Pennsylvania’s outdoor recreation plans have not comprehensively addressed local parks since 1980, when a priority called for “more recreation facilities and programs near or where people live.” With issues like the recession, aging infrastructure and a heavy emphasis over the last decade on greenways and trails, members of the Technical Advisory Committee requested a focus on local parks in the 2014 plan to address the facilities residents use the most.

For most Pennsylvanians, local parks serve as the primary venues for their outdoor recreation pursuits. From small neighborhood pocket parks to larger community or county-level recreation areas, these locations are tapped for their close-to-home benefits.

While the number and size may differ, local parks afford communities the opportunity to provide quality recreation experiences to residents of all ages by offering recreation programs and services that are consistent with citizens’ needs and interests and add to their health, sense of well-being and sense of community. Local parks deliver opportunities for play and physical activities and promote mental and spiritual well-being and environmental stewardship. Local parks often provide a sense of place and a gathering space, and are the heart of a community.

Local parks are also the most popular areas for recreation. Ninety-one percent of Pennsylvanians who participate in outdoor recreation report visiting a local or county park within the past year.

Pennsylvanians spend more time at their local and county facilities than all other public and private outdoor recreation facilities combined.

Fortunately, the majority of Pennsylvanians have access to a local park. The state’s first comprehensive statewide local parks data layer, developed by DCNR in 2012, mapped a total of 5,600 local parks, encompassing...
Municipalities without local parks (n=887)
Municipalities with local parks (n=1,675)

Source: Center for Rural PA

171,400 acres. Using this GIS layer, DCNR teamed up with the Center for Rural Pennsylvania for the first-ever analysis of how many Pennsylvanians are served by a local park, where Pennsylvania’s local parks are located, which municipalities are without local parks, and how much local funding is spent on park facilities and recreation services.

The analysis showed the majority of Pennsylvania’s municipalities (65 percent) have one or more local parks. About 91 percent of Pennsylvanians live in a municipality with a local park. Among urban residents, that number climbs to 98 percent.

While there are an abundance of parks throughout the state, one-third of municipalities do not have a local park (Figure 11). Most of the communities without local parks are located in the more rural areas of the state, particularly in the northcentral region, which presumably offers outdoor recreation through the large swaths of public lands there. In addition, the data analysis revealed more than 2,200 school sites that may serve as the local park for rural municipalities. Further research is needed to evaluate how and if the local recreation needs are being met in rural Pennsylvania and the 10 percent of urban municipalities that may not have publicly owned local parkland.

Local parks are diverse. Slightly more than one-third of Pennsylvania’s municipalities have fewer than 10 acres of parkland; 35 percent have 10 to 49 acres of parkland; and 30 percent have 50 or more acres of parkland (Figure 12). The size of parks also varies from small pocket parks of less than one acre to county parks encompassing thousands of acres, and every size in between. Half of all local parkland in Pennsylvania is located within 70 municipalities — the state’s densely populated urban areas. The majority of these larger urban municipalities have an average of six local parks.

Local spending on parks and recreation is equally as diverse and challenging to analyze. Based on the best available data through the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, from 2008-2012 municipalities spent about $457 million on recreation, or $36 per capita. The median recreation expenditure per municipality was $13,627. While municipalities spend an average of 3 percent of their total expenditures on recreation, two-thirds either had no recreation expenditures or spent less than $25,000. Municipal recreation spending is closely correlated to population; the larger the municipal population, the higher the spending. Of concern, this data shows that from 2003-2012, municipal recreation spending declined an average of 12 percent. This supports expressed concerns about the financial challenges involved in the provision of local park and recreation services.

Recent focus on local parks and recreation began in earnest in 2010 when 100 professionals from across Pennsylvania convened for a leadership summit in Philadelphia to develop priorities and recommendations for recreation in Pennsylvania. Highlights included the need for a statewide marketing campaign, additional documentation on local recreation
PRIORITY
Local Parks and Recreation

and park benefits, more promising practices on repositioning services, and additional focused work on urban parks, green parks and connecting with the health community.

Since that summit, strengthening urban parks and recreation systems has emerged as a top statewide priority. Pennsylvania has 53 cities and 30 boroughs with populations greater than 10,000. According to the Pennsylvania State Data Center, four out of five citizens in Pennsylvania live in urban areas. The urban population is 10.6 million, comprising 84 percent of the commonwealth’s citizenry. These data make the case for a priority focus.

In 2012, DCNR, the PA Recreation and Park Society and the PA Municipal League launched the Urban Recreation Initiative, with a goal of making urban areas in Pennsylvania healthier, more livable and economically competitive through the revitalization and development of parks, green space and recreation opportunities.

As part of the initiative, six focus groups were conducted in 2012 to help develop an action plan. The groups identified maintenance as the chief problem facing urban systems. Programming and services were cited as being essential to increased park use, encouraging active living, connecting people to nature and promoting social equity. The initiative has been formalized into the creation of the PA Urban Park and Recreation Alliance, and an action plan is being implemented.

In 2014, as a research element to this plan, a more comprehensive provider survey was undertaken to assess the needs, priorities and challenges of Pennsylvania elected officials, appointed officials and park and recreation directors, who help to provide outdoor recreation to the public. One hundred thirty recreation and park directors with more established and comprehensive systems completed the survey. The majority response, however, was from more than 900 elected and appointed officials from predominantly rural, small government with limited facility, staffing and budgetary capacity. This feedback helped to provide more input on the needs of rural Pennsylvania municipalities.

The provider survey found that playgrounds are a top priority for future investment among recreation providers, with nearly 60 percent giving them a high priority rating. Neighborhood parks, community or

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regional parks, team sport facilities and community or regional trails rounded out the top facilities for future investment. On the other hand, citizens in the online survey ranked community or regional trail systems as their priority investment facility (73 percent), followed by opportunities for water-based recreation and community or regional parks. Respondents to the resident survey thought that Pennsylvania needs more on-road bike lanes, rental cabins, natural and wild areas, dog parks and bicycle paths. These varied opinions on facility needs reinforce the importance of more analysis of local recreation and park needs as part of county comprehensive plan updates.

Local parks and recreation offer a range of benefits to the citizens they serve, but those benefits vary in importance depending on the audience. When surveyed, the providers of parks and recreation services perceive the greatest benefits as “providing a safe place for children to play” and “making the community a more desirable place to live,” while the users of those services — the citizens — view the health benefits of parks and recreation areas as their greatest benefit.

This apparent disconnect between the providers and users of parks and recreation services could have implications for statewide recreation objectives.

Representing diverse park systems and services, the recent urban and rural provider feedback and analysis collectively suggests that local park and recreation services have experienced considerable challenges related to their capacity to invest in parks and provide recreation programs to a changing population. Repositioning park and recreation services as essential community investments will be critical in advancing the work of recreation providers.

The National Recreation and Park Association recently launched an initiative that could help Pennsylvania’s local park and recreation providers in the repositioning of public parks, recreation and conservation services as the gateways to healthy, prosperous and connected communities. Consideration should be given by local providers in using the three “pillars” developed by NRPA — conservation, health and wellness, and social equity — to demonstrate how local parks are an invaluable public resource and worthy investment.

### CHALLENGE

**Sufficient and stable funding sources are scarce for existing and new recreation facilities and services.**

For all of the health and societal benefits parks and recreation services provide to citizens, they only command a small fraction of local governments’ budgets. Parks and recreational expenditures comprise, on average, about three percent of the total municipal expenditures.

**Maintaining existing park and recreation areas is overwhelmingly the biggest challenge for recreation providers.**

In the 2014 Pennsylvania provider survey, 24 percent of respondents indicated their tax-supported funding for operational expenses has declined; 29 percent said funding for capital projects has declined. Nearly two-thirds reported level funding for operations over the past three years.

More than three-quarters of local providers perceive significant challenges in securing alternative, non-traditional revenue sources. The majority believes that retaining the funds allocated for parks and recreation will be a major challenge for the future.
Federal support of local parks through grant programs is an important way to leverage local park investments. Funding from federal government programs such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program has declined sharply in the past 20 years. The LWCF is currently awarding funding at a level around one-tenth of its original rate. UPARR funding had declined severely since 1984 and was disbanded in 2002. State funding from some sources such as Growing Greener II has ended.

Layoffs, deferred maintenance, increased user fees, reduced services and fewer grant opportunities have been common themes over the past few years of budget austerity. Because of the diversity of Pennsylvania’s park systems, there is no magic formula for keeping parks open and thriving.

**CHALLENGE**

Aging infrastructure and facility maintenance consume most of the financial resources of park and recreation departments.

Many pools and playgrounds built decades ago are deteriorating. Playfields and trails need constant attention and upkeep. Citizens are clamoring for more trails and connectivity, and newer facilities are needed to meet changing audiences and interests. Local park administrators are faced with the constant challenge of fixing what they have and managing changing needs and preferences. Based on the local provider survey, the recession has been particularly hard on capital funding, and without local capital funds, it is difficult to secure the required match for state funding sources.

Municipalities spend an average of just 3 percent of their total expenditures on recreation.

Maintaining existing park and recreation areas is overwhelmingly the biggest challenge for recreation providers. Citizens also believe the maintenance of facilities should be the top priority of their local recreation providers, as they did in the 2009 resident survey, although with higher percentages in the 2014 survey.

Much of Pennsylvania’s local park system, particularly in rural areas, has been built and maintained by volunteer athletic associations and swim clubs and supported by service clubs like the Lions and Kiwanis. The challenge will be to maintain a stable volunteer base.

While park professionals combat maintenance issues, they also have to manage other challenges like staffing, mobilizing public support, responding to emerging or new types of outdoor recreation, and addressing the lack of youth engagement in outdoor recreation.

Some communities have turned to creative solutions to meet maintenance challenges and build new facilities. State College borough is using crowdfunding as a pilot to involve the public in decision making and raise funds to support park improvements. The concept has great potential to serve as a model alternative revenue source.

**CHALLENGE**

Park facilities and recreation programs are often not viewed as essential public services.

One of the biggest challenges of parks and recreation is being relevant to the general citizenry. To regain their community relevance, parks and recreation services must return to their historic foundation of health, conservation and social equity.

Elected officials are tasked with solving their community’s most pressing problems, and funds are invested in these areas, often leaving parks and recreation services...
short in times of fiscal distress. If parks are understood to be a response to these pressing problems, it is more likely that elected officials will prioritize the recreation investments needed for parks to thrive.

Building support for recreation and parks services requires leadership at the local level to educate both the public and its politically active members about the many community benefits of parks, greenways, trails and outdoor recreation. Among these benefits are the very real and measureable results of developing economic prosperity, enhancing environmental sustainability and alleviating social problems — the very same issues that public officials are elected to solve.

Park advocates must become adept at conveying the economic impact these resources and services have on all citizens, not just the ones who use them. Having a trained recreation professional can help with building support for recreation services. However, Pennsylvania has only 330 departments with paid professional park and recreation directors. While these departments serve at least half of Pennsylvania’s population, more than 1,000 small, rural municipalities have limited capacity to advocate and garner support.

Making the case for parks and recreation facilities and programs requires a cohesive way to collect beneficial case studies and disseminate that information to decision makers. Parks and recreation professionals’ time is dedicated to carrying out the core functions of their work, while documenting and heralding successes often goes uncaptured and unrecognized.

Public park and recreation amenities are a key element in the creation of desirable communities. They have a distinct value in the way they build community identity, cohesion and pride. Their presence creates a level of demand that raises property values and tax revenues. The challenge has always been associating a dollar value to park facilities and recreation programs. Because of the unique variables involved, it is complicated to perform a cost-benefit analysis on investments in local parks and recreation.

• **CHALLENGE**

  **Building partnerships with non-traditional partners has benefits but can be challenging, risky and unconventional.**

Pennsylvania’s local recreation and park system has been built and supported by volunteers, traditional service clubs, and in many cases, strong partnerships with local school districts. But to be truly successful and sustainable, park systems must now reach beyond these traditional sources to create new public-private partnerships of lasting value.

When added to the daily to-do list of facility maintenance and program development and promotion, building partnerships can be a difficult task for recreation providers. There are few resources and little grassroots support available for park and recreation professionals or community leaders to identify potential partners and develop a meaningful proposal to work together for a common cause.
Seeking out non-traditional partnerships will take time to forge a cohesive and meaningful relationship and identify each other’s strengths and roles in the partnership.

Legal roadblocks and political implications must be considered when forming partnerships. Exacerbating this issue is the relatively high turnover rates of local community leaders. Partnerships created by one administration may not last through the next. Creating partnerships is a constant process, requiring considerable time and effort from what is often an already overwhelmed and underfunded staff.

Solid waste and water authorities, multi-cultural organizations, utility companies, health care organizations, tourism promotion agencies and land conservancies are examples of new partners tapped by local park and recreation agencies.

**OPPORTUNITY**

New funding sources can expand local park facilities and programs.

Pennsylvanians overwhelmingly support local and state funding for local parks and recreation services. About 70 percent of those polled in the Pennsylvania online survey agree/strongly agree that providing outdoor recreation services is a core role of both state and local government.

Among the general citizenry, 59 percent of respondents to the resident survey strongly believe the state needs to increase its permanent source of funding for parks and recreation, and municipalities should have a permanent source of funding from general tax revenues.

Several new funding streams are providing an infusion of cash into local recreation facilities. Act 13 of 2012 allocates a percentage of fees collected from unconventional gas wells to counties and municipalities impacted by the drilling partially for use on environmental programs. A portion of the fees collected are deposited into the Marcellus Legacy Fund, which is distributed to all counties for use on conservation and recreation initiatives and also provided to the Commonwealth Financing Authority for greenway, trail and park grants. In 2013, the CFA invested $16.4 million in greenways, trails, open space and parks in municipalities across the state.

The Transportation Act 89 of 2013 created two multi-modal transportation funds. PennDOT now has a dedicated funding stream of at least $2 million a year for bicycle and pedestrian projects with an emphasis on safety, shared use, pedestrian connectivity and partnerships. The CFA also receives at least $40 million in multimodal funds.

A 2013 amendment to the state’s open space law allows for up to 25 percent of open space taxes to be used to develop, improve, design, engineer and maintain open space. This new flexibility enables municipalities with well-established open space protection programs to enhance their protected lands with trails and other recreational facilities.

Additional funding flexibility also is available to municipalities with the September 2014 passage of an amendment to the Municipal Planning Code that allows municipalities to use a portion of the fees collected from developers to maintain existing parks instead of solely building new facilities.
Sharing best practices can help to better plan, maintain, program and support local recreation.

Hundreds of examples — both in and out of state — point to innovative ideas and programs that are positively impacting the health of residents, improving access to clean rivers, connecting children to nature and providing critical close-to-home services. Linkages are being made between local parks and other existing recreation assets, like incorporating parks into a water trail. Abandoned mine lands are being converted to off-road vehicle parks, and former waterfront industrial sites are being reborn as city recreational gems.

All of these efforts take courage and cooperation, but also start with one idea. Effectively sharing best practices may be the first step to getting these innovative ideas off the ground. With the broadening availability of technology, it has become easier to share information among diverse community groups and potential partners.

Although there is no “one size fits all” approach to planning, maintaining and programming park facilities — which can make technical assistance on a broad scale quite challenging — there is still benefit to be gained from sharing specific ideas and techniques. Lacking in this process is a central and well-known resource to collect and share these best practices as well as funding to provide more localized and specific technical assistance.

By creating blogs and sharing knowledge through websites and desktop webinars, local providers can conveniently learn about design practices that result in less maintenance, how to create programs that appeal to diverse audiences or how to develop a “park prescription” program in partnership with the local health community.

New technologies can help to educate about local recreation services and their benefits.

Parks need to attract new audiences to maintain relevancy. New technologies can improve data collection, build constituencies and inform citizens of the recreation opportunities that surround them.

As noted in surveys, many people want to be more active, but could use help in finding out what there is to do and where to go for quality outdoor recreation experiences. Local park and recreation providers should do more to connect with Pennsylvanians through online content and social media, says 58 percent of Pennsylvanians. When asked to cite their top methods for planning where to go for outdoor recreation, more than half of the respondents list the Internet and a quarter say social media, email and smart phone apps.

Technology has greatly improved our access to information over the last five years. Websites like ExplorePATrails.com make use of interactive maps, user feedback, directions and photos to draw people into trail locations. Mobile applications and websites tailored for smart phones provide fingertip access to recreation information, and more people are turning to this technology to find their information.

Technology can also build excitement for local recreation services and help people to connect with the natural resources. Contests that promote visitation with check-ins via smart phones or websites are growing in popularity and can benefit both citizens and providers. In the case of the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation, a contest among local parks encouraged visitors to vote for their favorite by scanning a QR code. The park with the most votes received a cash prize.
While many people may know the location of their local parks, the newly developed statewide map of local parks will help expand their knowledge of what’s around them. Placing the map online and in a mobile application will provide the first-ever interactive map of Pennsylvania’s local parks. Coupled with the already existing interactive maps and mobile apps for Pennsylvania state parks and forests, the addition of this local map layer will be a powerful information tool for both the recreation providers and the citizens looking for recreation opportunities.

**O P P O R T U N I T Y**

**Partnerships and intergovernmental cooperation can expand recreational capacity.**

Perhaps Pennsylvania’s 2,562 individual municipalities can’t all be expected to provide park and recreation services to their citizens; however, citizens should not be denied the right to access opportunities for outdoor recreation close to home.

Pennsylvanians recognize that local government can’t do it all, particularly the smaller ones. About 60 percent of Pennsylvanians believe that municipalities should join forces to provide parks and recreation services to their citizens.

Intermunicipal cooperation for parks and recreation services is not a new concept. The Lancaster Recreation Commission — a cooperative effort among Lancaster City, Lancaster School District and Lancaster Township — celebrated its 100th year in 2009.

Some local governments share a floating recreation and parks staff member called a circuit rider, who, through shared funding and grants from DCNR, works across political boundaries to deliver park programming and services. Since 1991, DCNR has helped to create more than 25 new multi-municipal recreation and park agencies through its circuit rider funding assistance. Some circuit riders work for two municipalities, like the Gettysburg Area Recreation Authority, one of DCNR’s newest circuit riders. Others work at a county level, like the partnership formed between Beaver and Lawrence counties in which a circuit rider was hired to provide assistance to both counties.

Due to recent economic challenges, municipalities often struggled to gain approval to hire new staff, and interest in hiring circuit riders waned. With increasing unmet needs and improving economic conditions, some communities have prioritized parks and recreation, illustrated by three new circuit riders funded by DCNR in 2014.

The PA Recreation and Park Society also has a technical assistance service called RecTAP that offers great potential to expand to more communities, with up to $2,500 available for small projects. Mifflin County has tapped it to help build its first boat launch along the Juniata River. The Blue Mountain Recreation Commission in Schuylkill County improved the management of its public swimming pool through the program.

Beyond regionalization, partnerships with other entities will expand capacity. Volunteerism and community service is still thriving across Pennsylvania (see following case studies).

A final new opportunity is the leadership and support from the National Recreation and Park Association that is available to help local providers be a loud voice for the significance and impact of local parks and recreation services around conservation, health and wellness and social equity. NRPA has developed considerable web-based educational materials and case studies around these three pillars.

21 Pennsylvania Local Parks and the Communities They Serve, 2014. Appendix F.
March for Parks – Westmoreland County
To boost its ability to support programs and facilities, the Westmoreland County Parks and Recreation Department has held a March for Parks event for the last 12 years. In 2014, participants raised $104,000, which will be used for a variety of park-related initiatives and has been valuable in helping to match other grants and to implement the county’s comprehensive parks, recreation and open space plan. More than 1,050 marchers, 65 teams and 80 businesses sponsored or participated in the walk.

Step Outdoors – Tioga County
Pooling resources helps to expand the reach of recreation initiatives. The Tioga County Partnership for Community Health has teamed up with several state and local parks in the area to host large events under a “Step Outdoors” brand, including a “Tryathlon” at Hills Creek State Park, a Trail Challenge at Ives Run Recreation Area, and Springfest and Winterfest, both hosted at Hills Creek State Park. At Springfest and Winterfest free equipment is available, including kayaks, canoes, fishing poles, skis, snowshoes, sleds and ice skates as well as free hot dogs and hot chocolate during Winterfest. Much of this equipment is provided by Pennsylvania State Parks and Wellsboro Parks and Recreation.

Gettysburg Alternative Sports Park (GASP) – Adams County
Sometimes you just have to take matters into your own hands if you want something to happen. That’s what local youth did in Gettysburg to provide a venue for BMX stunt riding, inline skating and skateboarding — activities that were not safe on the borough streets. A local advocacy group, Collaborating for Youth, petitioned for a skate park in the borough, and eight years ago, the Gettysburg Alternative Sports Park became reality for $87,000. Users pay a low registration fee to offset some of the costs associated with staffing the park, and the venue can be rented for private functions. A group that includes a former BMX professional is currently lobbying for longer hours and more activities at the park.
“On Your Park, Get Set, Go!” – Montgomery County

A little friendly competition among local parks never hurts, and in the case of the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation's “On Your Park, Get Set, Go!” contest, winning means money. Park users were encouraged to visit one of 12 area parks and cast a vote for their favorite using one of several methods: scanning a QR code on a sign in the park with their smartphone, which earned 10 votes per visit; posting a photo from the park, which earned 10 votes; using Facebook to earn two votes; or emailing a “selfie” photo taken at their chosen park, which earned 10 votes. Bonus votes were also available by going to the parks on Saturdays throughout the month.

The park with the most votes received a $10,000 grant. The second-place winner received $7,500, and third-place received $5,000. There was also a lottery worth $2,500 that the remaining participating parks were entered into for a chance to win.

Parks were encouraged to host a variety of outdoor events, including puppet shows and jazz performances, and to use an assortment of promotional strategies, such as handing out flyers to local business to draw people to the park. In all, more than 700 participated in the contest. Half of the total votes came from the QR code scans, meaning people were visiting the park while voting. Proof of that visitation came in via 400 “selfies” of park patrons enjoying their favorite parks, and Facebook friends for the Foundation more than tripled during the contest time period.

Love Your Park Week, Philadelphia

Every year, Fairmount Park Conservancy, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation and Philadelphia park friends groups collaborate to conduct a week-long celebration of Philadelphia's parks. The focus of the 2014 event was the creation and installation of Philadelphia’s very first pumptrack — an area of hills and bumps designed for BMX and mountain bikers. More than 90 parks took part in the kick-off service project in 2014, and thousands of volunteers participated in the eight-day event. Park friends groups throughout the city put on events and activities during the celebration to help promote their parks. Love Your Park Week helps instill a sense of community and promotes volunteerism and stewardship of these natural areas, in addition to providing necessary maintenance for Philadelphia’s local parks.

See Appendix I for more case studies.
1. Connect citizens to close-to-home recreational opportunities and green space.

**ACTION STEPS**

a. Develop a diverse collection of park and playground designs that exemplify green practices, appeal to all ages and abilities, create whole-family recreation spaces and incorporate popular and innovative trends in recreation.

b. Launch a mobile-friendly website for residents to easily find local parks and collect photos, stories and amenities from users.

c. Identify and take steps to reduce barriers so that every citizen has equal access to local and school parks and outdoor recreation opportunities.

d. Develop research to explore recreation needs and behaviors of African Americans, Hispanics and other ethnic groups.

2. Position local park facilities and recreation programs as essential services.

**ACTION STEPS**

a. Challenge local communities to increase the portion of their municipal budget dedicated to parks and recreation to at least 5 percent over the next 5 years.

b. Implement the recommended approach developed by Penn State University to assess the economic impact of local parks and recreation.

c. Develop a unified brand for local parks and recreation with accompanying marketing strategy, toolkit and training that helps providers communicate the benefits and value of local parks and recreation.

d. Establish a gold medal award program for Pennsylvania local park and recreation agencies.

3. Create and leverage partnerships that expand outdoor recreation opportunities.

**ACTION STEPS**

a. Partner with educators to expand environmental stewardship opportunities to increase efficiency, encourage local and state collaboration, focus on common priorities and increase youth involvement.

b. Increase the number of outdoor recreation events available to all regions of the state by adding 100 new community partners to Get Outdoors PA.

c. Identify and promote strategic, alternative and non-traditional revenue sources for recreation programming and local parks.

d. Encourage educational institutions to partner with local communities to share resources through mechanisms such as joint-use agreements and collaborative programming.

e. Support the creation of friends and advocacy groups to assist park and recreation providers in protecting, enhancing and interpreting natural resources, local parks and heritage areas.

4. Coordinate strategic investment in local priorities and respond to emerging trends.

**ACTION STEPS**

a. Work with all 67 counties to identify gaps in local outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide support and technical assistance to advance recreation and conservation planning and implementation.

b. Collect nominations from local communities to create a Top 10 most endangered parks list, and partner with state and local agencies to target funding to revitalize these parks.

c. Create a new Rural Communities Leadership Team to develop an action plan including implementation, funding and volunteer recruitment strategies for local parks and recreation in rural areas.

d. Create a Natural Play Area Pilot Program to develop and monitor natural play areas.

e. Implement the PA Urban Park and Recreation Alliance action plan for local parks and recreation in municipalities with populations over 10,000 residents.

5. Provide expanded parks and recreation technical assistance to communities.

**ACTION STEPS**

a. Develop a Maintenance Institute promoting low-maintenance design, preventative maintenance, green and sustainable design and other practices that will reduce maintenance costs.

b. Expand Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance Program (RecTAP) and the Peer Program to encourage multi-municipal and county-based agencies through increased promotion and funding to municipalities.

c. Enhance DCNR's local parks web-based resources to feature best practices and resources on emerging topics such as green and sustainable practices, funding, partnerships, technology and stewardship education.

d. Hold a Recreation and Conservation Leadership Summit, and launch a Leadership Development and Mentoring Program for parks, recreation and resource management professionals.