
Chapter 5

Vision and Goals for Open Space and Recreation in Mercer County

Without a clear, defined vision of what a community wants to achieve, there is no significant probability that it will achieve the desired results.

The Greenways, Open Space and Rural Recreation Plan was developed concurrently with the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan. The plan development and public participation processes were intentionally conducted in tandem to foster consistency between the two plans. The comprehensive plan is the broader document that assures the coordination and consistency of community development projects across the county. The greenways plan aims to coordinate conservation efforts at the county level and provide guidance for recreation facilities and services in the rural communities of the county.

The first part of this chapter highlights elements of the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan that provide a foundation for the more specific directives of the greenways plan; the greenways vision and goals are presented in the second portion of the chapter. The chapter concludes with three maps that illustrate the location of designated greenways, open space conservation areas, and the countywide recreation network.

From the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan

The Vision

The Mercer County Comprehensive Plan defines a broad vision for community development and conservation. The vision provides direction for the greenways plan by addressing natural resources, community character and recreational and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors. The vision statement is the slogan, albeit a long one, that expresses the kind of community that residents want – the kind of community they want to continue to become.

Mercer County Vision Statement

In the year 2025,...

...Mercer County maintains a diverse array of urban, suburban and rural community types, yet has grown in a manner that respects the rural character and provides a high quality of life for all residents.

...the County has embraced the concept of “smart growth,” as evidenced through guiding policies, strong leadership, and citizen feedback.

...existing towns continue to invest in their core districts and continue to grow in areas that are suitable for development. Municipalities plan and implement jointly to save costs and provide high-quality services as a region.

...economic opportunities are flourishing within the County, creating new jobs and attracting new residents. Sustainable forestry and agriculture are strong economic components of the rural landscape and economy.

...the County provides many recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities for residents and visitors through sound planning and program development.

...young persons are staying or moving to the region to take advantage of abundant entertainment and recreation opportunities, as well as safe, affordable neighborhoods well-served by water/sewer and telecommunications utilities.

...existing residents and newcomers enjoy many opportunities to live, work, learn, retire, and play among the County’s strong community fabric and friendly people.

The Growth and Development Policy Statement

The comprehensive plan paired the vision with a growth and development policy statement to outline the patterns, methods, and tools that the county and its partners would use to work toward the vision.

Mercer County Growth and Policy Statement

Mercer County and its communities should plan for continued development and should work to enhance the sense of place in each of the urban, suburban, and rural areas. This will be established by striving to achieve the Community Vision and by establishing policies that:

- *define existing developed areas and areas for future growth*
- *encourage redevelopment in existing developed areas and encourage new development near existing developed areas*
- *balance a variety of land uses and densities, as well as combinations of uses, appropriate to urban, suburban, and rural character*
- *encourage land uses that support a strong tax base, including agriculture and forest industries in rural areas*
- *encourage development patterns that complement and preserve existing natural, environmental, and historic features*
- *coordinate infrastructure (water, sewer, and transportation) upgrades and extensions in areas of existing development and those areas targeted for growth*
- *incorporate public participation in the decision-making and land development process*

The Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the comprehensive plan laid the groundwork for further discussion and goal setting for the greenways plan. The following excerpts from the comprehensive plan highlight the fact that resources and recreation were integrated into the comprehensive plan and not treated separately.

Education objectives from the Land Use Plan express the need for a better understanding of land use value and impacts.

Land Use - Education Objectives

- *Educate the general public about land use issues within the County and their implications for the future.*
- *Educate landowners, residents and prospective residents about the value of the agricultural and forest industries.*
- *Encourage stewardship of agricultural and forest land for recreation, timber production, wildlife habitat, and water quality protection*

The Economic Development Plan gives specific attention to rural industries, which if conducted in economically and environmentally sustainable ways, will be viable long term industries that can withstand most development pressure. The Economic Development Plan also recognizes the county's green infrastructure (both natural and man-made) as an amenity to be promoted within the county and as a tourism feature.

Economic Development – Rural Industries Development Objectives

- *Provide support for new agri-businesses, marketing, and other agriculturally related activities to encourage the sustainability and livelihood of the industry*
- *Promote and educate on the opportunities for sustainable forestry in urban, suburban, and rural areas and support the development of forestry related economic development initiatives*
- *Support the development of agriculture and forestry niche markets*

Economic Development - Tourism and Community Promotion Objectives

- *Promote the County's vision and incorporate the County's natural areas, green infrastructure, and wealth of recreational opportunities into tourism initiatives*

The community Facilities Plan draws attention to the need to consider stormwater generation as development is proposed, approved and constructed, in light of the management requirements for detention/retention, recharge and flood mitigation (water quantity) and source water and aquatic habitat protection (water quality).

Community Facilities - Stormwater Management Objectives

- *Work with municipalities to update stormwater regulations to adequately address water quality as required by government agencies*
- *Encourage best practices and innovative stormwater management techniques to minimize runoff from new land development, thereby reducing potential for increased flooding and flood damage*

The Natural Resources Plan emphasizes the connectedness of natural features as coherent functional systems and directs the collection and maintenance of data and analysis to assist officials in decision-making. This component also advocates sustainable use and management of resources for long-term productivity and environmental quality. In addition, the natural resources plan directs the county to demonstrate and encourage stewardship among its residents.

Natural Resources - Systems Objectives

- *Coordinate land use planning with resource knowledge and management.*
- *Strengthen municipal regulations to minimize the impact of development on sensitive environmental features and their functions.*
- *Assist municipalities in assembling essential data to support local regulations.*
- *Develop and maintain a detailed resource inventory for each planning region or watershed in the County.*
- *Promote connectedness of landscape features.*

Natural Resources - Quality Objectives

- *Promote forest stewardship by landowners and residents for recreation, timber production, wildlife habitat, and water quality protection*
- *Utilize existing organizations to promote the use of sustainable forestry practices to woodland owners.*

Natural Resources - Resource-based Industries Objectives

- *Promote the accessibility and marketability of local forest and agricultural products through farmers' markets, trade shows, etc.*
- *Promote managed development of tourism destinations, activities, and programs that showcase the County's natural resources*

Natural Resources - Education Goal: *Demonstrate (or support demonstration of) the value of the natural environment to landowners, residents, and visitors*

Objectives

- *Integrate environmental education efforts with nature-based recreation sites.*

The Cultural Resources Plan addresses not only the historic assets of the county, but also its contemporary culture that ties its communities together.

Cultural Resources - Historic Preservation Objectives

- *Support preservation and conservation easements of historic sites.*
- *Encourage innovative development approaches that integrate historic resources into new site and building design*
- *Encourage innovative approaches to adaptive reuse and building rehabilitation/restoration*

Supporting Tourism and Community Promotion Objective

- *Promote cultural sites and events to residents and visitors*

Supporting Recreation Objective

- *Integrate historical interpretation efforts with the recreation network*

Cultural Resources - Contemporary Identity Objectives

- *Promote strong community leadership and volunteerism.*
- *Promote heritage events and other cultural activities*
- *Promote community coordination and cooperation where common values and objectives exist*

County policy for recreation in the urban communities and multi-municipal planning regions is provided in the comprehensive plan. Many of the same concepts are applied to the greenways plan as well.

Urban Recreation

Goal: *Support development and sustainable management of a recreational network across Mercer County*

Recreation Network Objectives

- *Promote a guideline of 10 acres of public parkland per 1,000 residents in urbanized areas.*
- *Encourage urbanized municipalities to provide neighborhood parks within walking or short-driving distance (10 minute walk or 5 minute drive) of residential areas.*
- *Develop and support development of on-road and off-road trails that link residential neighborhoods with park facilities.*
- *Encourage the development of accessible resource-based recreation opportunities, e.g. fishing piers, playgrounds, etc.*
- *Encourage the development of adequate recreational infrastructure, e.g. parking, trash receptacles, picnic and seating benches, restrooms, etc.*

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- *Assist municipalities in budgeting and exploring funding options for facility maintenance and policing.*
- *Encourage new development to incorporate trail connections with adjacent properties.*
- *Encourage re-development of underused or substandard recreation facilities.*
- *Encourage shared use of specialized recreational facilities (e.g. indoor swimming pools) that require significant investment and operations/maintenance support.*

Services Goal: *Support provision of year round recreational programs for residents of all ages*

Objectives

- *Support recreational and leisure programs for specific age groups (pre-school, elementary, teens, adults, seniors) and for intergenerational groups.*
- *Integrate environmental education and historical interpretation efforts with the recreation network.*

Finally, the transportation element of the comprehensive plan directs the county and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) (the regional transportation planning agency) to provide a transportation system that is safe and efficient for all travelers, including bicycle and pedestrian route travelers.

Transportation - Accessibility and Mobility Objectives

- *Develop and maintain an integrated transportation system utilizing bicycle/pedestrian, rail, air, and highway networks in meeting the goals of TEA-21.*

Ingredients for Livable Communities

The 1996 Mercer County Comprehensive Plan outlined several critical “ingredients” that make communities great places to live. These ingredients were reviewed and updated in the new comprehensive plan. The ingredients are the anticipated and hoped-for outcomes of the county’s planning efforts.

The ingredients most relevant to the greenways plan are presented in the following matrix. The complete matrix can be found in Chapter 3 of the comprehensive plan.

Greenways, Open Space and Recreation Ingredients from the

Ingredients for Livable Communities Matrix

Mercer County Comprehensive Plan

VISION THEMES								
	Recreational Opportunities	Cultural, Historic, and Entertainment Resources	Economic Development	Smart Growth & Community Character	Inter-governmental Cooperation	Environmental and Natural Resources	Infrastructure (transportation, water, sewer)	Community Social Fabric
Ingredients for livable communities	Well-maintained, well-connected parks, trails and recreational facilities	Preserved cultural and historic sites, structures, and landscapes	Productive rural industries (agri-businesses, forest industries, etc.)	Innovative land use regulations (zoning and SALDO)	Regionally consistent (possibly joint) land use policies and tools	Sustainable agricultural and forestry activities	Safe ease of movement for all modes of transportation (automotive, rail, air, bicycle, pedestrian)	Attractive public spaces
	Variety of recreational programs for all ages	Cultural and artistic events; Variety of event venues		Strong sense of community character (unique features)	Regional cooperation to deliver services (police, fire, recreation)	Available resource preservation tools (conservation easements, ASAs)		
	Recreational opportunities available to visitors/tourists	Cultural, Historic, and Entertainment Resources available to visitors and tourists		Conserved natural and historic resources within developed areas		Programs that encourage private resource stewardship		
						Detailed, up –to-date environmental resource inventory		
						Regulations that protect sensitive environmental resources		
						Designated greenway networks		

A Vision for Greenways, Open Space, and Rural Recreation in Mercer County

Residents of Mercer County clearly value the abundant natural resources and the current recreational opportunities available in the county. They also believe that more could be done to protect and manage resources more effectively, to enhance the quality and diversity of recreation, and to coordinate public and private sector efforts in these areas.

These beliefs begin to describe how residents would like the future to be different, and in fact better, than the present. They form the basis of a vision for an even better quality of life for residents in the future. It is of the utmost importance for residents to agree on what they ultimately want to accomplish for themselves and for future generations. A vision statement serves this purpose. It defines the desired outcome of this planning effort.

Vision Statement for Greenways, Open Space and Rural Recreation

By 2025, Mercer County will be a community where open space is recognized as a vital part of the county's character and economy.

Open space land will be found in the county's urban, suburban and rural settings, as parks and playgrounds, as fields, pastures and woodlands, and as trails, wildlife and water ways corridors. Residents will value open space land for its qualities, functions and benefits:

- the crops, livestock and forest products it yields
- the employment and income it provides to rural landowners
- the minimal safety and infrastructure services it requires from local government
- its capacity to filter and purify the water in streams, rivers and underground aquifers
- the habitat it provides for wildlife and game species
- its pastoral and seasonal scenic beauty

And landowners will engage open space land for sustainable resource-based industries, such as agriculture, forestry, recreation, and tourism.

To achieve this vision, Mercer County residents and landowners will need a thorough understanding of what open space is, how it functions, and what benefits it offers. The county will need to designate greenways and establish policies for open space uses and management. Furthermore, the county will need to manage growth and development to minimize negative impacts on open space lands. The five goals for the open space, greenways, and outdoor recreation plan reflect the broadest level of action that Mercer County and its partners should take to fulfill the resource and recreation related needs of residents.

Five Goals

With a clear understanding of the desired outcome, the process or strategy for achieving the vision can be outlined. The strategy begins with goals that identify broad topics for enhancement or improvement, and supports these goals with objectives that further direct action to specific areas of need.

The Greenways Goal

Designate and promote greenways as corridors for resource stewardship, recreation, and cultural interpretation.

This goal advocates that the most sensitive resources receive protection from development and its impacts.

The functions of natural systems, the splendor of large natural features, and the stories of county heritage can be understood from single sites or locations, but a full appreciation of these threads of the community requires a larger view – a view that demonstrates the relationship of one site to another.

Greenways are a means to physically link these individual sites and highlight the relationships between our natural and man-made communities. Active greenways can provide public access to those sites that residents and visitors would like to observe, explore and experience in person, while passive greenways are intended to conserve the benefits of environmental systems under the management of private landowners.

Both types of greenways have a place in Mercer County. The Shenango River corridor is a candidate for an active greenway, where people can travel the corridor on land and water trails to experience its natural and cultural significance. Smaller corridors in the county are candidate for passive greenways for biological health and diversity of wildlife.

Objectives

- Support the connection of protected and sensitive resources through greenways designation.
 - Designate greenways in county planning documents (text and maps).
 - Encourage municipalities to designate and protect greenways.
 - Work with greenway partners to identify and protect resources from development and its impacts.
 - Support the development of public access appropriate to the resources and its corridor context (active greenway or passive greenway).
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The Open Space Goal

Encourage the sustainable management of natural resources for resource-based industries, particularly in designated conservation areas.

This goal advocates that open space lands be managed with the recognition that they influence the quality of the overall environment, that the farms and forests of the county should employ best management practices, and balance short term economic benefits with long term productivity and resource health.

Residents of Mercer County rely on the presence and quality of environmental systems and open space lands for their livelihood and their quality of life. Some rely on these resources for water – the water the lands absorb, filter, and make available as groundwater in underground aquifers. Some rely on these resources for the agricultural crops and livestock and forest products they cultivate and harvest. Some rely on these resources for the public and private environments they provide for outdoor recreation. And nearly all residents appreciate the scenic seasonal beauty.

While the functions and benefits of these systems and open space lands are enjoyed by all members of the public, to at least some degree, the ownership and management of such lands lies in the hands of various public agencies and numerous private landowners.

For the most part, the working lands of the county, those that are actively engaged in agricultural and forestry, are adequately managed in the hands of private land owners. Many of these land owners have been caring and cultivating the landscape throughout their family history, and have learned and passed the management techniques through generations. Their ability to cultivate or nurture valuable, marketable products for local and regional markets provides a sustainable component to the economy and should be recognized.

Other site-specific resources are important to the overall health of the community that their management should exclude significant physical development. Floodplains are one example. These resources can remain under the ownership of private land owners as passive greenways and with management assistance and limitations provided by public or public-interest agencies.

While the various land owners may have different perspectives on the beneficiaries of the lands and their products, they need not conflict in terms of protecting the health and well-being of the community at-large. The county should promote these principles among public, private, and even public-private partnerships involved in resource ownership and management

Objectives

- Focus and refine Mercer County’s rural industries.
- Encourage municipalities to recognize the value of open space through their regulatory provisions.
- Encourage farmers and forest landowners to develop and implement management/stewardship plans for their properties.
- Encourage public land owners to manage properties with best practices.
- Support the restoration of lands that contribute to impaired water quality.

Rural Recreation

Provide recreation facilities and programs for rural residents through partnerships.

This goal focuses on developing and sustaining recreation facilities in rural areas as part of a countywide network, recreational programs for rural residents, and partnerships to develop and maintain these facilities and services. Policy and future projects for rural recreation will not only meet sport, fitness, and well-being needs of residents, but also enhance recreation-based tourism in Mercer County. Parkland supports recreational activities for athletic and fitness programs, and sidewalks and trails enable people to travel by bike or on foot within and between the local communities of the county. Most importantly, the goal recognizes that partners in rural areas often have very limited financial and human resources – available land, improvement funds, staff time and skill – will best be able to make progress toward this goal.

The following goals and objectives are similar to the urban recreation policies in the county comprehensive plan yet specific to the resources and capabilities of rural communities.

Recreation Network Goal: Support development and sustainable management of a recreational network across Mercer County

Objectives

- Promote a guideline of 3 acres of public parkland per 1,000 residents in rural municipalities.
- Encourage rural municipalities to plan for and develop recreational facilities jointly and in partnership with school districts.
- Encourage the development of accessible resource-based recreation opportunities, e.g. fishing piers, trails.
- Encourage the development of adequate recreational infrastructure, e.g. parking, trash receptacles, picnic and seating benches, restrooms, etc.
- Assist municipalities in budgeting and exploring funding options for facility maintenance and policing.
- Encourage re-development of underused or substandard recreation facilities.

Recreation Services Goal: Support provision of yearround recreational programs for residents of all ages

Objectives

- Encourage rural municipalities to plan for and develop recreational services jointly.
- Support recreational and leisure programs for specific age groups (pre-school, elementary, teens, adults, seniors) and for intergenerational groups.
- Integrate environmental education and historical interpretation efforts with the recreation network.

Community Growth and Development

Foster sound growth and development that respects open space and integrates recreational amenities.

Residents' appreciation for traditional settlement patterns may be somewhat sentimental. But those patterns also fostered a strong sense of place and community identity among previous generations. This is evident in the "cookie-cutter" residential development that has taken place in the mid to late 20th century but also in other types of development. Large parcels are subdivided and developed en masse, fragmenting and replacing woodlands, fields and pastures with development that fits neither town nor countryside settings.

In some communities, farmland and woodlands are viewed as lands awaiting development. That is not the case in Mercer County, where farmland and woodlands are actively engaged in the economy. These open space uses receive moderate support for their function as viable land uses, but more should be done to support their continued presence and value to the community.

When new development does occur, it should locate residential subdivision as new neighborhoods of existing communities or as first neighborhoods of new communities; provide connections into the community center; and provide public space for community gathering in ways that are feasible and functional for the local community.

Objectives

- Encourage municipalities to guide development to appropriate locations and into appropriate patterns for distinct town, village and rural settings.
- Encourage municipalities to integrate open space requirements into their development provisions.

Education

Promote a thorough understanding of the functions and benefits of open space, greenways, outdoor recreation, and community development among residents.

Interwoven throughout the above listed goals is the need for a more thorough understanding of both built and natural environments among current and future residents and officials. While it could have been addressed as an objective for each goal, education was thought to be of such great significance that it warranted an independent goal and required specific and coordinated action. This goal encompasses both education and demonstration to help landowners, residents, and visitors understand the function and value of the natural environment. And while the goal focuses on the understanding of the natural and built environments, it is also intended to foster increased stewardship by those residents who have this understanding.

Objectives

- Educate local officials, landowners and residents about the positive and negative effects of development on the physical and financial resources of the community.
- Demonstrate the function and value of natural resources.

- Support public and private partner in developing and distributing such information. It is important to share these visions with those who can provide assistance and those who will benefit from the results. Promoting the vision communicates the importance of working together to achieve the common goal and the beneficial results. These goals, like the vision statement, can be a reference to which individuals, agencies and local government compare their current activities and decisions. Will this action promote the protection of sensitive environmental sites? Will this approval foster sound growth and development in our community? Will this new park help to reflect to available natural resources to park visitors? If the answer is yes, these people should feel confident in advancing their actions and approvals. If the answer is no, they should consider what alternatives could better support these goals. In addition, the vision should be shared with those who might not readily accept the plan's ideas, in order to identify the points of disagreement, resolve them, and begin working together.

Greenway, Open Space Conservation and Recreation Network Maps

The Greenways Map

The Greenways Map illustrates lands that should be protected through public ownership and management or private stewardship. These same lands are shown on the Future Land Use Map of the county comprehensive plan as Natural Resource Protection Areas, as shown in Figure 5-1.

The lands designated as greenways include some lands already in public ownership:

- State parks
- State Game Lands
- US ACOE Shenango River Lake

as well as land currently in private ownership:

- lands with slopes greater than 25%
- land in the 100-year floodplain
- Biological Diversity Areas, defined in the Mercer County Natural Areas Inventory; "exceptional" and "county significant" BDAs should receive priority attention; "high" and "notable" sites should be conserved as opportunities arise and as the county and its partners make progress on priority sites.
- National Wetland Inventory sites adjacent to Biological Diversity Areas
- Greenway connectors – corridors that connect other greenways features primarily along waterways and ridgelines.

The Greenways Map and Figure 5-1 illustrate the location of the proposed greenways. Table 5-1 outlines the major proposed greenways by name, location, length, significance/significant features and inter-county connections. These proposed greenways represent substantial natural and man-made resources and the potential to interconnect these resources with local communities. These lands should be considered priority candidates for public acquisition or easement, with the agreement of the landowner.

Figure 5-1
Greenway Map
as compiled for the Future Land Use Map of the Mercer County Comprehensive Plan

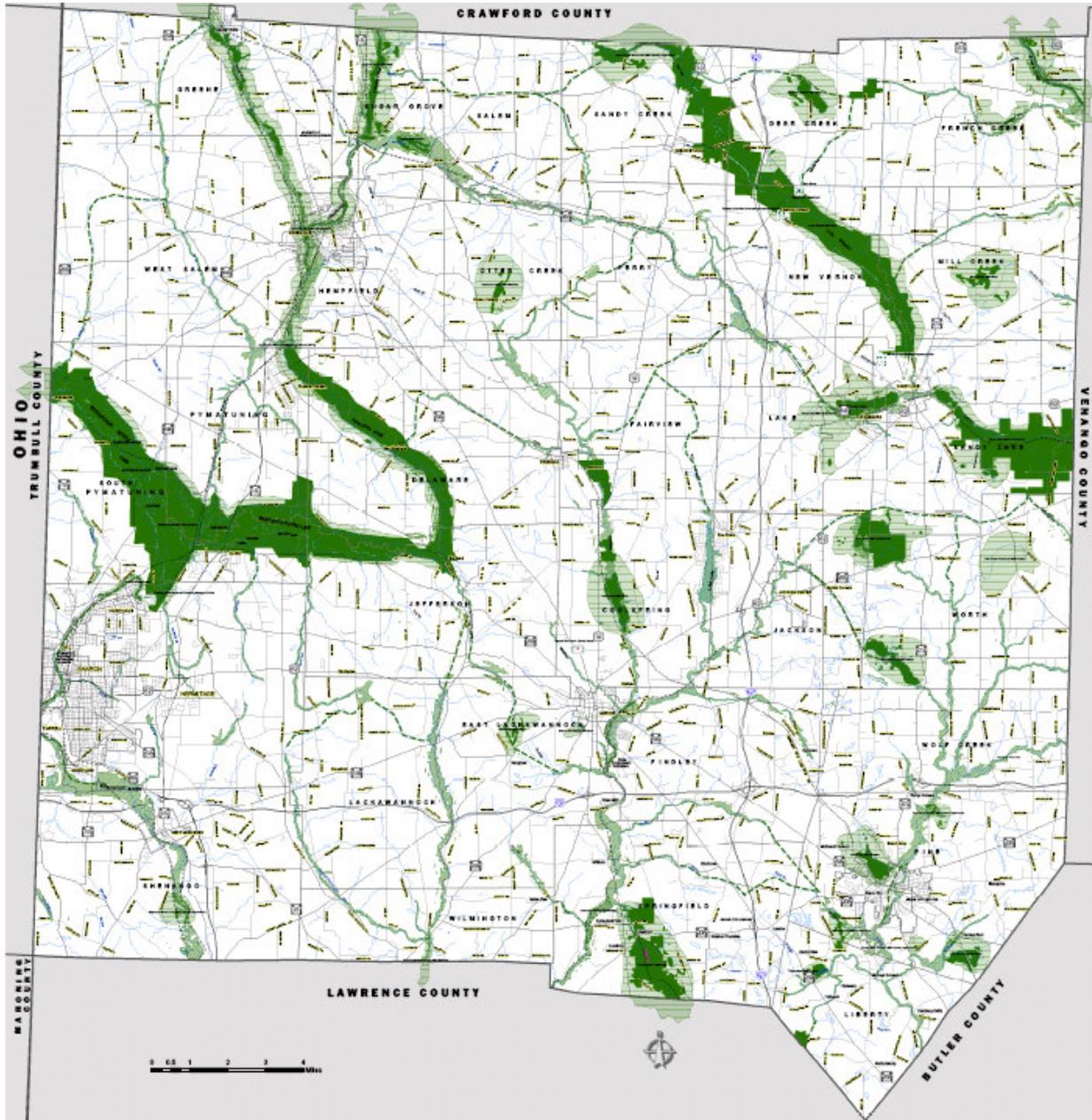


Table 5-1 Proposed Greenways for Mercer County

Name	Location	Size	Type	Significance	Inter-County Connections
Shenango River Greenway (segments shown below)	Sugar Grove Twp, Greenville, Hempfield Twp, West Salem Twp, Pymatuning Twp, Delaware Twp, Jefferson Twp, South Pymatuning Twp, Clark, Sharpsville, Sharon, Farrell, Wheatland, Shenango Twp, West Middlesex	35-40 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of Shenango River BDA, Shenango Lake BDA, Sharpsville BDA and Shenango River Oxbow BDA ■ Conservation of Shenango River Reservoir IBA and IMA site ■ Recreation opportunities in and along the river corridor ■ Trail connection between communities ■ Potential connection to Pymatuning State Park ■ Potential re-use of rail corridor ■ Potential integration or spurs to historic districts and areas 	Crawford – Mercer – Trumbull (OH) – Mercer – Lawrence
■ Jamestown to Greenville Segment	Jamestown, Greene Twp, West Salem Twp, Greenville	6 miles			Crawford – Mercer
■ Greenville to Reynolds Segment	Greenville, Hempfield Twp, West Salem Twp, Pymatuning Twp	3.5 miles			
■ Reynolds to Kidds Mill Segment	Pymatuning Twp, Delaware Twp	3.5 miles			
■ Kidds Mill to Big Bend Segment	Delaware Twp, Jefferson Twp	4 miles		■ Trail complete	
■ Big Bend to Clark Segment	Jefferson Twp, South Pymatuning Twp, Clark	6 miles			
■ Clark to Sharpsville Segment	Clark, South Pymatuning Twp, Sharpsville	4.5 miles			
■ Sharpsville to Farrell Segment	Sharpsville, Sharon, Farrell	4.5 miles			Mercer – Trumbull (OH)
■ Farrell to West Middlesex Segment	Farrell, Wheatland, Shenango Twp, West Middlesex	5 miles			Trumbull (OH) – Mercer
■ West Middlesex to Lawrence County Segment	West Middlesex, Shenango Twp	3.5 miles			Mercer – Lawrence

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Name	Location	Size	Type	Significance	Inter-County Connections
Crooked Creek Greenway	Sugar Grove Twp, Greenville	6 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of Crooked Creek BDA ■ Potential re-use of rail corridor 	Crawford – Mercer
Northwest Connector	Jamestown, Greene Twp, West Salem Twp, South Pymatuning Twp	11.25 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Creation of active trail loop in northwest portion of county ■ Follows stream corridors approximately 50% of distance 	
West Salem – Pymatuning Greenway	West Salem Twp, Pymatuning Twp	8.75	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of stream corridor 	
Little Shenango Greenway (segments shown below)	Sandy Lake Twp, Sandy Lake, Stoneboro, Kae Twp, New Vernon Twp, Perry Twp, Salem Twp, Sugar Grove Twp	20-25 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation and recreation in and along the river corridor ■ Conservation of Sandy Lake BDA, Sandy Creek BDA, and Salem BDA ■ Conservation of the Barrows Heronry and Edward Brucker Sanctuary IBA site ■ Potential re-use of rail corridor in select locations ■ Trail connection between Sandy Lake, Stoneboro, Clarks Mills, Hadley, Salem/Leeches Corners, Osgood and Greenville 	Venango – Mercer
■ Headwaters Segment	Sandy Lake Twp, Sandy Lake	4.5 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of Sandy Creek BDA ■ Access to SGL 130 	Venango – Mercer
■ Upper Segment	Sandy Lake, Stoneboro, Kae Twp, New Vernon Twp, Perry Twp	6.5 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of Sandy Lake BDA ■ Trail connection between Sandy Lake, Stoneboro, Clarks Mills 	
■ Middle Segment	Perry Twp	3.5 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation and recreation in and along the river corridor ■ Trail connection between Clarks Mills, Hadley 	
■ Lower Segment	Perry Twp, Salem Twp, Sugar Grove Twp	8 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of the Barrows Heronry and Edward Brucker Sanctuary IBA site ■ Trail connection between Hadley, Salem/Leeches Corners, Osgood and Greenville 	
Goddard Greenway	Sandy Creek Twp, Deer Creek Twp, New Vernon Twp, Mill Creek Twp, Sandy Lake Twp, Sandy Lake	12 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connection of Goddard State Park to Sandy Lake ■ Conservation of Sandy Creek Headwaters BDA 	

Mercer County Greenways, Open Space and Rural Recreation Plan

Name	Location	Size	Type	Significance	Inter-County Connections
Northcentral Connector	Sandy Creek Twp, Perry Twp, Salem Twp, Sugar Grove Twp		A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Creates connections between Shenango River Greenway and Goddard Greenway and loop trails 	
French Creek Greenway	French Creek Twp	2.5 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation and recreation in and along the river corridor ■ Conservation of French Creek BDA 	Crawford – Mercer – Venango
French Creek Greenway Connector	French Creek Twp, Deer Creek Twp, Sandy Creek Twp, New Vernon Twp	10.5 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of Deer Creek BDA and Cranberry Swamp BDA ■ Connection of French Creek Greenway with Goddard Greenway 	
Northeast Connector	Mill Creek Twp	5-7 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Connection between southern portion of Goddard Greenway and French Creek 	Mercer – Venango
Wolf Creek Greenway (segments shown below)	Worth Twp, Wolf Creek Twp, Pine Twp, Grove City,	18 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of Pine Swamp BDA, Wolf Creek Swamp, 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Millbrook Spur 	Worth Twp, Wolf Creek Twp	5 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Millbrook Swamp BDA 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ (Northeast) Spur 	Worth Twp, Wolf Creek Twp	6 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of stream corridor 	Venango – Mercer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ East Branch Spur 	Wolf Creek Twp	3 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of stream corridor 	Venango – Mercer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Barmore Spur 	Liberty Twp		P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of Barmore Lake BDA 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Amsterdam Spur 	Liberty Twp	3-5 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation Of Amsterdam BDA 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Swamproot (?) Spur 	Pine Twp	3-5 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of Swamproot BDA and Swamp Run tributary BDA 	
Otter Creek Greenway	Otter Creek Twp, Delaware Twp, Fairview Twp, Coolspring Twp, Mercer, Findley Twp, Springfield Twp	20-25 miles	A/P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation and recreation in and along stream corridor ■ Interconnection of communities 	Mercer – Lawrence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Upper Otter Creek Greenway 	Otter Creek Twp, Delaware Twp, Fairview Twp	7 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of stream corridor ■ Conservation of Kashner Corners Swamp BDA 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Middle Otter Creek Greenway 	Fairview Twp, Coolspring Twp, Mercer	7 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation and recreation in and along stream corridor ■ Conservation of Otter Creek BDA ■ Trail connection between Fredonia and Mercer ■ Access to SGL 294 	

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Name	Location	Size	Type	Significance	Inter-County Connections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lower Otter Creek Greenway 	Mercer, Findley Twp, Springfield Twp	7-9 miles	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation and recreation in and along stream corridor ■ Conservation of Schollard Run BDA ■ Conservation of Pennsy, Black and Celery Swamp IBA ■ Trail connection between Mercer, Hope Mills, Milburn, Springfield Falls, Schollard and Leesburg ■ Access to SGL 284 	
Little Neshannock Greenway	Jefferson Twp, Lackawannock Twp, Wilmington Twp	10-12 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of stream corridor ■ Conservation of Little Neshannock Creek BDA 	Mercer – Lawrence
Little Neshannock Spur	Lackawannock Twp, Shenango Twp, Wilmington Twp	7 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of stream corridor 	
Jefferson – Lackawannock Connectors	Jefferson Twp, Lackawannock Twp	6.5 miles	P	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conservation of stream corridors and wetlands ■ Potential trail connections between Shenango River Greenway and Little Neshannock Greenway (if an active greenway) 	

While each proposed greenway may include many resources and may benefit many people, Mercer County cannot “build” these greenways at once. Instead, the county should prioritize its leadership and cooperative efforts with local and regional partners to pursue greenways projects that will gradually “build” greenway over time.

The county should consider a sound approach to prioritizing its efforts and investment. Table 5-2 outlines several criteria that may be used to prioritize projects for county support. Table 5-3 qualitatively measures the opportunities for the proposed major greenways by these criteria.

Table 5-2 Potential Greenway Prioritization Criteria for Greenway Corridors

Proposed Greenway includes...	Active Greenway (with public land trail)	Passive Greenway (no public land trail)
Exceptional Value/high Quality Water Quality		X
Existing municipal protection through regulations		X
Existing conservation easement (agricultural or other type)		X
Existing conservation management		X
Existing ASA designation		
Public land	X	X
Expressed landowner interest or available land/right-of-way	X	X
Existing recreational use	X	
Documented historical site	X	X
Advocacy Organization	X	X
Proposed Greenway would...	Active Greenway	Passive Greenway
Extend trail/provide other recreational use/opportunities, e.g. expand park or provide new park	X	
Increase bicycle-pedestrian mobility, e.g. for inter-community travel	X	
Provide connection to existing recreational lands/facilities	X	
Address stream impairment		X
Implement rivers conservation plan or watershed protection/conservation plan		X
Protect NHI sites (weighted per exceptional/high/notable/county significant values)		X

Table 5-3 Opportunities for Major Greenways based on Greenway Prioritization Criteria

Proposed Greenway includes...	Shenango River Greenway	Little Shenango Greenway	Goddard Greenway	French Creek Greenway	Wolf Creek Greenway	Otter Creek Greenway	Little Neshannock Greenway
Exceptional Value/High Quality Water Quality					X		
Existing municipal protection through regulations							
Existing conservation easement (agricultural or other type)			w/in 1 mile of corridor		w/in 1 mile of corridor	w/in 1 mile of corridor	
Existing conservation management							
Existing ASA designation	X	X	X				
Public land	X	X	X			X	
Expressed landowner interest or available land/right-of-way							
Existing recreational use	X	X	X				
Documented historical site	X						
Advocacy Organization	X	X		X			
Proposed Greenway would...							
Extend trail/provide other recreational use/opportunities, e.g. expand park or provide new park	X	X	X			X	
Increase bicycle-pedestrian mobility, e.g. for inter-community travel	X	X	X		X	X	
Provide connection to existing recreational lands/facilities	X	X	X		X	X	X
Address stream impairment		X				X	
Implement rivers conservation plan or watershed protection/conservation plan	X			X			
Protect NHI sites (weighted per exceptional/high/notable/county significant values)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Opportunities for Greenways

Based on the qualitative prioritization of greenways shown in Table 5-3 and the current efforts of local entities, the following activities for each of the major greenways would take help to advance their development. These activities represent opportunities for Mercer County to focus future county assistance and investment based on local interest, support and cooperation.

Opportunities to advance the Shenango River Greenway

1. Complete the construction of the Trout Island Trail.
2. Extend the Shenango Valley Trail north to Reynolds.
3. Extend the Trout Island Trail south into Sharon and Farrell.
4. Support implementation of the Shenango River Conservation Plan.
5. Develop the Shenango River Water Trail.

Opportunities to advance the Little Shenango Greenway

1. Connection Sandy Lake to the SGL.
2. Explore right-of-way acquisition.
3. Explore interest in a Little Shenango Water Trail, i.e. additional access points at Hadley or Leeches Corners.

Opportunities to advance the Goddard Greenway

1. Pursue protection of Sandy Creek Headwaters BDA via landowner management.

Opportunities to advance the Wolf Creek Greenway

1. Review/amend municipal regulations to minimize development impacts on stream corridors and BDAs, particularly in growth area municipalities/regions.
2. Pursue protection of BDAs via landowner management.

Opportunities to advance the French Creek Greenway

1. Review/amend municipal regulations to minimize development impacts on stream corridors and BDAs.
2. Pursue protection of BDAs via landowner management.
3. Coordinate implementation of land and water conservation plans with the French Creek Valley Conservancy.

Opportunities to advance the Otter Creek Greenway

1. Review/amend municipal regulations to minimize development impacts on stream corridors and BDAs, particularly in growth area municipalities/regions.
2. Explore right-of-way acquisition
3. Connect Fredonia to SGL, SGL to SGL, and SGL to Mercer.
4. Pursue protection of BDAs via landowner management.

The Open Space Map

The Open Space Map illustrates lands that should be conserved for resource production (farm and forest) primarily through private stewardship. These same lands are shown on the Future Land Use Map of the county comprehensive plan as Natural Resource Production Areas. Developed and Growth Areas are lands designated for intensive community development and detailed on the Future Land Use Map of the county comprehensive plan. Other stream classifications and drinking water supply locations are provided for reference.

Landscape Conservation Areas, defined in the Mercer County Natural Areas Inventory, and the exceptional value and cold water watersheds are designated as priority conservation areas and listed in Table 5-4. Education and outreach to landowners in these areas should be coordinated and strengthened. Development policy and proposals in these areas should be carefully reviewed and enhanced, as needed; the policy review task should be prioritized in the priority conservation areas over other areas of the county, while the proposal review can begin immediately.

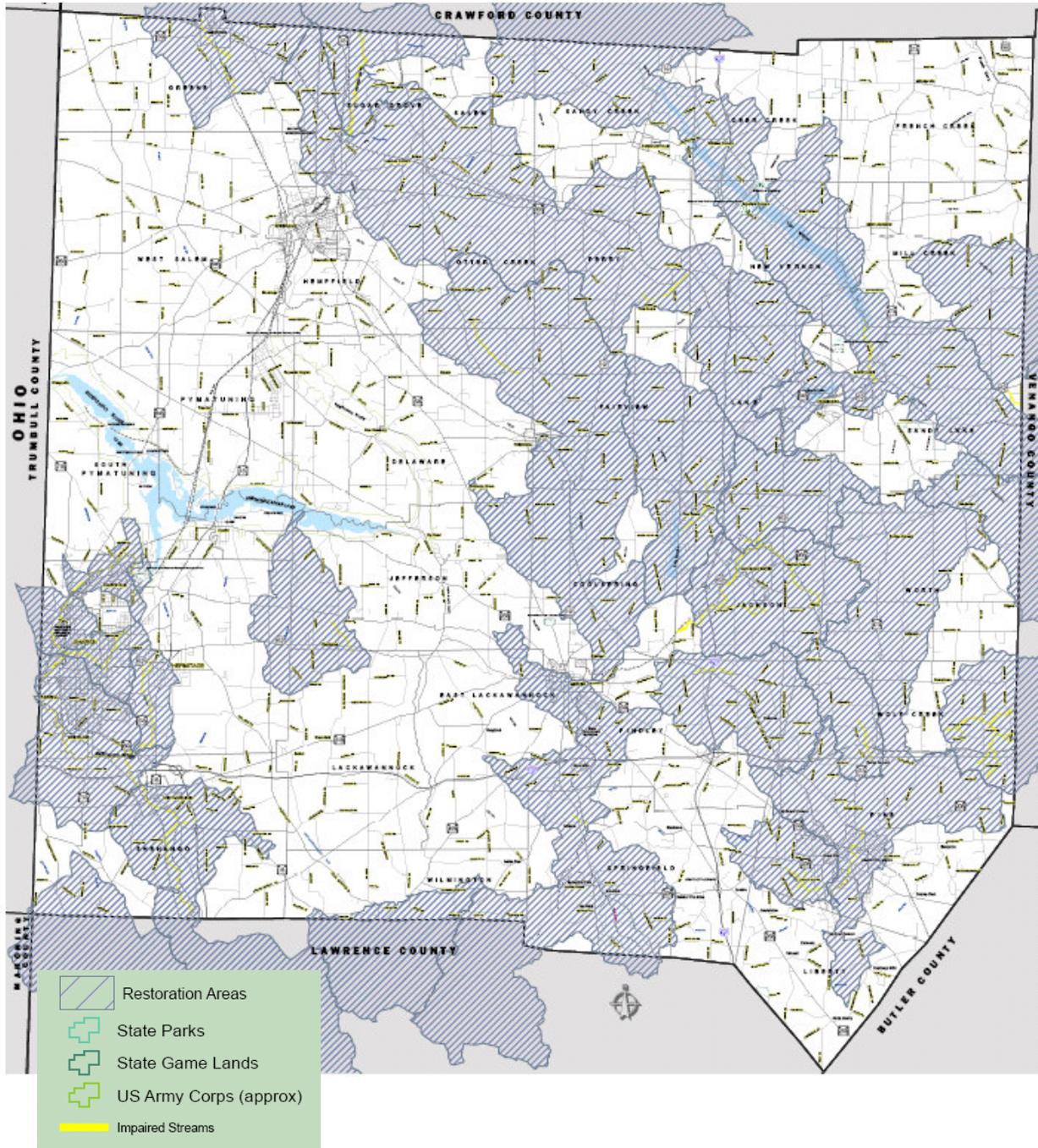
The watersheds of impaired streams should also receive special attention as restoration areas. Impaired streams and their watersheds are shown in Figure 5-2. In some cases, the impairment may be difficult or particularly costly to mitigate or eliminate. Such instances include impairment from the broad non-point sources. But some impairments are temporary, occurring as a result of specific management techniques, such as unbuffered run-off from adjacent properties. The county should strive to restore these watersheds where there is a reasonable expectation of restoring water quality. Assisting and educating landowners in modifying management techniques may be all that is needed to improve or restore water quality.

All other lands identified as open space are the third level of priority for open space protection. These lands include agricultural lands, woodlands, and quarries, as defined by the Existing Land Use Map of the county comprehensive plan. Current education and outreach to landowners in these areas should be sustained. Development policy should be reviewed and enhanced, as needed, in these areas after the priority conservation areas are addressed.

Table 5-4 Priority Conservation Areas

Site Name	All or portions of (Municipality)	Significance	Priority Sites
French Creek LCA	Deer Creek Township, French Creek Township, New Lebanon Borough, Mill Creek Township	Watershed that contains numerous animal species of special concern, one plant species of concern and several natural communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ French Creek BDA ■ Deer Creek BDA ■ BDA adjacent lands
Sandy Creek LCA	Deer Creek Township, French Creek Township, Lake Township, Mill Creek Township, New Lebanon Borough, New Vernon Township, Perry Township, Salem Township, Sandy Creek Township, Sandy Lake Borough, Sandy Lake Township, Stoneboro Borough, Worth Township	Watershed that contains numerous important natural communities, and plants and animals of special concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Sandy Creek BDA ■ Sandy Lake BDA ■ Sandy Creek Headwaters ■ Lake Wilhelm BDA ■ Cranberry Swamp BDA ■ BDA adjacent lands ■ Restoration areas
Shenango River LCA	Clark Borough, Delaware Township, Greene Township, Greenville Borough, Hempfield Township, City of Hermitage, Jamestown Borough, Pymatuning Township, South Pymatuning Township, Sugar Grove Township	Watershed that supports numerous animal and plant species of special concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Crooked Creek BDA ■ Shenango River BDA ■ Shenango Lake BDA ■ Sharpsville BDA ■ BDA adjacent lands ■ Restoration areas
Wolf Creek LCA	Liberty Township	LCA that is the location of high quality aquatic community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None
Wolf Creek Watershed	Grove City Borough, Findley Township, Liberty, Township, Pine Township, Springfield Township, Wolf Creek Township, Worth Township	Cold water fishery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Amsterdam BDA ■ Barmore Lake BDA ■ Gorve City BDA ■ Swamp Run Tributary BDA ■ Swampprot BDA ■ Wolf Creek Swamp BDA ■ BDA adjacent lands ■ Restoration areas

Figure 5-2
Restoration Areas



The Recreation Network Map

The Recreation Network Map is based on the Recreation Sites Map compiled during the inventory process, distinguishing facility types and sites in urban and rural communities. The Recreation Network Map focuses on linking the existing sites with future land trails, scenic corridors, and water trails.

Existing trails are shown for reference. Expansion of existing trail segments should be evaluated, planned, and designed as opportunities arise.

Future land trails propose circulation within major recreation sites and communities and interconnections among these major hubs. The specific location or alignment of these future trails should be developed through individual trail master plans.

Scenic corridors are road-based routes that lead the traveler through some of the most scenic open spaces of the county and major communities. These corridors should be further explored to identify scenic viewsheds and vistas. They should also be considered candidates for scenic byways designation.

Water trails are defined primarily by the waterbody they occupy but they also include specific points of access. Water trails often have published maps or guides that illustrate points of access and interest; directions to nearby rest areas and locations for supplies; and rules and regulations about boating on public waterways.

Opportunities for new recreation resources are outlined in table 5-5 and illustrated on the Recreation Network Map.

Table 5-5 Future Recreation Resources

Name	Location	Significance	Inter-County Connections
Future Water Trails			
Upper Shenango River Water Trail	Shenango River	Connections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jamestown ▪ Greenville ▪ Reynolds ▪ Clark ▪ Hermitage 	Crawford – Mercer – Lawrence
Lower Shenango River Water Trail	Shenango River	Connections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hermitage ▪ Sharpsville ▪ Sharon ▪ Farrell ▪ Wheatland ▪ West Middlesex 	Crawford – Mercer – Lawrence
Lake Wilhelm Water Trail		Connections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State Park ▪ SGL 270 	None
Sandy Lake Water Trail	Sandy Lake	Sandy Lake BDA	None
Lake Latonka Water Trail	Lake Latonka	Recreational	None
Scenic Corridors			
US 19	Sandy Creek Twp, Perry Twp, Fairview Twp, Coolspring Twp, Mercer	SGL 270 and 294 Goddard State Park Future Lake Wilhelm Water Trail Sheakleyville Wilhelm Trail Extension Otter Creek BDA Munnell Run Farm Mercer	Mercer – Crawford
Goddard Scenic Loop	Sandy Cree Twp, Deer Creek Twp, New Vernon Twp, Mill Creek Twp, Sandy Lake Twp, Sandy Lake,	SGL 270 and 294 Goddard State Park Future Lake Wilhelm Water Trail Sheakleyville Trails at McKeever Environmental Learning Center	None
Cross-County Scenic Corridor (Sandy Lake to Sharpsville)	Sandy Lake, Sandy Lake Twp, Stoneboro, Lake Twp, Jackson Twp, Fairview Twp, Coolspring Twp, Jefferson Twp, Clark, Pymatuning Twp, South Pymatuning Twp, City of Hermitage, Sharpsville	Active farm and forest land Shenango Trail Big Bend Historical Area Shenango River Lake Clark Trout Island Trail Sharpsville	Venango – Mercer – Trumbull (OH)

Mercer County Greenways, Open Space and Rural Recreation Plan

Name	Location	Significance	Inter-County Connections
Scenic Corridors (continued)			
East Mercer Scenic Corridor	French Creek Twp, Mill Creek Twp, Sandy Lake Twp, Worth Twp, Wolf Creek Twp, Pine Twp	Active forest and farm land SGL 130 French Creek BDA Wolf Creek Wetlands BDA	Mercer – Crawford
PA 258	Springfield Twp, Liberty Twp	Pennsy, Black and Celery Swamp BDA Grove City Country Club	Mercer – Butler
PA 208	Pine Twp, Grove City, Springfield Twp	Downtown Grove City SGL 284 Leesburg Station BDA Schollard Run BDA	Mercer – Venango
Little Neshannock Scenic Corridor	Jefferson Twp, East Lackawannock Twp, Wilmington Twp	Shenango Trail Big Bend Historical Area Shenango River Reservoir Active forest and farmland Little Neshannock Creek BDA	Mercer – Lawrence
Southern Shenango Scenic Corridor	Shenango Twp, West Middlesex, Lackawannock Twp, Wilmington Twp	Shenango River Lake Reservoir (multiple boat accesses) West Middlesex (boat access #172) Little Neshannock Greenway Spur	Trumbull (OH) – Mercer – Lawrence
Shenango River Lake Loop	South Pymatuning Twp, Pymatuning Twp, Delaware Twp, Jefferson Twp	Shenango River Lake Reservoir Shenango Lake BDA Multiple boat accesses (#164-#171) Shenango Trail Big Bend Historical Area Future Trout Island Trail Chestnut Beach	Mercer – Trumbull (OH)
Western Shenango Scenic Corridor	South Pymatuning Twp, Sharon, Farrell, City of Hermitage	Community and recreational facilities in Sharon and Farrell	Mercer – Trumbull (OH)
Greenville – New Hamburg Scenic Loop	Greenville, Hempfield Twp, West Salem Twp, Delaware Twp	Greenville Historic District New Hamburg Historical Area Shenango Trail Shenango River BDA	None
Northwest Scenic Corridor	Jamestown, Greene Twp, West Salem Twp	Active farm and forest land	None
North Central Scenic Loop (Greenville to Clarks Mills)	Greenville, Hempfield Twp, Sugar Grove Twp, Otter Creek Twp, Perry Twp, Salem Twp	Active farm and forest land Greenville Historic District Barrows Heronry and Edward Brucker Sanctuary IBA site	None

Vision and Goals for Open Space and Rural Recreation

Name	Location	Significance	Inter-County Connections
Future Land Trails (Active Greenways and Connecting Trail Segments)			
Shenango River Greenway	Jamestown to Shenango Twp	Connections/Segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shenango Trail ▪ Seth Myers Nature Trail (US ACOE) ▪ Future Trout Island Trail ▪ Future Shenango River Trail Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inactive railroad right-of-way 	Crawford – Mercer – Lawrence
Little Shenango Greenway	Sandy Lake to Greenville	Connections/Segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sandy Lake to Stoneboro Trail Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inactive railroad right-of-way 	Venango – Mercer
Goddard Greenway	Goddard State park and SGL 270	Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existing trails on state park land 	None
Little Neshannock Greenway	Jefferson Twp to Wilmington Twp	Connections/Segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little Neshannock to Shenango River Lake and Shenango Trail 	Mercer – Lawrence
Little Neshannock Spur	City of Hermitage to Wilmington Twp	Connections/Segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Little Neshannock and tributary (near and through mixed use growth area) to Shenango River Lake 	Mercer – Lawrence
Otter Creek Greenway	Delaware/Fredonia to Springfield Twp	Connections/Segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fredonia to New Hamburg Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inactive railroad right-of-way 	Mercer – Lawrence
Otter-Wolf Trail Loop		Connections/Segments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Future Otter Creek Greenway/Trail ▪ Mercer to Jackson Center to Wolf Creek (link) ▪ Grove City to Otter Creek (link) ▪ Wolf Creek Greenway/Trail ▪ Jackson Center to Sandy Lake/SGL130 Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inactive railroad right-of-way 	None