PENNSYLVANIA'S STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

2014-2019

NATURAL CONNECTIONS

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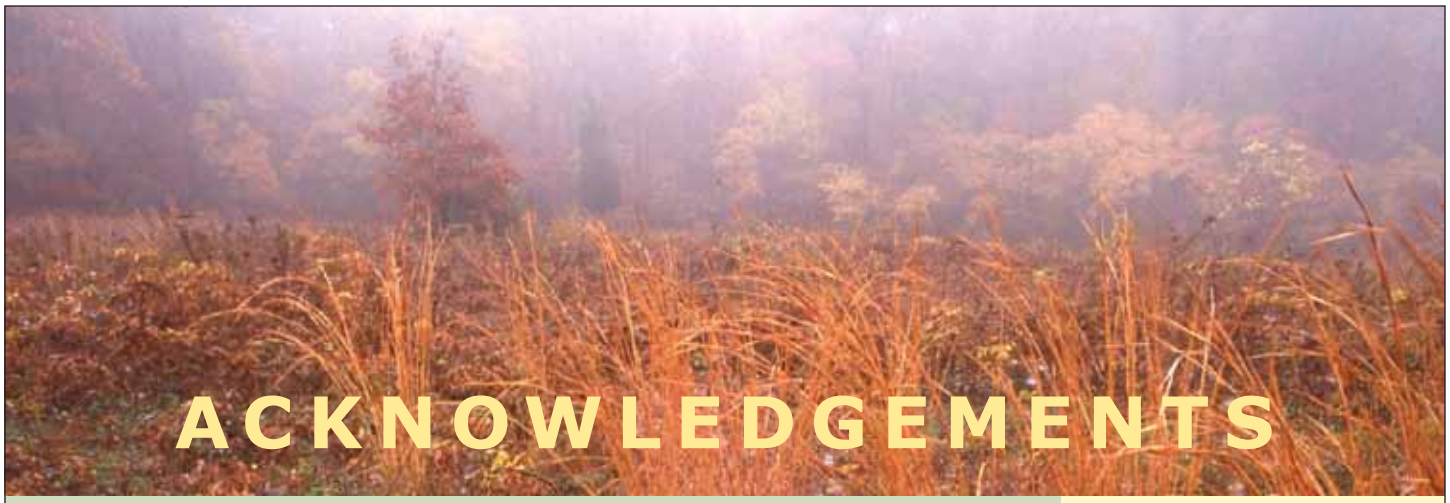
National Park Service – Jack Howard, David Lange and Sherry Peck



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Technical Advisory Committee

National Park Service
Sherry Peck
David Lange

Allegheny National Forest
Jim Seyler

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Gary Stolz

USDA – Rural Development Office
Tom Williams
Angela Callie
Jeff Gatano

PA Department of Agriculture
Erin Smith
Mary Bender

PA Department of Aging
Lauren Merlie

PA Department of Community and Economic Development
Scott Dunkelberger

PA Department of Education
Dave Bauman
Sally Flaherty

PA Department of Environmental Protection
Kim Hoover
Laura Henry

PA Department of Health
Serina Gaston
Justin Lehman

PA Historical and Museum Commission
Bryan Van Sweden
Andrea MacDonald
Janice Mullen

PA Department of Transportation
Douglas Zimmerman

PA Fish and Boat Commission
Laurel Anders

PA Game Commission
Keith Snyder
Coren Jagnow

Center for Rural PA
Barry Denk
Jonathan Johnson

Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc.
Elissa Garofalo
Scott Everett

National Wild Turkey Federation
Bob Eriksen
Ray Smith

PA Council of Trout Unlimited
Samantha Kutskel

PA Downtown Center
Julie Fitzpatrick
Bill Fontana

PA Environmental Council
Paul King
Patrick Starr
Davitt Woodwell

PA Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
Josh First
John Kline

PA Parks & Forests Foundation
Marci Mowery

PA Land Trust Association
Andy Loza

PA Recreation & Park Society
Karen Burke
Emily Gates

PA State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance
Linda Woods-Huber
Eric Childs

PA State Association of Boroughs
Leslie Suhr

PA Municipal League
Mary Ann Nau

PA State Association of Township Supervisors
Holly Fishel

Penn State Hershey PRO Wellness Center
Donna Kephart
Alicia Hoke

County Commissioners Association of PA
Lisa Schaefer
Adrienne Hodson

Rails-To-Trails Conservancy
Tom Sexton
Pat Tomes

Lancaster Recreation Commission
Sue Landes

Lower Providence Township
Karen Hegedus

Pashek Associates
Bob Good
John Buerkle

S & S Processing
Chris Lessig

Blue Mountain Recreation Commission
Mark Palerino

Berks Conservancy
Kim Murphy

Pottstown Health & Wellness Foundation
David Kraybill

Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living
Bob Amelio
Brian Rogers

Richard King Mellon Foundation
Brian Hill

Research Team – Penn State University

Andrew Mowen
Alan Graefe
William Elmendorf
Austin Barrett

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Team

Lauren Adair
Stephen Aux
Paula Devore
Cynthia Dunlap
Mike Eschenmann
Jason Hall
Meredith Hill
Lauren Imgrund
Jeff Johns
Chris Kemmerer
Diane Kripas
Gretchen Leslie
Rebecca Oyler
Zack Roeder
Kelly Rossiter
Vanyla Tierney

Plan writer and editor:
Gretchen Leslie

Contributing writers:
Austin Barrett, William Elmendorf, Meredith Hill, Lauren Imgrund, Diane Kripas, Andrew Mowen, Rebecca Oyler, Zachary Roeder, Kelly Rossiter

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LETTER FROM THE GOVERNOR

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Office of the Governor
Harrisburg

THE GOVERNOR

Dear Fellow Pennsylvanians:

As your new governor, it gives me great pleasure to present Pennsylvania's plan for helping our citizens connect to healthy outdoor recreation.

As a lifelong resident, I have always marveled at Pennsylvania's natural beauty and its seemingly endless opportunities to enjoy the outdoors. Like many of you, I enjoy spending time hiking and enjoying the outdoors in the commonwealth's state parks and forests and plan to make time for those activities during my time as governor.

Outdoor activity can be a prescription for wellness and help our citizens combat chronic diseases and illnesses. Our local parks and programs can build solid communities and provide children opportunities to connect with nature. Trails, rivers and parks can create vibrant cities and towns and contribute to economic prosperity. And, as we create these spaces to recreate, we are also working to protect our natural resources for future generations.

This plan is an outdoor recreation blueprint for all citizens, from our urban and suburban dwellers enjoying neighborhood parks, bike lanes and riverfront trails, to our more rural residents who frequently explore our vast state and federally protected lands. More than 10,000 of these citizens gave feedback on what is important to them, and the plan is reflective and inclusive of those thoughts and ideas.

It will now be up to our community and state leaders and recreation providers to act upon the recommendations and actions set forth in the following pages. I wish them much luck and success in implementing Pennsylvania's Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Tom Wolf

TOM WOLF
Governor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation opportunities are as diverse as its people and places. Four seasons, mountains, rivers, lakes and millions of acres of forests and fields serve as the settings for just about every recreational pursuit. • Pennsylvania's recreation professionals use the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan to help capitalize on the natural assets and deliver facilities and programs that make it easy for people to play outdoors. As demographics, trends and interests change, a new plan every five years identifies outdoor recreation strategies that help to address societal needs.

Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation plan helps to guide strategy for local governments, state government and other outdoor recreation providers. Priorities, recommendations and action items delineate a course of action for five years and help to determine where best to make investments in recreation.

The 2014 plan is the culmination of research, public input and advice from a group of professional recreation leaders serving on a technical advisory committee. For about 18 months, the committee met to discuss themes, research and public feedback. More than 10,000 people participated in one of three surveys or commented on the draft plan. This input from citizens and recreation providers far exceeded that received from any of the previous outdoor recreation plans written over the last 50 years.

FINDINGS

This comprehensive analysis showed that Pennsylvanians' favorite outdoor recreation pursuits haven't changed much over the last five years, when research for the last plan was conducted. Walking is still the most popular activity, which mirrors national outdoor recreation preferences. About half the population participates in outdoor recreation one or more times a week, and Pennsylvanians use their local parks more frequently than any other facility.

Maintenance of existing park and recreation areas continues to be the top concern and priority for both citizens and recreation providers, even more so than in 2009. Citizens still place high importance on protecting open space and wildlife habitat; providers of recreation services feel a greater obligation to providing recreation programs and building more greenways and trails.

Since the 2009 plan, there has been growth in unconventional gas drilling, particularly in the northcentral and western parts of the state. Although the activity is having a slight impact on certain recreational activities and is changing some people's behavior, most Pennsylvanians have yet to come in contact with the activity while recreating.

Implementers of the plan will need to take into consideration the changing demographics and trends that are influencing how and where people recreate. Pennsylvania's population is getting older and more diverse, which could translate into different needs and demands over the coming years.

PRIORITIES

The 2014 plan outlines five priority areas to help foster outdoor recreation for all Pennsylvanians. These five priorities each discuss primary challenges and opportunities, but by no means cover them all. Case studies at the end of each priority section and in Appendix I highlight successes, but scores of others exist that demonstrate examples of how recreation is improving the lives of Pennsylvanians.

- Health and Wellness
- Local Parks and Recreation
- Tourism and Economic Development
- Resource Management and Stewardship
- Funding and Financial Stability

To help carry out these five priorities, key state and local agencies and recreation providers will be guided by the 20 recommendations and 83 action steps found in this plan. A matrix of these action items, along with implementing partners, is found at the back of the plan (page 85).

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Outdoor recreation is key to helping address some of today's pressing health care issues. Creating walkable and bikeable communities and making improvements to the built environment can encourage active living. An increased focus by the health care community on recreation and opportunities for new partnerships and coordination can lessen our obesity and chronic disease crisis. Getting people of all ages — including the growing population of active seniors — connected to the outdoors and nature can have a positive effect on the health and wellness of our citizens.

Recommendations:

1. Reconnect people to the outdoors through recreation opportunities and experiences.
2. Continue to strengthen connections between outdoor recreation and health in communities for people of all ages and abilities.
3. Examine the built environment and encourage local communities to promote healthful transportation alternatives.
4. Enhance and promote healthful outdoor recreation through strategic partnerships with the health care community.

LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION

With more than 5,600 locations across the state, our local parks and recreation areas are perhaps our most valuable recreation resources. More than 90 percent of Pennsylvanians who participated in outdoor recreation visited a local park last year. Local parks are as diverse as the populations they serve, but most face similar challenges — limited funding, aging infrastructure, maintenance and capacity to carry out programs and services. While forming stable and productive partnerships takes commitment and creativity, new opportunities and expanded capacity are gained by doing so. New funding sources and technologies are helping to improve park and recreation officials' abilities to meet the recreation needs of their citizens.

Recommendations:

1. Connect citizens to close-to-home recreational opportunities and green space.
2. Position local park facilities and recreation programs as essential services.
3. Create and leverage partnerships that expand outdoor recreation opportunities.
4. Coordinate strategic investment in local priorities and respond to emerging trends.
5. Provide expanded parks and recreation technical assistance to communities.

TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Our parks, trails and other recreational amenities create places where people want to live, work and play. All across the state are examples of towns and businesses that are capitalizing on the benefits gained by making connections to recreational and natural assets in a community. To help measure the impact these recreational resources are having on our communities, recreation leaders need good economic data to communicate to key influencers. Given the wealth of outdoor assets and successful case studies, the opportunities for programming and partnerships continue to expand across Pennsylvania.

Recommendations:

1. Organize and market outdoor recreation and heritage tourism assets and amenities more effectively.
2. Develop and implement a plan for communicating the economic and community benefits of outdoor recreation, heritage tourism and land conservation.
3. Increase access to business development resources and incentives for small tourism and outdoor recreation businesses and entrepreneurs.
4. Use new and existing research to document the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, heritage tourism and land conservation.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

To participate in outdoor recreation, people need places that are accessible, protected and safe. Millions of acres of local, state and federal lands have been set aside for the purpose of providing healthful recreation to all Pennsylvanians, and many dollars are invested each year to ensure that these facilities meet that goal. But budget restraints and growing maintenance backlogs challenge providers' ability to meet citizen demand. Due in part to a centuries-old hunting and fishing heritage, Pennsylvanians believe strongly in their natural resources and taking care of what we have so these precious lands and waters can continue to be the setting for recreation for generations to come.

1. Conserve and protect Pennsylvania's natural places.
2. Maintain existing park, trail and recreation areas, and prioritize other infrastructure needs.
3. Cultivate support to protect wildlife and fish habitat through wildlife viewing, fishing and hunting.
4. Develop and implement shale-gas best practices for recreation, and pursue new recreation opportunities.

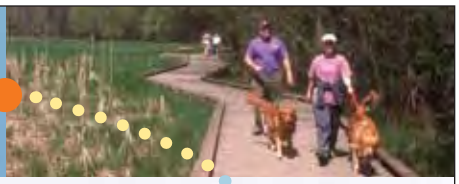
FUNDING AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

At the heart of delivering outdoor recreation programs and services is the ability to fund and sustain them for the benefit of all citizens. Recreation and conservation initiatives have several long-standing state and federal funding sources, and new sources such as the Marcellus Legacy Fund of 2012, have helped to meet more demand. However, demand always outpaces the total funding available for projects, usually 2:1. The recommendations put forth in the plan will require innovative and more permanent funding solutions.

1. Ensure the continued stability and permanence of existing state and federal conservation and recreation funding sources.
2. Foster use of new revenue sources in support of recreation and conservation.
3. Prioritize the use of federal LWCF funds that come to Pennsylvania over the next five years.

As it has over the last 50 years, this Outdoor Recreation Plan will be a guidance tool and resource for Pennsylvania's recreation providers over the next five years. Outdoor recreation affords us tremendous opportunities to develop a better society through improved health and wellness, resource protection, economic development and community enhancement. It will take a strong commitment by agency leaders, elected and appointed officials, and recreation and parks professionals to ensure these priorities are met with enthusiasm and success.

INTRODUCTION



What outdoor recreation does for the
mind, body and soul
is immeasurable.

BACKGROUND • The importance of outdoor recreation to Pennsylvania is difficult to capture in a few words. From the pick-up basketball game with friends, to a solitary walk along a riverfront path with your dog, to a first-time camping outing under the stars with the family, outdoor recreation has the ability to touch all people with its far-reaching benefits. The abundance of local and state parks, state and national forests, trails, rivers and game lands opens the door of possibilities for adventure and enjoyment. What outdoor recreation does for the mind, body and soul is immeasurable.

With a state as diverse as Pennsylvania — in both people and landscape — providing outdoor recreation services is an exciting, albeit challenging, endeavor. Community leaders, resource managers and park and recreation professionals look for guidance on how to best serve the needs of their citizens. For the past 50 years, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan has served that very purpose by offering ideas and solutions on how to shape Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation future.

Every five years, states across the nation are required to produce a new recreation plan to remain eligible to receive federal Land and Water Conservation funds. Established in 1965 to invest in our nation's land, water and wildlife heritage, the Land and Water Conservation Fund has supported local parks and historic sites; conserved forests, rivers, lakes and wildlife habitat; and provided access to recreation, hunting and fishing across Pennsylvania for current and future generations. Since 1965, Pennsylvania has received almost $165 million from the LWCF, which has supported more than 1,500 local parks.

Pennsylvania has produced a total of eight outdoor recreation plans since 1966. Work on the 2014-19 plan began in 2012 and kicked off officially in 2013 with the formation of the 41-member Technical Advisory Committee, composed of state agencies and organizations with a vested interest in the outdoor recreation estate of Pennsylvania and who represent agencies that can bring resources to the planning, funding and implementation of the plan. Through quarterly meetings over the course of 18 months, the TAC helped to define priorities; clarify goals and objectives; analyze research findings; and establish recommendations and action items contained in the plan's priority areas.

PLAN PURPOSE

Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation plan helps to guide strategy for local governments, state government and other outdoor recreation providers. Priorities, recommendations and action items delineate a course of action for five years and help to determine where best to make investments in recreation.

For the purpose of this plan, Pennsylvania included several passive outdoor activities such as scenic driving and visiting historic sites along with the traditional active outdoor activities like walking, bicycling, swimming, hunting and fishing. Indoor activities are not considered in this plan.

The 2014 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan strives to capture the latest recreation wants and needs of our citizens. Thoughtful research and analysis has led to a plan that will:

- Continue to elevate the importance of statewide outdoor recreation planning;
- Identify high priority issues, needs and investments;
- Review the 2009 plan and retain uncompleted top actions;
- Develop collaborative relationships and partnerships;
- Quantify the public's outdoor needs and values;
- Connect people to the outdoors;
- Satisfy National Park Service priorities and meet LWCF requirements.

This comprehensive plan requires a collaboration of partners to accomplish these goals. Led primarily by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and other state agency partners, the plan's success will be determined by the willingness of all partners, at both the local and state levels, to work together to tackle issues and embrace opportunities.

FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

The 2014 plan brings in new ideas to complement the outstanding body of work put forth in the successful *Pennsylvania Outdoors, The Keystone for Healthy Living*, Pennsylvania's 2009-2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. As the result of a renewed focus on implementation of formidable action steps for outdoor recreation, Pennsylvania's 2009 plan was awarded the Best in the Nation in 2011 by the National Park Service and the National Association for Recreation Resource Planners.

Along with extensive engagement with the public, recreation experts and stakeholders, research findings from several studies, plans and reports helped to develop the 2009 plan recommendations and actions steps. Four surveys supporting the plan showed that families were spending less time outdoors; more children were obese than ever before; and residents wanted access to close-to-home recreation, walkable and bikeable communities, protected lands and waters, and well-maintained park facilities.

The 2009 plan identified walking for pleasure or fitness as the most popular outdoor recreation activity in Pennsylvania. Other popular activities included sightseeing and driving for pleasure, nature watching, swimming, picnicking and bicycling.

The 28 programmatic and five funding action steps were organized thematically under four major goals:

- Strengthen connections between outdoor recreation, healthy lifestyles and economic benefits in communities;
- Reconnect people to the outdoors and develop a stewardship ethic through outdoor recreation opportunities and experiences;
- Develop a statewide land and water trail network to facilitate recreation, transportation and healthy lifestyles;
- Enhance outdoor recreation through better state agency cooperation.

To prepare for the 2014 plan, DCNR first conducted a thorough review of the implementation status of the 2009 plan. Implementation occurred on about half of a very ambitious plan with significant outdoor recreation projects advanced and long-term priorities implemented. Some projects and programs not accomplished or in progress have been evaluated for advancement in this plan. Highlights of major implementation activities achieved over the past five years are found in Appendix A.

THE PEOPLE'S PLAN

The intent of the outdoor recreation plan is to facilitate outdoor recreation experiences for Pennsylvanians. To do that, the plan must speak to citizens' wants and needs. Understanding the recreational behaviors of the state's nearly 13 million citizens, during a time when outdoor demands appear to be diversifying and when public finances are stretched thin, is essential if Pennsylvania is to effectively balance the outdoor recreational demands of its people with its responsibility to protect and restore its natural resources.

While some people make recreation in outdoor environs a part of their daily life, others are unsure, unmotivated or disinterested in spending time outdoors. How does a plan speak to our growing, aging and diverse population who may be at varying stages of engagement?

We started by asking people what they want. This plan used three surveys to collect information, ideas and demographics from two distinct audiences: those who use outdoor recreation services and those who provide it.

CITIZEN SURVEYS

Resident survey

For this new outdoor recreation plan to stay relevant to the population it is intended to serve, researchers at Penn State's Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management studied and reported on

Pennsylvanians' outdoor recreation participation patterns, attitudes and opinions through a comprehensive mail and Internet survey conducted from January 2014 through March 2014.

So that comparisons could be drawn from previous outdoor recreation plans' resident surveys, this survey included a number of questions that had been used in previous surveys. This survey research strived to gauge residents':

- overall recreation participation
- activity-specific participation
- recreation area and facility needs
- funding priorities
- opinions about outdoor recreation and conservation
- demographics

A random sample of 12,000 adult Pennsylvania residents was purchased from Survey Sampling Incorporated with a targeted response rate of 20-25 percent for a 95 percent confidence level. This sampling was identical to the sampling frame of the 2009 resident survey.

Participants were contacted through a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and directing them to the online survey website. After this initial contact, mail questionnaires and a series of post-card follow ups were sent to non-respondents to encourage their participation in the study. A total of 2,240 completed surveys were returned, representing a response rate of about 20 percent. As with the 2009 plan, resident survey data were weighted according to gender and region of residence to reflect the overall Pennsylvania population.

Respondents were more likely to be older, with an average age of 59 years. Most people identified themselves as living in a suburban area (39 percent), with only 17 percent residing in a city. The survey respondents were overwhelmingly white (92 percent), with 5 percent black and 2 percent Hispanic.[1]

Online survey

Many Pennsylvanians are passionate about outdoor recreation. To capture the opinions of those vested in specific activities and recreation in general, a condensed 13-question online survey was posted to the PA Outdoor Recreation Plan website from April 2014 to May 2014 to supplement the statistically valid resident survey (referenced above) and make general comparisons. This provided an opportunity for anyone to comment and have their opinions included in the plan's development. More than 7,100 recreation enthusiasts seized the chance to be heard. Respondents represented all 67 counties, with 40 percent identifying themselves as living in a rural area. The survey skewed heavily male (66 percent). Respondents were younger than the resident survey, with 62 percent under the age of 55. The simplified survey duplicated a few

questions from other surveys for comparison purposes and provided two open-ended opportunities for expression of needs. Those open forums elicited more than 8,500 individual comments, which were placed into general categories and considered when developing plan recommendations.[2]

PROVIDER SURVEY

With assistance from the PA Recreation and Park Society, the PA State Association of Township Supervisors, the PA State Association of Boroughs, the PA Municipal League and the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, 1,037 elected officials, appointed officials and directors of parks and recreation agencies responded to a survey designed specifically for them. They shared their opinions on the benefits of recreation and parks services in their area; their priorities for facility investment over the next five years; general funding priorities; and challenges they face when providing parks and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Two online surveys were developed for data collection. One survey was designed to be taken by park and recreation directors and included a number of specific questions that relate to the role and realities of leading a park and recreation agency. The other survey was designed for both appointed and elected officials. Nearly all of the appointed officials who responded were township, city or borough managers/secretaries; the majority of elected officials were borough council members. A total of 134 park and recreation directors completed the survey as well.

The brief surveys, conducted in spring 2014, elicited a predominantly rural, small government response, with 55 percent representing communities with populations less than 5,000. The responses mostly came from appointed officials (47 percent) and elected officials (40 percent), with park and recreation directors contributing 13 percent. Nearly all appointed and elected officials described their local government as either a township or borough.[3]

PUBLIC FEEDBACK

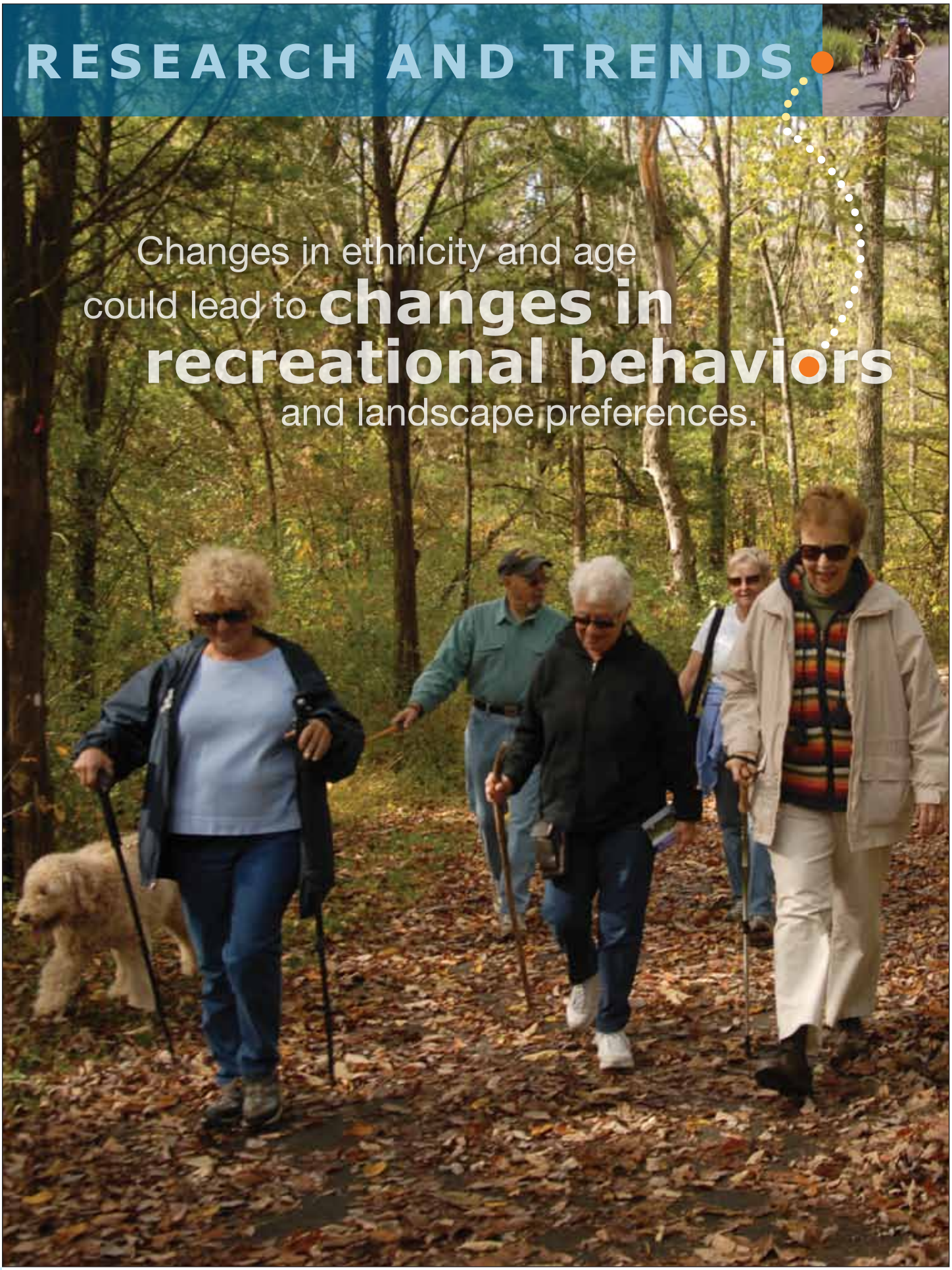
These more than 10,000 survey comments from the public and recreation providers helped to shape the recommendations of the plan in early 2014. Before the plan was finalized, the public again had the chance to weigh in on the future of outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania. Draft plan recommendations and action steps were posted during October on the plan's website, *paoutdoorrecplan.com*. An online survey allowed those interested to rank and provide feedback on the recommendations and actions steps; 579 people filled out all or portions of the survey. Citizens also had a chance to provide in-person comments at three public meetings in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Harrisburg in mid-October 2014. The meetings drew 109 people, who were provided an overview and asked to rank and provide feedback on the draft recommendations and action steps for the plan.

[1] Outdoor Recreation in Pennsylvania Resident Survey, Appendix B

[2] Pennsylvania Outdoor Recreation Online Surveys, Appendix C

[3] Pennsylvania Local Park and Recreation Provider Survey, Appendix D

RESEARCH AND TRENDS



Changes in ethnicity and age could lead to **changes in recreational behaviors** and landscape preferences.

OUR CHANGING POPULATIONS • Pennsylvania continues to get older and more ethnically diverse. These and other changes to the demographic fabric of Pennsylvania have and will have profound effects on people's recreational behavior and the provision of recreational services and facilities. Variations in population growth and density could mean more or less visitor demand, crowding, waiting and conflict. Changes in ethnicity and age could lead to changes in recreational behaviors and landscape preferences. Penn State researchers analyzed our changing demographics for their implications on recreation.[4]

Population Growth and Density

Between 2000 and 2010, Pennsylvania's population grew 3.4 percent to 12.7 million people, slower than the United States overall growth of 9.7 percent. The state grew faster than Ohio, New York and West Virginia and slower than New Jersey and Maryland, but was comparable to the 3.2 percent average growth rate of the U.S. Northeast Region. Between 2005 and 2012, about 30 percent of the Pennsylvania's population growth was made up of people born outside of the United States.

Fifty-two percent of the state's population (6.6 million) resided in 10 counties: Philadelphia, Allegheny, Montgomery, Bucks, Delaware, Lancaster, Chester, York, Berks and Westmoreland.

Except for Forest and Centre counties, Pennsylvania's population growth was predominantly centered in the east and southcentral counties. In the 2010 U.S. Census, Pike, Monroe, Franklin, Chester, York, Centre, Lehigh, Northampton and Adams were the fastest growing counties.

The slowest growing counties were Cameron, Elk, Fayette, Beaver, Cambria, McKean, Greene, Armstrong, Warren, Allegheny and Venango. All of these counties lost population between 2000 and 2010. In fact, many rural counties have lost population since the 1980s, and 29 Pennsylvania counties continued to lose population between 2000 and 2010. Twenty-five of these counties were in the rural north and northwestern parts of the state.

Between 2010 and 2030, the state's population is projected to grow 7.4 percent, slower than what is expected for the United States. Except for Centre County, and a few other outliers, the state's population will continue to be centered in an area encompassing the eastern and southcentral counties.

Land Conversion

Urbanization and land conversion will continue, especially in northeast and southcentral counties. A number of reports, including the 2003 Brookings Institution report, *Back to Prosperity: A Competitive Agenda for Renewing Pennsylvania,* have discussed the large amount of developed land associated with small population growth — defined as sprawl — in the state. While the 2008 economic recession drastically

slowed the number of new residential building permits and housing starts, rural and urban housing units both increased by 6 percent between 2000 and 2010. Similar to other population trends, the greatest increase in housing units occurred in the eastern and southcentral counties of the state, with slower growth in northern and western counties.

Although ethnic population densities are projected to grow in urban areas and population densities will remain high in existing cities, Pennsylvania's population will continue to shift to second class townships. This will be especially apparent in the residential growth of northeastern and southcentral border counties adjacent to Maryland and New York.

Scattered growth could cause the update of land use planning and regulatory policy and an increase in referendum and bond issues and other tools used to preserve open space, greenways, riparian areas and other green infrastructure associated with recreation. It might lead to increased capacity and partnerships among municipalities, nonprofits and business in an attempt to plan and finance the purchase and administration of open space and other recreational areas and provide cooperative park and recreation services.

Age

In Pennsylvania and nationally, the percentage of people age 65 and over is increasing. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Pennsylvania was one of the country's oldest states, with 15.4 percent of the population 65 and over. By the way of comparison, Florida had 17.3 percent. At 27 percent, Pennsylvania also had one of the highest percentages of baby boomers, defined as those individuals born between 1946 and 1964. In general, younger populations were found in the state's southern and eastern counties, with older populations in the north and west.

By 2030, people over 65 are projected to grow to 23 percent of the state's population. Until 2030, baby boomers in the 65-75 age range will dominate older Pennsylvanians. A greater percentage of those over 65 will be female. A smaller portion of these older people will retire in a traditional sense, and they are expected to live longer and live more independent lives as they age.

By 2030, people over the age of 65 will be approaching one quarter of the state's population.

Ethnic Populations

Although our ethnic populations are still considerably lower than other states, Pennsylvania is becoming increasingly diverse. Future population growth in Pennsylvania will largely be either foreign born or U.S. citizens born outside of the country (e.g. Puerto Rico). Between 2000 and 2010, the state's white population decreased 0.7 percent. During the same time period, the state's ethnic population grew 33 percent. In 2010, one of five Pennsylvanians identified themselves as belonging to an ethnic group. Between 2000 and 2010, the state's African American population grew 12 percent, making it the largest ethnic group in the state, representing 10.4 percent.

Ethnic populations in rural areas grew at a much slower rate — 8 percent. When looking at youth, there was a growing population of children under five in all ethnic groups, compared to a 10 percent decline in the population growth of white children under five.

Family structure will shift away from a traditional "nuclear family" to include structures such as single parents and couples without children. These changes could affect the type of family groups visiting facilities, the role women play in shaping recreational policy or family recreation decision-making, and the time households have for recreation.

Economic realities could cause disparities within and between municipalities related to the type, quality and quantity of recreation and where people can participate in high-quality recreation. This trend may marginalize some people from higher-quality recreation, lead to increased recreational conflict, cause reevaluation of entrance fee strategies, increase the need for state grants and technical assistance and elevate the need for transportation and other services that can improve access for lower income people. Economic disparity in recreation may also have environmental and social justice realities. Recreation close to the home may become even more important in some places, especially with any economic downturn.

The fastest growing ethnic group in the state is Hispanic, which grew 83 percent to a total of 5.7 percent of the state's population. The largest Hispanic populations were found in Philadelphia, Lehigh, Berks and Lancaster counties.

Between 2010 and 2030, the white population is projected to grow by less than one percent, while the Hispanic population is projected to grow 184 percent, to a total of 8.5 percent of the state's population. The African American population is projected to grow 26.6 percent and will remain the state's largest ethnic population. Even given these growth rates, no ethnic population is projected to become the majority population in Pennsylvania by 2030.

The increase in ethnic populations and population densities could cause changes in recreational behavior, facilities, services, strategies for outreach and interpretation, and needs for grants and technical assistance.

Between 2010 and 2030, the Hispanic population is projected to grow 184 percent, to a total of 8.5 percent of the state's population.

Family Structure and Income

The average size of households in Pennsylvania continues to decrease, with fewer families with children and fewer children in families. Between 2000 and 2010, the share of married couples raising children declined by 12 percent; conversely, single parent homes raising children increased by 12 percent.

Philadelphia and Pittsburgh

Between 2000 and 2010, Pittsburgh's population declined by 9 percent. During that time, the city lost African American and older populations and gained Hispanic and younger people.

Between 2000 and 2010, Philadelphia had a dramatic increase in the Hispanic population and a decrease in older people. Between 2000 and 2010, Philadelphia's population grew by 1 percent, the city's first population increase since 1950.

Although Pittsburgh's population decreased and Philadelphia's population grew, three trends seem apparent: 1) the number and density of the Hispanic populations will continue to grow; 2) the cities' populations will become younger; and 3) these cities will continue to have large African American populations.

RESEARCH FINDINGS–CITIZEN SURVEYS

Both the random sample resident survey and the online survey of recreation enthusiasts provide insights into what Pennsylvanians want to do, where they go and what they value in their outdoor recreation lives.

What people are doing

According to the Pennsylvania resident survey, the majority of respondents were actively engaged in outdoor recreation and participated in a wide variety of activities at both public and private park and recreation areas.

Three-quarters of respondents said they participate in outdoor recreation and over half (53 percent) do so one or more times per week. About one-quarter of respondents indicated they never participate in outdoor recreation (Figure 1).

Walking, scenic driving, dog walking and bicycling are the most popular activities done on roads and trails. Swimming and fishing are the most popular water-based activities. Visiting historic sites, wildlife viewing, bird watching, visiting nature centers and night sky viewing all hold top spots on the popularity index. Taken as a whole, the top five outdoor recreation activities for Pennsylvanians are walking, visiting historic sites, scenic driving, picnicking and swimming (Figure 2).

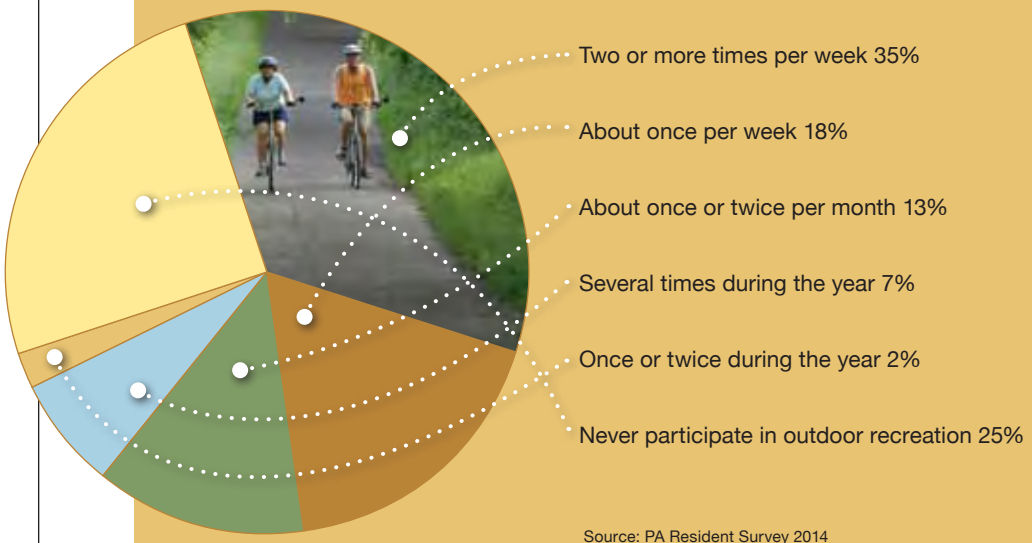
According to the data, youth like to do slightly different things, as to be expected. The top five outdoor recreation activities varied slightly for those under 18 years of age: walking, swimming, playing on playgrounds, picnicking and sledding/tubing.

Respondents most frequently participate in various forms of walking. Walking with a dog had the highest average number of times a respondent participated in the past year — nearly 150 times. Walking on local streets/sidewalks is the second most frequent activity, with respondents participating an average of 107 times last year. Other frequent activities include: bird watching (81 times per year), jogging/running (71 times per year) and wildlife viewing (55 times per year).

More than half of Pennsylvanians participate in outdoor recreation one or more times per week.

Consistent with national trend data, Pennsylvanians' participation has significantly increased for bird watching over the last 10 years (17 percent in 2003 and 31 percent in 2014) and wildlife viewing (19 percent in 2003 and 35 percent in 2014). Although hunting participation has increased steadily from 2003 (11 percent) to 2009 (13 percent) to 2014 (15 percent), fishing has declined over that time period from 28 percent to 20 percent.

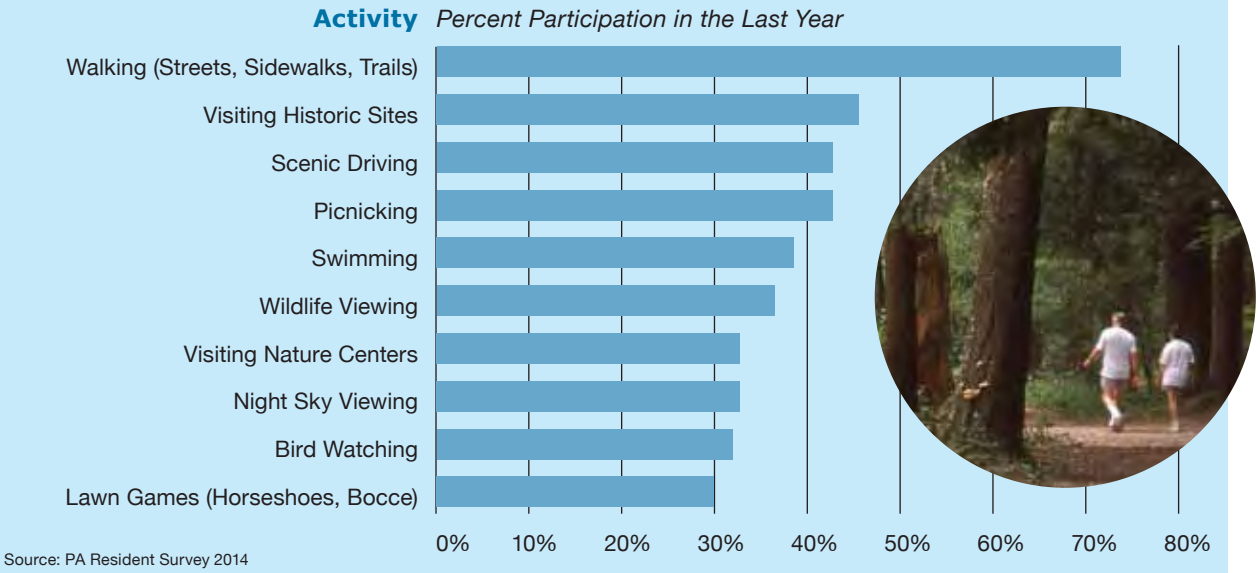
Figure 1: Outdoor Recreation Participation



Source: PA Resident Survey 2014

Nearly three-quarters of those who said they have participated in outdoor recreation estimate they spend an average of 20 minutes per day being physically active in the outdoors. Pennsylvanians said providing more long distance trails and pathways and protecting and encouraging more natural settings at outdoor recreation areas and facilities would be the most effective way to get them to achieve their health and fitness goals.

Figure 2: Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities



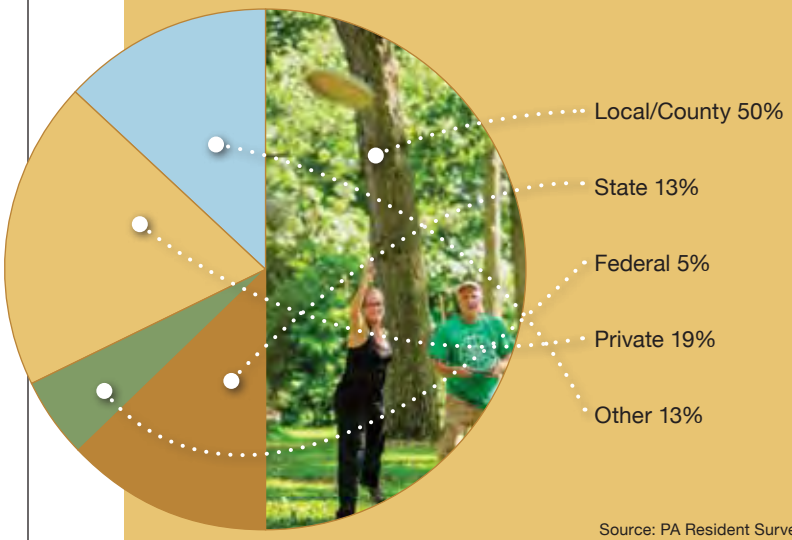
Source: PA Resident Survey 2014

Where people are going

Local parks and recreation areas still remain the top destination choice for Pennsylvanians, proving that close-to-home recreation is an important consideration for Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation plan. According to the Pennsylvania resident survey, 50 percent of visitor participation days occurred at local and county parks, trails or recreation areas. Specifically, respondents reported that they recreate most frequently at local parks, estimating they spent 28 days visiting those areas over the past year. State parks, forests and game lands as well as federal parks, trails and recreation areas also were visited but presumably due to proximity, were not visited as frequently over the course of the year as local and county parks (Figure 3).

Bird watching and wildlife watching both saw big gains in participation over the last 10 years.

Figure 3: Where Pennsylvanians Participate in Outdoor Recreation

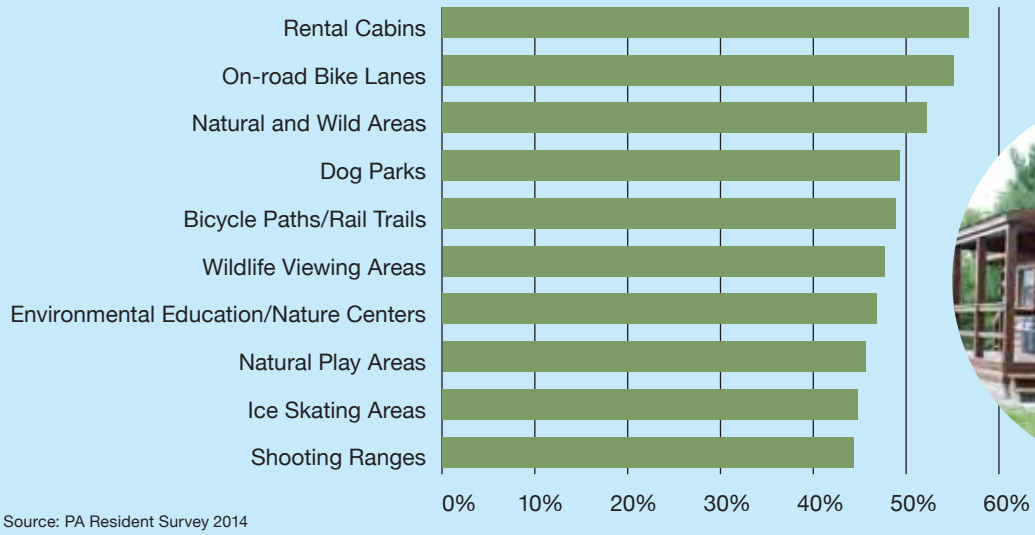


Source: PA Resident Survey 2014

What people want

In the separate online survey, 59 percent of respondents indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with outdoor recreation amenities — trails, parks, playgrounds and playing fields — near where they live. The resident survey drilled down to specifics in order to get a true assessment of the adequacy of existing recreation areas and facilities. Participants were asked if certain facilities and areas were adequate, needed to be increased and/or needed to be improved.

Figure 4: Top Recreation Area and Facility Needs (should be increased)



Source: PA Resident Survey 2014

Pennsylvanians seem to be most satisfied with the number and condition of golf courses, ice-fishing areas, waterfowl hunting areas, downhill skiing/snow-boarding areas and baseball/softball fields. However, some respondents believe we need more of certain recreational facilities and areas, like on-road bike lanes, natural/wild areas, rental cabins and dog parks (Figure 4). On-road bike lanes were also identified as the facility or area that is most in need of improvement, with nearly 30 percent of those responding saying bike lanes should be improved. Additionally, on-road bike lanes had the lowest adequacy rating of all facilities or areas. Other facilities or areas in need of improvement were playgrounds, picnic areas and lake/stream areas (Figure 5). City respondents stated a greater need than suburban, town and rural respondents for developed recreation areas such as various sports facilities, playgrounds and picnic areas.

Connectivity through the use of trails was important to Pennsylvanians. The majority of residents said that they would be more likely to use a trail if it were within easy walking distance from where they live. Additionally, residents agreed that it was important for greenways and trails to connect neighborhoods with schools, shopping areas, parks and open spaces. Finally, 63 percent of respondents agreed that Pennsylvania should do more to reconnect citizens to the riverfront.

What people value

Pennsylvanians place high value on the recreational and natural amenities in their community. Of 10 choices of what best represents what they value most in a community, 90 percent of respondents to the online survey listed the trails, natural areas and waterways category as a choice. Three-quarters also checked 1) local parks and public spaces and 2) surrounding countryside and farm land, as top values in their community. By comparison, the next highest choice — residential neighborhoods — was selected by 35 percent of the respondents.

Pennsylvanians see both individual and societal benefits to park and outdoor recreation services in their local area. From the resident survey, half of the respondents thought outdoor recreation improves physical and mental health and fitness as well as reduces stress a “great deal.” But outdoor recreation services also were perceived to serve the greater societal good, such as making their community a more desirable place to live (51 percent ranking a great deal), providing children a safe place to play (48 percent) and protecting the natural environment (43 percent).

When people are trying to pick a spot to enjoy outdoor recreation, they look for places that are clean and safe, with at least 75 percent ranking those two qualities as very important. Other important factors included the proximity of the area (53 percent very important), available information/signage about the site (44 percent very important) and the cost to participate (44 percent very important).

Perceptions and opinions

How people perceive the recreation opportunities close to their home is an important consideration for recreation planners and providers. Most people (over 60 percent) believe that public recreation areas near where they live are well maintained, although 45 percent of respondents believe that public outdoor recreation areas near where they live are in need of upgrades and modernization. The vast majority view their facilities as safe.

According to the resident survey, more Pennsylvanians believe that there are enough public recreation areas close to where they live (40 percent) than those who do not (29 percent). Only one-fifth of the recreation enthusiasts who answered the online survey believe they do not have easy access to outdoor recreation facilities.

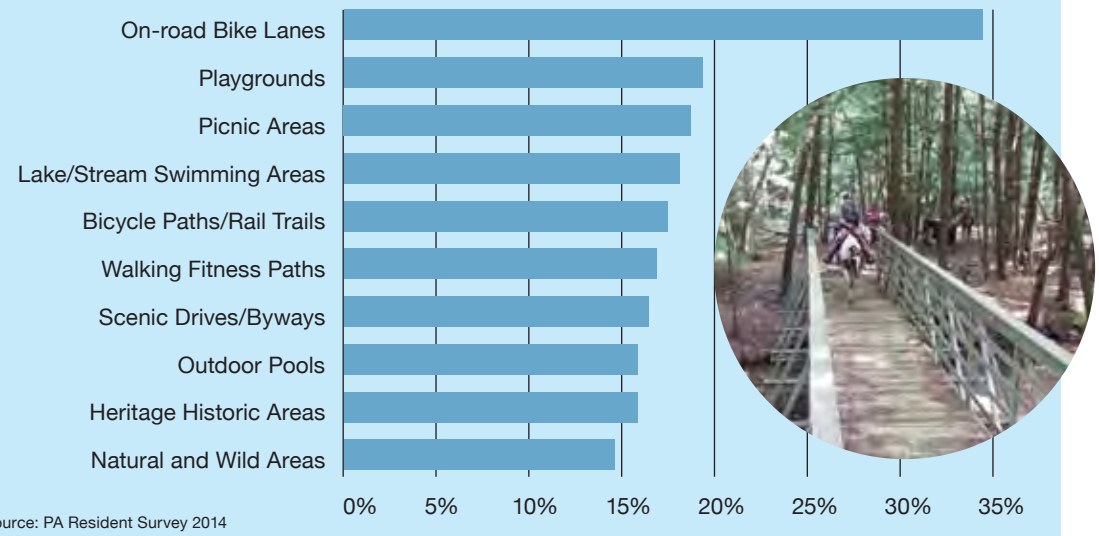
Those who answered the online survey believe that recreation services should be a core function of state and local governments (70 percent). Respondents to the resident survey recognize the challenge of providing those services and agree that cooperation is important to adequately providing outdoor recreation services to local communities. Over 60 percent of respondents to the resident survey agree that municipalities in their area should join together to form a parks and recreation department.

More than three-quarters of citizens believe parks, trails and open spaces are an essential part of our health care system.

Pennsylvanians clearly see a connection between health and outdoor recreation. More than three-quarters (77 percent) of respondents to the resident survey agreed or strongly agreed that parks, trails and open spaces are an essential part of our health care system, making it the strongest response of 21 attitudinal questions in the survey.

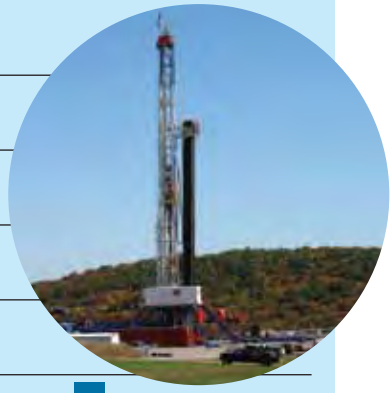
Nearly 83 percent of respondents to the resident survey said they have never encountered natural gas activity when participating in outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania. In areas of the state where drilling is

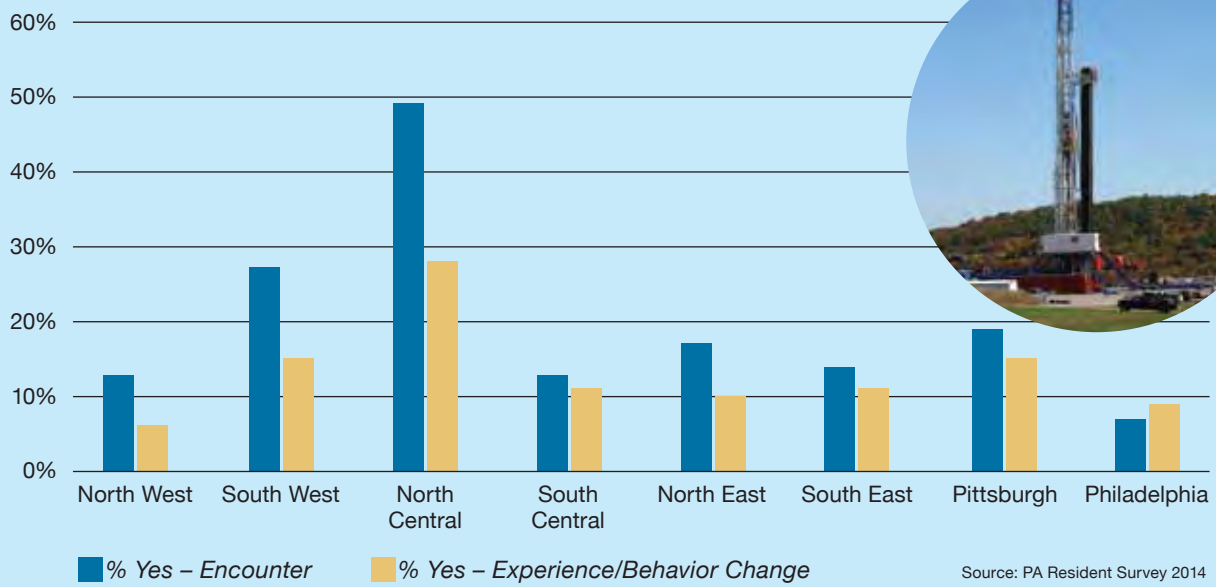
Figure 5: Top Recreation Area and Facility Needs (should be improved)



Source: PA Resident Survey 2014

Figure 6: Percentage of Marcellus Shale-Related Gas Activity Encounters and Experience/Behavior Change by Region





Source: PA Resident Survey 2014

more prevalent, like in the northcentral region, that percentage is more evenly split between those who have encountered and those who have not. Across the commonwealth, a small percentage of respondents — about 12 percent — indicate their outdoor recreation behavior has changed due to Marcellus shale-related activity, but that number jumps to 28 percent for respondents from regions with heavy drilling (Figure 6). For those who said their experience was impacted by gas-related activity, the main complaint related to a disturbance or disruption of their desired outdoor recreation behaviors. Others cited environmental and aesthetic degradation as a negative consequence of drilling-related activity.

Funding

A majority of respondents in the resident survey believe the state should increase its permanent source of funding for park and recreation opportunities based on general tax revenues. Additionally, a majority believe their municipality should have a permanent source of funding for park and recreation opportunities derived from general tax revenues.

Maintaining existing park and recreation areas was identified as the highest funding priority.

Overall, maintaining existing facilities was highlighted as a main priority for respondents. To illustrate, more than half of respondents agreed that maintaining the public recreation areas we now have is more important than adding new outdoor recreation facilities in Pennsylvania.

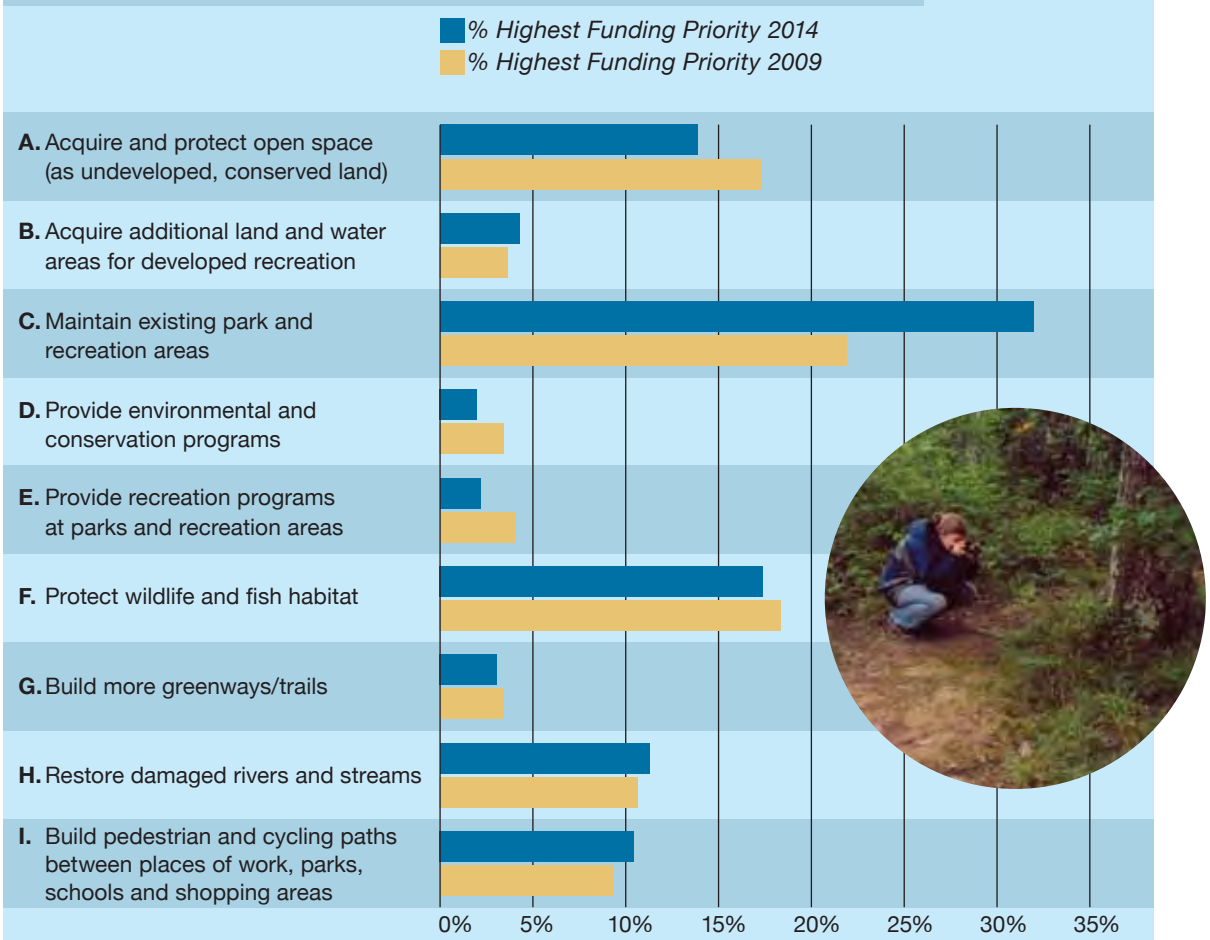
Maintaining existing park and recreation areas was identified by 32 percent of respondents as the top overall funding priority, a 10 percent jump from the 2009 survey. The other top priorities were all conservation related: protecting wildlife and fish habitat (17 percent),

acquiring and protecting open space (14 percent) and restoring damaged rivers and streams (11 percent). These priorities, and their order of importance, were the same in 2014 as they were in 2009, reflecting their continued importance to Pennsylvanians (Figure 7).

Citizen survey conclusions

Both the resident survey and the online survey give us insight into the opinions and priority outdoor recreation needs of citizens. Pennsylvanians place a high value on the recreational and natural amenities in their communities. We know from both surveys that maintaining facilities, protecting natural resources and properly funding outdoor recreation opportunities are important to Pennsylvanians. Pennsylvanians like to walk and prefer close-to-home recreation areas that are safe and clean. Citizens see a strong connection between recreating outdoors and their physical and mental health and well-being. The vast majority of Pennsylvanians believe that outdoor recreation should be an important component of our health care system. Appendices B and C provide complete results and analysis of the surveys.

Figure 7: Pennsylvanian's Highest Funding Priorities 2014/2009



Source: PA Resident Survey 2014

RESEARCH FINDINGS–PROVIDER SURVEY

The responses of more than 1,000 providers of local park and recreation services add insight into the perceived benefits provided by these services, future facility investment priorities, outdoor recreation and conservation funding strategies and challenges faced by their local government or agency. Appendix D provides complete results and analysis of the provider survey.

Capacity

The majority of appointed and elected providers work for local governments that own a small number of parks. Slightly more than half of appointed and elected officials said that they have a park and recreation board that was established by their local government, with three-quarters stating that the board was either somewhat effective or extremely effective in promoting, planning and serving the park and recreation needs of their local residents.

Park and recreation directors reported that their average number of full-time recreation staff was 6.7 (with a range from zero to 63) and a median of four. The average number of part time/seasonal staff was 40.8 (with a range from zero to 430) and a median of 20. When reading these statistics, the median is most relevant because it is not skewed by the presence of outliers.

A majority of park and recreation directors said that tax-supported operational and capital expenses have remained the same over the last three years (65 percent and 53 percent, respectively). Those who did indicate changes were more likely to cite declines in tax support for operational (24 percent) and capital (29 percent) expenses rather than increases.

Benefits

When asked to indicate the extent that their local government delivered a list of 14 potential park and recreation benefits, the most important benefits cited among all providers were that they provide children with a safe place to play, make communities a more desirable place to live, provide opportunities for social interaction, and enhance a sense of community.

There were variations in benefit perceptions across certain types of park and recreation providers. For

example, township managers were less likely than other providers to perceive that their local government's park and recreation services provided a range of benefits. Delving deeper, it is clear that elected officials were more likely than appointed officials to perceive that park and recreation services provided a multitude of benefits to their local areas. Not surprisingly, park and recreation directors and respondents from the resident survey reported the highest levels of park and recreation benefits overall.

The extent to which local government agencies had the capacity to provide park and recreation services impacted their perception of the benefits that their services provide to their local areas. Those who served larger populations and who had larger budgets and staffing were more likely to perceive that park and recreation services provided benefits to the community.

Recreation providers believe providing children with a safe place to play is the most important benefit of parks and recreation services.

Facility Investment Priorities

Playgrounds, neighborhood parks, team sport facilities, community or regional parks and community or regional trails were the providers' selections as the highest priority for future investment (Figure 8). Collectively, playgrounds were the highest priority facility among all providers, with neighborhood parks ranking second, but neighborhood parks were clearly more important to appointed and elected officials than to park and recreation directors. Elected officials prioritized future facility investments at similar or higher rates than appointed officials.

Funding Priorities

Maintaining existing park and recreation areas was the most important funding priority across all provider groups, which mirrors the response given by Pennsylvania's citizens. Eighty-five percent of provider respondents believe maintenance is important or extremely important, and 64 percent said it was their top funding priority. Though significantly less important than maintenance, other important funding priorities included providing recreation programs at parks and recreation areas (58 percent), building more greenways and trails (40 percent) and providing environmental and conservation programs (33 percent) (Figure 9).

Three of the top four challenges for providers (out of 31) related to funding.

When comparing funding priorities across provider groups, park and recreation directors generally placed a higher importance on various outdoor recreation and conservation funding priorities than appointed and elected officials. Specifically, park and recreation directors identified providing recreation programs at parks and recreation areas as a high outdoor funding priority more so than others, while township providers — both appointed and elected — identified acquiring and protecting open space as a high funding priority. Overall, 40 percent of providers ranked trails and greenways as an important or extremely important funding priority.

Challenges Faced

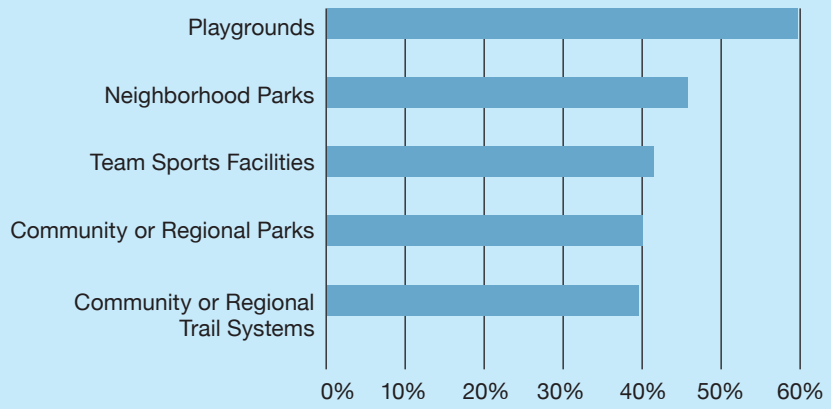
Providers were asked to indicate the extent that various partnership/staffing, advocacy, fiscal and maintenance issues were a challenge for their local government. They were also asked whether responding to certain societal trends posed challenges for their organization.

Three of the four top challenges (out of 31) related to funding. Seventy-eight percent of providers believed that developing alternative, non-traditional revenue sources was a significant or major challenge. This was identified as the single most significant challenge of all 31 issues presented. Creating new park and recreation facilities, insufficient funds to rehabilitate existing facilities and insufficient funds for land acquisition, collectively posed the other most significant challenges across the various provider groups.

Providers also felt emerging trends, such as dog parks, paddleboarding and pickleball, were a challenge, but less so than funding and maintenance and management issues.

Park and recreation directors were more likely than the other providers to indicate "addressing the lack of youth engagement in outdoor recreation" as a challenge.

Figure 8: Top 5 Future Facility Investment Priorities*



*Respondents were asked to rate the level of priority their agency/local government placed on investing in specific facilities over the next five years (15 total facilities).

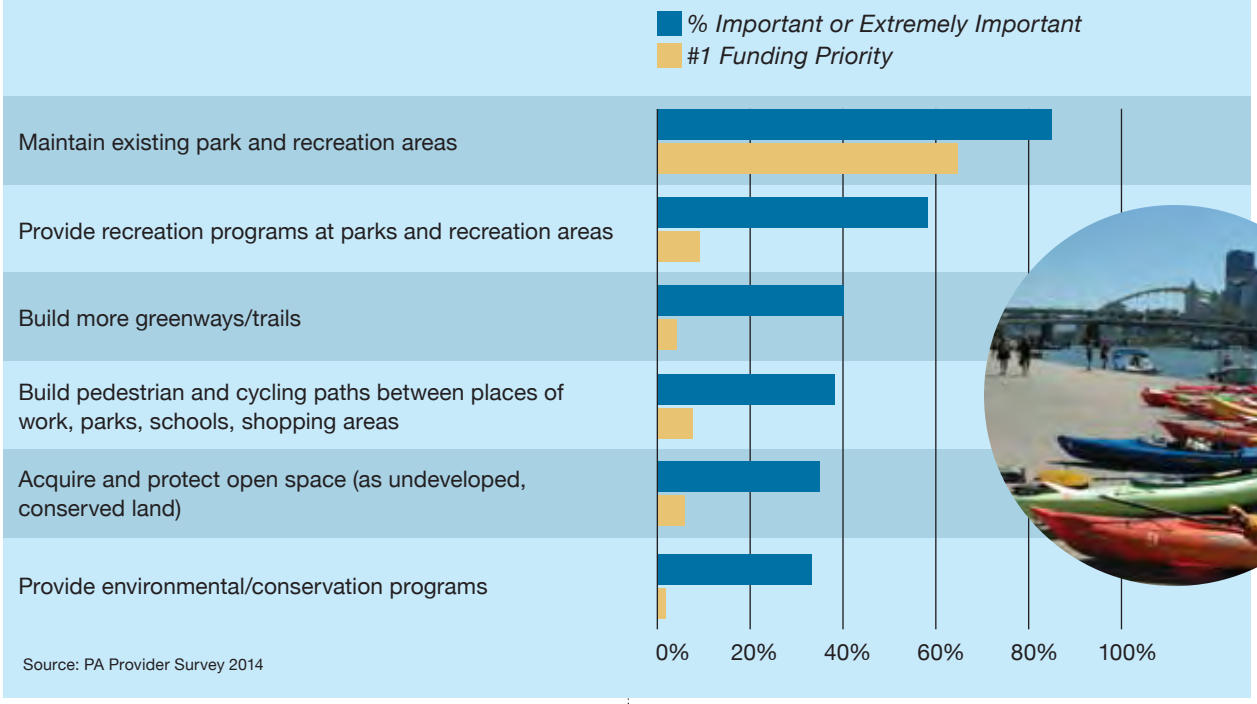
Source: PA Provider Survey 2014

Boroughs were more likely than other providers to report "lack of acreage or suitable sites for new parks and recreation facilities," "responding to emerging or new types of outdoor recreation activities" and "promoting green infrastructure at parks" as challenging.

Conclusions

This large and diverse sample provided insights that will prove to be helpful when planning for the future of outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania over the next five years.

Figure 9: Top 6 Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Funding Strategies



Source: PA Provider Survey 2014

Child/youth, community and social benefits were perceived as the top benefits delivered to local communities through park and recreation services. These top benefits illustrate the widely-held opinion among providers that parks and recreation deliver benefits that are advantageous to local communities, especially with positive youth development. The high priority providers placed on playgrounds as a top facility investment need further substantiates the focus respondents had on providing recreational opportunities for young people.

The results of the resident survey indicate citizens were much more likely than local park and recreation providers to rate a number of conservation-related funding priorities higher, such as protecting fish and wildlife habitat and restoring damaged rivers, indicating a possible disconnect in what citizens and providers think is important.

More than three-quarters of all respondents said their most significant challenge is developing alternative/non-traditional revenue sources for parks and recreation.

The significant importance that providers placed on maintaining existing park and recreation areas was a major finding of this study. In the face of shrinking budgets and rising maintenance backlogs, this data indicates that providers would like to see future funding opportunities directed towards maintaining the park and recreation areas that already exist to ensure facilities are clean, safe and ready to use.

The biggest challenge that providers face is developing alternative/non-traditional revenue sources for parks and recreation. With lower levels of funding and rising costs to provide their services, recreation providers must seek out new partners and opportunities to generate revenues to continue offering quality facilities and services. Finally, creating new park and recreation facilities and expanding programming will continue to be challenges into the foreseeable future.

NATIONAL OUTDOOR TRENDS: PA COMPARED TO USA

Two major national surveys provide insight into outdoor recreation participation trends within the United States. Since 1998, the Outdoor Foundation has published an annual outdoor recreation participation report that helps the outdoor industry, public agencies and community organizations better understand the trends in outdoor recreation participation. This survey is a sample of individuals who participate in outdoor recreation, not a general population sample like the Pennsylvania resident survey. Another survey, the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment, is led by researchers at the USDA Forest Service. This surveillance survey began in 1960 and uses phone interviews with a general population of Americans to understand their outdoor recreation participation and behaviors.

Both national data sources indicate that the number of outdoor recreation participants and the number of total outdoor outings have increased in recent years, but much of this increase is due to population growth.

As it is in Pennsylvania, walking is the nation's most popular outdoor activity, with 85 percent of the American population participating. Nationally, the fastest growing outdoor recreation activities include adventure racing (alternative endurance events such as mud runs), growing by 211 percent over the past five years, as well as triathlons (both non-traditional and traditional), which increased 199 percent and 174 percent respectively over the past five years.[5] According to NSRE trend data, nature-based activities are also popular: viewing birds (23 percent), other wildlife besides birds (25 percent), wildflowers/trees (29 percent), natural scenery (18 percent) and fish (21 percent).[6]

Walking is the most popular outdoor activity in both PA and the nation.

First-time participants are flocking to newer forms of outdoor recreation like stand-up paddleboarding, with 56 percent of users identified as first-time participants. Boardsailing, windsurfing and triathlons also experienced a significant influx of first-time participants. By contrast, the traditional activities of fishing and hiking experienced the lowest percentages of users identified as first-time participants, both at 6 percent.[5]

The Outdoor Foundation's Pennsylvania-specific data show that the top five outdoor recreation activities remained consistent over the last four years: running/jogging, fishing, biking, hiking and camping. These differ from the Pennsylvania survey due to category choices available to the survey respondents. The categories with the highest increase in participation over the last four years are: cross-country skiing, telemarking, snowshoeing, kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding. Those activities with the biggest decrease in participation rates were scuba diving, non-traditional triathlons, windsurfing, BMX bicycling and surfing.

When comparing Pennsylvania participation rates to a national average, 16 recreational activities in Pennsylvania exceeded the average. These activities include rifle hunting, snowboarding, kayaking and all types of skiing (downhill, cross-country, telemarking and freestyle).

The NSRE national data on youth participation is encouraging. Approximately 64 percent of youth ages 6 to 19 reported spending two or more hours outdoors on a typical weekday. This percentage jumps to over 75 percent on weekend days. Participation by adolescent boys ages 13 to 17 rose three percentage points in the past two years, whereas adolescent girls ages 13 to 17 declined four percentage points in the last two years. Perceived constraints to outdoor recreation help explain why youth did not participate in outdoor recreation activities. From the overall sample of respondents ages 6 and up, not being interested (37 percent), not having time (26 percent), and not having the skills/abilities (21 percent) were the top three reasons why respondents did not participate in outdoor recreation activities.[6]

Pennsylvania exceeds the national average in 16 recreational activities including rifle hunting, kayaking and all types of skiing.

A noticeable lack of diversity in outdoor recreation participants is a reason for concern moving forward. Consistent with previous reports, outdoor participation was highest among Caucasians and lowest among African Americans. Across all age groups, Caucasians participated in outdoor recreation more than Hispanics, African Americans and Asian/Pacific Islanders. Most notably, 64 percent of Caucasians ages 13 to 17 participated in outdoor recreation, while only 46 percent of African Americans, 53 percent of Hispanics, and 58 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders of the same age group participated.

Visitation to public lands has varied over the past 10 years, dependent on the type of public land (national parks, national forests, national recreation areas, state parks, etc.). National parks visitation has remained relatively stable; national forests visitation has decreased; and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service facility visitation has steadily increased. Nationally, state park visitation had increased from 1992 to 2000, declined until 2005, increased through 2008, and dipped again in 2009. In Pennsylvania, state park visitation fluctuated only slightly over the same time period, with moderate increases and decreases in attendance. Over the past 10 years, the average attendance has hovered around 36.5 million visits. In that time period, the highest level of visitation occurred in 2009 with around 38.7 million visits and the lowest occurred in 2008 with 34.1 million visits. In 2013, Pennsylvania State Parks received 37.5 million visits.[4]

TECHNOLOGY

We live in a world highly influenced by technology, so it is only logical that recreation and parks professionals consider its implications in outdoor recreation.

Technology has always influenced outdoor recreation. Advances in equipment and clothing have made participation more comfortable, safe, enjoyable and even possible. Lightweight backpacking gear, composite materials, technical fabrics and motorized recreational vehicles are just a few examples of how technology has perpetually shaped the outdoor recreation experience. However, while equipment advances still continue to improve experiences and access, the biggest advances in recent years have come from digital technology.

Digital technology refers to the use of cellphones, computers, tablets, television, the Internet, GPS and other similar forms of media. On one hand, digital technology is seen as a way to connect people to outdoor recreation activities and destinations. Conversely, it is often seen as a detractor to exercising outdoors or connecting with nature.

People are adapting to and changing with technology, and the parks and recreation industry must move with them.

Digital technology is clearly already part of life in the United States. An ongoing survey conducted by the Pew Research Internet Project reveals that 91 percent of American adults 18+ years of age have a cell phone, 55 percent have a smartphone, and 42 percent have a tablet computer. These three devices have been on a general increase since the survey was begun in 2006.[7]

Research firm eMarketer has assembled data on the average time spent per day with media by U.S. adults 18+ years of age. Their findings indicate that U.S. adults spend more than five hours on computer/mobile devices and four hours with TV.[8] Half of the five hours of computer time was spent on a mobile device. The use of digital technology clearly has become a primary leisure time activity for many Americans.

The digital technology era is only beginning; it is the job of outdoor recreation providers to adapt to this new reality. Technology could potentially be a powerful tool to connect people to nature and outdoor recreation. At their fingertips, citizens now have instant access to recreation information and destinations. Website usage for outdoor venues and activities has grown exponentially as more people use the Internet as their primary source for researching and planning trips.

In the Pennsylvania resident survey, the Internet was identified by the highest percentage of respondents as their most used information source. Notably, however, more technologically focused information sources like social media, email/text messages and mobile/smart phone apps were the three least important information sources indicated by the overall respondents. Those respondents under 49 years of age were more likely than older respondents to say that these technological information sources were important and were also more likely to use them with much more frequency.

In a recent survey, the Outdoor Foundation attempted to better understand the role of technology within outdoor recreation from the perspective of young people. The Outdoor Foundation study, titled *Technology + Social Media: an Outdoor Nation Special Report,* uncovered both the positive and negative effects high tech tools have on the outdoor experience. Positive effects include: the use of iPods and MP3 players to listen to music while running, the use of GPS for exploring new areas while remaining safer in the outdoors, and access to information like maps while using mobile phones. The study goes on to suggest ideas for incorporating technology into the outdoor recreation experience. These ideas include geocaching, Twitter/Facebook groups, text message scavenger hunts and others.[9]

Technology has positive practical applications to outdoor recreation participation as well. For example, there are great applications for the use of technology in communicating environmental subjects. The use of podcast technology has been shown as a cost-effective way to communicate environmental education and interpretive concepts to park visitors.[10] Guided cell phone tours are now commonplace at many national park units. Site-specific tablet and mobile apps also have been developed to provide information about natural and cultural resources at a specific area or site, such as the South Mountain Partnership app, which provides details about the conservation landscape in southcentral Pennsylvania. In this light, digital technology can be seen as a complement to the outdoor recreation experience.

The use of technology within outdoor recreation is not without potential negative impacts. The Outdoor Foundation special report identified some of these negative effects, including an overreliance and over absorption with GPS devices; the fact that iPods and MP3s shut out natural sounds; and mobile phones "take away from the feeling of being out in nature, cut off from everything…".[9] These findings imply that the restorative benefits of nature connection that have long been inherent within outdoor recreation participation are being whittled away by the excessive use of digital technology.

The Internet is the most used source when searching for outdoor recreation information.

Also noted in the literature is that virtual reality — the use of computer-generated 3D environments — could pose a threat to outdoor recreation and tourism. Virtual reality could be viewed as a substitute for the actual recreation or tourism experience. The seemingly limitless experience of virtual reality tourism could prove to be a serious competitor to outdoor recreation participation. This competition has the potential to result in a decline in actual outdoor recreation participation, along with the loss of support for conserving the environments in which outdoor recreation occurs.[11]

To take full advantage of the benefits of technology, parks and recreation providers must gain a better understanding of the increasing digitization of our society. In the Pennsylvania resident survey, 58 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that "local park and recreation services should do more to connect with Pennsylvanians through online content and social media." People are adapting to and changing with technology, and the parks and recreation industry must move with them.

This requires flexibility on the part of park and recreation providers to use technology to create additional opportunities for connection to the outdoors as well as using it to foster a stewardship ethic. Governmental agencies often are less nimble at adapting to emerging trends, so an opportunity exists for non-governmental agencies and park and forest "friends groups" to partner with park and recreation providers to offer digital technology solutions that can better connect recreation participants to outdoor settings through online content and conversations.[12]

RESEARCH AND TRENDS CONCLUSIONS

Several trends and research findings influenced the development of this recreation plan. Some noted findings include:

- Pennsylvania's population is projected to substantially grow older and increase its ethnic proportions, particularly in the eastern and southcentral parts of the state.
- As in the past, Pennsylvanians still like to walk, visit historic sites, take scenic drives, picnic and swim. Increasingly, they also like to kayak, watch wildlife and participate in winter sports.
- People spend most of their outdoor recreation time in their local parks and recreation areas. They choose the spots that are safe, close by, well-maintained and clean.
- Respondents perceived park and recreation services to provide both important personal health and societal benefits.
- Pennsylvanians strongly believe that parks, trails and open space are an essential component of our health care system, but the providers of recreation services don't make as strong of a connection.
- Maintenance of existing park and recreation facilities is clearly the most important funding priority for outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania, for both citizens and providers.

- Even though they believe that maintenance comes before building new facilities, citizens would like to see more on-road bike lanes, playgrounds, picnic areas, rental cabins, natural and wild areas and dog parks. Providers think the priorities should be on playgrounds, neighborhood and regional parks, team sport facilities and trails.
- Pennsylvanians feel strongly about protecting their natural resources and support conservation-related funding priorities, such as acquiring and protecting open space, protecting wildlife and fish habitat and restoring damaged rivers and streams.
- Citizens value trails and would become more active if there were more trails closer to where they live. They believe communities should make trail connections between neighborhoods, parks, schools and shopping areas.
- Fiscal and funding issues are the biggest challenges faced by local park and recreation providers.
- Unconventional gas drilling (i.e. Marcellus Shale) is having a slight impact on people's recreational choices, but most Pennsylvanians have yet to come in contact with the activity while recreating.
- Technology is influencing leisure activity and recreational choices, both positively and negatively. Parks and recreation areas can use technology to influence decisions and enhance outdoor experiences.

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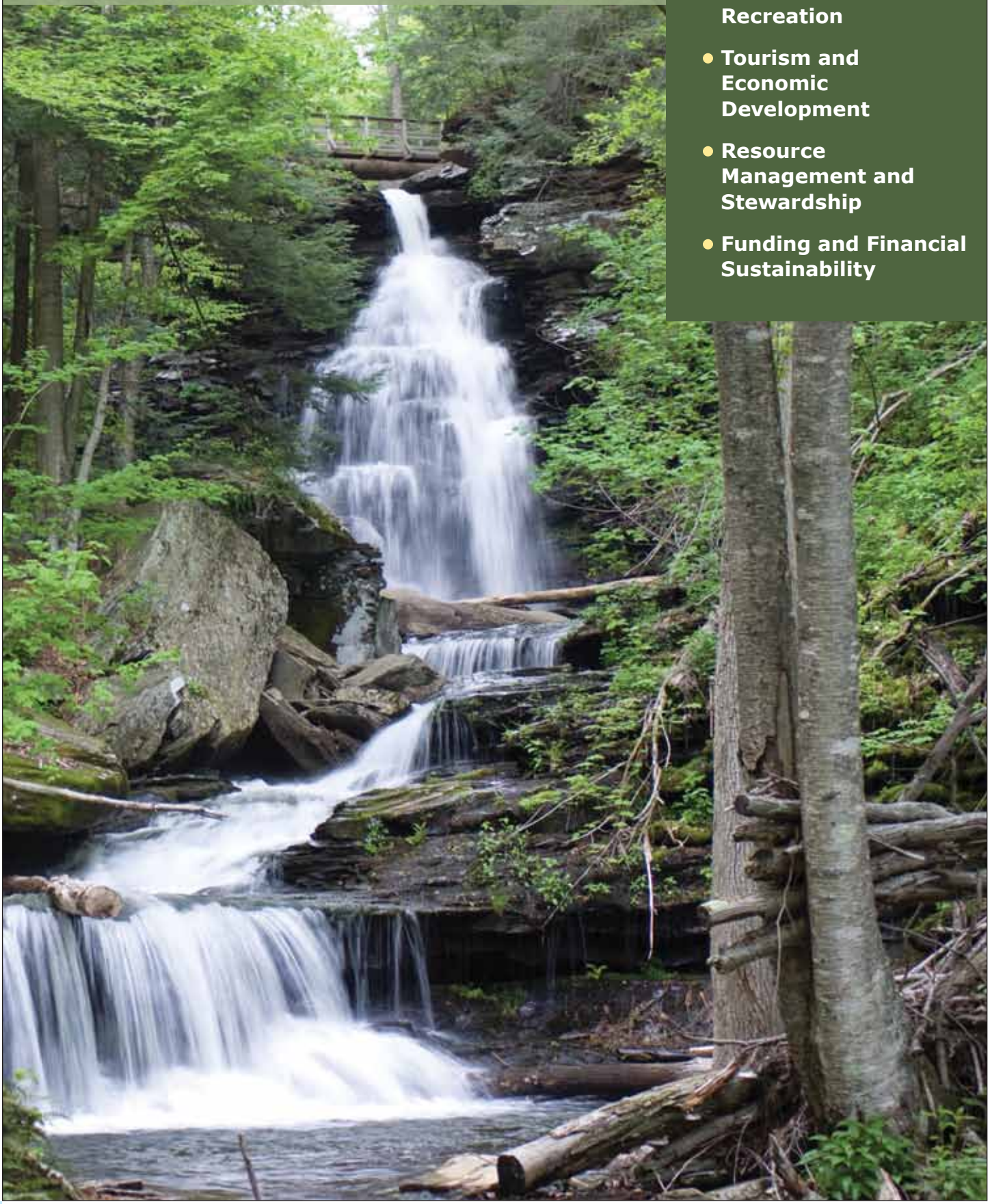
PRIORITY AREAS

- Health and Wellness
- Local Parks and Recreation
- Tourism and Economic Development
- Resource Management and Stewardship
- Funding and Financial Sustainability



PRIORITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

promoting healthy living through outdoor connections

KEY THEMES	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
• Alternative transportation improvements • Obesity reduction • School-based recreation • Senior recreation • Walkable/bikeable communities • Connections to the outdoors/stewardship	• An obesity and chronic diseases crisis • Connecting health and recreation providers • Disconnect between people and outdoors • Changing demographics • The built environment	• Active aging population • Wellness focus in the provision of health care • Opportunities for coordination • Built environment's influence on community health

Human health and well-being are fundamental elements of park and outdoor recreation services. The historic roots of the park and outdoor recreation movements of the late 19th century can be traced back to the pressing health concerns facing the nation at that time. Creating and expanding park and outdoor recreation opportunities were viewed as a way to rejuvenate a rapidly industrialized workforce, address youth development concerns and improve overall sanitation and health in America's cities.

While many of those original health concerns are still relevant today, technological and societal changes have brought about a new set of health challenges that confront modern society. Americans are less physically active, more overweight and are undergoing stress and anxiety effects as a result of a society that is constantly "plugged in" and disconnected from nature.

Park and recreation services, too, have evolved since the early movement. The mid-20th century was characterized by impressive gains in park and outdoor recreation areas and programs. However, the late 20th century witnessed a retrenchment of these investments and saw the field straying away from its role in addressing the core social problems of the nation. The recent recession had significant impacts on park capital budgets and staffing and may have lowered the recreation field's capacity to sustain services.[13]

The nation's increasing physical and mental health concerns have now brought that core mission back into focus. For the first time in the history of Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation plans, the 2009 plan made health a central theme, which is continued and elevated in this 2014 plan. Park and outdoor recreation services are once again being recognized as a central asset in combating societal health care issues like obesity, heart disease, diabetes and mental health.

How healthy we are has a direct correlation with how our communities are built and function. Our built

environment defines how we live. Our human-made spaces can either help or hinder our access to healthier lifestyles. Studies show that when citizens are provided opportunities for active transportation and recreation and are provided connections to green spaces, they are healthier and more active.

A range of professions and stakeholders in fields from public health to transportation and community planning are examining the role of park and outdoor services in shaping a range of health outcomes. Scientific research links health and wellness to those who participate in outdoor recreation. Research findings include:

- Living closer to a park or outdoor recreation area is associated with higher levels of use and physical activity and lower levels of Body Mass Index (BMI).
- The more parks that exist within a community, the more likely residents are to be physically active and the less likely they are to be overweight.
- Park and recreation areas with specific features and a wider range of features are more likely to attract visitors and more likely to be associated with increased physical activity.

- The aesthetics, maintenance and condition of parks and park features contribute to their use and the physical activity that occurs in these settings.
- Organized programming and supervision at parks and outdoor recreation areas is associated with increased visitation levels and with the physical activity that occurs in these spaces, particularly among youth.
- Spending time in parks, natural areas and open space is associated with favorable physiological and mental health outcomes.[4]

Because our built environment influences our lifestyles, addressing public health challenges has become the responsibility of many — from planners, to recreation professionals, to transportation decision makers, to builders.

Park and outdoor recreation services are once again being recognized as a central asset in combating societal health care issues.

The Urban Land Institute's Building Healthy Places Initiative is working with these interest groups to raise awareness of the connections between health and the built environment. ULI defines a healthy place within a built environment as one that is designed, built and programmed to support the physical, mental and social well-being of the people who live, work, learn and visit there. Healthy places offer healthy and affordable housing options, and a variety of safe, comfortable and convenient transportation choices; provide access to healthy foods, the natural environment and other amenities that allow people to reach their full potential; are designed thoughtfully, with an eye to making the healthy choice the easy choice, and they are built using health-promoting materials; and address unique community issues with innovative and sustainable solutions.[14]

The potential to re-energize park and outdoor recreation services and improve their contribution to human health is considerable, but the challenges are also considerable. Working in cooperation with allied partners like hospitals, community health foundations and insurers, park and outdoor recreation providers should develop coordinated and measurable health improvement

Although very recent statistics show a decline in the childhood obesity rate, the number of overweight and obese citizens remains alarming. In Pennsylvania, the percentage of adults meeting criteria as overweight or obese has increased steadily over the past decade. In 2011, 65 percent of Pennsylvania adults met criteria as overweight or obese, compared with 60 percent in 2001.

Particularly disturbing is the percentage of overweight children. Children today for the first time may not have a lifespan longer than their parents. For children in grades K to 6, 36 percent were overweight or obese in 2011, as well as 34 percent of children in grades 7 to 12 (Figure 10).

Obese and overweight people are at increased risk of developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer. Overweight and obese children are also at higher risk for health problems, including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, asthma, joint problems, gallstones and some forms of cancer. They are also at higher risk of developing these problems in adulthood.

strategies and action steps. Efforts should strive to enhance the public's access or proximity to park and outdoor recreation services; maintain or improve the quality and condition of low-cost outdoor recreation facilities; increase the number of organized programs and active features within existing park settings; and enlist partners to share in the provision and promotion of healthy outdoor recreation activities.

CHALLENGE

Chronic diseases and conditions have become epidemic.

Health issues like obesity, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, stress and mental illnesses are common and costly. As a nation, 75 percent of our health care spending is on people with chronic diseases.

Because these conditions and diseases are largely preventable, changing certain risk behaviors like tobacco use, poor nutrition and the lack of physical exercise can develop a healthier society.

Overall, less than half (49 percent) of Pennsylvania adults participate in the 150 minutes of physical activity each week recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Although lower than the U.S. figure of 52 percent, the difference between U.S. and Pennsylvania rates by age is not statistically significant.

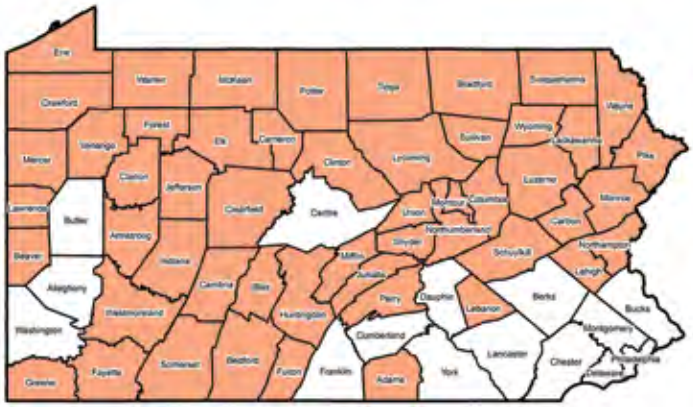


Figure 10: Percent of School Students who are Overweight/Obese 2008-11

Statewide Average = 33.4% with BMI > 85th percentile

At or below statewide average

Above statewide average

Source: Center for Rural PA

Not only are obesity and overweight conditions creating a crisis of health, but they also are having a financial impact. Medical charges for those who are obese are $1,429 higher per year than their normal weight counterparts.

Correcting chronic conditions is a slow and complex issue that can take decades. Although not a single magic bullet, increased recreational activity can be a vital component to reversing these alarming trends.

CHALLENGE

Connecting health and recreation providers is still a challenge.

Although coordinated linkages between the health care community and outdoor recreation providers are growing, much work needs to be done to return to the days when outdoor recreation was intrinsically linked to our health and well-being.

While current evidence suggests a correlation between time spent outdoors and health, there is a need to develop additional evidence and data on the broad health impacts of outdoor recreation services and how these impacts translate to economic savings in the health sector.

The health care community's primary focus has been on treatment, not prevention. Health care providers — particularly insurance companies — are beginning to recognize the cost savings possible through prevention strategies such as healthy outdoor recreation and are directly supporting programs and initiatives (see case studies) that promote these opportunities.

Recreation providers also may not always make the connection between the resources they maintain and the benefits recreating in the outdoors have to the people in their communities. When surveyed, recreation providers did not perceive health as important as other community-wide benefits, not even ranking in the top five of benefit choices. When figuring out where priority investments should be made, "active" recreation choices like building more pedestrian and cycling paths between places of work, parks, schools and shopping areas ranked much lower than maintaining existing infrastructure.

More than 75 percent of Pennsylvanians believe that parks, trails and open space are an essential component of our health care system.

Pennsylvania's citizens, on the other hand, do make the direct correlation between outdoor recreation and their health. More than three-quarters agreed or strongly agreed that "parks, trails and open space are

an essential component of our health care system." This was the highest rated item from the attitudinal questions asked in the resident survey. Of the benefits of outdoor recreation services rated by residents, improving physical health and fitness and reducing stress and improving mental health were among the top three.

Individuals seem to recognize that outdoor recreation is beneficial to their physical and mental well-being, and they value their ability to access active outdoor recreation resources. Health care providers, as they begin to recognize this, may be the link that is needed between individuals who enjoy the benefits of outdoor activity and the recreation providers who ensure its accessibility in our communities.

Recognizing this connection is one thing; evaluating the worth of park and outdoor recreation initiatives to enhance health is another matter entirely. Efforts must be undertaken to determine what outdoor recreation strategies and action steps are most effective in helping prevent chronic diseases.

CHALLENGE

There is still a growing disconnect between people and the natural environment.

The 2009 outdoor recreation plan addressed this challenge head on. Although a few lasting programs have developed across the state as the result of that plan's recommendations, many efforts struggled due to cutbacks in schools and budgets. The trends in our society that are helping to cause this disconnect are continuing: increased digital presence in our lives, less unstructured play time for kids, growing urbanization and increased obligations in other parts of our lives. Reconnecting citizens to nature continues to be a focus of the 2014 plan.

A national movement to address children's disconnect with nature was spawned by the book *Last Child in the Woods.*[15] Author Richard Louv and many others since then, have suggested that children without a connection to the outdoors will be less inclined as adults to appreciate the values our natural resources provide humanity, and therefore would be less likely to

advocate for their protection. The next generation of environmental stewards must build a young appreciation for our flora and fauna or our natural world will greatly suffer.

Park and recreation directors across the state recognize this and are making strides to address it. Of all recreation providers, recreation and park directors were most likely to cite "addressing the lack of youth engagement in outdoor recreation" as a significant or major challenge.

About 77 percent of recreation directors indicated that their organization offered outdoor programs that connect children with nature. They also place the highest value on those facilities, like playgrounds, that are most likely to attract children and families.

As expected, having a park close by is likely to help make outdoor connections, particularly when the space is "green," with trees and natural play areas. Park proximity is associated with higher levels of park use and physical activity among a variety of populations, particularly among youth. A national survey of U.S. adults found that those who perceived that park facilities were accessible to them were almost twice as likely to meet recommended physical activity levels as those who did not perceive parks as being accessible.[16]

Citizens have not lost the desire to spend more time outdoors, which offers promise. The online survey found that 77 percent of respondents would like to become more involved in outdoor recreation activities in the

future. In addition, 63 percent of residents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that communities should do more to reconnect citizens to the riverfront, particularly those responding from urban areas, implying interest in river or waterside activities. And 69 percent indicated they would be more likely to use a trail if it was within easy walking distance.

CHALLENGE

Pennsylvania's population is aging and becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.

Pennsylvania is an aging state, with the number of citizens over 65 projected to grow to 23 percent of the state's population by 2030. Older citizens have more disabling health conditions, many of which can be improved by physical activity.

If parks are to help address health concerns of aging Pennsylvanians, the facilities and programming must match the need, such as accessible trails, fitness stations and walking programs. Many of our local parks are designed for children, with recreation services geared toward children. The trend will likely continue, with playgrounds ranking as the highest priority for future investment with providers. Although it is critically important to engage young people in outdoor recreation opportunities, older Pennsylvanians are an increasingly significant constituency, and programs and facilities will need to serve their needs.

The City of Allentown's parks and recreation department created the LifeTrail Club in 2011 for its citizens over the age of 55. Members of the club, which now total more than 400, use fitness stations on a city park trail to record their progress. Health seminars throughout the year also help members stay on task with their outdoor fitness goals.

Pennsylvania is also becoming more diverse. In 2000, the U.S. Census Bureau found that 16 percent of Pennsylvania residents belonged to a minority group; in 2010, the percentage had grown to 20 percent and is expected to grow over the next two decades. Tailoring programming and facilities to draw minorities into the outdoors can help to increase physical activity.

For instance, at Lehigh Gap Nature Center in Slatington, Lehigh County, Latino youth are trained and paid to lead bilingual environmental education programs and nature walks for families in Allentown's parks and nearby natural areas, including Jacobsburg Environmental Education Center. The connection with Jacobsburg led to the formation of the Conservation Leadership Academy in 2014. With a grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection and support from Jacobsburg and Moravian College, the Academy hosted 10 urban youth from Allentown in a weeklong intensive day camp that will hopefully become an annual event to develop interest in conservation in the Latino community.

More research is needed on the outdoor facility, landscape and programming needs of racially and ethnically diverse audiences in order to increase their participation in outdoor recreation.

CHALLENGE

The built environment in many communities discourages healthy outdoor behaviors.

While the state is replete with outdoor recreation venues, many Pennsylvanians are restricted to what they can access. Citizens from all socioeconomic groups must be able to get to facilities safely and affordably in both urban and rural areas.

Ideally, citizens should have access to parks, trails and open spaces simply by walking out their door or hopping on their bikes. Many citizens are restricted by the sprawling nature of Pennsylvania's development. For some, the only accessible open space is their backyard.

Designated Walk Friendly Communities

- Philadelphia – Silver
- Indiana – Bronze

Source: Walk Friendly Communities

Park capacity — the number of parks and/or community landmass devoted to parks and open space — is also associated with physical activity. For example, a study in Portland, Oregon found that communities with more recreation facilities and green space had higher levels of walking than those communities with less capacity.[17] Another Oregon analysis found that the prevalence of hiking and urban trails was associated with higher proportions of physically active adults. Counties where people were more engaged in non-motorized trail-related activities, road and street activities (e.g., walking, jogging, biking) and other outdoor sports were more likely to have higher overall proportions of physical activity.[18]

In Pennsylvania, encouraging the development of walkable and bikeable communities is important to residents, as is creating attractive streetscapes that support walking. The majority of citizens believe it is important that greenways and trails connect neighborhoods with schools, shopping areas, parks and open spaces. They also think on-road bike lanes should be increased, ranking second on the list of recreation area and facility needs.

Building communities that encourage healthy behaviors demands the cooperative efforts of planners, local governments, transportation officials, community partners, schools and others. Having more than 2,500 municipalities in Pennsylvania often creates fragmentation: sidewalks end abruptly and bike lanes fade away at municipal lines due to differing policies and practices. In the Susquehanna Greenway along the Susquehanna River, protecting a landscape and providing access requires working with more than 20 counties and over 150 municipalities with varying levels of zoning and development requirements. Because planning and maintaining such projects is complex and often requires much effort, it can be challenging to succeed.

OPPORTUNITY

Pennsylvania's aging population is more active and is looking to the outdoors as a venue.

The activity rate among older Pennsylvanians is rising, so how are communities addressing the recreation demands of this growing demographic?

Although the PA State Health Assessment found that less than half of Pennsylvania's adults participate in the CDC-recommended 150 minutes of physical activity each week, those aged 55 to 65 exceed the national average.[19] Though the lower rates of activity for other age groups are concerning, the higher rate among Pennsylvania's older residents is an opportunity.

Seventy-five percent of respondents to the resident survey — the average age of whom was 59 — cited walking as an outdoor recreation activity they participate in, and the top four activities with highest frequency of participation were: walking on local streets/sidewalks, walking with a dog, walking on trails/paths and jogging.

Structured programs specifically designed for seniors can contribute to visitation levels within parks. Parks that have an active programming element are shown to have higher levels of physical activity. For example, a study of Los Angeles city parks found that parks with a greater number of supervised activities and programs had higher visitation levels. Having events at the park was the strongest correlate of use and community-level physical activity.[20]

Designated Bike Status Communities

- Philadelphia – Silver
- Franklin – Bronze
- Pittsburgh – Bronze
- State College – Bronze
- York – Bronze

Source: League of American Bicyclists

Connecting parks and trails to senior centers, or incorporating outdoor recreation facilities and programs within a center's grounds, can provide an easy outlet for activity without the need to bus residents to remote locations. In 2013, DCNR invested $7.4 million in Benjamin Rush State Park, a previously undeveloped state park outside of Philadelphia, to construct trails and other amenities, which connect directly with the Delaware Valley Veterans Home.

The 15.5-mile Lebanon Valley Rail Trail runs from the Lebanon County/Lancaster County line north to the City of Lebanon. When the trail was being developed from Mt. Gretna to Cornwall Borough, the Lebanon Valley Rails-to-Trails organization formed a key partnership with the Cornwall Manor Retirement Community, located adjacent to the trail. Today, Cornwall Manor features the trail in its advertisements, and pathways have been constructed to link its campus with the rail trail. The residents use the rail trail regularly to socialize, go birding and get exercise.

• OPPORTUNITY

There is a new focus on wellness in the provision of health care to contain costs and comply with federal law.

The Affordable Care Act has spurred a new interest in containing health care costs and encouraging wellness. The ACA contains provisions that encourage health and wellness as part of the overall health care delivery system in the U.S., including:

- Incentives for employer wellness programs, which are intended to lower the overall cost of health care benefits for employers by encouraging employees to improve and maintain their health. The increasing prevalence of employer wellness programs may provide opportunities for private businesses to seek out partnership opportunities to encourage healthful outdoor recreation opportunities in their communities.
- Community Health Needs Assessments are required to be submitted every three years by 501(c)(3) hospitals to maintain their tax-exempt status. Each hospital must adopt an implementation strategy to meet the community health needs identified, and they must submit a description of how the organization is addressing the health care needs of the community every year. This requirement of hospitals is spurring unlikely partnerships in many communities and may present opportunities for these communities to work together to improve upon the provision of outdoor recreation as a way to address health needs.

PennDOT is in the process of developing a Long-Range Transportation Plan to inform agency decisions and assess whether plan policies — like bike/ped — and investments are achieving their desired impact. The plan will include ways to integrate active transportation, including bicycle and pedestrian design principles, into the transportation project development process.

OPPORTUNITY

More opportunities exist for coordination of planning efforts to address health concerns.

Responding effectively to Pennsylvania's obesity and chronic disease crisis involves the work of several state agencies, health care providers, community groups and private businesses. Coordination among these agencies and organizations on planning and implementing long-range plans for addressing this crisis should provide a venue for outdoor recreation advocates to be considered as part of the solution. The partnership between DCNR and the PA Department of Health as it moves forward with the Pennsylvania State Health Improvement Plan is one such opportunity.

Similarly, in partnership with DCNR and other public and private entities, the PA Department of Health is working on a grant through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that spans four health areas (School Health; Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity; Diabetes Prevention and Control; and Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention) to address chronic disease risk factors and ultimately prevent and reduce obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Currently, the partners are working with 15 targeted school districts to create programs that encourage physical activity in their communities, with a focus on walking, informational outreach and designing of streets and communities for physical activity.

The PA On Track website provides opportunities for the public to engage in the planning process and provide feedback.

In addition, the many successful partnerships that have recently formed at the local, state and national levels to promote the link between outdoor recreation and health and wellness are a testament to a growing movement in this direction. At the national level, these include the National Environmental Education Foundation's Children and Nature Initiative: Rx for Outdoor Activity and the National Park Service's Healthy Parks Healthy People program.

At the state level, the successful Get Outdoors PA program added the PA Department of Health to its list of flagship partners in 2014 to expand the program's health connections and messages. Get Outdoors PA provides a centralized venue to promote guided outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, canoeing and biking, to engage new audiences and to create meaningful and lasting connections between Pennsylvania's citizens and its natural resources.

At the local level, such programs as Lighten up Lancaster involve a coalition of concerned individuals representing all facets of the community who work together to make policy, system and environmental changes to help increase the number of people who are a healthy weight.

One promising effort to promote park use — and ultimately improved physical activity and health outcomes — is to enlist the medical community to prescribe parks as a means to ameliorate chronic health conditions and risk markers. While these programs have been warmly received within the park and outdoor recreation industry, their long-term effects upon various health outcomes are unknown.

• OPPORTUNITY

The built environment has a strong influence on community health, in both positive and negative ways.

Organizations and communities are beginning to recognize and advocate for linking health and wellness to the way our buildings and communities function through the built environment.

Many walkable/bikeable communities incorporate common areas where people can have community gardens and open spaces for unstructured play. Some cities, like Pittsburgh, have developed pedestrian/biking thoroughfares that connect portions of the city. Others are creating walking groups to connect people using technology.

In 2013 and 2014, Frances Slocum State Park partnered with the local public bus transportation, which offered a special route to the park during the summer months. More than 200 people took advantage of the route the first year, growing to 380 during the summer of 2014.

At the state level, transportation funding reflects recognition that there is a need to provide more opportunities for active transportation. Under Act 89 of 2013, Pennsylvania's comprehensive transportation funding plan, two new dedicated multimodal funds were created, which commit at least $2 million a year to pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

In its largest gathering in its 18-year history, the national 2014 Pro Walk/Pro Bike/Pro Place conference was held in Pittsburgh, chosen as a living demonstration of an urban area transforming its city spaces and transportation networks. National experts presented scores of successful case studies of how public and private sectors, driven by advocacy, political leadership and philanthropy are creating great public spaces and transportation networks that serve the citizens and foster change.

Innovative partnerships can expand the recreation horizon for many people. Collectively, the evidence suggests the closer people live to parks, the more parks that are available, the more things there are to do in parks, and the more well-maintained parks are, the more likely they are to be used and the more physical activity that occurs in these spaces. However, the health value of park and outdoor recreation services extend beyond their associations with physical activity and weight status. Park and outdoor recreation areas and experiences can contribute to psychological or mental health outcomes as well.

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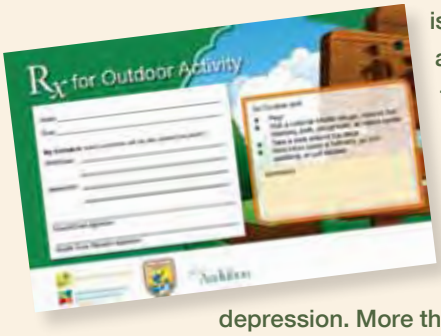
Parks Prescription Programs

In a perfect marriage between recreation and the medical community, parks prescription programs are taking hold in several cities across the country. In one such example, Dr. Robert Zarr kickstarted a program in 2013 in the nation's capital to provide a healthy, safe and affordable treatment option that is easily accessible to families in the D.C. area. Prescribing parks is a very low risk, affordable option for treatment of chronic diseases, including diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure and mental illnesses such as depression. More than 350 parks have been mapped, categorized by safety, cleanliness and activity level and compiled into a database that is linked to physicians' electronic medical records. Since inception, doctors have written more than 400 parks "prescriptions."



The prescriptions specifically address where and when a child will play outside for that particular week, which helps the child, as well as the family, to have a specific treatment plan and goal for the week. The database of park options provides peace of mind in finding a safe and accessible park, reducing the anxiety level some citizens may have in an urban setting. The program also hopes to instill a sense of value for the environment so that these children can become the next generation of environmental stewards.

This program was conceived with the help of the National Park Service and volunteers from the School of Public Health at George Washington University, as well as with support from park rangers and physicians. Funding from the National Recreation and Park Association, National Environmental Education Foundation and the American Academy of Pediatrics made this program possible.

Get Your Tail on the Trail

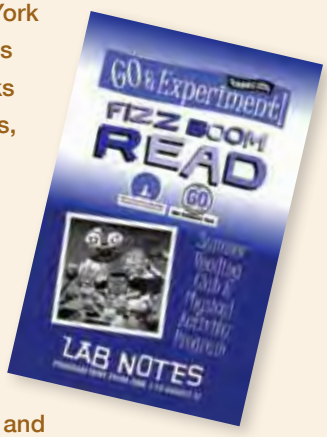
"Build a healthier community one mile at a time" is the goal of a new partnership between St. Luke's University Health Network and the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. "Get Your Tail on the Trail" incentivizes people for traveling the 165 miles that make up the D & L Trail in northeastern Pennsylvania via foot or bicycle or a combination of the two. The free program doles out rewards at key milestones. Participants log their mileage through the "Trail Tracker," receive prizes as they complete their goals and can even receive additional prizes for doubling or tripling the 165-mile goal. In addition, the partnership has sponsored many special events throughout the six-month program for participants, which count towards the mileage goal. These special events include 5Ks to benefit local charitable groups, a celebration at the half-way mark of the program and special sponsored events provided by L.L. Bean, such as paddleboarding and a "Kayak Discovery Course." During the first year of the program, which launched in the spring of 2013, 2,500 participants logged a total of 255,000 miles. During the Winter Mini-Challenge in 2014, 580 participants tracked 44,000 miles.

Everybody Walk Across PA

Not everyone gets to travel across northern Pennsylvania by car on the 400-mile iconic PA Route 6, so why not do it by foot? The Route 6 Alliance recently partnered with Penn State Extension as part of its "Road to Health" initiative to create a program called "Everybody Walk Across PA." For two months in the spring of 2014, Pennsylvanians were encouraged to take a virtual walk along Route 6. Participants registered in teams of five, and each team member was to exercise and report at least 10 miles per week. Participation rates were three times greater than expected during the first eight-week session, with over 250 teams committed to walk at least 50 miles a week. Participants logged over 107,000 miles. Everybody Walk Across PA provided participants with a team support network as well as useful information for a healthy lifestyle and a history lesson along the 400-mile journey. Respondents to a post-walk survey indicated that 94 percent increased their physical activity, and 42 percent increased their vegetable and fruit intake.

Get Outdoors (GO!) York

Who doesn't love a scavenger hunt? Banking on kids' love of searching for things, the Healthy York County Coalition launched "Get Outdoors and Experiment" within 26 parks and trails in York County. Thirty scientific terms were hidden throughout parks and trails on wooden markers, and hints to the location of markers were found in the "Go and Experiment" Lab Notebook, downloaded from the Go York website. The terms related to scientific disciplines including chemistry, biology, medicine and physics. Each term had a unique etching alongside it, and participants who collected at least three etchings received a prize and were entered to win one of three grand prizes. The more etchings found (i.e. parks visited), the more chances to win a grand prize. Free activities in the parks were held during the scavenger hunt to encourage participation in the program.



"Outdoor Berks" Phone App

"Outdoor Berks" is a phone app developed by Reading Health System's Community Health Department, with funding assistance provided by The Friends of Reading Hospital. The app can be used to search by location or amenity through 170 parks and trails located throughout Berks County, and users can bookmark favorite parks as well. The app is free to download and can be used on both Apple and Android devices. It enables residents and visitors to easily sift through and discover the many beautiful and free outdoor amenities that Berks County has to offer.

See Appendix I for more case studies.

1 Reconnect people to the outdoors through recreation opportunities and experiences.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Celebrate Get Outdoors PA annually with special Get Outdoors Days hosted by regional community partners that offer instructional programs for various outdoor recreation activities.

b. Provide templates to state and local parks agencies for them to list amenities, resources and educational materials so schools and youth-based organizations can more easily incorporate local outdoor activities into curricula.

c. Use the PA Department of Health's 15 pilot school districts to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive school physical activity programs, and identify opportunities to connect youth to the outdoors through places for physical activity.

d. Provide a best-practices forum to encourage local efforts to use technology to design and develop programs that link people to the outdoors.

e. Identify partner organizations to spearhead at least five programs that encourage participation in outdoor recreation opportunities by diverse populations with guidance from the Governor's advisory commissions on African American, Asian American and Latino affairs.

2 Continue to strengthen connections between outdoor recreation and health in communities for people of all ages and abilities.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Fund and support pilot programs with innovative partnerships that build a health and wellness connection with outdoor recreation programming, emphasizing active recreation, diverse populations and volunteer recruitment and training.

b. Link state grant program criteria to community projects designed to strengthen the health and outdoor recreation connection.

c. Develop educational materials and best practices to highlight and encourage local successes in linking outdoor recreation and health for planning, recreation, community and health care leaders.

d. Identify and work with five pilot communities, representing specific population groups, to develop and distribute materials that highlight available outdoor amenities and correlating fitness benefits.

3 Examine the built environment and encourage local communities to promote healthful transportation alternatives.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Continue to align PennDOT and DCNR trail development, including bicycle and pedestrian trail coordination and grant making.

b. Develop land use planning guidelines and best practices to integrate outdoor and green infrastructure initiatives within multi-municipal comprehensive plans and/or greenway and open space plans.

c. Provide guidelines and technical assistance to help communities conduct walkability and bikeability assessments and apply for national recognition as bicycle- and/or walk-friendly communities.

d. Provide technical assistance to communities to consider the addition of bicycle lanes, where appropriate, during the planning process for transportation projects.

e. Provide technical assistance to help communities and school districts take advantage of multimodal and transportation alternative funding opportunities in PennDOT, DCED and the Commonwealth Financing Authority to address challenges in the built environment.

4 Enhance and promote healthful outdoor recreation through strategic partnerships with the health care community.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Develop Pennsylvania-specific park/trail "prescription" programs to encourage physical activity in the outdoors in cooperation with health care providers, insurance companies, health foundations, economic development organizations, local government associations and social service providers.

b. Encourage partnerships between recreation and planning professionals and the health care community to identify private funding opportunities, cooperate in community wellness efforts and implement community health assessment strategies.

c. Convene statewide and regional summits that bring together health care and parks and recreation professionals to explore ways to improve physical activity through outdoor recreation.

PRIORITY • LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION

enhancing close-to-home outdoor recreation

KEY THEMES	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
• Park diversity • Funding • Repositioning • Partnerships	• Sufficient and stable funding sources • Aging infrastructure and facility maintenance • Positioning parks and programs as essential public services • Non-traditional partners	• New funding sources to support local parks • Sharing best practices • New technologies for information sharing • Intergovernmental cooperation

Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation plans have not comprehensively addressed local parks since 1980, when a priority called for "more recreation facilities and programs near or where people live." With issues like the recession, aging infrastructure and a heavy emphasis over the last decade on greenways and trails, members of the Technical Advisory Committee requested a focus on local parks in the 2014 plan to address the facilities residents use the most.

For most Pennsylvanians, local parks serve as the primary venues for their outdoor recreation pursuits. From small neighborhood pocket parks to larger community or county-level recreation areas, these locations are tapped for their close-to-home benefits.

While the number and size may differ, local parks afford communities the opportunity to provide quality recreation experiences to residents of all ages by offering recreation programs and services that are consistent with citizens' needs and interests and add to their health, sense of well-being and sense of community. Local parks deliver opportunities for play and physical activities and promote mental and spiritual well-being and environmental stewardship. Local parks often provide a sense of place and a gathering space, and are the heart of a community.

Local parks are also the most popular areas for recreation. Ninety-one percent of Pennsylvanians who participate in outdoor recreation report visiting a local or county park within the past year.

Pennsylvanians spend more time at their local and county facilities than all other public and private outdoor recreation facilities combined.

Fortunately, the majority of Pennsylvanians have access to a local park. The state's first comprehensive statewide local parks data layer, developed by DCNR in 2012, mapped a total of 5,600 local parks, encompassing

Figure 11: Municipalities With and Without Local Parkland, 2013

☐ *Municipalities without local parks (n=887)*
■ *Municipalities with local parks (n=1,675)*

Source: Center for Rural PA

171,400 acres. Using this GIS layer, DCNR teamed up with the Center for Rural Pennsylvania for the first-ever analysis of how many Pennsylvanians are served by a local park, where Pennsylvania's local parks are located, which municipalities are without local parks, and how much local funding is spent on park facilities and recreation services.[21]

The analysis showed the majority of Pennsylvania's municipalities (65 percent) have one or more local parks. About 91 percent of Pennsylvanians live in a municipality with a local park. Among urban residents, that number climbs to 98 percent.

While there are an abundance of parks throughout the state, one-third of municipalities do not have a local park (Figure 11). Most of the communities without local parks are located in the more rural areas of the state, particularly in the northcentral region, which presumably offers outdoor recreation through the large swaths of public lands there. In addition, the data analysis revealed more than 2,200 school sites that may serve as the local park for rural municipalities. Further research is needed to evaluate how and if the local recreation needs are being met in rural Pennsylvania and the 10 percent of urban municipalities that may not have publicly owned local parkland.

Local parks are diverse. Slightly more than one-third of Pennsylvania's municipalities have fewer than 10 acres of parkland; 35 percent have 10 to 49 acres of parkland; and 30 percent have 50 or more acres of parkland (Figure 12). The size of parks also varies from small pocket parks of less than one acre to county parks encompassing thousands of acres, and every size in between. Half of all local parkland in Pennsylvania is located within 70 municipalities — the state's densely populated urban areas. The majority of these larger urban municipalities have an average of six local parks.

Local spending on parks and recreation is equally as diverse and challenging to analyze. Based on the best available data through the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, from 2008-2012 municipalities spent about $457 million on recreation, or $36 per capita. The median recreation expenditure per municipality was $13,627. While municipalities spend an average of 3 percent of their total expenditures on recreation, two-thirds either had no recreation expenditures or spent less than $25,000. Municipal recreation spending is closely correlated to population; the larger the municipal population, the higher the spending. Of concern, this data shows that from 2003-2012, municipal recreation spending declined an average of 12 percent. This supports expressed concerns about the financial challenges involved in the provision of local park and recreation services.

Recent focus on local parks and recreation began in earnest in 2010 when 100 professionals from across Pennsylvania convened for a leadership summit in Philadelphia to develop priorities and recommendations for recreation in Pennsylvania. Highlights included the need for a statewide marketing campaign, additional documentation on local recreation

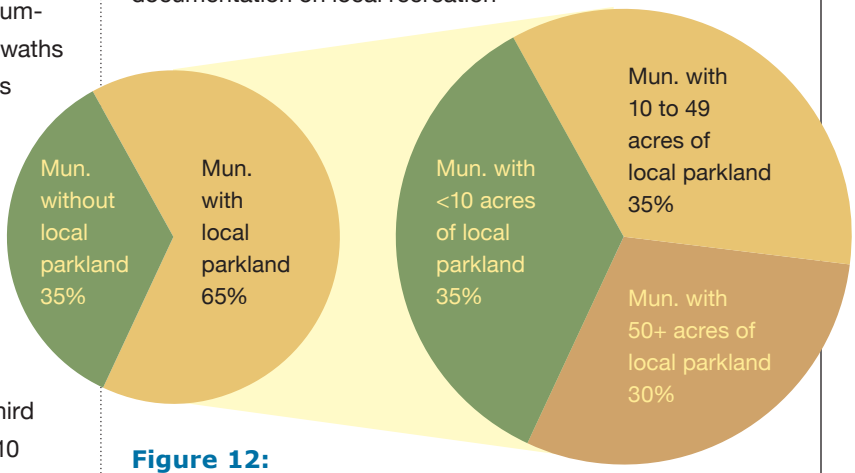


Figure 12: Municipalities by Acres of Local Parkland, 2013

Source: Center for Rural PA

and park benefits, more promising practices on repositioning services, and additional focused work on urban parks, green parks and connecting with the health community.

Since that summit, strengthening urban parks and recreation systems has emerged as a top statewide priority. Pennsylvania has 53 cities and 30 boroughs with populations greater than 10,000. According to the Pennsylvania State Data Center, four out of five citizens in Pennsylvania live in urban areas. The urban population is 10.6 million, comprising 84 percent of the commonwealth's citizenry. These data make the case for a priority focus.

In 2012, DCNR, the PA Recreation and Park Society and the PA Municipal League launched the Urban Recreation Initiative, with a goal of making urban areas in Pennsylvania healthier, more livable and economically competitive through the revitalization and development of parks, green space and recreation opportunities.

As part of the initiative, six focus groups were conducted in 2012 to help develop an action plan. The groups identified maintenance as the chief problem facing urban systems. Programming and services were cited as being essential to increased park use, encouraging active living, connecting people to nature and promoting social equity. The initiative has been formalized into the creation of the PA Urban Park and Recreation Alliance, and an action plan is being implemented.

In 2014, as a research element to this plan, a more comprehensive provider survey was undertaken to assess the needs, priorities and challenges of Pennsylvania elected officials, appointed officials and park and recreation directors, who help to provide outdoor recreation to the public. One hundred thirty recreation and park directors with more established and comprehensive systems completed the survey. The majority response, however, was from more than 900 elected and appointed officials from predominantly rural, small government with limited facility, staffing and budgetary capacity. This feedback helped to provide more input on the needs of rural Pennsylvania municipalities.

Playgrounds are a top priority for future investment among recreation providers.

The provider survey found that playgrounds are a top priority for future investment among recreation providers, with nearly 60 percent giving them a high priority rating. Neighborhood parks, community or

regional parks, team sport facilities and community or regional trails rounded out the top facilities for future investment. On the other hand, citizens in the online survey ranked community or regional trail systems as their priority investment facility (73 percent), followed by opportunities for water-based recreation and community or regional parks. Respondents to the resident survey thought that Pennsylvania needs more on-road bike lanes, rental cabins, natural and wild areas, dog parks and bicycle paths. These varied opinions on facility needs reinforce the importance of more analysis of local recreation and park needs as part of county comprehensive plan updates.

Local parks and recreation offer a range of benefits to the citizens they serve, but those benefits vary in importance depending on the audience. When surveyed, the providers of parks and recreation services perceive the greatest benefits as "providing a safe place for children to play" and "making the community a more desirable place to live," while the users of those services — the citizens — view the health benefits of parks and recreation areas as their greatest benefit.

This apparent disconnect between the providers and users of parks and recreation services could have implications for statewide recreation objectives.

Representing diverse park systems and services, the recent urban and rural provider feedback and analysis collectively suggests that local park and recreation services have experienced considerable challenges related to their capacity to invest in parks and provide recreation programs to a changing population. Repositioning park and recreation services as essential community investments will be critical in advancing the work of recreation providers.

The National Recreation and Park Association recently launched an initiative that could help Pennsylvania's local park and recreation providers in the repositioning of public parks, recreation and conservation services as the gateways to healthy, prosperous and connected communities. Consideration should be given by local providers in using the three "pillars" developed by NRPA — conservation, health and wellness, and social equity — to demonstrate how local parks are an invaluable public resource and worthy investment.

CHALLENGE

Sufficient and stable funding sources are scarce for existing and new recreation facilities and services.

For all of the health and societal benefits parks and recreation services provide to citizens, they only command a small fraction of local governments' budgets. Parks and recreational expenditures comprise, on average, about three percent of the total municipal expenditures.

Maintaining existing park and recreation areas is overwhelmingly the biggest challenge for recreation providers.

In the 2014 Pennsylvania provider survey, 24 percent of respondents indicated their tax-supported funding for operational expenses has declined; 29 percent said funding for capital projects has declined. Nearly two-thirds reported level funding for operations over the past three years.

More than three-quarters of local providers perceive significant challenges in securing alternative, non-traditional revenue sources. The majority believes that retaining the funds allocated for parks and recreation will be a major challenge for the future.

Federal support of local parks through grant programs is an important way to leverage local park investments. Funding from federal government programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program has declined sharply in the past 20 years. The LWCF is currently awarding funding at a level around one-tenth of its original rate. UPARR funding had declined severely since 1984 and was disbanded in 2002. State funding from some sources such as Growing Greener II has ended.

Layoffs, deferred maintenance, increased user fees, reduced services and fewer grant opportunities have been common themes over the past few years of budget austerity. Because of the diversity of Pennsylvania's park systems, there is no magic formula for keeping parks open and thriving.

CHALLENGE

Aging infrastructure and facility maintenance consume most of the financial resources of park and recreation departments.

Many pools and playgrounds built decades ago are deteriorating. Playfields and trails need constant attention and upkeep. Citizens are clamoring for more trails and connectivity, and newer facilities are needed to meet changing audiences and interests. Local park administrators are faced with the constant challenge of fixing what they have and managing changing needs and preferences. Based on the local provider survey, the recession has been particularly hard on capital funding, and without local capital funds, it is difficult to secure the required match for state funding sources.

Municipalities spend an average of just 3 percent of their total expenditures on recreation.

Maintaining existing park and recreation areas is overwhelmingly the biggest challenge for recreation providers. Citizens also believe the maintenance of facilities should be the top priority of their local recreation providers, as they did in the 2009 resident survey, although with higher percentages in the 2014 survey.

Much of Pennsylvania's local park system, particularly in rural areas, has been built and maintained by volunteer athletic associations and swim clubs and supported by service clubs like the Lions and Kiwanis. The challenge will be to maintain a stable volunteer base.

While park professionals combat maintenance issues, they also have to manage other challenges like staffing, mobilizing public support, responding to emerging or new types of outdoor recreation, and addressing the lack of youth engagement in outdoor recreation.

Some communities have turned to creative solutions to meet maintenance challenges and build new facilities. State College borough is using crowdfunding as a pilot to involve the public in decision making and raise funds to support park improvements. The concept has great potential to serve as a model alternative revenue source.

CHALLENGE

Park facilities and recreation programs are often not viewed as essential public services.

One of the biggest challenges of parks and recreation is being relevant to the general citizenry. To regain their community relevance, parks and recreation services must return to their historic foundation of health, conservation and social equity.

Elected officials are tasked with solving their community's most pressing problems, and funds are invested in these areas, often leaving parks and recreation services

short in times of fiscal distress. If parks are understood to be a response to these pressing problems, it is more likely that elected officials will prioritize the recreation investments needed for parks to thrive.

Building support for recreation and parks services requires leadership at the local level to educate both the public and its politically active members about the many community benefits of parks, greenways, trails and outdoor recreation. Among these benefits are the very real and measureable results of developing economic prosperity, enhancing environmental sustainability and alleviating social problems — the very same issues that public officials are elected to solve.

Park advocates must become adept at conveying the economic impact these resources and services have on all citizens, not just the ones who use them. Having a trained recreation professional can help with building support for recreation services. However, Pennsylvania has only 330 departments with paid professional park and recreation directors. While these departments serve at least half of Pennsylvania's population, more than 1,000 small, rural municipalities have limited capacity to advocate and garner support.

Making the case for parks and recreation facilities and programs requires a cohesive way to collect beneficial case studies and disseminate that information to decision makers. Parks and recreation professionals' time is dedicated to carrying out the core functions of their work, while documenting and heralding successes often goes uncaptured and unrecognized.

Public park and recreation amenities are a key element in the creation of desirable communities. They have a distinct value in the way they build community identity, cohesion and pride. Their presence creates a level of demand that raises property values and tax revenues. The challenge has always been associating a dollar value to park facilities and recreation programs. Because of the unique variables involved, it is complicated to perform a cost-benefit analysis on investments in local parks and recreation.

CHALLENGE

Building partnerships with non-traditional partners has benefits but can be challenging, risky and unconventional.

Pennsylvania's local recreation and park system has been built and supported by volunteers, traditional service clubs, and in many cases, strong partnerships with local school districts. But to be truly successful and sustainable, park systems must now reach beyond these traditional sources to create new public-private partnerships of lasting value.

When added to the daily to-do list of facility maintenance and program development and promotion, building partnerships can be a difficult task for recreation providers. There are few resources and little grassroots support available for park and recreation professionals or community leaders to identify potential partners and develop a meaningful proposal to work together for a common cause.

Among the general citizenry, 59 percent of respondents to the resident survey strongly believe the state needs to increase its permanent source of funding for parks and recreation, and municipalities should have a permanent source of funding from general tax revenues.

Several new funding streams are providing an infusion of cash into local recreation facilities. Act 13 of 2012 allocates a percentage of fees collected from unconventional gas wells to counties and municipalities impacted by the drilling partially for use on environmental programs. A portion of the fees collected are deposited into the Marcellus Legacy Fund, which is distributed to all counties for use on conservation and recreation initiatives and also provided to the Commonwealth Financing Authority for greenway, trail and park grants. In 2013, the CFA invested $16.4 million in greenways, trails, open space and parks in municipalities across the state.

The Transportation Act 89 of 2013 created two multimodal transportation funds. PennDOT now has a dedicated funding stream of at least $2 million a year for bicycle and pedestrian projects with an emphasis on safety, shared use, pedestrian connectivity and partnerships. The CFA also receives at least $40 million in multimodal funds.

A 2013 amendment to the state's open space law allows for up to 25 percent of open space taxes to be used to develop, improve, design, engineer and maintain open space. This new flexibility enables municipalities with well-established open space protection programs to enhance their protected lands with trails and other recreational facilities.

Additional funding flexibility also is available to municipalities with the September 2014 passage of an amendment to the Municipal Planning Code that allows municipalities to use a portion of the fees collected from developers to maintain existing parks instead of solely building new facilities.

Seeking out non-traditional partnerships will take time to forge a cohesive and meaningful relationship and identify each other's strengths and roles in the partnership.

Legal roadblocks and political implications must be considered when forming partnerships. Exacerbating this issue is the relatively high turnover rates of local community leaders. Partnerships created by one administration may not last through the next. Creating partnerships is a constant process, requiring considerable time and effort from what is often an already overwhelmed and underfunded staff.

Solid waste and water authorities, multi-cultural organizations, utility companies, health care organizations, tourism promotion agencies and land conservancies are examples of new partners tapped by local park and recreation agencies.

• OPPORTUNITY

New funding sources can expand local park facilities and programs.

Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly support local and state funding for local parks and recreation services. About 70 percent of those polled in the Pennsylvania online survey agree/strongly agree that providing outdoor recreation services is a core role of both state and local government.

OPPORTUNITY

Sharing best practices can help to better plan, maintain, program and support local recreation.

Hundreds of examples — both in and out of state — point to innovative ideas and programs that are positively impacting the health of residents, improving access to clean rivers, connecting children to nature and providing critical close-to-home services. Linkages are being made between local parks and other existing recreation assets, like incorporating parks into a water trail. Abandoned mine lands are being converted to off-road vehicle parks, and former waterfront industrial sites are being reborn as city recreational gems.

All of these efforts take courage and cooperation, but also start with one idea. Effectively sharing best practices may be the first step to getting these innovative ideas off the ground. With the broadening availability of technology, it has become easier to share information among diverse community groups and potential partners.

Although there is no "one size fits all" approach to planning, maintaining and programming park facilities — which can make technical assistance on a broad scale quite challenging — there is still benefit to be gained from sharing specific ideas and techniques. Lacking in this process is a central and well-known resource to collect and share these best practices as well as funding to provide more localized and specific technical assistance.

By creating blogs and sharing knowledge through websites and desktop webinars, local providers can conveniently learn about design practices that result in less maintenance, how to create programs that appeal to diverse audiences or how to develop a "park prescription" program in partnership with the local health community.

OPPORTUNITY

New technologies can help to educate about local recreation services and their benefits.

Parks need to attract new audiences to maintain relevancy. New technologies can improve data collection, build constituencies and inform citizens of the recreation opportunities that surround them.

As noted in surveys, many people want to be more active, but could use help in finding out what there is to do and where to go for quality outdoor recreation experiences. Local park and recreation providers should do more to connect with Pennsylvanians through online content and social media, says 58 percent of Pennsylvanians. When asked to cite their top methods for planning where to go for outdoor recreation, more than half of the respondents list the Internet and a quarter say social media, email and smart phone apps.

Technology has greatly improved our access to information over the last five years. Websites like *ExplorePATrails.com* make use of interactive maps, user feedback, directions and photos to draw people into trail locations. Mobile applications and websites tailored for smart phones provide fingertip access to recreation information, and more people are turning to this technology to find their information.

Technology can also build excitement for local recreation services and help people to connect with the natural resources. Contests that promote visitation with check-ins via smart phones or websites are growing in popularity and can benefit both citizens and providers. In the case of the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, a contest among local parks encouraged visitors to vote for their favorite by scanning a QR code. The park with the most votes received a cash prize.

While many people may know the location of their local parks, the newly developed statewide map of local parks will help expand their knowledge of what's around them. Placing the map online and in a mobile application will provide the first-ever interactive map of Pennsylvania's local parks. Coupled with the already existing interactive maps and mobile apps for Pennsylvania state parks and forests, the addition of this local map layer will be a powerful information tool for both the recreation providers and the citizens looking for recreation opportunities.

• OPPORTUNITY

Partnerships and intergovernmental cooperation can expand recreational capacity.

Perhaps Pennsylvania's 2,562 individual municipalities can't all be expected to provide park and recreation services to their citizens; however, citizens should not be denied the right to access opportunities for outdoor recreation close to home.

Pennsylvanians recognize that local government can't do it all, particularly the smaller ones. About 60 percent of Pennsylvanians believe that municipalities should join forces to provide parks and recreation services to their citizens.

Intermunicipal cooperation for parks and recreation services is not a new concept. The Lancaster Recreation Commission — a cooperative effort among Lancaster City, Lancaster School District and Lancaster Township — celebrated its 100th year in 2009.

Some local governments share a floating recreation and parks staff member called a circuit rider, who, through shared funding and grants from DCNR, works across political boundaries to deliver park programming and services. Since 1991, DCNR has helped to create more than 25 new multi-municipal recreation and park agencies through its circuit rider funding assistance. Some circuit riders work for two municipalities, like the Gettysburg Area Recreation Authority, one of DCNR's newest circuit riders. Others work at a county level, like the partnership formed between Beaver and Lawrence counties in which a circuit rider was hired to provide assistance to both counties.

Due to recent economic challenges, municipalities often struggled to gain approval to hire new staff, and interest in hiring circuit riders waned. With increasing unmet needs and improving economic conditions, some communities have prioritized parks and recreation, illustrated by three new circuit riders funded by DCNR in 2014.

The PA Recreation and Park Society also has a technical assistance service called RecTAP that offers great potential to expand to more communities, with up to $2,500 available for small projects. Mifflin County has tapped it to help build its first boat launch along the Juniata River. The Blue Mountain Recreation Commission in Schuylkill County improved the management of its public swimming pool through the program.

Beyond regionalization, partnerships with other entities will expand capacity. Volunteerism and community service is still thriving across Pennsylvania (see following case studies).

A final new opportunity is the leadership and support from the National Recreation and Park Association that is available to help local providers be a loud voice for the significance and impact of local parks and recreation services around conservation, health and wellness and social equity. NRPA has developed considerable web-based educational materials and case studies around these three pillars.

[21] Pennsylvania Local Parks and the Communities They Serve, 2014. Appendix F.

March for Parks – Westmoreland County

To boost its ability to support programs and facilities, the Westmoreland County Parks and Recreation Department has held a March for Parks event for the last 12 years. In 2014, participants raised $104,000, which will be used for a variety of park-related initiatives and has been valuable in helping to match other grants and to implement the county's comprehensive parks, recreation and open space plan. More than 1,050 marchers, 65 teams and 80 businesses sponsored or participated in the walk.

Step Outdoors – Tioga County

Pooling resources helps to expand the reach of recreation initiatives. The Tioga County Partnership for Community Health has teamed up with several state and local parks in the area to help host large events under a "Step Outdoors" brand, including a "Tryathlon" at Hills Creek State Park, a Trail Challenge at Ives Run Recreation Area, and Springfest and Winterfest, both hosted at Hills Creek State Park. At Springfest and Winterfest free equipment is available, including kayaks, canoes, fishing poles, skis, snowshoes, sleds and ice skates as well as free hot dogs and hot chocolate during Winterfest. Much of this equipment is provided by Pennsylvania State Parks and Wellsboro Parks and Recreation. There are also nature walks, birding and educational courses on topics such as ice fishing. This program is a great way to get both children and adults out into the parks to enjoy all that they have to offer.

Sarah Fleischman

Gettysburg Alternative Sports Park (GASP) – Adams County

Sometimes you just have to take matters into your own hands if you want something to happen. That's what local youth did in Gettysburg to provide a venue for BMX stunt riding, inline skating and skateboarding — activities that were not safe on the borough streets. A local advocacy group, Collaborating for Youth, petitioned for a skate park in the borough, and eight years ago, the Gettysburg Alternative Sports Park became reality for $87,000. Users pay a low registration fee to offset some of the costs associated with staffing the park, and the venue can be rented for private functions. A group that includes a former BMX professional is currently lobbying for longer hours and more activities at the park.

"On Your Park, Get Set, Go!" – Montgomery County

A little friendly competition among local parks never hurts, and in the case of the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation's "On Your Park, Get Set, Go!" contest, winning means money. Park users were encouraged to visit one of 12 area parks and cast a vote for their favorite using one of several methods: scanning a QR code on a sign in the park with their smartphone, which earned 10 votes per visit; posting a photo from the park, which earned 10 votes; using Facebook to earn two votes; or emailing a "selfie" photo taken at their chosen park, which earned 10 votes. Bonus votes were also available by going to the parks on Saturdays throughout the month.

The park with the most votes received a $10,000 grant. The second-place winner received $7,500, and third-place received $5,000. There was also a lottery worth $2,500 that the remaining participating parks were entered into for a chance to win.

Parks were encouraged to host a variety of outdoor events, including puppet shows and jazz performances, and to use an assortment of promotional strategies, such as handing out flyers to local business to draw people to the park. In all, more than 700 participated in the contest. Half of the total votes came from the QR code scans, meaning people were visiting the park while voting. Proof of that visitation came in via 400 "selfies" of park patrons enjoying their favorite parks, and Facebook friends for the Foundation more than tripled during the contest time period.

Love Your Park Week, Philadelphia

Every year, Fairmount Park Conservancy, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation and Philadelphia park friends groups collaborate to conduct a week-long celebration of Philadelphia's parks. The focus of the 2014 event was the creation and installation of Philadelphia's very first pumptrack — an area of hills and bumps designed for BMX and mountain bikers. More than 90 parks took part in the kick-off service project in 2014, and thousands of volunteers participated in the eight-day event. Park friends groups throughout the city put on events and activities during the celebration to help promote their parks. Love Your Park Week helps instill a sense of community and promotes volunteerism and stewardship of these natural areas, in addition to providing necessary maintenance for Philadelphia's local parks.

See Appendix I for more case studies.

1 Connect citizens to close-to-home recreational opportunities and green space.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Develop a diverse collection of park and playground designs that exemplify green practices, appeal to all ages and abilities, create whole-family recreation spaces and incorporate popular and innovative trends in recreation.

b. Launch a mobile-friendly website for residents to easily find local parks and collect photos, stories and amenities from users.

c. Identify and take steps to reduce barriers so that every citizen has equal access to local and school parks and outdoor recreation opportunities.

d. Develop research to explore recreation needs and behaviors of African Americans, Hispanics and other ethnic groups.

2 Position local park facilities and recreation programs as essential services.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Challenge local communities to increase the portion of their municipal budget dedicated to parks and recreation to at least 5 percent over the next 5 years.

b. Implement the recommended approach developed by Penn State University to assess the economic impact of local parks and recreation.

c. Develop a unified brand for local parks and recreation with accompanying marketing strategy, toolkit and training that helps providers communicate the benefits and value of local parks and recreation.

d. Establish a gold medal award program for Pennsylvania local park and recreation agencies.

3 Create and leverage partnerships that expand outdoor recreation opportunities.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Partner with educators to expand environmental stewardship opportunities to increase efficiency, encourage local and state collaboration, focus on common priorities and increase youth involvement.

b. Increase the number of outdoor recreation events available to all regions of the state by adding 100 new community partners to Get Outdoors PA.

c. Identify and promote strategic, alternative and non-traditional revenue sources for recreation programming and local parks.

d. Encourage educational institutions to partner with local communities to share resources through mechanisms such as joint-use agreements and collaborative programming.

e. Support the creation of friends and advocacy groups to assist park and recreation providers in protecting, enhancing and interpreting natural resources, local parks and heritage areas.

4 Coordinate strategic investment in local priorities and respond to emerging trends.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Work with all 67 counties to identify gaps in local outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide support and technical assistance to advance recreation and conservation planning and implementation.

b. Collect nominations from local communities to create a Top 10 most endangered parks list, and partner with state and local agencies to target funding to revitalize these parks.

c. Create a new Rural Communities Leadership Team to develop an action plan including implementation, funding and volunteer recruitment strategies for local parks and recreation in rural areas.

d. Create a Natural Play Area Pilot Program to develop and monitor natural play areas.

e. Implement the PA Urban Park and Recreation Alliance action plan for local parks and recreation in municipalities with populations over 10,000 residents.

5 Provide expanded parks and recreation technical assistance to communities.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Develop a Maintenance Institute promoting low-maintenance design, preventative maintenance, green and sustainable design and other practices that will reduce maintenance costs.

b. Expand Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance Program (RecTAP) and the Peer Program to encourage multi-municipal and county-based agencies through increased promotion and funding to municipalities.

c. Enhance DCNR's local parks web-based resources to feature best practices and resources on emerging topics such as green and sustainable practices, funding, partnerships, technology and stewardship education.

d. Hold a Recreation and Conservation Leadership Summit, and launch a Leadership Development and Mentoring Program for parks, recreation and resource management professionals.

PRIORITY • TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

• creating opportunities for community prosperity

KEY THEMES	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
• Measuring impact • Coordinating among state agencies • Communicating benefits • Enhancing current marketing efforts • Developing public-private partnerships	• Developing good economic impact data • Communicating benefits and economic impacts • Changing demands and trends • Maintaining funding • Interagency coordination	• Pennsylvania's broad diversity of recreational opportunities • Experiential programming • Successful case studies to demonstrate return on investment • Public-private partnerships • Recreation-based towns

Pennsylvania's outdoor assets have long served as economic engines for the tourism industry. In 2012, 19 percent of the 189 million travelers to the state indicated their primary reason for travel was outdoor related. Those travelers listed swimming, visiting a state park or national park, camping and hiking as top outdoor activities they did on their vacation. Each visit to those lakes, parks, trails and forests generates income for local communities.

But the economic value of outdoor recreation is not just limited to tourist spending. Close-to-home recreation, trails and green spaces promote active lifestyles and add to the economic viability and livability of communities. Increasingly, citizens are seeking out communities that offer outdoor amenities, open spaces and recreational opportunities. Some of the country's biggest cities, like Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and small towns like Confluence and Ridgway in western and northwestern Pennsylvania have recognized the value of their rivers, trails and parks and are hoping a renewed focus on these amenities will draw businesses and people to downtowns. Employers are using outdoor amenities to draw a highly skilled workforce looking for quality of life features outside of work. Some entrepreneurs, who can locate anywhere because of an online business presence rather than traditional bricks and mortar, are choosing places that offer extraordinary outdoor amenities and scenic beauty.

Heritage areas and conservation landscapes are another way to garner more interest in recreation. Visitors are coming to many areas to experience the landscapes and the heritage tourism sites and are participating in outdoor recreation while doing so. Agricultural tourism features like corn mazes, farmer's market tours and wine trails are a growing trend and can be economic drivers in Pennsylvania's rural communities. Festivals, fairs and competitions focused on outdoor activities and natural assets attract people year-round to the unique experi-

ences offered by Pennsylvania's big cities and small towns. From a national Bassmaster tournament held in 2014 on the Delaware River, to dark sky parties at Cherry Springs State Park in the PA Wilds, to dozens of endurance adventure races through Pennsylvania's forests, these outdoor-related events infuse tens of millions of dollars into the local economies. When woven together, recreation-, heritage- and agriculture-based tourism provide a robust marketing strategy for attracting tourists to a region.

Pennsylvania's vast state park and forest system is — and always has been — a significant draw to tourists. To develop a better understanding of the site-specific impact of these areas, DCNR commissioned the Pennsylvania Visitor Use Monitoring project to survey expenditures by visitors in select state parks and forests. Average trip expenditures for a visitor to six state parks studied in the Pennsylvania Wilds region were $124; in a similar study for state parks in the Laurel Highlands and Poconos, trip expenditures averaged $187.[22]

In February 2012, DCNR commissioned Penn State University to update its 2009 economic analysis of Pennsylvania state park impact. Key findings showed that Pennsylvania state parks hosted 37.9 million visitors who spent $859 million on their trips. The direct contribution of visitor spending to the state economy was $628.7 million in sales, supporting 9,435 jobs. The study found that for every dollar invested in Pennsylvania state parks in 2010, $12.41 of income is returned to the state economy. This level of return was higher than previous estimates due to increased visitation over the initial report. Similar to the site-specific visitor analysis, vehicle gas and oil represented the largest percentage of visitor spending.[23]

"Our economy is no longer just about companies. It is about two other things: people and places. It's about how we want to live our lives and what kind of places we want to live in."

– Richard Florida in global bestseller *The Rise of the Creative Class*

A snowmobile study conducted in 2013 showed that resident snowmobilers spend $96 million in Pennsylvania on their trips, and an additional $57 million on equipment purchases. Add in out-of-state travelers, and the total economic impact of snowmobiling in Pennsylvania topped $159 million a year.

On a broader scale, Tourism Economics completed an economic analysis of tourism in Pennsylvania for *visitpa.com*. This 2012 study found that tourism industry sales in Pennsylvania were $38.4 billion in 2012, with just under 17 percent in spending associated with recreation (both indoor and outdoor). This equates to roughly $6.4 billion dollars in spending, making it the third most profitable industry in relation to tourism (behind transportation and food/beverage services). Since 2008, recreation-related spending has increased 14.3 percent from $5.6 billion in 2008 to $6.4 billion in 2012. Though the classification for "recreation" in this study included both indoor and outdoor recreation and places like amusement parks, it is clear that outdoor recreation can be considered an important component to Pennsylvania's tourism and economic well-being.[24]

On a national level, the Outdoor Industry Association publishes an annual Outdoor Recreation Economy guide that details the economic value of outdoor recreation in the United States. Based on survey data collected in 2011 and 2012, OIA estimated that Americans spent $646 billion annually on outdoor recreation supporting 6.1 million jobs. OIA's analysis of Pennsylvania-specific numbers showed outdoor recreation accounted for $21.5 billion in consumer spending, 219,000 direct Pennsylvania jobs, $7.2 billion in wages and salaries, and $1.6 billion in state and local tax revenue. The figures include both tourism and outdoor recreation product manufacturing.[25]

Not only does outdoor recreation provide important physical and mental benefits, it also provides tangible economic impacts to the areas in which it occurs. These financial benefits and the demonstrated positive return from outdoor recreation infrastructure investments means that it is important to sustain funding for this activity. In the face of budgetary challenges, there is a need to substantiate the economic value of funding for parks and outdoor recreation and sustain the investment through effective communications to decision makers and our citizens.

CHALLENGE

Meaningful impact data is needed to inform decision makers of economic benefits.

Sound economic data draw the attention of decision makers. Selling the benefits of outdoor recreation — both social and economic — will require better data and outreach to local officials and leaders. By focusing on return on investment, recreation providers can make the case that this is money well spent.

Despite tourism being a leading industry in Pennsylvania, and outdoor recreation being a significant portion of that industry, there is little concerted effort to document its economic value in an organized manner. Proven success stories, which demonstrate how new businesses are drawn to trail sides, riverfronts and thriving recreation venues, are becoming more prevalent. The challenge is that local recreation providers and land managers often do not have the time or resources to commission, seek out or analyze data from existing economic studies to make the case for outdoor recreation investments.

CHALLENGE

Effective strategies for communicating economic impact are lacking.

New eateries and bike shops have emerged along long-distance trails like the Great Allegheny Passage and the Schuylkill Heritage River Trail. Wineries, artisan shops, country stores, lodging establishments and more have seen exponential growth in the Pennsylvania Wilds since its focused tourism strategy began driving people to the region in 2003. If shared, these success stories could aid other efforts that are struggling to find financial, citizen and political support. However, the decentralized nature of eco-tourism initiatives and tourism promotion in general in the state, coupled with the complexity of Pennsylvania's governmental structure, can be barriers to communicating effectively and sharing success stories. People must be aware of the existing data, how to access it and how best to communicate it to different stakeholder groups, so they can be effective in sustaining and increasing support for the outdoor recreation and tourism industries in the state.

CHALLENGE

Robust outdoor recreation-based business development is dependent on meeting user demands.

Knowing what visitors want can help to drive strategic investments into outdoor recreation tourism and outdoor recreation goods and services. Recent surveys cite wildlife watching, paddle sports like kayaking and stand-up paddleboarding, and adventure races as the top growing recreation interests. And, as citizens continue to express in survey after survey, trails of all types top the lists of recreation needs.

One such trail need is for off-highway motorized vehicle use, particularly ATVs, which has grown dramatically over the past couple of decades, generating pressure for the development of more trails on public lands to meet rider demand. In Pennsylvania's online survey, about 10 percent of the respondents specifically wanted ATVs addressed in the outdoor recreation plan. While large-scale public land development is unlikely due to user conflicts and the significant resources needed for trail management and maintenance, private sector off-highway vehicle parks are receiving state grant funding, such as the Rock Run Recreation Area and the Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area. An ongoing assessment of these ATV parks and trails can help to determine what additional public-private partnerships can help address this user interest.

Indicating another possible business development opportunity for both the public and private sectors, 56 percent of respondents in Pennsylvania's resident survey believe that more rental cabins are needed to satisfy user demand. More data may be needed to determine whether this is a perceived need or an actual facility limitation in Pennsylvania.

CHALLENGE

Specific incentives are needed to further develop Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation industry.

If you build it, they will come. This age-old adage may be true, but it takes guidance and financial assistance for small businesses and entrepreneurs to get off the ground and develop a successful business dependent on the outdoor recreation product.

Outdoor recreation-based businesses — from the bed and breakfasts dependent on the trail traveler to the makers of snowboards and kayaks located in Pennsylvania — face challenges that other businesses do not, such as seasonality, weather, water levels and snowfall.

Often times, tourism-related businesses have a difficult time getting traditional financing, so success is dependent on public-private investment models where the commonwealth provides capital investment or grant funding to match local government or private sector funds.

DCED's First Industries Fund for Tourism has helped nonprofit and for-profit organizations to undertake tourism-related projects through grants, loans and loan guarantees; however, new funding dollars are needed to continue the program.

Examples of support and incentives for small businesses and entrepreneurs do exist in Pennsylvania. The Progress Fund, a community redevelopment financing agency in southwestern Pennsylvania, has financed 29 businesses along the Great Allegheny Passage and received $2 million in federal funding in 2014, which will be used to make additional loans to new and existing businesses along the trail.

In the PA Wilds, the commonwealth has invested in a small business ombudsman position that serves as a clearinghouse and a connector for businesses in the region who are seeking to invest or grow in the eco-tourism market. The ombudsman recently created the PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship to help small businesses learn what it takes to be successful. The position not only offers technical assistance

and helps businesses navigate the existing service provider network, it also promotes, shares and builds excitement for the outdoor recreation industry. This model may be well suited for other areas of the state.

CHALLENGE

More agency and partner coordination is essential to successfully promote the state as an outdoor recreation destination.

With multiple agencies and organizations charged with managing the state's outdoor tourism product, messages and promotional efforts often compete. Because of the economic value associated with tourism, there are incentives to stay parochial to get the best payoff for the local communities.

Interagency cooperation can help determine how to attract those who travel across Pennsylvania to get from one place to another and help with local initiatives to seek more tourism. Many tourist promotion agencies understand the value of their outdoor recreation places and spaces, like the Cumberland Valley Visitors Bureau, which has made outdoor destinations a central theme in its marketing strategy. However, some fail to include trails, parks and rivers in their promotional materials and messages.

The new Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership, formed with public and private funding and leadership, is charged with developing and promoting a cohesive Pennsylvania brand that will bolster local messages and campaigns. There is an opportunity in the development of the brand and messaging to highlight Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation product.

The Pennsylvania conservation landscape and heritage areas programs, established to promote broad-based economic strategies for key landscapes across the state, have become models for cross-agency cooperation of businesses, tourism agencies and local elected leaders. But even these established areas have not made all the connections to maximize the tourism potential.

OPPORTUNITY

Pennsylvania is known for exceptional outdoor recreation assets and experiences.

Verdant hillsides, dark skies, deep forests and tranquil waterways define Pennsylvania. These natural resources are the backdrop for nearly every kind of outdoor recreation pursuit. With its four seasons and millions of acres of public lands, Pennsylvania can rival any state in the country for its outdoor recreation options. Added to the wealth of facilities and options are hundreds of unique towns and cities that celebrate the spirit of the outdoors through fairs and festivals.

Pennsylvania's Assets: Opportunities Galore

- 120 state parks
- 2.2 million acres of state forest land
- 1.3 million acres of state game lands
- 500,000-acre Allegheny National Forest
- 85,000 miles of waterways
- 76 natural lakes creating 5,266 acres of flatwater
- 2,300 impoundments creating 200,000 acres of boatable waters
- More than 11,000 miles of trails, including more than 1,700 miles of rail trails
- 18 national park sites
- 12 heritage areas
- 3 national wildlife refuges

Pennsylvania often makes the "best of" lists — from its long-distance trails like the Great Allegheny Passage, to its dark skies at Cherry Springs State Park, to its fishing and boating opportunities on Lake Erie at Presque Isle State Park. Columbia Borough, a river town on the banks of the Susquehanna River in Lancaster County, was named one of the "20 Best Small Towns to Visit in 2014" by Smithsonian Magazine. In its reporting of the recognition, the magazine cited its proximity to nearby state parks.

Pennsylvania's consumptive sports, like hunting and fishing, have been long-held traditions that have large economic impact. Tracts of state game lands, making up a land base larger than the state of Delaware, exist in all but two counties of the state. More than 85,000 miles of streams and 75 natural lakes provide endless opportunities for fishing. Factor in the growing outdoor recreation activity — watching wildlife — and these sports fuel outfitters, guides, bait and tackle shops and mom-and-pop businesses throughout all of Pennsylvania.

• OPPORTUNITY

More economic opportunity exists through development of specific outdoor recreation travel and experiential packages.

Communities can take advantage of public investments and make a living by providing services to those coming to recreate. Significant investments have been made in public lands in recent years through the Growing Greener and the Enhance Penn's Woods programs, creating new and improved facilities that enhance the outdoor experience. New overnight accommodations, visitor centers, viewing areas, trails and events help visitors to make more connections with nature through extended stays.

In today's world of abundant choices and information overload, many consumers turn to recreation providers for help in creating a meaningful outdoor experience. Some of Pennsylvania's heritage areas are offering pedal-paddle trips, where participants ride along the trail to a destination — often times a trail town — then paddle a canoe or kayak back to their point of origin. Private sector entities in the towns along the trails,

like bed and breakfasts and cafes, can partner with recreation providers to create inclusive packages.

Sojourns — long distance journeys — by bike or boat have gained in popularity, providing multi-day immersion experiences into local cultures and recreation. Participants show up prepared for fun, with the worry of logistics left to the sojourn organizer. In 2013, organizations offered 15 river sojourns that traveled more than 650 river miles, carrying 3,100 participants on journeys of fun and learning.

Quaint, small-town charm is one of Pennsylvania's tourism selling points. Many travelers today are looking for authentic experiences. Surveys show that most outdoor enthusiasts also enjoy history and heritage and often combine these experiences in their trips. Visiting historic sites is the second most popular outdoor activity cited in the resident survey. Heritage areas, recreation professionals and tourism promotion agencies should work together to create authentic experiences that combine visitors' love of walking, scenic driving and heritage to promote economic development in communities.

A recent example of coordinated heritage/recreation tourism was Pedaling Through National Parks, a two-day, 60-mile bicycling trip through the Schuylkill River Heritage Area showcasing the regional trail and three national parks.

OPPORTUNITY

Detailed case studies are showing return on investment.

Although a statewide comprehensive approach to documenting the economic impact of outdoor recreation has not been developed, numerous site- or facility-specific studies show significant contributions of trails, visitor centers, state parks and forests.

With funding from DCNR, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has conducted eight visitor use and economic impact studies on rail trails in Pennsylvania over the past few years. A 2012 study on the D & L Trail in northeastern Pennsylvania concluded that 282,769 annual user visits to the trail resulted in a total economic impact of $19 million. From this figure, $16 million was estimated to be directly injected into the local economy.

The 19-mile-long Perkiomen Trail in Montgomery County hosts nearly 400,000 unique visits each year, and those visitors generate an estimated $19.8 million in economic activity.

The Great Allegheny Passage in southwestern Pennsylvania completed its final missing connectors in 2013, making it one of the country's longest trails — 334 miles from Pittsburgh to Washington D.C. In a survey of businesses along the trail in Pennsylvania, on average about 30 percent of gross revenues were attributed to the trail, about five percent higher than a survey done in 2008-2009.

Pennsylvania's 12 heritage areas, five of which have national designations, have generated significant economic benefits for local communities. In 2014, a study of the Lackawanna Heritage Valley National and State Heritage Area found that the region contributes $31 million in economic impact, supporting 386 jobs and generating $2 million in tax revenue.

OPPORTUNITY

Public private partnerships leverage resources to support outdoor recreation assets and private sector investment.

In the Greater Philadelphia region, the Circuit is widely known in the planning and recreation community, but perhaps is not as well known to area residents. Behind the scenes, the Circuit is working to build a 750-mile pedestrian and bicycle network linking the entire greater Philadelphia region. A spider web of lanes and trails covering about 300 miles are in place, with an additional 50 miles in progress. Trail and circuit development was enhanced in 2014 with a $7 million commitment from the William Penn Foundation, adding to $10 million in grants to kickstart the effort in 2012.

An effort of this size requires a partnership of enormous magnitude, from small towns, to state agencies, to city government, to foundations and non-profits. As in the case of the Great Allegheny Passage in southwestern Pennsylvania, small victories and success stories of business development create excitement and build momentum.

In the Pennsylvania Wilds, outfitters, bed and breakfasts and local country stores have noted a marked increase in business since the state began making strategic investments into the outdoor recreation product in an effort to increase tourism to the area. The Benezette Hotel in Elk County invested in 2012 to expand its overnight capacity to meet the tourist

demand caused by the public-private investment that created the Elk Country Visitors Center just up the road. The more than 300,000 people who flock to the new center each year to see the largest elk herd in the Northeast, also are creating a demand for more rooms, eateries and places to visit. The center was the result of financial contributions of the commonwealth, the non-profit Keystone Elk Country Alliance and private investors. The center gift shop also provides a venue for 60 small businesses to sell locally made products and artisan wares.

• OPPORTUNITY

Creating connections between outdoor recreation and towns expands economic potential.

A top recreation priority in Pennsylvania has been the development of long-distance trails. Trail developers and advocates argue that the longer the trail — particularly longer than 50 miles — the more people it attracts, and in turn, the greater the economic return. Longer trails become destination trails. These ribbons of recreation make connections between places and are helping to build economic development and promote business opportunities that serve trail user needs.

The Trail Town concept emerged in 2005 as the product of the work along the Great Allegheny Passage in southwestern Pennsylvania. Trail Town technical assistance helps towns along a long-distance trail identify the assets that will be most attractive to trail users and capitalize on them. Based on the premise that trail users will venture off the trail to enjoy a town's heritage, retail shops, eateries and other attractions, a trail town puts out a coordinated "welcome mat" to encourage tourism.

The Trail Town Program work started by the Allegheny Trail Alliance has been replicated in other landscapes. The Schuylkill Heritage Area developed a toolkit that had grant funding attached, which towns used to put ideas into action. In Pottstown, grants were used to create signs and kiosks along the trail to guide riders through town via bike lanes.

Trail Town successes have led to the development of River Towns, with the river as the visitor draw rather than a specific trail. In the Susquehanna Riverlands conservation landscape in Lancaster and York counties, the river towns of Marietta and Columbia benefit from a recently developed riverfront park, boat access area and trail that all provide recreational access to hundreds of acres of open space along the Susquehanna River preserved by the five municipalities and Lancaster County. Users of these recreational facilities spur visitation to history and heritage sites and businesses within the towns.

[22] Mowen, A. J., Graefe, A. R., Ferguson, M. D., & Graefe, D. A. (2013) Pennsylvania State Parks Visitor Use Monitoring (VUM) Study – Year 1 Survey Results. Report to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

[23] Mowen, A. J., Graefe, A. R., Trauntvein, N. E., & Stynes, D. J. (2012). The economic significance and impact of Pennsylvania State Parks: An updated assessment of 2010 park visitor spending on the state and local economy. Report to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources.

[24] Tourism Economics (2012). The economic impact of travel and tourism in Pennsylvania. Report for visitpa.com. Retrieved from: http://www.visitpa.com/sites/new.visitpa.com/master/files/pdfs/PA_Visitor_Economic_Impact_2011_State_and_County_FINAL_REPORT_Dec2012_0.pdf

[25] Outdoor Industry Association (2012). The outdoor recreation economy: Take it outside for American jobs and a strong community. Retrieved from: http://www.outdoorindustry.org/pdf/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf. The Outdoor Industry Association: Boulder, CO.

River Towns

Where they once carried commerce and served as the backbone of our industrialization, Pennsylvania's rivers are again fueling new growth. Launched in 2011 by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, the River Town program focused on five communities along the Monongahela River as pilots to demonstrate how economic development based around the natural resource could spur growth and employment. In the three years since the program's launch, more than $1 million has been raised for projects focusing on trail development, river accessibility, providing scenic views from unforgettable locations and essential tourist services and amenities. Recently, the River Town Program published a five-year strategic plan, "*The Monongahela River Valley Plan: A Five-Year Action Agenda to Increase Tourism to the Region*" and proposed five key regional initiatives geared towards attracting more visitors and businesses to the Monongahela River Valley.

Get on the Trail

Entrepreneurial Business Contest

Using natural assets like trails and rivers to drive economic development is a practice that is having growing success across Pennsylvania. A new program is rewarding these natural connections along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.

The *Get on the Trail Entrepreneurial Business Contest*, sponsored by the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry and Tourism, offered financial and technical assistance to new and expanding businesses that submit solid business plans to provide goods and services to trail users. This pilot program, now evolving into a business incubator concept, encourages businesses to reach out to a new clientele riding or paddling on the trail or waterway, connecting to the downtown business districts along the routes.

In the first two years, 19 businesses submitted plans. While every business can continue to receive assistance, the contest had six winners ranging from the traditional to the unique. A refurbished bed and breakfast will serve local products. A mobile ice cream vending cart serves locally produced treats at trail events. A coffee shop rents GPS units leading trail users on tours. A fine dining restaurant will have expanded outdoor seating, and a local outfitter will rent specialized bikes to assist mobility challenged customers and winter equipment to extend the season. An antique and gift shop will expand marketing to attract trail users into town.

The contest was funded with $16,000 from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development as well as free services for website and logo development.

Endurance Challenges

All across the country, endurance races are surging in popularity. While marathons, 5Ks and 10Ks have been around for decades, grueling events that take advantage of the challenges and natural beauty of the forests and mountains are all the rage — and not just during the warm months. From 100-mile races to canoe competitions to obstacle courses, these new or growing race events are winning widespread community support for the boost they give local businesses and how they inspire healthy living and pride of place.

Many times registration for endurance events open and close within days due to their cult-like followings. Outfitting businesses are getting in on the action too, realizing their participation in the events can help to fuel business. When Country Squirrel Outfitters, formerly located in Colorado, moved their business to Ridgway in the PA Wilds, the owners were surprised to see such a vast number of endurance events in the region, something that was common in Colorado. Race enthusiasts flock to the region for the wildly-popular Hyner View Trail Challenge, Megatransect and Prowl the Sproul events. More than 150 diehards tackle the Frozen Snot Run each year — a 13.5-mile run over Bald Eagle Mountain during the coldest week of the year.

See Appendix I for more case studies.

1 Organize and market outdoor recreation and heritage tourism assets and amenities more effectively.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Work with the PA Tourism Partnership to include outdoor recreation and heritage tourism as key components of the state tourism promotion and branding strategy, and specifically call out the significance of trails within this.

b. Establish a state agency workgroup to more cohesively promote outdoor recreation and heritage tourism.

c. Work with tourism partners to develop itineraries and travel packages that target the outdoor recreation product and experiences.

d. Actively market and promote hunting, fishing and recreational shooting opportunities and events to further engage all audiences in these traditional activities.

e. Obtain a major sponsor to fund a statewide marketing effort promoting Get Outdoors PA to prospective community partners, program providers and the public at large.

f. Identify gaps and issues with current wayfinding signage for outdoor recreation and heritage destinations, and make recommendations to PennDOT and State Signing Trust.

g. Republish the statewide PA Outdoor Adventure Guide bi-annually.

2 Develop and implement a plan for communicating the economic and community benefits of outdoor recreation, heritage tourism and land conservation.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Continue the development of the Nature-based Placemaking Program (e.g. trail towns, river towns, community gateways, etc.), and pilot community projects to provide technical assistance, training, mentoring and information resources and exchange for local government and business leaders.

b. Work with tourism partners and chambers of commerce to hold at least one meeting per region per year that focuses on the value of the outdoor recreation economy and ways to encourage growth in this industry sector.

c. Place case studies, economic data and other resources on agency and partner websites.

d. Develop a short video on model initiatives as a tool for building greater awareness on economic benefits to communities.

3 Increase access to business development resources and incentives for small tourism and outdoor recreation businesses and entrepreneurs.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Seek public-private partnerships to provide non-traditional opportunities for outdoor recreation businesses, leverage outdoor recreation infrastructure investments and assist state agencies in cost-effectively delivering outdoor recreation experiences across the state.

b. Establish a new loan investor program or more fully equip existing programs that provide gap financing for entrepreneurs developing businesses and products based upon the state's outdoor recreation assets.

c. Replicate the PA Wilds Small Business Ombudsman model in other places in the state to support small business development around outdoor recreation assets.

d. Continue the First Industries Loan Fund for Tourism to support tourism-related businesses that dovetail with outdoor recreation assets and assist continued expansion of the outdoor recreation industry sector in the state.

4 Use new and existing research to document the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, heritage tourism and land conservation.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Produce a broad, statewide analysis on the benefits and economic impact of all types of recreational trails including rail trails, hiking trails, water trails, mountain biking trails, equestrian trails and motorized trails.

b. Work with the outdoor recreation industry to produce a statewide assessment of the economic impact of outdoor recreation and outdoor recreation-based businesses on the state's economy and publicize the results with key stakeholders.

c. Through a collaborative effort among agencies and partners with an outdoor recreation interest, publish a report every three years that aggregates and documents economic impact data and case studies for outdoor recreation.

d. Undertake a targeted return-on-investment study around a few specific outdoor recreation infrastructure investments (e.g. Elk Country Visitor Center, critical trail links) to document resulting business development activity and direct economic impact.

PRIORITY • RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

sustaining natural resources and public investment

KEY THEMES

- Funding
- Maintenance
- Hunting and fishing heritage
- Natural gas development
- Land and water conservation and protection

CHALLENGES

- Funding for infrastructure and ongoing maintenance
- Meeting demands while maintaining existing infrastructure
- Improving public access
- Changing demographics and population growth
- Declining participation in hunting and fishing

OPPORTUNITIES

- Land and water conservation
- New funding sources
- Public-private partnerships and agency collaboration
- Green practices
- Reclaiming degraded lands for recreation
- Hunting and fishing opportunities close to population centers

Pennsylvania's natural areas, parks, diverse wildlife, trails, open spaces and other recreational infrastructure and amenities are the foundation for each of the other priorities listed in this plan. They provide the backdrop for healthy communities and a catalyst for local economic development and tourism. Their critical role in many aspects of our communities has long been recognized and affirmed by the investments made by state and local governments. Although the local parks priority of this plan addresses infrastructure challenges and opportunities, resource management and stewardship is a much larger topic, which merits its own discussion.

Pennsylvanians expect their parks and recreation areas to be safe, clean, well-maintained and accessible. Resource managers and parks and recreation providers are challenged with protecting the lands and waters entrusted to them, while building and maintaining facilities to adequately serve their citizens' wants and needs. The complexities of natural resource issues combined with infrastructure maintenance provides for a very challenging job.

Public investment over many years has resulted in an extensive infrastructure system to support outdoor recreation in the commonwealth. We are fortunate to have more than 5,600 local parks, 120 state parks, millions of acres of state forests and state game lands, and federal land and water facilities. The existing infrastructure to support outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania is worth billions of dollars.

Just within the Pennsylvania parks and forests system alone are 4,700 buildings, 3,720 miles of roads, 842 bridges, 180 boat launches and 121 dams.

The estimated cost to repair and improve those facilities approached $1 billion in 2013. Much of this infrastructure is antiquated, and the need to find adequate funding to cover the cumulating project lists to improve facilities are among the top challenges of park and recreation providers — at the local, state and federal levels, and in all population densities — rural, suburban and urban.

Citizens are stressing the importance of fixing existing facilities, but they also have expectations for the management of their natural resources. In addition to wanting clean, modern and safe facilities, Pennsylvanians want their lands and waters protected. They want clean rivers to fish and boat, open spaces to roam and vast forests to explore. As discovered through surveys, written responses and public meetings, our citizens care deeply about their natural resources and believe their recreation and park providers and government agencies should place high value on them as well.

Protection of wildlife and fish habitat and restoration of damaged rivers and streams ranked high on the priority list in the Pennsylvania resident survey. They were second and third, after maintaining existing infrastructure, with 84 percent and 81 percent respectively believing them to be important priorities for funding. These results underscore the importance of habitat conservation measures and water protection as critical components of outdoor recreation planning.

Pennsylvania places high value on its more than 400,000 acres of wetlands. Many plant and animal species are entirely dependent upon wetlands for survival. Wetlands also function to improve water quality, add to a healthy environment and aid humans in a variety of ways, like flood control and water purification. DEP has developed wetland protection and waterway management programs to ensure these sensitive resources are protected. Pennsylvania's various regulatory and non-regulatory programs and strategies since enactment of the 1988 Wetland Protection Action Plan have led to the achievement of no net loss and, over the past several years, a statewide net gain in wetland acreage. In cases where impacts to wetlands are unavoidable, compensatory mitigation offsets damages to restore, conserve and provide long-term resource protection within a

watershed. Mitigation strategies are opportunities to link to government and non-government programs with related resource and recreation goals.[26]

Habitat improvement and protection and land and river conservation are top charges of the state's resource management agencies — DCNR, the Fish and Boat Commission and the Game Commission. Other non-profit conservation organizations like land trusts and conservancies also play a significant role in habitat and land protection. These agencies and organizations often work together to purchase conservation easements and buy lands of special value that are added to the overall recreation landscape and help to protect local ecosystems. The PA Land Trust Association reports that from 2011-13 nearly 33,000 acres were preserved by Pennsylvania's land trust organizations, bringing the total acreage preserved to 667,148.

Most of the state's seven conservation landscapes have land protection as a key goal. The Pocono Forest and Waters landscape houses the greatest concentration of wetlands in the state and large tracts of public and private forested lands. In 2013 alone, partners acquired more than 1,800 additional public acres in that region. In the densely populated Lehigh Valley

Greenways landscape, land protection and connection of critical lands through a system of greenways remains a top priority. Landscape partners have protected 1,500 acres over the past 10 years in this very urbanized area of the state.

One of the challenges of land conservation is the lack of a GIS layer of protected lands to be able to track what we have — and what we are losing. For the hundreds of thousands of acres Pennsylvania has preserved, it is estimated that nearly 300 acres are lost to development each day.

In addition to land conservation, resource managers work to protect the vast system of rivers and restore those that have been damaged over the years from past industrial practices like mining. Pennsylvania is a river-rich state, with more than 85,000 miles — from tiny brooks to major navigable waters. These rivers provide the backbone for water-based recreation, particularly the traditional sports of fishing and boating. River conservation projects are funded each year by DCNR and DEP to ensure the health of these water resources. To help improve public access to recreation, many of these projects include the development of boat launches and water trails, stream bank stabilization, land acquisition, removal of invasive species and planting of native wild species. Over the last five years, DCNR has funded the completion of 29 river conservation projects in the commonwealth.

Pennsylvania's water trails also work to improve citizen access. Pennsylvania's Water Trail Partnership has designated 24 trails suitable for water recreation across the state. The partnership has shifted its priority from creating new trails to improving maintenance of the existing water trails and promotion of the system.

An important part of resource management is protecting culturally and historically significant areas and infrastructure. The state's heritage areas were formed for that very purpose and have been working over the last 25 years to protect and showcase those resources that tell the story of how Pennsylvania helped to build the nation. Rivers of Steel's Carrie Furnace, a rare example of pre-World War II iron-making technology on the Monongahela River, and Oil Region's Ida Tarbell House, which is being rehabilitated to exhibit the material culture of Pennsylvania's oil boom, are examples of those resources.

Since the 2009 recreation plan, the Bureau of Forestry has acquired 31,500 acres of land.

A recent resource management challenge that has emerged since the 2009 recreation plan is shale-gas development, which is having an impact not only on natural resources, but also on recreational resources. A small percentage of respondents (17 percent) in the Pennsylvania resident survey said that they had

encountered Marcellus-related activities while participating in outdoor recreation; an even smaller percentage (12 percent) said the activity has changed their outdoor recreation behaviors or experiences. These figures rose for those respondents who indicated they lived in northcentral Pennsylvania, where gas-related activity is high (49 percent encountered; 28 percent had their experience changed.)

DCNR's Bureau of Forestry released a shale-gas monitoring report in 2014 of the impacts of the activity on state forest land. The report showed hiking, particularly in the more heavily developed regions, appears to be the recreation activity most negatively affected by gas drilling. Although shale-gas development has yet to affect any national hiking trails, three designated state forest hiking trails have been closed temporarily or rerouted. Aesthetic changes in the landscape and noise from drilling activity are also contributing to the effects on the hiking experience.

In some cases where impacts occur, shale-gas development has provided the opportunity to improve recreation infrastructure and create better experiences. For example, although some state forest joint-use roads can no longer be used for snowmobiling due to increased truck traffic, pipelines installed adjacent to impacted roads have created new snowmobile trails and improved safety by removing the previous shared-use situations.

Careful evaluations of outcomes and cooperative planning can help mitigate the impacts of resource extraction on recreational infrastructure. DCNR established a Natural Gas Advisory Committee in 2013 to advise and provide recommendations for implementing natural gas management in a manner that is consistent with the mission of DCNR and its bureaus. In addition to broad gas management issues, the committee is examining a few specific issues that could have an impact on recreation such as noise, air quality and invasive species.

CHALLENGE

Aging infrastructure and ongoing facility maintenance requires sustained funding sources.

As discussed earlier and in the Local Parks and Recreation priority, parks of the ’60s and ’70s — many funded with federal Land and Water Conservation Fund monies — are in need of modernization and repair. This is true in both urban and rural areas, and can be said of facilities at the municipal, state and federal levels.

Often in times of fiscal crisis, parks and recreation budgets are reduced to keep other areas of government afloat. Stable, sufficient and consistently growing funding sources are needed to cover maintenance backlogs and ongoing upkeep.

In large systems of infrastructure, such as Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests, a sustainable funding source is needed to tackle ongoing maintenance, which can build at a rate of $100 million a year. In times of fiscal constraints, funding streams used for maintenance have been diverted to support operations of the systems.

CHALLENGE

Priorities must be set to meet demands while maintaining existing infrastructure.

As recreation facilities are built or existing ones are modified or modernized, recreation providers must take into account new expectations and how they relate to people’s willingness to participate in outdoor activities. Some people like a rustic and natural condition in parks; others expect modern facilities and the comforts of home as they travel outdoors: flush toilets, modern bathhouses, the latest recreation equipment and technology upgrades.

When assessing priorities for investment, providers must also consider demographic profiles of the communities they serve. For example, while playgrounds ranked as the highest investment priority for providers, many of their communities are experiencing declining populations of young people and the rise of active senior populations seeking to get outdoors.

Although some cities across the state are recognizing the recreation and transportation value of bike lanes and pedestrian accommodations, Pennsylvanians still think there is much room for improvement. In the resident survey, 54 percent said on-road bike lanes should be increased (second only to overnight cabins). On-road bike lanes were the facility rated the highest in need of improvement (29 percent) by a 10 percent margin over the next facility — playgrounds. In 2009, dog parks ranked as the highest need.

While each community’s needs might vary, trails always consistently rank high among residents’ requests. The trail needs exist on three levels: 1) finishing the big trails; 2) maintaining the open ones; and 3) bringing trails closer to home through small connections. Consideration should be given to investment priorities in order to make the most of limited funding.

CHALLENGE

Access to recreation is a barrier for many.

Access is one of the important factors influencing recreation participation. There are many reasons why citizens may not have access to outdoor recreation — from time and distance constraints, to lack of information about resources, to physical inaccessibility. All Pennsylvanians, including those with disabilities, kids and older adults, deserve safe and easy access to recreational facilities.

The majority of residents identified the time and distance required to get to a recreation facility as a very important factor influencing their participation.

This highlights the need for close-to-home recreation amenities, which are often local parks, trails or bicycle paths, but may also include nearby hunting and fishing opportunities.

A weak biking infrastructure in most communities is preventing access to recreational trails and transportation corridors for commuting purposes. Trail connections linking existing parks, recreation areas and residential communities are an important component to the expansion of bike lanes. Although identified as an infrastructure challenge, recommendations related specifically to bike and pedestrian infrastructure are discussed in more detail in the Health and Wellness priority.

As Pennsylvania's population ages, accessibility of recreation areas to people with limited mobility or other physical conditions will become more important, particularly since baby boomers are the only age group to exceed the national average for weekly physical activity. These citizens will be looking for opportunities for healthy recreation in the outdoors, and facilities should be accessible to them. Because much of the recreation infrastructure is decades old, universal design and ADA accessibility were not incorporated into design. Now updates to these facilities and new infrastructure need to consider access for all.

Concerns about costs and not knowing available opportunities are also cited as barriers to recreation participation. Programs such as Get Outdoors PA are trying to break down these barriers through organized outdoor recreation that offers close-to-home activities at little or no cost to the participant.

Access to rivers is important to Pennsylvanians, and efforts are needed to develop, improve and re-establish public river access in communities. A 2009 Executive Order on Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration calls for 300 new access points to be established within the Bay watershed by 2025. Reconnecting citizens to their rivers can have a profound effect by reminding us of the importance of improving the health of our aquatic assets and safeguarding them from future degradation. However, creating new access, improving existing sites, and reducing pollutants are all very challenging endeavors. Tradition, built infrastructure, funding, safety and liability issues often defeat projects before they even begin.

CHALLENGE

A changing population will create new user needs.

It is necessary to understand population trends to provide services and meet demands. By 2030 Pennsylvania's population is projected to grow another 7.4 percent to 13.1 million people. Much of this growth will come from ethnic populations, which grew 33 percent over the last 10 years. Ethnic populations' recreational preferences, from locations to activities, may vary greatly from those for which facilities were constructed and programs designed over the last few decades. Because this plan's survey work did not include a wide representation of ethnic populations, more outreach is necessary to determine the needs and interests of diverse population groups.

Pennsylvania is also getting older. Already the fourth oldest state in the country, people over 65 are projected to grow to 23 percent of the state's population by 2030. With nearly a quarter of their citizen base over the age of 65, recreation providers will have to adjust facilities

and programming. An aging population could cause changes in the type of preferred recreation, a need for more localized recreation, and changes in outreach strategies, transportation, and other important recreational services.

CHALLENGE

People are moving away from Pennsylvania's traditional heritage sports.

Over the past decade, hunting and fishing participation has waned, as time commitments, decreased access and age have worked against the sports. Although Pennsylvania is still one of the top sportsmen's states in the nation, those agencies charged with the perpetuation of hunting and fishing — Pennsylvania's Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission — must adopt strategies to renew interest in the sports and reverse the decline.

Not only do hunting and fishing provide recreational enjoyment, but licensed and educated sportsmen are stewards who serve species and habitat management functions that are vital to the protection of Pennsylvania's natural resources. The data provided by sportsmen are valuable to biologists who manage wildlife. Not having hunters and anglers to help to manage certain populations like white-tailed deer could create natural resource challenges.

Aside from wanting to fix aging infrastructure, Pennsylvanians want land managers and recreation providers to invest in protecting wildlife and fish habitat and restore damaged rivers and streams. Natural and wild areas, shooting ranges and wildlife viewing areas ranked among the top 10 requested facility needs.

Fast growing participation in wildlife viewing could also supplant the loss of hunters and anglers and garner support for the protection of wildlife and fish habitat.

OPPORTUNITY

Land conservation efforts can create new opportunities for recreation

A demographic analysis shows the trend of people moving to townships will continue — particularly in Pennsylvania's southeastern, southern and northeastern counties. As land is developed, fewer spaces are left for the growing populations to enjoy. DCNR and land conservation partners support land conservation through a number of methods, including acquisition of lands that are added to state parks and forests, funding for acquisition of conservation lands by local government or nonprofit entities, and funding of the purchase of easements on privately held property. Since 2011, DCNR has conserved over 24,000 acres of land through these efforts. For example, in 2014, Allegheny Land Trust closed on five properties protecting an additional 76 acres including parcels that created trail head access and connected parks.

DCNR's Bureau of Forestry also acquires new property to add to the 2.2 million-acre state forest system to conserve natural lands and provide additional benefits to Pennsylvanians. Land conservation efforts are focused on inholdings or indentures of land to simplify state forest boundaries; new access points; and high value lands to protect special ecological or recreational resources, such as high-use trails, unique wildlife habitat or exceptional trout streams. Since the 2009 recreation plan, the Bureau of Forestry has acquired more than 31,500 acres of additional land.

Strategic land acquisitions help to make important connections for citizens' recreational opportunities. The 107-acre Hawbaker Tract in Peters Township, Franklin County, lies between State Game Lands 124 and an isolated tract of state forest land in Buchanan State Forest. Its recent purchase by the Bureau of Forestry now connects the two state-owned lands and provides protection for the Tuscarora Trail, which runs through the property and was threatened by potential development of the land. Two existing access points along PA Route 16 will provide an opportunity to develop parking for the public.

• OPPORTUNITY

New funding sources can supplement successful programs.

As discussed in the Funding and Local Parks and Recreation priorities, funding is continually a challenge for park and recreation providers. There are, however, some new opportunities. Pennsylvania's Keystone Recreation, Parks and Conservation Fund continues to fund the majority of recreation projects in small and large communities across the state. Attempts in the past several years to divert the monies to help fill the commonwealth's budget gaps have been thwarted. Nonetheless, the funding still falls far short of meeting recreation demand. DCNR, through the several funding streams under its Community Conservation Partnerships Program — including the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund — is typically only able to fund 50 percent of its grant requests in any given year.

In 2013 alone, volunteers with the PA Parks and Forests Foundation donated 44,420 hours to state parks and forests, an equivalent value of more than $1 million.

Helping to bridge the gap are recent sources specifically set aside for recreation, conservation and multimodal projects. Act 13's Marcellus Legacy Fund, collected from an impact fee on unconventional natural gas wells, supports conservation projects and environmental protection measures, including: orphan

or abandoned well plugging; watershed restoration and protection; baseline water quality data; flood mitigation; abandoned mine drainage abatement and treatment; and greenways, trails and recreation programs.

The Transportation Act 89 of 2013 created a multimodal transportation fund that establishes a dedicated funding stream of $2 million a year for bicycle and pedestrian projects with an emphasis on safety, shared use, pedestrian connectively and partnerships.

The Enhance Penn's Woods initiative is specifically targeting infrastructure needs in state parks and forests. Faced with an infrastructure backlog of close to $1 billion, Enhance Penn's Woods is dedicating more than $200 million over two years (2013-15) to invest in campgrounds, trails, boat access, land acquisition and much more in Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

• OPPORTUNITY

Partnerships are maximizing delivery of services.

Especially in an era where limited funding is the norm, a more complex delivery of outdoor recreation services requires coordination of state agencies and often involves the private sector in a successful model. Good planning at the local level helps to identify roles and priorities for each partner.

A successful partnership model over the last 15 years has been the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation's support of the state parks and forest systems. This statewide nonprofit organization created in 1999 has established 39 "friends" groups to operate

on public lands. Friends groups provide an invaluable service of volunteer hours, plus hold fundraising events to raise money for needed projects in the parks and forests. In 2013 alone, these volunteers donated 44,420 hours, an equivalent value of more than $1 million. These groups also raised nearly a quarter of a million dollars through fundraising events, like music and history festivals.

Through private donations, corporate sponsorship and grants, PPFF has helped to fund dozens of much-needed projects throughout the park and forest system. In 2014, an EZ launch and canoe/kayak rack at Point State Park was installed with PPFF funds to help people with disabilities easily and safely embark on a water adventure.

A public-private effort is helping to renovate the historic lighthouse at Presque Isle State Park in Erie. DCNR entered into a 35-year lease in 2014 with the newly created Presque Isle Light Station non-profit organization, which is raising funds for restoration of the 141-year-old lighthouse, with the eventual goal of opening the lighthouse to the public. DCNR owns the lighthouse and land, which has been used over its history as a residence, most recently for state park staff.

The Elk Country Visitor Center in Benezette, Pa. is one of the strongest examples of a true public-private partnership within the state park and forest system. Opened in 2010, the center is an ongoing example of a success story to sustain Pennsylvania's majestic elk habitat through the partnership of the non-profit wildlife conservation organization Keystone Elk Country Alliance and DCNR. KECA operates and manages the center and the Elk Mountain Homestead and conducts conservation education through stewardship projects and permanent land protection, as well as by cooperating with private land owners and state natural resource agencies. KECA also assists DCNR with marketing and communications related to preservation and enhancement of Pennsylvania's elk herd.

OPPORTUNITY

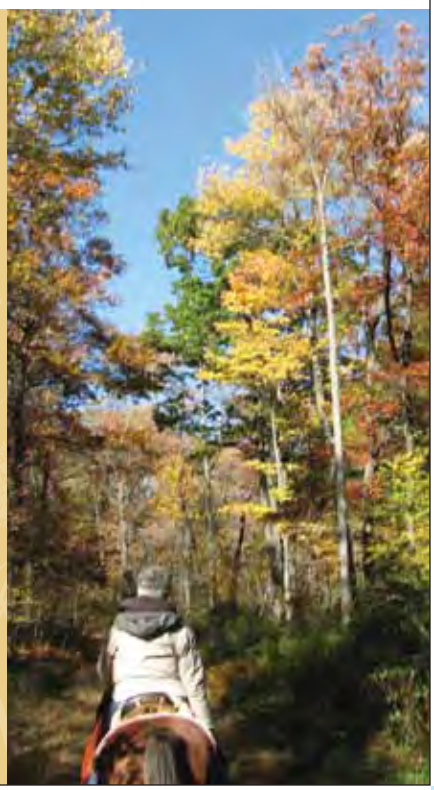
Green practices can protect, save and educate.

Green infrastructure in recreational areas — like pervious pavements, sustainable materials, stormwater retention, no-mow areas and native plantings — can play a role in conserving and protecting critical natural resources, all with the potential to save recreation providers money. Green infrastructure can be incorporated

Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Plan 2014-2019[27]

Pennsylvania's 2009 outdoor recreation plan focused heavily on trails, and much has been accomplished in this area. Since 2011, an additional 217 trail miles have been built, and state and local projects have invested more than $115 million in trail development. Pennsylvania is now updating its trails strategic plan, which envisions the creation of a truly statewide network of trails. Over 150 trail gaps have been identified and prioritized for funding, and the Trails Advisory Committee is in the process of identifying the top 10 priority trail gaps involving major infrastructure needs. The trails strategic plan makes seven recommendations:

1. Close priority gaps in Pennsylvania's statewide land and water trail network to achieve the overall goal of having a trail within 15 minutes of every citizen.
2. Coordinate state and federal funding programs to leverage maximum investment in priority trail projects.
3. Cultivate diverse partnerships to build capacity to address local and regional trail needs.
4. Develop a marketing strategy to promote Pennsylvania as a premier land and water trail destination.
5. Connect community assets through accessible trail networks.
6. Elevate the priority to maintain and improve existing land and water trails and related infrastructure.
7. Promote the economic, environmental, and public health benefits of trails through education and outreach.



into existing facilities and spaces or planned into new projects. For retrofits, energy or conservation audits can help communities identify where they will realize the greatest savings and protections.

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification provides guidelines for communities and organizations looking to meet strict criteria for maximum benefit. The Pennsylvania state park and forest system has 10 LEED-certified buildings and has instituted dozens of conservation best practices and energy efficiencies that can serve as models for homeowners and other land managers.

DCNR's use of native plants and trees and its aggressive program to eradicate invasive species are not only improving the aesthetics of recreational areas, they are also increasing opportunities for recreation. Invasive species have the ability to change a landscape, clogging lakes, choking streams and taking over popular hiking areas and vistas.

A Green Parks Award program, developed by DCNR in 2012 to showcase best practices being employed at municipal parks, has award winners serving as models of green solutions for park systems across the state.

• OPPORTUNITY

Former industrial and mine sites and utility lands can be reborn as recreation space.

Vestiges of our past resource extraction and industrial development scar landscapes and cities across the state. Use of old brownfield sites is a way to preserve and interpret historic connections and reuse old structures in new ways — restaurants, gathering places, comfort facilities and education centers. Some of these lands are well suited for certain recreation uses like ATV and bicycle trails and fishing and riverfront access.

One example of an innovative use of a brownfield for recreation purposes is the Rock Run Recreation Area in Cambria and Clearfield counties. A 6,000-acre multi-use, motorized recreation site built on a former mine site, Rock Run was the result of a collaboration between multiple state agencies and local organizations. A similar site recently opened in the eastern part of the state at the Anthracite Outdoor Adventure Area in Northumberland County.

The once industrial landscape and rail yard along the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia has been reborn into a destination now known as the Schuylkill Banks. Starting

with a riverfront trail more than 15 years ago, the multi-faceted revitalization effort now includes docks, an over-the-water boardwalk, fishing piers, connecting greenways, and trail and bridge enhancements that reconnect thousands to the Schuylkill River.

Utility lands are being repurposed as recreation and conservation lands as companies are divesting these lands once held to protect watersheds. Instead of being sold for development, these large-scale landscapes can continue their watershed protection role, while now improving recreation access. In the Susquehanna Riverlands conservation landscape, more than 600 acres owned by PPL have been acquired by the Lancaster County Conservancy and now provide sweeping overlooks of the Susquehanna River.

OPPORTUNITY

Access to close-to-home hunting and fishing opportunities can sustain Pennsylvania's heritage sports.

Because hunter participation is stagnant or declining with both young and old audiences, improved close-to-home access through more game lands and private lands easements can help to reverse the decline. Funding for land conservation close to population centers can increase hunting, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities.

Many people think that good fishing or hunting is only available in the remote wilds of the state, but close-to-home opportunities already exist. Only about half of residents responding to the citizen survey thought there was sufficient access to small and big game hunting opportunities near where they live. Better education and promotion of the available resources can engage new audiences who may have noted limited time as their reason for not participating.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission's Go Hunt PA website, launched in September 2014, offers many resources in a single location to connect hunters to hunting opportunities across the state. Go Hunt PA's interactive map provides information on state game lands, state park and forest lands, national lands and private lands available for hunting. It also provides seasonally open roads, which help to provide better access to hunters. Go Hunt PA also contains information on what game is in season. Links to events and to sign up for a hunter education class and purchase a hunting license are also provided. As part of a larger marketing campaign, the GoHuntPA site is being widely promoted via television and radio ads across the state.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission conducts the Family Fishing Program to reach lapsed anglers and non-fishing adults who have children in their households. Studies find that recruiting and retaining anglers is more successful when targeting the whole family. From 2010-13, the commission conducted about 450 Family Fishing Programs, reaching more than 15,500 people. Comparisons with similar programs across the country showed the commission's program consistently ranks among the top five in 10 categories, including increasing participation in the sport, purchasing fishing equipment and improving awareness of where to fish as a result of the program.

[26] Pennsylvania Wetlands Update, Appendix G

[27] Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan 2014-2019, Appendix H

Brownfields to Greenfields

Thanks to a robust brownfields redevelopment program in Pennsylvania, former industrial sites that helped to fuel this nation are being reborn as productive spaces. As the country's first naval shipyard, the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard was one of the main military installations and shipbuilders in the United States. Base realignments and closures led to its demise, and by 1995 nearly all activities ceased at the facility. Today, the Navy Yard is a thriving 1,200-acre mixed-use area with more than 140 businesses engaged in research, manufacturing and development. More than 10,000 are now employed at the site, the same number of jobs available as when the site was a shipyard in its peak years. Incorporated into the campus are 1.5 miles of riverfront trail and 21 acres of green space and parks. Additional acreage of open space is proposed in the Navy Yard's master plan for vacant parcels that are slated for future development.

Mentored Youth Programs

The rich history associated with fishing and hunting in Pennsylvania spurred the creation of the Mentored Youth Programs, developed to connect youth to these sports at a younger age. For each of these programs, a mentored youth permit can be purchased, enabling the youth to hunt or fish with an individual that is of age, 21 for hunting, and 16 for fishing. To further encourage participation, the Fish and Boat Commission conducts one or two Mentored Youth Fishing Days every year. For every Voluntary Youth License purchased, the PFBC receives five dollars back as a federal reimbursement. The funds collected through this event are all directed to support youth education and outreach programs. The Mentored Youth Hunting and Fishing Programs enable youth to experience these sports at a young age alongside an adult mentor who can show and explain the ethics, safety and enjoyment involved when participating in these sports responsibly.

Mellon Square Maintenance Fund

Opened in 1955, Mellon Square's significant landscape and Modernist design has brought liveliness and beauty to downtown Pittsburgh for almost 60 years. The first modern garden plaza to be built atop a parking garage, Mellon Square's design makes it a forerunner of today's rooftop gardens.

But by the 1990s, this Modernist masterpiece had fallen into serious disrepair. While good faith efforts to care for and restore Mellon Square were made in past decades, the Achilles heel of lasting results proved to be the maintenance and upkeep of this unique public space. Indeed, the attributes that make Mellon Square so distinct — including its garage-roof location, multiple fountains on different levels, intricate stonework, and shallow tree and flower planters — are also those that present maintenance challenges.

Understanding that a long-term maintenance plan with secure, lasting funding was key to the future of Mellon Square remaining a valuable asset to the city, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy made establishing such a fund a key component of its restoration plan. The Parks Conservancy worked closely with funders in creating a dedicated and permanent maintenance fund that includes ongoing monitoring of the water, plants and stonework for adjustments that may be necessary as seasonal weather, condensation variations, and other elements intrinsic in a natural setting arise.

The extensive restoration — completed in 2014 — also included an agreement with the City of Pittsburgh that gives the Parks Conservancy management responsibilities for Mellon Square. With such regimented monitoring and a permanent maintenance fund in place, the state of this magnificent public space will remain in excellent health for perpetuity.

See Appendix I for more case studies.

1 Conserve and protect Pennsylvania's natural places.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Protect critical wildlife habitat, forested watersheds, wetlands and riparian corridors through conservation planning and easements, nature preserves and land conservation programs.

b. Restore and repurpose brownfields, abandoned mine lands and other damaged lands for recreation and conservation purposes through at least five pilot projects.

c. Develop partnerships that include state agencies, volunteer watershed organizations and local governments to update and implement 25 River Conservation Plans, with a particular focus on restoring rivers for public recreation.

d. Develop guidance and expand resources at *ConservationTools.org* to help organizations and local governments protect wildlife habitat, greenways, and other open spaces; implement appropriate public access; and plan for conservation and development best suited to the land.

e. Track conservation progress through the development of a GIS layer of conserved lands.

2 Maintain existing park, trail and recreation areas, and prioritize other infrastructure needs.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Identify top 10 priority trail gaps and close gaps in five years.

b. Complete Pennsylvania's five-year strategic plan for land and water trails.

c. Increase full-service overnight amenities at public and private facilities.

d. Improve ADA access and universal design by updating facilities to meet standards.

e. Coordinate with local, state and heritage organizations to develop management and improvement plans for recreation areas that incorporate strategies for managing historic and cultural resources.

f. Complete the 2013-15 $200 million state park and forest infrastructure improvement plan and PA Parks and Forests Foundation's special projects list.

3 Cultivate support to protect wildlife and fish habitat through wildlife viewing, fishing and hunting.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Expand successful hunting and fishing programs such as hunter education, field days, mentored youth opportunities and family fishing days, by training local organizations, state and local park personnel and volunteers.

b. Enhance access to wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing and shooting sports opportunities close to population centers, and improve communication to connect people to those opportunities.

c. Engage the large audience of infrequent hunting and fishing participants with targeted marketing campaigns to encourage them to hunt and fish more frequently.

4 Develop and implement shale-gas best practices for recreation, and pursue new recreation opportunities.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Mitigate impacts of gas development to recreation, and consider possibilities to develop new recreation opportunities.

b. Continually review, examine and promote the range of best management practices and guidance to manage impacts to recreation and natural resources.

THE CASE FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION INVESTMENT

As noted throughout this plan, Pennsylvanians support state and community re-investment in and improvement to Pennsylvania's outstanding system of parks, trails and natural areas. Conservation of open space for wildlife habitat and recreation areas and the restoration of rivers and streams are also important to the public.

In fact, Pennsylvanians continue to support increased funding for these programs by wide margins. A 2014 Penn State University poll found that 97 percent of Pennsylvanians think that state funds dedicated to preserving open space and farmland, providing parks and trails, and protecting rivers and streams should continue to be used for these purposes. Furthermore, 82 percent of survey respondents support increasing state funds for these purposes even if that would cost the average household $10 more annually.[28]

State and federal investment in recreation and conservation — our state's green infrastructure — provides a host of natural services including flood control, drinking water protection and reduction in air pollution. In 2013, the Trust for Public Land analyzed the return on investment of the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund. Their study found that for every $1 invested in land and water conservation, $7 in natural goods and services is returned to Pennsylvania.[29] Studies nationally and in Pennsylvania have demonstrated the economic impact of trail development through new small businesses, increased property values and increased spending from new visitors to an area. It is also well-documented that recreation and conservation grants leverage significant matching funds. From 1996-2012, the Keystone Fund leveraged $3.13 for every dollar invested.

Funding History

Pennsylvania has a long history of dedicated conservation and recreation funding through bond issues (Project 70, Growing Greener Bonds I and II) and dedicated funding sources like the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund and the Environmental Stewardship Fund. Since 1995, the Keystone Fund alone has provided more than $710 million to recreation and conservation projects, distributed in each of the state's 67 counties, through grants and matching funding. In 2012, Act 13 directed additional funding to the Environmental Stewardship Fund and also provides funding to the Commonwealth Financing Authority for greenways, trails and recreation grants and to each county in the state for conservation and recreation purposes.

Demand for recreation and conservation funds remains high. In 2013, nearly 40 percent of projects submitted for funding from all DCNR sources (Keystone, Environmental Stewardship, LWCF, Recreational Trails) went unfunded.

In years past, DCNR was able to fund, on average, less than half of grant dollars requested using all funding sources (Keystone, Growing Greener I and II, and LWCF). In the 2014 grant round, demand exceeded funding by nearly $41 million. (Figure 13)

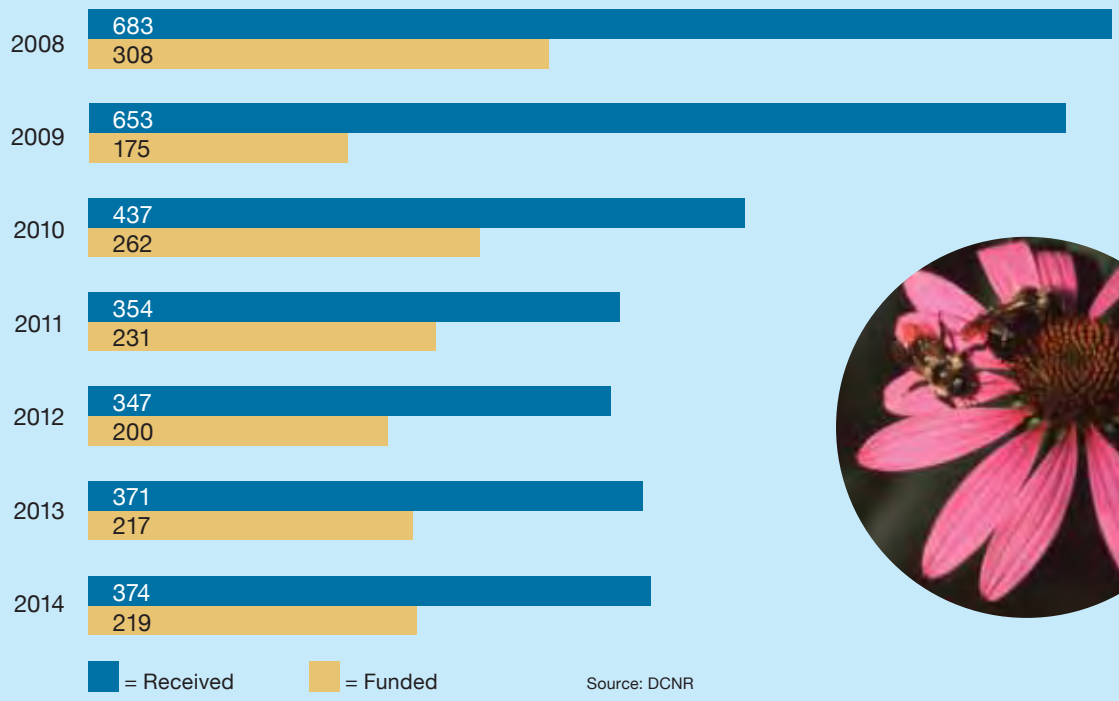
Pennsylvania's Federal Lands and Resources

Compared to other eastern states, Pennsylvania has a wealth of federal recreational land within its borders. The first national wild and scenic river in the country was the Delaware, which forms the commonwealth's eastern border. The Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area protects critical habitat while offering spectacular views, as well as paddling, rafting and hiking on a portion of the Appalachian Trail. In 2008, Pennsylvania gained a new national wildlife refuge designation with Cherry Valley, in northeastern Pennsylvania. The Allegheny National Forest covers more than half a million acres of forested land in northwestern Pennsylvania, providing hundreds of trail miles, recreational lakes and reservoirs, stream miles, and outstanding hunting and fishing habitat. The Army Corps of Engineers owns and operates a number of large reservoirs that provide popular recreational boating and paddling opportunities, including Raystown Lake in southcentral Pennsylvania and dam release-powered white water runs on the Lehigh River.

From the Gettysburg Battlefield to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is home to 15 national parks, five national heritage areas, and 26 national natural landmarks.

From the Gettysburg Battlefield to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is home to 15 national parks, five national heritage areas, and 26 national natural landmarks. Pennsylvania's system of heritage areas also includes 12 state-designated heritage areas, which for the past 20 years have been innovators in regional community conservation and revitalization, heritage tourism, greenway preservation and story-telling. Pennsylvania also hosts several national trails, including the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, the North Country Trail and the Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail.

Figure 13: DCNR Applications Received Versus Funded, 2008-2014



Land and Water Conservation Fund
The Land and Water Conservation Fund, established in 1965, protects large landscapes and helps local communities acquire and develop parks. Through the Federal Land Protection Program, over $155 million has helped to protect places such as the Gettysburg National Military Park, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and the Appalachian Trail. On the state level, the National Park Service has funded more than 1,500 projects through $165 million in LWCF matching grants to Pennsylvania communities.

However, in recent years those federal funds have been greatly reduced. Pennsylvania's network of protected lands, including 1,400 LWCF-protected sites, need continual re-investment and improvements to assure that they remain accessible and readily available for public recreation. LWCF helped Pennsylvania establish one of the finest state and local park systems in the nation. The lack of full funding continues to stress these

DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program Funding Sources

The Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund (Key 93)
Generated from a portion of Realty Transfer Tax, the Keystone Fund is DCNR's primary source of funding to support grants for recreation and land conservation. Grants are available for community recreation for planning, development and land acquisition; rivers conservation plans and projects; land trust projects; and trails projects.

The Environmental Stewardship Fund (Growing Greener I)
Funding for ESF is from tipping fees placed on disposal of municipal waste and from the Marcellus Legacy Fund (Act 13) of 2012. DCNR's portion of the fund is invested in state park and forestry facilities as well as grants for greenways, trails, open space, natural areas, river corridors and watersheds, community parks and recreation and other projects to conserve the biological diversity of the commonwealth.

Heritage Areas Funding
Act 46 of 2010 established the Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program within DCNR to identify, protect, enhance and promote the historic, recreational, natural and cultural resources of the commonwealth. Heritage areas funding supports the implementation of these activities via the state's 12 designated heritage areas and is contingent upon appropriation through the state budget process.

Snowmobile and ATV Fund
Generated from snowmobile and ATV registration fees, grants are available for the planning, acquisition of land, development and maintenance of areas and facilities for snowmobile and all-terrain vehicle use; the purchase or lease of equipment for trail construction and maintenance; and the development of educational materials and programs.

Federal Highway Administration funds to the Pennsylvania Recreational Trails program
Funding for the Recreational Trails Program is provided to the commonwealth through the Federal Highway Administration. Grants are available for the construction, renovation and maintenance of trails and trail-related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trails, the purchase or lease of equipment for trail maintenance and construction, and the development of educational materials and programs.

Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
Generated from revenue received from off-shore leasing for oil and gas on the Outer Continental Shelf, grants are available for general public outdoor park, recreation and conservation, land acquisition and development projects.

Table 1: Summary of Recreation Project Funding Need by Category

Category	Amount	Notes
Local Park and Rec Funding	$22 million	Based on 2014 DCNR Grant Application Demand
Acquisition/Land Conservation	$30 million	Based on 2014 DCNR Grant Application Demand
Greenways/Trails	$15 million	Based on 2014 DCNR Grant Application Demand
River Infrastructure/Access	$1.5 million	Based on 2014 DCNR Grant Application Demand
State Park	$400 million	DCNR estimate for needed construction, energy improvements and other non-maintenance projects, 2015-19
State Forest	$315 million	DCNR estimate for infrastructure needs, including roads

Source: DCNR

resources, and the restoration of LWCF to the fully authorized level is critical to maintain Pennsylvania's recreational areas. In addition, LWCF will sunset in 2015. Re-authorization of this law is necessary in order to move Pennsylvania's recreation and conservation agenda forward.

Recommendations

The importance of these permanent conservation and recreation funding sources cannot be underestimated, and, in turn, the importance of continued education of the public about these sources is critical. Furthermore, over the next five years the funding of LWCF at fully authorized levels could significantly advance the

conservation and recreation priorities of the public. The plan's public input process and survey research results have identified top priorities for federal and matching recreation and conservation funding. Pennsylvania's priorities for the expenditure of LWCF funds over the next five years include:

- Acquisition of critical wildlife habitat, forested watersheds, wetlands and riparian corridors
- Rehabilitation of existing local parks with a focus on playground replacement and upgrades

These priorities reflect the interest in investing and reinvesting in the green infrastructure of the commonwealth.

Federal and state funds alone will never be enough to continue to maintain and expand Pennsylvania's green infrastructure and move the comprehensive recommendations in this plan forward. Partnerships with the state's philanthropic community, the outdoor recreation industry and local business interests can provide critical leverage and help grow the funds available. In addition, since most Pennsylvanians recognize that parks, trails and open space are essential components of our health care system, partnerships with health care providers, community health foundations and park and recreation professionals can be a tool to increase awareness and funding.

[28] Center for Survey Research, Penn State Harrisburg, 2014 Poll. http://csr.hbg.psu.edu/Portals/44/Press Release_TPL_Nature Conservancy_Spring 2014 PSP.pdf

[29] "Pennsylvania's Return on Investment in the Keystone, Recreation, Park, and Conservation Fund," The Trust for Public Land, 2013. http://www.tpl.org/return-investment-pas-keystone-fund

1 Ensure the continued stability and permanence of existing state and federal conservation and recreation funding sources.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Advocate for the re-authorization of the LWCF to include state funding at fully authorized levels through support letters and celebratory events.

b. Advocate for the continued inclusion of the federal Recreational Trails Program and Transportation Alternative Program as part of the national transportation funding.

c. Convene a state funding coordination team to assure projects are coordinated, leveraged and funded with the most appropriate funding sources.

d. Develop a 25-year anniversary report (2018) celebrating the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund contributions to Pennsylvania's state and local parks and conservation areas.

2 Foster use of new revenue sources in support of recreation and conservation.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Explore and identify creative strategies to expand state and local funding for conservation and recreation.

b. Provide technical assistance to local governments and charitable organizations for establishing local acquisition programs as authorized by the newly amended Pennsylvania Open Space Law.

c. Educate user groups, decision makers and beneficiaries of state funding sources to maintain support for and expand awareness and understanding of these funding sources.

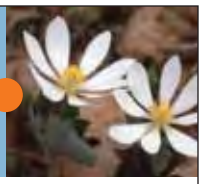
3 Prioritize the use of federal LWCF funds that come to Pennsylvania over the next five years.

• ACTION STEPS

a. Set the acquisition of critical wildlife habitat, forested watersheds, wetlands and riparian corridors for nature-based recreation as a LWCF priority.

b. Set rehabilitation of existing local parks with a focus on playground replacement and upgrades as a LWCF priority.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX



SUMMARY OF PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION STEPS

This chart summarizes all programmatic recommendations and action steps in the 2014-2019 Pennsylvania Outdoor Recreation Plan. Partners included are Technical Advisory Committee members who have affirmed their commitment to implementing plan recommendations, as well as suggested partners who are knowledgeble about the topics. A list of partner acronyms can be found at the end of the matrix. The plan recommends continuing the TAC to help oversee plan implementation, and the development of work groups for priority action items as needed.

Health and Wellness: Promoting Healthy Living Through Outdoor Connections	
Recommendations and Action Steps	**Implementing Partners**
1. Reconnect people to the outdoors through recreation opportunities and experiences.	
a. Celebrate Get Outdoors PA annually with special Get Outdoors Days hosted by regional community partners that offer instructional programs for various outdoor recreation activities.	Get Outdoors PA Flagship and Community Partners
b. Provide templates to state and local parks agencies for them to list amenities, resources and educational materials so schools and youth-based organizations can more easily incorporate local outdoor activities into curricula.	DCNR, DOH, PDE, PRPS, PSAHPERD, PHMC, PRO Wellness
c. Use the PA Department of Health's 15 pilot school districts to develop, implement and evaluate comprehensive school physical activity programs, and identify opportunities to connect youth to the outdoors through places for physical activity.	DOH, PDE, DCNR, PSAPHERD, Pro Wellness, PennDOT, University of Pittsburgh
d. Provide a best-practices forum to encourage local efforts to use technology to design and develop programs that link people to the outdoors.	Get Outdoors PA Flagship Partners, PSAPHERD
e. Identify partner organizations to spearhead at least five programs that encourage participation in outdoor recreation opportunities by diverse populations with guidance from the Governor's advisory commissions on African American, Asian American and Latino affairs.	DCNR, Advisory Commissions

Recommendations and Action Steps	Implementing Partners
2. Continue to strengthen connections between outdoor recreation and health in communities for people of all ages and abilities.	
a. Fund and support pilot programs with innovative partnerships that build a health and wellness connection with outdoor recreation programming, emphasizing active recreation, diverse populations and volunteer recruitment and training.	DOH, DCNR, PPFF, DOA
b. Link state grant program criteria to community projects designed to strengthen the health and outdoor recreation connection.	DCNR, DOH, PennDOT
c. Develop educational materials and best practices to highlight and encourage local successes in linking outdoor recreation and health for planning, recreation, community and health care leaders.	DCNR, DOH, PRO Wellness, PRPS
d. Identify and work with five pilot communities, representing specific population groups, to develop and distribute materials that highlight available outdoor amenities and correlating fitness benefits.	DCNR, DOA, DOH, PDC, LVCIL
3. Examine the built environment and encourage local communities to promote healthful transportation alternatives.	
a. Continue to align PennDOT and DCNR trail development, including bicycle and pedestrian trail coordination and grant making.	PennDOT, DCNR, RTC, DCED, MPOs, RPOs
b. Develop land use planning guidelines and best practices to integrate outdoor and green infrastructure initiatives within multi-municipal comprehensive plans and/or greenway and open space plans.	DCNR, DCED, PALTA, CCAP
c. Provide guidelines and technical assistance to help communities conduct walkability and bikeability assessments and apply for national recognition as bicycle- and/or walk-friendly communities.	PennDOT, DCNR, DCED, DOH, RTC, CCAP, PDC, PSATS
d. Provide technical assistance to communities to consider the addition of bicycle lanes, where appropriate, during the planning process for transportation projects.	PennDOT, MPOs, RPOs, CCAP
e. Provide technical assistance to help communities and school districts take advantage of multimodal and transportation alternative funding opportunities in PennDOT, DCED and the Commonwealth Financing Authority to address challenges in the built environment.	PennDOT, DCED, PDE, PRO Wellness
4. Enhance and promote healthful outdoor recreation through strategic partnerships with the health care community.	
a. Develop Pennsylvania-specific park/trail "prescription" programs to encourage physical activity in the outdoors in cooperation with health care providers, insurance companies, health foundations, economic development organizations, local government associations and social service providers.	DOH, DCNR, PRPS, PRO Wellness
b. Encourage partnerships between recreation and planning professionals and the health care community to identify private funding opportunities, cooperate in community wellness efforts and implement community health assessment strategies.	DOH, DCNR, PDC
c. Convene statewide and regional summits that bring together health care and parks and recreation professionals to explore ways to improve physical activity through outdoor recreation.	DOH, DCNR, PRPS, PPFF, PALTA, PDC, SGP, Heritage Areas, Conservation Landscapes, PRO Wellness

Local Parks And Recreation: Enhancing Close-To-Home Outdoor Recreation	
Recommendations and Action Steps	**Implementing Partners**
1. Connect citizens to close-to-home recreational opportunities and green space.	
a. Develop a diverse collection of park and playground designs that exemplify green practices, appeal to all ages and abilities, create whole-family recreation spaces and incorporate popular and innovative trends in recreation.	DCNR, PRPS, LVCIL, Local Recreation and Parks Departments
b. Launch a mobile-friendly website for residents to easily find local parks and collect photos, stories and amenities from users.	DCNR, CCAP, PEC, Local Recreation and Parks Departments
c. Identify and take steps to reduce barriers so that every citizen has equal access to local and school parks and outdoor recreation opportunities.	DCNR, TPL, LVCIL, Local Recreation and Parks Departments
d. Develop research to explore recreation needs and behaviors of African Americans, Hispanics and other ethnic groups.	PSU, DCNR, Advisory Commissions
2. Position local park facilities and recreation programs as essential services.	
a. Challenge local communities to increase the portion of their municipal budget dedicated to parks and recreation to at least 5 percent over the next five years.	PSAB, PLM, DCNR, CCAP, PRPS, Local Recreation and Parks Departments
b. Implement the recommended approach developed by Penn State University to assess the economic impact of local parks and recreation.	PRPS, DCNR
c. Develop a unified brand for local parks and recreation with accompanying marketing strategy, toolkit and training that helps providers communicate the benefits and value of local parks and recreation.	PRPS, DCNR, PSAB, PSATS, PLM, CCAP
d. Establish a gold medal award program for Pennsylvania local park and recreation agencies.	PRPS, DCNR

Recommendations and Action Steps	Implementing Partners
3. Create and leverage partnerships that expand outdoor recreation opportunities.	
a. Partner with educators to expand environmental stewardship opportunities to increase efficiency, encourage local and state collaboration, focus on common priorities and increase youth involvement.	PDE, DCNR, ATC
b. Increase the number of outdoor recreation events available to all regions of the state by adding 100 new community partners to Get Outdoors PA.	Get Outdoors PA Flagship and Community Partners
c. Identify and promote strategic, alternative and non-traditional revenue sources for recreation programming and local parks.	PRPS, DCNR
d. Encourage educational institutions to partner with local communities to share resources through mechanisms such as joint-use agreements and collaborative programming.	PRPS, DOH, PDE
e. Support the creation of friends and advocacy groups to assist park and recreation providers in protecting, enhancing and interpreting natural resources, local parks and heritage areas.	PRPS, PPFF, PALTA, DCNR, Heritage Areas, Conservation Landscapes
4. Coordinate strategic investment in local priorities and respond to emerging trends.	
a. Work with all 67 counties to identify gaps in local outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide support and technical assistance to advance recreation and conservation planning and implementation.	CCAP, DCNR, DCED, Heritage Areas
b. Collect nominations from local communities to create a Top 10 most endangered parks list, and partner with state and local agencies to target funding to revitalize these parks.	PRPS, DCNR, PSATS, PSAB, CCAP, PLM, PHMC
c. Create a new Rural Communities Leadership Team to develop an action plan including implementation, funding and volunteer recruitment strategies for local parks and recreation in rural areas.	DCNR, CRP, PSATS, PSAB, PRPS, USDA, CCAP
d. Create a Natural Play Area Pilot Program to develop and monitor natural play areas.	DCNR
e. Implement the PA Urban Park and Recreation Alliance action plan for local parks and recreation in municipalities with populations over 10,000 residents.	PA Urban Park and Recreation Alliance Leadership Team
5. Provide expanded parks and recreation technical assistance to communities.	
a. Develop a Maintenance Institute promoting low-maintenance design, preventative maintenance, green and sustainable design and other practices that will reduce maintenance costs.	PRPS, DCNR, RTC, PA Urban Park and Recreation Alliance Leadership Team
b. Expand Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance Program and the Peer Program to encourage multi-municipal and county-based agencies through increased promotion and funding to municipalities.	DCNR, PRPS, Heritage Areas
c. Enhance DCNR's local parks web-based resources to feature best practices and resources on emerging topics such as green and sustainable practices, funding, partnerships, technology and stewardship education.	DCNR
d. Hold a Recreation and Conservation Leadership Summit, and launch a Leadership Development and Mentoring Program for parks, recreation and resource management professionals.	PRPS, DCNR

Tourism And Economic Development: Creating Opportunities for Community Prosperity

Recommendations and Action Steps	Implementing Partners
1. Organize and market outdoor recreation and heritage tourism assets and amenities more effectively.	
a. Work with the PA Tourism Partnership to include outdoor recreation and heritage tourism as key components of the state tourism promotion and branding strategy, and specifically call out the significance of trails within this.	DCED, DCNR, PDA, PTP, TPAs, PATT, PEC, PHMC, Heritage Areas, Conservation Landscapes
b. Establish a state agency workgroup to more cohesively promote outdoor recreation and heritage tourism.	DCNR, PFBC, PGC, PHMC, PDA, DCED, Heritage Areas
c. Work with tourism partners to develop itineraries and travel packages that target the outdoor recreation product and experiences.	TPAs, CVBs, PATT, PTP, PDC, Heritage Areas
d. Actively market and promote hunting, fishing and recreational shooting opportunities and events to further engage all audiences in these traditional activities.	PGC, PFBC, NWTF, TU, PFSC, TPAs, Sportsmen's Organizations
e. Obtain a major sponsor to fund a statewide marketing effort promoting Get Outdoors PA to prospective community partners, program providers and the public at large.	Get Outdoors PA Flagship Partners
f. Identify gaps and issues with current wayfinding signage for outdoor recreation and heritage destinations, and make recommendations to PennDOT and State Signing Trust.	PennDOT, State Signing Trust, Heritage Areas, DCNR, DCED, PHMC, TPAs, RPOs, MPOs
g. Republish the statewide PA Outdoor Adventure Guide bi-annually.	DCED, DCNR, PFBC, PGC
2. Develop and implement a plan for communicating the economic and community benefits of outdoor recreation, heritage tourism and land conservation.	
a. Continue the development of the Nature-based Placemaking Program (e.g. trail towns, river towns, gateway communities, etc.), and pilot community projects to provide technical assistance, training, mentoring and information resources and exchange for local government and business leaders.	PDC, DCNR, PPFF, PHMC, PEC, SGP, Heritage Areas, Conservation Landscapes, Progress Fund Trail Towns Program
b. Work with tourism partners and chambers of commerce to hold at least one meeting per region per year that focuses on the value of the outdoor recreation economy and ways to encourage growth in this industry sector.	DCED, TPAs, DCNR, PPFF, PTP, PATT, PDC, Heritage Areas
c. Place case studies, economic data and other resources on agency and partner websites.	DCED, PGC, PFBC, DCNR, PDC, PALTA, Heritage Areas, Conservation Landscapes, County and Regional Economic Development Agencies
d. Develop a short video on model initiatives as a tool for building greater awareness on economic benefits to communities.	DCNR, PGC, PFBC, DCED, PDC

Recommendations and Action Steps	Implementing Partners
3. Increase access to business development resources and incentives for small tourism and outdoor recreation businesses and entrepreneurs.	
a. Seek public-private partnerships to provide non-traditional opportunities for outdoor recreation businesses, leverage outdoor recreation infrastructure investments and assist state agencies in cost-effectively delivering outdoor recreation experiences across the state.	DCED, DCNR, PDC
b. Establish a new loan investor program or more fully equip existing programs that provide gap financing for entrepreneurs developing businesses and products based upon the state's outdoor recreation assets.	DCED, LDDs, RPOs, IDAs, Progress Fund
c. Replicate the PA Wilds Small Business Ombudsman model in other places in the state to support small business development around outdoor recreation assets.	Conservation Landscapes, Heritage Areas, DCED
d. Continue the First Industries Loan Fund for Tourism to support tourism-related businesses that dovetail with outdoor recreation assets and assist continued expansion of the outdoor recreation industry sector in the state.	DCED
4. Use new and existing research to document the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, heritage tourism and land conservation.	
a. Produce a broad, statewide analysis on the benefits and economic impact of all types of recreational trails including rail trails, hiking trails, water trails, mountain biking trails, equestrian trails and motorized trails.	PA Trails Advisory Committee, Trail Stakeholder Organizations
b. Work with the outdoor recreation industry to produce a statewide assessment of the economic impact of outdoor recreation and outdoor recreation-based businesses on the state's economy and publicize the results with key stakeholders.	PTP, DCNR, DCED
c. Through a collaborative effort among agencies and partners with an outdoor recreation interest, publish a report every three years that aggregates and documents economic impact data and case studies for outdoor recreation.	DCNR, PFBC, PGC, DCED, USFWS, NPS, ANF
d. Undertake a targeted return-on-investment study around a few specific outdoor recreation infrastructure investments (e.g. Elk Country Visitor Center, critical trail links) to document resulting business development activity and direct economic impact.	DCNR, DCED, PDC

Resource Management and Stewardship: Sustaining Natural Resources and Public Investments	
Recommendations and Action Steps	**Implementing Partners**
1. Conserve and protect Pennsylvania's natural places.	
a. Protect critical wildlife habitat, forested watersheds, wetlands and riparian corridors through conservation planning and easements, nature preserves and land conservation programs.	PALTA, DCNR, PGC, TU, Land Trusts
b. Restore and repurpose brownfields, abandoned mine lands and other damaged lands for recreation and conservation purposes through at least five pilot projects.	DCNR, DEP, PEC, PHMC
c. Develop partnerships that include state agencies, volunteer watershed organizations and local governments to update and implement 25 River Conservation Plans, with a particular focus on restoring rivers for public recreation.	DCNR, DEP, PEC/POWR, TU, Conservation Districts
d. Develop guidance and expand resources at ConservationTools.org to help organizations and local governments protect wildlife habitat, greenways, and other open spaces; implement appropriate public access; and plan for conservation and development best suited to the land.	PALTA
e. Track conservation progress through the development of a GIS layer of conserved lands.	PALTA, DCNR, CCAP
2. Maintain existing park, trail and recreation areas, and prioritize other infrastructure needs.	
a. Identify top 10 priority trail gaps and close gaps in five years.	PA Trails Advisory Committee, Trail Stakeholder Organizations, RTC, PennDOT, DCNR, MPOs, RPOs,
b. Complete Pennsylvania's five-year strategic plan for land and water trails.	PA Trails Advisory Committee, PA Water Trail Partnership, Trail Stakeholder Organizations
c. Increase full-service overnight amenities at public and private facilities.	DCNR, PA Campground Owners Association
d. Improve ADA access and universal design by updating facilities to meet standards.	DCNR, LVCIL
e. Coordinate with local, state and heritage organizations to develop management and improvement plans for recreation areas that incorporate strategies for managing historic and cultural resources.	DCNR, PHMC, Heritage Areas, Conservation Landscapes
f. Complete the 2013-15 $200 million state park and forest infrastructure improvement plan and PA Parks and Forests Foundation's special projects list.	DCNR, PPFF

Recommendations and Action Steps	Implementing Partners
3. Cultivate support to protect wildlife and fish habitat through wildlife viewing, fishing and hunting.	
a. Expand successful hunting and fishing programs such as hunter education, field days, mentored youth opportunities and family fishing days by training local organizations, state and local park personnel and volunteers.	PGC, PFBC,TU, NWTF, PFSC, Get Outdoors PA Partners, Sportsmen's Organizations
b. Enhance access to wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing and shooting sports opportunities close to population centers, and improve communication to connect people to those opportunities.	PGC, PFBC, TU, NWTF, PFSC, Sportsmen's Organizations
c. Engage the large audience of infrequent hunting and fishing participants with targeted marketing campaigns to encourage them to hunt and fish more frequently.	PGC, PFBC, TU, NWTF, PFSC
4. Develop and implement shale-gas best practices for recreation, and pursue new recreation opportunities	
a. Mitigate impacts of gas development to recreation, and consider possibilities to develop new recreation opportunities.	DCNR, DEP, PA Wilds Planning Team
b. Continually review, examine and promote the range of best management practices and guidance to manage impacts to recreation and natural resources.	DCNR, DEP

Funding: Ensuring Long-Term Financial Stability for Recreation and Conservation	
Recommendations and Action Steps	**Implementing Partners**
1. Ensure the continued stability and permanence of existing state and federal conservation and recreation funding sources.	
a. Advocate for the re-authorization of the LWCF to include state funding at fully authorized levels through support letters and celebratory events.	PLM, PALTA, PSATS, PRPS, PSAB, DCNR, TPL
b. Advocate for the continued inclusion of the federal Recreational Trails Program and Transportation Alternative Program as part of the national transportation funding.	PennDOT, DCNR, RTC, ATC, PEC, Trail Stakeholder Organizations
c. Convene a state funding coordination team to assure projects are coordinated, leveraged and funded with the most appropriate funding sources.	PennDOT, DCNR, DCED, DEP
d. Develop a 25-year anniversary report (2018) celebrating the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund contributions to Pennsylvania's state and local parks and conservation areas.	PALTA, PPFF, PRPS, DCNR, PEC
2. Foster use of new revenue sources in support of recreation and conservation.	
a. Explore and identify creative strategies to expand state and local funding for conservation and recreation.	PRPS, PALTA, PPFF, DCNR, TPL
b. Provide technical assistance to local governments and charitable organizations for establishing local acquisition programs as authorized by the newly amended Pennsylvania Open Space Law.	PALTA, PSATS, TPL
c. Educate user groups, decision makers and beneficiaries of state funding sources to maintain support for and expand awareness and understanding of these funding sources.	PALTA, PRPS, PPFF, RTC, PEC, PSATS, PLM, PSAB, CCAP
3. Prioritize the use of federal LWCF funds that come to Pennsylvania over the next five years.	
a. Set the acquisition of critical wildlife habitat, forested watersheds, wetlands and riparian corridors for nature-based recreation as a LWCF priority.	DCNR
b. Set rehabilitation of existing local parks with a focus on playground replacement and upgrades as a LWCF priority.	DCNR

Acronyms for Agencies, Organizations and Terms Referred to in Plan

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ANF	Allegheny National Forest
ATC	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
ATV	All-Terrain Vehicle
CCAP	County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania
CDC	Center for Disease Control
CFA	Commonwealth Financing Authority
CRP	Center for Rural PA
CVB	Convention and Visitors Bureau
DCED*	Department of Community and Economic Development
DCNR*	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
DEP*	Department of Environmental Protection
DOA*	Department of Aging
DOH*	Department of Health
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
IDA	Industrial Development Authority
KECA	Keystone Elk Country Alliance
KTA	Keystone Trails Association
LDD	Local Development District
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
LVCIL	Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NPS	National Park Service
NWTF	National Wild Turkey Federation
OHV	Off-Highway Vehicle
PALTA	Pennsylvania Land Trust Association
PATT	Pennsylvania Association of Travel and Tourism
PDA*	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
PDC	Pennsylvania Downtown Center
PDE*	Pennsylvania Department of Education
PEC	Pennsylvania Environmental Council
PennDOT*	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
PFBC*	Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
PFSC	Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
PGC*	Pennsylvania Game Commission
PHMC*	Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
PLM	Pennsylvania League of Municipalities
POWR	Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers
PPFF	Pennsylvania Parks & Forests Foundation
PRPS	Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society
PSAB	Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs
PSAHPERD	Pennsylvania State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance
PSSA	Pennsylvania State Snowmobile Association
PSATS	Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors
PSU	Pennsylvania State University
PTP	Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership
RPO	Regional Planning Organization
RTC	Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
SCORP	Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
SGP	Susquehanna Greenway Partnership
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TPA	Tourism Promotion Agency
TPL	Trust for Public Land
TU	Trout Unlimited
ULI	Urban Land Institute
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Indicates Pennsylvania state agency*

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PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, pages 18, 20, 30, 59, 70 (bottom)
Reading Recreation Commission: pages 4, 36, 44, 51
Bud Wills, pages 19, 70, 75
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Cindy Adams Dunn, Acting Secretary