





Farmland, West Pennsboro Township

Introduction and Plan Purpose

Cumberland County is fortunate to have many unique natural and cultural resources that contribute to the high quality of life and strong economy. Preserving those resources, and in turn a high quality of life and business friendly climate, can prove to be especially challenging. In order to preserve the features that make Cumberland County a great place to live, work and play, it is essential to plan for the future.

Land Partnerships is a countywide strategy designed to maintain and improve the quality of life in Cumberland County through farmland preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails & greenways. The plan seeks to encourage action in the community and facilitate partnerships among federal, state, county and local governments, non-profit organizations, businesses and landowners to achieve common goals.

Land Partnerships is a blueprint intended to help the County achieve a healthy balance between preservation and development. Land Partnerships will serve as a guidebook for the 33 municipalities in the County. Municipalities should use the County plan as a reference and point of departure for their own planning initiatives. Land Partnerships identifies the important features of the County and offers recommendations to protect those resources for current and future generations.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief introduction and background on planning for agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails & greenways in Cumberland County. This chapter includes a physical description of Cumberland County, a history of previous planning efforts and update on the successes of the 2006 Land Partnerships Plan. The chapter also describes the 2013 plan update process and plan organization.

County Description

Cumberland County is located in south central Pennsylvania. While the County originally included most of the western portion of the state, today it encompasses 550 square miles and is home to over 235,000 residents within its 33 municipalities. The County includes 11 boroughs and 22 townships. Adams, Dauphin, Franklin, Perry, and York are its neighboring counties (Figure 1-1).



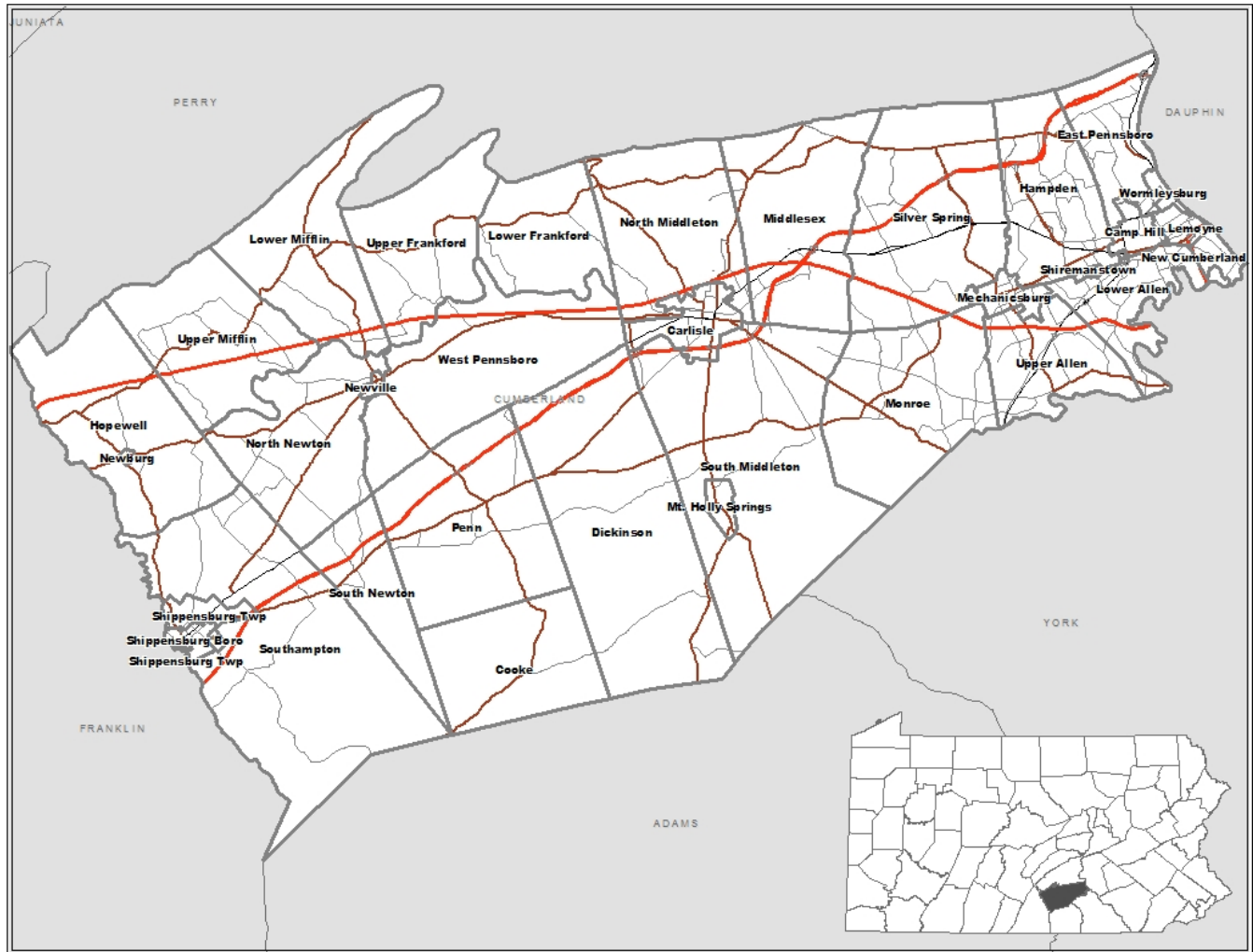


Figure 1-1 Cumberland County and its municipalities

The County's borders align with its distinct physical features, typical of the ridge and valley province. The Susquehanna River separates Cumberland County from Dauphin County and the state capital of Harrisburg. The Blue Mountain-Kittatinny ridge divides Cumberland County from Perry County. The County border with Adams and York Counties is formed by the Yellow Breeches Creek and the ridges and uplands of South Mountain.

Previous Planning Efforts

Cumberland County has been addressing the issues of agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails & greenways over the last 15 years. A listing of relevant County planning activities and milestones is provided below:

- Cumberland County Conservation and Open Space Task Force Report, 1995

- Cumberland County Natural Area Inventory Report, 2000 & 2005 Update
- Cumberland Countywide Greenway Study, 2000
- Creation of Greenway & Open Space Coordinator Position, 2001
- Tri-County Regional Growth Management Plan, 2003 & 2011 Update
- Cumberland County Comprehensive Plan, 2003 & 2010 Update
- Bond Issues for Farmland Preservation & Pilot Land Partnerships Grant Program, 2004 & 2006
- Land Partnership Plan, 2006

2006 Land Partnerships Plan Implementation

Between 2006 and 2012, Cumberland County successfully implemented the first version of the Land Partnerships Plan. Continued implementation of the State Farmland Preservation Program and development of the Land Partnerships Grant Program were two major milestones. In addition to these two high profile initiatives, the staff of the Planning Department continues to work diligently through lower cost measures to integrate plan implementation into the daily County operations.

Farmland Preservation Program

To implement the agriculture preservation element of Land Partnerships, nearly \$20 million in State, County and Federal funding was directed to the Cumberland County Agricultural Land Preservation Board to be invested in the Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program over the past seven years. Through the Program, agricultural conservation easements were purchased from willing landowners on prime agricultural lands. In 2006, the \$3.6 million County investment was strategically allocated to align with Pennsylvania's Growing Greener 2 Program to garner \$6.3 million in matching state dollars. Between 2006-2012, 5,413 acres of prime farmland was permanently preserved as a result of Land Partnerships. Table 1-1 summarizes farmland preservation funding and acres preserved in that timeframe. From the Program's inception in 1989 until 2012, over 15,700 acres of farmland have been preserved. In October of 2012, the County held an event to celebrate the milestone of preservation of 15,000 acres of farmland.



Table 1-1
Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program, 2006-2012

Year	County Funding	State/Federal Funding	Annual Acres Preserved	Total Program Acres
2006	\$3,637,092	\$6,275,605	2838	13,142
2007	\$251,470	\$977,529	287	13,429
2008	\$293,181	\$1,705,268	491	13,920
2009	\$301,357	\$765,211	371	14,291
2010	\$301,034	\$1,204,955	394	14,685
2011	\$1,053,898	\$1,596,848	569	15,254
2012	\$309,124	\$1,271,045	463	15,717
	\$6,147,156	\$13,796,461	5,413	

Pilot Land Partnership Grant Program Overview

To provide financial incentives to implement the goals and objectives of Land Partnerships, \$1 million in County funding was designated for implementation of the Land Partnerships pilot grant program. The pilot grant program provided grant assistance to municipalities and non-profit organizations in Cumberland County for land acquisition, park and trail development, land use ordinance assistance and comprehensive planning for greenways and open space.

Overall support for the Land Partnerships pilot grant program was extremely positive and demand for the program far exceeded grant funds available. 53 grant applications totaling nearly \$2 million in projects were received from 24 municipalities and 6 non-profit organizations. 33 grants, totaling \$1 million, were ultimately awarded. In addition, another \$1 million in local, state and private dollars were leveraged.

Grant Program Outcomes

As a result of the Land Partnerships grant offering, the following projects were completed:

- 5 land acquisition projects totaling 240 acres in high priority conservation areas
- 6 updated land use ordinances including innovative planning techniques such as conservation subdivision/land development
- 4 updated comprehensive land use plans including 1 multi-municipal plan
- 1 multi-municipal master trail/urban greenway plan
- 17 park & trail development projects including 11 park improvement projects, 4 new park projects and 2 new trail projects



Press Event for Simpson Park Development Project,
Upper Allen Township

Other Staff Initiatives

Staff implemented the goals and objectives of the Land Partnerships Plan on a daily basis through a variety of projects and initiatives. A sampling of 2006-2012 activities is provided below:

- Development of training programs and workshops including topics such as ASAs and Clean and Green
- Development of model ordinances including energy series and agricultural series
- Public presentations to community and stakeholder organizations such as Audubon Society, Master Gardeners, local schools and universities
- Implementation of the TreeVitalize Program
- Technical assistance to Cumberland Valley Rails to Trails Council
- Publication of the Simply Moving guide
- Publication of the Yellow Breeches and Conodoguinet Creek Water Trail Guides
- Trail, signage and parking lot improvements at the Mount Holly Marsh Preserve
- Invasive plant removal program at Mount Holly Marsh Preserve
- Publication of Local Food, Farm and Outdoor Recreation Guide
- Engagement with local conservation organizations and initiatives such as South Mountain Partnerships and Central Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Host an annual Farm Tour



Press Event For Waggoner's Gap Land Acquisition

2013 Land Partnerships Plan Update

Cumberland County obtained a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to update Land Partnerships in partnership with a planning consultant. The Land Partnerships planning process consisted of six steps:

1. Update the inventory and mapping of agricultural, natural, recreational and cultural resources
2. Reassessment of public opinion and level of support for farmland preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails & greenways
3. Assessment of 2006 vision
4. Assessment of 2006 goals and objectives to achieve the vision



5. Development of strategies regarding agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails & greenways
6. Establishment of recommendations and action plan

Plan Organization

Land Partnerships is organized in the following manner:

Chapter 1

Introduction provides a brief overview, background and update on planning for agriculture preservation, natural resource protection and parks, trails & greenways in Cumberland County.

Chapter 2

Needs Assessment identifies and analyzes population trends, development patterns, development activity, status of land preservation and land use planning across the County.

Chapter 3

Public Participation describes the components and findings of the public participation process.

Chapter 4

Goals and Objectives details the vision, key focus areas and goals and objectives of Land Partnerships.

Chapter 5

Agriculture Preservation identifies the agricultural resources of the County, trends in agriculture and offers tools for agriculture preservation.

Chapter 6

Natural Resource Protection includes an inventory of natural resources, benefits and threats to the resources and offers strategies for protection.

Chapter 7

Parks, Trails & Greenways provides an inventory and assessment of park, trail and greenway resources in Cumberland County, trends in parks and recreation and offers tools to meet present and future needs.

Chapter 8

Implementation includes the strategies and potential funding mechanisms for implementation of Land Partnerships.



Michaux State Forest