

## 6.0 Identifying Issues, Concerns, Constraints & Opportunities

In order to identify the issues and concerns of watershed residents, several methods of gathering public input were employed. Information was collected using a variety of public involvement tools/techniques including: meeting regularly with a Study Advisory Committee (SAC), facilitating public meetings, conducting key person interviews, carrying out a citizen survey, and conducting a stream walk assessment using citizen volunteers. Also, issues were identified through an extensive review of prior studies. The recommended Actions and Management Options listed in Chapter 7, *An Action Plan for the Cherry Creek Watershed*, have been designed around these identified issues and opportunities.

### 6.1 Study Advisory Committee Meetings

The public involvement campaign began with a search for watershed partners who would serve as the backbone of the planning process. Many individuals, organizations, representatives and agencies were willing to participate. A group of about twenty individuals, agencies and organizations formed the advisory committee. The advisory committee included local, regional and federal watershed partners. Initially, the steering committee met about every other month to formulate an overall conservation planning strategy. Throughout the planning process the study advisory committee meetings were conducted as informal work sessions where the major directional decisions were made.

The first study committee meeting was held September 5, 2002 at the Delaware Water Gap Municipal Building. Project goals, scope of work and timeline were reviewed and potential key person interviewees were identified. A “results” brainstorming session was also conducted in which committee members described desired outcomes of this project which included the following:

#### *Watershed Condition:*

- Maintain quality of life
- Maintain historic values
- Maintain ecological condition of valley

#### *Water Quality:*

- Improved stream and water quality
- Need to find ways to respond to development in the next 20 years – address stormwater issues
- Address problem of people nuisance wildlife (geese/ducks)
- Develop a countywide sewer system

*Education:*

- Educate landowners and public on why Cherry Valley is special (history, geology) and the role they can play in maintaining the quality of the watershed

*Coordination and Planning:*

- Maintain quality of life
- Establish an institutional / organizational framework to guide future watershed activities
- Develop a foundation for a future watershed management plan (which would take a more quantitative approach such as developing a water budget)
- Need to create a dynamic plan that can be modified and updated as conditions and needs change

A second committee meeting was held on October 10, 2002 at the Christ Hamilton Lutheran Church (Covenant House Community Building) in Bossardsville and preceded the first public meeting. A draft citizen survey questionnaire and project fact sheet was reviewed, and initial key person interviews were discussed. The citizen survey questionnaire and the project fact sheet are included in *Appendix F*.

The third committee meeting was held on January 30, 2003 at the Stroud Township Municipal Center. The purpose of this meeting was to review planning process progress as several project initiatives were completed or ongoing since the last committee meeting including: the first public meeting, the stream walk assessment and the mailing of the citizen survey. Also, the recent formation of the “Friends of Cherry Valley” whose mission and vision overlap with this planning effort was noted. Copies of an updated Fact Sheet were handed out and discussed. It was decided that the fact sheet could be expanded into an 11x17 fold out to be more informative as a handout for the upcoming second public meeting to be held on March 20, 2003. The *Special Places* map developed from the first public meeting was presented and reviewed. Also the *Straight-Line Diagram of Watershed Resources* was reviewed (See: Chapter 1). Overlapping resources within watershed mile segments were noted. The *Mean Impervious Cover* map of the watershed was introduced and the project consultant explained how the methodology used to produce this map was derived from that used by the Delaware River Basin Commission planners for the Pocono Creek study.<sup>1</sup> Don Baylor of Aquatic Resources summarized the results of the *Cherry Creek Stream Walk Assessment* while pointing out certain areas on the *Stream Walk Results* maps. Results were also summarized by the project consultant in an associated table (included in *Appendix G – Stream Walk Assessment Matrix*). In discussing the results, Don cited the primary problems in the creek corridor as:

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<sup>1</sup> Planner Pamela V’Combe, DRBC, presented the basic methodology to BLOSS Associates and assisted in the windshield survey. BLOSS Associates interpreted the results from the windshield survey using aerial photography for the project area and cover classes provided by DRBC.

- Silt deposition,
- Some unstable banks,
- Down trees, and
- Poor habitat because of silt deposition.

Don also noted that the worst problem area is that of the old Blakeslee Farm. The area has no banks, is full of silt, has poor habitat, and is a lot wider than normal. Don referred to the area as a possible prime rehabilitation area. If rehabilitated it may better ‘silty’ areas down stream. With regard to the Blakeslee Farm, Michael Pressman of the Nature Conservancy noted that the farmers, the Nature Conservancy, & the US Dept. of Agriculture have approved & signed a Farm Conservation Plan. The Plan will call for the installation of grass buffer zones around all waterways & roads, which may decrease stream silt deposition and that there will be a shift from corn operations to hay operations over time. Corn requires more tilling. Hay will keep the soils intact better and longer.

A draft *List of Problems, Issues, and Concerns* gathered from the first public meeting, municipal meetings, and key person’s interviews was handed out. The list was broken down into four subheadings:

- Conservation / Preservation
- Education / Awareness
- Management
- Recreation

The Education / Awareness category had the most listed items. One of the purposes of making this list was to facilitate the visioning process later in the meeting. It was noted that multi-municipal open space plans (HJP, Stroud Region, & Eastern Monroe) have identified Cherry Valley as an important conservation area. Also, the “Greater Cherry Valley’s” potential for National Wildlife Refuge status was noted. (See: *Appendix H – Greater Cherry Valley Wildlife Refuge Initiative*). The greater Cherry Valley ranks # 43 out of approximately 500 potential areas in the nation.

The preliminary citizen survey results were presented by the project consultant. Also, population projections were provided based on trends for the watershed using source data from Census 2000 and Monroe County Planning Commission’s Population Projections. These figures were later used to create a Build-Out Scenario for the watershed. (See: Table 6.1)

The third committee meeting concluded with a brainstorming session on ideas of what the Cherry Creek Watershed area should be like in the future. David Lange, Community Planner with the Rivers and Trails Program facilitated using his “magic wall,” in grouping the ideas into categories. These topical categories were then used to help draft a Vision Statement and goals.



Magic Wall & Study Advisory Committee

The fourth committee meeting was held on February 20, 2003 at the Smithfield Township Municipal Building. The purpose of this meeting was to review results and feedback from January 20 Study Advisory Committee (Meeting #3) and revise the initial draft Vision Statement crafted by the project consultants using collected input from the committee. Another brainstorming session was facilitated to identify and develop a list of potential actions that could be done within the next three years to help achieve the goals and vision for the watershed.

The following were listed:

- The identification & preservation of historic & prehistoric sites;
- Get the Friends of Cherry Valley organized, structured, & enabled to catalyze & oversee planning implementation;
- Implementation of conservation design ordinances, conservation zoning & aggressive land acquisition programs;
- Continue farm land conservation by purchases / easements;
- Develop watershed management plan, water testing / water quality;
- Preservation of greenway corridors along Cherry Creek and the ridges;
- Continued protection & enhancement of wildlife & vegetation, also reintroduction of native species being crowded out by non-native invasive species and control/management of the latter;
- Enhance & restore riparian buffers through acquisitions / easements;
- A National Wildlife Refuge established & funded;
- Roadway improvements (especially Cherry Valley Road & Middle Road) to provide safer walking and biking, i.e. Bicycle and pedestrian “friendly” roadways. (Maybe separate bike lanes or pathways.);
- Fluvial Geomorphology Assessment;
- Protection & enhancement of Scenic Vistas, through zoning easements / acquisitions, etc.;
- Develop an out reach program to educate and encourage watershed stewardship;
- Land use ordinance changes to reduce residential / commercial development;
- Encourage & manage the appropriate use of industrial and commercial sites, e.g. mining closures done in beneficial ways;
- Clean up eyesores & potential contaminants;
- Begin in-stream habitat improvement & bank stabilization;
- Encourage preservation of open space and the development of some greenways with trails;
- Implement zoning to protect open-space & environmentally sensitive areas;
- Implement timber harvest regulations on the municipal level that manage timber harvesting to minimize visual & environmental impacts;
- Maintain scenic vistas and important viewsheds;

- Adopt a highway litter clean-up program for local roads;
- Develop watershed-wide greenway system;
- Develop an equine / cross country trail system.

Discussion regarding the logistics and the format for the next Public Meeting #2 to be held on March 20, 2003 completed the agenda for this meeting. Using the information obtained from the outreach process to date the consultants began to draft potential goals and actions. The second Public Meeting will be held on March 20 at either Christ Hamilton Lutheran Church or the Cherry Valley United Methodist Church. It was suggested by Michael Pressman of the Nature Conservancy that information with regard to the groups and programs currently operating in the valley be somehow incorporated into the next meeting to help clear up the public's confusion on what is happening in the valley. The consultants suggested that an extra hour before the official start of the Public Meeting be devoted to an Open House for informal discussion and display of current and ongoing planning, programs, and projects focused on the Cherry Valley. The list of groups and programs currently operating in Cherry Valley is included in *Appendix I*.

The fifth committee meeting was held on May 1, 2003 at the Delaware Water Gap Town Hall. The purpose of this meeting was to review results of the March 20 Public Meeting #2, the Revised Draft Vision Statement, and Potential Actions and Craft Draft Action Plan. The remaining Study Advisory Committee meetings focused on further refinement of the Draft Action Plan and the Draft Report.

## **6.2 Public Meetings**

### **Public Meeting #1**

Public Meeting #1 was held on October 10, 2002 at the Christ Hamilton Lutheran Church (Covenant House Community Building) in Bossardsville. The meeting was held to help identify issues, concerns and threats to resources in the watershed (See *Appendix J – Relevant Newspaper Clippings*). This meeting also served to introduce the planning effort to the public and collect information from the public in facilitated group discussion aimed at answering three basic sets of questions:

- What are the “special places” within the watershed?
- What are the threats/possibilities for the watershed in the next ten years? and
- What should we do to maintain the watershed for the future?

Close to thirty citizens turned out for this meeting which was held immediately following the second Study Advisory Committee meeting held at the same location. Advisor Committee members helped greet members from the larger public and participated throughout the meeting as well. As attendees gathered they were asked to locate where they lived in the watershed by placing a pin on the watershed base map. There was a good distribution of representation throughout the watershed.

We also wanted to know what is positive about the watershed and what residents are concerned about preserving for the future. In order to protect the resources of the watershed, it is necessary to inventory what is already here that is valuable. The attendees were asked to identify “special places” in the watershed on additional basemaps spread out on tables for that purpose. There was also time after the close of the meeting for attendees to continue working on the maps. Results of the special places mapping exercise are illustrated by the *Special Places* map (Figure 6.1) and the following list:

Unique Lands:

- All of Cherry Creek Watershed
- Eagle Rest Tree Plantation, choose & cut Christmas trees (tree farm), owned by Alden & Ann Featherman
- Some underdeveloped Land- Possibly owned by the National Park Service
- The Gorge along 191/Mtn. Run
- Headwaters of Cherry Creek
- Cherry Creek as a Exceptional Value Stream
- Kettle Bog
- Collections of Flowing Springs
- Limestone Springs, on American Water Company property (a big spring)

Recreational Resources:

- The Appalachian Trail
- Totts Gap / Appalachian Trail
- Kirkridge Shelter, Retreat Center, Hang-Gliding Area

Scenic Quality:

- Cherry Valley Point
- Valley Views (Blakeslee Farm)
- Valley Views
- Views along Cherry Valley Road- long distance views
- Views from the top of the hill
- Wolf Rocks- Great View Point

Cultural Resources:

- 5 Lime Kilns
- Glacier ‘Dump’ - by rocks
- Cherry Valley Winery
- Glenwood Hotel
- The Deerhead Inn- cultural & historic center
- Delaware Water Gap Golf Course (former Wolf Hollow Golf Course)
- Church in Delaware Water Gap, Mountain / Gazebo / Hostel Shelter
- Castle Inn (Fred Waring performance)
- Merwine home, good acreage on stream front (like to preserve)

- Cherry Valley Grange Hall
- Old Stone House
- Old Stone House- former Schoonover Farm (Nolan)
- Bell School
- God's Sanctuary- creek side chapel
- Poplar Valley Church
- Kellers Church
- Cherry Valley Church
- Kemmertown Cemetery- historic

The meeting began with a presentation about challenges and opportunities in the Brodhead watershed. Next, attendees were asked what they thought. A group discussion focused on answering the three questions outlined above. Attendees' responses were captured. A summary list of public input identified the following issues, threats and concerns facing the Cherry Creek as a result of this first public meeting in order of the number of votes received at the end of the discussion:

- Concern about future over-development and potential impacts to water quality, scenic quality;
- Loss of farmland from development and impact from new septic systems on water quality;
- Concern about future impact on aquifer from potential increased water withdrawals by Pennsylvania American Water Company (unclear what they are permitted to withdraw and what amounts they are planning to withdraw in the future);
- Lack of scientific data about whether current groundwater quality and quantity is sufficient to support future growth;
- Lack of landowner awareness of good streamside stewardship;
- Littering and trash along highways - lack of respect;
- Concern about use of pesticides and herbicides (i.e. Atrazine spraying) on lawns and farms and impacts on quality of groundwater and headwater streams;
- Landowner concern about trespassing and liability;
- Concern that existing municipal codes are outdated or inadequate;
- Lack of awareness about the uniqueness of Cherry Creek;
- Landowners lack knowledge about sources of assistance and what to do about streambank erosion and trees falling in streams;
- Lack of integrated dynamic watershed planning;
- Concern about new housing development and resulting water quality problems from stormwater runoff and septic tanks;
- Need for landowners to have a role in future decisions about the watershed;
- Landowners lack knowledge about why trees falling in streams (some natural causes, man-made causes);

- Slow agency response to address streambank erosion problems leading to landowners doing the work themselves;
- Concern about new upstream development and the impact to water quality from what they do on the land;
- Hard to bring landowners together in large geographic area.

## **Public Meeting/Workshop #2**

Public Meeting #2 was held on March 20, 2002. For the first hour there was a Special Open House - discussing & detailing the conservation programs and projects underway or already available for landowners in the watershed. Over 40 citizens and stakeholders attended. The meeting began with a presentation of watershed resources and issues identified to date. The presentation was then followed by a general discussion and comments on the draft vision statement.

The larger group was then divided up into four discussion groups to review draft goals and identify potential watershed actions. The following is the resulting list of draft goals:

- Goal # 1 - Preserve, protect and manage and the watershed's unique resources.
- Goal # 2 – Improve water quality throughout the watershed;
- Goal # 3 – Preserve and enhance the scenic quality of the valley;
- Goal #4 – Create a network of greenways and trails that provide linkages for wildlife and recreational opportunities to enjoy nature and scenery;
- Goal # 5 – Promote and support stewardship efforts.

## **Public Meeting #3**

Public Meeting #3 was held on June 2, 2004 to present the Draft Plan and start the 30-day citizen review process.

### **6.3 Stream Walk Assessment**

A Stream Walk Assessment of the Cherry Creek was conducted to provide a benchmark study to help assess the overall health of the watershed and to identify potential management strategies. A description of the stream walk process and a summary results matrix can be found in *Appendix G - Stream Walk Assessment Matrix*. The spatial location of the assessment results are illustrated on the *Stream Walk Results* maps (Figures 6.2).

The major problems identified by the stream walk assessment were:

- Silt deposition,
- Some unstable banks,
- Down trees, and
- Poor habitat because of silt deposition.

The worst problem area is that of the old Blakeslee Farm. The area has no banks, is full of silt, has poor habitat, and is a lot wider than normal.

As a supplement to the stream walk assessment Gary Bloss of BLOSS Associates (project consultant) and Brian C. Nolan (landowner) kayaked the section from the bridge at the Blakeslee Farm down to the Eagle Rest Tree Farm in the early fall of 2003. Fourteen (14) deadfall trees “strainers” were encountered and noted in this approximate five (5) mile section of the creek. While normal deadfall of trees in the stream is healthy for the stream this preponderance of deadfall appears to indicate a condition more closely associated with unstable bank conditions.

### **6.4 Citizen Survey**

In the beginning of November 2002, the Brodhead Watershed Association through its Cherry Creek Watershed Sub-Association spearheaded an effort to gather thoughts of citizens who lived in the watershed area. Approximately 950 surveys were sent out to landowners whose land is located within the Cherry Creek Watershed area. There was an outstanding response rate of 23%.

Most of the respondents were from Hamilton and Stroud Townships and have lived there for more than 30 years. Also, most live next to or less than a quarter mile away from the Cherry Creek or its tributaries. Most believe that Cherry Creek is of moderately clean quality and would wade in it occasionally. The most frequent activities engaged in, in the watershed are: enjoying nature, gardening, bird watching, and walking/running. Activities occasionally done were hiking and biking.

Current major problems cited in the watershed were:

- Loss of agricultural land and open space to development,
- Increased vehicular traffic, and

- Loss of wetlands.

Current occasional problems cited in the watershed were:

- Loss of scenic quality,
- Trash and litter / illegal dumping,
- Less groundwater (withdraws from wells),
- Threats to drinking water quality,
- Soil loss and sedimentation from new development and agricultural practices,
- Fertilizer & herbicide runoff from lawns, farms & golf courses,
- Property damage from wildlife,
- Solid waste disposal,
- Storm water runoff from parking lots & streets,
- Water contamination from failing septic tanks, animal waste from dogs, geese, farm animals, etc., and
- Frequency of flooding.

Most respondents believe it's very important to protect the streams & lakes in the watershed and to preserve farming in the community. Actions that respondents labeled as very important if money were used to improve the Cherry Creek Watershed were to:

- Encourage preservation of open space as part of new development,
- Protect environmentally sensitive areas,
- Encourage municipalities to work on more effective planning and zoning,
- Preserve more natural areas,
- Preserve scenic quality,
- Work with landowners on ways to protect water quality,
- Repair malfunctioning septic systems,
- Restore degraded streams, and
- Create a watershed wide system of greenways and trails.

A more detailed summary of the Cherry Creek Watershed Survey is included in *Appendix F*.

## ***6.5 Key Person Interviews***

Over twenty interviews were conducted in person or as phone conversations. The project was explained and the geographic extent of the watershed was described. The following interview questions were developed as a guide and starting point to help draw out relevant information from each identified individual and to determine their ideas regarding issues, opportunities, concerns and potential threats in the watershed. A list of key interviewees is included in *Appendix K*.

Interview questions:

- ✓ What specific opportunities or concerns are you aware of that might help or hinder the development of a watershed management plan?

- ✓ What special places are you aware of in the corridor (natural, historic, cultural, etc.)?
- ✓ Do you have any specific ideas for the protection of lands within the watershed? If so where?
- ✓ Are you aware of any special needs that should be addressed in the planning process?
- ✓ How do you envision the implementation of a successful watershed management plan next 3-5 years?

**Opportunities / Concerns:**

- Sprawl and unchecked land development,
- Impact of development especially erosion,
- Impact of development on scenic beauty,
- Forest fragmentation of interior forest for breeding, i.e. songbirds,
- Need to inform people on the rules of management of the waterway (what are the rules?),
- As a common regional resource the watershed provides a focal point for people to come together and get excited about conservation and protect something valuable to their community,
- Ecotourism opportunity,
- Effect of new development on water supply (additional private wells),
- Need for more open-space areas,
- There was a dramatic change in quality around 1958,
- Landowners abusing land carrying capacities,
- Opportunity for encouraging stewardship of the land, maintaining scenic quality, and increasing water quality of Cherry Creek,
- Clean up Lake Lenape (which appears to be affected by Eutrophication), and
- Provide trail link to the Appalachian Trail in the headwater area from in the vicinity of the Cherry Valley Vineyard.

**Special Places:**

- Train Station property, by DWG Bridge,
- Lime kilns,
- Cherry Valley Golf Course could be used for schools or as a County course (revenue generator),
- Old estates in the valley:

- Groner Farm
- Fellencer Farm
- Fetherman Farm,
- Church on Kemmertown Road,
- John McDowell's house was one of the 1<sup>st</sup> in the valley (currently owned by Christine family) - John McDowell, who was the 1<sup>st</sup> person to settle and live on this property in the 1700s, married a DePue daughter. The DePue's were the first non-native settlers in Monroe County (the present stone house was built in 1824 by Shaw, McDowell's son in law, on the same foundation as a previous log cabin burned down),
- Indian burial grounds,
- Hollows were named after Jacob Fetherman and his sons,
- The oldest house in the valley is toward DWG , it's a stone house once owned by Ray Roberts, and it's on Cherry Valley Road opposite the duck pond;

#### **Land Protection:**

- Add to the state game lands,
- Make a special conservancy reserve,
- Buy special lands to keeping them from development and make them available for public use,
- The Porter Farm (old goat farm) containing approximately 48 acres,
- Need to limit building especially upstream,
- Protection of agricultural lands,
- Tax relief for landowners who maintain property as open-space,
- What has been going on so far is great e.g. the Blakeslee Farm acquisition and a pending deal for the Cherry Valley fens,
- Would like to see Cherry Valley kept near to its current state, i.e. limit new development.

#### **Special needs:**

- Linkages between the special places.
  - Scenic drive through the watershed,
  - Creek side hiking trail,
  - Scenic Drive Loop,
  - Support with interpretive brochures and/or audiotape (educational, informative, historical, scenic, and accessible to all types of persons from those who are avid hikers to those who are physically challenged),

- Encouraging landowners to agree to manage their lands in a particular way,
- Scenic designation might be an important consideration,
- Many residents may not realize the threats to valley with regard to scenic degradation,
- Need management strategy for dangerous and/or felled old growth in or over Cherry Creek,
- Need open space tax relief,
- Education of land owners to avoid any potential misunderstandings about the plan and the process and to have a say in the future changes in the watershed,
- Establish credibility of people working on the conservation projects in the watershed,
- Maintain water quality.

**Implementation of a successful watershed management plan:**

- Formation of an organization of concerned peoples to help implement plan actions,
- Workshops for landowners and municipalities would key on what are the options or tools available for implementing the plan,
- Helping landowners take the next step toward protecting the lands;
- Helping municipalities take the first step in developing zoning or protective measures,
- Develop a broad public education and awareness campaign;
- Formation of a possible National Wildlife Refuge in the greater Cherry Valley as recently reported,
- Create an information video on a successful or non-successful watershed conservation plan,
- Develop measures of success for maintaining scenic quality, encouraging stewardship of the land, and increasing quality of Cherry Creek.

## ***6.6 Build-out Analysis***

A Build-out analysis was performed by the Monroe County Planning Commission to assist in determining the potential developmental growth facing the watershed. Using population numbers from the 2000 census and the watershed boundary overlay, a year 2000 existing population was established by municipality in the watershed. Projections to the year 2020 were then calculated based on current trends. The analysis removed some of the environmental constraints from “developable” parcels within the watershed e.g. wetlands (NWI), steep slopes to determine the available acreage open to development and in order to apply growth factors based on current zoning. A parcel was

considered developable if it is listed vacant or has no building improvements or is a potentially developable parcel such as a hotel, hunting or fishing club lands, or water company land, or a property currently using Act 319 tax incentives. If it is not developable according to these criteria then it was classified as not developable. It should be remembered that this is a subjective analysis to obtain a general indication of the potential development facing the watershed. Developable land by municipality in the watershed using these criteria resulted in the following acreages:

- Hamilton Township - 6874 acres
- Stroud Township - 4658 acres
- Smithfield Township - 1794 acres
- Delaware Water Gap Borough – 1154

Except for Delaware Water Gap Borough this analysis assumes the use of individual wells and septic systems. If public water and/or sewer were provided, the numbers would reflect a different scenario. Under the former scenario build-out would occur in the watershed between the years 2030 and 2105 (See: Table 6.1 – Summary Results - Build-Out Analysis).

[Insert Build-out analysis Table 6.1]



[Insert map of Special Places.]



[Insert map of Stream Walk Results]

