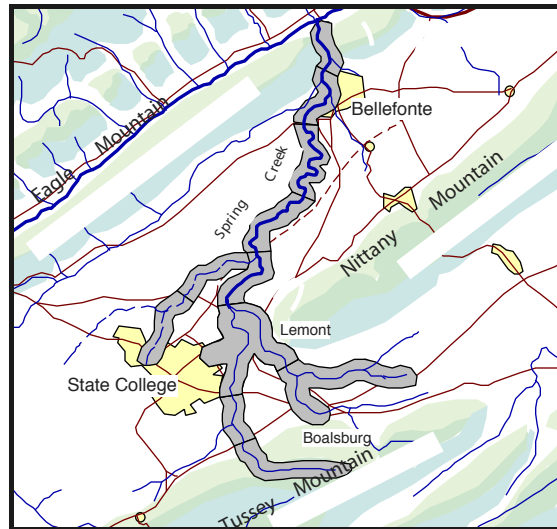

The Spring Creek Corridor Study

The Clear Water Conservancy



The Department Of Landscape Architecture
The Pennsylvania State University



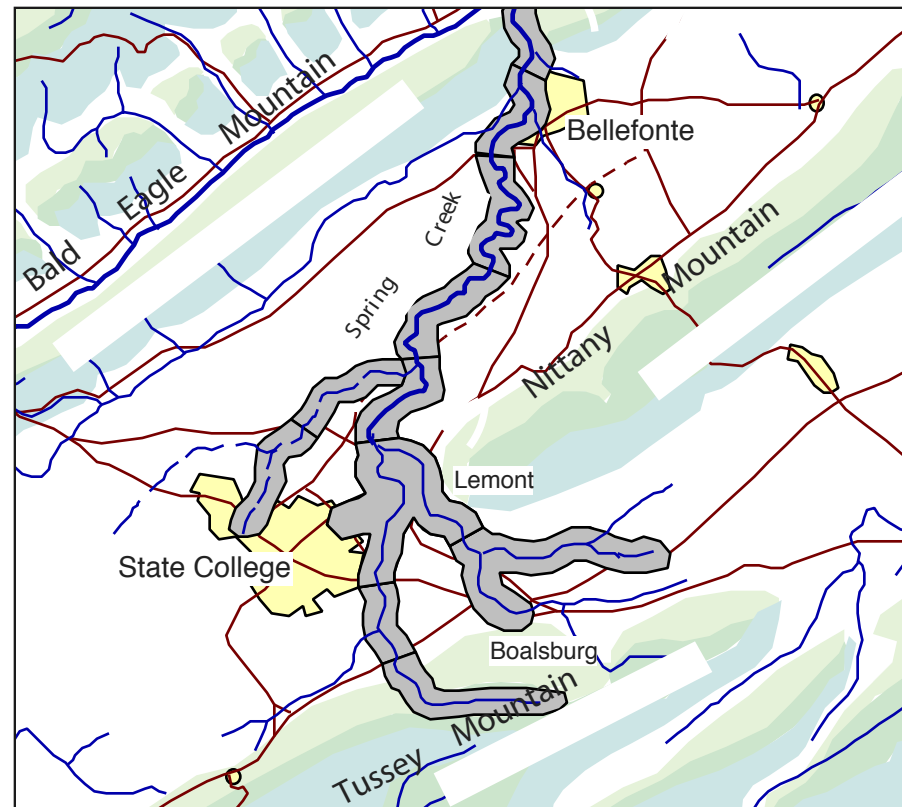


Mission Statement Of The Spring Creek Corridor Study

To protect and enhance the natural, historic, and scenic resources in the vicinity of Spring Creek through a planned program of easements, acquisitions, and cooperative arrangements with local landowners and local governments with provisions for improved public access, and recreational and educational use where feasible and appropriate. To ensure that the resources in the Spring Creek corridor are available for the use and enjoyment of future generations and to ensure that the public is informed about the corridor and engaged in its protection and enhancement.



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Introduction

The waters of Spring Creek and its tributaries are silver ribbons flowing through our region, uniting our many communities. This introduction to the Spring Creek Corridor Study will trace the course of Spring Creek from its headwater origins, through the diverse landscapes of our region, to its junction with Bald Eagle Creek.

Spring Creek begins as several small, cool, acidic brook trout streams under the forest canopy of hemlock and rhododendron high in the forested ridges that flank the Nittany and Penns Valleys. Roaring Run, Galbraith Gap Run, and Pleasant Gap Run are examples of these headwater streams. These rushing tributaries descend from the sandstone mountains into a gently rolling valley. In many places at the base of the mountains these streams disappear into sinkholes, created in the soluble valley limestones over eons of time. Through these sinkholes the water enters extensive cavern systems to form streams and rivers flowing beneath the ground. This copious ground water system is a tremendous reservoir of clean, pure water from which our human community, by deep well extraction, supplies its water needs.

The waters of Spring Creek resurface in the valley to form the main stem and important tributaries of the stream such as Slab Cabin Run and Cedar Run. Sometimes the water seeps silently from the ground forming quiet fern ringed pools in the woods, other times it gushes from fissures in the bedrock birthing new streams into the valley. These springs nourish and replenish

Spring Creek on its journey through the landscape, giving the creek its name and supplying the cold, pure water that makes it one of the most productive trout streams in eastern North America. The names of

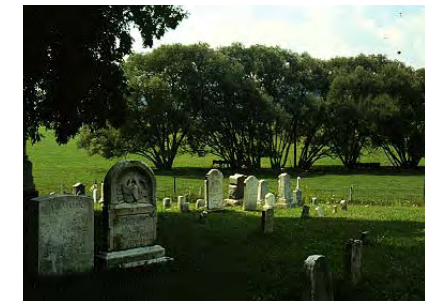


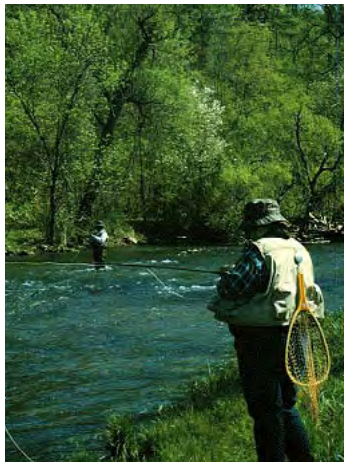
the many springs evoke the history of our region: Thompson Meadow Spring, Thorton Spring, Walnut Spring, Benner Spring, Bathgate Spring, and Big Spring in Bellefonte. Winding through the pastures and woodlots of the agricultural landscape, the stream passes through the historic rural villages founded on its banks: Pine Grove Mills, Shingletown, Linden Hall, Oak Hall, Boalsburg, Lemont, and Houserville. The waters of Spring Creek powered the first settlements in this valley and their history can still be read in the remnant structures and patterns of these places.

More recent settlement has not always been so kind to Spring Creek. Many of our contemporary communities turn their backs to the stream, its beauty concealed by neglect. Frequently the stream and its associated flood plains are disturbed by roads, bridges, parking lots, and debris. More alarming, rainfall that once soaked gently into the soil is now shed in violent torrents from the many paved surfaces of

our subdivisions and shopping centers, fundamentally altering the form and seasonal processes of the stream. These local degradations presage the fate that much of Spring Creek could suffer at the expense of future growth. Other facets of our environment are also at risk. Scenic forested mountain slopes can still be logged; streamside habitats destroyed; natural areas severed from one another into degraded fragments. Our historical and cultural landscapes will disappear unless they are recognized and adopted as an integral part of the fabric of our growing metropolitan region. Much of what we value in our beautiful and healthy valley could be jeopardized unless we plan carefully for future growth.

Today our community recognizes the value of the stream in the many parks we have created along its length: Blue Spring Park; Walnut Springs Park; Slab Cabin Park; Spring Creek Park; Tallyrand Park; and Milesburg Community Park. In these places we secure open space for our increasingly urbanized neighborhoods and provide opportunities for a variety of recreational activities from organized sports to contemplative walks. Spring Creek also performs essential environmental functions for our society. Flood plains and wetlands such as Millbrook Marsh absorb flood waters and filter polluting sediments from the flow. The stream receives the discharges from our modern waste water treatment plants, whose operations are critical to public health and the protection of water quality in the creek. Spring Creek today is substantially cleaner





and healthier than it was some fifty years ago. Today the greatest threat is thermal pollution, heating the waters above the tolerance of wild trout.

Trout are the most famous denizens of Spring Creek. Wild brown trout abound in its cold, clean waters; fish of trophy size lurk beneath over-hanging tree roots or wait in clear pools for invertebrate food species to float through the riffles. Upstream from the village of Lemont the healthiest section of the creek, contains a rich diversity of invertebrates and excellent populations of trout. Fisherman's Paradise draws anglers from all over the world to its demonstration areas of restored trout habitat. Recreational fishing for these wily creatures puts more than \$1.2 million dollars into the local economy. These same pure waters are the basis for one of our region's most important industries: the trout hatcheries operated by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission at Benner Spring and Fisherman's Paradise. From here tens of thousands of rainbow, brook, and brown trout are shipped to waters all across Pennsylvania, to the delight of the state's anglers. Through the hatcheries and other operations headquartered on the banks of Spring Creek it is estimated that the Fish and Boat Commission spends over \$10 million dollars locally.

At the center of the Nittany Valley, Spring Creek has sculpted a dramatic gorge through the resistant dolomitic limestones. Spring Creek Canyon, a unique Central Pennsylvania geographic feature with

deeply incised meanders, contains outstanding scenery, mature forests of oak, sugar maple, basswood, pine and hemlock, rare plants, animals and natural communities, wild trout habitat, and majestic two hundred foot high limestone cliffs. The natural scenery of the canyon rivals any in the state, yet this little known wonder lies the middle of our expanding metropolitan area, largely on property controlled by the Pennsylvania State Correctional Institute at Rockview.

The historic heart of our region, the county seat of Bellefonte, is sited in a naturally favored place on Spring Creek just above the master water gap outlet from the Nittany Valley. Also site of the bountiful Big Spring, one of the largest springs in Pennsylvania, the town grew into a wealthy and sophisticated nineteenth century place based upon numerous industries powered by the constant, steady flow of Spring Creek. Thankfully much of Bellefonte's rich historic architecture has been recognized and preserved endowing the town with its delightful Victorian air. Atop the architecturally superb county courthouse (1805) the copper weather-vane is formed in the shape of a trout. Legend has it that the town's name derives from a remark about its "beautiful spring" by the French diplomat Tallyrand, who is said to have visited the region just after the War of Independence. More likely, Tallyrand would have been speaking about the region's excellent iron manufacturing resources, the industry that propelled Bellefonte's early growth.

Through the outlet water gap the stream flows over the McCoy Dam, a historic power dam and industrial site. Here can be found remnants of Harmony Forge, one of the first iron manufactories in the region, including the iron master's house and farm. The Bald Eagle and Spring Creek Navigation Canal can be seen here too, and the fine stonework of a canal lock still remains just above historic Milesburg, where at the junction pool, Spring Creek contributes the majority flow to Bald Eagle Creek. From that point, though they no longer bear its name, the waters of Spring Creek flow through Bald Eagle Creek to the West Branch of the Susquehanna River, and ultimately to the Atlantic Ocean through the Chesapeake Bay.

Spring Creek links the Nittany Valley's varied communities together contributing significantly to our history, the quality of our environment, and to our valued lifestyles. Today we face new challenges as we grow to become an important twenty-first century metropolitan area. We welcome the vitality that growth brings, directing this study toward the accommodation of growth and the protection of the quality of our exceptional environment. Maybe the wild trout of Spring Creek will be the measure of our success, our environmental canary. If we plan thoughtfully and manage well the irreplaceable natural resources of our region, protect their essential ecological functions, and maintain our healthy environment, those wild trout will be there for many future generations.