

CHAPTER 9

PLAN FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Natural resources are identified in Chapter 14, where agricultural resources are discussed; Chapter 15, where floodplains, wetlands, hydric soils, streams, steep slopes, wooded areas and natural features of special interest are discussed; Chapter 16, where aquifers are discussed; and Chapter 17, where scenic resources are discussed. Historic Resources are discussed in Chapter 22.

Natural Resources

The following goal and objectives have been established:

Goal: Protect, preserve, sustain and enhance the natural and scenic resources of Amity, Exeter and St. Lawrence for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

Objectives:

- Prepare and implement a resource protection and management strategy for the region.
- Protect water resources within municipalities and thus the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater. Water courses of particular concern are the Schuylkill River, the Antietam, Manatawny, Monocacy, Limekiln, Heisters, Ironstone, and Owatin Creeks, Trout Run, tributaries to the creeks, wetlands and floodplains along the river and creeks, and steep slopes draining to the water courses.
- Protect groundwater throughout the municipalities, including remaining limestone areas where the potential for pollution and groundwater resources tend to be the greatest.
- Protect and improve water quality within the region.
- Encourage recharge of the water table as development occurs.
- Protect and manage woodlands within the municipalities and encourage new planting of trees within developments and reforestation.

- Protect the steep slopes within the municipalities, including Neversink Mountain, Monocacy Hill, Schwarzwald Hill and Guldin Hill; and preserve visible ridgelines, which contribute to the scenic character of the region.
- Protect watershed and wellhead areas for existing and potential community water supplies within Amity, Exeter and St. Lawrence.
- Preserve the scenic viewsheds and scenic road corridors within the region.
- Support water conservation efforts.
- Protect and maintain the rural character in portions of the Townships still possessing that rural character.
- Protect and conserve unique natural areas in the region, such as Neversink Mountain, the Schuylkill River, the Amityville Floodplain, and other identified PNDI sites.
- Conserve, enhance, manage and connect the ecosystems within the Planning Area.
- Strengthen municipal zoning and subdivision ordinances to provide further protection to the region's natural and scenic resources.
- Require developers to utilize appropriate erosion and sedimentation control techniques and minimize and mitigate sinkhole occurrence.
- Utilize existing programs and ordinances and initiate new programs to protect and/or acquire development rights or title to, the key natural resources in the region, such as agricultural areas, woodlands, hills, and greenways and buffers along waterways and wetlands.
- Encourage the design of new development to complement the region's scenic character and cultural heritage.
- Recognize the potential of the Schuylkill River corridor, support the designation of the Schuylkill River as a scenic river and efforts to preserve the River corridor, and foster recreational opportunities along the River. Foster preservation of a greenway along the river corridor. Consider participating in the following goals which have been established for a Schuylkill River Greenway in adjoining Montgomery County:

- Preserve natural resources of the Schuylkill River Valley environment, while revitalizing existing river-front communities in ways that respect the characteristics and qualities of the Schuylkill River.
 - Provide access to the water and encourage recreation along the river in ways that minimize conflicts between river users, and protect the natural features and sense of solitude along the river.
 - Protect water quality, enhance natural diversity, and improve overall aesthetic appearance of the river.
 - Promote sustainability and economic development in existing riverfront communities.
 - Conserve and enhance the cultural resources of the river corridor.
 - Preserve important open space lands for passive recreation, riparian buffers protection and protection of native species habitat along the river.
 - Establish a cooperative framework for education, planning, and coordination between public and private greenway partners.
- Promote alternatives to motor vehicle use to improve air quality.
 - Ensure businesses comply with state and federal air quality emissions standards.
 - Improve the appearance of the Route 422 Corridor through use of design and performance standards and coordinated signage standards and programs.

Relationship to Future Land Use Plan

Watercourses within the region have been identified as Stream Corridor Preservation areas on the Stream Corridor Preservation Map. One way to protect these watercourses is to establish Stream Corridor Preservation Overlay Districts through zoning ordinance regulations. Regulations for these overlay districts should be written to establish, protect, and manage riparian buffers along the watercourses. These regulations would protect groundwater discharge/recharge areas, protect the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater, and restrict further development in the corridor to protect the water quality. This will also help to establish and maintain corridors for future greenway and park development for the residents of the Region.

River Conservation is designated along the Schuylkill River. Agricultural Preservation, Rural Conservation and Rural Preservation areas have been identified throughout most of

the northern and central portions of Exeter and Amity Townships. Only limited development will be allowed in the Rural Conservation and Rural Preservation areas in order to protect watersheds, woodlands, and steep slopes. Limiting development will protect watercourses and water supplies, vulnerable wooded areas, and conserve ecosystems by maintaining an adequate critical mass through connecting ecosystems. Distinctive hills in the Region will be protected. The River Conservation areas are located within environmentally sensitive areas along the Schuylkill River. Only very limited development will be permitted in Agricultural Preservation areas, which protect agricultural resources, serve as recharge areas, and contain wildlife habitats.

Riparian Buffers

Riparian buffers are particularly important to the region because of the number of watercourses in the region. A riparian buffer is an area of vegetation that is maintained along the shore of a water body to protect stream water quality and stabilize stream channels and banks.

Buffers provide the following benefits:

- filter runoff – Rain that runs off the land can be slowed and infiltrated in the buffer, settling out sediment, nutrients and pesticides (nonpoint source pollution) before they reach streams.
- take up nutrients – Fertilizers and other pollutants that originate on the upslope land are taken up by tree roots. Nutrients are stored in leaves, limbs and roots instead of reaching the stream. Through a process called “denitrification,” bacteria in the forest floor convert nitrate to nitrogen gas, which is released into the air.
- provide shade – The leaf canopy’s shade keeps the water cool, allowing it to retain more dissolved oxygen, and encouraging growth of plants and aquatic insects that provide food for fish.
- contribute leaf food – Leaves that fall into the stream are trapped on fallen trees and rocks where they provide food and habitat for organisms critical to the aquatic food chain.
- provide habitat – Streams that travel through woodlands provide more habitat for fish and wildlife. Woody debris provides cover for fish while stabilizing stream bottoms.
- provides migration corridors for wildlife.
- safeguard water supplies by protecting groundwater recharge areas.

- provide flood control.
- provide stormwater management potential – natural vegetation provides a basis for innovative stormwater management systems. Stormwater flows from retention basins can be directed to, and allowed to flow through, buffers to reduce nutrient and sediment loads.
- improve water and air quality.
- stimulate economic opportunities such as by providing valuable open space which may increase land values and, therefore, the tax base.
- provide some federal tax incentives to landowners (depending on a landowner's financial situation) willing and able to place some of their lands under conservation easement.
- reduce grounds maintenance.
- provide recreational opportunities, and associated economic benefits for recreation-related businesses.
- provide educational and research opportunities for local schools and colleges.
- provide windbreak, shade and visual buffer.

Actions to Protect Natural Resources

The following actions should be taken to protect the natural resources within St. Lawrence Borough, Exeter Township and Amity Township:

1. Update zoning maps to reflect the Future Land Use Plan.
2. Update zoning ordinances to reflect the Future Land Use Plan and Goals and Objectives of this Plan to include:
 - a. Natural Resource Protection Standards and Net Out Provisions
 - b. Steep Slope Protection
 - c. Watershed and Wellhead Protection
 - d. Groundwater and Surface Water Protection
 - e. Tree and Woodland Protection, Management, and Planting
 - f. Wetland, Wetland Mitigation and Hydric Soil Protection
 - g. Floodplain Protection
 - h. River and Stream Corridor Overlay Zoning, Riparian Buffers

- i. Limestone Area Overlay District Zoning
 - j. Scenic Road and Scenic Viewshed Overlay Zoning
3. Promote active involvement of municipal Environmental Advisory Committees
 4. Support acquisition/protection of key natural areas through conservation easements, fee simple, donation and dedication, stream easements, stream corridor management, in cooperation with conservation groups and community groups.
 5. Encourage expansion of agricultural security areas and encourage purchase of agricultural conservation easements.
 6. Discourage public sewer and water for areas to remain agricultural or rural, coordinate with Act 537 Planning.
 7. Investigate wellhead protection and watershed planning opportunities under the growing greener initiative and other programs.
 8. Encourage Act 167 Stormwater Management Planning, stormwater management, and use of Best Management Practices.
 9. Form watershed associations.
 10. Complete water supply and quality studies.
 11. Effective agricultural preservation zoning should be maintained in Exeter Township. This should be supplemented by administrative means for agricultural preservation.
 12. Appropriate zoning and/or administrative means should be used to further agricultural preservation in designated areas in Amity Township.
 13. Utilize zoning techniques such as Conservation Zoning and lot averaging to protect natural and historic resources on tracts.
 14. Plan for greenways and riparian buffers.
 15. Update Open Space and Recreation Plans.
 16. Support efforts to protect critical treasures in the Highlands Region of Pennsylvania.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The following goal and objectives have been established:

Goal: Preserve and enhance the historic, architectural and cultural resources of Amity, Exeter and St. Lawrence.

Objectives:

- Encourage the preservation, protection, and enhancement of historic and architectural resources and their context.
- Discourage demolition by neglect and deterioration of historic resources.
- Foster increased public awareness of the history of and historic resources within the municipalities.
- Support efforts of organizations to identify, mark, register and protect historic resources and work with local and state agencies to protect historic resources.
- Require new development to reflect and consider the history, architecture and development patterns of the municipalities in order to preserve the important historic and architectural resources of the region.
- Determine the role which municipalities should play in historic preservation through land use ordinance incentives, controls and regulations, and efforts to create historic districts and/or historic overlay zoning.
- Encourage adaptive re-use of historic structures where appropriate.
- Identify existing contemporary sites which could be considered part of the historical or cultural heritage of future generations and preserve these sites for future generations.
- Support cultural events, which celebrate the historic and cultural heritage of the region.

Actions to Protect Historic Resources

The following actions should be taken to protect historic resources within the Region:

1. Utilize Historic Resource Overlay Zoning.

2. Utilizing demolition by neglect provisions in zoning ordinances.
3. Adopt Town Center and Rural Village design standards.
4. Require historic resource impact studies in subdivision and land development ordinances.
5. Encourage active involvement of Historical Commissions to:
 - Identify, evaluate, mark and foster awareness of historic resources
 - Investigate participation in Certified Local Government Program
 - Investigate creation of historic districts
 - Inform and involve public
 - Encourage retention, restoration, enhancement and appropriate adaptive re-use of historic resources and discourage removal of historic structures
 - Conceive programs, events and interpretive signage and exhibits which emphasize the history of the region
 - Identify contemporary sites for future preservation

State Grants Available to Help Fund the Preservation of Historic Resources

Guidelines pertaining to the PHMC's three primary grant programs are found in this section. The programs and eligibility criteria are described in detail. Prospective applicants may determine how the Commission's multiple funding opportunities can best meet their needs and the needs of their constituents and can best serve the people of Pennsylvania. Guidelines can be obtained for each grant type on the PHMC's website. The Bureau for Historic Preservation awarded competitive grants based on the recommendations of independent review panels, which evaluated hundreds of applications. Since 1995, the PHMC has awarded more than 2,300 grants – totaling more than \$45 million- in communities across the state. Grants are awarded to museums, historical societies, municipal governments, and local institutions to support their programs and operation, preserve historic properties and districts, and assist in a wide variety of projects designed to interpret and protect PA's cultural heritage.

The following are the PHMC's available grants to preserve historical resources:

1. **Certified Local Government Grant Program** – Funding under this program is limited to federally designated Certified Local Governments. There is only one type of grant.
 - Competitive
 - Matching
 - Maximum Award \$25,000
 - Funding in the Categories of Cultural Resource Surveys, National Register Nominations, Technical and Planning Assistance, Educational and Interpretive Programs, Staffing and Training, and Pooling CLG Grants and Third Party Administration.

2. **Keystone Historic Preservation Grant Program** - Funding under this program is available to nonprofit organizations and local governments for capital improvements on historic resources listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. (Private property owners are not eligible for funding under this program and may wish to refer directly to PHMC Programs of Interest for information on investment tax credits and historic homesites program.) There is one type of grant.
 - Competitive
 - Matching
 - Maximum Award \$100,000
 - Funding in the Categories of Preservation, Restoration, and Rehabilitation.

3. **Pennsylvania History and Museum Grant Program** - Funding under this program is designated to support a wide variety of museum, history, archives and historic preservation projects, as well as nonprofit organizations and local governments. There are 10 types of grants listed below with descriptions of each following:
 - Archives and Records Management Grants
 - General Operating Support Grants for Museums
 - General Operating Support Grants for Official County Historical Societies
 - Historic Preservation Grants
 - Historical Marker Grants
 - Local History Grants
 - Museum Project Grants
 - Statewide Conference Grants
 - Statewide Organization Grants
 - Technical Assistance Grants

4. **Archives and Records Management Grants** - PHMC grants help communities share Pennsylvania's rich and diverse history.
 - Organizations and local governments can bring historical documents and records to life for their communities with grants for archival care and accessibility.
 - Organizations and local governments can contribute to a community's understanding of its heritage through oral and written histories, public programs of all types, historical research, and educational programs for students of all ages.

5. **General Operating Support for Museums Grants** - Museums are eligible to apply for grant funding to support their general operations.
 - Noncompetitive
 - Matching
 - Maximum Award \$10,000
 - No Special Categories

6. **General Operating Support Grants for Official County Historical Societies Grants** - Official county historical societies receive general operating support grants as a way to recognize the outstanding work these societies do for their communities. These grants are:
 - Noncompetitive
 - Matching
 - Maximum Award \$10,000
 - No Special Categories

7. **Achieves and Records Management Grants are:**
 - Competitive
 - No Match Required to \$5,000
 - Matching to \$20,000
 - Maximum Award \$20,000
 - Funding in the Categories of Access and Preservation Programs, and County Records Improvement Programs

8. **Historic Preservation Grants** - Applicants may apply for grants that cover every aspect of historic preservation, including:
 - restoration and rehabilitation of historic properties
 - cultural resource surveys
 - historic preservation studies and plans
 - educational and interpretive programs
 - nomination to the National Register of Historic Places

- archaeological research

Historic Preservation Grants are:

- Competitive
- No Match Required to \$5,000
- Matching to \$15,000
- Maximum Award \$15,000
- Funding in the Categories of Cultural Resource Surveys, National Register Nominations, Planning and Development Assistance, Educational and Interpretive Programs, and Archaeology

9. Historical Markers Grants are:

- Selective
- Matching
- Maximum Award \$650
- No Special Categories

10. Local History Grants are:

- Competitive
- No Match Required to \$5,000
- Matching to \$15,000
- Maximum Award \$15,000
- Funding in the Categories of Public Programs, Research and Writing, and Educational Programs

11. Museum Project Grants are:

- Competitive
- No Match Required to \$5,000
- Matching to \$15,000
- Maximum Award \$15,000
- Funding in the Categories of Institutional Development, Collections Management, and Educational and Interpretive Program

12. Statewide Conferences Grants - Organizations planning to sponsor conferences with a statewide, regional or national audience may apply for "seed" money to assist with conference preparation.

- Selective
- No Match Required
- Maximum Award Generally Does Not Exceed \$5,000
- No Special Categories

13. **Statewide Organizational Grants are:**

- Selective
- No Match Required
- Maximum Award Generally Does Not Exceed \$100,000
- No Special Categories

14. **Technical Assistance Grants** - Offer options to a wide range of applicants for solving institutional problems, developing staff skills, and increasing overall professionalism. The grants bring experts in the field to the organizations' sites or provide staff training. These grants are:

- Competitive
- No Match Required
- Maximum Award \$1,500
- No Special Categories

Action Steps for Protection of Historic Resources:

1. Historic Resource Overlay District.
2. Demolition by Neglect Provisions.
3. **Identify, evaluate, mark and foster awareness of historic resources** - These resources should be reviewed and one or more historic contexts developed as a precursor to conducting a *comprehensive survey of historic resources*. An historic context is defined as a broad pattern of historical development in a community that may be evidenced in the historic resources.
4. **Investigate the creation of Certified Local Historic Districts** - requires appointment of an historic architectural review board to advise the local governing body on the appropriateness of the construction, reconstruction, alteration, restoration, demolition or razing of buildings in the district-contributing and non-contributing. Evaluate the potential for historic districts and support their creation if warranted. If created, support the adoption of Design Guidelines and Sign Controls for Historic District(s).
5. **Inform and involve the public** - The Historical Society of Berks County and local historical associations can provide assistance in identifying historic resources and developing an educational outreach for broad-based community support.
6. **Historic Overlay Zoning** - Individual sites and clusters documented and identified on a Historic Resource Map may be protected from inappropriate