

Land Use and Growth Management Profile

Tioga County is located in the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania, the Susquehanna Extension Region and adjoins Potter County to the west, the New York state line to the north, Bradford County to the east, and Lycoming County to the south. Tioga County is rural in character, and has 40 municipalities, 30 townships, and 10 boroughs. Wellsboro is the county seat. Wellsboro and Mansfield, with its state university, are the two primary core communities. Blossburg, Westfield, Elkland, and Lawrenceburg comprise secondary core communities.

Tioga County's population of 41,373 places it in 55th position among Pennsylvania's 67 counties. Its total land area of 1,133.73 square miles makes Tioga the 4th largest County in Pennsylvania. The County's population density of 36.5 people per square mile ranks the County in 62nd position, and compares to the statewide average of 274 people per square mile. From 1990 to 2000, Census figures show a 0.6 percent increase in population, the 22nd slowest rate of population growth.

The County's 19,893 housing units ranked it in 52nd position statewide. From 1990 to 2000, the County had a 9.3 percent gain in the number of housing units, the 25th fastest rate of gain among Pennsylvania counties. The number of households increased by 6.4 percent during the same period, placing the County in 40th position among the 67 counties. The average size of households decreased by 5.0 percent, the 21st largest decrease, statewide.

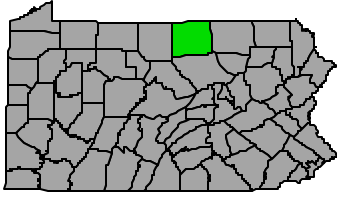
According to 1997 estimates in the 2000 Census, 13.3 percent of Tioga County's population was below the poverty line, the 16th largest number among Pennsylvania's counties. Statewide, the average number below the poverty line is 10.9 percent. The median age of Tioga County residents is 38.5 years, ranking the County as having the 33rd lowest median age; 24.2 percent of Tioga County residents worked outside their county of residence, the 21st largest percentage statewide.

Existing Land Use Conditions

Over 97 percent of the County's total land area are undeveloped, with about 2.6 percent of this land devoted to forest and agricultural uses.

Tioga County, located in Pennsylvania's Northern Tier of counties, is part of the Allegheny Plateau, characterized by flat-topped hills and steep valleys. It is the location of the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania, a 50-mile-long forested and scenic gorge with a natural waterway, Pine Creek, viewed by many tourists each year. It was formed about 26,000 years ago from glacial runoff. The County's lowest point, Pine Creek near Blackwell, is 850 feet above sea level, with its highest point of 2,543 feet on Cedar Mountain in Elk Township. The average elevation is 1,600-1,700 feet above sea level.

The primary use of converted agricultural land to date has been residential development. The County has a significant number of second homes used by hunters. Some weatherization of these housing



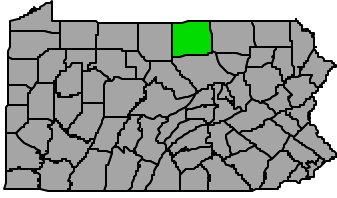
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structures is occurring. Such housing development depends upon soils suitable for septic systems. The County has a substantial amount of soil with high clay content.

The major highway corridors in Tioga County are Route 15, Route 49, and Route 6. In perhaps three to four years, I-99 is expected to be a major corridor within Tioga County. At present, Route 15 is the only corridor with substantial congestion. The Route 15 corridor also generates some growth pressures in terms of infrastructure requests to facilitate development along the corridor.

Key Land Use Issues

- Agriculture continues to be Tioga County's main industry; sustaining this industry is vital to the County and regional economies.** U.S. Dept. of Agriculture December 2002 data indicates that there are 832 farms, placing Tioga County in 19th place statewide. Dairy farming accounts for most of the County's agricultural income. Total agricultural acreage is 220,000 acres, the eighth largest number of farm acres among Pennsylvania counties. The average size of a Tioga County farm is 246 acres, the second largest average size among the 67 counties. Statewide, the average Pennsylvania farm covers 158 acres.
- The lack of state and local funds necessary to support the County's Ag Land Preservation program is detrimental to the County's ability to**
- sustain its vibrant agricultural industry.** Currently, only one farm of 180 acres in Tioga County has been preserved through the County's agricultural land preservation program.
- Concentrated animal feeding operations, especially pig farms, produce odors and effluent run-off that threatens to produce significant pollution problems.** Some dairy farms are producing even worse environmental problems.
- U.S. Route 15 congestion is a substantial problem, which has convinced many residents that growth management needs to be considered.** Ongoing improvements to Route 15 for its future designation as I-99 will serve to mitigate congestion problems.
- I-99 interchange development may become a land use planning issue** for local communities, especially those without land use regulations.
- Illegal dumping throughout Tioga County – especially, on public lands – poses a serious issue,** as this practice is often used to avoid disposal or tipping fees for items no longer wanted.



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Land Use Planning Activities

- ☑ **The Tioga County Planning Commission is spearheading the effort to prepare a new countywide comprehensive plan**, the development of which is supported by a DCED Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance grant. Unique features of the plan include a land use survey using the County's aerial photography and a visioning process to safeguard uniquely attractive landscapes. Once adopted, the plan will comply with the PA Municipalities Planning Code.

- ☑ **The Tioga County Planning Commission, in cooperation with the Penn State Extension Service and PA Department of Environmental Protection, is exploring the availability of GIS-based watershed studies.**

- ☑ **The Tioga County Planning Commission is applying to the PA DCNR for a Scenic River designation for Pine Creek in Tioga's Grand Canyon.**