

# The New Look

The DRBC and Monroe County Conservation District received a Growing Greener Initiative grant in the year 2000 from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to study a new and much needed approach to watershed management. The Pocono Creek Watershed in Northeast Pennsylvania was selected as the study site.

Regulations now on the books typically force a piecemeal approach to watershed management. Elements like land use, water quality and quantity, and the important connection between surface and ground water, often are treated separately at the expense of cost-effective and innovative solutions.

The new approach, goal-based watershed management, lumps these important elements together into a cohesive plan which is based on active community participation. It starts with local communities setting both water resource and socioeconomic goals for their watershed.

The water resource goals address water quality, water quantity, fish species, habitat, and streambank erosion. The socioeconomic goals address future conditions needed to support the local economy and the desired quality of life for residents.

Once the goals are established, management strategies are developed to meet them. These strategies are evaluated in terms of their costs and other socioeconomic impacts. The communities then select and implement the preferred approach.

Other partners in the study include the Monroe County Planning Commission, Brodhead Watershed Association, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, DEP, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, U.S. Geological Survey, and Villanova University. The seven municipalities within the watershed - Hamilton, Jackson, Pocono, Stroud, Tobyhanna, and Tunkhannock Townships as well as Stroudsburg Borough - are actively involved.



Cranberry Bog, which feeds Cranberry Creek in the Pocono Creek Watershed (Photo by Robert Limbeck)

### POCONO CREEK

Pocono Creek is a tributary to McMichael Creek in the Brodhead Watershed. Land use is mainly residential and includes Big Pocono State Park, Camelback Ski Area, the Nature Conservancy's Tannersville Cranberry Bog, and state game lands. Interstate 80 and State Route 611 bisect the watershed.

Pocono Creek is designated as a High Quality-Cold Water Fishery under Pennsylvania's water quality regulations.

The 46 square-mile watershed is an excellent area for the pilot study because of its high quality water coupled with tremendous growth. It has a tourist- and recreation-based economy that relies on the preservation of its natural resources.

Just as every watershed is different, so too should each watershed plan be unique. Goal-based watershed management is performance-based, rather than prescriptive. The objective is to set environmental goals and standards that must be met and provide support to local governments in achieving them.

Different goals can be set in different parts of the watershed. Existing state and federal regulations will determine the minimum environmental standards necessary to protect the existing quality and uses of Pocono Creek. The local communities may want more stringent water resource goals in all or parts of the watershed. Once the goals are set, the partners will develop possible management scenarios, which will most likely be different in different areas of the watershed. The partners will then evaluate the net costs and other socioeconomic issues for each management scenario.

The "what" (environmental goals and standards) is set by the local community and the regulatory agencies; the "how" (ways to meet the goals and standards) is entirely a local decision.

There can be a host of solutions. Some may be nonstructural, such as educating the community about lawn care and stream stability, and controlling runoff with vegetation. Others may be based on better integrating water resource protection in land use planning, or may stress the relationship between storm water control, ground water recharge, stream quality, and land use. Finally, some solutions may involve more traditional approaches of point source regulations and structural controls.

The most important aspect is that the local stakeholders within the Pocono Creek Watershed will have a voice in shaping their watershed's future by developing and implementing management approaches that will ensure a sustainable quality of life, environment, and economy.

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