

Needs Assessment

The Needs Assessment is a major component of the Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan. This evaluation identifies and prioritizes, in a methodical way, the quantity and type of parks most needed within the County-wide park, recreation and open space system. The Needs Assessment has been completed utilizing two approaches: a quantitative analysis and a qualitative evaluation.

The first approach quantifies the amount of park and open space land available for County residents' use. Park acreage surpluses and deficiencies are calculated based on existing facilities and their distribution within the Westmoreland County region as well as current and projected population statistics.

The second approach solicits public feedback regarding the perceived value of park and recreation experiences. The qualitative evaluation utilizes a randomly distributed Citizen Survey in which County residents were asked about their park and recreation preferences as well as improvement and implementation priorities.

A. Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis, as described below, is completed in two phases: Inventory and Distribution Evaluation and Acreage Needs Assessment. The first phase mathematically identifies the region's current park acreage and the accessibility of such parks to residents of the County's seven Study Regions; the second phase calculates park acreage surpluses and deficiencies in relation to the overall County and each individual Study Region. The surpluses and deficiencies are based on current and projected population growth factors.

1. Inventory and Distribution Evaluation

The Evaluation identifies the type of activity and development intensity for each Municipal, County, State and Federal parks and open space facility in the Westmoreland County region. In order to determine the park acreage available to the County and, more specifically, to each Study Region, the Inventory and Distribution Evaluation is completed in a series of three steps. Outlined below are descriptions and graphic examples of the calculations.

Step 1 Park Classification

Using the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) general park classification standards as a base, the Bureau has developed a set of standards that reflect the unique characteristics of Westmoreland County. Each park is classified as either:

- Neighborhood;
- Community;
- Metropolitan;
- Regional;

- Special Activity; or
- Preserve.

Table 14 illustrates the type of uses, facilities, minimum size, service radius and acreage recommendations per 1,000 persons that the County has assigned to each classification.

Table 14
Westmoreland County Park Classification Standards

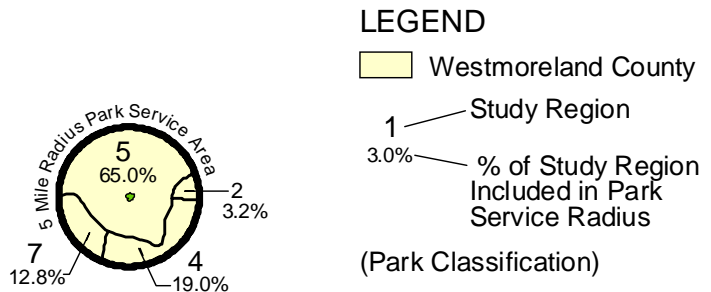
Park Classification	Definition	Facilities	Min. Size	Service Area Radius	Acreage Req't per 1,000 Pop.
			acres	mile	acres
Neighborhood	Walk to park; intense recreational activities; 100% developed	playfields, playgrounds, tot lots, multi-purpose hardcourts, recreation center, picnicking	0.25-5	0.5	2.0
Community	Drive to park; intense recreational activities; max. 80% developed	same as neighborhood plus swimming pool, lit playfields and single-use hardcourts, multipurpose building, community center	20	3	2.0
Metropolitan	Drive to park; primarily resource based activities with some intense recreational activities; max. 40% developed	water resource-oriented, unlit playfields, playgrounds, picnicking, hiking/biking/ walking trails, nature center, amphitheater, group camping, swimming beaches, boating areas	100	12	5.0
Regional	Drive to park; natural areas with some resource based activities; max 20% developed	water resource-oriented, conservation areas (flood control/management), beaches, nature study, group camping, rustic areas, bridal trails, picnicking	250	30	20.0
Preserve	lands dedicated to the preservation of natural resources and wildlife management	hunting areas and general open space	250	25	NA
Special Activity	specialized recreational facilities	arboreta, historical sites, sports complexes, golf courses and trails	NA	NA	NA

Step 2 Regional Proportion Calculation

The service radius assigned to each park represents the standard distance a park user is willing to travel to visit a facility. Typically, the larger or more specialized the park, the further a user will travel to visit.

A Regional Proportion is a Study Region’s portion of a particular park’s service area. To calculate this, the acreage of each Study Region within a park’s service area is divided into the park’s total service area. As illustrated in Figure 23: Service Area Example A, Sewickley Creek Wetlands is classified as a Special Activity facility with a 5-mile service radius. Region 5’s portion of the facility’s service area is 65%; Region 4 equals 19%; Region 7 equals 12.8% and Region 2 represents 3.2%. Because, Regions 1, 3, 5 and 6 are beyond the 5-mile service radius, each is allotted 0% of the park’s service area.

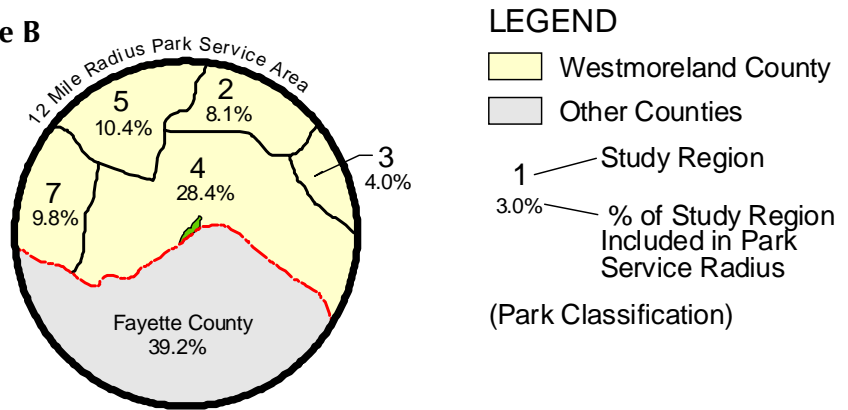
Figure 23
Service Area Example A



Sewickley Creek Wetlands
(Special Activity)

Some parks’ service radii encompass land outside of Westmoreland County. Figure 24: Service Area Example B illustrates Bridgeport Dam’s 12-mile service radius. The park’s service area covers portions of Westmoreland and Fayette Counties. Using the same calculation procedure as described in Example A, Regions 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 collectively comprise 60.8% of Bridgeport’s service area. The remaining “non-Westmoreland County” service area, 39.2%, is allocated to Fayette County.

Figure 24
Service Area Example B

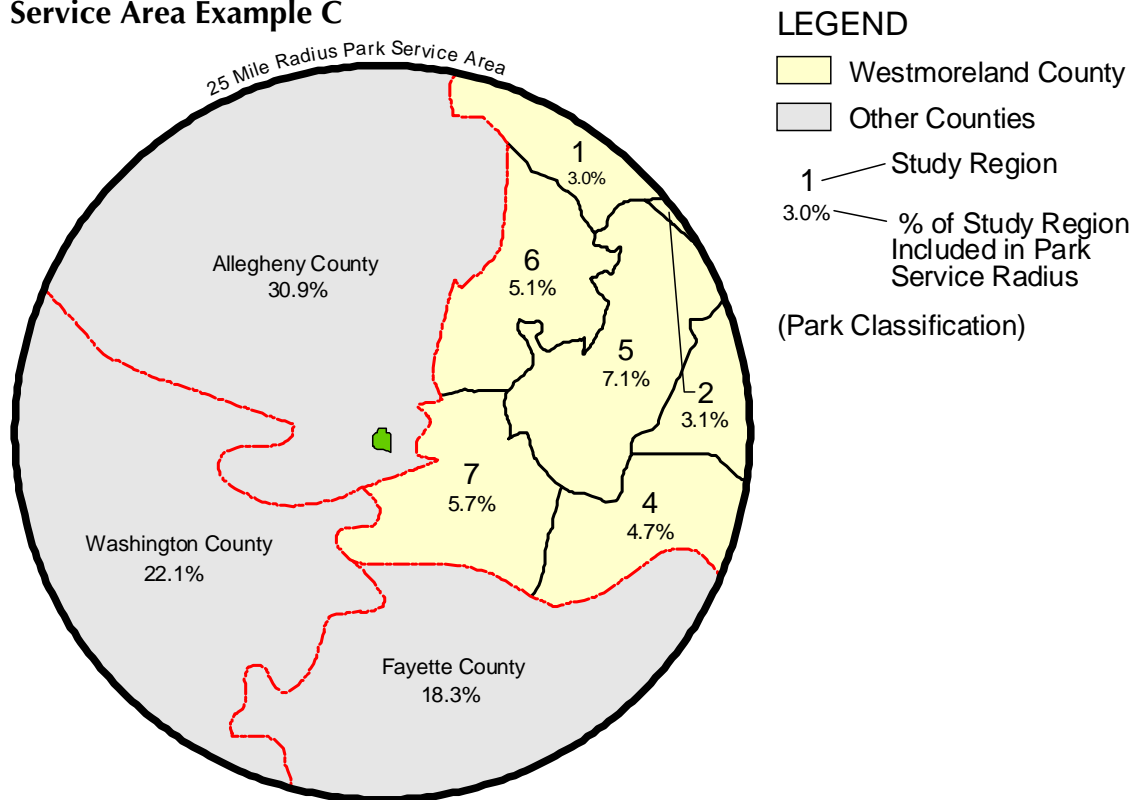


Bridgeport Dam
(Metropolitan)

Currently, there are over 49,600 acres of Municipal, County, State and Federal parks and open space areas within Westmoreland County. However, several non-Westmoreland County park and open space areas (92,050 acres) lie within easy driving distance of the County's boundary. Because many Westmoreland residents travel to neighboring counties for recreational activities and vice versa, it was determined that the Quantitative Analysis should account for all parks within 30 miles of the County boundary.

The same acreage distribution procedure used in Examples A and B is applied to non-Westmoreland facilities. Allegheny County's Round Hill Regional Park is classified as a Special Activity park and has a 25-mile service radius. In performing the regional proportion calculation for Round Hill, a service area percentage is derived for each Study Region and non-Westmoreland County land. Figure 25 illustrates the results.

Figure 25
Service Area Example C



Round Hill Regional Park
(Special Activity)

Step 3 Available Acreage Calculation

To determine the actual park acres available for Westmoreland County overall, each park’s total acreage is multiplied by the percentage of its service area allocated to Westmoreland County. Table 15 outlines the County’s total available acres by park provider.

Table 15
Available Acres per Provider

<u>Provider</u>	<u>Acres</u>
Municipal	3,023
Westmoreland County Parks	1,607
Non-Westmoreland County Parks	2,654
State Parks and Forests	25,475
State Gamelands	3,956
Federal	6,072

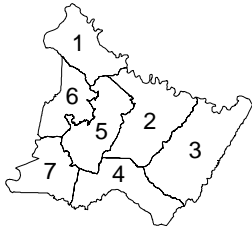
To prepare for the second phase of the Qualitative Analysis and to gain a more detailed understanding of specific needs by Region, the available acreage for each Study Region is calculated. Each park’s acreage is multiplied by the percentage of a park’s service area within each Study Region. The remaining percentage is calculated as available acreage for non-Westmoreland County residents’ use. Appendix H contains the Park and Open Space Inventory detailing the overall Park Acreage Distribution for the County and Study Regions.

2. Acreage Needs Assessment

The Acreage Needs Assessment identifies the County’s park acreage surpluses and deficits. The total Recommended Acres by park classification are computed utilizing Westmoreland County’s population statistics and the required park acreage per 1,000 population as defined in the County’s Park Classifications Standards’ (Table 14).

This study’s assessment not only determines current needs but projects future needs as well. To plan for generations to come, two future points in time were identified for analysis - 2015 and 2050. The projections are compiled for the overall County as well as each Study Region. Population projections (Table 16) were provided by several sources including the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP).

Table 16
Population Projections



Overall County		Population (Total Persons)	
Periods		1990	2015
		370,321	413,263
		484,301	

Study Regions		Regions						
Periods		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1990		65,147	50,882	16,644	31,651	88,614	76,318	41,065
2015		72,299	56,192	19,145	33,430	99,719	87,969	44,515
2050		87,734	64,408	22,175	40,549	114,667	103,710	51,058

The Recommended Acreage per park classification is compared to the County's actual Available Acreage. The analysis results are described in Table 17: Overall County Acreage Needs Analysis. Numbers framed by parenthesis indicate deficits in terms of current available acreage.

Table 17
Overall County Acreage Needs Analysis

Park Classification	Acreage Req't per 1,000 Pop. ² acres	Current Regional Park, Recreation and Open Space Inventory ³ acres	1990		2015		2050	
			Acreage Needed as per Pop. Statistics acres	Existing Surplus or Deficit () acres	Acreage Needed as per 2015 Pop. Proj. acres	Future Surplus or Deficit () acres	Acreage Needed as per 2050 Pop. Proj. acres	Future Surplus or Deficit () acres
			Neighborhood	2.0	657	741	(84)	827
Community	2.0	2,366	741	1,625	827	1,539	969	1,397
Metropolitan	5.0	1,515	1,852	(337)	2,066	(551)	2,422	(907)
Regional	20.0	28,753	7,406	21,347	8,265	20,488	9,686	19,067
	29.0	33,291	10,740	22,551	11,985	21,306	14,046	19,245

Other Recreation and Open Space Facilities

Preserve	NA	8,563	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Special Activity	NA	828	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Subtotal		9,391	NA	0	NA	0	NA	0
Total		42,682	10,740	22,551	11,985	21,306	14,046	19,245

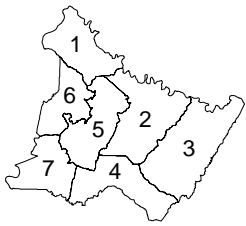
Because the Overall Acreage Needs Analysis accounts for all park types and total park acreage throughout the entire County, surpluses and deficits for each Study Region may be masked. Therefore, each Study Region’s park acreage distribution is evaluated. Using this finer grain analysis reveals specific regional surpluses or deficits. The results of the Regional Acreage Needs Analysis are summarized in Table 18. Appendix H includes detailed Needs Analysis data calculations.

Table 18
Future Needs by Region

2015

Future Park Acreage Surplus or Deficit by Region
(as per future population projections)

Park Classification	1 acres	2 acres	3 acres	4 acres	5 acres	6 acres	7 acres	Total acres
Neighborhood	(44)	9	4	(25)	(68)	(26)	(20)	(170)
Community	52	93	37	(67)	40	1,318	67	1,539
Metropolitan	(110)	(144)	(7)	108	(236)	(206)	42	(551)
Regional	(401)	4,999	6,987	4,441	2,640	(130)	1,954	20,488
Total	(503)	4,957	7,021	4,457	2,376	956	2,043	21,306

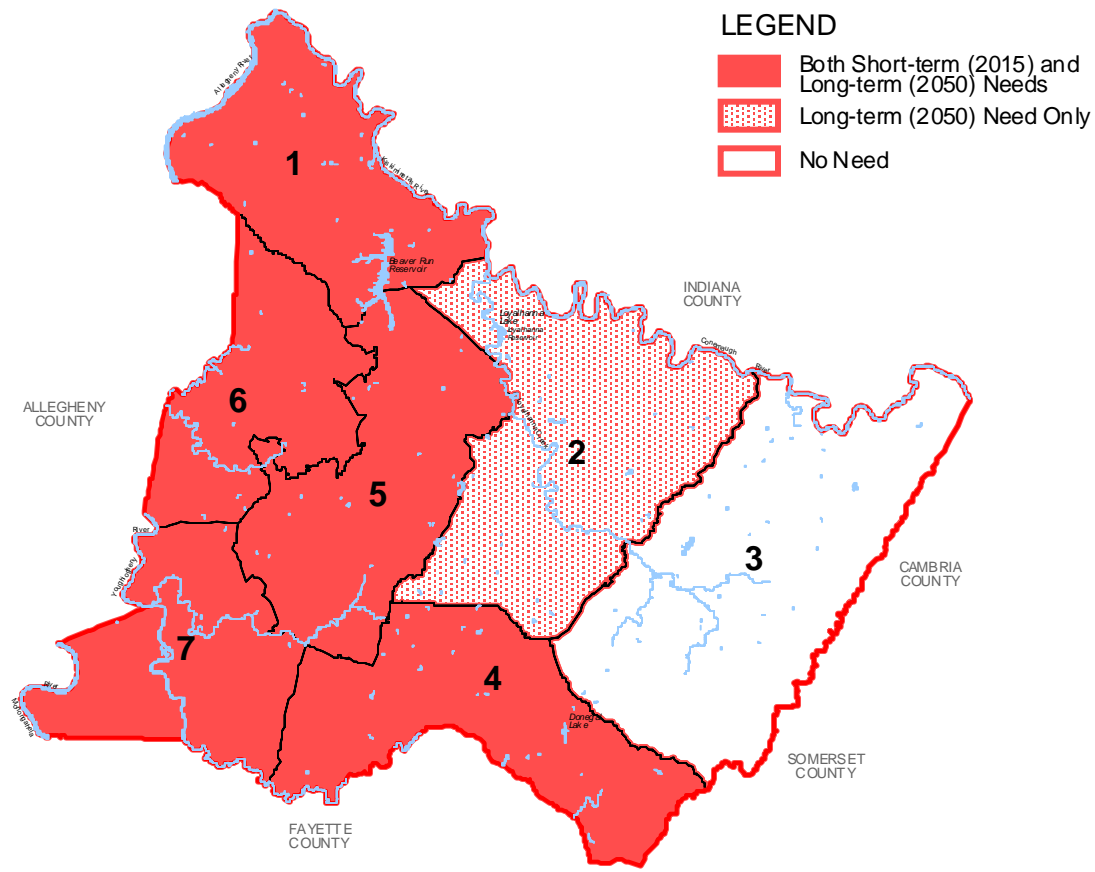


2050

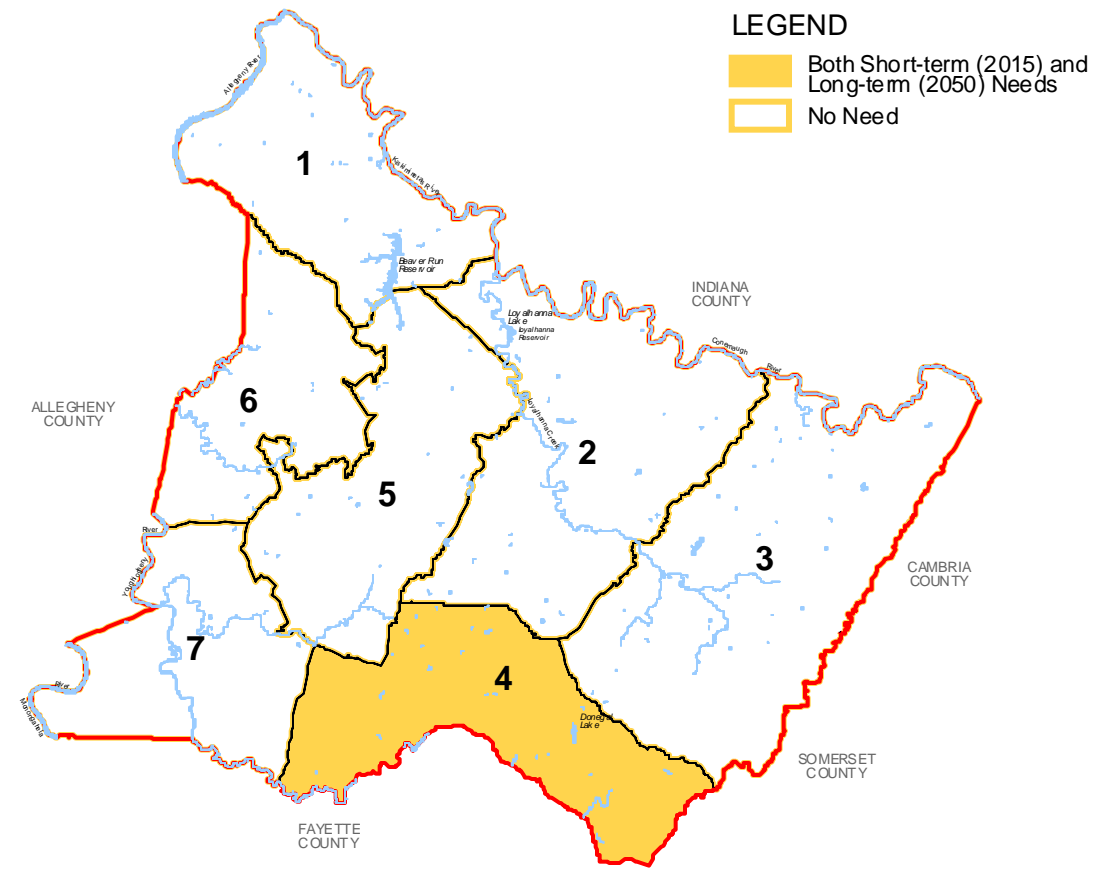
Future Park Acreage Surplus or Deficit by Region
(as per future population projections)

Park Classification	1 acres	2 acres	3 acres	4 acres	5 acres	6 acres	7 acres	Total acres
Neighborhood	(74)	(8)	(2)	(39)	(98)	(57)	(33)	(312)
Community	22	76	31	(81)	10	1,287	54	1,397
Metropolitan	(188)	(185)	(22)	72	(310)	(285)	10	(907)
Regional	(710)	4,835	6,926	4,299	2,341	(445)	1,823	19,067
Total	(950)	4,718	6,933	4,251	1,943	333	1,854	19,245

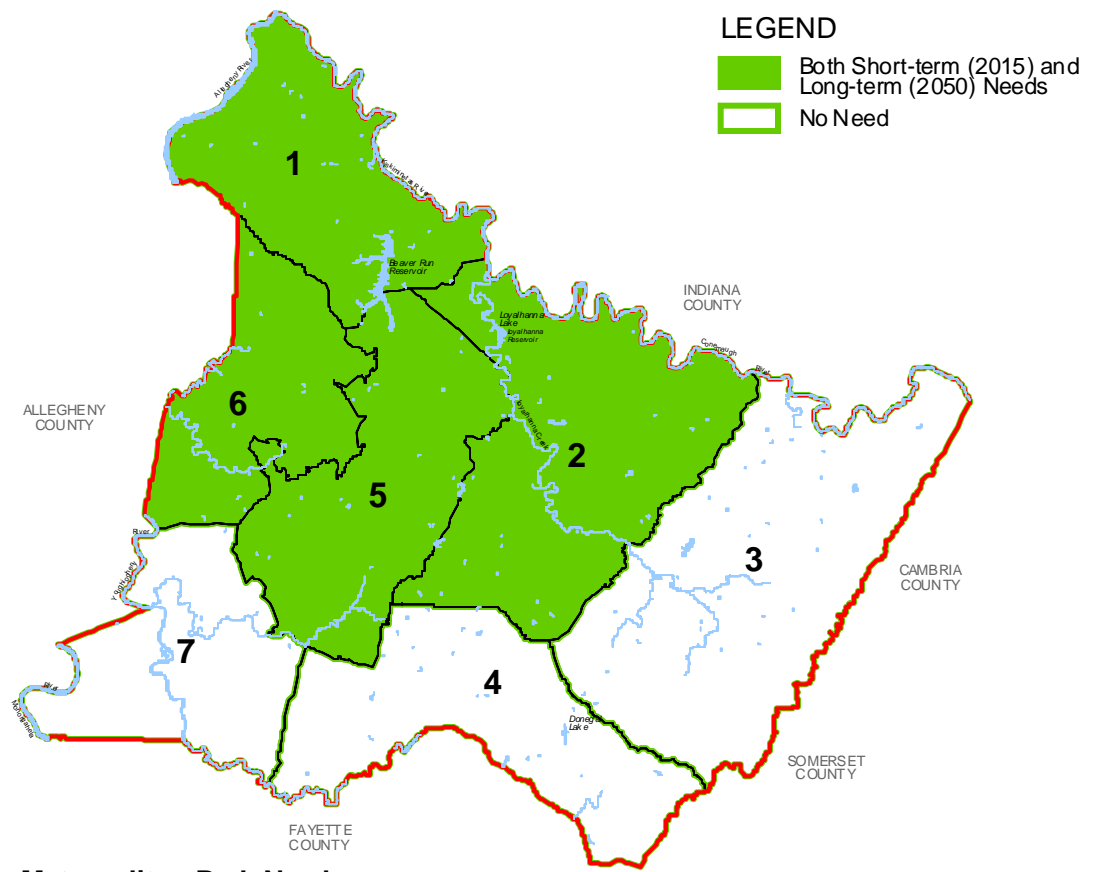
Map 24: Park Distribution Conclusions (page 5-8) illustrates which regions will need additional park acreage in the future. Both Short-Term (by 2015) and Long-Term (2050) needs are indicated and color-coded accordingly.



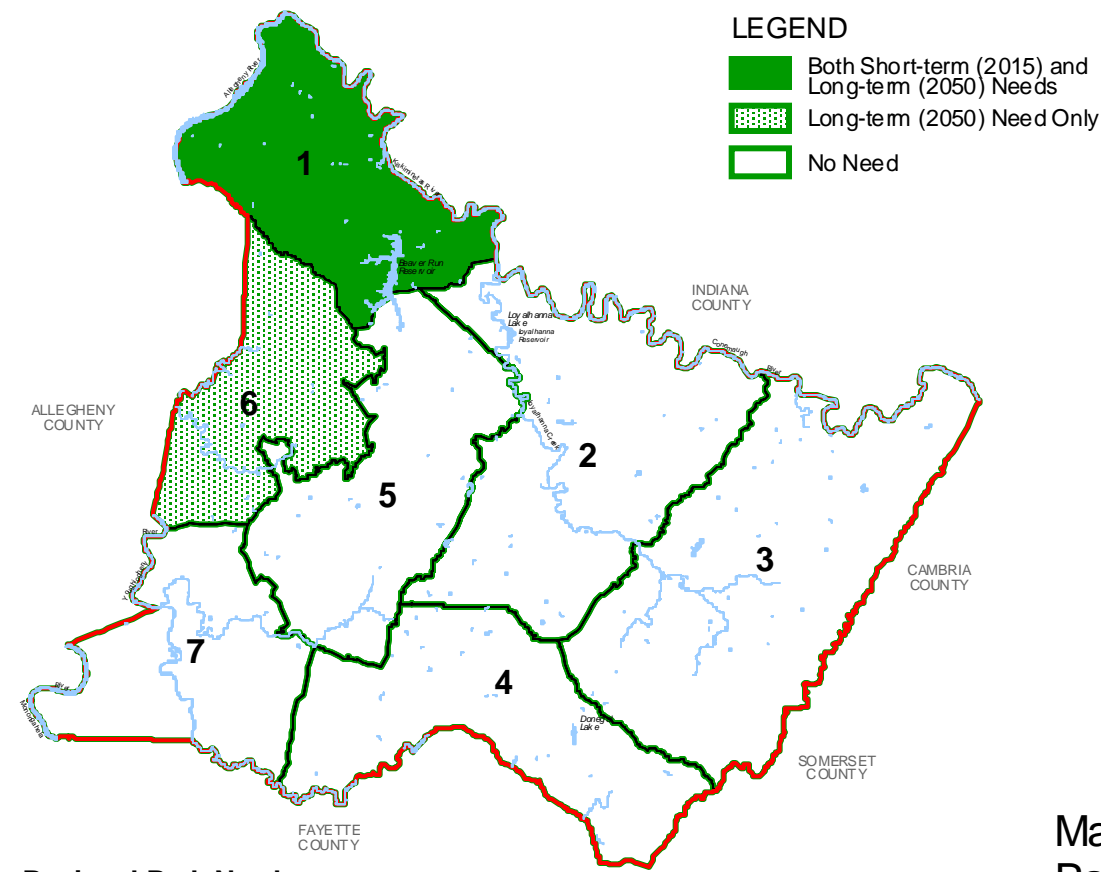
Neighborhood Park Needs



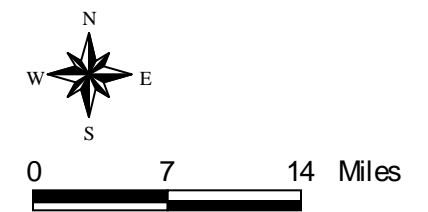
Community Park Needs



Metropolitan Park Needs



Regional Park Needs



**Map 26
Park Distribution Conclusions**

B. Qualitative Evaluation

To complement the previous quantitative analysis, the County's park facilities and recreation services were assessed through a qualitative evaluation. Mail-in surveys were randomly distributed to approximately 10% (14,000) of the County's households (147,000). Survey questions focused upon the County's role, responsibility and effectiveness of delivering park and recreation services. The residents' responses enabled the Bureau to balance the conclusions of the qualitative analysis with more specific information regarding their recreation and leisure trends, programming preferences, spending concentration and tolerance, as well as facility usage. 2,391 surveys were returned -- providing an impressive 17.1% response rate.

Outlined below are portions of the Citizen Survey's key questions and resident opinions.

1. ***When at a County Park, in what type of park setting would you prefer to be?***
 - 70% of County households prefer a park setting that is at least 60% natural.

2. ***In the past year, what County Park, State Park or Federal open space area in the Westmoreland County region have you visited?***
 - Twin Lakes Park is the most popular park facility in the County.
 - The Youghiogheny River Trail and the Five Star Trail rank 2nd and 3rd in terms of most visited County-owned facilities.
 - Westmoreland County residents do not frequently visit Allegheny County Parks.

3. ***What types of things could be done to increase the number of times that you visit a Westmoreland County park?***
 - Increasing public knowledge and awareness is of overwhelming importance.

4. ***The County's annual operating budget for parks is 1.1% of the total County operating budget. This cost is approximately \$13.50 per family per year. Do you feel that spending for parks and recreation should be adjusted?***
 - County residents do not want to decrease the number of parks, the total park acreage or the Bureau's annual operating budget.
 - Residents would prefer to have things remain the same, but would support an increase in the Bureau's operating budget.

5. ***What areas do you feel Westmoreland County should concentrate upon most in the future?***
 - Existing park maintenance.
 - Targeted new facilities in existing parks.
 - New trails.

6. ***If it is determined that the County should focus its future efforts on developing new parks, trails and/or open space or expanding existing parks, trails and/or open space, how should the County finance future land acquisition? Would your family be willing to commit additional funds on an annual basis to provide these facilities?***
 - 58% of the households indicated that they would be willing to commit additional funds.
 - If a spending increase would occur, \$1-\$8 per household per year is acceptable.

7. ***Currently, Westmoreland County supports municipal-based recreation (youth baseball and soccer) by providing and maintaining recreation facilities. The County finances this support by collecting minimal fees from these groups, and subsidizes remaining costs through its park operating budget.***
 - Generally, residents feel that the County should continue to support municipal-based recreation by maintaining recreation facilities typically used by municipalities.
 - Very few residents want the County to stop providing/supporting at all.
 - If fees are to be collected – user fees are generally the preferred choice.

8. ***What changes would your family prefer to see in the County's environmental education programming?***
 - 81% of the households wanted programs expanded in at least one of the following ways:
 - a. Programming expanded for additional age groups
 - b. Programs expanded geographically throughout the County
 - c. Develop additional family-oriented programs

See Appendix I for a copy of the Citizen Survey, complete survey observations as well as the detailed summation and analysis of the Citizen Survey responses.