

Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways and Open Space Network Project

Project sponsor:

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Project timeline: January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008

The Regional project will create independent *Greenways and Open Space Network Plans* for the following counties:

- Clarion County, PA
- Crawford County, PA
- Erie County, PA
- Forest County, PA
- Venango County, PA
- Warren County, PA
- Lawrence County is currently developing a county greenway plan
- Mercer County has developed a Greenways Plan as part of its comprehensive plan.

The plan would include the development of a regional plan, and synchronization of the regional plan with adjoining regions, including Lawrence and Mercer Counties, and state-wide plans. The regional plan will ultimately cover an eight-county region.

Steering Committees

Regional Committee: includes the Northwest Commission, the counties, and designated groups/organizations having functional, land use/ownership, and economic/tourism responsibilities and interests in greenways and open space.

Each county has a steering committee to direct the independent plans.

Scope of Work

Purpose

- Discuss any specific policy goals or objectives that relate to the use of greenways for different functions (e.g. recreation, wildlife migration, water quality protection, etc.)
- Discuss how the county, the general public and other stakeholders may use the plan. Specifically indicate how this plan will interface with the County Comprehensive Plan and other plans guiding the County
- Corridor connections beyond county boundaries may have regional, statewide or even national significance by providing long-distance recreational and alternative transportation opportunities as well as potentially important migration routes for wildlife

Inventory Existing Data and Related Plans

- Identification and mapping of what the existing natural resources, manmade features and linear greenway corridors are within a county that might influence the development of the greenways network.
- Existing trails and other greenway corridors that extend beyond the counties borders
- Greenways outside the county that have potential for creating connections from within the county to form a greenway corridor that might be more regional in scope.

Natural Resources (“green infrastructure”)

- ✧ Water resources -- flood plains, wetlands, aquifer recharge zones, surface waters
- ✧ Natural areas – areas involving land, water or both land and water
- ✧ Important plant and animal species and their critical habitats
- ✧ Forests and woodlands
- ✧ Public and other protected open space
- ✧ Farmland including preserved acreage
- ✧ Soils and geological features.
- ✧ Steep slopes (15% or greater) and slide prone areas
- ✧ Ridge tops and scenic view sheds
- ✧ Biological diversity areas
- ✧ Landscape conservation areas

Manmade Resources (“gray infrastructure”)

- ✧ Transportation and utility corridors and related facilities
- ✧ Recreation facilities
- ✧ Cultural/Historic Sites
- ✧ Population Centers and Destinations
- ✧ Future development areas

Analyze Data and Develop Proposed County Greenways Network Vision

- Identification of the county’s vision for its greenways network
- Resulting in a county map and text to describe the proposed network including a rationale for the proposal
- Identify potential greenway corridors, the specific functions and associated benefits of each of the different types of proposed corridors
- Identify hubs / destinations that are either natural resource-based or manmade (or a combination of the two)
- Specifically identify important and threatened open space that should be conserved as part of the greenways network
- Consider corridors and hubs that are known to support wildlife habitat and migration
- Identify potential linkages between the eight counties, explore connections into neighboring counties and regions
- Identify major “restorative” opportunities along river and stream corridors
- Consider opportunities that might be provided by mine land reclamation and brownfield sites

Mapping

- Illustrate existing county greenway network elements, & the proposed greenway network envisioned by the county and its stakeholders

Develop Action Plan

- Creating a matrix of concrete actions for next steps laying out priorities
- Specify the life of the plan as 10 years to encourage synchronization with other county planning initiatives
- Identifying roles and responsibilities for each action step
- Estimating costs and resources and potential financing options needed to address actions steps
- Identifying potential pilot projects to generate momentum for early implementation of the plan
- Identify where taking a multi-municipal approach could be a viable
- Reviewing and recommending model ordinance and land development regulation language
- Recommending the use of existing or new advisory groups (e.g. Environmental Advisory Councils, Recreation and Park Advisory Boards, State Health Improvement Partnerships, etc.) at the municipal or county level to act as greenway network champions
- Establishing methods for the long-term protection of the corridors and hubs proposed in the county greenway network
- Setting up on-going mechanisms for coordination with other counties, regional planning entities, municipalities, landowners and other stakeholders including local health improvement partners who are becoming valuable and interested parties in greenways planning and design.
- Exploring partnerships with private organizations and corporations including hospitals
- Determine and identify the opportunities and mechanisms necessary to facilitate any proposed inter-municipal and inter-county project opportunities

Public Participation/ Community Involvement Process

Final products

- The final plan will be accessible to the public through the Northwest Commission's website. GIS data/maps created for the plan will be displayed over the Northwest Commission's Neighborhood GIS ArcIMS (Internet Map Server) web site