

Tioga County Planning Commission 2024 Annual Report



2024 Board of Commissioners

Sam VanLoon - Chairman

Marc Rice

Shane Nickerson

Planning Commission

The Tioga County Planning Commission is made up of nine citizen volunteers appointed by the Tioga County Board of Commissioners. The Commission is responsible for the review, approval, or disapproval of Subdivision and Land Development plans within the county. The commission is also responsible for reviewing or approving Residential and Commercial Developments, Comprehensive Plans, and Municipal Zoning Ordinance amendments within the County. The Commission meets monthly on the second Wednesday and the meetings are open to the public.

2024 Commission Members

Roger Bunn – Chair

Nancy Smith – Vice Chair

Karl Kroeck

Bill Roosa

Kevin Connelly

Erick Coolidge

Marc Rice

Dawn Avery

Carol Hoke

Planning Staff

Deborah A. Crawford, Administrative Director

Kaye Aumick, Planning Director

Message from the Planning Staff

The Planning Department is made up of two County staff and the board of volunteers that make up the Planning Commission. The Commission's major responsibility is to guide the organized development of the County. Together, we review major and minor land developments and subdivisions. The tools that are used include; the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), the Tioga County Comprehensive Plan, and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The last update to the county SALDO was in 2013 and the most recent county Comprehensive Plan was revised and adopted in December of 2017. The Planning Commission and Planning staff are currently reviewing and updating the county SALDO, this should be completed by the end of 2025.

The Planning Commission also worked to create the Tioga County Lighting Ordinance. It was determined that more decisive lighting requirements and plans were needed throughout the county. This is especially true when working through commercial land developments. We strive to keep our citizens safe, while at the same time preserving our beautiful night time skies. Having developers adhere to the Lighting Ordinance will ensure we retain our dark skies for generations to come.

The Planning staff is always available to answer questions and guide citizens with the subdivision and land development process of the county. We will also direct citizens to the proper local, county, or state departments necessary to assist with any concerns and/or questions involving the land and environment of the county that cannot be answered by this office.

Major Projects Involving Planning Staff

- Pine Creek Rail Trail Extension (aka Marsh Creek Greenway) – This project fits a priority goal stated in the Tioga County Comprehensive Plan identifying “New non-motorized land and water trail projects and activities”.
- Development of a Stormwater Management Plan (Act 167) – Partnering with Potter County, with the assistance of a consultant from Larson Design Group.
- Tioga County Housing Task Force – The task force was formed to identify any housing issues in the county.

Committees and Teams with Planning Staff Involvement

- Tioga County Agricultural Farmland Preservation
- Marsh Creek Greenway Trail Advisory Committee (Pine Creek Rail Trail Extension)
- PA Wilds Planning Team & PA Wilds Climate Network
- Route 6 Alliance
- Pine Creek Watershed Council
- Northern Tier Regional Transportation Advisory Committee
- Tioga County Conservation District
- Tioga County Mitigation Advisory Committee

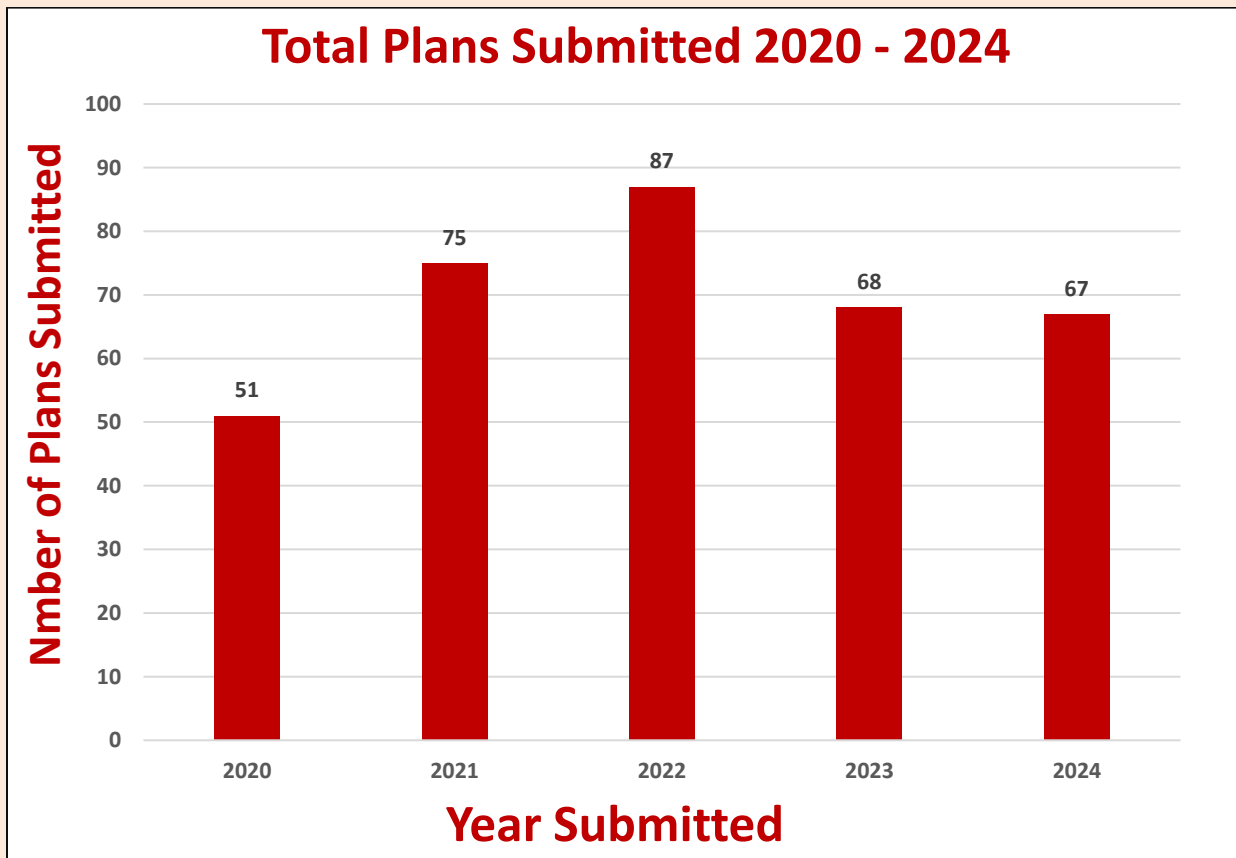
2024 Tioga County Planning Commission Report

This following report is a summary of the Planning activities of Tioga County for the 2024 year. The report will display charts and explain the numbers for Subdivisions and Land Developments. We will also talk about some of the projects that are ongoing within the County.

Tioga County has 39 municipalities; eight of which have their own Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) and 16 having their own Zoning Ordinance. There is no county wide zoning ordinance. For the eight municipalities with their own SALDO the County Planning staff reviews their subdivision and land developments for comment only. All others are reviewed and approved by the County Planning Commission. Minor Subdivisions and Land Developments can be reviewed and approved by the Planning Staff, while major plans are reviewed by the 9-member Planning Commission.

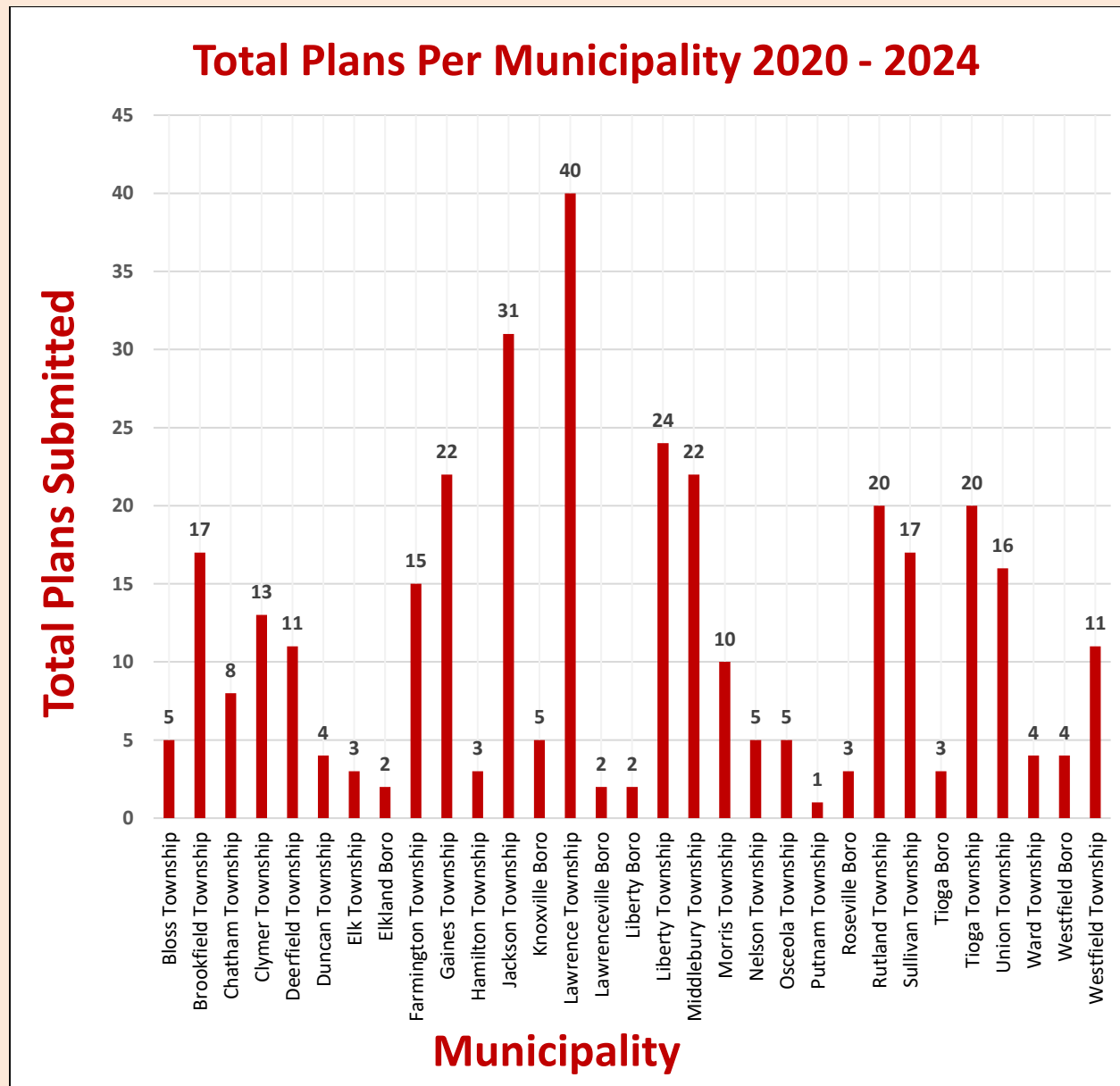
Total County SALDO Plan Submissions

The chart below displays the total number of plans approved during the most recent 5-year period of 2020 – 2024, from the Municipalities that fall under the countywide SALDO. The highest number of submissions was seen in 2022 with 87 and the lowest in 2020 with 51; this low is possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The overall yearly average is 69 submissions.



The five-year submission total was 348. This total breaks down to 28 Land Developments and 320 Subdivisions. There was a total of 67 submissions in 2024; which was a decrease of one from 2023, when there were 68 total. Of the 67 submissions; five were new Land Developments and 62 were subdivisions. During this five-year reporting period the highest submission of Land Developments was nine in 2022.

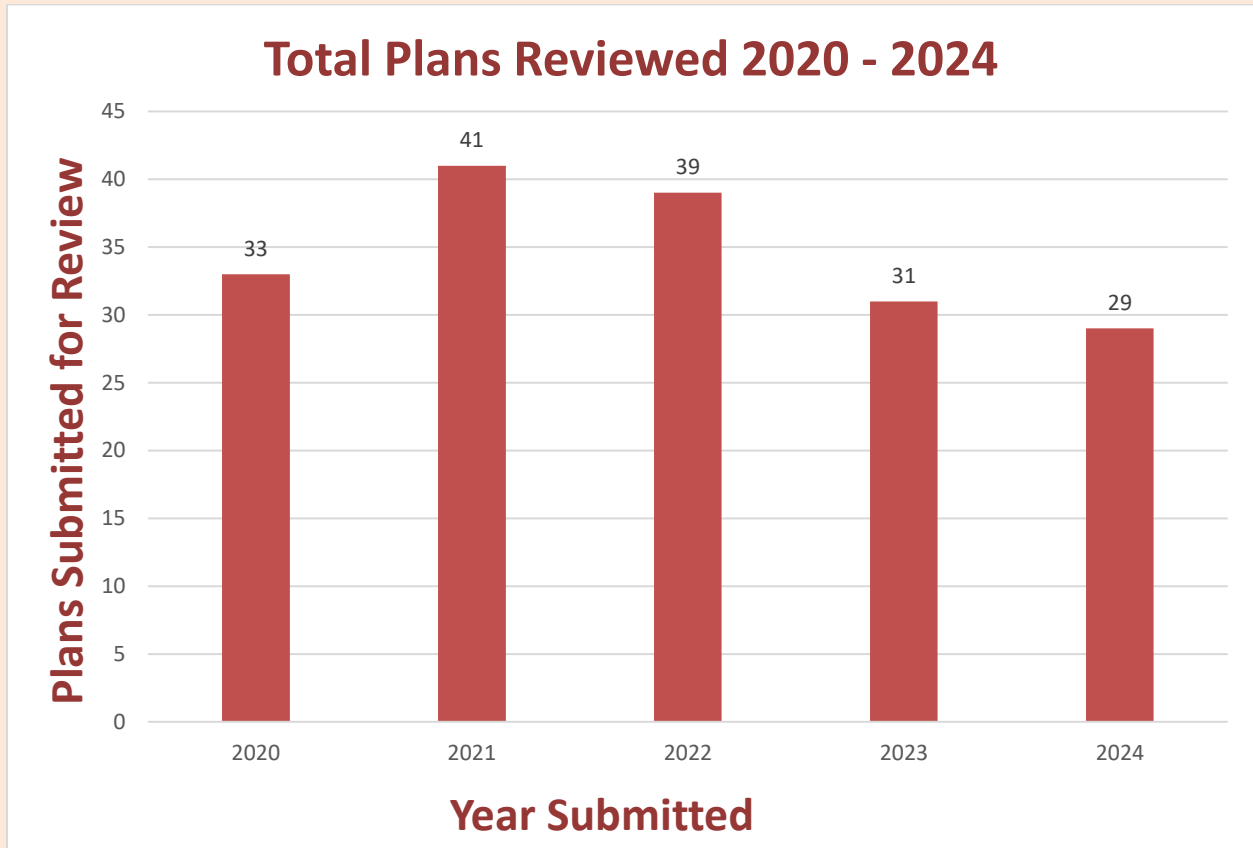
The chart below breaks down the submissions received in 2024 by Municipality. Lawrence Township saw the highest overall submissions with 40 in the five years being reported, while Putnam Township had just one submission during the same time frame. Jackson Township also had a large number of submissions during this time frame with 31. This shows there is a large variance between the Municipalities in regard to areas that are being developed and those that are not. The smaller Municipalities and Boroughs have a much lower rate of submissions.



Municipal SALDO Plan Reviews

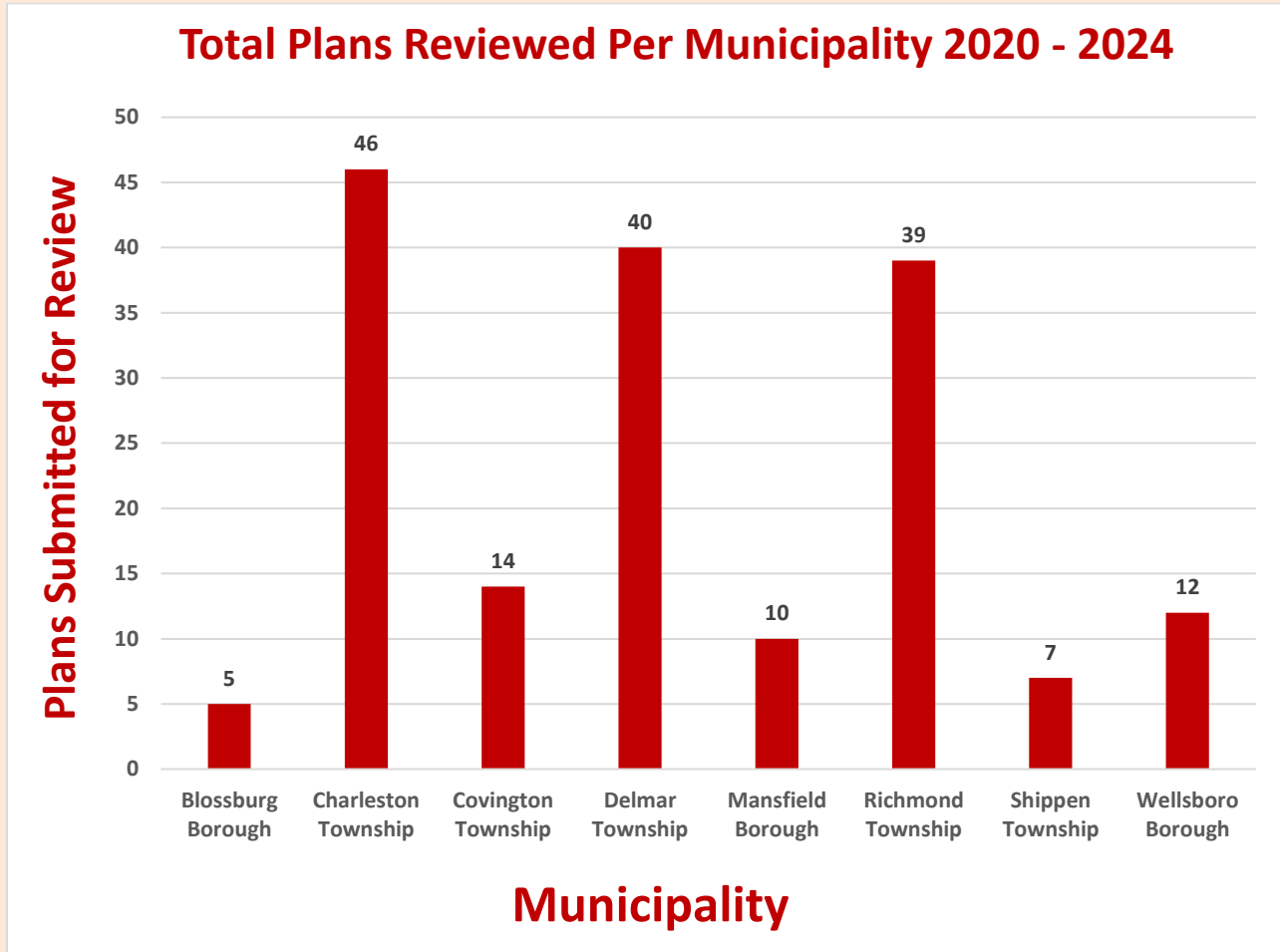
We will now take a look at the Municipalities that operate under their own SALDO's. These Municipalities request that Subdivisions and Land Developments only be reviewed by the Tioga County Planning Commission. To complete the review, we typically receive a map, project narrative, and Municipal application. Once we have reviewed the plans, a review letter is drafted and sent to the submitting Municipality. This review letter will state any comments or concerns with the subdivision being proposed. The plans will then be taken to the Municipal Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors for their review and approval.

The chart below shows the total municipal plans that were reviewed by the County Planning Commission during the years 2020 – 2024. This number includes both Subdivisions and Land Developments.



There were 41 plans submitted for review in 2021 making it the highest in the five-year time frame of the above chart. The lowest number of plans submitted was in 2024 with 29 submissions, there has been a steady decline in submission since the peak in 2021. The average yearly plan review submittal over the five-year period is 34.

The chart below displays the plans received for review by each Municipality during the five-year recording period.



Charleston Township had the largest number of subdivisions reviewed by the County with 46, while Blossburg Borough had only five submitted during the same time period. Delmar and Richmond Townships have the next highest number of submittals with 40 and 39 respectively.

The total number of plans submitted for review by the Municipalities was 173. Of this number; 16 were Land Developments and 157 were subdivisions. The highest number of Land Developments across these Municipalities was five in Richmond Township. Richmond Township is starting to see more growth along the Business Route 15 corridor.

County Project Overviews

Pine Creek Rail Trail Extension - Marsh Creek Greenway

The Pine Creek Rail Trail Extension (aka Marsh Creek Greenway) is a 3.2-mile non-motorized trail linking the current northern terminus of the Pine Creek Rail Trail (PCRT) to downtown Wellsboro. A trailhead building with a visitor's center and a downtown connection to the trail are part of this project. The trailhead building, proposed to be complete in 2025 will feature community-centric displays, trail resources, local history, and history of the railroad.

This project was identified as a priority gap in the 2020-2024 Pennsylvania Trail Network Strategic Plan. The local communities, regional planning organization, and Tioga County have determined that this connectivity to the Pine Creek Rail Trail is a priority. The connectivity will improve the quality of life and encourage active recreation; while providing an alternate means of transportation and enhance the connective tissue between communities throughout the PA Wilds region.

The Southern section of the trail was completed in October and opened for public use. The historic bridge connecting the trail to Charleston Street was also completed in October and creates a beautiful entrance from Charleston Street to the trail.

Construction on the Patterson Trailhead building began in late summer and is projected to be completed and ready for occupants sometime in the spring of 2025.

The ground breaking ceremony for the Northern section was on October 17, 2024 along with the ribbon cutting for the Southern section. Construction has begun and is proposed to be complete in 2025. The new trail will promote tourism and economic activity in the county by linking to local restaurants, businesses, and lodging.

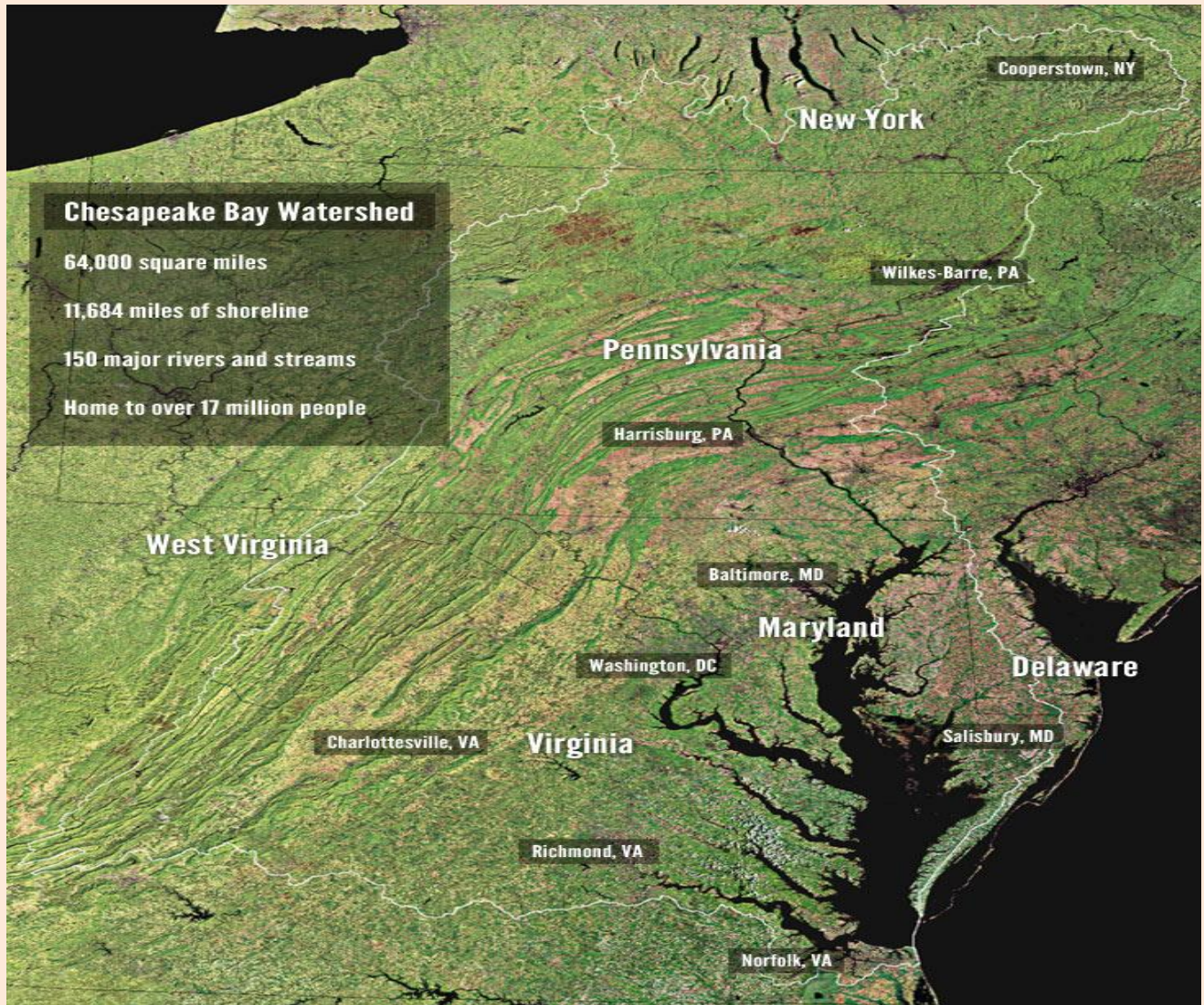
The new trail has been attracting walkers and bikers since it was opened and the use of the trail continues throughout the winter with walkers and cross county skiers.

This picture shows a portion of the Southern section, during early construction.



Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Project

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan is a three County based team; Bradford, Tioga, and Potter. The three counties began working together on one plan with each county having their own individual section within the larger plan. Each County's Planning Department and Conservation Districts are involved together with Bradford County being the lead team. The project team worked with a consultant to prepare and submit a plan to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The project completion is slated for 2025.



In 2021 a draft of the County Wide Action Plan (CAP) was created to reduce the pollution loads in our streams, creeks, and rivers. We have secured a contract company and will continue working towards our plans and implementation. The goals are to reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus loads in the county waterways that flow towards the Chesapeake Bay. There are many opportunities within Tioga County to clean area watersheds and headwaters. Just a few of the local watersheds in Tioga County are; Marsh Creek, Tioga River, Corey Creek, Mill Creek,

and Pine Creek. All of these watersheds have smaller streams running into them where the process of removing pollutants begins.

In 2022, the county began working to implement the plan that was created and submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) for approval. Cleaning up our local waters is the first step in the cleaning of waters downstream and eventually the Chesapeake Bay. Tioga County is dedicated to cleaning our waters to ensure safer, cleaner drinking water for the future of generations to come.

In 2023, the county began a partnership with Potter County to develop a much-needed Stormwater Management Plan (Act 167). The development of the plan will bring the county into compliance with the guidelines set forth by the PADEP.

In 2024, the work continued to develop a Stormwater Management Plan (Act 167) and we are getting closer to completion. Public meetings were held and information has been and will continue to be gathered on what is needed and what can be done to assist with the Act 167 plan and how each Municipality can benefit by implementing a plan.

Tioga County Agricultural Farmland Preservation

We believe that it is important to mention the work that is being done to preserve and protect agricultural lands in Tioga County. The purpose of the program is to protect viable agricultural lands by acquiring agricultural conservation easements to prevent the development of the land for any purpose other than agricultural production. Agricultural Conservation Easements restrict and limit the conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use. The county agricultural preservation program ensures that farmers in the county have sufficient agricultural lands to provide farm products for the people of Tioga County and the United States.

The planning staff works with the County Agricultural Farmland Preservation Board to select and preserve these farms. The board guides the staff on each step of the process from farm selections to final easement. The board is made up of seven county citizens that are appointed by the Tioga County Board of Commissioners. These members are comprised of one municipal supervisor, four farmers, one contractor, and one member at large.

The first agricultural easement was in 2001 with a farm consisting of 180 acres located in Deerfield Township. Since that first preservation there have been one to three farms being preserved each year. Tioga County currently has 34 preserved farms totally 4,301 acres with four farms moving through the preservation process at the current time, two of these will be completed by the end of 2025. The 2025 application period began on January 2, 2025 and will continue until March 3, 2025. After the application period ends all farm applications will be processed and the farms will be ranked. The Agricultural Preservation Board will be selecting farms for the 2025 preservation process in the spring from these rankings.

Closing thoughts from the Planning Staff

The Planning Commission had another busy year and we look forward to 2025 and the challenges as we continue to be involved with the current county projects and committees, work through exiting land developments and new submissions, as well as any new projects that may arise throughout the county.

Planning now for the future of the county is an important and necessary venture if we wish to continue the growth and orderly development of our Municipalities.

Tourism is the heart of our economy and as we continue to develop and pursue growth, we must ensure that the beauty and elegance, that attracts the tourists as well as those who choose to make Tioga County their home, is not lost.