



with the recent accomplishment of many critical steps in the process, proponents of the effort are optimistic about the future of the river affectionately known as the "Musky."

RESOURCES

U.S. Congressman Scott Garrett, New Jersey's 5th District

<http://garrett.house.gov/>

Heritage Conservancy

<http://www.heritageconservancy.org/>

Musconetcong River Wild and Scenic River Study, National Park Service

<http://www.nps.gov/nero/rivers/muskie.htm>

Musconetcong Watershed Association

<http://www.musconetcong.org>

National Wild and Scenic Rivers System

<http://www.nps.gov/rivers/>

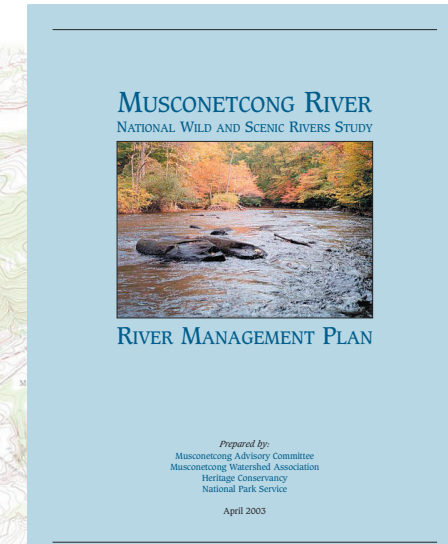


As the Route 57 communities and Warren County move forward with land use, transportation, and scenic preservation initiatives for the corridor, it will be important to coordinate efforts with other related planning initiatives in the region. One of these is the Musconetcong River Management Plan, prepared in April 2003 by the Musconetcong Advisory Committee, Musconetcong Watershed Association, Heritage Conservancy, and the National Park Service. The River Management Plan proposes a strategy for managing the Musconetcong River and its associated natural resource values.

The Plan was created as part of an ongoing effort to evaluate the Musconetcong River for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. If the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act is amended by Congress to include the Musconetcong River, the river will become one of the NPS "Partnership" Wild and Scenic Rivers. The NPS will not own land within the designated wild and scenic corridor, but will act as a partner with local landowners and government in collectively managing the river.

THE MUSCONETCONG RIVER

The 43-mile long Musconetcong River, a portion of which forms the border between Hunterdon and Warren Counties, drains a 158 square mile watershed area in northern New Jersey and is a major tributary of the Delaware River. Recognizing the value of the rich natural and cultural resources of the Musconetcong River Valley, concerned citizens drew attention to the needs of the river in 1991. By 1997, eighteen of the nineteen municipalities along the Musconetcong petitioned the National Park Service (NPS) to determine the river's eligibility for designation under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers program. The process that these communities, the Musconetcong Watershed Association, and other partner organizations have followed over the past 15 years, speaks to the importance of protecting water quality, scenic vistas, and public access to the Musconetcong.



"The genesis for this legislation was a community effort to preserve the river. New Jersey is already the most densely populated state in the union and growing exurbs continue to decrease the state's remaining wild spaces. While this legislation would not freeze development, it would work to preserve the existing character of the river, a character of rural beauty and recreational enjoyment."

- Congressman Scott Garrett (New Jersey's 5th District)

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

The National Wild and Scenic River System permanently preserves selected rivers or river segments in their free-flowing condition (i.e. without dams, levees, or other development) and makes selected waterways eligible for millions of dollars in federal preservation support. The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed in 1968 and has since been amended to include 163 rivers or river segments across the country. Other designated Wild and Scenic Rivers in New Jersey are the Great Egg River,

Maurice River, and the Lower and Middle Delaware River (from Warren to Burlington County).

The Musconetcong River Management Plan documents that the Musconetcong River meets the two main criteria for designation: it a free-flowing body and it possesses "outstandingly remarkable resource values." The Musconetcong study area is divided into three segments; the total study area contains about 28.5 miles of river. The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires eligible segments to be classified as wild, scenic, or recreational. Each of the three Musconetcong segments, listed below, are classified as recreational because they are readily

accessible by road and/or contain some development along the shoreline. Segment A is additionally classified as scenic because most of the land along the riverfront is undeveloped public parkland.

- Segment A: Saxton Falls to the Rt. 46 Bridge (3.5mi)
- Segment B: Kings Highway Bridge to railroad tunnels at Musconetcong Gorge (20.7mi)
- Segment C: Hughesville Mill to Delaware River confluence (4.3mi)

FIVE GOALS

The Musconetcong River Management Committee will ensure implementation of the Musconetcong River Management Plan and serve to advise local, county, and state authorities and private interests. The goals of the River Management Plan are consistent with those of the Route 57 Conceptual Corridor Plan and with the proposed State Scenic Byway initiative for the roadway. The Plan states the following five major goals for preserving the wild and scenic integrity of the river:

1. Encourage recreational use that is compatible with the preservation of natural and cultural qualities of the river corridor while respecting private property.
2. Preserve and protect the character of archaeological sites and historic structures, districts, sites, and landscapes in the river corridor.
3. Preserve farmland and open space within the river corridor and the watershed.
4. Preserve, protect, restore, and enhance the outstanding natural resources in the river corridor and the watershed.
5. Maintain existing water quality in the Musconetcong River and its tributaries and improve water quality where possible.

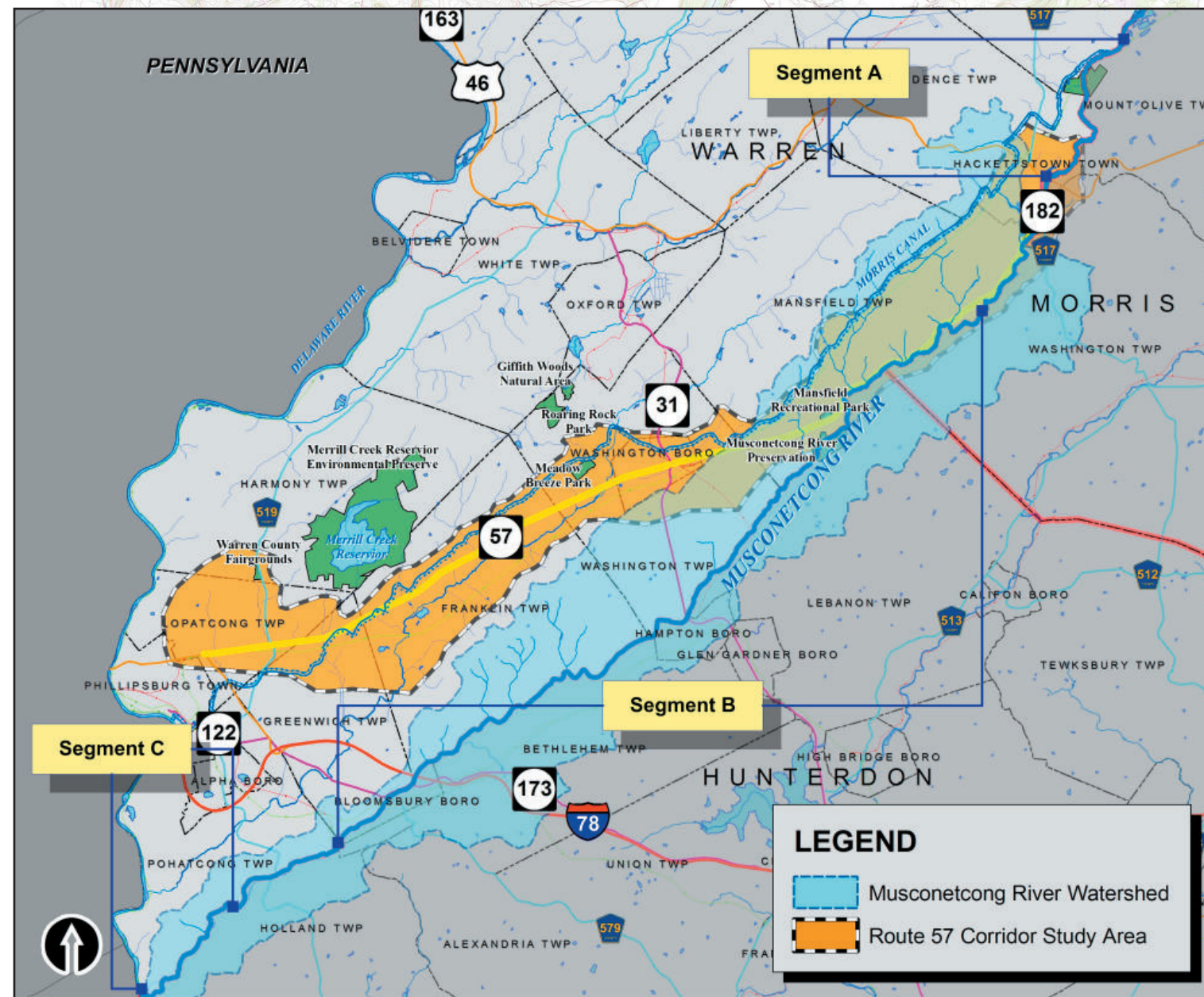
- **Natural Resources:** The Musconetcong is part of the important Delaware River wildlife corridor, which is one of four North American major bird migratory routes. The watershed lies within the ecologically diverse Highlands region.
- **Water Quality:** The Musconetcong is widely considered to be a high quality and important trout-fishing stream in comparison with many other New Jersey rivers, and efforts to reduce pollution sources are continuing.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE MUSCONETCONG?

An underlying principle of the River Management Plan is that existing authorities, as well as local governments, will continue to support the long-term protection of the Musconetcong River, its tributaries, and its watershed. Local governments can demonstrate support for the long-term protection of the Musconetcong River by incorporating the goals and actions of the Management Plan into municipal master plans, zoning, and land development regulations. Thirteen of the fourteen riverside municipalities supported the adoption of the Musconetcong River Management Plan in 2003.

Although most of the preserved 15 percent of Musconetcong River Watershed land has been acquired through the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program and county and state farmland preservation organizations, municipalities have become increasingly active partners in the open space acquisition process. As of December 2000, 12 of 26 municipalities in the watershed area had enacted special taxes for open space acquisition. Local efforts on behalf of the Musconetcong River Management Plan complement the goals and vision of the Route 57 Conceptual Corridor Plan, the potential Route 57 State Scenic Byway Designation, and related endeavors.

A bill to amend to Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to include 24 miles of the Musconetcong River has been working its way through Congress since 2004. On December 16, 2005, the bill passed the Senate by unanimous consent. The bill has been referred back to the House Committee on Resources which is expected to mark up the bill early in 2006. The effort to designate the Musconetcong as a Wild and Scenic River has been ongoing since 1991, and



RESOURCES TO BE PROTECTED

The River Management Plan identifies five major resource categories to be protected in order to maintain the wild and scenic integrity of the river corridor.

- **Recreational and Scenic Resources:** There are over 5,000 acres of state-owned parks and river access sites in the Musconetcong River Valley, as well as several hundred acres of county and municipal parklands along the river.
- **Historic and Archaeological Resources:** Stanhope, Asbury, Finesville and several other communities are home to Lenape Indian and early 18th Century colonial and agricultural artifacts. Morris Canal national landmarks parallel the river at various points along the Route 57 corridor.
- **Farmland and Open Space:** About 15 percent of the Musconetcong River watershed's 100,864 acres are permanently preserved as open space or farmland.