

Cherry Valley, Pennsylvania

Studying its potential as a national wildlife refuge

Represented by Members of Congress

Senator Arlen Specter (R)
Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D)
Rep. Paul Kanjorski (D-11th)
Rep. Charles Dent (R-15th)

Introduction

Pennsylvania's Cherry Valley is rich in natural resources and wildlife diversity. Cherry Creek flows through southern Monroe County in northeastern Pennsylvania, flowing into the Delaware River. For generations, local landowners and conservation organizations safeguarded the valley's clean waters and important natural communities. Recent rapid residential and commercial growth in Monroe County, however, has outpaced efforts to protect these resources. The county is within a two-hour drive of millions of people.

The community took action several years ago to encourage permanent protection of Cherry Valley as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. As a result, U.S. Representatives Paul Kanjorski (D-11th) and Charles Dent (R-15th) co-sponsored a bill to study the area for potential inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The 109th U.S. Congress passed the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act (Act) in 2006. The Act directs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), which administers the National Wildlife Refuge System, to evaluate the biological value of natural communities within the valley to determine if the area merits protection as a national wildlife refuge.

While the Act authorizes funding, tight federal budgets have precluded a specific appropriation to support the study. The Service has partnered with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to establish baseline information as the foundation of the study, which is now underway and includes opportunities for public input.

The study team includes members from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife



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A coalition of community and conservation interests has worked to establish a national wildlife refuge in Cherry Valley since 2000.

Service, TNC, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Monroe County conservation and planning administrators, National Park Service and local academic institutions. The team held its initial meeting in October 2007 and has been meeting regularly since.

Cherry Valley Natural Setting

The 30,000-acre valley harbors nationally significant ecosystems and many protected plants and animals, including federally listed threatened or endangered species. Kittatinny Ridge, following the creek's path, is a major avenue for migrating birds of prey, songbirds, waterfowl and bats.

Unique habitats of the valley include mid-atlantic calcareous fens, Kittatinny Ridge, pitch pine/scrub oak barrens, kettle hole bogs and caves, and Cherry Creek. Unique species include bog turtle, dwarf wedge mussel, northeastern bulrush, bald eagle, spreading globe flower, and American eel.

Opportunities to get Involved

The Service is hosting two public

meetings in northeastern Pennsylvania as part of the study (see inset for details). These meetings offer opportunities for interested individuals and organizations to learn more about the project and to voice their opinions.

Public involvement is crucial in the planning process and we encourage your participation. Comments may be submitted in person at our public meetings, or by regular mail, email, or

Upcoming Public Meetings

Wednesday, March 26, 2008
Monroe County Conservation District

Thursday, March 27, 2008
Christ Hamilton Church

Meeting Format

2:00 - 4:00 pm

Informal open house and public information session

6:30 - 9:00 pm

Brief presentations by USFWS and TNC followed by Q&A period

Both locations are fully accessible (directions on reverse side)

fax to the contact information provided below. We ask that you submit your comments by April 30, 2008.

Recent Progress

In October 2007, the study team held its first meeting, which included local and regional experts on the species and habitats found in the valley. The team began compiling information for the land conservation plan and environmental assessment.

Chronology of the Refuge Proposal

- 2000 TNC begins discussions with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff in Pennsylvania regarding protection and management of Cherry Valley's significant population of threatened bog turtles.
- 2001 The concept of protecting lands within the valley as a national wildlife refuge is introduced. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managers cannot support the proposal due to other land acquisition priorities within the Northeast Region.
- 2004 The Friends of Cherry Valley, with support from TNC, the National Wildlife Federation, and local governments, forward the refuge proposal to Rep. Kanjorski.
- 2005 With nine cosponsors, Rep. Kanjorski submits a bill before Congress to create a national wildlife refuge within Cherry Valley.
- 2006 Congress passes the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act, directing the Service to evaluate the valley for potential inclusion as a future national wildlife refuge.
- 2007 Following site visits and several planning meetings, the Service determined that a land conservation plan and environmental assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) should be completed as part of the study.

Meanwhile, the chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System in the Northeast Region briefed Congressional staff, the director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and the Friends of Cherry Valley on the status of the study.

The second study team meeting took place in December 2007. Led by TNC, the team used the information gathered at the first meeting to start to draft a description of the affected environment for the plan.

Future Steps

Winter-Spring 2008

The March 2008 public meetings will be in accordance with the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act, which stipulates that the Service will host public meetings and offer other opportunities for community involvement as it evaluates Cherry Valley as a prospective national wildlife refuge.

The comments from the meetings will be recorded, summarized, and then used to determine what issues and opportunities might arise from establishing a national wildlife refuge in the valley.

Spring-Summer 2008

The Service will complete a draft land conservation plan and environmental assessment and release it for public comment. The document will then be finalized.

Fall 2008

If Cherry Valley is found suitable for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System, and gains approval of the Service's Director, the draft documents will be published for public review and comment.

For more information, contact

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northeastplanning@fws.gov

Federal Relay Service for the deaf and hard-of-hearing: 1 800/877 8339

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
<http://www.fws.gov>
March 2008



Directions to Meeting Locations

• Wednesday, March 26, 2008 •

*Monroe County Conservation District
8050 Running Valley Road
Bartonsville, PA 18360
570/629 3060*

From Route 715 to Route 611 South
Turn right onto Rimrock Road at *Advanced Collision* (a garage). Then follow directions in italics, below

From Route 33 to Route 611 North
Turn left onto Rimrock Road at *Advanced Collision* (a garage). Then follow directions in italics, below.

From 80 E to Tannersville exit
Turn right off exit onto Route 715. Go through one traffic light. At the second traffic light, turn right onto Route 611 South. Turn right onto Rimrock Road at *Advanced Collision* (a garage). Then follow directions in italics, below.

Bear right onto North Easton-Belmont Pike. Bear right onto Running Valley Road. Watch for a sign for Kettle Creek on the right, then turn left.

• Thursday, March 27, 2008 •

*Christ Hamilton Church
RD 4 Box 4293, Bossardsville Road
Saylorsburg, PA
570/992 4085*

From the North
Take Route 80 to Route 33 S (exit 302). Take the second Snydersville exit. Go right at the end of the ramp onto Manor Drive. Then follow directions in italics below.

From the East
Take Route 80 W to 209 S (exit 304). Take the 3rd exit (Snydersville). Go right at the end of the ramp onto Manor Drive. Then follow directions in italics below.

From the South
Take Route 22 to Route 33N to the Snydersville exit. Go left at the end of the ramp onto Manor Drive. Then follow directions in italics below.

Turn left at the next stop sign onto Middle Easton-Belmont Pike. Follow Middle Easton-Belmont Pike for 2.5 miles (becomes Bossardsville Road). The church is stone, on the left with parking on the right.

From the West
Take Business Route 209N to Sciota Exit. Go left at the end of the ramp onto Hamilton South Road and then make the next right onto Bossardsville Road. Go 8/10 of a mile to a stop sign. Turn right at stop sign and go 8/10 of a mile to the church. The church is stone, on the left with parking on the right.