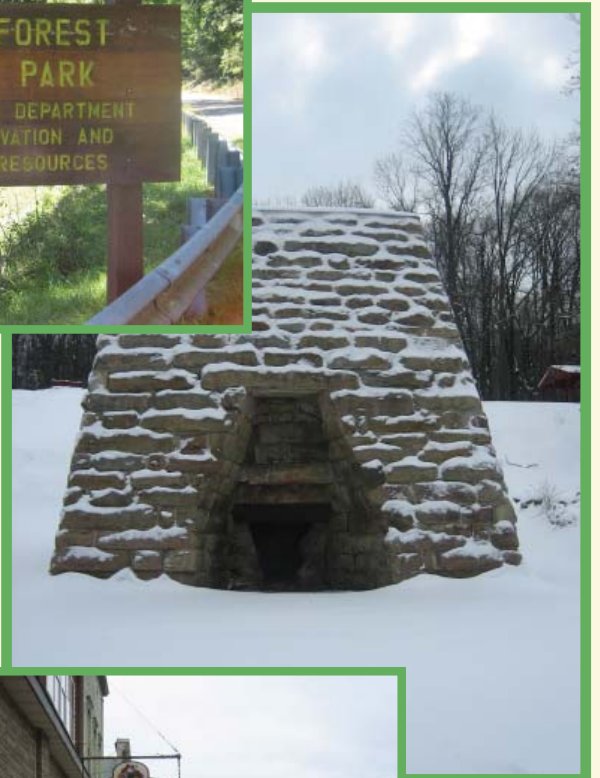


# NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA GREENWAYS

## Clarion County, Pennsylvania

DCNR Project No. BRC-I2.5.2



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# **INTRODUCTION**

## **CLARION COUNTY GREENWAYS PLAN - A Component of the Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways Plan**



## **INTRODUCTION**

This Clarion County Greenways Plan is a separate individual document to be synthesized into part of the Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways Planning effort undertaken by the Northwest Regional Planning and Development Commission. The Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways planning process was a multi-county effort completed for the Commission's eight counties, and individual plans for six counties, including:

- Erie County
- Clarion County
- Crawford County
- Forest County
- Venango County
- Warren County

Before the start of this plan individual plans for Lawrence and Mercer Counties were completed. Their results were synthesized into the Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways Plan.

Clarion County is rich in recreation opportunities and natural resources. Many of these resources are unique and special to the northwest Pennsylvania region and beyond. They include:

- Cook Forest State Park: approximately 8,500 acres in northwest Clarion County in an area once called the Black Forest due to its stands of old growth forest.
- Nine (9) High Quality Streams
- One (1) Exceptional Value Stream and two (2) Exceptional Value watersheds.
- Two (2) Important Bird Areas (IBA's) and one (1) Important Mammal Area
- PA Wilds: covers more than two million acres of public land within areas such as state forests and state game lands and includes twelve (12) northern Pennsylvania Counties. The PA Wilds Region within Clarion County is found north of Interstate 80, and much of the PA Wilds Initiative has been focused in those counties in Central Pennsylvania.
- Lumber Heritage Region: promotes the history and heritage of the lumber industry and its importance to Pennsylvania's development. The Region boasts a wide variety of natural, cultural, and historic resources. While celebrating the past, the grassroots effort works to build the region's economy and quality of life through education, conservation, and tourism promotion.

- North Country National Scenic Trail.....recreational trail that stretches for about four thousand six hundred miles from North Dakota to New York. A portion of this trail currently exists in northeastern Clarion County running through Cook Forest State Park.

### ***WHY A GREENWAYS PLAN FOR CLARION COUNTY?***

Wherever greenways are developed, they provide numerous and diverse benefits to local municipalities and their residents. This section of the plan focuses on those benefits that are especially applicable to greenways development in the Clarion County. Such benefits include:

- promotes land and water restoration
- encourages economic development
- promotes healthy living
- enhances the quality of life

**The process of establishing a greenway network in Northwest Pennsylvania will not take away the rights of property owners, nor will it restrict development in the region.**

**This Greenways Plan is being adopted on January 13, 2010, by the Clarion County Commissioners and is meant to be used only and solely as a reference document and is not to be incorporated or considered part of the present or future editions of the Clarion County Comprehensive Plan.**

### **CLARION COUNTY'S DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS**

Wise usage of Clarion County's natural resources is now of greater importance than ever. Wise use of these assets can play a key role in establishing a high quality of life, as well as a high quality of place, for ourselves and future generations. Residents enjoy the natural and recreational resources that set their community or region apart from everywhere else.

Clarion County Greenways Plan - Clarion County has many recreational assets, including Cook Forest State Park, Clarion County Park, several state game lands, and many existing trail opportunities including a section of North Country National Scenic Trail. These resources provide a variety of opportunities for biking, hiking, fishing, hunting, boating, snowmobiling, wildlife viewing, and other pastimes.



### **Tourism**

Clarion County's proximity to major population centers, such as Cleveland, Buffalo, and Pittsburgh, as well as being situated on nearby major transportation routes like Interstate 80 makes it a logical place for development in one of the fastest-growing sectors in Pennsylvania's economy. According to the DCNR, tourism is the second largest industry in the Commonwealth and nearly one-fifth of Pennsylvania's tourists travel to enjoy its outdoor amenities.

Clarion County contains numerous natural and recreational resources that are important assets for providing the potential for substantial growth in the travel and tourism sector. Some of these assets include; Cook Forest State Park, which attracted more than eight hundred thousand visitors in 2006.

Clarion County provides excellent hunting, fishing, boating and wildlife watching opportunities.

Greenways offer opportunities for recreation, health and fitness.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

Enhancing Clarion County's character and quality of life and place are the main goals of the Greenways Plan. These specific objectives support this main goal which is contained in Clarion County's Comprehensive Plan.

- Enhance existing natural areas primarily for wildlife habitat;
- Promote the wise use of agricultural land;
- Provide recreational opportunities for County residents through wise use of trails and open spaces on existing public land;
- Promote economic growth through recreation;
- Encourage counties and local municipalities to work in unison to help develop their various resources.



# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **HOW DO WE GET THERE? - Implementation Strategies to Achieve the Vision**



## **CHAPTER ONE:        *HOW DO WE GET THERE?***

The remaining chapters in this plan outline the process that was completed to make recommendations presented in this chapter. These chapters include:

*Chapter Two: Where Are We Now*

Provides background information, inventory of existing planning efforts, natural infrastructure, ecological infrastructure, cultural and historic resources, and existing recreational greenways.

*Chapter Three: Where Do We Want to Be?*

Documents the process of developing the vision for recreational greenways.

### **Goals and Objectives**

Enhancing Clarion County's character and quality of life is the main goal of the Greenway Plan, and these specific objectives support this main goal which is contained in Clarion County's Comprehensive Plan.

- Enhance existing natural areas primarily for wildlife habitat
- Promote the wise use of agricultural land
- Provide recreational opportunities for County residents through wise use of trails and open spaces on existing public land
- Promote economic growth via recreational tourism
- Encourage counties and local municipalities to work in unison to help develop their various resources

### **Recreation and Transportation Greenways**

Existing and potential recreation and transportation greenway corridors were inventoried, as described in Chapter Two, and analyzed in Chapter Three. Through this process, existing recreation and transportation greenways were documented, and recommendations were developed for expanding those offerings.

*Land Based Trails*

Proposed recreation and transportation greenway corridors in Clarion County include:

1. Allegheny River Trail – This trail follows the former Oil City Secondary railroad corridor from Warren County to Armstrong County, passing through Clarion and Venango Counties along the way. The Clarion County segment of this trail has been abandoned

since 1984 and is approximately twenty miles long. This trail enters Clarion County from Emlenton, Venango County and follows the Allegheny River, passing through Foxburg , and extending to the Brady Tunnel at which point it connects to the Armstrong Trail.

This corridor plays a significant role in the proposed Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway, and has the potential to generate tourism related economic development activities in the trail towns which it passes through. Therefore, we recommend the completion of this trail continue to be one of the top priorities for the County and the Northwest region.

The Allegheny Valley Land Trust is currently in the process of securing the right for public access between Emlenton and Foxburg. A shared use path has been constructed between Foxburg Borough and the City of Parker. The corridor between Parker and the Brady Tunnel is currently unimproved. Further, the Allegheny Valley Land Trust has made application to the PA DCNR for the design of approximately five miles of the Parker to Brady Tunnel corridor and for the rehabilitation of the Brady Tunnel.

As we have found with other trail groups in the Northwest Region, the Allegheny Valley Land Trust has difficulty in securing the required local matches for grant programs such as the PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program, and the PA DCNR Recreational Trails Program.

*Approximate Length:* 19.9 miles, with approximately 3.2 miles currently improved

*Associated Municipalities:* Brady, Madison, Perry, Richland, and Toby Townships as well as Foxburg Borough.

2. North Country National Scenic Trail – The North Country Trail is a hiking trail that will extend over 4,000 miles from New York to North Dakota, passing through six additional states along its route. Currently over 1,800 miles of the North Country Scenic Trail have been developed off-road. Although many segments of the trail currently exist, completion of the entire route is still years away.

The section of the trail through Clarion County begins at the southern end of the Allegheny National Forest and extends through Cook Forest State Park and State Game land No. 283. This section of trail exists through the State Park and Game Land. At this point the established trail currently ends, and does not begin again until it reaches the Butler County line, west of Parker.

Between State Game Land 283 and the Butler County line the proposed trail route is undetermined. Potential routes through Clarion County include one proposed through Clarion and Callensburg Borough, crossing the Allegheny River at Parker. A temporary route connects with the Clarion Highlands Trail passing through Shippenville and utilizing the existing Sandy Creek and Allegheny River Trails to connect to Parker.

The North Country Scenic Trail is of national significance and upon being entirely established will follow in the footsteps of the Appalachian Trail, a 2,175 trail connecting Maine to Georgia.

*Approximate Length:* 45 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Clarion, Farmington, Highland, Licking, Monroe, Perry, and Piney Townships as well as Callensburg and Clarion Borough

3. Knox to Kane Trail – The proposed Knox to Kane Trail runs from Knox Borough in Clarion County to Kane Borough in McKean County. Approximately 26 miles of this trail is located within Clarion County from Knox to the Forest County line north of Cook Forest State Park. Along its route, this trail passes through Shippenville, Paint Mills, Arthurs, Lucinda, Snydersburg, Leeper, Crown and Vowickel.

During the inventory phase of this study, the Knox and Kane Railroad held this corridor. Also, during the inventory process, we interviewed a local surveyor to inquire whether the corridor is generally owned in fee by the railroad, or if the railroad acquired easements and/or rights of way. Through that conversation we learned, that based on the surveyor's knowledge, very little of the corridor is owned in fee. Additional research is needed to confirm this assumption for the entire corridor.

4. Armstrong Trail - The Armstrong Trail is a recreational and transportation corridor opened to non-motorized traffic, and maintained by the Allegheny Valley Land Trust. Currently, the segment between East Brady and the mouth of Redbank Creek is unimproved. However this segment of corridor has been secured by the Allegheny Valley Land Trust for trail use.

This segment of the Armstrong Trail, between Redbank Creek and East Brady, is an important corridor as East Brady is only one of two main street communities in Clarion County, along the Clarion County segments of the Armstrong and Allegheny River Trails, that can provide the goods and services that the trail users desire.

We recommend Clarion County continue to work with the Allegheny Valley Land Trust and East Brady Borough, Brady Township, and Madison Township to improve this trail corridor with the County's support in rail-banking.

*Approximate Length:* 4.78 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Madison and Brady Townships as well as East Brady Borough

At Redbank Creek the Armstrong Trail corridor continues into Armstrong County to Rosston. Recommendations for the Armstrong County portions are contained in the Armstrong County Greenway Plan.

5. Lawsonham to Sligo Trail – This proposed trail follows the former Sligo Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad running approximately 10 miles from Lawsonham, along Redbank Creek, to Sligo, along Licking Creek, in south central Clarion County.

This proposed spur trail will connect Rimersburg and Sligo residents to the proposed Redbank Creek Trail, the Armstrong Trail, and the Allegheny River Trail.

*Approximate Length:* 10.2 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Madison and Toby Townships as well as Sligo Borough

6. East Brady to Chicora Trail – An abandoned railroad line follows Route 68 westward from East Brady. This proposed trail could potentially connect East Brady with small population centers in Butler County. The status (abandoned vs. active) and condition (if abandoned) of the rail line in Butler County was unknown at the time of this report. Clarion, Armstrong and Butler Counties should strive to work together to extend the trail as far as possible, with the intent of connecting East Brady to Chicora. Armstrong County showed slight interest in this trail route several years ago, but at the time several landowners were opposed to the idea of a trail. This route still has potential for an important trail connection across County borders.

7. Redbank Creek Trail – This proposed trail runs along the north bank of Redbank Creek following the route of the former Mt. Laurel Railroad, also known as the Redbank Junction Railroad. This former rail line extends from the mouth of Redbank Creek at the Allegheny River to Summerville, Jefferson County passing through Lawsonham, New Bethlehem, and Hawthorne along the way. The section between the mouth of Redbank Creek and Lawsonham has been secured by the Allegheny Valley Land Trust, and is open to trail use, but unimproved. The Allegheny Valley Land Trust is in the process of securing the corridor for trail use from Lawsonham, through New Bethlehem, to Brookville in Jefferson County.

The Allegheny Valley Land Trust has made application to PA DCNR for the design and engineering of approximately eleven miles of this corridor.

*Approximate Length:* 27.9 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Madison, Porter, and Redbank Townships as well as Hawthorn and New Bethlehem Borough. New Bethlehem Borough is a possible Trail Town.

In addition to the recommendations above for the development of new or additional trail segments in Clarion County, there are several existing trails that require attention. These include the Clarion Highlands Trail and the Baker Trail.

1. Clarion Highlands Trail – This trail follows the former Clarion Secondary line from Polk in Venango County to the Clarion River. Approximately 15.8 miles of this trail is



currently open within Clarion County from where it enters from Venango County at State Game Land No. 45 to where it ends at Piney Mine Trail head south of the Clarion River, and Piney Dam.

In Clarion County this trail passes through State Game Land No. 45 and 63, Shipperville and also connects to the Knox Kane Trail, the North Country Trail, Venango Frankstown Path, Knox Shipperville Trail, and Sandy Creek Trail in Venango County. A portion of this trail from just east of State Game Land No. 45 extending one mile is being disputed by a private property owner.

This corridor is held by the Allegheny Valley Trails Association, and it is their intention to improve the trail to a shared use path once they complete the Allegheny River Trail.

*Approximate Length:* 15.8 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Ashland, Elk, Beaver, and Piney Townships

2. **Baker Trail** - The Baker Trail is an existing hiking trail that covers 132 miles and extends from Freeport, Armstrong County to the Allegheny National Forest. This trail follows forest paths, old jeep trails and dirt roads through woods, gamelands, and farmlands and is marked by yellow blazes. 18 miles of the trail share a footpath with the North Country Scenic Trail. The majority of this trail is located outside Clarion County. However approximately 6.6 miles of the trail are located in the east central and northeast portions of Clarion County.

The Baker Trail enters Clarion County through State Game Land No. 74 from Jefferson County. The trail route winds back into Jefferson County briefly before passing through State Game Land No. 283. It then heads north, crossing the Clarion River before connecting up with Cook Forest State Park. Within the state park the trail travels around Forest County passing through Clear Creek State Forest, then back into Clarion County one more time via State Game Land No. 24. Within the state game land it travels into Forest County then on to Allegheny National Forest. More information is available at [www.rachelcarsontrails.org](http://www.rachelcarsontrails.org).

*Approximate Length:* 6.6 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Millcreek and Farmington Townships

Last, there is interest in Armstrong County to connect Foxburg with Bruin, in Butler County, through a combination of rail trail and bike lanes.

**Foxburg to Bruin Rail-Trail / Bike Lane** – Proposed as part of the Armstrong County Greenways Plan, this trail connection provides connection to Foxburg (Clarion County) and to Bruin Borough (Butler County) via the City of Parker. Between Bruin and Parker a bike lane or off-road bike trail along Route 268 may be necessary to make the connection.

## Clarion County Greenways Plan

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Utilizing an average cost range for rail trail construction of between \$50 and \$100 per lineal foot for rail trail construction, the following table establishes a budget for the anticipated cost of constructing the rail trails described above. These costs are based on the following assumptions:

- Construction projects will be publicly bid projects following PA DCNR, PA Department of Labor Industry and respective County / Municipal Code requirements
- Costs reflect the potential for completing projects with Pennsylvania Department of Transportation funding; from past experience we know this can increase the project costs by fifteen to twenty percent
- Property acquisition costs have not been incorporated into the projected costs
- Costs are based on 2008 construction figures, future year costs should costs be amortized by 4.5%
- Costs do not include costs associated with major structures, >100' in length
- Cost projections should be confirmed / revised upon completion of preliminary design
- Costs do not assume in-kind, donated, or volunteer services

The projected costs may seem overwhelming at first. However, to fully understand the financial implications of implementing the projects, one must evaluate scenarios for implementation and funding to completely understand what the project will mean, and cost, to its implementation partners. Implementation costs can be significantly reduced by utilizing in-kind and donated services, grants, foundation awards, and volunteer services. Each of these aspects can further reduce the cost to the implementation partners and reduce their requirement for a cash match. As an example, the Butler Freeport Trail Association, in Butler County will be constructing 4.5 miles of rail trail on an acquired rail bed. Utilizing the multipliers identified herein, it is estimated the trail will cost between \$1,188,000 and \$1,820,000 to construct. However, through in-kind services being provided by a local municipality to construct the trail, and volunteer services clearing the corridor, they hope to reduce the costs to approximately \$400,000. This money will be used to purchase materials and then volunteer and in-kind services will be used to provide the local match.

| Trail  | Unbuilt Mileage | Projected Construction Cost using \$50 / LF | Projected Construction Cost using \$100 / LF |
|--|-----------------|---|--|
| Redbank Creek  | 27.9            | \$7,365,600                                 | \$14,731,200                                 |
| Knox to Kane   | 23.6            | \$6,230,400                                 | \$12,460,800                                 |
| Lawsonham to Sligo   | 10.2            | \$2,692,800                                 | \$5,385,600                                  |
| Allegheny River Trail<br>- Emlenton to Foxburg<br>- Parker to Brady Tunnel | 15.7            | \$4,144,800                                 | \$8,289,600                                  |

Personnel and financial resources for the implementation of each trail is not available to meet all of the needs. Therefore, in order to focus and prioritize the resources required to implement the trail segments identified in this plan, we have established the following criteria to prioritize the corridors. This criterion allows us to rank projects based on a common set criteria, established to

ensure all resources are focused towards those projects with the greatest potential for public use, public benefit, and implementation.

### Trail Prioritization Criteria

1. *Trail Demand:* The degree of public support for the project and anticipated use of the trail, the greater the public support for a project and / or the greater the anticipated use of the trail, the higher the value.
  - a. Degree of public support demonstrated by political support, at public meetings, and through letters of support.
  - b. The projected use of the trail is a measurement of local use based on population in the vicinity of the proposed trail. The greater the projected use, the higher the value.
2. *Land Acquisition:* Trail concepts that require land acquisition to complete, receive a higher value because the project would not be feasible if land acquisition is not completed.
  - a. Donations / Low Cost: Significant Value
  - b. Associated with Regional Trail: High Value
  - c. Medium Cost: Medium Value
  - d. High Cost / Not Available: Valuable
3. *Connectivity:* The degree to which the trail connects to existing greenways or destination points or to on-road or pedestrian facilities, the greater the connectivity, the higher the value.
  - a. Regional Trail: Significant Value: a part of a regional trail system recognized by PA DCNR
  - b. Direct Extension: High Value: of existing trail and/or a spur directly into a destination center
  - c. Real Potential: Medium Value: to connect to existing opportunities
  - d. Stand Alone Trail: Valuable
4. *Environmental or Historical Impacts:* Measured by the degree to which the project will have anticipated, direct, adverse impacts to protected natural or historical resources, the greater the degree of impact, the lower the value.
5. *Benefits to the Public:* The total number of recreation, transportation, education, and other benefits that can be derived by the public from the project, the greater the number of benefits, the higher the value.
6. *Funding Opportunity / Partnering:* Considering the factors affecting the project's funding status and the degree to which the project may be allocated funds from a variety of agencies, the greater the funding opportunities, the higher the value.

7. *Economic Development Potential:* Trails that connect to proposed trail towns will have the greatest potential to impact the local economy.

### Prioritization Levels

- *Exceptional Priority:* most significant priority, focus planning, acquisition, design and construction, and funding resources to implement project.
- *Significant Priority:* second most significant priority, focus planning, acquisition, design and construction resources to provide locals with opportunity to secure funding to implement project.
- *High Priority:* third most significant priority, focus planning, and acquisition resources to plan for future of project.

Based on this prioritization, we recommend the following:

- Exceptional Priority Corridors: be advanced in the short-term, one to three years
  - Allegheny River Trail
  - Redbank Creek Trail
  - Knox to Kane Trail
- High Priority Corridors: be advanced in the long-term, five to ten years
  - Lanwsonham to Sligo Trail

### Trail Implementation Steps

Taking a trail from concept through implementation can be a daunting task to a trail volunteer who may be responsible for its implementation. Towards that end, the following is a step-by-step process that helps define the tasks required to advance the implementation of a trail:

1. Identify the potential corridor and any alternate routes.
2. Estimate the demand for the proposed trail. Will it connect local or regional population centers? Will the demographics of the area support the use of the trail?
3. Conduct research at the County Courthouse to gain an understanding of who owns the property.
  - a. If it is currently held by a railroad, contact the railroad to determine if it is likely to be abandoned in the near future – if currently owned by the railroad, then there is the potential to rail bank the corridor. **RAIL BANKING MUST BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH PENNSYLVANIA ACT 1990-188, THE RAILS TO TRAILS ACT.**

- b. If the property is owned by various individuals, it is likely the corridor has reverted back to private ownership. To confirm this title, research must be completed so a legal opinion to the ownership status can be rendered. If ownership is unclear, one must assume the property has reverted to the adjacent property owners until proven otherwise.
4. Document the benefits of the proposed trail, including: economic, transportation, recreation, health and wellness, establishing partnerships, and quality of life improvements.
5. Meet with municipal and county officials to discuss your proposal, review the potential alignment, and discuss the benefits the proposed trail can provide to the area.
6. Meet with property owners and the general public to solicit input and determine whether property owners support or oppose the proposed trail. For this initial meeting, it is important to listen and identify concerns, issues, and false understanding of what the trail will mean and how it may impact their property. With this information, you can tailor the concept for the trail to respond to the issues, concerns, and needs of the property owners. Also, by understanding any false pretenses they may have, you can prepare to respond to demonstrate what a trail is / will do, and what a trail isn't / won't do at a second meeting with the property owners. Ask for permission to go onto their property so you can get a better understanding of their concerns. Document this request in writing by having them complete a form at the public meeting.
7. Evaluate the corridor to determine the likelihood of physically establishing a trail on the corridor. Do not go onto the corridor without the permission of the current property owner(s) as you will be trespassing. For portions of the trail you do not have permission to access, utilize aerial photography and other geographic information resources to complete a thorough desktop analysis. Meet with willing property owners, as required, to allay fears and discuss particular concerns and alignments.
8. Prepare a concept plan for the trail to identify the trail's potential alignment, adequately address land owner issues and concerns, and develop an estimate of probable construction costs from this concept plan.
9. Develop management, operation, and security strategies for the continued operation of the trail. Many agencies will be leery of your proposal unless you can demonstrate that there is a long-term commitment and that there is a long-term commitment and that long-term care can be provided for the proposed trail.
10. Complete a financial analysis to project the capital and operating costs for the proposed trail, and prepare a plan to show these costs will be covered. Also, project the estimated economic impact of the proposed trail utilizing data collected from existing trails that are similar in nature to the trail being proposed.

11. Meet with the property owners and the general public a second time to present the proposed concept plan, and review the proposed recommendations for property acquisition; trail alignment; trail development; and trail management, operations, and security. Collect input of proposed recommendations, and determine where you have support and where you do not have support for the development of the proposed trail. Determine if logical portions of the trail can be advanced to demonstrate the impacts of the trail and to build support for extensions to the trail.
12. Based on the input received, determine whether there is a feasible demonstration project that can be implemented.
13. Secure rights for public access to the demonstration segment of the proposed trail.
14. Complete final design, prepare construction documents, and obtain required permits for the construction of the proposed demonstration segment.

The old adage that “it is better to ask forgiveness than it is to ask for permission” is a common approach taken by those who do not have experience in advancing trail projects. When this approach is taken to the extreme, and trails are developed and/or publicly advertised without the property owners’ involvement and consent, litigation can result, and property owners who otherwise may have been supportive, are likely to be alienated.

There is nothing more satisfying than having a property owner who was vocally opposed to the proposed trail at the first meeting come to you after the second meeting and thank you for understanding and responding to their concerns. Experience tells us that some property owners are willing to share concerns, be open-minded, and re-evaluate their initial decision over the course of the project, while there are others who will not.

Recognizing many of the proposed trail routes in Clarion County should begin with the completion of a trail feasibility study for their respective corridors, the following table provides an educated estimate of the costs associated with completing those studies. The budgets proposed here are based on 2008 dollars, and should be increased by 4.5% for each year and beyond.

These costs may be reduced if there is a well-organized trail constituency group. That group may be able to complete title research and develop the management, operation, and security components of the feasibility study, thereby reducing the overall cost of the plan. Furthermore, the value of their in-kind services can potentially be used to fulfill a portion of the local match requirement when required by grant funding sources.

This step is of the utmost importance. The number one issue facing local trail organizations is that most do not have the capacity to do the work required to determine a particular corridor’s viability. Providing these organizations with a completed feasibility study will go a long way towards giving them the information and direction required to move their plan forward. Furthermore, a significant component, both from a cost perspective, and from a needs perspective, is that of completing the legal feasibility portion of the studies. This

component includes completing title research and receiving a legal opinion regarding the ownership status of the corridor in question. Without completing this component, the local trail organizations are not able to move forward with their work.

### Water Trails

Guidelines for PA Fish & Boat Commission designation as presented in the Commission's Fact Sheet, as follows:

- ✓ **Public Planning Process:** In order to designate a water trail, there must be a public process. This includes multiple public meetings that are publicly advertised. The purpose of the meetings is to collect information about the water trail (access points, amenities, etc.) and to gain support for the water trail. A small steering committee is recommended.
- ✓ **PFBC Water Trail Logo:** All designated water trails must use the water trail logo as developed by the PFBC. The top portion of the logo is a standard Pennsylvania Water Trail image. Local groups can customize the bottom portion of the logo within the bordered format.
- ✓ **Mapping and Signage:** Any maps provided in partnership with the PFBC as part of the PFBC technical assistance must be distributed at no cost. Key access points should have trailhead signs. Other signage like interpretive signage and trail markers are desirable.
- ✓ **Local Government Notification:** As part of the public process it is highly recommended that water trail organizers work with the local governments that are traversed by the trail. The purpose is both to notify and involve them in the development of the water trail-local support is critical. Water trails benefit local governments so it is only logical that they should be involved. Also, if the local government is not involved at the outset of the project there may be unforeseen conflicts as the trail goes into development.
- ✓ **Access Points:** For ease of use, water trails should have at least one access point every ten miles. These points must be able to accommodate boats appropriate for the water trail.
- ✓ **Management & Stewardship Commitment:** There must be a local group who is willing to sign a Water Trail Partnership Agreement with the PFBC. The agreement is for a length of five years and includes specific agreements about signage, mapping, roles of the local group and the PFBC, stewardship goals, etc.
- ✓ **Safety Information:** Managers of water trails have a responsibility to provide safety information and to warn of hazards. No waterway is completely safe. However, by providing pertinent information about the waterway and good safety tips, hazardous conditions can be addressed appropriately. For example, users may be asked to portage around a particularly hazardous area.

We recommend local partners be identified to explore the potential of establishing designated water trails along the following corridors in Clarion County:

## **Clarion County Greenways Plan**

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### *Proposed Middle Allegheny River Water Trail*

#### *Allegheny River – Emlenton to West Monterey – 11 miles*

Although not officially acknowledged as part of the Middle Allegheny River Trail, the Allegheny River is canoeable from Emlenton to West Monterey.

#### *Allegheny River – West Monterey to Pittsburgh – 79 miles*

This section is less desirable to non-motorized boating due to scenery, water quality, commercial barge traffic, power boaters, and the eight locks and dams that must be navigated.

### *Proposed Red Bank Creek Water Trail*

#### *Red Bank Creek – Brookville to Summerville – 10.5 miles, Jefferson County*

Canoeable early December through May. Do not put in above Brookville as there is a dangerous drop on the North Fork under U.S. Route 322.

##### Shuttle Points:

- Junction of Sandy Lick Creek and North Fork Red Bank Creek, left bank
- At Summerville turn left / east on any road towards the river

#### *Summerville to New Bethlehem – 16.5 miles*

##### Shuttle Points:

Canoeable early December through late May.

- At Summerville turn left / east on any road towards the river
- Heathville
- Mayport
- River right, above dam in New Bethlehem



## **Clarion County Greenways Plan**

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*New Bethlehem to Rimer on the Allegheny River – 27.8 miles*

Canoeable late November through late May.

### Shuttle Points:

- Stream right, below dam at State Route 28/66 Bridge crossing the creek in New Bethlehem
- Climax
- St. Charles
- Lawsonham, immediately below bridge on right
- Lock and Dam No. 9 on the Allegheny River
- Lock and Dam No. 9 to Rimer, requires locking through, approach lock from left hand shore, remain clear of barge traffic

### **Bicycle Routes**

Clarion County has one formally-established Bicycle PA Route in Route “V”. This bicycle route runs from Ohio to the New Jersey paralleling Interstate 80 almost the entire distance. This route enters Clarion County along State Route 208 near Emlenton heading northeast. From Shipperville the route follows US 322 through Clarion Borough and Strattanville before entering Jefferson County near Corisca.

PennDOT should evaluate the existing designated PennDOT Bike Route with representatives of the Clarion County cycling community to determine how the existing routes can be improved.

### Trail Town Opportunities

It should be the goal of Clarion County's recreation and transportation greenways to attract every trail user to the main street districts, where they can find the goods and services they need, while spending money in our towns.

In 2005, the Allegheny Trail Alliance published "Trail Towns – Capturing Trail Based Tourism, a Guide for Pennsylvania Communities". The development of this guide was funded by the Regional Trail Alliance and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The guide provides step by step guidance in preparing a blueprint to provide goods and services required by trail users and promoting trail friendly towns.

#### *Trail Towns*

- Entice trail users to get off the trail and into your town
- Welcome trail users to your town by making information about the community readily available at the trail
- Make a strong and safe connection between your town and the trail
- Educate local businesses on the economic benefits of meeting the needs of trail tourists
- Recruit new businesses or expand existing ones to fill gaps in the goods or services that trail users need
- Promote the "trail friendly" character of the town
- Work with neighboring communities to promote the entire trail corridor as a tourist designation

Towards that end the following communities have been identified as potential Trail Towns because of their proximity to existing or proposed trail corridors as have established main street districts and provide food, lodging, and fuel, basic services desired by trail users.

#### *Potential Trail Towns*

- Clarion Borough
- Foxburg
- New Bethlehem
- East Brady
- Cooksburg (Forest County)

During this greenway planning process Redbank Renaissance, Inc. and the New Bethlehem Area Chamber of Commerce showed strong support and desire to advance trail town efforts in Clarion County. This interest should be capitalized on before it wanes. We recommend the Northwest Commission and Clarion County Planning Department assist these organizations in completing a trail town audit and master plan.

Trail Towns provides goods and services desired by trail users. These goods and services may include bicycle sales and service, casual restaurants, bed and breakfasts, ice cream shops, convenience stores, restrooms, outfitters, and guide services, to name a few. It is important that

goods and services can be procured in trail-friendly environments, meaning that they encourage, not discourage, clientele that may have just come off the trail. Provide ample opportunities to secure their bicycles in bike friendly bike racks. Provide a shoe brush outside your doorway to allow them to clean the mud off their shoes before entering your establishment. Provide a restroom with ample space and necessities, such as towels and wash clothes, to allow them to clean-up so they can feel comfortable while at your location. Finally, sell items that trail users need while out on the trail.

To create a Trail Town involves organizing, educating, promoting, and economic restructuring of your town and results in the preparation of a Trail Town Master Plan. This Master Plan should pull it all together by: providing a gateway moment, creating a sense of place, developing a welcoming atmosphere, establishing the right mix of services, and promoting trail oriented events.

This process should be lead by the local Chamber of Commerces and /or Merchants Associations in cooperation with their respective municipalities. The development of Trail Towns will require new partnerships to be developed by stakeholders in each community. Developing a trail town master plan will require monthly meetings of the stakeholders and should involve quarterly meetings of trail town catalysts to prepare a coordinated approach.

Next, complete an inventory of your community and its businesses to determine if you have the ability to meet the needs of the trail users, or if you need to encourage the development of a business to meet an unmet need. With this information, you'll be able to develop a trail town marketing guide, which can be provided to trail users. This guide should accomplish several tasks. First, it should provide the trail user with information regarding the trail, provide maps of the trail segments, and locate those who offer the goods and services that the trail users desire. The guide should focus on the qualities of your community that make it unique. It can provide an overview of the history of the community and a history of features located along and adjacent to the trail corridor. Next, you can sell advertisements to those who offer goods and services of interest to trail users.

Upon completing the self assessment recommended in the Trail Town guide, you will be able to identify those businesses that cater to trail users. Then, a way finding signage program can be developed to assist trail users in finding the goods and services they need and to allow those in the community to find the trail and trail access opportunities. At this time, you should also be aware of the goods and services that are desired but not being provided in your community. With this information, you can focus community development efforts to attract and expand businesses that can fill those voids. For further details in preparing a detailed trail town master plan, refer to "Trail Towns – Capturing Trail Based Tourism, a Guide for Pennsylvania Communities" published by the Allegheny Trail Alliance.

## **Demonstration Project Opportunities**

Opportunities exist to allow the County and partner organizations to advance greenways at all levels. Demonstration project opportunities were selected in Clarion County based on the following criteria:

1. Was prioritized as a critical or exceptional priority at the regional level
2. Has a local partner / advocate
3. Can be realistically achieved
4. Provides opportunity for economic development (recreation and transportation greenway corridors)

Utilizing these sets of criteria, the Steering Committee recommended the following demonstration project opportunities in Clarion County:

### Land Based Trails

- ✓ **Knox to Kane Rail Trail:** The recent acquisition of the Knox and Kane Railroad by a salvage company and subsequent discussions between the Counties which the corridor extends through, indicate interest in filing for Interim Trail Use under the Rails to Trails Act to secure the corridor for rail trail development. As of this writing the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Clarion County, Forest County, McKean County, and various trail organizations in the region have met to explore the potential of identifying a potential agency who may be willing to file for Interim Trail Use.
- ✓ **Allegheny River Trail:** The Allegheny River Trail is the spine of the proposed, and regionally significant, Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway. With that majority of the trail being complete, focus must be placed on securing and completing the gap in the trail that exists between Emlenton, in Venango County, and Foxburg, in Clarion County. Further, with the recommendation of Foxburg Borough also being a Trail Town Demonstration project, these opportunities provide the potential for expanded economic development activities in Foxburg.
- ✓ **Redbank Creek Rail Trail:** The Armstrong Rails to Trails Association, in conjunction with the Allegheny Valley Land Trust, have secured Interim Trail Use through the Rails to Trail Act for the Buffalo and Pittsburgh Rail corridor, from Lawsonham and continuing east into Jefferson County. This proposed trail provides a regional connection to communities located to the east, to the Erie to Pittsburgh Greenway. Further, with the recommendation of New Bethlehem Borough also being a Trail Town Demonstration project, these opportunities provide the potential for expanded economic development activities in New Bethlehem Borough.

- ✓ North Country National Scenic Trail: The current terminus of the officially established North Country National Scenic Trail is located in northeastern Clarion County, in Cooks Forest State Park. Although a route has been proposed through the County, the North Country National Scenic Trail Association has been unable to secure easements for the segments of trail proposed in Clarion County. We recommend Clarion County lead an effort in conjunction with the securing the Knox to Kane rail corridor for trail use to bring together a partnership with the North Country National Scenic Trail Association to also secure the corridor as the official route of the North Country Scenic Trail through the eastern portion of Clarion County.

Developing land based trails requires proper planning and due diligence on the part of the trail sponsor to build consensus and support for the proposed trail. Building trails first, and asking forgiveness after, is a sure fire method of: creating legal challenges; further alienating those who oppose the trail; and positioning the trail sponsor to defend future lawsuits which can be filed. The proper steps in pursuing trail development are further outlined in “Trail Implementation Steps”, earlier in this Chapter.

We recommend a feasibility study and master plan be completed for the proposed Knox to Kane Rail Trail and for the proposed Redbank Creek Trail. A feasibility study and master plan of these corridors will identify potential opposition to the trails, and allow a design to be prepared to respond to the concerns of those who own property adjacent to the trail. Further, these studies will identify and recommend the proposed alignment of the trail, identify locations for trail access points, develop an opinion of probable construction costs for construction of the trail, recommend a management structure for the trail, provide recommendations for the operations and maintenance of the trails, and project costs associated with the on-going operations and maintenance of the trails.

### Water Trails

- ✓ Lower Allegheny River Water Trail:

There is an officially designated and recognized, by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, water trail along the Allegheny River, beginning at the Kinzua Dam in Warren County, and extending south to Emlenton in Venango County. The opportunity exists to extend this water trail to the south, from Emlenton, south to the City of Pittsburgh, in Allegheny County, a distance of approximate eighty-nine miles. Herein this proposed extension is referred to as the proposed Lower Allegheny River Water Trail.

The commercially navigable segment of the Allegheny River begins in the vicinity of East Brady and continues southward. From East Brady to Pittsburgh there are eight sets of locks and dams to facilitate the river traffic. Therefore, hazards in this segment, to non-motorized craft and motorized craft, include: dams, commercial river traffic including barges, and both commercial and non-commercial motorized water crafts.

The anticipated costs associated with developing this water trail include:

Identification and acquisition of put in / take out points: .....Unknown  
Construction of put in / take out points: .....\$200,000

Frequency five to ten miles, therefore eight to sixteen required, with many being existing access points that have been previously developed for motorized water craft use.

Development of water trail brochure: .....\$15,000

Further, with the recommendation of Foxburg Borough, Clarion County, Emlenton Borough, Venango County, and New Bethlehem Borough Clarion County, also being a Trail Town Demonstration projects, these opportunities provide the potential for expanded economic development activities in these communities.

- ✓ Red Bank Creek Water Trail: In the “Canoeing Guide to Western Pennsylvania and Northern West Virginia”, Red Bank Creek is documented as a canoeable stream from Brookville, Jefferson County, to its confluence with the Allegheny River at Rimer, in Clarion County, approximately fifty-four miles.

Identification and acquisition of put in / take out points: .....Unknown  
Construction of put in / take out points: .....\$200,000  
Development of water trail brochure .....\$7,500

Further, with the recommendation of New Bethlehem Borough also being a Trail Town Demonstration project this opportunity, and the development of the Red Bank Creek Trail, land based, as described earlier, these initiatives provide the potential for expanded economic development activities in New Bethlehem Borough.

In her thesis completed in 2002, “Case Studies of Water Trail Impacts on Rural Communities”, Lindsay Johnson, MCRP provides the following recommendation for developing a successful water trail.

Communities interested in water trail development should be aware of impacts on local culture, the environment and businesses. Negative impacts can be mitigated if the community is supportive of water trail development and there is dedicated management. The following recommendations should help project leaders plan, organize and create facilities for water trails while minimizing impacts on rural communities.

### *Planning and Organizational Needs*

1. A shared vision for a water trail is a goal that community members believe in and are willing to work towards. Dedicated local support for a goal-oriented project will sustain local water trail benefits. A dedicated group of volunteers is key to water trail success. A water trail must be advocated and maintained locally if the community will reap economic and social benefits.
2. Address landowner and citizen concerns through outreach to the community early in the project. A designated contact person should respond quickly and accurately to suggestions, concerns and other comments. A pre-opening/pre-construction trail paddle will allow community members to see the proposed water trail for themselves.
3. Solidify funding, planning and overall water trail management with clear leadership and goals. These factors should be considered before marketing a water trail.
4. Investigate local goals, norms and land use patterns that are inconsistent with the water trail vision or threaten the integrity of a paddling experience should be evaluated. Tourism development in rural areas will have social implications including increased land values.
5. Explore partnership opportunities and apply for grants and offers of assistance. Local officials, government agencies, businesses and the community should commit to water trail project goals. Successful water trails are the result of a cooperative effort between an active citizen group, a responsive public agency, and a supportive community all of whom share a vision for the trail. Partner with lodging, eating and drinking, retail sales, and recreational services businesses.
6. Host events to advertise the trail, build support and draw new volunteers. noteworthy events such as water trail grand openings and annual paddling festivals provide excellent opportunity to make contact with the community, present accurate information and generate positive media attention.

### *Infrastructure Needs*

1. Identify and secure rights to access put in and take out locations. Designate and clearly sign legal access points and public land at reasonable intervals to minimize landowner concerns.
2. Promote 'leave no trace' ethics or provide adequately maintained facilities to mitigate for environmental impacts from improperly disposed human waste, large groups and littering.
3. Improve access to parking at river put-ins. Information and access are two big issues to improve trail system usage.
4. Manage a river experience, the quality of the natural environment and uncrowded river conditions are important to paddlers. These aspects of the river experience are vital for all management actions.
5. Explore the history of the waterway and interpret these stories to paddlers in creative ways. Trail users often have an interest in the history and environment of the community, and can help to support museums, nature centers and other cultural assets. The interpretation of history and linkages with the past is a marketable concept.
6. Offer a variety of accessible activities. Paddlers are often interested in easy access to downtown, restaurants, campgrounds and bed and breakfasts, in other outdoor recreation experiences and learning about local history and culture. Successful paddle destinations offer diverse activities with a wide variety of opportunities.

### Trail Towns

Marketing, promoting, and developing a trail town business mentality can assist main street communities in promoting economic development activities, and expanding the economy of those communities. A trail town is a main street community that can provide the goods and services that are desired by land based and water based trail users. To function as a trail town, the following goods and services must be provided:

- Main Street Business District
- Food
- Lodging
- Fuel
- Emergency Services (Police, Fire and Ambulance)

It is also beneficial, but not essential, in a trail town can also provide:

- Entertainment
- Recreation



## Clarion County Greenways Plan

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- Historic Site(s)
- Other Attraction(s)

Of the trail towns being proposed for Clarion County, we recommend focus be placed on developing and implementing a trail town philosophy in the following communities:

- ✓ Foxburg
- ✓ New Bethlehem
- ✓ Clarion

“Trail Towns: Capturing Trail Based Tourism – A Guide for Pennsylvania Communities”, prepared by the Allegheny Trail Alliance, provides step by step guidance in organizing a community to create a trail town.

### Natural Systems Greenway Corridors

The following Clarion County Natural System Greenway Corridors have been identified at the regional level as priority corridors:

- ✓ Allegheny River Greenway Corridor: Also associated with the existing Middle Allegheny River Water Trail, the proposed Lower Allegheny River Water Trail, the existing Allegheny River Trail (land based trail) and proposed demonstration trail towns of Emlenton, Foxburg, and New Bethlehem.
- ✓ Clarion River Greenway Corridor: Also associated with the existing Clarion River Water Trail and proposed demonstration trail town of Clarion.
- ✓ Hemlock Creek Greenway Corridor

Opportunities to implement enhancement and restoration projects along these corridors can be completed to achieve the following goals:

- Improving water quality
- Improving access to water features
- Reducing flooding
- Improving stormwater management
- Reducing nonpoint source pollution & improving water quality
- Sustainable timber practices

## Implementation Resources

### *Acquisition Tools*

These mechanisms generally provide permanent protection of land and are preferred when establishing greenways.

#### *Fee Simple Purchase*

- **Description:** Direct purchase of land, at a price agreeable to the landowner, is done by a governmental or public agency or non-profit land trust organization. Land acquisition can be made at every level of government.
- **Benefits:** Acquiring fee simple title provides more permanent protection than other methods, such as zoning or subdivision requirements. Acquisition by non-profit groups partnering with communities imposes little or no cost and little administrative burden on local governments.
- **Implementation:** DCNR and DEP's Growing Greener Program has sources of funding to help communities and non-profit groups implement acquisition of land for inclusion in greenways.

#### *Conservation Easements*

- **Description:** A landowner voluntarily agrees to sell the right to develop his land in certain ways by granting an easement to another entity such as a land trust. The landowner retains title to the land and continues to pay taxes on it. The easement may or may not allow the grantee access to the land for certain purposes.
- **Benefits:** Establishment of conservation easements provides long-term protection, but is less costly than fee simple acquisition because the buyer receives less than full title to the land. Where the easement is held by a non-profit group, cost and burden on local government are minimized. Moreover, the landowners pay reduced real estate taxes, subject to terms of the conservation easement.
- **Implementation:** Generally, the buyer pays the landowner the difference between the value of the land that can be fully developed and the value of the land without development potential. The easement is recorded with the property deed and remains if the land is sold.

### *Agricultural Conservation Easements*

- **Description:** A subset of conservation easements described above, these easements protect farms from development. Landowners voluntarily sell the rights to develop the farm to a government entity or land trust. The agency or organization usually pays them the difference between the value of the land for agricultural use and the value of the land for its "highest and best" use, which is generally residential or commercial development.
- **Benefits:** Conservation easements preserve land for agricultural use. They provide a financial benefit to farmers while conserving farmland that often provides wildlife habitat. Also, owners of land subject to conservation easements pay reduced real estate taxes.
- **Implementation:** County Agricultural Land Preservation Boards have primary responsibility for developing application procedures. They also establish priority for easement purchases based on a numerical ranking system. The ranking system is modeled on Pennsylvania Dept. of Agriculture (PDA) regulations that require consideration of soil quality, conservation practices, development pressure, and proximity to other preserved farmland and open space.

### *Forest Land Conservation Easements*

- **Description:** These easements are a market driven tool used to preserve working forests, in the same way agricultural conservation easements protect working farmland.
- **Benefits:** Easements can be used to protect forests for present and future economic benefit, simultaneously preserving wildlife habitat; protecting watersheds; providing outdoor recreation opportunities; and promoting soil conservation. In addition, benefits to landowners include reduced property taxes. These easements are of great importance to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as timber is one of the top sectors of the state's economy.
- **Implementation:** Some non-profit groups such as conservancies and land trusts provide financial support for purchasing easements from landowners. They also accept tax-deductible donations of easements.

### *Transfer / Purchase of Development Rights*

- **Description:** Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a tool that allows conservation and development to co-exist within a municipality or group of municipalities with joint zoning. TDR permits landowners in conservation target areas to transfer some or all of the development rights to their land (sending areas) to areas where growth is desired at higher densities than zoning allows (receiving areas). The landowners keep title to the land and the right to use it, but give up the right to develop it for other purposes. The buyer of development rights uses them to develop another parcel at greater density than

would otherwise be permitted. With TDR, transfer of rights occurs at the time of development.

- Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) operates in a similar manner. However, with PDR, an entity buys the rights to develop land from the landowner. The landowner retains title and use of the land, and receives tax benefits. A municipality can pass a bond issue to buy the rights and "bank" them. A developer may then purchase the development rights from the municipality when ready to develop an area with high density. The municipal bond financing is paid off over time by the purchase of development rights as development occurs.
- Benefits: The value of each development right is controlled by the open market, not the municipality. TDR is an equitable option for preserving open space and agricultural land, compensating the owner of the preserved land while guiding the growth of development by allowing increased density where existing infrastructure can support it.
- PDR provides an immediate return to the landowner, as he/she is compensated for the reduction in development potential of their land. At the same time, PDR supports the development district concept. PDR also streamlines the development process, since private sales and negotiations for development rights are eliminated. It allows a municipality to guide growth to places where it is desired.
- Implementation: In Pennsylvania, TDR can only be used to transfer development rights within a single municipality or among municipalities with a joint zoning ordinance. It is up to each municipality implementing TDR to set up a mechanism to accomplish the transfer.

### *Other Recommendations*

The action plan also includes several other conservation, recreation, and transportation based recommendations essential to maintaining the quality of life that defines Clarion County. The following mechanisms are methods of land conservation that do not involve acquisition of land or enactment of ordinances by a municipality, but are no less effective.

#### *Clean and Green Program*

- Description: Pennsylvania ACT 319 (also known as Clean and Green) provides real estate tax benefit to owners of agricultural or forest land by taxing that land on the basis of its "use value", rather than its true market value. This act provides preferential assessment to any individuals who agree to maintain their land solely devoted to one of the three following uses:
  - Agricultural Use: Land used for producing an agricultural commodity or devoted to (and qualifying for) payments or other compensation under a soil conservation program, under an agreement with a Federal government agency.

- **Agricultural Reserve:** A non-commercial open space used for outdoor recreation or enjoyment of scenic or natural beauty, offering public use without fee or charge. Agricultural reserve land is the only use under the Clean and Green program that requires landowners to permit nondiscriminatory public access. This use is generally requested by landowners that wish to maintain their land in a natural state – free of farming, timbering, or any other activities.
- **Forest Reserve:** A 10+ acre parcel of land stocked by forest trees that are capable of producing timber or other wood products. Forest reserve lands include any farmstead land on the same property parcel as the timber trees.
- **Benefits:** Clean and Green reduces property taxes for owners of farm, timber, or conservation land.
- **Implementation:** Landowners applying for the Clean and Green Program must have 10 or more acres of active agricultural or forest land, unless they gross at least \$2,000 annual income from the land.

## Potential Funding Sources

Development of a greenways network can be costly and requires a long term strategy to access a variety of federal, state, and private sector funding opportunities. Funding programs designed to conserve natural resources, develop recreational trails, and create transportation improvements are all potential sources of grants for implementation of the recommendations contained herein. Most require some form of local match, and sometimes one grant opportunity can be utilized as the ‘local match’ for another grant opportunity.

Moreover, any funding strategy should leverage local resources as well. Private and non-profit foundations in the communities and region are important sources of funding that should not be overlooked when assembling funding strategies. In addition, efforts should be made to create public-private partnerships and to seek in-kind contributions from local businesses in the communities and the region.



# **CHAPTER TWO**

## **WHERE ARE WE NOW? - Clarion County's Resources**





## **WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

### ***CLARION COUNTY'S RESOURCES***

#### **GATHERING THE DATA**

In this section, the plan will describe Clarion County's resources and the sources of information we consulted, referring to relevant sections of the various existing planning documents, where appropriate.

#### **EXISTING PLANNING EFFORTS**

Thoughtful Greenway Planning will allow Clarion County to address issues and follow recommendations set forth in existing planning efforts such as the county's Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan was completed to guide development, land use, economic progress, and long term preservation of the quality of life. The recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are intended to provide guidance for the best possible methods of growth and development while maintaining the county's heritage and rural character.

##### **Clarion County Comprehensive Plan**

Clarion County adopted its Comp Plan in 2004. Some of the specific recommendations that may be fulfilled in the NWPA Greenways Plan include:

- Preserving historic and economic character of older downtowns;
- Ensuring that the natural landscape remains scenic and beautiful;
- Retaining young people in the community; and
- Providing developed recreation needs, such as parks and ball fields

Within the Conservation of Natural and Historic Resources Plan, one of the items noted for consideration is for the county to pursue a DCNR-funded Greenways Plan to complete the County Natural Heritage Inventory. These items were tagged as actions with high priority. Also found in the Clarion County Com. Plan was a section titled Interrelationships Plan. This section recommended establishing a multi-county, Allegheny River initiative. The NWPA Greenways Plan will help to further develop this initiative.

#### **TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDIES**

##### **Allegheny Valley Rail-Trails – Feasibility Study and Development Plan**

This plan investigates the feasibility of establishing multi-use trails on two former rail rights-of-way in Clarion and Venango County. As part of this plan two corridors are considered that have been offered for donation to the nonprofit Allegheny Valley Trails Association:

## Clarion County Greenways Plan

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- The Allegheny River Trail (14 miles): along the Allegheny River, from Franklin to the Kennerdell tunnel (Venango County)
- The Clarion Secondary Line (31 miles): from Pecan, Victory township, (Venango County) to Interstate 80, south of Shippenville (Clarion County).

These two trail corridors link the towns of Franklin, Oil City, and Clarion. Future connections to these proposed trails could lead to the creation of a network of trails linking Lake Erie and the Allegheny National Forest to the city of Pittsburgh. They could also become key parts of the Allegheny National Wild and Scenic River and the Oil Region Heritage Park.

### **Rail to Trail Feasibility Study – Piney Branch Trail and Brookville to Brockway Trail**

This study is a review of two potential trail corridors extending through Clarion and Jefferson Counties. The study evaluates the feasibility of the inter community recreational trail.

Completion of the two trails is feasible according to the study. The physical conditions along the former rail line provide an excellent base for trail construction and existing intersections with roads include large areas appropriate for trailheads and parking. According to the study acquisition is also feasible and contingent upon funding and negotiations with land owners. The study determines that a twenty five (25) year timeframe is appropriate for trail development.

The plan includes an implementation strategy as well as a management and maintenance plan. Detailed maps are provided indicating proposed routes for the trail segments. The plan also includes detailed section drawings of a variety of trail elements necessary for completing the corridor.

## **MISCELANEOUS PLANS**

### **A Recreation Plan for the State Parks & State Forests in the PA Wilds**

The PA Wilds initiative was created to facilitate growth in outdoor recreation and heritage tourism across North Central Pennsylvania. Within the Wilds, outdoor recreation opportunities can be found in 27 state parks and 1.3 million acres of state forests. The DCNR established a process to develop a system-wide outdoor recreation plan the state parks and forests in the PA Wilds.

There are three counties within the NWPA Greenways planning region that are also a part of what has been designated the PA Wilds. These counties are Clarion, Forest, and Warren. Within these three counties are two State Parks; Chapman in Warren County and Cooks Forest in Clarion County, as well as two State Forests; Cornplanter and Clear Creek both in Forest County.

This plan promotes trails as critical connections between recreation and resources. It is recommended that recreational trails receive a priority for investment and that they be

strategically examined to identify opportunities for additional links to communities throughout the region.

Within this plan recommendations were made for significant infrastructure investments for some of the state parks and forests in the PA Wilds. The proposed facilities and enhancements are intended to expand DCNR service to reach both its traditional customer base, as well as the expected growing visitation of urban visitors.

- Cook Forest State Park and the Clarion River - This plan labels the Longfellow Trail in Cooks Forest State park as the primary attraction in the park. The condition of the trail has become degraded and this plan recommends that DCNR rehabilitate the trail to provide a quality hiking experience and protect the precious trees on the site. In addition, the plan recommends the development of interpretive signage, which portrays the history of the forest and the value of these ancient trees to today's visitors.
- It is also recommended that a scenic byway be established along the Clarion River from Cook Forest State Park to Ridgway.

### **Clarion River Recreation Assessment**

The Clarion River Recreation Assessment was done in the fall of 2006 by Elk, Forest, Jefferson and Clarion Counties in partnership with the DCNR and Allegheny National Forest. The purpose of this plan is to evaluate the current recreational opportunities and challenges facing the Clarion River Corridor. Some of the specific recommendations that may be fulfilled in the NWPA Greenways Plan include:

- Improve signing and access – better signing and improvements to parking and launches.
- Enhance visitor information and services by developing relationships between agency personnel and businesses.
- Support community revitalization.
- Intergovernmental Cooperation.

### MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANS AND OTHER LAND USE TOOLS

Of the thirty-four municipalities in Clarion County eleven have adopted their own Comprehensive Plans, within which they outline various community objectives. Three municipalities have enacted subdivision and land development ordinances, Clarion Borough, New Bethlehem Borough and Licking Township. Five have enacted zoning ordinances, Clarion Borough, New Bethlehem Borough, Rimersburg Borough, Sligo Borough, and Millcreek Township. For those municipalities that have not enacted their own subdivision and land development ordinances, they fall into the purview of the Clarion County subdivision and land development ordinance.

### NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVENTORY

Understanding the natural infrastructure of Clarion County is part of developing a greenways plan. For example, steep slope habitats are candidates for natural systems corridors, while rivers and canoeable streams may provide opportunities for water trail development. Unique natural features may also become important greenway destinations.

The following natural infrastructure resources were inventoried and analyzed as part of the Natural Infrastructure Inventory section of this plan:

#### **Water Resources**

The Allegheny River forms Clarion County's southwestern border separating Clarion from Armstrong County. The Allegheny generally runs south from Emlenton in Venango County through Foxburg and East Brady to the confluence with Redbank Creek.

The most prominent water resource in Clarion County is the Clarion River. The Clarion runs through the heart of Clarion County in a generally southwesterly direction. After entering the county from the area near Cook State Forest, the Clarion flows southwest toward Clarion Borough and on to Callensburg. At this point the River begins to wind in a more westerly direction to its confluence with the Allegheny River south of Foxburg. A majority of smaller streams within the County drain into the Clarion River before they reach the Allegheny.

Redbank Creek forms Clarion County's southern border with Armstrong County. Redbank Creek meanders from northeast of Hawthorn through New Bethlehem and eventually empties into the Allegheny River east of East Brady. Smaller streams in southern Clarion County typically drain into Redbank Creek before entering the Allegheny River.

Located in Venango and Clarion County, Kahle Lake is a 251 acre reservoir owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and managed by the PA Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) for recreational fishing. Boating is also permitted on the lake and is limited to electric motors or non-powered boats. There are two boat launches with ample parking.

### *Impaired Waterways*

Given natural resource extraction activities in Clarion County over the past one hundred and fifty years, Clarion County has many impaired waterways that are not in compliance with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's water quality standards.

### **Wetlands**

Clarion County contains nearly 5,400 acres of wetlands. These are divided among three classifications: Lacustrine, or Lake Edge (198 acres), Palustrine, or Marsh Edge (977 acres) and Riverine, or River Edge (4219 acres). Notable wetland areas are found along the Allegheny and Clarion Rivers and Redbank Creek. There are also wetland areas surrounding Kahle Lake in northwestern Clarion County.

### **100 Year Floodplain**

Clarion County's streams are bordered by many miles of floodplains. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) delineates floodplains for the nation through its floodplain management program. In the State of Pennsylvania, the PA Code has regulations designed to encourage planning and development in floodplains which are consistent with sound land use practices. Protecting the people and properties within floodplains from floodwaters is essential. In addition, preserving and restoring the efficiency and carrying capacity of streams within the Commonwealth is a vital component to maintaining a sound ecological system.

Notable floodplain areas in Clarion County exist along the Clarion and Allegheny Rivers, Redbank Creek, and most of the first and second order tributaries to the Clarion River and Redbank Creek.

### **Soils and Geologic Features**

Key soil types for the purposes of greenway planning include hydric soils. The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) has a hydric soils section which presents information on hydric soils. Hydric soils are soils that are sufficiently wet enough during the growing season to support the growth of wetland vegetation. Hydric soils are designated by individual county soils surveys. The Clarion County conservation district was contacted to obtain a list of hydric soils for the county. Once this list was obtained, these soils were mapped and analyzed as part of the Natural Infrastructure Inventory.

### **Forests and Woodland Areas**

According to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR 2007), approximately sixty-one percent (62%) 236,500 acres, of Clarion County is currently covered by forested land. Of the 236,500 acres, over 196,295 are privately owned. While large areas of forest are protected throughout the State Game Lands, Cooks Forest State Park, and within local parks.

### **Important Bird Areas**

Selected by the Audubon Society, Important Bird Areas (IBAs) have been designated in over 80 locations across the state and include more than 1 million acres. All combined, IBAs encompass over 3.5% of the state of Pennsylvania.

Audubon Pennsylvania has designated two (2) Important Bird Areas (IBAs) at least partially located within County – Mount Zion (Piney Tract) IBA and Cook Forest State Park IBA.

Mount Zion (Piney Tract) IBA supports the largest Henslow's Sparrow breeding colony in Pennsylvania and is also host to high numbers of Grasshopper Sparrows and Savannah Sparrow.

Cook Forest State Park IBA is located in the northwest section of Clarion County is totally within Cook Forest State Park. Cook Forest State park IBA contains sizable stands of old-growth forest, one of which is a Registered National Natural Landmark. These forests enable exceptional densities and diverse representation of breeding bird species that like interior forest. Some of these species include:

- Northern Goshawk
- Red-Breasted Nuthatch
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Evening Grosbeaks
- White-winged and Red Crossbills
- Blackburnian Warbler
- Black-throated Green Warbler
- Magnolia Warbler

### **Public and Other Protected Open Space**

Cook Forest State Park covers approximately 8,500-acres in Clarion and Forest Counties. The Park hosts a variety of recreational opportunities and features the Forest Cathedral, which is designated as a National Natural Landmark. In Clarion County the Park is situated in the western portion of Farmington Township along the Clarion River.

Forest Cathedral Natural Area is a five hundred and fifty-five (555) acre site that has been set aside for protection as a State Park Natural Area and is a National Natural Landmark. This area contains one of the largest old growth forests of eastern white pine and eastern hemlock in the state of Pennsylvania, some of which are over 300 years old.

### **Ridge Tops and Scenic Viewsheds**

The Brady Overlook offers 1500 foot panoramic view of the magnificent Brady's Bend is breathtaking from the Brady Narrows Overlook on Rt. 68.

The Seneca Point Overlook offers an excellent view of the Clarion River as you pass through the old-growth Seneca Natural Area of Cook Forest in northern Clarion County.

### **Natural Infrastructure Inventory Resources:**

(NWI) National Wetland Inventory: <http://www.fws.gov/nwi/>

(FEMA) Federal Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.fema.gov/>

(USGS) United States Geological Survey: <http://www.usgs.gov/>

(NRCS) Natural Resources Conservation Service: <http://soils.usda.gov/>

(DEP) PA Department of Environmental Protection – Chapter 93:

<http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/025/chapter93/chap93toc.html>

<http://www.coldwaterheritage.org/Effectsofspecialprotection.pdf>

(PNHP) Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

## GRAY INFRASTRUCTURE INVENTORY

### Transportation and Utility Corridors

- Former Rail Lines - Clarion County has several stretches of former or inactive rail lines. In reviewing GIS data for inactive railroads and historic railroad maps, it was discovered that eight (8) abandoned rail lines with trail potential exist in Clarion County. These segments are described briefly here:
  - (1) The former Lake Erie, Franklin and Clarion Railroad line runs approximately fifteen miles between Summerville in Jefferson County and the Borough of Clarion.
  - (2) The former Clarion Secondary Line runs from Polk in Venango County to near the Clarion River in Piney Township in Clarion County. After crossing the Clarion River heading east, the line becomes active again as listed in the data available for this study.
  - (3) East Brady Industrial Track extends approximately three and a half (3.5) miles, from near where the Oil City Secondary Line exits the tunnel south of Riverview to east Brady, passing through Phillipston along the way. This segment is part of the existing Armstrong Trail.
  - (4) The former Knox to Kane Railroad runs from the Borough of Knox in Clarion County to the Borough of Kane, McKean County. The approximately twenty-six (26) mile segment within Clarion County currently runs from Knox to the Forest County Border north of Cook Forest State Park along PA Route 66 and is part of the potential Knox to Kane Trail. Along this route the line passes through Shippenville, Paint Mills, Arthurs, Lucinda, Snydersburg, Leeper, Crown and Vowinckel.
  - (5) Near the mouth of Redbank Creek, the former Mt. Laurel Railroad Low Grade Division, also known as the Redbank Junction branches off the Allegheny Valley railroad near Brady. This rail line extends approximately 5 miles down Redbank Creek to Summerville in Jefferson County. Along its route, this rail line passes through Lawsonham, New Bethlehem and Hawthorn.
  - (6) The Sligo Branch travels north out of Lawsonham through Rimersburg to Sligo, covering approximately 10 miles.
  - (7) The former Northern Subdivision Railroad extends from the Allegheny River at Foxburg to Knox passing through St. Petersburg, Alum Rock, and Blairs Corners along its approximately fourteen (14) mile route.
  - (8) The former Oil City Secondary Line extends from Warren County through Venango County, passing through Clarion County as it follows the Allegheny



River into Armstrong County. The Clarion County stretch of this rail line, which has been inactive since 1984, is approximately miles (17) miles long from where it enters the county at Foxburg to where it leaves the county east of Brady. This segment is part of the existing Allegheny River Rail Trail.

- Pedestrian Walkways – Urban areas in and around the large and small population centers of Clarion County including such places as Shippenville, Clarion, Strattanville, Knox and other communities have paved sidewalks. Most of the county’s Townships do not require sidewalks with new developments, thus none exist except in villages or other small population centers where housing units are in close proximity to the roadways and each other.

### Recreation Opportunities Inventory

Various recreation facilities, including the community parks in municipalities throughout the county, are depicted on the Recreation Opportunities Inventory Map. Though the recreation facilities in Clarion County are too numerous to describe in detail here.

- Public Recreation Facilities
  - (1) Cook Forest State Park encompasses approximately 8,500 acres in northwest Clarion County in an area once called the Black Forest due to its stands of old growth forest. A section of the park known as Forest Cathedral is a National Natural Landmark and the Clarion River runs along the parks southern of the park allowing for canoeing and rafting activities. Park amenities include camping areas, cabins, picnic areas, Sawmill Craft Center and Theater, swimming pool, and canoe launches. Additionally, recreation opportunities include canoeing, kayaking, hiking, biking, swimming, horseback riding, hunting, fishing, and in the winter ice skating, snowmobiling, sledding, and cross-country skiing.
  - (2) Beaver Creek Nature Area between Knox and Emlenton is a popular area for nature photography, bird watching, hiking & fishing. This site consists of approximately 850 acres of lakes, wetlands & meadows. Managed by the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife.
  - (3) Clarion County Park is located west of Clarion Borough near Piney Dam on the north side of the Clarion River. Park amenities include several softball, baseball and soccer fields, basketball court, tennis court, horse arena, and archery range, and nature trail, and pavilions.
  - (4) Nearly 12,000 acres are designated as State Game Lands in Clarion County. These lands are managed by the PA Game Commission for wildlife conservation, hunting, and trapping. In addition to hunting, these lands offer other recreational opportunities such as, bird watching, fishing, and hiking.

## Clarion County Greenways Plan

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Community and Neighborhood Parks that were requested to be shown by Clarion County Planning department as part of the Greenways Plan are:

- (1) Farmington Township Park, Farmington Township
  - (2) Baseball field near Fryburg
  - (3) Knights of Columbus ball field, south of Lucinda
  - (4) Ball Field in Shippenville
  - (5) Ball Fields and Park in Knox
  - (6) Clarion University Stadium and Ball Fields, Clarion
  - (7) Clarion University Tennis Courts, Clarion
  - (8) Clarion County Memorial Park, Clarion
  - (9) Clarion Borough Park, Clarion
  - (10) Basketball Courts in Strattanville
  - (11) Piney Dam, Piney Township
  - (12) The Grove Park, St. Petersburg
  - (13) Baseball Field in Callensburg
  - (14) David Wetzel Memorial Park & Ball Field outside Callensburg
  - (15) Union COG Pool/Park outside Sligo
  - (16) Veterans Memorial Park & Ball Field, Rimersburg
  - (17) Gumtown Park & Scout Hill Park, New Bethlehem
  - (18) Redbank Valley Municipal Park, Alcola
  - (19) American Legion Baseball Field, Hawthorn
- Campgrounds – there are several campground facilities in Clarion County, including:
- (1) Colwell’s Campground, Knox
  - (2) Cook Forest Locust Lodge Campground, Cooksburg
  - (3) Cook Forest Trails Campground, Cooksburg
  - (4) Deer Meadow Campground, Cooksburg
  - (5) Kalyumet Campground, Lucinda
  - (6) Piney Meadow Park, Limestone
  - (7) Rustic Acres Campground, Shippenville
  - (8) Wolfs Camping Resort, Knox
- Pedestrian Paths – Urban areas in and around the large population centers of Clarion County have paved sidewalks.

### Water Trails

- (1) The section of the Clarion River Water Trail within Clarion County starts where the river enters from Jefferson County in Cook Forest State Park. Water trail users must take-out at Piney Dam and portage around to the access located a half mile downstream from the base of the dam. The Clarion River Water Trail ends where the Clarion River outlets into the Allegheny River at Foxburg.
- (2) The Middle Allegheny River Water Trail, Wilderness Islands (Northern) Segment begins at the boat access near the base of Kinzua Dam and ends at the boat access in the borough of Tionesta, Forest County. This section of the water trail is characterized by rural landscapes many islands. There are a total of twenty-four public islands that are part of the Allegheny National Forest, in addition to 60 islands under other ownership. Seven of the public islands are federally designated as Wilderness Islands. All of the public islands are open for camping and recreation.

Allegheny River launches include:

- Corps of Engineers ramp at the Kinzua Dam
  - Crescent Park launch near Warren General Hospital
  - Buckaloons (ANF) campground at Irvine
  - Bonnie Brae, Fish Commission (mile 28)
  - Fish Commission launch at Tidioute (mile 30)
  - West Hickory launch
- Water Access Areas –The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) lists eight (8) water access areas in Clarion County. These water access points are:
- (1) 322 bridge access, Clarion River
  - (2) Alum Rock Access, Clarion River
  - (3) Callensburg Access, Clarion River
  - (4) Gravel lick Access, Clarion River
  - (5) Deer Creek Access, Clarion River
  - (6) Toby Boat Launch, Clarion River
  - (7) Kahle Lake Access, Kahle Lake
  - (8) Mill Creek Access, Clarion River

The PFBC owns two of these accesses:

- (1) Mill Creek Access, 8.2 acres
- (2) Gravel Lick Access, 4.18 acres

- Fishing is a very popular outdoor recreation activity among Clarion County residents. The waterways of the county offer many opportunities for a range of different fish species.

In 2007, twelve (12) of Clarion County's streams, were on the PFBC's list of approved trout waterways. This designation means that these waters contain significant portions that are open to public fishing and are stocked with trout. Approved trout waters within Clarion County include:

- (1) Beaver Creek
- (2) Big Coon Creek
- (3) Canoe Creek
- (4) Cathers Run
- (5) East Sandy Creek
- (6) Leatherwood Creek
- (7) Mill Creek
- (8) Piney Creek
- (9) Redbank Creek (county line to confluence with little Sandy Creek)
- (10) Richey Run
- (11) Toms Run
- (12) Turkey Run

Kahle Lake is a part of the Big Bass Program, which maintains special regulations for largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted bass. The PFBC lists this lake as an excellent largemouth bass fishery.

### **Cultural Resource Inventory**

The following discussion highlights the variety of historically significant sites and districts in Clarion County.

#### *The National Register of Historic Places*

The NRHP is a list of structures, sites, and districts worthy of preservation due to their historic significance. The list was established by the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which also establishes the process for adding properties to the list. The NRHP is administered by the National Parks Service (NPS) with the goal of helping identify and protect historic sites.

Clarion County currently features four (4) individual sites/structures on the NRHP. There are no designated historic districts in Clarion County. Two of the three historically significant sites/structures within Clarion County are found within Clarion Borough. The Clarion County Courthouse is one of the two NRHP sites in Clarion Borough. The County's third NRHP site, the Buchanan Furnace, is located near Callensburg Borough. Foxburg Country Club, Clarion's fourth NRHP site, is located in Foxburg and Richland Township. The Cultural and Historic Resources Inventory Map depicts the locations of the NRHP properties described above. More detailed discussions of each of these districts, sites, and structures are provided below.

The PHMC maintains an inventory of properties that are not on the NRHP but are eligible for inclusion on this list. Currently, there are approximately sixteen (16) properties included within the PHMC's inventory of eligible properties. Similarly to those currently listed on the NRHP, many of these properties are situated within Clarion Borough. However, many of these eligible are found within other areas of the County. The PHMC's inventory of NRHP eligible properties and a list of those on the NRHP is provided in the Appendix.

### *Buchanan Furnace, Licking Township, PA*

The Buchanan Furnace is considered one of western Pennsylvania's most intact iron furnaces and represents the iron industry's expansion in Pennsylvania. The furnace was constructed in 1844 and operated until 1858. The site has seen little activity since that time.

### *Clarion County Courthouse, Clarion, PA*

The current courthouse, erected in 1885, is the third building constructed to house the county offices and courthouse. The Romanesque structure is situated at the intersection of Route 22 and Route 966 in the heart of Clarion.

### *Foxburg Country Club, Foxburg, PA*

Originally built in 1887, the Foxburg Country Club features a historic golf course and club house. The course was one of the first in western Pennsylvania and contributed to the growth and expansion of the sport's popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### *Sutton-Ditz House, Clarion, PA*

The Sutton-Ditz House is a residential structure located in Clarion Borough. The house was originally built in 1847 for prominent local lawyer Thomas Sutton and showed a Greek revival style. It was remodeled in 1910 with a neo-classical appearance.

### *Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Historic Markers*

The PHMC has created and maintains a network of over 2,000 historic markers throughout the Commonwealth to promote knowledge and recollection of historically significant people, places, and events. These markers exhibit a common design featuring gold text on a blue metal pole and sign. The text provides a brief description of the location, person, or event. Currently, the PHMC has placed approximately seven (7) of these markers in Clarion County. The PHMC's list of historic markers is provided in the Appendix.

### *North Country National Scenic Trail*

The North Country National Scenic Trail is a recreational trail that stretches for about four thousand six hundred (4,600) miles from North Dakota to New York. Pennsylvania includes approximately one hundred (100) miles of the North Country National Scenic Trail. The trail includes nearly two thousand (2,000) miles of off-road trails as well as many miles of shared paths and road paths. Upon completion the trail boasts becoming the longest off-road hiking trail in the country.

### *Lumber Heritage Region*

The fifteen (15) county Lumber Heritage Region strives to promote the history and heritage of the lumber industry and its importance to Pennsylvania's development. The Region boasts a wide variety of natural, cultural, and historic resources. While celebrating the past, the grassroots effort works to build the region's economy and quality of life through education, and tourism promotion.

### *National Natural Landmarks*

Administered by the National Parks Service (NPS), the National Natural Landmarks (NNL) Program promotes conservation of natural features that significantly contribute to the country's history. Throughout the country less than six hundred (600) NNLs have been designated. NNLs can be publicly or privately owned. The NPS supports private and public owners with management and conservation of the sites. Cook Forest State Park is Clarion County's NNL.

## **Population Centers and Destinations**

Clarion County has thirty-four (34) incorporated municipalities: twelve (12) boroughs, and twenty two (22) townships. Table 1-2 lists the ten largest municipalities in terms of population based on 2006 population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

**Table 1-2. Ten Largest Municipalities (Population 2006)**

| <b>Municipality</b> | <b>Total Population<br/>(2006)*</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Clarion Borough     | 5,257                               |
| Clarion Township    | 3,247                               |
| Washington Township | 2,028                               |
| Farmington Township | 1,930                               |
| Limestone Township  | 1,831                               |
| Paint Township      | 1,781                               |
| Beaver Township     | 1,751                               |
| Monroe Township     | 1,594                               |
| Elk Township        | 1,489                               |
| Madison Township    | 1,458                               |

*\*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2006 Population Estimates*

Clarion Borough was Clarion County's largest municipality in 2006 in terms of population. The remaining nine communities in the top ten per population are townships. Clarion Township, the second largest community in the County surrounds Clarion Borough. Clarion Borough and Clarion Township accounted for approximately 21% of Clarion County's population in 2006.

### Population Trends

Clarion County's overall population decreased approximately 3.15% between 1990 and 2006. According to the U.S. Census Bureau there were approximately 40,385 residents within the County in 2006. The County's overall population loss is attributable to the rate of population loss in 17 municipalities outpacing the rate that the other 17 municipalities gained population. Clarion Borough witnessed the most significant population loss within the County. Between 1990 and 2006 the Borough lost approximately 1,200 residents (approximately 18%). Other communities with significant population loss included Knox Township, New Bethlehem Borough, Porter Township, and Redbank Township. Conversely, communities such as Washington, Limestone, Monroe, and Ashland Townships experienced significant increases in population.





# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?**

### **- The Vision for Greenways in Clarion County**



## WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

### **CREATING THE VISION: DESIGNING A GREENWAYS NETWORK**

#### **THE CRITERIA**

Greenways can serve many functions with regional and local impact. When determining the guiding principles used to designate greenways for Clarion County, we considered the objectives established in the early part of the planning process. The following goals and objectives offer insight into the function of the greenways to be developed in the county:

Enhancing Clarion County's character and quality of life and quality of place are the main goals of the Greenways Plan. These specific objectives support these goals:

- Provide recreational opportunities for county residents;
- Promote economic growth via recreational opportunities;
- Encourage local municipalities to work in unison;
- Educate county residents on the aspects and benefits of Planning, including the benefits of implementation of the goals listed above.

These goals and objectives support functions that define proposed Greenways in Clarion County:

- 1) Recreation and Transportation Greenways are corridors in which trail development is recommended, or trails already exist. These greenways connect population centers and points of interest. They bring people in contact with the outdoors and engender an appreciation of the natural world. These trails also provide alternative, environmentally friendly transportation opportunity for commuters and visitors. In some cases, recreational and transportation trails overlay areas where conservation of natural assets is also an objective. To avoid conflicts, recreational and transportation uses should be planned to minimize impacts. For example, a biking trail along a river or stream corridor should be designed to preserve steep slopes, wetlands, and other sensitive areas.

#### **THE STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK**

Building the framework of the greenway network began with laying out the Natural Systems Greenways. These corridors follow the existing natural features within the county such as; forests, ridgelines, significant stream corridors, and wildlife habitats. Overlaying this Natural Systems backdrop, the plan adopts a "hubs and spokes" structure for its recreational and transportation greenways.

The "hubs," sometimes called nodes, are the significant destination points – trail towns and important recreation areas. The spokes or corridors will provide the links between them. In some areas, natural systems corridors are distinct from recreation and transportation greenways; in other cases, they coincide. Finally, because streams, mountain ridges, wildlife habitats, state parks, and some recreational and transportation trails do not terminate at the county's

boundaries, the greenways network proposes that recreation and transportation corridors continue outward and form connections to natural and recreational assets in neighboring counties and states.

### Recreation and Transportation Greenways - Trails

Recreation and transportation greenways were identified by first reviewing existing and potential trail corridors within Clarion County. Corridors examined included:

- Existing or planned land or water trails
- Abandoned rail lines
- Stream corridors
- Existing on-road bike routes
- Utility corridors / Rights-of-way

After determining potential trail routes, a Recreation and Transportation Greenway network was laid out for the county. After this trail network was mapped key destinations and points of interest along the proposed routes were analyzed.

Trail Towns were determined based on their presence of the following elements: a Main Street; food; lodging; and fuel. In order to meet the criteria, and be designated as a trail town, the town had to have at least three of the four elements. Optional elements used to determine Major Hubs and Hubs included the presence of: entertainment; recreation opportunities; historic attractions; and other attractions. The table below details the matrix used for determining Trail Towns, Major Hubs, and Hubs in Clarion County.

### Trail Towns

- 1) Cooksburg (Forest County)
- 2) Emlenton
- 3) Clarion
- 4) Foxburg
- 5) East Brady
- 6) New Bethlehem

### *Major Hub*

- 1) Cook Forest State Park

### *Hub*

- 1) Piney Dam
- 2) Brady Overlook

Proposed trails are planned primarily for active recreational and transportation uses such as running, walking, rollerblading, hiking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, and other forms of motorized and non-motorized recreation and transportation. Preference was given to off-road

trail opportunities where feasible. However, in making trail linkages through urban areas or across rural areas where no other options exist, trails on or adjacent to existing roadways were proposed. In instances where the proposed recreation & transportation and natural systems greenways coincide, trail design should strive to minimize impact from these uses.

Many of the trails described in the proposed greenway network are existing trails or are trails that are already planned. In other instances, new trail connections have been recommended. The inclusion of both existing and proposed trails supports the project study committee's goal of creating an interconnected web of recreational and transportation opportunities connecting various destination and population centers throughout Clarion County.

It is also important to note that *because the plan makes recommendations at a countywide level, exact locations and designs of trails are not specified. This plan is conceptual in nature. The proposed trail corridors will require further investigation through the completion of a feasibility studies and master plans before they can be advanced.* This section generally describes location and possible obstacles to recreation and transportation greenway development.

- Allegheny River Trail – This trail follows the former Oil City Secondary line which ran from Warren County to Armstrong County, Passing through Clarion and Venango Counties along the way. The Clarion County segment of this trail has been abandoned since 1984 and is approximately twenty miles long. This trail enters Clarion County from Emlenton, Venango County and follows along the Allegheny River passing through Foxburg and East Brady before exiting into Armstrong County at the mouth of Red Bank Creek.

This section of trail is proposed between Emlenton and Foxburg, active between Foxburg and Parkers Landing, and continues with a rough surface from that point to Brady Overlook.

The Allegheny River Trail effort is being further by the Allegheny Valley Land Trust in the south and the by the Allegheny Valley Trails Association in the north.

*Approximate Length:* 19.9 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Brady, Madison, Perry, Richland, and Toby Townships as well as East Brady and Foxburg Boroughs.

- Armstrong Trail - The Armstrong Trail is a recreational and transportation corridor opened to non-motorized traffic, and maintained by the Allegheny Valley Land Trust. Fifteen miles of the trail are currently paved with asphalt, with other portions paved with crushed limestone or remaining as earth surface. Other portions of the trail utilize existing paved streets. The Southern end of the improved trail section is begins at Rosston, Armstrong County. From that point, the trail stretches northward through Ford City, and Kittanning. Future plans are in progress to eventually extend the trail along the river northward to Foxburg connecting to the Allegheny River Trail, as well as southward into Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties, linking with other trail systems as part of a Pittsburgh-to-Erie trail. More detailed information is available at [www.armstrongtrail.org](http://www.armstrongtrail.org)

*Approximate Length:* 4.78 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Madison and Brady Townships as well as East Brady Borough

The Armstrong Trail effort is being furthered by the Allegheny Valley Land Trust (AVLT). Recently, the AVLT submitted 2 DCNR grant applications for the period ending April 25, 2008. These grant applications were submitted for the following work associated with the Armstrong Trail in Clarion County:

- The Armstrong Trail Phase 8 Brady Redbank project consists of the Engineering and design of 11 miles of a 10 foot wide crushed limestone smooth surface. The estimated cost of the engineering and design aspect of the project is estimated \$102,600. This DCNR Grant will be, if a successful application, a 50/50 match. Local cash and qualifying non-cash funds needed for the match would be \$51,300. AVLT has provided a resolution to dedicate the needed funds for the matching funds. ([www.armstrongtrail.org](http://www.armstrongtrail.org), July 2008)

The Armstrong Trail Phase 9 Brady Tunnel Project consists of the engineering and design for the restoration and opening of the 2,468 foot long Brady Tunnel. The estimated cost of the engineering and design aspect of the project is estimated \$230,200. This DCNR Grant will be, if a successful application, a 50/50 match. Local cash and qualifying non-cash funds needed for the match would be \$115,100. The matching funds for this project are pending on contributions and other sources that have not been secured. ([www.armstrongtrail.org](http://www.armstrongtrail.org), July 2008)

Foxburg south to the Clarion River is the next target area by AVLT as of the time of this report.

- Baker Trail - The Baker Trail is an existing hiking trail that covers 132 miles and extends from Freeport, Armstrong County to the Allegheny National Forest. This trail follows forest paths, old jeep trails and dirt roads through woods, gamelands, and farmlands and is marked by yellow blazes. 18 miles of the trail share a footpath with the North Country Scenic Trail.

The Baker Trail enters Clarion County through State Game Land No. 74 from Jefferson County. The trail route winds back into Jefferson County briefly before passing through State Game Land No. 283. It then heads north, crossing the Clarion River before connecting up with Cook Forest State Park. Within the state park the trail travels around Forest County passing through Clear Creek State Forest, then back into Clarion County one more time via State Game Land No. 24. Within the state game land it travels into Forest County then on to Allegheny National Forest. More information is available at [www.rachelcarsontrails.org](http://www.rachelcarsontrails.org).

*Approximate Length:* 6.6 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Millcreek and Farmington Townships

- Clarion Highlands Trail – This trail follows the former Clarion Secondary line from Polk in Venango County to the Clarion River. Approximately 16.5 miles of this trail is currently open within Clarion County from where it enters from Venango County at State Game Land No. 45 to where it ends at Piney Mine Trail head south of the Clarion River, and Piney Dam.

This trail passes through State Game Land No. 45 and 63, Shippenville and also connects to the Knox Kane Trail, the North Country Trail, Venango Frankstown Path, Knox Shippenville Trail, and Sandy Creek Trail in Venango County.

A portion of this trail from just east of State Game Land No. 45 extending one mile is in question due to the claim of a private property owner.

*Approximate Length:* 15.8 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Ashland, Elk, Beaver, and Piney Townships

- North Country Scenic Trail – The North Country Trail is a planned footpath that extends over 4,000 miles from New York to North Dakota, passing through six additional states along its route. Although many segments of the trail currently exist, completion of the entire route is still years away. The section of the trail through Clarion County begins at the southern end of the Allegheny National Forest and extends through Cook Forest State Park and State Game land No. 283. From here the trail route is in flux. Potential routes through Clarion County include a route through Clarion Borough and Callensburg crossing the Allegheny River at the Parker City. A temporary route connects up with the Clarion Highlands Trail passing through Shippenville and utilizing the existing Sandy Creek and Allegheny River Trails to connect to Parker City.

*Approximate Length:* 45 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Clarion, Farmington, Highland, Licking, Monroe, Perry, and Piney Townships as well as Callensburg and Clarion Borough

## Clarion County Greenways Plan

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- Knox to Kane Trail – The proposed Knox to Kane Trail runs from Knox Borough in Clarion County to Kane borough in McKean County. Approximately 26 miles of this trail is found within Clarion County from Knox to the Forest County line north of Cook Forest State Park. Along its route, this trail passes through Shippenville, Paint Mills, Arthurs, Lucinda, Snydersburg, Leeper, Crown and Vowickel.

*Approximate Length:* 28.2 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Beaver, Elk, Farmington, Knox, and Paint Townships as well as Shippenville and Knox Boroughs

- Knox to Shippenville Trail – This proposed trail segment is a proposed connection between Knox and Shippenville following the former Knox to Kane Railroad grade. This section of trail runs approximately 4.7 miles.

- Clarion to Jefferson Trail – This proposed eleven mile trail runs from Clarion Borough to the Jefferson County line near Sutton. At the Jefferson County line it links up with the Venango Frankstown Path, which intersects the Baker Trail shortly after entering Jefferson County. This proposed trail follows the Lake Erie, Franklin, and Clarion Railroad which ran from Summerville in Jefferson County to Clarion Borough.

*Approximate Length:* 11.4 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Limestone and Clarion Townships as well as Strattanville and Clarion Boroughs

- Venango Frankstown Path – This proposed trail runs nearly 15 miles from Piney Dam to the Jefferson County border near Sutton. This path follows the route of the former Mt. Laurel Railroad Clarion Secondary line.

*Approximate Length:* 15.1 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Limestone, Monroe, and Piney Townships

- Lawsonham to Sligo Trail – This proposed trail follows the former Sligo Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad running approximately 10 miles from Lawsonham, along Redbank Creek, to Sligo, along Licking Creek, in south central Clarion County.

*Approximate Length:* 10.2 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Madison and Toby Townships as well as Sligo Borough



## Clarion County Greenways Plan

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- Redbank Creek Trail – This proposed trail runs along the north bank of Redbank Creek following the route of the abandoned Mt. Laurel Railroad, also known as the Redbank Junction railroad. This former rail line extends from the mouth of Redbank Creek at the Allegheny River to Summerville, Jefferson County passing through Lawsonham, New Bethlehem, and Hawthorn along the way. The section between the mouth of Redbank Creek and Lawsonham is currently active as part of the Armstrong Trail.

*Approximate Length:* 27.9 miles

*Associated Municipalities:* Madison, Porter, and Redbank Townships as well as Hawthorn and New Bethlehem Borough

Additional notable trails with potential connection to the Clarion County Greenways network include:

- Sandy Creek Trail – This trail follows the path of an old railroad grade between Van and the Allegheny River, at Belmar, in Venango County. The Sandy Creek Trail connects to the Clarion Highlands Trail linking northern Clarion County to the Allegheny River Trail system.
- Chicora to East Brady Trail – An abandoned railroad line follows Route 68 westward from East Brady. This proposed trail could potentially connect East Brady with small population centers in Butler County. The status (abandoned vs. active) and condition (if abandoned) of the rail line in Butler County was unknown at the time of this report. Clarion, Armstrong and Butler Counties should strive to work together to extend the trail as far as possible, with the intent of connecting East Brady to Chicora. Armstrong County showed slight interest in this trail route several years ago, but at the time several landowners were opposed to the idea of a trail. This route still has potential for an important trail connection across County borders.
- Foxburg to Bruin Rail-Trail / Bike Lane – Proposed as part of the Armstrong County Greenways Plan, this trail connection provides connection to Foxburg (Clarion County) and to Bruin Borough (Butler County) via the City of Parker. Portions of the former rail line following this route between Foxburg and Parker have been obliterated, and a bike lane or off-road bike trail along Route 268 may be necessary to make the connection. From Parker, the trail could follow an abandoned rail alignment along the Allegheny River and Bear Creek stream valleys, and further west into Butler County, through State Game Lands #95, and on to Bruin Borough.

### Bike Lanes

PennDOT has established a series of bicycle routes that are marked and publicized. These routes are known as BicyclePA routes. BicyclePA routes were designed by experienced bicyclists to provide bicycling members of the traveling public who wish to traverse the state with a guide to some of the Commonwealth's highways and rail-trails. Few of these routes contain bike lanes or other facilities designed specifically for bicyclists. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation does not guarantee the safety of bicyclists as they access those roads and rail-trails. Every bicyclist is responsible for his or her personal safety and welfare and for remaining alert and mindful of conditions on the roads or trails. BicyclePA users are expected to be licensed drivers or persons at least sixteen years of age who have several years of road bicycling experience and who are comfortable in bicycling in a vehicular environment.

- 1) Bicycle Route V – This bicycle route runs from Ohio to the New Jersey paralleling Interstate 80 almost the entire distance. This route enters Clarion County along State Route 208 near Emlenton heading northeast. While traveling on Route 208, this route passes through Beaver Creek Nature Area and Knox before turning east on US Highway 32 in Shippenville. From Shippenville the route follows US 322 through Clarion Borough and Strattanville before entering Jefferson County near Corisca.

### Recreation and Transportation Greenways - Water Trails

Water trails are boat routes suitable for canoes, kayaks and small motorized watercraft. Like conventional trails, water trails are recreational corridors between specific locations. Water trails are comprised of access points, boat launches, day use sites, and, in some cases, overnight camping areas. Each water trail is unique, a reflection of Pennsylvania's diverse geology, ecology and communities.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has a process of evaluating and designating potential water trails. The Commission is the sole agency to designate official Pennsylvania Water Trails. However, individual water trails and trail corridors are conceived and maintained by a network of volunteers, property owners, civic groups and associations. Upon designation of a water trail, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission will provide local counties, municipalities, and community organizations with support and guidance in developing and marketing the designated water trail.

Designated water trails in Clarion County include the Clarion River and Middle Allegheny River Water Trails.

### *Clarion River Water Trail*

The Clarion River Water Trail, beginning in Jefferson County below the East Branch Dam, extends one hundred miles downstream to the confluence with the Allegheny River in Clarion County. This is one of two official water trails in the Northwest Pennsylvania Planning and Development Commission region. The second being the Middle Allegheny River Water Trail. The Clarion River Water Trail has been officially sanctioned by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission through their water trails program.

In their “Clarion River Water Trail Guide” the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission describes the Shuttle points and opportunities along the Clarion River Water Trail.

Printed copies of the guide, which also contain a map and boating safety information, are available from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.