Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan
for the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Revised Final Draft – April 3, 2012

Prepared by

The Federation of Northern Chester County Communities, Chester County, Pennsylvania

Adopted by

East Coventry Township on

East Nantmeal Township on

East Pikeland Township on

East Vincent Township on

North Coventry Township on

South Coventry Township on

Warwick Township on

West Pikeland Township on

West Vincent Township on

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IN MEMORY

We dedicate this plan to the memory of Eleanor May Morris, a pioneer in using conservation easements and public/private partnerships to save over 7,000 acres of land in the watersheds of the French and Pickering Creeks. May we all continue her legacy of vision, perseverance, and accomplishment to protect the lands, parks, watersheds and cultural heritage of northern Chester County for future generations.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan for the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities:

A FRAMEWORK FOR COLLABORATION AMONG WILLING PARTNERS

The Northern Chester County Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan is consistent with Article III, Section 303 "Legal Status of Comprehensive Plan Within the Jurisdiction that Adopted the Plan," of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Act of 1968, P.L. 805, No. 247 as reenacted and amended.

This Plan serves as a guide. In adopting this plan, the participating municipalities are affirming their intent to continue cooperative efforts toward achievement of the Plan's regional goals. No participating municipality is obligated to undertake any particular plan element or expend funds for implementation.

After adoption, an individual township will only be bound to undertake or participate in any particular Plan element requiring contribution of funds, land or other resources by its adopted municipal resolution that sets forth the terms of the undertaking and the township's participation.

By working in collaboration, each municipality will maintain its autonomy while having the opportunity to participate in the development of a regional park, recreation and open space system that preserves the scenic beauty of our area, conserves our natural resources and provides recreation opportunities for our citizens to engage in active healthy living.

Chapter 1: About this Plan

THIS PLAN

This plan was prepared for the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities, more commonly known as the Northern Federation. Established in 1974 to protect the French Creek Corridor, this longstanding intergovernmental partnership has grown from 5 to 11 member municipalities that participate in Federation activities based on relevance and interest. Over its 37-year history, the Federation has also expanded its mission from the French Creek Corridor to a wider array of community development and resource protection planning efforts.

To date, the Federation has led the preparation of 13 regional studies:

- *Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Comprehensive Plan: Background Section,* circa 1978
- *Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Comprehensive Plan: Plan Alternatives,* circa 1978
- *Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Comprehensive Plan: Regional Land Use Plan*, 1979
- *French Creek Scenic River Management Guidelines,* 1984
- *PA Route 100 Corridor Study,* 1986
- *Water Resource Management Study,* 1988
- *Wastewater Facilities Plan: Phases I and II,* 1990
- *Surface Water Runoff Study,* 1991
- *Pennhurst Center Land Use Feasibility Study,* 1993
- *Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Comprehensive Plan: Regional Land Use Plan*, 1996
- *Sustainable Watershed Management: The Vision for Northern Chester County,* circa 2000
- *A Model Program to Balance Water Resources and Land Development in the Schuylkill River Tributary Watersheds,* circa 2000
- *Federation of Northern Chester County Communities Comprehensive Plan: Regional Resource Protection Plan*, 2008

Nine municipalities are partners in this Regional Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan—the townships of East Coventry, East Pikeland, East Nantmeal, East Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, Warwick, West Pikeland, and West Vincent. The 75,000-acre area and nearly 44,000 residents of their nine jurisdictions, referred to as the Northern Chester County region (the Region), are the study area for this plan.

The plan was prepared as a guide for providing parks, recreation and open space protection in the interest of public health and wellness and environmental conservation. It was adopted as a supplement to each municipality's comprehensive plan and can be implemented, in whole or in part, among two or more willing municipalities.

Chapter 1

Revised Final Draft – April 3, 2012

Our Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to foster active, healthy living and environmental conservation through parks, recreation, and open space. Active, healthy living involves regular physical activity as well as a healthy diet that benefits public health and wellness. Environmental conservation in our region focuses on the protection and stewardship of significant landscapes. This plan draws these values together to plan for places and programs that enable physical activity and support social connections to regional history, culture, and the natural environment.

We base our purpose on the beliefs that:

- The scenic, rural character of Northern Chester County represents our natural and cultural heritage, which should be celebrated and promoted through recreation and conservation.
- Parks and recreation, including trails, are essential to our quality of life, promote health and wellness, and contribute to a vibrant regional economy.
- It is important for the residents and community organizations to be fully informed about recreation and conservation opportunities in order to take advantage of them in a timely manner.
- Advocacy, innovation, and partnerships are vital in creating and sustaining the human and financial capital necessary to support parks, recreation, and open space in the Region.

Our guiding principles for the planning process included:

1. Focus on a clear public purpose that speaks to actions and benefits.
2. Build upon existing data.
3. Engage partners and the public in building consensus for public investment.
4. Define needs locally, not by arbitrary standards.
5. Bring to light hidden opportunities that are unique to our region.
6. Envision a regional strategy with local action items.
7. Leverage regional vision and willing partnership for larger-than-local benefits.
8. Jump-start plan implementation to build momentum for further action.

Our Partners

Public and private sector organizations in our region share our vision for a comprehensive parks, recreation, and open space system that fosters active, healthy living and environmental conservation through land protection. Additional planning participants included:

- Green Valleys Association
- French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust
- Natural Lands Trust
- Owen J. Roberts, Downingtown, and Phoenixville School Districts

- Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation
- Chester County and the Chester County Planning Commission

This Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan was developed in cooperation with the Chester County Planning Commission, and funded by the Vision Partnership Program (VPP) of Chester County and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in partnership with participating Northern Chester County communities. The VPP is a program designed to provide the most effective coordination and consistency between the growth management policies of *Landscapes2: Bringing Growth and Preservation Together for Chester County,* adopted in 2009 (Chester County's Comprehensive Policy Plan), and those of municipalities in the county. The strategies and recommendations identified in this Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan are consistent with the policies identified in *Landscapes2*, as well as in its implementation plans, *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, PA,* adopted in 2002, and *Watersheds: An Integrated Water Resources Plan for Chester County, Pennsylvania,* also adopted in 2002. The requirements and standards of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources planning grant program have also been fulfilled.

Our Process

This plan was prepared in four phases beginning in May 2009.

The **Inventory and Assessment** included:

- Reviewing municipal comprehensive plans and parks, recreation, and open space plans.
- Compiling and summarizing demographic trends and growth implications.
- Conducting a field tour of selected parks, recreation, and open space locations.
- Conducting additional field visits to community parks.
- Compiling park and recreation areas, recreation facilities, trails, natural resources, historic resources and cultural sites, and protected open space, recreation programs and services, service providers and management organizations, mandatory dedication of parkland ordinances, and sports league participation and facility demand.
- Compiling and updating Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapped resources.
- Assessing strengths, challenges, and opportunities—including partnership potential—among study topics.

The inventory and assessment is documented in *Appendices 1 through 10* and summarized in Chapters 2 and 3 of the plan.

The **Vision, Goals, and Strategies** included:

- Articulating a vision for parks, recreation, and open space as a regional system.
- Formulating goals and strategies.
- Preparing the parks, recreation, and open space service zones (*Map A, Service Zones Map*).

The vision, goals, and strategies are presented in Chapter 4.

The **Plan Development** included:

- Developing recommendations.
- Prioritizing priority recommendations based on readiness and long-term value.
- Preparing the draft plan.

The plan's recommendations are presented in Chapters 5 through 8 with implementation priorities listed in Chapter 9.

The **Plan Review & Approval** included:

-
- Review by the Coordinating Committee and municipal Boards of Supervisors.
- Revising and publishing the draft plan.
- Public review.
- Plan adoption by the municipal Boards of Supervisors.

The participation of the Coordinating Committee, including representatives from each of the nine participating municipalities and the Chester County Planning Commission, was integral to the plan's preparation. The Coordinating Committee guided the direction of the plan, assisted the consultants in data collection, helped to organize public participation activities, and provided review and feedback on the draft plan. A Steering Committee representing a broader range of recreation and conservation interests served as a sounding board for issues, strategies, and recommendations at milestones in the plan's development. Additional public participation included:

- Interviews with municipal officials and representative community stakeholders, including school districts, county agencies, state and federal land managers, land conservancies, and trusts.
- Focus groups with sports leagues, park and recreation boards, trail developers and user groups, conservation and heritage organizations, and 5th graders.
- Public meetings at milestones in the plan's preparation.
- A public opinion survey.

A summary of these activities is reported in *Appendix 11*. A detailed report on the Citizen Survey is included as *Appendix 12*.

In addition, a project Web site was established to host information about the plan and its preparation and to help publicize public activities. Posted materials included a project fact sheet, public presentations, and regional newspaper coverage of the project.

Chapter 2: About the Northern Chester County Region

Our Landscape

The Northern Chester County region (the Region) lies at the juncture of historically and currently significant landscapes—the Schuylkill River corridor, where events of our nation's formative history took place and riverside communities were established, and the Schuylkill Highlands, the last globally significant forested area in southeastern Pennsylvania. The river led colonists 35 miles northwest from Philadelphia to settle among rolling hills where they found favorable soils for farming, waterways to power mills, and iron ore deposits among acres upon acres of native woodlands. Colonists used these resources for their own subsistence and to support their army during the American Revolution. Once the Commonwealth and the nation were established, iron production continued and new community and economic pursuits emerged: production agriculture in the valleys, recreation in the woodlands, and community trade and institutions in the villages. With the exception of Pottstown Landing, Kenilworth, and Kimberton, where early American industrialization was focused, and a handful of country villages, landowners managed the landscape as large tracts of farmland and woodland into the 20th century.

This juncture of highland and water corridors is recognized by state and national designations. The Schuylkill River National Heritage Area celebrates the rich culture and history of the Schuylkill River watershed as one of America's most significant cultural and industrial regions. Schuylkill Highlands, a Conservation Landscape Initiative (CLI) of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, draws attention and resources toward the conservation of high quality lands and connecting people to the landscape through a network of trails and gateway communities in the Hopewell Big Woods.

The rural landscape pattern began to change in the early to mid-20th century when significant development began to occur along the rural state highways that provided access to major employment centers in Pottstown and Downingtown (via Route 100 north and south), Phoenixville and Lancaster (via Route 23 east and west), and Valley Forge (Route 724 east). Subdivision parceled land ownership, and development cleared farmland and woodlands for the construction of homes and roads in scattered locations across the Region. During the national debate between advocates of unchecked growth and environmentalists, local conservationists emerged. These visionaries urged communities of the Region to consider the long-range impacts of land use and infrastructure decisions, and promote balanced resource management. In the 1970s, local public officials took an active position in conserving the Region's rural character and began meeting to discuss approaches to managed development and planned conservation. This regional conversation has

continued for more than 35 years under the leadership of the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities.

Today, our expansive region is still largely rural in character, with farmland, meadows, and woodlands draped over its rolling topography. Our region continues to sustain numerous natural communities and value its dark nighttime skies. Schools and parks are our "community centers." Few commercial centers for shopping and employment are found here and are only marginally concentrated along the state highways. Historic settlements from as early as the 18th century, including urban neighborhoods of South Pottstown and Kenilworth, villages such as Kimberton and St. Peters, rural estates of iron barons, and farmsteads, along with mills, bridges, and canalways, still dot the landscape—though they are increasingly shadowed by the smaller-scaled contemporary development concentrated along the state highway corridors, particularly in the central and eastern portions of the Region. These characteristics make our Region a visually attractive place to live. The result is a growing population with diverse recreational needs, juxtaposed with development that impacts the very landscape and resources that attract them.

Our People

The region has grown from 26,795 residents in 1970 to 43,907 residents in 2010. Total population and growth rates have been higher in the eastern and central municipalities, where transportation and utility infrastructure allow for more intensive development, than in East Nantmeal and Warwick Townships. Population increases have been accompanied by increased household incomes in these same municipalities as well as higher median ages. This translates to higher increases in older residents and lower increases in children, youth and young adults. The region's racial and ethnic heritage is nearly homogenous with a majority of white, European descendants and a minority population of less than two percent; recent apparent increases in minority populations may be attributed to changes in census categories related to race and ethnicity.

While individual municipal populations are small, the region as a whole is as large as some of Pennsylvania's small cities and major boroughs.

According to population projections prepared by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, the Region is expected to continue growing to more than 53,000 residents by 2030, with increases again concentrated in the central and eastern municipalities. Student and total population projections indicate continued aging among community populations, suggesting that public recreation provisions and conservation efforts will need to keep pace with both growth (total needs) and changing types of needs.

Survey Question #11
How would you prefer to get information about parks and recreation in Northern Chester County?

One Web site for all townships in Northern Chester County 51%

One Web site for your township 48%

Newsletter mailed to your home 48%

The 2010 public opinion survey conducted for this plan found three important resident perspectives. First and foremost, residents view the entire region as their community, as evidenced by their spending time in parks and participating in activities within and beyond

their home municipality, as well as their preference for a one-stop source for information on recreational opportunities in the Region.

Second, conservation is more important to survey respondents than recreation. Residents value conservation landscapes and corridors more than parks, but nevertheless desire a park system that includes diverse park types, from large, nature-based parks and preserves, to community parks for physical activity, to trails for a variety of users.

Third, residents are most interested in self-directed outdoor activities, such as walking, bicycling, enjoying nature, and enjoying the dark night skies.

Our Park, Recreation, and Open Space Assets

Nature Parks and Preserves

Expansive public landscapes owned by federal, state, and county agencies and supplemented by municipal nature parks and private preserves offer more than 4,965 acres of protected open space with abundant passive recreation opportunities. The Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, French Creek State Park, and State Game Lands 43 span the Region's northern border with Berks County. They host unique natural and cultural resources significant to local, state, and national history, representing the American Revolution and the early American iron industry. Together with the Natural Lands Trust's Crow's Nest Preserve, this area offers 3,763 nearly contiguous acres rich in natural scenic beauty and outdoor recreation opportunities, ranging from hiking, biking, and horseback riding among interconnected trails to camping, boating, fishing, swimming, hunting, and winter activities. Warwick County Park adds another 538 acres of grass fields, meadows, wetlands and woodlands with historic resources, water access, active recreation facilities, and trails along Route 23 and French Creek. Tri-Town Park will soon be completed as an accessible fishing park along French Creek. Welkinweir, the home of Green Valleys Association, and Natural Lands Trust's Binky Lee Preserve, offer 209 acres demonstrating environmental stewardship, which are open to the public for walking and nature study. Coventry Woods (620 acres), Woody's Woods (263 acres), and French Creek Open Space (99 acres) are the three municipal nature parks offering similar trails for walking and nature observation.

In addition to the parks and private preserves open to public recreation, more than 19,500 acres are protected from development by agricultural easements, conservation easements, voluntary deed restrictions (though often less rigorous in protection and enforcement), transferred development rights, homeowner's association agreements, and municipal ownership (including municipal easements), many of which were acquired through voter-approved bonds. All of these protection techniques are voluntary actions on the part of the landowner to protect specified resources and guide development and its impacts away from these locations.

Community Parks

Our 11 community parks for active and passive recreation are located throughout the central and eastern portions of the Region. (See *Map 8, Recreation Features Map*, in the Appendix.) These parks offer a variety of sports fields, playgrounds, river and creek access, and picnic areas in traditional active

recreation park layouts, as well as in natural or naturalized environments—often with both types occurring on the same site. Master plans have guided the most recent park designs and improvements. Other, generally older parks evolved to serve the needs of the community without a formal plan.

Together these parks offer a total of 48 active recreation or physical play facilities for 13 unique active recreation activities, which tend to emphasize team sports and play equipment over fitness and non-competitive play activities. (See Appendix 3, Recreation Facilities.) They also offer a total of 59 features for passive recreation for 15 unique passive recreation activities or experiences. Most of these are areas of natural or naturalized landscape, trails, and seating and picnic areas. Notable features include the nature study area of Riverbend Park, the interpretation of Towpath Park's site history as part of the Schuylkill River Canal (the only integration of arts, culture, or history into a public park in the Region), and the former horseracing track at Pine Creek Park.

Schools, churches, and private facilities provide the majority of 21 diamond and 12 rectangular sports fields used by sports leagues for practice and games. With more than 4,000 sports league participants in 18 leagues across five sports, and most playing sports in more than one competitive season each year, fields are always in demand. East Coventry, East Pikeland and West Vincent have protected six sites (more than 265 acres) as open space for passive recreation and trail systems. The nearest indoor recreation or community centers are the Phoenixville, Pottstown, Upper Perkiomen, and Lionville Community YMCA facilities located just outside the Region.

Trails

The region offers more than 100 miles of land and water trails, including at least one existing public-use trail or path in every municipality, per Chester County's Trail Inventory and project updates. There are nearly 35 miles of trails available to equestrians, though roughly half of this mileage is the Horse-Shoe Trail, a longstanding social trail not fully protected by public ownership. Extensive trail systems are found in Coventry Woods, Woody's Woods, and Warwick County Park, throughout the state and national parks, and through Natural Lands Trust's Crow's Nest Preserve, Binky Lee Preserve, and Welkinweir. A handful of community parks have paths, too—most designed for circulation. Nearly 30 miles of off-road bicycling routes complement the trails in the Region with distance cycling (or touring) experiences and two public landings provide access to the water trail. Several major public trails, namely the Schuylkill River Trail, the French Creek Trail, the Pickering Creek Trail, and the Brandywine Trail, are under development and will connect the interior of the Region to nearby communities. An extensive network of social trails exists on private lands, used primarily by equestrians and only by private arrangement.

Accessible Private Recreation Lands

There are 22 privately-owned recreation sites, as shown on *Map 8, Recreation Facilities*, in the Appendix. In addition to the three nature preserves, commercial and non-profit entities provide day camps, campgrounds, sportsmen's clubs, golf courses, show grounds, indoor sports training centers, and a water park that can be accessed through daily fees or memberships.

Recreation Activities

Recreation activities in the Region and its surroundings abound. From the "all-American" community sports leagues to the Chester County favorites, beagling and bassetting (the hunting of hare and rabbits on foot with beagle or basset hounds), people who live in or visit our region can find a host of fun things to do in the great outdoors. These include traditional recreation opportunities provided by municipalities, community sports leagues, recreation commissions, and member-based sportsman's clubs.

- Eighteen community sports leagues and regional recreation commissions offer opportunities to play baseball, Little League, softball, football, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, basketball, and swimming. About 4,051 participants from the Northern Chester County region alone played in the leagues in 2009 or were on league waiting lists.
- Municipalities and non-profit organizations sponsor community special events, such community fairs and festivals, art and craft shows, and holiday events, as well as events celebrating history, heritage, and conservation.
- Sportsman's clubs offer members a wide range of outdoor sport and game pursuits, from hunting by gun, bow, foxhound, beagle, or basset to fly fishing.

Other activities are unique to Northern Chester County and the activity sponsors:

- Owen J. Roberts provides two important recreation programs: a comprehensive Aquatics Program providing facilities, instruction, and coaching for varied levels of swimming, diving, and water polo; and the Adult Evening School, offering a wide variety of learning and recreational opportunities for people 18 years of age and older.
- Camp Innabah, Camp Sankanac, Crow's Nest Preserve, Miss Betty's Day Camp, Indian Springs and Welkinweir offer summer programs for children and youth.
- Along the newly-forming Wine and Cheese Trails, travelers can enjoy the Region's signature pastoral scenery as they traverse the countryside to taste locally made, internationally acclaimed wines and cheeses.
- Among many cycling events, the French Creek Iron Tour, sponsored by the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, raises money for the preservation of lands in the French Creek watershed.

The region is fortunate to have several active organizations dedicated to conserving the Region's historic living landscape. These organizations, such as Historic Yellow Springs, the Mill at Anselma, Ludwig's Corner Horseshow and County Fair, and Maysie's Farm Conservation Center, provide programs and events that inform and even inspire, blurring the line between cultural and heritage education and recreation. Local food growers and producers, such as Chester Springs Creamery and Milky Way Farm, demonstrate the conservation ethic through their sensitive and sustainable operations communicated through site tours and product packaging. All of these organizations add to the quality of life here by connecting customers and employees to the Region's agricultural past and present.

Operations and Management

Nearly all that has been accomplished in parks, recreation, and open space in our Region has been due to the efforts of volunteers. Alongside elected officials and township staff, these volunteers have spearheaded efforts to determine policy, plan site acquisition and development, perform sports field maintenance, organize and lead programs, and manage finances through countless hours of community service. For many communities, the parks and recreation program is reliant on dedicated volunteers and their availability, capacity and enthusiasm to provide these services.

All nine municipalities have a history of recreation and open space planning in conjunction with their overall community development and conservation policies.

Seven of the nine municipalities have some form of mandatory dedication of parkland provisions in their subdivision and land development ordinance. Preserving open space and protecting natural, scenic, and historic resources as passive recreation areas are the primary focus of this planning tool. East Coventry, East Vincent, South Coventry, and West Vincent follow the most common practice of specifying an acreage (or square footage) to be dedicated based on the number of residential units. East Pikeland, and North Coventry require a percentage of the proposed development site, including proposed commercial, industrial, and institutional uses, to be dedicated as recreational lands.

Fees-in-lieu of land dedication are common in this region but could be strengthened by provision for fair market value assessment and inclusion of trails as permitted uses of such fees. Provisions specifying land characteristics and design standards for dedicated land are highly consistent across the five ordinances in which they are found. Provisions in several municipalities recognize trails as an appropriate facility for passive parkland and open space. Only East Pikeland Township's mandatory dedication of parkland provisions incorporates standards for trail design, construction, maintenance, and dedication, making it the most comprehensive in the Region.

With an eye toward future growth and recreational needs, six municipalities have acquired or expect to receive a total of 400 acres of future parkland. Some sites have been conceptually evaluated for active recreation development, but only one, Snyder Avenue Park, has been master planned. Recreational needs of residents, facility assessments, and other opportunities—identified by this Plan and other sources—will guide their planning and development.

Municipal parks and recreation is largely supported by tax dollars. East Coventry, East Pikeland, North Coventry, West Pikeland and West Vincent supplement revenues for parks and recreation services through program fees and facility rentals. This limited operating investment in parks and recreation in the Region is lower than average for communities of similar size and context as a result of several factors. First, the Region includes communities with relatively conservative budgets. Second, volunteers provide the vast majority of labor. Second, Public Works or Road Departments are providing park maintenance but not tracking labor and expenses for park maintenance efforts separately. Finally, for many communities, the parks and recreation system is relatively new and growing by small, volunteer-driven steps toward expanded services and programs.

Chapter 3: Our Needs and Opportunities

Parks, recreation, and open space protection are important to the contemporary culture of Northern Chester County residents. Hundreds of acres of parkland have been acquired, numerous recreation fields, courts, playgrounds, and other facilities have been developed, a wide array of programs and services have been offered, and thousands of acres of open spaces have been protected. These accomplishments are appreciated by citizens, as reflected in their participation and use of recreation opportunities and support for conservation initiatives, reported in the 2010 citizen survey and other public outreach activities.

However, citizens' interests are also growing and changing. In addition to the overall population growth trend, the number of active participants in sports leagues, recreation programs, and community educational programs is growing. The survey found latent interest in these opportunities among citizens. The leagues, programs, and other services are being offered more frequently throughout the year, and new ones are being introduced, placing greater demand on existing fields, parks, and their support facilities. In addition to this growing demand for places to play, sports field dimensions and accessibility regulations are changing, making many existing facilities out-of-date.

There are clearly needs for more, improved, and enhanced facilities and programs and the need for continuing open space protection efforts in this growing region. The comprehensive inventory and assessment of parklands, recreation facilities, sports fields, trails, open space protection, and programs and services (documented in *Appendices 2 through 6, and 8 and 10*) demonstrates these needs. In addition, the analysis of providers and management entities (*Appendix 7)* concludes that the capacity of entities to meet these needs individually is moderate to low, but is much higher through cooperative and collaborative efforts. Viewing needs region-wide provides opportunities to join efforts and leverage resources toward common goals. Additional opportunities to integrate themes of active, healthy living, conservation, and cultural heritage with community recreation are found as these elements are cross-referenced.

Continued, Targeted Open Space Protection

Four major landscapes define the Region's character—Hopewell Big Woods and the Schuylkill River, French Creek, and Pickering Creek corridors. Most of the Region's unique and defining natural and cultural resources are located within or can be related to these landscapes. Most of the protected land is also located within these landscapes, but the preserves, easements, and deed restrictions, though less rigorously, only protect some lands, not the entire landscapes. If lands where resources that define the Region's character are lost to or further fragmented by development, the Region's identity will suffer.

Benefits of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (and Trails, too!)

Environmental Benefits

- Research shows that trees in parks have an individual, annual value of between $94 and $250 in energy savings and deterrence of environmental degradation. This has a total value of about $17 million annually in the Delaware Valley.
- Parks help to improve water quality by providing green space that absorbs runoff and filters pollutants. Southeastern Pennsylvania realizes $61 million in annual cost savings from protected open space's filtration of pollutants and replenishment of the water supply.
- Parks and open spaces preserve and buffer vital land and water resources, provide important habitat for plants and animals, and demonstrate low-impact environmental management practices. They can also important venues for environmental education and community-based environmental stewardship activities.
- A well-connected parks system supports wildlife movement and is essential to the life cycles of some species.
- Parks and open spaces can protect significant historic features of the natural landscape.

Economic Benefits

- Open space adds $16.3 billion to the value of homes in southeastern Pennsylvania. Parks increase property values. Homes within 2,000 feet of a park have a premium of about 20 percent over similar homes farther away. Open space generates $240 million in property tax revenues annually.
- Parks attract businesses. The availability of parks and recreation opportunities is the top reason that business owners choose a location next to location and availability of labor force.
- Parks are one of the most direct ways that our country can save money on health care costs by offering physical activity opportunities. The United States spends $147 billion annually on direct and indirect costs of the obesity epidemic which stems largely from lifestyle choices of inactivity and poor diet. Improved health saves $800 million in annual health care costs in the Delaware Valley.

Social Benefits

- Recreation has been found to be the number one factor in creating healthy family bonds, the foundation of our society.
- Parks and recreation is second only to the role of faith-based institutions in contributing to the happiness of the citizens about their community.
- Community facilities, including parks and open spaces, are the source of community pride and identity.
- Trails connect people to nature, provide transportation, create jobs, attract tourists and stimulate the local economy.

Personal Benefits

- Children's play is essential to the human development process.
- Physical activity and leisure are important to fostering a positive self-image and essential to stress management. Recreation opportunities for youth provide alternatives to delinquency and gang-related activity.
- Parks and park facilities provide important opportunities for regular physical activity – one of the best methods of health insurance. Each household with close to home public recreation opportunities saves $392 annually.

Sources: National Recreation and Park Association, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Penn State University, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, American Trails, and the Rails to Trail Conservancy.

Land protection should continue to be focused within these landscapes. Where voluntary protection techniques are used, outreach efforts to landowners on the benefits of land protection need to be more focused on and within these landscapes. Where mandatory dedication of parkland ordinances and fee-in-lieu of parkland alternatives are in place, standards and criteria need to be applied to provide appropriate land protection (or commensurate cash resources) at no cost to the municipality.

Land protection, especially along waterways, also conserves our waters. The exceptional value and high water quality designations for all the Region's major interior waterways characterize the aquatic habitat as nearly pristine. These designations call attention to the waterways' sensitivity to impacts but may not prohibit development, and its associated clearing, erosion, sedimentation, and other impacts, from occurring, nor do they provide public access for fishing, nature study, or scenic observation.

Finally, land protection influences our skies and air quality. Protection techniques significantly reduce travel associated with intensive development (in Northern Chester County, travel is almost exclusively by motorized vehicle), which decreases noxious pollutants from vehicular emissions. Other impacts from development, such as outdoor lighting for nighttime security, are also minimized, enabling citizens to experience one of the few remaining areas in the Delaware Valley with dark, starry skies.

Citizens support conservation efforts as a priority. Survey respondents rated the importance of nature reserves, trails, and greenways as important or extremely important. Written comments echoed and elaborated on this strong sentiment regarding the preservation of the Region's scenic rural character.

Over time, protection will be increasingly challenging. Each parcel subdivision creates more parcels and more parcel owners of smaller pieces of land, requiring more time, effort, and resources to protect and monitor these sites. Protection efforts need to be emphasized in the near-term, especially for the most critical resources.

More Distinctive, Well-Designed Parks

The location of existing parks relates reasonably well to the population distribution of the Region. Parks in the central and eastern municipalities provide close-to-home recreation sites for residents, and residents of East Nantmeal and Warwick have convenient access to Warwick County Park. Park locations are not well publicized and entrances are not well marked, especially where location, topography, or vegetation blocks views to recognizable park facilities. Signage, enhanced with landscaping, and publicity need to do a better job of communicating park locations in the community and in advance of park visits.

The same or better can be said about the location of most parklands owned by the municipalities for future development. These sites are:

- proximate to an elementary school with potential for joint development with the school district of ownership (e.g., the Reiff Tract behind East Vincent Elementary School),
- along the River (e.g., the Heyser, Faulk, and Wade Tracts in East Coventry),

- along travel corridors (e.g., Hanover Meadows in North Coventry along Route 100), or
- in underserved areas of residential concentration, (e.g., the Pennhurst Tract on the outskirts of Spring City in East Vincent Township).

Other sites have unique features that would enable the development of a truly distinctive park experience, e.g., the historic Parker Ford Tavern. However, none of these sites is large enough, flat enough, or centrally located to multiple leagues for a multi-field sports complex.

Park design is noticeably improving. Newer parks take advantage of site features and topography, include circulation paths and natural or naturalized plantings to unify the site and buffer its facilities from one another, include some accessible facilities, and clearly mark and landscape parking areas. Some older parks lack these design characteristics, though the size and canopy of their shade trees is unmatched in newer parks. None of the parks are universally accessible, which is a concern for persons with disabilities as well as families with children in strollers, and elderly people who move about with assistance (cane, walker, or scooter.) Suggestions on park improvements and enhancements have been made for all existing parks (see Table 5-1, page 31), but further evaluation and detail should be explored.

Public outreach, specifically the survey, found that township park visitation is high (73 percent of residents use parks on at least an occasional basis) and that residents would use parks and recreation opportunities more if they had more information about them. In fact, lack of information—not lack of time or money as is more commonly reported in these types of surveys—was cited as the chief block to participation. Timely information compiled in one location is perhaps the single most important thing that Northern Chester County could do to foster participation in recreation and active healthy lifestyles among residents of all ages.

The survey also found interest in special use facilities, such as a dog park, a skate park, outdoor swimming pool, or ice skating rink, but not in sufficient degree to warrant recommendation. These facilities could be integrated within a multi-purpose park, or developed independently by special interest groups with consideration for park dedication over time, if public sentiment changes.

Owen J. Roberts School District's Fit for Life program and local sponsorship of the Adult Evening School offer opportunities for program expansion and coordination, serving as an indoor community center. The feasibility of an independent indoor community center facility that would support year-round community recreation and education, separate from the district's middle school/high school campus, should also be explored.

Variety in Type and Quality, Consistency in Safety among Recreation Facilities

Existing public parks and recreation sites in the Region are biased toward active recreation facilities, namely traditional sports fields and playgrounds. Some sites include natural areas and elements of history but do little to engage the everyday park visitor in understanding their significance to the park, the community, or the environment. Social areas (benches, tables, etc.) are limited to a single pavilion

or widely dispersed, not able to support multiple small groups and families at one time. They are also limited to either sun or shade locations; few parks offer both options. More and varied active, nature-based, and local interest facilities, supported by educational signage, programs, or public art, would create more distinctive park experiences and support the Region's upswing in fishing, hiking, and wildlife watching activities.

The greatest need among park-based recreation facilities is public-use sports field capacity. For years, community sports leagues have asked for more fields but have fallen short in response when asked to justify how many, what kind, where, and when fields were needed. The sports field analysis for this plan explored these needs based on league service areas, participation rates, team composition, and seasonal schedules (see *Appendix 9*) and found that community sports leagues—the only providers of youth athletics outside of the schools—could not operate without the borrowed use of school, church, and private field space. They make extensive use of fields that are undersized, moderately well oriented, and otherwise lacking field design. Many sites have issues with parking capacity. The region needs more fields—19 diamond fields and 13 rectangular fields—just to sustain youth sports. Another 4 diamond fields and 4 rectangular fields are needed to provide "room" for adult sports leagues to emerge and for general recreational play. The evaluation and redesign of older parks could push this number slightly higher if one or more fields are eliminated from an existing park to make room for alternative facilities.

Recreation opportunities for adults are lacking overall, not just in sports. Facilities, such as horseshoe pits, have been introduced into recent parks, but their numbers have been few and thus limit the number of persons who can play (and teach others) at any one time. Repeated facilities are needed to demonstrate real support for adult outdoor activity and build interest in adult recreation.

While unmanaged outdoor lighting can impact the dark skies, lighting can be beneficial in extending the amount of play on a field, court, or other outdoor recreation facility on a given day. Field lighting is controversial as a result of the type and direction of current lighting fixtures. Replacement equipment that reduces impacts should be considered. Field and facility lighting should also be part of any park planning or evaluation studies to determine if lighting is desirable and how best to minimize impacts.

Other important needs include:

- Replacement of play equipment that is outdated, unattractive, and unsafe in terms of ground surface fall zones.
- Addition of plantings at park entrances and social areas to enhance seasonality and offer a different experience each time.

Expanded, Networked Trails

Pathways for safe walking and cycling emerged as the top facility that survey respondents identified as lacking in the Region. Walking was the top outdoor activity in which respondents participate (75 percent participation); bicycle riding ranked fifth (51 percent participation). About three out of five

respondents indicated that there are not enough of safe places to walk and bike. The simplicity and low cost of walking and cycling as activities of an active, healthy lifestyle suggest that public investments in these areas would have great returns on public health.

More than 100 miles of public-use land and water trails seems like a lot. For a region that is 15 miles by 12 miles, 100 miles could traverse the entire region several times. But existing public-use trails are actually quite concentrated in a few locations and these clusters isolated from one another, thus they provide destinations for trail-goers but no real region-wide network.

Municipalities have independently conceived and planned trail networks, but few segments outside the parks and passive open spaces have been completed. Many of the proposed trails fall short of feasibility, even without detailed study, yet remain part of the "plan." Municipal trail plans need to be reviewed, evaluated, and refined into a single coordinated or region-wide trail network plan to ensure that trails that connect parks, schools, and other community destinations meet at municipal boundaries. From this network, trails can then be prioritized for advanced study and planning to address:

- Detailed trail alignment and design, maintenance, and publicity.
- Infrastructure appropriate to each trail's permitted use(s), such as:
    - access (trailheads, signage)
    - parking (vehicles and horse trailers)
    - starting and resting points (benches, mounting blocks for equestrians)
- Interpretive information on the corridor's resources and history
- Restrooms and water fountains

The regional trails—Schuylkill River Trail, the French Creek Trail (including the Boars Back Trail), the Pickering Creek Trail, the Brandywine Trail, and the proposed Hopewell Big Woods connector trail—offer great potential for tying the Region together and establishing a region-wide trail network. Efforts to complete these regional trails need continued support for land acquisition or easement, trail design and development, and provisions for owner or volunteer trail maintenance.

Until public-use trails are in wide use across the Region and a track record of safety is established, the social trail network should remain privately-owned and personally-acknowledged through traditional gestures from individuals and small groups to owners. Those who have permission to use trails on private lands should use these opportunities to speak with landowners to share benefits and encourage right-of-way protection, fully respecting owners' desires. Over time, owners may warm up to the idea of public access, or properties may change hands. A region-wide trail network plan should carefully consider select privately-owned "social" trails for long-term network integration.

Diversified, Coordinated, and Publicized Activities and Events

The range of public recreation services is infinite, but the focus of parks, recreation, and open space in this region is active, healthy living and conservation and stewardship of natural and cultural heritage.

These should be the focus of additional services that offer activities and events for residents of all ages to connect with, celebrate, and appreciate. Adults and families are the underserved populations in recreation. Partners also have a keen interest in connecting children to the outdoors for spontaneous physical activity and exploration of the physical world, not just the virtual world.

The multitude of sports organizations and their extensive demand for field and facility use indicates that ongoing dialogue with these organizations is needed as additional facilities are planned and developed. Discussions among league representatives provided valuable information for this plan and should continue to inform and detail the need and desires for sports fields, surfaces and lighting, spectator areas, support facilities, and shared use and maintenance for all of the above.

As stated above, citizens need timely information about recreation activities and events. The challenge here is that each provider has its own method of publishing and distributing information. Some use newsletters, others flyers and signs. Some have Web sites, others do not. Some have bulletin boards, others prefer word-of-mouth. Knowing "what's going on" is as difficult for the public as it is for scheduled program and event sponsors, occasionally resulting in conflicting activities being scheduled on the same day. Knowing from the survey that residents view Northern Chester County as their home community, not just their municipality, residents and program providers would benefit from one calendar of events, coordinated by providers behind the scenes and published in multiple outlets. Such coordination would also enable cost-sharing for advertising and other purchases.

Organized, Managed Partnerships

The analysis of providers and management entities found that the capacity to meet these needs individually is moderate to low. Municipal staffs are small, budgets are lean, and local accomplishments to-date are credited largely to the efforts of dedicated volunteers. Recreation, health and wellness, and conservation partners each have a more focused mission, yet their human and financial resources are also slim. School district partners have larger staffs and growing community outreach programs but increasing curricular and administrative demands on their budgets.

Many of these needs presented here will require capital investment: human capital and financial capital. Volunteers will certainly continue to lead many efforts, but professional staff (one or more positions over time) is needed to support broad multi-municipal or region-wide coordination of publicity, program expansion, park improvement planning, partnership development, fundraising, etc. An initial position should require recreational programming and management experience and could be part-time, and possibly combined with other municipal or multi-municipal functions.

Again, residents identify with the Region rather than only their municipality, and have expressed support for regional cooperation that removes redundancy and expands and improves services. The real opportunity to advance parks, recreation, and open space in Northern Chester County lies in future cooperative and collaborative efforts. Through such efforts, partners can share their people's time, knowledge, and skills and their financial resources to research and share best practices, and

consolidate purchases and contracts. They can also leverage this cooperation in pursuing external funding from state, federal, and private sources, enabling them to expand and improve services.

Chapter 4: Our Values and Vision

Our residents' core values are the foundation of our plan. They communicate the qualities of our region that people hold in common regarding parks, recreation, and open space. From the core values, we cast a vision—a captivating description of the parks, recreation, and open space system we want for Northern Chester County. Our mission communicates the approach that our partnership to creating this legacy in Northern Chester County. The strategies and recommendations direct our policies, projects and other actions to implement our vision and sustaining our values. This chapter presents this planning framework.

Core Values

As the qualities most valued by the communities of Northern Chester County, the core values are embodied in the goals, blueprint, and recommendations for parks, recreation, and open space. All policies and actions should be vested in the core values. The core values include:

- Community – Northern Chester County is a special place in which to live. Community involvement has sparked many of the important achievements of the Region in parks, recreation and open space. Building and strengthening the sense of community here through parks, recreation, and open space is essential.
- Health – The physical health and wellness of the residents is paramount. Providing opportunities for the residents to live active, healthy lifestyles through community recreation facilities, programs, and services will benefit the community.
- Heritage – Northern Chester County has a globally significant history. This unique heritage needs to be celebrated and promoted through recreational and educational opportunities.
- Scenic Rural Character – Our beautiful landscapes, dark night skies, and distinctive way of life need to be protected and treasured for present and future generations.
- Sustainability – Making the best use of all resources in ways that steward the environment, supports human and financial resources, and provides a legacy for future generations is vital.

Vision Statement

The community's core values underlie the vision for parks, recreation, and open space in the Region. Our vision is:

To establish a premier parks, recreation, and open space system in Northern Chester County through public and private partnerships that connects our history, culture, recreational, natural, and scenic resources and our physical health through facilities, programs and policies.

Chapter 4

Revised Final Draft – April 3, 2012

Mission Statement for Parks, Recreation and Open Space

The mission statement presents how the Region can achieve its vision.

The mission of the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities is to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the Region's citizens through parks, recreation, and open spaces. We are committed to working with public and private sector partners to protect our rural landscape, interpret our heritage, expand our landscape-based economy, increase public awareness about parks and recreation opportunities, and foster active healthy living through recreation in a fiscally responsible manner. Our member municipalities will collaborate in a fair and equitable manner through the Federation to maximize our limited fiscal resources, reduce duplication of effort, and leverage additional funding and support in achieving this legacy for our citizens.

Goals

With the core values, vision, and mission defined, the next part of developing the planning framework was establishing community goals for parks, recreation, and open space. The goals contain specific outcomes of the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. Four goals emerged from the process. Goals are the long-range outcomes desired from the implementation of the Regional Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. They include:

1. Protect open space that defines our region's natural, historic, and scenic character.
2. Foster active, healthy lifestyles through parks, trails, and programs.
3. Manage parks, recreation and open space to convey the best possible benefit to the public.
4. Establish a sustainable financial support system of public and private resources.

A Community-Based Level-of-Service System

To meet residents' recreation needs and to promote active, healthy living and a conservation stewardship ethic, the Northern Chester County region needs a way to guide municipal investments and partnerships. Traditional level-of-service methods outline acreage needs. More sophisticated methods detail facility needs. This region needs these parameters and more to make the best use of limited municipal capacity and financial resources for parks and recreation and continue open space protection efforts. The community-based level-of-service system for this region includes:

- Classifications for Public Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- Appropriate Recreational and Support Facilities by Classification
- Three Service Zones
- A Trail Network
- A Public Park, Recreation, and Open Space Service Standard
- Principles for Design, Access and Management

Table 4-1 presents the classifications, their descriptions, services zones, and suggested recreational activities.

Table 4-1: Proposed Park Classification System for Northern Chester County

Park Classification Purpose and Description	**Suggested Recreational and Support Facilities**	Service Zones
Community Parks – Meet community-based recreation needs for active recreation facilities and preservation of local landscape features (minimum 20 acres; 2/3 for active and 1/3 for resource conservation).	Ball fields, game courts, playgrounds, and spectator seating areas.	Neighborhoods, Schuylkill Riverfront
Special Use Parks – Meet a single purpose need such as a swimming pool, ice rink, nature center, or riverfront access (variable, determined by special use).		Neighborhoods, Schuylkill Riverfront
Heritage Parks – Has a distinctive natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resource(s), preferably interpreted; is owned by a governmental entity or private sector partner (size determined by resource).	Observation and interpretation areas. Examples: Parker Ford Tavern and grounds, Snyder's Mill, and Fricks Lochs.	Riverfront, Neighborhoods, Scenic Rural Interior
Regional Parks – Preserve natural landscapes while offering active recreation opportunities (minimum 50 acres; 2/3 for resource conservation and 1/3 for active).	Nature-based recreation facilities such as camp sites, trails, nature center, and amphitheater.	Neighborhoods, Schuylkill Riverfront
Sports Complexes – Consolidate heavily programmed athletic fields and associated recreation and support facilities (minimum 50 acres); located along a major transportation corridor).	Sports fields, game courts, concession stands, spectator seating areas, food vendors, picnic pavilions, water fountains, shade, playground, exercise path.	Neighborhoods, Schuylkill Riverfront
School Parks – Integrate school facilities, park and recreation facilities in close to home locations to function as community parks, sports complexes, and special use facilities as needed (minimum 25 acres).	Sports fields, game courts, playground, walking paths, bicycle paths, skate park, restrooms, seating areas, pavilions, parking and landscaping.	Neighborhoods, Schuylkill Riverfront
Reserves – Preserve significant natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resource(s); may provide buffering to other parklands.	Nature viewing and interpretation areas.	Schuylkill Riverfront, Neighborhoods, Scenic Rural Interior
Trails Network – Provide multi-use trails within greenways and parks; connector trails for non-motorized access to parks, schools, and community destinations; on-street bikeways; and equestrian trails (within ½ mile of every home).		Schuylkill Riverfront, Neighborhoods, Scenic Rural Interior

Classifications for Public Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

A classification system outlines the range of public park, recreation, and open space types that will be provided as the system is enhanced and expanded. It includes existing park types and other types to be developed over time. For example, classifications not present among current park and recreation sites, e.g. school-parks and public sports complex, suggest gaps in recreational experiences that improvements, enhancements, or new acquisitions could fill.

Eight classifications of park and recreation lands are proposed in the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space System. Each classification serves a unique purpose, e.g., to support recreational sports, preserve sensitive natural areas, or connect/provide recreational travel corridors—all components valued by citizens of the Region as reported in the citizen survey.

Appropriate Recreation and Support Facilities

Since this is a rural area, no data for analyzing or projecting park visitation was available. However, the public opinion survey, key person interviews, focus groups, and work sessions with the Coordinating Committee provided extensive input to the recommendations for activities by classification. Data for the sports facilities was further informed by the sports league schedules and participation rates.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Service Zones

The analysis of population, parkland, and open space distribution across the Region suggests three distinct service zones that offer specific opportunities for the development of the parks, recreation and open space system: the riverfront, the rural interior, and the developing residential and service areas between them. (See *Map A, Service Zones Map*.) Public interest in safe places to walk and ride bicycles or horses indicates the need for a trail network that would span and interconnect all three service zones.

The Schuylkill Riverfront is a unique resource with opportunities for water access and water-based recreation, environmental education, and heritage interpretation. In addition, lands along the river lie in the floodplain and/or host wetlands that are limited in their development potential but are suitable for low impact uses such as recreation, including recreational quality (not premier) sports fields. Therefore, these 2,100 acres along the river offer strategic opportunities to develop the kind of parks, recreation, and open space system that fosters river-based recreation opportunities, demonstrates river-focused land and water conservation, and celebrates river-related heritage. The Schuylkill Riverfront is shown in orange on *Map A, Service Zones Map*.

The Neighborhoods are concentrated in the central and eastern municipalities, especially along the state highway corridors. These areas are also the location of most public elementary schools, which are hubs of community life in the Region. Land use and community service planning sustains this pattern as a means to promote small-scaled communities and conserve the rural landscape. These areas are close-to-home for both current and future residents, who desire nearer access to more facilities for regular recreation. Therefore, these 20,000 acres are the prime service locations for enhanced and expanded active recreation facilities, including sports fields of all qualities, and for smaller passive

recreation areas that highlight unique site features for self-directed activities and scheduled programs. The Neighborhoods is shown in yellow on *Map A, Service Zones Map*.

The Scenic Rural Interior comprises the large conservation landscapes—the Hopewell Big Woods, the French Creek Corridor, the Pickering Creek Corridor, and the Marsh Creek headwaters. Here, the scenic, rural landscape holds center stage, with abundant natural and cultural resources and beauty. Community development in these areas is purposefully low density and low impact. The public parks, recreation, and open space system aligns its investments in this 53,000 acre area to ensure protection of contiguous landscapes and the resources they hold. Protected lands with public access could serve as nature reserves, heritage parks, picnic grounds, trailheads, or other passive recreation sites. The Scenic, Rural Interior is shown in green on *Map A, Service Zones Map*.

The service zones are intended to guide municipalities in the types of future parks/open spaces appropriate to be developed. Their edges are open to flexible interpretation. For example, Ludwig's Corner Horse Show Grounds lies in the Scenic, Rural Interior but could be further developed for recreation, given its proximity to the Neighborhoods, where the village of Ludwig's Corner is located. Similarly, lands shown in the Neighborhoods adjacent to the Scenic, Rural Interior may be more suitable for conservation, given the presence or proximity to other conservation lands. The map should contribute to discussion but the conditions of the site and its surroundings should ultimately determine the most appropriate park type.

For example, if a parcel is proposed for development in the yellow area (generally the municipally-designated planned development/growth area), any lands proposed for mandatory dedication of parkland should fit minimum criteria (flat land) for a community park (majority for active recreation fields plus some area for passive recreation). If the land does not meet the criteria, then fees-in-lieu of dedication should be paid to support development of active recreation facilities elsewhere in the vicinity. If the site has historic resources, French Creek, a trail corridor, or other unusual site resources, dedicated parkland for dedicated passive open space with enhancements to interpret the site would be appropriate.

A Northern Chester County Trail Network is needed to complement the three service zones. This network would expand from the framework provided by the regional trails. It would interconnect parks of all types with schools, historic villages, and community centers. It would interconnect the three service zones, enabling interpretation of nature and history across the woodlands, farm fields, villages and neighborhoods, and waterways.

A Public Park, Recreation, and Open Space Service Standard

To sustain the proportion of protected public land for recreation for future residents, the Region will need to maintain a standard of 28 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

The parkland standard prepared for Northern Chester County considered the amount of land present and needed to support active healthy lifestyles among current residents of all ages.

- existing and future parkland
- land needed to accommodate sports facilities for the existing organized sports
- land needed for fields and supporting facilities for adults

These parklands and parkland needs total 916 acres to serve today's 43,907 residents and yield a population-based standard of 21 acres per 1,000 residents.

Future generations will recreate through sports and other outdoor activities that are difficult to project today but will likely require open land areas. A previous Chester County policy set aside one-third of parkland for 50 years, as a legacy for future generations to program and develop. Incorporating this best practice increases the population-based standard by one-third to 28 acres per 1,000 residents.

See *Appendix 8, Sports Field Analysis,* and *Appendix 10, Level of Service Analysis* for further information.

Principles for Design, Access, and Management

Through improvement, enhancements, and new park design, all parks will:

1. Be designed to provide multiple opportunities based on the unique features of the site and resident needs. Regardless of park classification, they incorporate walking paths, places to sit, public art that interprets local values, large trees and landscaping that create "curb appeal" for park use, and signage that conveys the park's identity and role in a larger park system.
2. Provide access to all recreational and support facilities, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, to support barrier-free recreation for all residents.
3. Be developed in phases. Initial development includes facilities, landscaping, and signage to establish the park as a destination. Some sites and portions of sites are landbanked to meet future recreation needs.
4. Be maintained with sufficient resources to provide clean, safe opportunities for recreational activities.

12 Key Strategies: A Blueprint for Action

The planning framework was completed with the definition of 12 key strategies for establishing a premier parks, recreation, and open space system in Northern Chester County. These strategies build upon the success, assets, and opportunities in place in Northern Chester County. They recognize that the Northern Federation is a unifying group with a productive track record in regional collaboration. They recommend continuing support of the things that work well (conservation and land protection)

while strengthening service areas where community needs exist, namely in areas of active recreation, connection to the outdoors, trails, and collaboration on the organization of recreation and service delivery. They propose stronger working relationships with expert partners in conservation and recreation, such as the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Green Valleys Association, the Natural Lands Trust, and private recreation providers.

These 12 key strategies are presented and detailed through recommendations in Chapters 5 through 8.

1. Enrich parks as a regional system of multi-faceted destinations.
2. Expand close-to-home recreation opportunities within the regional park system.
3. Develop more sports facilities within the regional park system.
4. Develop trails as a regional network.
5. Expand and diversify recreation programming.
6. Integrate open space protection with growth management and recreation planning.
7. Protect and interpret landscapes that define the Region's character.
8. Demonstrate and encourage resource stewardship.
9. Increase recreation participation through awareness of opportunities.
10. Organize a regional commission to coordinate the development and delivery of parks, recreation, trails, and open space services.
11. Increase operating and capital support for parks, recreation, trails, and open space.
12. Leverage the knowledge, skills, and resources of partner organizations that share the Region's core values.

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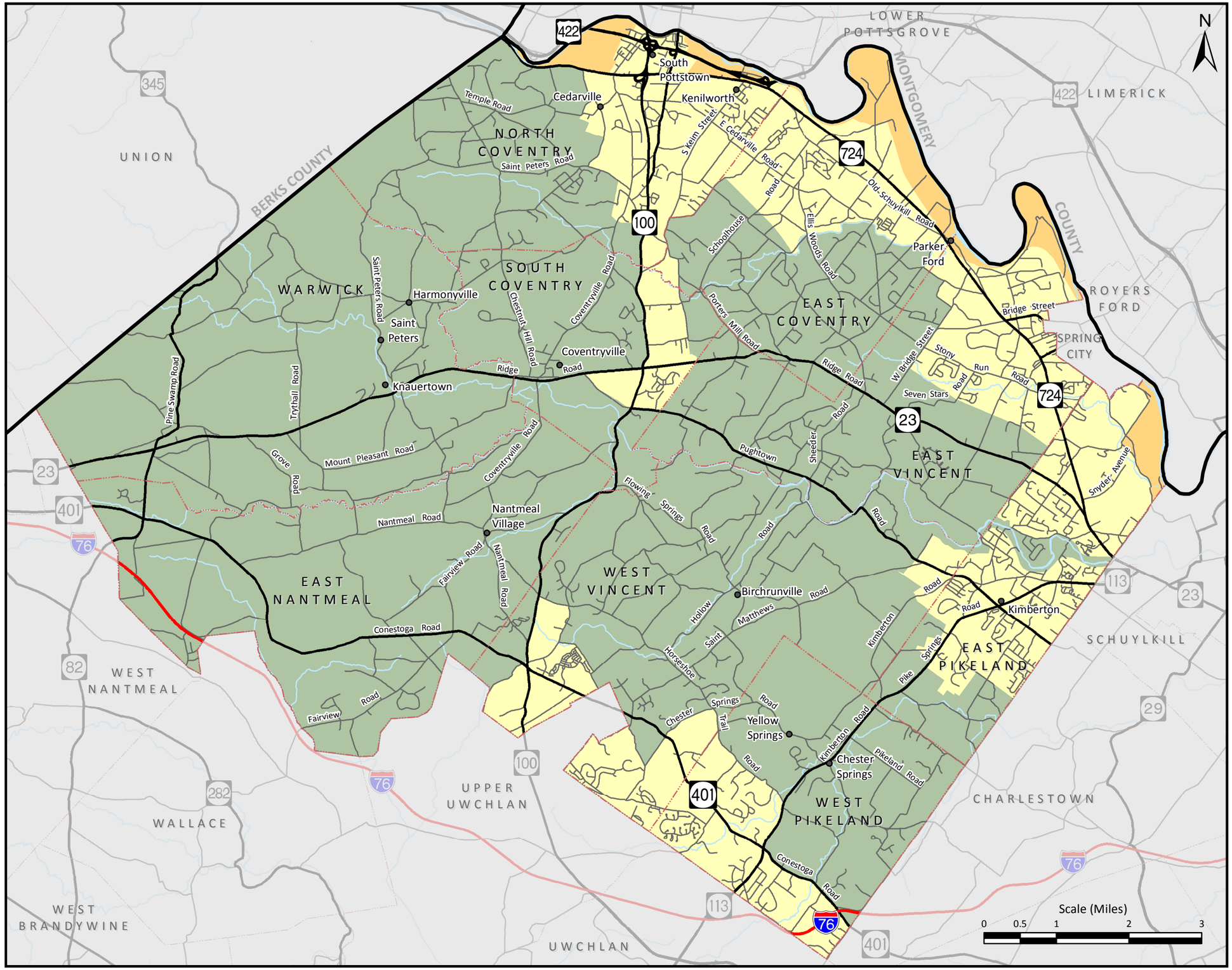
Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Map A
Service Zones Map

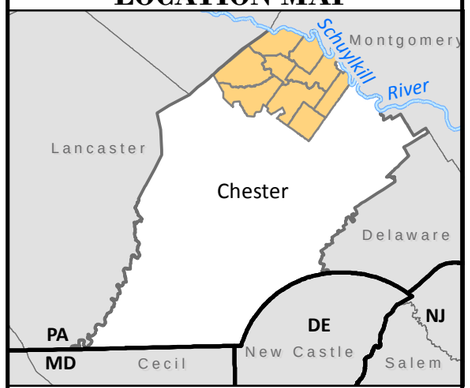


LEGEND

Service Zones

- Neighborhoods
- Schuylkill Riverfront
- Scenic Rural Interior

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

December 2011

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS Pennsylvania DCNR and State Game Commission. Gannett Fleming developed Level of Service coverage.

Chapter 5: Strategies and Recommendations for a Regional System

Parks, trails, and programs are key components of communities that foster active, healthy lifestyles. Together, they provide the places, the activities, and the direction to inspire physical activity. Their proximity to home and other daily destinations influences the convenience and regularity of their use. Local entities can plan, develop, and offer these services independently and successfully. However, when conditions are favorable, a regional system can streamline costs and reduce unnecessary duplication of effort— items of concern to local officials and taxpayers— while expanding facility and program offerings and enhancing the service quality important to recreation "customers."

This chapter synthesizes challenges and opportunities identified in the inventory and assessment reports (*Appendices*) and presents recommendations under five Blueprint Strategies:

Strategy 1: Enrich Parks as a Regional System of Multi-Faceted Destinations.
Strategy 2: Expand Close to Home Recreation Opportunities within the Regional Park System.
Strategy 3: Develop More Sports Facilities within the Regional Park System.
Strategy 4: Develop Trails as a Regional Network.
Strategy 5: Expand and Diversify Recreation Programming.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Region is poised to coordinate the places and programs of parks and recreation as a regional system. The existing public parks are well known, frequently visited, and well located in relation to the resident population. While most parks offer traditional sports fields, courts, and playgrounds, there is diversity in their environmental setting and features, particularly when the less well known municipal open spaces for passive recreation and private preserves are included. Park improvements to highlight and interpret each park's natural and cultural features would enhance this diversity to support an even wider variety of recreational experiences within the Region.

In this expansive region, most parks are drive-to destinations. In spite of the travel time and distance, a high percentage of residents (73 percent) use township parks at least occasionally as reported in the 2010 public opinion survey. But only 15 percent use parks on at least a weekly basis. If residents are to lead (and municipalities to encourage) active, healthy lifestyles, park usage needs to increase. A greater number of smaller, close-to-home parks, stated as important to nearly 9 out of 10 survey respondents, would increase the opportunity and convenience of physical and social activity.

Developing more parks requires significant investment in land and facilities, as well as the site development costs of parking, stormwater management, and utilities. The demand for more close-to-

home parks, the location of public schools in proximity to the resident population—particularly the Owen J. Roberts schools, and the community-wide adult education programming provide an opportunity for joint development and programming of school sites as school-parks for active, healthy living. School-parks can become destinations for community education and recreation for all ages, bringing more diversity to recreation programming.

More sports fields are needed to sustain youth sports leagues alone, not to mention the need for adult league and general recreation access to fields. Additional fields that further differentiate recreational play from competitive and tournament-quality play would further enhance recreational opportunities. Fortunately, additional land is held in public reserve by municipalities and other public entities for additional and alternative parks and facilities, including parcels that could expand school-park sites, but they have not all been individually evaluated for site constraints. Additional land may be needed based on criteria for field configuration, support facilities such as parking, and reserve or landbanked areas for long-range, "next generation" site development.

Current public-use trails are almost exclusively destination trails within the federal, state, county, or municipal conservation parks and private preserves. (The Horse-Shoe Trail threads its way through many of these sites but currently lacks the comprehensive public ownership to be called a public-use trail.) Existing trails are interconnected among adjacent sites but provide no real travel alternative to regional destinations; they also lack adequate accommodations for permitted trail users. Many other trails have been proposed but few have been evaluated for their physical and political feasibility, or their relationship to recreational and community destinations. However, several multi-mile public-use trails are under development. These span the Region along the riverfront, across its interior along French Creek, and along its eastern border. Upon completion, these three major trails could become the spines of a regional trail network that interconnects the Region's park system with trail spurs and loops.

Strategies and Recommendations for a Regional System

A regional system administered through one of several management options (outlined in Chapter 8, Management and Financing) would require several strategies to guide municipal efforts and investments in the areas of parks, trails, and programs. The remainder of this chapter outlines each strategy through a series of recommendations— some general, others specific; some region-wide, others municipal or multi-municipal.

Strategy 1: Enrich Parks as a Regional System of Multi-Faceted Destinations

Given the rural nature, rich history and culture, and existing parks and facilities of the region, parks should offer a range of park types, from community parks to heritage parks to nature preserves to sports complexes, each with distinctive themes and multiple activities that offer a variety of experiences for each visit. The system should appear unified to the park visitor through consistent signage, maintenance, and marketing.

Recommendation 1.1: Enhance existing parks as unique recreational destinations.

Parks that are most memorable and well-used are those that provide recreation facilities (fields, courts, equipment, paths/trails, etc.) and support facilities (social seating, spectator seating, restrooms, water, etc.) that match residents' needs in an easily navigated, well-designed setting. Most existing parks in the Region provide the recreation facilities but lack strong settings that distinguish them from other parks for the spectator or passive user. Well-placed facility improvements (upgrades, replacements, or additions) and park enhancements (shade trees, additional seating, and paths through or along natural features, along with interpretation of natural and/or cultural features through signage, art, or activity) will make each park experience unique.

Use a mini-planning process to evaluate the need for facility improvements and park enhancements in each existing park.

- Evaluate based on facility use, facility condition, park design, safety, and universal (ADA) access throughout the park. Determine which, if any, facilities should be replaced or removed based on use and condition. Determine which, if any, additional or alternative facilities are desirable. Consider the following recreational needs found in the 2010 public opinion survey and facility assessment (see *Appendix 3*):
    - Additional pathways for safe walking and bicycling, where possible. These can be shorter perimeter paths or loops within parks or longer independent trail systems, designed for leisure and fitness. Complement paths with shade trees (if not through a semi-shaded area), occasional seating, and interpretative signage of natural and cultural features of the site or the Region. Evaluate whether additional parking is needed to support use of walking/bicycling pathways.
    - Additional social and spectator seating and picnic areas. Feature one or more pieces of public art as a focal point.
    - Recreation facilities currently found in limited numbers, e.g., horse-shoe pits, exercise trail, skate rink, especially those that serve adult and multiple age groups.

- Other facilities such as skate parks, ice rinks, Frisbee golf courses, sledding hills, climbing walls, amphitheatres or band shells, and manmade water features (e.g., fountains).

- Prioritize desired facilities to sort "must have" from "should have" facilities. Review field/court/rink orientation, maintenance, safety, and insurance requirements, as well as ADA compliance, for each facility.

- Revise or redesign park layout.

This process should be applied based on the age and phase of park development. For parks in the process of phased master plan development, this recommendation entails a thoughtful review of the master plan prior to further construction. For recently completed or improved parks, it should be interpreted as an opportunity to identify short and long term enhancements; a comprehensive evaluation should occur five years after major improvement. For older parks, particularly those that evolved over time, it should guide a thorough evaluation and responsive redesign, as needed.

Site-specific park improvement and enhancement recommendations are listed in *Table 5-1*.

Table 5-1 Site-Specific Park Improvements and Enhancements

Community Parks	Improvement/Enhancement Recommendations
River Bend Park	● Evaluate play equipment use; replace desired equipment and install safety surface ● Evaluate parking demand; expand parking as needed; consider low-impact/green parking lot techniques ● Add a perimeter walking path and signed interpretation of the river history and ecology ● Add trees for shade and to unify park ● Convert a portion of grass area to meadow with walking path; interpret for nature study ● Increase seasonal interest through ornamental trees/plantings ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Add identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas ● Add benches for shaded seating ● Upgrade pavilion and add a second picnic area ● Sign permitted Schuylkill River Trail users and direct non-permitted users to nearest available facilities

Community Parks	Improvement/Enhancement Recommendations
Riverside Park	● Evaluate court use; update/restore courts, if well-used ● Add identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage ● Unify park activities with ornamental plantings and sidewalk or walking trail ● Consider an integrated design for circulation, landscaping, and signage with the adjacent Wampler Complex ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Upgrade parking area
Kenilworth Park	● Evaluate use of all fields; consider relocating or removing one or more fields to create larger buffers between activity spaces ● Add identification/welcome signage at each park entrance ● Add trees for shade and vegetation for seasonal interest to unify park ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Replace sidewalk along southern perimeter ● Replace trees misshapen by pruning ● Add benches for shaded seating ● Upgrade/add field lighting ● Add parking for permitted trail users and their vehicles ● Repair the pond's dam; Plant vegetation to buffer stormwater to pond; and Re-direct stormwater to pond via swales (per previous North Coventry plan)
Towpath Park	● Replace identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas (consistent with regional signage system) ● Interpret woodlands and river features for nature study ● Sign permitted Schuylkill River Trail users and direct non-permitted users to nearest available facilities ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Add a second pavilion ● Upgrade/replace children's play area with playground equipment
Ellis Woods Park	● Replace identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas (consistent with regional signage system) ● Interpret woodlands and creek for nature study ● Develop grass fields for active recreation activities and unify this area with trees and benches; or convert a portion of grass field to meadow with walking path that connects to Coventry Glen's sidewalks and interpret for nature study ● Sign permitted trail users and direct non-permitted users to nearest available facilities ● Add seating area(s) and/or pavilion (not associated with playground) ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history

Community Parks	Improvement/Enhancement Recommendations
Community Park on the Ridge	● Add identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas (consistent with regional signage system) ● Add more trees (or tree clusters) for shade and benches for shaded seating ● Sign permitted trail users and direct non-permitted users to nearest available facilities ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Hold additional field in reserve for long-range "next generation" recreation needs
Kimberton Community Park	● Add trees (or tree clusters) for shade and benches for shaded seating ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Expand walking trail to all facilities, e.g., hockey rink; extend to adjacent KYA ball fields ● Interpret Kimberton Village history ● Convert a portion of grass area to meadow and interpret for nature study, as previously planned ● Long term, replace identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas (consistent with regional signage system)
Pickering Grove	Consider improvements to Pickering Grove to make all or portions of the site accessible for public recreation, while accommodating the summer camp use ● Add identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas (consistent with regional signage system) ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Add picnic benches and seating for general use ● Designate parking for permitted trail users and their vehicles
Pine Creek Park	● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Interpret natural features and site history ● Long term, replace identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas (consistent with regional signage system)
Andrew Evans Park	● Add trees, benches, or other unifying elements ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Plan for/add "bike parking" per trail use ● Extend walking trail to future West Vincent Trail System

Community Parks	Improvement/Enhancement Recommendations
Connie Batdorf Park	● Enhance entrance and orientation signage (consider consistency with regional signage system) ● Add perimeter walking trail ● Increase seasonal interest through ornamental plantings ● Add public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Consider replacing port-a-johns with permanent comfort facilities ● Add additional active recreation facilities as needed and as space allows● Take steps to ensure safe pedestrian crossing over Route 100

Recommendation 1.2: Master-plan and develop future parks.

With one exception (Snyder Avenue Park), future parklands will require further site-level evaluation and master planning to determine specific facilities, layout, and park design features. Guidance outlined here recommends park types and potential facilities based on site opportunities and facilities needs found through this planning process.

- Evaluate the site's intrinsic qualities/characteristics: locations, surrounding uses, (potential for) access by road and trail, and natural and cultural resources.
- Compare qualities/characteristics to recreation facility needs to select an appropriate and desired park type (community, heritage, special purpose, sports complex, etc.). Define the amount and location of the park site to be reserved for future generations' recreation needs; this area will remain in a natural (or other open space) condition for the next 30 years.
- Prioritize desired facilities.
- Design facility layout and other park features.

Recommendations for several future park sites are listed in *Table 5-2*. Additional future park sites are addressed by Recommendation 1.2.

Table 5-2 Site-Specific Future Park Development Recommendations

Future Park Sites	Development Concepts and Recommendations
Anselma Crossing	3-parcel site (approximately 9 acres across Route 401 from Anselma Mill) to be acquired by West Pikeland ● Preserve existing schoolhouse; improve, as needed, to support public use ● Develop trail(s) to adjacent neighborhoods ● Interpret wetlands ● Consider tot lot, tennis courts, and basketball court, as well as other facility needs in the master planning process

Future Park Sites	Development Concepts and Recommendations
Snyder Avenue Park	Pursue community park design as proposed by developer with the following inclusions: ● Include identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Include benches for sun and shaded seating ● Designate parking for permitted Schuylkill River Trail users and their vehicles
Snyder Mill	Plan and develop as a Heritage Park: ● Include identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Include benches for sun and shaded seating ● Designate parking for permitted French Creek Trail users and their vehicles
Heyser Tract (and Faulk Tract)	Pursue a use easement for the parcel of land between the Heyser and Faulk Tracts. Plan and develop as a riverfront Sports Complex of tournament quality fields: ● Evaluate concept sketches or advance to preliminary design to determine developable land area and conservation (wetland) areas; capacity for fields and other facilities (play area, concessions, comfort facilities, picnic areas, Schuylkill River trailhead, park/trailhead parking, etc.) ● Evaluate the need for and impact of field lighting; if lighting is necessary, minimize impact to the greatest extent possible.
Parker Ford	Master plan and program the park as a Heritage Park in conjunction with the nearby sites owned by Chester County (Schuylkill River Trailhead at the Parker House) and East Coventry (Wade Tract): ● Include identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Include benches for sun and shaded seating ● Designate parking for permitted Schuylkill River Trail users and their vehicles
Pennhurst Tract	Master plan Tract A (active recreation area) and Tract B (passive recreation area) concurrently and develop as a riverfront Community Park, phasing development, as needed: ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history; e.g., Pennhurst hospital, geology that creates the peninsulas in the river ● Include benches for sun and shaded seating ● Designate parking for permitted Schuylkill River Trail users, particularly on the lower portion so that trail users can use the park as a resting point

Future Park Sites	Development Concepts and Recommendations
Windolph Knoll	Following determination of lands needs for sewage management, plan and develop as a Special Purpose Park. Consider an amphitheatre set into the site's gentle slope with long distance views in the background; surround the amphitheatre with planted meadows woven with walking paths. Alternatively, grade the site for tiered sports fields.
Warwick Township	Plan and develop as a Nature Park/Trailhead with grassed areas (not sports fields) and picnic facilities (similar to Towpath Park in design): ● Designate parking for permitted Boars Back, French Trail, and Horse-Shoe trail users and their vehicles ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history
Site known as Wineberry Estates	Plan limited development in conjunction with the adjacent Maack Property ● Develop trails and establish permitted trail user groups ● Include identification/welcome signage at park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Include benches for sun and shaded seating ● Designate parking for permitted trail users and their vehicles

Recommendation 1.3: Evaluate options for underutilized sites.

The **Bryton Avenue Play Lot** is a corner lot in the small neighborhood along Laurelwood Road between Route 724 and 422 in North Coventry Township. Options for this site include:

- Remove pavement and restore and maintain as a grassed lot for neighborhood play;
- Remove pavement and develop a neighborhood playground;
- Sell the lot and apply the revenue to the park and trail system in the vicinity of the neighborhood if possible.

If the township aims to foster neighborhood identity and if the neighborhood comprises young families, then options 1 or 2 should be considered. If the neighborhood is home to adult families and seniors and is not expected to turn over to younger families, option 3 would be more suitable, at least in the short term.

The **Riverside Avenue Play Lot** is located along the riverfront in the (Riverside) neighborhood. This neighborhood was separated from the rest of the community when US Route 422 was constructed. The township has purchased several lots in the neighborhood, removing development from this flood-prone area. The township plans to continue acquisitions in this neighborhood as opportunities arise. Once then area is publicly owned, the entire site should be planned as a riverfront park. Connections to the Schuylkill River Trail and to the Heyser Tract should be explored.

Other small, single property sites held by the municipalities for future parkland should be similarly evaluated for their potential role in providing local and regional recreation opportunities.

The **Fernbrook Access to Coventry Woods** is located on the south side of Saint Peters Road (just east of Fernbrook Lane) and was formerly a private camp. Concepts for future use of this site include:

- Formalize the site as the primary trailhead to Coventry Woods and a local gateway to the Hopewell Big Woods. Provide parking, comfort facilities, and picnic and camping facilities. Remove un-used facilities. Redesign circulation to minimize views of municipal storage areas. Rename to remove reference to camp.
- Formalize the site as the primary trailhead to Coventry Woods and local gateway to the Hopewell Big Woods (as described above) and challenge adventure park. In addition to trailhead/gateway facilities (described above), evaluate the addition of a low challenge activities for the development of group dynamics and social emotional learning, such as a rope course and rock climbing wall, for use by regional and nearby organizations, e.g., scouts, outing clubs, etc. (and investigate appropriate insurance).
- Lease the site for the operation of a private nature-based challenge adventure park by a third party.
- Redevelop the site as a school-park for outdoor education. Develop cabins for student lodging. Make the school-park available to scouts and other outdoor clubs.

Any of these options could incorporate:

- The conversion of the three small cabins to environmental education centers, perhaps themed centers for watersheds, flora, and fauna.
- Interpretation of the site's cultural heritage, including the charcoal industry and the Free Love Valley.
- Restoration of Fernbrook Lodge and the Oaks Cabin for lodging and indoor events.

Fricks Lock, an abandoned cluster of approximately 10 structures, represents the Region's ties to the Schuylkill River Canal and its heyday of the 1820s and 1830s, and the subsequent route of commerce, the Pennsylvania Schuylkill Valley Railroad. This site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003 but remained in private ownership, namely the Philadelphia Electric Company (PECO) and its successor, Exelon Corporation. Exelon Corp. has agreed to stabilize and rehabilitate the structures and then donate the land and structures to East Coventry Township.[1] Upon acquisition, the township should lead an effort to plan and program the site as a Heritage Park along the Schuylkill River Trail, including potential restoration of the building interiors.

[1] The Sanatoga Post, 24 February 2011.

Recommendation 1.4: Acquire additional parkland or fees-in-lieu of parkland.

Future parkland already owned by the municipalities will help to meet the need for additional sports fields, walking paths and trails, and other recreation facilities. However, their individual sizes, locations, and site constraints may not enable them to fulfill all present and projected future needs. Municipalities should continue to acquire parkland through municipal land acquisition as well as revised mandatory dedication of parkland provision and fee-in-lieu provisions.

Municipalities should strengthen their mandatory dedication of parkland provisions and create consistency among their standards to acquire parkland through the actions of private developers, i.e., at minimal cost to the townships. Stronger provisions will enable each municipality to continue to acquire and protect larger land areas where appropriate (especially flat lands suitable for active recreation) and to make strategic use of the fee-in-lieu of parkland dedication alternative (fee-in-lieu) to fund for site development when lands are not suitable for needed facilities. Consistency will reflect a shared vision and value for parkland and will encourage interconnectivity of parkland and trails. Municipalities should gather their provisions for comparison and assemble a regional model for municipal consideration. North Coventry and South Coventry, which outline provisions for eligible lands, and East Pikeland, which has the most detailed trail provisions, should be considered.

The regional model should incorporate or update the following:

- **The application of mandatory dedication of parkland to all land developments** not just residential development**.** Where in use, this provision is applied as a percent of the parcel.
- **The amount of land to be dedicated.** A parkland standard of 28 acres per 1,000 residents is needed meet the true need to support active, healthy lifestyles among citizens. Table 5-3 shows this as an acreage per dwelling unit for each municipality based on the 2009 estimate of average household size, and a percentage of the parcel for proposed non-residential land uses. These figures should be recalculated using current household sizes when ordinance provisions are prepared.

Table 5-3 SALDO Application of 28 acres per 1,000 residents

	2009 Estimate of Average Household Size	SALDO Requirement to Achieve Parkland Protection of 28 ac/1,000 residents: Residential uses (Acres per dwelling unit)	For non-residential uses (Percent of tract)
East Coventry	2.67	0.07	• Commercial and industrial uses (20%) • Institutional uses (25%)
East Nantmeal	2.68	0.08	
East Pikeland	2.66	0.07	
East Vincent	2.73	0.08	
North Coventry	2.44	0.07	
South Coventry	2.98	0.08	
Warwick	2.53	0.07	
West Pikeland	3.08	0.09	
West Vincent	2.72	0.08	

Source: Gannett Fleming

- **Lands eligible for dedication,** based on this plan and other municipal planning for open space, which may specify natural drainageways, steep slopes, woodlands, prime farmland, significant natural areas, historical sites, and existing trails.
- **Other design considerations,** such as length/width configuration (except for trails), maximum area of passive open space, accessibility from public right-of-way, and interconnectivity.
- **Provisions and Standards for Fee-in-Lieu of Mandatory Dedication of Parkland**, including
    - Conditions under which the governing body should require a fee in lieu of parkland dedication, such as
        - when the land is incompatible in size, shape, location, access, topography or other physical features to the type of park need to meet recreational needs;
        - when the land otherwise does not conform to needs or specifications documented local and regional recreation plans;
        - when it is impractical to dedicate recreation or open space land as required by ordinance standards; or
        - Upon specific recommendation of the Township Park and Recreation Board to the Board of Supervisors for its consideration.
    - Fee Value and Determination that specify that the value of the fee in lieu of land dedication is equivalent to the fair market value (FMV) of buildable acreage on the property
        - where "fair market value" (FMV) of improved residential or non-residential land (land at highest and best use) is determined at the time of the filing of the final plan with the Township or the first final plan phase of a subdivision or land development plan consisting of multiple phases, and may be adjusted with each phased final plan submission to keep current with actual land value if the subdivision and land development is planned in phases over multiple years. This approach keeps fees in line with increasing market values without the need to amend the fixed fee provision of the ordinance.
        - based upon a written appraisal report prepared by the developer or applicant and signed by an appraiser licensed as such in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and certified by such appraiser to be a fair and reasonable appraisal of such land and submitted within reasonable time limits associated with the development proposal.
        - with a specified process to resolve disputed appraisals.

In addition, municipalities partnering to implement this recommendation should consider developing an intergovernmental agreement to enable municipalities that prefer resource conservation to apply their fees-in-lieu of dedication toward active recreation parks facilities in another municipality. Under the Pennsylvania's Municipalities Planning Code provisions for regional (multi-municipal) planning, additional tools are granted for implementation, where an intergovernmental agreement is in place and based on the regional plan. This provision allows for revenue sharing and may allow for the type of fee

transfer suggested here. A legal opinion should be sought prior to taking action on this aspect of mandatory dedication of parkland.

Recommendation 1.5: Explore support for an indoor recreation center.

Conduct a feasibility study to determine community need and support as well as technical operations, management, and financing. Include a vigorous public participation process with opportunities to engage all age groups. Retain a consultant with expertise in indoor recreation center planning and operation. Consider visits to a variety of indoor recreation centers to see facilities and operations and to ask about "lessons learned." Involve regional health and wellness partners: the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, the Owen J. Roberts School District, and partners associated with the proposed YMCA site at Ludwig's Corner. Involve community sports organizations if the center is envisioned to accommodate indoor sports training facilities.

Recommendation 1.6: Present parks as a unified system.

Residents of the Region already use a variety of public parks. Their perception of the quality of the park experience is influenced by the park's ease of location, appearance, cleanliness, safety, and accessibility. Accessibility should be addressed primarily by design, but appearance, cleanliness, and safety all require ongoing maintenance efforts that vary from one municipality to the next. In this region, where high value is placed on environmental quality, economically and environmentally sustainable approaches, techniques, and materials should be the norm.

To present the parks (and trails) as a unified system, the municipalities should:

- Implement a regional signage system to identify the parks in the system. The sign template should reflect the character of the Region and its park system. Its design should be consistent with other recreation and wayfinding signage in the Region, e.g., Schuylkill River Heritage signage, though it need not be identical. Each sign should include the park name and regional system name. Signage types should include park identification/welcome signage at the park entrance from the street and park orientation signage at the parking area. Other interior park signs, such as signage for rules and regulations, could be standardized in design and/or policy over time. Park identification/welcome signage should be accompanied by landscaping to increase curb appeal. Park orientation signs should illustrate park layout. It should also show the entire regional park and trail system, if space allows, or at minimum the nearest parks and trailheads.

- Develop a consistent park maintenance program that addresses sustainable facility maintenance, sports turf management, and natural resource management. Gather park maintenance staff annually, at minimum, to exchange ideas, techniques, and information to promote consistent maintenance approaches. Dedicate some time to comparing the short-term costs of changing "the way we've always done it" to long-term savings in alternatives. Long-term costs of operating and maintaining facilities are high—estimated at 75 percent of the 40-year lifetime of a park.

Recommendation 1.7: Encourage special interest groups to self-serve.

While taking steps to leverage resources and expand recreation opportunities, municipalities should encourage special interest groups, such as those requesting single-use dog parks, mountain biking areas, etc., to provide their own facilities. Over the long term, the Region may be able to integrate these facilities into its regional park and trail system. But in the near term, the focus should be prioritized on places and programs for active, healthy living and cultural heritage for the general public.

Recommendation 1.8: Develop a regional publicity program.

Public awareness of park locations should be integrated with information about available recreational programs and activities. See Chapter 7, Raising Public Awareness for integrated publicity recommendations.

Strategy 2: Expand Close-to-Home Recreation Opportunities.

The public opinion survey found that residents desire more close to home recreation opportunities. For such a large region, close to home may mean anything from "in my neighborhood" to "less than 20 minutes from home." Given the distribution of public school sites in relation to the population, school-parks offer a model for accommodating more close to home recreation opportunities (indoor and outdoor facilities and programs) on existing school sites.

Recommendation 2.1: Develop school-parks.

School-parks are sites that offer public education and community recreation. They leverage public investment for both public services to streamline costs for facilities and operations. They have grown out of joint use agreements, in which two entities agree to shared maintenance, operations, liability, ownership, and costs of an existing facility, to include the design and development (or enhancement) of school sites that can support planned community recreation programs. The proximity of future parkland to several of the Region's elementary schools make school-parks a particularly viable opportunity for expanding recreational programs and facilities in Northern Chester County.

Joint use —- the sharing of space between schools and communities —- makes it easier for people to be active and healthy. Joint use provides kids and adults alike with safe, conveniently located, and inviting places to exercise and play. Besides making sense from a health perspective, joint use agreements make sense financially because they build upon assets a community already has. Sharing existing space is cheaper and more efficient than duplicating the same facilities in other parts of the community.
Source: www.jointuse.org

School-parks have been developed in communities across the country, including other areas of Pennsylvania, however the Springfield-Greene County, Missouri, Park Board represents one of the most successful school-park partnerships and a potential model for the Northern Chester County region.

In its 2010 *School-Park Partnerships: A Case Study of Excellence*, the Springfield-Greene County Park Board (www.parkboard.org) describes how its partnership with the Springfield R-12 School District plans, designs, constructs, and operates its school-parks. The partnership works by enabling the school district to program its academic and extracurricular services during school hours, and allowing the Park Board to offer recreational programs and access to indoor and outdoor facilities in the remaining hours. Today, four school-parks are complete.

The Federation and its planning partners, including the school districts, were introduced to the school-park concept during this planning process. In fact, the Owen J. Roberts School District noted the potential for joint school-recreation development when it acquired a 52-acre site adjacent to the East Coventry Elementary School in early 2011. Municipalities and interested school districts should continue to discuss where and how school-parks could serve the Region. They may want to correspond with the Springfield-Greene County Park Board and the Springfield R-12 School District through audio or video conference calls to learn more about this successful partnership. A visit to the Park Board's school-parks, playful pathways, and other facilities would be informative and inspirational.

Table 5-3 Site-Specific School-Park Development Recommendations

School- Park Sites	Development Recommendations
East Coventry Elementary and adjacent 52-acre site	Pursue site master plan and development as a Community Park with varied active recreation fields, courts, etc.; passive/natural areas; and a reserve area for future recreation needs. ● Include identification/welcome signage at school-park entrance(s) and orientation signage at parking areas ● Include a perimeter walking path ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history; perhaps on the history and practice of agriculture ● Include tree clusters and benches for sun and shaded seating ● Plan for future parking for permitted trail users and their vehicles
East Vincent Elementary and Reiff Tract (36 acres)	Pursue site master plan and development as a Community Park with varied active recreation fields, courts, etc.; passive/natural areas; and a reserve area for future recreation needs. Consider previous plans for soccer fields and a passive natural area. Consider how the natural area can serve as an outdoor classroom, i.e.; need for pavilion with tables. ● Include identification/welcome signage at school-park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas ● Include a perimeter walking path

School- Park Sites	Development Recommendations
	● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Include tree clusters and benches for sun and shaded seating ● Pursue trail connection to Community Park on the Ridge
North Coventry Elementary / Hanover Meadows (22 acres) and Bickels Run (32 acres)	Consider how Hanover Meadows can meet physical education/active recreation needs and how Bickels Run Park can meet outdoor education/passive recreation needs; address street crossing, as needed. ● Include identification/welcome signage at school-park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas ● Include a perimeter walking path ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Include tree clusters and benches for sun and shaded seating
French Creek Elementary	Explore potential shared use of adjacent conservation area with access to French Creek. ● Include identification/welcome signage at school-park entrance and orientation signage at parking areas ● Include a perimeter walking path ● Include public art on one or more themes of nature, culture, or history ● Include tree clusters and benches for sun and shaded seating
West Vincent Elementary	Enhance as a Nature Park with interpretive trails for self-directed nature study. Connect to Henrietta Hankin Branch Library and Evans Park via Township trail system.
Kutz-Painter Tract (39 acres) and Bealer Tract (58 acres)	Both sites are central to the Region with good transportation access via Route 100. The Kutz-Painter tract is an upland site. The Bealer Tract lies along Pigeon Creek. Either could be considered for a Sports Complex with portions protected in a natural condition.
Pennhurst Tract (OJR SD owned) (22 acres)	This site seems a most likely of the three undeveloped school district sites for a future elementary school. If so, plan and develop as a community park with consideration for facilities planned or developed for East Vincent's Pennhurst Tracts.
East Pikeland Elementary	Phoenixville Area School District is planning a facility expansion; a playground, one grass field and other small recreation facilities should be incorporated into the new site design.

Strategy 3: Develop More Sports Facilities within the Regional Park System.

The sports league survey found high levels of participation among community and scholastic sports leagues, creating high demand for sports fields. But non-league players desire informal and impromptu access to sports facilities, as well. In addition to greater number of sports facilities to accommodate practice, games and field rest, a broader range of facilities is needed from recreational quality to tournament caliber—each with appropriate design and maintenance standards.

Recommendation 3.1: Acquire and develop additional park land for sports fields for both community sports leagues and general community recreation.

Community and scholastic sports leagues have high levels of participation, and their intensive use of available sports fields already shows unmet demand and heavy wear on field surfaces. With a deficit of sports fields in the Region today, additional sports fields are needed to provide practice and game fields, as well as field rest, for community sports leagues. But others desire informal and impromptu access to sports fields as well. A greater number of facilities and wider range of field quality—from recreational quality to tournament caliber, each with appropriate design and maintenance standards—is needed. Three approaches are outlined below to increase sports fields in the Region.

- Develop at least two centralized sports complexes to provide tournament quality, competitive play facilities in the Region. Each can be dedicated to either rectangular fields or diamond fields or can be a mix of the two. Sizeable tracts of land with minimal environmental constraints are present in every municipality, however many of these tracts lie in the scenic rural interior service zone, where sports complex development is generally not appropriate. Some lands along the edge of this zone may be suitable. Others in the Schuylkill Riverfront may be impacted by the floodplain, and should be eliminated from consideration as a sports complex location but may offer opportunities for practice fields alone. The remaining sites, including additional suggested parcels and clusters, are shown on *Map B, Potential Sports Complex Locations Map*.

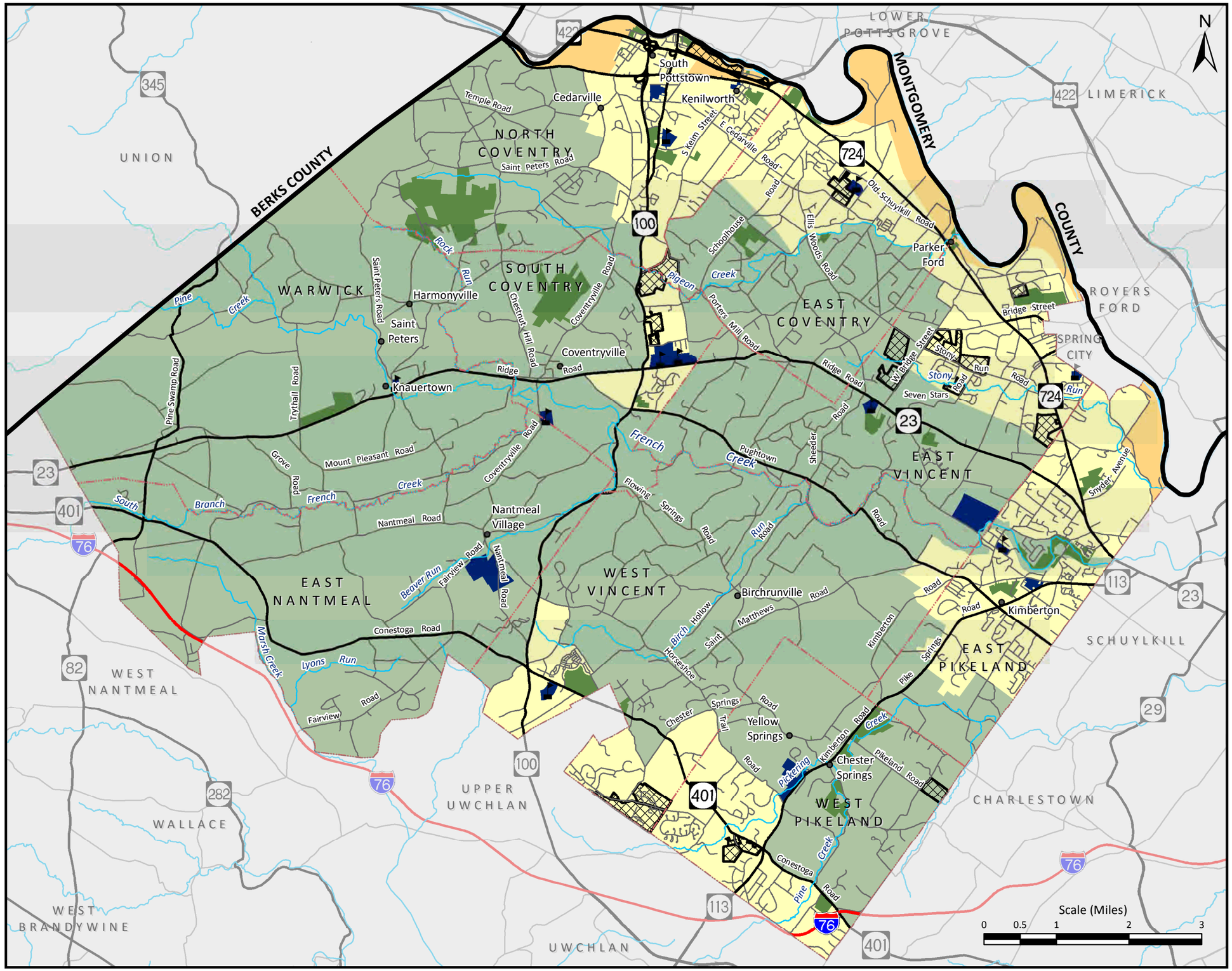
  More detailed screening of these sites is needed to determine which are most appropriate for field development. In addition, local officials may know of smaller parcels that could be jointly developed for fields. Implementation of this recommendation should begin with a joint work session of local representatives to identify realistic sites for further evaluation and prioritization.

  Park master planning should consider 1) the installation of synthetic turf or alternative surface fields to eliminate field rest and minimize maintenance; 2) the use of field lighting to extend use of existing fields into dusk; and 3) use of revenue-generating events, e.g., tournaments, to offset operating costs.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Map B
Potential Sports Complex Locations



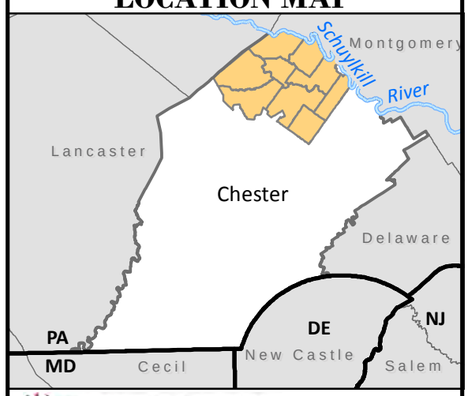
LEGEND

- Public School
- Potential Sports Complex Locations
- Municipal Recreation Lands
- Public School Properties

Service Zones

- Neighborhoods
- Schuylkill Riverfront
- Scenic Rural Interior

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

December 2011

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS Pennsylvania DCNR and State Game Commission. Gannett Fleming developed Level of Service coverage.

- Develop additional sports fields at school-parks and in community parks, where appropriate, for general community recreation (i.e., no use by sports leagues), as well as for adult leagues. Sports facilities in school-parks should provide instructional, skill development, and recreational play in close-to-home active, healthy living parks. Facilities in community parks can also serve in this role.

- Secure public access to privately-owned sports fields through long-term lease, easement, or acquisition to protect open these existing fields for public use. Potential locations include:
  - The Kimberton Ballfield Complex
  - The Wampler Ballfield Complex
  - Springford Area School District fields (Springford Youth Athletic League complex)

Strategy 4: Develop Trails as a Regional Network.

With several regional (multi-municipal) trails under development and avid public interest in walking and biking, Northern Chester County is primed for a trail network that connects recreational and community destinations throughout the region. Focus on getting people to existing trails, e.g., the Schuylkill River Trail, for positive trail experiences. At the same time, expand the trail system. Consider establishing a regional trails committee. Look at a system of trails including loop trails in parks, linear or "walking parks," off-road trails, and on-road cycling routes. Not all trails need to serve all trail users, but each user should be able to use continuous parts of the system. Start with pilot projects featuring trail segments that have the support to be built.

Recommendation 4.1: Establish a regional trails committee.

The committee would comprise representatives of each municipality for the purpose of developing a regional trail network. Coordination with the Natural Lands Trust, Hopewell Big Woods, Horse-Shoe Trail Club, and Chester County Parks and Recreation is recommended, through additional committee membership or regular committee communications. Membership of local trail and outing organizations may also be considered.

Recommendation 4.2: Prepare a Northern Chester County trail network plan.

The network should be based on the regional trail spines and existing trails with new branch/spur and loop trails connecting to various recreation and community destinations and scenic journeys. Trail network planning will require the study of new and existing proposed trails, focusing on regional (multi-municipal) connections and realistic physical and political feasibility.

The regional trail network should offer a variety of trail experiences ranging from short fitness routes, where residents can walk or ride (on bike or horse) frequently for short durations, as well as to region-wide recreational journeys for half-day or multi-day excursions. Most, if not all trails, should be designed for multi-purpose use, providing all intended users with adequate trail surface, parking and

trail use signage. Trails permitting specialized use, e.g., equestrians, should offer specialized facilities, e.g., mounting blocks, as appropriate to the use. Not all trails need to serve all trail users, but each user should be able to use continuous parts of the system. This will also require a coordinated bicycle plan to guide improvement of on-road conditions.

Having a trail network plan will help to prioritize trail development and improvement. It will enable the municipalities to acquire right-of-way (land or easements) through the land development process, strategic purchase and donations, beginning with feasible trail segments that have the public and political support to be built. Extensions and interconnections among trails can be longer term development phases with the completion of "missing links" pursued as conditions change over time.

The trail network planning process should include these steps:

1. Compile a map of proposed trails. Request current trail inventory data from the Chester County Planning Commission. Include new trail proposed by this plan, namely the Hanover Trail extension south to French Creek (via the OJR school district campus) and the Pigeon Creek Trail. Review map of proposed trails with municipalities and trail planning entities for accuracy.

2. Evaluate proposed trails to determine which trails should advance for feasibility or further study. Consider potential trail connections that would provide close-to-home loop trails in the Livable Communities Landscape, and park-to-trail and park-to-park connections, and trail-to-trail interconnections throughout the Region.

3. Conceptualize trail users, surfaces, accessibility, and trailhead and rest area locations. Suggest each trail's users (pedestrian, bicycle, equestrian, dogs and their walkers) based on location and compatibility with adjacent trails and park paths, recognizing that uses may be refined during individual trail master planning. Given the importance of trails as a means to experience the natural and cultural significance of the Region, several accessible trail opportunities should be planned and developed. Accessible trails need not be flat, straight trails but do need to alert persons with disabilities in advance (at the trailhead or trail juncture where an alternative trail is available) to obstacles and challenges that they will encounter.

4. Prioritize trails for feasibility study or further planning. If several proposed trails are located in a concentrated area, consider studying them as a group, not individually.

Recommendation 4.3: Complete, or support completion of, planned regional trails.

Planned regional trails include the Schuylkill River Trail, the French Creek Trail (Boars Back and Sowbelly Trail Segments), the Hopewell Big Woods connector from the Schuylkill River Trail in Berks County to the Boars Back Trail, the Pickering Creek Trail, and realignments of the Horse-Shoe Trail. These routes provide the major spines or spokes to which local trails can connect and should permit and support all users (pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian) on these long distance trails.

Recommendation 4.4: Improve and expand existing trails and networks.

Municipal trail network plans should be refined to complement regional trails with realistic local connections. This could be completed within the context of a regional trail network planning effort, depending on the depth of scope and available resources. If prepared separately, these plans should note locations and support for regional trails then focus on trail spurs, loops and other connections among neighborhoods and community destinations, including the trail facilities and amenities noted below.

Some trail improvements and extensions can occur with little or no additional planning. Such projects should:

- Improve trail facilities and amenities for permitted trail users; alternatively, direct users to nearby facilities in advance and on-site. Provide or provide direction to restrooms, drinking water, and public phones. Provide trash/recycling receptacles or notify users of pack-it-in, pack-it-out policies. Provide trailhead parking for all permitted users. Consider providing running water/water troughs or directions to nearest water source at trailheads where equestrian use is permitted. Provide trail surfaces for casual horseback-riding and horse-running, as appropriate. Provide mounting blocks or large boulders for horseback-riders to mount and dismount their horses at the trailhead and at regular intervals along the trails.

- Complete proposed expansion segments of existing trails systems, e.g., within Coventry Woods, the Reconnections Loop Trail between North Coventry and Pottstown.

- Complete feasibility study, design, and development of proposed interconnections among existing trail systems. These include:
    - Coventry Woods to French Creek State Park
    - Woody's Woods to Coventry Woods trail
    - Woody's Woods to Warwick County Park / French Creek Trail

- Develop additional river access to the Schuylkill River Water Trail. This should include visual and physical access to the water and surroundings, as well as interpretation of the river's history and the natural environment. Additional access can support short, family-oriented and skill-building water trail opportunities, such as Towpath Park to Parkerford.

Recommendation 4.5: Strengthen municipal mandatory dedication of parkland provisions to address trail development.

Update municipal ordinances to include trails and paths as eligible lands for mandatory dedication of parkland and as eligible uses for fees-in-lieu of parkland dedication; also provide standards for trail design, construction, maintenance, and dedication. East Pikeland Township's provisions (Subdivision and Lands Ordinance, 2008, Section 424.E) should be used as a model for the Region. (See also Recommendation 1.4)

Recommendation 4.6: Present trails as a unified network.

Just like parks, trail experiences—and the desire to return to a trail or seek others—are influenced by the trail user's impression of ease of location, appearance, cleanliness, safety, and accessibility. See Recommendation 1.6 for integrated recommendations regarding trail signage and appearance.

- Coordinate trailhead and interpretive signage with other parks and recreation signage in the Region.
- Improve trail maintenance. Coordinate trail users in the voluntary maintenance of trails, e.g., trash pick-up, right-of-way clearing, fence repair, minor resurfacing, etc. Schedule "maintenance days" when equipment, supplies, etc. can be provided, volunteers can be guided (if necessary), and volunteer hours can be tracked. Employ municipal staff or contractors in larger, more complex maintenance projects.
- e This has been a recent focus of the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, however not all easements are monitored by the Trust. The Trust may be willing to share its protocols and experience with others that take on this responsibility.

Recommendation 4.7: Develop a regional publicity program.

Publicize available trails and paths to residents through mechanisms outlined in Chapter 7, Strategy for Public Awareness. Include permitted trail users, available and nearby facilities and amenities, and guidance on trail use and etiquette including respect for property owners. On trails with user restrictions, direct non-permitted users, which may include equestrians, mountain bikers and ATV riders, to nearest available facilities. (The nearest ATV trails on State Forest Land are in the Delaware State Forest in Monroe and Pike Counties and in the Michaux State Forest in Adams and Cumberland Counties. The nearest private facility, a motocross track, is the Pagoda Motorcycle Club Inc. in Birdsboro.)

Recommendation 4.8: Sustain private social trails through partnerships and stewardship.

Continue expressions of appreciation. Continue informal discussions with land owners to address emerging concerns about trail use and opportunities for permanent protection. Include information regarding protection from liability as provided under Pennsylvania's Recreation Use of Land and Water Act.

Recommendation 4.9: Prepare a bicycle network plan.

This plan would assess and recommend improvements to on-road cycling conditions in the Region and would interface with the regional trail network at planned trailheads. This plan should:

- Evaluate BicyclePA Routes L and S and previously used Iron Tour routes for public use. Other studies have raised concerns about route safety based on physical roadway and shoulder conditions.
- Assess the road network for realistic "complete street "improvements, such as shoulders, bike lanes and compare best practices regarding maintenance techniques.

- Assess local cyclists' knowledge of safe bicycling techniques, and recommend educational topics and programs.
- Evaluate the Region's potential as a destination for cycling clubs and tours, and the economic benefits of such tourism.

Strategy 5: Expand and Diversify Recreation Programming.

While conservation has strong roots here, community recreation for all ages is fledgling initiative. A variety of recreation activities through the efforts of Welkinweir, Green Valleys, Crow's Nest, Warwick County Park, and sports leagues and clubs are in place but are fragmented in scheduling, promotion, evaluation, and renewal. Recreation service that fully reflects Northern Chester County culture could be a blend of organized activities such as league sports, community events (important community builders), fitness and wellness, conservation in action, nature observation, and family-based activities. Foster what organizations are already doing well for their target audiences while actively supporting efforts to expand the range of activities for all ages.

Recommendation 5.1: Focus programs in two areas: active healthy living and cultural heritage.

The range of public recreation services is infinite. The Federation cannot be all things to all people. It is better to do a few things at very high quality than to undertake too many things at lesser quality. Active healthy living and cultural heritage programs and events will enable the Federation to serve a broad range of citizens including youth, adults, and families in line with the Region's values. Cultural heritage programs include nature, the environment, and the history of the Region.

Forging the relationship between the Federation and the school districts, Owen J. Roberts, Downingtown Area and Phoenixville Area, as well as the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation and Downingtown Area Recreational Consortium, will help to provide community programs in both areas. This partnership should pursue the "school-parks" concept in programming active, healthy living activities during after-school hours and on weekends for people of all ages and families. See Recommendation 1.3, and expand cultural heritage programs for adults through the Adult Evening School (Recommendation 5.2).

Recommendation 5.2: Expand adult lifelong learning programs.

Adult lifelong learning emerged at the top activity in which survey respondents are interested. One in five adults reports participating in adult programs already. Further research and interviews revealed that citizens have a keen interest in learning about the history of the area. Serve the high rate of interest with ongoing and publicity of current programs as well as expansion of program frequency and topics. Consider bringing additional programs under the umbrella of The Adult Evening School or coordinating adult program publicity through one recreation Web site (See Chapter 7, Raising Public Awareness).

Recommendation 5.3: Continue community sports league summits.

This planning process convened sports leagues on two occasions to discuss facilities and participation. The Federation, or its implementation entity, should continue this regional dialogue. Changes in field specifications and league classifications affect existing fields and the need for additional fields. Program and facility providers need to have regular (annual or semi-annual) communication on program and facility assessments, and evolving facility requirements established by national leagues. (See also Chapter 8, Management and Financing)

Recommendation 5.4: Engage youth in the Region's natural and cultural heritage.

Reach youth through programs for this age group or for intergenerational groups, or through assistance in developing program technologies. This age group can be challenging to engage in any adult-directed activity, however, 5th graders interviewed for this project expressed a desire to play in the woods, in the creeks, and on equipment for their age group. For some, access to these types of environments will fulfill their needs. For others, some programming may be needed or helpful in connecting them with the environment, e.g., as a theatre for their play. Washington and his troops crossed the Schuylkill River, but 5th graders, with supervision, could certainly cross a creek as a smaller-scaled reenactment.

Alternatively, offering them an opportunity to develop geo-caches, videos, and games and to offer other ideas for portraying the Region's history, environment, and culture *technologically* may attract their skills and interests directly and ultimately influence their appreciation for the Region.

Recommendation 5.5: Address water safety.

Access to the river and creeks is important to many residents and a cultural value to be shared with children, youth, and adult residents, old and new. This value includes respect for the resource in terms of cleanliness (free from litter and pollutants) and personal safety. Programs that promote access to the river and creeks should provide instruction on water safety and emphasize policies on trash removal.

Recommendation 5.6: Coordinate special events and activities.

Along with the recommendation for the establishment of a Northern Chester County Parks and Recreation Board (See Chapter 8, Partnerships) is the recommendation to use this board as the vehicle for coordinating, planning, and scheduling recreational/cultural events in the Region. By working together, the organizations and municipalities will be able to maximize public recreation services and events in terms of schedule, event theme, location, and promotion.

Northern Chester County is home to more than a dozen historic villages: Birchrunville, Bucktown, Cedarville, Chester Springs, Coventryville, Fricks Lochs, Harmonyville, Kenilworth, Kimberton, Knauertown, Nantmeal, Parker Ford, Pottstown Landing, St. Peters, Warwick, and Yellow Springs, as well as other many historic sites. Tours, programs, and events in these communities would be a way to inform local residents of their heritage through recreational experiences.

Recommendation 5.7: Link Recreation with Other Community Building Endeavors.

Engaging in activities that build community through parks and recreation is important for the Region.

- Include a course on Northern Chester County history in the Owen J. Roberts Adult Evening School.
- Provide tours of historic sites, natural areas, and villages on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Work with Schuylkill Highlands with developing driving tours through smart phone apps.
- Work with Community Service and justice system participants on recreation and heritage projects in the Region.
- Coordinate efforts with the Welcome Wagon to meet with new residents and inform them of the Region's recreation, heritage, and desire to conserve the scenic rural character of the area.
- Develop a way to recognize volunteers annually and formally. Consider a celebration in a park or heritage site as a way to bring people together for this important recognition. Try to include fun activities. Strive to get sponsors or partners to support the cost.

Recommendation 5.8: Develop a Regional Publicity Program

Public awareness of scheduled programs, available activities, and special events should be integrated with information about park locations. See Chapter 7, Raising Public Awareness for integrated publicity recommendations.

Chapter 6: Strategies and Recommendations for Conserving Landscapes

Protecting open space is essential to sustaining the Region's character. This region is unique in its location at the nexus of the Highlands and Schuylkill River watershed. Its location influenced, and continues to influence, the abundance of woodlands and the quality of waterways found here. Previous generations employed these resources and others in settlement, agriculture, and industry, as well as in support of the American Revolution. Today, residents value these same resources for their ecological functions (filtration, infiltration, habitat, biodiversity, etc.) and their scenic, rural character under sunlit and dark night skies, and wish to protect and sustain them for future generations.

Protecting the land from development through easements and acquisitions is already under way with over 18,700 acres protected by municipalities, state and federal agencies, land trusts, and private individuals. Historically, local protection efforts were largely opportunistic, based on landowner interest and initiative. Today, the pattern of protected lands is somewhat concentrated in the western portion of the Region, including Coventry Woods and Woody's Woods as well as state and federal lands and privately eased lands, and but protection of the Region's defining landscapes is incomplete.

Multi-partner conservation initiatives are looking at entire landscapes, prioritizing outreach and protection efforts and developing recreation and trail systems that bridge the invisible ownership boundaries. These collaborations have drawn attention to the expansive nature of the Hopewell Big Woods and the Schuylkill River corridor. To fully protect these natural communities, natural systems, and scenic landscapes, further integration with local planning and land protection efforts is needed.

Furthermore, sustainable resource management, managed public access to sensitive resource areas, and interpretation of resource use are needed to ensure the legacy of Northern Chester County. Land protection alone does not prevent disturbance of habitat, infestation by invasive species, or other management effects to the presence and quality of the vegetation. Nor does it enable close contact with nature or an immediate understanding of the environmental, economic, and social benefits of protected open space.

This chapter synthesizes challenges and opportunities of open space protection, identified in the inventory and assessment reports (*Appendices*), and presents recommendations under three Blueprint Strategies:

Strategy 6: Integrate Open Space Protection with Growth Management and Recreation Planning
Strategy 7: Protect and Interpret Landscapes that Define the Region's Character
Strategy 8: Demonstrate and Encourage Stewardship

Strategy 6: Integrate Open Space Protection with Growth Management and Recreation Planning.

These three topics are closely interrelated when it comes to conserving the landscape and sustaining a culture of active, healthy living. Protection through acquisition or easement should be compatible with, or even complementary to, goals for growth management and recreation. Progress toward all three goals should be monitored and reported to the public, who value and financially support these initiatives.

Recommendation 6.1: Adopt a goal of protecting half of the remaining open space in the Region.

This goal represents protecting an additional 13,000 acres and would achieve protection for approximately half of the Region. While few communities in Pennsylvania have protected more than 30 percent of their lands, there is such a wealth of natural and cultural resources and such strong support for public and private land protection efforts in this region that a goal of 30 percent protection seems insufficient. Indeed, there are few large unprotected parcels in this region from which to make significant strides toward the goal, thus protection of small, preferably contiguous, acreages will play an important role. The goal could be refined based on further analysis of anticipated growth rates, growth management techniques, and funding feasibility. However, given current support for open space protection, the important message is continue open space protection efforts in full, pursuing all available open space protection techniques as appropriate to the resource(s) proposed to be protected and landowner preferences.

Recommendation 6.2: Establish a region-wide open space committee.

This committee would be responsible for sharing, promoting, and coordinating open space protection in the Region, and coordinating its implementation with growth management in the Region. The committee might comprise the existing municipal open space committees, meeting at a summit-style event, or include one to two appointed municipal representatives. Regardless of organization, the committee should meet every three to six months to discuss parcels recently protected, parcels under consideration (including concerns of the landowner and supplemental outreach to the landowner and neighboring landowners), progress toward goals, publicity of progress, and future educational and outreach needs, programs, and campaigns. The Land Preservation Committee (LPC) of the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust fulfills several of these parameters. If the LPC can accommodate the entire geography of the Region, which extends beyond the French and Pickering Creeks watersheds, this existing committee should be considered in lieu of forming a new one. Supplemental resources, e.g. funding, volunteer time, or other, may be needed but still more efficient than a separate effort.

Recommendation 6.3: Establish a region-wide program for open space mapping.

This program would assist the regional open space committee in measuring changes to the acreage of protected open space and undeveloped unprotected open space at least every five years based on the

availability of updated aerial photography. Such a program should be conducted in coordination with non-profit land trusts and other entities that hold easements in the Region.

Recommendation 6.4: Publicize progress toward the open space goal.

Annually publish the goal, the acreage of protected open space, and if available, past trends. This information could be maintained on a region-wide Web site, and/or published through periodic Federation and municipal newsletters.

Recommendation 6.5: Use mandatory dedication of parkland provisions to protect open space for passive recreation.

Amend municipal mandatory dedication of parkland ordinances, where necessary, to include natural resource preserves with limited public access as eligible for parkland dedication and use of fee-in-lieu of parkland dedication funds. (See also Chapter 4, Recommendation 1.4.2.)

Recommendation 6.6: Expand existing parks, where practical and as land is available.

Where adjacent lands are suitable for active recreation facilities, parks located in the Neighborhoods Service Zone should be expanded by the acquisition of adjacent parcels, as opportunities arise. Similar expansions should be explored for passive recreation areas.

Recommendation 6.7: Determine the need for park and facility lighting on a case-by-case during the master planning process or park review process. (See also Chapter 5, Recommendations 1.1 and 1.2.)

Although outdoor lighting runs counter to the value the Region places on dark skies, natural habitat, and being "good neighbors," there may be certain sites and facilities where outdoor lighting enhances use, e.g., to extend play on specialized or popular evening facilities, and indirectly contributes to conservation of other lands. This perspective applies to all outdoor lighting, including but not limited to recreational park and field lighting.

All necessary lighting should be facility-focused, time-limited, and have minimal impact to adjacent properties. All unlit parks and facilities should be regulated as dawn-to-dusk facilities to minimize liability.

If desired, a more progressive approach would involve the adoption of municipal ordinance provisions to manage outdoor lighting (both fixed and portable) and promote the preservation of dark skies.

Strategy 7: Protect and Interpret Landscapes that Define the Region's Character.

Open space protection is most effective when it focuses on clustered or contiguous parcels that encompass natural communities or define local character. The Schuylkill Riverfront and the Scenic Rural Interior, including Hopewell Big Woods, the Great Marsh, the French Creek Corridor, and the Pickering Creek Corridor, are significant and defining landscapes that should be protected. Protection across such large areas should apply acquisition of parcels in-fee or easements appropriate to the resource or resources proposed for protection, and therefore may be varied even within a single parcel. But protection is only part of the story. Providing public access, where feasible, for passive recreation and interpretive activities that tell of the landscape's role in history and ecology is also important in sustaining the region's culture.

Recommendation 7.1: Protect the riverfront.

Though an ambitious goal, the Region should protect all of the Schuylkill Riverfront from development and provide as much public access to the river as possible. Such access should support water-based recreation activities, such as boating and fishing, as well as visual access for nature study and environmental education. Parcels should be prioritized based on the threat of development and opportunity for contiguous protection.

Recommendation 7.2: Protect the scenic rural interior.

- **Expand and fill the unprotected gaps in clusters of protected open space (known in Chester County as outfill).** These clusters include lands protected by any and all techniques.
- **Protect natural areas of significance (Natural Areas, Important Bird Areas, and Important Mammal Areas as shown on Map 4, Natural Areas), and prioritize land protection in locations where such areas overlap.** Consider acquisition of parcels in-fee or easement to manage sensitive sites as nature preserves, including but not limited to: the upland buffers and water sources to the Great Marsh (Site #11), privately held portions of Pine Swamp (Site #114), and Warwick Seeps, (Site #9).
- **Consider acquisition of private, non-profit recreation lands, as opportunities arise.** The various private camps, campgrounds and sportsman's clubs have recreational facilities that would complement those currently available in the Region, if they were available to the public. If such lands become available for purchase (or easement), an evaluation of the site location, natural and cultural resources, facility inventory and conditions, and trails should inform a purchase/easement decision.

Recommendation 7.3: Protect the primary stream corridors.

The primary stream corridors include main stems of French Creek, Pickering Creek, Pigeon Creek, and Stony Run. Protection along these stream corridors should include both protection from development (controlled through floodplain management and managed as vegetated riparian buffers) as well as

easements and acquisitions that provide public access to the water. Much of French Creek lies in the Scenic, Rural Interior or is already protected in East Pikeland Township with plans for trail development. Similarly, portions of Pickering Creek are protected and have developed streamside trails in West Pikeland. Nevertheless, segments of unprotected, unmanaged, and inaccessible corridor remain. Currently, Ellis Woods Park provides the only publicly accessible land along Pigeon Creek; a future passive open space park is proposed at Wineberry Estates. Development has already occurred along portions of Stony Run, making comprehensive protection and trail development an impractical goal, however stream access for fishing, nature study, and cultural heritage interpretation should be pursued.

Recommendation 7.4: Interpret open space that defines regional character.

- **Investigate the Pennsylvania Byway Program** to determine if there are roadways within the Region that are worthy of state designation and special local management. If so, nominate the roadway, or portion thereof, to PennDOT for consideration to the program.
- **Develop an interpretive tour of protected lands in the Region.** This tour route could be based on one or more of the Iron Tour routes that feature protected lands in the French Creek watershed, one or more PA Byways in the Region (once designated), or other routes. Tour narratives could be published online for easy revision and update. Web site programming could also include an e-mail prompt to a tour survey for user feedback (or student quiz, if the tour were integrate into a local history course). Tours should be promoted only as driving tours until roadway conditions are assessed and improved, as needed, for safety.
- **Host cultural heritage programs and special events on protected open space lands**, engaging the site, its history, and significance to the Region.

Recommendation 7.5: Continue education and outreach efforts.

- **Continue to meet with landowners** to make them aware of various open space protection techniques (full or partial parcel protection; acquisition or easement; paid or donated; near term action or future bequest; etc.) and their unique benefits. Compile and coordinate educational information with local private and municipal land trusts in response to their interests and concerns. Prioritize outreach to landowners of 1) parcels 40 acres or more in size; 2) land enrolled in the Clean and Green program that is not already protected by easement; and 3) parcels contiguous to protected lands.

- **Invite the Greenspace Alliance and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission to present its findings on the economic impact of open space** to elected officials of the Region.

- **Document a series of landowner legacies**—personal stories about the importance of land protection. Use the landowner legacies as an aid to individual outreach meetings, a handout at special outreach events, or a larger outreach campaign. Pike County used this approach to share four landowner legacies with prospective land donors.

Strategy 8: Demonstrate and Encourage Resource Stewardship.

Our use and management of the landscape can promote the health and dynamics of natural communities and the preservation of historic structures, or can contribute to their decline. Resources on public and private lands should be purposefully managed for their long term presence in the region. Publicly protected open space lands offer an opportunity to demonstrate environmental stewardship toward natural, historic, and other resources in ways that others can observe and apply to their own priorities.

Recommendation 8.1: Practice resource management on public lands.

All public lands with natural areas should have resource management plans that address the health and dynamics of the plant and animal communities and the preservation of natural features and scenic vistas through planned management activities and public access and recreation policies. Where public access is permitted, resource management areas may be posted with information on the technique and intended benefits.

Recommendation 8.2: Encourage resource management on private lands.

Similarly, private landowners of natural areas, including homeowner's associations, should be encouraged to develop and manage resources sustainably in accordance with their goals for the land and resource(s). Such management plans need not be complex but should address the specific natural resources of the site (woodlands, fields/meadows, waters, plant and animal communities), historic resources (buildings, structures, fences, walls, etc.), vegetative patterns, and public access to these features.

Chapter 7: Strategy and Recommendations for Raising Public Awareness

Providing information about parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services is an important public service. Convenient, timely information enables people to engage in recreational activities, plan for memorable experiences, and lead active, healthy lives close to home. Nearly three out of five survey respondents indicated that they would like to have more information about parks, recreation facilities, trails, events, and activities—and they want to know where to go to get that information. Survey respondents listed the lack of information about parks and recreation as their chief block to participation! When asked how they would like to get information, more than half the survey respondents indicated that one Web site for Northern Chester County is their preferred method. Next in preference was township Web sites and newsletters mailed to homes. Making information about parks and recreation easy for residents to access could be one of the most valuable new or improved services that the Region offers.

This chapter synthesizes challenges and opportunities regarding public awareness and presents recommendations under one Blueprint Strategy:

Strategy 9: Increase Recreation Participation through Awareness of Opportunities

Challenges and Opportunities

There are a lot of recreation options in Northern Chester County. Many organizations are providing facilities and services. From things people can do whenever it suits them such as walk, enjoy a picnic, or look at the starry skies, to organized activities such community fairs, opportunities for fun and enrichment abound. The problem is that these opportunities are fragmented and there is no one place to get information about parks, recreation facilities, trails, programs, or services. Too often residents reported missing out on a great activity simply because they were unaware of it. While trails are important to 85 percent of the survey respondents, fully 63 percent report not having enough information about them. In providing information about parks and recreation to residents, the Region is facing a number of challenges including the collection of timely information; the methods for distribution; and how to make residents and visitors aware of information sources. It takes time, expertise, and commitment to capture, organize, and distribute information on an ongoing basis. Developing a "go to" resource for information about parks and recreation is an important undertaking to advance the vision for the Region. The nature and extent of what information will be collected and distributed regarding parks and recreation must be determined.

The public involvement process yielded a significant finding: residents identify with the Northern Chester County region as a whole more so than relating only to their township or their school district. This underscores the need for a consolidated information source. Many organizations have information to provide. Many organizations are already providing information, including Chester County, the nine municipalities, the three school districts, sports leagues, land trusts and conservancies, quasi-public tourism organizations, health organizations, historic and cultural private sector businesses with recreation related functions, newspapers, various Web sites, and many others. Tapping these various sources of information and distributing their collective information would expand parks and recreation possibilities for people who live and visit in the Region.

Strategy 9: Increase Recreation Participation through Opportunity Awareness.

Increasing participation in recreational activities is key to the public's life-long health and wellness. Participation starts with awareness of "what to do and where to do it" for both scheduled and self-directed recreation activities, and may include activities offered by both public and private providers. Such information should be timely, accurate and accessible in multiple formats to promote participation across the community.

Recommendation 9.1: Provide a parks and recreation guide for the Northern Chester County region in print and digital/online formats.

A guide with information about all the parks, recreation facilities, trails, services, programs, contact information, and related information will help people who live or visit here to partake in recreation opportunities. Consider the guide as a whole but composed of parts that could stand on their own for targeted audiences with specific interests, such as land and water trails, birding areas, playgrounds, historic sites, cultural events and so on. Sell advertising for the guide to offset production costs.

Recommendation 9.2: Provide a Web site for parks and recreation in Northern Chester County.

The public participation process found that the citizens relate to Northern Chester County overall as their home region more than any other sub-entity. This result positions the Region as the candidate with the most potential for success in providing a Web site for parks and recreation.

- Determine a suitable organization to house the responsibility for the Web site. Evaluate the feasibility of organizations and partners to oversee Web site services:
  - Northern Federation staffing or contracting.
  - A multi-municipal partnership.
  - A multi-municipal /school partnership.

- Other private sector partners, such as Chester Springs Surrounds.

- Continue to use the **www.northernfederation.com** site developed for this plan as the Web site for Parks and Recreation. Web sites appear to be the most preferred method for residents and tourists to use as a resource for information about parks and recreation. Determine what information will be placed on the Web site. This could include a range of topics that could be added over time such as:
  - Parks and recreation facilities and addresses. Park site maps. Linkage to MapQuest or other online navigation tool for directions. Rules and regulations.
  - Contact information for sports leagues; arts, cultural and historic organizations; schools and school-related facilities and programs.
  - Information that connects recreation with open space efforts, trails, historic and cultural sites and activities, and other related efforts.
  - Information on accessibility of facilities and programs.
  - Shared calendars of events sponsored by the municipalities; schools; regional and community organizations; county, state, and national park partners; tourism agencies; fire companies; and others.
  - Information about registration and permits for facility use.
  - Registration for programs along with the option for payment by credit card.
  - Reservations for facilities.
  - Information to support and advance volunteerism related to parks and recreation.
  - Parks and Recreation Boards meeting dates, agendas, reports, and special features.
  - Benefits of parks and recreation.
  - Testimonials from citizens engaged in recreational activities.
  - Stories about participants involved in parks and recreation.
  - Photographs of people engaged in recreational activities, programs, and events in the Region.
  - Plans related to parks and recreation such as the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plans; trails plans; park master plans; survey reports; capital improvement programs; open space plans; greenway plans; county and regional plans related to parks, recreation greenways, trails, and heritage areas; and special studies such as economic development, health and wellness, and other related topics.
  - Links to reports and studies that might be of interest to key stakeholders involved with parks, recreation, and open space.

- Provide links from **www.northernfederation.com** to the Web sites of recreation providers, including municipalities, school districts, faith-based institutions, health and wellness groups, and other organizations.
- Promote this Web site by including the Web address in all marketing materials, newsletters, forms, and other materials of the Northern Federation, its municipalities, and partner organizations.

Recommendation 9.3: Continue to use township newsletters to distribute parks and recreation information.

Direct mail newsletters are still a major way to promote parks and recreation to the community and will continue to be of value for the near future. It would be important to use the newsletters to steer people toward the Region's Web site for parks and recreation for additional information.

Integrate human interest with newsletter Information. Include testimonials, photos, and stories about participants and how they benefit from parks and recreation in the newsletters instead of only providing schedule information. Such an approach will help to motivate citizens to go to the Web site and find opportunities of how to join in programs or use facilities.

Include information on how parks and recreation benefits the community. This can be increased property values, cost savings from and conservation vs. development, environmental benefits of a tree planting program, how families build strong bonds through recreation, and so on.

Recommendation 9.4: Enhance the Northern Federation's relationship with the news media.

Outlets such as newspapers—whether print or online—and radio provide additional ways to get the word out to the public on parks and recreation.

- Continue to create public interest stories about parks and recreation to take to the local newspapers for publication.
- Aim to get Philadelphia market television and radio coverage for the major events such as the Iron Tour.

Recommendation 9.5: Explore the use of social media to share information.

Recognize that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media are the preferred method of communicating by the Millennial Generation (born after 1989). Interviews with youth support this concept. It is important for the Region to look ahead in serving upcoming generations.

Form an Advisory Group of youth and others with expertise in the use of social media to advise the Region on increasing public awareness about parks and recreation through social media.

Consider developing an "App" for smart phones for parks and recreation in Northern Chester County. Work with another organization such as the Schuylkill Highlands in developing this since it is a large-scale effort. Focus on parks and recreation facilities, including trails, as the first application.

Recommendation 9.6: Encourage individuals, families, and small groups of friends to experience the natural, cultural, and recreational assets of Northern Chester County.

Retaining the scenic, rural character and peaceful way of life in Northern Chester County is of paramount importance. While increasing public awareness, visitation, and use of special destinations (such as Parkerford Tavern, the Schuylkill River Trail, the parks, and Hopewell Big Woods) is important, traditional tourism that targets throngs of people and suggests hotels, motels, franchise restaurants and other Anywhere, USA, development is not appropriate for this region. Instead, marketing should invite residents to experience recreational, natural, and cultural places of interest and activities that they would not normally visit as part of their routine lives and usual destinations. The concept is akin to being a "tourist in your own town."

- Direct Marketing of Recreation, Heritage, and Conservation Destinations to Families and Small Groups. Tourism in this area should not be designed to attract busloads of people, but rather small groups of people that would arrive by individual car. The goal would be to get such visitors to spend a day or stay overnight and spend money in the local economy for food, lodging, products, gifts, art, and products unique to the Region, in municipalities that desire to use regional visitation to support and retain local businesses.
- Consider how to Brand the Northern Chester County Region with a Unique Identity. Use the unique characteristics and features of the area, determined in the July 2010 branding exercise, including:
    - Schuylkill Highlands
    - Hopewell Big Woods
    - Iron and Steel Heritage
    - Revolutionary War: the Story Before Washington's Winter in Valley Forge
    - Open Spaces, Historic Places, and Hidden Treasures
    - Scenic Beauty
    - Historic, Living Landscape (similar to the Revolutionary War era).

If no single identity emerges, consider partnering with a larger related effort, such as the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative.

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Chapter 8: Strategies and Recommendations for Management and Financing

The Northern Federation exemplifies the benefits of partnerships through its nearly 40-year history of successful planning and land conservation efforts. Volunteerism and collaboration are the lynchpins of community parks and recreation in the Region. The nine municipalities are relatively small communities that have commensurately small staffs and budgets. Each municipality is too small to provide an independent public parks and recreation system. But together, and along with other public and private sector partners, the Region is large enough to be able to offer a parks and recreation system to serve people of all ages, year-round, with a wide range of opportunities, facilities, and services.

This chapter synthesizes challenges and opportunities identified in the inventory and assessment reports (*Appendices*) and presents recommendations under three Blueprint Strategies:

> Strategy 10: Organize a regional commission to coordinate the development and delivery of parks, recreation, trails, and open space services.
>
> Strategy 11: Increase operating and capital support for parks, recreation, trails, and open space.
>
> Strategy 12: Leverage the knowledge, skills, and resources of partner organizations that share the Region's core values.

Challenges

This Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan focuses heavily on recommendations that require a high degree of activity, organization, and management. Through good fortune, the generous spirit of volunteers, and the support of key stakeholders, parks are in place, events and activities are happening, and planning continues in many varied parks and recreation efforts from trails to park master plans and school-parks. However, the Region has reached the size and critical level of effort in which the fragmented efforts of many providers cannot expand and improve independently. Partnerships and multi-municipal collaboration are necessary for everything from efficiency and cost savings to being competitive for grant funding to providing more and better public service. Instituting a formal organized approach to partnerships led by the multi-municipal coalition, the Federation, appears to be a sound direction. To implement this plan, some paid staff is necessary to carry out daily functions of partnership-building and plan implementation, freeing volunteers to carry out major projects and initiatives.

Chapter 8

Revised Final Draft – April 3, 2012

OPPORTUNITIES

The Northern Federation, nine municipalities, three school districts, major conservancies and land trusts, dozens of community organizations, and a host of interested citizens came together in a public conversation about how to work together in providing parks, recreation, greenways, trails, and preserving open space. While there are well over 100 organizations with partnerships under way or with potential for parks, recreation, and open space progress through joint efforts in Northern Chester County, it is essential to focus on several crucial partnerships that, if successful, will make all other partnerships possible. These crucial partners include:

1. the Federation's municipal partners organizing for the planning, development and operation of parks, recreation, and open space;
2. the Owen J. Roberts, Downingtown Area, and Phoenixville Area School Districts to advance the school-park concept;
3. the sports leagues, Downingtown Area Recreation Commission and Phoenixville Recreation Department for development and maintenance of the major recreation facilities most in need—athletic fields
4. the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation and Phoenixville Community Foundation for active, healthy living;
5. Hopewell Big Woods, Schuylkill River Greenway Association, and Chester County for conservation;
6. the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiatives Program for tourism and economic development; and

While there are a host of other important organizations that are involved in partnership efforts, the work involved with the major partners mandates a strong and specific focus.

Strategy 10: Organize a Regional Commission to coordinate the development and delivery of parks, recreation, trails, and open space services.

Several management approaches to service delivery are available to the region—each with its own benefits to the municipalities and to the region's residents. The range of options could be viewed as a progression of an increasingly cooperative and collaborative partnership.

Recommendation 10.1 Establish the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission.

Five options for parks, recreation, and open space were developed for consideration as a management structure for a regional parks, recreation, and open space system. These are shown in *Table 5* of *Appendix 7, Organization, Management, and Financing,* on page A7-15. Based upon the ideas and concerns of the participants involved in the planning process, this plan recommends formal regionalization—a Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission—for recreation planning, programs, and services. Alternatively, naming the Commission as the Federation Park, Recreation, and Open Space Commission would draw upon the organizations successful and respected reputation.

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission would operate as a volunteer organization. Its purpose would be to plan, direct, and evaluate the formation of a regional parks, recreation, and open space system in Northern Chester County. Its main focus would be on the implementation of the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. Park ownership and maintenance would continue as an individual municipal function.

1) Determine the composition of the commission. It is suggested that the commission members include each municipality, each school district and the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities. This would make a 13-member board. Each member organization would appoint a representative and a designated alternate, and hold one vote. Municipal representatives would preferably comprise a parks and recreation board member, open space board member, or an elected official. It is important to ensure that a broad range of interests is represented on the Commission including conservation, recreation and sports.
2) Have the respective entities appoint the members to staggered terms of office.
3) Determine an organizational framework to establish the roles, responsibilities, and methods for decision-making. Consider how decisions will be made in serving the Region as a whole while supporting the needs of the sub-regions for active recreation facility planning, development and operation. If outside assistance is needed, consider applying for a Recreation and Parks Technical

Assistance Program (RecTAP) grant of $3,500 with no match required, or a Peer Grant of $10,000 with a $1,000 match required, to assist in this matter.

4) Develop a one-year action plan defining the projects, roles, schedule, and resources based upon the goal of implementing the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

5) Determine a budget for the commission based on the one-year action plan and the formula that sets for the contributions by the partners.

6) Evaluate progress at the end of one year and determine whether the commission is ready to formalize their relationship, e.g., with an Intergovernmental Agreement, and proceed in planning year two. Evaluation should address plan implementation and commission roles and functions and include input from the commission as well as the partnership organizations.
   - Evaluate the current opportunities and emerging needs in parks, recreation, and open space.
   - Analyze the previous year's accomplishments and indicate reasons for progress or lack of it.
   - Determine if staffing is needed. Assess the potential for a Circuit Rider.
   - Develop a plan of action for the next fiscal year.

Recommendation 10.2: Consider addressing sports facilities through sub-regional organization.

In terms of the regional planning, development and maintenance of sports facilities, the Region is especially complex. The complexity is due to the fact that residents of the nine municipalities are served by 15 athletic leagues with 26 divisions covering seven sports. Only two leagues have their own facilities; the rest schedule use of public and private fields. Some leagues feed the athletic programs of the three school districts and reflect participant preference to play with others they know. In addition, residents of East Pikeland and West Pikeland have access to professionally-led community recreation programs through the Phoenixville Recreation Department and Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium respectively, while residents of the remaining municipalities have had more limited programs offerings largely provided by volunteer and private organizations.

Background

A review of league service areas, player participation by municipality, and school district service areas found two sub-regions in the Northern Chester County area: East Nantmeal, East Coventry, South Coventry, North Coventry, East Vincent, and Warwick in the northwestern area and East Pikeland, West Pikeland and West Vincent in the southeastern area. While West Vincent is in the Owen J. Roberts School District, its residents primarily play in recreational leagues that operate outside of this school district. Of the 4,050 registered players in the sports leagues serving in the Region, players are nearly evenly split between the two sub-regions. *Table 8-1, Possible Sub-Regions for Sports Facility Planning, Development and Use,* presents the two possible sub-regions according to municipalities, participation, school districts, leagues and recreation providers.

Table 8-1 Sub-Regions for Sports Facility Planning, Development and Use

Sub-Region	Participants	Municipalities	Leagues (Predominant)	Recreation Program Provider
Northwestern	2,030	East Nantmeal, East Coventry, South Coventry, North Coventry, East Vincent, Warwick	Coventry Little League, Coventry Soccer, Coventry Youth Lacrosse, Coventry Girls Basketball, Norchester Red Knights, NYAA, SFYAL, Wildcats Football	Volunteer parks and recreation boards
Southeastern	2,020	East Pikeland, West Pikeland, West Vincent	DARC, GEYA, KYAL, LYA, NYAA, Phoenixville Baseball,	Phoenixville Recreation Dept., DARC

It is important to note important nuances reflected in *Table 8.1*. The leagues shown for each sub-region are the predominant leagues for the Region, however there is some crossover of players. Interviews and focus groups found that citizens are oriented to their leagues, school districts and community recreation program providers. People like to recreate with their neighbors, schoolmates and friends. Sustaining these social patterns while expanding sports facilities and program for all ages will increase recreational activity and foster active, healthy lifestyles.

Sports facilities would be located as close to home as possible thereby making facility use more convenient resulting in more use, more feasible bicycle and pedestrian distances, and thus less driving and environmental impact. Facilities would be configured to serve people where they want to play thereby enhancing a sense of community.

The analysis of sports field needs determined that the following facilities are needed:

- 19 diamond fields for youth
- 13 rectangular fields for youth
- 4 diamond fields for adults
- 4 rectangular fields for adults

Based upon the nearly equal level of participation in the two sub-regions, the facilities needed in each sub-region would also be about equal. The northwestern region would need 12 diamond fields and nine rectangular fields. The southeastern region would need 11 diamond fields and eight rectangular fields.

An advantage of this configuration is that it will enable all municipalities to compete for grant funding by collaborating in a joint application. By partnering within the sub-regions, the municipal partners and school districts can ensure that their resources are maximized, facilities are not duplicated unnecessarily, and operating costs are streamlined.

Recommendations

1. Consider forming two sub-regions for active recreation facility planning purposes. Sub-regions are common in large parks and recreation systems for efficient and effective service.

    - Northwest Sub-Region: East Nantmeal, East Coventry, South Coventry, North Coventry, East Vincent, and Warwick
    - Southeast Sub-Region: East Pikeland, West Pikeland and West Vincent

2. Plan the needed additional 40 sports fields according the sub-regional needs.

3. Planning for the development and operation of sports facilities needs to include representatives of municipal government, sports program providers (leagues and recreation providers), and school districts working together in a positive and collaborative fashion. Together, these partners can accomplish what no one entity could do on its own.

4. Consider locating one sports complex in each sub-region.

5. Advance the concept of School-Parks throughout Northern Chester County in the three school districts of Owen J. Roberts, Phoenixville and Downingtown.

6. West Pikeland should continue to be a partner in DARC for sports and other recreation programs, and the Federation of Northern Chester County for other services and facility improvements supported by this plan, including networking and partnership development.

7. East Pikeland should continue to be a partner in the Federation of Northern Chester County for parks, recreation, open space, greenways, trails and other related functions. East Pikeland could also consider opening discussions with the Phoenixville Area Recreation Department regarding the provision of recreation services to East Pikeland. The residents are already participating in these programs. The Department has re-organized and staffed recreation operations since East Pikeland withdrew from this partnership five years ago. This could include the exploration of the services to be provided, funding, and most importantly, regular reporting of participation by township residents and other benefits to East Pikeland as a result of the partnership.

Recommendation 10.3: Consider staff to support coordination and/or expansion of services.

As the members carry out their work, the commission could decide when to hire staff. That could be sooner or later depending on how the work goes along with plan implementation and the capacity of the volunteers to support progress. When that time comes, this plan recommends that a Circuit Rider be considered. A Circuit Rider is the name of a PADCNR grant-funded position for regional parks and recreation management. This position would be a Recreation Coordinator for Northern Chester County. Over the four-year course of the Circuit Rider grant, PADCNR would fund half of the salary of the Recreation Coordinator—100 percent in year one, 75 percent in year two, 50 percent in year three,

and 25 percent in year four—to be matched with local funds. This gives the Region four years to establish the system as well as begin implementing the plan.

The Recreation Coordinator would serve the Region by planning, marketing, directing, coordinating, and evaluating parks and recreation programs. The Recreation Coordinator would also help advance other partnership recommendations.

It may be possible to secure the matching funds from a partnering organization in the Region.

Recommendation 10.4: Establish a central clearinghouse for technical information about parks, recreation, and open space.

Since parks, recreation, and open space initiatives in Northern Chester County are largely implemented by volunteer Parks and Recreation boards, there is a higher need for convenient access to technical resources, funding sources, case studies, service standards, best practices, and so on. Armed with useful information, volunteers can then work toward the advancement of parks and recreation goals. Mandatory Dedication of Parkland was just one example of the type of information that park and recreation board members were interested in. Several informative Web sites, plans, reports, and studies have been listed in *Appendix 13*, Tools and Resources, but these are just the tip of the iceberg. Additional research and information sharing would greatly benefit volunteers and ultimately the Region's residents.

a) Evaluate the capacity of organizations in the Northern Chester County region to support an information clearinghouse.

b) Determine the parameters that the clearinghouse will encompass.

c) Undertake the function and scope of the clearinghouse that can be supported wither regional resources or through a partnership with another organization such as the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation. It is better to have a smaller clearinghouse with a targeted scope that works well rather than an extensive clearinghouse that is irrelevant due to insufficient capacity.

Recommendation 10.5: Actively develop and manage partnerships.

Recognize that partnerships are key components of creating a regional parks, recreation, and open space system and that these partnerships must be managed. The Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Commission cannot undertake everything they would like to do. By focusing a few key partnerships (see Strategy 12) while addressing others to a lesser extent, the commission should be able to get the maximum benefit from partnerships.

1) Develop a strategic plan for partnership development and management.

2) Identify three to five core partnerships that will involve 80 percent of the total time devoted to partnership development.

3) Identify all of the other partners that will get 20 percent of the focus of partnerships.

4) Create a "Friends of the Parks and Trails" organization with an objective of having a Friends organization for every park and trail in Northern Chester County. The Friends groups would serve as advocates, ambassadors, watchdogs, fundraisers, and overall supporters.

Consider making partnership development a primary responsibility of a future Recreation Coordinator.

Strategy 11: Increase operating and capital support for parks, recreation, trails, and open space.

Whether implemented individually, cooperatively, or through joint efforts, a finance strategy is needed to support capital (land and facility) and operational (program and publicity) recommendations. Consider that staff may be needed, if a more intensive level of service is to be attained. A capital and operating finance strategy should assemble a mix of sources—public, private, and individual—to support parks, recreation, trails and open space.

Recommendation 11.1 Adopt a financial support policy that sustains parks and recreation over time.

The policy should address the following components:

- Government Role, explaining that local government can provide (and thus fund) some but not all parks and recreation opportunities independently. Services will require a mix of public and private resources, both human and financial.
- Revenue Sources, stating that revenues to support parks and recreation need to come from both public and private revenue. This includes taxes, earned income, contractual receipts (leases, rentals) and financial assistance (grants, gifts, donations, bequests).
- Fees and Charges, indicating that parks, recreation facilities, and events that benefit the general public will continue to be free of charge; facilities that require a higher level of maintenance for specific uses such as sports and programs that benefit the participants individually would be supported through a mix of user fees and volunteer support.
- Capital Donations**,** outlining criteria and procedures to ensure that any significant donation can be supported over time, whether that is through municipal support, private support, or a mix of public and private support. Significant donations could include land, trails, recreation facilities such as ball fields, playgrounds, pavilions, park benches, etc.

Recommendation 11.2 Increase municipal investment in the daily operation of parks and recreation to enhance the quality of life.

Work toward aligning the municipal operating budgets for parks and recreation with the $28.78 per capita annual average of Pennsylvania municipalities.[2] Expand budgets over time as additional facilities and services are provided.

Recommendation 11.3 Keep park maintenance expenditures a function of each individual municipality.

As small rural communities with limited staff, workload and cost tracking of park maintenance tasks are not always performed. Since three out of every four dollars of the lifetime cost of a park is in maintenance, tracking maintenance is important. The conundrum is that it is relatively easier to get funds to buy land and build facilities than it is to get funding for operations and management. Often new parks are added and recreation facilities built, but no additional staff or budgets are added to support their maintenance (see *Recommendation 11.4*). As a rule of thumb, the municipalities could work toward tracking maintenance costs and an average per acre maintenance cost for active areas of $1,500 - $3,000 per acre, and $250 to $500 per acre for passive parks. While continuing to maintain parks individually, the townships as a region can develop an approach to park maintenance by exploring this municipal function as a network in which staff share information, training, joint purchasing, and perhaps maintenance software that could be used by the Northern Chester County municipalities.

Recommendation 11.4 Consider a Maintenance Impact Statement to evaluate future operating costs when planning capital improvements.

To ensure that the municipalities or the Region can support a planned capital improvement, it is essential to consider maintenance, operations, and funding during the planning process.

Recommendation 11.5 Consider capital improvement programs for each municipality.

Every municipality should consider having a five- to seven-year capital improvement program for parks, recreation, and trails. The first year of the program would go into the current fiscal year's budget. Having a five- to seven-year plan enables municipalities to undertake projects in an organized manner rather than as a reaction to a crisis, urgent need, or public pressure. Allocating a designated amount of funding annually and regularly facilitates planning. For example, East Vincent Township allocates about $50,000 annually for capital improvements. Other funding sources can include the Chester County Open Space Program, fees-in-lieu of dedication of parkland, bond issues, loans, grants, and partnerships.

[2] Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources and Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society, *Pennsylvania Parks & Recreation Budget and Salary Survey*, 2002. Pennsylvania Department of Conservation, Harrisburg, PA.

Maintenance Impact Statement

Purpose

1. To assess the capital and operating impact of a significant proposed project or a major program and its effects on other parks and recreation facilities and services.
2. To support an informed decision about feasibility and viability of the proposed project.

Method

1. Determine Capital cost of the proposed project.
2. Determine Operating costs of the proposed project. Include:
   - Number of staff hours required, and cost of staff hours
   - Volunteer support (any indirect costs)
   - Cost of materials and supplies
   - Miscellaneous costs
3. Determine impact on other facilities and programs with the implementation of the proposed project.
   - Will the project/service require funds needed for other facilities/programs?
   - Will the project/service require staff time needed for other services/programs?
   - How will the project impact the quality of service in Northern Chester County?
   - Will the project require resources from the community and are they available?
4. Determine revenue sources.
   - Municipal funds – within current budget
   - Municipal funds – additional appropriation
   - Non-tax funds to be generated from the project/program
   - Grants, Donations

Decision-Making

Based upon the above information, does the region (or a municipality) have the resources to develop and sustain this project?

Recommendation 11.6 Consider pooling a dedicated amount of funding for regional parks and recreation efforts.

This would be considered as part of the per capita investment level. This funding could be used to support projects and programs that are beyond the capacity of volunteers to undertake. Part-time staff or contractors for a specific project could undertake specific tasks and actions to implement the recommendations of this plan.

A regional funding formula that strives to equalize the responsibilities and the benefits of parks and recreation is crucial. This is especially important in Northern Chester County where some

municipalities provide multiple parks and recreation facilities and others provide few to date. Regional parks and recreation system contributions begin at a few dollars per capita. Determining this formula requires discussion and negotiation to reach a fee is fair and equitable.

One way to test this at limited cost to the municipalities is to secure a Circuit Rider Grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to hire a parks and recreation professional to work on the implementation of this plan. See description under *Recommendation 10.2*.

Consider undertaking a major regional parks and recreation improvement program as a way to demonstrate that this plan is being implemented. The annual contribution per municipality would need to be determined. This could be for ball fields, a sports complex, trails, and other facilities. These projects and the joint investment would be particularly competitive for grant funding.

Strategy 12: Leverage the knowledge, skills, and resources of partner organizations that share the region's core values.

While citizen volunteers are leading parks, recreation, and open space at the municipal level, other organizations are working toward similar goals. Local government, school districts, and private organizations can accomplish more together than they can independently.

Recommendation 12.1 Advance the Concept of School-Parks with the Owen J. Roberts School District.

The school-park partnership can grow from the sharing of information, programs, services, and maintenance to the development and operations of facilities that serve recreational and educational purposes through joint use agreements. The region's participation in discussions of future school district improvements, i.e., its strategic plan, can provide maximum benefit to residents of all ages for both educational and recreational use. Therefore, families with or without children will benefit from educational experiences. Collaboration on school sites may make cost savings possible in the construction and operation of educational/recreational facilities. Municipalities and school districts may be able to pool resources to develop facilities neither could afford independently.

See specific guidance on advancing the school-park concept and description of joint use under Recommendation 2.1.

Recommendation 12.2 Foster active, healthy lifestyles with the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation.

Public recreation is public health. Recreation is an important tool in fixing the national health crisis stemming from obesity, which results from a lack of physical activity and poor nutrition. The U.S.

Surgeon General has stated that communities can offer an important public health services by providing facilities such as trails and parks close to home, along with programs and activities for citizens to participate in physical activity for fun and fitness. The Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation and Northern Chester County are ideal partners in pursing their common interest in fostering active, healthy lifestyles in the Region.

1. Continue to explore the potential of a regional circuit rider for Northern Chester County and a mega-region circuit rider for active, healthy living.

2. Continue to work together in projects and programs to engage citizens in physical activity through recreation.

3. Continue to pursue funding from the Foundation to help support recreation and wellness in Northern Chester County. Focus on facility improvements using Foundation funding to match other grants.

Recommendation 12.3 Consider strategic marketing and development of special destinations and experiences with conservation and tourism partners.

As described under Recommendation 9.6, traditional tourism is not appropriate for this region. However, the Region could benefit economically from greater local and niche awareness and use of recreational, natural, and cultural places of interest and activities. Efforts are underway by conservation partners to promote recreation and tourism as appropriate economic development. The region will need to continue to participate in these discussions and developments to promote sensitive development, management, and use of the landscape.

- Continue to work with the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscapes Initiative on appropriate economic development.
    - Focus on heritage outdoor recreation tourism.
    - Identify projects that can be undertaken in a specific time frame along with the roles and responsibilities of each organization.
    - Apply for funding from the grant program offered by the Schuylkill Highlands. Consider funding for signage in the Region as a high priority.

- Work with the Convention and Visitors Centers in the Region to increase appropriate tourism in Northern Chester County.
    - Work with the Brandywine Conference and Visitors Bureau on folding Northern Chester County into its promotional activities at a higher level.
    - Work with the Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau to direct visitors from Valley Forge National Historic Park to related sites and programs in Northern Chester County.

Recommendation 12.4: Continue to work with sports leagues in the planning, development, operation, and maintenance of athletic fields.

Additional ball fields and game courts are needed to provide sufficient facilities for youth sports and adult sports that are now not addressed at all. Community sports groups can be valuable allies in undertaking the goal of providing additional facilities as well as taking care of facilities that are already in place.

- Consider establishing a Northern Chester County Regional Sports Association. This would be an umbrella group for community sports leagues. However, each league would continue to manage its own operation. The umbrella organization would focus on issues and opportunities that are regional in nature.
- Hold an annual sports summit for the purpose of identifying and addressing issues and opportunities.
- Involve the sports organizations in the planning of future athletic facilities.
- Consider partnerships in sports fields in which there could be funding from both public and private sources.
- Work with the leagues in figuring out ways of maintaining sports facilities in a fair, equitable, and high quality manner.

Recommendation 12.5: Support and expand partnerships in conservation, trails, and open space preservation.

Many major organizations have invested their time, money and expertise in Northern Chester County in order to preserve its historic resources, scenic beauty, and outdoor recreation opportunities. These partnerships will become more important than ever as fiscal challenges continue.

- Continue to work with the Schuylkill River Greenway Association on river access, trail development, advertising, and programs.
- Continue to partner with the Chester County Planning Commission and the Parks and Recreation department on open space, trails, and recreation.
- Continue to partner with conservation and trail organizations in the Region, including the French & Pickering Conservation Trust, Green Valleys Association, the Natural Lands Trust, The Nature Conservancy, The Brandywine Conservancy, and the Bicycle Coalition of Philadelphia.

  The conservation and trail organizations are instrumental partners in preserving natural and scenic resources as well as in providing trails to create community connections.

  - Consider creating a sub-committee(s) of the commission for conservation and trail groups.
  - At least annually, interview these organizations to determine and help support their goals and projects.

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Chapter 9: Implementation

In preparing this plan, we've developed a vision and strategies to foster active, healthy living and environmental conservation among the residents of our region. Our discussion among the municipal and project partners and the public has generated interest and enthusiasm for recreation and conservation efforts that integrate our values for community, heritage, natural beauty, health, and sustainability. We now must maintain that momentum as we implement our plan.

The steps of implementation are challenging but not insurmountable. Some steps are significant and will require major investment, while others are smaller and can be readily undertaken by volunteer efforts. The number of communities and topics adds complexity to each recommendation, but multi-municipal collaboration and focused partnerships can help streamline efforts. Working collaboratively, our service can greatly surpass that of separate actions, benefitting citizens now and leaving a legacy of parks, recreation and open space for future generations.

Implementation Strategies by Topic

The intent for implementation is to lay out a pragmatic and achievable course of action that also allows for more progressive actions should the opportunities emerge. The 63 recommendations in Chapters 5 through 8 include a broad range of land and facility, policy and program, and management, and financing actions. Tables 9-1 through 9-4 provide direction for the organization and start-up of each recommendation listed in Chapters 5 through 8.

Table 9-1 Implementation Strategy for Parks
Table 9-2 Implementation Strategy for Trails
Table 9-3 Implementation Strategy for Programs
Table 9-4 Implementation Strategy for Open Space Conservation
Table 9-5 Implementation Strategy for Public Awareness
Table 9-6 Implementation Strategy for Management and Finance

For each recommendation, a suggested timeframe, lead and support partners, and effort and resources, including cost estimate ranges for professional services and capital improvements, where appropriate, are outlined.

- The timeframe column is used to order each table. Ongoing and short term (2012-2014) actions are listed first shaded in green, followed by mid term (2015-2018) and long term (2019+) projects and initiatives shaded in yellow.

- Partners are identified as lead partners, those with primary responsibility for organizing and initiating the recommendation, and support partners, those with a supporting role of advocacy, technical knowledge, associated action, or other resources.
- Estimated cost ranges are based on recent PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program grants for similar projects, as well as recent planning, construction costs in Northern Chester County
- Page numbers to the detailed recommendations are provide for quick reference.

Table 9-1 Implementation Strategy for Parks

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
Parks			
3.1: Acquire and develop additional park land for sports fields for both community sports leagues and general community recreation. *Pg 44*	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation (sub-regions) and Sports Leagues for development of sports complexes Municipal Park and Recreation Boards for fields in community parks Municipal Park and Recreation Board and Municipal Officials for securing private fields in their respective townships through written agreement	Volunteer effort to identify, evaluate, and select a candidate sports complex site for detailed feasibility study; feasibility studies prepared by a professional park and recreation consultant Estimated value of $25,000 to $50,000 per sports complex master site plan; estimated value of $8 to $10 million for construction, though costs will vary by site and facilities.
		Sports Leagues for fields in community parks	Volunteer effort for enhancement of fields in community parks; see Recommendation 1.1. Volunteer effort to acquire model agreement and tailor terms to municipality and landowner.
1.4: Acquire additional parkland or fees-in-lieu of parkland (through mandatory dedication of parkland ordinance. *Pg 38* Steps: 1. Review recommended standards and provisions for parkland, open space and trails. 2. Prepare a revised standards and provisions 3. Submit revision to Municipal Planning Commission	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Municipal Officials and Planning Commissions to update mandatory dedication of parkland (and fee-in-lieu) standards Municipal Officials to enforce standards	Volunteer effort with review by Municipal Solicitor Nominal cost of for required public meeting advertisements prior to adoption of ordinance amendment
		Federation (including Municipal Planning Commissions and Park and Recreation Boards) for compilation of model standards	

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
1.6: Present parks as a unified system. *Pg 40*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Federation for signage design; consider Schuylkill River Greenway signage system as basis or model Municipal Public Works/Park Maintenance for comparison of park maintenance practices N/A	Sign design template led by volunteer effort, supported by staff Sign design (template) prepared by a professional designer Estimated value of $15,000 to $30,000 for regional sign template development service Nominal cost of Park Maintenance coordination by staff
2.1: Develop school-parks. *Pg 41* Steps: 1. Organize Federation School-Park Sub-Committee and gain representation on the School District Strategic Facilities Plan implementation committee(s) 2. Conduct a field visit to Springfield-Greene County, Missouri by partners 3. Revitalize an existing school property as a school-park; program indoor and outdoor facilities for after school recreation and learning 4. Develop new school-parks, as needed	Short Term, 2012-2014 to Long Term (2019+)	School Districts, Federation, Municipal Officials, Municipal Park and Recreation Boards for land acquisition, planning, development, programming, maintenance	Volunteer and staff effort to organize sub-committee and field visit Estimated cost of field visit to Springfield MO: $4,000 - $5,000 for 4-5 officials from Northern Chester County Prepared by a professional architect/landscape architect consultant Estimated value of $15,000 to $60,000 per school-park revitalization master site plan; development/construction costs will vary by site and facilities.
1.7: Encourage special interest groups to self-serve. *Pg 41*	Ongoing	Municipal Park and Recreation Boards and Municipal Officials for response to requests	N/A

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
1.1: Enhance existing parks as unique recreational destinations. *Pg 31* Steps: 1. Individual park and facility evaluation of 14 parks to assess current facility use, safety conditions, and ADA accessibility; invite public participation 2. Recommendations to address issues and add facilities and amenities; invite public participation 3. Construction of solutions and enhancements; invite public participation in construction	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Municipal Park and Recreation Boards to perform/initiate park and facility evaluation and enhancement recommendations Municipal Officials for local funding Federation for pursuit of concurrent professional park design services and/or external funding	Possibly performed as a volunteer/staff effort by Municipal Park and Recreation Board, Municipal Engineer/Landscape Architect knowledgeable in park design and current ADA standards, and Certified Playground Safety Inspector; track volunteer an staff hours as potential in-kind services to match external funding Preferably performed by or in conjunction with a professional park design consultant Estimated value of $3,500 to $25,000 per professional park assessment and recommendation; enhancement costs will vary by park
1.2: Master-plan and develop future parks. *Pg 35* Steps: 1. Park planning/design. Consider "bundling" several park master plans into one planning project for efficiency, time and budget savings; invite public participation. 2. Development/construction of facilities and amenities; invite public participation in construction	Mid Term, 2015-2018 to Long Term, 2019+	Municipal Park and Recreation Boards to initiate park planning and development Municipal Officials for local funding Federation for pursuit of concurrent professional park design services and/or external funding for planning and /or development	Prepared by a professional park design consultant Estimated value of $25,000 to $80,000 per park master site plan Estimated value of $300,000 to $5+ million for construction (recent 15-acre community parks average $1.5 million); costs will vary by site conditions and planned facilities.

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
1.5: Explore support for an indoor recreation center. *Pg 40* Steps: 1. Work with the school districts to maximize the use of school facilities for recreation during after-school hours. 2. If and when existing facilities no longer meet program needs, undertake a feasibility study for an indoor recreation center. 3. Continue to explore partnerships such as with the Freedom Valley YMCA/YWCA as this long term action is considered.	Long Term, 2019+	Federation (possibly a sub-regional initiative) School Districts, Health and Wellness Partners, Sports Leagues, YMCA/YWCA Health and Wellness Partners, Sports Leagues	Performed by a professional recreation center consultant Estimated value of $40,000 to $60,000 per professional feasibility indoor recreation study Estimated value of $4 to $18 million for construction

Table 9-2 Implementation Strategy for Trails

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
4.3: Complete, or support completion of, planned regional trails. *Pg 47*	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation and Municipal Officials for trail advocacy, where regional trail development is led by others Federation and Municipal Officials for trail completion for regional trails planned in the NCC trail network plan	Volunteer effort and nominal cost for advocacy efforts Estimated value of $121,000 per mile of trail acquisition (@ $50,000/acre and 20' right-of-way) Estimated value of $13,500 per mile of trail easement (@ $5,500/easement acre and 20' right-of-way) Estimated value of $40,000 to $400,000 per mile of trail construction; costs vary widely by trail surface, width, location, needed structures, signage, and amenities
4.4: Improve and expand existing trails and networks. *Pg 47*	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation Trails Committee and Municipal Park and Recreation Boards for planning improvements and extensions to existing trails and networks Municipal Officials for funding French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust for experience, knowledge of standards and best practices; Trail User Groups for planning participation	Volunteer efforts for trail improvement planning Trail extensions designed by a professional trail plan consultant See Recommendation 4.3 for trail construction cost ranges

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
4.5: Strengthen municipal mandatory dedication of parkland provisions to address trail development. *Pg 48* *Steps:* 1. Identify desired trail corridors 2. Where land development proposals cross desired corridors, request trail land dedication and development (per standards) to fulfill the mandatory dedication provision.	Short Term, 2012-2014	Municipal Officials and Planning Commissions to update mandatory dedication of parkland (and fee-in-lieu) standards; Municipal Officials to enforce standards Federation (including Planning Commissions and Park and Recreation Boards) for compilation of model standards	Volunteer effort with review by Municipal Solicitor See also Recommendation 1.4 for mandatory dedication of parkland updates Nominal cost of for required public meeting advertisements prior to adoption
4.8: Sustain private social trails through partnerships and stewardship. *Pg 49*	Ongoing	Individual Trail Users and Trail User Groups for landowner outreach	N/A
4.6: Present trails as a unified network. *Pg 48* See also Recommendation 1.6 for compatible recommendation	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation Trails Committee for signage design Municipal Public Works/Park Maintenance for comparison of trail maintenance practices	Sign design (template) prepared by a professional designer working with local volunteers Estimated value of $5,000 to $15,000 for regional sign template development service Nominal cost of trail maintenance coordination by staff
4.1: Establish a Regional Trails Committee. *Pg 46*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation for organization of the Federation Trails Committee Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and the Schuylkill River Greenway Association	Volunteer effort to organize committee

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
4.2: Prepare a Northern Chester County trail network plan. *Pg 46* Steps: 1. Determine scope of trail plan: a. regional (multi-municipal) trails only; regional and local trails; b. off-road trails only; on- and off-road trails (combine with Rec 4.9) c. connection opportunities vs. initial feasibility criteria 2. Hire trail plan consultant 3. Prepare plan To be followed by individual trail feasibility studies and master plans for trail development and maintenance	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation Trails Committee for regional trails planning French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Schuylkill Highlands, Schuylkill River Heritage Area, Trail User Groups, Chester County for planning participation	Prepared by a professional trail plan consultant Estimated value of $50,000 to $80,000 for off-road trail network only; $70,000 to $90,000 for on- and off-road trail network
4.9: Prepare a bicycle network plan. *Pg 49* See also Recommendation 4.2 above for compatible recommendation; consider joining both into one planning effort.	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation Trails Committee for planning Federation, Municipal Officials, and PennDOT for subsequent development Municipal Public Works and PennDOT's Chester County Maintenance Department for planned maintenance	Prepared by a professional trail plan consultant; traffic engineering review recommended Estimated value of $20,000 to $30,000 for bicycle plan only; $70,000 to $90,000 for on- and off-road trail network

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Table 9-3 Implementation Strategy for Programs

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
5.1: Focus programs in two areas: active healthy living and cultural heritage. *Pg 50*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Federation for identification of program opportunities and potential providers School Districts, Recreation Program Providers, Health and Wellness partners	Staff and volunteer effort for programming of school-parks and financing administration (program fees can generate revenue to offset costs)
5.2: Expand adult lifelong learning programs. *Pg 50*	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation for identification of potential topics and speakers Owen J. Roberts School District/Adult Evening School for programming Municipal Park and Recreation Boards, Municipal Historical Commissions and Societies, Heritage partners, Health and Wellness partners	Volunteer effort for planning OJR/AES staff effort for programming
5.6: Coordinate special events and activities. *Pg 51* *Steps* 1. Identify events and activities with similar target audiences 2. Determine which events and activities could be synergistic if programmed and/or advertised concurrently or in series	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation and Event/Activity Sponsors such as the historical commissions and societies, conservation organizations, fire companies, and others.	Volunteer effort for sponsor coordination
5.3: Continue community sports league summits. *Pg 50*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Municipal Park and Recreation Boards for organizing annual Sports League Summit	Volunteer effort for organization and documentation of summits

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
5.4: Engage youth in the region's natural and cultural heritage. *Pg 50* Consider appointing two high school students as representatives on the Federation PROS Commission (or interim committee)	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation for identification of youth program opportunities and youth services in support of program development Municipal Park and Recreation Boards, Municipal Historical Commissions and Societies, School Districts, Recreation Program Providers, Health and Wellness partners	Volunteer effort
5.5: Address water safety. *Pg 51*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation for identification of events and programs with which to integrate water safety instruction Health and Wellness partners	Volunteer/staff effort for program development and program offering
5.7: Link recreation with other community building endeavors. *Pg 51*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation (including Municipal Park and Recreation Boards) for outreach to other community organizations; possibly coordinated through an annual planning summit	Volunteer efforts to coordinate opportunities and responsibilities; for example, engage Municipal Planning Commissions in securing trail connections during the land development process and EAC's in identifying priorities for open space protection, resource stewardship demonstration sites, and interpretive sites.

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Table 9-4 Implementation Strategy for Open Space Conservation

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
6.1: Adopt a goal of protecting half of the remaining open space in the region. *Pg 54*	Short Term, 2012-2014 to adopt goal	Federation to draft goal as a resolution	Volunteer effort
6.2: Establish a region-wide open space committee. *Pg 54*	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation to organize the Open Space Committee or designate responsibilities and resources French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Green Valley Association, Natural Lands Trust	Volunteer effort by Federation for determination of appropriate committee composition (or designee), scope of responsibilities and resource support
6.5: Use mandatory dedication of parkland provisions to protect open space for passive recreation. *Pg 55*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Municipal Officials and Planning Commissions to update mandatory dedication of parkland (and fee-in-lieu) standards; Municipal Officials to enforce standards Federation Open Space Committee (or designee) (including Planning Commissions and Park and Recreation Boards) for compilation of model standards	Volunteer effort with review by Municipal Solicitor See also Recommendation 1.4 for mandatory dedication of parkland updates Nominal cost of for required public meeting advertisements prior to adoption
6.6: Expand existing parks, where practical and as land is available. *Pg 55*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Federation, Municipal Officials and Municipal Park and Recreation Boards for identification, evaluation and acquisition of park adjacent properties	Volunteer effort Estimated value of $50,000/acre for fee-simple acquisition, or $5,500/easement acre

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
7.5: Continue education and outreach efforts. *Pg 57*	Ongoing	Open Space Committee (or designee) French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Green Valley Association, Natural Lands Trust	Volunteer effort
6.7: Determine the need for park and facility lighting on a case-by-case during the master planning process or park review process. *Pg 55*	Ongoing	Federation and Municipal Park and Recreation Boards for inclusion of lighting discussion in planning processes Sports Leagues	Volunteer effort
7.1: Protect the riverfront. *Pg 56*	Ongoing	Federation Open Space Committee (or designee) and Municipal Open Space Committees for identification of potential land acquisitions and easements Municipal Officials for acquisitions and easements	Volunteer effort Estimated value of $50,000/acre for fee-simple acquisition, or $5,500/easement acre
7.2: Protect the scenic rural interior. *Pg 56*	Ongoing	Same as 7.1 above	Volunteer effort Estimated value of $50,000/acre for fee-simple acquisition, or $5,500/easement acre
7.3: Protect the primary stream corridors. *Pg 56*	Ongoing	Same as 7.1 above	Volunteer effort Estimated value of $50,000/acre for fee-simple acquisition, or $5,500/easement acre
6.3: Establish a region-wide program for open space mapping. *Pg 55*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation Open Space Committee (or designee) to develop data tracking and update process Chester County	Volunteer and staff effort to coordinate data and mapping requirements Value to be based on data availability, data consistency, and level of effort to achieve a minimum quality product

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources
6.4: Publicize progress toward the open space goal. *Pg 55*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation Open Space Committee (or designee) for preparation and distribution of annual report	Volunteer effort Nominal cost for digital distribution of annual report
8.1: Practice resource management on public lands. *Pg 58*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Municipal Open Space Committees and Municipal EACs for identification of appropriate lands Conservation District and Land Conservancies to develop management program and train maintenance staffs Municipal Public Works Departments for property maintenance French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Green Valley Association, Natural Lands Trust	Volunteer effort to determine potential projects Project and maintenance costs to vary by site
8.2: Encourage resource management on private lands. *Pg 58*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation Open Space Committee (or designee) and Municipal Open Space Committees and Municipal Officials French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Green Valley Association, Natural Lands Trust	Volunteer effort by Federation, staff effort by partners
7.4: Interpret open space that defines regional character. *Pg 57*	Mid Term, 2015-2018 to Long Term, 2019+	Federation Open Space Committee (or designee) and Municipal Open Space Committees for identification and development of interpretive programs, events, activities, etc.	Volunteer effort to determine potential projects Project development costs to vary

Table 9-5 Implementation Strategy for Public Awareness

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources Recommended
9.3: Continue to use township newsletters to distribute parks and recreation information. *Pg 62*	Ongoing	Municipal Park and Recreation Boards for home delivery of parks and recreation information	N/A
9.1: Provide a parks and recreation guide for the Northern Chester County region in print and online formats. *Pg 60* *Steps:* 1. Gather examples of guides; meet with recreation program providers to learn from their experience 2. Evaluate data types and format 3. Determine minimum and optional data to be collected 4. Collect and compile data consistently 5. Design and produce Web site and/or print publication; work with local newspapers to print and distribute guide annually Strive to be WEB based to avoid printing and distribution costs.	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation for annual data compilation and sponsor financing Private Recreation Providers, Local Newspapers	Volunteer effort to research and compile data and to sell advertising and sponsorships to offset costs Estimated value of $10,000 budget to seed the project.

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources Recommended
9.2: Provide a Web site for parks and recreation in Northern Chester County. *Pg 60*	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation for Web site development and data maintenance	Prepared or guided by a professional web site designer as a paid or pro bono community service Estimated value of $6,000 to $10,000 for Web site design and maintenance plus $500 annual hosting fee
9.4: Enhance the Northern Federation's relationship with the news media. *Pg 62*	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation for outreach to media	Volunteer effort to provide media with timely, accurate information (press releases, invitations to cover events, topics, etc.)
9.6: Encourage individuals, families, and small groups of friends to experience the natural, cultural, and recreational assets of Northern Chester County. *Pg 63*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Federation for branding and marketing initiatives	Prepared by a professional marketing consultant Distributed and promoted by volunteers and Federation staff
9.5: Explore the use of social media to share information. *Pg 62*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation for exploration and evaluation of varied social media sources and use	Volunteer (and youth) effort to explore social media formats Volunteer effort or small professional service contract to manage social media accounts

Table 9-6 Implementation Strategy for Management and Finance

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources Recommended
10.2: Consider addressing sports facilities through sub-regional organization. *Pg 68*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Federation (northern and southern sub-regions) for the planning and development of sports complexes	Volunteer effort to lead coordination Estimated value of $25,000 to $50,000 per master plan for sports fields. Development costs to be determined by master plan
12.4: Continue to work with sports leagues in the planning, development, operation, and maintenance of athletic fields. *Pg 76*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Federation and Sports Leagues for information sharing to facility planning, construction and maintenance	See also Recommendations 3.1 and 10.2 Volunteer efforts in the short term
11.3 Keep park maintenance expenditures a function of each individual municipality. *Pg 72*	Ongoing	Municipal Public Works Departments to give input to annual municipal budget Municipal Officials to review input prior to budget adoption	Strive to maintain active parks at a rate $1,500 to $3,000 per acre for active parks and $300 to $500 per acre for natural areas phased in over time.
11.4 Consider a Maintenance Impact Statement to evaluate future operating costs when planning capital improvements. *Pg 72*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Federation and Municipal Park and Recreation Boards to evaluate this tool	Municipal staff and volunteer effort
12.1 Advance the Concept of School-Parks with the Owen J. Roberts School District. *Pg 75*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Municipal Officials, Municipal Park and Recreation Boards, and School Districts	Cost would vary from volunteer time up to major park and recreation facility development as school parks.
12.2 Foster active, healthy lifestyles with the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation. *Pg 75*	Short Term, 2012-2014	Federation and Pottstown Area Health and Wellness for program and facility development and promotion	Federation/municipal volunteer effort, PAHWF staff effort

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources Recommended
12.5: Support and expand partnerships in conservation, trails, and open space preservation. *Pg 77*	Short Term, 2012-2014 and Ongoing	Federation, Federation Trails Committee, and Municipalities for partnered regional efforts that are efficient, cost-shared, cost-effective and grant-competitive French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Green Valley Association, Natural Lands Trust	Volunteer effort
10.5: Actively develop and manage partnerships. *Pg 71*	Ongoing	Federation and Federation Recreation Coordinator	Volunteer effort in the short term; ultimately a Recreation Coordinator responsibility
11.2 Increase municipal investment in the daily operation of parks and recreation to enhance the quality of life. *Pg 72*	Ongoing	Municipal Park and Recreation Boards to give input to annual municipal budget and to propose fee structure for programs Municipal Officials to review input and fee structure prior to budget adoption	Volunteer effort
10.1 Establish the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission. *Pg 67*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation for organizing the Commission	Volunteer effort to explore formal organization of Commission Estimated value of $7,500 to $10,000 for professional facilitation of Commission feasibility, composition, organizational structure, etc.; consider seeking either a RecTAP grant of $2,500 or a Peer Study grant of $10,000 with $1,000 local match to assist with this effort
10.3: Consider staff to support coordination and/or expansion of services. *Pg 70*	Mid Term, 2015-2018 to Long Term, 2019	Federation to determine appropriate time and conditions to hire staff Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation for shared support of staff	Via PA DCNR Circuit Rider grant, estimated value of $200,000 over four years split among ten partners and matched by PADCNR. Via long term local support, $45,000 – 50,000 annual salary

Recommendation	Timeframe	Lead Partners Support Partners	Effort and Resources Recommended
11.1 Adopt a financial support policy that sustains parks and recreation over time. *Pg 72*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Federation to request samples from PADCNR and draft a financial policy statement Municipal Officials to review and adopt	Volunteer effort with potential Municipal Solicitor review
11.5 Consider a (five year) capital improvement program for each municipality. *Pg 72*	Mid Term, 2015-2018	Municipal Officials with input from Municipal Park and Recreation Boards	Level of detail and effort to be determined by each municipality and developed by volunteer and staff efforts
11.6 Consider pooling a dedicated amount of funding for regional parks and recreation efforts. *Pg 72*	Mid Term, 2015-2018 to Long Term, 2019+	Federation, Municipal Officials and School Districts to explore options Federation Recreation Coordinator to foster multi-municipal financing options based on other successes School Districts	Volunteer effort to explore precedents, determine if regional pooling is feasible, and if so, propose a mechanism Regional recreation organizations generally dedicate $3 to $10 per capita annually to support regional parks and recreation operations. In contrast, individual municipalities spend an average of $30 in PA and $65 in the USA.
10.4: Establish a central clearinghouse for technical information about parks, recreation, and open space. *Pg 70*	Long Term, 2019+	Federation Recreation Coordinator	Initial volunteer efforts for early gathering of information and resources Ultimately a Recreation Coordinator responsibility
12.3 Consider strategic marketing and development of special destinations and experiences with conservation and heritage partners. *Pg 76*	Long Term, 2019+	Partners to be determined	Volunteer efforts for informal discussions Professional services recommended for formal marketing study To be determined based upon scope of marketing discussions and plan.

A Shared Recreation Coordinator as a Long Term Option

The findings of the work detailed below revealed that the concept of the Recreation Coordinator Circuit Rider for Northern Chester County would be a cost-effective way to advance the plan implementation. However, many of the participating municipalities were apprehensive about committing to a multi-year program with uncertain outcomes. Steering Committee members indicated that "smaller first steps by volunteers and township staff" was a preferred approach. Once underway, the partners would monitor progress and determine an appropriate time to hire staff. Though not being advanced at the outset, the effort to investigate this concept is documented here for future reference, when the right circumstances, opportunities or need would arise.

See page 26 for Year 2012 Projects and Initiatives.

The Recommendation

Under Strategy 10 to organize a Regional Commission to coordinate the development and delivery of parks, recreation, trails, and open space services, Recommendation 10.3 states "Consider staff to support coordination and/or expansion of services." Staff could be part-time, contracted for specific projects, shared among several willing partners or defined by another configuration of common interest and shared support. A paid recreation professional could free volunteers to work on projects by assuming organizational, fundraising, and financing responsibilities. Well before the plan was fully prepared, discussions about the potential for establishing paid staff began to occur.

The plan specifically recommends that a Circuit Rider be considered. A Circuit Rider is a staff position serving and funded by multiple municipalities – in this case, recreation facility, services and management coordination – by leading projects and programs that each of the municipalities is too small to do on its own. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) has a grant program to assist in establishing circuit riders in multi-municipal regions. Over the four-year grant period, the grant funds half of the salary of the Recreation Coordinator—100 percent in year one, 75 percent in year two, 50 percent in year three, and 25 percent in year four—to be matched with local funds in years two through four. This gives the region four years to establish services and begin to realize the benefits of their planning.

Early Discussions

Between June 2010 and June 2011, project partners including the Federation, PA DCNR, Chester County Parks and Recreation, Owen J. Roberts School District, Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, DARC, and Phoenixville Recreation and Parks Department were asked for their input on a potential circuit rider position for Northern Chester County. Municipal partners met with Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, area school districts, including Pottstown, and PA DCNR on three occasions to discuss the concept. The concept was also introduced to the region's municipal park and recreation boards at the January 2011 Parks & Recreation Summit sponsored by South Coventry Township.

Coordination with the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation led to the concept of dual Circuit Rider positions that would serve the region in different ways: one Circuit Rider would serve the mega-region within a 15-mile radius of Pottstown, and a second would serve the Northern Chester County region, namely to lead the implementation of the Regional Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. It was envisioned that these two Circuit Riders would work closely together and include related parks and recreation/education staff such as the Pottstown, Phoenixville and DARC parks and recreation directors and school district active healthy living coordinators.

The goal of the Circuit Rider positions would be to implement the regional plans, create programs and services to foster active healthy living, provide technical support on parks and recreation to the participating partners, and develop and implement an organized program to increase public awareness about parks and recreation opportunities in the area—all in line with the mission of the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation.

With guidance from PA DCNR Circuit Rider and Peer Study program managers, these discussions enabled the plan to include valuable information that would otherwise be required in a separate Peer Study, prior to Circuit Rider grant approval. This approach consolidated efforts, time and cost by addressing some of the PA DCNR requirements for Peer Study and Circuit Rider planning within the Parks, Recreation and Open Space plan work effort.

A Model Recreation Coordinator Job Description

The following job description was drafted based upon extensive interviewing, plan findings and exploration of partnerships. It can be used in future discussions about a Recreation Coordinator position and modified to best fit a future scenario when this position has support and a high likelihood of success.

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities
Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission
Recreation Coordinator

Position Responsibilities

The Regional Recreation Coordinator is responsible for the overall administration, leadership, finances, organizational planning, operation, staffing, outreach, facilities, programs, and projects for recreation in Northern Chester County organized as the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities and the Owen J. Roberts School District. He/She is accountable to the Chairman of the Board.

Service Area

The position is responsible for serving the nine municipalities of Northern Chester County including: the Townships of East Coventry, North Coventry, South Coventry, East Nantmeal, East Pikeland, West Pikeland, Warwick, East Vincent and West Vincent, and coordinating with the region's three school districts. This area covers 118 square miles with a population of nearly 45,000 including 14,500 households (2010). Work will focus on communities within the Owen J. Roberts School District but will not exclude Phoenixville Area and Downingtown Area School Districts.

Administration, Leadership, and Responsibilities

1. Direct, manage, plan, and supervise all operations and activities of the Commission.
2. Collaborate with and serve as liaison to the participating Member Municipalities and the Owen J. Roberts School District to implement, manage, operate, and administer the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan.
3. Develop, motivate, encourage, and expand intergovernmental cooperation, public and private partnerships, and other community collaborations to further the goals and objectives of the Commission. This includes collaboration with the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation on active healthy living initiatives in Northern Chester County.
4. Manage, promote, and advise on all open space, greenways, trails, parks, and recreation properties and facilities assigned by the Member municipalities under the jurisdiction of the Commission. Establish, implement, recommend, and update facility development and management plans, policies, and regulations.

Continued

5. Provide direction, education, and leadership to the Board of Directors and officers of the Commission. Assist the Board in development of short and long range planning. Cast vision and provide relevant background information and industry news to the Commissioners.
6. Manage all fiscal affairs of the Commission including the operating, capital, program, and grants budgets. Account for all monies received and expended in compliance with Commission-established policies; document all affairs in accordance with proper accounting techniques for annual independent audit.
7. Manage the recruitment, training, motivation, discipline, and evaluation of all Commission staff and volunteers. Ensure that all personnel comply with all established operating procedures, work ethic, Board policies, and state and federal laws; recommend updates to policies as needed.
8. Research, secure, and administer grants for development, operation, planning, program, open space, greenway, trail and special projects; develop and implement fundraising efforts to support facilities, activities, and projects of the member municipalities and the School District related to parks and recreation.
9. Assist Parks and Recreation Boards and any Friends groups that exist, or emerge, in developing organizational and fundraising capacity, community outreach, and regional influence; serve as ex officio member of the Board of Directors.
10. Work with appropriate personnel within federal, state, and county agencies in planning, developing, and administering open space, greenways, trails, park planning, and grant projects.
11. Follow and enforce all municipal procedures and regulations concerning bid specifications, purchasing, public notices, Requests for Proposals, contract agreements and their compliance by vendors, consultants, and contractors.
12. Keep current with industry and profession news, issues, techniques, and trends. Pursue professional growth and development through regular training, education, and certifications; enable and encourage the same of the professional staff, Commissioners, and associated committee members.
13. Evaluate, and recommend Regional Park and Facilities Rules & Regulations and other public use policies.
14. Hire and supervise outside contractors as needed; ensure and enforce compliance with all contracts, duties, and expectations.

Continued

15. Research, interpret, and provide direction on assessed public needs for open space, greenway, trails, and recreational programming and park facilities. Develop target markets and audiences for expanding recreational, educational, environmental, and cultural programming opportunities and partnerships.
16. Cultivate and maintain a well-rounded base of media contacts, including print, radio, TV, and online and social media sources. Oversee a continuing production of educational and informational media releases, public service announcements, and news features to establish the Commission as a valuable and knowledgeable source of information and quality facilitator of open space, parks, greenways, trails, and recreation facilities and programs.
17. Provide leadership, expertise, and assistance in creating and maintaining an ongoing schedule of public education and advocacy campaigns, seminars, conferences, events, and outreaches on the societal values and benefits of recreation, parks, and open space. As available, lend assistance of the same to outside requesting organizations.
18. Consistently and creatively promote all goals, objectives, programs, and projects of the Commission. Manage and supervise the production of all promotional materials, forms, messages, newsletters, and multimedia productions for high quality, a consistent message, and a professional public corporate identity.
19. Develop and maintain a user-friendly, relevant, timely, practical, and attractive online presence in the Commission websites, social networks, and other audio/visual/multimedia, and other electronic media technologies.

Note

Maintenance is not included, as that will remain a function of the Public Works Departments of each municipality. The Recreation Coordinator may provide technical assistance regarding maintenance but only for informational purposes.

Acknowledgement: Tim Hurd, Executive Director of the Stroud Regional Recreation Commission, provided information on his job description and the Commission's Annual Report that served as the basis for this draft position description for the Northern Chester County Regional Recreation Coordinator.

YEAR 2012 PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES (ALREADY UNDERWAY!)

As the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan recommendations were drafted, it was apparent that many ideas for creating a regional parks, recreation and open space system had community support. However, as shown by the management and financing assessment, our nine municipalities have limited staff and budget available for plan implementation. And while the Federation has led the preparation of at least seven regional plans, implementation has been relatively sparse. The Steering Committee expressed a sincere desire to achieve real benefits for the region's residents and improve the Federation's implementation track record. To meet this goal, the planning process included a task to organize and initiate a few recommendations that emerged as priorities by way of local support. These include:

- Organization of Volunteer Committees
- Advancing Parks, New Parks and School-Parks
- Identifying Potential Sports Complex Locations
- Extending Trail Systems
- Creating a Common Activities Calendar

Organization of Volunteer Committees

By the end of the planning process, volunteers were enthusiastic about the plan's potential. At public meetings, they expressed a willingness to organize as small groups to begin working on the plan's implementation. As noted above, there are many recommendations that municipal volunteers from park and recreation boards, open space committees, environmental advisory commissions, and historical commissions, can accomplish or contribute significant progress. Committees, sub-committees, and a reporting structure to the Federation Board of Directors should be defined so that volunteer efforts can be coordinated, where appropriate, and recognized. The Federation intends to devote a Spring 2012 meeting to the overall committee and sub-committee structure, such as but not limited to:

- Land Conservation
- Public awareness
- Sports
- Community School Parks (or Active Healthy Living)
- Trails
- Heritage
- Events and Programs

Once the date for this meeting is established, the Federation will circulate an announcement to all member municipalities requesting attendance by any and all interested volunteers.

Advancing Parks, New Parks and School-Parks

A handful of existing and potential future parks have received attention concurrent with this planning process.

- The **Woody's Woods Master Site and Conservation Plan**, a draft document to be finalized and appended to the South Coventry Township Open Space Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan) calls for expansion and select closure of trails, emergency access to the trail system, and forest stewardship practices to sustain the woodland of this popular hiking destination located in South Coventry. The recommendations are phased over three periods and total $63,000 in probable costs, according to the plan.
- Norchester Youth Athletic Association (NYAA) has proposed to construct a **baseball stadium on the Heyser Tract** in East Coventry. Bear Stadium in Boyertown and Owls Field at Ted Palka Park in West Lawn has been identified as reference stadiums. NYAA has outlined a four phase design and construction process: site use agreement and feasibility determination, design and fundraising and phase 1 field construction, "go-live" operation and management procedures, and phase 2 construction of a concession stand, additional sports fields, if space allows, and expanded programming. Phase 1 construction of the baseball field has been estimated at a cost of $500,000. Phase 2 construction to complete the stadium to host tournaments has been estimated at $1 million. NYAA has begun exploring funding and partnership options.
- The **future Snyder Avenue Park** is an anticipated 53-acre land dedication and $1 million improvement contribution associated with a 250 –home development in East Pikeland. A master site plan outlining $4 million in active and passive recreation facilities and natural areas has been prepared. Once the land and improvement fund are transferred to the township, the first phase will construct utilities and stormwater management facilities.
- Recreational planning for **Windolph Knoll** in West Pikeland has been on hold while the township completed sewage facilities planning. As of December 2011, the township does not anticipate the need for this property for sewage facilities and continues to reserve this 23.8–acre site at the intersection of Route 401 and Upper Pike Creek Road for recreational facilities, including one or more sports fields.
- A field visit to Springfield-Greene County, Missouri to meet with the School-Park Board and view their exemplary school-park facilities and program would be an ideal first step in further exploring this partnership concept. A field visit by no means precludes local discussions but could provide valuable best practices and lessons learned for this young initiative.

Identifying Potential Sports Complex Locations

In determining the preliminary feasibility of one or more future sports complexes to support vibrant sports league participation, the planning process initially screened the Region for open space parcels of at least 50 acres with minimal environmental constraints. This inquiry and the documented need for sports field in the Region raised interest in further exploring potential sports complex locations, and the Steering Committee reviewed the site screening map for parcels that should be removed from

consideration, due to easements or other known factors, and for other parcels that should be considered. Once all sites for consideration are identified, the Federation should narrow the list of sites to one per the northern sub-region and one for the southern sub-region (East Pikeland, West Pikeland and West Vincent) for detailed feasibility study.

A completed sports complex will take several years to complete. In the meantime, municipalities should explore the planning, development and maintenance of single or multiple sports fields in existing parks or by securing access to private fields to serve the immediate needs of the many community sports leagues and the general public.

Extending Trail System

Public trails, as places to walk and enjoy nature, for exercise and leisure, are clearly a priority need. Several regional trails are under development. The French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust is leading the French Creek Trail effort; Chester County, the Schuylkill River Trail effort; the Hopewell Big Woods Partnership, the Boars Back Trail effort; and the Schuylkill Highlands, the Hopewell Big Woods Connector effort. The Federation and municipalities should continue their supporting roles as advocates for the completion of these regional trails as these will form the primary routes of a future regional trail network.

In addition, trail systems in Coventry Woods and Woody's Woods should continue to be expanded and improved with trailheads and amenities. Connector trails to nearby parks, e.g. Warwick County Park and French Creek State Park, should be a second priority.

Creating a Common Activities Calendar

Analysis of the public opinion survey found that a lack of awareness for recreation programs, activities and self-directed opportunities was the greatest barrier to regular recreation participation. A common calendar of scheduled events that coordinates similar activities and prevents conflicts would also allow municipalities to share advertising costs. This would be a significant first step in increasing awareness of recreation opportunities. Over time, this coordination could evolve into a Web site listing scheduled events, then a searchable calendar Web site, then expanded to list and link to parks, trails, and self-directed recreation activities.

Annual Plan Review

Each year the Federation should review, report and publish its progress. This activity should occur at a convenient time of year (it need not be in December or January) when summary figures for the number of projects, dollars of investment, acres protected, and miles of trail planned or completed can be summarized. Every incremental success, no matter how small, will advance our vision for the future. Demonstrating success with pilot projects that meet public needs for outdoor recreation and working to increase public awareness about them can have a domino effect, increasing public support for cooperative enhancement of parks, recreation, and open space.

As projects and initiatives are completed, or as new leaders and resources become available, the Federation should review the remaining recommendations to prioritize those that:

- have public support or timely interest from partners
- include a low cost and a high return
- plant seeds for future opportunities, or
- create or expand capacity for enhancing parks, recreation, and open space services.

The completion of this plan is not the end. It is the beginning of the real work: adjusting, revising, and transforming the way parks, recreation and open space are provided in our region. As we implement our plan, we take steps to ensure the health and well-being of our citizens and our environment. Each step will take us closer to a network of connected open spaces that sustains us physically and culturally. Each step will reward present and future generations with a legacy of parks, recreation, and open space in Northern Chester County.

GUIDE TO APPENDIX 1

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INTRODUCTION

Appendix 1 presents information about the study area's demographics, socioeconomics, land use/land cover pattern, and community service centers as they pertain to recreational and open space needs and opportunities in the Northern Chester County Region (the Region). Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics influence the resident demand for public recreation lands, built facilities, organized and self-directed programs. Socioeconomics figures in particular suggest the quality or sophistication of services that residents may desire. Land use/land cover patterns reflect the amount and distribution of man-made development and suggest the availability of open space for future public recreational lands or protected open space. Finally, community service centers suggest destinations to which residents may frequently travel as well as concentrations of residents with specific needs.

Data for Appendix 1 was drawn from the U.S. Census Bureau, including the 2000 decennial census and the American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2005-2009; municipal and county planning documents; the Chester County GIS Department; the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC); and the Owen J. Roberts School District. Additional analysis was performed by Gannett Fleming, Inc., as noted.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND SOCIOECONOMICS

TOTAL POPULATION

As shown in *Table A1.1*, *Population Change, 1970-2000,* the region had 36,950 residents in 2000, representing 8.5 percent of Chester County's total population. Populations were higher in municipalities along the Schuylkill River and lower toward the county's interior. North Coventry had the largest population at 7,381, and East Nantmeal had the smallest population at 1,787.

The region grew by 4,760 residents or 14.8 percent from 1990 to 2000. East Vincent gained the most new residents, 1,332, though West Pikeland's increase of 1,270 residents represented the fastest growth rate, 55.7 percent. North Coventry and Warwick both lost a small number of residents, 125 and 26, respectively.

From 1970 to 2000, the region grew at a rate of 37.9 percent, somewhat slower than Chester County's 55.8 percent growth rate over the same period. However, the region's growth rate increased each decade. For the 1990 to 2000 period, the region's 14.8 percent growth rate was comparable to Chester County's 15.2 percent.

Table A1.1: Population Change, 1970-2000

	Population Counts				Change			
	1970	1980	1990	2000	1990-2000		1970-2000	
	#	#	#	#	#	%	#	%
Chester County	278,311	316,660	376,396	433,501	57,105	15.2%	155,190	55.8%
Northern Chester County	26,795	29,054	32,190	36,950	4,760	14.8%	10,155	37.9%
East Coventry	3,284	4,085	4,450	4,566	116	2.6%	1,282	39.0%
East Nantmeal	858	1,222	1,448	1,787	339	23.4%	929	108.3%
East Pikeland	4,384	4,410	5,825	6,551	726	12.5%	2,167	49.4%
East Vincent	5,084	4,739	4,161	5,493	1,332	32.0%	409	8.0%
North Coventry	6,690	7,164	7,506	7,381	-125	-1.7%	691	10.3%
South Coventry	1,518	1,556	1,675	1,895	220	13.1%	377	24.8%
Warwick	1,667	2,350	2,582	2,556	-26	-1.0%	889	53.3%
West Pikeland	1,420	1,536	2,281	3,551	1,270	55.7%	2,131	150.1%
West Vincent	1,890	1,992	2,268	3,170	902	39.8%	1,280	67.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

By 2010, the region had a resident population of 43,907 and had increased its percentage of the county population to 8.8 percent, as shown in *Table A1.2, Population 2010*. North Coventry still had the largest population at 7,866, and East Nantmeal had the smallest population at 1,803.

Table A1.2: Population, 2010

	Census Count		Change 2000-2010	
	2000	2010	#	%
Chester County	433,501	498,886	65,385	15.1%
Northern Chester Region	36,950	43,907	6,957	18.8%
East Coventry	4,566	6,636	2,070	45.3%
East Nantmeal	1,787	1,803	16	0.9%
East Pikeland	6,551	7,079	528	8.1%
East Vincent	5,493	6,821	1,328	24.2%
North Coventry	7,381	7,866	485	6.6%
South Coventry	1,895	2,604	709	37.4%
Warwick	2,556	2,507	-49	-1.9%
West Pikeland	3,551	4,024	473	13.3%
West Vincent	3,170	4,567	1,397	44.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The region as a whole was larger than the City of Wilkes-Barre with 41,498 residents and the Borough of State College with 42,034 residents, and somewhat smaller than the state capital, the City of Harrisburg, with 49,528 residents.

The region grew 18.8 percent between 2000 and 2010. All townships except Warwick grew in population. East Coventry added the most residents, 2,070, and East Nantmeal added the fewest, 16.

West Vincent grew at the fastest rate, 44.1 percent, and East Nantmeal grew at the slowest rate, 0.9 percent. North Coventry notably rebounded from population loss in the 1990s with an increase of 485 persons, or 6.6 percent. Warwick's population declined by 49 persons, or 1.9 percent.

POPULATION DENSITY AND URBAN POPULATION[1]

The average population density in Northern Chester County was 0.5 persons per acre in 2000—slightly less than half of Chester County's 0.9 persons per acre. Figures are presented in *Table A1.3, Population Density and Urban Classification, 2000*. East Pikeland had the highest population density at 1.2 persons per acre. East Nantmeal and Warwick each had a population density of 0.2 persons per acre. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's classification, 56 percent of the region's population lived in urbanized areas in 2000. The two most urbanized populations were in East Pikeland and North Coventry, while East Nantmeal, Warwick, and West Vincent had virtually no residents in urbanized areas.

Table A1.3: Population Density and Urban Classification, 2000

	Census		Population Density	Urbanized Population
	Persons	Acres	Persons/acre	% of total pop
Chester County	433,501	483,840	0.9	81%
Northern Chester County	36,950	75,072	0.5	56%
East Coventry	4,566	6,912	0.7	67%
East Nantmeal	1,787	10,496	0.2	0%
East Pikeland	6,551	5,632	1.2	84%
East Vincent	5,493	8,640	0.6	67%
North Coventry	7,381	8,576	0.9	80%
South Coventry	1,895	4,800	0.4	29%
Warwick	2,556	12,288	0.2	0%
West Pikeland	3,551	6,400	0.6	54%
West Vincent	3,170	11,328	0.3	1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

[1] The U.S. Census Bureau's urban-rural classification is fundamentally a delineation of geographical areas, identifying both individual urban areas and the rural areas of the nation. For the 2000 Census, the urban areas represent densely-developed territory of encompass residential, commercial, and other non-residential urban land uses. To qualify as an urban area, the territory identified according to criteria must encompass at least 2,500 people, at least 1,500 of which reside outside institutional group quarters.

Households and Household Size

As shown in *Table A1.4, Households and Household Size, 2000 and 2009*, there were 13,628 households in the region in 2000. By 2009, the number of households was estimated at 15,431, reflecting an increase of 1,803 or 13 percent. This increase was greater than Chester County's 11 percent increase.

In addition, household sizes also increased from 2000 to 2009. While average household size was not available for the region, increases in the average household size of East Coventry, East Pikeland, South Coventry, and West Pikeland offset decreases in other municipalities by 0.31 persons per household, suggesting more significant growth in households than for Chester County, for which the average household size increased by 0.03 persons.

Table A1.4: Households and Household Size, 2000 and 2009

	Households			Household Size		
Municipality	2000	2009 estimate	Change 2000-2009	2000	2009 estimate	Change 2000-2009
Chester County	157,905	175,312	17,407	2.65	2.68	0.03
Northern Chester County	13,628	15,431	1,803	n/a	n/a	n/a
East Coventry	1,649	2,333	684	2.64	2.67	0.03
East Nantmeal	569	569	0	2.74	2.68	-0.06
East Pikeland	2,530	2,548	18	2.58	2.66	0.08
East Vincent	1,888	2,197	309	2.75	2.73	-0.02
North Coventry	3,012	3,156	144	2.45	2.44	-0.01
South Coventry	690	849	159	2.69	2.98	0.29
Warwick	999	1,074	75	2.56	2.53	-0.03
West Pikeland	1,214	1,307	93	2.93	3.08	0.15
West Vincent	1,077	1,398	321	2.84	2.72	-0.12

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Median Age and Age Distribution

Table A1.5: Median Age, 2000

Municipality	1990	2000	Increase 1990-2000
Chester County	34.0	36.9	2.9
Northern Chester County	n/a	n/a	n/a
East Coventry	37.9	42.7	4.8
East Nantmeal	34.3	37.5	3.2
East Pikeland	34.4	39.3	4.9
East Vincent	34.9	38.1	3.2
North Coventry	34.9	40.1	5.2
South Coventry	39.0	39.6	0.6
Warwick	35.9	41.4	5.5
West Pikeland	36.0	38.9	2.9
West Vincent	38.1	39.7	1.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

The median age for the Region cannot be calculated from the available data, however it can be reasoned that the median age is higher than Chester County's 36.9 years since all municipal values are higher, as shown in *Table A1.5, Median Age, 2000*. The median age ranged from 37.5 years in East Nantmeal to 42.7 years in East Coventry in 2000. The population of the Region aged from 1990 to 2000—likely faster than Chester County's increase of 2.9 years, as only three

municipal values were less than the county's increase of 2.9 years. Municipal values ranged from an increase of 0.6 years in South Coventry to 5.5 years in Warwick.

In 2000, the region's largest age group was the young adult group, representing residents 20 to 44 years old, as shown in *Table A1.6, Age Distribution, 2000*. These residents totaled 12,107 or 32.7 percent of the total population. Children and youth were the second-largest group at 10,238 residents or 27.7 percent of the total population, followed closely by the mature adult group of residents ages 45 to 64 at 9,880 residents or 26.7 percent. The senior adult group was the smallest at only 4,732 residents or 12.8 percent of the population.

East Nantmeal, East Vincent, and West Pikeland have the highest percentages of children and youth. East Nantmeal, East Pikeland, and North Coventry have the highest percentages of young adults. Warwick, West Pikeland, and West Vincent have the highest percentages of mature adults. East Coventry, North Coventry, and South Coventry have the highest percentages of senior adults.

Race and Ethnicity

In 2000, residents of minority or multiple races in Northern Chester County totaled 1,359 or 3.7 percent, as shown in *Table A1.7, Race and Ethnicity, 2000*. Only 3.8 percent of the region reported Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, also shown in *Table A1.7*. East Vincent was the most racially diverse township with 5.7percent of the residents being African American. West Pikeland had the highest percentage of Hispanic or Latino residents at 1.8 percent. Population growth from 1990 to 2000 reflected increases in residents of both white and non-white races as well as an increase of 0.3 percent in residents of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

Table A1.6: Age Distribution, 2000

Age Groups	Northern Chester County #	Northern Chester County %	East Coventry #	East Coventry %	East Nantmeal #	East Nantmeal %	East Pikeland #	East Pikeland %	East Vincent #	East Vincent %
Under 5	2,410	6.5	239	5.2	104	5.8	407	6.2	477	8.7
5-9	2,814	7.6	272	6.0	139	7.8	494	7.5	498	9.1
10-14	2,729	7.4	366	8.0	154	8.6	511	7.8	380	6.9
15-19	2,285	6.2	313	6.9	151	8.4	358	5.5	328	6.0
School Age Group	**10,238**	**27.7**	**1,190**	**26.1**	**548**	**30.7**	**1,770**	**27.0**	**1,683**	**30.6**
20-24	1,273	3.4	133	2.9	123	6.9	181	2.8	150	2.7
25-34	3,847	10.4	355	7.8	150	8.4	759	11.6	724	13.2
35-44	6,987	18.9	816	17.9	357	20.0	1,314	20.1	935	17.0
Young Adult Group	**12,107**	**32.8**	**1,304**	**28.6**	**630**	**35.3**	**2,254**	**34.4**	**1,809**	**32.9**
45-54	6,050	16.4	696	15.2	299	16.7	1,054	16.1	734	13.3
55-59	2,103	5.7	302	6.6	109	6.1	335	5.1	261	4.7
60-64	1,727	4.7	245	5.4	54	3.0	330	5.0	263	4.8
Mature Adult Group	**9,880**	**26.7**	**1,243**	**27.2**	**462**	**25.9**	**1,719**	**26.2**	**1,258**	**22.9**
65-74	2,619	7.1	374	8.2	91	5.1	486	7.4	361	6.6
75-84	1,556	4.2	271	5.9	42	2.4	254	3.9	240	4.4
85 and Over	557	1.5	184	4.0	14	0.8	68	1.0	149	2.7
Senior Adult Group	**4,732**	**12.8**	**829**	**18.2**	**147**	**8.2**	**808**	**12.3**	**750**	**13.6**
Group Total	**36,957**	**100.0**	**4,566**	**100.0**	**1,787**	**100.0**	**6,551**	**100.0**	**5,500**	**100.0**

Age Groups	North Coventry #	North Coventry %	South Coventry #	South Coventry %	Warwick #	Warwick %	West Pikeland #	West Pikeland %	West Vincent #	West Vincent %
Under 5	382	5.2	124	6.5	118	4.6	285	8.0	274	8.6
5-9	493	6.7	139	7.3	161	6.3	312	8.8	306	9.7
10-14	431	5.8	144	7.6	206	8.1	324	9.1	213	6.7
15-19	526	7.1	118	6.2	153	6.0	209	5.9	129	4.1
School Age Group	**1,832**	**24.8**	**525**	**27.7**	**638**	**25.0**	**1,130**	**31.8**	**922**	**29.1**
20-24	364	4.9	46	2.4	92	3.6	82	2.3	102	3.2
35-44	1,277	17.3	374	19.7	446	17.4	789	22.2	679	21.4
Young Adult Group	**2,527**	**34.2**	**635**	**33.5**	**800**	**31.3**	**1,122**	**31.6**	**1,026**	**32.4**
45-54	1,239	16.8	274	14.5	512	20.0	694	19.5	548	17.3
55-59	390	5.3	105	5.5	206	8.1	202	5.7	193	6.1
60-64	354	4.8	81	4.3	100	3.9	144	4.1	156	4.9
Mature Adult Group	**1,983**	**26.9**	**460**	**24.3**	**818**	**32.0**	**1,040**	**29.3**	**897**	**28.3**
65-74	603	8.2	157	8.3	188	7.4	155	4.4	204	6.4
75-84	383	5.2	99	5.2	82	3.2	87	2.5	98	3.1
85 and Over	53	0.7	19	1.0	30	1.2	17	0.5	23	0.7
Senior Adult Group	**1,039**	**14.1**	**275**	**14.5**	**300**	**11.7**	**259**	**7.3**	**325**	**10.3**
Group Total	**7,381**	**100.0**	**1,895**	**100.0**	**2,556**	**100.0**	**3,551**	**100.0**	**3,170**	**100.0**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Table A1.7: Race and Ethnicity, 2000

											1990-2000 Change		
		White alone	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	Other race	Two or more races	Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity	Total	White Race	Non-White Race	Hispanic Ethnicity
Northern Chester County	#	36,498	663	49	321	11	70	245	306	36,957	4,829	838	82
	%	98.8	1.8	0.1	0.9	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.8		15.0	2.6	0.3
East Coventry	#	4,525	15	0	0	11	8	7	28	4,566	92	24	-34
	%	99.1	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.6		2.1	0.5	-0.8
East Nantmeal	#	1,744	24	2	0	0	4	13	14	1,787	314	31	2
	%	97.6	1.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.8		21.8	2.1	0.1
East Pikeland	#	6,285	68	0	116	0	0	82	87	6,551	541	185	43
	%	95.9	1.0	0.0	1.8	0.0	0.0	1.3	1.3		9.3	3.2	0.7
East Vincent	#	5,102	316	0	19	0	5	58	31	5,500	1,184	155	-14
	%	92.8	5.7	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1	1.1	0.6		28.5	3.7	-0.3
North Coventry	#	7,101	132	26	74	0	7	41	58	7,381	-268	143	14
	%	96.2	1.8	0.4	1.0	0.0	0.1	0.6	0.8		-3.6	1.9	0.2
South Coventry	#	1,862	16	4	7	0	0	6	8	1,895	193	27	4
	%	98.3	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.4		11.5	1.6	0.2
Warwick	#	2,520	17	9	0	0	0	10	3	2,556	-62	36	3
	%	98.6	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.1		-2.4	1.4	0.1
West Pikeland	#	3,398	49	7	53	0	44	0	64	3,551	1,124	146	51
	%	95.7	1.4	0.2	1.5	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.8		49.3	6.4	2.2
West Vincent	#	3,089	12	0	46	0	0	23	6	3,170	839	63	6
	%	97.4	0.4	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.2		37.0	2.8	0.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In 2000, the vast majority of the region's residents over 25 years old—88.7 percent—had at least a high school education, as shown in *Table A1.8, Educational Attainment, 2000*. That figure was less than 1 percent behind that of Chester County's percentage of high school graduates at 89.3 percent. West Pikeland had the highest percentage of residents within this category—more than 96 percent of the population. East Vincent had the lowest percentage at 82.8 percent. A majority of the region's residents, 58.2 percent, had also completed higher educational coursework, and more than two in five, or 42.5 percent, had achieved an advanced degree. In East Pikeland, West Pikeland, and West Vincent, more than 50 percent of residents had completed an advanced degree.

Table A1.8: Educational Attainment, 2000

	Less than 9th grade		9th to 12th grade, no diploma		High School Graduate (or equivalent)		At least a High School Diploma
	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Chester County	10,085	3.5	20,491	89.3	74,179	26.0	89.3
Northern Chester County	**774**	**3.0**	**2,090**	**88.7**	**7,771**	**30.5**	**88.7**
East Coventry	189	5.8	317	84.4	1,135	35.0	84.4
East Nantmeal	7	0.6	65	93.5	299	26.8	93.5
East Pikeland	131	2.8	275	91.2	1,234	26.8	91.2
East Vincent	181	4.9	449	82.8	1,157	31.6	82.8
North Coventry	152	2.9	521	87.0	2,003	38.6	87.0
South Coventry	34	2.6	139	86.9	442	33.4	86.9
Warwick	44	2.4	150	89.4	677	37.1	89.4
West Pikeland	7	0.3	66	96.9	376	16.1	96.9
West Vincent	29	1.4	108	93.6	448	20.9	93.6

	Some college, no degree		Associate's Degree		Bachelor's Degree		Graduate or Professional Degree		Any College Degree
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	%
Chester County	44,280	15.5	15,429	5.4	76,003	26.6	45,349	15.9	47.9
Northern Chester County	**4,008**	**15.8**	**1,551**	**6.1**	**5,780**	**22.7**	**3,472**	**13.6**	**42.5**
East Coventry	555	17.1	185	5.7	502	15.5	360	11.1	32.3
East Nantmeal	206	18.5	69	6.2	331	29.7	139	12.5	48.3
East Pikeland	635	13.8	373	8.1	1,206	26.2	746	16.2	50.5
East Vincent	564	15.4	248	6.8	721	19.7	347	9.5	35.9
North Coventry	757	14.6	343	6.6	914	17.6	495	9.5	33.8
South Coventry	232	17.5	53	4.0	269	20.3	155	11.7	36.0
Warwick	363	19.9	85	4.7	313	17.1	194	10.6	32.4
West Pikeland	419	17.9	84	3.6	806	34.5	581	24.8	62.9
West Vincent	277	12.9	111	5.2	718	33.5	455	21.2	59.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

INCOME

Due to data limitations, median household income for the region was not available; however, median household income ranged from $51,954 in North Coventry to $105,322 in West Pikeland in 2000, as shown in *Table A1.9, Median Household and Per Capita Income, 1990-2000*. East Nantmeal, East Pikeland, West Pikeland, and West Vincent had median household incomes higher than the County's $65,295.

Overall, the region experienced real growth in median household incomes from 1989 to 1999. Growth in five municipalities exceeded that of Chester County, however the median household income in East Coventry, North Coventry, and Warwick declined in real dollars. West Vincent saw the highest real growth between 1989 and 1999 in household income—$21,872. North Coventry saw the largest decline—$1,531.

Per capita income for 1999 ranged from $25,418 in North Coventry to $48,616 in West Pikeland. The average municipal per capita income was $32,458—2.6 percent higher than that of Chester County. Real growth in per capita income from 1989 to 1999 varied from a high of $11,382 in West Vincent to a low of $3,428 in East Nantmeal.

Table A1.9: Median Household and Per Capita Income, 1990-2000

Municipality	1989 Median Household Income	1989 Median Household Income (in 1999 $)	1999 Median Household Income	Real Growth in 1999 $
Chester County	$45,642	$61,160	$65,295	$4,135
East Coventry	$43,396	$58,151	$58,125	-$26
East Nantmeal	$46,964	$62,932	$72,375	$9,443
East Pikeland	$50,079	$67,106	$72,850	$5,744
East Vincent	$36,274	$48,607	$63,851	$15,244
North Coventry	$39,914	$53,485	$51,954	-$1,531
South Coventry	$42,381	$56,791	$62,857	$6,066
Warwick	$42,382	$56,792	$56,771	-$21
West Pikeland	$76,480	$102,483	$105,322	$2,839
West Vincent	$52,352	$70,152	$92,024	$21,872
Municipality	**1989 Per Capita Income**	**1990 Per Capita Income (in 1999 $)**	**1999 Per Capita Income**	**Real Growth in 1999 $**
Chester County	$20,601	$27,605	$31,627	$4,022
East Coventry	$17,079	$22,886	$27,257	$4,371
East Nantmeal	$26,631	$35,686	$32,258	-$3,428
East Pikeland	$18,898	$25,323	$31,774	$6,451
East Vincent	$14,837	$19,882	$27,799	$7,917
North Coventry	$19,224	$25,760	$25,418	-$342
South Coventry	$18,882	$25,302	$28,956	$3,654
Warwick	$21,037	$28,190	$26,547	-$1,643
West Pikeland	$30,990	$41,527	$48,616	$7,089
West Vincent	$23,969	$32,118	$43,500	$11,382

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN POVERTY

Of the 15,025 families living in the region in 2000, 1 in 50 (2 percent) was classified as living in poverty, as shown in *Table A1.10, Families and Individuals in Poverty, 2000*. Of these, 72.9 percent included children under the age of 18, and 44.4 percent were single-mother families. East Vincent had the highest percentage of families living in poverty, 7.2 percent or 108 families. Another 1,450 individuals, or 4.5 percent of the region's residents, were classified as living in poverty. Municipal percentages ranged from 0.5 percent in West Pikeland to 7.4 percent in East Nantmeal.

Table A1.10: Families and Individuals in Poverty, 2000

	Northern Chester County		East Coventry		East Nantmeal		East Pikeland		East Vincent	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Families living below poverty level	295	2.0	25	2.0	8	1.8	10	0.5	108	7.2
With related children under 18 years	*215*	n/a	*12*	*2.0*	*2*	*0.9*	*10*	*1.2*	*100*	*11.7*
With related children under 5 years	*105*	n/a	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*63*	*16.8*
Families with female householder, no husband present	131	n/a	7	6.7	2	12.5	0	0.0	84	31.5
With related children under 18 years	*124*	n/a	*7*	*11.3*	*2*	*33.3*	*0*	*0.0*	*84*	*41.6*
With related children under 5 years	*68*	n/a	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*55*	*47.4*
Total Families	15,025	n/a	1,255	n/a	448	n/a	1,822	n/a	1,498	n/a
Individuals	1,450	4.5	83	1.9	122	7.4	117	1.8	339	6.5
18 years and over	*1072*	n/a	*73*	*2.2*	*120*	*9.8*	*100*	*2.1*	*203*	*5.6*
65 years and over	*123*	n/a	*0*	*0.0*	*6*	*4.1*	*10*	*1.2*	*27*	*4.9*
Related children under 18 years	*371*	n/a	*10*	*0.9*	*2*	*0.5*	*17*	*1.0*	*136*	*8.6*
Total Population	32,221	n/a	4,566	n/a	1,787	n/a	6,551	n/a	5,493	n/a
	North Coventry		**South Coventry**		**Warwick**		**West Pikeland**		**West Vincent**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Families living below poverty level	67	3.2	17	3.2	27	3.6	5	0.5	28	3.2
With related children under 18 years	*42*	*4.9*	*2*	*0.8*	*27*	*8.2*	*0*	*0.0*	*20*	*4.6*
With related children under 5 years	*24*	*8.1*	*0*	*0.0*	*4*	*6.2*	*0*	*0.0*	*14*	*7.5*
Families with female householder, no husband present	31	12.5	3	8.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	11.8
With related children under 18 years	*27*	*20.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*4*	*18.2*
With related children under 5 years	*9*	*26.5*	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*4*	*28.6*
Total Families	2,103	n/a	525	n/a	756	n/a	1,023	n/a	866	n/a
Individuals	333	4.5	68	3.7	156	6.1	18	0.5	214	6.8
18 years and over	*246*	*4.3*	*61*	*4.5*	*87*	*4.4*	*18*	*0.7*	*164*	*7.2*
65 years and over	*12*	*1.2*	*31*	*13.1*	*9*	*3.0*	*6*	*2.3*	*22*	*6.8*
Related children under 18 years	*87*	*5.4*	*5*	*1.0*	*64*	*11.0*	*0*	*0.0*	*50*	*5.9*
Total Population	7,381	n/a	1,895	n/a	2,556	n/a	3,551	n/a	3,170	n/a

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

POPULATION FORECAST

Multiple population forecasts suggest continued growth through 2030 for the Region, though growth rates vary by source. Forecasts presented in municipal planning documents and those prepared by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) were reviewed. Both forecasts were considered "too high" by several municipalities.

The 2010 Owen J. Roberts School District reported 2010 municipal populations higher than the municipal and DVRPC forecasts for 2010, thus these figures did not provide a lower base population from which to forecast growth. However, the School District projected a 6 percent, 302-student enrollment by the 2020-2021 school year, largely due to the construction of 23 residential development projects totaling 1,718 units, supporting growth forecasts with actual and proposed development activity.

Using the more conservative DVRPC municipal population forecasts for 2020 and 2030, the resident population in the Region could reach 45,000 within a few years and exceed 53,000 within 20 years, as shown in *A1.11, Population Forecast, 2020 and 2030*. Applying slower growth rates of 10.5 percent for 2010-2020 and 8.0 percent for 2020-2030 for the region as derived from DVRPC forecasts, the regional population could still surpass 50,000 by 2030.

Table A1.11: Population Forecast, 2020 and 2030

	Census Count		Population Projection					
	2000	2010	2020	2010-2020		2030	2020-2030	
				#	%		#	%
Northern Chester County	**36,950**	**43,907**	**48,860**	**4,953**	**11.3%**	**53,100**	**4,240**	**8.68%**
East Coventry	4,566	6,636	7,040	404	6.1%	7,800	760	10.80%
East Nantmeal	1,787	1,803	2,080	277	15.4%	2,190	110	5.29%
East Pikeland	6,551	7,079	8,410	1,331	18.8%	9,360	950	11.30%
East Vincent	5,493	6,821	8,050	1,229	18.0%	9,070	1,020	12.67%
North Coventry	7,381	7,866	8,130	264	3.4%	8,430	300	3.69%
South Coventry	1,895	2,604	2,700	96	3.7%	2,890	190	7.04%
Warwick	2,556	2,507	2,850	343	13.7%	2,930	80	2.81%
West Pikeland	3,551	4,024	5,020	996	24.8%	5,500	480	9.56%
West Vincent	3,170	4,567	4,580	13	0.3%	4,930	350	7.64%

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Municipal Data Navigator

REGIONAL LAND USE PATTERN

Map 1, 2007 Land Use, illustrates land use data as classified by the Chester County Assessment Office. This data was used to provide a general characterization of land use and land cover patterns with knowledge of its parcel-specific accuracy.

Table A1.12, Land Use Distribution, 2007 presents associated acreage and percent of region figures by use. These show that in 2007, 53 percent of the region was engaged in open space uses, 38 percent was developed for intensive uses, and the remaining 9 percent was classified as hydrology, unknown, or vacant land.

Table A1.12: Land Use Distribution, 2007

General Land Use Category	Acres	% of Total Area
Commercial	1,191	2%
Industrial	857	1%
Multi-Family Residential	804	1%
Residential	146	0%
Single-Family Residential	24,495	34%
Utilities	93	0%
Intensive Uses Subtotal	**27,585**	**38%**
Agriculture	23,423	32%
Forested	3,049	4%
Institutional	8,823	12%
Recreation	2,808	4%
Open Space Uses Subtotal	**38,102**	**53%**
Hydrology	58	0%
Unknown	478	1%
Vacant	6,086	8%
Other Subtotal	**6,563**	**9%**
Total	**72,308**	**100%**

Source: Chester County GIS Department; calculations by Gannett Fleming, Inc.

Residential uses occupied the largest percentage of all land uses—35 percent of the total region or 25,445 acres. Single-family residential uses were by far the most common and included single lots urrounded by other uses as well as residential lots organized by subdivision. While classified as residential for taxation purposes, the land covered by structures and impervious surfaces on larger lots was often minimal. Multi-family residential uses were located in every municipality, though more commonly in the eastern municipalities.

Commercial uses occupied roughly 1,100 acres, or 2 percent of the total land area, generally along state transportation routes and particularly at state route intersections. The 857 acres of industrial

land was similarly located along state highway corridors. Utilities occupied less than 100 acres as a primary land use.

Among open space uses, agriculture occupied the largest land area—23,423 acres or 32 percent of the region. More than 3,000 acres of forested private land added another 4 percent to the total acreage of working landscapes in the region.

Institutional uses occupied 12 percent of the region and included state, county, municipal, and private nonprofit-owned property, only a small portion of which represented land not dedicated to public recreation or protected open space. An additional 2,808 acres or 4 percent was classified as public or private recreation land and in most cases is protected from further development.

More than 6,000 acres were classified as vacant land by Chester County. Given this classification, one could assume that no improvements to the land were evident, and the land was functioning as open space at the time of the last assessment, though it is not protected from future development.

COMMUNITY SERVICE LOCATIONS AND "HUBS"

Map 2, Community Hubs, illustrates a variety of community destinations and service areas that may be relevant to parks, recreation, and open space planning. Underlying the community hubs are the service areas for the three public school districts serving the Region.

Commercial areas are generally located along Route 100, Route 113, and Route 724, and are more concentrated at the intersections of these routes. The largest commercial shopping destinations are the Coventry Mall and the Lowe's and Giant Food Store shopping plazas along Route 100, all in North Coventry. The East Vincent Industrial Park is the only sizeable industrial activity; the Exelon's Cromby Generating Station is in the process of decommissioning and closure by 2012.

Commercial recreation providers also function as community hubs in the Region. The five private golf courses/clubs, Water World water park, and Warwick Woods Family Camping Resort are described in *Appendix 2, Park and Recreation Lands*.

There is one private heliport in East Vincent; the Pottstown-Limerick Airport, the Pottstown Memorial Medical Center Heliport, and the PECO Limerick Heliport are located across the river in Montgomery County.

A range of independent and to skilled care retirement living facilities are location in the Region. The Coventry Manor Nursing Home and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Veterans Center are the two local nursing homes. Manatawny Manor is an assisted living facility on Old Schuylkill Road in North Coventry. Spring Mill Senior Living Community and Coldstream Crossing, both located at the intersection of Route 113 and Coldstream/Pughtown Roads in East Pikeland and operated by

Vantage Point Retirement, Inc., offer independent living as well as assisted living services. Coventry Manor Nursing Home, a skilled nursing care and rehabilitation facility operated by PennMed Consultants, Inc, is located on Chestnut Hill Road in South Coventry. Nearby hospitals are located in Pottstown and Phoenixville.

The Henrietta Hankin Branch at Weatherstone in Ludwigs Corner and the Chester Springs Library, located in the Washington Building of Historic Yellow Springs, are both member libraries of the Chester County Library System. Other nearby libraries include the Phoenixville Public Library, Pottstown Public Library, and the Spring City Free Public Library.

The Owen J. Roberts School District serves residents of seven of the nine municipalities. The district operates five elementary schools, one middle school/high school campus, and one administration building. The district also owns additional land for future district facilities: the Bealer Tract and the Kutz-Painter Tract in South Coventry, and the Pennhurst Tract in East Vincent. All of the district's properties, with the exception of the Warwick Administration Building, are located in or adjacent to the U.S. Census-defined urban area. In other words, the existing facilities and future facility sites are located in close proximity to the residential population of the region. Public schools, other district facilities, and district held lands are listed in *Table A1.13, Public School Facilities*; locations and site acreage are also provided.

Table A1.13: Public School Facilities

Facility Name	Municipal Location	Address	Acreage
East Coventry Elementary School	East Coventry	932 Sanatoga Road	14.6
French Creek Elementary School	South Coventry	3590 Coventryville Road	20.0
	East Nantmeal	3570 Coventryville Road	
North Coventry Elementary School	North Coventry	1206 South Hanover Street	25.4
	North Coventry	475 Kemp Road	
Vincent Elementary School	East Vincent	340 Ridge Road	20.0
West Vincent Elementary School	West Vincent	2750 Conestoga Road	24.8
Owen J Roberts Middle School/High School Campus	South Coventry	901 Ridge Road	90.5
	South Coventry	990 Cadmus Road	
	South Coventry	974 Ridge Road	
	South Coventry	881 Ridge Road	
Warwick Administration Building	Warwick	Ridge Road	8.4
Bealer Tract	South Coventry	1788 Pottstown Pike	57.6
	South Coventry	1782 Pottstown Pike	
	South Coventry	220 Bealer Road	
Kutz-Painter Tract (3 parcels)	South Coventry	1081 Cadmus Road	38.6
Pennhurst Tract	East Vincent	830 Brown Drive	22.4

Source: Chester County Planning Commission

Students living in East Pikeland attend the Phoenixville Area School District. Of the district's facilities, only the East Pikeland Elementary School on Hares Hill Road is located in the Region. Middle and high school students are bused to the district's centralized facilities in Phoenixville.

Students living in West Pikeland attend the Downingtown Area School District. All students are bused to the district's facilities just south of the region in Lionville, in Uwchlan Township.

In addition, the Spring City Elementary School of the Springford Area School District is located on Wall Street in East Vincent.

A1. 14, Private School Facilities lists schools, locations, and school types as reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Table A1.14: Private School Facilities

Facility Name	Address	Municipal Location	School Type
Camp Hill Special School	Fairview Road	East Nantmeal	Licensed, Private Academic
Coventry Christian School	East Schuylkill Road	North Coventry	
Kimberton Waldorf School	East Schuylkill Road	North Coventry	Nonpublic, Non-licensed
Montgomery School	Route 113	West Pikeland	Nonpublic, Non-licensed
St. Basil the Great School	Kimberton Road	East Pikeland	Nonpublic, Non-licensed
West Mont Christian Academy	South Hanover Street	North Coventry	Nonpublic, Non-licensed

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education

FINDINGS

1. The Region had a 2010 resident population of 43,907, which was concentrated in the eastern and central municipalities. While individual municipal populations are small, the Region as a whole is as large as some of Pennsylvania's small cities and major boroughs. Based on this total population, the Region could potentially support a multi-faceted park system, a trail network, and diversified recreation programs.

2. Growth over the past 20 years has also been concentrated in the eastern and central municipalities and is forecast to continue across the Region through 2030. More residents will consume more unprotected open space and attract more commercial services that will do the same. They will also require more developed parks, and more diversified recreation facilities and programs.

3. The median age of the Region's residents was higher than Chester County's 36.9 years in 2000 and aged faster than the County. Residents 35 years to 54 years old comprised one third of the total population in 2000, an age cohort now 47 to 66 years old. Student and total population projections reflect this aging trend, showing a growth rate for students that is roughly half of the growth rate for the total population. Recreational opportunities for all ages groups, including the growing

segment of adults, should be made available, since recreational interests and values for protected open space vary among age groups.

4. The Region's residents were highly educated with more than two in five holding an advanced degree. Residents of southern municipalities tended to have higher educational attainment levels, as well as higher median household incomes and faster income gains. Higher educational levels and higher income levels typically raise expectations for public recreation to a certain point before residents begin to choose commercial recreation services. These characteristics are also commonly associated with higher values for, and ability to support, open space protection.

5. A small portion of residents lived in poverty. These residents, including children, youth, and adults, rely on free public recreation opportunities.

6. The majority of the landscape is engaged in open space uses: agriculture, woodland, recreation and institutional/public facilities.

7. The 2007 land use data suggests that residential development is the largest threat to the remaining open space in the Region. While a portion of the remaining open space lands are protected from development by federal, state and municipal regulations, (e.g., limiting development from impacting wetlands, steep slopes, and floodplains), the vast majority could be developed for residential or other uses. Additional analysis of land protection efforts in the Region is needed to determine the actual land available for development or conservation decision-making.

8. Schools and parks are the "centers of community activity" in the Region. The Owen J. Roberts school facilities serve residents of North Coventry, East Coventry, South Coventry, East Vincent, West Vincent, East Nantmeal and Warwick. Residents of East Pikeland are focused in many ways, though not exclusively, toward the Phoenixville area. Similarly, residents of West Pikeland are oriented toward the Lionville and Dowingtown areas.

9. There are few shopping centers of significant size and these are only marginally concentrated along the state highways. Residents use shopping centers outside the Region in Pottstown, Phoenixville, and Downingtown but do not view them as centers of their home communities. Travel to destinations within and beyond the Region requires an automobile in almost all cases.

GUIDE TO APPENDIX 2

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INTRODUCTION

Different types of park and recreation lands serve different recreational purposes. Municipal neighborhood and community parks typically serve the active, close-to-home recreation needs of nearby citizens. County and regional parks frequently provide larger sites for resource-based recreation; preservation of natural, cultural, and historic resources; and enjoyment of scenic resources. State and federal agencies typically offer recreation areas and allow recreational activities where they are compatible with resource conservation policies.

This Appendix presents an inventory of park and recreation lands in the Northern Chester County (the Region) and an analysis of the location of these lands in relation to population centers and the resources they feature, diversity of park environments and facilities in relation to residents' needs, planning to meet recreational needs, and tools used to acquire park land.

PARK AND RECREATION LANDS

This inventory of park lands and recreational facilities, as shown on *Map 8, Recreation Features*, was compiled from municipal plans; narratives on county, state, and federal parks as described in the *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*; private park and facility Web sites; and field investigation.

HOPEWELL FURNACE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

The **Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site**[1] (NHS) is an 848-acre complex of village structures and landscapes that tell the story of the development of the early iron industry. Nearly one-third of the site—271 acres—lies in Warwick Township.

The complex of historic and reconstructed structures represents Hopewell between 1820 and 1840, featuring a cold-blast furnace restored to its 1830s appearance. It serves as an example of an early American iron-making community that once utilized charcoal-fueled iron furnaces. These furnaces produced iron items to make arms as early as the American Revolution and to support the nation's

[1] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*, 2009. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

growth during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Remnants of the iron industry are evident in the landscape, and include earthworks such as colliers' pits and built structures.

Hopewell Furnace NHS features a visitor center hosting museum exhibits, restrooms, a bookstore, audio-visual programs and staff who inform and orient visitors to the site. Outdoors, 70 miles of blazed trails wind throughout the site and connect hikers with neighboring French Creek State Park. Bicycling is allowed on the site's paved roads. Much of the surrounding landscape is protected today as the French Creek State Park, State Game Lands 43, and the Crow's Nest Preserve. In addition, the Horse-Shoe Trail passes through the site.

Hopewell Furnace NHS currently serves a great number of interpretive functions. It represents the only assemblage of buildings, in one location, that characterize the form and arrangement typical of eighteenth- century iron plantations. The site explores the lives of ironmasters Mark Bird and Clement Brooke, provides a characterization of Iron Plantation life, and provides the only opportunity within the region to see all of the components necessary to eighteenth-century iron production in one place. It is also an excellent place to interpret African American resources such as Sixpenny Village and the contribution of African Americans to the region's iron industry.

The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan[2] identifies various opportunities to expand or enhance interpretation of the iron industry at or in the vicinity of Hopewell Furnace NHS:

- The *Hopewell Furnace NHS General Management Plan* suggests reorienting access to the park from the south, which would have been the historical entry point to the furnace.
- Diversifying the set of forest stands—also important to maintaining healthy and diverse ecosystems—would suggest the historical approach to forest management in the interest of fueling the furnace. This diversification would occur through managing for different age stands and leaving down and dead woody debris and cavities for nesting animals. A working demonstration of the 30-year rotation system is possible.
- During summer months, costumed historical interpreters demonstrate, describe, and tell the story of Hopewell's iron-making years (1771-1883) and depict village occupations. Lumber carving and producing charcoal on a small scale are activities that could be part of the hands-on approach appropriate to this former Recreation Demonstration Area.
- Hopewell Furnace NHS could be one of five venues to tell the conservation story, along with Crow's Nest Preserve, Welkinweir, French Creek State Park, and Birdsboro Waters.
- Nature walks and talks at French Creek State Park and Hopewell Furnace NHS could be expanded in partnership with the Natural Lands Trust.

Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area

Like other National Heritage Areas, the **Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area** is recognized for its unique qualities, resources, and historical significance to America's past. Its designation acknowledges the Schuylkill River Valley as the birthplace of several movements that shaped the nation, fueled its growth, and reclaimed its future. Along these riverbanks, the American,

[2] Ibid.

Industrial, and Environmental Revolutions were born. The Heritage Area was designated a State Heritage Area by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1995 and a National Heritage Area (NHA) by Congress in 2000. It encompasses lands from Ashland and Tamaqua in Schuylkill County, along the 128-mile river and throughout most of Berks County, from portions of Chester and Montgomery counties, and from the City of Philadelphia. In addition to the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, this Schuylkill River NHA is also home to the Valley Forge National Historic Park and Independence National Historic Park.

Designation as a heritage area does not represent federal land ownership. Instead, it recognizes the area, its resources, and its communities as having significant value for present and future generations. *Living with the River: The Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Schuylkill River Heritage Area*[3] outlines the goals, strategies, and tasks for achieving resource conservation, recreation, education and interpretation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism through partnerships, program linkages, and investments that have regional impact and contribute to a unique sense of place. The Schuylkill River Greenway Association (SRGA) is the designated management organization for the Heritage Area. SRGA leads the implementation of the management plan and supports further action through grants and partnership projects.

Though not located within Northern Chester County, **Valley Forge National Historic Park**[4] is a popular destination among the region's residents. On the site of the 1777-78 winter encampment of the Continental Army, the park commemorates the sacrifices and perseverance of the Revolutionary War generation and honors the ability of citizens to pull together and overcome adversity during extraordinary times. Within the park, visitors can take tours, explore the museum, watch reenactments, speak with interpreters, and visit the buildings and monuments. The park also contains 28 miles of authorized trails that are popular for hiking, biking, and horseback riding.

STATE LANDS

Together, French Creek State Park and State Game Lands 43 offer 10,639 acres of public land for a variety of recreational activities.

At 7,730 acres, **French Creek State Park**[5] is the largest public recreational facility in the Hopewell Big Woods region and a major recreational destination. French Creek offers two lakes—Hopewell and Scotts Run—extensive forests, and almost 40 miles of trails for hiking, biking, and limited horseback riding. Lake activities include boating, fishing, and swimming, with the availability of boat rentals, showers, restrooms, phones, and a food concession shoreside. Winter activities include ice fishing as well as snowshoeing and cross-country skiing on the park trails. Hunting is quite popular in season and is allowed in most areas of the park except around the two lakes and campgrounds. The pool at French Creek State Park is also very popular, attracting visitors from Lancaster, Reading, and other parts of southeastern Pennsylvania. The visitor center provides information on available activities within the park and nearby.

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[3] *Living with the River: The Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Schuylkill River Heritage Area,2003.* Schuylkill River Greenway Association.

[4] www.nps.gov, accessed December 8, 2010.

[5] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*, 2009. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

The most significant recreational use at the state park occurs at Hopewell Lake and the adjacent campgrounds. The state park is one of the few recreational facilities in the Hopewell Big Woods area that includes overnight camping. There is an extensive, year-round campground with 200 wooded campsites in the more-developed part of the park north of Hopewell Lake. The campground has paved parking pads, hot showers, a playground, 60 sites with electric hookups for RVs, accessible campsites, and two family-assist restrooms. There are also three heated cabins and two Mongolian-style round tents or "yurts" on wooden decks. A showerhouse is nearby.

A former quarry, with a total depth of some 300 feet, is a geological and scenic wonder at the northern tip of French Creek State Park. There is currently no authorized trail access to the quarry. In addition to enhanced interpretation of the iron industry items noted under the Hopewell Furnace NHS, *The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*[6] identified both the unique opportunity for rock climbing and safety concern for rock climbers at French Creek State Park, St. Peters Village, and Birdsboro Waters.

Marsh Creek State Park lies just to the south of the study area in Upper Uwchlan Township in northcentral Chester County and outside the Hopewell Big Woods region. The 1,705-acre park contains the 535-acre Marsh Creek Lake, which offers fishing and sailing and is a rest stop for migrating waterfowl. Other recreational opportunities include hiking, horseback riding, picnicking, swimming, hunting, birding, sledding, and ice skating, iceboating, and ice fishing on the frozen lake in winter.[7]

The 2,909 acres of **Pennsylvania Game Lands 43**[8] span Berks and Chester counties with the vast majority—2,156 acres—in Warwick Township. This site consists of three noncontiguous wooded properties. The western tract can be accessed from Laurel Road; the central tract by Pine Swamp Road, Northside Road, or Harmonyville Road; and the eastern tract by Trythall Road and St. Peters Village. Pennsylvania Game Commission policies focus on managing wildlife populations and minimizing impacts to their habitat, to the extent possible, for the benefit of hunters. Its educational focus is limited to hunting safety and management of wildlife habitat on State Game Lands. It provides no visitor support facilities such as a visitor center, restrooms, and picnic or rest areas.

State Game Lands 43, and designated portions of French Creek State Park, are major regional hunting destinations. A shooting range is available on the State Game Lands off of Laurel Road. Hunting is possible most times of the year (bow season, deer season, bird season), although limited to bow hunting and shotgun. Rifle hunting is not permitted in Chester County but is permitted in the Berks County portions of the Game Lands.

With the exception of the Horse-Shoe Trail, the trails on the State Game Lands are essentially service roads used primarily by hunters. Trails are open to the public on a limited basis for public safety. Trail access is permitted on Sundays or on roads open to public travel, from the last Saturday in September to the third Saturday in January, and after 1 p.m. from the second Saturday in April to the last Saturday in May. There are no authorized single-track or cross-country trails and no authorized connections to French Creek State Park or Hopewell Furnace trails, with the exception of the Horse-Shoe Trail.

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[6] Ibid.

[7] www.dcnr.state.pa.us, accessed December 1, 2010.

[8] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*, 2009. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

COUNTY PARKS

The Chester County Park System encompasses more than 4,500 acres of dedicated parklands open for public use, and created to preserve the natural and cultural history of the county, as well as provide passive recreational pursuits. Facilities are open from 8 a.m. to sunset, and offer many recreational opportunities and services. All facilities are available year-round, weather permitting.[9] Warwick County Park is the only park located in the Region. Chester County is also developing the Schuylkill River Trail through Northern Chester County and a visitor center and trailhead in the village of Parker Ford.

Warwick County Park[10] is a popular recreational destination. The 538-acre park includes a variety of habitats, from vernal pools and wetlands to meadows to woods; an extensive system of trails that offers numerous opportunities for hiking, biking, horseback riding, and bird watching; and a day use area. The Horse-Shoe Trail winds its way along the southern boundary of the park. Fishing in French Creek is a popular recreational pastime. Two miles of this state-designated exceptional value waterway can be accessed from within the park. French Creek is one of the most popular destinations in southeastern Pennsylvania for trout fishing, and is stocked each year with rainbow and brown trout.

The developed day use area is confined to the western end of the park. This area offers several single-family picnic tables and two roofed pavilions that can be reserved for special events. Park facilities feature two age-appropriate playgrounds, a sand volleyball court, horseshoe pits, and a quoit pit. The day use area also includes a water spigot. Restrooms are available and there is a ranger station. There is even a public telephone. Other areas of the park are generally unimproved, although there are two parking areas and trailheads at the eastern end of the park, along Mt. Pleasant Road and Coventryville Road.

The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan[11] identifies opportunities to expand or enhance natural resource and iron heritage interpretation at Warwick County Park:

1. Explanation of the process of reducing wood to charcoal, and the way of life of the collier through artifact and photograph display, as recommended in Chester County's *Strategic Plan for the Iron and Steel Heritage Region*.

2. Trails/tours for travel on foot, on bike, or by an historically-relevant mode among interpretive sites at Hopewell Furnace NHS, Coventryville, and St. Peters Village.

3. Education about water resources in the park (vernal pools, wetlands, and French Creek) as well as source water and their relationship to water quality in downstream communities of the French Creek and Schuylkill River watersheds.

In 2008, Chester County purchased the Parker House and its 5.5-acre lot in the village of **Parker Ford** with the intent of developing it as a Schuylkill River Trail visitor center and maintenance facility. The

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[9] Chester County Parks and Recreation, http://dsf.chesco.org, accessed December 1, 2010.
[10] Ibid.
[11] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*, 2009. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

village is a National Historic District deemed historically significant in the areas of commerce, transportation, and military history between the years 1700 and 1899. In September 1777, General Washington's Continental troops crossed the Schuylkill River to the banks of Parker Ford after the Battle of Brandywine. For its location and significance, the village has been designated as a gateway to the Schuylkill River Heritage Area. The county also owns the riverfront tract at the outfall of Pigeon Creek to the Schuylkill River; East Coventry Township owns an adjacent riverfront tract, the Wade Tract. East Vincent owns the Parker Ford Tavern and Stable and envisions restoration of the buildings and grounds to their original eighteenth-century appearance and re-use as a museum or similar public amenity to complement the Schuylkill River Trailhead at Parker Ford.[12]

Chester County also owns the **Linfield and Saratoga de-silting basins** along the Schuylkill River in East Coventry with long-term plans to manage them as preserves, much like the Black Rock Sanctuary.

MUNICIPAL PARKS

ACTIVE PARKLAND

The 11 municipal parks in the Region offer 208.7 acres of developed parkland for active recreation, as listed in *Table A2.1* and shown on *Map 8, Recreational Features*.

Table A2.1: Municipal Parkland

Facility Name	Municipal Location	Ownership	Acreage
Ellis Woods Park	East Coventry	Municipal	14.9
Towpath Park	East Coventry	Municipal	7.5
Kimberton Community Park	East Pikeland	Municipal	15.0
Community Park on the Ridge	East Vincent	Municipal	23.0
Kenilworth Park	North Coventry	Municipal	22.3
River Bend Park	North Coventry	Municipal	10.8
Riverside Park	North Coventry	Municipal	3.7
Connie Batdorf Park	South Coventry	Municipal	14.0
Pickering Grove	West Pikeland	Municipal	16.4
Pine Creek Park	West Pikeland	Municipal	71.1
Andrew Evans Park	West Vincent	Municipal	10.0
Total			**208.7**

Source: Gannett Fleming, Inc.

Ellis Woods Park is a 14.9-acre suburban site in East Coventry Township adjacent to the township municipal building and Pigeon Creek. The site offers a walking path (loop) and a nature trail through wooded areas, as well as a playground, picnic area, and parking lot.

Towpath Park is a 7.5-acre park between Route 724 and the Schuylkill River in East Coventry Township. The park offers a multipurpose field, a volleyball court (net available upon request), a pond,

[12] www.eastvincent.org, accessed December 1, 2010.

boat launch, and children's play area, as well as pavilions, picnic tables, and grills. Interpretative signage along a walking trail highlights the site's history related to the former Schuylkill River canal.

The **Kimberton Community Park** is a 15.0-acre park located along Route 113 in the historic village of Kimberton. The park offers a basketball court, tennis courts, a hockey rink, and playground, as well as a walking trail and benches sited among the facilities. A gazebo, restrooms, and a drinking fountain are also provided.

Community Park on the Ridge is a 23-acre active and passive recreation park along Ridge Road (Route 23) in the central portion of East Vincent Township. The township's administration building is located on the south side of Route 23; the park is located behind it. Park facilities include a sand volleyball court, tether ball, basketball court, soccer field, 60' baseball/softball fields, two tennis courts, lacrosse nets, environmental markers, a meadow, child playground equipment, ornamental gardens, birdhouses, a dozen exercise stations and two paved trail loops. A small stream passing under a bridge flows through the west side of the park flanked by two riparian buffers. Also are picnic tables in and around a pavilion with grills. Rest benches are situated throughout the two trail loops.

Kenilworth Park is a 22.3-acre park in the Kenilworth neighborhood of North Coventry Township. Park facilities include two ball fields, one multi-purpose field, two tennis courts, a picnic area, a playground, and a walking path around the nearly one-acre pond. The park's community building is currently used by the Tae KWON Do Academy, Pottstown.

River Bend Park, including an area known as the Pottstown Landing, is a 10.8-acre active recreation park in North Coventry Township. Facilities include two Little League ball fields, one multipurpose field, some playground equipment, a picnic pavilion, and tables. Each of the fields is a memorial field. Port-a-johns and parking are available on the site. The park is heavily used by sports leagues. Parking is located at the east end of the park, though visitors park in a small gravel area at the west end and on the adjacent grassy areas.

Riverside Park is a 3.7-acre park with locations along Coyne Alley and along Penn Street in North Coventry Township. The Coyne Alley location has a grass field. The Penn Street location offers two tennis courts, a basketball court, a boat launch, and parking.

Connie Batdorf Park is South Coventry Township's active recreation park. The 14-acre park along Route 100 includes a football field, playground, and picnic pavilion. A port-a-john and parking are available.

Pickering Grove is a 16.4-acre site just off Route 113 in West Pikeland Township. The site is largely wooded with clearings primarily used for summer camp programs and parking. It includes a lodge, two informal ball fields primarily used as play areas, and access to Pickering Creek as it passes through the property. Informal pavilions and picnic areas have also been built on the site.

Pine Creek Park is West Pikeland Township's active recreation park. This 71.1-acre site was once home to a horseracing track with a stable and associated structures. Today, the track is used for leisure and fitness walking, and the buildings are used for storage and maintenance. A half-acre pond is also found on the site. A playground, two soccer fields, two multipurpose fields, walking paths, benches, and

picnic areas with a pavilion, tables, and grills have been added to the site. Natural areas of woodland, brush, and fields comprise the remainder of the site. Dogs are permitted in the park.

Andrew Evans Park is West Vincent Township's park. The 10-acre active recreation park includes a Little League/softball field, a soccer field, a basketball court, and a playground. A picnic pavilion with tables is located at the highest point of the park. A walking path links several of the facilities. Benches and ornamental plantings are located throughout the site. Restrooms and parking are available.

Passive Parkland (Municipal Open Space)

Six of the nine municipalities own or hold easement to a total of 1,163.7 acres of land for passive recreation, as listed in *Table A2.2* and shown on *Map 8*. Most of these tracts are wooded and offer trails or are planned to offer trails.

Table A2.2: Municipal Open Space/Passive Parkland

Facility Name	Municipal Location	Ownership	Acreage
Maack Property	East Coventry	Municipal	59.9
French Creek Open Space at Rapps Dam (multiple parcels)	East Pikeland	Municipal	98.7
Graham Tract Reserve	East Pikeland	Municipal	38.6
Hares Hill Bridge Reserve	East Pikeland	Municipal	12.7
Pickering Creek Reserve (A and B)	East Pikeland	Municipal	30.7
Township Municipal Complex	East Pikeland	Municipal	22.0
Coventry Woods	North Coventry	Municipal	538.0
Coventry Woods	South Coventry	Municipal	15.0
Town Forest (Woody's Woods)	South Coventry	Municipal	263.0
Coventry Woods	Warwick	Municipal	67.0
Hill School Tract (Coventry Woods)	Warwick	Municipal	16.1
Hallman's Field (Pickering Preserve)	West Pikeland	Municipal	2.0
Total			**1163.7**

The nearly 60-acre **Maack Property** was acquired by East Coventry Township to protect trails on the site used by the horse community and others.

Various lands in East Pikeland Township have been acquired or eased to protect open space along French and Pickering creeks and provide a planned corridor for the French Creek Trail. These parcels total 98.7 acres along the creek. The township has in fact adopted a master plan for the development of a two-mile segment of the French Creek Trail that will be constructed within these parcels. Snyder's Mill, a gunpower mill for Washington's Continental Army, is located within these parcels. The Township is pursuing grants to restore the mill and develop this site as the Continental Powder Works Historic Park. Additional parcels including the **Graham Tract Reserve**, the **Hares Hill Bridge reserve**, and **Pickering Creek Reserve**, as well as grass and wooded aras along the creek at the township complex, raise the total municipal open space to 202.7 acres.

Coventry Woods is the name given to an assembly of approximately 600 acres of protected parcels in North Coventry, South Coventry, and Warwick townships. The Fernbrook Access to Coventry Woods in North Coventry Township was formerly a private church camp; its facilities included a lodge, swimming pool, basketball court, arts and crafts building, pavilion, and on-site residence/office. Approximately six miles of trails exist here and more are planned as part of the North Coventry Township Trail System. The physical condition of the buildings and sports facilities varies and some, like the swimming pool, may be removed. Approximately 15 acres of Coventry Woods are located in South Coventry Township. Approximately 67 acres of Coventry Woods, including the 16.1-acre Hill School Tract, are located in Warwick Township.

Town Forest, more commonly known as **Woody's Woods**, is a 263-acre protected area located at one of the highest points in Northern Chester County. Woody's Woods offers nearly five miles of trails through wooded wilderness, offering opportunities for hiking, seasonal bow hunting, and birding. The main entrance is on Coventryville Road; a second access is on Harmonyville Road.

Future Parkland

Six of the nine municipalities own a total of 395.7 acres of land for future parkland, as listed in *Table A2.3* and shown on *Map 8*.

Table A2.3 : Future Municipal Parkland

Facility Name	Municipal Location	Ownership	Acreage
Faulk Tract	East Coventry	Municipal	12.0
Heyser Tract	East Coventry	Municipal	32.6
Wade Tract	East Coventry	Municipal	6.8
Snyder Avenue Park (proposed)	East Pikeland	Municipal	57.6
Parker Tavern	East Vincent	Municipal	2.0
Pennhurst Tracts A and B	East Vincent	Municipal	94.5
Reiff Lands	East Vincent	Municipal	32.4
Bickels Run Park on Kemp Road	North Coventry	Municipal	32.0
Bryton Avenue Park	North Coventry	Municipal	1.0
Hanover Meadows	North Coventry	Municipal	22
Riverside Ave. Playlot	North Coventry	Municipal	0.9
Warwick Township Parkland	Warwick	Municipal	93.0
Windolph Knoll	West Pikeland	Municipal	23.8
Total			**411.0**

Three sites acquired by East Coventry Township for future recreational use total 51.4 acres of land. These sites include the **Faulk Tract** and the **Heyser Tract** (located north of Towpath Park along Route 724), and the **Wade Tract** near Parker Ford.

A 57.6-acre park has been proposed and master planned along **Snyder Avenue Park** in East Pikeland Township. A portion of the site is currently operated as a driving range. Once completed, the park would offer two Little League/softball fields, three multipurpose fields, three basketball courts, six tennis courts, two playgrounds, a skatepark, and an amphitheatre. The various facilities would be

interconnected by a walking trail. Benches, bleachers, picnic areas, restrooms, drinking fountains, and storage facilities would also be located in the park.

East Vincent owns the **Parker Tavern and Stable** and envisions restoration of the buildings and grounds to their original eighteenth-century appearance and re-use as a museum or similar public amenity to complement the Schuylkill River Trailhead at Parker Ford.

East Vincent Township acquired the **Pennhurst Tracts** along Pennhurst Road for future recreational use through the Commonwealth's decommissioning of the Pennhurst State School and Hospital. Pennhurst Tract A is a sloping 79.5-acre tract of land with views of the Schuylkill River. Pennhurst Tract B is a 15.4-acre tract of relatively flat land, also with views of the river. The site's potential to serve recreational uses was characterized by the Township Engineer, CMX:

> "The central area of Tract A [the 79.5-acre tract] is a significant natural corridor containing a perennial stream channel which is referred to by the Commonwealth as Tributary No. 2 to the Schuylkill River. In addition to a federally-regulated 100-year floodplain, there are noteworthy areas of woodland vegetation, steep slopes, riparian buffer, and potential wetlands that virtually bisect the land mass. The area of land to be conveyed to East Vincent Township is significant in quantity, though active recreation is limited due to the amount of grading necessary to meet current accessibility standards while honoring the natural resources corridor. … Tract B, located northwest of Tract A at the intersection of Pennhurst Road and Dunlap Drive, has significant potential for active recreational uses. Should the Township acquire these approximately 15 acres of gradually sloping land, there is potential for two additional high school regulated soccer fields, with parking and public amenities…. The remaining natural resources areas…lend best to natural trail systems and passive uses."

The **Reiff Land** is a 36.2-acre tract behind Vincent Elementary School on Route 23. The site is owned by East Vincent Township and is planned for active and passive recreational uses, including athletic fields and walking trails.

Three one-acre lots are designated as parkland but not currently used as such. **Bryton Avenue Park** is a one-acre site in the Pottstown Landing neighborhood of North Coventry Township. The site was formerly used for parking and is currently undeveloped for recreation. Similarly, the **Riverside Ave. Playlot** is a one-acre grass lot on Riverside Drive between Route 422 and the Schuylkill River. The **Town Square Property** is a one-acre lot at the Town Square shopping area.

Bickels Run Park on Kemp Road and **Hanover Meadows** are lands held by North Coventry Township for future recreational development. Bickels Run Park is currently a set of three contiguous and one noncontiguous parcels totaling 32 acres. Future acquisitions or easements along Bickels Run are envisioned to create one large public park. Hanover Meadows is a 22-acre site between the Pottstown Pike and South Hanover Street.

The **Pew Tract** is a 93-acre site at the intersection of Trythall Road and Route 23 in Warwick Township. The site adjoins the eastern tract of State Game Lands 43. Portions of the site are farmed while the rest is wooded. An informal trail connects the site to the Game Lands and the Boars Back Trail.

Windolph Knoll is a 23.8-acre tract of land at the intersection of Upper Pike Creek Road and Route 401 in West Pikeland Township. The roughly square site slopes from the southern corner to the northern corner at the road intersection. The site is being held by the township as future recreational land.

Other Municipal Sites Supporting Recreation

West Pikeland Township owns and maintains the **Yellow Springs Cultural Center**, which also houses the township offices. The Cultural Center is housed in a preserved historic barn, which was adapted for use as a sculpture studio by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts' Summer School at Chester Spring in the early 1900s. The studio was converted to a Black Box Theater by the Yellow Springs Institute in the 1960s. The theater became the home of the People's Light and Theater Company, a nonprofit, professional theatre founded in service to the community from 1974 to 1979. An outdoor earthworks sculpture known as Stonehenge was the venue for avant-garde dance and music performances during this time. The 300-seat theater, including its overhead grid of theatrical lighting, is maintained in working condition and is available for community and private events.

Public School Sites

There are nine school sites with recreational facilities or grass fields, as well as three undeveloped district-owned tracts, in the Region. The developed sites are listed in *Table A2.4* and shown on *Map 8*.

The **East Coventry Elementary School** in East Coventry Township is sited on a 14.6-acre parcel and hosts two soccer fields, two multipurpose fields, a basketball court, and two playgrounds. An adjacent 4.8-acre site fronting Sanatoga Road accommodates additional practice soccer fields. In January 2011, the Owen J. Roberts School Board approved the purchase of two contiguous parcels totaling 52.0 acres adjacent to the school. A 16.5-acre parcel fronts East Cedarville Road. The other lies between the school and the Coventry Glen subdivision and is accessible from Old Schuylkill Road.

The **Vincent Elementary School** in East Vincent Township is located on a 20-acre parcel and offers a multipurpose field and a playground.

The 24.8-acre **French Creek Elementary School** property spans the East Nantmeal and South Coventry township border. The site offers a playground and a multipurpose field.

The **North Coventry Elementary School** is located on a 24.2-acre parcel along Kemp Road. The site includes one Little League ball field, a multipurpose field, three basketball hoops, and a playground, as well as several hard courts painted on the pavement. A nature trail is also located on the site.

The **West Vincent Elementary School** is sited on a 24.8-acre tract of wooded land along Route 401 in Ludwig's Corner.

The 90.5-acre **Owen J. Roberts Middle School/High School** campus is located along Route 23 in South Coventry Township. The campus is home to the district's largest concentration of recreational facilities. The site offers a stadium with an artificial turf multipurpose field, track, restrooms, and concession stand; two artificial turf multipurpose fields; two baseball and two softball fields; and seven tennis courts. Indoor facilities include two gymnasiums for volleyball and basketball, an auditorium, and a swimming pool.

The **Owen J. Roberts Administration Building** is located on an 8.4-acre parcel along Route 23 in Warwick Township. The building was converted from a former elementary school to a facility for administrative offices in 2009. The site has no recreational facilities but does offer relatively flat grass areas for informal play.

Table A2.4: Public School Sites

Facility Name	Municipal Location	Parcel Number	Address	Parcel Acreage	Site Acreage
East Coventry Elementary School	East Coventry	18-4-51.1-E	932 Sanatoga Road		14.6
French Creek Elementary School	South Coventry	20-4-101.2-E	3590 Coventryville Road	12.0	20.0
	East Nantmeal	24-2-1.1-E	3570 Coventryville Road	8.0	
North Coventry Elementary School	North Coventry	17-3-276-E	1206 S Hanover Street (no developed access)	24.2	25.4
	North Coventry	17-3-308.8-E	475 Kemp Road	1.2	
Vincent Elementary School	East Vincent	21-4-89-E	340 Ridge Road		20.0
West Vincent Elementary School	West Vincent	25-7-8-E	2750 Conestoga Road		24.8
Owen J Roberts Middle School/High School Campus	South Coventry	20-4-92-E	901 Ridge Road	56.3	90.5
	South Coventry	20-4-93-E	990 Cadmus Road	9.7	
	South Coventry	20-4D-1-E	974 Ridge Road	7.7	
	South Coventry	20-4-100-E	881 Ridge Road	16.8	
Warwick Administration Building	Warwick		Ridge Road		8.4
Bealer Tract	South Coventry	20-2-120	1788 Pottstown Pike	0.5	57.6
	South Coventry	20-2-121	1782 Pottstown Pike	0.2	
	South Coventry	20-2-125	220 Bealer Road	56.9	
Kutz-Painter Tract	South Coventry	20-4-71	1081 Cadmus Road	9.1	38.6
	South Coventry	20-4-71.5-E	n/a	0.6	
	South Coventry	20-4-76.1-E	n/a	28.9	
Unknown Tract	East Vincent	21-1-92.4-E	830 Brown Drive		22.4
East Pikeland Elementary School, Phoenixville Area School District	East Pikeland		Hares Hill Road		6.8
Spring City Elementary School, Spring Ford Area School District	East Vincent		Wall Street		10.0
Total					**339.1**

The **East Pikeland Elementary School** on Hares Hill Road is a facility of the Phoenixville Area School District. The 6.8-acre site offers two multipurpose fields, an informal ball field, two basketball nets, and a playground. The Phoenixville Area School District has submitted a land development plan to East

Pikeland Township to expand the elementary school, which would diminish the amount of play area on the site.

The **Spring City Elementary School** on Wall Street in East Vincent Township is a facility of the Spring Ford Area School District serving Royersford Borough and Limerick and Upper Providence townships, in Montgomery County, as well as Spring City Borough in Chester County. The school site includes a playground. The adjacent 10-acre parcel is owned by Spring City Borough and leased to the Spring Ford Youth Athletic League (SFYAL), which provides recreational programs to youth of the school district. The league operates the site as the SFYAL complex. Facilities include four Little League ball fields, a T-ball field, batting cages, bleachers, and a concession stand. A dirt road provides access to the site, which lies behind the school, and there is minimal paved parking.

Due to the tremendous growth in league participation, the complex is overwhelmed by heavy use from league participants, the majority of whom are not from Spring City or East Vincent Township but from Montgomery County. On typical game days, 200 to 300 cars enter the site on the dirt road, sending fine particles into the air, which then blow into the surrounding neighborhood, creating a health concern for residents and leaders of East Vincent Township.

All parties—the league, the Township, the Borough, and the school district—have begun discussing a new paved access and termination of use of the dirt road as a solution. The league has requested that league participants observe the 5 m.p.h. speed limit on the driveway to the complex. Additional tension was added to the already complex situation when the league expanded the field area(s) without permit from the township. A subsequent request to approve night lighting to extend league play hours was denied by the Township Planning Commission.

Private School Sites

There are six private schools in the Northern Chester Country region. All but one have developed recreational facilities for use by their student populations.

Camp Hill Special School on Fairview Road in East Nantmeal Township is home to children, ages 5-19 years with intellectual and development disabilities, who live in an extended family community where the educational program focuses on experiential learning and emphasizes social, artistic, and practical skills, supported by a variety of therapies to help the child in his or her development. The community consists of approximately 90 students, 40 teachers and teacher aides, 10 therapists, 70 additional coworkers, and 11 staff.[13] This facility has no active recreation facilities.

Coventry Christian School on East Schuylkill Road in North Coventry Township has a small multipurpose field and a play area.

Kimberton Waldorf School in East Vincent Township has a small multipurpose field, a tennis court, a basketball court, and a playground.

[13] www.camphill.org, accessed December 15, 2010.

Montgomery School along Route 113 in West Pikeland Township hosts a soccer field, a multipurpose field, a swimming pool, and two playgrounds/play areas.

St. Basil the Great School and grounds on Kimberton Road in East Pikeland Township include one softball field, a fenced playground, and a gymnasium. The gym is used primarily for Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) basketball but is available for event rental from the school office.

West Mont Christian Academy on South Hanover Street in North Coventry Township owns one baseball field, one softball field, a soccer field, a multipurpose field, and a playground.

Private Lands with Public Recreational Access

There are more than 1,000 acres of privately owned lands among nine sites that permit public access for recreational purposes, as listed in *Table A2.5*.

Table A2.5: Private Lands with Public Access

Facility Name	Municipal Location	Acreage
Crow's Nest Preserve	Warwick	600
Welkinweir	East Nantmeal	197
Binky Lee Preserve	West Pikeland	112
Tri-Town	East Vincent	9
Covered Bridge Crossing (along French Creek)	East Pikeland	10
Covered Bridge Crossing Playlot	East Pikeland	3
Wampler Little League Complex	North Coventry	15
Kimberton Fire Company	East Pikeland	17
Historic Yellow Springs	West Pikeland	106
Total		**1,069**

The privately-owned **Crow's Nest Preserve** is a 600-acre property along French Creek characterized by wildflower meadows and grasslands, crop fields, and forested areas typical of Piedmont flora and dissected by French Creek. Natural Lands Trust (NLT), a nonprofit land trust, owns and manages the Preserve for native habitat as well as for agricultural and passive public use. The visitor center is located in a restored barn, and farmhouses on the property are being restored for staff housing and program uses. The visitor center includes a library, meeting space, and restrooms; however, the center is only open by appointment.

More than six miles of hiking trails take visitors through forests of oak, hickory, tulip poplar, beech, maple, and spicebush; through grassland meadows and wildflowers; and through crop fields reflecting the continuing tradition of Chester County farming. Connections to the adjacent Hopewell Furnace NHS and to trails in French Creek State Park are available.–NLT provides environmental education and research opportunities, including a summer day camp and afterschool programs. Bow hunting for deer only is also allowed. The Preserve is one of several major tracts of privately-owned conservation lands within Northern Chester County.

Welkinweir is the 197-acre property and former estate of Everett and Grace Rodebaugh, founding members of the conservation-minded Green Valleys Association. The property now houses the offices of the Green Valleys Association. Welkinweir was placed into a conservation easement held by Natural

Lands Trust in 1976 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001. Welkinweir's grounds include formal gardens, an arboretum, and a diversity of native habitats with trails open daily to the public. Only hiking is permitted on the trails, with the exception of the Horse-Shoe Trail, which passes through the site. On-site facilities include a visitor education center with restrooms and parking and a picnic pavilion. Green Valleys offers a summer nature day camp for children on the site. *The Hopewell Big Woods Trail and Recreation Concept Plan* suggested Welkinweir as a hub for interpreting land conservation and providing information on recreational facilities and visitor services.

Binky Lee Preserve[14] is a 112-acre expanse of former agricultural land that is being restored to natural woodlands and meadows by the Natural Lands Trust. A walk along the Preserve's four miles of trails provides a wonderful introduction to natural area restoration techniques. The view from atop the hill offers a rare glimpse of Chester County of the past: undeveloped woodlands and fields in all directions. Two tributaries to the Pickering Creek pass through the property—one designated as a "high quality" stream and the other as a public drinking source. The rolling topography supports a variety of native forest types: mature native upland woodlands filled with oak, hickory, and sugar maple; young floodplain forest; and successional forest in areas still transitioning from former clearings. A white pine plantation is also found on the property. Warm- and cool-season grasslands with native wildflowers populate the meadows. The woodlands, meadows, and wetlands host an abundance of local bird and animal species. Visitors are greeted by an information kiosk at the parking area and educational signs throughout the preserve.

Historic Yellow Springs (HYS)[15] is a private, nonprofit enterprise in Chester County that preserves and promotes the history and arts of 100+ acre Yellow Springs village. Trails through the grounds are open to the public. Historic Yellow Springs is home to the **Chester Springs Studio**, a vibrant arts center that hosts classes, workshops, and exhibitions in the visual arts. HYS' programs allow visitors to explore more than 300 years of history, a rich artistic heritage, and inspiring natural beauty. Education staff offer custom group tours and maintain a self-guided tour program. Exhibits, including a permanent orientation exhibit, The Lure of the Springs, trace the site's history through original artifacts and images and present the work of innovative artists. Special programs include lifelong learning opportunities for senior groups and summer camps for youth. A lecture series, "Third Wednesdays," brings experts in a variety of fields to the village for enriching discussions.

The French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust owns an 8.5-acre parcel along French Creek known as **Tri-Town (Park)**. The site has been master planned to provide an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessible fishing park. The plan includes accessible parking, trail, fishing dock, and picnic facilities.

Hallman's Field is the corner tract of the Pickering Preserve located at the intersection of Route 113 and Pikeland Road in West Pikeland Township. The two-acre grassed site is available to township residents through a deed restriction for use as a baseball field. Use of the field can be arranged at Hallman's Store, across Route 113.

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[14] www.natlands.org, accessed December 8, 2010.
[15] www.yellowsprings.org, accessed December 10, 2010.

The **Wampler Little League Complex** is a 15-acre site owned by the Coventry Little League organization. The complex includes three Little League fields (two with field lighting), one T-ball field, and batting cages for league play. Bleachers, an announcer's box, concession stand, and port-a-johns are available for players and spectators. On game days, the parking demand often exceeds the available number of spaces.

The **Kimberton Fire Company** owns a 16.5-acre site adjacent to the Community Park. The Fire Company uses the site for its annual fair—its longest-running fundraising event. The Fire Company leases a portion of the site to the Kimberton Youth Association, and the township allows use of some adjacent parkland, for its Little League complex. The complex includes three Little League ball fields (all with field lighting), a playground, a concession stand, restrooms, and a storage building.

Covered Bridge Crossing Playlot is a 3.2-acre neighborhood park owned by the Covered Bridge Crossing Homeowners Association in East Pikeland Township. The park contains a playground and grass field. The Association also owns a 9.6-acre tract of protected open space land with stream access known as the **Covered Bridge Crossing**.

Recreation Lands with Restricted Access

There are sixten for-profit recreation businesses and nonprofit recreation organizations with facilities and/or land holdings in the Region, as listed in *Table A2.6* and shown on *Map 8*.

Table A2.6: Private Lands with Restricted Access

Facility Name	Municipal Location	Acreage
Longstreth Academy	East Coventry	33
Water World	East Pikeland	22
Ludwig's Corner Horse Show Grounds	West Vincent	33
Camp Innabah	East Vincent	179
Camp Sankanac	East Vincent	150
Indian Springs Day Camp	West Pikeland	46
Bellewood Golf Course	North Coventry	175
French Creek Golf Club	East Nantmeal	168
Kimberton Country Club	East Vincent	125
Spring Hollow Golf Course	East Vincent	115
Stone Wall Golf Course	East Nantmeal, Warwick	338
Frontier Archery	South Coventry	56
Kimberton Fish and Game Club	East Pikeland	32
Elverson Rod and Gun Club	Warwick	8
Northern Chester County Sportsmen's Club	Warwick	13
Warwick Woods Family Camping Resort	Warwick	82
Total		**1575**

Longstreth Training Academy is located at 88 Wells Road in East Coventry Township. The academy offers a 4,300-square-foot indoor facility, one artificial turf field, and three grass fields for field hockey

training, as well as seasonal clinics for field hockey, softball, and lacrosse. The facilities can be rented for a per hour fee.

Located nearby in Pottstown, the **422 SportsPlex** provides indoor sports classes, leagues, and camps for fees, as well as rental of its indoor sporting facilities for recreational use. It offers two domed turf fields for soccer, field hockey, and lacrosse; two standard inline hockey rinks with professional-style dasher boards; a basketball/volleyball court; batting cages; and a party room.

Water World is a commercial water park occupying six acres of a 22.2-acre tract along Route 724 in East Pikeland Township. The facility includes a half-million-gallon Olympic-sized pool with a separate area for two water slides and a rope swing, a "kiddy" pool, pavilions with shaded areas, a bathhouse, and a snack bar. The facility is open seasonally at daily rates and for seasonal membership.[16]

Ludwig's Corner Horse Show Association owns and manages a 33-acre property along Route 100 in West Vincent Township. Organized in 1943 by a group of area residents, the Association has successfully hosted an annual horse show and country fair to bring together lovers of horses and the countryside to aid various community activities and organizations with open space missions. The Association has also leased the site to the Glenmoore Eagle Youth Association (GEYA) for spring and fall soccer seasons.

Founded in 1929 and comprised of 179 acres of meadows and woodlands in East Vincent Township, **Camp Innabah**, is one of the oldest church-affiliated camps in the Mid-Atlantic Region, and is owned and operated by the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church. The name "Innabah" was given by the Navajo People to the daughter of Rees J. Frescoln, the man who donated the original $5,000 to purchase the property. Innabah translates to "The Great Spirit Be With You Always." Innabah is not only a summer camp, but also a year-round retreat facility available to all types of church and faith-based guest groups. Indoor facilities include four lodges, the farmhouse, several unheated cabins and Adirondack Shelters, and a gymnasium. Outdoor facilities include two picnic areas, a swimming pool, an archery field, two playgrounds, and two pavilions. All facilities are available to the public for fee-based use. [17]

Similarly, **Camp Sankanac** operates as a ministry of Bible-Centered Ministries International. The 150-acre property adjacent to Camp Innabah was purchased in 1941 for the development of a year-round camp. Its facilities include two retreat lodges, two cabins, a swimming pool, a boating area along French Creek, a maintenance building, and a year-round residence for camp staff. Its "professional-grade" 18-hole disc-golf (Frisbee®) course is available to the public by arrangement. The 74-par course travels through the entire camp and has various terrains and obstacles.[18]

Indian Springs Day Camp is located on 46 acres of rolling countryside in West Pikeland Township. The camp offers boys and girls ages 3-14 a variety of recreation, fitness, and learning experiences. Campers enjoy hiking, fishing, and boating on the three-acre lake; horseback riding; and pool

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[16] www.waterworldrec.com, accessed December 3, 2010.
[17] www.innabah.org, accessed December 1, 2010.
[18] www.campsankanac.org, accessed December 3, 2010.

swimming. The camp has multiple courts for basketball, GaGa (a form of dodgeball), volleyball or Newcomb (a variation on volleyball), kickball, and street hockey as well as ball fields and soccer fields. Its climbing wall, zipline, batting cage, and pool slide are also popular attractions. Arts and crafts, nature programs, and dodge ball are enjoyed in a large two-story barn. The camp's trails connect to the adjacent Charlestown Township trail system. The camp can also be rented and catered for private picnics.[19]

There are f**ive private golf courses** in the Region:

- Bellewood Golf Course in North Coventry Township.
- French Creek Golf Club in East Nantmeal Township.
- Kimberton Country Club in East Vincent Township.
- Spring Hollow Golf Course in East Vincent Township.
- Stone Wall Golf Course in East Nantmeal and Warwick Townships.

Residents of the region also have nearby access to the Limerick Golf Club, the Turtle Creek Golf Course, and the Waltz Golf Farm, offering two mini-golf courses, a Par 3 course, batting cages, and a driving range, across the river in Montgomery County.

The region is home to **four sportsmen's clubs** and their properties:

- The Elverson Rod and Gun Club owns an 8-acre tract in Warwick Township.
- Frontier Archery owns a 56.4-acre tract in South Coventry Township.
- The Kimberton Fish and Game Club owns a 31.6-acre tract in East Pikeland Township.
- The Northern Chester County Sportsmen's Club owns a 13-acre tract between Crow's Nest Preserve and French Creek State Park in Warwick Township.

There is one private campground in the Region. The **Warwick Woods Family Camping Resort** offers 220 large, secluded campsites for trailers, motorhomes, pop-ups, and tents, spread out over 82 acres, located along Trythall Road. Each campsite has a picnic table and fire ring. Water, electric, and sewer hookups are available. Hiking, biking, and exploring are available on-site and along the Horse-Shoe Trail, which runs through the campground. The resort has both an Olympic-sized pool and a kiddy pool. Its fishing pond is about an acre in size and is stocked with fish throughout the season. Bass, trout, catfish, bluegill, and several other varieties of fish are found in the pond. Several facilities for outdoor games including basketball, volleyball, shuffleboard, horseshoes, and badminton are available, as well as two playgrounds.[20]

Indoor Recreation Centers

There are no public or private indoor recreation or community centers in Northern Chester County. Four facilities of this type are available just outside the region. The Phoenixville YMCA and Pottstown YMCA are branch facilities of the Freedom Valley YMCA organization. The Upper Perkiomen Branch in East Greenville Township, Montgomery County, has an outdoor pool complex; members of the

[19] www.indianspringsdaycamp.com, accessed December 15, 2010.
[20] www.warwickwoods.com, accessed December 3, 2010.

Pottstown Branch may use the complex. Other Freedom Valley Branches are located in Audubon and Spring Valley. The Lionville Community YMCA is located just east of Downingtown High School East along Route 113.

Interviews found that the Freedom Valley YMCA's feasibility study for establishing a YM/YWCA in Northern Chester County research found an insufficient support for such a facility. The Ludwig's Corner master site plan reserves a footprint for a future YM/YWCA should conditions change and Freedom Valley or other organization determine it feasible to construct and operate a facility here.

Analysis of Parkland

Amount of Parkland Land

Lands developed or reserved for recreation use in Northern Chester County total 9,883 acres. The majority of this land, 6,659 acres, is currently available for public recreation use and 2,994 acres are locally owned.

Lands owned by federal, state, and county agencies offer 12,025 acres of protected open space accessible from the Region. More than 4,200 acres lie within the region alone. These lands are rich in history, natural scenic beauty, and outdoor recreation opportunities, ranging from hiking, biking, and horseback riding to camping, boating, fishing, swimming, hunting, and winter activities.

The nine townships collectively own or hold easement to 1,783.4 acres of protected open space for public recreational use. There are 11 township-owned parks on a total of 208.7 acres, developed in whole or part for active recreation. There are 12 sites, largely township-owned, on 1,163.7 acres dedicated to passive recreation; nearly all of the sites offer trails. There are 13 township-owned sites on 411.0 acres held in reserve for future parkland development.

There are eight public school facilities with on-site recreation facilities and undeveloped and other district-owned lands, on a total of 339.1 acres. Another 52 acres was approved for purchase in January 2011.

There are 25 privately-owned recreation sites. Six are available to the public for free passive recreation use and three are private sites owned by nonprofit community recreation organizations; these lands total 1,069 acres. The remaining 1,575 acres of private recreation lands are owned by commercial entities, nonprofits, or private clubs that require membership or service fees.

Conventional Parkland Analysis

Many communities use a population-based standard, interpreted from the Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines published by the National Recreation and Park Association in 1983, to measure their parkland needs. From the detailed classification of park types, each with its own function, these communities inferred a universal 10.5 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents as the recommended standard.

This analysis applied to Northern Chester County results in a deficiency of 252.3 acres for the 2010 population. If all the undeveloped land in holding for public parks was developed and there was no additional increase in population, the region would have a surplus of 204.3 acres. Even with projected population growth through 2030, there is likely to be surplus parkland.

However, this analysis is simply a land acreage calculation and does not account for the development of parkland for recreational use, i.e. the availability and types of recreational facilities provided in the parks, and their match to residents' needs. This requires a local analysis of residents'' needs and comparison to available parkland and acquisition rates. An analysis of municipal mandatory dedication of parkland is reported in Appendix 8.
A detailed sports field level of service analysis has been prepared and is reported in Appendix 9.
A composite level of service analysis is presented in Appendix 10.

	2010 Acreage	Population	Current Parkland Acres per 1,000 Residents	Parkland Acres at 10.5 Acres per 1,000 Residents	Surplus (+) / Deficiency (-)
Developed local public parkland	208.7	43,907	4.8	461.0	-252.3
If all undeveloped public parkland were developed (no change in population)	619.7	43,907	14.1	461.0	158.7
If all undeveloped public parkland were developed (projected 2020 population)	619.7	48,860	12.7	513.0	106.7
If all undeveloped public parkland were developed (projected 2030 population)	619.7	53,100	11.7	557.6	62.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census; DVRPC, 2020 and 2030 population projections; Gannett Fleming, Inc.

Location and Size of Municipal Parkland and School Sites

Most of the municipal parkland for active recreation is located within or adjacent to the most intensively developed areas of the region, where large concentrations of the population reside. Towpath Park, Kenilworth Park, River Bend Park, and Riverside Park lie along the Route 724/New Schuylkill Road corridor. Kimberton Community Park is located along Route 113.

Connie Batdorf Park lies within the urbanized area defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and Andrew Evans Park and Community Park on the Ridge lie adjacent to the urbanized area. Both are sited along major travel routes to aid their accessibility within these somewhat more rural municipalities. Pickering Grove and Pine Creek Park were sited by their original owners in proximity to Route 113. Township parks for active recreation range in size from 1.5 acres (Riverside Park) to 71 acres (Pine Creek Park). Removing these two extremes, the average park size for the remaining parks is 15 acres.

Overall, parks are located in the more densely populated areas of the region, yet, development densities are relatively low and few sidewalk systems or alternative bicycle/ pedestrian pathways are in place to enable safe, non-motorized travel to the parks. As a result, the parks are recreational destinations that require park visitors to drive to and from the park and thus require some portion of the site to be used for parking. Exceptions include Riverside and Kenilworth Parks in North Coventry.

Parkland for passive recreation, and those parks that offer both active and passive recreational opportunities, have been sited to take advantage of the resources that support nature-based recreation. Those lands along the Schuylkill River also happen to lie in close proximity to the most concentrated residential areas. River Bend, Riverside, and Towpath parks all feature views of the river; Riverside and Towpath offer direct access for boating and fishing. The Ellis Woods Park lies along Pigeon Creek. Pickering Creek flows through Pickering Grove. Coventry Woods and Woody's Woods feature large expanses of wooded hilltops; Pigeon Creek also passes through Coventry Woods.

Notably, there is no municipal parkland along French Creek, the region's central waterway. Warwick County Park is located here and features a largely natural landscape, and the Tri-Town Park will soon offer universal public access to the creek. The French Creek Trail is planned along the waterway, including 98.7 acres owned by East Pikeland Township, but the trail is still several years from formal completion; some segments and loop trail routes along the creek are informally used today.

Lands for passive recreation range in size from one acre (French Creek – Tract A, Pickering Preserve B) to more than 500 acres (Coventry Woods). Removing these extremes, the average park size for the remaining parks is 42 acres. While the natural resources (and parcel boundaries) drive the location and size of these lands, a portion of the parkland must again be reserved for parking to accommodate the only reasonable access to the parks.

Like the existing active recreation parks, most parcels owned for future municipal parkland are also located in proximity to concentrations of development. In fact, all but the Pew Tract are located in the eastern riverfront municipalities less than a mile from the Route 724/New Schuylkill Road corridor—six on the riverside and four with riverfront access. The Faulk and Heyser tracts front the highway corridor and the river. The future Snyder Avenue Park will have direct access from the highway.

The Wade Tract and Parker Ford Tavern are clustered in the village of Parker Ford. The Pennhurst Tract nearly spans the distance between Route 724 and the Schuylkill River. The Bryton Avenue Park and Riverside Avenue Playlot were sited to serve older neighborhoods of South Pottstown. Hanover Meadows and Bickel Run Park will be accessible from South Hanover Street. The Pew Tract at Trythall Road along Route 23 in Warwick Township is the only site not located near a residential cluster.

Lands in holding for future parkland range in size from one acre (Bryton Avenue Park, Riverside Avenue Playlot, and Town Square Property) to 93 acres (Pew Tract). Removing these extremes, the average park size for the remaining parks is 33 acres.

Due to their common interest in serving residents with close-to-home facilities, schools and parks (or future parklands) exist relatively close to one another in several urbanized locations. Hanover Meadows and Bickel Run Park are nearly adjacent to the North Coventry Elementary School. A site adjacent to the East Coventry Elementary School is used by soccer, football, and lacrosse leagues. The Reiff Tract lies adjacent to the Vincent Elementary School; a trail is envisioned to connect to the nearby Community Park on the Ridge.

Warwick County Park and protected open space adjoin French Creek Elementary School. Connie Batdorf Park lies less than a mile, though across busy Route 23, from the OJR middle school/high school campus. Only the West Vincent Elementary School has no land for future parkland in its immediate vicinity.

The Owen J. Roberts School District also holds lands in reserve for future facilities. Two tracts (or tract clusters) are located along Route 100. The Kutz-Painter Tract lies nearly adjacent to the current middle school/high school campus just east of Route 100. The Bealer Tract lies farther north between Bealer Road and Pigeon Creek. A third tract lies just east of Route 724 along Pennhurst Road not far from the Pennhurst tracts owned by East Vincent Township. Finally, a pair of parcels totaling 52 acres adjacent to the East Coventry Elementary was approved for purchase in early 2011.

Additional Parkland Availability and Suitability

The Region holds more than 400 acres of land in 13 tracts for future parkland development. Of the 13 sites in holding as future parkland, only the Snyder Avenue Park has been master-planned as a multi-use park with active and passive facilities. The Parker Tavern and Wade Tract are envisioned as complementary sites to the Schuylkill River Trailhead at the Parker House, though no detailed planning has occurred. The Heyser Tract has been proposed as a baseball field for the Norchester Baseball League and soccer fields for Vincent United Futbol Club; concept sketches have been prepared. The Pennhurst Tract had a preliminary engineering evaluation that indicated a few fields could be sited on the land without negative impact to the natural resources corridor. Other sites have had minimal discussion of future development.

As the Region continues to grow, so will the need for parkland and likely the region's desire to protect open space for environmental and scenic quality. Currently, 32,557 acres or 45 percent of the region remains in agricultural, forest, or vacant use as defined by the Chester County assessment data. Portions of this total area are already protected and are not intended to be developed for recreational uses. Of the remainder, only certain lands are appropriate for future parkland, given that land requirements for active and passive recreation uses vary and the costs of site modification to meet these requirements can be significant.

The primary factor for active recreation parkland is adequate flat land for fields, however, other features and conditions are relevant in determining the value of a site as new park land. Its location and accessibility influences its convenience and use by residents. Its size and configuration affects the number, arrangement, and orientation of facilities. The presence of floodplains, wetlands, and other environmental features determines how much of the site can be developed. Access to water and sewer

facilities may also be considered if permanent comfort facilities are desired. Such would suggest examining the Route 100, 113, and 724 corridors for needed large parks and sports complexes.

These criteria should be applied to all lands considered for active parkland, whether acquired through fee-simple purchase, mandatory dedication, or donation. They may also be used as screening criteria to identify parcels of potential value as future parkland for acquisition and landbanking until needed. A simple analysis of agricultural or vacant parcels of 50 acres or more with less than 5 percent slope on 75 percent of the tract was used to identify potential parcels that could accommodate multiple flat or diamond fields. This analysis identified 103 parcels in the Region. Parcels that meet these criteria were found in every municipality.

Passive recreation parkland typically has no site requirements, since the resource or resources to be protected drive the location, size, and configuration of the site. However, some of the same site conditions, such as location, access, and proximity to other recreation and open space lands, are relevant to user convenience of passive parkland. Therefore, even sites considered for passive recreational use should be evaluated by these criteria prior to acquisition.

FINDINGS

PARKLAND AVAILABILITY

1. Lands developed, available or reserved for recreation use in Northern Chester County total 9,985 acres. Two-thirds of this land, 6,659 acres, is currently available for public recreation use and nearly one-third, 3,096 acres, is municipally-owned or locally-eased properties.

2. There are 11 township-owned parks on a total of 208.7 acres, developed in whole or part for active recreation; the average size is 15 acres. There are 12 sites, largely township-owned, on 1,163.7 acres dedicated to passive recreation; nearly all of the sites offer trails. There are 13 township-owned sites on 411.0 acres held in reserve for future parkland development; the average size is 42 acres.

3. Large public landscapes owned by federal, state, and county agencies offer more than 4,200 acres of protected open space with abundant passive recreation opportunities. These lands are rich in history, natural scenic beauty, and outdoor recreation opportunities, ranging from hiking, biking, and horseback riding to camping, boating, fishing, swimming, hunting, and winter activities. They host unique natural and cultural resources significant to local, state, and national history. The *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* identifies various opportunities to improve, enhance or expand physical and knowledge-based linkages among these landscapes.

4. Public schools in the Region make their recreational facilities available for community recreation programs**.** There are eight public school facilities with on-site recreation facilities as well as three undeveloped or other district-owned tracts, on a total of 391.1 acres. The six private schools generally limit the use of their recreational facilities to their student populations.

5. There are 25 privately-owned recreation sites on 2,644 acres, including 1,069 acres with limited public access. Lands with public access include nature preserves, sports league ballfields, show

grounds, and heritage centers. The remaining 1,575 acres of private recreation lands are owned by commercial entities, nonprofits, or private clubs that provide land access and services based on membership or fees.

Parkland Location and Access

6. Overall, parks are located in the more densely populated areas of the region. Most future municipal parkland is also located in proximity to concentrations of development. As a result of their common interest in serving residents with close-to-home facilities, several school and park (or future parkland) sites are relatively close to one another.

7. Without a non-motorized transportation network, most parks require park visitors to drive to and from the park, and thus demand that some portion of the park parcel be used for parking. Development densities in the region area relatively low and few sidewalk systems or trail/path networks are in place to enable safe non-motorized travel to the parks.

8. There are several parks, as well as long-range county parkland, along the Schuylkill River but no municipal parkland along French Creek, the region's central waterway. The French Creek Trail is planned along the waterway, but the trail is still several years from formal completion; some segments and loop trail routes along the creek are informally used today.

Additional Parkland

9. If existing park types, recreation facilities and locations, are well-matched to resident needs, no additional parkland is needed in the foreseeable future. A conventional analysis of local parkland applied to the Region results in a deficiency of 252.3 acres of developed local parkland for the 2010 population. If all the undeveloped land in holding for public parks was developed, and even with the projected population, the region would not fully absorb the surplus parkland. However, this analysis is simply a land acreage calculation and does not compare the types of recreational facilities provided in the parks and those desired by residents.

10. If additional park types, active recreation facilities or specific locations are needed, additional land may be needed. There are sizeable tracts of relatively flat unprotected land, which may be suitable for active recreation fields, in every municipality of the Region. A simple analysis of agricultural or vacant or agricultural parcels of 50 acres or more with less than 5 percent slope (on 75% of the tract) was used to identify potential parcels that could accommodate multiple flat or diamond fields. This analysis identified 103 parcels in the Region.

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INTRODUCTION

Different types of facilities serve different recreational purposes. Active recreation facilities support intensive physical activity with fields, courts, rinks, playgrounds and other built components. Passive facilities provide an open space environment for activities that requires limited physical effort but otherwise relax, refresh, and fulfill the mind and body. The selection and composition of active and passive recreation facilities influences a park's desirability or curb appeal and its use. This Appendix presents an inventory of recreation facilities in municipal parks, an analysis of diversity among active and passive opportunities, and an assessment of park design and development including individual reviews of the eleven parks in the Northern Chester County (the Region).

MUNICIPAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

ACTIVE RECREATION FACILITIES

The active recreation parks in Northern Chester County offer a total of 46 active recreation or physical play facilities for 13 unique active recreation activities, as listed in *Table A3.1*. *Table A3.2* presents a compilation of facility counts by type: team sports, informal sports, exercise, and children's active play.

- Parks tend to emphasize team and informal sports over other physical activities. Team sports include field, court, and rink sports where teams of multiple players are needed. Informal sports facilities include multipurpose fields, running tracks, outdoor basketball courts, tennis courts, volleyball courts, skateparks, golf and disc-golf (Frisbee® golf courses, and the like, where individuals can play one-on-one.
- All parks except Ellis Woods Park and Pickering Grove offer one or more sports fields for organized or informal team play. Multiple diamond fields for baseball, softball, and Little League, and several multipurpose flat fields for soccer, football, field hockey, and lacrosse are found here. (Further discussion of sports fields can be found in Appendix 8.)
- All of the parks except Pickering Grove have playground equipment or tot lots for children.

Table A3.1: Active Recreation Facility Inventory in Municipal Parks

Facility Name	Active Recreation Facilities																					
	Baseball: 90-ft	Softball/Little League: 60-ft	Field Hockey	Football	Soccer field	Track	Multipurpose field	Outdoor Basketball	Tennis	Volleyball	Swimming pool	Playground / Tot lot	Exercise trail/stations	Hockey Rink	Skatepark	Ice Rink	Sledding Hill	Golf Course	Frisbee Golf	Horseshoe Pits	Climbing Wall		Total Active Facilities
Ellis Woods Park												1	1										2
Towpath Park							1			1		1											3
Kimberton Community Park							1	1	3			1		1									7
Community Park on the Ridge		1			1			1	2	1		1	1							1			9
Kenilworth Park	2						1		2			1											6
River Bend Park		2					1					1											4
Riverside Park								1	2	1		1											5
Connie Batdorf Park				1								1											2
Pickering Grove																							0
Pine Creek Park					2	1						1											4
Andrew Evans Park		1			1			1				1											4
Total Facilities	**2**	**4**	**0**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**4**	**4**	**9**	**3**	**0**	**10**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**0**		**46**

- The fitness trail with exercise stations at Community Park on the Ridge and walking loop at Ellis Woods Park are the only facility specifically designed for fitness exercise. The former horseracing track at Pine Creek Park is also suitable for distance walking. Paths and trails in other parks are listed under passive recreation facilities.
- There is one horseshoe pit at Community Park on the Ridge. It is not heavily used, however having only one place to throw horseshoes can limit interest. Parks with multiple facilities of a single type (e.g., basketball, tennis, etc.), demonstrate more demand than parks with just one.
- There are no public swimming pools, public golf courses, skateparks, ice rinks, Frisbee golf courses, sledding hills, or climbing walls in any of the parks.
- There are no indoor facilities for general recreation. The 422 SportsPlex and the Longstreth Training Academy/Wells Road Facility are commercial, for-profit facilities designed for sports training. Four YMCA facilities are located just outside the region: Pottstown, Phoenixville, Lionville, and Morgantown.

Table A3.2: Facilities for Active Recreation by Physical Activity

Physical Activity Type	Ellis Woods	Towpath	Kimberton	Cmmnty Park on the Ridge	Kenilworth	River Bend	Riverside	Connie Batdorf	Pickering Grove	Pine Creek	Andrew Evans
Team Sports	○	◐	●	●	●	◐	◐	◐	○	◐	●
Informal Sports	○	◐	●	●	●	●	●	◐	○	◐	◐
Exercise	◐	○	○	◐	○	○	○	○	○	◐	○
Children's Active Play	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐	○	◐	◐

Key: ○ No Facility, ◐ 1-2 Facilities, ● 3 or more Facilities

FACILITIES FOR PASSIVE RECREATION

These same parks offer a total of 59 natural or manmade features for passive recreation for 14 unique passive recreation activities, as listed in *Table A3.3*.

- All parks offer one or more seating areas. Types vary from park benches to picnic benches to sports field bleachers, and numbers of benches vary from 1 to 12 seating locations per park.
- All but Riverside Park have a picnic area or pavilion.
- Ellis Woods, Towpath Park, Kenilworth Park, Kimberton Community Park, Pine Creek Park, and Andrew Evans Park have walking or "fitness" paths. These paths provide a smooth surface for internal circulation. Their functionality to support walking for fitness varies with their length and configuration. None offer facilities for strength-building, flexibility or other aspects of fitness
- Towpath Park, Kenilworth Park, Riverside Park, Pickering Grove, and Pine Creek Park offer access to a river, creek, or pond for fishing.
- In addition to the parks with fishing waters, Ellis Woods abuts Pigeon Creek and River Bend Park offer views of the Schuylkill River.
- Towpath Park and Riverside Park have the only boat launches.

Table A3.3 : Passive Recreation Facility and Natural Area Inventory in Municipal Parks

Facility Name	Passive Recreation Facilities																		
	Paths/Trails	Benches/Sitting Areas	Amphitheatre / Bandshell	Fishing Access	Boat Launch	Picnic Area/Pavilion	Elevated Viewpoint/ Observation Tower	Manmade Water Feature	Ornamental Gardens	Community Planting Gardens	Historical Features	Historical Markers	Nature Study Area	Campsites	Woods	Meadows	Wetlands	Natural Water Feature	**Total Passive Facilities**
Ellis Woods Park	1	Y				1									1		1	1	6
Towpath Park	1	Y		1	1	1		1			1	1			1			1	10
Kimberton Community Park	1	Y				1													3
Community Park on the Ridge		Y				1									1	1			4
Kenilworth Park	1	Y		1		1									1			1	6
River Bend Park		Y				1							1		1			1	5
Riverside Park		Y		1	1														3
Connie Batdorf Park		Y				1													2
Pickering Grove		Y		1		1									1			1	5
Pine Creek Park	1	Y		1		1	1		1		1				1	1		1	10
Andrew Evans Park	1	Y				1			1										4
Total Facilities	**6**	**11**	**0**	**5**	**2**	**10**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**0**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**7**	**2**	**1**	**6**	**59**

- All except Kimberton Community Park and Riverside Park have natural or naturalized landscapes (woods, meadows, wetlands); Towpath Park's pond is manmade but has a naturalized appearance.
- Only River Bend Park has a signed nature study area.
- Only Pine Creek Park has an observation tower or other elevated viewpoint.
- Only Pine Creek Park and Andrew Evans Park have ornamental plantings.
- Only Towpath Park and Pine Creek Park have historical features, namely the canal bed and the horseracing track and stables, respectively; only Towpath Park has interpretative signage of its historic feature.
- None of the parks has an amphitheatre or a bandshell, a community garden.
- None of the parks permits camping or mountain biking; these functions are not typical of community parks but may be of interest to youth and young adults in semi-rural settings.
- There are no dog parks, i.e., fenced areas for dogs to run off-leash, however, five municipal parks as well as the county park and several private conservation lands allow dogs on-leash.

Most parks offer more than one recreation facility for physical activity for a variety of age groups. Offering multiple facilities for intended age groups is important in promoting varied park experiences, repeat visits, and a sense of community ownership of the park. *Table A3.4* summarizes each park's facility count by the age groups served.

Table A3.4: Total Facilities by Age Group

Age Groups	Ellis Woods	Towpath	Kimberton	Cmmnty Park on the Ridge	Kenilworth	River Bend	Riverside	Connie Batdorf	Pickering Grove	Pine Creek	Andrew Evans
Children (3-5 years)	◐	●	●	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	○	◐	◐
Children (5-12 years)	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	○	●	●
Youth (12-17 years)	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●
Adults (18-64)	◐	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	◐	●	●
Seniors (65+ years)	◐	●	●	●	●	◐	●	◐	◐	◐	◐
Families / Intergenerational Groups	●	●	●	●	●	●	◐	●	●	●	◐

Key: ○ No Facility, ◐ 1-2 Facilities, ● 3 or more Facilities

- Children ages 3 to 5 can use playgrounds, multipurpose fields, swimming pools, and walking paths.
- Children ages 5 to 12 are able to use these same facilities, plus team and informal sports fields and courts independent of adults, as well as passive nature study areas.
- Youth ages 12 to 17 years make use of team and informal sports facilities including hockey and ice rinks, as well as passive fishing and boating accesses.

- Active adults over age 17 engage in activities requiring team and informal sports facilities, walking paths, passive fishing and boating accesses, and natural landscapes, e.g., for birding.
- Active seniors make use of lifetime sports facilities such as tennis courts, swimming pools, and walking paths as well as natural landscapes, nature study areas, and fishing and boating accesses for passive recreation.
- Active recreation facilities for family and intergenerational groups include walking and fitness trails and golf courses; passive areas include natural landscapes and nature study areas, fishing and boating accesses, picnic areas, and community gardens.
- All parks except Pickering Grove offer at least one recreational facility for physical activity appropriate for each age group. Pickering Grove has no active recreation facilities for children.

Table A3.5 tallies each park's recreational opportunities for contact with nature; arts, history, and culture; and other people. Overall, most recreation facilities are concentrated in the areas of team sports and play equipment. Seating and picnic areas are common to the parks but their numbers are few and limit social use to only a few individuals. Trails are also present though most are laid out for internal circulation, and none offer facilities for strength-building, flexibility or other aspects of fitness. Natural areas are fairly common though they require complete self-direction and self-motivation; few are interpreted as having environmental or cultural value.

Only Towpath Park features and interprets local history. While other sites may not contain historic features, their proximity to communities, waterways, and other historic sites suggests that there are stories about this region that could be told in local parks.

Table A3.5: Non-Physical Recreational Opportunities in Municipal Parks

Facility Name	Recreational Opportunities					
	Contact with Nature		Connect with Arts, Culture, History		Social Connections	
	Nature Observation or Study	Trails in Nature	Historical Features	Historical Markers	Places to sit and "people watch"	Places to picnic
Ellis Woods Park	3	1	0	0	2	1
Towpath Park	3	1	1	1	2	1
Kimberton Community Park	0	1	0	0	11	1
Community Park on the Ridge	2	0	0	0	13	1
Kenilworth Park	3	1	0	0	5	1
River Bend Park	4	0	0	0	2	1
Riverside Park	2	0	0	0	3	0
Connie Batdorf Park	0	0	0	0	1	1
Pickering Grove	3	0	0	0	1	1
Pine Creek Park	5	1	1	0	2	1
Andrew Evans Park	2	1	0	0	2	1
Total Parks with Specified Recreational Opportunities	**10**	**6**	**2**	**1**	**11**	**10**

MUNICIPAL PARK DESIGN

MASTER PLANNING

Master planning ensures that a park's design includes needed recreational and support facilities that meet national play and accessibility standards through a unified design. These qualities can be achieved in parks developed incrementally, but the master planning process provides the opportunity to explore and select design alternatives before the construction investment.

PARK ACCESS

Access to nearly all of the parks in the region is predominantly by automobile, as evidenced by the presence of parking lots. The low density distribution of homes places most parks beyond a comfortable 10-15 minute walking distance. In addition, few sidewalks, walking trails, or marked road shoulders connect neighborhoods to public parks. However, trail planning and development with an aim to connect more residents to parks is active in the region. This suggests the need to design the trail access to the park—not just the driveway and parking lot—for park visitors. The trail access to the park will need to provide or direct trail users to suitable "parking," e.g., for bicycles and horses as permitted by the trail.

PARK USER EXPERIENCE

The experience of a park is driven by physical design and maintenance as well as by the social experience, and helps a park visitor determine whether he/she will use and/or return to the park. First impressions, largely visual impressions, are critical to welcoming the park visitor. They include overall appearance and facilities of interest that help determine whether a visitor wants to enter the park. A clean, litter-free park conveys that people, either park visitors or park maintenance staff or both, value and take care of the park. Design, signage, and lighting contribute to a sense of safety. Visible places to sit and areas in sun and shade provide places to rest.

ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY CONDITIONS OF RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

None of the parks are fully ADA-accessible, providing continuous universal access to the park, its parking lot, its primary recreational facilities, and its amenities. This prohibits or discourages park use by people with disabilities and also by families with strollers as well as individuals with temporary disabilities.

The first national accessibility guidelines for playgrounds were published by the U. S. Access Board in 2000, well after most parks in the region were established. Guidelines for other common community recreation facilities soon followed in 2002. These guidelines were combined with the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities and published as the *2004 ADA/ABA* (Architectural Barriers Act) *Accessibility Guidelines*.

The Department of Justice has added requirements for policy and operational concerns, i.e., service animals, personal mobility devices (wheelchairs, Segways, etc.), and telecommunications for the deaf, by publishing the *2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design*, which took effect on March 15, 2011. Compliance with the *2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design* is permitted as of September 15, 2010, but

not required until March 15, 2012. Standards are to be applied according to when the facility was built or last improved.[1]

Compliance Date for New Construction or Alterations	Applicable Standards
Before September 15, 2010	1991 Standards or Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS)
On or after September 15, 2010, and before March 15, 2012	1991 Standards, UFAS, or 2010 Standards
On or after March 15, 2012	2010 Standards

Given that the new regulations have already taken effect, park owners should assess each park against the applicable standards and establish a program to address deficiencies.

Playgrounds are intended to provide active recreation activities for children. Yet, too often, they present safety hazards to the spontaneous and unpredictable behavior of children aged 6 months to 12 years. Since 1981, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has published voluntary standards for public playground safety. These standards are intended to minimize injuries associated with the use of playground equipment by addressing site selection, playground layout, equipment selection, materials, and surfacing, as well as assembly, installation, and maintenance.

Playgrounds in the region built within the past decade appear to meet the CPSC standards, but the few older playgrounds, including individual pieces of play equipment, do not. While the standards are voluntary, their application provides a basic level of physical safety for children. Park owners should review the CPSC's Public Playground Safety Handbook and apply the CPSC Public Playground Safety Checklist to regular playground maintenance inspections. As recommended by the CPSC, the frequency of inspections will depend on the type and age of equipment, the amount of use, and the local climate. Inspections should be carried out in a systematic manner by personnel familiar with the playground, such as maintenance workers, playground supervisors, etc.

Detailed Assessment of Municipal Parklands

River Bend Park

River Bend Park's location along the riverfront and its athletic fields for community use are the park's strengths. Yet its isolation from neighbors by the nearby elevated U.S. Route 422 and its focus on sports are drawbacks, resulting in narrow use by sports leagues and limited use when players are not present. Given the need to drive to the park and the concentration of visitors on game days, the park lacks adequate parking, and its play equipment does not meet current safety standards. Its riverfront is underutilized; views and access are very limited. Its memorial field plaques are not prominent. It also lacks a sense of design to tie the park elements together.

[1] http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/ADAregs2010.htm

The age of the facilities, namely the playground equipment, the high demand for parking, and other concerns suggest that the park may benefit from evaluation and renewal through a new master planning effort. Opportunities for park enhancement include the addition of a perimeter walking path and interpretation of the river history and ecology to expand recreational offerings, more benches and shade trees to support social activities, identified parking and overflow areas, and signage to identify the park and orient park visitors to its layout and features. Signage and plantings will also improve curb appeal.

Riverside Park

Riverside Park's strengths are its neighborhood location in the heart of South Pottstown and its basketball and tennis courts for informal, "drop in" recreation. Like River Bend, Riverside lacks a sense of design to tie the park elements together. At the same time, the park is nearly surrounded by parking, streets, and alleys—and thus vehicles—especially on game days at the adjacent Wampler Little League Complex. On the day of its field view, the tennis nets were missing, raising questions about the courts' use and suitability for neighbors' recreational interests. This park, too, could benefit from a new master plan with neighborhood input. Opportunities for improvement at this site include an integrated design for circulation, landscaping, and signage with the adjacent Wampler Complex.

Kenilworth Park

Kenilworth Park has been fully developed with varied active and passive recreation facilities. It has not been master-planned, yet its facilities are well-used by the surrounding neighborhood. The mature trees along the adjacent streets and around the pond help define and unify the site. Kenilworth Park's assets include its neighborhood location, varied athletic facilities, pond and walking trail, areas of both sun and shade, and activities building. The park sits slightly lower than the surrounding neighborhood, giving passersby a birds-eye view of the activities in the park.

While the park offers two ball fields, a multipurpose field, and tennis courts, they are fitted tightly on the site with little space between them for circulation and buffering wayward balls. Sidewalks along the perimeter of the park are in need of repair. Opportunities for park improvement or enhancement include additional benches and greater field separation with trees or other plantings for seasonal interest and buffering.

Towpath Park

Towpath Park is primarily a park for passive recreation along the Schuylkill River. The park offers an informal grass field and a small children's play area in the sun, abundant shade under the riparian forest canopy, a fishing pier and boat launch, a small pond and varied facilities for social activities, including benches, a picnic pavilion, grills, etc. Strengths of Towpath Park include its riverside location and access, interpreted canal history, and internal walking trail, meeting recreational interests in natural resources, history, and physical activity at one site. The park falls short on ADA accessibility to its varied facilities. Opportunities for park improvement include universal access to all facilities; accessible play equipment to replace the concrete animals in sand; the addition of a trailhead, signage, and bike rack to the Schuylkill River Trail (upon its construction); and additional pavilions.

Ellis Woods Park

Ellis Woods Park has been master-planned and partially developed. To date, a playground has been installed adjacent to the municipal building, the municipal parking lot expanded, and an improved (cindered) loop walking path installed in the large grassed area between the parking lot and the woods. The wooded portion at the rear of the site along Pigeon Creek will remain in a natural condition. The park's visibility and "curb appeal" are relatively low given its remote location and limited view of available activities from the road. Opportunities for enhancement include more activities in the grass area surrounding and inside the walking loop, which could range from exercise stations to naturalized meadows; seating, pavilion(s), and trees/plantings to support social use of the space; and potential expansion of this narrow site to accommodate additional facilities and extended trails.

Community Park on the Ridge

Community Park on the Ridge offers a wide variety of athletic fields sited into the park's hillside topography, a contemporary playground, and room to add an additional athletic field in the future. A walking path with occasional bench seating and shade trees ties the park elements together visually. Time will mature the park's trees and plantings, increasing its seasonal interest and shaded seating. The park's primary challenge is the fact that it lies hidden from view behind and below the township building along Route 23. Opportunities to enhance the park include the construction of the additional sports field for league or community play, interpretation of the on-site and adjacent naturalized landscape, and additional shade trees, perhaps planted in clusters.

Kimberton Community Park

Kimberton Community Park includes varied sports, informal play, and social facilities for all ages. The park's layout fits these facilities into the varied topography of the site and allows visitors to casually view activities occurring on lower levels of the park. A walking path and landscaped areas provide interconnected access among the facilities. Opportunities to enhance this park include integration of village history and extension of the walking path system to the adjacent Kimberton Youth Athletic League ball field complex and the Kimberton Fire Company Fairgrounds.

Pickering Grove

Continuing to operate primarily as a summer camp, Pickering Grove has had limited site development, yet its facilities are laid out in a way that is easily understood by the visitor. The creekside location and closed tree canopy are the primary strengths of Pickering Grove, creating an intimate space for experiences with nature. The former camp building provides a central location for activities. The simple structures used to designate other activity or group centers may be beneficial to the summer camp but offer no long-term value to the park. The park's primary challenge is the entrance; the driveway leads to unmarked gravel parking from which the activities building and creek are barely visible. In addition to a more intentional entrance design and identification signage, opportunities for park improvement include interpretation or guided study of nature and a trailhead for the Pickering Creek Trail.

Pine Creek Park

Pine Creek Park, the former horseracing facility, has been adapted as West Pikeland's community park. The racetrack is now used as a walking track. Pavilions, picnic benches, and grills have been added to support picnicking in the park. A trail has been constructed through the natural wooded, wetland, and meadow areas as well as through the developed areas. Park signage displays the layout of the park.

This is helpful to the park visitor, because the topography and vegetation hide some areas from view. The strengths of Pine Creek Park include its size and variety of natural landscape types and water features, trail, social areas, and signage within the park. Feasible use and maintenance of the stable and other buildings associated with the park's former use as a horseracing track are the park's primary challenge. Opportunities to enhance the park include interpretation of the site's natural and cultural features through signage and/or programs.

Andrew Evans Park

Like Kimberton Community Park, the fields and facilities at Andrew Evans Park "fit" into the topography of the site. This design approach, along with a walking path and ornamental plantings, unify the park into a cohesive landscape. The provision of two parking locations, one upper and one lower, promotes convenient access to the park's facilities. There are large expanses of grass between the fields and facilities, absorbing the change in grade and allowing for informal play. Converting portions of the grassy areas to a naturalized landscape would reduce the need for regular mowing. A trailhead for hikers and bicyclists may be appropriate if trails are designated or developed to/from or along the park. Over time the existing plantings will mature, enhancing the park by providing additional shade.

Connie Batdorf Park

Connie Batdorf Park was planned to provide an athletic field and field house for local area sports teams which currently includes Norchester Red Knights and Coventry Lacrosse. In addition to the athletic field, the park has a picnic pavilion built by local boy scouts and a modern playground. The park's design is uncomplicated and the facilities are easily visible from the parking area. Connie Batdorf Park's location along Route 100 is both a strength and a weakness. The location is well suited to drop-in park use as residents of the region travel this busy route. However, the route can be a hazard to those entering and exiting the park, particularly those crossing the road to reach the food vendor.

Advance visibility of the park from Route 100 is limited, given its location behind frontage properties. Queues to its presence, such as landscaping and signage, especially at the park entrance, would increase appreciation for this park. Finally, additional facilities—active, passive, or social—should be considered to create more diversified recreational opportunities at the park. Elements such as a perimeter trail, ornamental or community planting beds, and benches, could help unify this space and add interest to the park experience. Signage could also help inform the park visitor of the park boundaries and included areas.

Findings

Recreation Facilities

1. The active recreation parks in Northern Chester County offer a total of 48 active recreation or physical play facilities for 13 unique active recreation activities. Parks in the Region offer duplicate facilities, especially team sports fields. This repetition supports sport leagues and competition. One notable exception is the single horseshoe pit at Community Park on the Ridge.

2. Overall, most of the available recreation facilities support team sports and children's play (playgrounds). This may limit use of the facilities and the park to groups large enough to "hold a game" and age groups interested in such activities.

3. The fitness trail with exercise stations at Community Park on the Ridge is the only facility specifically designed for exercise. While other parks have paths, they function as circulation paths within the park, not fitness facilities. Other facilities require physical activity but are not focused on the individual's fitness as the primary function.

4. Five parks offer access to water for fishing or boating. Towpath Park, Kenilworth Park, Riverside Park offer access to the Schuylkill River; Pickering Grove and Pine Creek Park offer access to Pickering Creek. Also, the Tri-Town accessible fishing park is under development along French Creek.

5. Natural areas are commonly found in the Region's parks. Eight parks have natural or naturalized landscapes (woods, meadows, wetlands) within the park. These landscapes function largely as backdrops to open grass fields. With the exception of the signed nature study area along the edge of the riparian forest in River Bend Park, there are no blazed trails to guide visitors to or through these natural features. Any experience of these natural features requires complete self-direction and self-motivation

6. Heritage is not commonly featured in the Region's parks. Only Towpath Park and Pine Creek Park have historical features, namely the canal bed and the horseracing track and stables, respectively; only Towpath Park has interpretative signage of its historic feature. While other sites may not contain historic features, their proximity to communities, waterways, and other historic sites suggests that there are stories about this region that could be told in local parks.

7. Other common park facilities not found in the Region include public swimming pools, public golf courses, skateparks, ice rinks, Frisbee golf courses, sledding hills, climbing walls, amphitheatres or bandshells, manmade water features (e.g., a fountains), and a community gardens.

8. There are no public or private indoor community recreation centers in the Region. The nearest centers are the Phoenixville YMCA and Pottstown YMCA.A previous feasibility study found an insufficient support for such a facility in the Region, however the Ludwig's Corner master site plan reserves a site for a future YM/YWCA should conditions change.

9. There are no dog parks, i.e., fenced areas for dogs to run off-leash. Five of the municipal parks, as well as the county park and several private conservation lands, allow dogs on-leash.

10. Most parks offer more than one recreation facility for physical activity for age groups ranging from children to adults to intergenerational groups. Few offer more than three age-group appropriate facilities to support repeated park visits.

11. Seating and picnic areas are common to the parks but their numbers are few and limit social use to only a few individuals.

PARK MASTER PLANNING

12. Park master plans have guided the most recent park designs and improvements. Master plans have been prepared and at least partially implemented for Ellis Woods Park, Kimberton Community Park, Community Park on the Ridge, Pine Creek Park, and Andrew Evans Park. Facilities in other, older parks were installed over time to serve the needs of the community.

13. Site analysis and preliminary planning for some future park sites have occurred. Only the Snyder Avenue Park has been master planned, namely as a multi-use park with active and passive facilities. The Parker Tavern and Wade Tract are envisioned as complementary sites to the Schuylkill River Trailhead at the Parker House, though no detailed planning has occurred. The Heyser Tract has been proposed as a baseball field for the Norchester Baseball League and soccer fields for Vincent United Futbol Club; concept sketches have been prepared. The Pennhurst Tract had a preliminary engineering evaluation that indicated Tract A "lend best to natural trail systems and passive uses," while Tract B could support more active recreation. Other sites have had minimal discussion. The Reiff Tract has been laid out for soccer fields.

FACILITY ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY

14. None of the parks are fully ADA-accessible, providing continuous universal access to the park, its parking lot, its primary recreational facilities, and its amenities. Newer parks, particularly those that have used state funding for construction, have accessible recreation and support facilities.

15. Playgrounds in the Region built within the past decade appear to meet the CPSC standards, but older play equipment does not.

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GUIDE TO APPENDIX 4

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INTRODUCTION

In the broadest sense, trails are designated routes of travel. Images of walking or hiking trails through the natural landscape come to mind first for many people, but trails serve a variety of motorized and non-motorized users on both land and water. There are bicycling trails for beginners to experienced cyclists, equestrian trails for horseback riders, park paths for circulation, and exercise trails for those focused on fitness and wellness. There are also specialty trails, such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails for winter enthusiasts, trails for all-terrain vehicles (three- and four-wheeled ATVs) and snowmobiles, and water trails for paddlers. Sidewalks and road shoulders also serve as paths for non-motorized travel to and from home, work, school, park, or shopping destinations in some communities. Several but not all of these trail types exist in the Northern Chester County region (the Region). Many more miles of trails have been proposed or are already under study and development by a variety of public and private entities. Existing, planned and proposed non-motorized, public-use trails in the Region are the focus of this inventory and assessment with acknowledgement given to the presence of social trails and other recreational routes.

In *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County*[1] and County Parks and Recreation publications, Chester County defines a trail as "an off-road facility with a permanent alignment that is open to the general public, and that is designed, constructed and maintained as part of a public park system used for a variety of non-motorized forms of travel including walking, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing or horseback riding." The County has also defined a path as "a facility that is designed, constructed, maintained and used primarily for one form of travel, such as a bicycle path or a walking path," and a bike route as "a roadway shoulder or a low volume roadway used for bicycle transportation." A hiking pathway that has been used for many years but has not been incorporated into a public trail network is termed a "traditional hiking route" or "social trail." Finally, a trail network is defined as "a network is a combination of trails, paths, sidewalks and other linear facilities used for pedestrian and non-motorized transportation along with destinations." The County

[1] *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, 2002.* Chester County Planning Commission.

emphasizes the importance of legally defensible definitions of term, particularly in municipal ordinances, to provide a sound foundation for trail network development.

The Chester County Trail Inventory is the most comprehensive source of public-use trail network data in the Region (the Region). The database was assembled by the Chester County Planning Commission to help implement *Landscapes 2*[2], to track the progress of and investment in trail development, and to aid in further trail planning. The database includes a variety of trail attributes: name, location, status, surface material, access, mileage, owner, maintainer, permitted users, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility, funding, and data source.

Additional trail information was gathered from municipal and regional planning documents, interviews with trail owners and developers, and recreation facility or provider Web sites. *Map 9, Trails*, illustrates available mapping for the emerging trail network in the Region.

EXISTING TRAILS

The Chester County Trail Inventory shows 69 existing trails or trail segments totaling 60.3 miles in the Region. Additional named trails at Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (NHS) and French Creek State Park, the Horse-Shoe Trail, and public-use trails on private lands, not currently inventoried by Chester County, raise the total to 99.4 miles of existing trails. One water trail, the Schuylkill River Water Trail, offers 18.7 miles of river excursion.

REGIONAL TRAILS

The **Schuylkill River Trail**,[3] much of which is designated a National Recreation Trail, is the trail spine of the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area. The trail stretches through a landscape that varies from urban and suburban neighborhoods to farmlands to heavy industrial sites, and accesses major metropolitan areas—Reading, Pottstown, Phoenixville, Norristown, and Philadelphia. Fifty-six miles of the 125-mile route have been constructed and are open for use. Most sections of this accessible, multi-use trail are off-road, paved, and level. The trail supports recreational hikers and bikers, as well as people seeking exercise, and tourists visiting the Region. In more urban areas, it serves as an important commuter route for pedestrians and cyclists. Interactive and printable maps are available at www.schuylkillrivertrail.com.

The grand vision for this trail began during the 1970s. The first completed section of trail was designated as a National Recreation Trail—the Manayunk to Valley Forge Bikeway—in 1976. With the recent completion of the Thun Trail section through Birdsboro, the Hopewell Big Woods portion of the trail is now complete. Sections of the trail from Pottstown to Phoenixville are under development by Chester County and anticipated to be open for use in 2011. Once the gap in Phoenixville is complete, trail users will be able to travel north to the Schuylkill headwaters in Schuylkill County.

The Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area requested Chester County funding to complete, on behalf of the county, a 3.5-mile gravel segment of the Schuylkill River Trail between Spring City Borough and Cromby Power Station (PECO) in East Pikeland Township. This section will be completed in 2011. Chester County acquired trail easements for four PECO properties that will help solidify these

[2] *Landscapes 2, The Chester County Comprehensive Policy Plan, 2009.* Chester County Planning Commission.
[3] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009*. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

connections, including the PECO power plant property at Spring City. Private property was also purchased in Parker Ford for a ranger station and potential boat access to the river. Chester County is developing another 9.5 miles of trail from Spring City to Pottstown. See page 3-13.

Trail management is coordinated by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association. Sections of trail are owned and managed by a number of different entities, including government agencies. The Schuylkill River Heritage Area formed a Trail Council composed of members of each owning or managing entity. The Trail Council is working together with a Trail Steward to create a unified trail system, including a standardized system of signs and brochures. It also developed a standardized method of managing and maintaining the trail, so that users recognize the entire trail as a single unit, rather than a group of interconnected trails.

The **Schuylkill River Water Trail**[4] is a designated on-river trail route boating along the Region's 18.7 miles of riverfront. The 147-mile waterway begins in the headwaters of the Schuylkill in the heart of Pennsylvania's coal country. The trail passes through historic river and canal towns, the scenic Blue Mountains and State Game Lands, among other natural and cultural features dramatic geologic features. The annual Schuylkill River Sojourn utilizes the Schuylkill River Water Trail for a seven-day paddle from Schuylkill Haven to Philadelphia.

There are two public landings in the Region that allow access to the water trail and, to varying extents, the land trail. At River Mile 53.6 is the Hanover Street boat ramp owned by North Coventry Township, including a parking lot for some 25 cars accessible from Ridge Pike or Route 422. The site is proposed to connect with the North Coventry Township Trail System that would connect to the township's parklands and French Creek State Park. At River Mile 51.3 is the Towpath Park Boat Ramp. Parking and camping are permitted with permission from East Coventry Township. A picnic shelter and toilet facilities are available in the park. Approximately at River Mile 46.5 is the proposed Schuylkill River trailhead at Parker Ford. A small parking lot and ramp launch are located nearby in Spring City.

The Schuylkill River Water Trail offers tremendous opportunities for environmental education and stewardship of natural resources, and consequently, eco-tourism prospects. Online and printed trail guides are available through the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area Web site along with links to real-time data on water levels, water quality forecasts, and safety tips. Unifying directional and orientation signage for the Schuylkill River Water Trail is under development.

Internal and Loop Trails

Trails on Federal and State Lands

The **Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site** offers 70 miles of blazed trails that wind throughout the 848-acre site; major trails are illustrated in *Figure A4.1*. An 8-mile segment of the Horse-Shoe Trail passes through the site. The 0.8-mile Baptism Creek National Recreation Trail is a loop trail within the site that accommodates cross-country skiers and equestrians, as well as hikers. The Buzzard, Colliers, Lenape, Mill Creek, and Raccoon trails connect hikers with neighboring French Creek State Park, where additional trails are available. The Bethesda Church/Hopewell Trail connects hikers to the adjacent Crow's Nest Preserve, owned and managed by the Natural Lands Trust (NLT). Biking is allowed only on the site's paved roads.

[4] Ibid.

The *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*[5] states that Hopewell Furnace NHS, French Creek State Park, and NLT desire greater coordination of the interconnected trail system to expose more visitors to the national park and help in managing habitat and visitor use of their facilities. The plan also identified the need for "a bicycle repair and rental concession, with distribution of safety information, and potentially concessions for other recreational equipment…in the Hopewell Big Woods region," which would logically be located near this concentration of trails.

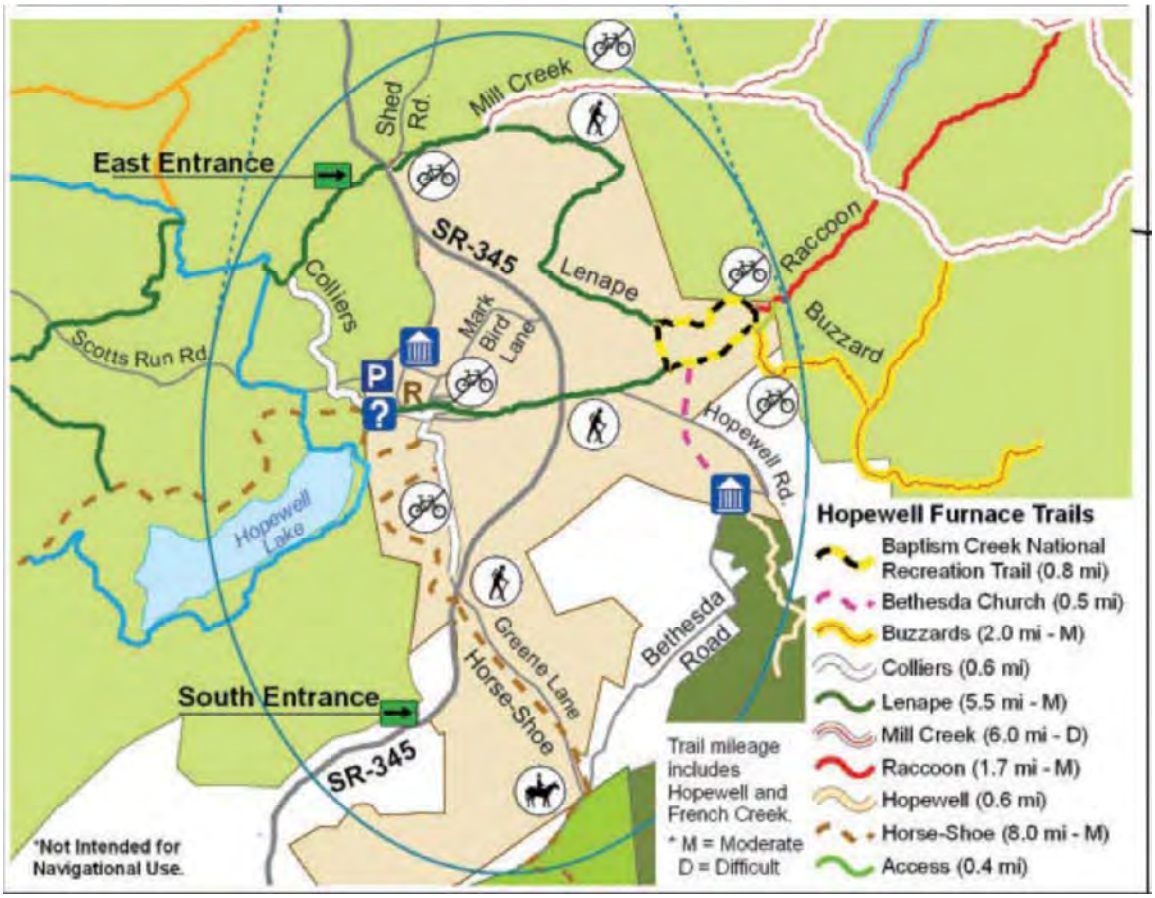

Figure A4.1: Major Trails at Hopewell Furnace NHS

French Creek State Park is a major destination for trail-seekers given its nine trails totaling more than 35 miles.

All trails at the park allow for hiking and access to hunting areas. Mountain bike riders enjoy the over 20 miles of trails that climb hills, cross streams, and pass through forests. The trails explore most parts of the park and are rated as difficult riding. Horseback riding is only allowed on the Horse-Shoe Trail.

Neither paved parking or horse trailer parking are available in the portions of French Creek in Chester County, though both are available at the end of South Entrance Road just across the county line from Warwick Township.

[5] Ibid.

Table A4.1: Major Trails at Hopewell Furnace NHS

Hopewell Furnace NHS Trails*	Length	Surface	Walking	Bicycling/ Mountain Biking	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Protected Open Space
Baptism Creek National Recreation Trail	0.8	Dirt	P	P	P	N	N	Y
Bethesda Church Trail	0.5	Dirt	P	R	P	N	N	Y
Hopewell Trail	0.6	Dirt	P	U	R	N	N	Y
Total	1.9							

P – Permitted; R – Restricted; U – Unknown; Y – Yes; N - No
* Trails spanning Hopewell Furnace NHS and French Creek State Parks Lands are listed under French Creek State Park.

Table A4.2: Trails at French Creek State Park

French Park State Park Trails	Length	Surface	Walking	Bicycling/ Mountain Biking	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Protected Open Space
Boone Trail	6.0	Dirt	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Buzzards Trail*	3.0	Dirt	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Colliers Trail*	0.6	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Kalmia Trail	1.0	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Lenape Trail*	5.5	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Mill Creek Trail*	6.0	Dirt	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Raccoon Trail*	1.7	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Ridge Trail (short connector)	0.0	Dirt	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Six Penny Trail	3.0	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Turtle Trail	3.6	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Total	29.8	(plus unnamed connector trails)						

P – Permitted; R – Restricted; U – Unknown; Y – Yes; N - No
* Trails span Hopewell Furnace NHS and French Creek State Parks Lands. Trail mileage shown is total length.

The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan[6] reported that off-road biking has taken place in areas of French Creek State Park where this use is currently restricted, and also in the adjacent national park; however, in recent years the state park has been working effectively with bike and hiking groups to better monitor and manage trail use, educate users on trail etiquette, and maintain the trails. The Plan suggested enhanced signage and informational materials to positively influence trail users. It also indicated that Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and state park staff are studying the feasibility of permitting limited, controlled, and safe access to the quarry, where ATVs have created unauthorized trails and ramps.[7]

[6] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009.* Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.
[7] Ibid.

TRAILS ON COUNTY LANDS

The Chester County Parks and Recreation Department offers six trails totaling 5.6 miles of natural and cultural exploration throughout its more than 500-acre **Warwick County Park**, as listed in *Table A4.3*.[8] Hiking and walking are permitted on all trails. Three of the improved surface trails permit bicycling. Cross-country skiing is permitted on some trails, and horseback riding is allowed exclusively on the Horse-Shoe Trail. Pets are permitted on all but the Nature Trail. Trails offer various surfaces: four are grass; six are gravel, cinder, or mulch; and one is a paved (asphalt) connector. None are specifically ADA-accessible, though one short connector is paved.

Table A4.3: Trails in Warwick County Park

Warwick County Park Trails	Length	Surface	Walking	Bicycling/ Mountain Biking*	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Protected Open Space
Adirondack Tree ID Trail	0.3	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Charcoal Trail, or Iron Heritage Trail	1.3	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Coventryville Forge Path	0.1	Grass	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Nature Trail	0.4	Grass	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Nature Trail	0.1	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
North Loop Trail	1.8	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Red Cliff Trail	0.6	Grass	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Red Cliff Trail	0.0	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Connector Trails	0.3	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Connector Trails	0.2	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Connector Trails	0.5	Grass	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Total	5.6							

P – Permitted; R – Restricted; U – Unknown; Y – Yes
* Source: www.mountainbikepa.com, accessed July 8, 2011.

The trails take advantage of historic features and landscape elements, recognizing that Warwick's woodlands provided much of the timber for charcoal used in the local furnaces of the early American iron industry. Charcoal hearths, historic house and barn ruins, and the site of 1717 Coventry Forge are marked to inform the visitor about the area's iron heritage. The Charcoal Trail, with its charcoal hearth sites, provides the opportunity to feature the lives of the furnace plantation woodcutters and colliers.

There are no parking facilities for horses and their riders, or for bicyclists. *The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*[9] suggests that improvements to parking areas, such as bike parking, a horse trailer parking area and/or hitching posts and a watering trough, as well as trail maps and brochures, could better support users of the Horse-Shoe Trail, and the proposed multi-use Boars Back/French Creek Trail.

[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

Trails and Paths on Municipal Lands

Eight municipalities in the Region own and maintain 26 existing trails or paths totaling 28.7 miles. These facilities are listed below in *Table A4.4* and illustrated on *Map 9*. Since the last update of the Chester County trails inventory, a public trail (estimated at 1.0 miles) and small parking area have opened in East Nantmeal Township at the end of Lyons Run Road, as well as access to the adjacent Nature Conservancy- eased lands of the Great Marsh.

North Coventry has the most trails in number (eight), and in length (8.7 miles). The Coventry Woods trails alone total six open trails: Pigeon Creek, Chestnut Hill, Furnace, Love Valley, Collier, Rock Run, totaling about 6 miles to date. Surfaces range from dirt to grass for off-road trails, to concrete and asphalt for sidewalks and hard-surface trails. Pedestrians are permitted on all trails. Bicyclists are generally permitted on the improved surface trails, except on the Park Springs Trails, West Vincent Equestrian Trail, Community Park on the Ridge Trail, and Andrew Evans Park Trail. Equestrians are expressly permitted to use five of the trails in North Coventry Township, including Coventry Woods, as well as the West Vincent Equestrian trail—totaling 7.6 miles. Pets are permitted on the North Coventry Township trails, the West Vincent Trail Network, and in Pine Creek Park. Trails within municipal parks, open spaces, and private preserves are considered protected. This is true for eight of the 24 municipal trails, which total approximately 15 miles.

Sidewalk Networks

Sidewalks in the Region are extremely limited. Older areas of South Pottstown/Pottstown Landing have sidewalks one block in each direction at the intersection of Hanover Street and Main Street and within a block or so of Kenilworth Park. It appears the central and eastern municipalities have only recently required sidewalks of developers, resulting in isolated sidewalk systems at the periphery and within major commercial properties, such as Lowe's and the Suburbia Shopping Center along Hanover Street, and major residential developments, such as Coventry Glen townhomes and The Fields at Creekview in East Coventry; neighborhoods adjacent to Spring City in East Vincent; Coventry Pointe townhomes in North Coventry; Ridglea and Vrynewy Acres in South Coventry; and Weatherstone in West Vincent. Smaller properties also appear to have been affected as there are sidewalk segments at the southeast corner of Hanover Street and Schuylkill Road in North Coventry and along Kimberton Road in front of St. Basil the Great Catholic School in East Pikeland.

Trails and Paths in Private Residential Developments

Residential developments in the Region offer 10. 6 miles of public use trails or paths maintained by the developments' homeowners association. Access to another 6.9 miles of trails and paths in other developments is unknown, according to the Chester County Trail Inventory. These inventoried trails and paths are listed in *Table A4.5*.

Table A4.4: Trails on Municipal Lands

Trail Name	Location Owner	Length (miles)	Surface	Walking	Bicycling	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Protected Open Space
Ellis Woods Park Trail	East Coventry	0.1	Gravel/Cinders	P	U	U	U	P	Y
Towpath Park Trail	East Coventry	1.0	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	U	U	U	P	Y
Maack Road Trail	East Coventry	1.7	Grass	P	U	U	U	U	N
New/Unnamed Trail	East Nantmeal	1.0	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	U
Kimberton Park Trail	East Pikeland	0.6	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	R	U	U	Y
Community Park on the Ridge Trail	East Vincent	0.8	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	U	U	U	R	Y
Park Springs Trail	East Vincent	0.3	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	U	R	U	U	N
Existing Sidewalks	East Vincent	0.4	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	P	R	U	U	N
Cedarville Trail[1]	North Coventry	0.3	Unknown	P	U	U	U	U	Y
Kenilworth Park Trail	North Coventry	0.9	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	U	U	P	Y
Pottstown Reconnections Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	P	P	U	P	N
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.2	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	P	U	U	P	N
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	U	U	P	N
Coventry Woods Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	P	U	P	Y
Coventry Woods Trail	North Coventry	4.9	Dirt	P	P	P	U	P	Y
Scholl Road Trail	North Coventry	1.0	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	P	U	P	N
North Coventry Trail Network	North Coventry	0.5	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	P	P	U	P	N
South Coventry Township Trail Network	South Coventry	0.4	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	N
Woody's Woods Trail	South Coventry	4.8	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	Y
Pine Creek Park Trail	West Pikeland	1.6	Grass	P	U	U	U	P	Y
Binky Lee Preserve Trail	West Pikeland	0.1	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	N
Pickering Creek Trail[2]	West Pikeland	3.2	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	N
Andrew Evans Park Trail	West Vincent	0.5	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	U	U	U	U	Y
Weatherstone Pedestrian Trail	West Vincent	0.5	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Weatherstone Multi-use Trail	West Vincent	1.2	Dirt	P	R	P	N	R	Y
Griffith Farm Multi-use Trail	West Vincent	1.4	Dirt	P	R	P	N	P	Y
Total		**28.7**							

P – Permitted; R – Restricted; U – Unknown; Y – Yes; N - No

[1] Per correspondence with Jay Erb, North Coventry Township.

[2] Complete from Clover Mill Rd. to Anselma Mill, correspondence with Pam Brown, French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Fall 2010.

Table A4.5: Trails on Homeowners Association Lands

HOA Trails and Paths	Municipal Location	Access	Length (miles)	Walking	Bicycling	Equestrian	ADA	Pets
Bridge Street HOA Trails	East Vincent	Public	1.5	P	P	U	U	U
Cedamill Crossing Trail	North Coventry	Public	0.7	P	P	U	U	P
Chestnut Hill Trail	North Coventry	Public	1.3	P	P	U	U	P
Martin Farm Trail	North Coventry	Public	0.1	P	P	U	U	U
Martin Farm Trail	North Coventry	Public	0.5	P	P	R	Y	U
Stoney Run Farms Trail	East Vincent	Public	0.2	P	P	R	Y	P
Stoney Run Farms Trail	East Vincent	Public	3.6	P	P	U	U	U
Windgate I Trail	East Vincent	Public	1.6	P	U	U	U	U
Windgate II Trail	East Vincent	Public	1.1	P	P	U	U	P
Public Access Total			**10.6**					
Coldstream Crossing Trail	East Pikeland	Unknown	1.1	P	P	U	U	P
Kimberton Greene Trail	East Pikeland	Unknown	0.9	P	U	R	U	U
Kimberton Greene Trail	East Pikeland	Unknown	1.7	P	P	R	U	P
Kimberton Meadows Trail	East Pikeland	Unknown	0.8	P	U	U	U	U
Kimberton Ridge Trail	East Vincent	Unknown	0.4	P	P	R	U	P
Twin Hills Association Trail	West Pikeland	Unknown	1.9	P	P	R	U	U
Unknown Access Total			**6.9**					

P – Permitted; R – Restricted; U – Unknown; Y – Yes

Private Lands with Limited Trail Access

The following privately-owned destinations offer more than 10 miles of trails to the public on a limited basis.

Natural Lands Trust's **Crow's Nest Preserve** offers 6.2 miles of natural surface (grass and dirt) trails through forests of oak, hickory, tulip poplar, beech, maple, and spicebush; through grassland meadows and wildflowers; and through crop fields reflecting the tradition of Chester County farming. The Preserve's trails are shown on *Map 9*. All of the Preserve trails permit hiking and leashed pets. Select trails permit equestrians; none allow mountain biking or motorized transportation such as ATVs. These constraints are meant to preserve the environmentally-sensitive areas, prevent the disruption of animal life cycles, and maintain the tranquil setting. From the trails, visitors can see and hear a diversity of birds and mammals, which is why the Preserve is part of an Important Bird and Important Mammal Area.

Connection to the adjacent Hopewell Furnace NHS is available via the Bethesda Church Trail, which takes visitors from Crow's Nest Preserve into the Baptism Creek area of Hopewell Furnace NHS, where trail users can connect with the Baptism Creek National Recreation Trail and walk through forested wetlands. From the National Recreation Trail, visitors can walk east along Hopewell Road into the main park complex.

As an existing destination, *the Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* suggests that the Preserve could become a hub for information on regional recreational facilities and trails—including auto tours—and information on visitor services. Given the Preserve's Leave No Trace visitor management approach, the Plan also suggests a water basin or similar facility for washing off hiking boots or horse hooves, to minimize the translocation of invasive species.

The **Binky Lee Preserve** offers four miles of natural surface (grass) trails through its rolling woodlands and meadows, for walkers only. (Only 2.9 miles are mapped by the Chester County Trail Inventory, as shown on *Map 9*.) Visitors are greeted by an information kiosk at the parking area and educational signs are throughout the preserve.

Welkinweir, the former estate of Everett and Grace Rodebaugh and home of the Green Valleys Association, offers natural surface (grass) paths through the estate's formal gardens, arboretum, and native habitats. Spatial data for these trails is not available and thus are not shown on *Map 9;* a total path length of five miles was estimated. The grounds are open weekdays to the public and to members only on weekends. Group access on weekends can be arranged through the office. Only hiking is permitted on the paths, with the exception of the Horse-Shoe Trail, which passes through the site. Welkinweir allows trail-goers to use its parking lot and has worked with the Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy to mark the connector trail from the parking lot to the Horse-Shoe Trail. It does not actively encourage equestrian use of this access point to the Horse-Shoe Trail given its focus on environmental conservation, i.e., protection of wildlife habitat including ground-nesting birds. Like Crow's Nest, *the Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* suggests that Welkinweir could also offer information on regional recreational facilities, trails, and visitor services.

Historic Yellow Springs,[10] home of the **Chester Springs Studio,** preserves and promotes the history and arts of this Chester County village in West Pikeland Township. An estimated half-mile walking tour through the village features a dozen historic buildings and landscapes, including a meadow where Washington's army camped in Fall 1777. The primary route is shown on *Map 9*.

Unmapped Private Trails

The **Great Marsh Trail System** through this inland freshwater marsh in East Nantmeal Township is not considered public. Access to the trails is granted for educational and scientific groups using the conference center by arrangement. Hunting on this property is managed by the Great Marsh Stewardship Committee.

Throughout the Region, there are many more miles of trails on private lands that owners share by private arrangement. These "social trails" are not mapped minimizing publicity of their locations and their abuse by the public. Residents who use these trails appreciate the willingness of property owners to share them and demonstrate their appreciation through informal words and gifts of thanks.

Some would like to see at least some of these social trails permanently protected so that the trails remain in place even as property owners change. However, protection through public funding requires public access, which is generally not desired. Protection through private mechanisms, such as deed restrictions, would not require public access but offers no real value to the property owner.

[10] http://www.yellowsprings.org accessed December 10, 2010.

OTHER RECREATIONAL AND TRAVEL ROUTES

HORSE-SHOE TRAIL

The 140-mile **Horse-Shoe Trail**[11] is a hiking and equestrian route that stretches through five counties in southeastern Pennsylvania. From its intersection with the Appalachian Trail—a National Scenic Trail—in Dauphin County, the Horse-Shoe Trail winds through the agricultural landscape of Lebanon and Lancaster counties and through southern Berks County and the Region to Valley Forge National Historical Park (NHP) and the Schuylkill River Trail. The Horse-Shoe Trail runs roughly parallel to I-76, the Pennsylvania Turnpike, between Harrisburg East exit 247 and Valley Forge exit 326. The five-foot-wide dirt path passes through Warwick, East Nantmeal, South Coventry, West Vincent, and West Pikeland townships in the Region.

A total of 16.7 miles of the Horse-Shoe Trail traverse the Region, as shown on *Map 9, Trails*, where it accesses:

- French Creek State Park (the Berks County portion), where it connects to several trails within the park, including the Six Penny, Boone, and Mill Creek trails;
- Hopewell Furnace NHS;
- State Game Lands 43;
- Warwick County Park; and
- Welkinweir, the 162-acre arboretum and headquarters of Green Valleys Association, a nonprofit conservation organization.

While no single owner determines route policies, hiking and equestrian use are permitted on route segments in the Region. Bicycling is permitted on some segments, including the portion through Warwick County Park. Leashed pets are also permitted on local portions of the route. The demand for horse trails and their relative scarcity in the Region make the Horse-Shoe Trail a valuable recreational resource.

The nonprofit Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy (formerly known as the Horse-Shoe Trail Club) founded the current trail during the 1920s. It was largely completed by 1935 as a horse-riding path from Valley Forge NHP to Hopewell Furnace NHS. Since that time, the Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy has maintained it with the help of many volunteers. Member dues and contributions largely support the preservation and maintenance of the trail. Trail use is not restricted to members.

Started as a handshake agreement with farmers, trail use is still largely based on short-term informal agreements with the adjacent landowners. As landowners change, the Horse-Shoe Trail often must be relocated. Working with French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, the Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy is seeking to secure easements and address liability concerns on private property. This includes permanent protection of the Horse-Shoe Trail easement through State Game Lands 43. The Conservancy is also trying to make the trail truly open to the public, and remove any segments that are still on-road.

[11] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009*. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

The Horse-Shoe Trail is being considered as a designated section of the proposed Highlands Trail within Pennsylvania. If designated, the Horse-Shoe Trail would receive additional promotion through the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative.

Designated Routes on PA State Game Lands

The **PA State Game Lands (SGL)**[12] service roads are intended for hunters moving within the Game Lands. In 2000, a change in state regulations permitted recreationists on non-motorized vehicles (e.g., bicycles), conveyances, or animals to use designated Game Lands routes on Sundays with seasonal limitations to recreational access to ensure public safety during hunting seasons.

Within SGL 43, namely on the western property, there is only one designated route, a 3.4-mile loop, which begins and ends at the rifle range off of Laurel Road. The rifle range includes a buffer to avoid use conflicts, and bicyclists can ride at night or on Sundays to avoid hunters. The Horse-Shoe Trail is noted as a "special use trail" on Pennsylvania Game Commission maps but is not listed as a designated route. There are no authorized single-track or cross-country trails and no authorized connections to French Creek State Park or Hopewell Furnace trails, with the exception of the Horse-Shoe Trail.

The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan[13] reported that the Pennsylvania Game Commission is concerned about the development of unauthorized biking/hiking trails through SGL 43 and has been receptive to the idea of a land exchange or purchase that would enable the National Park Service and its partners to expand trail connections as well as limited recreational use of the State Game Lands in the offseason. The Plan also suggests that formal designation of the Horse-Shoe Trail within SGL 43 and the proposed Boars Back Trail as designated routes, could provide the impetus for preserving additional lands adjacent to the trail corridor, improving access for hunters and safety for recreational users away from the rifle range area, and expanding wildlife habitat.

Themed and Special Trail Events

The French Creek Iron Tour, sponsored by the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, annually draws more than 1,200 participants to tour through the Trust's protected open space lands. Route lengths range from 10 miles to 100 miles, offering cyclists of every skill level an opportunity to view scenic Northern Chester County.

The hubs of a wine and cheese trail are in place in the Region. A travel route may soon emerge to promote these locally-grown products. The J. Maki Winery at French Creek Ridge Vineyards, located on Grove Road in Warwick Township, produces award-winning champagne and ice wine, as well as red and white wines. The Amazing Acres Goat Dairy, also on Grove Road, raises Nubian Goats and produces 16 types of fresh and natural artisanal cheeses. The Birch Run Hills Farm produces handcrafted raw milk cheese, including Birchrun Blue, Equinox, Fat Cat, and Red Cat, as well as seasonal and fresh cheeses, from its location in West Vincent Township. This farm is also known for fresh veal and pork. Finally, the Yellow Springs Farm in Chester Springs, West Pikeland Township, produces hundreds of native plant species, herbs, raw honey, and artisanal goat milk cheeses. These three cheese artisans are three of the six farmstead and artisanal cheese makers practicing their craft in

[12] Ibid.
[13] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009*. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

Chester County. A tour among these local producers features views of the scenic countryside and well-kept farms, conversations with dedicated owner artisans, and of course, lively animals.

TRAIL AND PATH ACCESSIBILITY

None of the trails in the Region are specifically ADA-accessible. Accessibility is not required by federal regulations for public–use trails, defined as recreational routes constructed or altered on non-federal lands, at this point in time. (See Proposed ADA Guidelines Trails and Shared Use Paths.) However, given the importance of trails as a means to experience the natural and cultural significance of the Region, accessible trail opportunities should be considered.

Proposed ADA Guidelines Trails and Shared Use Paths

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) is responsible for developing accessibility guidelines to ensure that new construction and alterations of facilities subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4151 et seq.) are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. The ADA applies to state and local governments, places of public accommodation, and commercial facilities. The ABA applies to facilities designed, built, altered, or leased with Federal funds.

On June 20, 2007, the Access Board issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to establish accessibility guidelines pursuant to the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) for camping facilities, picnic facilities, viewing areas, outdoor recreation access routes, trails, and beach access routes that are constructed or altered by or on behalf of the Federal government. The final accessibility guidelines will apply to Federal land management agencies and non-federal entities that construct or alter facilities on Federal lands on behalf of the Federal government, namely Hopewell Furnace NHS in the Region. The Access Board prepared a draft of the final accessibility guidelines based on the NPRM and the comments on the NPRM. The Access Board reviewed the draft final accessibility guidelines with the accessibility program managers for the Federal land management agencies. After public reviewing, the Access Board will issue the accessibility guidelines as a final rule.

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) to develop accessibility guidelines for shared use paths on March 28, 2011. Shared use paths, as defined by the Access Board, are designed to be part of a transportation system, providing off-road routes for a variety of users—primarily bicyclists and pedestrians, including pedestrians using mobility devices such as manual or motorized wheelchairs. Whether located within a highway right-of-way, provided along a riverbank, or established over natural terrain within an independent right-of-way, shared use paths differ from sidewalks and trails in that they are primarily designed for multiple users for transportation purposes. Once developed and approved by the Access Board, accessibility guidelines will apply to shared use paths.

Trails, as defined by the Access Board, are pedestrian routes developed primarily for outdoor recreational purposes—for pedestrians and other users to "experience" the outdoors; they do not connect elements, spaces, or facilities within a site. Since they are not designed with a transportation focus, they are typically not parallel to a roadway or related to its right-of-way. Accessibility guidelines for shared use paths will not apply to trails.

TRAIL DESTINATIONS AND SUPPORT FACILITIES

Several parks and preserves function as destinations for their on-site trails or as trailheads for trails in their vicinity. These locations include Hopewell Furnace NHS, French Creek State Park, Warwick County Park, Coventry Woods, Woody's Woods, Crow's Nest Preserve, Binky Lee Preserve, and Welkinweir.

Table A4.6 lists trail access and use facilities. General vehicular parking is available at all eight sites, though limited at municipal and private parks and preserves. Horse trailer parking is available only at French Creek State Park and Welkinweir. Few comfort and emergency facilities are available beyond the largest parks. Drinking water fountains and restrooms are provided at the national, state and county parks but not at the municipal and private locations; Welkinweir does have restrooms. Public telephones are available at the national and state sites.

Table A4.6: Trail Access and Use Facilities

	General Parking	Horse-trailer Parking	Water/Drinking Fountain	Restrooms/ Port-a Johns	Public Phone
Hopewell Furnace NHS	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
French Creek State Park	Yes	South Entrance Road, Berks County	Yes	Yes	Yes
Warwick County Park	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Coventry Woods	Yes	No	No	No	No
Woody's Woods	Yes	No	No	No	No
Crow's Nest Preserve	Yes	No	No	No	No
Binky Lee Preserve	Yes	N/A	No	No	No
Welkinweir	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

TRAIL PLANNING

The Chester County Trail Inventory shows 52 planned trails or trail segments totaling 122.9 miles in the Region. Planned trails updates identified during the planning study raise the total to 127.3 miles. These planned trails include trails in design or under construction, under feasibility study, or proposed for future study and development, and comprise county, municipal, and private trails in the Region.

REGIONAL TRAIL PLANNING

Chester County is leading the development of just over 9.5 miles of the **Schuylkill River Trail** through the Region, including a segment through Spring City. A total trail length of 14.6 miles will be achieved as Phoenixville and Montgomery County extend the trail to connect to the Schuylkill River and Perkiomen Trails to the east and the Thun Trail to the north in Berks County. The trail will be located within existing railroad and PECO Energy right-of-way corridors, former roadway and utility right-of-

ways, canal towpaths, public and private open space, and road shoulders, and over existing bridges and road culverts.

The trail enters North Coventry Township from Pottstown across the US Route 422 bridge. It travels southeast into East Coventry Township through the Heyser Tract and Towpath Park, then on to the village of Fricks Locks. From there it heads southward to Parker Ford, skirting the edge of the Linfield Silt Basin, then eastward toward the former Pennhurst State Hospital property. It then parallels the river through Spring City, where a trailhead is planned on Gay Street, and through East Pikeland to Phoenixville, where the trail crosses the river back into Montgomery County on PA Route 29. Four trailheads are planned in the Region: one in East Coventry at PA Route 724 (at Towpath Park), one at Fricks Locks in East Coventry, one at Parker Ford in East Vincent, and one at Cromby in East Pikeland.

This portion of the Schuylkill River Trail is planned as an off-road, asphalt-paved, surface trail for non-motorized recreation, fitness, and travel. The paved portions of the trail will be an average of 12 feet wide with four-foot grass shoulders on either side. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and leashed pets are to be permitted; equestrians and motorized vehicles will be prohibited. It will comply with ADA standards as of the final design date.

The 15+-mile **French Creek Trail**[14] is a multi-phase project along the creek, to be located on the former railroad beds of the Boars Back Railroad and the Sowbelly Railroad. These short-distance railroads transported granite and iron from the interior of the Region to the Schuylkill River. Phase I includes the development of the trail from St. Peters Village to Trythall Road. Phase II will extend the trail to Elverson to complete the Boars Back Segment of the French Creek Trail. Phases III, IV, and V will comprise the Sowbelly Trail segment from St. Peters Village to Kimberton. *The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* indicates that restaurants and bike shops are envisioned as part of the long-term economic benefits for this key destination within the Hopewell Big Woods.

As the lead trail planning and development entity, the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust has purchased easements on four miles from the Warwick/South Coventry township border to Hollow Road. In cooperation, East Pikeland Township has master planned a two-mile segment of the French Creek Trail and acquired parcels along the creek for the trail's development. A 4.2-mile connection between Kimberton and Phoenixville has been proposed as part of the Phoenixville Area Regional Comprehensive Plan.

The 4.8-mile **Boars Back Trail**[15] segment of the French Creek Trail is intended as a multi-use, non-motorized, natural- and crushed-stone surface, providing recreation for hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists. From the trail, users will be able to access Hopewell Furnace NHS, Natural Lands Trust's Crow's Nest Preserve, French Creek State Park, State Game Lands 43, and the Horse-Shoe Trail. The project is under development by Chester County, the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, and Warwick Township. One miles is completed; 3.8 miles is planned. The Chester County Commissioners provided a $1.5 million grant to French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust to purchase easements and fund construction of the 2.7-mile Phase I segment. The Trust has acquired three acres of land at Route 345 to build a parking lot and trailhead, and will convey this land to the

[14] *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009.* Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.
[15] Ibid.

county once the trail is complete. Phase II will need to address landowners' disputes over the former rail corridor's ownership and their concerns for safety and liability.

The 12.4-mile proposed **Sowbelly Trail**[16] segment will primarily use the former railroad bed of the Sowbelly Railroad between St. Peters Village and the East Vincent/East Pikeland border. From St. Peters Village, the Sowbelly Trail alignment travels south to Warwick County Park, then continues east along French Creek. The preferred alignment takes the trail off-road at Pughtown, roughly paralleling Pughtown Road to the north along French Creek to Hoffecker Road, then following Lucas Road and West Seven Stars Road. From here the trail will be located on lands along the creek owned or eased by East Pikeland Township. The trail is intended for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians. A total of 2.0 miles will be ADA-accessible in two locations: Warwick County Park and along the border of East and West Vincent townships, east of Hollow Road. These on-road segments are expected to be feasible given the low traffic volumes but will still require further study to ensure the safety of trail users and motorists.[17]

The **Warwick-Elverson Regional Recreation Corridor** is identified in Chester County's *Linking Landscapes*. The corridor is shown as a conceptual connection from French Creek Elementary School along the South Branch of French Creek to Elverson. This concept has the potential to feature several historic sites along the creek. A more specific and detailed alignment for a trail connection would be studied during a feasibility study.

The 0.9-mile **Yellow Spring Trail** is a proposed spur from Historic Yellow Springs to the Horse-Shoe Trail along Art School Road. The Chester County Trail Inventory lists only walking as a permitted use; all other users including equestrians are listed as "unknown." However, given the trail's linkage with the Horse-Shoe Trail, equestrian use of this planned natural surface trail may be intended and/or feasible.

Roughly three miles of the **Pickering Creek Trail**, a West Pikeland's segment of the proposed Pickering-Upper Uwchlan Regional Recreation Corridor in *Linking Landscapes*, is complete from Clover Mill Road to the Mill at Anselma along Route 401; completion of the remaining portion from the Mill at Anselma to the Upper Uwchlan Township border is proposed by challenged by wetlands and private land ownership. The trail was envisioned to follow the former Pickering Valley Railroad right-of-way connecting Marsh Creek State Park with the Schuylkill River Trail.

Local Trail Planning

Trail Development by Municipal Location

The Chester County Trail Inventory lists 33 trails or trail segments totaling 83.93 miles of planned trails in the Region. These trails are listed below in *Table A4.7* and illustrated on *Map 9*. Of these more than 80 miles, only 1.5 miles of trail are in design or under construction, namely in North Coventry Township. The vast majority of the planned trails, 79.1 miles, are simply proposed for further study. These include township-wide trail concepts discussed in the subsequent section.

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

Table A4.7: Municipal Trails

Trail Name	Location and Owner	Length (miles)	Status	Location	Protected Open Space
Coventry Lake Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Design/Construction	Homeowner's Association (HOA) Property	No
French Creek Trail	East Pikeland	2.0	Design/ Construction	Along creek on township-owned or eased land	Yes
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Design/Construction	Along Stream Corridor	No
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Design/Construction	Open Space	No
North Coventry Trail Network	North Coventry	0.03	Design/Construction	Coventry Woods	Yes
Rosewarne Link Trail	North Coventry	0.2	Design/Construction	Open Space/Along Roadways	No
Karl's Chestnut Hill Trail (Woody's Woods Trail Link)	South Coventry	0.2	Design/ Construction	Open Space	Yes
Pickering Creek Trail	West Pikeland	1.0	Feasibility Study	Along Stream Corridor	Yes
Bickel's Run Trail	North Coventry	1.0	Proposed	Open Space/Bickel's Run Park/Utility Right-of-Way (ROW)	No
Brandywine Trail	West Vincent	2.1	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
Coventry Woods Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Proposed	Coventry Woods	Yes
Cross Trail	North Coventry	1.9	Proposed	Open Space/Along Roadways	No
East Coventry Township Trail Network	East Coventry	21.2	Proposed	Along Stream Corridor	No
East Coventry Township Trail Network	East Coventry	13.7	Proposed	Along Utility ROW/Private Lands	No
French Creek Park Link	North Coventry	1.0	Proposed	Along Roadway	Yes
Hanover Meadows Park Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Proposed	Hanover Meadows Park	No
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Proposed	Along Roadways/Open Space	No
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.5	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
Off-Road Pedestrian Trail	East Vincent	1.2	Proposed	Open Space	No
Phoenixville Crossing Trail (within subdivision)	East Pikeland	0.3	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
Pickering Hunt Trail	East Pikeland	0.4	Proposed	Open Space	No
Pottstown Reconnections Trail	North Coventry	1.7	Proposed	Along Roadways	No
Proposed Sidewalks	East Vincent	3.7	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
River Bend Park Trail	North Coventry	0.2	Proposed	River Bend Park	Yes
River Park Trail	North Coventry	1.6	Proposed	Open Space/Wooded Areas	No
Roadside Trail	East Vincent	9.4	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
Rural Walking Street	East Vincent	3.9	Proposed	Along Roadway	No

Trail Name	Location and Owner	Length (miles)	Status	Location	Protected Open Space
St. Peter's Warwick County Park Connector (French Creek Trail)	Warwick	1.3	Proposed	Open Space/Along Roadway	No
Schuylkill River Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Proposed	Open Space/Along Roadway	No
South Coventry Township Trail Network	South Coventry	1.6	Proposed	Stream Corridor/Along Roadway/Open Space	No
Sowbelly Segment, French Creek Trail	Phoenixville	0.3	Proposed	French Creek Corridor	No
Western Loop	East Nantmeal	10.0	Proposed	Open Space/Along Roadway	No
Total Miles		**84.13**			

Source: Chester County Trail Inventory; Gannett Fleming, Inc.

These trails are universally intended for walkers and most will permit bicyclists. Only 10 are planned to permit equestrians. ADA accessibility is listed as "unknown" for these trails; if studied and constructed with public monies, these trails will have to meet ADA accessibility standards.

The Chester County Trail Inventory lists "along roadway" as the location for nearly half of these trails. The inventory does not specify if "along roadway" means on the road shoulder, on an improved widened shoulder, or some other meaning. Given that many of these roadways are heavily-used local roads, the proposal to use them as trail routes raises concern for the safety of trail users and motorists. Each of these "along roadway" trails should carefully study the physical conditions and use of the roadway as part of its feasibility and design studies.

Municipal Trail Network Planning

The municipal trail networks vary greatly in expanse and development.

The **East Coventry Township Trail Network** proposes 34.9 miles of trail connections for walking and bicycling among the following features:

- along the Schuylkill River and Pigeon Creek and their tributaries.
- on-road and off-road connections between the East Coventry Elementary School, Ellis Woods and Towpath Parks, the Heyser, Faulk, and Wade Tracts, and the Maack property.
- along the PECO Energy utility corridor from the Bickel Run area of North Coventry Township to Stony Run in East Vincent Township.

The proposed trail network is a concept awaiting further evaluation and development. The corridors intersect at various points throughout the township, creating trail loops in a variety of sizes. Some of the trails end abruptly at roadways, the township boundary, or tributary headwaters. Further consideration of trail extensions and alignments should be given during the master planning phase of trail development to increase trail connectivity. Additional design and use criteria, such as ADA accessibility, intended users and suitability for equestrians, are not known.

The proposed 10-mile Western Loop Trail is the only mapped trail concept of the **East Nantmeal Township Trail Network** shown in the township's *1993 Open Space Plan*. The Western Loop is

proposed as a 10-mile on-road and off-road alignment through the rural landscape in the western portion of the township. Its route could give access to the French Creek and Stonewall Links Golf Courses.

An **East Pikeland Township Trail Network** was initially discussed in the township's *1993 Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan*. As conceived, this ambitious network is intended to "give access to scenic areas and recreation facilities and provide a safe transportation system for pedestrians and bicyclists to move about the community." The network envisioned approximately 20 miles of trails, roadside ways, and footpaths through wilderness corridors for hiking, bicycling, and mountain biking, and horseback riding, as appropriate; only 2.7 miles of proposed trails are inventoried by Chester County. While land acquisition and trail construction for the French Creek Trail took priority, other

potential trail locations were not acquired or protected from development. The township is in the process of updating the trail network concept to the development pattern that has emerged since 1993.

The **East Vincent Trail Network** is an 18.2-mile system of roadside trail routes and bike lanes connecting neighborhoods with East Vincent Elementary School, Community Park on the Ridge, French Creek, and the Schuylkill River Trail. Bike lanes are proposed along PA Route 23 and Pughtown Road. Sidewalks are proposed along some roadside routes, while road shoulders would be used in other locations.

The 26.8-mile **North Coventry Trail System** is a network of on- and off-road trail segments proposed to connect major neighborhoods and major destinations throughout the township. Township destinations include its parks, Coventry Woods, and the Schuylkill River Trail, as well as destinations beyond the township border, such as Pottstown, French Creek State Park and the larger Hopewell Big Woods region, and Woody's Woods. Major trails and trail segments include:

- A trail section from the north side of Coventry Woods to PA Route 724.
- A River Park Trail along the south side of the Schuylkill River from PA Route 724 to the Schuylkill River Trail at Route 100, providing access to River Bend Park.
- The Hanover Trail along Hanover Street, using sidewalks and passing through parkland before turning east into Bickel Run Park and heading south to Temple Road.
- The Kirlin Trail from the south side of Coventry Woods to PA Route 100 and the Hanover Trail.

Completed trails total 9.1 miles. Another 11.8 miles are proposed.

The *1996* ***South Coventry Township*** *Comprehensive Plan* recommended a trail network in the township. This network would include trails from Woody's Woods to the Horse-Shoe Trail and French Creek Trail in Warwick County Park, bike lanes along PA Routes 23 and 100, designated bike routes along secondary roadways, and recreational trails along stream valleys throughout the township. This recommendation also encouraged the realignment of the Horse-Shoe Trail to ensure its permanent protection. Identified as the Woody's Woods Trail Link by Chester County, a volunteer has cleared and constructed 4.8 miles of the 5-mile Karl's Chestnut Hill Trail, connecting Coventry Woods and the North Coventry trail system to the Harmonyville Road entrance to Woody's Woods in South Coventry Township, on township-owned land. The final 02.-mile segment will be completed once a neighboring property owner's concerns are addressed. Only one other 1.6 mile trail of the township trail network has been inventoried by Chester County.

The St. Peter's Warwick County Park Connector of the French Trail system is the only planned trail by **Warwick Township.** (Another 1.6 mile trail system is listed under Trails Planned by/for Private Entities.) However, the township's residents are well served by the numerous public trails on public and private conservation lands in the township. These trails include the Horse-Shoe Trail and trails at Hopewell Furnace NHS, French Creek State Park, Warwick County Park, State Game Lands 43, and Crow's Nest Preserve, as well as the proposed Boars Back Segment of the French Creek Trail and the French Creek Trail connector from St. Peters Village to Warwick County Park. The Warwick-Elverson Regional Recreation Corridor proposed in Chester County's *Linking Landscapes* may provide Warwick Township residents with yet another regional trail, if further studied and developed.

The *2010* ***West Pikeland Township*** *Comprehensive Plan* outlines trails and greenways in its parks, recreation and open space plan. It acknowledges the abundant private or social trails that require landowner permission for use. No planned trails in the township have been inventoried by Chester County.

The **West Vincent Township Trail Network** currently comprises a few disparate trails and the Horse-Shoe Trail. A half-mile walking and bicycling trail and a mile-plus multi-use (hiking and equestrian) trail are located in the Weatherstone development. A 1.4 miles unimproved multi-use perimeter trail exists on the township-owned Griffith Farm. Another half-mile walking and bicycling trail is located in Andrew Evans Park. In addition, the West Vincent Land Trust and French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust hold several public access trail easements on private lands. A realignment of the Horse-Shoe Trail is proposed in the township between Birch Run and Jaine Lane. A 2.1-mile extension of the Brandywine Trail to the Horse-Shoe Trail was proposed along St. Andrews Lane and Birch Run Road in the township's 1992 Open Space and Recreation Plan. An effort is currently underway to identify on-road routes suitable for bicycling in the township.

Trail Planning by Private or Varied Public-Private Owners

The Chester County Trail Inventory identifies another eight trails totaling 13.1 miles as planned by/for various private owners. Homeowners associations—both in North Coventry Township—are expected to own and maintain two of these planned trails. In two other cases, a private owner is expected to remain in place as owner/maintainer. The other six planned trails have various owners. Half of these trails are located in protected open space. These trails are listed below in *Table A4.8* and illustrated on *Map 9*.

Two of these trails are in design or under construction: the Boars Back Segment of the French Creek Trail in Warwick Township, and the Temple Estates Trail in North Coventry Township. All others have simply been proposed. All 10 trails are intended to permit walkers, eight are planned to permit bicyclists, and seven will permit leashed pets. None of these planned trails are known to permit equestrians.

Table A4.8: Trails Planned by/for Private Entities

Trail Name	Status	Length (miles)	Walking	Bicycling	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Owner	Protected Open Space
Boars Back Segment, French Creek Trail	Design/ Construction	2.0	P	P	P	U	P	Various	Yes
Temple Estates Trail	Design/ Construction	0.3	P	P	U	U	P	HOA	No
Boars Back Segment, French Creek Trail	Proposed	1.8	P	P	P	U	P	Various	Yes
Kensworth Association Trail	Proposed	0.9	P	P	U	U	U	HOA	Yes
Kirlin Trail	Proposed	0.6	P	P	P	U	P	Private	Yes
North Coventry Trail Network	Proposed	6.2	P	P	P	U	P	Various	No
Warwick Township Trail Network	Proposed	1.3	P	P	P	U	P	Various	Yes
Total		**13.1**							

P – Permitted; R – Restricted; U – Unknown
Source: Chester County Trail Inventory; Gannett Fleming, Inc.

OTHER IDENTIFIED TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

ADDITIONAL EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Within the Region and the larger Hopewell Big Woods region, there is privately-owned infrastructure for horseback riders, including stables and horse farms. Examples include:

- Ryerss Home for Aged Equines in Coventryville
- Sheeder Mill Horse Farm, open to public riding
- Spring Creek Farm in East Coventry
- Clearview Stable, a full-service equestrian facility in Chester Springs
- Pen-Y-Bryn Equestrian Center Ltd. in Birchrunville
- Journey's End Farm in East Nantmeal
- Wyndsor Farm in Elverson, a full-service boarding and training facility
- Magic Hill Farm in Douglassville, a horse training farm
- Horse Spa Products, a horse equipment store in Elverson

Some of these properties may provide the opportunity to develop additional equestrian trails. At a larger scale, this concentration of equestrian destinations and services could be viewed as an opportunity to bring services and trail planners together and to market the Region to horse-lovers.

A REGIONAL TRAIL LOOP

The Schuylkill River Trail and French Creek Trail, along with the Horse-Shoe Trail, are major east-west "spines" through the Hopewell Big Woods that are anticipated to connect with north-south trails currently under development in the Region and southern Berks County. These trails could form a **Hopewell Big Woods Trail Loop** of about 30 miles through the Hopewell Big Woods, allowing communities and visitors access to a remarkable variety of recreational activity options. The loop

would provide a systematic way to experience all the Hopewell Big Woods has to offer, and an understanding and appreciation of natural and cultural resources through interpretive programming.

Voluntary Access to Agricultural Security Areas

Viewing protected open space from the public right-of-way provides an opportunity for appreciation of the large-scale landscape. It does not however afford the public a more intimate experience with nature. In a few cases, landowners have been willing to allow the public access to their property to view the natural vegetation and wildlife more closely. To date, landowners with an agricultural easement on their property have been prohibited from granting public access for passive recreational use, i.e., trail use, by strict interpretation of the Agricultural Area Security Law.

In 2008, House Bill 2524 was introduced to amend the Agricultural Area Security Law enacted June 30, 1981 (P.L.128, No.43) to allow "the granting of rights-of-way by the owner of the subject land in and through the land for trails for non-motorized use," under the following conditions (Section 14.1.(c)(9)):

- the portion of land does not exceed 20 feet in width,
- the portion of land is used as a trail for non-motorized passive recreational use,
- the portion of land is available to the public for use without charge,
- the use of the portion of land as a trail shall not convert land which is devoted primarily to agricultural production or commercial equine activity, and
- if the owner of land subject to an agricultural conservation easement permits or authorizes the use of a portion of the subject land for a trail, the owner may enter into an agreement with a local government unit or an eligible nonprofit entity permitting or authorizing its use of the portion of land as a trail. The agreement shall be recorded with the county recorder of deeds.

The bill was subsequently referred to the Committee on Agricultural and Rural Affairs.

This prohibition of agriculturally-eased land for non-motorized passive recreation use was raised again during the preparation of *Pennsylvania Outdoors: The Keystone for Healthy Living, the 2009-2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. Finding value in recreational opportunities on state lands and state-funded private lands, PA DCNR developed Recommendation 4.4. Action Step C:

> Work with Department of Agriculture to identify ways to incorporate hiking trails and rails-to-trails on lands under permanent agricultural preservation easements. Review easements and easement policy to determine potential options.

Suggested implementation partners included: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), counties, DCNR, trail groups, Farm Bureau, Penn State Cooperative Extension, and Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA). No action or progress has been publicly reported, though trail groups, like the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, remain hopeful that progress can be made under the new Governor Corbett Administration.

Mandatory Dedication of Parkland for Trails

A review of municipal ordinances for mandatory dedication of parkland requirements demonstrates that several municipalities recognize trails as an appropriate facility for passive parkland and open space but include no specific standards for trail facilities. Provisions in East Coventry Township, East Vincent Township, and South Coventry Township subdivision and land development ordinances

specially mention trails or pedestrian pathways as rationale for connecting passive recreation and open space. North Coventry Township lists "existing trails connecting the tract to other locations in the Township" as one of its prioritized resources to be incorporated into protected open space to the greatest extent possible. West Vincent Township's provisions also support continued use of existing trails on the proposed development tract. East Vincent Township and North Coventry Township specifically mention trails as a suitable use for new parkland areas that do not meet the municipal parkland configuration standards. Only East Pikeland Township's provisions incorporate standards for trail design, construction, maintenance, and dedication.

Analysis of Trail Networks and Potential

Existing Trails, Paths, and Networks

1. The Region offers more than one hundred miles of land and water trails. There are 69 existing trails or paths totaling 82.2 miles on county, municipal and private parklands in the Region. Additional named trails at Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (NHS) and French Creek State Park, the Horse-Shoe Trail, and public-use trails on private lands not currently inventoried by Chester County raise the total to 99.4 miles of existing trails. One water trail, the Schuylkill River Water Trail, offers 18.7 miles of river excursion.

2. There is at least one existing public-use trail or path in every municipality. These include walking paths within parks, neighborhood sidewalk systems, and routes, such as the Horse-Shoe Trail.

3. Municipal and private public-use trails offer a wide range of lengths, ranging from five-mile trails in Coventry Woods and Woody's Woods to more than a dozen trails or trail segments under one-quarter mile. These trails average 1.5 miles in length.

4. Existing trail networks, interconnecting multiple trail segments, are limited to the larger public parks and preserves. Almost 45 miles of named trails (plus many more unnamed segments) are interconnected among Hopewell Furnace NHS, French Creek State Park, and Crow's Nest Preserve. Warwick County Park and Welkinweir both hosts internal loop trails as well as segments of the Horse-Shoe Trail. Serving as trailheads to multi-trail networks, *The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* suggests that Crow's Nest Preserve and Welkinweir could become hubs for information on regional recreational facilities, specifically trails, and information on visitor services.

5. Four regional (multi-municipal) trails that will pass through the Region are under development: the Schuylkill River Trail, the French Creek Trail, the Pickering Creek Trail, and the Brandywine Trail. Upon completion, the Schuylkill River Trail and the French Creek Trail will both provide northwest-southeast travel routes. Interconnection of the Schuylkill River Trail and French Creek Trail, along with the Horse-Shoe Trail and local trails could form a Hopewell Big Woods Trail Loop of about 30 miles, creating a significant trail destination. The Pickering Creek Trail is completed through most of West Pikeland Township and planned through East Pikeland into Charlestown Township. The Brandywine Trail has a north-south orientation between the Horse-Shoe Trail and Marsh Creek State Park.

6. Sidewalks in the Region are extremely limited, offering no significant linkages between home and recreational destinations—except in the vicinity of Kenilworth Park and Riverside Park in North Coventry.

7. The Region offers 29.2 miles of off-road bicycling routes for beginner and intermediate bicyclists. Most of these are hard-surfaced trails suitable for the beginner and recreational bicyclists who prefer or require separation from motor vehicles.

8. The Region offers 34.3 trail miles in eight locations for equestrians. Roughly half of this mileage is the Horse-Shoe Trail. Trails at Crow's Nest Preserve, Warwick County Park, and Coventry Woods comprise the majority of the remaining public trail mileage for equestrian use.

9. The Horse-Shoe Trail is recognized by Chester County as a recreation resource but not as public-use trail, due to its non-public ownership. The Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy is seeking to secure easements and address liability concerns on private property to make the trail truly open to the public, and remove any segments that are still on-road.

10. Multi-use trails reportedly lack facilities and amenities for permitted trail users; trails that permit equestrians are especially lacking in these areas. Vehicular parking is limited at municipal and private trailheads, and restrooms, drinking water, bike parking, and public phones are generally not available. Trash/recycling receptacles are also limited, though several sites have pack-it-in, pack-it-out policies. Horse trailer parking is limited to French Creek State Park (South Entrance Road, Berks County) and Welkinwier. Inappropriate trail surfaces for horses where they are permitted have also been reported as a concern. Mounting blocks for horseback-riders to mount and dismount their horses at the trailhead and at regular intervals along the trails, are also absent, discouraging clean up after their horses. The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan suggests that improvements to parking areas, such as bike parking, a horse trailer parking area and/or hitching posts and a watering trough, as well as trail maps and brochures, could better support users of existing and proposed equestrians trails. Access to running water to rinse horse hooves and minimize the transfer of invasive species has been suggested.

11. Trailhead identification signage and trail blazes are also lacking. Signage along the Schuylkill River has been coordinated by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association and may provide a model for recreational signage throughout the Region.

12. None of the trails in the Region are specifically ADA-accessible. Given the importance of trails as a means to experience the natural and cultural significance of the Region, accessible trail opportunities should be considered.

13. Along the more than 18 miles of riverfront in the Region, there are two public access/landings to the Schuylkill River Water Trail: the Hanover Street Boat Ramp and the Towpath Park Boat Ramp. The next access point is located in Spring City. A third boat ramp is proposed in the Region at the Schuylkill River trailhead at Parker Ford.

14. Trails and paths on private lands are not well known by residents, according to the 2010 public opinion survey.

15. There are no running trails for equestrians and their horses. Interest in such trails is reportedly growing.

16. There are many miles of social trails in the Region. Some residents would like to see social trails permanently protected so that the trails remain in place even as property owners change. Others prefer to keep these routes private.

TRAIL NETWORK PLANNING

17. There are 52 planned trails or trail segments totaling 122.9 miles in the Region; 127.3 miles with recent updates. These planned trails include 60.0 miles of trails in design or under construction and 22.2 miles of trail under feasibility study; most of these segments are part of the Schuylkill River Trail and the French Creek Trail. Another 45.13 miles of trail is proposed for future study and development.

18. If proposed trails in the eastern municipalities were found to be feasible and developed, most residents would have access to a trail within two miles of their home, possibly less. However, not all trails will be feasible.

19. The level of detail, practicality, and development in municipal trail network planning varies widely across the nine municipalities. Nearly all municipalities have considered locations and linkages for such a system. All are challenged to connect dispersed destinations and no significant population center within a single township. Many proposed trail and path locations are "lines on a map" with little to no consideration of physical or political feasibility. Only East Pikeland, North Coventry, and West Pikeland have advanced these concepts to feasibility study and design/construction.

20. Municipal trail networks have focused on connections within each township with little to no linkages to destinations beyond each jurisdiction. For example, a trail along Pigeon Creek is proposed by East Coventry Township but not proposed for the North Coventry Township trail system. The hubs and spokes approach to trail planning has been limited.

21. There are two proposed trail concepts in southern Warwick Township and East Nantmeal Township. The Warwick-Elverson Regional Recreation Corridor listed in Chseter County's *Linking Landscapes* could provide a trail along this municipal border. The proposed Western Loop in East Nantmeal suggests that other loop trails may be considered. Connections among Nantmeal Village, Welkinweir, French Creek Elementary School, the Horse-Shoe Trail, and Ludwig's Corner in West Vincent Township should be considered.

22. Off-road bicycling trails could total more than 100 miles as more trails are studied and constructed. Of the 127.3 miles of known planned trails, 80.5 miles will permit bicycling on paved surface trails and some dirt and compacted surface trails.

23. Trails that permit equestrians could total 57.5 miles, as another 23.4 miles of trail is planned for equestrian use. More than fifteen miles of equestrian trails will be added to the North Coventry Trail Network. Nearly two miles of the proposed Schuylkill River Trail and nearly four miles of the Boars Back Trail will be open to equestrian use.

24. ADA accessibility is listed as "unknown" for nearly all planned trails and "along roadway" as the location for nearly half of the planned trails. Given that many of the "along roadway" locations are

heavily-used local roads, the proposal to use them as trail routes raises concern for the safety of trail users and motorists. Each of these "along roadway" trails should carefully study the physical conditions and use of the roadway as part of its feasibility and design studies. If designed as shared-use paths that provide transportation per the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board and constructed with federal monies, these trails will have to meet ADA accessibility standards.

Related Trail Needs and Opportunities

25. Trail easements need consistent monitoring and enforcement. This has been a recent focus of the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust for the easements it holds.

26. Together, the Schuylkill River Trail and the Schuylkill River Water Trail offer tremendous opportunities for environmental education and stewardship of natural resources, and consequently, eco-tourism prospects.

27. Education is needed for trail users on topics such as trail etiquette (travel speed, right-of-way, etc.) toward other trail users on multi-use trails, trail use (rest) during wet weather conditions, and respect for property owners.

28. Direction to nearest available facilities for non-permitted users, e.g. mountain bikers and ATV riders, is also needed.

29. Education is also needed for private landowners, regarding protection from liability as provided under Pennsylvania's Recreation Use of Land and Water Act.

30. A relative concentration of equestrian services, including stables and horse farms, is available in the Region and surroundings. These lands may represent potential locations or community support for the development of additional equestrian trails in the Region, as well as the opportunity to market the Region as an equestrian trail destination or community.

31. State legislators and PA DCNR have suggested that lands under permanent agricultural preservation easements could be voluntarily made available to the public for non-motorized passive recreational use. An amendment to the Agricultural Area Security Law would likely be needed and was proposed in House Bill 2524 of 2008.

32. Provisions in several municipal ordinances recognize trails as an appropriate facility for passive parkland and open space but only East Pikeland's ordinance includes specific standards for trail design, construction, maintenance, and dedication.

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INTRODUCTION

Natural resources in the Northern Chester County region (the Region) have long been valued. Land and water resources have been employed in the Region's settlement and development, evident in designated historic districts, sites, and buildings, and they continue to support its working agricultural and forest landscapes. Their continued presence, high quality, and pattern contribute to the Region's scenic character that residents appreciate and desire to conserve. Appendix 4 presents information about natural and cultural resources in the Region. Data were drawn from various state, county, and private sources as indicated.

NATURAL RESOURCES

WATER RESOURCES

Map 3, Water Resources, shows the location of streams, floodplains, and potential wetlands by watershed in the Region. It also illustrates the location of the historic Schuylkill River Canal.

RIVERS AND STREAMS

The Schuylkill River and its tributaries, French Creek and Pickering Creek, as well as Marsh Creek, which flows into the East Brandywine Creek, drain the Region. These 18.7 miles of the Schuylkill River and 86 miles of streams were essential to its historical development. Streams supported coal and iron production and powered mills, while the river and canal provided transportation to markets.

Rivers and streams are classified in several ways. Waterways are classified into several habitat types based on water flow: tidal, lower perennial, upper perennial, and intermittent. They are classified by size and their location in hierarchy of drainage toward the river, e.g., first order, second order, etc. Waterways are also classified by water quality or biotic health by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in response to the anti-degradation policy created by U.S. Department of the Interior and Environmental Protection Agency water quality standards regulations from 1983. Classifications are made for a river's or stream's designated use, such as aquatic life, fish consumption, recreation, and potable water supply (desired as policy, not necessarily attained); existing use (as attained since 1975 and which can be more protective than the designated use); and waters of such high quality that they warrant "special protection."[1] Four uses and two "special protection waters" designations are described below.

- CWF Cold Water Fisheries – Maintenance or propagation, or both, of fish species and additional flora and fauna which are indigenous to a cold water habitat, such as the trout. Many times this classification is based on the presence or absence of trout.

- WWF Warm Water Fisheries – Maintenance and propagation of fish species and additional flora and fauna which are indigenous to a warm water habitat. This classification is often times looked at as "the bottom of the barrel" but this is not the case. A warm water fishery simply means it is a water body that supports fish, plants, and animals that thrive and prefer warmer temperatures (above 70 degrees F) such as bass and sunfish.

- MF Migratory Fishes Passage – Maintenance and propagation of fishes which ascend to flowing waters to complete their life cycle, including reproduction. Some of them live in streams and reproduce in the ocean (catadromous) like American Eels, and others live in the ocean and reproduce in streams (anadromous) like the American Shad.

- TSF Trout Stocking Fisheries – Maintenance of stocked trout from February 15 to July 31 and maintenance and TSF propagation of fish species and additional flora and fauna which are indigenous to a warm water habitat.

- EV Exceptional Value – DEP testing must show a high biotic integrity and health with test data from over a one-year period to obtain this rank. EV streams include all streams that flow through state natural areas or federally-protected wilderness areas, other waters that receive a score of 92 percent biotic integrity ranking, and wilderness trout streams. Once a stream has been defined in such a way, the stream is protected in that DEP regulation does not permit uses along the stream that would lead to any degradation of the stream quality.

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[1] *Wildlife Habitat in Pennsylvania: Past, Present, and Future,* accessed at http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/wlhabitat/acknowledge.aspx on May 10, 2011.

- HQ High Quality – DEP testing must show a macro-invertebrate community score of 83 percent or better, or it must be a state-designated class A trout stream. HQ streams are defined as still sustaining cold water fisheries. Most of the HQ and EV watersheds are located where forest cover is abundant.

The combination of use and special protection designations results in 13 potential classifications:

- CWF – Cold Water Fishery
- CWF, MF – Cold Water Fishery; Migratory Fishery
- EV – Exceptional Value
- EV, MF – Exceptional Value, Migratory Fishery
- HQ-CWF – High Quality, Cold Water Fishery
- HQ-CWF, MF – High Quality, Cold Water Fishery, Migratory Fishery
- HQ-TSF – High Quality, Trout Stocked Fishery
- HQ-TSF, MF – High Quality, Trout Stocked Fishery, Migratory Fishery
- HQ-WWF – High Quality, Warm Water Fishery
- TSF – Trout Stocked Fishery
- TSF, MF – Trout Stocked Fishery, Migratory Fishery
- WWF – Warm Water Fishery
- WWF, MF – Warm Water Fishery, Migratory Fishery

Waterways are also classified as attaining (supporting) or not attaining their designated use(s) based on their water quality conditions, i.e., point and non-point source pollutants. The designated use, existing use (if it exceeds the designated use), the most protective use(s) supported, and any use limitations for each of the major waterways in Northern Chester County are shown in *Table A5.1.*

Table A5.1: PA DEP Designated Uses of Major Waterways in Northern Chester County

Waterway	Designated Use	Existing Use (if exceeds Designated Use)	Status of Support for Most Protective Use(s)
Schuylkill River – Main Stem, Little Schuylkill River to Head of Tide	WWF, MF		Supporting aquatic life and potable water supply; fish consumption use impaired by presence of PCBs.
Pickering Creek – Source to Philadelphia Suburban Water Company Dam	HQ-TSF, MF		Supporting aquatic life.
French Creek – Source to Beaver Run	EV, MF		Supporting aquatic life; supporting recreational use in headwaters only; recreational use of South Branch impaired by the presence of pathogens.
Beaver Run	HQ-TSF, MF	EV; last evaluated 2004	Supporting aquatic life.
French Creek – Beaver Run to the Junction	HQ-TSF, MF	EV from Beaver Run to second/last entry	Supporting aquatic life.

Waterway	Designated Use	Existing Use (if exceeds Designated Use)	Status of Support for Most Protective Use(s)
of West Vincent, East Vincent, and East Pikeland township borders		into East Pikeland Township; last evaluated 2004	
Birch Run	EV, MF		Supporting; recreational use impaired by the presence of pathogens.
Stony Run	HQ-TSF, MF		Supporting; recreational use impaired by the presence of pathogens.
Pigeon Creek	HQ-TSF, MF		Supporting aquatic life.
Marsh Creek	HQ-TSF, MF		Supporting aquatic life.

Source: EmapPA, at http://www.dep.state.pa.us, accessed May 11, 2011.

The Schuylkill River drains the northeastern portion through direct flow, several small unnamed tributaries, and two named tributaries, Pigeon Creek and Stony Run.

PA DEP has designated the river as a warm water fishery. It has also listed the river as impaired for fish consumption by polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) has been established to manage further PCB pollution of the river. Other tributary impairments include an unnamed tributary passing through Kenilworth impaired for aquatic life by flow alterations, flow variability, and siltation caused by residential development. Another unnamed tributary in East Vincent is impaired for aquatic life by nutrients (phosphorus from agricultural activities in the watershed) for which a TMDL has been established. The TMDL establishes the maximum annual load at 238 pounds per year and the daily load at 0.65 pounds per day.

Both larger tributaries, Pigeon Creek and Stony Run, are designated as High Quality, though recreational use of Stony Run is limited by pathogens. Pigeon Creek has been classified as a Biodiversity Corridor by Chester County and that the Township is working to conserve land adjacent to it through acquisitions.

French Creek drains the central portion of the Region from west to east, exiting from East Pikeland and flowing to its confluence with the Schuylkill River at Phoenixville. Its named tributaries include Pine Creek, Rock Run, South Branch, Beaver Run, and Birch Run. Stream segments upstream of Beaver Run and Birch Run are designated by PA DEP as Exceptional Value. Downstream segments are designated as High Quality. Assessments confirm that water quality is supporting aquatic life in nearly all segments. Portions are approved for trout stocking. However, the South Branch and Birch Run are impaired for recreational use by unknown sources of pathogens.

Pickering Creek drains the southeastern portion of the Region. Its sole named tributary in the Region is Pine Creek. All segments are designated as High Quality and assessments confirm that water quality is supporting aquatic life. Portions are approved for trout stocking.

Marsh Creek drains a small portion of East Nantmeal into the East Brandywine Creek watershed. Its sole named tributary in the Region is Lyon Run. Assessments have tentatively confirmed that water quality is supporting aquatic life in all segments. However, a TMDL to manage PCBs in the Delaware River Basin and a TMDL to manage low flow in the Christian River Basin have been established across these watersheds.

Stream ReLeaf

Stream ReLeaf plantings, a program of the Pennsylvania DEP, are intended to restore and conserve riparian buffers along Pennsylvania streams and improve water quality. Six Stream ReLeaf projects have been completed along French Creek. Two Stream ReLeaf projects have been completed along a small, unnamed tributary in North Coventry, and five have been completed along Pigeon Creek.

Floodplains

As the fluctuating interface between the land and dynamic water resources, floodplains and wetlands are found alongside these water bodies. Floodplains are found along the main stem of all four major waterways in the Region. While minor flooding can occur with any storm event, anticipated flood elevations are determined for a storm that has a one percent annual chance of occurrence, designated as the 100-year floodplain. Locations susceptible to more severe flooding associated with a storm that has a 0.2 percent annual chance of occurrence, the 500-year floodplain, are found only along the Schuylkill River. One-hundred and 500-year floodplain locations are shown on *Map 3*.

Zoning regulations in all nine municipalities manage the uses, activities, and development that are permitted in the floodplain. All regulations are purposed to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare and to minimize property damage and associated impacts to the tax base. Some aim to protect surface and subsurface water supplies, prevent the disruption of activities and services, and minimize public expenditures for flood protection and relief.

North Coventry and Warwick purpose statements recognize the floodplain's vital function in natural drainage and critical conditions (porosity and permeability) in storing and absorbing flood waters and providing areas for the deposition of flood-borne sediment. East Pikeland regulations also aim to protect and preserve the waterway and its habitat, as well as the scenic character of the streams and stream valleys.

Wetlands

According to the National Wetlands Inventory, 2,150 acres of wetlands cover 2.9 percent of the Region, as shown on *Map 3*. They vary from less than one acre to 74 acres in size. Riverine or river-based wetlands are located along the Schuylkill River and its floodplains, while Freshwater Emergent and Freshwater Forested Shrub wetlands, including some farm ponds, are found in lowland locations. The two most significant wetland areas in the Region are the Great Marsh and the nearly contiguous areas along French Creek and its tributaries upstream of Beaver Run. Due to their function in flood control,

water filtration, groundwater recharge, water supply, and wildlife habitat, wetlands are considered to be a constraint to development. Their protection is regulated by state and federal law.

NATURAL AREAS

Map 4, Natural Areas, illustrates three natural community types designated in the Region: natural areas/communities, important bird areas, and important mammal areas.

The *Chester County Natural Areas Inventory (1994)*,[2] prepared by the Pennsylvania Science Office of The Nature Conservancy, contains information on the locations of rare, threatened, and endangered species and the highest quality natural areas in the county. The information and maps presented in the report are intended as a guide for planning community development and parks, for conserving natural areas, and for developing priorities for the protection of vulnerable natural areas in the county.

Twelve sites are located in the Region, as presented in *Table A5.2*. Site #11, Great Marsh, and Site #114, Pine Swamp, are ranked fifth and sixth, respectively, as sites of statewide significance for the protection of biological diversity in Chester County. Additionally, the Warwick County Park Floodplain Forest and Seeps and St. Peters Woods are listed as areas of high county significance, though they do not include high quality natural communities or species of special concern.

Table A5.2: Natural Areas

Site	Name	Size	Significance / Threats
5	Sportsman Club Site	16.1	This site along a powerline right-of-way contained very small populations of two Pennsylvania rare species (SP554 and SP557). Management of the right-of-way and weedy species, Japanese honeysuckle and stilt grass, may be a threat to these populations.
6	Dorrance Estate	15.2	Two species (SP555 and SP556) are located on a slight slope in a weedy wet meadow in poorly-drained silty soil on a shale-conglomerate substrate. The wet meadow is located among mixed woods and is succeeding to a woodland, which will likely shade out these populations over time.
7	Rock Run Thicket	120.8	SP503, found in a wet floodplain thicket and swamp forest along the south side of Harmonyville Road and east of Rock Run, does not warrant protection action. Encouraging the landowner to maintain the wetland and floodplain vegetation does help to protect Rock Run water quality.
8	Trythall Woods	70.1	This Circumneutral Seep natural community is within a mature 16-acre beech-tulip-poplar woodlot. There are about 20 seeps found on this diabase (traprock) ridge on lands managed by the Natural Lands Trust. Management concerns include: 1) maintenance of the forest overstory at the seeps and in the upper part of the watershed above the seeps; 2) protection from over-browsing by deer; 3) impacts from uphill residential properties on water quality and quantity.

[2] *Chester County Natural Areas Inventory, 1994*. The Nature Conservancy.

Site	Name	Size	Significance / Threats
9	Warwick Seeps	62.2	This Circumneutral Seepage Swamp natural community is a 15-acre mosaic of wooded uplands and seeps at the base of a diabase ridge. Species diversity and forest age are high. No rare plants or animals have been located here but further searching is warranted. The site could be an ideal local nature preserve because of the easy access afforded it from the abandoned rail line.
11	Great Marsh	2,953.3	This wetland complex contains Graminoid Marsh and Circumneutral Shrub Swamp natural communities, as well as some successional wet meadow and swamp forest habitats. This is the largest freshwater marsh and wetland complex in southeastern Pennsylvania. Four animals of concern are currently known to be using the wetland complex. Approximately 150 bird species utilize the marsh for nesting and foraging or during migration. There are numerous accounts of rare or declining bird species that have nested here in the past, some of which may still nest here. Common reed (Phraqmites australis), multiflora rose, and other weeds have become established here following ditching and other disturbance, severely degrading the communities in some areas of the wetland. The lower end of the marsh has been inundated by waters backed up by a dam. This has created the open water areas and marsh which have been beneficial to many forms of wildlife. Monitoring and maintenance of the dam will be necessary for continued high value of the marsh and open water areas. Much of Great Marsh is under an easement to the Brandywine Conservancy, French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and some of the marsh is owned by TNC. Protection of upland buffers and water sources is needed to protect the marsh and its inhabitants. This site has potential to be a township or county nature preserve.
96	Trythall Road Wetland	35.9	n/a
97	Warwick County Park Seeps	883.1	n/a
105	Pigeon Run Wetland	26.6	This locally-significant site is a fairly large wetland complex on the floodplain of Pigeon Run, which may have been caused by the construction of a power line. No rare species are currently known at this site but more searching for plants and animals is warranted. Maintaining the forest cover is important to protecting the quality of the site. Fencing around the wetland to exclude streamside grazing has helped to prevent erosion and nutrient loading into the swamp. The area provides valuable open space and wildlife habitat and serves as flood and water pollution control as well.
108	Warwick County Park Floodplain Forest & Seeps	157.6	This site is a diverse wooded area of mature trees, understory and herbaceous layer, and seepage wetlands. No known species of special concern are known from this site but there is potential because of the high diversity.

Site	Name	Size	Significance / Threats
			Forest management should continue to be limited to selective harvest and kept well away from the floodplain and the seeps on the hillside leading down to the floodplain. The forested floodplain helps maintain the water quality of French Creek which does harbor a fairly rare aquatic plant species. The creek and the floodplain woods are recreational resources for residents of the township and county. This site offers a good opportunity for environmental education and a nature trail; a boardwalk may be needed to minimize visitor impact.
109	St. Peters Woods	67.1	This site located to the west of French Creek at St. Peters Village is a locally-significant example of a talus slope forest natural community. The steep slope contains mixed hardwoods and hemlock growing among large diabase (traprock) boulders. The oldest trees appear to be about 75 to 100 years old. The area is known for the scenic French Creek Falls, where the creek tumbles over boulders on its descent to the valley. Left in woodland, the site will continue to serve as a unique example of this woodland type in the county, to provide scenic and recreational value and to serve as a buffer along French Creek, home to at least one plant species of special concern (SP515). Not logging within this site is the best way to maintain the area's unique qualities and its potential for rare species.
114	Pine Swamp	523.2	This site contains an Acidic Broadleaf Swamp natural community and supports a globally-rare plant species. Five other plants of special concern occur in the surrounding wetland plant communities. Part of the swamp is within French Creek State Park but most of the land is privately held. Protection of the swamp and its contributing water resources will require easements on surrounding land in the watershed and possibly ownership of the most critical habitats. Management will require not only maintaining the forested swamp but also the diversity of communities within the wetland and monitoring the populations of the rare species that inhabit the various wetland types.

Source: Chester County Natural Areas Inventory, 1994

Important Bird and Important Mammal Areas

The Important Bird Areas Program[3] is a global effort to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and biodiversity. By working with Audubon chapters, landowners, public agencies, community groups, and other nonprofits, the National Audubon Society endeavors to activate a broad network of supporters to ensure that all Important Bird Areas in the U.S. are properly managed and conserved.

Important Bird Areas, or IBAs, are sites that provide essential habitat for one or more species of bird. IBAs include sites for breeding, wintering, and/or migrating birds. IBAs may be a few acres or thousands of acres with distinctive features. They may include public or private lands, or both. If privately owned, they may be protected or unprotected. To qualify as an IBA, sites must satisfy at least one of the following criteria. The site must support

- species of conservation concern (e.g., threatened and endangered species);
- restricted-ranges species (species vulnerable because they are not widely distributed);
- species that are vulnerable because their populations are concentrated in one general habitat type or biome, or
- species, or groups of similar species (such as waterfowl or shorebirds), that are vulnerable because they occur at high densities due to their congregatory behavior.

The two IBA sites in the Region, the Great Marsh and the Hay Creek–French Creek Forest Block, have both core and buffer areas, as shown on *Map 4, Natural Areas*. The core of the Great Marsh IBA extends into East Nantmeal for 507.58 acres with an adjacent buffer area of 3,257.49 acres along its border with West Nantmeal and Wallace. The Hay Creek–French Creek Forest Block has two core areas—one in North Coventry and one spanning South Coventry and Warwick—totaling 7,900.91 acres with a connecting buffer area of 10,612.94 acres just in Northern Chester County, plus additional area in Berks County. Descriptions of the two local IBAs are presented in *Table A5.3.*

Both IBA sites in the Region are fully recognized by the program and hold a state-level priority or significance. Recognized IBAs have been announced to the public through a public ceremony, press release, or some other mechanism that makes it widely known that this site is part of a global network of places identified for their outstanding value to bird conservation. Recognition may mean that a landowner has been notified and has approved of the fact that the property has been identified as an IBA; however, recognition does not require landowner approval.

The Important Mammal Areas Project, IMAP,[4] was created by the Mammal Technical Committee of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey (PABS). IMAP was a joint partnership of the National Wildlife

[3] Audubon website, http://web4.audubon.org/bird/iba/, accessed February 23, 2011.
[4] The Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation, http://www.pawildlife.org/imap.htm, accessed February 23, 2011.

Federation, Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation, Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Mammal Technical Committee/PABS, and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. The pilot IMAP conservation plan was completed for Pennsylvania, and will be used as a model to protect critical mammal habitat throughout North America.

The Hopewell Big Woods region has been identified as an Important Mammal Area, as listed in *Table A5.4*; individual sites are found throughout all nine municipalities in the Region as shown on *Map 4, Natural Areas*. The three largest sites in fact lie within the French Creek Watershed in East Pikeland.

Table A5.3: Important Bird Areas

Site	Name	Size	Significance / Threats
#71	Great Marsh	2,400	Great Marsh is the largest and most biologically diverse inland freshwater marsh in eastern Pennsylvania and the most significant wetland in Chester County's Natural Area Inventory. The marsh contains a 2,500-acre marshland complex within a broader 5,000-acre watershed on a privately owned site. The site includes shrub swamps, swamp forests, and a corridor of floodplain forest extending to the reservoir at Marsh Creek State Park. Industrialization/Urbanization may threaten the site.
#74	Hay Creek – French Creek Forest Block	12,000	This site large block of relatively unfragmented, low elevation forest with abundant "interior forest birds" is owned by varied municipal, state, federal, and private landowners. Industrialization/urbanization, including heavy recreational development; local introduction of non-indigenous species; and quarries at the site perimeter may threaten the site.

Source: Audubon website, http://web4.audubon.org/bird/iba/

Table A5.4: Important Mammal Areas

Site	Name	Size	Ownership	Significance / Threats
#31	Hopewell Big Woods	73,000 +	Various	This vast forested area comprises the watersheds of French Creek, Sixpenny Creek, and Hay Creek. These high-value streams maintain native Brook trout populations and provide clean drinking water for the Philadelphia Metropolitan area. The area also contains a unique broadleaf acidic swamp, globally-rare plants and animals and other unique geological features. Industrialization/urbanization may threaten the site.

Source: The Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation, http://www.pawildlife.org/imap.htm

WORKING LANDSCAPES

Map 5, Working Landscapes, selectively illustrates agricultural and forested lands. The working and other agricultural lands are based on Chester County's tax assessment data and tallied in *Table A5.5*.

Forest and agricultural lands are sometimes considered undeveloped, implying that these lands are not used for their highest and best use. But in fact these lands naturally produce the raw materials for the wood and wood products industry—a staple of the construction industry, and the food and food products industry. The age of many woodlands in Chester County increases the likelihood of nails and other materials, deterring harvesters, but the three cheese makers and two wineries are renowned food producers:

- Amazing Acres Goat Dairy on Grove Road in Warwick.
- Birch Run Hills Farm on Horse-Shoe Trail in West Vincent.
- Yellow Springs Farm Native Plant Nursery and Artisanal Goat Cheese Dairy on Yellow Springs Road in Chester Springs, West Pikeland.
- Clover Mill Farm, Vineyards and Winery, LLC, on Clover Mill Road in Chester Springs, West Pikeland.
- J. Maki Winery on Grove Road in Warwick.

As such, these lands are the basis for substantial portions of the economy. A more appropriate term for these productive and largely unbuilt lands is "working landscapes."

Table A5.5: Working Landscapes

Landscape Type	Acres	Percent of Region	Parcels	Percent of Parcels
Forested/Woodlands	26,288	35.02%	7,096	36.72%
Total Agricultural Land	16,839	22.43%	644	3.33%
Working Agricultural Land	10,851	14.45%	259	1.34%
Other Agricultural Land	5,988	7.98%	385	1.99%

Source: Gannett Fleming, Inc.

The value of the lands is in their production, since these uses are so fundamental to the contemporary society and the economy, as well as in their indirect value as "undeveloped" lands. *Return on Environment: The Economic Value of Protected Open Space in Southeastern Pennsylvania* demonstrates how protecting land from development saves public and private spending on health care, recreation, and infrastructure.

SCENIC FEATURES

Many natural resources contribute to scenic character. Scenic character is often viewed as a subjective judgment. However, when linked to specified conditions and criteria, scenic character can be measured and more objectively evaluated. Topography, surface water, vegetation, and wildlife are the most commonly cited resources. Dark, unpolluted skies are necessary to view stars. *Map 6, Scenic Features*, depicts designated scenic features and viewing areas in the Region.

TOPOGRAPHY AND SLOPE

Topography creates vertical relief that separates one space from another. This relief separates uplands from lowlands and controls the viewshed. Steeper relief generally creates more dramatic views, though expanses of gently rolling patterns can be equally appealing. Slopes of 15 percent or more are found in all nine municipalities along the waterways and scattered throughout upland locations. Some steeply-sloped areas are relatively small, such as those found in East Pikeland and West Pikeland. Other steeply-sloped areas cover a much larger area, such as those in the upper French Creek and Pigeon Creek watersheds. It is primarily in this western portion of the Region that several municipalities have identified "scenic roads" that offer picturesque views to the adjacent landscape from a motorist's perspective. East Nantmeal and East Coventry have also identified scenic vistas along these roadways.

SCHUYLKILL AND FRENCH CREEK SCENIC RIVERS

In 1978, the main stem of the Schuylkill River was designated as a Pennsylvania Scenic River for the historical and cultural significance of its watershed and its free-flowing, relatively high quality waters—the first scenic river designated under Pennsylvania's Scenic River Act. Approximately 1,390 acres of Northern Chester County are included in this designation. In 1982, French Creek received the same designation for 9,319 acres of land along its banks. This special status publicly recognizes the value of the creek's resources and requires state and federal agencies to follow local management guidelines as they carry out land and water management activities and governmental oversight, including regulations and permitting. In 1984, the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities prepared the French Creek Scenic River Management Guidelines to guide development "in the context of the ecological, cultural, and aesthetic quality of the stream area." As such, the guidelines address land use and design standards for development and were intended to be implemented locally through municipal ordinances.

Through not state-designated, other water bodies throughout the Region also contribute to its scenic character, as they highlight the local topography, native vegetation, and seasonal conditions.

VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

The Region's natural and cultivated vegetation further contributes to its scenic beauty through its seasonal variability. The woodlands burst into bright leaf and bloom in spring, settle into subtle shades of green in summer, blaze with warm colors in fall, and display their minimalist structure in winter.

Agricultural fields and vineyards display similar seasonal changes to crops organized at the hand of the grower. This seasonal variability, in combination with light, weather, and time of day, distinguishes any one day's view from another.

Glimpses of local wildlife are seasonal, too. Only in March can you find Spotted and Jefferson salamanders, Wood frogs, Spring peepers, and American toads crossing St. Peters Road from the vernal pools in the forest to the safety of French Creek State Park (aided by a crew of volunteer citizen crossing guards). Only in summer can you follow Monarch butterflies throughout the arboretum. Only in winter do the red-crested wings of the Red-winged blackbird stand out from the muted grays and browns of nature's landscape at rest.

Dark Skies

As urbanization has increased in Northern Chester County, it has become more difficult to fully view the stars in the nighttime sky. The need for illumination of public, semi-public, and even private properties to enable surveillance and convey a sense of security has concentrated outdoor lighting in the most urban areas and introduced light fixtures to every major road corridor, even in rural areas of the Region. Where lighting fixtures are well designed and properly installed, the goals of lighting are achieved. However, poor design and improper installation can lead to light pollution and extensive negative impacts on wildlife and vegetation, as well as unnecessary economic expense. Where roads and properties rise with the topography, these effects can be experienced from miles away.

The Four Components of Light Pollution

- **Urban sky glow –** the brightening of the night sky over inhabited areas due to lighting in unoccupied buildings, outdoor lights pointing up to the sky, or unshielded lights.
- **Light trespass –** light falling where it is not intended, wanted, or needed.
- **Glare –** excessive brightness which causes visual discomfort. High levels of glare can decrease visibility.
- **Clutter –** bright, confusing, and excessive groupings of light sources, commonly found in over-lit urban areas. The proliferation of clutter contributes to urban sky glow, trespass, and glare.

Source: International Dark-Sky Association

Skies in Northern Chester County are darker than in the central and eastern portions of the county, though far brighter than much of the state, according to the Light Pollution Science and Technology Institute, which maps artificial night sky brightness and studies its impacts. Artificial night sky brightness maps, such as the one shown in *Figure 1*, allow comparison of levels of light pollution in the atmosphere, to recognize more and less polluted areas and to identify the more polluting districts and

the bigger sources.[5] These maps do not give information on star visibility, however, the color indicators approximates that:

- Black - Close to the natural sky brightness.
- Blue - Artificial sky brightness is more than 10% above the natural level.
- Green - Artificial sky brightness is more than 33% above the natural level.
- Yellow - Artificial sky brightness is equal to the natural level. (Total sky brightness is double.)
- Orange - The Milky Way is no longer visible. (Artificial sky brightness is 3 - 9 times the natural level.)
- Red - Less than a hundred stars are visible. (Artificial sky brightness is 9 - 27 times the natural level.)
- White - The North Star is no longer visible. Only the moon, the brightest planets, and about 25 of the brightest stars are visible. (Artificial sky brightness is 27 - 81 times the natural level.)

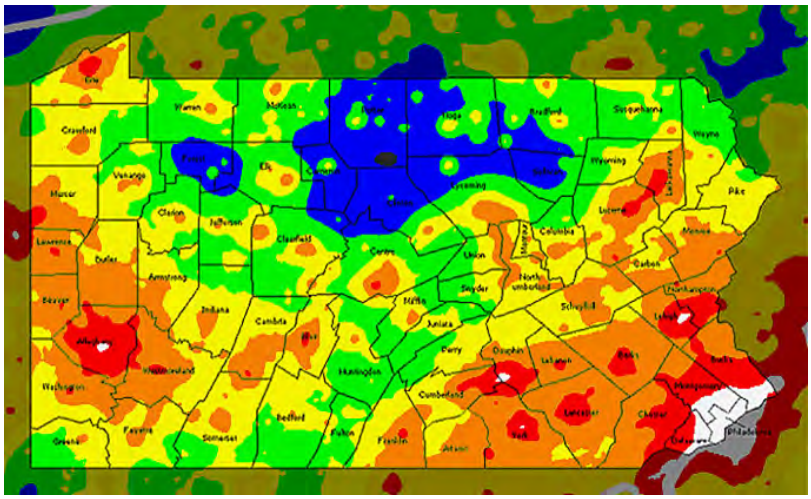

Figure 1: Artificial Night Sky Brightness Map of Pennsylvania
Source: Pennsylvania Outdoor Lighting Council

Similarly, a nighttime satellite image acquired by the International Dark-Sky Association and derived for Pennsylvania by the Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomers, *Figure 2*, shows Northern Chester County in a dark pocket between the nearby metropolitan areas of Lancaster, Reading, and the greater Philadelphia area.

[5] Pennsylvania Outdoor Lighting Council, www.polcouncil.org, accessed February 25, 2011.

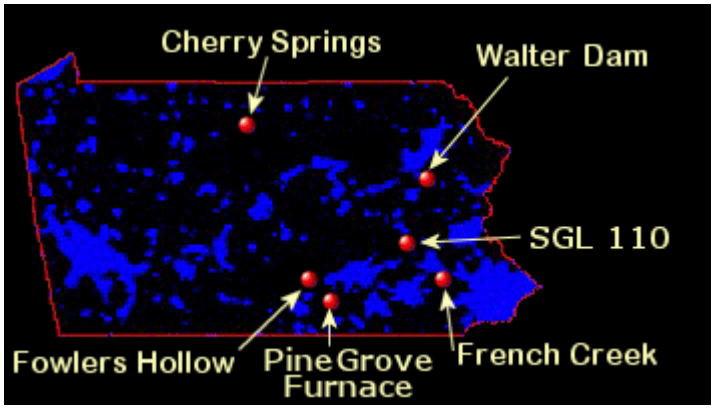

Figure 2: Nighttime Satellite Image of Pennsylvania
Source: International Dark-Sky Association, derived for Pennsylvania by the Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomers

As evidence of the dark skies still found in Northern Chester County, three observatories are located in the Region. The State Game Lands Observatory (the target range on State Game Lands 43), used by the Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomers, and the private Watch Where You Step Observatory are located in Warwick. The private Dark Horse Observatory is located in East Vincent. Given the expansive forest cover designated as Hopewell Big Woods, Warwick may be the darkest place in Chester County.

CULTURAL FEATURES

SITES ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Map 10, Historic Sites and Heritage Facilities Map, *Table A5.6, National Register Districts*, and *Table A5.7, National Register Buildings and Sites* present sites and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places and located in or near Northern Chester County.

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of properties recognized for their significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. The National Register Program was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identity, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. National Register properties include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects. They can be significant to a local community, a state, an Indian tribe, or the nation as a whole. Listing, and

even nomination, of properties often changes the way communities perceive their historic resources and gives credibility to efforts to preserve these resources as irreplaceable parts of the community.[6]

Spatial data from the National Park Service shows 38 historic sites and 16 historic districts in Northern Chester County. Data from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission lists two additional districts and one additional building. Districts are found in all nine municipalities and their periods of significance span from 1700 to 1949. The majority of districts are significant for their architecture. Individual National Register-listed historic buildings and sites found in eight of the nine municipalities (none in North Coventry) present a full array of structures associated with early settlement life: homes, farms, mills, churches and social halls, and bridges. The majority are significant for their architectural style, dating from as early as 1700 to as late as 1974.

Table A5.6: Districts on the National Register of Historic Places

Historic District Name and Contents[7]	Topic and Period of Significance[8,9]	Municipal Location
Birchrunville Historic District 193 acres, 53 buildings, 1 structure	For architecture and commerce, 1800-1924	West Vincent Township
Chester Springs Historic District Also known as Good News Buildings Yellow Springs Spa 145 acres, 7 buildings, 1 structure	For architecture, social history, art, and military, 1800-1849	West Pikeland Township
Coventryville Historic District 338 acres	For industry (Warwick (iron) Furnace) and architecture, 1700-1749 and 1875-1899	South Coventry Township, Warwick Township
French Creek Farm Also known as Aman Farm 20 acres, 4 buildings	For architecture, 1750-1824	West Vincent Township
Fricks Locks Historic District 18 acres, 12 buildings, 10 structures	For transportation (canal) and architecture, 1750-1949	East Coventry Township
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site; Hopewell Village National Historic Site 848 acres, 24 buildings, 15 structures	For industry, military, and architecture, 1750-1899	Warwick Township
Kimberton Village Historic District 40 acres, 3 buildings	For architecture, education, commerce, 1700 to 1799; 18th- and 19th-century stone buildings in Chester County vernacular architecture and post-Civil War lot pattern around the railroad station	East Pikeland Township
Kimberton Historic District (Boundary	For architecture, transportation,	East Pikeland Township

[6] Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, *National Register of Historic Places Fact Sheet*.
[7] http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com, accessed March 9, 2011.
[8] Ibid.
[9] http://www.livingplaces.com, accessed March 9, 2011.

Historic District Name and Contents[7]	Topic and Period of Significance[8,9]	Municipal Location
Increase) 44 acres, 46 buildings, 2 structures	education, and commerce, 1750-1924	
Middle Pickering Rural Historic District; Pickering & Pigeon Run Rural Historic District Also known as Stonorov, Oskar G., House 1,055 acres, 76 buildings, 15 structures	For architecture, agriculture, exploration/settlement, 1750-1949	Pikeland, Yellow Springs, Merlin, Church and Pickering Roads in East Pikeland Township, West Pikeland Township, Charlestown Township
North Warwick Historic and Archeological District 1,849 acres, 55 buildings, 13 structures, 1 object	For historic-non-aboriginal, historic-aboriginal, architecture, exploration/settlement, industry, from 3499 BC to 1949 AD	Warwick Township
Parker's Ford 8 acres, 5 buildings, 1 structure	For transportation and commerce, 1750 -1824	East Vincent Township
Pottstown Landing Historic District 22 acres, 76 buildings	18th, 19th, and 20th century buildings, representing Colonial Farmhouse, conservative Victorian Gothic, Bungalow and American Four-Square, and Century Revivals or American Movements	North Coventry Township
Prizer's Mill Complex 4 acres, 5 buildings, 2 structures	For industry, 1750-1799 and 1875-1899	East Pikeland Township
Reading Furnace Historic District 13 acres, 7 buildings, 1 structure	For architecture, 1700-1749, 1800-1824, 1900-1949, namely a mansion house, built in 1744 and expanded in 1812 and 1936; a tenant house, barn, large shed, and three outbuildings built between 1740 and 1820	East Nantmeal Township, Warwick Township
Rice—Pennebecker Farm Also known as Fox Meadow Farm; Hench, Johannes Farm 42 acres, 4 buildings, 1 structure	For architecture and agriculture, 1750-1874	West Pikeland Township
St. Peters Village Historic District 70 acres, 30 buildings, 6 structures	For architecture and industry, 1825-1974, namely a late 19th century industrial company village including the mining site, worker housing, and tradesmen shops	Warwick Township
Warwick Furnace/Farms 786 acres, 13 buildings	For architecture, industry, agriculture, 1700-1749	East Nantmeal Township
West Vincent Highlands Historic District 1,986 acres, 147 buildings, 6 structures	For agriculture and architecture, 1700 to 1949	West Vincent Township
Total: 5,314 acres, 491 buildings, 47 structures		

Source: National Park Service; National Register of Historic Places.com; Living Places.com

Table A5.7: Buildings and Sites on the National Register of Historic Places

Historic Building or Site Name	Area and Period of Significance	Address, Municipality
Birchrunville General Store	For architecture, social history, commerce, 1875-1899	Hollow and Flowing Springs Roads, Birchrunville, West Vincent Township
Brower's Bridge	For engineering, 1900-1924	Mansion Road over French Creek, Warwick Township
Bull, Thomas, House Also known as Robert's Plantation; Redding Plantation; Mt. Pleasant	For architecture and commerce, 1700-1799	East of Elverson on Bulltown Road, East Nantmeal Township, Elverson
Clinger-Moses Mill Complex Also known as Clement's Mill	For industry, agriculture, architecture, 1750-1799 and 1875-1899	South of Chester Springs on Pine Creek Lane, Chester Springs, West Pikeland Township
Coventry Hall	For architecture, invention, industry, 1750-1799	Off PA 23, South Coventry Township, Coventryville, South Coventry Township
Deery Family Homestead	For architecture, social history, agriculture, 1750-1824	West of Phoenixville, West Vincent Township
East, Nicholas, House	For architecture, 1800-1824	West of Valley Forge on Kimberton Road, West Pikeland Township
Fagley House	For architecture, 1850-1874	West of Phoenixville on Art School Road, West Pikeland Township
Hall's Bridge Also known as Sheeder-Hall Bridge	For engineering, 1850-1874	About 3 miles North of Chester Springs at Sheeder Road and Birch Run, East Vincent and West Vincent Townships
Hare's Hill Road Bridge	For engineering, 1850-1874	West of Phoenixville on Hare's Hill Road, East Pikeland Township
Hartman, George, House	For architecture, 1750-1799	West of Phoenixville on Church Road, East Pikeland Township
Hockley Mill Farm Also known as Mt. Pleasant Mills; Knauer, Frank, Mill	For architecture and industry, 1700-1949	Warwick Furnace Road, SE of Knauertown, Warwick Township
Kennedy Covered Bridge	For engineering, 1850-1874	Seven Stars Road over French Creek, East Vincent Township
Ker--Feal	For education, art, architecture, 1925-1974	1081 Bodine Road, Chester Springs, West Pikeland Township
Knauer, John, House and Mill Also known as Knauer Mill	For architecture and commerce, 1750-1799	PA 23, Knauertown, Warwick Township
Lahr Farm (added 1979 – Building - #79002199)	For architecture, 1825-1849	East of Elverson on PA 23, Warwick Township
Lightfoot Mill	For architecture and industry, 1700-1749	1703 Conestoga Road, Chester Springs, West Pikeland Township
Meredith, Simon, House	For architecture, 1700-1749	0.5 miles West of Pughtown on Pughtown Road, Pughtown
Meredith, Stephen, House	For architecture, 1825-1849	PA 100 halfway between Bucktown and Pughtown, South Coventry Township
Michener, Nathan, House	For architecture and health/medicine, 1800-1824	West of Bucktown on Ridge Road, Bucktown, South Coventry Township

Historic Building or Site Name	Area and Period of Significance	Address, Municipality
Rapps Dam Covered Bridge	For architecture and engineering, 1850-1874	West of Phoenixville on Rapps Dam Road, East Pikeland Township
River Bend Farm	For military, politics/government, architecture, 1750-1790	North of Spring City on Sanatoga Road, East Coventry Township
Rogers, Philip, House Also known as Penn Wick	For architecture, 1750-1799	Ridge Road, Warwick Township
Rooke, Robert, House	For architecture, 1825-1849	North of Downingtown on Horse-Shoe Trail at Fellowship Road, West Vincent Township
St. Mary's Episcopal Church Also known as Old St. Mary's Church	For architecture, 1825-1924	Warwick Road, Elverson, Warwick Township
Strickland-Roberts Homestead Also known as Bryn Coed Farm	For transportation and architecture, 1875-1924	3 miles South of Kimberton on St. Matthews Road, West Vincent Township
Townsend House	For architecture, 1750-1799	SW of Pughtown off PA 100, South Coventry Township
Vincent Forge Mansion Also known as Young's Forge Mansion	For industry and architecture, 1750-1799	Cook's Glen Road, East Vincent Township
Warrenpoint Also known as Branson, William, House; Templin Farm	For industry and architecture, 1750-1799	West of Knauertown off PA 23, Warwick Township, Knauertown, Warwick Township
Warwick Mills Also known as James Mills with Jacob Hager House and Tenant House	For architecture, communications, and agriculture, 1750-1799	East of Elverson off PA 23 on James Mills Road, Elverson, Warwick Township
Welkinweir Also known as Rodebaugh, Grace and Everett, Estate; Morris, Edwin, Farm	For conservation, architecture, and other, 1925-1974	1368 Prizer Road, East Nantmeal Township
Winings, Jacob, House and Clover Mill	For architecture, 1750-1799	SW of Elverson on James Mill Road, Warwick Township

Source: National Park Service; National Register of Historic Places.com; Living Places.com

Local Historic Sites

Many more sites hold historic significance to the Region, Chester County, or Pennsylvania. Examples of these include:

- Sulphur springs, valued by Native Americans and European settlers for their medical properties, in West Pikeland.
- First churches in the Region, including the German Reformed Church, now known as the East Vincent United Church of Christ; Coventry Church of the Brethren, built about 1724 and the

oldest church of that denomination in continuous use in America; African Union Church (the Union Meeting House on Chestnut Hill near Coventryville) in Coventry (now South Coventry) Township, originally comprised largely of free Africans, some of whom had been rescued from illegal slave-smuggling ships and relocated with families in the Pottstown area.[10]

- Numerous mills, including Snyder's Mill (1776), the site of a gunpowder mill built for General George Washington during the Revolutionary War, later built and operated as a linseed oil mill, a clover mill, a saw and grist mill, a spoke mill and a flour mill from 18030 to 1935, in East Pikeland.
- Revolutionary War Soldiers Cemeteries in East Coventry (Ellis Woods Cemetery) and East Vincent.
- The seven one-room schoolhouses in East Vincent Township, including the Hickory Grove School House (1856); preserved and restored by the East Vincent Township Historical Commission.
- Multiple covered bridges, including the Sheeder Hall Bridge (1850) over French Creek between East Vincent and West Vincent, and Kennedy Bridge (1856 – rebuilt in the 1980s as an exact replacement save for the use of fire and insect resistant wood).
- Railroads corridors, including the Pickering Valley Branch of the Reading Railroad Company, and the stations that served or promoted the development of villages, e.g. Chester Springs

These are but a few of the many sites listed among municipal documents that represent the Region's local history and its role in our national heritage.

Heritage and Interpretation Facilities

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site and **French Creek State Park** each contain multiple historic structures and interpretive facilities. See Appendix 2 for descriptions of these sites.

Historic Yellow Springs (HYS)[11] is a private, nonprofit enterprise in Chester County that preserves and promotes the history and arts of Yellow Springs village. Trails through the grounds are open to the public. Historic Yellow Springs is home to the **Chester Springs Studio**, a vibrant arts center that hosts classes, workshops, and exhibitions in the visual arts. HYS programs allow visitors to explore more than 300 years of history, a rich artistic heritage, and inspiring natural beauty. Education staff offer custom group tours and maintain a self-guided tour program. Exhibits, including a permanent

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[10] http://www.faucsc.org/download/FAUCSCbackgrounder.pdf, accessed June 28, 2011.

[11] www.yellowsprings.org, accessed December 10, 2010.

orientation exhibit, The Lure of the Springs, trace the site's history through original artifacts and images and present the work of innovative artists. Special programs include lifelong learning opportunities for senior groups and summer camps for youth. A lecture series, "Third Wednesdays," brings experts in a variety of fields to the village for enriching discussions.

PROTECTED OPEN SPACE

Map 7, Protected Lands, illustrates the 19,563.9 acres of protected open space in Northern Chester County (26.0 percent of the 75,278.1 acre region) using best available data as of August 2009. Protected open space is defined by the Chester County Planning Commission as "land and water areas that have little or no development; are used for recreation or preserving cultural or natural resources, including productive agricultural soils; and are protected either permanently or on a long-term basis." This total includes 13,423.4 acres of land, or 19.2 percent of the Region, that is protected primarily for land and resource conservation as well as 4,849.5 acres, or 6.5 percent, that is protected as federal, state, county, or municipal public recreation lands.

At the municipal level, East Nantmeal has the largest amount of protected open space (5,143.5 acres) as well as the largest percentage of protected open space (49.1 percent) within its municipal boundary. East Coventry has the smallest amount of protected open space (615.1 acres) and the smallest percentage of protected open space (8 percent) within its municipal boundary.

TYPES AND METHODS USED

The abundance of protected open space in Northern Chester County results from a variety of public and private land protection techniques, as listed in *Table A5.8, Protected Lands by Type by Municipality*. Seven techniques have been used to protect private land in the Region, in addition to public acquisition of recreation lands.

AGRICULTURAL EASEMENTS

Agricultural easements held by Chester County are found in all nine municipalities and total 3,897.9 acres. East Nantmeal has the greatest amount of land protected by agricultural easements, 1,053.7 acres; East Pikeland, the smallest, 1.8 acres.

The Chester County Agricultural Land Preservation Board (ALPB), as authorized by the Chester County Board of Commissioners, implements the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program and the Chester County Challenge Grant Program. Through each Program, the County seeks to proactively preserve the agricultural base that retains Chester County's leading industry.

The purpose of the Commonwealth Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program is to preserve viable agricultural lands. The statewide program has been uses in Chester County since 1989.

Table A5.8: Protected Lands by Type by Municipality, 2009*

Protection Technique	East Coventry	East Nantmeal	East Pikeland	East Vincent	North Coventry	South Coventry	Warwick	West Pikeland	West Vincent	Northern Chester County Acres	Percent of Northern Chester County
Agricultural Easement	288.1	1,053.7	1.8	790.3	642.5	406.9	225.4	10.1	479.1	3,898.0	5.2%
Conservation Easement		3,486.1	908.7		9.3	479.1	210.8	940.7	1,074.4	6,585.5	8.7%
Deed Restriction		532.7							5.2	537.9	0.7%
Homeowners Association Open Space	22.5	64.2	207.2		88.7	60.9		274.3	309.7	1,179.4	1.4%
Municipal Open Space	82.3	7.8	196.3	38.2	23.5	273.1	91.0	250.2	324.6	2,491.5	3.3%
Parcels owned in-fee by Land Trusts		661.8	1.5	12.0	513.4	47.4	426.5	90.8	76.0	1,815.3	2.4%
Transfer of Development Rights			0.5						603.5	604.0	0.8%
Subtotal**	**392.9**	**5,806.2**	**1,316.0**	**840.5**	**1,277.4**	**1,267.3**	**953.7**	**1,566.1**	**2,872.5**	**16,292.8**	21.6%
Acres with more than one protection (-)	58.3	668.4	35.2	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.0	0.0	274.0	1,582.4	2.1%
Public Recreation Lands (+)	280.5	5.7	104.4	184.5	367.7	79.0	3,706.3	111.3	14.0	4,853.5	6.4%
Total	**615.1**	**5,143.6**	**1,385.2**	**1,025.0**	**1,645.1**	**1,344.0**	**4,660.0**	**1,677.4**	**2,612.5**	**19,563.9**	**26.0%**
Percent of Regional Protected Open Space	3.1%	26.3%	7.1%	5.2%	8.4%	6.9%	23.9%	8.6%	13.4%		
Municipal Area	6,982.3	10,484.0	5,691.9	8,736.7	8,638.6	4,861.8	12,093.1	6,374.3	11,415.6	75,278.1	
Percent of Protected Open Space by Municipality	8.8%	49.1%	24.3%	11.7%	19.0%	27.6%	38.5%	26.3%	22.9%		

* 2009 data was provided by Chester County and supplemented with readily available municipal records.

**This subtotal reflects the acreage of all protection types in place; some parcels have more than one protection type and therefore some double-counting occurs. Source: Chester County GIS Department; East Pikeland Township; Gannett Fleming, Inc.

This program has preserved 39 farms on 3,173.4 acres in the Northern Chester County region, or roughly 11-12 percent of the 338 farms on 28,818 acres in Chester County (data as of July 1, 2011); some parcels have only a portion under easement. Due to the prevalence of prime farmland soils, the southwest region of Chester County competes more effectively for agricultural conservation easements.

The purpose of the Chester County Challenge Grant Program is to preserve agricultural land in Chester County in accordance with the strategy developed by the Board of County Commissioners. Lands in Chester County that are designated as a Rural Resource Area according to the Landscapes2 County comprehensive plan and located in locally adopted Agricultural Security Areas will be targeted for agricultural conservation easement acquisition. These areas contain prime agricultural soils, are generally designated for agriculture in local comprehensive plans and are concentrations of actively farmed land in Chester County. This program has preserved 724.6 acres in the Northern Chester County region, or roughly 13 percent of 5,372 acres protected by this program in Chester County.

Conservation Easements

Conservation easements protect 7,109.1 acres in seven municipalities in the Region. Under a conservation easement, a landowner voluntarily agrees to sell or donate certain rights associated with his or her property—often the right to subdivide or develop—and a private organization or public agency agrees to hold the right to enforce the landowner's promise not to exercise those rights.[12] Conservation easements are held by the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, the Natural Lands Trust, Brandywine Conservancy, and other land trusts. Again, East Nantmeal has the greatest amount of land protected by conservation easements, 3,468.1 acres; North Coventry, the smallest, 9.3 acres.

Deed Restrictions

Deed restrictions are voluntary, self-imposed limitations to future development of a parcel by the landowner. Landowners in East Nantmeal have used this technique to protect 537.9 acres, including a parcel that spans the border with West Vincent.

Homeowner Association Open Space Lands

Nearly 1,100 acres have been protected within private neighborhoods as a condition of the subdivision and land development process in seven of the nine municipalities. This type of open space protection is most prevalent in West Vincent where 309.7 acres are protected by private homeowners associations.

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[12] The Nature Conservancy, www.nature.org, accessed May 12, 2011.

Municipal Open Space

Eight of the nine municipalities have protected open space through land acquisition or easement or influenced open space protection through their land development requirements. These include the 12 named tracts acquired as open space and available for passive recreation, as listed in *Table 9, Municipal Open Space/Passive Parkland* (also shown as Table 2 in Appendix 2), as well as other parcels. A total of 1,287.0 acreshas been protected with this technique.

Table A5.9: Municipal Open Space/Passive Parkland

Facility Name	Municipal Location	Ownership	Acreage
Maack Property	East Coventry	Municipal	59.9
French Creek Open Space (multiple parcels)	East Pikeland	Municipal	98.7
Graham Tract Reserve	East Pikeland	Municipal	38.6
Hares Hill Bridge Reserve	East Pikeland	Municipal	12.7
Pickering Creek Reserve (A and B)	East Pikeland	Municipal	30.7
Township Municipal Complex	East Pikeland	Municipal	22.0
Coventry Woods	North Coventry	Municipal	538.0
Coventry Woods	South Coventry	Municipal	15.0
Town Forest (Woody's Woods)	South Coventry	Municipal	263.0
Coventry Woods	Warwick	Municipal	67.0
Hill School Tract (Coventry Woods)	Warwick	Municipal	16.1
Hallman's Field (Pickering Preserve)	West Pikeland	Municipal	2.0
Total			**1163.7**

Parcels Owned In-Fee by Land Trusts

Land trusts and conservancies own land in-fee or fee-simple in the Region. The French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust and The Nature Conservancy own 1,829.4 acres in eight of the nine municipalities in the Region. Once more, the most land protected by this technique is located in East Nantmeal, 661.8 acres.

Transfer of Development Rights

West Vincent is the only municipality where transfer of development rights was used as of August 2009. As reported by the township, private developers bought the development rights from 603.5 acres, including a parcel that spanned into East Pikeland Township, and transferred them to other areas of the township where development was deemed more desirable.

Overlapping Protections

In several locations, more than one protection technique has been used to ensure compliance. Lands where this has occurred are found in five municipalities and total 1,582.4 acres. To avoid double-counting, this figure is deducted from the 16,264.5 acres shown as protected in *Table A5.8*.

Public Recreation Lands

Public recreation lands are also considered protected for the long term by the nature of their ownership and use, though few if any easements or deed restrictions are in place. These lands representing 4,853.5 acres are described in detail in Appendix 2.

Clean and Green: A Tax Benefit Program for Working Landscapes

Landowners have enrolled 30,388.5 acres—nearly all of the agricultural and forested land in Northern Chester County—in the Clean and Green Program, established by the Pennsylvania Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act of 1974 (Act 319), as shown in *Table A5.10, Acres Enrolled in Clean and Green*. The program provides a real estate tax benefit to enrolled landowners, enabling lands to be assessed according to use, namely agricultural, agricultural reserve, or forest reserve, rather than the prevailing market value. Such strong participation in the program suggests that landowners are fiscally conservative in regard to property tax values.

Clean and Green program enrollment does not specifically indicate a landowner's interest in open space protection and does not preclude protection. By comparing Map 5, Working Landscapes, and Map 7, Protected Lands, one sees that many have already protected their land.

Table A5.10: Acres Enrolled in Clean and Green

	Acres
Northern Chester County	30,388.50
Percent of Region	40.50%
East Coventry	1,904.60
East Nantmeal	5,796.60
East Pikeland	1,521.80
East Vincent	3,056.70
North Coventry	2,776.00
South Coventry	1,993.60
Warwick	4,551.20
West Pikeland	2,690.10
West Vincent	6,097.80

Source: Chester County Planning Commission

Increases in protected open space from Clean and Green lands would occur in sizeable pieces of at least 10 acres, since the minimum parcel size for all uses is 10 acres, with the exception of agricultural uses producing a minimum yearly gross income. This requirement suggests that many if not most of the parcels enrolled in the Clean and Green program in the Region are 10 acres or more.

The landscape of Northern Chester County is legally divided into thousands of parcels—each with its own landowner. As subdivisions continue, the number of parcels and landowners, i.e. decision-makers,

continues to expand, while the average parcel size declines. Individuals and organizations advocating for open space protection have a steadily increasing audience of land managers making decisions about smaller parcels of land.

OPEN SPACE LANDSCAPE INITIATIVES

SCHUYLKILL HIGHLANDS

The Highlands Conservation Area, a U.S. Forest Service designation, stretch from northwest Connecticut south into southeastern Pennsylvania. The area at the nexus of the Highlands and the Schuylkill River watershed is known as the Schuylkill Highlands, a priority landscape for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). The Schuylkill Highlands' boundary was expanded to include the entirety of municipalities that fall within the watershed or that have important shared natural features.

The area's importance derives from the need for water quality protection, habitat conservation, and recreational development in a region poised for considerable growth. Focusing on the combination of the heavily forested Highlands area with the watershed of the second-most important water source for the Southeast (after the Delaware River) is logical and compelling.

The DCNR's Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative is focused on ecotourism, recreation, and conservation. The Schuylkill Highlands contains a number of large habitat areas that have been called out for protection by county planning commissions, state agencies, and private conservancies. Hopewell Big Woods is perhaps the largest and best known (described below), but the Oley Hills, Unami Forest, Neversink Mountain, and Swamp Creek Corridor are other well-known examples. Public trails along the Schuylkill River have been gradually expanding for many years, and other trail initiatives are under way to connect this spine to adjoining gateways and destinations.

HOPEWELL BIG WOODS

Hopewell Big Woods is the name given to the last large, unbroken forest left in southeastern Pennsylvania. The expanse of 73,000 acres, more than half of which lies in Northern Chester County, surrounds French Creek State Park and the Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site and comprises many of the natural and cultural resources mentioned above. Hopewell Big Woods is home to hundreds of plant, animal, and bird species (some rare, threatened, or endangered), pristine forest, unique wetlands, clean streams, historic landscapes, and recreational opportunities. Hopewell Big Woods is one of the highest priority conservation areas in the Pennsylvania Highlands.

The Hopewell Big Woods Partnership, led by the Natural Lands Trust, is a group of more than 30 government agencies, private nonprofits, and municipal entities. The partnership was established to organize and coordinate effort to achieve the following conservation goals:

1. The permanent protection and stewardship of at least 15,000 acres of unbroken forest in and around French Creek State Park.
2. The conservation of water quality and quantity in the watersheds of the Upper Reaches of French Creek, the entirety of Hay Creek, and the other smaller watersheds within the Hopewell Big Woods.
3. The conservation of state- and federally-listed and other rare species occurring within the Hopewell Big Woods.
4. The promotion of the recreational resources located in and around the Hopewell Big Woods.
5. The encouragement of compatible economic development within the Hopewell Big Woods that is consistent with the other conservation goals
6. The protection of historic and other cultural resources occurring within and nearby the Hopewell Big Woods.

In 2009, the Partnership completed the *Hopewell Big Woods Trail and Recreation Concept Plan*. The envisioned trail network, linking hundreds of recreational attractions, is anticipated to boost local economies and support tourism; inspire interest in history, culture, and the environment; promote and support health and fitness; and link communities with the assets that surround them.

Schuylkill River Heritage Area

At 70,065 acres, the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area encompasses nearly all of the Northern Chester County region. The boundaries of the Heritage Area cover the Schuylkill River watershed in Schuylkill, Berks, Chester, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties. A National Heritage Area is a place designated by Congress where natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-distinctive landscape. The Heritage Area was designated as a State Heritage Area by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1995 and as a National Heritage Area by Congress in 2000. This region is nationally significant for the role that its people, places, and events played in the American, Industrial, and Environmental Revolutions.

> "A variety of peoples–from the Lenni Lenapi to the first European settlers to the many other ethnic groups who migrated to the Schuylkill region over time–have called the River Valley home. Its abundant natural resources and productive soils made it an early industrial center and breadbasket for the colonies. During the American Revolution, the perseverance and sacrifice of George Washington's army at Valley Forge played a key role in the birth of a new nation. The 19th century witnessed the emergence of the Schuylkill Valley as one of the world's leading manufacturing regions, fueled in large part by anthracite coal mined from Schuylkill County. The Schuylkill River and canal system were one of the major arteries of the Industrial Revolution, transporting coal,

> manufactured goods, and crops to the port of Philadelphia. Industrial and mining activities impacted the Schuylkill River Valley's water resources, leading to a new chapter in its history in the 20th century–one of environmental reclamation and water quality restoration on a massive scale, accompanied by the emergence of outdoor recreation as a major activity."[13]

The Schuylkill River Heritage Area is managed by the nonprofit Schuylkill River Greenway Association. Founded in 1974 as an organization focused on the preservation of the riverfront in Berks and Schuylkill counties, the organization has grown in its mission and geographic scope over the years. The Greenway Association is governed by a Board of Directors representing all five counties within the Heritage Area. The eight-member Heritage Area staff administers the programs and projects identified in their management plan, *Living with the River: Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, July 2003. The plan guides the organizatin in its approach to natural and cultural resource conservation and enhancement, education, recreation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism. Today, use of the name Schuylkill River Greenway Association is typically reserved for legal and financial purposes, and members of the Board and staff refer to the organization as the Schuylkill River Heritage Area.

FINDINGS

RESOURCES

1. The 19 miles of the Schuylkill River and 86 miles of streams were essential to the historical development of the Region.

2. The Region's waterways are inherently valuable for aquatic habitat, water supply, and recreation. Warm and cold water fisheries, including trout-stocked segments, are found here.

3. All of the Region's streams are designated as special protection waters—either Exceptional Value or High Quality—due in large part to the forest cover and limited development in each watershed. Six Stream ReLeaf plantings have been installed to restore the forest along urbanized or otherwise cleared stream segments.

4. Most of the riverside and streamside lands (floodplains) in Northern Chester County are held in private ownership. Notable exceptions include the riverfront parks: River Bend Park, Riverside Park, and Towpath Park; State Game Lands 43, Crow's Nest Preserve, Warwick County Park, and various tracts held by East Pikeland that provide access to French Creek; Coventry Woods and Ellis Woods Park that provide access to Pigeon Creek; and Pine Creek Park and Pickering Grove

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[13] *Living with the River: Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement*, 2003. Schuylkill River Heritage Association.

that provide access to Pickering Creek. Many more acres are protected from development, and thus the waterway is protected from direct impacts.

5. Zoning regulations in all nine municipalities manage the uses, activities, and development that are permitted in the floodplain. These regulations generally acknowledge the suitability of floodplains for low-impact uses, such as recreation, however, they do not afford the public access for recreational opportunities in and along the public waterways. Access to the water by way of public lands or easements is critical to encouraging water-based recreation activities, such as boating, fishing, nature study and environmental education.

6. Protection of upland buffers and water sources to the Great Marsh (Site #11) is needed to sustain the marsh and its inhabitants; such protection could be achieved if the site where owned and managed as a local nature preserve.

7. Of the 2,150 acres of wetlands, the two most significant wetland areas in the Region are the Great Marsh and the nearly contiguous areas along French Creek and its tributaries upstream of Beaver Run. While wetlands are a constraint to development, they can also be focus for conservation and environmental education.

8. Of the 12 natural areas in the Region, Site #11, Great Marsh, and Site #114, Pine Swamp, are ranked fifth and sixth, respectively, as sites of statewide significance for the protection of biological diversity in Chester County. Warwick Seeps (Site #9) could be an ideal local nature preserve because of the easy access afforded it from the abandoned Boar's Back rail line, now under development as a trail.

9. The redundancy in locations designated for resource conservation emphasizes the rich natural and cultural environment of Northern Chester County. Natural Areas, Important Bird Areas, and Important Mammal Areas overlap and are encompassed by the Hopewell Big Woods. However, these lands are largely unprotected with the exception of federal, state, and county lands, and the concentration of protected lands in East Nantmeal.

10. Only three percent of parcels (one might also read this as land owners) are devoted to agriculture, but they represent more than 22 percent of the Region's landscape.

11. With the exception of East Nantmeal, agricultural lands are largely unprotected from development yet vastly important to the economy and visual character of the Region.

12. The Northern Chester County region can rightfully be called scenic based on its topographic, water, and biotic features as well as its dark night skies. The Schuylkill River and French Creek corridors are recognized as state-designated scenic landscapes with the waterway as the focal point.

13. French Creek State Park is known as a destination for skywatchers in the Delaware Valley. Their travel from a few to many miles away brings implications for tourism and hospitality services.

14. In all, the 16 historic districts represent 5,296 acres, 491 buildings, and 47 structures in or near Northern Chester County.

15. The majority of historic districts and buildings are significant for their architecture, representing periods as early as 1700 to as late as 1974.

16. Historic buildings and sites present a full array of structures associated with early settlement life: homes, farms, mills, churches and social halls, and bridges.

17. This palette of architectural styles could be promoted in the design of new buildings, especially public buildings and public art.

18. The vast majority of lands, buildings, and structures is held in private ownership. East Pikeland, South Coventry, West Pikeland, and West Vincent each have standards and an historical architectural review board to advise their governing bodies on the suitability of new development within their historic districts.

PROTECTION

19. There is no one source for accurate, up-to-date protected land totals for the Region. The figures presented in Appendix 5 are based on data collected by Chester County for *Linking Landscapes* (circa 2000-2002) and updated with available municipal records. Even these figures may not fully represent land protection in Northern Chester County.

20. Best available data shows that land trusts and conservancies, municipalities, and Chester County have protected 18,750 acres of open space in Northern Chester County (25 percent of the 75,278 acre region) as of August 2009.

21. Voluntary conservation easements have protected the largest portion of protected open space in the Region, followed by public recreation lands and agricultural easements.

22. Voluntary deed restrictions established by local landowners protect more than 530 acres.

23. Nearly all of the agricultural and forested land in Northern Chester County has been enrolled in the Clean and Green Program. Some but not all of this land is protected. Additional protected open space from Clean and Green lands would occur in sizeable pieces of at least 10 acres. Landowners enrolled in this program are a candidate audience for further open space protection.

24. The increasingly complex parcel pattern in Northern Chester County is a growing challenge to further land and resource protection.

25. With 25 percent of the Region protected and 38 percent developed, the future of the remaining 37 percent (26,754 acres) will be determined by the policies of municipalities, the desires of landowners, and the efforts of conservation-minded organizations and partnerships.

CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

26. Federal and state landscape conservation initiatives overlap in the Northern Chester County region. They complement the efforts of the municipalities and land trusts and conservancies and private sector partners. They also imply a variety of regional identities and often compete for the same resources to implement their plans.

GUIDE TO APPENDIX 6

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INTRODUCTION

Recreation is an important part of a well-balanced lifestyle. People who are engaged in active healthy lifestyles live longer,[1] are less in danger from heart disease and stroke,[2] are at a significantly reduced risk of cancer,[3] and have improved chances of combating a wide range of chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, asthma, and depression.[4] Northern Chester County's heritage and culture offer another dimension to recreation: the opportunity to use and engage in heritage related sites and programs that evoke the globally significant history that occurred here. The area is an attractive place for heritage tourism where people can learn American history within the context of having an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Recreation participation increases one's sense of well-being, deters addictions, and assists in the social learning of tolerance and respect for others. Recreation plays an important role in promoting a strong sense of community by providing settings for people to socialize and share common interests, and being a major driver of community interaction and pride. Recreation facilities make an important contribution to the physical infrastructure of communities. They provide a social focus for the community and affect a resident's perception of his or her neighborhood. It is widely accepted that parks and recreation influence how a community looks, feels, and functions.

In 2009, the U.S. Center for Disease Control enlisted local communities in the fight against diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension by urging them to offer plentiful and convenient places and

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[1] Gibbons, L.W., and Macera, C.A., 1995. Changes in physical fitness and all-cause mortality: a prospective study of healthy and unhealthy men. Journal of the American Medical Association. 273:1093-1098

[2] Blair, S.N., Kohl, H.W., and Gordon, N.F., 1992. *How much physical activity is good for health?* Annual Reviews of Public Health. 13:99-126

[3] Slattery, M.L., Potter, J., Caan, B., et al., 1996. *How much physical activity do we need to maintain health, prevent disease? Different diseases – different mechanisms.* Research Quarterly Exercise and Sport. 67(2):209-212

[4] Glasgow, R.E., Ruggerio, L., Eakin, E.G., et al., 1996. United States Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. *Physical Activity and Health: A Report of the Surgeon General.* Atlanta, Georgia.

programs that will help citizens to increase physical activity. This initiative will help to reduce national health care costs, one of our country's most pressing challenges. Today public recreation is considered essential to public health. Walking for 30 minutes daily benefits your heart, weight, and mental health, and has recently been found to stave off Alzheimer's disease. Cancer does not kill most Americans—the lack of physical exercise and a poor diet do.[5] Public recreation has a prominent role in creating healthy people, healthy families, and healthy communities in the Northern Chester County region (the Region).

Recreation Trends

While recreation trends are typically portrayed as activity based, there is a changing attitude toward recreation and life goals in America. This is an important trend to consider in community recreation planning: how to help our citizens achieve or do what is important to them through recreation.

A national survey[6] found that about 85 percent of the respondents listed maintaining their health as an important goal. Three-quarters considered themselves healthy now; an almost equal number (69 percent) admitted to being at least somewhat out of shape. After health, connecting with family, friends, and community is next in importance. An important trend is volunteerism, which is on the upswing. People want to make a meaningful contribution to improving the world and want to put their expertise to work, well beyond the usual stereotype of menial volunteer work.

Public recreation trends are those changes that go beyond fads and that have affected society so much that they are now a part of our culture. Trends include the following:

- Programs and activities that directly affect the health of the residents of the community, and the minimum support required to maintain those services, is becoming a principle mission of a public park and recreation agency. The focus of public parks and recreation is becoming directed toward essential and fundamental life and health services, not only community vitality and enrichment.
- Nearly half of all Americans say they spend time together outdoors at least once a month. Recreation is important to families with young children.
- Today, 66 percent of all Americans recreate outdoors monthly. In 1994 only 50 percent did.
- In 1972, one out of 27 girls participated in high school sports. In 1978, the ratio was one out of four. Today, more than half of all high school girls participate in sports. For years, researchers have found that there is a link between participation in high school sports and success later in life.[7]
- While baseball, football, and basketball were once the major sports, field hockey, lacrosse, and rugby are now mainstreaming. Even cricket (the most-watched sport in the world) is now popping up in the Delaware Valley.

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[5] Oz, M. *6-Month Plan for Getting Healthy.* AARP Magazine. Volume 53: 3A May/June 2010. p56.

[6] Harris, M. *Forever Young*. Money Magazine. September 13, 2007.

[7] Lahart, J., 2010. *Economists Link Athletics to Success in School, Job Markets*. Wall Street Journal. http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2010/02/08/economists-link-athletics-to-success-in-school-job-markets/

- Sports are played throughout four seasons, including soccer and basketball year-round. Softball and baseball players and teams train in the off-seasons.
- Today's empty nesters with extensive free time, unprecedented good health, and retirement plans, are indulging in active lifestyles that are well beyond rocking chairs, front porches, and bingo. There is a mismatch between what retirees are looking for and what society provides. Many are looking for a second career that often involves using their expertise to make the world a better place, for example, through conservation.
- The first of the Baby Boomers will turn 65 in 2011. They represent the major planning challenge for parks and recreation. They will be more active, well-educated, and healthier than previous generations and will most likely be more involved in recreational pursuits. The sheer number of baby boomers will require more facilities and services than did previous generations of people over the age of 60.
- Generation X'ers (born 1964-1980) have launched the development of new activities such as in-line skating and skateboarding.
- Gen M (born 1985 and forward) is the Millennium generation. They have lived their full lives with benefit of the Internet. People in this age group are exposed to 8.5 hours of electronic media daily. This includes 2.5 hours in which they are "multi-tasking" with two or more media sources.
- People born between 1980 and 2000 make job choices based upon convenient access to facilities and services where they can engage in active recreation. The majority of those in this age group engage in vigorous physical activity on a regular basis. Having such opportunities nearby is a key to keeping and attracting both young people in the community and employers looking to locate or expand a business.
- In today's busy society of overscheduled youth, recreation programming is moving away from scheduled programs to self-directed opportunities and programs with fewer meeting times such as single night educational/recreational programs.
- Heritage Tourism is an important and growing segment of the tourism industry.

Recreation Trends in Northern Chester County

Recreation opportunities in Northern Chester County and the surrounding region abound. From the expected community sports programs to the unexpected beagling and bassetting (the hunting of hare and rabbits on foot with beagle or basset hounds), people who live in or visit the Region can find a host of fun things to do in the great outdoors. These activities include opportunities that one can enjoy at his/her own discretion, to a full calendar of special events in every season of the year. Many of these activities are unique to Northern Chester County such as the newly-forming Cheese Trail. Here visitors can enjoy world-class scenery as they traverse the countryside to taste locally-made, internationally-acclaimed cheeses. They can try out the wine trail as well! Whether one wants to enjoy a brisk 30-minute walk or a 100-mile bicycle ride, there is plenty to do here.

- **Regional recreation**. Residents undertake their recreation throughout the Region rather than only within their own municipality. With nine municipalities, three school districts, two multi-municipal parks and recreation commissions, and many private nonprofit providers of recreation opportunities, recreation is complex in Northern Chester County.

- **Sports participation** is increasing. Leagues are expanding. Organized sports leagues are playing through multiple seasons with many going year-round. Players are playing at older and younger ages. National sports sanctioning organizations are changing the regulations regarding field sizes, resulting in different-sized fields. Sports organizations operate independently. Spin-off leagues are emerging in the area such as Wildcat Football, resulting from parents wanting their children to play by age group not by weight. This is a very important trend to address.

- **Recreation special events** are important in Northern Chester County and are often used to showcase other important aspects of the area such as heritage, locally-grown food, and land conservation.

- **Recreation special events through diverse providers**. Community and conservation organizations plan and carry out recreation events related to the beauty and history of Northern Chester County, as exemplified by the Iron Tour, Homegrown Harvest, Green Valleys Association EnviroFest, the Dance at Welkinweir, and the Dry Stone Workshop at Hopewell.

- **Recreation and heritage**. The relationship of recreation to the history and heritage of the area is notable in Northern Chester County. Many different organizations are involved in various aspects of recreation heritage, culture, conservation, and wellness. They operate through an informal network partnering when opportunities arise but not in an organized fashion. Recreation opportunities range from national caliber at the Schuylkill River Heritage Area and Hopewell National Historic Site, to scout troops in the local neighborhoods.

- **Astronomy** via Delaware Valley Amateur Astronomers, universities, and Astronomers without Borders is popular in this Region that treasures its dark night skies. Three out of five respondents in the survey reported enjoying the dark starry skies as one of the recreation activities they enjoy, while another 25 percent report being interested in that activity—for a total of 85 percent of the respondents. Keeping the skies dark is important to the quality of life here.

- **Trail use is high.** Trail use is popular and in some areas becoming threatened. Horse trails thread the area in large part due to the generosity of private landowners who allow the informal use of their property for horseback riders. This is a privilege not a right; access to these trails could be changed at any time, particularly if there is a change in property ownership.

- **Fun in the creeks**. Access to local creeks is important to the residents with 63 percent of the survey respondents indicating that they use local creeks for recreation.

- **Year-round recreation**. Interest in recreation indoors year-round is becoming more important in the area.

- **Wellness and physical activity**. Reflective of Chester County's ranking as the healthiest county in Pennsylvania, the Pottstown Heath and Wellness Foundation is dedicated to increasing the level of physical activity throughout its service area, which includes Northern Chester County.

- **School Districts and recreation**. Schools provide important recreation opportunities (programs and facilities) for children and youth in all three school districts. They serve as community hubs of activity year round. The Owen J. Roberts School District provides adults with lifelong learning program hosted in the Adult Evening School. Adult life-long learning emerged at the top activity in which survey

respondents are interested. Half of the survey respondents indicated that they are interested in adult lifelong learning while another 20 percent said they are already participating.

- **Active and passive recreation**. There is some tension between active and passive recreational interests. Concern is strong regarding the conservation of the rural character of the area while providing active recreation facilities to meet the needs of a constituency engaged in active healthy lifestyles. Finding a way to meld the two interests will be a key to success.
- **Nature-based recreation**. Interest in nature and passive recreation is on the upswing. Fishing, hiking, and wildlife watching are reportedly gaining in interest. There is a keen need to connect children to the outdoors—a particular challenge in this area where children's time is heavily scheduled.
- **Tourism**. While tourism is growing as a leading industry in Pennsylvania, tourism in Northern Chester County is not clearly defined. There is not consensus on a clear direction or theme for tourism in this Region even among organizations with tourism as their mission, such as the Brandywine Valley Visitors Bureau and the Valley Forge Conference and Visitors Bureau. Certainly the residents do not want buses traveling the narrow country roads, but there is a sense that attracting visitors as smaller groups of families and friends to experience the wealth of history, scenic beauty, and outdoor recreation opportunities would offer benefits.

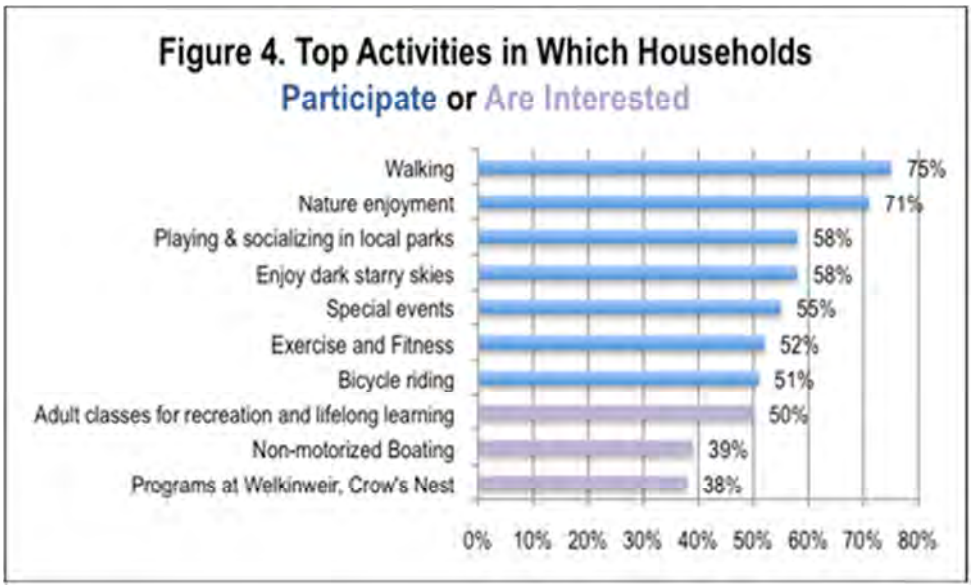
Recreation Participation in Northern Chester County

Information on participation in recreational pursuits was derived from several sources including the public opinion survey, interviews with key stakeholders and focus groups, information provided by organizations, and observations through field visitation. Survey Figure 4 shows the top activities in which survey respondents for this plan participate or are interested in participating. Survey responses reflect the opinions of the general public, not special interest groups, and as such are comprehensive in nature and very important to the planning process.

Most of their participation and interest lies in activities they can undertake on their own such as walking, enjoying nature, using local parks, cycling and enjoying the dark starry skies. Two exceptions to activities people can do on their own are special events and adult classes for lifelong learning. The many special events held in Northern Chester County are successful both a response and a generator of participation in special events and popular. People want to socialize with family and friends and to create memories and recreational special events are the way to achieve that.

Blocks to Participation

According to results from the public opinion survey, public meetings, focus groups, and interviews, the chief block to recreation participation is that people are unaware of the opportunity. About one out of two survey respondents indicated that not knowing about the opportunity was the chief reason they did not participate. Typically, survey respondents indicate that they are too busy to participate. Lack of awareness as the top reason is a survey finding unique to Northern Chester County.



REGIONAL RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OPPORTUNITIES

The citizens of Northern Chester County live close to outstanding recreational opportunities in the great outdoors as well as within an hour of world-class cultural, educational, entertainment, and sporting events in the city of Philadelphia. The significant history of the area, its scenic beauty, and its conserved resources play an important role in recreation.

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

National, state, and county parks in the Northern Chester County area offer recreational opportunities in the great outdoors. County parks are places that people typically spend half of a day to a day enjoying. State parks offer full-day, overnight, weekend, or vacation-length opportunities. State and county park facilities are fully described in Appendix 2. The Schuylkill River, French Creek, and Pickering Creek all offer important water-based recreation opportunities close to home.

Written comments in the survey indicated that people tend to travel to the various large nature and historic parks throughout the Region, including French Creek State Park, Marsh Creek State Park, Valley Forge National Park, Hopewell Furnace, and Warwick County Park. The Schuylkill River National Heritage Area celebrates the rich culture and history of the Schuylkill River watershed as one of America's most significant cultural and industrial regions. As a National Heritage Area, it is working to revitalize and restore the Region through natural and cultural resource preservation, education, recreation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism.

Schuylkill Highlands is a Conservation Landscape Initiative (CLI) region of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which includes Northern Chester County as home to critical unprotected lands such as source waters, head waters, riparian buffers, watershed lands, natural areas, contiguous forested lands, and the key habitats, farmland, and greenway connectors found in the Hopewell Big Woods. The Schuylkill Highlands initiative is striving to protect what is special in this Region by saving

high-quality lands and connecting people and communities through a network of trails and gateway communities.

Close-to-Home Activities Available at National, State, and County Parks & Heritage Areas

Hiking. Bicycling. Mountain Biking. Trail Riding. Horseback Riding. Picnicking in shelters and groves. Swimming. Boating. Windsurfing. Fishing. Hunting. Trapping. Wildlife Watching. Cross-Country Skiing. Sledding. Tobogganing. Ice skating. Iceboating. Ice fishing. Nature Center visitation. Organized group camping in cabins, tents, and yurts. Birding. Destination Playgrounds. Disc Golf. Astronomy. Orienteering. Historic programs and events. Tours. Nature study and environmental education.

MUNICIPAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Playing and socializing in local parks is important to residents. About 80 percent of the survey respondents socialize and play in parks close to home or are interested in doing that. With respect to organized, scheduled activities, the municipalities in Northern Chester County range in the level of services they provide. Some offer organized programs and others do not provide any recreational services. Several key factors come into play here. Size of population, availability of park and recreation facilities, capacity of the local government operations, the rural nature of the area, budget, and availability of volunteers are all contributing factors in the provision of recreation services.

Table A6.1: Municipal Parks and Recreation Programs, Activities, and Events in Northern Chester County

Municipality	Program/Event	Date Offered 2010	Sponsor
East Coventry	Community Day	June 5	Park, Recreation & Conservation Committee
	Easter Egg Hunt	March 27	Parker Ford Women's Club
East Nantmeal			Historical Society and Green Valleys Association are program sources.
East Pikeland	Outdoor Movie Nights	June 5 September 18	Parks & Recreation Board and Exelon Power as sponsors
	Kimberton Run	September 25	Kimberton Lions
	Easter Egg Hunt	March 27	Parks & Recreation Board
	Yard Sale/Craft Fair/ Bake Sale	May 1 October 24	East Pikeland Township
	Historic Walking Tour	July 8	Kimberton Friends
	Summer Sports Program	August 2 - 6	Offered by U.S. Sports Institute
	Summer Playground Program	June 22 – July 31	Phoenixville Area Recreation Department
	Summer Tennis Camp	June 21 – July 24	Phoenixville Area Recreation Department
	Kimberton Fair	July 26 -31	Kimberton Fair organization
	Annual Butterfly Garden Planting	Spring	Park & Recreation Committee and North Coventry Elementary School
	Environmental Monitoring	Spring	Frog Watch and Nest Box - EAC
	Annual Clean & Green Day	April 18	EAC
	Coventry Woods Festival	May 31	Park & Recreation Committee and EAC
East Vincent	Community Day	May 7	Park on the Ridge

Municipality	Program/Event	Date Offered 2010	Sponsor
	Trout Rodeo	May 7	Park on the Ridge
	History Under the Stars	June 11 & Aug 13	Park on the Ridge
	Independence Day Ceremony	July 4	Revolutionary War Soldiers' Cemetery
North Coventry	Summer Camp	Six Weeks	Kenilworth
	Tennis Lessons	Summer	Kenilworth
	Fall Bonfire	October	Coventry Woods
	Coventry Woods Festival	May 22	Coventry Woods
South Coventry	Sundae Serenade	June	Community day with ice cream, book, and plant swap. Board of Supervisors and Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Oversight Board.
West Pikeland	Chamber Music Series	March 7 April 11	Arts & Culture Committee
	Spring Egg Hunt	March 21	Parks & Recreation Board
	Milling Demonstrations	Monthly Apr - Nov	Anselma Mill
	Pickering Grove Tree Planting	April 17-18	Parks & Recreation Board
	Yellow Springs Art Show	April 24 – May 9	Historic Yellow Springs – 27th year
	Chester County Craft Guild Show	May 1-2	WPT Cultural Center
	Herb & Ceramics Sale	May 13	Historic Yellow Springs
	Summer Fest	June 6	Historic Yellow Springs
	Swing Into Summer	June 19	Anselma Mill
	West Pikeland Fall Festival	October 17	Parks & Recreation Board
	Midsummer Night's Dream	July	Commonwealth Classic Theater
	Trail Guide	Used year-round	West Pikeland Township
West Vincent	West Vincent Community Day	Spring	Park and Recreation Commission
	Trout Rodeo	Spring	West Vincent Township Police Department
	Outdoor Movie Night	August 21	Park and Recreation Commission
	Turkey Trot	November	Park and Recreation Commission
	Park and Pavilion Rental	Year-round	West Vincent Township

Overall, no municipality has sufficient population size, staff, or budget to offer a full program of recreational services. While some have been providing some level of recreation services for many years, others have not. There is no right or wrong approach; what works for the community is the important factor. What is appropriate for one municipality is not necessarily a good fit for another.

In addition, the residents tend to look at all of Northern Chester County as a region with recreation opportunities, rather than only their municipality. Most organized recreation opportunities in communities are provided by volunteers including Parks and Recreation Boards, Historic Committees, Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), and Boards of Supervisors. ***Table A6.1*** presents recreation opportunities in each municipality. The table presents broad information about anything that the municipality directly provides or facilitates.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The school districts serve as community hubs for recreation. They make their facilities available for public recreational use and are vital for community sports. An important factor for recreation, particularly youth sports, is that children and youth like to play sports with their friends—usually schoolmates. Communities, as well as families and adult individuals, are in most cases oriented toward the school district rather than the municipality, especially in rural communities.

Owen J. Roberts provides two important recreation programs: the Aquatics Program and Adult Evening School. The Aquatics Program includes swimming instructions, parent and tot classes, lap swimming, conditioning classes, water polo, competitive swimming and diving, recreational swim, a summer program, adult conditions, and a master swim program. The Adult Evening School offers a wide variety of classes, instructions, and recreational opportunities for people 18 years of age and older. According to the citizen survey findings for this plan, 50 percent of the respondents indicated that they are interested in lifelong learning classes for adults. Another 20 percent already participate in such programs. This was the program of the most interest to survey respondents.

FIT FOR LIFE IN THE OWEN J. ROBERTS SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Owen J. Roberts School District is committed to fostering active, healthy lifestyles among its students. With funding provided by the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, the School District has put into place the *Fit for Life* program headed by the Wellness and Communications Coordinator. The program operates with the Owen J. Roberts Wellness Council, a working group composed of individuals with an interest in wellness from representative segments of the community and schools. Members include administrators, teachers, nurses, food service staff, and experts in dietetics, nutrition, physical activity, and health.

Each individual school within the district has representation on the Council and is also encouraged to have a dedicated Coordinated Health Team in their respective building. Many experts in the areas of health, mental health, physical education, and nutrition comprise the School Coordinated Health Teams, making the Wellness infrastructure in the Owen J. Roberts District very diverse and strong. The goal is to create wellness outcomes that benefit people through healthier lives.

Through partnerships and programs the Wellness Council strives to create new knowledge, increase skills, foster a positive change in attitude or values, and drive behavioral changes that improve lifestyle habits. They focus on programs and services that build long-term solutions—lifelong healthy people. Goals are directed toward demonstrated need in the youth health risk areas identified by the Centers for Disease Control: tobacco use, poor nutrition, lack of exercise, drug and alcohol use, injury to self and others, and other risky behaviors. Most of the School District's programming addresses nutrition and physical activity because of the magnitude to which these areas can improve the public's health and prevent and control chronic diseases.

COMMUNITY SPORTS

Community sports programs are important in Northern Chester County. Leagues are expanding. Participation is increasing. Sports have moved beyond one traditional season into multi-season and even year-round play. About 4,051 participants played in the leagues in 2009 or were on league waiting lists. This does not account for volunteers, coaches, field and concession managers, and spectators. It also represents a snapshot in time—it is important to remember that many people play sports at a certain point in their life and then age out of it. When combined, a significant portion of the population is playing or has played in community sports. The following sports organizations serve Northern Chester County.

Coventry Girls Basketball serves 120 girls in the second through ninth grades in the Owen J. Roberts (OJR) School District. The organization uses gyms in East Coventry Elementary School, North Coventry Elementary School, and OJR Middle School. This is not enough gym time and has resulted in splitting two days among three groups in the middle school. They need at least one more gym or more days in the existing gyms.

Coventry Little League (CLL) offers little league baseball, t-ball, and softball for boys and girls ages 5-18. League participation has been growing since 2002 with the fall session experiencing the most growth. CLL plays at the Wampler Complex and practices on OJR High School and Middle School fields, Kenilworth fields, and Anderson fields. As the league grows, they anticipate needing three additional fields by 2013.

Coventry Soccer Association is a soccer league for participants ages 4-18. Participation has been increasing and a cap in certain age groups may become necessary. In 2002, there were fewer than 500 players; however, it is anticipated that there will be over 1,000 by 2013. The league plays spring through fall. Game fields used include East Coventry Elementary School (side and front fields) and North Coventry River Bend Park (all three fields: Anderson, Batdorf, and Deegan). Practice fields include East Coventry Elementary School (Front-U8, Side-travel, Back-U10/travel), North Coventry Elementary School (front), Kenilworth Park (t-ball field, soccer field), North Coventry River Bend Park (all three when available), Parker Ford Brethren Church, and East Vincent Township Park.

For winter use, they rent the Sportsplex in Pottstown and the Body Zone in Wyomissing. The organization reported difficulties in using assigned fields, with other teams forcing them off fields they had permits for. Anticipated field needs include: one full-sized game field for travel, one full-sized for intramurals, two small-sided fields for travel, one small-sided for intramurals, and one additional full-sized field for the U6 and U8 intramurals. Additionally, more space is needed for practice. At least an additional two full-sized field areas and two small-sided field areas are needed. They have investigated purchasing land and found it to be unaffordable.

Coventry Youth Lacrosse serves 160 boys ages 7-15 and 95 girls ages 8-12, with a total of 16 teams. Participation is expected to stabilize at about this number. Fields used include:

- East Vincent Elementary School – Fields behind the school accommodate three separate practice locations.
- North Coventry Elementary School – Front field (near Kemp Rd) accommodates two squads; the narrow space between the parking lot and the front field accommodates one squad.

- OJR High School – North turf field after the high school squad has completed their practice accommodates two squads when available.
- East Vincent Township Park – Two areas are used including the "lower field" and the field adjacent to the tennis courts.
- West Vincent Township Park – Multi-use field (soccer field) is used.
- Connie Batdorf Park (South Coventry Township) – Football field is used for games only.

The organization anticipates needing one to two fields in the future due to decreasing access to school fields, loss of field use due to school priorities, and competition with other sports leagues for fields.

Downingtown Areas Recreation Consortium (DARC) is a multi-municipal parks and recreation organization that includes West Pikeland. DARC is the only organization offering adult leagues for softball, basketball, volleyball, and street hockey. It also offers youth sports clinics and camps. DARC's programs fill up and have waiting lists. The leagues operate year-round depending upon the sport. Facilities used include Hickory Park, Shamona Creek Park, and Kerr Park. For gyms, they use all school district facilities for basketball and sports clinics. They have enough facility time for games but none for practices. Kerr Park has lost one field due to drainage issues. If adult leagues grow, then more fields will be needed.

Glenmoore Eagle Youth Association (GEYA) offers baseball and soccer for youth ages 5-18. The league has been growing. Both sports play in the spring and fall. Facilities used for baseball include: 60-foot – Hickory Park (2 fields), Springton Manor Elementary (2 fields), West Vincent, and Brandywine Wallace; 90-foot – Hickory Park (older divisions also travel to other leagues within Chester County to play away games). Facilities used for soccer include: Shamona Creek Elementary (two 25x50 fields), Windsor Baptist Church (two 15x30 fields), West Vincent Park (one regulation field), Springton Manor Elementary (one 40x70 field), Pickering Valley Elementary (three 15x30 fields), Montgomery School (one regulation field), and Ludwig's Corner Horse Show Grounds (one 60x100 field, one 40x70, two 25x50, three 15x30). The organization reports having difficulty getting fields for practice. Drainage problems exist at Hickory Park and West Vincent. While not looking for more fields now, they would consider exploring the addition of fields.

Kimberton Youth Athletic League (KYAL) offers baseball and softball for youth ages 5-16. The league is growing especially in the younger ages. Play is underway April through July. All fields are on Kimberton Fire Company property or East Pikeland Park property (four fields at #6 Firehouse Lane in Kimberton) and school district fields are used for practice. KYAL is raising money for new lights. They need two more practice areas and upgrades to the current fields.

Lionville Youth Association (LYA) is a regional umbrella sports organization celebrating its fortieth season. LYA serves the youth primarily in Uwchlan Township, West Pikeland Township, and Northern East Caln Township, which are all in the Downingtown Area School District. LYA does not view Northern Chester County as part of its territory. They play in ten Uwchlan Township parks and West Pikeland Township's park. A new Challenger League is being added in 2011 for youth ages 5-18 with mental and physical disabilities. About 4,000 participants are involved in the following sports:

- Spring: Little League Baseball, Little League Softball, American Legion Baseball, and Girls and Boys Lacrosse

- Fall: Intramural Soccer, Girls Field Hockey, Fall Baseball, and Fall Softball
- Winter: Girls and Boys Basketball
- Other: Club Baseball – Lionville Hillcats; Travel Softball – Lionville Lightning; and Travel Soccer – Lionville Soccer Club

LYA offers summer sports camps for youth in the first through eighth grades for baseball, co-ed lacrosse, girls lacrosse, boys lacrosse, golf, flag football, basketball, field hockey, cheerleading, and an all-sports camp. Most camps are held at Lionville Park while basketball is at the Lionville Elementary School and golf is at Rossi's Golf and Sports Center. LYA reports a need for more practice soccer fields.

Norchester Red Knights offers football and cheerleading in the fall. Facilities used include North Coventry Elementary and Connie Batdorf Park. North Coventry Elementary has been the practice location over the past couple of years but it is not large enough for all of the teams to be on one field. The youngest team (ages 5-6) practices on the side, just off the parking lot, away from the organization. Cheerleaders typically practice on the playground. That leaves approximately a 20x20 yard area for the other teams to practice, which is restrictive given the contact nature of football.

For the safety of the kids, coaches typically practice well within that boundary to avoid overlapping. They have discussed and investigated purchasing land over the past couple of years. Unfortunately, to purchase about 8-10 acres of land puts the organization in competition with developers that have greater resources. They would like more practice space and parking at Connie Batdorf Park.

Norchester Youth Athletic Association (NYAA) is a baseball league serving boys ages 13-19 in the spring. Participation has been increasing with a leveling-off expected in the near future. The teams use two fields at the OJR High School and Middle School. They also use a field at Kenilworth Park but it is in disrepair. Fields are overused and in poor condition. They would like to have a stadium but one more field would help.

Penn Premiere Lacrosse is a lacrosse league for youth in grades 1-12. The league anticipates growing from 100 participants to 175 in the next three years. They use facilities at 88 Wells Road, East Vincent Elementary School, North Coventry Elementary School, East Vincent Township Park, and the OJR High School lacrosse fields. They work with OJR School District for fields and negotiated an agreement to rent the WC Eagles turf field. The league anticipates needing additional fields to accommodate their growth.

Phoenixville Babe Ruth League is a baseball league for boys ages 13-18. All games are played at DeSanno Field which is a 90-foot lighted baseball field located at Mason and Wheatland Streets in the borough of Phoenixville. This field is owned in fee by the Phoenixville Babe Ruth League, a not-for-profit corporation. American Legion home games are played at "Doc Kennedy Field"—a 90-foot baseball field located on the grounds of the Phoenixville Area High School. This field is the high school baseball field. DeSanno field is at risk of loss due to a proposed land development that would take the field to build a road there. This is a premiere baseball field that is used by numerous school athletic teams as their home field and for tournaments as well. While the organization would be compensated, there is no other land in the borough that could replace this field.

Spring-Ford Youth Athletic League (SFYAL) offers baseball, softball, football, cheerleading, boys and girls basketball, and wrestling. Football has a waiting list. Playing seasons include spring and fall for baseball, fall for football, and winter for basketball and wrestling. The league uses the following facilities: two 50/70 fields at Spring City (SC) complex, two 46/60 fields at SC complex, three 46/60 fields at Manderach Park, Victory Park, one T-ball field at SC complex, and all Spring-Ford Area School District elementary fields for practices. They could use more field space and lighting. They could use four more baseball/softball fields. The Spring City complex has design and overuse issues that need to be addressed.

Vincent United Futbol Club is a premier travel soccer organization with a purpose of providing an opportunity for girls to participate in a complete soccer program by encouraging teamwork and good sportsmanship, and by teaching the necessary skills to play competitively. Their program offers girls opportunities to compete regionally and nationally giving them the exposure to further their development as student athletes at the collegiate level and beyond. It is a year-round soccer training program that develops players to their greatest potential by focusing on top-quality instruction and exposure to the highest levels of competition. The organization uses fields in East Vincent Township, West Vincent Township, and the Owen J. Roberts School District Stadium. Eleven teams are organized according to age groups of U10 through U23. Four of the teams are U10 to U12.

Wildcats Football is a relatively new organization going into its third season providing football and cheerleading for boys and girls ages 5-12. About 89 boys play football on six teams. Twenty-two cheerleaders are organized into two teams. Participation increased by 50 percent in the second year with growth projected to be 250 by 2013. The Wildcats rent their practice facility from the 422 Sportsplex and play games on the North Turf of the Owen J. Roberts High School. These facilities are expected to be adequate through growth to 250 players as long as the fees at the 422 Sportsplex remain stable and the school district permits their use of the turf field.

Table A6.2 presents the sports participation according to league, sport, and place of residence of the participants. *Table A6.3* also presents the total participation for the Northern Chester area and for the leagues. Total sports participation in the Northern Chester County was 4,051 in 2010. Overall, the leagues and DARC served 16,143 participants in 2010. Without DARC, the leagues served 10,619 participants in 2010.

Participation by Sport

As shown in *Table A6.3*, several leagues offer the same sport, such as GEYA and the Coventry Soccer Association both providing soccer. However, they have different primary service areas. For example, GEYA soccer serves mainly East Nantmeal, West Pikeland, and West Vincent townships, as well as Upper Uwchlan and Wallace. Coventry Soccer Association serves primarily East Coventry, East Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, and Warwick townships. It also serves West Vincent township, but to a lesser extent than GEYA. East Nantmeal and West Vincent have players in both leagues. *Table A6.3* presents the total participation by sport in Northern Chester.

Table A6.2: Sports League Participation by Municipality and League Total

League	East Coventry	East Nantmeal	East Pikeland	East Vincent	North Coventry	South Coventry	Warwick	West Pikeland	West Vincent	**Total NCC**	**Total League**
Coventry Little League	98	11	0	125	175	79	49	0	5	**542**	**550**
Coventry Soccer Assn	132	6	0	196	165	94	35	0	56	**684**	**1,400**
Coventry Youth Lacrosse	27	10	0	66	38	30	11	0	73	**255**	**255**
Coventry Girls Basketball	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	**120**	**120**
DARC Leagues & Camps	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	468	0	**468**	**5,524**
GEYA Soccer	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	24	180	**216**	**1,200**
GEYA Baseball	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	16	127	**151**	**850**
KYAL Baseball	0	0	443	37	0	0	0	0	0	**480**	**480**
KYAL Softball	0	0	196	11	0	0	0	0	0	**207**	**225**
LYA All sports	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	400	0	**400**	**4,000**
Norchester Red Knights Football	20	3	1	23	40	12	5	0	1	**105**	**133**
Norchester Red Knights Cheerleading	20	6	3	18	27	6	17	0	4	**101**	**113**
NYAA Baseball	16	5	13	15	18	7	7	7	12	**100**	**100**
Penn Premiere Lacrosse	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	**100**
Phoenixville Babe Ruth	0	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	**36**	**122**
SFYAL Baseball	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	**40**	**400**
SFYAL Softball	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	**40**	**400**
Vincent United Futbol Club (Soccer)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Wildcats Football	25	0	0	38	32	10	0	0	1	**106**	**6**
TOTAL	**338**	**61**	**692**	**609**	**495**	**238**	**124**	**915**	**413**	**4,050**	**16,211**

n/a – not available or not available by municipality

Table A6.3: Participation by Sport

Sport	Total Participants
Basketball	120
Baseball	1,349
Football/Cheerleading	312
Lacrosse (Penn Premiere unreported by municipality)	255
Soccer (Vincent United unreported)	900
Softball	247
Multiple sports by DARC and LYA	868
Total	4,051

LEAGUE FINDINGS

While all leagues appreciate the commitment of school district, municipal, and community organizations that provide facilities and support for sports, the reality is that:

- There are not enough fields.
- Practice time is extremely limited to non-existent at times due to lack of facilities.
- Not all fields are permanently protected as recreation facilities. Fields such as those at Ludwig's Corner or Brethren Church are not guaranteed for use in perpetuity. Only fields that are in parks are protected. Even school district fields are not a given should the district need land for expansion of educational facilities.
- Participation varies by municipality as does the provision of sports fields.
- Fields are overused.
- There are no sports turf management programs in place and no fields get rest.
- Fields are generally maintained as well as possible given the resources of the communities. There is no gradation of fields from practice areas through recreational play to tournament quality.
- Field scheduling is a challenge with field use conflicts regarding permits.
- Field lighting in the area is limited, which is consistent with environmental concerns.
- Lack of indoor facilities requires groups to travel outside the area to rent facilities.
- Land values are high and beyond the financial capacity of community sports to purchase sites for fields.
- The leagues operate independently.
- Children and youth appear to have field priority. Over time, adult leagues are likely to emerge such as those that are in place in other areas of southeastern Pennsylvania including: adult soccer, field hockey for ages over 50, and "Grumpy Old Men" softball leagues. They will need places to play.

In interviews and two sports focus groups for this plan, league representatives expressed the desire to work in common and support efforts to obtain land and develop and/or improve facilities.

PROVIDERS OF RECREATION AND HERITAGE-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

Northern Chester County is fortunate to be the home of important organizations that have a mission related to recreation, history, and the local heritage. These include the Mill at Anselma, Anselma Farmers' and Artisans' Market, Binky Lee Preserve, Chester Springs Creamery and Milky Way Farm, Crow's Nest Preserve, Historic Yellow Springs, Ludwig's Corner Horseshow and County Fair, Maysie's Farm Conservation Center, Welkinweir, French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, and the Natural Lands Trust. All of these organizations add to the quality of life here by directly connecting people who live and work here to the local heritage through recreation and tourism opportunities.

Table A6.4: Private Providers of Recreation and Cultural Heritage Programs

Site/Organization	Activities and Programs
Binky Lee Preserve www.natlands.org/preserves-to-visit/...preserves/binky-lee-preserve/	Hiking, walking, nature enjoyment, wildlife watching
Crow's Nest Preserve www.natlands.org/preserves-to-visit/list-of-preserves/crows-nest-preserve/	Visitor Center, hiking, wildlife watching, educational programs, youth environmental programs and camps, volunteer days
Welkinweir www.greenvalleys.org/welkinweir.html	Enjoyment of nature and unique trees, flowers, and shrubs. Home of Green Valleys educational programs. Hosts schools and other organized groups, educating them about wildlife, water, and land protection. Nine-week Summer Nature Day Camp for children ages 4 through 14.
Green Valleys Association www.greenvalleys.org	Wide range of programs and services related primarily to the preservation of watersheds and the environment. Programs for children and adults through schools, scout programs, summer camps, on-site programs, and more.
Mill at Anselma www.anselmamill.org	Tours, workshops, special events, festivals, and school programs related to the mill, food, and heritage.
Anselma Mill and Artisans' Market www.anselmamill.org/market.htm	Weekly children's activities on the green, with a focus on sustainable agriculture education and the active promotion of school gardens, farm-to-school, and whole food nutrition.
Historic Yellow Springs www.yellowsprings.org	Tours, exhibits, workshops, classes, and performances related to the studio and performing arts.
French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust www.frenchandpickering.org	Iron Tour, Homegrown Harvest, special events, annual auction
Milky Way Farm www.milkywayfarm.com	Services and products with "down on the farm" flair including birthday parties, private tours, school group field trips, and pick-your-own pumpkins.
Chester Springs Creamery www.milkywayfarm.com/homepage-creamery.htm	Ice cream making and facility rental for parties and meetings.
Maysie's Farm Conservation Center www.maysiesfarm.org	Nonprofit educational organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the importance of conservation and ecological thinking. Offers a community learning series, school and youth programs, events, educational programs, camps, cooking classes, and more.
Ludwig's Corner Horse Show and Country Fair www.ludwigshorseshow.org	Dedicated to preserving the tradition of horses in Chester County. Offers horse-related programs and special events.
Pottstown YMCA www.ymca.net/y-profile/?assn=5895	Working with the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation and North Coventry Township in creating a 10-week summer camp at Coventry Woods; this camp would also serve participants from Pottstown.

Although there are YMCA's in Pottstown, Phoenixville, Lionville and in nearby counties, there is no YMCA or other type of community center in Northern Chester County. Interviews found that the Freedom Valley YMCA's feasibility study for establishing a YM/YWCA in Northern Chester County research found an insufficient base to support a YM/YWCA. The Ludwig's Corner master site plan reserves a footprint for a future YM/YWCA should conditions change and Freedom Valley or other organization determine it feasible to construct and operate a facility here. In the meantime, exploring ways of working with the Freedom Valley YMCA in the provision of services would help to provide more public recreation services. For example as shown in Table 5, the Pottstown YMCA is working with the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation and North Coventry Township in offering a 10-week summer camp in Coventry Woods that would also serve youth from Pottstown. This partnership features management and services from the YMCA, funding from the Foundation and facilities from North Coventry Township.

History and Recreation

Northern Chester County is an important region in the history of the United States of America. It is the home of the Iron and Steel Industry. Important historic events occurred here during the Revolutionary War. Northern Chester County is one of the few places where people can experience the landscape of an historic event in the same way it appeared during the actual event, largely due to the land preservation efforts of the municipalities of the Northern Chester County area. Opportunities to interpret this history and convey it through recreational experiences should be fostered. Efforts are underway to create a heritage tourism program through the Chester County Parks Department.

Northern Chester County is home to more than a dozen historic villages. Tours, programs, and events in these communities would be a way to inform local residents of their heritage through recreational experiences.

The historic Parker Ford Tavern is being restored as the keystone of a multi-municipal park along the Schuylkill River. East Vincent Township has a vision for the Parker Ford Tavern—to see the buildings and grounds restored as closely as possible to their original eighteenth-century appearance. The tavern could serve as a museum open to the public and dedicated to the history of Parker Ford. The themes for this site would include historic modes of transportation, the growth of commerce and industry in Chester County, and the Revolutionary War. As part of the Schuylkill River Valley Heritage Corridor, the Tavern site will attract tourists, school children, scouts, and area citizens to visit and step back in time. The township believes that with all the growth happening today, saving this historic treasure for future generations to enjoy is a commitment for all ages. It is envisioned that a Friends of the Parker Ford Tavern organization will help to support the facility and programs.

In the public opinion survey, one out of every two respondents indicated that they were interested in lifelong learning classes and programs. Further research and interviews revealed that citizens have a keen interest in learning about the history of the area. Suggestions generated included having local and regional history classes incorporated in the Owen J. Roberts Adult Evening School.

The area has fine examples of events and activities organized around the historic aspects of the Region. These include re-enactments such as the 225th Anniversary Crossing of the Schuylkill River by General George Washington's troops.

Culture and Recreation

While the Brandywine area of Southern Chester County is renowned for art—most prominently expressed through the Wyeth family—Northern Chester County is also home to an important arts community. Historic Yellow Springs is a nonprofit enterprise that preserves and promotes the history and arts of Yellow Springs village. The Chester Springs Studio is a vibrant arts center at Historic Yellow Springs. Founded in 1978 as an offshoot of Historic Yellow Springs, the Studio grew in reputation as a nationally-known home for the visual arts, particularly in the areas of painting and ceramics. Historic Yellow Springs offers an innovative mix of arts, history, and interdisciplinary program experiences. Today, the Chester Springs Studio continues to be an artistic epicenter in Northern Chester County. The Studio's dedicated faculty members bring experience and excitement to intimate classroom settings. Visiting artists conduct workshops to expand students' horizons in ceramics, sculpture, painting, photography, dance, and other pursuits. Exhibitions provide a way for established and emerging artists to showcase their works while educating the public about visual art.

Historic Yellow Springs features the Yellow Springs Cultural Center. In the 1920s the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts created studio space in the 1845 barn for its Country School. The Yellow Springs Institute, a nonprofit performing arts organization, was formed in 1976 and purchased the barn and five acres from Historic Yellow Springs. The loft was converted to a black box theatre in 1982 and a conference center was added in 1989. Historic Yellow Springs was able to repurchase the property in 1997 and created the Yellow Springs Cultural Center, a performing arts center.

Tourism

Cultural heritage tourism includes traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historical, and natural resources. Northern Chester County has its own unique identity rooted in its Revolutionary War history, the Iron and Steel Heritage, and its significant natural resources and scenery that organizations and individuals have been working strategically and successfully to protect. This is not an area that favors a large volume of group tours and buses. The lovely countryside with its narrow winding roads, small historic villages, and scenery is more conducive to heritage tourism supported by small groups of family and friends enjoying the area together.

Northern Chester County is not a focus of the area's visitor and convention bureaus. The Brandywine Conference and Visitor's Bureau concentrates on the southern part of the county featuring the Brandywine area. The Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau is centered on the Valley Forge/King of Prussia area. The Schuylkill Highlands CLI is working toward addressing recreational tourism in the area that includes Northern Chester County. Consideration could be given to determining if this is the logical home for tourism for Northern Chester County. Because cultural heritage tourism could be important for the area, Northern Chester County should continue to work with the Schuylkill Highlands CLI in developing an approach that works for those who live here, as there appears to be a duality of desire to both showcase the Region as well as keep it a secret!

Recreation Program and Opportunity Analysis

Recreation opportunities are a patchwork of self-directed opportunities in the great outdoors, heritage-related programs, the arts unique to this area, community sports, special events, school district programs, multi-municipal park and recreation organizations, and close-to-home recreation provided by volunteers under the auspices of local municipalities.

The main character of recreation in the area is enjoyment of the great outdoors, special events (many tied to heritage, history, and conservation), and sports. There appears to be a strong desire to establish active healthy lifestyles as a way of life here. This would be in keeping with Chester County's rating as the healthiest county in Pennsylvania. Another underlying theme is the desire to meld heritage and history with recreation rather than as discrete elements separate from each other.

The programs, such as the Iron Tour and community festivals, offered are of top quality and are generally increasing in participation. The provision of recreation services, programs, information, schedules, and locations is fragmented. Each provider operates independently as best they can in planning and implementing recreation opportunities. There is no centralized place for people to go for information about programs, events, facilities, or services.

The residents participate in recreation throughout the Region and do not restrict themselves to their own municipality. The municipalities are too small to provide their own recreation services, as is common in larger communities in southeastern Pennsylvania. West Pikeland and East Pikeland have joined together with Phoenixville and Downingtown in providing multi-municipal recreation in their areas in conjunction with other municipal partners.

Sports represent a major challenge. With 16 organizations providing football, baseball, softball, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, basketball, and swimming, all operating regionally, increasing in numbers, and struggling to get enough game and practice facilities, there is a lot of problem solving and work to do here. Fortunately, people in the leagues and the municipalities as well as some private organizations are willing to work together in this effort.

The activities in which most people are interested are opportunities outdoors such as walking, bicycling, enjoying nature, and so on. The organized activity of the most interest is lifelong learning for adults—and Owen J. Roberts offers the Adult Evening School for that. One of the disconnects relates to children being engaged and active in the outdoors. With youth largely consumed with video- and computer-based recreation, engaging them in active healthy lifestyles is a major goal of the communities of Northern Chester County. A work session with 90 fifth graders found that their top interests were being outside, but not in more ballfields and game courts as expected. They expressed the desire to play in the woods, in the creeks, and on play equipment suitable for their ages.

Probably the single most important thing that Northern Chester County could do to foster participation in recreation and active healthy lifestyles for people of all ages is to develop the "go-to" place for information. Survey respondents indicated that their most preferred source of this information would be one Web site for Northern Chester County. This support for a regional source of information is a significant finding of regional thinking, especially in Pennsylvania. The "go-to" place would be easily accessed, in real time, easy

to navigate, and provide a range of information on the activities, events, facilities, and opportunities in the Region. Promoting this resource to create wide public understanding of its availability would be key.

Long-term and out-of-the-box, there may be another way to engage people through a leisure counseling approach that would be based upon a strategic development process tailored for Northern Chester County. The idea would be to develop a system similar to finding a hotel on a travel Web site that engages the participant in a series of directed questions until he/she makes a choice about what they would like to do. This would be a rather significant undertaking requiring expertise and resources for development, but perhaps it would be worthy of university involvement and grant funding from a foundation. The key may be to tying this into wellness and active healthy living

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INTRODUCTION

Vision, bold leadership, and effective management are needed to create a successful parks and recreation system. Parks that are safe, clean, ready-to-use, and inviting attract citizens of all ages, interests, and abilities. Having plenty of recreation opportunities in place—both organized activities and things people can do on their own—enhances the quality of life. This chapter describes the current scenario in Northern Chester County in terms of operations, management and financing. It also presents how operations and management could work more efficiently and effectively if the municipalities pooled their resources for parks and recreation. By working in partnership rather than as independent jurisdictions, municipalities can save money, provide more and better public service and be more competitive for grant funding.

ORGANIZATION OF NORTHERN CHESTER COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The governments in Northern Chester County include nine townships, three school districts, and Chester County. The townships range in population from 1,946 to 7,843. *Table A7.1* presents the nine municipalities of Northern Chester County along with their elected and appointed boards, township administration, police, and county government. *Table A7.2* presents information about the three school districts regarding the boards and municipalities served. In all, 63 elected officials serve the communities of Northern Chester County. Another 227 citizens serve as appointed members of the boards and committees related to parks, recreation, open space, environment, conservation, the arts, history, and culture.

In addition to the permanent boards, the municipalities also provide representatives to regional boards and committees for special purposes. Examples of these special purpose committees include the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee, the Phoenixville Regional Planning Committee, the Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee, and the Northern Federation Regional Resource Plan Advisory Committee.

Table A7.1: Northern Chester County Municipalities, Governance, Administration, and Boards and Committees Related to Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Municipality	Elected Officials	Municipal Manager	Police Dept.	Parks and Recreation Board	Related Boards or Committees
East Coventry	5	Yes	Yes	Parks, Recreation & Conservation Board (7 members + alternate) Historical Commission (7 members)	
East Nantmeal	3	No	No	No	Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) (7 members) Historical Commission (7 members)
East Pikeland	3	Yes	Yes	Parks & Recreation Board (7 members)	Open Space Committee (9 members) Historical Commission (9 members + building inspector)
East Vincent	3	Yes	Yes	Parks & Recreation Board (7 members)	EAC (4 members) Historical Commission (8 members)
North Coventry	5	Yes	Yes	Parks & Recreation Board (8 members)	Open Space Review Board (7 members) EAC (5 members) Historical Commission (9 members)
South Coventry	3	No	No	Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Oversight (OREO) Board (7 members) Historical Commission (8 members)	
Warwick	3	Admin-istrator	No	No	Historical Commission (5 members)
West Pikeland	5	Yes	Yes	Parks and Recreation Board (7 members + Alternate) Member of Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium (DARC) (10 members) Arts & Culture Committee (5 members)	Open Space Advisory Committee (9 members) West Pikeland Land Trust (11 members) EAC (5 members) Historical Commission (7 members)
West Vincent	3	Yes	Yes	Parks and Recreation Commission (7 members + supervisor liaison)	Open Space Advisory Committee (7 members) West Vincent Land Trust (9 members) EAC (9 members) Sustainability Committee (9 members)
Chester County	3	Open Space Department and a Parks & Recreation Department with		Parks & Recreation Board (9 members)	Open Space Advisory Committee (10 members)

County Park Rangers.	

Table A7.2: School Districts Serving Northern Chester County

School District	School Board Members	Municipalities Served in Northern Chester County
Owen J. Roberts School District	9	▪ East Coventry Township ▪ East Nantmeal Township ▪ East Vincent Township ▪ North Coventry Township ▪ South Coventry Township ▪ Warwick Township ▪ West Vincent Township
Phoenixville Area School District, based in Montgomery County	9	▪ East Pikeland Township
Downingtown Area School District	9	▪ West Pikeland Township

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

With nearly 300 elected and appointed officials working toward the planning and implementation of projects in their individual jurisdictions, the Federation of Northern Chester County is a potential nucleus of collaboration. Known as the Northern Federation, it has been leading the way in regional planning, conservation, and partnerships since 1974. The Northern Federation is the oldest and largest active regional planning organization in Chester County. Originally formed as a joint venture of five municipalities to protect the French Creek corridor, the Northern Federation now includes 10 municipalities—9 of which participated in the development of this Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan—and a host of public and private organizations. Since its establishment, the Northern Federation has been geared toward planning and developing regulations for resource conservation. Although in Pennsylvania municipalities have traditionally operated independently, the Northern Federation has advocated that the municipalities and their partners work together, transcending municipal boundaries toward a common vision of a region united by natural and cultural resources and rural scenic beauty.

The Northern Federation operates informally through consensus of its municipal partners. Although formal paperwork was in place at the time of the establishment of the Northern Federation, the intergovernmental agreement has become informal over the years. The municipal partners contribute about $2,500 annually to support the Northern Federation's efforts to secure support for projects that advance the region's goals. Each municipality appoints one member to the Northern Federation annually, and these members elect the Federation's annual leadership.

With its long and successful history, the Northern Federation has earned the recognition and support of the citizenry to the degree that many citizens view their place of residence as Northern Chester County rather than as any one municipality. Municipalities working together have become the norm here with the encouragement and example of the Northern Federation. This was borne out in the public opinion survey in which 51 percent of all respondents would prefer to get information about parks and recreation from one Web site for all townships, rather than from single townships or the school district.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (www.nps.gov/hofu/historyculture/index.htm) offers programs, tours, events, camps, programs, educational activities, and public facilities for walking, hiking, and nature and cultural exploration. About 53,000 people visit the site annually. The Hopewell Furnace's role in the historical, cultural, and recreation system of Northern Chester County could be explored.

While the **Valley Forge National Historical Park** (www.nps.gov/vafo) is not within the Northern Chester County boundaries, it does abut the area and serves as a major destination for the citizens of the region who like to walk, hike, bicycle, picnic, and enjoy the scenery there. As reported in the survey, it is among the most heavily-used parks by Northern Chester County residents. The role of Valley Forge in the American Revolution is well known. The Northern Chester County landscape and its cultural resources play a lesser-known but also vital part in the story of the Revolution. Working with the National Military Park in telling and promoting this story throughout the region could be considered. Some 2.2 million people visit the park each year.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

French Creek State Park (www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/frenchcreek.aspx) is heavily used by the residents of Northern Chester County. About 271,400 people visit the park annually. The park is very important to the Philadelphia area in generating about $1,842,300 annually in economic impact. Although Pennsylvania state parks have experienced cutbacks in operations, the Commonwealth is still encouraging state parks to form partnerships in order to serve citizens while conserving resources. Beyond its use as a recreation resource, the park could potentially be a partner for Northern Chester County in environmental education, resource management, and other related areas. As the North American capital for orienteering, French Creek State Park could potentially assist Northern Chester County in generating interest in this activity as a way of motivating people of all ages to spend more time outdoors.

The 1,727-acre **Marsh Creek State Park** (www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateParks/parks/marshcreek.aspx) provides recreation opportunities that serve the people of Northern Chester County. They are frequent visitors to Marsh Creek. The partnership potential would be similar to that of French Creek State Park. The 2010 Citizen Survey found that people who use one state park tend to use many state, national, regional, and county parks.

The **Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission** (www.fish.state.pa.us) is an important state organization for municipalities. Commission services that lend themselves to partnerships in Northern Chester County include stream stocking, fishing and boating programs, and grant funding.

The **Pennsylvania Game Commission** (www.pgc.state.pa.us) specializes in wildlife management and conservation. With some state game lands in the area, the Game Commission can potentially be a partner in educational programs and in programs on wildlife management.

The **Schuylkill River Heritage Greenway Association** (www.schuylkillriver.org) manages the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area. The Association is a strong supporter, facilitator, planner, advocate, and implementer of trails, greenways, activities, and events in Northern Chester County and other areas surrounding the river. Northern Chester County communities work closely with the Greenway Association. Subjects for potential partnerships already include or could include the following:

- Expanded Schuylkill Land and River Trail System.
- Increased riverfront access.
- Environmental education along the river for children, adults, and families.
- Public recreation facilities on the riverfront.
- Riverfront recreation events, perhaps signature events.
- Greenway protection.
- Reforestation.
- Heritage preservation and interpretation.
- Revitalization of riverfront communities.

County and Regional Governmental Organizations

Chester County Parks and Recreation (CCPR)(www.chesco.org/ccparks) manages Warwick County Park, the only county park in Northern Chester County. As such, CCPR provides valuable expertise in assisting Northern Chester County communities in managing natural areas, establishing benchmarks, providing examples of policies and procedures, refining workload cost tracking methods, planning, developing and managing nature-based parks, and programming. The Department also manages the Historic Preservation and Heritage Education Services division. Both the Parks and Recreation Director and the Historic Preservation Coordinator participated in this planning effort. The programs that lend themselves to partnerships with the Northern Federation include historic trail planning, historic and cultural resource preservation, heritage tourism, and town tours, among others.

The **Owen J. Roberts School District** (OJR SD) (www.ojrsd.com) provides public education for East Coventry, East Nantmeal, East Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, Warwick, and West Vincent townships. The school district is progressive in addressing health and wellness as part of its core function. The district has established a Wellness Coordinator position supported in part through a grant from the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation to stimulate physical activity to promote wellness. The school district is engaged in a strategic planning process for the improvement of school facilities over the next 10 to 20 years. As part of the strategic planning process, the school district is exploring facilities that are used for recreation and how they can be enhanced and expanded in the

future to serve a broad base of citizens in leading active, engaged lifestyles. Topics for partnerships include the following:

- Active healthy lifestyle advocacy, programs, services, and promotion for broad base of citizens within the district.
- Information sharing and promotion.
- Facility planning, development, and operation.
- Sharing of expertise in field operations.
- Potential sharing of equipment.
- Joint purchasing.
- School parks.
- Customer data base for enhanced public service and information dissemination.

East Pikeland Township is served by the **Phoenixville Area School District** (www.pasd.com). The district will be renovating East Pikeland Elementary School on Hares Hill Road and has presented the plans to the township. Given their orientation to the school district, township residents tend to participate in programs and services provided by the Phoenixville Recreation Department.

West Pikeland Township is a member of the **Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium** (DARC) (www.darcinfo.com), a consortium of municipalities and the **Downingtown Area School District** (www.dasd.org) organized to provide public recreation programs and services. About 5,500 people are enrolled in DARC's sports leagues including 500 residents from West Pikeland. This plan supports the continued participation of West Pikeland Township as a member of DARC. As an exemplary municipal school parks and recreation partnership, DARC could serve as a model multi-municipal recreation organization for Northern Chester County.

Private and Non-Profit Partners

Table A7.3 presents private and nonprofit organizations that have a relationship or the potential to have a partnership with the Northern Federation in parks, recreation, and open space protection and related areas, such as health and wellness and environmental conservation. This includes promotion and information sharing.

Table A7.3: Non-Governmental Organizations with Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Interests in Northern Chester County

Name	Mission
Conservation and Heritage	
Hopewell Big Woods Partnership www.hopewellbigwoods.org	Led by Natural Lands Trust, the Partnership is a group of over 30 government agencies, private nonprofits, and municipal entities. The Partnership is seeking to conserve at least 4,000 acres of old growth, 15,000 acres of unbroken forest, and the watersheds supported by this

Name	Mission
	forest.
French and Pickering Creek Conservation Trust www.frenchandpickering.org	To preserve and protect endangered land and natural resources in the Northern Chester County watersheds for future generations.
Green Valleys Association www.greenvalleys.org	To protect and preserve the quality and quantity of water resources in Northern Chester County through advocacy and education.
Schuylkill Highlands www.schuylkillhighlands.org	Under the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) and administered by Natural Lands Trust, Schuylkill Highlands is a place-based strategy for natural resource stewardship and advocacy in key landscapes across our state where there are strong natural assets and local readiness and support for land conservation, locally-driven planning, and community economic revitalization efforts.
Natural Lands Trust www.natlands.org	Natural Lands Trust protects the forests, fields, wetlands, and streams that are essential to the sustainability and quality of life in eastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey.
Green Space Alliance www.greenspacealliance.org	Dedicated to preserving and connecting open space throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania, the alliance works collaboratively with members, local governments, and nonprofit organizations, to raise awareness of the importance of open space to the region's quality of life and identity, its economic vitality, and its ecology.
Iron and Steel Heritage Task Force	Created in 2009 to address the lack of comprehensive planning for the area's iron and steel sites. Goal is to link the sites on the Iron and Steel Trail and promote them as a unit.
Health and Wellness	
Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation www.pottstownfoundation.org	The Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation serves communities within a 10-mile radius of Pottstown. The Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to assuring increased access to health and wellness education and services. The foundation provides these services directly through its own programs and through other nonprofit health and wellness providers via a trust of about $70 million.
Phoenixville Community Health Foundation www.pchf1.org	The foundation's mission is to improve the health and quality of life of people through grants and community involvement within the greater Phoenixville community.
Nature Based Recreation and Environmental Education	
Crow's Nest Preserve http://www.natlands.org/preserves-to-visit/list-of-preserves/crows-nest-	600 acres of protected lands along French Creek managed by the Natural Lands Trust. Offers educational and recreation programs.

Name	Mission
preserve	
Dame Juliana League Flyfishers www.djlflyfishers.org	Works toward the conservation and protection of our aquatic resources and educating those interested in fly fishing and fly tying.
French Creek Outfitters www.frenchcreekoutfitters.com	Commercial outfitting company that provides demonstrations and classes on recreation in the great outdoors.
Anselma Mill www.anselmamill.org	The Mill at Anselma Preservation and Educational Trust was formed in 1998 to create an innovative historical attraction at the Mill at Anselma to demonstrate through sensory experiences the evolution of technology and the impacts of change in commerce, free enterprise, and transportation on American life over three centuries, for schoolchildren, families, scholars, visitors, and local residents.
Historic Yellow Springs and Studio www.yellowsprings.org	Historic Yellow Springs is a nonprofit enterprise that preserves and promotes the history and arts of Yellow Springs village. It is home to the Chester Springs Studio, a vibrant arts center that hosts classes, workshops, and exhibitions in the visual arts.
Maki Winery	Demonstrations, tastings, programs, and involvement in development of a regional Wine and Cheese Trail.
Chester County Cheeses www.chestercountycheese.org	Members dedicate their lives and lands to the art and science of making premier farmstead and artisanal cheeses. Offers events and programs; involved in creating a regional Wine and Cheese Trail.
Organized Sports	
Coventry Little League www.coventryll.org	Baseball and softball for males ages 5–12 and females ages 5–18.
Coventry Soccer Association http://ssl.23sports.net/coventrysoccer	Soccer for males and females ages 4-17.
Coventry Youth Lacrosse www.coventrylax.com	Lacrosse for males ages 7–15 and females ages 8–12.
Glenmoore Eagle Youth Association www.geyasports.org	Baseball and soccer for males and females ages 5–18.
Kimberton Youth Athletic League www.kimbertonyouth.com	Baseball and softball for males and females ages 5–16.
Lionville Youth Association www.lyasports.org	Baseball, softball, lacrosse, field hockey for males and females ages 5–19.
Norchester Red Knights www.norchesterredknights.com	Flag and tackle football and cheerleading for males and females ages 6-15.

Name	Mission
Penn Premiere Lacrosse www.pennpremier.com	Lacrosse for males and females in grades 1 through 12.
Phoenixville Babe Ruth League www.pybrl.com	Baseball for males ages 13–18.
Spring Ford Youth Athletic League www.s-fyouth.com	Baseball, softball, cheerleading, basketball, and wrestling for males and females ages 4–18, with most being 6–12.
Vincent United Futbol Club www.vincentunited.com	Competitive soccer program for females U10–U18.
WC Field Hockey Club www.wcfieldhockey.com	Total player development in field hockey for females ages 8–18.
Equestrian	
Ludwig's Corner Riding and Driving Club www.ludwigsriding.org	Club for riding and driving, including English and Western-style pleasure riding and carriage driving for all ages and skill levels.
Bellewood Hunt Club 610-495-6587	Fox hunting.
Warwick Village Hounds 610-286-7337	Fox hunting.
Kimberton Hunt Club 610-469-0227	Fox hunting.
Trails and Greenways	
Horseshoe Trail Conservancy www.hstrail.org	Established in 1935 as the Horseshoe Trail Club, this is a nonprofit volunteer organization working toward protecting and conserving the natural and cultural aspects of the trail.
Equestrian Groups See above.	Equestrian groups identified above are strong advocates of trails and perform outreach to create the network of informal trails throughout the area.
Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia www.bicyclecoalition.org	Recognized as the top bicycle advocacy coalition in the nation, the Bike Coalition was instrumental in obtaining an $18 million TIGER grant in 2010. The organization should be considered as a major partner in bicycle trails in Northern Chester County.
Bicycle Club of Philadelphia http://phillybikeclub.org/newbcp	The Bicycle Club of Philadelphia is a recreational biking group which offers a wide variety of rides throughout the Greater Delaware Valley for cyclists of all abilities and interests.
Tourism and Information Dissemination	

Name	Mission
Brandywine Conference and Visitor's Bureau www.brandywinecvb.org	Conference and Visitors Bureau for Chester County with a focus on the Brandywine area.
Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau www.valleyforge.org	The Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau is a private, nonprofit membership sales and marketing organization that aggressively promotes the Valley Forge area and Montgomery County as a convention site and leisure visitor destination by promoting patronage of its member hotels, restaurants, attractions, and services.
Chester Springs Surrounds www.chesterspringssurrounds.org	An organization devoted to visitation and appreciation of the beautiful green spaces bounded by Pottstown, South Phoenixville, Elverson, and Exton. The organization produces a brochure oriented toward visitation in this area.

PARTNERSHIPS AS AN ORGANIZING ELEMENT

Combined, Northern Chester County's local governmental, state, regional, county, private and nonprofit partners number more than 350 organizations. Clearly, the people of Northern Chester County have experienced the value of working together. Partnerships vary, from those that have endured for many decades, to partnerships that are rooted in a certain cause and are of finite duration. For the most part, Northern Chester County partners desire to operate on a handshake and the good word of those involved rather than a formal written agreement. While this seems to work, there is also a desire—noted in the public involvement section—to move ahead more formally over time with a partnership devoted to parks, recreation, and open space. The range of partnerships in this area could include the following:

- A Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission including the nine municipalities of the service area.
- A municipal/ school district partnership among the municipalities and the Owen J. Roberts School District.
- A multi-municipal/school district partnership with a recreation coordinator staff person.
- A multi-municipal/school district partnership as part of a regional coalition with the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation. Under this scenario several regional parks and recreation partnerships would exist in the Foundation's service area within the 10-mile radius of Pottstown. The Northern Federation coalition would focus on the Owen J. Roberts School District and collaborate with the Foundation's efforts on larger topical and service issues and opportunities.

MANAGEMENT

In Northern Chester County, management of facilities is primarily the responsibility of the entity that owns the property. For example, the National Park Service manages Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, the Bureau of State Parks operates French Creek State Park, and Chester County manages Warwick County Park. For the purposes of this plan, management will focus on the properties owned by the municipalities.

POLICY MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION

As Townships of the Second Class, the Boards of Supervisors are the chief elected officials for each municipality. They are responsible for setting policy and decision-making. Those responsible for the implementation of the Boards' policies are township managers, staff, and advisory boards and committees. Township-appointed boards and committees are advisory. It is their job to implement the policy directives of the elected officials and to provide the elected officials with solid information in a timely manner so that the elected body can make informed decisions for the overall good of the community. All of the townships have a manager except Warwick, which has an Administrator, and East Nantmeal, where the Supervisors serve in this capacity.

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS

No municipality in Northern Chester County has a parks and recreation department. The functions normally provided by a parks and recreation department are handled by volunteer parks and recreation boards. Some, such as North Coventry Township, offer extensive recreation programs and thus employ part-time recreation staff. This is an expected finding as a municipality needs a population of at least 10,000–12,000 to warrant a parks and recreation operation. The Park and Recreation Boards in Northern Chester County provide recreation programs and activities for their communities with a focus on special events and community festivals.

PARK MAINTENANCE

Park maintenance in Northern Chester County is a function of the Public Works or Roads Departments. This is expected to continue in the future even if the region forms a coalition for parks, recreation, and open space. The usual path to regional parks and recreation begins with a focus on programs and services with the responsibility of park maintenance continuing under the auspices of the public works or roads departments. The focus is typically on mowing, trimming, and trash removal. They also work on capital projects.

Because these are small rural communities and work on parks is done as part of overall public works, there is little if any tracking of workload and costs associated with park maintenance, or specific facilities such as ball fields, or tasks such as mowing. Tracking the cost of labor and expenses provides a base of information for use in decision-making such as setting fees and charges, staff hiring, contracting out tasks, and so on. As the saying goes, "You can't manage what you can't count." As the Northern Chester County parks and recreation system grows, it will be important to begin workload

cost tracking for park maintenance. The Owen J. Roberts campus maintenance management team may be able to provide expertise, advice, and modeling in this area.

Sports Field Maintenance

Sports organizations provide support for the maintenance of game fields in the form of volunteers and contracted maintenance. They spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on field maintenance and improvements.

Owen J. Roberts School District Adult Evening School

The Owen J. Roberts School District contracts its Adult Evening School to Chester County Night School. The Adult Evening School is important to the residents of Northern Chester County. The survey for this plan found that one of every two survey respondents is interested in adult enrichment, lifelong learning, and skill development programs. This was a margin of nearly double that of other types of programs listed in the survey. There is also interest in programs centered on local history and culture. The Adult Evening School is an important source of recreation opportunities that satisfies an interest in this community. It demonstrates how contracting services is an effective management tool.

Information Management

One of the most important findings of the planning process was the consistent identification of the need for information about parks, trails, recreation facilities, programs, and services. One in two survey respondents identified the lack of information about recreation opportunities as their chief block to participation. This is an unusual finding as the chief block to participation in most communities is the lack of time/too busy to participate.

As shown in *Table A7.4*, the majority of the survey respondents indicated that they would like to know more about parks, trails, recreation facilities, programs, and services and where to get information about these topics. *Table A7.4*also shows that the highest level of awareness was about parks and the lowest was about programs. Those who wanted more information about trails outnumbered those who were fully informed about them by a margin of two to one. Fully one in four respondents was not aware of trails in the region.

Table A7.4: Survey Respondents' Awareness about Parks and Recreation Elements

	Fully Informed	Would like to Know More	Not Aware
Parks in the area	36%	57%	6%
Trails for cycling	24%	50%	26%
Recreation facilities	27%	58%	15%
Recreation programs, events, and services	19%	63%	18%
Where to get information about parks and recreation	20%	63%	17%

When asked about their preferred means of getting information, the Web sites and township newsletters were the most-preferred means. Overall, respondents most preferred accessing information

via one Web site for Northern Chester County. This was closely followed by township Web sites. Least preferred was social media. However, it is important to note that the respondents to this survey were primarily over the age of 24. It is highly likely that generational differences are at play in this response. Social media are important for young residents.

Planning for the provision of information will be an evolutionary process with the first step being to establish one Web site as the "go to" place for all things parks and recreation in Northern Chester County, with links to township Web sites as well to other providers and partners. An existing Web site might be able to be tapped to become the "go to" Web site—Chester Springs Surrounds might be a partner in this initiative. The Northern Federation should strongly be considered as the home of the "go to" parks and recreation Web site given its name recognition, success, and long history here. The township newsletters should continue. The investigation about information on trails should consider long-term mobile applications, most likely in partnership with another organization such as the Schuylkill River Greenway Association or the Schuylkill Highlands. A Web site for the Owen J. Roberts School District as well as individual fliers and handouts were not preferred methods.

One of the most valuable things that the Northern Federation does is to bring the parks and recreation boards together for a semi-annual summit. During the summit the participants discuss important parks and recreation issues that they have in common. The merits of regular discussion about parks and recreation issues came to light during this planning process. Participants regularly shared information on topics of importance to them such as the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland. Without a regular forum, such discussion and information sharing do not occur.

Overview of Management and Future Directions

It is important to keep the context of Northern Chester County municipalities in mind in any discussion of management. These are small, rural communities with 2010 populations ranging from 1,803 in East Nantmeal to 7,866 in North Coventry, with an average of 4,879. Given the fact that seven of the nine municipalities and dozens of volunteers are providing recreation programs and activities, these efforts are dispersed, fragmented, and duplicative. About 80 percent of survey respondents reported not knowing where to go to get information (17 percent) or wanting more information (63 percent). Those municipalities and private providers involved with the planning process suggested that by working together, they may be able to schedule and coordinate activities and programs in such a way as to provide more numerous programs, of higher quality and more diversity, to maximize public involvement. The level of coordination could range from sharing information on event schedules to planning a year-round program. Areas that appear to be well-suited to multi-municipal partnerships include information sharing, event planning, program planning, advertising and promotion, recreation staff sharing, and trail planning. Areas that do not appear to be well-suited to multi-municipal sharing include park maintenance and park design. Park planning appears to be on the cusp of multi-municipal involvement especially in the area of ball fields and game courts. With organized sports expanding, and fields already being overused and insufficient in number, discussion

during this planning process focused on multi-municipal and school district efforts regarding sharing the planning, development, and maintenance of athletic fields.

Table A7.5 presents potential management options, ranging from retaining the current organizational structure by municipality with the Northern Federation facilitating collaborative projects, to establishing a regional parks and recreation organization. Not everything needs to happen at once. Organizational changes can be phased in as opportunities emerge and circumstances evolve. Not all nine municipalities need to step up together—the municipalities that want to join forces can, leaving the door open for others to join in at a later time. The benefits of collaboration include maximizing available resources through cost and labor sharing, providing more and better public services, and moving initiatives forward across municipal boundaries to establish more facilities and services for recreation than could be done by any one municipality alone.

FINANCING

Parks and recreation support has departed from the traditional approach in which municipalities used local taxes to develop and operate parks and recreation. Today, parks and recreation is largely supported through a mix of public and private funding.

As small, rural communities, the municipalities of Northern Chester County experienced the traditional pattern of growth in parks and recreation—municipalities providing land and park development largely in response to pressing needs for sports facilities. Programs and services were rooted in volunteer organizations such as sports leagues as well as faith-based institutions. Public schools were hubs for community life, including recreation. Fire companies stepped up by offering land as the location for ball fields. Organizations did their own fundraising through concession stand sales, product sales, and events geared to raising money to support operations.

Today, many citizens view facilities on municipal and school district property as already being in place and available for public use in an unlimited fashion. While the municipalities and the Owen J. Roberts School District operate under the philosophy of maximum public use of facilities for education and recreation, their use requires operational support for labor, maintenance, cyclical repairs, security, utilities, materials, equipment, and supplies. Long-term, 75 percent of the lifetime cost of a facility is in maintenance. It is much easier to get capital funding than it is to get funding for operations and maintenance, especially in this era of concern about paying for salaries and benefits.

The following section provides information about financing parks and recreation in Northern Chester County.

Table A7.5: Organizational Options for the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, Greenways, Trails, and Open Space System

Options	Pros	Cons	Comments
Current Scenario Federation exploring and facilitating regional collaboration. Each municipality operating parks and recreation opportunities on its own through its parks and recreation board. Trails advanced by individual stakeholder groups. School districts operate independently on recreation-related initiatives.	• Federation fosters collaboration. • Municipalities are working together and contributing joint funding for this plan. • Each municipality has the opportunity to chart its own course.	• Efforts are fragmented. • Potential for more duplication of facilities and services as municipalities develop independently. • Higher costs. • Less efficiency. • Harder to get grants as single municipalities.	• The "easiest" thing to do is keep the status quo. Change is a challenge. However, the right thing to do and the hard thing to do may be the same thing.
Northern Chester County Committee Scenario *Current Scenario + Northern Chester County Parks and Recreation Committee*	• Offers formal mechanism for communication and collaboration. • Potentially better use of limited resources. • Flexibility on when and what to collaborate on.	• Same as above to a lesser degree.	• This could be a first step that would help parks, recreation, and open space advance. The Committee could help advance communication and build trust.
Expanded Municipal Scenario *Current Scenario + Northern Chester County Parks and Recreation Committee*. Each municipality grows its system *independently* with parks and recreation staff (part-time or full time).	• Would help to implement the plan on a municipal basis with a mechanism for communication and cooperation in place via the Committee. • More could be accomplished with additional staff.	• Municipal reluctance about adding staff due to wages and benefits. • Additional staff over nine municipalities is likely to be duplicative and expensive. • May not attract quality staff due to constraints on wage level.	• If the municipalities start hiring parks and recreation staff, it will be more difficult to regionalize in the future.
Municipal Partnership Scenario Northern Chester County Parks and Recreation Committee in place with	• A more formalized way of coordinating programs and facilities among municipalities	• The scale of accomplishments is likely to be limited without people in place charged with	

Options	Pros	Cons	Comments
municipalities working together on identified initiatives using existing municipal staff and/or volunteers to accomplish projects and programs.	than presently followed. Identifies an annual work program with roles, responsibilities, timelines, and resources. • Uses existing staff or additional staff at municipal level.	planning, directing, and managing efforts on a day-to-day basis.	
Tri-School District Scenario Municipalities organize by school district. Regional partnership by school district. Three partnerships organized by OJR, Phoenixville, and Downingtown school districts with their associated municipalities.	• Provides three parks and recreation systems organized around the current orientation of participants toward their own school district. • West Pikeland already participates in DARC.	• Separates the Northern Chester County communities by school district: the municipalities of the OJR SD, with East Pikeland in Phoenixville, and West Pikeland in Downingtown.	• Parks and recreation management through DARC and Phoenixville appears to work well in organized, scheduled recreation opportunities.
Northern Chester County Regional Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission. True regional partnership with an intergovernmental agreement including municipalities and the OJR School District for roles, responsibilities, contributions, planning, and staffing. Under this scenario, a Parks and Recreation Coordinator would serve the Northern Chester County regional parks and recreation partnership by coordinating efforts to develop programs for active healthy living; helping to guide the planning, development, and operation of parks and recreation facilities among the various partners; and providing technical assistance and support to advance partnerships and a broad means of supporting parks and	• The Federation is very well respected and has demonstrated staying power over decades. • Citizens already relate to the Federation. • Cost savings. • Higher level of public service, enhanced conservation of resources, less cost than operating separately. • Capacity to get things done that cannot be accomplished through volunteers alone. • Capacity to put actions into place in response to public preferences such as providing information about parks and recreation. • Capacity to recruit, sustain,	• There is a lot to work out. Details are complex but achievable. • With OJR being the principal school district, how can we carve out a role with Phoenixville? • West Pikeland is already in DARC and may not want to be in a Northern Chester regional parks and recreation commission. • We need to work out putting in fair and equitable shares by each municipality and the school district. Need to figure in the fairness related to municipalities providing the land and facilities for recreation versus those that do	• All of the right people and conditions are in place to foster success. It is hard to imagine a better set of circumstances to launch a regional system. • The focus of the commission can be determined: parks, recreation, open space, greenways, trails—any or all of these. • Can determine how parks and recreation facilities are planned, acquired, developed, and maintained. • Assumes each municipality would

Options	Pros	Cons	Comments
recreation. "Parks and Recreation" encompasses the region's broad interests of conservation, recreation, trails, history, culture, the arts, and partnerships.	enhance, coordinate, and recognize partnerships, sponsorships, and volunteers. • Opportunity to get staffing that may not be affordable by any one municipality. • Ability to attract higher-quality staff. • Smaller investment required by each municipality to yield greater results. • Ability to address regional issues, e.g., trails, facilities, services. • More competitive for grants. • Potential to be a demonstration area with the school park idea that could attract funding. • State funding available for four years for circuit rider, allowing time to establish and stabilize the system. • Pottstown Health & Wellness Foundation could be a key player.	not.	continue to own its own land. • Decisions could be made about regional parks and potential school parks. • Decisions could be made about the level of regional cooperation regarding facility development and operation, including decision-making. • DARC is a good local model of successful formal regional recreation partnership. • Funding for this position may be available under Pennsylvania's Circuit Rider program. The program offers funding over a four-year period to support the Circuit Rider in 100%, 75%, 50%, and 25% grants, to be matched by the regional partners with no match the first year increasing to 25%, 50%, and 75% over the next three years.

OPERATING BUDGETS

Table A7.6 presents the 2010 municipal and parks and recreation budgets in Northern Chester County. The financial resources available in each community vary widely. It should be noted that the municipal investments in parks and recreation may be higher than reported due to labor, equipment, and materials provided for township parks by the municipal Public Works Departments, for which park expenditures are not tracked.

Table A7.6: Municipal Operating Budgets, Per Capita Investment, and Ratio of Parks and Recreation to Operating Budget, 2010

Municipality	Population 2010	Municipal Operating Budget	Per Capita Operating Budget	Parks & Recreation Budget	Per Capita Parks & Recreation Expenditure	Ratio of Parks & Recreation to Operating Budget
East Coventry	6,636	$3,028,581	$456	$50,419	$7.60	1.6%
East Nantmeal	1,803	$607,217	$337	-	-	-
East Pikeland	7,079	$2,286,000	$323	$9,500	$1.34	0.4%
East Vincent	6,821	$2,309,925	$339	$68,550	$10.05	2.9%
North Coventry	7,866	$3,812,240	$485	$54,676	$6.95	1.4%
South Coventry	2,604	$781,478	$300	$24,250	$9.31	3.1%
Warwick*	2,507	$1,955,000	$780	$55,000	$21.94	2.8%
West Pikeland	4,024	$2,130,459	$529	$97,195	$24.15	4.5%
West Vincent	4,567	$5,601,575	$1,227	$48,700	$10.66	0.9%
Total	**43,907**	**$22,512,475**		**$408,290**		
Municipal Average		**$512**		**$45,366**	**$9.30**	**1.8%**

Source: Munciipalities; Toole Recreation Planning

*Warwick Township Parks and Recreation Budget includes $40,000 is in annual reserve for potential recreation needs and $15,000 is for annual planning.

BENCHMARK COMPARISONS

While each municipality is unique and Northern Chester County has higher socioeconomic characteristics than Pennsylvania and the USA, benchmark comparisons serve to provide a measure for gauging parks and recreation investment with other communities. While there is no right or wrong answer, the statistics represent broad "yardsticks" against which a municipality's operations can be measured. A deviation among those reporting figures is not necessarily good or bad. The information should be used as a tool for informed decision-making rather than absolute standards. Since municipalities differ as to their location, size, and other factors, any two can be successful yet have very different experiences with regard to certain measures. The better the information we have, the more informed we are in making decisions.

- According to the Trust for Public Land, the national average annual per capita investment in parks and recreation is $67.

- According to Dr. John Crompton, leading national parks and recreation researcher, the national average ratio of a parks and recreation budget to a municipal operating budget is 2 percent. In Northern Chester County, the average is 1.95 percent, with a range 0.4 percent to 4.5 percent among the nine municipalities with parks and recreation operating budgets, and zero in place in East Nantmeal and Warwick's recreation budget for projects that arise.

- According to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources the average annual municipal investment in parks and recreation is $28.78 as adjusted for inflation.[1] In Northern Chester County, the average of township per capita spending on parks and recreation is $9.83 and $9.21 for the region as a whole with a range of $1.29 to $21.59.

- According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, the average annual per capita investment in parks and recreation for rural communities of all populations is $8.13 with a range of $6.22 to $11.23, based on population size. *Table A7.7* presents the figures on per capita investment in parks and recreation in rural communities according to population size in Pennsylvania.

Table A7.7: Average Rural Municipal Expenditures in Statewide Study Center for Rural Pennsylvania (2004 dollar value adjusted for inflation in 2011)

Rural Municipalities	Average Municipal Expenditure	Average Parks & Rec Expenditure	Municipal Expenditure per Capita	Parks & Rec Expenditure Per Capita
Municipalities with fewer than 2,500 residents	$427,834	$6,547	$407	$6.22
Municipalities with 2,500 to 4,999 residents	$1,113,392	$26,187	$320	$7.50
Municipalities with 5,000 to 9,999 residents	$2,115,640	$71,929	$330	$11.23
Average for All Rural Municipalities	**$653,828**	**$14,630**	**$363**	**$8.13**

Revenue Sources

Other than municipal taxes, municipalities generate revenues for parks and recreation from fees, charges, and facility rentals. For Northern Chester County as a whole, about 29 percent of the recreation budget is generated from non-tax sources. Typically about 35 percent is viewed as the bottom range of non-tax support, with 50 percent being a target and 85 percent possible by parks and recreation agencies with solid management and a wide range of programs and facilities that can generate rental income and user fees. *Table A7.8* presents Northern Chester County's parks and recreation non-tax revenues by municipality.

Role of Volunteerism

Volunteers in recreation in these communities are invaluable. Volunteers provide planning, programs, events, fundraising, sports leagues, and advocacy which have a significant value without having an exact price. As the management section described, over 350 different boards, committees, and

[1] Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources and Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society. 2002. **Pennsylvania Parks & Recreation Budget and Salary Survey**: Harrisburg, PA.

organizations deal with community parks, recreation, open space, culture, the arts, and historical endeavors. The value of a volunteer hour in 2010 was $21.36.[2]

Table A7.8: Parks and Recreation Fees and Revenues

Municipality	Source	Facility/Event Revenues	Total Revenues	Percentage of P&R Operating Budget
East Coventry	Towpath Park pavilion rental	$2,100	$7,100	14%
	Park Day receipts	$5,000		
East Nantmeal	No recreation revenues	0		
East Pikeland	Park Facility rentals	$1,000	$4,700	49%
	Recreation Program Fees	$3,700		
East Vincent	NA	NA		
North Coventry	Ball field rental fees	$5,000	$14,640	27%
	Facility rentals	$2,000		
	Tennis	$240		
	Day Camp	$4,400		
	Events	$3,000		
South Coventry	No recreation revenues	0		
Warwick	No recreation revenues	0		
West Pikeland	No recreation revenues	0		
West Vincent	Playground Fees	$15,500	$27,500	56%
	Community Day	$12,000		
TOTAL		**$53,940**		

FINANCING OVERVIEW

As expected, the operating investment in parks and recreation in the Northern Chester County communities is lower than average. This is due to a number of factors, including:

- It is a rural area.
- Overall municipal budgets are relatively low.
- For many communities, the parks and recreation system is relatively new and growing.
- Public Works or Road Departments provide park maintenance and these expenses are possibly not tracked and reported as park maintenance.

Parks and recreation is largely supported by tax dollars. Only East Coventry, East Pikeland, North Coventry, and West Pikeland generate revenues from parks and recreation through program fees and facility rentals.

[2] Independent Sector. http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time. Accessed December 10, 2010.

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INTRODUCTION

Early in the planning process, discussion with the Coordinating Committee revealed that the municipalities of Northern Chester County vary in their use of mandatory dedication of parkland provisions, and some have no provisions at all. As a result, municipalities are not accumulating public parkland or recreation facilities through this no-cost-to-acquire method. This section cites the authority and requirements for municipal mandatory dedication of parkland, analyses the current provisions, and makes preliminary recommendations that all municipalities adopt or revise their mandatory dedication provisions in order to acquire land for recreation.

AUTHORITY FOR MANDATORY DEDICATION OF PARKLAND PROVISIONS

The Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Provision, Article V Section 503 (11), of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) is a powerful planning tool that enables municipalities to acquire parkland or develop recreation facilities at no cost through the land development process. This provision enables a municipality to enact language in the subdivision/land development ordinance requiring the dedication of land for recreational purposes. In order to impose the mandatory dedication of parkland requirement, the municipality must meet the following standards:

1. The ordinance must include "definitive standards" for amounts of land or fees to be dedicated.
2. The land or fees shall only be used to provide facilities "accessible to the development."
3. There must be a formally-adopted recreation plan.
4. The amount and location of land or fees must bear a "reasonable relationship" to the use of facilities by future inhabitants.
5. Fees from each development shall be designated for specific recreation facilities and shall only be spent for those facilities.
6. If the municipality does not use the fees within three years after payment, the applicant or developer who paid the fees receives a refund upon request, including interest earned.
7. The municipality cannot require the dedication of land, fees, or facilities except in accordance with these standards.

Municipalities Planning Code Article V Section 503 (11)

(11) Provisions requiring the public dedication of land suitable for the use intended; and, upon agreement with the applicant or developer, the construction of recreational facilities, the payment of fees in lieu thereof, the private reservation of the land, or a combination, for park or recreation purposes as a condition precedent to final plan approval, provided that:

(i) The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply to any plan application, whether preliminary or final, pending at the time of enactment of such provisions.

(ii) The ordinance includes definite standards for determining the proportion of a development to be dedicated and the amount of any fee to be paid in lieu thereof.

(iii) The land or fees, or combination thereof, are to be used only for the purpose of providing park or recreational facilities accessible to the development.

(iv) The governing body has a formally-adopted recreation plan, and the park and recreational facilities are in accordance with definite principles and standards contained in the subdivision and land development ordinance.

(v) The amount and location of land to be dedicated or the fees to be paid shall bear a reasonable relationship to the use of the park and recreational facilities by future inhabitants of the development or subdivision.

(vi) A fee authorized under this subsection shall, upon its receipt by a municipality, be deposited in an interest-bearing account, clearly identifying the specific recreation facilities for which the fee was received. Interest earned on such accounts shall become funds of that account. Funds from such accounts shall be expended only in properly allocable portions of the cost incurred to construct the specific recreation facilities for which the funds were collected.

(vii) Upon request of any person who paid any fee under this subsection, the municipality shall refund such fee, plus interest accumulated thereon from the date of payment, if the municipality had failed to utilize the fee paid for the purposes set forth in this section within three years from the date such fee was paid.

(viii) No municipality shall have the power to require the construction of recreational facilities or the dedication of land, or fees in lieu thereof or private reservation except as may be provided by statute.

Alternatively, and if the municipality and the developer both agree, the development may accomplish one or more of the following in place of parkland dedication:

1. Construct recreational facilities.
2. Pay fees in place of (or in combination with) land dedication.
3. Reserve land in private ownership.

APPLICATION AND VALUE

A municipality's need for future parkland and recreation facilities depends on its standards or level of service—even if current conditions fall short of this goal—and its future population growth. Therefore, goals for parkland and recreation facilities and prioritized needs, documented in a recreation plan, are essential to the mandatory dedication process. The provision for "reasonable relationship" to future inhabitants establishes that the land or facilities serve future residents in line with these goals. It does not attempt to place the burden of meeting current recreational deficiencies on new development.

As an example, applying the long-standing accepted national practice of 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents as the standard, and with the population projections presented in Appendix 1, *Table A8.1* demonstrates a potential regional parkland need of more than 85 acres in Northern Chester County by 2030. If every jurisdiction had a 10.5 acre per 1,000 standard, the jurisdictions of Northern Chester County would be able to add a minimum of 96.5 acres of parkland by 2030 at no cost. At an estimated land value of $38,000 per acre, the savings of mandatory dedication in place of municipal fee-simple purchase totals $3,668,007.

Higher acreage per population standards, and thus higher fees, are acceptable if they are based on sound analysis of the community's need for more parkland. See Future Needs in Northern Chester County below.

Table A8.1: Example Application of Mandatory Dedication of Parkland

	2010	2020	2010-2020 Increase	Parkland Need per Pop Increase 2010- 2020	2030	2020-2030 Increase	Parkland Need per Pop Increase 2020- 2030	Total Add'l Parkland Need by 2030
Northern Chester County	**43,907**	**48,860**	**4,953**	**52.0**	**53,100**	**4,240**	**44.5**	**96.5**
East Coventry	6,636	7,040	404	4.2	7,800	760	8.0	12.2
East Nantmeal	1,803	2,080	277	2.9	2,190	110	1.2	4.1
East Pikeland	7,079	8,410	1,331	14.0	9,360	950	10.0	24.0
East Vincent	6,821	8,050	1,229	12.9	9,070	1,020	10.7	23.6
North Coventry	7,866	8,130	264	2.8	8,430	300	3.2	5.9
South Coventry	2,604	2,700	96	1.0	2,890	190	2.0	3.0
Warwick	2,507	2,850	343	3.6	2,930	80	0.8	4.4
West Pikeland	4,024	5,020	996	10.5	5,500	480	5.0	15.5
West Vincent	4,567	4,580	13	0.1	4,930	350	3.7	3.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 census; Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Municipal Data Navigator (2020, 2030); parkland needs calculated by Gannett Fleming, Inc.

CURRENT PROVISIONS IN NORTHERN CHESTER COUNTY

Seven of the nine municipalities have mandatory dedication provisions in their subdivision and land development ordinances as a means to acquire land for future parkland and open space, or to collect fees for the development of recreation facilities. East Nantmeal and Warwick have no provisions for dedicated parkland. Summary information of current mandatory dedication of parkland provisions are presented in *Table A8.2*.

East Coventry, East Vincent, South Coventry and West Vincent follow the most common practice of specifying an acreage (or square footage) to be dedicated based on the number of residential units. All include a fee-in-lieu option. Methods for fee determination vary across all four East Vincent uses a predetermined fee, East Coventry and South Coventry require the applicant to present the fee based on the fair market value of the undeveloped land, and West Vincent determines its fee based on the cost of a similar land acquisition.

East Pikeland and North Coventry require a percentage of the proposed development to be dedicated, based on the proposed use. This overall percentage is further broken down into minimum percentages for active recreation land and passive recreation/open space. This approach has worked well where parcels are large enough to yield parkland of at least five acres. North Coventry includes a minimum area of three acres among its layout standards, directing applicants who cannot meet this requirement to its fee-in lieu option.

West Pikeland has provisions for the dedication of land based on the proposed number of families to be served, i.e., residential units and no fee-in-lieu option. East Nantmeal and Warwick have no provisions for the dedication of parkland per se.

Warwick and West Vincent both have open space requirements in their zoning ordinances. Warwick's provisions do not inherently or specifically address the need for recreational land.

The Pennsylvania MPC does not distinguish between residential development and other types of development with regard to mandatory dedication. While most municipalities in Pennsylvania enforce their mandatory dedication requirement only on residential land development submissions, East Pikeland, and North Coventry have enacted mandatory dedication of parkland provisions for all types of development.

The majority of the ordinances specify purposes for mandatory dedication of parkland. These generally include:

1. **Providing a variety of active and passive open space lands to serve the varied recreational needs of the township's residents, as well as businesses and industry** in some ordinances. East Coventry, East Pikeland, and North Coventry require a percentage of land from commercial, industrial, and institutional uses.

Table A8.2: Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Provisions

Ordinance	Parkland Requirement	Fee-in-Lieu Option	Comments
East Coventry Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SLDO), 2011. Section 426 Park, Recreation and Open Space	• 0.02 acres per dwelling unit or building lot	Value of fee-in-lieu of dedication is to be equal to the total fair market value of the required land.	
East Nantmeal Township	No mandatory dedication of parkland provisions.	N/A	
East Pikeland Township SLDO, as amended in 2008. Section 424 Park, Recreation, Open Space and Trails	Based on use: • residential use based on size (0-40%) • adult community, industrial and commercial uses (20%) • institutional uses (25%) Percentages of total specified for active use (0-25%) and passive use/open space (5-25%) also based on use/density.	$3,909 per dwelling unit or equivalent dwelling unit, adjusted each year based upon the consumer price index (CPI) for the Philadelphia region for each year from the effective date up to and including the year in which the fee is actually paid to the Township	• Includes extensive provisions for trails (Section 424.E.): 1. Purpose 2. Provision 3. Maintenance 4. Fee-In-Lieu of Trails 5. Trail Conservation Standards 6. Trail Construction Specifications 7. Inspections of Trails 8. Performance Guarantee for the Construction of Trails 9. As-built Plans of Trails 10. Continuous Offer of Dedication of Trails 11. Maintenance Guarantee 12. Private Trails
East Vincent Township SLDO, as amended in 2004. Section 22-428 Dedication of Land, or Payment of Fees in Lieu Thereof, for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Use continued	Minimum 0.125 acres/ 5,445 square feet per proposed dwelling unit. No dedication required for non-residential uses.	A minimum of $3,000 per proposed residential unit; no inflation or market value reference.	

Ordinance	Parkland Requirement	Fee-in-Lieu Option	Comments
North Coventry Township SLDO, 2008. Section 320-53 Community Facilities, Park Land and Open Space	Based on use: • residential uses (12-15%) • commercial uses (15%) • industrial uses (20%) • institutional uses (25%)	Value of fee-in-lieu of dedication is to be equal to the fair undeveloped market value of the required land.	• Provides for ownership alternatives contingent upon approval of Board of Supervisors. • Provides for long-term management and maintenance of dedicated land.
South Coventry Township, SLDO (2007). Section 626 Public Facilities, Open Space and Recreation	0.115 acres/ 5,000 square feet per dwelling unit with at least half of the land suitable for active sports.	Value of fee-in-lieu of dedication is to be equal to the fair undeveloped market value of the required land.	
Warwick Township SLDO, 2005. Section 812	No mandatory dedication of parkland provisions. Refers to open space requirement in zoning ordinance.	None	• Zoning Article 20: Open Space Provisions addresses open space protection but establishes no requirement for active recreation parkland: - Requires minimum dedication of 1.5 acres; no per-unit or percentage ratio. - Allows ownership and maintenance alternatives.
West Pikeland Township SLDO, 1997. Section 627 Public Facilities and Open Space	Sliding scale of 3 acres (minimum) to 10 percent (maximum) based on number of families to be served, i.e., residential units.	None	• Section 628 Community Assets recognizes the community value of "natural features, such as large trees, water courses, steep or wooded slopes, historic areas and structures;" serves as guidance for open space protection; establishes no requirement for active recreation parkland.
West Vincent Township SLDO Section 615C	5,000 square feet per dwelling unit.	Value based on the Township' s estimated cost of acquiring similar land that has attributes which would better serve the public recreational needs.	• Provisions in the Zoning Ordinance address open space protection by district and density; requirements range from 50-80% open space, generally separate from primary conservation, which may be used for recreation; and applicable to residential and commercial districts.

2. **Preserving open space and protecting the natural, scenic, and historic resources.** This seems to be the focus of ordinance application in the Region. However, once dedicated, lands where these resources are found are not inventoried, managed, or promoted for the passive recreation opportunities they offer.
3. **Developing a system of public parklands and other open space areas that can effectively and efficiently offer recreational opportunities and experiences.** Little progress has been made in the development of a park and open space system in any of the municipalities, with the exception of land protection along French Creek in East Pikeland Township for the future development of the French Creek Trail.
4. **Providing equitable and convenient accessibility to recreation facilities and open space areas.** Without multiple parks and open space places, access by residents is not equitable and convenient. However, on a regional scale, this condition may be improved as residents far from a municipal park in their home municipality may be nearer a park in an adjacent municipality. Trail development may be the single-most important improvement to equitable and convenient access.
5. **Supporting community development and stability.** This has been accomplished to date, and will be into the future, through the use of public parks for special events that enable the community to come together socially.

East Vincent's purposes further acknowledge equitable and convenient accessibility to recreation facilities and open space areas "within the township's urbanizing areas" and community development and stability "through a balance of developed areas, locally- and regionally-valued open space resources, and neighborhood, community, and regional recreational opportunities." West Vincent's purposes recognize that certain lands, as set forth in the West Vincent Township Open Space and Recreation Plan, are "irreplaceable and environmentally sensitive."

Unique Aspects of Mandatory Dedication Provisions in Northern Chester County

Provisions in East Pikeland, North Coventry, and West Vincent ordinances allow that the land remain as private property and be reserved and restricted in perpetuity under other forms of ownership as specified. North Coventry's ordinance specifies, in the event that lands remain as private property, that future dedication is permitted if the land and facilities meet the specified standards.

Provisions specifying land characteristics and design standards for dedicated land are highly consistent across the five ordinances in which they are found. The compiled list of standards from East Coventry, East Pikeland, East Vincent, North Coventry, and South Coventry includes:

- Free of non-recreational structures.
- Size, length-to-width ratio, and contiguous or single-parcel configuration.
- Accessibility.
- Minimal interference with adjacent dwelling units, parking, driveways, and roads.
- Connectivity with open space lands within and adjoining the subdivision.

- Buffers to adjoining parks, preserves, or other protected lands.
- Pedestrian pathways for use by the residents of the subdivision and/or the township.
- Access as required for land management and emergency purposes.
- Undivided by public or private streets.
- Suitably landscaped either by retaining existing natural cover and wooded areas and/or according to a Landscaping Plan.
- Consistency with the policies of the Township's Comprehensive Plan and Open Space Plan.

Several of the ordinances incorporate or reference environmental features that may be protected by dedicated parkland. West Pikeland's Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance recognizes a variety of natural and cultural features, which if retained, add value to the subdivision as community assets. North Coventry's ordinance includes a prioritized list of resources to be protected through parkland and open space.

Provisions in several municipalities recognize trails as an appropriate facility for passive parkland and open space. Only East Pikeland Township's mandatory dedication of parkland provisions incorporates standards for trail design, construction, maintenance, and dedication, making it the most comprehensive and extensive mandatory dedication ordinance in the Northern Chester County region.

Fees-in-lieu of land dedication are common to those municipalities with mandatory dedication of parkland provisions, however provisions vary. Two municipalities specify a value, one refers to the township's estimated cost of acquiring land of the required size better suited to public recreation, and three refer to the fair market value of the required land acreage. The basis and method of determining the fair market value also varies among the three.

FUTURE NEEDS IN NORTHERN CHESTER COUNTY

The municipalities in Northern Chester County recognize that acquiring parkland is only part of the goal. Having the right mix of recreation facilities available and accessible to residents is equally important. For this reason, the planning process placed great emphasis on the inventory of recreation facilities and the needs of citizens in order to identify and prioritize the development of additional facilities on currently held future parklands.

In addition, residents' interest in living active, healthy lifestyles where walking, hiking, and biking in the outdoors is part of everyday life, suggests that parkland standards that can provide and protect natural landscapes, not just neighborhood parks, need to be established. For this reason, the parkland standard for Northern Chester County will need take into account the available federal, state, county, and municipal park acreages in recommending a baseline percentage for future mandatory dedication of parkland.

FINDINGS

1. East Coventry, East Vincent, South Coventry and West Vincent follow the most common practice of specifying an acreage (or square footage) to be dedicated based on the number of residential units.

2. East Pikeland, and North Coventry require a percentage of the land proposed-for development, including commercial, industrial, and institutional uses, to be dedicated. This approach works well where parcels are large enough to yield parkland of at least five acres. West Vincent requires a dedication of a percentage of residential and commercial developments to public space uses.

3. Preserving open space and protecting the natural, scenic, and historic resources seems to be the focus of mandatory dedication (and open space) ordinances in the region. However, these lands are generally not inventoried, managed, or promoted for the passive recreation opportunities they offer.

4. Trail development may be the single-most important improvement to equitable and convenient access.

5. Fees-in-lieu of land dedication are common in this region but could be strengthened by provision for fair market value assessment and inclusion of trails as permitted uses of such fees.

6. Provisions specifying land characteristics and design standards for dedicated land are highly consistent across the five ordinances in which they are found.

7. Provisions in several municipalities recognize trails as an appropriate facility for passive parkland and open space. Only East Pikeland Township's mandatory dedication of parkland provisions incorporates standards for trail design, construction, maintenance, and dedication, making it the most comprehensive and extensive ordinance.

8. Recreation and open space advocates in Northern Chester County are interested in higher-than-average standards for mandatory dedication of parkland, and fee-in-lieu alternatives.

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INTRODUCTION

Demand for sports fields by community sports leagues is high in the Northern Chester County region (the Region). Organized sports leagues offer competitive baseball, softball, soccer, football, lacrosse, basketball, and swimming and diving, serving primarily ages 6 through 12. Due to the heavy use of facilities by youth leagues, there are no adult sports leagues. Leagues for adult sports are common throughout Pennsylvania but very limited in areas without sufficient sports fields. Research found that adults do not even bother to request field or gym use as all available facilities are used almost exclusively for youth athletics.

Leagues frequently comment to township officials and staff that more fields are needed, but they have limited, single league data, if any at all, to support their claims. This Appendix compiles league data on numbers of participants, teams, seasons of play, and fields used; establishes which fields are publicly owned and dedicated to recreation versus those borrowed from other public and private landowners; analyzes the number of fields needed to support these youth leagues and future adult leagues, as well as proper field rest; and offers suggestions on securing more public fields and developing more diversified field opportunities.

INVENTORY

There are basically three types of athletic fields:

- ***Diamond Fields*** for baseball, softball, and t-ball.
- ***Rectangular Fields*** for football, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, and similar games. It is important to note that maintenance on rectangular fields is essential given the varied play on the particular field. For example, sports in which the ball's movement is largely in hand or in the air, such as lacrosse or football, do not require the higher quality field surface needed by sports in which the ball is largely in contact with the field surface, such as soccer and field hockey.
- ***Overlay Fields*** are fields in which a designated field is lined out over an existing field for another purpose. The most common is a rectangular field overlaid on the outfield of a diamond field. There are two issues related to overlay fields: proper maintenance and conflicts due to year-round play.

The inventory of fields used by sports leagues found six 90-foot baseball fields, 16 60-foot softball/Little League fields, and 14 rectangular fields for soccer, football, and/or lacrosse for public use or quasi-public use (league use by permission) in the Region, as well as numerous other fields used

outside the region. *Table A9.1* shows diamond fields and *Table 2* lists rectangular fields. Both tables sort fields by their ownership and location, namely on public recreation lands (in township parks), on other public lands (public school or fire company grounds), or on private lands. The tables also indicate compliance with regulation dimensions and optimal orientation, as well as field lighting conditions.

Table A9.1: Public and Private Diamond Fields used in Northern Chester County

Fields	Location	Field Conditions	Regulation Dimensions	Optimal Orientation	Lighting
Fields on Public Recreation Lands					
2 90-foot Sr. Baseball fields	Kenilworth Park, North Coventry	▪ Poor	2	No	1
1 60-foot Jr. Baseball field Anderson Field	River Bend Park, North Coventry	▪ Poor as a result of overlapping use	1; soccer, yes	No	No
1 60-foot Jr. Baseball field Batdorf Field	River Bend Park, North Coventry	▪ Poor as a result of overlapping use	1; soccer, modified	Yes	No
1 60-foot Little League field	Andrew Evans Park, West Vincent	▪	1	No	No
1 60-foot Little League field	Community Park on the Ridge, East Vincent	▪	1	No	No
Subtotal – 2 90-foot Fields and 4 60-foot Fields on Public Recreation Lands			**6**	**1**	**1**
Fields on Other Public Lands					
1 90-foot Sr. Baseball field	OJR HS, South Coventry	▪ Good	1	1	No
2 90-foot Sr. Baseball fields	OJR MS, South Coventry	▪ Good	2	2	No
1 60-foot field	North Coventry Elementary School	▪ Fair, no infield	1	1	No
2 70-foot Jr. Baseball fields 2 60-foot Jr. Baseball fields 1 45-foot T-Ball field	Spring City Elementary/SFYAL Complex, Spring City	▪ Poor as a result of heavy use	2 2 1	2	No
4 60′ Little League fields (1 used for T-Ball)	Wampler Complex, North Coventry	▪ Outfields are too short	4	1	2
3 60′ Little League fields	Kimberton Fire Company, East Pikeland	▪	3	1	2
Subtotal - 3 90′ Fields, 2 70′ Fields, 9 60′ Fields and 1 45′ Fields on Other Public Lands			**16**	**8**	**4**
Total - 5 90′ Fields, 2 70′ Fields, 13 60′ Fields and 1 45′ Fields on Public Lands			**22**	**9**	**5**

GEYA – Glenmoore-Eagle Youth Association; SFYAL – Spring-Ford Youth Athletic League; OJR – Owen J. Roberts School District

Public and private diamond fields used outside of the Region include:

- 1 90-foot deSanno Field in Phoenixville used by Phoenixville Babe Ruth League, where parking is a reported challenge. The site is also proposed to be replaced by the French Creek Parkway.
- 1 90-foot field in Hickory Park used by GEYA.
- 1 60-foot field in Victory Park, Royersford, used by SFYAL Boys Jr. Baseball, Girls Softball.
- 1 60-foot field at Brooke Elementary School used by SFYAL Boys Jr. Baseball, Girls Softball.
- 1 60-foot field at Royersford Elementary School used by SFYAL Boys Jr. Baseball, Girls Softball.
- 2 60-foot fields at Springton Manor Elementary, Wallace Township, used by SFYAL Boys Jr. Baseball, Girls Softball, and GEYA (Little League).
- 3 60-foot fields at Manderach Park, Limerick, used by SFYAL Boys Jr. Baseball, Girls Softball.
- 2 60-foot fields at Hickory Park used by GEYA (Little League).
- 1 60-foot field at Brandywine Wallace Elementary School, East Brandywine, used by GEYA.

Table A9.2: Public and Private Rectangular Fields used in Northern Chester County

Fields	Location	Field Conditions	Regulation Dimensions	Optimal Orientation	Lighting
Fields on Public Recreation Lands					
1 soccer field	River Bend Park, North Coventry	▪ Fair	(U16)	No	No
2 soccer fields	Pine Creek Park, West Pikeland	▪ Fair	2	No	No
1 multi-use field	Andrew Evans Park, West Vincent	▪	1	No	No
1 multi-use field	Community Park on the Ridge, East Vincent	▪ Fair as a result of overlapping use	1	No	No
1 multi-use field	Connie Batdorf Park, South Coventry	▪ Fair as a result of overlapping use	1	No	No
Subtotal – 3 Soccer and 3 Multi-use Fields on Public Recreation Lands			**5**	**0**	**0**
Fields on Other Public Lands					
1 turf field (stadium)	OJR HS, South Coventry	▪ Good	1	1	1
1 turf field (north field)	OJR HS, South Coventry	▪ Good	1	1	1
1 turf field (south field)	OJR HS, South Coventry	▪ Good	1	1	1
Subtotal – 3 Turf Fields on Other Public Lands			**3**	**3**	**3**
Fields on Private Lands					
1 soccer field	Montgomery School, West Pikeland	▪	1	No	1
1 60yd x 100yd field 1 40yd x 60yd area 2 25yd x 50yd area 3 15yd x 30yd area	Ludwig's Corner Horse Show Grounds, West Vincent	▪ Poor as a resulting of multi-purpose use	1	No	No
1 soccer field	Parkerford Brethren Church, East Coventry	▪	1	No	No
Subtotal – 3 Soccer Fields on Private Lands			**3**	**0**	**1**
Total 6 (grass) Soccer Fields, 3 (grass) Multi-use Fields, and 3 Turf Fields			**11**	**3**	**4**

GEYA – Glenmoore-Eagle Youth Association; OJR – Owen J. Roberts School District

Additionally, grass lawns at several elementary schools are used as practice areas.

Public and private rectangular fields used outside of the Region include:

- 2 25-yard x 50-yard areas at Shamona Creek Elementary School, Uwchlan, used by GEYA Soccer.
- 1 40-yard x 70-yard area at Springton Manor Elementary School, Wallace, used by GEYA Soccer.
- 3 15-yard x 30-yard areas at Pickering Valley Elementary School, Upper Uwchlan, used by GEYA Soccer.
- 2 15-yard x 30-yard areas at Windsor Baptist Church, Uwchlan, used by GEYA Soccer.
- 1 practice field at Spring City Elementary School used by Penn Premier Lacrosse.
- 1 turf field (field hockey) at the Longstreth Academy used by Penn Premier Lacrosse.
- 1 indoor turf field at 422 SportsPlex used by Coventry Wildcats Football and Coventry Youth Lacrosse.

FIELD NEED (SUPPLY-DEMAND-NEED) ANALYSIS

The process for assessing the need for additional athletic facilities is based upon a classic supply-demand-need analysis.

- ***Field Supply*** is the actual field availability in any given season of play. Some baseball and softball fields have an overlapping soccer field on the outfield so the fields are counted as one field in spring/summer for baseball or softball and one field for soccer in fall.
- ***Field Demand*** is the actual current use by each sport for 2010, the most recent full year. The community has identified the standard as two practices and one game per week early in the season supplanted by a full game schedule that may or may not include practice time that would cover three visits per week.
- ***Field Need*** is calculated by distributing the hours of demand over the fields used by each sport.

ATHLETIC FIELD SUPPLY

Work sessions with sports leagues and interviews with league representatives, townships, school districts, and DARC (Downington Area Recreation Commission) discussed the results of the field inventory beyond the shortage of facilities to serve the existing participants. The field capacity in the Region is so limited that no fields can be rested for maintenance purposes. There are no formalized sports turf management programs in place. The Owen J. Roberts School District has installed three synthetic turf fields to manage the heavy use by its sports programs and community sports leagues, and to control field maintenance costs.

The athletic field supply in the Region appears to be a major issue. The high demand can be exemplified by leagues that rent private facilities out of the area because they cannot get field time in the Region. While in the past sports were played during one traditional season, such as baseball in spring and summer and soccer in the fall, sports are now played throughout the year. Football tends to be the only sport played in a single season, the fall.

Field supply is not only a number. Other important factors include playability, the culture of use, league transformation of fields, climate, and ownership. How playable fields are depends upon their construction, maintenance, weather, lighting, and intensity and length of use. In the case of the Region,

the culture of use has dictated that field use goes to youth and that field lighting is limited to certain areas and not allowed in others. Under league transformation of fields, the leagues receiving the permit for that space may use the space in a different way than laid out. The most prevalent example is soccer in which most soccer use is not on a regulation-sized field but on much smaller-scaled fields to provide more contact with the ball among younger players. The result is often overuse of an entire field.

Climate greatly affects field use and the need for maintenance. For example, a wet and long winter may make fields unplayable until much later in the season than March. Rain will cause delays to the extent that make-up games become impossible. Climate directly impacts the leagues in the spring and fall when shorter daylight hours limit play.

Ownership of fields in the Region is complex. Over the years, sports leagues pursued field locations wherever they could get land. This has included private lands such as the Kimberton Fire Company and Ludwig's Corner Horse Show Grounds. Complicating matters further is the fact that some teams practice at private homes, a questionable practice due to safety and liability concerns. Finally, fields that are not permanently protected in public ownership could be lost if current or future owners would retract the use privileges, resulting in very difficult and expensive solutions required to replace them.

Public Sports Fields

The field supply shown in *Table A9.3* is for children and youth only. There are no fields for adults. While is a perception that there are a lot of fields in the Region, there are only six diamond fields and six rectangular fields in the public domain including four flat fields that overlay diamond outfields.

Table A9.3: Summary of Public Sports Field Supply in Northern Chester County Parks

Type of Field	Number	Municipal Location	League Users
Dedicated Diamond Fields			
90-foot Baseball	2	North Coventry	Coventry Little League
60-foot Baseball	4	2 in North Coventry 1 in West Vincent 1 in East Vincent	Coventry Little League
Total	6		
Dedicated Rectangular Fields			
Regulation Soccer field	2	2 in West Pikeland	DARC
Multi-use field	3	1 in West Vincent 1 in East Vincent 1 in South Coventry	Coventry Soccer Norchester Red Knights Penn Premiere LAX
Small Soccer field	1	1 in North Coventry	Coventry Soccer
Total	6		
Overlay Fields			
90-ft diamond outfields for Soccer	2	2 in North Coventry	Coventry Soccer
60-ft diamond outfields for Soccer	1	1 in North Coventry	Coventry Soccer
60-ft diamond outfield for Lacrosse	1	1 in East Vincent	Penn Premiere LAX
Total	4		

DARC – Downingtown Area Recreation Commission

Sports Fields on Public School Grounds

Table A9.4 presents sports fields that are on Owen J. Roberts School District school grounds. The facilities are available first for school district use, then for community recreational use. School activities

always take precedence. While the school district is generous in making facilities available to the community, demand is high for school purposes. Recreational users are appreciative of getting the use of the facilities and still experience times when permission must be revoked to facilitate school use. This makes scheduling a challenge and difficult for events such as tournaments.

Table A9.4: Sports Fields on Public School Grounds in Northern Chester County

Type of Field	Number	School Location	League Users
Dedicated Diamond Fields			
90-foot Baseball	3	1 OJR High School, 2 OJR Middle School	NYAA, Coventry LL
60-foot Baseball	1	1 North Coventry Elementary School	NYAA, Coventry LL
Total	4		
Dedicated Rectangular Fields			
	3	1 turf field in the stadium 1 north turf field at the HS 1 south turf field at the HS	Coventry Youth LAX Penn Premiere LAX Coventry Wildcats
Total	3		
Overlay Fields			
Total	0		

NYAA – Norchester Youth Athletic Association

Sports Fields on Private Lands or Lands outside the Region

Table A9.5 presents fields that are on other public lands outside of the study area or on quasi-public lands. Access to these fields is not permanently protected.

Table A9.5: Sports Field Supply on Private Lands or Lands Outside of Region

Type of Field	Number	Municipal Location	League Users
Dedicated Diamond Fields			
70-foot Baseball	2	SFYAL Complex at Spring City Elementary School	SFYAL, includes East Vincent players
60-foot Baseball	9	2 at SFYAL Complex at Spring City Elementary School 4 at Wampler Complex in North Coventry 3 at Kimberton Fire Company	SFYAL, includes East Vincent players
45-foot T-Ball	1	SFYAL Complex at Spring City Elementary School	SFYAL, includes East Vincent players
Total	12		
Dedicated Rectangular Fields			
Regulation soccer field	2	1 at Montgomery School West Pikeland 1 at Parkerford Brethren Church East Coventry	GEYA Coventry Soccer Assn
Small Soccer fields	7	Ludwig's Corner: 1 – 60 x 90 yd 1 - 40 x 60 yd 2 – 25 x 50 yd 3 – 15 x 30 yd	GEYA and Coventry Lacrosse
Total	6		
Overlay Fields			
Total	0		

GEYA – Glenmoore-Eagle Youth Association; SFYAL – Spring-Ford Youth Athletic League

In addition to the fields shown in *Tables A9.3, A9.4, and A9.5*, another 13 diamond fields and 11 rectangular fields of various sizes are used in municipalities outside of the Region. These include fields on public and private school property, churches, and commercial facilities.

DEMAND FOR ATHLETIC FIELDS

The supply and demand for fields was assessed based on 2010 numbers, considering the following factors: the number of teams, games, practices, season, weekdays and weekends. Consideration of these factors found that each field could accommodate five to seven teams. For the purposes of this plan, the standard of six teams per field was used. A correlation was found between this standard and the standard developed and used in the area by the Lionville Youth Association—one field per 100 players. The numbers applied to this standard included the participants that are from the nine municipalities of the Region. Using this standard, *Table A9.6* presents the fields needed in the Region.

Table A9.6: Diamond (D) and Rectangular (R) Field Needs For Northern Chester County

Diamond Field Sports Leagues	Teams (max. by season)	Seasons	Field Demand (6 teams/ field)	Rectangular Field Sports Leagues	Teams (max. by season)	Seasons	Field Demand (6 teams/ field)
Baseball Leagues	**99**		**17**	**Football Leagues**	**16**		**3**
KYAL	32	Sp	5	Norchester Red Knights	10	F	2
GEYA	15	Sp, F	3	Wildcats	6	F	1
SFYAL	7	Sp, F	1	**Lacrosse Leagues**	**21**		**4**
Coventry LL	28	Sp, F	5	Penn Premiere	5	Sp	1
Phoenixville Babe Ruth	2	Sp	0	Coventry Youth Lacrosse	16	Sp, S, F	3
NYAA	8	Sp, F	1	**Soccer Leagues**	**70**		**12**
LYA	7	Sp, S, F	1	GEYA	4	Sp, S, F	1
Softball Leagues	**47**		**8**	LYA	6	Sp, S, F	1
Coventry LL	20	Sp, F	3	Coventry Soccer	60	Sp, S, F	10
KYAL	14	Sp	2				
SFYAL	7	Sp, F	1				
LYA	6	Sp, S, F	1				
Total Diamond Field Demand			**25**	**Total Rectangular Field Demand**			**19**
Public Diamond Field Supply			**6**	**Public Rectangular Field Supply**			**6**
Public Diamond Field Need			**19**	**Public Rectangular Field Need**			**13**

GEYA – Glenmoore-Eagle Youth Association; SFYAL – Spring-Ford Youth Athletic League; LYA – Lionville Youth Association; NYAA – Norchester Youth Athletic Association; KYAL – Kimberton Youth Athletic League

Need for Additional Athletic Fields

As *Table A9.6* shows, the Region has six diamond fields and six rectangular fields that are in the public recreation domain. Based upon the number of teams engaged in organized sports in the area, an additional 19 diamond fields and 13 rectangular fields are needed.

Land requirement for Additional Field Needs

At 3.85 acres for a maximum size diamond field and 2.1 acres for a rectangular field, 100.45 acres is needed to accommodate just the fields. Estimating an additional 25 percent for parking and support facilities, including some non-sport recreation facilities, raises the land need to 125.56 acres. Reserving 33 percent of the total area for resource conservation, the region's highest value, further raises the land need to 166.99 acres.

However, this acreage serves only youth. In order to serve adults, additional land needs to be obtained. Since this plan is for the next 10 years and beyond, it is important to recognize that the Baby Boomer retirees are an active and healthy group that is expected to participate in active healthy living well into their advancing years.

Since the demand for fields for adults is latent, exact calculations cannot be determined at this time. The survey conducted for the Pennsylvania Outdoor Recreation Plans shows that about eight percent of the adult population participates in field sports (eight percent in diamond field sports and eight percent in rectangular field sports) in Southeastern Pennsylvania. Applying eight percent to the 22,000 people ages 20 to 64 who live in the Region yields an estimated latent demand of 1,760 adult participants for each field type. If these players were organized in leagues, they would require 18 fields, again for each field type. This figure seems high in the context of the region's conservation values.

In the absence of more detailed survey data, it is reasonable to assume that eight percent of adults play sports but perhaps not everyone plays in an organized league for scheduled games. Conservatively approximating that one in four adult players would participate in an organized league in the Region results in 440 players and a field need of four diamond (softball) fields and four rectangular fields on another 39.57 acres. These fields would need to be guaranteed for adult use to enable adults to form and sustain organized leagues. When these fields are not scheduled for adult league play, they could be used for informal recreational play by the community. The fields would be developed in phases and their league use monitored over time to determine the need for additional adult fields.

Findings

Sports Field Inventory Findings and Implications

1. The numerous fields distributed throughout the Region and beyond on public, quasi-public, and private property show the creative approach that leagues have taken in securing places to play ball. Many of these places are not permanently protected from development or dedicated for recreational use. Although they may appear to be secure, without a lease or ownership, privileges to use the land could legally be taken away at any time.

2. Of the many sports fields in the Region, very few are devoted to public recreation. Only six diamond fields (two 90' baseball, four 60' Little League/softball) and five flat fields (two soccer,

and three multi-use) are public-use fields that meet regulation size for multiple sports; four overlay rectangular fields are played on the outfields of diamond fields in three parks.

3. There are more sports fields owned by sports leagues, local and adjacent school districts, and private owners than owned by municipalities for public use. League, school district, and private fields raise the number of regulation-sized fields to 12 diamond fields and 11 flat fields. These fields are essential to the current demand but school district and private fields do not ensure permanent access by community sports leagues. Their use is subject to owner policies, e.g., primary use for school curriculum and athletics, secondary use by community organizations, e.g., leagues.

4. Extensive field sharing (overlay) occurs in the region. Five diamond fields (and their outfields) and six flat fields each serve at least two leagues of different sports. As long as there are no conflicts, the outfields could be used for such sports as soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, and football. However, interviews revealed that baseball, softball, soccer, and lacrosse are being played in both the spring and fall.

5. Investigation revealed that broadly scattered fields on relatively small park and recreation sites results in a lot of driving around by families taking players to various fields.

6. Every blade of grass counts. Many smaller-than-regulation-size fields and grassed areas, especially on elementary school sites, are adaptively used as game and practice areas.

7. Public field conditions are fair at best. Heavy use to overuse exists, including overlapping use by diamond and rectangular field sports. Lack of turf maintenance contributes to poor field conditions, especially for sports where field conditions matter, e.g., soccer.

8. Lack of optimal orientation has not limited community league play. Of the public recreation fields, only the Batdorf Baseball Field is optimal in orientation. Fields on league and school lands raise the numbers to nine diamond fields and three flat fields. Optimal orientation is required when building new fields using public grants.

9. While there is no gradation of fields based on quality of play from recreational-, training-, or tournament-level play, there is somewhat of an informal structure for quality of play. Generally, community park fields are maintained at the recreational play level. School district fields with their synthetic turf, field lighting, and stadium seating qualify as tournament-level fields. It is fitting and appropriate to have a range of field types to foster a range of play from instructional to recreational, to skill development and competitive higher-level play, to offer a range of experiences.

10. There is only one lighted public-use field in the Region: Scherfel Field at Kenilworth Park. There are no lighted public-use fields for Little League/Softball, soccer, football, or lacrosse. Lighted fields used after sundown can help meet the need for field time, however, community attitudes toward evening play and environmental impacts should be considered.

11. Field drainage and parking capacity are reported problems at several sites. Some of these conditions may be due to poor siting of a field(s).

12. While the focus of this study was primarily on outdoor facilities, leagues and the school district also posited that there is not enough gym space to accommodate the demand. Even for school district

programs alone, gym space is extremely tight. When recreational leagues are considered, there are not enough gyms to accommodate use. Just how much more space is needed in gyms is difficult to determine as people have stopped asking to use the facilities and no new leagues are forming due to lack of space.

13. Twenty-five diamond fields are needed to sustain the baseball, softball, and Little League organizations. Only six public fields are currently available. Nineteen additional diamond fields are needed.

14. Nineteen rectangular flat fields are needed to sustain the soccer, football, field hockey and lacrosse organizations. Only six public fields are currently available. Thirteen additional rectangular flat fields are needed.

15. Additional land to develop 19 diamond field and 13 rectangular flat fields for youth sports leagues totals 167 acres. Another 40 acres is needed to provide diamond and rectangular flat fields for future adult sports leagues.

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LEVEL OF SERVICE

The conventional approach to level of service, i.e. the land needs for parks and recreation, calculates a land acreage based on the total population figure (e.g. 10 acres per 1,000 residents). This approach was outlined by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in its first Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines published in 1983 alongside a provision for regional parkland (and open space), which was grossly ignored. Its 1996 update of these guidelines recommended a shift from an absolute national parkland standard toward a community-based determination of the amount, distribution, and development of specific facilities that suit local recreational needs and interests. This determination would consider factors beyond total population, such as: recreational activity interests, participation, and facilities/environments required; special environmental features, including natural areas, cultural and historic elements, and scenic views; trails; age cohorts; and population distribution. This analysis could suggest needed parkland location in addition to needed acreage. Ultimately, the locally tailored analysis returns to a population-based ratio of parkland to residents in support of mandatory dedication of parkland, and fees-in-lieu of parkland dedication, where provided. (Fee-in-lieu of parkland dedication may be permitted as an alternative but cannot stand alone in municipal ordinances in Pennsylvania.)

NORTHERN CHESTER COUNTY-BASED APPROACH

It is important to underscore the need to develop the rationale for the level of service first before converting the standard to population-based figures for use in fulfilling the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code regarding mandatory dedication of land ordinances. Partners in the Northern Chester County region (the Region) aimed to define a level of service in parks and recreation that would be tailored to the unique resources and landscape of the Hopewell Big Woods, Schuylkill River corridor, French Creek corridor and sports, fitness, social and cultural activity interests of residents. This locally-defined level of service would help the Region plan for the development and maintenance of parks, recreation facilities, and trails, and the protection of additional scenic, rural open space, as participation and population continue to grow.

Through a robust public participation process, community organizations and citizens provided input regarding area resources, values, participation, and facilities in terms of location, numbers and quality of conditions. The public expressed its interests and needs in a regional parks, recreation and open space system. Proposed facility and service needs were explored in tandem with the crucial goal of preservation of the natural resources and scenic rural character of the area. The proposed needs were added to existing facilities according to both quantitative and qualitative features. This was divided by the projected population for 2020 and expressed per 1,000 citizens for the purposes of supporting Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinances.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

In the Region, there are a total of 26 existing parks and future park sites totaling 604 acres. The parks include ballfields, game courts, trails, picnic areas, playgrounds, seating areas, and landscaping. Another 1,222 acres is included in 20 park reserves. Facilities for walking, cycling, nature enjoyment, and other informal recreation activities will be available in the park reserves. No active recreation development is to be undertaken in the park reserves.

CONSERVATION FIRST

At the outset of this plan, it was clear that the conservation of natural resources, preservation of the scenic rural character and protection of the cultural heritage landscape would be the foundation of the plan. All nine municipalities, Chester County, and conservation organizations have worked diligently and successfully since the 1970s to preserve the stunning beauty and resources of the Northern Chester County landscape. About 82 percent of the respondents of the citizen survey indicated that achieving a balance of conservation and recreation is important. To that end, the location of parks and recreation facilities needs to fit the region in a way that supports ongoing conservation efforts and provides convenient access for people to enjoy and care for nature.

ACTIVE HEALTHY LIVING

Three major groups provided input to the active healthy living Level of Service Analysis: the general public, the school districts, and organized interest groups.

GENERAL PUBLIC

Assessing the needs of the community at large was conducted through a statistically valid and reliable direct mail survey, interviews, public meetings and focus groups. The findings included the following:

- Activities: the top activities in which over half the residents engage are walking, nature enjoyment, playing/socializing in the parks, enjoying the dark starry skies, participating in special events, fitness, and bicycling.
- Types of Parks: About 82 percent stated that a balance of all types of parks is important. The rank order of types of parks preferred was nature reserves, trails systems, smaller close to home

parks and greenways. Access to large parks in the region is adequate – it is the smaller closer to home parks and trails that are insufficient.

- Outdoor Recreation Facilities: Respondents stated that there are not enough bike paths (58%), walking paths (55%), outdoor pool (48%), multi-purpose trails (47%) or dog parks (46%)
- Indoor Recreation: More than half of the survey respondents indicated that an indoor recreation center is needed in Northern Chester County.
- Target Groups: Adults and families need more parks and recreation opportunities. The strong focus on children and youth in the area is important but adults need opportunities as well. Providing facilities and services in which families can enjoy time together is very important.
- Children and Youth: Research with a large group of fifth graders found that they most want to enjoy the parks and nature in unstructured unorganized play.
- Senior Adults: There is no facility for senior adults in Northern Chester County. They must go to Pottstown or Phoenixville for recreational clubs and activities.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The Owen J. Roberts School District serves seven of the nine municipalities in the Northern Chester County region. The Superintendent, School Board President and Vice President and the Wellness Coordinator participated were members of the Coordinating Committee for the Plan. The Wellness Coordinator is funded by the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation. The District has been participating in discussions with the Northern Chester County Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan Core Committee, the Pottstown Area Heath and Wellness Foundation, the Pottstown Area School District and others in a regional active healthy living initiative. The district has integrated Northern Chester County's active, healthy living initiative with the school district's **Feasibility Study for the Future of the Owen J. Roberts School District**. When the public opinion survey found that residents were interested in close to home parks, discussions with the school district explored the potential for school campuses to expand to serve the close-to-home recreational needs of a broad base of citizens throughout their life time including families in order to cultivate active healthy living as a way of life here. The District is now exploring the potential to establish community school parks based upon the findings of the planning process.

The Phoenixville Area School District serves East Pikeland Township. In addition to school district facilities, East Pikeland residents also use Borough of Phoenixville parks and recreation facilities. Interviews found that the East Pikeland residents are oriented toward their school district and the Borough for sports, trails and recreational services. They play mainly in the Kimberton Youth Athletic League (KYAL), Phoenixville Babe Ruth League, and a few on the Norchester Red Knights Football Team. Regarding open space, the residents are more oriented toward Chester County.

The Downingtown Area School District serves West Pikeland Township. West Pikeland is also a member of the Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium (DARC). West Pikeland residents are oriented toward the Downingtown area for sports and recreation programs. Residents mostly play in Lionville Youth Athletics and Glenmore-Eagle Youth Association and enroll in DARC programs. Just

as East Pikeland residents are oriented toward Chester County in terms of open space preservation, so too are West Pikeland residents.

ORGANIZED SPORTS

Organized sports leagues in Northern Chester County include baseball, softball, soccer, football, lacrosse, basketball and swimming and diving. Organized sports play is youth oriented primarily serving participants ages four through 18 but primarily ages six through 12. Due to the heavy use of facilities by youth leagues, there are no adult sports leagues. Leagues for adult sports are common throughout Pennsylvania but very limited in areas without sufficient sports fields. In Northern Chester County, research found that adults do not even bother to request field or gym use as all available facilities are used almost exclusively for youth athletics.

FINDINGS

The current park acreage of 604 acres in the existing parks and future park sites includes 26 parks. The total acreage of future park sites is larger overall than existing parks providing extensive opportunities to develop true community parks. Along with the 272 acres needed to accommodate sports facilities for the existing organized sports, another 40 acres will be needed for fields and supporting facilities for adults (see Appendix 8). The total acreage needed for parks to support active healthy lifestyles for today's citizens is 916 acres. This yields a population based standard of 21 acres per 1,000 residents.

In tailoring this standard with best practices, this plan recommends a previous Chester County policy of setting aside 30 percent of parkland for 50 years as a legacy for future generations to program and develop. Incorporating this yields a population based standard of 28 acres per 1,000 residents.

This locally-derived standard will enable the Northern Chester County communities to revise or establish mandatory dedication of parkland provisions in line with needed recreational land for present and future residents.

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INTRODUCTION

The Northern Federation is in itself a model of public participation. Since its inception nearly 40 years ago, the Northern Federation has brought together nine municipalities, the Owen J. Roberts (OJR) School District, and numerous conservation and related private organizations to work together on projects of common concern in the areas of land conservation and natural resource protection.

The Northern Federation has long recognized that important issues and opportunities transcend municipal boundaries and that a great deal can be accomplished through collaboration. This Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan is another example of the Northern Federation harnessing a multimunicipal partnership, with public involvement by citizens representing various interests. Federation leaders sought state support, state and county grant funds, municipal funding, and participation by many citizens during the course of this plan. No doubt, much of the Northern Federation's success is due in part to its commitment to partnerships and public involvement.

The public involvement process for the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan was based on the belief that those who are affected by the plan have a right to be involved in the planning process. The public involvement process included the promise that the public's contribution would influence the plan's recommendations. To that end, a six-part public participation process served as the foundation for the 10-year plan. The process included the following:

- Coordinating Committee
- Steering Committee
- Public Opinion Survey
- Sports Organization Survey
- Focus Groups
- Key Person Interviews
- Project Web Site

COORDINATING AND STEERING COMMITTEES

The Coordinating Committee included 10 members representing the Townships of East Coventry, East Nantmeal, East Pikeland, East Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, Warwick, West Pikeland, and West Vincent, and the Chester County Planning Commission. The mission of the Committee was to provide municipal input to the plan's inventory, assessment, goals, and recommendations on behalf of their communities. Their challenge was to represent the communities overall and not any single interest. Participation in the Coordinating Committee actually increased and expanded during the course of the project to include more people and organizations. This is a testament to the level of interest, openness to new partners, and sense of collaboration within the Northern Federation.

The Steering Committee comprised 140 organizations and individuals who were invited to an initial issues identification workshop and subsequently invited to milestone public presentations. The organizations included federal, state, and county park managers; Chester County program managers; private facility owners/managers; community sports leagues; sportsmen's clubs; municipal commissions, boards, and committees; regional land trusts and conservancies; natural and cultural landscape initiative leaders, i.e. Hopewell Big Woods, and Schuylkill Highlands; and regional health and wellness foundations.

These organizations and individuals represented the vast array of potential partners in improving and expanding opportunities for active, healthy living through parks, recreation, and protected open space in Northern Chester County.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The Federation of Northern Chester County conducted a public opinion survey in 2010. The survey was distributed to a random sample of 2,008 households in the Federation's service area. The purpose of the survey was to determine the opinions, ideas and concerns of the residents regarding parks, recreation, and open space and to provide a foundation for decision-making. By understanding citizens' needs and interests, the Northern Federation along with its municipal and private sector partners would be able to direct planning and resources for the benefit of the region.

The process produced statistically reliable and valid survey results. Of the 1,920 successfully-delivered surveys, 514 were completed and returned—a return rate of 27 percent, exceeding the typical direct mail return rate of two to four percent. The 88 non-deliverable surveys (due to people moving or other reasons) equaled four percent, within the normal range of three to five percent. A detailed survey analysis report is presented in Appendix 10.

FINDINGS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Regional Perspective – Respondents appear to view parks and recreation regionally more than as an effort by any single municipality. The respondents prefer continuing regional parks and recreation efforts.

High Level of Park Visitation – The respondents are major visitors to parks. The most-used parks include Valley Forge National Historic Park (84 percent), French Creek State Park (79 percent), township parks (73 percent), local creeks (63 percent), Warwick County Park (61 percent), and Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (58 percent). Township parks should figure prominently in developing a parks, recreation, and open space strategy for the next 10 years.

Nature First – Respondents clearly indicated the importance of nature-based parks and recreation with nature reserves, trails, and greenways being important or extremely important among park types. Written comments of the respondents echoed strong sentiment regarding the preservation of the region's scenic rural character.

Balancing Conservation with Recreation – Smaller parks close to home, trails for cycling and walking, and achieving a balance of recreation facilities of game courts, ball fields, and picnic facilities with nature-based recreation and conservation is key.

Indoor Recreation – Indoor recreation was listed as important/extremely important by 56 percent of the respondents with another 29 percent reporting a neutral posture. Only eight percent said that indoor recreation is not needed.

Adults and Families – Based on reported interests, these appear to most likely be target groups for future recreation services.

Public Awareness and the Region – One of the most important findings was that three out of five respondents identified the need for more information about parks and recreation including facilities, programs, and where to go to get information. Their most preferred way to get information was from a Web site. Their most preferred location for a Web site was *one single Web site for all of the townships in Northern Chester County*. More people favored one single Web site to a Web site for each township or a school district Web site. A Web site is only one way to increase public awareness about parks and recreation opportunities and their benefits. More outreach of all types to promote parks and recreation opportunities would be a most valuable public service.

Support for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space – Respondents indicated their willingness to support parks and recreation through a variety of means, from user fees and friends groups to taxes. Fifty-four percent of the respondents stated that they were willing to consider paying an additional amount annually to support parks and recreation. The amounts ranged from two to five dollars more per person every year. Those willing to support parks and recreation financially outnumbered those who were not willing by a margin of nearly 11 to 1. Only five percent were not willing to support parks and recreation at all.

SPORTS ORGANIZATION SURVEY

Fourteen of the fifteen sports organizations serving Northern Chester County residents participated in a sports survey. They provided information on participants, participation trends, field use, issues, opportunities, and ideas. They also provided information on field maintenance and financial support. The participants included: Glenmore Eagle Youth Athletics, Kimberton Youth Athletic League, Norchester Red Knights, Coventry Little League, Penn Premiere Lacrosse, Phoenixville Babe Ruth League, Springford Youth Athletic League, Norchester Youth Athletic Association, DARC (Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium), Coventry Soccer Association, Lionville Youth Athletic Association, Wildcats Football, and Coventry Girls Basketball.

FINDINGS

- Total participation in area leagues was 16,143 in 2010.
- Participation in leagues serving Northern Chester County was 10,619 in 2010.
- Participation in the municipalities within this plan was 4,051 in 2010.
- There are not enough ball fields to support games, practice, and field maintenance.
- Ball fields are overused, overscheduled, and not rested. As a result, field conditions are generally less than desirable.
- Sports leagues are increasing in participation and new leagues have been emerging.
- Leagues rent facilities outside of the region.
- Field lighting would help spring and fall sports.
- Both the leagues and the municipalities have invested in sports fields; there is a mutual understanding of the value of this partnership.
- While it appears that there are many fields in the area, a significant number are not permanently protected and in public ownership, such as fields on Fire Company grounds and on Ludwig's Corner Horse Show Grounds.
- Volunteers in leagues also schedule practices at private homes, which is cause for concern from a safety and liability perspective.
- There are no adult leagues; there is a sense that adults no longer even ask for facilities because none are ever available.
- There appears to be a disconnect between how much school facilities are used and how the public perceives that they are used. The Owen J. Roberts School District facilities are completely booked to the extent that they cannot even accommodate all school events and activities. Yet there appears to be a public perception that they are underutilized.
- No turf management programs are in place on municipal athletic fields.
- No gradation of sports facilities from recreational play through tournament-quality play is in place. However, the turf fields on the Owen J. Roberts campus do convey the sense of being premier fields given their lights and synthetic turf surface.

- If more sports fields are developed, the sports organizations would like to see a centralized sports complex for flat field sports and for diamond sports. Centralized locations provide better public service in terms of limiting the need to drive around to drop players off at multiple locations; storage of equipment; maintenance; and sense of community.
- The school district properties offer the potential to become community hubs for sports.
- There are not enough gyms to accommodate uses such as basketball or indoor sports training in the winter months for baseball and softball.
- The organizations invest in facilities and services and expressed a willingness to continue in partnering to increase field numbers and capacity.

FOCUS GROUPS

In focus groups, people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes toward certain topics, services, concepts, conditions, or ideas. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members and with the focus group leaders. For the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, more than 250 participants engaged in seven focus groups: Heritage and Culture, Sports (two), Trails, Conservation and Stewardship, Parks and Recreation Boards, and Youth. Summary responses regarding how to move ahead with the plan are presented for each topic below.

CONSERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP

What's your organization's "bumper sticker" (short phrases that would best describe its purpose, goals, or mission)?

- Land Matters
- Preservation (Sense of Natural Resources, Culture, Place, Heritage)
- Funding Preservation, Making Parks Permanent
- Keep West Vincent Green
- Quality Environment = Quality of Life (Note: Suggested three times.)
- Water Quality = Quality of Life
- Promote Fly Fishing Fun
- Explore Nature, Heritage, and Community
- Continue Expanding Trails
- Preserve, Promote, and Protect Land Conservation and Use
- Preserve and Protect Our Natural and Cultural Heritage for enjoyment of current and future generations: "We're making it in America"
- Connect to Nature, Heritage, and Community
- Protect Our Watershed
- Preserve Hopewell Big Woods

What conservation and stewardship programs are already in place?

- Hopewell Big Woods is 72,000 acres. Nearly the whole region lies in the Hopewell Big Woods designated area. The problem is that people don't know what Hopewell Big Woods is. Groups agreed that it would take time and successes along the way to advance the identity.

- French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust staff conducts annual inspections of easements. They talk with the landowners about steps they can take to protect and conserve their land with the easement. The Trust conducts trips and tours for landowners such as to Longwood Gardens. They do special events and education in a fun and casual way. Parties are hosted by landowners that have eased their properties, inviting others to attend who might consider easing their own land. It is a casual, informal educational strategy that works. They show maps of preserved properties and relationships. Examples exist of property owners who are actually buying property to preserve (West Vincent). The outreach method is high touch and very community-based, with a "show and do" philosophy.
- The Chester County Heritage Program manages land and partners with other organizations. It provides educational programs, examples of best management practices, and consultation. Program it, practice it, and demonstrate it. The County Parks Department conducts education and outreach.
- We need to come up with numbers to prove what we do works and has value.
- Have some demonstration areas or projects.
- Have great signage.
- Warwick Township coordinates with Chester County, other municipalities, and organizations in its conservation efforts. Coventry Woods project, in conjunction with North Coventry and South Coventry, will result in 600 acres preserved.
- The Hill School and the Bentley tract are important land conservation projects.
- Need to educate new residents and elected officials about the value and assets of Northern Chester County.
- Crow's Nest helps to get young participants involved in nature-based experiences and fun activities.
- Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site has a host of programs for a range of ages. NPS staff has made a concerted effort to engage youth and diverse ethnicities in park activities and use. Engagement of the Latino community has resulted in participation among participants with ties to 13 Latin American countries. Programs include afterschool activities, summer camp, and art projects with high visibility to park visitors. As a result, there is now a Latino historical aspect of Hopewell in place. Programs range all the way to a nationally-important stonewall conservation education program in conjunction with a school in western Kentucky. Getting rid of fees really helped to increase park visitation and program participation. Important to consider the demographics of the area. Eagle Scouts have helped on park projects including a health and fitness trail.
- Chester County provides grants and technical support through the Chester County Open Space Program. This supports acquisition and development. The agricultural preservation program has helped to protect farmland. The county also is active in supporting trail planning and especially construction. Different partners take leads on various initiatives. The county is looking into the ability to change passive parks into active recreation areas. Chester County is undertaking a strategic planning process.

- West Pikeland did a survey that found overall support for open space preservation. The township has been a model of outreach. Supports and advocates discussions with all interests, not only with like-minded conservationists. Communication with all interests is vital. The soccer field recently built helped to relieve pressure in the township. Their Open Space referendum provided the "war chest" that the community needed to preserve land. Recommendations for success include the following steps: talk with the community, pursue and secure funding from a variety of sources, and network with groups such as the Natural Lands Trust (especially). Focus on connectivity. Use trails to show that they are community-based connectors. There is a concerted effort in West Pikeland to get people to serve on multiple boards—works for communication and coordination of effort.
- Defining our constituency: Landowners, Residents (major groups), Supervisors, and various Township Committees. Have very focused outreach. Focus on use and users, such as kids being a major group. Let's try to think bigger and beyond just things like soccer—how can you use soccer as their entree to other interests?
- West Vincent has TreeVitalize grants. Goal is to use signage to inform the public. Youth helped to clear trails, which was a highly visible project and result. The township has a trails committee. Passed two referenda on the Earned Income Tax and the property tax to support open space.
- People do recognize a split between new residents and long-term residents in terms of understanding about the nature of the area, land use, level of services, and expectations. Politics and political action indicate different philosophies are in place.
- Need to inform people about what is going on and where to do the activities. One stop shopping about what is available regionally. Coordination is needed. Engage the OJR School District, the Cable Station. Engage people in educational and awareness-building efforts about the value, history, and resources of the region. The heritage landscape is vital. Need to make the case of the economic value of the region. Need to show people visually what they have and what the alternative would be. Need to promote opportunities and get more visitation to important areas.
- Keying in on kids was a common theme throughout this discussion.
- Dame Juliana League Fly Fishers are champions by example. The organization makes improvements and mobilizes forces for initiatives such as stream bank stabilization. 120 members including 40 who are active. They provide labor to spread fish about the streams. Their home stream is French Creek and they are branching out to Pickering Creek. All programs lead to stewardship. Concern about losing many young anglers! The YMCA in Phoenixville teaches fly-fishing and also stream ecology.
- Community sports are a lot of work and require multiple partners and volunteers.
- Need to work out the parking issues at parks, especially where there are sports fields.
- Green Valleys Association has taken on big issues successfully such as the Perrier case in which over 700 people turned out for a public meeting. Envirofest is a unique event in northern Chester County that brings together businesses and nonprofits from the areas of sustainable watershed practices, renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, land conservation, green

building, energy efficiency, and environmental education. Educational and entertaining for adults and children. This year will feature live music, local microbrew tasting, fishing, workshops, demonstrations, and much more. In 2009 over 1,100 people attended. Stream Day Celebration generated over 40,000 pounds of trash. Will do the Schuylkill Scrub from the headwaters of the Delaware to Bartram's Garden from mid-April to mid-May as a media event.

- Programs at Welkinweir: summer camp with 500 campers, school district outreach, pre-school programs, and library programs.
- Look into how to educate municipal officials and landowners on how to treat their land.
- Recognize that there is power through participation—getting people involved will connect them with efforts.
- South Coventry is focusing on Woody's Woods and the master plan is under way. Will be working on the trail link to Hopewell Park and the Schuylkill River Trail. The township would like to see the school district do a program on recycling as part of the curriculum. Was once part of the curriculum and gave 125 kids outdoor experiences annually. Its Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Oversight Board conducts an annual Clean-Up Day, Community Day, and Recycling Day. A native plant exchange is part of the Community Day celebration.
- French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust does the annual Iron Tour through open space preserved properties. Earth Day in Warwick Park. Hopewell Big Woods Teaching Trunk.

If the participants could get one thing out of this plan, what would that be?

- The area has a strong history of success and support for conservation and stewardship. Many people and organizations are involved in this important cause and it shows with the continued scenic beauty and measures in place for conservation and collaboration. Northern Chester County has more heart than anywhere—just witness all that has been protected, studied, and enjoyed.
- The success of the plan will be rooted in its execution. Special interest groups and leaders need to be involved. The Plan needs to be rooted in community cooperation, connecting citizens to the land, providing continuous connections, and being persistent over time. Never give up: look at how Dick Whitlock turned 12 acres into 300 acres of preserved land as Woody's Woods. Work smarter not harder. Be seamless in goals and engagement. Use a variety of means of networking from the Internet to meetings, from socials to educational events. Make things fun to participate in. Develop and foster a regional brand: need a good name for Northern Chester County. Maintain Momentum. Capture the children as a way to reach adults. Do adult education and outreach too. Have concrete steps to work on. Use Best Management Practices. Have intermunicipal committees. Get message out to all groups: not just like-minded people. Conduct outreach to parent teacher organizations and newcomers. Offer community-building events and educational programs that encourage citizens to build your family's roots here and appreciate and understand our legacy. It is essential to convey the message of Northern Chester County and its special nature. It is not like anywhere else and we need to work to keep it special with its own unique identity.

HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Opportunities and Assets of Northern Chester County's Heritage and Cultural Features:

- The Centennial Powder Works Historic Park in East Pikeland has the potential to become a major heritage park and a tourism destination. The gunpowder mill served George Washington's army during the Revolutionary War. Plans are underway for archeological studies, master planning, and coordination with the Schuylkill River Heritage Area and the Valley Forge Area Visitors Bureau. This could become part of a Reading to Philadelphia area historic tour. The story of George Washington's race for the forges in the Revolution is an important and compelling story.
- Steel and Iron Heritage Interest. Support in interest for the Iron Furnace. Interest by East Nantmeal in this aspect of heritage.
- Parker Tavern in East Vincent Township.
- Pennhurst.
- West Pikeland has historic Yellow Springs. Arts tradition is unique in Northern Chester County and very different from Southern Chester County's Brandywine/Wyeth tradition. Here we have the art school. It would be important to identify this in our plan. First military hospital.
- North Coventry Township has Pottstown Landing, Iron Boar History – Franklin Stove heritage. Charcoal hearths, streams for fire control and to support drinking for mules used in industry. Auto tour in planning stages. Pottstown Landing is very interesting.
- East Coventry – Frick's Lock that is on the National Register.
- East Nantmeal has Welkinweir.
- Historic books and postcard books by local author.
- Need to preserve what we have in Northern Chester County.
- Old Houses/New Neighbors would be a useful theme.
- Many old churches including the oldest continually-operating Brethren Church in the USA.
- History is a major economic driver.
- Hopewell Big Woods.
- Iron & Steel Heritage area.
- Largest contiguous agricultural field (300+ acres) in Northern Chester County is the line between growth and development. (Alice's property)
- Iron Heritage tours are in planning.
- Five national register historic districts are in Warwick Township. This is a little-known fact among the general public and in terms of tourism recognition.
- Haycreek Festival.

- Need to get the stories out: connecting the story of Northern Chester County with its incredible history and resources is most important to get out to the newer residents. This was a focal point discussion.
- Stories about many aspects of the history such as the colliers are important.
- For the arts: the Black Box Theater is an unusual asset that merits exploration.
- Nature Camps and Arts Camps: Welkinweir, Crow's Nest, Sakanac, Anadba, Warwick Woods, and Warwick County Park.
- Camp Fernbrook may have been an Underground Railroad stop; is the gateway to a 600-acre park, filled with charcoal.
- New types of agriculture are extending the heritage: Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), cheese and wine making, specialty farms.
- The locks on the Schuylkill River are important and interesting.
- Towpath Park.
- Our mission: heritage tourism, show Northern Chester County as a destination. We need to have "enough" destinations.
- Should there be some type of umbrella organization or mechanism for trail use groups?
- Karen Marshall indicated that the first Iron & Steel Heritage Task Force meeting on marketing would be held in March.
- History just seems to focus on the end event of Washington's winter in Valley Forge, but there is so much more to tell about that story in Northern Chester County. It is the story of freedom.
- The Schuylkill River Trail is coming to the area all the way to Pottstown.
- Rail service (R6 line) may be coming to the area.
- Need to be prepared for visitors; how do you get ready for them?
- Need to capitalize on the agricultural heritage that we may be losing. It is at least changing and evolving from large farms to smaller organic and specialty farms. Laurel Locks Farm is open for tourism. Christmas Tree farms. Harvest time visitation. St. Peter's Oktoberfest. All provide events and destinations.
- Water as a theme: French and Pickering Creeks, Schuylkill River.
- Coordination is important. A lot is going on.
- "Come Home to Iron Country" as a theme
- In the 1700s and 1800s the forests were managed very well to support the iron industry.
- Sites where programming occurs: Ludwig's Corner, St. Peter's, Historic Yellow Springs, Anselma Mill, Welkinweir, Hopewell Big Woods, Marsh Creek, Towpath Park, Fern Brook, Black Box Theater.

- Everyone is broke. No supervisors are willing to take on major new projects. There is no connection to revenue generation.
- Example: person buys baked goods from local specialty bakery. Sells them at Conestoga High School. Then the buyers of the products become interested and then go to visit the specialty baker and the area.
- Capitalize on what we have: the big sky, woods, farms, and streams. Don't want to build new things.
- How do we get to the school districts? Suggestion to teach a class on Northern Chester County as part of OJR Evening School. Note: The importance of working with and using school district programs and coordination was of major importance and discussion in this group. Work on connecting kids to nature. Concern about school district ending important nature-based programs such as Stream Watch.
- Public investment is lacking in things like historic and recreation sites and facilities as well as marketing.
- Community Service projects: trail clearing, stream bank stabilization. Historic committees offer tours. Use villages and sites as locations for tours.
- How can the Federation transform into a catalytic role? Become the mobilizers, do the outreach, connect with Environmental Advisory Councils (EACs), unify key stakeholders to galvanize them into action. How can we partner with municipalities?
- Historic cemeteries in East Pikeland.

If the participants could get one thing out of this plan, what would that be?

- Establish programs for heritage- and nature-based recreation.
- Coordinate with municipalities on programs.
- Add signage to area to highlight what is here and build an identity.
- Showcase difference between northern and southern Chester County with respect to the arts and other factors.
- Establish a means of communication among the entities involved in common efforts to advance a unified vision.
- Self-tours are important.
- There are all these things out there but no connections or way to connect them.
- Have the Visitors Bureau develop a focus.
- Continuing education class about Northern Chester County at OJR Evening School.
- Outreach to new residents about the area.
- Tourism information in strategic locations and in creative methods. Rack sheets. Outreach to groups like German tourists.

- Figure out who will do all this!
- Get people together. Get them used to working together.
- Do events like "Washington's Ride to the Schuylkill" which was held in 2002.
- Do small efforts to achieve success rather than large-scale things that are harder to accomplish. Perhaps identify two to four projects each municipality could do. That would be 18 to 36 projects.
- Develop an ordinance to protect historic towns and villages including buffers to protect the landscape heritage. Concern about properties behind the historic towns or districts that could get sprawl.
- Programs that are fun and inspirational: SPARK Discovery. Pughtown special community festival on town streets and roads.
- Educate residents about assets of Northern Chester County, especially newcomers.
- The Federation needs to change its role. Become more organized and formalized.
- What is most important about this heritage is that the cultural lands still have the historic landscape attached. Seeing the history within the context of the same landscape is very unusual. We need to make this point in the plan. People don't want to hear about some event—they want to see things and experience them. Northern Chester County needs to create the lure as part of tourism efforts. Create both the experience and the emotional connection. Focus on the integrity of the landscape. How do we get history into recreation and the plan?

TRAILS

Critical Issues

- Hunting on state-owned lands precludes trail use. Questions were raised about the closure of state game lands trails emanating from state game lands in Lancaster County. Ingrid Cantarella of the Horse Shoe Trail Club provided information on how that policy is changing. The Horse Shoe Trail was grandfathered and not affected by the Game Commission regulations. It has always been open.
- Multi-use trails need accommodations for horses.
- Running trails desired. Preferred surface is wood or gravel, not asphalt. Trail running is becoming an activity of interest.
- Horse parking including trailers is needed. Horse-friendly parking needed. Welkinweir does offer horse trailer parking. Good to call ahead to make sure it is available and that no special events are going on.
- Public education about trail use is critically needed. Courtesy among trail users is vital. Desired goal is for the hierarchy of trail use to be observed: wheels → feet → hooves
- Use common sense: don't ride when trails are muddy. Keep off wet grass. Using muddy surfaces damages them for future use.

- Suggestion: Look into providing mounting blocks along horse trails. This would facilitate riders dismounting to clean up after their horses. Suggested distance was a block or boulder every half mile. (Note: Look into this to establish a standard.)
- Accurate records and monitoring is needed for easements. Easements have been lost that were essential trail segments. Adjoining property owners took over the eased properties in some areas.
- The area includes many trails on privately-owned property that are used by local residents. These trail segments are provided by the owners through their own goodwill. Trail club members described their outreach efforts to show appreciation and gratitude in a formal way annually. The recognition includes a personal visit, expression of thanks, and the presentation of a gift such as a home-baked pie, a birdhouse, birdseed, and other thoughtful items. Property owners in the forum stated how they like to have this type of trail use on their properties and, as horse riders themselves, value these trails. There is no desire to advertise the trails but to continue their use through goodwill. Discussion included the potential for having discussion with willing landowners about the potential for easements on these trail segments. The turnover of property from landowners willing to accommodate trail use to future property owners who may close their land to trail use is of concern.
- Bicycle speeding is prevalent and dangerous, especially on the Schuylkill River Trail. How can speed limits be established and enforced?
- A hierarchy of trails needs to be incorporated into a regional trail system: in parks, loops, on-road, off-road, destination, and long-distance and local commuting. Include recreational, fitness, and transportation as uses. Include range of users from those learning to ride to expert cyclists.
- Evaluate road shoulders for accommodating cyclists and pedestrians.
- Keep trail chip areas for horses (Struble Trail as an example).
- Find appropriate areas for mountain bikers. Various participants provided a range of perceptions and experiences about the effect of cyclists on horses ranging from no effect at all to dangerous close calls.
- ATV use is evident in the area and is a problem. The plan is dealing with non-motorized trail use only. Enforcement of ATVs is an issue that needs to be dealt with at the local level.
- Safety issues such as adequate sight lines required on multi-use trails needs consideration.
- Restricting the use of horses on trails was raised as a concern. There appears to be a need for information about trail construction and improvements in trails. Public perception about trail improvements in Chester County appears to be different from what is actually happening in the southern end of the county in the Downingtown area.
- West Vincent Land Trust is working on eased trails on pipelines. The organization has already made some calls about this and it appears that creating trails on pipelines has potential.

How do organizations conduct trail outreach?

- Based upon a resounding theme of the need for education on a host of topics, the participants explored ways to do outreach.
- Trail riders talking with other trail users.
- Peer-to-Peer – when there is a problem or issue with a particular trail, organize trail users to undertake a positive, organized, friendly outreach to inform trail users about issues and to enlist their support in taking corrective action as well as in getting the word out to make the trail work well for everyone.
- Signage – The topic of signage emerged as a critical need. A regional signage system needs to be planned, installed, and maintained. A regional identity system appeared to be important.
- Have trashcans, waste receptacles. (Note: explore pack it in/pack it out policy.)
- Talk to the hunters about how to enlist their outreach support. They know everybody and use much of the region for their sport.
- Educate landowners about liability especially to educate them about the methods of protection through the state Recreational Use of Land and Water Act.
- Use township newsletters to feature articles on education and outreach. Newsletters are read extensively and residents value them.
- Communicate through all open space, recreation, and other related township committees.
- Communicate through trail clubs and committees.
- Explore "Adopt-A-Trail" and Trail Watch programs.
- Have theme days and events such as Historic Trails Days.
- Unite trail, historic, and heritage events and facilities.
- Develop a welcome strategy for newcomers that fosters residents' identity of living in Northern Chester County as a special place.
- Education was mentioned numerous times with specific suggestions that broadly ranged from informing people how to act around horses, trail users talking to the horses, and trail projects, to newcomer socials and materials, trail etiquette, private property rights, and respect for property owners.
- Should there be some type of umbrella organization or mechanism for trail use groups?

If the participants could get one thing out of this plan, what would that be?

- Build rapport with private landowners for public access for trail use.
- Widen shoulder on Pughtown Road from Rt 113 to Rt 23.
- Provide trails from residential developments to parks, commercial centers, schools, and other destinations.
- Connect to the Trenton Cutoff.

- Provide something for everyone with respect to a range of trail types.
- All townships should connect via a regional trail system—not just trails within single municipal boundaries.
- Provide maps on the Internet—not paper maps. Let trail users print out their own maps. Keep the Internet maps up-to-date.
- No trespassing enforcement is key.
- Notify people when trail maintenance projects are underway; people would like to join in but just do not know about the opportunities.
- Provide trails as an alternative transportation mode.
- Provide share-the-road signs.
- A most important point: There is a major difference between trail planning and trail construction. Trails that can actually get built need to be built. Certain trail projects have the property ownership or easment, design, construction documents, funding, political will, and citizens' support (maybe even a partnering group for trail maintenance and management). While other trails might look good on paper, they may not have the elements necessary to actually get built. Trails that can be built should become the priority. The plan needs to be focused on that in order to be competitive for grant funding. Some trails can theoretically be more important or make more sense on paper but if they can't get built, it is more important to move on to the trails that can actually get built. Successful trails will create the momentum for more trail development.
- Participants from municipalities in southern Chester County expressed interest in a similar regional trail planning effort in their area. All communities have an open space plan—just as those in the northern portion of the county, so do the southern municipalities.

PARKS AND RECREATION BOARDS

Successes

East Vincent Township:

- Park Design for Community Park on the Ridge
- Many facilities
- Well integrated
- Connected trails
- Demonstration meadow – award from Philadelphia Horticultural Society
- Community Day with friends

North Coventry Township:

- Upgrades to Kenilworth Park (1970s design)
- Expansion of Coventry Woods
- Streambank/riparian better restoration projects

South Coventry Township:

- Bought land to connect Woody's Woods to Coventry Woods
- Planning for Woody's Woods
- Connie Batdorf Park – well used by residents and non-residents

West Pikeland Township:

- Bridge to Bridge Trail
- Along 113, 2 bridges, equestrian use
- Signage, parking still in progress

Warwick Township:

- 90-acre passive park (field and woods)
- Adding new open space in partnerships
  - South Coventry Township, East Nantmeal Township, and French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust to add 30 acres to Warwick County Park
  - North Coventry Township to add land to Coventry Woods toward 620 acres
- Active in Hopewell Big Woods – trail links, economic development potential
- Schuylkill River National Heritage – economic development
- Re-use of 100-year-old truss as a park feature; locally made with plaque pedestrian bridge
- Last stop on the Iron Heritage Trail
- 1990s community survey reported passive recreation need; trails needed; survey findings are still used today

West Vincent Township:

- Collaboration with township organizations
- Recent citizen survey
- Community Day – Walking survey; Raffle
- Town Hall Meeting
- Township newsletter
- Fire Department
- Receive/request survey
- Separate sports league poll

Chester County:

- Schuylkill River Trail
  - 1982 – easement
  - Segment from Spring City to Cromby in East Pikeland is complete and in use with parking trailheads at both ends
  - 5.4 miles from East Pikeland Township to Parker Ford – currently under construction
  - $406,000 in DCNR grant
- Research, interpretive signage plan for Iron Heritage Trail

Challenges

East Coventry Township:

- No money

South Coventry Township:

- conflicts between active recreation facilities and quiet neighborhoods (lights, noise, traffic/parking)

Warwick Township:

- Vocal minority as small as one person while silent majority is absent.

West Pikeland Township:

- Tension between active and passive recreation advocates
- Getting trails through the development process
- No ordinance in place today per planning commission, e.g., 50 percent open space as required in West Vincent Township

West Vincent Township:

- Trails – private use only
- Trail users who feel/act entitled to trail use
- Is a purchased easement the solution?
- Quantifying needs for fields, etc.
- Evaluating best location for various facilities

Green Valleys Association:

- Perception of criminal delinquent behavior on trails
- Some get the concept of "community policing" by trail users
- Perceived needs for tournament-quality facilities

If the participants could get one thing out of this plan, what would that be?

East Coventry Township:

- Fee-in-lieu

East Vincent Township:

- Complete, current inventory

South Coventry Township:

- Inter-community coordination

West Vincent Township:

- Facility sharing
- Appropriate citing of criteria standards
- Capital reserve fund for park maintenance from facility fees – 4%? 10%?

Chester County:

- Identify gaps in recreation facilities in the region, e.g., general or specific facilities
- Today, community parks are similar in design and audience; identify the need for diversity

What vision should be cast for parks and recreation in 2020?

- Lifetime recreation/community center/senior center
- Phoenixville Homes Proposal for community center: Library, senior center, computer, trail amenities, child daycare, police station; seeking funding
- West Vincent Township – approved for YMCA at Weatherstone, developer dependent
- Informational materials – brochure, calendar produced jointly via Federation
- Completion of trails/connections from Schuylkill River Trail to French Creek Trail, Iron Heritage Trail, Horse-Shoe Trail, and Boars Back Trail; and signage for trailheads and resource interpretation
- Forge to Furnace Trail/Morgantown to Manayunk
- Horse-Shoe Trail moved off-road
- Publicity of trails as a system
- Best location for park sky/stargazing and protection
- Fitness Trail with exercise stations
- Regional Web site with interactive map
- Examples of passive recreation suitable to natural resource context
- Best practices for recreation development
- Facilities
- Support: parking, restrooms
- Infrastructure: water, stormwater/drainage
- Other services: repair, food, lodging, medical care/first aid – economic development opportunities

Collaboration/Working Together: What about Joining Forces?

The participants were united in their desire to continue collaborating and improving the collaboration in parks, recreation, and open space. Areas of collaboration include the following:

- Sharing information
- Sharing facilities, e.g., sports fields
    - Possibly acquisition, development, and maintenance?
    - Willing to advocate to elected officials
- More coordinated special events
- Program/Management Staff/Communication/Maintenance – Equity! Equitable cost-sharing
- Scheduling of events/field use and rest

SPORTS FORUMS

Two sports forums were held. The first was to initiate discussions about needs and opportunities regarding organized sports in Northern Chester County. The second was to go over the findings of the fieldwork, questionnaire results, and questions that arose during the research and inventory phase of the project.

Sports Forum 1

What Works Well in Community Sports

- Use of fields without charge.
- New soccer fields going in at the Catholic church in East Vincent.
- Communities such as West Pikeland have open space funding programs.
- Lots of volunteers.
- Soccer is willing to do outreach to all other organizations to share in field development and operation.
- Leagues and sports organizations are willing to travel but usually "not across the river."
- Sports programs are local and kids want to be able to play with their friends.
- Youth sports organizations serve as the feeder for high school sports.

What Does Not Work Well in Community Sports

- Out of season sports: fall baseball, spring soccer, year-round sports all need fields. While some sports were once only played in traditional seasons, such as baseball in the spring and summer, the prevalence of sports played for multiple seasons increases demand for facilities. If baseball is played in the fall, then the outfields can't be used for fall soccer.
- Four-season sports place high demands on facilities.
- School district fields are limited.
- Phoenixville baseball field is used by multiple school districts, schools, the community, and Catholic Youth Organizations (CYOs). The fields are lighted and of championship play caliber. A road is being planned to go through these fields, which will eliminate them. While the league will be paid for the land, there is nowhere to buy replacement land in the Borough of Phoenixville.
- Only three 90-foot diamonds in the area.
- Could the former steel plant lands provide space for more fields? There are liens on several of the parcels.
- Coventry Little League: maintenance is a major problem. The electrical system is deficient. Bellwood Golf Club owns adjacent lands; do these lands have potential for additional sports fields?
- Can fields be centralized by type to locate them in one place? Would be convenient for residents in terms of driving to one location. Could have tournaments and schedule better.
- Parking is a problem at many field locations.
- Municipalities operate in the dark. There is no database about sports participation and field use.

- Indoor facilities are needed. The schools charge a lot of money to rent out their facilities.
- Weather causes delays and the need to reschedule, which compounds field demand.
- Sponsorships are down in 2010 over 2009 by over 50 percent. For example, last year at this time Coventry Little League had 48 sponsorships compared with the 20 in place this week. That could change with additional sponsorships going into place in the upcoming weeks.
- Divisions and teams in most sports are growing and expanding.
- Volunteerism is harder with fewer people willing to step up.

Ideas for Improvement

- Consider regional recreation. Look at how the costs and benefits can be shared and supported. Consider how municipalities working together could benefit in cost sharing. Partnerships could lower maintenance costs and improve quality.
- Easier to raise capital and get grants as municipal partners.
- Evaluate municipal- and school district-owned properties for active recreation use.
- Look at Pennhurst property.
- Needs to be partnerships; educate the townships.
- Downingtown Area School District has the old SMS property that has a couple of hundred acres.
- Sports Complex: maintenance would be easier and less expensive, amenities could be provided, advantage for tournaments, less travel for parents. Need to consider the important factor that kids want to play with their friends.
- Can we show the demographics in a way to attract private business? Example: USTC has 14 fields including outdoor, indoor, and turf.
- Make sure we have recreational sports fields such as through homeowners associations (HOAs). Provide practice areas. Consider multi-use fields.
- Adult Leagues: Leagues for adults include Bradford, Tredyfrinn, Rocket, and USTC.
- Lighting is of concern because the night skies are very important here.
- Need to make the case through photos.
- People think sports fields are just utilitarian places – make them more park-like. Include shade, nice clean restrooms, and many uses beyond sports such as playgrounds, trails, picnic and sitting areas. Wilson Park has concerts, sports (Old Chesterbrook). Make the case for this through photos.
- Pool resources and make responsibilities equitable.
- Consider having sports organizations run for public office. Use the political process to influence support for recreation facilities.
- Use ordinances such as mandatory dedication as a means to acquire land and raise revenues. Provide sample ordinances? How can we use the land development and planning process as a means to increase recreational opportunities?

Sports Forum 2

Participants provided clarification on their field needs, participation, and issues. Findings included:

- Not all fields are permanently protected.
- School district fields are not guaranteed and can be pulled at any time, thereby making scheduling difficult.
- Field lighting is needed but participants recognize the challenge of lights in Northern Chester County.
- The 90-foot Desanno baseball field in Phoenixville will be relocated to a local college campus.

YOUTH FORUM

The Owen J. Roberts School District assisted the Northern Federation in planning and holding a youth forum with fifth graders. Participants included 98 fifth-grade students. They participated in an interactive question and answer session and also completed a questionnaire. All those completing the questionnaire were entered in a drawing to win a prize.

It is important to note that in the interactive discussions and in the questionnaires, the youth were focused on being outside, engaged in active healthy play, in an unstructured format. There was very little discussion about organized sports. There was a great deal of discussion about playing outside in nature with trees, flowers, and shade. Regarding facilities, their emphasis was on pools, skate parks, and indoor recreation facilities for year-round use. There was consensus on the youth wanting to spend time with parents and siblings—this was of great importance to them.

Things They Like to Do

- Swim
- Kickball
- Dodge ball
- Jump rope
- Walk
- Ride scooter
- Ride bike
- Play with dogs
- Play games
- Hula hoop
- Sports
- Use playgrounds
- Play with family and friends
- Be with parents
- Ride four wheelers
- Video games
- Play tag
- Volleyball
- Basketball
- Football
- Baseball
- Soccer
- Climb trees
- Read
- Listen to music
- Write stories
- Take pictures
- Play with my little brothers and sisters
- Go camping
- Go to new places
- Build stuff
- Fishing
- Karate
- Skateboard
- Hang out with friends

What they would like in a new park

- Swimming pools with a slide and other fun things
- Zip line
- Baseball field
- Playground
- Basketball courts
- Stage for performances
- Benches
- Rock walls
- Swings
- Spinning tire swing
- Laser tag
- Pond for fishing
- Soccer goals
- Tons of water rides
- A little bit of everything so that lots of people would use the park
- Kickball fields
- Tennis courts
- Trampoline
- Sand boxes
- Sand volleyball
- Places for nature lovers
- Playgrounds for both big kids and little kids
- Bathrooms
- Places to park cars
- Bicycle paths
- Lots of trees and flowers
- Monkey bars
- Lots of colorful things to play on
- Water games
- Food court so I could stay long and play and eat when I'm hungry
- A place for bands to play and have them play all the time
- An orchard
- Pavilions and picnic places
- Recreation center so I could go all year round and play inside and outside
- Petting zoo
- Nature center
- Water Fountains

KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

More than 150 interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, citizens, and organizations in Northern Chester County. These groups included:

- Officials from the nine municipalities in municipal outreach meetings held in every jurisdiction including supervisors, planning commission members, parks and recreation board members, and EAC members, depending upon the preferences and availability of the townships.
- Chester County Planning Commission, Parks and Recreation Department, Historic Preservation Division, Open Space Department.
- Conservation organizations such as the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Green Valleys Association, Natural Lands Trust, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Open Space Alliance, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Schuylkill River Greenway Association, Hopewell Big Woods, Schuylkill Highlands, Dame Julianna Fly Fishers, Binky Lee Preserve, Maysie's Farm, Milky Way Farm, the Creamery, the Federation of Northern Chester County Communities.
- Recreation providers such as the township parks and recreation board members, sports organization officers, area hunt clubs, Camp Saranac and Camp Anabba, French Creek State Park, Marsh Creek State Park, Valley Forge National Historic Park, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, DARC (Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium), Phoenixville Parks & Recreation Department, Chester County Parks and Recreation Department, Crow's Nest Preserve, Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, Ludwig's Corner Horseshow, Northern Chester County Sportsmens Clubs, Horse-Shoe Trail, Freedom Valley Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Freedom Valley YMCA, St. Joseph's CYO.
- Spring City officials.
- School Districts including school board members, superintendents, business managers, athletic directors, health and wellness coordinators, coaches, and teachers.
- Health and Wellness: Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation and Phoenixville Community Health Foundation.
- Arts & Culture: Chester Springs Surrounds, Historic Yellow Springs, West Pikeland Arts & Culture Committee leaders.
- Private businesses such as the Mill at Anselma, Anselma Farmers' and Artisans' Market, J. Maki Winery, outfitter businesses, bicycle shops, Pottstown Visitors Center for the Schuylkill River Greenway, Pottstown Bicycle rental, Phoenixville theater committee, St. Peter's Village businesses regarding tourism, Brandywine Valley Visitors Bureau, Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau.

FINDINGS

The interviews dealt with the specific needs, interests, ideas, and concerns of the respective interviewees. However some common themes emerged that were highly similar to the findings of the direct mail survey. These include:

- Northern Chester County is a very special place. So far, many organizations have pitched in to preserve the landscape as we see it today.
- Many, many people and organizations are involved and interested in doing whatever they can to conserve Northern Chester County.
- The flip side is that these efforts are diverse, fragmented, duplicative, and sometimes wind up in gaps in services or efforts.
- There is a lot of information out there combined with a need for information but no way exists to manage and provide information in an organized, timely, and visible manner.
- A go-to place for information is needed on a host of topics related to parks, recreation, and open space.
- A strong sense of the benefits of collaboration and a desire to collaborate exist in the area.
- The Federation of Northern Chester County Communities appears to have a great deal of respect and recognition in the community. It serves as the common denominator among a host of organizations in the area. Many throughout the outreach process described the potential for the Federation to become more organized and focused on implementation.
- There is frustration that so many plans have been done yet implementation of these plans is perceived to be minimal and scattered.
- A sense of urgency and strong desire to get things moving ahead through implementation is in place. "Do something."
- Conserving the rural scenic character is vital communitywide. There is some concern about how to do this while accommodating the changing population and perceptions of people who have lived here for quite a while as well as newcomers.
- There is general consensus that there are not enough places for people to play sports.
- Recreation is youth-oriented and focused on sports, summer, and holidays. There is a need for services for adults and families. The focus should be on nature and active healthy living.
- There is a need to get more people outdoors enjoying nature. Providing people with information on where and how to do this will help.

WEB SITE

A Web site, www.northernfederation.com, was designed for the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan project. The intent was two-fold: to inform and keep the public informed about the project and to establish a Web site for continued Federation use once the plan is completed. The site posted the project's purpose, public meeting announcements and summaries, milestones in the planning process, and contact information for the planning team. During the planning process, site visitors were able to sign up for a project email distribution list for direct notification of upcoming meetings.

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities
www.northernfederation.com

Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Public Opinion Survey Report 2010

Revised December 2011

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Federation of Northern Chester County
Public Opinion Survey on Parks, Recreation, & Open Space
Executive Summary

The Federation of Northern Chester County conducted a public opinion survey in 2010. The surveyed was distributed to a random sample of 2,008 households in the Federation's project area, namely the Townships of East Coventry, East Nantmeal, East Pikeland, East Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, Warwick, West Pikeland, and West Vincent.

Purpose

The purpose of the survey was to determine the opinions, ideas, and concerns of the residents regarding parks, recreation, and open space. This information was used to help develop the **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan** for Federation of Northern Chester County Communities, a 10-year guide to providing parks and recreation opportunities that meet the needs and interest of citizens within our region.

Results

The process produced statistically reliable and valid survey results with a return of 514 completed questionnaires. The 88 that were non-deliverable due to people moving or other reasons equaled four percent, within the normal range of three to five percent. With 1,920 surveys deliverable, the 27 percent return rate exceeded the typical direct mail return rate of two to four percent.

Survey Findings and Potential Directions for the Plan

- **Regional Perspective** – Respondents view parks and recreation regionally more than as an effort by each municipality on its own. The respondents would prefer continuing regional parks and recreation efforts.

- **High Level of Park Visitation** – The respondents are major visitors to parks. The most-used parks include Valley Forge National Historical Park (84 percent), French Creek State Park (79 percent), township parks (73percent), local creeks (63 percent), Warwick County Park (61 percent), and Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (58 percent). Township parks should figure prominently in developing a parks and recreation strategy for the next 10 years.

- **Conservation Lands and Trails** – Respondents indicated the importance of nature-based parks and recreation with nature reserves, trails, and greenways as important or extremely important. Written comments echoed strong sentiment regarding the preservation of the region's scenic rural character.

- **Active Healthy Living** – Setting the stage for citizens to engage in active recreational pursuits is key. Activities that make up a healthy way of life were top interests and pursuits in the survey findings: walking, enjoying the great outdoors, fitness, playing and socializing in the township parks, and cycling are important to the citizens. Providing facilities, programs, and information about them is important.

- **Indoor Recreation** – Indoor recreation was listed as important/extremely important for 56 percent of the respondents, with another 29 percent being neutral about it. Only eight percent said that it is not needed.

- **Adults and Families** – These appear to be the groups most in need of recreation services. It is important to make the case that parks and recreation is for everyone—not just children and youth! Most non-respondents reported being too old or not having kids as their reasons for not participating in the survey.

- **Public Awareness** – More outreach to publicize parks and recreation opportunities and explore support for lacking facilities, such as an outdoor pool and a dog park, is needed. Increasing public awareness about parks and recreation opportunities and their benefits through one centralized source would be a most valuable public service.

- **Support for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space** – Respondents indicated their willingness to support parks and recreation through fees, charges and tax support. About 54 percent were willing to pay taxes ranging from $2 to $5 per person annually for parks and recreation. Only five percent was not willing to support parks and recreation at all. This is a margin of nearly 11 to 1.

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I. Introduction

The Federation of Northern Chester County Communities (Northern Federation) conducted a direct mail survey in 2010 to assess public opinion about parks, recreation, and open space. The survey area encompassed the northernmost area of Chester County including the townships of East Coventry, East Nantmeal, East Pikeland, East Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, Warwick, and West Vincent. The Northern Federation wanted to determine the opinions, ideas, and concerns of the residents to serve as a foundation for decision-making regarding parks, recreation, and open space. By understanding the citizens' needs and interests, the Northern Federation will be able to direct planning and resources so that citizens benefit from the kinds of parks and recreation opportunities that are important to them.

This information will be used to develop a **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan** for Northern Chester County. In addition to the public opinion survey to assess the interests of citizens as individuals, the public participation process for the development of the Plan also included interviews with key stakeholders, focus groups, public meetings, and work sessions with the municipalities. Balancing the needs of the general public with those of organized entities that provide important public service, such as community organizations, sports leagues, and conservation entities, is crucial to meeting overall community needs.

Survey Reporting Parameters

Survey responses are reported as percentages. Percentages and numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

II. Process

Organization, Goals, and Survey Instrument – The Northern Federation retained Gannett Fleming and Toole Recreation Planning to develop the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan for Northern Chester County. Toole Recreation Planning conducted the public opinion survey as a component of the planning process. The Northern Federation; the Central Coordinating Committee for the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan; and the consultant worked collaboratively to develop the topics to be addressed in the survey. Topics identified by the Central Coordinating Committee included: recreation interests and participation, parks, recreation facilities, priorities for parks and recreation, public awareness about recreation opportunities in the area, level of support in terms of paying for parks and recreation, and indoor recreation. The survey instrument underwent six revisions until it was fine-tuned for public distribution.

Random Sample: Return Number Matters – Every household in the nine townships had an equal chance of participating in the survey. The goal was to produce a high level of confidence in the survey response along with a low margin of error. The random sample included 2,000 households. The sample was stratified by township. Half of the questionnaires (1,000) were distributed equally among the nine townships for a total of 112 per township. The other half (1,008) were proportioned according to ratio of the population of each township compared to the population for the entire study area. **Table 1** presents the distribution by municipality.

Table 1 Northern Chester County Survey Distribution by Municipality				
Municipality	2009 Population	Number Distributed		Total Distributed
		Equal	By Population	
East Coventry	6,856	112	153	265
East Nantmeal	1,946	112	45	157
East Pikeland	7,033	112	157	269
East Vincent	6,547	112	147	259
North Coventry	7,843	112	176	288
South Coventry	2,613	112	59	171
Warwick	2,781	112	62	174
West Pikeland	4,064	112	91	203
West Vincent	4,916	112	110	222
TOTAL	44,599*	1008	1000	2008

* This is about 16,500 households.

- Random sample drawn: 2,000 households
- Goal: 375 completed, returned surveys

Distribution – Respondents received a pre-survey letter informing them that they would be getting a questionnaire the following week. The pre-survey letter informed the respondents about the project, the importance of their response, and the time frame. The survey was mailed out via first class mail along with a cover letter and a self-addressed stamped reply envelope the next week. A follow-up postcard was sent to thank respondents for returning the completed surveys or asking them to complete their survey and send it in.

III. Survey Follow-Up

Follow-up included telephone calls to the respondents who had not yet returned their surveys. Toole Recreation Planning is licensed in the federal "Do Not Call" registry to make telephone calls to survey participants. Up to three calls were made to a random group of non-respondents asking them to complete and return their questionnaire. The phone calls yielded the following:

- **Unreachable**: 178 of the survey sample that had not returned a questionnaire were unreachable. That is, they did not respond to the survey or any of the telephone calls.

- **Refusals**: 62 non-respondents refused in telephone follow-up. Of the refusals, some were "hang ups" while others refused after listening to the purpose of the call. The main reasons given for refusals were age ("too old"), no children, lack of time, non-use of parks or lack of interest.

- **Reachable and Non-refused**: 45 of the survey sample contacted stated that they appreciated the Federation undertaking the survey and for the follow-up telephone call. Their primary focus was on pride in living in Chester County and the beautiful scenery and way of life that abounds in the northern region. Comments included lack of awareness about what is available (other than the famous parks like Valley Forge or French Creek) or where to go to get information, being concerned about safety while bicycle riding, being too busy, and the recognition that a park and recreation plan would be important. Nine respondents expressed concern about taxes, mainly about Owen J. Roberts (OJR) School District taxes.

IV. Return

The goal was to generate 370 completed returned surveys to achieve statistical significance. The Northern Federation's survey resulted in 508 completed returned questionnaires along with six letters. Another six were returned after tabulation for a grand total of 514 exceeding the original goal by 138 surveys or 27 percent. Typically direct mail surveys generate a return rate of two to four percent. The yield produced exceeded the number required to achieve a statistical level of confidence of 95 percent +/- 5 percent.

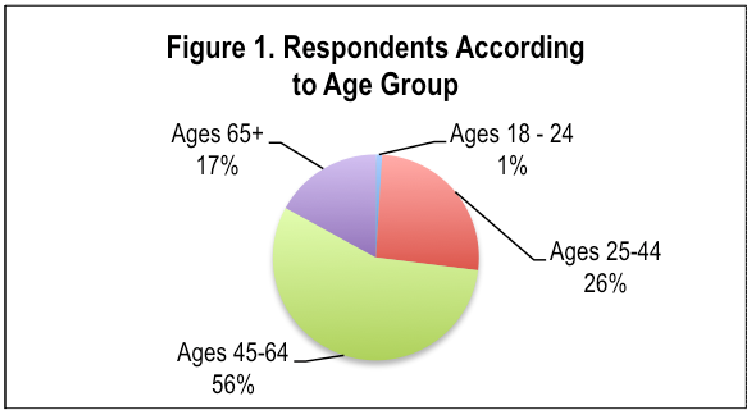
Of the 2,008 surveys mailed, 88 were undeliverable due to incorrect addresses, changes of address, refusals, and deaths, effectively reducing the sample to 1,920. The number of undeliverable surveys equates to four percent, falling into the normal range of three to five percent.

Respondent Characteristics

Respondents provided demographic information that included their gender, age group, household composition, and length of residence. Surveys were coded according to the township of residence of each respondent so the number of respondents from each township could be ascertained.

Respondent Age Group

Figure 1 presents the response according to age group of the respondents. The age group of 18 to 24 had only three respondents, a typical frequency of response in park and recreation direct mail household surveys. The age group of 25-44 had a 26 percent response rate. Respondents ages 45-64 had a 56 percent response rate and 17 percent of the respondents were 65 and older.

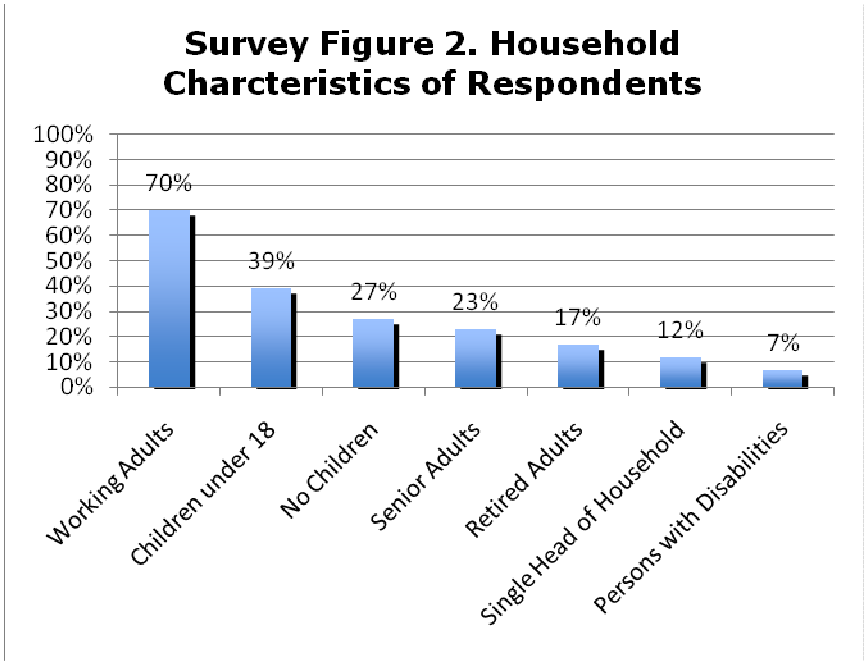


Gender of Respondents

Of those who answered the question about respondent gender, 45 percent reported that they were males and 46 percent females. Nine percent of the survey respondents did not answer this question.

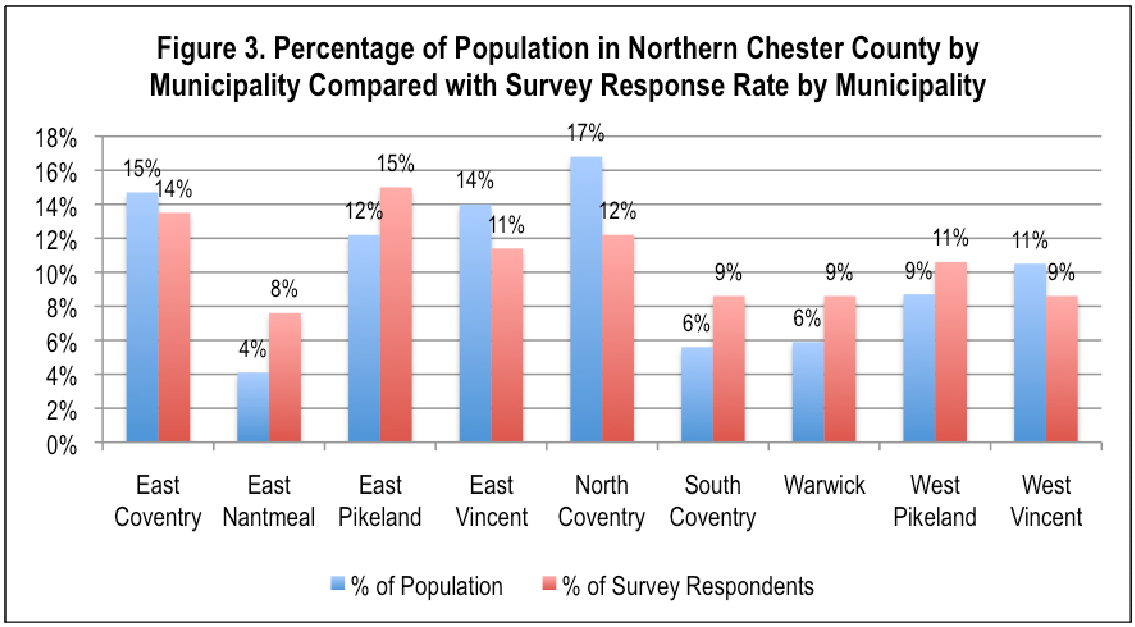
Household Characteristics

Figure 2 presents the characteristics of the households responding to the survey.



Respondents by Place of Residence in Northern Chester County

Figure 3 presents a comparison of the response rate by municipality compared with the percentage of the population by municipality in Northern Chester County. East Nantmeal, East Coventry, Warwick, and West Pikeland had a greater representation in survey response compared with their ratio of population in Northern Chester County. In contrast, East Coventry, East Vincent, North Coventry, and West Vincent had a lower response rate than their municipal population ratio in the region.



V. Summary of Overall Findings

The survey is statistically valid and reliable with a level of confidence of 95 percent and a margin of error of +/- five percent. While the respondents indicated that parks and recreation meet their expectations, Northern Chester County has a ways to go in achieving a higher satisfaction level. The survey results provide a clear direction on how to get there. The 10 major findings of the survey include the following:

1. **Regional Perspective for Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.** One of the most significant findings of the survey was that the respondents appear to think regionally when it comes to parks, recreation, and open space. When asked for their most preferred way to get information on this topic, one Web site for Northern Chester County was the top preference. A Web site for each township came in second.

2. **Park Use.** The respondents are major visitors of parks. The most-used parks include Valley Forge NHP (84 percent), French Creek State Park (79 percent), township parks (73 percent), local creeks (63 percent), Warwick County Park (61 percent), and Hopewell Furnace NHS (58 percent). Nationwide, about 72 percent of the population uses parks. The higher level of use at Valley Forge, French Creek, and township parks may correspond to the demographics of this community; affluence correlates positively with park use.

3. **Township Parks.** Township parks are important. About three out of four respondents said that they use township parks, a very high finding. Small parks close to home are important to 83 percent of the respondents. About 52 percent reported that parks and recreation in their community meet their expectations. Twenty-nine percent reported that facilities exceed their expectations. The national average is about 30 percent. Achieving a higher rating of exceeding expectations in the 50 percent range could reasonably be achieved through this plan by addressing things respondents want such as a continued focus on nature, access to information about recreation opportunities, walking and cycling paths, more recreation opportunities for adults and families, and indoor recreation facilities. Without indoor recreation facilities, it is very difficult to get to a 60 percent or higher very favorable impression rating by the public. Indoor recreation facilities are key to higher levels of satisfaction with public parks and recreation.

4. **Trails.** Pathways for safe walking and cycling emerged as the top facilities that respondents identified as lacking in the area. About three out of five respondents indicated that there are not enough of them.

5. **Facilities Not Available.** Two public recreation facilities that are not available in the area were identified: an outdoor pool and a dog park. Since an indoor recreation center was identified as important, a feasibility study could address both an indoor recreation center and a swimming pool to assess the viability of an outdoor or indoor pool.

6. **Nature-Based Recreation**. Recreation facilities including the improvement and/or development of new facilities should be rooted in nature and in preserving the rural character and scenic beauty. Respondents clearly show that parks, recreation, and open space are important here—and that they must be rooted in the area's rural character. In fact, 82 percent of survey respondents indicated that achieving a balance of park types and sports facilities, nature areas, greenways, and trails is important or extremely important.

7. **Active Recreation Preferences.** The top activities in which the respondents participate are related to nature and the outdoors: walking, enjoying nature and the starry skies, fitness, and cycling. Activities in which they are most interested are related to organized, structured programs such as lifelong learning. Special events are tops in terms of participation and interest. Interest in programs for adults and families are highest. Children and youth appear to have a broad range of recreation opportunities in place.

8. **Indoor Recreation Facilities.** Indoor recreation emerged with very important findings: about 56 percent indicated that an indoor recreation center is important or extremely important. Another 29 percent were neutral which indicates that with more information they would be likely to form an opinion on this subject. Only eight percent said that an indoor center is not needed while seven percent said it is not important. The ratio is nearly four to one of important/extremely important to not important/not needed.

9. **Public Awareness about Parks and Recreation.** The importance of increasing public awareness about parks and recreation opportunities was a theme of the survey findings. Lack of information was cited as the chief block to participation. Respondents indicated that they would like to get more information in a timely manner with one Web site for the Northern Chester County region as their preferred source. Surprisingly, the lack of money is not the chief problem for parks and recreation organizations: the lack of awareness is!

10. **Support for Parks and Recreation.** When asked about the level of support for parks and recreation improvements, the majority of respondents were willing to support parks and recreation in a range of choices from user fees to increased taxes. Only five percent of respondents were not willing to support parks and recreation financially. Once again, about one in three expressed a need for more information before they could commit to supporting parks and recreation financially.

Applying the Survey Findings: Potential Directions and Recommendations

The survey findings provide guidance for Northern Chester in terms of responding to the public opinion of the citizens at-large:

- **Continue to use a regional approach to parks, recreation, and open space in Northern Chester County.** Partnerships abound here and are vital for future success.

- **Foster efforts to root parks and recreation planning, management, and operations in nature and the rural character and scenic beauty of Northern Chester County.** This means that the full range of parks and recreation opportunities from active to passive would be in effect and all would consciously involve the conservation and enhancement of the character and way of life of Northern Chester County.

- **Make active healthy living a cornerstone of the way of life in Northern Chester County.** Citizens are interested in pursuing recreation activities that add years to their life and life to their years: walking, cycling, playing in parks, enjoying nature—and not just in the summer but throughout the year. Facilities, recreation opportunities, and information about them enable people to live active, socially-engaged lives.

- **Work toward increasing public awareness about parks, recreation, and open space.** Use existing methods and partners wherever possible instead of trying to create a new tactic or entity.

- **Focus on trails as the top priority for capital improvements.** Concentrate on the large regional connections as the first level of effort. Work with municipalities in creating trails to link to the Northern Chester County spine. Strive to add pathways including perimeter and loop trails in all township parks.

- **Phase in program expansion to adults and families and in areas beyond sports.** Consider partnerships with other organizations in this effort. Focus on high quality and creating "experiences."

- **When appropriate, conduct a feasibility study for the community recreation center including a swimming pool with indoor and outdoor options.** Timing and information are the crucial factors regarding an indoor recreation center. Include a vigorous public participation process. Retain a company with expertise and experience in indoor recreation center planning and operation. The study needs to address capital costs and most importantly address operations, management, and financing as primary elements for consideration. Consider having elected and appointed officials and other key stakeholders make visits to a variety of indoor recreation centers to see them firsthand and learn about their experiences. Involve three major organizations in this effort: the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, the Owen J. Roberts School District, and the potential YM/YWCA partners with the footprint at Ludwig's Corner. Community sports organizations may also be key stakeholders if the center would include indoor sports and training facilities. It is important to recognize that the trend is away from single-purpose senior citizen centers and toward intergenerational community recreation centers that people use throughout their lifetime and on an expanded basis when they retire.

- **Prioritize the host of findings from this survey to focus on a selected few important ones to carry out with commitment and high quality.** Suggestions would be trails and building awareness among the public about parks, recreation, and open space opportunities and benefits. It is important to note that the findings of this survey need to be balanced with the findings of the others portions of the public participation process for this plan such as the needs of organized community groups. While the parks and recreation in Northern Chester County cannot be everything to everybody, it can be something ***important*** to everybody.

VI. Responses

Survey responses are reported as percentages.
Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding.

The following section presents the responses to the questions, interpretation of the findings, and implications. It is important to note that the percentages are high in the responses. The private sector makes major marketing and investment decisions based upon numbers as low as 10 percent. Please note that numbers do not add up to 100 percent due to rounding and/or non-response.

The results are statistically reliable and valid for the response as a whole. The survey findings do present information on how subgroups answered selected questions. However, ***findings of the sub-groups are too small to be of statistical significance and cannot be generalized to that population group as a whole***. For example, reports on the findings of how respondents of a certain age group or place of residence or length of residence in Northern Chester County answered cannot be generalized to all the people in that particular category. They merely present some indication as to the direction of the respondents in that selected group.

Question 1. Please indicate if you or members of your household participate or are interested in the following activities in our community. ***Circle one response for each.***

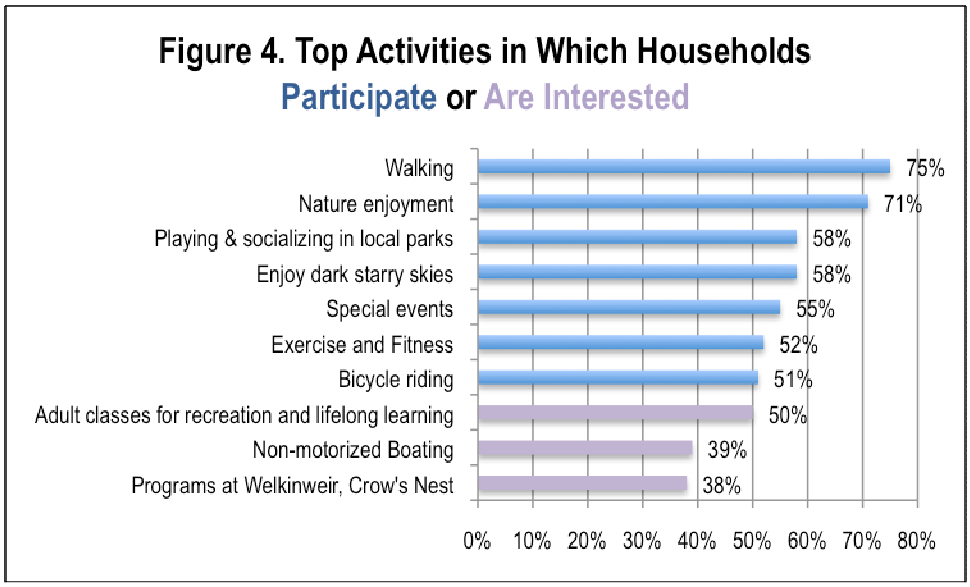
Table 2. Participation and Interest in Recreation Activities

	Yes, I / We participate	No, but Interested	Not Interested	Don't Know about it	NA
▪ Special events such as Community Days, Fairs	55%	29%	13%	3%	5%
▪ Playing or socializing in the local parks	58	22	18	1	5
▪ League Sports (e.g., baseball, soccer, lacrosse, football, basketball, etc.)	30	22	44	5	7
▪ Non-league Sports (e.g., golf, tennis, etc.)	27	24	39	4	7
▪ Exercise and Fitness	52	29	17	2	7
▪ Fishing	34	28	37	1	6
▪ Hunting	20	4	65	1	8
▪ Walking	75	18	7	0	4
▪ Bicycle Riding	51	25	22	1	5
▪ ATV Riding	10	14	74	2	9
▪ Nature Enjoyment	71	18	10	1	6
▪ Horseback Riding	20	30	47	3	9
▪ Enjoying the dark starry skies	58	25	15	2	6
▪ Winter Sports (sledding, cross-country skiing, skating, etc.)	41	29	27	2	7
▪ Non-motorized boating on the creeks or the Schuylkill River	29	39	30	3	8
▪ The Arts (music, arts, drama, dance)	39	34	22	4	5
▪ Volunteerism	31	37	26	6	6
▪ Organized programs for children on school holidays	14	32	47	7	6
▪ Summer camps for children	20	29	46	5	6
▪ Adult Classes for recreation, lifelong learning, or skill development	20	50	27	3	6
▪ Programs at local facilities such as Welkinweir, Crow's Nest, etc.	21	38	22	18	8
▪ Other – Results reported on page 35.					

Interpretation

Figure 4 depicts the top 10 activities in which the respondents are interested or participate. The top seven activities in which the respondents *participate* are related to enjoyment of nature and the outdoors and are activities that they can do at their own discretion. The top three activities in which respondents are *interested* involve structured, organized programs and additional opportunities. The good news for Welkinweir and Crow's Nest Preserve is that two out of five respondents are interested in programs there. However, one in five indicated that they did not know about programs at Welkinweir or Crow's Nest, while only seven percent or fewer indicated a lack of knowledge about any other activity. This is significant.

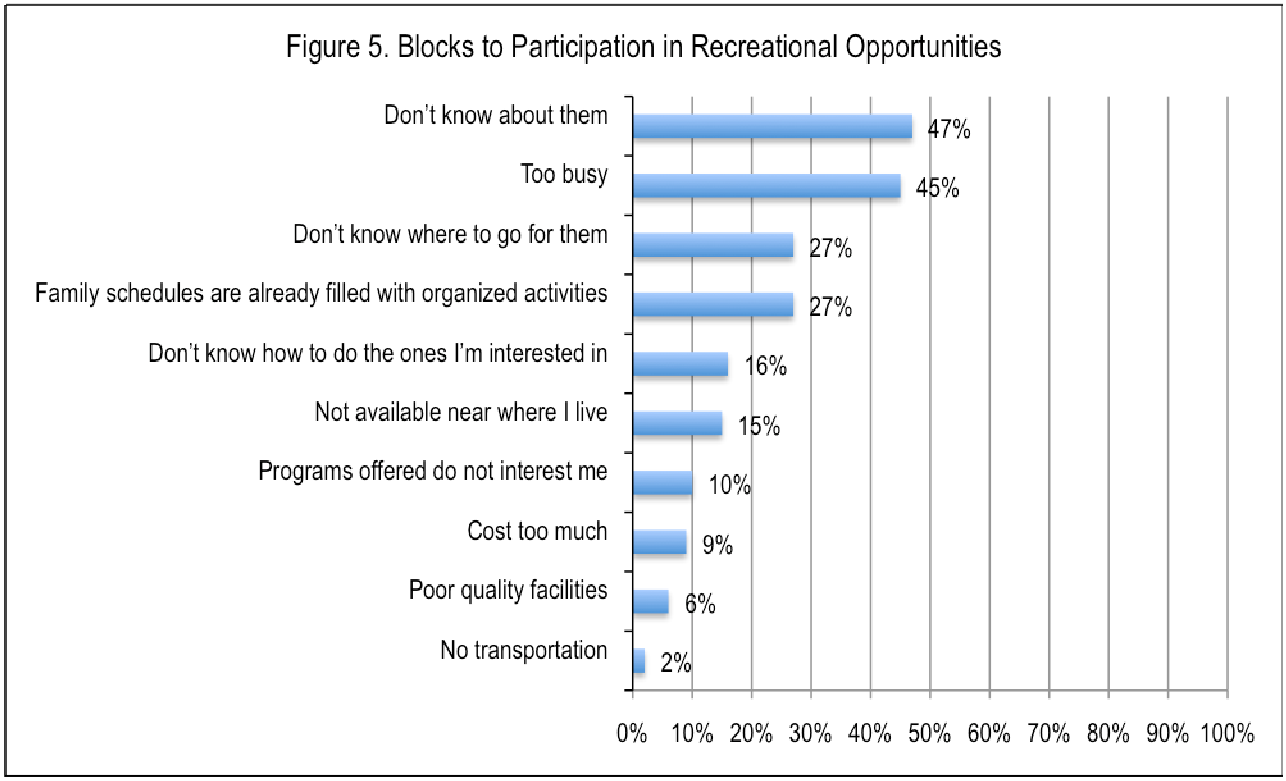
In addition, the finding that more than one out of three respondents is interested in volunteerism corresponds to the significant number of people who completed the section of the survey indicating that they would be interested in "helping out with parks, recreation, and open space," – 110 of the 514 respondents.



Implications

- **Provide safe places for citizens to walk, engage in active healthy living pursuits, and enjoy nature.**
- **Protect the dark starry skies.**
- **Work with existing organizations, especially the school districts, to provide information to the residents about adult classes and lifelong learning and active living opportunities.**
- **Figure out how to coordinate and promote special events in Northern Chester County to maximize opportunities, resources, and participation in these events.** Coordinating schedules and activities could help to reduce duplication, create a critical mass of events that would result in major showcasing of the Northern Chester County region, and build awareness among the citizens. Establishing a regular schedule of anticipated events including, a few signature iconic events for the region, would be a great public benefit. Create opportunities for "experiences." The high interest in special events reflects the trend in which people are looking for "experiences" and ways to create memories with families and friends. Include Welkinweir and Crow's Nest program information in materials about parks and recreation opportunities in the region.
- **Ensure that local parks are great!** Fun, clean, and safe. Four out of five respondents indicated that they enjoy or are interested in playing or socializing in local parks. Plan for increased boat access on the Schuylkill River via the riverfront parks. Consider partnering with other organizations in offering instructional programs on non-motorized boating in which interested citizens can experience non-motorized boating and perhaps develop an interest in it.
- **Plan summer recreation programming enhancements.** Approximately 62 percent of the respondents would be interested in summer recreation programs for children. Focus on how to deliver the kinds and quality of programs and services the residents want.
- **There does not appear to be a pressing need for organized programs for school holidays or for summer camps.** However, nearly half of the respondents indicated that they would be interested in them. Such programs would be revenue-generating programs that could be considered in the future.

Question 2. What prevents you or members of your household from participating in recreational opportunities? *Circle all that apply.*



Interpretation

The major finding of this question is that nearly half of the respondents reported that not knowing about recreation opportunities is their chief block to participation. Typically, parks and recreation public opinion surveys yield "Too busy" at the number one block. While the responses of "Too busy" and "Family schedules are already filled with organized activities" had an expectedly high response of 45 percent and 27 percent, respectively, they still ranked behind "not knowing about them" as the main reason people do not participate in recreation opportunities.

Other blocks to participation are shown on page 36.

Implications

- **Create a "Go To" place where citizens can learn about recreation programs and activities available to them.**
- **Form a centralized clearinghouse for parks, recreation, and open space information.**
- **Strive to use an existing organization to form the clearinghouse and make the information available in a convenient and timely format.**

- **Tie the planning for creating a public awareness strategy to the findings of this survey and further exploration of citizen preferences by age group.** As shown in Question 11, respondents indicated their most preferred ways to get information about parks and recreation in Northern Chester County. The most preferred ways were on a Northern Chester County Web site, a Web site for each township, and newsletters mailed to the home. Since only one percent of the respondents were 18 to 24, methods of reaching younger age groups need to be considered.
- **Develop information about parks and recreation facility locations and distribution methods for this information.** Create a brief narrative of park descriptions. Add a legend for facilities and/or recreation opportunities that are available at each site. In addition to information about parks, include a trail map, trail head information, and locations for river access. Since it would be important to post this information on a Web site, consider making the park locations extremely easy to get to by adding a direction link to Mapquest.

Question 3. How often do you or members of your household use parks, sites, and recreation facilities in or near Northern Chester County? *Circle one response for each item.*

Table 3.
Percentage of Respondents Using Parks and Recreation Facilities in or near Northern Chester County

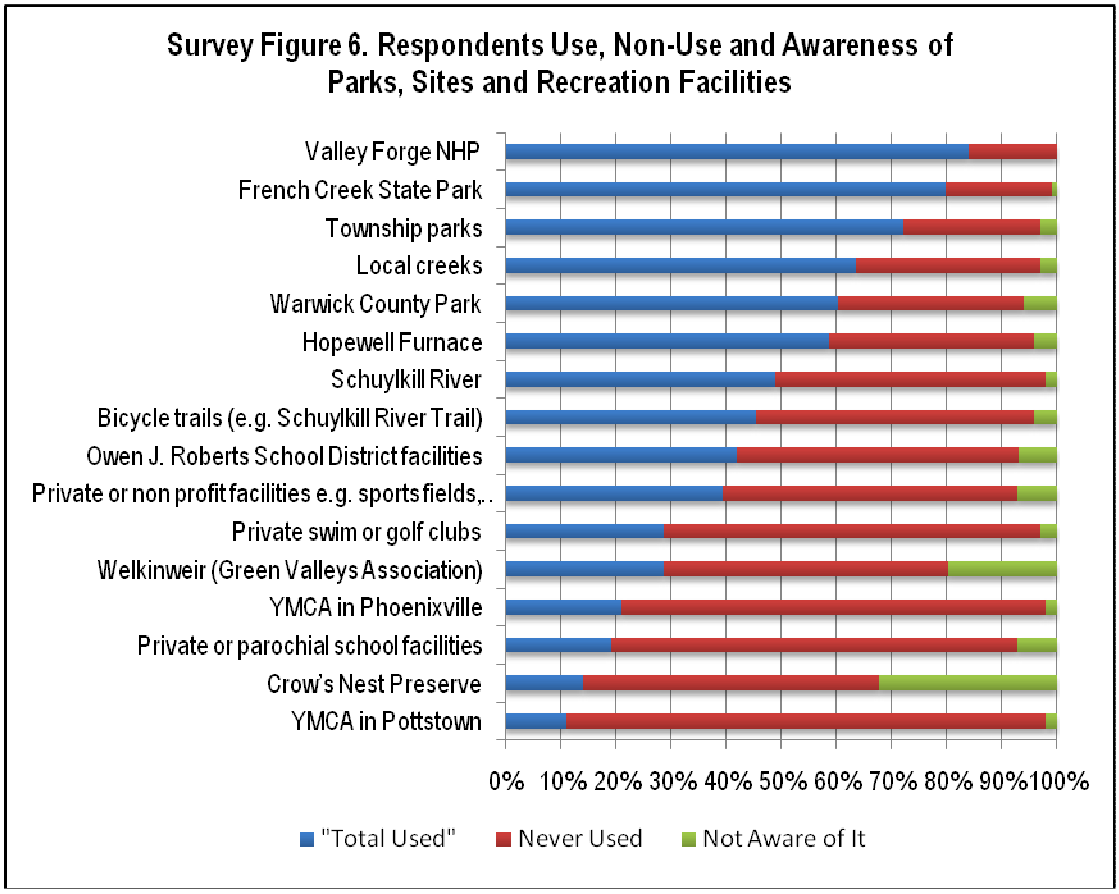
	Daily	Weekly	Seasonally	Occasionally	Total Use*	Never	Not aware of it	No Answer
Valley Forge NHP	1%	5%	21%	57%	84%	16%	0%	4%
French Creek State Park	.4	6	25	48	79	19	1	6
Township parks	3	12	17	41	73	25	3	8
Local creeks	3	6	17	37	63	33	3	9
Warwick County Park	.7	6	22	32	61	34	6	9
Hopewell Furnace NHS	0	1	14	43	58	37	4	7
Schuylkill River	.9	3	15	30	49	49	2	7
Bicycle trails (e.g., Schuylkill River Trail)	2	6	17	20	45	50	4	4
Owen J. Roberts School District facilities	4	5	6	27	42	51	7	7
Private or nonprofit facilities (e.g., sports fields, fitness facilities)	6	9	6	18	39	53	7	9
Private swim or golf clubs	1	7	9	12	29	69	3	10
Welkinweir (Green Valleys Association)	.4	1	8	20	29	52	20	10
YMCA in Phoenixville	3	3	3	12	21	77	2	9
Crow's Nest Preserve	.2	1	5	8	14	53	32	10
Private or parochial school facilities	2	2	3	12	19	73	7	9
YMCA in Pottstown	.2	1	1	9	11	86	2	10
Other results reported on page 37								

Interpretation

As shown in **Table 3**, the top six parks used by more than half of the respondents are Valley Forge NHP, French Creek State Park, the township parks, local creeks, Warwick County Park, and Hopewell Furnace NHS. The high use of the township parks and local creeks is an unexpectedly high finding, as in surveys such as this most respondents report using county parks more. Three out of four citizens report that they use township parks. The level of awareness of the parks, sites, and recreation facilities named was high overall with more than nine

out of ten respondents knowing about each facility except Welkenweir and Crow's Nest Preserve. Responses exceeded 100 percent due to respondents circling more than one response for use of each facility, such as circling "seasonally" along with another choice.

Figure 6 shows the combined total use, non-use, and level of awareness about parks, sites, and recreation facilities in or near Northern Chester County.



Implications

- **Consider the township parks an essential component of the way of life in Northern Chester County.** Township parks and recreation facilities are a major asset given the fact that three out of four people use them.
- **Promote the benefits of parks and recreation as a way to garner public support.** Parks improve the quality of life and help to build a sense of community, increase property values, protect the environment, preserve natural resources, and facilitate active healthy life styles.
- **Recognize that township parks and local creeks rank among the highest facilities used.** This is a significant finding. Plans for maintaining, improving, and informing the public about these facilities would be important.
- **Lack of awareness about the existence of the township parks themselves appears not to be an issue because of the high level of reported use.** Lack of awareness appears to be centered on programs, events, and recreation opportunities based upon the chief block to participation in recreation opportunities

being lack of awareness. The level of awareness about each township park is undetermined since the parks were not individually named in the survey.

Question 4. What township parks do you use for recreation other than organized sports? *Please print the names of the parks you use below.*

Each response was listed once. Numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of multiple responses.

Although this question asked for township park use, the respondents listed all parks used. This appears to validate the idea that people use parks regionally and that park ownership is irrelevant to them—they think regionally about parks and recreation. Many parks are outside of the Northern Chester County municipalities and even in Berks and Montgomery counties.

Parks Used for Activities Other than Organized Sports

(83 locations were named 509 times in responses)

1. Warwick County Park (106)
2. French Creek State Park (49)
3. Towpath Park (43)
4. Kimberton Community Park (36)
5. Valley Forge NHP (30)
6. Pine Creek Playground
7. Pine Creek (34) West Pikeland
8. Marsh Creek (19)
9. West Vincent Park* (16)
10. West Vincent Playground
11. Kieran St Park (16)
12. Reeves Park (12) Phoenixville
13. Hopewell Furnace NHS (10)
14. Manderack Playground (9)
15. Oaks – dog park (8)
16. Local roads for walking and cycling (8)
17. Schuylkill River Park (3)
18. Schuylkill River Trail (7)
19. Mountain biking (6)
20. Pottstown downtown, Riverfront Park (6)
21. We have enough large parks (6)
22. Fishing (6)
23. Camp Fernbrook (6)
24. Connie Batdorf Park (6)
25. Coventry Woods (6)
26. Charlestown Park (5)
27. Bell Tavern Park (4)
28. Blue Marsh (4)
29. East Vincent (4)
30. Evansburg (4)
31. Woody's Woods (4)
32. Livingood Park (Elverson) (4)
33. Natural Lands Trust – Binky Lee (4)
34. Spring City (4)
35. Spring City Pool
36. St. Peters (4)
37. Struble Trail (3)
38. Welkinweir (3)
39. West Pikeland (3)
40. Green Lane County Park (3)
41. Hickory Park (3)
42. Brandywine (3)
43. Horse-Shoe Trail (3)
44. Kerr Park Playground
45. Kerr Park (3)
46. OJR School District (2) tennis courts
47. Phoenixville Y (2)
48. Boat ramp (2)
49. Affordable free-use indoor recreation areas – private clubs too expensive
50. Allentown to bicycle, Sand Island Bicycle Trail, Rodale Park to bicycle
51. Crow's Nest
52. Eagleview
53. Bridge to Bridge Trail
54. Bicycle riding
55. Big Woods
56. East Coventry silt basins by the river
57. East Pikeland parks
58. Good Will
59. Griggs Mill
60. Have little knowledge of where to go to find out about parks
61. Kayaking

62. Laurels Preserve
63. Linfield River Park (Montco)
64. Lionville Parks
65. Lionville Youth Association (LYA)
66. Manatawny
67. Matthews Meadows
68. Monacacy Hill Berks County
69. Neighborhood for walking
70. Ontalaunee
71. Park in Chester Springs
72. Parks in Maryland
73. Perkiomen Trail
74. Pickering Grove Park
75. Phoenixville Marian Youth Club (PMYC) fields
76. Ridgelea Phoenixville
77. Ridley Creek State Park
78. Royersford
79. Schuylkill River Walk
80. Shamona Creek Park
81. Springton Manor
82. State Game Lands
83. Walk in West Chester Park
84. West Goshen Park
85. Don't use township parks because I don't know what they offer
86. Township parks prohibit active recreation – very sad for our children.

Question 5. How important do you think it is for your community to have the following types of facilities? ***Circle one response for each item.***

Table 4. Importance of Facility Types to the Survey Respondents

	Not Needed	Not Important	Neutral	Important	Extremely Important	No Answer
Large Parks with a mix of facilities with ball fields, game courts, playgrounds, and picnic areas for general use, league use, and recreation programs	7%	5%	17%	39%	32%	7%
Small close-to-home parks with game courts, play areas, paths, sitting areas, and scenic features	4	3	11	49	34	6
Nature reserves for walking, relaxation, and nature study	1	3	9	44	43	5
Outdoor sports center for leagues and spectator enjoyment	9	10	33	30	18	7
Greenways, linear corridors of green space for natural resource and animal conservation	2	3	12	36	47	6
Trail system, non-motorized for use by cyclists, horseback riders, and walkers/runners	2	3	10`	41	44	5
Balance of all of the above	3	3	12	41	41	13
Indoor recreation center – gym, fitness, indoor activities for all ages	8	7	29	35	21	7

Interpretation

As shown in **Table 4**, the major message of the respondents is that all park types are important here. Greenways, trails, and nature reserves are deemed extremely important compared with other facility types. Large parks, an outdoor sports center, and an indoor recreation center captured the largest rate of not important or not needed—but at a very low rate of 12 percent, 14 percent, and 15 percent, respectively. The two facilities that would require the most exploration and study, an outdoor sports center and an indoor recreation center, had the largest neutral responses of 33 percent and 29 percent. This is a positive finding indicating that this set of respondents has not formulated opinions about these facilities although about half or more think that they

are important or extremely important. In rank order, the respondents prefer small parks close to home (83 percent) to large parks (71 percent) and both reflect high levels of interest. The respondents view trail systems as important versus not important/not needed by a margin of 17 to 1. For every respondent that stated nature reserves are not important, 22 respondents said they are important.

Table 5. Important/Extremely Important Park Types of Respondents by Municipality

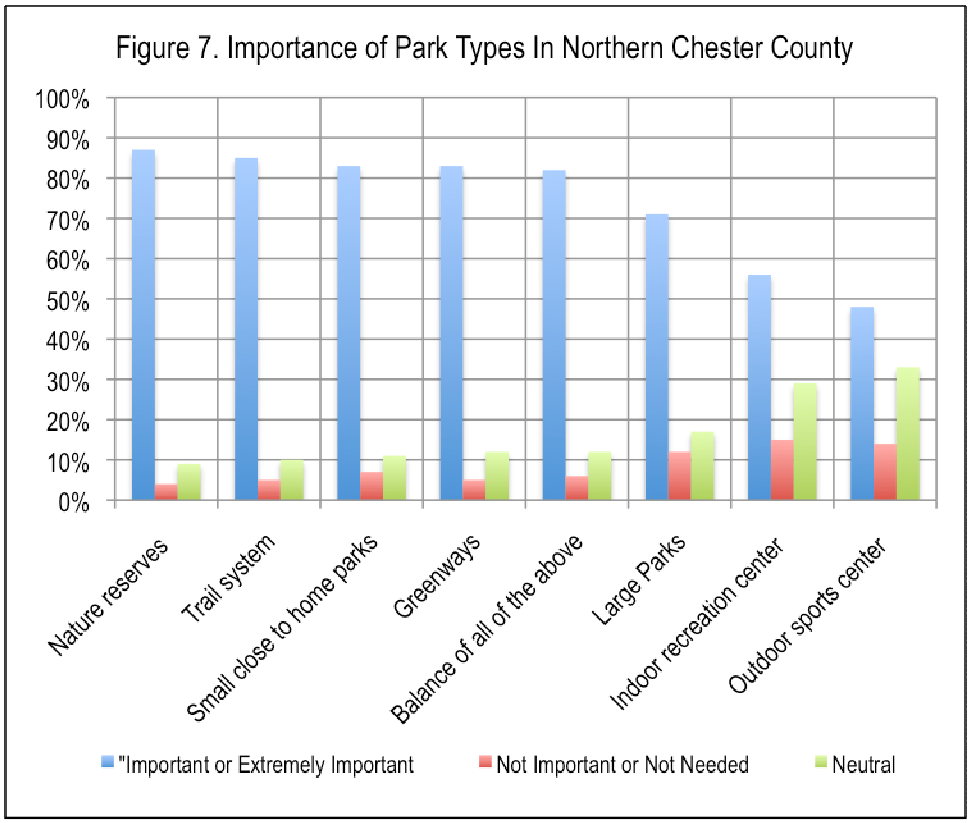
	All	E Coventry	E Nantmeal	E Pikeland	E Vincent	N Coventry	S Coventry	Warwick	W Pikeland	W Vincent
Nature reserves	**87%**	90%	**79%**	**85%**	88%	86%	81%	85%	**90%**	88%
Trail system	85%	88%	74%	82%	**89%**	81%	88%	**91%**	79%	**93%**
Small close-to-home parks	83%	**92%**	70%	83%	86%	83%	84%	76%	78%	92%
Greenways	83%	90%	70%	75%	74%	73%	78%	87%	81%	90%
Large parks	71%	69%	65%	76%	74%	75%	76%	67%	59%	75%
Outdoor sports center	48%	52%	29%	54%	45%	58%	69%	45%	30%	46%
Balance of all of the above	82%	78%	78%	78%	81%	**90%**	**96%**	76%	72%	82%
Indoor recreation center	56% 56%	63%	48%	66%	49%	62%	69%	49%	44%	57%

Table 5 presents the types of facilities that the respondents deemed important and extremely important. Note that findings in this table are not statistically valid due to the small number of respondents in each municipality. They present an indication of what is important to these respondents and that cannot be generalized to the township as a whole.

Figure 7 shows the importance of park types to the respondents according to how important or not important they are or if the respondent felt neutral about that particular park type. The chart is dramatic in presenting how important the respondents consider park types in Northern Chester County. Written comments indicate that people may feel that there are enough large parks in the area with Valley Forge NHP, French Creek State Park, Hopewell Furnace NHS, and Warwick County Park, and would like to see parks closer to home.

Implications

- **Focus on achieving a balance of nature-based facilities, trails, and smaller close-to-home parks with a variety of active recreation facilities.** This is important to about nine out of ten respondents.
- **Recognize that there appears to be support for both an indoor recreation center and an outdoor sports center.** The indoor recreation center was rated as important by 56 percent of the respondents while another 15 percent were neutral. For the outdoor sports center, 48 percent rated it as important with another 14 percent as neutral. The benchmark for moving ahead for public efforts that would require a vote is 61 percent. Both of these facility types are close to that mark. With effective outreach and education, the benchmark of 61 percent could be achieved. Both of these facilities would need a feasibility study to determine whether it is possible to plan, develop, operate, and support them in the long term.
- **Further explore the concept of smaller close-to-home parks in Northern Chester County.** Many factors need to be considered, such as: most people drive to use parks; the cost of maintenance of many small parks versus fewer large parks; the need for facilities that can be used for organized events, sports, and programs; and the desire of various jurisdictions to have parks located within their boundaries.



Question 6. What do you think about the availability of the following parks and recreation opportunities in your community? *Circle one response for each item.*

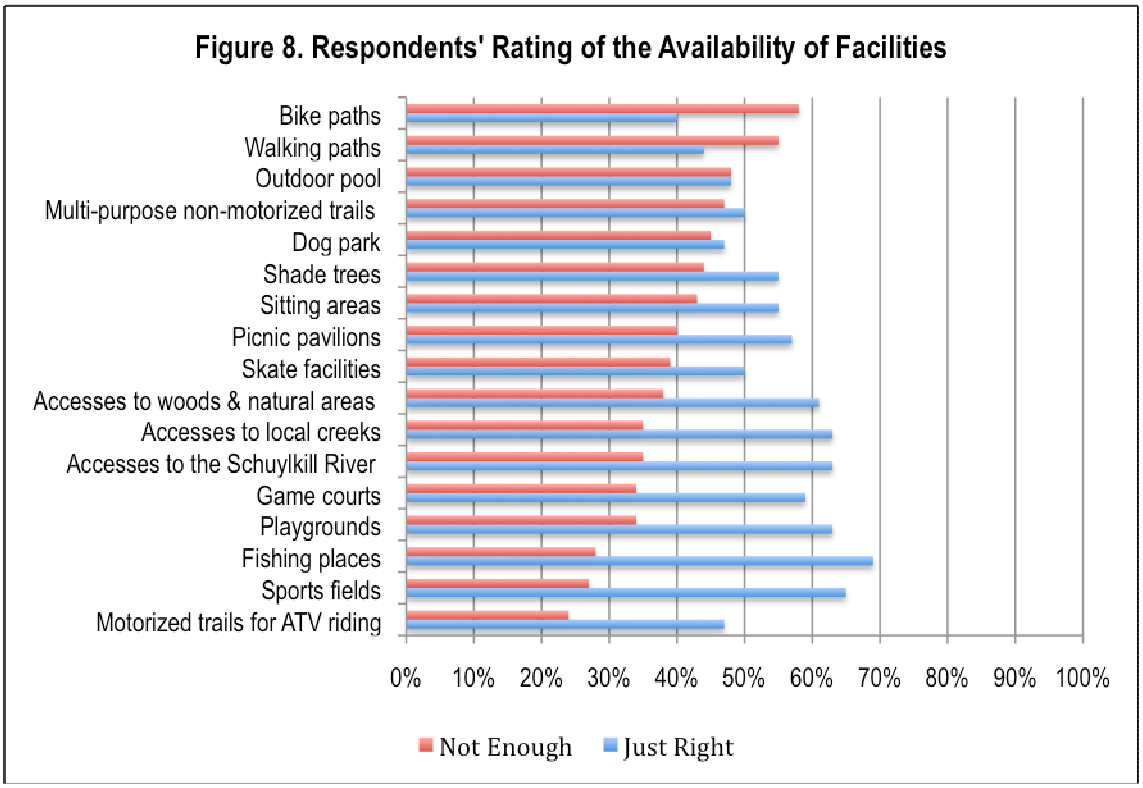
Table 6. Availability of Facilities

	Too Many	Just Right	Not Enough
Bike paths	2%	40%	58%
Walking paths	1	44	55
Outdoor pool	4	48	48
Multipurpose non-motorized trails – for horses, hiking	3	50	47
Dog park	8	47	45
Shade trees	1	55	44
Sitting areas	1	55	43
Picnic pavilions	2	57	40
Skate facilities for skateboards or in-line skating	11	50	39
Accesses to woods and natural areas	2	61	38
Accesses to the Schuylkill River	2	63	35
Accesses to local creeks	2	63	35
Playgrounds	3	63	34
Game courts	7	59	34
Fishing places	2	69	28
Sports fields	7	65	27
Motorized trails for ATV riding	29	47	24
Other results reported on page 38			

Interpretation

In **Table 6**, the responses show that the majority of the respondents perceive that there are enough facilities for a variety of recreation types, from a high of fishing places at 69 percent, to multipurpose non-motorized trails and skate facilities at 50 percent. Biking paths, walking paths, outdoor pools, dog parks, and motorized trails fell short of 50 percent. Bike paths (58 percent) and walking paths (55 percent) topped the "Not Enough" category. Motorized trails at 29 percent and skate facilities at 11 percent outweighed the other 15 facility choices by a large margin on the "Too Many" response.

Implications



- **Continue the concurrent work on proposed trails in Northern Chester County in developing the proposed bicycle pathways.**
- **Consider the three levels of bike path use in regional bicycle path planning to reach all levels of riders and enlist future generations of cyclists.** Type A: Advanced Bicyclists who are comfortable in most traffic situations, even arterial streets with high traffic volume. Type B: Basic Bicyclists who include adolescent cyclists and adults who ride only on occasion. This group is less comfortable operating a bicycle in the midst of heavy vehicle traffic, and instead desires greater protection from vehicular traffic than Type A. Type C: Child Bicyclists require substantial protection from motor vehicles, and often ride only with adult supervision. Child cyclists have the least amount of bicycling skill, and they often are unaware of the danger that their unpredictable behavior poses.
- **Offer educational programs to foster bicycle safety among cyclists and motorists.**
- **Add perimeter paths to the parks as well as loop trails within the parks.** For the public, adding paths and facilities would make parks more useful and could be the most important thing that would improve

the parks. The good news is that these are among the least expensive park improvements to maintain. Walking paths would serve most of the population throughout their lifetime and enable people to lead active healthy lifestyles. Install mile markers, seating, and water fountains. Provide restrooms in larger parks. Consider walking programs to stimulate active healthy lifestyles.

- **Continue planning to connect parks to neighborhoods, schools, shopping areas, business, and public transit via bike paths.** Connect local trails to regional trail networks for longer-distance cycling.
- **Work with the townships to support their efforts to secure the links needed, preferably before areas are developed.** Many communities are negotiating for trail links and actual paved paths in the land development process. Provide support for their efforts in establishing a mandatory dedication of parkland ordinance that would also cover trails.
- **Meld the feasibility study for an indoor recreation center with a swimming pool feasibility study.** Since outdoor pools ranked high in terms of needed facilities, it would be advisable to explore an outdoor pool in conjunction with a community center study. With the Northern Chester County climate, investing in a year-round facility may be a more sound decision. Research into another cold climate, Colorado, found that the two most-heavily-used months for indoor swimming pools there were January and July! Create a formalized public outreach program designed to inform the public about the facts and figures of an indoor recreation center. This should include construction and operating costs, revenues from municipal and non-municipal sources, offsetting operating costs with outside revenue sources, and the benefits of recreation centers for communities and individuals. Conduct a road tour of community recreation centers. Participants should include elected and appointed officials and key stakeholders.

Question 7. How likely would members of your household be to participate in recreation programs for the following groups? *Circle one response for each.*

Table 7. Program Interest According to Population Segments

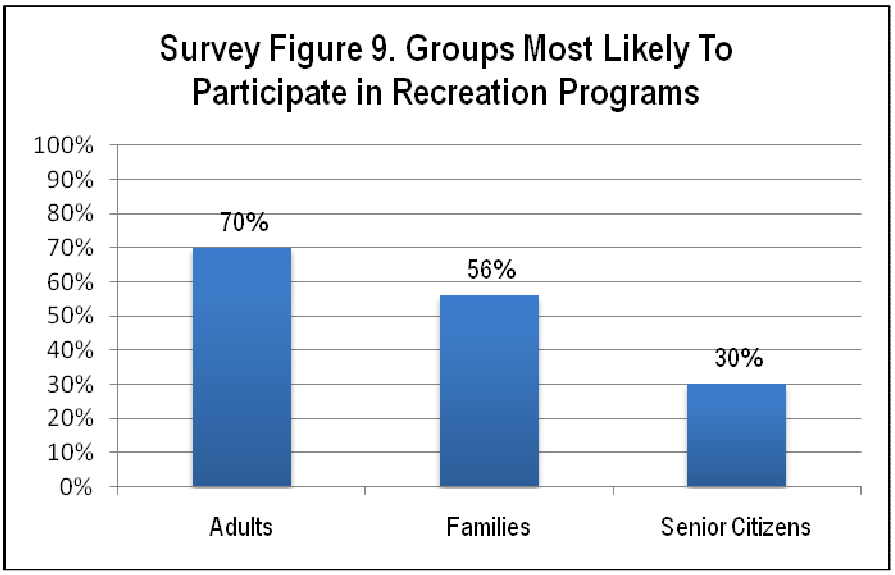
Programs for:	Very Likely	More Likely	LIKELY TOTAL	Less Likely	Not Likely	Not Applicable	No Answer
Adults	23%	47%	70%	10%	14%	7%	9%
Families	21	33	56	9	14	21	9
Elementary students	14	13	27	3	8	62	8
Middle school students	10	8	18	4	9	69	10
High school students	8	11	19	6	9	66	12
Senior Citizens	9	21	30	9	14	47	10
Pre-schoolers	10	7	17	2	9	72	10
People with disabilities	6	8	14	8	13	63	13

Interpretation

Table 7 depicts how likely different population groups would be to participate in recreation programs. **Figure 9** shows that recreation programs for adults and families are the most likely to generate participation from the community. These were named about two to two-and-a-half times more frequently than the next highest group of senior citizens. The children and youth categories came in at one out of four or fewer. It appears from the survey that respondents generally feel that children and youth have recreation program opportunities. Offering programs in the area of nature, programs in the parks, and fitness and wellness special events for adults and families would

respond to citizen preferences. Adult classes for recreation, lifelong learning, and skill development are likely to draw participants. The Owen J. Roberts Evening School is the major source of these opportunities.

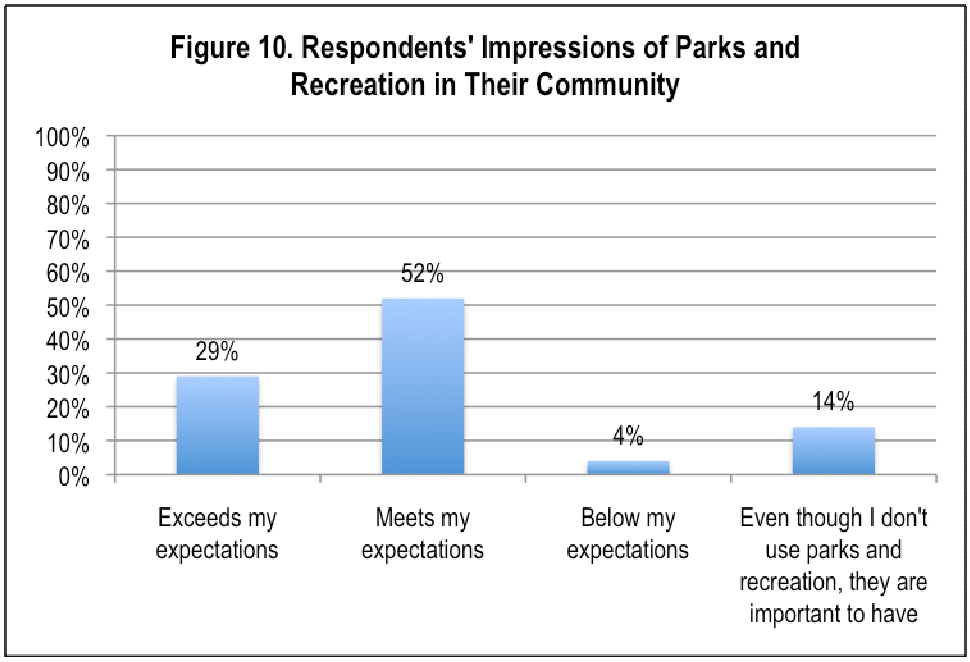
Implications



- **Work in partnership with other providers.** It may be possible for some of the municipal or other partners to take the lead on identified programs for target groups.
- **Focus on adults and families as the target group for recreation programs.** If Northern Chester County decides to establish a regional parks and recreation board, it will be important to work within the parameters of "not being all things to all people," focusing limited resources where they will have the most benefit.
- **Involve client groups in planning services.** Planning services for adults and families should be done through involvement with representatives of these groups in order to zero in on programs, schedules, hours, fees and charges, promotion and marketing, and identifying other factors that could affect participation. Use focus groups, an advisory committee, and interviews with citizens in planning services and facilities.
- **Focus on self-directed opportunities.** Self-directed recreation opportunities do not require staffing. They do require promotion of information about locations and facilities to potential participants. The self-directed recreational pursuits are also the activities that lead to energetic, socially-engaged, healthy lifestyles.
- **Provide information to adults and families on programs and activities.** Use Web sites as the primary vehicle.
- **Adopt a policy of cost recovery on programs and events.** Base the policy upon a hierarchy of participation, from broad community involvement benefitting the community at large, to the other end of the spectrum in which the activity involves a limited number of participants who solely benefit from the activity. Programs and activities that are open and benefit the community at large would be free and paid through by other means such as public and private sponsors. Programs that benefit an individual and require a higher level of staff or facility resources would require a user fee. Cost recovery and non-tax revenue generation will facilitate the provision of a growing number of recreation programs and services

from a range of participants. The level of "support" responses shown in Question 12 indicates that the respondents are willing to support a variety of ways to pay for parks and recreation.

Question 8. What is your overall impression about parks and recreation in your community? *Circle one response for each feature.*



Interpretation

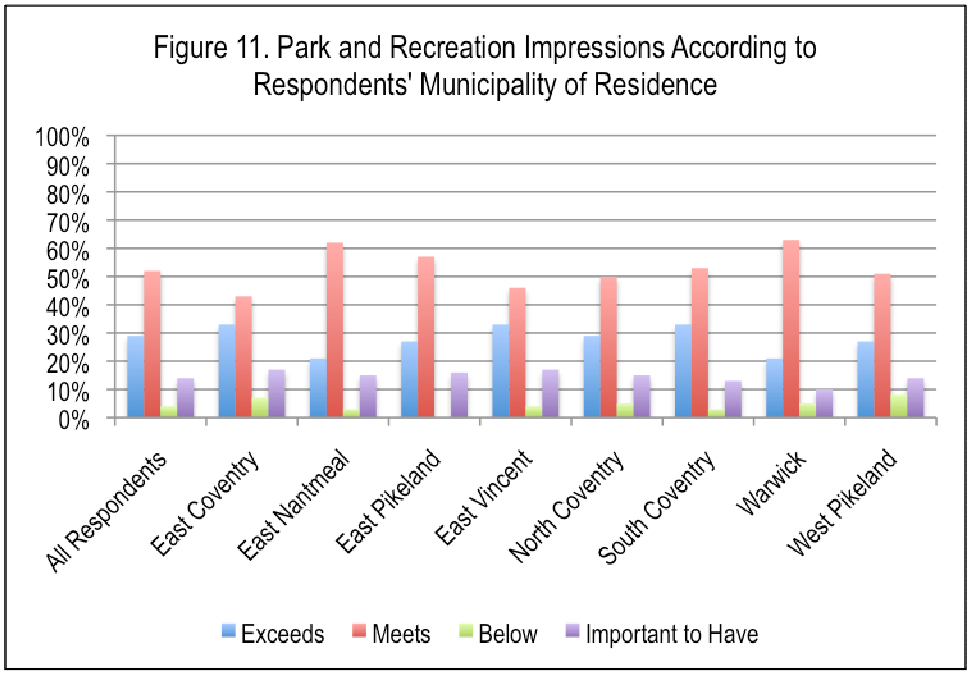
Figure 10 shows that 52 percent of the respondents reported that the parks in their community meet their expectations. This is about double the percentage of respondents (29 percent) who indicated that parks and recreation exceed their expectations in their community. Only four percent of the respondents indicated that parks and recreation fall below their expectations. **Table 8** presents respondents' impressions about parks and recreation according to age group and length of residence in Northern Chester County.

Figure 11 provides a comparison of how the respondents as a whole as well as from each municipality rated parks and recreation in their community. It would be safe to project that these respondents view parks and recreation as regionally available, as the respondents who live in municipalities without parks and recreation facilities rated parks and recreation similarly to respondents in municipalities with parks and recreation.

Table 8. Respondents' Impressions of Parks and Recreation According to Age and Length of Residence, Compared with Respondents as a Whole

	Exceeds	Meets	Below	Important to Have
All Respondents	**29%**	**52%**	**4%**	**14%**
Respondents 25 - 44	27%	59%	4%	10%
Respondents 45 - 64	32%	51%	4%	12%
Respondents 65+Years	25%	45%	4%	26%

Resident less than 5 Years	27%	54%	4%	14%
Resident 5 - 10 Years	24%	66%	0%	9%
Resident 10+ Years	30%	49%	5%	13%



Implications

- **Set a time frame and create a plan to improve parks and recreation to attain a 75 to 80 percent rating from the citizens indicating that parks and recreation exceeds their expectations.**
- **Provide the types of facilities and programs that the respondents desire.** Refer to the findings in Questions 5, 6, 7, and 11 regarding facilities, programs, client groups, and information. Park deficiencies appear to be related to the absence of the types of facilities that the respondents desire. Prioritize improvements according to the public's wishes. Fold in the needs of community organizations that provide important public recreation services. Create a five- to seven-year plan for capital improvements.
- **Explore how to provide indoor recreation facilities and involve the citizens in a transparent planning process with a high level of public outreach**. Link the exploration of an indoor center with the study of an outdoor pool.

Question 9. If we could do ONE THING to improve parks and recreation in Northern Chester County, what would you want that to be? *Please print your response below.*

Categories were generated based upon the 387 responses. The categories included: Awareness, Facilities, Trails, Conservation, Maintenance, Security, Programs and Activities, and Support. Each response was listed once. Numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of multiple responses.

Awareness (52 responses)

- More information about activities and all that is available. (5)
- Publicize available opportunities. (3)
- Awareness – not sure everyone knows what is available. (4)
- Advertise where all nature centers are within a 20-mile radius.
- Information – we just moved here and never received anything about nearby parks or recreation facilities.
- Try to use existing facilities better through creating more awareness.
- Advertise parks.
- More information about what is available – where, when, and times.
- Comprehensive guide on available facilities including trails.
- Flow of information: create one centralized place for all parks in Northern Chester County to get information on events, programs, etc.
- Make people more aware of these resources and their accessibility.
- Make everyone aware of the existence of parks and their facilities. They are not easy to find.
- Better communication to where the parks are.
- Advertise to local people.
- Advertise through mailing family activities.
- Better communication of existing programs.
- More awareness about the parks and what is offered.
- Information, information, information – what, where, community involvement, ownership, info about all of its upkeep, benefits, future generations.
- Better publicity and access to it.
- Improved communication.
- Communicate programs that are available to the public.
- New families and families with pre-schoolers need more information.
- Communicate information to new residents about parks.
- Send out information on what each park offers: parks, trails, biking.
- Awareness – have recently moved to area and have found parks only by accident.
- Publicize existing resources better.
- More notice about programs – mostly learn about them afterwards.
- Highlight facilities we do not know about like Welkinweir and Crow's Nest
- Hold activities of high interest at the parks to entice members of the community to use them.
- I would like to know where and when more activities take place in our area.
- Have people know about them.
- More information on special events.
- One centralized place of information about parks and recreation.
- Advertise more – use signs and local newspapers.
- Improve communication regarding available programs and locations of parks.
- Too much research is required to find out where parks and recreation activities are available – improve access by advertising the types of facilities available.
- Make sure community is aware of park locations.
- Public information about locations and availability of recreation facilities.
- Better and more communication about what is available and where.
- More awareness

Facilities (142 Responses)

- Dog park. (13)
- Dogs aren't allowed in all parks so I drive my dogs to other areas so they can run.
- Build more parks. (11)
- Add restrooms and improve (9) – decent, clean, nicer, more of them, toilet access.
- More sports fields. (8)
- Tennis courts. (7)
- Tennis courts at Warwick County Park.
- More and better playgrounds. Warwick County Park playground is good but all others are too small. It's why people go to Manderack. (7)
- More local parks with ball fields and sports fields. (5)
- Water fountains. (3)
- More soccer fields. (3)
- Lacrosse fields.
- Limit playing fields.
- More parks and recreation.
- More facilities including game courts, restrooms
- More active recreation – ball fields, tennis courts, bike trails.
- Allow dogs.
- More accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Family facilities at all parks.
- Nothing – parks are beautiful!
- Fine the way they are.
- Outdoor facilities for concerts, movies, and special events.
- Let runners and walkers have access to local school facilities. I pay $6,000 in taxes and have no access.
- Indoor community recreation center.
- Bleachers in Connie Badorf Park.
- Make sure the parks are saved.
- More places to sit for the handicapped.
- More parks convenient for people with animals.
- RV Park.
- More tables, benches, and lights for night outings.
- More places to sit and enjoy scenery.
- More facilities.
- Camping and hunting.
- More hunting and fishing access.
- Better access to the Schuylkill for fishing.
- More parks open to hunting.
- Continue to create more facilities.
- Add more parks so the ones we have aren't so crowded.
- Have a variety of special facilities developed by municipalities in their parks but offered regionally.
- Do not make any more parks. I don't think the locals use them as much as outsiders do.
- More walking, biking, exercise, fitness, tennis, and swimming.
- Open to all outdoor activities.
- A park that can be used at night for activities and serenity – not closed at dark.
- Expand facilities and access.
- Expand and maintain existing parks.
- Take the toxic off-gassing tire chips out of Warwick Park! We will not go there because it smells and is dangerous for kids.
- Add lakes.
- More picnic areas.
- Clean them up and make more parks.
- More large parks with lots to do for all.
- Keep parks small – no monster parks. Prefer rural and natural venue.
- Public swimming with open space for hiking and enjoying nature.
- A park with access to the Schuylkill River.
- Skate Park.
- Not interested in skateboard parks because it draws trouble, would be better to keep them for walking and relaxation and water access.
- More parks in North Coventry for the young and old.
- Not in East Nantmeal.
- Parks closer to my home.
- Avoid the noisy, dense, sloppy – strive for quiet.
- More areas to sit and socialize outdoors.
- Pavilions.
- Backboard at courts in West Vincent Township Park.
- Build a soccer field in Warwick Township.
- More active recreation areas in West Pikeland.
- Build a large park with a variety of facilities for in-line skating, biking, benches, and an area for doggies.
- Put a ball field in each new development.
- Spread baseball parks all over instead of just one place.
- Our area needs more sports fields especially soccer fields.
- Separate ball fields from other types of outdoor recreation use
- More overnight opportunities.

- Design or re-design a park with beautiful wide open views of the Schuylkill River.
- Do not light parks.
- Light the parks.
- Tie housing development to new park development.
- Do not have multiple entrances.
- More variety.

Trails (81 Responses)

- More biking/walking/hiking trails. (16)
- More riding trails. (8)
- Bike lanes along roads. (4)
- ATV trails (3) - for responsible adult riders.
- More nature reserves with trails.
- Connectivity.
- Add sidewalks and bike & jogging lanes. Many residents use vehicles for short commutes because of lack of planning and are in potentially dangerous situations. Township and builders did not plan well.
- Sidewalls connecting to trails.
- Sidewalks so my younger children can ride a bike to a park without a need for an adult to drive them there.
- Maps of trails.
- Nature walking.
- Preserve and maintain trail easements (non-motorized for horses) and greenways (use same spaces).
- Continue path along Schuylkill in Spring City.
- More walking paths near East Pikeland.
- Schuylkill River areas are **not** safe, too many perverts!
- Connect to Schuylkill Trail.
- Safer way to walk or cycle on state highways especially Route 401.
- Better marked and groomed trails at Woody's Woods.
- Finish the bike trail.
- Place walking trails out in the open rather than in the woods so that females walking alone don't have to worry about their safety.
- Walking paths in rural areas.
- Signage on trails and near trails.
- Explain that trail use is for non-motorized vehicles. There is no place for dirt bikes or ATVs in our township and they jeopardize trail use.
- Better-labeled trails.
- Allow mountain biking.
- More horse trails for fox chasing.
- Horse driving trails.
- More trails for off-street hiking and biking.
- Create walking trails that connect different points.
- Design a bike trail through the county that is safe and used for walking, biking, dog walking, and riding horses.
- Improve river trails.
- Build a linked and integrated bike/walking/hiking path system.
- More hiking trails.
- Clearly-labeled trails and maps of trails.
- Walking and bike trails and dogs permitted all hooked together.
- More places for my son to ride his bike safely in East Coventry. [Son appears to be an adult rider.]
- Soft surface trail/path for running and cycling and cross-country skiing.
- Create more non-motorized tails that connect parks, historic, and cultural institutions.
- More nature trails.
- More hiking.
- Make pedestrian connections between parks and where people live.
- Add more and safer bike paths.
- More walking and jogging trails other than the Schuylkill River.
- More walking trails to avoid walking on roads. More trails placed closer to more homes for recreational walks.
- Improved trails for bikes and running.
- Have sidewalks on back roads.
- Bike lanes.
- Extend paths to connect various trails clearly and clearly mark trails with colored lines-of-sight markers.
- More walking paths with sitting areas.
- Connect recreation areas with walking paths and make them safe for bikes.

Conservation (50 Responses)

- Preserve open space, land, and habitats. (6)
- More preserved green spaces left undeveloped. (5)
- Less development, less construction. (5)
- Easy access to woods and natural areas. (3)
- Leave it natural. (3)
- Save small farms, stop development.
- Open space, green space, preservation, land, and historic buildings.
- More open space with hunting opportunities.
- More trees.
- Keep parks natural – we don't need expensive improvements.
- Low population density.
- More wilderness areas.
- Preserve open space so we can add parks later.
- Large arboretum with walking trails.
- Quiet space away from roads, parking, stores.
- Get rid of geese.
- Stock more birds and rabbits.
- Would love a nature reserve like McKaig in Upper Merion Township.
- Add more well-maintained nature parks and trails that are non-motorized.
- More peaceful spots without loud organized sports.
- More emphasis on nature.
- More land conservation.
- Seek conservation easements.
- Add a nature reserve.
- Make sure there are plenty of natural parks for walking and sitting to enjoy nature.
- Nature reserves away from the noise of ball fields and highways.
- Since our county is still rural, I view parks, ball fields, game courts, etc., as sprawl.
- We are very happy with our parks and use them often.

Maintenance (21 Responses)

- Maintain the parks! (3)
- Cleanliness. (5)
- Pest control.
- Keep parks clean and safe.
- It's so overgrown along streams you can't fish.
- Improve care and amenities.
- Keep them cleaner.
- Keep the parks we have and keep them maintained.
- Spray for ticks.
- Trash clean up and safety.
- Better facility maintenance.
- Change out all synthetic plastic materials for cedar wood – use no toxic materials.
- More facilities and operation support.

Activities and Programs (26 Responses)

- Activities that would appeal to retired people. (3)
- More things for children under six years.
- More free activities for children.
- More activities for adults.
- More activities.
- Music and bands.
- More things for people like summer camps.
- Set up canoe and kayak liveries for day use. Start in Reading and finish in Pottstown or Pottstown to Valley Forge.
- Add small sections of stocked streams for kid fishing only.
- Organized outdoor activities.
- More organized recreation activities.
- Promote quieter activities that gentle the soul.
- Increase opportunities for environmental education for ALL family members.
- Put kids' needs above horses.
- Access for deer hunting.
- Increase the variety of activities in parks.
- More history about the area and more info on nature.
- More organized activities – play groups, craft classes, etc.
- Have free game nights and a fair.
- More special events and community days.
- More music fairs.
- July 4th fireworks.
- Provide affordable summer sports.

Security (9 Responses)

- Access to park ranger via cell phone especially at Camp Fernbrook.
- No loitering.
- Keep out the undesirables. Hard to do but they wreck it for us.
- My total concern is security safeguards.
- Use signage to let people know when they are breaking the rules. Strictly enforce and take action so that people know that breaking the rules is not a joke. Impose a fine.
- Have a police patrol.
- Visible security people.
- Add security guards to some of the parks as some of them are isolated.
- Ensure safety!

Support (6 Responses)

- Keep cost down.
- Stop the needless spending for the benefit of a few.
- More operating support.
- Cooperation among townships to share resources for active recreation.
- Reduce the tax burden.
- No tax increase.

Because questions 10 and 11 are so closely related, the responses, interpretation of the responses, and implications are reported together below the results of Question 11.

Question 10. How aware are you and members of your household about the following? *Circle one response for each item.*

Table 9. Respondents' Awareness About Parks and Recreation Elements

	Fully Informed	Would like to Know More	Not Aware
Parks in the area	36%	57%	6%
Trails for cycling	24	50	26
Recreation facilities	27	58	15
Recreation programs, events, and services	19	63	18
Where to get information about parks and recreation	20	63	17

Question 11. How would you prefer to get information about parks and recreation in Northern Chester County? *Circle one response for each item.*

Table 10. Respondents' Preferences for Getting Information about Parks and Recreation

	Most Preferred	Somewhat Preferred	Not Preferred
One Web site for your township	48%	30%	21%
One Web site for all townships in Northern Chester County	51	30	20
Owen J. Roberts School District Web site	14	25	61
Facebook, Twitter, or other social media	6	11	83
E-mails by topics of interest to you	25	26	49
Newsletters mailed to your home	48	27	28
Local newspapers	28	31	41
Handouts and fliers	20	28	52

Interpretation

The responses in Question 10 clearly indicate that most respondents would like to know more about parks, trails, programs, recreation facilities, and where to go to get information about parks and recreation, as shown in **Table 9**. Awareness about parks is higher than awareness about the kinds of recreation facilities and programs that would be offered in them. While trails are the top desired recreation facility, only 24 percent feel fully informed about trails. Another 26 percent say they are unaware of trails and fully one in two would like to know more. Therefore, three out of four survey respondents want to learn more about trails. Those who would like to know where to go to get information about parks and recreation outnumber respondents who feel fully informed by a margin of more than three to one. Recreation programs, services, and events are the elements of parks and recreation of which respondents are least aware. Correspondingly, not knowing about recreation opportunities was identified in Question 2 as the chief reason that prevents respondents from participating.

In Question 11, the respondents evaluated each way of getting information. **Table 10** shows the respondents' preferred sources for information. When asked how they preferred to get information about parks and recreation in Northern Chester County, 81 percent preferred being able to go to one Web site for all of Northern Chester County. One Web site for each township came in next with a 78 percent response. About 75 percent of respondents indicated that a newsletter mailed to the home was preferred. Not preferred were the social media of Facebook, Twitter, and the like; the Owen J. Roberts School District Web site; or e-mails. Local newspapers garnered only 41 percent of preferred responses. It is important to note that 73 percent of the survey respondents were age 45 and older. This is an age group less involved with social media than younger age groups. If more younger people had responded and in younger age groups, it is likely that social media may have been more highly preferred.

Implications

- **Provide parks and recreation regionally in Northern Chester County.** One of the most important findings of the survey was the respondents' preference for getting information about parks and recreation from one Web site for all of Northern Chester County.
- **Plan, launch, and manage a Web site for parks and recreation in Northern Chester County.** Provide links to this site from township Web sites and related Web sites from other parks and recreation providers, the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Chester County Parks Department, the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, Welkinweir, Crow's Nest Preserve, the school districts, private and parochial schools, day care centers, senior centers, the Brandywine and Valley Forge Convention and Visitors' Bureaus, and a host of others to be identified.
- **Strive to get a partner to work collaboratively in the planning, development, and management of a Web site for parks and recreation.** An example of a potential partner could be Chester Springs Surrounds. It is important to note that Web sites must be as "close to the customer" as possible.
- **Invest in this Web site as a primary function of parks and recreation in Northern Chester County.** Ensure that the Web site is updated in real time if possible. While this is a cost, the investment resulting in citizens participating more in recreation opportunities will yield great benefits to the citizens and the community. Use the fact that respondents said they prefer one Web site in Northern Chester County for this information.
- **Create and carry out a program to advertise and promote the Web site as the "go to" source of parks and recreation information in the community.**

- **Explore the use of social media among younger age groups.** Once the Web site is in place, the second order of business in getting information out to potential parks and recreation participants is reaching younger age groups through continually-evolving social media networks.

Question 12. Supporting parks and recreation needs to come from a variety of public and private sources. What would you be willing to do to support parks and recreation? *Circle all that apply.*

Table 11. Support for Parks and Recreation

Choice	Response Rate
Pay additional municipal taxes annually for parks and recreation	54%
Consider paying another $2-$4 per person in municipal taxes annually.	*29%*
Consider paying another $3-$5 per person in municipal taxes annually.	*25%*
Pay to use special types of facilities that require high maintenance	39%
Pay user fees to participate in programs	38%
Join a park friends group as a dues-paying member	15%
I would not support anything for parks and recreation increase.	5%
I need more information.	31%

Table 12.
Willingness to Support Additional Sources for Parks and Recreation
According to Demographic Characteristic

	Pay to use special facilities	Pay $2-4 more in taxes	Pay $3-5 more In taxes	Total willing to pay more in taxes	Pay Park Friends' Dues
All Respondents	39%	29%	25%	54%	15%
Respondents 25-44	35%	34%	31%	65%	16%
Respondents 45-64	42%	31%	27%	58%	16%
Respondents 65+ Years	38%	23%	21%	44%	11%
Male respondents	38%	32%	30%	52%	14%
Female respondents	42%	29%	22%	51%	16%
Resident under 5 Years	40%	31%	19%	50%	11%
Resident 5-10 Years	39%	34%	34%	68%	8%
Resident 10+ Years	41%	28%	24%	52%	19%

Interpretation

Even in a recession and with a pervasive anti-tax sentiment among the public, 54 percent of the survey respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay another $2-$4 or $3-$5 annually in municipal taxes for parks and recreation. Most respondents were willing to pay a mix of methods to support parks and recreation. Only five percent of the respondents said they would not support anything for parks and recreation as indciated in **Table 11**. **Table 12** shows the responses according to age group and length of residence.It appears that those most supportive of paying for parks and recreation with taxes are people in the family-raising life stage and those who have lived here for five to ten years. The least willing to support parks and recreation are those age 65 and older.

About one in three indicated that they need more information. This finding corresponds to the lack of awareness and wanting to know more about parks and recreation opportunities as seen in Question 10.

Implications

- **Provide information to the public about the costs and investment value of parks, recreation, and open space in the community.** Promote the benefits of parks, recreation, and open space. Use facts derived from Northern Chester County wherever possible, then southeastern Pennsylvania, thirdly Pennsylvania, and then other locales. This could include real estate values, local spending, natural resource conservation efforts, and so on. An example includes: The York Heritage Rail Trail generates over $4 million in local economic benefit annually. Recreation programs deter crime and juvenile delinquency. Open space conservation increases property values.
- **Direct municipal tax funds toward land, facilities, and programs that benefit the general public.**
- **Recognize that the residents have generously supported open space conservation.** Survey findings indicate that the citizens are very interested in recreational activities in which they also enjoy nature: walking, cycling, and playing in parks. The "Your Turn" comments included references to spending a lot of money on open space and not being able to use it for recreation as being a problem.
- **Institute a cost recovery program for special programs and events.** Adopt a fees and charges system if organized, scheduled recreation programs are held in Northern Chester County, in which the programs and special-use facilities benefit individual pursuits or facilities that require higher costs for maintenance, based upon use by individuals or organized groups. Some use by organized groups is a mix of benefitting individuals and the community at large by the nature of the service provided, in terms of benefits such as youth development, fitness, wellness, and the environment. In those cases, special policies and partnership arrangements could be developed for sharing operational costs.
- **Use this information to develop plans and make decisions about parks, recreation, and open space to benefit the community.** Continue to have public conversations about methods of paying for parks and recreation through a mix of public and private resources.
- **Recognize and work with the reality of the high tax situation in the region.** The conundrum is that tax levels are high overall but municipal investment is parks and recreation is low. Furthermore, the demographics of this community would indicate that the parks and recreation system should be premier in keeping with the quality of life in an area of this caliber. Anti-tax sentiment appears to be focused on school taxes.
- **Recognize that pooling resources regionally will yield a higher level of parks and recreation than many entities operating alone.** Given the level of support indicated in this survey, another $2-5 per person in this region would have a marked effect on public recreation opportunities.
- **Develop a revenue strategy that includes a mix of resources including taxes, fees and charges, partnerships, sponsorships, fundraising, grants, gifts, bequests, leases, and concessions.** Partnerships and strategic alliances are key aspects of most successful parks and recreation systems. Neither Northern Chester County as a whole nor each of its municipalities alone can be expected to provide all the financial support required for a parks and recreation system befitting the region. Create a 10-year funding plan for parks and recreation capital improvements. Update this plan when significant plans are established for major initiatives such as a trail system, an indoor recreation center if feasible, and major park and recreation facility improvements and development.

Open Ended Question: Your Turn!
Please use this space to add your comments.

Interpretation

Your Turn generated 105 written comments from survey respondents. The specific comments of the respondents are shown in pages 46-51 of this report.

Implications

The comments were favorable and appreciative of the efforts of the Northern Federation and the municipalities in parks and recreation. The list has concrete suggestions for items that could be considered. Responses are included at the end of section VIII, below.

VII. Volunteers

Survey respondents were asked to indicate if they would be interested in volunteering for parks and recreation initiatives. Twenty-one percent of the respondents, totaling 110 people, completed the questionnaire regarding helping out with parks and recreation. The Northern Federation can use this information as a source of new volunteers. The list of volunteers is being provided as a separate document to the Director for privacy reasons.

VIII. Open-Ended Questions

Responses to questions that contained open-ended questions are listed on the following pages.

Question 1. Other Programs or Activities of Interest

Each response was listed once. Numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of multiple responses.

Activities or Interests (33 responses)

- Mountain biking (2)
- Dog parks (2)
- Walking dogs
- Dog-friendly parks
- Active recreation opportunities
- Longer trail network
- Recreation resources such as the Schuylkill River and the county property are underutilized.
- Walking – bicycle trails
- I do many of these things – just not here.
- Camping
- Horseback riding and hunting with the hounds
- Pick-up games in township parks
- Keep character of East Coventry and surrounding areas and maintaining trail access for horses
- Living history and re-enactments
- Moved to East Coventry to enjoy dark starry skies – now too much light pollution – lost 20-30 degrees of horizon to lights.
- Concerts and plays in local areas
- More nature trails
- Craft workshops
- Need a park to roller blade and bike in
- RV camping
- Camping
- Skiing
- Use playgrounds
- Looking for companies that rent canoes and kayaks by day or weekend on the Schuylkill River.
- Roller blading
- Ice skating
- Breathing clean air and enjoying the natural landscapes
- Use the town path
- Target shooting
- This area needs more sports fields. Growth has been huge and facilities have not kept pace.
- Paint ball

Question 2. Blocks to Participation

Each response was listed once. Numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of multiple responses.

Blocks to Participation (59 responses)

- T
- oo old and not in best of health. (11)
- DON’T KNOW ABOUT WHAT’S GOING ON (5)
- Nothing (5)
- I have lived here my entire life of 44 years and have never had a problem finding recreation.
- Where are the ACTIVE RECREATION PARKS?
- Lack of active facilities
- We are already active
- Child isn’t old enough for sports now but will likely participate.
- Kids too young*
- Currently working two jobs and don’t have free time.
- Am on disability and don’t get out much.
- Senior Citizen.
- Can’t take dogs to park – afraid of Lyme bugs.
- Forget.
- No sidewalks or biking paths
- No bike path and roads are dangerous
- I frequently participate in all kinds of programs but grandchildren take me to

Morgantown and Chadds Ford areas to do so!
- Mostly don't know about them. Not enough notice is given and other things get scheduled.
- Never know about them!
- There are more good programs than days in the week
- No indoor pool
- Trail access that used to exist for horseback riding since the 1970s is being destroyed by development. Need future development to keep perimeters clear of trails through easements or other ways.
- Children are grown and grandchildren live elsewhere
- Must work to pay taxes to county and township which double about every three years.
- Work days and weekends and have schedule conflicts
- Need info on township parks
- Don't care
- Not interested
- Facilities we use here are poor quality
- I have a lot of interests but not a lot of time. But I am glad they are there for others especially the children.
- Not around 4-6 months of the year
- Children not interested
- Travel
- Only way to find out is county flyer at the county park
- Things are too kid-centered which does not interest me
- Not enough activities for adults without children
- Do many of the activities listed but elsewhere and would love to do them in our own community!
- Live at the beach in summer and too old and cold to play in winter
- We do not have PARKS – we have ball fields. We do have good people working on making our parks green and pleasant for everyone!
- No bike path
- Where are the county's tennis backboards?

Question 3. Other Parks and Recreation Facilities Used

Each response was listed once. Numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of multiple responses.

Other Park and Recreation Facilities Used (23 named)

- Lionville Y (3)
- Lionville Y for swimming
- Public golf courses (2)
- Cemeteries for walking
- Dog parks
- Downingtown & Great Valley HS tracks
- Elverson Y
- Geocaching areas
- Hunting
- Marsh Creek
- Morgantown Y
- Pine Creek Park
- Public golf courses that allow kids
- Public tennis courts
- High School tennis courts
- Royersford Y
- Wild edges of business parks
- PA State Gamelands #43

Question 6. Other Parks and Recreation Facility Availability

Each response was listed once. Numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency of multiple responses.

Respondents answered this question by pointing out the need for additional facilities including the following. (26 responses)

- More hunting (6)
- Dog park (4)
- Active recreation facilities: bike trails, ball fields, and tennis courts grouped together for active facilities
- Sprinkler park for little kids
- Linear parks
- Outdoor concert facility
- Ice skating rink
- Outdoor shooting range
- Trails with a soft surface
- Tennis courts
- Preserve land for future generations to make decisions about what to put there
- Place to walk dogs
- Community gardens
- Horse driving trails
- Natural gardens
- Sidewalks

"Your Turn" Open-Ended Comment Question

Northern Chester County Public Opinion Survey "Your Turn Comments"		
Source/ Municipality		**Comment**
Meeting Survey	1.	Start promoting Share the Road programs for bikers/walkers/cars. Start promoting alternative transportation for commuting to work – bike lanes etc. Expand the vision beyond recreation, think sustainability, grant funding
East Coventry	2.	Glad to hear about it!
East Coventry	3.	75 years old. Widowed. Family grown up and moved out. Both hips replaced in a year.
East Coventry	4.	We need more open space for its own sake not because it affords another organized activity use.
East Coventry	5.	Lifelong resident now raising a family with a spouse who used to run in the Valley Green and misses it.
East Coventry	6.	My family would like to use more of the walking/biking trails and organized sports leagues but we are now unaware of their existence. Do take advantage of the parks we are aware of – there is nothing better that to get children outside.
East Coventry	7.	Ridden here since 1975 (referring to horses)
East Coventry	8.	Reduce spending vs. increasing taxes/fees!
East Coventry	9.	Who in their right mind would not like to see everything noted happen if the money was there to pay for it but nothing should happen if taxes have to be raised – Seniors are trying desperately to hold on to their properties and live and die with dignity rather than be on the taxpayers (government rolls). Seniors have done their share. If the young want these for their families it's theirs to pay.
East Coventry	10.	Our family has been farming this area for more than 100 years. Now cemeteries are the only

Northern Chester County Public Opinion Survey "Your Turn Comments"		
Source/ Municipality		**Comment**
		quiet place to go. If you want parks and recreation, put a leash on developers that have already raped this area. While you're at it, put a lid on Owen J's taxes.
East Coventry	11.	I think current parks are great but (more) could be done to fully utilize the space. Bring park to East Coventry area. Thank You!
East Coventry	12.	I believe open space should try to be kept. Farmers are selling off property. Children and teens need places to go and opportunities for a variety of different recreations. Nature should be enjoyed and respected. I enjoy my time with my nine year old when we go to the park and fishing.
East Coventry	13.	East Coventry seems to move very slowly. Almost no news is good news. Two examples are Pizza World property and East Coventry Pool, Fickes Lock and 724 – two eyesores. Dumping ground for DECADES. Also miles of bike paths east of the township and west of the township but no access in East Coventry.
East Coventry	14.	Would like to see a place to go ATV riding and more areas to hunt or just be able to take a hike.
East Coventry	15.	Thank you for asking for our opinion!
East Coventry	16.	Your Hard work is really appreciated
East Coventry	17.	This is an attractive area. There are lots of rec area ballparks, trails, etc. At our ages of over 70, I still like to walk, hike and canoe
East Nantmeal	18.	Thanks for this opportunity. We enjoy our local parks very much. Our son attends Camp Hill Special School and they frequent all parks and feel welcome.
East Nantmeal	19.	No one should have to pay user fees to use or participate in public park programs. I believe taxes or special event days make money!
East Nantmeal	20.	Feel it should be up to the people that choose to participate to pay their way. I'm quite tired of paying for everybody to just mess things up and figure someone will pay for it!
East Nantmeal	21.	If you are going to spend money, don't waste it on typical "suburban" improvements like pools, ballfields, skate parks etc. Spend it on pure natural open space.
East Nantmeal	22.	I wish there would be more places to hunt deer and other game other than private land. It is just getting very difficult to find a place to hunt.
East Nantmeal	23.	Help promote small and large game restoration with state and federal info and monies. Stop creating playgrounds everywhere. Need more nature type activities and undisturbed areas. Help landowners understand the benefits of hunting and fishing access.
East Nantmeal	24.	We don't use the parks much because we have enough land and facilities to keep us busy – but we do believe parks are important and would like to find the time to attend some of the nature type activities – maybe when we retire!
East Pikeland	25.	Like the idea of preserving open space by creating parks (nature centers would be nice) vs. turning open space into plops of McMansions in a field
East Pikeland	26.	Not interested in anything. Increase services for taxes already paying. Forget farther expansion of spending form nonsense. A frustrated taxpayer.
East Pikeland	27.	Don't allow private businesses on our parks and recreation land. e.g.: landowner lets a business exist by East Vincent's Revolutionary War cemetery. Visitors are now sharing the same parking lot with this business. It looks horrible. They destroy the lot and the sound of nature can rarely be heard. East Vincent Township is fining this person until they leave.
East Pikeland	28.	Obviously this survey is not of interest to us.
East Pikeland	29.	Thank you for reaching out to us. Please help keep us informed of the general response and

Northern Chester County Public Opinion Survey "Your Turn Comments"		
Source/ Municipality		**Comment**
		programs for improvements in the future.
East Pikeland	30.	I find it very strange that as a runner of many years I can go to the Conestoga High School, turn on the lights for up to 55 minutes and run/speed work but in my own township high school, the track is locked!! Due to supposed kid destruction/damage!!! For that I get to be ripped off for $6,000 with no return. Amazing based on my lack of return for 6K, you tell me why I should be interested. Not your fault, just another messed up system.
East Pikeland	31.	Many of these questions were family or younger person oriented. I just enjoy having open space, tress, and places for wild life to be enjoyed – not so much organization.
East Pikeland	32.	My household is not interested in any new parks, facilities etc. that will increase our taxes. Living in East Pikeland we already pay 1.25% local tax and taxes in Chester County are already high enough.
East Pikeland	33.	Absolutely overwhelmed by this flier. In all over 40 years we have never received such a great invite/info/convenience/conveyance etc. Like this! We want to thoroughly and thoroughly …**THANK YOU** (Age 77 over ten-year resident. Willing to pay more & join in
East Pikeland	34.	We moved here in 1987 and had no knowledge of anything available for us or our children. Everything was learned too late. Play area came to Kimberton finally and dogs not permitted. By now too late for kids – perhaps grandkids? No safe cheap water in Kimberton Creek: makes dogs smell like fish.
East Pikeland	35.	There are other schools in Chester County with Web sites and recreation areas other than Owen J. Roberts.
East Vincent	36.	Personally I think there are plenty of ballfields. However my kids are grown. The park near the Spring City Police Station could use a little attention. It looks like a great place to sled though more benches might mess that up. Need access to Schuylkill River and information about other existing areas and how to get to the river.
East Vincent	37.	I am close to the Park on the Ridge. It is beautiful and maintained well. I notice it is used everyday. There are sports played here but no baseball fields. In this time of scarce money, we must be careful
East Vincent	38.	This is a rural township. I would like to see it remain that way. The farmers needs our support and open space is critical to maintaining a slower and healthier life for people – the natural world recreation is fine as long as they do not diminish the natural landscape and ecological health of the land. Wildlife should be protected and our waterways capable of supporting diverse life forms.
East Vincent	39.	I am opposed to using anyone's private property for trails, greenways, etc.
East Vincent	40.	I believe the park system is very good. Current funding should be sufficient.
East Vincent	41.	My wife and I enjoy the East Vincent Park very much. It is well kept and right across the road from us. As a farmer when I see a survey on open space I think of farmland, not mentioned in this survey. Parks are nice but too many of them will cost too much. Farms produce food.
East Vincent	42.	Open space preservation is part of the reason we live in Chester County where we do and why we are okay with paying such high taxes. Keep it open! ☺
East Vincent	43.	I would like to see more open space and less development. I believe we need more activities for our young people to keep them out of trouble and more places for senior adults and people with disabilities to get together.
East Vincent	44.	I feel I find out about special events either too close to the day or even AFTER it occurs. ☹

Northern Chester County Public Opinion Survey "Your Turn Comments"		
Source/ Municipality		**Comment**
East Vincent	45.	I love living in Chester County even though I do not like living in PA. My wife's family history is traced to Chester County all the way back to William Penn's second voyage. I do not plan on leaving. All I can hope for is value put on open space and less on Targets & developments.
East Vincent	46.	I want to thank you for your parks, trails and facilities. Although I get lost on trails sometimes, I still have a great time. Thanks, Chester County!
East Vincent	47.	No motorized tracks or trails ever. All parks, trails, program activities that depend in taxation of any sort must be on a ballot simultaneously throughout any federation. (Note: Still willing to pay $3-5)
East Vincent	48.	I am currently involved in open space (private) programs. Parks programs are important to me.
North Coventry	49.	Parks are great! Love Valley Forge! I've heard about an Outdoor Range at French Creek Park. I would like to find out more about this. I think that is a great idea and would like to see more in the area.
North Coventry	50.	I believe that Chester County does a great job on their parks and recreational activities.
North Coventry	51.	Whitemarsh Township has a great newsletter that they send out 2-4 times a year. It is very informative and kept us aware of what was available.
North Coventry	52.	Leave open space open
North Coventry	53.	The parks need to be user friendly and monitored from time to time to keep trouble away. Most people that use parks are good people. They clean up after themselves and are friendly and that's the way it should be. I just don't want it to become a hangout for problem kids and people to ruin it. That's why I said it should be maintained from time to time, just a drive through from police or parks and recreation so people know it is being watched.
North Coventry	54.	Public parks are very important to any community, however there is an extremely bad problem of people trespassing on private property, using other people's property without permission. Perhaps we could start imposing fines on these morons and use that money for the parks that would support upkeep for them.
North Coventry	55.	Thank you for your work and efforts to improve recreational facilities and open space.
North Coventry	56.	I would like to know where I could find all info about parks for kids in the area.
North Coventry	57.	A dog park would be tremendous. Volunteer support needed for a dog park. So many dogs here. Place for dogs & owners to gather and socialize.
North Coventry	58.	We are no longer young but hope for more parks, walking and nature trails open space and recreational opportunities for our children, grandchildren and future generations
North Coventry	59.	My opinion doesn't matter. Why don't you ask the wildlife if they would like their habitats destroyed for human amusement park.
North Coventry	60.	Any additional parks and rec activities would be welcome. Summer camp with themes.
North Coventry	61.	Do not raise taxes to pay for any more things of this nature. Right now we need to lower taxes not raise them!
South	62.	If you asked most people involved with youth sports, they will tell you that we need more

Northern Chester County Public Opinion Survey "Your Turn Comments"		
Source/ Municipality		**Comment**
Coventry		baseball, football, soccer & lacrosse fields. I feel that the elementary schools in this area all have ballfields that are available to the aforementioned groups.
South Coventry	63.	I cannot help at this time – one in college, another going to college in two years. Work, work, work. Financially strapped.
South Coventry	64.	Do not consider adding ANY new or additional taxes of any type to the taxpaying pubic for any new or considered proposals or programs – we can't afford it. Anything new needs to stand on its own in terms of service and be supported by reasonable user fees.
South Coventry	65.	Thank you for asking.
South Coventry	66.	Local parks especially in South Coventry are being promoted by a few interested individuals for personal financial gain as well as to increase their power in the community. These parks are an attractive nuisance in the community which will invite activities that will increase lawsuits and more expense for the already over taxpayer.
South Coventry	67.	We love our parks and welcome any improvements.
South Coventry	68.	I'd love to have a bike trail in the Big Woods.
South Coventry	69.	Northern Chester County is a beautiful place to live and we have been very impressed with its parks and open space.
South Coventry	70.	No tax increase for any of these activities. In fact, stop property tax on senior citizens
South Coventry	71.	Please remove the tire chips form Warwick Playground. They are toxic and should not be where kids play. We'd love to use the equipment there but go to French Creek instead.
Warwick	72.	Preserve open space, forests and prevent overdevelopment and "urban spread" by creating too many facilities when nature has already done that for us.
Warwick	73.	I would think instead of more parks with a lot of maintenance, that wider roads with bike path or sidewalks would be used more and cut down on accidents. This would encourage more people to exercise in their own community.
Warwick	74.	My wife and I moved to Warwick Township in 2004 and we've come to realize that the most valued asset is open space, peace, quiet and tranquility. A nature reserve, more trees and public gardens would be highly welcomed and valued.
Warwick	75.	Horse riding trails wide and clear to drive horses.
Warwick	76.	My husband would like to see some land in Warwick Township made into a soccer field.
Warwick	77.	We would like to help out but we are old & not in the best health.
Warwick	78.	I enjoy the parks in my area just the way they are. I think open space parks should be kept as natural as possible.
Warwick	79.	Living for 32 years above Warwick Park, I am now moving to Florida. As past president of the Friends of Warwick Park and an active member, I participated in many fundraisers since 1997. I have hiked in the park and when my daughter was little went to many events with her. She also enjoyed the playground.
Warwick	80.	This area is great. We are lucky to have French Creek State Park, Crow's Nest preserve, Warwick County Park and Camp Fernbrook so close to home. We are looking forward to the new trail that begins at St. Peter's Village and ends at French Creek (I think). Well where it goes, we will be on it!

Northern Chester County Public Opinion Survey "Your Turn Comments"		
Source/ Municipality		**Comment**
Warwick	81.	Most important to me is preserving open space without development of any kind. Also concerned about stopping new lighting and preserving night skies.
Warwick	82.	Would like to see the old rail trail from St. Peters to RT. 345 be repaired to allow hiking, biking, and horse riding. We need places to go, not always relying on development and to set aside recreation areas.
West Pikeland	83.	Saving/preserving open land from being overbuilt is critical to saving Chester County. Take a drive through Delaware County to see how over construction destroys a county. Control builders- Limit construction!!!
West Pikeland	84.	We moved from Wayne. We walked at McKaig in Upper Merion or Skunk Hollow in Radnor everyday with our kids and dogs. Here, although we are surrounded by more land and open space, there is nowhere for the entire family to go including dogs to walk. Also we have many creeks around but I don't know how I can access them for my kids to play in water.
West Pikeland	85.	More bicycle paths please. Complete more of the Schuylkill River Trail system.
West Pikeland	86.	Lived in Chester County for 25 years. Every year the local political said there would be tennis courts. Where? Have I missed them? We buy ground to protect open space by can't get ground for soccer or tennis courts.
West Pikeland	87.	Preserve and conserve township open spaces!
West Pikeland	88.	Kids have taken a back seat to horses for too long now. If you don't provide opportunities for kids to participate, they will find their own activities (not all of them good). The value of your home would also diminish if other families buy here. We need to play where they go to school so they can be with their friends.
West Pikeland	89.	I do not know about other Northern Chester County Townships but West Pikeland needs to have more active recreation; tennis courts; basketball courts in our park. It is severely underused.
West Pikeland	90.	Open Space should not be used for anything other than open space. More preservation needs to be done to keep the countryside open and protected.
West Pikeland	91.	We keep purchasing open land without tax dollars but we have ZERO parks for "active recreation". We have tons of new families but still old residents running things. <u>That needs to change.</u>
West Vincent	92.	Although the quieter forms of recreation like tennis, racquetball are not compatible with trees, walkways, trails, water interests, the team sports need their own space. It should be a requirement of the new developments that ballfields, community gardens and recreation halls be a part of the planning within the space of the development. They are doing that in towns like Swarthmore and even Pittsburgh with less room.
West Vincent	93.	As our area (West Vincent) has a large horseback riding population and we have lost so much of our trail land to developers, we would like to see additional trails dedicated to riders, hikers and non-motorized vehicles added to our area – as many other countries have done!
West Vincent	94.	Open Space preservation is a priority to me. Use township tax funds to do this and make new developers install ballfields etc as part of this planning and development
West Vincent	95.	I would like to see a county golf course.
West Vincent	96.	I would like to see as much land, woods, walking and sitting trials to enjoy nature. We have

Northern Chester County Public Opinion Survey "Your Turn Comments"		
Source/ Municipality		**Comment**
		a valuable resource in our land – let's strive to keep it that way.
West Vincent	97.	Parks and recreation facilities need to be safe and healthy environments, especially for children and vulnerable populations. So no toxic materials such as arsenic, copper-treated park tables where we eat. No herbicides, pesticides. Create a buffer zone around parks where farmers are prohibited from spraying any toxic substance period. Encourage schools to adopt a park; to be responsible for aspects related to beauty, improving the aesthetic will encourage people to "hang out" because they feel "re-charged". Utilize consciously the healing benefits of nature. Thank You.
West Vincent	98.	I am a senior citizen & I enjoy taking my grandchildren to parks and playgrounds. My husband & I would like more safe walking trails.
West Vincent	99.	It would be helpful to have clearly marked recreation areas and even though it is too late and probably not relevant to this study, traffic should be addressed to improve the quality of life.
West Vincent	100.	West Vincent Township probably needs more playing fields. However, for a community encompassing the number of square miles that it occupies, it will probably be necessary to provide additional parking space (appropriately landscaped) to house the motor vehicles that people use to transport themselves to their children's games. Well-designed recreational spaces enhance the desirability of the community. They may cost $ to build and maintain but they may indeed be worth the expense if they are well managed.
West Vincent	101.	My township is overspent and in debt. I will not vote for supervisors who continue to waste our money on anything we can live without, regardless of its merit.

Active Healthy Living

Active Healthy Living by Design – www.activelivingbydesign.org/

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation – www.rwjf.org/

Let's Move – www.letsmove.gov

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ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Conservation: An Investment that Pays, The Economic Benefits of Parks and Open Space
http://www.tpl.org/publications/books-reports/park-benefits/investment-that-pays.html
Summary - Parks and Open Space
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/parks_open_space.pdf

The Economic Benefits of Open Space, Recreation Facilities & Walkable Community Design.
http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Synthesis_Shoup-Ewing_March2010.pdf
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http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/econ_bene_open_space.pdf

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http://conservationtools.org/libraries/1/library_items/804-Return-on-Environment-The-Economic-Value-of-Protected-Open-Space-in-Southeastern-Pennsylvania

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The EAC Handbook, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, 2004.
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/EACHB.pdf

GREENWAYS

Pennsylvania Greenways Clearinghouse - http://www.pagreenways.org/

PA Greenways Toolbox - www.pagreenways.org/greenwaystoolbox.htm

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION MODELS

Growing Greener: Conservation Subdivisions
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/ucmprd1/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_002285.pdf

Growing with Green Infrastructure, Heritage Conservancy, 2008.
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/green_infra.pdf

Better Models for Development in Pennsylvania: Ideas for Creating More Livable and Prosperous Communities, The Conservation Fund and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 2005.
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/BetterModels.pdf

NATIONAL AND STATE PARKS AND RECREATION ORGANIZATIONS

National Parks and Recreation Association – www.nrpa.org

Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society – www.prps.org

OPEN SPACE PROTECTION

Public Finance for Open Space, Heritage Conservancy, 2003.

Opportunity Knocks, Heritage Conservancy, 2008.
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/Opportunity%20Knocks.pdf

Using Conservation Easements to Preserve Open Space, Heritage Conservancy, 2002.
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/Easements.pdf

Implementing a Municipal Open Space Program, Heritage Conservancy, 2003.
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/Quality%20of%20PlaceLife%20Web.pdf

Leaders in the Fields: Seven Successful Municipal Open Space Referendums in the Lehigh Valley, 2008.
https://www.heritageconservancy.org/images/stories/Leaders-in-the-Fields.pdf

STATE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

Pennsylvania Outdoors: The Keystone for Healthy Living, 2009-2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/PAOutdoorRecreationPlan.pdf

STATE LAW

Pennsylvania's Recreational Use of Land and Water Act, available from PA DCNR
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/RUWLA.pdf

TRAILS

Pennsylvania Trails Interactive Web site – http://www.explorepatrails.com/

Rails to Trails Conservancy Trail-Building Toolbox (the Rails to Trail Conservancy has helpful trail building information even for trails that are not rail trails) –
www.railstotrails.org/ourwork/trailbuilding/toolbox/index.html

Pennsylvania Trail Design Manual, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureaus of Facility Design and Recreation and Conservation 2004.
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Trail User Survey Workbook, How to conduct a survey and win support for your trail,

Sample Surveys and Methods, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2005.
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http://community.railstotrails.org/media/p/6865.aspx
Summary - http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/schuylkill_river.pdf

Perkiomen Trail, 2008 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2008.
http://community.railstotrails.org/media/p/12.aspx
Summary: http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/perkiomen.pdf

Trail Towns - Capturing Trail-Based Tourism, Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2005.
http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications/Pubs/TrailTowns.pdf

The River Sojourn Organizer's Guide, Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers, 2003.
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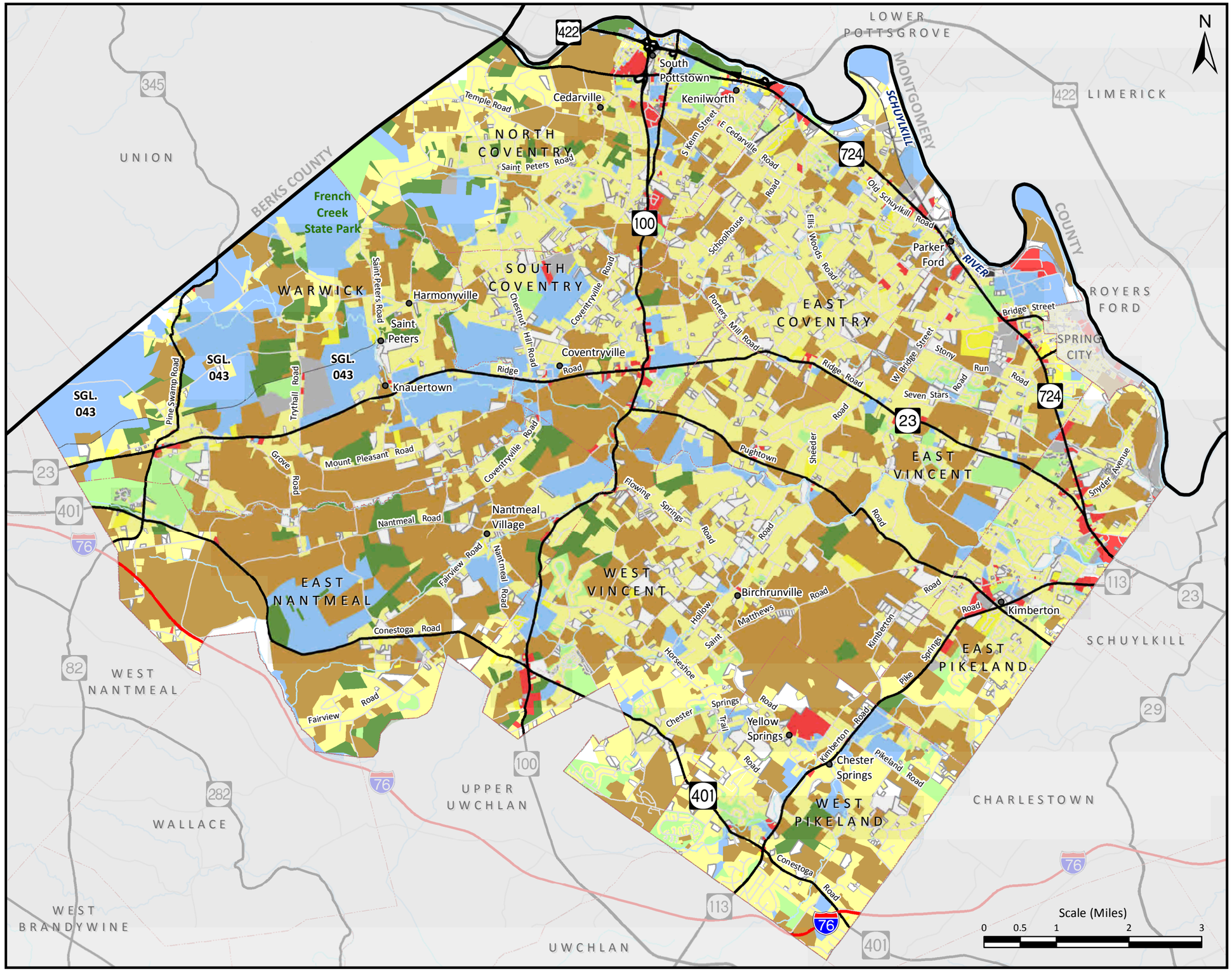
Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Map 1
2007 Land Use

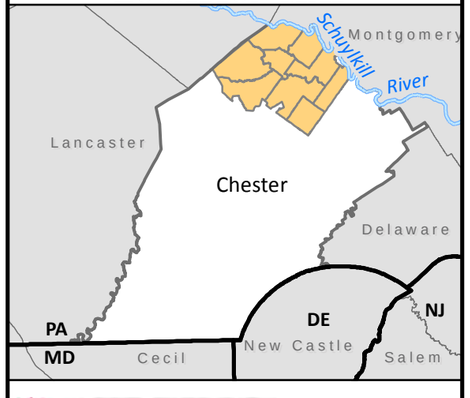


LEGEND

Land Use

- Agriculture
- Commercial
- Forested
- Hydrology
- Industrial
- Institutional
- Single Family Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Park/Recreation
- Utilities
- Vacant

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

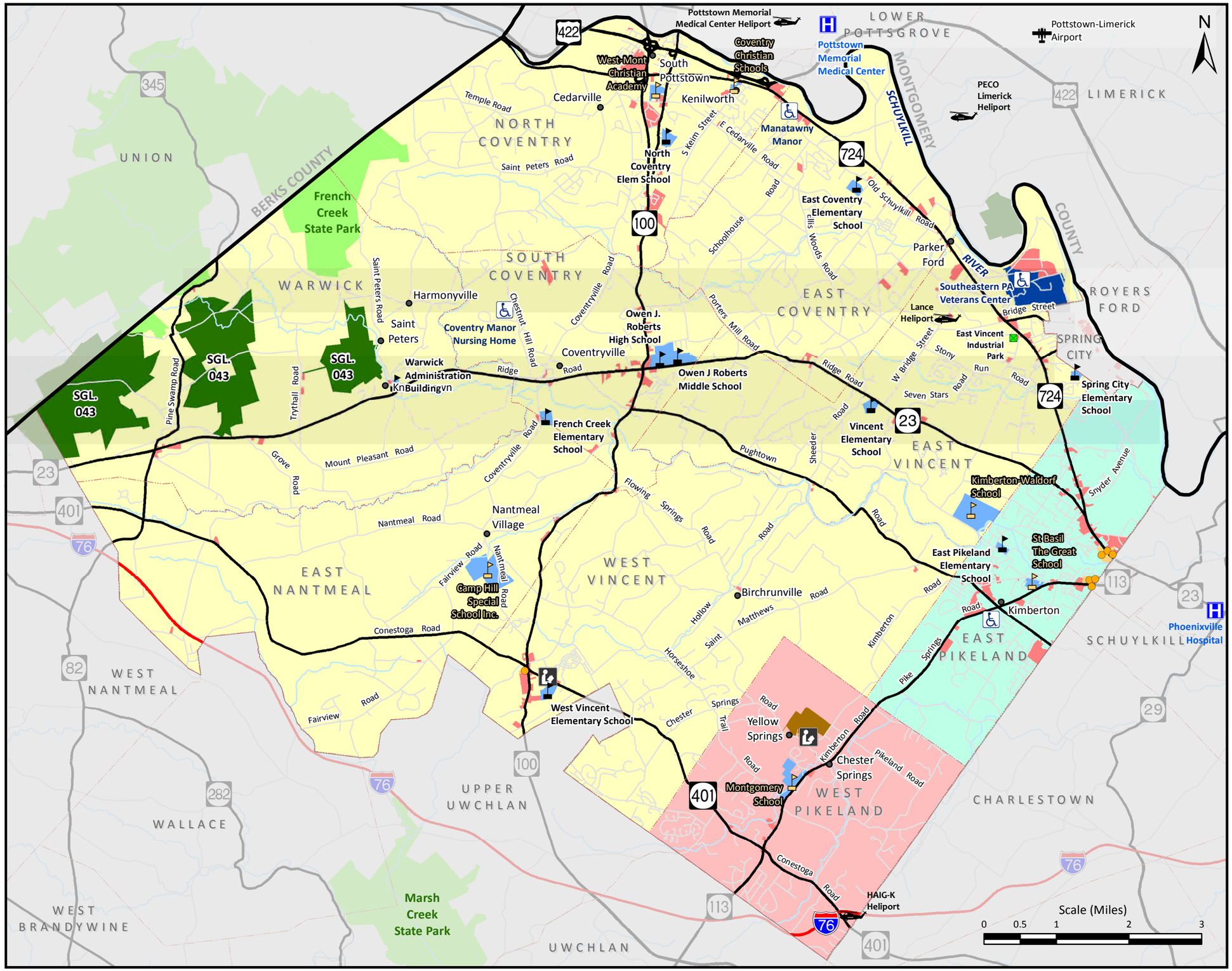
December 2011

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS
2005 DVRPC Orthophotgraphy - used to update county land use

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

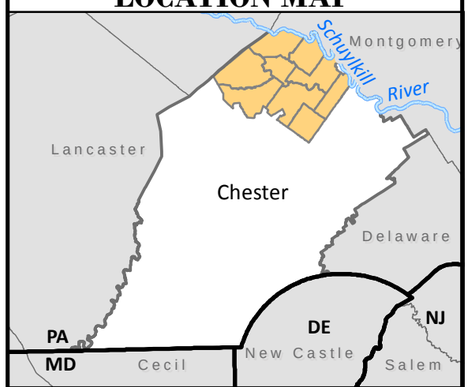
Map 2
Community Hubs



LEGEND

- Heliports
- Airports
- Hospitals
- Nursing Homes
- Business/Industrial Parks
- Public Libraries
- Private School
- Public School
- Major Shopping Centers
- Public Library Properties
- Business Park Properties
- Nursing Homes Properties
- Heliport Properties
- School Properties
- Shopping Center Properties
- Commercial Areas
- Downingtown Area SD
- Owen J Roberts SD
- Phoenixville Area SD

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

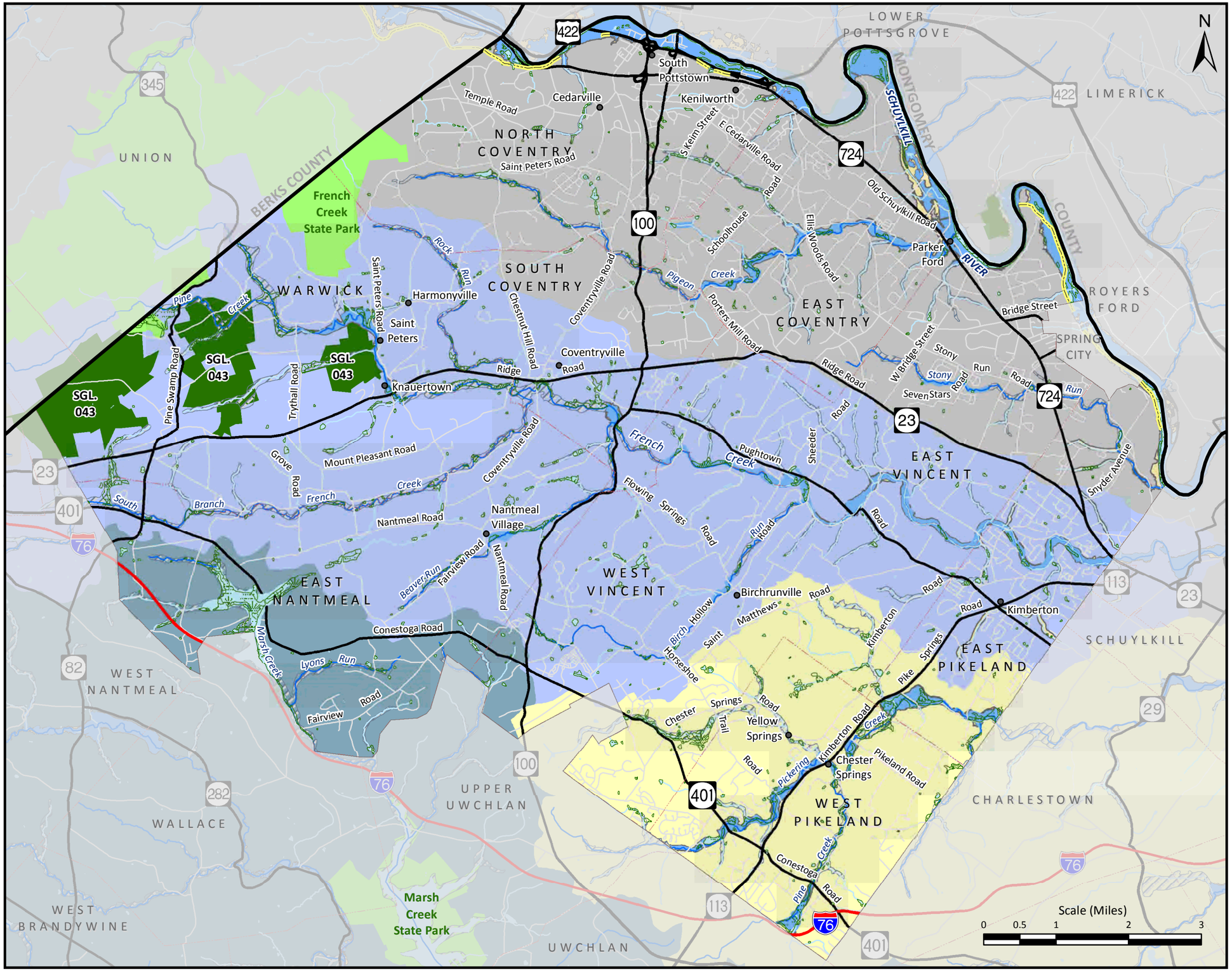
December 2011

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS
Pennsylvania DCNR and State Game Commission
2009 PENNDOT GIS

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Map 3
Water Resources



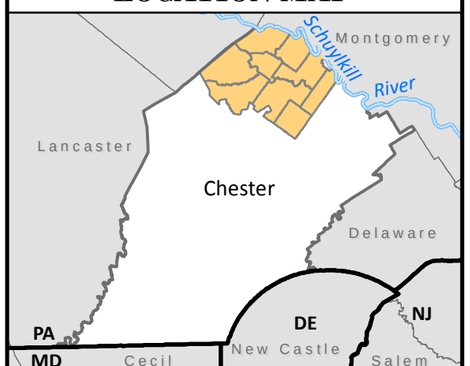
LEGEND

- Canals
- NWI Wetlands
- 500-Year Floodplains
- 100-Year Floodplain - Zone A
- 100-Year Floodplain - Zone AE

Watersheds

- East Brandywine Creek
- French Creek
- Pickering Creek
- Schuylkill River

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

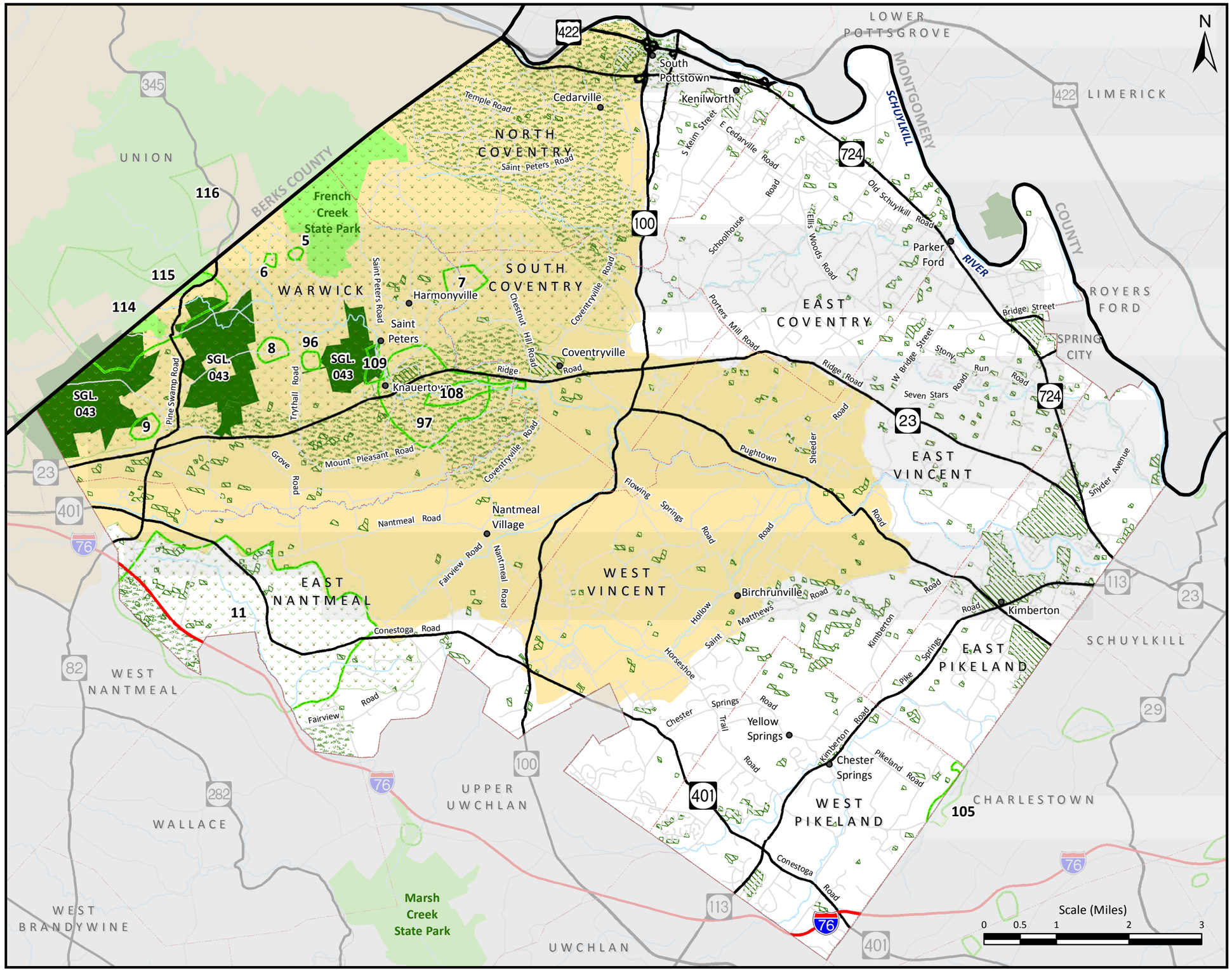
December 2011

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS
Pennsylvania DCNR and State Game Commission
Pennsylvania DEP, USGS NHD, FEMA

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Map 4
Natural Areas



LEGEND

Important Mammal Areas

Important Bird Areas

Core Area

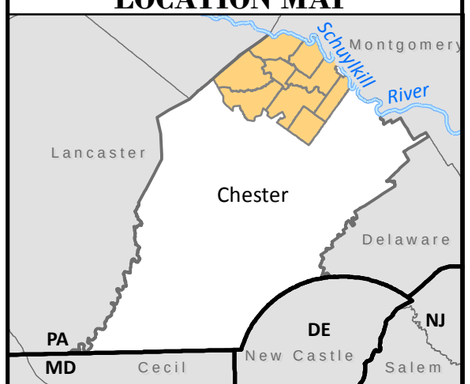
Buffer Area

Hopewell Big Woods Study Area

Natural Areas Inventory

5 - Sportsman Club Site
6 - Durrance Estate
7 - Rock Run Thicket
8 - Trythall Woods
9 - Warwick Seeps
11 - Great Marsh
96 - Trythall Road Wetland
97 - Warwick County Park Seeps
105 - Pigeon Run Wetland
108 - Warwock County Park Floodplain Forest & Seeps
109 - St. Peters Woods
114 - Pine Swamp
115 - Hopewell Lake Swale
116 - French Creek

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

December 2011

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS Pennsylvania DCNR and State Game Commission 2009 PENNDOT GIS, Natural Lands Trust with input from PA DEP

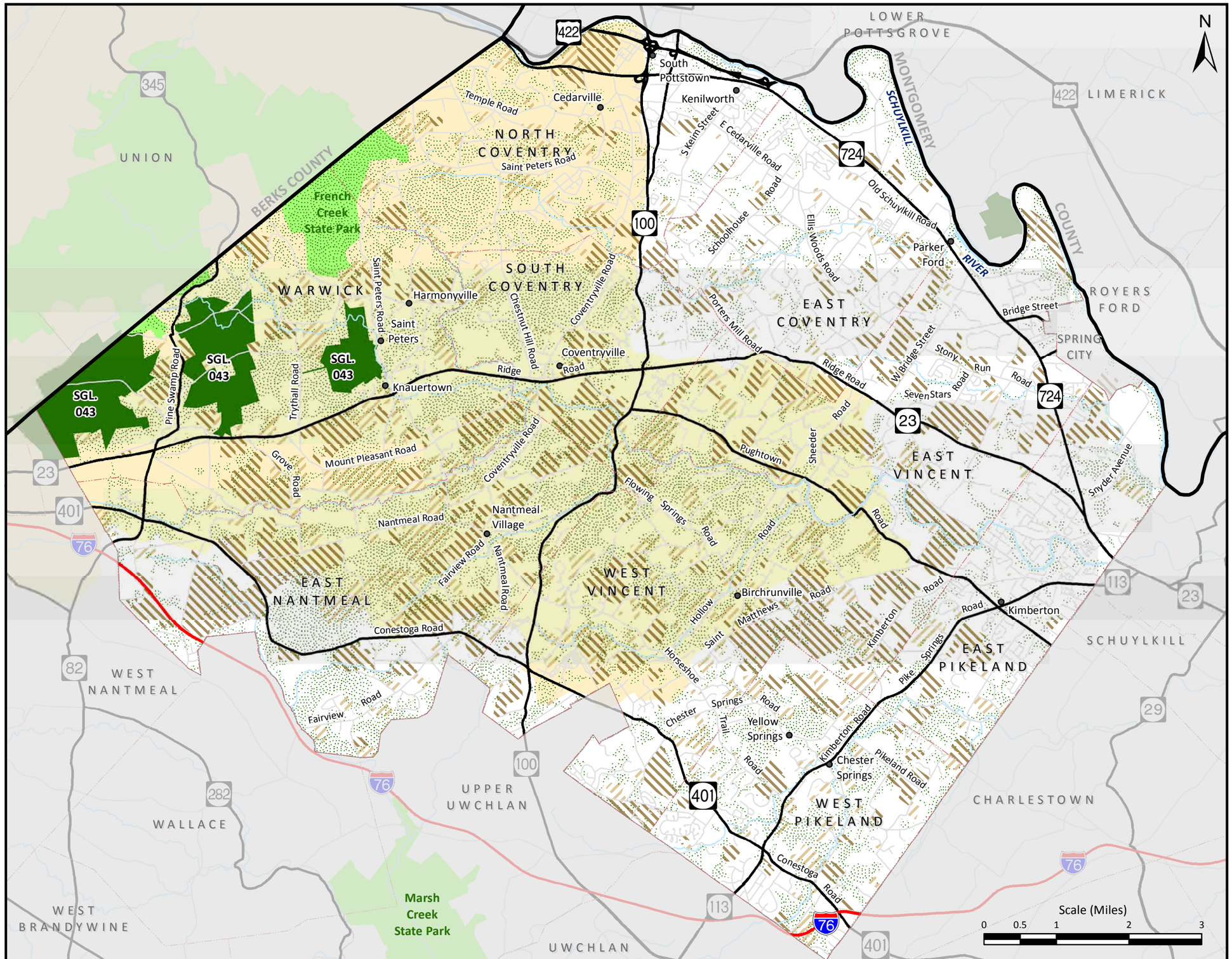
Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

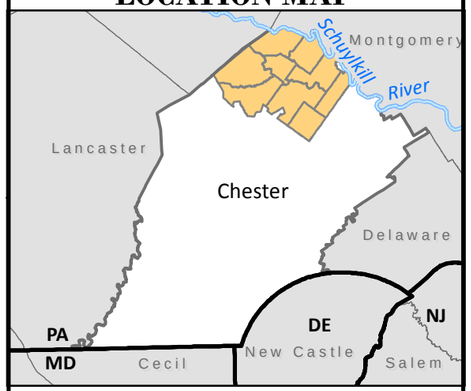
Map 5
Working Landscapes

LEGEND

- Forested/Woodlands
- Working Agricultural Land
- Other Agricultural Land
- Hopewell Big Woods Study Area



LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

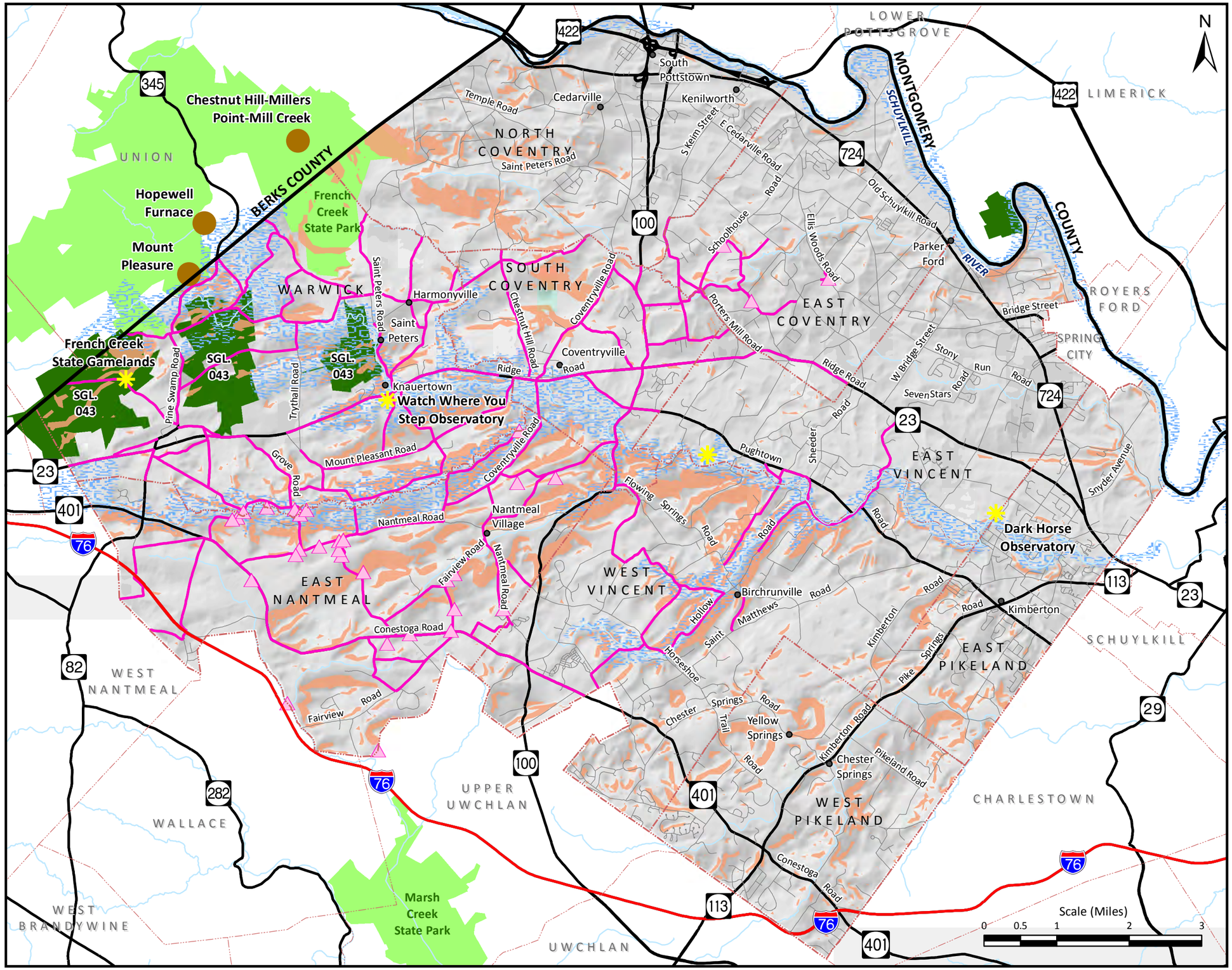
December 2011

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS
2006 Aerial Photography - AEX, Natural Lands Trust

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

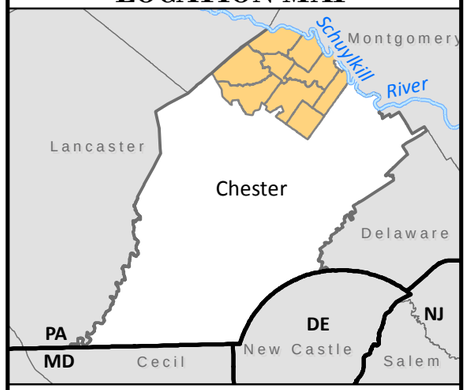
Map 6
Scenic Features



LEGEND

- Steep Slopes (15% or greater)
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Scenic Vistas
- Scenic Roads
- Dark Sky/Observatory Sites
- Scenic Geology

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

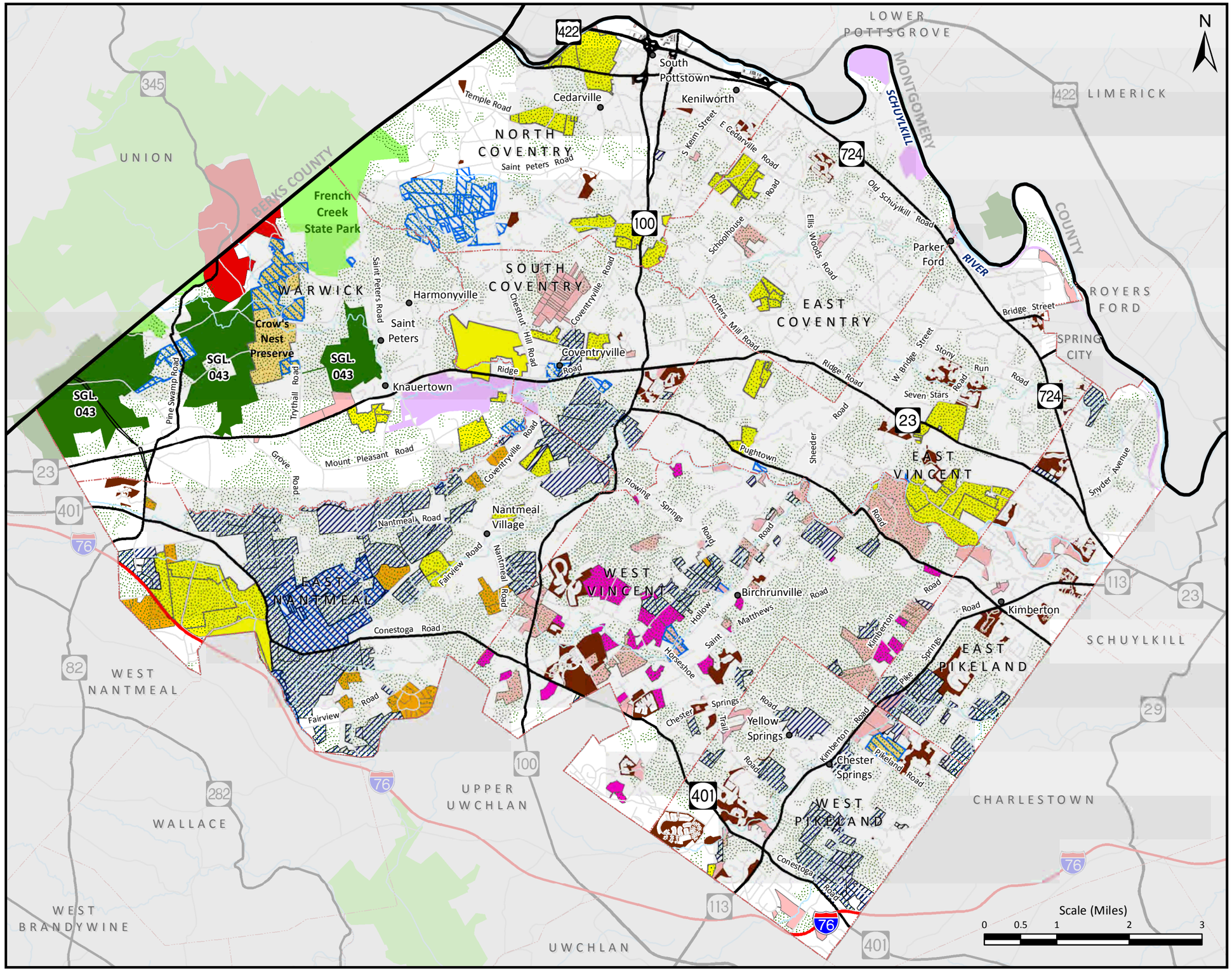
December 2011

Source: East Nantmeal, East Coventry, South Coventry and Warwick Townships, USGS National Elevation Dataset, DCNR, Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey, Trail of Geology - French Creek State Park Clear Sky Charts in Pennsylvania

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Map 7
Protected and Conservation Lands



LEGEND

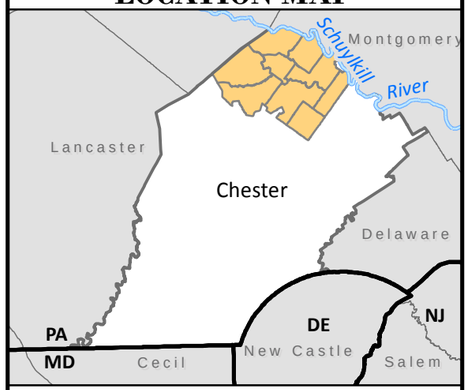
Protected Lands

- Deed Restriction
- Conservation Easement
- Parcels Owned In-Fee by Land Trusts
- Agricultural Easements
- TDR (Transfer of Development Rights)
- Homeowners Association Open Spaces
- Municipal Open Space
- County Parks
- State Parks
- State Game Lands

Conservation Lands

- Parcels Enrolled in PA Clean and Green Program

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

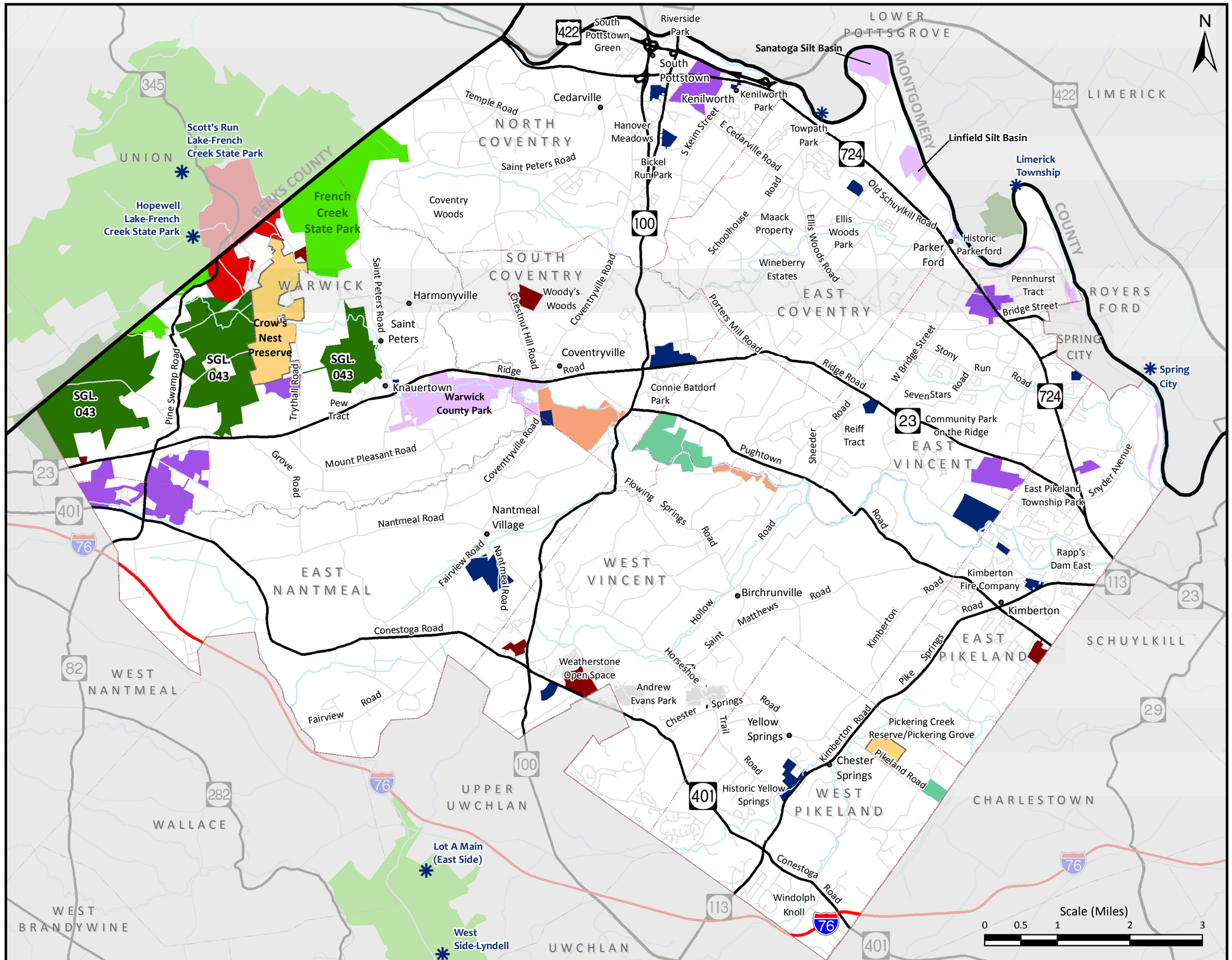
Revised April 2012

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS Protected lands data derived from county and local municipal planning documents.

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

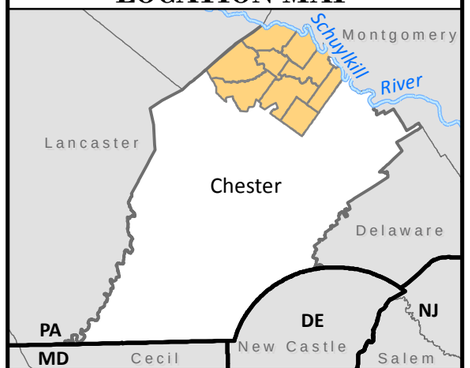
Map 8
Recreation Features



LEGEND

- Water Access Locations
- County Parks
- State Parks
- State Game Lands
- French Creek Trail Lands
- Natural Lands Trust Preserves
- School Properties
- Municipal Recreation (Active and Passive)
- Commercial Recreation
- Non-Profit Camps
- Private Recreation

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

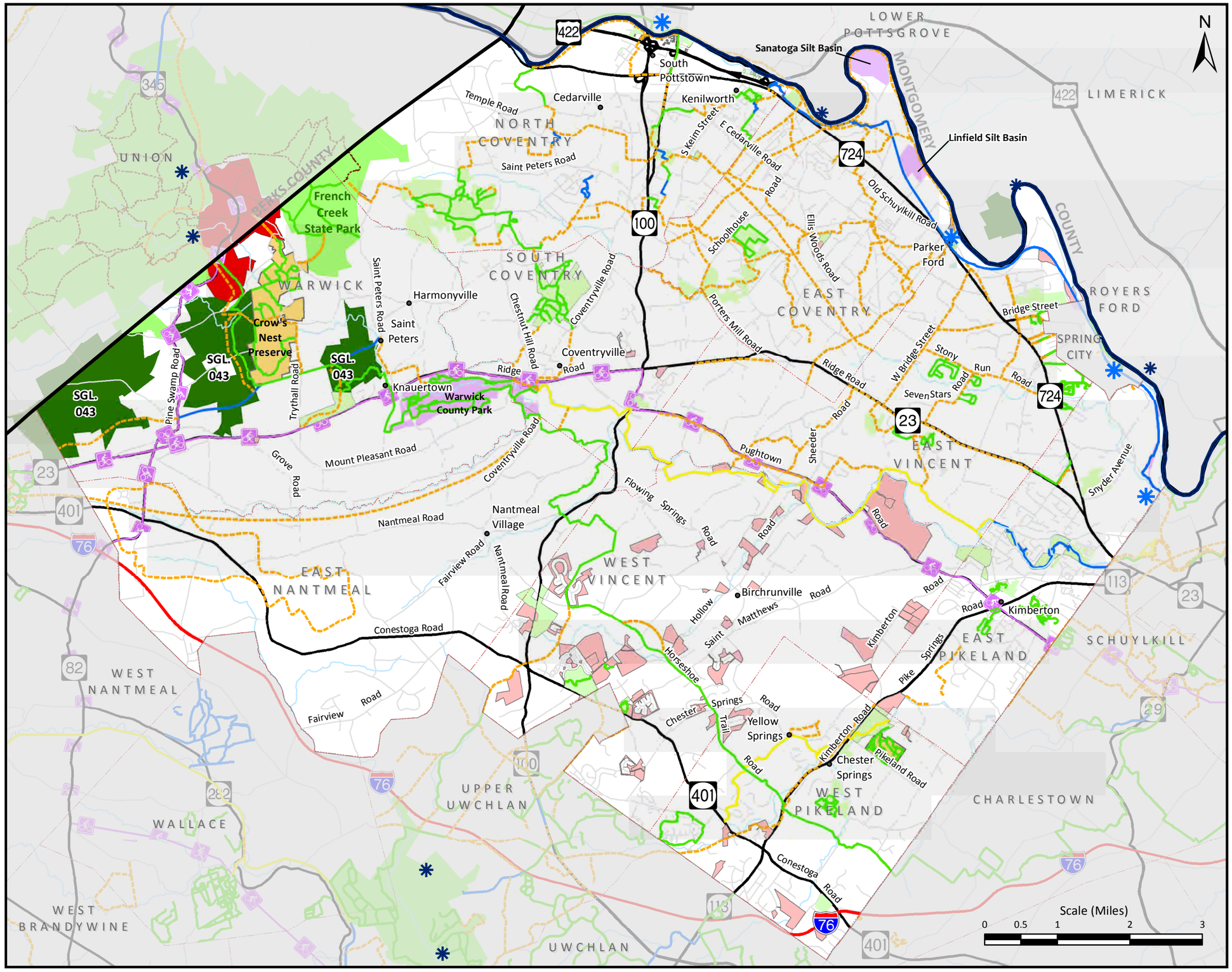
Revised April 2012

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS Pennsylvania DCNR and State Game Commission PA Fish & Boat Commission, Natural Lands Trust, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Map 9
Trail Facilities



LEGEND

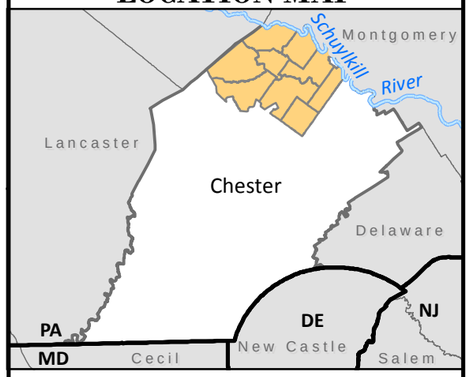
- Water Access Locations
- Schuylkill River Trailhead
- Schuylkill River Water Trail
- PA Bicycle Routes

Trail By Status

- Design/Construction
- Existing
- Feasibility Study
- Proposed
- French Creek State Park Trails

- Municipal Open Space
- Municipal Recreation
- County Parks
- State Parks
- State Game Lands

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

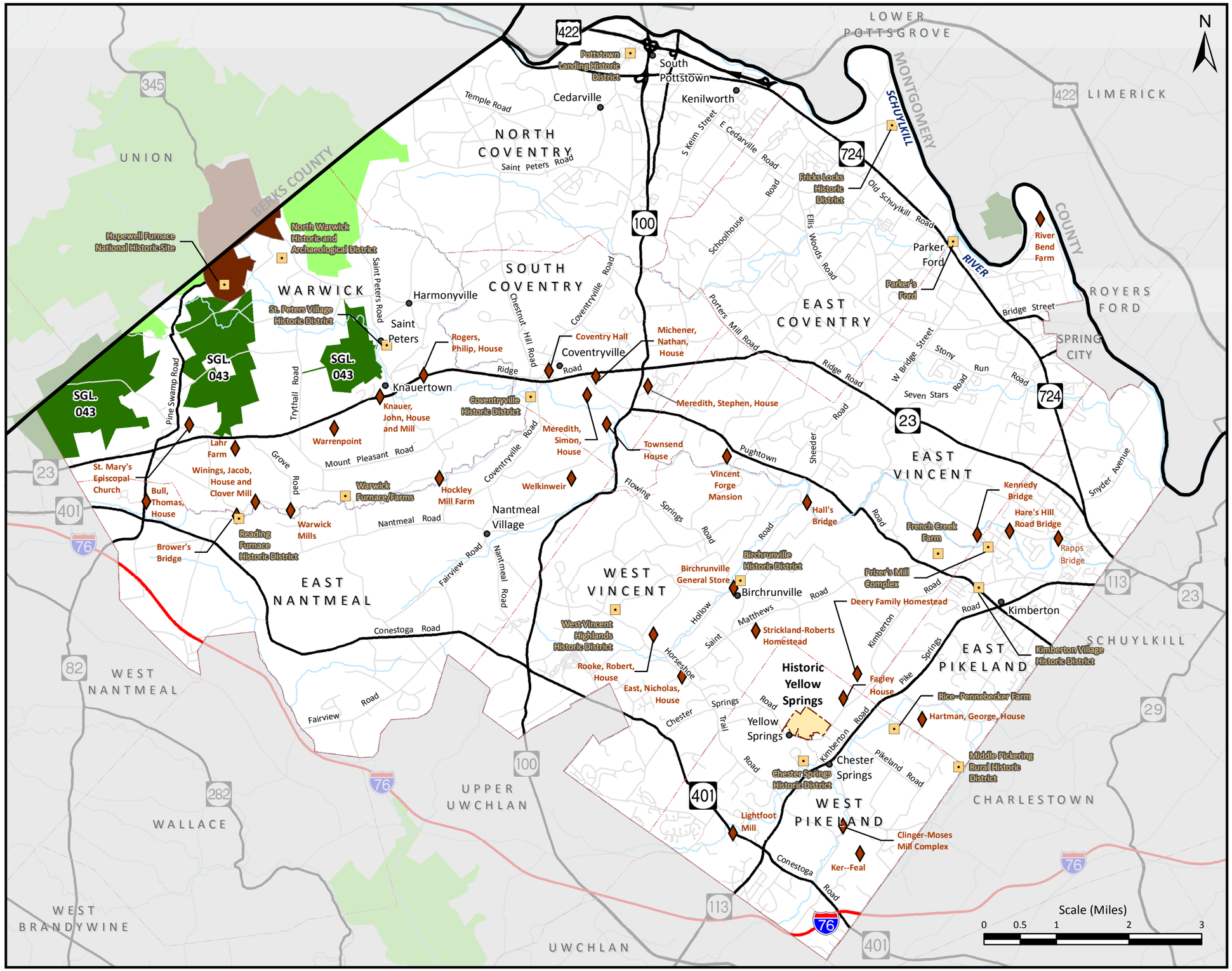
Revised April 2012

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS
Pennsylvania DCNR and State Game Commission
PA Fish & Boat Commission, Natural Lands Trust, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Federation of Northern Chester County Communities

Map 10
Historic Sites and Heritage Facilities Map



LEGEND

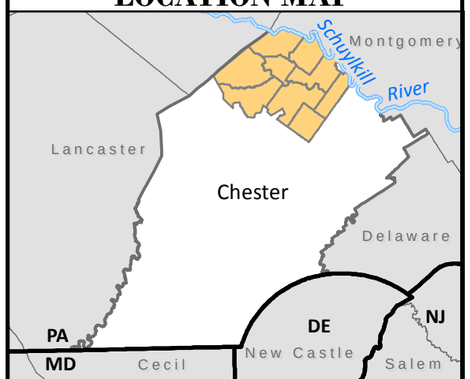
National Register of Historic Places

- Listed Historic Site
- Listed Historic District

Private Heritage Facilities

- Historic Yellow Springs

LOCATION MAP



Gannett Fleming

Revised April 2012

Source: Chester County Departments of Health, Parks & Recreation, Planning Commission and GIS
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
National Park Service - National Register of Historic Places