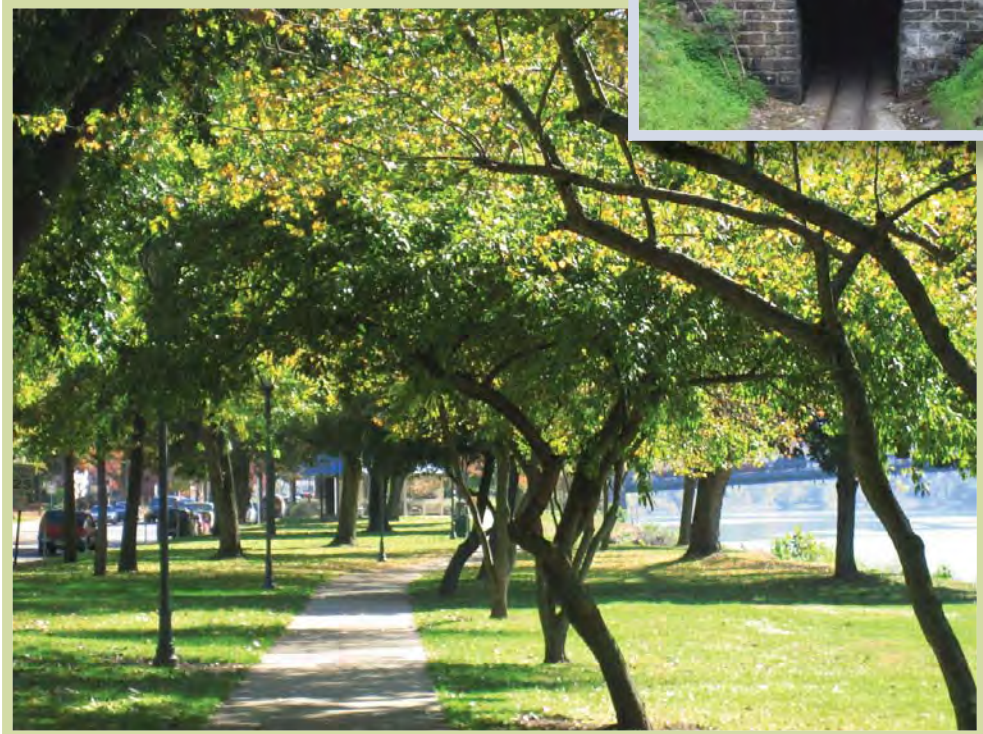


Armstrong County

COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION, PARK, OPEN SPACE & GREENWAY PLAN

June 2009 BRC-TAG-12-222



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This project was financed in part by a grant from the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund under administration of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation.

Acronyms

ACD – Armstrong Conservation District

ACDPD – Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development

ACTB – Armstrong County Tourist Bureau

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act

ANF – Allegheny National Forest

ASA - Agriculture Security Area

ASTM – American Society for Testing and Materials

ASWP – Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania

ATV - All Terrain Vehicle

AVLT – Allegheny Valley Land Trust

AVTA – Allegheny Valley Trails Association

BDA – Biological Diversity Area

BRC – TAG – Bureau of Recreation and Conservation – Technical Assistance Grant

C2P2 – Community Conservation Partnership Program

CrCWA - Crooked Creek Watershed Association

CCWA - Cowanshannock Creek Watershed Association

CDBG – Community Block Development Grant

CHP – Coldwater Heritage Partnership

CPSC – US Consumer Product Safety Commission

CRP – Conservation Reserve Program

CVC – Conemaugh Valley Conservancy

CWF – Cold Water Fishery

DCED – Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development

DCNR - Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DEM – Digital Elevation Model

DEP - Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

EAC – Environmental Advisory Council

ELC – Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center

ESRI - Environmental Systems Research Institute

EV – Exceptional Value

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

FHA – Federal Highway Administration

FSA – Farm Service Agency

HQ – High Quality

IBA – Important Bird Area

IMA – Important Mammal Area

IMAP – Important Mammal Area Project

ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act

IUP – Indiana University of Pennsylvania

KAZ – Keystone Active Zone

K-C Alliance – Kiski-Conemaugh Alliance

LCA – Landscape Conservation Areas

LWCF – US Land and Water Conservation Fund

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization

NAD - North American Datum

NHI – Natural Heritage Inventory

NRCS – National Resource Conservation Service

NRPA – National Recreation and Park Association

NWI – National Wetland Inventory

PEC – Pennsylvania Environmental Council

PennDOT – Pennsylvania Department of Transportation

PANA – Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity

PA SR – Pennsylvania State Route

PDA – Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

PFBC – Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

PPG – Pittsburgh Plate Glass

PRPS – Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society

PSDA - Pennsylvania Spatial Data Access

RCP – River Conservation Plan

ROW – Right-of-Way

RRWA - Roaring Run Watershed Association

SALDO - Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance

SGL – State Game Lands [of the Pennsylvania Game Commission]

SPC – Southwest Pennsylvania Commission

STP – Surface Transportation Program

TEA21 - Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century

TIP – Transportation Improvements Plan

TSF – Trout Stocked Fisheries

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

USGS - United States Geological Survey

WPC - Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

YMCA - Young Men’s Christian Association

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
Issues	3
Key Recommendations	5
Greenways	7
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND	11
The Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space, and Greenway Plan	13
The Planning Process	14
The Benefits of Parks and Recreation	15
How to Use this Plan	15
County Background	16
Demographics	17
Review of Existing Planning Documents	21
<i>Armstrong County Comprehensive Plan</i>	21
<i>Belmont Complex Feasibility Study</i>	22
<i>Middle Allegheny River Conservation Plan</i>	23
<i>Buffalo Creek Watershed Conservation Plan</i>	26
<i>Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Conservation Plan</i>	27
<i>Cowanshannock Creek Watershed River Conservation Plan</i>	27
<i>Redbank Creek Watershed Conservation Plan</i>	29
<i>Lower Crooked Creek Watershed Conservation Plan</i>	30
<i>Upper Crooked Creek Watershed Conservation Plan</i>	31
CHAPTER 2: PARKS & RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES	33
Classifications of Parks and Trails	36
Recreation Opportunities provided by Armstrong County	38
<i>The Belmont Complex</i>	38
<i>The Milton Loop Campground</i>	39
<i>The Canfield-Holmes Sanctuary</i>	39
<i>Gilpin/Leechburg Park</i>	39
<i>Armstrong County Mini-Grant Program</i>	39
Local Parks and Recreation Facilities	40

Parks and Recreation Program Providers.....	49
<i>Belmont Complex.....</i>	49
<i>Armstrong County YMCA.....</i>	49
<i>HEALTHY Armstrong.....</i>	50
<i>Other Recreation Program Providers.....</i>	51

Armstrong County Trail Inventory.....	51
<i>Armstrong Trail.....</i>	51
<i>Baker Trail.....</i>	52
<i>Great Shamokin Path.....</i>	52
<i>Cowanshannock Trail.....</i>	53
<i>Roaring Run Trail & Rock Furnace Trail.....</i>	53
<i>Laneville Section of the Butler to Freeport Trail.....</i>	53
<i>Kiski River Trail.....</i>	54
<i>North Country Trail.....</i>	54

Regional Recreation Facilities Located Within Armstrong County	54
<i>Mahoning Creek Lake and Dam.....</i>	54
<i>Keystone Lake.....</i>	55
<i>Crooked Creek Lake and Dam.....</i>	55
<i>The Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center.....</i>	55
<i>Pennsylvania State Game Lands.....</i>	56

Regional Recreation Facilities Located Outside Armstrong County	57
<i>Pennsylvania State Parks.....</i>	58
<i>National Forest.....</i>	59
<i>Pennsylvania State Forest.....</i>	59
<i>County Parks.....</i>	59
<i>Other Regional Recreation Facilities.....</i>	61
<i>Regional Trails.....</i>	61

CHAPTER 3: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.....67

The Study Committee.....	69
---------------------------------	-----------

Public Meetings.....	70
<i>Public Meetings – Round 1.....</i>	70
<i>Public Meetings – Round 2.....</i>	73

Key Person Interviews.....	73
-----------------------------------	-----------

Recreation Questionnaire.....	75
<i>Questionnaire Highlights.....</i>	75

Other Public Input.....	76
--------------------------------	-----------

Development of the vision, goals, and Recommendations/Implementation Strategies.....	76
---	-----------

CHAPTER 4: VISION, GOALS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS/IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES.....77

Creating a Vision for the Future..... 79
Vision Statement..... 79
Goals..... 80
Implementation Strategies/Recommendations..... 80
General Recommendations..... 94
Fulfilling the Vision..... 97
Successful Implementation97
Conclusion98

CHAPTER 5: THE GREENWAY PLAN99

Introduction..... 101
What is a Greenway? 101
Why are Greenways Important to Armstrong County?..... 101
How is a Greenways Plan Developed?..... 104
Armstrong County’s Resources..... 106
Gathering Data..... 106
Natural Infrastructure Inventory 106
Built Infrastructure Inventory..... 113
The Greenways Vision 116
Criteria..... 116
The Structure of the Network 117
Natural Systems Greenways 117
Recreation and Transportation Greenways 122
Greenways Recommendations..... 130
Management Structure..... 130
Municipalities Drive Greenway Implementation..... 132
Other Recommendations..... 132
Strategies for Implementation..... 135

CHAPTER 6: POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES143

APPENDICES bound separately

- Appendix A: Park Inventory Matrix**
- Appendix B: Armstrong County Park Inventories**
- Appendix C: School District Recreation Facilities Inventory**
- Appendix D: Regional Comparison Charts**
- Appendix E: Armstrong County Municipal Recreation Matrix**
- Appendix F: Study Committee Issues and Concerns**
- Appendix G: Public Meetings Details**
- Appendix H: Key Person Interview Details**
- Appendix I: Questionnaire Results**
- Appendix J: Methods for Protecting and Preserving Open Space**
- Appendix K: Conservation by Design**
- Appendix L: Land Conservation Tools**
- Appendix M: Model Conservation Easement Agreement and Commentary**
- Appendix N: Model Fishing Access Easement Agreement and Commentary**
- Appendix O: Model Flood Plain Overlay District Ordinance**
- Appendix P: Model Forest Management Ordinance**
- Appendix Q: Model Riparian Forest Buffer Protection Agreement and Commentary**
- Appendix R: Model Stream Corridor Conservation Overlay District**
- Appendix S: Model Trail Easement Agreement and Commentary**
- Appendix T: Model Water Quality Agreement and Commentary**
- Appendix U: Sample Greenway Coordinator Position Descriptions**
- Appendix V: Sample Mandatory Fee In Lieu Dedication Ordinance**
- Appendix W: Sample Resource Protection Ordinance**
- Appendix X: Sample Steep Slope Conservation Overlay District**

Document Organization

Executive Summary

This summary highlights the key findings of the inventory, results of the public participation process, and recommendations for the future of recreation, parks, and open space in the Armstrong County region.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

This chapter introduces the Plan and the County. It describes the planning process and how it relates to Armstrong County's recently completed Comprehensive Plan. It provides a general description of the County. This background information provides a context for the development of this Plan.

Chapter 2: Inventory and Analysis

This chapter provides an inventory and assessment of the recreational opportunities available in the region. It also analyzes the existing conditions of facilities, programs, and recreation providers.

Chapter 3: Public Participation

Public input is a key component in the development of successful planning efforts. This chapter describes the public participation process and summarizes the results of each venue of participation.

Chapter 4: Vision, Goals, and Recommendations/Implementation Strategies

The public participation process culminates in the Vision, Goals, and Recommendation/Implementation Strategies for the future of recreation, parks, and open space, which will guide future efforts.

Chapter 5: Greenway Plan

This Greenway Plan draws upon much of the inventory, analysis, and public input from the rest of this document. It further inventories and analyzes the natural features of the County as they relate to greenways planning. Drawing upon the existing conditions and the public input, recommendations are provided for the future of both recreational and conservation greenways in the County.

Chapter 6: Potential Funding Sources

Chapter 6 provides a listing of multiple options for funding parks and recreation development and programs.

Appendix

The Appendix provides a series of supporting information.

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Recognizing the importance of parks and recreation in Armstrong County, this Comprehensive Recreation and Parks Plan was initiated. The process used to develop this Plan included extensive public input, detailed inventory and assessment, and the development of recommendations for the future of parks and recreation in Armstrong County.

When planning for the future of parks and recreation in Armstrong County, it is important to develop an understanding of the County as a whole. Information on demographics and community resources gathered through the County Comprehensive Planning process provided a context within which this Comprehensive Recreation and Parks Plan was generated. A familiarity with this information ensured the development of a plan that is realistic, sensitive to current issues, and tailored to the unique needs of the residents of Armstrong County.

Input received through the public participation process was an important asset as viable recommendations for the future of parks and recreation were developed. A strong study committee, comprised of a cross-section of county residents, assisted the consultant in gathering and analyzing the public input. The public input included a series of six public meetings; a recreation questionnaire that was mailed to 3000 county residents; and twenty-five key person interviews.

The public participation process culminated in the development of a Vision Statement for the Future of Parks and Recreation in Armstrong County. The Vision Statement is shown on the next page.

The inventory of recreation facilities included all County and Municipal recreation areas within the County, as well as those of regional significance that are located outside Armstrong County. All inventories included notation of number of facilities and their size and condition. The information collected offers an overview of existing park and recreation conditions in the County. Professional assessment of the inventories and comparisons to current trends were completed to determine the condition of Armstrong County facilities and how they compare with typical facilities across the country.

This Study recognizes the tremendous importance of open space and greenways in Armstrong County and addresses various components of each. Several recently completed plans impact the County's open space efforts. They include the County's Comprehensive Plan, and rivers conservation plans for the Allegheny River, Buffalo Creek Watershed, Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin, Upper and Lower Crooked Creek Watersheds, and Cowanshannock Creek Watershed. The County is in the process of conducting its Natural Heritage Inventory. A Greenways Plan was developed as a separate component of this study.

Drawing upon the public participation, inventory, and assessment, recommendations for the future of recreation and parks were developed.

ISSUES

Through the public input process and the inventory and analysis the following issues were identified.

- There is a need for the County to play a role in County-wide park, recreation, open space, and trail management.
- There is support of open space and natural areas preservation.
- There is a desire for improved opportunities for recreational use of the County's rivers and waterways.
- There is strong support for outdoor recreation providers.
- There is support of continued trail development – with connections to regional trails.
- There is a desire to utilize the County's natural features to increase tourism to the County.

- There is support for the Belmont Complex – for improved facilities and expanded services.
- There is a desire to enhance trails and natural resources that support economic development.
- There is a need for ATV trails and/or facilities, balanced with the concerns of local property owners.
- There is a desire for better utilization of school facilities for public use.
- There is support for existing local facilities – they play a strong role in the County.
- There is a need for recreational facilities throughout the County.
- There is a need for activities and facilities to support youth development.

From these key issues, the Study Committee developed a *Vision for the Future* of recreation, parks, and open space. This vision sets the stage for long-term implementation of strategies that will provide Armstrong County residents with the recreation, parks, and open space system they desire.

The eleven elements of the Vision become goals for identifiable areas of implementation. For each of those goals, specific implementation strategies are developed. The strategies are classified as short-term, to be accomplished in the first 1 to 3 years; mid-term (4-8 years); or long-term (9 years and beyond).

Completion of the specific strategies works toward accomplishing the goals, which ultimately fulfills the Vision. Through this process, the County has a systematic course of action for responding to its residents’ needs and desires for recreation parks, and open space.

Vision for the Future

1. Create and sustain a County-wide advisory committee and/or staff person to oversee the administration, finance, programming, marketing, and advocacy of parks and recreation throughout the County.
2. Promote recreation and parks as a means of improving the health and well-being of Armstrong County residents.
3. Develop a system of ATV trails and/or facilities that is available for County residents and attracts visitors to the County.
4. Complete a web of trails throughout Armstrong County that connects to regional and statewide trail networks.
5. Stabilize and rehabilitate the Belmont Complex to meet a wide variety of recreational needs of County residents.
6. Encourage and support new local playgrounds and local park and recreation facilities, as well as the maintenance and preservation of existing recreational opportunities.
7. Establish public access to rivers, streams, and land for hunting, fishing, ATV, recreation, and open space uses.
8. Educate the public and promote existing facilities and amenities.
9. Develop youth centered recreational facilities throughout the County, such as soccer fields, baseball fields, and skate parks.
10. Encourage and support the development of recreational facilities, programs, and opportunities that stimulate the County’s economic growth.
11. Promote and support partnerships with local municipalities, schools, organizations, and private businesses to build and strengthen recreational opportunities.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Hire a full-time parks and trails director/planner to serve as the County's manager and overseer of implementation of this Plan.

There was a strong consensus among residents, organizations, and municipalities that the County needs to play a significant role in County-wide parks and recreation opportunities. Not that the County needs to be all or do all, but that it should be a formidable player in the system.

Successful implementation of this Plan will require a single person whose primary function is to work as a representative of the County moving the Plan forward. It would seem most appropriate for this person to be a trained planner and to be a part of the Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development.

This position is not intended to take the place of roles that are more appropriately the responsibility of local municipalities and organizations. Rather, it would be to serve as a coordinator, facilitator, and planner in assisting these entities in moving forward with their individual roles in a way that supports this County Plan. Additionally, the position will provide technical support; assistance in identifying and securing grants; coordination in bringing partners together; focus on the economic value of projects; and support for specific projects.

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation offers a grant program to assist in creating such a position. The program provides funding assistance for a four-year period by granting 100% of the positions salary in the first year; 75% in year two; 50% in year three; and 25% in year four.

Promote the Healthy Armstrong Project as a model program to encourage residents to be active and physically fit. Utilize the County school districts as the agents for expansion of this program.

This is an ongoing program partnership among the County, Armstrong County Memorial Hospital, Armstrong School District, the YMCA, and others. It has worked to improve the health of elementary students and reduce obesity levels through a variety of fitness activities. The project has worked very well in its first year in the Armstrong Elementary Schools. Expansion to other school districts in the County and to higher grade levels will work to dramatically affect lifestyles for the future.

As part of this program, the County should register as a member of Keystone Active Zones, a statewide program that promotes awareness of close-to-home parks and trails, and encourage increased physical activity to help residents lead healthier lifestyles.

Conduct an ATV Feasibility Study to determine the availability of suitable land for development of ATV trails and facilities and the ability of the County or other entities to develop such facilities.

Armstrong County has a large number of users of ATVs that have few legal options for riding in the County. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has recognized this issue statewide and is providing funding for both studies and development for ATV facilities.

As is the case in most areas, the ATV issue prompts strong feelings on both sides. Some strongly support the development of such facilities while others are solidly opposed to them. In order to appropriately address this issue in Armstrong

County, a feasibility study would consider potential locations; options for management of such a facility; public input; opportunities for the economic impact of ATV use in the County; methods of protecting property owners rights; and opportunities to provide for this recreational need.

Armstrong County has been awarded a grant from the PA DCNR to conduct the first phase of this type of study which is currently underway.

Support the development of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail to follow the Armstrong Trail through Armstrong County.

Plans are in progress to designate a non-motorized, multi-use trail from Erie to Pittsburgh. The Armstrong Trail will likely become a primary component of that trail. The potential economic impact to Armstrong County could be significant. The development of “Trail Towns” along the Armstrong Trail presents opportunities to stimulate economic growth through the development of small businesses that serve the needs of trail users. Such businesses could include ice cream shops, eateries, bed and breakfasts, repair shops, campgrounds, and more.

With as many as five trails coming together as they enter the County over the Freeport bridge, Freeport Borough will have an opportunity to become one of the strong “trail towns” in western Pennsylvania. Others we have identified in the County along the Armstrong Trail include Ford City, Kittanning, and Parker City.

Utilize the Belmont Complex to its fullest potential.

Prior to the development of this Plan a Feasibility Study was completed for the Belmont Complex that identified the means of making it a more useable facility. Through this Plan it was suggested that there may be additional opportunities to expand the usefulness of the Complex to allow it to better serve the residents of Armstrong County.

Provide technical assistance through the Armstrong County Office of Planning and Development to support local recreation facilities

- Offer grants workshops to increase awareness of available funding sources
- Assist with grant applications
- Hold an annual meeting of local parks and recreation committees to discuss key issues
- Assist in the development of maintenance management plans for local parks
- Provide staff training workshops related to park maintenance
- Educate municipalities about compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- Coordinate local partners to accomplish the recommendations of this plan

Assist municipalities and organizations in securing funding and negotiating contracts to purchase property, easements, or right-of-ways that will support long-term access to rivers, streams, and land for hunting, fishing, ATV, recreation, and open space uses. Partner with municipalities, businesses, and non-profits.

Residents of the County have long enjoyed its rural and natural features for a multitude of recreational purposes. As liability and property rights issues have come more to the forefront in recent years, properties that were once available for public use are being closed off. This is having a dramatic impact of those who have hunted, fished, hiked, and otherwise enjoyed these privately owned natural areas for years.

Encourage local event organizers to promote facilities, events, and activities to throughout the County

Many County residents expressed a concern that they were unaware of events and facilities that are available throughout the County. A concerted effort is needed to increase that awareness.

Work with the County's school districts to increase the availability of their recreational facilities for public use

Most schools have both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. Some are available for public use while others are not. Increased availability of these facilities will better support the recreational needs of local residents.

Identify the economic benefits of the recreational uses of the Armstrong Trail and the Allegheny and Kiski Rivers, and support development to increase their economic impact

There are significant opportunities for tourism to have a greater economic impact in the County by inviting visitors from outside the County to utilize the vast array of trails, parks, and waterways available in Armstrong County. The County should seek out ways take advantage of these resources to stimulate the local economy.

Develop grassroots cooperative efforts for as many of the recommendations of this Plan as possible.

Successful implementation of this Plan will come through the development of partnerships that bring together a multitude of municipalities and organizations. Such partnerships allow the funding, management, and operations of recreational opportunities to be spread among many groups rather than placing the burden on single entities.

A full listing of park and recreation recommendations can be found in Chapter 4 of this report.

GREENWAYS

The Greenways Plan completed as a component of this study inventoried and analyzed greenway and trail opportunities in Armstrong County. Greenways are linear corridors of land or water that connect and protect natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources. Greenways can be recreational trails accommodating hiking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, horseback-riding, rollerblading, etc. (local example: Armstrong Trail) or can protect sensitive natural resources such as streams, wetlands, forests, and wildlife habitat (local example: Roaring Run / Arcadia Natural Area).

Preserving and enhancing quality of life is the **general goal** of planning a greenways network, and the County-specific objectives listed below support that goal:

- providing public access to some existing natural areas to increase awareness of their existence and importance while minimizing environmental impact of providing access
- unifying the efforts of conservation and recreation special interest groups in Armstrong County
- providing recreational opportunities for County residents through preservation, connection, and enhanced promotion of existing destinations and resources

- promoting economic growth via recreational or eco-tourism
- encouraging local municipalities to work in unison to help protect their various resources by adopting open-space and land-use regulations
- educating County residents on the aspects and benefits of greenways planning, including the benefits of implementation of the objectives listed herein, while acknowledging their property ownership rights
- fostering a sense of pride and ownership in public recreation facilities in the County

The objectives listed above support the two general functions that define proposed greenways in the County: Natural Systems Greenways; and Recreation and Transportation Greenways.

Natural Systems Greenways are linear tracts of essentially undeveloped land used to preserve sensitive natural features like wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, high-water-quality streams, high-value natural areas identified by the various sources, and outstanding geologic or scenic features. Only low-impact activity like hiking or wildlife observation is acceptable in these corridors. Limited access for such activities may increase awareness of sensitive natural areas among County residents.

The project study committee, with the help of Pashek Associates, assigned weighted values to the County's natural resources and identified areas with the most natural resources. These areas, located along the following water bodies, are high-priority natural systems greenways:

- Allegheny River
- Mahoning Creek/Mahoning Creek Lake
- Redbank Creek
- Pine Creek
- Cowanshannock Creek
- Crooked Creek/Crooked Creek Lake
- Kiskiminetas River
- Roaring Run
- Rattling Run
- Buffalo Creek Valley

Each of the proposed natural systems greenways listed above is represented by a ribbon of dark green (representing higher cumulative natural resource value) on the *Natural Systems Greenways* map.

Recreational and Transportation Greenways are various types of trails, on both land and water, that connect population centers (hubs) and points of interest, bring people into contact with the outdoors, engender an appreciation of the natural world, and provide environmentally-friendly transportation options for commuters and visitors.

The Greenways Plan proposes four types of recreation and transportation greenways:

1) Off-road shared-use paths; 2) On-road bike routes or bike lanes; 3) Footpaths / pedestrian-only connections; and 4) Water trails. The project study committee prioritized proposed trails based on perceived feasibility and on local and regional importance. The chart below shows high-priority proposed trails.

Recreation and Transportation Greenway (Trail) Corridor	Type of Trail	Priority
Apollo - Leechburg Connector	Shared-use path	High
Route 356 Bridge Trail	Shared-use path	High
Schenley to Rosston Rail-with-Trail	Shared-use path	High
Allegheny River Water Trail - mouth of Clarion River to mouth of Redbank Creek	Water trail	High

Information on medium and low priority recreation and transportation greenways is included in the Greenways section of the project report. Existing trails listed earlier in the Greenways Plan are also considered part of the greenways network. Improvements to these trails are necessary to maintain their current level of use are supported by this Plan.

Partnerships are the key to successful *greenways management*. No one entity; whether it be the County, a municipality, or a non-profit group; can be expected to manage/maintain greenways on their own. The Greenways Plan recommends a strong partnership structure led by the Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development (ACDPD) through a *Parks and Trails Planner* position. Developing and managing partnerships requires careful coordination and well-defined roles for all partners involved. Partners may help with leadership, planning, or implementation of greenways projects.

Through its *Parks and Trails Planner* or other staff, the ACDPD will assist both municipalities and non-profits in implementing greenway corridors, attracting funding, and coordinating with other partners who can provide technical assistance.

The Greenways Plan identifies and prioritizes specific implementation strategies, along with estimated costs (if applicable) and parties responsible for leadership and assistance in the undertaking of each strategy. Individual strategies / tasks are prioritized into three designations: Short-term (within 3 years); Mid-term (4-8 years); and Long-term (9 years or more).

These strategies outline a recommended plan of action. Actual implementation will depend on fiscal and political climate in any given year or municipality, thus making it essential that the County review and re-evaluate strategies often.

Specific tools for conservation, along with other specific recommendations, are detailed in Chapter 6 of this report. All greenways maps can be seen in that chapter as well.

Chapter 1: Introduction & Background



Chapter 1: Introduction & Background

Part of the Armstrong County “vision statement” in the County’s 2005 Comprehensive Plan identifies the following vision for recreation, open space, and natural resources.

“In 2023, the County will have implemented many of the actions identified in the County recreation plan that was prepared in 2006. These actions will address recreation needs at the neighborhood, municipal, and County levels.

Opportunities for taking part in leisure activities are an integral part of a quality lifestyle

There will be more recreational use of the waterways, especially the Allegheny River, as a greater push for tourism is made. Tools for preserving prime agricultural land and promoting productive agricultural land uses will gain increased importance as a means to maintain the current rural character of the County. “

THE COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION, PARK, OPEN SPACE, AND GREENWAY PLAN

Recognizing the importance of a quality, County-wide recreation, park, open space, and trail system, the Armstrong County Commissioners retained the recreation planning firm of Pashek Associates to assist in the development of this Comprehensive Recreation, Park, Open Space, and Greenway Plan. Pashek Associates worked closely with the project Study Committee throughout the planning process. The approach used to generate the Plan included a detailed inventory and professional assessment, an extensive public input process, and the development of a vision for the future of recreation, parks, open space, and trails in Armstrong County.

This Plan is designed to serve as a tool for addressing the current and future recreation needs of County residents and to establish a framework for the decisions that must be made in order to provide adequate recreation facilities and programs. This Plan is broad in scope, encompassing a variety of issues pertinent to parks, recreation, and open space in the County. It lays the groundwork for the continued successful planning and development of recreation, parks, facilities, and programs.

Armstrong County identified seven objectives for the Plan.

1. Assure extensive public participation through a variety of methods, processes, and venues.
2. Identify significant natural resources throughout Armstrong County, and identify techniques to encourage their preservation.
3. Assess park and recreation properties and facilities and identify their locations, conditions, and project service areas.
4. Inventory and evaluate regionally significant recreation programs, opportunities, and service delivery methods and consider how they relate to tourism, economic development, and cultural/historic resources.
5. Develop a concept for the Armstrong County Greenway System.

6. Develop strategies for County and municipal partnerships in providing, managing, and operating park and recreation facilities and a County-wide greenway system.
7. Explore potential public/private partnerships to involve industrial and commercial businesses.

Just prior to conducting this Plan, Armstrong County completed its County Comprehensive Plan. The County Comprehensive Plan includes a variety of background data that has been used in the development of this Plan to understand the make-up of the County. This includes demographic and socio-economic statistics, cultural features information, natural resource data, statistical facts, and general background information. Analysis of this demographic information was factored into the evaluation of the recreation, parks, and open space issues.

An understanding of the area's existing features provides a context within which realistic and responsive recommendations are developed

Additionally, the County comprehensive planning process has analyzed and made recommendations concerning current and future land use throughout the County. The land use recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan support many of the findings of this Plan related to the preservation of natural resources and open space.

Readers of this report should refer to the County Comprehensive Plan to gain a better understanding of the background that supports this report.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Planning Process took the County through a three-step progression of questions. Those questions are:

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

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

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

This question was intended to reach out to the public in a variety of venues to help project what the future of parks and recreation should be in Armstrong County. Public participation was gathered through four sources: a study committee that represented the residents of the



County, a series of twelve public meetings, key person interviews, and a recreation questionnaire. Additionally, analysis was done on the findings of the existing conditions to determine ways of improving.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

The culmination of the answers to the two previous questions provides direction to accomplish the recreational needs, wants, and desires of the County. It includes a vision statement that paints a picture of what the future should be; goals for bringing the vision to fruition; and implementation strategies to accomplish the goals.

THE BENEFITS OF PARKS AND RECREATION

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

Environmental Benefits

- Clean water and air
- Preserve wildlife
- Reduce pollution
- Protect ecosystems
- Provide a place to enjoy nature's beauty



Economic Benefits

- Increase tourism
- Enhance land and property value
- Assist in business creation & retention
- Generate revenue
- Reduce vandalism and crime

BENEFITS OF RECREATION, PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Community Benefits

- Reduce crime and delinquency
- Connect families
- Support youth
- Offer lifelines for elderly



Personal Benefits

- Reduce stress
- Increase life expectancy
- Create balance between work and play
- Eliminate boredom and loneliness
- Promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles
- Reduce obesity

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A top priority of DCNR is to support implementation of county greenway plans and fund plan priorities.

The PA Municipal Planning Code requires that Counties update their Comprehensive Plan every ten years. This Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan should be adopted as part of the County’s Comprehensive Plan.

COUNTY BACKGROUND

Armstrong County is located in western Pennsylvania, northeast of the City of Pittsburgh, and about equal distance between New York State and West Virginia. A rural county, it is known for its multitude of small towns and villages scattered throughout the hilly terrain. The largest of these is the Borough of Kittanning, the Armstrong County seat, with a population of 4,700. The County’s 2000 census shows that it has a total population of 72,392 living in 16 boroughs, 28 townships, and one city.

Among Armstrong County’s significant resources are its forests and waterways. The



Allegheny River travels the full length of the County from north to south, eventually emptying into the Ohio River in the City of Pittsburgh. In addition to the Allegheny, the Kiskiminetas River, Redbank, Cowanshannock, Mahoning, and Crooked Creeks, along with the Mahoning and Crooked Creek Reservoirs, provide for exceptional water-based recreational opportunities in the County. The County’s six state game lands and other managed lands serve to conserve some of the County’s natural resources and to provide recreational opportunities, as well.

Local trails also play an important part in the County’s parks and recreation system. The Armstrong Trail travels 52 miles along the former rail bed from Schenley to East Brady. Plans are in place to complete missing links on the trail. Additional trails in the County include the Roaring Run Trail, the Great Shamokin Path, Baker Trail, Cowanshannock Trail, and Rock Furnace Trail.

The following fifteen sites in the County are designated as significant historic or archaeological resources.

- Drake Log Cabin, Apollo
- Bradys Bend Iron Company Furnaces, Bradys Bend
- St. Stephens’s Church, Bradys Bend
- St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Church, Cowansville
- Marshall House, Dayton
- Bridge between Madison and Mahoning Townships, Deanville
- Ford City Armory, Ford City
- Allegheny River Lock and Dam No. 5, Freeport
- Allegheny River Lock and Dam No. 6, Freeport
- Allegheny River Lock and Dam No. 7, Kittanning
- Allegheny River Lock and Dam No. 8, Templeton
- Allegheny River Lock and Dam No. 9, Widnoon
- Armstrong County Courthouse and Jail, Kittanning
- McCain House, Kittanning
- The Women’s Christian Temperance Union, Apollo



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

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the 2000 census, Armstrong County has a population which is a 1.5% decline from the 1990 census. The Census Bureau further estimates that the population had declined an additional 3% by 2006 to a population of 70,096. This compares to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which experienced a 3.4% increase in population between 1990 and 2000.

Demographic Subject	Armstrong County	Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Total Population	72,392	12,281,054
Median Household Income	\$31,557	\$40,106
Total # of Households	29,005	4,777,003
Average Household Size	2.46	2.48
Percent of Families Below Poverty Level	9.3%	7.8%
Median Age	40.4	38.0

Ages Distribution by Percent					
	0-9 yrs.	10-19 yrs.	20-34 yrs.	35-64 yrs.	65+ yrs.
Armstrong County	11%	13%	16%	40%	17%
Pennsylvania	13%	14%	19%	40%	15%

Armstrong County’s population distribution by age shows fewer youth (2%), teens (1%), and young adults (3%), but more seniors (3%) than the Commonwealth. The median age of Armstrong County residents is 40.4 compared to 38 for the Commonwealth. These figures indicate a more aged population in the County than in the Commonwealth.

Median Household Income by Planning Region - Year 2000	
Region	Income
Central Planning	\$29,239
East Planning	\$32,778
Northeast Planning	\$30,333
Northwest Planning	\$31,289
South Planning	\$32,385
West Planning	\$33,541

The median household income of County residents is over \$8,500 less than that of the Commonwealth. The percent of Armstrong County residents below the poverty level is 9.3 compared to 7.8 across the entire Commonwealth. These figures suggest a population with less disposable income available to spend on leisure activities.

The largest planning regions in the County are the South, West, and Central regions, comprising 68% (49,247 residents) of the population. These regions include the larger Boroughs of Kittanning, Ford City, Freeport, Leechburg, Apollo, and North Apollo. The east and the west regions have a median household income that is slightly above that of the other districts.

Population Change			
	1990	2000	Percent Increase/Decrease
Commonwealth of PA	11,881,643	12,281,054	+3.4%
Armstrong County	73,478	72,392	-1.5%
Central Planning	15,760	15,093	3.9%
East Planning	10,992	11,001	.1%
Northeast Planning	7,006	7,323	+4.5
Northwest Planning	4,717	4,821	+2.2
South Planning	18,778	17,907	-4.6
West Planning	16,279	16,247	.2%

The *Population Density Map*, on the next page, graphically depicts the location of the population throughout Armstrong County.

Insert “Population Density” 11x 17 map here

REVIEW OF EXISTING PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Several plans have been conducted in Armstrong County in recent years that have had an impact on the County's recreation, parks, open space, and trails. The following review of these studies provides a brief description of each and a summary of their recommendations as they relate to recreation, parks, open space, and trails. The recommendations cited for each plan should be considered as recommendations of this Plan as well.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Mullin and Lonergan Associates, April 2005

Included in the Armstrong County Comprehensive Plan are a number of issues related to recreation, parks, open space, trails, and natural resources. The following includes excerpts and analysis of the plan.

The Executive Summary of the report states, "Given the rural character of Armstrong County, it is important to preserve and protect the County's existing natural features. Providing recreational opportunities is essential to enhancing the quality of life for residents." And, "Armstrong County needs to use a variety of tools and organizations to protect the County's natural resources." It points out that the County's natural, historic, and cultural resources should not only be protected, but also can serve as a basis for economic development.

Land Use Analysis

Its land uses analysis says, "Land along the Allegheny River should either be indefinitely protected due to environmental constraints (e.g. steep slopes, floodplains) or developed in an environmentally sustainable fashion so as to provide opportunities for tourism and recreation..." It identifies agricultural land as one of the key types of lands that need to be protected. It states that "large agricultural and open space tracts of land are becoming fragmented by development resulting in a loss of the rural atmosphere most County residents like and want to preserve." Part of the conclusion of the land use analysis states that "Steps need to be taken to make preservation of open space and agricultural areas a high priority." And, "The County needs to capitalize on its natural, historic, and cultural resources and more fully develop recreational land uses..."

The Plan's Land Use Vision

"Overall, Armstrong County residents are content with current land use patterns within the county and would like to ensure that any additional growth does not significantly impact the County's rural atmosphere. The desire to retain the rural character of the County was a central factor in determining future land use patterns. County residents want denser development to remain in the boroughs, along the main transportation corridors, and where public water and sewerage infrastructure exists. They would like suburban-type automobile-oriented uses to occur in areas that are predominantly served by public infrastructure and roads. Most residents agree that haphazard development should not occur in areas that are not served by public water and sewerage infrastructure and transportation corridors.

In 2023, Armstrong County will look much like it does today, with no less than 70% of the County remaining forested or used for agriculture. Some currently unzoned municipalities may have opted to adopt zoning ordinances to guide growth to appropriate areas within their borders."

Land Use recommendations include:

- Encourage and support the implementation of an agricultural preservation program with an emphasis on the preservation of land outside of anticipated development areas.
- Conduct a study of the County's natural resources to identify development and preservation areas.

The Plan's Recreation/Open Space/Natural Resources Vision

“Most residents of Armstrong County agree that preservation of natural resources is important. The rural character of the County is distinctive, especially considering its proximity to the City of Pittsburgh. It provides a quality of life that most residents cite as a reason for living in Armstrong County. Approximately 25% of the County's land is developed, and natural resources and open space account for the rest.

In 2023, the County will have a comprehensive recreation plan that will prioritize funding for improvements or addition of new recreational facilities. In addition, better coordination with ongoing recreational and natural resource studies and inventories will produce shared data bases and will facilitate efficient action toward achieving related goals.

Currently, some boroughs are lacking adequate recreation facilities for youth, while other municipalities have an abundance of such facilities or are near regional facilities, such as Belmont Complex, or Freeport Community Park and Pool. For residents in the northeast and northwest sections of the County, fewer developed recreational facilities exist, but there is an abundance of open space. In 2023, all residents will be served by adequate facilities for recreational activities, and the County will retain its rural character.”

Key Recreation/Open Space/Natural Resources Recommendations

- Develop a Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan.
- Investigate the possibility of a regional ATV facility.
- Investigate the possibility of developing a state park in the County.
- Conduct a study to identify and evaluate the impact of the Allegheny River dams and locks.
- Identify potential sites that are suitable for campgrounds.
- Identify methods of providing recreational programming in the County.
- Promote the use of, and access to, the County's water bodies.
- Evaluate how well local parks are meeting the recreational needs of the residents.
- Develop a strategy that identifies the amount of investment required for upkeep and preventative maintenance of local park resources.
- Identify mine reclamation sites for recreational use (e.g. ATV facilities).
- Improve marketing of existing public recreational facilities.
- Prepare a feasibility study regarding recreational uses of the Kiski River.

BELMONT COMPLEX FEASIBILITY STUDY

Prepared by Pashek Associates, Ltd., August 2007

The purpose of this study was to determine if improvements could be made to the Belmont Complex facilities, operating structure, and management to better meet the demands of local residents, provide a safer and more user-friendly facility, and reduce or eliminate the financial losses associated with its operation.

There are three main components of the Complex: the ice arena, the swimming pool, and the community/banquet room. The ice arena includes a single sheet of ice, spectator areas, locker rooms, concession area, party room, skate rental shop, pro-shop, several meeting areas, and a mechanical room. A second floor office suite is located in the ice rink section of the building.

The large, recreational swimming pool has zero-depth access, a diving well, competitive area, and water play area. The pool area includes a large grassy beach, picnic shelter, volleyball courts, playground, concession stand, and locker rooms.

The community/banquet room is large and open with an adjacent kitchen and is used for banquets, recreational activities, education and training sessions, and community gatherings.

The study analyzed the facility's history, regional demographics, operations and finances of each recreational component of the facility, the physical structure, mechanical systems, and the organizational structure. The study also included a strong public input component.

General Recommendations

1. Analyze all financial procedures to develop ways to streamline the process, reduce duplication, and assure checks and balances.
2. Solicit private funding to supplement the costs of upgrades and improvements.
3. Establish a separate, non-governmental fund or foundation to accept the financial contributions.
4. Upgraded both vehicle entrances to the Belmont Complex with new signage, landscaping, and road improvements.
5. Adopt a more comprehensive marketing effort.
6. Develop a Belmont Complex website separate from the County's, but still provide a direct link from the County site to the Belmont website.
7. Reorganize the staffing structure to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Primary Ice Rink Recommendations

- Expand and promote programs both on and off the ice.
- Consolidate spaces to better operate food & retail.
- Repair and update facilities and equipment.

Other Recommendations

Additionally, the Study makes several recommendations for upgrading of the building and mechanical systems, as well as the swimming pool. It also makes operational recommendations for the swimming pool and community room at the Belmont.

The final conclusion is that about \$3 million needs to be invested into the infrastructure of the facility to bring it up to current standards and to allow it to adequately fulfill its intended purpose. Additionally, numerous changes need to be made in the operations and management of the Belmont Complex to allow it to become financially and programmatically successful.

The study specifically analyzed the feasibility of making the Belmont Complex financially and programmatically successful. It did not analyze whether or not the current use of the facility is its best use. Some have suggested that there may be better, more economical uses for the facility. The County Commissioners have had discussions with Armstrong County Memorial Hospital, Armstrong County YMCA, and the Armstrong School District to consider other options for the facility that may better serve the recreational needs of the County's residents.

MIDDLE ALLEGHENY RIVER CONSERVATION PLAN

Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC), November 2005

Three separate river conservation plans have been completed for the Allegheny River – one for the upper Allegheny from its northern terminus to the Borough of Emlenton, in Venango County; the second for the middle Allegheny from Emlenton to the Borough of Harmar in Allegheny County; and another for the lower Allegheny from Harmar to the Ohio River. The following is a review of the River Conservation Plan for the Middle Allegheny, which travels through Armstrong County.

See: <http://www.pecwest.org/arcpecsummary.pdf>

The following paragraphs are excerpts from this plan.

Introduction

The Middle Allegheny River Conservation Plan (RCP) encompasses 75 miles of river from Emlenton Borough in Venango County to Lock & Dam 3 at Harmar Township in Allegheny County. The study area of this RCP is important because it links two other river studies: to the south - the Three Rivers Conservation Plan, which extends from the Point in Pittsburgh to Lock & Dam 3; and to the north - the Allegheny National Wild & Scenic River Management Plan, which extends approximately from Emlenton to Warren. Thus, these three studies cover a majority of the Allegheny River, which is 325 miles in length, draining a watershed of 11,770 square miles.

Discussions and Recommendations

The purpose of this River Conservation Plan is to relay public opinion about the Allegheny River and its resources and to make relevant recommendations for the conservation or enhancement of those resources. The study committee for this RCP, which included representatives from local and County government, industry, businesses, residents, landowners, and conservationists, reviewed draft lists of recommendations and suggested that many be kept as general as possible, thus extending the life and usefulness of the RCP. For some of the more controversial issues, they suggested trying to find common ground and helping communities work toward solutions.

The following are key recommendations of the plan as they relay to recreation, parks, and open space in Armstrong County.

Recreational Boating

- Provide more public boating access areas for motorized and non-motorized craft where appropriate. Areas currently under consideration in Armstrong County are Freeport and Ford City.
- Improve the existing access areas (including ramps, parking, facilities, etc.) at Cowanshannock Creek, Crooked Creek (Rosston), Sugar Creek, Parker City, East Brady, Freeport, and South Buffalo.
- Provide more pump-out stations for motorized boaters.
- Allow public access to private marinas for food, restrooms, fuel, etc.
- Establish wake limits from Freeport to Kittanning.
- Conduct a study of recreational use of the river and its economic benefits.
- Provide public docks for overnight mooring.
- Notify residents of Kinzua Dam of water releases via email or media.
- Encourage the public to report boating violations to proper PFBC offices.
- Enforce jet-ski regulations and consider limiting their use in important habitat areas.

Trail Development

- Complete the Armstrong Trail and the connections to the trail where appropriate.
- Establish more restrooms and parking lots along the Armstrong Trail.
- Law enforcement must be increased along the trail to deal with vandalism, littering, and all terrain-vehicle (ATV) use.
- Develop a surfaced hiking-biking trail from the Bernard Snyder Picnic Area to Buttermilk Falls on Cowanshannock Creek.



Source: Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Western Region, and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Rivers Conservation Program Allegheny River Conservation Plan - Map

- Continue to use and promote the Armstrong Trail as a wildlife corridor and educational resource that can be used for birding and school trips.
- Complete existing and planned trail segments at Freeport.

Recreation

- Establish a water trail from Emlenton to Freeport.
- Alleviate road problems and establish public camping at the South Buffalo boat launch.
- Increase usage of Kittanning Riverfront Park.
- Enforce laws and increase security along the trail and river.
- Improve and expand waterfront facilities at Freeport.
- Create public swimming areas.

Water Quality

- Address abandoned mine drainage problems, especially in Buffalo Creek, Kiskiminetas River, Glade Run bore hole (near Cadogan), and Huling Run.
- Study and quantify the combined sewer overflow problem and initiate an overflow warning system for river users.
- Continue, enhance, and expand water quality monitoring along the Allegheny and its tributaries. Problem areas include Redbank Creek and sulfur swamp near Parker City.
- Share water quality data among interested parties and coordinate efforts among monitors and data users.
- Enforce water quality regulations and permits for industry and public and private facilities.
- Research and plan for flood abatement measures along the corridor.

Natural Resources

- Encourage stream bank beautification on public lands.
- Develop and distribute educational materials about riverfront land stewardship.
- Create birding and wildflower guides for the Armstrong Trail.
- Preserve Murphy's Island as an historic and natural resource.
- Establish PA Cleanways chapters to address illegal dumping and to educate the public and local governments.
- Recognize and support natural areas such as wetlands, important habitats, and riparian buffers.
- Restore the rock dump, coal preparation area, and Brunner Run at Cadogan.
- Work to control erosion along river shorelines and islands.
- Work to protect high value and environmentally-sensitive public areas from development and degradation.
- Increase efforts to control and/or eradicate invasive species.
- Establish a responsible vector control program for mosquitoes and black flies.

Education and Culture

- Create a local history curriculum for area schools.
- Provide educational programs/activities for children at the East Brady boat launch.
- Provide educational programs about invasive plants.
- Create a means (in addition to press releases) to inform residents of county/municipal/organizational grants and projects.
- Utilize, enhance, and support the operation and services of the Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center to promote environmental education and responsible resource conservation.
- Interpret Kittanning as a major French and Indian War site.
- Extend River Quest excursions to Kittanning.
- Identify and preserve historic landmarks along the Allegheny River.
- Increase public awareness of the Allegheny and river issues.

- Sponsor more riverfront programs and festivals.
- Establish an historic driving tour of cultural resources in the region.
- Reopen the Kiski Junction Railroad tours by calling for more volunteers.

BUFFALO CREEK WATERSHED CONSERVATION PLAN

GAI Consultants, Draft Plan, December 2007

The following are excerpts from the Draft Executive Summary of the Plan.

The development of a River Conservation Plan for the Buffalo Creek Watershed is an initiative of Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania (ASWP). Buffalo Creek is the largest tributary on the west side of the Allegheny River between Franklin (French Creek) and the Ohio River. From its headwaters in Butler County the stream flows 34.4 miles to the Allegheny River at Freeport, Armstrong County.

The primary objectives of the plan are to:

- Establish common ground and direction among stakeholders for the watershed.
- Provide a tool for local decision makers to use in making informed decisions.
- Identify initiatives for the protection and stewardship of the watershed.
- Qualify the watershed for admission to the Pennsylvania Rivers Conservation Registry.

The rural and small town atmosphere that typifies the area, with its abundance of greenspace and natural beauty, was seen as the most important aspect contributing to quality of life in the watershed. The natural landscapes and ecological communities present here are important components of daily life to watershed residents.

Foremost among the concerns raised was a common theme of the need to retain the rural character and natural landscapes that define quality of life in the watershed. Some of the challenges that face the watershed include water quality degradation from agricultural runoff and malfunctioning septic systems, limited public recreational access and opportunities, greenspace preservation, loss of agricultural land, invasive species, need for historic preservation, and a perceived lack of planning.

A number of stakeholders also noted that the watershed is increasingly gaining recognition as a regional destination for its recreational opportunities, rural landscape, and small-town atmosphere. This attention could result in substantial economic benefit to local communities. However, this issue is currently not addressed in a comprehensive manner and as a result opportunities are being lost.

Action Plan

Based upon the public input obtained through the planning process, an action plan was developed for activities recommended to address issues, concerns, and opportunities. Action items were identified based upon the problems, their respective potential, and the interest expressed by the community. The primary objectives for the Action Plan for the Buffalo Creek Watershed can be organized according to the following major themes:

- Retain the rural landscape and small-town sense of community that typifies the watershed and attracts people to the area.
- Conserve and enhance the biological communities present in the watershed, with particular emphasis on the regionally significant forest associations, and reduce potential impact from exotic invasive species introductions.
- Enhance the regionally significant recreational resources in the watershed in order to provide for increased quality of life for residents as well as to provide increased economic opportunities through tourism.
- Create a sense of community stewardship. Encourage and enable residents to take active and proactive roles in issues that affect their quality of life.

KISKI-CONEMAUGH RIVER BASIN CONSERVATION PLAN

GAI Consultants, July 1999

The following are excerpts from the Executive Summary of the plan.

With the decline of the coal and steel industry, recreation and tourism is emerging as a viable source of economic revenue for the Kiskiminetas-Conemaugh Basin. The renewed sense of community pride, coupled with recent environmental remediation projects throughout the region, have introduced new levels of optimism for economic and environmental improvement into the next century.

Through this pride, the K-C Alliance (Kiski-Conemaugh) has emerged: a cooperative effort of five watershed organizations and four other environmental organizations within the basin. The K-C Alliance has developed a statement of goals to use as the impetus for development of a river conservation plan. Conservation, remediation, wise management, balanced development, education, unified advisory input, improvement of community facilities, and communication are the key components of their goals.

Recreation opportunities in the basin are primarily located in the central and western portions of the basin along the rivers and along Chestnut Ridge, Laurel Hill Ridge, and the Allegheny Ridge. The types of recreation opportunities vary and include a system of state parks operated by DCNR, state game lands owned by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, two units of the National Park System, and other flood control dam areas, state forest lands, natural areas, various county parks, and a growing system of hiking and biking trails.

Action Plan

A recommended plan of action was developed based on available resources, their problems and potential, and the interest shown by public input obtained by local groups in the basin. The intent of the plan is to restore, maintain, and enhance the basin resources through various management options. Primary management options for the Action Plan were identified and were organized according to the following seven major themes:

- Land Resources – Vegetative stream buffering, land use planning, view-shed protection, forestry initiatives, and green golf course initiatives are all encouraged.
- Water Resources – Mine drainage remediation efforts throughout the Basin need to be implemented.
- Biological Resources - Alkalinity stabilization, biologic monitoring, fishery management, and habitat improvement programs can be developed and implemented.
- Recreation Resources – Scenic river applications, trail development, greenway stabilization, and water park establishment are all components of recreational and leisure opportunities that can be furthered through the basin.
- Historic/Archaeological Resources – Historic and archeological organizations are encouraged to preserve and promote their areas of study and interest within the basin.
- Education/Promotion – Basin-wide educational program development, including tourism/marketing, would be experienced through the various Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Watershed stakeholders.
- Management – Development of a new watershed organization that the Roaring Run Watershed Association would manage would have as its focus the entire main stem of the Kiskiminetas River.

COWANSHANNOCK CREEK WATERSHED RIVER CONSERVATION PLAN

Skelly and Loy, Inc., February 2002

The following are excerpts from the Executive Summary of the plan.

The Cowanshannock Creek Watershed River Conservation Plan is intended to help communities better understand the natural, physical, and cultural resources in the watersheds, so they can make conscious decisions regarding potential

improvements and protect important features. A further objective is to obtain DCNR approval of the river conservation plan in order to place the Cowanshannock Creek Watershed on the Pennsylvania River Conservation Registry. This status gives special recognition to communities that lie within the Cowanshannock Creek Watershed and make them eligible for certain grants through the Community Conservation Partnership Program.

A series of management recommendations were developed to address major issues and concerns throughout the area. The management options offer guidance to communities in the watershed to help them achieve the greatest environmental, recreational, and economic benefit. More specifically, the recommendations will help communities reach the following goals, in no specific order:

- improve water quality
- promote land development that is compatible with a sustainable environment
- enhance the recreational opportunities of the watershed
- protect the natural resources, historic landscape, and scenic beauty within the watershed
- provide an environmental education program for adults, and enhance existing school-based environmental education
- encourage compatible and sustainable economic development

Action Plan

A recommended plan of action was developed, noting major issues within the watershed and creating management options. The following Action Plan items impact the purpose of this Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan.

1. Implement local planning and zoning to protect farmland and forest resources, the riparian corridor, floodplains, and wetlands.
2. Promote water quality improvement and protection efforts that focus on agricultural pollution sources, sewage management, riparian buffers, and key areas for stream bank stabilization, and impacts from abandoned mine drainage.
3. Collect information on existing biological resources within the watershed needed to identify key areas for long term protection.
 - Encourage forestry techniques that involve conservation principals.
 - Encourage development of Natural Heritage Inventory in Armstrong County.
4. Waste management
5. Protection and enhancement of natural recreational resources
 - Promote and enhance existing recreational facilities, such as Bernard C. Snyder Picnic Area; promote Devil's Washbasin; and improve water quality at White Lake and Wetland.
 - Prevent littering, graffiti, and other vandalism at Buttermilk Falls, White Lake and Wetland, Devil's Washbasin, Bernard C. Snyder Picnic Area, and along the Shamokin Path.
 - Prevent destruction and high sedimentation in streams by all-terrain vehicles at Buttermilk Falls and along the Shamokin Path.
 - Hold annual recreational/athletic events in the watershed during a community festival.
 - Obtain easement or public acquisition of the Buttermilk Falls recreation area.
 - Secure remaining funds for Rails-to-Trails, Margaret to Echo.
 - Place interpretive signage along Shamokin Path.
 - Extend Shamokin Path.

"On Rivers Day (2000) and throughout June, we'll celebrate the importance of Pennsylvania rivers by examining how we can best conserve them and enhance their value. And the best examples of that are the rivers selected as Pennsylvania's Feature Rivers of the Year' for 2000. By naming the Kiskiminetas and Conemaugh rivers as this year's 'Feature Rivers', we are noting both the rivers' polluted past and the promise of the future."

- Tom Ridge, Governor of Pennsylvania

6. Additional watershed education opportunities

- Develop and promote the use of environmental education facilities such as the Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center.
- Promote beautification projects at Devil’s Washbasin and White Lake and Wetland.
- Prepare and implement a public relations campaign regarding watershed issues.
- Promote Buttermilk Falls, Canfield-Holmes Sanctuary, White Lake and Wetland, Devil’s Washbasin, and other areas of interest for education and research.

REDBANK CREEK WATERSHED CONSERVATION PLAN

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, (WPC) Draft Plan January 2007,

On November 24, 2007, the DCNR, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation approved the Redbank Creek Watershed Conservation Plan, and placed the Redbank Creek Watershed and all tributaries covered in the Plan in Armstrong, Clarion, Clearfield and Jefferson Counties, on the Pennsylvania Rivers Conservation Registry.

The following are excerpts from the Plan.

The Redbank Creek Watershed Conservation Plan covers Armstrong, Clarion, Jefferson, and Clearfield Counties. Redbank Creek is formed in Brookville, Jefferson County, at the confluence of North Fork Creek and Sandy Lick Creek. The headwaters of these streams originate in Jefferson County and Clearfield County, respectively. It was found that much of this watershed is impaired by non-point source pollution, including abandoned mine drainage, storm water, and sewage, however the North Fork watershed is designated by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as High Quality, with parts of it considered Exceptional Value.

The Redbank Creek Watershed is located within two recognized cultural regions of Pennsylvania, the Lumber Heritage Region and the Pennsylvania Wilds Region. The Lumber Heritage Region, a destination given by DCNR, highlights the natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources that embodied the industrial traditions of the lumbering industry. The Pennsylvania Wilds Region, is a marketing strategy that Pennsylvania has developed in an attempt to increase tourism and tourist-based business around the natural and outdoor experiences in north-central Pennsylvania,

Action Plan

Non-regulatory management recommendations were developed to improve the quality of life in the watershed community. The watershed community developed the management recommendations through comments, interviews, public meeting workshops, and public surveys. The following lists the five specific themes of the recommendations and a sampling of the top two goals under each theme. A complete listing is available for review at: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/rivers/riversconservation/registry/redbank.pdf>.

Project Area Characteristics

- Increase communication and cooperation among municipalities and counties within the region, and eliminate the mentality that each community is separate.
- Become proactive as opposed to reactive when planning for the future.

Land Resources

- Preserve agricultural lands and lifestyles while encouraging sustainable practices.
- Protect forest resources

Water Resources

- Address acidity problems in local waterways created by abandoned mine drainage and acid precipitation.
- Protect and maintain wetland areas.

Biological Resources

- Implement strategies to conserve rare and unique communities of flora and fauna.
- Minimize the spread of exotic and invasive species.

Cultural Resources

- Increase support of watershed issues
- Address environmental issues.

LOWER CROOKED CREEK WATERSHED CONSERVATION PLAN

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) Plan, June 2004

The following are excerpts from the WPC Plan.

Crooked Creek is a major tributary of the Allegheny River, entering near Ford City. The Lower Crooked Creek Watershed is a portion of the 300-square mile Crooked Creek Watershed located in Indiana and Armstrong Counties. The Lower Crooked Creek Watershed drains 101.8 square miles from the confluence with Plum Creek to its mouth at the Allegheny River in Rosston. Included in the study of the Lower Crooked Creek Watershed is Tub Mill Run Watershed.

In 2002, the Crooked Creek Watershed Association received a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) C2P2 program to complete a Watershed Conservation Plan for the Lower Crooked Creek watershed. The Plan was finalized and submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for approval on the Rivers Registry, and was given placement on February 11, 2006.

In the development of this plan, several methods were used to identify the issues and concerns of watershed stakeholders. The Crooked Creek Watershed Association hosted public meetings, attended community events, and met with municipalities, groups and individuals. Visioning sessions along with public and municipal surveys were also used to gather information from watershed residents; and throughout the process public officials were invited to participate.

Action Plan

Management recommendations are suggestions to improve the quality of life in the watershed. They are non-regulatory in nature and may be used by any citizen, group or agency. The recommendations were derived from issues and concerns identified by local citizens throughout the planning process. The watershed community, through comments, and the completion of surveys, prioritized their management as high, medium, and low. The recommendations are listed in a matrix, which benchmarks five specific themes, each highlighting specific areas of concern, which also lists issues, recommended approaches, potential partners, potential funding, and priority ratings. Four of the five specific themes are listed below as pertinent to this Plan. For further information, a review of the executive summary is available for viewing at: <http://www.wpconline.org/cc-draft/Preface/Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Land Resources

- Areas of Concern: Agricultural Lands, Erosion and Sedimentation, Forestry, Illegal Dumping/Waste Disposal, Reclamation – Abandoned Gas Wells, Reclamation – Mining, Riparian Corridors, Subsidence

- High Priority: Plug abandoned gas wells in the watershed to prevent brine water from entering streams and potable water supplies.

Water Resources

- Areas of Concern: Agriculture, Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD), Dry Hydrants, Erosion/Sedimentation, Floodplain, Monitoring, Sewage and Septic, Stormwater, Stream Restoration, Water Conservation, Water Quality, Water Quality Trading, Wetlands
- High Priority: Continue to address AMD issues using the best available technology.

Biological Resources

- Areas of Concern: Biological Diversity, Deer Management, Invasive, Native, and Sensitive Plants, Protecting Important Habitats, Rare, Threatened or Endangered Species
- High Priority: Implement abandoned mine drainage and sewage remediation projects to improve the viability of aquatic life.

Cultural Resources

- Areas of Concern: Environmental Education, Funding, Historical Preservation, Horse Park, Marketing Recreation, Recreational Opportunities
- High Priority: Link trails together.

UPPER CROOKED CREEK WATERSHED CONSERVATION PLAN

Mackin Engineering, December 2001

The following are excerpts from the DCNR Upper Crooked Creek Watershed Plan.

The Upper Crooked Creek watershed was completed in 2001 by the Indiana County Department of Planning. The DCNR, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation approved the Upper Crooked Creek Watershed River Conservation Plan and placed the Upper Crooked and Plum Creeks, the watershed and all tributaries covered in the Plan, in Armstrong and Indiana Counties, on the Pennsylvania Rivers Conservation Registry.

The contributory drainage of the entire Crooked Creek watershed is approximately 292 square miles in area. The study area for the Crooked Creek River Conservation Plan covers the entire watershed in Indiana County and a small section of the Plum Creek watershed in Armstrong County; totaling 195 square miles. This plan examines approximately 28 river miles along Crooked Creek, contains sections of 23 named tributaries, and encompasses portions of 15 municipalities in two counties.

The Management Options which are of significance to the Armstrong County Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan are listed below, along with several recommendations. A complete listing of recommendations, potential partners, potential funding sources and recommended beginning dates are contained within a matrix in the final watershed plan. The plan is available on the DCNR website which is listed at the end of this section.

General

1. Institute an Upper Crooked Creek Watershed Coalition to oversee the implementation of this plan and act as a clearinghouse for the management of watershed resource data.
2. Coordinate with other River Conservation Plans within the vicinity.

Cultural and Historical

1. Facilitate regional coordination between historical groups and municipalities.
2. Coordinate an exchange of historical literature between communities in order to market a regional experience and promote travel to the watershed communities.
3. Encourage communities to develop a local history book or pamphlet (such as a centennial tribute) to develop one.

Economic Development

1. Complete an inventory of brown fields and prioritize their redevelopment potential under PA Act 2 and Act 4.
2. Create a Business Directory and map that highlights the commercial districts and other amenities within the project area.
3. Promote fishing, hiking, and biking through events.

Education

1. Develop a newsletter to inform the public of the value of the resources of the Upper Crooked Creek watershed.
2. Initiate educational programs on floods and floodplain development including “flood emergency response” educational materials and flood awareness seminars for residents.
3. Promote an essay and/or photo contest throughout school districts within the watershed.

Natural Resources

1. Continue the development and implementation of preliminary restoration plans for two discharges at Ernest, including the construction of passive wetland treatment systems.
2. Coordinate with PA Department of Environmental Protection’s Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation to identify “Problem Area” abandoned mine sites within the study corridor for reclamation and funding prioritization.
3. Organize, perform, and maintain clean up of all dumpsites.

Planning

1. Form the Upper Crooked Creek Watershed Council of Governments (UCCWCOG).
2. Encourage municipalities to enact a timber harvest ordinance.
3. Encourage private landowners to develop forest management plans.

Recreation

1. Develop directional and interpretive signs for display along the existing and proposed trails.
2. Conduct feasibility studies, inventory, investigate, and acquire abandoned railroad right-of-way for new recreational trails and connections between existing or proposed trails, and investigate the possibility of rail-with-trail connections.
3. Develop a comprehensive trail and greenway plan for the entire watershed.

Source: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/rivers/riversconservation/registry/56crooked.aspx>

Chapter 2: Parks & Recreation Opportunities



Chapter 2: Parks & Recreation Opportunities

Armstrong County has a wealth of recreational opportunities ranging from large open spaces to indoor recreation facilities. Armstrong County residents pride themselves in the fact that their County is rural in nature and has an abundance of natural features. Residents take advantage of the full array of recreational opportunities as they hunt and fish, hike and bike, ride horses and ATV's, and participate in team sports and community activities. As well, many are committed to the preservation of the County's natural features for future generations.

This chapter provides an in-depth inventory and assessment of parks and recreation opportunities available to Armstrong County residents. It is important to understand that while many residents of Armstrong County utilize facilities within the County to fulfill their leisure pursuits, many will also travel outside the County for the same purpose. Therefore, it is necessary to provide an inventory and analysis of both types of recreational opportunities.

Numerous municipalities, schools, agencies, organizations, businesses, and non-profits provide recreational opportunities for the residents of Armstrong County. This report breaks these opportunities into six categories: 1) County facilities; 2) local facilities; 3) recreation program providers; 4) trails; 5) regional facilities located within the County; 6) regional facilities located outside of Armstrong County.

County Parks and Recreation

Armstrong County owns and operates the Belmont Complex, an indoor/outdoor recreation facility with a swimming pool and ice rink. Additionally, they have contracts on three other properties that are operated as recreation facilities.

Local Parks and Recreation

Many municipalities throughout the County provide local recreation opportunities that are primarily intended for their own local residents. Most of these facilities are community parks that are designed to serve entire communities and neighborhood parks intended to serve areas within about ½ mile of the park. The parks include facilities, such as ball fields; playgrounds; picnic shelters; basketball, volleyball, and horseshoe courts; and short walking trails. This report identifies forty-one local, municipally-owned parks and numerous school facilities. See Appendix B and C for a complete listing.

Recreation Program Providers

The two major providers of recreation programming in the County are the Belmont Complex and the Armstrong County YMCA. Youth sports organizations are also a significant provider for recreation programming; and, in addition to providing parks and recreation facilities, some municipalities provide a variety of recreational programming as well.

Parks and Recreation Facilities in Armstrong County

41 Local Parks
1 County Recreation Facility
2 Federal Recreation Areas
7 Trails (6 land/1 water)
20 Schools with Recreation Facilities
2 Rivers
3 Major Lakes
4 Other Major Recreation Facilities
Dozens of Private Recreation
Opportunities

Trails

Six land trails and one designated water trail are located within the County. The Armstrong Trail, a non-motorized, multiuse trail and the Baker Trail, a hiking trail, are the backbone of the County’s trail system. Water trails, which provide passages for both motorized and non-motorized boats, are becoming evermore popular. The Kiski River Water Trail is the County’s only such facility.

Regional Parks

Regional facilities are located both in and out of Armstrong County. They include State Parks, Forests, and Game Lands; Federal Recreation Areas; PA Fish Commission lakes; and regional trails. These facilities are owned and operated by the state or federal governments or public organizations.

Other Recreational Facilities

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

CLASSIFICATIONS OF PARKS AND TRAILS

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

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

NRPA Parks and Open Space Classifications

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Site Criteria
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated, or unique recreational needs.	Less than a 1/4 mile in distance in residential setting.	Between 2,500 sq. ft. and one acre in size.
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on the informal and active and passive recreation.	1/4 to 1/2 mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers.	5 acres is considered minimum size; 5 to 10 acres is optional.
School Park	Depending on the circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use.	Determined by location of school district property.	Variable - depends on function.

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria	Site Criteria
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods and 1/2 to 3 miles distance.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 30 and 50 acres.
Large Urban Park	Large urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community based recreational needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces.	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres, with 75 or more acres being optimal.
Natural Resource Areas	Land set aside for the preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual/aesthetics/ buffering.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable
Greenways	Effectively tie park systems together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and opportunity.	Variable
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community.	Strategically located community-wide facilities.	Determined by project demand. Usually a minimum of 25 acres, with 40 to 80 acres being optimal.
Special Use	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs.	Variable - dependent on specific use.	Variable
Private Party/ Recreational Facility	Parks and recreation facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system.	Variable - dependent on specific use.	Variable

NRPA Trail Classifications

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria
Park Trail	Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard- or soft-surfaced.
Connector Trails	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters located in independent right-of-way (r.o.w.). Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters. Typically located within road r.o.w.

Classification	General Description	Location Criteria
On-street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic.	Bike Route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.
All-terrain Bike Trail	Off road trail for all-terrain (mountain) bikes.	Single-purpose use trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Cross-country Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Equestrian Trail	Trails developed for horseback riding.	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all-terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.

RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY ARMSTRONG COUNTY

Armstrong County owns and operates just one recreation facility – the Belmont Complex. However, the County is legally affiliated with three other recreation facilities.

THE BELMONT COMPLEX

The Complex is located at 415 Butler Road, Kittanning. It was purchased by the Armstrong County Recreation Authority in 1979, and operation was turned over to the county in 1985. The Complex is centrally located in the County and easily accessible from Routes 422, 28, 268 and 66. Although the Belmont Complex is located in the population center of the County, the facility itself is located in East Franklin Township which is in the Western Region of the County. It offers an outdoor swimming pool with a 150' water slide, locker rooms, concession stand, playground, volleyball courts, zero-depth access, diving well, grassy beach, picnic shelter, and an indoor ice skating rink and arena.



The Belmont Complex Ice season, which includes public skates, amateur and high school hockey, tournaments, learn-to-skate, and figure skating opportunities, operates from the beginning of September through the middle of April. The facility includes locker rooms, concession stand, party room, skate rental area, pro shop, spectator bleachers, and ice rink. The Belmont Pool operates from the weekend after Memorial Day to the day before Armstrong School District begins classes in August.

The Complex also has a community/banquet room with an adjacent kitchen that is used for banquets, recreational activities, education and training sessions, and community gatherings.

Armstrong County manages all aspects of the Belmont Complex and subsidizes its operations. In a typical year, Armstrong County provides a subsidy of \$150,000 to \$200,000 for the Complex.

This Plan does not include a thorough evaluation of the Belmont Complex, as a feasibility study for the Belmont Complex has just been completed. A summary of the results of that study can be found in Chapter One of this report.

THE MILTON LOOP CAMPGROUND

Armstrong County leases 28 acres from the Army Corps of Engineers to operate the Milton Loop Campground. Milton Loop is located four miles north of Dayton off PA Route 839 near Milton. Fifty-two sites, suitable for all types of camping units, are available. The campground has modern restrooms and a sanitary disposal station. Some of the campground is available for seasonal camping. The campground is situated within the Mahoning Creek Lake area which is surrounded by beautiful, natural scenery and multiple opportunities for outdoor recreation. There are wondrous views along forested pathways and small inlets along the lake's shoreline. In addition to camping, visitors will also enjoy the many outdoor activities such as boating, fishing, hiking, camping, and picnicking. There are also picnic pavilions, picnic table sites, play-areas, volleyball, and horseshoe courts. Mahoning Creek Lake has a varied and thriving fish population. The Outflow Area is accessible for persons with disabilities and includes a restroom, pavilion, picnic sites and fishing access. Special trips can also be arranged for campers to use the Mahoning River for canoe and tubing float-trips.

The County leases the operation of Milton Loop Campground to a private vendor.

THE CANFIELD-HOLMES SANCTUARY

In 1980 Mrs. Sara Canfield-Holmes donated 288 acres to the County for the creation and maintenance of a park. At the time of the donation, the County was unable to complete the transfer, but the Cowanshannock Creek Watershed Association agreed to hold title as trustees for the County.

To get to the Sanctuary from the Courthouse in Kittanning, travel north on Oak Avenue (PA SR 1033) toward Templeton. Oak Avenue becomes Johnston Avenue. At approximately 3 miles past the Courthouse, SR 1033 crosses over Cowanshannock Creek where you can turn right and find parking on the left at the Sanctuary/Picnic Area.



The Bernard C. Snyder Picnic Area is 7 acres, and is at the starting point of the Cowanshannock Trail. Portions can be found to be both paved and dirt surfaces on spur trails to off-trail locations. The trail follows the Cowanshannock Creek for about 1.27 miles to the Buttermilk Falls Bridge, and on to Buttermilk Falls. The trail has been constructed along the former Pennsylvania Railroad bed that led to and from old clay and coal mines. Visible signs of the former railroad bed and the dynamite shed can still be seen in some locations along the trail.

GILPIN/LEECHBURG PARK

The Gilpin Leechburg Park is located at Rt. 66 and Park Road, just north of Leechburg. The park has six picnic pavilions; four ball fields; a pool with plastic slides, high dive, wading pool, and sand volleyball court; 2 lighted tennis courts; 2 basketball courts; 2 playgrounds; a horseshoe court; and a nature trail.

Armstrong County has entered into a lease agreement with the Township of Gilpin, the Borough of Leechburg, and the Leechburg Area Park, Inc, also known as the Gilpin/Leechburg Park, for the County to take ownership of the 24-acre park property. Additionally, the County entered into an operating agreement with Gilpin/Leechburg Park for the park to be operated and maintained for the benefit of the Township and Borough residents.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

Armstrong County also provides mini-grants to municipalities within the County for use in upgrading, improving, or expanding parks and recreation facilities. The intent of the grants is to supplement local or state funding for projects.

Grants are limited to \$5,000 per municipality or organization annually. In 2007, the County provided \$40,000 to twelve municipalities and one organization for recreational improvements. The local municipalities and organization provided an additional \$63,000 in funding. The combined efforts of the County and the local municipalities meant an investment of \$104,000 in local recreation projects across the County. Since 2003 Armstrong County has provided \$120,000 in grants to 29 communities and organizations across the County.

LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Throughout Armstrong County, residents enjoy many local recreation and open space opportunities in or near their communities. Forty-one community and neighborhood parks, as well as 20 public schools with recreation facilities are found in 28 of the County’s 45 municipalities. As part of the inventory and analysis, each municipality and school district was asked to provide information about their local parks and recreation facilities. This information was to include park names and sizes, a list of available facilities, general conditions and sizes of facilities, ADA compliance, availability of parking, and available utility services. Items in the inventory charts, found in Appendix B, C, and D may be incomplete if the municipality or school did not provide all the requested information. Most communities were unable to provide accurate information about the acreage of individual parks.

This inventory is a comprehensive listing of recreational opportunities throughout the County. It will aid both the County and individual communities in assessing the current level of service and in providing information for grant writing.

To assist in ensuring a complete and accurate inventory of recreational opportunities, a Municipal Questionnaire was sent out to each of the County’s 45 municipalities asking for information concerning parks and recreation. Twenty-seven of the municipalities responded. The questionnaire asked each municipality specific questions in regard to their recreational facilities, operations, and administration. The data collected from the responses is used throughout this chapter as local parks and recreation are described. The detailed responses in the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A, B, and E.

The *Recreation Inventory Map* on page 45 shows that there is a good distribution of local parks throughout the County. In an effort to analyze this distribution more thoroughly, we used the County’s six Planning Regions.

Northwest Planning Region – Parker City; Hovey, Bradys Bend, Sugarcreek, and Washington Townships

Northeast Planning Region – Dayton and South Bethlehem Boroughs; Madison, Mahoning, Redbank, Pine, Boggs, and Wayne Townships

West Planning Region – Freeport, Worthington, Applewold, and West Kittanning Boroughs; West Franklin, East Franklin, North Buffalo, South Buffalo, and Cadogan Townships

Central Planning Region – Kittanning, Ford City, Ford Cliff and Manorville Boroughs; Rayburn and Manor Townships

East Planning Region – Rural Valley, Atwood, and Elderton Boroughs; Valley, Kittanning, Cowanshannock, Plumcreek, and South Bend Townships

South Planning Region – Leechburg, Apollo, and North Apollo Boroughs; Gilpin, Bethel, Parks, Burrell, and Kiskiminetas Townships

The chart to the right shows the distribution of local parks and their total acreage according to the Planning Region in which they are located.

Distribution of local parks by Planning Region	
Northwest	
5 parks	144 acres
Northeast	
6 parks	25 acres
West	
11 parks	175 acres
Central	
6 parks	247 acres
East	
5 parks	50 acres
South	
8 parks	45 acres

The National Recreation and Parks Association published guidelines for the number of acres of park land needed per 1,000 persons in a community. Based on these guidelines, a community needs about eight acres of community park land and two acres of neighborhood park land for every 1,000 residents. The analysis of these guidelines for each planning region, rather than for individual communities, shows that three of the six regions have sufficient park land, while three are deficient; and the south region, which has the greatest population, also has the greatest deficiency of park land.

Planning Region	2000 Population	Guideline for acres required	Current Park Acreage	Surplus/Deficiency
Northwest	4,821	48 acres	144	96-acre surplus
Northeast	7,323	73 acres	25	48-acre deficiency
West	16,247	162 acres	175	13-acre surplus
Central	15,093	150 acres	247	97-acre surplus
East	11,001	110 acres	50	60-acre deficiency
South	17,907	179 acres	45	134-acre deficiency

Individual facilities in each park are ranked poor, fair, or good according to their condition. Facilities in most parks fall into the good or fair ranking; however, there are a sizeable number that are ranked as poor. The fair and poor classifications indicate that there are safety concerns at these parks. Those that received a fair or poor ranking should be scheduled for repairs or upgrades.

All public facilities are required to be compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This includes all parks and recreation facilities. Specifically, recreation facilities must comply with the *ADA Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities*. These guidelines include a section dealing with parks and recreation facilities. Currently, none of the parks in the County are completely compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It should be a priority to bring each park into compliance with ADA. The responsibility to do this lies with the property owner or lessee.

In addition to conducting a general inventory of facilities and conditions, each municipality was given the option to have the consultant conduct a playground safety audit of their playgrounds. Twelve communities consented to having this done. A playground safety audit evaluates the playground equipment, as well as the conditions and amenities in and around the play area. The evaluation is based on safety standards established by the National Playground Safety Institute and are conducted by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector. In addition to identifying safety hazards, the audits also make specific recommendations for correcting the deficiencies. Results of these safety audits have been provided to the individual municipalities for their use. Because the audits specifically identify known safety hazards that effect children, the recommendations for repairs and/or replacement should be a high priority for each municipality.



Currently there are three public outdoor swimming pools that serve the entire County. The County-owned Belmont Pool is located in the western portion of the County, in East Franklin Township. Gilpin/Leechburg and Apollo pools are both in the southern section of the County; Gilpin/Leechburg Pool in Gilpin Township, and Apollo Pool in Kiskiminetas Township. Each is operated by a separate non-profit organization. All three of the swimming pools are in good condition and serve significant population areas. Some upgrades would be warranted to keep them in good working order and to provide additional amenities desired by today’s swimmers.

A fourth pool is located in Freeport Park in South Buffalo Township; however, it has been closed for several years. With the population distribution of Armstrong County, it is not likely that additional swimming pools could be financially

successful. Additionally, a swimming pool is located in Redbank Park in Clarion County, just north of South Bethlehem, which serves residents of northern Armstrong County.

School facilities play a vital role in parks and recreation throughout the County. Twenty of the counties public schools have recreation facilities located on their properties. Many of those facilities are open to the public for general usage when they are not being used for school activities. However, the public input from this plan suggested that all schools need to be made available for public use. This was a high priority among many County residents.

Several communities are working together or with local school districts to provide recreational facilities and services on a multi-municipal basis. Gilpin Township and Leechburg Borough share a 24-acre park; Leechburg also shares its football stadium with the school district; Freeport Borough leases their football stadium to the school district; Worthington Borough and West Franklin Township share a 4-acre park for basketball, baseball, and tennis; and Apollo-Ridge School District utilizes the football stadium that is owned by the Borough of Apollo.

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

Once the planning is complete, a higher grant priority is given to the participating communities to improve and expand their facilities according to the recommendations of the plan. The Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development could work with local communities to encourage planning and development of park projects on a multi-municipal level. This will provide a better opportunity for these municipalities to receive grant funding from the State.

In the 2007-2008 DCNR Grants Program, communities of fewer than 5,000 residents can receive up to \$20,000 in grant funds with no local match required. A fifty percent match is required for grant funding above \$20,000. According to the 2000 Census Data, all municipalities in the County have fewer than 5,000 residents. Each municipality should take full advantage of this funding source to begin local park improvements.

For larger development projects, DCNR requires a local match of 50% of the project cost. The local match can include both cash and non-cash contributions.

The inventory of local recreation facilities also compares certain types of recreation facilities to national guidelines. These include basketball, volleyball, and tennis courts; baseball, softball, soccer, and football fields; swimming pools; and picnic shelters. This comparison includes facilities located at local parks, as well as school facilities. NRPA Standards are established as guidelines for the number of facilities required for each 1,000 residents. The final number of facilities should ultimately be determined by local demand. For instance, although the NRPA Standards recommend one basketball court per 1,000 residents, a community may find that its residents especially enjoy basketball and require more courts than the standard recommends. On the other hand, a community may not have the demand for the number of picnic shelters recommended by the standards. The municipality should develop more or less facilities as determined by the demand.

In determining the facility deficiencies in Armstrong County, all parks, as well as school facilities are counted as being available for public use. NRPA Standards show the following deficiencies in each planning region:

Planning Region	Facility	Number of Deficiencies
Northwest	Soccer fields	1
Northeast	Soccer fields	3
	Football fields	1 (but one is available at the Redbank Valley School District in New Bethlehem)
	Baseball	1
West	Picnic shelters	6
	Football fields	1
	Softball	2
Central	Volleyball courts	2
	Soccer fields	5
	Softball fields	6
	Picnic shelters	2
East	Volleyball courts	1
	Soccer fields	1
South	Basketball courts	1
	Tennis courts	1
	Volleyball courts	4
	Baseball fields	1
	Softball fields	4
	Soccer fields	7
	Football fields	2

It is clear from the chart that the South and Central regions have the greatest deficiencies of facilities.

A complete inventory of local recreation facilities and school recreation facilities is located in Appendix A, B and C.

The two maps on the following pages identify the locations of each recreation facility in Armstrong County and the school facilities.

Insert “Recreation Inventory” 11x17 map here

Insert “Education Resources & School Recreation Inventory” 11x17 map here

PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAM PROVIDERS

Numerous agencies, organizations, businesses, and municipalities provide a variety of recreational programming for residents of Armstrong County.

BELMONT COMPLEX

The Belmont Complex is the only Armstrong County-owned recreation facility. The facility houses an ice skating rink, outdoor swimming pool, sand volleyball court, and a community room. Various recreational programs are offered by the Belmont Complex at each of these facilities.

Programming at the Ice Rink

- Learn to Skate
- Youth Hockey
- Figure Skating
- Public Skating
- Ice Rink Rentals
- Goalie Clinic
- Lacrosse Clinic (off-season)

Programming at the Swimming Pool

- Swimming Lessons
- Swim Team
- Diving Lessons
- Water Aerobics
- Public Swimming

Community Programs

- SummerFEST
- Children's Fair
- Community Day
- ARMtech Showcase
- Veteran's Expo

Additionally, the community room is available for rent for birthday parties, family gatherings, wedding receptions, bridal and baby showers, community events, educational seminars, and more.



ARMSTRONG COUNTY YMCA

The biggest individual provider of recreational programming in the County is the Armstrong County YMCA. The YMCA is a private, non-profit recreation facility. It is supported by membership fees, program fees, partnerships, fundraising, and contributions. The Armstrong County YMCA is located in downtown Kittanning. Its facilities include a swimming pool, gymnasium, fitness center, racquetball court, locker rooms, and class-rooms.



The YMCA offers a well balanced series of recreational programming for all ages and interests. While the majority of their programming takes place at the YMCA, they lead cooperative programs at the Belmont Complex and the Armstrong School District. Typical programming that is available through the Armstrong County YMCA includes the following.

Swimming

- Swimming Lessons
- Lap Swimming
- Aqua Aerobics
- H2O Workout
- Aqua Wavers
- Water Fitness

Special Events

- Fall Classic 10K Race, 5K Run/Walk
- Parent's Day Off
- Autumn Harvest Festival

Pre-School Programs

- Y-Tots
- Gymboree
- Kindermusik
- Tumbling and gymnastics
- Pre-School Swim Lessons

Youth Programs

- Youth Karate & Martial Arts
- Youth Judo
- Fall Soccer
- Spring Soccer
- Soccer Camp
- Basketball Skills Camp
- Youth Swim Lessons
- Tumbling and Gymnastics
- Kid's Club
- Beyond The Bell
- Y-Play Days

Health & Fitness

- Early Bird Cycling
- Boot Camp
- Yoga
- Cardio Kick Boxing
- Total Body Workout
- Line Dancing

Active Older Adults

- AOA Weight Room Fitness Program
- Y-Walkers
- Silver Sneakers I & II

Adult Programs

- Basketball
- Racquetball
- Wallyball
- Karate
- Noon Basketball
- Beginners Knitting

Special Programs

- Guard Start
- Dog Obedience
- Baby Sitting

HEALTHY ARMSTRONG

HEALTHY Armstrong is a cooperative effort to encourage healthy eating and active lifestyles among children. Partners include the Armstrong County Hospital Foundation, Children's Community Pediatrics, Belmont Complex, Armstrong County YMCA, and the Armstrong School District. The effort was begun in 2007 as a pilot program for the Armstrong School District. The success of the program will likely bring it into other Armstrong County school districts in 2008.

HEALTHY stands for Healthy Eating and Active Lifestyles Together Helping Youth. The program uses the National Institutes of Health We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition) curriculum materials to focus on increasing physical activity, improving food choices, and reducing screen (TV, video games, etc.) time.

It emphasizes wellness through a monthly newsletter that provides helpful nutritional tips, suggestions for physical activity, and strategies for weight management. Other health-related activities include the development of in-school wellness programs and snack-making advice from a nutritionist. The coalition distributed pedometers for students to keep track of their level of activity and sponsored several community walking events.

With its main focus on the health of the community, the HEALTHY Armstrong program has coordinated with the Allegheny Valley Land Trust to encourage use of the Armstrong Trail. The schools conduct some of their physical

education classes, along with after school wellness events on the trail. AVLTT schedules seasonal walks for students and families on the trail to exercise and interpreted the history and land uses near the trail. They are trying to instill a sense of ownership of the trail in students by encouraging them to volunteer on the trail and to assist with school projects related to the trail. Through a cooperative effort between the Armstrong School District and the AVLTT, mile markers are being built and installed along sections of the trail.

The local coalition is currently developing a HEALTHY Armstrong website that will launch in April.

OTHER RECREATION PROGRAM PROVIDERS

A host of youth sports organizations throughout the County run leagues, camps, and clinics for baseball, softball, soccer, and football. Many municipalities assist the sports organizations with technical assistance, free use of facilities, publicity, and general support.

Several community organizations offer programming as well. For instance:

- Redbank Township, a non-profit recreation organization, provides men's softball
- South Bethlehem supports the Redbank Valley Park
- The Apollo Community Association provides special events in the community
- Fort Armstrong Horseman's Association offers equestrian programs at Crooked Creek Horse Park in Manor Township

Conservation and trail organizations such as the Allegheny Valley Land Trust, Cowanshannock Watershed Association, Roaring Run Watershed Association, and the Crooked Creek ELC provide a variety of programming to Armstrong County residents.

Most of the school districts in Armstrong County offer some combination of the following recreational programming: interscholastic sports programs, after-school activities, school clubs, fitness activities, and after-school academic programs.

Finally, a vast array of private businesses provides recreational opportunities. These include golf courses, outdoor outfitters, boat liveries, bowling alleys, fitness facilities, and many more.

According to the Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Questionnaire that was distributed as part of this study, the greatest number of residents participate in community special events, swimming, art/music/theater, youth outdoor sports, and adult outdoor sports. The top five programs that Armstrong residents would participate in if they were provided are: 1) nature and environmental activities; 2) art/music/theater; 3) arts and crafts; 4) adult outdoor sports; 5) adult indoor sports.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY TRAIL INVENTORY

ARMSTRONG TRAIL

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

The Armstrong Trail is a non-motorized recreational trail that is open to the public for walking, jogging, biking, and cross county skiing. The southern



end of the improved section of the Armstrong Trail begins in Rosston, ¼ mile north of the PA Fish & Boat Commission boat launch and parking lot, and travels into Ford City. The Armstrong Trail in Ford City is a paved asphalt surface and passes adjacent to the former PPG property, and various waterfront industrial properties to the west and Memorial park to the east.

From Ford City to Kittanning, the Trail is a mixture of crushed limestone surface and local streets. In Kittanning, the trail travels through a portion of the central business district and past the Armstrong County Courthouse. It becomes a crushed limestone surface north of Kittanning, traveling along the bank of the Allegheny River. The trail extends another 1.4 miles until being directed onto S.R. 1033 for one eighth of a mile by the mouth of Cowanshannock Creek.

Located by the mouth of Cowanshannock Creek is parking at the Bernard Snyder Picnic Area and Trailhead, Canfield-Holmes Sanctuary, and the PA Fish & Boat Commission Boat Launch and Parking Lot. This location is a favorite fishing area, and is also an access point for the Cowanshannock Trail. From this location, the trail has another 5.5 miles of newly developed trail of a crushed sandstone surface. The trail travels over Pine Creek, through the village of Mosgrove, past a parking area and trailhead at Lock & Dam #8, and along PA State Game Land #287, just south of Templeton. This section of the trail provides many interesting things to see, such as the Monticello Furnace, the Army Corps of Engineers Lock & Dam #8, and impressive wetlands.

The Armstrong Trail's next trailhead is located at the PA Fish & Boat Commission Boat Launch and Parking Lot in Templeton. This improved section travels north for one mile to Mahoning Creek. The next trail improvement planned is to extend north of Mahoning Creek. For further information, access the Armstrong Rails to Trails Association on the internet at www.armstrongtrail.org.

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

BAKER TRAIL

The Baker Trail is considered by many as Armstrong County's premiere hiking trail, traversing from Freeport to the Allegheny National Forest. The counties that its path navigates are Armstrong, Clarion, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, McKean, and Warren. Baker Trail was established in 1950 and named for the late Pittsburgh attorney, Horace Forbes Baker. It originally extended from Aspinwall to Cook Forest State Park (133 miles). However, extensive development along the Allegheny River caused the Aspinwall-Freeport section to be abandoned. In 1971, the trail was extended northward from Cook Forest Fire Tower into Allegheny National Forest, making the trail 141 miles long.

This hiking trail follows forest paths and old jeep trails and dirt roads through woods, game lands, and farmlands and is marked by yellow blazes. Eighteen miles of the trail share a footpath with the North Country Scenic Trail. Currently, there are nine campsites with open front Adirondack shelters located on side trails. There are no signs pointing to the shelters, so they must be located by consulting the Baker Trail Guide. Besides the shelters, there are primitive campsites along the trail where tents can be used. For further information access the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy on the internet at www.rachelcarsontrails.org

Source: Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, Armstrong County Tourist Bureau

GREAT SHAMOKIN PATH

Built along the Rural Valley Railroad, the Great Shamokin Path is named after the path that once linked the Allegheny and Susquehanna Rivers and ran from Kittanning to Sunbury.

The Great Shamokin Path is a hiking and bicycle trail running for 4 miles between NuMine and Rose Valley. The trail is parallel to the Cowanshannock Creek.

This mostly grass-covered trail climbs steadily through the Cowanshannock Creek Valley past the Devil's Washbasin, a 1.5-acre lake named for a dam across the creek to obtain water for steam engines – always smoky, steamy, and eerie looking. The lake is stocked with fish and offers ice fishing and picnicking. Just off Route 85, trailheads for the Great Shamokin Path exist 1/2 mile down Margaret Road on North Street in Yatesboro (by the Little League ballfield), on S. Water Street in rural Valley,

on White Oak Road in Meredith, and on Center Street in NuMine at the NuMine ballfield. For further information access the Cowanshannock Creek Watershed Association on the internet at www.cowanshannock.org

Source: Cowanshannock Creek Watershed Association, Armstrong County Tourist Bureau

COWANSHANNOCK TRAIL

The 1.27 mile trail is located in Bernard C. Snyder Picnic Area. The trail surface is both paved and dirt. Several trail spurs lead to off-trail locations within the Park. The trail follows the Cowanshannock Creek to the Buttermilk Falls Bridge, and on to Buttermilk Falls. It travels along the former Pennsylvania Railroad bed that led to and from old clay and coal mines. Visible signs of the former railroad bed and the dynamite shed can still be seen in some locations along the trail.

Source: www.cowanshannock.org/

ROARING RUN TRAIL & ROCK FURNACE TRAIL

The Roaring Run Recreation Area is owned and operated by the Roaring Run Watershed Association. Founded in 1982, the Association's mission is to restore land which has suffered environmental damage, and to protect unspoiled tracts from unwarranted development. This 653-acre property is open to the public year-round, from dawn to dusk, and includes both Rattling Run and Roaring Run natural areas. Waterfalls, huge boulders, and tree-covered hills make the area ideal for picnics, hiking and the enjoyment of nature.



Over 15 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails exist throughout the property, as well the two primary surfaced trails, the “Roaring Run Trail” and the “Rock Furnace Trail”. The first 3.5 miles of Roaring Run Trail are hard packed limestone. The remaining 15 miles are railroad ballast and logging road and are suitable for mountain biking and hiking. The trail ends in the town of Edmon. Rock Furnace Trail is a 1.5-mile, hard surfaced trail that joins the Roaring Run Trail at the 1.5-mile mark. This trail passes through the beautiful Roaring Run Valley, where many small waterfalls and huge rocks can be found. The remains of the first iron furnace in the Kiskiminetas Valley can be found across the trail from the huge “Camel Back Rock”.

Also part of the Roaring Run Recreation Area is 4-acre Derwood Beers Community Park, with a pond, pavilion, and picnic area. The Association acquired an additional 62 acres of land at the mouth of Roaring Run, which has been named the “Arcadia Natural Area.”

The Roaring Run Trailhead is located in Apollo on Kiski Avenue/Canal Road. The Roaring Run Trail and the lower ½-mile of the Rock Furnace Trail are suitable for persons with disabilities. A canoeing/kayaking launch for Kiskiminetas River access is also located at the Roaring Run Trailhead. There is a parking area for 105 vehicles. Picnic tables and a pavilion are also at the trailhead. For further information, access the Roaring Run Watershed Association on the internet at www.roaringrun.org.

Source: Roaring Run Watershed Association, Armstrong County Tourist Bureau

LANEVILLE SECTION OF THE BUTLER TO FREEPORT TRAIL

Freeport Borough entered into a 20-year lease with Buffalo Township for 3.5 miles of right-of-way which connects to the rest of the Butler to Freeport Trail into Butler. The borough used grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources’ (DCNR) Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2) and the PA Department of Transportation, Transportation Enhancement Grant to pave part of the 3.5 miles, clear the right-of-way, install a 10-foot, stone trail along Buffalo Creek, add two parking areas, and install split rail fence and benches. These 3.5 miles connect with almost 3 miles of the Butler to Freeport Trail that runs under the Route 28 Bridge to Monroe Road in

Buffalo Township. This area is relatively level, provides over 6 miles of trail along beautiful Buffalo Creek, and is used by hikers and bikers most every day.

Source: James M. Seagriff Jr., Freeport Council President

KISKI RIVER TRAIL

The Kiski River Water Trail travels approximately 86 miles, flowing through Somerset, Cambria, Indiana, Westmoreland, and Armstrong Counties before emptying into the Allegheny River. There are 11 designated public river access points from Freeport in Armstrong County to Greenhouse Park in Somerset County. Launch points in Armstrong County include Freeport, Leechburg, and Roaring Run Watershed Association's access southeast of Apollo. The remainder of the access points are at Avonmore, Riverside Park in Saltsburg, Conemaugh Dam, Blairsville, Bolivar (100 yards upstream on Tubmill Creek), Seward, and at Greenhouse Park. Riverside Park, Conemaugh Dam, and Greenhouse Park are the only river access points to have restrooms, drinking water, and picnic areas, with Greenhouse Park also providing for overnight camping. The Kiski is a good novice and family canoe and kayak river. Float speed is approximately 2 to 3 miles per hour with leisurely paddling. Inexperienced and novice canoeists should take precautions on the Johnstown-to-Seward section due in part to its length and the rapids at Findley Run, which can be portaged. Some access points are "primitive," which means they are more suitable for canoes and car-top boats to be carried to the water from a parking area, and are primarily a carry-in and parking area. Fishing is also popular along various stretches of the River, with fair numbers of smallmouth bass, yellow perch, and sunfish. The lower stretches (from Apollo downstream) are producing walleyes, sauger, and a wide variety of fish.

http://www.fish.state.pa.us/watertrails/kiski/kiski_conemaugh_guide_map.pdf

NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL

The North Country National Scenic Trail is a premier footpath that stretches for about 4,600 miles linking communities, forests, and prairies across seven northern states, with more than 1,800 miles being certified for off-road use. Additional miles follow shared paths, and some road walks yet remain. Pennsylvania claims 104 miles of the North Country Trail [NCT]. Ninety-five miles of the meander through the rolling hills and stream valleys of the Allegheny National Forest. Marked with blue paint and/or plastic nailed blazes and routed wooden signs, this northwestern Pennsylvania trail is one of the more established along the route of the NCT. The trail is not clearly established in Armstrong County at its designated crossing section at Parker, PA. The North Country Trail website considers the trail-section from the eastern Butler County border to the southwestern Clarion County Border which runs through Armstrong County at Parker, PA as a temporary connector. This section is not yet established with a designated trailway, and for the near future a hiker will have to use county maps from Clarion and Butler Counties to find the way across low-use roads to the next steppingstone.

Source: <http://www.northcountrytrail.org/pa/>

REGIONAL RECREATION FACILITIES LOCATED WITHIN ARMSTRONG COUNTY

MAHONING CREEK LAKE AND DAM

145 Dam Site Road
New Bethlehem, PA 16242
Ph: 814-257-8811

Owned and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mahoning Creek Lake is situated among steep-sided valleys and forested hillsides. Boating and fishing, hiking, camping, and picnicking are a few of the outdoor activities that can be enjoyed. Boating on Mahoning Creek Lake is limited to 10 horsepower, and swimming is not permitted in the lake.

Canoeists, fishing enthusiasts, and persons using small boats can enjoy the more peaceful and relaxed atmosphere that is characteristic of the lake and upstream sections of the creek. Boaters can also enjoy floating Mahoning Creek as it makes its way toward the Allegheny River.

In the area near the dam, the Corps maintains facilities for the public's enjoyment. Picnickers can relax in one of Mahoning's tree-shaded picnic areas, complete with modern restrooms, grills, picnic tables, playground facilities, an overlook, and walking trails. The Outflow Area is accessible for persons with disabilities and includes a restroom, pavilion, picnic sites, and fishing access. The Corps of Engineers leases 860 acres of the project lands and waters to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, encompassing the main body of the lake and its adjoining lands, including the Milton Loop Boat Launch and the Sportsman's Area. Armstrong County leases 28 acres from the Corps to operate the Milton Loop Campground. A 52-site campground has modern restrooms and a sanitary disposal station. Some of the campground is available for seasonal camping.

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District

KEYSTONE LAKE

Keystone Lake comprises 850 acres stretching 5.5 miles and is the largest lake in Armstrong County. The lake has two formal boat launches at NuMine (north shore) – off of Route 85 at White Oak Road, and Atwood (south shore) – off of Route 210 at the village of Atwood. There are also several primitive access areas around the lake. The lake contains shallows and wetlands and gets as deep as 90 feet. The lake is owned and operated by Reliant Energy as a cooling water supply for Keystone Power Plant, is open for public use, and is controlled by the PA Fish & Boat Commission. No swimming is allowed in the lake, but boats up to 9.9 horsepower are allowed. Keystone Lake provides an excellent warm water fishery with large and small mouth bass, walleye, muskellunge, and (stocked) trout. The lake is considered a Trophy Bass Lake, where professional bass fishing tournaments have been held. Several thousand acres surrounding the lake are open to hunting. If winter weather conditions permit, Keystone Lake is an excellent place for ice fishing.

Source: Armstrong County Tourist Bureau.

CROOKED CREEK LAKE AND DAM

114 Park Main Road
Ford City, PA 16226
Ph: 724-763-3161

Crooked Creek Lake is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project, where visitors are invited to discover the scenic beauty of the 2,664 acres of woodland property and the recreational lake. Located south of Ford City and east off of Rt. 66, Crooked Creek Lake lies among the hills of western Pennsylvania and is an ideal setting for year-round outdoor activities. Visitors will find they can pursue a variety of outdoor activities at the lake with its numerous well maintained facilities.

The lake and its miles of scenic shoreline provide unlimited opportunities for water-based recreation. A boat launch with ample trailer parking is available for boating and water-skiing enthusiasts. Swimmers and sunbathers will especially appreciate the lake's sandy, peninsula beach. A great variety and abundance of fish can be found in the lake, and picnicking is offered at six centrally located picnic areas maintained by the Corps that provides picnic tables and charcoal grills.

THE CROOKED CREEK ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER

The Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center (ELC) is located near Crooked Creek Lake is operated by the Armstrong Educational Trust and is leased from the U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers. The Center is dedicated to promoting environmental education and resource conservation. It is funded by grants, user fees, donations and sponsors.

The ELC consists of two buildings set on 31 acres of park, meadow and forest. The main building holds a multi-purpose room with a fully equipped kitchen, a dormitory with overnight accommodations, and a lodge-style great room housing an extensive collection of mounted animals. The second building holds a conference room, kitchen office space, and storage. It features its own interpretive trail and herb garden and is developing an ADA accessible trail.

The ELC offers programs for the public and works with schools to provide environmental education. As a multi-use facility, the ELC is also available to organized groups and businesses for meetings, workshops and retreats. Some of the visiting groups include students from elementary, high school and collegiate programs from several counties whose learning is enhanced by hands-on participation as well as instructional and research programs. Adult learners have participated in community programs such as beekeeping, wilderness survival, and seasonal nature hikes.

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District; www.crookedcreekelc.org and www.lrp.usace.army.mil/rec/lakes/crookedc.htm.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE GAME LANDS

The Pennsylvania Game Commission owns and manages, for wildlife and people, more than 1.4 million acres of State Game Lands [SGL] throughout the Commonwealth. SGL #'s 105, 137, 247, 259, and 287 are open and available to the public in Armstrong County.

These state game lands are identified on the inventory map on page 45.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Designated Routes

For each Pennsylvania Game Commission region, there is a list of designated routes for horses and bicycles. These route designations are in compliance with State Game Lands use regulations that went into effect on February 1, 2003. Under the new regulations, anyone who rides a non-motorized vehicle, conveyance, or animal on State Game Lands must do so only on designated routes. Such riding activities will not be permitted, except on Sundays or on roads open to public travel, from the last Saturday in September to the third Saturday in January, and after 1 p.m. from the second Saturday in April to the last Saturday in May. This does not apply to anyone lawfully engaged in hunting, trapping, or fishing on State Game Lands.

Game Land #/Municipality/ Location/Acreage		
Game Land #	Municipality	Acreage
105	Bradys Bend Sugar Creek Washington	3,068.65
137	South Bethlehem	945.49
247	North Buffalo	452.30
259	Sugar Creek Worthington	351.36
287	Boggs Madison Pine	2,005.21

Designated Routes

SGL #105

2.1 miles - From a gate on the north side of the township road (T-148), northward down an interior Game Lands road to a state road (SR4009) at Daman Industries; Bradys Bend Township

SGL #137

2.3 miles - From the Game Lands parking lot on west side of routes 28 & 66, follow the interior Game Lands road through gate; route has spur to right and second spur to left off right spur; all routes end prior to herbaceous openings; return to beginning via same route; Mahoning Township

SGL #247

1.1 miles - From game land parking lot past Game Commission maintenance buildings, follow Game Lands road to pond where the route ends; North Buffalo Township

No Pennsylvania Game Commission Designated Routes are located on SGL #259 or #287.

Pennsylvania Game Commission Snowmobile Trails

The following list is of the designated routes for snowmobile use on State Game Lands. These routes are open, provided there is sufficient snow, from the third Sunday in January through April 1. Riders may only use snowmobiles that are registered and display valid registration decal as required under 75 Pa.C.S. § § 7711.1 and 7711.2 (relating to registration of snowmobile or ATV, and limited registration of snowmobile or ATV).

SGL #105

6 miles - Trail No. 1 - Entrance to Game Lands at Heppenstall Spray Welding Plant at the intersection of State Route 68 and Legislative Route 03027, 1.5 miles west of Bradys Bend, to the intersection of Township Route 418, a distance of approximately 1 mile

Trail No. 2 - The West Penn power line and service road from Bradys Bend Cemetery to the intersection of Township Route 440

SGL #137

2 miles - Entrance off west side of State Routes 66 and 28, approximately 1/2 mile north of Distant, starting at parking lot, the trail loops to same parking lot

SGL #247

3 miles - Starting at parking lot on Legislative Route 03010, the marked trail loops back to same parking lot

Habitat Management

Improving wildlife habitat has long been a major objective of the Game Commission almost since the agency was created in 1895. In fact, the agency spends millions of dollars annually on habitat work on State Game Lands to benefit wildlife. The agency's 1.4 million acres of State Game Lands comprise roughly five percent of the Commonwealth's landscape and is spread out over more than 600 parcels in 65 of our 67 counties. While this may seem like a lot, when viewed in context of the entire Commonwealth, it is easy to see how the agency's ability to provide the necessary habitat for all of the State's wildlife, on State Game Lands alone, is impossible.

Many Pennsylvania landowners have contacted the Game Commission to express their interest in doing something in their backyards, woodlots, or on their farms to make their properties more attractive to wildlife. The habitat projects conducted on State Game Lands can serve as the model for other public and private lands. The agency would very much like to share this information with interested landowners for the benefit of wildlife. More information is available by accessing the agency website at: www.pgc.state.pa.us, or by contacting the Southwest Regional Office at 724/238-9523, 4820 Route 711, Bolivar, PA 15923.

REGIONAL RECREATION FACILITIES LOCATED OUTSIDE ARMSTRONG COUNTY

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

Regional Parks outside of Armstrong County

7 State Parks
1 National Forest
1 State Forest
9 County Parks
(Butler, Indiana, Westmoreland, Allegheny)
3 Other Regional Parks
10 Regional Trails
5 State Game Lands

PENNSYLVANIA STATE PARKS

Yellow Creek State Park

Located in Indiana County, this park is named for Yellow and Little Yellow creeks, which create the park's lake. Yellow Creek Lake is 720 acres and has multiple boat launching ramps and a beach. The lake's beach is 800 feet long, with picnic tables and adjacent parking for over 4,000 people. For the hiker there is Laurel Run Trail, a 0.5-mile loop; Ridgetop Trail a challenging 2-mile course; and Damsite Trail, which stretches 2.5 miles and offers a view of the Yellow Creek dam. Yellow Creek State Park is along one of the first "highways" in the state, the historical Kittanning Path. The park has six cottages for rental along the lakeshore near McFeather's Cove; and educational programs are offered at the Environmental Learning Classroom near Dragonfly Pond.

Moraine State Park

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

Jennings Environmental Education Center

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

Cook Forest State Park

Cook Forest is an 8,500-acre heavily forested park in northeastern Clarion County. Once called the "Black Forest," the area is famous for its stands of old growth forest. Cook Forest's "Forest Cathedral" of towering white pines and hemlocks is a National Natural Landmark. The Clarion River is along the eastern border of the park and is popular for canoeing and rafting. Cook Forest has 27 marked trails, crossing through rugged terrain, rolling hills, and cool valley streams. Special scenic areas are the Fire Tower at Seneca Point and the Clarion River. Overnight camping is permitted in the campground or cabin areas. Cook Forest also holds part of the 141-mile Baker Trail and the North Country National Scenic Trail. The Baker Trail runs from Freeport, in southern Armstrong County, to the Allegheny National Forest.

Clear Creek State Park

To the northeast of Armstrong County in Jefferson County, Clear Creek encompasses just over 1,676 acres and occupies a scenic portion of the Clear Creek Valley. The park has a 180-foot sand beach with swimming available in a small man-made lake. There are about 25 miles of well maintained trails throughout the park, with a 0.5-mile exercise trail in the large cabin area. The Clarion River provides excellent canoeing as a class "C" waterway, with an average downward flow of four miles per hour. A popular canoe trip, lasting about 4.5 hours, spans the ten miles from Clear Creek to Cook Forest State Park.

Laurel Ridge State Park

Set on the southeastern border of Indiana County, Laurel Ridge spans over 13,625 acres along Laurel Mountain from the picturesque Youghiogheny River at Ohiopyle to the Conemaugh Gorge near Johnstown. This large park ties into Cambria, Fayette, Somerset, and Westmoreland Counties. The main draw to the park is the 70-mile Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail, which features trail shelters for overnight camping.

Keystone State Park

This 1,200-acre tract of land in Westmoreland County is a known destination for great day-trips and family vacations year-round. Camping, modern cabins, many trails, and a lake are all within walking distance and provide an ideal setting for wildlife watching or outdoor adventures. The park is within easy driving distance from southern Armstrong County. Boating is allowed on 78-acre Keystone Lake, with electric motors only. The lake supports warm- and cold-water fishing, with trout stockings throughout the year. A sand beach is open during the summer.

NATIONAL FOREST

Allegheny National Forest

The Allegheny National Forest [ANF] covers more than 500,000 acres. The forest offers over 1,000 miles of hiking, biking, and horseback riding trails. Swimming, boating, and fishing are available in the Clarion, Allegheny, and Tionesta Rivers. The Forest has more than 600 miles of trails and roads specifically available to mountain biking enthusiasts. During the 1920's, recreation focused mostly on dispersed activities like hunting and fishing. In the 1930's, the Civilian Conservation Corps built Twin Lakes and Loleta Recreation Areas in the ANF. The creation of the Allegheny Reservoir, when the Kinzua Dam was completed in 1965, brought new recreational opportunities to the ANF. By the mid-1970's campgrounds, boat launches, beaches, picnic areas, hiking trails, and overlooks around the reservoir shoreline were developed in the Forest.

PENNSYLVANIA STATE FOREST

Clear Creek State Forest

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

COUNTY PARKS

Alameda Park of the Butler County Parks and Recreation Department

This park operates year-round, bringing the residents of Butler County quality, affordable, recreational opportunities. The mission of the Butler County Parks and Recreation Department is to provide safe, clean, and beautiful facilities, parks, and open spaces, along with professionally managed leisure activities for all people. Services are provided to enrich the quality of life for local citizens and to provide economic value through facilities which create tourism and encourage long-term community stability and growth.

Boyce Park

An Allegheny County Park dedicated in 1963, Boyce Park was named after William D. Boyce, the founder of the Boy Scouts, who was born in the area. It is the only location for downhill skiing in the County, with ski lifts, The Four Seasons ski lodge, and all the amenities. There is also a large recreational complex and a wave pool. Allegheny County Community College occupies part of the original park property. As much as half of the park is still undeveloped, but long-range plans call for the restoration of the Carpenter homestead - a log house, spring house and barn - and an interpretive center on the life of the pioneers.

Deer Lakes Park

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

Harrison Hills Park

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

Hartwood Park

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

North Park

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

Blue Spruce Park

This 650 acre tract of land in Crooked Creek Watershed, in Indiana County was established in 1966, though recreation use of the site first occurred in the early part of the century, with Cummings Dam being constructed in 1908. Purchase of the original park land (377 acres) was completed by 1966, and work on clearing the site and dredging the dam area was started. An additional 41 acres was acquired in 1981. Another 232 acres was added to the park in 2001. An historical marker honoring Bernice Gera is located in the park. Gera was the first female umpire to work in a professional baseball league. The park has four pavilions and two lodges. Other features include two playgrounds, a volleyball court, horseshoe court, areas for games and sports, and a 12-acre lake stocked with trout. The park also contains six miles of hiking and cross-country skiing trails.

Pine Ridge Park

Located in Indiana County, this land was purchased in 1966 and 1967 primarily with federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grants. At 635 acres, the park provides a variety of recreation options, with much of it remaining in a natural state with large stands of mature hardwoods. Tom's Run, a scenic mountain stream, intersects the park, with several miles of hiking and cross-country trails. The Run area features picnic tables, playgrounds, and two pavilions. Pine Lodge is located in the park and features a kitchen, activity rooms, a deck, and two stone fireplaces. A two-acre pond is available for catch-and-release fishing.

Northmoreland Park

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

OTHER REGIONAL RECREATION FACILITIES

Todd Nature Reserve

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

Beaver Creek Project

Beaver Creek Project, in Clarion County, contains 1,000 acres of public land. In existence for almost 20 years, part of the property is owned by the County. The other areas are owned through a local group known as the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife, which is overseen by the Beaver Creek Committee. It is, in part, a refuge of sorts, so that animals have preserved open space; but it is also open for Pennsylvania's hunting seasons.

Reynlow Park

Reynlow Park is on 576 wooded acres in Jefferson County, located off Rt. 310 on Reynlow Park Road. The park offers four pavilions, playgrounds, volleyball courts, and camping facilities that accommodate any event from reunions and graduations to weddings. It is an enjoyable destination for families to experience a leisurely day out. Reynlow's game lands are also open to hunting during the regular hunting seasons.

REGIONAL TRAILS

Butler-Freeport Trail

This Trail covers 16 miles, with 4 more miles proposed. This crushed limestone-surfaced trail traverses Buffalo, Jefferson, Summit, and Winfield Townships in Butler County, and South Buffalo Township and Freeport in Armstrong County. Trailheads are located at Cabot, Herman, Sarver, Marwood, Monroe, and Freeport. The trail is closed to motor vehicles, and equestrians are asked to ride along the side of the trail.

Rachel Carson Trail

Rachel Carson Trail is located in Allegheny County northeast of Pittsburgh. Its length spans 35.7 miles from Harrison Hills County Park



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

Treadway Trail

This Trail is located in Westmoreland County along the east side of the Allegheny River. Treadway presently stretches for 2.5 miles. The surface is ballast, and no motor vehicles are permitted.

West Penn Trail

West Penn Trail has 12 miles located in Indiana and Westmoreland Counties, with trailheads at Saltsburg and at the Westinghouse Specialty metals plant near Blairsville. The Saltsburg section has rock dust/pea gravel, Conemaugh has limestone, and the link between Conemaugh and Saltsburg is pea gravel. No motor vehicles are permitted, and horses are permitted only on the Saltsburg section.

Hoodlebug Trail

This Trail is located in Indiana County from Blacklick to Indiana. Six miles of the trail are open, nine miles are proposed, and three are under construction. Trailheads are located at IUP South campus, Homer City Floodway Park, and at Red Barn. The surface is asphalt, with a “no motor vehicles” restriction in place. The trail passes through residential, commercial, and natural settings, providing direct trail access to many local residents and employees of several schools, industries, and small businesses. “Hoodlebug” was the local nickname for the self-propelled passenger coach that ran on the line until 1940.

Mahoning Shadow Trail

This Trail stretches 14 miles from Fordham to Punxsutawney to Winslow in Jefferson County, with one additional mile being proposed. The trail follows the Mahoning Creek for most of its course throughout the Punxsutawney area. Along this limestone packed trail, trailheads can be located at Punxsutawney, Water Street, Indiana Street, Skateboard Park, Cloe Road, Bair Road, and Winslow Road. No motor vehicles or horses are permitted.

Ghost Town Trail

Ghost Town Trail encompasses 16 open trail miles, with 21 proposed, and 6.5 under construction. Located in Indiana and Cambria Counties, The Ghost Town Trail derives its name from numerous mining towns that once existed along the railroad corridor. The surface is crushed limestone, with a restriction of “no motor vehicles” allowed. Permitted are cross-country skiing, horseback riding, bird watching, wild flower walks, and visits to historical sites such as Eliza Iron Furnace (1846-1849). The trail can be accessed in Black Lick Creek Valley from Dilltown, Indiana County to Nanty Glo, Cambria County; Blacklick Township, Jackson Township, Nanty Glo Borough, and Vintondale Borough in Cambria County. Trailheads are located at Dilltown, Wehrum, Rexis, Twin Rocks, Nanty Glo, Heshbron (Rt259), and Saylor Park (Blacklick, PA).

Sandy Creek Trail

Located in Venango County, Sandy Creek trail has eight miles of asphalt surface, seven pedestrian-safe bridges, and a tunnel reconstructed in 2005. The trail winds along East Sandy Creek through hills, valleys, and forests. It runs east and west, crossing over the Allegheny River and the Allegheny River Trail 5 miles south of Franklin. The trail can be

accessed from three major trail heads: 1) in Oil City – across the Allegheny River at the Petroleum Street Bridge, to the Venango Campus of Clarion University, with parking 1/4 mile from the street on a tar-and-chipped surface by a yellow gated trailhead; 2) in Franklin – at the east end of the 8th Street Bridge over the Allegheny River, on PA Route 322; 3) in Brandon – (a relatively remote access) Route 322 to Cranberry, at the intersection with Route 257 at the Cranberry Mall, turn onto the Rockland Road and drive to the Coal City Road to the river.

Samuel Justus Trail and Allegheny River Trail

Located in Venango County, these span 31 miles of flat, smooth, asphalt surface from Oil City to Emlenton except for a ½-mile break at Sunny Slope, which is located 14 miles south of Franklin. These two trails are, in actuality, one continuous trail built on a portion of the old Pennsylvania Railroad that ran from Pittsburgh to Buffalo, NY. The Samuel Justus Trail was built and is maintained by Cranberry Township using a grant from the Samuel Justus Trust Fund. It is the portion from Oil City to Franklin, a distance of 5.3 miles. South of Franklin, the trail was built and is maintained by the Allegheny Valley Trails Association (AVTA) and is called the Allegheny River Trail. The trail is paved from Oil City to Brandon, a distance of 15.5 miles. AVTA owns the railroad grade from Franklin to Emlenton (with some exceptions) - a distance of 30 miles, including tunnels at Kennerdell and Rockland. The Allegheny River Trail, as it runs along a portion of the Armstrong and Clarion County border, has a proposed section from Emlenton to Foxburg, and a completed section from Foxburg to Parker Landing.

The map on page 65 identifies the regional recreation opportunities.

Insert “Regional Recreation Opportunities Inventory” 11x17 map here

Chapter 3: Public Participation



Chapter 3: Public Participation

The public participation process was crucial in understanding the needs and desires of Armstrong County residents. It provided valuable grassroots input that assisted in the development of viable recommendations for the future of parks, recreation, and open space. The public participation process included: public meetings; close work with the project study group; distribution and tabulation of a recreation questionnaire; and personal interviews with key stakeholders and users of the County's recreation facilities.

Providing a variety of venues for resident participation resulted in a holistic understanding of the current state of recreation, parks, and open space; the issues that are important to Armstrong County's residents; and the types of improvements they would like to see.

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

- **There is a need for the County to play a role in County-wide park, recreation, open space, and trail management.**
- **There is support of open space and natural areas preservation.**
- **There is a desire for improved opportunities for recreational use of the County's rivers and waterways.**
- **There is strong support for outdoor recreation providers.**
- **There is support of continued trail development – with connections to regional trails.**
- **There is a desire to utilize the County's natural features to increase tourism to the County.**
- **There is support for the Belmont Complex – for improved facilities and services.**
- **There is a desire to enhance trails and natural resources that support economic development.**
- **There is a need for ATV trails and/or facilities, balanced with the concerns of local property owners.**
- **There is a desire for better utilization of school facilities for public use.**
- **There is support for existing local facilities – they play a strong role in the County.**
- **There is a need for recreational facilities throughout the County.**
- **There is a need for activities and facilities to support youth development.**

Each of the venues of public input provided its own unique perspective on recreation, parks, open space, and greenways. The remainder of this chapter provides a more detailed review of each of the venues of public input. Complete results are included in Appendix F, G, H and I.

THE STUDY COMMITTEE

From the beginning of the planning process, through to the final recommendations, the Study Committee played an important role in the development of this Plan. The committee brought a consistent County-wide focus to the year-and-a-half process. The committee:

- served as a sounding board for ideas generated throughout the planning process
- provided feedback as existing recreation facilities and programs were inventoried
- assisted in the interpretation of the public input
- balanced a multitude of contrasting ideas of what is important to parks and recreation in the County

The committee was comprised of 18 residents of Armstrong County who represented a cross-section of recreation, park, and conservation interests.

The committee began the process by identifying some of the key issues surrounding parks and recreation in the County. The following list identifies the top 16 of those issues.

- There is no county park system in Armstrong County.
- The County needs additional recreation facilities, other than those provided at local schools, or a stronger cooperative effort to enhance the use of school facilities.
- There needs to be improved care and management of existing facilities throughout the County.
- The County should provide assistance for local municipalities on how to develop parks.
- There should be concentration on completing the trail system.
- Maintenance of facilities is tremendously important.
- There are a lot of special interest groups but no overall County-wide direction.
- There is a need for destination points for both residents and for those outside the County. Those that exist need better promotion.
- The County needs legalized trails for ATV use.
- The lack of organized activities at parks deters residents from visiting them.
- Landowners need to be educated about preservation and conservation, while acknowledging their ownership rights.
- Boroughs and townships need to be discussing provision of local recreation.
- There is currently a lack of river access, but some access points are being developed; amenities at these points should be developed as well.
- Acquire, for preservation, natural areas as identified through the inventory portion of this Plan.
- The transit authority should be better utilized for access to recreation.
- Recreation facilities, particularly swimming pools, need to be strategically located throughout the County.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Valuable input from the general public was gathered through regional public meetings. Two rounds of six public meetings each were held across the County. Early in the process, each of the County's six planning regions hosted a meeting to hear from residents about their thoughts, concerns, needs, desires, and issues concerning parks and recreation in the County. As the Plan was nearing completion, a second meeting was held in each of the planning regions to present the findings of the study and the draft recommendations.

PUBLIC MEETINGS – ROUND 1

Throughout the regional meetings, a number of similar suggestions came to light. The issue of ATV trail and use-area development was most often voiced by proponents and opponents alike. County residents were also very adamant about having equal access to recreational program site developments – that in using County tax money, development would occur in a more central County location or in multiple locations which provide similar amenities. Residents also felt it imperative that the County look into measures to insure that promotion of existing and developable County-wide land and water recreational opportunities takes place to attract tourism and increase economic development.



Some of the top issues were:

- trail and land acquisition and development specifically for ATV use
- land acquisition for development of public recreation-use grounds, non-motorized land trails, and water trails
- when developing trails, they should be connected to other regional trail systems

- ATV sites should be developed to attract visitors to the County that will stay overnight.
- ATV sites should not be developed using County tax dollars; and if so, those using the sites from outside the County should be charged additional fees to cover the operational expenses
- the County would create an *authority* and/or position that would oversee, develop, and coordinate multi-recreational program opportunities, and work with recreational organizations in coordinating efforts and advising for recreational funding initiatives
- developing recreational programs, services, and facilities that are self-sustainable
- improvement of the recreational opportunities that have already been established prior to the consideration and development of any new facilities
- development of a multi-use athletic facility in a central location in the County for better accessibility to all residents
- retaining and improving the facility and services of the Belmont Complex
- the Allegheny and Kiski Rivers would have better and more strategically accessible points of entry
- promoting the cultural and historical aspects of the County and focusing on their economic value
- upgrading the present YMCA building or constructing a new one
- that the County Commissioners and public would realize and act upon the fact that the development and promotion of recreational resources would improve the County economy by increasing tourism, business development, and overall revenue
- that a better and broader tourism campaign be developed and funded to bring visitors into the County
- high school-aged and adult support for the development of a skate park
- that public transportation be provided to public recreational-use sites throughout the County
- that school facilities would be made more available for public recreational usage

Even with the similarities that were identified across all of the public meetings, it is important to note that each meeting had its own flavor regarding key issues particular to that district.

Meeting # 1 – Distant Fire Hall, November 7, 2007

The focus of the meeting in the Northeast Planning Region of Armstrong County was the need for multi-use, land- and water-trail development and ATV utilization areas. Attendees were very much concerned in connecting communities, counties, and regions through the development of interlinking and sustainable land- and water-trails. The allowance of, and provision for, ATV use was significant in this Region. Attendees were very much interested with working to partner landowners, municipalities, and abandoned strip-mine areas to create ATV trails and riding land-tracts. Discussion focused around the need to encourage partnerships, private investment, and financial entrepreneurialism to create avenues to accomplish this.

Meeting # 2 – Manor Township Fire Hall, November 19, 2007

The issues of major concern discussed in the Central Planning Region of Armstrong County were those of retaining the facility and services of the Belmont Complex and of other recreational pursuits. The attendees were concerned with the provision and continuance of adequate public recreational opportunities. Residents were completely in support of the Belmont Complex and were also interested in the development of a County-funded recreational authority and/or position that would oversee recreational programming and facility development and sustainability. There was also a fair voice expressed for upgrading the YMCA. Discussion was raised in regard to the present condition and visual appeal of the existing YMCA facility; people were suggesting a complete renovation or even the development of a new “classier-designed” YMCA facility. There were also various discussions centered on multipurpose trails and how trail development can lead to economic development in the region. After much discussion of trail development, the interest in trails that stood above all others was for the completion of the Armstrong Trail to take priority over any other trail initiatives.



Meeting # 3 – Sugar creek Township Fire Hall, November 29, 2007

In the Northwest Planning Region of Armstrong County the top issue, by far, targeted on the support of ATV trail development. Proponents for ATV trails very much supported trail development for multi-purpose utilization; hence, they were not opposed to sharing the resources. Attendees were also in support of the County acquiring more land for any project that would increase recreational opportunities, whether they were rail beds for public access for multi-usage, tracts of land for County parks, or river frontage for public water-recreation. Other discussion centered on county-wide recreational program opportunities development. Participants were mostly concerned with two factors: that the County would create a position that would develop and coordinate multi-recreational program opportunities and, secondly, that the Commissioners and County residents would seriously consider the importance that recreational opportunities development would have in stimulating County economic development and revenue production.

Meeting # 4 – Rural Valley Fire Hall, December 4, 2007

Discussion in the East Planning Region of Armstrong County revealed that attendees were very outspoken on land issues and property-owner rights. A majority of the discussion was against using tax-payer dollars for the development of ATV trails, which non-County residents would utilize without any real expense to them. Added to this concern was that non-County residents have bought local land for their own seasonal recreational usage and have posted it, hunted on it, and ridden their ATV's all over without regard for the adjoining life-long County resident land owners. Also of concern was the need for improvement of existing recreational opportunities before development of new facilities. Residents in this region were also interested in Armstrong County developing better relations with Clarion County in order to jointly contribute to the development and sustainability of their area recreational purposes. There was also support for development of a County-wide recreational authority that would focus on coordinating all outdoor groups so they can all get together and work together for the benefit of the County.

Meeting # 5 – Parks Township Fire Hall, December 5, 2007

In the South Planning Region of Armstrong County attendees were concerned with positive land acquisition that would allow land to be opened for recreational soccer and baseball sports fields, trail extensions, and for the preservation of open space to protect against commercial development. They were very much in favor of also increasing funding to improve the already existing parks and recreational facilities. Here again, there was discussion and support for the creation of a County-wide recreational authority that would work with public and private entities and residents for the development of recreational opportunities. Attendees voiced a desire to see their historical heritage promoted as towns along land or water trails are enhanced.

Meeting # 6 – West Kittanning Fire Hall, December 6, 2007

The West Planning Region meeting of Armstrong County provided for the greatest attendance; twice as many people attended this meeting than any other regional meeting.

A number of high school-age residents and adult supporters gathered to rally their support for the development of a skate park. A selected youth representative briefly shared their joint vision and concern for the development of a skate park/recreational facility to meet the needs of all area youth. At the end of the evening their recorded vote represented the highest single tally for any issue brought before any of the previous regional meetings.

A second area of discussion by the majority of adult attendees was for the development of rail trails and strip mines for ATV use. The discussion also spawned disagreement regarding developing ATV-use areas on public or County-owned land; and it was suggested that provisions be in place for better policing of current ATV use.

Also well represented were County residents who wanted to see the development of a multi-use athletic facility in a central location within the County, allowing better accessibility to all residents, and upgrading of the Belmont Complex with newer amenities. Attendees were also concerned with the preservation and enhancement of existing trails and parks,

the building of a new YMCA, and in developing a County position that would oversee parks and recreation, nature/environmental education programming, marketing, and communication throughout the County.

PUBLIC MEETINGS – ROUND 2

In the second round of public meetings, a Power Point presentation was made at each location summarizing the findings of the study and presenting the vision for the future of parks, recreation, open space, and trails in Armstrong County. Verbal feedback regarding the findings and vision was very positive. There was strong support from these meetings for the proposed ATV Feasibility Study. Many attendees were very supportive of the trail plan, looking for it to be accomplished soon. A number of persons commented on the need for support to local municipalities and organizations with technical assistance, grants, and information.

Attendees were also given the opportunity to provide written comments concerning the Plan. The following comments were offered.

- The Plan should provide a list of financial resources for the kinds of projects it is recommending.
- Funding for various projects to upgrade or develop local parks is not always readily available to local groups or organizations. Hopefully, better communication with County staff will enhance acquisition of funding. Over the years, the Belmont Complex has received the greatest focus for funding over other parks.
- Development of the arts and culture should be considered as part of the Plan. This could include theater, visual arts, lectures, etc.
- ATV trails are needed.
- Liability issues for ATV's need to be addressed at the state level.
- An ATV facility should be modeled after the Rock Run ATV Park in Cambria County.

Complete results of the public meetings are found in Appendix G.

KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

To gather public input on parks and recreation resources and needs, twenty-six interviews were conducted with recreational professionals, sports league coaches, elected officials, school district personnel, local business people, and other residents. Each person interviewed was asked about their impressions of existing parks, recreation, and open space issues in Armstrong County, as well as about the County's current and future needs.

Twenty-five respondents indicated they were Armstrong County residents, and one stated that they reside outside the County but their work influences the quality of recreational or open space opportunities within Armstrong County. Interviewees were asked eight questions.

The most common responses to the question, "When you think of parks and recreation in Armstrong County what comes to mind?", were: Crooked Creek Lake (9), river recreation (6), rails to trails (6), and the Belmont Complex (6). Other top responses included, parks that provide for families to picnic and relax and to have fun together (4), the many township parks around the County (2), hunting (2), fishing (2), children and their need to recreate (2), horse riding areas (2), Mahoning Creek Lake (2), Armstrong Trail (2), and a lack of leadership in County-wide recreation planning (2).

When asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of parks and recreation in Armstrong County, the top strengths noted were: the widespread distribution of the various small township parks and larger park areas (7), enjoyment of the rural nature of Armstrong County (6), and the Belmont Complex (4). Other considered strengths were: the untapped recreational opportunities and space that can yet be developed (3), Crooked Creek Lake area (3), the local people and organizations that coordinate local recreational initiatives (3), tourist bureau promotions (2), and the view from Riverfront Park (2).

The top two weaknesses indicated were: there is no county park and recreation organization or department to oversee parks and recreation (9), and there is not much publicity on recreational opportunities to inform and draw visitors (8). Participants were also concerned that there were no local municipal parks and recreation staff (4), and inadequate maintenance and upkeep of parks and facilities (4). Others highlighted the lack of properties available for hunting, fishing, and public use (2), a need for a county-wide or regional recreation board comprised of members of individual municipalities (2), the need for someone to do research to see that all municipalities get their fair share of grants (2), a shortage of larger parks and recreation destinations evenly distributed throughout the County (2), and the lack of an economic base to support parks and recreation funding (2).

The greatest recreational needs for facilities in Armstrong County were: a true community recreation center with multi-purpose amenities for recreational sports and wellness that is centrally located and usable by all residents (4); upgrades to what already exists in the different parks including enhancements, expansions, and improved maintenance (4); more available multi-use sports fields in the summer months (4); and areas for young people to recreate and interact (4). Residents also were interested in multi-use and multi-generational recreational facilities in various locations throughout the County (3); additional restrooms in public-use areas (2), swimming pools for summer use (2), skate parks (2), indoor facilities for use in the winter months (2), more rail trails, or other mixed-use trails, and ATV designated-use areas (2).

The greatest recreational needs for programming in Armstrong County were identified as: summer day camp and instructional and recreational programs (5), additional children's recreational programs in all municipalities (5), marketing of current recreational programs available (5), increased funding and availability for more community recreational programs (4), and more County-wide tennis and soccer programs (4). Also of interest were competitive programs where one municipality can compete recreationally against another (2) and more programs for rural children (2).

When asked, "What group of people is least served or should be targeted with recreational programs or facilities?" , the top groups were children and teenagers (10) followed by middle-aged (7), seniors (6), off-road vehicle owners (2), young people needing low cost or no cost programs (2), and seniors' with specific physical limitations and needs (2).

Twenty-five of the twenty-six interviewees agreed that Armstrong County should be cooperating with local communities in providing parks and recreation. Four persons believed that the County's involvement with individual municipalities is the only way change and positive development will occur; that the County could better assist municipalities by personally helping them to develop their mini-grant application and to match other grants to those (4). Three persons said that the County could help representatives from the major boroughs and a few townships come together to meet and form a County-wide authority or agency. Others suggested: the County should assist in the planning of new facilities and/or improvements to existing facilities (2); all communities need the County's help (2); and the areas of Leechburg/Gilpin/Kiskiminetas, and Freeport and Ford City all need financial help to operate recreation (2).

When asked about other issues of importance needing consideration, the largest number (5) of respondents said there is a need to take greater advantage of the Allegheny River and related recreational development opportunities, which would increase use and tourism and stimulate the County economy. Other issues for consideration were:

- The County should get someone involved, at least to some degree, with recreation development (3).
- The Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development should consider the tourism component when concerned with job development (3).
- The Armstrong Trail is great, but it needs to be finished and connected to other trails. (2)
- Armstrong County taxes are comparatively high, and residents do not get many recreational opportunities in return for the taxes they are paying (2).

When presented with the question, "What role should the County play in providing parks and recreation in the County?", ten respondents said the County should act as a consultant in bringing together and facilitating discussion with all entities that provide parks and recreation in the County for the common good. Nine said the County should assist municipalities and agencies in preparing funding requests and work cooperatively with a partner organization or group because neither can afford to provide all recreational opportunities on their own. Eight believed the County should assist municipalities

with preparing many different funding requests so the municipalities can upgrade their parks. Others said: the County should develop a park authority or recreation position to oversee all aspects of County-wide parks and recreation (6); the County should financially assist in parks and recreation development and better assist communities in finding and obtaining recreational grants (4); and there needs to be a united analysis of the possibility of the County and school districts working together to better utilize school facilities and grounds (3).

All of those interviewed were also asked how their group or organization impacts parks and recreation in the County. Most responses varied, as each related to its specific interests. Some respondents indicated that they provide a destination that draws tourists to the County; that their facilities and activities promote economic development by visitors spending money in the County; and that their organization promotes good health. Still others said that their organization provides wellness programs; addresses the needs of the youth and families with recreational and health programs; provides linear parks and trails; maintains recreation facilities; and supports the Belmont Complex.

A full description of the key person interviews is located in Appendix H.

RECREATION QUESTIONNAIRE

In August 2007, three thousand recreation questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of Armstrong County households. Four hundred and six completed surveys were received and tabulated by the consultant, ninety seven were returned as undeliverable – a response rate of fourteen percent (14%).

The standard calculation for confidence level and confidence interval, with the sample size of 3,000 households compared to the total number of households of 29,005, produces a confidence level of 99% and a confidence interval of 2. The confidence level describes how sure one can be that the responses to the questionnaire are an accurate depiction of the entire population of County households. This means that there is 99% likelihood that the responses to each of the questions are accurate within two percentage points.

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

Based on these analyses, it is reasonable to conclude that the results of the Armstrong County Recreation, Parks, Open Space, and Trail Survey provide an accurate depiction of the thoughts and desires of County residents.

QUESTIONNAIRE HIGHLIGHTS

According to the questionnaire:

- The most used recreational facilities in Armstrong County are Kittanning Riverfront Park, Crooked Creek Recreation Area, the Allegheny River, Belmont Complex, and the Armstrong Trail.
- When asked how far a person is willing to drive to use a park, 44% said it does not matter.
- Most people are attracted to parks because of their picnic facilities and open space.
- The top five most used recreation facilities are walking and jogging trails, picnic areas, streams and rivers (fishing), bike trails, and playgrounds.
- The most requested new facilities are cabins (for rentals), sledding/tubing areas, wildflower areas, historic sites, and scenic roads and by-ways.
- Existing facilities people would use if they were improved are picnic areas, baseball fields, bike trails, tennis courts, walking and jogging trails, softball fields, and playgrounds.

- The most needed recreational programs are nature/environmental activities, art/music/theater, arts and crafts, adult outdoor sports, and adult indoor sports.
- 81% of County residents support the development of a County open space preservation system to protect streams, fields, and woodlands.
- 83% of County residents believe the County should explore opportunities to acquire open space and greenways.
- Over 80% of the residents feel it is important to keep natural buffers along stream corridors, keep stream corridors available for recreational purposes, and maintain forestland for ecological and recreational purposes.
- More than 40% of the County residents believe Armstrong County should:
 - maintain its present role of operating the Belmont Complex
 - assist local municipalities in developing recreational services
 - cooperate with non-profit organizations to provide county-wide recreational programs and facilities
- The largest percentage of County residents believes that the county-wide trail system should be developed and maintained by volunteer, non-profit organizations.
- At least 52% of County residents said it is at least somewhat important to have trails or a park for motorized recreational vehicles such as ATVs, motorcycles, and snowmobiles.
- Most residents believe that motorized recreational vehicle trails should be developed and managed by volunteer groups, private businesses, or a multi-county trail authority.
- Most residents believe that expansion of recreational programming, park development, and greenways should be funded through grants, local funds, private/corporate donations, volunteers, and user fees.

A complete depiction of the questionnaire results are in Appendix I.

OTHER PUBLIC INPUT

In addition to the formal public input opportunities, several residents sent letters or spoke to the consultants with their comments. These included:

- Two residents requested an indoor shuffleboard court. They provided great detail concerning its design.
- Two people discussed with the consultant their objections to the development of any ATV facilities in the County. They do not want to attract persons from outside the County to bring their ATVs into the County.
- One person discussed the need to assist local municipalities in upgrading and maintaining their recreation facilities.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISION, GOALS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS/IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The public input was analyzed to determine what facilities, needs, and issues were most important to Armstrong County residents. This analysis resulted in the development of a vision statement, goals, and implementation strategies/recommendations that address the County's needs. Chapter 4 provides the full detail on this implementation process.

Chapter 4: Vision, Goals, & Recommendations/ Implementation Strategies



Chapter 4: Vision, Goals, & Recommendations/ Implementation Strategies

CREATING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

How do residents of Armstrong County see recreation, parks, open space, and trails in their County in the coming years? In order to clarify this vision for the future, the consultant worked with the study committee to analyze the results of the public participation process including study committee meetings, public meetings, key person interviews, and the results of the recreation questionnaire. During the course of this analysis, the committee looked for ideas that were consistently mentioned throughout the public participation process. These ideas were identified as vision elements and developed into the *Vision for the Future* as follows.

How do residents of Armstrong County see recreation, parks, open space, and trails in their County in the coming years?

VISION STATEMENT

Vision for the Future

1. Create and sustain a County-wide advisory committee and/or staff person to oversee the administration, finance, programming, marketing, and advocacy of parks and recreation throughout the County.
2. Promote recreation and parks as a means of improving the health and well-being of Armstrong County residents.
3. Develop a system of ATV trails and/or facilities that is available for County residents and attracts visitors to the County.
4. Complete a web of trails throughout Armstrong County that connects to regional and statewide trail networks.
5. Stabilize and rehabilitate the Belmont Complex to meet a wide variety of recreational needs of County residents.
6. Encourage and support new local playgrounds and local park and recreation facilities, as well as the maintenance and preservation of existing recreational opportunities.
7. Establish public access to rivers, streams, and land for hunting, fishing, ATV, recreation, and open space uses.
8. Educate the public and promote existing facilities and amenities.
9. Develop youth centered recreational facilities throughout the County, such as soccer fields, baseball fields, and skate parks.
10. Encourage and support the development of recreational facilities, programs, and opportunities that stimulate the County's economic growth.
11. Promote and support partnerships with local municipalities, schools, organizations, and private businesses to build and strengthen recreational opportunities.

GOALS

This *Vision for the Future* becomes the basis for responding to the expressed needs and desires of Armstrong County residents. This chapter presents recommendations for the future of Armstrong County’s recreation, parks, and open space as the County works toward accomplishing each goal and fulfilling their vision for the future.

The recommendations of this Plan are organized according to the goal statements, or vision elements. The goals are broad in nature, designed to be all-encompassing, and based upon community ideas and issues raised through the planning process. The goal statements reflect the themes that were identified through the public input process and illustrated in the *Vision for the Future*. These goals also provide the organizational structure for the implementation of the recommendations and direction for the future of recreation, parks, and open space in Armstrong County.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES/RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are detailed implementation strategies under each goal statement. Information collected through both the public participation process and the professional assessment was utilized to develop these implementation strategies, which set forth a defined plan for fulfilling the goals set forth by the community’s vision for the future.

The implementation strategies are organized into tables. The information provided in each table includes categories for strategy, priority, responsible party, cost estimate, and additional comments or description. These strategies provide guidance to the decision makers of Armstrong County and those organizations and staff designated to implement portions of the Plan. The successful implementation of these strategies will depend upon the fiscal and political climate in any given year. Therefore, it is essential that the County monitor, review, and prioritize the strategies on an annual basis, prior to the budgeting process.

Each implementation strategy is assigned a priority of Short-term, Mid-term, or Long-term. A Short-term (S) ranking suggests that the strategy be implemented in the first one to three years following the adoption of this Plan. Mid-term (M) ranked strategies are to be implemented in the fourth to eighth year, and Long-term (L) ranking strategies are to be implemented in the ninth to twelfth year.

Cost estimates are included for each strategy, where appropriate. It should be noted that the cost estimates are wide-ranging and should only serve as a starting point for project evaluation. Detailed costs will be developed as a particular project or strategy is selected for implementation. Potential funding sources for the completion of the recommendations are indicated, where appropriate. The funding opportunities identified do not constitute an exhaustive list, and other possible resources should be continually sought. It will be important for the County to be up-to-date on future funding sources. Chapter 6 of this report provides a list of numerous potential funding sources that should be considered.

Chapter 6 of this report provides a list of numerous potential funding sources that should be considered.

In some cases, a narrative description follows the recommendations chart to provide additional implementation detail.

GOAL #1: Create and sustain a County-wide Recreation Advisory Board and Staff Person

	Recommendation	Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Appoint a County Parks and Trails Advisory Board to advise the Commissioners and staff on implementation of this Plan.	Action	County Commissioners	S	\$0	
2	Hire a full-time parks and trails director/planner to serve as the County's manager and overseer of implementation of this Plan. Place this staff person in the ACDPD.	Action	County Commissioners	S	\$50,000 annually	Apply for a DCNR Circuit Rider Grant to assist in funding this position. DCED also offers a shared services grant if the County were to join forces with another County or municipality for this position.

Parks and Trails Advisory Board

PA DCNR, in their publication “Recreation and Parks Board Handbook” identified the following reasons that the creation of a recreation and Parks Board is a good idea.

A recreation and parks board is a group of conscientious volunteers who work to improve life in your community by providing citizens with close-to-home park areas, recreation facilities and recreation programs. This board benefits your community by:

- Being aware of the needs and viewpoints of their neighbors, friends and fellow citizens. A board helps your municipality become more customer-driven by providing ongoing public input. As the eyes and ears of your community, a board also knows how and when to broach a subject with residents.
- Selling the worth of recreation and parks to elected officials. As citizens themselves, a board carries clout and political influence. Elected officials listen to voters. A board 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.
- Extending the capability of your local government by providing support for the operation of your recreation and parks system, especially if your community has no staff.
- Enhancing the image, developing community pride in and enlisting public support for your recreation and parks system. A board helps spread the word about your great parks and programs.
- Monitoring the public expenditures of citizen tax dollars and raising funds to supplement budgeted funds.
- Serving as a buffer between citizens, recreation and parks directors, other municipal staff and elected officials on controversial issues.
- Providing continuity from year-to-year for the operation of your recreation and parks system.
- Planning and conducting recreation programs and special events and involving more citizens as volunteers.

This publication is available on the DCNR website at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications>

PA DCNR Circuit Rider Program

The following is a paraphrased description of the Circuit Rider program from DCNR.

The Bureau of Recreation and Conservation provides financial assistance for county or regional organizations to hire a professional full-time staff person. The Circuit Rider's purpose must be to initiate new programs and services either county-wide or across multiple municipalities that individually do not have the financial resources to hire a professional staff person. The intended result of such a hiring is the increased ability of county and/or local officials to more efficiently and effectively meet their recreation, park, greenway, open space, and/or natural resource conservation needs.

The project encourages intergovernmental cooperation through a written agreement that enables small communities and organizations to pool their financial resources in order to support a full-time, professional staff person.

A Circuit Rider is hired to coordinate the recreation, park, or conservation efforts of the participating municipalities, school districts, a county, and/or non-profit organizations, but not to suppress their individuality and autonomy. These cooperative efforts result in a greater availability of facilities and programs than could be achieved by the participants on their own.

A single county can be eligible without an intergovernmental agreement, providing the county is undertaking or has completed the appropriate recreation and/or greenway planning and will be providing services county-wide to residents and municipalities. Circuit Rider applications are accepted by DCNR at any time.

Eligible costs through the grant include the Circuit Rider's salary and DCNR approved technical assistance and training expenses as follows:

- ◇ First year---one hundred percent (100%) of gross salary
- ◇ Second year---seventy-five percent (75%) of gross salary
- ◇ Third year---fifty percent (50%) of gross salary
- ◇ Fourth year---twenty-five percent (25%) of gross salary

- ◇ **Training Expenses** – Up to \$2,000 is available for Bureau-approved training expenses over the four years of funding.

- ◇ **Mentoring Expenses** – Up to \$1,500 is available per year for mentoring of the Circuit Rider by a Bureau-approved mentor.

The County must provide local funds to cover the Circuit Rider's employee benefits for all four years, the balance of the salary in years two, three, and four, and normal support services. Examples of typical project costs not covered by the grant include:

- up-front, ineligible costs for developing the intergovernmental written agreement (legal fees), job description and advertisement, conducting interviews, sunshine law meeting advertisements, etc.

- fringe benefits for the Circuit Rider (fringe benefits generally include life and health insurance, worker's compensation, unemployment compensation pension plan)

- office arrangements, equipment and supplies, clerical assistance, and the initial start-up costs, such as a phone and separate phone line, stationary, mileage, travel expenses, training, the establishment and upkeep of separate bank accounts for the grant, as well as an account for the contributions from participating municipalities and revenues generated from programs as part of the cooperative effort

- liability insurance for board, director, and possibility program participants (check on insurance policies with each municipality to evaluate coverage options); and program expenses.

In year five and beyond, the Bureau expects the local effort to continue on its own.

GOAL #2: Promote recreation and parks as a means of improving the health and well-being of Armstrong County residents.

	Recommendation	Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Promote the Healthy Armstrong Project as a model program to encourage residents to be active and physically fit. Utilize the County school districts as the agents for expansion of this program.	Action	ACDPD Armstrong County Memorial Hospital Armstrong School District YMCA	S	To be determined by the responsible agencies	Responsible agencies and related grants organizations
2	Register to become a County member of Keystone Active Zones, a statewide program that promotes awareness of close-to-home parks and trails, and encourage increased physical activity to help residents lead healthier lifestyles.	Action	ACDPD Armstrong County Memorial Hospital Armstrong School District YMCA	S	\$0	

Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA)

<http://www.panaonline.org/>

Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA) connects the champions of health and wellness at the local, regional, and state level. Eating well and being active isn’t just a personal choice – it’s a choice we encourage in each other by helping to provide access to healthy eating and active living options. This often requires a change in the way we operate or do business – a systems change. By advocating for systems change and training leaders in local communities to organize into “change partnerships,” PANA builds capacity and secures broad support across multiple sectors for expanding access to healthy eating and activity choices.

Mission

Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity works collectively to make it easier to be healthy in the places we live, learn, work, and play by changing environments to support healthier eating and physical activity options.

Goals

1. Engage multi-level, multi-sector partners in coordinated action to improve healthy eating and active living.
2. Enable environment and policy changes within organizational settings to support healthy eating and active living behaviors.
3. Effect sustainable healthy eating and active living improvements across the wider community via large scale coordinated strategies.

Keystone Active Zone

www.keystoneactivezon.org

The Keystone Active Zone (KAZ) is a statewide, on-line campaign that focuses on promoting existing park and recreation facilities across Pennsylvania as great places for physical activity and fun. The campaign is implemented through local partnerships among health, recreation, and education professionals. Once developed, these partnerships are empowered to work with the community and media to implement strategies that will increase awareness and promote usage of local parks and trails.

In order for communities to develop these innovative partnerships, Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA) conducts an annual training, provides on-going technical assistance and web support, and administers an annual mini-grant program for partnerships to implement the campaign.

KAZ provides shared resources for partnerships to adapt the program to local needs and interests. Shared resources include:

- a central web portal for searching local parks and trails by activities and amenities
- a template poster for each county to print and distribute
- a promotional summer passport program that can be used with schools, summer camps, worksites, and senior centers
- an implementation guide that allows for local customization

The statewide Keystone Active Zone (KAZ) campaign helps foster county-level partnerships with recreation, health, and education professionals to promote local parks and trails as great places for physical activity across Pennsylvania.

KAZ empowers these partners to work with media and other groups to increase awareness and usage of community trails, and you get the dual benefit of a great family workout close to home!

The program is administered by Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA) and was developed in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society and the Pennsylvania Departments of Health and Conservation & Natural Resources.

GOAL #3: Develop a system of ATV Trails and/or Facilities

	Recommendation	Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Conduct an ATV Feasibility Study to determine the availability of suitable land for development of ATV trails and facilities and the ability of the County or other entities to develop such facilities.	Action	ACDPD	S	\$114,000	PA DCNR and Armstrong County
2	Encourage registered County ATV users to unite to form a local non-profit ATV organization to play a lead role in ATV trail/facility development.	Action	ACDPD ATV Organizations	S	\$0	

As of the writing of this report, Armstrong County is in the process of negotiating a contract to begin the ATV Facility Feasibility Study.

GOAL #4: Complete a County-wide Trail System

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Support the development of the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail to follow the Armstrong Trail through Armstrong County.	Action	ACDPD and Allegheny Valley Land Trust	S	Will be determined by each section	PA DCNR
2	The Armstrong Trail -	Action	ACDPD and Allegheny Valley Land Trust	S	Will be determined by each section	PA DCNR and responsible agencies
	(a) Complete the gaps in the trail.	Action	Allegheny Valley Land Trust and Armstrong Rails to Trails			
	(b) Provide additional restroom facilities along the trail.					
	(c) Develop additional parking and access areas to the trail.					
	(d) Complete the planned trail sections in the Freeport area					
	(e) Enhance the connection with the Baker Trail.					
	(f) Determine routes and methods to connect the trail to population centers in the County. Develop the connections.					
	(g) Improve signage along trails to include mileage, educational information, and directions to local sites and businesses.	Action	Allegheny Valley Land Trust and County Parks and Trail Advisory Board		\$5,000	
(h) Produce printed and digital trail maps for use by the general public.	Action	Allegheny Valley Land Trust and County Parks and Trail Advisory Board				
3	Explore opportunities for the development or designation of bicycle lanes along roadways in the county as they are constructed or repaired.	Action	ACDPD	L	\$0	
4	Provide coordination assistance to local recreation and open space organizations in their efforts to implement trail and open space projects supported by this Plan.	Technical Support	County Recreation Parks and Trails Board	M	\$0	Partner w/ PennDot and SPC
5	Work with local recreation and open space organizations to implement projects.	Action	County Parks and Trails Advisory Board	S	\$0	

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
6	Provide guidelines for the development of county-wide trails and greenways projects.	Action	Allegheny Valley Land Trust and County Parks and Trails Advisory Board	M	\$0	
7	Develop connections from Armstrong County trails to regional trails outside the County.	Action	Allegheny Valley Land Trust and County Parks and Trails Advisory Board	S	included with trail development	

GOAL #5: Stabilize and rehabilitate the Belmont Complex to meet the wide variety of recreational needs of County residents

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Utilize the Belmont Complex to its fullest potential.	Action	Board of Commissioners Belmont Complex	S	No additional cost	
2	Analyze the Belmont Complex site to determine if there are other recreational uses that would better serve county residents.	Action	County Commissioners	S	\$0	
3	Evaluate ways to coordinate and cooperate with the Armstrong County YMCA, Armstrong County Memorial Hospital, and other organizations to improve recreational activities at the Belmont Complex.	Action	Board of Commissioners Belmont Complex	S	\$40,000	PA DCNR; partnerships with YMCA, Armstrong County Memorial Hospital

In 2007, the Belmont Complex completed a feasibility study of the facility to determine its needs for long-term sustainability. A summary of that Study is described in Chapter One of this report. Additional options for partnerships and management have surfaced since that time.

GOAL #6: Encourage and support new local playgrounds, parks, and recreation facilities, as well as the maintenance and preservation of existing facilities

	Recommendation	Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Continue utilizing the ACDPD to provide information and administrative and technical support to local municipalities in their efforts to upgrade their recreation facilities. This may include writing letters of support, providing background information from this Plan, facilitating DCNR workshops, and identifying other grant sources.	Technical Support	ACDPD, Allegheny Valley Land Trust, and County Parks and Trails Advisory Board	S	No additional cost	
2	Ensure that recreation facilities are available close to all residents in Armstrong County.	Policy		M	\$0	
3	Support organizations and local governments in their efforts to identify potential funding sources. A list of potential funding sources is provided in the appendices of this report.	Technical Support	ACDPD, Allegheny Valley Land Trust, and County Parks and Trails Advisory Board	S	\$0	
4	Strengthen cooperative efforts at the local level to maintain and take pride in local facilities. Begin through outreach from the County.	Policy	ACDPD, Allegheny Valley Land Trust, and County Parks and Trails Advisory Board	M	\$0	
5	Encourage municipalities to make parks and recreation a priority. Each should create a citizen advisory board to recommend improvements and/or additions. Each should also commit adequate funds for maintenance, up-keep, and improvements.	Policy	ACDPD, Allegheny Valley Land Trust, Armstrong Rails to Trails, and County Parks and Trails Advisory Board	M	\$0	
6	Assist individual municipalities to develop a plan to address Americans With Disabilities Act deficiencies in local parks.	Technical Support	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	S	Implementation costs will vary by municipality.	PA DCNR; CDBG; DCED; local municipality
7	Assist individual municipalities to identify ways to address playground safety deficiencies identified in the local parks' Playground Safety Audits.	Technical Support	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	S	Implementation costs will vary by municipality.	PA DCNR; CDBG; DCED; local municipality

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
8	Provide each municipality with a copy of the park inventory, for each of their parks, conducted as part of this Plan. Each inventory identifies maintenance and facility deficiencies in the park. Encourage municipalities to address these concerns. Provide technical assistance to address the deficiencies.	Technical Support	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	S	\$0	
9	Provide each municipality with a copy of the sample maintenance plan included in the appendices of this report. Encourage each municipality to adopt a maintenance management plan that addresses on-going and long-term maintenance needs of their parks.	Technical Support	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	M	\$0	

Playground Safety Audits

Across the nation over 150,000 children are treated annually in hospital emergency rooms for playground-related injuries. To reduce the occurrence and severity of playground injuries several organizations have developed playground safety standards, which, if followed, should dramatically reduce the number of playground accidents. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board are three organizations that have established general guidelines for new and existing playgrounds and technical guidelines for equipment and surfacing.

As part of the Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space planning process, playground safety audits were conducted on the municipal playgrounds of those who gave permission to do so. In all, a total of 22 playground safety audits were conducted. The results of these reports are provided to the owners of the playgrounds.

Each playground audit provides the owner with a thorough analysis of the findings of the audit, as well as recommendations to address all safety issues.

Risk Management for Parks and Recreation Facilities

A risk management plan for parks and recreation facilities is of the highest importance for the safety of the residents and to minimize the municipalities’ liability exposure. Risk management is accident prevention. When facilities and programs are provided for public use, every precaution should be taken to ensure user safety. Documentation of all risk management procedures is essential, not only for good record keeping and maintenance scheduling, but also to provide evidence in case of legal action.

The risk management plan should be based on the competence and training of recreation and maintenance staff. Staff should be trained in safety procedures and should be expected to be constantly aware of the condition of facilities used. Staff should be trained to recognize and post unsafe conditions, prevent the use of unsafe equipment and facilities, and report safety hazards, in writing, so they can be remedied in a timely manner. Regularly scheduled safety inspections should be conducted by trained staff at every facility available for public use. Written work orders should be issued for needed repairs, and completed work should be documented.

Adequate liability insurance must be kept up-to-date. As new programs and facilities are developed, liability insurance coverage should be revised to reflect new conditions. Regular communication with the insurance carriers is necessary. Both, risk to users and insurance costs, may be reduced if all existing and proposed facilities can be brought into compliance with current safety standards and guidelines.

Park Maintenance Plan

Many of the municipalities within Armstrong County struggle to adequately maintain their facilities. Development of a Park Maintenance Plan is the first step in improving maintenance practices. A Park Maintenance Plan should set maintenance standards that will keep recreation facilities safe, reduce liability risks, and plan for prevention of accidents. In order to accomplish this, the municipality should develop and follow a complete preventative maintenance and risk management program. All facilities should be scheduled for regular inspection and assessment. In the spring and summer, these inspections may be performed when a site is visited for mowing. A written inspection form should be completed, and minor repairs should be made immediately. Areas or equipment needing major repairs or having parts missing should be posted as unsafe, reported in writing, and repaired as soon as possible.

Projects should be prioritized according to existing condition and usage. Work on these projects should be scheduled around the regular mowing, inspection, and repair schedule.

Routine equipment maintenance and servicing must be scheduled and performed on a regular basis. Maintenance equipment is expensive and should last a long time. With proper care, replacement of maintenance equipment can be kept to a minimum. An equipment and tool inventory should be kept accurate and up-to-date to assure the availability of proper tools when needed. A fund should be established to provide for new maintenance equipment and a regular replacement program.

Regular review of legal requirements and inspections for conformance to sanitary regulations, criteria for licensing, fire laws, building codes, pesticide applications, and safety procedures should be a priority for the maintenance staff. The municipalities should keep up-to-date with safety standards, such as those published by the American Society for Testing Materials and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Maintenance staff should receive training in play equipment safety assessment and in the operation of hazardous maintenance equipment. A Certified Playground Safety Inspector should conduct a playground safety audit approximately every five years.

In addition to planning for risk management, a maintenance plan will set standards of care for all facilities. This allows for a measure of productivity in park and facility maintenance.

Park maintenance should be monitored and compared to the "*Park Maintenance Standards*" published by the National Recreation and Parks Association. This publication assists in determining the appropriate level of maintenance of park facilities, based on size and usage, and provides productivity standards which are useful in determining the efficiency of park maintenance staff. This publication is also a valuable tool for estimating maintenance requirements of proposed projects and, with current cost estimating guides, can assist one in establishing park maintenance budgets.

Based on the standards presented in the above listed publication, this study recommends that each Township and Borough establish its own parks maintenance program using a combination of Mode II and Mode III.

Mode II is considered for park areas with reasonably high visitation, such as playgrounds and ball fields that require a higher level of care. Mode III is considered to be a moderate level of maintenance associated with moderate to low levels of development, moderate to low levels of visitation, or with agencies that, because of budget restrictions, cannot afford a higher intensity of maintenance. With the combination of these modes, the following sample standards provide a starting place from which both municipalities can work.

Turf Care for Ball Fields and Playground Areas - grass cut once every five working days, reseeding when bare spots are present; weed control practiced when weeds present a visible problem or when they represent 5% of the turf surface; some pre-emergent products may be utilized

Low Use Areas - cut once every ten working days; normally not aerated unless turf quality indicates a need or in anticipation of an application of fertilizer; re-seeding is done only when bare spots appear; weed control measures used only when 50% of the small areas are weed infested or general turf quality is low in 15% or more of the surface area

Fertilizer - applied only when turf vigor seems low; low-level application is done once per year

Litter Control - minimum service of two to three times per week; high use may dictate higher levels during warm season

Pruning - when required for health or reasonable appearance; with most tree and shrub species, this would not be more frequent than once every two to three years

Disease and Insect Control - done only on an epidemic or serious-complaint basis; control measures may be put into effect when health or survival of the plant material is threatened or where the public's comfort is concerned

Snow Removal - snow removal on park roads only and generally accomplished by the day following snowfall

Lighting - replacement or repair of fixture when report filed or when noticed by employees

Surfaces - high-use areas should be cleaned two to three times per week; all surfaces should be repaired or replaced when appearance has noticeably deteriorated

Repairs - should be done whenever safety or function is in question

Inspections - daily for high use areas; weekly for other areas

Floral Planting - only perennials or flowering trees and shrubs; annual plantings should only be planted if maintained by a volunteer organization

Restrooms - serviced minimum five times per week; seldom more than once per day unless otherwise dictated by use

Staff Training

Park maintenance staff should be well trained in all aspects of park maintenance. Attendance at a park maintenance management school is highly recommended. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sponsors several such schools across the country. One of the closest is held at Olgebay Park in Wheeling, West Virginia in January or February each year.

Additional training is available from NRPA and the Pennsylvania Recreation and Parks Society (PRPS) in one- and two-day training sessions offered throughout the year. The NRPA also provides publications dealing with current maintenance issues in parks and recreation.

The park maintenance staff should be well trained in ball field maintenance, turf care, vehicle and equipment maintenance, and building and facility maintenance. Other training for specific programs and facilities may also be necessary.

It may also be necessary for at least one staff person to acquire a Pesticide Applicator certification from the PA Department of Agriculture in category 23 for parks. Other staff should be certified as pesticide technicians, to allow them to apply pesticides under the direction of the Certified Applicator.

GOAL #7: Establish public access to rivers, streams, and land for hunting, fishing, ATV, recreation, and open space uses

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Assist municipalities and organizations in securing funding and negotiating contracts to purchase property, easements, or right-of-ways that will support long-term access to rivers, streams, and land for hunting, fishing, ATV, recreation, and open space uses. Partner with municipalities, businesses, and non-profits.	Technical Support	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	S	\$0	Partner with DCNR, PA Fish and Boat Commission and other agencies.
2	Work with land owners to gain access to private property for recreational use of rivers, lakes, and open space.	Technical Support	ACDPD, Local recreation and conservation agencies and organizations	L	\$0	
3	Promote additional public boating access areas along the Allegheny and Kiski Rivers. Several access areas should include fuel, food, restrooms, and other amenities. Examples would be Freeport and Ford City.	Policy	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	S	Will vary by project	PA DCNR; private investment
4	Encourage development of riverfront and streamside parks.	Policy	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	L	\$0	

GOAL #8: Educate the public and promote existing facilities and amenities

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Organize events, outings, hikes, geocaching, and other activities to highlight existing opportunities.	Action	Armstrong County Tourist Bureau	S	Will vary by project	
2	Create a website to serve as a clearinghouse of information on recreation opportunities throughout the County. Visitors to the site will be able to find information on the area parks, including hours of operation, available facilities, activity and event schedules, programming, and contact, reservation, and registration information.	Action	Armstrong County Tourist Bureau	M	\$1000-\$10,000	Armstrong County Tourist Bureau
3	Enhance the promotion of appropriate local events to potential visitors through the Armstrong County Tourist Bureau.	Action	Event organizers and the Armstrong County Tourist Bureau	M	Will vary by project	

GOAL #9: Develop youth centered, active recreation facilities throughout the County

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Develop the recreation facility needs defined in the description that follows this chart.	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities	M	Will vary by project	PA DCNR; DCED; local organizations and municipalities
2	Work with the local school districts to improve accessibility of their fields and facilities for public use.	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities, and School Districts	S	\$0	
3	Strengthen the relationships and partnerships among community sports organizations, municipalities, and schools.	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities, Sports Organizations	S	\$0	

Recreation Facilities and Park Land Deficiencies

Chapter Two describes a number of park land and recreation facilities deficiencies in each region of the County. Based on that analysis, the following additional acreage and/or recreation facilities are needed in each region.

Planning Region	Additional Acreage needed
Northwest	None
Northeast	48 acres
West	None
Central	None
East	60 acres
South	134 acres

Planning Region	Recreation Facility	Number of Facilities needed
Northwest	Soccer fields	1
Northeast	Soccer fields	3
	Baseball	1
West	Picnic shelters	6
	Football fields	1
	Softball	2
Central	Volleyball courts	2
	Soccer fields	5
	Softball fields	6
	Picnic shelters	2
East	Volleyball courts	1
	Soccer fields	1
South	Basketball courts	1
	Tennis courts	1
	Volleyball courts	4
	Baseball fields	1
	Softball fields	4
	Soccer fields	7
	Football fields	2

GOAL #10: Encourage and support the development of recreational facilities, programs, and opportunities that stimulate the County's economic growth

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Form partnerships for tourist packages.	Action	Armstrong County Tourist Bureau and Local Municipalities	M	\$0	
2	Conduct a study of recreational uses, along with their economic benefits, of the Allegheny and Kiski Rivers (a specific recommendation from the Armstrong County Comprehensive Plan).	Action	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	M	\$60,000	
3	Conduct a study of the Armstrong Trail and its economic benefits	Action	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner, AVLTL	M	\$30,000	
4	Encourage new recreation related business development along the Allegheny and Kiski Rivers (e.g. boat rentals and services, guided trips, easy food services, campgrounds, bed and breakfasts).	Policy	ACDPD Park and Trail Planner	S	\$0	
5	Promote the County's trails, waterways, and natural features as a means of bringing visitors to the County.	Action	Armstrong County Tourist Bureau, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities	S		
6	Develop "Trail Towns" in Parker City, Kittanning, Ford City, Freeport, Leechburg, Apollo, and South Bethlehem. See the Trail Towns description in the Greenways chapter.	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities, Sports Organizations	S		

GOAL #11: Promote and support partnerships with local municipalities, schools, organizations, and private businesses to build and strengthen recreational opportunities

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Develop grassroots cooperative efforts for as many of the recommendations of this Plan as possible.	Policy	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities	S	\$0	
2	Support the existing partnership among Armstrong County, Armstrong County Memorial Hospital, Armstrong School District, and the Armstrong County YMCA.	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities	S	\$0	
3	Encourage the efforts of the Freeport, Leechburg, Apollo Group (FLAG) toward water-trail economic development along the Kiski River.	Policy	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities, Sports Organizations	S	\$0	
4	Strengthen the relationships and partnerships among community sports organizations, municipalities, and schools.	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Local Municipalities, Sports Organizations	S	\$0	

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation		Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Cost	Potential Funding Source
1	Adopt this plan as a part of the County's Comprehensive Plan.	Policy	ACDPD	S	\$0	
2	Utilize the three-tier planning system for implementation of this Plan (description to be included).	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board and Planner	S	\$0	
3	Seek funding through a variety of sources for development, acquisition, and on-going support. Work to leverage funds from one funding source against another to lower the County's local investment.	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board and Planner	S	\$0	
4	Create a park and trail foundation, through the Armstrong County Community Foundation, where persons can contribute to development and acquisition projects. This should be established as a Donor Advised Fund.	Action	ACDPD, Park and Trail Advisory Board, Armstrong County Community Foundation	S	\$0	

Grants Sources

There are many sources of funding for parks and recreation. There are three primary governmental programs that provide grants to local communities for parks and recreation purposes. The programs and funding opportunities are listed below. Additional sources of funding are listed at the end of this chapter.

1. PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Maximum Grant - approximately \$100,000 (sometimes more can be available)

Local Match - generally, grants require a 50% local match

Sources of Local Match - generally, local cash match; in-kind services are now eligible as a match under certain conditions; DCED grants can be used as a match

Funding Cycle - grant applications for development, planning, and acquisition are due in April; awards are announced in the late summer or early fall; a second application period is scheduled for planning and acquisition projects; the deadline is generally late September

Eligible Uses

- (1) technical assistance
- (2) feasibility studies for recreation facilities
- (3) acquisition of additional park land
- (4) development and rehabilitation of existing facilities

2. PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED)

Maximum Grant - no specified limit; could be as much as \$500,000 or more

Local Match - generally, grants require some local match; although, 100% funding is available; DCED grants can be used to match DCNR grants

Sources of Local Match - generally, local cash match; in-kind services may eligible as a match under certain conditions; private local investment

Funding Cycle - applications are accepted at any time; awards are generally made on a quarterly basis in July, October, January, and April

Eligible Uses

- (1) community facility construction and/or rehabilitation
- (2) some funding can be used for programming

3. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Eligible Uses

- (1) community facility construction and/or rehabilitation
- (2) ADA improvements
- (3) some funding can be used for programming

Grants Strategies

Applying for a grant is not simply a matter of filling out the proper forms and submitting them. Grants can be very competitive. Often, funding agencies receive requests that amount to as much as ten times more than the money that is available. It is, therefore, very important that you are well prepared in submitting your application. The following outlines several steps that can significantly improve your chances of receiving a grant.

1. Be well prepared

- Know the funding agency - contact persons, addresses, and phone numbers.
- Be sure you are an eligible applicant for the agency and program through which you intend to apply.
- Investigate each grant opportunity to be sure that what you are applying for meets the funding criteria.
- Be complete and accurate in your application. Do not assume that you will have an opportunity to correct mistakes, update data, etc.
- Submit your application several days prior to the deadline. This assures it is in on time and shows that you are well prepared.

2. Have a Vision and a Plan

- A vision shows the funding agency that you have looked to the future. It shows where your application fits into the bigger picture in your community and/or department. A vision can come from your Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan or be a part of a broader community effort.
- A plan shows that you have looked at the details of what you want to do. Be more specific in your plan than in your vision.
- Describe where your matching funds will come from. Show that you can leverage funding from a variety of sources - local taxes, private contributions, other grants, etc.
- Describe in detail how you will address maintenance of any facilities you are requesting funding for. Maintenance is a key factor if an agency is to invest large dollars in your project.
- Show previous success you have had. Show existing parks that have previously been funded. Indicate how your successes in other projects will impact the project you are applying for.
- Identify opportunities to partner with other municipalities and organizations.

3. Contact the Funding Agencies

- Make a personal contact with the funding agency as early as you can in the process. Keep them informed but don't badger them. Show them your vision and how this specific project fits into it.
- DCED - Contact your local State Representative and/or Senator. Also contact the Pittsburgh DCED office.
- DCNR - Contact the Regional Recreation Advisor.

Other Funding Strategies

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

- ❖ **Grants Agencies** - See the list of potential grant sources provided in Chapter 6 of this report. It is wise to consider more than one grant source for multifaceted projects. Different agencies may be willing to provide funding for different portions of your project. For example, if a project includes construction of trails and development of a neighborhood park, there are agencies that will fund trails and others who will fund parks. Applying to both types of agencies for funding that meets their specific criteria enhances the likelihood of receiving a grant.
- ❖ **Adjacent Municipalities** - In some cases adjacent municipalities have a specific interest in park facilities located within the Township or Borough. In these cases there may be interest in making a financial contribution toward the project.
- ❖ **Local Organizations** - Often local recreation organizations are willing to raise funds to be used for upgrades to their facilities. These funds should be considered as part of the local match for grant funding. For example, if a football organization is already investing \$10,000 to \$15,000 annually into upgrading of facilities, they may be willing to utilize several years' worth of that investment toward a major renovation of the football facility. This could mean as much as fifty or seventy-five thousand dollars available to be used as matching funds for a grant.
- ❖ **Funds Already Planned for Use** - It is also helpful to consider funds that may already be allocated for use in or near a park that may be used as a source of matching funds. For instance, if a water or sewer line is being planned to run through a park, tapping into that line could make the money spent for its installation an eligible match for a park project. The same could be true of parking areas, roads, trails, trailheads, and other projects.
- ❖ **Creativity** - Creativity is key to finding and leveraging funding sources with one another. The intent is to reduce the local share as low as possible, while accomplishing the goals of the project. Consider as many options as you can identify. Then contact the funding agencies to determine whether or not your plan meets their requirements.
- ❖ **Partnerships** - Partnerships will be critical to ensuring local capacity to implement this Plan. All municipalities and organizations should consider opportunities to partner with others as they move toward implementation of the Plan's strategies. Partnerships can allow for the distribution of responsibility for funding, management, operations, programming or maintenance of a specific project. Often times funding agencies look more favorably upon projects that are developed through partnerships than those of an individual entity.

FULFILLING THE VISION

The three-tier implementation process, illustrated on the right, will be very useful in ensuring that the County stays on track toward full implementation of this Plan.

The Vision for the Future of Recreation, Parks, and Open Space should be adopted by the County as **tier one** of the implementation process. Within that vision are the series long-range goals that have been developed as **tier two** of the process. The final step, **tier three**, is to create annual or biannual goals to be accomplished within those parameters

Each level becomes more clearly defined. The vision statement is intended to be very broad-based and forward-looking. The long-range goals are created to provide a framework for implementation of the vision. Finally, annual or biannual goals are developed to accomplish specific tasks. All goals should be clearly defined and measurable.

Adoption of this plan includes adoption of **tiers one and two**. For **tier three**, the County will need to prioritize and adopt annual goals that begin to accomplish the long-term goals and move the County toward the fulfillment of the vision.

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

The successful implementation of this plan depends on a variety of factors, including but not limited to, the following:

1. PUBLIC SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

Armstrong County residents' support of future efforts to develop recreation opportunities and preserve open space is critical to the future of a successful system. Immediately following the approval of this planning document, efforts should be made to publicize its findings and recommendations.

2. INVOLVEMENT OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

As the primary decision-makers of the County, elected officials should be updated on a regular basis regarding the recommendations of this plan, the status of implementation, public support, and related issues as they arise.

3. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION

The future development of Armstrong County's recreation and open space system will be an important opportunity for local municipalities, organizations, and agencies to work together. The base of cooperation that was created through this planning process will allow a pooling of resources for the implementation of this plan's recommendations.

4. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The local municipalities, organizations, and agencies continue to show a commitment to a high quality recreation and open space system. Commitment to funding recreation and open space projects will greatly influence the success with which the recommendations of this plan are implemented. Alternative funding sources should be continually explored to supplement the contributions of local governments and local organizations.

5. VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

A strong volunteer base will make a large contribution to the physical implementation of the plan's recommendations.

TIER ONE

ADOPT A VISION

Where do you want to be in 10 - 20 years?



TIER TWO

ADOPT LONG AND SHORT-RANGE GOALS

General goals to move toward fulfilling the Vision Statement



TIER THREE

ANNUAL AND BIANNUAL GOALS

Very specific and measurable goals intended to accomplish the long and short-range goals

CONCLUSION

Armstrong County's Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan provides an analysis of the County's current parks and recreation system and makes recommendations for its future. The process began with a detailed inventory of current recreation and open space opportunities. Public input throughout the development of the plan helped to mold a document that is factual and realistic. The public participation process culminated in the Vision for the Future, which represents the communities' recreation goals. The recommendations of this plan include changes and enhancements that will move the County closer to accomplishment of those goals and fulfillment of the Vision.

This Plan lays the groundwork for improved parks, recreation, and open space throughout the County. Future successes will be determined by residents' participation; the level of financial support; multi-agency and multi-municipal cooperation; and the strong desire to create safe places for residents to live, play, and learn. Support for the implementation of the plan's recommendations and a strong commitment to its use as a guide for the future will assist in providing an improved quality of life for years to come.

Chapter 5: Greenway Plan



Chapter 5: Greenway Plan

INTRODUCTION

As part of Armstrong County's Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan, Pashek Associates inventoried and analyzed greenway and trail opportunities. Using this information, Pashek Associates worked with the project study committee to establish a vision, set goals, and develop strategies for conserving greenways and creating a trail network in the County.

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

WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

Many people think of greenways as primarily recreational – trails for hiking, jogging, biking, or canoeing/kayaking (often called water trails or “blueways”). For them, greenways are places that offer opportunities to experience the outdoors. Others see greenways as a way to conserve natural resources like forests, wetlands, and stream banks, along with the plants and animals that live there. Some also see greenways in aesthetic terms – preserving the pastoral countryside setting in rural areas; protecting outstanding natural features such as cliffs, overlooks, or stream valleys; or establishing green landscapes in urban areas.

All three of these ideas are embraced by the all-encompassing definition on the left, which is adapted from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Greenways Plan, *Pennsylvania Greenways - An Action Plan for Creating Connections*, which is, in turn, supported by this Greenways Plan:

WHY ARE GREENWAYS IMPORTANT TO ARMSTRONG COUNTY?

Wherever greenways are developed, or protected, they provide numerous and diverse benefits to local municipalities and their residents. Some of those benefits are especially applicable to greenways development or protection in Armstrong County. They include:

- protection of natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources
- support of economic growth and development
- fostering of public recreation, health, and fitness
- protection of drinking water resources
- creation of educational opportunities
- promotion of sustainable development and sound land use
- stewardship of Pennsylvania's rural and farmland legacy
- provision of alternative transportation
- building of partnerships with other counties, municipalities, and organizations

Examples of these benefits are very diverse. Open space corridors protect farmland and help to preserve the rural way of life. Providing outdoor recreation opportunities supports health and fitness among County residents. Preserving historic and cultural resources may attract visitors thus supporting economic prosperity.

Further, many of these benefits are interrelated, and a single greenway or trail can provide several benefits. For instance, greenways along rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs protect wildlife habitat, help control flooding, and protect drinking water supplies.

Preserving Armstrong County's Defining Characteristics by Increasing Awareness

As we move through the 21st century, the importance of the protection of our open spaces and natural resources is greater than ever. Residents of areas abundant in open spaces and natural resources often take those assets for granted because they are not aware of their importance. Preservation of an area's defining characteristics, such as rolling farmland or forested valleys marked by boulder-strewn streams, plays a large role in determining *quality of life* for ourselves and future generations.

Local residents of Armstrong County may be more likely to realize the importance of their County's natural resources if access to, and information on, such resources were available. For instance, residents may not value a remote pristine stream valley until a footpath provides access to it so that its beauty can be enjoyed more easily.

Armstrong County has many outdoor recreational assets, including: the Armstrong Trail; the Great Shamokin Path; a portion of the Baker Trail; connection to the Butler-Freepport Trail; the North Country National Scenic Trail; canoe- and kayak-accessible and navigable portions of the Allegheny River, Kiski River, and Redbank Creek; public access and recreation areas at Mahoning, Keystone, and Crooked Creek Lakes; Roaring Run/Arcadia Natural Area; Canfield Holmes Sanctuary; several local municipal parks; trout fishing streams; and State Game Lands. These places together provide a variety of opportunities for biking, hiking, hunting, fishing, boating, picnicking, wildlife viewing and photography, and other pastimes.

Expanding the Economy Through Recreation and Eco-Tourism

Economic growth is of special importance in Western Pennsylvania. Communities once considered industrial centers experienced an economic decline since the collapse of Western Pennsylvania's steel industry. Armstrong County, as well as many other surrounding counties, is still recovering from the aforementioned economic downturn and attempting to mirror the national economic transition from heavy industry to technology and service-related industries. Along with the Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development (ACDPD) (www.co.armstrong.pa.us), the Armstrong County Tourist Bureau (www.armstrongcounty.com), Armstrong County Chamber of Commerce (www.armstrongchamber.org), Strongland Chamber of Commerce (www.strongland.org), and Armstrong Conservation District (ACD) (www.armstrongcd.org) have launched both individual and coordinated efforts to draw businesses, residents, and visitors to Armstrong County.

The 2005 Armstrong County Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) recommends that the County's natural, cultural, and historic resources be protected and used as the basis for economic development. The Comp Plan specifically uses the examples of tourism and recreation as economic development generators.

The County's accessibility from major highways, proximity to nearby population centers, and its abundance of navigable waterways, forestland, and other natural resources makes it a logical place for development in one of the fastest-growing sectors in Pennsylvania's economy – *Recreational or Eco-Tourism*. According to DCNR, tourism is the second largest industry in the Commonwealth, and nearly one-fifth of Pennsylvania's tourists travel to enjoy its outdoor amenities. Armstrong County's various natural and recreational resources are important assets that provide potential for substantial growth in the travel and tourism industries.

The economic benefits of greenway development are well-documented. In 2002, York County published a study of the Heritage Rail Trail, which had been in operation for three years. The study, *Heritage Rail Trail County Park 2001 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis*, concluded that trail users were having a measurable, positive impact on the York County economy. Specifically, the report stated:

- In terms of economic impact, 72% of the respondents indicated they had purchased “hard goods”, mostly bicycles and related accessories, in the past year in conjunction with their use of the trail. The average purchase amount was \$367.12. While these types of purchases are not annually recurring, even with the most conservative usage estimate they amount to millions of dollars in sales.
- Even more significant is the purchase of “soft goods” (water, soda, candy, ice cream, lunches, etc.); 65.6% of the respondents indicated that they purchased these types of items on their most recent trip to the trail. The average purchase amount per person was \$8.33. Considering that the average user makes several trips to the trail on an annual basis, at the minimum these types of purchases are contributing several hundred thousand dollars to the York County economy. And these types of purchases are recurring year after year. Only 15% of the respondents indicated that they did not make a purchase in conjunction with their use of the trail.

A similar study done in the Western Pennsylvania region, the *Economic Impact of Ghost Town Trail in the Indiana and Cambria Counties Region* (completed in October 1996), returned similar results with a trail user survey and infrared counters spaced at trail entrances. When the results of the user survey were assumed to represent all trail users, the study concluded that:

- Average daily local purchases for Ghost Town Trail users were \$4.33 per day for Indiana or Cambria County residents and \$9.28 for non-residents. Typical purchases included food, transportation, and other items.
- The total economic impact, when multiplied by the estimated 66,253 people that used the trail during 1996, was approximately \$362,000: \$221,000 from residents' expenditures and \$140,000 from non-residents' expenditures. Over 77% of trail users were residents of either Indiana or Cambria County.

The Allegheny Trail Alliance also had a user survey of their trail system, including 100 of the 150 continuous miles of the Great Allegheny Passage, between Pittsburgh, PA and Cumberland, MD, as well as the Montour Trail near Pittsburgh International Airport.

Their study, the *2002 User Survey for the Pennsylvania Allegheny Trail Alliance*, asked information on trail use, distances traveled, spending in local communities, and spending on bikes and equipment. Highlights of the survey results include:

- 59% of trail users made some type of small item purchase, such as food, clothing, and gas, at businesses in local trail-related communities.
- The average person spent \$8.84 per trip on small purchases.
- Per-trip spending varied at different trailheads surveyed, ranging from \$2.87 per person at the Montour Trail to \$15.61 at the Confluence trailhead of the Great Allegheny Passage.
- Spending varied substantially with distances traveled, ranging from \$4.03 per person per trip for those traveling less than 10 miles (one way) to a trailhead; to \$15.44 per person per trip for those traveling more than 60 miles.
- 13.3% of trail users stayed overnight during their trail visit, and the average number of nights stayed among those users was 2.4 nights.

To cater to the needs of recreational users, new service businesses such as bike shops, canoe & kayak rentals, outdoor equipment stores, restaurants, campsites, and bed and breakfasts often spring up around recreational greenways. These new businesses bring new jobs and additional tax dollars to the host municipalities.

In *Benefits of Greenways*, DCNR noted that in 2002, recreational tourism accounted for 459,000 jobs statewide, an increase of 100,000 from 1998. Moreover, the report noted that “there is also evidence to demonstrate that communities with recreational greenways have witnessed significant increases in real estate values.”

Beyond these direct economic benefits of greenways, other less-tangible, but very important fiscal impacts may be attributed to greenway development. For example, when looking for places to relocate or expand their businesses, employers look at a variety of factors including amenities for their employees. Workers, particularly young people, are attracted to places that provide opportunities for easy access to outdoor recreation. Greenways and trails provide such accessibility since they connect employment centers to parks and other natural amenities.

Protecting Sensitive Habitats

Armstrong County contains a variety of forests, wetlands, rivers, and streams that provide habitat for a wide array of plants and animals. The Pennsylvania Audubon Society has identified one Important Bird Area (IBA), an area essential to sustaining wild bird populations, in the County. In addition, the Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation has identified several Important Mammal Areas (IMA) in Armstrong County. These areas provide essential habitat for a variety of mammal species.

Although a Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) has not yet been completed for Armstrong County, one Bio-Diversity Area (BDA), which is of special importance to the ecological integrity of the County and the surrounding region, has been identified. These BDA's are identified in neighboring county NHI's.

A greenway network will help to protect these sensitive environmental areas from development and to restrict uses that would threaten their conservation.

Promoting Sound Land Use and Sustainable Growth

To bring new residential, commercial, and industrial development into Armstrong County, planning is needed to assure that such development respects the County's sensitive environmental areas, along with the aforementioned cultural, historic, and scenic resources.

One method of responsible land use is the "in-fill" development of land in existing areas of urban or suburban development, such as, developing land in an existing business park rather than in previously undisturbed land provides easier access to utilities and resources, while preserving an additional area of open space.

According to the 2005 Armstrong County Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan), most County residents support existing land-use patterns, with new and intense development occurring along major transportation corridors where adequate public infrastructure is available. The Comp Plan also states that many opportunities exist in the County for revitalization, redevelopment, and restoration of residential, commercial, and industrial areas. The Comp Plan goes further to recommend that new residential development should include multi-family housing to better meet future needs of County residents. This view parallels state-wide Growing Greener program ideals.

It is important to note that a thoughtfully developed greenway plan does *not* oppose development but, rather, identifies ways to integrate it with conservation practices and recreation opportunities. Thus, economic growth will occur in planned areas and will result in economically, socially, and environmentally healthier communities.

HOW IS A GREENWAYS PLAN DEVELOPED?

A Three-Step Process

Sound greenways planning uses a three-step process that answers the following questions:

Where Are We Now? - This is the inventory phase, during which information about the County's natural, cultural, historical, and scenic assets is gathered, forming the building blocks of natural systems and/or recreation corridors. For example, it is important to note critical habitat areas, as well as abandoned rail lines that have potential for conversion into recreational trails.

Where Do We Want to Be? - In this phase, the "vision" for the greenways system is developed through a public participation process. The plan synthesizes information gathered in the inventory phase into a proposed network of greenways and trails linking important destinations throughout the County.

How Do We Get There? - This phase provides information and recommendations to implement the greenways network. It includes concrete tools such as recommended management structure, prioritized trail and greenway segments, potential funding sources, and suggestions for pilot/demonstration projects.

Public Participation is Essential

Greenways planning also involves an intensive public participation process that solicits knowledge and expertise from those who know Armstrong County best – local residents and officials. Details of the public input process can be found in Chapter 3.

Greenways Goals and Objectives

Preserving and enhancing quality of life is the general goal of planning a greenways network. Near the onset of the Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan, the study committee stated recreation objectives relating to greenways. These objectives support the goal for planning the greenways network and address issues specific to Armstrong County by:

- providing public access to some existing natural areas to increase awareness of their existence and importance while minimizing environmental impact of providing access
- unifying the efforts of conservation and recreation special interest groups in Armstrong County
- providing recreational opportunities for County residents through preservation, connection, and enhanced promotion of existing destinations and resources
- promoting economic growth via recreational or eco-tourism
- encouraging local municipalities to work in unison to help protect their various resources by adopting open-space and land-use regulations
- educating County residents on the aspects and benefits of greenways planning, including the benefits of implementation of the objectives listed herein, while acknowledging their property ownership rights
- fostering a sense of pride and ownership in public recreation facilities in the County

The Greenways Plan as a Decision-Making Tool

This Greenway Plan serves as a flexible tool for making decisions regarding the protection of natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources. By encompassing a variety of issues pertinent to these resources, the Greenways Plan establishes the foundation for the continued success of open space conservation and enhanced quality of life in Armstrong County. Specific policy details and greenway locations may be adjusted as needed throughout the planning process and implementation.

Sound greenway planning includes inventory and analysis of natural features and existing recreation facilities, such as parks or trails; cultural and historic sites; and open spaces, such as nature reserves. Such planning requires collaboration with local government agencies, private groups, and interested citizens to form policies for development, resource conservation, and provision of recreation opportunities. This multi-layered approach involving Armstrong County and its decision-makers yields short-, medium-, and long-term strategies for natural resource conservation and development of public recreation facilities.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY'S RESOURCES

GATHERING DATA

Most of the background information needed to support the Greenways Plan was gathered through project-specific independent research. With the help of the Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development (ACDPD), Pashek Associates obtained and reviewed studies and reports, including County and municipal planning documents as well as recreation- and natural resource-related materials. Other information was gathered through the public participation process described in the introduction section of this report, as well as through field observation. The Greenways Plan references relevant sections of the various research sources when related greenways issues are discussed throughout.

NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVENTORY

Green infrastructure is defined as an interconnected network of natural areas and other open spaces that are planned and managed for their natural resource values and the services those areas provide to the human population. These areas clean the air, generate oxygen, filter and cool water, store and recycle nutrients, conserve and generate soils, pollinate crops and other plants, regulate climate, sequester carbon, manage storm and flood waters, and maintain aquifers, streams, and potable water resources.

These ecologically valuable lands also provide marketable goods and services, like agricultural and forest products, fish, and wildlife. They serve as vital habitat for resident and migratory species, maintain a vast genetic library, provide scenery, and contribute in many ways to the health and quality of life for Armstrong County's population.

The process of developing a plan for Armstrong County's greenways utilizes a green infrastructure approach to the building blocks that contribute to the region's well-being. This process will also identify a plan of action to assure these resources are available to provide their valuable functions for future generations of County residents.

The following green infrastructure resources have been mapped and analyzed to determine where resources are within the Armstrong County Greenways project area.

Important Bird Areas

Armstrong County's forests, thickets, wetlands, streams, lakes, and vernal pools provide habitat for a diversity of plants and animals, including birds. Some areas provide critical habitat for certain species of birds, and thus merit special recognition. The Pennsylvania Chapter of the Audubon Society (Audubon Pennsylvania) has designated one Important Bird Area (IBA) that is partially located in Armstrong County – the Buffalo Creek Valley IBA. According to Audubon Pennsylvania, "to qualify as an IBA, a site must meet at least one of four criteria, each associated with a different type of vulnerability. It must support endangered or threatened species; species that are not widely distributed; species that are restricted to a single extensive habitat or biome; or high densities of congregating species, such as waterfowl or shorebirds." Sites that are important flyways for migrating birds in spring and fall may also qualify as IBA's. Over 80 IBA's have been identified by Audubon Pennsylvania. Information on each, including interactive mapping, is available at <http://pa.audubon.org/iba>.

The Buffalo Creek Valley IBA, according to Audubon Pennsylvania's description, boasts regionally significant populations of neo-tropical forest interior migrant bird species, as well as resident forest bird species. There are large stands of Hemlock, American Sycamore, and moist deciduous forest. These habitats, along with unfragmented forests in some uplands surrounding the stream valleys, are exceptional bird habitat. The Cerulean Warbler is a resident bird species sensitive to habitat change, and the resident Pileated Woodpecker population is limited by habitat size. The Buffalo Creek Valley has also been recognized as an area of high biological diversity.

Several avian and ecological studies have been undertaken at the Todd Nature Reserve, a nature preserve owned and operated by the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania. The Todd Nature Reserve is located adjacent to the Buffalo Creek Valley in Buffalo Township, Butler County, near the border with Armstrong County. The sanctuary is within the Buffalo Creek Valley IBA.

Potential threats to this IBA include natural pests and diseases, recreational development/overuse as a fishing resource, and excessive or inappropriate forestry or mining practices.

Important Mammal Areas

The 2002 Important Mammal Area Project (IMAP) is an ongoing joint partnership of the National Wildlife Federation, PA Wildlife Federation, PA Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, Mammal Technical Committee/PA Biological Survey, PA Game Commission, and the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Using Audubon Pennsylvania's Important Bird Area (IBA) program as a model, IMAP identifies areas that provide a critical habitat for mammals whose success rate has been strained by the disturbance or loss of habitat. The goal is to then have these areas be managed by private conservation agencies and government organizations as territories to be protected. More information on IMAP is available online at www.pawildlife.org/imap.htm and at <http://www.pgc.state.pa.us/pgc/cwp/view.asp?a=496&q=161682>.

Two sites have been designated as Important Mammal Areas (IMA's) in Armstrong County. The IMA's are referred to as the Private Mine IMA and the U.S. Steel Mine IMA. Both areas are located in the west-central portion of Armstrong County. No further information on these sites was available via Pennsylvania Wildlife Federation or PA Game Commission online resources.

Natural Heritage Areas

The Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program collects and inventories data that outline the populations and biodiversity of the state's wildlife areas. The inventory is updated frequently to stay current with new discoveries and changes in the data. The function of this resource is to provide precise information for natural resource/land management, development preparation, and wildlife conservation. Data is collected on the local, county, and state level by a partnership between The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and The Nature Conservancy.

The Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) for Armstrong County has yet to be completed. Upon completion, it will be an invaluable public asset and resource for County residents, providing maps and information on the known outstanding floral, faunal, geologic, and scenic features in the County. It was not available for use in the Greenways Plan. However, a natural heritage area crossing Armstrong County's borders was identified by the Butler County NHI.

An NHI classifies natural areas as either Biodiversity Areas (BDA's), Landscape Conservation Areas (LCA's), or other Managed Lands. These sites may be examples of the county's best natural communities and the locations of animal and plant species of concern (endangered, threatened, or rare). The definitions of these classifications, as given in the NHI, are shown below.

- A **BDA** is an area containing: 1) one or more locations of plants, animals, or natural communities recognized as a state or federal species (or natural community) of concern; or 2) high-quality examples of natural communities or areas supporting exceptional native diversity.
- An **LCA** is a large contiguous area which is important because of its size, open space, habitats, and/or the inclusion of one or more BDA's. Although an LCA may include many different land uses, it typically has not been heavily disturbed and thus retains much of its natural character.

The County Line Ravine BDA is situated on the Butler County/Armstrong County border and contains areas of both Counties. A portion of this BDA is located in Allegheny Township, Butler County while the most pristine portion of

this BDA is located in Hovey Township, Armstrong County. This BDA contains a northern hardwood-conifer forest community dominated by old-growth hemlocks on steep ravine slopes and by mature oaks on upland slopes. Potential threats to this BDA include leakage from an adjacent abandoned oil drilling operation, drainage from an adjacent strip mine that was not reclaimed, and erosion from adjacent logging operations and heavily used ATV trails. The NHI recommends removal of abandoned drilling equipment and piping, stoppage of ATV riding on the BDA site, and re-evaluation of adjacent mining and logging operations.

Wetlands

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Wetland Inventory (NWI) produces information on the nation's wetlands. Wetlands serve many purposes in an ecosystem. They are home to thousands of wetland plant and animal species, as well as a source of food and nesting to an estimated 50% of North America's bird population. Additionally, more than 46% of U.S. endangered and threatened species need wetlands to live.

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

Predictably, Armstrong County's wetlands are generally small areas situated along side the rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds within the County.

Floodplains

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) delineates 100-year floodplains for the nation through its floodplain management program and mapping. In the State of Pennsylvania, the PA Code has regulations designed to encourage planning and development in floodplains which are consistent with sound land use practices. Protecting the people and properties within floodplains from floodwaters is essential. In addition, preserving and restoring the efficiency and carrying capacity of streams within the Commonwealth is a vital component to maintaining a sound ecological system.

The Greenway Plan analyzes FEMA floodplain mapping to locate environmentally sensitive areas within communities. This information can be utilized to further promote the preservation and restoration of streams within the study area.

Steep Slopes

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) mapped the topography of the United States. From this mapping the USGS created a Digital Elevation Model (DEM) which was used to analyze topography in Armstrong County. Areas with slopes greater than twenty-five percent (25%) are mapped as steep slopes. These areas are typically considered environmentally sensitive, generally unsuitable for development of any kind, and are in need of protection.

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

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

Hydric Soils

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), in partnership with The Pennsylvania State University Department of Agriculture, completed individual county soil surveys in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. These soil surveys list hydric soils, which often support wetland vegetation.

The Armstrong Conservation District should be contacted to obtain a list of hydric soils for Armstrong County. These soils have been mapped and analyzed as part of the green infrastructure inventory. Development in or around hydric soils should be done sensitively so as to preserve the potential benefits they may offer.

Forested Areas

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has created mapping of large tracts of contiguous forest blocks throughout the state of Pennsylvania. These forest blocks should be maintained as best as possible to preserve habitat and sustain avian migratory flyways. Such forest blocks have been mapped as part of the Greenways Plan.

High Quality Streams and Trout-Stocked Fisheries

A Cold Water Fishery (CWF), as classified by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), supports fish (such as various trout species), plants, and animals that best live and reproduce in colder water temperatures. One basis for this classification is the presence or absence of trout. High Quality (HQ) streams are defined as self-sustaining cold water fisheries. Exceptional Value (EV) streams are those of substantial recreational or ecological significance, such as unfiltered potable water supplies and PA Fish & Boat Commission-designated "Wilderness Trout Streams." EV streams constitute an outstanding national, state, regional, or local water resource.

Of Pennsylvania's 83,000 miles of streams, only about 25% are designated as HQ or EV cold water fisheries. Of these 25%, less than 2% are considered "highly productive" streams. Highly productive streams are home to naturally-reproducing wild trout populations. Other waters are stocked with game fish raised in hatcheries.

The Coldwater Heritage Partnership (CHP) is a collaborative effort between the PA Fish & Boat Commission, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, The Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, and Pennsylvania Trout Unlimited. The CHP provides leadership, coordination, technical assistance, and funding support for the evaluation, conservation, and protection of Pennsylvania's cold water streams.

The presence of an HQ-CWF will not stop a development from occurring. Rather, to ensure that water quality is not degraded by said development, the presence of an HQ-CWF will spur a rigorous permit review by DEP before any new development is allowed to proceed. This usually means that a complicated Individual Permit will be required rather than a more common General Permit.

A stream given an HQ or EV designation by DEP may have positive influences on an adjacent community. The presence of an HQ or EV stream improves a community's odds of attaining funding for the upgrading of local infrastructure such as sewage treatment facilities and road maintenance. EV classification also prohibits the dumping or storage of radioactive or other hazardous waste material within the same watershed.

Armstrong County boasts three HQ-CWF's – Pine Creek, Buffalo Creek, and little Mahoning Creek. In addition, sixteen streams in the County have been designated as CWF's, and the following five streams were designated as Trout-Stocked Fisheries (TSF's): Redbank Creek, Huling Run, Cowanshannock Creek, Plum Creek, and Glade Run. Ten Armstrong County streams are listed on the PA Fish & Boat Commission (PAFBC) list of trout-stocked streams.

Scenic Areas / Viewsheds

Due to the county's rolling topography, only a handful of long, uninterrupted views of the river valleys or large expanses of countryside are possible. These few opportunities for such views merit attention and preservation. Scenic viewsheds in Armstrong County may allow one to enjoy a panoramic view over a quaint farm valley or ponder the power and constancy of the Allegheny River. Although there is no known source of mapping for such places, they were made part of the inventory for this Plan through accounts of direct observation offered by study committee members.

The green infrastructure items listed above are shown on the *Natural Infrastructure Inventory Map* located on page 111.

**Insert “Natural Infrastructure Inventory”
11x17 map here**

BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE INVENTORY

Greenways also take advantage of elements in the human-made, or "built" environment. An often-used example of built infrastructure is that of abandoned rail lines being reborn as recreational rail trails. But sound greenways planning also requires an understanding of a diversity of built infrastructure resources. There are those that facilitate a greenway corridor, like old canal beds or utility corridors. Others present challenges to greenway development, like major highways and active industrial sites. And there are some built features that provide interesting stops along the greenway, like historic and cultural sites.

Transportation Corridors

- Abandoned and Active Rail Lines - Abandoned railroad grades connect several points throughout Armstrong County, generally following the paths of stream valleys. Portions of abandoned railroad line parallel the Allegheny River along its entire, roughly 40-mile stretch within Armstrong County borders. Some of these lines have been converted into rail-trail segments, but others remain abandoned. An abandoned rail line also follows Mahoning Creek and extends into Jefferson County, toward Brookville. An abandoned rail line once crossed the Allegheny River into Clarion County at Foxburg over what is now the State Route 58 Road Bridge, and another abandoned rail line follows the northern bank of Redbank Creek (Clarion County), which is mapped due to regional significance. Other abandoned rail alignments also cross County borders: from Parker City westward to Bruin Borough in Butler County; and from East Brady westward toward Petrolia Borough in Butler County. The abandoned railroad alignment along State Route 85 extends eastward into Indiana County. A portion of this alignment has already been converted to a trail – The Great Shamokin Path.
- Pedestrian Walkways - Urban areas in and around the large and small population centers of Armstrong County, including Kittanning, Ford City, Leechburg, Apollo, Freeport, Bradys Bend, Parker City, and South Bethlehem, have paved sidewalks. Most of the County's townships do not require sidewalks with new development, thus none exist except in villages or other small population centers where housing units are in close proximity to the roadway and to each other.
- Canals - Completed in 1834, the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal System paved the way for expansion westward from Philadelphia, across the Alleghenies to Pittsburgh and beyond. Part of this canal system once followed the Kiskiminetas River along Armstrong County's southern border. This canal system is seen as an opportunity for regional trail connections to neighboring communities (such as Saltsburg) and part of a greenway system theoretically connecting Harrisburg and Pittsburgh. Trail systems included in this grand proposed connection include the Lower Trail, West Penn Trail, Roaring Run Trail, and Kiski-Conemaugh and Juniata River Water Trail systems.

Major Greenway Corridors

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has established two major recreational greenway corridors that impact Armstrong County – The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail, and the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal System.

Erie to Pittsburgh Trail

In June 2008, the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail Alliance was created marking the beginning a coordinated effort to create trails from Lake Erie to Pittsburgh. The Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance (EPTA) project is a collaborative organization of individual trail efforts currently underway in western Pennsylvania. Using as many as 10 existing trails between Pittsburgh and Lake Erie, the EPTA will focus on filling the gaps between these trails and creating a unified route that generally follows the Allegheny River north into Venango County. From Venango County various routes will be explored that continue to Lake Erie.

Several large sections of the trail are already constructed in Allegheny, Armstrong and Venango Counties. One of the largest sections of completed trail is the Armstrong Trail that follows the Allegheny River through Armstrong County.

The EPTA has formed a steering committee made up of representatives from RTC, RTCA, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (Western Region) and the Pennsylvania DCNR. For more information on the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance, contact the NW PA Regional Planning and Development Commission at 814-667-4800 or www.nwcommission.org.

Pennsylvania Mainline Canal

Upon its completion, the Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway™ will be a linked network of land and water trails that wind 320 miles from Pittsburgh to Harrisburg and follow the path of the historic Pennsylvania Mainline Canal. The Greenway has been designated Pennsylvania's Millennium Legacy Trail--part of a set of trails across America whose ability to link heritage, culture, and recreation is seen as nationally significant. It intends to serve as a physical connector that improves opportunities for public access, linkage to important destinations, and economic development. It is not a single, long-distance trail for unimpeded travel.

For more information, see their Web site: www.alleghenyridge.org

Recreation Facilities

Various recreation facilities, including the community parks in municipalities throughout the county, are depicted on the *Recreation Inventory Map* and *Regional Recreation Opportunities Inventory Map* found on pages 45 and 65 respectively. Though the recreation facilities in Armstrong County are too numerous to describe in detail here, this section describes some of the most significant recreational assets that are relevant to the Greenways Plan.

- **Armstrong Trail** - The Armstrong Trail is a recreational trail open to non-motorized traffic and maintained by the Allegheny Valley Land Trust. Fifteen miles of the trail are currently paved with asphalt; other portions are paved with crushed limestone or remain as earth surface; and still other portions of the trail utilize existing paved streets. The southern end of the improved trail section begins at Rosston, ¼-mile north of the PAFBC boat launch and parking area. From that point, the trail stretches northward through Ford City and Kittanning and further northward to the PAFBC boat launch at Templeton, near State Game Land #287. Future plans are in progress to eventually extend the trail along the river northward to Foxburg and beyond, as well as southward into Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties, linking with other trail systems as part of a Pittsburgh-to-Erie trail. More detailed information is available at www.armstrongtrail.org
- **Baker Trail** - Armstrong County's premiere hiking trail, the Baker Trail, covers 141 miles and extends from Freeport, Armstrong County to the Allegheny National Forest. This hiking trail follows forest paths, old jeep trails, and dirt roads through woods, game lands, and farmlands and is marked by yellow blazes. 18 miles of the trail share a footpath with the North Country Scenic Trail. The Baker Trail also passes through the Crooked Creek Lake Recreation Area and Mahoning Creek Lake Recreation Area. More information is available at www.rachelcarsontrails.org.
- **Butler-Freeport Trail** - The Butler-Freeport Trail is a 16-mile compacted aggregate rail-trail following the Buffalo and Little Buffalo Creek valleys through eastern Butler County and extreme southwestern Armstrong County. The trail also traverses broad flat woodlands and small farming communities as it meanders toward Butler. Improvements to four miles of trail are currently being designed and will provide connection into the City of Butler. Additional information can be found at www.butlerfreeporttrail.org
- **North Country National Scenic Trail** - The North Country National Scenic Trail is a 4,600+ mile footpath spanning 7 states. A potential route of the trail crosses the northern panhandle of Armstrong County through the City of Parker, and provides a recreation connection to Butler and Clarion Counties. Additional information can be found on the North Country Trail Association's (NCTA's) website: <http://www.northcountrytrail.org>
- **Canfield-Holmes Sanctuary** - This natural area is located at the mouth of the Cowanshannock Creek just north of Kittanning. The sanctuary protects wildlife habitat while allowing public access for wildlife observation,

fishing, and hiking. The sanctuary serves as a PAFBC Boat Launch access and also acts as a trailhead for “Cowanshannock Trail”, which follows the Cowanshannock Creek 1.27 miles upstream through a wooded stream valley and past boulders and tumbling waterfalls.

- Roaring Run/Arcadia Natural Area - The Roaring Run Recreation Area is owned and operated by the Roaring Run Watershed Association. This 653 acre conservation and recreation area is open to the public year-round, from dawn to dusk. Over 15 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails traverse the property, as well as two premier-surfaced trails – the Roaring Run Trail and the Rock Furnace Trail. A canoeing/kayaking launch for Kiskiminetas River access is located at the Roaring Run trailhead. The parking area has a capacity for 105 vehicles. Picnic tables and a pavilion are located at the trailhead. More information is available at the Roaring Run Watershed Association’s website, www.roaringrun.org
- Great Shamokin Path - The Great Shamokin Path is a primitive surface hiking and bicycle trail running for five miles between NuMine and Margaret Road. The trail is parallel to the Cowanshannock Creek. The mostly grass-covered trail follows an abandoned rail line through the Cowanshannock Creek Valley past the Devil’s Washbasin, a 1.5-acre lake named for an old dam across the creek to obtain water for steam engines – always smokey, steamy, and eerie looking. The lake is stocked with fish and offers ice fishing and picnicking.

Utilizing the former Rural Valley Railroad alignment, the Great Shamokin Path is named after the path that once linked the Allegheny and Susquehanna Rivers and ran from Kittanning to Sunbury.

Several trailheads exist off of S.R. 85 for the Great Shamokin Path – one along State Route 85 near Yatesboro, and the other in NuMine (near the White Lake Picnic wetlands). For more information, see the description on page 52 or visit www.cowanshannock.org

- Crooked Creek ELC - The Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center (ELC) is located near Crooked Creek Lake is operated by the Armstrong Educational Trust and is leased from the U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers. The Center is dedicated to promoting environmental education and resource conservation. It is funded by grants, user fees, donations and sponsors.
- Community Parks - Among the largest community parks in Armstrong County are Freeport Community Park, Kittanning Riverfront Park, Ford City Park, and Sugar Creek (Township) Community Park.
- Hunting is very popular among residents of Armstrong County. Five separate State Game Lands (#’s 105, 137, 247, 259, and 287) encompassing thousands of acres of land are located in the County. These lands are managed by the State Game Commission for wildlife conservation, hunting, and trapping. These activities remain tantamount to any other proposed activities on these lands. Proposals for other uses are reviewed by the Game Commission to determine if they are compatible with primary uses.
- Fishing is also an important recreational activity to Armstrong County residents. Several species of game fish inhabit the Allegheny and Kiskiminetas Rivers, along with Crooked Creek Lake, Mahoning Lake, and Keystone Lake. In addition, trout are stocked in several of the Counties' streams. According to the PA Fish & Boat Commission’s 2008 trout stocking schedules, trout-stocked streams within Armstrong County include:
 - o Buffalo Creek
 - o Cherry Run
 - o Glade Run
 - o Little Sandy Creek
 - o North Fork Pine Creek
 - o Patterson Creek
 - o Redbank Creek
 - o Scrubgrass Creek
 - o South Fork Pine Creek
 - o Cowanshannock Creek
 - o Plum Creek
 - o Cornplanter Run
 - o Hulings Run

One special-protection trout waters or "special regulation" area, as designated by the PFBC, is located in Armstrong County: a 3.7-mile *Delayed Harvest, Artificial Lures-Only* portion of Buffalo Creek. This stream section stretches from the mouth of Little Buffalo Run downstream to a point 0.6 miles above the State Route 4035 bridge at Craigsville.

- Canoeing/Kayaking - The Allegheny and Kiskiminetas Rivers, along with Redbank Creek and the lower portion of Mahoning Creek, are easily navigable by non-powered boats such as canoes and kayaks and, thus, offer an important recreation resource to residents and visitors of Armstrong County. Parker's Landing Canoe & Kayak Livery (City of Parker) offers such boating opportunities on the Allegheny River, while River's Edge Canoe & Kayak Livery (Kiskiminetas Township) offers boating trips on the Kiskiminetas River.

Cultural and Historic Sites

Preserving places that offer a glimpse into Armstrong County's history may bring visitors into Armstrong County. Schools and Nationally-Registered Historic Places were inventoried as part of the Greenways Plan. Numerous schools exist throughout the County, and fourteen Nationally-Registered Historic Places were researched and mapped. A map of the County's schools is located on page 47 of this report and a description of major historic sites is on page 17. Additional information about historic sites in Armstrong County can be collected by contacting one of the County's historical societies. They are:

- Armstrong County Historical Museum and Genealogical Society (Kittanning)
- Apollo Historical Society
- Brady's Bend Historical Society
- Dayton Historical Society
- Freeport Area Historical Society
- Leechburg Historical Society

All of these can be found at www.armstronghistory.org.

Population Centers and Destinations

Armstrong County has 16 boroughs, 28 townships, and 1 city, the City of Parker. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the two largest population centers were Kittanning (nearly 4,800 residents) and Ford City (nearly 3,500 residents) Boroughs. Several of the County's other boroughs have populations between 1,000 and 2,000 or above. In addition, some townships in the County have populations of nearly 3,000 residents. These numbers indicate that the County's population is concentrated into small population centers and their surrounding suburbs. These municipalities are obviously important in any planning study. The County's smaller boroughs and villages, however, often have unique historic features and character that make them appealing destinations.

The aforementioned built resources are mapped on the *Recreation Inventory Map* and the *Regional Recreation Opportunities Inventory Map*. These maps are found on pages 45 and 65 respectively.

THE GREENWAYS VISION

CRITERIA

Greenways can serve many functions. When determining the guiding principles used to designate proposed greenway locations in Armstrong County, we considered the objectives established in the early part of the planning process. These goals, mentioned earlier in this chapter, support the two general functions that define proposed greenways in the County:

- 1) Natural Systems Greenways are corridors whose primary function is preservation of sensitive environmental features and habitats, such as wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, high-water-quality streams, high-value natural areas identified by the various sources, outstanding geologic or scenic features, and land surrounding the County's surface sources for drinking water. They are linear tracts of essentially undeveloped open space. Some low-impact activity, like hiking or wildlife observation, is acceptable in these corridors and may increase awareness of sensitive natural areas among County residents. However, intense development and motorized vehicle use are not recommended.
- 2) Recreation and Transportation Greenways are various types of trails, on both land and water. These greenways connect population centers and points of interest, bring people into contact with the outdoors, engender an appreciation of the natural world, and provide environmentally-friendly transportation options for commuters and visitors. In some cases, recreational trails overlay areas where conservation of natural assets is also an objective. To avoid conflicts, recreational uses should be planned to minimize impacts. For example, a biking trail along a river or stream corridor should be designed to preserve steep slopes, wetlands, and other sensitive areas.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK

Although recreational trails and eco-tourism were the larger focus of the Greenways Plan, building the framework of the greenway network began with laying out the natural systems greenways. These corridors follow the natural systems and features of the County – forests, ridge lines, significant stream corridors, and wildlife habitats.

Overlaying this backdrop of natural areas to be preserved, the plan adopts a "hubs and spokes" structure for its recreational and transportation greenways. Pennsylvania's State Greenways Plan, entitled *Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections*, describes the product of this overlay method as follows:

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

The hubs, sometimes called "nodes," are the significant destination points – boroughs and villages, historic and cultural sites, and important parks and recreational areas. The "spokes," or corridors, will provide the links between them. In some areas, natural systems greenways are distinct from recreational greenways; in other cases, they coincide. Finally, because streams, mountain ridges, wildlife habitats, state parks, and some recreational trails do not terminate at the County's boundaries, the greenways network proposes that corridors continue outward and form connections to natural and recreational assets in neighboring counties.

It should be noted that any plan to develop greenways will encounter hurdles, such as incompatible land uses, environmental constraints, and unwilling private and public landowners. These issues, while inevitable, should not prevent the County from creating its vision of a greenways network. Conflicts can be addressed at a later phase, when segments of this plan proceed to design and implementation at the local level.

NATURAL SYSTEMS GREENWAYS

Natural Systems Greenways were established using a system of weighted values given to natural resources within larger natural systems. The project study committee, with the help of Pashek Associates, assigned values to natural resources according to magnitude of county-wide importance. Each type of natural resource was then mapped individually, and all natural resources were overlaid onto each other and depicted on the *Natural Systems Greenways Map* found on page 119. When more than one natural resource overlapped, their respective values were added. Areas with the highest cumulative values included the most natural resources and, thus, merited inclusion in the natural systems greenways network.

Weighted values given to the county's various natural resources are shown in the table below and, also, on the *Natural Systems Greenways Map* on page 119.

Natural Systems Greenways



Component	Value									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Biological Diversity Area										
Wetland										
Slopes > 25%										
Floodplain										
High Quality Cold Water Fishery										
State Game Land										
Abandoned Mine Drainage-affected Streams										
Trout-Stocked Fisheries										
Interior Forest										
Hydric Soils										
Important Bird Area										
Important Mammal Area										
Other Managed Land										

**Insert “Natural Systems Greenways”
11x17 map here**

The project study committee determined that areas with a cumulative value of 11 or higher were to be the high-priority targets for protection as part of the natural systems greenways network. Cumulative values ranging from 3-10 are slightly lower priorities and should be included in the greenways network only when they are part of a linear connection (not an isolated area).

Although every effort should be made to include all the areas achieving the minimum weighted value for a high-priority resource area (11), not every piece of land containing such important resources can be protected. Protection of such a vast amount of land would be unrealistic. Instead, emphasis should be given to protection of the linear natural systems corridors following river and stream valleys and surrounding lakes throughout the County. Small, isolated patches with high-weighted cumulative values can be addressed at the municipal level rather than in the County-wide Greenway Plan.

The above method describes the scientific side of identifying important natural systems greenways. To develop feasible natural systems greenways connections, common sense must also be applied. Areas receiving a cumulative value less than the stated minimum for high-priority resource areas (a value less than 11) can still be included in the natural systems greenways network. In some instances, these areas are essential in creating logical connections between natural systems greenways in close proximity to one another. In other words, these areas "span the gaps" between other resources, ensuring continuity of proposed greenways.

Natural Systems Greenways Descriptions and Priorities

Using the cumulative resource value method mentioned above, the project study committee identified the following locations for high-priority natural systems greenways, specifically greenway corridors along the following water bodies:

- Allegheny River
- Mahoning Creek/Mahoning Creek Lake
- Redbank Creek
- Pine Creek
- Cowanshannock Creek
- Crooked Creek/Crooked Creek Lake
- Kiskiminetas River
- Roaring Run
- Rattling Run

Each of the proposed natural systems greenways listed above is represented by a ribbon of dark green (representing higher cumulative natural resource value) on the *Natural Systems Greenways Map* on page 119.

Level of Recommended Protection

Portions of many of the greenway corridors are located on private land. Acquisition of the entirety of each corridor would be unfeasible and unnecessary. Municipalities associated with each proposed natural systems greenways corridor should strive to educate and work with landowners to promote conservation.

While regulatory tools may protect some areas from development, they ignore other threats such as logging or mining, and can also be a heavy hand to deal when attempting to form friendly relationships with landowners. Easements and other agreements with educated, conservation-minded landowners can be customized to meet needs of both parties and may protect some targeted natural resources. Acquisition of small tracts near very vulnerable resources (high-water-quality streams, wetlands, etc.) should be considered, but only when feasible and directly beneficial.

Specific tools for conservation, along with other specific recommendations, are described in detail later in this section and in the appendices of this report.

RECREATION AND TRANSPORTATION GREENWAYS

Recreational and transportation greenways were established by first identifying those locations in the county that qualify as key destination points, or "hubs". Hubs represent the major destinations in the County, and recreation greenways should strive to connect them. The study committee identified several population centers within the County, and just outside County borders, as hubs. These destinations provide lodging, dining, and entertainment opportunities that already accommodate residents and visitors alike. Trail connections to these hubs are logical because trails provide an easily-accessible recreation resource to the greatest number of people in a concentrated area. In addition, visitors using the trail may spend money at local restaurants, hotels, or shops, thus supporting the local economy.

Some features of local cultural, historic, or aesthetic significance that could not be considered major destinations but may still attract interest of trail users are also included in the recreation greenways network. These features, such as schools and nationally-registered historic sites, are designated as "points of interest". They are included in the recreation greenways network only when they are in close proximity (one-half mile) to proposed hubs or spokes.

Once the hubs and points of interest were pinpointed, the "spokes" or trail connections between hubs were charted using one or more of the following man-made or natural features:

- existing or planned land or water trails
- abandoned rail lines
- stream corridors
- existing on-road bike routes
- utility corridors/right-of-ways

Proposed trails or "spokes" are planned primarily for active recreational uses such as running, walking, rollerblading, hiking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, and other forms of non-motorized recreation and transportation. Preference is given to off-road trail opportunities wherever feasible. However, in making trail linkages through urban areas or across rural areas where other options were not available, trail sections on or adjacent to existing roadways are proposed. Where proposed recreation and transportation greenways coincide with natural systems greenways, trail design should strive to minimize impact from these uses. Low-impact recreational use of such greenways is essential to increase awareness of Armstrong County's most outstanding natural resources.

Several of the trails described in the proposed greenways network are existing or already planned trails. In other instances, new trail connections are recommended. The inclusion of both existing and proposed trails supports the project study committee's goal of creating an interconnected web of recreational opportunities connecting various destinations in all parts of the County.

It is also important to keep in mind that because the plan makes recommendations at a County-wide level, exact locations and designs of trails are not specified. This plan is conceptual in nature, and actual implementation will require further study on a site-specific level. This section generally describes location and possible obstacles to recreation and transportation greenway development.

Proposed recreation and transportation greenways are depicted on the *Recreation Greenways Map* on page 123 and are described thereafter. A list of points of interest included in the recreation greenways network is found on the page following the map.

Insert “Recreation Greenways” 11x17 map here

**Insert “ACGP- Rec Greenways - POI List”
11x17 here**

Recreation and Transportation Greenway Descriptions

With guidance from Pashek Associates, the project study committee identified recreation and transportation greenways connections that are perceived as feasible, have potential to spur economic growth, and will receive large amounts of use. The priorities given to these proposed trail segments should *not* deter development of trail projects along second- or third-priority proposed trail routes if they are proposed before first-priority trails are constructed. Numbers in parentheses correspond *only* to trail connection labels on the *Recreation Greenways Map*. Numbers do *not* represent priorities.

It should also be noted that all trails described below are proposed as multi-use trails, accommodating biking and walking/jogging at a minimum. Allowance of other modes of transportation should be considered on a trail-by-trail basis when more detailed municipal greenways plans or individual trail projects are undertaken. This plan also recommends a compacted aggregate surfacing on all the proposed trails, except in any situation in which slope or other conditions dictate a need for paved (asphalt) surfacing.

Mahoning Creek/Pine Run Rail-Trail (1)

This proposed multi-use (bike/walk) trail follows an abandoned railroad alignment following Mahoning Creek and is the possible subject of a feasibility study by the County for an ATV trail extending into Jefferson County. At the time of this report, ATV use for this trail was seen as unfavorable to the railroad company currently abandoning the rail line property.

Pine Creek Rail-with-Trail (2)

This proposed trail follows an active rail line from the Allegheny River eastward to the Village of Echo and possibly to Dayton Borough. This segment would connect a spur of the Great Shamokin Path, at Echo, to the Armstrong Trail.

Roaring Run-West Penn Connector (3)

The Roaring Run Watershed Association intends to extend the Roaring Run Trail eastward to Edmon, which is 1.5 miles from the end of the West Penn Trail at Avonmore. The Conemaugh Valley Conservancy (CVC) maintains the West Penn Trail. Both the CVC and RRWA share interest in connecting the two trails. This connection would provide an important connection in the Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Mainline Canal Greenway, which now runs from Johnstown, through Saltsburg, to Avonmore. A museum dedicated to the Mainline Canal is located in Saltsburg.

Apollo-Leechburg Connector (4A)

This connection would further extend the Mainline Canal Greenway and would create a needed land trail connection along the Kiski River (now a designated water trail). Some committee members indicated that lots of bike and walking activity already takes place along the shoulders of roads between Apollo and Leechburg. Providing an on-road route or off-road trail would only increase use.

Leechburg to Schenley Rail Trail (4B)

This segment is located along a currently-active rail line. Despite potential difficulty of implementation, this connection is important, as it would enable Rachel Carson Trail, Tredway Trail, Butler-Freeport Trail, and Armstrong Trail users to access the Mainline Canal Greenway and (in-theory) travel all the way to Johnstown and beyond via trails.

Tredway-Armstrong Trail Connection (5)

These two trails are located on separate parts of the same railroad alignment, and connecting them would open another gateway between Armstrong County and Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties. One obstacle to this trail is the possible railroad re-activation on the southern portion of the Armstrong Trail (from Schenley north to the mouth of Crooked Creek).

Route 356 Bridge Trail (6)

A bike lane/trail connection is planned as part of the Route 356 Bridge improvements. This connection will allow Butler-Freeport Trail users and Rachel Carson Trail users to cross over the Allegheny River, potentially connecting to the Tredway and/or Armstrong Trails. Although this connection will probably happen independently of the Greenways Plan, the County should support this trail connection in all possible planning efforts.

Sligo to Brookville Rail Trail (7)

This rail trail opportunity is entirely in neighboring counties, but is included in the Armstrong County Greenways Plan due to regional importance and the possibility of partnerships between counties to achieve future trail connections.

Great Shamokin Path Trail Spurs (8)

These two trail spurs represent opportunities to connect the existing Great Shamokin Path to two small population centers: the villages of Echo to the north and Margaret to the south. More importantly, the spurs present opportunities for connections to other future trails. Both spurs follow abandoned rail lines. The Cowanshannock Creek Watershed Association, which owns and maintains the Great Shamokin Path, is currently in the process of proving legal ownership of the abandoned rail line to Echo.

Foxburg to Bruin Rail Trail/Bike Lane (9)

This trail connection provides connection to Foxburg (Clarion County) and to Bruin Borough (Butler County) via the City of Parker. Portions of the former rail line following this route between Foxburg and Parker City have been obliterated, and a bike lane or off-road bike trail along Route 268 may be necessary to make the connection. From Parker City, the trail could follow an abandoned rail alignment along the Allegheny River and Bear Creek stream valleys, and further west into Butler County, through State Game Land #95, and on to Bruin Borough.

Baker Trail Spurs to Three Lakes (10)

The 141-mile Baker Trail passes through two public recreation areas associated with Crooked Creek Lake and Mahoning Lake, respectively. A public boat launch is maintained at Keystone Lake, which is roughly one mile from the Baker Trail. The County should discuss trail spurs between the main trail and the three lakes with the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy, which maintains the Baker Trail. The implementation of these spurs would benefit both parties by potentially drawing more use of the Baker Trail.

Schenley to Rosston Rail-with-Trail (11)

A nine-mile segment of the railroad alignment housing the Armstrong Trail between Schenley and Rosston is slated for reactivation. However, the alignment contains two tracks, only one of which will be reactivated for rail use. An opportunity exists that, if the railroad company using the reactivated line agrees, a rail-with-trail segment could be completed. This segment would not only maintain a connection of two parts of the Armstrong Trail, but if successful could serve as a model rail-with-trail agreement for similar projects in the County and surrounding region.

East Brady to Chicora Rail Trail (12)

An abandoned railroad line follows Route 68 westward from East Brady. This proposed trail could potentially connect East Brady with small population centers in Butler County. The status (abandoned vs. active) and condition (if abandoned) of the rail line in Butler County was unknown at the time of this report. The County should strive to work with Butler County to extend the trail across the County border as far as possible, with the intent of connecting East Brady to Chicora. Armstrong County showed slight interest in this trail route several years ago, but at the time several landowners were opposed to the idea of a trail. Nonetheless, this route still has potential for an important trail connection across County borders. In addition, this opportunity is one of few in Armstrong County west of the Allegheny River.

Allegheny River Water Trail – Mouth of Clarion River to mouth of Redbank Creek (13A)

The portion of the Allegheny River between the mouth of the Clarion River and Lock #5 near Freeport is the only portion not designated a water trail. This segment would provide an extension of the Middle Allegheny River Water Trail, which currently ends at the mouth of the Clarion River. This section of river does not include impediments such as the locks, and a livery service already offers canoe/kayak trips from Parker City to East Brady.

Allegheny River Water Trail – Mouth of Redbank Creek to Lock #5 (13B)

Implementation of this water trail may be difficult due to the limited operation schedule of the river locks and/or the need for portage points around the locks. However, this water trail could potentially provide connection between some of the County's largest population centers. The completion of this water trail through Armstrong County would provide

connection to the Lower Allegheny River Water Trail, which extends to Point State Park in Pittsburgh at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers.

In addition, Lock-and-Dams #'s 5 through 9 are nationally-registered historic places and may draw interest from water trail users.

Existing Water Trails

The Middle Allegheny River (ending at the mouth of the Clarion River), Kiskiminetas River, and Clarion Rivers have already been designated as water trails, and their use as such should continue. Further development of access points and marketing of these water trails, especially the Kiski Water Trail, is supported by this Greenways Plan.

Existing Trails

In addition to the proposed trails listed above, existing trails listed earlier in the Greenways Plan are considered part of the greenways network. Improvements to these trails necessary to maintain their current level of use are supported by this Plan.

This chapter is the blueprint for implementation of the Greenways Plan. Included in this section are strategies for County government, municipalities, public agencies, and private/non-profit organizations wishing to build the greenways network. Recommendations of the Action Plan are organized into five subsections: 1) Management Structure; 2) Implementation Strategies; 3) Land Conservation Tools; 4) Model Ordinances and Agreements; and 5) Potential Funding Sources.

Trail Priorities

With guidance from Pashek Associates, the project study committee prioritized the proposed trail segments mentioned above while considering two factors: *Importance* (regional and local); and *Feasibility* of implementation. The committee designated three different levels of prioritization: High, Medium, and Low.

High Priority Trails: These trail segments have either a high degree of local or regional importance (providing regional connections, etc.) or are highly feasible and can serve as quick successes on which future greenways implementation can build.

- Apollo-Leechburg Connector (4A)
- Route 356 Trail Bridge (6)
- Schenley to Rosston Rail-with-Trail (11)
- Allegheny River Water Trail - Mouth of Clarion River to mouth of Redbank Creek (13A)

Medium Priority Trails: Medium priority trail segments are of slightly lesser importance or face difficult impediments to implementation, such as large amounts of private land or lack of an interest group desiring to lead implementation efforts.

- Roaring Run - West Penn Connector (3)
- Tredway - Armstrong Trail Connection (5)
- Sligo to Brookville Rail Trail (7)
- Great Shamokin Path Trail Spurs (8)
- Baker Trail Spurs to Three Lakes (10)
- Allegheny River Water Trail – Mouth of Redbank Creek to Lock #5 (13B)

Low Priority Trails: Low priority trails may be smaller connections that are of relatively low local or regional importance, do not provide connections to other trails, or pose great potential difficulty of implementation.

- Pine Creek Rail-with-Trail (2)
- Leechburg to Schenley Rail Trail (4B)

- Foxburg to Bruin Rail Trail/Bike Lane (9)
- East Brady to Chicora Rail Trail (12)

GREENWAYS RECOMMENDATIONS

This section is the blueprint for implementation of the Greenways Plan. Included are strategies for County government, municipalities, public agencies, and private/non-profit organizations wishing to build the greenways network. Recommendations of the Action Plan are organized into two subsections: 1) Management Structure; and 2) Implementation Strategies. Lists and descriptions of various land conservation tools, model ordinances, and agreements are found in Appendix L through T.

Potential funding sources for greenways and other recreation projects are listed in Chapter 6.

Making this Greenways Plan a reality will require leadership at the County level and formation of strong partnerships with local municipalities and key organizations, both public and private. Another essential is a strong commitment by the County and its municipalities to carry out the plan. Greenways are not developed overnight. They are often assembled piece-by-piece, one parcel at a time. This process usually takes years, even decades. Greenway corridors that can be achieved with few obstacles should be the early focus of implementation. Establishing a record of small successes will build positive momentum for larger-scale implementation of the Plan. The Action Plan offers guidance regarding various tools that can help bridge the gap from concept to reality.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Partnerships are the key to successful greenways management. No one entity; whether it be the County, a municipality, or a non-profit group; can be expected to manage/maintain greenways on their own. One of the most important things to note is that public/private partnerships will maximize grant opportunities. Non-profits can apply for grant funds unavailable to government entities and vice-versa.

Pashek Associates recommends a strong partnership structure led by the Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development (ACDPD). Developing and managing partnerships requires careful coordination and well-defined roles for all partners involved. Some partners may help with leadership or planning greenways projects, and some may help in the planning process, while others help with implementation, management, and maintenance.

The proposed partnership structure, illustrated in this section, recommends that the County maintain an active role in advancing the recommendations detailed herein. A partnership-based management structure also allows the County, along with participating municipalities, to draw from the knowledge and resources of other state, county, local, and non-profit organizations when implementing the Plan's recommendations.

This Plan recommends that the County create a new position of Parks and Trails Planner within the ACDPD. A significant portion of this position will be to serve as the Greenways Coordinator for the County.

As a resource to Armstrong County, this Plan offers a brief model of the skills, experience, and expectations of a Greenways Coordinator. In addition to the information provided below, job descriptions for three Greenway Coordinator positions that were created in Pike, Cumberland, and Beaver and Lawrence Counties (joint position), are included in Appendix U of this report.

A SUCCESSFUL GREENWAYS COORDINATOR SHOULD...

Knowledge and experience are only half of what makes a successful worker. Equally important are **attitude**, ability to communicate and work with others, and the ability and willingness to research and obtain answers and issues beyond their knowledge or experience base. It is essential that a greenways coordinator be **self-starting**, **enthusiastic**, and **entrepreneurial**. In addition to these qualities, the coordinator should boast the following skills and credentials:

- excellent communication, organizational, and relationship-building skills
- experience in public and private land conservation and obtaining ownership of trail corridors via acquisition and easements
- a minimum two years experience as a paid staff person for a conservation organization (preferred)
- a minimum two years managing projects involving coordination and consensus building among diverse interest groups

The Greenways Coordinator should energetically advance the recommendations of Armstrong County's adopted Greenways Plan. Specific expectations should include:

- providing technical assistance to municipalities to advance greenways in accordance with the county's priorities for greenway development
- working and negotiating with landowners, other agencies, and organizations to implement and protect greenway corridors
- overseeing property holdings
- increasing public awareness of the benefits of greenway protection throughout the county by conducting presentations, spearheading outreach programs, distributing information, and attracting media coverage
- educating and developing good working relationships with conservation groups, government agencies, municipal officials, non-profit organizations, and landowners
- working with municipalities and/or non-profit groups to increase funding by assisting with grant writing and development of donor materials
- managing daily operations
- coordinating volunteer labor or material donations
- attending meetings or events during evenings and weekends

The County may apply to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), through their Circuit Rider Program, to fund the Parks and Trails Planner position. However, this program funds only full-time staff positions. Should the County decide that creation of a full-time position is in its best interest, the ACDPD should contact DCNR for more information on the Circuit Rider Program.

Administrative Needs

A Parks and Trails Planner fulfilling the role of Greenways Coordinator would require full access to ACDPD resources, including:

- office space
- computer
- telephone
- reproduction services (photocopying, plotting, etc.)
- U.S. Postal Services
- clerical services

Should a part-time position be created, the ACDPD should consult the Armstrong County Planning Commission and the County Commissioners to develop an administrative budget acceptable to all parties.

It should be noted that a successful full-time Greenways Coordinator should be able to raise \$100,000 to \$200,000 each year through grants and allocations from foundations (in conjunction with a non-profit that can accept donations from a foundation). Even though expectations may be lower for a part-time position, the benefits of creating this position could far outweigh the burden on the County's finances.

MUNICIPALITIES DRIVE GREENWAY IMPLEMENTATION

Local municipalities are the engine that drives the greenways implementation machine. The broad recommendations made in this Greenways Plan should be confirmed and refined at the municipal level via comprehensive plans or recreation, park, and open space plans. These planning efforts should recommend the adoption of new land use tools in local ordinances that facilitate greenways development. Examples of such tools are: conservation overlay districts, stream buffer requirements, steep slope restrictions, and developer incentives that encourage preservation of contiguous open space in new residential subdivisions and other land developments. Such devices are explained in more detail in Appendices J through X.

This plan also recommends the development of multi-municipal greenway plans and/or feasibility studies. Such efforts will evaluate proposed greenway corridors in greater detail, including exact trail alignments, land ownership at the parcel level, known obstacles, proposed solutions, and estimated costs.

Through its Parks and Trails Planner or other staff, the ACDPD will assist both municipalities and non-profits in implementing greenway corridors, attracting funding, and coordinating with other partners who can provide technical assistance. This plan also recommends that Environmental Advisory Councils (EAC's), consisting of members of existing governing bodies and knowledgeable private conservation groups, be organized at the municipal, multi-municipal, or even County level to assist in the planning and implementation of natural systems greenways. Municipalities interested in forming an EAC should visit www.eacnetwork.org. Using this website, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) offers learning opportunities regarding locations, operations, and successes of EAC's throughout the state.

The Planning Department and its local municipal partners will work with various County, State, and private/non-profit partners. These entities have valuable expertise that can be tapped to advance the goals of this plan. Among the ACDPD's likely natural systems greenways partners are the Armstrong Conservation District, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and the Western Pennsylvania Audubon Society.

On the recreation side, the Armstrong County Tourist Bureau and Chamber of Commerce, and the Strongland Chamber of Commerce may be important County partners in planning, promoting, and developing trails. The chart on page 134 depicts other key partners with knowledge and expertise germane to the establishment of greenways.

This Plan recommends that local municipalities coordinate closely with these partner organizations, or even enlist representatives of these partner organizations to serve on municipal greenway planning committees. Furthermore, the Plan urges municipalities to identify and engage other partners possessing knowledge and resources that could benefit plan implementation.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Trail Towns

In 2005, the Allegheny Trail Alliance and the Regional Trail Alliance partnered to create the Trail Towns Initiative. Their publication, *Trail Towns: Capturing Trail-Based Tourism*, serves as a guide for communities across Pennsylvania who have opportunities to benefit economically from nearby hiking, biking, equestrian, or water trails.

Several small towns in Armstrong County have potential to become a Trail Town drawing travelers in from adjacent existing or proposed trails. These include Apollo, Ford City, Freeport, Kittanning, Leechburg, Parker City, and possibly South Bethlehem, pending trail development in neighboring Clarion County.

This Greenway Plan recommends that leaders in the County government and in these communities plan to utilize the model strategies described in the Trail Towns initiative. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- enticing trail users to get off the trail and into the community
- welcoming trail users by making information about the community readily available along the trail
- making a strong, safe, well-marked connection between the trail and community
- educating local businesses and residents on the economic benefits of meeting trail tourists' needs
- recruiting new businesses or expanding existing ones to fill gaps in the goods or services needs of trail users
- promoting a "trail-friendly" character within the town
- working with neighboring communities to promote the entire trail corridor as a tourist destination

Armstrong County should assist local municipalities by:

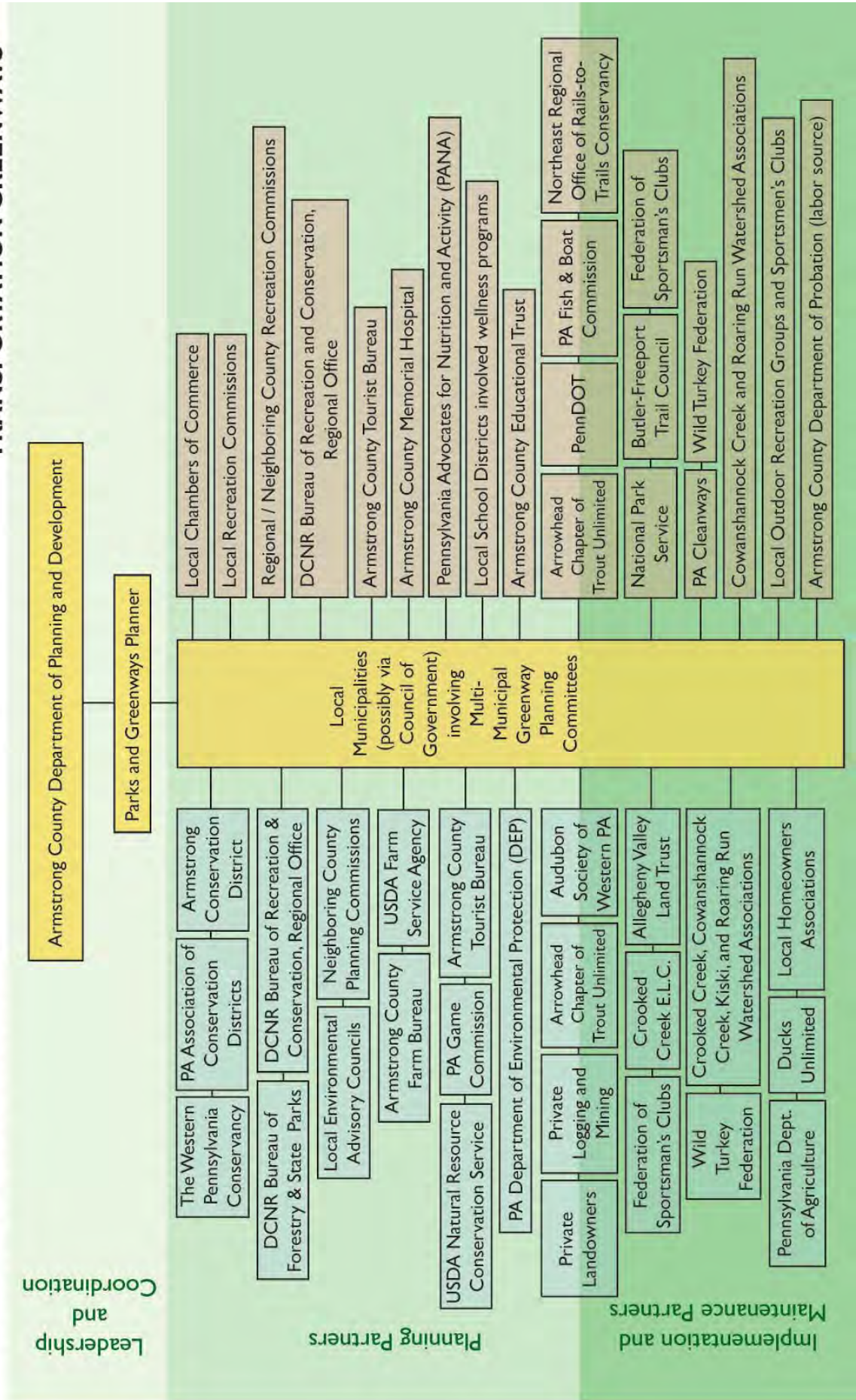
- Bringing in regional experts to offer "Trail Town" workshops to train local leaders how to implement these recommendations
- Focusing some of their economic development efforts on Trail Town efforts
- Facilitating a meeting of interested Trail Towns to discuss ways to begin implementation
- Providing technical assistance to apply for grants to develop Trail Town plans

The Trail Towns initiative also promotes community and economic development through one of the Nation's most well-known and successful revitalization programs: The National Main Street Center's "Four Point" or "Main Street Approach." This program offers a complete outline for downtown revitalization that has been successful in more than 1,700 towns and cities throughout the United States. The program's four points, or keys to success, are: Organizing, Design, Economic Restructuring, and Promotion. Pashek Associates recommends that communities with Trail Town potential consider this program when proposed trails are implemented.

ARMSTRONG COUNTY GREENWAYS PLAN

Proposed Management Structure

NATURAL SYSTEMS GREENWAYS RECREATION / TRANSPORTATION GREENWAYS



STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the Greenways Plan offers step-by-step recommendations outlining the process of implementing the proposed greenways network in Armstrong County. The implementation tables found at the end of this section describe the sequence of events needed to carry the Greenways Plan from the "vision" described earlier in this Plan to completion of natural systems and recreation greenway corridors.

The "General Objective" tables, on pages 136 - 141, relate implementation strategies to several general objectives. For each broad objective, the tables specify a sequence of prioritized tasks, along with respective estimated costs, and parties responsible for leadership and assistance in the undertaking of each task. Responsible parties will need to seek funding through grants or cost reimbursement programs throughout the implementation process. Chapter 6 also provides lists of potential funding sources.

Tasks are prioritized into three designations:

- **Short-term (S) priorities** should be accomplished in the first 3 years after official adoption of the Greenways Plan. These strategies will lay the foundation for successful implementation of the Greenways Plan.
- **Mid-term (M) priorities** should be undertaken in years 4 through 8.
- **Long-term (L) priorities** are expected to begin 9 or more years down the road.

Many of the strategies listed have little or no cost beyond administrative costs incurred by the responsible parties. Where recommended tasks require an additional expense for implementation, a cost estimate is included. It is essential to note that costs are "ball park" figures, in 2008 dollars, based on similar projects or initiatives. Detailed cost estimates will need to be developed through feasibility studies.

Pashek Associates recommends Armstrong County review these tables annually, at a minimum, to determine which tasks have been accomplished, which should be undertaken next, and where adjustments need to be made. Entering beginning and/or completion dates in the "status" column of the tables will help the County to track progress made toward completion of each general objective.

These tables outline a recommended plan of action. Actual implementation will depend on fiscal and political climate in any given year or municipality, thus making it essential that tables be reviewed often. Although this section of the Greenways Plan sets lofty goals, it also accounts for fiscal and political realities.

Advancing Individual Greenway Segments

The following steps show the process that the ACDPD, via current staff or a Parks and Trails Planner, may take to advance the implementation of a specific greenway segment.

- 1) Approach municipalities to educate them on the benefits of establishing greenways.
- 2) Work with municipal officials to identify a demonstration project that will result in a success story and achieve consensus and support for advancing the project.
- 3) Meet with municipal officials and other local supporters to discuss greenway protection and/or trail development, plan a strategy for approaching landowner(s) in the project area, and identify land trusts or other organizations as possible partners.
- 4) Determine who will hold property or easement if property acquisition or easement establishment is successful.
- 5) Assist municipalities and partners in determining the need for further planning and the feasibility of property acquisition or easement establishment. If additional planning is required, proceed directly to step 10.

- 6) Help municipal officials and partners to anticipate questions, issues, and concerns of landowner(s). Prepare a response detailing how proper planning will specifically address landowner questions and issues, alleviate concerns, and promote healthy relationships between the municipality and landowner(s).
- 7) Coach municipal officials and partners in preparing to negotiate the acquisition or establishment of easements on the greenway segment.
- 8) Approach landowner(s) with municipal officials and partners to discuss the project, identify landowner issues/concerns, and address ability of planning and design to address those concerns in a manner acceptable to all the parties. Ask landowner(s) permission to advance planning and design of the greenway segment. Schedule a follow-up meeting with landowner(s) to present a conceptual design for the greenway segment.
- 9) Accompany municipal officials and partners to present preliminary planning and design of the greenway segment; ask landowner(s) if his/her concerns have been sufficiently addressed. Revise the planning and/or design if necessary until acceptable to all parties.
- 10) Review methods of acquisition and preservation and negotiate with landowner(s) to acquire property or establish easement(s).
- 11) Arrange for County Solicitor to arrange legal paperwork for acquisition of property or establishment of easement(s) in the greenway segment.
- 12) Assist the municipality in establishing a construction budget, and determine the county's level of participation in development of the greenway segment.
- 13) Help with the preparation of grant applications to secure funding for acquisition and/or development of the greenway segment.
- 14) Oversee development of the greenway segment.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE #1: Develop a County-wide Greenways Vision					
Task	Responsible Parties	Priority	Cost Estimate	Status	
1.	Officially adopt the Greenways Plan as an addition to the Comprehensive Plan	Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development (ACDPD), County Commissioners	S	-	
2.	Establish a "Greenway Coordinator" position within the ACDPD to serve as a "champion" for greenway development. Seek combination of funding from county and other sources (DCNR, DCED)	ACDPD, County Commissioners	S	±\$30,000 (part-time); ±\$44,000 (full-time)	
3.	Develop a detailed public marketing and education program to inform county residents about the many benefits of greenway development (economic, environmental, health, etc.) and promote the many attractions of the greenway network (eco-tourism, recreation, cultural, historic, etc.). Seek grant money for hiring professional marketing consultant. Efforts could focus on existing projects, such as slated trail improvements, Watershed Conservation Plans, or public education / outreach efforts.	ACDPD and Armstrong Conservation District (ACD), with assistance from local municipalities, Armstrong County Tourist Bureau (ACTB), DCNR, Western PA Conservancy Audubon Society of Western PA (ASWP), various local watershed organizations	S	\$40,000	

GENERAL OBJECTIVE #1: Develop a County-wide Greenways Vision					
Task	Responsible Parties	Priority	Cost Estimate	Status	
4.	Explore registering Armstrong County in the Keystone Active Zone (KAZ) program organized by Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA), formation of an alliance with local health organizations to promote this initiative. This program works to increase awareness of all recreation resources, including trails, in each Pennsylvania county.	ACDPD, Armstrong County Memorial Hospital, PANA, with advice from Butler County (who is already enrolled in the KAZ program)	S		

GENERAL OBJECTIVE #2: Advance the Greenways Plan at the Municipal Level					
Task	Responsible Parties	Priority	Cost Estimate	Status	
1.	Meet with municipal officials to discuss goals of the Greenways Plan and the means of advancing it through local planning efforts; request that local municipalities pass resolutions endorsing the Greenway Plan.	ACDPD, ACD, Municipal Officials & Planning Commissions	S	-	
	Provide Municipal Officials with information about tools they can use to preserve open space (See below and appendices). Seek assistance from DCNR for preservation success stories, resources.	ACDPD, ACD	S ongoing	-	
2.	<p>Develop a list of recommended actions for Municipalities <i>with</i> Zoning:</p> <p>- <u>Public Education</u> programs based on the following concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting quality of life and rural character vs. control of land / property rights • Tax breaks, other advantages for land donation or easement agreements (i.e. density bonuses for developers) <p>- <u>Recommended Land Preservation Tools:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Map • Conservation by Design • Buffer Zones • Conservation Overlay District • Fees-in-Lieu of Dedication of Open Space Ordinances • Conservation Easements (includes Agricultural) 				
	<p>Develop list of recommended actions for Municipalities <i>without</i> Zoning:</p> <p>- <u>Public education</u> programs.... (same as above, plus additional points below:)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If no zoning, landowner has control of land, but neighbors can build /develop anything anywhere <p>- <u>Recommended Land Preservation Tools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official Map • Conservation Easements (includes Agricultural) • Fees-in-lieu of Dedication Ordinance (part of SALDO -- if applicable) • Option / First Right of Refusal • Conservation by Design SALDO 				

**GENERAL OBJECTIVE #2:
Advance the Greenways Plan at the Municipal Level**

	Task	Responsible Parties	Priority	Cost Estimate	Status
3.	Create a package of incentives, including: provision of matching funds, grant writing and other technical assistance, to encourage municipalities to pursue multi-municipal greenway planning.	ACDPD	S	\$20,000 annually	
4.	Complete & adopt municipal or multi-municipal greenway plans, or other plans with greenway components	Municipal Officials with guidance from ACDPD, ACD, Planner	S	\$40,000 per plan or study	
5.	Coordinate greenway planning efforts with adjacent counties to ensure connectivity of recreation and conservation corridors across County lines.	ACDPD	Ongoing	-	
6.	Explore joint grant writing with neighboring counties in Northwestern PA for greenway projects stretching across County lines.	ACDPD	Ongoing	-	
7.	Explore opportunities for trail planning and implementation and economic revitalization through the Trail Towns Initiative's "Main Street" / "Four Points" revitalization programs	Local Boroughs, Cities, and small population centers near existing or proposed trails, with advice from ACDPD, Regional Trail Alliance, Armstrong County Memorial Hospital, other recreation partners	Ongoing	-	

**GENERAL OBJECTIVE #3:
Refine Planning to the Individual Greenway Level**

Task	Responsible Parties	Priority	Cost Estimate	Status	
1.	Identify greenway corridors that may be implemented as "pilot projects" to gain momentum for future implementation efforts. Examples include, but are not limited to those shown below:	ACDPD, ACD, in coordination with Municipal Officials and Planning Commissions	S	-	
<p>Potential Natural Systems Greenways Pilot Projects for Consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streambank Restoration projects • Preserve or Plant Vegetative Buffers around streams, wetlands, wellheads, or drinking water sources • Conservation Easements around sensitive natural resources (i.e. Cowanshannock Creek) • Buffer Zones, Conservation Overlay Zoning, or Conservation By Design Ordinances along streams or other outstanding natural resources (i.e. high water-quality streams) • Conduct Landowner Education Programs on Agricultural Best Management Practices, Watershed Protection, and/or the importance of conservation (target watersheds draining into high water-quality streams or watersheds receiving development pressure) 					
<p>Potential Recreation / Transportation Greenways Pilot Projects for Consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct proposed trail spur(s) from Great Shamokin Path. (<i>Map Segment #8</i>) • Establish Trail Connections in and around Freeport to connect the Armstrong, Tredway, Rachel Carson, and Butler-Freeport Trails (<i>Map Segments #5,6,11</i>) • Establish a shared-use trail on the abandoned rail line following the Mahoning Creek and Pine Run, extending into Jefferson County (<i>Map Segment #1</i>) • Designate a water trail along the Allegheny River and approach the Army Corps of Engineers and other parties regarding portage points at each Lock & Dam for canoeists and kayakers (<i>Proposed Water Trail</i>) 					
2.	Identify key players that will help carry out the pilot projects, explore possibility of public / private partnerships with possible partner organizations (see Management Structure Chart).	ACDPD, ACD, Municipal Officials, Planning Commissions, in cooperation with partners listed on Management Structure Chart.	S	-	
3.	Conduct <u>feasibility studies</u> for respective corridors, addressing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research of land ownership in the corridor • Conduct environmental site assessments and other studies • Develop detailed cost estimates, budget, and funding strategy • Develop a maintenance plan • Develop a specific marketing strategy 	Municipal Officials and Planning Commissions in close cooperation with landowners; with guidance from ACDPD, ACD, Local Watershed Organizations	Ongoing	\$40,000 per study (may vary per size of corridor)	

**GENERAL OBJECTIVE #3:
Refine Planning to the Individual Greenway Level**

	Task	Responsible Parties	Priority	Cost Estimate	Status
4.	Establish Natural Systems Greenways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure grants and local matching funds • Negotiate with landowners and neighbors • Acquire property or obtain easements (agricultural or others) • Enact municipal regulations that protect specific resources or create incentives for preserving open space. • Develop a signage system promoting / indicating locations of natural systems greenways. 	Municipal Officials, Planning Commissions, various partners listed on management structure chart, with guidance from ACDPD, ACD	Ongoing	Varies greatly per project	
5.	Establish Recreation and Transportation Greenways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure grants and local matching funds • Negotiate with landowners and neighbors • Acquire property or obtain trail easements • Enact municipal regulations that create incentives for preserving open space for recreation • Develop trail use regulations; signage systems • Design and construct trail(s) 	Municipal Officials, Planning Commissions, DCNR, PA Rails-to-Trails, PennDOT, PA Game Commission, PA Fish & Boat Commission, with guidance from ACDPD, ACD, local groups, watershed associations, and AVL T	Ongoing	Varies per project	

**GENERAL OBJECTIVE #4:
Ensure the Greenway Plan's Continued Success**

	Task	Responsible Parties	Priority	Cost Estimate	Status
1.	Implement Marketing Strategies formed in early stages of Greenways Implementation, with emphasis on economic development potential (See previous general objectives)	ACDPD, ACTB, ACD, Armstrong County Chamber of Commerce, Municipal Planning Commissions, Strongland Chamber of Commerce	S	\$10,000 annually	
2.	Develop and Implement a Plan for trail maintenance using a combination of County and local resources as well as volunteer services such as PA Cleanways and local non-profits	ACDPD, Municipal Recreation Commissions, Armstrong County Chamber of Commerce, Strongland Chamber of Commerce, ACTB, PA Cleanways, Other local non-profits	M	-	

**GENERAL OBJECTIVE #4:
Ensure the Greenway Plan's Continued Success**

	Task	Responsible Parties	Priority	Cost Estimate	Status
3.	Work with local officials to promote safe pedestrian routes across intersections within or connecting to greenway corridors	ACDPD, Municipal Officials, PennDOT	M	-	
4.	Engage local Recreation Commissions to help advance local commuter bike lanes and/or shared use paths. Ensure that adopted trail plans requiring transportation improvements are included in any regional long-term Transportation Improvements Plan (TIP)	ACDPD, Municipal Officials, PA Rails-to-Trails, Local Outdoor Groups	M, L	-	
5.	During and after completion of various trail projects, partner with local hospitals and health organizations such as Armstrong County Memorial Hospital to develop an outreach and marketing campaign to promote health and benefits of recreational trails.	ACDPD, Local Recreation Commissions	M, L	\$15,000	
6.	During and after protection of proposed natural systems greenways, work to promote an increase in natural resource awareness among local residents and promote preservation via conservation easements (including agricultural).	ACD, with guidance / assistance from Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), USDA-NRCS, FSA, and Farm Bureau			

Chapter 6: Potential Funding Sources



Chapter 6 : Potential Funding Sources

The following is a list of known potential funding sources with descriptions, program requirements, and contact information:

- **Baseball Tomorrow Fund**

The Baseball Tomorrow Fund is a joint initiative between Major League Baseball and the Major League Baseball Players Association. The mission of the Baseball Tomorrow Fund is to promote and enhance the growth of baseball in the United States, Canada, and throughout the world by funding programs, fields, and equipment purchases to encourage and maintain youth participation in the game. Grants from the Baseball Tomorrow Fund are designed to be sufficiently flexible to enable applicants to address needs unique to their communities. The funds may be used to finance a new program, expand or improve an existing program, undertake a new collaborative effort, or obtain facilities or equipment necessary for youth baseball or softball programs. The Baseball Tomorrow Fund is intended to provide funding for incremental programming and facilities for youth baseball and not as a substitute for existing funding or fundraising activities or to provide routine or recurring operating costs or funding for construction or maintenance of buildings. The Baseball Tomorrow Fund supports equal opportunity in its grant making. The opportunities that prospective grantee organizations provide for minorities and women will be considered in evaluating proposals. Grant proposals are considered on a quarterly basis.

Address:

Baseball Tomorrow Fund
245 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10167

Website: www.baseballtomorrowfund.com

- **USDA Forest Service Wood in Transportation**

Agency: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Program Goals: To develop structures that showcases wood in transportation technology and provide useful design and cost information to potential users throughout the country. The use of locally available wood species not traditionally used for bridge construction is preferred. Applicants should submit a site plan and construction drawings prepared by a registered professional engineer. Sketch drawings are adequate at the time of application if detailed drawings are not available.

Use of Funds: Requires minimum of 50% match from local project sponsor. USDA grant amounts are limited to \$20,000 for pedestrian bridges and \$150,000 for vehicular bridges. Other federal funds cannot be used as the applicant's match.

Address:

Northeastern Area -
State and Private Forestry (DE, MD, NJ, OH, PA, WV)
Mr. Ed Cesa
USDA Forest Service
180 Canfield St.
Morgantown, WV 26505

Phone: (304) 285-1530, Fax: (304) 285-1564

Website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/na/wit/>

- **U.S. Soccer Foundation**

The Foundation's Grants Program is open to anyone with a soccer-specific program or project that benefits a not-for-profit purpose. A complete list of guidelines for the Foundation's Grants Program can be obtained by reviewing the instructions section of the grant application.

The United States Soccer Foundation, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation qualified under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Earnings from the permanent endowment fund of the Foundation are the source for grants made by the Foundation for worthy soccer projects. The Foundation is now in its ninth year of awarding governing bodies, having awarded approximately \$17,000,000 in grants during its first nine years of operation. The Foundation commences its grant process in the fall and announces the recipients each spring.

The following, listed in prioritized order, have been established to fund innovative and creative programs:

- Ethnic, minority, and economically disadvantaged players
- Player and coach development
- Referee development
- Field development

Address:

US Soccer Foundation
1050 17th Street, NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20036
Attn: Grants Department

Website: ussoccerfoundation.org (Grant Applications may be filed electronically ONLY at the Foundation's website.)

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers Program**

Agency: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Program Goals: This program was authorized by Congress to award grants to rural and inner-city public schools, or consortia of such schools, to plan, implement, or expand projects that address the education, health, social services, cultural, and recreational needs of the community.

Program Restrictions: School Districts must collaborate with an outside entity, such as another public agency or non-profit organization.

Use of Funds or Support: Applications must address four of the following program activities: literacy education programs; senior citizen programs; children's day care services; integrated education; health, social service, recreational or cultural programs; summer and weekend school programs in conjunction with recreation programs; nutrition and health programs; expanded library service hours to serve community needs; telecommunications and technology education programs for individuals of all ages; parenting skills education programs; support and training for child day care providers; employment counseling, training, and placement; services for individuals who leave before graduating from secondary school, regardless of age of such individual; services for individuals with disabilities.

Address:

21st Century Community Learning Centers
Attn: CFDA 84.287
U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center
Regional Office Building 3
Room 36337th & D Streets, SW
Washington, DC 20202-4725

Phone: 1-800-USA-LEARN

Website: www.ed.gov/21stccclc

- **National Tree Trust**

Program Goals: This program provides tree seedlings for planting on roadsides, highways, or land under the jurisdiction of any federal, state, municipal, or transportation authority.

Program Restrictions: Limitations include a minimum of 100 trees to a maximum of 10,000 trees. All trees delivered must be planted, and only volunteers may do the planting. The trees must be planted on public property.

Use of Funds or Support: Monetary grants are provided to local tree-planting organizations that support volunteer planting and education efforts throughout the United States.

Address:

Todd Nelson
1120 G Street, Suite 770
Washington, DC 20005

Phone: 1-800-846-8733

Website: <http://www.nationaltreetrust.org>

- **Community Conservation Partnerships Programs**

Agency: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Program Goals: To develop and sustain partnerships with communities, non-profits, and other organizations for recreation and conservation projects and purposes. The Bureau of Recreation and Conservation is responsible for fostering, facilitating, and nurturing the great majority of these partnerships through technical assistance and grant funding from the Community Conservation Partnerships Programs.

Program Restrictions: See DCNR grant application manual for the Community Conservation Partnerships Program, as program restrictions vary by type.

Use of Funds

- 1) Planning and Technical Assistance: Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plans; County Natural Area Inventories; Feasibility Studies; Greenways and Trails Plans; Rails-to-Trails Plans; Master Site Plans; River Conservation Plans; Education and Training; Peer-to-Peer Consultation and Circuit Riders (temporary employment of a full-time Park and Recreation Practitioner)
- 2) Acquisition Projects: Park and Recreation Areas; Greenways, Trails, and Rivers Conservation; Rails-to-Trails; Natural and Critical Habitat Areas
- 3) Development Projects: Park and Recreation Areas; Park Rehabilitation and Development; Small Community Development; Greenways and Trails; Rails-to-Trails; Rivers Conservation; Federally Funded Projects; Lands and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Projects; Pennsylvania Recreational Trails

Address:

PA DCNR
Southwest Regional Office
1405 State Office Building
300 Liberty St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: (412) 880-0486

Website: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us>

- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**

Agency: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Program Goals: To provide a flexible source of annual grant funds for local governments nationwide: funds that they, with the participation of local citizens, can devote to the activities that best serve their own particular development priorities, provided that these projects either 1) benefit low and moderate income persons; 2) prevent or eliminate slums or blight; or 3) meet other urgent community development needs.

Program Restrictions: Low and moderate income persons (generally defined as members of a family earning no more than 80% of the area's median income) benefit most directly and most often from CDBG funds for activities that principally benefit low and moderate income persons.

Use of Funds or Support: Building public facilities and improvements, such as streets, sidewalks, sewers, water systems, community and senior citizen centers, and recreational facilities. There are other possible uses of funds that do not relate to parks and recreation.

Address:

Armstrong County Department of Planning and Development
402 Market Street
Kittanning, PA 16201

Phone: (724) 548-3223

Website: <http://co.armstrong.pa.us/departments/planning-development>

- **Community Improvement Grants**

Agency: Pennsylvania Urban and Community Forestry Department

Program Goals: Focus is to support "greening" partnerships linking grassroots organizations, local community groups, and natural resource experts in support of community resource and natural resource management.

Use of Funds or Support: Encourages partnerships with and between diverse organizations and groups. Supports local improvement projects, and tree planting projects in parks, greenbelts, schools, and community public spaces.

Address:

Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences
Butler County Cooperative Extension
101 Motor Pool Way
Butler, PA 16001-3545

Phone: (724) 287-4761

Fax: (724) 287-9911

Email: ButlerExt@psu.edu

Website: <http://butler.extension.psu.edu>

- **Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**

Agency: Natural Resources Conservation Service

Program Goals: Designed to reduce erosion on sensitive lands, CRP also improves soil and water and provides significant wildlife habitat.

Program Restrictions: Applications are for 10 and 15 year contracts.

Use of Funds or Support: The CRP offers annual rental payments, incentive payments for certain activities, and cost-share assistance to establish approved ground cover on eligible cropland.

Address:

RR#12, Box 202 C
Greensburg, PA 15601-9271

Phone: (724) 834-9063 ext. 3

Fax: (724) 837-4127

Website: www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/

- **Kodak American Greenways Awards Program**

Agency: The Conservation Fund and Eastman Kodak Company

Program Goals: Provide seed money to stimulate greenway planning and design. Supports pioneering work in linking the nation's natural areas, historic sites, parks, and open space.

Program Restrictions: Grant recipients are selected according to criteria that include: importance of the project to local greenway development efforts; demonstrated community support for the project; extent to which the grant will result in matching funds or other support from public or private sources; likelihood of tangible results; capacity of the organization to complete the project.

Use of Funds or Support: Planning, Implementation

Address:

Leigh Anne McDonald
American Greenways Coordinator
The Conservation Fund
1800 North Kent Street, Suite 1120
Arlington, VA 22209

Phone: (703) 525-6300

Email: lmcdonald@conservationfund.org

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Grants**

Agency: LWCF

Program Goals: To provide park and recreation opportunities to residents throughout the United States; to allow communities to acquire and build a variety of park and recreation facilities, including trails.

Program Restrictions: Communities must match LWCF grants with 50% of the local project costs through in-kind services or cash. All projects funded by the LWCF grants must be exclusively for recreation purposes, into perpetuity. Grants are administered through the DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2).

Use of Funds or Support: Planning and investment in an existing park system. Funds are annually distributed by the National Park Service through the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

Address:

PA DCNR
Southwest Regional Office
1405 State Office Building
300 Liberty St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: (412) 880-0486

Website: www.dcnr.state.pa.us

- **KaBOOM! (National Non-profit)**

Program Goals: To bring together people, community organizations, and businesses to develop safe, healthy, and much-needed playgrounds.

Use of Funds or Support: Leveraged spending power with well-established companies in the play equipment industry. Also, corporate and foundation support that can include volunteers and technical resources.

Address:

2213 M Street NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20037

Phone: (202) 659-0215

Website: <http://www.kaboom.org>

- **National Recreational Trails Fund Act (NRTEA)**

Agency: PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) - administered through the Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2)

Program Goals: The recreational trails program provides funds to develop and maintain recreational trails for motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use. The program funding represents a portion of the revenue received by the Federal Highway Trust Fund from the federal motor fuel excise tax paid by users of off-road recreational vehicles.

Program Restrictions: A component of TEA21, matching requirements for the Pennsylvania Recreational Trails Program Grants are 80% federal money, up to a maximum of \$150,000, and 20% non-federal money. However, acquisition projects will require a 50/50 match. "Soft match" is permitted from any project sponsor, whether private or public money. ("Soft match" includes credit for donations of funds, materials, services, or new right-of-way).

Use of Funds or Support: The department must distribute funding among motorized, non-motorized, and diverse trail use as follows: 40% minimum for diverse trail use, 30% minimum for non-motorized recreation, and 30% minimum for motorized recreation. The Commonwealth may also use up to 5% of its funds for the operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection related to the use of recreational trails. The department will also consider projects that provide for the redesign, reconstruction, non-routine maintenance, or relocation of recreational trails to benefit the natural environment.

Address:

PA DCNR
Southwest Regional Office
1405 State Office Building
300 Liberty St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: (412) 880-0486

Website: www.dcnr.state.pa.us

- **Pennsylvania Conservation Corps**

Agency: Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry

Program Goals: This program provides work experience, job training, and educational opportunities to young adults while accomplishing conservation, recreation, historic preservation, and urban revitalization work on public lands.

Program Restrictions: The project sponsors receive the services of a Pennsylvania Conservation Corps crew, fully paid, for one year. Sponsors can also receive up to \$20,000 for needed materials and contracted services. Sponsors must provide a 25% cash match on material and contracted services costs.

Use of Funds or Support: Funds may be used for materials and contracted services needed to complete approved projects.

Address:

Lou Scott
Director
1304 Labor and Industry Building
7th and Forester Streets
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Phone: (717) 783-6385

Website: <http://www.dli.state.pa.us>

- **Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds**

Agency: Department of Transportation (PennDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Program Goals: These funds can be used for bicycle and pedestrian facility construction or non-construction projects such as brochures, public service announcements, and route maps. The projects related to bicycle and pedestrian transportation must be a part of the long-range transportation plan. These funds are controlled by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the Transportation Improvement Program.

Program Restrictions: Expands STP eligibilities to specifically include the following [1108(a)]: sodium acetate / format, or other environmentally-acceptable, minimally corrosive anti-icing and de-icing compositions; programs to reduce extreme cold starts; environmental restoration and pollution abatement projects; including retrofit or construction of storm water treatment facilities (limited to 20% of total cost of 3R-type transportation projects); natural habitat mitigation, but specifies that if wetland or natural habitat mitigation is within the service area of a mitigation bank, preference will be given to use the bank; privately owned vehicles and facilities that are used to provide inter-city passenger service by bus; modifications of existing public sidewalks (regardless of whether the sidewalk is on a Federal-aid highway right-of-way), to comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act; infrastructure based intelligent transportation system capital improvements.

Use of Funds or Support: Transportation, planning, railroad crossing improvements.

Address:

PennDOT District 10
2550 Oakland Ave.
Indiana, PA 15701

Phone: (724)357-2800

Website: www.dot.state.pa.us

- **Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA21)**

Agency: TEA21 / ISTE A

Program Goals: The primary source of federal funding for greenways and trails is through the Transportation Equity Act of 1998 (TEA21), formerly the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). ISTEA provided millions of dollars in funding for bicycle and pedestrian transportation projects across the country and will provide millions more as TEA21. There are many sections of TEA21 that support the development of bicycle and pedestrian corridors. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) can utilize funding from any of these subsets of TEA21 and should be contacted for further details.

Use of Funds or Support: Safety and Transportation Enhancements

Contact:

Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission

Phone: (412) 391-5590

Website: (Federal Highway Administration) <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/>

- **Wal-Mart - Good Works**

Agency: Wal-Mart Foundation

Program Goals: Allows local non-profit organizations to hold fundraisers at their local Wal-Mart or Sam's Club. Wal-Mart and Sam's Club can elect to match a portion of the funds collected, up to \$1,000. Events held on the premises are eligible for funding when a Wal-Mart or Sam's Club Associate is actively involved in the event. Additionally, once the Wal-Mart or Sam's Club Associate has met certain criteria in the Matching Grant Program each year, a second source of funding is awarded to the store / club to use in the community. These funds do not require a fundraiser to be held, instead the funds can be awarded directly to a deserving organization.

Program Restrictions: Organizations that may qualify to receive funding through the Matching Grant Program are 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations or organizations that are exempt from needing 501(c)(3) status, such as public schools, faith-based institutions such as churches (must be conducting a project that benefits the community at large), and government agencies.

Use of Funds or Support: Community Improvement Projects.

Contact: Community Involvement Coordinator at your local Wal-Mart or Sam's Club store.

Website: www.walmartfoundation.org/wmstore/goodworks

- **Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation**

Program Goals: Education. Community improvement projects such as projects at parks and other public areas, housing for underprivileged, and innovative environmental issues.

Program Restrictions: Organizations that may qualify to receive funding through the Matching Grant Program are 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations.

Contact:

The Foundation only accepts grant applications submitted online through the website.

Website: <http://www.easy2.com/cm/lowe/foundation/intro.asp>

- **Tony Hawk Foundation**

Program Goals: The Tony Hawk Foundation seeks to foster lasting improvements in society, with an emphasis on helping children. Through grants and other charitable donations, the foundation supports programs focusing on the creation of public skateboard parks and other causes. The primary mission of the Tony Hawk Foundation is to promote high-quality skateboard parks in low-income areas throughout the United States.

Program Restrictions: The Foundation will favor parks that: are designed by qualified and experienced skatepark contractors; include local skaters in the design process; are in low-income areas, or areas with a high population of at-risk youths; can demonstrate a strong grassroots commitment to the project, particularly in the form of fund-raising by local skateboarders and other community groups; have a creative mix of street obstacles and transition / vertical terrain; don't require skaters or their parents to sign waivers; encourage skaters to look after their own safety and safety of others without restricting their access to the park or over-regulating their use of it; are open during daylight hours 365 days a year; don't charge fees; are in areas that currently have no skateboarding facilities.

Use of Funds or Support: To facilitate the design, development, construction, and operation of new, quality skateboard parks and facilities. The Foundation may offer technical assistance on design and construction, promotion materials, training materials, and safety information. The Foundation may also facilitate support from vendors, suppliers, and community leaders.

Address:

Tony Hawk Foundation
P.O. Box 1780
El Granada, CA 94018
Attn: Steve

Email: Hawkquestions@tonyhawkfoundation.org

Website: <http://www.tonyhawkfoundation.org>

- **The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission**

Program Goals: The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission have a number of grant programs that provide funding in support of fishing, boating and aquatic resource conservation. A list of the major grant programs appears below. Visit the website, go to the grants link, and select the appropriate program description and grant details.

Use of Funds or Support: Grants pertinent to the implementation of this Plan are available in the following areas: Boating Facility Grant Program, Coldwater Heritage Partnership, Cooperative Nursery Grants, Landowner Incentive Program (LIP), Sinnemahoning Creek Watershed Restoration Grant Program, Sport fishing and Aquatic Resource Education Grants, State Wildlife Grant (SWG) Program.

Website: <http://www.fish.state.pa.us/mpag1.htm>

- **Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**

Program Goals: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is the state agency largely responsible for administering Pennsylvania's environmental laws and regulations. Its responsibilities include: reducing air pollution; making sure our drinking water is safe; protecting water quality in our rivers and streams; making sure waste is handled properly; supporting community renewal and revitalization; promoting advanced energy technology; and helping citizens prevent pollution and comply with the Commonwealth's environmental regulations. DEP is committed to general environmental education and encouraging effective public involvement in setting environmental policy.

Use of Funds or Support: Grants and loans assist individuals, groups and businesses with a host of environmental issues. Below, you'll find a list of available grants and loans, a description of each program, links to applications and eligibility information. DEP's Grants Center is available to assist you with general questions. Some of the grant categories include: Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant, Coastal Zone Management, Composting Infrastructure Development Grant, Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance, Enactment & Implementation of Stormwater Ordinances, Environmental Education Grants Program, Evaluation for HSCA Remedial Response, Flood Protection Grant Program, Growing Greener Watershed Grants, Municipal Recycling Program Grant (902), Pennsylvania Energy Harvest Grant, Recycling Coordinators, Recycling Performance.

Contact: (717) 705-5400 for more information, or visit the DEP website at:
<http://www.dep.state.pa.us/grantscenter/GrantAndLoanPrograms.asp>

