

Dreher Township

Wayne County Agricultural Land Use/Land Cover Study

A study examining the change of agricultural land use and land cover
in Wayne County from 1959 to 2002

This is report M-8, Dreher Township; in a series of reports examining land use and land cover change in Wayne County's 28 municipalities, particularly agricultural land between 1959 and 2002. For a detail of the study procedures, see the Project Narrative.

Overview



Dreher Township is located in southern Wayne County with the Wallenpaupack Creek forming its eastern border. It is the twentieth largest municipality in Wayne County with a total of approximately 9,657 acres or 15 square miles and accounts for 2% of the

County's total land area. As can be seen in Table 1 {below} and Charts 1 and 2 {right}, the majority of the Township was covered by forest in both 1959 and 2002. The area of farming related activities decreased over the forty-plus year study period. Conversely, the amount of forest, residential and water cover increased. Recreational land use accounted for almost 1% of the Township land area in 2002. This was attributed to the "Breezewood Acres" development, which is occupied by campsites and travel trailers.

The charts below show the percent values for the land use/land cover categories in Dreher Township for 1959 and 2002. The residential category includes farmsteads in each chart's total throughout this report, and the category "other" includes land use/land cover categories that were too small to illustrate individually.

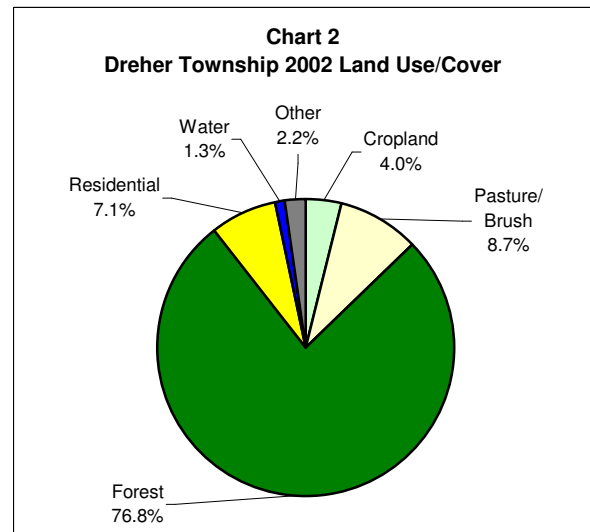
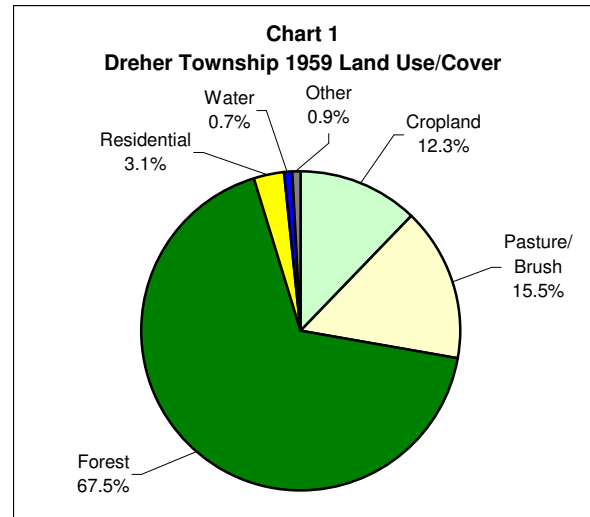


Table 1 - Dreher Township Land Use/Land Cover

Land Use/Land Cover	Dreher 1959 Acres	Category Percent of Total	Dreher 2002 Acres	Category Percent of Total
Residential	267.07	2.8%	674.62	7.0%
Commercial	69.68	0.7%	87.10	0.9%
Industrial	1.32	0.0%	6.46	0.1%
Transportation	-	0%	-	0%
Utilities	-	0%	2.02	0.0%
Religious	6.15	0.1%	9.85	0.1%
Government/Institution	11.19	0.1%	27.43	0.3%
Recreational	-	0%	75.18	0.8%
Cropland	1,187.78	12.3%	385.29	4.0%
Farmstead	33.11	0.3%	11.31	0.1%
Pasture/Brush	1,494.67	15.5%	836.12	8.7%
Forest	6,513.86	67.5%	7,418.44	76.8%
Water	71.80	0.7%	122.81	1.3%
Mining/Extraction	-	0%	-	0%
Total	9,656.63	100.0%	9,656.63	100.0%

Notice the large decrease of both cropland and pasture/brush over this time period and the gradual increase of both forest and residential land use/land cover. The water coverage also increased by an additional fifty-plus acres and now accounts for over 1% of Dreher Township's total land area.

Cropland

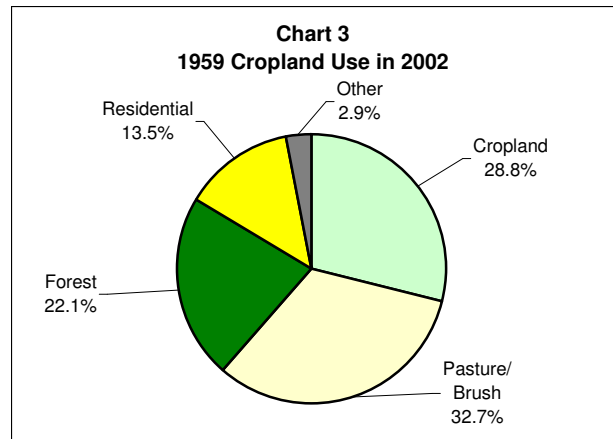
Cropland was the third largest land use in Dreher Township in 1959. By 2002, however, cropland became the fourth largest land use in the Township {see Table 1}. In 1959, there were approximately 1,188 acres, which equals 12.3% of the Township. By 2002, the area of cropland had decreased by over 800 acres, reducing cropland to 4% of the Township. Table 2 {below} and Chart 3 {right} shows what became of the 1959 cropland.

Table 2 - 1959 Cropland Use in 2002

Land Use/Land Cover	1959 Cropland Classification in 2002	
	Acres	Percent
Residential	153.24	12.9%
Commercial	11.48	1.0%
Industrial	3.10	0.3%
Transportation	-	0%
Utilities	0.51	0.0%
Religious	2.68	0.2%
Government/Institution	2.52	0.2%
Recreational	10.74	0.9%
Cropland	341.84	28.8%
Farmstead	7.05	0.6%
Pasture/Brush	388.25	32.7%
Forest	262.50	22.1%
Water	3.87	0.3%
Mining/Extraction	-	0%
Total	1,187.78	100.0%

Of the approximately 1,188 acres of 1959 cropland, only 342 acres or 28.8% remained as cropland by 2002. Nearly 55% of the 1959 cropland converted to natural land cover, namely pasture/brush (32.7%) and forest (22.1%). These two land covers accounted for 650 acres. Another 160 acres was changed to residential land use, which includes the farmstead category, and roughly 11 acres was changed to both commercial and recreational land.

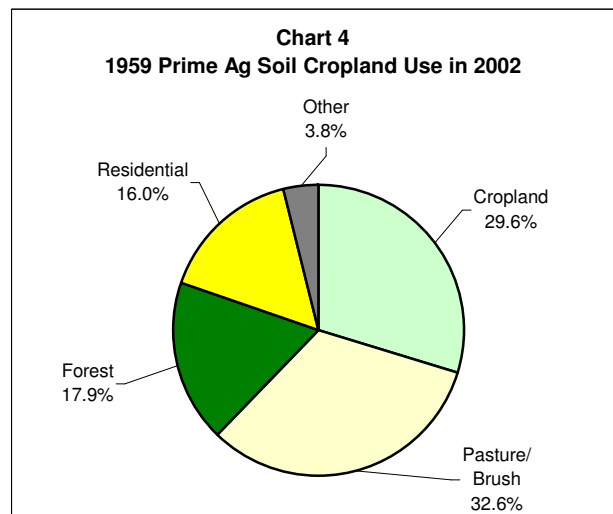
The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifies soil as prime agricultural soil, farmland of statewide importance or non-prime soil. Details of the three classifications can be found in the County summary. The following sections will examine soils from a prime versus non-prime perspective.



The chart above shows the percent values for the 1959 cropland and what it became by 2002.

Prime Agricultural Soil

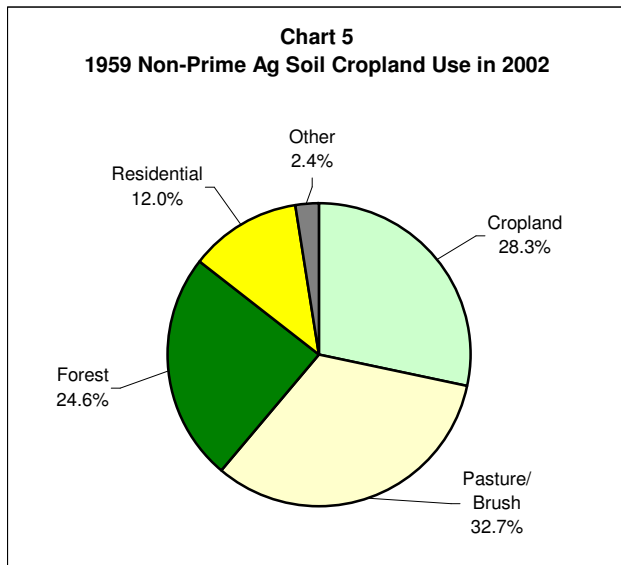
In 1959, 450 acres or nearly 38% of the cropland in Dreher Township was located on prime agricultural soil. Of that prime agricultural soil cropland, approximately 133 acres, equal to 29.6%, was being utilized for cropland production by 2002. Over 225 acres converted naturally to other land covers during this four-decade plus period. Almost 150 acres or 32.6% of the prime soil cropland from 1959 became pasture/brush and 80 acres, equal to 17.9%, grew into forest cover. Another 16% became utilized for residential purposes, which includes the farmstead classification, and was equivalent to 72 acres. Chart 4 {below} shows what became of the 1959 cropland located on prime agricultural soil.



Less than 30% of the 1959 prime agricultural cropland soil remained as cropland by 2002, while nearly one-third (32.6%) converted to pasture/brush.

Non-Prime Agricultural Soil

In 1959, roughly 738 acres, equaling 62% of the cropland in Dreher Township, was located on non-prime agricultural soil. Of that non-prime agricultural soil, only 208 acres equaling 28.3% was being used as cropland by 2002. Over half of the prior 1959 non-prime soil cropland had converted into natural types of land cover. Approximately 241 acres or 32.7% became pasture/brush and almost 182 acres, equal to 24.6%, grew naturally into forest cover. Another 12% became utilized for residential purposes, which was equivalent to 88 acres. Chart 5 {below} shows, by percentage, what became of the 1959 non-prime soil cropland in Dreher Township.

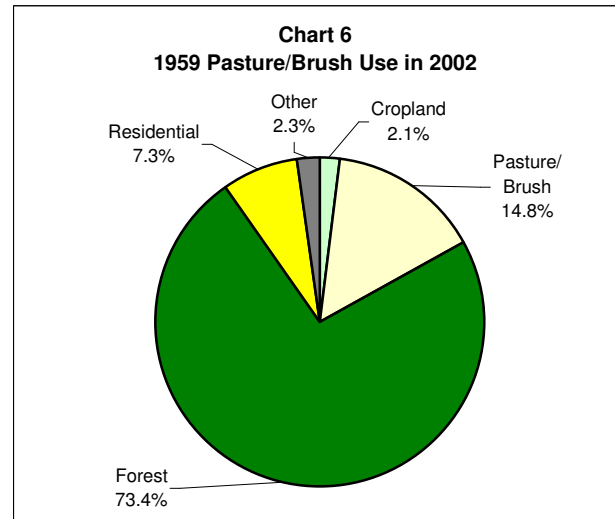


Less than 30% of the 1959 non-prime soil cropland remained as cropland by 2002 and over 57% grew into either pasture/brush or forest.

Pasture/Brush

In 1959, pasture/brush accounted for 15.5% or nearly 1,500 acres of Dreher Township's total land area {See Table 1}. By 2002, this land cover had decreased to 836 acres, which equaled only 8.7% of the Township. Of the 1959 pasture/brush acreage, only 222 acres remained as such by 2002, which was equivalent to 14.8%. Almost 1,100 acres equaling nearly three-quarters of the prior 1959 pasture/brush grew naturally into forest cover over the four-decade plus study period. Another 110 acres or 7.3% became residential land and 31 acres,

equal to 2.1%, was improved into cropland use. The following chart shows the 1959 pasture/brush land and what it became by 2002.



Nearly three-quarters of the 1959 pasture/brush grew into forest by 2002, equal to approximately 1,100 acres.

Forest

As stated in the "overview", the majority of Dreher Township was covered by forest in both 1959 and 2002. In 1959, there were over 6,500 acres of forest, which equaled over two-thirds of the Township {see Table 1}. By 2002, the area of forest had increased by an additional 900-plus acres to over 7,400 acres. By percentage, over three-quarters (76.8%) of the Township was now forested. A part of the Tobyhanna State Park, under the ownership of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, is located in the southwest corner of the Township and accounts for 290 acres, which is equal to 3.9% of the total forest acreage. The increase in forest cover is mostly attributed to the maturation of the pasture/brush land, as discussed in the previous section. Also, a large portion of the 1959 forest in the Township remained as such forty-three years later. Of the 6,514 acres of 1959 forest, approximately 6,012 acres, equal to 92.3%, remained as forest by 2002 {see Table 3 on next page}. Almost 200 acres or 3.1% of the 1959 forest became pasture/brush land and 194 acres or 3% was converted to residential land use over this time period. Roughly 56 acres became classified as recreational land due to establishment of the "Breezewood Acres" development, which equaled less than 1%.

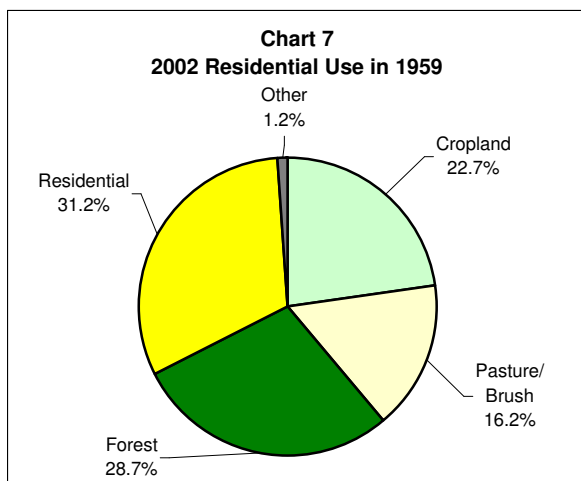
Table 3 - 1959 Forestland Use in 2002

Land Use/Land Cover	1959 Forestland Classification in 2002	
	Acres	Percent
Residential	193.87	3.0%
Commercial	3.46	0.1%
Industrial	0.15	0.0%
Transportation	-	0%
Utilities	0.08	0.0%
Religious	0.13	0.0%
Government/Institution	3.35	0.1%
Recreational	56.11	0.9%
Cropland	9.31	0.1%
Farmstead	0.47	0.0%
Pasture/Brush	198.80	3.1%
Forest	6,011.55	92.3%
Water	36.57	0.6%
Mining/Extraction	-	0%
Total	6,513.85	100.0%

The table above shows both the acreage and percent of the 1959 forest and what it became by 2002.

Residential

In 1959, a total of 267 acres or 2.8% of Dreher Township's land area was being used for residential purposes. By 2002, the residential acreage increased by an additional 400 plus acres to 675 acres or 7% of the Township's land area. Chart 7 {below} will show, by percentage, how this residential acreage existed back in 1959.



Over 150 acres of the 2002 residential came from prior cropland, roughly 110 acres was from 1959 pasture/brush, 194 acres was previously forest and 193 acres was already being used for residential purposes in 1959.

Protected Agricultural Land

Due to the limited agricultural activities, Dreher Township does not have any land that has been designated in the Agricultural Security Area Program. Therefore, there are no farms enrolled in the Agricultural Land Preservation Program since the agricultural security designation is one of the major requirements. However, under the Act 319 (Clean & Green) Program, a total of 1,154 acres equaling 12.6% of the taxable acreage within Dreher Township has been accepted by the County in order to receive reduced property tax assessment.

Summary

The findings of this agricultural land use study revealed that nearly 850 acres of 1959 cropland was converted to other uses. Almost one-third converted to pasture/brush and almost one-quarter became forest during this time. In 1959 cropland covered 12.3% of the Township compared to 4% in 2002. In this same time period, pasture/brush covered 6.8% less of the Township. Nearly 1,100 acres or almost 75% of the 1959 pasture/brush grew into forest. It was by far the largest destination category for the 1959 pasture/brush land. Forest coverage increased 900-plus acres, which represents 9.3% more of the Township and now accounts for over three-quarters of the Township's total land area. Residential land increased by 400 plus acres during the study period and now covers 7%. Commercial land increased by less than 20 acres, but still accounts for less than 1% of Dreher Township.

Wayne County Agricultural Land Use/Cover

This project was funded in part by the Wayne County Commissioners and by a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. This study examines the change in agricultural land use/cover over 43 years (1959-2002). The base data is 1959 USDA aerial photos which were registered to the state plane coordinate system by Wilkes University's Center for Geographic Information Sciences. This enabled comparison with the 1997 aerial photos taken by Wayne County. To aid in the analysis of the data, local municipal volunteers worked with planning department staff members in reviewing the aerial photos and resulting land use maps. A complete list of those community volunteers who aided in the completion of this report can be found in the report summary.

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