

Lehigh 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-14, Lehigh 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



Lehigh Township is located in the southern most portion of Wayne County with the Lehigh River forming its northwestern border. It is the twenty-second largest municipality in Wayne County with a total land area of approximately 8,075 acres or 12.6 square miles, which accounts for nearly 1.7% 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 Township had minimal farming related activities in 1959 and none by 2002. The amount of forest also decreased over the forty-three year study period. Residential and commercial land use increased as well as recreational land use due to the establishment of the "Breezewood Acres" camping and travel trailer development located along the eastern border of the Township.

The charts below show the percent values for the land use/land cover categories in Lehigh Township for 1959 and 2002. The category "other" includes land use/land cover categories that were too small to illustrate individually.

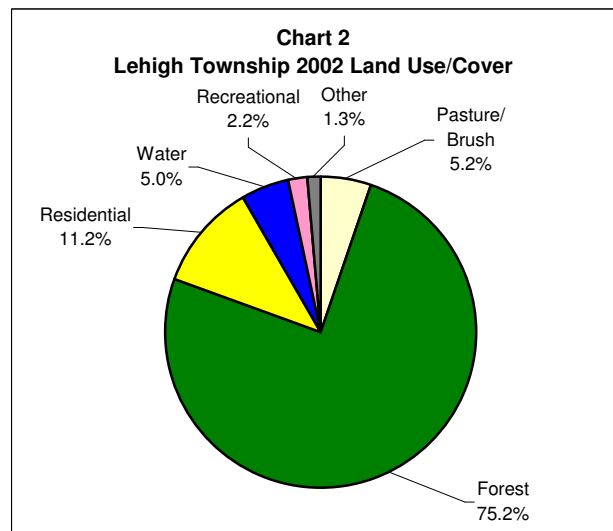
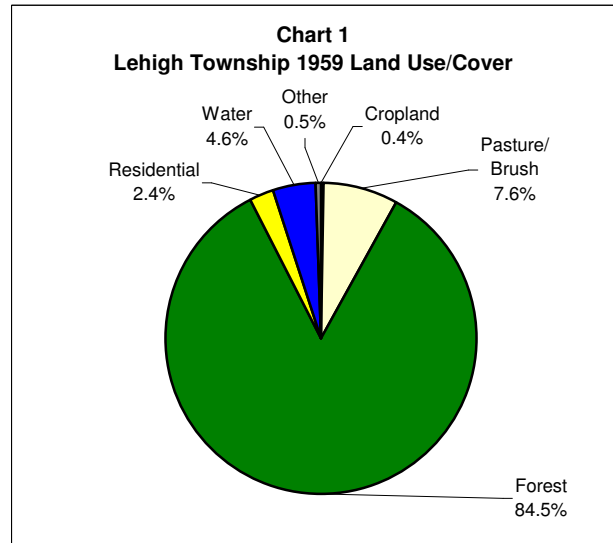


Table 1 - Lehigh Township Land Use/Land Cover

Land Use/Land Cover	Lehigh 1959 Acres	Category Percent of Total	Lehigh 2002 Acres	Category Percent of Total
Residential	195.27	2.4%	902.60	11.2%
Commercial	7.46	0.1%	59.16	0.7%
Industrial	3.79	0.0%	1.22	0.0%
Transportation	13.19	0.2%	18.80	0.2%
Utilities	4.58	0.1%	7.81	0.1%
Religious	3.45	0.0%	5.96	0.1%
Government/Institution	3.30	0.0%	8.11	0.1%
Recreational	4.87	0.1%	173.70	2.2%
Cropland	30.71	0.4%	-	0%
Farmstead	-	0%	-	0%
Pasture/Brush	611.45	7.6%	421.59	5.2%
Forest	6,824.14	84.5%	6,076.14	75.2%
Water	373.37	4.6%	400.50	5.0%
Mining/Extraction	-	0%	-	0%
Total	8,075.58	100.0%	8,075.59	100.0%

Notice the slight decrease of pasture/brush land and the larger decrease of forest over this time period. Also note the obvious increase of residential land and the establishment of recreational land during this time due to the location of the "Breezewood Acres" campground and travel trailer development.

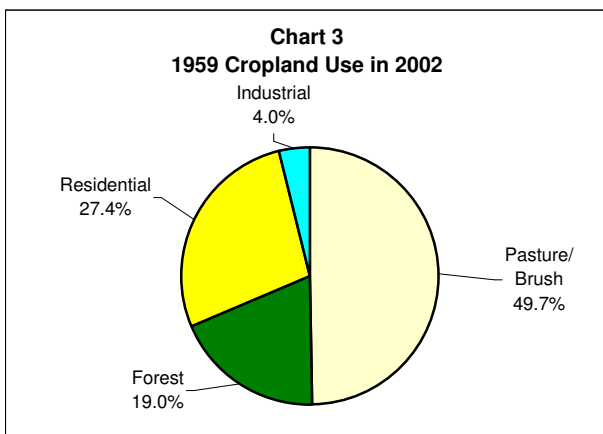
Cropland

Cropland was a very small land use in the Township in 1959 and did not exist at all by 2002 {See Table 1}. In 1959, there was less than 31 acres of cropland in Lehigh Township, which was equivalent to only 0.4% of the total land area. By 2002, all the cropland acreage had changed to a different land use classification. Table 2 and Chart 3 {below} will show what became of the minimal cropland from 1959.

Table 2 - 1959 Cropland Use in 2002

Land Use/Land Cover	1959 Cropland Classification in 2002	
	Acres	Percent
Residential	8.41	27.4%
Commercial		0%
Industrial	1.22	4.0%
Transportation		0%
Utilities		0%
Religious		0%
Government/Institution		0%
Recreational		0%
Cropland		0%
Farmstead		0%
Pasture/Brush	15.25	49.7%
Forest	5.83	19.0%
Water		0%
Mining/Extraction		0%
Total	30.71	100.0%

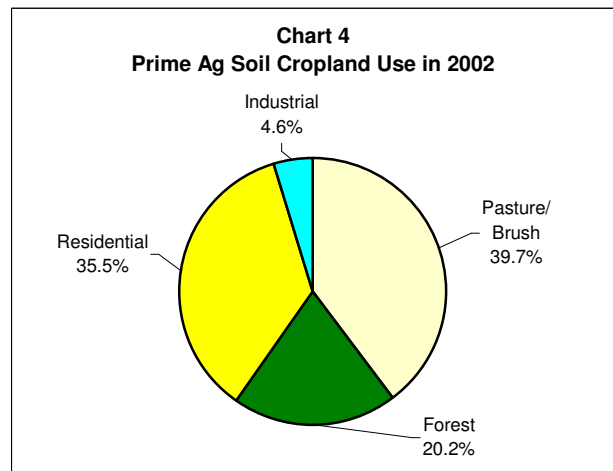
Of the approximately 31 acres of 1959 cropland, none of it remained by 2002. Nearly half became idle pasture/brush ground and another 19% had grown into forest cover over this forty-three year period. Over one-quarter (27.4%) became residential land and the final 4% was converted to industrial use.



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.

Prime Agricultural Soil

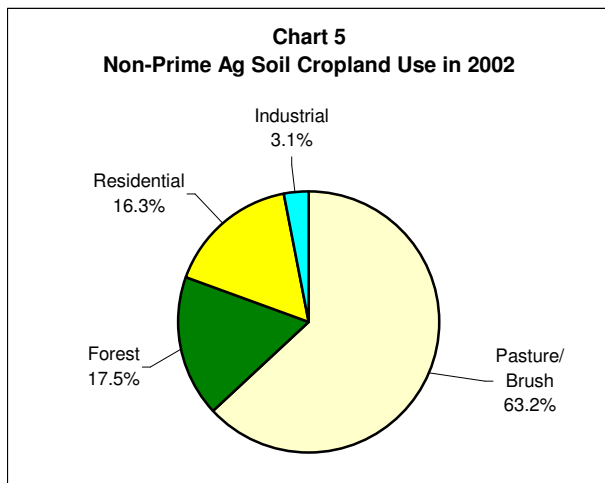
In 1959, approximately 18 acres or nearly 58% of the small amount of cropland in Lehigh Township was located on prime agricultural soil. Of that prime agricultural soil cropland, none of it was being utilized as active cropland by 2002. Nearly 60% converted naturally to other land covers during this forty-three year study period. A total of seven acres, equal to 39.7%, became idle pasture/brush land and 3.6 acres or 20.2% grew naturally into forest cover. A total of 35.5% became utilized for residential purposes. However, by acreage, this only amounted to six acres. Less than one acre was converted to industrial use. Chart 4 {below} shows what became of the minimal 1959 cropland located on prime agricultural soil.



Non-Prime Agricultural Soil

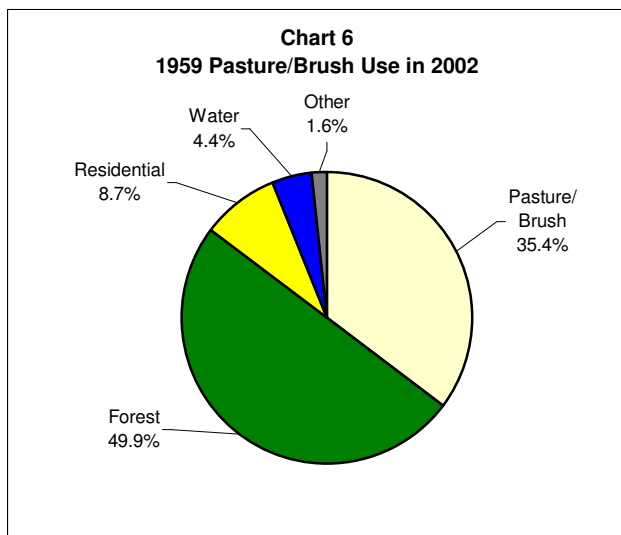
In 1959, a total of only 13 acres, equal to approximately 42%, of the small amount of cropland in Lehigh Township was located on non-prime agricultural soil. Of that non-prime soil cropland, none of it was used for cropland production by 2002. Over 80% converted naturally to other land covers during this time, but this only involved approximately ten acres

of land. Pasture/brush accounted for eight acres and forest made up the remaining two acres. Another two acres of the 1959 non-prime cropland became utilized for residential purposes, which was equivalent to 16.3%. The remaining 3% went towards industrial use, but equaled less than one-half acre. Chart 5 {below} shows what became of the Lehigh Township 1959 cropland located on non-prime agricultural soil consisting of 13 acres.



Pasture/Brush

In 1959, pasture/brush accounted for over 600 acres, which was equal to 7.6% of the total land area of the Township {See Table 1}. By 2002, this land cover had decreased to roughly 422 acres or 5.2% of the Township's land area. Chart 6 {below} shows the 1959 pasture/brush land and what it became by 2002.



Of the 1959 pasture/brush acreage, a total of 216 acres remained as such by 2002, which was equal to 35.4%. A total of 305 acres or half of the 1959 pasture/brush had grown naturally into forest over the forty-three year study period. A total of approximately 53 acres or 8.7% of prior pasture/brush had become residential land and another 27 acres, equal to 4.4%, became water.

Forest

As stated in the "overview", the majority of Lehigh Township was covered by forest in both 1959 and 2002. In 1959, there were 6,824 acres of forest, which was equivalent to 84.5% of Lehigh Township's total land area {See Table 1} By 2002, the area of forest had decreased by 748 acres to a total of 6,076 acres. However, by percentage, over three-quarters of the Township was still forested. State Gameland number 312, under the ownership of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and managed by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, is located throughout the center portion of the Township and contains approximately 3,046 acres, which accounts for half of the forest acreage. There are also two State parks that are partially located in the southern portion of the Township. Combined, the Gouldsboro State Park and the Tobyhanna State Park account for an additional 309 acres. Table 3 {below} shows the 1959 forest and what it became by 2002.

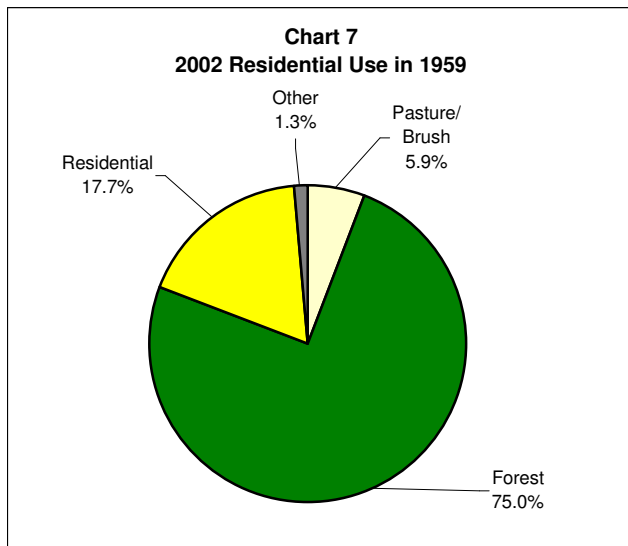
Table 3 - 1959 Forest Use in 2002

Land Use/Land Cover	1959 Forestland Classification in 2002	
	Acres	Percent
Residential	677.30	9.9%
Commercial	37.63	0.6%
Industrial	-	0%
Transportation	7.04	0.1%
Utilities	3.10	0.0%
Religious	0.46	0.0%
Government/Institution	1.06	0.0%
Recreational	168.20	2.5%
Cropland	-	0%
Farmstead	-	0%
Pasture/Brush	181.86	2.7%
Forest	5,740.85	84.1%
Water	6.64	0.1%
Mining/Extraction	-	0%
Total	6,824.14	100.0%

Of the 6,824 acres of 1959 forest, a total of 5,741 acres or 84.1% remained as the same land cover forty-three years later. Another 9.9% was converted to residential use, which was equal to approximately 677 acres. The remaining 6% was divided among pasture/brush, recreational and commercial uses. Almost 182 acres became pasture/brush, 168 acres was being utilized for recreational purposes and approximately 38 acres was converted to commercial land over this time period. Lehigh Township is one of only a few Wayne County municipalities that saw a decrease in forestland in the study period.

Residential

In 1959, approximately 195 acres or 2.4% of Lehigh Township's total land area was residential land. By 2002, the residential acreage increased by an additional 707 acres to approximately 903 acres. By percentage, 11.2% of the Township's land area was being used for residential. Chart 7 {below} shows how this 2002 residential land existed back in 1959.



A total of approximately 677 acres equaling 75% of the 2002 residential land came from forest and roughly 53 acres equaling 5.9% was prior pasture/brush land. Another 160 acres were already residential land back in 1959. Only 8 acres of the present residential land came from the small amount of 1959 cropland, which falls under the "other" classification.

Protected Agricultural Land

Due to the non-existent agricultural activity, Lehigh Township does not have any land designated in either the Agricultural Security Area or the Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Programs. However, there are seventy-nine acres enrolled in the Act 319 (Clean & Green) Program in order to receive a preferential assessment. This acreage represents 2% of the taxable acreage in the Township. This tax designation reduces the assessed value of the Township by \$ 86,500.00.

Summary

The most notable change in Lehigh Township during the study period was the elimination of the minimal cropland from 1959, the 750-acre reduction of forest and the 190-acre reduction of pasture/brush. Residential acreage increased approximately 707 acres and now covers 8.8% more of the Township. Commercial land use increased by nearly 52 acres over the study period, but still accounts for less than 1% of the Township's total land area. Also, a total of nearly 175 acres is being used as recreational land, which ranks second in the County only to Paupack Township in the amount of acres under this land category. This is due to the location of the "Breezewood Acres" development, the majority being located along the eastern border of Lehigh Township. Lehigh Township is atypical of Wayne County in terms of the acreage change for forestland. While forestland covers more of the County, Lehigh Township saw a decrease in forestland between 1959 and 2002.

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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