

Introduction to Pennsylvania Municipal Government – Where do EACs Fit ?

EAC Network Statewide Conference

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Image Credit: Local Government Commission

Introductions

Your presenters:



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Director - Watersheds



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- Watersheds

Member: Abington Township EAC

Learning Objectives

1. Review local government structures in PA, their powers, and limitations
2. Understand how and why local government land use and planning decisions have immediate and critical impacts on water resources
3. Understand the roles, perspectives, and priorities of key local officials, boards, commissions, and departments
4. Become familiar with the tools, policies and processes used to guide development
5. Appreciate the local government priorities and consider how to align them with conservation values



1 The impact of local and regional governmental decisions on water & other natural resources

- Understand the ways in which PA local government decisions impact water and other natural resources

They can do that?

Municipalities in Pennsylvania are Enabled to:

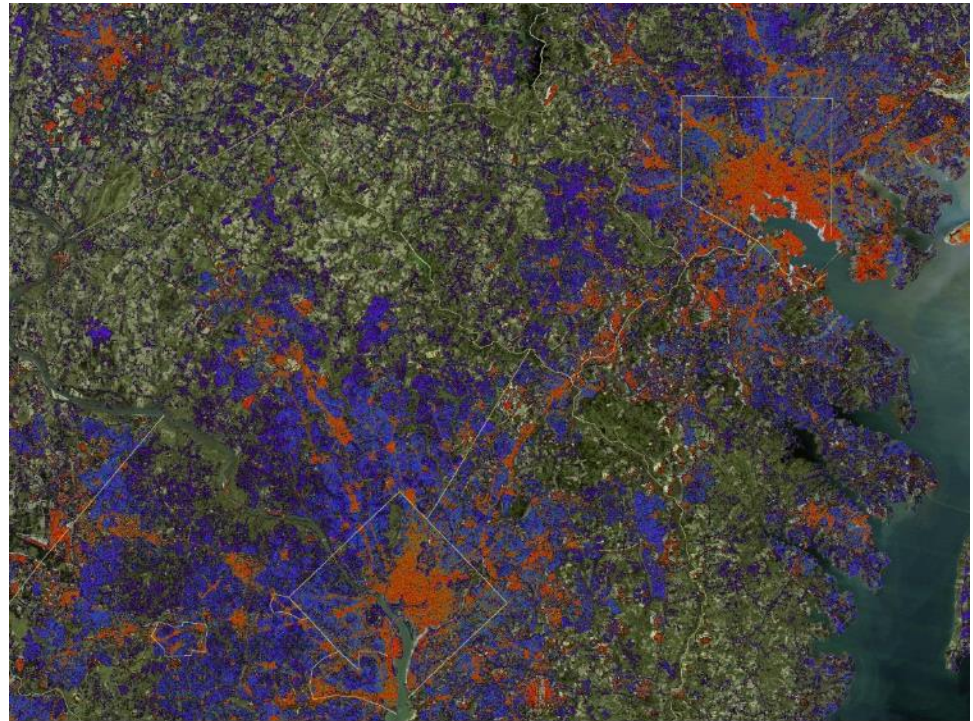
- Control future land use
- Protect agricultural, historic, natural and scenic resources
- Preserve forests, wetlands, aquifers & floodplains
- Regulate Stormwater



Some Key Terms

Landsat Imagery from
Wash. DC Metro Area

- ☐ Impervious Surface
- ☐ Land Use
- ☐ Land Cover
- ☐ Stream Impairment



<https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/1481/map-of-paved-surfaces>

Land Use Relationship to Water Quality



0% - 5%



0% - 15%



5% - 65%



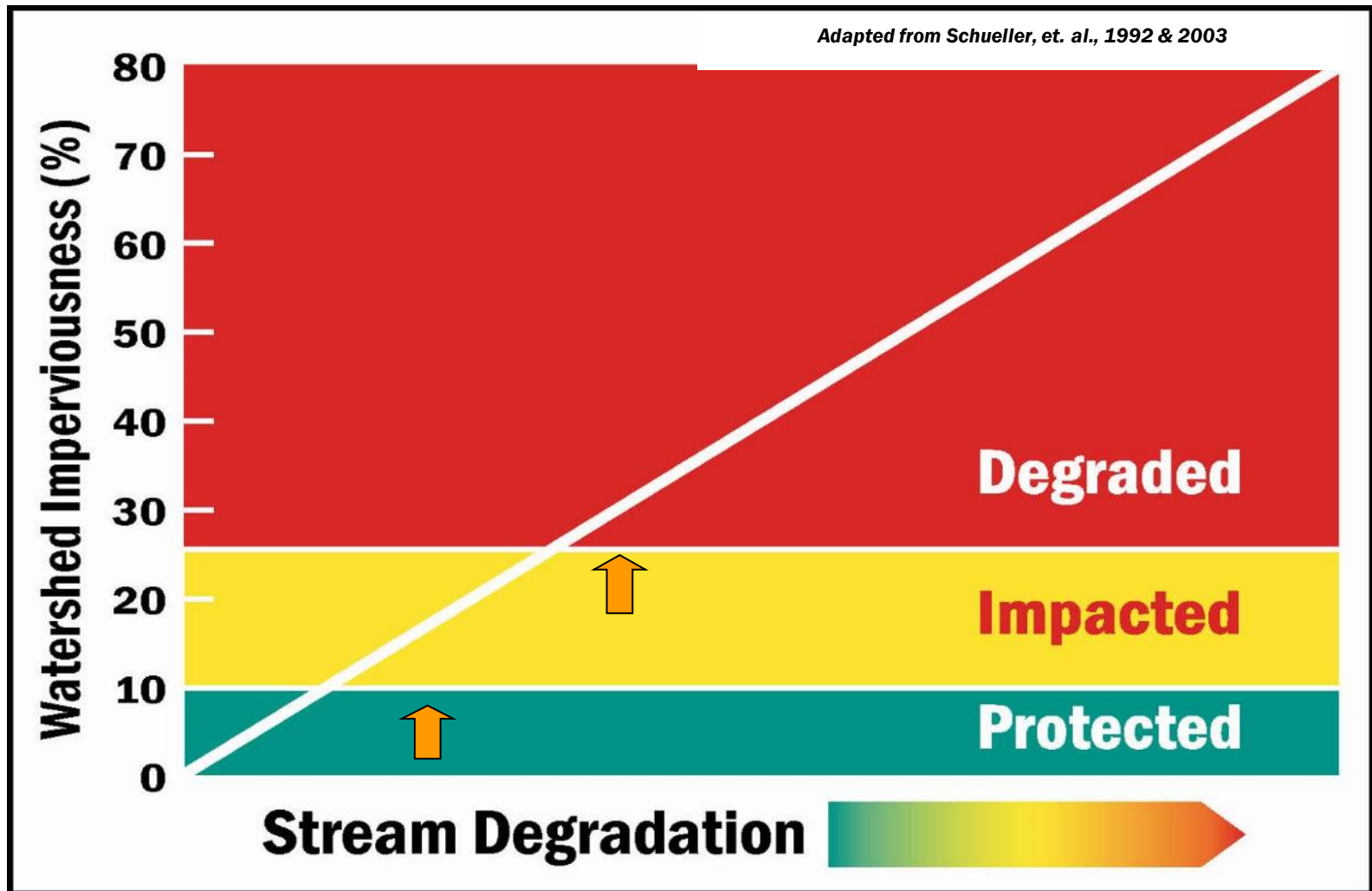
50% - 95%

INTENSITY OF LAND USE

AMOUNT OF IMPERVIOUS SURFACE

POTENTIAL WATER QUALITY PROBLEMS

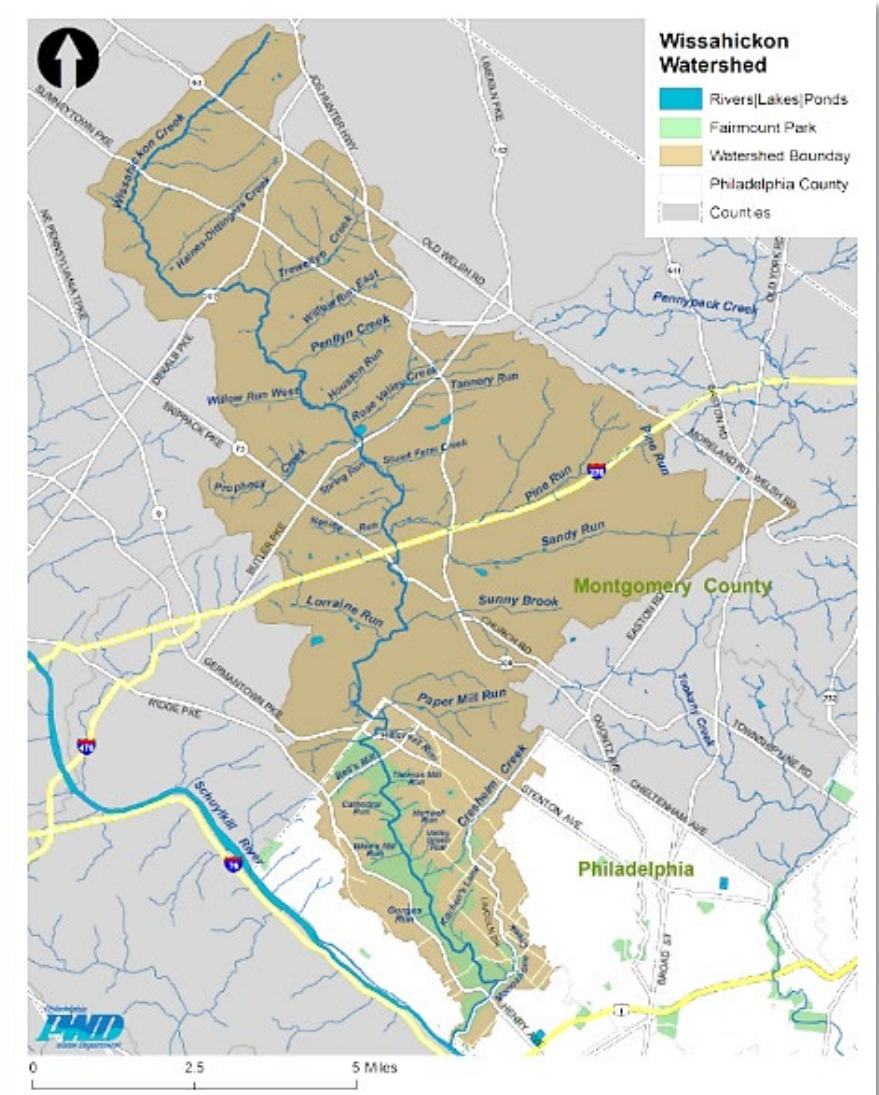
Waterway Health & Imperviousness



Impairment – indicates stream water quality doesn't support healthy habitat

The Wissahickon Creek

- 27 miles in length (7 in Philadelphia)
- 64 square mile watershed
- Approximately 220,000 residents (2020 census data)
- 27% impervious; 24% is semi-pervious
- Source is below a shopping center parking lot



Impact of Development

- Increased imperviousness
- Channelized Streams
- Degraded Corridors



Flooding Impacts

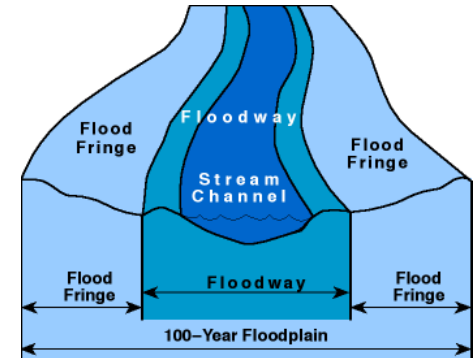


Impact of Erosion



Land Use Impact on other Natural Resources

- Steep Slopes
- Prime Farmland Soils
- Riparian Buffers
- Woodlands
- Wetlands
- Floodplains





Time for a
Poll!

Which current land uses in your community do you think have the most significant negative impact on local water resources?

(Choose your top 2 or 3)

Answer 1: Densely Developed Areas

Answer 2: Suburban Sprawl

Answer 3: Highways and Roads

Answer 4: Large Agricultural Areas

Answer 5: Small Scale/Hobby Farms

Answer 6: Individually Owned Wooded Areas

Answer 7: Trails

Answer 8: AMD/Existing Mining Operations

Answer 9: Other, please type in the chat

An aerial photograph of a suburban neighborhood. The top half of the image shows a residential area with many houses and a large number '2' overlaid on the left. The bottom half shows a more developed area with a large building, parking lots, and a road. The number '2' is a large, dark blue, stylized font.

2

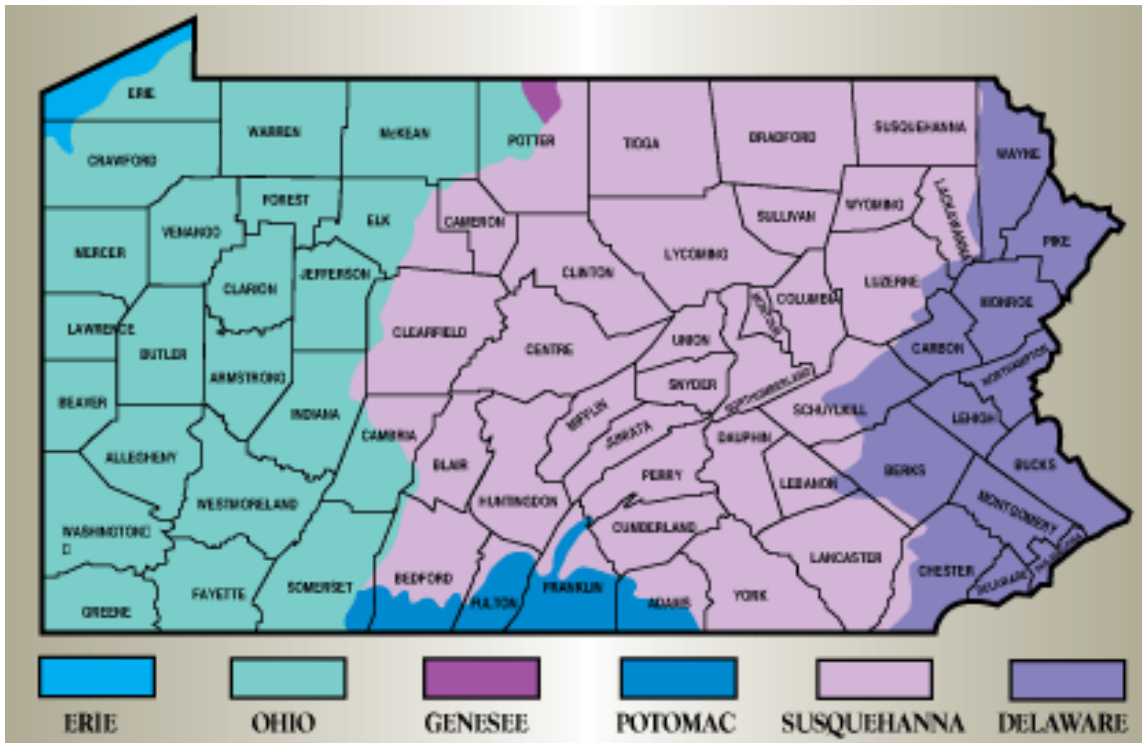
Pennsylvania Local Government Structure and Basic Powers

- Local Governments System in PA
- Forms and Powers

Local Government



- Created by State Legislature to provide public services directly to residents
 - E.G. – Municipality, County, Municipal Authority, County Conservation Districts, School Districts



All citizens in PA lives in and come under the jurisdiction of one county.

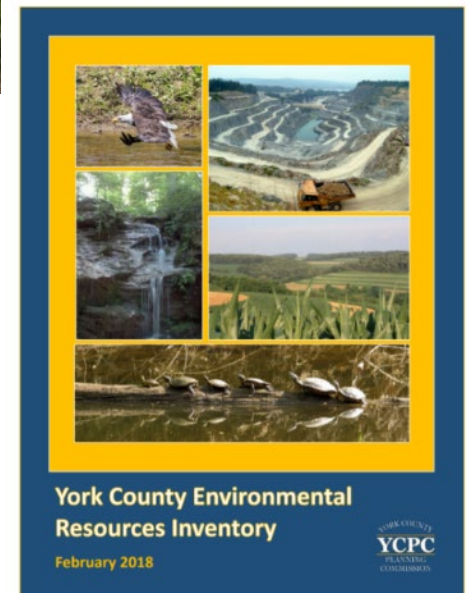
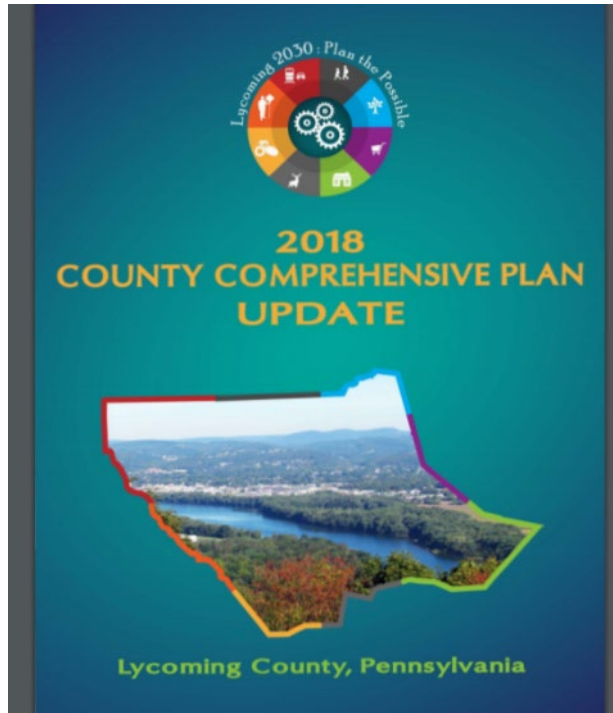
Lycoming - largest size

Phila – smallest size...largest population

There are 67 *Counties* in PA –no Executive. Governed by 3 commissioners. Phila, Bucks and Chester first1682

County Functions

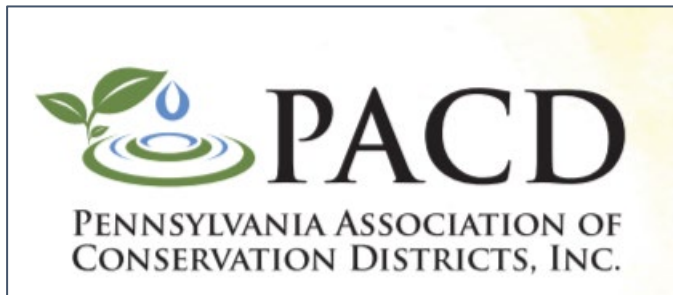
ELECTION 2020



- Authorized to administer human service program, conduct land use planning, and operate county jails
- Pass ordinances, assess all real and personal property for taxes
- Register voters

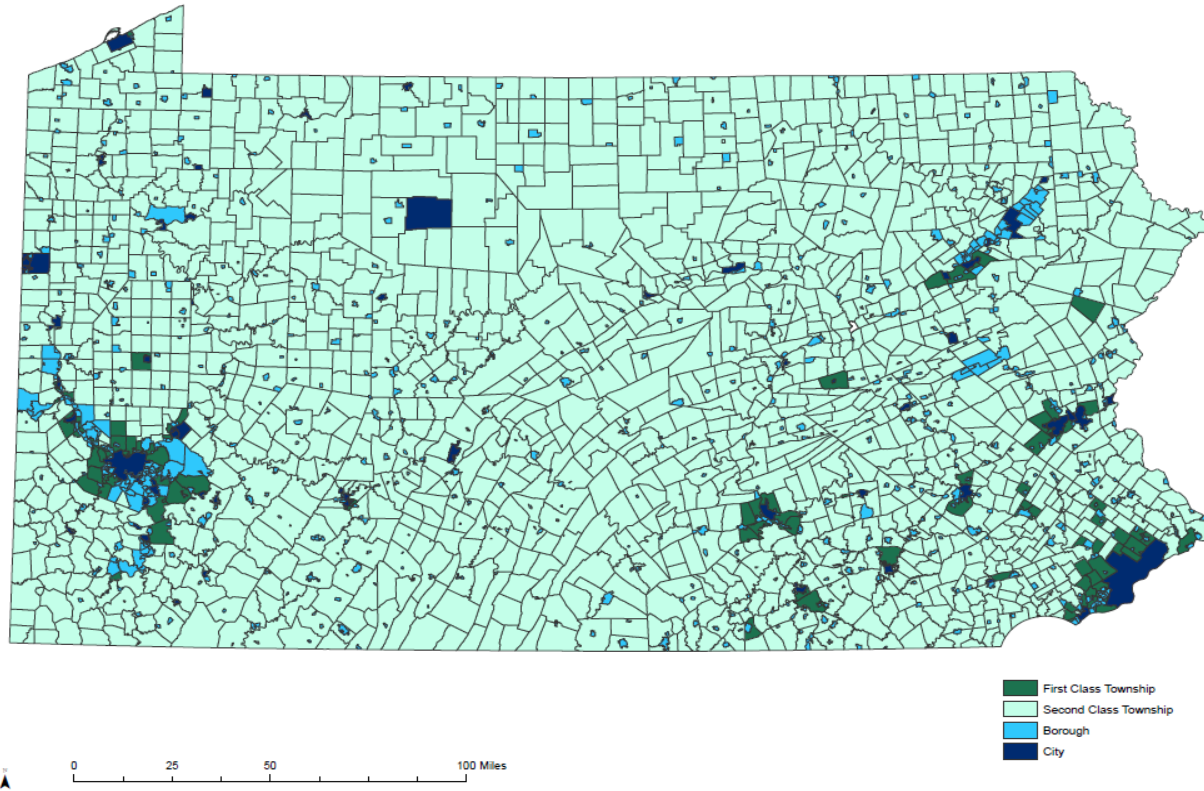
County Conservation District

- Created in 1945 to improve soil and water conservation
 - Provide technical assistance for project design
 - Review Plans and Issue Permits for Erosion & Sedimentation Control
 - Manage certain grant programs to support restoration efforts



66 Counties except Philadelphia

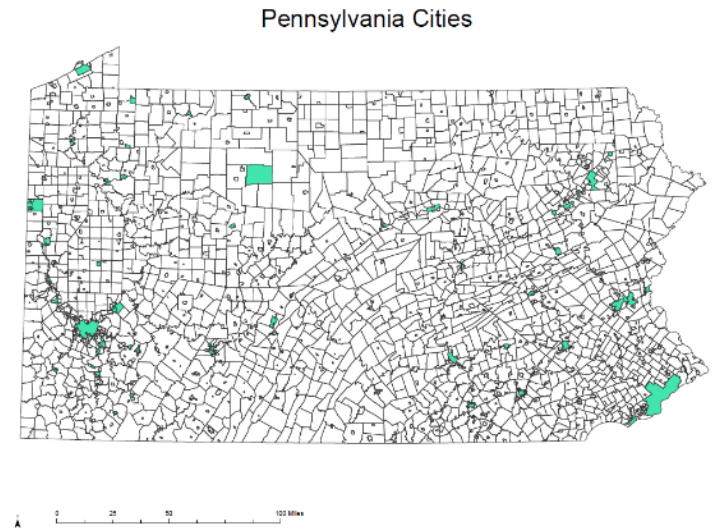
Municipalities



- 2,560 Municipalities
- 2nd Class Township most common (1454)
- Governed by elected officials (councils, commissioners, supervisors)

Cities

- **First and second class** cities have a mayor and home rule charters – Phila (1), Pittsburgh (2) and Scranton – (2A)
- **Third class** cities can be governed by:
 1. **Commission form**
 - Mayor and 4 commission members serve as city's governing body
 - Elected city controller and treasurer
 2. **Mayor-council form**
 - Has a 5, 7 or 9 member elected council
 - Elected mayor, treasurer and controller
 3. **Council - manager form**
 - All authority is given to a council of 5, 7 or 9 elected members

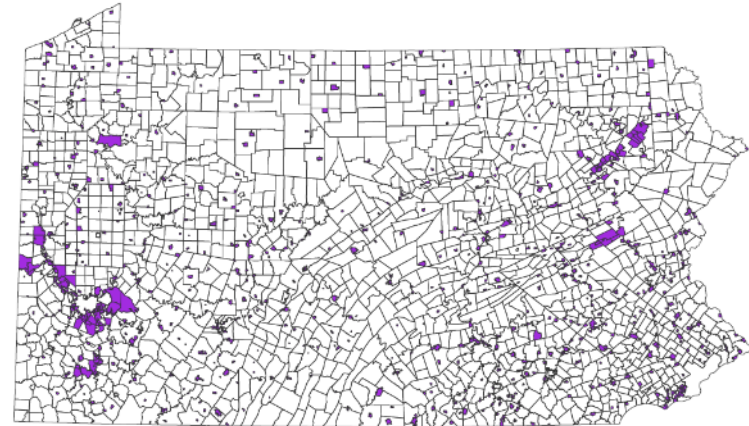


Boroughs

- Generally smaller than cities geographically and in population
- Each has a mayor and a 3, 5, 7 or 9 member council
- Second Largest # in PA - 961



Pennsylvania Boroughs



Townships

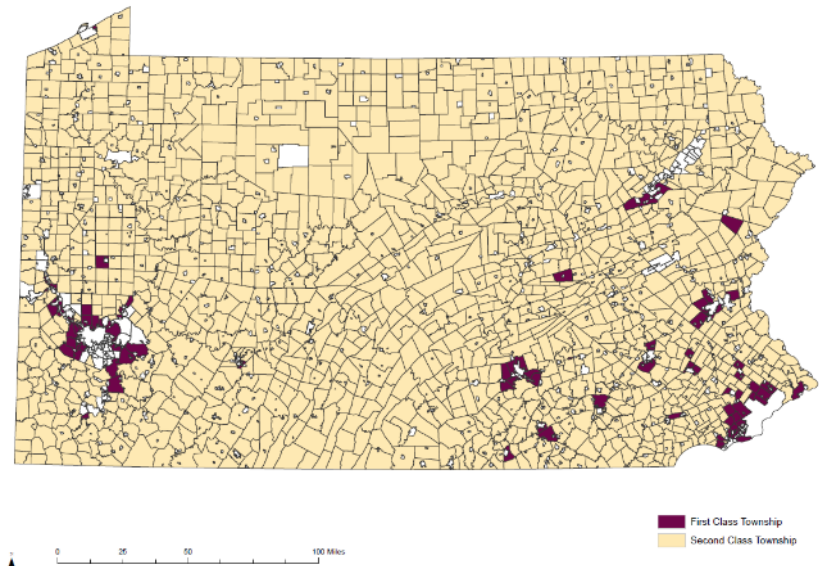
- Townships are either first or second class municipalities
 - **First Class Townships**
Board of 7-15 commissioners



- **Second Class Townships (1,456)**
Typically have 3 supervisors



Pennsylvania Townships



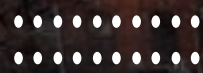
Functions of Municipalities



- Provide police, fire protection, road maintenance, water supply, stormwater management, sewage collection, trash collection and local planning and zoning.



Example 1: Road Maintenance
Decisions that Impact Local
Waterways



Example 2:
Municipal Parks
and Open
Space: Design
and
Maintenance



3

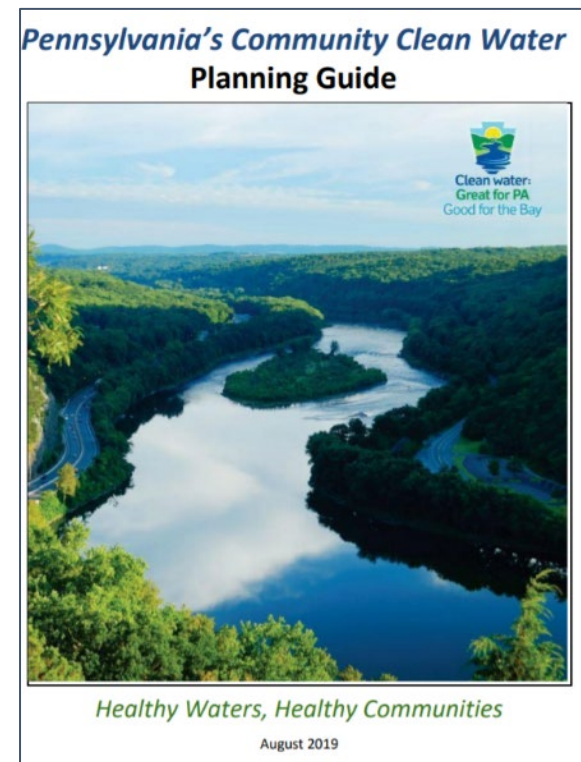
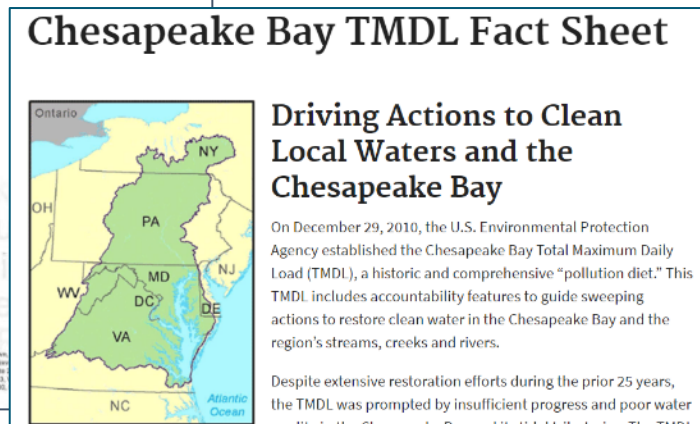
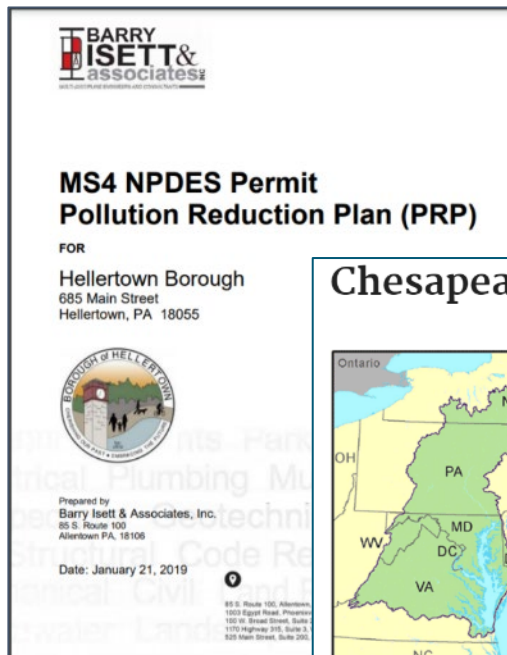
The People You Need to Know and Why

- Importance of developing relationships with key officials/staff
- Advantage of local knowledge/constituency concerns



Why Is It Important to Educate Local Elected Officials About Water Resource Issues?

- Land use directly linked to watershed health
- Municipalities are regulated by Clean Water Act
- Long Term Impact of Decisions



Municipal Officials

- **Elected** – Supervisor, Council, Mayor
- **Appointed** – Boards, Commissions
- **Professional Staff** – Engineer, Zoning Officer, Manager
- **Municipal Contracted Services** – Planner, Engineer

(EACS)



Elected Officials

Municipal official types vary by class



CITIES
(MAYOR/COUNCIL)



1ST CLASS TOWNSHIP
(BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS)



2ND CLASS TWP.
(SUPERVISORS)



BOROUGH
(MAYOR/COUNCIL)

Boards and Commissions

Appointed Officials



PLANNING
COMMISSION



ENVIRONMENTAL
ADVISORY
COUNCIL/BOARD



SHADE TREE
COMMISSION



ZONING HEARING
BOARD

Boards and Commissions

Appointed Officials



ENVIRONMENTAL
ADVISORY
COUNCIL/BOARD



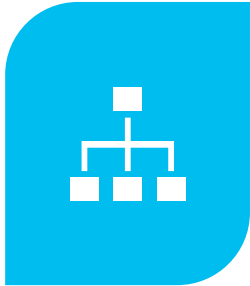
SHADE TREE
COMMISSION



ZONING
HEARING BOARD

- **Environmental Advisory Council/Board** created to **advise** local governments on environmental issues and policies.
- **Shade Tree Commission** - Created to advise the municipality to ensure the health and sustainability of its trees and woodlands.
- **Zoning Hearing Board**: Hears appeals to zoning officer findings, grant variances/special exceptions

Professional Staff



MANAGER



ENGINEER



ZONING
OFFICER



PARKS/REC
DIRECTOR

- Manager is the chief administrator – Provides insight and access to staff and officials.
- Engineer & Zoning Officer – Review development plans, issue permits, advise officials
- Parks/Rec Director – Maintains & manages parks, playgrounds & open space

Reach out and meet with municipal staff – key ally –
share resources, expertise, partnership opportunities, – mutual benefits

Note: Some of these functions may be via contractors

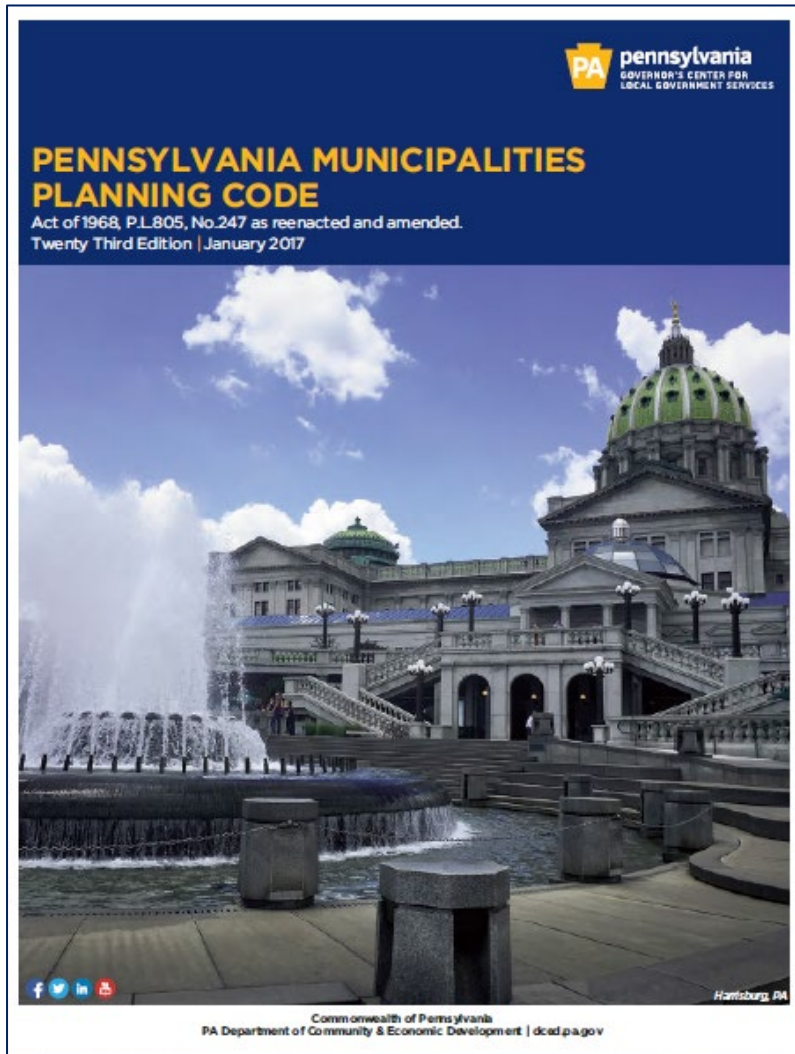


4 Tools Policies, Processes and Plans used by Municipalities to guide development

- Important decision- making tools, processes and plans where EACs could be influential.

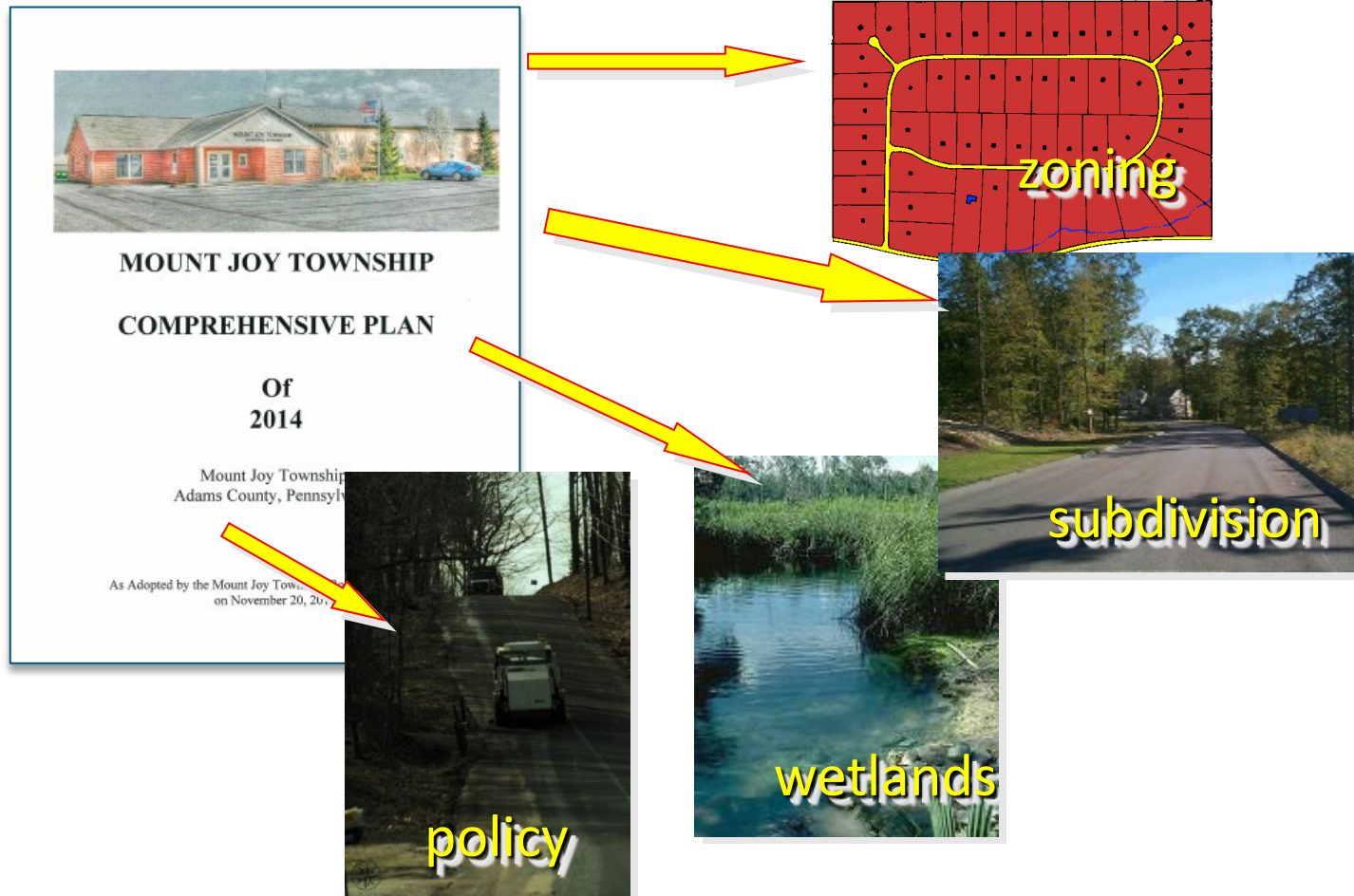


ACT 247 – The Municipalities Planning Code



- Empowers municipalities to plan their development and to govern the same by zoning, subdivision & land development ordinances...
- Among its purposes: “to promote the preservation of this Commonwealth’s natural & historic resources and prime agricultural land”

Comprehensive Plans are blueprints for regulations & policies



Other Plans & Policies

- OPEN SPACE, PARKS AND RECREATION
- NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY
- STORMWATER MANAGEMENT
- ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY

Bethlehem Climate Action Plan: Public Meeting on Draft Plan

December 9, 2020



Upper Frederick Township Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan Update

May 2015



Upper Frederick Township,
Montgomery County, PA

LYCOMING CREEK ACT 167 STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN



Prepared by:
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www.kandwconsulting.com

ADOPTED BY LYCOMING COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
May 6, 2010

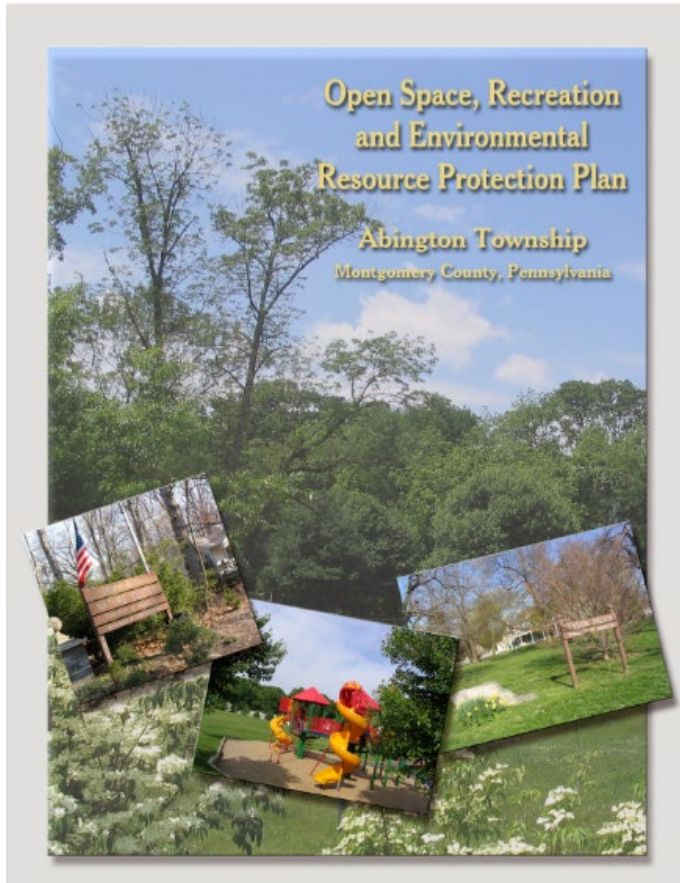
APPROVED BY PA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
September 16, 2010

RESOLUTION No. 2019 - 022 Abington Township, Pennsylvania Ready For 100 Renewable Energy Future

A Vision For a 100% Clean, Renewable Energy Future

- WHEREAS: The ongoing change in the global climate presents an existential, long-term threat to the survival of our civilization and Earth's living ecosystems;
- WHEREAS: Increasingly more frequent and more extreme weather events due to the ongoing change in the global climate, pose immediate and local risks;
- WHEREAS: The increase in global heat caused by the release of greenhouse gases (GHG) into the atmosphere, due in large part to the use of fossil fuels, is a major contributor to the ongoing change in the global climate;
- WHEREAS: Climate change impacts will test our infrastructure, emergency and social services; impact our access to food, water and energy supplies; and heighten disruption of services, commerce and quality of life;

Other Plans – Open Space, Park & Recreation



Other Plans – Stormwater Management/ Sustainability

LYCOMING CREEK ACT 167 STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN



Prepared by:



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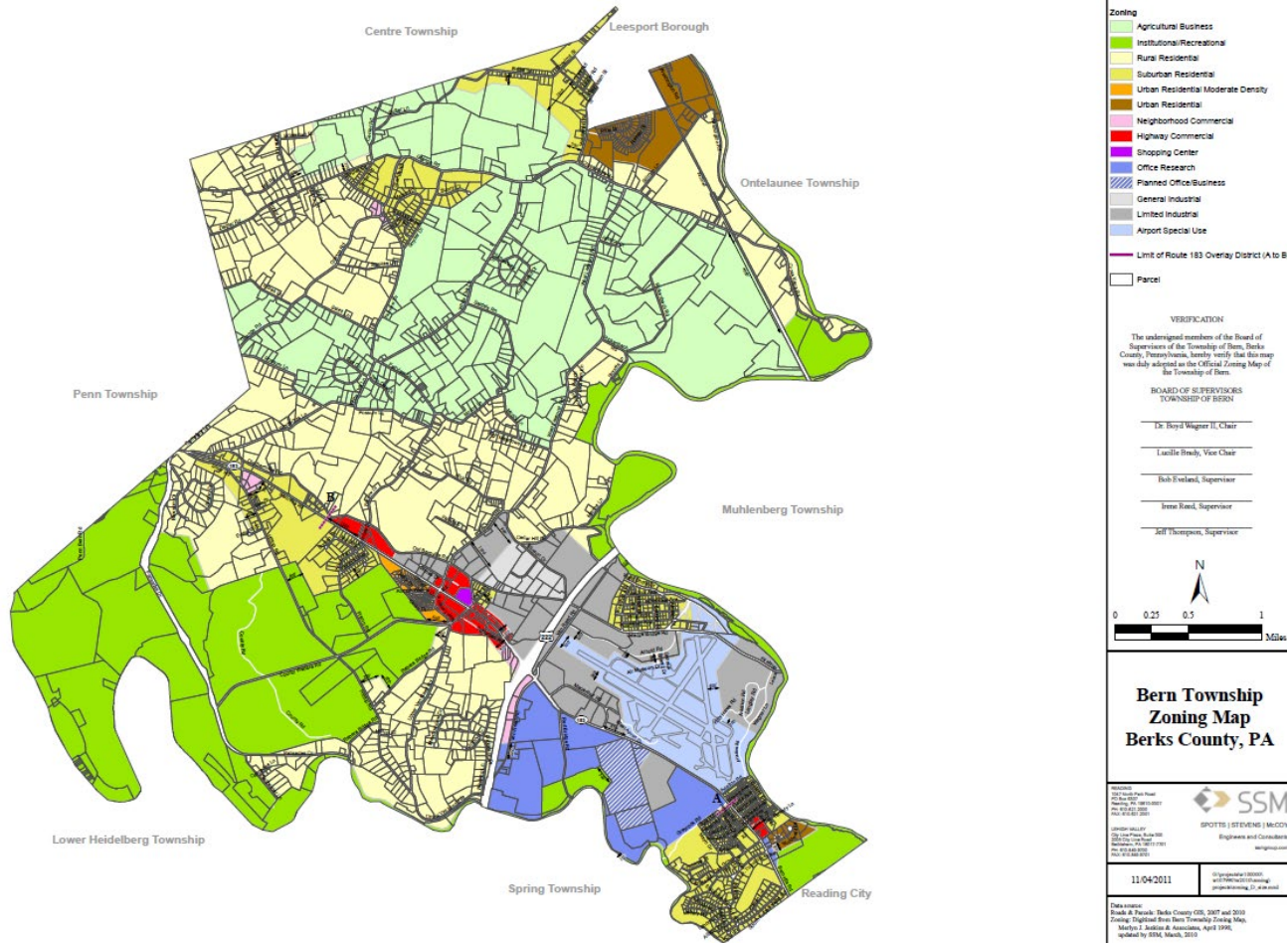
Bethlehem Climate Action Plan Draft

For public comment. Released on Dec. 11, 2020.



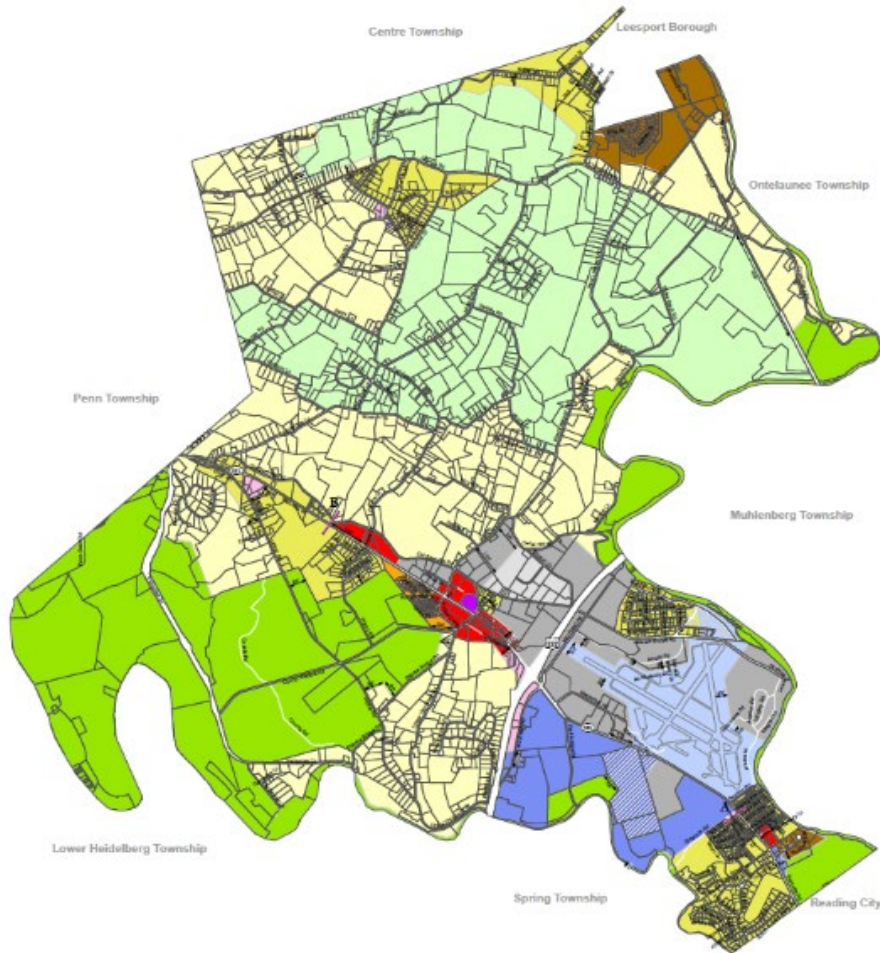
Bethlehem CAP – Draft for public comment. Released on Dec. 11, 2020. Not final.

Zoning and Zoning Ordinance



The MPC requires general consistency between a municipality's Zoning Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan.

Zoning and Zoning Ordinance

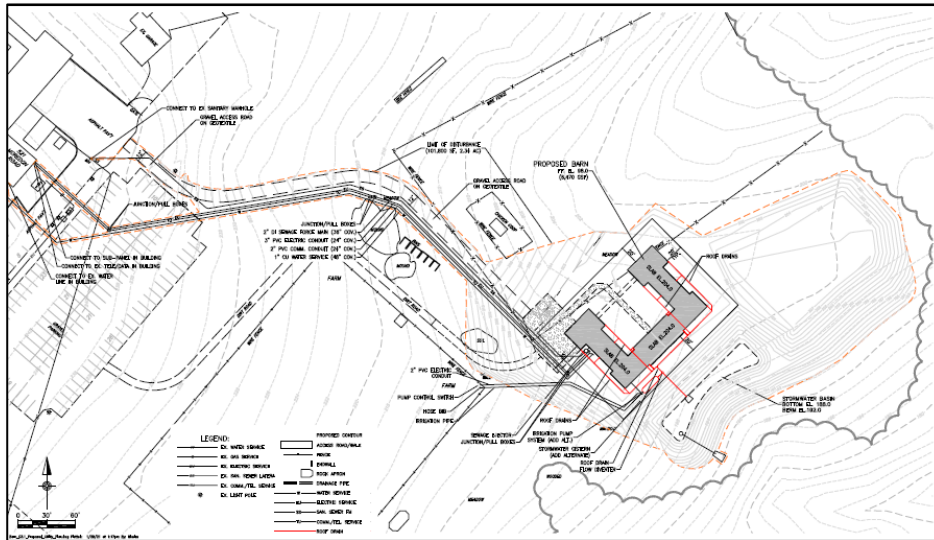


Can provide comment on variance requests that may impact resources.

Can also comment on text amendment requests.

Subdivision & Land Development Ordinance (SLDO)

- “**Subdivision**” refers to the creation of new lots or changes in property lines,
- “**land development**” involves construction of public or private improvements to land.



Should be familiar with land development process to understand when EAC may offer comment and advice on proposed new or redevelopment.

5

Understanding local government priorities and aligning conservation values

Local Government Priorities

- Constituent Needs/Support
- Revenues/Budget
- Re-Election



Local Government Priorities

Immediate Concerns

- Infrastructure
- Healthcare
- Education
- Crime
- Growth Management
- Social Services



Values and Concerns

- What do you most value or most adore about your community/watershed?
- What are your top concerns about your community/watershed?





Time for a
Poll!

What do you most value or most adore about your community/watershed? Choose your top 2 or 3.

Answer 1: Open space and parks

Answer 2: Access to land and/or water trails

Answer 3: Its walkability

Answer 4: Its rural character

Answer 5: Access to many businesses and amenities

Answer 6: It feels safe

Answer 7: Access to great angling opportunities

Answer 8: Great schools and other family-friendly opportunities

Answer 9: Other, please add in the chat

Consider how your values and concerns relate to local municipal priorities

- Local Priorities/Concerns:

- Revenue/Budget
- Infrastructure Maintenance
- Education
- Flooding
- Crime
- Health and Well-being
- Re-election

- Community, Watershed and Water Resource Values and Concerns:

- Swimmable/Fishable waters
- Access for water recreation
- Fish Passage
- Rural Character
- Safety
- Flooding



Challenges of Educating Elected Officials

- Full Plate - Lots of Competing Issues & Priorities
- Legal Mandates – Stormwater Permits – MS4s
- Term Limits – Short Term View – High Turnover/Or “Entrenched” Viewpoints
- Understanding Cause and Effect - Cumulative Impacts
- Complexity of Environmental Issues



In Summary

- LOCAL decisions matter;
- Municipalities are *enabled* to manage, regulate and plan
- There is a role for you as a EAC member and concerned citizen who is affected by these outcomes.



A photograph of a narrow stream flowing through a dense forest. The water is clear, reflecting the surrounding greenery, and flows over small rocks, creating gentle ripples. The banks are lined with thick foliage and trees, their branches arching over the water. A semi-transparent, light-colored rectangular box covers the upper portion of the image, serving as a background for the text.

Questions?