Pennsylvania Environmental Council

RIVER TOWN PROGRAM
MON RIVER VALLEY
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A community and economic development initiative in small, rural river towns focused on outdoor recreation as the primary driver.
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GOALS

1. Visitor attraction
2. Business attraction
   A. Expand existing businesses
   B. Attract new businesses
VISITOR ATTRACTION STRATEGIES
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BUSINESS ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

Fill service gaps

- Confluence, PA (pop. 780)
  - Assets: Lake – River – Bike Trail
  - 13 B & B’s
  - 8 Guest houses (soon to be 9)
  - 2 Grocery stores
  - 5 Restaurants (fine dining, BBQ, café, diner, pizza shop)
  - 2 Banks / ATM’s
  - Ice cream stand
  - Campground (next to the ice cream stand)
  - Post office
  - Bike shop / repair & rental
  - Kayak / canoe / bike rental (next to the café)
  - Gas station
  - Wine shop
BUSINESS ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

Adaptive re-use of existing and historic buildings as “the greenest green buildings”
BUSINESS ATTRACTION STRATEGIES

- Adopt a regional approach, building on the unique assets of each community as complementary vs. competitive.
PROGRAM BACKGROUND

- Linking Communities, Tourism & Conservation
  - A Tourism Assessment Process
  - Conservation International
  - The George Washington University
    - Eileen Gutierrez
    - Kristin Lamoureux
    - Seleni Matus
    - Kaddu Sebunya
  - 2005
ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Outdoor Recreation Activity (2006)
  - Wildlife viewing: 66 million
  - Bicycling: 60 million
  - Trails: 56 million
  - Camping: 45 million
  - Fishing: 33 million
  - Paddling: 24 million
  - Snow sports: 16 million
  - Hunting: 13 million

- $730B per year nationally – 6.5M jobs
- More Americans paddle than play soccer
- Outdoor recreation employs 5 times more people than Wal-Mart
ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Paddlers – Kayaks / Canoes / Rafts
  - 17.8M Americans paddlers (2008)
  - 7.8M kayakers

- Outdoor and adventure retail
  - $20B annually

- National Park Service
  - Paddler’s spend $27-$63 per day
  - Multiple day, destination paddlers spend $88/day

- Geo-Tourism (Sustainability, Ecology, Outdoor Adventure)
  - 55.1M Americans
  - Growing @ 10% annually
  - Travel Industry Association of America
Trail Town Program® (2007)
  - Great Allegheny Passage / C&O Canal Towpath

2010 Allegheny River Pilot Program (2010)
  - Blawnox (river access)
  - O’Hara (loop bike trail)
  - Aspinwall (marina)
  - Sharpsburg (gateway signage program)
  - Etna (multi-municipal flood plan)
  - Millvale (artist enclave & safe town to river connection)
Tourism is the 2\textsuperscript{nd} largest industry in Pennsylvania

- 2.6M overnight visitors in the Laurel Highlands annually
- 4.7M visited during the day

- The Great Allegheny Passage Rail Trail
  - $41M economic impact annually
  - $7.2M in employee wages
  - 54 new or expanded businesses
  - 83 new jobs in 8 small, rural communities
MONONGAHELA RIVER TOWNS

- Point Marion
- Greensboro
- Rices Landing
- Fredericktown/Millsboro
- Brownsville/West Brownsville
- California/Coal Center/California University
- Fayette, Greene, and Washington Counties
POINT MARION
GREENSBORO
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation

Additional grants / funding

- Alpha Natural Resources
- California Recreation Authority
- Community Foundation of Fayette County
- Elm Street Program – Greensboro
- Greene County Tourism
- Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau
- Port of Pittsburgh
- Point Marion residents
- RK Mellon Foundation
- Sprout Fund
- Visit Washington County PA
- West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund
THE PROCESS- YEAR 1

- Needs assessment
- Review of existing plans
- Action Teams
- Short term projects
- Communications and marketing
THE PROCESS- YEAR 2

- Capacity building
- Visitor & business attraction
- Fundraising for mid- and long-term projects
- Initiate mid-term projects
- Promote public art
THE PROCESS - YEAR 3

- Capacity building
- Visitor & business attraction
- Initiate mid- and long-term projects
- Transition to local & regional Action Teams
WHO’S INVOLVED?

- Point Marion Park
- Greensboro Elm Street Program
- Rices Landing community volunteers
- Fredericktown Chamber of Commerce/Maxwell Basin Recreation Area
- Brownsville Blueprint Committee, City of Brownsville, West Brownsville Borough, Brownsville Area Redevelopment Authority
- California Borough, California Recreation Authority, California University of Pennsylvania
Student Conservation Association
- One representative assigned to each River Town for a year
- Project coordination
- Event planning
- Clean up efforts
- Anything else we can think of
REGIONAL SIGNAGE PROGRAM
Design, print, and distribute information to both existing and potential businesses

Will include:
- Business planning
- Advice after a business opens
- Marketing strategies
- Sources of funding
- Tips for sustainability
PADDLING TRIPS

- Partnership with the National Park Service’s Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA), and the Izaak Walton League of America, Greene County Chapter (IWLA)
- Organized, promoted and lead trips to promote the Mon, its’ tributaries and Mon River towns
PADDLE THE MON - GREENSBORO
EXAMPLES OF TOWN SPECIFIC PROJECTS

- **California** – Design charrette for Project 70 site and Loop Trail, River Fest, park clean-ups, open view corridors to the river

- **Brownsville** – Walking tour brochures, Buy-Local Farmers Market

- **Fredericktown** – Public dock expansion, trail connections, façade improvements, multiple events
EXAMPLES OF TOWN SPECIFIC PROJECTS

- **Rices Landing** – Signage, park improvements, gazebo concert series
- **Greensboro** – Farmers’ Market, website, business attraction strategy
- **Point Marion** – Public art project, park improvements, connect with WV trail, business attraction (new marina)
WORKSHOPS

RIVER TOWN SUSTAINABILITY FAIR
MARCH 31, 9:30AM - 1:30PM

LEARN ABOUT RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY
HANDS-ON DEMONSTRATIONS, INTERACTIVE EXHIBITS, FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

FREE ADMISSION
EAST BETHLEHEM TWP. FIRE HALL, 831 CRAMFORD ROAD, FREDERICKTOWN

WWW.WPPSEF.ORG/RIVERTOWN

RIVER TOWN PROGRAM

RIVER TOWN PROPERTY WORKSHOP
THURSDAY OCTOBER 6TH

The Upper Main River Towns is a program of:

6:00 PM Fredericktown, PA Fire Hall
Guest Speaker-Tom Hardy, Principal of Paul Alto Properties

TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED
- Buying, Selling, Leasing Property
- Information needed
- Property development
- Maintenance and appearance
- River Town’s role
RECOMMENDED READING

- *The Economics Associated with Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources Conservation and Historic Preservation in the United States*
  - For: The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
  - By: Southwick Associates
  - 2011

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- *An Evaluation of Strategies and Finances of the Rural Tourism Industry*
  - For: The Center for Rural Pennsylvania
  - By: Paula A. Duda Holoviak, Ph.D.
  - Kutztown University
  - April 2012
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