

Honesdale Borough

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-11, Honesdale Borough; 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



Honesdale Borough was established in 1831 and has been the county seat for Wayne County since 1841. The Borough is centrally located along U.S. Route 6 and contains 2,570 acres or four square miles. In 1959, two-thirds of the Borough was comprised of a

combination of agricultural and natural land use/cover. By 2002, agricultural and natural land use/cover accounted for 54.9% of the Borough land area. Pasture/brush was the most prevalent land use contributing to the 1959 total by accounting for 24.1% of the total 1959 land use. Forestland was a close second consisting of 23.6% in 1959, but was the number one land use in 2002 accounting for 32.6% of the entire Borough. Cropland accounted for 17.9% of the total land area of the Borough in 1959, but had been reduced to 8.2% by 2002 {see Table 1 below}.

The charts below are to aid in visualizing the changes in the land use/cover of Honesdale Borough over the 43-year period of this study. For presentation purposes, farmsteads were grouped with the residential classification in the charts throughout this report. The categories included in "other" are: industrial, utilities, religious, mining/extraction, recreational & transportation.

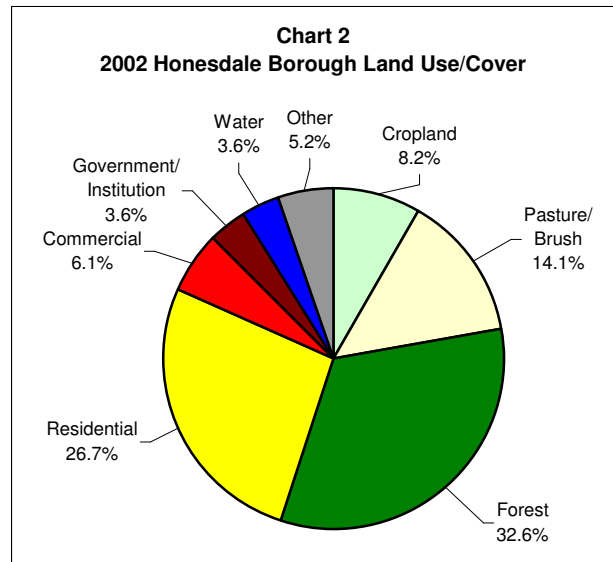
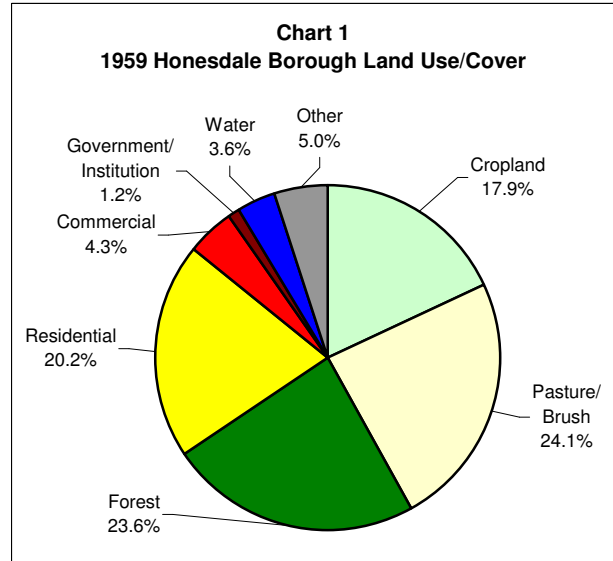


Table 1 – Honesdale Borough Land Use/Land Cover

Land Use/Land Cover	Honesdale 1959 Acres	Category Percent of Total	Honesdale 2002 Acres	Category Percent of Total
Residential	497.15	19.3%	674.08	26.2%
Commercial	110.79	4.3%	156.34	6.1%
Industrial	38.99	1.5%	22.95	0.9%
Transportation	14.56	0.6%	12.20	0.5%
Utilities	4.38	0.2%	12.72	0.5%
Religious	54.02	2.1%	60.75	2.4%
Government/Institution	31.42	1.2%	92.13	3.6%
Recreational	6.57	0.3%	20.81	0.8%
Cropland	461.08	17.9%	211.43	8.2%
Farmstead	22.51	0.9%	10.96	0.4%
Pasture/Brush	619.98	24.1%	362.43	14.1%
Forest	606.51	23.6%	836.94	32.6%
Water	91.79	3.6%	92.05	3.6%
Mining/Extraction	10.29	0.4%	4.25	0.2%
Total	2,570.04	100.0%	2,570.04	100.0%

Charts 1 and 2 {above} show that forestland was the largest land cover in 2002, but not in 1959 unlike many other municipalities in the County. In 1959, pasture/brush was the largest land cover. The charts also reveal that both cropland and pasture/brush decreased over the 43-year study period while forestland increased.

Cropland

As can be seen in Table 1 on the front page, cropland covered 461 acres in 1959 in the Borough of Honesdale. This acreage accounted for the fourth largest land use at 17.9% overall. The cropland was located primarily east of the Lackawaxen River and Dyberry Creek with other concentrations in the southwestern and northwestern corners of the Borough. By 2002, 197 acres, equal to 42.8%, was still cropland {see Chart 3 right}. Some cropland converted to pasture/brush in the amount of 120 acres or 26.2% of the 1959 cropland. The acreage of former cropland that was being used for residential purposes in 2002 totaled 79 acres. Forestland claimed 50 acres of 1959 cropland as shown in Table 2 {below}. By 2002, the amount of cropland in the Borough had been reduced by more than half to approximately 211 acres or 8.2% of the entire land area of the Borough.

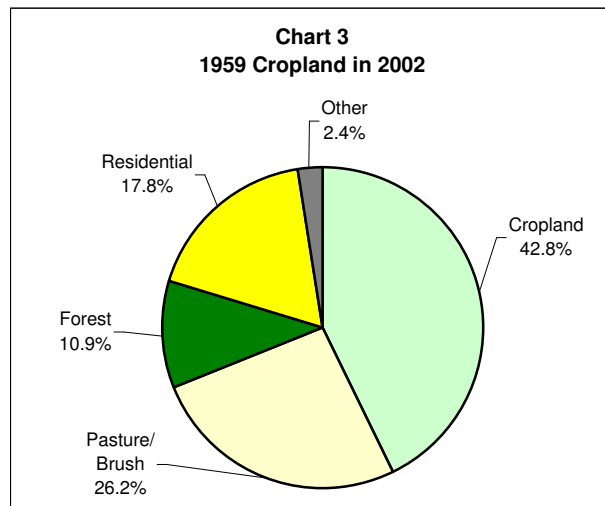
Table 2 – 1959 Cropland Use in 2002

Land Use/Land Cover	1959 Cropland Classification in 2002	
	Acres	Percent
Residential	79.28	17.2%
Commercial	0.37	0.1%
Industrial	-	0%
Transportation	-	0%
Utilities	-	0%
Religious	-	0%
Government/Institution	7.34	1.6%
Recreational	2.79	0.6%
Cropland	197.23	42.8%
Farmstead	2.61	0.6%
Pasture/Brush	120.70	26.2%
Forest	50.12	10.9%
Water	0.64	0.1%
Mining/Extraction	-	0%
Total	461.08	100.0%

The table above shows the acres and percent values for what the 1959 cropland was used for in 2002. Of the 461 acres of 1959 cropland just under 200 acres remained as cropland forty-three years later.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) classifies soil as either prime agricultural soil, farmland of statewide importance, or non-prime soil. The following

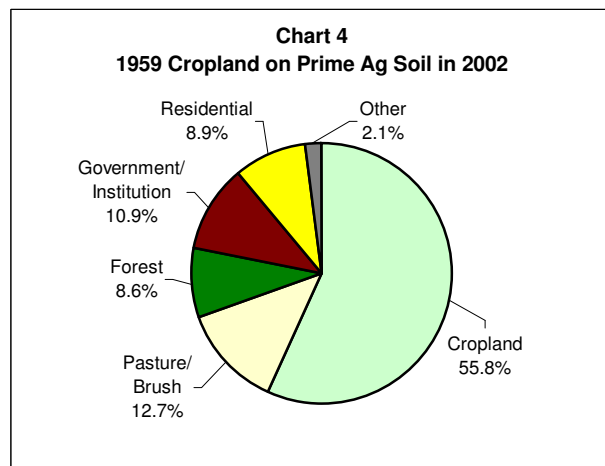
sections analyze soil from a prime versus non-prime perspective.



The above chart visualizes the percent values for what the 1959 cropland was used for in 2002. Over one-quarter of the 1959 cropland became idle by 2002 and turned into pasture/brush and fifty acres became forest over this time.

Prime Agricultural Soil

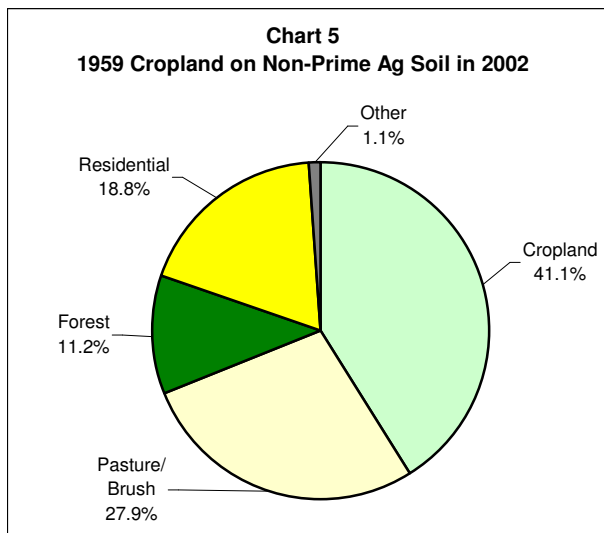
In 1959, there were 53 acres of cropland on prime agricultural soil, which was equal to 11.5% of the total cropland. By 2002, nearly 30 acres remained as cropland, which equaled 55.8% {see Chart 4 below}. Prime agricultural soil cropland that converted to pasture/brush land totaled almost 7 acres or 12.7%. Less than 5 acres became forest during this time period. The remaining 12 acres became used for residential, government/institution facilities, farmsteads and recreational land.



Of the 53 acres of 1959 cropland located on prime agricultural soil, approximately 30 acres was still being utilized as cropland forty-three years later in 2002.

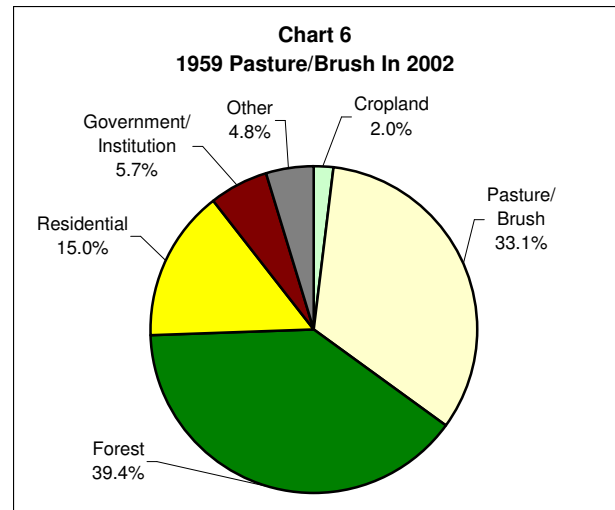
Non-Prime Agricultural Soil

In 1959, cropland located on non-prime agricultural soil totaled approximately 408 acres, which was equal to 88.5% of the total 1959 cropland. Of the 408 acres, a total of 168 acres equal to 41.1% were used as such 43 years later in 2002. Cropland that converted to pasture/brush equaled 114 acres or 27.9%. A total of 75 acres was converted to residential use, which was 18.8% of the total 1959 cropland on non-prime agricultural soil. Forest gained from former cropland equaled approximately 46 acres, which was 11.2% of the total.



Pasture/Brush

In 1959, pasture/brush accounted for nearly one out of every four acres in Honesdale Borough. By 2002, pasture/brush accounted for just 14.1% overall. As shown in Chart 6, {upper right} over a third of the 1959 pasture/brush land converted to forest over the 43-year period of the study. Pasture/brush land from 1959 that became forestland by 2002 equaled 244 acres, which was 39.4% of the total. Approximately one-third of the 1959 pasture/brush that was retained more than four decades later amounted to 205 acres, or 33.1%. Another 36 acres, which amounts to 5.7% of the total converted to government/institution use. This conversion can be attributed to the expansion of the Wayne Highlands School District. The remaining acres of former pasture/brush became used for various other land uses.



The above chart shows the percent values for what 1959 pasture/brush changed to by 2002.

Forest

In 1959, forestland covered nearly one-quarter of the Borough {see Table 1}. By 2002, it covered nearly one-third of the total acreage of Honesdale. Between 1959 and 2002, 85.4% of the forestland that existed in 1959 was retained. As shown in Table 3 {below} there was a total of 39 acres of former forestland that by the end of the study period was being used for residential purposes. These acres account for 6.5% of the total 1959 forestland acreage. Also, 4.3% or 26 acres were converted to pasture/brush more than four decades later.

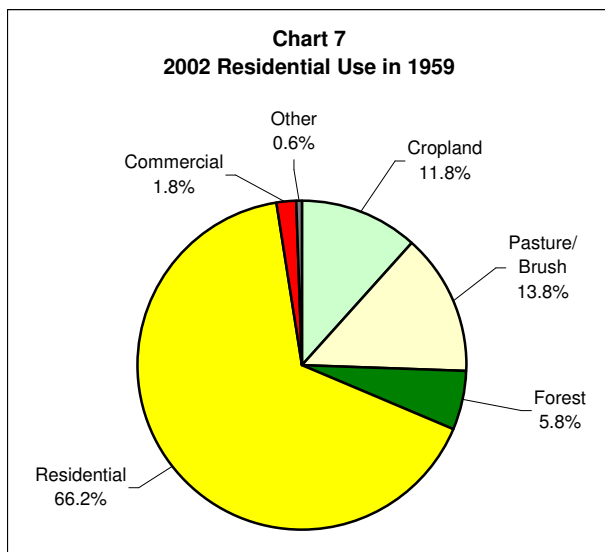
Table 3-1959 Forestland Use in 2002

Land Use/Land Cover	1959 Forestland Classification in 2002	
	Acres	Percent
Residential	39.23	6.5%
Commercial	4.32	0.7%
Industrial	1.64	0.3%
Transportation	-	0%
Utilities	6.39	1.1%
Religious	0.77	0.1%
Government/Institution	3.98	0.7%
Recreational	1.02	0.2%
Cropland	1.97	0.3%
Farmstead	-	0%
Pasture/Brush	26.30	4.3%
Forest	517.79	85.4%
Water	3.02	0.5%
Mining/Extraction	0.08	0.0%
Total	606.51	100.0%

Over 85% of the 1959 forest was still forested in 2002.

Residential

In 1959, residential land use accounted for nearly 500 acres, which was equal to about one-fifth of the land area of Honesdale Borough. By 2002, the number of acres of residential land increased by 177 to 674 acres, which was equal to over one-quarter overall {see Table 1}. This section will study the relationship of the 2002 residential acreage and how it was being used in 1959. The 2002 residential acreage came from several different land use/cover classifications from 1959 {see Chart 7 below}. The most prevalent was that nearly two-thirds of the residential land in 2002 was already being utilized residentially in 1959. Pasture/brush that was converted to residential purposes by 2002 equaled 93 acres or 13.8% of the total. Cropland was also converted to residential land over the 43-year study period. Cropland lost to residential development totaled 79 acres or 11.8%. While slightly more than a quarter of the area of Honesdale was forested in 1959, only 39 acres or 5.8% was changed to residential use. Much of the land east of the Lackawaxen River has steep slopes, which makes development more difficult. Data from the Census Bureau indicates that the population of Honesdale is declining.



Of the 674 acres of residential land in 2002, over two-thirds equal to 440 acres were already being used for residential purposes back in 1959. Less than 80 acres and 40 acres were cropland and forestland, respectively.

Commercial

Commercial acreage for Honesdale has not changed significantly over the 43-year period of this study. Between 1959 and 2002, of commercial land use increased by approximately 46 acres. In 1959 commercial acreage accounted for 4.3% overall and by 2002, just 6.1%. Of the 46 acres of commercial land that was gained, nearly 30 acres came from former residential land in 1959. Commercial acreage also gained from prior industrial land in the amount of 13.5 acres. Pasture/brush land was also changed to commercial in the amount of ten acres. Forestland that was converted to commercial use equaled four acres.

Summary

Overall, the general character of Honesdale has remained generally consistent. While businesses come and go, the Borough has a relatively strong business climate that keeps storefronts generally filled. An added advantage of being the County seat provides a basis for the success of the downtown businesses. Some cropland was converted to residential development, but there is still a sizeable portion of the Borough that is utilized for cropland. The area east of the Lackawaxen River and Dyberry Creek is a good example of this. There are no Agricultural Security Areas within Honesdale's borders, and therefore no parcels with permanent agricultural easements. There are 71 acres in Honesdale with a preferential assessment under the Clean and Green Program. These 71 acres represent 3.5% of the taxable acreage within Honesdale and reduce its assessed value \$139,500 or 0.1%.

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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