6 Consultation and Coordination with Others

One of the requirements of the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Study Act is to provide an opportunity for public participation. Specifically, the Study Act states that "The Secretary … shall consult appropriate State and local officials, private conservation organizations, major landowners and other interested persons, regarding the identification of eligible lands, waters, and interests therein that are appropriate for acquisition for a national wildlife refuge and the determination of boundaries within which such acquisitions should be made." (Section 603 (b)). The Service met this requirement through a variety of methods including briefings, formation of the CVST, and public meetings.

6.1 Communication and Coordination with Agencies and Organizations

The Service began coordinating with other agencies and organizations shortly after the passage of the Study Act. In February 2007, Service staff held preliminary scoping meetings and site visits with the Pennsylvania state director of The Nature Conservancy and members of his staff, along with the manager of the Monroe County Conservation District and the Executive Director of the Monroe County Planning Commission. In October 2007, Service staff briefed aides to Rep. Paul Kanjorski, Senator Bob Casey, and Senator Arlen Specter. We also briefed the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and aides to the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission on plans to initiate the study. Also in October 2007, Service provided a briefing at the annual meeting of Friends of Cherry Valley.

As discussed in Chapter 1, to help complete the study and to provide more opportunity for public participation, the Service established the Cherry Valley Study Team (CVST). Members of the CVST include: representatives from a variety of agencies, organizations, and local academic institutions (see Table 1-1 for a list of participating agencies and organizations). Between October 2007 and September 2008, the CVST met four times to collect information to develop the study, provide updates on the current status of the study, and to solicit comments on the Service's over-all approach.

6.2 Public Participation and Issue Identification

In addition to the briefings and CVST meetings, the Service held two public meetings in March 2008 to solicit public comments on a potential Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The Service also offered a public comment period from March 2008 through the end of April 2008 where written comments on potentially establishing a refuge in Cherry Valley were accepted. Issues, questions, and concerns were identified through comments received during the public meetings and in letters and emails. More than 200 people attended the meetings, and 15 organizations and agencies, along with numerous individuals, presented oral comments at the meetings.

To assist the Service in communicating with interested parties and obtaining public participation, we developed a newsletter and a website (www.fws.gov/northeast/planning/Cherry%20Valley/lcphome.html). We distributed approximately 650 copies of a FWS Cherry Valley newsletter by email and U.S. Postal Service to municipal officials, community leaders, and other interested parties. In addition, the following organizations distributed the newsletter to their mailing lists: Monroe County Federation of Sportsmens Clubs, Lehigh Gap Nature Center, Monroe County Open Space Update Committee, Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmens Clubs, and The Nature Conservancy. In total, we estimate that over 1,500 copies of the newsletter were distributed. The newsletter provided information about the study as well as the scheduled public meetings. The Service distributed a news release prior to the public meetings to 12 media in the Cherry Valley region and received extensive coverage in the Pocono Record, the major daily newspaper serving Monroe County.

Issues and concerns identified through public participation opportunities have been considered in developing the objectives and alternatives presented in this document. Over-all, the public comments and questions were very supportive of establishing a Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Expressions of support for a National Wildlife Refuge were given by**:**

- Area residents
- Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- Brodhead Watershed Association
- Cherry Valley Community Supported Agriculture Project
- Friends of Cherry Valley
- Paul Kanjorski, Member of Congress
- Lehigh Valley Audubon Society
- Lenape tribe
- Monroe County Commissioners
- Monroe County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
- Pocono Environmental Education Center
- Pocono Heritage Land Trust
- Pocono Builders Association
- Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau
- Shawnee on Delaware Preservation Society
- Stroud Township
- Stroudsmoor Country Inn (with conditions, see full notes)

6.3 Specific Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Comments from the public meetings and the public comment period were usually fell within nine general categories. Some of these comments were already discussed in

Chapter 1. Following is a more detailed list of comments made at the public-meetings by categories.

The NWR process/policies/study area

- Shawnee Creek Valley and Mosier's Knob should be included in the study area because of their natural resource values (e.g., presence of bog turtles)
- Can areas to the southeast (like Minsi Lake and Mount Bethel fens) be included into the study area?
- What does the line/boundary of the study area represent and how was it chosen?
- Does the Service consider cultural resources when planning a refuge?
- Do long-range plans address already planned developments?
- How long does the process of creating a NWR usually take?
- How are National Wildlife Refuges funded?
- Does the FWS use condemnation to acquire land for a refuge?
- What will prevent landowners from selling wetland to the Service and selling farmland to developers anyway?
- Does the Service lease land back to farmers?

Stewardship/land management

- It is important to educate new and existing landowners about preserving their property
- The people living here have been those who want to live in close harmony with the land: farmers, birdwatchers, hunters, fishers, gardeners, rabbit and bee-keepers, etc. The Friends of Cherry Valley will continue to be good stewards, whether or not members sell land to the refuge.
- How will residents be assured the costs for maintenance of the refuge will continue to be paid?
- A concern about the status of the Service's budget was expressed.
- Under the Service's management, will vistas disappear because farmland will be allowed to succeed to forest?
- Is there a possibility of partnering with local government or conservation organizations to provide adequate staffing if this is a problem for the Service?

Access/Activities

- The refuge has the support of the Monroe County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, and may get the support of the state federation as well.
- The study team should publicize more that the refuge will be a multi-use area that people can use to hunt, fish, hike, cycle, etc. to help build the grassroots effort and yield greater involvement.

- One resident expressed deep concerns about his hunting activities and the restrictions that would be placed on them by the establishment of a refuge.
- What will public access to the refuge be like?
- How will FWS prevent trespass on private lands? What recourse is available for residents to prosecute trespassers?
- Will horseback riding be included as an acceptable use?

Habitat/conservation of species

- Preserving plants and animals is most important; we should not impact nature.
- There is a need for increased conservation of the area surrounding the Appalachian Trail, not just the right of way.
- One resident recommended a full natural resource inventory of Cherry Valley.
- The designation of Cherry Valley as a refuge supports each of the local conservation plans, and supports what hundreds of residents have said they want at other public meetings: preservation of open space.
- How much of the valley is currently protected, and is the protection permanent?

Local Economic Effects

- How will the establishment of a refuge affect the economic situation of businesses in the valley and the livelihoods of people who depend on them?
- Can the Service ensure that the Stroudsmoor Country Inn, if within the refuge area, will not be at a competitive disadvantage, or expected to meet a higher bar, making it impossible to expand in the future?
- What will the changes/benefits be to current residents?
- How will the local tax base be affected?
- How will property values be affected?

Farming

- Keeping land in farms is important; when land is developed, “houses are the last crop it will ever grow.”
- The changing attitudes of younger generations towards farming pose a threat to the habitat and way of life of Cherry Valley.
- Organic farming is important to the valley.

What makes the area attractive

- The main reasons the area is attractive to visitors, include “ease, authenticity, and refreshment,” built upon the preservation of the natural environment, coupled with sustainable development.

- The area's scenic views and habitat are important to retaining residents and attracting them to the area. There is a place for everything, and this [the refuge/preservation] is the best use of this land.

Education / research opportunities

- The refuge area has potential to be used as an "outdoor classroom/natural laboratory" where students can learn about the environment.
- The area is already being used for research/educational opportunities, which will no longer exist if the NWR is not created.

Land Use / Zoning Regulations

- Will land use change for areas owned by the National Park Service after the establishment of the refuge?
- Is Hamilton Township changing zoning regulations as a result of the refuge study?