

## VI. PARKS & RECREATION

The planning for both passive and active recreation opportunities is an important component of any comprehensive planning effort. Recreation planning seeks to determine the level of demand for recreation facilities and programs, and where needed parks and recreation facilities should be located. Finally, certain widely-used procedures for the acquisition of parklands via dedication/fee-in-lieu thereof subdivision requirements are only legally defensible if they seek to implement legitimate and logical recreation goals and objectives. For these various reasons, the following recreation analysis is offered.

### A. Parks and Recreation Administration

Presently each of the individual participants (municipalities and school districts) acquire, develop and program their parks independent from one another. One of the most important goals of this Plan is to:

*“Confine park development to one centralized community park per Township yet look to coordinate with the School District and the other municipalities in a coordinated delivery of recreation programs and activities.”*

In order to maximize funding and coordination the municipalities should investigate park and recreation planning on a regional basis. Various State-funded programs can help the Region design and operate a regional recreation agency fine-tuned to meet its specific needs. ***The Region should appoint a Regional Recreation Board (RRB) made up of at least one representative from each municipality and school district (plus alternates) who have an understanding of the Region’s recreation needs and resources. This RRB should then prepare and submit an application to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for a Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) or “Peer-to-Peer” project.*** In this study, an expert will visit with local park and recreation providers to gain a thorough understanding of their operations and activities. A maximum grant amount of \$10,000 is available for Peer-to-Peer projects. The community must provide at least a 10% local cash match. At the end of the peer project, a recommendation will be tailored to best manage the Region’s recreation needs and resources. Often, another C2P2 “circuit-rider grant” is suggested to help cover the costs of initializing a Regional paid park and recreation staff. This circuit-rider grant funds 100% of such expenses the first year, 75% the second, 50% the third, and 25% the fourth years. Additional information on this program and its application requirements can be found online at: <https://www.grants.dcnr.state.pa.us/GrantPrograms.aspx>

### B. Facilities Inventory

The first step in a recreation analysis is an inventory of existing recreation facilities serving the Region’s residents. The inventory on the following pages is a series of tables which lists all identified public recreation sites and their improvements within the Eastern Berks County Region. This inventory indicates the site name, the site’s ownership and maintenance responsibilities, the site type, and its total recreation acreage. Following this is a specific list of recreation improvements at each site. This list is broken out to identify amenities including playgrounds, fields and courts, picnic facilities, pools, trails and support facilities. A final section at the bottom of the table allows for comments concerning a particular site, or the listing of any additional improvements.

The *Parks and Recreation Map* utilizes the information from the inventory to illustrate the geographic distribution of all recreation sites within the Eastern Berks County Region, including their types, and service radii for locally-oriented facilities. Listed below is the name and acreage for all public parks within the Region.

<b>Public Parks Within the Eastern Berks County Region</b>	
<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
<b><i>Topton Borough</i></b>	<b>52.8</b>
Brandywine Heights Area Middle School	30.0
Brandywine Heights Area Elementary School	10.1
Topton Community Park	10.2
Brandywine Youth Baseball Association	2.5
<b><i>District Township</i></b>	<b>188.4</b>
Gordon Park	71.4
PA State Gamelands	117.0
<b><i>Rockland Township</i></b>	<b>10.0</b>
Hogan Learning Academy	10.0
<b><i>Eastern Berks County Region</i></b>	<b>251.2 acres</b>

## FACILITIES INVENTORY

<b>NAME</b>	Gordon Park	Gamelands 315	Topton Community Park	Brandywine Youth Baseball Association
<b>MUNICIPALITY</b>	District		Topton	Topton
<b>OWNERSHIP</b>	Municipal	State	Municipal	Non-profit
<b>ACREAGE</b>	71.4	117.0	10.2	2.5
<b>TYPE</b>	Community Park	Natural Resource Area	Community Park	Quasi-public
<b>BASEBALL</b>			X	
<b>BASEBALL YOUTH</b>	X			X
<b>BASKETBALL</b>				
<b>BIKING</b>				
<b>BOATING</b>				
<b>BOWLING</b>				
<b>CAMPING</b>				
<b>FIELD HOCKEY</b>				
<b>FISHING</b>		X		
<b>FITNESS COURSE</b>				
<b>FOOTBALL</b>				
<b>GOLF</b>				
<b>GOLF DRIVING</b>				
<b>GOLF MINIATURE</b>				
<b>HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE</b>				
<b>HIKING</b>		X		
<b>HORSEBACK</b>				
<b>HUNTING</b>	X	X		
<b>ICE HOCKEY</b>				

<b>INDOOR ENTERTAINMENT</b>				
<b>INDOOR FITNESS</b>				
<b>MUSEUM HERITAGE</b>				
<b>NATURE STUDY</b>	X			
<b>OPEN FIELD</b>	X		X	
<b>OUTDOOR AMPITHEATER</b>				
<b>PICNIC AREA</b>	X		X	
<b>RACQUETBALL</b>				
<b>SHOOTING RANGE</b>				
<b>SKATEBOARD</b>				
<b>SKIING DOWNHILL</b>				
<b>SKIING CROSS COUNTRY</b>				
<b>SOCCER</b>				
<b>SOFTBALL</b>			X	
<b>SWIMMING</b>			X	
<b>TENNIS</b>	X		X	
<b>TOT LOT PLAYGROUND</b>	X		X	
<b>TRACK</b>				
<b>VOLLEYBALL</b>	X			
<b>OTHER</b>				
<b>RESTROOM</b>	X		X	
<b>STREET HOCKEY</b>				
<b>PAVILION</b>	X		X	

## SCHOOL FACILITIES INVENTORY

NAME	Middle School	Elementary School	Hogan Learning Academy
MUNICIPAL	Topton	Topton	Rockland
OWNERSHIP	School	School	Private School
ACREAGE	11.9	3.9	10.0
TYPE	School Park	School Park	School Park
BASEBALL	X	X	
BASEBALL YOUTH			
BASKETBALL		X	
BIKING			
BOATING			
BOWLING			
CAMPING			
FIELD HOCKEY			
FISHING			
FITNESS COURSE			
FOOTBALL			
GOLF			
GOLF DRIVING			
GOLF MINIATURE			
HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE			
HIKING			
HORSEBACK			
HUNTING			
ICE HOCKEY			
INDOOR ENTERTAINMENT			
INDOOR FITNESS			
MUSEUM HERITAGE			
NATURE STUDY			
OPEN FIELD	X	X	X
OUTDOOR AMPITHEATER			
PICNIC AREA			
RACQUETBALL			
SHOOTING RANGE			
SKATEBOARD			

<b>SKIING DOWNHILL</b>			
<b>SKIING CROSS COUNTRY</b>			
<b>SOCCER</b>	X	X	X
<b>SOFTBALL</b>	X		
<b>SWIMMING</b>			
<b>TENNIS</b>	X	X	
<b>TOT LOT PLAYGROUND</b>		X	X
<b>TRACK</b>	X		
<b>VOLLEYBALL</b>			
<b>OTHER</b>			
<b>RESTROOM</b>			
<b>STREET HOCKEY</b>			
<b>PAVILION</b>			

## INDOOR FACILITIES INVENTORY

<b>SITE NAME</b>	<b>High School</b>	<b>Middle School</b>	<b>Elementary School</b>
<b>GYMNASIUM</b>	X	X	
<b>FULL BASKETBALL COURT</b>	X	X	X
<b>SWIMMING POOL</b>			
<b>DIVING POOL</b>			
<b>LOCKER ROOMS</b>	X	X	
<b>WEIGHT ROOM</b>	X	X	
<b>WRESTLING ROOM</b>	X	X	
<b>MULTIPURPOSE ROOM</b>			X
<b>AUDITORIUM (NO. OF SEATS)</b>	825	525	
<b>MUSIC ROOM</b>	X	X	
<b>GYMNASTICS ROOM (EQUIPMENT)</b>			
<b>LIBRARY</b>	X	X	X

<b>MEETING ROOM</b>			
<b>INDOOR TRACK</b>			
<b>DARK ROOM</b>	X	X	
<b>PLANETARIUM</b>			
<b>COMPUTER LAB</b>	X	X	X
<b>OTHER/COMMENTS</b>			

### **C. Spatial Park Analysis**

With a complete inventory of parks, it becomes possible to analyze the level of park service available within the Region. Within this analysis, every publicly-owned park and/or recreation facility (Township, Borough, and School District) is identified. Then, its size and service area is evaluated in relation to its intended service population. Conversely, this analysis also identifies those areas of the Region that lack close, convenient, and safe access to public parkland. Typically, these evaluations are based upon prescribed standards for park size per 1,000 persons being served and also for predetermined service radii. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) generally assign such standards for various park types. The national standard ranges anywhere from 6 to 19 acres per 1,000 persons. Using NRPA's PRORAGIS system, a municipality can access the national recreation database, input data, and develop reports tailored to a specific area. It is these minimum standards that will be applied to evaluate the allocation and spatial distribution of Region's park system.

First, regional parks generally contain 200± acres and are typically located within a one hour driving time from the population being served. These parks are generally located throughout a large metropolitan region, and can accommodate a wide variety of recreational activities. Often, these parks are owned and operated by the State and Federal government, and in the case of Pennsylvania, many State Game Lands are included in this category. Regional parks usually have a natural orientation with hiking, camping, and picnicking facilities. Other "activity-oriented" facilities, as well as significant historic or archaeological resources, might also be included.

Within Berks County, several public organizations and private enterprises are involved with the provision of regional recreation facilities. Within the EBC Region one Regional park is located within Rockland Township. The table on the following page lists Federal, State and County owned parks, acreage and activities offered. **Facilities contained within the Region are highlighted.**

Because the size and cost usually associated with regional parks transcend the responsibilities of local government, this Plan does not recommend any specific actions associated with the acquisition and development of more regional parks. Instead, this Plan will focus upon the remaining park types within the Region beginning with community parks.

However, the Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan (Dec., 2007) designates a number of regional facilities as priorities within the Countywide system of parks. More discussion of these facilities will follow in the linear parks section of this Chapter.

Facility	Acres	Activities
<b>Federal</b>		
Blue Marsh	5,587.64	Boating, bike trail, camping, fishing, hunting, hiking, picnic, swimming, Old Dry Road Farm Complex
Appalachian Trail	1,376.04	Hiking
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site	537.34	Horseback riding, hiking, nature study, picnic museum
<b>TOTAL FEDERAL</b>	<b>7,501.02</b>	

Facility	Acres	Activities
<b>State</b>		
Blue Marsh	494.22	Museum, picnic
Conrad Weiser Park	24.62	Museum, ice skating, picnic
Alsace Forest	32.86	Hiking
Charming Forge/Fish and Boat	22.43	Boating, fishing
Cross Keys/Stoudt's Ferry Desilting Basins	275.1	Hiking, picnic, fishing
Eplers Landing	72.33	Boating, fishing, hiking, nature study, picnic
Hamburg Center Watershed	115.01	Hiking
Leizes Desilting Basin	41.84	Hiking, picnic, fishing
Schuylkill Canal - Gibraltar	8.32	Fishing, historic aqueduct
Wernersville State Hospital Watershed	410.55	Fishing
French Creek State Park	5,938.69	Boating, bike trail, camping, fishing, hunting, horseback riding, hiking, picnic, swimming
Kaercher Creek Park	183.67	Boating, fishing, hiking, ice skating, outdoor concerts, nature study, picnic, tot-lot/ playground, handicapped recreation facilities available
Kernsville Recreation Area/Desilting Basin (DEP)	263.73	Boating, camping, fishing
Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center	628.66	Hiking, nature study, Environmental Education Center
Schuylkill Canal – Five Locks	33.65	Boating, fishing
State Game Lands #43, #52, #80, #106, #110, #182, #274, #280, #315, #324	19,739.43	Hunting, hiking
Weiser State Forest	1,515.82	Hunting
<b>TOTAL STATE</b>	<b>29,800.93</b>	



Facility	Acres	Activities
<b><u>County</u></b>		
<b>Tulpehocken Creek Valley Park</b>	290.07	
Berks Leisure Area		Picnic, handicapped recreation facilities available
Gring's Mill Recreation Area		Fishing, field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, etc.), ice skating, nature study, outdoor concerts, tennis, volleyball, handicapped recreation facilities available
Red Bridge Recreation Area		Fishing, picnic
Stonecliffe Recreation Area		Basketball, bike trail, fishing, field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, etc.) ice skating, tennis, tot-lot/playground, volleyball, handicapped recreation facilities available
Union Canal & Tow Path		Bike Trail, fishing, hiking
Heritage Center		Museum, picnic, handicapped recreation facilities available
Antietam Lake & Angora Fruit Farm	501.84	Hiking, fishing, environmental education
Hunsicker's Grove	48.04	Pavilion, fishing, sand volleyball, picnic
Youth Recreation Facility	117.42	Field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, etc.), picnic, educational farm
Allegheny Aqueduct/Schuylkill Canal	34.88	Fishing, historic aqueduct
<b>TOTAL COUNTY</b>	<b>992.25</b>	

**Community and neighborhood parks** are usually provided by local governments and public school districts to serve local residents' needs.

**Community parks** generally contain 20± acres and are intended to serve a population within a 2 mile-service radius. They should be sized at the rate of 5 to 8 acres for 1,000 persons served. These parks generally involve a fairly high level of improvement with multiple sets of athletic fields and courts. Sometimes swimming pools and indoor recreation centers are situated on these community-wide parks. Larger school sites (usually middle, and high schools) have the facilities to qualify as community-based parks, and represent valuable recreation resources that can significantly enhance the level of recreation services offered to a given area.

**Neighborhood parks** are generally between 1 and 20 acres in size and meant to serve a population of 2,000 to 10,000. The recommended service area for these parks is a one-quarter to one-half mile radius. As implied by the name, these parks are intended to provide close-to-home areas for limited athletic activities, playgrounds, and passive pursuits. The NRPA recommends that 1 to 2 acres of publicly-owned land be devoted to neighborhood parks for each 1,000 residents.

While more developed areas usually provide for both of these park types, local officials within the Region believe that the Region’s rural character does not require such high levels of park and recreation service, particularly in outlying rural areas. Therefore they want to provide for one community park per Township.

The table below lists all publicly-owned community parks.

<b>Community Parks Within the Eastern Berks County Region</b>	
<b>Park Name</b>	<b>Acreage</b>
<b><i>Topton Borough</i></b>	<b>52.8</b>
Brandywine Heights Area Middle School	30.0
Brandywine Heights Area Elementary School	10.1
Topton Community Park	10.2
Brandywine Youth Baseball Association	2.5
<b><i>District Township</i></b>	<b>71.4</b>
Gordon Park	71.4
<b><i>Rockland Township</i></b>	<b>10.0</b>
Hogan Learning Academy	10.0
<b><i>Eastern Berks County Region</i></b>	<b>134.2 acres</b>

To determine future community park needs, the minimum NRPA standard acreage for community and neighborhood parks will be used or 6 acres per 1000 population. The following tabulates the level of parklands provided and needed based upon DEP’s population projections for each municipality and the Region as listed in Chapter IV of this Plan:

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Existing Public Park Acreage</b>	<b>Year 2010</b>			<b>Year 2020</b>			<b>Year 2030</b>		
		<b>Population</b>	<b>Needed acres</b>	<b>Surplus/deficiency</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Needed acres</b>	<b>Surplus/deficiency</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Needed acres</b>	<b>Surplus/deficiency</b>
<b>Topton Borough</b>	<b>52.8</b>	2069	12.4	<b>+40.4</b>	2099	12.6	<b>+40.2</b>	2180	13.1	<b>+39.7</b>
<b>District Township</b>	<b>71.4</b>	1337	8.0	<b>+63.4</b>	1425	8.6	<b>+62.8</b>	1399	8.4	<b>+63.0</b>
<b>Rockland Township</b>	<b>10.0</b>	3778	22.7	<b>-12.7</b>	4406	26.4	<b>-16.4</b>	4683	28.1	<b>-18.1</b>
<b>Region</b>	<b>134.2</b>	7,184	43.1	<b>+91.1</b>	7,930	47.6	<b>+86.6</b>	8,262	49.6	<b>+84.6</b>

As can be seen in the preceding table, the Region as a whole enjoys a wealth of community parkland well in excess of the NRPA-recommended minimum now and for the projected future. Aside from Rockland Township all municipalities have large surpluses of parkland.

Rockland Township has a public parkland deficiency now. Today the Township needs between 12.7 and 16.4 acres to adequately serve its Township population. **Since the Township is deficient in community parkland, the Township should initiate plans to develop its community parkland.** Any revenues generated for parks (as discussed later) within Rockland Township should be targeted to meet this current demand on a priority basis. As for projected parkland deficiencies within Rockland Township, these projections assume that the Township will grow at a rate similar to that experienced in the past. This assumption does not account for the reduction of growth planned for the rural Townships based upon a regional allocation of land use integral to this Plan and its goals. **Therefore, these projected parkland deficiencies add justification for targeting future growth in Tipton Borough where abundant parklands exist to serve future residents.** Then, since less units will be built in the rural areas, future deficiencies will be reduced.

In addition to the above-described needed parkland expansions, many of the Region's parks have limited amounts and types of facilities available when compared with typical community park improvements. **In areas where park sizes are adequate, local officials should seek to add improvements to their parks to provide for a wider range of activities and programs.** Municipalities and the School District should seek and utilize funds to add new features and revitalize aging ones to offer improved recreation services.

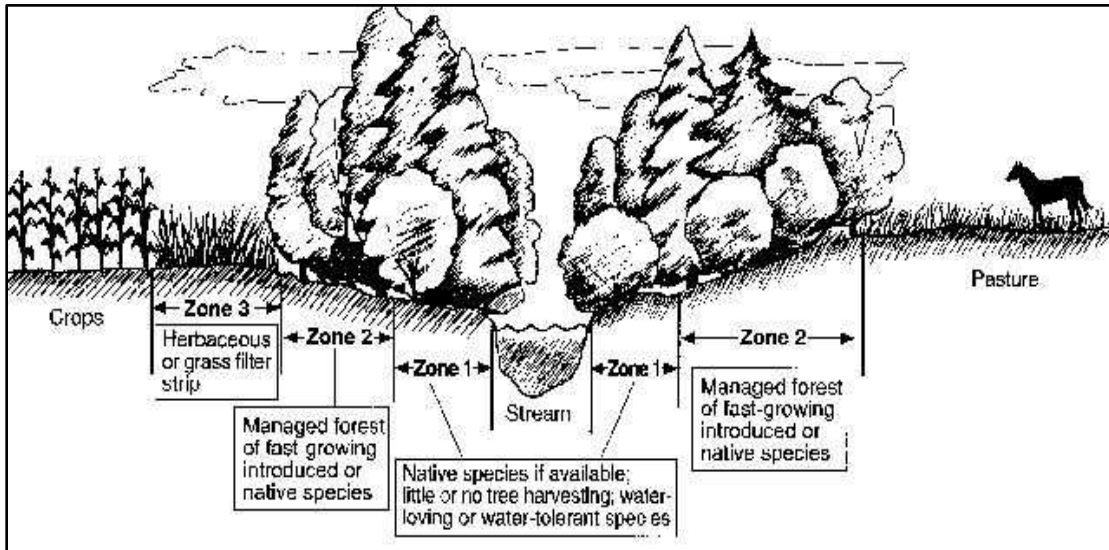
**Linear parks and greenways** are also gaining in popularity throughout the nation as less and less open space remains within developing areas. These parks can take many forms from abandoned railroad beds to utility transmission lines and riparian buffers along creeks. This latter form appears to be most applicable within the Region. The Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan (December, 2007) recognizes multiple greenway opportunities within the Region. Each municipality has multiple opportunities at varying priorities. Many of the opportunities recommend cooperative efforts among public, private and non-profit organizations. Specific details can be found within the Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan (Dec. 2007) in the Oley Hills Region Section of the Implementation Plan chapter.

Fortunately, the Region has an abundance of important and high quality streams that, with proper attention, can offer tremendous environmental, recreational and educational value. These natural corridors represent the Region's best opportunities for greenways that respond to the County's system of greenways and fulfill the goals expressed by local officials for improved water quality protection. Presently, the Region's municipalities already strictly regulate land use activities within the floodplains. However, additional protection and management is warranted if the Region wants to improve water quality and offer better streamside opportunities. Studies conducted by the U.S. Forest Service demonstrate that riparian buffers offer real advantages in the removal of harmful nutrients and sediment from storm water before it enters the stream. These same riparian buffers can increase the food supply and create interconnected natural systems of movement for pedestrians and local wildlife. Riparian buffers are areas adjoining streams where naturally successful vegetation is provided and protected.



In this area riparian buffers are recommended to include a 90-foot wide radius from the streambanks.

This width is determined by the USDA Department of Forestry, based upon the climatic conditions. Essentially, riparian buffers comprise three distinct zones as depicted below. The following will describe where to establish, and how to plant and maintain each of these three zones:



**Zone 1** is the landward area located between the streambank edge under typical flow conditions, and the largest width of any of the following:

- Fifteen (15) feet, as measured directly perpendicular from the streambank edge;
- The 1-percent-chance-annual-flood (100 year floodplain);
- Any adjoining identified wetlands; and/or,
- Any adjoining area characterized by slopes exceeding twenty-five percent (25%).

This Zone must include mature canopy trees and a ground cover of warm season grasses. New tree plantings should be selected, arranged and managed to accelerate canopy growth, and offer native species habitat and food supply. New grass plantings should be selected and managed to filter out pollutants and offer habitat. All vegetation within this Zone must thrive in wet conditions. Zone 1 requires little maintenance. As trees mature, die and decay, it is important that such natural debris be allowed to decompose within the stream. This will provide important food and habitat for beneficial microorganisms, fish and amphibians. Streamside grasses should similarly be allowed to seasonally flourish and recede. Manmade activities should be very limited and confined to perpendicular passages from Zone 2. Intensively-used locations should be fitted with raised walkways and reinforced embankments. Streamside cleanup of junk and manmade debris is permitted. No animal watering and crossing locations are permitted, unless they are reinforced.

**Zone 2** begins at the inland edge of the above-described Zone 1 and extends at least sixty (60) feet inland therefrom. This Zone must also include mature canopy trees generally three rows deep, and a natural undercover. New tree plantings should be selected that grow rapidly, so as

to intercept passing nutrients. Such trees should also be arranged and managed to accelerate canopy growth, and offer native species habitat and food supply. Successful undercover plants should also be allowed to “evolve” within the canopy of this Zone. This Zone requires the most attention, but not for some time after initial planting. Here, the objective is to develop a stable and broad canopy of tree cover. The trees within Zone 2 are fast-growing and, therefore, consume many nutrients. The regular pruning and trimming of these trees will increase their nutrient consumption, but should not jeopardize the important overhead canopy of shade. The natural undercover should be undisturbed, except for periodic litter cleanup. Pedestrian paths can weave through Zone 2, but should be provided to prevent compacted soils and root damage.

**Zone 3** begins at the inland edge of the above-described Zone 2, and extends at least fifteen (15) feet inland therefrom. Where a pasture is proposed just beyond the above-described Zone 2, no Zone 3 is required. This Zone should be planted with warm season grasses that are allowed to mature naturally without mowing. The tall grasses ensure that overland storm water flows do not “channel” into Zone 2. New grass plantings should be selected and managed to enable controlled grazing or haying, so long as the grasses are not reduced to a point where they are no longer able to effectively disperse the surface water flows. This Zone also requires little maintenance. Long summer grasses should be allowed to flourish and recede with the seasons. Grazing and haying is permitted, so long as the residual grass length is sufficient to disperse overland storm water flows into Zone 2 and avoid channelization.

### **Buffer Use and Maintenance**

Streamside buffers must be generally undisturbed. Mature trees and long grasses absorb more nutrients than do manicured plants. Similarly, the more extensive root systems retain passing sediments. These characteristics reduce pollution and yield abundant food and habitat for wildlife. The temptation to “over-maintain” the streamside must be overcome.



***Local officials should educate landowners and developers of the importance of riparian buffers, and the Region’s intent to provide for them. Newsletter articles should be used occasionally to introduce these concepts, and then to feature successful implementation examples as they occur. A sample riparian buffer ordinance is contained in Chapter XII (Future Land Use) of this Plan and should be adopted throughout the Region. Then as new developments are proposed, local officials can ensure, through proper site plan review procedures and conservation subdivision design, that these riparian buffers are protected.***

But zoning regulations alone will not get this job done, as most land uses don’t require zoning approval to continue to operate. In these areas, other options exist. First, the USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service offers its Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). This program seeks to enroll some 100,000 across the Commonwealth. ***Landowners adjoining streams are offered annual rental payments for installation and proper management of streamside buffers. In addition to the rental payments, landowners are eligible for 100% cost share reimbursement for installation of suitable vegetation within these buffers.***

***Township officials should mount a campaign to inform local landowners who abut these creeks. Program experts should be invited to explain the benefits of these programs. Information about this program can be found at [www.creppa.org](http://www.creppa.org).***

Most of the success stories surrounding riparian buffers within Central Pennsylvania have been the results of dedicated volunteers from conservation and sporting groups. Local anglers have made it their mission to rehabilitate and save stream habitats for fishing purposes. The Region, too, shares in these dedicated groups. ***These captive groups should be educated about the benefits of riparian buffers and energized into action. These “neighbors” can probably best affect the peer pressure to convince local landowners to get involved.*** A “hip-boot-brigade” should be formed from local sportsmen who should regularly travel up the waterways and meet with adjoining landowners, and describe the benefits and programs of riparian buffers. ***Another powerful ally are the Region’s youth. Environmental studies classes can develop pilot riparian buffers at visible school and park locations; these focused successes enable the benefits of these buffers to be experienced first-hand by the general public. The School District should develop and regularly offer a streamside riparian buffer workshop as part of its curriculum, for students to learn “first-hand” about how man can co-exist with nature. Local and School District officials should cooperate on a number of these pilot projects at visible locations throughout the Region. Then, as successes mount, they should be featured in local newsletter and media articles that widen awareness and attention about their use and benefits. Such projects represent excellent candidates for Growing Greener grants from the State. Once momentum is achieved, other civic groups are likely to get involved.***

Finally, Tipton Borough has expressed an interest in developing a rail-trail along the abandoned Kutztown Railroad line that runs between both Boroughs. The development of a rail-trail is also a popular way to acquire linear trails that are relatively flat and accessible for public use. However, they are also controversial as many adjoining landowners fear impacts of noise, litter, vandalism, criminal or mischievous behavior and a general intrusion in their privacy. Consequently the feasibility of these types of trails must consider a broad range of acquisition and development options that are well beyond the scope of this project. Fortunately, the State has a number of programs that fund these feasibility studies. ***It is therefore recommended that the staff from Tipton Borough inquire with Maxatawny Township and Kutztown Borough in their respective interest for such a trail. If interest exists then the Region should sponsor a grant application for a “Rail-to-Trail Program”.*** More information is available at the following website: <https://www.grants.dcnr.state.pa.us/GrantPrograms>

### **C. Mandatory Dedication (or fee-in-lieu thereof) of Recreation Land**

***Mandatory dedication of parkland has become a standard technique for local park systems to keep pace with growth since it was enabled by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code in the late 1980s. The regulations for mandatory dedication of parkland and fees-in-lieu thereof can be found in Article V Subdivision and Land Development. Interesting to note as part of the mandatory dedication of parkland in this***

**article, is that a municipality must have adopted a recreation plan. For further information, see MPC Section 503(11).**

Topton Borough has adopted mandatory dedication provisions within its subdivision and land development ordinance. Details for these regulations can be found in Article VIII, Section 818.

Given changing demographics, land values and parkland needs it is important for municipalities to periodically recalculate mandatory dedication standards and their related fees-in-lieu thereof. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the NRPA's minimum standard for local parklands is 6 acres per 1,000 persons. To date, the Region has provided local parklands exceeding the NRPA standards listed above; however, much of this has been derived from sources other than the mandatory dedication regulations in effect.

As an alternative to parkland dedication, municipalities can accept a fee-in-lieu of parkland dedication. This approach can only be used in those instances where the developer and municipality agree on the amount of the fee-in-lieu. In addition, such funds cannot be used merely to maintain existing facilities, but must be used to:

1. Purchase new parkland;
2. Purchase new equipment for new or existing parks;
3. Operate new or existing parks; and/or,
4. Make improvements to existing parks that will serve existing residents and those of the proposed development.

According to requirements within the Municipalities Planning Code, amounts of the fees-in-lieu should be derived from the following approach:

***An appraiser should be retained by the municipality to analyze recent real estate transactions and derive estimates of fair market value. Such estimates can be based upon all properties within the municipality, or on a neighborhood basis. It is important that the appraiser be informed of the development features (e.g., utilities, zoning, curbs, sidewalks, etc.) common to such lands, so that accurate real estate comparisons can be identified. Once these estimates are derived, they should be periodically updated to reflect the ever-changing value of land.***

When disputes between the developer and municipality occur, both the developer and municipality should select an appraiser who, in turn, should jointly select a third appraiser. This third appraiser should then determine the fair market value of the land.

Funds collected under this approach must be used to provide for recreation facilities that are accessible to residents of the proposed development. In determining accessibility to the park, local officials should be guided by the respective park service areas as listed in this Plan.

**District and Rockland Townships should consider adoption of mandatory dedication standards within their respective Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance and each of the municipalities update their existing standards to reflect current conditions and trends. The revenues/parklands acquired through this process should be used across the Region.**