

Franklin Township Profile

History of the Township

One of five original townships in Greene County, Franklin Township, which took its name from Benjamin Franklin, was formed in 1787 from Cumberland and Morgan Townships. In some historical documents, reference is made to the area that became Franklin Township as being cleared for habitation around 1771 as settlers traveled upstream along Ten Mile Creek from the Monongahela River to get to the village of Waynesburg, which later became the County Seat of Greene County.

The following excerpt is taken from the History of Greene County, Pennsylvania by Samuel P. Bates (Nelson, Ruchforth & Co., Chicago. 1888).

"FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP, from the fact that the county seat is comprised within its limits, and that it holds a central location in the county, possesses an importance beyond that of any of the others. Franklin was organized as a township in 1787, by act of the Supreme Executive council with less circumscribed boundaries than at present. It is now limited as follows: on the north by Washington, on the east by Morgan, Jefferson and Whiteley, on the south by Whiteley and Wayne, and on the west by Centre. It bears the name of one of the early patriots, more honored in foreign lands than any other American citizen. Its surface is diversified by hill and dale, and, though the hills rise to an elevation which may with some propriety be termed mountains, the soil is everywhere productive, copious fountains bursting forth on every hand, even to the loftiest summits. Originally the sugar maple made luxurious growth here, but, as in nearly every other part of the county, the groves of these trees have been swept away, and thus a source of great profit to the husbandman has been cut off. The hay crop in this township is very abundant.

Franklin is principally drained by South Ten Mile Creek and its tributaries. Smith creek drains all the south western section even to its farthest limits. A marked peculiarity of the highways is that they almost exclusively run from north to south, following the valleys, the few connecting roads from east to west forming the exception. The farms in this township are in a high state of cultivation, and exhibit evidences of careful and intelligent tillage. The farmhouses are commodious, and those recently built, exhibit evidences of tasteful architecture. Many of the barns are models, and admirably planned to meet the requirements of the husbandman. Waynesburg, the county seat, a place of some 3,400 inhabitants, with Perryville and Morrisville a little to the east and lower down the stream, are the only places of importance. The Washington and Waynesburg railroad enters the township by the Ten Mile Creek valley. On a commanding eminence to the north of the town a beautiful cemetery has been laid out

and planted with evergreens and shrubs, and to it many who had been buried in the old bury ground to the east of the town, and from a burying place on the public common, have been removed.”

The history of Franklin Township goes back to the initial settlements of various Native American tribes. As European inhabitants found their way to America, and eventually into Greene County and Franklin Township, the local populations increased as these new immigrants found work in the (bituminous) coal, agriculture and wool industries. The abundance of natural gas was also a catalyst to the early growth that the Township experienced.

Also playing a part in the development of the Township was the transportation network that provided access throughout the region – most notably the state roads, the interstate (and the interchange in Franklin Township), and the railroad. As mobility was made easier, goods and services became more accessible and economic growth followed. The global economy became attainable through the export of various products from the region via the railroads and the Interstate system – both of which are prominent in the Township.

Community Character

Governance

Franklin Township is a municipality – a political subdivision unit – in Pennsylvania that is classified as a township of the second class. The municipality is governed by three elected Supervisors that function under the Pennsylvania Second Class Township Code (Act of May 1, 1933, P.L. 103, No. 69; reenacted and amended Nov. 9, 1995, P.L.350, No.60).

Through powers enabled to municipalities in Pennsylvania, Franklin Township has established a Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, Recreation Board, Sewer Authority Board, and Auditors to address various matters in the Township.

Geography

Franklin Township, with the coordinates of 39.89639 (Latitude) and -80.17944 (Longitude), is located in the central / eastern central part of Greene County and completely surrounds Waynesburg Borough – the county seat. Franklin shares its boundary with the following Townships in Greene County: Morgan, Jefferson, Whiteley, Wayne, Center, Morris, and Washington.

Interstate 79, which traverses Franklin Township in a north – south direction, provides easy access to two major east – west connectors: Interstate 68 to the south and Interstate 70 to the north. This network allows the Township to be within a one day’s drive to many major metropolitan areas within the United States. This may be a competitive advantage for businesses and industries looking to locate in the region to access to these markets.

North

- Pittsburgh, PA – 52 miles
- Cleveland, OH – 180 miles
- Toronto, CAN – 362 miles
- New York, NY – 385 miles

West

- Columbus, OH – 182 miles
- Indianapolis, IN – 356 miles
- Chicago, IL – 506 miles
- St. Louis, MO – 598 miles

South

- Charlotte, NC – 400 miles
- Nashville, TN – 566 miles
- Atlanta, GA – 635 miles
- Orlando, FL – 922 miles

East

- Washington, DC – 240 miles
- Baltimore, MD – 242 miles
- Philadelphia, PA – 318 miles
- Boston, MA – 608 miles

These mileages were determined using Google Maps calculations from Waynesburg to each location.

Locally, some of the areas that Township residents travel to for services and shopping include the following cities: Morgantown, WV (27 miles); Uniontown, Fayette County (28 miles); and Washington, Washington County (25 miles).

Land Area

Franklin Township, according to the US Census Bureau, has a total area of 40.9 square miles. Approximately 99% of the total area is land while only 0.10% of the surface is covered by water. Over half of the land area is forested with the remaining significant land cover classified as agricultural and urban.

Topography

Situated within the Appalachian Mountains, Franklin Township’s rural landscape is made up of hills and valleys throughout a majority of the municipality. The Township is in the Waynesburg Hills Section of the Pittsburgh Low Plateau of the Appalachian Plateau Physiographic Province. The Appalachian Plateau province is underlain by layers of rock, predominantly sandstones and shales. Unlike the Allegheny Mountain Province to the east, the rock layers in the plateau region did not fold extensively to form mountain

ridges; topographic relief at the surface in this area is mostly defined by stream valleys eroded and down cut over time. (Greene County Natural Heritage Inventory: Prepared by The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy - June 2005).

As shown on the USGS topographic map (Waynesburg Quad), elevations in the Township range from just under 1000 feet above sea level to locations that reach almost 1500 feet above sea level. Some of the higher elevations in the municipality provide remarkable viewsheds.



The majority of the lands that are less than ten percent (10%) slope are located along the State Route 21 Corridor and along the streams throughout the Township. Some of the land along the streams are also located in the 100-year floodplain making them more difficult to develop. Franklin Township also has a few areas that contain slopes in excess of twenty-five percent (25%) which can be more susceptible to erosion and landslides if they are developed. The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) addresses steep slopes in Article III – Comprehensive Plan as being included in the plan for the protection of natural and historic resources to the extent not preempted by federal or state law. Also, Article VI – Zoning states that the regulation, restriction or prohibition of uses and structures at, along or near places of relatively steep slope or grade should be included in the zoning ordinance enacted by a municipality.

These slopes are shown in more detail on the Soils / Slopes Map. The flood prone areas are identified on the Hydrography Map.

Soils

The characteristics of the soil types that are found in Franklin Township can be good indicators of how certain lands should be used in the future - protection of watersheds, open spaces and forestlands; development of residential, commercial, and industrial sites; expansion of public infrastructure; improvements to recreation facilities; and landscaping vegetation. As shown on the Soils / Slope Map for Franklin Township, three soil associations are identified for the Township:

- Dormont – Culleoka – Guernsey: Residuum of weathered clay shale, siltstone, sandstone, limestone and colluvium. Moderately well drained and well drained, deep and moderately deep, gently sloping to moderately steep soils; on hilltops,

ridges, benches, and hillsides. Use is best suited to trees. Slopes, erosion and seasonally high-water tables are the main limitations.

- Glenford – Dormont – Library: Slackwater alluvium derived from calcareous shale and sandstone. Moderately well drained and somewhat poorly drained, deep, nearly level to sloping soils; on terraces and surrounding uplands. Most areas are cultivated or used for hay and to a lesser extent community development. Less sloping soils are suited to farming and most acreage is suited to trees.
- Gilpin-Dormont-Culleoka – this soil type is identified on the soil survey map, but there was no description included in the Soil Survey.

The majority of the Township is comprised of the Dormont-Culleoka association. The major limitations associated with this association include steep slopes, a tendency for erosion to occur, and a seasonal high-water table. The soils of Greene County are described in more detail in the Soil Survey of Greene and Washington Counties, Pennsylvania (Siebert, et al., 1983).

Ecological Habitats

In 2005, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) completed a Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) for Greene County which was “designed to identify and map important biotic (living) and ecological resources” and help decision makers plan development with the preservation of these environmentally important sites in mind.

Currently, the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program is in the process of updating the County Natural Heritage Inventories for the Southwest region. The updated spatial data (ecology of the sites that include maps and species lists) is expected to be released in June of 2020 and the updated site accounts are anticipated to be completed by December of 2020. The Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) collects and stores location and baseline ecological information about rare plants, rare animals, unique plant communities, significant habitats, and geologic features in Pennsylvania.

The NHI that was completed for Greene County in 2005 identified three (3) areas in the Township that were a mix of Biological Diversity Areas (BDAs) and Landscape Conservation Areas (LCAs). The new classification system now combines these areas into one category – Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs).

The NHA is an area containing one or more plant or animal species of concern at state or federal levels, exemplary natural communities, or exceptional native biological diversity. NHAs include both the immediate habitat and surrounding lands important in the support of these elements. They are mapped according to their sensitivity to human activities, with designations of Core Habitat and Supporting Landscape areas.

Core Habitat – areas representing critical habitat that cannot absorb significant levels of activity without substantial negative impacts to elements of concern.

Supporting Landscape – areas directly connected to Core Habitat that maintain vital ecological processes and / or secondary habitat that may be able to withstand some lower level of activity without substantial negative impacts to elements of concern.

Initial data has identified five (5) NHAs in Franklin Township, of which two (2) of the new NHAs are considered of “local” significance, one (1) is of “regional” significance, and two (2) are of “global” significance. These updates are based on new inventory surveys that were done in the area between 2005 and 2019, as well as changes in species rarity and status rankings that have occurred over the last 15 years.

<u>Site Name</u>	<u>Significance Rank</u>
Browns Creek	Global
Hill School House Road	Regional
Pursley Creek	Local
South Fork Tenmile Creek at Waynesburg	Local
Throckmorton Run	Global

Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program 2020 - Southwest Regional Natural Heritage Inventory Update (Unpublished draft)

The PNHP / WPC has indicated that it is possible that some additional changes might occur between now and when the NHI is finalized because the information that was provided is still undergoing internal review. Once the report is completed, the WPC will share the full report or underlying spatial data as well as add a URL to link to the information.

The Rank and Description for the NHAs are as follows:

Global - Sites which have global importance for biological diversity and Pennsylvania has a primary role to maintain. Sites in this category generally contain one or more occurrences of species of global concern or large concentrations of species of lower significance.

Regional - Sites which have regional importance for biological diversity and these Pennsylvania sites are important for maintaining representation of those species in the greater Northeast / mid-Atlantic region. Sites in this category generally

contain one or more occurrences of species of global concern or concentrations of species of lower significance

State - Sites which are important for the biological diversity and ecological integrity at the state scale. Sites have occurrences of elements of concern with lower ranks, smaller populations or extent, or generally lower biodiversity scores than Global or Regional ranked areas.

Local - Sites which have importance to biological diversity at the county scale, but are not, as yet, known to contain species of concern or state significant natural communities. Often recognized because of their relative size, undisturbed character, or proximity to areas of known significance, these sites may be targeted with future surveys.

The information for the Natural Heritage Areas, Core Habitat, Supporting Landscape, and the Rank and Descriptions was taken from a recently completed Natural Heritage Inventory for Bedford County through the permission of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

Water Resources

In Article III (Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, it states that (municipal) Comprehensive Plans shall include a plan for the reliable supply of water, considering current and future water resources availability, uses and limitations, including provisions adequate to protect water supply sources. It further says that any such plan shall be generally consistent with the State Water Plan and any applicable water resources plan adopted by a river basin commission.

The importance of protecting the quality and quantity of water resources – streams, lakes, reservoirs, wetlands, well heads, groundwater, etc. – is essential to the public’s health, safety, and welfare; recreation opportunities; future growth and development; and the improvement of the quality of life. Franklin Township has many water based resources that are a big part of its overall appeal to its residents and visitors.

The Franklin Township Comprehensive Plan has identified the various water resources in the Township and their significance to the Township’s future. This is reflective of the Commonwealth’s Environmental Rights amendment (1971) that states all Pennsylvanians have a fundamental right to a healthy environment. Included in these efforts are that all elected officials, when they take the oath of office to uphold Pennsylvania’s Constitution, in so doing, assume the role of steward for the

Commonwealth's natural resources that they may be protected for the benefit and use of future generations.

Located in the larger Ohio River Watershed Basin, and the Monongahela River subbasin, the Township has many subwatersheds that drain into streams that ultimately reach the Ohio River. Protecting these watersheds, including the waterways, wetlands, 100-year floodplains, riparian buffers, and other features will help to maintain and improve the local environment and its ecological communities.

The subwatersheds located in Franklin Township include the following:

- Wisecarver Run
- Mudlick Run
- Purman Run
- Grimes Run
- Jackson Run
- Toll Gate Run
- Brown's Creek
- Throckmorton Run
- Clear Run
- South Fork Ten Mile Creek
- Pursley Creek
- Smith Creek
- Sugar Run
- Laurel Run
- Coal Lick Run

Two waterways in the Township are presently being used, or planned for improvements to be used, as recreational sites that are bringing visitors into the region. They are:

Ten Mile Creek

As people are looking for new ways to get out and enjoy local recreational opportunities, (South Fork) Ten Mile Creek is becoming a destination for those who are interested in kayaking, canoeing and fishing. A local group has established a Facebook page and a website (www.kayakgreencounty.com) that provides information on suggested trips, launch points, upcoming events / floats, etc.



The South Fork of Ten Mile Creek runs in a west to east direction through the middle of the Township and it flows into Ten Mile Creek at Clarksburg and continues on to the Monongahela River.

Additional awareness through social media and other means will lead to more people making the trip to Greene County and Franklin Township. Franklin Township has an official launch point at the Route 188 recreation fields and two other locations that include: Bucktown Dam and the I-79 Overpass access points.

Ten Mile Creek is one of only two publicly navigable waters in Greene County – the other is the Monongahela River.

Wisecarver Recreation Area



Located in the northwestern portion of the Township off of Water Dam Road (SR 4035), the Wisecarver Dam and Reservoir (former name) is a potential regional recreational site. The Wisecarver Recreation Area is a 360-acre site that includes open space, wooded areas, and an 18.5 acre reservoir that is fed by Wisecarver Run. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission helps to maintain the fishing and boating access area.

A few years ago, the Greene County Commissioners entered into a 99-year lease with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Water Authority to use the site for future park and recreation activities. In April of 2019 the County Commissioners agreed to a twenty-five year sub-lease for a portion of the property with the Wisecarver Complex Committee. The organization is looking to build three softball fields, a concession stand, rest rooms and batting cages on the property near the access from Water Dam Road.

In 2018, the Commissioners received a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) grant that will be used for a parking lot and walking trails at the Wisecarver Recreation Area site.