

## Executive Summary

The purpose of the Cherry Creek Watershed Conservation Plan is to create a plan to help guide and prioritize conservation actions in the Cherry Creek watershed. It is intended to be shared by those concerned for the area, which is at a critical juncture in time if it is to preserve and enhance its special distinction.

The Plan is structured with continuous action and management options and opportunities of short to long-term duration. Promoting and encouraging outreach programs toward a greater understanding of the issues and a true commitment to the goals are crucial elements to success. Protecting stream corridors is particularly critical to water quality issues while ridgeline protection is particularly critical to maintaining scenic quality.

The planning area for this conservation plan is the Cherry Creek watershed area and two small adjacent watersheds that drain directly into the Delaware River. The Cherry Creek watershed area essentially defines Cherry Valley and can therefore be considered one and the same, covering approximately 13,314 acres, about 20.8 square miles in total. Ultimately the Plan is a means to assemble and focus planning efforts on a watershed-wide basis and identify specific water-related conservation and restoration projects.



## Critical Decisions

“Cherry Valley” is widely recognized in the greater region as a unique and special place. This “gem” of Monroe County is rich in natural resources, harbors a vast array of native species of special concern, and has unique and distinct landforms, providing aesthetically pleasing vistas from locales and roads traversing the valley. Given these attractive factors along with close proximity to urban amenities, mass transportation and highway access, the threats of environmental degradation are real. Strong growth pressures in the region have led to sprawl development patterns with not enough consideration of the impact on both the quality and quantity of surface and groundwater of the watershed. As rooftops, parking lots and streets spread across the landscape, replacing forests and fields, streams suffer. Rain and snowmelt run rapidly off these man-made surfaces instead of soaking into the ground. This stormwater runoff carries sediment and pollutants into the streams, accelerates stream-bank erosion, and raises stream temperatures. We must consider watershed protection a priority as future development and planning occur.

## The Foundation:

### Public Involvement

The identification of watershed-specific problems, issues, concerns, and constraints has been a major focus of the public involvement process in developing the plan. Though much of the inventory information was gathered and collected from prior related plans and studies, other information was generated as part of the planning process and through meetings with the public and watershed partners regarding significant resources within the watershed.

Four Primary Goals were identified:

1. Preserve, protect and manage the watershed's unique resources.
2. Maintain and/or improve water quantity/quality throughout the watershed.
3. Create a network of greenways and greenways with trails that provide linkages for wildlife and recreational opportunities to enjoy nature and scenery.
4. Promote and support stewardship efforts.

The following Vision Statement represents how citizens in the watershed will view the landscape in the watershed within the next 10 years. It reflects input from the public derived in preparation of the plan and what will happen when the watershed conservation plan is effectively implemented.

### ***Vision Statement***

*In the year 2014 the watershed of Cherry Valley is a landscape rich in nature, scenery and history, and indicative of a community that cares about its pastoral qualities. The resources that make the watershed unique are unspoiled and provide visible evidence of the commitment of numerous conservation initiatives by residents and concerned citizens who have treasured, nurtured, and respected the valley's assets. The bucolic landscapes, forests, and wetlands in the watershed are managed to facilitate long-term health and diversity of flora and fauna. The clean water of the Cherry Creek Watershed supports healthy fisheries and wildlife. The watershed also provides safe and sufficient groundwater and drinking water. A system of greenways, safe roads for bicyclists and pedestrians, and ridgeline trails provides continuous wildlife corridors and opportunities to enjoy the watershed's resources while participating in safe, enjoyable and healthful activities such as walking, hiking and bicycling. Traditional ways of life such as farming, hunting, fishing and trapping are maintained. The high quality agricultural lands have been preserved for future generations. Public and private partnerships have worked in many positive ways to respond to the development pressures facing the valley and have created an oasis of nature in balance with its cultural community.*

## ***Critical Actions***

Recommended early action items were identified by steering committee members, municipal officials and other stakeholders. Implementation responsibilities will be shared by individual landowners, municipalities, and various agencies as outlined in the Plan. Timeframes and details appear under related objectives in the *Management Options* tables, 7.4, found in Chapter 7.

Preservation and resource management is dependent upon cooperative and proactive participation.

- *Create and secure funding for a National Wildlife Refuge.*
- *Work with landowners on Key Conservation Tracts/Projects:*
  - Protect Kittatinny and Godfrey Ridges and links to Quiet Valley Living History Farm*
  - Pursue conservation options with PA Water Company property.*
- *Identify and protect most significant threatened prehistoric, historic and cultural sites.*
- *Enhance municipal zoning, land use and subdivision ordinances and comprehensive plans to define and protect historic and cultural resources:*
  - *encourage creative reuse of historic structures consistent with maintaining the historic character of the building.*
  - *Incorporate clear, reasonable design review standards for renovations to historic structures into municipal codes*
  - *Require enhanced review procedures and permits for demolition of historic structures.*

- *Encourage developers to use voluntary design guidelines following Conservation Subdivision Design concepts.*



Achieving the goal of maintaining and improving water quality in the Watershed is critical.

- *Restore in-stream habitat in areas degraded by flooding, canalization, loss of riparian buffer, and increased runoff.*
- *Update municipal 537 plans to ensure consistency.*
- *Develop sewage management programs to better manage on-lot septic systems.*
- *Encourage alternatives (such as land application) to stream discharges from sewage treatment plants where feasible.*
- *Encourage responsible use of fertilizers and pesticides.*
- *Manage nuisance wildlife such as geese.*

Greenway networks are the visual & ecological cornerstone of the Plan, preserving and enhancing opportunities to enjoy the natural beauty of Cherry Valley.

- *Complete a comprehensive greenway and trail plan that examines the feasibility of developing a watershed wide system of greenways to maintain*

and enhance green infrastructure and scenic quality, and to examine trail opportunities and linkages including Kittatinny Ridge project, Godfrey Ridge trail, Brodhead, McMichael, and Pocono Creeks Greenways Plan, Quiet Valley Historical Farm, Appalachian Trail, and PennDOT Visitors Center.

- Promote bicycle and pedestrian compatibility on all state and local roads, including the implementation of traffic-calming techniques.
- Encourage ordinances that preserve and maintain historic character. Prohibit/restrict billboards and apply appropriate restrictions to other signs in keeping with the scenic/historic character and reduce visual clutter through better signage ordinances.
- Encourage improved signage, landscaping, buffer areas, driveways, and lighting of commercial facilities accessible from arterial roadways.
- Avoid road widening or realignments that detract from the rural character or serve to promote increased speeds.
- Encourage the use of edge striping to narrow travel lanes and increase shoulder widths.
- Develop/enhance litter control program.



Developing partnerships for protection, securing funding, management and monitoring will signal commitment to crucial support elements.

- Conduct an outreach campaign to increase visibility of conservation

programs, benefits and stewardship opportunities.

- Utilize a variety of news media to communicate and interpret watershed values and issues.
- Support and evolve the “Friends of Cherry Valley” as a sustainable partnership to catalyze and oversee plan implementation.
- Identify, develop, and foster cooperative relationships with surrounding municipalities to work toward the creation of a regional greenway and trail system. Establish Environmental Advisory Councils in all watershed municipalities and explore creation of a watershed-wide EAC. Explore additional funding opportunities through state, federal, and private organizations.
- Explore the possibilities presented by Act 153 of 1996 authorizing the levying of taxes for financing the purchase of open space.
- Create fundraisers and special events to support greenway development.
- Develop landowner outreach and education program to promote conservation activities.
  - Encourage landowners and citizens to plant native species, plant or maintain riparian buffers and improve stream habitat.
  - Continue to make landowners aware of endangered species on their property.
- Organize a sustainable agriculture workshop for interested landowners with information on sustainable / best management practices for forestry and agriculture.
- Coordinate with other agencies to identify property owners of key agricultural lands and approach them regarding their participation in preservation programs.
- Encourage landowners to conserve privately owned woodlots.
  - Use sustainable forestry practices.

- Educate interested landowners about placing conservation easements on open land through donation or purchase.
- Conduct inventories of terrestrial wildlife and their habitats, including birds, reptiles and amphibians.
  - Conduct standard census work during breeding and non-breeding seasons.
  - Hold a “bioblitz” throughout the watershed.
  - Determine if areas in the watershed qualify as Important Bird Areas.
  - Continue with research on saw-whet owls and breeding birds.
- Develop more effective deer, geese, and other nuisance wildlife management programs.
- Implement programs to control/manage invasive and exotic species.
- Develop sign ordinance.
- Minimize visual impacts from cellphone-towers through local ordinances , (e.g. keep towers below 200 feet; no lights on towers, etc. )
- Review and assess effectiveness of existing local tree protection ordinances.
- Develop tree protection programs through local subdivision and zoning ordinances to protect and conserve forest cover.



## **Action Plan Summary**

### **Preserve, protect and manage the watershed’s unique resources**

- Conserve at least 50 % of priority resource lands (agricultural, forest, wetland, riparian lands, ridges, scenic areas, geologic areas) in the watershed by 2007.
- Make significant advances in protecting and interpreting cultural heritage and resources in the watershed.
- Preserve and enhance green infrastructure in the watershed.

### **Maintain and/or improve water quantity / quality throughout the watershed.**

- Maintain current baseflow and groundwater recharge in the watershed.
- Improve quantitative measures of benthic invertebrate and fishery quality.
- Improve, maintain, and enhance water quality by keeping the creek and its tributaries clean.

### **Create a network of greenways and greenways with trails that provide linkages for wildlife and recreational opportunities to enjoy nature and scenery.**

- Examine greenway and trail opportunities for the watershed.
- Develop a strategy for implementing a trail system.

- Improve roadways for bicycle and pedestrian access and safety.
- Expand recreational opportunities in the watershed.
- Maintain and enhance roadways to preserve scenic quality and landscape character.

conservation district, and non-profit conservation groups will be able to leverage funds for these purposes.

**COMMENTS / QUESTIONS:**

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***Promote and support stewardship efforts.***

- Develop educational and outreach efforts to inform and involve the citizens of the watershed.
- Foster and develop partnerships to help monitor and implement plan recommendations.



## **Implementation**

This document will be used to petition the Commonwealth to have the Cherry Creek Watershed Conservation Plan put on the Pennsylvania Rivers Conservation Registry. After obtaining this status, the watershed will be eligible for matching funds for the implementation of projects that are directly related to the actions and strategies identified in this plan. Thus, municipalities, the County, the