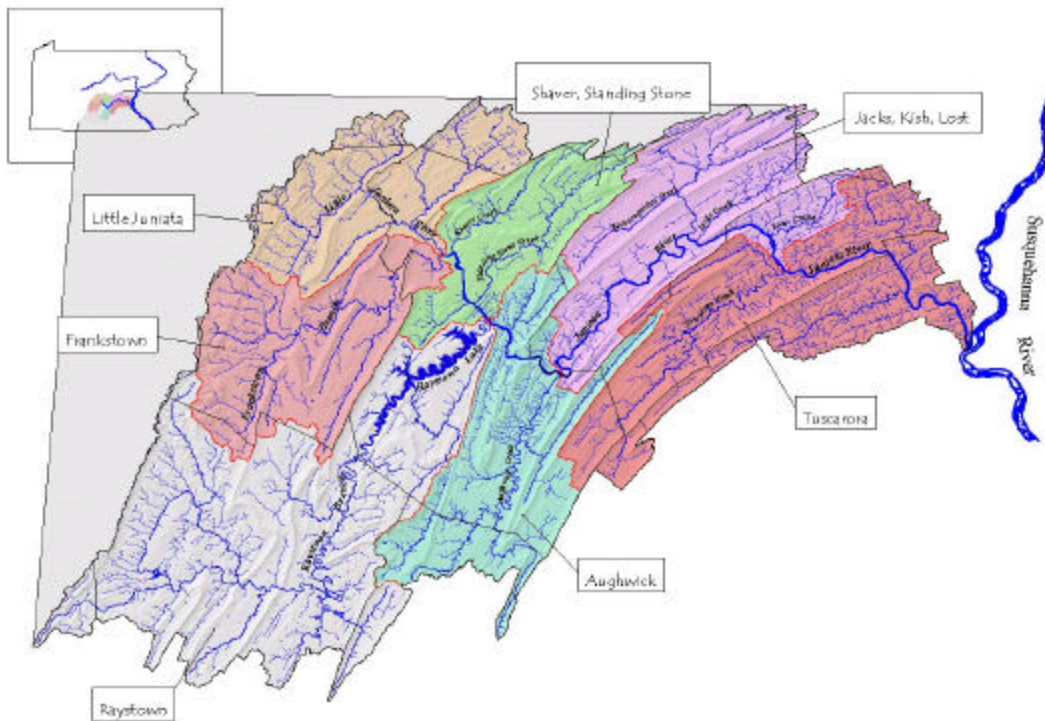


The Pennsylvania Rivers Conservation Program

Juniata Watershed Management Plan Executive Summary

Juniata Clean Water Partnership
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania



Prepared by:

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The Pennsylvania Rivers Conservation Program

Juniata Watershed Management Plan Executive Summary

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Copies of the full plan are available on the enclosed CD-ROM,
along with the GIS data used to create the plan maps.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JUNIATA WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Juniata River is a 100-mile ribbon of water tying together the ridge and valley region of south-central Pennsylvania. The river and its 400+ tributaries flow through parts of 12 counties, draining a total of 3,400 square miles. All told, more than 6,500 miles of streams rush, bubble, and meander their way to the Juniata River, which empties into the Susquehanna River. All of the rain and snow which falls on the forests, farms, towns, and other land that makes up the Juniata River watershed ultimately ends up in the Chesapeake Bay.

The main counties encompassed by the Juniata River watershed include Bedford, Blair, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, and Perry. Two hundred municipalities (townships and boroughs) have at least some of their area within the Juniata River watershed. Each of these municipalities derives a great deal of benefit from the abundant natural resources and relatively good water quality found in this region. It is the hope of many residents within the Juniata watershed that this situation continues well into the future.

The Juniata Watershed Management Plan was written to help guide conservation efforts in communities throughout the Juniata watershed. Township supervisors, borough councilors, watershed associations, and community groups can use the plan to improve the quality of life in their particular communities. Projects have been identified that will alleviate common water-related concerns in the region. These projects include improving public sewer and water systems; installing agricultural conservation practices; preserving farmland and historic sites; cleaning up roadside dumps; and reducing pollution from stormwater runoff, excess fertilizers and chemicals, untreated sewage, and eroded soil. Funding and technical assistance is available for communities that choose to carry out one or more of the recommended projects.

Community groups or municipal officials who may be interested in carrying out conservation projects should contact the Juniata Clean Water Partnership (JCWP) office to obtain a copy of the Recommended Action tables and Implementation Strategy. These sections of the Juniata Watershed Management Plan list the projects that address environmental concerns and are eligible for funding. The full plan is available at libraries and conservation districts, and online at www.jcwp.org. For assistance with implementation, contact your local JCWP partner. Please see Table 1 on page ES-9 for contact information.

Those interested in carrying out projects should also verify that their municipality has expressed written support for the watershed plan. The JCWP has made a concerted effort throughout the planning process to request support from watershed municipalities. Projects in non-supporting municipalities will not be given priority consideration for funding.

BACKGROUND OF THE JUNIATA CLEAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

The Juniata Clean Water Partnership was formed in 1997 to begin addressing the environmental and natural resource issues affecting the Juniata River watershed. The JCWP is a regional coalition of citizens, community groups, non-profit conservation organizations, county planning agencies, and county conservation districts. The mission of the JCWP is to build local capacity to protect, enhance, and restore the natural resources of the Juniata watershed.

The initial, overall goals of the JCWP were to develop a watershed plan for communities in the Juniata River watershed, to identify projects in need of funding, to build public awareness of watershed issues and threats, and to foster communication and cooperation between communities for natural resource improvement. As we neared completion of the watershed plan, we adjusted our goals and added the following:

- Assisting communities in implementing the watershed plan,
- Increasing public awareness and education on watershed issues,
- Conducting watershed-wide studies and modeling as needed, and
- Assisting in the establishment of successful watershed associations for the tributaries of the Juniata River.

Partners in this effort are listed in Table 1 on page ES-9.

CREATING A COMMUNITY VISION

The watershed planning process began with the premise that everyone in this region should help to determine the quality of life in our communities. Volunteers, natural resource professionals, and key decision makers have worked side by side for more than three years to produce this plan. The members of the Juniata Clean Water Partnership believe they have prepared an effective document and action plan that is meaningful, ambitious, and practical.

The Juniata Watershed Management Plan is being submitted to the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Recreation and Conservation by the JCWP, on behalf of the Mid-State Resource Conservation and Development Council and the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy. With submission of the plan to the DCNR, the JCWP will petition the state to be put on the Pennsylvania Rivers Conservation Registry. Once on that listing, the Juniata River watershed will be eligible for matching funds for the implementation of projects identified in this plan. This will allow a number of watershed associations, municipalities, conservation districts, county planning organizations, and community organizations to leverage funding.

This watershed plan completes a crucial planning phase for the Juniata River watershed and for the Juniata Clean Water Partnership. Yet the completion of the plan by no means represents the “end of the road” for the JCWP or for watershed planning more generally. In many ways, this is only the beginning. The completed plan will serve as the catalyst for watershed protection and restoration projects that will provide watershed residents with a clean and healthy future.

As we proceed to the new task of implementing watershed protection and restoration projects, the JCWP will continue its commitment to work with the communities of the Juniata watershed. In order for this plan to be a success, we need to keep the momentum going and to begin work on the numerous projects identified in the plan. Implementing the recommended actions will require thousands of committed people and organizations to work together patiently over the next decade and beyond. We look to the residents and local government officials of the Juniata watershed to take the lead in successfully improving the water quality and overall quality of life for everyone in this region.

OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The JCWP steering committee designed a watershed planning process that focused on achieving the following objectives:

- Prioritize projects that reduce threats to water quality and quantity from numerous sources such as poor or no storm water management, inadequate or non-existing sewage treatment, eroding stream banks, nutrient and sediment overload, acid mine drainage, and poor floodplain management.
- Identify ways to provide healthy resources to sustain the region's way of life.
- Improve and provide greater consistency to regional planning efforts.
- Encourage municipal officials to assume responsibility for their water-related problems.
- Improve the level of education on watershed concepts and issues.
- Increase citizen participation and decision making on resource issues.
- Create a strategy to best implement future projects.
- Direct appropriate additional funding to municipalities and organizations to carry out necessary conservation projects.
- Foster long-term partnerships among state and local agencies with community stakeholders to meet common conservation goals.

The JCWP steering committee's efforts in developing the watershed plan have been driven by three key principles: **grassroots involvement**, **conservation**, and **stewardship**. Following these principles, we developed the plan and recommended actions believing that:

- The best decisions regarding a river or other local resource are usually made by those who have the most familiarity with that resource. Thus the JCWP felt it was crucial to hear and incorporate the concerns of local residents and community leaders throughout the planning process.
- A greater level of acceptance among the communities of the Juniata watershed means increased public commitment to implement the many facets of this plan.
- A watershed's resources should be used and conserved for the benefit of all residents, including those yet to be born.
- Decisions ought to be guided by a balanced concern for the environmental, social, and economic well being of the residents of the Juniata watershed.
- The abundant resources entrusted to those of us in this region should be prudently and appropriately managed.

- Landowners and municipal officials in the Juniata watershed should be encouraged to be good stewards of their land, considering the impacts their decisions have on the entire community.

RESOURCES OF THE JUNIATA RIVER WATERSHED

History and Demographics

The Juniata River watershed is a predominantly rural region in south-central Pennsylvania. The area is especially notable for its history as a major transportation corridor across the Commonwealth. The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal and the Pennsylvania Railroad, both built in the early to mid-1800s, traveled along the Juniata River from the Susquehanna River to the Allegheny Ridge, providing a key link between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Iron production flourished in the 1800s, and the modern transportation systems helped the area grow rapidly. Iron production began to decline in the 1870s, while coal mining, limestone quarrying, and sand quarrying increased. The production of silica bricks became the dominant industry into the early 1900s. Since the early 1900s through the present day, the Juniata River region has alternated between periods of prosperity and depression.

Approximately 317,000 people now live in this 3,400 square mile area, with nearly half of the total population living in Blair County. Altoona, Blair County, is the only city in the watershed. The economy of the watershed is somewhat depressed, owing to its rural and somewhat isolated character. Per capita income is lower and unemployment rates are generally higher than for Pennsylvania as a whole.

Land Resources

Most of the Juniata watershed lies in the ridge and valley region of Pennsylvania. This topography of parallel northeast-southwest running ridges influences many aspects of the basin, such as soil type, land use, and transportation routes. The ridges consist primarily of sandstone-based soils, and are covered predominantly by deciduous forests. The valley bottoms consist of limestone-based soils, which provide high quality agricultural land. The land in the Juniata River watershed is approximately 67 percent forested, 23 percent agricultural, seven percent developed, and the rest in mine lands, water, or miscellaneous. See the map on page ES-12 for a visual display of land use. More than 80 percent of the land in the watershed is privately owned.

Because of the many ridges, steep slopes are common throughout the watershed. Slopes of 25 percent or greater make up 457,647 acres, or 21 percent of the watershed. Sinkholes, depressions in the land where limestone has dissolved, are a common occurrence, owing to the predominance of limestone bedrock.

Water Resources

The mainstem of the Juniata River is formed by three major tributaries: the Frankstown Branch, the Little Juniata River, and the Raystown Branch. The Frankstown Branch flows for 45 miles through southern Blair County and meets the Little Juniata River in western

Huntingdon County. The Little Juniata River flows north from Altoona to Tyrone, turning southeast and cutting through two ridges before it meets the Frankstown Branch at the official beginning of the Juniata River. The Raystown Branch, the longest stream in the watershed, flows for more than 120 miles through Somerset, Bedford, and Huntingdon counties. A dam near its mouth forms Raystown Lake, one of the largest lakes in Pennsylvania. Other major tributaries that feed the Juniata River include Standing Stone Creek, Aughwick Creek, Kishacoquillas Creek, and Tuscarora Creek. These seven tributaries make up the seven major subbasins of the Juniata River basin.

Many of the smaller tributaries are in particularly good condition. More than one-third of the basin's smaller watersheds are designated as "special protection" watersheds. Wetlands make up a small but biologically significant portion of the watershed, at about 9,000 acres. Floodplains cover only about 90,000 acres of the watershed, but their impact is significantly larger than the numbers would seem to indicate. This is because many boroughs and other residential areas are located in floodplains, heightening the risk of flood damages.

The rural nature of the watershed leads to limited use of public sewer and water systems. About 46 percent of households are hooked up to public sewer systems, and around 60 percent of households receive water from a public water system. About 60 sewage treatment plants serve communities in the watershed.

Significant point sources of water pollution in the watershed include sewage treatment plants and factory effluent. Overall, however, more pollution comes from diffuse (non-point) sources, such as forestry, agriculture, mining, or on-lot sewage and runoff from residential lots. Acid mine drainage is an intense, localized problem in the coal fields of the Broad Top plateau along the Bedford-Huntingdon county line and the Allegheny Front of western Blair County. The most common and widespread source of pollution throughout the watershed, however, is eroded soil and excess nutrients that can enter unprotected streams from agricultural and residential areas.

Biological Resources

The forests, fields, and streams of the watershed provide an abundant amount of habitat for wildlife, including many game species. Hunting and fishing are popular activities in the region. Nearly 170 species of birds, 60 species of fish, 50 species of mammals, and 40 species of reptiles and amphibians reside in the watershed. About 120 rare and endangered species live in the watershed, most of which are terrestrial plants. A few exotic, invasive species threaten to exclude native and/or rare species, damaging the health of the ecosystem.

Cultural Resources

Recreation areas are plentiful in the watershed. Eleven state parks, encompassing more than 14,000 acres, are located in the region. Thirty-two state game lands and five state forests are also in the watershed, consisting of nearly 350,000 acres. Two state heritage parks, the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor and the Allegheny Ridge State Heritage Park, link recreational and historical resources. The Raystown Lake Project, managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, features the very popular tourist destination, Raystown Lake. One hundred fifteen sites in the watershed are listed on the National Register of Historic Sites.

Two significant environmental education facilities are located in the watershed: Penn State University's Shavers Creek Environmental Center and Juniata College's Raystown Field Station.

Additional information about the resources of the Juniata watershed can be found in Chapters 2 through 6 of the Juniata Watershed Management Plan.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Respecting the value of local knowledge, the members of the JCWP designed the planning process to incorporate the ideas and concerns of many local watershed residents. Several methods were used to gather public input. The JCWP collected information by holding public meetings, soliciting written responses, consulting existing studies, and creating a water resources survey for municipal leaders.

In the winter of 1999, the JCWP held nine meetings throughout the watershed, setting the groundwork for the rest of the watershed plan. The purpose of these meetings was to hear and compile the concerns of local residents regarding the environmental and social health of the watershed. A water resources survey was sent to municipal officials in the summer of 1999, gathering vital information on localized concerns and upcoming projects. Finally, a draft version of the plan was presented and reviewed at another round of public meetings held in early 2000. Suggestions from these meetings were then incorporated into the final version of the plan.

The information gathered at public meetings and through the water resources survey can be found in Chapter 7 and Appendix B of the Juniata Watershed Management Plan.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

After collecting information through public meetings and the municipal survey, watershed related issues were organized by theme into seven major resource categories: Land, Water, Biological, Recreational, Cultural/Historical, Educational, and Political/Economic. The issues related to each category were prioritized according to their watershed impacts as well as public input. Table 2 on page ES-10 summarizes the major issues and their priorities.

The goal statements below describe the broad, general goals the plan is striving for in each resource category. Recommended actions, including projects such as those identified on page 1, paragraph 3, were developed with the intention that they will achieve these goals. Chapter 8 of the Juniata Watershed Management Plan lists the recommended actions for each issue, as well as agencies or organizations that can assist with the implementation and/or funding of the actions.

Land Resources – The land resources category consists of activities that take place primarily on land, but which may affect the adjacent land, water, and air.

Goal: The land resources of the Juniata watershed should be utilized efficiently to

ensure sustainable productivity of food and fiber while reducing soil erosion and keeping fertilizers and chemicals in the soil rather than in streams or ground water. High-risk land areas such as floodplains, wetlands, and steep slopes ought to be restricted to low-impact land uses.

Water Resources – The water resources category consists of specific issues and activities that are water related and/or take place primarily in or on water sources.

Goal: The water resources of the Juniata watershed should be utilized safely and efficiently at all times so that sufficient quantities of clean water exist for both native in-stream aquatic life and human and livestock consumption. Systems of response should be in place to reduce the potentially harmful impacts of both flooding and drought.

Septic and public sewer systems should be kept in good working order so that wastewater does not degrade streams or ground water. Sources of water pollution such as acid mine drainage and industrial point-source pollution should be reduced and/or eliminated. Storm water should be managed not only to reduce the amount of runoff, but also to use the abundance of water for community benefit and then return clean water into our streams and rivers. For example, rain barrels could collect storm water for use as “gray water” for watering plants, washing cars, etc. Wetlands should be retained to improve water quality, reduce impacts from flooding, and provide habitat for many species.

Biological Resources – The biological resources category consists of issues directly related to the flora and fauna of an ecosystem.

Goal: The biological resources of the Juniata watershed should be maintained and/or restored to provide high quality land and water habitat for diverse species of flora and fauna. Special consideration should be given to protecting endangered species and habitats and to maximizing natural diversity. Exotic invasive species should be removed as much as possible.

Recreational Resources – The recreational resource category consists of issues relevant to the need for additional recreation opportunities and for public access to recreation.

Goal: The recreational resources of the Juniata watershed should be readily accessible and affordable for all of the watershed’s residents. Greenway corridors, providing river access and trails, should be developed to enhance residents’ appreciation for the value and beauty of the area’s natural resources. Recreational resources should be maintained in good condition in order to attract those from outside the region to vacation here. Efforts to combine the attractions of both recreational and historical sites should be continued in order to heighten educational value and tourist appeal.

Cultural/Historical Resources – The cultural resources category consists of issues related to historic preservation.

Goal: The cultural and historical resources of the Juniata watershed should be preserved to serve as living reminders of our industrial and cultural history. Historical resources should be maintained in good condition in order to attract those from outside the region to vacation here. Efforts to combine the attractions of both historical and recreational sites should continued to heighten educational value and tourist appeal.

Educational Resources – The educational resources category consists primarily of issues related to environmental education.

Goal: The educational resources of the Juniata watershed should provide all watershed residents, especially children and decision makers, with an appreciation of the beauty of this region and a clear understanding of the value of maintaining and protecting its natural resources. Educational resources should be linked to recreational and cultural/historical resources to increase the availability of these resources and to enhance their appeal.

Political/Economic Resources – The political/economic resources category consists of issues related to leadership and money.

Goal: The political and economic resources of the Juniata watershed should enable the creation of a broadly shared vision for the future of the region as well as the means to work together to achieve that vision. Citizens should be encouraged to participate in municipal government activities. Government entities should cooperate across political boundaries to provide consistent and effective planning, regulation, and enforcement. Governments should also encourage cooperation across the boundaries of competing interest groups so that intractable conflicts can give way to creative solutions. Economic opportunities should be developed based on the region's strengths: its natural beauty and abundant natural resources. Economic development that sustains communities and natural systems should be encouraged through the use of incentives.

CONCLUSION

The information summarized in this document can be found in more detail in the full Juniata Watershed Management Plan. To reiterate, the purpose of the Juniata Watershed Management Plan is to help guide conservation efforts in communities throughout the Juniata River watershed. Plans are available for review at county conservation district offices, most area libraries, and on the Internet at www.jcwp.org.

If you are interested in obtaining funding to carry out watershed protection and restoration projects, please contact the Juniata Clean Water Partnership office or your local JCWP partner. The JCWP partners represent an excellent source of skill and energy, and they will often be the point people in carrying out the plan in their particular regions. However, the partnership itself will continue to play a crucial role in coordinating the multitude of activities so that they lead to a meaningful result.

The value of this plan goes well beyond the written document itself. The planning process has led to information sharing, awareness raising, collaborative action, and strengthened partnerships. The impacts of these results transcend the pages of the document.

TABLE 1
Juniata Clean Water Partnership Contact Information

Contact Person		Organization/Agency	Phone Number
Dave	Sewak	Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation	(814) 696-9380
John	Turner	Allegheny Ridge Corporation	(814) 696-2900
Terry	Miller	Bedford County Conservation District, Manager	(814) 623-7900
Jim	Barefoot	Bedford County Conservation District, Watershed Specialist	(814) 623-7900
Jeffrey	Kloss	Bedford County Planning Commission	(814) 623-4827
Donna	Fisher	Blair County Conservation District, Manager	(814) 696-0877
Jim	Eckenrode	Blair County Conservation District, Watershed Specialist	(814) 696-0877
Richard	Haines	Blair County Planning Commission	(814) 940-5984
Janie	French	Canaan Valley Institute	(814) 768-9584
Deb	Nardone	Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Juniata Project	(814) 627-5082
Jennifer	Henry	Chesapeake Bay Foundation, PA Office	(717) 234-5550
Jim	Mays	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Conservation Partnerships	(717) 783-8526
Terry	Hough	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Susquehanna Watershed Coordinator	(717) 783-2712
Alice	Kline	Department of Environmental Protection, Altoona	(814) 946-7290
Bill	Zett	Department of Environmental Protection, Altoona	(717) 946-7290
Bernie	Hoffnar	Department of Environmental Protection, Harrisburg	(717) 787-4975
Richard	Devore	Department of Environmental Protection, Southcentral Region	(717) 705-4906
Jennifer	Reed	Fulton County Conservation District	(717) 485-3547
Mary Kay	Seville	Fulton County Planning	(717) 485-3717
John	Dawes	Howard Heinz Endowment/Western PA Watershed Protection Program	(814) 669-4847
Andy	Patterson	Huntingdon County Conservation District	(814) 627-1627
Richard	Stahl	Huntingdon County Planning Commission	(814) 643-5091
Dave	Hockman-Wert	Juniata Clean Water Partnership	(814) 627-5391
Dennis	Johnson	Juniata College, Environmental Science Program	(814) 641-5335
Paula	Martin	Juniata College, Environmental Science Program	(814) 641-3314
Dane	Lauver	Juniata County Conservation District	(717) 436-6919
Bill	Stong	Juniata County Planning	(717) 436-7729
Larry	Schardt	Mid-State RC&D	(717) 248-4901
Dan	Dunmire	Mifflin County Conservation District, Manager	(717) 248-4695
Cadie	Pruss	Mifflin County Conservation District, Watershed Specialist	(717) 248-4695
Bill	Gomes	Mifflin County Planning	(717) 242-0887
Walt	Whitmer	Penn State Cooperative Extension	(717) 436-7744
Todd	Brajkovich	Perry County Conservation District	(717) 582-8988
Len	Lichvar	Southern Alleghenies Conservancy	(814) 623-7900
Ron	Donlan	Southern Alleghenies RC&D	(814) 623-7900
Andrew	Thompson	Tri-County Regional Planning (Perry County)	(717) 234-2639

TABLE 2		
Prioritized Issues and Timetable		
Issue	Priority Level*	Timetable
Land Resources		
Land Use Planning	HHH	1-3 years
Erosion and Sedimentation/Non-point Source Pollution	HH	3-5 years
Forestry	HH	3-5 years
Large Scale/Intensive Livestock Operations	HH	3-5 years
Nutrient Pollution	HH	3-5 years
Riparian (Streamside) Buffers	HH	3-5 years
Solid Waste Management/Illegal Dumping	HH	3-5 years
Agricultural Conservation Practices	H	5-8 years
Herbicide and Pesticide Use	H	5-8 years
Streambank Fencing	H	5-8 years
Water Resources		
Stormwater Management	HHH	1-3 years
Water Monitoring	HHH	1-3 years and ongoing
Acid Mine Drainage	HH	3-5 years
Flooding/Floodplain Management	HH	3-5 years
Public Water Supply	HH	3-5 years
Sewage and Septage	HH	3-5 years
Wetlands	HH	3-5 years
Industrial Pollution	H	5-8 years
Air Pollution	M	8-10 years
Biological Resources		
Fisheries Management	M	8-10 years
Habitat Management and Invasive Species	M	8-10 years
Recreational Resources		
Greenways/Trail Development	H	5-8 years
Recreational Needs	M	8-10 years
River Access	M	8-10 years
Cultural/Historical Resources		
Cultural/Historical Preservation	M	8-10 years
Educational Resources		
Environmental/General Education	HH	3-5 years
Political/Economic Resources		
Funding	HH	3-5 years
Government Coordination	HH	3-5 years
Planning and Policy Development	HH	3-5 years
Sustainable Economic Development	HH	3-5 years
Environmental Management	H	5-8 years

*Priority level:

HHH = Paramount issues that need to be dealt with first.

HH = Highest priority and should be completed within 3-5 years.

H = High Priority and should be completed in 5-8 years.

M = Medium priority and should be completed in 8-10 years.

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Dave Hockman-Wert, Juniata Clean Water Partnership: *Co-Author/Researcher*
Deborah Nardone, Chesapeake Bay Foundation: *Co-Author/Project Manager*
Jim Eckenrode, Juniata Clean Water Partnership (formerly): *Public Outreach*
Bernard Yacobucci, Juniata Clean Water Partnership (formerly): *GIS*
Carissa Gigliotti, Juniata Clean Water Partnership: *Public Outreach*

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Dave Sewak, Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation

John Turner, Allegheny Ridge Corporation

Jane Sheffield, Allegheny Ridge Corporation

Terry Miller, Bedford County Conservation District

Jim Barefoot, Bedford County Conservation District

Jeffrey Kloss, Bedford County Planning

Frank Burggraf, Bedford County Planning

Donna Fisher, Blair County Conservation District

Richard Haines, Blair County Planning

Janie French, Canaan Valley Institute

Stacey Cromer, Canaan Valley Institute

Jennifer Henry, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

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Marion Hrubovchak, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Rick Devore, PA Department of Environmental Protection

Bernard Hoffnar, PA Department of Environmental Protection

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Brian Young, Huntingdon County Planning

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William Gomes, Mifflin County Planning

Christopher Pfeiffer, Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access, Pennsylvania State University

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