

**Recommendations:**

- Identify, assess, and prioritize the areas of the county with rural, agricultural, open space, river-riparian corridors, and scenic qualities.
- Provide incentives for development and businesses that would promote the county's rural, agricultural, open space, river-riparian corridor, and scenic qualities, particularly when the development or businesses would contribute something new to the local economy and economic development, promote a sense of community, provide a needed public service, or reflect the history and culture of the area.
- Provide disincentives for conflicting development within these prioritized areas, districts, and landscapes.
- Develop land use regulations, ordinances, and plans that promote these unique qualities.

**Goal: Determine Appropriate Current and Future Uses of Historic Landscapes, Districts, and Structures.**

**Objectives:**

- Revitalize historic resources in ways that will serve the community and develop the economy without detracting from their contribution to local character or impair their historic value.
- Encourage new uses of historic structures that contribute to the preservation of their historic character, particularly including financial contributions.
- Emphasize the unique aspects of the county's history to promote and develop the existing sense of local character that is important to the county's residents and appealing to visitors and future residents.
- Employ existing preservation tools and explore new opportunities for financing, restoration, and other forms of support.

**Recommendations:**

- Provide incentives for businesses and organizations to locate in historic structures and play a role in their preservation, particularly when those businesses or organizations contribute something new to the local economy and economic development, promote a sense of community, provide a needed public service, or reflect the historic use of the structure.
- Provide disincentives for new, and particularly conflicting, development within prioritized historic districts and landscapes, such as the county's agricultural lands, the Hinton Historic District and the land surrounding the John Henry Historical Park.
- If new development is to occur in historic districts or landscapes, ensure that the development complements the character and value of the emphasized period of history.

**Goal: Promote and Encourage Appropriate Uses Based on Cultural, Environmental, and Historical Context of an Area.**

**Objective:** Encourage mixed uses while ensuring that the proposed use is consistent with or compliments the overall cultural, environmental, and historical qualities of the area.

**Recommendations:**

- Establish criteria for the assessment of categories of uses, such as commercial, residential, industrial, agricultural, and open-space, acknowledging that there may be sub-categories within the broader categories.
- Categorize and contemplate various types of uses and assess areas of the county where each use might be appropriate or inappropriate. For instance, adult entertainment businesses may not be appropriate in the smaller communities such as Jumping Branch. Conversely, locally owned and operated retail businesses may be appropriate in each of the individual communities but perhaps not in the very rural or strictly residential areas. However, home-based businesses may be appropriate throughout the community.
- Based on this assessment, determine which uses are permitted and which, if any, should be prohibited and in which areas or districts.
- Promote mixed-used development throughout the county, which would encourage sustainable communities within Summers County.
- Provide incentives for development and businesses that represent appropriate uses in appropriate areas, particularly when the development or businesses contribute something new to the local economy and economic development, promote a sense of community, provide a needed public service, or reflect the history and culture of the area.
- Create disincentives for conflicting development.
- Create an opportunity for variances from these “use categories” based on the overall effect the use may have on the historical, cultural, and environmental qualities in the community.
- Develop land use regulations, ordinances, performance standards, and plans that would promote these unique qualities.

**Financial Considerations**

Many provisions of this chapter and this document, as a whole, can be divided into broader categories of recommendations and strategies. These recommendations encompass many possibilities, including land use planning tools – such as subdivision ordinances, zoning or performance standards, and other types of regulations or ordinances, partnerships between local government agencies, quasi-government agencies, and non-profit or private enterprises, and incentivizing appropriate development for individuals and private enterprises. Because many of these recommendations can be categorized into groups, the financial considerations necessary to implement these recommendations can likewise be categorized.

While many of the recommendations included in this document may be accomplished with little additional funding or expense, most of the recommendations may require additional funding. For instance, it may be appropriate to create local government positions to study, develop, and enforce additional ordinance or provisions of the code, such as a code enforcement officer. However, it may also be possible to implement some provisions with the resources currently available.

There are a variety of approaches which may be taken to develop the funding necessary for implementation of these recommendations. Some of the more obvious sources of funding include, but should not be limited to, increase in property taxes (though not popular), development fees, additional building permit fees, grants funding conservation

programs, like the Summers County Farmland Protection Board, public-private partnerships, and grant opportunities. In drafting this document, the Summers County Planning Commission, based on public input, encourages a broad and flexible approach to addressing the issue of funding the recommendations included in this document. Any legal opportunity for funding a project consistent with the recommendations herein may be or should be pursued.

## Chapter IX: Economic Development

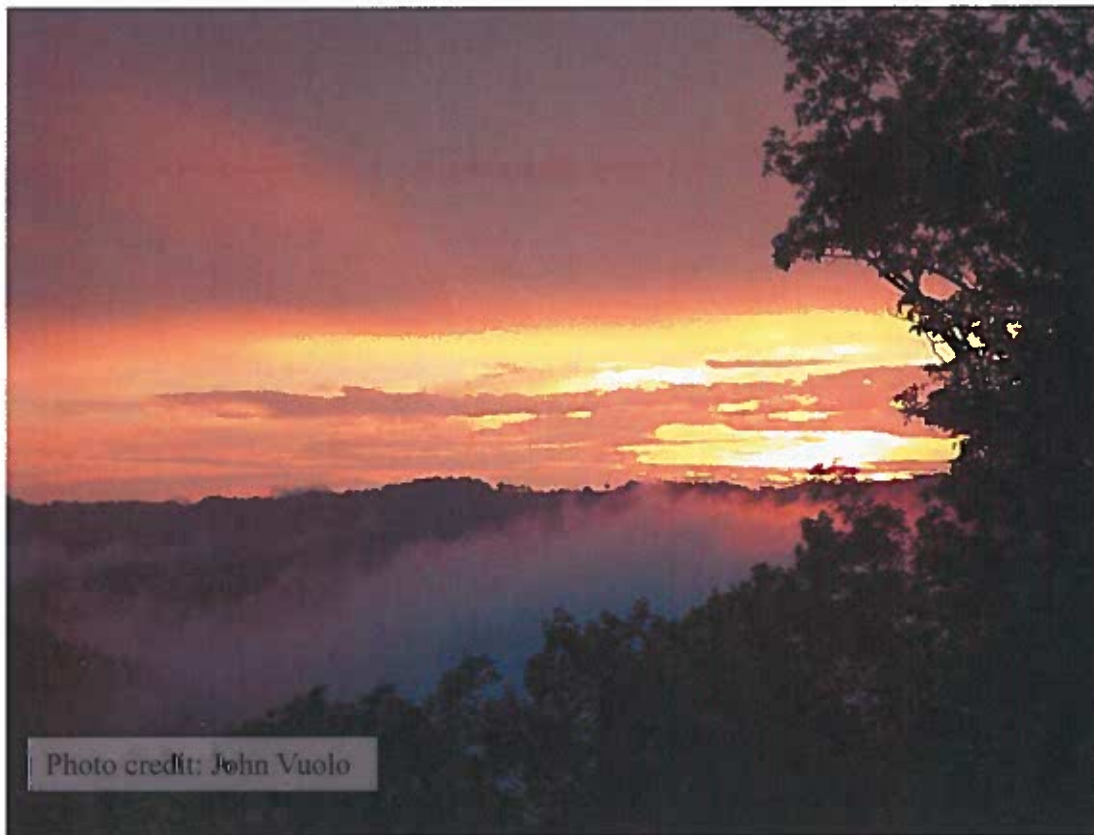


Photo credit: John Vuolo

Economic activity is the lifeblood of a community. By encouraging economic development, a county can facilitate job growth, generate wealth among community members, and produce tax revenue. Economic development is a critical component of improving the quality of life for Summers County residents. Accordingly, the Legislature has identified economic development as an essential consideration of comprehensive planning. W. Va. Code § 8A-3-4(b)(8).

An effective plan for economic development will capitalize on Summers County's strengths. Though advances in technology have somewhat reduced the importance of rail travel, the railroad continues to be an asset to the local economy. On the other hand, technological advances like the internet have allowed rural communities like Summers County to "plug in" to a global economy, facilitating the growth of technology based businesses and small cottage industries.

Of particular importance to Summers County is its tourism industry. The continued vitality of tourism in the region requires responsible management of natural resources and promotion of attractive development in appropriate areas. A strong service industry can compliment tourism, as well as cater to the county's increasing retiree community.

Summers County has historically weathered boom-and-bust cycles, highlighting the need for economic development that is sustainable. A dependable economy will not only prevent the problems traditionally associated with economic busts, it will also invite social and capital investment from stakeholders.

## Economic History

Summers County was formed in 1871 from parts of Monroe, Mercer, Greenbrier, and Fayette Counties. It was named in honor of George W. Summers, a prominent jurist from Kanawha County. The history of commerce and economic development in Summers County is synonymous with the growth of Hinton, its county seat. Hinton is located at the confluence of the Bluestone, Greenbrier, and New Rivers and was formed in 1831 when John Hinton parceled out lots from his wife's land. Further situated along a travel route between Lewisburg and Beckley, Hinton grew slowly over the next 40 years.<sup>26</sup> During that time, goods and passengers were transported on the rivers by wide, shallow-bottomed bateau boats. The primary point of commerce in the county was an area now known as Hinton Landing in the Avis community. Even though the railroad eventually replaced the river as the thoroughfare of commerce in the Hinton area, bateau boats continued bringing goods and passengers down the New River from Roanoke and Radford, Virginia into the early part of the Twentieth Century until the Bluestone Dam was constructed during the 1940s.<sup>27</sup>

According to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation's profile of Hinton announcing it as a Preserve America community in 2008, Hinton and Summers County's economies took a substantial turn in 1871 when the Chesapeake & Ohio River Railroad cut through the New River Gorge and based its operations in Hinton.<sup>28</sup> According to local historian Stephen D. Trail, "The C&O immediately began construction of a roundhouse and machine shops. By the time they were completed in 1892 they employed 370 men. In addition, a 40-car repair shop was built that employed another 170. Because Hinton was a terminal where crews were made up and dispatched, many crewmen moved to the new community, adding further to its growth."<sup>29</sup> Trail adds, "This boom in population and employment attracted doctors and other professionals, as well as entrepreneurs who established the grocery and hardware stores, restaurants, hotels and saloons (for which Hinton became famous) of the fledgling town."<sup>30</sup> The economy continued to thrive as its growing population attracted a hospital, banks, and industries, and later combined with the communities of Avis and Bellepoint to be incorporate in 1927. Hinton's economy continued to grow into the 1950s, leaving the city to pursue tourism and technology as its economic base.

The railroad's economic impact on Hinton and Summers County has continued to diminish as CSX Transportation (formerly the C&O) has moved many clerical, dispatching, and repair operations from Hinton to other localities. Consequently, the loss of wages from those formerly employed in those positions locally has contributed to a loss of retail businesses in Hinton's historic downtown district. That, combined with the leakage of sales to regional shopping destinations such as Beckley, Lewisburg, and Princeton has left downtown Hinton with a substantial inventory of vacant retail space.

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26 Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. 2008. "Profile of Hinton, West Virginia." Preserve America Community Designation Event. HUD.

27 Boyle, Brian. 2006. Projected Design Plan for Hinton Riverfront Museum & Boat Building Facility. Hinton Waterfront Park Committee.

28 Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. 2008. "Profile of Hinton, West Virginia." Preserve America Community Designation Event. HUD.

29 Trail, Stephen D. "Hinton: A Living Museum". Highlands of the Virginias. Autumn 1987.

30 *Ibid.*

## **Current Conditions**

Currently, Summers County is designated as a distressed county by the Appalachian Regional Commission. The criteria used for this designation includes the following:

- A per capita market income no greater than two-thirds (~67%)
- A poverty rate at 150% of the U.S. average or greater
- Three-year unemployment at 150% of the U.S. average or greater

According to the May 2013 issue of the *West Virginia Executive Summary*<sup>31</sup>, the county's civilian labor force totaled 4,610 with 4,200 employed and 410 unemployed. The unemployment rate was 9.0%.

The current economy of Summers County includes a blend of agriculture, small business retail and service, small corporations, technology, manufacturing, tourism, and recreation. According to WorkForce West Virginia<sup>32</sup>, the County's largest employers in March 2012 were:

- Summers County Board of Educational
- West Virginia Division of Natural Resources
- Appalachian Regional Healthcare
- Summers Nursing and Rehabilitation Center
- Summers County Council on Aging
- Relational Management Services, LLC
- The Kroger Company
- R.T. Rogers Oil Co., Inc.
- Summers County Commission
- Resort Foodservice, Inc. (Bluestone Dining Room)

### **Existing Plans for Economic Development**

Strategic plans have been developed for Summers County and the City of Hinton and are discussed in Chapter II: County Overview of this Plan.

### **Region One Planning and Development Council**

Region One Planning and Development Council is tasked with creating Community Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) for Summers County and the City of Hinton. According to the Region One Planning and Development website, "This document describes the problems, needs and resources of this region, identifies the goals and objectives of the development program, presents the strategies and action plans devised to achieve these goals, and outlines the standards for evaluation of the program's achievements." (<http://www.regiononepdc.org/#!plans/c1iwz>). Many of the strategies frequently used by Region One in developing CEDS were implemented in drafting this document, specifically, the Planning Commission held several meetings to assess the community's overall vision, collected data using SWOT analysis, assessed the shared success for the community, determined priority issues and recommended objectives for achieving these the overall vision. One of the purposes of this plan is to further facilitate the work of Region One in the CEDS process and in other processes which will achieve viable financial growth for the county and city.

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31 WorkForce West Virginia. West Virginia Economic Summary. May 2013.

32 <http://www.workforcewv.org/Imi/EandWAnnual/TopTenEmployersByCounty.html>. 07/29/13. 3:10 p.m.

**Community Input on the County Economy.** Overall, community members noted the availability of developable land and the county's proximity to urban markets as economic strengths of the area. One comment stated that the lack of a Walmart or similar "big box" store retailer is a strength of the county's economy, supporting other comments that acknowledge the local business base. The agricultural sector of the economy and the growing technology sector of the economy are appreciated by county residents.

Major weaknesses identified by citizens include the poor job market and concerns about the decline in businesses in downtown centers, particularly in Hinton. Several citizens were concerned that government ownership of lands in the county, such as by the National Park Service, inhibits growth, while others were concerned that a loss of open space and agriculture posed a threat to the county's economy, demonstrating divergent values in the community, with some favoring a more industrial economy and some favoring an economy based more upon tourism and recreational opportunities.

### **Technology**

The Connected Technology Corridors Program was established by U.S. Congressman Nick J. Rahall in 2005<sup>33</sup> to improve technology infrastructure in Southern West Virginia and promote related economic development.<sup>34</sup> Rahall and then-U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd helped secure federal grants for the City of Hinton to support the Hinton Technology Center; support has also been given through loans from the West Virginia Development Office.

### **Agriculture**

According to Summers County data from the 2007 Census of Agriculture<sup>35</sup>, from 2002 to 2007, the amount of land in farms has increased by nine percent from 54,645 acres to 59,628 acres and the number of farms in the county has increased by 22 percent from 313 to 383. The result is that the average farm size has decreased by 11 percent with the average farm being 175 acres in 2002 and decreasing to 156 acres in 2007. The market value of products sold increased by four percent between 2002 and 2007, with 2007 sales reaching more than \$5.3 million. Therefore, the average market value of products sold per farm reporting sales that year was approximately \$13,965.



Agriculture in Summers County is diverse. There is significant production in livestock and forage production along with nursery and greenhouse production. Summers County leads the state in acres of nursery stock in production and ranks fourth in value of sales for the products of nursery, greenhouse, and floriculture enterprises. Livestock production and

33 <http://www.hintonnews.net/columns/061230-rahall-report.html>

34 <http://www.rahall.house.gov/index.cfm?sectionid=10&parentid=5&sectiontree=5,10&itemid=240>

35 [http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/online\\_highlights/county\\_profile/West\\_Virginia/cp54089.pdf](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/online_highlights/county_profile/West_Virginia/cp54089.pdf)  
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sales account for 69 percent of the gross agricultural income with \$3,694,000 in 2007, which ranks 18<sup>th</sup> on the state level.

One factor that has a negative implication for farming is the increasing average age of West Virginia farm operators, which in 2000 stood at 57. According to the 2007 Agricultural Census, the average age of principal Summers County farmers was 61.8 years. There is also concern that of the county's 383 farms in 2007, farming was the primary occupation of only 180 principal operators. This situation is not unique to Summers County as our farmers suffer from the same low commodity prices that affect farmers nationwide. Off-farm employment is becoming a way of life throughout the farming community. Part-time farming may not have the economic impact of the more substantial operations, but it supports the goals of farm preservation and stewardship of agricultural land.

### **Workforce and Education**

According to Census data, the Summers County civilian labor force remained fairly steady during the 2002-2012 period ranging from a low of 4,600 to a high of 4,780.<sup>36</sup> Unemployment during the period dropped from 7.3% in 2002 to 4.9% in 2008, but then rose to 9.3% by 2010 and ended at 9.0% in 2012. Census data also points out the existence of a significant concern as 22.5% of Summers County's population age 25 or older were not high school graduates. Similarly, only 17.0% of the 2012 county population had any level of college degree. Ideally, both of these measures should be higher to better meet both current and future employment needs. The data also shows that 1,821 Summers County residents either work in another West Virginia county or out-of-state. The individuals represent a substantial pool of available employees assuming that they would choose to work in the county if suitable employment was available.

Region One of Workforce West Virginia encompasses an eleven-county region in the southern and southeast portions of the State, including Summers County. This organization conducted a study in 2001 and 2002. Findings of the *Region 1 State of the Workforce Report*<sup>37</sup> include:

- The region's population has declined and is aging. Negative outmigration is an unfortunate cycle: the absence of good jobs leads to a lack of ambition among our youth, who in turn see little incentive for education beyond the compulsory requirements, which means that the low skill level of the workforce makes for difficult recruitment of good jobs. It also causes ambitious residents and potential leaders to flee the small, rural towns in search of better opportunities. We must create better employment opportunities to keep this talent and to attract those who have left back to the region.
- Low educational attainment and basic skill levels are only part of the problem. Many in the existing and emerging workforce lack the basic work ethic, soft skills, problem solving skills, and basic computer literacy to function effectively in today's workplace.
- Unacceptable levels of poverty have a direct correlation to education, literacy, and income. There is a need to change and diversify the employment mix in the interest of moving more people to a higher standard of living.
- A disconnect exists between the business community and educational entities in the region. Business and education need each other to be successful but have not collaborated to the levels needed for impact.
- The region's workforce development system specifically must do a better job of

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36 <http://www.workforcewv.org/lmi/CNTYPROF/summers.pdf> 07/30/13 1:20 p.m.

37 Simpson, G. and Hicks, M. "State of the Workforce Report Region 1 Workforce Investment Board." May 2002.



making all individuals and employers aware of the resources available, and ensure that the services are of high quality.

**Community Input on Workforce and Education.** Comments from members of different communities within Summers County demonstrated a diversity of opinions on the county's educational opportunities based on locality. One comment from Talcott expressed concern about the loss of the old elementary school that might otherwise be used as a community center, and Pipestem residents expressed concern that bus rides for children are too long due to the lack of any public schools in that community. Hinton residents saw their public library as a great benefit, while the Talcott community felt their lack of a library is a weakness. Common themes among all communities included the desire to attract a higher education facility, expand vocational training opportunities and generally improve the county's educational system. Some common concerns included the quality of the county school system and the loss of the county's youth to other places with more work opportunities. Communities felt that the county benefits from higher educational institutions in other nearby counties.

Community members were divided on the state of the county's workforce. Some described the people of Summers County as being good, honest, hard-working, talented, friendly, and community-minded, making for a good workforce. Others felt that local residents are not adequately educated or trained in order to qualify for many of the professional or technology industry jobs available in the county. It was noted that many employees of the businesses live in other counties or states and commute to Summers County. Some suggested that not all of the potential local workforce has a work ethic that would keep them employed; some may not desire to be employed.

### **Tourism**

Outdoor recreation is the prime tourism opportunity in Summers County. The county's remoteness, rural character, and abundant natural features provide for unique opportunities to find solitude and experience adventure. Numerous parks and public lands are available for outdoor recreation activities, including fishing, hiking, boating, rafting, horseback riding, bicycling, bird-watching, camping, picnicking, golf, and outdoor sports. Plans for future and expanding recreation opportunities include the development of the John Henry Historical Park, the Mary Ingles Trail, and the Great Eastern Trail. A map of road bicycling routes is also in development.

Private and non-profit enterprises that support outdoor recreation include several outfitters who offer float and fishing trips on the rivers in the county, the Three Rivers Avian Center, which provides birding hikes and educational programs, as well as several campgrounds and cabin rental businesses.

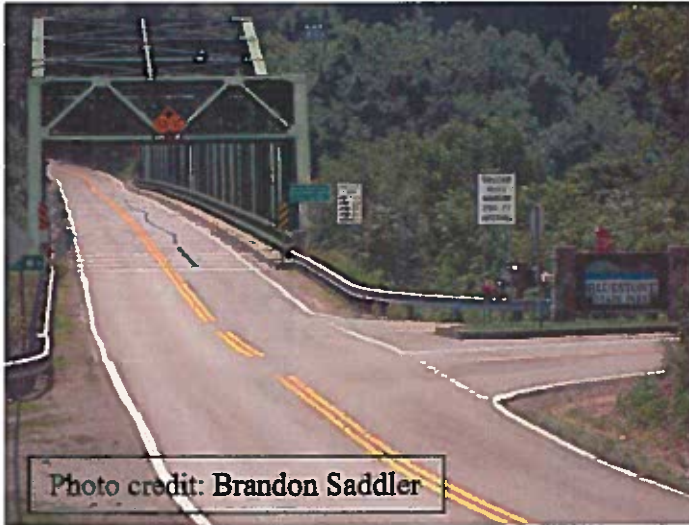
Other tourism opportunities include cultural and historic attractions. Summers County is one of 13 counties that make up the National Coal Heritage Area, a federally designated area of national historical significance, established to protect and interpret the coal mining heritage of southern West Virginia. All of downtown Hinton is designated as the Hinton National Historic District, and there are nine listings of individual buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, including the Hinton Railroad Depot, which is being restored for community use. The John Henry Historical Park is also in development; the park will celebrate the railroad history of the county and the legend of John Henry and engage visitors in the stories of the generations past and present about how they lived on the land and among one another. Several small museums are also located in Summers County.

Festivals in the county are lively affairs and bring tourism to the local communities throughout the year. These events include the John Henry Days Festival in Talcott, the West

Virginia State Water Festival on Bluestone Lake, the Festival of the Rivers and the Railroad Days Festival, both in Hinton.

Some businesses with tourist appeal include the local antique shops and local stores that sell the work of artisans from Summers County. These artisans work in a variety of forms, including pottery, painting, photography, candles, quilting, fiber arts, jewelry, stained glass and musical folk art. Additionally, movies and live performances can be enjoyed at the restored Ritz Theatre in downtown Hinton.

Visitors have a variety of lodging options in Summers County, including several bed and breakfasts, numerous cabin rentals and a variety of camping options from rustic tent camping to deluxe sites with water, sewage and electric services. Several motels are available in and around Hinton.



**Community Input on Tourism.** Summers County residents see the rural landscape and local character of the county's communities and natural and cultural resources as tremendous strengths for encouraging tourism. They envision the county as a place for visitors to escape from urban areas and experience nature, solitude, a

sense of isolation, history, festivals, agriculture, a rural lifestyle, a friendly atmosphere and the novelty of interesting local businesses, rather than large, ubiquitous box stores. National and state parks throughout the county are attractions for visitors, and comments described Hinton as a gateway community to the two units of the National Park Service within the county.

Community members asked for the development of more trails, including hiking, biking, equestrian, and ATV trails, and for improved access to the river, scenic vistas, and other natural areas. Particularly, residents would like to find solutions that improve access to the river where most potential access is blocked by the railroad. Comments recognized the county's scenic beauty and night skies as unique resources and draws for tourism, which would necessitate some form of viewshed protection. The historic significance of much within Summers County was identified by residents as providing opportunities for tourism, and numerous features, such as the railroad and the historic downtown area of Hinton, could be revitalized and showcased. Community members also felt that the agricultural character of the county and the ability to grow food locally could provide tourism opportunities.

Most concerns residents expressed had to do with the lack of an overall business base to provide services for tourists and a lack of infrastructure, such as consistent cellular phone coverage, high-speed internet, and television and cable service throughout the county. Additionally, the lack of public transportation and the remoteness of most of the county's communities from major travel routes were seen as a challenge for tourism, as it is difficult to move quickly through the county, and roads are poorly maintained. Amtrak service to the county is available on a limited schedule from New York, Washington, D.C., and Chicago, but there is no available transportation for visitors once they arrive in Summers County. The

community also identified a need for quality local print media to share information about county events and attractions.

One concern expressed is the number and visibility of blighted properties, including junkyards, trash dumps and properties with old cars and vacant and dilapidated buildings, that would be unattractive to visitors. Vacant commercial properties would also deter visitors, but there are opportunities for new local businesses to fill those spaces and add to the attraction of the county's local character. Also, residents were concerned about the need for environmental protection, such as providing public sewage service to stop the practice of straight-piping waste into rivers and tributaries that would draw visitors for recreation opportunities like hiking, swimming, fishing and boating.

### **Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations**

Major goals for economic development that emerged from community meetings include:

- **Support the Increase of a Diversity of Businesses in the County that Would Preserve the Rural Quality of Life and Promote Local Ownership and Employment.**
- **Enhance Opportunities to Educate, Train, and Develop the Local Workforce.**
- **Support and Promote Tourism Throughout the County.**

**Goal: Support the Increase of a Diversity of Businesses in the County that Would Preserve the Rural Quality of Life and Promote Local Ownership and Employment.**

**Objective:** Support and encourage appropriate retail and commercial businesses.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Assess existing plans, studies, and other documents developed for Summers County regarding economic development. Conduct additional studies and market research for information that is out of date or unavailable regarding retail or commercial potential in the county's population centers.
- Identify potential retail and/or commercial districts, and adopt and implement zoning or other land use ordinances to encourage retail and/or commercial growth in these districts.
- Encourage appropriate development in identified districts through financial incentives for businesses, giving priority to locally-owned businesses over national chains.
- Provide financial and technical support to businesses that open in existing buildings, giving priority to those that rehabilitate, preserve, and reuse historic buildings according to guidelines set by the West Virginia Historic Preservation Office
- Work with the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority to attract the target retail or commercial businesses identified in its regional marketing plan.

**Objective:** Support and encourage appropriate industrial development.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Develop specific criteria that make an industrial business or use economically sound, environmentally friendly and supportive of community livability to enhance the quality of life, in keeping with the overarching goal of this plan.

- Adopt and implement zoning or other land use ordinances which identify districts appropriate for industrial development, perhaps based on the Thrasher Engineering Map identified in preceding Chapter of this Plan.
- Provide financial incentives to attract industries and industrial businesses that meet the appropriate criteria into the areas appropriately zoned for industrial businesses.
- Work with the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority to attract the target industries identified in its regional marketing plan.

**Objective:** Support and encourage agriculture and agriculture-based businesses.

**Recommendations:**

- Identify potential districts which would be appropriate for technology based businesses, and adopt and implement zoning or other land use ordinances to encourage technology-based business in these districts.
- Provide financial incentives to attract technology-based businesses to the county.
- Provide financial incentives for independent technology contractors and employees of companies and agencies.
- Work with the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority to attract the target technology-based businesses identified in its regional marketing plan.

**Objective:** Support and encourage appropriate agricultural businesses.

**Recommendations:**

- Identify potential districts which would be appropriate for agriculture or agriculturally based businesses, and adopt and implement zoning or other land use ordinances to encourage agricultural business in these districts.
- Identify and solicit agricultural businesses and businesses which support agriculture, such as feed and supply stores and tractor and farm equipment sales and services.
- Support and promote agricultural conservation easements and organizations, such as the Summers County Farmland Protection Board, which facilitate these easements.
- Promote and support local farmers by supporting local farmers markets, farm to table initiatives, provide financial incentives for the use and sale of locally grown products (ex: reduced taxes, such as the B&O tax on restaurants using locally grown products, local coupons for local products, etc.).
- Work with the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority to attract the agricultural-based businesses identified in its regional marketing plan.

**Goal:** Enhance Opportunities to Educate, Train, and Develop the Local Workforce.

**Objective:** Improve existing educational opportunities and provide innovative new ones for county residents of all ages.

**Recommendations:**

- Identify career opportunities and encourage businesses to work

within the school system to promote job readiness.

- Encourage and promote non-traditional training and career programs.
- Provide financial incentives for a higher education institution to develop a branch or facility in Summers County.
- Explore the possibility of providing a shuttle service to higher education institutions in nearby counties.
- Explore the possibility of providing tele-classes from higher education institutions in a public learning facility.

**Objective:** Develop a system of incentives to encourage potential members of the local workforce to become and remain employed, and promote local employment opportunities in the community.

**Recommendations:**

- Encourage job development in areas in which lower income people reside to reduce the stress and obstacle of commuting great distances to potential jobs.
- Encourage low income residential development in areas within walking distance to local job opportunities.
- Support the career services program at the local library, Workforce WV and similar programs.
- Develop and support or encourage private development of a transit system for commuters to commute to and from work.
- Develop employment bulletin boards online and at public facilities and provide a standard application system that employers and job seekers could use.

**Goal: Support and Promote Tourism Throughout the County.**

**Objective:** Promote the tourism industry.

**Recommendations:**

- Identify tourism niche businesses or needs which are not currently being met in Summers Co. and support/encourage growth and development of those businesses (ex: shuttle service for boaters, hikers, bikers, etc.).
- Adopt and implement land use practice which will promote local tourism opportunities (ex: incorporation of biking and hiking trails or public parks or river access into new development).
- Work with local and regional Convention and Visitors Bureaus to develop more effective marketing campaigns for tourism in Summers County.
- Work with the state Division of Tourism to have Summers County featured in their marketing that reaches a broad audience across the Mid-Atlantic region.
- Develop a social media campaign to spread information about Summers County less formally than through traditional marketing and take advantage of peer-to-peer recommendations by providing incentives to participate in this type of marketing to people who are visiting the county.
- Promote county recreational opportunities at colleges and universities around the region.

- Establish partnerships around the region to increase the regional tourism draw and cross promote opportunities for visitors to explore.
- Encourage high-quality local print media that advertises Summers County events and attractions and is readily available to visitors.
- Provide detailed maps, signage, and information to visitors on how to get around the county, including points of interest, available services, and recreational opportunities.

**Objective:** Protect and promote outdoor recreation and scenic viewing opportunities.

**Recommendations:**

- Identify and prioritize natural, agricultural, and other scenic viewsheds to preserve and develop guidelines or ordinances for protection.
- Develop guidelines or ordinances for nighttime lighting that would best preserve night sky views without putting an undue burden on businesses, residents, and public services.
- Work with state and federal agencies and private landholders for conservation of lands with high recreational or scenic values. Develop partnership agreements with public agencies and explore conservation easements, rights of way, and other conservation tools with private land owners.
- Develop agreements with CSX for access points to the river and other attractions that are currently unreachable via legal railroad crossings
- At scenic viewpoints along roads most likely to be traveled by tourists, where land is not already in public ownership and developed as a scenic overlook, seek to purchase the land from willing sellers as a county park or work with private landowners to allow public access and limited development. Provide a parking area or pullout and some information or interpretation for visitors to enjoy the view and understand the landscape of the county.
- Encourage development of more hiking, biking, equestrian and ATV trails in the county. Work with public land managers where land is in federal or state ownership. Where land is in private ownership, work with local and regional trail organizations and land trusts to develop agreements with landowners who would be willing to allow a public trail to cross their property.
- Using land use ordinances or other regulations, limit development of industries which might negatively impact tourism, such as hydrologic fracturing, mountain top removal, or businesses which generate significant noise or odor.
- Develop and implement a Share the Road campaign to promote bicycling, hiking and equestrian businesses and tourism.

**Objective:** Protect and promote opportunities for cultural and historic tourism attractions.

**Recommendations:**

- Support the development of the John Henry Historical Park, and take advantage of other opportunities to create or support protected

spaces out of significant historic features of the landscape.

- Continue to host cultural festivals, expand their appeal, and increase and expand marketing.

**Objective:** Create and promote opportunities for agricultural tourism.

**Recommendations:**

- Support the development of one or more local farmers markets in the county.
- Encourage local and organic local food production, use of local foods in restaurants, and sale of local foods in grocery stores and farmers markets. Brand local foods with a logo for businesses that sell them.
- Encourage local farmers to provide agricultural tourism opportunities, such as farm stays and beds & breakfasts, or encourage them to partner with other local entrepreneurs to provide those services.

**Objective:** Provide adequate services to support tourism and encourage local businesses that will encourage visitors to spend money in Summers County.

**Recommendations:**

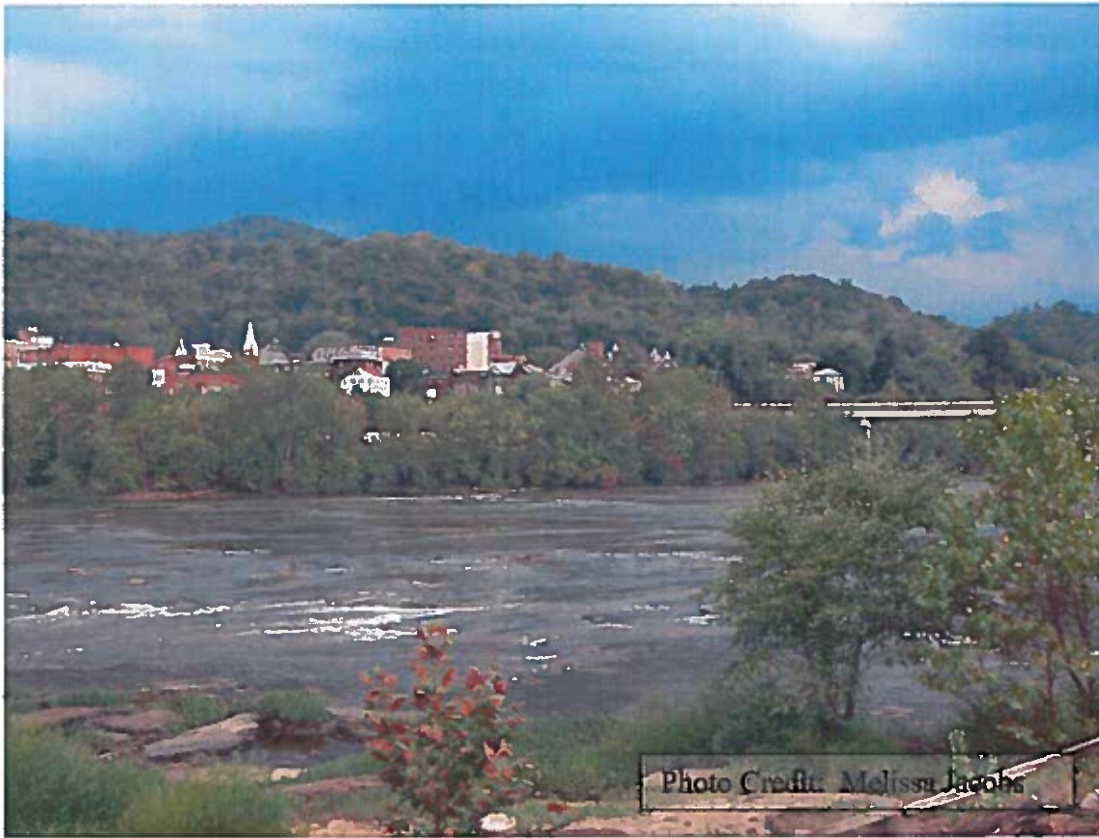
- Provide financial incentives for sustainable, value-added local businesses in the county, such as furniture manufacturing. Also provide incentives for artisan workshops and galleries.
- Provide financial incentives for locally-owned or franchised but appropriately designed lodging establishments, including a hotel in Sandstone and small hotels or motels, beds & breakfasts, and cabins in other communities arounds Summers County.
- Encourage tourism service businesses to provide rental vehicles and/or shuttle services and partner with other businesses to create transportation for visitors who arrive by train.
- Build tourism packages between local lodging establishments, Amtrak, restaurants, recreational services, and entertainment venues.

### **Financial Considerations**

Many of the recommendations included in this chapter are similar to those found in other chapters. In addition to financial considerations identified in other sections, many of these recommendations may qualify for additional or different funding sources because these are based in economic development, specifically. Any implementation strategies of these recommendations should solicit funding from other governmental, quasi-governmental, non-profit or private sector sources for the promotion of economic development.



## Chapter X: Implementation Strategy



A comprehensive plan is a statement of a community's goals and a conceptual road map for how to achieve them. A comprehensive plan provides guidance to municipal leaders, county officials, government agencies, funding agencies, community organizations, local businesses, and residents, and helps to ensure that the community's needs are met, now and in the future. Long-term in nature, comprehensive plans concentrate on setting out land use policy and suggesting regulatory and non-regulatory measures that, over time, will foster the community's future in a manner consistent with residents' preferred vision. The Summers County Comprehensive Plan is an advisory document intended to serve as a guide for the growth and development of the county. Specific strategies for implementation are necessary if the goals and objectives of this Plan are to be achieved. Implementation is an integral part of the planning process and this Plan's success will be measured by how well it has been implemented.

The first step in implementing this Comprehensive Plan starts when the county and/or City formally adopts the document. Legal adoption means the Plan is accepted and is the guide to future development. Once adopted, all subsequent county (and City, if the City adopts this plan) ordinances must be in accordance with this Plan. Public agencies and citizens should use this document to help make decisions concerning future growth in Summers County. The tools found in this chapter are meant to assist Summers County in coming up with land use regulations and other implementation strategies. Some of these implementation strategies may be suited to address a number of the identified goals and



objectives while others may only address one or even parts of one. The following portions of this chapter illustrate different ways in which the local governments may implement goals and objectives identified in this Plan; however, this is not intended to be a comprehensive list of all possible implementation strategies nor to impede or limit implementation techniques. The goals and objectives identified by the citizens and set forth in this Plan are paramount and any legal mechanism for implementing these should be carefully considered by the local governing bodies.

### **Zoning Regulations**

Zoning provides the authority to regulate private use of land by creating land use zones and applying development standards to these zones in various zoning districts. Zoning is crucial to the planning and developing of any community. It is the central land use tool counties and municipalities use to regulate land use and implement the comprehensive plan. West Virginia Code §8A-7-1, *et seq.* gives Summers County and the City of Hinton the authority to enact zoning ordinances. The West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals has held that “. . . a municipality may enact a zoning ordinance which restricts the use of property in designated districts within the municipality if the restrictions imposed by the ordinance are not arbitrary or unreasonable and bear a substantial relation to the public health, safety, morals, or the general welfare of the municipality.” Syl. Pt. 7, *Carter v. City of Bluefield*, 54 S.E.2d 747, 750 (W. Va. 1949).

Aside from the regulations themselves, zoning ordinances should include a subsection defining the intent, territorial applicability, interpretation, and the effective date of the ordinance. The following are meant to illustrate and explain zoning ordinances which may be utilized in Summers County, but not intended to be a comprehensive list or explanation.

#### **Traditional Zoning**

Also known as Euclidean Zoning, traditional zoning regulates land use and development through a classification system. Most counties in West Virginia with zoning ordinances utilize this type of zoning. A zoning district may be established in which zoning classifications, dimensional standards, and permitted use are defined.

**Classifications.** Zoning classifications define the types of property to be regulated by the local governing body. Common zoning classifications or districts may include: agricultural, rural residential, single-family residential, mixed residential, neighborhood residential, suburban commercial, high density commercial, light industrial, and heavy industrial. Each classification or zoning district defines its dimensional standards, permitted uses, permitted accessory uses, and conditional uses.

**Dimensional Standards.** Dimensional standards, also known as development standards, regulate building height, minimum and/or maximum lot size, setback distance from the road, and minimum side-yard and backyard size.

**Permitted Uses.** Permitted uses define what uses are available to the applicable zoning district. For example, a single-family residential zoning district will typically allow for agricultural development, single-family dwellings, public and private parks, duplexes, and sometimes small apartments.

**Permitted Accessory Uses.** These uses go hand-in-hand with permitted uses. Accessory uses define what uses are permitted incidental to, and customarily found in connection with the principal use. Common permitted accessory uses to permitted residential uses include: private swimming pools, satellite dishes, detached garages,

carports, and storage buildings.

**Conditional Uses.** Also known as special permit uses, conditional uses are only permitted after review by a local governing body. Common conditional uses in a residential district include: bed & breakfast establishments, cemeteries, golf courses, religious buildings, and schools.

**Zoning Variances.** There are two basic types of zoning variances: area variances and use variances. A zoning variance is a one-time property-specific modification of an existing zoning ordinance granted by a local governing body.

- **Area Variance:** Area variances are more common than use variances. Often, especially in mountainous regions like Appalachia, the combination of certain landscape features and existing zoning ordinances may restrict development that is desired by a community, and an area variance may be sought for development. Some governing bodies are liberal in allowing these variances, while others grant them sparingly and only in unique circumstances.
- **Use Variances:** A use variance authorizes use of land in a zoning district that is not permitted under the applicable zoning ordinances. These operate the same way a conditional use operates, in the sense that a local governing body must authorize a use variance. Because the two zoning tools are so similar, governing bodies typically choose between allowing for conditional uses or use variances, but not both.

### **Modular Zoning**

This type of zoning system is similar to traditional zoning in that it includes similar classifications, dimensional standards, and permitted uses. The difference in this zoning system is that it is just another way to organize zoning ordinances. For each classification, ordinances are comprised of three modules to create a zoning district. The modules are use, form, and intensity. This type of zoning is typically set up using a table where the zoning classification, use module, form module, and intensity module are listed in columns, and the details of each are listed in rows. This type of zoning allows for great flexibility in defining zoning districts, as a local governing body can mix-and-match different modules into interesting combinations.

**Use Module.** This module establishes which uses are permitted, conditionally permitted, and prohibited.

**Form Module.** This module establishes the physical parameters for development, including setbacks, building height, and side-yard regulations.

**Intensity Module.** This module establishes the maximum density that is allowed for the classification and regulates lot size, open space requirements, and number of dwellings per acre.

### **Floating Zones**

A floating zone uses the same methods of defining a zoning district as traditional zoning. However, unlike traditional zoning districts, floating zones are not committed to any one particular location on a map. These zones “float” over a county’s jurisdiction until specific developmental criteria is met by a developer and the floating zone is adopted by a zoning amendment. At this point, the floating zone ceases to “float” and becomes a special type of zoning district. In several states, courts have found that specific floating zones are invalid as an arbitrary or capricious zoning ordinance. Therefore, this type of zoning should be used sparingly and only when criteria allowing for it is clear to the public.

### **Performance Zoning**

This zoning type is significantly different from other, more traditional, types of land use regulations. Instead of establishing strict rules defining each zoning classification, dimensional standards for structures, and permitted and conditional uses for each zoning district, performance zoning uses goal-oriented criteria to define each zone. For example, a performance zone may require that the building be constructed in a way that contains a fire for one hour. Some local governing bodies would then specifically establish a standard that the walls, floors, and ceilings of such a building be constructed of five-inch thick masonry or stone, while other local governing bodies allow the landowner or developer flexibility in constructing the building in a way to comply with the performance zone. This zoning type is typically used in more urban areas and has not been heavily adopted in the United States but may be considered to implement some of the goals and objectives identified in the Plan.

### **Cluster Zoning**

Cluster zoning establishes density specifications for a larger area than traditional zoning. Zoning districts may still exist and restrict what type of structures may be built, but cluster zoning allows for greater flexibility for developers in placing lower density structures close to larger density structures. Cluster zoning has strict open space requirements, which is key to allowing various density structures to be placed close together.

### **Development Rights**

West Virginia Code § 36B-1-103(14) defines development rights as any right reserved by a developer to: (1) add real estate to a common interest community; (2) create units, common elements, or limited common elements within a common interest community; (3) subdivide or convert units of property into common elements; or (4) withdraw real estate from a common interest community. West Virginia Code § 7-1-3mm authorizes local governments to allow for the transfer of development rights if the county has been designated as a “growth county” as defined by West Virginia Code § 7-20-3.

A development right is not necessarily a zoning tool, but it does involve zoning. Development rights can “vest” with a developer so that his or her right to perform the aforementioned actions cannot be interfered with by a subsequent zoning ordinance. These vested rights can be transferred or sold to other developers. These development rights have been used to mitigate any economic impact or loss in property value due to land use regulations. For example, development rights may offer land owners and developers a way to recapture lost value in their property if their property is downsized from residential use to agricultural use.

### **Infrastructure**

Local governments and funding agencies should carefully consider areas in which growth or a specific type of growth is desired and promote and fund appropriate infrastructure in these areas. Infrastructure is an indispensable component of the local economy and can stimulate growth and development. Transportation facilitates trade, contributes to value-added goods and services, and influences property values. The presence of high-speed internet can stimulate high-tech jobs growth. Transportation, water, and sewer systems have been shown to strongly influence the growth patterns of an area. Because of this, growth should be balanced with supporting a community's infrastructure. Road access permits, for example, can standardize the interface of public and private road systems. Water

and sewer ordinances ensure efficiency in operation and, prospectively, can help make repairs easier and facilitate modernization. Sidewalks and trails should be developed as an enhancement to transportation facilities. Because of its significance, appropriate infrastructure can promote growth and development in desirable areas. Just as a local government should promote growth through infrastructure, local governments can also dampen growth in areas which have been identified as not appropriate for growth or certain types of growth. Similarly, local government can adopt land use ordinances which require or encourage certain types of development in areas which have the appropriate infrastructure in place. These tools emphasize the need to maximize the efficiency of existing and future infrastructure systems in Summers County.

### **Road Access Permits**

In some situations, local governments may require road access permits for residents wishing to construct driveways accessing certain types of public roads. Through road access permits, local government may regulate road access according to size, design, or material.

### **Water and Sewer Ordinances**

These ordinances regulate the use of sewer and water systems. Common areas of regulation include sewer connection requirements, discharge prohibitions, grease management practices, discharge permitting schemes, and sewer impact fees. Local governments may also set design criteria for water mains, sewer mains, and pumping stations and may designate areas where water and sewer infrastructure may and may not be extended.

### **Sidewalk Ordinances**

In areas where pedestrian traffic is common or desired, sidewalk ordinances can ensure safety and ease of travel. These ordinances can set standards for sidewalk construction, repair, or reconstruction. Snow and ice removal ordinances are common where inclement conditions may endanger pedestrians. Restrictions on commercial activity are also common, as are restrictions on skateboarding, roller-skating, and other recreational activities.

## **Historic Preservation**

Summers County is rich in history. Preserving this history, however, requires affirmative care and attention. State law grants Summers County and Hinton the authority to form an historical landmark commission to aid in historic zoning, historic architecture review, and landmark preservation. Historic zoning ordinances may be enacted even in the absence of an historical landmark commission. This section lays out a variety of tools to help preserve the history of Summers County for years to come.

### **Historic Zoning**

Local governments are authorized to create historic zones. Typically, historic zoning ordinances are more restrictive, ensuring the preservation of a community's historical, architectural, and cultural heritage. In West Virginia, historic zoning is often accomplished with the help of an historic landmark commission. Historic zoning ordinances are often accomplished as an overlay district with existing zoning ordinances.

### **Historic Landmark Commission**

West Virginia Code § 8-26A-4 grants Summers County and the City of Hinton the power to form and support historic landmark commissions. These commissions are

authorized to designate certain landmarks, buildings, structures, and city districts as historically significant and may assist the zoning authority in adopting historic zoning ordinances. Currently, Hinton Historic Landmark Commission exists in Summers County and should be given support and seek guidance from this document.

Most historic landmark commissions are multidisciplinary, often including architects, real estate brokers, building inspectors, historians, or contractors. Commissions often include non-professionals as well, especially those with an interest in historic preservation or those living in an historic district. This means that community members can and should be encouraged to participate in preserving history in their community

**Historic Architectural Review.** Historic landmark commissions are also authorized to review all proposed construction, demolition, and exterior alteration of structures within designated historic districts. If the commission finds that the alterations do not threaten the historical and architectural integrity of the district, it may issue a “certificate of appropriateness” allowing the project to proceed as proposed. Otherwise, the commission will work alongside the developer in creating cost efficient and historically appropriate alternatives.

**Landmark Preservation.** After designating historic landmarks, a commission may establish standards for their care and management. The commission may withdraw historic landmark designation for failure to maintain the standards.

### Conservation, Recreation, and Tourism

The objective of conservation is to promote smart strategies to protect resources integral to the health of the community. Conservation can be accomplished in numerous ways, such as increasing efficiency, regulating usage, and creating conservation easements.

Summers County is home to three rivers, Bluestone Lake, and many other public spaces. Summers County



Summers County welcomes tourism and wishes to preserve the first-class outdoor activities it has to offer. The natural and scenic landscape of the county provides an abundance of recreational opportunities. To this end, the county can encourage private landowners to consider conservation easements as a means of protecting properties of scenic, wilderness, or agricultural value for themselves or the general public. The following tools are at Summers County's disposal for implementing conservation values.

#### **Conservation Easements**

A conservation easement is an encumbrance that private landowners can voluntarily place on their land, ensuring that agricultural, scenic, or wilderness value is conserved in perpetuity. Though the easement restricts future real estate development or industrial use,

the property remains in the hands of the owner. The owner may convey the land freely, but the restrictions “run with the land” and apply to subsequent owners. Easements are typically held by non-profit land trusts or government agencies charged with ensuring the continued conservation of the property.

West Virginia Code Chapter 20, Article 12 controls the validity and construction of conservation easements generally, while West Virginia Code Chapter 8A, Article 12 focuses specifically on agricultural conservation easements. Summers County created a Farmland Protection Board which is funded largely through a portion of transfer stamps paid as part of real property transactions in Summers County. In recent years, this board has seen increasing interest in agricultural conservation easements from local landowners and has partnered with non-profit organizations to hold conservation easements. With the community’s expressed desire to protect open space, promote local agricultural, be more self-sustaining and preserve the rural and agrarian landscape, the Summers County Farmland Protection Board and the easements held by it may play critical roles in Summers County.

### **Campground Regulations**

The natural beauty of Summers County makes it an attractive camping destination for tourists and locals alike. To protect campgrounds and wilderness areas, counties may regulate camping practices by ordinance. Typical areas of regulation include campfire size, waste disposal, periods of stay, generator use, use of alcoholic beverages, and noise. By enacting campground ordinances, Summers County can ensure that its natural beauty is preserved for future generations.

### **Other Land Use Regulations**

#### **Subdivision Ordinances**

The difference between subdivision and zoning regulations is that subdivision regulations are not part of an overall plan to regulate the use of land in a community, but they do have specific goals to regulate the quality of infrastructure going into the subdivision development. West Virginia Code § 8A-4-1 authorizes local governments to promulgate subdivision ordinances. Typically, subdivision ordinances will explain the process of how a developer may subdivide, and will often include provisions that detail what infrastructure must be included and how that infrastructure is to be included in a subdivision development.

#### **Mobile Home Park Ordinances**

Summers County may regulate areas containing manufactured and mobile homes. These ordinances usually include specific requirements for park construction, maintenance, use, occupancy, and design. Most counties allow for mobile home parks through a permitting process managed by a local governing body.

#### **Salvage Yard Ordinances**

As long as county ordinances do not interfere with West Virginia Code § 17-23-1 *et seq.*, provisions governing the establishment, operation, and maintenance of salvage yards, local governments may regulate them. Most counties in West Virginia that have these ordinances create regulations that define, create standards for, and create a permitting process for managing salvage yards.

#### **Sign Ordinances**

Summers County may wish to enact a sign permit program to regulate the use, size

or other dimensions, lighting, placement, and maintenance of commercial signs. Common factors a local governing body considers when deciding whether or not to allow for commercial signs are the type, dimensions, setback distance from roads, location, duration, and whether the sign will be illuminated. Properly regulating the use of signs in Summers County ensures that its visual landscape is preserved for residents and tourists alike.

### **Telecommunications Regulations**

Summers County already has in place a wireless telecommunications facilities ordinance regulating the placement and construction of freestanding towers and other structures. It has put together a permitting program to consider construction of future telecommunications facilities. This program should be maintained and, as necessary or required, reviewed and updated.

### **Planned Unit Developments (PUDs)**

Due to the rigidity of zoning ordinances, Summers County may wish to allow for PUDs. A PUD is a mechanism that allows developers the option of configuring lots of property in an area to avoid development in sensitive areas or to create open space or achieve other environmental or aesthetic amenities. It is common for counties in West Virginia that allow for PUDs to have them comply with existing subdivision regulations and to have a separate review and permitting process. PUDs are intended to promote a more economical and efficient use of the land, while providing landowners in the development a harmonious flow of residential, commercial, and open-space aspects in the development. The local governing body regulating PUDs should always consider population density.

### **Small-Scale Power Generation Ordinances**

Due to increasing availability and demand for small-scale power generation devices like electric generators, solar power panels, and small wind turbines, Summers County may wish to create ordinances regulating the placement and use of each of these. Diesel and gas generators can be noisy and cause pollution, which may disrupt neighboring property owners if used. Small-scale wind and solar power generating devices can have negative visual impacts in neighborhoods. It is recommended that Summers County create a regulatory scheme to address possible problems that may arise should residents use these power generating devices without discouraging renewable energy resources.

### **Floodplain Regulations**

Summers County already has a floodplain regulatory scheme in place. Most insurance companies require that floodplain regulations be in place for homeowners and businesses to acquire flood insurance. It is recommended that this program is reviewed and updated to accommodate for the objectives identified in this Plan to mitigate any loss, cost, or human suffering caused by flooding in the county and to promote harmonious use of the county's public waterways.

### **Financial Incentives and Dis-incentives**

The authority for local governments to tax or generate income is largely regulated by state and even federal laws. However, within that framework exists a variety of creative mechanisms which can impact growth and development in the area. For instance and by way of example but not limitation, Business and Operating taxes may be waived or reduced to promote specific and appropriate development of areas which might otherwise fall into disrepair. Other examples might include endorsing or applying for grants or loans which

may offset the cost of desired growth or development. Some communities have turned to a form of local currency in which local businesses agree to accept for payment a type of local “dollar” which can be purchased or sold to individuals or businesses at a reduced rate, thereby stimulating the local economy. Alternatively, imposition of fees or bonds can both fund and discourage inappropriate development within the jurisdiction. Additional financial incentives may and should be explored to promote appropriate development in appropriate areas and discourage un-desirable development.



## **Chapter XI: Regional Planning, Coordination, and Cooperation**

Intergovernmental cooperation is essential to developing a comprehensive land use plan that effectively and efficiently addresses the needs of Summers County. Intergovernmental cooperation involves the coordination of Summers County's Comprehensive Plan with local governments, surrounding counties, and other governmental authorities. Working with others not subject to the jurisdiction of Summers County can produce a more effective comprehensive plan by removing external barriers to implementation. Further, joint planning often avoids duplicate land use planning functions and potential conflicts with regional and local planning. It also recognizes that the comprehensive land use plan, though confined to the borders of Summers County, affects and is affected by the land use actions of surrounding communities, counties, the State of West Virginia, and the federal government.

Many of the problems associated with growth and development transcend political boundaries. For this reason, the Legislature requires all counties and municipalities "cooperate, participate, share information, and give input" throughout the planning process. W. Va. Code § 8A-3-13. Indeed, a key purpose of a comprehensive plan is to encourage coordination between "all governing bodies . . . to ensure that all comprehensive plans and future development are compatible." W. Va. Code § 8A-3-1.

West Virginia provides several tools to government entities to do so. For example, government entities affected by a new or amended comprehensive plan are required to supply available information to the entity creating such a comprehensive plan. Moreover, state law authorizes intergovernmental agreements between local governments. It also permits municipalities to adopt county planning commissions as their own, or vice versa. Lastly, it permits the development of regional planning commissions to address needs across jurisdictional boundaries.

Sharing of public services may prove particularly beneficial for small, rural communities. This is especially true of emergency services. To the extent that political boundaries interfere with the most efficient administration of emergency services, intergovernmental agreements can work to protect the safety and wellbeing of residents.

As such, it is both the plan and the purpose of Summers County to utilize the provisions provide by the Legislature to work with other governmental entities to the maximum extent practicable, to coordinate, collaborate, and develop a land use plan that effectively serves the people of Summers County.

Summers County and the City of Hinton hopes to maximize land use planning efficiently for both the City and County, develop and maintain positive working relationships with surrounding counties, maintain and improve cooperation with federal and state government agencies, identify areas in which surrounding counties' and municipalities' current regulations, laws, or objectives conflict with those of Summers County, and enter into agreements with other government entities to provide cost effective government.

### **Regional Government**

One of the goals of the Summers County Planning Commission is to facilitate cooperation and coordination between it and other Summers County governmental entities. Other land use and comprehensive plans discussed in Chapter II of this plan were considered in this project. The more cooperation between regional government bodies for land use planning, the more those bodies can accomplish. The goal of the Commission is to work alongside these other entities to create the best working environment for successful implementation of the goals, objectives, and recommendations listed in this plan.

### **Surrounding Counties**

Summers County is adjacent to five other West Virginia counties and one Virginia county: Raleigh County, Fayette County, Greenbrier County, Monroe County, Mercer County, West Virginia and Giles County, Virginia. Summers County should consider its current agreements with all of those counties, potential conflicts in land use planning, and potential areas for collaboration, such as transportation and utilities or other governmental services. As with regional government, cooperation with these bodies leads to smoother implementation of the provisions of this Plan.

### **Municipalities**

The only municipality in Summers County is the City of Hinton. Pursuant to a resolution adopted by the City of Hinton, this plan was drafted to include the City of Hinton and, if the City so desires, to adopt it. In addition to this Plan, Summers County and the City of Hinton should consider their current agreements with each other, potential conflicts in land use planning, and potential areas for collaboration, such as transportation and utilities or other governmental services.

### **State Government**

Cooperation and coordination with state government agencies will help Summers County take advantage of all opportunities for funding and grants for projects suggested in this Plan. Also, compliance with state mandates and regulations is required, and staying mindful of the work at the state level regarding land use planning will help the County implement the provisions of this Plan as efficiently as possible. Specific state agencies Summers County should cooperate with include: The West Virginia Department of Transportation, The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources—Bluestone Lake, Pipestem Resort State Park, The West Virginia Division of Tourism, The West Virginia Department of Agriculture, The West Virginia Economic Development Authority, and The New River Parkway Authority.

### **Federal Government**

The same reasons for coordination with state government also apply to the federal government. Entities of particular relevance to Summers County are: The National Park Service—Bluestone National Scenic River and the New River Gorge National River and The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—Bluestone Dam.

### **New River Gorge National River General Management Plan**

The New River Gorge National River already has a Plan in place that considers goals for Summers County, specifically. This Plan was created by the National Park Service.

The New River Gorge National River (NRG NR) was established by law as a unit of the national park system in 1978. The National Park Service (NPS) is responsible for managing the NRG NR to conserve its scenery, natural and historic resources, and wildlife, and to provide for its enjoyment in a manner that will leave the park unimpaired for future generations.

The General Management Plan (GMP) for the NRG NR provides a decision-making framework for the park that ensures that management decisions effectively and efficiently

carry out the National Park Service (NPS) mission. The GMP's approval was announced on March 2, 2012, and it is meant to guide management decision making at the park for 15 to 20 years.

The overall goals of the GMP are to preserve areas for primitive recreational experiences from end to end of the park, interspersing those opportunities with cultural and interpretive resource focal areas. A north-south through the park connector composed of improved scenic roads and trails will enable visitors to travel the length of the park. Partnerships with gateway communities and improved connections and experiences from the gorge rim to the river will foster links to the park as a whole and to specific cultural and interpretive areas. Other connecting trails outside the park, made possible through partnerships, will offer visitors opportunities to hike and bike from the NRGNR to numerous parks, communities and points of interest throughout the region.

The park plans to expand its efforts to work cooperatively with gateway communities to protect park resources and values, to provide for visitor enjoyment and to define and accomplish shared goals that address mutual interests in the quality of life of community residents, including matters such as compatible economic development and resource and environmental protection to anticipate, avoid and resolve potential conflicts. The park will also pursue regional tourism partnerships, as appropriate, and can provide technical assistance to communities.

In and related to Summers County, the GMP lays out the following long-term NPS goals:

- To preserve a nearly continuous strip of natural riparian habitat along the New River from Hinton to Meadow Creek;
- To improve existing river access facilities and provide new restroom facilities at Brooks Falls;
- To maintain a variety of trails that enable visitors with different physical capabilities to explore the park in the area around the Sandstone Visitor Center;
- To provide a rim-to-river trail from Lower Hump Mountain to the Sandstone Visitor Center;
- To the west of Meadow Creek, to provide a developed campground and offer amphitheatre-based interpretive programs;
- To expand opportunities for new fishing float trips, family float trips and beginning paddler float trips in the middle gorge, and to do so, provide a public river access facility including a river launch, parking, road improvements, comfort/changing station, utilities, picnicking facilities and disabled boater access, all located at the developed campground west of Meadow Creek;
- To provide a trail from the Sandstone Visitor Center to Meadow Creek;
- To provide a trailhead and rail trail along the CSX Meadow Creek Rail line from Meadow Bridge to Meadow Creek, if/when the line is abandoned and acquired by the NPS;
- To provide an equestrian loop trail on Chestnut Mountain and expand parking capacity at the Gwinn Ridge Trailhead, including facilities for horse trailers;
- At Camp Brookside, to work in partnership with an educational institution to rehabilitate camp buildings for adaptive reuse for education purposes or for use as a youth training camp;
- To work with the WV Division of Highways to implement the New River Parkway and the recreation facilities proposed along the route, including the

Laurel Creek Overlook, the Fall Branch Trailhead, the Long Bottom Overlook, the Mermaid Beach Access, the Cochran Farm Multiple Use, the Brooks Falls Boat Access, Richmond Bottom and Brooklin Overlook; and

- To restore and interpret the Richmond-Hamilton, Vallandingham, Trump-Lilly and Cochran Farms, providing parking and a farm loop trail for visitor exploration.

In Hinton, the GMP lays out the following additional goals:

- To work collaboratively with the City of Hinton to strengthen the connections between the park and the city and its residents;
- To identify and implement appropriate treatments for significant cultural resources within the park boundary;
- To acquire a right-of-way across the CSX rail line that would allow for safe, legal pedestrian access to the waterfront and trail development from the city to downstream portions of the park;
- To develop a hiking and biking trail on river right from Hinton to Camp Brookside;
- To develop a hiking and biking trail on river left from the Hinton Bridge to the New River Parkway (working cooperatively with the New River Parkway Authority and the WV DOH);
- To continue support for existing successful special events, such as Hinton Railroad Days, as well as development of new special events that would attract visitors to the park and the city;
- To implement interpretive programs focused on Hinton's railroading history; and
- Not to seek to acquire private land within the park boundary in Hinton except where a property includes resources and values that are fundamental or important to the park that require protection from pending private actions that would adversely impact those resources, or where a property is needed to implement management actions in the GMP.

**Chapter XII: Miscellaneous Provisions**

**Enabling Legislation**

West Virginia Code § 8A-2-1 authorizes the governing body of a municipality or county to create, by ordinance, “a planning commission to promote orderly development of its jurisdiction.” W. Va. Code § 8A-2-1(a). West Virginia Code § 8A-3-3 requires a planning commission “prepare a comprehensive plan for the development of land within its jurisdiction” and “recommend the comprehensive plan to the appropriate governing body for adoption.” W. Va. Code § 8A-3-3(a). A county planning commission is authorized to include within a county's plan “the planning of towns, villages or municipalities to the extent to which, in the planning commission's judgment, they are related to the planning of the unincorporated territory of the county as a whole.” W. Va. Code § 8A-3-3(b).

**Mandatory Components**

West Virginia Code § 8A-3-4 lists the required components of a West Virginia comprehensive plan. This Plan addresses these components, sometimes in multiple places, but specifically as outlined by the table below:

<b>§ 8A-3-4 Requirement</b>	<b>Summers County Comprehensive Plan</b>	
(c)(1) Land use. – Designate the current, and set goals and programs for the proposed general distribution, location and suitable uses of land, including, but not limited to:	7 8	Current Land Use Planned Development Patterns
(c)(1)(A) Residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, educational, public, historic, conservation, transportation, infrastructure or any other use of land	7 8	Current Land Use Planned Development Patterns
(c)(1)(B) Population density and building intensity standards	7.2.4 8.4.5	Population Centers Building Densities
(c)(1)(C) Growth and/or decline management	8 2.2.2	Planned Development Patterns Growth/Decline Management
(c)(1)(D) Projected population growth or decline	8 2.2	Planned Development Patterns Population and Demographics
(c)(1)(E) Constraints to development, including identifying flood-prone and subsidence areas	8.1 8.2	Environmental Constraints Cultural Constraints
(c)(2) Housing. – Set goals, plans and programs to meet the housing needs for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction, including but not limited to:	3	Housing
(c)(2)(A) Analyzing projected housing needs and the different types of housing needed, including affordable housing and universally designed housing	3.1.3	Housing - Anticipated Needs

accessible to persons with disabilities		
(c)(2)(B) Identifying the number of projected necessary housing units and sufficient land needed for all housing needs	3.1.3	Housing – Anticipated Needs
(c)(2)(C) Addressing substandard housing	3.2	Housing – Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations
(c)(2)(D) Rehabilitating and improving existing housing	3.2	Housing – Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations
(c)(2)(E) Adaptive reuse of buildings into housing	3.2	Housing – Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations
(c)(3) Transportation. – Consistent with the land use component, identify the type, location, programs, goals and plans to meet the intermodal transportation needs of the jurisdiction, including, but not limited to:	4	Transportation
(c)(3)(A) Vehicular, transit, air, port, railroad, river and any other mode of transportation system	4.2	Transportation – Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations
(c)(3)(B) Movement of traffic and parking	4.2	Transportation – Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations
(c)(3)(C) Pedestrian and bicycle systems	4.2.5	Non-motorized transportation
(c)(3)(D) Intermodal transportation	4.2	Transportation – Goals, Objectives, and Recommendations
(c)(4) Infrastructure. – Designate the current, and set goals, plans and programs, for the proposed locations, capabilities and capacities of all utilities, essential utilities and equipment, infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction.	5	Infrastructure
(c)(5) Public services. – Set goals, plans and programs to ensure public safety, and meet the medical, cultural, historical, community, social, educational and disaster needs of the current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction	6	Public Services
(c)(6) Rural. – Consistent with the land use component, identify land that is not intended for urban growth and set goals, plans and programs for growth and/or decline management in the designated rural area.	8.4.1	Rural / Agricultural / Open Space
(c)(7) Recreation. – Consistent with the land use component, identify lands, and set goals, plans and	9.1	Tourism

programs for recreational and tourism use in the area		
(c)(8) Economic development. – Establish goals, policies, objectives, provisions and guidelines for economic growth and vitality for current and anticipated future residents of the jurisdiction, including but not limited to:	9	Economic Development
(c)(8)(A) Opportunities, strengths and weaknesses of the local economy and workforce	9	Economic Development
(c)(8)(B) Identifying and designating economic development sites and/or sectors for the area	9	Economic Development
(c)(8)(C) Type of economic development sought, correlated to the present and projected employment needs and utilization of residents in the area	9	Economic Development
(c)(9) Community design. – Consistent with the land use component, set goals, plans and programs to promote a sense of community, character and identity	8.4	Community Design and Development Considerations
(c)(10) Preferred development areas. – Consistent with the land use component, identify areas where incentives may be used to encourage development, infill development or redevelopment in order to promote well designed and coordinated communities and prevent sprawl	8.3	Preferred Development Areas
(c)(11) Renewal and/or redevelopment. – Consistent with the land use component, identify slums and other blighted areas and set goals, plans and programs for the elimination of such slums and blighted areas and for community renewal, revitalization, and/or redevelopment	8.3.2	Renewal and Re-development of Blighted Areas
	8.3.4	Brownfields and Industrial Sites
(c)(12) Financing. – Recommend to the governing body short and long-term financing plans to meet the goals, objectives and components of the comprehensive plan.	12	Financial programs
(c)(13) Historic preservation. – Identify historical, scenic, archaeological, architectural or similar significant lands or buildings, and specify preservation plans and programs so as not to unnecessarily destroy the past development which may make a viable and affordable contribution to the future	7.2.7	Land Uses – Historical
	8.2.2	Cultural Constraints –
	8.4.2	Historical Community Design and Development Considerations – Historic Preservation Areas

### **Recommendations for Regular Plan Review**

Pursuant to § 8A-3-11(a) of the West Virginia Code, the Summers County Planning Commission must review this comprehensive plan and make updates at least once every ten years. This review shall examine which goals were accomplished, how they were accomplished, which goals were not, and why they were not accomplished. The demographical, infrastructural, and economical changes to the City of Hinton and Summers County shall be examined in preparation for amending this comprehensive plan.

### **Plan Amendments and Modification**

West Virginia Code § 8A-3-1 *et seq.* authorizes plan amendments and modifications and sets forth the requirements for making such amendments and modifications. The Code specifically sets forth the requirements for public participation and public hearings throughout the amendment process of this Comprehensive Plan. After consideration has been given to the comments, the plan may be amended. The West Virginia Code requires that an amendment to this Comprehensive Plan have, at a minimum, the same procedures that were used to adopt it. Any amendments or modifications to this plan shall be done in conformity with the requirements of the Code.

### **Severability**

Should any chapter, section, or provision of this Comprehensive Plan be declared unconstitutional or invalid by the courts, such decision shall not affect the validity of the Comprehensive Plan as a whole or any part thereof other than the part declared unconstitutional or invalid.



## **Chapter XIII: Maps**

### **Appendix of Maps**

Summers County Housing

Summers County Transportation

Summers County Adopt-A-Highway

Summers County Infrastructure

Summers County Public Services

Summers County Current Land Use

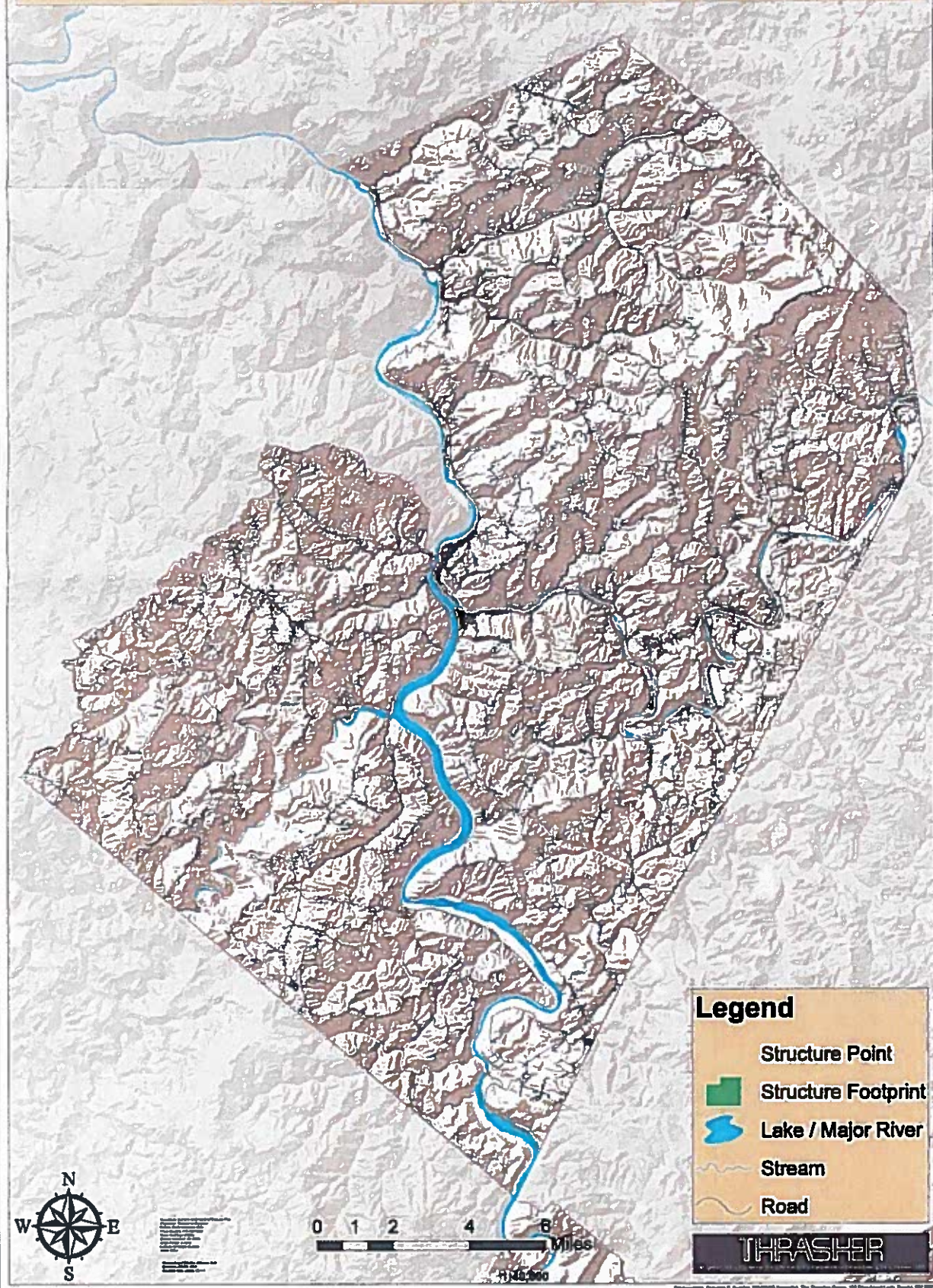
Summers County Environmental Constraints

Summers County Soils Cultural Constraints

Summers County Recreational Resources

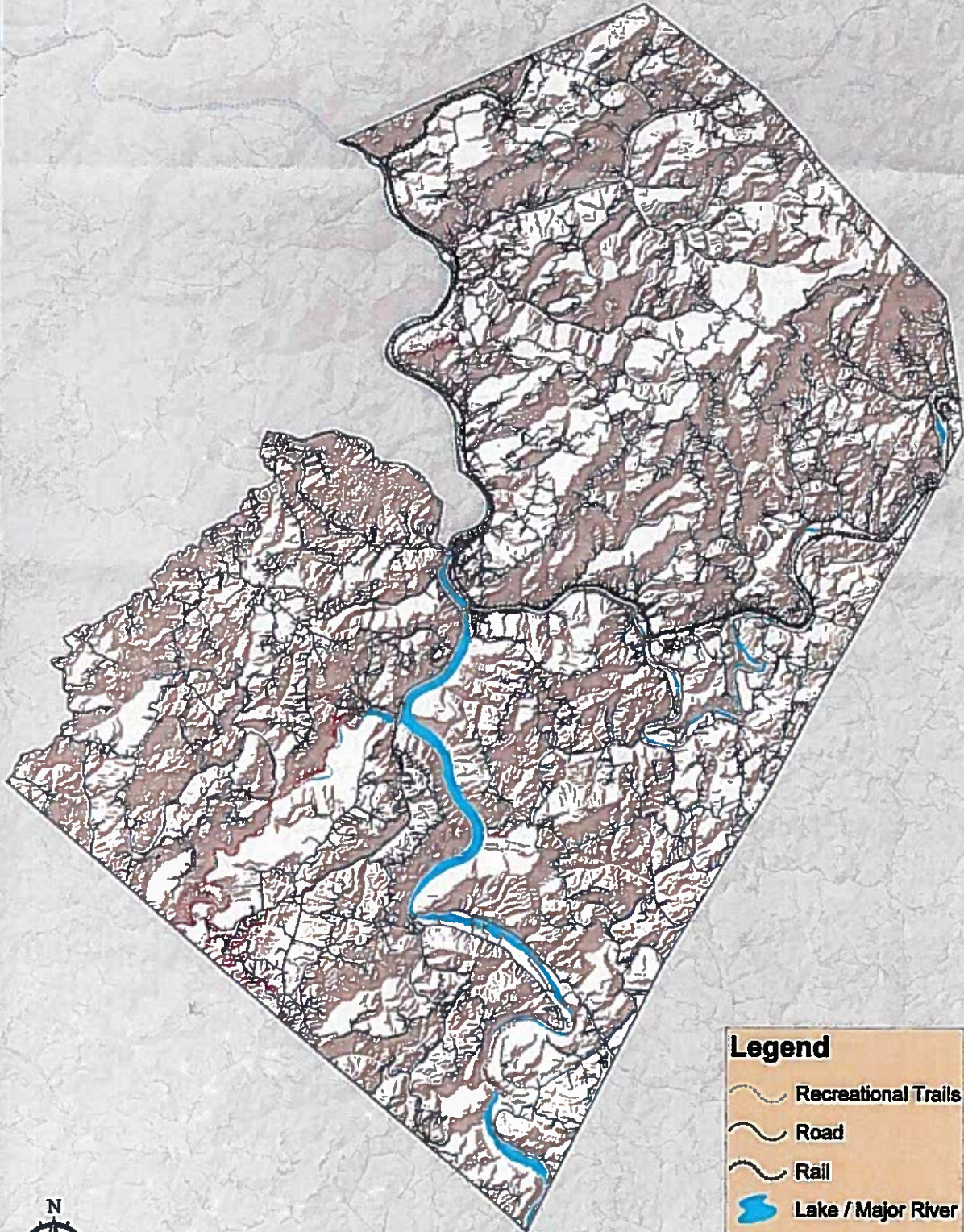
Summers County Preferred Development Areas

# Summers County Housing





# Summers County Transportation



**Legend**

- Recreational Trails
- Road
- Rail
- Lake / Major River
- Stream



Summers County, West Virginia  
Topographic Map  
Scale: 1:40,000



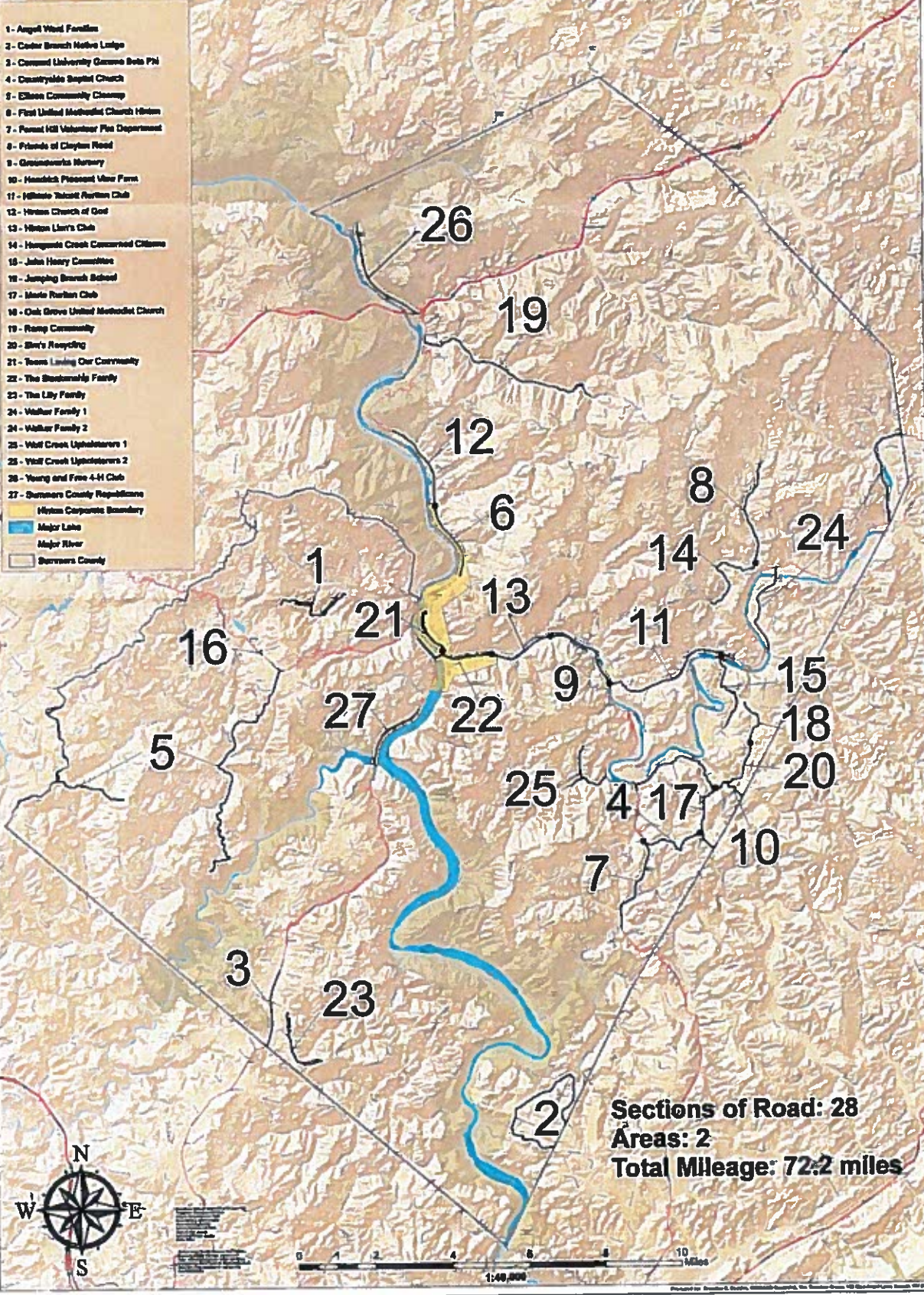
**THRASHER**

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# Summers County Adopt-A-Highway

- 1 - Angel Wood Family
  - 2 - Cedar Branch Native Lodge
  - 3 - Concord University Game Beds PM
  - 4 - Countrywide Baptist Church
  - 5 - Elison Community Center
  - 6 - First United Methodist Church Hinton
  - 7 - Forest Hill Volunteer Fire Department
  - 8 - Friends of Clayton Road
  - 9 - Greenworks Nursery
  - 10 - Handick Pleasant View Farm
  - 11 - Hillside Baptist Parson Club
  - 12 - Hinton Church of God
  - 13 - Hinton Larr's Club
  - 14 - Hargrave Creek Conservared Citizens
  - 15 - John Henry Committee
  - 16 - Jumping Branch School
  - 17 - Marie Parson Club
  - 18 - Oak Grove United Methodist Church
  - 19 - Ramp Community
  - 20 - Riv's Recycling
  - 21 - Teens Loving Our Community
  - 22 - The Shoemaker Family
  - 23 - The Lily Family
  - 24 - Walker Family 1
  - 24 - Walker Family 2
  - 25 - Wolf Creek Upholsterers 1
  - 25 - Wolf Creek Upholsterers 2
  - 26 - Young and Free 4-H Club
  - 27 - Summers County Republicans
- Hinton Corporate Boundary  
■ Major Lake  
■ Major River  
 Summers County



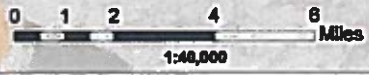
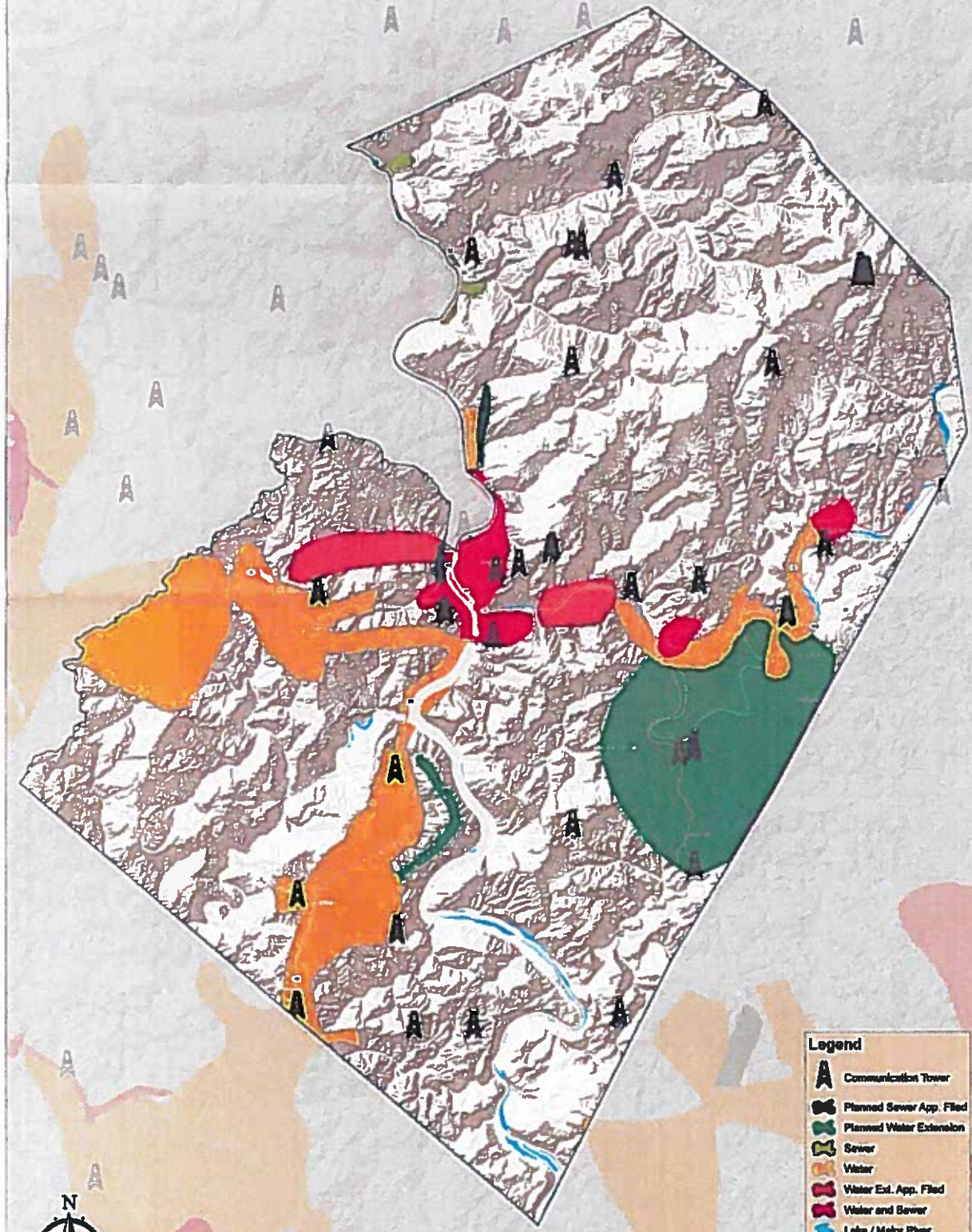
**Sections of Road: 28**  
**Areas: 2**  
**Total Mileage: 72.2 miles**



Prepared by Summit & Spahr, Charleston, W. Va. © 1994 Summit & Spahr



# Summers County Infrastructure



**Legend**

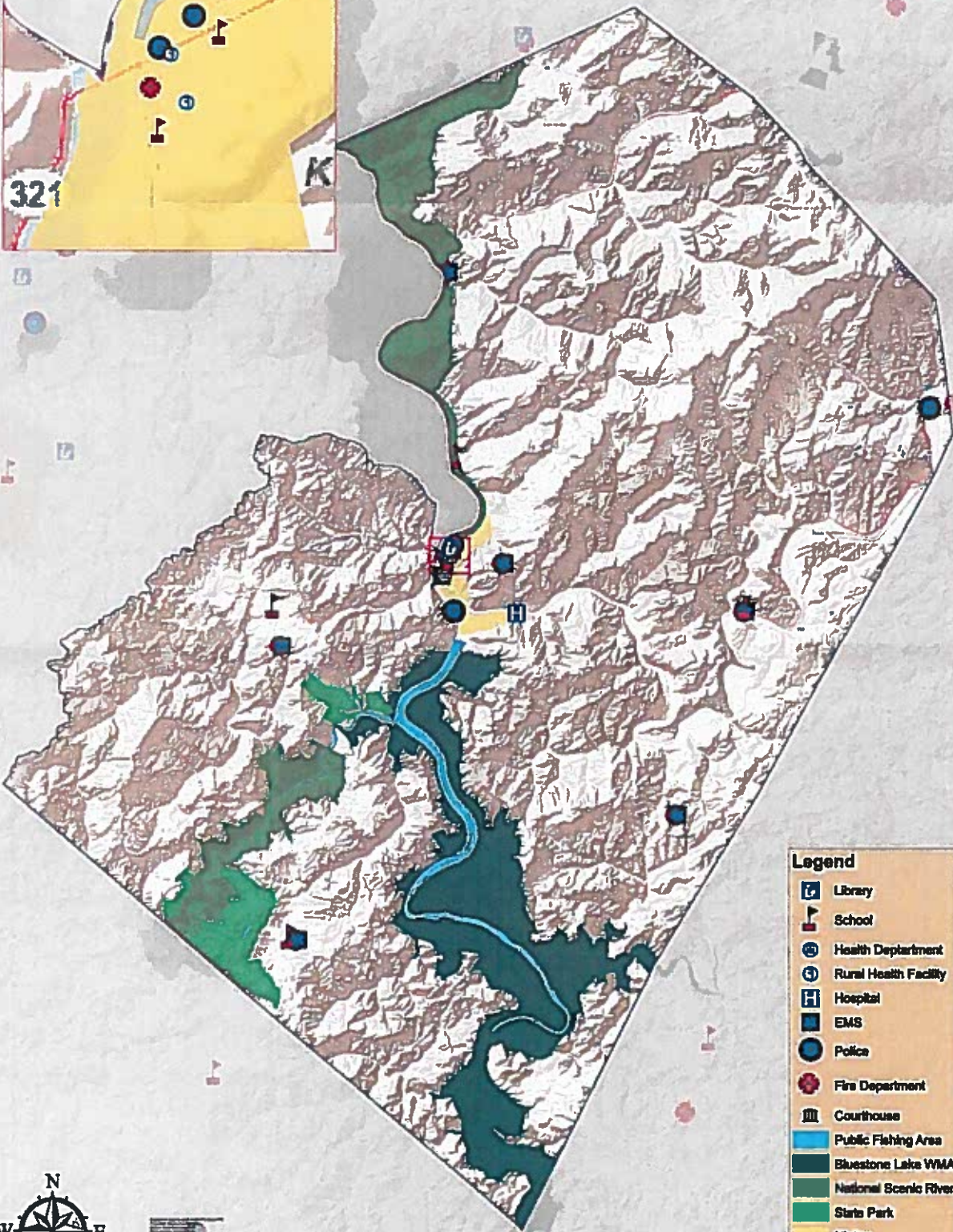
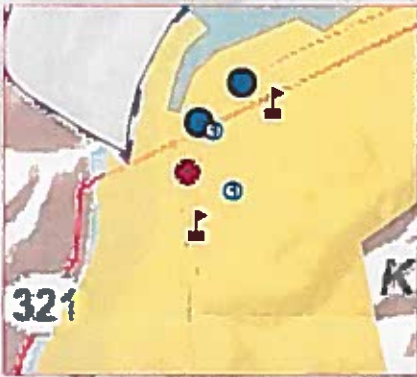
A	Communication Tower
	Planned Sewer App. Filed
	Planned Water Extension
	Sewer
	Water
	Water Ext. App. Filed
	Water and Sewer
	Lake / Major River
	Stream

**THRASHER**

Producers: Design & Survey, 1974-2000. Sources: Topographic Series, 1:50,000 Scale, 1974-2000.



# Summers County Public Services

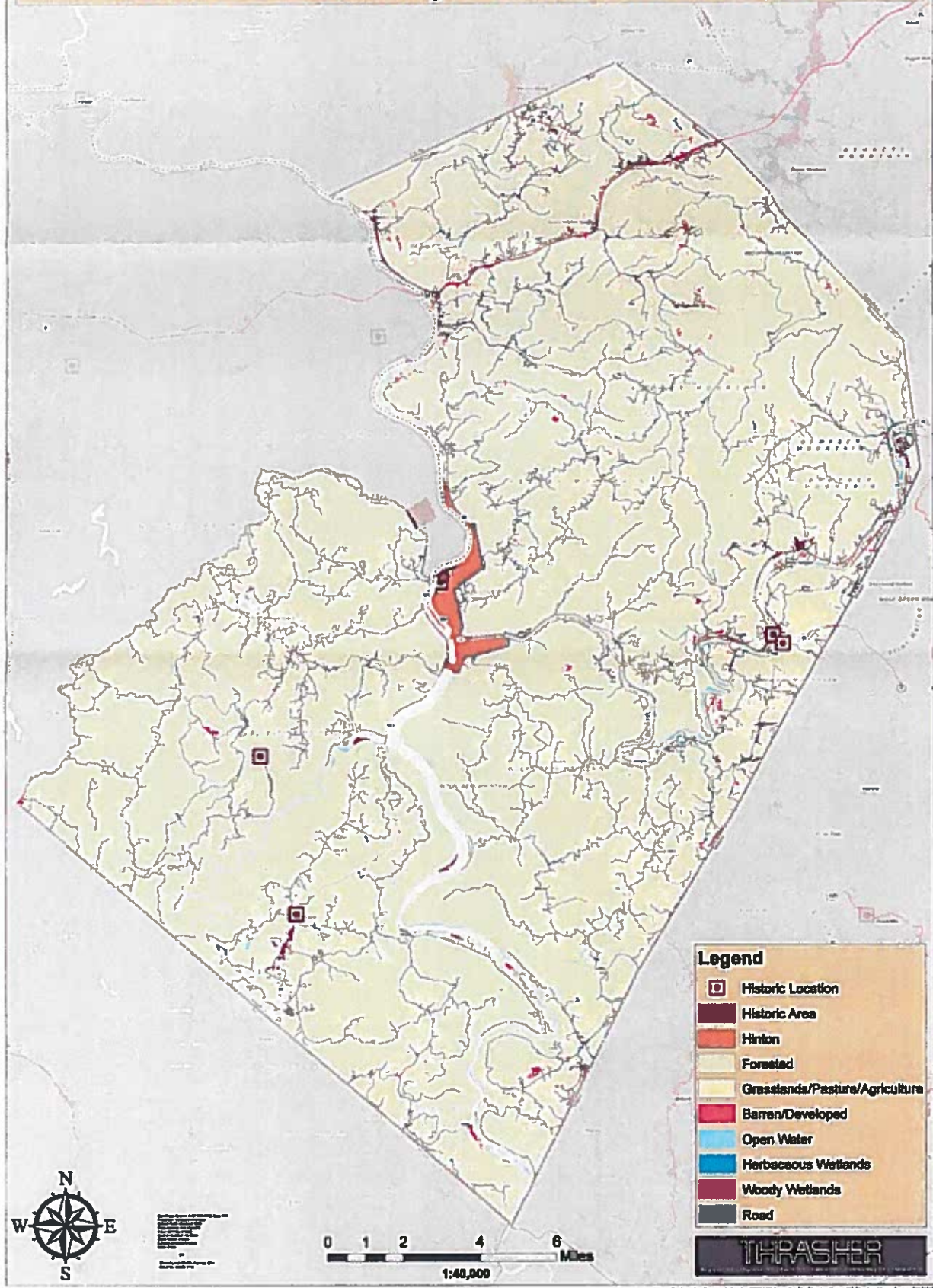


- Legend**
- Library
  - School
  - Health Department
  - Rural Health Facility
  - Hospital
  - EMS
  - Police
  - Fire Department
  - Courthouse
  - Public Fishing Area
  - Bluestone Lake WMA
  - National Scenic River
  - State Park
  - Hinton





# Summers County Current Land Use



## Legend

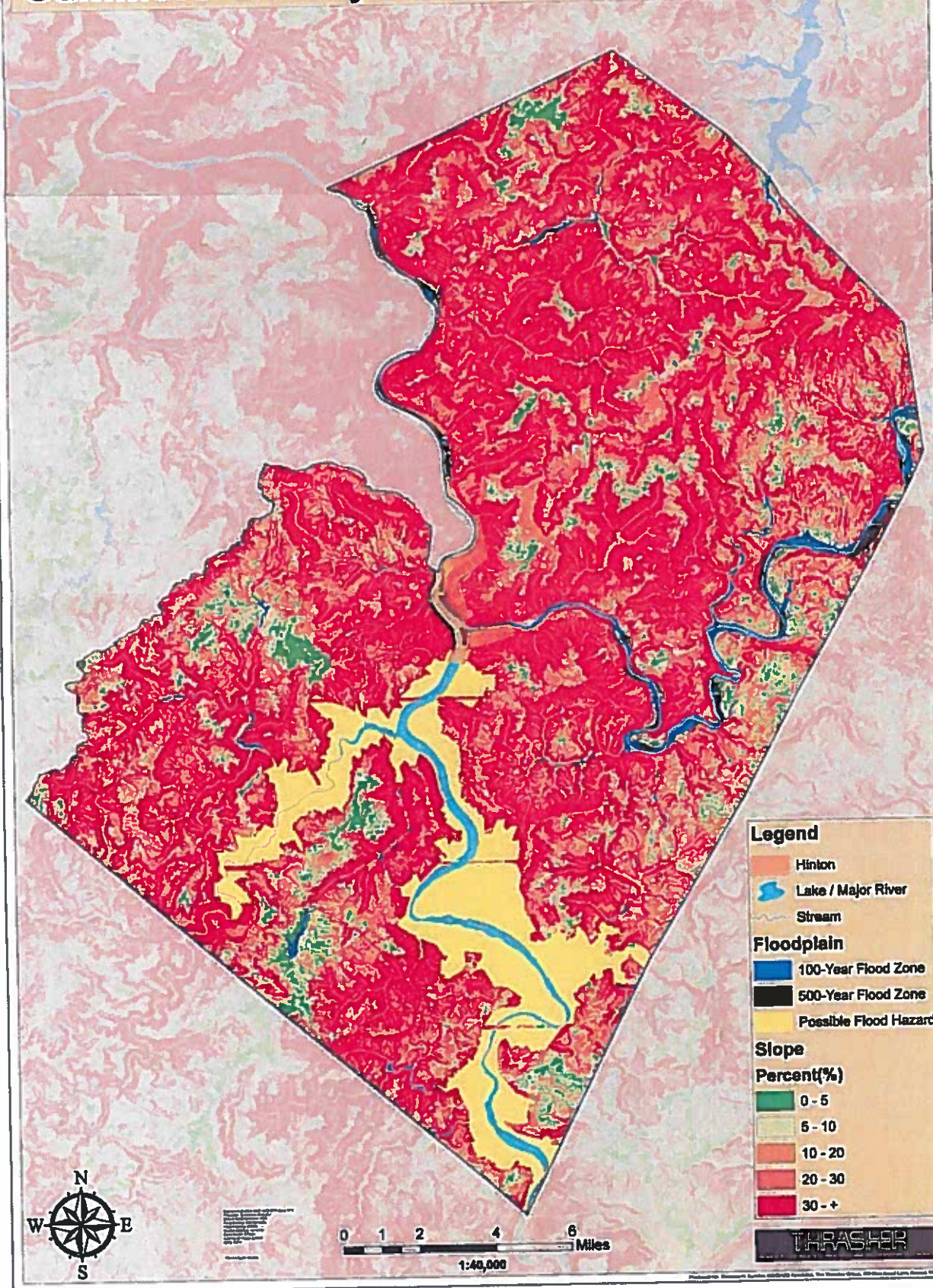
- Historic Location
- Historic Area
- Hinton
- Forested
- Grasslands/Pasture/Agriculture
- Barren/Developed
- Open Water
- Herbaceous Wetlands
- Woody Wetlands
- Road



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# Summers County Environmental Constraints



- Legend**
- Hinton
  - Lake / Major River
  - Stream
  - Floodplain**
    - 100-Year Flood Zone
    - 500-Year Flood Zone
    - Possible Flood Hazard
  - Slope**  
Percent(%)
    - 0 - 5
    - 6 - 10
    - 10 - 20
    - 20 - 30
    - 30 - +

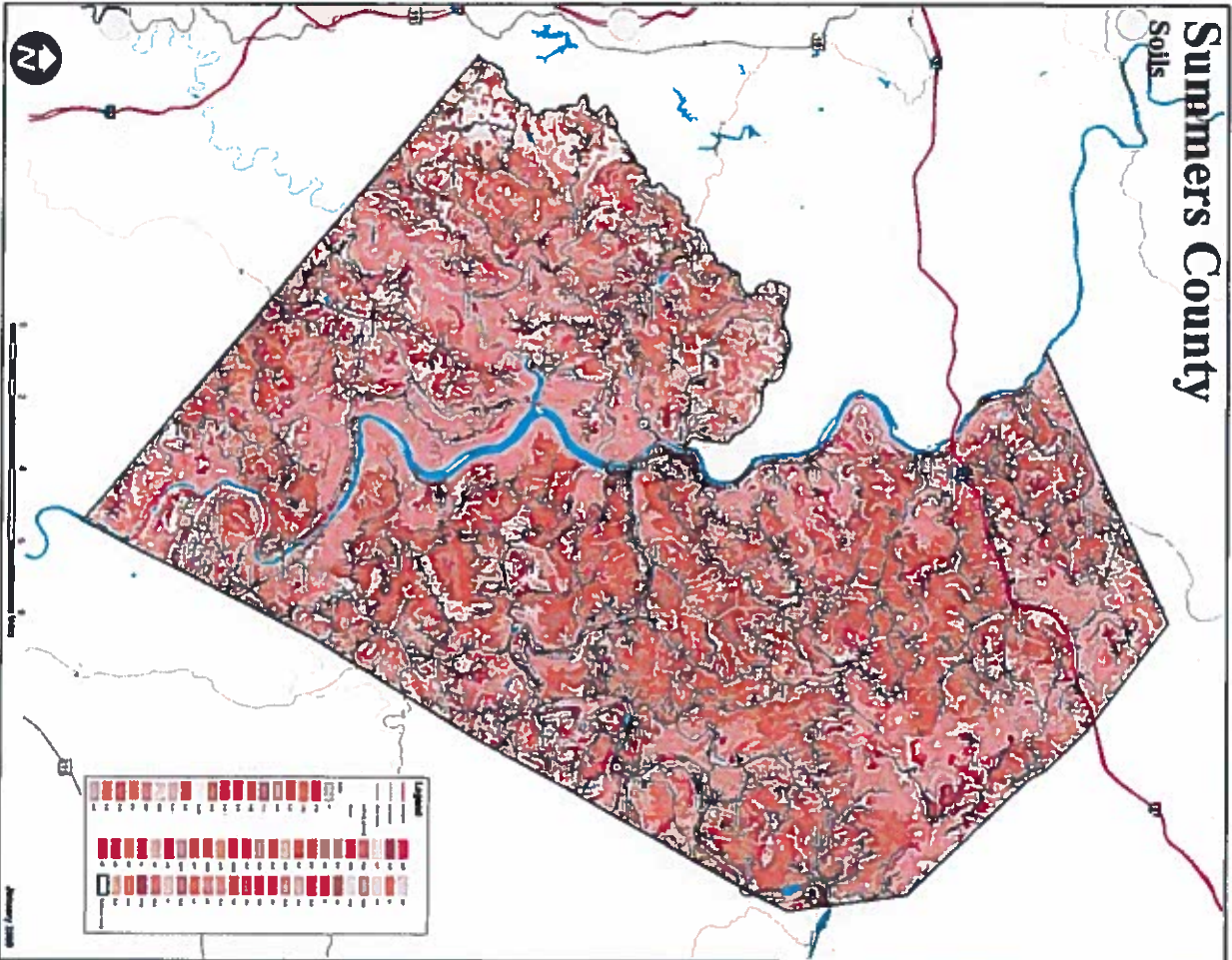
THRASHER



0 1 2 4 6 Miles  
1:40,000



# Summers County Soils



# Summers County Recreational Resources

