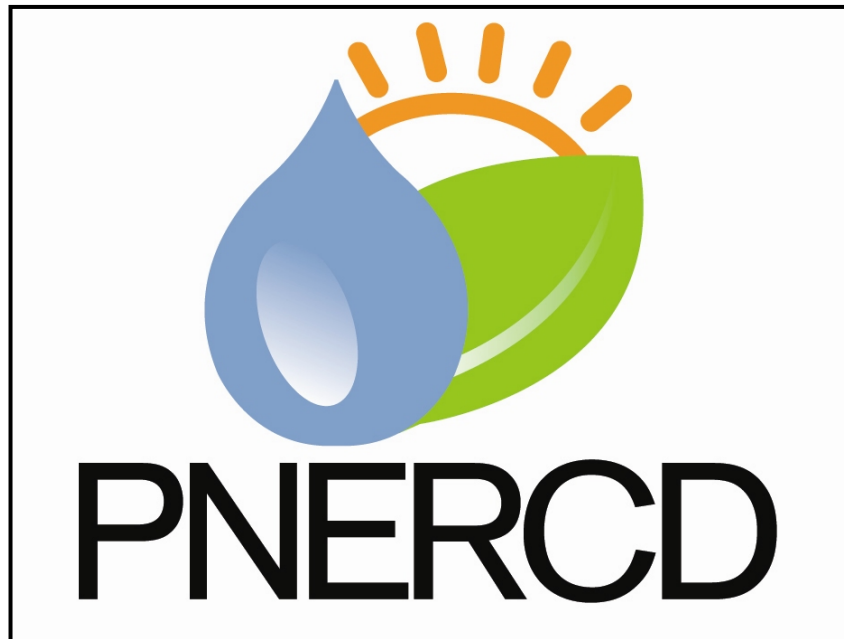


***Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation and
Development Council***

(Pennsylvania)

2009 – 2014 Area Plan



Prepared by the Pocono Northeast RC&D Council on behalf of the council members and sponsors in the following counties:

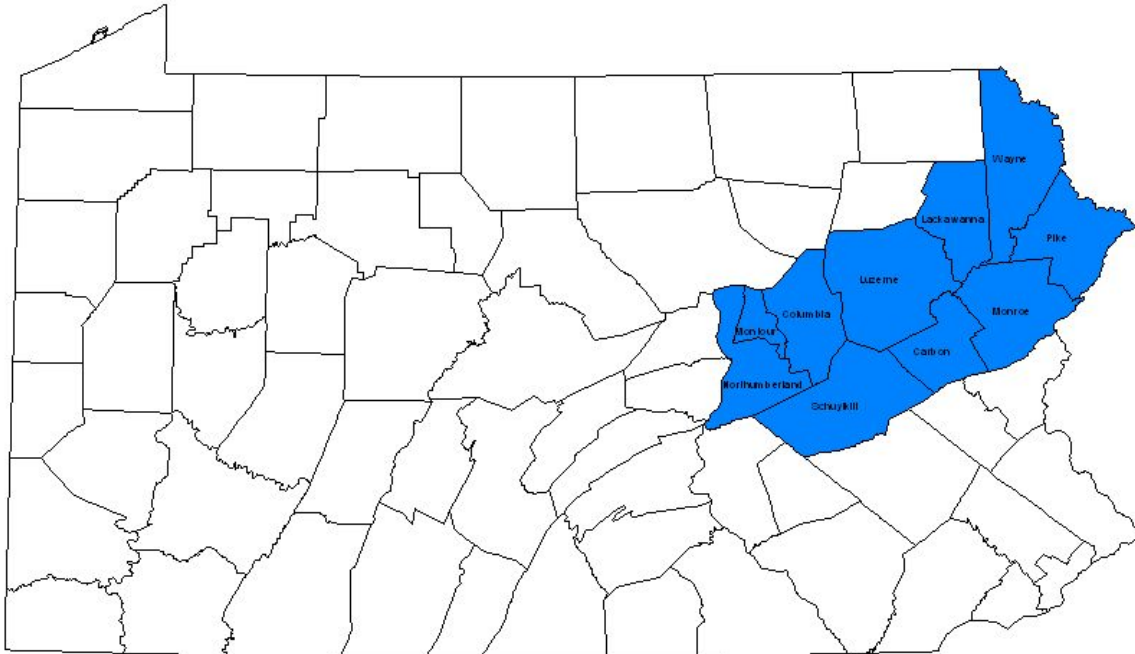
**Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour,
Northumberland, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne Counties**

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Serving the Following Counties in Pennsylvania: Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne

Mission: To enhance and improve the ecological, cultural, and economic characteristics of the area through projects and programs that promote the management, protection, and sustainable utilization of the area's resources. (Adopted 2004, Revised 2007)

Vision: To become a recognized leader and advocate of natural resource and community sustainability in northeastern Pennsylvania. (Adopted 2004)

Introduction

This document is the long-range plan for Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council, Inc. The purpose of this plan is to provide a strategic direction for the organization over the next five years. The plan documents the goals the Council wants to accomplish through the RC&D Program for the five-year time period based on well-defined needs and opportunities within the Council Area. The plan contains goals, objectives, and strategies that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Oriented, and Time-bound (SMART). These will serve as the Council's foundation from which it will work, as well as provide the structure for the development of the Council's Annual Plan of Work. So, in essence the Area Plan is the cornerstone of the planning, coordination, facilitation, and implementation of the Council's activities.

The Council's Area Plan was developed by soliciting input through a variety of sources including: public meetings, surveys, and verbal confirmation. In addition to the survey results, local Council members were provided guidance on the development of this plan, and were assisted with the development through a professional Penn State University facilitator. The counties served by this Area Plan include Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne.

With the passage of the Food and Agricultural Act of 1962, Congress authorized Resource Conservation and Development areas. The purpose of the act was to expand opportunities for conservation districts, local units of governments, and individuals to improve their communities in multi-county areas. This included assistance in enhancing the economic, environmental, and social well being of the RC&D Areas. Currently, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service administers the Federal RC&D Program. This document serves as an agreement between NRCS and the Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc.

Organizational Overview

Background

The Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) area is a ten-county 5,527-square-mile, region in northeastern Pennsylvania with a population of 1,151,337 (2000 census). The RC&D Council has been an active alliance of resource and economic development interests in the Pocono Northeast since 1973, when the initial constitution, bylaws, and application for federal assistance were filed. The application was updated and resubmitted in June 1977. On February 15, 1980, following seven years of faithful commitment to the RC&D program, the organizers were granted authorization by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to operate as the Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation and Development Area. On July 8, 1988 the Council created the Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation Trust (IRS 501c3 determination on April 7, 1989) which has served as its funding subsidiary. Due to changes in RC&D program requirements, the Trust has been replaced by a reorganized and incorporated RC&D Council. The Trust was dissolved during calendar year 2004 completing its outstanding contractual obligations. Incorporation of the RC&D Council was completed on November 13, 2002. The Council received its nonprofit IRS 501c3 determination on April 30, 2003.

The original authorization of the Pocono Northeast RC&D area included the counties of Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne. Columbia and Northumberland Counties were added in October 1991 with Montour County joining the following year. Representatives from these counties have faithfully served the RC&D Council for nearly a quarter century with many accomplishments to their credit. Currently the governing body of the Pocono Northeast RC&D Council is made up of a twenty-member Board of Directors. The structure of the twenty-member board is made up of ten appointees, one from each of the ten County Conservation Districts. The remaining ten members are members-at-large who have an interest in the Council to become involved as board members. The Council annually elects five at-large members who serve a one-year term, and there are five at-large members who serve a two-year-term and thus are elected every other year.

The Council developed its previous Area Plan in 2004. During the planning process the Council developed a mission and vision statement for the organization. The mission as developed in 2004 is:

To enhance and improve the ecological, cultural, and economic characteristics of the Pocono Northeast RC&D Area through projects and programs that promote the management, protection, and sustainable utilization of the Area's resources

The Council's vision as developed in 2004 is:

To become a recognized leader and advocate of natural resource and community sustainability in northeastern Pennsylvania

The Council reevaluated the mission and vision statement in 2007 based on the Council's continued involvement with projects and programs that benefit individuals and communities throughout the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Due to the continued participation with these projects and programs, the Council modified the mission statement in 2007 to read as follows:

To enhance and improve the ecological, cultural, and economic characteristics of the area through projects and programs that promote the management, protection, and sustainable utilization of the area's resources

Geographic Information

The Pocono Northeast RC&D Area is situated in the northern Appalachian Mountain Section of the Ridge and Valley Province and the Appalachian Plateau Province. The Delaware River forms the Area's eastern boundary, separating the Area from New York and New Jersey. The Susquehanna River, the largest of Pennsylvania's rivers, drains major portions of the five western counties and has had a major influence on the history and development of the region. The Blue Mountain, with its nationally renowned Appalachian Trail, forms the southern boundary, and the Endless Mountains of Pennsylvania's Northern Tier borders the Area on the north and west.

The Pocono Northeast Area is comprised of three characteristically unique yet interdependent regions. These are, from east to west, the Pocono, the Anthracite, and the Susquehanna Regions. Luzerne and Lackawanna are the transition counties having all three regions within their borders. The Susquehanna Region comprises Montour, most of Columbia, and Northumberland, plus major portions of Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Schuylkill Counties. The Anthracite Region includes significant portions of Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Schuylkill with smaller portions of Carbon, Columbia, and Northumberland Counties. The northwestern portion of Monroe County and the high plateau areas of the five bordering counties constitute the Pocono Plateau. This "Poconos" or "Pocono Mountains" label has become synonymous with the entire northeastern Pennsylvania plateau and the upper Delaware Valley in the marketing of the region's resorts, vacation homes, and tourism. All of Monroe, Pike, and Wayne with smaller portions of Carbon, Lackawanna, and Luzerne comprise the Pocono Region.

The topography of the plateau is relatively rugged, having been scoured by glaciers. The principal result was the formation of hundreds of lakes, waterfalls, wetland bogs, and thousands of acres of rock-littered forestlands. These and related soil characteristics are inherent to the resource problems of the entire glaciated plateau region. While limiting use, these characteristics have enhanced the region's scenic beauty and provide many recreational opportunities.

Socioeconomic Information

There are a number of socio-economic factors that have shaped and influenced the communities within the RC&D Area. The area has been impacted largely by the anthracite coal fields that are found throughout the region. The development, exploitation, and transportation of coal literally shaped the Anthracite region, its settlement, growth, industry, and landscape. In the late 1700's coal was discovered and began to be used and mined within northeastern Pennsylvania. The industry expanded and grew to the point in 1914 when over 180,000 people were employed working in the coal mines of northeastern PA, and in 1917 coal production

peaked at over 100 million tons. Coal production began to decline first as a result of the Depression, and second with the introduction of oil as a heating source. In 1950 the production was approximately 46 million tons; in 1970 it fell to 9.2 million tons, and in 1987 it was only 5.2 million tons. Anthracite has caused both positive and negative impacts on the region. Until the mid-Twentieth Century, anthracite provided economic prosperity for the urban centers that grew in and around the region's four major coal fields (northern, southern, eastern middle, and western middle anthracite coal fields). The decline of the coal mining industry has taken its toll on the communities within the RC&D Area. The urban centers of Scranton, Carbondale, Wilkes-Barre, Pittston, Hazleton, Shamokin, Shenandoah, and Pottsville were all built up as a result of the anthracite coal industry, and have transitioned into other epicenters within the communities or have slowly been losing populations due to the lack of employment.

Recently there has been a local resurgence into the resource extraction field with the identification and advancement of technologies in drilling of the Marcellus Shale. The Marcellus Shale is a black, low density, carbonaceous (organic rich) shale that occurs in the subsurface beneath much of Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. The United State Geologic Survey (USGS) provided initial calculations that the Marcellus Shale contained an estimated undiscovered resource of about 1.9 trillion cubic feet of gas. This information has brought gas companies into the area and increased the potential for large amounts of funding for exploring and developing these potential gas resources.

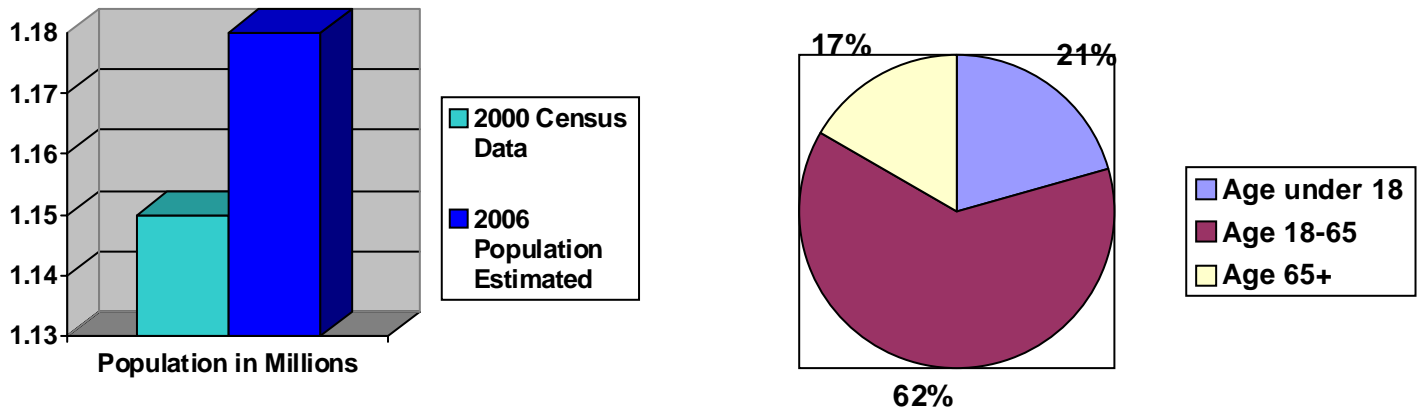
A prime-contributing factor to many of the changes throughout the Pocono Northeast during the past quarter-century has been the accessibility of the area upon completion of the extensive interstate highway system. Three major interstate highways (I-80, I-81, and I-84) plus the Pennsylvania Turnpike and the regional interstate link (I-380) have provided one-day motor vehicle access to the area from most points between Boston and Washington, D.C. Recent expansions to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport have provided even greater accessibility to and from distant points throughout the U.S. and Canada. Completion of these transportation facilities has triggered economic growth as well as serious impacts on the Area's resources. Even greater impacts are expected when the rail passenger service is restored between Scranton and New York City (Hoboken, NJ). As a result of these developments, coupled with our location, the sustainability of our resources and our communities will become even more important during the first quarter of this century.

Currently there are only limited numbers of new manufacturing and production industries moving into the Pocono region; it has been the region's environmental amenities rather than employment that have been the attraction. In fact, many of the newcomers continue to maintain employment in New York and northern New Jersey where several major industries have recently relocated. The extensive interstate highway system that links the Pocono region with the eastern metro-area makes it possible to commute. The higher salaries offered by the industries and firms in the eastern metropolitan areas more than compensate for the time and cost of commuting. As a result, the Pocono region has become a bedroom community as well as a retirement community for these former metro residents. The new industries that have located in the region have done so primarily in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Metropolitan Area. This, too, has contributed to the demand for new housing and escalating cost of living expense.

Agriculture still provides economic potential and returns within the RC&D Area. Many of the counties have agricultural areas that continue to produce products that are used locally, but are also transported or exported to other areas for use. The farm enterprises range from the traditional dairy, beef, poultry, and cash grains to such specialized commodities as green wrapped tomatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as commercially grown vegetables supplying nearby canneries and potato chip factories. Some of the agricultural producers have also experienced success with value-added opportunities such as cheese making, wine making, organic products, and other avenues to market their products creatively to provide more of a demand and value for the products.

Demographics

Socioeconomic factors in the RC&D area have impacted the overall demographics. Again, the anthracite coal mining industry was a huge influence on the region, and the decline of the industry has negatively affected the demographics, but the highway infrastructure and low-cost of living of the Pocono area have positively increased the demographic numbers. This can be seen through many of the facts and figures represented below:



The 2000 Census shows the RC&D Area population to be 1,151,337 people within the area, but 2006 estimates show the population increase on average of 4.93% to 1,182,131 people. Out of the ten counties, five show a negative increase in the population with the largest loss of -3.1% within Northumberland County, and the largest population increase of 25.7% represented by Pike County. Also of note is eight out of the ten counties within the area are considered rural meaning they have an average of fewer than 274 people per square mile. The two counties that are over this figure and considered urban are Lackawanna and Luzerne. The entire land area of the RC&D region is 5,469 square miles. The average age representation within the area is 18-65 year-olds representing 62.4% of the population, with 20.8% under 18, and 16.8% over 65 years old. The population of the area is under the Pennsylvania average for higher education with 81.1% of those over 25 years-old graduating from high school, and 16.1% of those over 25 having a bachelor's degree or higher. The average median income within the area is \$40,461.

Natural Resources

The Pocono Northeast continues to account for most of the nation's anthracite production, coming primarily from the two middle and southern fields (Schuylkill, Luzerne, Northumberland, Columbia, and Carbon Counties). Mining in the northern field is nearly nonexistent today, having succumbed to numerous economic and environmental forces. This region where mining and manufacturing flourished, during the nation's age of industrial expansion, is currently emerging into a center for service industries. However, there has been a local resurgence into the resource extraction field through the identification of Marcellus Shale. In the United States, the Marcellus Shale runs across the southern tier and Finger Lakes regions of New York, in northern and western Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, through western Maryland, and throughout most of West Virginia extending across the state line into extreme western Virginia. The Marcellus bedrock in eastern Pennsylvania extends across the Delaware River into extreme western New Jersey. A Pennsylvania State University geosciences professor called his estimate of 168 trillion cubic feet (4,800 km³) in the Marcellus black shale beds that lie between New York state and West Virginia conservative. Environmental concerns regarding the drilling and extraction processes have sparked opposition to development of this resource. One concern is the release of underground, naturally-occurring, radioactive material along with the drilling fluids and equipment use. The hydraulic fracturing process also uses large quantities of surface water and potentially threatens stream and river beds as well as underground aquifers.

The blighted landscape and other environmental scars left in the wake of anthracite's demise are very much evident today. However, the approximately 12,000 acres of anthracite refuse piles ("culm banks") and

approximately 18,000 acres of abandoned strip mined land in the region are ripe with opportunities for reclamation, resource recovery, and creative economic development.

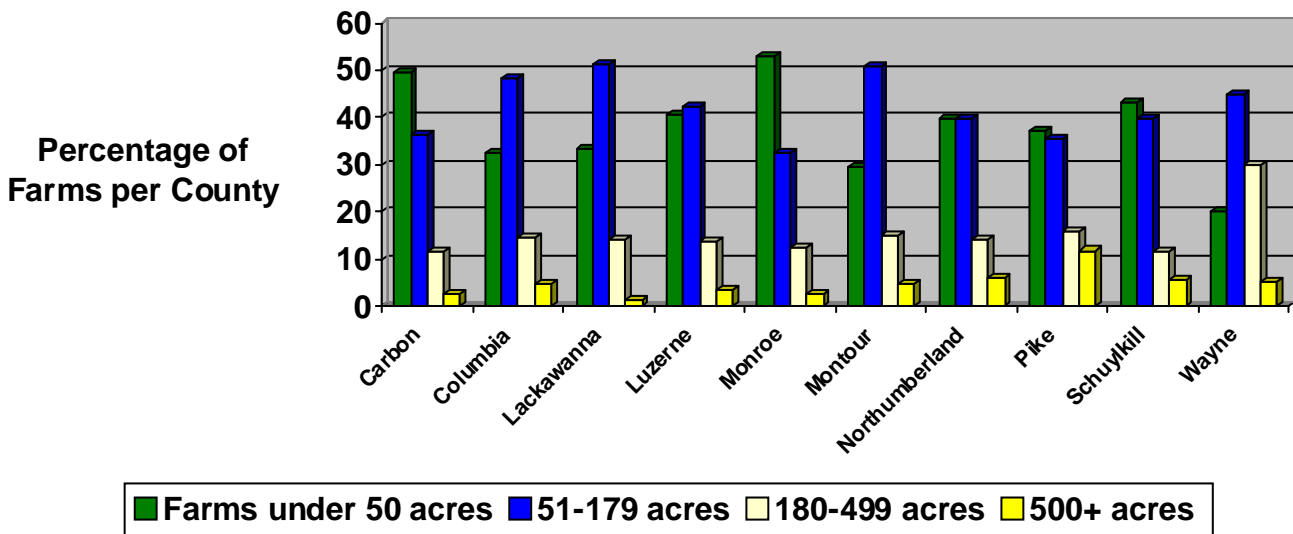
Like the Pocono region, but to a lesser degree, the Susquehanna region’s expanding urban centers of Bloomsburg, Berwick, Danville, and Sunbury are imposing development pressures on the area’s unique and important farmlands. This Susquehanna region is the area’s agricultural center. A very viable agricultural industry still exists in this region with a wide range of farm enterprises. These enterprises range from the traditional dairy, beef, poultry, and cash grains to such specialized commodities as green-wrapped tomatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as commercially grown vegetables supplying nearby canneries and potato chip factories.

Streams and rivers within parts of the region have been designated as High Quality and Exceptional Value by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. These valuable water resources are essential for the agricultural and tourism industries as well as for sustaining groundwater and surface water reserves. Stormwater is a major problem for many of the local individuals, communities, municipalities, and organizations within the Pocono Northeast Area. Development has occurred at an exponential rate within the region, and as a result large amounts of stormwater runoff have overstressed our watersheds and caused major flooding. Stormwater runoff only tends to increase and become more severe as we create more roads, parking lots, homes, residential developments, shopping centers, and other types of impervious surfaces. The economic implications and realities relating to stormwater and floodplain management are not often recognized until there is a flooding event. Stormwater runoff seems to not be thought about until there is a catastrophic event such as flooding as experienced in the summers of 2004, 2006, or 2008.

Sustainability of water resources, agriculture, forestry, and local communities are all inter-related and subject to the effectiveness of, and commitment to, local comprehensive planning. Unfortunately there is a major void and weakness throughout the region related to regional planning. This puts both resources and communities at risk, and, therefore, it is vital that the Pocono Northeast RC&D Council continues to address these needs and opportunities.

Agriculture

The latest National Agriculture Statistics Service data (2002) show some interesting trends in the agricultural industry within the RC&D area. NASS has identified the number of farms within the RC&D area to total 4,824 farms with 675,175 acres in production. The overall average farm size is 138 acres with 42% of the farms falling within the 50-179 acre range followed by farms under 50 acres being 38% of the total. Since the last NASS survey data, there are only two counties (Monroe & Schuylkill) that have increased in the number of farms within the county. Both these counties have increased acreages in production, but two other counties (Luzerne & Pike) have increased the acreages in production as well.



Even though these data appear to show that agriculture production has decreased on average because the number of farms and acreages decreased in the majority of the ten counties in the RC&D area, the market value of production has increased in six of the ten counties. These enterprises range from the traditional dairy, beef, poultry, and cash grains to such specialized commodities as green-wrapped tomatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as commercially grown vegetables supplying nearby canneries and potato chip factories. Livestock sales accounted for \$165,630,000 of total value in the ten counties while crop production was \$140,170,000. Northumberland County ranked #1 in livestock market value production, and Schuylkill County ranked #1 in production for crops.

Resource Needs and Opportunities

Public Participation Process

The Pocono Northeast RC&D Council enlisted several strategies to develop public participation during the area planning process. The Council developed an online and hardcopy survey for interested individuals and organizations to provide input and feedback on the resource needs and opportunities within the area. Both surveys were distributed to constituents within the region. Hardcopy surveys were distributed at various meetings and functions of county conservation districts in order for their clients to provide input as well as for district staff and board members.

The Council also hosted two area planning public meetings for RC&D members as well as for the public to participate in the process in providing ideas and comments. The public meetings were held in July and August 2008 with an outside facilitator assisting with the process. The public meetings went very well and resulted in the Council's focusing on several very evident themes as needs and opportunities for the Council.

Summary of Findings by RC&D Element

Through the online and hardcopy surveys as well as the public meetings, the RC&D Council received and tabulated 153 surveys, and was able to determine the resource needs and opportunities within the area. The Council evaluated the data and was able to rank and score the responses which follow:

| What needs do you foresee for your community over the next five years? | Rank by % |
|---|------------------|
| Land Conservation | 33.11% |
| Land Management | 29.80% |
| Water Management | 25.17% |
| Community Development | 11.92% |

| Land Conservation | Rank by % |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Reduction of Soil Erosion | 23.32% |
| Soil Quality | 18.95% |
| Forest Stewardship | 17.20% |
| Air Quality | 15.16% |
| Vegetation Management | 12.24% |
| Abandoned Mineland Reclamation | 11.95% |
| Other | 1.17% |

| Land Management | Rank by % |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Ag Land Preservation | 22.69% |
| Forestland Management | 15.57% |
| Fish & Wildlife Habitat | 15.04% |
| Agricultural Management | 12.66% |
| Agricultural Opportunities | 11.87% |
| Biomass Production/Opps | 10.29% |
| Grazing/Pasture Mgmt | 9.76% |
| Other | 2.11% |

| Water Management | Rank by % |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Stormwater Management | 19.37% |
| Water Quality Protection/Creation | 16.24% |
| Watershed Management | 14.53% |
| Non-point Source Pollution | 11.97% |
| Riparian Area/Buffer Mgmt | 11.68% |
| Watershed Education | 11.68% |
| Wetland Protection/Creation | 9.40% |
| Alternative Wastewater | 3.99% |
| Other | 1.14% |

| Community Development | Rank by % |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Alternative Energy Opportunities | 18.48% |
| Economic Development | 12.77% |
| Business Creation/Retention | 12.50% |
| Historic Preservation | 10.87% |
| Health Services | 10.05% |
| Community Beautification | 8.15% |
| Educational Sessions/Opportunities | 7.61% |
| Rural Fire Protection | 6.52% |
| Other | 0.54% |

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Community Development Element

Goal: Provide at least one education and outreach activity or media release for communities and individuals within the RC&D area annually on alternative and renewable energy and energy conservation topics

Objective: Contact all ten county conservation districts to establish a technical steering committee to assist with the planning, coordination, and implementation of energy education and outreach programs by 2009.

Strategy: Plan and host an alternative/renewable energy expo to showcase new technologies and facilitate technology transfer by 2010.

Strategy: Produce and distribute six press releases and/or articles promoting alternative/renewable energy by 2011.

Strategy: Assist with the development and implementation of three alternative/renewable energy projects within the RC&D area by 2014.

Objective: Provide leadership and attend at least two Pennsylvania Fuels for Schools & Beyond (FFS&B) Working Group meetings annually to assist with the implementation of the program.

Strategy: Work with the FFS&B Committees to develop three new educational documents by 2011.

Strategy: Host two public meetings and two workshops on the Pennsylvania Fuels for Schools & Beyond program by 2010.

Strategy: Host a tour to a biomass heating facility for interested parties by 2011.

Strategy: Give five presentations on biomass heating applications and opportunities by 2010.

Strategy: Participate on the technical steering committee with the Benton Area School District's project to install a biomass heating system to develop an educational curriculum and campaign to promote the project through 2011.

Goal: Assist three businesses or organizations with enhancement/creation of services as well as job creation strategies and opportunities by 2014.

Objective: Engage partners to help identify and locate one business, organization, or market-based opportunity each year through 2012 that could use technical assistance for enhancement or expansion of their specific services

Strategy: Assist a minimum of three businesses identified by the partners with the expansion and/or creation of new opportunities, value-added products or services, and/or marketplaces for their respective businesses by 2014.

Strategy: Support the construction of a mobile pelletizing unit that will densify native grasses and establish a market for the material by 2009.

Strategy: Assist with the promotion of densified grasses as a viable biomass feedstock for thermal heating applications through four presentations and workshops by 2010.

Strategy: Produce and distribute an annual report for the Pennsylvania Association of RC&D Councils by 2009 to increase awareness and opportunity for organizational expansion.

Goal: Increase the RC&D Council's board and staff leadership and capacity development activities to better serve local communities within the area through the hosting of one board development exercise/activity annually.

Objective: Increase RC&D Council board diversity and fill 25% of vacant Board seats through utilizing the board development matrix to identify board member characteristics beneficial to the Council by March 2011.

Strategy: Each Board member will identify and contact at least one organization or business person as a potential Board member by June 2009.

Strategy: Review compiled lists and target specific persons or organizations by personal contact, written correspondence, and marketing packet to become an RC&D Board Member by December 2009.

Strategy: Produce and distribute an annual report for the RC&D Council each year to increase awareness and the opportunity for organizational development.

Objective: Recruit a new RC&D Board member with expertise in organizational/staff development and funding by 2010.

Strategy: Poll existing Council members (twenty) and five organizations for a listing of other organizations (twenty-five) having expertise in staff development by June 2009.

Strategy: Contact ten organizations and identify one work plan to meet the Council's goal of staff development by September 2009.

Strategy: Implement the work plan the Council identified by March 2010.

Objective: Develop a comprehensive list of staffing and volunteer needs or requirements for RC&D and the ten Conservation District partners by 2011 to share with volunteer organizations, colleges, job training centers, etc.

Strategy: Assess each of the ten Conservation Districts for volunteers/staffing needs for partnering with RC&D by September 2009.

Strategy: Identify five organizations that could provide volunteers/staff (AmeriCorps, etc.) for RC&D and Conservation Districts by September 2009.

Strategy: Distribute comprehensive list to the five identified organizations and assist with identification of volunteer duties for at least one of the Conservation Districts by 2012.

Goal: Increase revenue diversification of the RC&D Council by one method the RC&D has not previously used by 2014 to increase program delivery within the Council area.

Objective: Develop three alternative long-term revenue streams for the RC&D Council by 2014.

Strategy1: Partner with other organizations and agencies to apply for a grant to establish a Revolving Loan Fund by 2010.

Strategy2: Identify and contact three local foundations by 2009 to assist with establishing an Endowment for the Council.

Strategy3: Identify and discuss investment options with a local investment representative by 2010 for Council to diversify its portfolio.

Strategy: Assist project partners with the preparation, submission, or administration of three grants by 2014 for projects and programs.

Land Management Element

Goal: Conserve and improve a minimum of 20 acres of land and water resources within the area through a minimum of one enhancement or remediation project to display native grasses as an energy resource and reclamation alternative by 2014.

Objective: Stabilize and restore critically damaged soils, landscapes, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive areas through the development of a property database for AML reclamation by 2010.

Strategy: Utilize EPCAMR's GIS to prioritize 100% of AML critically damaged soil areas and landscapes within the Pocono NERCD Region by 2010.

Strategy: Work with EPCAMR and other reclamation partners in the Pocono NERCD Region to identify five potential demonstration acreages for planting native warm and cool season grasses for potential biofuel production by 2010.

Strategy: Identify and display various native grassland mixes for vegetative ground cover on abandoned mine lands for partners by 2010.

Objective: Identify and Produce a Regional Partnership List of Landowners from the prioritized AML critically damaged soil areas by 2010.

Strategy: Work with the PA DEP BAMR Office and Regional County Planning Agencies or Assessor's Office to identify landowners with AML acreage by 2010.

Strategy: Work with Landowners to evaluate by 2009 the most appropriate AML site where native grassland establishment would be beneficial and not in conflict with economic redevelopment, recreational opportunities, or brownfields redevelopment.

Strategy: Partner with landowners to seek funding and complete one grant application by 2010 for the planting of an AML critically damaged soil areas with native grassland plant species.

Objective: Establish and complete a demonstration project utilizing native grasses as an alternative renewable energy resource for biofuel development within the Pocono Northeast RC&D Region in partnership with EPCAMR and other reclamation partners by 2010.

Strategy: Assist with preparing one grant application by 2010 based on program areas at the State and Federal level that would support alternative renewable home-grown energy resources on an AML site.

Strategy: Evaluate the growth of the native grasses for energy and reclamation by 2014 based on planting various species over the course of several growing seasons.

Strategy: Provide no fewer than two tours to the site to promote the success of the project and the partnerships by 2014.

Land Conservation Element

Goal: Provide one education and outreach seminar/workshop annually on Best Management Practices (BMPs) to the public by 2014 to increase the adoption of these practices and reduce negative environmental impacts.

Objective: Utilize a network of partnering organizations to assist with promoting and delivering one education and outreach session targeting constituents within each of the ten counties of the RC&D area by 2014.

Strategy: Assist with planning and hosting the Woodland Resource Adventure Camp for students ages 12-16 annually.

Strategy: Host one annual field day on biomass production and utilization.

Strategy: Assist five landowners annually with soil sampling procedures for proper nutrient management on agricultural land.

Strategy: Lead project partners to plan, organize, and conduct the Northeast PA No-till Conference annually.

Strategy: Assist partners with hosting the annual Northeast PA Grazing Conference.

Strategy: Coordinate and host a training session on solar/wind powered water pumping system opportunities for rotational grazing by 2010.

Goal: Create a steering committee to provide technical assistance on conservation planning to landowners within the ten county area by 2014.

Objective: Utilize local partners and steering committee to develop a five-year outline by 2010 for targeting landowners to develop conservation plans for their properties.

Strategy: Host two public workshops or seminars on conservation planning to the public by 2012.

Strategy: Assist with preparing one grant for implementing recommended specified practices in conservation plans for landowners 2012.

Strategy: Assist with preparing ten conservation plans for landowners to address resource concerns by 2014.

Strategy: Provide one-on-one technical assistance to no fewer than twenty landowners on managing noxious weed species and improving wildlife habitat by 2012.

Water Management Element

Goal: Assist twenty watershed and/or lake associations with watershed-specific technical assistance by 2014 through a consortium of partners and technical assistance providers.

Objective: Work cooperatively annually with project partners to provide watershed-specific technical assistance to two new watershed/lake associations per year.

Strategy: Host three project partner meetings for project information exchange and accomplishment reports annually until 2010.

Strategy: Assist partners with coordinating and hosting twenty trainings and workshops for watershed/lake associations by 2014.

Strategy: Provide watershed-specific technical assistance to twenty watershed/lake associations by 2014.

Strategy: Provide assistance and instruction to more than 500 people on water quality information and technical assistance by 2014.

Strategy: Assist with the improvement, enhancement, and/or restoration of two miles of waterways by 2014.

Goal: Provide at least one educational opportunity, session, or workshop annually for homeowners, landowners, and community leaders on water quality enhancement and improvement throughout the RC&D area.

Objective: Utilize county conservation districts to identify water quality and program needs within each county for program development by 2010.

Strategy: Conduct two workshops on stormwater management for municipal leaders in cooperation with project partners by 2012.

Strategy: Provide an updated listing of stormwater management activities and events on the RC&D Council website annually.

Strategy: Conduct one demonstration project that will highlight stormwater management BMPs to enhance and improve water quality.

Strategy: Participate with one meeting and educational opportunity annually based on Pennsylvania Act 220 State Water Plan.

Objective: Partner with EPCAMR and others to develop programming to address water quality issues related to abandoned mine lands and abandoned mine drainage (AML/AMD) by 2014.

Strategy: Attend no fewer than one EPCAMR Board Meeting annually to assist with project planning.

Strategy: Assist with planning, coordinating, and hosting an AML/AMD conference by 2011 focusing on best management practices (BMPs) to improve water quality.

Strategy: Partner with EPCAMR or one county conservation district/watershed association on an AML/AMD remediation project by 2014.

Current and Potential Partnering Organizations and Agencies

To address the RC&D Area's Needs and Opportunities, it will be necessary to effectively utilize the RC&D support base and reach out to new partners. The Council will continue its long standing partnerships with the United States Department of Agriculture through the following agencies:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Farm Services Agency
- Forest Service
- Rural Development
- Agricultural Research Service

The Council will also continue its long standing partnerships with the following organizations and agencies:

- County Conservation Districts
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
- Pennsylvania Department Conservation of Natural Resources
- Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
- Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension
- Pennsylvania Association of RC&D Councils
- RC&D Councils within Pennsylvania
- Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR)
- United States Geological Survey
- United States Department of the Interior Office of Surface Mining
- Wilkes University
- Dickinson College's ALLARM
- Delaware Riverkeeper Network
- Stroud Water Research Center
- Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR)
- Pennsylvania Lake Management Society
- Watershed Associations
- Forest Landowners
- Advanced Recycling Equipment
- Sustainable Forestry Initiative of PA
- AFS Energy Systems
- Pennsylvania Hardwoods Council

The Council will work towards establishing and fostering new partnerships within the RC&D area as well. New partnerships will be critical to move the Council forward by conducting services and programs to communities within the ten county area. Examples of new ideas for partners include:

- ❖ Partner and collaborate with the Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA) and the SEDA Council of Governments on projects.
- ❖ Involve County Planning Directors and Municipal governments in the RC&D Area Plan implementation.
- ❖ Encourage involvement of local planning commissions and local government leaders throughout the area to be active participants in the RC&D Area Plan implementation process.
- ❖ Work with local universities and institutions to acquire needed technical expertise.
- ❖ Continue reaching out to watershed associations, community organizations, regional non-profit organizations, and sportsmen's clubs.
- ❖ Reach out to forest landowners' associations, conservancy groups, and land trusts.
- ❖ Reach out to community organizations and homeowner organizations.
- ❖ Build consensus among special interest groups.

- ❖ Create a volunteer base with youth and retired individuals.
- ❖ Partner with private sector interests such as developers and entrepreneurs.
- ❖ Partner with industrial development authorities and Chambers of Commerce on projects in the RC&D area including abandoned mine reclamation and AMD remediation efforts.

Linkages to the NRCS Strategic Plan

Goal: Provide education and outreach for communities and individuals within the RC&D area annually on alternative and renewable energy and energy conservation topics.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation
2. Watershed Approach
3. Market-based Approach

NRCS Goals:

1. Air Quality
2. Energy Conservation
3. Renewable Energy and Biofuels
4. Soil Quality
5. Water Quality
6. Grassland, Rangeland, and Forest Ecosystems
7. Fish & Wildlife Habitat

Goal: Assist three businesses or organizations with enhancement/creation of services as well as job creation strategies and opportunities by 2014.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation
2. Market-based Approach

NRCS Goals:

1. Energy Conservation
2. Renewable Energy and Biofuels
3. Other

Goal: Increase the RC&D Council's board and staff development to better serve local communities within the area through the hosting of one board development exercise/activity annually.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation

NRCS Goals:

1. Other

Goal: Increase by 2014 revenue diversification of the RC&D Council by one method the RC&D has not previously used to increase program delivery within the Council area.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation

NRCS Goals:

1. Other

Goal: Conserve, improve, protect, and manage the land and water resources of the area to achieve clean water, clean air, and natural resource sustainability through a minimum of one enhancement or remediation project to display native grasses as a reclamation alternative by 2014.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation
2. Watershed Approach
3. Market-based Approach

NRCS Goals:

1. Air Quality
2. Energy Conservation
3. Renewable Energy and Biofuels
4. Soil Quality
5. Water Quality
6. Water Management
7. Grassland, Rangeland, and Forest Ecosystems
8. Fish & Wildlife Habitat
9. Connected Landscapes

Goal: Provide one educational and outreach seminar/workshop annually on Best Management Practices (BMPs) to the public by 2014 to increase the adoption of these practices and reduce negative environmental impacts.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation
2. Watershed Approach

NRCS Goals:

1. Soil Quality
2. Water Quality
3. Water Management
4. Fish & Wildlife Habitat
5. Wetlands
6. Connected Landscapes

Goal: Create a steering committee to provide technical assistance on conservation planning to landowners within the ten county area by 2014.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation
2. Watershed Approach

NRCS Goals:

1. Soil Quality
2. Water Quality
3. Water Management
4. Fish & Wildlife Habitat
5. Wetlands
6. Grassland, Rangeland, and Forest Ecosystems
7. Connected Landscapes

Goal: Assist twenty watershed and/or lake associations with watershed-specific technical assistance by 2014 through a consortium of partners and technical assistance providers.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation
2. Watershed Approach

NRCS Goals:

1. Soil Quality
2. Water Quality
3. Water Management
4. Fish & Wildlife Habitat
5. Wetlands
6. Connected Landscapes

Goal: Provide at least one educational opportunity, session, or workshop annually for homeowners, landowners, and community leaders on water quality enhancements and/or improvements throughout the RC&D area.

NRCS Strategies:

1. Cooperative Conservation
2. Watershed Approach

NRCS Goals:

1. Soil Quality
2. Water Quality
3. Water Management
4. Fish & Wildlife Habitat
5. Wetlands
6. Connected Landscapes

AGREEMENT and COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

The Pocono Northeast RC&D Council agrees that the RC&D Program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Sub parts A and B) that provide that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial (or technical) assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.

The Pocono Northeast RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with Federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for non-procurement, suspension, and debarment, and State review.

The Pocono Northeast RC&D Council has had this application reviewed by the state. Comments made through the state single point of contact have been considered prior to submission of the application and that all applicable procedures have been followed. An environmental impact statement will not be prepared during the development of this area plan, but an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement will be prepared concurrently with the development of each project, when applicable, in accordance with federal procedures.

The Pocono Northeast RC&D Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to use effectively the assistance provided by the U. S. Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein.

Pocono Northeast RC&D Council, Mayfield, Pennsylvania

By: _____ Date: _____
Brian Oram, Chairperson

Attest: _____
Ernest Keller, Council Secretary

This action was authorized at an official meeting of the Pocono Northeast RC&D Council on December 18, 2008.

U. S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Pennsylvania State Conservationist hereby acknowledges the attached Area Plan of the Pocono Northeast RC&D Council as meeting the requirements under Public Law 97-98 to receive assistance from USDA.

Acknowledged By: _____ Date: _____
Craig Derickson, State Conservationist