

## CHAPTER 9

### PLAN FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

#### IDENTIFICATION OF NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES

Natural resources are identified in Chapter 14, where prime agricultural soils are discussed, Chapter 15, where floodplains, wetlands, hydric soils, streams, steep slopes, wooded areas and natural features of special interest are discussed; Chapter 16, where the high yield aquifers in limestone areas are discussed; and Chapter 17, where scenic resources are discussed. Historic resources are identified in Chapter 23.

#### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives have been established for natural resources, historic resources and agricultural resources.

##### **Natural Resources**

*Goal:* Protect, conserve and enhance the natural resources of the municipalities.

*Objectives:*

- Protect water resources within the municipalities and thus the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater. Of special concern will be the water courses, particularly the Cacoosing, Little Cacoosing, Spring, Manor, Tulpehocken and Hospital Creeks, and tributaries to these creeks, wetlands and floodplains along the creeks, and steep slopes draining to the creeks.
- Protect groundwater throughout the municipalities, particularly in limestone areas where the potential for pollution tends to be greatest and groundwater resources tend to be greatest.
- Protect and improve water quality in the municipalities, with special emphasis on Spring Creek.
- Protect and manage woodlands within the municipalities and encourage new planting of trees.
- Protect the steep slopes within the municipalities.

- Protect watersheds and wellhead areas for community water supplies within the municipalities.
- Protect and conserve unique natural areas in the Townships, such as South Mountain and Cushion Peak, Blue Marsh, and the Tulpehocken Creek.
- Conserve, enhance, and manage the ecosystems within the Planning Area and maintain adequate critical mass by connecting those ecosystems.

## **Historic Resources**

*Goal:* Preserve and enhance the historic resources of the municipalities.

### **Objectives:**

- Encourage property owners and developers to preserve, protect, and enhance historic resources within the municipalities.
- Foster increased public awareness of the history of and historic resources within the municipalities.
- Support efforts of organizations to identify and protect historic resources.
- Require new development to reflect and consider the history, architecture and development patterns of the municipalities in order to preserve the important historic and architectural resources of the area.
- Determine the role which the municipalities should play in historic preservation through land use ordinance incentives, controls and regulations, and efforts to create historic districts and/or historic overlay zoning. Also, encourage new development to be built so that it blends into the existing character of established neighborhoods and historic areas.
- Encourage adaptive re-use of historic structures where appropriate.

## **Agricultural Resources**

*Goal:* Protect and preserve agricultural areas for agricultural use.

### **Objectives:**

- Promote the preservation of agricultural areas within the Townships through conservation development, agricultural security areas, purchase and donation of development rights, and conservation easements.
- Continue and consider expansion of effective agricultural zoning in the Townships.

- Assure policies regarding public sewer and water do not encourage development pressure on designated agricultural areas.
- Minimize conflicts of agricultural and non-agricultural uses around the perimeter of designated agricultural areas.
- Recognize and build upon agricultural preservation efforts in surrounding municipalities, including West Cocalico, Heidelberg, North Heidelberg and Spring Townships.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO LAND USE PLAN**

The watercourses within the area have been designated Stream Corridor Preservation. The stream corridors contain wetlands, hydric soils and floodplains. These areas have been designated for protection in order to buffer watercourses, protect groundwater discharge/recharge areas, and protect the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater.

Resource Preservation areas are shown at the Blue Marsh Recreation Area and a large band through South Mountain in South Heidelberg Township. Only limited development will be allowed in the Resource Preservation areas in order to protect the watersheds of watercourses and water supplies, protect vulnerable wooded, steep slopes, conserve ecosystems by maintaining an adequate critical mass through connecting ecosystems, and encourage the protection of historic resources and farms.

Agricultural Preservation areas are found throughout much of the eastern and western portions of Lower Heidelberg Township, in a band in South Heidelberg Township around Wernersville, and in the southern portion of South Heidelberg Township. The Agricultural Preservation area is intended to provide for the protection of prime agricultural soils and reflect the heritage of farming within Southwestern Berks County.

In the Rural Conservation areas found in the vicinity of the Church Road corridor in central Lower Heidelberg Township and interspersed among Resource Preservation and Low Density Residential areas in South Heidelberg Township, the density of development which could be accommodated on a tract of ground would be established through analysis of the natural and historic features and resources of each site, with the intent that steep slopes, floodplains and wetlands would be protected. In the chapter on Future Land Use, the following considerations for future residential development have been identified:

- As development occurs in the Townships, particularly in the Resource Preservation and Rural Conservation areas, which contain the greatest extent of sensitive environmental resources in the Townships, care much be taken to preserve and protect the resources identified within each tract of land.
- An ongoing awareness of and sensitivity toward the natural resources of the area should be encouraged.

- Development should be concerned with geologic stability, soils suitability, groundwater supplies and stream flows.
- Groundwater resources should be protected against depletion and contamination.
- Methods of encouraging replenishment of the groundwater supply should be encouraged.
- Streams, ponds and wetlands should be protected against pollution from point sources and runoff.
- Floodplains and wet soils should be protected from encroachment.
- The loss of topsoil should be minimized.
- The retention and establishment of trees and other vegetation should be encouraged to control erosion, shade surface waters, control stormwater flow, create wind breaks, provide animal habitats and provide visual amenities.
- Steep slopes should be avoided.
- The protection, preservation and enhancement of historic resources should be encouraged.

## **ACTIONS TO PROTECT NATURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCES**

The following actions should be taken to protect natural and historic resources:

1. Update the joint zoning ordinance to reflect any changes in the Resource Preservation, Rural Conservation and Agricultural Preservation areas.
2. Update the joint zoning ordinance to include any changes, updated standards and clarifications needed for:
  - a. Natural resource protection standards (net out provisions) for floodplains, wetlands, wetland margins, steep slopes, watercourses, water bodies, lake and pond shores, pond agricultural soils and limestone areas.
  - b. Include lot averaging provisions in Rural Preservation and Rural Conservation areas to allow flexibility in lotting to protect natural and historic features and resources.

- c. Conservation Zoning in Rural Preservation and Rural Conservation areas to protect historic sites, agriculture, steep slopes, wetlands, and woodlands through inclusion in open spaces.
- d. Steep slope protection provisions.
- e. Woodland protection provisions, while providing for forestry operations.
- f. Wetlands, wetland margin and hydric soil protection provisions.
- g. Floodplain protection provisions.
- h. Limestone area overlay zoning to protect aquifers by restricting potential polluting activities.
- i. Stream corridor overlay zoning to minimize development and impervious surfaces, provide for riparian buffers, encourage use of Best Management Practices for storm water management and agriculture, and encourage stream habitat improvement through wetland restoration and streambank restoration/stabilization.
- j. Historic resource overlay zoning which will require developers to identify historic resources, the impact of proposals on historic resources, and mitigation measures. Adaptive re-use provisions for historic buildings to discourage removal of historic structures and bonuses for design compatible with existing resources and the appropriate reuse of existing resources.
- k. Historic District zoning for concentrations of historic resources.
- l. Demolition by neglect provisions, requiring maintenance of historic properties.
- m. Provisions regulating forestry that require the management of forests and timberlands in accordance with accepted silvacultural practices. Regulations should address proper stormwater management, erosion and sedimentation control, proper internal roads, and mitigation of impacts on public roads and require a forestry management plan prepared by a professional forester.

The municipal subdivision and land development ordinances should contain the following provisions to protect natural and historic resources:

- 1. Consider stormwater management part of the hydrologic cycle with less emphasis on detention and more emphasis on infiltration, reducing pollution, and reducing thermal impacts through BMP's. Assure developers adequately address storm water management and erosion and sedimentation control.

2. Encourage developers to identify natural, historic, scenic, architectural and cultural resources in their tracts and incorporate them into the open space system. Management plans for open space should be required as well as mechanisms assuring the continuation as open space.
3. Require developers to identify the resources within their tracts, analyze the impacts of the development and mitigate those impacts.
4. Plan data requirements should include a specific listing of environmental, scenic, historic and cultural resources.
5. Require environmental assessment studies, hydrogeological studies, scenic, historic and cultural resources impact studies and plans for preservation of environmental, historic and cultural resources and analysis of the site's ability to support the proposed use and intensity of use.
6. Development guidelines should be established for development in areas of the high yield aquifers, such as recharge areas, limits on impervious cover, and limits on on-site sewage disposal.
7. Include provisions for protection of vegetation during site work.
8. In review of Subdivision and Land Development Plans, requirements for setting aside open space could be used to preserve the Stream Corridors identified in this plan.

To encourage agricultural preservation, consideration should be given to expansion of Agricultural Security areas, discouraging public sewer and water in agricultural areas, and encouraging the purchase of agricultural conservation easements.

Additional actions which can be taken to protect historic and natural resources include the following:

1. Appoint municipal historical commissions.
2. Support the activities of individuals and groups that identify, document, evaluate and protect historical resources and increase public awareness of the area's history and historic resources. Notify the Berks County Planning Commission of any changes, additions or demolition of historic structures so that this information is added to the County's data base.
3. Support the planning of trails to link historic sites with trails and erect informative markers and exhibits at historic resources.

4. Evaluate the potential for historic districts and support their creation if warranted. If created, support the adoption of Design Guidelines and Sign Controls for the Historic District(s).
5. Identify key natural areas to the Berks County Conservancy and other conservation groups to encourage acquisition through conservation easements, fee simple, donation and dedication through the development review process. “Connecting Tracts in the Rural Preservation Areas” are examples of key areas.
6. Consider creation of municipal Environmental Advisory Committees to work with property owners to preserve key tracts of open space.
7. Support efforts of the Berks County Conservancy, Berks County Conservation District, and other agencies to manage stream corridors through cooperative efforts with landowners for riparian buffers, best management practices, and stream bank improvements. Cooperate in securing easements along the streams.
8. Encourage property owners to restore and/or adaptively reuse historic structures and discourage removal of historic structures.
9. Encourage formation of groups within the community to adopt a stream and provide monitoring and oversight along the stream corridor.
10. Encourage the use of improved farming practices involving the use of fertilizer and pesticides and the application of manure. Aggressive control of animal excretions and feed lot managing should be encouraged.

This plan for the protection of natural and historic resources is not intended to be inconsistent with and exceed the requirements imposed under acts identified in Section 301.(a).(6) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, nor prohibit the conduct of forestry operations.