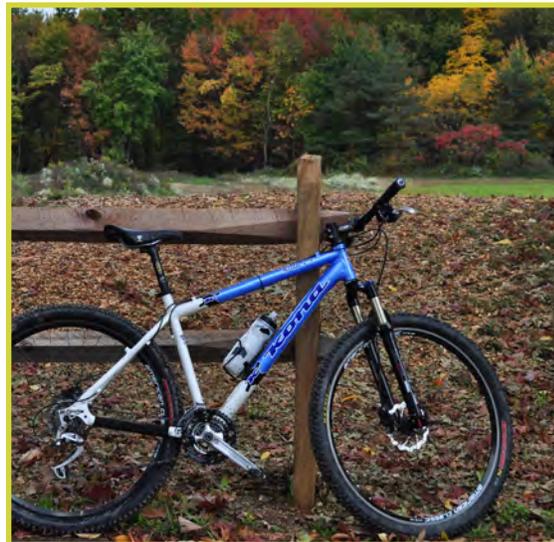
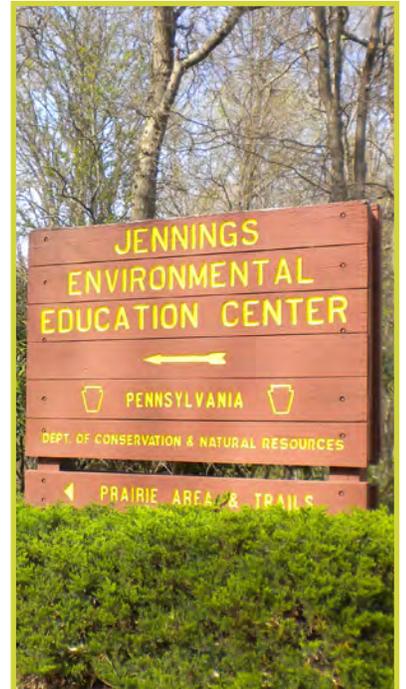


# Butler County

## Comprehensive Recreation, Park, & Open Space Plan; Greenways & Trails Plan; and Alameda Park Master Site Plan Update

PA DCNR BRC-TAG-15-87



# Acknowledgements

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# Document Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section offers a summary of the key findings and recommendations of the overall planning process.

## SECTION I – Introduction

The Introduction includes two chapters.

**Chapter One - Background** describes the history and purpose of planning in Butler County as well as a general background of the County's parks and recreation, demographic analysis, and a review of related planning projects completed by Butler County municipalities.

**Chapter Two - Public Input** reviews the public input component that was completed as part of the planning process. The public input opportunities gathered feedback from residents for all components of the plan. Its results are utilized throughout the remainder of the report to identify needs, describe concerns, and make recommendations.

## SECTION II – Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan

The Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan is the overarching plan that considers the overall issues, needs, opportunities, and concerns for parks and recreation throughout the County. It lays the groundwork and establishes the priorities for the future of parks, recreation, and open space throughout the County. The section is broken into two chapters.

**Chapter 3 - Inventory and Assessment** provides a complete inventory and assessment of all recreation opportunities available to Butler County residents.

**Chapter 4 - Goals, Recommendations and Implementation Strategies**, draws conclusions from the inventory and analysis, public input, and professional review to set priorities and strategies for implementation of the plan.

## Section III – Greenways and Trails Plan

This is the first ever greenways and trail plan to be completed for Butler County.

**Chapter 5- Greenways and Trails.** This section begins by defining what a greenway is and why greenways are important for Butler County. It then analyzes an inventory of environmental, ecological, and recreational factors that are used to identify both conservation and recreational greenways. The section concludes by making recommendations and establishing priorities through the use of maps and text for the establishment of greenways throughout the County.

## **SECTION IV – Alameda Park Master Plan Update**

This two-chapter section is an update of the Park's 1996 Master Plan.

**Chapter 6 - Site Information and Analysis** analyzes existing conditions of the park and its surroundings, describing both opportunities and obstacles. The analysis, combined with the public input, lays the foundation for changes and upgrades that need to be made.

**Chapter 7 - Master Plan** defines the complete master plan, describing both graphically and in writing a series of recommended upgrades. The chapter is finalized by estimating the costs of improvements and projecting a phasing plan for implementation.

A feasibility study and recommendations for the Swimming Pool is provided as a separate report.

## **SECTION V – Appendix**

The Appendix provides supplemental material that supports analysis or implementation.

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## **SECTION V – APPENDICES**

Available at the office of the Butler County Parks Department

Appendix A: Public Input

Appendix B: PA DCNR Oil and Gas Advisory

Appendix C: PA DCNR Funding Guide for Recreation and Conservation Projects

Appendix D: Butler County Recreation Facilities Inventory

Appendix E: PTAG Memorandum of Understanding - Draft



# Executive Summary

## Executive Summary

Butler County officials have consistently understood the value of good planning and identified the need to plan for the current and future recreational needs of their residents. County Commissioners contracted Pashek Associates, Ltd. to assist in the preparation of four types of recreation plans: a Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan; a Countywide Greenway Plan; a Master Site Plan for Alameda Park; and a Swimming Pool Feasibility Study.

The purpose of these studies was to analyze the current recreation, parks, open space, and trails and to develop recommendations and implementation strategies to ensure sufficient and appropriate recreation opportunities for County residents both now and into future.

To provide the County with a complete view of current conditions, a comprehensive inventory and analysis of recreational and environmental opportunities was completed. This inventory established a baseline to understand the current status of parks, recreation, and opens space.

In an effort to understand the county's recreational needs and demands, a series of public input methods were employed to listen to County residents. These included a series of public meetings, a county-wide questionnaire, focus group meetings, key person interviews, and on-site conversations with park users. This input brought forth a valuable understanding of how residents view parks and recreation and what they see as important for its future.

The combination of the inventory, analysis, and resident input served to establish a vision for the future of parks, recreation, and open space opportunities for the future.

## Parks and Recreation Facilities in Butler County

- 66 Community Parks
- 16 Quasi-public Parks
  - 1 County Park
  - 6 State Game Lands
- 10 Recreational Trails
- 34 Schools with Recreation Facilities
- 4 Community Centers
- 9 Outdoor Swimming Pools
- 19 Golf Courses
- 2,273 Acres of Community Park Land

The Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan serves as the broad-based, overarching plan for the County. However, while the greenways plan, master site plan, and swimming pool study are derived largely from understanding the big picture of parks and recreation in the County, each focused very specifically on its respective needs, demands, and opportunities.

The recommendations and strategies of all four plans reflect the recreational demands and expectations of County residents.

The following pages describe key implementation strategies that encompass all of the components of this planning process.

## The Role of Butler County Parks and Recreation

Based on public input gathered throughout the planning process, the County's role in Parks and Recreation Department can be summarized in four key functions.

1. Manage and operate the Butler County Parks and Recreation Department.
2. Continue to develop and maintain Alameda Park as a superior facility for county residents and visitors.
3. Plan for the acquisition of additional County parks as demand dictates and finances are available. Assist in the acquisition of and/or development of other regionally significant park facilities that impact county residents.
4. Support individual municipalities in their efforts to provide local parks and recreation throughout the County.

Specific implementation strategies are described in Chapter 4 of this report for each function.

### Support of local municipalities in their efforts to provide parks and recreation

The public input compiled through this planning process clearly identified this assistance as a great benefit to the local municipalities. Local officials are extremely appreciative of the assistance provided by the County. Some of the key implementation strategies for the continuation and expansion of this program are described below.

- Assist local governments in applying for and administering state grants.
- Hold annual grant workshops to inform municipalities of available funding and how to secure it
- Provide technical assistance and funding through grant programs to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Standards and playground safety standards
- Promote quality planning, design, and construction of local parks
- Expand the annual County's local community grant program
- Provide municipalities with technical assistance related to parks and recreation

### Summary of Act 13 Funding For Recreation, Parks, and Conservation Projects

Three sources of funds for recreation and conservation purposes:

#### Local Government Funding

Counties, Townships and Boroughs that are receiving funds based upon their number of wells. These funds can be used for:

- Environmental programs including trails, parks and recreation, open space, flood plain management, conservation districts and agricultural preservation

Marcellus Legacy Fund distribution to Counties  
All Counties will receive funds based upon their population that can only be used for:

- Planning, acquisition, development and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, natural areas, community conservation and beautification projects, community and heritage parks

#### Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA)

The CFA will administer a new fund that can be used for these purposes:

- Planning, acquisition, development and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, parks and beautification projects
- Acid mine drainage, abatement and cleanup
- Orphaned or abandoned oil and gas well plugging
- Watershed programs and related projects
- Up to 25% of funds for flood control projects

## Funding Opportunities

With the initiation of several new funding sources, the time is right for the acquisition of grand funding recreation, parks, and conservation. Many of Pennsylvania's standard funding opportunities remain available through DCNR's Community Conservation Partnership Program. These include the PA Recreational Trails Fund, ATV/Snowmobile Fund, Environmental Stewardship Fund, and the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. Funds from these grants can be used for a variety of recreational facility acquisition, development, and planning projects.

In addition to these programs, the Commonwealth of PA has recently initiated a series of grant programs that are funded through revenues produced by gas drilling efforts throughout the state. The grants are made available through what is commonly referred to as "Act 13 Funding". Through this legislation, three sources of funds are made available for recreation and conservation purposes. An abbreviated summary of these funds can be seen in the accompanying box.

## County-wide Park Improvement Projects

Through their own initiative, along with technical and financial assistance from Butler County officials and grants funds from a variety of sources, local municipalities have made great strides in upgrading and expanding community recreation facilities. High quality recreation facilities that are safe, well maintained, and meet local needs are important to Butler County Municipalities.

The next steps in providing high-quality recreational facilities to local residents means improving playground safety, offering better accessibility to local parks for those with disabilities, and adding new recreation facilities to meet specific needs, and implementation of local recreation plans.

### Playground Safety

Each municipality should have all playgrounds evaluated by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector and upgrade according to the results of the inspection

### Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

Each municipality should:

- Review park inventories included in this report
- Work with a park consultant to develop a compliance plan
- Identify potential funding sources for compliance
- Complete recommended improvements

### Key Regional Recreation Needs

#### Region 1

- Pedestrian and bike trails
- Regional assistance from the County
- County to provide guide books for native species plantings, habitat protection, best practices in parks, botanical upgrades for parks
- North Country Trail completion

#### Region 3

- Alameda Park bike trails reconstruction and protection
- Eliminate logging in parks
- Develop inter-municipal partners for trail planning and development
- Connect the Butler Freeport Trail and the North Country Trail

#### Region 4

- Disc Golf Course
- Rectangular fields in the Adams Township/Mars area
- Rail corridor trails

#### Region 5

- Retain Glade Run Lake as a major recreation facility in the region
- Set aside and protect tracts of land with limited development

## Implementation of Local Recreation Plans

One of the primary focuses of this Plan is to support master site plans, comprehensive recreation, park, and open space plans, feasibility studies, and other recreation plans completed by municipalities and agencies across the County. Such plans provide public directed strategies for provision of local parks and recreation.

While the county recreation plans are useful in looking at the broader scope of parks, recreation, and open space in the county, the municipal plans go to the heart of what serves local residents. The local plans should be used as the detailed implementation strategies for addressing community priorities.

The County Recreation Plans should not be used to supersede any local plan but rather to support and enhance them.

## Featured Projects

The projects featured on the following pages are identified as ones that can have immediate and substantial impact on the County's recreational opportunities. While all of the recommendations of these plans are important, the featured projects rank as high priorities.

The **Slippery Rock region**, comprising Slippery Rock Borough and Township, West Liberty Borough, Worth and Brady Townships, has recently completed a multi-municipal Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan that describes what the future of parks and recreation will look like and how they will move in that direction. As a complement to that Plan, Slippery Rock Borough and Brady Township completed Master Site Plans for their respective parks.



**Implementation of these Plans will meet the needs of a large segment of the population in northwestern Butler County and should be a high priority for implementation.**

Throughout the public input process, considerable interest was shown in completing the **North Country Trail** within Butler County. More specifically, the interest was in development of Trail as it comes from McConnell's Mill State Park in Lawrence County to Moraine State Park in Butler County.

**The primary recommendation for the North Country Trail is to complete the Feasibility Study that is currently underway and then to implement its recommendations for completion the proposed segment of the Trail.**



**Glade Run Lake** was once a beautiful outdoor facility offering a diversity of recreational opportunities to residents of Butler County. Fishing, boating, picnicking, bird and wildlife watching, and walking are among the previous activities. Due to the potential failure of the dam on that lake, the Fish and Boat Commission was forced to draw down the lake, which took away a significant recreational facility in the region. The Glade Run Lake Conservancy has actively and successfully lobbied and raised funds that they expect will bring this recreational lake back into use. The return of the 145-acre property to recreational use will be a boost to the region. Glade Run has the potential to once again be a major recreational and environmental asset in southeast Butler County.



**The recommendation of this Plan is that the Butler County Commissioners recognize the value of this potential recreational site by making a significant financial contribution toward the reconstruction of the lake and its recreational amenities and that they offer their encouragement and support of the overall project.**

**Adams Township** continues to be one of the fastest growing areas of the County. In recent years, they have tried to stay ahead of the demand for recreation facilities by further developing the Township Community Park.



The Township's Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan (2008) recommended the acquisition of two new park lands of eighty to two hundred acres each. It also recommended as a high priority the development of seven rectangular fields and six baseball/softball fields.

**Recreational development that is in line with the recommendations of the Adams Township Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan should continue to be one of the top recreational priorities in the County.**

**Cranberry Township** has the largest municipal population in Butler County, the most progressive recreation program, and the most comprehensive recreation facilities. With its growing populations and its propensity for good planning, Cranberry Township is poised to continue as a leader in providing municipal parks, recreation, and open space for the future.



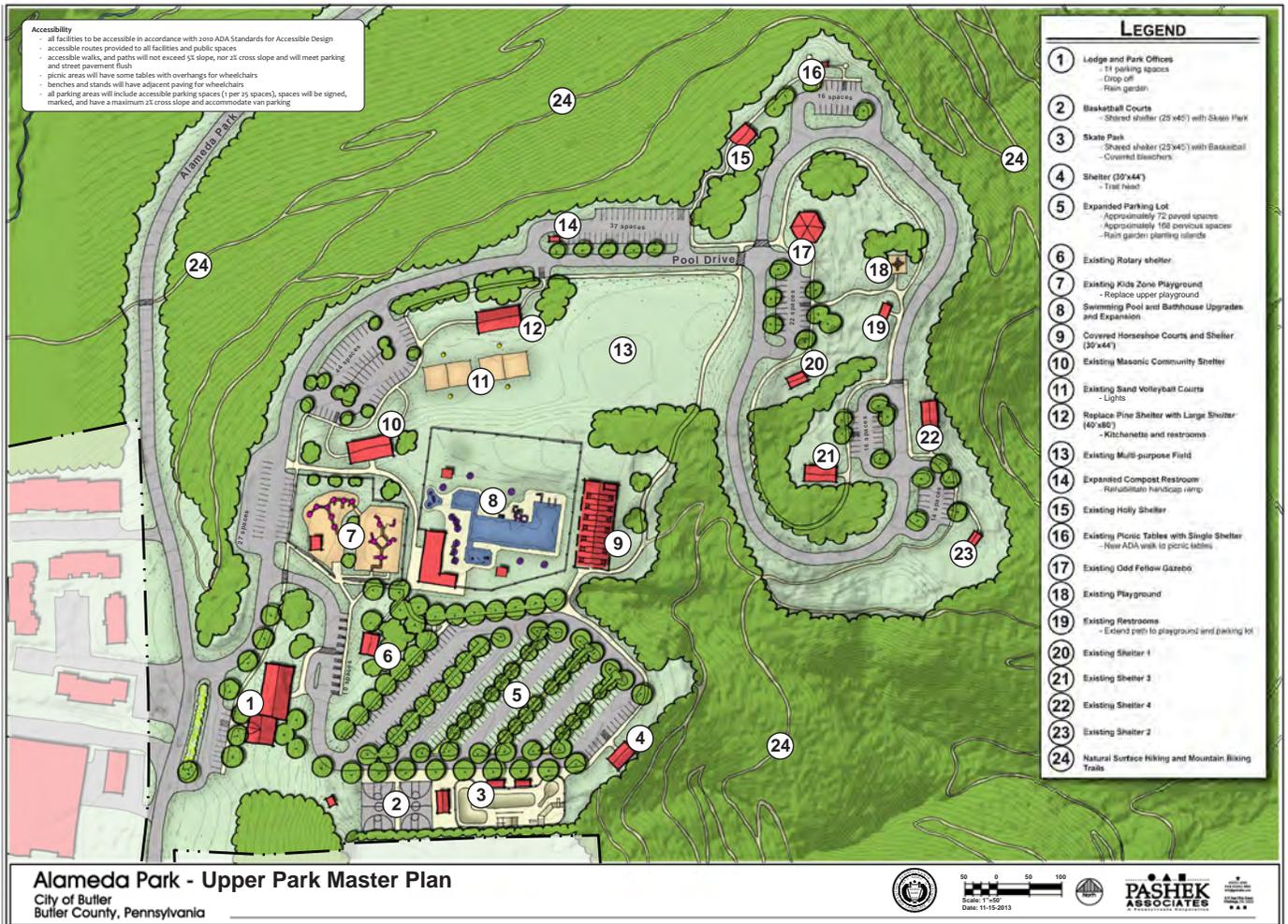
**Implementation of the Township's Comprehensive Recreation and Open Space Plan as well as their Bicycle/Pedestrian should be a priority.**

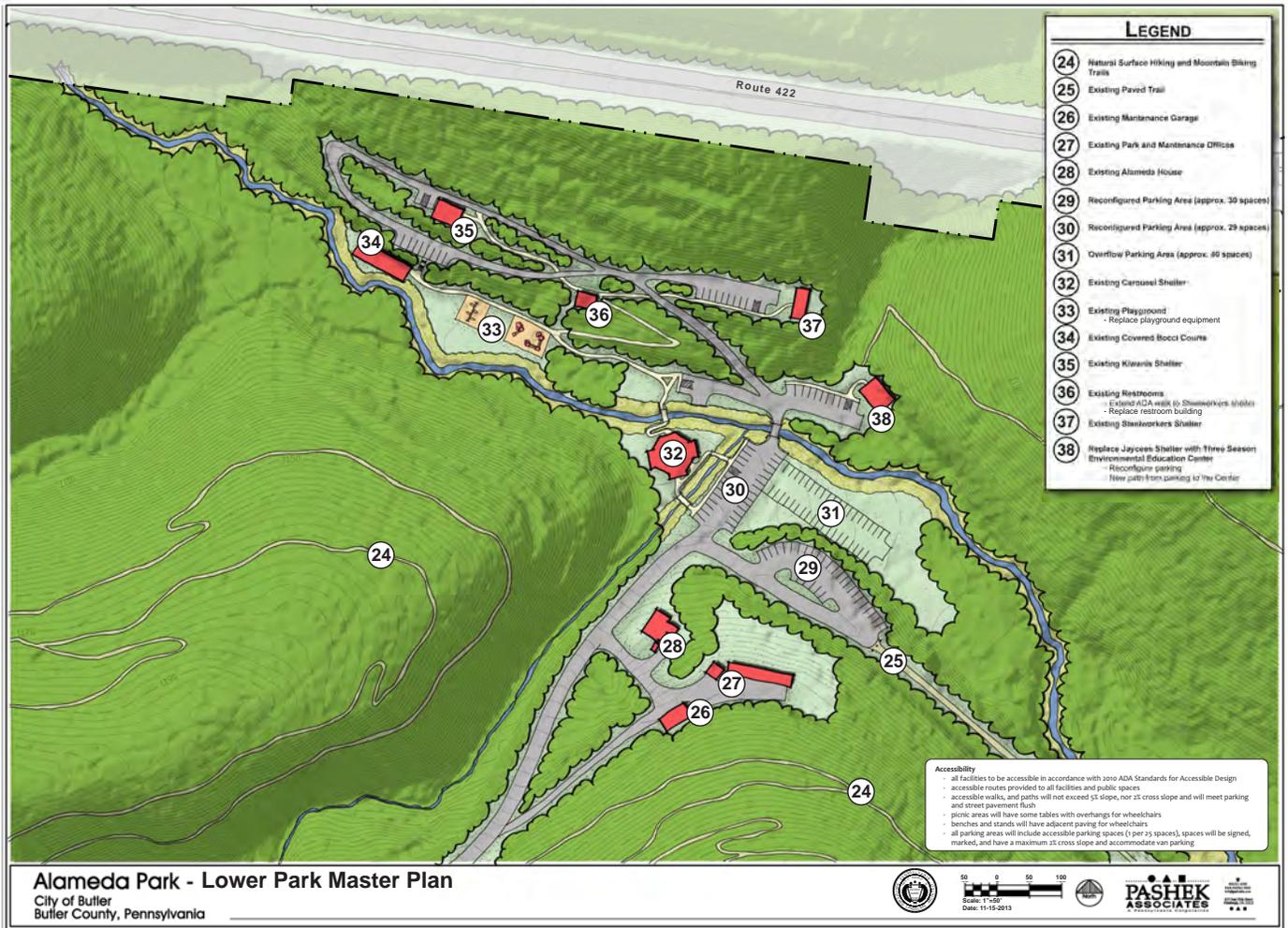
**Alameda Park** is the focal point of Butler County Parks and Recreation. Among its most notable features are the Kid's Zone Purple Playground located at the entrance to the park, the ever-popular swimming pool, and the historic Carousel Shelter. These are complemented by a variety of picnic shelters, playgrounds, sport courts, trails, and much more. In recent years, the park has been noted for its attractive look and high quality care. The County has set the bar high to meet the demands and expectations of its residents.

In order to maintain this level of distinction, the Butler County Commissioners and Park Department included a Master Site Plan as part of this recreational planning process. The plan calls for a host of upgrades that will ensure that the park remains as one of the best in the region. In the first phase of development, the mountain bike trails will be completely reconstructed to make them more challenging and sustainable, and the swimming pool will be upgraded to include additional play features, a dual water slide, enhanced restroom facilities; improved filtration and sanitation for cleaner, more sanitary water, and easier access.

Other proposed improvements include playground, road, and trail improvements; enhancements to the Carousel and Pine Shelters; development of the East Penn Trail; and improved walkways, restrooms, and shelters in the lower portion of the park. Longer term improvements suggest a new sport court and parking area above the swimming pool; development of a park lodge with new park offices at the entrance to the park, and construction of an environmental education.

**These improvements should be a top priority as the County works to provide quality recreation opportunities for its residents.**





## Conservation and Recreation Greenways

The public input process completed during this planning effort reveals that natural greenway corridors, as well as varying types of trails are important to residents of Butler County. There is also significant support for the development of an inter-connecting system of trails throughout the County.

The results of the county-wide recreation questionnaire show:

- 78% of the respondents ranked trails as important or very important to their family household.
- 79% say that hiking, biking, and walking trails are what attracts them to parks.
- Walking, hiking, and biking trails were identified as the most used facilities.
- water trails, hiking, and biking trails are among the five most requested additional outdoor recreational facilities among the seventeen
- 67.7% say acquisition of linear greenways to connect natural open spaces and regional recreation facilities throughout the County is important to them.
- 69.6% support keeping natural vegetative buffers along stream corridors
- 73.5% say it is important to make stream corridors available for recreational use.
- 79.1% say it is important to maintain forestland for ecological and recreational purposes.
- 69.7% say it is important to keep fields available as open space.

All of these statistics combined indicate significant support of the creation of clearly defined greenway system in the County. This Plan strongly supports the establishment of both conservation and recreational greenways throughout Butler County.

### Proposed Recreational Greenway Corridors

#### Land-based Trails

Butler Freeport Trail  
Buffalo Creek Trail  
Butler Cranberry Trail  
New Castle to Brady's Bend Trail  
North Country Trail  
Butler to Glade Dam Lake Trail  
Slippery Rock to North Country Trail  
Buffalo and Pittsburgh Rail-with-Trail  
Evans City to Ellwood City Trail  
Slippery Rock Creek Trail

#### Water-Base Trails

Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail  
Little Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail  
Slippery Rock Creek Water Trail  
Wolf Creek Water Trail  
Yellow Creek Water Trail

Based on a systematic analysis of various natural features in the County, **this Plan proposes seventeen natural systems greenways be recognized for conservation and protection of the County's natural beauty and resources.** Most are found along waterways that are located throughout the County. **A county-wide trail system consisting of fifteen recreational greenway corridors is proposed** to meet the recreational needs of county residents. Ten are land-based trails for bicycling, walking, running and the like. The remaining five are water based for canoeing, kayaking and other water activities.

Each corridor is depicted graphically on the pages that follow.

## Recreation & Alternative Transportation Greenway Corridors

Various existing trails, potential trail corridors, on-road cycling routes, and potential water trail opportunities are shown on the Recreation and Alternative Transportation Greenways Map. These existing and potential routes are described here:

### 1) **Butler Freeport Trail**

The Butler Freeport Trail is an existing Rails-to-Trails Shared Use Path connecting the town of Freeport on the Allegheny River in Armstrong County to the City of Butler. This 11 mile trail should continue to be maintained and promoted to the extent it has been to date. Additionally, extensions or spurs connecting to this trail could be a major asset to the communities along the trail and should be pursued.

### 2) **Buffalo Creek Trail**

The proposed Buffalo Creek Trail follows the former Winfield Rail Road corridor from the Butler Freeport Trail just west of the Route 28 Bridge. At this point the trail heads north along the banks of Buffalo Creek into Armstrong County and back into Butler County near the intersection of Clearfield Road and Winfield. This trail would make for a beautiful recreation opportunity as it travels through the Buffalo Creek Gorge and what is proposed as an exceptional value natural system greenway corridor.

### 3) **Butler Cranberry Trail**

The proposed Butler Cranberry Trail begins at Mars Road near the interchange with Interstate 79 and travels through open space to Rowan Road where it picks up the former Pittsburgh, Harmony, Butler and New Castle Railway. This route travels through Callery, Evans City, and Connoquenessing before entering the city of Butler from the west. Once in Butler, the trail can travel on road to make a connection with the Butler Freeport Trail.

This proposed Shared Use Path has the opportunity to not only be a gem of a recreational trail, but also provide alternative transportation to those traveling between

the communities and Butler. In addition, this trail provides access to what could become an alternative transportation connection to Pittsburgh with public transportation options from the western terminus of the trail near the I-79 interchange.

### 4) **New Castle to Brady's Bend Trail**

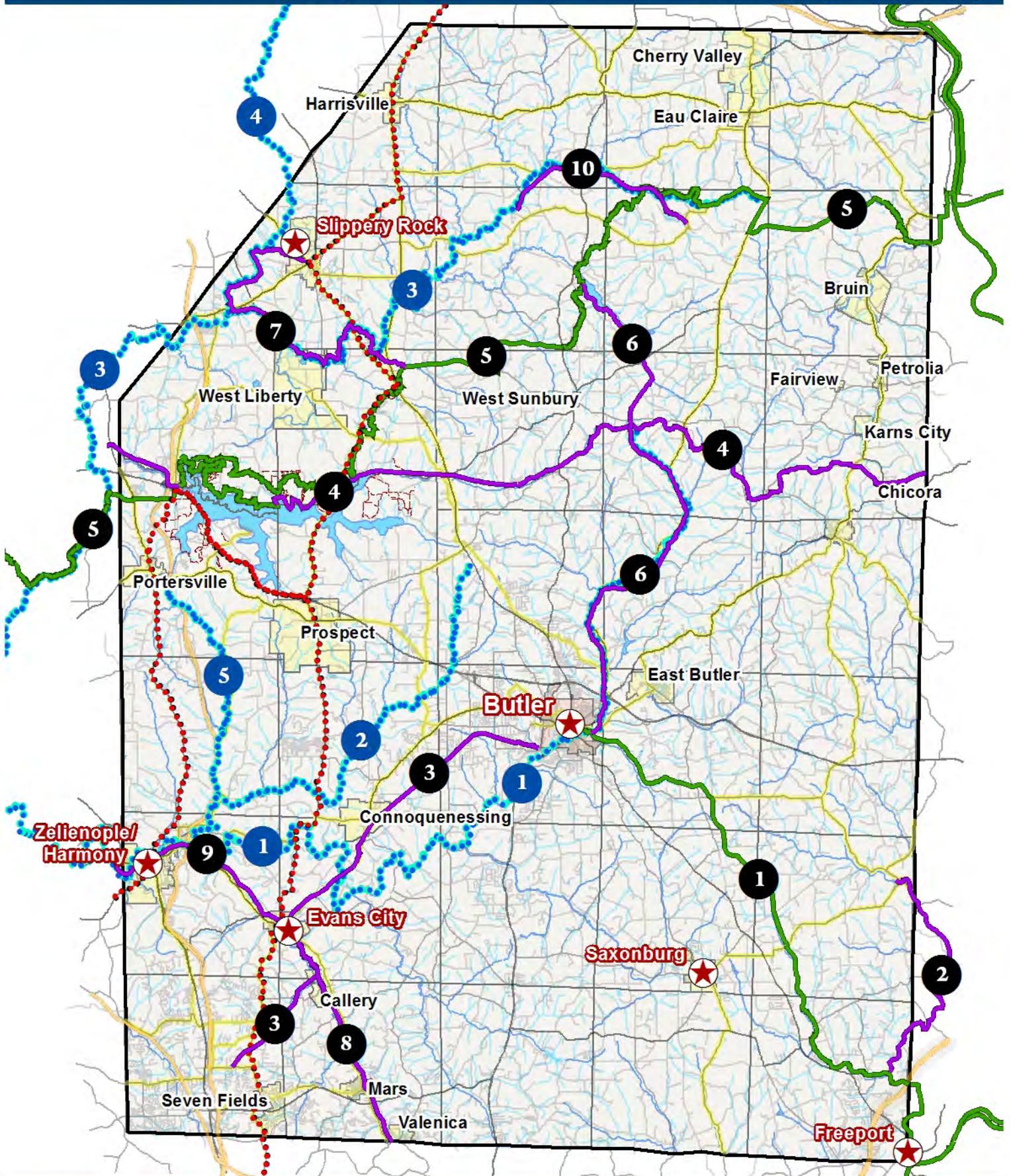
The proposed New Castle to Brady's Bend Trail begins at New Castle in Lawrence County and ends at East Brady in Armstrong County. This trail has the potential to have a regional impact connecting with the Armstrong Trail on the Allegheny River in Brady's Bend and passing through both McConnells Mill and Moraine State Parks.

The trail enters Butler County from the west following the former Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad (BLE)/Western Allegheny Railroad (WARR) corridor along Muddy Creek to Moraine State Park where it picks up the existing Moraine State Park Bike trail. At the eastern terminus of the trail at Davis Hollow marina in the park, a new shared use path would need to be blazed to connect to the east side of Lake Arthur. On the east side of Lake Arthur the trail once again picks up the former Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad (BLE)/Western Allegheny Railroad (WARR) corridor following it the rest of the way to Brady's Bend and the Armstrong Trail on the Allegheny River.

### 5) **North Country Trail**

The North Country Trail (NCT) in Butler County has several completed sections in place on the road through Moraine State Park and State Game Land No. 95. The other sections of trail through the County are listed as temporary routes in place to allow for passage of the trail until a final route can be formalized.

The existing NCT through Moraine State Park covers approximately fifteen miles along the north shore of Lake Arthur passing the Davis Hollow Cabin, which is a historic preservation project of the NCT, and connecting to Jennings Nature Reserve and the Old Stone House. Through State Game Land No. 95 the trail covers



13 miles of trail rich in wild life from State Route 308 to Leonard Road. In the last section that approached the Trail Town of Parker and the Allegheny River, there is the five mile section along the North Fork of Bear Creek, through Hemlock forest and across two special arched bridges.

#### 6) **Butler to Glade Dam Lake Trail**

This proposed trail begins in the City of Butler near the trailhead for the Butler Freeport Trail and ends at Glade Dam Lake in State Game Land No. 95. This trail has the potential to connect the City of Butler with Thorn Reservoir, Lake Oneida, and the New Castle to Brady's Bend Trail as well as Moraine State Park, Glade Dam Lake, and the North Country Trail.

The trail leaves Butler heading north along Connoquenessing Creek parallel to PA State Route 38 and the active Bessemer & Lake Erie railroad. After passing Lake Oneida, the trail heads northwest following a stream corridor along Valley Road and Joswiak Road. Near the intersection of Joswiak and Gilbert Roads, this proposed trail intersects the proposed New Castle to Brady's Bend Trail. At this point, trail users could head west on on the New Castle to Brady's Bend trail to reach Moraine State Park.

Heading north, the Butler to Glade Dam Lake Trail follows the stream along Hazlett Road to South Branch Slippery Rock Creek. The trail then heads northwest along South Branch Slippery Rock Creek into State Game Land No. 95 eventually arriving at Glade Dam Lake and traveling along its western shore until it reaches the North Country Trail near PA State Route 308.

#### 7) **Slippery Rock to North Country Trail**

The proposed Slippery Rock Creek Trail connects Main Street in Slippery Rock, as well as the University, with the North Country Trail and Moraine State Park. This trail would provide numerous recreation opportunities for residents as well as the students of Slippery Rock University.

Additionally, this trail would provide educational

opportunities being that the trail would also connect to Wolf Creek Narrows and Millers Woods owned by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Moraine State Park Conservation Area, and Jennings Environmental Education Center in Moraine State Park.

The proposed trail leaves Main Street in Slippery Rock heading west along a tributary of Wolf Creek to Wolf Creek. Once it reaches Wolf Creek the Trail heads southwest along the creek to its mouth at Slippery Rock Creek. At Slippery Rock Creek the Trail heads east following the creek across Slippery Rock Road to Rock Falls park, then across Route 173 to Armco Park, and finally across Route 8 to the North Country Trail near Hallston Road.

#### 8) **Buffalo & Pittsburgh Rail-with-Trail**

The Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad maintains a rail line that traverses Adams Township from south to north connecting Valencia Borough, Callery Borough, and just north of the Township, Evans City Borough. Although the right-of-way currently provides a single track (for the most part), historically there were two tracks located along its length through Adams Township. The eastern most track remains, while the western track was removed some time ago. Based on evidence along the line, it appears the right-of-way width for these two tracks is between 40 to 60 feet wide. This width appears to be sufficient to accommodate a rail-with-trail.

This corridor provides potential to create a trail which crosses Adams Township from north to south, and to provide connections to communities located along the way.

This corridor was evaluated in 2008 as part of the **Adams Township Recreation, Park, Open Space, Greenway & Trail Plan**. Based on the analysis of this corridor, a long term vision is recommended for establishing a rail-with-trail from the Mars VFW Ballfield, located southeast of the Mars Valencia Road and State Route 228, to the Railroad Street ballfield complex in Evan City Borough.

In addition, it was recommended that the Mars Area Historical Society's Mars Train Station be utilized as a trail access point, as well as Marburger Field in Callery Borough.

That study also recommends, ideally, the trail would continue further to the south. However, the secondary rail sidings in the vicinity of Fey Lane and Downieville Road present safety hazards. Trail users would be required to cross the sidings to continue southward, to Valencia Borough, on the trail.

Therefore, it was recommended that Adam Township begin a dialogue with the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad to further explore the potential to develop a rail-with-trail from the Mars VFW Field, in the southern portion of the Township, to the Railroad Street Fields, in Evan City Borough. The proposed trail would cover a distance of 6.72 miles.

The existing rails are situated on a limestone ballast bed, which appears to meet rail industry standards. The overall width of the ballast bed at the base is approximately 20 feet wide while the actual rail bed itself has a width of approximately ten feet wide and rails that are 4 feet 8-1/2" apart. These dimensions are represented in the Pennsylvania Railroad Standard for Single and Double Track Railway.

The U.S. Department of Transportation publication ***Rails-with-Trails: Lessons Learned*** reviewed best practices for establishing rails-with-trails and provides recommendations for the planning and design of such a facility.

Further research should be conducted on the Buffalo & Pittsburgh line to determine the right-of-way width. Based on discussions with a Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad representative this corridor is a low speed and low frequency corridor, with a right-of-way width of 40 feet. Given the location of the existing track within that width, a 10 foot separation could be accommodated between the center of the existing track and the near edge of the

proposed rail trail. Where the right-of-way is 60 feet in width, a setback of 20 feet, or greater, may be provided. Further study, analysis and discussion is required with the railroad to determine if these separations would be acceptable.

As recommended in the 2008 study, we continue to recommend the Township pursue the development of a demonstration project along this corridor following the concept plan proposed in 2008.

#### 9) **Evans City to Ellwood City Trail**

The proposed Evans City to Ellwood City Trail follows the former Pittsburgh, Harmony, Butler, and New Castle railroad corridor. The trail begins in Evans City heading northwest along Breakneck Creek to the creek's mouth at Connoquenessing Creek. At Connoquenessing Creek the trail heads west along the creek through Harmony and Zelienople before entering Lawrence County.

Through other proposed trail connections, this proposed trail has the potential to link population centers of Cranberry and Butler with New Castle in Lawrence County.

#### 10) **Slippery Rock Creek Trail**

This proposed trail follows the former Bessemer & Lake Erie railroad line from Branchton Road, east of Slippery Rock near its intersection with PA Route 8 to Hillards, at the eastern terminus of Branchton Road.

This recently inactivated corridor has the potential to become a recreational trail heading east out of Slippery Rock or to become part of the final route of the North Country Trail. Its status of abandonment should be looked into before it is reverted to private ownership.

## Proposed Water Trails

### 1) **Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail**

Presently, the documented canoeable portion of Connoquenessing Creek begins on the western edge of Butler County in Zelenople heading west through Lawrence and into Beaver County. The recommendations of this plan include determining the feasibility of creating a water trail beginning north of Lake Oneida and passing through the City of Butler on to Zelenople. This would create a significant water trail which, if properly maintained and marketed, could become a recreation and tourism draw for the County and the region.

### 2) **Little Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail**

This water trail is proposed to begin at Little Connoquenessing Creek's confluence with Mulligan Run in Connoquenessing Township and travel more than 11 miles south west to its confluence with Connoquenessing Creek in Jackson Township. This water trail will provide additional paddling opportunities in Butler County with potential to paddle all the way to the Beaver River.

### 3) **Slippery Rock Creek Water Trail**

Presently, the documented canoeable portion of Slippery Rock Creek begins in Rock Falls Park along State Route 173 and heads west and south into Lawrence County and McConnells Mill State Park. The recommendations of this plan include determining the feasibility of developing a water trail beginning further upstream, possibly as far as State Game Land 95. This would create a significant water trail, which, if properly maintained and marketed, could become a recreation and tourism draw for the County and the region.

### 4) **Wolf Creek Water Trail**

The proposed Wolf Creek water trail provides more than eleven miles of seasonal paddling from Grove City in Mercer County to the Confluence with Slippery Rock Creek in Lancaster Township, Butler County. Along with Slippery Rock Creek, this water trail provides opportunity for paddling adventures near Slippery Rock University as well as near

Moraine and McConnells Mill State Parks. If properly maintained and marketed, these water trails could become recreation and tourism destinations for the County and the region.

### 5) **Yellow Creek Water Trail**

This proposed water trail is only five miles long but has the potential to offer short trips for unexperienced paddlers to learn techniques. A study should be completed to determine the feasibility and desirability of creating this short water trail.

**Associated Municipalities:** Muddy Creek Township and Lancaster Township.



# section I:

*introduction*



## Benefits of Greenways to Butler County

- Promotes restoration of land and water;
- Fosters public recreation, active living, and healthy lifestyles;
- Encourages a network of non-motorized land and water transportation corridors to connect people to our resources;
- Explores opportunities to expand motorized off-highway vehicle and snowmobile trails;
- Conserves natural, ecological and hydrologic infrastructure resources;
- Builds capacity at the local level for implementation and education;
- Encourages economic development;
- Promotes active living and healthy lifestyles;
- Promotes sustainable land development;
- Enhances the quality of life;
- Preserves rural scenic character.

# Chapter 1: background

## Recreation Planning in Butler County

Butler County has a strong history of parks and recreation. While Alameda Park began in 1901 as an amusement Park, it served area residents with its picnic groves, carousel, swimming and boating lake, theater, and ballfields. In 1965, Butler County purchased the park for use as a county recreational facility. That same year, with financial assistance from Butler City and Township, County Commissioners created the Butler County Park and Recreation Commission. The Commission's initial master plan envisioned a system of county parks and open spaces and defined a role for the County that would fill the recreational gap between Pennsylvania's State Park system and the host of local parks across the county. The Commission's goal was to create an optimum level of recreational services through a system of County regional parks and by offering support, assistance, and advice to local municipalities.

Over the years, the system has seen a change in its financial support and even its name, but the mission has remained the same. It has now become the Butler County Parks and Recreation Department with an accompanying Advisory Board.

As many of the recommendations of the 1997 plan have been implemented, the County initiated a new effort to once again lay plans for the future of parks, recreation, and open space in Butler County.

In 1997, Butler County completed its most recent Comprehensive Recreation and Open Space Plan. This was a plan that provided the vision and direction to develop a well-defined County parks and recreation system. This structure has been the driving force in developing Alameda Park into a substantial county recreation facility and has assisted individual municipalities in creating a strong network of local parks.

Understanding the value in completing a plan that is all-inclusive, the County has chosen to include four components in the planning process. Each is included in this final report.

1. Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan – This plan considers the overall needs of recreation and park opportunities across the County.
2. Greenways Plan – A plan for establishing both recreational and conservation greenways throughout the County.
3. Alameda Park Master Plan – Planning for the future development of one of the County's only County-owned Parks.
4. Alameda Park Swimming Pool Feasibility Study – An analysis and plan for the long-term sustainability of the swimming pool.

## County Background

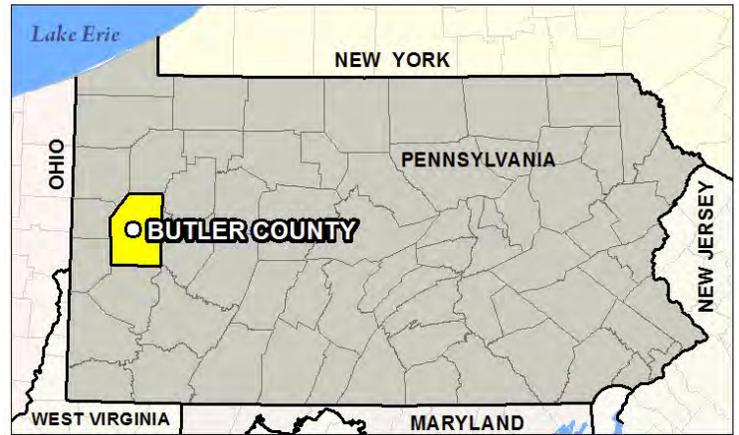
Butler County is located in the west-central portion of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It is about twenty minutes north of the City of Pittsburgh and nearly equidistant between New York State and West Virginia. It is bounded to the east by Clarion, Armstrong, and Westmoreland Counties; to the south by Allegheny County; to the west by Beaver, Lawrence, and Mercer Counties; and to the north by Venango County.

The southern sections of the County, while maintaining some of their rural character, are becoming more and more suburbanized. Municipalities to the east and north of the City of Butler are among the least densely populated in the County.

Cranberry Township, located in the southwest corner, is the County's largest municipality with a population of 28,098<sup>1</sup>. The City of Butler and Butler Township combine to make up the Butler area with a total population of 31,005. The next largest municipalities are Slippery Rock Borough and Township combined (9,239) and Adams Township (11,652).

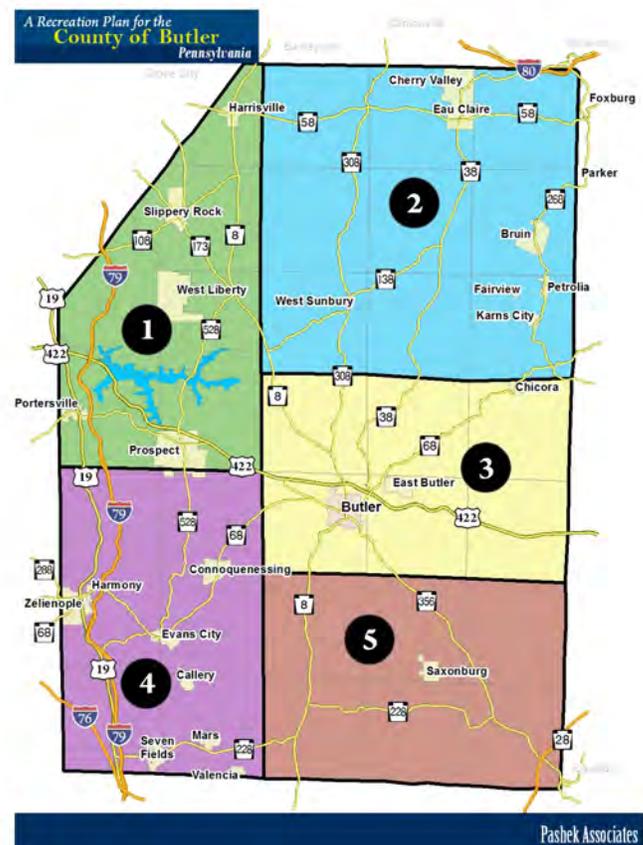
The County owns and operates Alameda Park that is located just northwest of the City of Butler. Comprising 418 acres, Alameda features a large outdoor swimming pool, more than a dozen picnic shelters, several playground areas, sport courts, and miles of recreational trails. Moraine State Park, the largest park in the County with nearly 17,000 acres, features a multitude of outdoor recreation opportunities from fishing and boating, to biking, hiking, picnicking and much more. In addition to the Alameda and Moraine parks, dozens of local municipal parks are well distributed across the county.

Typically, Butler County has not included parks, recreation, and open space in its County Comprehensive Plan. Instead it has chosen to complete it as a stand-alone plan separate from the County Comprehensive Plan. The previous



Butler County Comprehensive Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan was completed in 1997. It is recommended that Counties complete this plan every ten to fifteen years.

For planning purposes, the County has designated five planning regions, identified in the accompanying map. Much of the analysis throughout this Plan is conducted based on these planning regions.



<sup>1</sup> All Census data in this section is from the US Census Bureau, 2010 Census Data

## The Planning Process

The Planning Process led the County through a three-step progression of simple yet profound questions.

### Where Are We Now?

Answering this question required the research of existing conditions. What are the County's recreational and natural resources, and where are they located? What facilities and resources are available within the existing county-wide parks and recreation system? What recreational facilities are available in the County that are offered by local municipalities, non-profit recreation providers, school districts, private entities, and other government agencies? And, what is the administrative structure that manages major recreation and/or parks systems throughout the County, and how do they function?

### Where Do We Want To Be?

This question stimulates the need to reach out to the public in a variety of venues to help project what the future of parks and recreation should be in Butler County. Public participation was gathered through multiple sources including a study committee that represented the residents of the County; a series of public meetings; key person interviews; a recreation questionnaire; a web-based blog; and on-site interviews. In addition to collecting public comment, an analysis was completed on the findings of the existing conditions to identify changes and improvements that would benefit County residents.

### How Do We Get There?

The culmination of the answers to the two previous questions provides the direction on how to meet the recreational needs, wants, and desires of the County. It includes the development of a vision statement, goals, and implementation strategies. Separate chapters provide specific recommendations related to Alameda Park, Alameda Swimming Pool, and county greenways.

## THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

WHERE ARE  
WE NOW?



WHERE DO WE  
WANT TO BE?



HOW DO WE  
GET THERE?

## The Benefits of Parks and Recreation

Parks and recreation play a critical role in providing a quality of life that attracts residents, businesses, and economic activity to communities. The economic benefits are quite clear, as businesses prefer communities with a high quality of life, including an abundance of open space and nearby recreation.

### Parks & Recreation

BE HAPPIER • Build Family Unity • Feel Great • TAKE CARE OF LATCH KEY CHILDREN • reduce unemployment • INCREASE COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS • Expand Knowledge • Lose weight • diminish chance of disease • Build self-esteem • Reduce stress - promote sensitivity to cultural diversity - Provide safe places to play • Generate revenue • lower healthcare costs - Meet friends • educate children and adults • Relax - Keep Businesses from Leaving • Elevate Personal Growth - Strengthen Neighborhood Involvement • conquer boredom • provide childcare - Boost Economy • curb employee absenteeism • increase tourism • Build strong bodies • increase property value • attract new businesses - Preserve plant and animal wildlife • instill teamwork - Live longer • create memories • protect the environment - Clean air and water • boost employee productivity • look better - Enhance relationship skills • decrease insurance premiums • control weight - Offer places for social interaction • diminish gang violence - TEACH VITAL LIFE SKILLS • provide space to enjoy nature - Quench Competitive Thirst

**The Benefits are Endless...**

## How to Use this Plan

Butler County's Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan will be a powerful tool in the County's effort to continually build and support a high quality recreation and open space system. It provides direction for the County to sustain and enhance the quality of recreational opportunities, park facilities, open spaces and trails.

The Plan provides a framework to fulfill Butler County's vision for the future of recreation, parks, open space and trails. It recognizes the County's desire to balance its rural and natural areas with the recreational needs of its residents and visitors. A strong effort has been made to balance opportunities for County residents, while working to stimulate the County's economy through recreational improvement and development.

The recommendations presented in this document offer a clear direction for future recreation, park, and open space initiatives in the County. The wide scope and short, middle, and long-term range of the implementation strategies assist in realistic planning for implementation. The detailed information provided will assist in setting financial goals and the appropriate allocation of needed County support.

The broad scope of this Plan includes the documentation and analysis of a variety of issues pertinent to recreation, parks, and open space in Butler County. The document will be a valuable resource of supporting information as the implementation strategies are completed, new strategies are developed and documentation of existing conditions is needed.

The Plan provides the County with a wealth of data and background information to support the enhancement of county-wide recreation facilities, preservation of the County's natural features, development of recreational trails and stimulation of the County's economy. The Plan identifies ways for the County to partner with a multitude of organizations and municipalities to strengthen recreational opportunities throughout the County.

Local municipalities will find direction for improvement of local recreational facilities. Municipalities will be able to draw from the data and recommendations of the Plan to identify and support local projects. They will find opportunities to cooperate with the County, other municipalities, and a host of local and regional organizations to implement their projects. The Plan provides needed information to support grant applications for improvement and expansion of their recreation facilities.

Local residents will be the ultimate beneficiary of new recreation facilities, preserved resources, and an enhanced economy based on the outcomes of the Plan. Residents have demonstrated a perpetual interest in the growth of a high quality system of recreation, parks, and open space. This Plan offers convenient, practical information for public consumption. Additionally, many of the key components can be used by the County or local organizations to garner support for proposed projects or funding assistance.

### Demographics

According to the 2010 US Census Data, Butler County has a population of 183,862, an increase of 5.62% from 2000 and 21.06% from 1990. The ten-year increase from 2000 to 2010 is more than two percentage points higher than that of the State.

Initial analysis for the 2013 Butler County Comprehensive Plan projects an increase in the County's total population of 45% by the year

2020. It further projects that each of the County's planning regions will increase between 18% and 59% with the two southern regions having the greatest percentages of growth. The Central and Southwest Regions are expected to have the largest numeric growth at 24,315 and 31,098 respectively.

When comparing age cohorts with the general population, we see that the young children cohort (ages 0-9) and the senior's cohort are almost identical in the County and the State with only 0.1 percentage difference in each. Butler County has a slightly higher percentage of youth ages 10-19 than the State as a whole. In the adult cohorts, the State has a higher percentage (2.7%) of young adults ages 20-34 while the County has a greater percentage (2.6%) of adults age 35-64. The percentage of persons under the age of eighteen is very similar between the State (22.0%) and the County (22.4%), and the median age of each is also similar at 41.5 in the County and 40.1 across the State.

Ages Distribution by Percent	0-9 yrs.	10-19 yrs.	20-34 yrs.	35-64 yrs.	65+ yrs.
<b>Butler County</b>	11.50%	14.00%	16.10%	43.20%	15.50%
<b>Pennsylvania</b>	11.60%	13.30%	18.80%	40.80%	15.60%

Two key economic statistics show that Butler County has a significantly higher median household income than that of the state while also having a much lower poverty rate.

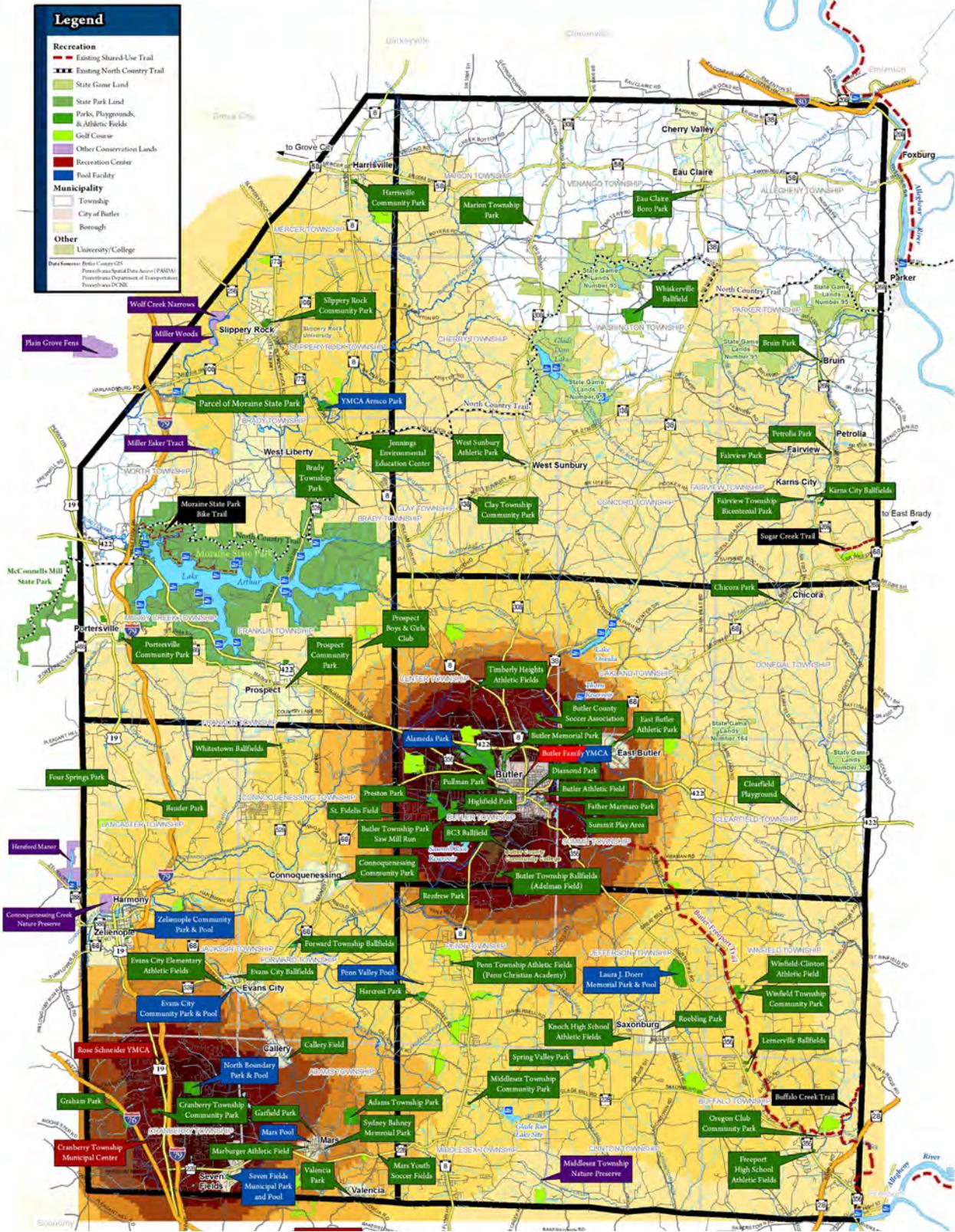
### POPULATION ANALYSIS

	2000	2010	Inc/Dec	% Inc/Dec	2020 Projection	% Inc/Dec 2010-2020
Pennsylvania	12,281,054	12,702,379	421,325	3.40%		
<b>Butler County</b>	174,083	183,862	9,779	5.60%	266,312	45%
Region 1 NW	19,229	20,583	1,354	7.00%	26860	30%
Region 2 NE	13,718	13,791	73	0.50%	16291	18%
Region 3 C	54,417	53,058	-1,359	-2.50%	77373	46%
Region 4 SW	55,088	65,234	10,146	18.40%	96332	48%
Region 5 SE	31,306	31,196	-110	-0.40%	49456	59%

The population distribution map graphically depicts the location of the population throughout Butler County.

# A Recreation Plan for the County of Butler Pennsylvania

## Inventory Map 2 Spatial Analysis



## Review of Existing Planning Documents

A multitude of recreational and community planning has taken place in Butler County in recent years. Many of these plans have an absolute impact on the future of recreation, parks, and conservation, while others have a less direct yet important impact. The following graphics depict the types of direct recreational planning that has taken place.

### Single Municipality Plans

- City of Butler (2006) – Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan; Master Site Plans for Memorial and Father Marinaro Parks; Butler Community Swimming Pool Feasibility Study
- Slippery Rock Borough – Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan; Master Site Plan
- Adams Township – Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan; Greenway Plan; Master Site Plan
- Middlesex Township - Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan; Master Site Plan
- Cranberry Township - Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan; Greenway/Bike-Ped Plan; Various Master Site Plans
- Zelienople Borough – Master Site Plan; Swimming Pool Feasibility Study; Recreation Plan as part of the Multi-municipal Plan

### Other Studies

- Butler-Freeport Trail – Feasibility/development Studies
- North Country Trail Feasibility Study
- Slippery Rock Creek - Watershed Plan
- Connoquenessing Creek - Watershed Plan
- Butler County - Comprehensive Plan

### Multi-municipal Plans

- Butler Area (Butler, Penn, and Summit Townships, East Butler Borough) – Comprehensive Recreation Plan
- Northwestern Butler County (Slippery Rock Borough and Township, West Liberty Borough, Worth and Brady Townships) – Comprehensive Recreation Plan
- Buffalo/Clinton Townships – Multi-municipal Greenways Plan; Buffalo Comprehensive Recreation Plan; Spring Valley (Clinton) Master Site Plan
- Zelienople/Harmony – Recreation component in the Multi-Municipal Plan
- Mars Region – Intergovernmental Cooperation Peer-to-Peer Study

### Master Site Plans

- Adams Township Park
- Butler City – Memorial and Father Marinaro
- Butler Township – Preston Park
- Brady Township Park
- Buffalo Township – Oregon Club Park
- Clinton Township - Spring Valley Park
- Cranberry Township Parks
- Jefferson Township – Laura J. Doerr Park
- Penn Township – Harcrest Park
- Middlesex Township Park
- Slippery Rock Borough Park
- Winfield Township Park
- Zelienople Borough Park



# Chapter 2: public input

The public participation process is crucial in understanding the needs and desires of Butler County residents. It provided valuable grassroots input that assisted in the development of a vision for the future of Butler County recreation, parks, and open space, and of viable implementation strategies. The public input process included:

- regular meetings of the **project study committee**
- series of **regional public meetings**
- distribution and tabulation of an **online recreation questionnaire**
- **personal interviews** with key stakeholders and users of the County's recreation facilities
- **on-site interviews** at the Alameda Park and Swimming Pool
- **project blog** as an interactive on-line public comment forum

Providing a variety of venues for resident participation resulted in an holistic understanding of the current state of recreation, parks, and open space; the issues that are important to Butler County's residents; and the types of improvements they would like to see. As well, it provided a greater level of detail for Alameda Park and Swimming Pool.

The following is a categorized summary of the key findings from all forms of public input.

## Alameda Park Needs

- Hiking, biking, mountain bike, xc ski trails
- Repair damage to trails created by logging
- Sledding/tubing hill
- Bike access to Alameda Park with connections to other resources
- Restroom facilities
- Dog park
- Basketball court
- Indoor recreation facility at Alameda Park

## Alameda Swimming Pool

- Lazy river
- Additional umbrellas
- Water spray pad outside the pool
- Additional chairs
- Upgraded restrooms
- Shade
- Lifeguard room
- Better access for Butler City kids to get to the pool

## Highest Ranking Desires

- Significant County role in local parks and recreation
- Trails, trails, and trails
- Sledding/tubing areas
- Dog parks
- Swimming pools – indoor and outdoor
- North Country Trail completion
- Alameda Park trail upgrades
- Rectangular fields in some parts of the County

## County-wide Facility Needs

- Hiking, biking, walking, rollerblade trails throughout the County
  - Inter-connecting trail system connecting various community and recreation facilities and other trails
  - Shared use trails
  - Urban trails
  - Complete the North Country Trail within Butler County
  - Rail trails
- Water Trails
- ATV Trails
- County to provide both technical and financial support to local municipal parks
- Kayak access to County streams and lakes
- Reclaim Glade Run Lake as a recreational facility
- Preservation of the County's natural features – streams, waterways, Glade Run Lake
- Promote economic development through parks and recreation

## Facilities

- Indoor pool
- Sledding/tubing hill
- Outdoor Skating area
- Indoor Ice arena
- Rectangular fields – soccer, field hockey, lacrosse, football
- Natural areas – wild flowers, undeveloped areas
- Indoor swimming pools
- Indoor and outdoor shooting range
- Dog parks

## Program Needs

### Festivals and Special Events

- Community festivals
- Music/Bands concerts
- Ethnic/Cultural festivals

### Recreational Programming Needs

- Art/music/theater
- Arts and crafts
- Adult sports

- Pre-school programs
- Competitions/contests/races
- After-school programs
- Senior programs
- Nature/environmental activities

## Butler County's Role in Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

- Expand the County Grant program
- Maintain a comprehensive listing of recreational facilities and programs available throughout the County
- Provide municipalities with technical assistance related to parks and recreation
- Grant assistance for local municipalities
- Assist in protecting Glade Run Lake as a recreational facility
- Support trail development in the County
- Facilitate regional or County-wide recreation meetings to support local municipalities - programming, special events, park maintenance

## Highlights from Comments Provided in the Survey

- Disc golf
- Rectangular fields (lots of requests from Adams Twp.)
- Walking and biking trails close to home
- No more logging in Alameda Park. Return it to useable trails.
- Spray Park at Butler City Pool

## Public Input Summary by Venue

Each of the venues of input generated its own unique perspective on recreation, parks, open space, and greenways. The remainder of this chapter provides a description of each of the venues of public input. Complete results are included in the appendices.

### The Study Committee

The Study Committee comprises mostly members of the Butler County Park Commission. This included one representative from each of the Park Commission's five geographic regions as well as representatives from the Convention and Visitor Bureau, Butler County Board of Commissioners, Moraine State Park, members at-large, and County Parks and Recreation staff.

From the beginning of the planning process through to the final recommendations, the Study Committee played an important role in the development of this Plan. The committee brought a consistent County-wide focus to the process. It served as a sounding board for ideas generated throughout the planning process; provided feedback as existing recreation facilities and programs were inventoried; assisted in the interpretation of the public input; and balanced a multitude of contrasting ideas of what is important to parks and recreation in the County. At its first meeting, the Committee discussed, identified, and brainstormed issues, qualities, and concerns about parks and recreation in Butler County.

The following list identifies the top 10 issues the Committee felt should be addressed in this plan.

1. Expanding the County grant program to municipalities for local recreational projects
2. Continuing interest and support from the County Commissioners for parks and recreation
3. Additional indoor recreational facilities across the County for multi-purpose recreational use
4. Bringing together other County departments, businesses, organizations, school districts and local governments to help with parks and recreation across the County
5. Acquisition of additional park land; especially in

the southern part of the County

6. Need for parks and recreation professionals for local municipalities
7. Development of a map that depicts all parks and recreation opportunities in the County
8. Providing Wi-Fi in Alameda Park
9. Meeting residents' recreational needs without duplication of services
10. Expanding trail opportunities within the County

A full list of the Committees concerns is located in the appendices.

## Key Regional Needs

### Region 1

- Pedestrian and bike trails
- Regional assistance from the County
- County to provide guide books for native species plantings, habitat protection, best practices in parks, botanical upgrades for parks

### Region 2

No particular recreational needs were identified in this region

### Region 3

- Alameda Park bike trails reconstruction and protection
- Eliminate logging in parks
- Develop inter-municipal partners for trail planning and development
- Connect the Butler Freeport Trail and the North Country Trail

### Region 4

- North Country Trail completion
- Disc Golf Course
- Rectangular fields in the Adams Township/Mars area
- Rail corridor trails

## Public Meetings

Valuable input from the general public was gathered through regional public meetings. Early in the process, a public meeting was held in each of the County's five planning regions. The purpose of the meetings was to hear from residents about their thoughts, concerns, needs, desires, and issues concerning parks, recreation, and open space in the County. As the Plan was nearing completion, a County-wide open house was held to present the draft recommendations for each of the plans included in this project. Residents were given the opportunity to view pictorial displays, narrative summaries, and key recommendations for each component of the project. County staff and consultants were on hand to answer questions. Residents were given the opportunity to provide verbal and written comments.

Throughout these meetings, a number of similar suggestions were presented. They include:

- Extending the North Country Trail to connect Moraine State Park with McConnell's Mill State Park.
- Developing a variety of kinds of trails throughout the County.
  - Walking, hiking, biking, mountain biking, multi-use trails
  - Urban trails
  - Linking Alameda Park with surrounding resources
  - Conversion of abandoned rail beds to trails
  - Inter-connecting trails within the County and extending beyond the County
- Creating a map with descriptions and inventories of parks and recreation facilities throughout the County. Make it available on-line.
- Expand and clearly define the County's role in providing assistance for local parks and recreation.
- Promote volunteer support for parks and recreation.

In addition to the issues that were common among the regions, each meeting depicted the individual needs of the region's residents.

### REGION 1 – SLIPPERY ROCK COMMUNITY CENTER; MAY 31, 2012

The major point of interest at this meeting was the role Butler County should play in local parks and recreation. Participants showed great consensus that the County should provide assistance to local municipalities in locating, securing, and administering parks and recreation grants. They also promoted the expansion of the County's existing grant program to local municipalities.

The group was also looking to the County to provide a number of documents that would help local parks departments. These included:

- A centralized database and map of parks and recreation facilities throughout the County
- A guide to planting native plant species in local parks

**Butler County**  
**Parks, Recreation, Trails, and**  
**Open Space**

**Public Meetings**  
**Come and tell us what you think**



Follow our Blog at [www.butlercountyrecreation.blogspot.com](http://www.butlercountyrecreation.blogspot.com)



**FIND OUR RECREATION SURVEY AT**  
**WWW.CO.BUTLER.PA.US**  
**JUST CLICK ON THE LINK**

**May 30 – Fairview Municipal Building**  
**May 31 – Slippery Rock Community Center**  
**June 7 – Clinton Twp. Municipal Building**  
**June 12– Adams Twp. Municipal Building**  
**June 14– Alameda Park Odd Fellows Pavilion**  
**All meetings are at 7:00 pm**

For more info, call the Butler County Parks and Recreation at 724-284-5383

- A list of available volunteer groups
- A guide sheet for stream improvements
- Publicity ideas and methods

### **REGION 2 – FAIRVIEW TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING; MAY 30, 2012**

No one attended this meeting.

### **REGION 3 – ALAMEDA PARK; JUNE 14, 2012**

The Alameda Park meeting focused on the attendees' perceived problems created with the timbering of the Park. Attendees were quite dismayed that the mountain bike trails had been destroyed during the timbering process and were adamant about having the County re-construct the trails to their original condition. They were also outspoken that the trails groups should be more involved in decisions concerning the trails.

Other important topics were:

- Extension of the North Country Trail
- Provision of kayak access on streams, rivers, and lakes throughout the County
- Including business and industrial groups in assisting with parks and recreation, trails, greenways, and open space preservation
- Improved methods for park security

### **REGION 4 – ADAMS TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING; JUNE 12, 2012**

In addition to the North Country Trail extension, the attendees in this region were focused on outdoor sports' needs. The need for rectangular fields, especially for soccer, a disc golf course, and recreational trails topped the list.

### **REGION 5 – CLINTON TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING; JUNE 7, 2012**

Of greatest concern to the residents in this region is the restoration of Glade Run Lake. A significant portion of the meeting was devoted to the details of this issue. Perhaps the biggest push was for the County to be involved both financially and supportively in the restoration.

Other issues included enhancing the County's role in local parks and recreation; developing a

web-based listing of all recreation opportunities in the County; involving industries, businesses, churches, organizations, and schools in support and participation of parks and recreation; and completing the North Country Trail through the County.

A complete listing of the data collected through the public meetings is located in the appendices.

### **Key Person Interviews**

Key Person Interviews were conducted with individuals who could provide valuable input regarding parks and recreation issues. Each person was questioned related to his/her particular interest or expertise in the region's parks, recreation, and open space. Interviews were conducted in one of four ways: in person, via telephone, via email or as part of a group meeting along with the Consultant. Interviewees represented these Municipalities and organizations:

- Butler County Parks and Recreation
- Slippery Rock Parks and Recreation Commission
- Cranberry Township Parks and Recreation
- Adams Township (Parks and Recreation)
- Middlesex Township (Recreation)
- Buffalo Township (Parks and Recreation)
- Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (proposed park in Buffalo Township)
- Butler-Freeport Community Trail Association
- Glade Run Lake
- North Country Trail Association

Information gathered from these interviews is interspersed throughout this report as part of the analysis and recommendations.

### **Recreation Questionnaire**

In May 2012, a digital survey was posted on SurveyMonkey to collect information from Butler County residents about their wants, needs, and desires for parks and recreation opportunities. The survey was promoted through a series of email blasts that were sent from various County agencies and organizations as well as through newspaper articles, posters, business card distributions, and word-of-mouth.

Over a four-month period, 423 surveys were completed.

The questionnaire responses were compared to County population statistics, and it was determined that the responses were equitably distributed among all age groups. Additionally, the results were compared to the geographic distribution of the population throughout the County. The results showed that residents from each region responded to the questionnaire and that responses generally corresponded to the geographic distribution of residents.

### QUESTIONNAIRE HIGHLIGHTS

According to the questionnaire:

- Among the parks that respondents **visited the most** are Adams Township Community Park, Alameda County Park, and Moraine State Park. Behind those are Butler City Parks and Cranberry Township Parks
- Parks, recreational programming, recreational trails, and recreational waterways all ranked as important or very important to respondents.
- Respondents are **most attracted to parks** that include hiking, biking, and walking trails; water features; picnic facilities; and/or open spaces for recreational activity.
- Most people are **finding out about parks and recreation activities** via the internet or newspapers. Word of mouth, email, brochures, and Facebook are also popular.
- Among the most **popular programs and activities** are community special events, nature/environmental programs, swimming, youth outdoor sports, art/music/theater.
- Residents specified that the **top programs and activities** that a member of their family would participate in if provided were: senior programs (indoor and outdoor), arts and crafts, adult indoor sports, art/music/theater, and after-school programs.
- Community festivals, music festivals, and ethnic culture/food festivals are among the most popular.
- Respondents indicated that the top types of **recreation and open spaces** that **they currently use** in Butler County are: walking,



Butler County Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Survey

6. What attracts you to a park? Check as many as apply.

- Other trails
- Playgrounds
- Programs and activities
- Sports fields
- Rivers, streams, lakes and other bodies of water
- Picnic facilities
- Open spaces for recreational activity
- Hiking/biking/ walking trails

Other (please specify)

7. What is the best way for you to find out about parks and recreation activities? Check as many as apply.

- Facebook
- Newspapers
- Twitter
- Website/Internet
- Local schools
- Email
- Word of mouth
- Brochures
- Fliers

Other (please specify)

biking, hiking, mountain bike, water, and geocache trails; sports fields; picnic areas and playgrounds.

- Respondents indicated that the top types of **recreation and open spaces** that they would use if provided in Butler County are: water parks and indoor swimming pools; outdoor ice rinks; sledding/tubing areas; and dog parks.
- Seventy-five percent or more of the respondents find the protection and preservation of natural areas important or very important.
- 77% of County residents believe a County-wide open space system that protects natural areas such as streams, woodlands, and farms is important or very important to them.
- The most requested facilities in Alameda Park are trails.
- At the Alameda Park Swimming Pool the most desired new facilities are a lazy river, more large umbrellas, and a water spray pad outside of the pool.

Much more detail is provided about the survey in the appendices.

### ***Alameda Park and Pool On-site Interviews***

Interviews were conducted at both Alameda Park and the swimming pool on four different occasions during August of 2012. Each interviewee was asked a series of six questions to get her/his opinions about improvements that are needed in the Park or at the pool. There were a total of 99 interviewees for the park and 70 for the swimming pool for a total of 169 interviews. Some interviewees answered questions for both the park and the pool. A total of 136 persons were interviewed. Of these, 107 said they were residents of Butler County.

Fifty of the interviewees said they come to the park or pool one or more times per week. Another 42 visit one or the other one or more times per month.

When asked what the best things about the park are, top responses were the Purple Playground, the parks cleanliness, its spaciousness and size, the variety of things to do at the park, and that

the Purple Playground is fenced in. When asked the same question about the swimming pool, respondents said it was the great staff, the kid's area in the pool, the pool itself, and the diving boards.

Interviewees were also asked to identify what new facilities were needed from a list provided by the interviewer. For the park, more than half of the respondents said walking trails around the park, more restroom facilities, hiking trails in the woods, and a sledding hill. The biggest needs for the swimming pool were identified as a water spray pad on the deck, family changing rooms and restrooms, and expanding the children's area.

Each interviewee was also asked if there were any other particular needs for either the park or swimming pool. While no particular amenity stood out far as a significant need, these were mentioned several times: more and cleaner restrooms, more water fountains throughout the park and in the Purple Playground area, more swings, and a bike lane through the park.

A complete list of results is located in the appendices.

### ***On-line Blog***

The Butler County Recreation Blog was used to help keep the public informed of upcoming events related to the recreation planning process. In some municipalities and Counties across Pennsylvania, the Blog has also been an excellent tool to stimulate discussion concerning parks and recreation issues. The Blog was not so successful for that purpose in Butler County.

While the Blog also provided an opportunity for residents to share their thoughts concerning the future of recreation, parks, and open space in the County, there was a very limited response. Only two pertinent comments were posted.

There was also a single question survey on the Blog asking "... what types of facilities attract you to your favorite park?" This survey received just seven responses.

# Butler County Recreation

Public Input Opportunity for Butler County Parks and Recreation



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2012

## Update!

The initial set of public meetings and interviews at Alameda Park have all been completed. We are now moving into analyzing the data to see what the public had to say about their recreational areas. Please feel free to give us additional feedback on the blog site. We welcome and appreciate your comments!

Posted by Christine Marie at 1:42 PM 1 comment:

 Recommend this on Google

## WHETHER IN BUTLER COUNTY OR ELSEWHERE, THESE RECREATION FACILITIES ATTRACT YOU TO YOU

- Programs & Activities
- Athletic Fields
- Walking/biking trails (greenways)
- Playground Equipment
- Streams, Ponds, & Lakes
- Picnic Facilities

## TWO WAYS TO PROVIDE YOUR COMMENTS

One option is to click the "Comments" link at the bottom of the post.

THURSDAY, JUNE 28, 2012

# section II:

## *Comprehensive Recreation, Park & Open Space Plan*





# Chapter 3: inventory and assessment

A drive through almost any community in Butler County quickly reveals that its residents are blessed with a multitude of recreational features, facilities, and programs. From the 16,000+ acre Moraine State Park to the county's own Alameda Park, to the multitude of local community parks, and the Butler-Freeport and North Country trails, county residents have plenty of opportunities to recreate.

With well-balanced development ranging from rural to sub-urban to urban areas, indoor and outdoor recreational facilities and amenities abound. Residents take advantage of the full array of recreational opportunities as they hunt and fish, hike and bike, golf and swim, play a sport, enjoy a playground or just simply relax outdoors.

This chapter presents an in-depth inventory and assessment of parks and recreation opportunities available to Butler County residents. It is important to understand that while many residents of Butler County utilize facilities within the County to fulfill their leisure pursuits, many will also travel outside the County for the same purpose.

## **Recreation Opportunities in and around Butler County**

Numerous municipalities, schools, agencies, organizations, businesses, and non-profits provide recreational opportunities for the residents of Butler County. Inventory of these opportunities is broken into the categories as described below.

### **County Parks and Recreation**

Butler County owns and operates Alameda Park under the direction of the County Parks and Recreation Department. A later section in this report provides a detailed inventory of Alameda Park as part of the development of its new Master Site Plan. The Butler County Parks and Recreation Department is described in this section.

### **Local Parks and Recreation**

Many municipalities throughout the County provide local recreation opportunities that are primarily intended for local residents. Most of these facilities are community and neighborhood parks that are designed to serve entire communities or specific areas within the community. The parks include facilities such as ball fields; playgrounds; picnic shelters; basketball, volleyball, and horseshoe courts; and short walking trails.

### **Recreation Program Providers**

There are several major providers of recreation programming in the County, including the Butler County, Cranberry, and Slippery Rock Parks and Recreation Departments, all of whom have full time staff. Several other communities also offer their own recreational programming for their local residents. The Butler Family YMCA provides a variety of programming through its main indoor facility located in the City of Butler and its outdoor camp in Slippery Rock Township. The Rose Schneider YMCA focuses programming in Cranberry Township and the surrounding communities. Moraine State Park offers a wide variety of outdoor-based programming centered within the parks boundaries. Non-profits and youth sports organizations are also significant providers of recreation programming and, in some cases, in providing recreational facilities as well.

### **Trails**

Butler County features three trails as the mainstay of its trail system:

- The twenty-one mile, multi-use Butler-Freeport Trail
- The thirty-three mile section of the North Country Trail
- The seven mile Moraine State Park Bike Trail

Moraine and Alameda Parks also feature a number of hiking and mountain bike trails.

Additional information about these trails is located in the Recreation and Alternative Transportation section of the Greenway Plan in this Report.

## **Regional Parks and Trails Located outside Butler County**

Regional facilities are located both in and out of Butler County. They include state parks, forests, and game lands; PA Fish Commission lakes; and regional trails. These facilities are owned and operated by the state or federal governments or by public organizations.

### **Other Recreational Facilities**

Other recreation providers in Butler County include conservation and environmental groups, sportsman and outdoor recreation organizations, non-profit organizations, and local school districts.

### **Classifications of Parks and Trails**

The recommendations of this Study, with regard to parks, are based on the premise that in order to provide the optimal level of service to County residents, recreation providers must understand and take into consideration the different ways in which people use recreation facilities. The function or use of a park depends on its size, location, and available facilities. Use of trails depends on their length, surface, location, and designed use.

Parks can be organized into a “hierarchy” which defines their functions and the types of activities they should be expected to accommodate. Trails are classified similarly. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) defines the hierarchy in Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines (James D. Mertes and John R. Hall, December 1995). The classifications are described in the tables on the following page.

## NRPA Parks and Open Space Classifications

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Site Criteria
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	Less than a 1/4 mile in distance in residential setting.	Between 2,500 sq. ft. and one acre in size.
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on the informal and active and passive recreation.	1/4 to 1/2 mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.	5 acres is considered minimum size; 5 to 10 acres is optimal.
School Park	Depending on the circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use.	Determined by location of school district property.	Variable - depends on function.
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and 1/2 to 3 miles distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 30 and 50 acres.
Large Urban Park	Large urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 or more acres being optimal.
Natural Resource Areas	Land set aside for the preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual/aesthetics/buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable
Greenways	Effectively tie park systems together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community.	Strategically located community-wide facilities.	Determined by project demand. Usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres being optimal.
Special Use	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.	Variable - dependent on specific use.	Variable
Private Party/ Recreational Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system.	Variable - dependent on specific use.	Variable

## NRPA Trail Classifications

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria
Park Trail	Multi-purpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type II: Multi-purpose hard surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard or soft surface.
Connector Trails	Multi-purpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters located in independent right-of-way (r.o.w.). Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Typically located within road r.o.w.
On-street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.
All-terrain Bike Trail	Off road trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes.	Single-purpose use trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Cross-country Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Equestrian Trail	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all-terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.

## Recreation Opportunities provided by Butler County

### Alameda Park

Located just north of the City of Butler in Butler Township, the 418-acre Alameda Park includes 14 picnic shelters, multiple play areas including the Kid's Zone Playground, a sand volleyball court, multi-purpose recreational and ball field, restrooms, picnic areas, walking, hiking, and mountain biking trails, and a swimming pool with concession stand and bathhouse.

A master Site Plan for the Park is being developed as part of the planning process. A full description and site analysis of Alameda Park is written in Chapter 6 of this report.

### Butler County Parks and Recreation Department

Appropriate administration is critical to the management and implementation of the parks and recreation system. The analysis considers four areas of administration: general administration, maintenance, programming, and finances.

The general administration analysis reviews the current organizational structure of parks and recreation, general operations, planning efforts, and intergovernmental cooperation. The maintenance analysis summarizes current maintenance practices such as management, staffing levels, risk management, training, and equipment. The personnel analysis reviews personnel systems, staffing levels, expectations of current staff, and the use of volunteers. The financial analysis evaluates past and current financial trends and support.

### Organizational Structure

Having been established in 1965, Butler County Parks and Recreation Department has a long history of meeting the recreational needs of County residents. The original by-laws for the Park and Recreation Commission were drafted in 1969. After multiple changes in the organization, the by-laws were revised and adopted November 16, 2011.



### A SNAPSHOT OF THE BUTLER COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

#### **Alameda Park**

- 418 acres
- Outdoor swimming pool
- Multiple play areas
- Fourteen picnic shelters
- Sport courts and fields
- Hiking and mountain bike trails

#### **Programming**

- Seasonal recreational and educational programming
- Special events
- Partner programs with local organizations

#### **Services to local Communities**

- Park Renovation Grants
- Technical assistance
- Grant writing and administration
- ADA and playground safety compliance

#### **Staffing**

- Four full-time
- About 45 part-time annually
- Up to 75 volunteers each year

The Butler County Commissioners appoint as many as eleven commission members, of whom five represent each of the county's planning regions and the remaining six are at-large appointments. Each is appointed to a three year term.

The purpose of the Commission is to advise the Butler County Board of County Commissioners as they work to:

1. Acquire, develop and maintain park and recreational facilities and/or to encourage and assist local municipalities to provide neighborhood and community facilities by offering planning, consultation and other services.
2. Provide an organized program of recreation services and to cooperate with state, regional and local municipalities in coordinating recreation areas and activities for Butler County.
3. Offer county residents types of program services that are not practical for the local municipalities to offer (camping, hiking, canoeing, nature study areas).
4. Offer our facilities in contracting for special services desired by local municipalities.
5. Cooperate with other Butler County political subdivisions financially through joint planning and maintenance of county park areas.
6. Consider and formulate all major policies; approve programs; determine and submit to the County Commissioners for their consideration an annual operating budget; supervise the activities of necessary personnel; and make reports of all meetings to the Board of County Commissioners and to the public.

The Commission meets monthly to conduct its business.

Serving in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Commission is the Butler County Department of Parks and Recreation. It is one of the fourteen County Departments under the direction of the County Commissioners. The remainder of this section describes the structure and function of the Department.

## STAFFING

The Department of Parks and Recreation is one of fourteen county departments that operate various components of governmental services. The Department is led by the Director of Parks and Recreation who reports to the County Commissioners. The Director is responsible for the overall operation of the department, ensuring that it operates according to County policy and direction.

Three other staff positions fill out the full-time complement of employees. They are:

**Aquatic and Program Director** – coordinates, manages, supervises, and operates all Department programming and oversees the aquatic facilities and programs. Manages and oversees all program staff.

**Administrative Assistant** – manages all office and administrative functions in support of department operations. Also assists with recreational programming. Manages and oversees all part-time and seasonal administrative and clerical staff.

**Park Maintenance Person** – supervises and manages all park and facility maintenance functions. Manages and oversees park maintenance staff and contractors.

About 40 part-time and seasonal employees are utilized for programming and maintenance. Summer college interns are also hired to assist with seasonal programming and administration. As many as 50 to 75 volunteers are used throughout the year to assist with various programs and special events.

Personnel functions and payroll are handled by the County. Personnel policies, organizational chart, job descriptions, and other pertinent personnel management tools are in place in the County. All staff report to the Director of Parks and Recreation.

## Finances

### **Receipt and Disbursement of Funds**

The County of Butler establishes annually a budget appropriation for the operation and use of the Commission. The County uses a voucher check system for the disbursement of these funds where vouchers are issued by the executive director or other authorized person and are then disbursed according to the Department's budget appropriations.

In addition to the County budget appropriation, funds are received by the Department from program registrations, admission fees, sales, ticket purchases, contributions, and from other miscellaneous sources. According to the Commissioner-approved by-laws of the Park and Recreation Advisory Commission, these funds are to be "deposited by the County of Butler to the credit and for the use of said Board and disbursed as the above budget funds are disbursed, except that funds received by gift, bequest, or otherwise shall be disbursed in accordance with the terms of such gift or bequest, or the terms of the acceptance thereof."

All funds received by the Commission and Department are to be received and disbursed according to County policy.

## Budget

The County maintains three separate funds for parks and recreation: the park fund; the swimming pool; and Fund 37 that includes all grants, some employee salaries, and the program staff budget.

Funds are allocated according to the annual county budget. Each year, the Parks and Recreation Director submits a proposed budget to the commissioners for the following fiscal year. After some negotiation between the Commissioners and the Director, a final budget is passed. The Parks and Recreation Department remains similar each year with typical changes to accommodate wage increases, inflationary costs of equipment and supplies, additions to programs, changes in maintenance or capital needs and grant funds being administrated.

## Comparison of Parks and Recreation expenditures to the County's overall General Fund Spending

For purposes of this analysis, parks and recreation spending is compared to the Board of Commissioners portion of the County's General Fund Budget. The comparison does not include expenditures for the County Court System or Row Offices.

A five-year analysis of the County budget shows that General Fund spending for parks and recreation ranged from a low of \$331,936 in 2008 to a high of \$401,700 in 2011. Over the five years that were considered, the parks and recreation budget rose just over 10% while the overall General Fund Budget rose a little over 14%.

Parks and recreation expenditures accounted for 1% to 1.2% of the Board of Commissioners portion of the general fund budget. Further analysis shows that the County spends an average \$2.00 per resident for parks and recreation.

<b>Butler County Park and Pool vs. General Fund Expenditure Comparison</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Alameda Park and Pool</b>	<b>Board of Commissioners Portion of the General Fund</b>	<b>Park and Pool Percent of General Fund</b>	<b>Per Capita Exp for Park and Pool</b>
2008	\$331,936	\$31,441,048	1.1%	\$1.81
2009	\$355,235	\$30,418,137	1.2%	\$1.93
2010	\$385,677	\$32,316,347	1.2%	\$2.10
2011	\$401,700	\$33,694,984	1.2%	\$2.18
2012	\$365,644	\$35,943,745	1.0%	\$1.99
<b>Five Year Total/Average</b>	<b>\$1,840,192</b>	<b>\$163,814,261</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>\$2.00</b>
<b>% of Five Year Increase</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>		

Source: Butler County Annual Audits 2008-2012

An additional analysis considered how Butler County matched up with other counties in the region and some of similar population across the Commonwealth. Spending for fiscal year 2009 was used for this comparison. The average per capita spending by the counties considered is \$7.94 compared to the \$2.18 Butler County spends. The highest per capita spending is Lackawanna County at \$22.09 and the lowest is Franklin at \$0.19.

The comparison chart also shows which of the counties has a full-time parks and recreation department and/or full-time staff as well as identifying the number of parks in each.

It is difficult to draw significant conclusions in comparing county parks and recreation because there is such a vast array of county demographics, economics, and resident demand or expectation. In considering Butler County we see that significant funds have been invested in local community parks and recreation facilities thanks to the Local Park Renovation Grant program operated by the Butler County Board of Commissioners. We also see even larger investment in grant funds from the Commonwealth because the County Parks Department is tasked with providing technical assistance in grant writing and administration. And we see top quality parks at the county level as well as the local level due to the influence of the County Parks and Recreation Department.

However, it is still evident that the County invests less money per capita than most other similar counties. The County should be diligent to continue to invest in the on-going operations of its Parks and Recreation Department and to be open to increase expenditures as recreational needs arise. The greater need for the future, however, will likely be a continued investment in larger infrastructure such as swimming pool renovations and planning for the acquisition of additional county park land. Some of this may come from state grant funds, but some will need to come from county coffers.

Comparison of Per Capita Expenditures for Culture and Recreation						
County	2010 Population	2009 Culture and Recreation Expenditures	Per Capita Expenditures	Full-time Parks/Rec Department	Full-time Staff?	Number of Parks
Franklin	149,618	\$28,308	\$0.19	No	No	0
Washington	207,820	\$199,362	\$0.96	Yes	Yes	3
<b>Butler</b>	<b>183,862</b>	<b>\$401,700</b>	<b>\$2.18</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>1</b>
Centre	153,990	\$545,259	\$3.54	No	No	0
Schuylkill	148,289	\$525,075	\$3.54	No	No	1
Lawrence	91,108	\$568,331	\$6.24	No	Yes	0
Cambria	143,679	\$1,229,600	\$8.56	Yes	Yes	2
Monroe	169,842	\$2,509,255	\$14.77	No	No	0
Beaver	170,539	\$2,960,924	\$17.36	Yes	Yes	4
Lackawanna	214,437	\$4,736,938	\$22.09	Yes	Yes	1
<b>Average Per Capita</b>	<b>\$7.94</b>					
<b>Median Per Capita</b>	<b>\$4.89</b>					
<b>Highest Per Capita</b>	<b>\$22.09</b>					
<b>Lowest Per Capita</b>	<b>\$0.19</b>					

Source DCED 2009 County financial Reporting

## Grants

Each year, the Park and Recreation Commission assists communities throughout the County with the preparation of applications to the Commonwealth Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) grant funds. Over the years, these communities have been quite successful in being awarded such grants. The County has also received grants from DCNR as well as other sources such as the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), and the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps (PCC). Grants have been awarded for the creation of master site plans, development and rehabilitation of parks, installation of playground equipment, completion of trail work, and fulfillment of ADA requirements. The following chart depicts grants received from 2008 through 2012.

During the five-year period depicted in the chart below, over \$1.3 million in grant funding has been awarded to the County and its municipalities. With the help of these grants, an estimated \$1.95 million has been invested in recreation facilities across the county.

**GRANT FUNDS AWARDED IN BUTLER COUNTY 2008-2012**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>AWARDING AGENCY</b>	<b>GRANT AMOUNT</b>	<b>PROJECT AMOUNT</b>
2008	Fairview Twp.	Basketball court, bleachers, ADA access, site improvements	DCNR	\$28,000	\$36,000
2008	Harrisville Borough	Community Park development: skate park, site improvements	DCNR	\$26,000	\$32,000
2008	Fairview Twp.	Community Park development	PCC	\$103,000	\$103,000
2008	Four communities	Trail improvements, pavilions, playground, basketball court	PCC	\$88,000	\$88,000
2008	Butler County	Alameda Park improvements	PCC	\$103,000	\$103,000
2008	Middlesex Twp.	Peer-to-Peer Study for intergovernmental recreation	DCNR	\$10,000	\$11,000
2009	Buffalo Twp.	Butler/Freeport Trail development	DCNR	\$195,000	\$195,000
2010	Buffalo Twp.	Trail head property acquisition	DCNR	\$90,000	\$180,000
2010	Buffalo Twp.	Construction of pedestrian bridge and additional trail	DCNR	\$91,400	\$114,250
2010	Butler City	Development/rehab of Rotary Park Trail to Pullman Park	DCNR	\$154,000	\$309,800
2010	Winfield Twp.	Winfield Park development. Playground, ADA access	DCNR	\$40,000	\$60,000
2011	Butler Twp.	Preston Park Master Site Plan	DCNR	\$30,000	\$60,000
2011	Clay Twp.	Community Park pavilion, restroom, ADA, site amenities	DCNR	\$32,000	\$44,000
2011	Eau Claire Borough	Community Park rehab. Tennis court, fencing, ADA, landscape	DCNR	\$28,000	\$36,000
2011	Butler County	Comp Rec and Greenway, Alameda Park Master Plan; Swimming Pool Study; Cranberry Twp. Rec Plans	DCNR	\$125,000	\$250,000
2012	Cranberry Twp.	Brush Creek Trail Development	DCNR	\$90,000	\$180,000
2012	East Butler Twp.	Brandon and Firehall Park Rehabilitation	DCNR	\$32,000	\$44,000
2012	Lancaster Twp.	Master Site Plan for a new park	DCNR	\$15,000	\$30,000
2012	Mars Borough	Clay Avenue Park rehabilitation	DCNR	\$35,000	\$50,000
2012	Butler County	North Country Trail Feasibility Study	DCNR	\$19,200	\$24,000
<b>Total Grant Funding 2008-2012</b>				<b>\$1,334,600</b>	<b>\$1,950,050</b>

In addition to state grant funding, municipalities in Butler County are eligible for grants awarded by the County Commissioners for park upgrades and renovations. Established in 1995, the Butler County Park Renovation Grant Program aids local municipalities in the renovation and development of local recreation facilities. Many municipalities have used the county funding as a match toward state grants.

**Butler County Renovation Grants**

During the five years from 2008 to 2012, Butler County has supported 56 projects in 33 communities across the County. The County’s contribution of \$252,170 has assisted projects totaling \$355,514.

**Renovation Grants Program**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Butler County Grant</b>	<b>Total Project Amount</b>
2008	\$51,731	\$75,475
2009	\$48,221	\$69,629
2010	\$50,707	\$67,122
2011	\$50,832	\$74,296
2012	\$50,679	\$68,992
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$252,170</b>	<b>\$355,514</b>

**Maintenance**

The parks maintenance staff consists of one full-time and one part-time employee supplemented by up to four seasonal positions. Currently each seasonal position is budgeted for 1,000 hours annually and the Director has flexibility to schedule each position so that adequate staff is available from April through October. Currently one person begins in late March or early April and one finishes in October. The months in between are covered by the various schedules of the four with the most hours being spent during June, July, and August.

While this works well, it is sometimes difficult to cover off hours such as busy evenings and weekends, as well as some key program tasks related to the park. The conversion of one of these four positions into two 500 hour jobs could allow a programmer to be available to assist with office and program tasks and a park host position to greet visitors, perform simple maintenance tasks, address

facility issues, and supervise activities during weekend and evening hours when other staff is not available.

In addition to the park maintenance staff, the County’s Facilities and Operations Department assists in the park when specialized skills are needed or when tasks are beyond the capabilities of park staff. They also provide assistance in opening the swimming pool each year and can be available when additional staff is needed for major activities or events in the park.

Regular maintenance consists of general cleaning, seasonal preparations, mowing, facility upkeep, maintenance and preparation; preventative care, and general repairs. These tasks are based primarily on apparent needs and visual observations. Additionally, the park maintenance staff assists with the construction and/or installation at the facility.

Park maintenance requires specialized skills and knowledge. Over the years, the maintenance person has had varying skills and understanding of park maintenance. The responsibility has fallen on the Parks and Recreation Director to ensure top quality maintenance of Alameda Park. Written standards have not been established to set the level of expected care or to ensure a long-term commitment to high standards.

The National Recreation and Park Association, Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, and other similar organizations provide workshops, schools, and conferences to provide training in maintenance of ball fields, turf grass, equipment, playgrounds, and other park equipment and facilities. Additional sessions provide education in maintenance planning, staff management, dealing with the public, working within financial constraints, budgeting, and working in a municipal setting. Such training enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance staff. The staff charged with park maintenance management and those performing primary tasks in the parks should attend one or more of these training sessions annually.

One of the most significant issues identified from the public input portion of this study is

the expectation of a higher standard of design, development, and care for Alameda Park and other parks throughout the County. To meet these expectations, maintenance standards should be established for Alameda Park, and the County should play a role in helping local municipalities develop similar standards for their parks.

Sustainability of parks and their facilities is a critical concern to ensure long-term access to high quality parks and to control maintenance costs. All parks need to be planned, designed, and constructed to be maintained and used for many years to come. The investment in these practices will provide for easier maintenance, a greater life span, and better quality facilities. In the end, they will be more cost-effective and provide better recreational opportunities for Butler County residents.

### **Safety and Risk Management**

The Butler County Parks and Recreation Department does a good job of designing and maintaining for the safety of park users. The analysis of facilities revealed very few safety hazards.

However, there is no risk management plan for the park. Safety inspections are conducted as part of the regular maintenance visits, but there are no written safety standards or a system to track the identification and repair of such hazards. Details of inspections should be tracked, and records of repairs should be kept. A risk management plan should be developed for the entire park system and its facilities. The lack of a risk management plan often results in both immediate and long term potential for dangerous situations as well as undue liability exposure for the County.

The creation and adoption of both maintenance management and risk management plans will establish the Commissioners' commitment to safe and well-maintained parks for years to come.

### **Programming**

The Butler County Parks and Recreation Department designs, implements and hosts a broad series of recreational programming and special events for County residents and visitors. The programs meet the varying needs

and demographics of the County. Programming changes from year-to-year to keep up with interests and demand. While most of the programming takes place at Alameda Park, the Department also co-sponsors programming with municipalities and recreation departments across the County. In 2011, the County offered babysitter training classes in Fairview, Adams, and Butler Townships, as well as at the Slippery Rock Recreation Commission. These partnerships allow programming to occur in many municipalities that would be unable to offer them on their own.

Included in the recreational programming schedule each year is a series of special events. These events have included:

- Doggie Pool Party attracting over 200 dogs and 500 people in some years
- Seasonal events such as Easter Egg-o-Rama, Easter Bunny Breakfast, Haunted Bonfire, Breakfast with Santa, Flashlight Candy Cane
- Family fishing events
- Fall Festival and Car Cruise
- Youth Triathlon
- Trunk Sales – Spring and Fall

In addition to its own programs, the Department assists with or hosts programs for a number of events and activities that are operated by other organizations. These have included:

- Butler Family YMCA Day Camp that has served about 1,000 campers per summer for many years
- Cub Scout Day Activities averaging about 200 persons per day for four days
- Dog Show and Agility Training with as many as 700 participants
- Mopars in the Park Car Show, 1,500 attendees
- Boater Safety Course
- Hunter Safety Course
- Butler Road Race
- Special Olympics
- Butler Bocce Association League & Tournament
- RV Bocce Players Group
- YMCA Tee Ball
- East Butler Hunting & Fishing Club Tournament
- March of Dimes 5K Race

## Local Parks and Recreation Facilities

Throughout Butler County, residents enjoy many local recreation and open space opportunities in or near their communities. Nearly every municipality in the County has some type of recreational facility. As part of the inventory and analysis, all municipal parks and their related amenities were identified. This portfolio of facilities includes park names and sizes, a list of available facilities, general conditions and sizes of facilities, and a notation of ADA compliance.

The maps, charts, and narratives on the following pages summarize the recreation facilities in each region of the County. In addition to the summaries provided herein, a complete inventory and matrix of facilities by planning region are located in the appendices of this report; and a full-scale inventory map of recreation facilities has been provided to the county separate from this report.

For each of the Planning Regions, the following pages include:

- A map showing recreation opportunities in each region. The legend to the right can be used for each of the five regional maps.
- A description of the region
- A chart depicting the types and number of facilities
- A comparison of park acreage to national standards
- A comparison of key recreational facilities to national standards

The National Recreation and Parks Association published guidelines for the number of acres of park land needed per 1,000 persons in a community. Based on these guidelines, a community needs about eight acres of community park land for every 1,000 residents. The analysis of these guidelines has been conducted for each planning region rather than for individual communities.

## Legend

### Recreation

-  Existing Shared-Use Trail
-  Existing North Country Trail
-  State Game Land
-  State Park Land
-  Parks, Playgrounds, & Athletic Fields
-  Golf Course
-  Other Conservation Lands
-  Recreation Center
-  Pool Facility

### Municipality

-  Township
-  City of Butler
-  Borough

### Other

-  University/College

**Data Sources:** Butler County GIS  
Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access (PASDA)  
Pennsylvania Department of Transportation  
Pennsylvania DCNR

**Planning Region 1**

Planning Region 1 is located in the northwest corner of Butler County. It includes Brady, Franklin, Mercer, Muddy Creek, Slippery Rock and Worth Townships and Harrisville, Portersville, Prospect, Slippery Rock, and West Liberty Boroughs. The Slippery Rock Area School District comprises all of Region 1. The table to the right depicts the types and numbers of parks. There are a total of twenty-one recreational spaces in Region 1.

Public and quasi-public facilities include:

- Harrisville Community Park
- Slippery Rock Community Park
- YMCA/ Armco Park
- Brady Township Park
- Portersville Community Park
- Prospect Park
- Prospect Boys and Girls Club
- Moraine State Park Multi-use Trail
- Moraine State Park Mountain Bike Trails
- Moraine State Park hiking trails
- North Country Trail
- Moraine State Park
- Slippery Rock Community Center
- YMCA/Armco Park Swimming Pool

Summary of Recreation Facilities	
Region 1	Quantity
Municipal Parks	5
State Parks	1
State Game Lands	0
Quasi-public Parks	2
Golf Courses	4
Trails	4
Schools w Rec Facilities	3
Community/Rec Centers	1
Outdoor Swimming Pools	1



Butler County Planning Region 1-NW				Population 20,432
Park Land Acreage Comparison to NRPA Standards				
Park Type	Acres/1000	Existing Acres	2013 needed acres	2013 Surplus (Deficit)
Community Park	8	260.43	163.46	96.97

## ANALYSIS OF FACILITY AND LAND COMPARISONS

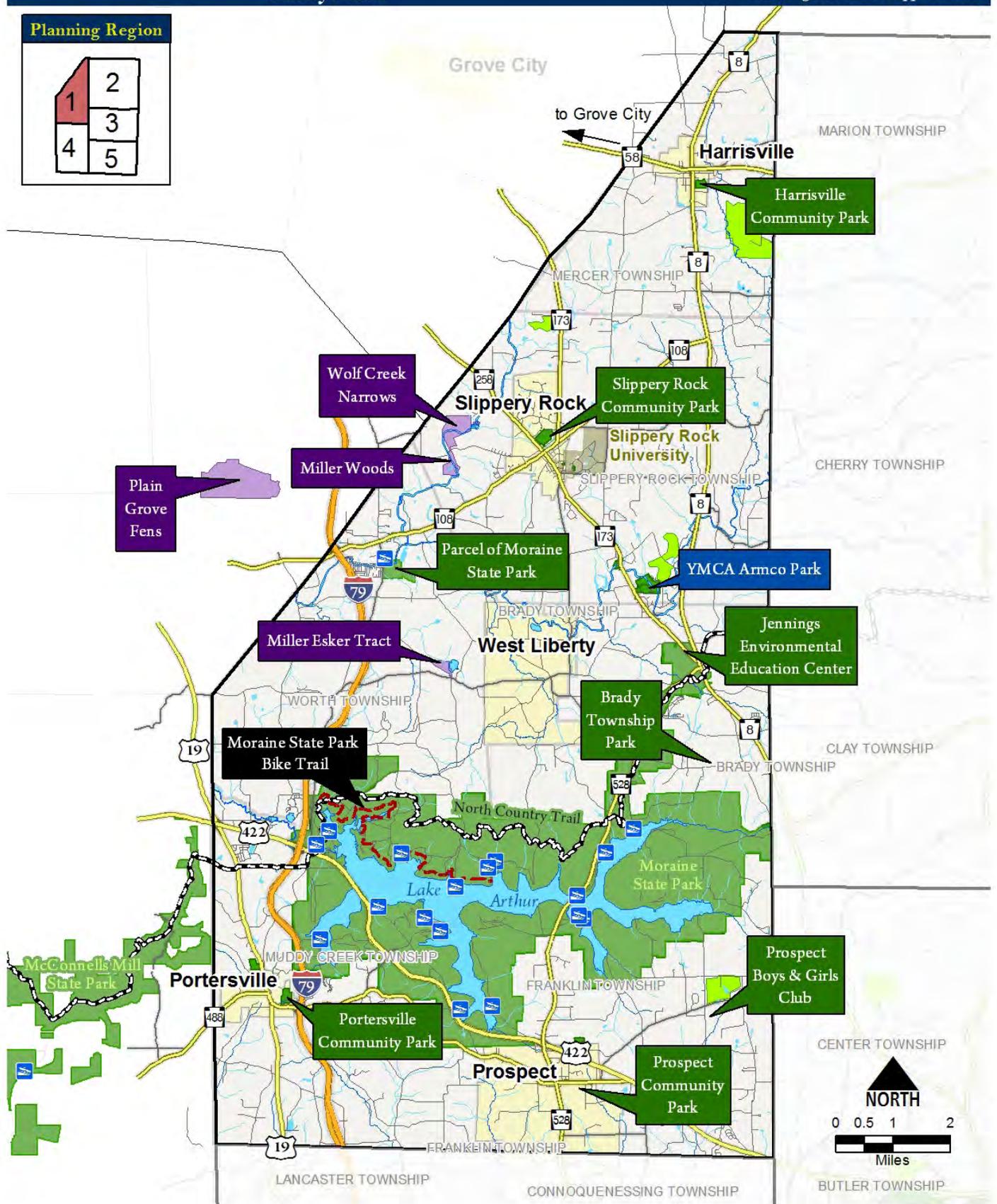
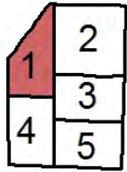
The comparison chart shows that there is sufficient community park land in the Northwest Region. In fact, in addition to the 97 acre surplus, Moraine State Park has an additional 16,725 acres of public recreational land.

Butler County Planning Region 1-NW					Population 20,432
Facility Comparisons to NRPA Standards					
Northwest Region					
Facility	1 facility per X people	Existing	2013 need	2013 surplus (deficit)	Comments: Other non-municipal facilities
Basketball Courts	5,000	6	4	2	
Tennis Courts*	5,000	1	4	-3	
Volleyball Courts	5,000	3	4	-1	
Diamond Ball Fields	2,500	19	8	11	
Soccer Fields*	2,500	7	8	-1	
Swimming Pools	20,000	1	1	0	Moraine State Park
Picnic Shelters	2,000	24	10	14	
Football	10,000	1	2	-1	

\*adjusted to reflect current trends

**Facility Recommendations** – As long as school and quasi-public facilities such as the Prospect Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA Armco Park are available for public use, the regional recreation needs are being met. That being said, the Northwestern Butler County Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan provides a series of recommendations for improving recreational opportunities in Slippery Rock Borough and Township, West Liberty Borough, and Worth and Brady Townships. Master Site Plans have also been completed for Slippery Rock Borough Park and Brady Township Park that call for improvements and additions to address local needs through park development. This County Plan fully supports the local municipalities' findings.

**Planning Region**



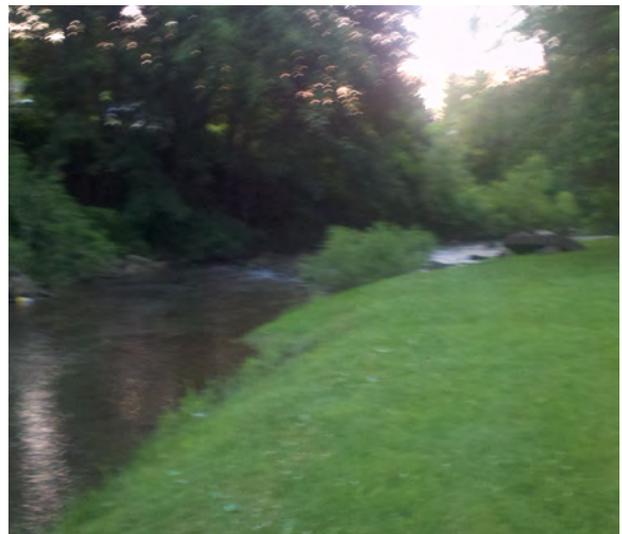
**Planning Region 2**

Planning Region 2 is located in the northeast corner of Butler County. It comprises Allegheny, Cherry, Clay, Concord, Fairview, Marion, Parker, Venango, and Washington Townships and Bruin, Cherry Valley, Eau Claire, Fairview, Karns City, Petrolia, and West Sunbury Boroughs. Moniteau, and parts of Karns City, and Allegheny-Clarion Valley School Districts comprise Region 2. The table to the right depicts the types and numbers of parks. There are a total of twenty recreational spaces in Region 2.

Public and quasi-public facilities include:

- Marion Township Park
- Eau Claire Borough Park
- Whiskerville Ballfield
- Bruin Park
- Petrolia Park
- Fairview Borough Park
- Fairview Township Park
- Edward C McCollough Park
- Clay Township Community Park
- West Sunbury Athletic Fields
- Sugar Creek Trail
- North Country Trail
- PA State Game Lands #95

Summary of Recreation Facilities	
Region 2	Quantity
Municipal Parks	9
State Parks	0
State Game Lands	4
Quasi-public Parks	1
Golf Courses	0
Trails	2
Schools w Rec Facilities	4
Community/Rec Center	0
Outdoor Swimming Pools	0



Butler County Planning Region 2-NE Population			Population 13,791	
Park Land Acreage Comparison to NRPA Standards				
Park Type	Acres/1000	Existing Acres	2013 needed acres	2013 Surplus (Deficit)
Community Park	8	143	110.33	32.67

## ANALYSIS OF FACILITY AND LAND COMPARISONS

The comparison chart shows that the amount of existing park land exceeds the typical standard for the current population by over 32 acres. Additionally, there are hundreds of acres of open space available to residents in in PA State Game Lands 95.

Butler County Planning Region 2-NE				Population 13,791	
Facility Comparisons to NRPA Standards					
Northeast Region					
	1 facility per X people	Existing	2013 need	2013 surplus (deficit)	Comments: Other non- municipal facilities
Basketball Courts	5,000	6	3	3	
Tennis Courts*	5,000	3	3	0	
Volleyball Courts	5,000	1	3	-2	
Diamond Ball Fields	2,500	19	6	13	
Soccer Fields*	2,500	0	6	-6	
Swimming Pools	20,000	0	-	-	
Picnic Shelters	2,000	10	7	3	
Football*	10,000	3	1	2	

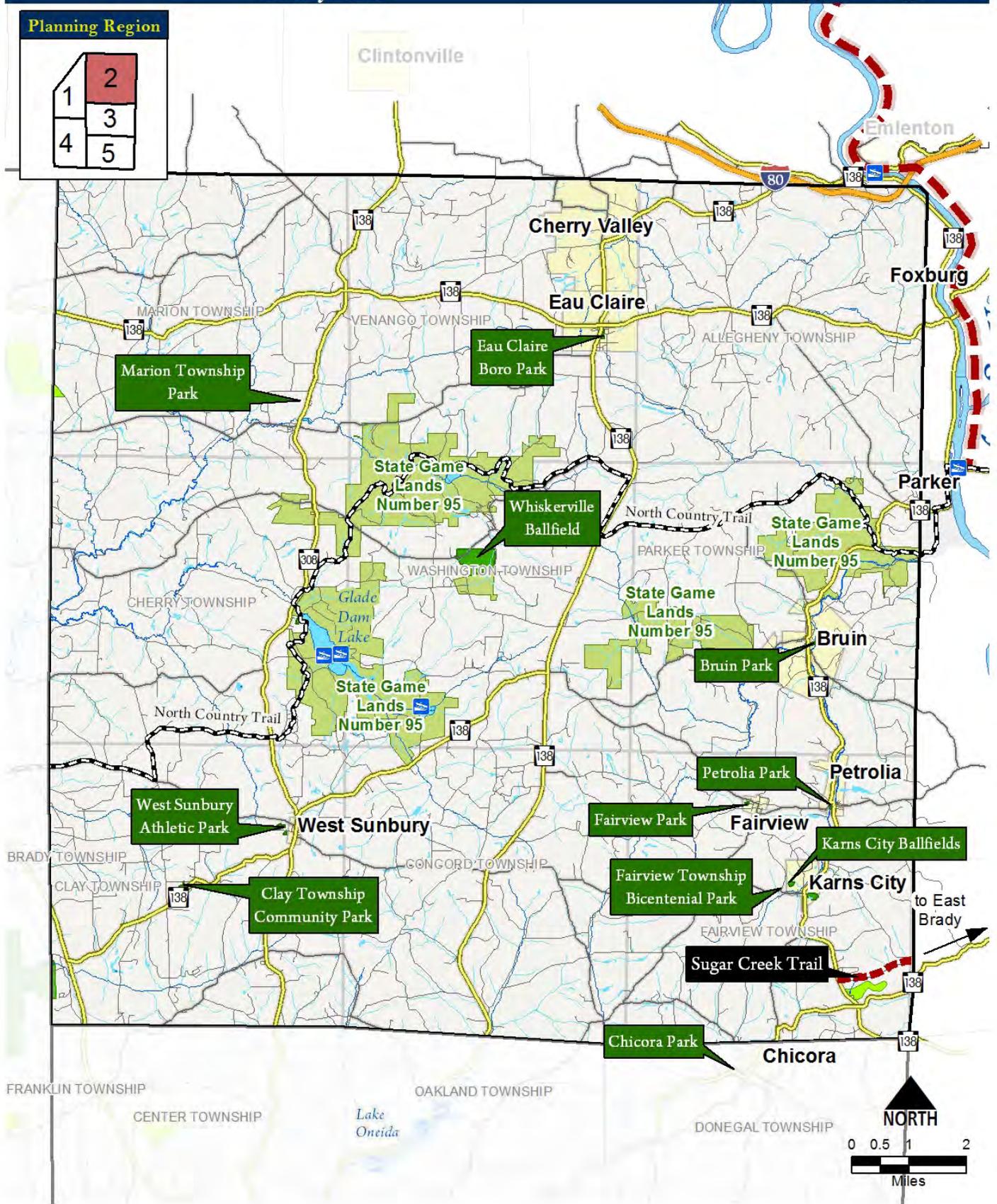
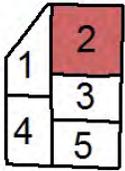
\*adjusted to reflect current trends

**Facility Recommendations** – Even though the chart depicts a deficiency in volleyball courts and soccer fields, there is no evident demand from the residents for any existing facilities. Only if residents express a concern in the future should any additional facilities be built.

*A Recreation Plan for the*  
**County of Butler**  
*Pennsylvania*

**Inventory Map 1**  
**Planning Region 2**  
*Existing Recreation Opportunities*

**Planning Region**



**Planning Region 3**

Planning Region 3 is located in the central part of the County. It comprises the City of Butler, Butler, Center, Clearfield, Donegal, Oakland, and Summit Townships, and Chicora and East Butler Boroughs. All municipalities in Region 3 are in the Butler Area School District except Donegal Township, which is in Karns City Area School District. The table to the right depicts the types and numbers of parks. There are a total of fifty recreational spaces in Region 3.

Public and quasi-public facilities include:

- Chicora Park
- Clearfield Playground
- Timberly Heights Athletic Fields
- Butler County Soccer Association Fields
- East Butler Athletic Park
- Alameda Park
- Father Marinaro Park
- Memorial Park
- Butler Athletic Field
- Pullman Park
- Preston Park
- Highfield Park
- Sawmill Run Park
- BC3 Ballfield
- Butler Township Athletic Fields
- Butler City neighborhood parks
- East Butler neighborhood parks

Summary of Recreation Facilities	
Region 3	Quantity
Municipal Parks	20
State Parks	0
State Game Lands	2
Quasi-public Parks	5
Golf Courses	5
Trails	2
Schools w Rec Facilities	14
Community/Rec Center	1
Outdoor Swimming Pools	1



Butler County Planning Region 3-C			Population 53,058	
Park Land Acreage Comparison to NRPA Standards				
Park Type	Acres/1000	Existing Acres	2013 needed acres	2013 Surplus (Deficit)
Community Park	8	802.62	424.46	379.16

## ANALYSIS OF FACILITY AND LAND COMPARISONS

The comparison chart shows that the amount of existing park land exceeds the typical standard for the current population by nearly 380 acres. Additionally, there are hundreds of acres of open space available to residents in PA State Game Lands 164 and 304. These numbers consider the region as a whole. Based on recreation facility analyses for individual communities, there may be a need for additional park land in specific municipalities. The municipal plans should be considered to supersede this County-wide plan in those analyses.

Butler County Planning Region 3-Central					Population 53,058
Facility Comparisons to NRPA Standards					
Central Region					
	1 facility per X people	Existing	2013 need	2013 surplus (deficit)	Comments: Other non- municipal facilities
Basketball Courts	5,000	27	11	16	
Tennis Courts*	5,000	15	11	4	
Volleyball Courts	5,000	4	11	-7	
Diamond Ball Fields	2,500	39	21	18	
Soccer Fields*	2,500	11	21	-10	
Swimming Pools	20,000	1	3	-2	
Picnic Shelters	2,000	32	27	5	
Football*	10,000	3	5	-2	

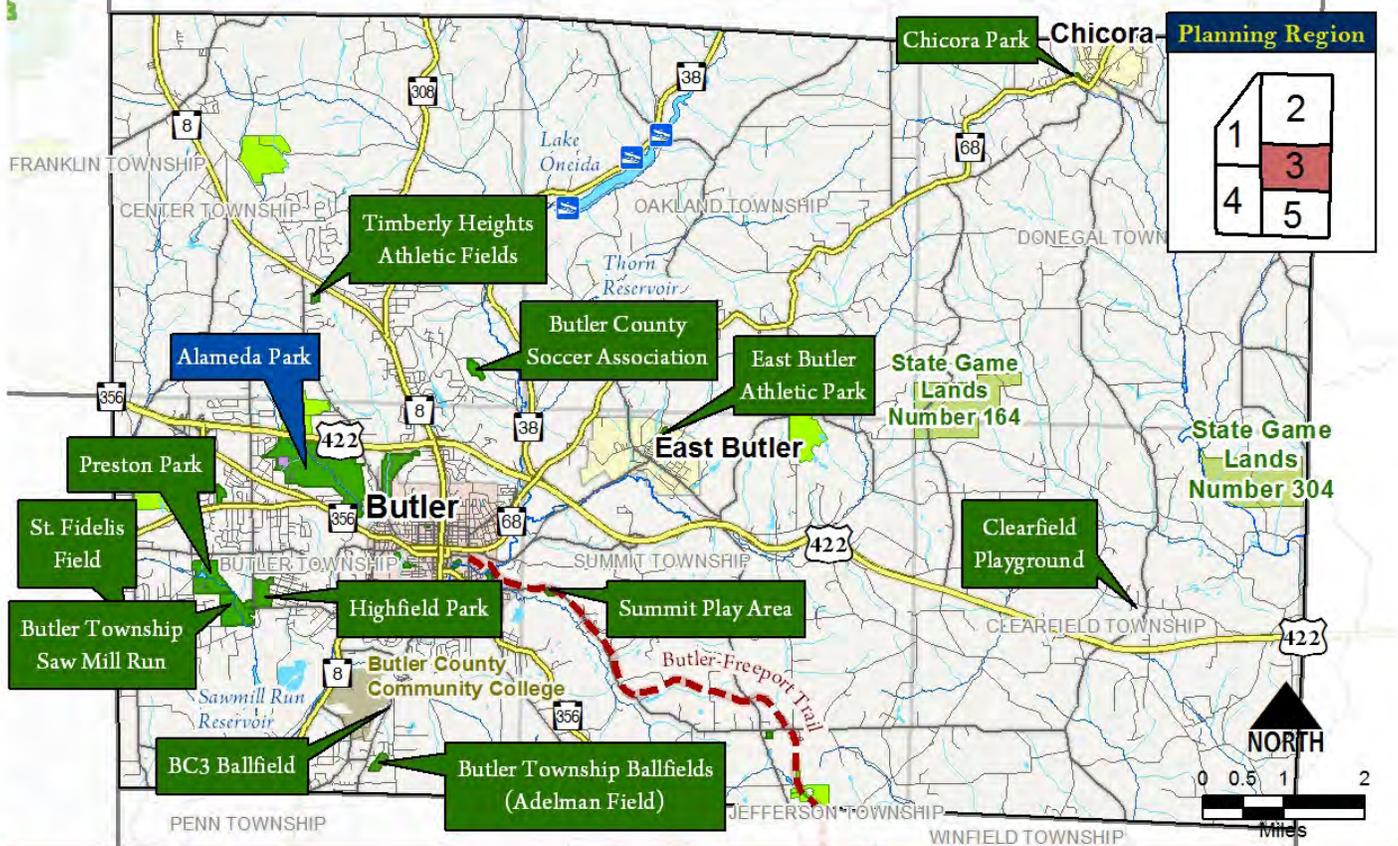
\*adjusted to reflect current trends

**Facility recommendations** – As the second most populous region in the county, Region 3 demands a more expansive planning process to meet the needs of the larger population. In 2006, Butler City developed a Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan along with Master Site Plans for Father Marinaro and Memorial Parks. A separate Study analyzed the Memorial Park Swimming Pool. In 2010, a follow-up Comprehensive Recreation Parks, and Open Space Plan that encompassed a broader region including Butler City, Butler, Penn, and Summit Townships, and East Butler Borough was completed.

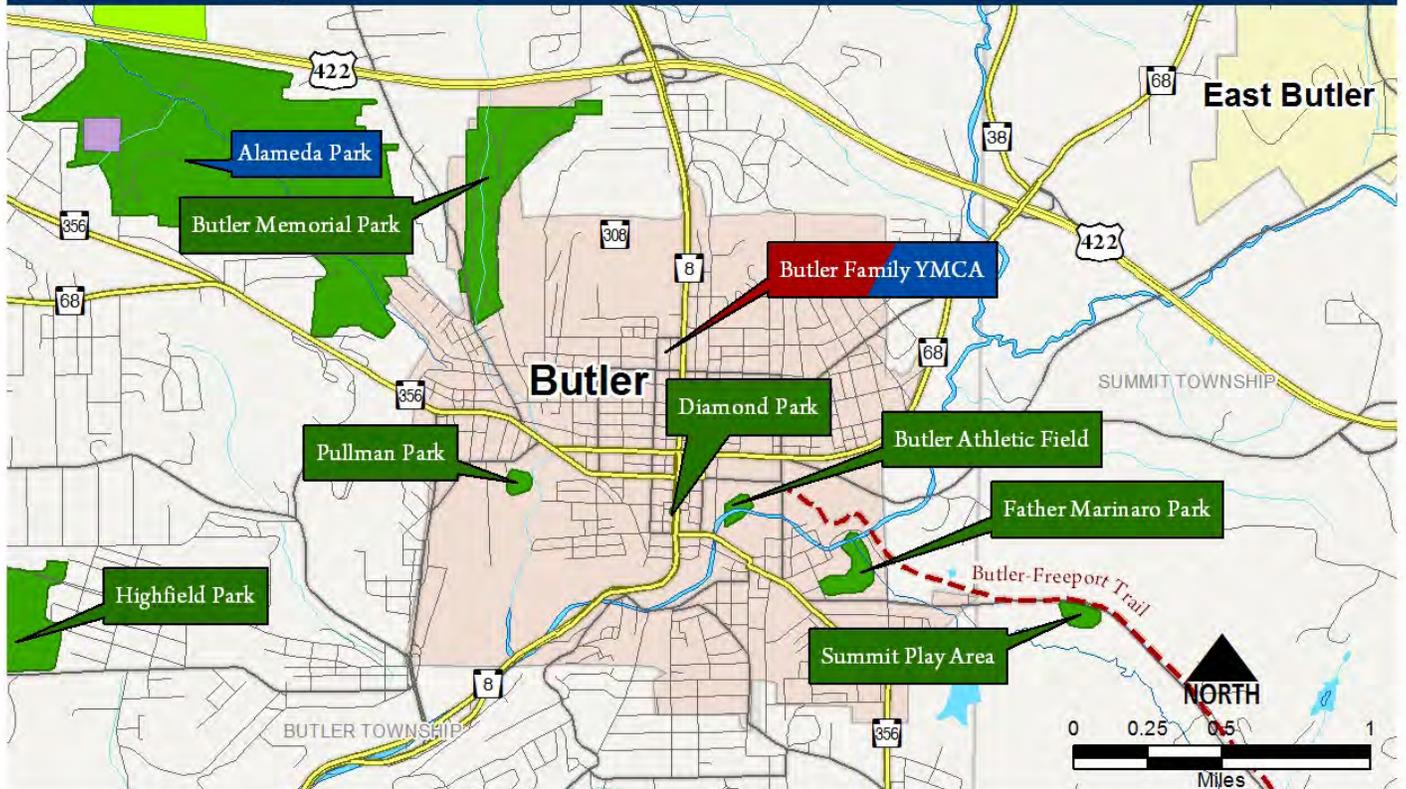
While the Region 3 facilities analysis chart shows surpluses and deficiencies on a regional basis, the individual recreation plans described above should be considered, and even take precedence, in making the final decisions on needed facilities.

*A Recreation Plan for the*  
**County of Butler**  
*Pennsylvania*

**Inventory Map 1**  
**Planning Region 3**  
*Existing Recreation Opportunities*



**City of Butler Enlargement**



**Planning Region 4**

Planning Region 4 is located in the southwest corner of Butler County. It comprises the Lancaster, Connoquenessing, Jackson, Forward, Cranberry, and Adams Townships, as well as Connoquenessing, Zelenople, Harmony, Evans City, Mars, Valencia, and Seven Fields Boroughs. The region comprises all of Seneca Valley School District as well as parts of Butler Area and Mars Area Districts. The table to the right depicts the types and numbers of parks. There are a total of forty-four recreational spaces in Region 4.

Summary of Recreation Facilities	
Region 4	Quantity
Municipal Parks	22
State Parks	0
State Game Lands	0
Quasi-public Parks	4
Golf Courses	3
Trails	0
Schools w Rec Facilities	7
Community/Rec Center	2
Outdoor Swimming Pools	5

Public and quasi-public facilities include:

- Whitestown Ballfield
- Connoquenessing Community Park
- Baude Park
- Four Springs Park
- Zelenople Park and Pool
- Evans City Elementary Athletic Fields
- Evans City Ballfields
- Evans City Community Park and Pool
- Forward Township Ballfields
- Callery Field
- North Boundary Park and Pool
- Cranberry Township Community Park
- Graham Park
- Mars Pool
- Garfield Park
- Marburger Athletic Field
- Sydney Bahney Memorial Park
- Adams Township Park
- Mars Youth Soccer Fields
- Valencia Park
- Seven Fields Municipal Park and Pool
- Cranberry Township neighborhood parks



Butler County Planning Region 4-SW			Population 65,234	
<b>Park Land Acreage Comparison to NRPA Standards</b>				
Park Type	Acres/1000	Existing Acres	2013 needed acres	2013 Surplus (Deficit)
Community Park	8	803.02	521.87	281.15

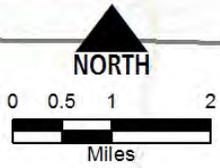
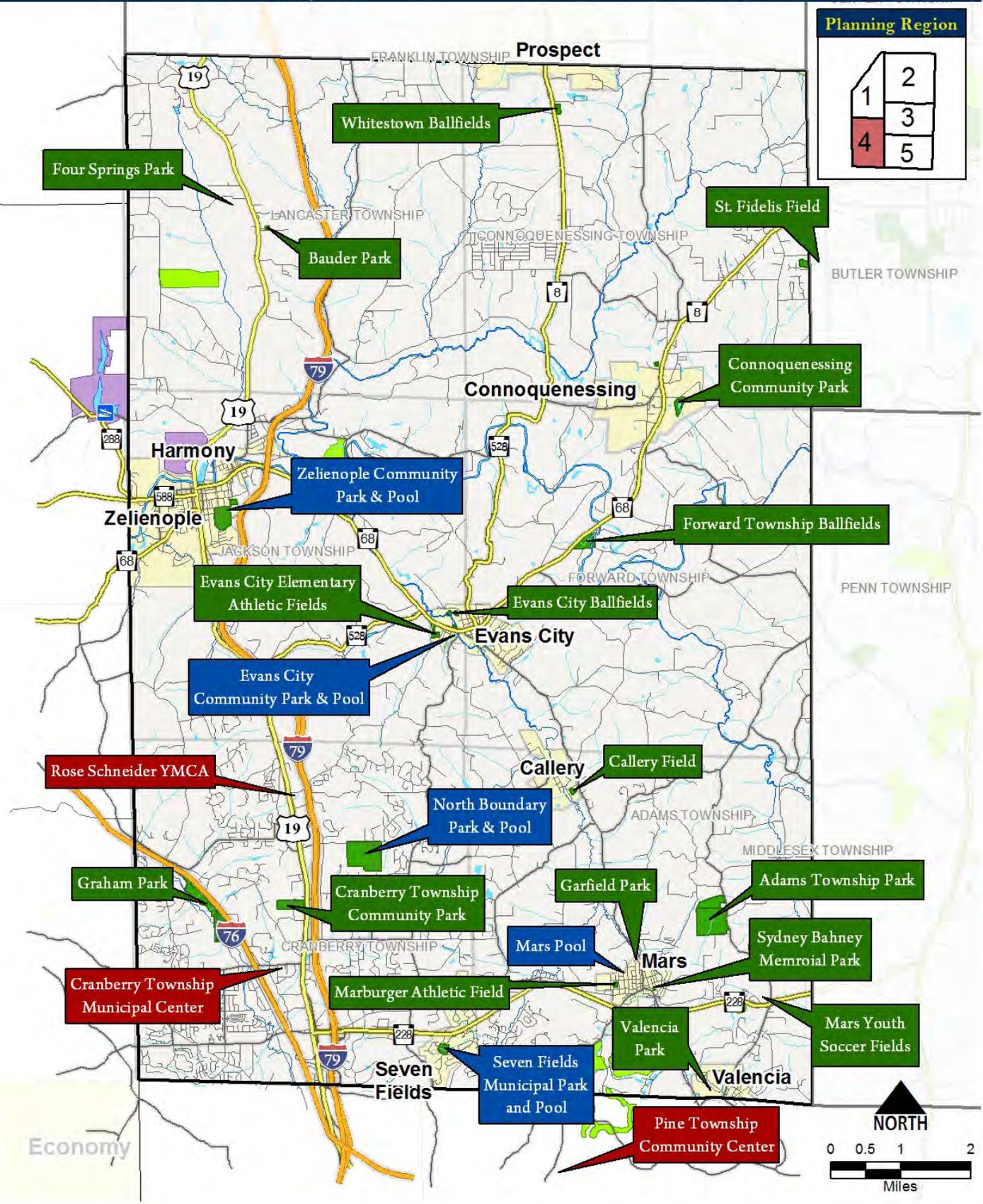
## ANALYSIS OF FACILITY AND LAND COMPARISONS

The comparison chart shows that the amount of existing park land exceeds the typical standard for the current population by 281 acres. These numbers consider the region as a whole. Based on recreation facility analyses for individual communities, there may be a need for additional park land in specific municipalities. The municipal plans should be considered to supersede this County-wide plan in those analyses. The Adams Comprehensive Recreation Plan identifies a shortage of park land for its residents.

Butler County Planning Region 4-SW					Population 65,234
Facility Comparisons to NRPA Standards					
Southwest Region					
	1 facility per X people	Existing	2013 need	2013 surplus (deficit)	Comments: Other non- municipal facilities
Basketball Courts	5,000	16	13	3	
Tennis Courts*	5,000	15	13	2	
Volleyball Courts	5,000	5	13	-8	
Diamond Ball Fields	2,500	47	26	21	
Soccer Fields*	2,500	21	26	-5	Mars Home fields are in jeopardy of being lost for public use
Swimming Pools	20,000	5	3	2	
Picnic Shelters	2,000	25	33	-8	
Football*	10,000	2	7	-5	

\*adjusted to reflect current trends

**Facility Recommendations** – Adams Township residents showed up in force expressing their need for additional soccer fields. This supports the deficiency identified in the chart above. These and other Municipal plans will also supersede in evaluating recreation facilities. While the chart above shows surpluses and deficiencies on a regional basis, individual recreation plans should be considered in making the final analysis. Adams Township and Cranberry Township have both recently completed multiple recreation plans that make specific facility recommendations for their respective municipalities. Additionally, Zelienople has completed a Master Site Plan for its community park and swimming pool and joined with Harmony Borough in developing a recreation planning component in their Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan. These Plans should be seen as complimentary to the County Plans and even to take precedence in determining needed facilities.



**Planning Region 5**

Planning Region 5 is located in the southeast corner of Butler County. It comprises the Penn, Jefferson, Winfield, Middlesex, Clinton, and Buffalo Townships, and Saxonburg Borough. The region comprises all of the South Butler School District as well as parts of Freeport Area and Mars Area Districts. The table to the right depicts the types and numbers of parks. There are a total of thirty-one recreational spaces in Region 5.

Public and quasi-public facilities include:

- Renfew Park
- Harcrest Park
- Penn Township Athletic Fields
- Knoch High School Athletic Fields
- Roebling Park
- Laura J. Doerr Memorial Park and Pool
- Spring Valley Park
- Middlesex Township Community Park
- Freeport High School Athletic Fields
- Lernerville Ballfields
- Winfield Township Community Park
- Winfield-Clinton Athletic Field

Summary of Recreation Facilities	
Region 3	Quantity
Municipal Parks	10
State Parks	0
State Game Lands	0
Quasi-public Parks	4
Golf Courses	7
Trails	2
Schools w Rec Facilities	6
Community/Rec Center	0
Outdoor Swimming Pools	2



Butler County Planning Region 5-SE			Population 31,196	
Park Land Acreage Comparison to NRPA Standards				
Park Type	Acres/1000	Existing Acres	2013 needed acres	2013 Surplus (Deficit)
Community Park	8	803.02	249.57	13.73

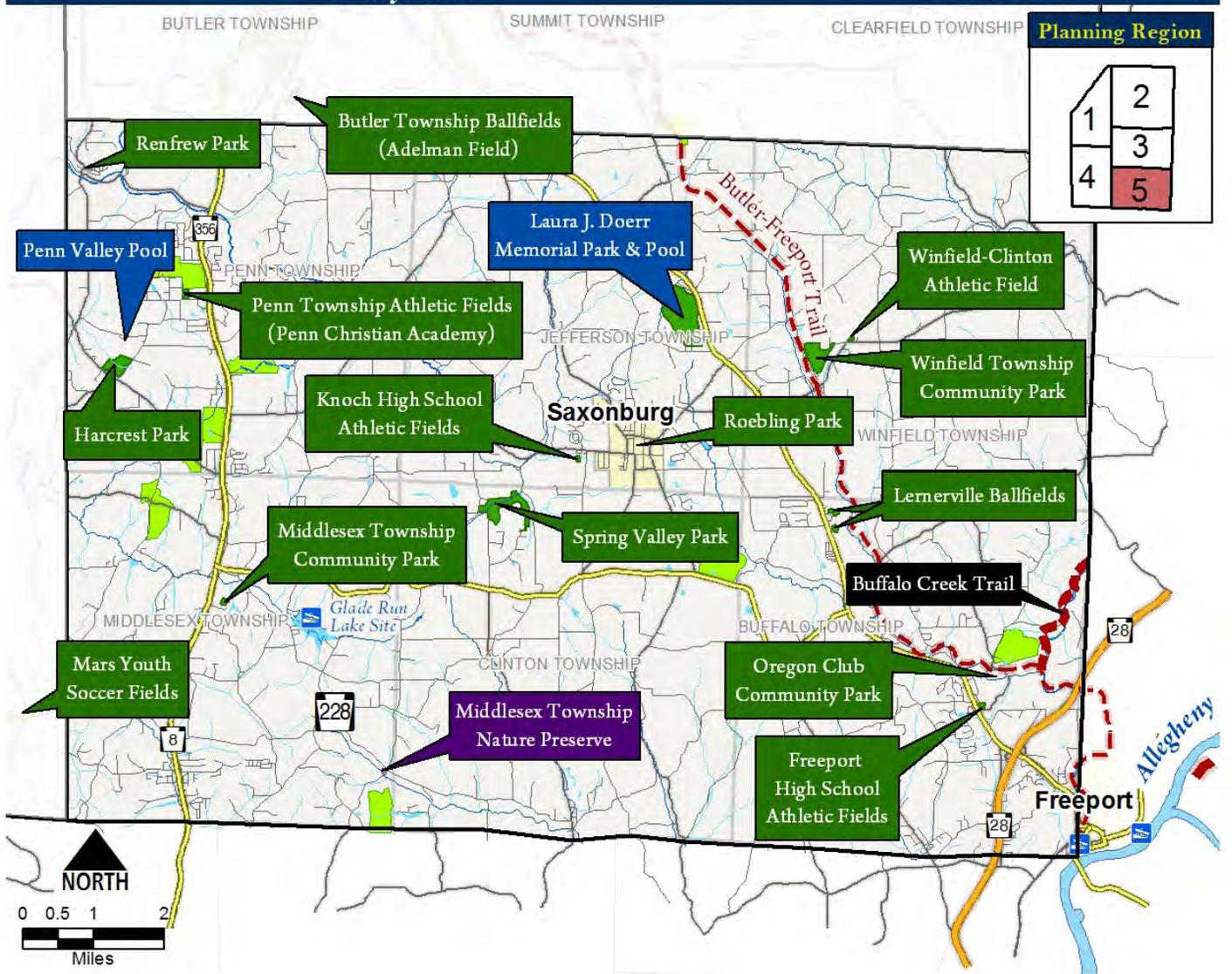
## ANALYSIS OF FACILITY AND LAND COMPARISONS

The comparison chart shows that the amount of existing park land exceeds the typical standard for the current population by almost 14 acres. These numbers consider the region as a whole. Based on recreation facility analyses for individual communities, there may be a need for additional park land in specific municipalities. The municipal plans should be considered to supersede this County-wide plan in those analyses. Support should be given to redevelopment of Glade Run Lake as a regional park facility. The PA Fish and Boat Commission Lake was drawn down in 2011 upon a state declaration that the dam was unsafe. The Glade Run Lake Conservancy has been working diligently to have the dam reconstructed and for the lake to once again become a major recreational attraction in that region.

Butler County Planning Region 5-SE					Population 31,196
Facility Comparisons to NRPA Standards					
Southeast Region					
	1 facility per X people	Existing	2013 need	2013 surplus (deficit)	Comments: Other non- municipal facilities
Basketball Courts	5,000	6	6	0	
Tennis Courts*	5,000	4	6	-2	
Volleyball Courts	5,000	0	6	-6	
Diamond Ball Fields	2,500	16	12	4	
Soccer Fields*	2,500	6	12	-6	
Swimming Pools	20,000	2	2	0	
Picnic Shelters	2,000	8	16	-8	
Football*	10,000	3	6	-3	

\*adjusted to reflect current trends

**Facility Recommendations** – While there was no significant input that showed demand for specific facilities, Middlesex, Buffalo, Clinton, and Penn Townships have all had Comp Rec Plans completed for their respective municipalities that better describe the recreational needs of those municipalities. As well, Laura Doerr Park, Winfield Township Community Park, Spring Valley Park, and Harcrest Parks have all completed master site plans with public input from their respective areas. The recommendations of each of these should be considered as valid in making the final decisions in local recreation planning.



## Summary of Park Land and Facility Analysis

### Park Land Summary

The NRPA standards are to be used only as a starting point in determining the surplus or deficiency in a given region or community. While all planning regions in Butler County show a surplus in the amount of park land, other local park studies and plans suggest the need for additional land in specific municipalities. For instance, in Adams Township, the Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan identifies a need for a new 80 to 200 acre park in the near future and an additional park of similar size in the long-term. These types of local recommendations may appear to be in conflict with this plan; they are most certainly not. Such local analysis considers what park land is available within a specific community. There may be plenty of other park lands available in other areas of the planning region that are not readily accessible to a single municipality. Therefore the local recommendation is appropriate.

Planning Region	2010 Population	Guideline for acres required	Current Park Acreage	Surplus (Deficiency)
Northwest	20,432	163.4	260.4	97.0-acre surplus
Northeast	13,791	110.3	143	32.7-acre surplus
Central	53,058	424.5	803.6	379.1-acre surplus
Southwest	65,234	521.9	803	281.1-acre surplus
Southeast	31,196	249.6	263	13.4-acre surplus

### Deficiencies and Needs

In determining the facility deficiencies in Butler County, all parks, as well as school facilities are counted as being available for public use. Facilities identified as quasi-public are also included since all are available to some degree for public use. NRPA Standards show the following deficiencies in each planning region.

Planning Region	Facility	Number of Deficiencies
<b>Northwest</b>	Tennis courts	3
	Volleyball courts	1
	Soccer fields	1
<b>Northeast</b>	Volleyball courts	2
	Soccer fields	6
<b>Central</b>	Volleyball courts	7
	Soccer fields	10
	Swimming pools	2
	Football fields	2
<b>Southwest</b>	Volleyball courts	8
	Soccer fields	5
	Picnic shelters	8
	Football fields	2
<b>Southeast</b>	Tennis courts	2
	Volleyball courts	6
	Soccer fields	6
	Picnic shelters	8
	Football fields	3

Much the same as is discussed in the park land analysis, needs identified on a regional basis may be different than what is found in a local municipality. Once again, the local need considers a smaller, more specific area and may find legitimate recreational facility needs that are not shown within the overall region.

Nationwide trends show that volleyball and tennis courts are not popular recreational facilities in local parks at this time. This plan does not recommend the development of these facilities unless a specific demand is shown in a community. Even then, the demand should be tested to ensure that there is a genuine need.

### Safety Improvements

A complete inventory of local recreation facilities and school recreation facilities is located in the Appendices of this report. In those inventory charts, individual facilities in each park are ranked poor, fair, or good according to their condition. Facilities in most parks fall into the good or fair ranking; however, there are a sizeable number that are ranked as poor. The fair and poor classifications indicate that there are safety concerns at these parks. A copy of the inventory and analysis for each local park should be provided to its respective municipality, and those facilities that received a fair or poor ranking should be scheduled for repairs or upgrades.

#### High Priority Improvements

- ADA Upgrades
- Playground Improvements

### **General Maintenance and Improvement Needs**

In recent years, the Butler County Parks and Recreation Department has worked diligently to help local municipalities to upgrade and improve municipal parks. They have assisted municipalities with grant application and administration and, because of their strong commitment to good planning, have encouraged and assisted local government in developing a variety of recreational planning documents. Through the County Park Renovation Grant Program, local parks have seen significant upgrades. Butler is one of the top Counties across the Commonwealth to support local parks and recreation.

According to the public input and park analyses conducted through this planning process, the top needs for local municipalities are:

- Continuing and expanding the County Renovation Grants
- Continuing the County's technical assistance with grant applications and administration
- Continuing the County's support of local parks and recreation planning
- Having the county provide technical assistance for local municipalities in the maintenance of their parks
- Upgrading all parks to meet current ADA standards
- Upgrading playgrounds to meet current safety standards
- Implementing the recommendations of local parks and recreation plans
- Adding new facilities and/or park land to meet local deficiencies

### **ADA Compliance**

All public facilities are required to be compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This includes all parks and recreation facilities. Specifically, recreation facilities must comply with the ADA Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities. These guidelines include a section dealing with parks and recreation facilities. Some local parks have become partially or completely compliant in recent years. The inventory charts in the appendices of this report identify compliancy for each park and facility. It should be a priority

to bring all parks into compliance with ADA. The responsibility to do this lies with the property owner or lessee.

### **Swimming Pools**

Currently there are nine outdoor swimming pools in Butler County that are either municipally or non-profit operated. They are located as follows.

**Region 1 Northwest** – 1 pool – Armco Park/YMCA Pool, Slippery Rock Township

With a swimming pool in the Slippery Rock area and Moraine State Park having plenty of lake swimming available, there is not a specific demand for additional swimming facilities in this area.

**Region 2 Northeast** – None

Although there is not an outdoor swimming pool in this region, the size and distribution of the current population does not support the development of a swimming pool. NRPA guidelines suggest a swimming pool for every 20,000 residents. According to the 2010 US Census data, this region has 13,791 residents. It is very unlikely that a swimming pool could be sustained in this Region.

**Region 3 Central** – 1 pool – Alameda Park Pool

According to the NRPA Guidelines, the Central Region may be able to support two more swimming pools than currently exist. However, a key factor that is not taken into account in the guidelines is the financial ability of the residents and the municipalities to sustain a pool.

The City of Butler closed its swimming pool in 2005 due to lack of revenues being produced by the pool and the inability of the city to cover the expenses that exceed annual revenues. According to the 2010 census data, the median family income for the City is \$31,995 which is much lower than the approximately \$50,000 that is common in communities that have successful swimming pools.

In 2006, the City conducted a swimming pool feasibility study that outlined a series of benchmarks that need to be met if they were to consider opening the pool again.

With a regional population of 53,058, it would be reasonable to expect that another swimming pool could be supported in the region. However, a detailed feasibility study and a well-defined business plan should be completed before pursuing such a facility.

The feasibility study will help to determine the financial and programmatic feasibility of construction and operation. Swimming pools are costly facilities to build, maintain, and operate. The current trend is to develop family pools that will service an entire region rather than a pool for each community. Another trend, and an option for some communities, is to construct a spray pad rather than a pool. However, a feasibility study should be developed for a spray pad as well.

The Alameda Park Swimming Pool is sufficiently large and adequately endowed with facilities, that with on-going upgrades and good maintenance, it could reasonably serve the swimming needs of the region for years to come. The recommended investment in the Alameda Park Pool described in Chapter 7 is currently the most cost effective option to meeting the swimming needs of the region.

#### **Region 4 Southwest – 6 pools**

Zelienople Community Pool; EDCO Pool, Evans City; North Boundary Pool, Cranberry Township; Mars Pool (member-owned); Seven Fields Pool

With six pools available in the region, no additional pools are needed.

#### **Region 5 Southeast – 2 pools**

Penn Valley Pool (member-owned), Penn Township; Laura J. Doerr Pool, Jefferson Township

These two pools adequately meet the needs of Region 5.

#### **Multi-municipal Recreation**

School facilities play a vital role in parks and recreation throughout the County. Twenty of the County's public schools have recreation facilities located on their properties. Many of those facilities are open to the public for general usage when they are not being used for school activities.

Several communities are working together or with local school districts to provide recreational facilities and services on a multi-municipal basis.

- Slippery Rock Area Parks and Recreation is a joint venture among Slippery Rock Borough, Township, and School District
- Adams Township and Mars Borough share both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities with Mars Area School District
- Zelienople Borough shares facilities with the Seneca Valley School District
- Clearfield Elementary School has leased a portion of its property to the Township for development of a playground
- Prospect Borough leases a portion of land at Moraine Elementary School for a community picnic shelter

Many other communities and school districts participate in similar ways.

The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) promotes multi-municipal cooperation, as it offers a higher priority in its grant programs for such operations. DCNR encourages communities to begin with multi-municipal planning efforts to determine specific parks and recreation needs. This is often accomplished through comprehensive recreation and parks plans for several municipalities in the same area or master site plans for individual parks.

Municipalities in Butler County have joined together for such planning as described in Chapter 1 of this report. Municipalities in the Butler area jointly completed a Comprehensive Recreation Plan; those in the northwest region of the County also developed a Comprehensive Recreation Plan together; Buffalo and Clinton Townships completed a joint Greenways Plan; Zelienople and Harmony Borough's worked together on a recreation component in their Comprehensive Plan; and the Mars region evaluated an intergovernmental recreation commission together. Once the planning is complete, a higher grant priority is given to the participating communities to improve and expand their facilities according to the recommendations of the plan. The Butler

County Department of Planning and Development could work with local communities to encourage planning and development of park projects on a multi-municipal level. This will provide a better opportunity for these municipalities to receive grant funding from the state.

### **Recreation Program Providers**

Numerous agencies, organizations, businesses, and municipalities provide a variety of recreational programming for residents of Butler County. Major providers are described in this section.

#### **Cranberry Township**

Cranberry Township has the broadest, most encompassing recreation program in the County. Having a full range of programs, events and activities for adults, youth, and children available throughout the year, the Cranberry Township Parks and Recreation Department can meet the recreational needs of most any resident. The array of programs includes aquatics, early childhood, before and after school, golf, fitness, indoor and outdoor sports, arts, dance, science, lifetime learning, summer camps, outdoor concerts, and much more.

Township facilities are well designed for a vast array of recreational programs with four community parks and playgrounds, an outdoor water park, community center with gymnasium, ballfields, sport courts, golf course, and more.

The Township works closely with youth sports organizations like the Cranberry Township Athletic League, Miracle League of SW PA, Seneca Valley Junior Football Association, Seneca Valley Soccer Association, Seneca Valley Girls and Boys Lacrosse, and the Cranberry Cup Golf program.

The Department is one of just two in the County to have a full-time parks and recreation director. Other staff includes an office services manager, facilities and program coordinator, and multiple activity coordinators. The permanent staff is assisted by about 80 seasonal workers and dozens of volunteers.

#### **Slippery Rock Township**

The Slippery Rock Parks and Recreation Commission (SRPRC), is a joint program of Slippery Rock Borough, Township, and School District. Housed in the Community Center at Slippery Rock Borough Park, the Commission is operated by a full-time director and office manager. Additional staff includes about 30 part-time workers and many recruited volunteers who each play key roles in all of their programs and events.

As the only recreation commission in the northwest section of the County, the SRPRC programs and facilities reach far beyond the bounds of its participating municipalities.

Programming includes a variety of activities such as gymnastics, early childhood/preschool classes, guitar lessons, babysitting classes, mother/son dodge ball games, father/daughter dances, after school language learning programs, and PlaySafe, an in-school, childcare service for grades K-6. Organized sport activities, supervised by at least one coach per team, include swimming, flag football, soccer, hockey, and a basketball program, "Hoop Heroes", which is run in conjunction with the SRU's women's basketball team.

The community park hosts activities throughout the year such as a winter carnival, Junk-in-the-Trunk, summer day camps, Watermelon Wednesdays (a concert series in July), and holiday-themed events. The field facilities are also rented out for baseball and softball teams in the spring through summer months.

Their larger events include the annual 5K Race, held during the Slippery Rock Villagefest and the Youth Triathlon held at Armco Park.

#### **Adams Township**

As the community of Adams Township continues to grow, so does its parks and recreation list of events and activities. The Township Parks and Recreation Committee offers a regular listing of holiday-themed events such as an Easter Egg Hunt, Halloween in the Park, and Pictures with Santa. They also hold special events like Junk-in-the-Trunk and the Township's annual Community Day, which is co-sponsored with

organizations such as the baseball/softball sports boosters. Other recreational activities like Zumba are held as time and demand dictate.

The park seasonally hosts the boys and girls teams from the Mars Area Baseball Association, Softball Association, and Fast pitch leagues. The pavilions at Adams Township Community Park are also available for rental.

Though there is not currently a parks and recreation director, coordination of the events is done by a Township staff person with support and assistance of the parks and recreation volunteer committee which meets monthly. Supervisors have considered expanding the parks and recreation programs but there are no specific plans at this time to do so.

With a 2010 population of nearly 12,000 residents, a full-time recreation department may be necessary in the near future to meet the increasing demand.

### **Buffalo Township**

In 2008, Buffalo Township created the Township Recreation Board to help with implementation of the Township's Recreation Plan and to plan and supervise recreational activities and events. The most significant event they host is the annual Buffalo Township Community Days.

Another key player in the township's recreation is the Buffalo-Freeport Community Trail, which offers a variety of active and passive recreation for all visitors.

While the Township does not yet have a park of its own, it is in the process of purchasing a parcel of land for a park. It has jointly developed a master site plan for the property with the Audubon Society of Western PA and hopes to enter into a joint operating agreement for the park.

Lernerville Fields house youth league teams from the Freeport Baseball, Softball, and Football Associations.

### **Middlesex Township**

Most of the events that the department hosts occur at either the Middlesex Municipal Building

or Middlesex Community Park. While there are a variety of events such as those focused on quilting, gardening, and other hobbies, more routine activities are exercise classes held throughout the week. One of the more popular events has been the Gardening Series. The community park facilities are always open to the public, but they also house activities for outside groups such as Youth Sports Programs and the Mars Area Youth Football League.

The Middlesex Township Parks and Recreation Committee comprises four community members who meet twice yearly to plan events. Individual volunteers are also recruited to assist as necessary. The Township notes that there is some demand for additional programming, which they are willing to provide as staff and volunteers are available.

### **Buffalo-Freeport Community Trail**

Under management of the Buffalo-Freeport Community Trail Group, the trail becomes host to many events throughout the year such as half marathons, group rides, and opportunities for geocaching. One of their most noted events is the Salute the Sacrifice 5/10k Walk/Run. Sponsored in conjunction by a local business, the run raises funds for the Wounded Warrior Project.

In order to maintain the trail, volunteer work days are scheduled to physically repair any damages to the trail or surrounding structures. Meetings are also held the first Monday of each month. For more information on the Buffalo Freeport Community Trail and Trail Group, please visit:

[www.butlerfreeporttrail.org](http://www.butlerfreeporttrail.org).

### **Butler Family YMCA**



The Butler Family YMCA has facilities at three locations. The Butler YMCA Branch in downtown Butler serves as the primary provider of indoor

recreation in the central part of the County while also providing a variety of outdoor sports. Rose E Schneider YMCA in northern Cranberry Township supplements a host of other recreational programs and facilities that are available in that region. The YMCA Camp/ARMCO Park in Slippery Rock Township provides outdoor facilities that are used by both branches primarily in the warmer seasons.

The Y is a membership-based facility but has some programs that are open to non-members as well. A family membership at the Butler branch is \$63 per month with a \$150 development fee charged up front and a one year commitment. Single memberships range from \$15 to \$42 per month based on age.

Fees at the Rose E. Schneider branch are \$150 for the development fee and \$82 dollars per month with single memberships ranging from \$15 to \$55 monthly based on age.

As well, there is also an Association Membership that allows members to use both branches of the Y. Membership in either branch includes unlimited, free use of the outdoor park at the YMCA Camp/ ARMCO Park.

Both branches offer a wide variety of programming for all ages in aquatics, gymnastics, family activities, sports, dance, cooking, health and well being, fitness, and special events. Both branches utilize the YMCA Camp/ ARMCO Park for summer camps and outdoor activities. Outdoor swimming lessons and themed night swims are also available at the YMCA Camp/ARMCO Park and are open to the general public. Both YMCA branches include gymnasiums, swimming pools, gymnastics areas, fitness rooms, social gathering spaces, child care space, and meeting and program rooms. The Butler branch also has racquetball courts.

## Butler County Trail Inventory

### Butler-Freeport Community Trail

The Butler-Freeport Trail is a 21-mile gravel, multi-purpose trail that stretches north from the Village of Laneville in Buffalo Township to the City of Butler. As part of the Rails-to-Trails program in southwestern Pennsylvania, this trail winds along the scenic Buffalo Creek and former Butler Branch Railroad lines as it makes its way northeast. Along the trail, users can make stops at a variety of additional recreational facilities such as Winfield Township Community Park and Father Marinaro Park in Butler.



The Buffalo-Freeport Trail provides users with many types and levels of activity such as walking/hiking, cycling, geocaching, bird watching, running, and, in the winter, cross country skiing. The trail also sets the stage for many activities throughout the year such as marathons, group cycling rides and charity events. The setting of the trail within thick forested areas offers shade for warmer months and beautiful scenery for the cooler. With trailheads in various locations, users of all ages can easily access the trail and are free to experience its benefits at their leisure.

Additional information about the Butler Freeport Trail can be found at [www.butlerfreeporttrail.org](http://www.butlerfreeporttrail.org).

### North Country Scenic Trail

Extending from North Dakota to New York State, the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCT) is a premier footpath that stretches for about 4,600 miles linking communities, forests and prairies across seven northern states. More than 1,800 of its miles are found off-road with additional miles

following shared paths, and some still following roadways.



Pennsylvania claims 244 miles of the North Country Trail with about 47 of those miles located in Butler County. Coming from the east via the Allegheny River Bridge in the city of Parker, the trail traverses westerly and then southerly through the three sections of State Game Lands #95. From the Game Lands, it travels south for a short distance then once again heads west to Moraine State Park near the Old Stone House. Through the park, it travels along the north side of Lake Arthur exiting the western edge of the park toward McConnell's Mill State Park in Lawrence County.

Within the County, two key areas that have not been completed are the sections from State Route 8 to State Game Lands #95 and from Moraine State Park to McConnell's Mill State Park. Filling in these gaps benefits the major goals of completing the NCT and would offer local residents the chance to explore these areas together without using vehicle transportation. Concurrently with this planning process, a study is underway for the section from Moraine to McConnell's Mill to develop it as an off-road trail.

The NCT is organized, developed, and maintained through hundreds of organizations throughout these regions, but is generally overseen by the National Park Service. The Butler Chapter of the North Country Trail Association is responsible for the Trail's pathway in and around Butler County, Pennsylvania. Additional information is available about the NCT's Butler Chapter at: [www.northcountrytrail.org/but](http://www.northcountrytrail.org/but).

### [Sugarcreek Trail](#)

Sugarcreek Trail is an unofficial ATV system stretching from Sugarcreek Township in Armstrong County into Fairview Township, Butler County. The trail has several connections to neighboring areas along it. Though the various access points allow for a direct connection to this type of recreation, the trail does not offer strong connections to other recreational areas or trails.

## **Regional Recreation Facilities located within Butler County**

### [Moraine State Park](#)

A 16,725-acre park in Butler County, containing Lake Arthur, offers over forty miles of scenic shoreline. Its tributaries include Muddy Run, Big Run, Swamp Run, Bear Run, and over 75 intermittent streams. Ranging from an average depth of 11 feet to about 36 feet deep near the dam, the shallow waters are home to a variety of warm-water fish. The park, created by a continental glacier and massive mineral extraction, now provides gently rolling hills, lush forests, and Lake Arthur. Each year over one million people visit the park for swimming, fishing, boating, boat rentals, windsurfing, sailing, hiking, biking and bike rentals, horseback riding, group tenting, and cabin rentals. About 13,600 acres of Moraine State Park are open to hunting and trapping with the winter season offering cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, sledding, ice boating, ice fishing, and ice skating. Moraine offers a wide variety of environmental education and interpretive programs through hands-on educational activities, guided walks, and evening programs.

### [Jennings Environmental Education Center](#)

Located 12 miles north of Butler on State Route 528, the center provides hiking trails, nature related activities and a full range of educational programs. Unique attractions on site include the Massasauga rattlesnake and a relict prairie environment, which includes a spectacular and well-known prairie flower, the blazing star. The relict prairie ecosystem is rare in Pennsylvania; visitors should try to visit in late July or early August when the prairie is in full bloom. Jennings is one of several state parks specifically dedicated to provide environmental education and interpretation to the community.

### [Todd Nature Reserve](#)

This Reserve is the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania's first reserve. It is a 176-acre nature reserve located in the Buffalo Creek drainage of Sarver, PA, in southeastern Butler County. The Reserve offers 5 miles of hiking trails abundant with the natural beauty of the forest, streams, and a pond. Todd Nature Reserve is a significant natural resource in Pennsylvania offering a picturesque, rugged landscape and notable, rustic trails. It is part of Pennsylvania Audubon's Buffalo Valley Important Bird Area program, as well as the Buffalo Creek Watershed Conservation Plan. Management practices of the Reserve are intended to promote education, nature study, and passive recreation, while protecting its natural areas by minimizing development. Public walks are led at the Reserve throughout the year, with most taking place in summer months. Also during the summer, a seasonal naturalist is stationed at Todd to conduct research, provide interpretation, provide maintenance, and oversee daily operations.

### [Glade Run Lake](#)

The 52-acre Glade Run Lake was built in 1955 on a 145-acre parcel of land that is owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and managed by the PA Fish and Boat Commission. For nearly six decades, the lake has provided fishing, boating, and other recreational opportunities for Butler County residents and visitors.

While gasoline motors are prohibited, electric trolling motors are allowed. In addition to traditional boating and fishing, canoeing, kayaking, sail boating and other forms of non-motorized boats are welcomed. Limited land-based recreation activities such as picnicking, walking, and wildlife observation have supplemented the boating and fishing opportunities. Facilities include a launch ramp, pier, and parking spaces.

In 2002, the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) declared the lake's dam unsafe and placed it on its list of "high-hazard" dams. The PFBC estimates that it will cost \$4 million to reconstruct the dam's concrete spillway and reinforce the embankment, but the project is currently unfunded. In 2011, the lake was completely

drawn down to alleviate the pressure on the dam. The draw down has placed a great burden on many anglers as the lake is no longer available for fishing or boating.

Since the draw-down, the Glade Run Lake Conservancy has been diligently working to restore the lake to its original condition.



## **Regional Recreation Facilities located outside Butler County**

Many County residents undoubtedly travel to regional recreation facilities that are located outside of Butler County. We have identified seven state parks; one state and one national forest; nine county parks; three regional parks; and ten regional trails. Each facility is described on the following pages.

### [Pennsylvania State Parks](#)

#### **MCCONNELL'S MILL STATE PARK**

McConnell's Mill State Park in Lawrence County encompasses 2,546 acres of the spectacular Slippery Rock Creek Gorge. Created by the draining of glacial lakes thousands of years ago, the gorge has steep sides and a valley floor littered with huge boulders. A gristmill was built in the 1800's to harness the power of the water. The park offers a Class II to IV river, depending on water level, with the spring and fall being the best time for boating.

Tours are available at the restored gristmill, and guided nature walks are conducted every Saturday and Sunday during the summer season. The natural character of McConnell's Mill State Park, the scenic gorge, waterfalls, rugged hiking trails and whitewater creek, are all directly caused by the geology of the area. McConnell's Mill Heritage Festival is held on the third or fourth weekend in September. The festival celebrates the operational era of the Old Mill (1852-1928).

### [Pennsylvania State Forest](#)

#### **CLEAR CREEK STATE FOREST**

Clear Creek State Forest encompasses 9,089 acres in northern Jefferson County, 3,165 acres in Venango County, and 1,012 acres in southern Forest County and is named after the crystal clear stream that flows through the Jefferson County tract. Clear Creek State Forest was founded in September of 1920, with the District Office being set in Clarion. The 3,184-acre Kennerdell Tract in Venango County was purchased in July of 1980. Hiking is available throughout the forest on 35 miles of trails, including the Little Clear Creek Trail, Silvis Trail, Trap Run Trail, Beartown Rocks Trail, and the North Country Trail. Primitive camping is permitted along all but the Beartown Rocks Trail and sections of the Little Clear Creek Trail.

### [County Parks](#)

#### **ALLEGHENY COUNTY PARKS**

Allegheny owns nine county parks that are distributed throughout the county. Four are located in the northern tier of the county that offer plenty of recreational opportunities to Butler County residents.

#### **Deer Lakes Park**

Deer Lakes Park in northern Allegheny County is located in Tarentum, PA. It includes 1,180 acres located in Frazier and West Deer Townships. Facilities and features include three fishing lakes, children's play area, Wagman Observatory, and groves and shelters. The lakes are spring fed, and construction of dams and new settling basins have made the site great for fishing.

#### **Harrison Hills Park**

Located on 500 acres in Harrison Township, Natrona Heights, in Allegheny County, this park boasts facilities and features including Watts Memorial Overlook; three soccer fields; groves and shelters; and walking, hiking, and bridle trails.

#### **Hartwood Park**

Hartwood Park rests on 629 acres in Hampton and Indiana Townships in Allegheny County. Preserved within the park is one of the largest and most spectacular country estates in the region. Hartwood consists of a 1929 Tudor Mansion, cottage, stable complex, and gate lodge. Hartwood also offers horseback riding, cross country skiing, hiking, and walking trails.

#### **North Park**

North Park in Allegheny County is located in Allison Park, PA and encompasses 3,010 acres in Hampton, McCandless, and Pine Townships. Facilities include an 18-hole golf course, pavilions, 75-acre fishing and boating lake, playgrounds, ice rink, swimming pool, tennis courts, Marshall Island Wildfowl Reserve, and a nature center.

### [Beaver County](#)

Brush Creek County Park is located in the northeast corner of Beaver County and serves the citizens of Beaver County as well as residents across the county line in Butler County. Brush Creek County Park is a nature lovers dream and offers 11 picnic areas, a covered bridge, tennis courts, horse trails, a walking trail, a lake, and other park amenities.

### [Westmoreland County](#)

At 548 acres in size, Northmoreland County Park sets just outside of Butler County to the southeast. Within the park is the 17-acre Northmoreland Lake, which is stocked by the PA Fish Commission including both warm-water fish and trout. The park also has a boat house, an activities center for year-round rentals, a BMX track, five ball fields, six soccer fields, a model radio-controlled airfield, and the Northmoreland Equine Complex.

## **Regional Trails**

### **RACHEL CARSON TRAIL**

Rachel Carson Trail is located in Allegheny County northeast of Pittsburgh. Its length spans 35.7 miles from Harrison Hills County Park in the far northeast corner of the County, to North Park in the north-central area of the County. The trail passes by several County parks, following power and gas lines, skirting suburban homes and farms, crossing creeks, woods, and fields. The terrain along the route ranges from paved roads to areas that are primitive and rugged. There are no bridges, so streams will need to be forded.

### **ARMSTRONG TRAIL**

The Armstrong Trail is a rail trail located in Armstrong County, spanning 52 miles, and connecting Schenley, Pa to East Brady, Pa. The trail occupies the former rail bed of the Allegheny Valley Railroad which opened in 1852. The Armstrong Trail is a scenic trail with many wooded nature areas, historic sites, and small towns, with access points along its length and much natural beauty and wildlife. The Armstrong Trail surface varies from a natural soil-path, to 15 miles of improved surfaces of asphalt, to crushed limestone and sandstone.

The Armstrong Trail is a non-motorized recreational trail that is open to the public for walking, jogging, biking, and cross country skiing. For further information, access the Armstrong Rails to Trails Association on the internet at: [www.armstrongtrail.org](http://www.armstrongtrail.org).

Source: Armstrong Rails to Trails Association, Armstrong County Tourist Bureau

### **BAKER TRAIL**

The Baker Trail, beginning just across the Butler County line at Freeport, travels through Armstrong, Clarion, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, McKean, and Warren Counties. Baker Trail was established in 1950 and named for the late Pittsburgh attorney, Horace Forbes Baker.

This hiking trail follows forest paths and old jeep trails and dirt roads through woods, game lands, and farmlands and is marked by yellow blazes.

Eighteen miles of the trail share a footpath with the North Country Scenic Trail. Currently, there are nine campsites with open front Adirondack shelters located on side trails. There are no signs pointing to the shelters, so they must be located by consulting the Baker Trail Guide. Besides the shelters, there are primitive campsites along the trail where tents can be used. For further information access the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy on the internet at [www.rachelcarsontrails.org](http://www.rachelcarsontrails.org).

Source: Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, Armstrong County Tourist Bureau

### **SANDY CREEK TRAIL**

Located in Venango County, Sandy Creek trail has eight miles of asphalt surface, seven pedestrian-safe bridges, and a tunnel reconstructed in 2005. The trail winds along East Sandy Creek through hills, valleys, and forests. It runs east and west, crossing over the Allegheny River and the Allegheny River Trail 5 miles south of Franklin. The trail can be accessed from three major trail heads: 1) in Oil City – across the Allegheny River at the Petroleum Street Bridge, to the Venango Campus of Clarion University, with parking 1/4 mile from the street on a tar-and-chipped surface by a yellow gated trailhead; 2) in Franklin – at the east end of the 8th Street Bridge over the Allegheny River, on PA Route 322; 3) in Brandon – (a relatively remote access) Route 322 to Cranberry, at the intersection with Route 257 at the Cranberry Mall, turn onto the Rockland Road and drive to the Coal City Road to the river.

### **SAMUEL JUSTUS TRAIL AND ALLEGHENY RIVER TRAIL**

Located in Venango County, these span 31 miles of flat, smooth, asphalt surface from Oil City to Emlenton except for a 1/2-mile break at Sunny Slope, which is located 14 miles south of Franklin. These two trails are, in actuality, one continuous trail built on a portion of the old Pennsylvania Railroad that ran from Pittsburgh to Buffalo. The Samuel Justus Trail was built and is maintained by Cranberry Township using a grant from the Samuel Justus Trust Fund. It is the portion from Oil City to Franklin, a distance of 5.3 miles. South of Franklin, the trail was built and is maintained by the Allegheny Valley Trails Association (AVTA) and is called the

Allegheny River Trail. The trail is paved from Oil City to Brandon, a distance of 15.5 miles. AVTA owns the railroad grade from Franklin to Emlenton (with some exceptions) a distance of 30 miles, including tunnels at Kennerdell and Rockland. The Allegheny River Trail, as it runs along a portion of the Butler and Clarion County border, has a proposed section from Emlenton to Foxburg, and a completed section from Foxburg to Parker Landing.

### **MIDDLE ALLEGHENY RIVER WATER TRAIL**

The Middle Allegheny River Water Trail is 107 river miles long, starting at Kinzua Dam and ending at the community of Emlenton, just upstream of the I-80 bridge. The water trail is an ideal destination for novice or family canoe and kayak trippers - though the rapids beneath Veteran's Bridge in Oil City are best left to experienced paddlers. Much of this section of river has been designated by Congress as part of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The size of the Allegheny River and the constant release of water from the Kinzua Dam make the river navigable all year long except in periods when there is ice on the river.

### **KISKI-CONEMAUGH WATER TRAIL**

Traveling 43 miles from Blairsville to Freeport, the trail empties into the Allegheny River along the Butler-Armstrong County border. The Kiski-Conemaugh is a good novice and family canoe and kayak river yet will entertain and challenge the experienced boater as well. Float speed is approximately 2 to 3 miles per hour with leisurely paddling. Travelling through the scenic Conemaugh valley, the river boasts of historic bridges, small Pennsylvania towns, remnants of the PA Mainline Canal, and extraordinary views of Pennsylvania's natural beauty. Its river towns include Saltsburg, Apollo, Vandergrift, Leechburg, and Freeport. The Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail brochure can be found at: [www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org/kiski\\_files/lower\\_text2.pdf](http://www.mainlinecanalgreenway.org/kiski_files/lower_text2.pdf).

### **Other Conservation Areas in Butler County**

#### **WOLF CREEK NARROWS**

Various parcels of Wolf Creek Narrows were purchased by the Western PA Conservancy, with the most recent acquisition occurring in 2013. The

property features mature northern hardwood forest, its spring wildflowers, wetlands and stream bank. Visitors enjoy hiking the 1.5 mile loop trail, observing wildflowers, hunting, and fishing in the prime waters of Wolf Creek. The property is located in Worth Township west of the Borough of Slippery Rock.

#### **MILLER WOODS TRACT**

The Miller Woods tract, also in Worth Township, is contiguous to the Wolf Creek Narrows immediately to the south. It is owned and managed by the Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania as an outdoor classroom and laboratory. This 42-acre site is widely known for its beautiful spring wildflower display and great variety of birds. Miller Woods also is an important archaeological and historical site, and the property became a Certified Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary in 2005.

#### **MILLER ESKER TRACT**

This 33-acre natural area, owned by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, is located south of Slippery Rock Borough in Worth Township, Butler County. The property is open to the public for "low-impact" activities such as hiking, wildlife viewing and photography.

#### **CONNOQUENESSING CREEK NATURE RESERVE**

Located in Jackson Township and Zelienople Borough, the 167-acre Reserve is classified by the Natural Heritage Inventory as a highly significant Biologically Diverse Area (BDA). The mostly forested area is owned and managed by the Ecologically Concerned of Zelienople (ECOZ).

#### **MIDDLESEX TOWNSHIP NATURE PRESERVE**

Middlesex Township has set aside an 18-acre parcel of land as a municipal conservation property.

#### **SEVEN FIELDS NATURE RESERVE/NORTHRIDGE PARK**

Seven Fields Borough owns and maintains a small natural area within the Borough limits.



# Chapter 4: vision, goals, & recommendations/ implementation strategies

Successful long-range planning begins with a vision, or “picture” of how recreation, parks, and open space in Butler County should look in the future. By developing an implementation methodology that utilizes simple, clear categories and implementation strategies, the County can understand and communicate where it wants to be (the Vision) and how it can get there (Implementation Strategies).

The recommendations of this Plan are organized into five themes that were identified through public input and analysis of the parks and recreation inventory. Each theme is broad in nature and based upon community ideas and issues raised through the planning process. They reflect the issues, opportunities, and concerns that were identified through public input and professional facility analysis. Completion of the implementation strategies within each theme will ultimately fulfill Butler County’s Vision for the Future of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.

## **Vision**

Butler County will provide high quality parks and recreation facilities that are safe, functional, well-maintained, and attractive, and that meet the recreational desires of County residents. These facilities will be supplemented by recreational programming for County residents.

Butler County will support, encourage, and assist local municipalities in the provision of parks and recreation facilities and programming at the local level.

Butler County will support, encourage, and assist organizations, municipalities, and agencies that provide and promote recreational trails and open space conservation within the County.

## **Implementation of the Vision**

Implementation of the vision will be directed by the following themes.

1. The role of Butler County in Parks and Recreation
2. Funding opportunities
3. County-wide park and recreation priorities
4. Featured projects
5. Recreational programming

It is important to understand that separate components of this plan address greenways, trails, and open space, as well as Alameda Park development. Detailed recommendations for these components can be found in Sections three and four of this report.

Where are we now?  
Where do we want to be?  
How do we get there?

## The Role of Butler County in Parks and Recreation

Throughout the public input process, residents and municipal officials spoke frequently about what the role of the County should be in the provision of parks and recreation. In the end the proposed County role can be summarized by four key recommendations identified in the highlighted box to the right.

The following recommendations are accompanied by corresponding implementation strategies.

### Manage and Operate the County's Parks and Recreation Department

Over the years, Butler County has become known for its high quality park facilities and recreational programming. The County should continue to hold this as its top priority. All actions of the remaining recommendations and implementation strategies are intended to support this key role.

Included in the functions of the Parks and Recreation Department should be to:

- Continue development and operation of Alameda Park. A separate recommendation with implementation strategies is listed below.
- Maintain a visionary approach toward the future of parks and recreation in the County and make recommendations to the County Commissioners to pursue that vision.
- Provide a balanced series of recreational programming.
- Implement the components of the Recreation Plans found within this document.
- Prepare for the demand and potential for additional County Parks.
- Support local parks and recreation.
  - o County Grant Program
  - o Assistance with application and administration of State and Federal Grants

- Support acquisition development, and management of trails and greenways.
- Encourage local park development.
- Expand recreational programming offerings
  - test the water to see what works.
  - o Environmental Programming
  - o Fall/winter children's Programs
  - o Pre-school Programs
  - o Partnership programs with other organizations

## Butler County's Role in Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

1. Manage and Operate the County's Parks and Recreation Department.
2. Continue to develop and maintain Alameda Park as a superior facility for County residents and visitors.
3. Plan for the acquisition of additional County parks as demand dictates and finances are available for development. Assist in the acquisition and/or development of other regionally significant park facilities that impact County residents.
4. Support local municipalities in their efforts to provide local parks and recreation throughout the County

### **Continue to develop and maintain Alameda Park as a superior facility for County residents and visitors**

Included in this planning document is the Alameda Park Master Site Plan that provides a vision, recommendations, and projected costs for the enhancement of Alameda Park. As well, an accompanying Swimming Pool Feasibility Study was developed and provided to the County as a separate document. The Study makes recommendations for the renovation and expansion of the swimming pool.

### **Implementation Strategies**

The top priorities for implementation are:

1. Rebuild the mountain bike trails in the park and coordinate with local users for development, management, and maintenance of the trails. A recommended partnership with the Pittsburgh Trail Advocacy Group, who will provide oversight to this process, has already been created as part of the planning process.
2. Renovate and expand the Alameda Park Swimming Pool to improve safety and function, and better meet the needs of County residents. A grant from the PA Department of Conservation and natural Resources has already been awarded for the first phase of implementation.

Projected costs and a phasing plan are included in the Master Plan Section of this report.

### **Plan for the acquisition and development of additional County parks as demand dictates and finances are available. Assist in the acquisition and/or development of other regionally significant park facilities that impact County residents**

The population in Butler County continues to grow at a more rapid pace than other Counties in western PA. Growth estimates found in the preliminary stages of the County's Comprehensive Plan project increases as high as 45% between 2010 and 2020. In taking a visionary approach to the future of parks and recreation, the County should be planning for a growth in recreation facilities to provide for that population.

The southwest, southeast, and central regions are projected to have the greatest growth. According to the analysis of parkland in the various regions of the County, the municipalities of the southwest have kept up with providing sufficient parkland for their residents. While the region will likely need additional parkland to address the growing population, it will likely be met through municipal parks. One example is Lancaster Township that recently acquired the Four Springs Park totaling 26 acres.

Prime locations for placement of additional County parks are the Southeast, Northeast, and Central Regions of the County.

In the Southeast Region, Glade Run Lake was once a regional facility that was owned and operated by the PA Fish and Boat Commission. Due to the potential failure of the dam on that lake, the Fish and Boat Commission was forced to draw down the lake, which took away a significant recreational facility in the region. The Glade Run Lake Conservancy has actively and successfully lobbied and raised funds that they expect will bring this recreational lake back into use. The return of the 145-acre property to recreational use will be a boost to the region.

The Northeast Region of the County would be a nice option for a future County Park. Property costs in that region are among the lowest in the County. The purchase of property to be used as a county park at some point in the future would be a good investment for the County.

In the Central Region of Butler County lies the 136-acre Sunnyview Farm property that is already owned by the County. The expanse of the property, its proximity to a large population center, and its accommodating terrain make it a good opportunity to be considered as a future county Park.

### Implementation Strategies

1. Support the **Glade Run Lake Conservancy** in its efforts to restore the lake for use as a regional recreation facility. The County can do this in a number of ways.
  - a. Lobby the state legislature, the PA Fish and Boat Commission, and other appropriate groups and agencies to support the restoration of the lake.
  - b. Adopt a resolution demonstrating the County's public support of the project.
  - c. Make a financial contribution in the range of \$100,000 toward the lake's restoration. Funds can be used from the Marcellus Shale Legacy Fund to support the project. The initial support should be in the form of a financial commitment that will be paid at the time the project is ready to move forward.



#### **Implementation Cost – Approximately \$100,000**

2. Evaluate the potential use of the **Sunnyview Farm** property as a county park.
  - a. Using a qualified park and recreation consultant, complete a study to determine the feasibility of using the property as a park. **Estimated Cost - \$8,000**
  - b. If the Feasibility Study determines it to be feasible, complete a master site plan for development of the property. **Estimated Cost - \$50,000**
3. Explore opportunities for property in the County's Northeast Region to **acquire as a future park** for the County. The property should be about 250 to 1200 acres in size and appropriate for development of typical recreation facilities. **Estimated acquisition cost - \$1 - \$5.5 million**
4. Before purchasing property, complete a study to determine the feasibility of using the property as a park. **Estimated Cost - \$12,000 - \$15,000**

Partial funding for support, acquisition, and development of these regional parks may be sought through PA DCNR Community Conservation Grant Funds or any of the Act 13 Funds described below.

## **Support local municipalities in their efforts to provide local parks and recreation throughout the County.**

Butler County has long been a supporter of local parks and recreation. Butler County Parks and Recreation Department has assisted local municipalities through technical assistance, grant assistance, operations recommendations, and much more. The public input compiled through this planning process clearly identified this assistance as a great benefit to the local municipalities. Local officials are extremely appreciative of the assistance provided by the County. Many indicated that without the County's help, their parks would not be at their current level of quality. Some of the implementation strategies described below are in support of activities that are already occurring and intended to strengthen and encourage the continuation and/or expansion of those services. Others are strategies that will serve to enhance the role of local parks in the County.

### **Implementation Strategies**

- Assist local governments in applying for and administering state grants and in understanding their options with the new changes in state grant funding
- Hold annual grant workshops to inform municipalities of available funding and how to secure it
- Provide technical assistance and funding through grant programs to ensure that park facilities are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Standards and playground safety standards
- Continue to promote quality planning, design, and construction of local parks
- Expand the annual County Grant program to support additional communities and/or provide larger grant amounts for larger projects
- Maintain a comprehensive listing of recreational facilities and programs that are available throughout the County
- Provide municipalities with technical assistance related to parks and recreation
- Support implementation of existing local parks and recreation plans
- Facilitate semi-annual regional or county-wide parks and recreation meetings to support local municipalities. Topics of discussion may include programming, special events, park maintenance and improvements, financial sustainability, grants, park security, vandalism protection, etc.



### **Funding Opportunities**

Many funding sources are available to help municipalities fund planning, acquisition, and development of parks and recreation facilities. Additionally, numerous organizations and agencies provide grant funding for recreational programming.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a number of funding opportunities available to municipalities for parks and recreation purposes. Most of these fall under the umbrella of one of two sources: Act 13 drilling impact fees and DCNR's Community Conservation Partnership Program. Each of these is described in more detail on the following pages with additional information provided in the appendices.

# Summary of Act 13 Funding For Recreation and Conservation Projects

There are three sources of funds being distributed through Act 13 that can be used for recreation and conservation purposes:

## Local Government Funding

Counties, Townships and Boroughs that have wells with a certain output are receiving funds based upon their number of wells. These funds can only be used for:

- Construction, maintenance and repair of roadways, bridges and public infrastructure
- Water, stormwater and sewer systems
- Emergency preparedness and public safety
- Environmental programs including trails, parks and recreation, open space, flood plain management, conservation districts and agricultural preservation
- Preservation and reclamation of surface and subsurface waters
- Tax reductions, affordable housing, social services, judicial services, career and technical centers and local or regional planning initiatives

## Statewide Initiatives – Marcellus Legacy Fund distribution to All Counties -

All Counties will receive funds based upon their population that can only be used for:

- Planning, acquisition, development and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, natural areas, community conservation and beautification projects, community and heritage parks
- Water resource management

## Statewide Initiatives - Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA)

The CFA will administer a new fund that can be used for these purposes:

- Acid mine drainage, abatement and cleanup
- Orphaned or abandoned oil and gas well plugging
- Compliance with PA Sewage Facilities Act
- Planning, acquisition, development and repair of greenways, recreational trails, open space, parks and beautification projects
- Programs to establish baseline water quality data on private water supplies
- Watershed programs and related projects
- Up to 25% of funds for flood control projects

## [DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Programs and Priorities](#)

The DCNR 204 Grant Announcement describes grant assistance from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to help communities and organizations plan, acquire, and develop recreation, park, and trail facilities and conserve open space. Grants are funded through the Community Conservation Partnerships Program which combines several state and federal funding sources including the Keystone Recreation, Park, and Conservation Fund, Environmental Stewardship Fund, Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program, and the Land and Water Conservation Fund.



Grant applications for this program are generally due in April of each year with funding announcements typically being made in the late fall.

The 2014 DCNR Grant Program continues to focus on making grant awards that advance local recreation and conservation priorities and implement the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2009-2013 (<http://paoutdoorrecplan.com/>).

Specific priorities include:

- Sustainable and green park development and planning
- Major park and recreation rehabilitation projects that modernize facilities and bring them into compliance with the current standards for safety, ADA, and the Universal Construction Code,
- Trail projects that close gaps in major statewide greenways and regionally significant trails and planning to help communities become bicycle and pedestrian friendly
- Land conservation to protect critical habitat, forested watersheds, wetlands, and riparian corridors and lands that conserve connectors between public lands, or conserve urban green space
- Rivers conservation projects that enhance water trails, improve public access and/or increase awareness of Pennsylvania rivers
- Emerging trends including off-leash dog parks, splash/spray parks, skate parks and community parks that feature green amenities such as gardens and natural areas that connect children to nature, etc.
- Statewide and regional partnerships that build capacity to promote outdoor recreation and conservation of natural and heritage resources

DCNR is in the process of completing the new 2014-2018 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan that will establish new priorities for grant funding beginning in 2015. Preliminary indications are that there will be a renewed emphasis on funding for local parks, while also maintaining the commitment to trail and conservation priorities.

Each of these grants typically requires the grantee to contribute or match a portion of the grant amount.

#### **Funding from Oil and Gas Drilling on Park Property**

Local governments and non-profit organizations that are looking for additional sources of revenue for the parks and even for other municipal operations often consider drilling for gas and oil on municipally owned park property. While the municipality may believe they have every right to do so, there may be restrictions if grant funding was used in the acquisition or development of the properties. If properties were acquired or developed using the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Project 500 Fund (P-500), Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund (Keystone), and/or the Growing Greener Bond Fund (GG2), the properties may only be used for purposes permitted in the funding legislation. These activities are generally restricted to recreation and conservation. To use the property for natural resource extraction is considered a change in use of the property that requires written consent from the PA DCNR and in some cases the US Department of Interior.

Because both DCNR and the Department of Interior recognize that some drilling opportunities are good for the municipalities and their residents, they have established certain guidelines under which drilling can take place. Any contracts or agreements for drilling on these properties must receive approval from DCNR prior to the signing of any lease.

If a conversion is approved by DCNR, the revenues produced from the drilling operations can only be used to fund projects that are consistent with the original grant legislation. Under the Keystone Fund, this means “the conservation open space, acquisition or development of park lands or natural areas for public benefit.” Other funds have very similar restrictions.

DCNR’s “Advisory on Oil and Natural Gas Drilling” is located in the appendices of this report.

### **Recreational Program Grants**

A host of organizations and agencies also make grants and other resources available for recreation programming and facilities. A list of potential funding sources is located in the appendices.

### **Other Funding Strategies**

It is important to consider multiple funding sources for most major projects. Identify the possible groups, organizations, or grants agencies that may have an interest in a specific project. Consider the following potential sources of funding.

**Grants Agencies** - See the list of potential grant sources provided in the appendices of this report. It is wise to consider more than one grant source for multifaceted projects. Different agencies may be willing to provide funding for different portions of your project. For example, if a project includes construction of trails and development of a neighborhood park, there are agencies that will fund trails and others who will fund parks. Applying to both types of agencies for funding that meets their specific criteria enhances the likelihood of receiving a grant.

**Adjacent Municipalities** - In some cases adjacent municipalities have a specific interest in park facilities located within the Township or Borough. In these cases there may be interest in making a financial contribution toward the project.

**Local Organizations** - Often local recreation organizations are willing to raise funds to be used for upgrades to their facilities. These funds should be considered as part of the local match for grant funding. For example, if a football organization is already investing \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually into upgrading of facilities, they may be willing to utilize several years’ worth of that investment toward a major renovation of the football facility. This could mean as much as fifty or seventy-five thousand dollars available to be used as matching funds for a grant.

**Funds Already Planned for Use** - It is also helpful to consider funds that may already be allocated for use in or near a park that may be used as a source of matching funds. For instance, if a water or sewer line is being planned to run through a park, tapping into that line could make the money spent for its installation an eligible match for a park project.

The same could be true of parking areas, roads, trails, trailheads, and other projects.

**Creativity** - Creativity is key to finding and leveraging funding sources with one another. The intent is to reduce the local share as low as possible while accomplishing the goals of the project. Consider as many options as you can identify. Then contact the funding agencies to determine whether or not your plan meets their requirements.

**Partnerships** – Partnerships will be critical to ensuring local capacity to implement this Plan. All municipalities and organizations should consider opportunities to partner with others as they move toward implementation of the Plan’s strategies. Partnerships can allow for the distribution of responsibility

for funding, management, operations, programming or maintenance of a specific project. Often times funding agencies look more favorably upon projects that are developed through partnerships than those of an individual entity.

## **Countywide Priorities**

A significant part of this planning process included a detailed inventory and analysis of parks and recreation facilities throughout the county. It is evident from this analysis that over the last fifteen years, significant emphasis has been put on improving local parks. The following describes three significant county-wide issues and makes recommendations for how to address each of them.

### **Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Providing recreation facilities that are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities act is more than just meeting the letter of the law. It is recognizing that a major segment of the population that uses parks and participates in recreation needs some type of accommodation that makes it easier for them to use these facilities and programs.

Ensuring accessibility to all facilities not only accommodates those with disabilities, but also makes it easier for the general public to use the facilities. All municipalities need to immediately take steps to provide accessibility for all park users.

Accessibility, in design terms, is described by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate in the mainstream of public life. To do so, the ADA sets requirements for facilities to prevent physical barriers that keep people with disabilities from participating.

Butler County municipalities should make it a priority to bring all recreational facilities into compliance with these standards. When recreational facilities are built or altered, they must comply with the ADA standards. This includes providing an accessible route to the area of use and to spectator areas. With regards to complying with ADA, the following standards must be taken into consideration.

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, enforced by the Department of Justice. Title II defines the requirements for providing accessible buildings, accessible routes, parking, playgrounds, drinking fountains, seating areas, and many other items associated with the recreation environment. Standards can be found at [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).
- Draft Final Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas, October 19, 2009, [www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov) sets minimum requirements for accessible trails, access routes, resting opportunities, benches, trash receptacles, and other outdoor recreation opportunities. To date these guidelines have not been incorporated in the Department of Justice accessibility standards and are, therefore, not enforceable.
- American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) “Standard Specification for Determination of Accessibility of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment” (ASTM F 1951) - defines minimum requirements for accessible protective surfacing materials.

The inventory of local parks that is found in the appendices of this report identifies ADA compliance or non-compliance for all facilities in each park. Many parks have some compliant facilities but very few are in complete compliance.

The ultimate responsibility for compliance with ADA standards lies with the municipality or property owner. However, Butler County Parks and Recreation Department has set a precedent in recent years in

providing technical assistance to local municipalities concerning ADA issues. It is the recommendation of the Plan that the County should work together with local municipalities in bringing all parks into compliance.

### **Implementation Strategies**

Each municipality should:

1. Review the inventory provided to determine the level of compliance.
2. Work with its municipal engineer or park planning consultant to determine how to bring facilities into compliance.
3. Consult the County parks and Recreation Department or a parks and recreation consultant to develop a plan and identify potential funding sources for corrective action.
4. Bring all facilities into compliance.

**Estimated Costs** – This will vary greatly among municipalities and with each facility. Costs could be a few hundred dollars or may reach into the tens of thousands depending on the upgrades that are needed.

### **Playground Safety**

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), an estimated 200,000 injuries that require some type of medical care occur each year on public playgrounds across the US. While the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania does not have mandatory laws governing playground safety, the CPSC and the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) have established voluntary standards that have been generally accepted around the globe. National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) through the National Playground Safety Institute (NPSI) works to ensure that communities are constructing and maintaining safe public playgrounds. As part of its commitment to playground safety, NRPA in conjunction with the NPSI provides playground inspector training and certification.

National Playground Safety Inspectors help communities to ensure compliance with these CPSC, ASTM, and other playground safety standards.

Many Butler County municipalities have constructed new playgrounds in recent years that should be compliant with current playground safety standards. However, just because equipment is new doesn't mean that it is compliant.

### **Implementation Strategies**

Each municipality should:

1. Contract with a Certified Playground Safety Inspector to complete an inspection of all municipally owned playgrounds. The cost of inspection and making a playground safe will certainly be more cost effective than paying the liability costs if someone is injured on your playground.  
**Estimated Cost** - \$1,000 - \$10,000 per municipality, depending on the number, age, and type of the municipality's playgrounds.
2. Make the recommended modifications as identified by the Certified Playground Safety Inspector.  
**Estimated Cost** – this will vary according to the required upgrades that are needed.

The Butler County Parks and Recreation Department can assist in identifying a Certified Playground Safety Inspector. It can also help with recommendations for replacement of equipment.

### **Regional Facility Needs and Deficiencies**

During the public participation process a number of regional recreation needs were identified. They are identified in the box on this page.

In addition to those needs, a number of facility deficiencies were identified in each of the regions. Specific recommendations are made in each of the regional analyses on pages 38-55 of this report.

### **Implementation of Local Recreation Plans**

Over the past ten to twelve years, numerous communities throughout the County have completed a variety of recreation plans. The plans include comprehensive recreation, park, and opens space plans; master site plans; swimming pool and trail feasibility studies; greenway and bicycle/pedestrian plans; watershed plans; and peer studies. Together, these have laid a wide-ranging scope for recreation, parks, and open space throughout the county. The implementation and fulfillment of these plans will unquestionably provide considerable benefit to county residents and visitors alike.

While the county recreation plans are useful in looking at the broader scope of parks, recreation, and open space in the county, the municipal plans go to the heart of what serves local residents. The local plans should be used as the detailed implementation strategies for addressing community priorities.

These County Recreation Plans should not be used to supersede any local plan but rather to support and enhance them.

## **Key Regional Needs**

### **Region 1**

- Pedestrian and bike trails
- Regional assistance from the County
- County to provide guide books for native species plantings, habitat protection, best practices in parks, botanical upgrades for parks
- North Country Trail completion

### **Region 3**

- Alameda Park bike trails reconstruction and protection
- Eliminate logging in parks
- Develop inter-municipal partners for trail planning and development
- Connect the Butler Freeport Trail and the North Country Trail

### **Region 4**

- Disc Golf Course
- Rectangular fields in the Adams Township/Mars area
- Rail corridor trails

### **Region 5**

- Retain Glade Run Lake as a major recreation facility in the region
- Set aside and protect tracts of land with limited development

## FEATURE PROJECTS

Through the planning process, six projects from across the County seem to evolve as ones that would become high priorities for implementation. These are described on the following pages. All are seen as high priorities and are not listed in any particular order. Implementation of each of these will be accomplished by the project's respective municipality or organization. While these are recommendations of the County Plan, the local communities and organizations should not expect that these are to be County projects. The County's role will vary among projects. The focus, the work, the funding, and ultimately the benefit belong to the respective community or organization.

### *Slippery Rock Parks and Recreation Development*

The Slippery Rock Region has long been known for its parks and recreation. Through a partnership of the Slippery Rock School District, Slippery Rock Borough and Township, a host of community recreation needs are being met. While the borough park and school district sites provide most of the recreation facilities, participants come from numerous surrounding municipalities to take advantage of the programs and facilities.

The Slippery Rock Parks and Recreation Commission is one of just three full-time recreation departments in Butler County.

The region, comprised of Slippery Rock Borough and Township, West Liberty Borough, Worth and Brady Townships, has recently completed a multi-municipal Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan that describes what the future of parks and recreation will look like and how they will move in that direction. As a complement to that Plan, Slippery Rock Borough and Brady Township completed Master Site Plans for their respective parks.

While it remains among the rural regions of the county, population data shows that it will grow by as much as 30% between 2010 and 2020. The recent planning efforts anticipate that growth and lay plans to meet the future demand.

**Implementation of these Plans will meet the needs of a large segment of the population in northwestern Butler County and should be a high priority for implementation.**



## North Country Trail Extension

Throughout the public input process, considerable interest was shown in completing the North Country Trail within Butler County. More specifically, the interest was in development of the trail as it comes from McConnell's Mill State Park in Lawrence County to Moraine State Park in Butler County.

As a result of this input, the Butler County Chapter of the North Country Trail Association partnered with Butler County to acquire funding and hire a consultant to complete a feasibility study for the specified section of the trail.

The Study results will define a recommended right-of-way corridor for the North Country Trail between McConnell's Mills State Park in Lawrence County and Moraine State Park in Butler County.

Currently, the corridor includes 7.67 miles within McConnells Mills State Park and 15.1 miles within Moraine State Park, with a 2.62 mile on road connection between the two parks. Finalizing a right-of-way between the two parks could provide over 25 miles of continuous trail.

Potential partners in development of the trail could include Butler County, Lawrence County, North Country Trail Association, DCNR, Moraine State Park, McConnells Mills State Park, and the Butler and Lawrence County Visitors Bureaus.

**The primary recommendation of this priority is to:**  
**1) complete the Feasibility Study that is currently underway, and 2) implement its recommendations of the study.**



## Alameda Park and Pool Upgrades

Alameda Park is the focal point of Butler County Parks and Recreation. It is certainly one of the feature facilities in the County. The park is rooted in history yet relevant for today. Among its most notable features are the Kid's Zone Purple Playground located at the entrance to the park, the extremely popular swimming pool that was ahead of the trends when the spray park was constructed in 1996, and the historic Carousel Shelter. These are complemented by a variety of picnic shelters, playgrounds, sport courts, trails, and much more. In recent years, the park has been noted for its attractive look, high quality maintenance, and continual upgrading of facilities. The County has set the bar high to meet the demands and expectations of its residents.



In order to maintain this level of distinction, the County Commissioners and Park Department included a Master Site Plan as part of this round of recreational planning. The plan calls for a host of upgrades that will ensure that the park remains as one of the best in the region. In the first phase of development, the mountain bike trails will be completely reconstructed to make them more challenging and sustainable, and the swimming pool will be upgraded to include additional play features; a dual water slide; enhanced restroom facilities; improved filtration and sanitation for cleaner, more sanitary water; and easier access.

Future phases of development include playground, road, and trail improvements; enhancements to the Carousel and Pine Shelters; development of the West Penn Trail; and improved walkways, restrooms, and shelters in the lower portion of the park. Longer term improvements suggest a new sport court and parking area above the swimming pool; development of a park lodge with new park offices at the entrance to the park; and construction of an environmental education center.

**These improvements should be a high priority as the County works to provide quality recreation opportunities for its residents.**



## Glade Run

Glade Run has the potential to once again be a major recreational and environmental asset in southeast Butler County. From 1955 to 2011 the Lake served as a top fishing and family fun location for thousands of visitors each year. In the spring of 2011, the PA Department of Environmental Protection declared it a high hazard dam, and the lake was completely drawn down.

In mid-August of the same year, a citizen's action group was formed to address local concerns of the now defunct Glade Run Lake. A series of grassroots activities by that group eventually led to the creation of Glade Run Lake Conservancy (GRLC). Since that time, the Conservancy has been actively involved in lobbying for the return of the lake by raising community awareness, promoting the cause of the lake's return, and soliciting funds.

They have garnered much community support through public meetings, presentations to elected officials, displaying at public events, holding community fundraisers, and much more. The Conservancy has communicated with state officials to share its concerns and to ensure it was meeting all required criteria for the reconstruction of the lake.

It appears its time and efforts have paid off. Its voice has been heard by local residents and municipalities; it has been heard across Butler County; and it has been heard in Harrisburg. Financial contributions have been received from some two hundred fifty businesses, organizations, governments, and individuals.

Successful completion of this project will bring back a major regional outdoor recreation facility in southeast Butler County.

**The recommendation of this Plan is that the Butler County Commissioners make a contribution of \$100,000 toward the project, and offer their encouragement and support of the project; and that efforts continue for complete reconstruction of the lake and recreation area.**



## **Adams Township Park Expansion and Improvements**

Adams Township continues to be one of the fastest growing areas of the County. In recent years, they have tried to stay ahead of the demand for recreation facilities by further developing the Township Community Park. As part of the upgrade, the Township acquired and developed an additional parcel of parkland located adjacent to the Township Park bringing the total size to 138 acres. Even with those expansions, they are still in need of additional parkland and recreational facilities.

The Township's Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan (2008) recommended the acquisition of two new park lands of eighty to two hundred acres each. It also recommended as a high priority the development of seven rectangular fields and six baseball/softball fields.

During the public input process of these County Plans, the sports field deficiencies were once again brought to light.

**Recreational development that is in line with the recommendations of the Adams Township Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan should continue to be a priority.**



## Cranberry Township

In 2012, Cranberry Township completed its own Comprehensive Recreation and Open Space Plan. It is a long-range comprehensive plan that lays the groundwork for the future of Cranberry Township's parks and open space and serves as a guide for growth over the next 20 years. The Plan is comprehensive in its view toward 2030 and beyond, while recognizing that much needs to be done to fulfill its vision.

Three primary goals were crafted to lead the implementation of the plan.

1. Maintain and improve the quality of life in Cranberry Township, as it relates to open space, leisure, and recreation.
2. Strengthen the position of Cranberry Township as a distinguished leader in the provision of a diverse and attractive park, recreation, and open space system.
3. Cultivate an appreciation and education of the outdoors and our natural environment.

From a County-wide perspective, it must be recognized that Cranberry Township has the largest municipal population in the County, the most progressive recreation program in the County, and the most comprehensive recreation facilities. With its growing populations and its propensity for good planning, Cranberry Township is poised to continue as a leader in providing municipal parks, recreation, and open space for the future.

**Implementation of the Township's Comprehensive Recreation and Open Space Plan as well as its Bicycle/Pedestrian should be a priority.**





# section III:

## *Greenways & Trails Plan*





# Chapter 5: greenways & trails

## WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

The term “Greenway” was first coined in the 19th century, and since that time greenways have been defined in many ways. Some people think of greenways as primarily recreational, namely trails for hiking, jogging, biking, or canoeing/kayaking (often called water trails or “blueways”). For them, greenways are places that offer opportunities to experience the outdoors.

For others, the purpose of greenways is primarily for conservation of undeveloped land containing important natural resources like forests, wetlands, and stream banks, along with the plants and animals that live there.

Still others see greenways in aesthetic terms, preserving the pastoral countryside setting in rural areas and protecting outstanding natural features, such as stream valleys, forested ridges, and sensitive habitats.

The movement to establish greenways was given a significant boost in 1987 when the President’s Commission on Americans Outdoors recommended that an interconnected greenways network be established throughout the nation.

Many states, including the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, accepted the task of promoting greenways. ***Pennsylvania’s Greenways – An Action Plan for Creating Connections*** was published in 2001. This report established a strategy for creating a comprehensive, statewide greenway network by the year 2020.

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) was created to oversee the Commonwealth’s greenways program. DCNR, in partnership with county and municipal officials, supports greenways planning and implementation through education, technical assistance, and grant-making programs.

Greenway concepts are embraced by the following all-encompassing definition, which is adapted from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Greenways Plan: ***Pennsylvania Greenways - An Action Plan for Creating Connections*** and is embraced by this Greenways Plan.

*A greenway is a corridor of open space, varying greatly in scale, and incorporating or linking diverse natural, cultural, and scenic resources. Some greenways are recreational corridors or scenic byways accommodating pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle traffic on both land and water; while others function almost exclusively for environmental protection and are not designed for human passage.*

## Support for Greenways in Butler County

According to the public input gathered as part of the planning process, the residents of Butler County certainly have strong feelings about the need for trails, protected open space, and greenways.

The public input process completed during this planning effort reveals that trails of all types ranked as one of the top needs in the County. Specific trail types identified included biking, hiking, mountain bike, cross country ski, equestrian, urban, shared-use, and ATV trails. There is also significant support for the development of an inter-connecting system of trails throughout the County.

The results of the county-wide recreation questionnaire show:

- 78% of the respondents ranked trails as important or very important to their family household.
- 79% say that hiking, biking, and walking trails are what attracts them to parks.
- Walking, hiking, and biking trails were

identified as the most used facilities, while water trails, hiking, and biking trails are among the five most requested additional facilities among the seventeen outdoor recreation facilities in the listed in the survey.

In the written comments of the questionnaire, various types of trails were cited over a hundred times as a specific need in the County. The Butler-Freeport Trail was identified as the fifth most used recreational facility in the County behind Moraine State Park, Alameda Park, Adams Township Park, and Cranberry Parks.

When asked in the questionnaire about facilities needed in Alameda Park, walking and hiking trails ranked as the highest needs at 57% and 52% respectively. Mountain bike trails in the park were a major topic at one of the public meetings.

A great deal of interest was shown in completing the North Country Trail as it passes through Butler County. The North Country Trail was a major topic of conversation at all of the public meetings held throughout the County. And, in fact, specific comments were made concerning development of North Country Trail as it comes from McConnell's Mill State Park in Lawrence County to Moraine State Park in Butler County.

The public meetings also presented comments about development of additional rail trails and completing the Butler-Freeport Trail by connecting it to Father Marinaro Park and connecting it to other recreational facilities in the County.

Many trails are located within greenways and open space that are set aside for conservation and recreational activities, so it is not surprising to find that Butler County residents support the protection of such lands.

In addressing the protection of Butler County's natural features in the questionnaire:

- 78.8% say it is important that the County develop an open space plan that will protect natural areas such as streams, fields, and woodlands.

- 72.3% say it is important for the County to protect open space and natural areas through acquisition of land.
- 67.7% say acquisition of linear greenways to connect natural open spaces and regional recreation facilities throughout the County is important to them.
- 69.6% support keeping natural vegetative buffers along stream corridors while 73.5% say it is important to make stream corridors available for recreational use.
- 79.1% say it is important to maintain forestland for ecological and recreational purposes.
- 69.7% say it is important to keep fields available as open space.

One specific site mentioned for conservation measures and recreational opportunities is Glade Run Lake. Residents believe the County should play a significant role in renewing and maintaining this natural feature.

### **How is a Greenway Plan Developed?**

For many, the term greenway evokes visions of recreational and outdoor pursuits. For others, the term greenway evokes concern over restrictions to development and the loss of property rights. Throughout the planning process, we have taken efforts to ease concerns; educate the public to confirm the truth; dispel myths; and build consensus by establishing defensible rationale for implementing a greenway network through Butler County.

### **Purpose of the Butler County Greenway Plan**

This plan examines various methods by which a greenway network can be achieved for Butler County. As the recommendations of this plan are implemented the proposed recommendations will take into account the desire to conserve the County's essential natural resources and, in turn, its unique character, while enhancing the quality of life for its residents. Further, implementation will create a network of connections between the diverse natural areas; various cultural, historic, and recreational resources; and local population

centers. These connections will help to preserve natural resources and open spaces while providing valuable recreation, transportation, and economic development opportunities for the region.

### *The Greenway Plan as a Decision-Making Tool*

The greenway plan serves as a flexible tool for making decisions regarding land and water-based recreation and transportation improvements as well as the conservation of natural, cultural, historic and scenic resources. By encompassing a variety of issues pertinent to these resources, the plan will lay the foundation for the continued success of open space conservation and an improved quality of life in Butler County. Specific policy details and greenway locations may be adjusted as needed throughout the planning process and during implementation.

Sound greenway planning includes an inventory and analysis of natural features, cultural and historic assets, and of open spaces such as parks or natural reserves; along with collaboration with local government agencies, private groups, and interested citizens to form policies for development and/or conservation. This multi-layered approach, involving Butler County and its decision makers, yields short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies for natural resource conservation and greenway development in harmony with future economic development initiatives.

## WHY CREATE A GREENWAY PLAN FOR BUTLER COUNTY?

Greenways provide many benefits to the county, local municipalities and their residents.

Greenway corridors are established to conserve forested areas, open space and habitat for wildlife, as meccas for hunting and fishing opportunities. Adjacent to rivers, streams, reservoirs and lakes, greenways may have multiple advantages such as habitat protection, flood control and drinking water protection. Similarly, corridors linking areas of farmland to open space help to preserve the rural landscapes and modest lifestyles. Many of these benefits are interrelated and work together to strengthen the quality of life for residents and visitors to the region.

For example, providing transportation alternatives in the form of trails, shared use paths, or safe routes to schools lead to better health and fitness. Similarly, developing and improving access to trails, preserving open space for hunting and fishing, and conserving historic and cultural resources supports economic prosperity by attracting visitors from inside and outside the region.

Butler County contains a diversity of environmental, cultural, and historic resources. Municipalities, counties, and regional partnership organizations

### Benefits of Greenways to Butler County

- Promotes restoration of land and water;
- Fosters public recreation, active living, and healthy lifestyles;
- Encourages a network of non-motorized land and water transportation corridors to connect people to our resources;
- Explores opportunities to expand motorized off-highway vehicle and snowmobile trails;
- Conserves natural, ecological and hydrologic infrastructure resources;
- Builds capacity at the local level for implementation and education;
- Encourages economic development;
- Promotes sustainable land development;
- Enhances the quality of life;
- Preserves rural scenic character.

can plan for the future of the region by promoting and conserving the resources, utilizing a green infrastructure planning approach. Further, greenways can connect our residents to our resources by expanding existing, and establishing new, recreation and transportation greenways throughout Butler County.

The process of establishing a greenway network in Butler County will not take away the rights of property owners, nor will it restrict development. Rather, a greenway network will promote sustainable development; reduce development costs; and reduce the burden on local, county, and state governments of providing public services.

Proposed greenway and trail corridors may only become a reality upon securing agreements for public access to the corridors with willing landowners. No land will be acquired from unwilling landowners. Final corridors and routes are subject to review, further analysis and approval of willing landowners.

### **Economic Benefits of Greenways**

In 2006, the Rails to Trails Conservancy published the “Pine Creek Rail Trail User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis”. The study concluded that trail users were having a measurable, positive impact in the communities along the Pine Creek Rail Trail corridor. Specifically, the report stated:

- It is estimated 125,000 users frequented the trail system within the Pine Creek Valley creating an estimated economic impact of roughly \$5.4 million.
- 86% of the respondents indicated they purchased “soft goods” (water, soda, candy, ice cream, lunches, etc.) on their most recent trail outing.
- 82% of the respondents indicated they had purchased “hard goods” (bikes, bike accessories, clothing, etc.) in the past year in conjunction with their use of the trail. The majority of these purchases were bicycles and bike supplies that resulted in an average expenditure of \$354. While these types of

purchases are not annually recurring they amount to millions of dollars in sales. As a destination trail many of these purchases do not take place in the Pine Creek Valley. However, considering nearly 86% of survey respondents are Pennsylvania residents, the trail has a dramatic impact on the state’s economy.

- The average purchase amount per person was \$30. Considering that the average user makes several trips to the trail on an annual basis, at the minimum these types of purchases are also contributing several million dollars to the economy of the Pine Creek Valley. And, these types of purchases are recurring year after year.
- As a destination trail, the Pine Creek Rail Trail user frequently has to stay overnight in the valley in conjunction with a visit. The survey respondents indicated that more than 57% of them spent an overnight stay in conjunction with a trail excursion. The most frequent type of accommodation was indicated as “Other” which in most cases was a vacation home or camp in the valley. Local motels/hotels (22.43%) were the second-most frequently indicated type of accommodation. On average the survey respondents spent 3.34 nights in overnight accommodations. The average expenditure on overnight accommodations was \$69.08.
- All of the business owners interviewed indicated that the trail had resulted in an increase in business. The businesses interviewed included hotels, restaurants and general stores. One business owner stated that trail users accounted for between 35 and 49% of his business.

This study, along with other similar studies including the Great Allegheny Passage 2008 Economic Impact Study, the Heritage Rail Trail County Park 2007 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis, the Trail Utilization Study, and others, confirms there are significant positive economic impacts associated with the development of these trails.

## Benefits to Residential Development

Greenways often encourage new residents to settle in a particular area. Young people and families are attracted to places that provide opportunities for easy access to outdoor recreation. Greenway trails provide such accessibility since they connect population centers to parks and other natural amenities. Furthermore, to cater to the needs of recreational users, new service businesses such as bike shops, canoe & kayak rentals, outdoor equipment stores, restaurants, campsites, and bed and breakfast establishments often spring up around recreational greenways. These new businesses bring new jobs and additional tax dollars to the host municipalities.

Proximity to open space increases property values, reduces environmental services costs, reduces medical costs through healthy living and creates job opportunities.

A study completed in 2010 by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, for a five county area in southeastern Pennsylvania, estimated the values of green space:

- \$16.3 billion in added value to the region's housing stock;
- \$240 million in annual property and transfer tax revenue for the local government;
- \$133 million in costs avoided as a result of the natural provision of environmental services;
- \$577 million in annual benefit for residents who recreate on protected open space;
- \$795 million in annually avoided medical costs as a result of recreation that takes place on protected open space; and
- 6,900 jobs created as a result of protected open space in the five county region.

Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, "The Economic Value of Protected Open Space in Southeastern Pennsylvania", 2010

## Recreation Benefits

Greenways offer opportunities for recreation, health, and fitness. Many studies have shown that as little as 30 minutes a day of moderate to intense exercise can improve a person's mental and physical health as well as prevent certain diseases. Studies also support the premise that Americans place a high priority on having trails and open space in their community for recreation purposes.

Greenways and trails:

- Support a wide variety of recreation uses;
- Provide for the restoration and interpretation of historic sites;
- Provide connectivity between rural areas and the main street centers;
- Connect visitors with the goods and services they desire;
- Enhance the quality of life for residents;
- Connect residents with the environment and our natural resources.

## Transportation Benefits

One quarter of all trips taken by Americans are under a mile, but 75% of those trips are done by car, and only one-third of school children who live less than a mile from school now walk to school.

Shared use trails (rail trails), sidewalks, bike lanes, and share the road bicycle routes encourage:

- The use of non-polluting transportation alternatives to the automobile for those short trips to work, school, or the local store;
- The use of non-consumptive transportation alternatives to expending fossil fuels;
- Reducing congestion;
- Improving air quality;
- Providing safe alternatives to residents;
- Providing cost savings in car and road maintenance;
- Enhancing quality of life.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics:

- The average pedestrian's trip for recreation purposes is 1.9 miles;
- The average pedestrian's trip for non-recreation purposes is 0.8 miles;
- The average bicyclist's trip for recreation purposes is 5.6 miles;
- The average bicyclist's trip for non-recreation purposes is 2.2 miles.

There are many opportunities to expand choices for alternate modes of transportation such as developing safe routes to schools and expanding the roadway network to include bicycle facilities.

## Health and Wellness Benefits

Trails and greenways create healthy recreation and transportation opportunities by providing people of all ages with attractive, safe, accessible, and low or no-cost places to cycle, walk, hike, jog, or skate. Trails help people of all ages incorporate exercise into their daily routines by connecting them with places they want or need to go. Communities that encourage physical activity by making use of the linear corridors can see a significant effect on public health and wellness.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Center for Disease Control has been tracking obesity rates in the United States since 1985. Between 1985 and today, there has been a dramatic increase in obesity in the United States.

- In 1990, among states participating in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, ten states had a prevalence of obesity less than 10% and no states had prevalence equal to or greater than 15%.
- By 1999, no state had prevalence less than 10%, eighteen states had a prevalence of obesity between 20-24%, and no state had prevalence equal to or greater than 25%.
- In 2010 no state had a prevalence of obesity less than 20%. Thirty-five states had a prevalence equal to or greater than 25%; twelve of these states had a prevalence of obesity equal to or greater than 30%.

The Rails to Trails Conservancy's fact sheet "Health and Wellness Benefits," provides the following facts on how greenways and trails benefit health and wellness.

- In addition to helping control weight, opportunities for physical activity help to: 1) prevent heart disease, 2) help control cholesterol levels and diabetes, 3) slow bone loss associated with advancing

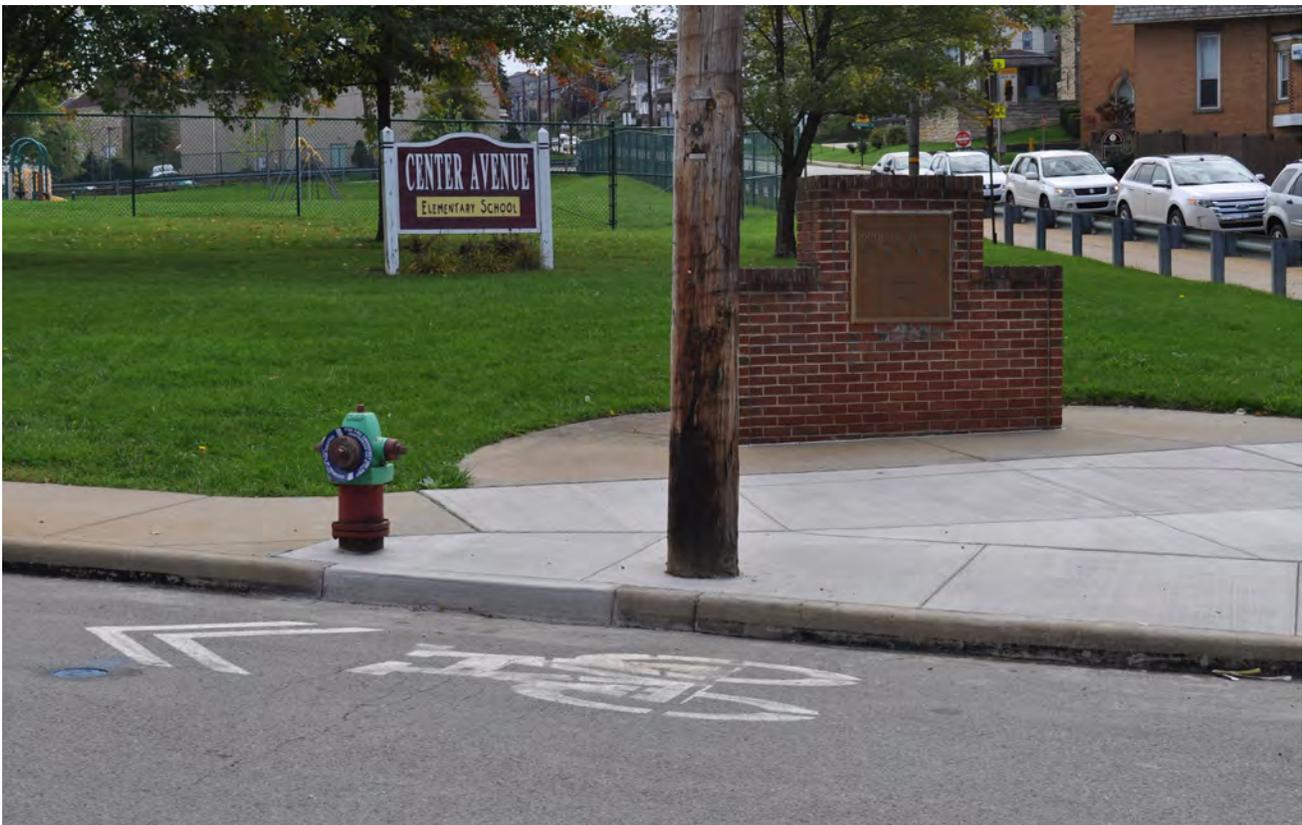
age, 4) lower the risk of certain cancers, and 5) help reduce anxiety and depression. The power of physical activity to improve mood and prevent disabilities and chronic diseases is especially pronounced for older adults.

- Trails connect people with places, enabling them to walk or cycle to visit parks, go to the store or commute to work. A majority of the daily trips people make are short, providing an opportunity for physical activity that can be built into the daily routine.
- Trails connect neighborhoods and schools so children can cycle or walk to their friends' homes or to school, especially in communities that lack sidewalks.
- Trails and greenways provide natural, scenic areas that cause people to actually want to be outside and be physically active.

Many studies conclude there are economic benefits associated with being physically fit. These benefits include:

- Lower medical costs, fewer insurance claims;
- Increased job productivity;
- Decreased absenteeism, depression, and job turnover;
- Prevention of disability.

Greenways and trails provide opportunities for maintaining a healthy lifestyle.



## Ecological Benefits

The ecological benefits of greenways are most likely the most unnoticed and some of the most important benefits provided to us. However, they generally are the least understood and valued. These ecological benefits are expensive to replace with constructed infrastructure to replicate their functions.

Ecological benefits of greenways include:

- Filtering stormwater as it returns to the aquifers;
- Absorbing contaminants of surface runoff;
- Storing stormwater runoff during large rain events;
- Cleansing and replenishing the air;
- Buffering the negative effects of development;
- Mitigating noise, water, thermal, and air pollution;
- Controlling property damage due to flooding;
- Conserving vital habitat corridors;
- Promoting plant and animal species diversity.

Probably the least understood and least quantified aspect of greenways is the impact of greenways on the economy. There are tourism dollars generated from residents and visitors to the region that otherwise would not be realized if it weren't for the natural resources that support them. These tourism dollars would be non-existent if the resources which create habitat, recreation opportunities, and Butler County's character did not exist.

The natural resources along Butler County's waterways cleanse water, provide for the temporary storage of flood waters, and provide ground water recharge zones. Without these resources in place, we would realize a significant cost in building additional infrastructure to replace these functions.

Further, the single aspect of temporarily storing floodwaters provides a major financial benefit by controlling property damage that may be caused by flooding. By eliminating these storage areas and increasing impermeable surfaces, the risk of flooding is increased, and an expense is incurred during development to mitigate their negative effects.

## PURPOSE OF THE GREENWAY PLAN

The Butler County Greenway Plan provides a blueprint for making decisions regarding greenway and trail development that will enhance the quality of life for residents of the County.

This Plan recommends establishing connections between the County’s diverse natural areas, its various cultural and historic resources, recreation opportunities, and local population centers. These connections will help to preserve the County’s natural systems and its unique character and quality of life, while realizing the benefits described earlier.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK

Building the framework of the greenway network began with laying out the natural systems greenways corridors. These corridors follow the most highly functional existing natural features within the County, such as forests, significant stream corridors, and wildlife habitat. Overlaying this natural systems backdrop, the plan adopts a “hubs and spokes’ approach to define recreation and transportation greenways.

*Pennsylvania’s greenways network will ultimately take the form of “hubs and spokes.” The “hubs” of the network will be the state’s parks, forests, game lands, lakes, and other destinations, including our towns. The “spokes” of the network will be greenways – connecting our natural areas and recreational and cultural destinations with the places where we live. The landscape connections that will result throughout Pennsylvania will create “green infrastructure” of open space vital to the health of Pennsylvania’s ecological systems and human communities.*

### **Pennsylvania’s Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections**

The “hubs”, sometimes called nodes, are the significant destination points such as potential trail towns and important recreation areas. The “spokes”, or corridors, will provide the links between them. In some areas, natural system corridors are distinct from recreational trails and in other areas they coexist.

Finally, because greenway elements such as streams, wildlife habitats, and some recreation and transportation trails do not terminate at the county’s boundaries, the greenways network proposes that recreation and transportation corridors continue outward and form connections to natural and recreational assets in neighboring counties and municipalities.

The concept for the Butler County greenway network is illustrated in the following diagram.



A detailed inventory and analysis was conducted as part of the greenway planning process for Butler County. Through this work, greenway corridors were identified and prioritized. This process resulted in a proposed greenway network for the Butler County consisting of Natural Systems Greenways and Recreation & Alternative Transportation Greenways.

# BUTLER COUNTY'S NATURAL SYSTEM GREENWAYS

As discussed in the Butler County Comprehensive Plan, the majority of Butler County is undeveloped wooded and agricultural land. The Comprehensive Plan also identified several attributes that provide opportunities for future land development within the county. One of these attributes is the County's natural features, also termed natural infrastructure. While it is inevitable that future development will occur, it is vital to properly plan and to preserve the existing natural infrastructure of the County in conjunction with development.

This plan provides recommendations for preserving the County's important natural infrastructure through development of Natural System Greenway corridors.

The first step in developing a Natural System Greenway Plan is to identify the location of what we term the existing High Quality Unique Natural Infrastructure of Butler County.

## **Defining High Quality Unique Natural Infrastructure**

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) defines Natural Infrastructure as the interconnected network of natural and undeveloped areas needed to maintain and support ecosystems. Natural Infrastructure provides a wide array of environmental, health and economic benefits such as mitigating climate change impacts and sustaining clean air and water.

High Quality Unique Natural Infrastructure (HQ-UNI) is a term utilized in this plan to identify the natural infrastructure within the county that serves the highest functions to the environment. The functions provided by these areas include anything from managing storm water and providing habitat to significant species to preserving landscape character.

While preserving all existing natural infrastructure would be ideal, the reality is that this cannot be done with today's ever developing landscape. So, by identifying the HQ-UNI and utilizing it to develop a Natural System Greenways Plan, the County can focus on preserving the natural infrastructure that serves the most functions to the environment, and thus the community at large.

## **Natural Infrastructure Inventory**

A complete understanding of the existing natural infrastructure of Butler County is essential to developing a Natural System Greenways plan.

### **The Building Blocks of Natural System Greenways**

The natural infrastructure resources utilized to develop this plan are termed "building blocks" herein because they set the foundation for the Natural System Greenways network. The following Building Blocks were identified and incorporated in the Natural System Greenways analysis.

- Lakes & Streams;
- Wetlands;
- Floodplains;
- Hydric Soils;
- Steep Slopes;
- Prime Agricultural Soils;
- Interior Forest Blocks;
- Important Bird Areas;
- Supporting Landscapes;
- Core Habitat Areas.

Each of these Building Blocks is further identified and described on the following pages.

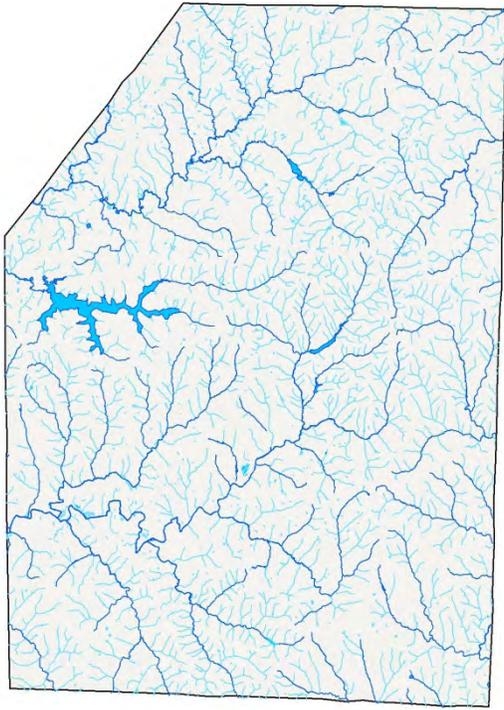


Figure 1 - Lakes & Streams

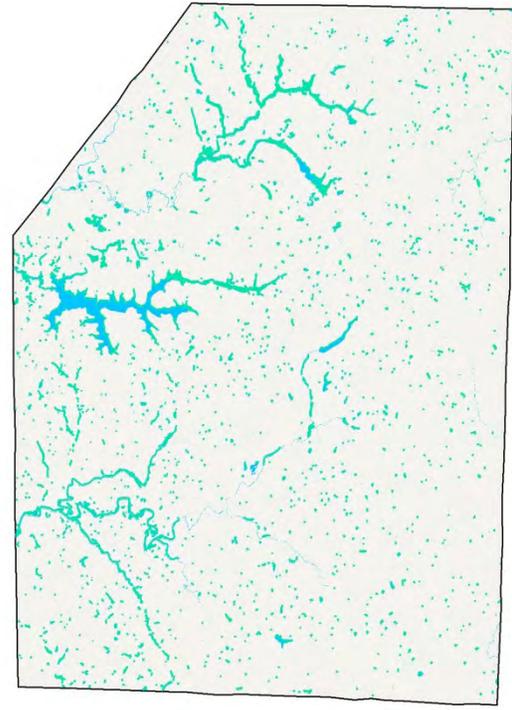


Figure 2 - Wetlands

### LAKES & STREAMS

Lakes are large bodies of water that provide important habitat for fish, wildlife, and migratory birds as well as providing value for recreational activities such as boating and fishing. Streams are natural bodies of flowing water which form fluid ecosystems.

Streams are natural channels of flowing water. As defined by the Environmental Protection Agency, “a stream begins at its headwaters and gathers water from runoff, rain, snow melt, or underground springs. Streams hold great importance regardless of size or flow. They provide water, a variety of aesthetic values, and are important wildlife habitats ([www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)).”

Butler County contains over 200 ponds, lakes and reservoirs within its boundary. These ponds, lakes, and reservoirs vary greatly in size from the smallest unnamed pond with an area of less than 0.1 acres, to the largest lake, Lake Arthur, in Moraine State Park with an area of approximately 3,225 acres.

### WETLANDS

Wetlands are transition areas between dry land and open water where the water table is usually at or near the surface. Wetlands serve many purposes to an ecosystem. They are home to thousands of wetland plants and animals as well as a source of food and nesting to birds.

In addition to sustaining habitat, wetlands are a necessary resource for the environment. Wetland soils absorb water from precipitation and their plants slow the water’s flow. These benefits enable wetland areas to hold and release water slowly into streams. Natural wetlands can also filter out chemicals and fertilizers that have been put on farms and lawns, or discharged from industries or other businesses.

The majority of the existing wetlands in the County are situated in the north central region along several stream corridors.

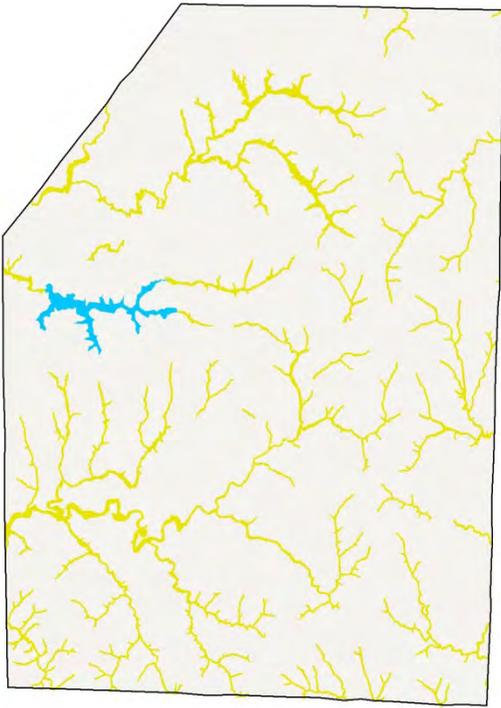


Figure 3 - Floodplains

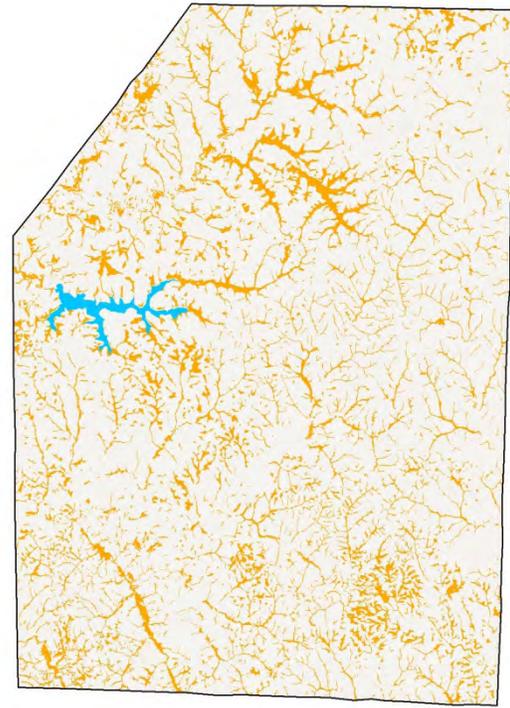


Figure 4 - Hydric Soils

### FLOODPLAINS

A floodplain is a low lying area adjacent to a stream, river, or lake that absorbs occasional overflow of water beyond the banks of those water bodies. Floodplains are important because they hold back storm flows and prevent destructive downstream flooding.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) delineates floodplains for the entire country through their floodplain management program. In Pennsylvania, the PA Code has regulations designed to encourage any planning and development occurring in a floodplain to be consistent with sound land use practices.

The steep slopes along Slippery Rock Creek and its tributaries are surrounded by wide floodplains in the north as are Connoquenessing Creek and its tributaries in the south. These are the most notable floodplain areas in the County.

### HYDRIC SOILS

Hydric soils are those soils that are sufficiently wet enough during the growing season to support the growth of wetland vegetation.

Hydric soils are designated by individual county soil surveys. The Butler County Conservation District provided a list of hydric soils for the County. It is generally recommended that development in and around hydric soils be avoided to preserve the public benefits that these soils provide.

Hydric Soils in Butler County include:

- Andover loam (AnA, AnB, AnC, AoB, AoC)
- Atkins silt loam (At)
- Brinkerton silt loam (BrA, BrB, BrC)
- Canadice silty clay loam (Cd)
- Fredon loam (FeB)
- Frenchtown silt loam (FrA)

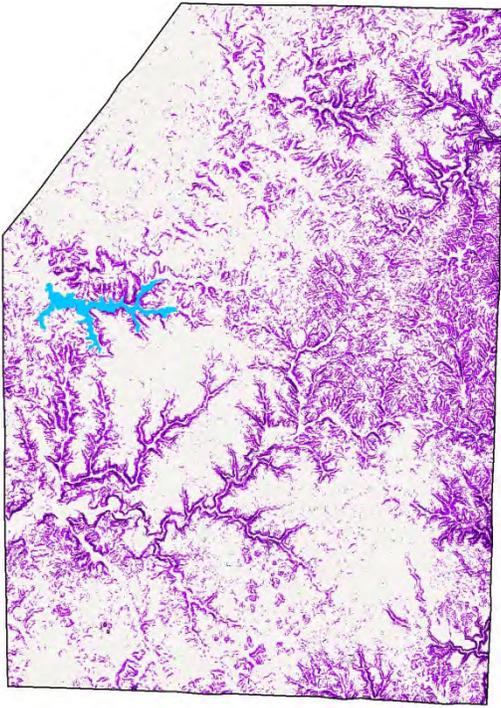


Figure 5 - Steep Slopes

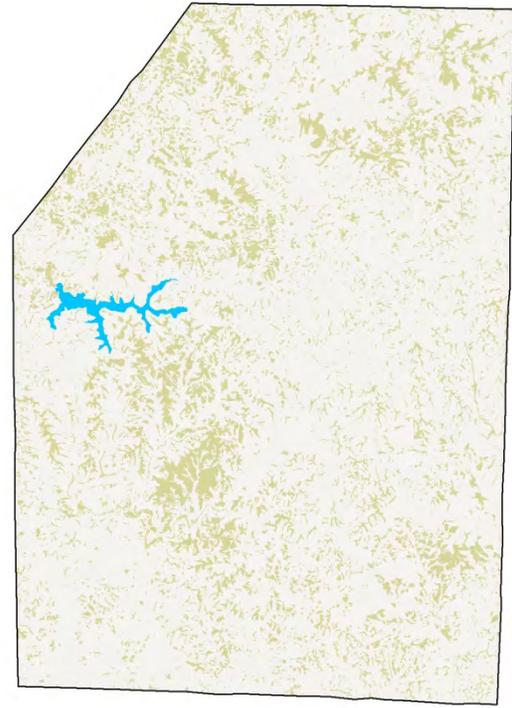


Figure 6 - Prime Agricultural Soils

### STEEP SLOPES

Steep slopes are generally defined as land with a slope angle of greater than 25%. For this plan, a second classification of slopes between 15% and 25% was added. These areas are typically considered environmentally sensitive and in need of protection.

Soils in areas with steep slopes are generally unstable which can result in landslides, causing safety concerns for communities. When disturbed, these unstable soils also create erosion and sedimentation problems which can lead to increased degradation of water quality downstream.

Steep slopes are features that are essential to the natural system because they contribute to open space networks, they typically connect forested areas to water resources (which aids in protection of water quality), they provide habitat and support vegetation, and they provide travel corridors for animal and avian species.

### PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS

Agricultural land provides more than food production and economic benefits. It is important because it provides a unique open field habitat that is not especially common in southwestern Pennsylvania. In addition to providing open space wildlife habitat, agricultural lands also provide water recharge zones, scenic character and landscape diversity.

Several animals, such as deer and field mice, as well as many species of birds rely on farmland for habitat. Additionally, rain and snowmelt seep back into the groundwater in agricultural areas instead of running off buildings and parking lots.

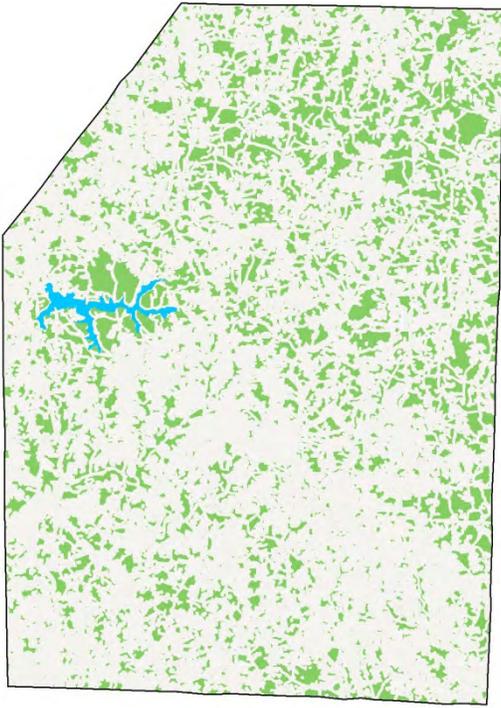


Figure 7 - Interior Forest Blocks

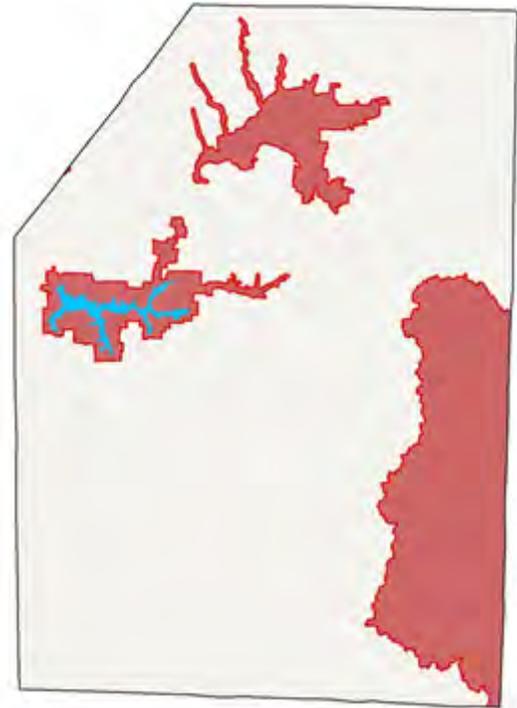


Figure 8 - Important Bird Areas

### INTERIOR FOREST BLOCKS

Contiguous forest blocks offer enhanced habitat value compared to forested areas that may be fragmented by roads or other land uses. Interior Forest areas are important because they provide habitat for plant and animal species that require the type of habitat that is isolated from other, non-forested areas.

Interior Forests are defined as forested land cover located at least 300 feet (approximately 100 meters) from non-forested land cover or primary, secondary, and local roads. Roads that are not wide enough to break the canopy of the forest are included in these areas.

Forest blocks should be maintained as much as possible to preserve habitat, protect water quality, and sustain migration flyways. Preservation of these areas must be considered relative to the economic interests of the forest products industry in Butler County.

### IMPORTANT BIRD AREAS

Important Bird Areas (IBA) have been designated by the Audubon Society in 3 locations within Butler County. To qualify as an Important Bird Area, sites must satisfy at least one of the following criteria.

The Site must support:

- Species of conservation concern (e.g. threatened and endangered species).
- Restricted-ranges species (species vulnerable because they are not widely distributed).
- Species vulnerable because populations are concentrated in one general habitat type or biome.
- Species, or groups of similar species (such as waterfowl or shorebirds), that are vulnerable because they occur at high densities due to their congregatory behavior.

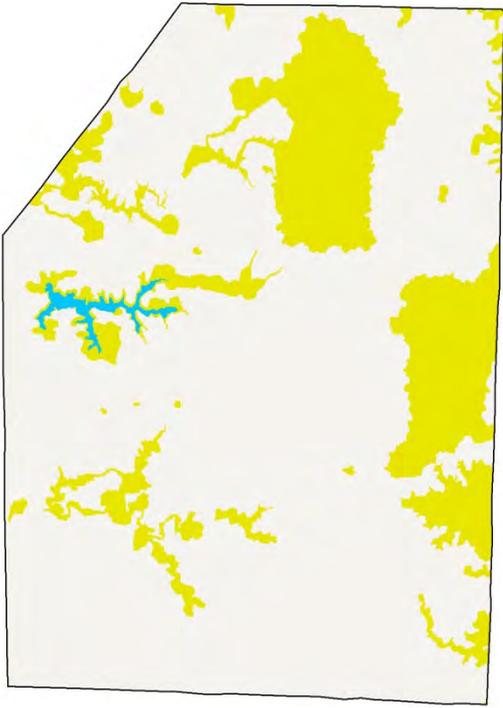


Figure 9 - Supporting Landscape

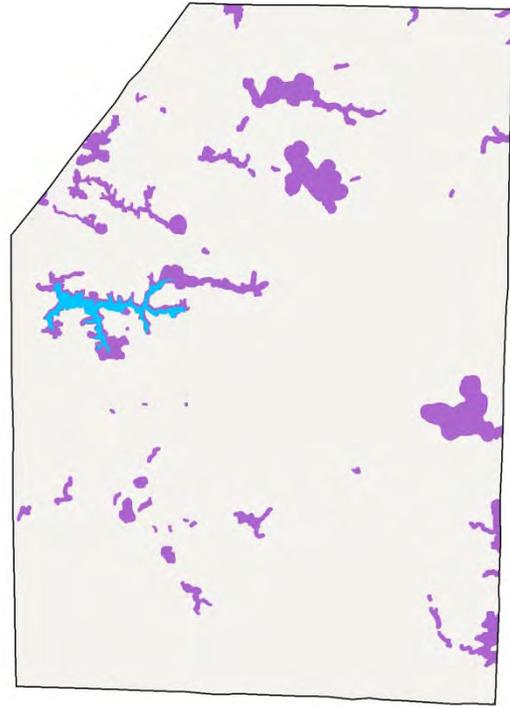


Figure 10 - Core Habitat Area

### SUPPORTING LANDSCAPE

The Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program identified seventy-two Biological Diversity Areas (BDAs) in Butler County. A BDA is an area containing: (1) one or more locations of plants, animals, or natural communities recognized as a state or federal species (or natural community) of concern; or (2) high quality examples of natural communities or areas supporting exceptional native diversity.

The BDA Supporting Landscape is the area surrounding the core habitat that is necessary to maintain vital ecological processes or secondary habitat that may be able to accommodate some types of lower level impacts. Activities within the Supporting Natural Landscape should be conducted with the needs of the Core Habitats in mind.

### CORE HABITAT AREA

The BDA Core Habitat areas are the essential habitat that cannot absorb significant levels of activity without substantial impact to the plants, animals, or unique natural communities of special concern contained within them. Core habitat areas house species of special concern, possess a high diversity of plants and animals native to the region, or contain rare or exemplary natural community (assemblage of plants and animals). They include the highest quality and least disturbed examples of relatively common types of communities.

## Natural Infrastructure Analysis

Each Building Block element was mapped individually, as shown above, and then all building blocks were overlaid on a map utilizing a Geographic Information System (GIS) process. (Figure 11)

### Natural Infrastructure Analysis

Map 1 - Building Blocks Overlay

#### Building Blocks

-  Streams
-  Lakes
-  Wetlands
-  Floodplains
-  Hydric Soils
-  Steep Slopes
-  Prime Agricultural Soils
-  Interior Forest Blocks
-  Important Bird Areas
-  Supporting Landscape
-  Core Habitat Area

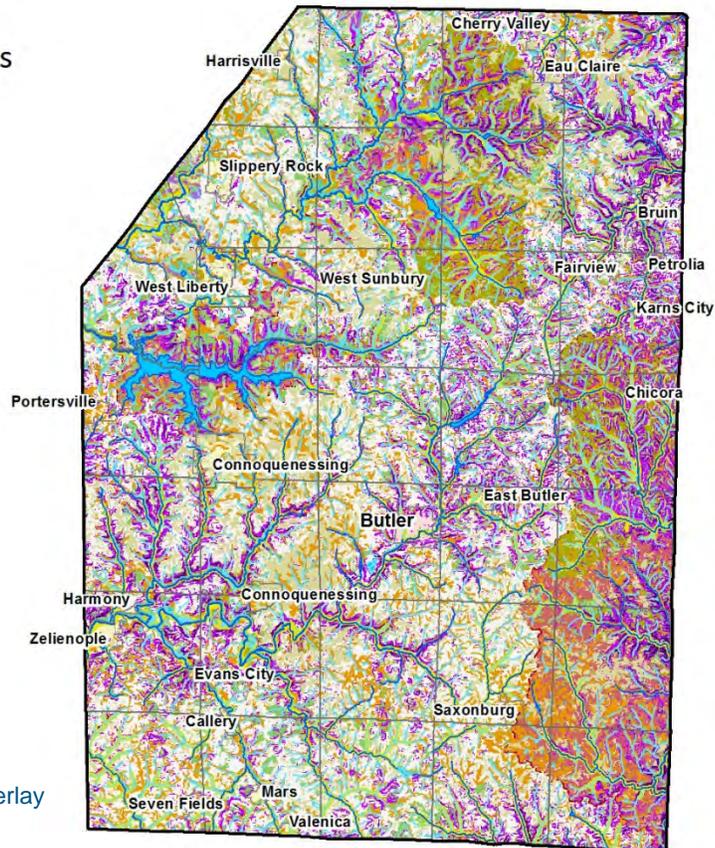


Figure 11 - Map 1: Building Blocks Overlay

The Natural Infrastructure analysis consisted of determining where two or more building blocks overlapped. To do this, a value of one (1) was assigned to each building block element creating a base line for a sensitivity level to be used for prioritizing the corridors at the end of the process. The entire county was then broken down into a 32 foot by 32 foot grid of cells in GIS Mapping software. Each building block map was then further analyzed.

Where a building block was situated within one of these grid cells, a value of one (1) was assigned to each corresponding cell. Each building block map was then overlaid on top of one another to analyze instances where two or more building blocks overlapped. In these areas, the associated values were added together to create a cumulative total for the resulting area. The more building blocks overlaid a cell, it resulted in a higher value for that cell.

Using GIS to calculate areas where building blocks overlaid one another resulted in cumulative values ranging from zero to eight, with eight representing the areas with the most HQ-UNI within the County and zero representing areas with no presence of any of the building blocks.

The map below details the cumulative values of the building block analysis outcome. (Figure 12)

## Natural Infrastructure Analysis

Map 2 - Analysis Return

### Cumulative Values

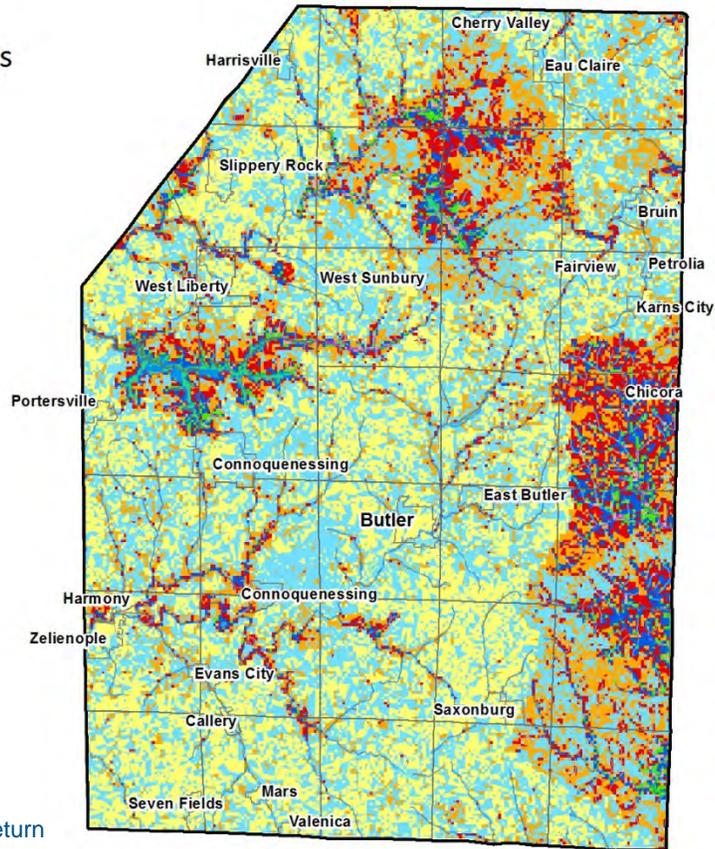
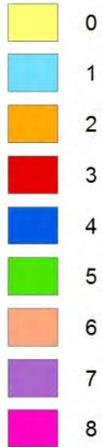


Figure 12 - Map 2: Analysis Return

The next step in the analysis after calculating the cumulative values for the building blocks entailed grouping the results into three categories. The Natural Breaks classification system was utilized to group the identified HQ-UNI into three categories based on the cumulative total of the building block values. When using this classification method, the GIS system identifies clusters or concentrations of data and then places class breaks between those clusters.

The dispersion of values for the HQ-UNI was based on more than one hundred and twenty five thousand 32 foot by 32 foot grid cells that made up the Butler County analysis area. The majority of these cells had a cumulative value of four, while only 3,015 cells had a value of eight.

In order to ensure that only areas with HQ-UNI were incorporated within the Natural System Greenways network, any cells with a value ranging from zero to two were removed from the analysis. This guaranteed that only areas with at least two of the building blocks were included. Removing these values also transformed the proposed greenway network into more defined corridors, as can be seen on the map below. (Figure 13)

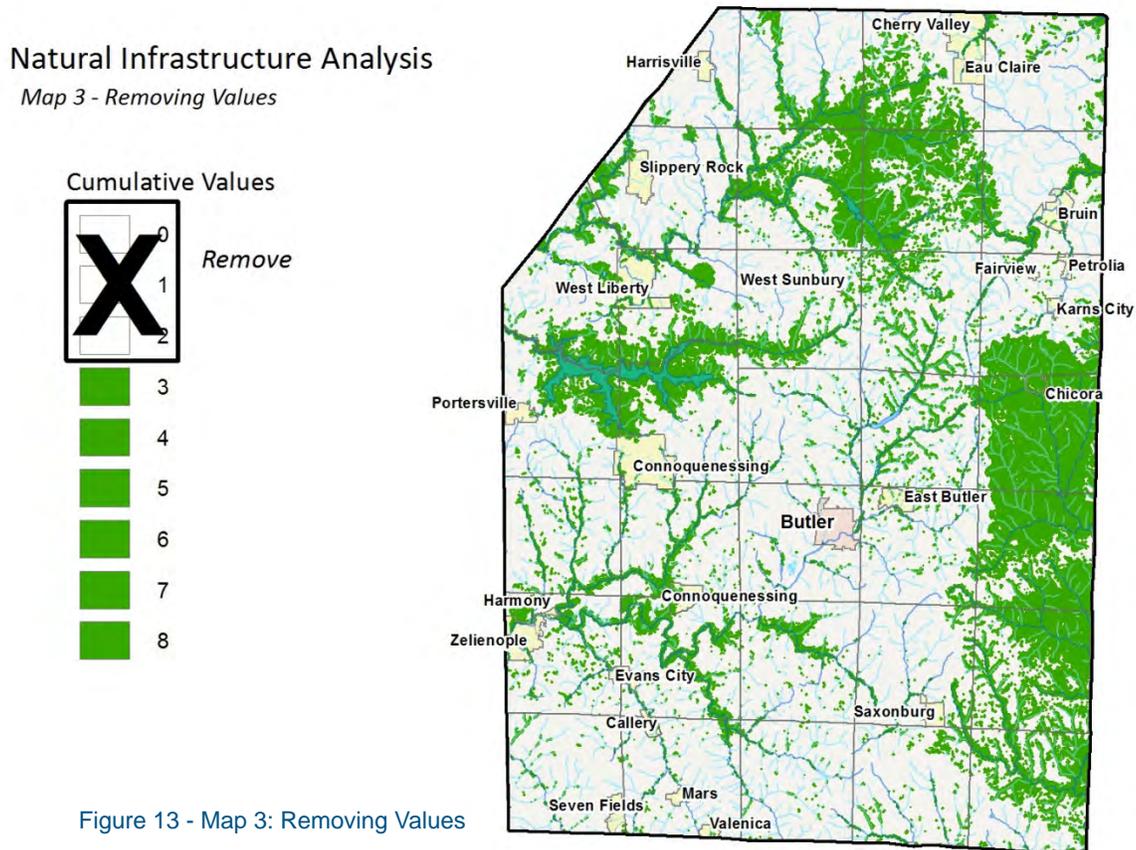


Figure 13 - Map 3: Removing Values

The natural breaks groups broke down as: Group #1 includes value three; Group #2 includes value four; and Group #3 includes values five through eight. Group #1 are areas of high value HQ-UNI, Group #2 are areas of significant value HQ-UNI, and Group #3 are areas of exceptional value HQ-UNI. This classification system enables the County to prioritize areas within the Natural System Greenway network for future planning and development work.

Notable areas of Exceptional Value were found along Slippery Rock Creek, South Branch Slippery Rock Creek, Wolf Creek, Muddy Creek/Lake Arthur, Buffalo Creek and its tributaries, Rough Run, and Little Buffalo Creek. While there are other areas with exceptional value rating, these areas have the highest concentration of exceptional value grid cells. (Figure 14)

Once the Natural System Greenways network was established, the next step was to name each of the corridors and prioritize them. This was done by using the watershed boundaries within Butler County to break the network into individual greenways. The greenways were named using the watershed name that made up the main stem of the respective greenway corridor.

### Natural Infrastructure Analysis

Map 4 - Classifying Values

#### Classified Network

- High
- Significant
- Exceptional

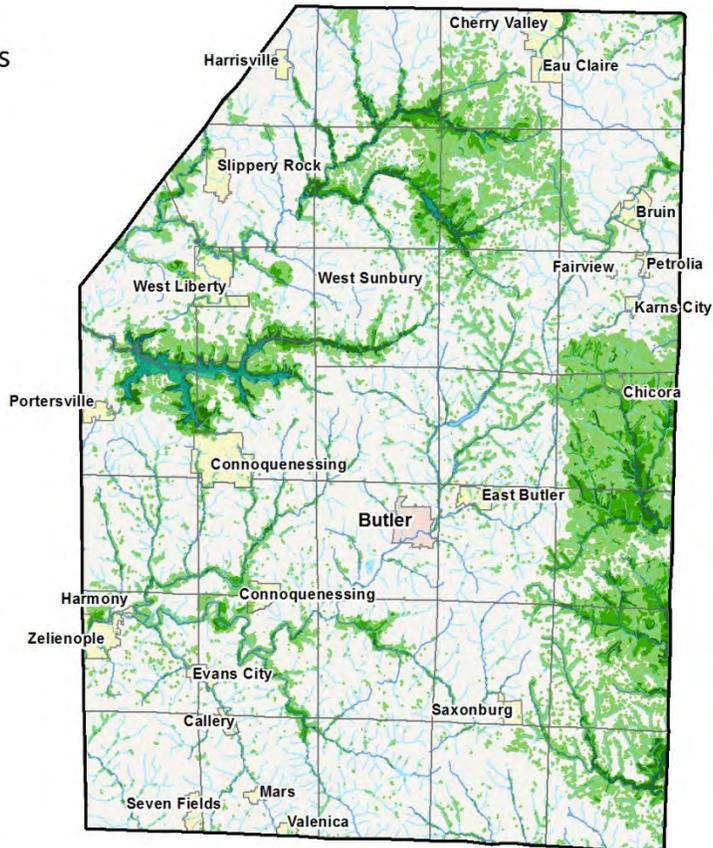


Figure 14 - Map 4: Classifying Values

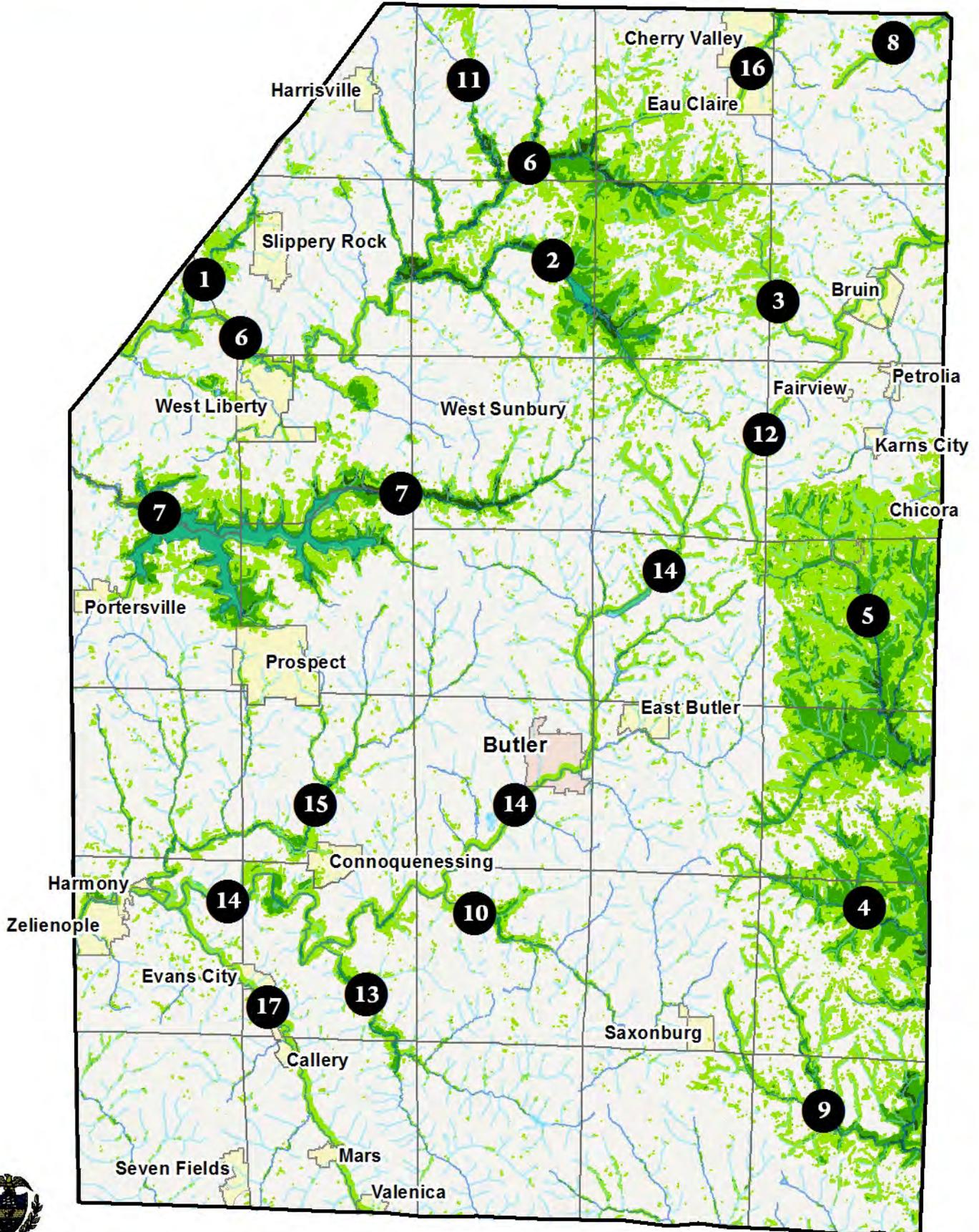
Utilizing these watershed boundaries, the greenway network was divided into seventeen individual Natural System Greenways corridors. To prioritize these greenways the total value of all cells within each corridor was divided by the total acreage of the corridor, resulting in a sensitivity score or rating. This sensitivity rating was then used to rank the corridors across the county in an evenly distributed manner so that the size of the greenway corridor did not affect the final ranking system.

The resulting rank of the corridors can be seen in the table below. (Figure 15)

	Rank	Greenway Name	Acres	Building Block Total	Sensitivity Rating
<b>EXCEPTIONAL</b>	1	Wolf Creek	1,074	1,778	60.40
	2	South Branch Slippery Rock Creek	7,056	11,758	60.01
	3	Silver Creek	1,221	2,157	56.61
	4	Rough Run	7,916	14,287	55.41
	5	Buffalo Creek	18,830	34,973	53.84
	6	Slippery Rock Creek	11,118	21,993	50.55
<b>SIGNIFICANT</b>	7	Muddy Creek/Lake Arthur	11,983	26,415	45.36
	8	Lowrey Run	223	499	44.69
	9	Little Buffalo Creek	4,962	14,240	34.85
	10	Thorn Creek	897	2,578	34.79
	11	North Branch Slippery Rock Creek	723	2,084	34.69
	12	Bear Creek	750	2,172	34.53
<b>HIGH</b>	13	Glade Run	845	3,313	25.51
	14	Connoquenessing Creek	3,549	14,504	24.47
	15	Little Connoquenessing Creek	1,846	7,670	24.07
	16	South Fork Scrubgrass Creek	157	715	21.96
	17	Breakneck Creek	276	1,443	19.13

In addition to separating and ranking each greenway, it's important to know the impact area and make up of each corridor. The following tables detail the municipality each corridor is in, the watersheds that are impacted by each corridor, and any special features or notable places within the corridors.

The ranking and other information provided for the Natural System Greenway corridors is intended to enable the County, local municipalities, watershed organizations, and other interested parties to focus on priority areas when seeking properties to target for land conservation. The information provides the opportunity for protecting the most unique natural infrastructure within the County. While the highest ranked priority areas defined by this study are recommended as the first target areas, any opportunity within the County should be pursued if it becomes available, regardless of its priority ranking.



Rank	Greenway Name	Municipality	Watershed	Special Features
1	Wolf Creek	Township: Mercer, Slippery Rock, Worth Borough: Slippery Rock	Wolf Creek	Wolf Creek Narrows and Miller Woods conservation properties.
2	South Branch Slippery Rock Creek	Township: Cherry, Clay, Concord, Washington Borough: West Sunbury	South Branch Slippery Rock Creek, Christy Run, Findlay Run	The Glades - State Game Land 95 Important Bird Area.
3	Silver Creek	Township: Parker, Washington	Silver Creek	Upper Silver Creek and its tributaries are rated Exceptional Value and the lower section is rated High Quality Cold Water Fishery by the DEP.
4	Rough Run	Township: Clearfield, Jefferson, Summit, Winfield	Cornplanter Run, Long Run, North Branch Rough Run, Rough Run	Rough Run and its tributaries are High Quality Trout Stocked Fisheries. Buffalo Creek Valley Important Bird Area.
5	Buffalo Creek	Township: Clearfield, Donegal, Fairview, Oakland, Summit Borough: Chicora	Buffalo Creek, Buffalo Run, Little Buffalo Run	Buffalo Creek and its tributaries are rated High Quality Cold Water Fishery by the DEP. Buffalo Creek Valley Important Bird Area.
6	Slippery Rock Creek	Township: Brady, Cherry, Clay, Marion, Mercer, Slippery Rock, Venango, Washington, Worth Borough: West Liberty	Big Run, Black Run, Blacks Creek, Hogue Run, Long Run, McDonald Run, McMurray Run Creek, Seaton Creek, Slippery Rock Creek	The Glades - State Game Land 95 Important Bird Area and Moraine State Park & Jennings EEC Important Bird Area. Miller Esker conservation property.

EXCEPTIONAL

SIGNIFICANT

Rank	Greenway Name	Municipality	Watershed	Special Features
7	Muddy Creek/ Lake Arthur	Township: Brady, Center, Clay, Concord, Franklin, Muddy Creek, Worth Borough: Portersville, Prospect	Bear Run, Big Run, Muddy Creek, Shannon Run, Swamp Run	Moraine State Park and Lake Arthur. Muddy Creek and its tributaries are rated High Quality Cold Water Fishery by the DEP. Moraine State Park & Jennings EEC Important Bird Area
8	Lowrey Run Creek	Township: Allegheny	Lowrey Run Creek	
9	Little Buffalo Creek	Township: Buffalo, Clinton, Jefferson, Winfield Borough: Saxonburg	Buffalo Creek, Little Buffalo Creek, Sarver Run Watershed	Little Buffalo Creek and its tributaries are High Quality Trout Stocked Fisheries. Buffalo Creek Valley Important Bird Area.
10	Thorn Creek	Township: Butler, Clinton, Jefferson, Penn	Davis Run, Patterson Run, Robinson Run, Thorn Creek, Vaur Run	
11	North Branch Slippery Rock Creek	Township: Cherry, Marion	North Branch Slipper Rock Creek	The Glades - State Game Land 95 Important Bird Area.
12	Bear Creek	Township: Concord, Fairview, Parker, Borough: Bruin, Kams City, Petrolia	Bear Creek, South Branch Bear Creek	

Rank	Greenway Name	Municipality	Watershed	Special Features
13	Glade Run	Township: Adams, Clinton, Forward, Middlesex, Penn	Anderson Run, Glade Run, South Branch Glade Run	
14	Connoquenessing Creek	Township: Butler, Center, Clay, Clearfield, Concord, Connoquenessing, Donegal, Forward, Jackson, Lancaster, Oakland Township, Penn, Summit Borough: Connoquenessing, East Butler, Harmony, Zellenople City: Butler	Bonnie Creek, Butcher Run, Coal Run, Connoquenessing Creek, Glade Run, Hereford Manor Lake, Middle Connoquenessing, Muntz Run, Pine Run, Rocklick Run, Sawmill Run, Scholars Run, Thorn Creek, Upper Connoquenessing	The upper section of Connoquenessing Creek is rated High Quality Warm Water Fishery by the DEP. Connoquenessing Creek Nature Reserve is situated in Jackson Township near Zellenople.
15	Little Connoquenessing Creek	Township: Butler, Center, Connoquenessing, Franklin, Jackson, Lancaster, Muddy Creek Borough: Connoquenessing, Harmony, Prospect	Crab Run Creek, Crooked Run, Little Connoquenessing Creek, Little Yellow Creek, Mulligan Run Creek, Semicolon Run Creek, Yellow Creek	
16	South Fork Scrubgrass Creek	Township: Allegheny, Cherry Valley, Eau Claire	Carrs Run, South Fork Scrubgrass Creek	
17	Breakneck Creek	Township: Adams, Cranberry, Forward, Jackson Borough: Callery, Evans City, Mars, Valencia	Breakneck Creek, Brush Creek, Kauffman Run, Likens Run, Wolf Run	

HIGH



# RECREATION & ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION GREENWAYS

Recreational trails and alternative transportation routes are important to the Quality of Life, Health and Wellness, and the Environment of Butler County’s residents.

It is widely accepted that a long history of car-oriented community design has contributed to many of America’s health problems, especially obesity. Our communities are shaped by government policies, which in the past has lead to a sedentary lifestyle.

Therefore, initiatives and policy shifts are taking place to promote active lifestyles through the development of pedestrian and bicycle friendly communities. These initiatives include incorporating policies that promote health and wellness by providing walkable and bikeable communities that encourage a healthy lifestyle.

The goal is for physical activity to become an integral part of people’s daily routines, whether that means biking to work, walking to school, or hiking on a trail for pleasure.

## Level of Support for Trails within Butler County

The desire for active and healthy lifestyles is reflected in the responses to the survey conducted as part of this planning effort. As noted earlier, it revealed trails of all types ranked as one of the top needs within Butler County and its communities.

Specific trail types identified in the survey responses included:

- biking;
- hiking;
- mountain biking;
- cross country skiing;
- equestrian;
- urban;
- shared-use paths/rail-trails;
- ATV trails.

Butler County residents also showed significant support for developing an inter-connected system of trails throughout the County.

- 78% of the respondents ranked trails as important or very important to their family or household.
- 79% say that hiking, biking, and walking trails are what attracts them to parks.
- Walking, hiking, and biking trails were identified as the most used facilities, while water trails, hiking, and biking trails are among the five most requested additional facilities of the seventeen outdoor recreation facilities listed in the survey.

In written responses to the survey, these various types of trails were cited over a hundred times as specific needs in the County. The Butler-Freepport Trail was identified as the fifth most used recreational facility in the County behind Moraine State Park, Alameda County Park, and Adams Township and Cranberry Township Parks.

## Recreation and Alternative Transportation Inventory

A complete understanding of the existing recreation and alternative transportation opportunities is essential to developing an interconnected system of Recreation and Alternative Transportation Greenways.

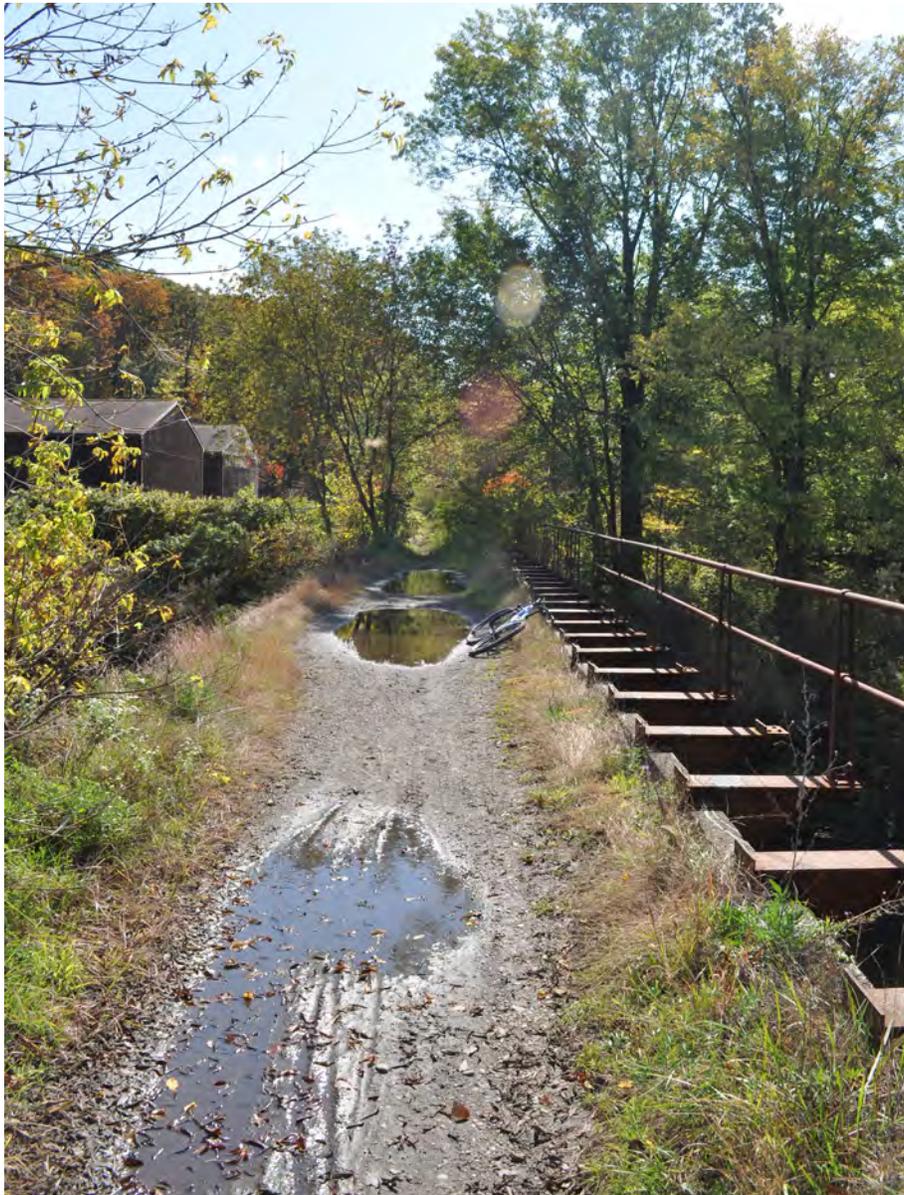
### The Building Blocks of Recreation and Transportation Greenways

The natural infrastructure resources analysis inventoried and analyzed “building blocks” and set the foundation for the Natural System Greenways network. Similarly, the recreation and transportation infrastructure “building blocks” were analyzed to determine their potential to achieve the goal of developing Recreation and Alternative Transportation Greenway corridors within Butler County.

Those building blocks include:

- Existing Shared Use Paths/Rail-Trails;
- Existing Hiking Trails;
- Existing Mountain Biking Trails;
- Existing Equestrian Trails;
- Existing On-Road Cycling Routes;
- Abandoned/Inactive/Former Railroad Corridors;
- Water Trail Opportunities;
- Trail/River Town Opportunities.

Each of these Building Blocks is described on the following pages.

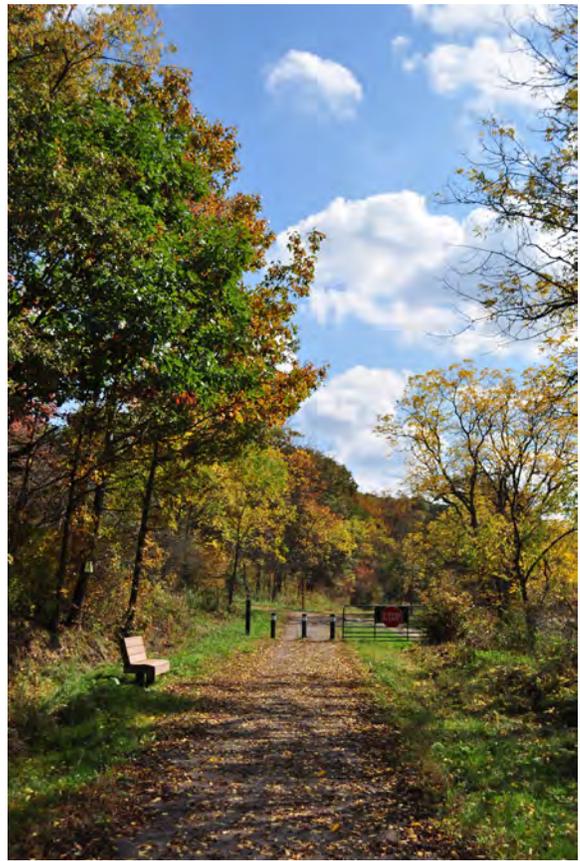


## EXISTING SHARED USE TRAILS

Shared-Use Trails are defined as pedestrian routes developed primarily for outdoor recreational purposes. These types of trails were designed for pedestrians and other users to experience the outdoors and may be used by a variety of users; they were not designed for transportation purposes.

### [Butler-Freeport Community Trail](#)

The Butler-Freeport Community Trail is a 21 mile rail-trail. This trail follows the former route of Butler County's first railroad (1871), the Western Pennsylvania Railroad, which connected the City of Butler to the Allegheny River at the port of Freeport. The trail offers a level, natural crushed limestone surface with a gradual uphill grade as it travels north and a downhill grade as it travels south. The trail is used by people of all ages and abilities for walking, jogging, hiking, bicycling, and cross-country skiing.



### [Moraine State Park Bike Trail](#)

Moraine State Park features a seven mile paved bike trail, which follows along the North Shore of Lake Arthur. This trail was completed in the summer of 2006. At various points along the trail, there are relatively short downgrades and curves, as this is not a rail-trail. The trail surface is still good for biking, as it is paved with asphalt for 7 miles. There is also a half mile of crushed stone towards the western end of the trail. Additionally, there is a bike rental building in the Northwest corner of the park at the trailhead.



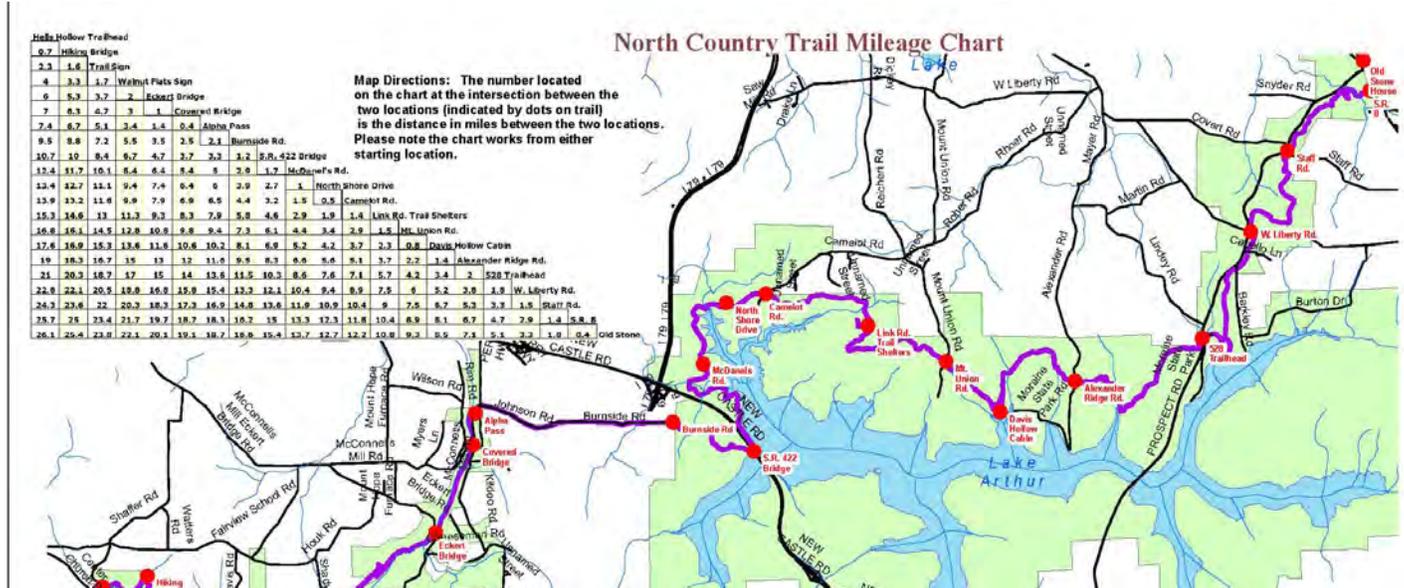
# Existing Hiking Trails

## North Country National Scenic Trail

The North Country Trail is America's longest National Scenic Trail stretching 4,600 miles from New York to North Dakota, linking seven states, ten National Forests and more than one hundred fifty public lands.



The sections maintained by the Butler Chapter pass through Moraine State Park, providing access to fifteen miles of trail along Lake Arthur and past the Davis Hollow Cabin (a project of the NCT) and connecting to Jennings Nature Reserve and the Old Stone House. To the North and East the trail passes through State Game Land 95, providing access to thirteen miles of trail rich in wild life from State Route 308 to Leonard Road. In the last section that approaches the Trail Town of Parker and the Allegheny River, there is the five mile section along the North Fork of Bear Creek, through Hemlock forest and across two special arched bridges.



## Moraine State Park Trails

Moraine State Park offers twenty-eight miles of hiking trails wandering through forests and grassy areas, along lake edges and past wetlands.

### South Shore Hiking Trails

- Sunken Garden Trail: 2.4 or 3.6 miles, when conditions permit, the trail is groomed for cross-country skiing in the winter.
- Hilltop Trail: 1 or 1.4 miles
- Pleasant Valley Trail: 1.9 miles, easiest hiking, yellow blazes

### North Shore Hiking Trails

- Five Points Trail: 1.3 miles
- Glacier Ridge Trail: 14.8 miles, Designated as part of the North Country National Scenic Trail, this trail extends 14 miles from the western end of Moraine State Park to Jennings Environmental Education Center.
- Wyggeston Trail: 1.5 to 4.6 miles

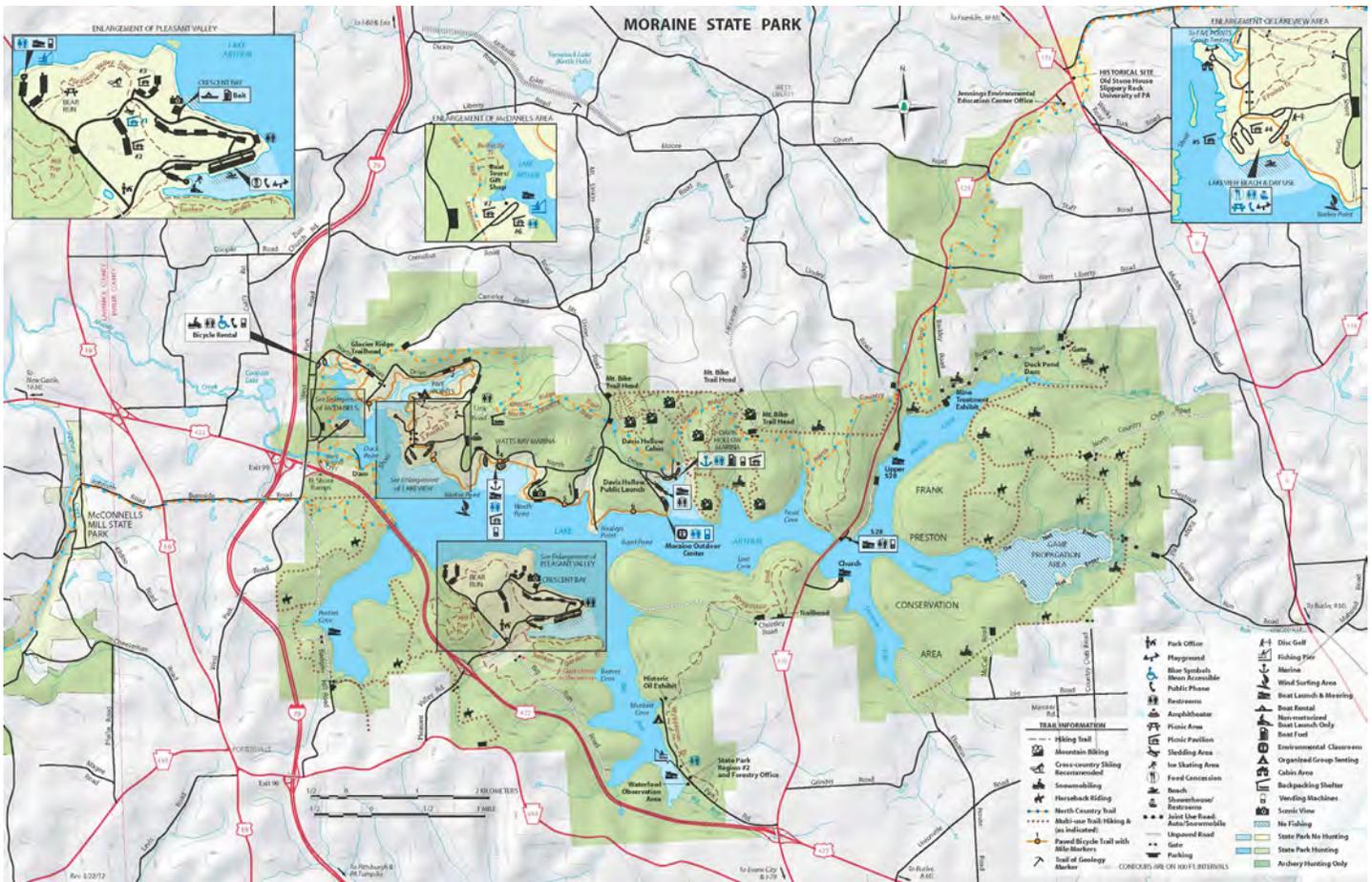
## Existing Mountain Bike & Equestrian Trails

### Existing Mountain Bike Trails

Moraine State Park offers six miles of mountain biking trails along the North Shore of Lake Arthur. Trailheads are located off of Mt. Union Road and Alexander Ridge Road.

### Equestrian Trails

Moraine State Park offers twenty miles of Horseback Riding in the southwest and east sides of the park. Riding is limited to designated trails and roadsides throughout the park.



## **Abandoned or Former Rail Corridors**

Greenways often take advantage of elements of the human-made, or built environment. A common example is abandoned rail lines being reborn as recreational trails. The following are brief descriptions of the abandoned rail lines in Butler County.

### **Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad (BLE)/Western Allegheny Railroad (WARR)**

This former rail corridor runs approximately twenty-one miles from the eastern edge of Lake Arthur in Moraine State Park east to the Allegheny River at Brady's Bend in Armstrong County.

### **Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad (BLE)**

This former rail corridor runs from Branchton, east of Slippery Rock near Route 8, through State Game Land Number 95 to Hilliards.

### **Pittsburgh, Harmony, Butler & New Castle Railway (PHBN)**

The Pittsburgh, Harmony, Butler & New Castle Railway, commonly known as the Harmony Line, was a broad gauge interurban streetcar line connecting Pittsburgh to Butler and New Castle via Harmony and a split in Evans City. The final trolleys ran on August 15, 1931.

### **Pittsburgh, Mars & Butler Railway (PMB)**

The Pittsburgh, Mars and Butler Railway was originally known as the Pittsburgh and Butler Street Railway. It was opened in 1907 between Pittsburgh and Butler traveling via Etna, Glenshaw, Allison Park, and Mars. In 1917 the railway amalgamated with the Pittsburgh, Harmony, Butler and New Castle Railway, the new company being named the Pittsburgh, Mars & Butler Railway.

### **Winfield Railroad (WNF)**

This former rail corridor runs from the Butler Freeport Trail north along Little Buffalo Creek to West Winfield via Boggsville in Armstrong County.

### **Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (BO)/Pittsburgh & Western Railroad (P&W)**

From Callery to Butler.



## Existing Cycling Routes

Throughout Butler County you can find miles upon miles of back roads suitable for cycling. There is only one major cycling route currently designated through the county and that is BicyclePA Route A.

### Bicycle PA Route A

Bicycle PA Route A stretches 199 miles from Erie to Greene County just north of Morgantown, West Virginia. The northern half is generally flat while the southern half is gently rolling to hilly. The northern terminus connects to Bicycle PA Route Z and the Seaway Trail.

In Butler County the route enters from the north on Route 19 traveling south to Portersville where it heads west on Route 488, West Portersville Road, and enters Lawrence County.

### Western Pennsylvania Wheelmen Routes

The Western Pennsylvania Wheelmen is a Pittsburgh based cycling club founded in 1969. It is one of the largest bicycle clubs in Pennsylvania with over 1,000 individual and family memberships. The Wheelmen have several established routes that they ride throughout Butler County.

### Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission Bicycle Suitability Mapping

SPC's transportation planners have undertaken a project to evaluate the cycling conditions of the regional state highway network. Based on the evaluation of a combination of traffic volumes, roadway geometry, and field observations, maps are periodically being created that can be used as a reference tool by cyclists and cycling commuters.

These maps indicate the roadways as being either (1) above average, (2) average or (3) below average for cycling, as well as other features relevant to cyclists such as significant hills, trails, park-n-ride lots, and bicycle parking. These maps are intended to connect with and build out from the existing bicycle network in the City of Pittsburgh being established by the non-profit bicycle advocacy organization Bike Pittsburgh.

Note: The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) and the individuals that contributed to the development of the bicycle suitability maps assume no liability for the safety of cyclists using these roadways.

### Bike Shops

Bike shops typically offer more than the sale of bikes many of them also offer group rides and maps of local cycling routes and trails. The bike shops in Butler County include:

- Dapper Bicycles, Zelienople
- Rapp's Bicycle Center, Butler
- Butler Bicycles, Butler
- Sedona Bicycles, Seven Fields
- Spokehouse Bike Rental, Portersville
- Trek Bicycle Shop, Cranberry

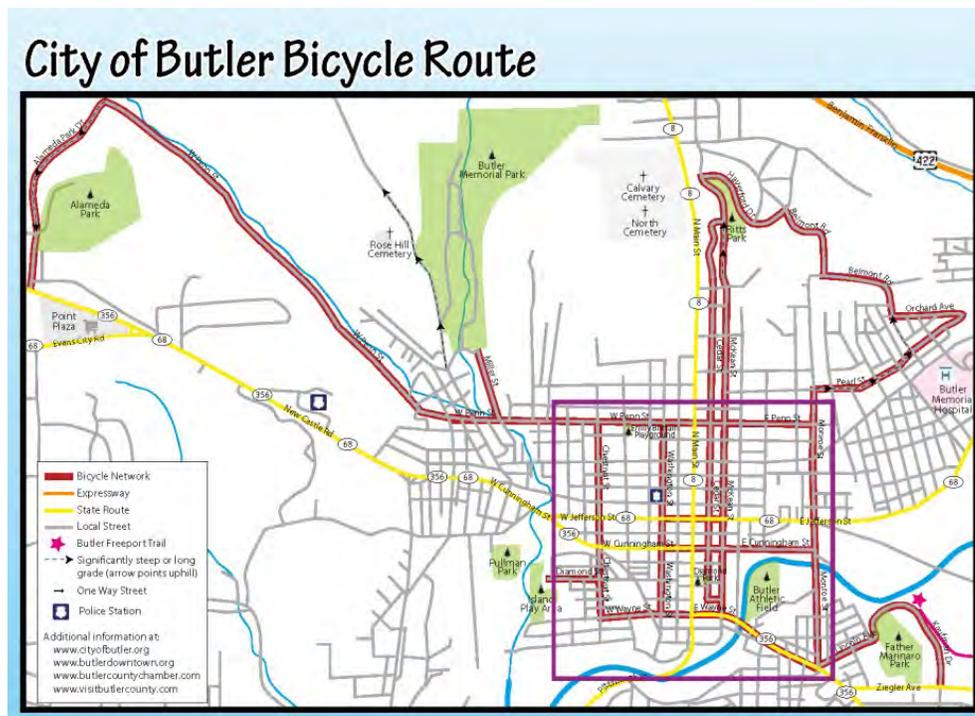


## City of Butler Bicycle Network

The City of Butler worked with the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC) and the Butler Bicycle Commission to develop and implement a bicycle network in the City. The routes throughout Butler are clearly marked with directional and way-finding signage and sharrow (shared roadway) pavement markings. In addition to providing a safe bicycle route through the City, the network also connects the City center to Father Marinaro Park, and the Butler-Freeport Trail, as well as to Butler Memorial Park and Alameda Park.

Recommendations for Bicycle and Pedestrian infrastructure in and around the City of Butler:

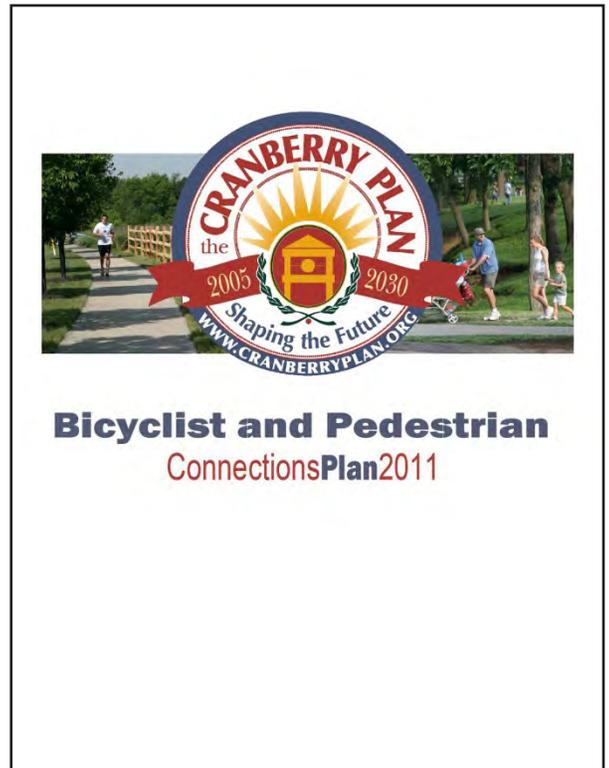
1. Maintain and upgrade the existing bicycle network in the City of Butler;
2. Work to transform one of the existing sharrow bicycle routes to a dedicated bike lane;
3. Explore feasibility of transforming a route between the Butler-Freeport Trail and Alameda Park into a buffered bike lane or cycle track to provide a safer route, separated from motorized traffic, between these two regional facilities.
4. Explore the feasibility of connecting the City's bicycle network to surrounding communities and neighborhoods to provide active transportation options for residents of Butler County.
5. Complete a Bicycle and Pedestrian or Active Transportation Plan for the City of Butler focused on Pedestrian and Bicycle safety.
6. Complete Safe Routes to School Study for the City of Butler.
7. Explore the feasibility of developing a safe /dedicated on road cycling route connecting the City of Butler to Moraine State Park.



## Cranberry Township Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections Plan

Cranberry Township adopted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections Plan in 2010. The resolution requires the installation of sidewalks and pedestrian connections as part of all land development in the Township. Additionally, the resolution promotes the Township aggressively seek opportunities to construct sidewalks and bikeways as part of roadway construction and maintenance projects to fill missing links in the pedestrian and bicycle network.

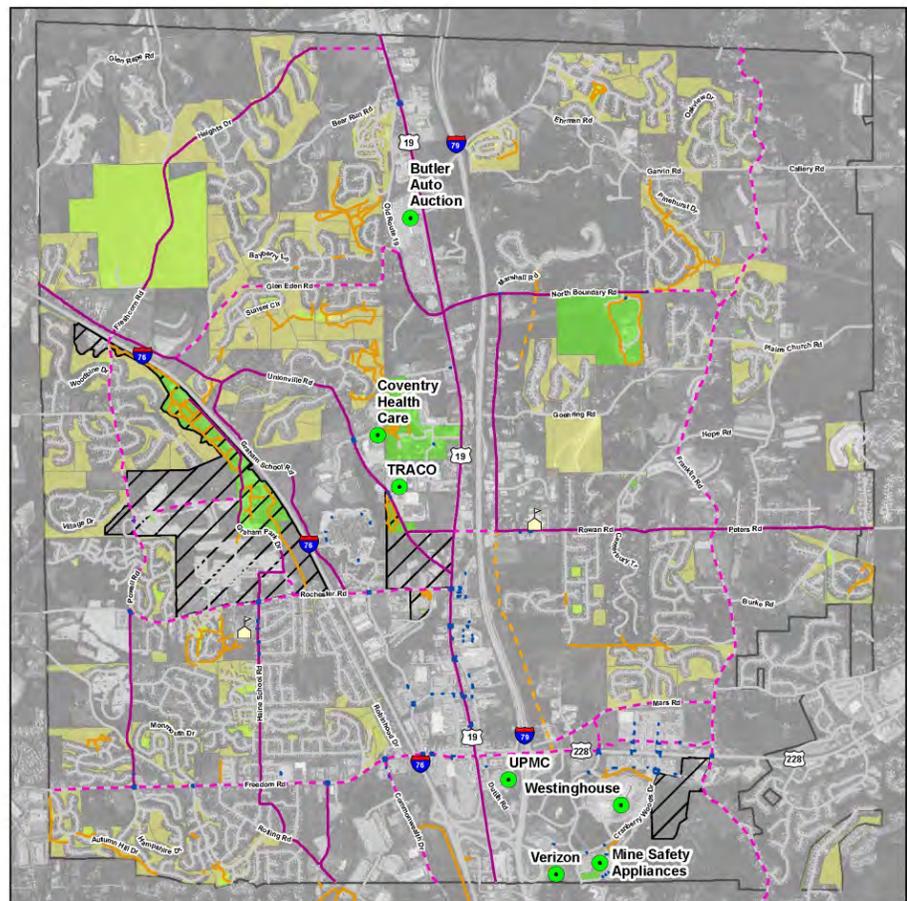
The plan has numerous recommendations, including proposed routes, for development of a network throughout the Township. Cranberry Township should continue implementing the plan and work towards establishing connections between the Township and surrounding communities.



### Existing & Proposed Bike Network

#### Legend

- Schools
- Major Employers
- Existing Crosswalks
- Proposed Bikeway
- Bikeway
- Existing Trail
- Proposed Trail
- Street Centerlines
- TND Districts
- Open Space
- Parks
- Township Boundary





## Potential Water Trail Opportunities

The *Canoeing Guide to Western Pennsylvania and Northern Virginia* (1991), by the Pittsburgh Council of American Youth Hostels, Inc., describes the following canoeing and kayaking opportunities within Butler County as follows.

### Connoquenessing Creek

19 miles of Connoquenessing Creek can be paddled. Paddling opportunities along Connoquenessing Creek begin in Butler County, extend through Lawrence County, until its confluence with the Beaver River in Beaver County.

The description of paddling opportunities along the Connoquenessing Creek are divided into five sections:

- Zelianople to Connoquenessing Country Club, State Route 65
- Connoquenessing Country Club, State Route 65 to Frisco
- Frisco to Ellport Park
- Ellport Park to Ellwood City Sewer Plant
- Ellwood City Sewer Plant to the Beaver River

### **Zelianople to Connoquenessing Country Club, State Route 65**

This section of Connoquenessing Creek is approximately 11 miles in length and offers seasonal Class I canoeing and kayaking opportunities from mid-November to mid-June.

From Zelianople to Camp Silver Lake (about 5 miles) there are a dozen or so easy riffles which can be run by anyone with a bare minimum of whitewater training. The remainder is slow current and pools. At certain seasons residents along the stream raise a collapsible 2-foot dam to form a pool ending just above the Country Club Bridge. Scout the dam from either bank if you are continuing down river.

Put-in up stream of the State Route 588 Bridge just west of Zelianople. Shuttle via State Route 599 to the Country Club Bridge. Take-out on right bank above the dam, upstream of the bridge.

The gauges should read between 1.8 feet and 3.5 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 170 cfs to 1,080

cfs. The McConnells Mill Gauge on nearby Slippery Rock Creek will probably read between 0.0 and 2.5 feet.

As noted above, this section normally can be paddled from mid-November to mid-June, and there is no season when it is too high.

### **Connoquenessing Country Club, State Route 65 to Frisco**

This short section of the Connoquenessing Creek is approximately 2 miles in length and also offers Class I canoeing and kayaking opportunities from mid-November to mid-June.

This section is usually run together with the Zelianople to Connoquenessing Country Club section described above or with the Frisco to Ellport section described below, depending on the skill level of the paddlers making the trip.

As described in the above section, during certain seasons, residents along the stream raise a collapsible 2-foot dam to form a pool ending just above the Country Club Bridge. Scout the dam from shore before running. About 2 miles below the put-in at low water there is an S-turn rapid which requires a little maneuvering. At higher levels it washes out.

Put-in just off of State Route 65 where it crosses the creek near the Connoquenessing Country Club. It is on the north/east side just along the RV dealer. To reach the take-out, go north of State Route 65 to the intersection 288. Go straight through the intersection rather than follow State Route 65 left across the bridge. The takeout is just past the gas station by the stone piers, under the power lines.

The gauge in Zelianople should read between 1.8 feet and 3.5 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 170 cfs to 1,080 cfs. The McConnells Mill Gauge on nearby Slippery Rock Creek will probably read between 0.0 and 2.5 feet.

This section can typically be paddled from mid-November through mid-June and there is no season when it is too high.

### **Frisco to Ellport Park**

This section of Connoquenessing Creek is known as Connie's Challenge. It is about 2 miles in length, and it is often used for teaching intermediate paddlers. It has mostly continuous Class II Rapids with a few pools down to Wurtemberg Bridge.

Calgon Ledge is a 3 foot drop about 0.5 miles downstream of Frisco (State Route 65) Bridge. It can be scouted from the road during the shuttle. Run it on the extreme right or left. The rest is fairly clear-cut except for the rapid just before the Wurtemberg Bridge, which can be scouted from the left bank. It is long and winds around a bend to the left.

The put-in is just north of the intersection of State Route 65 and State Route 288. It is just past the gas station by the stone piers, under the power lines. To reach the take-out, follow the river downstream/north. Turn left at the tee and cross the river at Wurtemberg. Take the first right past the bridge and turn right on Third Street to get to Ellport Park. Continue through the park to the water treatment plant and park at the top of the hill. Do not block the entrance to the plant. To get cars down to the take-out at the end of the trip, take a sharp right turn going down the hill past the treatment plant.

The Zelienople gauge should read between 1.6 feet and 3.0 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 115 cfs and 778 cfs. For a streamside gauge use the large rock in the middle of Calgon Ledge. If it is underwater, open-boat paddlers should not enter this section of the creek.

This section can normally be paddled from late November to early June, except when it is too high, typically from early to mid March.

It should be noted that consideration was given to a water trail along the Slippery Rock Creek from U.S. Route 19 downstream / south through McConnell's Mill State Park and onward to the confluence with the Connoquenessing Creek near Ellport Borough.

### **Ellport Park to Ellwood City Sewer Plant**

This section of the creek extends through a steeply walled gorge in many places, is approximately 3

miles in length and contains Class II and Class III rapids. For most of the trip you are out of sight as you are traveling through a steep gorge. The rapids are about as difficult as Connie's Challenge but are longer. Because of the rock structure along the shore, this section is sometimes used for instruction and practice on eddy turns.

Put-in at Ellport Park as described in the previous section. Take-out at the filtration plant on the creek, river right, about 0.3 miles downstream of the State Route 228 Bridge in Ellwood City.

The Zelienople gauge should read between 1.6 feet and 3.0 feet, corresponding to a flow of 115 cfs and 778 cfs.

This section can normally be paddled from late November to early June, except from early to mid March when it is too high.

### **Ellwood City Sewer Plant to Beaver River**

Like the previous section, this section is located in a gorge but further removed from civilization. It is about 1.5 miles long and contains Class III rapids.

After 0.5 miles of flatwater, you will see a road sign indicating a diagonal left turn. This is your cue to scout the first set of rapids in the lower gorge. It is a good whitewater run from here to the take-out.

In the gorge the first two rapids should be scouted. The first rapid is under the railroad bridge and should be run on the right. The second rapid is about 200 yards downstream and should be run on the left. Be careful paddling this section shortly after a rain storm because the water level rises quickly in the gorge.

This section is usually combined with the previous section. Use the Ellport Park put-in. To take-out at the junction with the Beaver River, park cars downstream at Rock Point Park, if the gate is open. Otherwise park downstream of the park gate on State Route 288 on the northside of the stream. If the gate is locked, it is about a 1 mile portage from the Creek to State Route 288.

Another alternative is to continue to paddle another

7 miles on the Beaver River to the dam located in Beaver Falls.

The Zelenople gauge should read above 1.6 feet, a flow of 115 cfs. This section can normally be paddled from mid November until late June.

### ***Slippery Rock Creek***

Approximately 30 miles of Slippery Rock Creek offers paddling opportunities from Class I through Class IV rapids. Paddling opportunities along Slippery Rock Creek begin near Rock Creek Park in Slippery Rock and extend through Lawrence County until its confluence with the Connoquenessing Creek in Lawrence County.

The description of paddling opportunities along the Slippery Rock Creek are divided into six sections:

- State Route 173 (Rock Falls Park) to Moore's Corners
- Moore's Corners to US Route 19
- US Route 19 (Kennedy Mill) to Rose Point
- Rose Point to Breakneck (Eckert Bridge)
- Breakneck (Eckert Bridge) to Harris Bridge
- Harris Bridge to Ellport Park

### ***State Route 173 (Rock Falls Park) to Moore's Corners***

This stretch of Slippery Rock Creek is approximately 9 miles in length and contains Class I through III paddling opportunities. It extends through picturesque countryside that is mostly mixed pasture and woods. The final mile flows through a small gorge reminiscent of the McConnells Mill area but with no whitewater.

The put-in is immediately below a dam and Class III rapid. There is a dam just above the Crolls Mills Bridge. Portage around the left of the dam.

From the put-in in Rock Falls Park, go north on State Route 173 to the town of Slippery Rock, then west on State Route 108. Go 3.5 miles, turn left just past Wolf Creek, go 0.25 miles to the river.

The Wurtemberg gauge should read above 2.3 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 850 cfs. The McConnells Mills gauge further downstream will probably read between 2.0 and 3.0 feet.

Typically this section can be paddled from early to late March. This stretch has been popular for whitewater kayaking at times in the past. However, problems have been documented with landowners near Kennedy Mill, where the creek crosses U.S. Route 19. In addition, seasonal water level changes can make the creek either dangerously fast or too low to be navigable.

### ***Moore's Corners to US Route 19 (Kennedy Mill)***

This 8.5 mile stretch contains a flat, flowing stream that wanders past farm houses, cornfields and woods. It also passes through a mobile home park and several areas of summer homes.

There is a dam at Kennedy Mill. This dam is at the end of a long pool with summer homes and has a bridge above it. The portage around this dam is difficult and should be scouted from the bridge before putting on the river. In the past it has been reported that access is blocked by barbed wire, and No Trespassing signs were posted. A take-out at US Route 19 is suggested.

The put-in is 0.25 miles south of State Route 108 on an unnumbered road 1 mile east of the Interstate 79 exit. From the put-in, go north 0.25 miles to Moore's Corners, west on State Route 108 to US Route 19, and south 1 mile to the river crossing.

The Wurtemberg gauge should read above 1.9 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 591 cfs. This section can typically be paddled from late February to mid April.

### ***US Route 19 (Kennedy Mill) to Rose Point***

This 1.5 mile section could not be paddled in the past as the property adjacent to it had been posted. It has been reported that there is a barbed wire fence and there are No Trespassing signs at Kennedy Mill. This section offers Class II rapids.

Put-in below the dam, as it is difficult to portage or run. Immediately below Kennedy Mill dam there are three rapids. The third one has a drop of about 2.5 feet. The next 2 miles to Rose Point are flat and flowing water.

The put-in is on US Route 19, 1.5 miles south of the

intersection with State Route 108. To get to the take-out, go south on US Route 19 to US Route 422. Turn right/west and go 1 mile to the river. New US Route 422 crosses the creek very high up. The actual take-out is north of the four lane along old route 422 which is down at river level. Take the right turn on either side of the creek within site of the high bridge.

The Wurtemberg gauge should read above 1.5 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 375 cfs. This section can typically be paddled from January to late May.

### **Rose Point to Breakneck (Eckert Bridge)**

This 2.5 mile stretch of Slippery Rock Creek runs through the gorge. It is strewn with boulders and lined with hemlock. It is a drop-and-pool river. The drops are fairly well spaced in the 1.5 miles from Rose Point to McConnells Mill and there are over half a dozen significant drops packed into "The Mile" below the Mill. Rapids along this section are classified as Class III & IV.

The stream can be paddled most of the year, becoming extremely tight, if less pushy, as the water drops below 0.0 on the gauge at McConnells Mill. A trail from the Mill to Eckert Bridge allows scouting of all but the biggest drop.

The first 0.5 miles is riffled. The next mile contains several drops, including two tricky S-turn rapids. These have very sharp turns at low water and very strong twisting currents at high levels. The backwater of the unrunnable dam is not very long. Portage is possible on either side of the creek; the park ranger prefers that you use the paths on the left.

Below the covered bridge, "The Mile" starts. There are several ledges, some with sneak routes, some without. There are small pools below each of the drops in which to recover, at levels below 1.0.

The largest drop is hard to scout, either from the river or from the trail. Huge boulders choke the river down to a quarter of its width, and three drops closely follow each other without pause. Small differences in the level at the Mill make big differences in the Triple Drop.

To get to the put-in take US Route 422 to where it crosses the river. New US Route 422 crosses the creek very high up. The actual put-in is north of the four lane along old route 422 which is down at river level. Take the right turn on either side of the creek within site of the high bridge. Park on New 422 after unloading the boats and gear. To reach the take-out proceed east on US Route 422 to US Route 19. Turn right/south and go about 3 miles. Turn right/west on Cheeseman which is about 0.3 miles north of State Route 488. Proceed west on Cheeseman until it ends at a tee intersection. Turn right and proceed to the river down an unmaintained road with its edges falling in. Be careful as you descend to the creek. The take-out is actually Eckert Bridge; the location has been called "Breakneck" for years.

Breakneck Bridge, now closed, crosses Cheeseman Run, which enters the Slippery Rock just downstream from Eckert Bridge. It is also possible to put-in at McConnells Mill. Unload at the Mill and move the cars to the upper parking lot. One favorite run combines "the Mile" from McConnells Mill with the next section, taking out at Harris Bridge.

The Wurtemberg gauge should read between 1.0 and 2.0 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 185 cfs to 650 cfs There is a staff gauge at McConnells Mill, located where the water flowing through the mill re-enters the creek. Because of its location and the lack of calibration for levels below zero, this gauge does not give reliable readings below about minus 0.1 ft.

This section can normally be paddled from mid November to late June, except it is normally too high from late January to early May.

### **Breakneck (Eckert) Bridge to Harris Bridge**

This 3.2 mile section of the creek extends 3.2 miles through a deep valley, but not as canyon-like through this stretch and contains Class II & III rapids. The river becomes calmer than it is upstream. However, the rapids in this section will still challenge intermediates. They have the same S-turn character as rapids farther upstream, although they are not as tight. The river is still strewn with immense boulders, some of which are undercut.

To get to the take-out, go back Cheeseman Road to US Route 19. Turn south and go the short distance to State Route 488. Turn right/west on State Route 488 and proceed for about 3 miles to Mountville Road, State Route 2030. Turn right towards Mt. Hope church. Continue about 3 miles to the river.

The Wurtemberg gauge should read between 1.0 and 2.5 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 185 cfs to 990 cfs. The McConnells Mills gauge on the river side of the mill should read between minus 0.3 and 1.5 (open boats) or 2.0 (closed boats) for the best run. The previous section discusses the uncertainty in using McConnells Mill gauge at levels below zero.

This section can normally be paddled from early November to early July, except it is normally too high from early March to early April.

### **Harris Bridge to Ellport Park**

From Harris Bridge to Connoquenessing Creek, approximately 6 miles, the creek is essentially flat with a few Class I riffles.

There are two permanent dams on this section, a runable broken-out dam, and a movable dam just above the junction with the Connoquenessing. The first dam is immediately below Harris Bridge. Portage around the dam on the right.

The broken-out dam is at the end of a high concrete retaining wall on the left bank. The dam may be run on the right. The second dam is located at Camp Allegheny just after a foot bridge. It is about 2 feet high and is portaged on the right. The movable dam is just above the junction with the Connoquenessing. If it is up, the portage is on the right.

To get to the take-out, go back Mountville Road to State Route 488. Turn right/west. After crossing the creek three times take the first right past the bridge and turn right on Third Street to get to the park. Continue through the park to the water treatment plant and park at the top of the hill. Do not block the entrance to the plant. To get cars down to the take-out at the end of the trip, take the sharp U-turn to the right that goes down the hill past the treatment plant.

The Wurtemberg gauge should read between 1.3 and 3.0 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 285 cfs to 1,340 cfs. The McConnells Mills gauge on the river side of the mill should read between 0.2 and 2.0.

This section can normally be paddled early January to late May.

### **Wolf Creek**

Wolf Creek provides 11.5 miles of seasonal paddling opportunities, from Grove City, Mercer County to the confluence of Slippery Rock Creek in West Liberty Township, near State Route 108.

The description of paddling opportunities along the Wolf Creek is divided into two sections:

- Grove City to Courtneys Mills
- Courtney Mills to Slippery Rock Creek

### **Grove City to Courtneys Mills**

A pleasant 4.5 mile paddle trip through rural countryside.

Put-in on Sewage Plant Road (Greenwood Drive) about 0.25 miles downstream from the dam at the old police station. Take State Route 173 south about 3 miles. Take right turn for Linley's Fishing Lake and continue about 0.75 miles to the creek. Ask the property owner for permission to take-out on land next to the bridge. An alternate take-out would be at State Route 255.

The Wurtemberg gauge should read between 1.6 and 4.6 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 425 cfs to 2,900 cfs. However because of the distance to the gauge, Wurtemberg is at best a weak predictor. The shallowest part of the trip is just above the Lake Linley (Courtneys Mills) Bridge. McConnells Mill gauge further downstream will probably read above 1.0.

The Wurtemberg gauge is above 1.6 feet 36% of the time and above 4.6 feet 3% of the time.

### **Courtneys Mills to Slippery Rock Creek**

This seven mile stretch of Class I & II rapids is a pleasant run through fairly remote areas. The stream is usually shallow, flowing over a gravel bed

that occasionally changes to large flat rocks. The first few miles of this section are isolated, with the best rapids and the best scenery. The last several miles are much flatter, and the shores are heavily populated by summer cottages.

In 1980, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy acquired 100 acres of virgin timber, wildflowers, and prime fishing waters including the 1 mile section known as Wolf Creek Narrows. It is appropriate for poling.

When spring thaw or heavy rain brings high water, fallen trees may block the river as potentially lethal strainers. Be very careful at high, fast levels.

To find the put-in take State Route 173 north from the town of Slippery Rock. After about 4 miles, take a left turn for Linley's Fishing Lake and continue about 0.75 miles to the creek. Ask permission of the lake's owner to put-in on his land next to the bridge. To find the take-out, return to Slippery Rock. Turn right/east on State Route 108. Go 2.5 miles to where the road crosses Wolf Creek. You may be able to arrange with the landowner to take-out here. Wolf Creek enters the Slippery Rock about a tenth of a mile further downstream. Alternatively, continue on State Route 108 for 0.2 miles, turn left/south on State Route 107 and take-out on the Slippery Rock Creek. This will add 0.7 miles of river.

The shallowest part of the trip is just above the Lake Linley (Courtneys Mills) Bridge. If the water is sufficient here, the run will probably be okay. The Wurtemberg gauge on nearby Slippery Rock Creek will probably read between 1.6 and 4.6 feet. This corresponds to a flow of 650 cfs to 2900 cfs at Wurtemberg. However, Wurtemberg is too far downstream to give a good indication of runnability.

The McConnells Mill gauge, a little closer, will probably read between 1.0 and 5.0. This section is a major tributary of the Slippery Rock Creek, so it is probably too low when the Slippery Rock is low or marginal.

The Wurtemberg gauge is above 1.6 feet 36% of the time and above 4.6 feet 3% of the time.

### [Little Connoquenessing Creek](#)

Little Connoquenessing Creek provides over 11 miles of seasonal paddling opportunities, from its confluence with Mulligan Run in Connoquenessing Township to the confluence of the Connoquenessing Creek in Jackson Township.

The description of paddling opportunities along the Little Connoquenessing Creek is divided into two sections:

- State Route 3007 to State Route 528
- State Route 528 to western State Route 3025

#### **State Route 3007 to State Route 528**

From the put-in to the junction with Mulligan Run, the stream is a tiny Class II. Usually less than 20 feet wide, it is dense with downed trees. The stretch is about 6.3 miles long and provides Class II paddling opportunities. Mulligan Run is almost as large as the Little Connoquenessing at the junction, so the stream opens up at that point. Trees can be down through the run, especially in the upper section.

The put-in is on State Route 3007, northwest of White Church, which is about 3 miles west of Butler on State Route 68. To reach the take-out, go south on State Route 3007 to State Route 68 and turn right. Go about 2.5 miles, and turn right on State Route 3030, then right again on State Route 528. Take-out is on the left side, downstream at the bridge.

State Route 3025 crosses the Little Connoquenessing twice. At the eastern crossing, where State Route 3025 turns north away from the stream, there is a government gauge on the downstream side of the center pier. Count on needing at least 2.0 feet for this section. This section is small, and it can only be paddled after a heavy rain or during spring snow melt.

#### **State Route 528 to western State Route 3025**

The stream begins as a tiny creek with wooded banks. After a couple of miles it picks up a tributary (Crab Run) and turns into a small stream meandering through farmland and areas of summer houses, with occasional excursions against steep hemlock-covered banks. Ducks and geese can be

seen in the spring, as well as an occasional heron. This stretch is approximately 5 miles long.

About a mile after Crab Run enters, the stream becomes flat. This is the backwater of a 3 foot dam located about a quarter-mile upstream from the bridge with the gauge. In low water you can land on a concrete pad on the left side of the dam and lift over. If you can not clearly identify this pad, take-out on the right side and carry around the gazebo. The gazebo is located just upstream of the dam; there is not room to take-out below it. In addition to this unrunnable dam, there are numerous runnable rock dams that pool water for homes along the stream.

The put-in is on State Route 528 about 4.5 miles north of Evans City. To get to the take-out, go north a quarter of a mile on State Route 528, turn left on Little Creek Road, go 3 miles turn left on State Route 3025, and immediately cross the bridge with the gauge. Then take the left onto a dead-end road just before State Route 3025 crosses the creek again. Park across from the Whiskey Hollow Inn and take-out near the embankment that once supported a bridge.

State Route 3025 crosses the Little Connoquenessing twice. At the eastern crossing, where State Route 3025 turns north away from the stream, there is a government gauge on the downstream side of the center pier. Count on needing at least 1.5 feet for this section. The Zelenople gauge on nearby Connoquenessing Creek will probably read above 3.0 feet.

Since this section is small, it can only be paddled (typically) from January through April.

### Yellow Creek

Yellow Creek provides 5 miles of limited paddling opportunities.

#### ***Middle Lancaster to Little Connoquenessing***

Yellow Creek runs parallel to Interstate 79 north of Harmony, Pa. and is very, very small. You have to push aside shrubbery to get through. There are fallen trees, and a farmer has put up a fence made of steel cable and oil drums. The Interstate highway is nearby, but usually not offensive. Yellow Creek is short and runs into the Little Connoquenessing which is small. It feels a bit like the Slippery Rock, but is still Class I, flowing with occasional riffles. A good stream for poling. This section is approximately 5.0 miles long.

The put-in is on the east fork, on the road that crosses under the Interstate to Middle Lancaster. The takeout is shortly before the Little Connoquenessing crosses under Interstate 79.

The Zelenople gauge on nearby Connoquenessing Creek will probably read above 3.0. There is a bridge footing at the put-in. If the footing shows about 0.5 inch above water level, Yellow Creek is low, but the Little Connoquenessing is fine.

Since this section is tiny, it should normally be runnable only after a heavy rain or during spring snowmelt.

## Other Significant Routes & Trail Corridors

Other on road routes with significance in the County include:

### Washington's Trail

The historic Washington's Trail is a driving route through western Pennsylvania. Traversing modern highways, the route commemorates young George Washington's first military and diplomatic venture in the Fall and Winter 1753 - 1754. Today, the route follows major roads. However, in some areas there are alternate historic or scenic routes suggested which may more closely align with Washington's travel in the Fall of 1753, and these are likely to be back roads.

In Butler County, the trail enters from Beaver County on Route 68 heading east through Zelienople to Route 19 then passing through Harmony heading north on Route 19 to Portersville and then heading onto West Park Road toward Moraine State Park.

Where West Park Road intersects Route 422 the trail heads east on 422 to Route 528. At Route 528 the trail heads north to the intersection with Route 8 and Route 173, it then follows Route 173 north to Slippery Rock. In Slippery Rock the trail heads east on Route 108 to Route 8 and then North on Route 8 to the Venango/Butler County line.

The trail also runs south from Prospect along Route 528 to Evans City. In Evans City a spur runs east along Route 68 to the George Washington Monument and returns to Evans City. The trail continues south out of Evans City along Franklin Road to the Allegheny/Butler County line.



### **Scenic Hiking Trails**

The following Scenic Hiking, Biking, and Walking trails are also associated with Washington's Trail.

- From western entrance to Moraine State Park by the bike rental, take Bike/Hike trail to the Marina at Davis Hollow Cabin - Enter the North Country Trail to the Old Stone House
- In Moraine State Park near McDaniel's, follow the North Country Trail along the Glacier Ridge, a distance of fourteen miles to the Old Stone House

### **Scenic Biking/Walking Route**

- In Moraine State Park take the seven-mile North Shore biking/hiking trail to the Davis Hollow Marina. Here you can connect to the North Country trail and continue onto the Old Stone House.

## Walkable Communities

Compact, walkable communities allow residents to walk to services, shopping, schools and jobs and can reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and improve public health.

### Elements of a Walkable Community

A growing body of research and many international and national resources now agree on a basic set of features and elements that make a walkable community. They generally include:

- Human scale design;
- Denser, mixed use development near neighborhood services and transit;
- A distinct urban or town center;
- A variety of connected transportation options;
- Unique and identifiable public spaces;
- Lower speed streets;
- Universal design - accessible design;
- Connected, grid street pattern.

Sizes and shapes of a walkable community typically include:

- Block size of 300-600 feet;
- Intersection spacing of 1000 feet on arterials to 500 feet on local streets;
- Extend street crossing time at crosswalks (2.5 ft/sec or 0.85 m/s);
- Connect dead end streets when adjacent parcels develop;
- Lower speed streets (below 35 mph).



### Potential Trail Towns

A goal of the greenway plan is to attract and invite trail users to the main street districts of our cities, towns, and villages where they can spend money on the goods and services they need. Primary services such as food, fuel, and lodging opportunities are identified as essential to trail users and will draw them off of the trail and onto the Main Street or business district.

The potential places in Butler County to consider as Trail Towns include:

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| • City of Butler  | • Karns City   |
| • Bruin           | • Mars         |
| • Callery         | • Petrolia     |
| • Cherry Valley   | • Portersville |
| • Chicora         | • Prospect     |
| • Connoquenessing | • Saxonburg    |
| • East Butler     | • Seven Fields |
| • Eau Claire      | • Valencia     |
| • Evans City      | • West Liberty |
| • Fairview        | • West Sunbury |
| • Harmony         | • Zelienople   |
| • Harrisville     |                |

Many of these places are currently positioned to capitalize on a trail town concept to maximize the economic benefits that are sure to result from trail development.

## TRAIL TOWNS

— Capturing Trail-Based Tourism —



A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITIES IN PENNSYLVANIA

### **What is a Trail Town?**

In 2005, the Allegheny Trail Alliance published “Trail Towns – Capturing Trail Based Tourism: a Guide for Communities in Pennsylvania.” The development of this guide was funded by the Regional Trail Alliance and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). It serves as a step-by-step guide preparing a blueprint for the provision of goods and services required by trail users. It also provides instructions on how to promote trail friendly towns.

The steps include:

- Enticing trail users to get off the trail and into your town;
- Welcoming trail users to your town by making information about the community readily available at the trail;
- Making a strong and safe connection between your town and the trail;
- Educating local businesses on the economic benefits of meeting the needs of trail tourists;
- Recruiting new businesses or expanding existing ones to fill gaps in the goods and services that trail users need;
- Promoting the “trail-friendly” character of the town; and
- Working with neighboring communities, the County, and regional entities to promote the entire trail corridor as a tourist destination.

To be considered as a potential trail town, it is recommended that proposed trail towns be able to provide three of the four following places, goods, or services:

- Main Street
- Food
- Lodging
- Fuel

“Towns” that can provide only two of the four components have been classified as hubs. Utilizing this approach, the following classifications became evident.

### **Proposed Trail Towns**

- Butler
- Evans City
- Mars
- Saxonburg
- Slippery Rock
- Zelienople/Harmony
- Freeport (Armstrong County)

### **Proposed Major Hubs**

- Chicora
- Harrisville
- Petrolia
- Portersville
- Prospect

### **Proposed Hubs**

- Bruin
- Callery
- West Sunbury



Potential Trail Towns, Major Hubs & Hubs	Main Street	Food	Lodging	Fuel	Entertainment	Recreation	Cultural / Historic Sites	Other Attraction(s)	Potential Trail Town	Potential Major Hub	Potential Hub
	Core Attributes				Supporting Attributes				Proposed Classification		
Butler	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1		
Bruin				x	-	x	-	-	3		
Callery		x			-	x	-		3		
Cherry Valley					-	-	-	-			
Chicora		x		x		x	-		1		
Connoquenessing						x	-				
East Butler						x	-				
Eau Claire					-	x	-				
Evans City	x	x		x	x	x	-	x	1		
Fairview						x	-				
Harmony	x	x				-	x		2		
Harrisville		x		x		x	-				
Karns City		x				x	-				
Mars	x	x		x		x	-		1		
Petrolia		x		x		x	-		2		
Portersville		x		x		x	-		2		
Prospect		x		x		x	x		2		
Saxonburg	x	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	1		
Seven Fields		x				x	-				
Slippery Rock	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	1		
Valencia						-	-				
West Liberty						-	-				
West Sunbury		x				x	-		3		
Zelienople	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	1		



## Identifying Potential Recreation & Alternative Transportation Corridors

Once the existing trails and potential trail corridors and bicycle routes were inventoried and mapped, opportunities for new trails and connections were evaluated. Potential trails and opportunities for on road bicycle routes were identified by:

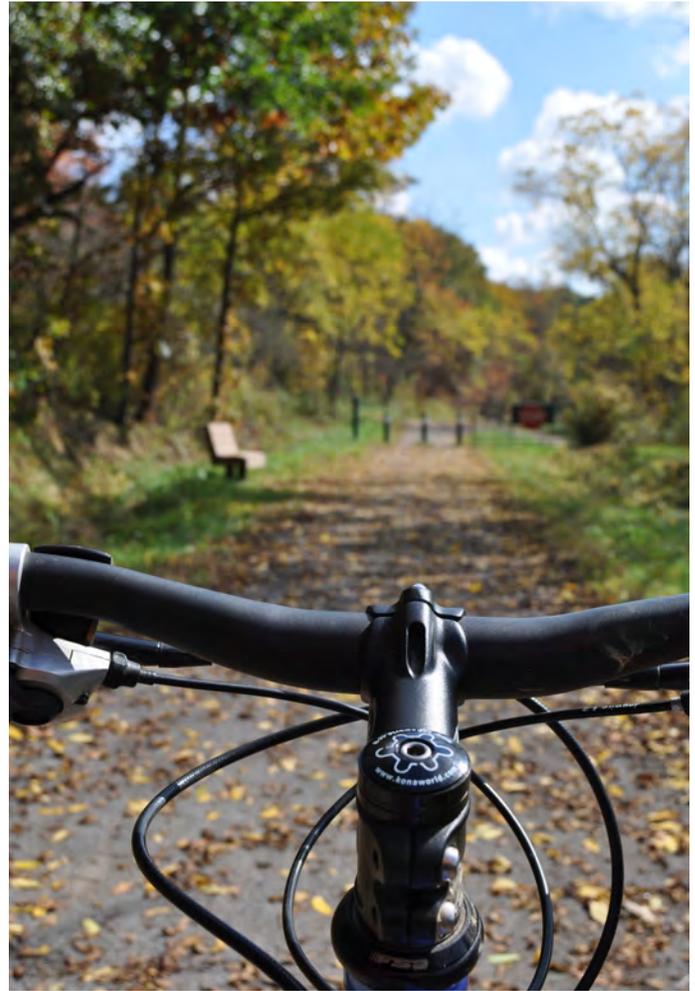
1. Identifying inactive rail corridors which may provide opportunity to serve as a trail corridor;
2. Identifying existing trails which may have the potential to be extended, or have a spur created, to connect to another trail or population center;
3. Identifying streams which are at least seasonably canoeable;
4. Identifying existing on road cycling routes frequented by local cycling clubs;
5. Identifying roads that are good or above average for cycling.

As potential corridors were identified, many were reviewed and mapped utilizing existing GIS data and aerial photography. Additionally, some corridors were reviewed in the field.

During our analysis of potential corridors we categorized the network for our proposed recreation and transportation greenways as either:

- Shared Use Path (Existing or Proposed) – shared use paths are defined as pedestrian routes developed primarily for outdoor recreational purposes. These trails are designed for pedestrians and other users to experience the outdoors and may be used by a variety of users.
- Bike Route (Existing or Proposed)
- Hiking Trail (Existing or Proposed)
- Water Trail (Existing or Proposed)

It should be noted that all corridors were evaluated based on their connectivity and not based upon existing property ownership. Later in this document recommendation and implementation strategies are presented for evaluating ownership issues and the potential to secure corridors for public use.



## Recommended Recreation and Alternative Transportation Greenway Corridors

### Recreation & Alternative Transportation Greenway Corridors

Various existing trails, potential trail corridors, on-road cycling routes, and potential water trail opportunities are shown on the Recreation and Alternative Transportation Greenways Map. These existing and potential routes are described here:

#### 1) **Butler Freeport Trail**

The Butler Freeport Trail is an existing Rails-to-Trails Shared Use Path connecting the town of Freeport on the Allegheny River in Armstrong County to the City of Butler. This 11 mile trail should continue to be maintained and promoted to the extent it has been to date. Additionally, extensions or spurs connecting to this trail could be a major asset to the communities along the trail and should be pursued.

#### 2) **Buffalo Creek Trail**

The proposed Buffalo Creek Trail follows the former Winfield Rail Road corridor from the Butler Freeport Trail just west of the Route 28 Bridge. At this point the trail heads north along the banks of Buffalo Creek into Armstrong County and back into Butler County near the intersection of Clearfield Road and Winfield. This trail would make for a beautiful recreation opportunity as it travels through the Buffalo Creek Gorge and what is proposed as an exceptional value natural system greenway corridor.

#### 3) **Butler Cranberry Trail**

The proposed Butler Cranberry Trail begins at Mars Road near the interchange with Interstate 79 and travels through open space to Rowan Road where it picks up the former Pittsburgh, Harmony, Butler and New Castle Railway. This route travels through Callery, Evans City, and Connoquenessing before entering the city of Butler from the west. Once in Butler, the trail can travel on road to make a connection with the Butler Freeport Trail.

This proposed Shared Use Path has the opportunity to not only be a gem of a recreational trail, but also provide alternative

transportation to those traveling between the communities and Butler. In addition, this trail provides access to what could become an alternative transportation connection to Pittsburgh with public transportation options from the western terminus of the trail near the I-79 interchange.

#### 4) **New Castle to Brady's Bend Trail**

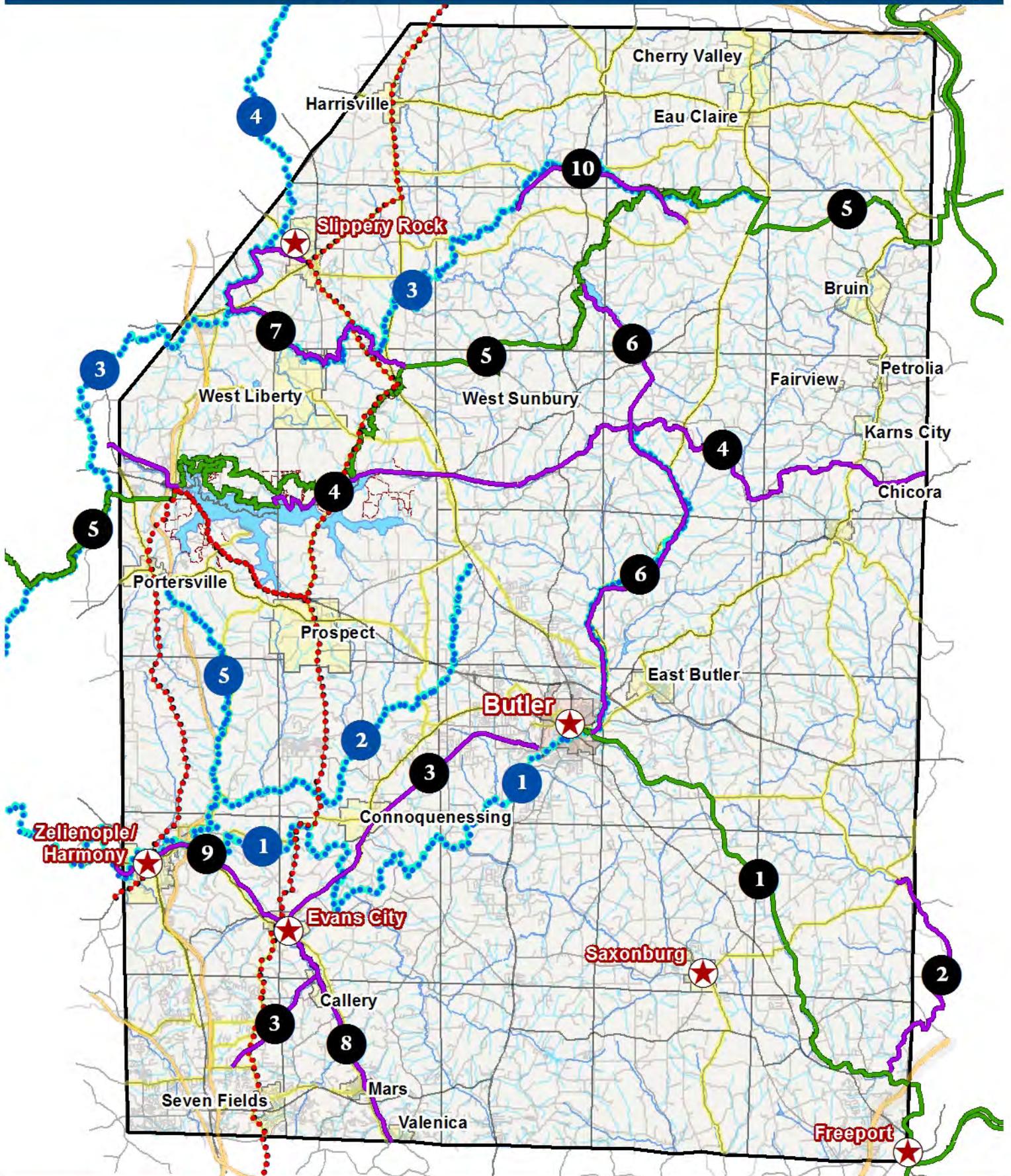
The proposed New Castle to Brady's Bend Trail begins at New Castle in Lawrence County and ends at East Brady in Armstrong County. This trail has the potential to have a regional impact connecting with the Armstrong Trail on the Allegheny River in Brady's Bend and passing through both McConnells Mill and Moraine State Parks.

The trail enters Butler County from the west following the former Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad (BLE)/Western Allegheny Railroad (WARR) corridor along Muddy Creek to Moraine State Park where it picks up the existing Moraine State Park Bike trail. At the eastern terminus of the trail at Davis Hollow marina in the park, a new shared use path would need to be blazed to connect to the east side of Lake Arthur. On the east side of Lake Arthur the trail once again picks up the former Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad (BLE)/Western Allegheny Railroad (WARR) corridor following it the rest of the way to Brady's Bend and the Armstrong Trail on the Allegheny River.

#### 5) **North Country Trail**

The North Country Trail (NCT) in Butler County has several completed sections in place on the road through Moraine State Park and State Game Land No. 95. The other sections of trail through the County are listed as temporary routes in place to allow for passage of the trail until a final route can be formalized.

The existing NCT through Moraine State Park covers approximately fifteen miles along the north shore of Lake Arthur passing the Davis Hollow Cabin, which is a historic preservation project of the NCT, and connecting to Jennings



Nature Reserve and the Old Stone House. Through State Game Land No. 95 the trail covers 13 miles of trail rich in wild life from State Route 308 to Leonard Road. In the last section that approached the Trail Town of Parker and the Allegheny River, there is the five mile section along the North Fork of Bear Creek, through Hemlock forest and across two special arched bridges.

**6) Butler to Glade Dam Lake Trail**

This proposed trail begins in the City of Butler near the trailhead for the Butler Freeport Trail and ends at Glade Dam Lake in State Game Land No. 95. This trail has the potential to connect the City of Butler with Thorn Reservoir, Lake Oneida, and the New Castle to Brady’s Bend Trail as well as Moraine State Park, Glade Dam Lake, and the North Country Trail.

The trail leaves Butler heading north along Connoquenessing Creek parallel to PA State Route 38 and the active Bessemer & Lake Erie railroad. After passing Lake Oneida, the trail heads northwest following a stream corridor along Valley Road and Joswiak Road. Near the intersection of Joswiak and Gilbert Roads, this proposed trail intersects the proposed New Castle to Brady’s Bend Trail. At this point, trail users could head west on on the New Castle to Brady’s Bend trail to reach Moraine State Park.

Heading north, the Butler to Glade Dam Lake

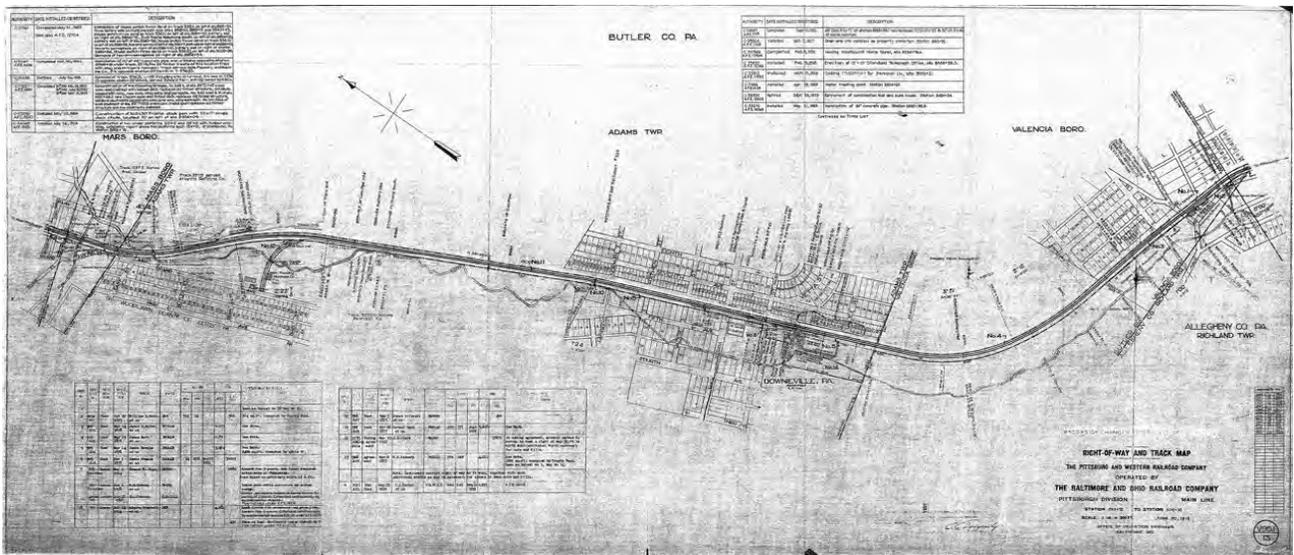
Trail follows the stream along Hazlett Road to South Branch Slippery Rock Creek. The trail then heads northwest along South Branch Slippery Rock Creek into State Game Land No. 95 eventually arriving at Glade Dam Lake and traveling along its western shore until it reaches the North Country Trail near PA State Route 308.

**7) Slippery Rock to North Country Trail**

The proposed Slippery Rock Creek Trail connects Main Street in Slippery Rock, as well as the University, with the North Country Trail and Moraine State Park. This trail would provide numerous recreation opportunities for residents as well as the students of Slippery Rock University.

Additionally, this trail would provide educational opportunities being that the trail would also connect to Wolf Creek Narrows and Millers Woods owned by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Moraine State Park Conservation Area, and Jennings Environmental Education Center in Moraine State Park.

The proposed trail leaves Main Street in Slippery Rock heading west along a tributary of Wolf Creek to Wolf Creek. Once it reaches Wolf Creek the Trail heads southwest along the creek to its mouth at Slippery Rock Creek. At Slippery Rock Creek the Trail heads east following the creek across Slippery Rock Road to Rock Falls park, then across Route 173 to Armco Park, and finally



across Route 8 to the North Country Trail near Hallston Road.

### 8) Buffalo & Pittsburgh Rail-with-Trail

The Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad maintains a rail line that traverses Adams Township from south to north connecting Valencia Borough, Callery Borough, and just north of the Township, Evans City Borough. Although the right-of-way currently provides a single track (for the most part), historically there were two tracks located along its length through Adams Township. The eastern most track remains, while the western track was removed some time ago. Based on evidence along the line, it appears the right-of-way width for these two tracks is between 40 to 60 feet wide. This width appears to be sufficient to accommodate a rail-with-trail.

This corridor provides potential to create a trail which crosses Adams Township from north to south, and to provide connections to communities located along the way.

This corridor was evaluated in 2008 as part of the **Adams Township Recreation, Park, Open Space, Greenway & Trail Plan**. Based on the analysis of this corridor, a long term vision is recommended for establishing a rail-with-trail from the Mars VFW Ballfield, located southeast of the Mars Valencia Road and State Route 228, to the Railroad Street ballfield complex in Evan City Borough.

In addition, it was recommended that the Mars Area Historical Society's Mars Train Station be utilized as a trail access point, as well as Marburger Field in Callery Borough.

That study also recommends, ideally, the trail would continue further to the south. However, the secondary rail sidings in the vicinity of Fey Lane and Downieville Road present safety hazards. Trail users would be required to cross the sidings to continue southward, to Valencia Borough, on the trail.

Therefore, it was recommended that Adam

Township begin a dialogue with the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad to further explore the potential to develop a rail-with-trail from the Mars VFW Field, in the southern portion of the Township, to the Railroad Street Fields, in Evan City Borough. The proposed trail would cover a distance of 6.72 miles.

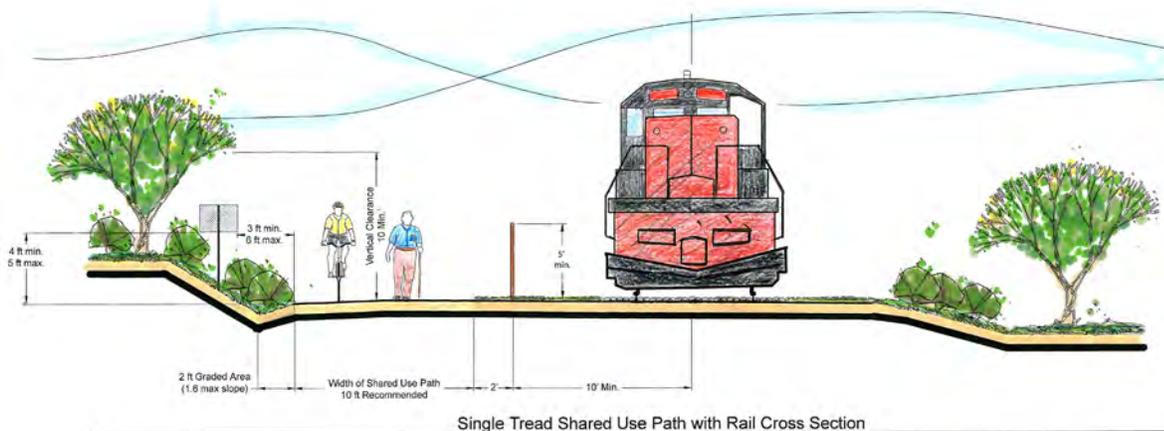
The existing rails are situated on a limestone ballast bed, which appears to meet rail industry standards. The overall width of the ballast bed at the base is approximately 20 feet wide while the actual rail bed itself has a width of approximately ten feet wide and rails that are 4 feet 8-1/2" apart. These dimensions are represented in the Pennsylvania Railroad Standard for Single and Double Track Railway.

The U.S. Department of Transportation publication **Rails-with-Trails: Lessons Learned** reviewed best practices for establishing rails-with-trails and provides recommendations for the planning and design of such a facility.

Further research should be conducted on the Buffalo & Pittsburgh line to determine the right-of-way width. Based on discussions with a Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad representative this corridor is a low speed and low frequency corridor, with a right-of-way width of 40 feet. Given the location of the existing track within that width, a 10 foot separation could be accommodated between the center of the existing track and the near edge of the proposed rail trail. Where the right-of-way is 60







feet in width, a setback of 20 feet, or greater, may be provided. Further study, analysis and discussion is required with the railroad to determine if these separations would be acceptable.

As recommended in the 2008 study, we continue to recommend the Township pursue the development of a demonstration project along this corridor following the concept plan proposed in 2008.

#### 9) **Evans City to Ellwood City Trail**

The proposed Evans City to Ellwood City Trail follows the former Pittsburgh, Harmony, Butler, and New Castle railroad corridor. The trail begins in Evans City heading northwest along Breakneck Creek to the creek's mouth at Connoquenessing Creek. At Connoquenessing Creek the trail heads west along the creek through Harmony and Zelienople before entering Lawrence County.

Through other proposed trail connections, this proposed trail has the potential to link population centers of Cranberry and Butler with New Castle in Lawrence County.

#### 10) **Slippery Rock Creek Trail**

This proposed trail follows the former Bessemer & Lake Erie railroad line from Branchton Road, east of Slippery Rock near its intersection with PA Route 8 to Hillards, at the eastern terminus of Branchton Road.

This recently inactivated corridor has the potential to become a recreational trail heading east out of Slippery Rock or to become part of the final route of the North Country Trail. Its status of abandonment should be looked into before it is reverted to private ownership.

## Proposed Water Trails

### 1) Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail

Presently, the documented canoeable portion of Connoquenessing Creek begins on the western edge of Butler County in Zelienople heading west through Lawrence and into Beaver County. The recommendations of this plan include determining the feasibility of creating a water trail beginning north of Lake Oneida and passing through the City of Butler on to Zelienople. This would create a significant water trail which, if properly maintained and marketed, could become a recreation and tourism draw for the County and the region. The Wild Waters Conservancy has several holdings along Connoquenessing Creek that may serve as suitable put-in/take-out locations.

**Associated Municipalities:** *Oakland Township, Center Township, City of Butler, Butler Township, Penn Township, Forward Township, Jackson Township, Harmony Borough and Zelienople Borough.*

### 2) Little Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail

This water trail is proposed to begin at Little Connoquenessing Creek's confluence with Mulligan Run in Connoquenessing Township and travel more than 11 miles south west to its confluence with Connoquenessing Creek in Jackson Township. This water trail will provide additional paddling opportunities in Butler County with potential to paddle all the way to the Beaver River.

**Associated Municipalities:** *Connoquenessing Township, Lancaster Township, and Jackson Township.*

### 3) Slippery Rock Creek Water Trail

Presently, the documented canoeable portion of Slippery Rock Creek begins in Rock Falls Park along State Route 173 and heads west and south into Lawrence County and McConnells Mill State Park. The recommendations of this plan include determining the feasibility of developing a water trail beginning further upstream, possibly as far as State Game Land 95. This would create a significant water trail, which, if properly maintained and marketed, could become a recreation and tourism draw for the County and the region.

**Associated Municipalities:** *Washington Township, Venango Township, Marion Township, Cherry Township, Slippery Rock Township, Brady Township, West Liberty Borough, Slippery Rock Township, and Worth Township.*

### 4) Wolf Creek Water Trail

The proposed Wolf Creek water trail provides more than eleven miles of seasonal paddling from Grove City in Mercer County to the Confluence with Slippery Rock Creek in Lancaster Township, Butler County. Along with Slippery Rock Creek, this water trail provides opportunity for paddling adventures near Slippery Rock University as well as near Moraine and McConnells Mill State Parks. If properly maintained and marketed, these water trails could become recreation and tourism destinations for the County and the region.

**Associated Municipalities:** *Grove City and Slippery Rock Township.*

### 5) Yellow Creek Water Trail

This proposed water trail is only five miles long but has the potential to offer short trips for unexperienced paddlers to learn techniques. A study should be completed to determine the feasibility and desirability of creating this short water trail.

**Associated Municipalities:** *Muddy Creek Township and Lancaster Township.*

## On-Road Cycling Routes

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission's transportation planners have undertaken a project to evaluate the cycling conditions of the regional state highway network.

Based on the evaluation of a combination of traffic volumes, roadway geometry, and field observations, maps will periodically be created that can be used as a reference tool by cyclists and cycling commuters. The maps indicate the roadways as being above average, average or below average for cycling, as well as other features relevant to cyclists such as significant hills, trails, park-n-ride lots, and bicycle parking. These maps are intended to connect with and build out from the existing BikePGH Bike Map.

The suitability ratings of the roadways apply to cyclists experienced in operating on the roadway network with other motorized vehicles. Inexperienced cyclists looking for facilities free of motorized vehicles should view the SPC bike trail maps.

The maps should reflect the cyclists' knowledge of the routes that they frequently ride. Capturing this local cyclist knowledge is an important aspect of the evaluation and the suitability maps.

The maps were presented to the SPC Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee and are available here for review and comment by cycling stakeholders. Through this process the maps are available to everyone; however, please understand the maps are in their preliminary form, and they will be evolving as the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission strives to improve them based on cyclist input.

The Draft Bicycle Suitability Maps for Butler County are available for review at:

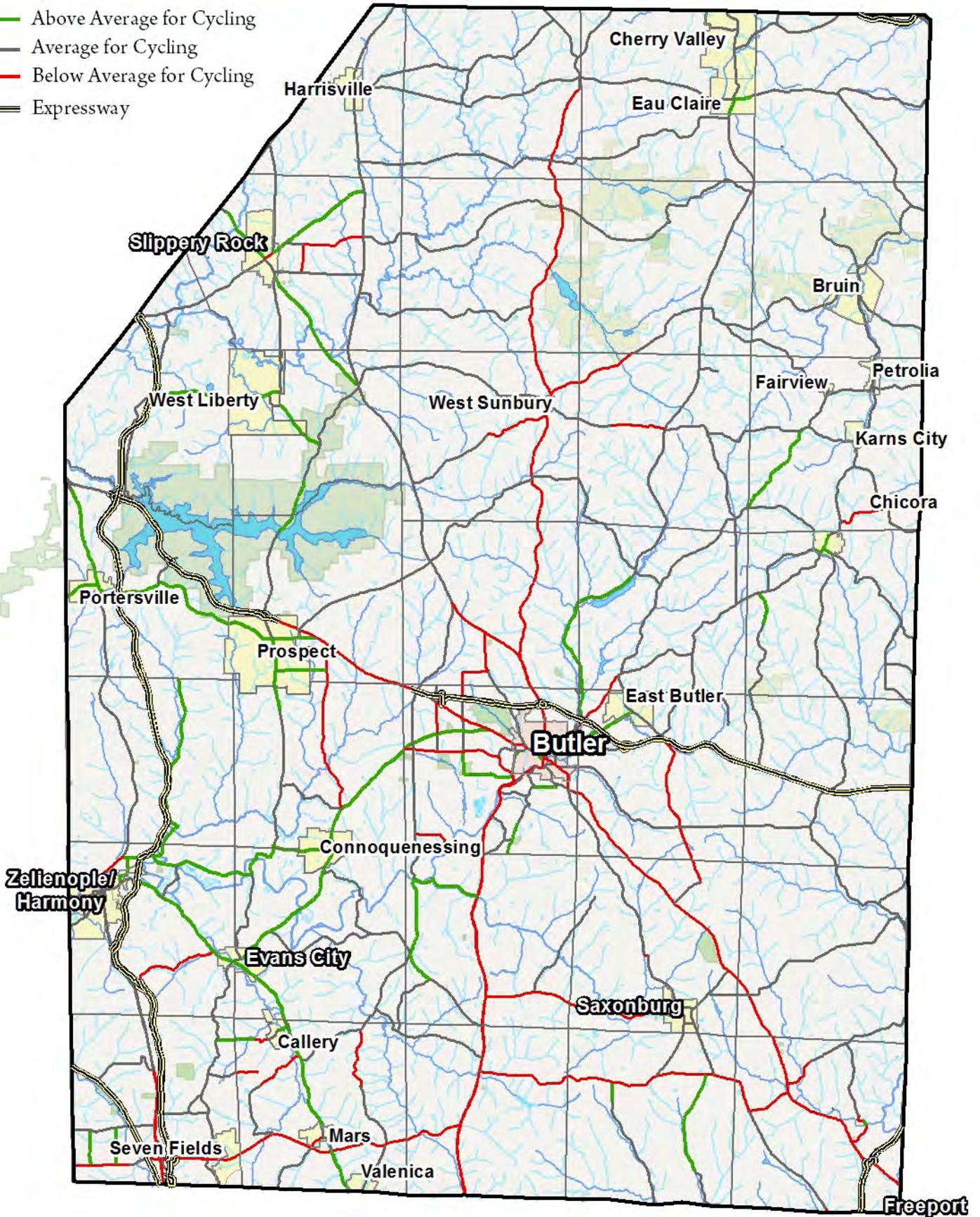
[www.spcregion.org/trans\\_pedbike\\_maps2.shtml](http://www.spcregion.org/trans_pedbike_maps2.shtml)

To provide comments concerning the maps in the area you ride contact Ryan Gordon via e-mail at [rgordon@spcregion.org](mailto:rgordon@spcregion.org).



The **Draft Bicycle Suitability Routes for Butler County** are shown on the following page.

- Above Average for Cycling
- Average for Cycling
- Below Average for Cycling
- == Expressway



Source: Southwestern PA Commission

*\*SPC and the individuals that contributed to the development of the bicycle suitability maps assume no liability for the safety of cyclists using these roadways*

# SUMMARY OF GREENWAY RECOMMENDATIONS

## Active Living/Alternative

### Transportation Recommendations

- 1) Work collaboratively with organizations to complete mutually beneficial projects;
- 2) Integrate trails and active living into the everyday life of the county's residents;
- 3) Create paved shared use paths as alternative active transportation and recreation corridors; and
- 4) Advocate and promote Complete Streets, Safe Routes to Schools, and Walkable Community concepts.

## Conservation of Natural Resources

### Recommendations

- 1) Foster public/private partnerships for the conservation of natural resources;
- 2) Educate decisionmakers on the benefits of conserving natural resources;
- 3) Educate the public on the benefits of conserving natural resources; and
- 4) Develop and promote model conservation ordinances and easement agreements.

## Connectivity and Trail Development

### Recommendations

- 1) Maintain and upgrade the existing trail system in Alameda Park;
- 2) Evaluate land/water based trails, re-route non-sustainable trails in a sustainable manner, or abandon non-sustainable trails that cannot be made sustainable;
- 3) Create/enhance/foster recreation hubs throughout the County;
- 4) Connect main streets and urban areas to the countryside;
- 5) Connect trails to housing so that homeowners have access to the trails and other recreation resources;
- 6) Plan, design, and implement trail mapping, electronic wayfinding and signage programs;
- 7) Provide trails for all users: hikers, bikers, equestrians, canoers/kayakers, snowmobilers, and ATVers;

- 8) Reduce maintenance requirements by adopting, educating, and promoting a 'Leave No Trace' philosophy.

## Water Trail Development

### Recommendations

In her thesis completed in 2002, "Case Studies of Water Trail Impacts on Rural Communities", Lindsay Johnson provides the following recommendation for developing a successful water trail.

"Rural communities interested in water trail development should be aware of impacts on local culture, the environment, and businesses. Negative impacts can be mitigated if the community is supportive of water trail development and there is dedicated management."

The following recommendations should help project leaders plan, organize, and create facilities for water trails while minimizing impacts on rural communities.

### Planning and Organizational Needs

1. A shared vision for a water trail is a goal that community members believe in and are willing to work towards. Dedicated local support for a goal-oriented project will sustain local water trail benefits. A dedicated group of volunteers is key to water trail success. A water trail must be advocated and maintained locally if the community will reap economic and social benefits.
2. Address landowner(s) and citizen concerns through outreach to the community early in the project. A designated contact person should respond quickly and accurately to suggestions, concerns, and other comments. A pre-opening/pre-construction trail paddle will allow community members to see the proposed blueway for themselves.
3. Solidify funding, planning, and overall water trail management with clear leadership and goals.

These factors should be considered before marketing a water trail.

4. Investigate local goals, norms, and land use patterns that are inconsistent with the water trail vision or threaten the integrity of a paddling experience. Tourism development in rural areas will have social implications including increased land values.
5. Explore partnership opportunities and apply for grants and offers of assistance. Local officials, government agencies, businesses, and the community should commit to water trail project goals. Successful water trails are the result of a cooperative effort between an active citizen group, a responsive public agency, and a supportive community, all of whom share a vision for the trail. Partner with lodging, eating and drinking, retail sales, and recreational services businesses.
6. Host events to advertise the trail, build support, and draw new volunteers. Noteworthy events such as water trail grand openings and annual paddling festivals provide excellent opportunities to make contact with the community, present accurate information, and generate positive media attention.

### **Infrastructure Needs**

1. Designate and provide signage for legal access points and public land at reasonable intervals along the greenway corridor to minimize landowner concerns.
2. Promote 'leave no trace' ethics or provide adequately maintained facilities to mitigate environmental impacts from improperly disposed human waste, garbage, and litter.
3. Improve access to parking at river put-ins. Information and access are the two primary issues for improving trail system usage.
4. Manage a river experience. The quality of the natural environment and uncrowded river conditions are important to paddlers. These

aspects of the river experience are vital for all management actions.

5. Explore the history of waterways, and interpret these stories to paddlers in creative ways. Trail users often have an interest in the history and environment of the community and can help to support museums, nature centers, and other cultural assets. The interpretation of history and linkages with the past is a marketable concept.
6. Offer a variety of accessible activities. Paddlers are often interested in easy access to downtowns, restaurants, campgrounds, bed and breakfast establishments, outdoor recreation experiences, and learning about local history and culture. Successful paddle destinations offer diverse activities with a wide variety of opportunities. Overnight trips are key for increasing economic impact and attracting users from a larger area.

### ***Management, Operations, and Maintenance Recommendations***

Develop a new model for creating, maintaining, and advocating for resources for trails, parks, and waterways such as partnering with established service organizations, creating a non-profit friends organization, or other means.

- 1) Identify dedicated funding sources to sustain greenway system;
- 2) Evaluate current maintenance practices, and institute sustainable management/maintenance practices;
- 3) Improve intergovernmental cooperation for the water trails between municipalities, counties, and states; and
- 4) Codify management, operations, and maintenance policies and procedures.

### ***Leadership Recommendations***

- 1) Formalize delivery and implementation strategies of greenways development between the County and its partners;
- 2) Pursue resources corroboratively;
- 3) Foster partnerships between conservation

and recreation organizations, public agencies, landowners, private sector companies, local municipalities, and dedicated individuals;

- 4) Promote, educate, and facilitate Trail Town concepts in local business districts; and
- 5) Promote, educate, and facilitate Activity Hub concepts to identified landowners.

## **Marketing & Tourism**

### **Recommendations**

- 1) Promote Butler County's outdoor opportunities locally, regionally, and state-wide with the Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau, the local media and other entities;
- 2) Develop and promote an on-road bicycle network;
- 3) Establish unified standards for trails through signage and marketing efforts;
- 5) Evaluate and pursue opportunities to partner promotional efforts with the private sector; and
- 6) Develop a centralized database of active recreation opportunities and promote them through social media and an interactive website.



## IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

Proposed natural, recreation and transportation greenway corridors will pass through public land such as national and state forests, state game lands, and other public lands. In these areas, the corridors are generally conserved for the intended use. However, many natural, recreation and transportation greenway corridors will pass through privately owned land. Few municipalities in Butler County have basic provisions to promote the conservation of the natural system resources.

Therefore it is recommended that the Butler County Planning Commission work with local municipalities and their elected officials to be proactive in conserving natural systems greenways corridors by encouraging the conservation of riparian buffers (streamside setbacks); steep slope margins; interior forest habitat; woodlands; seasonal high water table soils; heritage trees; and habitats of rare, threatened, or endangered species.

Land use tools can be adopted and are highly recommended: to protect the health, safety, and welfare of Butler County residents; to reduce flooding and other stormwater management problems currently being experienced by the County's municipalities; to reduce the costs of providing public services to maintain and operate the County's and municipalities' infrastructure; and to achieve the vision for retaining Butler County's rural character.

### **Education**

We recommend the County Planning Commission begin a process of educating elected officials and residents of municipalities who have not completed and adopted a Comprehensive Plan or Zoning Ordinance. The educational process must focus on the benefits provided by good planning and the downfalls associated with poor planning or reactive planning efforts.

Educational efforts should be conducted based on the priorities established for the natural system greenway corridors. Therefore, the educational

process should begin in those municipalities with Exceptional Priority natural system greenway corridors.

As the educational process progresses and municipalities become comfortable with the concepts, it is recommended the County work with the municipalities to encourage that comprehensive plans be updated/completed and to have them consider updating local ordinances to facilitate the conservation of natural system greenway corridors in their respective municipalities.

### **Why Plan?**

Many communities choose not to plan for their future. Rather, their community's future is planned for them by those developers whose goal is their own financial best interest and not necessarily the best interest of the community. Every community has resources, features, and qualities about its community that it would like to retain. Without pro-active planning, it is nearly impossible to retain those features. Planning for a community begins with asking, how do you want to improve your municipality?

Lack of pro-active planning efforts creates costs for the community and its residents:

#### *On Quality of Life*

- Failing and abandoned businesses reflect poorly on community image
- Poor design impacts aesthetics and community pride
- Isolation for older and younger residents, due to the need to rely on the automobile to access goods and services
- Lack of access to open spaces and places to recreate

#### *On Rural Lands and Natural Resources*

- Loss of wildlife habitat and pollution of aquatic resources diminish biodiversity and recreational hunting and fishing opportunities
- Removal of vegetation increases stormwater runoff and causes flooding, creating a public

safety concern

- Removal of vegetation results in increased air pollution

#### *On Transportation*

- Limits choices – no alternatives to the automobile
- Increases transportation costs – more miles traveled

#### *On Redevelopment / Development*

- Incompatible adjacent land uses
- Increased redevelopment / development costs
- Overgrading leads to unstable slopes which create a public safety concern
- Impervious surfaces increase runoff, stormwater flow, and flooding thus creating a public safety concern
- Stream water quality can be degraded by erosion

By pro actively planning for our community's future we can:

- Retain and attract people and jobs
- Keep existing cities and towns vital
- Enhance natural resources and quality of life amenities
- Conserve tax dollars

Successful communities have these characteristics:

- A pro-active, action-oriented mindset and a strong private-public partnership
- A diverse community leadership system with extensive citizen involvement
- A strong implementation plan with specific benchmarks and measurements of success

Traditionally, land use tools, such as comprehensive planning, zoning, and land development and subdivision ordinances have been used to guide a community in achieving its vision for the future. However, in many areas of Pennsylvania, zoning is a contentious word, setting off concerns of taking away property rights and one's ability to do as they wish with their land.

However, municipal leaders must recognize that local government is the backbone of Pennsylvania's governmental structure, and local government has the responsibility to plan and take charge rather than doing nothing. To do nothing puts planning in the hands of others who may not care about the future of our community. Good planning, and the implementation of land use tools that often follow, are not designed to take away property rights from the property owner, but rather are designed to guide the community in achieving its vision for the future. Good planning cannot occur in a vacuum. It must include residents of the community and be a pro-active effort which thoughtfully considers all aspects of each issue and builds consensus on the vision being established for the community's future.

#### **Keystone Principles**

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development has adopted a set of principles and criteria to guide investment and support local growth and economic development. These principles are referred to as the **Keystone Principles**.

These principles set the focus for continuing efforts to encourage economic development that sustains and grows economies in urban, suburban, and rural areas, while at the same time conserving exceptional natural resources.

This integrated approach not only focuses on prioritizing efforts to focus on economic development, but also addresses the Commonwealth's priorities related to restoring and enhancing the environment, recreation, and cultural resources.

The **Ten Keystone Principles** are:

1. Redevelop first: Support revitalization of Pennsylvania's many cities and towns and give funding preference to reuse and redevelopment of "brownfield" and previously developed sites in urban, suburban, and rural communities.
2. Provide efficient infrastructure: Fix

it first: use and improve existing infrastructure. Make highway and public transportation investments that use context-sensitive design to improve existing developed areas and attract residents and visitors to these places. Require private and public expansions of service to be consistent with approved comprehensive plans and consistent implementing ordinances.

3. Concentrate development: Support infill and “greenfield” development that is compact, conserves land, and is integrated with existing or planned transportation, water and sewer services, and schools. Foster creation of well-designed developments and neighborhoods that offer healthy life style opportunities for Pennsylvania residents.
4. Increase job opportunities: Retain and attract a diverse, educated workforce through the quality of economic opportunity and quality of life offered in Pennsylvania’s varied communities. Integrate educational and job training opportunities for workers of all ages with the workforce needs of businesses. Invest in businesses that offer good paying, high-quality jobs, and that are located near existing or planned water and sewer infrastructure, housing, existing workforce, and transportation access (highway or transit).
5. Foster sustainable businesses: Strengthen natural resource-based businesses that use sustainable practices in energy production and use, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and recreation and tourism. Increase our supply of renewable energy. Reduce consumption of water, energy, and materials to reduce

foreign energy dependence and address climate change.

6. Restore and enhance the environment: Maintain and expand land, air, and water protection and conservation programs. Conserve and restore environmentally-sensitive lands and natural areas for ecological health, biodiversity, and wildlife habitat.
7. Enhance recreational and heritage resources: Maintain and improve recreational and heritage assets and infrastructure throughout the commonwealth. This includes parks and forests, greenways and trails, heritage parks, historic sites and resources, fishing and boating areas, and game lands offering recreational and cultural opportunities to Pennsylvanians and visitors.
8. Expand housing opportunities: Support the construction and rehabilitation of housing of all types to meet the needs of people of all incomes and abilities. Support local projects that are based on a comprehensive vision or plan; have significant potential impact (e.g., increased tax base, private investment); and demonstrate local capacity, technical ability, and leadership to implement the project.
9. Plan regionally, implement locally: Support multi-municipal, county, and local government planning and implementation that has broad public input and support and is consistent with these principles. Provide education, training, technical assistance, and funding for such planning and for transportation, infrastructure, economic development, housing, mixed use, and conservation projects that

implement such plans.

10. Be fair: Support equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning to ensure social, economic, and environmental goals are met.

### **Conservation and Open Space Tools**

Municipalities can implement open space policies and assist in efforts to establish greenways and conserve open space by:

- Including natural resource protection standards in the subdivision and land development regulations.
- Preparing a detailed open space plan identifying desired location of future parks, major buffers, trails, greenways, and the location of designated sensitive areas. The plan should be made part of the Comprehensive Plan and should be updated regularly.
- Developing standards for open space dedications and expect all developers to dedicate land or provide fees in lieu for the general open space and/or parks. These criteria should be designed to mitigate the impacts of their development on neighboring properties and to provide open space resources for future users and occupants of the development.
- Preparing municipal Open Space and Greenway Plans to designate municipal Greenway systems that serve as the unifying element of the municipal open space network; to protect recreational, scenic, and significant sites and areas; and to ensure they are accessible to the public.
- Encouraging land owners and developers to dedicate public lands.
- Working to acquire conservation easements through the purchase or donation of land to preserve key open space buffers and trail connections.
- Developing/enhancing subdivision and land development ordinances to conserve open space areas in subdivisions and to ensure their long-term maintenance and conservation.

In addition to the open space policies, municipal comprehensive plans should establish policies regarding parks and recreation. This includes a recommendation to develop greenways – a linear path system that is of natural linear areas, incorporating foot or bike paths to provide access along creeks and rivers, abandoned railways, corridors, and transportation rights of way.

### **Land Use Tools Audit**

Municipality Subdivision and Land Development Ordinances should be reviewed to determine how effectively they promote the county-wide goal of establishing greenways within Butler County. When deficiencies are identified municipalities should consider taking action to strengthen their ordinances to promote the conservation of greenways and to establish pedestrian, bicycle and trail connections throughout Butler County.

## Model Ordinance Recommendations

We recommend local municipal ordinances include provisions to conserve natural system greenway components. Pocopson Township, in Chester County, has adopted a Natural Resource Protection Ordinance that was developed to conserve natural system greenway corridors, within its Township. The following table provides a summary of their conservation requirements.

Resource Element	Maximum Disturbance
Floodplain Conservation District	0%
Very Steep Slopes	10%
Steep Slopes	25%
Steep Slope Margins	25%
Wetlands	0%
Inner Riparian Buffer	0%
Outer Riparian Buffer	0%
Seasonal High Water Table Soils 20%	20%
Heritage Trees	0%
Rare Species Sites	0%
Exceptional Natural Areas	10%
Forest Interior Habitat	10%
Woodlands	5-25% depending on classification

Another example of municipal implementation of conservation provisions by ordinance is Hellam Township, York County. Hellam Township's ordinances establish a Restricted Development Overlay District to conserve natural resources within the Township. Their ordinance is summarized:

### **Restricted Development Overlay District**

The Restricted Development Overlay District is intended to protect those areas of Hellam Township with natural features that are essential to the health, economy, and rural character of the Township, including steep slopes, wetlands, flood-prone areas, woodlands, hazardous geology, streams, and unique geological features. This Overlay District is interpreted in conjunction with the Hellam Township Official Map to encourage the preservation of the Township's natural resource base and rural character by directing, whenever possible, land development away from environmentally sensitive areas.

Permitted uses. The development and/or use of any land will be permitted, subject to the provisions of this section, provided that the development or uses adhere to all the requirements of the underlying zone.

The Restricted Development Overlay District shall include:

1. Steep slopes. Slopes in excess of 15%.
2. Wetlands. Any portion of a property within a designated wetland as

- determined by current state and/or federal guidelines.
3. Woodlands. Any portion of a property having a continuous canopy equal to or greater than 10,000 square feet.
  4. Floodplains. Any portion of a property within the Floodplain Overlay District.
  5. Streams. Any portion of a property within 25 feet of the ordinary waterline of a naturally occurring waterway having a drainage area of 200 acres or more.
  6. Unique geological features. The unique geological features shown on the Hellam Township Official Map.

Design and Performance Standards:

1. Conservation of steeply sloped lands:
  - (a) No site disturbance shall be allowed on slopes exceeding 25%.
  - (b) Disturbance on slopes between 15% and 25% shall require the submission of a detailed site grading plan.
  - (c) Disturbance on slopes between 15% and 25% shall require the submission of an impact assessment which show evidence and consideration of all reasonable alternatives to the proposed activity and the provisions taken to minimize adverse impacts.
2. Conservation of wetlands.
  - (a) For all projects where wetlands have been delineated, a jurisdictional determination performed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or notification from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that wetlands do not exist on the project site is required. Wetlands shown on any plan must match this jurisdictional determination. In areas where soils have hydric inclusions, or in areas with shallow depth to groundwater, or evidence of surface water, the Township reserves the right to conduct, at the applicant's expense, a wetlands determination, including a wetlands and wetlands margin delineation.
  - (b) Any portion of a property within a delineated wetlands area shall not be altered, regraded, filled, piped, diverted, or built upon except in conformance with the regulations of the PA DEP and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
  - (c) Any activity requiring a federal or state permit shall obtain such permit before final approval by the Township.
  - (d) All uses and activities shall minimize, to the extent possible, destruction, degradation, or adverse impact on the wetland.
  - (e) Wells and septic systems shall not be located in wetlands areas.
3. Conservation of woodlands.
  - (a) In areas not within the Continuous Canopy Woodland Corridor as shown on the Official Map, no more than 20% of the trees of six-inch caliper or larger within, nor more than 20% of the total area of a woodland may be altered or cleared unless a mitigation plan is filed with the Township; provided, however, that this limitation shall not apply if a prior mitigation plan has been filed with the Township or if

the activity constitutes “forestry” as defined herein.

- (b) In areas within the Continuous Canopy Woodland Corridor as shown on the Official Map, no more than 20% of the trees of six-inch caliper or larger within, nor more than 20% of the total area of, a woodland may be removed for any purpose (including but not limited to the erection of structures), unless a mitigation plan is filed with the Township and the landowner follows all provisions in Article IV of the MPC.
  - (c) Any clearing or alteration of a woodland or forest shall be undertaken to maintain, to the greatest extent possible, the existing continuous canopy of trees where a continuous canopy exists.
  - (d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit the practice of forestry.
4. Conservation of floodplain areas:
- (a) Any portion of a property within a designated floodplain area shall not be altered, regraded, filled, or built upon.
5. Conservation of streams:
- (a) Any portion of a property within 25 feet of the ordinary waterline of any Type A stream shown on the Zoning Map shall not be altered, regraded, filled, or used for any purpose, including the raising of crops and/or the keeping of livestock, except in conformance with this section.
  - (b) Any portion of a property within 10 feet of the ordinary waterline of any Type B drainage way shown on the Zoning Map shall not be altered, regraded, filled, or used for any purpose, including the raising of crops and/or the keeping of livestock, except in conformance with this section. In cases where the flow in a drainage way is intermittent, the measurement shall be taken from the center line of the drainageway.
  - (c) A filter strip shall be maintained within all of the above areas.
  - (d) Where it is necessary to cross a stream or drainageway with a street, access road or driveway, such crossing shall be perpendicular to the thread of the stream or drainageway, and shall minimize the disturbance to the filter strip. If any vegetation is proposed to be disturbed, the disturbed area must be replaced so that the resulting size of the filter strip remains the same.
  - (e) Where it is necessary to provide for livestock crossings of a stream, farmers are encouraged to work with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to establish best management practices (BMPs) to protect the stream.
- 5.1 Conservation of riparian buffer areas.
- (a) All riparian buffer areas shall include the 100 feet immediately adjacent to the stream bank or outer edge of all watercourses, including springs and seeps.
  - (b) In the event that any floodplains or wetlands which exist within the 100 foot buffer area extend to within 35 feet from the outer edge of the 100 foot buffer or extend beyond the 100 foot buffer,

additional buffer areas shall be established to extend at least 25 feet from the outer edge of such wetland or floodplain.

- (c) The outer edge of the buffer area of all watercourses, springs and seeps shall be extended an additional four feet horizontally for each percent of slope based on the average slope as calculated over the 200 feet extending from the outer bank of a watercourse or the edge of a spring or seep. Such calculation shall be made at intervals no less than 50 feet or at such intervals so as to accurately determine slope deviations within the 200 foot distance.
- (d) No alteration, grading or regrading, filling, or any use shall be permitted within the riparian buffer area except the following, which shall follow best management practices (BMPs) as defined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service:

- [1] Raising of crops.

- [2] Keeping of livestock.

- [3] Forestry and timber harvesting (in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 444 of this Code of Ordinances and all other applicable requirements).

- [4] Hunting, fishing and wildlife preserves/refuges.

- [5] Passive recreation and parks.

6. Conservation of unique geological features:

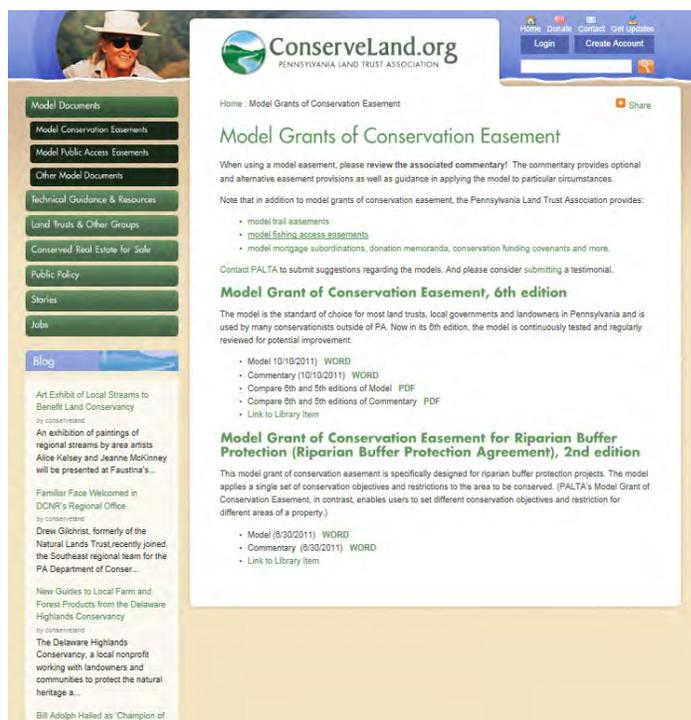
- (a) The “unique geological features” shown on the Hellam Township Official Map shall not be altered, regraded, or built upon except in conformance with the provisions of the Official Map unless the

landowner follows all provisions in Article IV of the MPC.

## Model Easement Agreements

Conservation of sensitive natural resources can also occur on a voluntary basis. The Pennsylvania Land Trust Association has prepared Model Easement Agreements and corresponding commentary for the respective agreements. The commentary provides optional and alternative easement provisions as well as guidance in applying the model to particular circumstances. To obtain the latest version of these documents visit <http://conserveland.org/modelconservationeasements>.

- Model Grant of Conservation Easement
- Model Grant of Conservation Easement for Riparian Buffer Protection
- Model Trail and Fishing Access Agreement
- Model Trail Easement Agreement
- Model Grant of Trail Easement - Short Form
- Model Grant of Fishing and Boat Access Agreement
- Model Fishing Access Agreement
- Model Stewardship Funding Convent
- Model Preliminary Agreement Regarding Conservation Easement Donation
- Model Mortgage Subordination
- Model Water Quality Improvement Easement



## Financing Open Space

**Public Finance for Open Space: A Guide for Pennsylvania's Municipalities**, Heritage Conservancy, provides guidance on a variety of methods for financing open space in Pennsylvania. Topics include:

### PART I: Introduction

- Why Invest in Open Space?
- Financing Open Space

### PART II: Public Financing Options for Open Space

- Pay-As-You-Go Approaches
- Property Tax
- Earned Income Tax
- Real Estate Transfer Tax
- Reservation of Park and Recreation Land
- Borrowing: Pay-As-You-Use Approaches

### PART III: Pennsylvania Law on Open Space Financing

- Act 153 of 1996
- Act 4 of 2006
- Act 138 of 1998
- The Referendum Process

### PART IV: Steps to a Successful Referendum

- Phase 1: Organization
- Phase 2: Education
- Phase 3: Action
- Phase 4: Celebration, Implementation and Continuation

### PART V: Case Studies

## Greenway Management Structure

There are many options to consider when exploring the appropriate structure for managing greenway and trail projects within Butler County. Further, there will likely be multiple organizations that are responsible for managing various aspects of greenways and trails in Butler County. Before assuming you need to create a new organization or agency to implement a specific aspect of greenways and trail within the county, your first step is to determine whether an existing organization is capable of and willing to manage the advancement of a particular project.

The framework identified capabilities within agencies and organizations can vary greatly depending on the regulatory, agency, and organizational requirements governing a particular structure. Therefore, it is important to define the capabilities needed to manage a particular project. In other words, it is imperative to compare the management needs with the capabilities of existing agencies and organizations to determine if they have the ability and capacity for your needs.

### Potential Management Needs

1. Organizational and financial administration;
2. Organizational sustainability;
3. Financial sustainability;
4. Administration of volunteers and ability to build and retain pools of volunteers;
5. Ability to secure federal, state, and/or municipal funding;
6. Ability to secure foundation funding;
7. Geographic jurisdiction or potential area of jurisdiction;
8. Project planning and design;
9. Partnership and relationship building;
10. Land acquisition, access easement and rights-of-way;
11. Negotiation/equitable ownership;
12. Construction funding;
13. Project mobilization and implementation;
14. Other resources receipt and management (e.g. donated materials or equipment w/ operator);
15. Maintenance capabilities/needs or arrangements for maintenance;
16. Insurance or insurability/risk management;

17. Operations/maintenance funding;
18. Accountability to public interest/fiduciary responsibility to public trust; and
19. Public relations and marketing ability.

It may be the case that additional needs are required to manage greenways in Butler County. It is important that they identify them early in the process and that those needs are discussed with potential partners who may assist in managing the implementation of greenways within the County.

If an agency or organization cannot be identified that can manage greenways in the County, then it must be determined if there is potential to establish an organization to provide the management needs.

Typical structures include:

- Municipal Organization
- Municipal Authority
- Non-Profit Organization

There are many variations of these management structures, each type providing opportunities and limitations regarding their ability to manage greenway projects.

Further, it is often beneficial to form a public private/non-profit partnership. Such an arrangement is beneficial because each entity can access support and funding not available to its partner.

In general, the public component may:

- Acquire easements and property;
- Hold easements and property;
- Ensure consistent development along corridors which pass through a number of municipalities;
- Insure for general liability; and
- Provide access to government funding.

The non-profit component may:

- Provide access to foundation and corporate giving;

- Organize and conduct fund raising events;
  - Organize volunteers;
  - Assist with property acquisition;
  - Leverage volunteers to provide routine maintenance along trails;
  - Leverage volunteers for quarterly work days along trails;
  - Organize volunteers to be the eyes and ears of the trails;
  - Promote, market and advocate greenways in the County; and
  - Build support for the expansion of the trails.
- Build capacity and recruit, mentor & train new staff and volunteers and do not “throw them to the wolves.”
    - Identify committed volunteers;
    - Those who are typically busy;
    - Those who are interested in particular area/ subject;
    - Those who complain – get them involved!
  - Be Honest about expectations.
    - How much time do you expect of them per month?
    - How many meetings will they be expected to attend?
    - How long will the meetings last?

Regardless of the management structure and its makeup, there are several key components required to poise the organization for success. These components include:

- Communication: Just as location is of key importance to real estate, communication is of key importance to advancing greenways and trails. The following recommendations shall be considered.
  - Hold membership meetings on a regular basis; at a minimum these meetings should occur quarterly, but more frequently would be better.
  - Use technology to communicate – provide monthly email updates, use email blasts and social media posts to get the word out to members and other interested stateholders.
  - Communicate not only with existing partners but also with potential partners. Pick up the phone, send email when necessary, and distribute “Need to know info” through a customized website, email blasts, social media, or other means;
- Build on each other’s’ strengths within the organization and externally with partners.
  - Identify members’ strengths and ask for their assistance;
  - Identify and establish strategic partnerships;
  - Delegate to members and volunteers, and follow up to provide assistance when & where needed;
  - Expect to “return the favor” to those who assist you;

## Potential Partners

Throughout the course of this study, potential partners were identified. These potential partners may provide direct or indirect assistance/partnerships in advancing greenways and trails in Butler County. They include agencies and organizations from these sectors:

- State Government
- County Government
- Municipal Government
- Trail Organizations
- Conservation Organizations
- Snowmobile Organizations
- Bicycling/Mountain Biking Organizations
- Foundations
- Equestrian Organizations
- Boating Organizations
- Fish and Game Organizations
- Birding Organizations
- Watershed Organizations
- Colleges and Universities
- Private Sector (businesses)

These organizations can potentially perform a role in planning, implementing, developing, managing, operating, maintaining, and marketing greenways and trails in Butler County.

### Public Partners

- Butler County Planning Commission
- Butler County Conservation District
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Moraine and McConnells Mill State Parks
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry
- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
- Pennsylvania Game Commission
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
- Local Municipalities

### Existing Conservation Organizations Serving Butler County

#### Arrowhead Chapter of Trout Unlimited

746 Painter Avenue  
Ford Cliff, PA 16228  
(724) 763-8789  
www.arrowheadtu.com

#### Bartramian Audubon Society

PO Box 315,  
Slippery Rock, PA 16057  
(814) 432-4496  
www.bartramianaudubon.org

#### Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania

614 Dorseyville Rd.  
Pittsburgh, PA, 15238  
Phone: (412) 963-6100  
Fax: (412) 963-6761  
Web: <http://www.aswp.org>

#### **Organizational Information**

Type of Organization..... Land Trust

#### **Mission or Purpose**

The mission of ASWP is to inspire and educate the people of southwestern Pennsylvania to be respectful and responsible stewards of the natural world.

#### Butler County Agricultural Land Preservation Board

Phone: 724-284-5270  
Web: [www.bccdonline.org/Farm.html](http://www.bccdonline.org/Farm.html)

Contact: Ronald Fodor

#### **Organizational Information**

Type of Organization..... County Farmland  
Preservation Board

**Butler-Freeport Community Trail Council**

Web: <http://www.butlerfreeporttrail.org>

Contact: Chris Ziegler (president)

**Organizational Information**

Type of Organization..... Trail Group

**Mission or Purpose**

The Butler-Freeport Community Trail Council, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation and volunteer organization which spearheaded the building of the Butler-Freeport Community Trail, a Rails-to-Trails project, in partnership with Buffalo Township, Butler County. The Trail Council through its members promotes and assists in the development of the Trail, assists in the maintenance and improvements of the Trail, educates the community on the uses and benefits of the Trail, and generates community involvement.

**North Country Trail Association, Pennsylvania Chapters**

Web: <http://www.northcountrytrail.org>

**Organizational Information**

Type of Organization..... Trail Group

**Mission or Purpose**

The mission of the North Country Trail Association is to develop, maintain, preserve and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail through a national network of volunteers, chapters, partner organizations and government agencies. The Association achieves its mission by creating, encouraging and supporting programs of public education, membership services, recreational opportunities and resource and corridor protection in keeping with its Vision for the Trail. There are 6 chapters in Pennsylvania, the Clarion County Chapter, Butler County Chapter, Rock Chapter, Greater Pittsburgh Chapter, and Wampum Chapter.

**Western Pennsylvania Conservancy**

800 Waterfront Drive

Pittsburgh, PA, 15222

Phone: (412) 288-2777

Fax: (412) 281-1792

Web: [www.waterlandlife.org](http://www.waterlandlife.org)

Email: [info@paconserve.org](mailto:info@paconserve.org)

**Organizational Information**

Type of Organization..... Land Trust

Year Founded ..... 1932

**Mission or Purpose**

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy protects and restores exceptional places to provide our region with clean waters and healthy forests, wildlife and natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservancy creates green spaces and gardens, contributing to the vitality of our cities and towns, and preserves Fallingwater, a symbol of people living in harmony with nature.

**Wild Waterways Conservancy**

101 E. Spring St., Ste 200

Zelienople, PA, 16063

Phone: 724-452-1429

Web: [www.wildwaterways.org](http://www.wildwaterways.org)

**Organizational Information**

Type of Organization..... Land Trust

**Mission or Purpose**

The mission of the Wild Waterways Conservancy is to protect and enhance the natural resources of the Connoquenessing and Slippery Rock Watersheds. Recognizing that the waterways and their surrounding lands provide critical habitat for species of concern; feature tremendous potential as a national destination for recreational opportunities; and include some of western Pennsylvania's most scenic open space; the Wild Waterways Conservancy seeks to work cooperatively with both private and public partners to preserve the watersheds' unique ecological and community features.

**Existing Recreation, Trail, Tourism, and Hunting & Fishing Organizations Serving Butler County**

**Butler-Freeport Community Trail Council**

PO Box 533  
Saxonburg, PA 16056  
president@butlerfreeporttrail.org  
www.butlerfreeporttrail.org

**Butler County Conservation District**

122 McCune Drive  
Butler, PA 16001  
(724) 284-5270  
bccd@co.butler.pa.us  
www.bccdonline.org

**Butler Outdoor Club**

PO Box 321  
Harrisville, Pa 16038  
www.butleroutdoorclub.org

**Basscasters of Butler**

<http://butlerbasscasters.org>

**The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania**

Butler County Coordinator  
Darrell Daubenspeck  
(724) 735-2363  
daubie@zoominternet.net  
www.thebsp.org

**Boy Scouts of America Moraine Trails Council**

830 Morton Ave. Extension  
Butler, PA 16001  
(724) 287-6791  
www.morainetrails.org

**Ducks Unlimited — Butler 020 Butler County Chapter**

650 Evans City Road  
Butler, PA 16001  
(724) 482-6015

**Moraine Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation**

288 Crisswell Road  
Butler, PA 16002  
(724) 496-1849  
cmpanwtf@zoominternet.net  
www.westernpaoutdoors.com/nwtfmoraine

**North Country Scenic Trail Association - Butler County Chapter**

PO Box 2968  
Butler, PA 16003  
(724) 445-3315  
but@northcountrytrail.org  
<http://northcountrytrail.org/but>

**Prospect Boys and Girls Club**

PO Box 462  
Prospect, PA 16052  
Country Club Road  
Franklin Township  
(724) 368-3644  
www.prospectboysandgirlsclub.org

**Slippery Rock Sportsmen's Club**

412 Deer Run Road  
Slippery Rock, PA 16057  
(724) 794-4333 or 724-728-2883  
srsportsman@gmail.com  
www.slipperyrocksportsman.com

**SRU Outdoor Adventures**

Aegersold Recreation Center  
Slippery Rock University  
Slippery Rock, PA 16057  
(724) 738-2883  
Web site: [www.sru.edu](http://www.sru.edu)

**Summit Township Sportsman's Club**

RD 3  
Butler, PA 16001  
(724) 282-7892

**Three Rivers Sportsman's Club**

320 S. Erico Road  
Boyers, PA 16020  
(724) 791-9942.

**Zelienople-Harmony Sportsman's Club**

PO Box 55  
Zelienople, PA 16063  
ZHSClub@zoominternet.net  
www.zelienople-harmonysportsmensclub.com

**Three Rivers Wet Weather**

3 Rivers Wet Weather Inc.  
3901 Penn Avenue, Bldg. #3  
Pittsburgh, PA 15224  
(412) 578-8375  
[www.3riverswetweather.org](http://www.3riverswetweather.org)

**Richland Sportsmen's Association**

PO Box 16  
Wildwood, PA 15091-0016  
<http://richlandsportsmens.tripod.com>

**Venture Outdoors - North**

33 Terminal Way, Suite 537A  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
(412) 255-0564 ext 228  
[www.ventureoutdoors.org/north.aspx](http://www.ventureoutdoors.org/north.aspx)

**Butler County Chamber of Commerce**

101 East Diamond Street  
Butler, PA 16001  
(724) 283-2222

**Butler City Hunting and Fishing Club**

P.O. Box 105  
Butler, Pa. 16003  
[www.bchfclub.org](http://www.bchfclub.org)

**Boyers Sportsmen's Association**

1103 Boyers Road  
PO Box 1  
Boyers, PA 16020  
[www.boyerssportsmens.org](http://www.boyerssportsmens.org)

**Evans City Sportsmen's Club**

323 T325  
Evans City, PA 16033  
(724) 538-5612

**Happy Hunters Sportsmen's Club**

PO Box 2  
Fenelton , PA 16034  
(724) 445-7510  
[www.happy-hunters.com](http://www.happy-hunters.com)

**Mars Rod & Gun Club**

141 Cashdollar Road  
Mars, PA 16046  
(724) 538-9392  
[www.marsrodandgunclub.org](http://www.marsrodandgunclub.org)



# DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS

As a result of inventory, analysis, and public participation completed for this plan, 10 recreation/transportation greenway trails, 17 natural system corridors, 5 water trails, 7 trail towns, 5 major hubs, and 3 hubs are being proposed. In addition, there are 5 conservation organizations and 25 potential implementation partners who may be able to assist in advancing the recommendations of the plan.

## Identifying Demonstration Projects

Earlier in this chapter the criteria for prioritizing Butler County's greenways are discussed. Furthering that effort, the following criteria was established to determine which of the priority greenway segments serve as the most appropriate demonstration segments, or "high priority demonstration projects."

The criteria for greenways demonstration projects is defined as:

### **A Greenways Demonstration Project should:**

- 1) Create momentum for future expansion of the greenways system
- 2) Be destination-oriented
- 3) Attract both local and regional use/attention
- 4) Increase awareness of the presence and benefits of local natural resources

Potential demonstration projects are those projects which may be more readily achievable with fewer challenges to overcome for implementation. These demonstration projects are also projects that would be ideal based on their potential to generate economic impact and target a large user base.

For purposes of implementation, potential partners for each project have been identified. These potential partners are agencies and organizations who may be able to assist in some capacity with the implementation of the proposed projects. The list of potential partners identified under each project is not exclusive as additional partners may be identified in the future.

Using this criteria, we identified 6 demonstration projects:

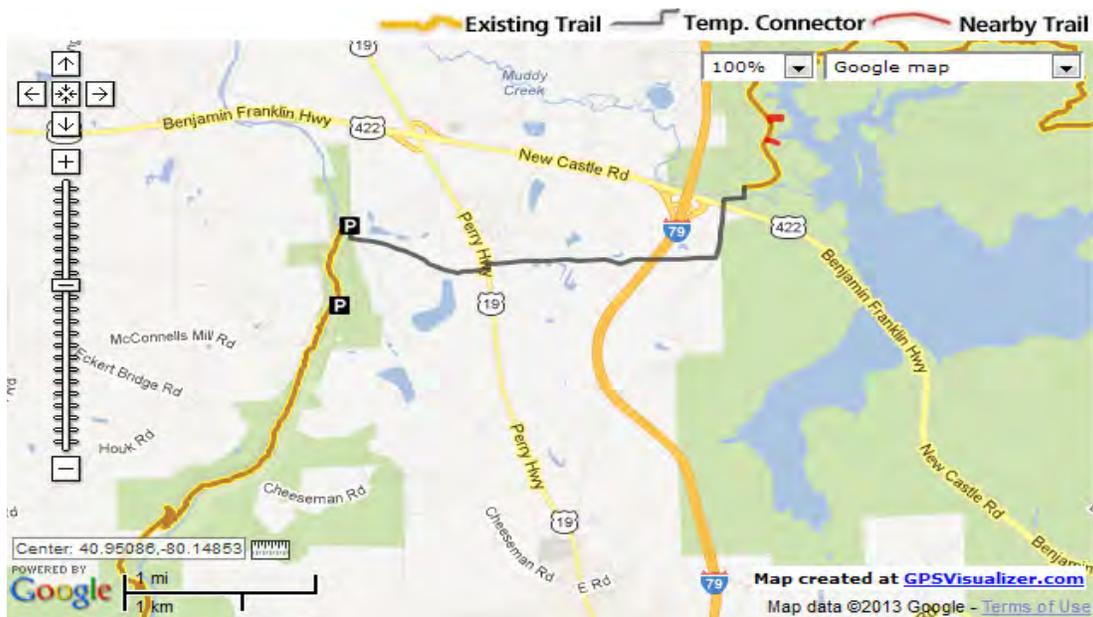
1. North Country Trail: Moraine State Park to McConnells Mill State Park
2. Slippery Rock to Moraine State Park Trail
3. Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail
4. City of Butler Trail Town & Pedestrian Bicycle Feasibility Study
5. Parker to Bruin Trail
6. Buffalo & Pittsburgh Rail-with-Trail

Each of these projects is described further on the following pages.

## 1. North Country Trail – Moraine to McConnell’s Mills Trail Feasibility Study

**Municipalities:** Muddy Creek Township and Worth Township in Butler County as well as Slippery Rock Township in Lawrence County

**Description:** This proposed trail project will finalize a right-of-way corridor for the North Country Trail between McConnell’s Mills State Park in Lawrence County and Moraine State Park in Butler County. Currently, the corridor includes 7.67 miles within McConnells Mills State Park and 15.1 miles within Moraine State Park, with a 2.62 mile on road connection between the two parks. Finalizing a right-of-way between the two parks could eliminate much of the road walk and provide over 25 miles of continuous trail.



Butler County is facilitating the preparation of a feasibility study to determine the best route for the final trail between McConnells Mills and Moraine State Parks.

**Potential Partners:** North Country Trails Association, Butler County Chapter of the North Country Trails Association, National Park Service, Butler County, Lawrence County, PA DCNR, Moraine State Park, McConnells Mills State Park, Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau, Lawrence County Visitors Bureau, Moraine State Park Preservation Fund and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

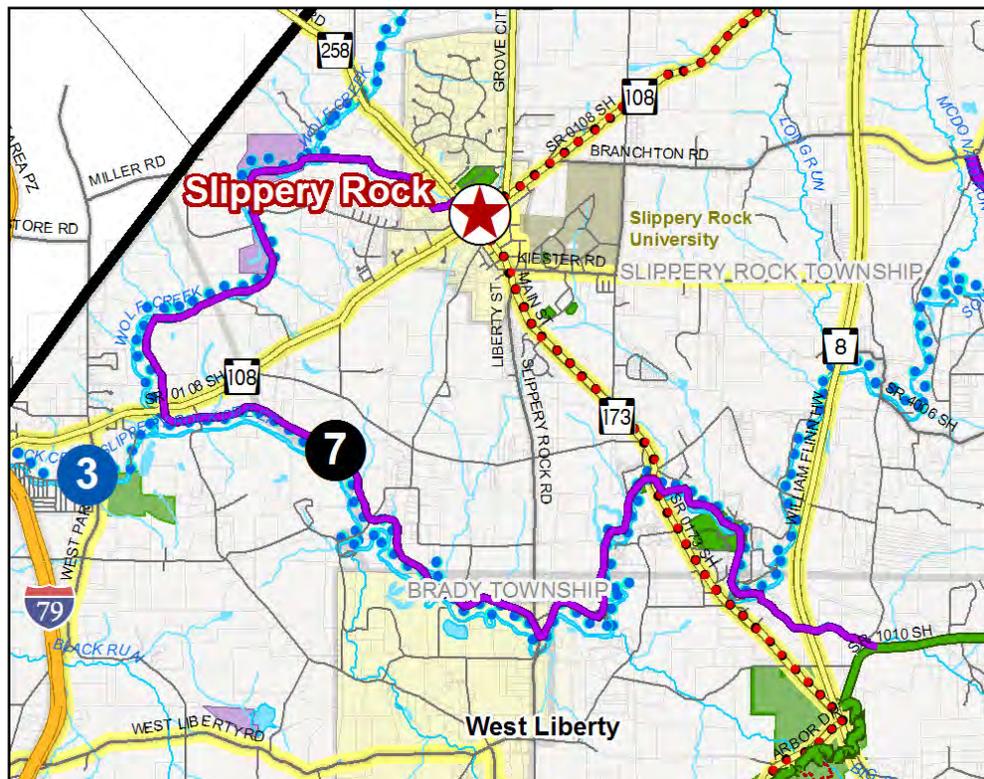
## 2. Slippery Rock to Moraine State Park Trail

**Municipalities:** Slippery Rock Borough, Slippery Rock Township, Worth Township, West Liberty Borough, and Brady Township

**Description:** The proposed Slippery Rock Creek Trail connects Main Street in Slippery Rock, as well as the University, with the North Country Trail and Moraine State Park. This trail would provide numerous recreation opportunities for residents as well as the students of Slippery Rock University. Additionally, this trail would provide educational opportunities being that the trail would also connect to Wolf Creek Narrows and Millers Woods owned by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Moraine State Park Conservation area, and Jennings Environmental Education Center in Moraine State Park.

The proposed trail leaves Main Street in Slippery Rock heading west along a tributary of Wolf Creek to Wolf Creek. Once it reaches Wolf Creek, the Trail heads southwest along the creek to its mouth at Slippery Rock Creek. At Slippery Rock Creek the Trail heads east following the creek across Slippery Rock Road to Rock Falls park, then across Route 173 to Armco Park, and finally across Route 8 to the North Country Trail near Hallston Road.

**Potential Partners:** Butler County, Slippery Rock University, Moraine State Park, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (Wolf Creek Narrows), North Country Trail Association, Old Stone House, Slippery Rock Creek Watershed Coalition, Jennings Environmental Center, Audubon Society (Millers Woods) and Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau.



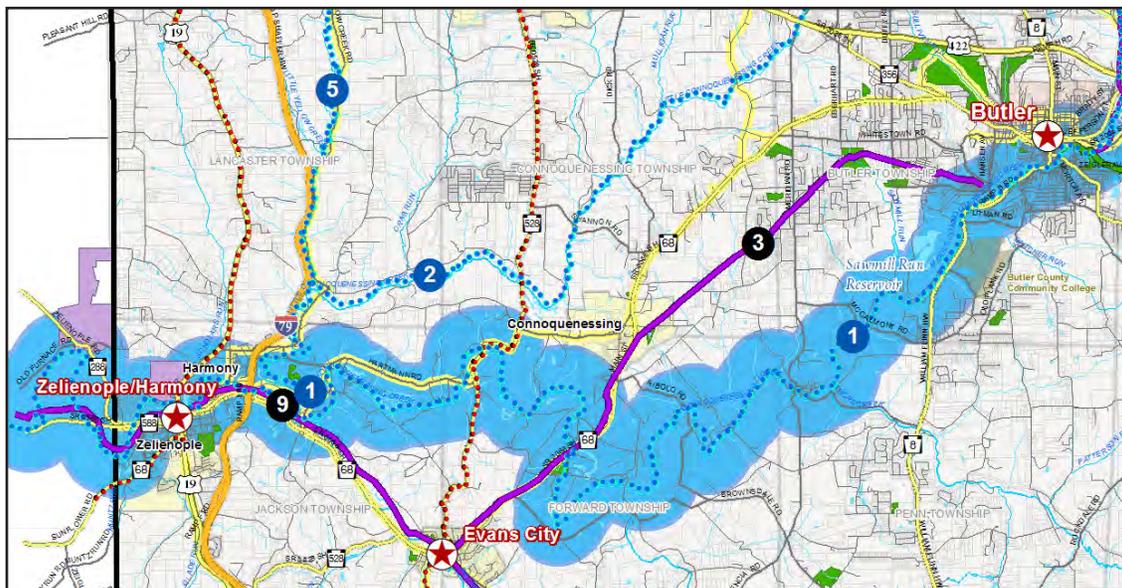
### 3. Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail (Butler to Zelenople)

**Municipalities:** City of Butler, Butler Township, Penn Township, Forward Township, Jackson Township, Harmony Borough, and Zelenople Borough.

**Description:** This project entails completing a feasibility study to determine the potential for creating a PA Fish and Boat recognized water trail from the City of Butler to the creeks confluence with the Beaver River in Beaver County. Currently, approximately 19 miles of Connoquenessing Creek is listed as canoeable from Zelenople downstream to the Beaver River. This feasibility study would determine the potential for creating a water trail approximately 45 miles in length from the City of Butler down to the Beaver River, with potential to connect to the Ohio River Water Trail via the Beaver River.

A great proposed starting point for the water trail would be Father Marinaro Park near the Butler-Freeport Trail trailhead. The Connoquenessing Creek water trail would also connect the proposed trail towns of Butler and Zelenople/Harmony.

**Potential Partners:** Butler County, Lawrence County, City of Butler, Zelenople Borough, Harmony Borough, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau, and the Beaver County Recreation & Tourism Department.

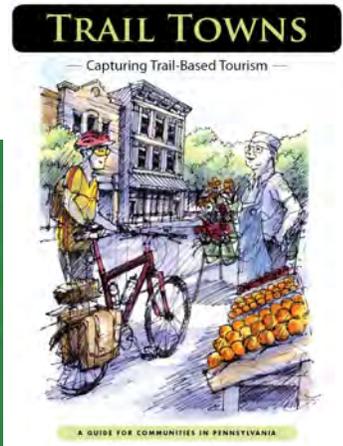


#### 4. **City of Butler Trail Town & Pedestrian Bicycle Feasibility Study**

**Municipalities:** City of Butler

**Description:** Complete a feasibility study to determine the potential to develop and promote the City of Butler as a Trail Town and develop recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure improvements. Butler has a Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission which has advocated for safer streets including bike lanes and routes throughout the city. Additionally, the northern terminus of the Butler-Freeport Trail is only blocks away from Butler’s Main Street business district. With the proposed Connoquenessing Creek Water Trail in this plan, the City of Butler is staged to be a prime candidate as a future Trail Town.

**Potential Partners:** Butler County, City of Butler, Butler-Freeport Trail, City of Butler Bike Pedestrian Commission, and Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau.

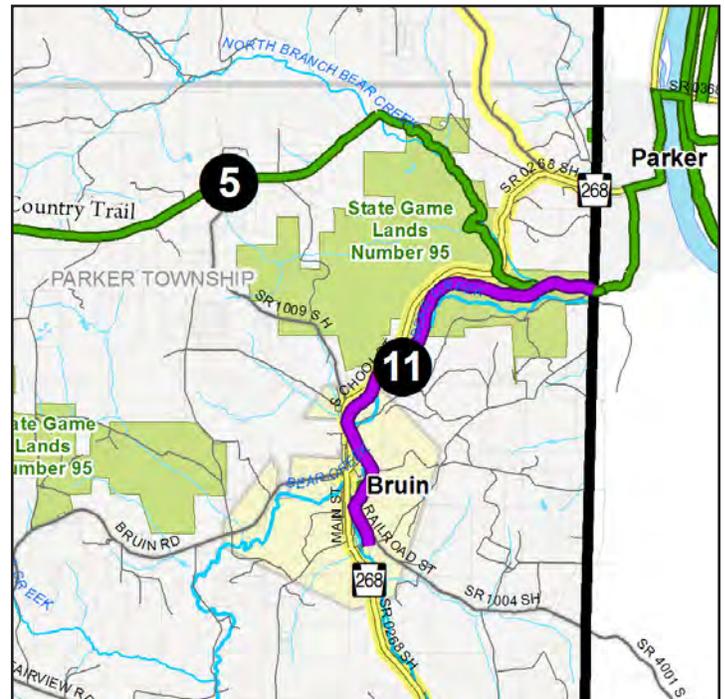


#### 5. **Parker to Bruin Trail**

**Municipalities:** City of Parker (Armstrong County), Parker Township, and Bruin Borough.

**Description:** The proposed Parker to Bruin Trail follows the former Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (Pittsburgh & Western Railroad) corridor for approximately four miles between the City of Parker in Armstrong County and Bruin Borough in Butler County. This trail has potential to link with the Allegheny River Trail and the Armstrong Trail which are part of the Pittsburgh to Erie Trail corridor managed by the Allegheny Valley Trails Association in Armstrong County.

**Potential Partners:** Butler County Chapter of the North Country Trail Association, Pennsylvania Game Commission, City of Parker, Bruin Borough, Bear Creek Watershed Association, PA Fish & Boat Commission, Clarion County Trails Association, Allegheny Valley Trails Association, Butler County, and Armstrong County.



## 6. Buffalo & Pittsburgh Rail-with-Trail

**Municipalities:** Adams Township, and potentially Valencia Borough, Callery Borough, and Evan City Borough.

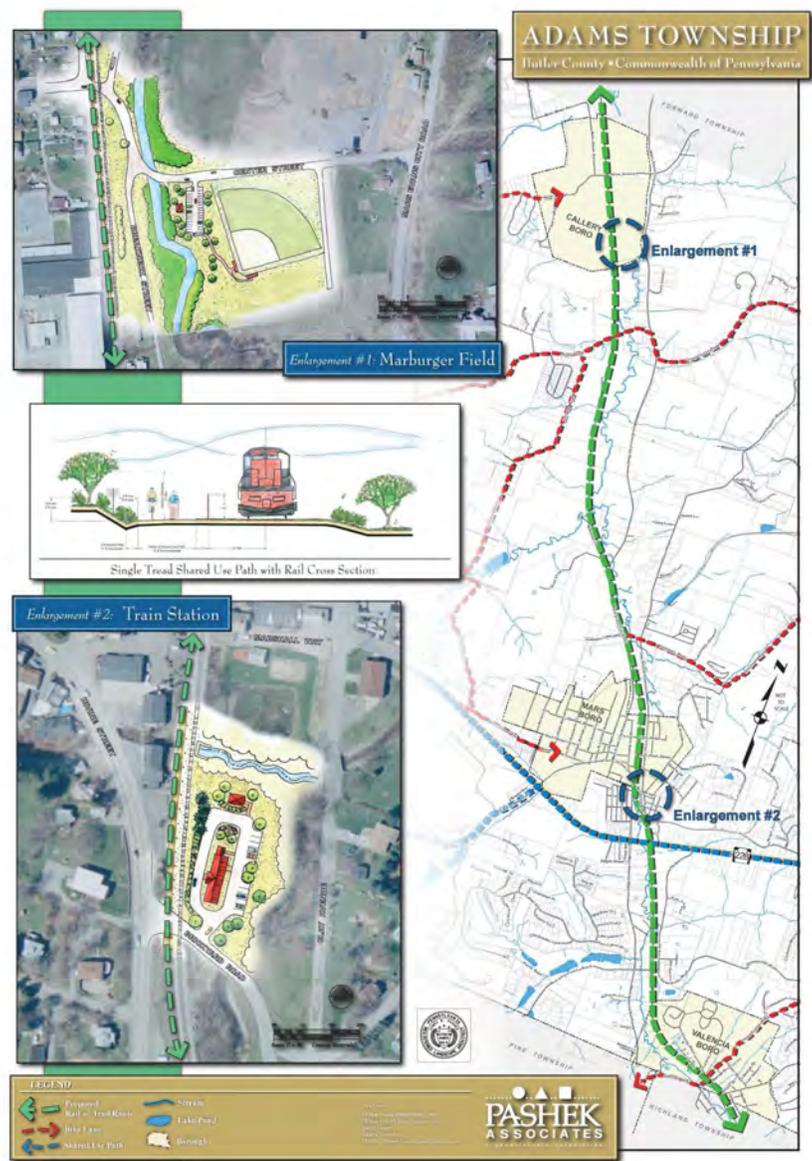
**Description:** Begin a dialogue with the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad to further explore the potential to develop a rail-with-trail from the Mars VFW Field, in the southern portion of the Township, to the Railroad Street Fields, in Evan City Borough. The proposed trail would cover a distance of 6.72 miles.

The existing rails are situated on a limestone ballast bed, which appears to meet rail industry standards. The overall width of the ballast bed at the base is approximately 20 feet wide while the actual rail bed itself has a width of approximately 10 feet wide and rails that are 4 feet 8 1/2 inches apart.

Further research should be conducted on the Buffalo & Pittsburgh Rail line to determine the right-of-way width. Based on discussions with a Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad representative, this corridor is a low speed and low frequency corridor with a right-of-way width of 40 feet. Given the location of the existing track within that width, a 10 foot separation could be accommodated between the center of the existing track and the near edge of the proposed rail trail. Where the right-of-way is 60 feet in width, a setback of 20 feet, or greater, may be provided. Further study, analysis, and discussion is required with the railroad to determine if these separations would be acceptable.

As recommended in the 2008 Adams Township Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, we continue to recommend the Township pursue the development of a demonstration project along this corridor following the concept plan proposed in 2008.

**Potential Partners:** Butler County, Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau, Adams Township, Valencia Borough, Callery Borough, and Evan City Borough.



# section IV:

## *Alameda Park Master Site Plan Update*





# Chapter 6: site information & analysis

Nestled in the rolling hills of Butler County is Alameda Park, a 418-acre facility that is open year-round to the public of Butler County, Pennsylvania. Located between the City of Butler and Route 422, the park is an oasis of recreation. The park consists of three main areas which are the waterways and topography of the park.

The upper level of park has a mix of active and passive recreation for all age groups. A two-lane road, known as Pool Drive, winds through it providing easy access to all facilities. It is heavily used by recreational walkers and bikers throughout the year.

When driving into the main entrance of the park, one is greeted with the well-known “Purple Playground”, a large well-used play area for children ages 2-12. In addition to two large play structures, the area also has a shade shelter, picnic tables, and benches. Restroom access is available close by at the swimming pool building.

Immediately behind the playground is the Alameda Swimming Pool that features a spiral water slide; a zero-depth, beach-like entry to the pool with water play equipment; and 3 large, brightly colored shade umbrellas. The zero-depth entry to the pool also provides easy access for those who have difficulty with the traditional steps and ladders. Additional features at the pool include separate changing rooms and restrooms for each gender, two shade shelters, a concession stand, a drop-slide, and two diving boards in the deep end of the pool.

Just to the north of the playground along Pool Drive is the Masonic Community Shelter, one of the three larger shelters in the Park that will accommodate as many as 250 people. The Pine and Holly shelters are also located along Pool Drive, one north of the road and one to its south. Two sand volleyball courts and rectangular ball field are located in the open area between the Swimming Pool and the Pool Drive.





Accessible from a separate access road off of Pool Drive is the Lion's Shelter and a small play area.

The northwestern section of this level of the park is dedicated to five picnic shelters. The largest of them is the Odd Fellows Shelter, a circular dome-topped pavilion that can accommodate up to 250 people. Shelters 1 through 4 are located around the loop road providing both views and access to the adjacent wooded area and trails.

Each of the shelters throughout the park has a dedicated parking lot and has access to nearby restrooms. All are compliant with current standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act providing accessibility to all populations of people.

There are three larger parking lots designed to meet the capacity of larger events in the park. One is located near the entrance to the swimming pool and another is located near the Masonic Shelter. The third area is a large overflow parking area located west of the pool parking lot.



The lower section of the park includes a variety of activities for younger children such as an additional playground area and a section along the creek bank for children to learn and explore.

Located in this section is the most historic feature of the Park that recalls recreational opportunities that span three centuries. It is the Carousel Pavilion that sits on the site of the once famous Alameda Carousel. The Carousel was one of several amusements in Alameda Park from the nineteenth century that are now simply a memory of past times. The Carousel Pavilion commemorates the strong history of parks and recreation in the County as it still offers a gathering place for residents to enjoy Alameda Park and its history. It holds about 250 people.



In the area surrounding the Carousel Pavilion are three smaller shelters of varying sizes: the Jaycees, Steelworkers, and Kiwanis shelters. Complementary facilities including bocce courts, a playground, Sullivan Run, and restrooms are dispersed through this area.

This section of the Park is also connected to an extensive trail system that winds through the largest wooded area of the park. These trails are used for hiking, running, or biking and connect to the neighboring community. Many of the existing trails were created by past logging in the Park that left paths for users to traverse from Sullivan Run up to the hills that overlook Route 422. The former West Penn Street that previously served as a connection to the Park from the City of Butler has been closed and now serves as a trail for walkers, cyclists, and others who prefer a harder surface.

The park's maintenance and administrative buildings are located between the upper and lower sections of the park and serve as the county's parks and recreation headquarters. Three buildings are located here. They include the Park office, maintenance building, and a small house that is used for meetings, programming, and administrative functions.

The facilities of Alameda Park are in generally good condition and continue to attract clientele from around the region through their variety of programming, state of the art facilities, and aesthetically-pleasing, family atmosphere.

Alameda Park is one of two County-owned public recreation facilities in the County. Butler County also owns Diamond Park, a public square located across from the Butler County Courthouse in the City of Butler.

## PARK HISTORY

Alameda Park was originally developed in 1901 as a privately owned amusement park open to the public during the summer season.

The park provided picnic groves, a carousel, swimming and boating on its lake, dancing, a theater and ballfields for summer recreation. Alameda Park was sold to a religious organization in 1949, which used the property as a church camp. In 1965 the park was purchased by Butler County for use as a public recreation facility.

The only structure remaining from its amusement park days is the carousel shelter, originally an operating carousel. The carousel animals and interior structure have been removed, leaving a large raised platform shelter.



The park once contained a lake, created by damming Sullivan Run. That dam has been removed and Sullivan Run has returned to its natural course.

In 1965, Butler County purchased Alameda Park as a first step in developing a county-wide system of parks and recreation facilities, a recommendation of the Butler County Planning Commission at that time. Acquisition and development of additional county owned parks has not been pursued by the County since that time.

## PARK ENTRANCE AND SURROUNDING LAND USES

The main entrance, and the only vehicular entrance, into the park is from Alameda Park Road. Alameda Park Road is accessed from State Route 356, located within a busy commercial corridor in Butler Township.

The Park entrance is identified on State Route 356 with a recycled-plastic lumber sign set back from the highway. Due to the proliferation of large commercial signs and visual clutter generated by the commercial buildings and their associated parking lots along State Route 356, the park's entrance sign is not very visible.

Flanking the east and west sides of Alameda Park Road are commercial buildings and high density residential development. The previous park master plan identified a second vehicular access from the northeast via the West Penn Road Extension. This road was recently closed by the County of Butler because portions of the roadway were subsiding. Currently the former road functions as a pedestrian and bicycle trail corridor to access Butler Township and the City of Butler.

US Route 422, a four lane limited access highway, crosses the northern portion of the park; there is no access from US 422 into the park. A steeply sloping, triangular parcel of park land, totaling 1.23 acres, is located north of US Route 422. This portion of the park is not accessible from the remainder of the park as the highway bisects the properties from one another.

Of the land within the park boundaries, a 14.13 acre parcel is owned by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and leased to the County for use as part of the Park. At the time of this writing Butler County is in the process of acquiring five acres along the southeastern boundary of the park. This property lies on both the north and south sides of West Penn Street Extension.

# DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES

Refer to the Survey of Existing Conditions Map which identifies the current boundaries of the park. Alameda Park's topography defines the locations for active and passive recreation areas from the natural areas of the park. Due to slope constraints, developed park facilities are located in two locations: the upper and lower areas in the western portion of the park. Refer to the Site Analysis Map, and the Upper and Lower Park Enlargement Maps.

The Upper and lower areas of the park contain approximately 64 acres of land sufficient to accommodate development of recreation facilities with larger footprints. The steep slopes located throughout the park and along Sullivan Run are not suitable for active recreation facilities, structures, roads, or parking areas.

These slopes are suitable for development of trails, sledding hills, or other passive recreation uses. The largest portion of developable land, the upper portion of the park, about 36 acres, is located east of Alameda Park Road.

## Upper Alameda Park

The upper portion of the park contains:

- Rotary Shelter
- Kids Zone Playground
- 50 Meter Swimming Pool , Bathhouse and parking
- Lions Shelter and adjacent playground
- Masonic Community Shelter
- Pine Shelter and nearby composting restroom
- Holly Shelter
- Odd Fellow Gazebo
- Shelters 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5
- Two Sand volleyball courts
- One Multi-Purpose Field/Ballfield
- Lions shelter

Vehicular access into the upper portion of the park is off of Alameda Park Road. Swimming Pool Drive extends into the park, and Picnic Grove Road leads from Swimming Pool Drive to the picnic grove.

## Lower Alameda Park

The lower portion of the park contains:

- Carousel Shelter
- Jaycees Shelter
- Steelworkers Shelter
- Restrooms
- Bocce Courts
- Kiwanis Shelter
- Swings
- Playground Area
- Walking Trails
- Picnic Area

In addition, the Alameda Park House, park office and park maintenance buildings are located on a wooded hillside near the lower portion of the park.

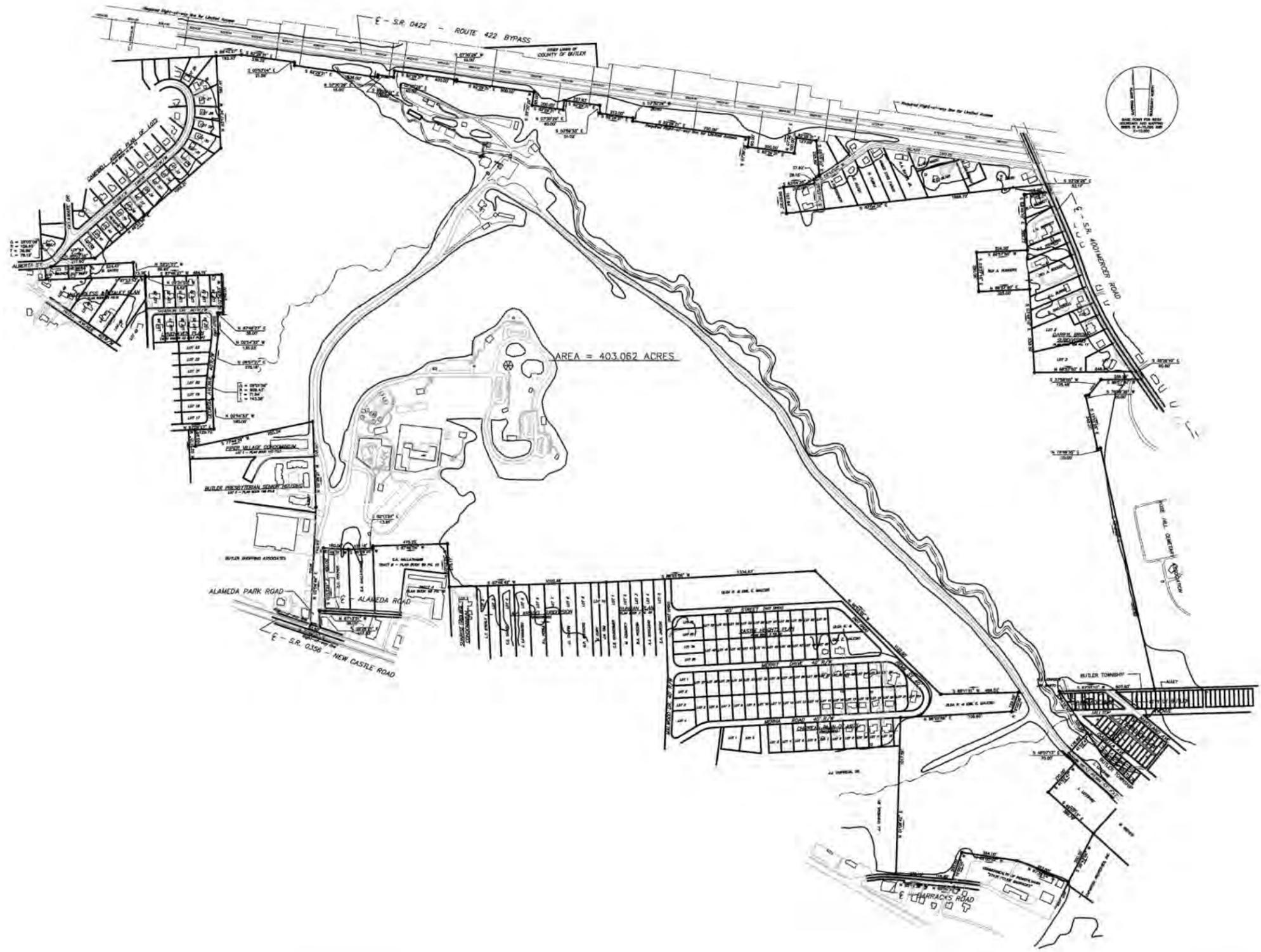
Vehicular access to the lower portion of the park is provided by Alameda Park Road and the corresponding gravel roads which provide access to the recreation facilities located north of Sullivan Run.

The remainder of the park, with the exception of the West Penn Street corridor, consists of wooded steep slope areas not suitable for active recreation facility development.

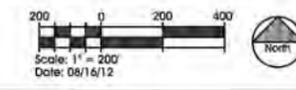
On the north side of Sullivan Run, an abandoned roadbed about one mile long has been converted into a pedestrian trail connecting to the City of Butler's Maryland Avenue.







**Alameda Park - Property Survey**  
 City of Butler  
 Butler County, Pennsylvania



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## SITE ANALYSIS

When planning for the future development of a recreation area, it is important to understand it as a whole. Information on the community's background, history, and demographics provides the context within which to begin the preparation of a park master plan. Equally important are the cultural and natural features of the site, such as zoning, utilities, topography, soils, vegetation and hydrology. All of these features, along with an analysis of the existing recreation facilities, begins to identify opportunities and constraints, which will guide us in preparing recommendations for improving the Alameda Park.

### Zoning

This 418 acre park, located in Butler Township, is bounded on the north by US Route 422. Property to the east, west and south is zoned for residential uses.

### Hydrology

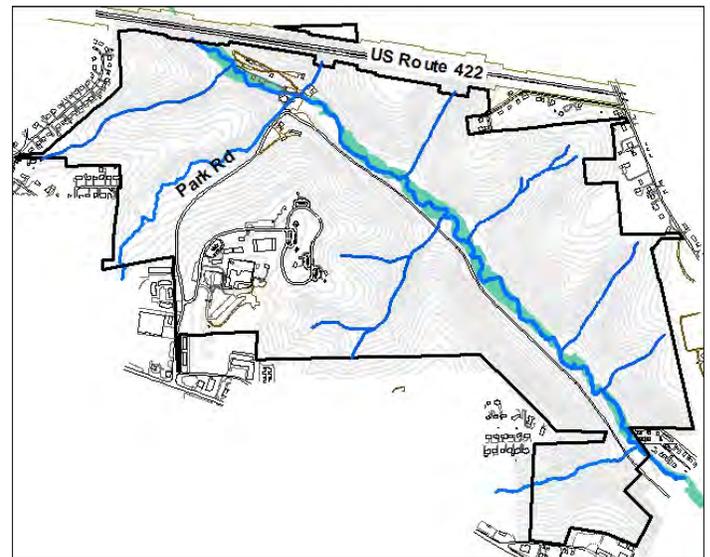
PA Code, Chapter 93, Water Quality Standards, classifies Sullivan Run as warm water fishery, fourth order stream which joins the Connoquenessing Creek in the City of Butler. Several small unnamed tributaries and intermittent drainageways feed into Sullivan Run within the park.

### Floodplain

The Federal Emergency Management Agency maps the 1% annual chance flood (100-year flood), also known as the base flood. This is the flood that has a 1% chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given year. In Alameda Park the 100-year floodplain is defined along the Sullivan Run corridor. Some of the improvements within Lower Alameda Park are located within this floodplain.

### Wetlands

A review of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife National Wetland Inventory Map for Butler County PA does not indicate the presence of jurisdictional wetlands near the park. However, the soils inventory for the park property indicated the presence of hydric soils, and a field visit indicated that most likely a jurisdictional wetland is located on the floodplain of Sullivan Run. Further, there are spring seeps located along the steep hillsides of the park which



## Jurisdictional Wetland Components

To be considered a jurisdictional wetland each of the following components must be present:

1. Hydric Soils, or soils with hydric inclusions
2. Hydrophytic (water-loving) vegetation
3. Presence of water for a period of 7 days or greater

may be a source of water for other jurisdictional wetlands on the property.

Jurisdictional wetlands are regulated by the US Army Corps of Engineers. To be considered a jurisdictional wetland three components must be present. There must be hydric soils and/or soils with hydric inclusions, which are soils that are likely to retain water. The other required components include hydrophytic (water loving) vegetation, and the presence of standing water in the soil.

Wetlands are very important because they provide certain hydrological functions and because they provide habitat for many plants and animals that rely on them. Therefore, regulatory agencies have regulations that protect wetlands from disturbance.

Before any development occurs on a property containing hydric soils and soils with hydric components, the county conservation district will generally require a jurisdictional wetland determination to be completed to identify those areas of the property that meet the jurisdictional wetland requirements.

Wetland determinations are valid for a period of five years. At the expiration of five years from the time of determination, delineation must be completed to determine the status.

When jurisdictional wetlands are located on the property, development of those areas is restricted in accordance with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's regulations regarding wetland disturbance.

## Riparian Zones

Riparian zones are areas of vegetation along waterways that protect water quality and stabilize stream banks. Vegetated areas along stream are of significance as they:

- Slow flood waters and reduce the volume of water through infiltration & root absorption
- Improve water quality by filtering stormwater runoff and promoting settling of sediment
- Recharge groundwater

- Provide canopy cover to shade and cool streams, improving water quality & habitat conditions
- Provide habitat, including shelter, food and water, for birds and small mammals

The Sullivan Run floodplain is considered a riparian zone, therefore no development should occur within it.

## Soils

The United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service maintains an on-line soil survey database, <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov>. This database provides information on a variety of soil properties and gives indications on whether they may present opportunities or constraints for various types of land development.

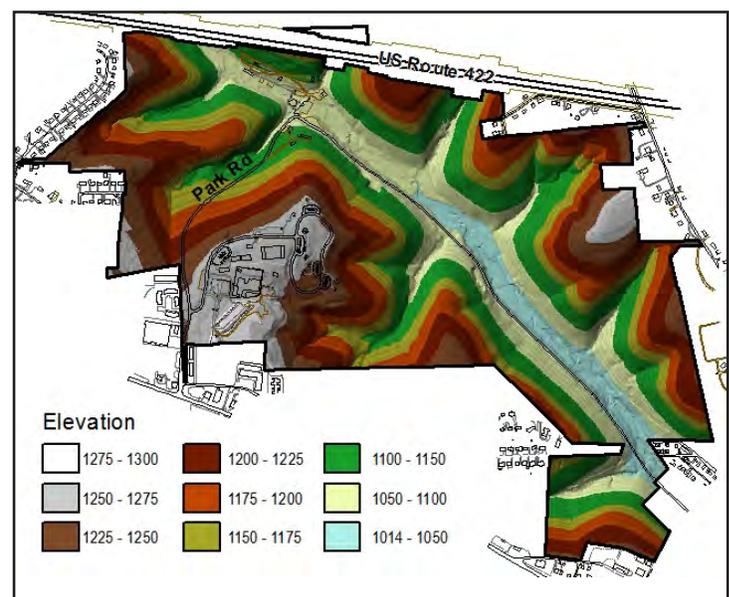
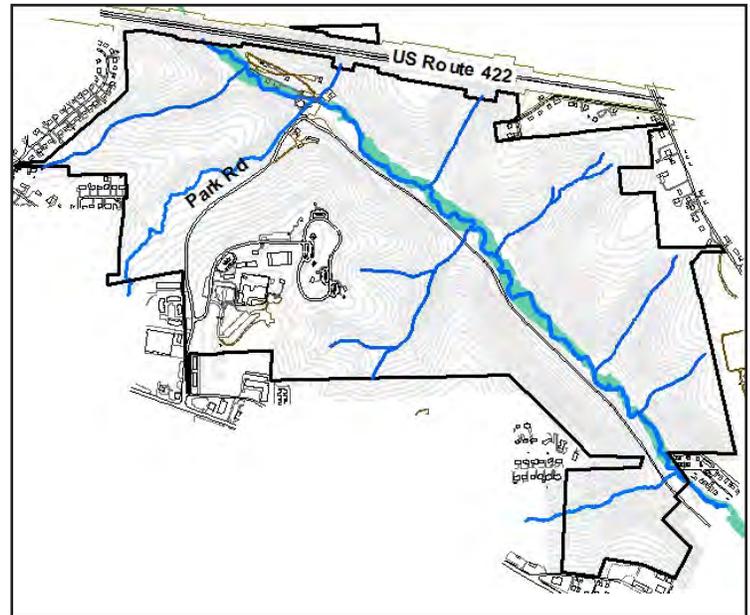
A custom soil survey report was generated for Alameda Park. A total of 29 soil types are represented within the park.

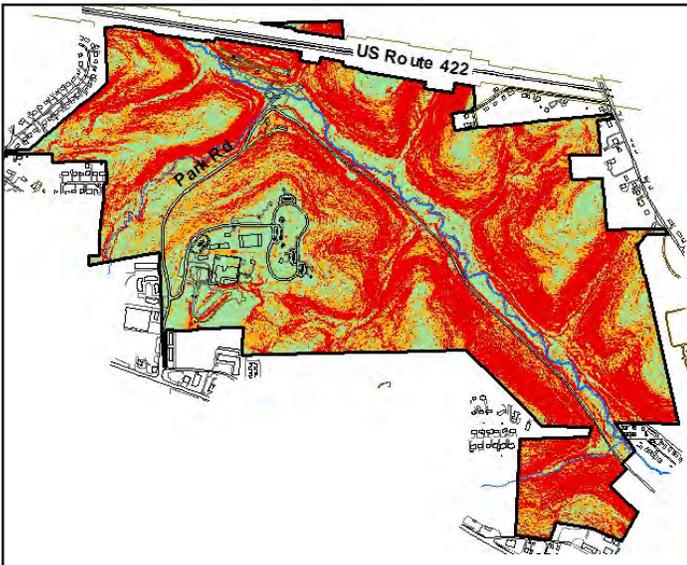
After reviewing the soils report, we reached the these conclusions:

- The Sullivan Run stream valley is subject to flooding; tributary valleys are subject to erosion and wetness. These areas are only suited to trails, provided there are no wetlands present and the soils are suitable to support a trail use. The Sullivan Run valley is only suited for passive recreation facility development.
- Slopes within the park are suited for trails with moderate restrictions due to degree of slope and stoniness.
- The upper portion of the park is suited for the development of active and passive recreation facilities with moderate restrictions due to wetness.

## Topography

There is approximately 260 vertical feet of elevation change within the property. Low points are located along the Sullivan Run Stream valley as





it enters onto the property from the State Route 422 at an elevation of 1096 feet and continuing eastward through the property until it exits the park's eastern boundary at an elevation of 1014 feet. Heading north, the property reaches an elevation of 1096 along State Route 422, a knob, located along the northeast edge of the property, heading towards Mercer Road, at elevation of 1227 feet, offers the highest elevation on the property north of Sullivan Run. While the swimming pool overflow parking area obtains the highest elevation on the property at 1274 feet above sea level.

### **Steep Slopes**

The majority of the property contains land with slopes in excess of 15%, with many being greater than 25%. Slopes greater than 15% limit the development of large scale facilities such as picnic shelters, parking areas, and athletic fields. Slopes greater than 25% should not be disturbed with major construction as they may be susceptible to erosion and potentially landslide prone.

### **Vegetation**

For inventory and mapping purposes, scientists recognize five basic stages in the life of a forest. In nature, forests do not fit into these classes as neatly as the stages suggests. A forest changes gradually from one stage to the next. Often young forests in the seedling stage will have some pole-size, mature, or old trees. A forest with many old trees often has patches of young trees, too.

With the exception of the developed portions of the upper and lower portions of the park, the park contains a contiguous canopy of trees consisting primarily of seedlings, saplings, and pole timber with a few young trees interspersed throughout the forest.

### **Rare, Threatened, & Endangered Species**

A review of the Butler County Natural Heritage Area Inventory Update 2011 indicates there are not any rare, threatened or endangered species located within or adjacent to Alameda Park.

## **Stages in the Life of a Forest**

### *Seedling*

Trees are 0 to 10 years old. The new forest is very open and may seem more like a meadow.

### *Pole and Sapling*

Trees are 10 to 40 years old. Most or all trees are in this age group, and the forest canopy is often closed, shading the forest floor. Tree diameters are not large yet.

### *Young*

In softwood species such as Douglas-fir and pine, trees are 40 to 80 years old. In hardwood species such as maple and oak, trees are 40 to 60 years old. The forest is taller and the trees are bigger than a pole and sapling forest, yet the growth rate is still rapid. Forests may

have a closed canopy or may have some small openings.

### *Mature*

In softwood species, trees are 80 to 140 years old. In hardwood species, trees are 60 to 140 years old. Trees have reached the mature size for their species. The growth rate of mature trees has leveled out, and mature trees grow at a slower rate than young trees.

### *Old Mature*

Trees are 140 years or older. Some tree species such as Douglas-fir are very long-lived, and may live to 500 or 1,000 years old if no fire, storm, disease, insect outbreak, or timber harvest kills them. Tree species such as red alder have much shorter life spans.

## Existing Facilities

Since the completion of the Alameda Park Master Plan in 1997, a number of improvement projects have taken place within the park. These include:

- Renovation of Alameda Park Swimming Pool
- Construction of the KidsZone Playground
- Construction of the Masonic Shelter
- Accessible parking and walkway improvements
- Extension of Picnic Grove Road, including five additional picnic groves, shelters, and associated parking

The current inventory and analysis of existing structures, buildings, and recreation facilities within Alameda Park is summarized on the following tables.

Facility	No.	Enhancements and Utilities	Condition	Size	ADA
Shelter 1	1	6 picnic tables; 6 lights; 2 grills; 2 outlets; water fountain; Port-a-John; wooden structure with concrete base	Good	20x28	Yes
Shelter 2	2	6 picnic tables; 6 lights; 2 outlets; 2 grills; Port-a-John; wooden structure with concrete base	Good	20x28	Yes
Shelter 3	3	15 picnic tables; 14 lights; 4 outlets; 2 grills; water fountain; Port a John; wooden structure with concrete base	Good	32x56	Yes
Shelter 4	4	12 picnic tables; 12 lights; 4 outlets; 2 grills; water fountain; Port a John; wooden structure with concrete base	Good	32x52	Yes
Odd Fellow Shelter	5	23 picnic tables; 12 lights; 3 benches; 4 outlets; 3 grills; metal structure with concrete base	Good	50x50	Yes
Rotary Shelter	6	4 picnic tables; 1 grill; metal structure with concrete base	Good	20x20	Yes
Holly Shelter	7	12 picnic tables; 6 lights; 1 bench; 1 water fountain; 1 workspace/ table; 5 outlets; 2 grills; wooden structure with concrete base	Good	28x34	Yes

Facility	No.	Enhancements and Utilities	Condition	Size	ADA
Lions Shelter	8	16 picnic tables; 6 lights; 1 water fountain; 2 outlets; 2 grills; wooden structure with concrete base	Good	34x40	Yes, but no ADA picnic table
Masonic Shelter	9	Restrooms; 26 picnic tables; 6 lights; 1 water fountain; 12 outlets; 3 grills; wooden structure with concrete base; concession/buffet window	Good	40x90	Yes
Pine Shelter	10	15 picnic tables; 2 grills; 1 water fountain; wooden structure with concrete base; 1 set horseshoes	Good	45x30	Yes
Picnic Area	1	3 picnic tables; 1 grill; 1 small shelter	Good		No accessible path
Pool	1	Slide; 2 diving boards; 12' deep; Zero-entry; umbrellas; concession stand; changing rooms; restrooms; splash/spray zone; wading pool	Good	261x240	Yes
Playground Area	1	Fence surround; series of connecting modular units for varying age groups and abilities; shelter; mulch and rubber surfaces	See safety audit	165x200	Yes
Beach volleyball courts	2	2 sand courts with decking surround; metal poles with mesh nets; 4 benches; 2 picnic tables	Good	40x80	No
Swings	1	Mulch surface with plastic surround	See safety audit	30x40	No
Walking Trails	1	Dirt trails; closed road	Good	Appx: 2 miles	No
Playground Area	2	Modular unit; mulch with decking surround	See safety audit	40x45	No
Playground Area	3	Modular units; mulch with decking surround	See safety audit	50x35	No
Carousel Shelter	11	Wooden structure with concrete base; 40 picnic tables; 1 grill; outlets; lights; water fountain	Good	75x75	Yes
Steelworkers Shelter	12	Wooden structure with concrete base; 15 picnic tables; 1 grill; 2 outlets; 4 lights; water fountain	Good	50x25	Yes
Kiwanis Shelter	13	Wooden structure with concrete base; 18 picnic tables; water fountain; 2 outlets; 6 lights; grill shelter	Good	30x40	Yes

Facility	No.	Enhancements and Utilities	Condition	Size	ADA
Jaycees Shelter	14	Wooden structure with concrete base; 15 picnic tables; water fountain; 2 outlets; 6 lights; 1 grill	Good	30x40	Yes
Restrooms	1	Wooden and concrete structure	Fair	20x25	Yes
Bocce Court	1	Wooden Structure with gravel base; crushed gravel court; 1 grill; 4 benches; 1 picnic table; 18 lights	Good	80x20	Yes, but not for play
Swings	2	Mulch surface with decking surround	See safety audit	32x32	No
Ballfield	1	Backstop fencing only; faded lines for football	Poor	RF: 164 LF: >250 BP: 60	No

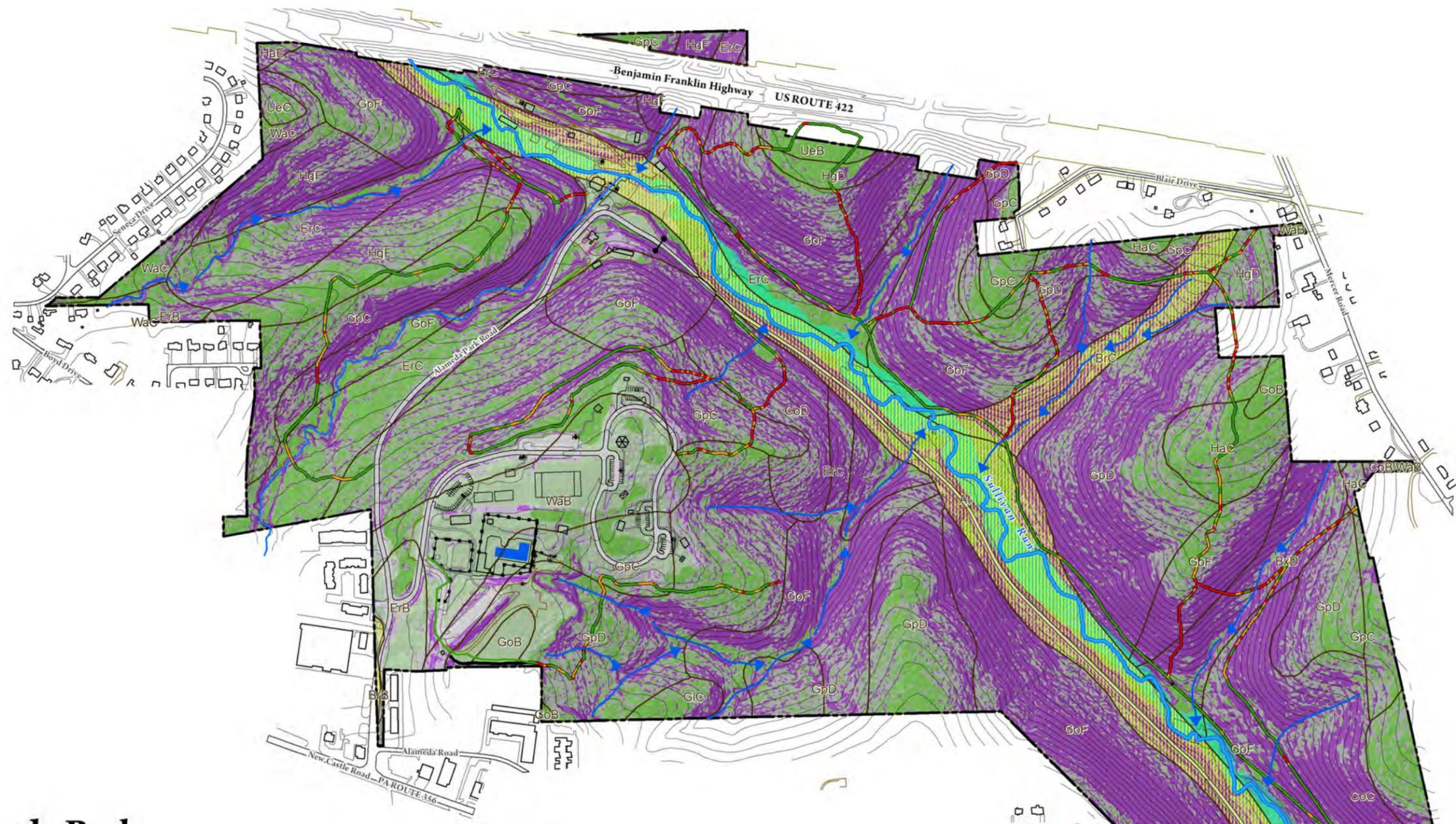
Also at the time of this writing, a non-motorized trail system is being planning and constructed, the County is acquiring five acres of land to expand the park along its southeastern boundary, and the County has entered into a contract to have a composting restroom designed and constructed to serve the loop picnic grove area, the Odd Fellows Gazebo and shelter nos. 1 through 5.

### Utility Services

Utility Service in the park consists of:

- Water ..... Pennsylvania Water
- Sewer ..... Butler Area Sewer Authority
- Electric ..... West Penn Power

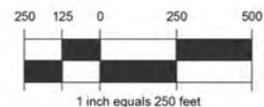




**Alameda Park**  
 Butler County, Pennsylvania  
 Butler County Department of Parks & Recreation

**SITE ANALYSIS OF EXISTING  
 CONDITIONS**

**PASHEK  
 ASSOCIATES**  
 a pennsylvania corporation  
 June 30, 2012



**Legend**

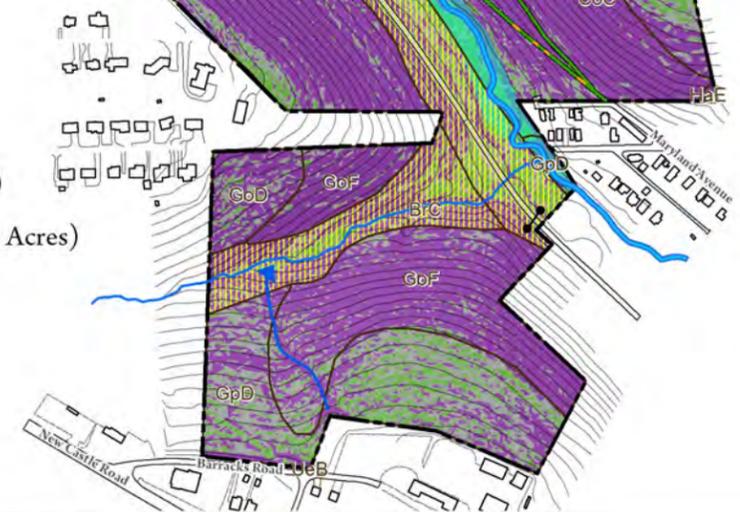
- Paved Roads/Parking Area
- Unpaved Roads/Parking Area
- Stream or Tributary
- Wooded Areas
- Hydric Soils
- 100 Year Floodplain
- Soil Type Boundaries
- Gate - Road Closed

**Steep Slope Analysis**

- Slope 15 to 25% (112 Acres)
- Slope greater than 25% (181 Acres)

**Trail Running Slope Analysis**

- Average Slope 0 to 10%
- Average Slope 10 to 15%
- Average Slope 15 to 25%





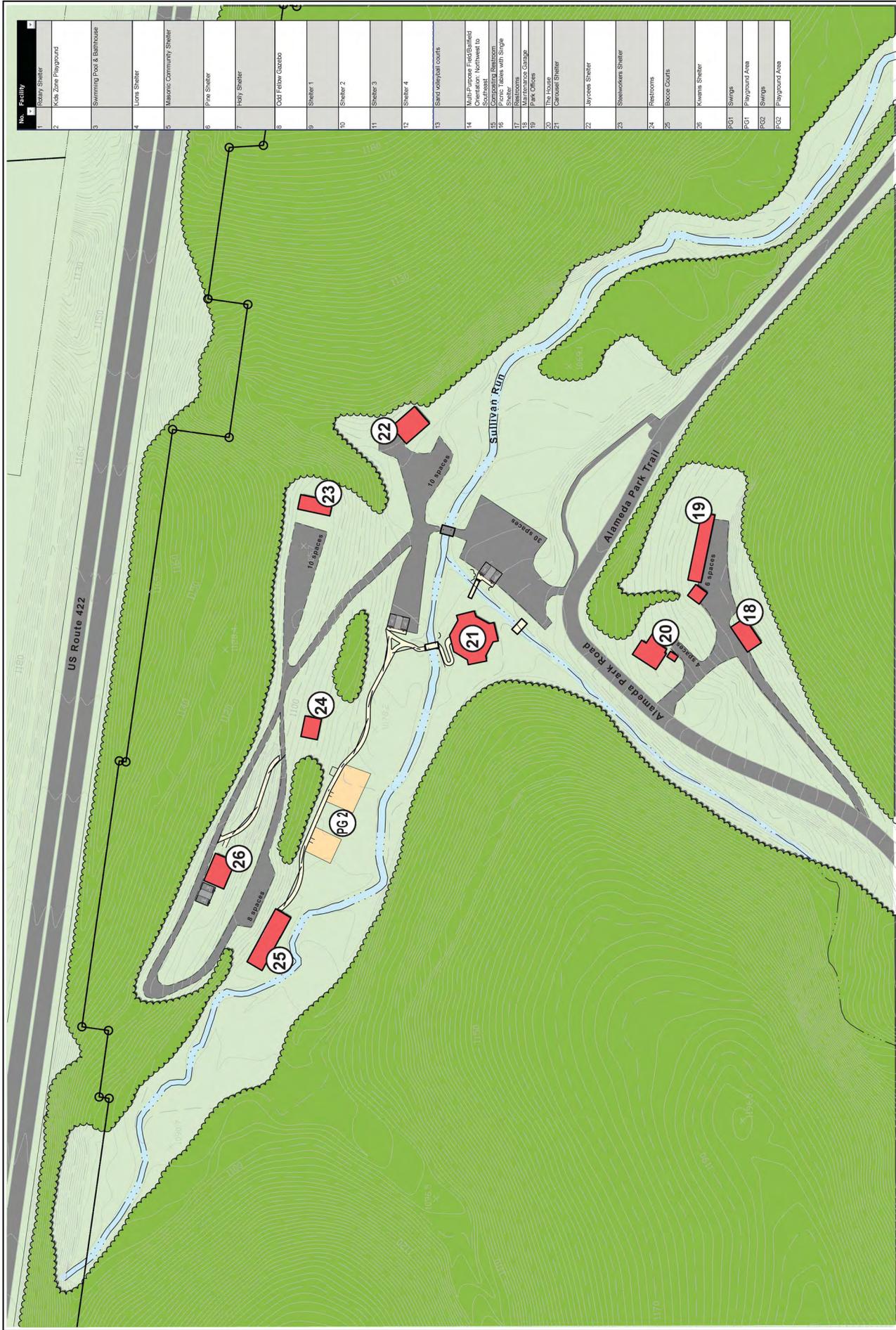
No.	Facility
1	Robey Shelter
2	Kids Zone Playground
3	Swimming Pool & Bathhouse
4	Lions Shelter
5	Masonic Community Shelter
6	Pine Shelter
7	Holly Shelter
8	Old Fellow Caboose
9	Shelter 1
10	Shelter 2
11	Shelter 3
12	Shelter 4
13	Sand volleyball courts
14	Multi-Purpose Field/Ballfield Orientation: Northwest to Southeast
15	Composting Classroom
16	Picnic Tables with Single Benches
17	Restrooms
18	Maintenance Garage
19	Park Office
20	The House
21	Canoeist Shelter
22	Jaycee Shelter
23	Stevedorkers Shelter
24	Restrooms
25	Boose Courts
26	Keweenaw Shelter
PG1	Playground Area
PG2	Swings
PG3	Swings
PG4	Playground Area



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**UPPER PARK**  
**ENLARGEMENT PLAN**

**Alameda Park - Existing Conditions**  
 City of Butler  
 Butler County, Pennsylvania



**Alameda Park - Existing Conditions**  
 City of Butler  
 Butler County, Pennsylvania

**LOWER PARK  
 ENLARGEMENT PLAN**



# Chapter 7: master plan

The master plan update for Alameda Park is the result of analysis of the site, active public participation, and in-depth discussion regarding the recreation and park needs of Butler County's residents and visitors.

The master plan provides a foundation to guide the decision-making process for investment in Alameda Park. With this master plan, the Butler County Parks and Recreation Department will be able to respond in an orderly and fiscally responsible manner to requests from various organizations and individuals regarding recreation facilities within the park.

Good planning reduces conflict and liability and can reduce maintenance and operation costs. Furthermore, the master plan should be used to support funding requests for future improvements in the park.

Upon reviewing the 1997 Alameda Park Master Plan, the site analysis conducted during this planning process, and the public input received during this planning process, this master plan was prepared.

The master plan reflects the vision and goals of the residents of Butler County for the park. This chapter describes the design process, the preparation of a draft master plan, master plan refinement, development of opinions of probable costs for park improvements, and recommends a phased implementation of the recommendations for park improvements.

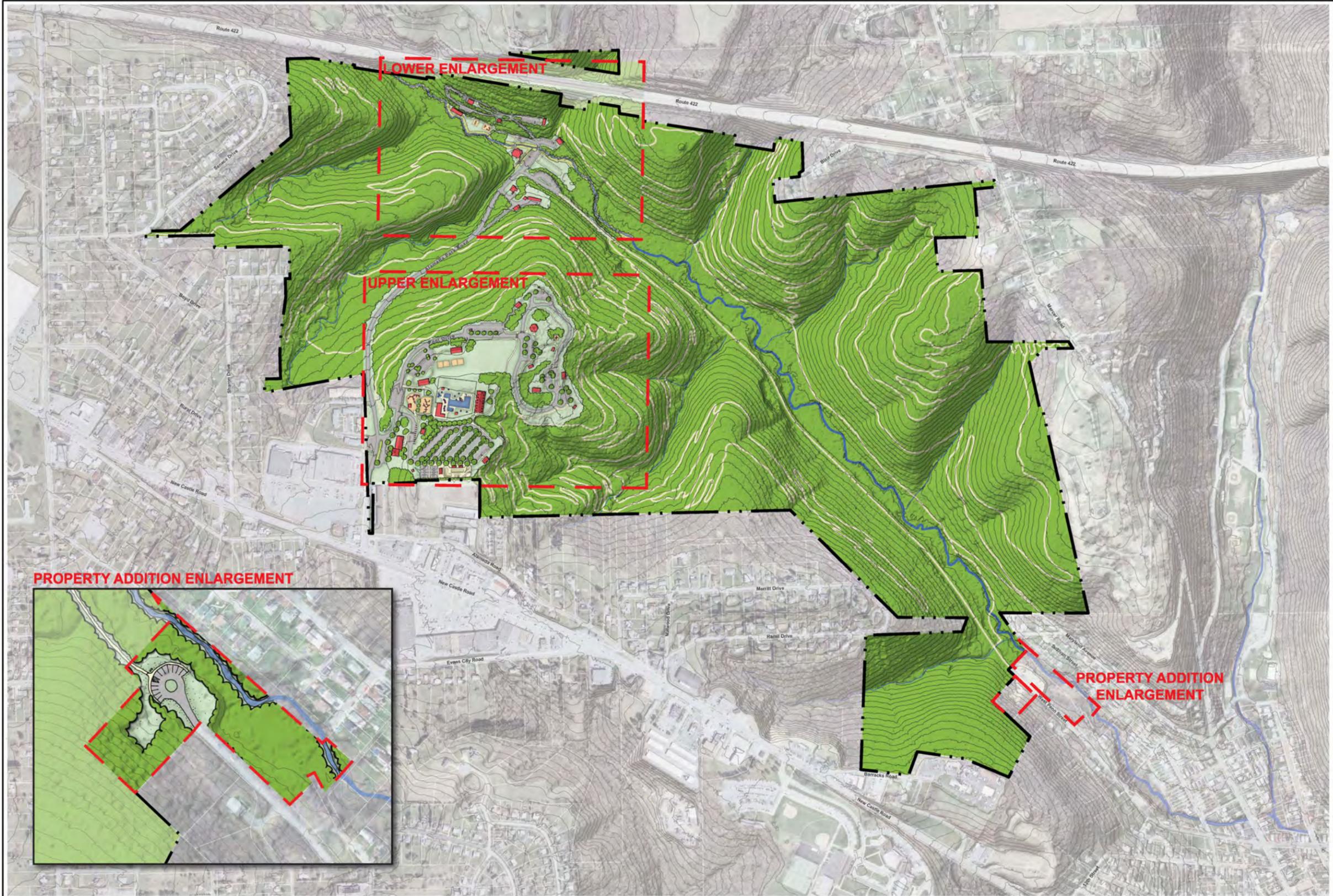
## Overall Park Master Plan

Our recommendations for park improvements begin with several park-wide recommendations which will impact all of the site specific areas within the park. These recommendations include:

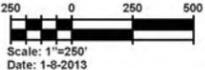
- Managing the forested areas of the park to provide a healthy, functioning forest that provides a diversity of habitat for flora and fauna while providing passive recreation opportunities;
- Improving the trail system to provide sustainable hiking and mountain biking trail opportunities throughout the park;
- Formalizing the lower entrance into the park as a pedestrian and bicycle only connection by converting the former West Penn Street Extension into a shared use path.
- Developing a lower shared use path health and wellness walking loop by connecting the the proposed West Penn Road Trail and the existing Sullivan Run Trail.

These recommendations are further described on the following pages.





**Alameda Park - Overall Master Plan**  
 City of Butler  
 Butler County, Pennsylvania



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# FOREST MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

*Adapted from Riparian Buffers Guidance Manual: Chapter 3  
General Woodlot Management, Virginia DCR*

The purpose of these recommendations is to provide general horticultural guidance to help maintain a healthy, functioning forest within Alameda Park. A healthy forest is defined as one with a majority of living trees that are a part of a functioning ecosystem.

That ecosystem is a complex mix of trees, understory shrubs and groundcover. Over time the process of natural succession causes a change in species composition and structure. Small saplings are developing into the next generation of trees as the older ones die out, and understory trees add valuable functions between the larger dominant species. Despite the fact that fire, insects, disease, and natural disturbances such as ice and wind are a normal part of that successional process, in an urban setting the effects of these natural forces may need to be monitored and controlled where necessary.

Since a forest is a dynamic ecosystem, change is inevitable as vegetation grows and dies. Active management should, however, be based on sound horticultural practice to assure that unwarranted thinning or removal does not occur. The removal of noxious weeds, or dead, dying and diseased vegetation should be done only as necessary to maintain the health of the forest or to prevent fire fuel buildup problems.

Removal of any material in the 25 feet closest to a stream should be avoided since the vegetation in this area provides the shade and organic material necessary to maintain the health of the aquatic habitat.

One of the important functions of this area of the buffer is that the roots of permanent woody vegetation help to maintain the stability of a stream bank, minimizing bank erosion that contributes to in stream sediment loading. A wooded buffer with porous soil from leaf litter, fungi, twigs and associated bacteria, increases the ability of the bank to resist failure by enhancing infiltration, helping to decrease surface water

runoff that can cause erosion.

The root mass of woody vegetation also has value for nutrient retention, pollutant degradation, and de-nitrification aided by microbes associated with the roots. These functions cannot be entirely duplicated by herbaceous material such as turf grass. Additionally, the deeper woody roots are more likely to intercept groundwater carrying pollution from inland sources and to remove or convert nutrients, metals, and toxins before they reach surface waters.

In a forested area the roots, twigs, associated leaf litter and detritus are important for slowing stormwater runoff and trapping debris and sediment. The tree canopy is beneficial for attenuating the force of raindrops hitting soil and causing erosion. Raindrops that are intercepted are more likely to evaporate or infiltrate the soil, thereby reducing runoff quantity and rate of flow, producing potentially 30-50 percent less runoff than lawn areas. In addition to attenuating erosion, another advantage of the increased soil strength that roots impart is that surface soils become more resistant to channelization. Maintaining sheet flow through the buffer is extremely important to gain the greatest value from the buffer.

Sheet flow rates are generally lower which increases the probability of infiltration and allows sediment to filter out of runoff.

A forested buffer can help stabilize a steep bank. By helping to curb runoff and encouraging infiltration, erosive channels are less likely to develop and disturb the stability of the bank.

Interlocking networks of woody roots provide significant value for soil stabilization, especially on sloping sites, as the roots extend deep into more stable subsurface soil layers. In older trees, the root system can extend as much as two or more times beyond the canopy of the tree, or the "drip line." Before any tree is cut, all alternatives to removal should be explored. The practice of removing a majority of trees on a slope can greatly increase the probability of a slope failure in the future as the tree roots decompose and their soil-

binding capacity declines. The mass of roots and associated bacteria and fungi that are part of a complex soil food web, improve the soil structure so that infiltration and water-holding capacity is increased and the soil maintains its structure. The overwhelming conclusion is that in the vast majority of cases, vegetation (especially well-rooted, mature trees) helps to stabilize a slope.

### **Dead, diseased and Dying Trees**

In natural stands dead and dying trees are a natural part of forest succession as it moves from pioneer to climax forest. Dead standing trees and logs on the ground provide food and shelter to many organisms and provide nutrients to the young forest vegetation as it grows. The carbon contained in the decaying material is a necessary part of the denitrification process, helping to remove nitrogen from the groundwater system. Leaf litter, twigs, and branches are an essential part of the buffer, functioning to retard run-off and return nutrients to the soil.

At a minimum, in the twenty-five foot area of the buffer next to the water where dead or dying trees are the result of natural or physical causes (damage to roots, compaction of soil, toxins, wind or lightning), they should not be removed, unless they threaten to undermine the integrity of the stream bank or shoreline. If, for the health of the buffer, they must be removed, the stump and roots should be left in place to help bind the soil. For damaged trees that are otherwise healthy, leaving the stump may encourage new growth and regeneration, or “coppicing” to occur.

Another important function of the area next to the water is to provide woody debris for habitat and decaying detritus that provides nutrients for

plants and aquatic organisms. Woody debris that falls into a stream is one of the major factors in aquatic biological diversity promoting a variety of habitats as well as providing a source of slowly decomposable nutrients. Snags, or dead standing trees, offer nesting and perching sites for many wildlife and bird species. If they are located where they won't be a danger to life or property, they should be left in place.

However, in some instances, the dead or dying woody plants may be harboring insects or disease that require control before they invade other weakened plants in the buffer. Safety may dictate that dead trunks and logs need to be removed where they pose a fire or falling hazard.

Trees that are diseased or infested may have to be removed if the disease or insects threaten other trees and other control methods, such as chemical application, are likely to damage the adjacent waterway. An assessment by a certified arborist, degreed horticulturalist or forester would determine the severity of the problem and whether or not mechanical or chemical treatment might rid a tree or shrub of infestation, or if removal is the only option.

Chemical use should be avoided within 25 feet of the water, since use in this area is more likely to result in the chemicals reaching the water.

### **Noxious Weeds**

Noxious weeds may be of concern when trying to promote a natural healthy native forest buffer. For the purpose of this section of the Regulations, “noxious weed” encompasses any invasive species that has gotten out of control and has become harmful to the health and survival of the woody

#### **Noxious Weeds**

Vegetation that is physically harmful or destructive to living vegetation, especially to native species.

#### **Alien Species**

Non-native species, differing in nature so as to be incompatible with native species.

#### **Invasive Species**

Tending to spread uncontrollably, overwhelming other, especially native, species; a native species may qualify as an invasive.

#### **Exotic Species**

Introduced from another country, not native to the place where found.

vegetation in the buffer. This can include trees such as ailanthus or shrubs such as privets, as well as vines. Noxious does not mean “undesirable” or “obnoxious” plants. Control of non-native, exotic species, or even invasive native species, may be justified when they threaten to over-run or out-compete native trees and shrubs. Some common noxious species are Japanese honeysuckle, kudzu, mile-a-minute, multi-flora rose, English ivy, all privets, and winged euonymus.

Not all alien plants are invasive all the time. If the noxious weed does not out-compete the existing native species, does not alter the ecosystem, does not overtop existing species, adds rather than decreases diversity, or does not change the presence or density of existing species, then intense management or removal may not be necessary.

If an invasive species is performing a desirable function such as preventing erosion on a bank, it should not be removed without replacing it with vegetation of at least equal value for erosion control and water quality functions.

The significance of impact on the site and the feasibility of control should dictate the management decisions.

Careful planning and research may be required to develop the appropriate management tool for an invasive species. A variety of methods may have to be used depending upon the severity of the infestation.

Mechanical control methods, such as pulling or cutting, are the least disruptive to the environment. However caution is needed to prevent damage to valuable native species.

Preferably, herbicide should be avoided to prevent damage to the underlying native vegetation. However, occasionally the tenacity of an invasive species may require chemical treatment. The choice to use herbicide treatment demands diligence in researching the appropriate product and method of application for safety and effectiveness. Because of the dangers of unintended damage to non-

target species, chemical use should be the choice of last or extreme resort. If it is determined that chemicals are necessary, it must be applied by a Certified Applicator or/and Registered Technician licensed through the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. All manufacturers’ recommendations and best management practices must be followed to assure the safety of the nearby surface waters.

### Thinning

The use of the word thinning was to address the silvicultural needs to manage timber stands to maximize harvest. Thinning is distinct from pruning or removing vegetation to create a sightline or vista and is not the appropriate method to achieve those results. Thinning should only be done to improve the health and vitality of a wooded buffer to improve its water quality functions. It does not mean clear-cutting, removal of an even-aged class of trees, or removal of all trophic layers leaving only trees above a certain size.

Many woodlands have grown up after an open property has been abandoned or after intense logging or clear-cutting, resulting in an even-aged stand that does not necessarily have plenty of young trees to grow and replace those that might die or be removed.

Often trees in these naturally regenerated forests are poorly distributed, growing too closely together. This may result in overcrowding and competition for sunlight, water and nutrients, producing slow-growing, weakened trees that could be more susceptible to insects and disease. Additionally, years of neglect or poor management may have left only poor quality or undesirable species and a lack of young vigorous trees to replace those lost over time.

An evaluation of a woodlot may determine that thinning or an improvement cut may be a valid method for improving the health, distribution and species mix of a neglected stand.

It is important to note that, in the practice of silviculture, harvesting or thinning trees is not planned in advance of the woodlot evaluation; the evaluation of the woodlot stocking determines the

need for harvesting or thinning.

## Response to Thinning

Thinning of young dense forests may increase the growth of remaining young trees and allow selection of the most desirable mix of species. Most thinning is done for commercial purposes of encouraging rapid diameter growth in crop trees for timber harvesting. If the buffer is a dense forest of mixed-aged young trees, between 5-30 years old, and the crown ratio (length of crown in relation to height of tree) is 30 percent or more, thinning may improve the strength and growth of existing trees if they are currently crowding each other. This will release more of the light, water and nutrients for use by the remaining trees, so they should grow faster. It may also help to reduce insect and disease vulnerability by increasing tree vigor, as well as remove broken, deformed or otherwise weakened trees. However, it does not mean removing all understory trees, saplings and shrubs. They add significant value to the buffer and are not detrimental to the canopy trees in a buffer being maintained for water quality. The removal of understory trees and saplings will prevent the buffer from continually regenerating naturally over its lifetime.

*“A cardinal rule when thinning is to improve the stand’s condition for future growth.”*

Future growth should include regeneration within the buffer so that the woodlot is sustainable.

Stands that have not been actively managed before they are 15-20 years old generally do not respond to thinning with a significant increase in growth. If the remaining trees have less than 30% crown ratio or are shade-intolerant species, they may not respond positively to thinning and may even decline.

Another consideration may be the consequences of removing overstory trees. Understory shrubs that have been stunted in the shade may thrive when the overstory is removed and interfere with views as the shrubs grow higher and need frequent trimming. Other native shade-loving shrubs may become overstressed by excessive sunlight and give way to less desirable or weedy species if the

adjacent protective overstory is removed. Non-native invasives that have been suppressed by overstory shelter may become prolific if the shelter is removed.

## Competition within a Stand

As an even-aged stand grows, some trees grow faster and out-compete the others: some become dominant while others fall behind to become co-dominant. The intermediate trees never manage to compete or are co-dominant trees that have weakened. The intermediates often become overtopped and die. On some poor sites the stand may become stagnant exhibiting slow growth and containing many suppressed trees. In an unmanaged stand the dead trees may remain in place to rot.

If a forest is managed early in its development, competition will be reduced and the majority of the trees will grow quickly into large trees with fewer becoming intermediates or suppressed trees.

### Diameter Limit

Setting a minimum diameter, or caliper, for cutting is a poor woodlot management practice.

Cutting everything in a size class will include trees that are just beginning their optimal growth and may leave a woodlot without good quality trees for future seed sources.

A lack of reference to stocking rates in an evaluation of the stand may result in thinning that opens up the forest so much that regeneration may not result in a good growing stock for decades.

The best way to manage thinning or harvesting of timber is to measure the present stocking and compare to the ideal; then cut, or thin, trees from all size classes to bring the remaining stand as close to the ideal as possible.

If the forest has been left to develop on its own,

competition will cause all crown classes to develop, eventually. Removing only suppressed and intermediate trees will not have a big effect on the growth of the dominant and co-dominant trees, since suppressed and intermediate trees do not offer significant competition with the larger trees. Removal of some dominant trees may open the canopy and release some of the younger trees to growth.

However, good quality trees should be left to provide seed for future generations. Even when thinning of some dominant trees is recommended, most of mature and aging trees should be left in the 25 feet adjacent to a stream to help maintain the health of the stream habitat.

### **Woodlot Evaluation**

Consultation with a professional arborist or reputable forester is recommended before approving any thinning activity. The arborist or forester should be able to examine a stand and determine whether a thinning will have any significant benefit to the buffer.

If thinning will not actively benefit the stand, then natural succession should be allowed to select the growth of the most vigorous trees. An evaluation should include an analysis of existing understory trees and shrubs, as well as subcanopy and canopy trees, since these are also important layers of a functioning buffer.

The analysis should include the seedlings and saplings of understory and canopy trees so that species desirable for regeneration can be protected during management activities. Understory trees, such as dogwood or redbud, and a sapling and shrub layer are a natural component of a healthy forest that do not compete with the dominant trees. As part of a healthy, self-regenerating forest buffer, this understory layer offers other benefits as well for nutrient removal, soil stabilization and habitat.

Under no circumstance should a complete understory layer be removed under the claim of thinning for management.

### **Healthy Regeneration**

In order for forested buffers to remain healthy, tree regeneration must be promoted through protection of existing understory trees. An undisturbed understory and forest floor should provide the next generation of overstory trees. In areas to be maintained as a light forest cover, the regeneration of shade tolerant species should be selectively promoted and protected when understory thinning operations are undertaken.

### **Tree Protection**

Protection of the remaining trees is an important part of any plans for activity in the buffer. Light thinnings may do more harm than good unless the logging crew is very careful. Damage from woodlot management may be more harmful than beneficial to the woodlot if damage like this occurs.

A healthy forest has a mix of trees and shrubs and a variety of ages within the stand. This mix allows a constant renewal of the stand over time.

Hardwoods are quite susceptible to insect and disease when bark is knocked off during thinning processes. This leaves the trees susceptible to bacteria, fungi and insects. Removal of trees from a dense stand without damaging those remaining can be difficult and expensive, but the extra care required is a good investment in maintaining the health of the remaining trees.

### **Stability**

On slopes, larger trees will have the more extensive deeper root systems that are better for soil retention and slope stabilization. Removing the majority of healthy, well-rooted trees from a slope is more likely to increase the probability of slope failure. As mentioned in the section about dead and dying trees, the roots also help slow runoff, encouraging infiltration, so erosion is less likely.

Assessment of the stability of a tree in relation to surrounding trees and vegetation should also be taken into account. In a mature forest with trees growing within ten feet of each other with intermingled crown canopies, the trees generally

function as a group. Removal of one or more trees, that are part of an interdependent group, may compromise the stability of the remaining trees. Excessive tree removal within the stand may also subject the remaining previously stable trees to unusual wind stresses, especially when on a bluff or other exposed situation.

### **Stream Temperatures**

Another important function of the riparian buffer is the maintenance of stream temperatures that are necessary for the survival of aquatic species. However, the removal of 50% of the canopy cover over a stream may cause temperature fluctuations for four years in a first order stream adjacent to a cleared area such as a subdivision, meadow or agricultural field. The temperature of the groundwater effluent that enters a stream alters the temperature in the stream, so the loss of a forest adjacent to the buffer may have a greater effect if the density of a forested buffer is reduced. In the area of the buffer adjacent to water, thinning should also be severely restricted to removal of only those trees absolutely necessary to maintain the health of the forest.

Trees left behind after a severe thinning may be more susceptible to wind throw.

#### **Forestry Management Recommendations**

- The goal of woodlot management should be to develop a self-sustainable, uneven-aged stand of mixed trees, shrubs and groundcover with a floor of either leaf litter and debris, or mulch.
- It is best to have a professional arborist, reputable forester or other knowledgeable person evaluate the stand before any plans for removal of vegetation are developed for thinning or for removal of large infestations of pests.
- Should a woodlot be large enough that timbering is considered a legitimate silvicultural activity, the Pennsylvania

Department of Environmental Protection should be notified before any activity takes place.

- Thinning for woodlot management should only be considered as a management measure when:
  1. the buffer is a young forest that is a tangled jungle of dense vegetation, and an opportunity exists to encourage a selection of vigorous native species;
  2. the buffer is a degraded stand or an older stand that has been poorly managed or grazed in the past, and a thinning may be used to influence species composition, age and quality to achieve sustainability in the buffer.
- Thinning should only be done according to an approved plan based on recommendations of a professional arborist or forester, or as part of an approved Forest Stewardship Plan.
- Under no circumstances should a complete age or size class, or trophic level of vegetation be removed under the claim of “thinning” or to achieve sight lines and vistas.
- The removal of noxious plants, which includes all plants on the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation, Recreation and Natural Resources’s list of Invasive Species (found at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/invasiveplants/index.htm)), is limited to those that have overrun an area becoming invasive, or are otherwise out-competing, or choking native plants.
- On first and second order streams, consider leaving dead trees, logs and other large woody debris within the 25 foot area closest to the stream. The availability of woody debris in this area is a major factor in aquatic biological diversity, providing slowly

decomposable nutrients and a variety of habitats.

- Removal of leaf litter, groundcover or humus is not permitted.
- Removal of underbrush should be permitted only when it is dead, dying, diseased or infested, or if the material is a noxious weed.

We strongly recommend the Butler County Parks and Recreation Department contact the Penn State Agricultural Extension Office and work with them to complete a Forest Stewardship Management Plan for Alameda Park.

## **Hazard Tree Identification, Inspection, and Corrective Action**

A tree is considered hazardous when structural defects are likely to cause failure of all or part of a tree within striking distance of a target.

A target can be a vehicle, building, trail or an area where people or their equipment are likely to stop and congregate such as park benches, campgrounds, picnic tables and environmental education areas.



Identifying hazard trees is not an exact science. Many times trees will fail though they appear healthy. One cannot always accurately determine the hazard potential of every tree, but following a few basic inspection techniques can identify many hazard trees so corrective action can be taken.

Tree age, size and condition are important factors in determining the seriousness of potential hazards. Older trees have had more time for injuries and infections to develop into structural defects; and larger trees have greater structural stresses due to their size and weight. Trees in poor condition may have dead or dying branches, off-color foliage, or multiple branch shoots along the trunk, known as epicormic branching.

Trees in poor condition should be inspected more closely for structural defects including cracks, cankers, decay, weak branch unions and root problems. Be sure to inspect trees carefully and systematically. Examine all parts of the tree,

including the trunk flair, main stem, branches and branch unions. A pair of binoculars or a spotting scope will allow for a more complete exam of the tree canopy.

Close inspection should occur in any public overnight and day use areas, along trails and roadways, and adjacent to buildings. Again, a hazard tree is defined as having a defect and a target. Tree inspections should be conducted using consistent procedures.

A widely accepted method of assessment is the USDA, USFS Risk Assessment Scale, which prioritizes hazard trees based on three criteria. The three assessment criteria are tree condition, failure potential, and probability of target impact. Tree condition considers the amount of deadwood, foliage and trunk decay. Failure potential is rated according to the severity of the defects. Probability of target impact is ranked based on frequency of use. Trees determined to have low probability of failure and target impact should be considered for their value as wildlife habitat.

Tree inspections should occur in the spring before leaf-on, in mid-summer, and after leaf-off in the fall. This inspection schedule allows the tree to be observed in various states and provides ample time for corrective action to be taken. Areas more heavily used by the public should be inspected immediately after severe storms that cause blow downs, leaning trees, or large hanging branches.

Tree inspections should be documented. This documentation should include the date(s) of the inspections, the area(s) inspected, the person(s) conducting the inspection, and whether this inspection was a routine inspection or conducted because of a storm event. Using the USFS Risk Assessment Scale allows for easy and consistent documentation over a multiple year period. Trail maintainers can provide this document to the landowner as a recommendation for corrective action.

Following the identification and inspection of trees, if a tree is found to have a deficiency, the appropriate corrective action should be taken promptly. Use the USFS Risk Assessment Scale to prioritize hazard trees that require corrective action. These corrective actions could include moving the target, pruning the tree to remove the hazardous portion, or removing the entire tree. Landowners/managers can contact a professional arborist if they do not have sufficient equipment or properly trained people to carry out tree pruning or removal.

Only properly trained and certified personnel should work with trees, especially when it comes to felling trees and/or working with power equipment, such as chain saws.

Additional information on hazardous trees and the USDA, USFS Risk Assessment scale can be found at: [www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/uf/utrm/index.htm](http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/uf/utrm/index.htm) or [www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/fhp/hazard/rating\\_method.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/fhp/hazard/rating_method.htm).

# TRAIL PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

To be successful, trails should be designed to be physically, ecologically, and economically sustainable. This includes:

- **Physical Sustainability**  
Designing trails to retain their structure and form over years of use and under forces of humans and nature is a key factor in sustainability. Trail use promotes change, so trails must be designed in anticipation of change to ensure that they remain physically stable with appropriate maintenance and management.
- **Ecological Sustainability**  
Minimizing the ecological impacts of trails, and protecting sensitive natural and cultural resources is fundamental in sustainable trail design and development.
- **Economic Sustainability**  
For any trail, the implementing agency or advocacy group must have the capacity to economically support it over its life cycle. Developing and committing to a long-term maintenance strategy is a critical aspect of a successful trail program.

The International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) has established itself as a leader in providing sustainable trail design and trail building resources. Many of the recommendations presented herein are based on IMBA guidelines.

## How Does this Translate on the Ground?

While there are many factors that can influence the sustainability of trails, when you get to actually constructing them or managing trails on the ground, they should achieve the following objectives.

### **Connect Positive, and Avoid Negative, Control Points**

Sustainable trails provide users with their desired experience; connect features such as water features, historic sites, vistas, interesting landforms and user facilities when present; while avoiding wet areas,

fall lines, critical habitats, and other culturally or environmentally sensitive areas.

### **Keep Water Off the Trail**

Erosion is the number one problem for sustainable trails. It damages trails, is expensive to repair and diminishes the user experiences. Water is the primary erosive force. Trails that collect or channel water will be both environmentally and economically un-sustainable.

### **Follow Natural Contours**

Trails lie on the land in three ways:

- 1) Fall Line Trail - along a fall line (in the direction of the slope)
- 2) Flat Trail - on flat ground with little slope or cross slope
- 3) Contour Trail - along the contour with subtle elevation changes (perpendicular to the slope).

Of these types of trails, only the contour trail easily sheds water and is thus sustainable.

### **Keep Users on the Trail**

When users leave the trail tread, they widen it, create braided trails, and create social trails. These can cause environmental damage and raise maintenance costs. Users leave the trail when it becomes eroded or wet, or when the trail does not meet their needs or expectations.

Ultimately, a sustainable trail design will most often be a contour trail that connects desired control points by contouring along the sides of slopes while making subtle changes in grade.

## Sustainable Trail Planning Guidelines

The design of sustainable trails begins during the planning phase. Sustainable trails follow the contour of the surrounding landscape, gradually climb or descend, and direct water away from the trail. Regardless of trail type, your trail can be sustainably designed by following IMBA's five essential elements of sustainable trails:

1. **The Half Rule:** A trail's grade should not exceed the half grade of the hillside or sideslope that the trail

traverses. If grade does exceed half of the sideslope, consider it a fall line trail that will be susceptible to erosion.

2. *The Ten Percent Average Grade*  
*Guideline:* Generally, a trail with an average grade of 10 percent or less is most sustainable. This does not mean you need to keep all grades less than 10 percent. Many sections of a trail will have short steep sections greater than 10 percent, and some unique situations will allow average grades of more than 10 percent.
3. *Maximum Sustainable Grade Trails:* Maximum sustainable grade equals the steepest section of trail that is more than 10 feet in length. When designing a trail, it is essential to determine early in the process the maximum grades the trail will be able to sustain given local conditions. Variables that impact the maximum sustainable grade include:
  - Soil Type
  - Rock
  - Annual Rainfall Amount
  - Grade Reversals
  - Type of Users
  - Number of Users
  - Planned Level of Difficulty
4. *Grade Reversals:* A grade reversal occurs when a climbing trail levels out and then changes direction, dropping subtly for about 10 to 50 linear feet before rising again. This change in grade forces water to exit the trail at the low point before it can gain volume, velocity, and erosive power. Other names for grade reversals include dips, grade breaks, drainage dips, or rolling dips.
5. *Outslope:* As the trail contours across a hillside, the downhill or outer edge of the trail tread should tilt slightly down and away from the high side. This encourages water to flow across and off the trail.

When you are designing sustainable trails, consider the level of trail development required based upon the location, use, and other factors. Some trails will consist of a natural surface, while others will consist of more developed surfaces.

## **Common Trail Building Mistakes**

Make every effort to avoid the most common trail building mistakes as summarized by IMBA to ensure for the design and maintenance of safe, sustainable trails.

### **Following the Fall Line**

Fall line trails usually follow the shortest route down a hill, following the same path water flows. Natural and user-created erosion strips the trail of soil, exposes roots, creates gullies, and scars the environment. To build trails that last, use the Half Rule: trail grade, or steepness, should not exceed half the grade of the hillside; and the 10 Percent Rule: Keep the overall trail grade 10 percent or less.

### **Guessing the Grade**

Always use a clinometer to confirm the grade when laying out a trail, because no amount of trail improvement can fix a trail built at an unsustainable grade. This accurate, relatively inexpensive tool measures the grade, or steepness, of a trail in degrees or percent for designers and builders to construct a trail route correctly.

### **Going Against the Flow**

All trail builders should ensure a trail has smooth transitions and good flow. This ensures an enjoyable trail experience. By designing smooth turns that users can safely navigate at a consistent speed, designers can limit user conflicts and decrease safety hazards with minimal trail degradation.

### **Not Constructing the Tread on a Full Bench**

The only instances where you should not construct a full bench cut trail are:

- (a) When the sideslope is so steep—80 percent or greater—that the backslope exceeds 6 feet in height, or;
- (b) When a trail design forces trail builders to build close to the downhill side of a large tree.

In both cases, build either a crib or retaining wall to support a partial bench, and, as in all trails, the tread should maintain a 5 to 7 percent outslope.

### **Steep Climbing Turns**

Avoid fall line turns, they result in extensive trail erosion. Trail designers should build climbing turns on sideslopes at grades no steeper than 7 to 10 percent to ensure their endurance.

### **Using Poor Materials**

Using poor quality materials when building trail structures reduces their safety and longevity. Doing so leaves trail designers and builders vulnerable to user and trail safety concerns.

### **Opening a Trail Too Soon**

Do not open newly constructed trails until they are ready and free of all safety hazards.

### **Log Lined Trails**

A properly constructed trail should not have logs lining its edges. In fact, lining a trail with logs or rocks traps water on the tread and increases erosion.

### **Ignoring Old Wounds**

Always reclaim eroded areas with check dams—natural obstacles like logs or rocks that divert the flow of water and soil—and reclaim all closed trails with transplanted native vegetation that conceals the old corridor.

Visit IMBA's website, [www.imba.com](http://www.imba.com), for additional trail design and trail building resources.





# ALAMEDA PARK TRAIL MASTER PLAN

One of the goals for Alameda Park, as determined through the public input process, is to develop a network of sustainable trails throughout the park. This includes a system of hiking and mountain bicycling trails, an accessible loop trail and a shared use path.

Trails have always been an important feature of Alameda Park. Based on the analysis of the existing trails discussed earlier, the trail system in Alameda Park should be refined and expanded in a sustainable manner to eliminate trail erosion and reoccurring maintenance issues.

By applying the sustainable trail principles described earlier with our analysis of topography and drainage characteristics of the park, a hiking and mountain biking trail network, approximately 20 miles in length is proposed for Alameda Park.

The proposed sustainable trail system is located on the following page.

Further, several proposed trailheads are recommended to provide access to the trail system.

The proposed trailheads are based on logical points of entry into the trail system. Before moving forward with trailhead construction, additional planning is required. This planning should include notifying and reviewing proposed trailhead plans with adjacent neighbors so they have the opportunity to express any concerns and so that a final implementation plan can be prepared to respond to potential concerns. Further, the trailhead development should correspond with the adjacent trail segments.

The proposed trailheads are located:

- Immediately adjacent to the eastern edge of the proposed upper park parking area expansion. At this location we propose a trail map & kiosk, a medium size (72 person capacity, approximate) shelter with adjacent green space to function as a rally area for small trail events. We recommend

a temporary trailhead kiosk be located near the existing swimming pool parking lot until the proposed upper parking lot expansion is completed.

- Western terminus of West Penn Street. At this location we propose terminating West Penn Street in a cul-de-sac with approximately 12 parking spaces, including two accessible parking spaces, and trail kiosk & map.
- Western terminus of Blair Drive provide several parking spaces, trail kiosk & map.
- We recommend ride in/walk in trailheads be located in the eastern portion of the park at the western terminus of Maryland and American Avenues.
- From the western side of the park we recommend a ride in/walk in trailhead be located where the public right-of-way extends into the park from Seneca Drive.

To accommodate those who desire additional technical challenges, we propose a skills park and downhill “free-ride” course. A skills park provides riders with the opportunity to develop and refine advanced mountain bicycling skills. And a “free-ride” course consists of a downhill run containing jumps, elevated boardwalks, drops and the like.

Technical challenge areas should include a wide variety of challenges, from easy to difficult, to provide the opportunity for skill progression. Typically these courses are located in a manner where technical challenges are placed to direct competent riders to the course. Best practices recommend surrounding these courses with natural barriers consisting of deadfall to ensure safety and seclusion from other trail users.

We propose a “free-ride” course that begins north of shelter 4 in the upper park and ends at the former log landing, along the West Penn Trail in the lower portion of the park.



As implementation of a sustainable trail system progresses, it is important to understand the trail alignment must be flagged and refined in the field before it is constructed. This step is important to ensuring the sustainability of the trails now and into the future. This work should be completed by a person skilled and trained in sustainable trail design as there are many details and nuisances in the field that need to be addressed in a sustainable manner.

The resulting trail master plan for Alameda Park is shown on the previous page.

As discussed in the Site Analysis section, many trails exist within the park and the majority of those trails are unsustainable. During the course of developing this master plan, the sustainability of the existing trail segments were evaluated at a desktop review level using GIS to determine the trails' running slopes.

The analysis lead to categorizing the trail segments based on their running slopes, as follows:

- Less than 10%
- Between 10% and 15%
- Greater than 15%

Trails with running slopes of less than 10% are generally sustainable, assuming the cross slope of the existing terrain is greater than 20%. Short segments of slopes between 10% & 15%, and slopes greater than 15% may be permitted provided careful consideration is given to their alignment and the watershed of the specific trail segment is limited.

The map below identifies the running slope of the proposed sustainable trail network proposed for Alameda Park.



## Permitting for Trail Development

Because trail construction involves earth disturbance, both temporary and permanent sedimentation control measures are needed to protect surface waters, as required by the Federal Clean Water Act. Further, consideration must be given to stormwater management to ensure that the rate, quality, and quantity of stormwater run-off is not greater than pre-construction levels) after the construction of the trail).

In Pennsylvania, most Federal and State regulatory requirements are enforced either through the County Conservation District or PA DEP. Depending on the specifics of some projects, the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) may also have jurisdiction. Typically, trail projects with proposed stream crossings that do not disturb jurisdictional wetlands are reviewed and approved by the County Conservation District upon the submission of a completed General Permit No. 7 – Minor Road Crossing application.

Well before construction of new trails begins, identify the layout of the trail and any desired stream crossings, then contact the County Conservation District to discuss the specifics and determine if a GP-7 is appropriate. Depending on the specifics related to the project the Conservation District may indicate that a more exhaustive permit is required.

### GP7 Permit for Stream Crossings

1. Evaluate proposed stream crossings for potential wetland impacts. If impacts to wetlands are anticipated determine if crossing can be relocated so there are not impacts. If wetlands are in the vicinity, DEP/USACE will require a wetland delineation to be performed.
2. Approval is required from both the PA DEP and the USACE.
3. DEP has a waiver that applies to watercourses draining less than 100 acres and with under 100 LF of defined bed and bank. This waiver is automatic and does

not need to be applied for assuming the requirements are met.

4. USACE does not have a waiver for projects with a drainage area of less than 100 acres. If the project qualifies for a waiver from DEP, USACE can issue a State Programmatic General Permit (SPGP) directly. The SPGP is a Federal Permit that the State generally issues.
5. The SPGP can be a lengthy process which starts with the preparation and submission of an aquatic resources study, after which USACE assigns a project manager who then conducts a site inspection and pre-application meeting.
6. As mentioned above, DEP has indicated that the General Permit-7 (GP-7) for a minor road crossing can be applied to a stream crossing for a trail.

The GP-7 is a DEP General Permit that conveys both DEP and USACE approvals for a project. It is limited to streams with a drainage area of less than 1.0 square mile. A separate GP-7 Permit is necessary for each crossing (this should be verified with the appropriate County Conservation District and/or PA DEP regional office).

## Next Steps in Implementing the Trail Master Plan

Once permitting obligations have been satisfied and permit applications have been approved, final trail design, flagging, and construction can begin, provided it is led by properly trained crew leaders with experience in sustainable trail design, layout and construction.

The International Mountain Bicycle Association can provide this training through its Subaru/IMBA Trail Care Crew program. On the road since 1997, this effort is IMBA's grass roots educational program and an authority on sustainable trail building practices. Two teams of professional trail experts travel year-round throughout the United States and beyond, leading trail work sessions, meeting with land managers and working with IMBA-affiliated clubs and the communities they serve to improve mountain biking opportunities.

We strongly encourage the Butler County Parks and Recreation Department engage the local mountain bicycling community and invite the International Mountain Bicycling Association to provide a Trail Care Crew Training Seminar in Alameda Park. This three-day training course provides attendees with the knowledge necessary to lead sustainable trail layout, design and construction crews. To schedule an IMBA Trail Care Crew training event contact IMBA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Director, Frank McGuire, [frank.maguire@imba.com](mailto:frank.maguire@imba.com).

We recommend the County Parks Department partner with a trail or mountain bicycling organization who can help with the implementation of sustainable trail improvements within Alameda Park. However, it must be done with an understanding and commitment from each party that the work will only be completed by individuals who have the necessary skills and training.

There are many examples of successful partnerships between park agencies and local volunteer trail organizations. One such partnership is between the Allegheny County Parks Department and the Pittsburgh Trails Advocacy Group (PTAG, [www.ptagtrails.org](http://www.ptagtrails.org)). PTAG has designed, flagged and constructed trail networks in Moraine State Park

in partnership with PA DCNR. Further, they have partnered with Allegheny County to develop and maintain trails in North Park, South Park, Boyce Park, White Oak Park, Deer Lakes Park and Hartwood Acres.

During the course of this planning process informal discussions occurred with PTAG to determine its interest in partnering with Butler County to establish a high quality, sustainable mountain biking and hiking trail network in Alameda Park. Those discussions have indicated that both PTAG and Butler County are interested in further exploring an opportunity to partner in this endeavor.

As these discussions progress we recommend that an arrangement between Butler County and PTAG be formalized in writing through an agreement/memorandum of understanding (MOU) which specifies the expectations of each party before any work begins. A sample memorandum of understanding is located in the Appendix.

An Agreement/MOU defines expectations and establishes quality control for the trail system. Ultimately Butler County, as the owner of the land, will be responsible for the trail system and bear the responsibility associated with its development.

By following best practices for trail design, construction and maintenance, Butler County will put forward a good faith effort to defend any potential liability that arises from trail development within Alameda Park. Allegheny County instituted a similar partnership with the trail community in Allegheny County. Since the partnership has been developed, there have been no liability claims related to mountain biking in the Allegheny County Park's system.

Given PTAG's success throughout western Pennsylvania and the interest it has expressed in developing and maintaining trails in Alameda Park, we recommend Butler County begin to formalize a partnership with PTAG for the construction and maintenance of trails within Alameda Park. Several regional organizations have trained volunteers

among their members. The Pittsburgh Trails Advocacy Group (PTAG) has successfully worked with state, county, and local entities throughout western Pennsylvania to ensure that all trails are approved by the landowner or land manager and that trails are constructed and maintained to the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) guidelines, with minimal impact on the environment. It works to educate all users on responsible trail use with the goal of fostering improved relations among landowners and all trail users. For more information on PTAG visit their website at: [www.ptagtrails.org](http://www.ptagtrails.org).

The proposed trail system should be developed incrementally over a period of time. This will provide Butler County with the opportunity to adjust to increased park visitation and allow trail maintainers to expand their pool of volunteers who assist with maintenance and upkeep of the trails.

Overall trail system mileage will be dependent on the final flagging and alignment of the proposed trails. Ideally, to become a regional attraction for mountain biking, we recommend a goal of establishing 10-15 miles, or more, of high quality, sustainable trails.

The map on page 206 represents the final trail master plan for Alameda Park. The map identifies logical trail segments and loops. Trail segments and loops should be developed in such a manner that each of the identified loops are completed at the end of each trail construction phase.

Once trails are flagged and necessary permits are obtained, trails can be constructed. Before the trails are opened to the public they should be marked/signed, and a corresponding map should be developed to serve as a guide to those desiring to use the trails.

### **Funding for Trail Development**

The majority of the costs associated with the construction of hiking and mountain bicycling trails are labor costs. Little material is required; however, given the trails are cleared, benched and constructed with hand tools, they are labor intensive. Materials expenses are greater where

trail access and trailhead facilities are constructed. Therefore, if Butler County is going to partner with a non-profit organization and/or volunteers to construct the trail, we recommend the County develop a plan of action to capitalize on matching the in-kind services provided with grant dollars.

Most funding programs and grant opportunities require matching in-kind services to be performed after funding is announced and committed. Banking time from prior efforts is typically not allowed. Therefore, trail construction needs to be choreographed with grant writing and funding efforts in order to maximize the ability of securing cash matches to in-kind labor donations.



**Alameda Park Master Plan**  
 Mountain Biking & Hiking Trail Plan



- 1 - Swimming Pool Parking Lot Trailhead
- 2 - Free Ride Park Trailhead
- 3 - West Penn Trailhead
- 4 - Maryland Avenue Trailhead
- 5 - American Avenue Trailhead
- 6 - Blair Drive Trailhead
- 7 - Seneca Drive Trailhead



# UPPER PARK MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The upper park consists of five areas:

- 1) Park Entrance and Proposed Lodge & Park Office
- 2) The Special Kids Zone Playground
- 3) Swimming Pool Complex
- 4) The Proposed Active Recreation Area
- 5) The Masonic, Pine and Holly Shelter Picnic Groves, and
- 6) The Loop Road Picnic Groves.

Proposed improvements to each of these areas is further described herein.

## **1. Park Entrance and Proposed Lodge & Park Office**

Due to existing site conditions and the adjacent land uses, the park entrance is difficult to see and does not have park-like “curb appeal.” To create a sense of place, street trees are proposed along Alameda Park Road to visually screen adjacent land use areas and provide a green, tree-lined avenue leading to the proposed park lodge and park office. New native plantings should occur within the boundary of the park property, and adjacent land owners could be approached to enhance their landscaping to achieve the design intent.

A new entrance sign and native flowering beds are proposed to attract attention to the park entrance. The sign should be an aesthetic, marquee sign, reflecting characteristics of natural elements such as stone and wood and perhaps incorporate a small, scrolling digital sign panel on which events occurring in the park can be promoted.

Upon entering into the park, a proposed two-story lodge and park office greets visitors as they arrive at the park. We recommend the County conduct a feasibility study to further evaluate the feasibility of and refine the proposed lodge area.

Short-term parking is available in one of the eleven spaces provided at the lower entrance (immediately west of the building) to the lodge. Long term parking is available on the east side of the building in the 240 space parking spaces provided.

Approximately one-third of the spaces are paved (impervious) spaces, while the remaining two-thirds of the spaces are proposed to be pervious spaces. The design intent for the pervious spaces is to provide paved access isles and stabilized turf parking spaces. The impervious spaces will meet the day-to-day demand of the swimming pool and lodge while the pervious spaces will meet the peak demand parking needs of the three adjacent facility areas.

The parking on the east side of the lodge is proposed to be shared with the existing swimming pool complex and the proposed basketball and skatepark area located immediately adjacent to the parking area. On the far east side of the parking area is the upper trailhead. This trailhead provides parking, a kiosk containing a trail map, trail rules, and other pertinent information, a medium size (72 person capacity) shelter and a rally field immediately northeast of the shelter. This trailhead will provide access to the 21 mile hiking and mountain bicycling network proposed within the park.

Accessible sidewalk and walking trails are proposed to connect the facilities located around the perimeter of the parking to the Kids Zone, Masonic Shelter, and Pine Shelter picnic groves.

## **2. The Special Kids Zone Playground**

The Special Kids Zone Playground is one of the largest and most popular playgrounds in the region. It attracts many visitors throughout the spring, summer, fall, and, on occasion, warm weather winter days. In addition to routine inspection and maintenance to upkeep the playground to conform to playground safety guidelines, we recommend the upper play area equipment and surfacing be replaced.

## **3. Swimming Pool Complex**

Proposed site improvements to the swimming pool complex are described in the swimming pool feasibility section of this study.

#### **4. Picnic Grove and Horseshoe Area**

The current location of the Lions Shelter is proposed to be improved to accommodate a 72 person (medium size) picnic shelter and approximately 10 horseshoe courts. The location lends itself to enclosing the horseshoe courts to allow for year round play. We recommend an accessible walkway connect this area with the loop road picnic area located to the north east.

#### **5. Existing Pine Shelter Picnic Grove**

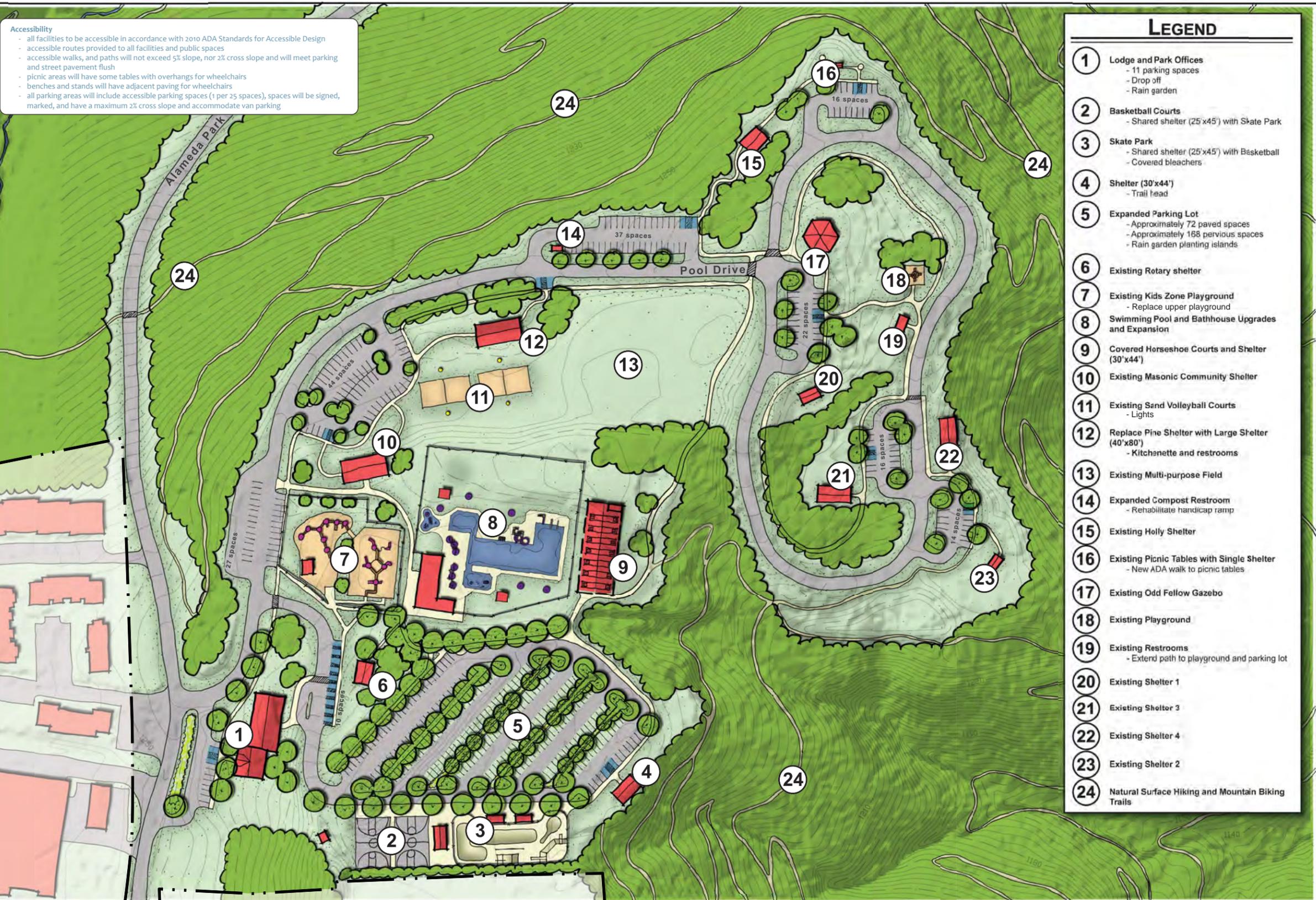
The Pine Picnic Grove is popular and hosts many summer camp events. We recommend that when the shelter is in need of capital investment that it be replaced with a shelter similar to the adjacent Masonic Shelter. Park staff has indicated there is a strong desire for a second shelter to contain a serving kitchen and restrooms, like the Masonic Shelter. This shelter would be larger in size, with the ability to accommodate approximately 160 people.

The existing volleyball courts and open space located south of the Pine Shelter are also in high demand, as they meet the need for the county volleyball league which typically has 20-25 teams participating. In order to extend the availability of the volleyball courts, we recommend lighting be installed.

The open space to the east of the Pine Shelter, which contains a backstop, is the only remaining open space available within the park for pick-up sports. We recommend this space be protected and remain open space for unprogrammed recreation uses.

#### **6. Loop Road Picnic Groves**

As recommended in the 1997 Master Plan, the Loop Road picnic groves have been developed. At the time of this writing a composting restroom is being designed to serve the five picnic groves and the Odd Fellow Gazebo located along the Loop Road. The Loop Road is also a popular route for those who seek a place to walk for recreation, health and wellness. Travel along the loop road is light, particularly during the week, and travel is generally at low speeds. The berms of the roads were constructed to support overflow parking (parallel to the path of travel) during peak use times in the park. A gate is located just west of the Loop Road to allow this portion of the park to be closed to vehicular traffic during the off-season. We recommend consideration be given to planting native shade trees within the picnic groves to provide much needed shade around the shelters.



**Accessibility**

- all facilities to be accessible in accordance with 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- accessible routes provided to all facilities and public spaces
- accessible walks, and paths will not exceed 5% slope, nor 2% cross slope and will meet parking and street pavement flush
- picnic areas will have some tables with overhangs for wheelchairs
- benches and stands will have adjacent paving for wheelchairs
- all parking areas will include accessible parking spaces (1 per 25 spaces), spaces will be signed, marked, and have a maximum 2% cross slope and accommodate van parking

- LEGEND**
- 1 Lodge and Park Offices
    - 11 parking spaces
    - Drop off
    - Rain garden
  - 2 Basketball Courts
    - Shared shelter (25'x45') with Skate Park
  - 3 Skate Park
    - Shared shelter (25'x45') with Basketball
    - Covered bleachers
  - 4 Shelter (30'x44')
    - Trail head
  - 5 Expanded Parking Lot
    - Approximately 72 paved spaces
    - Approximately 188 pervious spaces
    - Rain garden planting islands
  - 6 Existing Rotary shelter
  - 7 Existing Kids Zone Playground
    - Replace upper playground
  - 8 Swimming Pool and Bathhouse Upgrades and Expansion
  - 9 Covered Horseshoe Courts and Shelter (30'x44')
  - 10 Existing Masonic Community Shelter
  - 11 Existing Sand Volleyball Courts
    - Lights
  - 12 Replace Pine Shelter with Large Shelter (40'x80')
    - Kitchennette and restrooms
  - 13 Existing Multi-purpose Field
  - 14 Expanded Compost Restroom
    - Rehabilitate handicap ramp
  - 15 Existing Holly Shelter
  - 16 Existing Picnic Tables with Single Shelter
    - New ADA walk to picnic tables
  - 17 Existing Odd Fellow Gazebo
  - 18 Existing Playground
  - 19 Existing Restrooms
    - Extend path to playground and parking lot
  - 20 Existing Shelter 1
  - 21 Existing Shelter 3
  - 22 Existing Shelter 4
  - 23 Existing Shelter 2
  - 24 Natural Surface Hiking and Mountain Biking Trails

**Alameda Park - Upper Park Master Plan**  
 City of Butler  
 Butler County, Pennsylvania

Scale: 1"=50'  
 Date: 11-15-2013

**PASHEK ASSOCIATES**  
 A PARKWAYS CORPORATION



# LOWER PARK MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

The lower park consists of three areas:

- 1) Existing Alameda House, Park & Maintenance Offices and Maintenance Area
- 2) The Sullivan Run Recreation Area located in the northwest portion of the park, along the Sullivan Run stream valley, and,
- 3) The Former West Penn Street corridor which extends to the City of Butler heading east.

## 1. Existing Alameda House, Park & Maintenance Offices and Maintenance Area

Until recently, the Alameda Park House served as the home of the park's foreman. Over the past several years the home has been improved as a small meeting venue, and it provides storage space utilized by park staff. With the ability to accommodate approximately 15 people, it provides a quaint venue for small gatherings. Parking is limited in the vicinity of the building. This negatively impacts rental of the building. Two accessible parking spaces are provided at the building, with five or six additional spaces available above the house at the park and maintenance offices. Topography limits the ability to provide additional parking in close proximity to the Alameda House.

### **Park Office and Maintenance Office & Area**

Like the Alameda House, the Park and Maintenance Office, maintenance garage, shop and building material storage area is limited due to topography. Park staff have adapted to the space available and are currently managing, operating, and maintaining the park from this space. Ultimately, we recommend the Park Office be relocated from this location to the upper park as described earlier. Moving the park office from this location will open up additional space for park maintenance to operate from.

## 2. Sullivan Run Recreation Area

The area along Sullivan Run is the location of the former 1901 amusement park which was developed to generate ridership along the trolley line that extended to the Alameda Park picnic grounds and pavilion.

Sullivan Run was dammed just downstream of the eastern side of the bridge crossing. The dam has since been removed.

The Carousel Shelter is the only structure remaining from the amusement park's heyday. We recommend the history of the amusement park be told through interpretive panels located within or near the carousel shelter. Further, the landscaping in front of the shelter has outgrown its location. We recommend the large shrubs be removed to open up the views to the shelter.

We recommend an accessible walkway be constructed from the Carousel Shelter to the restrooms located in the lower park.

Parking demands of the Carousel Shelter exceed the supply, therefore, we recommend providing overflow parking on a pervious surface immediately east of the Carousel Shelter. Further, we recommend the 'flagpole loop' be formalized as an overflow parking area as well. This loop can also serve as a trailhead for the western terminus of the West Penn Street Extension Trail and for the hiking and mountain biking trails located on the north side of Sullivan Run.

Upon crossing the bridge to the north side of Sullivan Run, one can access several picnic shelters and groves (Jaycees, Steelworkers and Kiwanis) as well as the lower playground and bocce courts situated along Sullivan Run. The Steelworkers Shelter appears to be located in the location of the former Alameda Park Pavilion which was a former icon of the park.

A restroom is centrally located in this area to serve the surrounding picnic shelters.

We recommend the Jaycees Shelter and picnic grove be re-programmed for a three season environmental education center. We envision an enclosed picnic shelter with sides that can be opened to the air during warm weather months.

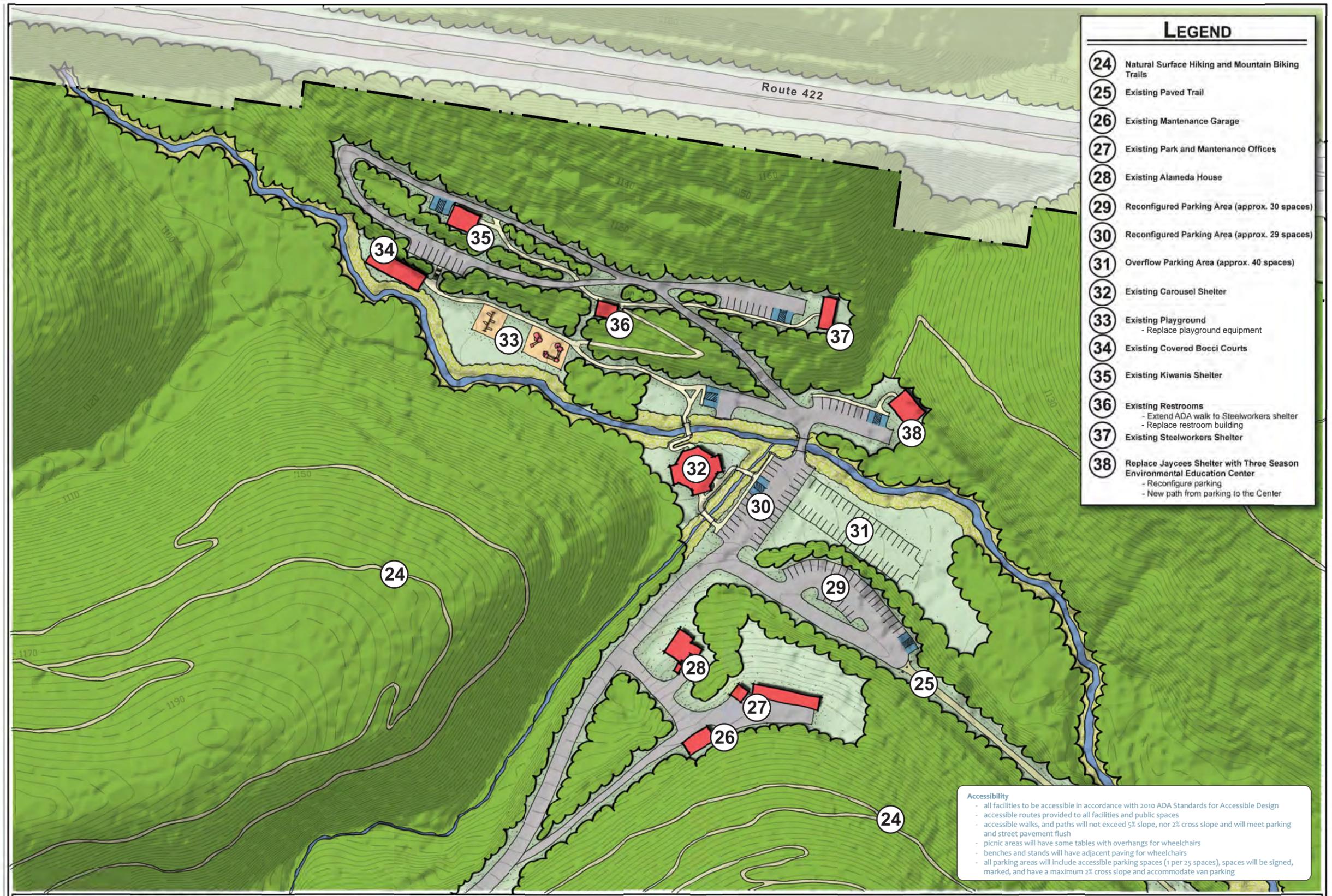
The lower area, which contains the lower playground and bocce courts, is ideally suited for a vegetated streamside buffer. That said, these facilities have been developed within the past 25 years and have some serviceable use left. Ultimately we recommend consideration be given to eliminating these facilities to expand the riparian zone along Sullivan Run.

### **3. Former West Penn Street Corridor**

A number of years ago Butler County closed West Penn Street, from the Alameda Park ‘flagpole’ approximately one mile heading east and stopping approximately perpendicular to the Fern Street/ Maryland Avenue intersection, located to the north. The road was closed due to its deteriorating condition and because it was functioning as a ‘bypass’ for locals who chose to avoid State Route 356 and its traffic lights.

Since its closing, the road serves a defacto pedestrian and bicycle trail into the lower portion of Alameda Park. Further, a loop trail is created by connecting this corridor with the park trail located on the north side of Sullivan Run, to Maryland Avenue, to Wood Street, back to the open portion of West Penn Street, creating a loop approximately 2.5 miles in length. Because this primarily follows the stream corridor, the trail is easy to negotiate with few climbs in elevation.

We recommend the County formalize this trail by converting the former roadbed into a shared use path complying with the AASHTO *Guide for Bicycle Facilities*. We envision the width of pavement would be narrowed to twelve feet, the existing guiderail would be removed, and native vegetation be planted to provide shade along the corridor. Further we recommend the trail be marked at quarter mile intervals and that the loop trail be established through signage and wayfinding markers.



LEGEND	
24	Natural Surface Hiking and Mountain Biking Trails
25	Existing Paved Trail
26	Existing Maintenance Garage
27	Existing Park and Maintenance Offices
28	Existing Alameda House
29	Reconfigured Parking Area (approx. 30 spaces)
30	Reconfigured Parking Area (approx. 29 spaces)
31	Overflow Parking Area (approx. 40 spaces)
32	Existing Carousel Shelter
33	Existing Playground - Replace playground equipment
34	Existing Covered Bocci Courts
35	Existing Kiwanis Shelter
36	Existing Restrooms - Extend ADA walk to Steelworkers shelter - Replace restroom building
37	Existing Steelworkers Shelter
38	Replace Jaycees Shelter with Three Season Environmental Education Center - Reconfigure parking - New path from parking to the Center

**Accessibility**

- all facilities to be accessible in accordance with 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- accessible routes provided to all facilities and public spaces
- accessible walks, and paths will not exceed 5% slope, nor 2% cross slope and will meet parking and street pavement flush
- picnic areas will have some tables with overhangs for wheelchairs
- benches and stands will have adjacent paving for wheelchairs
- all parking areas will include accessible parking spaces (1 per 25 spaces), spaces will be signed, marked, and have a maximum 2% cross slope and accommodate van parking

**Alameda Park - Lower Park Master Plan**  
 City of Butler  
 Butler County, Pennsylvania



# OPINION OF PROBABLE CONSTRUCTION COSTS

The opinion of probable construction costs projected here assumes improvements are constructed through a public bid process utilizing the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry's prevailing wage rates. These projections are likely to give folks "sticker shock." That said, projects should not be put on hold, deferred, or not entertained as they seem too expensive to undertake. Rather the County and its partners need to "think outside the box" to determine how to construct and implement the recommendations of this plan, at the lowest possible cost to the County, while maintaining a high level of quality in the construction of that work.

Unit prices for construction were assigned based on the consultant's experience with construction costs in 2014. These costs are based upon publicly bid projects that pay prevailing wage rates. In addition, the cost projections take into account the following:

- The condition of the property at the time of construction will be similar to its condition in 2014.
- Projects will be bid through a competitive bidding process utilizing state or federal prevailing wage rates.
- Opinions of probable construction costs should be confirmed / revised upon completion of preliminary design.
- To budget for inflation costs for improvements that will occur after 2014, we recommend a 4.5% annual increase for each year thereafter.
- In Pennsylvania all projects, valued at over \$25,000 and using public funds, are required to pay workers in accordance with the Commonwealth Department of Labor and Industry's Prevailing Wage Rates.

It is important to note the costs are based on 2014 construction figures. Should projects be constructed in future years an additional 4.5% per year should be factored into the costs for inflation.

Additional increases may be necessary to address the escalation of steel and fuel prices as their costs are escalating at unprecedented rates.

As noted, volunteer labor, in-kind services, and donated materials and services can reduce the overall project cost from those costs projected here. Additionally, alternate sources of funding, including grant opportunities, may assist in offsetting the construction costs.

The tables on the following pages reflect our opinions of probable construction costs for implementing the physical improvements described and shown on the master plan.

<b>Alameda Park - Upper Park Master Plan</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Unit Price</b>	<b>Extension</b>
<b>Park Entrance, Lodge &amp; Park Office</b>				
Removals	1	LS	\$1,500	\$1,500
Erosion & sedimentation controls	1	LS	\$2,400	\$2,400
Misc Grading	1	LS	\$10,000	\$10,000
Lodge / park office building	4500	SF	\$200	\$900,000
Bituminous parking lot	1095	SY	\$54	\$59,130
Concrete sidewalk	320	SY	\$105	\$33,600
Rain garden planting islands	5071	SF	\$30	\$152,130
Planting - trees	10	EA	\$350	\$3,500
Lawn seeding	18600	SF	\$0.12	\$2,232
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$1,164,492</b>
<b>Special Kids Zone Playground Improvements</b>				
Replace upper playground equipment & surface	1	LS	\$250,000	\$250,000
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$250,000</b>
<b>Swimming Pool</b>				
Necessary renovations	1	LS	\$635,650	\$635,650
Drop slide at diving area	1	LS	\$48,000	\$48,000
1 meter diving boards	1	LS	\$15,400	\$15,400
Renovate existing slide	1	LS	\$74,200	\$74,200
2-tube enclosed slide	1	LS	\$105,000	\$105,000
Intermediate spray pad	1	LS	\$225,000	\$225,000
Zero depth tot addition	1	LS	\$145,000	\$145,000
Shade umbrellas	1	LS	\$12,000	\$12,000
Winterization Cover	1	LS	\$27,000	\$27,000
Perimeter fence	1	LS	\$38,000	\$38,000
Seat walls	1	LS	\$18,400	\$18,400
ADA upgrades	1	LS	\$12,000	\$12,000
Family restrooms and storage room	1	LS	\$150,000	\$150,000
Concessions upgrade	1	LS	\$6,000	\$6,000
Shade canopy	1	LS	\$12,000	\$12,000
Design and permitting	1	LS	\$121,892	\$121,892
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$1,645,542</b>

<b>Upper Court Area Improvements</b>				
Removals	1	LS	\$500	\$500
Erosion & sedimentation controls	1	LS	\$3,500	\$3,500
Grading	1	LS	\$5,000	\$5,000
Basketball court (104x60; includes buffer)	2	EA	\$38,288	\$76,576
Skate park	1	LS	\$300,000	\$300,000
Chain link fence (6 ft)	580	LF	\$28	\$16,240
Concrete paving (court plaza)	1028	SY	\$105	\$107,940
Covered bleachers	2	EA	\$10,000	\$20,000
Shelter (25'x45')	1	EA	\$25,000	\$25,000
Concrete paving (shelter area)	475	SY	\$105	\$49,875
Planting - trees	10	EA	\$350	\$3,500
Lawn seeding	18000	SF	\$0.12	\$2,160
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$610,291</b>
<b>Parking Lot Expansion with Shelter</b>				
Removals	1	LS	\$500	\$500
Erosion & sedimentation controls	1	LS	\$1,000	\$1,000
Grading/excavation	1	LS	\$100,000	\$100,000
Parking area - bituminous (road and 72 spaces)	5275	SY	\$54	\$284,850
Parking area - stabilized lawn (168 spaces)	5240	SY	\$38	\$199,120
Signage (ADA parking signs)	4	EA	\$250	\$1,000
Concrete sidewalk	535	SY	\$105	\$56,175
Trees	45	EA	\$350	\$15,750
Lawn seeding	12500	SF	\$0.12	\$1,500
Rain garden planting islands	6060	SF	\$25	\$151,500
Shelter (30x44')	1	EA	\$50,000	\$50,000
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$861,395</b>
<b>Loop Improvements</b>				
Compacted aggregate trail surface, incl. base	1977	SY	\$20	\$39,540
Crosswalks	3	EA	\$1,500	\$4,500
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$44,040</b>
<b>Pine Shelter Area Improvements</b>				
Compacted aggregate trail surface, incl. base	1750	SY	\$20	\$35,000
Concrete sidewalk	285	SY	\$105	\$29,925
Volleyball court lighting	4	EA	\$10,000	\$40,000
Horseshoe courts	7	EA	\$7,500	\$52,500
Large shelter	1	EA	\$125,000	\$125,000
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$282,425</b>

Alameda Park - Lower Park Master Plan				
Item	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Extension
<b>Carousel Parking Improvements</b>				
Removals & Site Preparation	1	LS	\$20,000	\$20,000
Parking Area (27 spaces, gravel)	600	SY	\$38	\$22,800
Parking Area ADA spaces and drive aisle, paved)	575	SY	\$54	\$31,050
Concrete Sidewalk	85	SY	\$105	\$8,925
ADA sidewalk to restrooms	430	SY	\$105	\$45,150
ADA Signage	2	EA	\$250	\$500
Parking Area (40 spaces, stab. lawn)	1375	SY	\$25	\$34,375
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$162,800</b>
<b>East Penn Street Trail</b>				
Reconfigured Parking Area and Road (paved)	2235	SY	\$54	\$120,690
Improved Trail	1	LS	\$150,000	\$150,000
Bollards	3	EA	\$1,500	\$4,500
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$275,190</b>
<b>Lower Shelter Walkways</b>				
Site preparation	1	LS	\$10,000	\$10,000
Concrete walkways	900	SY	\$105	\$94,500
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$104,500</b>
<b>Restrooms</b>				
Pre-Fabricated Restroom Building	1	LS	\$75,000	\$75,000
Site Improvements	1	LS	\$125,000	\$125,000
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$200,000</b>
<b>Environmental Education Center</b>				
Site preparation	1	LS	\$20,000	\$20,000
Environmental Education Center	2000	SF	\$200	\$400,000
Parking Area (8 spaces, gravel)	625	SY	\$38	\$23,750
Parking Area (ADA space,paved)	45	SY	\$54	\$2,430
ADA Signage	1	EA	\$250	\$250
Concrete Sidewalk	95	SY	\$105	\$9,975
<b>Subtotal</b>				<b>\$456,405</b>
<b>All Improvements</b>				
Subtotal All Improvements				\$5,807,080
Final Design & Construction Documents				\$696,850
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>\$6,503,930</b>

# PHASING PLAN

Recognizing it is not feasible to construct all improvements at once, we recommend the County construct the improvements in a series of logical phases. Depending on the County's financial situation and the success of grant writing efforts, this phasing plan may be expedited or lengthened depending on the financial capabilities of the County.

## RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

### Phase I - \$1,100,000

Swimming Pool Rehabilitation  
Mountain Bike Trail System

### Phase II - \$329,500

Playground Improvements  
Loop Road Trail Improvements

### Phase III - \$490,500

Carousel Shelter Parking Improvements  
West Penn Trail

### Phase IV - \$316,500

Pine Shelter Improvements

### Phase V - \$341,000

Lower Park Walkways  
Lower Park Restrooms

### Phase VI - \$1,472,000

Upper Court Area Improvements  
Parking Lot Expansion with Shelter

### Phase VII - \$1,304,500

Park Entrance  
Park Lodge and Park Office

### Phase VIII - \$511,500

Environmental Education Center

# MANAGEMENT, OPERATIONS, MAINTENANCE, SECURITY, AND SAFETY

The success of the park hinges on the county's ability to successfully manage, operate, maintain, and secure the property. The county should periodically review its management, operations, maintenance, security and safety procedures to ensure they are meeting the needs of the parks and county residents.

These policies and procedures should be documented in a management plan, and it should include these following components:

- Rules and Regulations: Governing the use of the facility.
- Facility Use Agreement: Governing the use of the facility by outside organizations for special events.
- Forest Stewardship Plan: To address the proper forest, riparian, and waterbody management practices, habitat restoration, enhancement, and monitoring; water quality monitoring, fishery habitat restoration, enhancement, and monitoring; and annual habitat impact evaluation.
- Risk Management Plan: A detailed plan outlining the procedures necessary to effectively and efficiently maintain all facilities, including providing all employees and volunteers responsible for maintaining the property with the proper training.
- Program Plan: Identify the types of programs that should be offered in the park. This should be based on community demand and expectation. Programming should be sensitive to the environs of the property and should not stretch the facilities beyond their reasonable capabilities. The plan should establish a budget for each program and identify who will staff the program. Programs should be planned to address all seasons of the year.

# SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES

Some of the discussion during the public process turned toward providing more sustainable park designs. “Creating Sustainable Community Parks, A Guide to Improving Quality of Life by Protecting Natural Resources”, published by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) in 2007, provides valuable recommendations regarding how to implement sustainable practices into design, maintenance, and operations of parks across the Commonwealth.

The guide can be obtained from [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/GreeningPennsylvania.pdf](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/GreeningPennsylvania.pdf).

These practices are based on the following principals.

- Retain as much of the pre-existing landscape as possible during new construction, including the soil, rocks, native vegetation, wetlands, and contours. This will minimize disturbances, which can open up an area to invasive species. It can also keep costs down, as fewer new plants, soil amendments, and habitat enhancements will be needed.
  - Maintain high quality soils that will hold water and supply plants with proper nutrients.
  - During construction, leave as much existing topsoil as possible. When new soil is brought in, ensure that it is certified weed free in order to prevent the spread of new invasive species.
  - Using compost and other natural products for mulch and fertilizer will help enhance the soil and feed the native plants. Good quality soil will reduce the need for fertilizers and supplemental watering.
  - Connect new landscape components with the surrounding native vegetation to create larger contiguous areas of habitat. Many wildlife species need large ranges to find adequate food, mates, and shelter. By reducing the number of roads, parking lots, and turf areas, or by placing these together, habitat quality will be enhanced.
- Create natural storm water management systems and other green infrastructure such as rain gardens and swales of native grasses. These systems help to minimize downstream flooding, recharge and filter groundwater, and are more cost-effective and environmentally-sound than manmade systems of pipes and storage tanks.
  - Protect wetlands from disturbance and fill. Avoid placing construction projects, day-use areas, and roads/parking lots near or in wetlands.
  - Natural wetlands provide many benefits to the environment that cannot easily be duplicated with manmade ones.
  - Use integrated pest management (IPM) strategies to minimize the use of chemical pesticides to control plant and insect pests. IPM is an ecologically-based approach to pest control that helps maintain strong and healthy plants. IPM can include the use of traps, sterile male pests, and quarantines.
  - Minimize impermeable surfaces like roads, parking lots, and paved trails. Consider replacing asphalt and concrete with permeable pavement, mulch paths, gravel lots, and native vegetation. Permeable surfaces help to recharge ground water, reduce erosion, lessen flooding events, and filter out pollutants. When impermeable surfaces must be used, arrange them in an area where they will not fragment habitat, make them as small in area as possible, and keep them away from water bodies.

- Reduce turf to only those areas essential for recreational and other human use activities. Turf offers little habitat benefit and is not as effective as many native plants in pollution filtration flood prevention and erosion control. In addition, turf maintenance can have negative impacts on the surrounding environment and can require lots of mowing, watering, and fertilizing. Replace non-native turf grasses with native warm season grasses, which, once they are established, have lower maintenance needs.
- Use native plants in riparian buffers around any surface water body, including wetlands. Riparian buffers help to filter pollutants before they reach water bodies, and the vegetation discourages nuisance geese from staying in the area. Roots from riparian vegetation also prevent erosion of soils into the water body and minimize flooding events. Shade from these buffers acts as a temperature control for the water body, which enhances habitat value for aquatic organisms. The food and shelter values of these buffers also enhance habitat. In addition, by selecting the right kinds of plants, the scenic views of the water bodies can be enhanced.
- Identify and remove invasive plant species whenever possible. Invasive plants have a number of detrimental effects on natural habitats. Most invasive plants grow so densely and spread so rapidly that native vegetation is choked out.

Opportunities for sustainable park design in Alameda Park include permeable paving, rain gardens, native species, removing invasive species, reducing the amount of turf, expanding and restoring a riparian buffer, and promoting alternative transportation, to name a few.

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