

The following discussion describes key aspects of the public participation process featured as part of the Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Network Plan (the Plan). Specifically, this section of the Plan highlights the purposes, contents and results of two sets of individual public meetings, which were held within the participating counties during October 2005 and April 2006.

Individual County Meetings Summary, October 2005

Overview

Over the course of 2 days (October 12th and 13th), Planning Team members conducted meetings in the following five counties:

- Somerset (October 12th at 1:00pm in Somerset)
- Cambria (October 12th at 4:00pm in Ebensburg)
- Bedford (October 12th at 7:00pm in Bedford)
- Fulton (October 13th at 1:00pm in McConnellsburg)
- Huntingdon (October 13th at 4:00pm in Mill Creek)

The purpose of the meetings was to discuss three key aspects of the Plan: the overall purpose and intent of the Plan, the proposed dual nature of the Plan (recreation and conservation) and the elements and scoring used to develop the current Plan.

1. Purposes of the Greenway Plan

Five purposes of the plan, developed by the steering committee, were presented for comment; they were conservation, cultural heritage, economic development, recreation and transportation. Each of the groups was asked to rank the importance of these purposes relative to the greenway plan for their particular county. For the majority of the counties conservation and recreation ranked first and second, respectively.

2. Dual Preservation/Conservation Plans

As currently envisioned, the Plan will be comprised of two complimentary networks – one for human use or *recreation* and another for maintaining natural areas and habitats or *conservation*. Because this approach is unique among greenway plans developed in Pennsylvania to date, it was presented to each of the counties for discussion. During the course of these discussions, there was seemingly unanimous support for the idea of two parallel networks for recreation and conservation.

3. Plan Elements and Scoring

In addition to discussing the purposes of the Plan, the elements and their scoring were reviewed. There was consensus regarding the criteria used and the weight given to each. Attendees at meetings in Bedford and Fulton Counties felt that reservoir watersheds should be given a much higher weight. Similarly, those who attended in Bedford and Huntingdon Counties felt that ridge-tops should be more highly weighted. In Bedford and Huntingdon County, it was suggested that

Important Bird Areas (IBAs)²⁶ be included as a criteria.

Individual County Meetings Summary, April 2006

Overview

Over the course of 2 days (April 18th and 20th), Planning Team members conducted meetings in the following five counties:

- Fulton (April 18th in McConnellsburg)
- Huntingdon (April 18th in Mill Creek)
- Somerset (April 20th in Somerset)
- Cambria (April 20th in Ebensburg)
- Bedford (April 20th in Bedford)

The purpose of the meetings was to discuss the project corridors that were identified, additional project corridor suggestions, current efforts, current needs and opportunities present within the county. The following details the comments and describes the discussions that took place at each individual meeting.

Fulton County (April 18, 2006)

Comments

None

Additional Corridor Suggestions

- Cowan's Gap (4 miles) north at Tuscarora Trail

²⁶ The Important Bird Area program is a "global effort to identify areas that are most important for maintaining bird populations, and focus conservation efforts at protecting these sites." In the US and Pennsylvania it is compiled by the Audubon Society.

What's Happening Now

- Pike to Bike grant application
- Tuscarora Trail: Pennsylvania Appalachian Trails group active with private owners/partners on protection and adding shelters
- Link Trail: currently getting GPS coordinates on the Trail's current trace and its proposed changes
- Link Trail: extending State Game Land #81 with CPAC helping with the landowner
- May possibly establish Burnt Cabin as a trail town
- Relationship with the County is good; more difficult relationships with landowners and PA Game Commission (State Game lands)

Needs

- Funding
- Resource informational clearinghouse
- Need a Southern Alleghenies Planning position to support effort

Opportunities

- Very cooperative County Commissioners
- McConnellsburg recreational group is looking for a county-wide recreational director

Huntingdon County (April 18, 2006)

Comments

None

Additional Corridor Suggestions

1. Little Juniata (Tyrone to Frankstown Branch)

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2. Standing Stone Creek (Greenwood Furnace to Huntingdon)
3. Shavers Creek (Lake Perez to Little Juniata River)
4. Trough Creek (Lake to Calvin, Lake to Robertsdale)
5. Tuscarora Mountain (entire length)
6. Raystown Lake Water Trail (linking Raystown Water Trail to Juniata River water trail)
7. Link Trail to Cowans Gap State Park
8. Cowans Gap to the Pike to Bike
9. Kiski Conemaugh Water Trail

What's Happening Now

Link Trail:

- Landscape architect is currently flagging the potential relocated trail
- Looking at potential shelter locations
- Taking GPS coordinates of the Trail
- Link Trail Club working with County Planning Commission to incorporate trail into County Plan
- There are caretakers for every mile of the Trail
- Water trail exists in Huntingdon County portion of Main Line Canal but not in other sections
- Main Line trail consistent with County Plan

Needs

- Quick agency buy-in
- Obtain easements
- Game Commission agreement on (Link) Trail location
- Publicity
- Outreach and education
- Technical assistance and information dissemination

- Safety of visitors (at 1,000 Steps)
- Main Line walking trail nonexistent (acquisition need)

Bedford County (April 20, 2006)

Comments

- "Shellsburg" should be "Schellsburg"
- Question the ranking of ridge tops @ #10. The ridges are one of this areas most distinguishing natural resources.

Additional Corridor Suggestions

1. Connect on bike route G to Great Allegheny Passage in Maryland – along PA 96 or other parallel route.

What's Happening Now

- Pike to Bike (run by Advisory Committee)
- Southern Allegheny Conservancy Project – Cumberland
- Two alternatives for the Great Eastern Trail are currently under consideration

Needs

- Overlay of wind turbines, both planned and proposed
- Multi-use trails (non motorized) to include equine use
- Government ownership of Pike to Bike
- Funding
- Identify and map who owns properties
- Look at location siting vs. funding availability
- Protect ridge tops; corridors need advocates
- Need for technical assistance and guidance; what are available techniques and mechanisms
- Incorporate the Plan into the Comprehensive Plan

- Tourism promotion agencies can be key in promotion
- Promote secondary economic development benefits that add to quality of life
- Tap into multi county and multi State organizations with staff to address capacity issues
- Need umbrella organization to help with coordination and fund development
- Secondary school "property curriculum"
- RC&D as a possible coordinator throughout the region

Cambria County (April 20, 2006)

Comments

- Priorities are interdependent
- Direct and indirect economic development are both important (i.e., quality of life impacts = indirect)

Additional Corridor Suggestions

1. Johnstown is earmarked to become a regional trail hub joining Path of Flood, Iron Street Trail (to the Cambria Iron Works Landmark and Cambria City Historic District), the Incline Sculpture Trail and Jim Mayer Trail (north and south) to Johnstown and northern Somerset County. Based on the existing Heritage Route and Ghost Town Trail/Main Line Flood Trail connecting Ghost Town to the Johnstown, the hub would provide a route that would tie all purposes of the greenways together.

What's Happening Now

- Wind farm investigations are ongoing in the Plan's preservation corridors
- To date the wind turbine ordinances have not dealt with ecological impacts

- Cambria Township is embarking on several projects that tie into County projects (at the Feasibility Study stage)
- There are no safe trails in the area
- Johnstown Park is a special place
- Johnstown is an important hub for trails to meet at
- Johnstown projects are underway

Needs

- Put Main Line Trail on a fast track
- County Planning Commission can be a facilitator
- County Recreation Authority needs more staff for planned projects and future maintenance (capacity issue)
- Need for a functional regional alliance with member groups maintaining their identities
- Maintenance capacity is a very important need
- Develop an operation and maintenance (O&M) strategy
- Get municipalities involved early
- Look for opportunities to share services
- Ownership by counties and municipalities has benefits (funding, liability, O&M)
- Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and Development Council has a role in implementing
- Tourism promotion agencies, biking groups and Off Road Vehicle Groups are missing from the process
- Coordinate among State agencies

Somerset County (April 20, 2006)

Comments

- How does tourism/economic development demand impact/affect the Greenway corridors – are some more significant than others
- Allegheny Front is identified as a preservation corridor; yet is the site of major wind farm developments – conflict: preservation or industrial
- Should complete greenways currently under construction before new projects are started
- Create coalition of multiple interests focussed on quality of life
- Southern Alleghenies RC&D can help empower smaller groups from an RC&D perspective
- Technical assistance for smaller groups
- Somerset, Cambria and Blair Counties have hotel tax to potentially help groups
- Survey data and case studies can help create backing for and help justify green

Additional Corridor Suggestions

None

What's Happening Now

- All 42 miles of the Great Allegheny Passage are completed in Somerset County
- No mileage is completed on the Paint Creek Trail (still proposal stage)
- Stoney Creek engineering and design this fall
- Upper Shade Creek AMD remediation pending

Needs

- Volunteers for trail and AMD treatment maintenance
- Political support needed for Stoney Creek
- County owns part of the Great Allegheny Passage; need to identify capacity for other owners (i.e., conservancies)
- County should adopt Greenway Plan into County Plan

Appendix C: Public Participation Summary
