

## *Land Use and Growth Management Profile*

**M**ontour County is located in the Middle Susquehanna Valley portion of the state and is bordered by the counties of Columbia, Northumberland, and Lycoming. The County is located on the North Branch of the Susquehanna River. Montour County is rural and contains nine townships and two boroughs. Danville Borough is the county seat.

According to the 2000 Census, Montour County's population of 18,236 people placed it 62<sup>nd</sup> among Pennsylvania's counties. Its average population per square mile of 139.5 makes it the 33<sup>rd</sup> most densely populated county. Montour County's land area of 130.75 square miles means it is Pennsylvania's smallest county.

From 1990 to 2000, the County's population increased by 2.8 percent, which is slightly below the state's population increase of 3.4 percent. There was a gain in housing units of 10.8 percent during the 1990s, the 18<sup>th</sup> largest increase in the state. The number of households increased by 8.3 percent, while the average size of households decreased by 3.6 percent. Additionally, the County is in 43<sup>rd</sup> position in terms of the number of residents below the poverty line at 10.3 percent.

### **Existing Land Use Conditions**

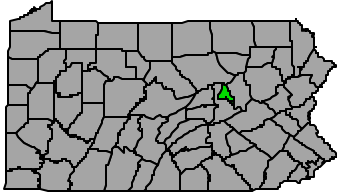
Underdeveloped land comprises 94.3 percent of the County's total land area. Farmland and open space illustrates the County's overall rural character with 60.1 percent of the total land.

With a total of 259 farms and 40,000 acres of farmland, Montour County ranks 55<sup>th</sup> among Pennsylvania's counties in acreage devoted to agriculture. The Montour Conservation District administers an agricultural preservation program. Easements have been purchased for eight farms, protecting 634 acres.

In addition to rural farmlands, Montour County includes state game lands, state forests, nature preserves, and the Susquehanna River and its tributaries. Ricketts Glen, one of several nearby state parks, is a Registered National Natural Landmark with more than 22 waterfalls located along a seven-mile trail through the park. Almost 20,000 acres of state game land are available for hunting, boating, hiking, bird watching, and nature study. There is an abundance of lakes and streams for bass, trout, muskie, pickerel, and many other fish.

### **Key Land Use Issues**

- ☑ **Currently, there are few development pressures in Montour County.** Population has grown at a rate of 0.28 percent per year over the last decade. There is little housing abandonment. Danville, the county seat, has little ground available for new construction. Some development has taken place in Mahoning Township, which has created a need for storm water management. This development has increased the impervious surface, which in turn, increases the amount of storm water runoff. Public water and sewer services



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are available in Danville, Mahoning, and Valley Townships. Otherwise, water and sewage service is provided by on-lot systems. The County Soil Conservation Office takes care of water quality and quantity measures.

- ☑ **There is a need to update the County comprehensive plan adopted in 1972.** The County Planning Commission is staffed by one employee. The Commission is responsible for planning administration in Anthony, Cooper, Liberty, and Mayberry Townships respectively, and in the Borough of Washingtonville, which is 31.6 percent of the County's land area. The balance of the County is not actively served by the Commission on a continuing basis. The County comprehensive plan was adopted in 1972, and it is not compliant with current Municipalities Planning Code Amendments. Nine municipalities have subdivision and zoning ordinances. County zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances were adopted in 1995.
- ☑ **There is also a need for additional planning administrative capacity.** This additional capacity would provide planning and planning-related services for the 68 percent of County land area which presently cannot be served, if the County planning ordinances are to be effective. Derry, Limestone, and West Hemlock Townships respectively, are members of a joint planning commission, the Northern Montour Regional Planning Commission, formed in 1997.

- ☑ **There is a need to integrate transportation and economic development planning into Montour County's comprehensive plan.** Montour County is substantially impacted by I-80, which traverses the County from east to west. Presently, transportation is not included in the County's planning process. Also, economic development planning is not integrated into any County comprehensive planning process. In the recent past, job loss in the County has centered upon Geisinger Medical Center, which has lost a substantial number of doctors. This occurred before the current problems with medical malpractice insurance.

### **Land Use Planning Activities**

- ☑ An effort is underway to prepare for updating of the 1972 County comprehensive plan.
- ☑ In the four municipalities presently served by the County planning commission, administration of zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances is ongoing.