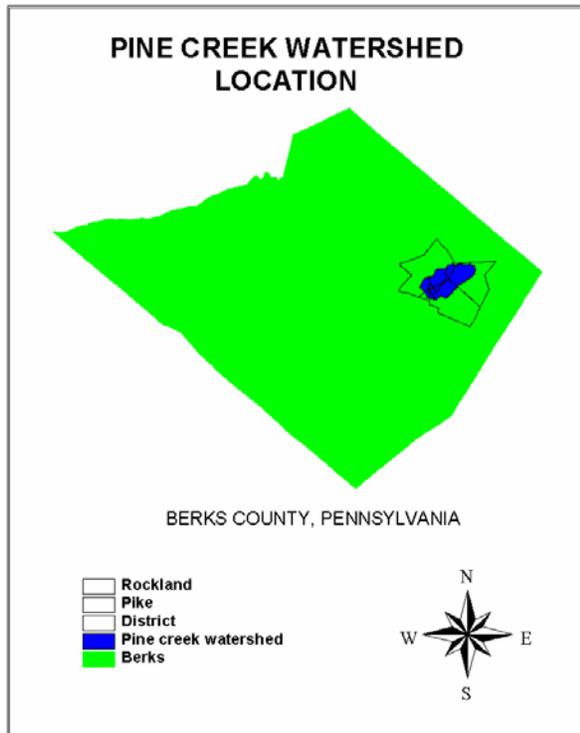


INTRODUCTION

Pine Creek Watershed is an area with exceptional natural and cultural resources and special preservation needs. Its water has been designated EV, *Exceptional Value*, by the Department of Environmental Protection. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has named it a *Class A Wild Trout Stream*. In fact, because of its exceptional water quality, that supports many sensitive species of aquatic insects, DEP's biologists use Pine Creek as the reference stream for comparison when evaluating other area streams for upgrades to EV status.



The entire Pine Creek Watershed is identified by the Pennsylvania Science Office of the Nature Conservancy as a sensitive Natural Community. The whole region is ranked as a top priority for protection in the Berks County Natural Areas Inventory and Open Space and Recreation Plan. Its natural features of contiguous woodlands, extensive wetlands, healthy streams, and variety of wildlife habitats nurture propagation of diverse native plants and animals. Rare, threatened and endangered species of flora and fauna, listed in the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory, are among its inhabitants.

The historical character of the region is also significant, distinguished by architectural, agricultural and industrial artifacts of the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The region around Lobachsville was settled by the Keim, Hoch, Pott, and Lobach families, who established farms and water-powered industries. Between 1745 and 1800, Pine Creek furnished power for the Pott gristmill and sawmill and the Lobach fulling mill and woolen factory, all in Lobachsville. Upstream, John Leshner built District Furnace in 1784, later followed by the Trexler gristmill and District forges. The Lobachsville area has been determined National Register eligible, exemplifying a well-preserved historic rural community of the northern Oley Valley.

The region's natural and cultural heritage has been influenced, to a large extent, by its excellent water resources. The early settlers chose their home sites near free-flowing springs. Later, entrepreneurs built mills and iron works utilizing the waterpower of Pine Creek. Self-sufficient farms multiplied as the area grew in population during the nineteenth century. People lived close to the land, and valued their water. Today water resources are still valued, and there is a need to balance the increasing demands of population growth with natural resource protection. Pine Creek Valley Watershed Association is producing this Protection Plan to encourage educational initiatives and action projects to address this need.