

### ***The Region***

The Southern Alleghenies region, situated in southcentral Pennsylvania between Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, features 4,600 square miles of various man-made and natural resources such as the historic Town of Bedford, the Laurel Mountains/Highlands and the Juniata River. These resources provide the region's 470,000 residents with opportunities for preservation, recreation and economic development. The Southern Alleghenies Region is made up of the following six counties: Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon and Somerset.

### **Bedford County**

Bedford County is the south central county in the region and encompasses 38 municipalities within its 1,015 square mile area. The County's population increased 4.3% (47,919 to 49,984) from 1990 to 2000. Although Bedford County's population is more concentrated in boroughs such as Bedford (the County Seat), Everett, Schellsburg and Hyndman, 83% of the population live in the more rural townships. Some of the County's unique natural features include: Blue Knob, which is the State's second highest point in elevation and the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River, which is part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

### **Blair County**

Blair County is the north central county in the region and features 24 municipalities within its 527 square mile area. The County's population decreased from 130,542 in 1990 to 129,144 in 2000 (-1.1%).

While the County's major population center is Altoona, residents are also concentrated in boroughs such as Hollidaysburg (the County Seat) and Tyrone. The Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River and Brush Mountain are two of the County's unique natural features.

### **Cambria County**

Cambria County, the northwestern most county in the region, includes 63 municipalities within its 694 square mile area. The County's population decreased from 163,029 in 1990 to 152,598 in 2000 (-6.4%). The County's major population center is Johnstown. However, residents are also concentrated in boroughs such as Ebensburg (the County Seat) and Carrolltown. Some of the County's unique natural features include Prince Gallitzin State Park and the Conemaugh River.

### **Fulton County**

Fulton County is the southeastern county in the region and features 13 municipalities within its 438 square mile area. The County's population increased 3.1% (13,837 to 14,261) from 1990 to 2000. This population is concentrated in boroughs such as McConnellsburg (the County Seat). Buchanan State Forest, Licking Creek and Meadow Grounds Lake are three of the County's most notable landscapes.

### **Huntingdon County**

Huntingdon County, the northeastern most county in the region, includes 48 municipalities within its 890 square mile area. The County's population increased 3.2% (44,164 to 45,586) from 1990 to 2000. The majority of the population base is concentrated in boroughs such as Huntingdon (the County Seat) and

Mount Union. Raystown Lake and Rothrock State Forest are two of the County's unique natural features.

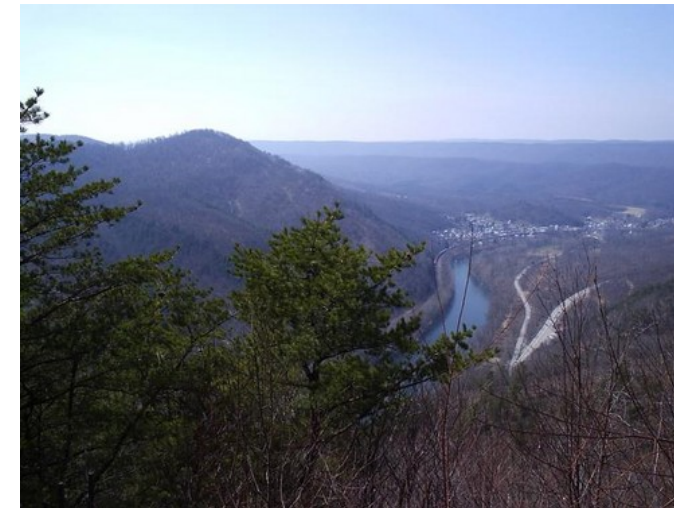


Figure 14: View of Juniata River from one of the Region's Ridges

### **Somerset County**

Somerset County is the southwestern county in the region and encompasses 50 municipalities within its 1,082 square mile area. The County's population increased 2.4% (78,128 to 80,023) from 1990 to 2000. The County's population is concentrated in boroughs such as Somerset (the County Seat), Indian Lake, Jennerstown and Windber. Some of the County's distinguished natural and recreation areas include the Youghiogheny River and Indian Lake. In addition, Somerset County is home to the Flight 93 National Memorial and a portion of the Great Allegheny Passage.

### ***Summary of Previous Planning Efforts***

Recent efforts to conserve resources and protect sensitive natural areas throughout the Southern Alleghenies region have developed a wide range of projects and plans. Many of

these plans have focused on watershed resources through multi-municipal or multi-jurisdictional efforts. The following is a brief overview of major ongoing and recently completed planning efforts in the region. Additional reports and studies have been listed in the bibliography section of this report.

### **Trail and Greenway Projects**

**The Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway™: Pennsylvania's Millennium Trail** aspires to coordinate individual efforts to protect historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources into a larger project. The project area includes four major watersheds but focuses primarily on the greenway corridor, which extends one mile to either side of the river that it travels along. The finished greenway will include linked water and land trails crossing approximately 320 miles from southwestern to central Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh to Harrisburg). As one of the longest proposed greenway corridors in the State, it is considered a 'mega'-greenway by DCNR. These 'mega'-greenways comprise the State level greenway network.

**The Great Allegheny Passage** is a hike-bike trail that will ultimately extend approximately 150 miles from Pittsburgh, PA to Cumberland, MD where it connects with the C & O Canal and continues to Washington, D.C. . Along this journey, the trail passes through the Southern Alleghenies region. Currently, the Great Allegheny Passage features 100 contiguous miles of constructed trail. Nearly the entire trail segment within the Southern Alleghenies region is constructed. Like the

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Main Line Coral Greenway, the Great Allegheny Passage is considered a 'mega'-greenway.

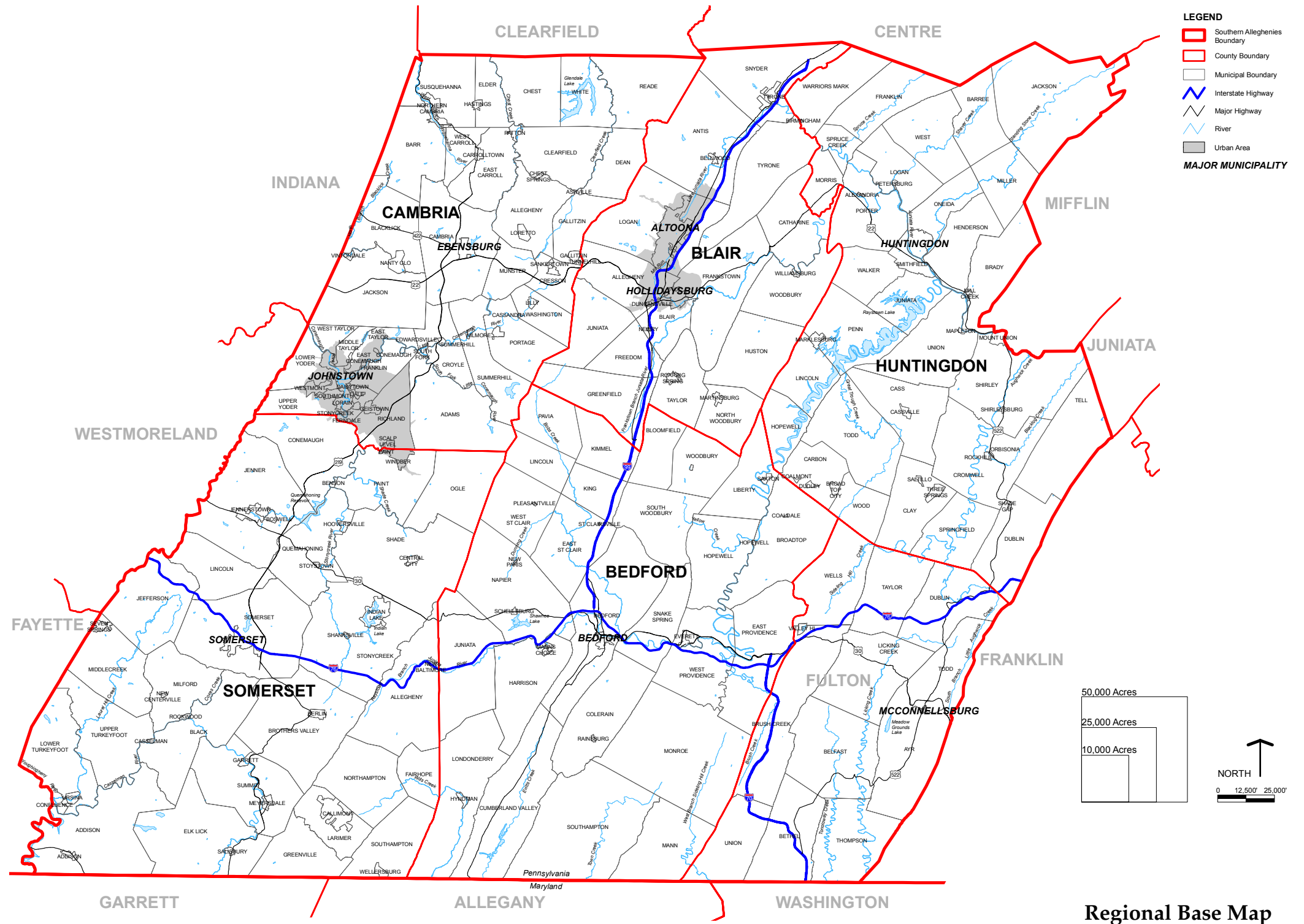
**The Trolley Trail Feasibility Study** analyzes the possibility of reforming the historic Johnstown Trolley Line as a rail trail corridor. The project is part of the Stoneycreek-Quemahoning Initiative. The study breaks development of the 7.4 mile trail into three phases and considers connections to various adjacent recreation and cultural attractions.

**The Fulton County Trails Master Plan** identifies over 400 miles of trails oriented towards pedestrians and various vehicles. These trails generally leverage one of the County's major assets, its rural character, to enhance users' experiences along the trails. The focus of the plan is to create linkages between points of interest and population centers.

**The Pike 2 Bike Trail**, straddling Bedford and Fulton counties, covers 8.5 miles of the original Pennsylvania Turnpike that was eventually bypassed in 1968. The land was turned over to the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy in 2001 for use as a bike trail. The Trail passes through Buchanan State Forest and features two tunnels (approximately 0.7 and 1.3 miles long) along its overall length.

**The Raystown, Huntingdon and Broad Top Greenway Feasibility Study and Plan** highlights 100 miles of natural and cultural resources to be conserved and protected. The proposed greenway corridor extends

from Bedford to Huntingdon and is generally 5 miles wide.



### The Lower Trail Feasibility Study

evaluates the extension of the Lower Trail from Alfarata to Huntingdon. The study was completed in 1995. This 8 miles trail expansion is an important part of the Mainline Canal Greenway.

**The Rock Run Recreation Area** is a DCNR-funded project that evolved through the Allegheny Ridge Corporation's *RidgeRIDER* Program and is owned and operated by the Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority and the Rock Run Recreation Area Advisory Board. This coalition of partners seeks to develop a large brownfield site in Cambria County with off-highway recreational vehicle trails and supporting facilities. The area will provide a State-wide destination for ATV, snowmobile and other such recreational activities.

### Watershed Studies

- Black Lick Creek North and South Watershed Assessment
- Coldwater Heritage Watershed Assessment
- Evitts Creek Watershed Assessment
- Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Conservation Plan
- Juniata Watershed Management Plan
- Piney Creek, Blair County Coldwater Heritage Conservation Plan
- Quemahoning Creek - AMD Treatment Plan
- Rhodes and Ickes Run Coldwater Heritage Conservation Plan
- Shawnee Lake Watershed Assessment
- Shober's Run Watershed Assessment Plan

- South Fork Branch of the Little Conemaugh - Coldwater Heritage Conservation Plan
- Spruce Creek Watershed Assessment
- Stonycreek River Economic Impact Study
- Three Sisters Conservation Plan - Potomac Watershed
- Upper West Branch Susquehanna River Conservation Plan
- Will Creek Joint Study

### Opportunities and Challenges for the Region

Previous planning efforts and the mapping and other data compiled for this Plan have revealed a number of opportunities and challenges for the region. The following listing of these opportunities and challenges represents the key issues to be addressed as part of the Greenways and Open Space Network Plan.

#### Opportunities

##### *Wealth of Natural Resources*

The region contains a vast array of high-quality streams and waterways, ridges, valleys and unique wildlife habitats.

##### *Unique Landscapes*

The position of the region within the State results in a range of unique landscape experiences from the Allegheny Plateau of Cambria and Somerset counties to the ridge and valley formations in the eastern portions of the region.

##### *Existing Projects Underway*

Several trail and greenway projects such as the Great Allegheny Passage are already complete

or underway and have proven to be widely popular recreational destinations.

##### *Large Amount of Publicly-Held Land*

Large portions of the region's open spaces are held in the form of State Parks, State Forests, Gamelands, Federal Lands or County Parks. Additional land is held by conservancies or other preservation-oriented groups.

##### *Localized Development Pressures*

Development pressure varies greatly throughout the region, sometimes high adjacent to cities and boroughs and sometimes high in very rural areas. For example, in Huntingdon County the highest growth areas are rural townships near Raystown Lake. Development pressure is increasing along the region's ridges and valleys, and particularly in areas near public land.

##### *Committed Residents and Leadership*

County residents and leadership have been supportive of the overall goals of the Greenways and Open Space Network.

#### Challenges

##### *Majority of Existing Open Space is Unconnected*

Although the region contains large amounts of publicly and privately held open space, it is currently not linked together in any meaningful way.

##### *Limited Regulatory Tools are Available for Implementation*

The large majority of the region's 236 municipalities lack zoning or other land development regulations that could potentially be used to protect elements of a greenways network. Local attitudes are reticent towards

land use regulation and may preclude their use even where available.



Figure 15: Stream Showing Discoloration due to Abandoned Mine Drainage

##### *Environmental Issues*

Like much of post-industrial Pennsylvania, the Southern Alleghenies region faces issues such as abandoned mine drainage, industrial discharges, uncontrolled sedimentation, agricultural run-off, strip

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mining, poor forestry practices and other forms of water pollution.

### *Funding and Staffing Resources for Implementation*

Although some funding and staff are dedicated to implementing trails and greenway elements in the region, the amount of funding and staff available does not match the needs of the region.

### *Lack of a Coordinated Implementation Approach*

Prior to this Plan there was not a coordinated effort to develop a regional greenway network.