

The Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

REGIONAL RESOURCE

PROTECTION PLAN

Chester County, Pennsylvania

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Prepared By:

Northern Federation

Regional Resource Protection Plan Taskforce

Northern Federation Membership/Taskforce Members

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Les Schwartz (East Vincent)
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Joseph St. Georges (East Nantmeal)
Stockton Iloway (East Pikeland)
John Hoekstra (East Vincent)
Stanley Stubbe (North Coventry)
Eleanor Morris (South Coventry)
Lou Schneider (Wallace)**
Gary Warrick (West Vincent)

Honorary (non-voting) Members of Taskforce

Elaine Husted (East Vincent Historical Commission)
Estelle Cremers (Warwick Township Historical Commission)
Eric C. Scheib (Owen J. Roberts School District)

* Former members of the Taskforce **Change in affiliation

Preparation and Funding

This Plan was prepared by the Northern Federation Regional Resource Protection Plan Taskforce with technical assistance provided by the Chester County Planning Commission. Funding was provided, in part, through a grant from the Vision Partnership Program sponsored by the Chester County Board of Commissioners. The Plan has been prepared in conjunction with the principles of the County's policy plan, *Landscapes*, as a means of achieving greater consistency between local and county planning programs.

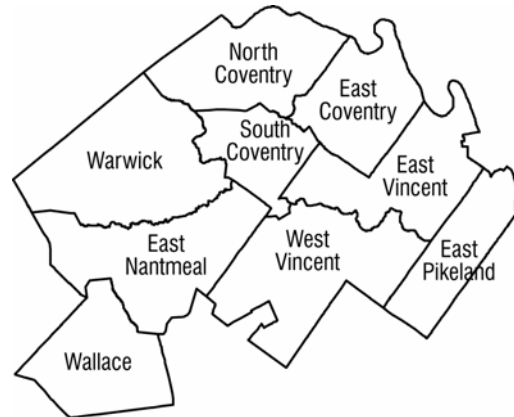
Regional Perspective

This Chapter familiarizes the reader with the Northern Federation and offers a brief overview on the Region's land use characteristics and shared resources, as well as influences on the Northern Federation Region, such as other regional planning group efforts and Chester County policy planning documents. When discussing resource protection, it is important to understand the relationship between the communities within the Region and the relationship between the Region and Chester County, as well as Berks and Montgomery Counties which are both adjacent to the Region. The resources identified in this Plan define the character of the Region and the resource ethic of its community leaders, business owners, and residents.

OVERVIEW OF THE REGION'S LAND USE CHARACTERISTICS

The Northern Federation Region encompasses the northern-most area of Chester County and is comprised of the Townships of East Coventry, East Nantmeal, East Pikeland, East Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, Wallace, Warwick, and West Vincent. See inset below and Map RP-1.

The Region consists primarily of rural land uses with suburban and urban influences along the Schuylkill River Corridor. The urban areas include: South Pottstown and Pottstown Landing in North Coventry Township. The largest areas of suburban development are located in East Coventry, East Pikeland, East Vincent, and North Coventry Townships. The Region also has four rural centers: Bucktown and Pughtown in South Coventry; Glenmoore in Wallace; Knauertown in Warwick; and Ludwig's Corner in West Vincent. In addition there are several Historic Villages in the Region including Kimberton in East Pikeland; Nantmeal Village in East Nantmeal; Coventryville in South Coventry; Warwick Village, Knaurtown, Saint Peters, and Harmonyville in Warwick Township; and Birchrunville in West Vincent. The areas to the west of the Region are primarily rural (Berks County) while the areas to the North and East (Montgomery County) are suburban and urban in nature. See Maps RP-1 and RP-2.



Although the Region is primarily rural and much of the land remains agricultural in nature with an abundance of nature resources, it is nonetheless influenced by its proximity to Reading and Philadelphia. These major urban areas influence growth of the Region and it's associated impact on regional resources. In addition to Philadelphia and Reading, other urban and developed areas such as Pottstown, Exton, West Chester, Downingtown, Phoenixville, Great Valley, and King of Prussia serve the Region as employment centers as well as recreational and educational centers. See Map RP-2.

SHARED RESOURCES IN THE REGION

A common thread that unifies the nine municipalities in the Region is the vast natural, historic, agricultural, scenic, and recreational resources that define the rural character of the Region. The French Creek stream valley provides a backdrop for an array of historic structures and scenic resources. Historic and scenic resources, such as Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, promote a sense of community, history, and place. The rolling hills of farmland, livestock, and wooden-clad farmsteads suggest a simpler time when silos outnumbered subdivisions. Parks and recreation facilities, such as Marsh Creek and French Creek State Parks provide facilities for residents and visitors to utilize and appreciate these resources.

In addition to their role as integral elements of the Region's rural character, these resources have historically guided land use and development patterns. Kimberton and St. Peter's Villages, for example, were built around mills for which the Region's streams provided the energy, and the earliest settlers produced raw timber and wheat.

REGIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS

Although the member municipalities of the Northern Federation have changed over the decades since its inception, a primary focus of the Regional group has always been the protection and preservation of natural resources.¹ To this end, the Northern Federation has produced several documents that focus on the protection of natural resources and planning efforts that implement that philosophy. An overview of each of these documents is included in Chapter 1: Coordination and Implementation Plan.

In addition to the activities of the Region, some of the member municipalities have taken part in resource protection efforts with municipalities outside of the Region. These activities benefit the Region as the member municipality will often share the plan recommendations or findings of the study with the Federation which enhances the potential for consistency in policy. The following is a listing of recent programs:

RECONNECTIONS

The goal of the Master Plan being developed as a joint effort by North Coventry Township and Pottstown Borough is "Reconnecting the people of North Coventry Township and Pottstown Borough with each other and their Schuylkill River Heritage." The Reconnections project examines the potential physical, economic, social, heritage, and aesthetic connections between the two communities. The plan focuses on the Schuylkill River as the "heart" of each community's history. *Reconnections* proposes major recommendations and they include: Enhancing existing bridges with pedestrian facilities, establishment of a new trail system, establishment of a gateway system to the renovated recreational facilities all focusing on the physical link between the two communities, the Schuylkill River.

¹ When the Comprehensive Plan was completed in 1978, the Federation was made up of the Townships of East Pikeland, East Vincent, South Coventry, Warwick, and West Vincent.

PHOENIXVILLE AREA REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Phoenixville Region consists of six municipalities including East and West Vincent, East Pikeland, Charlestown, and Schuylkill Townships and the Borough of Phoenixville. The plan focuses on the preservation of natural and agricultural resources while recognizing the need for revitalization of the villages and commercial districts of the Region and Phoenixville's historic downtown. East and West Vincent and East Pikeland Townships are working with this Regional Group while simultaneously working with the Northern Federation on the Regional Resource Protection Plan. The Phoenixville Plan is expected to be adopted by the end of 2006.

POTTSTOWN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Pottstown Metropolitan Region is a unique multi-municipal planning group that is comprised of municipalities from both Montgomery and Chester Counties. The participating municipalities in Montgomery County are West Pottsgrove, Lower Pottsgrove, and Upper Pottsgrove, Douglas, and New Hanover Townships and the Borough of Pottstown. Participants from Chester County include East and North Coventry Townships. The focus of this regional planning effort is directing growth into designated growth areas and promoting the revitalization of older communities, particularly the Borough of Pottstown, maximizing the efficient use of the Region's public infrastructure, and preserving its rural character. The Pottstown Plan was adopted in December 2005.

SUSTAINABLE WATERSHED MANAGEMENT FOR NORTHERN CHESTER COUNTY WATERSHEDS: A Model Program to balance Water Resources and Land Development in the Schuylkill River Tributary Watersheds.

This plan presents a comprehensive inventory and analysis of water resources and land uses in the watersheds of Northern Chester County. It includes the development of a water balance model that measures the impact of land use on the water table. Further, it includes a management and implementation plan that addresses the protection of the Region's most important resource, water. This plan was completed by the current members of the Northern Federation with the exception of Wallace Township.

RELATIONSHIP TO CHESTER COUNTY *LANDSCAPES*

This Regional Resource Protection Plan was developed in cooperation with the Chester County Planning Commission, and was undertaken as part of the Vision Partnership Program (VPP). The VPP is a program designed to provide the most effective coordination and consistency between the growth management policies of ***Landscapes, Managing Change in Chester County 1996-2020***, adopted in 1996, Chester County's Comprehensive Policy Plan, and those of municipalities in the County. With respect to the Region, the policies identified in this Regional Resource Protection Plan are consistent with the policies identified in ***Landscapes***, as well as in its implementation plans, *Linking Landscapes* and *Watersheds*.

Landscapes, Chester County Comprehensive Policy Plan

The primary goal of the Chester County policy plan, **Landscapes**, is to reduce sprawling residential development by focusing new development in areas where it can best be accommodated and encouraging the revitalization of the County's urban areas. The plan stresses the importance of protecting natural and historic resources and emphasizes the need to preserve farms and prime agricultural soils.

The plan identifies growth boundaries around four types of landscapes: Natural, Rural, Suburban, and Urban, and proposes key actions to protect and enhance the character of each landscape. The majority of the Northern Federation Region is located in the Rural and Natural Landscapes, with the Borough of Spring City, South Pottstown and Pottstown Landing in North Coventry Township identified as Urban Landscapes. Portions of East Coventry, East Pikeland, East Vincent, and North Coventry are identified as the Suburban Landscape. The Region also contains four rural centers including Bucktown and Pughtown in South Coventry; Knauertown in Warwick; Ludwig's Corner in West Vincent; and Glenmoore in Wallace. See the **Landscapes** inset on Map RP-1.

Because compliance with **Landscapes** is voluntary, the County seeks to partner with municipalities in implementing the plan and, through the VPP, provides grant funds to assist townships, boroughs, and regional planning groups with its implementation. The municipalities of the Region joined the VPP between the years 1996 and 2001. A review of the planning documents of each municipality indicated that the land use policies and regulations in place in were generally consistent with the County's planning policies.

Linking Landscapes, A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, Pennsylvania

In February 2002, the Chester County Commissioners adopted *Linking Landscapes*, the first of the specific plan elements tied to **Landscapes**. The primary goal of *Linking Landscapes* is the protection of open space through the coordinated efforts of Chester County, municipalities, land trusts and conservancies, and private property owners. Where this plan has value for the Region is in the policy recommendations for protecting agricultural and natural resources lands and the creation of open space linkages, as well as in the development of recreational resource areas for utilization by Township residents.

Watersheds, An Integrated Water Resources Plan for Chester County, Pennsylvania and Its Watersheds

The Chester County Commissioners adopted *Watersheds*, the second specific plan element to **Landscapes** in September 2002. The primary goal of *Watersheds* is the development of an integrated resource protection model that ultimately links to the protection of water quality in each watershed in Chester County.