Perry County Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

The Plan

In 2020, the citizens in Perry County continue to enjoy a way of life rooted in our rural heritage. Open spaces continue to be conserved, and natural resources, agriculture, and recreation are integral to the fabric and character of the County and provide places of respite and beauty. Our natural, recreational, cultural, artistic, and historical assets offer enriching experiences, enjoyment, fun, health and economic benefits for people who live, work, and visit Perry County. Greenways and trails connect people to the land and water and provide corridors for wildlife, transportation and recreation. Residents and visitors are both aware of recreation opportunities and engaged in active healthy lifestyles in the great outdoors. Citizens are stewards of conservation and strong advocates for recreation and continuance of our rural way of life.
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Purpose of the Plan

Perry County prepared and adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1993, and recently updated that plan in 2007 to serve as a general policy guide for the physical development of the County. The Comprehensive Plan sets the direction for policies related to housing, transportation, community facilities and utilities, and land use, as well as natural resources among other things. Although the plan has a chapter dedicated to natural resources protection and addresses parks and recreation as a part of the community facilities plan element, the Perry County Commissioners recognize the need to develop a plan that specifically focuses on greenways, parks, recreation, and open space, due to the influence that these features have on community and environmental health, as well as their social and economic implications. The Perry County Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan has been developed as a supplement to the Perry County Comprehensive Plan. It is meant to work in concert with the other elements of the County Comprehensive Plan and the Tri-County Regional Growth Management Plan to provide additional direction for the County over the next 10 to 15 years.

This planning effort is due in part to direction from the state. Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections was developed in 2001 and is designed to provide a coordinated and strategic approach to creating connections through the establishment of greenways in the Commonwealth. The plan identifies twelve strategies for implementation; one of those strategies is to promote the development of greenway plans by county and local governments as an integral part of their planning effort. Pennsylvania Greenways set a target date of 2007 for all 67 counties in the state to complete and adopt greenway plans. As of September 2010, 35 county greenway plans had been completed as stand-alone plans, or as part of a regional, multi-county initiative. Perry County and 28 other counties are in the process of completing greenway plans in support of this direction from the state.

Definitions

Several terms are used throughout this plan, and as such, it is important that these terms are defined at the forefront of the plan so that the people reading and implementing the plan clearly understand its purpose and intent. To maintain consistency with the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PADCNR), many of the definitions used in this plan have been adopted from terms presented in Pennsylvania Greenways or other PADCNR publications.

- **Green Infrastructure** – Green infrastructure is our nation’s natural life support system – an interconnected network of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitats, and other natural areas; greenways, parks, and other conservation lands; working farms, ranches and forests; and wilderness and other open spaces that support native species, maintain natural ecological processes, sustain air and water resources and contribute to the health and quality of life for America’s communities and people. The term “green

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1 The Conservation Fund; USDA Forest Service [www.Greeninfrastructure.net](http://www.Greeninfrastructure.net)
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infrastructure” is used in this plan to refer to greenways, parks, and open space collectively.

- **Greenways** – Greenways are linear corridors of public and private land that serve as the linkages between specifically identified natural resource-based or manmade features. They can be either land or water based and serve a variety of functions and benefits including recreation, transportation, community revitalization, economic development, natural resource conservation, environmental protection, wildlife habitat and migration and education. These corridors often follow old railways, canals, ridge tops, rivers and stream valleys, and roads, or streets.

- **Parks** – Parks are places; areas of land set aside for public use, maintained for the enjoyment and recreational use of people.

- **Recreation** – Recreation is an activity; the act of participating in experiences that result in achieving and maintaining the balance required for people to live life fully and to realize their full potential.

- **Open Space** – Open areas of land, whether protected or unprotected, public or private in nature, and undeveloped or actively used for farming, forestry, or other horticultural purposes. Open space can include stream valleys, forests and woodlands, wetlands, conservation lands, ridge tops, parks, and fields, among other pieces of the landscape.

Organization

Although this plan has been developed as a component of the Perry County Comprehensive Plan, its specificity warrants a discussion on its organization to provide ease of use and promote effectiveness in implementation.

The *Perry County Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan* has been organized into three parts, the PLAN, the FOUNDATION, and the ACTION PLAN. The PLAN section encompasses this introduction; a profile of Perry County now, which includes an overview of physical characteristics of the county, pertinent demographic information, a summary of findings from the public outreach initiative, and the identification of community issues related to greenways parks, recreation, and open space. More importantly, the PLAN also provides the direction for the future of greenways, parks, recreation, and open space in Perry County. It contains the mission, vision, goals, and objectives, as well as specific recommendations that will guide the County over the next 10 to 15 years. The ACTION PLAN provides direction for county staff, local officials, and other public/private organizations to ensure successful implementation of the plan. The Action Plan details the top priority recommendations from the Plan and includes information that is pertinent to the task at hand, such as funding resources, key players, and a timeline for completion.
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The FOUNDATION is the other major component of the plan. Information contained in the FOUNDATION is organized by topical area and provides an analysis of existing resources and current conditions in the county. Each section concludes with an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities as they pertain to the topic at hand. Information contained in the topical sections of the FOUNDATION provides the base upon which the plan is built.

The Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan is meant to be handled. The Action Plan contained herein is designed to effectively communicate the intent of the recommendation and the steps required to implement it. During implementation, the action sheets can be handed out to key stakeholders to build support for the project and to delegate tasks to project partners. As the priority recommendations are implemented, it is recommended that the County review, update, and reprioritize the list of recommendations contained in the Plan, and subsequently develop a new Action Plan for the projects that are deemed most pertinent. This process is meant to aid the County in effectively following through with and completing the projects and actions set forth as part of this Plan.

Benefits of Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Greenways, parks, recreation, and open space provide numerous benefits, functions, and values that address environmental, social, and economic needs – the three foundations of a sustainable community. A green infrastructure system helps to protect, enhance, and restore the natural functions and services of an ecosystem. These “ecosystem services” include cleaning the air, filtering and cooling water, recycling nutrients, regulating climate, capturing and storing excess carbon in the atmosphere, reducing storm and flood damage, and maintaining groundwater aquifers. Socially, greenways, parks, recreation, and open space are appreciated by all county residents, rather than just those residents who enjoy recreating outdoors. Residents employed in farming and timbering rely on the county’s soil properties and climate to grow crops and harvest trees; residents in the boroughs of the county rely on green infrastructure to provide clean drinking water, fresh air, and places to recreate. Greenways, parks, recreation, and open space also serve as economic drivers. The woodlands, waterways, and fields in the county produce marketable goods; greenways, trails, and watercourses that link cultural and historical resources provide an incubator for tourism development.

Benefits of greenways, parks, recreation, and open space include, but are not limited to the following:

*Environmental Benefits*

- Preserve natural resources and sensitive natural habitats including floodplains, steep slopes, wetlands, ridge tops, and woodlands.
- Recharge and protect the quality of ground and surface waters.
- Provide natural stormwater management services, including flood protection and reduction, erosion control, and pollution reduction.
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- Reduce energy use and captures carbon dioxide, thus helping to counteract global climate change.
- Conserve native communities and provide habitat for plant and animal species of concern.
- Promote plant and animal species diversity.
- Provide corridors for wildlife migration.
- Improve air quality.
- Connect landscapes.
- Store and convey floodwaters.

Social Benefits / Community Health Benefits

- Cleanse the air we breathe and the water we drink.
- Promote outdoor recreation and exercise through activities such as walking, biking, horseback riding, and paddling, which contribute to an enhanced quality of life, and improved mental and physical health.
- Connect people to nature and bring people into contact with nature, providing important psychological benefits.
- Provide access to historic and cultural features in the community.
- Help to preserve the character of the landscape.
- Public community gathering places improve the connectedness and vitality of the community.
- Provide opportunities for non-motorized transportation through safe alternative transportation routes for bicyclists and pedestrians, reducing dependency on the automobile.
- Provide connections between parks, protected lands, and community destinations.
- Introduce and provide a venue for interpretive and environmental education.

Economic Benefits

- Increase property values.
- Increase economic activity and business development and expansion related to recreation, greenways, and trails.
- Conserve resources that support the economy including hunting, fishing, paddling and other forms of outdoor recreation; tourism; and rural land uses such as agriculture, forestry, and resource extraction.
- Create tourism destinations that will foster the growth of hospitality industry businesses and generate expenditures on food, services, and lodging.
- Reduce costs associated with engineered systems such as stormwater and wastewater systems.
- Stream buffers can reduce damage and financial losses from flood damages by reducing flooding.
Profile of Perry County Now

Overview of Physical Characteristics of Perry County

Perry County is located in Central Pennsylvania, northwest of the City of Harrisburg. Two prominent rivers flow through the County; the Susquehanna River forms much of the County’s eastern boundary, and the Juniata River flows through the northeastern part of the county, joining the Susquehanna River in Penn Township, just north of Duncannon Borough. These two rivers, as well as the significant natural relief in the County have historically influenced development patterns. The southern border of the County follows Blue Mountain and the northern border follows Tuscarora Mountain and Lock Ridge. Several other mountains and ridges that are part of the Appalachian Mountain chain are located in the County between Blue Mountain and Tuscarora Mountain. The low population density is generally dispersed throughout the valleys and along the rivers’ edges. The City of Harrisburg, a regional employment destination, transportation hub, and center for cultural activity has also affected development patterns in Perry County, as population densities in the townships tend to decrease as you travel away from the southeast corner of the County. Blue Mountain and the Susquehanna River have acted as physical barriers that have halted the spread of the higher densities and urban style development from Harrisburg, resulting in much of the County remaining rural in nature. In addition to their influences on human development patterns, these significant natural resources also create a habitat for diverse plant and animal life, provide valued open space, and lay the groundwork for a network of greenways and trails.

U.S. 11/15, which follows the Susquehanna River, and U.S. 22/322, which follows the Juniata River, are the most prominent transportation corridors in the County and carry the highest volumes of motorized traffic. U.S. 11/15 connects motorists with Gettysburg and points south, Carlisle and points west, and Wilkes-Barre and Williamsport to the east and north. U.S. 22/322 connects the region to Harrisburg and Hershey to the south and east, and State College to the north and west. Several state routes in the County provide east-west connections and primary north-south connections in the western part of the county. These include SR 34, SR 850, SR 74, SR 274, and SR 17. In many places, development has concentrated along these routes.

Summary of Demographics and Implications

Perry County underwent its initial settlement phase in the early 1800s. Many of the earliest settlers were farmers, who recognized that the valleys of the County contained fertile soils that are beneficial to agriculture. The County lost population between 1880 and 1930, which was possibly a result of urbanizing industrial areas draining rural areas as factories sought a viable workforce. Employment opportunities were more readily available in the expanding urban areas, and farming was becoming less labor intensive as a result of the new farm implements developed during the industrial revolution. Between 1930 and 1970, the growth rate of the County stabilized with a small but consistent upward trend. The decade from 1970 to 1980 produced a population explosion of 24.8 percent. Growth continued through 2000, but at a slower rate.
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Perry County’s year 2000 population of 43,602 is relatively small considering that it is distributed among 30 municipalities. The average population of a community in Perry County is 1,500 with a range of 123 to 5,085. Perry County’s population is smaller than many municipalities in the state. For example Harrisburg has a population of 48,950. The residents like the small population size and would prefer that the County remain rural. Chart 2-1 graphically shows the population growth of Perry County.

CHART 2-1
POPULATION OF PERRY COUNTY, 1950-2000

When looking at population trends occurring in individual municipalities within the County, all of the boroughs, with the exception of Bloomfield Borough, Liverpool Borough, and Millerstown Borough, experienced decreases in population between 1970 and 2000. All of the townships in the County experienced increases in population during this same time period. Carroll Township and Wheatfield Township experienced the greatest increases in population and also have the most people. Population projections adopted in 2007 as a part of the Perry County Comprehensive Plan show that all of the municipalities are expected to increase their population between 2000 and 2020. These trends are important to consider in conjunction with the local availability of trails, parks, recreational opportunities, and open space.

Although the population in the County increased by only 5.9% between 1990 and 2000, the number of housing units in the County increased by 11% during this same time period, with the greatest amount of housing growth occurring in the townships. This is reflective of decreasing household size and a shift in population from the boroughs of the County to the townships. The
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Future land use plans support development in and around the County’s boroughs where necessary infrastructure exists or can be easily extended. Recreational resources are one component of a community that enhances the quality of life for residents; encouraging community greening and the rehabilitation of parks and public spaces in urban environments can make these places more attractive and encourage reinvestment in the older urban centers of the County. Table 2-1 shows the municipal population trends from 1970-2000.

Increased development also threatens open space in Perry County. Between 2001 and 2010, an average of 1,787 acres of land was included in plans for residential subdivisions.

Table 2-1

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As in many areas of Pennsylvania, the population of Perry County is aging. Between 1990 and 2000, the total number of people in each age group containing people under the age of 45 decreased or stayed the same in relative proportion, and each age group containing people over the age of 45 increased in relative proportion (with the exception of the 60-64 age group that decreased in relative percentage from 4.3% to 4.1%). The implications of this trend are that it will be necessary for Perry County to provide parks and recreational opportunities that are geared toward all segments of the population, keeping in mind that the population is aging and that recreation is not only for children and young people. Focusing attention on greenways and trails, as well as passive recreational opportunities such as walking paths, opportunities for interpretive education, fishing, and areas for bird and wildlife watching, will ensure that resources are available to meet the needs of residents of all ages.

Employment opportunities in Perry County are limited and many residents travel to Harrisburg for employment. Recently, the County has undertaken several initiatives to increase its economic prosperity, including greater involvement of the Perry County Economic Development Authority, creation of the Perry County Economic Development Corporation, and the Business Campus One site in Penn Township. The Perry County Chamber of Commerce will also play an important role in increasing the county’s economic prosperity. Perry County’s rich heritage, agricultural resources, and three state parks present opportunities to increase tourism and heritage tourism, which can in turn spur the development of hospitality businesses and products.
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geread toward the outdoor enthusiast, thus helping to generate spending in the county and boost
the local economy.

Public Input Process and Findings

The foundation of this plan is the input received through an extensive public outreach process,
which included conducting 50 key person interviews, multiple committee meetings, and three
public participation meetings. The input from the key person interviews and public participation
meetings is discussed below.

Key Person Interviews

As part of the planning process, 50 individuals were interviewed to seek additional insight on
greenways, parks, recreation, and open space in the county. These people are considered
stakeholders and are intimately involved with or have extensive knowledge of greenways, parks,
recreation, and open space in Perry County.

Feedback received included:

Water Resources
1. Watersheds are in good shape and there is a good supply of groundwater.
2. Source water protection is needed.
3. Great network of streams that can form the foundation of greenways.
4. Stream buffering is needed.
5. Improve public accessibility to creeks, streams, and rivers.

Land Resources
1. Incredible tracts of forest land.
2. Great deal of raw land available (rolling hills).
3. Too many lots are being used for single family homes.
4. Overall disrespect for land by county residents and visitors.
5. Keep development in the eastern end of the county.
6. Improve accessibility to public lands and mountains.

Conservation
1. Residents have a good ethic for land conservation, and a true passion for their land.
2. The County has large amounts of state preserved lands.
3. Develop program/process to encourage landowners to preserve their land.
4. Agricultural runoff is a problem.
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Regulatory
1. Municipalities need to develop better ordinance to protect/manage the remaining undeveloped land.
2. Sloppy construction is occurring in the county.
3. Overall lack of zoning laws is a problem.
4. Development is adversely impacting natural resources.
5. Guide growth to areas that can support it.
6. Mandatory dedication ordinances are not in place in most municipalities to support the acquisition and development of parkland as new development occurs.

Funding
1. Municipalities need to be proactive with projects.
2. The state/county must continue to fund the conservation easement program.
3. Community recreation organizations are struggling with facility operations, as there is little public investment.
4. Mandatory dedication of parkland ordinances could be of benefit in Perry County as not many are in place.

People
1. Have to develop a common pursuit to rally people around such as water pollution.
2. Need implementation champions.
3. Youth involvement in environmental awareness.
4. Educate residents about their common roots in historical heritage and connections to agricultural ways of life.
5. Partnerships appear to be both attractive as well as of concern. Regional recreation could be explored within the reality that local governments are the policy making center of public service.

Parks
1. Little Buffalo State Park is a regional destination point. Public perception is that the park serves primarily visitors from outside the area.
2. Mindset that there is no immediate need for recreation.
3. Community organizations are important partners in the provision of local parkland.
4. Financing for park acquisition and development is a challenge.
5. Vandalism is a concern at many park sites.
6. Existing facilities such as swimming pools are aging and either need or will need cyclic repairs and revitalization. A stable source of funding is required to maintain the pools.
7. Most parks have not been planned and have evolved over time in response to pressing community needs such as need for sports facilities.
8. There is no county park system in place in Perry County.
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9. Some fine examples of citizens organizing to ensure community recreation facilities and services are in place in Perry County.

Recreation
1. Horseback riding is popular with both residents and visitors to Perry County and the State Forest land offers extensive riding trails.
2. Traditional youth sports (baseball, softball, soccer) are growing in the County and additional fields are needed.
3. Membership-based Sportsman’s Clubs are located throughout the County.
4. Six community swimming pools serve local residents plus the pool complex at Little Buffalo State Park draws users from the region.
5. Mindset that there is no immediate need for recreation among those who are not directly involved with recreation.
6. Organized recreation services are rooted in volunteers, sports, youth, and summer.
7. Community festivals operated by community organizations are valued here.
8. Use of the great outdoors for hunting, fishing, boating, hiking and so on is very important in Perry County.
9. Residents drive to surrounding counties for participation in specialized recreation such as skating, swimming, indoor sports leagues and winter recreation and fitness. There are no indoor recreation facilities in Perry County. The Lion’s Den in Juniata County and Twin Ponds in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties represents the closest type of community recreation centers. PA EXTREME, formed in May of 2006, is a competitive all-star cheer leading program located at 407 Juniata Parkway in the Millerstown area. In addition to offering cheer leading programs, the facility can be rented for other events.

Tourism
1. There appears to be consensus that tourism would be important to economic development in Perry County. Public opinion appears to be split between the desire to maintain the quiet rural nature of the county without attracting more people and traffic versus the recognition that the county could benefit from tourism.
2. Major tourism efforts are underway including the Route 15 Corridor of the Arts. It is just a fledging initiative that could grow over time.
3. Tourism appears to be focused on Dauphin County. Perry County appears to be viewed as “the backyard” of the Harrisburg area, not necessarily a bad thing: regionally people recognize that Perry County is a beautiful scenic area worthy of conservation and responsible public use and strategic planned growth to prevent the sprawl common elsewhere in the region.
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Community Issues Related to Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

In addition to the key person interviews, six public participation meetings were conducted as part of this plan. The first was on February 18, 2010 in the Perry Northeast Plan Area, the second was conducted on March 4, 2010 in the Perry West Plan Area, and the final meeting was conducted on March 11, 2010 in the Perry Southeast Plan area. In June of 2011 three additional public participation meetings were conducted to present the Plan recommendations to the public and achieve public by-in of the project. The meetings were held at the same locations as previously and feedback on the Plan was extremely positive. Residents who attended the meetings all expressed support of the Plan and were interested in championing the recommendations forward.

The input received from the first three meetings can be found in Appendix I of this Plan. The following represent key findings and common themes discussed at those meetings:

Perry Northeast – Oliver Township

Key Findings:

- Community Pools are important.
- Millerstown - 40 acre park on east side of Juniata River - hope to get a trail down to Newport on the east bank. Going to be building a bridge across the Cocolamus Creek.
- Playground in Newport is in bad shape - but partnerships lined up for donations/contributions. Approximately $250,000-$300,000 cost to renovate.
- There is a church group looking at putting in a skate park outside of Millerstown.
- Open spaces used for a variety of passive recreation opportunities.
- People from Maryland come to Perry County to ride horses. A connection between Marysville and Blain would make a nice trip.
- A lot of people have gardens, but we don't have a community garden - people might be interested in it. Would get people involved with being outside, agriculture, and exercise. Good with the "local foods" movement and the economy. FFA has a grant to do a community garden at the Perry County Fairgrounds this summer.
- Bicycling / Bicycle trails could develop in some of the less busy areas. There are clubs and groups, and a route for the Newport Library that traverses the county. Purpose is to raise money for the library.
- The two big rivers are such an asset - why aren't they used more? Need to focus on water safety and recreation.
- Preserve Open Space.
- Viable young farmers – Support farming.
- Guide development where there is infrastructure. Implement the County Comprehensive Plan.
- Better recognition of Historic Resources.
The Plan

Perry West – PADCNR Building

Key Findings:
- Opportunity for rail trail in region.
- Dark sky – Important to this area.
- Perry County is a destination for equestrian activities. Need organized equestrian clubs.
- Bridge improvement projects should include parking areas for access to streams.
- Better recognition of Historic Resources.
- Source Watershed Protection.
- Recreation – Snowmobile Trails, Hiking, Fishing, etc… (Promote and develop).
- Need public shooting range.
- Opportunity to develop mountain bike trail with DCNR.
- Prepare a bike plan that will identify which roads should have shoulders.
- Relocate Tuscarora Trail from Route 34 in Carroll Township.
- Develop an indoor recreational facility such as the Lion’s Den in Juniata County.
- Must include recreation opportunities for individuals with special needs.
- Must have a collaborative approach to recreation.
- Must have motorized and non-motorized trails.
- Intra-County trail from Marysville to Blain area.
- Focus on preserving blocks of land just not individual parcels.
- Large Amish influence in region.

Perry Southeast – Penn Township

Key Findings:
- Apple Tree Alley in Duncannon Borough could be an off-road trail for Appalachian Trail hikers.
- Land Dedication/Fee-in-Lieu of Ordinance and other regulatory requirements are important in this area of the county.
- Accesses to the Susquehanna River - Marysville and Duncannon Boroughs have access through the arches. Penn Township has access issues.
- Preservation of the remaining portions of the Sherman’s Valley Railroad – Potential rail trail.
- Develop a trail system in Wagoner’s Park in Wheatfield Township.
- Better recognition of Historic Resources.
- Access to Shermans Creek – River Trail/Greenway.
- Trail is needed between the Rye Township Community Park and Marysville Borough.
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- Collaboration with existing recreation organizations – Perry County Recreation Association.
- High demand for community pools.
- Need a map identifying access points to the creeks, rivers, and other recreational lands.
- Open space preservation.
- Encourage Tourism.
- A community garden is in operation at Mutzabaugh’s market in Penn Township.

Common Themes from the Public Participation Meetings

- Great water resources – How to promote, protect, access, and encourage use of these resources.
- Community pools play an important role in the county.
- School Districts have an important role in providing facilities for recreation.
- Equestrian activities are growing in the county. Must nurture this growing industry.
- Need an intra-county trail that offers a variety of experiences – Rail Trail or Shermans Creek.
- Need more overnight accommodations.
- Vandalism of park land and equipment is an issue.
- Lack of Funding for projects.
- Property being “posted” by new residents from out of the county.
- Collaboration between public and private recreation providers.
- Preserve Open Space.
- Shermans Creek is an important/underutilized recreation resource in the county.
- Historic Preservation.
- Tourism.
- Must plan for roadway improvements to accommodate bikers.

Project Blueprint

The project Blueprint represents the “How To” part of establishing a coordinated county-wide greenways, parks, recreation, and open space network in Perry County. The shape and form of the Plan has been developed from input from the public with refinements from the steering committee and county staff. It begins by identifying county values which represent the heart and soul of Perry County, and what it should look like in the future. They are also instrumental in developing the Mission and Vision Statements, and ultimately the Project Blueprint.
The Plan

Plan Values

1. Retain and Promote the County’s Scenic Beauty.
2. Retain the Rural Character of the County.
3. Increase Outdoor Recreation Opportunities.
4. Increase Family-Oriented Activities.
5. Respect of Private Property Rights.
8. Protect the County’s Natural Resources.
10. Celebrate, Support, and Encourage Volunteerism.

Perry County: A Haven of Rural Tranquility

From the fertile agricultural valley in western Perry County to the Susquehanna River, Perry County contains exceptional agricultural soils, water quality, acres upon acres of verdant forests, four-season scenic beauty, abundant wildlife, high quality of life among its small towns and remote communities, including premiere outdoor recreation on state, local and private lands and public waterways and a vibrant arts and cultural heritage in its charming villages and towns.

Located between Harrisburg and State College in a setting defined by its mountains, rivers and streams, Perry County is a haven of peaceful scenic beauty and rural neighborliness. For decades, Perry County was one of only two counties in Pennsylvania without a permanent traffic light. However, as development slowly crept into Perry County over the years the need to safely move vehicles along the County’s busy roadways required the installation of a traffic light in Marysville Borough on Route 11/15. The traffic light signals more than when to stop and go. It also serves as a reminder that the way of life in Perry County is slowly yet inescapably changing. The current recession is providing Perry County with the time necessary to plan and position the county and local government to meet the challenges of future development that will return when the economy resurges in the future.

The Perry County Way of Life

The people of Perry County treasure living “off the beaten path”. They prefer having the tranquility of nature and the rural communities to the hustle and bustle associated with conveniences like shopping malls and employment centers. When faced with the choice of having amenities nearby vs. driving into the Harrisburg area, most residents would choose the drive. With nearly nine out of ten residents living in Perry County for over 15 years, the residents are strongly rooted in tradition. A major part of that tradition is centered on a way of life that incorporates the enjoyment of the great outdoors. In other areas where hunting and fishing are an event to be planned and scheduled, people experience such outdoor recreation as part of their
The Plan

everyday life. To the present day, school staff reports students engaging in outdoor recreational activities before and after school. Families report three and four generations getting together for outdoor pursuits such as annual hunting events.

Conservation First

Overwhelmingly, the public participation process found that conservation of natural resources and the scenic beauty of Perry County ranked first in priority in the development of this parks, recreation, greenway and open space plan.

Long ago, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognized the importance of the natural resources of Perry County and assembled 67,000 acres of land forever preserved as state parks, game lands and forests. This land occupies about twenty percent of Perry County and is available for recreational use year round. Many of the best hunting grounds, finest fishing streams and grandest views in the state are found in Perry County. One of the rarest and most beautiful of resources is found here: bright starry skies at night. Unparalleled views of the stars on a dark night are among the most threatened and fragile of natural features. Development and lights can forever diminish the stark beauty of Perry County’s star-filled skies.

The conservation of important natural resources and their availability for public access and responsible recreational use is of the utmost importance for this plan. Land conservation is best accomplished through sound planning at the state, county, regional and local levels of government and implemented through a variety of methods that includes acquisition, partnerships, easements, transfers of development rights and other methods.

Connections are Vital

Once again the Commonwealth recognized the value of Perry County in connections, conservation and heritage preservation by establishing three mega greenways that traverse Perry County and connect to the larger region beyond. These greenways are the Susquehanna Greenway, the Mainline Canal Greenway, and the Kittatinny Ridge (Blue Mountain) Greenway. The Appalachian Trail also crosses Perry County. These include both land and water trails that conserve natural and cultural features distinctive to Perry County. With miles of trails, outdoor enthusiasts find endless opportunities for hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and ATV riding in Perry County. In a public opinion survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, four out of five respondents from the area that included Perry County agreed that greenways and trails increase property values and that more should be built. Greenway and trail connections provide corridors for wildlife, non-motorized transportation and access for the top recreational activities in Perry County: walking and cycling.
The Plan

Recreation Next: Active Healthy Living

In addition to the three state parks, game lands and forests, Perry County has 26 municipal or quasi-public parks and recreation facilities with 621 acres that are close to home. Facilities include ball fields, game courts, outdoor swimming pools, picnic areas, paths, and playgrounds. For recreational pursuits that require specialized facilities such as skating rinks, fitness centers, indoor swimming pools, gymnastics and sports training facilities, the residents travel to the Harrisburg area, Juniata County, and even State College. More parkland and recreation facilities in communities are needed to serve increasing participation in sports as well as to engage people in lifelong active healthy living. Research shows that the closer parks are to where people live and the more facilities that are in the parks, the more often people use them to enjoy active healthy living.

While there is a sense of active engagement in the outdoors here, computers, videos, smart phones, and social media are diverting people of all ages, but particularly children and youth, toward passive lifestyles. The alarming statistics on lack of physical activity leading to disease and premature death are creeping in here. Obesity among children and youth is higher than the state average. Recreation is a powerful tool in combating a sedentary way of life and in establishing lifelong habits of active healthy living. Overall, Perry County is ranked 39th in healthy living among Pennsylvania’s 67 counties.

Recreation is an essential public service. It provides the means to address major social problems such as the obesity epidemic, the increasing isolation of society, and the need for a sense of community. Parks and other recreation opportunities that are “close to home” for all citizens are a top concern expressed among community leaders and citizens. Eighteen of the thirty municipalities have at least one municipal park. Most of the parks are small and a challenge to maintain by the local municipalities. Public schools could be the hub of close-to-home recreation by providing both facilities and services, but interviews with the school districts found that they are stretched thin, making facilities available as they can accommodate. They do not have enough land, recreation facilities, or staff to meet public recreation needs, nor do they view recreation as a primary mission.

Beyond Fun and Games: Economic Value of Recreation and Conservation

Study after study shows that people value living next to parks and protected forestlands. Studies show that where open space is limited, land values adjacent to permanently protected lands are higher, and in some cases up to 35% more. Higher land values, in turn, translate into higher property taxes for the municipality.

A 2010 study by Penn State University found that visitors to Little Buffalo State Park contributed $551,300 to the local economy through their spending associated with their visits to the park. About 81 jobs are associated with Little Buffalo State Park.
The Plan

Data from this study showed a return of investment of $9.63 for every taxpayer dollar invested into a state park. Outdoor recreation is an important part of Pennsylvania’s tradition, with 3.947 million wildlife watchers and 1.520 million anglers and hunters. Tourism is Pennsylvania’s second most economically significant industry sector, following agriculture. In 2006, spending associated with wildlife watching in Pennsylvania amounted to $1.4 billion in retail sales, over $2.6 billion for lodging, transportation, equipment and supplies, and generated $880 million in salaries, wages and business owners’ income. State parks and forests are key items in most visitor and convention bureau publications as major attractions. In the 1999 Pennsylvania Outdoor Travelers Profile and Activities Analysis, it was found that about one in five of Pennsylvania’s leisure tourists travel for the primary purpose of outdoor recreation, and that outdoor recreation was the fastest growing segment of tourism. Direct expenditures for outdoor recreation are about 33% of Pennsylvania’s leisure travel spending.

Attracting Business and Jobs

People desire to live in communities with outdoor recreation amenities. Workers are making job choices based on quality of life factors, and studies show that people rank parks, recreation, and open space amenities as the most important quality-of-life factors. Even retirees are showing that available recreation opportunities are a primary factor in their choice of retirement location.

Act Now, Act in Partnership

Perry County Commissioners have demonstrated their commitment to planning through the development of the County Comprehensive Plan and this Parks, Recreation Greenway and Open Space Plan. They have engaged the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission staff to work on these and other planning projects. The Planners provide countywide planning services through the review of local development plans, participation in regional planning initiatives, and long range planning for the wide array of planning components from land use and transportation to infrastructure and natural and historic resources. However, this is an excessive workload for only a limited number of hours that equate to only about a half-time planner when the extent of open space and quality of resources is at stake.

No municipality has a community planner or a parks and recreation professional on staff. As development pressures resurge when the economy rebounds municipalities are likely to look increasingly to Perry County for planning assistance, creating an even larger workload for the small operation. The participation of the municipalities in open space, parks and recreation planning is essential based upon how government works in Pennsylvania. The municipalities have the real power, enforcement and leveraging tools regarding the location, character and timing of development. It is evident that while the County would like to support and encourage those efforts, the County Government operates with austere finances that limit the resources available for staffing.
The Plan

The text box shows the factors that are needed for developing successful greenways, the heart of this plan. It is essential for Perry County to continue its commitment to planning by providing adequate resources for supporting the critical workload of implementing the recent county plans over the next ten years.

Perry County alone cannot accomplish all that needs to be done. Partnerships are essential. There is already a force of conservation organizations, land trusts, trail enthusiasts and outdoor recreation devotees with a common interest in sustaining Perry County’s tremendous resources as well as in providing close-to-home recreation opportunities. Harnessing these interests into productive partnerships, to work strategically and collaboratively on priority actions, could have a significant impact.

Factors of Successful Greenways

The following factors have been found to be essential components of successful greenway planning efforts. Perry County and its partners can use these factors in organizing for the implementation of the Parks, recreation Greenways and Open Space Plan.

1. Broad based collaboration with diverse stakeholders.
2. Clear multi-faceted goals that attract a wide constituency.
3. Focus greenway and open space planning on natural and cultural resources as well as scenic value.
4. Trained professionals guide planning and implementation.
5. Skilled, visionary and collaborative leadership needed to build consensus among multiple interest groups.
6. Cultivation of a broad base of interest and involvement.
7. Effective prices and organization are in place to make involvement meaningful and satisfying.
8. Adequate resources are needed to support continued collaboration. This includes an institutional structure as well as funding. What a group is able to produce depends on financial, human and informational resources.

While public sentiment favors small government, investing in staff and partnerships now to work in a concentrated, collaborative fashion over the next ten years will yield benefits. In the Commonwealth’s public opinion survey for the state outdoor recreation plan, four out of five respondents in the Perry County area stated that municipalities in their area should join together

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The Plan

to form a parks and recreation department. They also believe that programs should be available in community parks and that the municipalities should get help in developing parks and recreation plans. The results of concentrated, intensive planning and outreach is likely to have a payback worth millions of dollars, help to retain the high quality of life and preserve open space and Perry County’s character that could be in place a hundred years from now.

The adoption of this plan is not then end – it is the beginning of an important era in which Perry County will act strategically and in collaboration with other public and private partners. Together their goal will be to conserve the natural and cultural resources as well as to provide opportunities for citizens to engage in active healthy living through recreation that are the hallmark of the way of life in Perry County.

In summary, the direction of this plan is to focus on the protection of natural resources, investing in parks, advancing connections of Perry County through a countywide greenway and trail system, working with the municipalities to provide technical support, and building partnerships to implement the plan.

Mission Statement

The mission of Perry County government is to promote the health, safety and welfare of all Perry County citizens. We are committed to sound land use planning, working with public and private sector partners to preserve our rural character, conserve our agricultural and natural resources, establish a thriving economy, and provide the highest quality public recreation opportunities possible in a fiscally responsible manner.

Vision Statement

The following represents the County’s recreation vision. It was developed through input from the public, steering committee and county staff:

In 2020, the citizens in Perry County continue to enjoy a way of life rooted in our rural heritage. Open spaces continue to be conserved, and natural resources, agriculture, and recreation are integral to the fabric and character of the County and provide places of respite and beauty. Our natural, recreational, cultural, artistic, and historical assets offer enriching experiences, enjoyment, fun, health and economic benefits for people who live, work, and visit Perry County. Greenways and trails connect people to the land and water and provide corridors for wildlife, transportation and recreation. Residents and visitors are both aware of recreation opportunities and engaged in active healthy lifestyles in the great outdoors. Citizens are stewards of conservation and strong advocates for recreation and continuance of our rural way of life.
The Plan

Project Blueprint Development

There are two overall activities driving the successful implementation of this Plan; the first is the Plan must be adopted by the Perry County Board of Commissioners, and the second is the creation of an implementation organization. It was widely recognized by the Committee that without the two aforementioned activities the Project Blueprint and this Plan cannot move forward. The Project Blueprint features eight key strategies for improving the quality of life in Perry County through greenways, parks, recreation and open space. They were developed through input from the public and committee, county staff, and the mission and vision statements; however, in order to understand the importance that each strategy has in the County, the Committee was asked to rank them as to their value in implementing this Plan. The eight Project Blueprint strategies were prioritized in the following order most important to important:

PS1 - Conserve Land and Water Resources, and Promote Activities that Contribute to the Ecological Health of the County.
PS2 - Protect the County’s Scenic Character and Rural Lifestyle.
PS3 - Provide Assistance and Outreach to Municipalities and Private Sector Partners.
PS4 - Establish Partnerships to Promote and Implement Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.
PS5 - Expand Existing Recreation Programs.
PS6 - Link the County through the Development of Greenways and Trails.
PS7 - Provide New and Enhance Existing Recreation Facilities.
PS8 - Promote Tourism and Compatible Economic Development.

The following further develops the Project Blueprint into plan strategies, goals, polices, and projects:

Priority Strategy #1:

Conserve Land and Water Resources, and Promote Activities that Contribute to the Ecological Health of the County

PS1 - Recommendation #1 – Protect Land and Water Resources, and Open Space

PS1 - Recommendation #2 – Support the development of youth programs that support environmental awareness through the County Conservation District and/or the school districts

Priority Strategy #2:

Protect the County’s Scenic Character and Rural Lifestyle

PS2 - Recommendation #1 – Encourage local municipalities to adopt ordinances that protects the Dark Sky of the County
The Plan

PS2 - Recommendation #2 – Agricultural Preservation

PS2 - Recommendation #3 - Encourage and support local municipalities to adopt a Timber Harvest Ordinance

PS2 - Recommendation #4 – Support the adoption of zoning in municipalities that are located in the targeted growth areas

PS2 – Recommendation #5 - Enhance Public Spaces

Priority Strategy #3:

Provide Assistance and Outreach to Municipalities and Private Sector Partners

PS3 – Recommendation #1 - Develop educational meetings to educate local officials on the importance of adopting sound land use planning tools (Comprehensive Plan, Park and Recreation Plan, Act 537 Plan, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, and Zoning Ordinance)

PS3 – Recommendation #2 - Develop an Education and Outreach Effort for Private Landowners Regarding the Recreational Use of Land

PS3 – Recommendation #3 - Educate the public on the need for recreation and change their mindset that there is no need for recreation in the County

PS3 – Recommendation #4 - Partner and collaborate with the School Districts to develop environmental education classes and field trips that promote environmental awareness

Priority Strategy #4:

Establish Partnerships to Promote and Implement Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

PS4 – Recommendation #1 - Establish the Perry County Partnership in Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) by creating the Perry County Recreation Committee (PCRC)

PS4 – Recommendation #2 - Vest the responsibility for managing the operational and administrative functions of the PCRC with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission or other local organization

PS4 – Recommendation #3 - Encourage the municipalities to plan and work on a regional basis rather than as autonomous jurisdictions
The Plan

PS4 – Recommendation #4 - Create a WEB site to promote parks, recreation, greenways, trails and open space conservation as well as the plan and its implementation

PS4 – Recommendation #5 - Work with the Juniata Clean Water Partnership and the Conservation District in developing outreach and educational programs to increase knowledge and expertise related to greenways and conservation

PS4 – Recommendation #6 - Consider obtaining a Circuit Rider with a grant from PADCNR

PS4 – Recommendation #7 - PCRC should coordinate with the Perry County Historical Society to define historic and cultural interpretation opportunities and develop interpretative signage and explore other means of presenting the history and culture of the County to the public

PS4 – Recommendation #8 - Work with surrounding counties to ensure greenways and trails connections are made creating inter-county greenways and trails

PS4 – Recommendation #9 - Establish Partnerships to Promote Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space:

1. Continue to preserve prime agricultural land and important forested areas through public and private programs and partnerships:
   a. Support the continued funding of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program by the state and county
   b. Support the Forestry Legacy Program as a way to preserve important forested areas and promote better forest management.

PS4 – Recommendation #10 - Develop a formal process where community recreation organizations can collaborate on fundraising and volunteer coordination:
   a. Develop a recognition program to recognize volunteers
   b. Public Pool communities should form an alliance to share information, programming ideas, and resources

Priority Strategy #5:

Expand Existing Recreation Programs

PS5 – Recommendation #1 – Develop On-Road Bicycling Loops
The Plan

PS5 – Recommendation #2 - Improve accessibility to the county’s major streams and rivers for recreation purposes, including fishing, floating, and swimming

PS5 – Recommendation #3 - Encourage local municipalities in designated growth areas to prepare a Park and Recreation Plan and adopt a recreation land dedication/fee-in-lieu of land dedication ordinance

PS5 – Recommendation #4 - Plan for and develop a public shooting range.

PS5 – Recommendation #5 - Work with DCNR to develop a mountain bike trail in the Tuscarora State Forest

PS5 – Recommendation #6 – Increase access points to the Shermans Creek for floating, fishing, and other water related recreation opportunities

PS5 – Recommendation #7 - Support the development of recreation plans, and park master plans for those municipalities that have undeveloped parkland, or need to improve their existing facilities

PS5 – Recommendation #8 - Develop a community gardens program in the developed areas of the County to allow residents to enjoy open space and outdoor activity

Priority Strategy #6:

Link the County through the Development of Greenways and Trails

PS6 - Recommendation #1 – Develop Greenways to Protect Linear Features and Promote Recreation

PS6 - Recommendation #2 – Commission a Committee to determine the feasibility of developing the Shermans Creek Greenway starting at the headwaters of Shermans Creek and terminating at its confluence with the Susquehanna River

PS6 - Recommendation #3 – Support shorter greenways that connect the Mega-Greenways to the Shermans Creek Greenway to public and private park and recreation areas to trails

PS6 - Recommendation #4 - Coordinate with Adjoining Counties in Developing an Inter-County Greenway System

PS6 - Recommendation #5 - Link the County through Greenways and Trails:
   a. Identify equestrian trails and trail heads to serve the burgeoning equestrian industry in the County.
The Plan

b. Plan for the development of the Shermans Creek Water Trail.
c. Relocate the Tuscarora Trail from RT 34 in Carroll Township.
d. Develop an intra-county trail from Marysville to Blain.
e. Develop a multi-use trail along the Juniata River from the Millerstown Community Park to Newport Borough which provides access to the Juniata River.
f. Support the development of Apple Tree Alley Trail in Duncannon Borough. This could trail could also act as an off street trail for the Appalachian Trail.
g. Develop a trail along Fishing Creek that connects the Rye Township Community Park with Marysville Borough.
h. Plan for an equestrian/pedestrian rail trail from Duncannon/Newport boroughs to New Bloomfield to the Tuscarora State Forest. This trail could also be used by the Amish as a transportation corridor in the western part of the County.
i. Build upon the existing trail network in the Tuscarora Sate Forest and State Gamelands.
j. Complete the Tuscarora Wilds roadway connection.
k. Incorporate view sheds into the network of trails.

PS6 - Recommendation #6 - Develop better trail maps and trail wayfinding signs throughout the County.
PS6 - Recommendation #7 - Plan for additional snowmobile, and other motorized and non-motorized trails.
PS6 - Recommendation #8 - Develop a Hub and Spoke Approach to Trails

PS6 - Recommendation #9 – Relocate the Tuscarora Trail from an on-road trail to an off-off trail for a 10 mile length on PA 74, between PA 74 and McClure’s Gap. This gap was identified in State’s Outdoor recreation Plan (www.paoutdoorrecplan.com). PA 74 is not walker friendly and hikers are experience dangerous conditions along that roadway

Priority Strategy #7:

Provide New and Enhance Existing Recreation Facilities

PS7 – Recommendation #1 - Fix what you have! – Existing Park Maintenance
PS7 – Recommendation #2 - Design and Renovate Parks for Low Maintenance
PS7 – Recommendation #3 – Add Parkland
PS7 – Recommendation #4 –Maintain and Enhance Swimming Pools
The Plan

PS7 – Recommendation #5 - Indoor Recreation

PS7 – Recommendation #6 - Expand access to rivers and streams

PS7 – Recommendation #7 - Close-to-Home Parks and Recreation

PS7 – Recommendation #8 - Develop a funding strategy for parks, recreation and open space over the immediate, short and long term

PS7 – Recommendation #9 - Consider appropriating additional funds in the Perry County budget for more time from the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission to manage the implementation of the Greenways, Parka, Recreation, and Open Space Plan

PS7 – Recommendation #10 - Consider developing a funding program to assist municipalities in planning and implementing parks, recreation and open space conservation projects and programs

PS7 – Recommendation #11 - Recommendation - Establish Mandatory Dedication of Land Ordinances

PS7 – Recommendation #12 - Use the land development process to attain parkland, recreation facilities, and trail goals

Priority Strategy #8:

Promote Tourism and Compatible Economic Development

PS8 – Recommendation #1 - Outdoor Recreation

PS8 – Recommendation #2 - The Arts, Heritage and Special Events

PS8 – Recommendation #3 - Make recreation and conservation a part of the County’s overall planning and economic development strategies

PS8 – Recommendation #4 - Pursue heritage and outdoor recreation tourism as a major industry of Perry County

PS8 – Recommendation #5 - As the economy rebounds, consider undertaking a county bond issue to fund park, recreation and open space projects

PS8 – Recommendation #6 - Consider assisting municipalities with exploring the potential to generate funds through a one-quarter to one-half percent of the Earned Income Tax to preserve open space
The Plan

PS8 – Recommendation #7 - Retaining a part-time or contracted grant writer to pursue federal, state and foundation funds would help Perry County to obtain additional funding for parks, recreation and open space

Priority Assessment, Opportunities, Challenges, and Recommendations

This Plan, when coupled with the Perry County Comprehensive Plan, will provide the Perry County Board of Commissioners, the Perry County Planning Commission, and local elected and appointed officials with the necessary tools and recommendations to advance sound land use and recreation polices at the county and local levels for years to come. The goals, recommendations, and policy statements in this Plan have been developed from public input and represent real life issues and needs of Perry County residents and recreation providers in the county. Plan Map 1 graphically shows the location of proposed Greenways and other recreational facilities proposed in the County.

Priority Strategy #1:

Conserve Land and Water Resources, and Promote Activities that Contribute to the Ecological Health of the County

Assessment – Throughout the development of this Plan the public, committee, and county staff emphasized that the conservation of the County’s land and water resources was a priority. Bisecting through the mountain ranges and fertile farmland is a series of large rivers and small creeks and streams. As the County continues to develop, the protection and management of these resources will become extremely important to ensure adequate supply of potable water resources for human and livestock populations, and a safe and healthy source for water related recreation. This begins by ensuring proper development and stormwater controls are adopted by local municipalities, wetlands are protected from development, stream discharges are being adhered to, and important agricultural land is protected and preserved.

Opportunities – Perry County is in position to provide educational and technical assistance to local municipalities and property owners as to the value in developing appropriate development regulations, preservation of agricultural land, developing a recreation agenda that compliments the County’s land and water resources.
Challenges – Perry County has not seen the level and impact that development has on the environment as other counties have.

- The majority of the townships in Perry County do not have an appropriate community planning policy on the protection of land and water resources.

- With the exception of a few small public water systems, county residents have not been exposed to large scale rationing or groundwater pollution that affects potable water resources.

- The agricultural industry has a rich and sustained history in the County. Convincing farmers to change farming techniques to conserve water and protect water resources takes a very long and sustained effort.

- Developing recreation programs, and programs that contribute to the ecological health of the County, will require education and outreach.

PS1 - Recommendation #1 – Protect Natural and Water Resources, and Open Space

Promote appropriate strategies in the Perry County Comprehensive Plan that supports the protection of the county’s natural and water resources, open space, and provide technical assistance to the local municipalities.

Actions:

a. Encourage and Support Local Development of Appropriate Land Use Regulations to Protect the County’s Natural Features and Rural Lifestyle – Local municipalities would identify the appropriate level of regulations needed for their community; however, this Plan strongly encourages the adoption of natural features and water resource protection regulations, and an open space development option to the conventional subdivision.

b. Water Resource Protection – Perry County has an abundance of small creeks, along with larger creeks and rivers; however, three major waterways, the Susquehanna River, Juniata River, and Shermans Creek are recognized as the top waterways in the county. These creeks, streams, and rivers are all impacted by common everyday needs and activities including potable water use, sewage treatment, agricultural runoff, and commercial and industrial withdraws. They also provide a source of recreation in the form of fishing, boating, canoeing, and rafting. Accessibility, or lack thereof, was also identified as a concern, especially to the Susquehanna and Juniata River where access is obstructed by the Norfolk Southern Railroad.

Actions:
The Plan

a. **Support and encourage the development of stream and surface water buffer regulations in local zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances (SALDO)** – Stream and surface water buffering can be accomplished through a conservation overlay district in a local zoning ordinance, or a general buffering requirement in a SALDO.

b. **Utilize Best Management Practices (BMP) to control stormwater runoff** - Best Management Practices to control stormwater runoff from land development and agricultural runoff should be used throughout Perry County to protect the water quality of the local creeks and streams, and larger rivers.

c. **Review Chapter 93 classifications of streams and creeks in the County** – Overtime, as water quality improves and development pressures increase, the need to reevaluate the classification of streams to ensure continued water quality improvement must occur. Shermans Creek is an example of a stream that has been evaluated for a change in classification as a result of development occurring in eastern Perry County. The change of classification for Shermans Creek was spearheaded by the Shermans Creek Conservation Association.

d. **Waterway Clean-up Days** – Over the years Perry County waterways have experienced illegal dumping, which has adverse impacts not just on water quality but also the overall beauty of a stream, creek, or river. The County should assist in developing partnerships between local organizations, residents, and municipalities to identify illegal dumping sites within the county’s waterways and schedule clean-up days to remove debris and garbage. Clean-up parties should be recognized in the local papers for their efforts. Food, t-shirts, and other resources should be given to the clean-up parties.

e. **Update Stormwater Management Ordinances/Develop Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans** – In response to the impacts of accelerated stormwater runoff resulting from land development, in 1978 the state enacted Pennsylvania’s Stormwater Management Act (Act 167). The Act requires counties to prepare and adopt watershed based stormwater management plans—and requires municipalities to adopt and implement ordinances to regulate development consistent with these plans. To date no Act 167 Plans have been prepared for watersheds in Perry County.

**PS1 - Recommendation #2** – Support the development of youth programs that support environmental awareness through the County Conservation District and/or the school districts

**Priority Strategy #2:**

**Protect the County’s Scenic Character and Rural Lifestyle**
The Plan

Assessment – The protection of the county’s rural character and lifestyle was identified as being very important and highly valued by the residents of the county. Perry County is fortunate in that it has a broad cross-section of natural and physical/social features that contribute to its rural character. The natural features include steep slopes associated with the mountain ranges that traverse the county, streams and rivers of all sizes, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor activities, a growing Amish and Mennonite population, large forested and woodland tracts, and broad valleys dedicated to agriculture. Physical and social features include the quaint boroughs, historic amenities, accessibility to local and nationally recognized trails and public lands, and a passionate connection to one’s land and family heritage.

Opportunities – Perry County has not experienced the development pressure that Dauphin and Cumberland Counties have which affords an opportunity for county and local officials to work together to develop a plan to retain the rural character and lifestyle of the county. Since there are vast amounts of undeveloped land in the county, local municipalities need to focus on ways to retain the rural landscape and lifestyle through development of sound land use planning strategies. Local buy-in from residents in supporting sound land-use is essential. This can only be done through an inclusive approach by including the residents in the local decision making process.

Challenges – Perry County’s geographic location adjacent to the Harrisburg Metropolitan Area lends itself to future development, especially in the southeast quadrant of the County and within the Routes 11/15 and 22/322 corridors.

- The majority of the townships in Perry County do not have a zoning ordinance, which regulates the use of land, or appropriate regulations, such as natural and historic features protection, and open space and agricultural preservation requirements. These regulations protect the county’s natural and physical features that form the spine of the county’s desire to protect its rural character and lifestyle.

- Land prices and taxes in Perry County are less than those in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties. As the remaining large tracts of land are developed in Dauphin and Cumberland Counties developers are beginning to look towards Perry County for development opportunities. This trend is occurring in Marysville Borough, Penn Township, and Watts Township.

- Residents of the county have an aversion to regulations, especially regulations that control how they can use their own land. The deep rooted passion for the free use of their land can and often does result in local elected officials backing away from land use regulations that would protect the County from the very thing residents are concerned about – development.

- Development occurring in Perry County is typically road frontage development on larger lots. This poses two problems. The first, road frontage development affects the natural beauty of the County by creating a wall of homes along the road frontage. These homes
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typically block the view of pristine natural areas and historic structures. Secondly, accessibility to public water and public sewer infrastructure is limited in the county; therefore, the majority of development requires lots greater than one acre. Large lot development creates a sense of open space and the people residing on these lots are typically not supportive of requiring public dollar expenditures to purchase or maintain public lands.

- Municipalities have limited financial resources to prepare comprehensive plans and land use ordinances.

PS2 - Recommendation #1 – Encourage local municipalities to adopt ordinances that protects the Dark Sky of the County

Actions:

a. Contact the International Dark Sky Association for information for educational material pertaining to the preparation and adoption of lighting ordinances. Their web site is: www.darksky.org

b. Contact the DCNR, specifically Cherry Spring State Park, and the Potter County Planning Commission to discuss the success of being certified as an International Dark Sky Park.

PS2 - Recommendation #2 – Agricultural Preservation – Agriculture activity has been and will continue to be an important part of people’s lives in Perry County. Either by actively farming or benefiting from the farming activity, agriculture in Perry County is here to stay. Therefore, it should be a priority to preserve farms through a variety of methods including public and private conservation easements, local zoning regulations, and private deed restrictions. It must be noted that private deed restrictions may be broken by future landowners if no one “with standing” is willing to engage in the legal challenge of upholding the deed restriction. It is advisable to always get legal advice and assistance on such matters.

Actions:

a. Use Public and Private Conservation Easements – The Agricultural Preservation Board should continue to purchase conservation easements in a manner that complies with their agricultural preservation plan. This can be accomplished through a combination of public funds and private easement donations. Private conservation easements, such as the easements purchased by the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy, should be purchased when funds and opportunities arise. Both approaches should try and build upon existing farms and preserved land to increase the total area of the holding and not sporadically preserve land throughout the county.
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b. **Foster Effective Agricultural Zoning** - Municipalities that have an abundance of prime agricultural soils and agricultural activity and are in the path of development should consider adopting zoning and effective agricultural protection requirements. The Perry County Planning Commission should encourage municipalities to adopt effective agriculture preservation ordinances and provide technical support. The adoption of effective agricultural zoning can be very divisive within a community. Local officials should ensure that there is sufficient support for such regulations, which can be accomplished through the development or update of a local municipal comprehensive plan.

c. **Promote the Use of Private Deed Restrictions** - Farmers and land owners in Perry County are very passionate about their property. Some farmers and landowners do not support public programs to preserve land; however, they do want to see their land continuously farmed or left undeveloped. Individuals not supportive of the public programs to preserve land can privately restrict the use of their land through private deed restrictions attached to the property deed that will limit the intensity and type of development that could occur on their property.

PS2 - Recommendation #3 - Encourage and support local municipalities to adopt a Timber Harvest Ordinance – The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code states that Forestry must be allowed in every district if zoning is adopted. If a municipality does not have a zoning ordinance, a single-purpose ordinance could be adopted to regulate timbering activities, including erosion and sedimentation control, skid roads, and road bonding. Forestry is just as important as agriculture is to the heritage of Perry County. Forested areas in the County are typically associated with steeper sloped areas, areas along creeks and streams, and on soils that are not highly productive for agricultural uses. Forested areas provide income from timbering; purify air and water, provide erosion and sedimentation control; provide wildlife habitat; and are a source of lumber for wood products and heating. Forested areas and wood lots also increase property values and help retain the rural character of the county.

Actions:

a. **Prevent new introductions of invasive plants and pests** – One of the most destructive forces to the county’s forested areas is invasive plants and pests. Invasive plants include the mile-a-minute weed, Japanese stilt grass, barberry, tree of heaven (Ailanthus), invasive honeysuckles, autumn olive, phragmites, Japanese knotweed, purple loosestrife and reed canary grass. We are all familiar with the destructive forces of the gypsy moth, but other invasive pests include the emerald ash borer, and the hemlock wooly adelgid that is impacting Hemlock trees across the Commonwealth, and specifically the old growth stand of Hemlock trees in the Tuscarora Sate Forest.

b. **Identify and Protect Old Growth Forested Areas and Encourage the Protection of those areas through Conservation Easements and Private Deed Restriction** – Over the last couple of centuries Pennsylvania has been timbered several times; however, there
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are pockets of old growth forests that still exist in Perry County. The old growth Hemlock stand in the Tuscarora State Forest is one example of an old growth forest. Fortunately, that stand is protected and managed by the PADCNR for all to enjoy. Other pockets of old growth forest on private property should be identified and protected through a collaborative effort between the local, county, state, and private organizations through the use of conservation easements and private deed restrictions.

PS2 - Recommendation #4 – Support the adoption of zoning in municipalities that are located in the targeted growth areas – The Perry County Comprehensive Plan recommends a growth strategy that encourages growth to occur where there is sufficient public infrastructure. This strategy is defined in Chapter XII of the Perry County Comprehensive Plan and graphically shown on Comprehensive Plan Map 12-1.

PS2 – Recommendation #5 - Enhance Public Spaces – New Bloomfield, Millerstown, and other communities have public squares. These spaces are the public face of the community and often locations for community celebrations and displays. It is important to maintain these public spaces at a high level, commensurate with community pride and initial public investment. In addition to public spaces, several communities have historic buildings such as train stations and hotels that speak to the history of the community. Preserving these important buildings and enhancing the public spaces associated with them is important to maintaining vibrant communities.

Actions:

a. **Undertake Beautification Projects** – Assess opportunities to enhance the visual aesthetic of the public square. Consider introducing flags or plantings that add color, fencing or granite curb to define the space, and amenities that relate to the public use. If area(s) for plantings exist, use materials that are low maintenance, urban tolerant, and provide large splashes of color such as perennials or ornamental grasses. Explore working with a local garden club or garden enthusiasts on maintenance of planting areas. Some communities plant a single evergreen that can be decorated during the Christmas season. If there is no physical central square, consider adding color to the square streetscape through the use of planters or hanging flower baskets or banners.

Many of the eastern Perry County communities are destinations on the Rt. 15 By-Way of the Arts, one of Pennsylvania’s seven Artisan Trails. Funded in part by Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and aided by the partnership of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. These trails utilize rural roadways as driving routes to guide visitors on artistic road trips. Beautification of public spaces and squares in these communities will enhance their status and appeal as a tourist destination. Communities may want to explore opportunities to incorporating art into public squares and parks to expand the offerings of public art available in a community. Work with local artists to explore opportunities for art in community spaces. Another resource for information
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about revitalization of older communities is the Pennsylvania Downtown Center, http://www.padowntown.org.

b. **Preserve historic buildings and features** - Train stations, hotels, canal remnants, railroad structures, mills, and covered bridges are important elements of Perry County’s past. Communities should work with the Perry County Historical Society to preserve worthy pieces of history and provide opportunities for interpretation. Where appropriate public access and interpretative signs should be incorporated into public space at the feature. An example of this is at the site of the Book’s Covered Bridge outside of Blain.

Priority Strategy #3:

**Provide Assistance and Outreach to Municipalities and Private Sector Partners**

**Assessment** – In order for this Plan to be fully implemented it will require the development of an educational program, and assistance and outreach to local official and landowners as to the tools available to protect land and water resources, develop greenways and trails, expand recreation facilities, and protect open space.

**Opportunities** – The County Planning and Conservation District staff are best aligned to provide the assistance and outreach required to implement this Plan. Opportunities to educated officials can occur at the conventions, scheduled outreach meetings, and speaking roles at private and public social gatherings.

**Challenges** – The single largest challenge to implementing an effective assistance and outreach program is County staff capacity and availability of staff to attend meetings, and willingness of local officials and the public to listen and accept the suggested recommendations.

**PS3 – Recommendation #1** - Develop educational meetings to educate local officials on the importance of adopting sound land use planning tools (Comprehensive Plan, Park and Recreation Plan, Act 537 Plan, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, and Zoning Ordinance).

**PS3 – Recommendation #2** - Develop an Education and Outreach Effort for Private Landowners Regarding the Recreational Use of Land.
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Action:

a. Significant frontage along these important water resources is on private land. Many landowners may have never considered allowing public access for fishing or paddling or have been deterred by concerns about their liability if a person is injured on their property.

Landowner outreach and education about the importance of providing public access to the rivers and streams could expand these opportunities in the County. This outreach should be accompanied by education material about Pennsylvania’s Recreation Use of Land and Water Act. This statute provides landowners who allow the public to use their land for recreation purposes at no charge, legal protection from liability claims. The Act limits a landowner’s liability for injuries experienced by people engaging in recreational activities on their land.

Another deterrent for landowners is pervasive littering that may accompany fishing. Fishermen from outside of the local area and county are notorious for leaving litter along stream banks, even on private property. Outreach to fisherman to educate them on the importance of a “carry-in/carry-out policy and fishing courtesy may address this situation. These outreach and education initiatives could be championed by the numerous sportsmen’s clubs in the County and the PA Fish & Boat Commission could be a partner in this endeavor.

PS3 – Recommendation #3 - Educate the public on the need for recreation and change their mindset that there is no need for recreation in the County.

PS3 – Recommendation #4 - Partner and collaborate with the School Districts to develop environmental education classes and field trips that promote environmental awareness.

Priority Strategy #4:

Establish Partnerships to Promote and Implement Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

Assessment - Perry County, a small rural county, operates as a lean organization dedicated to providing for the health, safety and welfare of the citizens. With 30 municipalities and four school districts along with over 10 percent of the land owned by the Commonwealth, the County is complex organizationally in terms of parks, recreation and open space with numerous organizations operating.
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independently. In addition to public governmental entities, private non-profit organizations such as the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy are working on related conservation and recreation efforts. About 80 to 85 percent of the county functions such as the justice system and nursing care are mandated by the Commonwealth leaving only a small portion of the organization and budget available for discretionary planning and implementation. There is no county park and recreation department nor any plans for establishing one. Municipalities operate largely independently as do the various recreation providers. School districts and municipalities also appear to operate independently. Consequently the provision of parks and recreational services is independent and fragmented with intermittent opportunities for collaboration.

**Opportunities** - Organizing to carry out greenways, parks, recreation, trails and open space actions over the next ten years will be critical in achieving the goals of this plan. County leadership can forge the formation and enhancement of public/private partnerships central to success in parks, recreation and open space in an area with limited staff and financial resources. The factors of successful large greenways elsewhere as shown in Table 2-2 is a useful guide to Perry County in achieving its own success and were used in the development of implementation strategies for the Perry County Greenways, Parks, Recreation and Open Space system.

Implementing the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan through public and private partnerships represents the major opportunity. Harnessing limited resources and partners with common interests will help to preserve the rural character of Perry County and enhance the quality of life here through parks and recreation. Creating the Perry County Park, Recreation and Open Space Board could be singularly important outcomes of this plan that will help the County achieve its goals. Finding and leveraging support and involvement of key stakeholders will help to generate alternative means of support. **Figure 2-1** presents roles and responsibilities for Perry County and its partners.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2-2</th>
<th>10 Factors for Successful Greenways as Perry County Organizational Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Comment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad based collaboration$^3$</td>
<td>Involvement of diverse stakeholders builds cooperation, shared goals, expertise and stability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-faceted goal-setting</td>
<td>Multiple and broad goals can meet the needs of a wide constituency while guiding them toward a common vision.$^4$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based upon broad cultural, natural and recreational resources.</td>
<td>Incorporating multiple use values is essential including the importance of a mix of natural resource conservation, historic preservation and the use of resources that does not degrade the value of the resources.$^5$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of professionals</td>
<td>Help to advance collaboration, alternative approaches, generating ideas, and building community support and capacity for implementation.$^6$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled and committed leadership</td>
<td>An effective leader, coordinator or facilitator supports a sustained collaborative effort to help pull people together in accomplishing projects and actions.$^7$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating a broad base of interest and involvement</td>
<td>Involvement of a strong base of support of diverse stakeholders over the extended time that greenway and open space plans are developed. A voluntary effort is more effective than a mandatory one. Coordination among agencies is essential.$^8$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective processes and organizational culture.</td>
<td>Processes are open and interactive, proactive rather than reactive. Paid staff that undertakes tasks help to prevent volunteer burnout.$^9$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate resources</td>
<td>Organizational structures and funding resources are required. Funding comes from multiple sources including government, non-profit organizations, private enterprise and individuals. Using the media and creating channels to educate and influence key elected officials are vital strategies.$^{10}$.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make visible small successful achievements.</td>
<td>Nothing succeeds like success. Accomplishments inspire further action and more participation. Taking small steps in relatively easily achieved steps builds trust and confidence.$^{11}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link conservation to economic development.</td>
<td>Successful projects list economic development as a goal.$^{12}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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$^9$ Ibid Wondolleck and Yaffe.

$^{10}$ Ibid. Searns 1995.

$^{11}$ Ibid. Ahern. 1995.

$^{12}$ Ibid.
PS4 – Recommendation #1 - Establish the Perry County Partnership in Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) by creating the Perry County Recreation Committee (PCRC).

Action:

a. Consider transitioning the Study Committee for this plan into the PCRC. Consider the following interests being represented in the PROS Committee: Perry County, the municipalities, conservation organizations, sportsmen’s clubs, the Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau, the Perry County Council on the Arts, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Main Line Greenway, Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, and Juniata Clean Water Partnership. **Figure 2-1** presents the organizational structure for plan implementation.

The purpose of the PCRC would be to serve as advisors, advocates and guides in the implementation of the Perry County Greenways, Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. Consider establishing sub-committees for Outdoor Recreation; Conservation; the Arts, Tourism and Special Events; and Close-to-Home Recreation. The sub-committee members would work on the implementation of project and programs related to their specific interests. Charge the PCRC with the responsibility of reviewing the Perry County Greenway, Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan annually. Evaluate progress, emerging opportunities and changing needs. Develop annual goals and actions for the PCRC to undertake. **Table 2-3** lists the roles and Responsibilities of the Perry County Partnership in Greenway, Parks, Recreation and Open Space.

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**Figure 2-1 Organizational Structure for PCRC Partnerships**
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### Table 2-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Roles and Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County Commissioners</td>
<td>Serve as leaders in the advancement of parks, recreation and open space and implementation of the plan. Establish goals and budgets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tri-County Regional Planning</td>
<td>Has the primary responsibility for implementation of the plan. To ensure that there is sufficient staff time and budget allocated for this purpose, additional funding of $50,000 to $60,000 annually would be allocated for professional planners’ time and materials, supplies, promotion and other expenses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities</td>
<td>Willing municipalities would work in partnership with Perry County in planning, development, managing and programming close-to-home parks, recreation facilities, greenways and trails and in open space conservation. They would work on creating multi-municipal and school district partnerships in recreation and conservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Districts</td>
<td>Willing school districts would partner with municipalities in their service area in advancing community educational/recreational/healthy active living projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCRC</td>
<td>Serve as advisors and advocates in plan implementation. The Commissioners would appoint the members who would institute an organizational structure with mission, roles and responsibilities. The Board would serve as a central core committee and establish an annual work program, meet quarterly and conduct an annual assessment of the plan accomplishments. Spin-off committees in outdoor recreation; the arts/events/tourism; conservation and close-to-home recreation would establish their goals and actions, coordinating with the PC-PROS Board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Profits</td>
<td>Work in the area of conservation with their capacity to act readily and generate support. Coordinate and provide programs, services, park and trail care and other tasks required to develop and sustain parks and recreation facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Sector</td>
<td>Undertake special projects and initiatives; provide donations and support, advocacy, negotiation, and maintenance/care of parks, facilities, trails and natural resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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PS4 – Recommendation #2 - Vest the responsibility for managing the operational and administrative functions of the PCRC with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission or other local organization.

Action:

a. Consider adding to the staff time for the planner assigned to Perry County to work on the administrative functions of the PROS Committee. As with other planning functions, the planner would be responsible for implementing policy and directive established by the County Commissioners. The planner would offer expertise and ideas for consideration to the Commissioners and the PROS Committee.

PS4 – Recommendation #3 - Encourage the municipalities to plan and work on a regional basis rather than as autonomous jurisdictions.

Action:

a. Greenways, parks, recreation, open space, and trails extend beyond geographical boundaries. The plan found that citizens relate more to school districts than to municipalities. In rural communities, school districts tend to be the organizing element for education and recreation. Although there appears to be very limited municipal/school district relationships, there also appears to be potential to build and expand these relationships. Consider undertaking one school-municipal parks and recreation partnership as a pilot project. This could include the development of a regional parks, recreation and open space plan for the municipalities within the particular school district.

PS4 – Recommendation #4 - Create a WEB site to promote parks, recreation, greenways, trails and open space conservation as well as the plan and its implementation.

Action:

a. This could be on the Perry County WEB site and be a link on municipal, conservation, arts, historic, visitor’s bureau and other related WEB sites. Designate the management of the WEB site as the responsibility of a specific person.

PS4 – Recommendation #5 - Work with the Juniata Clean Water Partnership and the Conservation District in developing outreach and educational programs to increase knowledge and expertise related to greenways and conservation.

Action:

a. The Juniata Clean Water Partnership received a grant for outreach and education that may be a source of assistance for Perry County either during the grant period or post-grant funding using the expertise and programs developed with the grant. Tap other
organizations such as the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy, Center for Rural Pennsylvania and others in developing outreach and public awareness programs. The goal would be to build capacity for park, recreation and conservation at the regional and local level. Consider at a minimum to hold an annual training session for municipal elected officials, planning commissions, EAC’s and park and recreation boards on conservation and greenways.

PS4 – Recommendation #6 - Consider obtaining a Circuit Rider with a grant from PADCNR.

Action:

a. The four years of funding helps support a full-time park, recreation and open space professional. The purpose is to develop and stabilize a regional park, recreation and open space program/system.

PS4 – Recommendation #7 - PCRC should coordinate with the Perry County Historical Society to define historic and cultural interpretation opportunities and develop interpretative signage and explore other means of presenting the history and culture of the County to the public.

PS4 – Recommendation #8 - Work with surrounding counties to ensure greenways and trails connections are made creating inter-county greenways and trails.

PS4 – Recommendation #9 - Establish Partnerships to Promote Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space:

Actions:

a. Continue to preserve prime agricultural land and important forested areas through public and private programs and partnerships.

b. Support the continued funding of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program by the state and county.

c. Support the Forestry Legacy Program as a way to preserve important forested areas and promote better forest management.
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PS4 – Recommendation #10 - Develop a formal process where community recreation organizations can collaborate on fundraising and volunteer coordination.

Actions:

a. Develop a recognition program to recognize volunteers.

b. Public Pool communities should form an alliance to share information, programming ideas, and resources.

Priority Strategy #5:

Expand Existing Recreation Programs

Assessment – Only three municipalities in Perry County have a functioning Park and Recreation Board. Their role is limited to maintaining existing parks within their township. They consist of no paid staff and have no budget other than to maintain their parks. As the population of the County grows there will be a need to expand recreational services provided by these recreation boards. Expansion does not mean buying land or other major capital improvements, it can consist of adding a holiday trip to New York City, or a day trip to Baltimore. These boards need to start thinking beyond their current role and begin planning for their future.

PS5 – Recommendation #1 – Develop On-Road Bicycling Loops.

Bicycling is becoming one of the most popular forms of transportation, recreation and exercise. Cyclists in Perry County can enjoy a variety of terrain and overall scenic beauty. Bicycle routes should consist of a loop or a series of loops where a cyclist can start anywhere and return to their starting point without traveling the same route. The combination of state and local roads in the County make this loop concept achievable, and the location of the nine boroughs and the associated transportation network are great starting points for the beginner cyclists to the most advanced. Along the way cyclists can enjoy parks, historic features, Amish lifestyle, pristine streams, agricultural land, and soaring mountains.

Actions:

a. Identify local bicycling clubs as partners to the loop project.
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b. Identify preferred routes and communicate those routes to PennDOT so when roadway improvements are planned appropriate improvements can be designed and constructed to accommodate bicyclist.

c. The County or other organization should communicate with the Harrisburg Transportation Study (HATS) which roadways have been identified as on-road cycling loops. These loops can be incorporated into the Region’s Long Term Transportation Plan.

PS5 – Recommendation #2 - Improve accessibility to the County’s major streams and rivers for recreation purposes, including fishing, floating, and swimming.

PS5 – Recommendation #3 - Encourage local municipalities in designated growth areas to prepare a Park and Recreation Plan and adopt a recreation land dedication/fee-in-lieu of land dedication ordinance.

PS5 – Recommendation #4 - Plan for and develop a public shooting range.

PS5 – Recommendation #5 - Work with DCNR to develop a mountain bike trail in the Tuscarora State Forest.

PS5 – Recommendation #6 – Increase access points to the Shermans Creek for floating, fishing, and other water related recreation opportunities.

PS5 – Recommendation #7 - Support the development of recreation plans, and park master plans for those municipalities that have undeveloped parkland, or need to improve their existing facilities.

PS5 – Recommendation #8 - Develop a community gardens program in the developed areas of the County to allow residents to enjoy open space and outdoor activity.

Priority Strategy #6:

Link the County through the Development of Greenways and Trails

Assessment – Perry County lacks a coordinated trail system that interconnects major trails, such as the Appalachian Trail and Tuscarora Trail with other smaller regional trails that serve the local and regional community. The county’s boroughs are the centers of commercial and social activity in the county. They tend to be pedestrian oriented and have local parks and recreation programs, and are strategically located throughout the entire county. This offers an opportunity to develop a trail system that
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radiates out of the boroughs and connects to other visible recreation resources in the county, such as the Susquehanna River, Juniata River, Little Buffalo State Park, Tuscarora State Forest, and school district campuses. The County is also fortunate to have historic features such as the old canal, iron furnace, covered bridges, and older historic homes and barns that can be connected by a pedestrian/bicycle trail, or a mobile trail. Couple the opportunity to develop a trail system that radiates out of the activity centers with proposed greenways, opportunities abounds for linear recreation features in Perry County.

Opportunities – As identified above, opportunities abound for trail development in the County. Based on input from the public and key stake holders, the following trail related opportunities have been identified:

1. **Equestrian Trail from Duncannon/Marysville Borough to Blain Borough and the Tuscarora Sate Forest**

2. **Shermans Creek as a Water Trail** - Shermans Creek was identified as a significant waterway and one of the most underutilized water features in the county. Throughout this plan Shermans Creek has been identified for a greenway and water related recreation, and now a water trail. However, full fledge boating/canoeing opportunities only present themselves during spring and early summer when water levels of the creek run high. During summer months tubing and related floating adventures can occur; however, it will require significant portage.

3. **Millerstown Borough to Newport Borough Trail** – An opportunity exists to develop a trail along the Juniata River connecting the Millerstown Community Park to Newport Borough. The trail would generally follow Old Route 22 along the eastern bank of the Juniata River. Access to Newport Borough would be over the Juniata River Bridge which carries Route 34 over the Juniata River into Newport Borough.

4. **Mountain Biking** – This form of cycling has developed a strong and dedicated following of people and is becoming popular with all levels of cycling. Mountain biking in Perry County is primarily conducted on private property; however, there is an opportunity to work with the PADCNR to develop mountain biking trails in the Tuscarora State Forest.

5. **Apple Tree Alley Walk in Duncannon Borough** – The Apple Tree Alley Walk is a demonstration project of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership. This is one of the first projects to be undertaken to implement the Susquehanna Greenway in Pennsylvania. The trail would extend along Apple Tree Alley from Fritz Street to Noye Park. The trail follows the path of an abandoned rail line and other municipal streets and rights-of-way. The trail will provide a pathway through the Borough for use by pedestrian, including through hikers on the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. The trail will allow hikers to experience Duncannon’s riverfront history and will provide access to local businesses including those concentrated in the historic Duncannon Square.
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6. **Connection of the Appalachian Trail (AT) to the Darlington Trail to the Lions Park in Marysville Borough** – The AT and Darlington Trail traverses Rye Township. The Township also has a Community Park which provides access to Fishing Creek, which flows in an easterly direction into Marysville Borough and Lion’s Park. The creek eventually flows into the Susquehanna River. An opportunity exists to tie the AT and Darlington trails together via a series of smaller trails to the Rye Township Community Park. The ultimate route would take the trail along Fishing Creek to the Lion’s Park in Marysville Borough. In their recently adopted SALDO, Rye Township has the ability to require trails to be constructed as part of the subdivision and land development approval process.

7. **Extension of the Darlington Trail** – Marysville Borough received a commitment from the developer of Rockville Estates to extend the Darlington Trail over a section property is owned by the developer in Rye Township, through Rockville Estates and terminating in an area of open space that will be set aside by the developer as part of the Rockville Estates development. The Borough has worked with the Appalachian Trail Club on this project and they have committed to help locate and develop the trail. There is also a proposed section of trail that would extend beyond the Darlington Trail to an overlook for the Rockville Bridge, Susquehanna River, and the Kittatinny Flyway.

8. **Rail Trail** – Utilize remnants of the former Sherman’s Valley Railroad rights-of-way to develop a trail layout out plan that would connect Duncannon Borough to New Bloomfield Borough and to other destinations in the County. Portions of the rights-of-way have been claimed by adjoining property owners therefore the initial recommendation is to prepare a feasibility study to determine a general path and cost of the project.

9. **Identify Trail Towns** – As defined in Trail Towns Capturing Trail-Based Tourism a “Trail Town” is a destination along a long-distance trail. Whether on a rail trail, towpath, water trail, or hiking trail-trail users can venture off the trail and to enjoy the scenery, services, and heritage of the nearby community. It is a safe place where both township residents and trail users can walk, find goods and services they need, and easily access both trail and town by foot or vehicle. In such a town, the trail is an integral and important part of the community. A Trail Town is a vibrant place where people come together. It may have a bike shop, an ice cream parlor, casual restaurants, a grocery store, and quaint local shops. It has wide sidewalks, clean streets, bike racks, and benches at convenient locations. It has places to rest for the night. Trail Towns are not stand-alone communities; they are linked by the trial corridor where trail users may be passing through a town on a day trip or long distance trek, or may drive to a community and park to access a river or trial.
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In Perry County the following boroughs can be considered for a Trail Town designation:

- **Duncannon Borough** – Two trails converge on Duncannon Borough, the Appalachian Trail runs through the center of Duncannon Borough and the Borough can be easily accessed by the Susquehanna River Trail making it the quint essential Trail Town in Perry County. Duncannon exceeds the suggested amenities required to classify it as a Trail Town. Apple Tree Alley Trail is proposed in the Borough and would serve as an off-road trail for hikers hiking the Appalachian Trail.

- **Millerstown and Newport Borough** – Both Boroughs have access to the Juniata River and are quaint and full of services that can benefit trail users utilizing the Juniata River for water recreation. Access to the Juniata River in Millerstown is from the Millerstown Community Park and Newport is accessed by underpasses under the rail road.

**Challenges** – Identification of trails within this plan represents the initial step in making the vision come alive. There are many hurdles and challenges that must be overcome to the creation of an interconnected trail system. They include:

- No requirement to address trails in zoning ordinances and SALDOs.
- Funding – Trail construction requires a substantial capital commitment. Public budgets are strapped for revenue to operate government at the basic level.
- Lack of an Organization to Champion Trail Development/Improvements – Trail development requires partnerships at all levels. These partnerships can help with funding, construction, and maintenance of the trails.
- Private Property Rights/Posted Property – Perry Countians love their land. During the public meetings it was repeatedly mentioned that littering is a problem and that trail users do not respect the land that the trail traverses on. There are also liability concerns.
- No/Limited Access to Creeks/Rivers – It was repeatedly mentioned by the public that Perry County has poor access to the Juniata and Susquehanna Rivers due to the Norfolk Southern Railroad and Routes 11/15. Property owners are also restricting access to waterways over their land leaving very few points where the creeks and rivers can be accessed.
- Acquisition of railroad right-of-way by adjoining property owners.

**PS6 - Recommendation #1 – Develop Greenways to Protect Linear Features and Promote Recreation.**

From mountain ridges to stream corridors, all types of greenway opportunities abound in Perry County and it is important to protect these linear features for resource protection and recreation.
The Plan

Actions:

a) **Support the PADCNR Mega-Greenways in Perry County** – Three of the five Mega Greenways in Pennsylvania pass through or adjoin Perry County. They include the Kittatinny Ridge Greenway, Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway, and the Susquehanna Greenway. A detailed description of each greenway is provided in the Foundation section of this report.

b) **Support Locally Identified Greenways** – Several local municipalities in Perry County have identified greenways in their Park and Recreation Plan or Comprehensive Plan. Locally identified greenways include: Cove Creek and Shermans Creek Greenways in Penn Township. The Greenwood Area Joint Comprehensive Plan proposes the following greenways: Raccoon Creek, Cocolamus Creek, Sugar Run, and Wildcat Run. The Greenwood Area Joint Comprehensive Plan, which includes the municipalities that make up the Greenwood Area School District (Millerstown Borough, Greenwood Township (Perry County), Greenwood Township (Juniata County) and Tuscarora Township. The following provides additional information on the aforementioned greenways and other intra-county greenways:

Locally Identified Greenways

Conservation Greenways

1. **Cocolamus Creek Greenway (Greenwood Area Comprehensive Plan)**

   The Cocolamus Creek Greenway follows the main stem of Cocolamus Creek and one of its principal unnamed tributaries for approximately 8 combined miles in Perry County. The distance only reflects mileage within Perry County. The Greenwood Area Comprehensive Plan displays the portion of this greenway along the main branch of Cocolamus Creek exiting the County and continuing on in Greenwood Township, Juniata County.

   In Perry County the greenway is located in Greenwood and Liverpool Townships and Millerstown Borough.

2. **Sugar Run Greenway (Greenwood Area Comprehensive Plan)**

   The Sugar Run Greenway follows Sugar Run in Tuscarora Township for 4 ¾ miles. The greenway connects to the Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway. The greenway is located exclusively within Tuscarora Township. At its westernmost end, the Sugar Run Greenway may have the potential to connect with the Raccoon Creek Greenway.
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3. **Wildcat Run Greenway (Greenwood Area Comprehensive Plan)**

The Wildcat Run Greenway follows Wildcat Run and two of its unnamed tributaries for a unified distance of approximately 8 miles. The greenway is located entirely within Greenwood Township. As with all four other greenways in the Greenwood Area Comprehensive Plan, the Wildcat Run Greenway originates at its confluence with the Juniata River.

4. **Montour Creek Greenway**

The Montour Creek Greenway follows the Montour Creek for approximately 6.75 miles. The greenway is located in Centre, Spring, and Tyrone Townships.

5. **Perry Furnace Run Greenway**

The Perry Furnace Run Greenway follows Perry Furnace Run for approximately 3.75 miles. The greenway is located in Carroll, Centre, and Spring Townships.

**Conservation/Recreation Greenways**

1. **Cove Creek Greenway (Penn Township Recreation Plan)**

The Cove Creek Greenway follows Cove Creek for approximately 3 miles. The greenway is located entirely within Penn Township.

2. **Laurel Run Greenway**

The Laurel Run Greenway follows Laurel Run for approximately 17 miles. The greenway is located in Jackson, Southwest Madison, Toboyne, and Tyrone Townships.

**Recreation Greenways**

1. **Raccoon Creek Greenway (Greenwood Area Comprehensive Plan)**

The Raccoon Creek Greenway follows the main channel of Raccoon Creek for approximately 9½ miles from its confluence with the Juniata River to the western edge of Tuscarora Township. Near the Village of Donnally Mills the greenway may have the opportunity at some point to link with the Sugar Run Greenway.
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The greenway is located in Saville and Tuscarora Townships.

2. **Shermans Creek Greenway (Penn Township Recreation Plan)**

The Shermans Creek Greenway follows that portion of Shermans Creek in Penn Township for approximately 5.75 miles long, which is part of the proposed 45 mile long Shermans Creek Greenway.

3. **Big Buffalo Creek Greenway**

The Big Buffalo Creek Greenway follows Big Buffalo Creek for approximately 26¼ miles.

Currently the land cover associated with this greenway is only around 65% forested. The other 35% open areas appear along agricultural lands, residential properties, and roadways.

The greenway is located in Juniata, Northeast Madison, Oliver, Saville and Tuscarora Townships.

4. **Bixler Run Greenway**

The Bixler Run Greenway follows Bixler Run for approximately 9½ miles.

Currently the land cover associated with this greenway is only around 22% forested. The other 78% open areas appear along agricultural lands, residential properties, and roadways.

The greenway is located in Northeast Madison, Saville and Southwest Madison Townships.

5. **Little Buffalo Creek Greenway**

The Little Buffalo Creek Greenway follows Little Buffalo Creek for approximately 9 miles.

The greenway is located in Centre, Juniata, Oliver, and Saville Townships, and Newport Borough.

6. **Little Juniata Creek Greenway**

The Little Juniata Creek Greenway follows the Little Juniata Creek for approximately 13.5 miles.
The Plan

The greenway is located in Centre, Miller, Penn, and Wheatfield Townships, and Bloomfield and Duncannon Boroughs.

Mountain Ridges – Conservation

1. **Berry Mountain Greenway**

   The Berry Mountain Greenway follows Berry Mountain for approximately 7 miles. This mountain comprises a cove mountain-like geomorphic feature displaying similar folding and rock strata.

   Some of the potential linkages include the Buffalo Mountain Greenway to the north, the Howe Run Greenway to the south, and the Susquehanna Greenway to the east.

   The greenway is located in Buffalo and Howe Townships.

2. **Buffalo Mountain Greenway**

   The greenway is located in Buffalo, Greenwood, Howe, and Liverpool Townships, and Liverpool Borough.

3. **Conococheague Mountain Greenway**

   The Conococheague Mountain Greenway follows the Conococheague Mountain for 16 miles.

   The greenway is located in Jackson, Northeast Madison, Southwest Madison, and Toboyne Townships.

4. **Hickory Ridge Greenway**

   The Hickory Ridge Greenway follows Hickory Ridge for approximately 5.5 miles.

   The greenway is located in Centre, Miller, and Oliver Townships.

5. **Little (Second) Mountain Greenway**

   The Little (Second) Mountain Greenway follows the Little (Second) Mountain for approximately 17.5 miles.

   The greenway is located in Carroll, Rye, and Spring Townships, and Marysville Borough.
The Plan

6. Mahanoy Ridge Greenway

The Mahanoy Ridge Greenway follows the Mahanoy Ridge for approximately 10 miles.

The greenway is located in Centre, Miller and Spring Townships.

Mountain Ridge – Recreation

1. Bowers Mountain Greenway

The Bowers Mountain Greenway is approximately 11 miles. The greenway is located in Jackson, Southwest Madison, and Toboyne Townships.

2. Cove Mountain Greenway

The Cove Mountain Greenway follows the Cove Mountain ridge for approximately 14.5 miles.

The greenway is located in Penn and Rye Townships and Marysville Borough.

PS6 - Recommendation #2 – Commission a Committee to determine the Feasibility of developing the Shermans Creek Greenway starting at the headwaters of Shermans Creek and terminating at its confluence with the Susquehanna River.

Action:

a. The vision of this greenway is more than resource protection. Shermans Creek runs the full length of Perry County from west to east and is enjoyed by numerous interests – including trout and bass fishermen, swimmers cooling off during a hot summer day, canoeing and rafting during high water levels during the spring thaw to name a few. Landscapes along the way include forested lands, farms, narrow valleys, parks, and campgrounds.

PS6 - Recommendation #3 – Support Shorter Greenways that Connect the Mega-Greenways to the Shermans Creek Greenway to Public and Private Park and Recreation Areas to Trails.

Action:

a. Interconnecting proposed greenways to other greenways and trails is essential in developing a coordinated approach to preserve linear features and the recreational use of the greenways and trails. These smaller but equally important greenways include: Big Buffalo Creek, Bixler Run, Berry Mountain, Bowers Mountain, Buffalo Mountain, Conococheague Mountain, Cove Mountain, Hickory Ridge, Laurel Run, Little Buffalo
The Plan

Creek, Little Juniata Creek, Little Second Mountain, Mahanoy Ridge, Montour Creek, Perry Furnace Run, and Tuscarora Mountain.

PS6 - Recommendation #4 - Coordinate with Adjoining Counties in Developing an Inter-County Greenway System.

Action:

a. Dauphin County, Cumberland County, Franklin County, and Juniata County have all developed a Greenways, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. Greenways proposed in those plans that can be interconnected include the Kittatinny Ridge; Appalachian Trail; the Pittsburgh to Harrisburg Main Line Canal; Backlog/Shade Mountain; and the Susquehanna.

PS6 - Recommendation #5 - Link the County through Greenways and Trail

Actions:

a. Identify equestrian trails and trail heads to serve the burgeoning equestrian industry in the County.

b. Plan for the development of the Shermans Creek Water Trail.

c. Relocate the Tuscarora Trail from RT 34 in Carroll Township.

d. Develop an intra-county trail from Marysville to Blain.

e. Develop a multi-use trail along the Juniata River from the Millerstown Community Park to Newport Borough which provides access to the Juniata River.

f. Support the development of Apple Tree Alley Trail in Duncannon Borough. This could trail could also act as an off street trail for the Appalachian Trail.

g. Develop a trail along Fishing Creek that connects the Rye Township Community Park with Marysville Borough.

h. Plan for a rail trail from Duncannon/Newport boroughs to New Bloomfield to the Tuscarora State Forest. This trail could also be used by the Amish as a transportation corridor in the western part of the County.

i. Build upon the existing trail network in the Tuscarora State Forest and State Gamelands.

j. Incorporate view sheds into the network of trails.

PS6 - Recommendation #6 - Develop better trail maps and trail wayfinding signs throughout the County.
The Plan

PS6 - Recommendation #7 - Plan for additional snowmobile, and other motorized and non-motorized trails.

PS6 - Recommendation #8 - Develop a Hub and Spoke Approach to Trails.

As discussed above, opportunities abound in Perry County for trail development. Trail development should take the form of a hub and spokes, where the hub is represented by the boroughs in the County and the spokes represent trails that connect the boroughs to schools, local and regional parks, and historic resources to name a few. Trails should follow the path of least resistance such as streams, vacated roads, abandoned railroad beds, and along roads with adequate shoulders or sidewalks. Trail heads should be located in/or adjacent to the boroughs, or other local or regional destination point such as Little Buffalo State Park. Finally, to make this all work it is recommended that the local municipalities review their land use regulations and adopt the necessary language to allow the local municipality the ability to require trails as part of the subdivision and land development plan approval process.

Actions:

a. **Support and encourage the development of trail regulations in local zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances** – As land is subdivided and developed, an opportunity exists to obtain an easement or right-of-way for future trail development. With larger subdivision plans trails can be required to be built. However, before a municipality can require the reservation of land or construction of trails it must have the appropriate plans and ordinances to require such actions, including a Comprehensive Plan and a Park and Recreation Plan. Ordinances required include a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance with parkland dedication and trail development regulations. It is important to note that in order to adopt a parkland dedication ordinance, the municipality first must have a Park and Recreation Plan.

b. **Commission a committee to champion the development of trails in the County** – For this plan to be implemented it is important that a committee be created to champion the development of trails in the county, interact with local, county, and state officials, be a clearing house of information regarding trail development and regulations, and provide the “trust” value when negotiating with property owners for easements, rights-of-way, and land purchases.

c. **Interconnect trails and greenways where appropriate** – Where appropriate in the county, trails and greenways can be combined together. This will save negotiating time, legal fees, right-of-way acquisition costs, and save capital resources by securing two important resources at one time.

d. **Communicate with property owners** – Trust is the major stumbling block to acquiring easements, right-of-way, or land for trail and recreation development. To be successful, a highly trusted individual in the community must make initial contact with the property
The Plan

owner and develop a trusting relationship before other individuals become involved. After that initial contact the property owner must be kept abreast of all decisions and actions that occur and all issues must be discussed in detail with the property owner.

e. Develop Partnerships – Partnerships must be developed with key organizations such as the AT Conservancy, Central Penn Conservancy, Audubon Society, large land owners, and local and county officials. The development of trails cannot be accomplished by one individual.

f. Provide Accessible Trails – Accessible trails should be developed in conformance with the guidelines and spirit of the American with Disabilities Act.

g. Utilize abandoned railroad/canal right-of-way for trail development – Perry County is fortunate in that it had a series of railroads that were used for passenger transport and industry purposes in the early part of the 20th Century. However, with the exception of the Norfolk Southern Railroad, railroad activity has long seen its glory days in the county. What are remaining are pieces of historic structures such remnants of canal locks, elevated rail beds, and bridge abutments. These remnants represent a window to the past and an opportunity in the future.

h. Lower Bailey Road Trail – Miller Township is considering abandoning a section of the “no winter maintenance” section of Lower Bailey Road. The road follows the railroad tracks and Juniata River, and runs along the far eastern side of the State Game Lands No. 281. Ultimately, it could connect with the Game Land’s network of roads and trails.

PS6 - Recommendation #9 – Relocate the Tuscarora Trail from an on-road trail to an off-off trail for a 10 mile length on PA 74, between PA 74 and McClure’s Gap. This gap was identified in State’s Outdoor recreation Plan (www.paoutdoorrecplan.com). PA 74 is not walker friendly and hikers are experience dangerous conditions along that roadway.

Actions:

a. Reach out to the Keystone Trail Alliance to ascertain the exact issue that is forcing hikers off the trail and onto PA 74.

b. Identify the ultimate route where the trail should be located and alternatives routes that can be used until the preferred route is available.

c. Reach out to property owners to discuss the trail’s ultimate location and alternatives.
The Plan

Priority Strategy #7:

Provide New and Enhance Existing Recreation Facilities

Assessment – Enjoying time in the great outdoors is a key component of the quality of life valued by Perry County residents. The extensive amount of land in the County protected as State Parks, State Forests, and State Game Lands provide close to home opportunities for passive recreation pursuits such as hunting, fishing, and trail activities. While active recreation opportunities are not as plentiful, Perry County municipalities, community organizations, and volunteers have long worked together to make recreation in Perry County work. Through dedication, sharing of resources, and a willingness to travel for recreation, Perry County residents enjoy sporting events, community special events, and opportunities for self-directed recreation. Currently there are 30 parks in Perry County providing 621 acres of parkland for public use. As Perry County looks to the future, strategies for enhancing both passive and active recreation should be promoted to assure that the park facilities and recreation opportunities that residents’ value, are retained for future generations. These strategies should reflect the core values of the County, respond to trends affecting leisure activities, and be realistic and achievable.

Opportunities – The existing parks, school sites, and other public lands present opportunities to expand the offering of recreation facilities to county residents. Additional parkland has been identified as a need. Opportunities exist to expand the parkland holdings through expansion of existing parks sites, partnerships with school districts, and collaborative efforts between municipalities and community organizations.

Although development in Perry County has continued during the recent downturn in the economy, it had not previously experienced the extensive development that has affected many other areas of the Commonwealth. This position provides opportunity for parkland acquisition and exploration of recreation opportunities that will provide broad recreation benefits to the citizens of the county.

Challenges – Although Perry County has many pieces of a comprehensive park system, key components are missing and there are significant challenges associated with providing close to home parks and recreation lands to serve residents. Consider the following:

- The County does not have a formalized county park system nor is a parks department recommended for Perry County. The County should promote cooperation and partnerships to advance recreation locally and provide technical assistance to municipalities about park funding and ordinance provisions that enhance recreation opportunities.

- Eleven 11 municipalities do not have a park. Parks and recreation opportunities are essential elements of a high quality of life. Providing recreation opportunities for individual leisure pursuits, family gatherings, community celebrations, competitive
The Plan

Sports, and playground programs are important for creating and maintaining a sense of community and providing fitness and wellness benefits to citizens. Each borough should have a community park.

- There is an overall need for additional parkland in Perry County based on the existing and projected population.

- Many of the recreation facilities located throughout the County were developed prior to or without consideration of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act or Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines for public playground safety.

- Municipalities have limited financial resources for parkland acquisition, including matching funds for acquisition grants. Personnel resources for maintenance of parkland and capital funds for improvements and necessary renovations are equally challenged.

- Volunteers and community organizations play an important role in providing recreation opportunities throughout Perry County. Fostering these organizations and partnerships and broadening the base of volunteers will be important to expand recreation opportunities in the County.

- Only two municipalities in Perry County have mandatory dedication ordinances that provide for dedication of parkland from developers. Mandatory dedication of parkland is important to address recreation needs as communities grow.

- Key recreation facilities are missing from the offerings in the County to include a park or nature center developed for environmental education, long distance multi-purpose recreation trails, indoor recreation facilities with gymnasium, and special use facilities such as skate parks. Residents travel out of the County to participate in special use recreation activities and use indoor facilities.

- The boroughs have long provided the majority of parkland and recreation opportunities, serving as regional facilities. This informal regional approach to parks and recreation places excessive financial and personnel burden on these core providers.

PS7 – Recommendation #1 - Fix what you have! – Existing Park Maintenance.

Many of the communities throughout the County have parks and these facilities should be the primary target for future recreation investment. Some facilities are relatively new while others have sustained years of use and do not comply with the latest safety and accessibility standards or provide facilities that meet the changing interests of users. Addressing safety, accessibility, and maintenance of existing facilities is the strongest park and recreation facility recommendation.
The Plan

Actions:

a. **Address Safety and Accessibility Issues First** – Parks and recreation facilities are public facilities, and must comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Each recreation element within a public park must be accessible via an accessible route leading from an accessible parking space. Accommodations for persons with disabilities should be incorporated into parks, trails, and special use facilities. Examples of these accommodations include accessible spectator areas, gates to court areas to allow access by a person in a wheelchair, accessible play elements incorporated into playground structures, and accessible accessories such as picnic tables that accommodate wheelchair users.

Parks and recreation facilities need ongoing maintenance to remain in safe working order. Use, abuse, and deferred maintenance can take its toll on recreation facilities and ongoing maintenance to upgrade facilities and refurbish aged elements is necessary to provide facilities in safe working order. Additionally, in the case of playgrounds, upgrades may be needed to meet the latest Consumer Product Safety Commission safety guidelines for public playgrounds.

Safety and accessibility audits should be completed for parks to identify accessibility issues that relate to the requirements of the ADA and safety issues. Improvements to address these issues should be incorporated into Capital Improvement Programs for the parks.

b. **Maintain Recreation Facilities** – Parks require on-going maintenance and investment. Facilities use, exposure to the elements, and vandalism necessitate both on-going routine maintenance and as-needed maintenance to provide facilities in good working order that are safe and available for public use. Items like playground safety surfacing and infield mix require routine maintenance to assure that the material is maintained at the proper depth and configuration. Facilities like benches and picnic tables may need repaired on an annual basis. Maintenance deferred can often result in the need to replace or take a facility out of service. The municipalities and their partners should prioritize on-going maintenance of parks and recreation facilities and develop a Capital Improvement Program that identifies major facility repairs and replacements with a timeline for completion.

**PS7 – Recommendation #2 - Design and Renovate Parks for Low Maintenance.**

Parks should be designed and renovated for low maintenance. Materials should be chosen based on their maintenance requirements. Facility layout should consider maintenance practices. Consider using edging or curb to retain loose playground safety surface material and placing trees and signs in planting beds to minimize hand mowing and weeding. Introduce flower beds and extensive plantings only if a volunteer group commits to the ongoing upkeep. Introduce meadow areas with no-mow or low-mow maintenance requirements.
The Plan

Action:

a. **Maximize the Use of Existing Parks** – Although there is a need for more parkland and recreation facilities in Perry County, investing in existing parks is a higher priority than acquiring land for new facilities. Existing parks should be maximized in terms of recreation opportunities. It is often more cost efficient to invest in existing facilities because the infrastructure is typically in place to support the new or expanded use. A new game court or playground will add play value to a park but may not require additional parking, extensive trails, or restrooms.

Incorporating trails to connect facilities is a requirement of the ADA, and when developed in a looping configuration with distance markers and benches for resting, is a facility enjoyed for walking and jogging. Picnic pavilions provided near playgrounds will provide shaded locations for caregivers and accommodate birthday parties and summer playground activities. Picnic areas developed with accessory facilities such as horseshoe pits or grills may attract more use than a standalone structure. Each existing park should be explored to define opportunities to maximize use. Consideration should be given to recreation trends and interests of residents.

Master plan existing parks if a current master plan does not exist. A master plan is a blueprint for future park improvements and should include a phased implementation plan with corresponding cost estimates. Park master plans are critical documents needed when seeking funding from the Commonwealth or elsewhere for park improvements. Newport Borough is currently master planning Veteran’s Memorial Park and the recommendations of the plan should guide future investment. Likewise, other communities with park master plans should develop capital improvement programs that phase in park improvements.

**PS7 – Recommendation #3 – Add Parkland.**

There is an overall need for additional parkland in Perry County to provide facilities to meet the active recreation needs of the existing and projected population. Perry County has 621 acres of parkland distributed between 30 park sites. This total includes both active and passive parks as well as private parks. Parkland acreage analysis typically evaluates the parkland acreage available for active recreation. The active parkland acreage correlates to the acreage needed to develop the sports fields and courts and special use facilities desired by residents for league and community use.

Currently there are 461.28 acres of municipal owned active parkland and when private parks are included in the calculation, the total acreage of active parkland is 594.13. This acreage total is skewed by the inclusion of Wagner Park which is 282 acres in size and primarily natural with approximately five percent of the acreage developed for active recreation. If only the developed portion (15 acres) of Wagner Park is included in the assessment of parkland, there is approximately 194 acres of municipal parkland available for active recreation use. Add the
private parks (Marysville Lions Club Park, Perry County Recreation Association, etc.) and the parkland total climbs to 327 acres. Table 2-4 below defines the parkland deficit based on the adjusted acreage. The table shows the acreage calculation based on municipal parkland only and municipal parkland combined with private parkland.

### Table 2-4
**Parkland Deficiencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population Projections</th>
<th>Ex. Parkland Acreage</th>
<th>10 Acre Standard</th>
<th>15 Acre Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Parkland Required</td>
<td>Parkland Required</td>
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<td>Deficit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Municipal Parkland</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>52,795</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal &amp; Private Parkland</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>327</td>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
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<tr>
<td>Municipal Parkland</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>55,784</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal &amp; Private Parkland</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>327</td>
<td></td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The calculations were completed using a 10 acre standard per 1,000 residents and a 15 acre standard. The 10 acre standard is over 30 years old and many municipalities have targeted a higher acreage standard to address the changes in leisure use and increased participation witnessed since the standard was first promoted. At the 10 acre standard, there was a deficit of 334 acres in 2010 which is projected to grow to 364 acres in 2020. This projected deficit falls to 201 acres in 2010 and 231 in 2020 if private parks are included in the calculation.

Perry County communities should target the 10 acres per 1,000 residents as a minimum standard. Private parks, which play a significant role in the County, should be included in the calculation. The overall need for additional parkland is balanced by input from citizens and the study committee for this project which suggest that recommendations should not overreach and that new parkland be acquired in a strategic manner. At the 10 acre standard, Perry County should work to add 201 additional acres of parkland. The following strategies are suggested to address the parkland deficit:

**Actions:**

a. **Target Land Contiguous to Existing Recreation Land** – The preferred strategy for acquisition of additional parkland is to acquire land contiguous to existing parks or schools where possible. Contiguous acreage can provide land for expansion of existing uses and introduction of new uses. Park and school sites are already destination in the community and their expansion will promote centralize recreation activities. An important benefit of this strategy is that infrastructure is typically in place to expand
The Plan

upon. Many school sites and most parks already have playgrounds, athletic fields and courts, parking, and in some instances restrooms.

b. **Adopt Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinances** - The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act. No. 170 of 1988 provides municipalities with the authority to require the dedication of public land for recreation purposes. Mandatory dedication is a mechanism that many municipalities use to ensure that future residents have adequate park and recreation opportunities. Mandatory dedication ordinances require developers to dedicate public open space within proposed developments for recreation purposes. An option for paying fee-in-lieu of land dedication is also included in most ordinances. In Perry County, only Penn and Rye Townships have mandatory dedication ordinances. Other municipalities throughout Perry County, especially those in the path of growth and development, should adopt mandatory dedication ordinances. To comply with this legislation, a municipality must meet the following requirements:

1. Work with municipalities to have them adopt the county plan as their own parks and recreation plan or work with municipalities to develop their own parks and recreation plans, preferably as regions rather than single municipalities. Use the adopted recreation plan for established open space standards and park service areas, identification of areas in need of open space, and develop a capital improvement program for the region/municipality.

2. Develop a mandatory dedication ordinance that contains standards for determining the portion of a development to be dedicated and the amount, if any, of fee to be paid in lieu of land. Consider developing a model ordinance at the county level that could be used by municipalities.

3. Create a separate interest bearing account for the placement of any collected fees.

The ordinance should describe the size and characteristics of land appropriate for dedication to assure that it can be used to develop recreation facilities.

c. **Explore Opportunities for Regional Parks** – It is not likely that all of the parkland needs can be accommodated on contiguous acreage. It is equally true that acquisition of new parkland in each municipality is not realistic or necessarily desirable. Currently many residents travel to use swimming pools and other park facilities. Consideration should be given to developing regional parks to meet parkland and recreation facility needs. Through collaboration and pooling of resources, communities could expand recreation opportunities on a regional basis. There are numerous strategies for achieving regional parks, each with advantages and challenges. Below are three options for pursuing regional parks. The decision on the best approach should be defined locally.

1. **Regional Parks Based on School Districts** - Residents indicate that they currently recreate and typically travel between recreation venues based on school district
The Plan

boundaries. Municipalities within the same school district could explore working together to provide additional parkland and create regional park facilities. This additional acreage could be a new park facility or an expansion of an existing park or school site. The regional parks should have sufficient acreage to meet the active recreation needs of the region including special use facilities. The best strategy for providing expanded parkland within each of the four school districts should be defined by the collaborating communities. A slight variation of this approach would be to combine the Greenwood and Newport School Districts as one region. These are the two geographically smaller districts and they currently have a cooperative agreement for use of athletic facilities. Additionally, together their student enrollment total is similar to the other two districts, but much smaller when taken individually.

2. **Expand Existing Parks with Regional Focus** - One option is to explore expansion of parks that currently function as regional parks. Three parks were identified to target three geographic areas, based loosely on the school district boundaries. Loysville Community Park, Millerstown Area Community Park, and Perry County Recreation Association each provide recreation to a region of Perry County, reaching beyond the borders of the immediate community.

3. **Loysville Park**, in northern Tyrone Township, is geographically central to the western portion of the County and already functions as a regional park serving as the primary recreation destination for residents from surrounding municipalities. The surrounding and nearby municipalities of western Perry County should join together to expand and enhance Loysville Park to provide the facilities needed in the region. A master plan for Loysville Park illustrates the expansion of facilities to include an additional youth baseball field, a football field, additional soccer fields, new playgrounds, and expanded parking. The development of these facilities will expand the function of this park as a regional facility. The park improvements can be expedited if the municipalities of the region work cooperatively and pool resources. Expansion of this park site is limited by existing development and surrounding roads.

4. **Millerstown Area Community Park**, in Greenwood Township already serves several municipalities in the northeast portion of the County and is a regional destination for summer recreation because of the swimming pool. The master plan for this park proposed additional facilities needed in the region. One drawback to designating this park as a regional facility is that it is effectively land locked between the Juniata River and the West Juniata Parkway, limiting expansion potential. On the plus side, a trail is planned along the east bank of the Juniata River connecting Millerstown and Newport, which will enhance access to the park from the region.

5. **Perry County Recreation Association** (PCRA), in Penn Township is an 88 acre private, member-based recreation facility. PCRA has a partnership with SASY (Susquenita Area Soccer Youth) for soccer fields and currently there are six fields at
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the park and two more planned. In addition, the park includes a swimming pool, picnic pavilion, and camp sites. The partnership with SASY has expanded the recreation facilities at the park, introduced new users, and highlighted its importance as a regional facility. The idea of further expansion of this park to serve the region should be explored. The private status of the park will require a unique arrangement for cooperation but would only formalize its current function as a regional facility.

d. Themed Regional Parks - Regional parks could be developed to meet the identified facility needs in the County. Residents have expressed the need and desire for a park that provides access to the Juniata River, additional athletic fields, and special use facilities such as a skate park and in-line skate rink. These identified needs could be provided in two or three parks, depending on the size and configuration of the potential park sites. These regional parks would serve the entire County.

1. A River Park should be located along the Juniata River and contain enough acreage to accommodate both land and water based activities. The park could have a natural resource-based theme and components like a nature trail and signs that promote environmental education. The four school districts could be the driving force behind securing and developing a river park if environmental education is a significant component of the park.

2. A Sports Complex could be developed where sufficient acreage can be obtained that is compatible with athletic field and sports court development. A consistent message from the public was the need for additional athletic fields and a sports complex could provide a single destination for the majority of athletic activities. Sports complexes contain multiple fields and courts, sufficient parking, and support facilities to include concession stands, announcer booths, batting cages, and other features that support competitive play. If large numbers of fields can be accommodated, tournament use can be promoted which may provide revenues to offset operations costs. Additionally, if room permits, a portion of the park site should be set aside for a future indoor recreation facility. An indoor recreation facility in a centralized location would complement the athletic facilities providing a facility for year-round training and practice. Sports complexes typically are developed with field lights to maximize use of the facility, but due to concern about retaining dark skies, lights are not recommended in Perry County parks. The development of a sports complex may take the pressure off of community parks and free space in these local parks for other facilities, such as skate parks which should be located locally for easy access by teens. One strategy to create a regional athletic complex is to organize a collation of athletic leagues from throughout the County as an authority to acquire land, develop the park, and operate the facility.
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PS7 – Recommendation #4 – Maintain and Enhance Swimming Pools.

There are five community swimming pools in Perry County plus the swimming pool and spray ground at Little Buffalo State Park, a regional facility serving both county and non-county users. The community pools draw users from local and nearby communities for swimming lessons and leisure swimming. Unfortunately, these facilities are small traditional tank pools with few amenities. These small pools in rural areas present significant challenges to remain in operation and continue to attract patrons.

Actions:

a. Enhance Visitor Experience through Improvements - Improvements to these facilities should focus on enhancing the visitors experience by adding features such as shade structures, colorful plantings, movable lawn chairs, and shade trees. Newer swimming pools are including pool toys and spray features in the design. Many of these elements are system-based and interchangeable. The pools should be evaluated to determine if pool toys could be incorporated into the pool.

b. Foster Pool Alliances and Support - The pools should be supported by the host municipality as well as surrounding and nearby municipalities whose residents use the facility. The five community pool owners should consider forming an alliance to work together to jointly purchase multiple pool toys that could be rotated between the five pools. Additionally, this alliance could foster sharing of information, programming ideas, and resources that will the benefit the pool operations.

PS7 – Recommendation #5 - Indoor Recreation.

Indoor recreation in Perry County is limited with most residents traveling outside of the County for gymnasium and indoor pool use. The Lion’s Den in Juniata County was repeatedly referenced as a facility that people use and is needed in Perry County. At the same time, residents stated that it is not a hardship to drive out of the County for a variety of goods and services. With consideration of the magnitude of an initiative to develop a new indoor recreation facility in Perry County, the multitude of other recreation initiatives, and the lack of a compelling need, development of a facility for indoor recreation is not recommended for Perry County at this time.

Action:

a. Consider Indoor Recreation Interim Measure – Although a stand-alone, new indoor recreation facility is not recommended for Perry County at this time, partnerships with the school districts could, in part, address the need for an indoor facility. There are four school districts serving Perry County. Each of these districts has one or more schools with an indoor gymnasium. These facilities are taxpayer funded and should be available during non-school hours for community use. Greenwood School District currently
permits and facilitates extensive use of their indoor facilities and should serve as a model for the other districts. The municipalities and sports/recreation leagues within the other three school districts should initiate a conversation with their school district to understand their concerns regarding community use and devise solutions that will allow taxpayers full advantage of these public assets.

PS7 – Recommendation #6 - Expand access to rivers and streams.

The Juniata and Susquehanna Rivers, Shermans Creek, Raccoon Creek, Big Buffalo Creek, Little Buffalo Creek, Little Juniata Creek, Fishing Creek, and others streams are significant natural resources that provide resource-based recreation opportunities. Expanded access to the rivers and streams is desired by citizens. Unfortunately, private landowners are increasingly limiting public access to these resources.

Actions:

a. **Improve existing river access areas** – Access to the Juniata River is limited by the active Norfolk-Southern rail line that parallels the western shore of the river. There are a few locations where access is provided to the river via railroad crossings or subways under the rail corridor. In Duncannon Borough there are four arched stone subways which provide access to the river. These facilities should be improved by dredging silt, removing debris, and providing safe pedestrian connections to the town sidewalk system and nearby parking where possible. Other connections to the river should be explored for opportunities to accommodate public use.

b. **Target acquisition with river and stream frontage** – While many of the public parks in the County are along streams, Howe Township Park is the only municipal park with river frontage. Residents have expressed their desire to be able to recreate where they can participate in both water and land-based activities. The four PA Fish & Boat Commission access areas provide parking and boat ramps but do not provide accommodations for land activities such as picnicking and prohibit camping, swimming, and off-leash dogs. Acquisition of parkland with frontage along the Juniata River is recommended. The municipalities along the Juniata River should work together to develop a strategy for providing additional parkland along the Juniata River. Strategies could include getting the word out to the public and real estate professionals about the desire to acquire land along the river and assessing the public use potential of public landholdings along the river.

c. **Work with PennDOT to expand public access to streams** – Roadways provide public access to streams at bridge crossings although accommodation for parking, canoe/kayak launch, or fishing are not typically provided. The Commonwealth is currently undergoing an extensive initiative to replace and rehabilitate bridges and in doing so often secures lands adjacent to bridges for construction activities. Perry County and local municipalities should work with PennDOT to secure these adjacent lands for public
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access following the completion of bridge projects. Access to Shermans Creek was cited as a high priority.

PS7 – Recommendation #7 - Close-to-Home Parks and Recreation

Actions:

a. Focus on active healthy living through close-to-home recreation opportunities.

b. Support and advance the Perry Health Department’s strategic plan to improve physical activity options and opportunities for the residents of Perry County.

c. Work collaboratively with willing municipalities to enhance and increase the number and type of recreation facilities available in local parks. The more, varied and close-to-home recreation facilities are the more people will use them to engage in active healthy lifestyles. Use this county park, recreation and open space plan as a foundation for close-to-home recreation planning and implementation in setting the standards for the local communities and partners that want to participate in recreation planning and implementation.

d. Use the planning and land development process to increase opportunities for active healthy living close to where people live. Improve communities with sidewalks, bicycle paths and close-to-home recreation facilities.

e. Establish safe ways for people to walk and ride bicycles to community destinations to foster physical activity as a regular way of life.

f. Create a public awareness campaign about the recreation opportunities in Perry County and how their use benefits individuals, municipalities and the private sector.

g. Maximize the potential for school districts to be the central source of recreation opportunities for citizens near where they live. Work on shifting thinking about schools more broadly to lifelong education for the community at large through an educational/recreational partnership. This could make more recreation and life enriching experiences available to more citizens. The school districts would need community support in such an initiative.

PS7 – Recommendation #8 - Develop a funding strategy for parks, recreation and open space over the immediate, short and long term.

Action:
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a. Use the recommendations of this plan as the strategy to launch implementation and revise these recommendations into an evolving strategy as the economy improves and the plan is implemented over the next ten years and beyond.

PS7 – Recommendation #9 - Consider appropriating additional funds in the Perry County budget for more time from the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission to manage the implementation of the Greenways, Parka, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.

Action:

a. This could be in the range of $40,000 to 60,000. This would be an investment in leveraging funds from a variety of public and private sources.

PS7 – Recommendation #10 - Consider developing a funding program to assist municipalities in planning and implementing parks, recreation and open space conservation projects and programs.

Action:

a. Orient this program to multi-municipal partnerships rather than toward single jurisdictions.

PS5 – Recommendation #11 - Recommendation - Establish Mandatory Dedication of Land Ordinances.

Action:

a. The purpose would be to secure parkland and/or fees-in-lieu of dedication of parkland and trails to provide for the recreational needs of future citizens arriving here through new residential development.

PS7 – Recommendation #12 - Use the land development process to attain parkland, recreation facilities, and trail goals.

Action:

a. Local municipalities should work with developers in a proactive way to create residential development that fosters active healthy lifestyles and conservation of natural resources. By doing so, the cost of achieving these goals can often be absorbed through the development i.e. trails can be built as part of the infrastructure of the development. The Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) professional planning staff can provide new and updated information to officials about how to accomplish this. The interaction between the planners and municipalities can occur through the Local Planning Assistance (LPA) Program. Through this program local municipalities can contract with
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the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission to provide community planning services above those county services mandated by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. In this way, the investment in planning salaries achieves a payback through park and recreation development and conservation of natural resources achieved at the local level.

Priority Strategy #8:

Promote Tourism and Compatible Economic Development

Assessment - Outdoor recreation is a hallmark of Perry County. With over 40,000 acres of natural areas owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania dedicated to conservation and outdoor recreation in Perry County, the residents have plentiful opportunities to hunt, fish, hike, boat, enjoy nature, picnic, and experience the star-filled sky. The Perry County Council on the Arts provides a year round slate of activities covering the studio and performing arts. Not only do the programs enrich the communities and lives of the citizens, they are also an important economic development engine exemplified by the Route 15 Byway of the Arts. In addition to outdoor recreation opportunities, a multitude of organizations provide organized scheduled recreation for the citizens close to where they live. As customary in rural areas, volunteer organizations, faith-based institutions, schools, and community associations plan and offer recreation programs, leagues and special events. The boroughs and townships own 401 acres of recreation facilities in 20 parks. While municipal governments in Perry County consider recreation to be important, they lack the resources to offer organized programs and services. Perry County does not provide recreation programs. The municipalities generally support programs and services offered by other organizations that conduct those programs in municipal parks and recreation facilities. The focus of recreation in the municipalities is on the provision of facilities rather than the provision of services.

Opportunities - Increasing recreation opportunities will be a crucial strategy in three areas of concern in Perry County: preserving the peaceful rural way of life here, stimulating the economy and addressing the number one public health issue of obesity with its associated diseases resulting in poor quality of life and pre-mature death. Two out of three citizens are overweight or obese including 30 percent of third graders. While recreation opportunities are available, they are fragmented. Increasing awareness about recreation opportunities is important, as they are a significant asset of Perry County.

Recreation in Perry County has three core areas: outdoor recreation; the arts, culture & events; and close-to-home recreation. Since Perry County does not directly provide recreation programs or facilities nor does Perry County intend to establish a Parks and Recreation Department, how Perry County relates to the provision and promotion of recreation opportunities is important. Perry County can serve as the rallying organization to facilitate the coordination and collaboration of the provision and promotion of recreation services rather than directly providing the services. Providing the support mechanisms for people to engage in the recreation opportunities in Perry County is vital to outdoor recreation as well as outdoor recreation and
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heritage tourism. Lodging, food service, retail businesses and a welcoming atmosphere are essential aspects of supporting recreation opportunities as well as powerful contributors to a vibrant economy countywide.

PS8 – Recommendation #1 - Outdoor Recreation

Actions:

a. **Focus on advancing the provision and promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities provided by public, quasi-public and private organizations.**

b. **Work with the Bureau of State Parks.** Collaborate with the superintendent(s) managing the three state parks in Perry County, the State Game Commission and the Bureau of State Forests in determining how to promote and support their outdoor recreation opportunities for citizens and visitors in Perry County.

c. **Work with the Sportsmen’s Clubs and organizations.** Monitor their issues, interests and opportunities and promote the needs and interests of these groups regarding outdoor recreation.

d. **Support and enhance the partnership with the Dauphin County Visitors Bureau to promote the outdoor recreation opportunities of Perry County.**

e. **Include outdoor recreation opportunities as a part of every aspect of county planning and economic development efforts.**

f. **Use the inventory contained in this plan to create a centralized information source of recreation opportunities available in Perry County.** Develop materials to inform public and private organizations, individuals and visitors about recreation opportunities. Tailor the materials to the medium used such as brochures, news features, newsletters, the Internet, WEB sites, social media and others.

g. **Work with the Conservation District and the Penn State Extension on land conservation, trails and programming efforts in Perry County.**

PS8 – Recommendation #2 - The Arts, Heritage and Special Events.

Actions:

a. **Continue to support the efforts of the Perry County Council of the Arts.** The Council operates on a countywide basis developing, promoting, implementing and partnering on the provision of recreation program, events, and services related to the arts. Their work in recreation services through the arts improves the quality of life and tourism vital for the economy.
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b. **Fold heritage and historical features into recreation opportunities to develop Heritage Tourism as a major aspect of tourism in Perry County.** Cultural heritage tourism is traveling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic and natural resources. Strive to increase the potential of Perry County in Heritage Tourism as well as the role of Perry County in the Dauphin County Visitors Bureau efforts and programs. As a small rural County with no recognizable named hotels and limited services adjacent to Pennsylvania’s state capitol burgeoning with formalized recreation opportunities and support amenities, it is a challenge to position Perry County in a strong role in tourism. Two important themes emerged in this planning process: Perry County as the region’s “Big Back Yard” and rural history and heritage.

c. **Promote and coordinate special events in Perry County.** They are a top recreational interest among the citizens and have the potential to draw people to visit in Perry County. There is currently no centralized means for people to access information about events and programs in Perry County. Establishing a “go-to” place for people to go to in order to find out about recreation opportunities would increase awareness and stimulate participation in recreation. Consider using current providers of information as the “Go-to” resource or mix of resources including Perry County, the Perry County Council of the Arts, the Dauphin County Visitors Bureau, municipal newsletters and others that may be in place.

**PS8 – Recommendation #3 - Make recreation and conservation a part of the County’s overall planning and economic development strategies.**

**Action:**

a. The recreational lands and opportunities in Perry County are a major asset and should be used to attract business and tourism. This should include the development of support for tourism such as lodging, restaurants and promotion. Develop and implement a visitor readiness program with public and private providers of visitor services to ensure a welcoming atmosphere of hospitality for visitors. This will ensure that Perry County is ready and mechanisms are in place to support economic development through tourism.

**PS8 – Recommendation #4 - Pursue heritage and outdoor recreation tourism as a major industry of Perry County.**

**Action:**

a. Work aggressively with the Hershey – Harrisburg Visitors Bureau to position Perry County’s recreation and heritage assets for increased tourism.

**PS8 – Recommendation #5 - As the economy rebounds, consider undertaking a county bond issue to fund park, recreation and open space projects.**
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Action:

- Having a source of funds available would provide matching funds to leverage grant dollars. Providing matching funds is a problem for the local communities. Work with a financial advisory team to determine the feasibility of this along with appropriate funding levels. Include a key stakeholder and public participation process in exploring this. If this appears to be feasible, encourage a key stakeholder group to work with Perry County in developing a public outreach and information campaign about it. This is an important step before any question about an open space bond would go before the voters in a referendum.

**PS8 – Recommendation #6** - Consider assisting municipalities with exploring the potential to generate funds through a one-quarter to one-half percent of the Earned Income Tax to preserve open space.

**PS8 – Recommendation #7** - Retaining a part-time or contracted grant writer to pursue federal, state and foundation funds would help Perry County to obtain additional funding for parks, recreation and open space.

Action:

- Interviews for this plan found that there is little knowledge or capacity for pursing grants. The grant writer should also be charged with providing timely information to municipalities and partners about grants they could pursue. The Tri-County planners could also provide assistance in the grant process. The investment in providing assistance to secure grants should yield a result that is more than the cost of these services.