

Triple Divide Trail System

Rochester to Williamsport via the Genesee Valley Greenway, Pine Creek Trail, and Other Trail and Park Systems Across the Triple Continental Divide



Connecting urban, rural, and wilderness communities by greenways, blueways, and nature parks that promote conservation of the Genesee River and Pine Creek, outdoor recreation, and economic revitalization for ca. 230 miles from Lake Ontario to the Susquehanna River.

Strategic Plan

Triple Divide Trail System

Strategic Plan

To restore, protect, and enjoy the
Genesee River and Pine Creek by
raising their profile as resources for
outdoor recreation and sustainable economic development

Prepared with gracious assistance

from

agency directors, elected representatives, organization managers,
business owners, farmers, professors, photographers, and others in
federal, state, regional, county, and municipal agencies,
public and non-profit organizations, businesses, educational institutions,
and other groups in NY and PA

for the

Genesee River Wilds Project



GENESEE RIVER WILDS

www.geneseeriverwilds.org

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by

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**Cover photo, family rafting on Pine Creek, PA:
Courtesy of Jon Dillon, Pine Creek Outfitters.**

**Cover photo, jogging and bicycling on Genesee Valley Greenway, NY:
Photo by Kristen Bennett, courtesy Fran Gotcsik and Joan Schumaker,
Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway.**

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Numerous studies have argued that kindness, generosity, and cooperation express universal human tendencies rooted in our evolutionary heritage (e.g., Hart and Sussman 2009; De Waal 2005; Wilson 2002). Normal expectations that this might suggest have been exceeded by the individuals who helped develop the program outlined in this document.

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The individuals and organizations mentioned above include specialists with expertise far beyond my own. They are not responsible for the errors, misguided rhetoric, and other faults found in this document. Comments, corrections, and criticisms are welcomed so that it will be useful until replaced by better materials produced by more qualified people.

In continued collaboration,

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Note on Final Release

Comments on the previous draft suggested only very minor adjustments that were easily incorporated without significant changes in content or layout. The bibliography now includes new planning documents that refer to the Triple Divide Trail System. These were produced for Rochester (Sprinkle et al. 2011, p. 7); the Rochester-Genesee-Finger Lakes region ([Rochester Cycling Alliance et al.] 2010, pp. 7, 10-11); and all of NY (*2010 Statewide Trails Plan*, NYSOPRHP 2010b, pp. 14, 41, and maps, Figs. 1 and 4). These complement earlier documents already mentioned in the previous draft (e.g., North Central PA Regional Plan. and Devel. Comm. 2010, Potter County, p. 3-179 and map trails nos. 1 and 7; PA DCNR with Larson Design 2010; Lycoming County Plan. Comm. et al. 2006, in general and pp. 5-4, 10, 17; 9-9, 10; Slack et al. 2010). These sources attest to growing cooperation across state lines on this project.

A.K.

March 2011

Triple Divide Trail System Strategic Plan

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Preface

Purpose and Limitations of this Document

This document is a strategic planning tool for connecting conservation and recreational systems in Pennsylvania and New York. The program it describes is already being incorporated into state and regional plans in both states. This plan is being implemented by default, because it builds on work already being done on existing recreational systems. The new resources that become available by working together across state lines are only beginning to be tapped.

This plan is based on planning commission meetings, conversations with officials in public agencies, published reports, and many other sources. But it is neither a legal document nor a technical committee report. It is only a provisional working tool for the agencies, legislative bodies, businesses, landowners, and other groups that would benefit from collaboration. The purpose of this document is to make it easier to communicate across geographical distances, maximize resources, understand how parts fit into the whole, and secure grants and other aid.

One limitation of this plan is the absence of any significant treatment of trail and recreational systems associated with the Allegheny River. This is despite the fact that the Allegheny is one of the rivers referenced in the very name of the Triple Divide Trail System. This omission was due to practical considerations (see below, "Introduction"). This does not preclude giving more attention to connections with the rich resources along the Allegheny River at some future time. This is, however, far beyond the scope of the present document.

Executive Summary

Building on Previous Work with an Integrative Approach

The Triple Divide Trail System will be a unified conservation and recreational system stretching ca. 230 miles along the Genesee River and Pine Creek from Lake Ontario in Rochester, NY, to the Susquehanna River in Williamsport, PA. The name derives from its passage over a triple continental divide separating the headwaters of three national watersheds: the Allegheny River, the Genesee River, and the Susquehanna River (West Branch and Pine Creek). This recreational system is being created by connecting existing rail-trails (greenways), water trails (blueways), and nature park areas, including Letchworth State Park (NY) and Pine Creek Gorge (PA). The approach is integrative and cost effective. It combines water conservation, natural flood control, outdoor recreation, environmental education, and sustainable economic development, including new jobs in construction and eco-tourism.

Strategies and Phases

(1) Improve existing trails for bicycles and existing canoe/kayak launches along the Genesee River and Pine Creek. Existing trails include the Genesee Riverway Trail in Rochester (NY); Genesee Valley Greenway (NY); Park Road in Letchworth State Park (NY); WAG Trail (Wellsville-Addison-Galeton rail-trail, from Wellsville, NY, south); Pine Creek Trail (PA); and Lycoming County Trail and Bikeway in Williamsport (PA). Some canoe/kayak launches on Pine Creek and most on the Genesee River are rough and informal. This existing recreational infrastructure needs: (a) more signs; (b) more parking lots; (c) more complementary infrastructure, such as pavilions, restrooms, campsites, and trail shelters; (d) better surfaces for bicycle trails; (e) improved launches for canoes and kayaks.

(2) Construct new canoe-kayak launches with signs, parking lots, and other complementary infrastructure to improve blueway (water trail) systems along the Genesee River and Pine Creek. Often these can be built at low cost near bridges and other public sites, with costs minimized further by incorporation into new bridge construction. In other cases this requires purchase of land or easements.

(3) Add linking trails to connect existing trails (above) together to form a multi-use rail-trail stretching from Rochester to Williamsport along the Genesee River and Pine Creek. Only a few short sections of the entire 230-mile system do not already have a trail completed or under development. In most of these cases old railroad beds or other existing infrastructure will expedite trail construction.

(4) Add inexpensive forested streamside nature parks that simultaneously expand protections for the stream system while providing immediate jobs in construction, recreational infrastructure for long-term eco-tourism, and facilities for environmental education. These include camping shelters, restrooms, pavilions, interpretive signs, wildlife-viewing platforms, and educational kiosks.

(5) Continue adding forested riparian (streamside) buffers along the Genesee River and Pine Creek that offer water conservation, wildlife habitat, and natural flood control while accommodating existing development. The Genesee River is one of the largest rivers feeding Lake Ontario. Pine Creek is the largest tributary of the West Branch of the Susquehanna River and thereby has a major impact on Chesapeake Bay. Agricultural nutrients, industrial toxins, costly flooding, and risk of overuse will be reduced by buffers reaching at least 300 feet wide on each bank (at least 100 feet for small tributaries) where existing development allows. In some places this can reach 1/4 mile, which is the average recommended for the highest class of federally protected rivers. In other sections a narrower buffer may be a more realistic goal. Local support can be generated by funds for purchase of land, easements, zoning costs, and sustainable recreational development in these buffers (above).

**1. Maps of Entire Trail System:
Rochester, NY, to Williamsport, PA
(Lake Ontario to Susquehanna River)**



Beach on Lake Ontario at Mouth of Genesee River, Rochester, NY

Photo courtesy Cyclopedia Rochester and Dr. Cappy Collins, University of Rochester

Triple Divide Trail System

Rochester to Williamsport via the Genesee River, the Triple Divide, and Pine Creek

Distance from Lake Ontario in Rochester to Susquehanna River in Williamsport, approx. 230 Miles.



REVISED MAP, SEPTEMBER 1, 2010

Blue: Existing trails (completed or under development), including Genesee Riverway Trail (Rochester, NY), Genesee Valley Greenway (NY), Park Road in Letchworth State Park (NY), WAG Trail (trail on Wellsville-Addison-Galeton Railroad bed, from Wellsville, NY, to NY/PA state line, acquired by NYSDEC 11/2009), Pine Creek Trail (PA), Lycoming County Trail and Bikeway (PA).

Red: Planned linking trails (currently requires temporary detours onto roads): Out of ca. 120 miles on NY side, only missing ca. 20 miles between Belfast and Wellsville in Allegany County, NY. Out of ca. 110 miles on PA side, only missing ca. 40 miles from NY/PA state line through Potter County and Tioga County, PA, to the Pine Creek Trail and ca. 15 miles from southern end of Pine Creek Trail to Lycoming County Trail and Bikeway in Williamsport.

Revised by Allen Kerkeslager with aid of state agencies, planning commissions, academic institutions, and other groups in NY and PA

