county. At the end of Clyde St. in Wampum, there is a little path that leads to an illegal dump site. DEP has been notified, but they cannot catch the people who are doing it.
- People come to the area and wait by the railroad tracks to watch the trains go by. Communities should create a stopping place along the river where people can take pictures of trains.
- There are 3 historic markers along Rt. 18. Old canal went through Wampum. Are there underground railroad sites here? Christine Davis did a study on the potential historic sites in Beaver County. Lawrence County has a historical society, contact Beverly Zona.
- Access to river: Will the temporary railroad crossing at the bridge be removed? Big Beaver Borough has an old road that goes to the river.
- Can the river be part of the PA scenic rivers program?
- Are there land use controls in municipalities that protect the river corridor? Maybe do an overlay district to protect areas without controls (e.g. steep slopes). The RCP should recommend language for model ordinances to protect natural resources.
- Are there scenic views? Brighton Twp. golf course. Rockpoint where Connoque. enters the river. Railroad bridge where Shenango and Connoque. confluence behind the mall.
- Turnpike expansion will occur in the next few years.
- Are drains at Universal Mills (?) emptying into Eckles Run?
- Bad erosion and flooding at the end of Glenkirk Rd. along Jenkins Run. Road is closed.
- Tributaries are getting narrower.
- Wildlife: Bald eagles nesting at UPS distribution center in Rochester, beaver, muskrats, great blue herons, white swans, bobcats, bear, cormorants. A more detailed wildlife survey is needed (beyond the NHI).
- There are no watershed groups in this corridor. How will recommendations be implemented?
- Commercial dredging occurring in river near Rt. 168
- Siltation problem in Eckles Run
- Discussion on preserving the quality of the Beaver corridor for “selling the scenic and natural beauty and diversity of the River.”

## **Final Round of Public Participation**

The draft plan was presented to the advisory committee and the public at separate meetings on April 1, 2008, in Beaver Falls. The public and interested parties had an opportunity to comment on the Plan in its draft form during a 30 day comment period that ended May 1, 2008. Their comments have been integrated into this plan as appropriate.