

VENANGO COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

2006 Annual Report





VENANGO COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP

**The following municipalities became or renewed their membership
as planning partners with VCRPC:**

**Allegheny Township
Barkeyville Borough
Cherrytree Township
Clintonville Borough
Cooperstown Borough
Cornplanter Township
Cranberry Township
Emlenton Borough
Jackson Township
Mineral Township
Oil Creek Township
Pleasantville Borough
Plum Township
Polk Borough
Richland Township
Rouseville Borough
Sandy creek Township
Scrubgrass Township
Utica Borough**

If you would like to get involved or would like more information about the Venango County Regional Planning Commission and our many initiatives, please visit the county website at www.co.venango.pa.us/planning or feel free to stop by our offices on the first floor of the Venango County Courthouse.

VCRPC provided the following educational programming in 2006:

**Bridge Replacement
Recreation Funding
Subdivision Administration**

INTRODUCTION

The Venango County Planning Commission (VCPC) was created in 1961 and consisted of a nine-member board. In 2005 the VCPC became the Venango County Regional Planning Commission consisting of a fifteen-member board comprised of County residents, elected members, and three members of the area COGs. All members are appointed by the County Commissioners. The Commission employs a staff of three to carry out the administrative and technical responsibilities. The responsibilities include Countywide comprehensive and functional planning such as Housing, Recreation, Solid Waste and Land Use. The Commission also compiles and analyzes information about County characteristics and trends for use in evaluating proposed activities and projects and in preparing studies and plans.

Technical assistance is provided to county and local agencies on numerous matters including planning, zoning, subdivision and development. The Commission administers the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, which requires that plans for subdividing land or engaging in minor land development be reviewed and approved by the Commission. The Planning Commission maintains a

library of publications and data used by the Commission in carrying out its responsibilities which is available for use by other agencies and individuals.

The Venango County Regional Planning Commission coordinates its efforts with local and regional planning organizations. The County Commissioners serve on the Northwest Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission, which includes representation from Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango and Warren Counties. The Commission is a member of both the Pennsylvania and American Planning Associations. The Planning Commission's functions and responsibilities are governed by State Law, primarily the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, which provides for the creation, funding and operation of planning commissions at the discretion of each municipal or county government.

VENANGO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Susan M. Smith, Chairperson
Larry E. Horn, Vice Chairman
Gary R. Hutchison

VENANGO COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION DEPARTMENT

Judith Downs, Executive Director
Debra Frawley, Planner II
Christina Lynn Moss, Planner I
Chad Kline, GIS Intern (Summer 2006)
Sarah Mellring, Planning Intern (Summer 2006)
Al Wodzianski, PE, Engineer

VENANGO COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION BOARD

Susan Hileman, Chairperson	Debbra Kapp, Oakland Township	Fred Krizinsky, Oil Region COG
Warren Thomas, Vice Chairman	Garnet Wood, City of Franklin	Wally Stearns, Barkeyville Borough
Marc Rickard, Secretary/Treasurer	Ken Garland, Victory Township	Kirk Anna, Sugarcreek Borough
Terry Ray, Cranberry Township	Jeff Langworthy, Oil Creek Area COG	Sonja Hawkins, City of Oil City
Mary Ann Caton, Pleasantville Borough	Dan Kaylor, Southern Venango COG	Neil McElwee, City of Oil City

VENANGO COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION COMMITTEES

Executive Committee, Susan Hileman, Chair
Plan Review Committee, Ken Garland, Chair
Comprehensive Plan Committee, Fred Krizinsky, Chair
Community Development Committee, Mary Ann Caton, Chair
Affordable Housing Board, Terry Ray, Chair

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN



The consulting firm of HRG, Inc. was engaged to complete a Phase I stormwater management plan for Venango County. Phase I plans result in the development of a detailed scope of work and cost estimate for completion of a Phase II study. VCRPC intends to complete the Phase II work beginning in 2007. DEP awarded the County \$12,000 in funding to complete the Plan. A Storm Water Advisory Committee is in place with representation from all of the County's municipalities and other interested agencies.



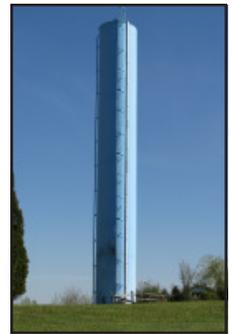
NATURAL HERITAGE INVENTORY

Venango County agreed to participate in the County Natural Heritage Inventory. These inventories are biological inventories of some of the most ecologically interesting habitats of Pennsylvania's Counties. Biologists with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, working through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, began the inventory in the Fall of 2006. The work is expected to occur over a two year period. Inventories are designed to inform the residents about their living heritage and give us the tools to use in planning the future of our communities.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT

Projects completed in 2006:
 Clintonville Head Start
 Clintonville Water
 Frenchcreek Sewer
 Cornplanter Sewer

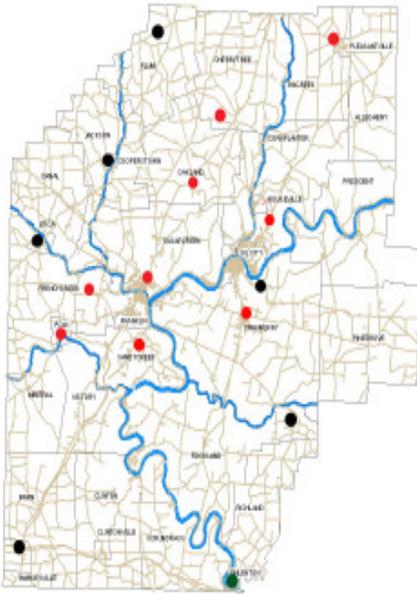


AFFORDABLE HOUSING

An upper story affordable housing trust project at the "Sheasley" building in Franklin was started in 2006. The project involved a public/private partnership with funding from the County's Act 137 fund, a DCED grant, the City of Franklin and the private property owner. Two vacant apartment units will be available to rent with a five year affordability term.



RECYCLING AND SOLID WASTE

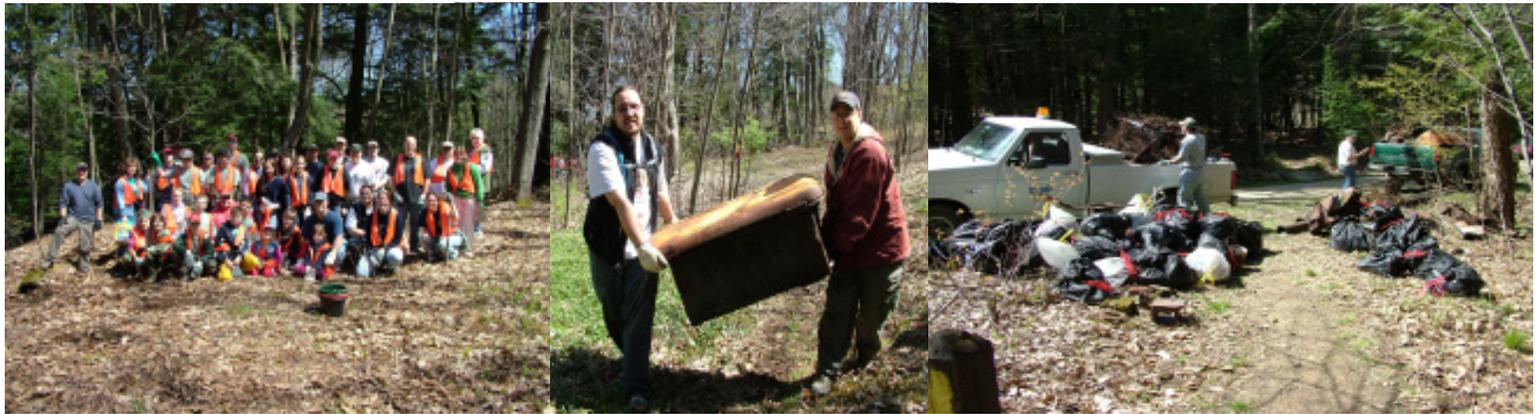


A technical assistance study for drop-off recycling bins conducted in 2005 resulted in the addition of two drop-off locations added in 2006. Cornplanter and Cranberry Townships added drop-off bins that have proven to be very successful in 2006. The following map shows the current (red) and proposed (black) drop-off locations throughout the county as a result of the study. An additional proposed location outside of the study is shown in green. We look forward to working with municipalities in the future to place additional drop-off locations and make recycling convenient for Venango County residents. A second study will be completed in 2007 to assess the possibility of curbside recycling in Venango County Boroughs.

On September 23, 2006, Venango County held a Household Hazardous Waste Event. The event was held at the Cranberry Mall which helped the event to be very successful. At the close of the event, Environmental Enterprises, Inc. had collected 32,739 pounds of hazardous materials from Venango County Residents. The Venango County Regional Planning Commission looks forward to holding this event again in 2008.

OIL CREEK STATE PARK CLEANUP

In April, 2006, the Venango County Regional Planning Commission held an Earth Day cleanup at Oil Creek State Park. The cleanup was setup through the geocaching website and resulted with 38 attendants removing five truckloads of trash from a well used trail.



Comments from attendants (listed as their geocaching screen name):

What a great CITO event! The dump we cleaned up looks awesome now! It took about 5 pick-up trucks to haul it all away! The hikers and cross country skiers that use the trail really appreciate it too! -Mooch and Earl

Glad to have helped clean up the woods. Since I do plenty of hiking in all kinds of areas I feel like giving something back to the environment like getting trash out where it doesn't belong. Thanks for a well organized and informative event. -Dave w/o id

Oh boy! I'd participated in other CITO events, but wasn't prepared for this. It's amazing (and a shame) what people will dump in the woods. A lot of junk was moved out and that's good. After returning to the pavilion and picking up composters (I'm so glad to have a bin instead of an open pile now) we went out to cache. -Meriadoc2003

For more information on geocaching or to see more comments from participants, please visit www.geocaching.com.

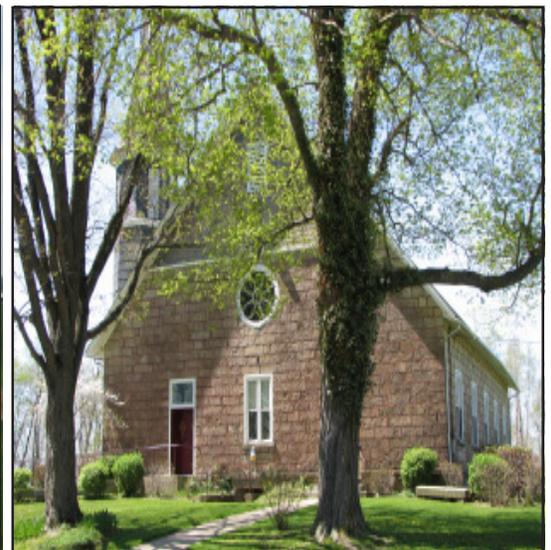


The “Southern Project” is drawing to a close with a completion date of June 30, 2007. Pashek Associates, a consulting firm from Pittsburgh has been contracted to assist in the completion of this Comprehensive Plan project. The VCRPC have completed or will complete several components of the project – visioning sessions, background studies, mapping and draft plan sections. Landscape architects will assist with plan completion in 2007.

VCRPC will continue to finalize information to complete the statement: “Where are they now?” Plan preparation will continue to answer the questions: “Where do they want to go?” and “How are they going to get there?”

Once the draft plan is completed, it will be available for public review and comment as well as to surrounding municipalities. Then the participating communities will adopt the plan and begin implementation.

Community visioning is continuing and becoming more specific to areas within the region.





More than 30 citizens and state and local officials congregated in Emlenton’s Crawford Center on Thursday, September 21, 2006 for the first day of a community workshop focused on turning Emlenton and Foxburg into “Trail Towns.” The two-day workshop, *“Emlenton and Foxburg, PA - Life after Oil - Toward a Renaissance of Former Oil Boom Towns”* helped officials and citizens explore ways of turning liabilities into community assets. Speakers included representatives from PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Oil Region Alliance, The Delta Group, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and local historians and elected officials.

The workshop focused on three key elements: _____

Identify ways to complete the regional rail-trail network (key elements include completion of the trail from the Rockland Tunnel 6 miles north of Emlenton through the old refinery into the downtown, and down the Allegheny River on to Pittsburgh).

Define next steps for identifying beneficial re-uses of the now vacant 40 acre site of the former Honeywell refinery.

Create a plan for a downtown revitalization using the Main Street model, building on the “Trail Towns” concept now being used in similar communities in southwestern and northeast Pennsylvania.

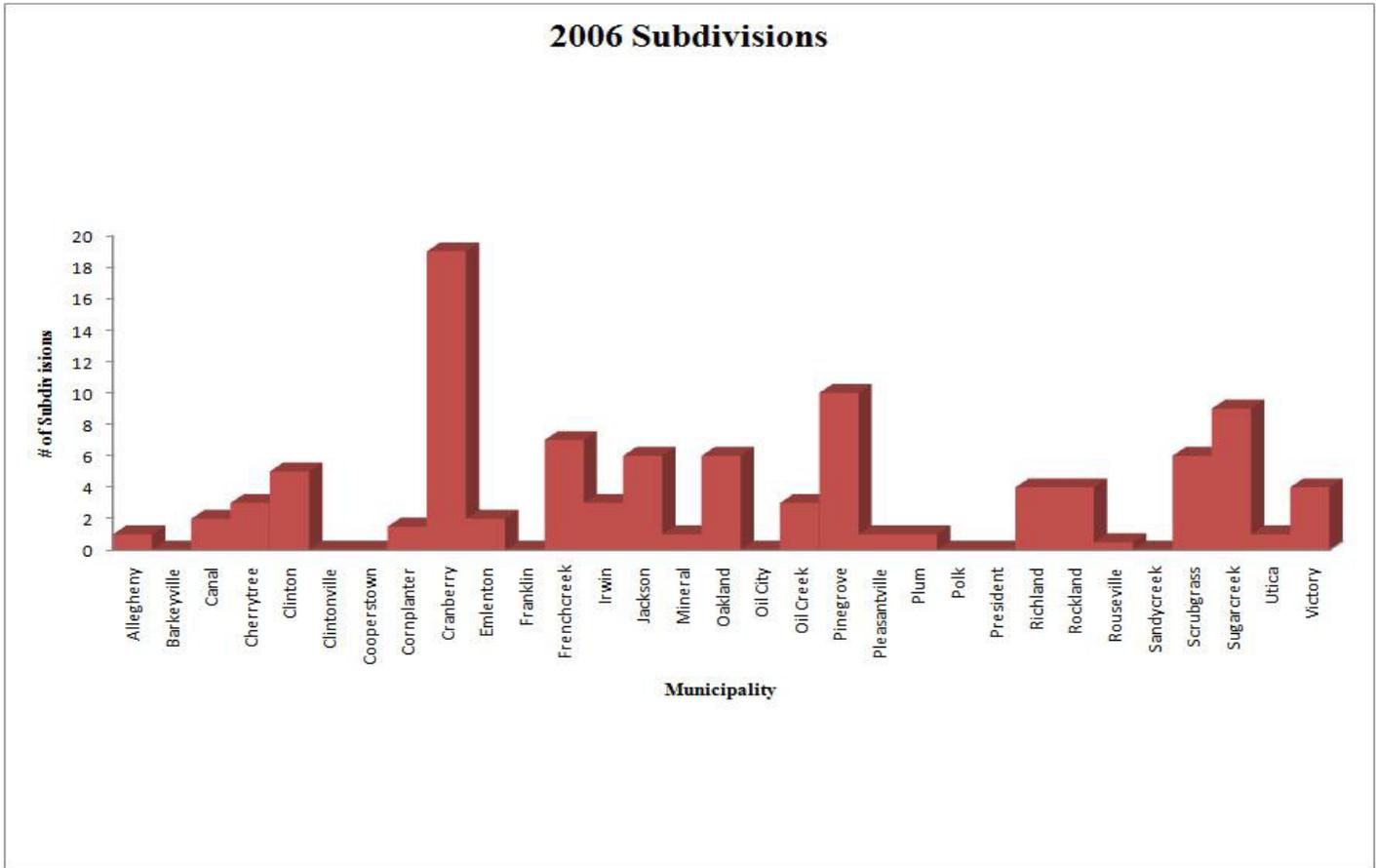
A regional approach: The towns of Emlenton, Foxburg, Parker and St. Petersburg are banding together to form a regional Main Street Program. Each community has formed a volunteer committee; a regional Board has been formed. The goal is to develop a five-year plan of action and hire a Regional Main Street coordinator to implement each community’s plan. This marks the beginning of formal cooperative efforts across county lines between Clarion and Venango Counties.

The workshop was organized by Emlenton and Foxburg Boroughs, the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, Venango County Regional Planning Commission and the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.



2006 SUBDIVISIONS IN REVIEW

There were 100 Subdivision reviewed and approved in 2006 by VCRPC staff in 23 Municipalities.



2006 MAJOR LAND DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

- Tractor Supply Company
- Holiday Inn Express
- Team Hardinger
- Hawbaker
- Hoss's Steak House

SUBDIVISION AND SALDO TRAINING FOR MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS, SURVEYORS, PERMIT ISSUERS

What is a subdivision? How does a municipality issue a building permit without a Parcel #? When new residential lots are created, who is affected? (municipality?, school?, emergency services?, county tax base?)

Mr. Denny Puko of the Governor's Center for Local Government Services explained the reasons for having a SALDO and how it relates to each of our county offices and municipalities. He also listened and answered questions about the SALDO and what role each of us plays.

These are just a few of the questions that have come to the VCRPC recently. Municipal officials and their assigned personnel who issue building permits, surveyors and county personnel were invited to attend a discussion concerning the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). The entire process was discussed from surveying to assessment to mapping and the role of planning in land use decisions.

The Venango County Regional Planning Commission would like to work more closely with the surveyors, municipalities and other county offices. With all of us "on the same page", the process will become simpler and more efficient. The land use decisions occurring at all levels of the county will work together to make Venango County a destination to live, work and play.

COUNTY-WIDE RECREATION PLAN



Venango County has an opportunity to create a plan of action that will benefit a wide range of groups, organizations, leadership, businesses and the citizens of the area. With funding from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), *Recreation, Parks and Open Space in Venango County: A plan for attractive, livable communities, a healthy, high quality of life and related economic development* will be created. A Community Conservation Partnerships Program grant has been received from DCNR in the amount of \$50,000. Local funding sources will match that amount. Project work will begin in the summer of 2007.

Venango County seeks to assess the entire range of activities, relationships, interactions and opportunities currently available, planned for and still needed to meet the recreation needs of the residents and visitors as well as the resources needed by the providers. The mission of the park and recreation service providers throughout Venango County is to provide opportunities that guarantee every resident quality recreation experiences consistent with their needs and interests.

MUNICIPAL RECREATION PROJECTS

The VCRPC is assisting several municipalities with project planning and obtaining information for grant applications to DCNR. Meetings and site tours were arranged for municipal officials, volunteers and the DCNR Regional Park and Recreation Advisor, Kim McCullough. Additional meetings are planned.

Ms. McCullough is encouraging projects in Northwestern Pennsylvania which has been under represented in the applications in the last several years. Current planned projects include: Borough and Township park site development plans such as:

- Playgrounds
- Tennis courts/skate parks
- ADA accessibility to facilities
- Little League ball field and recreation complex



The Venango County Regional Planning Commission utilizes GIS mapping capabilities to graphically demonstrate planning impacts. The following mapping projects were undertaken either in house or with the assistance of the County's GIS coordinator:

Southern Regional Comprehensive Plan Documents

Venango County Bus Routes

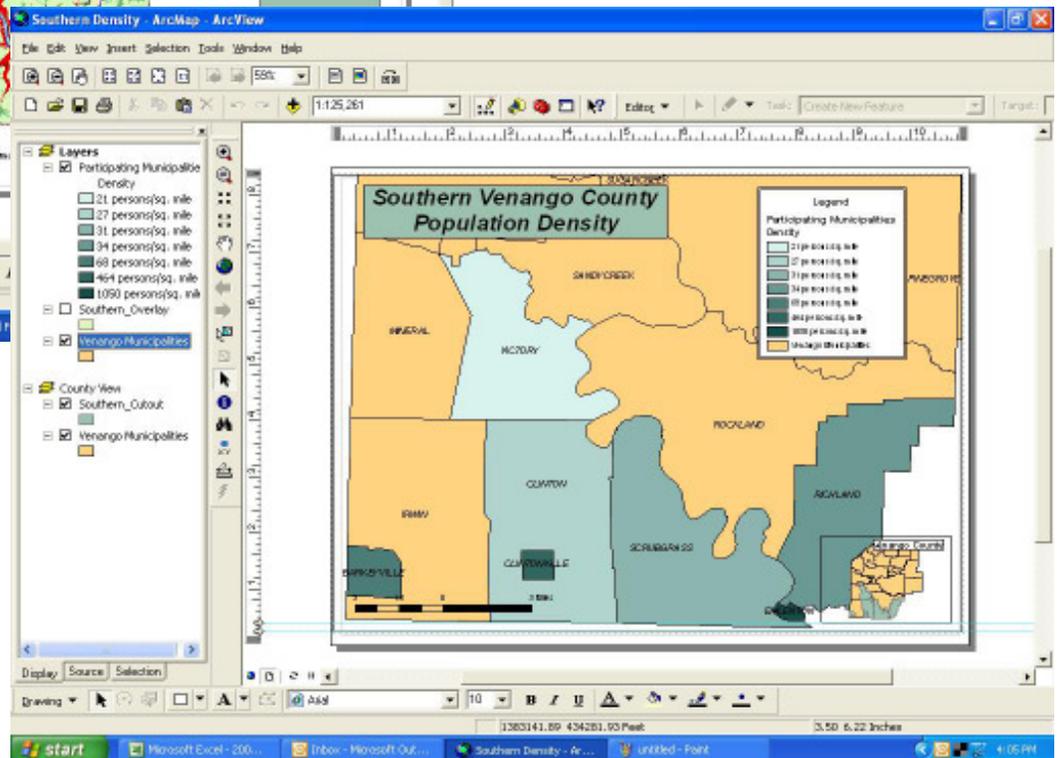
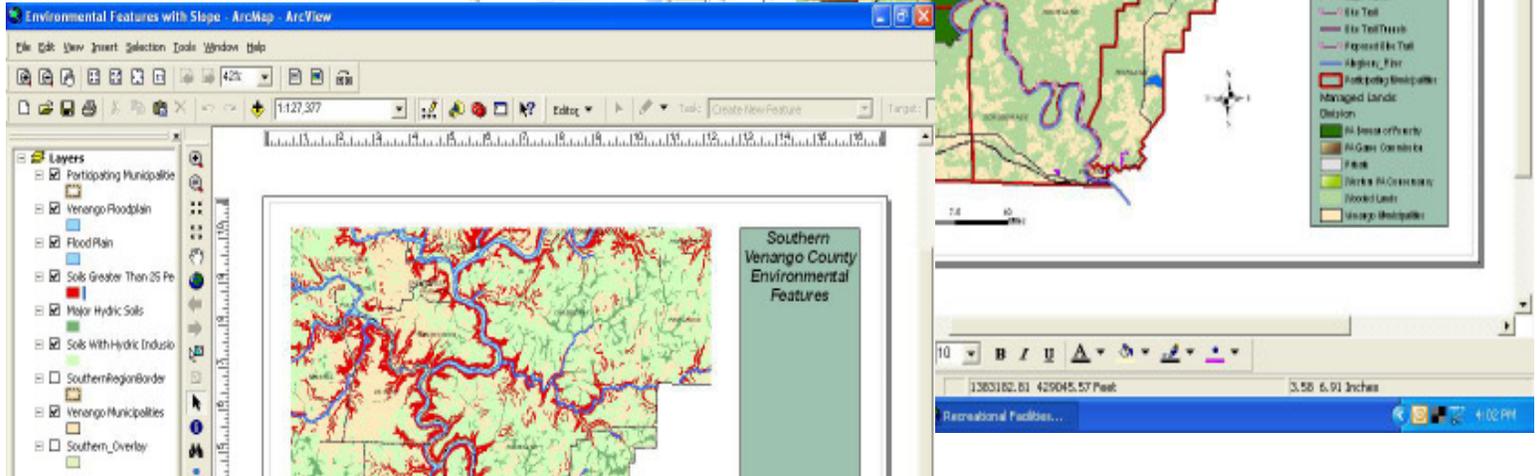
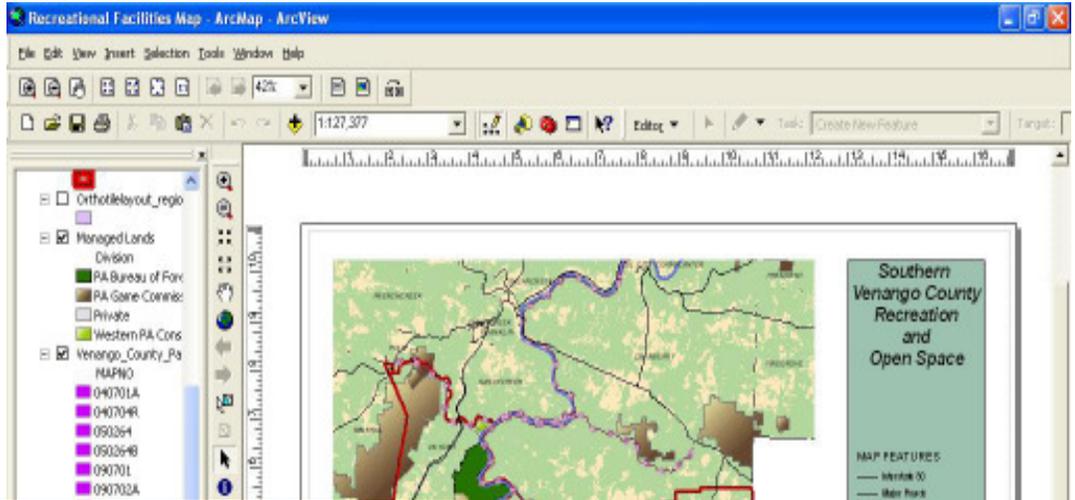
Clean and Green Parcels

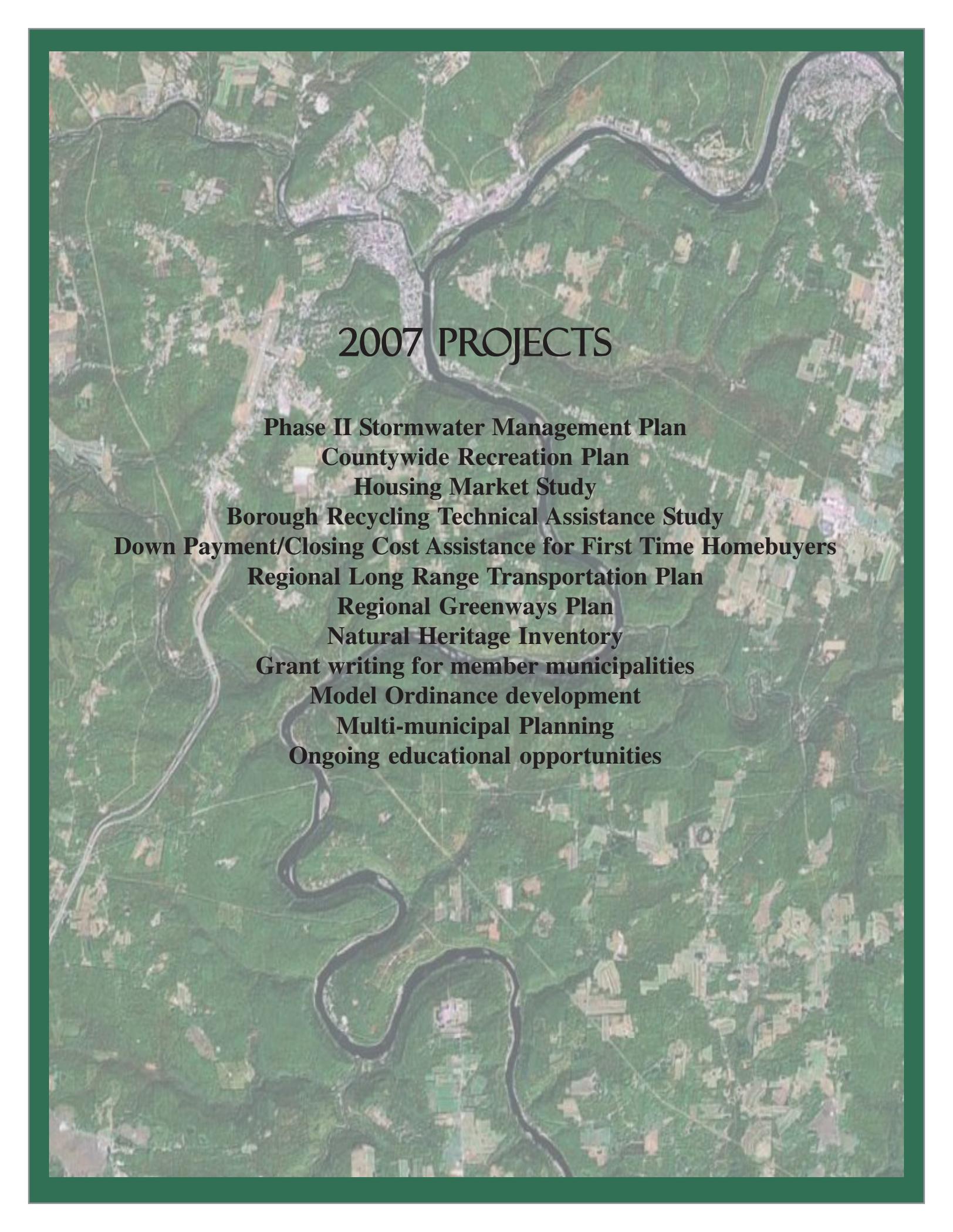
Agricultural Security Areas

Existing Land Use

Section 8 Housing Units

Bike Trails and Points of Interest



An aerial photograph of a river valley, likely the Delaware River, showing a winding river through green fields and small towns. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

2007 PROJECTS

Phase II Stormwater Management Plan

Countywide Recreation Plan

Housing Market Study

Borough Recycling Technical Assistance Study

Down Payment/Closing Cost Assistance for First Time Homebuyers

Regional Long Range Transportation Plan

Regional Greenways Plan

Natural Heritage Inventory

Grant writing for member municipalities

Model Ordinance development

Multi-municipal Planning

Ongoing educational opportunities

VENANGO COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

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FRANKLIN, PA 16323

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MONDAY - FRIDAY 8:30 TO 4:30

www.co.venango.pa.us



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