Appendix E
Pennsylvania's Priority Trail Gaps

Since 2009, DCNR has worked with local trail providers to identify and map trail gaps along Pennsylvania's statewide major greenways and regionally significant trail systems. Identifying and prioritizing the closing of priority trail gaps is believed to be the most effective method for creating an interconnected network of trails and greenways. To support this approach, DCNR provides additional consideration to grant requests that address the closure of these gaps.

In 2018, with 248 official gaps identified but very few closed, DCNR convened a small workgroup of trail professionals and state agency representatives to review the process and identify ways to improve the program. First, the group agreed that identifying and prioritizing trail gaps was an effective and worthwhile approach to building a statewide network of greenways. One of the most significant needs identified was for clearer criteria for what constitutes a priority trail gap. To address this need, the workgroup developed the following criteria for projects to be considered a priority trail gap:
•   The gap is along a statewide major greenway or regionally significant trail
•   The gap connects two existing segments of trail or connects an existing trail to a state park, state forest, or key community
•   The gap is five miles or less
•   The trail itself has been formalized in an official planning document

The workgroup also determined that with the establishment of a new definition, DCNR should reach out to the managers of the statewide major greenways and regionally significant trails to allow them the opportunity to update the status of their gaps as well as provide new data for gaps that meet the updated criteria. Establishing reliable data for trail gaps can help quantify the need for trail funding on a statewide basis, aiding the development of funding strategies and transportation plans.

DCNR received updates on the existing 248 gaps and received 87 new gaps for consideration. After evaluating all the data, it was determined that out of the 248 existing gaps, 77 met the new criteria, 46 had been closed, and 125 did not meet the revised criteria. For the 87 new gap submissions, 35 met the new criteria and 52 did not. This means there are a total of 112 gaps that met the new priority trail gap criteria. The results are published on the Pennsylvania's Priority Trail Gaps map.

These newly vetted 112 gaps require approximately 200 miles of new trail, the construction of approximately 41 bridges, and the rehabilitation of 21 bridges. DCNR will continue to work with local trail providers to regularly update the priority trail gap data, including the resubmission of gaps that previously were determined to not meet Priority Trail Gap criteria.

Top 10 Trail Gaps in Pennsylvania
From the list of priority trail gaps, DCNR and PTAC identify the top 10 trail gaps—the state's most critical gaps requiring significant time and resources to address. These 10 trail gaps represent projects that:
• Will connect contiguous open miles of trails
• Require construction or rehabilitation of major infrastructure
• Require a large amount of funding (generally over $1 million)
• Require interagency coordination

In 2019, two Priority Trail Gaps were elevated to the list of top 10 trail gaps:

- **Buffalo Valley Rail Trail—Lewisburg Gap (#241)**: The Buffalo Valley Rail Trail is a 9.5-mile, shared-use trail between Lewisburg and Mifflinburg boroughs. The current crossing of U.S. Highway 15 into Lewisburg Borough is unsafe for trail users. Closure of this gap will create a safer connection between the majority of trail miles and the 0.5-mile section of trail in Lewisburg.
- **Enola Low Grade Trail—Martic Forge Bridge (#329)**: The Martic Forge Bridge is a former railroad bridge located over Pequea Creek between Martic and Conestoga townships in Lancaster County. In 2017, the bridge was converted for bicycle and pedestrian use along the Enola Low Grade Trail. In the summer of 2018, the bridge was severely damaged by arson. Officials estimate reconstruction costs to be approximately $2.5 million.

As Top 10 Trail Gap projects close, new projects will continue to be evaluated for listing in the top 10. DCNR maintains a story map of the current Top 10 Trail Gaps.