Sacony Creek NHA

PNHP Significance Rank: *State*

Site Description

Sacony Creek NHA contains a mostly forested landscape intermingled with active agricultural operations and residential properties. Surface water from seeps and springs create moist meadows with mucky soils under puddles, pools, and rivulets in the areas adjacent to Sacony and Little Sacony Creeks. These areas provide suitable habitat for a **sensitive species of concern** that is not named at the request of the jurisdictional agency overseeing its protection.

Species or natural communities of concern that can be found in this NHA include the following:

Species or Natural Community Name		PNHP Rank[1] Global	State	PA Legal Status[1]	Last Seen	Quality[2]
Sensitive species of concern A[3]	**S**	---	---	---	7/15/2006	E

[1]See the PNHP website (http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/RankStatusDef.aspx) for an explanation of PNHP ranks and legal status. A legal status in parentheses is a status change recommended by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey.

[2]See NatureServe website (http://www.natureserve.org/explorer/eorankguide.htm) for an explanation of quality ranks.

[3]This species is not named by request of the jurisdictional agency responsible for its protection.

Threats and Stresses

Degradation of water quality in Sacony Creek, Little Sacony Creek, and adjacent wetlands as well as loss of natural habitats through fragmentation of forest blocks and destruction of riparian zones are threats to this NHA.

Specific threats and stresses to the elements present at this site include:

- Degradation of water quality or quantity can have a negative impact on the habitat supporting the species of concern found at this location. The stormwater runoff from roadways (e.g. Smoketown Road) including rural development, and agriculture should be considered a potential source of significant contamination. Runoff from these sources have significantly higher levels of sediment, nutrients, pesticides, herbicides and other pollutants than runoff filtered through a natural habitat.
- Natural succession from open, wet meadow floodplains to shrub and tree dominated habitats can eliminate suitable open canopied habitats supporting species of concern.
- Forest fragmentation due to development or infrastructure activities could result in habitat loss and degradation of the site.
- Exotic invasive plant species threaten to compete with and displace native species.
- Over browsing by white-tailed deer is a serious threat to the overall understory plant diversity. An overabundance of deer can create the effect of park-like forests in which the native plant understory and vertical stratification are greatly reduced.

Conservation Recommendations

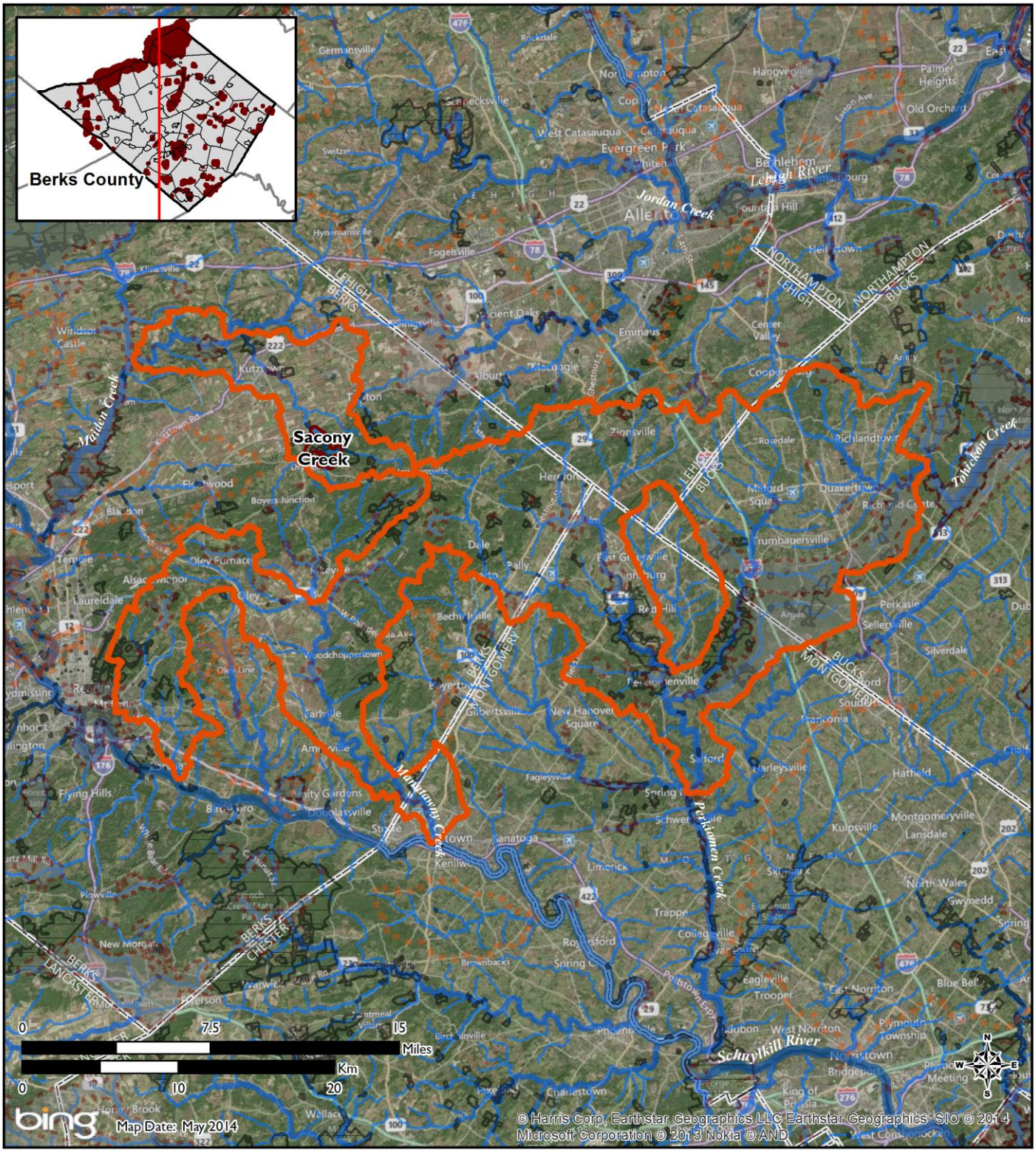
Streams flowing through forested areas and adjacent wetlands should be considered high priority for conservation. The forested riparian corridor helps to regulate the temperature of the stream and creates streamside conditions that contribute to improved water quality and aquatic habitat. This site will be best protected by maintaining the integrity of the forest buffer, maintaining adjacent open, wet-meadow wetlands and insuring a consistent hydrologic regime.

The following steps are recommended to ensure the persistence of these species at this site:

- Avoid disrupting the hydrology of the site by draining or filling the wetlands as well as disturbing the surface or groundwater hydrology.
- Maintain open, wet meadow habitats by periodic removal of woody species of plants. This action will temporarily help set back succession to a closed canopy habitat and preserve the open, wet meadow habitat conditions preferred by species of concern.
- Protect remaining portions of the riparian zone and repair others that have been degraded by encouraging the growth of native vegetation. Careful determination is needed to avoid planting trees in floodplains that should remain as open canopied herbaceous wetland habitats. These habitats should be maintained in their current open condition, with tree plantings to occur uphill of areas containing hydric soils.
- Avoid fragmenting the existing forested areas with additional buildings or infrastructure. The primary conservation concern for this habitat should be to focus on safeguarding the quality and expanse of the forested landscape. While providing the primary habitat for the populations of species of concern, the forested landscape also helps to protect water quality of the streams that drain through this NHA.
- Control invasive species of plants to prevent native species from being crowded out by introduced species. Invasive species removal efforts should focus on reducing the prevalence of woody species such as Norway maple, Japanese barberry, common privet, bush honeysuckles, Japanese honeysuckle, multiflora rose, autumn olive and winged euonymus. Target pioneer populations of invasive plants for immediate and continued removal. It is much easier and more effective to keep a place invasive-free than to try and repair a heavily infested habitat. Invasive species management should be coordinated by individuals familiar with the native species as well as the invasive species present. Continual invasive species monitoring and control will be necessary.
- Reduce the deer density in the area. Uncommon species of native plants are particularly susceptible to deer herbivory.

<u>Location</u>

Municipalities: *Rockland Township, Maxatawny Township*
USGS quads: *Manatawny*
Previous CNHI reference: *Berks CNAI 2003: "Little Lehigh Creek Watershed"*
Overlapping Protected Lands: *Conservation easements*



Sacony Creek
Natural Heritage Area

This site provides habitat for a sensitive species of concern.

Significance Rank:
STATE

PNHP
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program

Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Areas

- ***Core Habitat***
- ***Supporting Landscape***
- ***Other Core Habitat***
- ***Other Supporting Landscape***
- ***Conservation Lands***