

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THIS PLAN IS A LIVING DOCUMENT THAT WILL BE UPDATED OVER TIME TO REFLECT EMERGING TRENDS AND CHANGES IN PRIORITIES TO THE RECREATIONAL NEEDS OF BERKS COUNTY RESIDENTS.

This plan is not intended to sit on a shelf and collect dust. It is intended to be used by multiple entities to plan and prioritize projects that add to and/or enhance the already robust recreational, historical and ecological resources of Berks County.

To view entire plan please visit link below or scan the QR code

bit.ly/GreenwayRecreation



PLAN PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan update is to evaluate the current greenway, park, and recreation system in Berks County and how it can be sustained and improved for future generations. This update also gauges how the County, municipalities and agencies, have done in implementing the recommendations from the 2007 plan. The plan provides an extensive inventory of all public, private, and school district recreational facilities in the County.

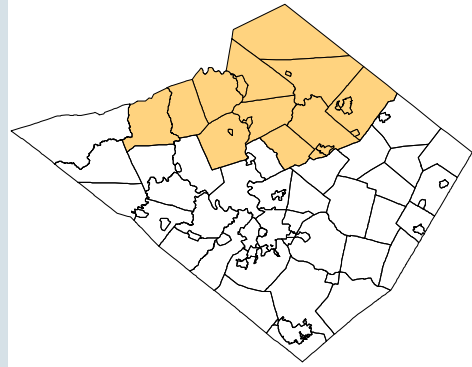
HOW TO UTILIZE THIS PLAN

This plan is a guide for municipal officials, quasi-public organizations, developers, and private interests on the development of future recreational facilities, connections to existing trails, greenways, schools, residential developments, shopping centers, and in the preservation of open space throughout Berks County.

It should also be used as a reference by municipalities when writing their own recreation plans as well as applying for funding. Policies and recommendations of this plan are advisory rather than regulatory but will be used by the Berks County Planning Commission as criteria in making recommendations on priority projects and funding.

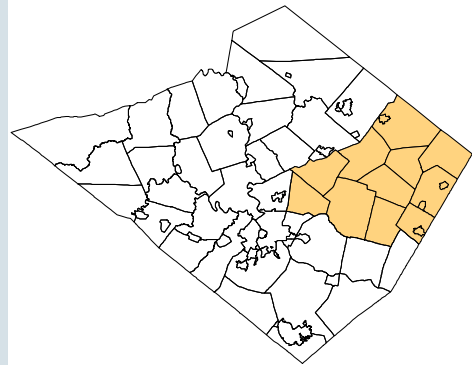


REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS



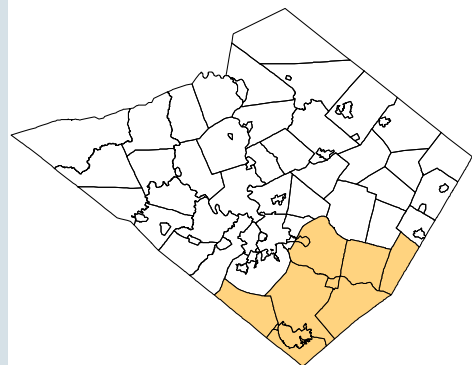
HAWK MOUNTAIN:

- Coordinate implementation of developing Trail Gaps #1 and #2.
- Prepare regional recreation, park and open space plans.
- Support development and expansion of greenway system. Specifically, Greenway Hub #1 and #2 and Corridor #3.
- Review zoning ordinances and subdivision ordinances to allow for increased protection of greenway hubs and corridors. Specifically, existing regulations which guide development in areas of Development Impact zones #1 and #2.
- Continue support of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.
- Collaborate in the completion of Schuylkill River Trail segments.
- Support and grow recreational economy through Appalachian Trail thru hikers and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.



OLEY HILLS:

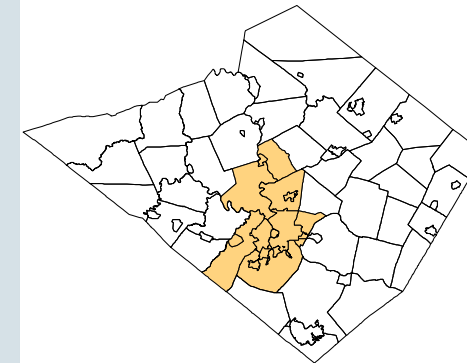
- Coordinate implementation of developing Trail Gap #3.
- Prepare regional recreation, park and open space plans.
- Support development and expansion of greenway system. Specifically, Greenway Hub #4 and Corridor #5.
- Review zoning ordinances and subdivision ordinances to allow for increased protection of greenway hubs and corridors. Specifically, existing regulations which guide development in areas of Development Impact zones #3 and #4.



SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS:

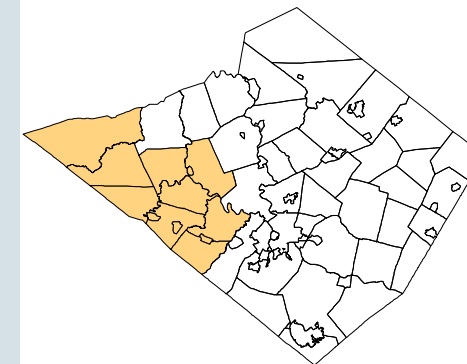
- Coordinate implementation of developing Trail Gaps #4 and #5.
- Review zoning ordinances and subdivision ordinances to allow for increased protection of greenway hubs and corridors. Specifically, existing regulations which guide development in areas of Development Impact zones #5, #6 and #7.
- Prepare regional recreation, park and open space plans.
- Implement projects identified in the County Bicycle and Pedestrian plan.
- Support development and expansion of greenway system hubs and corridors. Specifically, Greenway Hubs #6 and #7.
- Collaborate in the completion of Schuylkill River Trail segments.
- Support and grow recreational economy through visitation and use of French Creek State Park, Birdsboro watershed, Monocacy Hill, state forests and gamelands, Schuylkill River Trail and Daniel Boone Homestead.

These recommendations are specific to the five planning regions of Berks County and should be employed along with the municipal and countywide goals identified in this plan. The recommendations should be implemented through collaboration among municipalities and identified recreational organizations. Recommendations were developed from the results of the mapping analysis, identification of region-specific projects from existing municipal planning documents, the plan's guiding principals, and input from stakeholders and county residents.



METRO:

- Coordinate implementation of developing Trail Gaps #6, #7 and #8.
- Prepare regional recreation, park and open space plans.
- Implement projects identified in the City of Reading's Active Transportation Plan.
- Support the development of the GoggleWorks outdoor plaza and art park.
- Implement projects identified in the County Bicycle and Pedestrian plan.
- Support development and expansion of greenway system hubs and corridors. Specifically, Greenway Corridors #8 and #9.
- Review zoning ordinances and subdivision ordinances to allow for increased protection of greenway hubs and corridors. Specifically, existing regulations which guide development in areas of Development Impact zones #8 and #9.
- Support the Mount Penn Preserve development of Forest Stewardship and Trails Feasibility Plans and their implementation.
- Continue collaboration of Greater Reading Trails, Berks Nature, Berks County Parks and Recreation Department.
- Collaborate in the completion of Schuylkill River Trail segments.
- Promote the WyoWays Bike Trail program.
- Support and grow the recreational economy through visitation and use of Nolde Forest, Mount Penn Preserve and Neversink Mountain, Schuylkill River Trail and Antietam Lake Park.
- Support the development of the La Vereda: Gerry Street Connector Trail Support and complete construction of 600 Canal Street Skate Park through cooperation with Reading Skate Park Association.
- Support the development of the Alvernia University Bike Share program.



TULPEHOCKEN:

- Support development and expansion of greenway system hubs and corridors. Specifically, Greenway Corridor #10.
- Review zoning ordinances and subdivision ordinances to allow for increased protection of greenway hubs and corridors. Specifically, existing regulations which guide development in areas of Development Impact zones #10, #11, #12, #13 and #14.
- Work to provide additional trail systems within the region. Specifically, creating accessible loop trails on publicly owned lands.
- Prepare regional recreation, park and open space plans.
- Implement projects identified in the Bethel, Marion and Tulpehocken Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan.
- Support and grow recreational economy through visitation and use of Blue Marsh Lake, Camp Conrad Weiser and George Wertz State forest.

GUIDING PRINCIPALS

Health and Wellness



Outdoor recreation, or any type of physical recreation for that matter, is key to helping address some of today's pressing health care issues. Evidence suggests that spending time outdoors can have lasting benefits on individual health and well-being. Creating walkable and bikeable communities can encourage active living. An increased focus by the health care community on recreation and opportunities for new partnerships and coordination can lessen chronic health issues. Getting people of all ages connected to the outdoors and nature has proven to have positive effects on the health and wellness of our residents. One focus of this plan is to increase awareness and the importance of the growing connection between good health and the outdoors, the communication of this connection to our residents, and leveraging partnerships with the health care community to expand nature-based health and wellness programs.

Inclusivity – Recreation for All



Inclusivity pertains to ensuring that all residents in Berks County have close-to-home opportunities for recreation. This is vitally important to the future of outdoor recreation in the County. This plan will not serve all people if there are segments of the population who feel disconnected or unwelcomed, or simply do not have easy access to outdoor spaces and amenities. Age, neighborhood, gender, ethnicity, color of skin, language, ability, or socioeconomic standing should never be barriers to enjoying outdoor recreation in Berks County. This plan strives to identify and make recommendations on where new parks, greenspaces, and trails are clearly lacking. It aims to ensure that all people feel invited and engaged in our outdoor spaces by developing strategies to overcome real and perceived barriers through enhanced access, amenities, and programs.

Conservation / Sustainability / Stewardship



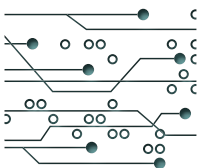
The ability to protect and enhance our public natural and recreational resources grows increasingly challenging as interests diversify, pressures intensify, infrastructure ages, and our climate changes. Recreation providers must plan for how to sustainably manage the resources, while trying to predict the uncertainty of the future. Land managers, conservation leaders, and recreational program providers must work tirelessly to uphold Berks Countian's right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic values of the environment. This plan outlines strategies to balance the needs of our natural resources with the ever-changing demands of recreation enthusiasts through careful planning and design, innovation and partnerships, and an emphasis on stewardship by all.

Economic Development and Funding



Berks County's parks, trails, and other recreational amenities create places where people want to live, work, and play. Berks County should continue to capitalize on the benefits of the recreational and natural resources which it hosts. Given the wealth of outdoor assets, the opportunities for growth of the outdoor recreation economy in Berks County is hopeful, but commitment to reinvestments and prioritization must improve. Infrastructure needs and recreational demands greatly outpace investments at the local level and grow exponentially each year. This plan outlines why safeguarding and increasing investments in outdoor recreation and expanding support for the outdoor recreation economy must be high priorities.

Technology



Over the last decade, advances in technology have had profound effects on how people experience the outdoors. Technology gives the public instant access to information about outdoor recreation opportunities. Advances in technology have allowed for better data collection and analysis. New tools and equipment that enhance the way we navigate and explore are exposing more people to nature. At the same time, technological advancements can lead to overuse and overpromotion and can detract from the beauty of nature. This plan seeks to set the right balance on how we can capitalize on technology without it being disruptive or destructive.