
Chapter 3

An Index of Organizations and Initiatives

Organizations and initiatives are really about people with purpose – people working together to provide services, to sustain their livelihoods, to protect and restore resources, and to educate and entertain others with their knowledge and skills. They work together as public agencies, private for-profit and non-profit organizations, and public-private partnerships.

The organizations in this index are ones that already are working in Mercer County or perhaps have an interest in working in the county in the future. They are identified here as active partners in protecting and managing open space and providing recreational opportunities for residents. Their projects or initiatives provide the foundation for this plan.

These people sustain, and in some cases are sustained by, the open space and recreation opportunities in Mercer County.

Local Government and Organizations

Local organizations often best reflect the interests of residents. From local government in the public sector to watershed organizations in the private sector, the following organizations local to Mercer County demonstrate an appreciation for the quality and productivity of the natural resources that yield economic and recreational benefits and promote continuity with their heritage.

Public Sector

Municipal governments in Mercer County have a tremendous impact on open space and recreation. As the primary authorities for land development, they have established the land use policies that outline where and how development can occur and where open space should remain for the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Thirty municipalities have established land use policies through municipal comprehensive plans or zoning ordinances.

The stronger of these two is the zoning ordinance, which specifies the uses that may take place on any given property. Yet zoning ordinances are only as strong as their enforcement. In communities where development is slow to moderate, community leaders may “accommodate” prospective developers with exceptions to their own land use regulations. For planning efforts to be effective – in other words, to guide the development of the communities toward the community it wants to become-- community leaders need to follow their plans and regulations carefully. Such careful enforcement may require professional services from a trained code enforcement officer and solicitor. The cost of these professional services may be a limiting factor to good planning and community development in small communities.

Municipal officials have also established recreation committees, boards, and commissions to oversee recreation programs and facilities. These have been established in five municipalities: Hermitage, Sharon, Farrell/Wheatland, Grove City and Greenville.

Furthermore, local officials can require land donation, or accept fees-in-lieu of land donation, as a component of the land development process. The authority to establish and enforce this requirement is given in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) and recognizes that people need outdoor space for recreation and leisure activities within their communities. Currently no communities have these provisions. The MPC requires an adopted recreation plan as a prerequisite for adopting a mandatory dedication of land ordinance at the county and municipal levels, respectively. This county plan is not expected to be substituted for an adopted municipal recreation plan, but may be used as a tool in seeking funding for such a plan and for consistency with the county’s intent for partnerships.

Finally, municipal officials are eligible for funding programs from state and federal agencies. These programs make money available to communities where the need for community or environmental improvements is demonstrated. Communities in Mercer County have received funding from Pennsylvania’s Growing Greener program, as well as the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), TEA-21 programs, and the DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program and Rivers Conservation Program.

Municipal officials are also working regionally to better serve residents with cost effective government services. Officials in six multi-municipal regions have adopted or are working together to develop a multi-municipal or regional comprehensive plan. These regional planning efforts not only consolidate the cost of planning efforts and services, but also enable partner municipalities to share the requirements for land use.

The **Mercer County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC)** is organized as a joint municipal planning commission in accord with Article XI of the Planning Code as existed prior to the amendments of Act 67 of 2000 and grand-fathered by said act. MCRPC originated in 1952 as the Shenango Valley Regional Planning Commission and served only the seven municipalities of Sharon, Farrell, Sharpsville, Wheatland, West Middlesex, Hickory (now Hermitage), and South Pymatuning. In 1972, the commission was restructured combining the Shenango Valley Regional Planning Commission with the Mercer County Planning and Zoning Commission to form the present-day Mercer County Regional Planning Commission.

Today voluntary membership includes 35 of the county's 48 municipalities plus the county itself. Membership is formalized through an inter-governmental agreement. Each local government member contributes funds to support the organization according to a population-based formula stated in the agreement. Each local government member appoints at least 2 representatives to the commission. The larger municipalities and the county have additional representatives. One rep must be a governing body member and one rep must be a local planning commissioner (preferred) or at-large member.

MCRPC's mission is "to prepare at the request of the governing body, a comprehensive plan and to conduct related studies and implementation activities." These activities include:

- Prepare long-range community plans, with emphasis on the county comprehensive plan and multi-municipal comprehensive plans, for member governments.
- Prepare plans and studies and provide staff assistance for special projects or problems (housing rehab, downtown revitalization, community and economic development projects, etc.).
- Prepare new or revised land use control ordinances (zoning, subdivision & land development, floodplain management, etc.) for member governments. Review and comment on all amendments to such ordinances.
- Administer Mercer County subdivision & land development ordinance - review and approve all subdivision plans in 36 municipalities covered by county ordinance. Review and comment on all subdivision plans in municipalities with own ordinance.
- Prepare plans for countywide solid waste disposal. Serve as staff for the Mercer County Solid Waste Authority for implementation and enforcement of the plan.
- Serve as county-designated recycling coordinator. Assist with mandatory and voluntary local recycling programs and generally promote an active countywide recycling effort.
- Prepare public highway and transit plans as federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Assist separate MPO coordinating committee in approval of long-range plan and periodic transportation improvement programs (TIP's) necessary for federal funding of highway & transit projects.
- Work with the county's lead economic development agency and local IDCs to plan for and facilitate development of reuse and new economic development projects.

- Administer Community Development Block Grant Program for Mercer County, Greenville Borough, Pine Township and other grantees when requested.
- Administer the Mercer County Affordable Housing Fund and Brownfields for Housing grants. Solicit, review, and recommend selection of eligible housing improvement projects.
- Prepare grant applications for a variety of community improvement projects.
- Prepare research and studies of local demographic/economic conditions to 1) support needs assessments and grant applications by municipalities and agencies; 2) provide needed information for marketing and prospective developers; and 3) fill public requests.
- Aid municipalities, agencies, local groups, etc. in implementing community plans.
- Assign addresses and update street/address database files for 911.

MCRPC was the lead agency for the development of the 1995/1996 Mercer County Comprehensive Plan: Planning for Livable Communities, the 2005 comprehensive plan update, and the lead or coordinating agency for the six multi-municipal comprehensive plans prepared in the county. These recent multi-municipal comprehensive plans have generated increased interest in cooperative efforts, including new recreation entities. Continued and expanded discussion is needed to determine the most effective and efficient recreation planning and management approach to serve all residents of the county.

In addition, several working committees provide reviews/recommendations to the full commission and carry out certain authorized tasks. MCRPC employs seven full-time professional staff as well as administrative staff and part-time professional for special projects. MCRPC's office is located in Hermitage, adjacent to the offices of the Mercer County Regional Council of Governments.

Mercer County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC)
2491 Highland Road,
Hermitage, PA, 16148
Phone 724-981-2412
Fax 724-981-7677
Website www.mcrpc.com.

The **Mercer County Regional Council of Government (MCRCOG)** coordinates transit, police booking, animal control, pesticide control, vehicle repair and maintenance, information technology, and Uniform Construction Code (UCC) enforcement services and equipment sharing for 24 of the 48 municipalities in Mercer County, including 8 rural municipalities. The decision-making body of MCRCOG comprises elected officials from the member municipalities and the Board of Commissioners.

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Clark | 10. Hempfield | 19. Shenango |
| 2. Coolspring | 11. Hermitage | 20. South Pymatuning |
| 3. Delaware* | 12. Jackson Center* | 21. West Middlesex |
| 4. Fairview | 13. Jefferson | 22. West Salem* |
| 5. Farrell | 14. Lackawannock* | 23. Wheatland |
| 6. Findley | 15. Mercer | 24. Wilmington* |
| 7. Fredonia* | 16. Pymatuning* | 25. County of Mercer |
| 8. Greene* | 17. Sharon | |
| 9. Greenville | 18. Sharpsville | |

MCRCOG employs a 12-person professional staff to administer its programs and services. It also coordinates recreation services and provides grant writing and administration, which has fostered substantial support for local recreation planning and implementation through investment in urban recreation facilities in the county. Like MCRPC, MCRCOG is a membership-driven organization, although some services are available to non-member municipalities on a contract basis as staff time permits.

In addition to local government, the **Mercer County school districts** are active local partners, as owners of recreation facilities in rural areas, educators of young residents, as well as land managers of their facilities.

The **Greenville Area Leisure Service Association (GALSA)** is the only traditional regional recreation organization in Mercer County. GALSA¹ is an agency of Greenville Borough that provides recreation programming for Greenville Borough, surrounding municipalities, and to manage the parks in the area. GALSA services five school districts: Greenville Area, Commodore Perry, Reynolds, Lakeview, and Jamestown, as well as St. Michaels.

GALSA is funded through contributions made by the three primary sources, Greenville Borough, Greenville Area School District, and the United Way, as well as revenues generated from user fees, fundraisers, and contributions from outside sources.

GALSA staff consists of three office people, an executive director, a program director, and an office manager, along with a full-time maintenance worker. During the summer months, between 70 and 80 part-time maintenance workers are employed to assist with park maintenance.

GALSA is overseen by a Board, which is comprised of two Borough Council members, six community residents, and the borough manager.

Affiliated organizations include the Greenville Area Youth Soccer Association, the Greenville Memorial Swimming Pool, the Greenville Area Ladies Softball, the Greenville Area Community Theatre, the Canal Museum, the Greenville Area Church Co-ed Softball, and Kid's Korner Day Care. Kid's Korner Day Care is a program sponsored by GALSA and is open to children up to 12 years. Children of the ages 0-5 are cared for at the First Baptist Church while children between 6-12 years are cared for at the Rec Center.

Greenville Area Leisure Service Association
PO Box 244
45 Alan Avenue
Greenville PA 16125
724-588-4810
galsa@svol.net

¹ Greenville Borough / Hempfield Township Joint Comprehensive Plan, 2004.

County Agencies

Officials, employees, and advocates in county level agencies and organizations also have a strong sense of local values and priorities. They are often residents of the county or region, who share directly in the benefits of their conservation and recreation work.

The 10-member **Mercer County Agricultural Development Council**² is appointed by the Mercer County Commissioners and works as an advocate for Mercer County Agriculture. The Council works to insure that agriculture is visible and viable in the county. Activities that enhance and acknowledge the agriculture industry and its contributions to social, economic, and environmental well-being of the area are a priority.

PO Box 530, Mercer, PA 16137
(724) 662-3141 phone
(724) 662-1933 fax
MercerExt@psu.edu
<http://mercer.extension.psu.edu>

The **Mercer County Agricultural Land Preservation Board**³ administers the Mercer County Agriculture Preservation Program to protect viable agricultural lands by acquiring agricultural conservation easements, which prevent the development or improvement of the land for any purpose other than agricultural production.

Further, it is the purpose of this program to:

1. Encourage landowners to make a long-term commitment to agriculture by offering them financial incentive and security of land use.
2. Protect normal farming operations in agricultural security areas from incompatible non-farmland uses that may render farming impracticable.
3. Protect farming operations from complaints of public nuisance against normal farming operations.
4. Assure conservation of viable agricultural lands in order to protect the agricultural economy of this Commonwealth.
5. Provide compensation to landowners in exchange for their relinquishment of the right to develop their private property.
6. Maximize agricultural easement purchase funds and protect the investment of taxpayers in agricultural conservation easement.
7. Preserve Mercer County agricultural productivity by buying easements on land most logically to remain as farmland.

The Mercer County Agricultural Land Preservation Board has developed fair, equitable, objective, non-discriminatory procedures for determining easement purchase priorities and has adopted written guidelines for purchasing easement. This organization is governed by a seven member Board of Directors.

² Mercer County Agricultural Resource Directory, 2003.

³ Ibid.

PO Box 530, Mercer, PA 16137
(724) 662-3141 phone
(724) 662-1933 fax
MercerExt@psu.edu or dmulju@msn.com

The **Mercer County Conservation District**⁴ strives to promote the wise use of natural resources. The conservation district offers the following services to the public:

- Process National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for projects involving earthmoving activities of 5 acres or more.
- Review of erosion and sediment pollution control plans.
- Process general permits on behalf of the PA DEP for activities encroaching on streams and wetlands.
- Environmental education activities including speakers, field days, and demonstrations.
- Nutrient Management planning and plan reviews.
- Dirt and Gravel Roads Program administration.
- Agriculture BMP funding in the Shenango River watershed.
- Munnell Run Farm programs and tours
- West Nile Virus Program administration

747 Greenville Road, Mercer PA 16137
(724) 662-2242 phone
(724) 662-3905 fax
mercercdd@Pathway.net

The **Mercer-Lawrence County Farm Service Agency**⁵ works to stabilize farm income, help farmers conserve land and water resources, provide credit to new or disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and helps farm operations recover from the effects of disaster.

559 Greenville Road, Suite C, Mercer PA 16137
(724) 662-2890 or (724) 652-3321 phone
(724) 662-0278 or (724) 652-3586 fax
www.fsa.usda.gov

The **Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau**⁶ is located in Sharon. The Bureau provides information on places to stay, things to do, community characteristics, and travel information for County visitors via paper and online publishing. The Bureaus' website also contains links to Pennsylvania search engines targeted toward travelers, allowing potential County explorers to locate other destinations across the state. The Bureau has published a media kit, entitled "Everyone needs an escape plan..." which highlights the seasonal activities, unique features, and uncommon characteristics of Mercer County.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Mercer County Convention and Visitors Bureau website, www.mercercountypa.org.

Local Private Sector Organizations

Private partners can assist in open space and recreation initiatives through several means. They may be willing to help promote the initiatives by distributing information to their members through newsletters, meetings, and other membership services. They may also take interest in sponsoring a special event, activity, or project. Private partners can be sources of technical assistance, including speakers who can share their knowledge and experience. And finally, these partners may be sources of local match monies for public grants or independent grant applicants for segmented portions of large projects.

The **Mercer County Trails Association, Inc.**⁷ is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization formed by the Shenango Valley Foundation. The Trails Association was formed with the primary purpose of developing and maintaining multipurpose trails in Mercer County, Pennsylvania, for public use, exclusively for charitable purposes. Its primary activities focus on

- Promoting health and fitness by providing a safe and pleasant setting for many recreational activities including biking, jogging, walking, cross-country skiing, in-line skating, and wheelchair mobility.
- Encouraging tourism and contributing to the economic vitality of our communities.
- Helping protect our environment and natural resources by making transportation links in our area that are not dependent on the automobile.

The Trails Association's current projects include the Trout Island Trail Project and the Shenango River Trail Project.

The Trout Island Trail will run from Sharpsville to Orangeville along the abandoned Pennsylvania Railroad and Erie Railroad lines. It will be an 8' wide blacktop surface and will cross two railroad trestles over the Shenango Reservoir. The project will be completed in phases as funding becomes available. Long-term extension of the trail could link to Transfer and Greenville along the same former railroad right-of-way.

The Shenango River Trail will run from Greenville on the west side of the Shenango River and follow the abandoned Erie and Pittsburgh Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad north to Jamestown and the Pymatuning State Park area. Like the Trout Island Trail, the Shenango River Trail will have an 8' wide paved surface. Eventually the trail may extend southward on the former railroad grade to connect with the Trout Island Trail, thus linking two of Mercer County's major recreation areas - Pymatuning and Shenango Lakes.

⁷ <http://www.mctrails.freesevers.com/>

AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

The **Mercer County Agricultural Society**⁸ and the **Mercer County Grange Fair**⁹ promote agriculture and family fun among the public of all ages. Both are member-based and member-supported organizations.

The **Mercer County Agricultural Society** organizes the Great Stoneboro Fair. The Society is led by 9 directors, and aided by a secretary and a treasurer.

P.O. Box 215, Stoneboro, PA 16153

(724) 376-2852

www.pafairs.org/stoneborofair

The Mercer County Grange Fair

1540 South Center Street Extension, Grove City, PA 16127

(724) 748-4007 phone

The **Pennsylvania Farm Bureau** is a grassroots farm organization financed by members to raise awareness, analyze and solve problems. Members meet at the county level (the **Mercer County Farm Bureau**¹⁰) to discuss and address issues of concern.

Pennsylvania Farmers Union, and its local **Mercer County Farmers Union**,¹¹ is part of the National Farmers Union, Denver, Colorado. This farm organization is in partnership with rural America and is dedicated to securing higher commodity prices and better living for rural citizens throughout the American heartland and continues to advance educational, cooperative, and legislative programs. The Pennsylvania Farmers Union is dedicated to the preservation of the strength of the family farm and the productivity which has made the United States the greatest nation in the world.

752 Forrester Road

Mercer PA 16137

(724) 475-2357

In addition, there are several growers associations in Mercer County and western Pennsylvania (also listed in the Mercer County Agricultural Resource Directory, 2003) that may provide a social network of farmers and growers interested in farmland and open space conservation efforts:

- The Mercer County Cooperative Sheep and Wool Growers
- Mercer County Holstein Club
- Mercer-Northwest Guernsey Breeders' Association
- Northwest Pennsylvania Cattlemen's Association
- Western Pennsylvania Jersey Breeders Association.

⁸ Mercer County Agricultural Resource Directory, 2003.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The **Conneaut Lake / French Creek Valley Conservancy**¹² is a non-profit environmental organization with a mission “to promote the environmental integrity of the French Creek watershed and its environs, and to advocate the protection of natural resources in the watershed to the aesthetic, ecological, recreational and economic benefit of the citizens of the area.” Based in Meadville, the conservancy operates as an advocacy group, a watershed association and a land trust throughout the French Creek watershed, primarily in Crawford, Erie, and Venango Counties, although future projects and events are anticipated for Mercer County. Founded to question the use of chemical herbicides for controlling the weed growth in Conneaut Lake, the organization has expanded its charter to encompass the entire French Creek Watershed, addressing issues such as water quality, preservation of land, habitat, scenic beauty, and quality of life. The conservancy owns three properties and one conservation easement. The conservancy is funded by memberships

PO Box 434
Meadville, PA 16335
Phone: (814) 337-4321
Website: <http://frenchcreekconservancy.allegheny.edu/>

Established in 1995, the **French Creek Project**¹³ is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, the Western PA Conservancy, Allegheny College, and The Nature Conservancy. The purpose of the Project is to raise public awareness about French Creek, the Commonwealth’s most biologically diverse stream. The French Creek Project employs 6 professional staff and supports additional interns and work study students.

www.FrenchCreek.allegheny.edu
FrenchCrik@aol.com
1-888-920-8699 phone

Munnell Run Farm Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that depends on contributions to support the educational programs, maintenance, and infrastructure improvements at Munnell Run Farm. Munnell Run Farm is a 163-acre working farm owned by the County of Mercer and managed by the Munnell Run Farm Foundation, Inc. with the support of the Mercer County Conservation District. Featuring outdoor, hands-on activities designed to meet PA Chapter 4 Academic Standards, Munnell Run Farm Foundation, Inc. received the Governor’s Award for Environmental Excellence in Education and Outreach in 2003. MRF depends on grants and donations for its educational programs, maintenance, and infrastructure improvements.

747 Greenville Road
Mercer, PA 16137
(724) 662- 2242 phone

¹² **Conneaut Lake/French Creek Valley Conservancy** website, <http://frenchcreekconservancy.allegheny.edu/index.html>.

¹³ The French Creek Project website, <http://frenchcreek.allegheny.edu/>.

(724) 662-3905 fax

mercercdd@verizon.net email

www.munnellrunfarm.org

The **Sandy Creek Conservancy**¹⁴ is a non-profit organization directed by local people and dedicated to environmental concerns, including educational efforts, productive land uses, careful recreation planning and sound land management practices. The Sandy Creek Conservancy was established in 1959 to help solve the problems of two small towns, namely, Sandy Lake and Stoneboro, in northeastern Mercer County. Periodic flooding of Sandy Creek was ended in 1971 when the flood gates closed creating Lake Wilhelm. The Conservancy

- Awards scholarships for McKeever's Outstanding Student Teachers of the Year
- Provides scholarships for elementary students who participate in summer programs at the McKeever Center
- Monitors activities within the Sandy Creek Watershed

P.O. Box 147

Sandy Lake, PA 16145

(724)458-7003 phone

sean@mckeeper.org email

The **Shenango Conservancy** is non-profit land trust organization incorporated in 1986. Its goals include historic preservation, conservation, and tourism development in the watershed of the Shenango River. In 1990, the Conservancy completed the restoration of the historic Kidd's Mill Covered Bridge, a major two-year undertaking by volunteers and contractors. Future plans for the covered bridge include development of a park with picnic areas, a canoe launch, landscaping, and improved parking. Other projects include maintenance of the Shenango Trail, public education of history and nature, preservation of the Beaver to Erie Canal and other historic sites.

747 Greenville Rd

Mercer, PA 16137

(724) 662-2242

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

The **Mercer County Historical Society** (MCHS) is a private, nonprofit group (501c3) established in 1947. MCHS headquarters are located at the Anderson/Magoffin Complex, 119 South Pitt Street, Mercer, PA. The organization is led by a 21-member board of directors, 5 officers, and 7 staff persons; the executive director is a full time employee. About three thousand guests visit MCHS sites annually, with just over one third being children on school field trips. MCHS sites and services are free and open to the public; donations are accepted and encouraged. MCHS has knowledgeable, trained tour guides at each of its sites.

¹⁴ McKeever Environmental Learning Center website, <http://www.mckeeper.org/scc.html>.

In 1998, MCHS fostered the development of **the Mercer County Historical Societies Coalition (MCHSC)**. This group includes thirteen historic and preservation organizations in the County.

The **Mercer County Genealogical Society** is a non-profit organization staffed by volunteers with a mission to promote the research of family history and to preserve historical data. The Society is located in the Shenango Valley Community Library, 11 North Sharpville Avenue, Sharon. The research holdings of the society include records from county census, churches, funeral homes, and the county home. The society also maintains a collection of cemetery books, family histories, city directories, and courthouse certificates (birth, marriage, and death).

The Greenville Area Historical Society - Greenville, PA is the oldest city in Mercer County. Founded in 1798 as West Greenville, it became a borough in 1865 and changed its name to Greenville. The Greenville Area Historical Society was once housed on the campus of Thiel College, but as of spring 2003, it is located at the Waugh House at 25 West Main Street. The Society's museum boasts rooms dedicated to different eras, such as the Civil War, WWI, and WWII, as well as to various themes, such as industry, health and medicine, and theater. The Society presents a yearly lecture series and sponsors other activities such as ethnic heritage festivals, walking tours and an oral history program focusing on longtime area residents. The Society is led by a 15-member board of directors and professional staff.

23 West Main Street
Greenville, PA 16125
724-588-9432
www.greenvillehistoricalsociety.org

The **Greenville Museum Alliance** was formed in December 2002 and legalized in 2003 with a mission for promoting, preserving and presenting Greenville's storied history. The GMA serves as an umbrella organization for the Canal Museum, the Greenville Railroad Park, and the Greenville historic society, to coordinate fundraiser, special events, and grant proposals.

The Stewart House is the home of the **Hermitage Historical Society**, located at 5465 E. State Street. The Society currently focuses its efforts on topical research, such as the city's oldest homes and the families who built them, Veterans from the Revolutionary War to the present, the City's 25 Cemeteries, canal history, early settlers, and photo-history.

5465 East State Street
Hermitage, PA 16148
724-346-0419

In 1998, the Grove City area celebrated the 200th anniversary of its founding. During that year, the rich history of the Grove City area was rediscovered through celebrations, publications, and an original play. Many citizens expressed an interest in preserving this local history. Some of those citizens suggested forming a **Grove City Historical Society**¹⁵ in order to preserve the local history. The historical society is financially supported by memberships. The society has been

¹⁵ Grove City Historical Society website, <http://www.grovecityhistoricalsociety.org/>.

involved in the dedication of historical markers on Broad Street and in the preservation of the Hand Wrought Aluminum Shop of Arthur Armour, a local craftsman. In addition, the society's website hosts an on-line walking tour of historic homes in the Grove City area.

111 College Ave.
P.O. Box 764
Grove City, PA 16127
724-458-1798
gcahs@wononline.net
<http://www.grovecityhistoricalsociety.org/>

The **Stoneboro Community & Historical Society** office is located in the Caboose on Railroad Street at Stoneboro Station Park.

Lake St.
Stoneboro, PA 16153
412-376-4190

The **Jamestown Historical Society** was founded in 1974 with a mission to preserve the history of Jamestown and surrounding townships. Its home, the Gibson House, contains displays and local artifacts that have been authenticated by research and local tradition.

The **Jamestown Future Foundation** is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing and expanding the cultural and educational life of a rural community and surrounding areas.

The **Sharpsville Area Historical Society** serves the Sharpsville, Clark, and South Pymatuning areas – the northern part of the Greater Shenango Valley.

Chloe Pierce Community Chapel
131 North Mercer Avenue
Sharpsville, PA 16150
Hours of Operation: Call for appointment

The **Wheatland Historical Society** documents and celebrates local history through displays located in the Borough Hall.

RECREATION ORGANIZATIONS

The **Shenango Outing Club** is non-profit recreation club based in Greenville. The outing club organizes and leads various recreational activities throughout Mercer County and the northwest Pennsylvania region. The club maintains the Shenango Trail.

c/o Riverside Park Nature Center
PO Box 244
Greenville, PA 16125

Western Pennsylvania Region

ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

The **Western Pennsylvania Conservancy** protects, conserves and restores land and water for the diversity of the region's plants, animals and their ecosystems. Through science-based strategies, collaboration, leadership and recognition of the relationship between humankind and nature, WPC achieves tangible conservation outcomes for present and future generations. The conservancy is guided by a 25-member Board of Directors, 11 officers and senior professional staff. WPC provides for the long-term stewardship of natural and historic resources by conserving and preserving forests and woodlands, watersheds and waterways, wildlife habitat, and agricultural lands. Through its land protection programs, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy conserves land of ecological, scenic, and recreational significance. Most of the 216,000 acres of WPC-protected land is now publicly owned and makes up some of the state's premier parks, forests, gamelands, and natural areas.

In addition to direct acquisition of land for publicly beneficial projects, WPC works with private landowners to purchase and administer conservation easements and to develop plans and construct projects that minimize impacts to the land from farm and forestry activities while at the same time providing viable economic return.

WPC's Natural Heritage Program science initiatives include a variety of studies, including County Natural Heritage Inventories, assessments of flora and fauna in state and national parks, at Allegheny National Forest, studies of plants and animals in natural lakes and streams, and more. Projects also include the description of landscapes and habitats, and investigations into the ecology of rare species. These initiatives include:

- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) - formerly named PNDI (Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory), this program records scientific data about occurrences of the Commonwealth's biological resources. This information is used as part of planning and permitting processes.
- Glacial Lakes Flora Project - an ongoing study of the plant life inhabiting the eight natural, glacial lakes in Northwestern Pennsylvania. This intensive project is just one way the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy makes use of volunteers.
- Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake Study - this native Pennsylvanian snake is a candidate species for federal classification. WPC is doing some of the most thorough research to date on this relatively timid reptile.
- Aquatic Classification Project - WPC is working with The Nature Conservancy to develop a classification of all of the fish, insect, and mussel communities in Pennsylvania's streams and rivers. This classification will provide us with a more holistic understanding of aquatic life in the state.
- County Natural Heritage Inventories - WPC is involved in a statewide effort to conduct inventories of all of the species of special concern in each county of the Commonwealth.

The **Watershed Assistance Center of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy** serves watershed organizations statewide. The twelve-member staff of WAC provides technical

assistance in the areas of science, legal issues, education and outreach, and project identification and prioritization, as well as administrative support. WAC is located in Blairsville, PA.

RECREATION ORGANIZATIONS

Venture Outdoors¹⁶ is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to making the outdoor recreation community a vibrant centerpiece of Western Pennsylvania and nearby sections of West Virginia and Ohio. The organization works to increase awareness of, participation in and appreciation for many regional outdoor amenities. Venture Outdoors can be reached at 412-255-0564 or info@ventureoutdoors.org.

The **Western Pennsylvania Wheelmen (WPW)**,¹⁷ founded in 1969, is one of the largest bicycle clubs in Pennsylvania. WPW promotes the general interests of bicyclists, to educate bicyclists in safe riding methods in adherence to the State Vehicle Code, to defend the rights of bicyclists, and to advocate the use of bicycles for pleasure, health, and transportation. The WPW is affiliated with the League of American Bicyclists (LAB, previously known as League of American Wheelmen (LAW), the Bicycle Federation of Pennsylvania (Bike FED-PA), the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) and the Pittsburgh Area Cycling Coalition (PACC). WPW members financed half of the abandoned railroad assessment study by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy that gave birth to the local Rail-Trail movement. WPW support has helped form the organizations to promote and develop the following trails: the Montour Trail, Yough River Trail, Three Rivers Heritage Trail, Butler-Freeport Trail, Harmony Trail, Allegheny Highlands Trail, Armstrong County Trail, Roaring Run Trail, and the National Pike Trail. WPW is based in Pittsburgh and can be reached at 412-422-2234.

State Agencies and Organizations

The following agencies are listed to acknowledge their purpose and priorities for managing public lands and supporting sound community development throughout Pennsylvania's local communities. To the extent that these agencies offer technical and financial assistance to communities, the state agencies' priorities are portals to technical and financial assistance programs. When local project sponsors can demonstrate that their projects would implement or advance these priorities, funding is more likely to be awarded.

Public Sector

The **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** is charged with maintaining and preserving the 116 state parks; managing the 2.1 million acres of state forest land; providing information on the state's ecological and geologic resources; and establishing community conservation partnerships with grants and technical assistance to

¹⁶ Venture Outdoors website, <http://www.wpfi.org/index.asp>.

¹⁷ WPW website, <http://www.wpwbikeclub.org>.

benefit rivers, trails, greenways, local parks and recreation, regional heritage parks, open space and natural areas.¹⁸

DCNR recognizes that its conservation mission extends well beyond the boundaries of public lands and seeks the assistance of advocates in the public and private sectors to foster stewardship among local communities, sister state agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, and private landowners. As the steward agency of Pennsylvania forests, **DCNR's Bureau of Forestry** manages over 2 million acres of state forest land and provides technical assistance to private and other forest land owners. The Bureau seeks to create a cultural and economic environment that fosters and supports a stewardship ethic within the Commonwealth. The Bureau provides advice, guidance and technical assistance concerning forest resources management for forest products, wildlife habitat, insect and diseases of forest trees, control of invasive and competing species, wetland enhancement and timber sales. The Bureau also offers specialized programs on forest management.

DCNR also acknowledges that recreation planning is an increasingly complex responsibility for local communities, as demands for recreation services increase, as communities age, and as developers and environmentalists debate land values and purposes. In the midst of these challenges, "recreation offers real hope in the face of society's real problems — that it can have a substantial role in improving health and fitness, reducing substance abuse, stimulating tourism and economic growth and, in general, making life better for Pennsylvania citizens."¹⁹ **DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation** has researched and published white papers on several major issues to help communities understand and deal with these issues. These papers have become DCNR's action plan and can be accessed at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us>.

To address these challenges, DCNR has focused its support for local parks and recreation on creating healthy and livable communities that include open space, linkage of public space, and recreation facilities.

The **Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** is the state agency largely responsible for administering Pennsylvania's environmental laws and regulations. Its responsibilities include reducing air pollution; making sure our drinking water is safe; protecting water quality in our rivers and streams; making sure waste is handled properly; managing the Commonwealth's recycling programs; and helping citizens prevent pollution and comply with the Commonwealth's environmental regulations. DEP's priority open space initiative is Growing Greener, described below under "Joint Initiatives."

Since 1999, the **Governor's Center for Local Government Services**, within the Department of Community and Economic Development's²⁰ has served as the principal state entity responsible for land use assistance and monitoring. The center encourages communities to plan wisely for future growth and development while preserving and protecting the environment and natural resources. The Governor's Center promotes the preservation of open space and the provision of recreational opportunities as important components of sound community planning, as

¹⁸ Pennsylvania's Recreation Plan 2004-2008, April 2004.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

established by the provisions of the Municipalities Planning Code and the cooperative technical and financial assistance of DCNR.

The Center offers educational programs through the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs and the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors to local government officials and staff, as well as technical assistance with land use management techniques. The Shared Municipal Services program and Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance Program are the center's financial assistance services that promote cooperative service agreements and planning, respectively.

The Center's priorities include its partnerships with sister state agencies to fund cooperative initiatives to support sound land use planning and promote recreation, greenway, and open space planning to local governments. These cooperative initiatives include:

- Funding to the Natural Lands Trust to promote the integration of conservation by design concepts into local plans and regulations.
- Funding to the Conservation Fund to develop a Pennsylvania-based "Better Models for Development" book.
- Funding to assist counties in completing Natural Resources Inventories.

Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation (PennDOT) is responsible for meeting the transportation needs of the Commonwealth. In addition to highways, PennDOT also provides transportation programs and funding for bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as transit riders. With this multi-modal responsibility, PennDOT was one of the sponsor agencies for Pennsylvania's greenway initiative.

PennDOT's current priorities include its Home Town Streets/Safe Routes to School program, which reimburses communities for sidewalk and trail improvements, and context sensitive solutions, which promote the design of transportation facilities that meet travel needs and support other community development goals, such as visual character and pedestrian mobility.

The **Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC)** is the sole agency responsible for the protection, propagation, and distribution of game fish, fish bait, bait fish, amphibians, reptiles, and aquatic organisms. The Commission is also responsible for managing recreational boating in the Commonwealth.²¹ While other agencies focus on land-based linkages and recreational experiences, PFBC focuses on the water-based environment.

More specifically, PFBC enforces the Title 30 Fish and Boat Law, which addresses disturbances and pollution of waterways, and cooperation between farmers, fishermen, and boater for land access to waters.

PFBC launched the water trail program in response to increased demand for information on fishing and boating opportunities and the need for associated boating safety information to boaters. The water trail program is a co-sponsored program, described below under "Joint Initiatives."

²¹ Pennsylvania's Recreation Plan 2004-2008, 2004.

In July 2005, the PFBC initiated the Boating Facilities Grant Program to fund local projects to develop, improve, or rehabilitate public recreational boat launches and encouraged eligible public entities to apply for a second round of funding through the Boating Facilities Grant Program.

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A sister agency to the PFBC, the **PA Game Commission (PGC)** is responsible for the protection, propagation, and distribution of game birds and mammals. The PGC has recently adopted a new management approach. Wildlife management units (WMUs) are now the geographic basis for management techniques and decisions by the Game Commission. Mercer County lies within WMU 1A. The Game Commission monitors the habitat and harvest of bear, antlered and antlerless deer, and various small game in Mercer County and across the state. Statistics for recent bear and deer harvest can be found in Chapter 2.

The northwest regional office of the Game Commission serves Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, and Warren Counties, and is located in Franklin, PA.

The **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's** mission is to encourage and promote agriculture and related industries throughout the Commonwealth. Its mission is accomplished through three major program areas: consumer protection, market development and promotion and farmland preservation. The Region 1 Office serves Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren Counties and is located in Meadville. The office is home to six professional staff members, representing four of the department's bureaus:

- Bureau of Food Safety
- Bureau of Animal Health and Diagnostic Services
- Bureau of Plant Industry
- Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards (Weights & Measures Division)

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Joint Initiatives

The state agencies have partnered together on several statewide initiatives, including some led by the private sector.

The **Coldwater Heritage Partnership (CHP)**, based in Bellefonte, Centre County, is a collaborative effort between the PFBC, DCNR, Western Pennsylvania Watershed Protection Program and Pennsylvania Trout. The Coldwater Heritage Partnership provides coordination, technical assistance, and funding support specifically for the evaluation, conservation and

protection of Pennsylvania's coldwater streams and watersheds. Organization start-up, planning studies, restoration/mitigation, and educational projects are eligible for Partnership funding.

Growing Greener ties economic and community development together with environmental initiatives. Established by Governor Ridge and continued by Governor Rendell, the Growing Greener program funds projects that return contaminated industrial sites and other polluted sites to productive use; protects farmland and open space from development; cleans up polluted streams and reclaims abandoned mines; and improves state and community parks and green infrastructure for fish and wildlife. Growing Greener is also the source of state farmland preservation funds allocated to counties for agricultural conservation easements.

Growing Greener: Conservation By Design™ is a state-wide program that builds conservation principles into the development process. Based on the approach developed by Randell Arendt at the Natural Lands Trust, this program targets the community development designers (developers) and decision-makers (municipal officials). Municipal officials can amend the process into their development regulations and developers can apply the approach to their design process.

The program's four components...

1. Enable participants to envision the built-out condition of their communities under current regulations and assess the potential for private conservation efforts to conserve open space and valued resources.
2. Encourage communities to identify preferred open space lands geographically in their comprehensive plans.
3. Promote reasonable zoning regulations that provide options rather than prescriptions for development.
4. Provide municipal officials and developers with a subdivision process that conserves open space and allows economic growth.

The program is recognized for its non-confrontational approach that protects a portion of each traditionally defined parcel, "builds" open space into new development, and requires little to no land acquisition or easement costs.

Growing Greener is a collaborative program of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR); the Governor's Center for Local Government Services and Natural Lands Trust, with additional direction provided by state and local agencies including the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension, and the private sector.

The **Important Bird Area (IBA)** program aims to help combat threats to bird populations and the habitats we often share with them, by conserving the most essential and vulnerable areas with voluntary management efforts. Audubon Pennsylvania, a private, non-profit organization, is the lead organizations for this program. Agency grants and private donations are used to develop an IBA database, write conservation plans, implement conservation actions, develop volunteer training for monitoring programs, and engage local communities in conservation activities. Seventy-eight IBA sites have been designated in Pennsylvania; two of these are in

Mercer County. The program is open to additional site nominations. Details about the nomination process can be found at www.audubon.org/chapter/pa/pa/iba/facts_info_site_book.html.

The **Important Mammal Areas Project (IMAP)** aims to ensure the future of Pennsylvania's wild mammals, both game and non-game species, through voluntary habitat management. IMAP is being carried out by the IMAP Partnership – a broad based alliance of sportsmen, conservation organizations, wildlife professionals, and scientists. The PA Game Commission passes wildlife funding to the alliance to maintain IMAP.

DCNR supports and advances this project by awarding additional rating points to IMAP-designated sites when scoring grant applications, thus increasing the likelihood of a grant award.

LandSavers is a partnership of the Heritage Conservancy, DEP, GreenWorks, and DCNR. This public-private partnership advocates the benefits of open space, the costs of development and land preservation, and funding options for open space programs, among other related topics. LandSavers can be access online at <http://www.greentreks.org/landsavers/index.htm>.

Pennsylvania Water Trails Program is a joint initiative of DCNR, the Fish and Boat Commission, and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) to encourage tourism and economic revenues to local communities, to provide water-based recreation, and to foster environmental stewardship among paddlers.²² The program provides guidelines to communities and organizations that want to develop a designated water trail, technical assistance in the development process, and marketing of designated water trails through Paddle Pennsylvania, a print and online publication.

Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA) is composed of more than 500 public, private, academic, professional, and volunteer groups that are working to promote policies and environments that support healthy eating and activity. This organization began operating in 2003 as a facilitator for the implementation of Pennsylvania's Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan to Prevent Obesity and Related Chronic Diseases. Its mission is to build state-wide capacity for developing an environment to support and promote active lifestyles and healthy food choices through collaboration and coordinated communication. The organization has three goals: to serve as a communication clearinghouse and statewide nutrition and activity resource; to facilitate the implementation of Pennsylvania's Nutrition & Physical Activity Plan; and to assess the effects of statewide PANA-related activities.

The **Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership**²³ works to conserve biodiversity statewide by promoting communication and cooperation among a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Partnership members represent conservation and environmental organizations, government agencies, business and industry, scientists and academic institutions, sportsmen, and private landowners. The partnership is in the midst of a multi-year process to formulate the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Conservation Plan (BCP) that identifies gaps in scientific knowledge,

²² <http://www.pecwest.org/watertrails.dwt>.

²³ <http://www.pabiodiversity.org>

establishes criteria for measuring Pennsylvania's biodiversity, and consolidates and completes recommendations for the protection of Pennsylvania's biodiversity. One of the plan's goals is to establish informed priorities for inventory, monitoring, and conservation at a statewide level. The partnership is led by a 22-member Board of Directors, including representatives from several state agencies; its two-person staff is based in Pittsburgh.

Other cooperative agency initiatives include the development of a Pennsylvania-based "**Better Models for Development**" book, led by the Conservation Fund, and **Natural Resource Inventories** for every county in the state.

Penn State Cooperative Extension in Mercer County²⁴ gives local residents easy access to the resources and expertise of the Pennsylvania State University.²⁵ The cooperative extension offers research-based information to individuals, families, businesses and communities throughout the county on a broad range of educational programs in agriculture and the food systems; building strong families, children, and communities; environment and natural resources; and public issues. Educational programs are developed by extension staff in cooperation with volunteers, advisory committees, clients, and a board of directors. The extension program includes educational meetings, individual assistance, newsletter, resource materials, 4-H/youth development program, Master Gardeners and more. Extension staff include 11 professional and five secretarial positions.

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Private Sector

In addition to the IBA program, **Audubon Pennsylvania** has also developed **The Susquehanna River Birding and Wildlife Trail Guide** to lead wildlife observers to locations that afford ample opportunity to view birds and other wildlife. The guide is available in print or online formats.

PA Cleanways, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to the fight against illegal dumping and littering in Pennsylvania's communities. The organization programs site and community cleanups, site adoptions and education events and activities. Site adoptions enable grassroots organizations to adopt responsibility for keeping a designated area trash-free. Local roads, parks, greenways, waterways and trails are common adoptees.

²⁴ Ibid.

The **Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)**²⁶ is a non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to sound environmental policy and decision-making by state government. The council provides critiques of proposed legislation by testifying and publishing its findings for members. PEC was a strong advocate for the passage of the 2000 amendments to the Municipalities Planning Code. PEC's work in the northeastern region of Pennsylvania has focused primarily on statewide initiatives such as the Susquehanna Greenway and the Pennsylvania Water Trail program. It has also promoted the reuse of brownfields and grayfields in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties.

The Pennsylvania Organization for Watershed & Rivers (POWR) advocates for the protection, restoration and enjoyment of water resources and conducts programs that foster stewardship, communication, leadership, and action. The organization promotes watershed awareness and education and operates the Keystone Watershed Monitoring Network, which contains water quality data, network contact information, training information, volunteer information, funding information, and service providers. POWR is based in Harrisburg.

The **Pennsylvania B.A.S.S. Federation**²⁷ is a nonprofit organization made up of seven districts with 102 bass fishing clubs and 1,518 members. This organization represents all the interests of local bass clubs and districts within the state. Pennsylvania B.A.S.S. Federation promotes district conservation efforts and youth fishing, "Casting Kids." PA B.A.S.S. is based in Mercer, PA.

The **Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society** was founded in 1935 and is the principal organization for promoting quality recreation and park opportunities to Pennsylvania residents through education, training, technical assistance, and other support to local, county, state, and federal recreation and park providers. Its mission statement is to unite recreation and park professionals and interested citizens to enhance their leadership in meeting the recreational needs of Pennsylvanians. The Society offers information about branches & programs, education & training, library & resources, public policy & legislation, awards & scholarships, and grants & funding. PRPS is based in State College, PA.

The **Pennsylvania State Snowmobile Association (PSSA)**²⁸ is a partnership of individuals, businesses, and sporting clubs promoting the safe recreational use of snowmobiles. The Association works to establish local clubs, such as the Northeast PA SnoTrails Association, and sponsors annual safety classes.

²⁶ <http://www.pecpa.org/>

²⁷ <http://www.pabass.com>

²⁸ <http://www.pasnow.org/>

Interstate and National Agencies and Organizations

American Rivers is a national non-profit conservation organization founded in 1973 and dedicated to protecting and restoring healthy natural rivers that sustain people, fish, and wildlife. The organization focuses on America's most endangered rivers, clean water, dam removal, hydropower dam reform, wild rivers, sprawl, water scarcity and instream flow, endangered species, the rivers of Lewis and Clark, community watersheds, Army Corps reform, river science, and the rivers of Puget Sound. *A Citizens' Agenda for Rivers*, which creates a unified vision for improving national river health, was developed by collaborating partners of American Rivers. The plan has three priorities: water quality, water quantity, and well planned development.

The **American Canoe Association (ACA)**, founded in 1880, has a stated mission to promote the health, social and personal benefits of canoeing, kayaking, and rafting and to serve the needs of paddlers for safe, enjoyable and quality paddling opportunities. The Association attempts to communicate the benefits of canoeing, kayaking, and rafting as lifetime recreation and keeps participants informed about paddlesport opportunities and activities. In the fields of paddlesport instruction and education, ACA is the nation's recognized leader. The Association also has a conservation and public policy department that helps to ensure clean, accessible recreational waterways for mutual enjoyment of paddlers and other recreational users. The ACA is one of the leading organizations that aid in the enforcement of the Clean Water Act. The ACA is based in Springfield, VA.

The **National Park Service**, an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior, is focused on four areas: parks & recreation, history & culture, nature & science, and interpretation & education. The National Park Service works with communities to preserve and care for neighborhood treasures through grants, tax credits, and other assistance; works with teachers to create unique learning opportunities in science and history; and helps plan personal adventures with National Register of Historic Places travel itineraries.

The **Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC)** works to enrich America's communities and countryside by networking public trails from former rail lines and developing new trail corridors. RTC promotes state and national policies that enable trail development and it works to protect trail-supporting funding programs. RTC also provides consulting services for trail development. RTC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with more than 100,000 members and supporters. Founded in 1986, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is located in Washington, D.C. and six regional offices nationwide, including one in Harrisburg.

The **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS)** provides technical and financial assistance programs to the public to

- Improve water quality
- Reduce soil erosion
- Control flooding
- Reclaim mined areas
- Inventory and assess local natural resources
- Survey, layout and design of soil and water conservation practices

Agencies and Organizations

USDA NRCS provides specific service to farmers, including farm conservation planning and manure storage design/planning. The Mercer office of the USDA NRCS employs two professional staff.

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