



2020-2024 Pennsylvania Outdoor Recreation Plan Outdoor Recreation Access and Need in Pennsylvania



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Finding and Using the Web Maps

1. How do I find the outdoor recreation access and need web maps and analysis?

The recreation access and need web map is available at the [DCNR Outdoor Recreation Plan webpage](#). A link to the map is in the section “Outdoor Recreation Access and Need Maps.” You can also use this [direct link to the map](#).

The Trust for Public Land’s ParkServe tool is available by visiting tpl.org/parkserve. Type in your community name, then click “Search.” Scroll down and click “See Map” to view the ParkServe web map.

Note that ParkServe does not yet cover all communities in Pennsylvania. An update is planned for 2021 that will expand its coverage statewide.

2. Where can I learn how to use these web maps?

A brief tutorial video is available on the [DCNR YouTube page](#).

3. Can I export the images and statistics from the web maps?

You can export a report from the Trust for Public Land’s ParkServe tool using the “Export Report” feature after running the ParkEvaluator tool. Unfortunately, there is currently no export option available for the DCNR outdoor recreation access and need web map. An alternative is to take a screenshot using a built-in application like the Windows Snipping tool.

4. I’m a GIS user. Can I access the data from this analysis directly?

Yes. The GIS layers from this analysis are available for both download and web map use on the [Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access \(PASDA\) website](#). Look for the layers that begin with “Outdoor Recreation Access.”

5. I’m a municipal or county official. How can I get help interpreting this analysis and improve access for my residents?

A good first point of contact is your DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation [regional advisor](#). They can help connect you with grants and technical assistance to build and improve parks, trails, and water access in your community.

Troubleshooting

6. When I try to open the access and need map, I get an error that says, “Unsupported browser.” What does that mean? How can I fix it?

The recreation access and need web map will run on most modern web browsers including Microsoft Edge, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Apple Safari. It will not run on older browsers, including Internet Explorer.

Even on supported browsers, the web map may not load if your browser has not been recently updated. If you are using a supported browser and the web map still does not load, check that you have the latest version of your browser. Update as needed, then load the web map again. You may need to restart your browser and/or refresh the web map to clear the error.

7. When I type in my county or municipality on the web map search, no results appear. Or when I look at the list of municipalities, I only see those that start with “A” or “B.” What’s wrong?

To help the web map load faster, the filters may not list all the options. You can still search. Start typing, then click “Search More.” Your result should then appear in the dropdown. Note that the filters are sensitive to spelling.

8. It’s a little odd that the parks and other outdoor spaces are blue on the recreation access and need map. Why aren’t they green?

The DCNR recreation access and need map uses a colorblind-friendly palette to make it more accessible for diverse users.

9. A park or trail appears in an area that’s identified as in need. What’s going on?

The most likely cause is an improvement in the park or trail data. The analysis took place in 2019 using data from January 2019. We used the best available data on outdoor recreation locations in Pennsylvania, but these databases are always improving. The web map features live links to these databases. Facilities created since January 2019 may now show on the map but not be reflected in the analysis. For older facilities, their public accessibility may not have been known at the time of the analysis.

For trails, accessibility was defined based on trailhead points, not the trail line itself. A trail may pass through an area of need, but it won’t count as providing access unless there is a designated access point identified in the data.

Methods

10. Where can I learn more about how the analysis was conducted?

A [full report](#), including methods, is available online. The report is also available on the [outdoor recreation access and need web map's home page](#).

11. What kinds of facilities were included in the analysis?

We took a broad view of outdoor recreation. Alongside traditional sites like local, state, and national parks, we also included public lands like state and national forests. Land trust nature preserves were also included if they were open to the public.

Trails and trailheads came from a combination of Explore PA Trails and the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Water access points came from a combination of Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission officially designated points and state water trail access points.

12. Are school parks included in the analysis?

No. This analysis examined public recreation access. Although some school parks are open to the public when school is not in session, many are not. For more detailed descriptions of methods and findings, please see the [project's final report](#).

13. How accurate is this analysis?

Even though no GIS database is perfect, the data used for this analysis was very good. For example, the managers of the recreation lands dataset, WeConservePA, estimate that the database contains 99% of government-protected land and 95% of land trust-protected land in Pennsylvania.

That said, when applying this data, it's always a good idea to corroborate this statewide analysis with your own local knowledge of outdoor recreation opportunities and access points.

14. How was diversity considered in this analysis?

The access analysis used the U.S. Census Bureau’s “block group” data. Census block groups are the finest resolution, publicly available data that still provide full demographic information. Thanks to this data, we were able to assess recreation access and need by numerous categories including race/ethnicity, age, and household income.

15. Do the web maps take facility quality into account? What about size?

The analysis looks simply at the presence or absence of facilities, not their quality. Data on facility condition was not available.

Size was evaluated to the extent that a larger facility will have more entry points and therefore a larger service area. But regardless of facility size, all facilities were evaluated based on a ten-minute walk.

As a result, an area shown as having access may still need investment in maintenance. It may also warrant more or larger outdoor recreation facilities depending on its population.

For more information on this topic, see the Trust for Public Land’s report [The Heat Is On](#).

16. How were walk/drive times determined?

The project used a network analysis based on roads. Esri’s Street Map Premium layer was used to create the service areas. The layer includes fields for speed limits and walking speeds. For more detailed descriptions of methods and findings, please see the [project’s final report](#).

17. For the 10-minute drive analyses, was public transit considered?

No. As noted for the previous question, drivetimes came from an analysis of road networks.

18. I’ve identified a missing park or trail in the analysis. Where can I submit corrections?

The [PA Conserved Land web map](#) has a built-in tool to submit updates and corrections for missing publicly accessible land. Missing local parks can also be added by completing the [Explore PA Local Parks update form](#). Missing trail data may be submitted to Explore PA Trails by emailing explorepatrails@pa.gov.

19. What determines whether an area of need is considered “low,” “medium,” or “high?”

Need level is determined at the U.S. Census block-group level based on three factors:

1. Population density (50%)
2. Youth (under 19) density (25%)
3. Low-income household density (25%)

Need levels are calculated within each county separately. The density required for high-need in an urban county (e.g., Philadelphia County) will be different from the density required in a rural county (e.g., Forest County).

20. How is DCNR using this information?

DCNR has integrated the outdoor recreation access and need results into application scoring for its Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2) grants. Applicants can receive additional consideration for their project if it occurs in an area identified as “Medium” or “High” need on the recreation access and need web map.

For more information on DCNR grants, please contact your DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation [regional advisor](#).