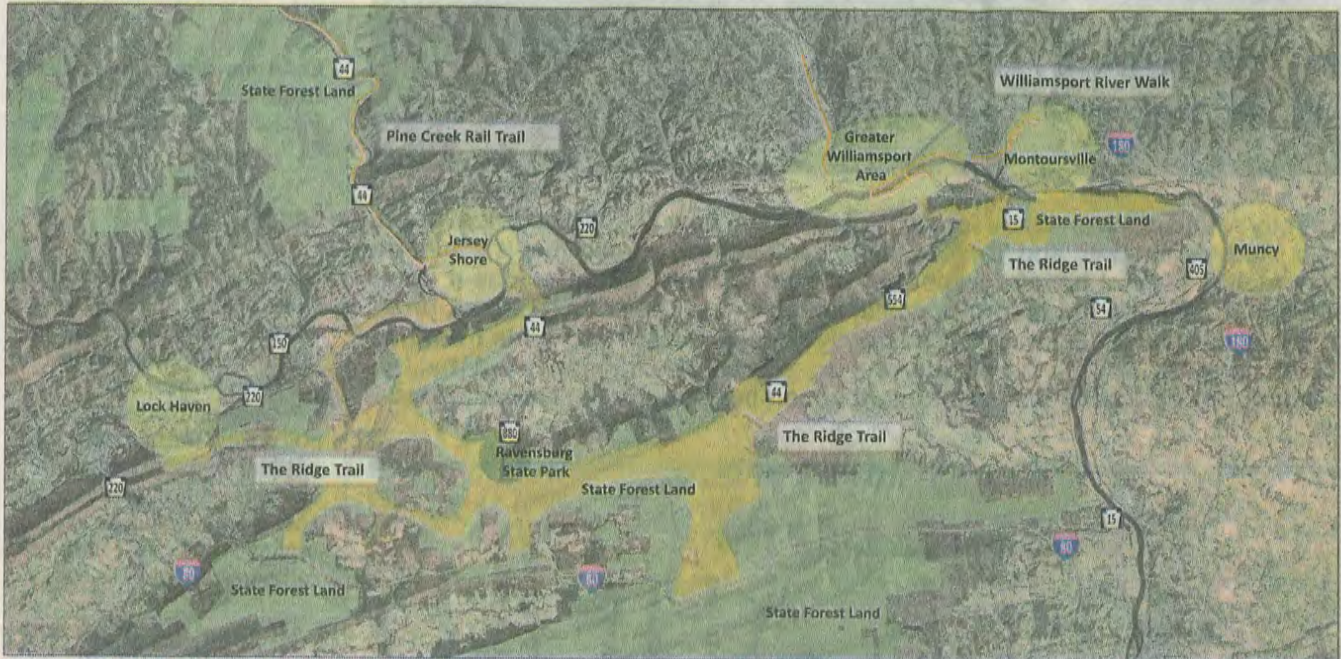


Bikeable communities



The Ridge Trail - Concept Plan Clinton and Lycoming Counties, Pennsylvania

Ridge Trail - Legend

- River Towns / Community Hub
- Ravensburg State Park / Recreation Hub
- State Forest Land
- Ridge Trail - Potential Corridor
- Ridge Trail - Potential Trail Alignment
- Scenic View Opportunity

BSA / LA
Bicycle Safety and Landmarks Association

IMAGE PROVIDED

A design concept by Brian S. Auman Landscape Architect shows possible trail alignments for a proposed bike system, as well as the placement of the trail along the Bald Eagle Mountain ridge.

Proposed trail system would span 2 counties

By **SAMANTHA WALLACE**
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Since it opened in 2009, the Susquehanna River Walk has become immensely popular with locals and

out-of-towners alike, but now it's become the impetus for an entirely new project: a regional bike trail system that would connect Lycoming and Clinton counties.

"A lot of this idea came out of the

river walk project," Lycoming County Transportation Planner Mark Murawski said.

The four-mile-long river walk ends

(See PROPOSED, Page A-7)

Williamsport Sun-Gazette

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Proposed trail system would span 2 counties

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at the South Williamsport recreation park complex, but about a year and a half ago, Murawski said, the Armstrong Township supervisors approached the Lycoming County commissioners with an idea to build their own park.

Eventually, the idea developed into an extension of South Williamsport's park — and a potential starting point for the bike trail.

"The thinking was, gee, we can use that as a starting point and develop this whole trail system," Murawski said.

The planned path for the trail system would travel over the Bald Eagle Mountain ridge via an existing corridor near Skyline Drive, capturing some "outstanding views" of Williamsport

and the surrounding area, before ending in Ravensburg State Park in Clinton County.

"There's sort of a natural corridor there already, but of course it would need some work, and that's what this study aims to do," he said. "We need to identify the needs and projects that would make this trail a viable option."

That's where Brian S. Auman Landscape Architect of Lewisburg comes in.

The Lycoming County commissioners approved \$30,000 of gas drilling impact fees in April for Auman to design the regional ridge trail master plan, which will identify surfacing, landscaping and more.

Auman has already submitted a design concept to the coun-

ty that identifies possible connecting trail alignments.

Murawski also said that the Williamsport Municipal Water Authority and the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources own land along the proposed corridor, so they will be part of the study to determine how to build the trails without disrupting their use.

Those entities are only two of several that will make up a working committee to be launched next month — others include local municipalities, the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership and the state Department of Transportation — who will help plan the project's scope, phasing, cost and potential sources of funding, Murawski said.

"There will be extensive input from everyone involved," he said. "You can't go after a grant until you define a project, so you have a game plan when funding opportunities arise."

Plans aside, he said, it also helps to go after funding and grants as a larger group working on a common project, rather than smaller groups requesting money at the same time.

"When we all go after funding, we have a good shot if we have a regional plan," he said.

The region-wide support for bike trail systems is encouraging, Murawski said.

He was "pleasantly surprised" to find, when the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership held a summit on the topic last year,

that many communities along the Susquehanna River either had similar plans for bike trail systems or were interested in creating one.

Clinton County, the other partner in the design study, has been active for almost a decade in planning a project that would follow the Susquehanna to connect the Pine Creek trail in Jersey Shore with Lock Haven.

That project, in turn, could eventually be part of a massive trail system extending from Lake Ontario to the Chesapeake Bay.

"It could work nicely as a piece of a larger puzzle," Murawski said. "Almost three-quarters of that system is already complete, and we want to be able to connect our projects to it."