

National Forest Land

The Allegheny National Forest (ANF), established in 1923, offers the public varied forms of recreation from passive hiking, bird watching, and other wilderness experiences to more active hunting, skiing, and motorized recreational vehicle opportunities. See page IG-4.

Two (2) hiking trails have been established in the ANF through the Rails-to Trails Program and PennDOT Enhancement Funds.

The provision of trails has proven to be a popular economic means of enhancing recreational space.

The ANF Land and Resource Management Plan was developed in 1986. A revision to the plan is anticipated prior to the year 2001.

Public Parks and Recreational Areas: General

In addition to those public parks and recreational areas "in" Elk County, public parks which serve Elk County include also:

- Parker Dam in Clearfield County
- Cook Forest State Park in Jefferson County
- Clear Creek State Park in Jefferson County

Local Recreational Opportunities - Center and Organizations

Senior citizen centers are located in the following municipalities:

- **The City of St. Marys**  
St. Marys Senior Center  
222 Chestnut Street  
St. Marys, PA 15857  
(814) 781-3555 (M-T-W-T-F)
- **Fox Township**  
Fox Township Senior Center  
365 Main Street  
Kersey, PA 15846  
(814) 885-8111 (M-T-W-T-F)
- **Johnsonburg Borough**  
Johnsonburg Senior Center  
422 Center Street  
Johnsonburg, PA 15845  
(814) 965-5638 (M-T-W-T-F)
- **Jones Township**  
Jones Township Senior Center  
Box 332  
Wilcox, PA 15870  
(814) 292-5443 (T-W-TH)
- **Ridgway Borough**  
Ridgway Senior Center  
10 Vine Alley  
Ridgway, PA 15853  
(814) 776-6080 (M-T-W-T-F)
- **Jay Township**  
Bennetts Valley Senior Center  
Box 176  
Byrnedale, PA 15827  
(814) 787-7888 (M-T-TH)

Recreational Programs for Young People are limited to those in St. Marys, Ridgway, and Johnsonburg and include:

- |   |                                  |                |           |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| • | Boys and Girls Club of St. Marys | (814) 781-1910 | St. Marys |
| • | St. Marys Youth Center           | (814) 781-3611 | St. Marys |
| • | The YMCA                         | (814) 776-1146 | Ridgway   |
| • | The Boy Scouts                   | (814) 371-5650 | DuBois    |
| • | The Girl Scouts                  | (814) 781-6566 | St. Marys |

**G.3 Fire Protection and Emergency Service**

The majority of Elk County’s townships operate volunteer fire departments. St. Marys has a city fire department. The townships without fire departments have cooperative agreements with adjoining municipalities. Benezette Township and Jay Township share services. Ridgway Borough and Ridgway Township share services. Fire protection is in need of enhancement in some areas of Elk County in terms of access and fire flows, i.e. elimination of dead ends in water systems and elimination of dead end roads with no cul-de-sac or turn around areas.

Emergency Medical Service (EMS) is available in the City of St. Marys, Johnsonburg Borough, Ridgway Borough, and Fox Township.

Horton Township has Quick Response Service (QRS). A QRS differs from EMS in that no transportation is provided. A QRS team stabilizes a person until the ambulance service takes over. The Borough of Ridgway and the City of St. Marys have Advanced Life Support (ALS) service and share service with all surrounding municipalities including Horton Township. The ALS provides transportation and paramedic service. Those with EMS services are either providers of ALS or Basic Life Support (BLS) services. BLS services have Emergency Management Technicians (EMT) and usually become ALS providers upon connection with the ambulance service providers.

**G.4 Police Protection and 911**

The Boroughs of Johnsonburg and Ridgway, and the City of St. Marys each operate a full-time police force. The remainder of the County is served by the Pennsylvania State Police located in Ridgway Township and the Elk County Sherriff’s Department.

All Municipalities in Elk County currently have 911 emergency service. The County is in the process of developing mapping with a master street access guide. When the project is complete, the entire County will have Enhanced 911 services with complete computerized data available for immediate access. The project should be completed by the end of 1999.

**G.5 Public and Private Schools**

Elk County is served by six (6) school districts. Three (3) are located within Elk County. The remaining three (3) are located in adjoining counties.

**TABLE 44 - ELK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

Elk County School Districts	Enrollment	Teaching Staff	Locations Served
Johnsonburg Area 591 Elk Ave Johnsonburg, PA 15845 814-965-2536	968	70	Johnsonburg Borough plus portion of Ridgway and Jones Townships
Ridgway Area P.O. Box 447 Ridgway, PA 15853 814-773-3146	1265	85	Borough of Ridgway and portions of Ridgway, Horton and Springcreek Townships
St. Marys Area 977 S. St. Marys Rd. St. Marys, PA 15857 814-834-7832	2760	125	City of St. Marys plus a portion of Fox, Benezette and Jay Townships

**TABLE 45 - SCHOOL DISTRICTS OUTSIDE OF ELK COUNTY**

Other School Districts Serving Elk County		Location Served
Kane Area 400 W. Hemlock Ave Kane, PA 16735 814-837-6821	McKean County	Highland Township and a portion of Jones Township
Brockway Area 95 North Street Brockway, PA 15824 814-265-8411	Jefferson County	Portion of Horton Township
Forest County Area 210 Vine Street Tionesta, PA 16353 814-755-4491	Forest County	Millstone Township

Private primary education is available in Johnsonburg, Ridgway, City of St. Marys, and Fox Township. Private secondary education is available in St. Marys. The total enrollment of the schools is approximately 1,190 with one hundred twenty (120) teachers.

Local Universities serving Elk County includes the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford and Pennsylvania State University at DuBois. These two institutions offer post-secondary education at various locations throughout the County.

## **G.6 Health Facilities**

The City of St. Marys is the location for the Elk County Regional Health System Hospital and the State Health Center.

In 1994, the former St. Marys Regional Medical Center and the Charles Cole Memorial Hospital in Coudersport initiated a community health needs assessment to identify unmet health needs of residents in Cameron, Elk and Potter Counties and portions of Tioga and McKean Counties together with other local community organizations and foundations. Tripp, Umbach and Associates, a Pittsburgh firm, was engaged to assist in the preparation of a needs assessment and community health improvement plan. Elk County steering committee members participated with steering committee members collectively known as Partners for Healthier Communities. The assessment identified needs areas in Elk County including preventive health, adolescent issues, and substance abuse.

A key community implementation strategy outlined goals and objectives. Suggestions were made regarding effective methods for implementing both short term and long term activities to meet identified objectives. The use of "task groups" was encouraged. That study should be referred for information of health concerns in Elk County. The study is titled Community Health Needs Assessment of Elk, Potter, and Cameron Counties and is available at the Elk County Regional Health System Hospital.

Also, the Elk County Health Profile, Division of Health Statistics and Research, Department of Health, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, should be consulted for additional information by interested parties. The Division of Health Statistics and Research is located in Harrisburg, PA (717-783-2548). County profiles are updated biannually.

**H. EXISTING LAND USE**

**H.1. Introduction**

Eight (8) of Elk County's municipalities have some form of land use controls in place, some of which are recent and some which are quite dated. Four (4) have no up to date land use planning tools in place.

<b>Land Development Tool</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan</b>	<b>Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance</b>	<b>Zoning</b>
Benezette Township	None - relies on County Plan 1971	None	None
Fox Township	1977, amended 1981	1981, Rev. 1998	None
Highland Township	None - relies on County Plan 1971	None	None
Horton Township	None - relies on County Plan 1971	None	None
Jay Township	None - relies on County Plan 1991	1993	None
Johnsonburg Borough	1964	1967	1965
Jones Township	None - relies on County Plan 1971	1993	None
Millstone Township	None - relies on County Plan 1971	None	None
Ridgway Borough	1964	1978	1978
Ridgway Township	1978 Rev. 1998	1967, Rev. 1979	1967 Rev. 1981
City of St. Marys	1994	1996	1995
Spring Creek Township	None - relies on County Plan 1971	1980	None

Elk County Survey 1998

Land use together with housing are most central to the Comprehensive Planning process. The study of land use is crucial. The arrangement of existing land uses reveal existing quality of local communities in basic relationships between those places where local citizens reside, work, shop, and find recreational spaces. Some local municipalities have begun to make use of planning tools to curtail the negative impacts associated with incompatible land uses. Others are just now beginning to see the results of having no controls in place and are just beginning to assess the need for implementation of such tools.

Interviews with local municipal officials and residents together with the windshield survey have established some primary areas of concern in Elk County.

These areas include:

1. The Million Dollar Highway (Fox Township)
2. The Village of Kersey (Fox Township)
3. Decker Chapel Area (City of St. Marys)
4. Route 120 Bucktail Trail (City of St. Marys)
5. Route 120 (City of St. Marys to Ridgway)
6. Route 219 (Wilcox to Johnsonburg)

The study of use of the land is a crucial component of comprehensive planning. It is important to quantify already developed lands and presently undeveloped land for guiding future planning. Also, existing land use affects the location and type of future land development, and is the base from which future land use policies need to be guided. Land use trends can be helpful in site-specific development planning and in the minimization of incompatible land uses.

Areas with fewer physical restrictions to development have seen sporadic growth, resulting mostly in mixed and unfortunately incompatible land uses. The land use plan for Fox Township, prepared in 1977, for example, recognized that natural development would be likely to occur in the north portion of the Township (north of Rte. 948) because of fewer physical restrictions and proximity to St. Marys. Zoning to guide the development for ordered compatible uses was also a recommendation. The need to control "sprawl" was also recognized. Growth and development has continued as predicted, but without the necessary controls as recommended in the late 70's, and so the same incompatibilities exist in the 90's but at a larger scale. With the Townships' proximity to the City of St. Marys, economic health will depend on building desirable residential areas and desirable industrial areas. This will mean that the Township will need to "implement" the tools necessary to begin to reduce the negative impacts currently felt by the prevalence of incompatible land use. The same tools were recommended for Ridgway Township in the late 70's. With zoning in place since the late 60's, Ridgway Township has seen less of the negative impacts that come with incompatible land uses.

The factors which influence the growth and development of communities are a very complex and interrelated. Variables including economy, cultural rate of growth, and technology are beyond the control of governmental agencies responsible for land use regulations. Local government can, however, stimulate, retard, control, and guide development patterns to productively enhance those variables: growth, cultural enhancement, economy.

Local government has the responsibility to guide the development of their community by promoting the goals and objectives of community residents. Professional planning practices require that specific strengths and weaknesses be identified, and agreed upon, and incorporated into the policies which the community lives by.

## H.2 Existing Use of Land

A windshield survey of the county was conducted by county staff and the consultant to determine the existing land use patterns. Following the survey it was determined that land use would be identified in nine (9) general categories including residential and urban, commercial/light industrial, public/semi-public, industrial, rural residential/forest/agriculture, vacant/forest/agriculture, National forest, State forest, and State game lands. The residential uses include single family, two family, and multi-family structures and seasonal facilities including lodges, vacation homes and camps. Commercial uses include all the land and the structures that house a business providing material goods and services. Public and semi-public uses included all of the land and structures under Governmental ownership, and other public uses including schools, churches, fire stations, police stations, cemeteries, airports, reservoirs, parks and playgrounds. Industrial uses include all of those areas and structures providing manufacturing, saw mills, lumber yards, and trucking establishments. For the purpose of this study, institutional uses, such as the Elk County Regional Health System Hospital, are included in the urban and residential category. The forest and game lands identified on the Existing Land Use map are basically those comprising the Allegheny National Forest, and State Forest Lands including Elk and Moshannon State Forests.

Existing land use is depicted on **Exhibit No. 8** on the following page.