

RECREATIONAL & TOURISM ROUNDTABLE CLEARFIELD COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SEPTEMBER 15, 2005

ATTENDEES

Jodi Brennan, Director of Clearfield County Planning Office
Meredith Krejny, Planning Specialist of Clearfield County Planning Office
Susan Reed , Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
Gerry Hatcher, Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
Sandy Fink Barrett, Clearfield County Recreation & Tourism Authority
Janice Aleksivich, Clearfield Chamber of Commerce
Beth Rosevear, Parker Dam State Park
Bob Merrill, Jr., Moshannon State Forest District
Denny Dusza, PA Game Commission
Leon Meyers, Clearfield Fair & Park Board
Janet Morris, Comfort Inn
Sharon Josefik, Central County Concerned Sportsmen
Donna Carnahan, Conservation District
Scott Casteel, Hilltop Howlers
Jamie Orcutt, Clearfield Co. Economic Development Corp.
Bob Grimminger, Bob's Army & Navy
Bill Mackereth, National Wild Turkey Federation
Hildred E. Rowles, II, Curwensville-Pike Twp. Historical Society
Rich Hughes, Allegheny Mountain Shooting Complex
Terry O'Conner, Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement

INTRODUCTIONS

After introducing one another, the question was asked, "who's missing from this roundtable that should be contacted?" Participants did not have any names to add.

PURPOSE

County Planning Director Jodi Brennan explained that the input collected at today's roundtable would be used for the purpose of updating the county's comprehensive plan. She then briefly explained what a comprehensive plan was and the purpose it serves. She also stressed that they would accept input after the meeting as well and asked for participants to share any data sources or reports that would be useful in the development of this plan. The roundtable participants will be sent the final draft of this comprehensive plan section for final review and comment.

PROCESS

The Director also explained the process in which today's meeting would be run to obtain this input. The SWOT analysis, a commonly used planning process, would be utilized which simply stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats. These items would then be used to develop a list of goals.

After lengthy discussion, participants developed a list of the following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and goals. Participants were then given five stickers, which they used to vote for the top five goals they felt were the most important. Participants were allowed to use more than one sticker per goal if they so desired. These “votes” were then used to prioritize the goals.

STRENGTHS:

- I - 80 (5 exists in County) 30,000 cars / day
- Idle land
- Gateway to PA Wilds
- 4 State parks, 2 public recreational areas, state forest
- Game lands, numerous hunting seasons
- 4 Seasons recreational activities for all seasons
- Susquehanna River, H2O resources
- 3 Large sporting goods, hunting retail stores (among largest in state)
- One of largest county fairs in state
- Hunting and fishing opportunities
- Long distance hiking trail and easy access to trail head
- Lodging (200 rooms, 800 campsites)
- Rails – to – trails
- More than 150 dining establishments
- 6 Museums
- Elk herd, viewing opportunities
- Major transportation corridors
- Location near center of PA
- X-C skiing, snowmobile, ice fishing
- Railroads
- Accessible healthcare
- Diverse land uses, historic and cultural resources
- Best scenery in country lots of back roads to get to it
- McGee’s Mills, Bloody Knox, Knobs Tower, etc.
- SB Elliot historic district
- Friendly, receptive people
- Variety of things to see and do
- Festivals, Picnics
- Highest elevation East of Mississippi (I - 80)
- In top 5 of state for deer, bear hunting
- Bird watching opportunities
- Denny’s Big Burger
- 130,000 plus acres open public lands
- County has own tourism – promotion entity
- Quehanna Wild Area
- Fall Colors

WEAKNESSES:

- No public four wheeler trails
- Lots of abandoned mine lands which lead to unfishable streams
- Not enough boat launches along river
- Landfills
- Need better maps of county (hard for non – residents to find their way)
- Previous lack of planning
- Lots of people have never left county (some “backwoods mentality”)
- Low Incomes
- Low education levels, education about area
- Low self esteem
- Loss of businesses, jobs, industrial base
- Lack eco – tourism businesses, outfitters, etc.
- Lack of responsible stewards
- Heavy truck traffic which leads to bad roads, odor and noise
- Cold weather
- Lack of cooperation among various communities
- Stagnation (some don’t want or fear change and problems that could change arise)
- County a target for landfills
- Fine line between good and bad tourism

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Empty building (could be re – used) many still newer or good condition
- Marketing through PA Wilds
- Rock Run: ATV park, equestrian, hiking trails, coming soon
- DCED small business grants for tourism
- Low – cost land for future development
- Continually identifying new, unique features
- Festivals, fairs could be promoted (almost continuous throughout year)
- Ability to develop and market assets on a regional level
- Could improve inter- county cooperation
- Need to better develop / manage hunting, parks, etc. (sportsmen spend a lot of \$, PSU football fans stay here for home games that leads to \$)
- 40 million people within 4 hr. drive of here
- Coordinate data from LHR, PA Wilds
- Bring in Audubon groups

THREATS:

- Landfills
- Not being a “vacation destination”
- Bureaucracy and politics (admin. Changes could lose all)
- Competition with adjacent counties
- Selling our open areas for undesirable development
- More land being posted (losing hunting grounds)

- Invasive species (our natural assets are vulnerable – could lose their draw, business)
- Abuse of land by users
- Lack of education about natural resources
- Poor planning leads to overuse (need responsible development, tourism) “Tourism gone wild”
- Loss of dark skies (sky watchers have lots of \$ could lose them)
- Uncertain weather (some activities highly dependent on certain conditions)
- Lack of diverse activities to compensate for weather – dependent activities
- Poor attitudes towards resources by some deter other from coming here
- Some people don’t want growth, change
- Vandalism, crime
- Poor economy

GOALS (in order of priority as voted on by roundtable participants)

1. Develop better information about area activities and alternative activities for tourists – develop guide (12 votes)
2. Build county tourist Info / visitor center promote area activities (10 votes)
3. Foster public – private partnerships (9 votes)
3. Develop resource protection strategies to protect those things that attract people to our area (9 votes)
4. Develop programming geared towards drawing eco-tourists to county (ex: Audubon birding competition, stargazing party, geocaching, etc. (8 votes)
5. Educate tourism – related businesses about the importance of cooperation (“Find the Magic”!) (7 votes)
6. Foster cooperation among governmental agencies (need to have cohesive msg.) (6 votes)
7. Develop responsible eco – tourism businesses (4 votes)
7. Increase Community pride (4 votes)
7. Set up mechanism to provide resources, training and tech. Assistance to those developing events / attractions (4 votes)
8. Solicit youth input, develop leadership, participation of youth (3)
8. Work with municipal rec. groups to assist and coordinate resources (3)
9. Add educational components to area recreational activities (2 votes)
10. Develop personal guide service (1)
10. Clean up AMD and protect and restore waters (will enhance recreation, fishing in southern parts of county) (1)
10. Develop marketing plan to educate about financial impact of natural resources (1 vote)
11. Restore Ag. Edu. Natural resource programs in schools (0 votes)
12. Publicize industry related tours (0 votes)

Participants were informed that they would receive minutes from this roundtable with the results of the prioritization of goals in the near future. An invitation will follow for a second follow up meeting to develop a plan of action to implement the top 5 goals

established at today's roundtable. Participants were encouraged to provide additional goals.