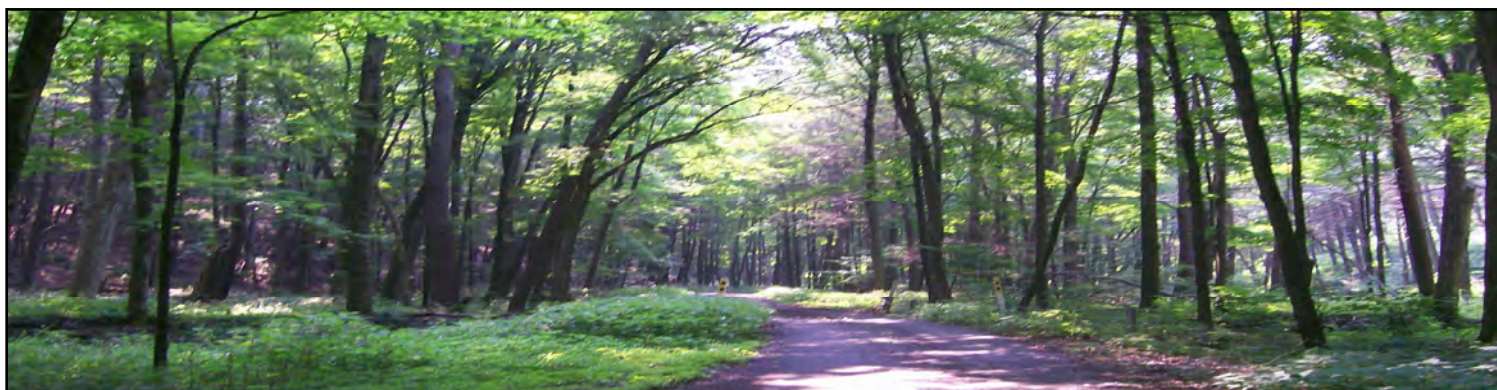


Managing our Lands Today Creating our Legacy for the Future

Protecting and managing your natural resources is an essential part of managing your biggest financial investment – your land. By envisioning what you want your land to be and setting goals for the future, you begin a land management planning process that can protect the quality of the soil, water and forested resources of your property. These land management activities can also enhance wildlife habitat, increase recreational opportunities and improve the aesthetic value of your land.



There are private landowners with sizable acreages containing agricultural and forested lands looking for assistance in protecting their natural resources. This guide is designed to provide information on land management options that, if implemented correctly, can reduce soil erosion, enhance wildlife and fisheries habitat, and protect water quality. It also lists financial incentive programs offered by government agencies and private organizations that help landowners like you. By incorporating some of these suggestions and making use of the financial assistance that may be available, you can protect your long-term investment, demonstrate your commitment to conservation of your land, and leave a legacy for future generations.

What are Best Management Practices?

Throughout this guide you will run into the term Best Management Practices (BMPs). BMPs are effective and practical methods that prevent the movement of sediment, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants from the land to the water. BMPs are developed to achieve a balance between water quality protection and maintaining your land.

Special Points of Interest:

Conservation Plan

Wildlife Management Plan

Forest Stewardship Plan

Tree Farms

Best Management Practices

Financial Assistance

Getting Started

When deciding how to manage your property, there are a few simple steps that can get you started:

- 1) Ask yourself what your long-range goals are for the property. Are you interested in managing your forest? Are you thinking about enhancing your agricultural activities? Do you want to improve wildlife habitat?
- 2) Review the following pages. Select the land management plan or combination of plans that best suit the goals you have identified for your property.
- 3) Choose land management practices that support your plan and can enhance and improve your land.
- 4) Based on the plan and practices you have identified, contact the appropriate agency which can provide professional assistance to help with development of the plan and implementation of the best management practices.

Land Management Plans

Conservation Plan

A Conservation Plan outlines the best way to use and manage the natural resources on your land based on your objectives and goals. The plan defines and explains the resources in a simple, easy to understand manner that typically includes soils information and an inventory of resources. As an example, a Conservation Plan implemented on a farm property can result in more viable and productive land, earning the farmer a higher income. Conservation plans can be used on properties other than farms, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) can help you develop a Conservation Plan at no cost to you, the landowner.

If you are ready to develop a Conservation Plan, a NRCS planner can meet with you to discuss your property goals, resource problems, soils, and the various conservation programs that NRCS offers. Many financial assistance programs offered by NRCS require that this plan be developed. But even if you are not presently interested in these programs, NRCS can assist you in developing a Conservation Plan that fits your needs—making your land investment a profitable decision. To speak with a NRCS planner contact the NRCS office in Mayfield at 570-282-8732.



Wildlife Management Plan

Wildlife is an important part of the life cycle of your forested or agricultural property. Wildlife reside where adequate food, cover, space, and water are present. Chances are, your property satisfies most, if not all of these needs. Practicing a few key habitat and forest management activities can help ensure a diversity of wildlife populations. Building brush piles, providing fruit trees or placing nesting structures are all easy ways to enhance wildlife habitat on your property. A diversity of habitats such as “edges” and wildlife openings and a mix of wildlife plantings for food and cover will enhance your wildlife viewing opportunities and enrich the variety of wildlife on your land. There are a number of agencies that can assist you in the development of a Wildlife Management Plan, including the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.



Forest Stewardship Plan

The Forest Stewardship Program provides information, education, and technical assistance to encourage and help private forest landowners keep their lands productive and healthy. The Forest Stewardship Program helps you accomplish what you want to do, whether or not that includes timber harvesting. The goal is to maintain healthy and productive forests for people and wildlife.

The program includes a written management plan for your forest land—a Forest Stewardship Plan. The process for developing your Forest Stewardship Plan is simple. During a site visit to your forest, a Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Forestry Service Forester can discuss the program and help you identify your interests and objectives for your land.

Knowing what you have on your property and deciding what is most important to you will form the foundation for everything else you will do on your land. Timber harvesting and other forest management activities have both short and long-term effects on the entire forest ecosystem. To ensure that these effects are positive, the use of BMPs is essential. BMPs must also remain flexible to adapt to future changes in your forested land. To learn more, contact your local Service Forester at DCNR by calling 570-895-4039.

Did you Know?

To date, **43** landowners in Pike County have worked with DCNR Bureau of Forestry and local consulting foresters to develop and implement Forest Stewardship Plans on **20,759** acres of forest land in Pike County.



Did you Know?

There are **18** Pike County Tree Farms, covering **28,231** acres, enrolled in the American Tree Farm System. A prominent Tree Farm designation offers prestige and potential business to the landowner.



Tree Farms

Though very similar to a Forest Stewardship Plan, the American Tree Farm System was developed by wood-using industries. The Tree Farm System and the government-sponsored Forest Stewardship Program overlap in many program goals and share similar standards. In fact, a private forest can be both a Tree Farm and a Stewardship Forest.

Under the system, Tree Farmers need to have a minimum of 10 acres that is managed for growing and harvesting repeated crops of forest products. With the help of a professional forester, a management plan is developed that considers all of the following items on your property: water quality, wildlife habitat, soil conservation and forest products production.

The Tree Farm system recognizes and encourages excellence by holding local, state, and regional contests for outstanding Tree Farms. For more information on the Tree Farm system, contact your area representative at the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources at 717-787-2703.

The Importance of Best Management Practices

In areas where development pressures threaten forested lands, Best Management Practices (BMPs) can enable you to provide crucial habitat for wildlife, increase the productivity of your forest lands, or increase crop production on farmlands, giving you a bigger return for your investment.

By using a simple practice like streambank or riparian buffers that will noticeably benefit your property, you are also reducing the amount of pollution that enters nearby streams, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater. A single BMP can have a rippling effect on your landscape, both now and into the future.

Choosing Best Management Practices

You, the landowner, must first determine what it is that you want to reduce or eliminate from happening on your property (i.e.—soil erosion, pesticide runoff, nutrient runoff, etc.) or what enhancements you wish to add to your lands. Soil erosion may be a concern for landowners timbering their property, while farmers may have a bigger concern with nutrient runoff. Some BMP's that you may be familiar with include contour farming, stream bank fencing, or the use of filter strips, all of which can reduce the potential for polluted water runoff. BMP's can also enhance your land by providing and maintaining important areas for wildlife, increasing your forest regeneration, improving timber quality and soil productivity.

Before choosing a Best Management Practice, you should consider a balance of two factors:

- 1) Can the BMP achieve the goal you have established for your property?
- 2) Is the BMP economically feasible?

By choosing BMPs that fit your needs, you will not only get your property producing to it's fullest potential, but you will also be protecting water quality. Perhaps one BMP will work or maybe you need to implement a combination of BMPs to achieve your desired result. Each BMP needs to be site specific. Your property — your investment — is unique.

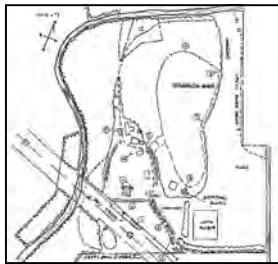
Riparian Buffers



One of the most common BMPs is the riparian (or streamside) buffer. This BMP is helpful to landowners in a number of ways. Originally used by farmers to reduce nutrient and manure runoff from pastures and fields, riparian buffers can be an extremely important tool to all landowners in protecting our high quality water resources. This “green” buffer of vegetation along the stream or water edge slows down pollutants or other excess nutrients which travel with stormwater runoff. Yard fertilizers, manure, and eroding soil sediments are filtered by the vegetation keeping them from entering the stream. A vegetated buffer shades the stream, keeping water temperatures cooler for fish.

Best Management Practices

Managing your property with “best management practices” is an investment in your future.



MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Management Plan for your property, whether it is a Conservation Plan, a Forest Stewardship Plan, or a Wildlife Management Plan, is a BMP itself. This BMP enhances resources important to your long-range goals.

RAIN GARDEN

A rain garden forms a collection area where water is captured and stored, permitting it to be filtered and slowly absorbed by the soil. By collecting water, rain gardens allow it to slowly penetrate the soil layer. It either infiltrates through the ground or is used by the plants in the garden.



RAIN BARREL

Rain barrels reduce the amount of water flowing to an area by collecting roof runoff and storing the water for future use. Not only does this BMP prevent water from flowing across your lawn, but it is also a free source of water when you go to wash your car or water the lawn.

SNAGS

After the wind and winter leave the woods in shambles, many are inclined to go out and remove any trees that are dead or downed. These “snags” are frequently used by wildlife as shelter and many species of birds and mammals nest in the hollow cavities. Insects found in these dead or dying trees provide food for wildlife. Decaying trees also help to rebuild the forest soils.



HABITAT BRUSH PILE

By collecting fallen sticks and branches and creating a brush pile on your property, you can easily create a habitat perfect for birds, squirrels, rabbits, etc. When placed in an ideal location, this BMP can be a helpful addition to most landscapes attracting wildlife and providing much needed wildlife shelter.

BAT BOXES

Due to the old, but incorrect, assumptions that bats are dangerous critters, bat populations are low. By creating a bat habitat, you can not only help increase bat populations in your area but also provide excellent insect control. Bats can live harmoniously around birds, as each have different food demands. A single bat is capable of consuming over 1,000 insects per night.



Best Management Practices

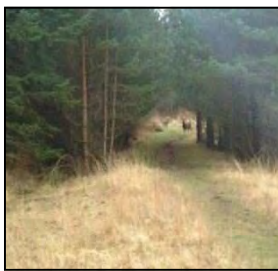


BROAD-BASED DIP or GRADE BREAK

Broad-based dips are gentle waves on the surface of an unpaved roadway. They minimize erosion by directing water off the road. Water flows into the bottom of the dip and drains into stable, grassy areas at the side of the road.

CONTOUR FARMING

When a farmer grows his crops along the natural contours of the land, he is reducing the amount of soil erosion on the property and increasing the product yield. As an added bonus, contour farming creates mini-dams that retain water and increase infiltration.



FOREST OPENINGS

By creating or maintaining openings in your forest, you are providing a valuable space to wildlife. Open fields and a variety of trees and shrubs along these forest “edges” provide diverse habitats for wildlife. Providing specialized wildlife plantings in these openings will also enhance wildlife use of the area. In addition, a clearing or opening also allows regeneration of new tree species.

FILTER STRIP

A filter strip is a band of grass that filters runoff and other pollutants before they reach water bodies. Commonly used in agricultural practices, this BMP can also be used by homeowners to slow and reduce water runoff into lakes and streams.



STREAMBANK FENCING

Streambank fencing is fencing that is installed along stream banks to limit livestock access to the stream. By providing defined crossing areas landowners can reduce the pollution from manure and protect streambanks from erosion. Providing enough streambank vegetation as a buffer with fencing (or without if you don't have livestock) can help to filter and reduce pollutants and maintain water quality.

WIND BREAKS

Wind Breaks are rows of trees and shrubs that protect areas from wind and provide food and cover for wildlife.



Assistance Programs for Private Land Stewardship

A number of state, federal and privately funded programs provide technical and, in some cases, financial assistance for private landowners to assist you in further protecting the unique characteristics of your property.

Forest Stewardship Program - A PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry service forester can help you develop sound forest management practices based on your needs and objectives, whether it's maximizing timber production, improving wildlife habitat or establishing riparian buffers to protect your stream or lakeside.

♦ Contact your local DCNR Bureau of Forestry Service Forester

Pennsylvania Landowner Assistance Program (PLAP) - Regional wildlife diversity biologists can help you create a land management plan for your property that ensures protection of the unique species that call your land home. Focuses on habitats for species of special concern.

♦ Contact the PA Game Commission at 570-675-1143

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) - This program offers funding for retiring cropland and establishing and maintaining a conservation cover crop.

♦ Contact the Farm Service Agency at 570-282-8732

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) - Technical and financial assistance under this program can help you establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat on your land.

♦ Contact the Natural Resource Conservation Service at 570-282-8732

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) - This voluntary program offers the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on your property. Technical and financial support is available to establish long-term conservation and wildlife practices and protection.

♦ Contact NRCS at 570-282-8732 or online at www.nrcs.usda.gov

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) - This program offers funding for implementation of conservation and best management practices that reduce erosion and water pollution or which benefit special species which live on your property.

♦ Contact NRCS at 570-282-8732

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) - This program offers technical and financial assistance to farmers and non-industrial forest landowners for maintaining high standards of environmental stewardship, and implementing new conservation practices.

♦ Contact NRCS at 570-282-8732

Common Waters Fund (CW) - A new program that provides funding for landowners in the Upper Delaware River watershed to develop forest plans and implement sustainable forest management practices. Qualified land trusts can use the Fund to help with the costs associated with conservation easements.

♦ Contact Common Waters at 202-797-6530 or online at www.commonwatersfund.org

PA Ducks Unlimited and the **PA National Wild Turkey Federation** may also have assistance programs for landowners who are interested in enhancing wildlife habitat. Look for more information on their websites at www.pa.ducks.org and www.panwtf.org.

NOTE: As programs and/or federal or state funding levels change, funding for the programs listed above may change or new programs may become available.

What you do with your property is up to you. The important thing to remember is that your actions will inevitably affect your land, for you and future generations. With the various agencies available to assist you in preparing a Land Management Plan, it is much easier than you think to make positive lasting effects on your land.

*By managing your lands today,
you create your legacy for the future.*



**Pike County
Conservation District**
570-226-8220
www.pikeconservation.org



**Pike County Office of
Community Planning**
570-296-3500
www.pikepa.org/planning.html



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