

DRAFT 2020-24 PA OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN 10/1/19

HEALTH AND WELLNESS:

Promoting Healthy Living Through Outdoor Connections

Recommendations and Actions

1. Educate on the connection between health and outdoor recreation

ACTION STEPS

1. Develop resources and training that focuses on the expanding connection between outdoor recreation and the positive benefits to physical, emotional, and mental health.
2. Educate people on how to minimize the health and safety risks of outdoor recreation through multi-media resources to overcome perceived barriers and increase outdoor recreation participation.
3. Identify and work with community partners to implement programs that highlight specific community outdoor amenities with correlating health benefits.

2. Support programs that connect health and outdoor recreation

ACTION STEPS

1. Fund and support programs through innovative partnerships that advance health and wellness and connect with outdoor recreation programming.
2. Provide training and certifications to outdoor and community recreation professionals to equip them with the skills to expand outdoor recreation opportunities on a regional/local level.
3. Create an interagency Health Team to link state grant program criteria and create a recognition program for projects and programs that strengthen the health and outdoor recreation connection.

3. Equip healthcare professionals with the tools needed to promote the health benefits of outdoor recreation

ACTION STEPS

1. Support ongoing park/trail prescription programs to include research studies to further evaluate the impact of outdoor recreation on health and overall well-being.
2. Evaluate existing park/trail prescription programs to capture best management practices to share with other healthcare institutions throughout the state.
3. Create a statewide learning network for park/trail prescription programs to share research and best practices.
4. Participate in statewide and regional healthcare summits to provide educational opportunities for healthcare institutions and professionals that strengthen awareness and knowledge of the health benefits of outdoor recreation.

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4. Create walking and biking networks that provide safe, close-to-home access to recreation and encourage healthy behavior in communities

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| ACTION STEPS | 1. Conduct walkability and bike-ability assessments and help communities apply for national recognition as bicycle and/or walk-friendly communities. |
| | 2. Close priority trail gaps to achieve the overall goal of having a trail within 10 minutes of every Pennsylvanian. |

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RECREATION FOR ALL

Ensuring Equity in Access to Pennsylvania's Outdoors

Recommendations and Actions

1. Provide opportunities for everyone to regularly engage in outdoor recreation

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify underserved communities using available mapping tools, and work with county and local community planners to improve access within a 10-minute walk to local parks, trails, and open spaces.
2. Develop a pilot access program with school districts and universities to allow public use of outdoor recreation facilities after school hours.
3. Expand training to teachers to incorporate outdoor recreation in their physical education classrooms.
4. Work with partners and residents in high-need communities to install pocket parks, splash pads and outdoor classrooms on vacant lots.
5. Offer pop-up events such as mobile learning kits and trailers for localized recreation, learning, and skill-building.
6. Expand public transportation and rideshares to outdoor recreation opportunities.
7. Improve park access for cultural events in partnership with community groups.
8. Improve marketing and messaging to reflect the diversity of outdoor recreation participants and activities.

2. Create recreational amenities that fit the needs and expectations of underserved communities

ACTION STEPS

1. Incorporate universal design to improve access for all people.
2. Increase availability and promotion of current locations offering ADA adaptive activities and equipment such as kayak launches, fishing access, beach wheelchairs, etc.
3. Support assessments of parks and trails through the lens of individuals with physical and sensory limitations.
4. Develop easy trail loops in community and state parks that are accessible to all people.
5. Engage diverse users in the management, planning and design of outdoor recreation spaces and access opportunities.
6. Expand Peer and Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance programs to underserved communities.
7. Examine state grant programs to address the needs of underserved communities.
8. Examine existing interpretive displays for cultural inconsistencies and biases.

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3. Provide equitable access to outdoor recreation and conservation programs and places	
ACTION STEPS	1. Develop outdoor skills-based classroom or distance learning opportunities for individuals who may have limited access to outdoor experiences.
	2. Increase promotion and access to “First Time” equipment kits and public programming.
	3. Conduct an inventory of high school and college outing and sporting clubs and assess their needs.
	4. Create a DCNR Youth Advisory Council to advise on the recreation and conservation needs of young people.
	5. Create partnerships with historic and cultural organizations to develop joint programming that combines art and history with the outdoors.
	6. Adapt national toolkits to create a Pennsylvania-based guide for ways to design, market, implement, and evaluate diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in outdoor recreation programming and parks.
4. Build a more diverse workforce and volunteer base to provide outdoor and conservation programs and opportunities	
ACTION STEPS	1. Develop apprenticeship opportunities for young adults interested in recreation and conservation employment positions within commonwealth and partner organizations.
	2. Develop an internship program working with Historically Black Colleges and Universities looking to match students with internships within the areas of natural, cultural, and historic resources.
	3. Ensure long-term sustainability of the PA Outdoor Corps program through development of a strategic plan and diversification of funding partners.
	4. Create a mentoring program and resources to connect individuals currently underrepresented in outdoor recreation employment and volunteerism.

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SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS *Protecting and Adapting our Resources* Recommendations and Actions

1. Address infrastructure and maintenance needs in Pennsylvania's existing outdoor recreation areas

ACTION STEPS

1. Develop three pilot projects on public lands that demonstrate best practices on how to retire redundant roads to accommodate high-impact trail activities.
2. Create sample agreements that address maintenance and natural resources protection needs through planning and engagement with industrial uses and legacy impacts on public lands.
3. Increase capacity of public land managers to perform work to maintain infrastructure by identifying and seeking necessary staffing and funding levels and increasing interagency cooperation and cross-pollination.
4. Incentivize outdoor recreation opportunities as part of historic renovation projects and abandoned mine and brownfield reclamations.
5. Complete the selected five Brownfields-to-Playfields pilot projects, evaluate lessons learned, create a story map of successes, and make recommendations for future program advancement.
6. Support Pennsylvania's Park Maintenance Institute to provide training on best sustainable park practices.
7. Enlist 1,200 young people in the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps by 2024 to address recreation infrastructure needs and improve visitor experience.

2. Adapt public lands and facilities to address the impacts of climate change on outdoor recreation

ACTION STEPS

1. Assess infrastructure and design to accommodate increased stormwater flows and improve conveyance through restored streams.
2. Develop a maintenance manual and hands-on training to address the impacts of climate change on public lands and natural areas.
3. Complete three pilot projects to showcase the value that wildlife corridors and greenways provide by connecting public lands and natural areas while also protecting water resources.
4. Identify and implement one pilot project in each county where public open space and parks can address water quality improvement and help local municipalities achieve MS4 permit requirements.
5. Analyze the impact of climate change on outdoor recreation through a landscape-level approach.
6. Protect critical wildlife habitat, forested watersheds, wetlands and riparian corridors through conservation planning, easements, and acquisition.
7. Develop pilots to increase tree canopy cover, water uptake, and other ecosystem services around recreation areas.

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3. Foster stewardship for Pennsylvania’s recreation areas and natural, cultural and historic resources	
ACTION STEPS	1. Identify best management practices and provide training for managing litter in public recreation areas.
	2. Implement a “Love Your Park Week in Pennsylvania” to strengthen volunteer activities and raise awareness of stewardship of public lands.
	3. Create a digital platform that supports friends’ groups, corporate volunteer days, and single-day stewardship events.
	4. Double the number of trained “Leave No Trace” trainers and increase by four-fold “Leave No Trace” specialists with a goal of consistently promoting these principles statewide.
4. Design outdoor recreation areas to minimize impacts on the environment and conflicts among user groups	
ACTION STEPS	1. Develop opportunities for high-impact recreation on restored brownfields and abandoned mine lands through increased state and federal funding to support economic development and stewardship opportunities.
	2. Conduct three pilot projects to analyze environmental and managerial carrying capacity on public lands and natural areas and use the data to inform future land management decisions.
	3. Provide incentives for using only native plants in outdoor recreation areas.
	4. Encourage professionals involved in the design of outdoor recreation facilities to be certified in sustainable landscape techniques and practices.

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TECHNOLOGY

Using New Tools to Improve Engagement Recommendations and Actions

1. Increase mobile connectivity in outdoor recreation areas

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify priority recreation areas for expanding cell phone coverage based on population density, park usage, and current cell coverage maps.
2. Develop a priority list for state park and forest Wi-Fi zones and partner with organizations to sponsor hotspots.
3. Deploy connectivity alternatives—signal boosters, signal repeaters, small cell networks, or other technologies—in areas of greatest need.
4. Communicate coverage and non-coverage areas to park, forest, and trail visitors.

2. Develop best practices for emerging outdoor recreation technologies

ACTION STEPS

1. Develop a resource team that is fluent in technology updates and practices who can train recreation providers.
2. Identify, develop, and disseminate educational programs and materials to help people use technology appropriately (e.g. drones, ebikes) to enrich their outdoor experiences and exchange new ideas.
3. Develop a communication strategy that uses existing campaigns (e.g. Good for All), social media, and technology platforms to educate recreational users on proper safety and etiquette.

3. Use technologies to support health goals and find places to recreate outdoors

ACTION STEPS

1. Create new/update existing databases, maps, and apps that help users find places to recreate and learn more about them.
2. Create a single outdoor recreation web/mobile app resource.
3. Expand existing recreation databases to improve their accuracy, completeness, and usability for land managers and local recreation providers.
4. Expand the use of existing apps and programs that make connections between outdoor recreation and fitness/wellness programs.
5. Overlay recreation GIS data layers with health data layers to determine areas of greatest need and potential connections.

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4. Enrich the understanding of the natural, cultural and historic aspects of the outdoors through technology.

ACTION STEPS

1. Identify and promote existing apps that can help users navigate, learn about, and enjoy the outdoors.
2. Use georeferenced technology such as geofencing or augmented reality in top-visited public parks to feed information that will help with user experiences.
3. Build themed georeferenced tours such as geocaching or story maps that lead participants on a learning tour.
4. Provide a mechanism for park users and recreation enthusiasts to provide input and feedback on technology needs and interests as well as engage in citizen science opportunities.

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FUNDING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Elevating Outdoor Recreation Recommendations and Actions

1. Protect and expand public and private investments in outdoor recreation

ACTION STEPS

1. Expand partnerships with businesses to develop programs that help consumers contribute to recreation projects through donations.
2. Educate and build awareness with policymakers on the importance of strong public outdoor recreation investments to position outdoor recreation as a vital public service.
3. Advocate for reauthorization and increased funding of the federal Recreational Trails and Transportation Alternative programs.
4. Advocate for the expansion of state and local funding for conservation and recreation.
5. Address the maintenance needs of our public outdoor recreation lands by increasing dedicated government funding and by leveraging private philanthropy and strategic partnerships.
6. Provide technical assistance to local governments and nonprofits to leverage local investments for recreation and conservation initiatives, using tools such as open space referenda and public dedication of land.

2. Build strategic coalitions to maximize the economic impacts of outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania

ACTION STEPS

1. Create a PA Office of Outdoor Recreation to strengthen public-private partnerships that support the outdoor recreation economy.
2. Develop a statewide recreation coalition consisting of for-profit, non-profit and government entities to advocate for critical investment needs in our public lands and natural areas.
3. Use DCNR's Conservation Landscapes and Heritage Areas to create regional coalitions with visitor bureaus, tourism agencies and businesses to strengthen outdoor towns and destinations.
4. Convene a state funding coordination team to assure projects are coordinated, leveraged, and funded with the most appropriate funding sources.
5. Support the creation of friends' groups and strategic coalitions to assist local providers in protecting and enhancing local outdoor recreation resources.

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3. Market Pennsylvania as an outdoor destination	
ACTION STEPS	1. Create a branding strategy for Pennsylvania’s outdoors and provide consistent messaging about the state’s outdoor assets.
	2. Increase collaboration, data-sharing and funding among state agencies and the proposed PA Office of Outdoor Recreation to advance and develop statewide marketing and tourism campaigns to position Pennsylvania as an international outdoor recreation destination.
	3. Actively market and promote hunting, fishing, and recreational target shooting opportunities and events to further engage all audiences in these traditional activities.
	4. Actively market and promote land and water trail opportunities and events to further engage the growing audiences in these activities.
4. Demonstrate the benefits and impacts of nature-based solutions to addressing community needs	
ACTION STEPS	1. Demonstrate the value of green infrastructure investments in creating sustainable and resilient recreation facilities that support multiple community needs as a cost savings opportunity, and the cost of not investing at all.
	2. Develop a strategic approach to conducting and using return on environment studies to reinforce the importance of conservation investments.
	3. Provide technical assistance to communities on how embracing the outdoors can retain and attract residents and businesses.
	4. Create a statewide revolving fund that would enable swift response and repair of outdoor recreation amenities impacted by climate change.