

Natural and Historic Resources Protection

If there were an index for natural features, Penn Township would rank near the top of Townships in Snyder County and possibly the State of Pennsylvania. The Township has two major streams, an abundance of prime farmland, rolling hills, woodland, superb scenic views and vistas. Further, the Township is situated along the Susquehanna River and the scenic Isle of Que. And not least, there is no accumulation of junk, limited development along country roads, and few examples of sprawl.

In rural areas, the natural environment is often taken for granted. Long-time residents may no longer "see" the ever present streams and mountains. Residents also may be unaware of travelers in their midst who are actually seeking these natural features.

The Idea of Stewardship

Environmental stewardship is the legitimate business of local government. The Municipalities Planning Code has been amended several times to permit local governments to address the protection of natural and cultural resources.

The agriculture lands of Penn Township, together with streams and hills, contribute to the rural character of the community. Several special chapters focusing upon prime agriculture areas have been developed for the current planning effort.

Fostering agriculture and enhancing local streams are two of the more prominent issues addressed in this Comprehensive Plan. The Land Use and Agriculture Preservation chapters strongly point to the importance of local heritage and natural features that are prized by local residents and others.

The State's Greenway Initiative (see Land Use chapter) will be an effective way to highlight and protect many of the Township's natural and cultural resources. It is the one-mile corridor along the Susquehanna River that contains some of the best of Penn Township's heritage.

Resource Inventory and Analysis

The mapping of natural resources can help protect the community's resources. The following list identifies the principal resources and maps that have been prepared:

Streams and their Buffers: All streams and tributaries have been identified and mapped. They include Middle Creek, Penns Creek, and Tributaries #3 and #6. The Township should require that in all future development proposals the applicant shall map water resources with an identified buffer.

Wetlands and their Buffers: Lands that are seasonally or permanently wet comprise one of the basic resources in any

community. Soil survey maps published by the USDA and National Wetland Inventory Maps published by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service can be used to target wetland areas. (See Environmentally Sensitive Areas Map.)

Floodways and Floodplains: The maps published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) constitute the most accurate and readily available data on the location of floodways and floodplains in most communities. SEDACOG has just completed a floodplain study of Penn Township which includes mapping of the floodplain areas. See Flood Mitigation Plan.

Groundwater and Recharge Area: The U.S. Geological Survey identifies aquifer(s) underlying the Township and surrounding areas that contribute to the recharge of each aquifer. Further hydrologic studies to determine the recharge capabilities of Township aquifers is merited.

Woodlands: Hardwoods such as oak, ash, hickory and maple are predominate in the County. In areas where the forest has been cleared, the woodlands may be described as remnants. Larger woodland areas are located in low-lying areas with relatively damp soils or on the steeper slopes. They have been mapped. Vertical aerial photographs are the best sources for mapping of woodlands, hedgerows, or tree lines.

Moderate and Steep Slopes – Steep slopes are very vulnerable to erosion especially when vegetation is disturbed. Slopes between 15 percent and 20 percent require special site planning and slopes with gradients over 25 percent should be avoided for clearing, grading or

construction. (See the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Map.)

Prime Farmland: Soils rated as being “prime” or “of statewide significance” have been emphasized and mapped. The Soil Conservation Service provides technical maps. Ag preservation techniques have been given the highest priority throughout the Comprehensive Plan. (See Ag Security and Prime Farmland Map.)

Unique Natural Areas: Habitats of threatened or endangered wildlife and plant species should be mapped, whenever possible. Such information is available from the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI).

Fragmentation of Resources

To the detriment of wildlife and people, woodlands and sensitive environments are becoming fragmented. An interconnected network of open space or conservation land should be promoted and protected during the subdivision review process.

The proposed regional greenway is a positive example of linked open space.

Principles of Resource Protection

Prime Agriculture Lands

- Agriculture occupies two-thirds of Penn Township and its preservation is a major goal of the Comprehensive Plan.

- Preservation techniques and extensive recommendations are contained in the Agricultural chapters.
- During municipal review of subdivisions/land developments, a vegetated "buffer yard" should be required between Ag Areas and a proposed non-agricultural use.
- Penn Township's land use ordinances should be reviewed for their effectiveness in protecting agriculture land.

River and Streams

- Protection of water resources is critical to public health, safety and general welfare of the community.
- Protection of streams can be promoted with effective land use ordinances.
- During municipal reviews for subdivision and land development, vegetative buffers (or "riparian forests") should be required between development and the stream.
- An interconnected greenway along the River and local streams should be encouraged.

Mountains and Slopes

- Mountainsides are beautiful but fragile and must be protected from erosion.
- Sloping land accelerates stormwater runoff. Stormwater management

plans address this potential danger and should be adopted for Middle Creek and Penns Creek.

- Local land use ordinances can set design standards which limit removal of vegetation on slopes.
- Fragmentation of wildlife habitat is a growing concern. Maintaining interconnectedness of forested corridors should be encouraged.

Scenic Areas

- The natural character and beauty of the area is a prime community asset and can be protected to a large extent by municipal land use ordinances.
- Consideration can be given to scenic views during design and review of such projects as highways, community facilities and conversion of farmland.

Historic Structures

- Homes, churches and schools of State and National historic significance add to the Township's character and their preservation should be encouraged.
- Municipal ordinances can guide village or properly scaled development for compatibility with historic and cultural properties.

The following listing was developed as an inventory of historic structures in Penn Township.

Salem Area:

Rowe's Church (1897)
Rowe's Schoolhouse (1860's)
Boyer's Tavern (1813)
Brouse House (1770's)
Snyder House (1840's)

Others North of Route 522:

Ott House (1840's)
Trolley Station (1906)
Dogtown Schoolhouse (1850's)
Herman's Schoolhouse (1840's)
Boyer's Schoolhouse (1882)
Haines House (1850's)
Gemberling Farmhouse (1875)
Gemberling Accessory Building (Early)

Kantz Area:

Kantz Schoolhouse (1860's)
Naugle House (1880's)

Kantz House (1770's)
Trading Post (1760's)
Kantz Post Office (1790's)
Frederick Miller House (1870's)

Others South of Route 522

Kuster Farmhouse (1882)
Pine Brook Schoolhouse (1850's)
Shock Farmhouse (1840's)
Pawling Estate (1780)
Pawling Slave Quarters (early 1800's)
Messuage Plantation (1870's)
Row House (1840's)
Woodling's Mill Site:
 The Mill (1790)
 Kantz Home (1860's)
 Accessory Building
 Sawmiller's House (1870's)
Hughes Farmhouse (1830's)
Edward Kinney House (1770's)
Furry Farmhouse (1860's)
Furrey Stone Barn (1860's)