

# River is the source of economic benefits, even today

By WENDY STIVER

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LOCK HAVEN — The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership Board of Directors will hold its annual meeting Tuesday afternoon in the Durrwachter Alumni Conference Center at Lock Haven University.

The meeting will focus on entrepreneurial development in river communities.

The partnership is leading a collaborative initiative for business development relating to the river, and Trish Carothers, the partnership's executive director, talked about it with the Rotary Club of Lock Haven recently.

She said a community with a vibrant connection to the river will benefit from increased tourism. Also, a waterfront that provides access to the river and includes historic structures is key to a vital downtown, and parks and trails are proven to increase the value of nearby properties by nearly 15 percent.

The partnership is striving to create one large

greenway focused on the river that will encompass 500 miles, 22 counties, 70 towns and 1,301 islands. The Susquehanna watershed has 6 million people depending on it for drinking water and also provides 50 percent of the water in the Chesapeake Bay.

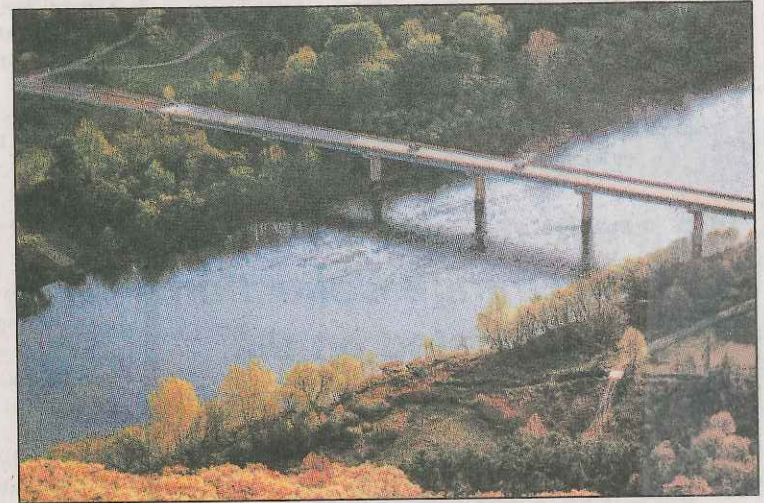
"This area is a high priority for us," she said.

Lock Haven is an official River Town now and the partnership gave a mini-grant for the new informational kiosk at the Corman Amphitheatre entrance in Lock Haven.

Carothers also talked about the Jersey Shore River Access project which may have a ribbon-cutting in about a month, she said.

The partnership's Asset-based Entrepreneurial Development Program is focused on Lock Haven, Jersey Shore and Williamsport. It will help people capitalize on business opportunities provided by historical, cultural and natural assets linked by land and water trails.

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DOUG BAUMAN/THE EXPRESS

The West Branch Susquehanna River is seen from Hyner View State Park earlier this year.

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The program's first step is to assess the unmet recreational needs of both residents and visitors.

Three LHU students are doing a survey of people along the river, at Lockport Boat Launch Park and perhaps at the Jaycees Labor Day Regatta, Carothers said, and this survey will help assess recreational needs in Lock Haven. Assessments will also be done in the other two communities.

Once the needs are identified, strategies will be written to foster new businesses to meet them.

The partnership is

working with the LHU Small Business Development Center to facilitate micro-business tourism grants and to help people develop business plans and find financing, Carothers said.

The program in this region should become a model for other Susquehanna Greenway communities.

It should also create lasting economic benefits. The three target communities should become more desirable places to visit and live in. They should have a stronger, more diversified economic base with new businesses, more revenue for existing busi-

nesses, and customers that are attracted by natural and cultural resources.

The partnership also is interested in linking the three communities here with a trail system, Carothers said, from the Susquehanna River Walk at Williamsport to the Pine Creek Trail to the Lock Haven area.

Walking is the most preferred type of outdoor recreation for Pennsylvanians, she noted, and a river-based trail system in this region would answer that desire to get out and walk. She suggested that local river towns also could establish a Bike-Pedestrian

Committee, just as Danville has.

A ridge trail plan for mountain-biking in Clinton and Lycoming counties is in the works as well, she said.

Pennsylvania's sprawl record is one of the worst in the nation, Carothers said. Downtowns are being hollowed out as communities push outward, and on average, four acres are lost every time land is developed.

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership is working with universities, state agencies, utilities, recreation non-profits, the National Park Service to preserve and improve the

green space and parkways in this river corridor.

It also is a willing partner for every community along the river that wants to boost its culture, its environment, and its economy.