

# Community Recreation and Parks



**An Essential Government  
Service in Pennsylvania**

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# Community Recreation and Parks

## A Handbook for Pennsylvania Municipalities

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
Bureau of Recreation and Conservation  
and the  
Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, Inc.

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Second Edition

## Foreword

Pennsylvania's community leaders continue to face many of the same challenges they faced in 1968 when this publication was first printed. What has changed, however, is the growing recognition of the significant role recreation and parks services play in enhancing and sustaining the viability of Pennsylvania's communities. Recreation and parks services in 1968 were viewed by many municipal officials as desirable "if the budget could afford it." Municipal philosophy today holds that a recreation and parks system must be a basic component of the community's infrastructure, along with streets, sewer and water.

Today's businesses and work force are increasingly more service-oriented and electronically driven. Businesses can locate anywhere they can "plug in;" consequently, quality of life has become a critical factor in where businesses locate and where skilled and knowledgeable workers want to live. Both developing communities as well as Pennsylvania's older urban communities are recognizing that open space, recreation services, parks, greenways and tree-lined streets are not only attracting new businesses and workers, but also are creating a viable environment that will sustain them.

Community leaders, whether elected, paid or volunteer, will find this publication helpful in developing or refining recreation and parks services to improve the quality of life in Pennsylvania.

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and the author of the first edition of  
*"Community Recreation and Parks"*



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## Preface

How do you improve your local economy, conserve your natural environment, strengthen your community and, at the same time, enhance the well being of your residents?

You provide public park areas, recreation facilities and recreation programs!

With its large and fragmented local government system, Pennsylvania faces many challenges to meet the close-to-home recreation needs of its citizens. Our municipalities range in size from under 100 to over one million people!

As a result, “*Community Recreation and Parks*” is directed at Pennsylvania municipalities of all sizes. Whether your municipality funds a full-service recreation and parks department with full-time staff, you offer no park areas and recreation programs for your citizens at all, or you fit somewhere in between, this handbook will be helpful to you. Whether you're an elected official, municipal manager, recreation and parks or school board member, or an active volunteer already involved in some aspect of recreation, this handbook has information you can use.

Its purpose is to provide an overview of the basic concepts of public recreation and parks and show how establishing or improving this important government service can greatly benefit your community.

If you've never provided this service for your municipality, “*Community Recreation and Parks*” gives you a starting point. If you currently offer some aspects of public recreation and parks, this handbook will help you enhance and expand your services. In addition to the text itself, you'll find a listing of resources to go to for help at the end of the handbook in Appendix E.

Read on and find out more about the government service that plays such an important and essential role in making Pennsylvania a wonderful place to live.

# Chapter One

## Why Recreation and Parks?

Congratulations! You've decided to explore providing recreation and parks in your community. We welcome you as you join over 1,000 other communities in Pennsylvania with public recreation and parks services. They have found that recreation and parks builds better communities. Pennsylvanians love their parks, from those as small as the City of Reading's .53-acre Hampden Park to the 18,719-acre Ohiopyle State Park in Fayette County. People love the parks that are close to home, places where friends gather, children play and nature abounds. Pennsylvania residents (even those who never use them) believe that public park areas and recreation programs are important to have in their communities.



Developing and operating a local recreation and parks system may be one of the most rewarding experiences your community will ever have. Financially, parks increase property values and attract business and industry to your area. Recreation programs improve the fitness and wellness of your residents. Parks, greenways and trails preserve your community's natural environment. Cultural and ethnic understanding takes place when your citizens meet each other and work and play together. Community recreation and parks is more than just a good time.

Of course, every journey begins with the first step. In this chapter, we look at the many providers of recreation and parks services in Pennsylvania. We consider what community recreation and parks is all about. We show you some examples of what has worked elsewhere so that you know this isn't all talk. Recreation and parks is an essential public service in communities where people want to live, work, make friends, raise a family and enjoy life. And finally, we present the many benefits of recreation and parks for you to consider for your own community.

When you consider what the words “recreation” and “parks” mean, you'll see that there is a related but fundamental difference in the two terms.



- *Recreation* is an activity: the act of participating in experiences that result in achieving and maintaining the balance required for people to live life fully and to realize their full potential.
- *Parks* are places: areas of land set aside for public use, maintained for the enjoyment and recreational use of people.

Consider parks as a surface upon which recreation takes place, recognizing that other things can happen in parks and that recreation can take place anywhere.

So, what is *community recreation and parks*? A simple definition is the entire range of activities, relationships, interactions and experiences planned for and carried out to meet the recreation needs of residents. This includes providing the spaces and places where recreation takes place. Community recreation and parks is anything and everything the community does to satisfy people's interests.



## Who Provides Recreation and Parks?

In Pennsylvania, providers of recreation and parks services range from family campgrounds, commercial fitness centers and ice rinks, nonprofit YMCAs and scout councils, churches and service clubs, to public recreation and parks departments. All fall into one of three sectors.

- The public sector is commonly known as recreation and parks agencies at the national, state, regional and local levels of government. These agencies provide park areas, recreation facilities, programs and services that are supported by tax dollars for use by the general public.
- The private for-profit business sector includes commercial recreation, travel and tourism. Private for-profits are in the recreation business for one major reason - financial profit. Examples include bowling centers, health and fitness clubs, movie theaters, ski resorts, golf courses, amusement parks and race tracks.


- Nonprofit sector recreation providers are generally social service oriented associations that extensively rely on volunteer support. These associations may focus on health, the environment, disability, the arts, religion, youth development or the elderly. They typically have a specific mission and operate on a nonprofit financial basis, relying on membership fees, donations, grants, and often United Way funding. Boys and Girls Clubs, Special Olympics, Lions Clubs and Little League Baseball organizations are examples.

## Our Public Recreation and Parks Past

Public recreation and parks began in Pennsylvania and throughout the United States as two distinct movements. Urban parks like the 8,900-acre Fairmount Park in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh's oldest park, the 80-acre Allegheny Commons, were founded in 1855 and 1788 respectively. Pennsylvania's first state park is Mont Alto in Franklin County, which opened to the public in 1902. Funding for public parks has always come primarily from citizen taxes.



Public recreation started with schools providing programs for children as early as the 1800s. Recreation programs sponsored by Pennsylvania local governments didn't occur until the turn of the 20th century, when the industrial revolution created social needs that initiated the first playgrounds in our cities. The beginning focus of public sector recreation was on social services for citizens, and, like public parks, funding came primarily from taxes. School districts in Pennsylvania ran summer and school-year community recreation programs with the help of state funds. In the 1960s, when state reimbursements were stopped, many local governments took over programs dropped by school districts. In some communities, school districts decided to continue providing recreation services. Over time, communities began to merge the management of parks and recreation services into one department, funded primarily by local government. Many larger cities in Pennsylvania, including Allentown, Reading and Lancaster, still have separate departments for recreation and parks. Some, like York and Harrisburg, have combined the functions. Each year, new recreation




and parks boards and departments form throughout Pennsylvania. Recreation and parks is an expanding local government service. Many of the new agencies are regional recreation commissions, formed by intergovernmental agreements of cooperation. On average, two to three new regional recreation commissions are formed each year.

In 1935, the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) was founded. PRPS is the principal state organization promoting recreation and park training, networking and leadership opportunities for those working and volunteering in the field. Members include professionals who manage municipal recreation and parks systems and state parks, citizen members of recreation and parks boards, and therapeutic recreation professionals working in health care settings.

The Bureau of Recreation and Conservation was created in 1966 and became part of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) in 1995. While its central office is in Harrisburg, the Bureau operates regional offices throughout Pennsylvania. The Bureau's mission is to serve as a leader in establishing community conservation partnerships for advancing the greening of Pennsylvania, for protecting the Commonwealth's natural and heritage resources and for providing recreational opportunities for all Pennsylvanians and visitors to enjoy. (For a map and list of the Bureau's regional offices see Appendix A.)

## The Roles of Governmental Providers

The total spectrum of government-sponsored recreation services in Pennsylvania involves not only local government but also federal, state, regional and county agencies. Federal government agencies acquire, develop and maintain vast areas often unique in nature that have scenic, historic, conservation or recreation values to the entire nation. The National Park Service manages parks, the United States Forest Service manages forests, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers manages impounded waters. The National Park Service oversees 21 sites in Pennsylvania, including the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Fort Necessity National Battlefield, Johnstown Flood National Memorial, and Independence and Valley Forge National Historical Parks. The Forest Service manages the Allegheny National Forest in Pennsylvania, while the Army Corps of Engineers operates 28 locks, dams and lakes throughout the state. Examples are Kinzua Dam, Loyalhanna Lake, the Maxwell Lock and Dam on the Monongahela River, and Raystown Lake.



Pennsylvania state government's role is similar to that of the federal government. The Commonwealth has 116 state parks and one of the largest systems in the country. Over 283,000 acres of state park property is maintained for public enjoyment. Pennsylvania has a 1.4 million-acre state game lands system, open to the public for hunting, trapping, fishing and hiking, and over 2.1 million acres of state forests. The Fort Pitt Museum in Allegheny County, Scranton Iron Furnaces in Lackawanna County, Brandywine Battlefield in Chester County, and Landis Valley Farm Museum in Lancaster County are four of the 26 state-owned historic sites and museums. State agencies offer mainly interpretive recreation and environmental education programs at their parks and historic areas.

County government's role in Pennsylvania is to provide regional park areas and recreation facilities and programs that are beyond the capabilities of municipal government, yet less extensive than those provided by the state. Of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, 28 have parks and recreation departments. One of the largest county park systems is eastern Pennsylvania's Bucks County, with over 7,200 acres of parkland for the enjoyment of residents. Bucks County offers active use recreational facilities like a golf course and outdoor swimming pools as well as acres of undeveloped open space. Some counties also provide greenway and trail systems. Recreation programs offered by counties are generally environmentally-oriented or special events. In rural areas, particularly where municipal government isn't providing recreation services, the county may serve as a coordinator and provider of services to meet local recreation needs. An example is Monroe County. It employs three full-time recreation program professionals who plan programs that are held in municipal locations.

### Providing Close-to-Home Recreation

The role of municipal government is to provide services that contribute to the betterment of residents and the community as a whole, services which individuals and groups can't realistically provide for themselves.

In Pennsylvania, our local governments provide community recreation and parks services for the benefit of people living within the designated boundaries of cities, boroughs, townships and home rule municipalities. These services include public parks, greenways and trails, recreation facilities and community recreation programs.

What makes one community in Pennsylvania more desirable to live in than another? It's more than just the quality of the school system, the condition of the roads and the safety of the neighborhoods. A significant factor is the number of local park areas and how easily residents can access community facilities like recreation centers, swimming pools, basketball courts and athletic fields.

Providing parkland and recreation facilities for your residents is an important local government function. Municipal parks are permanent places for the public to enjoy. They don't close when the economy is struggling or the number of club volunteers is down. Local government also has the financial ability to purchase land and natural resources to preserve the areas for future use or to protect them from development.

Equally as important are the experiences citizens have through involvement in recreation programs. Public recreation programs have continuity from year to year and are offered at affordable prices so all citizens may enjoy them.

Providing this close-to-home recreation and parks experience is the responsibility of municipalities. Most of Pennsylvania's municipalities have the staff, volunteers and financial resources to operate park areas and recreation facilities that are open to the public without charge or at low cost. In the same way, the programs provided by local government assure that recreation opportunities are accessible and available to every citizen, not just those with the financial and transportation means to pay for and travel to privately-sponsored facilities and activities.

This should be the mission of local government recreation and parks - to provide opportunities that guarantee every resident quality recreation experiences by:

- Offering recreation programs and services that are consistent with citizens' needs and interests and add to their health, sense of well being and sense of community.



- Developing and maintaining park areas and recreation facilities for citizens to enjoy, and at the same time, protecting and preserving the environment for future generations.

Within Pennsylvania communities, a variety of organizations exist whose purpose includes providing recreation opportunities to their members or to the general public. These agencies include civic and service groups, religious organizations and churches, athletic and cultural groups, youth serving agencies and commercial businesses.

Local government is just one of these providers. Their roles and responsibilities differ but the recreation opportunities provided form an inter-related system of recreation services within the municipality. *In any community, recreation services are not all provided by government.*

An important role for local government is to serve as the “central clearinghouse” for parks and recreation activities. This role can enhance communication among organizations and identify opportunities to work together and share resources. By coordinating all that's offered, local governments can improve services, give residents a clear understanding of all the opportunities available to them and minimize duplication of services. The focus is on collectively strengthening the community's recreation and parks system.

## School Districts Play an Important Role

Pennsylvania has 501 public school districts. Some serve one municipality while others may serve many, like Clinton County's Keystone Central School District with its 29 municipalities. All school districts have indoor and outdoor recreation facilities constructed with and maintained

by citizen tax dollars. The list includes indoor swimming pools, gymnasiums, weight training rooms, auditoriums, wrestling rooms, computer labs, ball fields, tennis courts, football stadiums, soccer fields, running tracks and playgrounds. Because of this, school districts need to play a vital role in the provision of recreation services by allowing community use of their facilities. School districts in Pennsylvania



should cooperate extensively with local government and other recreation providers such as youth sports organizations to make their fields and facilities available for community recreation at little or no cost.



Local government recreation and parks represents the interests of all residents, which places it in the best position to work closely with school districts for community use of school facilities outside of school hours. Municipalities are also best positioned to work with school districts as they build, renovate or close school buildings

and facilities that could be used for community recreation.

In rural Pennsylvania, open space is plentiful. Thousands of acres of state forests and game lands and state parks are close by. These facilities provide only a limited scope of activities. Places to hunt, fish and hike can't meet all people's needs for sports, cultural and social activities. Since school districts are often the only providers of recreation facilities in rural communities, it's essential that local governments and school districts cooperate in order to meet the recreation needs of citizens.

Pennsylvania school districts can work together with municipal recreation and parks in many other ways. Teachers and coaches make excellent program instructors and volunteers. Supplies can be jointly purchased, maintenance equipment shared and community recreation program information included in school newsletters. These types of partnerships can save significant time and money. Some school districts are active partners with their municipalities as part of intergovernmental recreation commissions and even provide office space for recreation staff.

## Understanding the Value of Recreation and Parks

If you ask the average Pennsylvanian what services government should provide for citizens, will they include recreation and parks in their response? They should, but if they don't, most likely it's because they don't understand why recreation and parks services are important to their communities.



An essential service is something that taxpayers won't do without. Public safety services like police and fire protection are perfect examples. Recreation and parks *can* be established as an essential, necessary government service. But how do you do this?

What makes recreation and parks essential is different from community to community. Most recreation and parks agencies are doing good things, but elected officials don't know, and even worse, many citizens aren't involved in any way with programs and services. The last characteristic any recreation and parks service wants to be described as is “invisible.”



To begin to change this, key community leaders have to clearly understand the value of recreation and parks services to your community. So it's important to talk about the worth and promote how necessary and important these services are, rather than assume that citizens understand the role recreation and parks currently plays or could play in making your community a better place to live. It's necessary to clearly communicate this message in plain, convincing terms that make sense to residents so it's easy to understand. The hardest part is being able to articulate in writing and in conversations just how recreation and parks services are essential, since value is intangible and hard to quantify.

To find out if the recreation and parks programs and services your community offers are valuable and worthwhile to citizens many questions have to be asked and answered. Who gains from these services? How do residents benefit? What does your community get in return? What significant issues must be dealt with? And the toughest question of all, what would happen if your community had no recreation and parks services? How would that affect your community? It's also critical to identify the most important recreation services your community offers. What is offered that your residents won't do without? Just as important, what could be offered that residents wouldn't want to do without? This helps to determine what community role your recreation and parks service should play.



## The Benefits of Public Recreation and Parks

The recreation and parks programs, places, events and services offered by local government positively impact many areas of citizen's lives and your community as a whole. Pennsylvania municipalities that invest in park areas and recreation programs are creating opportunities for personal enrichment, economic growth, environmental integrity, and social and community welfare.

### *Meeting the Basic Needs of Your Residents*

The aim of community recreation and parks is to improve the quality of life for your residents, giving them opportunities to enhance their physical, social, spiritual, cultural and intellectual well being. Through recreation programs, your citizens improve their health and fitness, learn to compete and cooperate, enhance their creativity, build relationships, develop character, reduce stress, and become happier and more productive and involved in community life. Well-designed community recreation programs meet people's needs for belonging, identity, recognition, achievement, affection, social approval, adventure, excitement, creativity and competition. Recreation programs provide experiences that help people grow, develop self-confidence and increase self-esteem. Recreation and parks offers diversion from routine, life-long learning, self-discovery, cultural growth and life enrichment opportunities to residents of all ages.

### *Improving Your Local Economy*

A quality recreation and parks system attracts business relocation and expansion, and serves as a catalyst for tourism, bringing visitors and retirees to spend money and time in your community. It contributes to healthy and productive work forces, and enhances real estate values. Business expansion means new homes are constructed, bringing increased revenue to your municipality for services. Recreation programs held at your community



facilities help to reduce the high cost of vandalism. Recreation aids financial stability in families by providing affordable activities, and helps to supplement your citizens' income through part-time employment opportunities.

### *Enhancing Your Natural Environment*

Recreation and parks helps to develop a bond among your citizens that encourages preservation and conservation of the environment. It preserves plant and wildlife habitats, fosters community pride in natural resources, provides accessible places to enjoy nature, protects natural resources and open space areas, helps to control pollution, and enhances air, water and soil quality. Parks provide buffers between residential and industrial areas. Trail and greenway systems link parks, schools and other community services together for safe biking and walking, cutting down on traffic congestion.

### *Strengthening Your Community*

Providing positive, meaningful and relevant programs and events strengthens your community and encourages a sense of cohesion, unity, belonging, pride and appreciation for your community's traditions and heritage. Bringing your

residents in touch with each other and their environment builds stronger families, reduces loneliness and alienation, promotes ethnic and cultural understanding and harmony and enhances community spirit. People meet their neighbors and develop friendships at parks and at recreation

programs. Recreation provides citizen involvement opportunities that build leadership skills your citizens can use to tackle other community concerns. Recreation provides alternatives to self-destructive behavior and helps to prevent crime, especially among youth. Keeping children involved in constructive, positive activities helps to keep them out of trouble.



# Chapter Two

## Providing Recreation and Parks

So, how do you get in touch with what's right for your community...and how do you get started?

The way Pennsylvania provides local government services is probably more grassroots-oriented than any other state. We have more than 2,500 cities, counties, boroughs, townships and home rule municipalities! Every region of Pennsylvania has its own distinct character and way of providing recreation and parks services.



Recreation and parks is a very citizen-centered service. Providing it with the active involvement of your citizens makes sense. Forming a recreation and parks board is the most common way that Pennsylvania municipalities get that necessary public input. Pennsylvania has nearly 900 recreation and parks boards. In this chapter we discuss how to establish a board and give you guidance on finding and keeping good board members. We tell you how your community benefits by having a recreation and parks board and outline the board's roles and responsibilities.

Our state's large number of municipal governments creates many challenges for recreation and parks. Many municipalities are too small to financially support recreation facilities like swimming pools and community centers by themselves. In larger suburban municipalities recreation facilities and programs are often duplicated. Sometimes, municipalities end up providing parks, recreation facilities and services for smaller neighboring municipalities, at a significant cost and with no financial help from them.

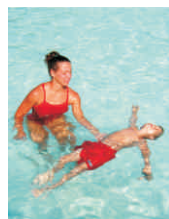
There's always been a lack of interest, reluctance and even unwillingness for municipalities to work together to provide local government services. But, for recreation and parks that's changing rapidly! As Pennsylvania's municipalities recognize the need to provide recreation and parks, they're also realizing that cooperating with nearby municipalities is a win-win situation. You save money and reduce duplication, and at the same time provide a better quality service.

## Local Governments Provide Recreation and Parks in Many Ways

While forming a recreation and parks board may be the most common way to provide public recreation services, it is by far not the only way. Just look at one of our 67 counties -- southeastern/central Lancaster County with its 60 rural, suburban and urban municipalities. You see how boroughs, townships and a city, located side-by-side with municipal borders touching, offer public recreation and parks services very differently. Then take into account all 2,500+ Pennsylvania municipalities. You can imagine the wide-ranging ways our many local governments provide recreation and parks to their citizens.

This list is *not* comprehensive. Its intent is to show you some of the many ways recreation and parks services are provided in Pennsylvania.

- A YMCA offers organized summer playground programs for children through a contract with Denver Borough.
- The Jaycees own, operate and maintain the community park in Strasburg Borough.
- A volunteer advisory park board manages three East Lampeter Township park sites totaling 83 acres.
- The Manheim Township Parks and Recreation Department has 20+ full-time staff and a volunteer advisory board. The township offers a full schedule of year-round public recreation programs and operates a golf course, indoor activities center and 13 parks totaling 327 acres, with a budget of nearly \$4 million.
- The intergovernmental Hempfield Area Recreation Commission operates a township-owned sports complex that features indoor tennis courts, fitness center, gymnasiums, outdoor tennis stadium, swimming pool and 18-hole golf course. It also provides community recreation programs for its other municipal partners.
- Churches own, operate and hire a full-time employee to maintain Lititz Springs Park.
- A Manheim Borough park is operated and maintained by a youth soccer club under a lease agreement.



- The non-profit Southern End Community Association provides recreation programs for six municipalities in the rural Quarryville area. After 10 years of successful operation as a volunteer board, they hired a full-time director with the help of a state grant.

- The Lancaster Recreation Commission, a municipal-school partnership, holds public recreation programs at all city and township parks and schools. Shared use of other facilities is common, with senior centers at churches, performing arts at downtown businesses, and swimming lessons at city hotels. Only 17% of its \$2 million budget is tax-supported funding.



- The Eastern Lancaster County School District and five municipalities that comprise it are developing a comprehensive recreation, park and open space plan to determine future recreation and parks roles and services.
- A volunteer greenway and park advisory board plans for linkages between 12 municipalities and publishes a newsletter about parks and recreation happenings.
- The Ephrata Area Recreation Center offers community recreation programs for all ages. The membership-based center features an indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, racquetball courts, fitness center, game room, senior center, preschool rooms and more. The agency also maintains borough parks under a contract.
- The Lancaster County Parks and Recreation Department employs 33 full-time staff to operate a 2,014-acre county park system, with six regional parks and two trails. Facilities include an environmental education center, outdoor swimming pool and skateboard park.

*Quite a list, isn't it? And it's nowhere near complete for just this one Pennsylvania county!*

## Why Should You Have a Recreation and Parks Board?

Recreation and parks boards play an important role as the “watchdog” and in many cases the administrator of municipal recreation and parks services. As a function of municipal government, the board has a responsibility to review the total recreation and parks system including the services provided by all agencies in the community, to insure that all residents' needs are met.

A recreation and parks board benefits your community by:

- Being aware of the needs and viewpoints of their neighbors, friends and fellow citizens. They help your municipality become more customer-driven by providing ongoing public input. As the eyes and ears of your community, they also know how and when to broach a subject with residents.
- Selling the worth of recreation and parks to elected officials. As citizens themselves, they carry clout and political influence. Elected officials listen to voters. Boards can gain financial support for parks and programs and can effectively negotiate with elected officials.
- Developing the recreation and parks vision of your community, helping your municipality become forward thinking and encouraging it to be proactive rather than reactive.
- Serving as an extension of elected officials, relieving them of day-to-day operations and concerns for recreation and parks, especially if your community has no staff.
- Enhancing the image and developing community pride in and support of your recreation and parks system.
- Monitoring the public expenditures of citizen tax dollars and raising funds to supplement budgeted funds.
- Serving as a buffer between citizens and elected officials on controversial issues.
- Providing continuity from year to year in the operation of your recreation and parks system.
- Helping to plan and conduct recreation programs and special events and involve more citizens as volunteers.

## Establishing a Recreation and Parks Board

When local elected officials recognize a need to provide recreation services for their residents, and realize they don't have the time and manpower to deal with this concern, they often create recreation and parks boards. The state municipal codes for each unit of government permit municipalities to appoint recreation and parks boards, to acquire and develop park areas and facilities and to offer recreation programs. These boards are comprised of volunteer citizens. Pennsylvania municipalities must pass an ordinance that spells out the board's title, numbers of members (depending on governmental unit, this may be designated by law), powers, duties, responsibilities and organization. This ordinance determines the recreation and parks board's powers as either advisory or policy-making. (For a sample board ordinance see Appendix B.)

### *Advisory Boards*

Most recreation and parks boards in Pennsylvania are advisory and volunteer based, and many don't have the benefit of part-time or full-time staff. The role of advisory boards is to advise the municipal governing body, and the director and staff, if any, concerning recreation and parks matters. They don't have final decision-making authority. Recreation and parks advisory board recommendations aren't adopted unless the board gains final approval from their local elected officials.



### *Policy Boards*

In Pennsylvania, policy-making boards have implementation powers but don't have taxing authority. They receive an annual appropriation from their municipal partners and are responsible for policy decisions. They employ and supervise the work of the director or other staff. The board sets policy, but isn't totally separated from the governmental unit that created it. The governing body has control over the appointment to and removal of members from office, power of financial appropriations, authority to review budgets and review of the board's progress. Throughout Pennsylvania, each community is different. The same is true for recreation and parks boards. No recreation and parks board operates as strictly all policy or all advisory. Most fall somewhere in between.



## Two...or Five...or Ten... is Better Than One

Many Pennsylvania communities recognize that their parks aren't surrounded by walls and residents recreate outside of their municipalities. They've reached out across municipal boundaries and created area-wide boards with neighboring municipalities either through informal handshake agreements or an official intergovernmental agreement. Pennsylvania's Intergovernmental Cooperation Act serves as the foundation for municipalities to create an intergovernmental agreement of cooperation to form a joint recreation and parks board or commission. The board includes representatives from the participating municipalities and often school districts.



The reason to establish an area-wide recreation and parks board is to assemble a tax base that can support a full-time recreation and parks service. In rural Pennsylvania or in small municipalities that can't fund the services alone, area-wide departments are a great option. Doing this allows communities to pool their resources together to develop recreation programs and facilities and hire staff that none of them could afford by themselves. It also makes addressing challenges and interests that cross municipal boundaries much easier.

Often, the municipalities that make up a school district will join forces to operate recreation and parks services together, rather than separately. When school districts are involved, it helps to expand the use of school facilities for community recreation. Schools also offer excellent opportunities to share equipment and jointly purchase supplies. Utilizing school staff, including teachers and coaches, as recreation program volunteers and instructors and promoting programs through school newsletters are other important ways school districts can support community recreation and parks.

The oldest formal municipal-school partnership in Pennsylvania is the Lancaster Recreation Commission, founded in 1909 by the School District of Lancaster. Today it is jointly funded by the School District, Lancaster City and Lancaster Township. Use of school facilities is at no cost to the agency, which uses all 18 school buildings year-round.





Throughout Pennsylvania, the most common partner for municipal recreation and parks is the school district.


An area-wide board has policy-making authority and the power to employ staff. The budget is shared by the participating municipalities based on a formula agreed upon by the parties to the agreement. Municipalities determine the scope of a regional agency. It can range from recreation programming to managing a swimming pool, developing regional trails and owning a large regional park complex.

Many area-wide boards are called recreation commissions. They focus on recreation programming that serves the needs of all municipalities and oversee the acquisition and development of park areas for each member municipality. Municipalities who are partners in a recreation commission usually retain ownership of their park areas and recreation facilities. They may maintain separate recreation and parks boards as well and still be a part of an area-wide recreation commission. Pennsylvania has over 50 area-wide boards or recreation commissions. If you're interested in exploring opportunities to work with neighboring municipalities, DCNR has grant money available to help. Contact your DCNR regional recreation advisor for information.

Another way to provide recreation and parks services is for a community to create an authority under the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Act, either by itself or together with other municipalities. The cooperating municipalities appoint authority board members. Authorities are somewhat autonomous and can employ staff. They pay their financial obligations from revenues of the facilities they operate. Over 55 recreation authorities operate in Pennsylvania. An example is the Meadville Area Recreation Authority in northwestern Crawford County. Founded in 1973, this full-service recreation agency operates a community recreation complex that includes an ice arena, aquatic center, skate park, tennis and volleyball courts, lighted ball fields and picnic pavilions for its over 33,000 residents. Along with the fees generated by the use of facilities, the City of Meadville, West Mead Township and Vernon Township support the recreation authority's approximately \$900,000 operating budget.

## What Does a Recreation and Parks Board Do?

Once a recreation and parks board is formed and its members are appointed, the real work begins. Officers are elected and committees are



formed. Committees may include finance, property, programs, personnel and public relations. The constitution and by-laws are written and adopted. The constitution covers the board's name, purpose, duties, responsibilities, membership and terms of office. The by-laws are details concerning the operation of the board, types of meetings, attendance requirements, minutes, agendas and order of business. As the recreation and parks board begins its work, the first important step is for all members to understand its overall purpose. Keeping in mind the constraints of the board structure, political climate and finances, its purpose is to provide the best recreation and parks service possible for the community's residents.

A recreation and parks board plays many important roles. To meet the expectations of your community, board members should know and understand their responsibilities. They are:

- *Advising* - Serve as a community forum to discuss new ideas, programs, policies and procedures for recreation and parks. Provide advice on accepting grants, gifts, donations, personal property or real estate.
- *Employment* - Conduct the search and interview process and recommend the best director candidate for part-time or full-time employment by your municipality if the budget allows for this. Formally evaluate the director's performance on an annual basis. Help to hire seasonal employees if no director exists.
- *Evaluation* - Provide feedback on how well recreation programs are conducted by observing them and interacting with participants. Visit community parks and evaluate how well they are maintained. Assess how recreation and parks services are managed to identify accomplishments, failures and future direction.
- *Finances* - Ensure that adequate funds are available to meet needs and priorities. Provide input for, approve and monitor the recreation and parks budget. Supplement the budget through a variety of methods including fund raising events, sponsorships and donations. Ensure proper use of funds. Set and review program and facility rental fees.
- *Liaison* - Help elected officials learn the needs and desires of your community. Develop cooperative relationships with citizens,

community organizations, businesses, elected officials, school district and government agencies. Keep elected officials up-to-date with progress reports and make them aware of the need for and importance of recreation and parks.

- *Meeting Attendance* - Be committed to attending and taking an active role in all meetings.
- *Mission and Vision* - Develop a mission and recreation and parks vision and communicate them to the public.
- *Planning* - Undertake a comprehensive recreation, park and open space plan to provide the structure and strategies for your community to best serve residents and develop a quality recreation and parks system. Focus on cooperative planning with neighboring municipalities whenever possible.
- *Program* - Set program goals. Conduct activities and special events and monitor them.
- *Promotion and Publicity* - Promote programs and services to your community by distributing materials, interacting with residents at activities and special events and assisting staff in producing materials by writing news releases, providing photos and artwork.
- *Public Relations and Communication* - Serve as ambassadors for recreation and parks in your community. Support programs and services, keep citizens informed about progress and enlist their help and support. Ask questions of citizens and fellow board members to help the board grow and become more effective.
- *Recruitment, Orientation and Training* - Recruit and orient new board members. Understand the board's authority, structure and legal responsibilities and be familiar with its by-laws. Join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society and attend meetings, training sessions and conferences to be better informed about the recreation and parks industry.



## How to Find the Best Board Members

A recreation and parks board is only as good as its members! Finding, attracting and keeping effective recreation and parks board members is important to build and maintain a quality community recreation and parks system. Even though the governing body of a municipality actually appoints members to the recreation and parks board, the board itself can play a key role in identifying the best people for the job.

This is accomplished by first knowing the board's demographic, skill and influence gaps. What types of people are needed to provide the greatest improvement for the board? Next, the board should develop a list of potential candidates looking in places like service groups, local universities, youth sports associations, area businesses, churches and parent-teacher organizations. The board should determine each candidate's level of interest in serving and forward the names of the best people to elected officials for their action.

When recruiting recreation and parks board members, look for people who:

- Live in your municipality - this is a requirement
- Are friendly and people-oriented
- Can give or raise money
- Are sensitive to the residents of your community and their needs
- Have the ability to work well with others and a sense of fairness
- Have time to give and a willingness to give it
- Have an interest in, enthusiasm for and belief in the value of community recreation and parks
- Have a genuine desire to serve your community and want to serve for the common good rather than self-interest



- Have keen judgement and an open mind
- Bring special skills and talents that support and make a direct contribution to the board's work
- Have excellent community visibility and credibility
- Represent a cross section of ages, neighborhoods and ethnic backgrounds

It's helpful to appoint an elected official as either a member of or a liaison to the recreation and parks board. This keeps lines of communication open.

To keep effective board members, keep...

...them busy! Give members a responsibility to perform (committee member, committee chair, program assignment, public relations task).

...them informed! Send meeting minutes out in advance of meetings, with special reports and correspondence for the next meeting.

...the meetings moving! Use a written agenda to keep the meetings on time.

...celebrating success! Recognize work well done and worthwhile contributions.

...thanking them! Make members feel appreciated to maintain their active interest and involvement.



# Chapter Three

## Strengthening Recreation and Parks

Do you want to save open space? Create a park? Build more ball fields? Construct a community center? Provide community recreation programs? Hire a parks and recreation director? Or, do you just want to improve your recreation and parks services but don't know where or how to start?

DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation regional recreation advisors are available to meet with you, tour your parks and give you advice on all aspects of recreation and parks. Regional recreation advisors will be the first to tell you that the recreation and parks system of your dreams won't happen if you don't plan. They can give you information on grant sources available for planning. (See Appendix A for a list of regional offices.)

Of course, you want to provide the best recreation and parks services you possibly can for your residents. That means you have to work on improving and expanding what you offer now. In this chapter we cover four key ways for you to strengthen community recreation and parks services: better planning, more partnerships, increased citizen involvement and stronger community relations.



### Why Should You Plan?

Planning is simply gathering, organizing and using information to make decisions. Plans are guidelines that outline the steps to follow to reach the goals you set. They set a path for you to get where you want to go.

Planning needs to be a priority for your municipality to:

- Help elected officials make well-informed decisions and wisely spend tax dollars
- Access grant funds and obtain your correct share of local tax dollars for recreation and parks services
- Evaluate your community's recreation programs and services by providing benchmarks to measure against
- Clarify direction, have everyone working toward the same goals and prepare for the future
- Foster collaboration and creativity and build teamwork and trust among elected officials and citizens
- Assess and adjust your direction in response to our changing environment
- Raise awareness of your current issues and operations

The keys to successful planning are to make decisions about what needs to be done, work together to implement your decisions and then carry out the plans you've made.

Keep this thought in mind: you can do all the planning in the world, but without the necessary time and resources to implement the plans, not much will change. As long as your municipality commits to implementation, recreation and parks planning is well worth its cost.

Municipalities are involved in these six basic types of planning for community recreation and parks:

- Community comprehensive planning
- Comprehensive recreation, park and open space planning
- Park master planning
- Feasibility studies
- Strategic planning
- Internal operations planning

## Community Comprehensive Planning

Recreation and parks is only one part of total community planning, along with other systems like public safety, transportation and public works infrastructure. A comprehensive plan establishes where recreation and parks fits in the big picture of your community. When undertaking a community comprehensive plan all elements of your community are



studied, looking at the resources, needs and objectives of each service. It's important that the comprehensive plan include a chapter on recreation and parks. This shouldn't be just a page or two about existing parks and services. You need a strong chapter with in-depth analysis and solid recommendations for improving your services.

Citizen involvement is a crucial part of the planning process and people must commit to work together to make your plan successful. For the comprehensive plan to stay off the shelf and not gather dust, there must be a strong commitment to

implement it. Elected officials and recreation and parks board members should be actively involved in the planning process from start to finish.



In most areas of Pennsylvania, it is better to do community comprehensive planning by studying a regional area like the boundaries of the public school district, rather than a single municipality. Regional plans are encouraged by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, which provides grant funding for comprehensive plans.

## Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Planning

A comprehensive recreation, park and open space plan is an in-depth study that focuses on developing and improving your municipal recreation and parks programs, services, facilities and natural resources. It is created with significant public input and covers a number of years to give you guidance and direction to make decisions. Doing this plan the right way is important. Don't try to do this plan on your own! It requires the hiring of a consultant.

Here are the planning steps your consultant will follow:

### #1 - Inventory and analysis of existing conditions:

- Government structure and lines of authority for recreation and parks



- A listing of all the natural resource areas in your municipality
- Population demographics
- The number, acreage and distribution of park areas and recreation facilities
- All public, semi-public and private parks and recreation areas and recreation programs
- Financial resources
- A needs assessment to get public input on community recreation and parks needs

#### #2 - Recommendations to improve:

- Recreation programs and services
- Maintenance
- Safety and security
- Funding sources
- Public involvement
- Marketing and public relations
- Staffing
- Park areas, trails and recreation facilities
- Open space, greenways and natural resource protection

#### #3 - An implementation action plan with:


- Time lines
- Short-term and long-term priorities
- Partnership opportunities
- Operating and capital costs
- Potential future park sites, greenways and trails
- A process for annual plan updates

When it's completed, the governing body of your municipality should officially adopt your plan according to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

DCNR provides matching funds to help cover the cost to prepare comprehensive recreation, park and open space plans. DCNR recommends reaching out to neighboring municipalities and developing a regional plan.

## Park Master Planning

When you create a new public park the best place to start is with a park master plan *before* you spend any time or money developing the park



site. Your park master plan will determine and prioritize what facilities to place in your future park. You'll need a consultant to prepare this plan.

As part of the park plan you'll look at how this park will fit into your community's overall park system and existing site conditions like adjacent neighbors, topography, site access, utilities and natural areas to preserve.

Involving your residents is a must! Your planning process should include future park neighbors and future park users and non-users. Good techniques include interviewing people interested in the park, holding focus group meetings and community forums, and conducting an on-site tour of your park site. These help you identify key needs, concerns, issues and challenges. A vision is created for your park that is put together and shared by everyone involved.

This public input is used to prepare a schematic design for your park. Based on the site's natural features, your community priorities for active and passive recreation facilities are placed on the site. You should get estimated operating and maintenance costs, projected revenues, a list of needed equipment, and recommended safety and security procedures. Your consultant will prepare a time line based on your available funds that includes the costs to develop each facility. Elected officials, board members and citizens review the park's schematic design and adjustments are made. Your final product is a phased development plan for your future park.

Having this plan increases your chances for public and private funding. Generally, to get park rehabilitation and development funds from DCNR, you need a park master plan. Consider the effectiveness of your presentation to a local bank president when your municipality can show a plan, clearly discuss your funding needs, and explain how the bank could be a community partner to make the park a reality.

## Feasibility Studies

A feasibility study is completed when your community wants to explore if a development project is viable, in terms of the cost, citizen interest and support, location and so on. It is a plan done ahead of time to determine whether a major expense should be made. Feasibility studies are commonly done for major capital projects like swimming pools,

community recreation centers and ice-skating rinks. If your municipality wants to renovate an existing swimming pool or community center or build a new one, this study is usually required to be eligible for DCNR grant funding.

## Strategic Planning

A strategic plan can be of great help to your community. This type of plan clarifies your vision and mission for recreation and parks, encourages outlining what needs to be accomplished and establishes a framework to measure success.

A strategic plan answers three

basic questions: *Where are you now? Where would you like to be? How do you get there?* The plan has a three- to five-year time frame and provides direction so that everyone associated with your recreation and parks service understands where they should be headed and what the steps should be to get there.



You *can* do a strategic plan without staff and without a lot of money. Take the Southern Regional Recreation Board in York County as an example. This recreation board developed its vision, goals and action-oriented objectives at a one-day strategic planning session facilitated by a business executive who volunteered his time to help the community.

Having a plan, though, is not enough. What counts is its implementation. Once it's completed, the strategic plan should be approved by your governing body and have time lines, task assignments and reporting procedures. The true value of a strategic plan is measured by your community's improved recreation and parks services and the real progress made toward reaching your goals.

## Internal Operations Planning

The most effective municipal governments undertake specific plans to address and improve their operations. If no one on your board or staff has expertise in the operations area you want to study, then your municipality should use a specialized consultant. Often, professionals working in businesses such as computer companies or marketing firms

are the best people to develop these types of plans, since they have the technical knowledge of that industry.

Internal operations plans are most commonly completed for these areas:

- Information Technology
- Marketing and Public Relations
- Revenue Development
- Board and Staff Development
- Maintenance Management
- Risk Management
- Security

## How Can Partnerships Strengthen Recreation and Parks?

Your residents expect more and better services. At the same time, your municipality has fewer financial resources, staff and volunteers, and technology is becoming more and more complex. Partnerships offer opportunities for your community to share skills and gain resources you don't have, so that you can enhance your recreation and parks services. Plus, joining forces with other groups and organizations gets your board more active in the community *and* helps better meet your community needs. “Partnership” is an umbrella term that includes agreements, cooperative ventures, joint arrangements, alliances, coalitions and collaborations.

Traditional partners for your recreation and parks agency like youth sports groups, churches and schools are very important. However, the potential for other partnerships is vast. Commercial businesses of all types, social service agencies, police departments and other recreation and parks agencies are potential partners for your community to improve recreation and parks services.

### What Partnerships Can Do For Your Community

- Save money
- Reduce duplication of services
- Replace any sense of competition with a spirit of collaboration
- Show cooperation which results in good public relations
- Stretch existing resources like facilities, equipment, staff, volunteers and money
- Gain public support
- Raise credibility
- Increase visibility
- Increase networking opportunities
- Develop friendships among board members and staff of different organizations
- Increase board and staff knowledge and skills

## How Do You Make a Partnership Successful?

For the first partnership, it's a good idea to start with something small scale and to choose only one other partner. With experience, larger projects with more partners can be attempted. Partnerships require work! To better insure their success, each organization needs to determine how they'll oversee and evaluate the partnership's operation and resolve conflicts. With each new partnership, planning will be better and things will go more smoothly.

Listed below are important steps to follow to establish partnerships successfully.

Step #1: Identify Who You Can Partner With	Brainstorm a list of possible partners. Include organizations you do and don't know well whose missions are compatible with yours. The longer your list, the better your chances are of finding the best partner.
Step #2: Determine What You Want to Gain From the Partnership	Write down why you want to form the partnership. Create measurable objectives so that you can see the results.
Step #3: Meet With Potential Partners	Explain the project to potential partners clearly enough that they know what to expect, yet broadly enough that they can bring their own vision and needs to the alliance. Ask each group what it hopes to gain from the partnership and select the group whose statement most closely matches yours.
Step #4: Decide Who Will Do What	Clearly outline responsibilities in writing, deciding what resources each of you will contribute. Resources can be money, staff, technology, training, information and contacts. The point isn't for you to contribute identical amounts but to put all your resources to better use. If each partner contributes what they can both will benefit.

## Types of Recreation and Parks Partnerships

*Facility Use* - Many municipalities want to offer new recreation programs but don't have the facilities to do so. Shared use of facilities, such as schools, churches, YMCAs and fitness clubs allows this to happen.

*Grants* - Grants are easier to get when a number of partners are involved in your project. For instance, developing a park with your school district strengthens your grant application.

*Planning* - Joint planning by municipalities is becoming more common. Pooling financial resources can greatly enhance the scope of projects and likelihood of plan implementation.

*Programming* - Cooperative recreation programs and special events may improve activities by increased volunteers, money, supplies, promotion and more.

*Publications* - Printing of brochures, shared space in newsletters, joint recreation program guides with other departments, and mailing recreation program guides with school newsletters, are all good examples of effective publications partnerships.

*Purchasing Agreements* - Joint purchasing allows equipment, materials and supplies to be purchased at a lower cost, because it increases the size of the orders. First aid supplies, sports equipment, gasoline, paper and office supplies are common items that municipalities may purchase together for recreation and parks services.

*Sponsorships* - Special events and recreation programs offer opportunities for municipalities to work with businesses to obtain financial support in exchange for visibility.

*Training* - Many municipalities don't have the finances to bring in an outside expert to train board members and staff. When you join together with other municipalities you can afford to do this.



## Strengthening Recreation and Parks by Involving Citizens

Volunteering can be an exciting, growing and enjoyable experience. In fact, it's a form of recreation for many people. As a recreation and parks volunteer it's gratifying to see the benefits residents derive from parks and programs and know you helped to make them happen. When you volunteer in recreation and parks, you feel a stake in and take pride in your community. You also develop a real understanding of what recreation and parks is and how it improves the quality of life in your community.

Your recreation and parks services are strengthened in a number of important ways when you involve more residents. First of all you get more help, and you always need more help! You get more work done in less time at no cost. That's never a bad thing. No recreation and parks service ever has enough money to do its job right. Most important though, when it's budget time you'll have residents who value recreation and parks and will support providing funds to keep it intact and even expand your services.

Involving citizens as volunteers in recreation and parks isn't as easy as it sounds. It's important to look at what your citizens are being asked to do, make it manageable, attractive and enjoyable, and provide them with help.

Knowing why people will get and stay involved is the first step to increasing public involvement. To get their loyalty, interest and best efforts, volunteers need:

- To be heard
- A sense of belonging
- Fair treatment
- A feeling of accomplishment
- To be praised
- To know what is expected of them

## How To Find Volunteers

Believe it or not, you've got to work to find volunteers! They won't just walk in your door. Your municipality should actively pursue these types of volunteer activities because they lend themselves well to recreation and parks work:

- Student community service - schools mandating that students complete a certain number of hours of community service work

- One-day opportunities - such as the United Way's Day of Caring
- Creative student involvement - utilizing classes, clubs and sports teams as volunteers
- Short-term assignments - projects that have a start and a finish
- Family volunteering - putting family units to work together
- Corporate volunteers - businesses mandating employee volunteering
- Virtual volunteering - the volunteers are real, but the service is done on-line, via e-mail and other Internet capabilities (research projects, surveying, designing web pages, translating flyers, mentoring teenagers and more)
- Adult recreation and friendship opportunities - projects where people will work with others and have a chance to make friends who share the same interests



## Strategies to Get Residents Involved

1. Design meaningful volunteer projects or assignments that have the potential to attract the kind of volunteers you most want. Your ability to recruit the types of volunteers you want is directly connected to what you're asking people to do as volunteers. Have a variety of volunteer opportunities available so that your residents can test the water with you.
2. After volunteer work design, the second most important part of recruitment is creativity in deciding where to look for volunteers. Only go to sources with the potential to have the types of candidates you most want. For each area where you need help, brainstorm new, creative places to seek qualified volunteers.
3. Set a goal of a certain number of outreach efforts each month. Pay attention to the overall look of your print materials and always leave something behind when you speak or visit. Develop recruitment materials that match the places you're most likely to find good candidates. If your municipality has a web site, make sure it highlights volunteer opportunities.
4. If you want someone as a volunteer, ask him or her directly! As with so many other things in life, if you don't ask, you won't get.



5. The word “volunteer” may repel as often as it attracts. Use vocabulary that your citizens relate to. This may be “community service,” “being a good neighbor,” or “joining in.” Also, don’t say: “We need volunteers.” Advertise that you need tutors or coaches or graphic designers. Focus on the work and use “volunteer” as a descriptor, not a title.
6. Don’t try to minimize the work a volunteer will do. A challenge can be more appealing than the sense any warm body will do. Don’t be apologetic. You’re offering people an opportunity, not asking a favor.
7. Make certain that when volunteers call you can put them to work.

Keep in mind that although you’re not paying them a salary, volunteers aren’t free. It takes money and staff time to recruit, reward, train and supervise volunteers.

## Stronger Community Relations = Stronger Recreation and Parks

Providing community recreation and parks services requires money, even if your municipality has no staff to pay. Tax dollars support one of Pennsylvania’s largest agencies, the Philadelphia Recreation Department, and one of its smallest, the Bedford Area Parks and Recreation Board. Community recreation and parks is a citizen service funded in some way by tax dollars. The support of your residents who pay these taxes is essential to maintain your current level of service *and* to increase it. To obtain this support, your municipality needs to work on building a positive image and increasing the public’s awareness of your recreation and parks services. Without grassroots community support, successful recreation programming, in particular, is very difficult to sustain.

Your reputation in your community is built over time, in every aspect of what you do.



## Improving the Image of Recreation and Parks Services

Does your community have an “image?” What do your residents think about recreation and parks? If your parks are poorly maintained, what



type of message are you sending? What response do you think your residents will have when your municipality requests additional funds to acquire more parkland?

Images are built on people's perceptions, which can be changed. Sometimes people have formed an image of your services based on little or no information at all. Enhancing the image of recreation and parks requires the involvement of everyone:

- The board member who sets goals and develops plans
- The custodian who prepares the all-purpose room for your evening dance classes
- The receptionist who makes sure that all questions about your programs are answered cheerfully and accurately
- The instructors who conduct your programs
- The maintenance worker who cuts the grass at your parks
- The volunteer serving food at a banquet
- The participants who report by word-of-mouth their experiences at your parks and in your programs to others

The first step in improving your community's recreation and parks image is for key leaders to hold a candid discussion where everyone has the opportunity to state what they think the image currently is. What do residents, community leaders and elected officials really think about your recreation and parks services? If you asked people to pick a word or phrase to describe them, what would they say? What important services and programs are offered that define your community's reputation? To improve your image, it's necessary to know exactly what it currently is. Then elected officials, board members, staff and volunteers need to decide what they want the image to be, and to influence people's perceptions of your services in positive ways.

The best people to start word-of-mouth enhancement of your image are your elected officials, board members, staff and volunteers. Making statements to neighbors and friends such as “things are changing for the better,” “this or that new program is fantastic,” and “it's a great place to work” go a long way toward improving your image.

Developing a logo is an easy step that all municipalities should take. All of your recreation and parks services need to be tied together with identification. Marking park signs, program flyers and recreation

facilities with a logo helps to build that identity and makes citizens realize whose facility or program they are in.

## Building a Base of Supportive Citizens

As far as government services are concerned, recreation and parks is a citizen-centered, positive one. Recreation doesn't dig streets up, plow driveways in after the snow has been shoveled or give out speeding tickets. It's easy to develop community support for recreation and parks since your services are where residents play, relax and enjoy life.

Support for your recreation and parks services depends on the public's use of them. Elected officials support services when they see that an active constituency exists for them. To strengthen your base of support, your recreation and parks services need to serve more people. A first step might be to recruit interested citizens and form a recreation and parks board.

Here are ways to build a supportive base of citizens who value recreation and parks:

### *Serve More People*

- Extend a helping hand to youth sports groups, especially in the areas of promotion, securing playing fields and training coaches. Develop area-wide sports leagues in sports no one currently offers or add special events to get people into your parks.
- Spend time and resources to reach out to hard-to-reach citizens. It's important to not just serve those residents who are inclined to join your programs or visit your parks.
- Seek partnerships with other agencies and work on building alliances with community groups and businesses.
- Develop a strong series of recreation programs that people take part in, hear about, read about and know about. Successful



programs create satisfied citizens and satisfied citizens tell their neighbors, families and friends about your great services.

### *Keep Your Park Areas and Recreation Facilities Well Maintained*

- Show the public that you care about making their stay in the parks comfortable and enjoyable by keeping restrooms clean, litter picked up, grass cut, weeds pulled and trees trimmed.

### *Become More Marketing-Oriented*

- Focus on the desires and needs of potential participants whenever decisions are made about your services, programs, prices, facilities, location, scheduling and promotion.
- Define your services in terms of the benefits customers seek, not in terms of providing facilities, services or programs. List the benefits of involvement in your programs and services so that your promotional material is created with these benefits in mind. Through their involvement, it's important that your citizens come to understand the value of recreation and parks services. Tell them through written material what that value is. Citizens will support what they value and communicate their support to your elected officials.
- Spend time identifying what your citizens want by asking them.
- Be very responsive to your citizens' questions, complaints and problems. Create a climate where citizens are encouraged to contact your municipality when they have a concern. Ask for a chance to correct the situation before complaints are taken to a public meeting and address what's wrong within a day or two. Prompt response gives you an image of putting citizens first. Be honest and own up to mistakes if you've made them.
- Ask for participants' opinions on a regular basis. People's opinions provide valuable information on what your community thinks about recreation and parks and will help you understand its current image.



### *Be Active and Visible in Your Community*

- Elected officials, board and staff members should become members of service clubs, school parent-teacher organizations, boy and girl scout councils and so on. This is a great way to get to know your community while the community gets to know about your services.
- Generate as much positive publicity as possible. Get in the local newspaper, on the radio and on the television to promote your parks and programs.
- Allow elected officials to be the spokespersons and get them in the newspaper photographs when the media is present at your special events or programs. Politicians like positive publicity, and recreation and parks can provide it better and more often than any other government service.
- Avoid controversy at all costs. The media can have a field day with it and the rumor mill in any community can be very destructive.

### *Develop a Caring Philosophy*

- Hire staff and recruit board members who are nice people, who care about people. Surrounding your municipality with nice people goes a long way toward improving its image in the community.
- Treat everyone with the same degree of courtesy, friendliness and kindness. Make people feel good about their involvement in recreation and parks.

### *Keep Political Leaders Informed*

- Whenever possible, involve them in recreation activities and get them out to your parks and programs. Give them a volunteer job alongside other citizens. Elected officials cannot fully support what they've never seen or don't understand.
- Share thank you notes and praises given to your municipality with elected officials. Others will see that your recreation and parks services are appreciated.

### *Become Involved in PRPS*

- This service to the profession reflects well on your local community and offers you many benefits.

## Effective Recreation and Parks Services Are Action-Oriented

On a daily basis, elected officials and community leaders deal with lots of problems. Economic development, crime, school drop-outs, youth violence, low rates of home ownership, rising taxes, declining downtown business sections and struggling families are on the problem lists of many Pennsylvania communities, small and large.

Your community should consider how increased recreation and parks services can be part of the solution to problems like these. Your recreation and parks programs and services *can* help.

Making recreation and parks a part of the solution to your community's problems isn't difficult. Your municipality can do this by offering family-oriented community celebrations like summer street fairs and holiday tree lighting ceremonies, expanding the number of lower-cost recreation programs for children, offering school age child care, opening your school gyms in the evening, partnering with juvenile justice agencies, promoting your downtown area with special events and much more. Your municipality can join task forces and committees that focus on community needs.

Overall, elected officials and citizens need to be convinced that recreation and parks services are as much a key to a safer community as increased police services. Showing what it can mean to your community to have an effective recreation and parks service means getting out of the business of offering only traditional recreation programming and into new services that your community needs.



Take the Centre Region Parks and Recreation Department in Centre County for example. In a unique government-business partnership, this department led the way to make a skate park facility a reality for its citizens. Government funds and private contributions financed the \$50,000 cost of construction. The skate park itself was built on privately-owned land and is operated by the Tussey Mountain Family Fun Center.

# Chapter Four

## Administering Recreation and Parks

Contrary to what most people might think, what sounds like just “fun and games” is, in fact, a real profession. It takes people with a multitude of skills to successfully provide recreation and parks services to Pennsylvania communities. It isn't as easy as it sounds!

It doesn't matter if you're a full-time recreation and parks director, a municipal manager with this as part of your responsibilities or a volunteer board chair. It doesn't matter how small or large your community is. To best serve your citizens, whoever is in charge of recreation and parks should be creative, resourceful, able to handle multiple projects and able to work well and get along with all types of people.



In this chapter, we cover the range of knowledge needed to oversee community recreation and parks services: acquiring, designing and developing park areas and recreation facilities, offering recreation program opportunities, serving all residents regardless of ability or disability, ensuring people's safety and maintaining resources. We show you the many ways to finance recreation and parks services, how to staff them and the important role of public relations and service marketing. You need money, people power and effective ways to inform and involve the public to make your services most successful.

### Financing Recreation and Parks

Almost everything that's needed to provide public recreation and parks services requires money. This money can come from many different sources.

*Tax Support* - In Pennsylvania, the majority of funding for recreation and parks comes from the municipal general fund that's supported primarily by taxes. Recreation and parks must compete with every other municipal service for tax dollars. To get a fair share of your local dollars, it's necessary to budget well and provide services efficiently.



*Bonds* - Often, financing the purchase of land or the construction of a major recreation facility can't be done using current revenue resources. Municipalities issue long-term debt to finance capital projects. Bonds are promissory notes that spread the cost of large-scale capital projects over a number of years. The money, plus interest, is repaid to the bondholders over a specified time period. The two types of bonds used by the public sector are general obligation bonds and revenue bonds.

*Concessions* - Concession operations can provide a substantial revenue source for your municipality. Concessions sell or rent merchandise or provide special services like bait shops, refreshment stands or golf lessons. Municipalities may manage concessions themselves or let a community group who wants to raise funds do it. When Pennsylvania municipalities want to provide services but can't afford to, another alternative is for private contractors to establish businesses within public park systems. This can still generate revenues for your municipality and provide services for citizens, while at the same time it creates profit-making situations for private enterprise. Examples of concessions are golf course pro shops, public horseback riding facilities, boat rental areas and community swimming pool snack bars. The land, and in some cases the actual facilities, are publicly owned. The municipality maintains control over some aspects of the private operations such as rates charged and operating hours.




*Fees and Charges* - Fees and charges play a big role in financing public recreation and parks services in Pennsylvania. Municipal taxes should support providing basic recreation for all citizens like parks and playgrounds. However, to charge all citizens through municipal taxes for special activities or facilities when only some take advantage of them is often considered unfair. With the increasing strain on municipal budgets for public services, the use of fees and charges is a practical technique for maintaining and expanding your recreation system. The construction of specialized recreation facilities like ice rinks, swimming pools, golf courses and community centers is in part justified by fees collected from participants. Most recreation programs can be financed on a break-even basis through fees paid by participants. Types of fees are: entrance fees to facilities, admission fees to performances, rental fees for building use, sales of merchandise, permit fees for picnic pavilions and registration fees for recreation programs.

Municipalities often charge higher fees for non-resident use of community recreation facilities and programs. The basis for this difference in fees is that residents have paid taxes for these services but non-residents have not. *If municipalities accept state or federal funds for facility construction or improvements, the fees charged to non-residents may not exceed twice that charged to residents.*

### Fees and Charges Benefit Your Municipality By:

- *Offsetting Operation and Maintenance Costs* - When funding from other sources can't be increased, fees can help you keep pace with rising operation and maintenance costs. Also, if funding from other sources decreases, fees can provide a minimum amount of revenue to maintain necessary services that otherwise you would eliminate.
- *Expanding Services and Facilities* - Fees can help your municipality develop new facilities and offer new recreation programs that are responsive to the changing needs of your community. Sometimes, fees may be the only way to finance proposed expansion.
- *Funding Specialized Opportunities* - Through fees, the support for specialized recreation opportunities comes from the user rather than the general tax dollar, giving your municipality the funds to help justify providing the opportunities. Facilities like swimming pools, golf courses and ice rinks are good examples.
- *Controlling Facility Use* - Fees can help control the numbers of people who use a facility, increase security through admission areas, and promote respect for your services which will help decrease vandalism.
- *Projecting an Image of Fiscal Responsibility* - Fees help project the image of a municipality that manages its revenues and resources well and provides services on an equitable basis.
- *Projecting an Image of Quality* - Residents perceive recreation programs are of better quality and have more value when a fee is charged. Fees can actually increase program participation versus programs that are free.



*Gifts and Donations* - It isn't uncommon for an individual, business or foundation to donate major gifts of land or money for recreation and parks purposes. Many of Pennsylvania's public parks have been named after their benefactors. Donated funds aren't something municipalities can rely on to support operations, but don't overlook them as a way to help finance capital projects.

*Business Sponsorship* - Conducting recreation programs and special events underwritten by business sponsors requires organization and planning. Corporations most often support athletic programs, cultural and performing arts programs, special events and capital projects. Funds should be solicited from local businesses since they have a vested interest in your community. Businesses want to know exactly what you want from them and what you'll offer them in return for their contribution. Different levels of sponsorships, each with appropriate levels of visibility and involvement, are offered to businesses in return for their financial investment.

*Grant Programs* - Government grants most often finance the planning, acquisition and development of recreation and park areas and facilities. Pennsylvania has responded to decreasing federal support by establishing its own funding sources to provide financial assistance to local municipalities for capital projects. (For information on DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Grant Program see Appendix D.) There's also government and private foundation funding available for programs and projects that address social concerns like youth at-risk, the elderly, health issues, people with disabilities and fitness and wellness. For municipalities to secure these types of grants, it's best to partner with other community agencies.

*Membership Dues* - Membership dues are used in recreation and parks to offset a facility's operating costs. Examples are season passes sold for swimming pools or yearly memberships to a community center.

*Fund Raising* - Recreation and parks fund raising takes many forms. It's used to fund everything from recreation programs to buying a van to capital construction projects. Boys and girls sell candy and cookies to help fund a basketball league, older adults hold raffles to support their club and capital campaigns help fund community center construction. Fund raising requires planning and coordination, whether your financial goal is small or large.

## Parkland Acquisition

Municipalities acquire public parkland in a variety of ways. They include:

*Purchasing Property* - The municipality and seller negotiate and agree on a price. Techniques are often used to close the sale, such as:

- Option to buy, which gives a municipality the right to purchase the property with no other competition until a set date, allowing them time to raise money for the acquisition and line up support.
- Retention, which allows the seller to occupy the property for a set period of time after selling.
- Life estates, which allows the seller to occupy the property for the rest of their lives.
- Bargain sale, when sellers reduce the price of a property below fair market value because of tax advantages they may receive.
- Transfer, when one agency purchases a property and then transfers it to another. The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land often hold land until it can be transferred to a public agency.



*Mandatory Dedication* - This practice requires land developers to dedicate part of their development's open space or pay fees for public park purposes. Giving approval for residential development increases the demand for recreation lands, while at the same time, diminishes the supply. With sufficient planning, mandatory dedication can be a reliable method of financing needed recreation facilities. Municipalities should have an adopted recreation plan and pass an ordinance that meets requirements listed in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

*Eminent Domain or Condemnation* - Municipalities can acquire property from an unwilling seller when the acquisition and use of the property is of greater public benefit than the continued private ownership of the land. A certified independent appraiser determines the price of the property. This technique is usually employed as a last resort.

*Easements* - These give municipalities the right to use someone's land for a specific purpose. Trails often rely on easements to pass through private property. Easements can be written on a permanent basis or for a set period of time.

*Leases* - This is a common way to acquire use of land or buildings for a specific period of time. Long-term leases between a municipality and property owner are usually acceptable to receive state funds for property improvements. These are defined as 25 years or the life expectancy of the facility.

*Gifts* - Property gifts are a donation from the owner to a municipality. The owner receives a tax write-off for the value of the property.

## Park Planning, Design and Development

Park planning isn't limited to only park area and recreation facility design and development; it's an ongoing, dynamic process of conceiving and providing recreation experiences. Effective park planners are experience directed, not development directed. Park facilities provide only the setting for recreation experiences for citizens.

Creating a park takes place in three phases:

- **Pre-design** - The park is described in terms of the land's physical characteristics and the experiences that will take place there. Each activity to be provided is carefully analyzed for the type and extent of development that's required, and what programs, operations and maintenance personnel, facilities and services




are necessary. The most important element is determining what recreation areas and facilities your community's residents need and desire. The park's design is driven by the recreation programs to be conducted there. Getting real citizen input is *essential*. Surveys, interviews, focus groups and public meetings are all good ways to find out what people want. Meetings should be held with adjoining property owners to answer their questions and concerns about the proposed park early in the planning process.

- Design - Once you determine the elements you'd like to see in the park, a landscape architect designs the park. Because of the major financial expense of developing a park, it's essential for the designers to get all relevant information about the programs and services planned for the park. This input is important to avoid facilities that “don't work.” When designing park areas and recreation facilities, keeping future maintenance costs low should be a high priority. For example, when planning outdoor facilities it's best to design:
  - Plant beds for easier mowing
  - Grass areas where grass can and will grow best
  - Walkways where the public will walk
  - Simply, without a cluttered appearance
  - All utilities for ease of maintenance
  - Spacing of trees and shrubs for natural growth
- Development - After the park plan is approved the landscape architect creates bidding documents, which are written specifications and plans for construction of the park. Your municipality then advertises and receives bids for the construction work. Generally, municipalities must accept the lowest responsible bid. Once construction begins, the landscape architect can act as your project manager or your municipality can assign a staff person to do this. It's very important to have a knowledgeable, readily available project manager.

## The Importance of Maintenance

Park maintenance is a wise use of municipal funds. If your community doesn't intend to maintain a park area or recreation facility, why build it? Continued neglect of park areas and recreation facilities causes them to



deteriorate to the point where they are unsafe for citizens. If this happens people won't use your facilities and repair won't be possible without large expenditures of time, money and manpower.

Maintenance is activities that are completed to retain an area, facility or piece of equipment in an acceptable condition. With proper maintenance, recreation facilities and park areas last longer and are more useful. Maintenance involves:

- Routine, regularly scheduled tasks to keep an area in good shape such as mowing grass, periodic inspections, lining athletic fields, weeding and watering flower beds
- Preventive repairs such as routine replacement to forestall excessive wear and expensive repair
- Daily custodial and housekeeping functions such as cleaning restrooms, emptying trash cans, vacuuming or mopping floors
- Hauling and set-up, tear-down and clean-up for recreation programs
- Steps taken to prepare areas for active use at the beginning and to close them down at the end of each season
- Scheduled improvements such as repairing a backstop, replacing a roof and painting a room
- Emergency repairs that are generally the result of vandalism, accidents, weather damage and other unpredictable occurrences

The goal of recreation and parks maintenance is to provide clean, safe and attractive areas and facilities for public use. Efficient and effective recreation and parks maintenance operations:

- Enhance people's recreation experiences
- Save money
- Reduce liability
- Improve public image
- Foster environmental stewardship

Developed recreation areas like buildings, swimming pools and golf courses require a high degree of maintenance, continuous supervision and management.

It's okay to leave some areas in their natural state. Undeveloped recreation areas are open space sites where the natural environment is of



primary importance and there is a minimum of facility development. Examples are primitive campsites, wetlands and forests. This type of physical resource requires less in the way of maintenance, but more attention in terms of protection from overuse and visitor impacts. Generally, facility development within natural areas is spread among a large acreage of land in order to minimize visitor impact and to protect and preserve sensitive land and water areas.

## The Role of Maintenance Planning

A good municipal park maintenance program can include use of a single park custodian, a roving crew or a reporting system using specialized personnel. However, the most important elements are planning and scheduling. It doesn't matter how big or small your operation is; a planned maintenance program assures the degree of safety, use and appearance residents deserve. Scheduling maintenance work consists of using a written checklist of tasks and fitting jobs into a daily format that is flexible enough to be revised when the weather, staff and equipment changes. Preventive maintenance means performing periodic maintenance tasks and making minor repairs and adjustments with an eye toward reducing future maintenance costs.

Maintenance plans should be written down. If knowledge of how the work gets done is kept within the heads of maintenance staff, it'll never work as well as it should. Preparation of written plans gives park managers the information they need to assign jobs and determine priorities. To develop a maintenance plan:



1. Involve employees to get their complete understanding and support. They should work with their park managers.
2. Inventory the resources to maintain. Determine how many thousands of square feet of turf, the total building space, the number of rest rooms, etc.
3. Develop a standard for each of the resources. The standard is a short description of what the resource should look like when the maintenance has been completed.

4. List tasks to perform so that the resources are maintained up to standards. Describe tasks in enough detail so that anyone would know how to perform them.
5. Determine the amount of time it takes to do each task.
6. Decide how often to do each task. Is the turf to be mowed once a week or once every two weeks? Are the restrooms to be cleaned daily or only two times a week? The frequency determines in large part the quality and cost of maintenance.
7. Schedule tasks into an operational plan after you know what to maintain, where it's located, what tasks to do (including the staff and equipment involved), how long it will take to do the tasks, and how frequently to do them. Divide up the tasks and develop a schedule for each person or crew.
8. Implement and monitor the work schedules so that adjustments can be made when needed. Have the workers keep track of how long it takes to do each task and have the supervisor monitor the quality of maintenance.

Some municipal recreation and parks services depend on the public works department for maintenance. When public works is in charge of park maintenance, resources are more consolidated. Equipment can be used for multiple tasks and staff that plows snow in the winter can mow grass in

the summer. Problems arise when public works does its own work first and leaves park maintenance as an afterthought. When this happens there's no systematic routine maintenance and no preventive maintenance. It's important that the public works staff be educated about the value of park maintenance and that it be made a priority.



Park maintenance can be contracted out. When you contract out, you're not hiring and supervising the staff or purchasing and maintaining equipment. However, you do lose direct control of work performance, you may be unable to respond to problems quickly, and you spend extra time administering the contract. When deciding how to get a

maintenance job done, carefully consider the advantages and disadvantages of in-house work versus contracting out. Potential cost savings isn't the only item to consider.

## Safety and the Role of Risk Management

All Pennsylvania municipalities share a common desire to provide the safest recreation and parks areas and facilities possible for citizens, staff and volunteers. Actively practicing risk management is the best way to do this.

“Risk” is the possibility of suffering harm from a hazard that can cause:

- Personal injury or death to participants
- Property damage, economic loss or environmental damage to your municipality

Risk management is the process of making your park areas and recreation facilities safer by conducting and documenting routine safety inspections, having procedures in place to correct problems and performing the necessary work promptly. A municipal recreation and parks risk management plan doesn't need to be complex, but it should cover the range of recreation programs, services and facilities your municipality offers.

First, you should know what your recreation facility or park area should look like in its proper condition. Then each component of the area needs to be thoroughly examined. For a baseball field, that would include items like the spectator bleachers, team benches, safety fencing, backstop, infield, outfield and warm-up areas.

What is actually there is compared against the standards of acceptable condition for each component. For each difference that's noted, you need to make a “so what?” determination. In other words, is it really a problem or not? Does it need to be fixed or can it be lived with safely?

It pays to implement risk management to:

- Enhance recreational experiences for citizens
- Protect and conserve municipal assets
- Make operations more effective and efficient

- Protect the public from harm
- Cut down on the number of accidents and injuries
- Stay out of court
- Have a better prepared defense if sued



It's important to your municipal general liability carrier that you reduce risk.

They can send out a loss control specialist to review your facilities, programs and employee safety policies and procedures. The insurance company does this to determine your risk exposures and offer ways to limit the possibility of liability claims.

### Basic Risk Management Principles

- Do routine written safety inspections of all areas and facilities
- Decide what needs to be fixed and do the work quickly to reduce the number and severity of possible injuries to people
- Eliminate hazards when possible
- Warn users about hazards and explain how to remain safe, placing warning signs near hazards to prevent accidents, not prohibit activities
- Be aware of the types of injuries likely to happen
- Provide directions for aid as a precaution

### The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Commonly referred to as the ADA, this civil rights law is intended to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities in those aspects of life necessary for them to become productive citizens.

The ADA affects community recreation and parks services in a number of important ways. Overall, local governments:

- Can't deny a person with a disability the opportunity to participate in or benefit from services available for people without disabilities
- Can't discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in any employment action

- Can't deny a person with a disability the opportunity to serve on a planning or advisory board
- Must make telephone systems usable by people with hearing impairments
- Must make new recreation facilities completely accessible
- Must operate every program and service within an existing facility so that they're accessible to and usable by people with disabilities

Two important concepts in understanding the ADA rules are the terms “reasonable accommodation” and “undue burden.”

A reasonable accommodation is anything that allows people with disabilities to fully use and enjoy recreation and parks services, programs and facilities. Examples are changing procedures to enable a person with a disability to participate in recreation programs or providing auxiliary aids to effectively communicate with people with hearing, speech or vision impairments. If the barrier is architectural, reasonable accommodations include moving the recreation program to an accessible site, providing similar services at an accessible site, redesigning equipment, and altering existing or building new facilities. Public recreation and parks agencies should adopt a philosophy of inclusion which values the involvement of all people, and promote that accommodations will be made so that all may participate.

Accommodations don't need to be made when it poses an undue burden on a local government. Courts have defined undue burden to include:

- A fundamental alteration in the nature of the service or program. This includes massive change that endangers the program's viability or jeopardizes the effectiveness of the program, a major restructuring of the agency or the creation of a new program.
- Economic hardship, including the cost of the accommodation, the number of people to benefit and the lack of available funds.
- Significant administrative difficulty, including how difficult it is to make the accommodation, the number of employees it takes to make the accommodation, and whether employees involved with the accommodation are taken away from other important duties.

## Recreation Programming

What makes up a community recreation program? What types of programs do residents want? How can a community be sure that its programs provide worthwhile recreational experiences for citizens? Why provide recreation programs at all?

These are important questions. Municipalities generally understand and accept that providing public parkland is an important role for them. Less understood is the role municipalities play in providing public recreation programs. Developing and maintaining public parks is a drain on the general fund budget. Recreation programs are not. Programs generate revenue to support the costs to offer them. In many cases, they can bring in additional funds to help your municipality offer other services. Recreation programs also bring people into your parks to enjoy them.

Recreation programming is the process of planning to create opportunities for people to engage in recreation experiences. Planning is the key word!

When planning municipal recreation programs, it's important to coordinate activities among all of your community's recreation providers and offer programs to meet the needs of all ages and interests. The most important part of making your recreation programs successful though, is the grassroots involvement of your citizens.

Recreation is not just sports! Many communities in Pennsylvania still think having a youth baseball program is plenty of recreation for their citizens. Guess what? It's not! Listed here are the major categories of community recreation programs and some program examples.

Aquatics: Swimming lessons, swim team, scuba diving  
Arts and Crafts: Drawing, painting, ceramics  
Educational: Volunteering, computer classes, pre-retirement planning  
Fitness and Wellness: Weight training, aerobics, yoga  
Outdoor Recreation: Archery, orienteering, cross-country skiing  
Performing Arts: Dance, theater, puppetry  
Social Recreation: Dances, cards, preschool events  
Special Events: Festivals, fairs, parades  
Sports, Games and Athletics: Volleyball, basketball, softball

## Community Recreation Programs 101

### A “How to” Course Outline for Beginners

#### 1. *Planning to Meet Community Needs*

- Determine your community’s recreation needs by conducting a citizen survey and analyzing the recreation opportunities that are currently available for citizens
- Establish which recreation needs your municipality will meet
- Analyze and decide what recreation programs will meet those recreation needs
- Determine what resources are needed to offer the recreation programs you've selected such as: facilities, funding, staff, volunteers and maintenance help
- Select the recreation programs you want to offer


#### 2. *Organizing to Offer Recreation Programs*

- Select leadership to conduct the recreation programs
- Develop schedule for the programs with number of days and weeks, day(s) of the week, and time(s) of day they will be held
- Determine facility availability and make arrangements for use
- Consider supplies and equipment needed and place orders
- Establish how much it will cost to hold the programs by doing an expense and revenue budget
- Decide what participants will be charged to take recreation programs and how many are needed to break even on costs
- Promote programs and invite participants
- Determine how you will get feedback from participants and have forms printed
- Plan ahead for safety, first aid and accidents
- Register the recreation program participants
- Implement and supervise the programs

#### 3. *Evaluating Success*

- Have staff and participants fill out evaluation forms after recreation programs are over
- Assess staff and participant satisfaction and the bottom-line financial figures
- Summarize evaluation results and provide recommendations for recreation program adjustments and improvements





Recreation programs come in a variety of formats, like camps, classes, clinics, clubs or interest groups, competitive, drop-in, one-day or weekend events, outreach and workshops.

## Staffing Recreation and Parks Services

The key to providing *comprehensive* recreation and parks services for your community is professional staff. Typically, when municipalities grow to 10,000 to 15,000 residents, the increased demand for recreation and parks services results in the need for professional staff. Forming regional recreation commissions is a viable alternative for smaller municipalities. Often municipalities start with a part-time recreation and parks director and as job demands increase, expand that into a full-time position. What does a recreation and parks director do? Essentially, they provide and maintain resources for recreation experiences.

### Why Hire a Recreation and Parks Professional?

A recreation and parks professional will help you to:

- Determine your community's recreation needs
- Acquire and develop parkland and recreation facilities
- Provide the variety of recreation programs necessary to serve all your residents
- Insure your park areas and recreation facilities are maintained in proper condition
- Address municipal legal liability issues
- Promote and market your recreation and parks services
- Obtain grant funds and resources to supplement municipal funds
- Develop and make efficient use of a limited budget
- Stay informed about current trends and techniques to provide better service
- Coordinate maximum use of school facilities
- Tap the important resource of volunteers
- Recruit, train and supervise part-time personnel
- Work with board members, volunteers and organizations to involve your whole community

Colleges and universities offer four-year degree programs that prepare individuals for administrative positions in recreation and parks. To help your municipality find qualified staff, both the National Recreation and

Park Association (NRPA) and Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) operate job vacancy listings, and DCNR provides a job referral service. When hiring a full-time recreation and parks director, look for candidates who are Certified Park and Recreation Professionals.

These people have met the nationally established criteria to attain professional certification. This certification program is recognized nationwide and offers a guarantee to your municipality that the candidate has attained the level of education and experience to be considered a recreation and parks professional.

Recreation and parks staff and board members that are actively involved in the profession join PRPS and/or NRPA. Professional activities like attending conferences, making presentations, working on task force committees and serving in elected and appointed positions provide valuable networking and learning opportunities.

Part-time and seasonal employees are a significant part of the public recreation and parks work force, often more than 50% of the total staff. Because of this, community recreation and parks services face some unique staff recruitment and retention challenges not



experienced by other fields. Many part-time recreation positions require specialized skills. Dance, baton and karate instructors are examples. It can be difficult to find qualified staff willing to work the few hours they're needed each week after school, evenings and weekends. Part-time positions don't offer benefits and it's a struggle to keep the hourly wages competitive with the marketplace. People tend to make less of a commitment to part-time jobs, calling off work with little notice. Constant training of new staff and inadequate time and resources to recruit staff are other issues faced by community recreation and parks.

Financial problems confronting many municipalities mean that adequate numbers of staff often can't be hired. The volunteer force remains an important resource, an integral part of any recreation and parks system regardless of the number of staff.

## Spreading the Word About Recreation and Parks

How can residents enjoy your parks when they don't know where they are? How can they experience your programs if they've never heard of them? Spending resources on marketing and promotion is time and money well spent. By investing in these areas, you can:

- Build, maintain and expand relationships among organizations
- Generate goodwill
- Insure that residents know about your parks and programs

These four complementary functions have the same ultimate purpose: making your recreation and parks services more successful.

- *Public Relations* is the process of building and maintaining relationships and generating goodwill for your municipality; its goal is to promote the municipality and your recreation and parks services.
- *Marketing* is the process of getting others to value your recreation and parks services; it creates value in the minds of the public. It also identifies the needs of your residents to encourage them to establish a long-term relationship with your services. Marketing focuses on people before they become participants, with its primary goal to “sell” your municipality's park areas, recreation facilities, programs and services. It's important to realize that you are marketing services and that people participate to get certain experiences or benefits, not for your services themselves. Your programs are only vehicles for delivering recreation experiences or benefits that people want. Your goal is to increase awareness and inform potential participants how your program or facility meets their needs.
- *Customer Service* is the process that seeks to provide participants with an enjoyable and meaningful recreation experience by building and maintaining a friendly climate for them. It deals with people as and after they become participants and is the treatment that participants receive. In a growing number of Pennsylvania communities, municipalities must be aware of and adapt to a variety of languages and cultures, making the role of customer service increasingly complex.

- *Community Relations* is about being active in your community and partnering with organizations to meet community needs. It's the ongoing process of building and reinforcing a positive reputation and public image within your community.

## Marketing Recreation and Parks as a Service

Your municipality isn't marketing recreation programs or park areas. It's marketing services that provide recreation experiences and benefits. Benefit-based promotion tells people what's in it for them, what they'll get, not what the service is, but what it does. People enroll in your programs because they meet a need or desire. Benefits may include things like health, fitness, self-esteem or self-worth. They may be escape from stress or just for the fun, excitement or risk of the experience. When you promote a wellness program, people don't want to hear about diet and exercise. Instead, they want to hear that they'll look better and have more energy.

You can't feel, taste or touch a recreation experience like you can a physical product, so it's impossible for participants to sample or inspect it before it's purchased. The woman registering for an aerobics class or the man joining a basketball league can't know the satisfaction or value of the service in advance. There's risk associated with selecting recreation services.



When making decisions about recreation services, people most respond to word-of-mouth comments. If participants enjoy your parks and programs, they're likely to return again and again and encourage many others to join them.

## The Tools to Market Recreation and Parks

The keys to effective recreation marketing are to communicate to residents the value of your services and show how you differ from other recreation providers. There are seven principal ways to do this:

- *Personal Communications* involve direct contact between your staff and volunteers and community residents. This can include

presentations to community groups, answering telephone questions and one-on-one meetings. For example, when you speak in front of community groups, mention the importance of neighborhood parks and your municipality's effort to enhance them.

- *Advertising* communicates to people through mass media like newspapers, magazines, radio, television and outdoor advertising. Mass media can deliver information quickly to widespread audiences.
- *Point-of-Participation Communications* include (1) displays, exhibits and signs, (2) special coupons and discounts, (3) facility/area directional maps, (4) directories of staff and where and how they can be reached most conveniently, and (5) rules and regulations.
- *Special Promotions* are activities, other than advertising, intended to get an immediate response. An example is a direct mail letter to past program participants that includes a special discount for early registration.
- *Publicity*, like advertising, uses mass media to communicate information. The difference is that publicity is free. In order to gain publicity, your information must be newsworthy and of potential interest to the media's audience.
- *Word-of-Mouth*, positive and negative, is generated by both satisfied and dissatisfied participants, residents who live near recreation and parks areas and your employees and volunteers. The tendency is for people to talk to more people about negative experiences than about positive ones. Recognizing this, many communities:
  1. Have money back service guarantees like “your registration fee back if you’re not satisfied with a recreation program for any reason.”
  2. Distribute products to stimulate interest like logo tee shirts and bumper stickers.
  3. Offer incentives to encourage word-of-mouth like "register two friends and get one-half off on your own registration."

- *Post-Participation Communications* involve contacting participants after their park visit or program is over. Doing this can maintain and strengthen your relationship with participants.

## How Do You Find Out What Recreation Services Residents Want?

You just ask them! Here are some ways:

- Have comment cards that people can fill out at your parks and programs. These can give you good information but are often filled out only by very satisfied or very dissatisfied people.
- Conduct a community survey. A volunteer group can interview people visiting your parks or participants can fill out surveys after completing your programs. Properly designed and administered surveys are a relatively quick, inexpensive way of collecting valuable information and exploring issues and concerns in more depth.
- Bring together frequent users to get their opinions about the quality of your services and to find out how they make decisions and what they really desire.
- Ask questions immediately after people have registered for a program or requested information. This helps to judge people's satisfaction with front-line contact staff and how satisfied they were with your customer service.
- Have someone visit your facility in-person and report back observations of your front-line staff performance. Sharing the results with staff and board members will improve your customer service.
- Ask participants who have stopped using your services why they left, to identify potential problems.
- Ask your staff and board members their views about the way services are provided and their perceptions of what participants think about your services.
- Observe your programs in person and talk informally with participants.

# Chapter Five

## Trends in Recreation and Parks

Recreation and parks has been around for a long time. And it's not going away! But it *is* changing. Change is a constant today, and recreation and parks as we know it now in Pennsylvania won't necessarily be the same in the future.

Where is recreation and parks heading? New patterns of recreating will form as work and family life continues to change. We can't predict the future. But we *can* use social, environmental and participation trends to help us plan for the changes to come in the way people play. In this chapter, we cover some of these important trends.

### Demographic Trends

Major demographic trends from the 2000 census include the following:

*Population Growth* - Pennsylvania is both a very urban and very rural state. We have over 1,000 urban municipalities, many of which are in decline, and one of the largest rural populations in the nation. Ours is also a state with little population growth. Pennsylvania's population increased by just 1% between 1970 and 1990 and by 3% in the 1990s. The most significant population gain was in eastern Pennsylvania while many western counties lost population. Pike (65%) and Monroe (45%) counties in the Poconos and the Philadelphia suburban counties of Bucks, Chester and Montgomery (12%) had the largest population growth. The most significant loss was in Cambria County (6%).

Half of our state's 12 million people live in urban areas. However, population in Pennsylvania's cities and boroughs is decreasing. Suburban and rural growth is on the rise. Over 1.3 million new homes were built between 1970 and 2000, despite our overall low population growth. So while our population is *not* growing, it *is* spreading into more rural areas, causing economic hardship to our cities, boroughs and older developed communities.

*Cultural Diversity* - Geographically, Pennsylvania is primarily a rural state. Our rural communities continue to be populated by mainly



Caucasian, native-born Pennsylvanians. Pennsylvania's cities are much more diverse than its rural areas. Urban communities like Allentown, Lancaster and Reading have had substantial increases in their Hispanic populations, while cities such as Philadelphia and Harrisburg have a higher percentage of African American residents. Our minority population, 15% statewide, lives primarily in our urban communities.

*Household Characteristics* - One of the biggest changes in recent years has been the alteration of the family structure. Pennsylvania households contain fewer married couples and fewer children. Households with single people living together, single heads of households and single parent families have increased.

*Aging Population* - Pennsylvanians are getting older and living longer. At 16%, the proportion of Pennsylvanians over the age of 65 is the second highest in the nation. Between now and 2010, the proportion of older Pennsylvanians will remain stable, but after 2010, it will increase substantially. *This is the major demographic trend that communities in Pennsylvania will address over the next 50 years.*

## Recreation Trends

While fads may come and go, recreation activities that command interest and participation for more than five years are considered trends. Recreation trends actually produce lifestyle changes. Trends like these may be occurring in your community:



*Family Fun* - Families build healthy bonds by sharing fun experiences. Clearly, American families value recreation together: nearly half of all Americans say they engage in outdoor recreation as a family at least once a month according to a Roper poll.<sup>1</sup> Schedule pressures, households with two wage earners, single parents, lack of time and money limitations all underscore the need for expanded family recreation opportunities.

*Wellness* - A highly publicized report by the U.S. Surgeon General identified physical inactivity as the number one public health issue,

stating “being inactive is as risky to one's health as smoking.”<sup>2</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have called obesity “an epidemic.” Obesity costs the United States \$238 billion per year in expenses from associated problems such as diabetes, stroke and heart disease.<sup>3</sup>

The percentage of young people who are overweight has more than doubled in the past 30 years. Almost half of people ages 12-21 and more than one-third of high school students don't participate in physical activity on a regular basis.<sup>4</sup> Physical inactivity is more prevalent among women than men, blacks and Hispanics than whites, older than younger adults, and the less affluent than the more affluent. The Surgeon General recommends that communities provide a range of sports and recreation programs that are attractive to all people.<sup>5</sup>

*Addressing Community Problems* - Rather than being an end in itself, recreation is a tool for communities to use to address a wide range of societal concerns from reducing sprawl to improving education and preventing drug abuse, juvenile crime and underage drinking. In a nationwide survey conducted by Roper Starch in 2000, respondents expressed the opinion that outdoor recreation can improve parent/child communication, deter vandalism and criminal behavior among youth and increase people's appreciation for nature and the environment.<sup>6</sup>



*Girls in Sports* - Fewer than one out of 27 girls played high school sports in 1971. Today, one out of three girls compete on high school sports teams.

*Action Sports* - Growth in traditional sports is low or stable compared with the growth in action sports featuring bikes, blades and boards. Mountain bikes, in-line skates, skateboards, rock climbing walls and snowboards all represent new spins on old equipment and sports.

*New Community Sports* - Sports such as field hockey, roller hockey, lacrosse and rugby are emerging as community recreation activities.

*Year-Round Play* - Youth sports have become seasonless, approaching year-round play. For instance, baseball is played in the spring and fall while soccer and basketball are played throughout the year.

*Active Older Adults* - The very name “senior citizen” has little appeal to many older adults. With improved health, higher educational levels and financial security, chronological age is no longer an indicator of ability and interest. People are hiking, biking, playing sports and running marathons into their 80s now. The baby boomer generation of more active older adults won't join traditional senior centers. Offering interesting recreation opportunities at convenient times in recreation centers rather than in stand alone senior centers will be important in the future.



## Park and Facility Trends

Trends in park planning focus on achieving a balance of protecting natural resources and meeting public need for recreation. Rather than developing a laundry list of facilities based on a cookie cutter formula, communities are now looking at the best way to serve the public through recreation. Location, convenience, access and connections via greenways and trails are all part of the mix.

*Trails* - Trails are the most preferred recreation facility in Pennsylvania according to current levels of use and the results of community recreation and parks surveys statewide. Trails can be multipurpose for walkers, hikers, joggers, runners, cyclists, skaters, cross country skiers and equestrians as well as for motorized vehicles such as snowmobiles and ATV's (all terrain vehicles). Trails connect neighborhoods, parks, schools and other community destinations. They provide safe places to exercise, alternative transportation, recreation facilities and environmental classrooms. Trails are also a major component of the new environmental trend relating to greenways, which is discussed in the next section.

*Community Parks* - Design trends for community parks show a mix of active and passive facilities so that families and friends can use a range of facilities at the same time. Trails, picnic spots and natural areas

complement ball fields and game courts to provide a varied outdoor experience. Comfort facilities such as restrooms, shade and sitting areas are important features of community parks. Convenient and accessible comfort facilities are particularly important for visitors at older and younger ages.

*Skating Facilities* - In-line facilities for skating and roller hockey and skateboard parks are catching up with the growth in roller sports.

*Indoor Recreation Centers* - While public recreation used to focus on youth, sports and summer, communities are now looking to provide year-round recreation, outdoors and indoors. This has generated interest in developing community recreation centers that allow residents to maintain active lifestyles regardless of weather. Instead of small neighborhood centers, communities are developing full-service recreation centers with aquatics facilities, gymnasiums, activity rooms and wellness centers geared to community recreation. These centers serve all ages with an emphasis on families, teens and older adults.

*Community School Use* - While public recreation departments and community organizations have always used school facilities for recreation, the trend is towards collaborative planning, construction and management of school and community recreation facilities and services. School districts are finding that serving the whole community and not just residents with school-age children helps to advance their overall educational program and generate citizen support for school endeavors.

*Aquatics Centers* - Traditional tank-type pools for lap swimming have given way to aquatics centers that include not only the typical lane pool but also a family play pool, water toys, fountains, moving water, therapy pools and water slides.



*Destination Playgrounds* - Large centralized playgrounds serve people community wide. In contrast to a small neighborhood playground where one would spend up to an hour, destination playgrounds attract visitors from throughout the community to spend a few hours or even a day there.

*Ball Fields* - Most communities don't have enough ball fields for the number of players, teams and leagues. Growth in sports such as field hockey, lacrosse and rugby are putting more demand on already scarce fields. Competition for fields is fierce in many communities. Ball fields are becoming more customized for the particular sport. Instead of multipurpose or overlapping fields, communities are developing individual fields for specific sports to provide safer, more enjoyable play and improved maintenance. Training areas that allow players to practice and develop skills complement game fields and help to alleviate field over use.

*Complexes* - To reduce driving to multiple sites, citizens are requesting centralized facilities for “one-stop recreating.” Complexes can be for sports, the arts, indoor recreation or even community hubs with municipal building, swimming pool, schools, recreation center and library on one campus.

*Nature Centers* - Facilities for environmental education are becoming more important in local and regional recreation just as they've been important to Pennsylvania counties in the past.

## Environmental Trends

To protect Pennsylvania's unparalleled natural, historic and cultural assets, our state, municipal and private sector partners have initiated a wide range of projects in conservation, outdoor recreation, heritage preservation and tourism promotion. Significant statewide programs include the Pennsylvania Greenways Partnership, Growing Greener: Conservation by Design, and Green Opportunities for Brownfields.

*Greenways* - In 2001, Pennsylvania adopted *Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections*. This plan is designed to develop a network of greenways, connecting corridors of open space, trails, natural landscape features and recreational sites statewide. It charts a set of specific strategies and actions for building Pennsylvania's greenways network by 2020. Notable strategies include mapping statewide greenways, developing 1,000 miles of water trails, having greenway plans completed by counties, and establishing a local greenway in every community by 2020. DCNR is the lead state agency for the

greenways initiative and will provide the framework and tools to build successful greenway projects.

### What is a Greenway?

A greenway is a corridor of open space. Greenways vary greatly in scale, from narrow ribbons of green that run through urban, suburban and rural areas to wider corridors that incorporate diverse natural, cultural and scenic features. They can incorporate both public and private property, and can be land- or water-based. They may follow old railways, canals or ridge tops, or they may follow stream corridors, shorelines or wetlands, and include water trails for non-motorized craft. Some greenways are recreational corridors or scenic byways that may accommodate motorized and non-motorized vehicles. Others function almost exclusively for environmental protection and are not designed for human passage. Greenways differ in their location and function, but overall, a greenway will protect natural, cultural and scenic resources, provide recreational benefits, enhance natural beauty and quality of life in neighborhoods and communities, and stimulate economic development opportunities.<sup>7</sup>

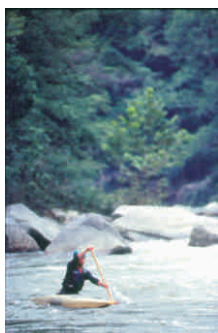
Developing the greenway network will allow future generations to experience a new treasure like we celebrate the parks, historic sites, trails and game lands that previous generations have preserved.

Building the greenways network will require teamwork - starting at the local level and involving everyone in the community, from business leaders to public officials to citizens. Often the team

is brought together by local planning efforts. DCNR is strongly encouraging the development of greenway plans by county and municipal governments as an integral part of their comprehensive planning efforts.







*Growing Greener* - Growing Greener (Environmental Stewardship and Watershed Protection Act) is the largest environmental program ever undertaken in Pennsylvania. Its purpose is to clean-up streams, restore abandoned mine lands, protect farmland and open space, improve state parks and forests, and plug oil and gas wells. Enacted into law in 1999 for five years, the Growing Greener program has been successful in helping communities, the environment and Pennsylvania's economy. In 2002, the Legislature imposed an increase in the state's tipping fee.

Portions of that additional revenue will provide a continued funding source until 2012.

*Growing Greener: Conservation By Design* - DCNR is promoting Growing Greener: Conservation by Design, a program to assist communities in planning residential development design that promotes open space and natural areas preservation. Developing subdivision regulations as a municipal tool can help to shape communities in Pennsylvania. By preserving open space through effective local land use planning, communities can protect streams and water quality, provide habitat for plants and animals, preserve rural "atmosphere," provide recreational areas, increase home values and reduce costs of municipal services. The program involves small but significant changes to the subdivision design and review process. When integrated with comprehensive plan and zoning provisions that encourage the preservation of open space, a community can -- over a period of years -- protect an interconnected network of conservation lands, at no cost to the taxpayer.<sup>8</sup>

*Green Opportunities for Brownfields* - Reuse of industrial sites and reclamation of scarred lands in Pennsylvania is a high land use priority with assistance provided by Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection and DCNR. Brownfields are abandoned factories or other industrial facilities, gas stations, oil storage facilities, dry cleaners and other businesses contaminated with pollution. Brownfields can be cleaned by safely removing contaminants and then redeveloped into parks or converted back into natural areas. Organizations such as the Earth Conservancy in northeastern Pennsylvania have been successful in reclaiming abandoned strip mine areas and revitalizing them for recreational use.



## Management Trends

Pennsylvania's most important management trend in public recreation and parks is working together with others. With over 2,500 municipalities, cooperative recreation and parks services can make the most use of limited resources. More municipalities are realizing the benefits of working together and with other public and private partners to provide recreation and parks services.

*Multi-Municipal Planning* - While collaborative partnerships to provide recreation and parks services have existed for decades, what's new is multi-municipal planning. This trend is best exemplified by Monroe County. Located in the Poconos, Monroe County is under significant growth pressures. All 20 municipalities have participated in planning resulting in the development of six multi-municipal recreation and open space plans that encompass the entire county. Together, they're looking at how to protect open space and provide recreation and parks collaboratively. They're exploring partnerships in land acquisition, regional park development, park maintenance, recreation services, management and financing.

*Bond Issues and Dedicated Taxes* - To leverage state funding and stay in the race to acquire land, counties and municipalities are floating bonds and dedicating taxes to preserve open space. This is happening most in Pennsylvania's fastest growing areas where development pressure is significant. In southeastern Pennsylvania, Bucks, Chester and Montgomery counties have floated bonds for open space preservation. Voters have embraced the message that open space costs less than residential development in terms of schools and other public services. Municipalities in these areas have enacted taxes for open space that includes dedicated portions of the earned income tax ranging from .0125% to 2% and property taxes ranging from 1/100th of a mill to two mills. Combined, four Pennsylvania counties and 30 municipalities made a commitment of nearly \$408 million for open space preservation between 1987 and 2000.

*Financing Recreation and Parks* - The trend in local financing of recreation and parks is towards a mix of tax and non-tax support and away from total governmental support. Tax funds are typically directed toward land and facilities that benefit the community as a whole. User fees cover services, recreation programs and facilities that benefit



specific users and not the community at large. Nationwide, communities are seeking to generate more non-tax money for recreation and parks services. Generating about 30% of a municipal recreation budget through user fees, sponsorships and partnerships is an achievable goal for municipal departments with a professional staff. Fifty percent or higher is a more difficult target but is regularly achieved by municipalities with extensive recreation programs and services. Park operations usually can't achieve higher levels of cost recovery because they focus on maintenance.

New trends in generating non-tax support include field use fees to cover maintenance costs, sponsorships by the private sector, park friends who raise money for specific purposes and private capital campaign fund raising for special use facilities.

*Public Participation* - While public participation is hardly a new concept, what *is* new is the intensity of and fresh approaches to public participation statewide. Public involvement in the form of citizen surveys, public forums, interviews, newsletters, web sites and e-mail is in practice in many Pennsylvania communities. This includes computerized surveys, citizen input through web pages and even electronic town meetings.

*Not in My Backyard (NIMBY)* -Some public park projects generate controversy, especially among citizens who live close to the project area. Successful projects need to have buy-in from adjacent property owners and impacted neighborhoods early in the process.

Recreation and parks agencies planning for new projects like parks or trails should prepare a public involvement program that includes strategic planning, outreach, public education and consensus building.



*Computerization* - Technology is enabling municipal recreation and parks departments to provide convenience for residents and enhanced customer service. Computer software programs designed for recreation and parks services simplify tasks like program registration, league scheduling, facility reservations and maintenance scheduling. The

Internet, credit cards and e-mail are making recreation and parks a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week service. The use of credit cards and the world wide web has allowed municipalities to provide convenient ways for residents to register and pay for recreation programs.

## Staying Ahead: Monitoring Trends

Monitoring community trends helps you make informed, cost effective decisions to meet the needs of your citizens today as well as the needs of generations to come. Your ability to anticipate and respond to the changing needs and expectations of your citizens is essential to make the most use of limited resources.

Developing park facilities and providing recreation services requires reliable information on the trends of recreation and parks. You can monitor trends by reading newspapers and magazines, attending state and national recreation and parks related conferences, tracking participation statistics and listening to what the public has to say. Without such monitoring tools, recreation and parks providers will continue to be in the position of reacting to changing conditions instead of dealing with change by developing practical strategies. Good trend information allows communities to plan effectively and provide a high level of public service efficiently. The fast-paced changes of life in the 21st century mandate looking ahead 10 years or more when planning and making decisions.

1. Roper Starch. (1999). Outdoor Recreation in America 1999: The Family and the Environment. Washington, D.C.: The Recreation Roundtable.
2. Surgeon General. (1996). Physical Activity and Health. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Public Health Service, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion.
3. Fox, Maggie. (1999). Obesity Costs U.S. \$238 Billion a Year Survey. Reuters: Science Headlines: [http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/199909/health\\_obesity\\_2.html](http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/199909/health_obesity_2.html).
4. U.S. Center for Disease Control. (1999). CDC's Guidelines for School and Community Programs Promoting Lifelong Physical Activity. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/phactaag.htm>.
5. Surgeon General. *IBID*.
6. Roper Starch. (2000). Outdoor Recreation in America 2000: Addressing Key Societal Concerns. Washington, D.C.: The Recreation Roundtable.
7. Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections. PA Greenways Partnership Commission, 2001.
8. Arendt, Randall G. (1999). *Growing Greener by Design*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

## Summary

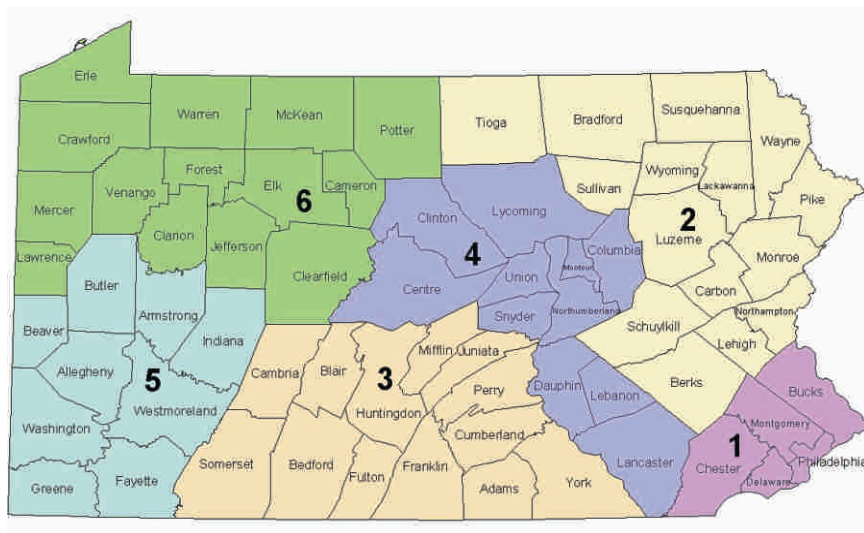
While no one can guarantee your success in recreation and parks, the chances are excellent that your efforts will make your community a better place. You'll get to see the fruits of your labor every day in a healthier environment, the wonder of nature, and the smiles of the young, old and everyone in between that tell you how important recreation and parks is in their lives. Those municipalities that get the results they'd hoped for share a variety of traits. The following steps that you can take in your community are based upon what award-winning recreation and parks systems in Pennsylvania have done to achieve success:

1. *Develop a Plan* - Determine what you want your recreation and parks system to look like and develop action steps to achieve this vision.
2. *Show Leadership* - Be vocal about what you're doing and what you want to do in the future.
3. *Listen and Respond to Your Community* - Encourage public input and involve key persons in planning and project activities.
4. *Build a Base of Public Supporters* - Form an advisory recreation and parks board or strengthen your existing board, get your elected officials out to parks and programs, involve your citizens as volunteers, and gain the support of business, school and private organizations.
5. *Work with Others* - Cooperate fully with other community organizations and boards.
6. *Establish Accountability* - Adopt practices that insure accountability of tax dollars and other resources.
7. *Be Action-Oriented* - Don't just plan. Get your projects moving and show some results.

Building a community recreation and parks system takes years and decades to happen. It certainly won't happen overnight! Just be patient and take your time. Along the way, celebrate each success you have, share it with your community and above all, enjoy yourself.

# Appendix A

## Bureau of Recreation and Conservation Regional Offices



### Region 1 - Southeast

*Bucks, Chester, Delaware,  
Montgomery and  
Philadelphia Counties*

207 State Office Building  
1400 West Spring Garden Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130-4007

Phone: (215) 560-1182 or  
(215) 560-1183  
Fax: (215) 965-5686

### Region 2 - Northeast

*Berks, Bradford, Carbon,  
Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne,  
Monroe, Northampton, Pike,  
Schuylkill, Sullivan, Susquehanna,  
Tioga, Wayne and Wyoming  
Counties*

201 Samters Building  
101 Penn Avenue  
Scranton, PA 18503-2025

Phone: (570) 963-4157  
Fax: (570) 963-3439

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### **Region 3 - Southcentral**

*Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cambria,  
Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton,  
Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry,  
Somerset and York Counties*

P.O. Box 1554  
Commonwealth Avenue  
and South Drive  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-1554

Phone: (717) 772-4362  
Fax: (717) 705-2943

### **Region 5 - Southwest**

*Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver,  
Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana,  
Washington and Westmoreland  
Counties*

1405 State Office Building  
300 Liberty Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-1210

Phone: (412) 880-0486  
Fax: (412) 565-2635

### **Region 4 - Northcentral**

*Centre, Clinton, Columbia,  
Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon,  
Lycoming, Montour,  
Northumberland, Snyder and Union  
Counties*

P.O. Box 1554  
Commonwealth Avenue  
and South Drive  
Harrisburg, PA 17105-1554

Phone: (717) 705-5956  
Fax: (717) 705-2943

### **Region 6 - Northwest**

*Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield,  
Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest,  
Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean,  
Mercer, Potter, Venango and Warren  
Counties*

100 State Street  
Suite 205  
Erie, PA 16507-1498

Phone: (814) 871-4190  
Fax: (814) 454-7494

# Appendix B

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This is a *sample ordinance* to create an advisory recreation and parks board for a second class township. It should be used for informational purposes only. Every Pennsylvania form of government is governed by municipal codes. The codes permit municipalities to create recreation and parks boards but differ in requirements. For example, the Second Class Township Code permits 5-7 members to be appointed to such boards while the Borough Code permits 5-9 members. Check with your municipal solicitor for applicable code requirements. Generally, the ordinance creating a board should detail its powers, duties, responsibilities and organization.

## ORDINANCE NO. 1

### AN ORDINANCE CREATING AN ADVISORY RECREATION BOARD; ESTABLISHING THE NUMBER AND TERM OF THE MEMBERS; AND DESIGNATING DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE BOARD.

The Board of Supervisors of Blue Township, White County, hereby ordains as follows:

Section 1. *Establishment of Board.* There is hereby created, pursuant to Section 2204 of the Second Class Township Code (act of May 1, 1933, P.L. 103, No. 69; reenacted July 10, 1947, P.L. 1481; reenacted and amended Nov. 9, 1995, P.L. 350, No. 60) a board to be known as the Blue Township Advisory Recreation and Parks Board (“Board”). The Board shall be composed of seven residents of this township.

Section 2. *Appointment and Terms of Office.* Members of the Board shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors in accordance with the following procedures:

- (1) Board members shall serve for terms of five years, or until their successors are appointed, except that members first appointed shall be appointed so that the terms of not more than two members expire annually. All persons appointed shall serve their full terms unless they voluntarily resign or are removed by the Board of Supervisors for dereliction or neglect of duty. Vacancies occurring otherwise than by expiration of term shall be for the unexpired term and shall be filled in the same manner as original appointments.
- (2) Whenever possible, due consideration will be given to representation from various geographic sections within the township, so that all members shall not be from the same general area.

Section 3. *Service Without Pay.* Members of the Board shall receive no compensation for their services, but may be reimbursed by the township for all expenses incurred in performing their duties.

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Section 4. *Advisory Role.* The Board is to be advisory and shall coordinate its activities with the elected officials, planning commission, and other such local governmental bodies.

Section 5. *Organization of Board.* The members of the Board shall elect a chairperson and secretary and select all other necessary officers to serve for a period of one year. The Board may adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of all business within its jurisdiction and exercise powers and functions concerning parks and recreation facilities as may be delegated to it by the Board of Supervisors.

Section 6. *Authority of the Board.* The Board shall have the following powers:

1. Identify the open space, recreation, park and trail needs of the township.
2. Plan and supervise recreation programs approved by the Board of Supervisors.
3. Recommend plans, programs, and policies regarding the provision of recreation and park services.
4. Advise the Board of Supervisors in the acquisition and development of parklands.
5. Undertake recreation and park tasks as requested by the Board of Supervisors.

Section 7. *Reporting.* The Board shall keep minutes of its meetings, which it shall submit to the Board of Supervisors. The Board shall submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors, including an analysis of the adequacy and effectiveness of community recreation areas, facilities and leadership.

Section 8. *Annual Budget.* The Board, at such times as directed by the Board of Supervisors, shall annually submit for approval to the Board of Supervisors a proposed budget for the ensuing year, setting forth all proposed expenditures, salaries, and programs with sufficient justification. The Board shall not in any manner obligate the Board of Supervisors for the payment of any township funds until the same is appropriated by the Board of Supervisors.

ADOPTED this 1<sup>st</sup> day of June, 2003. The ordinance shall become effective five days after adoption.

Board of Supervisors of Blue Township  
By \_\_\_\_\_, Chairperson  
\_\_\_\_\_, Vice Chair  
\_\_\_\_\_, Member

# Appendix C

The National Recreation and Park Association and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration developed park, open space and pathways classifications in its 1995 *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*. Provided below are excerpts from the classification table. The complete publication is available for purchase by contacting NRPA's store at 703-858-2190.

## Parks and Open Space Classifications

- *Mini-Parks* are areas of 2,500 square feet to one (1) acre in size. They are geared specifically for those living within a service radius of less than ¼ mile.
- *Neighborhood Parks* are generally areas of 10 acres or less that are developed for informal active and passive recreation activities. They serve people living within a ½ mile service area.
- *Community Parks* are larger in size than a neighborhood park, usually containing between 20 and 50 acres. Their focus is to meet active and passive recreation needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. The service area for community parks is a three-mile radius.
- *School-Parks* are public school sites with facilities that could serve as a neighborhood or community park. Sites are determined by the location of school district property.
- *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. They are usually a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 acres or more being optimal, and serve the entire community.
- *Greenways* are linear park areas that focus on passive recreation and the natural environment. These areas frequently form connections throughout the community.
- *Natural Resource Areas* are lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics and buffering.
- *Single Purpose/Special Use Parks* cover a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use.
- *Sports Complexes* consolidate heavily programmed athletic fields and facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community for community-wide use. These areas are usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres being optimal.
- *Private Park/Recreation Facilities* are sites that are privately owned yet contribute to the public recreation and parks system. The areas can be of any size.



# Appendix D

## Community Conservation Partnerships Grant Program

Whether it's rehabilitating a community athletic field, building a safer playground, preparing a greenways plan, developing a trail or protecting a critical natural area, the Bureau's Community Conservation Partnerships Program can provide communities and nonprofit organizations with the technical assistance and grant funding to undertake these and other types of recreation and conservation projects.

The Community Conservation Partnerships Program is a combination of several funding sources and grant programs that have been combined into one annual application cycle (generally late summer/early fall), and use a single application format and process with one grant manual and one set of application forms. Generally, all components require a match, usually 50% of cash or in-kind contributions.

The following is a summary of the types of projects eligible for funding under the Community Conservation Partnerships Program:

### Planning Projects

- Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plans
- Conservation Plans
- Feasibility Studies
- Rails-to-Trails Plans
- Master Site Plans
- County Natural Areas Inventories
- Greenways and Trails Plans
- Snowmobile and ATV Plans
- Rivers Conservation Plans

### Acquisition Projects

- Greenways, Trails and Rivers Conservation
- Park and Recreation Areas
- Rails-to-Trails
- Natural and Critical Habitat Areas
- Snowmobile and ATV Trails and Areas

### Development Projects

- Park and Recreation Areas
- Rails-to-Trails
- Rivers Conservation
- Greenways and Trails
- Snowmobile and ATV Trails and Areas

### Technical Assistance Projects

- Education and Training
- Peer-to-Peer
- Circuit Rider
- Snowmobile and ATV Trails and Areas

For more information about this grant program contact your DCNR regional office that covers your county (see Appendix A).

# Appendix E

## Where to Go for Help

We're fortunate in Pennsylvania to have a variety of resources available for recreation, parks, conservation, historic preservation, greenways and trails. Finding out that you're not alone and that you have help allows you to move ahead with your projects, benefit from the experience of others and avoid pitfalls. One of the best things about recreation and parks is the great network of people who share your desire, enthusiasm and challenges in achieving similar goals.

This brief resource directory gives you the names of organizations, contact information and a description of the services provided.

### Resource Directory for Community Recreation, Parks, Greenways and Trails

State Agencies and Organizations	
Resource	Description
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)  717-787-7672 www.dcnr.state.pa.us	Directs the establishment of community conservation partnerships through grants and technical assistance to benefit local parks and recreation, rivers, trails, greenways, regional heritage parks, open space and natural areas.
Pennsylvania Greenways Clearinghouse and Website  717-705-8533 www.pagreenways.org	Provides a "one-stop shop" for Pennsylvania greenways information and links to other key sources.
Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)  1-800-379-7448 www.inventpa.com	Fosters opportunities for communities to succeed and thrive in a global economy to enable Pennsylvania to achieve a superior quality of life. Provides grants for community revitalization and economic development activities on the local level.
Governor's Center for Local Government Services  1-888-223-6837 www.inventpa.com	One-stop shopping for all local governments in Pennsylvania. Part of DCED. Offers full range of technical and financial assistance to local governments.
Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission  717-705-7800 www.fish.state.pa.us	Provides fishing and boating opportunities through protection and management of aquatic resources.

Resource	Description
<p>Pennsylvania Game Commission</p> <p>717-787-4250 www.pgc.state.pa.us</p>	<p>Manages the state's wildlife resources through land management, law enforcement, public information and education.</p>
<p>Pennsylvania State Historical and Museum Commission</p> <p>717-787-3362 www.phmc.state.pa.us</p>	<p>Promotes the conservation of Pennsylvania's historic heritage, oversees care of historical manuscripts, public records, and objects of historic interest, museums, archaeology, publications, historic sites and properties, historic preservation, geographic names, and the promotion of public interest in Pennsylvania history.</p>
<p>Pennsylvania Council on the Arts</p> <p>717-787-6883 www.artsnet.org/pca/pca.html</p>	<p>Fosters the excellence, diversity and vitality of the arts in Pennsylvania and broadens the availability and appreciation of those arts throughout the state.</p>
<p>Pennsylvania Humanities Council</p> <p>1-800-462-0442 (in Pa only) 215-925-1005 www.pahumanities.org</p>	<p>Empowers non-profit groups across Pennsylvania to develop and offer their own programs for lifelong learning through history, literature, religious studies, philosophy and the social sciences.</p>
<p>Center for Rural Pennsylvania</p> <p>717-787-9555 www.ruralpa.org</p>	<p>Promotes and sustains the vitality of Pennsylvania's rural and small communities by awarding grants for research and model projects, disseminating information on trends and conditions and sponsoring forums on rural issues.</p>
<p>Keystone Athletic Field Management Association</p> <p>www.greenmediaonline.com</p>	<p>Provides promotion, education and training to advance sports turf management in Pennsylvania.</p>
<p>Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)</p> <p>1-800-322-9214 1-888-590-7844 www.pecpa.org www.eacnetwork.org</p>	<p>Promotes sustainable use of our land and natural resources, protection of watersheds, and innovative solutions to long-standing land use issues from brownfield clean-up to air quality. Also promotes the establishment of new municipal environmental advisory councils and assists existing EAC's.</p>
<p>Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA)</p> <p>717-230-8560 www.conserveland.org</p>	<p>Promotes voluntary land conservation and provides resources, leadership and training to the nation's 1,200-plus nonprofit, grassroots land trusts.</p>
<p>Pennsylvania Rails-to-Trails Conservancy</p> <p>717-238-1717 www.railtrails.org</p>	<p>Enriches Pennsylvania's communities and countryside by creating a statewide network of public trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Helps build trails by providing technical assistance.</p>

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Description</b>
Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS)  814-234-4272 <a href="http://www.prps.org">www.prps.org</a>	The principal state organization promoting recreation and park training, networking and leadership opportunities for those working and volunteering in the field.
Pennsylvania Turfgrass Council  814-355-8010 <a href="http://www.paturf.org">www.paturf.org</a>	Promotes professionalism in the turfgrass industry, provides educational opportunities, grants and other forms of support for education and research programs; promotes open dialogue with government agencies, private institutions and the general public.
Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers (POWR)  717-234-7910 <a href="http://www.pawatersheds.org">www.pawatersheds.org</a>	Dedicated to the protection, sound management and enhancement of the Commonwealth's rivers and watersheds and to the empowerment of local organizations with the same commitment.
Pennsylvania State Snowmobile Association (PSSA)  888-411-PSSA <a href="http://www.pasnow.org">www.pasnow.org</a>	Maintain a continuing effort to provide high-quality trails throughout the Commonwealth by promoting the proper recreational uses of snowmobiles, maintaining environmentally-friendly relationships, sponsoring safety classes to encourage safe, courteous and lawful use of snowmobiles.
Pennsylvania Off-Highway Vehicle Association (paOHV)  866-314-2079 <a href="http://www.paohv.org">www.paohv.org</a>	An organization of clubs, businesses and other parties interested in the sustained future of off-highway motorized recreation. PaOHV partners with DCNR to promote rider education and safety training as well as environmentally sensitive trail development, maintenance and use.

### **National Agencies and Organizations**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Description</b>
American Society of Landscape Architects  717-236-2044 <a href="http://www.landscapearchitects.org">www.landscapearchitects.org</a>	Supports the profession of landscape architecture that designs the built environment of neighborhoods, towns and cities and protects and manages the natural environment.
Audubon Society  PA Office 717-213-6880 <a href="http://www.audubon.org/states/pa">www.audubon.org/states/pa</a>	Conserves and restores natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife and habitats.
The Conservation Fund  PA Office 717-230-8166 <a href="http://www.conservationfund.org">www.conservationfund.org</a>	Helps acquire and protect open space, wildlife habitat and historic sites nationwide. Assists partners in business, government and the nonprofit sector with projects that integrate economic development with environmental protection.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Description</b>
National Park Service  215-597-7013 <a href="http://www.nps.gov">www.nps.gov</a>	Preserves the national park system for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations, guards diverse cultural, historic and recreational resources and protects America's open space. Rivers, trails and conservation assistance program staff available for technical assistance.
National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)  703-858-0784 <a href="http://www.nrpa.org">www.nrpa.org</a>	Advances parks, recreation, environmental and conservation efforts nationally. Provides publications, training programs and an annual conference.
Nature Conservancy  PA Office 610-832-1323 <a href="http://www.nature.org">www.nature.org</a>	Works closely with communities and businesses to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.
President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS)  202-690-9000 <a href="http://www.fitness.gov">www.fitness.gov</a>	Promotes, encourages and motivates Americans of all ages to become physically active and participate in sports. Initiates and administers programs that reach people in schools, homes, workplaces and communities.
Sierra Club  PA Chapter 717-232-0101 <a href="http://www.sierraclub.org">www.sierraclub.org</a>	Explores and protects the wild places on Earth, promotes responsible use of ecosystems and resources and educates and enlists people to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment.
Trails and Greenways Clearinghouse  <a href="http://www.trailsandgreenways.org">www.trailsandgreenways.org</a>	Provides technical information, resources and referrals to trail and greenway advocates and developers across the nation. Services are free to government agencies, communities, grassroots organizations and anyone else seeking to create and manage greenways.
Trust for Public Land  212-677-7171 <a href="http://www.tpl.org">www.tpl.org</a>	Helps conserve land for recreation and spiritual nourishment and to improve the health and quality of life of American communities.



## About the Authors and the Funding Partners

Susan E. Landes, CPRP, has worked for Pennsylvania governments of all sizes. She is presently the Executive Director of the Lancaster Recreation Commission, managing a staff of over 125 people and a \$2 million budget. She's a Past President of PRPS, serves as a peer consultant for DCNR and operates Recreation and Parks Solutions, a consulting firm that specializes in preparing comprehensive recreation, park and open space plans and providing cost effective ways to improve community recreation and parks services. Susan holds her undergraduate degree in Recreation and Parks and master's degree in Public Administration from Penn State University. Known for her creative approach and expertise in intergovernmental cooperation, recreation programming, revenue development, administrative management and marketing, Susan was the 2001 winner of the prestigious Fred M. Coombs Honor Award, the highest recognition given by PRPS.

Ann M. Toole, CPRP, is a national award-winning parks and recreation planner. She has worked in public and private parks and recreation organizations at the municipal, county and state levels as well as in the National Park Service. Located in Solebury, Bucks County, she operates Toole Recreation Planning, a firm exclusively devoted to parks and recreation.

The Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) is the principal state organization promoting recreation and park training, networking and leadership opportunities for those working and volunteering in the field. Members include professionals who manage municipal recreation and park systems and state parks, citizen members of recreation and parks boards, and therapeutic recreation professionals working in health care settings.

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Recreation and Conservation provides grants and technical assistance to support conservation, recreation and open space projects across Pennsylvania. The bureau serves as a leader in establishing community conservation partnerships for advancing the greening of Pennsylvania, protecting the Commonwealth's natural and heritage resources, and providing recreational opportunities for all Pennsylvanians and visitors to enjoy.



“Leave all the afternoon for exercise  
and recreation, which are as  
necessary as reading. I will rather say  
more  
necessary because health is  
worth more than learning.”

--Thomas Jefferson

