

Appendix



Prior Planning Efforts

A considerable number of planning efforts specific to, or related to, greenways and open space have been completed within the last 10 years. The most relevant are highlighted here with a description of the significant aspects of each that most directly affect greenway and open space planning and development.

Bucknell River Access Report

This report was completed by five students of Bucknell University as part of a Geography course / Community Service project in the Spring of 2013 and was presented to the Borough and the Lewisburg Neighborhoods Corporation (LNC).

The Bucknell River access report recommends the following actions to improve community connections and access to the Susquehanna River:

- Connect Riverwoods to the greater Lewisburg community with a trail or connecting sidewalks along River Road, including pedestrian access across the St. Anthony Street Bridge.
- The report lists Soldier's Park as a location to establish a formalized landing and launch for the river. Safety improvements to the St. George Street launch are also recommended.
- The report further identifies the untapped potential of the RiverWalk and several small parks along the riverbank as important locations to view and enjoy the River. Connections to these areas and to other local trails is recommended.

Bull Run Neighborhood Plan (BRNP)

The BRNP recommendation for a greenway has improvements for pedestrian circulation, habitat corridor, and utilizing the north-south rail corridor for a rail-with-trail passage. The plan calls for a connection to the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail (BVRT). The Borough of Lewisburg has secured funding for creating a master plan of the open space in the neighborhood.

BVRT - Final Section Feasibility Study

This report was prepared by the Buffalo Valley Recreation Authority (BVRA) with assistance from its consultant and Bucknell University. The three main objectives outlined include the following:

1. Connect the BVRT across US Route 15 and through the Borough of Lewisburg;
2. Establish a trail spur to Market Street in Lewisburg; and
3. Rehabilitate and reuse the historic railroad bridge across the Susquehanna and link to the proposed Route 405 greenway in Northumberland County.

Item #2 above, along with an extension of the BVRT between 8th and 5th Streets, was constructed in 2015. The remaining objectives have not been met.

Centre County Greenway Plan

The Centre County Greenway Plan recommends a trail connection, using the former Lewisburg and Tyrone railroad corridor, through Penns Valley from Centre Hall to Weikert in Union County. This would be connected to the Mid State and Cherry Run Trails which also use a portion of this corridor. Strategic goals of this trail would be to link to the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) as well as to a new spur trail that would head north past the Bald Eagle State Forest office, Laurelton Center, R.B. Winter State Park and finish at the McCall Dam State Park. Centre County is in the process of completing a feasibility study on the 26-mile Penns Valley Rail trail project.



The Comprehensive Plan for the US 15 South Planning Area

This plan specifically recommends Gregg Township participate in a scenic resources inventory, including the prioritization of scenic resource protection efforts (pg. 3-25). This is inclusive in Strategy #9, which includes Gregg Township in the development of a greenways plan (pg. 3-30, 9c).

The plan supports the completion of the Susquehanna Greenway and cites it as a critical priority (pg. 4-9, 2c). Key strategic actions cited in this plan for greenways and open space include the following (pg. 9-15):

1. Revise zoning to guide development to desired growth areas.
2. Identify farmland that should be permanently preserved for agricultural use.
3. Support the development of the Susquehanna Greenway.
4. Promote enrollment in forest conservation programs, e.g. Forest Legacy Program, Clean and Green – Forest Reserve Program.
5. Improve access to the Susquehanna River, including visual access, boat access, fishing access, etc.

Lewisburg Area Comprehensive Park, Recreation Open Space and Greenway Plan

The plan has the following goals and objectives (in brief):

1. Establish a premiere system of parks, recreation facilities and trails through the community. The plan also called for:
 - Linking existing parks/facilities via multi-use trails;
 - Accommodating older residents;
 - Completing master plans for existing and new parks;
 - Providing visual and pedestrian access to the river; and
 - Acquiring 3 acres of parkland in Lewisburg Borough, 37 acres in Kelly Township and 65 acres in East Buffalo Township by 2020.
2. Conserve the natural resources and scenic beauty
 - Conserve natural resource lands through various protection and

acquisition techniques including zoning, TDRs, official maps, overlays, education, easements by land trust, etc.

- Coordinate with other municipalities and organizations (such as the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership) to promote education on creating and conserving greenway.

Cultivating Community: A Plan for Union County's Future

The Union County Comprehensive Plan and three multi-municipal plans have many greenway and open space recommendations.

Some of the recommendations highlighted in the text include the preservation of important Natural Heritage Inventory sites, such as Mohn Mill Ponds, Shikellamy Bluffs, Halfway Run, and Penns Creek, implementation of the Susquehanna Greenway, completion of the BVRT, and agricultural land preservation. Several specific implementation actions as detailed in Part III of the plan are listed here.

Furthermore, the Plan calls for the establishment of accessible public parks to meet the requirements of today and the projected growth in population out to 2050 and the establishment of a recreational trail network throughout the county.

For the Central Planning Area, municipalities should consider the establishment of a regional park/open space and the expansion and maintenance of existing local parks.

Actions listed for the Eastern Planning Area also cite the need for cooperation to meet the recreational needs of an ever-expanding population. The completion of the BVRT is noted as well as participation in the Susquehanna Greenway project. The recommended actions also address the greying of our community by calling for easy access and Special Use Parks to address older Union County citizens, both now and in the future.



REF. NO.	ACTION
CW-1	Assist municipalities with developing and applying appropriate model regulations (e.g., conservation zoning, conservation subdivision design, TDRs) to preserve natural resources and agricultural lands.
CW-3	Increase the number of conservation easements held in the County through marketing, education, and donated easements.
CW-5	Develop a comprehensive waterways strategy for Union County (e.g, partnerships with local watershed organizations, riparian buffer protection using native vegetation along waterways, stream and water quality ordinances, best practice stormwater ordinances, partnerships with farmers, etc.).
CW-8	Increase and diversify funding for the County's PACE program to meet the short-term (\$7 million/10,000 acres by 2010) and long-term (40,000 acres by 2020) goals.
CW-9	Direct new development away from agricultural land to and into designated Primary and Secondary growth areas and limit extension of public water, sewer and other infrastructure to discourage development. Direct rural development into the designated Rural Development Areas.
CW-11	Develop model agricultural preservation zoning ordinances and encourage municipal adoption in agricultural areas. Offer technical assistance and grants to reimburse local expenses associated with drafting or amending local ordinances.
CW-62	Integrate preparation of a new greenways plan and updated Natural Heritage Area Inventory into development of the overall green infrastructure plan. Include a trail/bikeway network (walking/hiking trails, off-road bike paths, on-road bike lanes, etc.) that provides alternatives to vehicular travel.

Lewisburg River Launch Report/Presentation

This presentation was completed by LNC intern Jesse Lewis in 2013 and expanded by Andrew Ciotola and Samantha Pearson.

This report cites the inadequacy of the current St George St. boat launch and suggests improving the launch and/or establishing a new launch site at Wolfe Field, St. Anthony St., Soldiers Park or Mariah's Garden.

None of the recommendations in this presentation have been implemented.

Lower West Branch Susquehanna River Conservation Plan (LWBSRCP)

The LWBSRCP identifies the important habitat located in the Appalachian shale cliffs in and near the Shikellamy State park in Union Township (pg. 50). The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy's Plan recognizes the need to work with PennDOT to coordinate trail and greenway work with highway and improvement construction schedules (pg.155).

The Plan supports a connection of the river and the BVRT (pg. 148) and calls for the creation/expansion of the Lewisburg river walk, possibly along active rail corridors, to provide riparian buffer enhancements, invasive species control and habitat protection (pg. 162).

For direct access to the River, this plan recommends a "soft launch" (non-motorized) boat launch in Winfield and Lewisburg as well as an access point for watercraft on the Great Stream Commons property at Allenwood (pg. 168).

The above recommendations have not been implemented.



Lycoming County Greenway Plan

The Lycoming County Greenway plan supports the completion of the Susquehanna [Greenway] Trail along the West Branch of the river to the Union County line. This would connect to Williamsport and eventually the Pine Creek Trail and is the “number one trail priority” in Lycoming County (pg. 8-18).

An additional trail priority is the “Southern Lycoming Loop” trail connecting Union County to Elimsport and Route 880 (pg. 11). Neither of these trail connections have been completed.

Lycoming County also recognizes the importance of protecting the Mohn Mill Ponds that straddle the Lycoming/Union County lines. This woodland buffer is essential to maintain the community quality and resident rare species. (pg. 7-26)

Northumberland County Greenways and Open Space Plan

A portion of the Warrior Run Pathways Project runs through Union County in White Deer Township and Allenwood. A segment is more specifically called the West Branch Trail Concept and consists of a 4.5 mile loop trail connecting Dewart and Watsonstown Borough in Northumberland County with the villages of Allenwood and White Deer in Union County.

Furthermore a second portion of the project is the Warrior Run Touring Route, a “network of lesser traveled roads that provide opportunities for shared routes for pedestrians, runners and bicyclists” covering 77. 3 miles in Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland and Union Counties. Specifically in Union County is the Allenwood River Ride of 4.0 miles.

While not in Union County, the plans for a trail/greenway along State Route 405 in Northumberland County could connect to the BVRT.

These loops and connections are still incomplete.

SEDA- COG Metropolitan Planning Organization, Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The Susquehanna Greenway and a County Non-Motorized Network Master Plan are needs supported by the SEDA-COG Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) LRTP (pgs. 66-67). The MPO has not advanced any greenway implementation projects or the non-motorized network plan on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).

Susquehanna Greenway Plan

The Susquehanna Greenway Plan calls for many linkages between the river/ riverfront and Union County. These links include waypoints and points of interest within the County as well as links to trails and routes across the county and beyond.

Over a dozen waypoints are recommended in the eastern portion of the County including locations in downtown Lewisburg, Kelly, East Buffalo and Union Townships. Hufnagle Park, Packwood House, and Little Mexico Campground are just a few examples.

The Plan also notes the need to connect to the river via access points such as a Lewisburg Access (yet to be determined) the Maria Quant Memorial Garden and a proposed access point in Great Stream Commons.

The plan lists various linkages to the Greenway corridor. Links that are extant include the BVRT, Bike Route V on SR 192, White Deer Ridge Trail and the White Deer Hole Creek Conservation Corridor. Proposed linkages are the Lewisburg to Milton RiverWalk, the Buffalo Creek Conservation Corridor, the White Deer Creek Conservation Corridor and bike pedestrian access along SR 44 and the Central Susquehanna Valley Throughway (CSVT).

While aspects of the Susquehanna Greenway have been completed, these are all outside of Union County.



Union County Natural Areas Inventory

The Union County Natural Areas Inventory (UCNAI) was completed in 1993 and updated in 2000, and then again by DCNR in 2015. Contained in the original report were 21 locations that were recommended for protection and ranked in priority. The top ranked properties are Mohn Mill Ponds and Shikellamy Bluffs which have been mentioned in several other plans. Ranked second are Halfway Run Ponds and Penns Creek at White Mountain. All core habitats and supporting landscapes can be viewed on the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program Map Explorer at: <https://conservationexplorer.dcnr.pa.gov/content/map>.

West Branch Water Trail Stewardship Plan

The West Branch Water Trail Stewardship Plan, developed by the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy, identifies a soft boat launch in Gregg Township and Lewisburg Borough. These correspond with the proposed launch in Great Stream Commons and the existing St. George Street launch in Lewisburg Borough. Recommendations for improvements to these two locations include infrastructure upgrades for stability, ADA access, signage and control of the invasive plant Japanese knotweed.

One additional river access point is identified in the plan, to be removed. The River Edge Campground access should be listed as private and restricted to residents/clients of the campground and not as a public access point. The plan notes a possible new access being established as part of the CSVT project.

None of the recommendations from this plan have been implemented in Union County.

Buffalo Creek Watershed Plan

The Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance developed a comprehensive watershed restoration plan and has been working with landowners, the PA DEP, and the County Conservation District to improve water quality through

public education, physical improvements, and other means. A high priority noted in the plan is establishing forested riparian buffers, particularly on stream reaches that are designated as impaired on the State and Federal 303.d list. Currently there are 53 miles of listed impaired streams in the county, the majority of which the source of impairment is agricultural related. Most of this plan has not been implemented due to difficulty identifying volunteer landowner participants.

Lewisburg to Mifflinburg Trail Feasibility Study

This planning effort was led by the Union County Planning Commission and determined that a traditional rail to trail on the former West Shore Railroad, Inc. corridor from Lewisburg to Mifflinburg would be feasible and recommended developing a multi-use trail.

The recommendations of this planning effort were completed with the construction of the first phase of the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail (BVRT) in 2011.

Riverwoods Greenway Conceptual Plan

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, on behalf of the Lewisburg Area Recreation Authority (now BVRA) and Albright Care Services prepared a conceptual plan for expanded recreational opportunities and habitat restoration on the lands at Riverwoods along Buffalo Creek by the AYSO Soccer Fields and along the West Branch Susquehanna River. This included a riverfront loop trail that was over a mile in length. An easement agreement was executed between the property owner and LARA and a grant was secured from the PA DCNR; however, the project never materialized as energy and financial resources were shifted to address the acquisition, design, and development of the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail.



Previous Public Participation

Comprehensive Planning

During the development of the county comprehensive plan, *Cultivating Community: A Plan for Union County's Future from 2007 through 2009*, and three concurrent multi-municipal plans there was an extensive public involvement component. Various techniques such as focus groups, stakeholder interviews, meetings in a box, a random household survey, project website, school student survey, community interviews, open houses, municipal officials meetings, public meetings, and plan advisory teams were used among other methods to solicit input. This public involvement is what informed and shaped the plan and its goals and recommendations including the primary and secondary growth areas and future land use which is aimed at maintaining a large percentage of the county as forest and agricultural lands.

The public participation was intended to be broad due to the comprehensiveness of what has to be addressed in such a plan. With the exception of the household survey many of the questions were intentionally open ended to encourage discussion, dialogue and sharing of ideas. While this led to participants offering opinions noting general support for open space conservation it did not typically produce feedback on detailed greenway and open space implementation. The one exception was the rail trail from Mifflinburg to Lewisburg, which was mentioned by both supporters and opponents.

For example 375 community members were interviewed and asked questions such as "What is something you like about the community? What is something you dislike about the community? What is something you would like to see changed?" This returned answers to the first question such as small town character, abundance of open space, peace and quiet, and ample recreation while growth and development, loss of farmland and open space, and increased traffic were noted as dislikes. And finally more recreation programs, preserved farms, and less growth in response to the last question.

The random survey completed by 600 households throughout the county asked respondents to rank the importance of issues facing the county, what were the most important issues to address, and what are the most important reasons for living in the county. Energy conservation, managing future growth, improved transportation, and maintaining a low tax rate were cited as the most critical issues facing the county with each having 84% or more of respondents ranking them as important. In comparison 79% felt more agricultural preservation was important, 66% for expanding parks, recreation and open space and 66% for expanding walking and biking trails. Managing future growth and more agricultural preservation were two of the top five issues participants felt were most important for Union County to address. The most important reasons for people deciding to live in the county were low crime rate, small town/rural atmosphere, appearance and county beauty, quality of education, and taxation level.

Union County Future of Agriculture Program

In parallel with the county comprehensive plan the Union County Conservation District, Union County Planning Commission and a group of volunteers known as the Future of Union County Agriculture Task Force partnered with Pennsylvania State University and the Cooperative Extension Service in an effort to obtain direct input from Union County's agricultural land owners and producers. In 2007, *Let's Talk Sessions* were held where 110 people participated in a discussion on the opportunities, challenges, and future of farming in the county. This was followed by personal interviews conducted on 72 randomly selected farms. Farmers noted rising property taxes, sprawling development, loss of neighbor farms, increase in non-farm neighbors and rising farmland prices as the main threats to their operations and livelihood.

In terms of future farming plans 41% of those interviewed intend to stop farming in the next 10 years due to age and retirement and of those 33% plan to transfer farm ownership to a relative. When asked about the sale of development rights for farmland preservation, 64% indicated they would consider it to prevent the farm from being developed, and 23% said they would even consider donating the development rights for the same purpose.



However, only 6% would sell their land for development, and 48% supported the idea of the county issuing a bond to raise money for agricultural preservation with 15% opposed and 35% unsure.

Lewisburg Area Comprehensive Park, Recreation, Open Space & Greenway Plan

During the development of this multi-municipal plan by the Lewisburg Area Recreation Authority (LARA), now Buffalo Valley Recreation Authority, residents of East Buffalo Township, Kelly Township and Lewisburg Borough were engaged through a plan advisory committee, over 25 key person interviews, focus groups and work sessions, and a direct mail survey that netted 283 responses. Findings related to greenways and open space included the following being noted as needs:

- Multi-use trails (top priority)
- Maintaining existing parks
- Riverfront park and trails
- River access points

In addition 91% of survey respondents use local parks and 70% indicated a willingness to pay \$10 (2007 dollars) more per year per person to support parks, recreation, open space and greenways. Protecting farmland was important to 88%, 90% felt protecting wildlife habitat was important, and there was strong support for river-related conservation.

SEDA-COG MPO Initiatives

Long Range Transportation Plan

The SEDA-COG Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is required by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) to develop a long-range transportation plan for the eight-county MPO region of which Union County is a member. The plan is to consider all modes of transportation including automobile, rail, freight, transit, air, and bicycle and pedestrian. For the current plan the Susquehanna Greenway, and BVRT crossing of US 15 are the only greenway and bicycle

and pedestrian projects recommended in Union County as a result of that planning process and input received.

TIP Update Process

Every two years the MPO and PennDOT prepare an update to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for the MPO region and the Commonwealth. Input was solicited in 2013 for development of the next TIP via public meetings, webinars, and an interactive website made available via PennDOT. Based on the feedback from the SEDA-COG region Northumberland and Union Counties had the most individual comments in support of walking and biking trails. For Union County 58% of all the entered comments were about biking and walking trails, the majority of which focused on extending the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail across US 15 into downtown Lewisburg and to the river. However one Winfield resident suggested a trail from Lewisburg to Winfield and two East Buffalo Township residents mentioned the need for a trail along River Road to address safety issues caused by joggers and bicyclists being in the road. A Lewisburg Borough resident also proposed that trails be developed along the West Branch Susquehanna River.

PA DCNR SCORP Survey

Every five years the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania is required to prepare a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) to establish future outdoor recreation goals and priorities. During 2014 the Pennsylvania State University administered a survey on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) for the purpose of gathering citizen input for the new SCORP. A total of 161 Union County residents participated in the survey and the Union County Planning Commission obtained a summary of the results from PA DCNR. Below are the highlights from the data.

- 70% stated they were satisfied with the outdoor recreation amenities in the area
- 88% indicated outdoor recreation is important in their everyday life
- Trails, natural areas, waterways, local parks, public spaces and farmland are what people value the most about the community, ranking much higher than highway commercial corridors, down-



downtowns, industrial areas, residential neighborhoods, and other public/institutional areas.

- Community or regional trails were ranked as the highest priority in terms of what the local community should invest in over the next five years followed by water access for boating and kayaking, community and regional parks, and neighborhood parks.
- The lowest support for community investment over the next five years was for motorized trails and parks, skate parks, dog parks, and team sports facilities.
- The following were the top outdoor recreation and conservation funding priorities:
 - Restore damaged rivers and streams
 - Protect wildlife and fish habitats
 - Maintain existing park and recreation areas
 - Acquire and protect open space as undeveloped land
- 73% felt providing outdoor recreation is a core function of local government
- Very few felt they could not afford to participate (3%) in outdoor recreation or had physical limitations (4%) that prevented participation.
- 52% cited inadequate funding for outdoor recreation and conservation as the biggest challenge while 21% said the lack of public and political support for outdoor recreation.

Linn Conservancy/Union County Hike

On September 27th 2014 the Merrill W. Linn Land & Waterways Conservancy in conjunction with Union County sponsored a hike at the Hook Natural Area within the Bald Eagle State Forest. The purpose was to raise awareness about natural resources and open space in the county and to provide an opportunity for participants to provide early input into the topic of greenways and open space planning. Twenty of the hikers stayed to participate in a discussion after the hike. Slightly more than half of those participants felt there is too much development in the county. The rest

thought development was about right, except for two people who believed more development is needed. The group was fairly evenly split in terms of whether or not greenway and open space resources are adequately protected today. Another interesting response was that everyone was willing to walk at least a half mile from their home to access public open space such as a greenway, park or trail and the majority were willing to walk up to a mile.

Lewisburg River Town Community Planning

In early November 2014 the Lewisburg Neighborhood Corporation and Susquehanna Greenway Partnership held a River Town Community Planning Meeting in Lewisburg Borough to engage residents concerning their relationship to and with the river. Participants were given an opportunity to note what their two favorite and two most frustrating areas were in the town. After a presentation people split into focus groups on “Community Life”, “Downtown Lewisburg”, “Built Environment”, and “Natural Environment” where they identified the top two priorities for the River Town. The major priorities related to greenway and open space planning were the following:

- Connect the Buffalo Valley Rail Trail through the borough to the river, US 15 trail crossing
- Increase pedestrian and biking infrastructure
- Enhance Soldiers and Sailors Park with river access, seating, overlook, amphitheater, picnic tables, pavilion, and interpretive signage
- Trail connections along river to Milton and Northumberland
- Have a connecting trail between all riverfront green spaces and along Buffalo Creek
- Pedestrian walkway on old railroad bridge with canoe/kayak launch area in park



Implications for County Greenway & Open Space Plan

The extensive public participation undertaken for the county and various multi-municipal comprehensive plans, along with the Future of Agriculture program, resulted in a framework for balancing conservation and future growth and development. The public has shown a strong preference for preserving large areas of open space and comprehensive plans and land use maps reflect this same public sentiment.

Based on the LARA plan and more recent input received for the SEDA-COG TIP update, the PA DCNR SCORP Survey, and Conservancy hike we can make further assumptions and generalizations about what people are interested in and hold as important. We know people value outdoor recreation and that greenways and open spaces are needed in order for people to participate in those activities. There seems to be support for greenways, trails, creating water access points, watershed restoration, and protecting more land as permanent open space.

