

# Bethlehem Authority: a long history of superior forest stewardship

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*(The latest in a series of posts relating to the environment, Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan, and Bethlehem's Environmental Advisory Council)*

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Gadfly should check out the [web page of the Bethlehem Authority](#) on the City's website to learn about its role in the climate picture. I've excerpted a few lines below from the "Watershed Forest Management" section:

"Dating back to the purchase of the watershed properties, the Bethlehem Authority (Authority) and the City of Bethlehem have a long history of superior forest stewardship that is distinguished from most private land owners in the region. Through the efforts of long time City Forester, John Anspach, the watershed forests have been a model for proper forest management activities. Plantations of various indigenous species were developed and nurtured under Mr. Anspach's guiding forestry principles. . . . In 2011, following over a year of negotiations, the Authority entered into a conservation easement with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) that was part of TNC's Working Woodland's Program. TNC is an international private nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. The outcome of this arrangement was the development of a comprehensive Forest Management Plan (FMP) that became Forest Stewardship Council or FSC® certified in 2012. FSC ® is the preeminent sustainable forest certification entity in the world today.

The FMP has the following overarching goals that will drive the management activities on the Authority properties:

- Preserve the high drinking water quality and quantity of the sources by maintaining or improving the capacity of the watershed to produce these values and maintaining or improving watershed security to insure the safety of the supply.

- Improve the capacity of the watershed and its properties to produce financial return that will better enable BA to protect and enhance the long term value of the asset. This includes sustainable timbering, potential renewable energy and monetizing ecosystem services (carbon, NRCS cost share, easements, leases etc.).
- Promote ecosystem health, diversity, and sustainable management of all resources through compliance with all federal, state, and municipal requirements, FSC standards of operation and other best management practices.
- Within constraints of other objectives, maintain or improve opportunities to allow the public active and passive recreational access to BA lands.

The FMP was developed to guide the management activities of the Authority properties in the Wild Creek and Tunkhannock Creek Watersheds. These properties are part of the Working Woodlands program of TNC, and, as a result, will be managed in accordance with the FSC® US 2010 National Standard as part of TNC's group certificate. In addition, as part of Working Woodlands, these properties will be verified to the Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) and provides carbon credits that are sold on the voluntary market to offset the carbon footprint of large companies. By sequestering carbon dioxide, through 2018 the Authority has received credits for revenue totaling over \$946,000 from Chevy Corp. and Disney Corp. and has a commitment from Disney to buy carbon credits through 2022.

The vision for all properties within TNC's Working Woodlands, is to restore and sustain high quality ecological values within economically productive forests. The Authority properties serve as the primary and secondary drinking water supply for over 116,000 customers, and as such have considerably high conservation value. In addition, the mesic till barrens community type of the Pocono Plateau, which dominates several thousand acres of Authority property, is home to rare and endangered species of plants, birds and insects and is considered to be the only natural community of its kind in the world. The conservation easement provides that: the properties will be retained predominantly in their natural, scenic, and forested condition, free of additional forest fragmentation or additional development; any rare plants, animals, or plant communities will be protected; and any use that will significantly impair or interfere with the conservation values or interests of the Authority will be prevented. The easement will assure long-term, professional,

independent third-party certified forest management of the property for the production, management and harvesting of economically valuable timber and related forest products while ensuring the conservation values are protected or enhanced. The easement also ensures the protection of forest and other natural resources and allows for the potential of economic return from the protection, management, maintenance, and improvement of ecosystem services provided by the property, including but not limited to the protection of water quality and quantity, carbon sequestration, and the protection of wetlands, rare species and natural communities.

The FMP will be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure that strategies to be undertaken are in compliance with TNC's Compatible Human and Economic Use Activity Standard Operating Procedures (CHU SOP) and are in accordance with the Conservancy's Group Certification program and the FSC® US National Standard."

Steve