
I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. INTRODUCTION

The name “Pennsylvania” itself signifies the importance of forests to our state. The most densely forested part of the state is located in the northcentral and northwestern regions and has provided timber for a variety of uses from shipbuilding to tanneries, from building houses to crafting furniture. Over the three centuries since William Penn took ownership of this vast tract of property, the forest has evolved in both its composition and its uses. Today, the highest quality hardwoods in the United States are found in northcentral and northwest Pennsylvania.

Before European settlement, the entire state was blanketed in virgin timber. Through the early 1800s, farming and settlement caused the clearing of large expanses and timber was already being marketed for domestic and export uses. The combination of these events resulted in nearly all of the virgin timber in Pennsylvania being cut by the early 1900s.

By the 1920’s, the surge of forest clearing was slowing. The vast area from which the forest was harvested began to renew itself as a predominately hardwood forest. Many sawmills sat dilapidated and silent. Dozens of logging towns turned to ghost towns, scattered along the hillsides. Even today, older residents remember when these ghost towns buzzed with activity. They still recall growing up in the transient lumber camps or speak nostalgically of their time with the Civilian Conservation Corps.

As the forest continues to evolve, the lumber story continues to be one of success. Sustainable forest practices will identify silviculture guidelines for Penns Woods and help assure a continuous rotation of high quality trees for harvest and conversion into lumber products by the forest industry. Today, the forest is viewed not only for its lumber but also for its scenic, recreational, and historic opportunities. A new economy is growing in the region, one that balances timber cutting and tourism. Given its worldwide standing as a hardwood producer, its national recognition for forest management, and its colorful logging history, this region of Pennsylvania is being examined for its potential to be designated a state heritage region.

B. LUMBER HERITAGE REGION

The development of the Lumber Heritage Region Management Action Plan (LHR MAP) began with the completion of the Feasibility Study in 1998. The North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission (NCPRPDC) then applied to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) for a grant through the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program (PHPP) to prepare the MAP. The PHPP allows areas to highlight the cultural, historic, natural, and recreational resources that portray the industrial story of the region. Designated heritage parks are eligible to receive funding from the PHPP for projects and programs that achieve this goal.

In March 2000, NCPRPDC, on behalf of the LHR Core Steering Committee, contracted Mackin Engineering Company to prepare the LHR MAP. This plan emphasizes the economic development potential within the region, the balance of numerous resources, the contemporary forest products

industry, increased tourism and marketing efforts, and the overall organization and management of the LHR. This was completed through a two-year process that involved various stakeholders with a wide variety of interests related to forests and the region.

The study area consists of a 15-county area in northcentral and northwest Pennsylvania including all or portions of Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga, and Warren Counties. This area encompasses the Allegheny National Forest, 10 State Forests, 34 State Parks, over 50 State Game Lands, and numerous recreational, historic, cultural, and natural resources. Through intensive public participation, the Mackin project team formed a detailed report comprising historical interpretations, regional resources, strategies and projects for implementation, and management structure for the LHR.

C. THEMES AND EVENTS

Integral to the development of the Lumber Heritage Region, themes and events of the lumber history were developed and investigated. Five eras were identified as follows:

- Pioneers of Logging
- Spars and Sticks: Timber Rafting and Log Booms
- Bark Peelers and Lumber Barons: Railroad Logging Arrives
- Forest Conservation and the Recovery of a Resource
- A Second Forest and a Sustainable Approach: Modern Forest Management

Each theme provides a view into the lives, practices, and techniques of the time and is elemental in telling the tale of the LHR.

D. REGIONAL RESOURCES

Within the large expanse of the LHR, a need exists to connect the region through a network of resources. Two types of regional resources were identified: Gateways and Key Destinations. While each regional resource serves a distinct purpose, they all serve to link the natural, historic, cultural, and recreational resources of the region for a complete LHR experience. Each selected town, city, or site had to meet certain specific criteria in order to be designated as a Gateway or Key Destination. Gateways are located at the boundaries of the LHR and act as a springboard for the traveler to begin their journey. Key Destinations are located toward the interior of the region, while other sites and towns are, or will be, connected through hiking trails, water trails, and auto tours.

E. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

As defined by the PHPP, the primary goals of the program are as follows:

- Education/interpretation
- Outdoor recreation
- Historic preservation/cultural conservation
- Economic development
- Partnerships

Related resources, projects, partners, and implementation strategies were developed for each of these goals. This was accomplished through public involvement, which gauged the significance of each issue to the LHR and gathered knowledge and ideas related to each goal.

Projects of the education and interpretation strategy include partnering with existing educational programs within the LHR; creating educational and interpretive materials for the existing resources within LHR; and increasing public awareness of the LHR. The LHR boundary encompasses nine universities, colleges, and campus extensions; 34 State Parks; eight county visitor centers; the Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group; and the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum. Each of these venues and/or groups serve as potential partners for LHR educational and interpretation programs.

The outdoor recreation strategy includes developing plans for designated natural areas, landmarks, and sanctuaries, high quality angling streams, trails, State Forests, State Parks, the Allegheny National Forest, and State Game Lands. Thirty-four State Parks, 1.4 million acres of State Forest, 450,000 acres of State Game Lands, and the 513,000-acre Allegheny National Forest are available for recreational activities in the region. Recreational forest use and the current timber industry have evolved within the forest side-by-side and coexist within the LHR today.

Five types of projects were identified to implement the historic preservation and cultural conservation component of the LHR. They include identifying, documenting, and maintaining a database of key regional historical areas and structures; providing planning/technical assistance to partners for preserving and restoring historic sites, and promoting the adaptive reuse of historically significant buildings; documenting the oral history of the region's residents; conveying the story of the five eras of lumber history, including the customs, arts, ethnicities, and lifestyles of the region's residents at various times; and producing, in partnership with other organizations and agencies, historic and cultural interpretive materials such as videos, an interactive website, and historical educational packages for sites within the region, along with tailoring educational programs for significant historic sites.

Encouraging tourism throughout the LHR and partnering with the contemporary forest products industry to improve the marketing of timber products are the primary goals of the economic develop-

ment strategy. Tourism promotion agencies, county planning departments, the Allegheny Hardwoods Utilization Group, the Hardwoods Development Council, and the Hardwood Lumber Manufacturer's Association have been and will continue to be essential partners in this strategy.

Finally, the partnership strategy is based on the LHR having active partners dedicated to promoting the heritage of Pennsylvania's forest region and recognizing its value as a sustainable asset. The partners will work with LHR to enhance the region's economy by providing education, conserving important resources, and enhancing tourism.

Aside from these strategies, the LHR identified four additional issues to be investigated. These "Phase II" projects include developing strategies to interpret the modern forest products, or contemporary timber industry, within Pennsylvania; developing strategies/models for developing nature tourism markets; analyzing the feasibility and potential of an Elk Watching and Other Nature Tourism Plan for Northcentral Pennsylvania; and exploring alternatives to strengthen support of the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum.

F. ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

Because the LHR is comprised of all or part of 15 counties and hundreds of interested stakeholders, it will become increasingly important to prioritize and plan out projects. An action plan was developed that lays out the suggested priority projects for two-year, five-year and ten-year spans. This action plan includes descriptions, cost estimates and potential partners for priority projects. Some of the projects to be undertaken in the first two years of the LHR include developing a Comprehensive Interpretive Plan and Way-Finding Signage Plan, developing a Marketing Plan, establishing a Lumber Heritage Conference, creating a LHR Newsletter, becoming partners for an Annual Elk Festival, and publishing a LHR Historic Context book.

G. MANAGEMENT OF THE LUMBER HERITAGE REGION

Determining the organizational and management structure for the LHR was a critical task in planning the heritage area. The purpose of the organizational structure is to tell the story of lumber history in a coherent and concise way. The main focus is linking the thematic resources in a way that clearly and consistently portrays the story throughout the region.

Four potential organizational structure alternatives were examined. The selected alternative will revolve around the natural boundaries of the region's watersheds, creating three subregions within the LHR. This alternative closely follows the themes of the LHR, follows the natural boundaries of the regions, and will establish gateways within each subregions.

The type of management structure is a crucial decision for the long-term success of the heritage region. The management entity will be responsible for the realization of the project initiatives determined in the MAP, forming and continuing partnerships, managing grant money, and upholding the single shared vision across this large geographic region.

Three management structure alternatives were examined. The selected alternative, the Subre-

gion Management Structure, is based on the strength of the LHR being seated in its existing and potential partnerships, and the immense local interest developed through the planning process. The LHR management structure will consist of a central board working through a host organization, with three regional subcommittees. The regional subcommittees will be responsible for developing and supervising local projects supported by the Management Action Plan and future Interpretive Plans, acting as a liaison between the Central Board and the local partners, and monitoring the success of the LHR on a local level.

H. MOVING THE MAP FORWARD

This MAP addresses the vast resources of the LHR, its important history, and the living heritage of its internationally recognized forest products industry. It identifies important projects for the region and establishes the organizational and management structures to make those projects a reality. By carrying out the elements of this MAP, the LHR can achieve its vision of becoming “an internationally recognized forest community with a sense of pride in our people, our quality of life, and the traditions of our rural heritage. Our sustainable forest is a destination that continues to provide unique opportunities for forest products manufacturing, education, research, and recreation. Linking forests, parks, historic resources, and communities allows residents and visitors to explore our vibrant culture and contribute to a vital economy.”