

The formation of a greenways vision is based on a thorough analysis of the current state of recreation and open space in a region and the existing pressures that threaten it. Lehigh and Northampton counties include 62 municipalities that include three cities, 27 boroughs and 32 townships and a population forecasted to reach over 750,000 persons by the year 2030. Much of this growth will occur in the suburbs surrounding Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton; however, there is considerable evidence that residential growth is consuming agricultural lands and open space at a rate greater than four square miles per year. It is projected that the Lehigh Valley will be approximately 55% urban by 2030; sprawl is a growing concern, and the natural resources of the Lehigh Valley are at risk.

Lehigh Valley residents have been outspoken in their desire to maintain and improve their quality of life created by the pastoral scenery, cultural bounty and recreational resources available to them. Forming the *Lehigh Valley Greenways Plan* vision involved intensive community input through opinion surveys, several stakeholder meetings, and collaboration within the land conservation community. Also, the effort involved extensive Geographic Information Systems analysis and mapping and coordination with the statewide greenways planning effort.

### Statewide Greenways Vision

Under Executive Order 1998-3, the Governor of Pennsylvania called for a network of greenways across the state to preserve environmental values and protect the natural, cultural, historical and scenic assets. Recognizing that the development of a network of greenways requires the formulation of partnerships which include government agencies, nonprofit organizations, business interests and property owners, the order called for the organization of the Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership Commission (Partnership). Created in 1998, the Partnership supports the Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) in the promotion of greenways throughout Pennsylvania. The DCNR has prepared an action plan that includes recommendations designed to provide a coordinated and strategic approach to the development of greenways in the Commonwealth. *Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections* (Action Plan) defined the following statewide vision for Pennsylvania greenways:

#### **Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership Commission**

Pennsylvania Environmental Council  
 Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers  
 Pennsylvania Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
 Pennsylvania Recreation and Parks Society  
 Pennsylvania Planning Association  
 Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry  
 Pennsylvania Land Trust Association  
 Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Association  
 Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Advisory Board

*“Pennsylvania and its many partners will develop an outstanding network of greenways across the Commonwealth, creating an asset highly valued by Pennsylvanians and enhancing the quality of life for all. This network of greenways will connect Pennsylvania’s open space, natural landscape features, scenic, cultural, historic and recreational sites, and urban and rural communities. Greenways will become one of the Commonwealth’s most powerful tools to achieve sustainable growth and livable communities.”*

The DCNR has identified 34 major greenways (i.e. greenways that are greater than fifty miles in length, pass through two or more counties, and are recognized in an official planning document) in Pennsylvania. Five are found in the Lehigh Valley:

1. Appalachian National Scenic Trail/Kittatinny Ridge
2. Delaware & Lehigh (D&L) Trail
3. Delaware River Water Trail
4. Lehigh River Water Trail
5. Pennsylvania Highlands

The DCNR commitment to establish a greenways network that includes greenways of statewide significance as well as local and regional networks honors the tradition set by William Penn in the 1600s to foster a rich cultural heritage, improve the quality of life, and create connections between nature and community. The Action Plan states that "Greenways can provide a strategic approach for our municipalities and regions to plan for 'smarter' growth, enhance community character, provide for alternative transportation and provide educational opportunities in conservation, ecology and history." Calling for a greenways demonstration project to be selected and underway in each county of the Commonwealth by 2007, the DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation has committed to a sustained investment of time and money to enable careful coordination among state agencies and local partners.

### **Lehigh Valley Greenways Partnership**

Bushkill Stream Conservancy  
 Bushkill, Plainfield and Williams townships  
 Cities of Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton  
 Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor  
 Heritage Conservancy  
 Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center  
 Jacobsburg Historical Society  
 Lehigh County  
 Lehigh Valley businesses  
 Lehigh Valley colleges/universities  
 Lehigh Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau  
 Lehigh Valley Planning Commission  
 Martins-Jacoby Watershed Association  
 Natural Lands Trust  
 Northampton County Conservation District  
 Northampton County Department of Parks and Recreation  
 PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
 PA Department of Environmental Protection  
 PA Fish and Boat Commission  
 Wildlands Conservancy

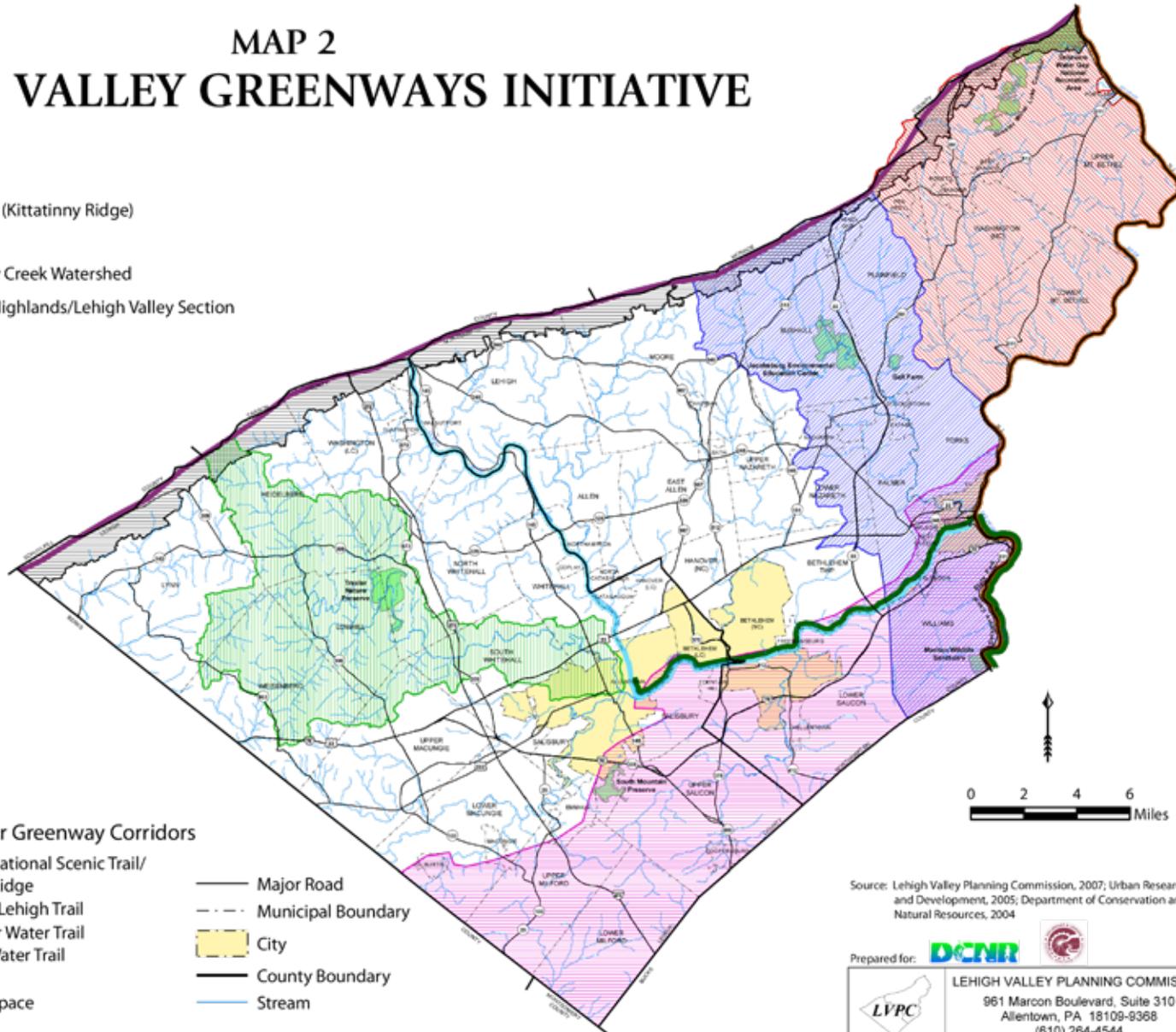
### **Regional Greenways Vision**

In 1985, Jacobsburg State Park, Bushkill Township, Northampton County, was dedicated as one of four Pennsylvania Environmental Education Centers. The Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center's (EEC) mission is to "develop a citizenry that is aware of and concerned about the environment and its problems, and also has the knowledge, attitude, motivation, commitment and skills to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones." In addition to its many recreational opportunities, the EEC is able to reach a variety of Lehigh Valley's citizenry through field learning experiences, workshops and ecological research. DCNR views the EEC as a model for demonstrating how the DCNR can holistically and strategically assist a region with its conservation and recreational needs.

This strategic approach to applying DCNR time and money has morphed into a full-fledged initiative in Lehigh and Northampton counties. The Lehigh Valley Greenways (LVG) is a "collaborative state and local partnership striving to conserve and connect people to valued natural resources in the Lehigh Valley through targeted outreach, recreation, education and land protection." The LVG partnership strives to accelerate regional conservation work among the conservancies, land trusts and community organizations, working closely with DCNR staff and other state agencies, local municipalities, and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) to advance their collective mission. LVG originated from the Bushkill Creek/Two Rivers Area of Northampton County where DCNR's Jacobsburg EEC is a major ecological and

# MAP 2 LEHIGH VALLEY GREENWAYS INITIATIVE

-  Blue Mountain (Kittatinny Ridge)
-  Jordan Creek
-  Martins Jacoby Creek Watershed
-  Pennsylvania Highlands/Lehigh Valley Section
-  Two Rivers



## Pennsylvania Major Greenway Corridors

-  Appalachian National Scenic Trail/  
Kittatinny Ridge
-  Delaware and Lehigh Trail
-  Delaware River Water Trail
-  Lehigh River Water Trail
-  Park or Open Space
-  Major Road
-  Municipal Boundary
-  City
-  County Boundary
-  Stream

Source: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, 2007; Urban Research and Development, 2005; Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 2004

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recreational hub, serving as a focal point for public outreach and education efforts related to the LVG initiative. It has since become a two-county initiative that includes five focus areas (Map 2):

1. Blue Mountain (Kittatinny Ridge)
2. Jordan Creek
3. Martins Jacoby Creek Watershed
4. Pennsylvania Highlands/Lehigh Valley Section
5. Two Rivers Area (Bushkill Creek Watershed)

The DCNR designated Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and State Heritage Park as the lead coordinating agency for their regional collaboration, leadership and capacity building abilities. Their staff will help local partners with project development, secure project funding, and provide overall leadership and coordination of local activities, education and outreach. Additionally, DCNR, geologists, biologists, engineers and marketing specialists will be tapped to assist the planning team and the communities in their respective roles.

### **Lehigh Valley Greenways Plan Vision**

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The LVPC has worked closely with DCNR and the LVG in the early phases of the *Lehigh Valley Greenways Plan*, considering the overall intent of the LVG is to establish greenways and recreation areas through the implementation of local greenways and watershed plans. Since early implementation occurs simultaneously with the planning process, the mission and identification of focus areas for the LVG initiative reflects many of the LVPC priorities and goals in this plan. Nonetheless, the LVPC method included public opinion surveys, a municipal survey, and a study advisory committee including many community groups not represented by the LVG.

The LVPC recognizes the importance of public support in the future success and implementation of the *Lehigh Valley Greenways Plan*. Accordingly, the LVPC has conducted many public opinion surveys, workshops and studies over the years to gauge interest in and to discover the issues facing the parks, recreational and open space resources in the Lehigh Valley. The input and opinions of the Lehigh Valley municipalities and residents are reflected in the goals and recommendations provided throughout this plan. The *Lehigh Valley Greenways Plan* will be Lehigh and Northampton counties' first regional plan to examine the physical framework of natural, recreational, cultural, historical and scenic resources that make up a multiform network of corridors and destinations to benefit a myriad of users. Our goal is to connect these resources with existing and planned pathways that are protected and carefully managed to form a continuous green route throughout both counties.

### **Public Opinion Surveys**

The LVPC has learned that one of the best ways to gauge public opinion on a variety of planning issues is to conduct a survey of a sizable number of Lehigh Valley residents. The process involves a mail-out/mail-back survey to 3,500 to 4,000 registered voters in Lehigh and Northampton counties. This method was used successfully in 1974, 1988 and 1999 prior to updates to the *Comprehensive Plan The Lehigh Valley ... 2030* (Comprehensive Plan). The most recent, 1999 Public Opinion Land Use Survey, was mailed to 4,000 registered voters, representing 1.25% of all registered voters in the Lehigh Valley. Approximately 27% of the surveys were returned for processing. The survey contained two types of questions: socioeconomic/demographic and attitudinal. The responses

to all questions were tabulated to determine the number and percentage of the respondents answering each question. A summary of the major findings pertinent to greenways planning follows:

- The three most important planning issues are the preservation of farmland, the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas, and the renewal of cities.
- The three most significant consequences of growth are felt to be: increasing traffic congestion, loss of open space, and overcrowding schools.
- Almost 47% of the survey respondents believe the quality of life in the Lehigh Valley has gotten worse during the past ten years.
- Over 90% of registered voters mandate the preservation of farmland.
- About 70% of the survey respondents believe more parks, recreation facilities and open space are needed.
- The most needed park and recreation facilities are felt to be large regional parks, trails for hiking and biking, and nature reserves.
- To preserve the natural environment, priority should be given first to protecting rivers, creeks, streams and lakes.
- What people like most about the Lehigh Valley is its proximity to New York City, Philadelphia, and shore points; its convenience to many things; and its farmland, open spaces and rural areas.

### **Municipal Survey**

In March 2005, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission surveyed the 62 municipalities in Lehigh and Northampton counties for their input on existing and potential greenways within their municipality. A map of the municipality was provided for their use to indicate the location of the greenways; thirty municipalities (fifteen townships, twelve boroughs, and the three cities) responded to the questionnaire. Many of the responding municipalities referred to existing park, recreation and open space plans for the identification of greenways. Additional information received regarding the location of existing and potential greenways is represented by the following categories:

- Connections between existing parks and residential areas
- Connections to existing bike paths and walking trails
- D & L Trail
- Inactive rail lines
- Lehigh Canal
- Ridges (e.g., Blue Mountain, Shochary Ridge)
- Rivers, streams and floodplains
- Scenic Byways

### **Study Advisory Committee**

The LVPC formed a study advisory committee (Committee) comprised of volunteers from across the two counties, including various government agencies, private nonprofit conservation organizations, watershed associations, and other stakeholder groups. The role of the Committee was to provide insight and input into the planning process, to comment on information and mapping developed by the LVPC staff, to act as a resource for localized activities pertaining to open space and greenway planning, and to suggest alternatives and make recommendations to the *Lehigh Valley Greenways Plan*.

### **Study Advisory Committee**

Allentown Hiking Club	Lehigh Wheelmen Association
Bushkill Stream Conservancy	Little Lehigh Watershed Coalition
City of Allentown	Lower Saucon Township, Northampton County
City of Bethlehem	Lynn Township, Lehigh County
City of Easton	Martins/Jacoby Watershed Association
Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor	Monocacy Creek Watershed Association
Heritage Conservancy	Northampton County Conservation District
Hokendauqua Chapter of Trout Unlimited	Northampton County Department of Public Works
Illicks Mill Partnership for Environmental Education	Northampton County Federation of Sportsmen
Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center	PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Lehigh County Administration	Palmer Township, Northampton County
Lehigh Gap Nature Center	Plainfield Township, Northampton County
Lehigh Township, Northampton County	Salisbury Township, Lehigh County
Lehigh Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau	Wildlands Conservancy
Lehigh Valley Planning Commission	Williams Township, Northampton County

Beginning in April 2005, four meetings were held at the LVPC office to review the project and gather comments. To initiate the Committee in the Lehigh Valley greenways planning process, they were provided with a copy of the Natural Resources Plan from the Comprehensive Plan and documentation from other regional activities involving greenways, including the DCNR Lehigh Valley Greenways initiative, Highlands Coalition and Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Project.