

August 2003

## Lackawanna County

### **COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL REAL ESTATE TAX LEVIES FOR 2003 RISE BY 3.3 PERCENT SINCE LAST YEAR AND BY 25.3 PERCENT IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS**

**The gross real estate tax levy** for 2003 for Lackawanna County, the cities of Carbondale and Scranton, and the county's boroughs and townships totals \$67,852,983, which is \$2,187,390 or 3.3 percent higher than in 2002. (The gross real estate tax levy is the potential tax yield based on millages and certified taxable valuations; it is not necessarily the amount of real estate tax revenues budgeted by jurisdictions or the amount which they expect to receive.)

Lackawanna County's gross real estate tax levy increased by \$1,485,639 or 3.7 percent between 2002 and 2003 to \$41,508,897. Real estate tax levies also rose in 33 of the county's 40 municipalities, they declined in five, and in two (Blakely and Taylor boroughs) there were no real estate taxes in 2002 and 2003. The largest increase in real estate tax levy since last year among the county's municipalities occurred in Roaring Brook Township (\$204,396 or 138.1 percent). Absolute decreases in real estate tax levies ranged from \$40 in Clarks Green Borough to \$72,207 in Scranton City; proportionate decreases ranged from less than 0.1 percent in Clarks Green Borough to 4.4 percent in Archbald Borough. (See Exhibit I.)

For the five-year period beginning in 1998, the combined real estate tax levy of the county and its 40 municipalities rose by \$13,686,867 or 25.3 percent. Lackawanna County's real estate tax levy increased by \$7,977,914 or 23.8 percent between 1998 and 2003. Levies also rose in 34 municipalities during this period, they decreased in four, and in Blakely and Taylor boroughs there were no real estate taxes in either 1998 or 2003. The largest dollar increases in tax levy among the county's municipalities for the five-year period were in Scranton City (\$3,056,988) and Dunmore Borough (\$1,025,268); the largest proportionate increase was experienced in Roaring Brook Township (246.9 percent). The decreases between 1998 and 2003 occurred in Throop Borough (\$1,800 or 1.7 percent) and the townships of Clifton (\$7,489 or 11.7 percent), Fell (\$39,031 or 30.3 percent), and Newton (\$54,610 or 22.2 percent).

In addition to new construction, demolitions, and the natural appreciation and depreciation of properties which can influence the change in the assessed valuation of a county and its municipalities from year to year, assessed valuations in Lackawanna County during the period 1998 to 2003 (and, in conjunction with the real estate tax millages, perhaps the gross tax levies as well), have been influenced by several significant events. These include the deregulation of public utilities in the Commonwealth (and the resulting shift in properties from tax-exempt to taxable status); changes in Pennsylvania's "Clean and Green" legislation (which expands the eligibility for preferential

assessment to include farm property previously excluded from consideration for tax exemption); and the implementation of Pennsylvania's Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ), and Keystone Opportunity Expansion Zone (KOEZ) programs (which are designed to encourage businesses and individuals to remain in or to move into these designated areas by providing tax incentives including exemption from real estate taxation).

The deregulation of utilities has increased the certified assessed valuation and tax levy countywide and in some municipalities, but, as a byproduct of deregulation, all jurisdictions will experience a loss in revenue from the state as part of the Public Utility Realty Tax (PURTA) program. Conversely, the change in the "Clean and Green" legislation and the KOZ and KOEZ programs have reduced the assessed valuation and possibly the tax levy in some municipalities and the county as a whole. While the specific impacts of these factors differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, combined, they have had a noticeable effect on the total certified value of taxable property and tax levies in Lackawanna County during the five-year period under review.

Real estate tax levies for 2003 in Lackawanna County's boroughs total \$8,579,787 and range from \$40,875 in Vandling to \$3,040,089 in Dunmore; the levies in the townships total \$3,759,963 and range from \$7,925 in West Abington to \$874,389 in South Abington. The tax levies in the boroughs rose by \$341,757 or 4.1 percent from 2002 and by \$1,778,861 or 26.2 percent since 1998. Levies in the townships during these two periods of time increased by \$429,952 or 12.9 percent and \$818,539 or 27.7 percent, respectively.

Scranton City's real estate tax levy for 2003—based on the city's millage rates and certified county assessment figures—is \$12,939,914, down by \$72,207 or 0.6 percent from last year. Scranton, unlike the county's other municipalities, levies separate tax rates on the land value and improvements value of each property. The tax levy on land increased by \$7,661 or 0.1 percent from last year; the levy on improvements fell by \$79,868 or 1.6 percent. Carbondale City's real estate tax levy for the year 2003 is \$1,066,422, up by \$2,249 or 0.2 percent from last year. For the five-year period beginning in 1998, the real estate tax levy in Scranton increased by \$3,056,988 or 30.9 percent; Carbondale's real estate tax levy rose by \$54,565 or 5.4 percent.

**Real estate tax millages** for general purposes (and for special purposes if levied throughout the jurisdiction) increased in four of the county's 40 municipalities between 2002 and 2003 and remained unchanged in 36. The millage increases occurred in the boroughs of Clarks Summit (2.00 mill or 12.7 percent) and Dalton (4.30 mills or 21.5 percent) and in the townships of Roaring Brook (1.00 mills or 9.5 percent) and West Abington (1.55 mills or 63.3 percent). (See Exhibit I.)

Lackawanna County's year 2003 real estate millage was unchanged from 2002 at 29.7293 mills. Scranton City's year 2003 tax rates on land and improvements were unchanged at 82.1220 mills and 17.8600 mills, respectively. Carbondale City's year 2003 tax rate also was unchanged at 25.9700 mills.

For the five-year period beginning in 1998, general purpose real estate tax millages increased in 14 municipalities, decreased in two, and remained unchanged in 24. The largest millage increases between 1998 and 2003 were recorded in Scranton City (16.12 mills on land and 5.86 mills on improvements—or an increase in the single millage equivalent of 8.29 mills) and Dunmore Borough

(10.25 mills). The largest proportionate increase was in West Abington Township (63.3 percent). The decreases occurred in the townships of Fell (4.55 mills or 44.4 percent) and Newton (4.00 mills or 28.6 percent).

Lackawanna County's real estate tax millage rose by 4.0 mills or 15.5 percent since 1998. Scranton City's land and improvements millages for the five-year period rose by 16.12 mills and 5.86 mills, respectively; Carbondale's real estate tax rate rose by 1.0 mill or 4.0 percent between 1998 and 2003.

Real estate millage rates in Lackawanna County's boroughs now range from 4.00 in Throop to 35.00 in Dunmore; millages in the townships range from 2.05 in Clifton to 14.00 in Carbondale and Spring Brook. For purposes of comparison, Scranton City's 2003 real estate tax rates of 82.122 mills on land and 17.860 mills on improvements convert to a single millage equivalent of 34.0995. Carbondale City's current millage is 25.970. (Blakely and Taylor boroughs did not levy real estate taxes in 2003.)

In addition to the general purpose and municipal-wide special purpose real estate taxes mentioned above, some municipalities levy special purpose real estate taxes only in selected areas of the jurisdiction for such services as street lighting and fire hydrants. These are not included in this study, nor are service fees which may be charged for garbage collection, sewage collection and treatment, and so forth. For example, seven Lackawanna County municipalities report annual residential garbage collection fees in 2003 ranging from \$100 to \$178 per household. Also, various nonproperty taxes, particularly those levied under Act 511, are widely used by Lackawanna County's municipalities (and school districts, as well). Included are earned income, per capita, occupational privilege, real estate transfer, amusement, mercantile, and business privilege taxes. **During the period under review, some jurisdictions may have imposed for the first time or may have changed nonproperty tax rates, service fees, or special purpose real estate taxes.**

**The certified assessed valuation of taxable property** in Lackawanna County for 2003 totals \$1,396,228,549, an increase of \$49,972,229 or 3.7 percent over 2002. Assessed valuations rose in 35 of the county's 40 municipalities since last year ranging from \$5,500 or 0.2 percent in LaPlume Township to \$16,547,988 or 117.4 percent in Roaring Brook Township. Five decreases in assessed valuation were recorded between 2002 and 2003 ranging from \$3,627 in Clarks Green Borough to \$4,378,633 in Scranton City. Proportionately, the decreases in assessed valuations ranged from less than 0.1 percent in Clarks Green Borough to 4.4 percent in Archbald Borough. (See Exhibit II.)

For the five-year period beginning in 1998, Lackawanna County's assessed valuation rose by \$93,006,820 or 7.1 percent. Assessed valuations increased in 37 of the county's municipalities between 1998 and 2003. The largest absolute and proportionate increase occurred in Roaring Brook Township (\$17,098,088 or 126.2 percent). During this period assessed valuations decreased in the City of Scranton (\$3,489,832 or 0.9 percent), in Throop Borough (\$449,966 or 1.7 percent), and in Clifton Township (\$3,653,196 or 11.7 percent).

The 2003 assessed valuations in Lackawanna County's 17 boroughs range from \$4,581,621 in Vandling to \$86,859,679 in Dunmore, while the range in the 21 townships is from \$1,981,369 in

West Abington to \$81,338,523 in South Abington. Carbondale City's year 2003 assessed valuation is \$41,063,610; Scranton City's is \$379,475,124.

The county's predetermined assessment ratio for 1998, 2002, and 2003 is 100 percent of market value. The Common Level Ratio of assessed values to selling prices as determined by the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) was 21.2 percent in 1998 and 21.3 percent in 2002 (the most recent figure available). The county most recently reassessed in 1972; the predetermined assessment ratio was raised to 100 percent in 1986.

**The foregoing narrative and exhibits which follow are designed primarily to identify changes since last year and during the most recent five-year period in the real estate tax levies, tax rates, and assessed valuations of the county government and each municipality in the county. No valid comparison of tax burden among the municipalities can be made without a detailed analysis of the quantity and quality of services provided and the role of nonproperty taxes, special fees, and charges, and any municipal-operated utilities; such as, sewer and water.**

The Pennsylvania Economy League was incorporated in 1936 as a statewide, nonprofit, nonpartisan, citizen-supported research organization. It provides critical information, perspective, and policy analysis to the business, civic, and governmental leadership of our communities and our state to support their efforts to make Pennsylvania a better place to live, work, and do business. PEL serves as a catalyst for moving ideas into action by working in partnership with governmental, business, and civic groups to develop consensus and action on public policies, programs, and solutions that will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of state government, improve the economic climate and competitiveness, and raise the quality of life in the state. At the local level PEL engages in a variety of research projects and related activities designed to bring about the sound financing and most cost-effective delivery of necessary public services. PEL's program of professional and unbiased research is made possible by the voluntary tax-deductible memberships of more than 1,000 individuals, businesses, institutions, and associations in Lackawanna County and throughout Pennsylvania.

**EXHIBIT I**

**Lackawanna County**  
**County and Municipal Real Estate Tax Rates and Levies <sup>1/</sup>**  
 2003

	2003		Change 2002 to 2003				Change 1998 to 2003			
	Tax	Gross Tax <sup>2/</sup>	Tax Rate		Gross Tax Levy		Tax Rate		Gross Tax Levy	
	Millage	Levy	Mills	%	\$	%	Mills	%	\$	%
<b>COUNTY:</b>										
Lackawanna <sup>HR/</sup>	29.7293	\$41,508,897	—	—	1,485,639	3.7	4.00	15.5	7,977,914	23.8
<b>CITIES:</b>										
Carbondale <sup>HR/</sup>	25.9700	1,066,422	—	—	2,249	0.2	1.00	4.0	54,565	5.4
Scranton—Total <sup>HR/ 3/</sup>	34.0995	12,939,914	0.20	0.6	-72,207	-0.6	8.29	32.1	3,056,988	30.9
Land	82.1220	7,875,196	—	—	7,661	0.1	16.12	24.4	1,412,884	21.9
Improvements	17.8600	5,064,718	—	—	-79,868	-1.6	5.86	48.8	1,644,104	48.1
<b>BOROUGHES:</b>										
Archbald	16.2000	703,620	—	—	-32,318	-4.4	—	—	72,987	11.6
Blakely	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clarks Green	11.0000	158,628	—	—	-40	—	2.00	22.2	30,412	23.7
Clarks Summit	17.7500	765,737	2.00	12.7	89,002	13.2	4.00	29.1	196,058	34.4
Dalton	24.3000	210,157	4.30	21.5	39,460	23.1	4.30	21.5	44,793	27.1
Dickson City	12.8000	810,024	—	—	45,459	5.9	—	—	65,590	8.8
Dunmore	35.0000	3,040,089	—	—	122,671	4.2	10.25	41.4	1,025,268	50.9
Jermyn	20.0000	172,577	—	—	2,883	1.7	—	—	6,176	3.7
Jessup	15.7000	361,043	—	—	6,307	1.8	—	—	37,663	11.6
Mayfield	20.5000	191,808	—	—	1,601	0.8	—	—	11,510	6.4
Moosic	14.2995	880,255	—	—	36,642	4.3	—	—	182,460	26.1
Moscow	15.0000	187,702	—	—	14,313	8.3	—	—	25,240	15.5
Old Forge	13.0000	629,110	—	—	2,604	0.4	1.00	8.3	78,810	14.3
Olyphant	10.6000	324,418	—	—	6,783	2.1	—	—	2,983	0.9
Taylor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Throop	4.0000	103,504	—	—	7,394	7.7	—	—	-1,800	-1.7
Vandling	9.0000	40,875	—	—	-1,244	-3.0	—	—	471	1.2
<b>TOWNSHIPS:</b>										
Abington	11.2500	246,234	—	—	3,285	1.4	1.00	9.8	29,605	13.7
Benton	4.3000	65,698	—	—	8,447	14.8	—	—	9,667	17.3
Carbondale	14.0000	193,940	—	—	95,087	96.2	—	—	97,810	101.7
Clifton	2.0500	56,459	—	—	-646	-1.1	—	—	-7,489	-11.7
Covington	10.2500	335,219	—	—	5,765	1.7	2.00	24.2	76,475	29.6
Elmhurst	9.5000	43,145	—	—	632	1.5	—	—	5,250	13.9
Fell	5.7000	89,613	—	—	9,756	12.2	-4.55	-44.4	-39,031	-30.3
Glenburn	3.0000	35,857	—	—	497	1.4	—	—	2,432	7.3
Greenfield	12.5000	197,322	—	—	8,169	4.3	1.50	13.6	51,167	35.0
Jefferson	6.8500	155,049	—	—	2,430	1.6	—	—	7,717	5.2
La Plume	4.4500	12,311	—	—	24	0.2	—	—	619	5.3
Madison	6.0000	91,060	—	—	4,932	5.7	—	—	14,646	19.2
Newton	10.0000	191,547	—	—	3,133	1.7	-4.00	-28.6	-54,610	-22.2
North Abington	8.0000	64,438	—	—	1,516	2.4	1.00	14.3	12,273	23.5
Ransom	7.0000	70,295	—	—	1,533	2.2	—	—	2,950	4.4
Roaring Brook	11.5000	352,380	1.00	9.5	204,396	138.1	4.00	53.3	250,803	246.9
Scott	11.0000	410,625	—	—	6,607	1.6	—	—	25,855	6.7
South Abington	10.7500	874,389	—	—	57,598	7.1	2.75	34.4	293,577	50.5
Spring Brook	14.0000	238,475	—	—	13,066	5.8	—	—	34,463	16.9
Thornhurst	2.3000	25,982	—	—	383	1.5	—	—	500	2.0
West Abington	4.0000	7,925	1.55	63.3	3,342	72.9	1.55	63.3	3,860	95.0

<sup>HR/</sup> Home Rule Charter municipality.

<sup>1/</sup> Tax rates and levies for 1998, 2002, and 2003 are based on certified municipal assessments at a predetermined 100 percent assessment ratio. The Common Level Ratio of assessed values to selling prices as determined by the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) was 21.2 percent in 1998 and 21.3 percent in 2002 (the most recent figure available).

<sup>2/</sup> The gross real estate tax levy is the potential tax yield based on the millage and the certified taxable valuation; it is not necessarily the amount of real estate tax revenue budgeted by a jurisdiction or the amount which it expects to receive.

<sup>3/</sup> Figures represent the single millage equivalent of the city's split tax rate on land and improvements and the resulting combined tax levy.

SOURCE: Municipalities and Lackawanna County Board of Assessment and Revision of Taxes.

PEL:CD August 2003

**EXHIBIT II**

**Lackawanna County**  
County and Municipal Assessed Valuations<sup>1/</sup>  
 2003

	2003 Assessed Valuation	Change 2002 to 2003		Change 1998 to 2003	
		\$	%	\$	%
<b>COUNTY:</b>					
Lackawanna <sup>HR/</sup>	\$1,396,228,549	49,972,229	3.7	93,006,820	7.1
<b>CITIES:</b>					
Carbondale <sup>HR/</sup>	41,063,610	86,607	0.2	540,722	1.3
Scranton—Total <sup>HR/</sup>	379,475,124	-4,378,633	-1.1	-3,489,832	-0.9
Land	95,896,302	93,289	0.1	-2,017,510	-2.1
Improvements	283,578,822	-4,471,922	-1.6	-1,472,322	-0.5
<b>BOROUGHES:</b>					
Archbald	43,433,331	-1,994,969	-4.4	4,505,376	11.6
Blakely	34,550,541	359,428	1.1	921,717	2.7
Clarks Green	14,420,729	-3,627	<-0.1	174,522	1.2
Clarks Summit	43,140,098	172,769	0.4	1,708,895	4.1
Dalton	8,648,421	113,555	1.3	380,222	4.6
Dickson City	63,283,155	3,551,506	5.9	5,124,224	8.8
Dunmore	86,859,679	3,504,892	4.2	5,452,782	6.7
Jermyn	8,628,826	144,105	1.7	308,791	3.7
Jessup	22,996,390	401,767	1.8	2,398,915	11.6
Mayfield	9,356,480	78,072	0.8	561,446	6.4
Moosic	61,558,451	2,562,501	4.3	12,759,900	26.1
Moscow	12,513,495	954,246	8.3	1,682,684	15.5
Old Forge	48,393,092	200,293	0.4	2,534,721	5.5
Olyphant	30,605,425	639,830	2.1	281,370	0.9
Taylor	40,167,418	4,355,205	12.2	5,359,625	15.4
Throop	25,875,976	1,848,364	7.7	-449,966	-1.7
Vandling	4,541,621	-138,220	-3.0	52,294	1.2
<b>TOWNSHIPS:</b>					
Abington	21,887,449	291,950	1.4	752,870	3.6
Benton	15,278,493	1,964,339	14.8	2,248,100	17.3
Carbondale	13,852,891	6,791,974	96.2	6,986,432	101.7
Clifton	27,541,123	-315,004	-1.1	-3,653,196	-11.7
Covington	32,704,274	562,398	1.7	1,341,396	4.3
Elmhurst	4,541,621	66,608	1.5	552,677	13.9
Fell	15,721,536	1,711,572	12.2	3,170,888	25.3
Glenburn	11,952,219	165,616	1.4	810,406	7.3
Greenfield	15,785,740	653,528	4.3	2,498,915	18.8
Jefferson	22,634,847	354,736	1.6	1,126,536	5.2
La Plume	2,766,615	5,500	0.2	139,205	5.3
Madison	15,176,631	822,044	5.7	2,440,987	19.2
Newton	19,154,722	313,361	1.7	1,572,057	8.9
North Abington	8,054,756	189,474	2.4	602,644	8.1
Ransom	10,042,169	219,088	2.2	421,400	4.4
Roaring Brook	30,641,725	16,547,988	117.4	17,098,088	126.2
Scott	37,329,517	600,634	1.6	2,350,467	6.7
South Abington	81,338,523	5,357,958	7.1	8,737,028	12.0
Spring Brook	17,033,941	933,325	5.8	2,461,686	16.9
Thornhurst	11,296,526	166,574	1.5	217,501	2.0
West Abington	1,981,369	110,875	5.9	322,325	19.4

<sup>HR/</sup> Home Rule Charter municipality.

<sup>1/</sup> Valuations for 1998, 2002, and 2003 are based on certified municipal assessments at a predetermined 100 percent assessment ratio. The Common Level Ratios of assessed values to selling prices as determined by the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) was 21.2 percent in 1998 and 21.3 percent in 2002 (the most recent figures available).