Susquehanna Greenway
A VISION
FOR CONNECTING COMMUNITIES
TO THE RIVER
The *Susquehanna Greenway* is a place and a journey that connects people and communities to the Susquehanna River and to its enduring story.

It unveils the spirit of the River—renewing awareness of its distinctive scenery, its natural and cultural heritage.

It is a destination shaped by diverse people and the pursuit of their dreams.
The Susquehanna Greenway is the newest chapter in the Susquehanna Story—a story of wide interest and importance. It provides a bridge between the past and the future—between the River as a place and a story. The Greenway is envisioned as the framework for a new realm of open space, recreation areas, facilities, and connecting trails—all vital to maintaining the human health and spirit, improving the character of communities, the economic prospects of people, and the quality of life.

On behalf of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, I am pleased to present this publication, *Susquehanna Greenway: A Vision for Connecting Communities to the River*. As the first in a series of foundation-laying documents it highlights the underlying vision for the Greenway and its promised benefits to the public.

Welcome to the Susquehanna Greenway

The success of the Susquehanna Greenway depends upon public participation and we owe a good measure of thanks to all who participated in meetings of the Partnership, our reach committees, and other hometown programs. The Partnership works in support of local initiatives and supports the efforts of local organizations to help connect people to our inherited treasure, the Susquehanna River.

By fostering regional awareness, pride, and stewardship, the Partnership and its supporters are piloting pathways to help people rediscover the Susquehanna River experience and all that it offers. Help reconnect your community to the wonders of the Susquehanna River. Join with neighbors near and far and help shape the Greenway as your gift to future generations. With your continued dedication and support the Partnership will prevail in its mission to mold the future Susquehanna Greenway.

Jerry Walls, Chairperson
Susquehanna Greenway Partnership
June, 2004
Susquehanna Greenway Partnership

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership is a network of public-private interests representing communities, organizations, governments, institutions, businesses and industries in Pennsylvania’s Susquehanna region. The Partnership guides planning for the Susquehanna Greenway and fosters community action to establish the Greenway. Membership in the Partnership is free and open to all who share the Partnership’s goals and interests.

Planning the Susquehanna Greenway

Planning for the Susquehanna Greenway is conducted by a team of agency and organization specialists drawn from the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, with additional support provided by technical consultants, state and federal agency advisors. Citizens, organizations, county and local governments also help plan the Greenway through participation in reach committees and other activities.

Establishing the Susquehanna Greenway

Establishment of the Greenway is a farsighted undertaking shaped by regional values and an over-arching vision, extending nearly 500 miles through 22 Pennsylvania counties. Greenway plans and designs are based on consideration of existing, currently planned, and newly proposed projects and ideas identified through public involvement.
The Susquehanna River is an American treasure reflecting the unique places and people that comprise the Pennsylvania heartland. Nearly 250 municipalities touch upon the River as it winds its way through the Commonwealth. Today, perhaps as never before, the Susquehanna has the potential to shape our future prospects in ways that we can only begin to imagine.

About the Susquehanna River and Greenway

**The Susquehanna River is unique and memorable**

No other place has the look and feel of the Susquehanna Valley. Within mere hours visitors may connect with an extraordinary range of experiences. The intertwining of physical geography, cities and towns, forests and countryside with the meandering path of the Susquehanna, creates a special sense of place—something uniquely memorable and increasingly rare.

**Susquehanna resources remain largely undiscovered**

The scenic environment of the Susquehanna region and the River that defines it beg to be discovered. The economic value of the region’s lumber, agriculture, mining, transportation, and industrial heritage cannot be underestimated. And recreation opportunities such as biking, hiking and backpacking, bird watching and wildlife viewing, camping, hunting and fishing, horseback riding, paddling and boating, sight-seeing, skiing and snow sports are a growing source of economic activity within the region.

**Water quality is key to public use and enjoyment of the Susquehanna**

The water resources of the Susquehanna are under new pressure for use and development, creating new conflicts among uses and users. While water quality is much improved, pollution remains an ongoing challenge. The after-effects of historic mining practices continue. And while much has been done to mitigate the impact
of modern farming practices on the River and the Chesapeake Bay—sedimentation, chemical and nutrient pollution are continuing concerns.

The Susquehanna is a region at risk

Increasing urbanization and development also threaten the character and economies of Susquehanna communities. New roads and sprawling development change the historic patterns of daily life and work and disturb the balance between man and nature in urban and rural areas alike. The loss of open space reduces the extent of viable fish and wildlife habitats and diminishes the region's man-nature connection and its deep-rooted sporting traditions.

The Susquehanna Greenway preserves regional distinctions

The Susquehanna Greenway will set a new course for Susquehanna Valley communities. Development practices can be honed to conserve the region's valued land and water assets and its cultural heritage. Tied to local development and county conservation plans, the Greenway will help preserve regional distinctions and authenticity while creating new opportunities for conserving open space and restoring habitat, for diverse health and recreational pursuits, and for guiding community development to economic and environmental advantage.

The Susquehanna Greenway is a compelling attraction

The Susquehanna Greenway is among the nation's largest river-related greenways. The River's unique combination of world-class fisheries, diverse boating opportunities, and seasonal-interest scenery, is a compelling attraction to residents and visitors, a fact revealed in public opinion surveys conducted for the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership. Existing water trails, and those currently under development, will further elevate the Susquehanna among America's treasured rivers.

Greenway action stems from public participation in local and regional plans

The region's diverse environmental and cultural resources create unparalleled potential for our communities to become ideal places to live and recreate. To realize this potential, Susquehanna Greenway plans must be considered in connection with local and regional development to preserve the Susquehanna as an American treasure and to help shape future chapters of the Susquehanna Story.
The Susquehanna Greenway is a response to the Commonwealth's call to develop a functional network of Greenways throughout Pennsylvania\(^1\) and to the wishes of many Susquehanna Valley residents. The Susquehanna Greenway will accommodate a full mix of possibilities consistent with local and regional needs and desires. Because the Susquehanna Greenway will help conserve a major river it is considered a greenway of statewide significance.

Greenways exist in many forms. Although American greenways have existed for decades, the varied nature and purposes of greenways are confusing to many citizens.

### A Greenway Vision for the Susquehanna River

What is the Susquehanna Greenway?

> A linear corridor of open space traversing urban, suburban, and rural areas.

> A mix of public and private property.

> Land- and water-based.

> Narrow paths to wider swaths of green space.

> Linked to man-made and natural features such as abandoned railways and canals, ridge and river corridors.

> A recreational-use corridor and scenic byway.

The Susquehanna Greenway will take form in response to regional values. Segments of the Greenway may accommodate either motorized or non-motorized vehicles. Some segments of the Greenway will conserve the environment while accommodating the use of natural resources. Other segments of the Greenway will exist for purposes relating to environmental protection—not for human passage.

The Greenway will connect the man-made environment of River communities with protected open spaces and ecosystems. It will link recreation facilities and trails of differing types. But equally important, the Greenway will stimulate efforts to renew River communities and their economies. It will create impetus for urban, suburban, and rural projects reflecting the River corridor’s varied character. And it will help bolster the lure of the Susquehanna Valley through the portrayal and strengthening of its regional character.

The Susquehanna Greenway is both a journey and a destination. Many Susquehanna Valley residents contributed to the making of this vision. In meetings, workshops, focus groups, personal interviews, and opinion surveys, they expressed a high level of support for the creation of the Susquehanna Greenway.
The Susquehanna Greenway will elevate the Susquehanna River to new importance. As a greenway of statewide significance, the Greenway will link communities with nature and help people to experience all that the River offers. It promises residents and visitors a mix of economic, environmental, community, recreation, health and fitness, transportation, and education benefits. These will vary over time and according to location. But the ability to achieve these benefits is real and lasting.

Greenway Benefits are Wide-Ranging

The Susquehanna Greenway will:

> Enhance the sense of place throughout the Susquehanna region
> Conserve natural, cultural, historical and scenic resources
> Filter water runoff and protect water resources
> Provide opportunities to protect and manage wildlife, forests and ecological systems
> Provide recreational opportunities for families and individuals of all ages and abilities
> Provide alternatives to automotive transportation and help to reduce traffic congestion
> Enhance the image of communities and regions and contribute positively to their business climate and economy
> Create opportunities for exercise and foster wellness and healthy living
> Promote regional assets important to tourism and economic development
> Enhance natural beauty and the character of neighborhoods and communities
> Provide opportunities for experience-based environmental education
Regional views and distinctions add interest and vitality to the Susquehanna Greenway. To assure that local and regional outlooks are considered, Greenway planning is coordinated across six contiguous River reaches. Susquehanna Greenway Partnership meetings rotate among the reaches and reach committees further facilitate citizen involvement in the Greenway effort.

Regional Views and Distinctions

While regional distinctions exist, all reaches share important concerns:

> Concern for water quality and the conservation of natural resources rank consistently high in all reaches as priorities for public-private action.

> A substantial majority of citizens supporting the establishment of the Susquehanna Greenway see a balanced approach to environmental conservation and community and economic development as crucial to attracting public support for the project.

> Improving the quality of life and local economies is top on the list of perceived benefits.

> It is desirable to preserve and strengthen regional distinctions as these traits enliven the greenway experience.

> Regions and communities that remain true to their traditions have more widespread appeal to visitors and prospective residents.

> The unique identity of places and the people that inhabit them is a potent and effective vehicle for achieving desired growth and development.

> The Susquehanna Greenway can help preserve the authenticity of regions and communities and use the image and identity of each reach to build momentum for positive change.

The following depictions of each reach portray the geography, regional character, and facts relevant to the community, environment, recreation, economic, and education issues affecting each reach.
Reach 1 Pennsylvania-New York Borders to Pittston

Reach One is characterized by rolling meadows, crop and forest lands, set amidst seemingly endless mountains. The glaciated landscape is marked by plentiful lakes and streams. The River is defined by frequent bends and meanders in response to its underlying geology.

Much of the area is within the Endless Mountains Heritage Region and it offers abundant outdoor recreation such as skiing, hiking, biking, snowmobiling and scenic driving tours. Classic Americana still flourishes in small river towns like Susquehanna, Athens-Sayre, Towanda, Wyalusing and Tunkhannock.

Attractions include Standing Stone, French Azilum, scenic U.S. Route 6, covered bridges, historic viaducts, numerous river access points, and convenient proximity to state game lands. The preservation of these and other such resources is addressed in the North Branch Susquehanna River Conservation Plan.

“You should be a different person at the end than when you started.” Citizen comment referring to floating the Susquehanna River.

Residents Strongly Support Creation of the Susquehanna Greenway

Susquehanna Greenway Public Opinion Survey

Yes 74%
Maybe / Not Sure 23%
No 3%

Issues and Opportunities

Community: Encourage public involvement and government cooperation, and develop a river link between New York and Pennsylvania.

Economy: Greenway considered important to economic revitalization, local business retention and development, and to improve quality of life.

Environment: Need to conserve and protect natural areas and wildlife habitats.

Education: Increase public understanding of greenways and create educational opportunities linked to the river and local history.

Recreation: Increase access to the river, develop multi-use trail systems and enforce trail regulations.
Reach Two includes Wilkes Barre, one of three larger Pennsylvania cities on the Greenway. The area's river landscape is characterized by forested ridges and agricultural valleys which provide a backdrop to historic river towns like Nanticoke, Berwick, Bloomsburg, Danville and Northumberland. While some areas benefit from convenient access to the river, flood control structures in other areas make access more difficult.

Nestled in the heart of east-central Pennsylvania, this scenic area offers year-round outdoor recreation tied to its mountains, streams and lakes. Reach Two contains the highest concentration of covered bridges in the nation, including the famed Twin Bridges in Columbia County. Evidence of the region's history is found in frontier-era fort sites, Native American artifacts, coal breakers, and remnants of the North Branch Pennsylvania Canal.

“*If the river were cleaned-up and made accessible, the possibilities would be limitless.*” Greenway Public Meeting Participant

Residents Value Clean Water, Natural Resources, and Scenery
Survey Respondents rate important features of the Susquehanna River.

**Clean Water** Critically Important
**Natural Resources** Very Important
**Scenery** Very Important

---

**Issues and Opportunities**

**Community:** Coordination and cooperation among agencies and municipal governments.

**Economy:** Greenway is considered important to improve community image, local economies, and expand opportunities for tourism.

**Environment:** Address water quality issues such as acid mine drainage and sewage treatment to improve fishing and restore the American Shad fishery.

**Education:** Improve public perception of the river’s water quality and establish educational programs on Native American and canal-era history.

**Recreation:** Improve river access and use of the river for community events, tourism, recreational and interpretive trails, and to promote health and wellness.
Reach Three is a scenic, pastoral landscape set between the Sunbury and Harrisburg urban areas. The reach is bounded to the north by Sunbury, Shamokin Dam and Selinsgrove and to the south by Harrisburg, Camp Hill, New Cumberland and Middletown. The intervening ridge and valley landscape is characterized by forested ridges, agricultural valleys, and distinctive water gaps created by ancient water flows.

The world's largest inflatable dam at Sunbury forms a seasonal pool for water sports. Small towns such as Liverpool, Millersburg, and Halifax offer unique attractions such as McKees Half Falls and the Millersburg Ferry. Duncannon is at the confluence with the Juniata River and at the crossroads of the Appalachian Trail, Kittatinny Ridge, and the Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Main Line Millennium Trail. The River in this area is nationally recognized for its birding and bass fishing opportunities. Additional distinctions include the world's longest stone arch bridge at Marysville and Harrisburg’s City Island Park and Capital Area Greenway.

“My family would spend more time on the River if it were cleaner, easier to access, and there was more to do.”
Greenway Survey Respondent

Residents View River as Community Asset
Survey Respondents Impressions of the Susquehanna River

Issues and Opportunities
Community: Need consistency between business, agricultural and greenway objectives.
Economy: Many untapped river resources for recreation and tourism-related businesses.
Environment: Protect important ecologic and scenic resources, and plant forest buffers to improve water-quality and aesthetics of the river.
Education: Use the river as a theme for varied cultural and environmental education programs.
Recreation: Improve river access by working with railroads and public utilities. Promote boating, fishing, trails, and environmental resources.
Reach 4  Harrisburg to Pennsylvania-Maryland Border

Reach Four extends from the southern fringe of the Harrisburg metropolitan area to Maryland. The River landscape is rural and scenic. The River flows between steep gorge-like ridges. The forested landscape is markedly different from the surrounding farmlands of York and Lancaster counties. The Susquehanna River Water Trail winds through this reach affording unique opportunities to observe the history and scenic beauty of the river, and to safely navigate the hydro-electric dams at Safe Harbor, Holtwood and Conowingo.

Important features of the river corridor include Three Mile Island, the historic U.S. Route 30 bridge, Chickies Rock and Conejohela Flats, an internationally renowned bird habitat. The lower Susquehanna is over a mile and a half wide in places, providing a study in contrast between the man-made and natural river. Towns like Columbia, Wrightsville and Marietta, actively market their commerce, unique heritage, and recreation opportunities. The lower Susquehanna forms a gateway to the Chesapeake Bay.

“I would like to see the Greenway established for environmental reasons…” Greenway Survey Respondent

Residents Support Natural Resource Conservation as a Focus for the Greenway
Survey Respondents Impressions of the Susquehanna River

Issues and Opportunities
Community: Acquire property for river access and land conservation.
Economy: Balance tourism development with river conservation objectives and capitalize on existing Lancaster County tourism.
Environment: Improve water quality by addressing non-point source pollution from agriculture and urban run-off, and preserve the river’s scenic and ecologic resources.
Education: Use the river to teach Native American and early American history through area schools.
Recreation: Acquire utility company land to improve river access and preserve environmentally sensitive areas, and enhance fishing and waterfowl hunting opportunities.
Reach 5  
Carrolltown to Lock Haven

The West Branch starts in Reach Five, high in the Allegheny Mountains near Carrolltown. Cutting through the mountain plateau as it flows downstream, the River and its tributaries offer paddlers a range of boating experiences from easy flat-water to challenging whitewater. Towns like Northern Cambria, Cherry Tree, Burnside, Mahaffey, Curwensville, Clearfield, Karthaus, and Renovo flank the River, each with a different story. Cherry Tree, the place where Cambria, Indiana and Clearfield counties meet, was originally known as Canoe Place, marking the point where dependable canoe travel ended.

The area is rich in resources with significant potential for heritage and eco-tourism. The area is part of the Lumber Heritage Region and is characterized by extensive forests, a history of timber extraction, and a diversified forest products industry that remains important to the economy. The region is blanketed with natural areas and landmarks, hiking trails, fishing streams, state forests, parks, and game lands. It is one of the most scenic and remote regions of the River with unique opportunities to view elk and other wildlife.

“I would like to see sections of the West Branch remain remote for canoeists…”  
Greenway Survey Respondent

Residents Value Clean Water, Natural Resources, and Scenery  
Survey Respondents rate important features of the Susquehanna River.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clean Water</td>
<td>Critically Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenery</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Issues and Opportunities

Community: Improve the connection between residents and visitors and the region’s natural and historic resources.

Economy: Many opportunities exist for promoting tourism, but it will require a coordinated effort to establish more attractions and facilities, and a unified marketing strategy.

Environment: Undertake watershed monitoring, assessment and restoration focusing on the treatment of acid mine drainage.

Education: Need more information about greenways. Opportunities exist for educational programs on river, railroad and lumber heritage.

Recreation: Improve signage and river access, provide more amenities for river trail users, and explore rail-trail and excursion train opportunities.
Reach 6

Lock Haven to Northumberland

The West Branch provides a focus to the forested rolling hills, steep mountainsides, and fertile farmlands of the Ridge and Valley landscape. Lumbering the bountiful forests of the upper watershed was once the backbone of the region’s economy and river towns such as Lock Haven, Jersey Shore, Williamsport, Muncy, Watsontown, Milton and Lewisburg prospered from lumber milling and manufacturing wood products.

Transportation is a dominant theme of the area’s development. Native American trails set the course for modern roads. The historic Sheshenque Path followed the river from what is now Williamsport to the Carolinas, the alignment of present-day U.S. Route 15. The river was used to transport lumber and agricultural goods downriver. The West Branch Pennsylvania Canal and later railroads further helped develop river town economies.

More than half of the region’s population lives within the river corridor with convenient access to state forest, park and game lands, scenic stretches of river, and hiking, biking and hunting opportunities. Anglers enjoy both warm- and cold-water fishing on the River and its tributary streams. Increasing numbers of visitors use the Pine Creek Rail-Trail system linking Jersey Shore to the Pennsylvania Grand Canyon. The Lower West Branch River Conservation Plan guides efforts to protect Reach Six resources and the West Branch Water Trail allows boaters to safely navigate and better appreciate the river.

“Learning to enjoy the river is the first step to improving and protecting it.”

Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy

Residents Overwhelmingly View River as Community Asset
Survey Respondents Impressions of the Susquehanna River

Issues and Opportunities

Community: Protect important historic features linked to the lumber and canal eras.

Economy: Develop a regional marketing strategy to capitalize on opportunities for eco- and heritage tourism.

Environment: Involve more citizens in conservation projects, protect scenic vistas, and preserve flood-prone lands in open space.

Education: Link school curricula to outdoor environmental projects to expand appreciation for river resources.

Recreation: Need to balance potentially conflicting river recreation uses, e.g., motorized and non-motorized boating.
With its growing list of community and reach committee partners, The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership is working to bring alive the rich story and legacy of the Susquehanna River. By creating awareness of the area’s valued resources, the Partnership works to foster stewardship of these assets for the use and enjoyment of all people. Through its quarterly newsletter *River Connections*, the Partnership provides a forum for the exchange of news, information, and educational materials needed to build awareness about Greenway development issues, opportunities, and challenges.

Join the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership and Help Shape the Greenway Where You Live.

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership also works to involve stakeholders in the development of design concepts and action strategies for inclusion in the Susquehanna Greenway Charter Plan, and the implementation of early-action demonstration projects in the River reaches.

For further information on how you can help to shape the Susquehanna Greenway, visit our website at [www.susquehannagreenway.org](http://www.susquehannagreenway.org), email us at greenway@seda-cog.org, or call 570-524-4491.

The Partnership meets periodically at locations throughout the Susquehanna Valley and membership in the Partnership is open to all that share the Partnership’s goals and interests.
Credits

Susquehanna Greenway:
A Vision for Connecting Communities
to the River is a publication of the:

Susquehanna Greenway Partnership
201 Furnace Road
Lewisburg, PA 17837

Funded in part by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Community Conservation Partnerships Grant Program and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation TEA 21 Grant Program.

Other contributors include the:
Chesapeake Bay Commission
Harrisburg Area Foundation
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
PPL Corporation
Western Pennsylvania Watershed Protection Program of the Heinz Endowment
William Penn Foundation
Williamsport-Lycoming Foundation
York Foundation

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership Planning Team:
Bradford County Office of Community Planning and Grants
Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority
Pennsylvania Downtown Center
Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Lancaster County Planning Commission
Lycoming County Planning Commission
Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy
SEDA Council of Governments
Susquehanna River Basin Commission

State and Federal Agency Advisors:
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
Federal Highway Administration

Consultants
Ball State University Community Based Projects Program
Bloss Associates Landscape Architects and Planners
Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Penn State University Department of Landscape Architecture
SEDA Council of Governments
Toole Recreation Planning

Photo credits
Front cover: Blair Seitz
Inside front cover: Blair Seitz
Inside back cover: Gordon R. Wenzel
Back cover: The Wild Studio
Brian Auman: pages 17, 21, 23
Greenways, Inc./EDAW: page 19
Randy King: page 17
Tim Palmer: pages 6, 7, 20, 21
Blair Seitz: pages 9, 13, 17, 19, 22, 23
The Wild Studio: pages 8, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23
Gordon R. Wenzel: page 7