



## PIKE COUNTY OFFICE OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE at October 5, 2011 Commissioners Meeting**  
**Contact: Nicholas Dickerson, Pike Planning 296-3500**

### **Pike County Adopts 2011 Natural Heritage Inventory**

The Pike County Commissioners formally adopted the Pike County Natural Heritage Inventory at their October 5, 2011 meeting. Since the publication of the original Pike County Natural Areas Inventory (the former title of the Natural Heritage Inventory) in 1990 and its 1995 update, Pike County has added 53 new Natural Heritage areas and is one of the leaders in biodiversity in Pennsylvania. The Pike County Natural Heritage Inventory will help guide future conservation efforts throughout the County.

Beginning in 2009, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Pike County Office of Community Planning sought to examine properties that contained areas of ecological interest, such as wetlands, streams, rock outcrops, floodplains, steep slopes, and large tracts of undisturbed forest land. Over 250 sites on both private and public lands were selected with these unique characteristics. Landowners were contacted by the Pike County Natural Heritage Inventory Advisory Committee to obtain permission to visit their properties. Ecologists from Western Pennsylvania Conservancy conducted surveys of properties across the County in 2009 and 2010 to evaluate habitats and measure species diversity. Data analysis followed the field survey and data collection phase.

Notable examples of species found include the bald eagle, great blue heron, timber rattlesnake, and the osprey; however these species represent only a small number of the total number of species recorded. Data analysis revealed that Pike County contains 555 extant occurrences of endangered, threatened, and rare species and natural communities, the third highest of Pennsylvania's 67 Counties. Researchers also found that Pike County has some of the greatest biodiversity within the state. Out of the initial sites selected, and where permission was granted, 121 sites were classified as being of Exceptional, High, Notable, or Local significance. In their analysis of each site, ecologists also documented: the linkages between plants and animals; threats and stresses from invasive species, forest fragmentation, stormwater runoff, or over-development; as well as recommended management practices to protect or enhance biodiversity. The report includes a list of recommendations for Pike County to ensure that it continues to lead Pennsylvania in its conservation efforts.

Natural Heritage Inventory reports are produced by the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program, a partnership between the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Natural Heritage Inventory reports measure and examine the flora, fauna, and natural areas of Pennsylvania. To date, 62 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties have published a Natural Heritage Inventory.

The Pike County Natural Heritage Inventory Advisory Committee assisted in the research and production of this report.

Grants from the Pike County Scenic Rural Character Preservation program, Pike County Conservation District, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and Pennsylvania DCNR funded this program through its completion. The success of this project also goes to those landowners who volunteered their properties for this analysis.

For those wishing to obtain a copy of the Pike County Natural Heritage Inventory, please visit the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program website at: <http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/> and click on "COUNTY INVENTORIES." Or, click this direct link to the full document: [http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/CNAI\\_PDFs/Pike%20CHNI%20Update%202011%20web.pdf](http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/CNAI_PDFs/Pike%20CHNI%20Update%202011%20web.pdf)

Further questions may be directed to Nicholas Dickerson, Community and Natural Resource Planner with Pike County Office of Community Planning at (570)296-3500.