



Parks Horizons

A Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan
for Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania



Funded in part by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation through a grant from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund.

Executive Summary

Purpose

The Westmoreland County Commissioners, in 1998, recognized the need to study the County's recreation and open space opportunities. The Commissioners authorized the County's Bureau of Parks and Recreation to form a thirty-one person Steering Committee composed of county residents and to initiate a county-wide Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan. The Plan, **Parks Horizons**, was conceived to:

- Identify the major issues and problems facing the County now and in the future.
- Define a long-term vision for the County's various park, recreation and open space opportunities.
- Formulate policies and strategies to guide the planning, development and integration of the County's park, recreation and open space resources.
- Establish a framework for cooperation and collaboration between the various recreation and open space providers.
- Define and prioritize short-term and long-term implementation strategies.

Background

Through a series of analyses and comparable county assessments, several issues regarding park and recreation planning and service delivery were identified. These findings provided factual information with which to solicit community input, identify priorities and establish long-term recommendations. Some of the key findings include:

- There are over 144,000 acres of publicly accessible parks and open space areas in Westmoreland County. The County's parks account for 2,674 acres of this total.
- The 1990 Westmoreland County population was 370,321. By the year 2015, the population is projected to increase to 410,000; by the year 2050, this figure is expected to rise to approximately 480,000 persons.
- Westmoreland County's senior population (over 59 years of age) accounts for 23% of its total population and ranks as the second largest in Pennsylvania.
- Based on national recreation planning standards, Westmoreland County and its 65 municipalities currently have neighborhood, community, metropolitan and regional park acreage deficiencies totaling over 420 acres. Assuming the projected population growth for 2015 occurs, this deficiency will grow to 721 acres; by 2050 the deficit will reach 1,219 acres.
- Historically, Westmoreland County has allocated approximately 1.1% of its annual budget for the Bureau of Parks and Recreation's daily operating activities.

Community Involvement and Perceptions

Based on public feedback obtained through the Steering Committee, 2,391 returned mail-in surveys and seven regional community meetings, the County has learned that:

- Many residents feel that parks and recreation significantly add to the County's quality of life and are crucial to successfully attracting new residents, businesses and industries to the County.
- The community wants to provide for future park and recreation needs by addressing acreage deficiencies as soon as is practical. Residents feel that the County should proceed with park facility improvements based on the following priorities:
 1. Existing Park Maintenance;
 2. Targeted New Facilities within Existing Parks; and
 3. Trails
- Most residents are pleased with the quality of the recreation facilities and services that the County provides. Residents want the County's annual budget appropriation for parks and recreation to be increased and directed towards existing facility maintenance and organized recreation programs.
- The Bureau of Parks and Recreation needs to increase public knowledge and awareness regarding the County's park and recreation resources.
- Residents have expressed the desire for more outdoor recreation opportunities such as environmental education and family-oriented programs. Moreover, the community feels that organized programs should be offered at multiple County park sites.
- There is general satisfaction with the County's current role in municipal recreation. Residents feel that the Bureau should continue to support recreation facilities typically used by municipalities but should also provide professional assistance in the form of technical expertise, project facilitation and planning coordination.
- If necessary, residents would be willing to annually commit additional funds per household to develop new parks or trails or expand existing parks, trails or open space areas.

Mission

The Mission of **Parks Horizons** is to:

Enhance and assure the quality of life of Westmoreland County residents by providing a diversity of:

- Safe;
- Accessible;
- Culturally based;
- Family oriented;
- Well maintained and/or protected;
- Economically responsible; and
- Strategically located park and recreation resources.

Recommendations

Fundamental to the success of the Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan are the specific actions and strategies established to fulfill the mission and achieve the Plan's goals. Outlined below are the Plan's major recommendations. Detailed descriptions for each recommendation as well as the Plan's other actions and strategies are located within Chapter 6 of the Plan.

1. Establish a Citizen Advisory Board to assist the County Commissioners and the County's Bureau of Parks and Recreation in conceptualizing, reviewing and refining long-term planning initiatives and funding strategies.
2. Provide for county-wide future park and recreation needs by adopting a proactive approach to secure control of recreation-oriented land, especially in the northwest quadrant of the County.
3. Adopt a County-wide Parks, Trails and Greenways Master Plan that interconnects the County's existing regional parks through a 250-mile network of locally accessible trails and recreation facilities.
4. Increase public awareness and education by initiating a marketing and promotional campaign. Initiate this campaign by hiring a qualified public information coordinator to market, promote and fund-raise for the Bureau of Parks and Recreation as well as sister agencies within the County government.
5. Increase programming, especially in the areas of environmental education and senior-oriented activities. The Bureau should expand its current emphasis on major seasonal events to include weekly and/or seasonal programs designed for family participation.
6. Continue the Bureau's strong park maintenance program with respect to existing County park facilities and trails. In addition, the majority of County park acreage should remain natural and not be over developed, as landscape setting is important to Westmoreland residents.
7. Work with municipal, county, state, federal, school and other quasi-public agencies to develop cooperative efforts and coordinate planning/development activities. Through this process, the County should define clear roles for the various park and recreation providers.
8. Encourage and promote additional volunteer-based efforts for parks and trails: adopt-a-park, friends groups, park and trail monitoring and trail maintenance.
9. Transform, over time, the Bureau of Parks and Recreation into an autonomous Department of Parks and Recreation in order to increase efficiency, improve communication and enhance the quality of services to County residents.

Acknowledgements

The development of this Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan has required active participation on the part of many individuals. The County acknowledges the valuable contributions by those involved in the project. In creating a legacy for the County's future generations, the Steering Committee members have established the project's vision, defined work products and guided the study to its completion. Their invaluable efforts and driving force are the keystone of **Parks Horizons'** success.

A. Steering Committee Members

Robert I. Baker	Lynn Barger
Lou Battistella	Erwin Beidler
James Bendel	Anthony Bompiani
Archie Bossart	Linda Boxx
Phil Dymond	Michelle Clark
Olga Gera	John Framel
Steve Gifford	Harold Grey
Rep. Ted Harhai	Rev. Earl Henry, O.S.B.
Paul Heyworth	Edward Hutchinson
Thomas Lazar	Dr. Edward Lewis, Ph.D.
William Mitchell	James R. Okonak
Rep. Joseph Petracca	Greg Phillips
Betty Reefer	Dr. Kenneth Rutter
Lynn Showalter	Rep. Jess Stairs
Allan Walzak	Jennings Womack

B. Government Agencies

Westmoreland County Department of Planning and Economic Development
 Westmoreland Conservation District
 Westmoreland County Information Systems
 Westmoreland County Farmland Preservation Program
 Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission
 U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

C. Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and Recreation

Claude Petroy, Director of Public Works
 Jack Paulik, Planning Coordinator
 Malcolm Sias, Program Coordinator
 Adrian Horvath, Maintenance and Development Coordinator
 Dan Carpenter, Program Assistant

Parks Horizons is dedicated to the memory of Steering Committee member Dorothy Pack.

Table of Contents

1. Preface	1-1
2. Planning Process	2-1
A. Steering Committee	2-1
B. Citizen Survey	2-1
C. Community Meetings	2-2
D. Commissioner Briefings	2-2
E. Press Conferences	2-3
3. Background Context	3-1
A. County History	3-1
B. County Government	3-1
C. Transportation	3-3
D. Schools	3-3
E. Study Regions	3-3
F. General Demographic Analysis	3-8
G. Natural Resource Inventory	3-11
1. Landform and Land Coverage	3-11
2. Steep Slopes	3-11
3. Woodlands	3-12
4. Water Resources	3-12
5. Flood Prone Areas	3-16
6. Wetlands	3-16
7. Agriculture	3-16
8. Natural Heritage Inventory	3-16
4. Park, Recreation and Open Space Analysis	4-1
A. Overall Park and Open Space Inventory	4-1
B. County Bureau of Parks and Recreation	4-7
1. Organization	4-7
2. Operating Budget	4-8
3. Administration	4-8
4. Benchmark Comparisons	4-10
C. Additional Bureau of Parks and Recreation Observations	4-13
1. Recreation Program Diversity	4-13
2. Program Promotion	4-13
3. Funding	4-14
4. Support	4-14
D. Park Security	4-14
1. Duties	4-15
2. Incidents	4-15
3. Perceptions	4-16

Table of Contents

E. County Park Facilities	4-16
1. County Parks	4-16
2. County Park Facility Inventory	4-21
F. County Park Use Analysis	4-22
1. Land Use	4-22
2. Pavilion Use	4-22
G. Private Recreation	4-23
5. Needs Assessment	5-1
A. Quantitative Analysis	5-1
B. Qualitative Evaluation	5-9
6. A Blueprint for the Future: The Mission, the Goals, and the Elements	6-1
A. Parks, Trails, and Open Space	6-5
B. Programs	6-13
C. Promotion	6-17
D. Roles Management	6-21
E. Implementation Plan	6-32

Maps/Figures

1. Boroughs, Cities and Townships	3-2
2. Major Roads	3-4
3. Railroads	3-5
4. Schools	3-6
5. Study Regions	3-7
6. Landform	3-13
7. Land Coverage	3-14
8. Steep Slopes	3-15
9. Flood Prone Areas	3-18
10. Wetlands	3-19
11. Prime Agriculture Soils	3-20
12. Agriculture Security Areas	3-21
13. Natural Heritage Inventory	3-22
14. Municipal Parks	4-2
15. County Parks	4-3
16. Trails and Greenways	4-4
17. State Parks and Forests and Federal Open Space	4-5
18. Overall County Park, Recreation and Open Space Inventory	4-6
19. Bureau of Parks and Recreational Organizational Structure	4-7
20. Golf Courses	4-24
21. Public Campgrounds	4-25
22. Private Sector Attractions	4-26
23. Service Area Analysis A	5-3
24. Service Area Analysis B	5-3

Table of Contents

25. Service Area Analysis C	5-4
26. Park Distribution Conclusions	5-8
27. County-Wide Parks, Trails and Greenways Master Plan	6-6
28. Short-Term Organizational Structure	6-23
29. Long-Term Organizational Structure	6-26

Tables

1. Population - % Change	3-8
2. Population by Study Region	3-9
3. Households - % Change	3-9
4. Age Distribution	3-10
5. Age - % Change	3-10
6. Age – Totals by Study Region	3-11
7. Total Park Acreage by Provider	4-1
8. Existing Bureau Staff Salaries	4-8
9. Expenditures by County	4-11
10. Program Hours Comparison	4-12
11. Salary Analysis	4-13
12. Park/Facility Matrix	4-21
13. Park Land Use Analysis	4-22
14. Westmoreland County Park Classification Standards	5-2
15. Available Acres per Provider	5-5
16. Population Projections	5-6
17. Overall County Acreage Needs Analysis	5-6
18. Future Needs by Region	5-7
19. Future Acreage Needs	6-8
20. Land Use Criteria	6-12
21. Short-Term Overall Staff Budget Summary	6-24
22. Long-Term Overall Staff Budget Summary	6-27
23. Responsibilities Matrix	6-28

Appendix

A. Public Participation	
B. Demographic Data	
C. Additional Inventory and Analysis Descriptions and Data	
D. Bureau of Parks and Recreation Facilities – Site Plans	
E. Additional Recommendations Descriptions	
F. Bureau of Parks and Recreation Budget, Park Police Report and Staff Positions	
G. Program Analysis Data and Calculations	
H. Needs Assessment Calculations and Analysis	
I. Citizen Survey, Observations and Conclusions	
J. Public Water / Recreation Examples	
K. Forest Stewardship Plan Guidelines	
L. Promotion Examples and Press Releases	

References

- Allegheny County Department of Planning and Development, Allegheny County Comprehensive Plan, Pittsburgh: 1977.
- Center for Local Government Services, Citizen's Guide to Pennsylvania Local Government, Harrisburg: Department of Community and Economic Development. March 1997.
- Center for Local Government Services, Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Act of 1968, P.L. 805, No.247 13th Edition, Harrisburg: Department of Community and Economic Development. March 1997.
- Fogg, George E. Park Planning Guidelines 3rd Edition, National Recreation and Park Association: 1997.
- Gold, Seymour M., Recreation Planning and Design, New York: McGraw-Hill. 1980.
- Governor's Conference on Greenways and Trails, Harrisburg: April 1997.
- Heritage Trails: Strengthening a Regional Community, US Department of Interior: August 1995.
- Mertes, James D. Ph.D., CLP and Hall, James R., CLP, Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines, National Recreation and Park Association: 1996.
- The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Department of Finance Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Annual Report of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Silver Spring, Maryland: 1999.
- Monmouth County (New Jersey) Parks, Activity Directory: Volume 4, 1998.
- Monmouth County (New Jersey) Parks. Amendment to the Monmouth County Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, 1998.
- Monmouth County (New Jersey) Parks, Annual Report, 1997.
- Monmouth County (New Jersey) Parks, Map and Guide, 1997.
- Montgomery County, Open Space Planning Board. Montgomery County Open Space Plan Summary 1996.
- Park Futures: A Master Plan for Portland's Park System. Portland, Oregon: Bureau of Parks and Recreation, November 1991.
- Parks 2000: A Master Plan for Travis County Park. Austin, Texas: Transportation and Natural Resources, January 1998.

References

- Pashek Associates. Hempfield Comprehensive Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan: Volume I, Pittsburgh: 1994.
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection census data, 1999.
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources. Pennsylvania State Parks 2000: Directions for the Next Century, 1992.
- Pennsylvania Heritage Route Map, 1998.
- Pennsylvania's Recreation Plan 1991-1997.
- Programming Phone Calls (August 16-19, 1999).
- The RBA Group, Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Bicycle Guidelines, Pedestrian Guidelines, Community Design Standards, April 1996
- The RBA Group, Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan: Executive Summary, May 1996
- Ski Pennsylvania. <<http://www.parec.com/recreation/skipa/.html>>
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission data, 1998.
- Suburban Hennepin Regions/Park District, Master Plan for a System of Parks: Hennepin Parks. April 1990.
- Westmoreland Conservation District, Annual Report, 1998.
- Westmoreland Conservation District, Westmoreland County Farmland Preservation Report, 1999.
- Westmoreland County History, 1983.
- Westmoreland County Information Systems data, 1999.
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Westmoreland County Natural Heritage Inventory, Pittsburgh, 1998.
- "What is a Forest Stewardship Plan?" Connecticut Forest Stewardship Program: www.tworthle@canr1.cag.uconn.edu, 1999. (Excerpt for Appendix J)
- Wichita Land Use/Research Division Metropolitan Area Planning Department and Wichita Park and Recreation Department, Parks and Pathways: Park and Open Space Master Plan Wichita - Sedgwick County, Kansas. September 1996.
- US Census data: 1970, 1980, 1990.
- YMCA Locator Map. <<http://www.ymca.com>>