

Strategic Action Plan

Priority Water: West Branch Susquehanna Priority Water

Five-year Vision Statement: Over the next five years, TU and partners will continue to work in the watershed to improve habitat and water quality in coldwater tributaries to ensure robust and resilient brook trout populations, reduce nonpoint source pollution, and ensure partnerships are in place to continue and maintain projects and efforts with measurable outcomes and achievable goals into the future. Five years from now, activities in the WB Susquehanna PW will not further degrade water resources but instead, improve water resources and associated recreation through conservation activities which are monitored and guided by the best available science.

Five-year Conservation Goals

1. Reconnect streams to allow for fish passage, specifically wild trout, and improved flood resilience.
2. Reduce the impacts of abandoned mine drainage (AMD) to coldwater tributaries within the watershed.
3. Pursue opportunities to reduce impacts from agriculture and other non-point source pollution sources in the watershed.
4. Build capacity for stream monitoring and data collection to protect coldwater streams from the potential threats of proposed land use and development.
5. Reduce impact of climate change on coldwater resources.
6. Sustain conservation partnerships and increase community engagement, public awareness, and advocacy related to coldwater conservation.

Primary Conservation Strategies

1. Replace undersized stream crossings and remove dams that are barriers to aquatic organism passage (AOP) and restore stream sections impacted by problems associated with barriers. Implement projects that will provide AOP for all life stages of wild trout and accommodate flooding.
2. Increase the number of AMD remediation projects. Maintain existing treatment systems. Evaluate existing treatment system strategies and technologies with a prioritization of attainable results that provide maximum benefits to recovering trout streams. Revive partnerships and groups that have partnered on AMD efforts like the West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Coalition.
3. Reduce the impacts of agriculture and other sources of non-point source pollution by implementing instream and riparian best management practices (BMP's) and dirt and gravel road improvements. Help landowners to locate available funding and resources that improve soil and water quality.
4. Work with state and federal agencies to ensure that appropriate tools and resources exist to provide adequate data for resource management decision making. i.e. - stream gages, real-time water chemistry data sondes, etc. where there are gaps and identify where TU can assist with data collection including citizen science opportunities.
5. Implement instream and riparian habitat improvements including strategic wood additions to increase resiliency to climate change for priority trout populations and coldwater habitat.

6. Maintain and enhance strategies for public access such as fishing access easements, public acquisition where appropriate and tax incentives for landowners who allow public access. Increase overall engagement toward the goals of the West Branch Susquehanna Priority Water. Promote and support federal Good Samaritan legislation for AMD cleanup and oppose state legislation that promotes further stream degradation following flood events. Support a specific PA DEP permit process oriented to AMD construction projects.

Current Partners

- Conservation Districts: Clinton, Clearfield, Tioga, Potter, Lycoming, Cameron, Elk, Cambria, Centre
- Watershed groups: Kettle Creek Watershed Association, Babb Creek Watershed Association, Pine Creek Watershed Coalition, Clearfield Creek Watershed Association, Moshannon Creek Watershed Association
- Northcentral PA Conservancy
- Chesapeake Conservancy
- Multiple Municipalities
- State and Federal Agencies: PA Fish and Boat Commission, PA Game Commission, PA Dept. Of Conservation and Natural Resources, PA Department of Environmental Protection, US Geological Survey, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Surface Mining Control and Reclamation
- Lycoming College and Lock Haven University
- Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Drainage
- Eastern Coalition for Abandoned Mine Drainage
- Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association

Potential Partners and Affected Communities

- Audubon Society
- The Nature Conservancy
- Civic groups, tourism authorities, chambers of commerce
- Sportsmen groups
- Natural Resources Conservation Service

Decisionmakers

- PA Fish and Boat Commission
- PA DEP
- PA Game Commission
- County Planning Departments
- Conservation Districts
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement