



## Nazareth Area Council of Governments Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan

During 2006, the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) finished the final draft of the "Nazareth Area...2030 Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan" for the 104 square mile area encompassing the Boroughs of Nazareth, Tatamy, Stockertown, Bath, and Chapman and the Townships of Bushkill, Upper Nazareth, Lower Nazareth, Moore, and East Allen. All municipalities with the exception of East Allen and Stockertown have since signed the implementation agreement and are now in the process of making many of the newly recommended improvements. This new plan calls for numerous changes that will improve the quality of life in our region, from farmland preservation and environmental protection to traffic improvements and socio-economic development initiatives.

Bushkill Township Board of Supervisors Chairman, Brien Kocher, was the Chairman of the steering committee of the Nazareth Area Council of Governments for the development of this plan. Brien and fellow committee members worked tirelessly to develop this plan with a better vision for the future of our region. The crafting of this plan required considerable coordination with and cooperation by all of the municipalities.

Aside from the direct benefits of improved planning for smarter growth and development, the adoption and commitment to implement this plan opens up our Township and the other participating municipalities to a wealth of funding through many Statewide programs.

## Bushkill Township Open Space Program

During the November 2005 general elections, the voters of Bushkill Township approved the Open Space Referendum placed on the ballot by a 2:1 majority. This referendum proposed a 0.25 percent increase in earned income tax of township residents to create a township open space fund specifically for the protection, preservation, and restoration of open space.

The ordinance to establish this additional tax was then developed, advertised, and approved by the Township Supervisors. According to Berkheimer

Valley Greenways, an important new initiative through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Heritage Conservancy, a highly reputable and successful non-profit conservancy based in Bucks County, is currently working with the Township Environmental Advisory Council, Supervisors, Planning Commission and Recreation Board to develop the Bushkill Township Open Space Program. The plan is based largely on the environmental resource and farmland preservation inventory work recently produced by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and is currently slated for completion by early 2007.

A public meeting was held on January 11, 2007 to gain public input on the plan. **A final public meeting will be held on February 8, 2007 at 7PM at the Township Building. All interested Township residents are encouraged to attend.**

The draft final Bushkill Township Open Space Plan may be found on our website at [www.bushkilltownship.org](http://www.bushkilltownship.org).

More detailed information on the Open Space Plan may be found on Page 2 of this newsletter.

**Public Meeting**  
**Final Development-Open Space Plan**  
**Thursday, February 8, 2007 at 7PM**

As- sociates, the Township should realize an estimated \$450,000, annually, to use for open space. Township funds will be matched to the extent possible with other funding through Northampton County's Open Space Program, Growing Greener II Program, and the Lehigh

# Bushkill Township Open Space Plan

In May 2006, following approval by Township voters to enact an Open Space Program and subsequent passage of the ordinance to enact a tax dedicated for such purpose, the Township contracted with the Heritage Conservancy to develop our Open Space Plan. For several months the Township's Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) met and worked on the basic framework for the plan with Jeffrey Marshall of the Heritage Conservancy during regularly scheduled public meetings.

Heritage Conservancy was selected to complete the Open Space Plan for several reasons, including their unmatched experience with open space preservation in Southeastern Pennsylvania and their prior commitment to implement a "Lasting Landscape Program" within the Bushkill Creek Watershed, of which Bushkill Township is a significant part. The Lasting Landscape Program is a flagship creation of the Heritage Conservancy whereby preservation of historical, environmental and recreational components of an area receive equal focus, at the guidance of the community, for the establishment of priorities and implementation. The Heritage Conservancy's commitment to our area included considerable allotment of their own resources and grant funding to assist us with getting started.

On the heels of the Lasting Landscape Program agreement came an even greater opportunity for our area to both preserve and improve our surroundings, the Lehigh Valley Greenways (LVG) initiative through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The LVG got its start here in Bushkill Township and the Bushkill Creek Watershed. Staff

facilitated the early relations between DCNR and the local conservation groups in an effort to protect Jacobsburg State Park, the Bushkill Creek, and our region from the impacts of misguided over-development. The integrity of the State Park depended largely on the development of a successful relationship between the DCNR, Bushkill Township, Bushkill Stream Conservancy, and other project partners. The efforts by our local partnership certainly paid off. Michael DiBerardinis, DCNR Secretary, was so impressed with our track record and the cohesiveness of our group that he committed considerable professional and financial resources aimed at our protection goals. The LVG initiative has grown to include most of the Lehigh Valley since our early meetings, but much of the focus and success is occurring right here in Bushkill Township. To date, the LVG has resulted in several hundred thousands of dollars for acquisition of key parcels of land, stormwater management projects, and planning and water quality protection assistance – all right here in Bushkill Township!

Additionally, after considerable deliberation for several years, Northampton County Council recently approved a sustainable funding mechanism for a County Open Space Program. Bushkill Township is one of only a few municipalities that is prepared to receive funding since we have our own matching open space funds and a plan nearly ready to guide implementation.

To sum it all up, our own smart investment into our community should be doubled or better by County and State funds! This is not only a smart investment of the dollar earned, but it also protects our individual real estate values.





## Environmental Advisory Council

**Get Involved!!**

The Bushkill Township EAC consists of up to seven members. Currently, five of the seven seats are filled, leaving two openings for new members. The EAC is responsible for important environmental initiatives and programs provided through the Township. Activities include recycling and composting programs, land development plan reviews, open space planning, website updates, environmental education projects, greenways plan implementation projects, historic resource protection, and many other opportunities. Meetings, which are open to the public, are held on the second Thursday of each month at 7PM at the Township Building.

### How You Can Help?

As the conservation challenges in the Township continue, so does the need for your support and involvement. What can you do to help?

**Become an EAC member.** Qualified applicants may be appointed by the Supervisors with recommendation by the EAC.

**Help us identify opportunities to conserve key parcels of land.** You may own land worthy of having its natural qualities permanently protected, or you may know other owners of important parcels who might be open to considering conservation alternatives. Pass on your ideas about land conservation opportunities to a member of the EAC.

**Volunteer.** There are many ways that volunteers can be helpful, including helping steward conservation lands, serving on committees, or providing specialized talents. Contact Township Manager, Aaron Hook at (610) 759-1250.

**Talk up your EAC's good work,** and encourage friends, neighbors and relatives to support our efforts.

**Support private and public open space and greenway funding initiatives.** Let your local, state, county, and municipal leaders know that you support conservation funding. Support the implementation of the Bushkill Township Open Space Program.

## Northern Regional Compost Authority—Update

Bushkill Township has been involved with five other local municipalities to create a regional compost authority/facility for disposal and reuse of yard waste and other qualifying organic materials. This new facility is being funded through recycling program grant money obtained by the municipalities.

As commonly encountered with multi-municipal activities, however, the project has experienced some unforeseen delays. After considerable negotiations and additional set-backs, the kinks have been worked out and the process is back on-line with a targeted grand opening for mid-Summer 2007.

The new facility is intended to operate like the Bethlehem compost authority, where residents from the municipalities can dispose of unwanted reusable yard wastes (including Christmas Trees), as well as obtain composted materials for use such as topsoil and mulch. For updates and additional information on the new Northern Regional Compost Authority, visit [www.bushkilltownship.org](http://www.bushkilltownship.org).



## Supervisor Wins Statewide Award

The Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited's Outstanding Coldwater Conservationist Award (Professional) was presented to Jason Smith (center), by Council President Ken Undercoffer. Rich Budihas (left), of the Forks of the Delaware Trout Unlimited Chapter, made the nomination. Smith works for Hanover Engineering Associates, Inc., dealing with conservation issues. He has worked with municipalities to develop their maps, facilitating easements, greenways, riparian protection and other conservation measures. Smith is also a supervisor for Bushkill Township.

*(Photo and text courtesy Pa. Council of Trout Unlimited)*

## Vernal Pond Study in Bushkill Township

During the spring and early-summer season of 2006, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy teamed-up to study the uncatalogued vernal ponds as part of a new project coined the "Seasonal Pools Registry of Pennsylvania." The base of the Blue Mountain Ridge in northern Northampton and Lehigh Counties has long been known for its wealth of high quality wetlands, headwater streams, and vernal ponds and was targeted as part of the study efforts.

What are "vernal ponds?"...may be your first question. The answer is quite simple, really. Vernal ponds are ephemeral waterbodies which means that they dry-up occasionally. This unique characteristic prevents the establishment of fish, allowing amphibians and other aquatic organisms to safely carry out their life cycles. Many vernal ponds serve as the critical habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species.

Why was this study important?...may be your next question. Unlike wetlands, streams, ponds and lakes, vernal ponds do not always fall under regulatory protection since they commonly do not exhibit the characteristics which define such water features in our landscape. Therefore, they may be subject to whimsical destruction, and the critical wildlife functions that they

serve are forever lost. Studying the ponds allows researchers to document vernal ponds which provide critical habitat functions to rare, threatened and endangered species, and in many cases results in the regulatory protection of the species in the absence of regulatory protection of the water features.

Results of this study will soon be available through Graver Arboretum and the Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center.



Spotted Salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*)

## Sobers Run...Officially Named and Protected

Through efforts made by the Township, Sobers Run has been officially named through the United States Geological Survey, and a portion of Sobers Run has been upgraded in water quality status from a High Quality Cold Water Fishery to a classification of Exceptional Value (EV) by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The new EV section of Sobers Run is from the crossing of the main stem by Kromer Road to the headwater feeder streams and wetlands at the base of the Blue Mountain Ridge.

The primary implication of this upgrade in water quality designation is better protection from indirect impacts by land development and from direct impacts by proposed stream and wetlands encroachments, as well as by proposed discharges of treated wastewater. While land development in the EV area may be a bit more cumbersome due to the upgrade, land values should be increased due to the assurance of better and smarter land development throughout the area.

The remainder of the Sobers Run watershed is currently under review by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection for upgrade to EV status as a "resource of significant local value," a seldomly used provision in the Pennsylvania Code.

The Township has also submitted a second petition to the United States Geological Service to officially name the western branch of Sobers Run as "West Branch Sobers Run." This important tributary to the main stem of Sobers Run represents the largest land area in the overall watershed of Sobers Run, and therefore should be officially named.

Stream crossing signs for Sobers Run, obtained by the Township through a grant from the Southeast Pennsylvania Resource Conservation and Development Program, have been installed along all crossings of the main stem of the stream. Additional stream crossings signs for the western branch of Sobers Run will be obtained and installed either through a similar grant program or through the Township's EAC.

Efforts for the work on Sobers Run were supported through decades of work by Bushkill Stream Conservancy, Lafayette College and Muhlenberg College, along with assistance through the Coldwater Heritage Partnership, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (including the Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center).

# The Official Map Explained

Since the riparian (stream associated) woodlands were added to the Township's Official Map in April of 2005, there have been many questions with regard to what it means to our residents and landowners. Many of those concerned have attended the regularly scheduled meetings of the Township's Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) which are held on the second Thursday of every month at 7PM at the Township Building. Simple dialogue has been widely successful.

The Official Map has traditionally been used as a planning tool for roads and infrastructure (e.g. utility lines) so that new development would not create undesirable conflicts with the general needs of residents. In recent years, however, the Commonwealth added a provision allowing protection of environmental resources which were of the "common wealth" throughout the respective municipality.

In a nutshell, the Township EAC, along with input by local land conservancies, our Planning Commission and our Supervisors, determined that the common thread which made our Township unique and desirable was our wooded stream valleys and clean streams. All of our streams are either listed as High Quality Cold Water Fisheries or Exceptional Value by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Also worth noting is the fact that the entire Bushkill Creek Watershed is listed for protection under the Class A Wild Trout designation by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The wealth of research and studies has shown that wooded stream and wetland buffers are the primary factors in the health of our aquatic ecosystems. Therefore, we determined that our riparian woodlands were a top priority for protection; and not only for the protection of our streams but also the protection of our quality of life and our property values. After all, there is a reason that Bushkill Township has become one of the most desirable places to live in the Lehigh Valley, and we need to keep it that way.

We are also very fortunate to have Jacobsburg State Park and Environmental Education Center here in the middle of our Township. The Park and Center are widely used by school groups from all over the region to learn about wildlife, aquatic habitats, resource management and much more. In fact, there are only three other Centers of this type in the entire Commonwealth. This Park, however, has always been extremely vulnerable to damaging ecological impacts since its only means of genetic stability (of wildlife) has been its fragile stream corridor connections to the Blue Mountain Ridge located miles to the north. These corridors allow for wildlife

migration between these two distant natural areas, and without them continual mixing of the gene pool species within a landlocked Jacobsburg State Park would become unhealthy and many species would soon disappear. This would not only damage the wildlife composition of the Park and Township, but it would damage the quality of education provided to our children and Park users.

The decision to add environmental provisions to our Official Map did not come easy for us. We wanted to find a means of protecting the riparian woodlands, but avoid damaging takings of our landowners' rights and property values. We explored other options, but we felt that most methods were generally too restrictive and rigid (e.g., zoning or stand-alone ordinances) if enacted at a threshold which would provide adequate resource protection. The Official Map seemed to offer more flexibility, and therefore was deemed the most appropriate choice. After nearly two years of working with it, we feel confident that the right decision was made. We have managed to work successfully with landowners, developers and real estate buyers to meet everyone's needs and maintain reasonable equity, something that most other methods of protection have not accomplished.

So...how does it work? Simple. The Official Map provides the Township with a full year from the time of plan submission to negotiate with landowners, developers, etc., who wish to develop land to preserve and protect mapped features to the satisfaction of the Township. Compliance in adequately protecting mapped features may be voluntary and/or may be gained through participation in the Township's Open Space Program, whereby desirable woodlands may be purchased rather than developed. Flexibility in planning for mapped roads and infrastructure is somewhat limited due to the fixed nature of existing connection points. Protection of mapped woodlands, however, is generally property specific and may be accomplished in various ways. The primary goal in dealing with development on properties which include mapped woodlands is to "avoid and minimize impacts to the extent practicable," similar in fashion to wetlands regulations. Methods for accomplishing this are largely negotiable. Landowners and developers are encouraged to meet with the Township prior to entering into detailed design, but they may also simply submit subdivision and land development plans which accomplish the intended goals for official review by the Township. Regardless of upfront planning, the final plans must be consistent with the intended goals.

## **Four out of Five Pennsylvanians Want Strong State Mercury Reductions...**

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**...and they want them now.**

Those are just two of the results of a statewide poll conducted of Pennsylvanians and their views on the need to clean up mercury spewed by our state's old outdated power plants.

The poll, commissioned by PennFuture, was released as the General Assembly was considering legislation to ban the proposal by Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to adopt a new regulation that the state's coal-fired power plants must reduce mercury pollution by 90 percent by 2015. The legislation would instead require Pennsylvania to follow the weak federal rule, which the Commonwealth and 13 other states, four Native American tribes and five environmental groups have challenged in court as illegal, and which could result in little appreciable mercury clean up in Pennsylvania.

The poll was released as part of a statewide Environment and Health Lobby Day, with more than 100 citizen lobbyists participating in Harrisburg and many more calling, emailing, faxing and writing to the legislators around the state.

The poll also found that:

- 87 percent of Pennsylvanians believe that mercury pollution is dangerous to babies;
- 80 percent of Pennsylvanians support the state's plan to reduce mercury, even if the average electric bill in the state would increase by \$1.08 or less per month;
- only 13 percent believe that power plants and industry will cut their pollution voluntarily.

Go to [www.protectbabies.org](http://www.protectbabies.org) website for more information.

### **Scientists and Health Care Professionals Weigh in for Babies**

Leading Pennsylvania scientists and health care professionals joined the more than 120 public health and health-affected, children's advocacy, faith-based, sporting, environmental, women's rights, labor and other organizations in calling on the legislature to support the strong State-specific mercury pollution rule proposed by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Noting that "Pennsylvanians are exposed to methylmercury at unacceptable levels," but that "babies are at the greatest risk," 44 of the State's foremost scientists were the latest to raise their voices against the polluters' campaign to stop strong protections from toxic mercury. Last Spring, nearly 150 religious leaders signed a similar letter, calling on the legislators to vote against legislation that would prevent Pennsylvania from regulating mercury from coal-fired power plants.

Go to [www.protectbabies.org](http://www.protectbabies.org) website to read these and other letters sent to Pennsylvania's elected leaders.

### **The Graver Arboretum: A Local Treasure**

*Located at 1581 Bushkill Center Road, on the west side of Route 512 in Bushkill Township, the Graver Arboretum is generally open to visitors every day, from dawn to dusk, but may be closed for extended periods in the winter months, due to icy conditions.*

Originally a private garden belonging to the late Lee and Virginia Graver, the Arboretum is now an outdoor educational laboratory belonging to Muhlenberg College. It is also an oasis of peaceful retreat for casual visitors, who just want to enjoy the beauty of nature by walking through.

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The Gravers donated their 48-acre property to Muhlenberg College in 1993, and also provided a fund to sustain the Arboretum. With additional help from the Gravers, in 1998 the College purchased an adjacent property of about 15 acres (part of the Howard Fehr farm, later owned by John Sikora). Visitors should enter this driveway, marked “Arboretum parking.” There is a large parking lot behind the barn.

The farmhouse near the entrance is used by college staff and faculty for office space and small classes. Sikoras’ garage has been converted to a field research station, and the large barn has been minimally renovated for large informal gatherings. Beginning in 1947, Dr. and Mrs. Graver purchased property fronting onto Bushkill Center Road (between Howard Fehr and the Diehls), and stretching back to Route 512, near the old double-arched stone bridge across from Van B’s Tack Shop. Some of this land had been part of the original Graver family farm.

Both schoolteachers at the time, the Gravers spent their summers developing the property. Over the years, they enlisted local Boy Scout troops, friends, and part-time workers to help build paths, clear brushy woods of brambles and poison ivy, and to create six permanent ponds. This was at the time, of course, when it was still perfectly acceptable to build ponds in wetland areas, and rural homeowners were even encouraged to do so for fire protection. Today these ponds are studied by Muhlenberg students interested in projects ranging from amphibian life to water quality.

Dr. Graver had been principal of Nazareth High School from 1949 to 1956, and then, after receiving his doctorate from Rutgers, he was a professor and head of the Department of History and Political Science at Kutztown University until retiring in 1975. Mrs. Graver spent her career teaching in Nazareth High School. The Gravers moved to Kirkland Village, in Bethlehem, in 1994, but were frequent visitors to the Arboretum until they died.

In the late 1940s and early ‘50s, the Gravers concentrated on making different parts of their property accessible. They built gravel paths from their home site at the Bushkill Center Road end of their property to the overgrown farm field fronting on Route 512, about a mile away. They cleared away brambles and prepared the site for replanting. There were no conifers at all on the property, and they planted Eastern Hemlock at random in the woods in the center of their property. They lined the main path with readily available and easily affordable conifers such as Scots Pine and Norway Spruce, but Dr. Graver soon became interested in trying to grow conifers from all parts of the world.

Today the Arboretum holds many hundreds of conifers representing over 150 species. Now over fifty years old, some of these trees are of impressive size. They hush the sounds of a developing neighborhood, and provide some of the shade under which rhododendrons thrive.

There are more visitors to see the rhododendrons in bloom during the month of May than at any other time of year. There is not a large variety of rhododendrons at the Arboretum, but since over 3,000 were originally planted, we have masses of blooms. An important criterion for Dr. Graver in selecting rhododendrons was that their foliage look good year round. The peak bloom time for rhododendrons is usually the last two weeks of May, although the season spreads from late April into July.

A third area of special interest to the Gravers was wildflowers. The best time to see spring wildflowers in the woods is in May, but August and September offer the most colorful blooms, when the asters and goldenrods bloom in the meadows.

Whatever the season, visitors are welcome at the Arboretum. Several marked trails are available, ranging from an easy 20-minute walk, to a more rigorous hike of more than an hour. Some areas can be very muddy in wet weather, and during the winter, even the main trail is often icy.

There is only one chemical toilet, located behind the barn near the entrance. There is no drinking water available.

*Please note that dogs are not permitted. The trails may be closed in inclement weather. Any club or group (e.g., garden club or senior citizens’ group) wanting a tour must make arrangements in advance, and a fee is involved. Please call the caretakers to make arrangements, at 610-759-3132.*

## BUSHKILL TOWNSHIP NEWSLETTER

Bushkill Township Municipal Bldg.  
1114 Bushkill Center Road  
Nazareth, PA 18064

Phone: (610) 759-1250  
Fax# (610) 759-8565

Mailing Address Line 1

Mailing Address Line 2

Mailing Address Line 3

Mailing Address Line 4

Mailing Address Line 5

*For more Township information, visit our currently redesigning website at [www.bushkilltownship.org!!](http://www.bushkilltownship.org!!)*

*Inside this issue: Bushkill Township Open Space Planning, The Official Map Explained, Vernal Ponds, and much more.*

## Charron Property

Wildlands Conservancy is currently in the final stages of acquiring a 110-acre wooded property (14 total parcels shown below in the figure outlined in red) on the Blue Mountain in Bushkill and Plainfield Townships, Northampton County, Pennsylvania. The goal of this project is to acquire the property to protect it from future residential or commercial development.

The property is dominated by mature deciduous woodlands on gently to steeply rolling slopes along the mountainside. With its far-reaching forests, streams, seeps, vernal ponds, and geological features, Blue Mountain is probably the wildest area remaining in southeastern Pennsylvania. As a conservation and recreation greenway, the Charron property offers wildlife habitat, migration corridors, and ecological sanctuary in an environmentally sensitive area.

