

## Background

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

The Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Network Plan (the Plan) outlines a series of policies and projects for linking existing natural and man-made resources within the region's six counties. By connecting these assets into a comprehensive greenway network, the region's natural resources are leveraged to promote and strengthen their value to the region for a range of purposes.

In addition to delineating the elements that make up the greenway network, the Plan identifies a strategic framework for implementation and management. This framework provides an overall strategy for prioritizing greenways or project corridors as well as a palette of potential implementation tools and a summary of support and funding sources.

## Purpose and Goals

The Plan was developed to achieve the following purposes:

1. Conserve important natural resources;
2. Expand recreation opportunities;
3. Celebrate cultural heritage;
4. Bolster economic development;
5. Increase pedestrian and bicycle mobility; and
6. Promote healthy lifestyles.

Specific goals were also developed in association with the six purposes collectively. These goals and purposes guided the Plan's analyses, recommendations and actions that emerged during the planning process.



Figure 1: The Ridges and Valleys of the Southern Alleghenies Region

## Planning Approach

In order to define a network of resource-based greenways, geographical information system (GIS) mapping was used as the project's primary analytical tool. This analysis was completed through three key phases: the compilation of background mapping, establishing planning objectives and greenway criteria and the identification of potential greenway elements and corridors. The resulting data as well as the background

information has been made available to each of the counties for use on other planning projects. As a compliment to the technical nature of the GIS analysis, an extensive public involvement process was incorporated into the planning process so that review and feedback from residents of the counties and other key stakeholders could be gathered and incorporated. To guide the process, the Southern Alleghenies Regional Greenways Committee was formed with representatives from each county, the Allegheny Ridge Corporation, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). Additionally, public meetings and work sessions were held as the Plan progressed to gather additional input from community groups, conservation organizations, local political leadership and interested citizens.



Figure 2: Bedford Public Meeting

## Analyzing Opportunities

Previous planning efforts and the mapping of other data compiled for the Plan have revealed a number of opportunities and challenges for the region. The key issues that emerged include:

### Opportunities:

- Wealth of natural resources;
- Unique landscapes;
- Existing projects underway;
- Abundance of existing/potential public lands;
- Development pressures are generally localized; and
- Committed residents and engaged political leadership.

### Challenges:

- Majority of existing open space is unconnected;
- Limited regulatory tools are available for implementation;
- Environmental issues;
- Funding and staffing resources for implementation;
- Lack of a coordinated implementation approach; and
- Develop marketing and educational materials to build awareness of the greenways vision.



# Executive Summary

## Greenways and Open Space Vision

Through an iterative planning process, an overall vision for the Plan was developed that both builds upon the region’s many opportunities and addresses its challenges. Within this vision, greenways are comprised of two major elements: corridors and hubs. corridors are linear elements that, depending on their characteristics, are suitable for recreation or preservation purposes. Hubs are typically non-linear sites that possess a common natural or man-made asset, which makes them significant. Natural hubs are considered habitat areas while man-made hubs are deemed destinations. Criteria developed through the planning process determined whether a corridor is suitable for recreation or preservation and whether a hub is a destination or habitat.

Analysis of the mapping associated with each of these criteria delineated an open space network that feature recreation and preservation corridors as well as destinations and habitats. From this overall open space network, a series of greenway or project corridors for each individual county were established.

As the project corridors were developed, significant corridors that spanned multiple counties interconnected to other regions were designated as Regional Projects. These projects, while more complex and difficult to implement, represent a grand vision of an integrated regional greenways network. For example, the proposed Allegheny Crossing traverses over 75 miles as it connects the Great Allegheny Passage in Somerset across the region to eastern Fulton County.

The counterpart to the Regional Projects, County Projects connect places of county-level significance to regional projects or to other parts of the county. For example, the proposed

Schellsburg Connector creates a two-mile greenway to link Schellsburg (Bedford County) to the Allegheny Crossing greenway via Shawnee State Park (Bedford County). These two levels of greenway corridors – County and Regional – were carefully optimized to balance the desire for a long-term vision and the need for projects that can be initiated and completed at the local level by grass root efforts.

## Project Corridors

The greenways and open space networks as well as the specific project corridors established throughout the planning process defined a vision for an integrated system of greenways that connect the region’s numerous natural, historic and cultural assets. The project corridors seek to:

- Link existing regional assets such as biodiversity areas, State Forests, parks, gamelands, steep slope complexes, stream valleys urban places and historic sites to establish the greenways network.
- Distinguish greenway elements as either conservation or recreation-oriented depending upon the types of features that comprise the greenway elements and their sensitivity to human activity.
- Delineate project corridors that can be implemented as discrete or individual projects.
- Develop a balance of regional and county-significant project corridors to create a comprehensive network of greenways. The balance proposed within the Plan is summarized in the table below.

County	Project Corridors	
	County	Regional
Bedford	23	6
Blair	-	4
Cambria	18	5
Fulton	13	3
Huntingdon	15	5
Somerset	27	5
Total	96	28

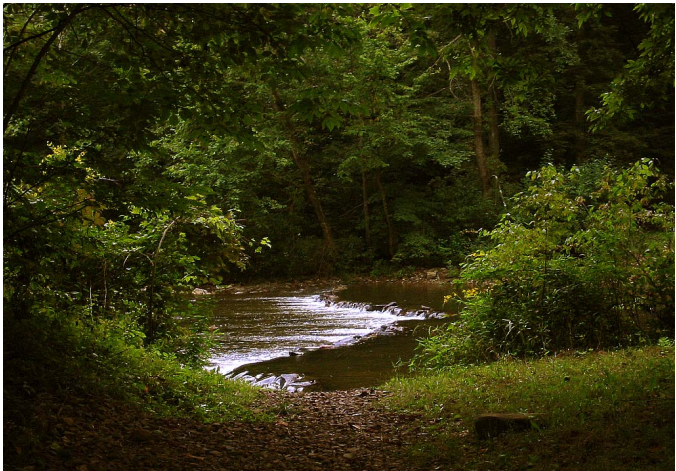


Figure 3: Laurel Hill Creek  
(www.gryphel.com)



Figure 6: Bike Trails



Figure 4: Greenwood Furnace Amish Buggies



Figure 7: Glendale Lake at Prince Gallitzin State Park



Figure 5: Barronvale Covered Bridge



Figure 8: Laurel Hill Greenway



# Regional Greenways Plan

Greenway Network

**Preservation Corridors/Habitats** - corridors intended to conserve the benefit of environmental sections or biological diversity areas; they generally do not include improved trails.

**Recreation Corridors/Destinations** - corridors of natural, cultural and recreational features linked by land based and/or water based trails.

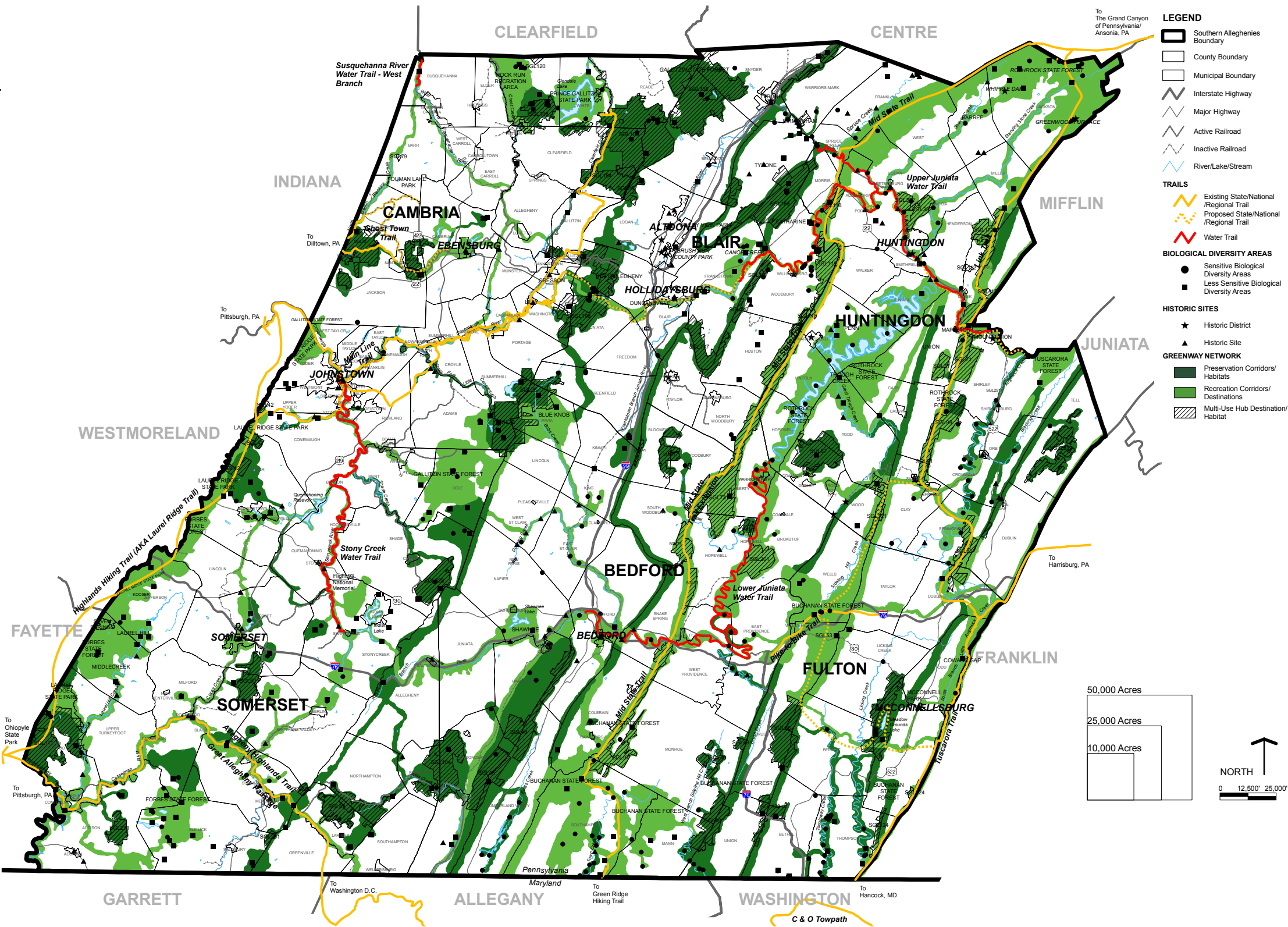
Multi-use Hub/  
Destination/Habitat

**Hubs** - the locations of urban activity or cultural tourism opportunities.

**Historic Sites** - the location of historic districts or sites as defined by the PA Historic and Museum Commission.

**Biological Diversity Areas** - high priority habitat areas identified in the specific county Natural Heritage Inventory

**Trails** - the location of existing or planned state or national-scale recreation trails including land based pedestrian



# Executive Summary

## Actions

The efforts for implementing the Southern Alleghenies region’s greenways and open space vision (Plan for Action) consists of four parts: an overall implementation strategy, a summary of the project priorities expressed during the planning process, a list and description of available regulatory tools and a summary of available resources for technical and funding support.

The implementation strategies recommended primarily include regional

coordination, county support and non-government organization participation intertwined in order to best achieve the Plan over a period of time. They are based on several factors including the high number of resources are already hard at work in the region making aspects of the vision a reality, the commitment of the counties involved and the position of SAP&DC as a regional planning body. The Plan for Action (Part Five) includes details regarding county and regional project priorities, regulatory and other specific implementation tools and funding sources.

The key recommendations of the Plan for Action include:

1. Create a Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Task Force from members of the Planning Advisory Committee and other stakeholders to guide the long-term implementation of the Plan.
2. Pursue the hiring of a DCNR supported-Circuit Rider to assist the Task Force to manage the detailed implementation plan, coordinate projects in the region and pursue funding opportunities.
3. Encourage and support the counties to develop, acquire and construct projects identified in this Plan.
4. Position the SAP&DC as the technical clearinghouse for GIS data and corridor planning in the region.
5. Host periodic summits or workshops to build capacity at the local level.
6. Utilize the technical expertise of the Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and Development Council to provide grant writing support.
7. Assist the counties to implement the Plan and provide technical support by leveraging the resources of the SAP&DC, Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and Development Council, county planners and State agencies.
8. Use existing regulatory tools, where available and appropriate, to implement portions of the Plan.
9. Continue to track implementation progress and prioritize projects based on available funding, opportunities and needs.

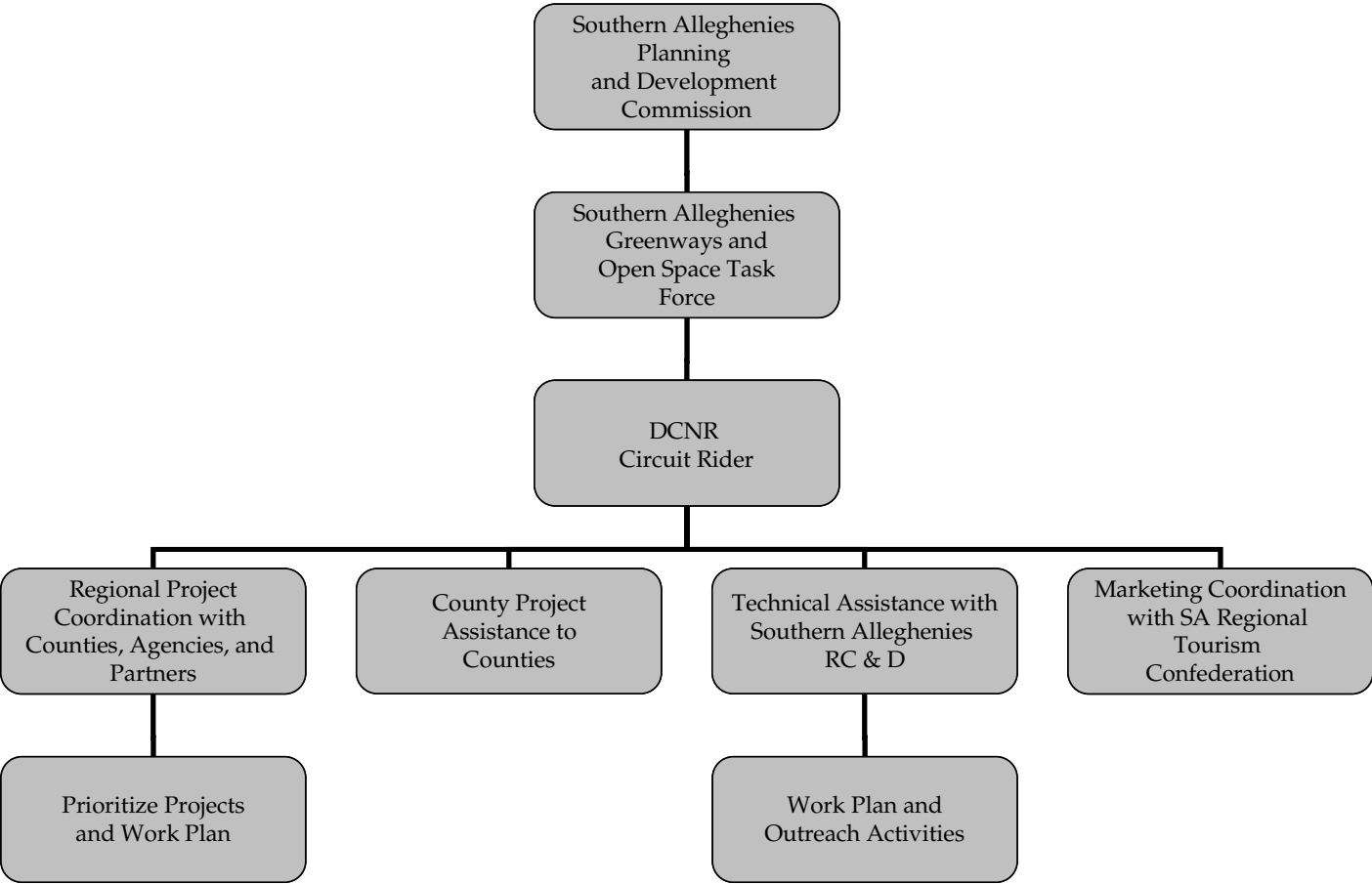


Figure 9: Implementation Partners Organization Chart

COUNTY OF \_\_\_\_\_, PENNSYLVANIA

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_\_

RESOLUTION OF COUNTY OF \_\_\_\_\_, PENNSYLVANIA, RECOGNIZING AND ADOPTING VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE SOUTHERN ALLEGHENIES GREENWAYS AND OPEN SPACE NETWORK PLAN (THE PLAN); AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FORMATION OF A REGIONAL TASK FORCE TO IMPLEMENT REGIONAL ELEMENTS; AND DETERMINING THE IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE FOR COUNTY-SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN.

Whereas the Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Network Plan (the Plan) includes greenway and open space preservation related policies applicable to the entire Southern Alleghenies Region as well as individual counties within the region;

Whereas the Plan describes regional and county-specific project corridors intended to be used for recreation or open space preservation purposes;

Whereas the Plan includes a detailed strategy for implementation of the regional and county-specific project corridors;

Whereas the Plan includes an implementation structure for both regional and county-specific elements; and

Whereas the Plan outlines a palette of tools that can be used for implementation of the Plan’s various recommendations;

Now therefore, be it resolved by the Board of County Commissioners of the County of \_\_\_\_\_ that:

- 1. The County recognizes the importance and potential benefits of the Plan’s regional and county-specific elements;
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ County-specific elements of the Plan are adopted as the County’s Greenways and Open Space Plan;
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ County-specific portions of the Plan are hereby incorporated into the County’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan; as adopted in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_;
- 4. The County supports the formation of the Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Task Force (Task Force) and the inclusion of the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) members in the Task Force membership;

- 5. The Task Force should guide and oversee implementation of the regional recommendations of the Plan and should make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners regarding the implementations of the Plan; and
- 6. The County supports the implementation structure identified in the Plan as a means of implementing the \_\_\_\_\_ County-specific elements of the Plan.





General

The Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Network Plan (the Plan) project is managed by the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP&DC). The Plan was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program under the administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Bureau of Recreation and Conservation. Additional funding was provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT).

Contributors

The following organizations and individuals have made the development of the Plan possible:

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- John Dubnansky – Formerly with SAP&DC
- Cindy Dunlap – Recreation and Parks Advisor, DCNR
- Richard Haines – Planning Director, Blair County

- Jeff Kloss – Executive Director, Bedford County Planning Commission
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- Fred Query – Assistant Director, Planning and Community Development SAP&DC
- Brandon Carson – SAP&DC
- Dean Roberts – PennDOT
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- Jane Sheffield – Executive Director, Allegheny Ridge Corporation
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- Richard Stahl – Planning Director, Huntingdon County
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## Acknowledgements

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