VENANGO COUNTY

COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION, PARKS, & OPEN SPACE PLAN

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PASHEK ASSOCIATES

a pennsylvania corporation

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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 Venango County.

Chapter 1: Introduction & Community Background

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

Chapter 2: Inventory & 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: Two Mile Run County Park

Two Mile Run is Venango County's only County owned park. This chapter describes the existing park and lays the plans for its future. It includes a new vision for the park, an update of its master site plan, and operational recommendations.

Chapter 5: Municipal Recreation Plans

Four of the County's local municipalities have previously completed recreation plans. This chapter evaluates those plans and provides recommendations for the future of parks and recreation in each community.

Chapter 6: Vision, Principles, & Recommendations / Implementation Strategies

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

Appendix

The Appendix provides a series of supporting information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE BENEFITS ARE ENDLESS

Parks and recreation is a critical component of community services for all Pennsylvania residents. Venango County has long played a significant role in the provision of parks and recreation through Two Mile Run County Park. As well, many local communities, sports organizations, seniors groups, arts organizations, recreational clubs, public entities, private business, and non-profits have come together to provide exceptional recreational opportunities throughout the County.

As one looks at parks, recreation, and open space across the country, the benefits become very evident –senior citizens walking the trails to stay active and healthy; youth learning about life by playing baseball, soccer or other youth sports; families strengthening relationships by camping, biking or picnicking together; communities coming together through festivals, carnivals, and special events.

Parks and recreation opportunities encourage citizens to be engaged in their communities as volunteers, stewards, advocates, and students. Access to parks and recreation facilities leads to healthy lifestyles for people of all ages. Activities in parks build self-esteem, reduce stress and improve overall wellness. Parks give communities a vital identity. Well-maintained, accessible parks and recreation facilities are key elements of strong, safe, family-friendly communities. Parks enhance property values, contribute to healthy and productive workforces, and help attract and retain businesses.

To see the economic impact that parks and recreation have in Venango County, one only need look at the recently completed Trail Utilization Study: Analysis of' the Allegheny Valley Trail System within the Oil Heritage Region. According to the report, "In just four months (in 2006), the trails attracted almost

Parks & Recreation

BE HAPPIER – Build Family Unity – FeelGreat - TAKE CARE OF LATCH KEY CHILDREN – reduce unemployment -INCREASE COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS –Expand Knowledge -Lose weight - diminish chance of disease – Build self-esteem -Reduce stress - promote sensitivity to cultural diversity - Provide safe places to play – Generate revenue – lower healthcare costs -Meet friends – educate children and adults – Relax -***Keep Businesses from leaving*** – Elevate Personal Growth -Strengthen Neighborhood Involvement – conquer boredom – provide childcare - Boost Economy – curb employee absenteeism – ***increase tourism*** -Build strong bodies – increase property value – attract new businesses - Preserve plant and animal wildlife – instill teamwork -Live longer – create memories – protect the environment -Clean air and water – boost employee productivity – look better -Enhance relationship skills – decrease insurance premiums – control weight --Offer places for social interaction – diminish gang violence -- TEACH VITAL LIFE SKILLS – provide space to enjoy nature – Quench Competitive Thirst

The Benefits are Endless...

83,000 trails users and generated over $2.22 million in revenues. Over a year, these impacts totaled approximately 161,000 trail users and $4.31 million in generated income for the Oil Heritage Region."

THE PROCESS IS CRUCIAL

Recognizing the importance of parks and recreation in Venango County, this Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space 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 Venango County.

An **inventory of recreation opportunities** provided a baseline of existing conditions. It included all municipal and non-profit recreation areas within the County, as well as those of regional significance that are located outside Venango 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 Venango County facilities and how they compare with typical facilities across the country.

The National Recreation and Park Association reports that four out of five North Americans use their local recreation and park system and that seventy percent have a park or recreation facility within walking distance of their home.

When planning for the future of parks and recreation, 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, Parks, and Open Space Plan was generated. A familiarity with this information ensured the development of a plan that is realistic in its expectations, responsive to resident's needs, and tailored to the unique opportunities of Venango County.

Public involvement is the heart of the comprehensive planning process. It fosters a sense of ownership of the plan in those who contributed. A plan shaped through citizen input is more likely to fully address key issues and to lead to effective implementation. A well-conceived public participation process engages citizens and strengthens communication and coordination between citizens and elected officials.

Public participation was solicited using a variety of techniques throughout the planning process. The public participation process culminated in the development of the "**Vision for the Future** of Recreation, Parks, and Open Space in Venango County."

THE FUTURE IS WAITING

Drawing upon the public participation and the facility inventories and assessment, recommendations for the future of recreation and parks were developed. Some of the key issues and related recommendations are summarized on the following pages.

Venango County's Role in Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

Most residents believe that the County should continue to support and operate Two Mile Run as a County park; that the County should play a supporting role in local community parks and recreation; and that they should provide technical assistance and support for non-profit organizations that provide county-wide recreational opportunities. As well, many believe that the County should support efforts that encourage economic growth through recreational opportunities such as trails, rivers, scenic areas, and cultural and historic sites.

Vision for the Future of Recreation Parks and Open Space

Principle #1
Enable the continued preservation, sustainability, support, promotion, and development of the recreational, natural, and cultural resources within Venango County.

Principle #2
Reveal to Venango County's residents, visitors and tourists the recreational, natural, and cultural resources available for them to utilize and enjoy.

Principle #3
Cultivate the processes and opportunities needed to enhance recreational experiences, and to increase prosperity and population growth, through marketing, promotion, development, and accessibility of recreational, natural, and cultural resources across Venango County.

To that end, and recognizing the financial and staffing resource constraints of the County, the recommendations of this plan try to address the County's long-term role in parks, recreation, and open space in a manner that provides for these in a financially responsible manner. The recommendations are:

- Support and operate Two Mile Run County Park
- Support and provide technical assistance to local municipalities in their efforts to maintain, upgrade, and develop their parks and recreation by providing administrative and technical assistance.
- Adopt and promote a policy of making parks and recreation facilities available "close-to-home" for all Venango County residents.
- Establishing a policy of promoting cooperative and/or regional recreation efforts throughout the County, functioning as a key player in significant partnerships.
- Manage the County's natural systems greenways and open space preservation.
- Hire a parks and greenways director/planner to oversee the implementation of this plan. The position could start out as part-time and grow as demand dictates.

Two Mile Run County Park

Analysis and re-visioning for Two Mile Run County Park were among the top issues addressed in this planning process. Nearly every County resident sees Two Mile Run as one of the County's top recreational resources.

As part of the this Plan, the County determined that it would be wise to re-visit the previously completed park master plan to see if it still matched county residents' vision for the park. An ad hoc committee was appointed to review and "re-vision" the park to meet current expectations. The decision was made to redirect the vision

toward three significant expectations; 1) the sustainability of the natural features and recreational amenities of the park; 2) providing for the current and future recreational needs of Venango County residents and; 3) drawing visitors from outside the County. Consequently, the Committee has developed the following vision for Two Mile Run Park.

The Vision

Two Mile Run County Park will be Venango County's premiere outdoor attraction as it balances its natural features with recreational use. The Park will provide Venango County residents and visitors a clean, safe, and user-friendly recreational place to connect with the environment and with each other.

As a multi-facility location, the Park will host local and national events, leaving visitors with a positive and memorable recreational experience. It will encourage use by individuals, organizations, families, companies, and County government for gatherings, site improvement projects, recreation, and education.

It will be a year-round outdoor recreation area where County residents and visitors feel welcome at well-maintained facilities. It will offer a balance between active and passive recreational uses and programs. Recreational facilities and opportunities will be designed and developed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the park and its natural resources.

The Park will be visually natural and engaging through its plants, wildlife, and viewscapes and will serve as a model of environmental education and stewardship. As the County's only Park, it will foster pride, encourage use, and promote a sense of local ownership and support.

Detailed recommendations for the fulfillment of this vision can be found in Chapter 3 of this report.

Local Parks and Recreation

Local communities and their sports and recreation organizations meet the most basic parks and recreation needs of county residents. There are a host of community and neighborhood parks that serve nearly every locale in the County providing grassroots recreational programming and facilities. While great efforts are made to provide for these local needs, the parks and recreation inventories completed as part of this plan identify certain deficiencies that should be addressed. The following is a summary of the key recommendations.

- Make parks and recreation a priority. Each municipality or group of municipalities should create a citizen advisory board to recommend improvements and/or additions.
- Rehabilitate, enhance, and renovate existing facilities to meet current recreational needs.
- Add new facilities or expand existing ones only when re-use is not practical or will not meet current or future recreational demands.
- Address playground safety deficiencies identified in the local parks Playground Safety Audits.

- Seek funding through a variety of sources for the development, acquisition, and on-going support of parks and recreation.
- Cooperate with other municipalities whenever possible.

For each of the four communities in Venango County that previously completed their own Parks and Recreation Plans (Oil City, Franklin, Cranberry Township, and Barkeyville) a review of those plans was conducted. Recommendations specific to each community can be found in Chapter 5 of this report.

Multi-municipal Recreation Opportunities

One of the expectations of this Plan was to consider ways that municipalities could partner with one another to provide higher quality recreation opportunities while offering a broader spectrum of facilities, events, and activities in a more economical fashion. A number of natural groupings of communities and recreational opportunities that could work well together in meeting recreation needs were identified.

A regional approach to providing parks and recreation is recommended in two areas:

- Oil City, Cranberry Township, Cornplanter Township, and Rouseville
- Franklin, Sandy Creek, French Creek, and Polk

This approach suggests a formal intergovernmental agreement that would specify how cooperation would take place. The DCNR Peer-to-Peer Grant Program helps municipalities work through the process of deciding if some form of cooperation can work for them. If so, the same grant can assist in formulating the intergovernmental agreement.

Regional cooperation for development of river related recreation opportunities is recommended for Oil City, Franklin, & Cranberry Townships, Sugarcreek Borough, and Venango County. This would include regional recreation, conservation, and economic planning for the Allegheny River and French Creek corridors.

Informal cooperation for outdoor recreation is recommended for Barkeyville, Clintonville, Emlenton, and nearby townships. This would be a more informal group that would meet together three or four times a year to identify, discuss, and implement regionally based outdoor recreational services and/or facilities.

Partnering with non-profit organizations
In addition to the municipal partnerships that have been recommended, opportunities should be pursued to include a variety of non-profit organizations in these endeavors.

Protection of Special Places in Venango County

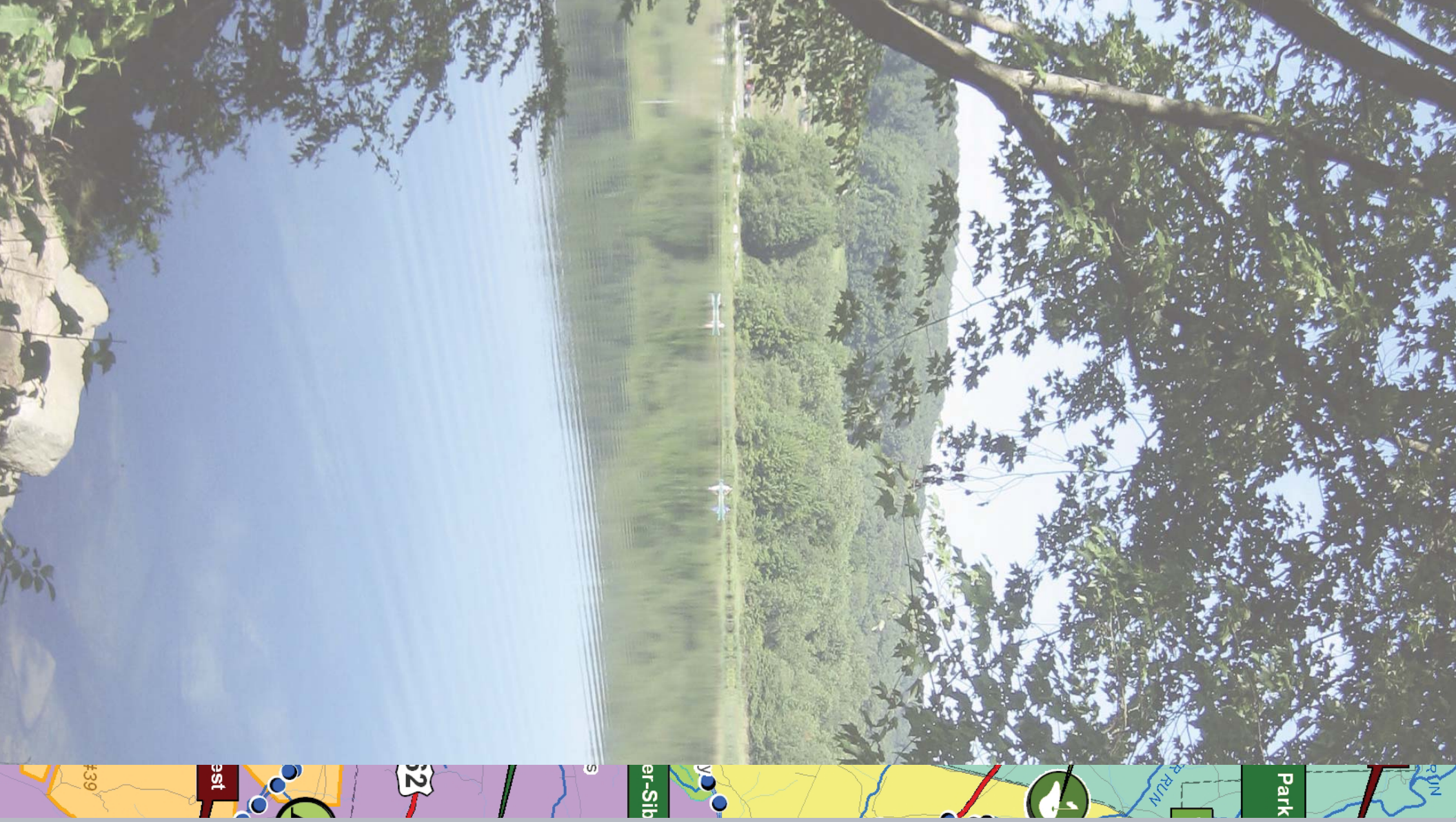
While "special places" of Venango County were not specifically defined, there was an overwhelming desire expressed throughout the planning process that these types of places be protected. Among those "special places" that were talked about in Venango County were:

- Natural features
- Historic and cultural facilities, locations, and resources
- Scenic vistas
- Farm lands
- Recreation places

The ***Venango County Greenways Plan*** and the ***County Comprehensive Plan*** provide a multitude of recommendations for protection of the County's natural features and the ***Oil Heritage Region National Management Plan*** and its Updates, along with the ***National Heritage Area Management Plan***, provide comprehensive compilation of recommendations that address protection of historic, cultural, and recreational areas; scenic vistas; and natural features, as they relate to the Oil Region's heritage. This Plan offers no additional recommendations.

Trails and Rivers

Through the public input process and the analysis of County recreation resources, Venango County's trails, rivers, and streams were identified as important issues – particularly providing access and protection. This Plan recognizes the need to address these concerns for the future and further acknowledges that the Venango County Greenways Plan provides adequate recommendations to address recreational, transportation, and natural resource based greenways. This plan recommends utilization of the vision and strategies of the Greenways Plan as the best way to address the future of trails and rivers in the County. No additional recommendations are made.



CHAPTER 1-
INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

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INTRODUCTION & COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

In 2004, Venango County completed its most recent County Comprehensive Plan. It includes a variety of information that has been used as background data in the development of this Plan. This includes demographic and socio-economic statistics, cultural features information, natural resource data, statistical facts, and general background information. Analysis of this information was factored into the evaluation of the recreation, parks, and open space issues.

Additionally, the County comprehensive planning process has analyzed and made recommendations concerning a variety of issues related to recreation, parks, and open space. The recommendations from this Plan and the County Comprehensive Plan support and complement each other.

Venango County's Comprehensive Plan provides a context within which this Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan has been developed

This Plan is intended to supplement the County Comprehensive Plan and to extend its reach further into the details of the County's recreation, parks, and open space. Readers of this report should refer to the County Comprehensive Plan to gain a better understanding of the background that supports it.

THE COMPREHENSIVE RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

The first goal of the 2004 County Comprehensive Plan is "To sustain the highest quality of rural, suburban, and urban life for the residents of Venango County." One of the short-term priorities under that goal is to "Prepare and enact a county-wide recreation plan." Acting upon that recommendation, the Venango County Commissioners retained the recreation planning firm of Pashek Associates to assist in the development of this Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan.

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.

Venango County identified nine objectives for the Plan.

1. Inventory existing facilities, programs, and opportunities for recreation, leisure services, and recreation-related economic opportunities.

2. Provide an extensive public participation process through a variety of methods, processes, and venues.
3. Consider ways to minimize duplication of services by various agencies throughout the County.
4. Analyze opportunities for regional cooperation in providing local recreation and park opportunities.
5. Focus on ways to collectively strengthen community recreation and parks services.
6. Identify specific opportunities for implementation of sections of the Oil Region Management Action Plan, the Allegheny River Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, and local Comprehensive Plans and Recreation Plans.
7. Identify ways to enhance communication among organizations and provide opportunities to work together and share resources.
8. Evaluate how the recreation related recommendations of the County Comprehensive Plan can be implemented.
9. Create action steps, resources, and funding opportunities for the recommendations of the Plan.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Planning Process led the County through a three-step progression of simple yet profound questions.

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? And, 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 Venango County. Public participation was gathered through four sources: a study committee that represented the residents of the County; a series of public meetings; key person interviews; and a recreation questionnaire. Additionally, analysis was done on the findings of the existing conditions to determine ways of improvement.

THE COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

↓

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

↓

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

How Do We Get There?

The culmination of the answers to the two previous questions provides the direction toward accomplishing the recreational needs and desires of the County. It includes a vision statement that describes guiding principles; descriptors of the likely implementation of the principles; and implementation strategies. Separate chapters provide specific recommendations related to Two Mile Run County Park and to several individual communities.

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; businesses prefer communities with a high quality-of-life, including abundance of open space and nearby recreation.

BENEFITS OF RECREATION, PARKS, & OPEN SPACE

Environmental Benefits

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

Community Benefits

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

Economic Benefits

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

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

Venango County's Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space 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 Venango 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.

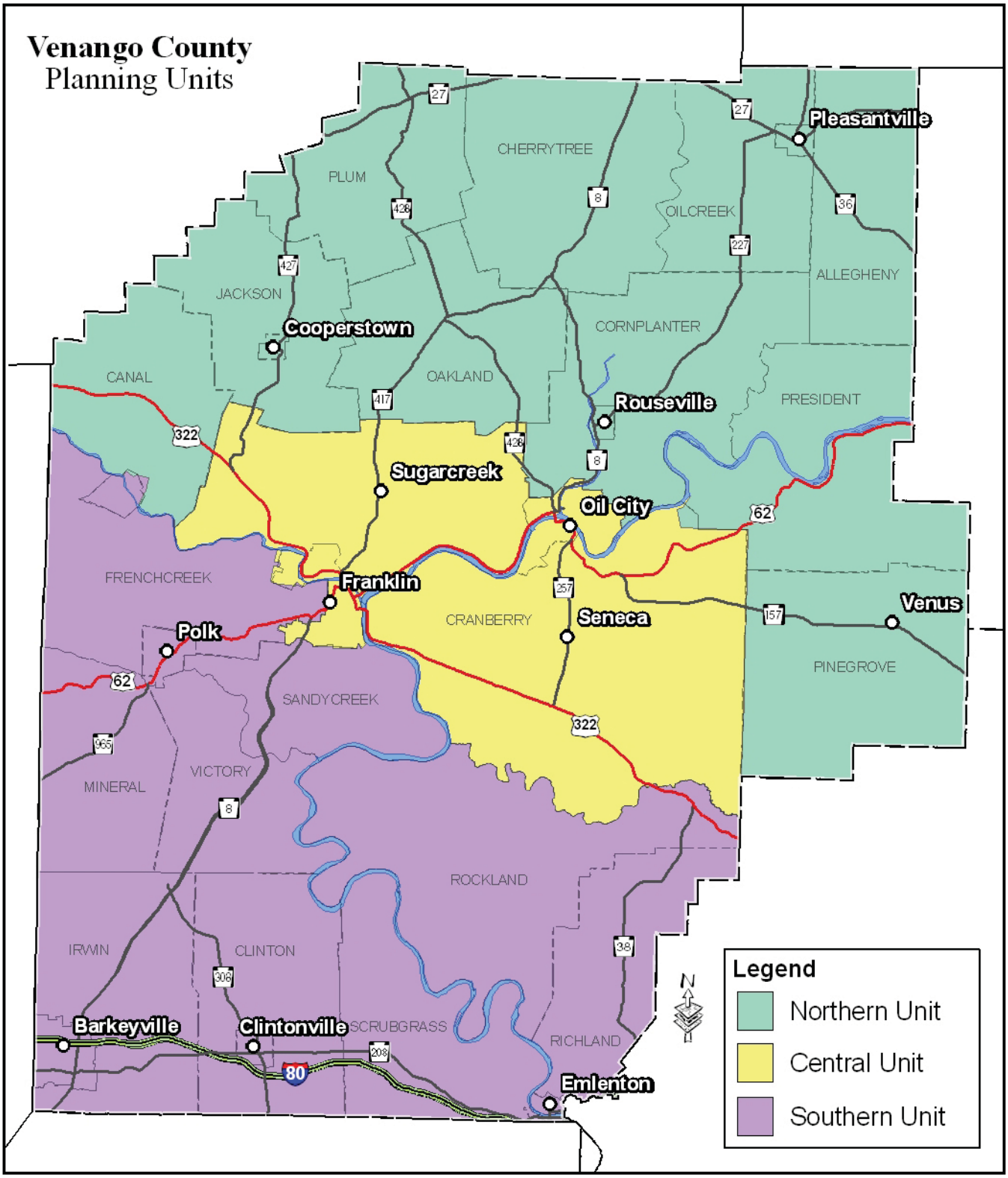
The broad scope of this Plan includes the documentation and analysis of a variety of issues pertinent to recreation, parks, and open space in Venango County. This document will be a valuable resource of supporting information as the implementation strategies are completed, new strategies are developed,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

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


Venango County
Planning Units
Pleasantville
CHERRYTREE
PLUM
OILCREEK
ALLEGHENY
JACKSON
Cooperstown
CORNPLANTER
CANAL
OAKLAND
Rouseville
PRESIDENT
Sugarcreek
Oil City
FRENCHCREEK
Franklin
CRANBERRY
Seneca
Venus
Polk
PINEGROVE
SANDYCREEK
MINERAL
VICTORY
ROCKLAND
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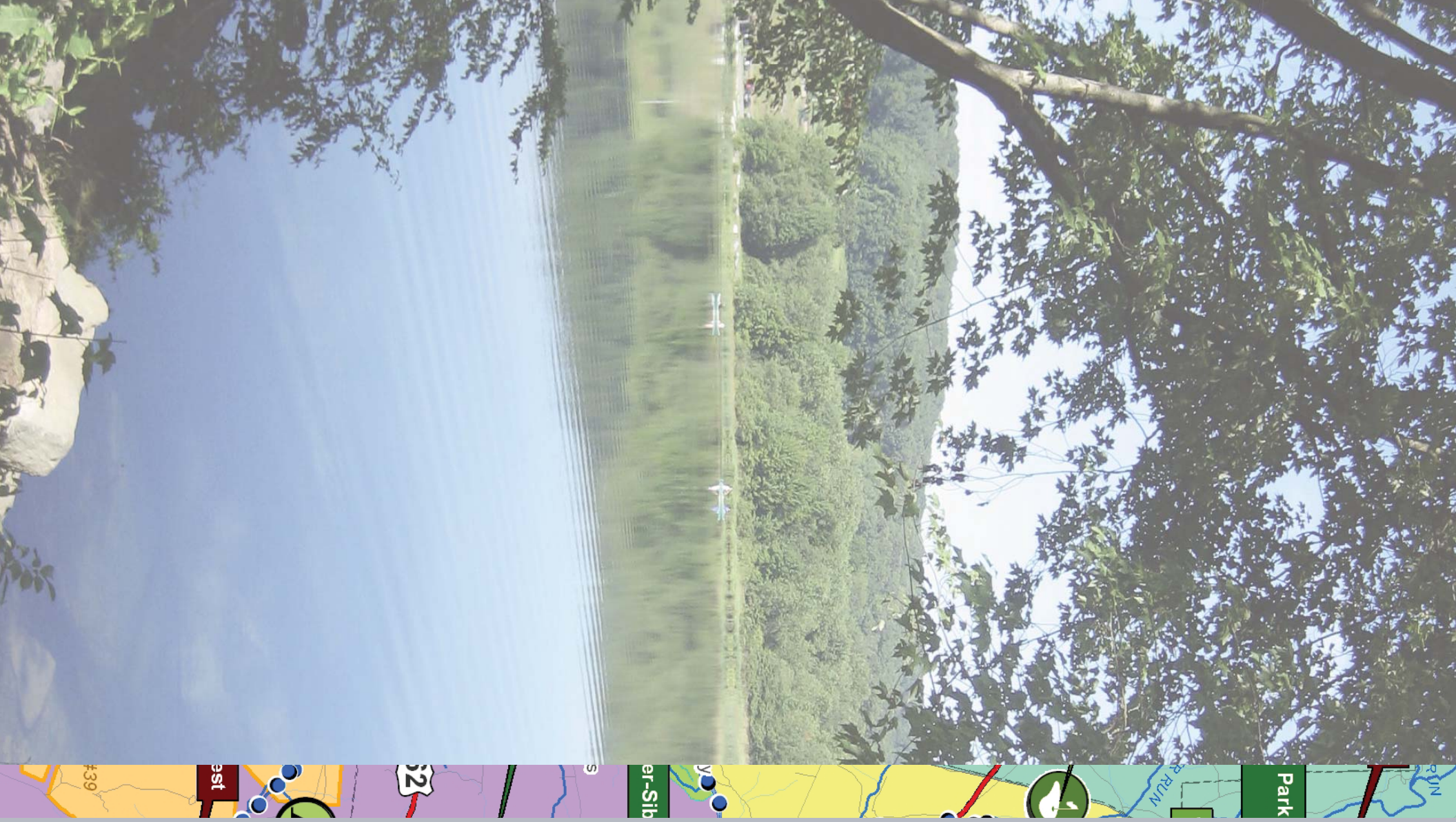
N
Legend
Northern Unit
Central Unit
Southern Unit



CHAPTER 2 -
INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

CHAPTER 2 - INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Venango County has a wealth of recreational opportunities ranging from large open spaces and waterways to indoor recreation facilities and community parks. Venango 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 off-road recreational vehicles, canoe and water ski, 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 Venango County residents. It is important to understand that while many residents of Venango 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, both in and outside of the County, provide recreational opportunities for the residents of Venango County. This report breaks these opportunities into six categories:

1) Venango County-owned recreation opportunities
2) Regional facility and program managers
3) Local parks and school facilities
4) Major recreation program providers
5) Regional parks, trails, and open space within Venango County
6) Regional parks, trails, and open space surrounding Venango County

SUMMARY OF RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

Venango County Parks and Recreation

Venango County owns and operates Two Mile Run County Park, located in Oakland Township and Sugarcreek Borough in the north-central part of Venango County. The Park features the 144-acre Justus Lake as well as a multitude of recreation facilities, open space, and conservation areas.

Venango County also owns four island properties on the Allegheny River.

Regional Facility and Program Managers

The Oil Region Alliance for Business, Industry, and Tourism (ORA) and the Oil Region Greenway Committee serve unique roles in managing two very significant portions of the region's recreation facilities and natural features. The ORA manages the Oil Heritage Region National Heritage Area and Pennsylvania Oil Heritage Region. A separate regional Greenways Committee coordinates the functions of the region's recreational and natural greenways.

Local Parks and Recreation

Twenty municipalities throughout the County provide local recreation opportunities that are primarily intended for their own local residents. Most of these facilities are community parks, which are designed to serve entire communities; and neighborhood parks, intended to serve smaller areas within the municipality. The parks include facilities such as ball fields; playgrounds; picnic shelters; basketball, volleyball, and horseshoe courts; and short walking trails. This report identifies twenty-nine local parks and numerous school facilities.

Major Recreation Program Providers

The eight major providers of recreation programming in the County are: Oil Creek State Park, Two Mile Run County Park, Franklin YMCA, Oil City YMCA and YWCA, and Emlenton Borough Girls and Boys Club.

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 Venango County

29 Local Parks
15 Neighborhood Parks (Oil City and Franklin)
1 County Park
4 Island Properties
1 State Park
7 Trails (6 Land/1Water)
1 River
4 Major Creeks
2 Major Lakes
5 State Game Lands
1 State Forest
7 Conservation Holdings/Easements

Major Private Recreation Facilities
3 Camps
3 Campgrounds
7 Golf Courses
9 Other Private Recreation Properties

Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space within Venango County

There is one state park, one state forest, six land trails and one water trail, seven lands with conservation easements, and five State Game Lands (SGL)- all located in Venango County.

Venango County has a series of land based regional trails that combine to form a regional trail system that traverses a north-south route from Titusville to Emlenton and a route from Fisherman's Cove to the eastern border of the County. The largest of these trails include Oil Creek State Park Bicycle Trail, Justus Trail, Allegheny River Trail, Sandy Creek Trail, McClintock Trail, and the Clarion Highlands Trail. There are connector trails through Franklin and Oil City to provide connections to the larger trail components. The

only gap in the trail systems is from Petroleum Center to Rynd Farm. Once this section is complete, the trail will travel the entire length of the County, connecting to regional trails both to the north and to the south via the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail.

The Allegheny River, as it travels through the County, is part of the Middle Allegheny River Water Trail from Kinzua Dam to Emlenton.

Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space Surrounding Venango County

There are five state parks, one wildlife refuge, one national forest, two state forests, one county forest, three regional recreation providers, and eight trails within a short driving distance from Venango County.

Other Recreational Facilities

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

CLASSIFICATIONS OF PARKS AND TRAILS

The recommendations of this Plan, 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 this 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 table.

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.
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.
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.

The analysis of the parks and open space inventory in this chapter indicates that Venango County has a good balance of outdoor recreation facilities. Additionally, park facilities tend to be well distributed throughout the County. However, the analysis also shows that there is a shortage of community park acreage in each of the County's designated planning units, as well as some deficiencies of individual recreation facilities.

INVENTORY OF RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

Recreation Opportunities Provided by Venango County

Two Mile Run County Park

A full description and analysis of Venango County's only County park is located in Chapter 4.

Venango County Allegheny River Islands

Venango County owns 4 island properties on the Allegheny River. Most notable are the two sections of Hoge Island, a 31-acre parcel at the confluence of the Allegheny River and French Creek. Hoge is located at river mile 124, with an annexed section less than 1/10 of a mile upstream, cut through by water erosion. At river mile 146.3 is 2.25-acre Lower Maple Island, and at mile 147.1 is 5.04-acre Round Island. Both are located between the Village of President and the Venango County border with Crawford County.

Source: PA .Dept. of Environmental Resources 1993 [report], Allegheny National Wild and Scenic River - Island Ownership Summary

Regional Facility and Program Providers

Oil Heritage Alliance for Business, Industry, and Tourism

The Oil Heritage Region was designated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as an official Pennsylvania Heritage Area in 1994 and by the National Park Service as an official National Heritage Area in 2004. The state and federal designations use the same boundaries, comprising 34 municipalities in 708 square miles. Included are the City of Titusville, Hydetown Borough, and Oil Creek Township in eastern Crawford County, plus all of the County of Venango.

The Oil Heritage Region is administered through the Oil Region Alliance for Business, Industry, and Tourism.

The Oil Region National Heritage Area Management Plan serves as the tool that directs the development activity for the Region. Projects focus on one or more of the following program objectives: cultural preservation; education/interpretation;

Oil Heritage Region's Current Recreation, Park, and Open Space Projects

- Kennerdell Scenic Overlook
- Recreational Trail Utilization Study
- Bicycle Trail engineering and construction
- Interpretive signage along the bike trails
- Competitive fishing tournaments along the Allegheny River
- Regional directional signage
- Allegheny GeoTrail
- Murray's Scenic View Overlook in Oil City
- Allegheny Overlook in Oil City
- Installation of bike racks
- Marketing for the Kennerdell Tract of Clear Creek State Forest and Oil Creek State Park
- Community Gateway Derricks
- Oil City Waterways Comprehensive Plan
- Expand Oil Packet Boat Operations on the Allegheny River
- Oil 150 Celebration

recreation and open space; promotion; intergovernmental cooperation; and economic development/community revitalization.

Most of the active projects handled in the Alliance's Heritage Development Department are funded in part by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, via the PA Heritage Area Program, and/or in part by the National Park Service, via the National Heritage Area Partnerships Program. Nearly every project also includes funding from the private and public funding sector.

As a National Heritage Area, the Oil Region has access to technical assistance from the National Park Service and other state and federal agencies. Additionally, the Heritage Area has access to as much as $10 million in federal funding during the 15 year period (2005 - 2019), to be matched by Pennsylvania and other local funds, to rapidly implement widely varied projects to develop, preserve, and enhance the region's cultural, recreational, historic, and natural resources.

Council on Greenway and Trails

On July 1, 2008, fifteen municipalities and organizations within the Oil Region came together to create the Council on Greenways and Trails. The Council is comprised of representatives of the member municipalities and organizations.

The Council serves as the managing entity of the organization with one representative from each of the partners. It is responsible for coordination, prioritizing, planning, design, development, and maintenance of all the efforts related to greenways and open space in the region. The Council works directly with the affiliated municipalities, trail and conservation organizations, governmental agencies, private businesses, and non-profits to help them fulfill their objectives in greenway and open space planning, design, development, and maintenance.

The Council has hired a full-time staff person to assist in carrying out its work. The staff person is responsible for coordinating the Region's greenway and trail work, serving as a central point of contact, and providing professional technical assistance to the member municipalities and organizations. The position is funded, in part, by a Circuit Rider Grant through the PA DCNR.

The Council serves Venango and Crawford Counties and Northwestern Clarion County.

Source: Some information was taken from the Council's "Greenways and Open Space Brochure".

Council on Greenways and Trails Assets and Initiatives

- A network of multi-purpose trails used as models for other regions
- 60+ miles of completed asphalt trail
- Additional 15+ miles in planning or construction
- 2006 Trail Utilization Study showing 160,000 annual trail users with $4 million economic impact
- Oil Heritage Region - State and National designations
- Allegheny Wild and Scenic River designation with the Middle Allegheny River Water Trail
- The new Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance effort will create and connect continuous trails from Erie to Pittsburgh and then connect to the Great Allegheny Passage which travels to the C&O Canal Towpath in Maryland which continues on to Washington, D.C. This local area will become a major hub in that system.
- Green infrastructure - defined as the network of greenways, open space, woodlands, wildlife habitat, parks and other natural areas which sustain clean air, water, and other natural resources and enrich citizens' quality of life.
- 900+ acres of private property conserved under conservation easement

Local Parks and School Facilities

Throughout Venango County, residents enjoy many local recreation and open space opportunities in or near their communities. Twenty-nine community parks and 15 neighborhood parks are found in 27 of the County's 31 municipalities. Additionally,

outdoor recreation facilities are located at 18 public school facilities within the County.

Each municipality was visited, analyzed, and recorded to include park locations, names and sizes, a list of available facilities, general conditions and sizes of each sports facility within the park or recreational site, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, availability of parking, and available utility services. Complete inventory charts are located in Appendices A, B, and C.

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.

The Recreation Resources Inventory map 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 three Planning Units.

Northern Planning Unit – Rouseville, Cooperstown, and Pleasantville Boroughs; Allegheny, Canal, Cherrytree, Cornplanter, Jackson, Oakland, Oil Creek, Pine Grove, Plum, and President Townships

Central Planning Unit – The Borough of Sugarcreek, the Township of Cranberry, and the Cities of Franklin and Oil City

Southern Planning Unit – Barkeyville, Clintonville, Emlenton, Polk, and Utica Boroughs; Clinton, Frenchcreek, Irwin, Mineral Richland, Rockland, Sandycreek, Scrubgrass, and Victory Townships

Distribution of local parks by Planning Units	
Northern	
7 parks	77 acres
Central	
12 parks	174 acres
Southern	
8 parks	65 acres

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

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) 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 Unit, rather than for individual communities, shows that all three of the regions have a deficiency of park land.

Planning Unit	2000 Population	Guideline for acres required	Current Park Acreage	Surplus/ Deficiency
Northern	13,715	138 acres	77	61-acre deficiency
Central	31,161	311 acres	174	137-acre deficiency
Southern	12,689	126 acres	65	61-acre deficiency
Totals	57,665	575 acres	316	259-acre deficiency

Individual facilities in each park are given a ranking of either good, fair, or poor, according to their condition. Facilities in most parks fall into the good or fair ranking; however, there are a few that are ranked as poor. The fair and poor classifications indicate that there are safety concerns at these parks. Those which received a fair or poor ranking should be scheduled for repairs or upgrades. These rankings can be found in the park inventories in Appendix B.

All public facilities are required to be compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. This includes all parks and recreation facilities. Specifically, recreation facilities must comply with the *ADA Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities, Standards for Play Areas, and others.* 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.

Currently, there are three public outdoor swimming pools that serve the entire County. Two pools are located in the Central Planning Unit, with one being in Oil City at Hasson Park, and the other in Franklin at the Miller-Sibley Park. The third pool is in the Southern Planning Unit in Emlenton, at the Emlenton Recreational Park/Hughes Park. Each is operated by their respective municipality. Oil City's pool is new and is in good condition. During an interview with the City of Franklin's Director of Community Development, it was indicated that the Miller-Sibley Pool is in need of some renovation, with consideration of a new pool liner being of a top priority if the pool were to be renovated. The Emlenton pool was found to be in fair condition. All three of the swimming pools serve significant population areas. Some upgrades would be warranted to Franklin's and Emlenton's pools to keep them in good working order and to provide additional amenities desired by today's swimmers.

There are two indoor pools located in Venango County, one at the Franklin YMCA, and the other at the Oil City YMCA. Additionally, the Titusville Leisure Services Association operates an outdoor community pool, with the Titusville YMCA operating an indoor pool. These pools serve the northern population of Venango County.

School facilities play a vital role in parks and recreation throughout the County. There are eight school districts that cover Venango County, with four of those districts busing students outside of Venango County. School districts having their school facilities within Venango County are Cranberry, Franklin, Oil City, and Valley Grove. School Districts with school facilities outside of Venango County are Allegheny-Clarion Valley in Clarion County, Forest Area in Forest County, and Penncrest and Titusville in Crawford County.

All eight of the County's public school districts have recreation facilities located on their properties; some include swimming pools. Many of those facilities are open to the public for general usage when they are not being used for school activities.

Several communities are working together or with local school districts to provide recreational facilities and services on a multi-municipal basis.

The City of Franklin's Miller-Sibley Pool is open to all communities with no non-resident fees, and the ball fields are open for use by anyone. The City of Franklin

is willing to cooperate with surrounding municipalities and the school district for recreation program and facility use. Currently, the surrounding municipalities that use their facilities are Sandycreek, Sugarcreek, and French Creek Townships, as well as Utica and Polk.

Oil City owns and operates the James A. Nelles Memorial Pool (formerly Ramage Hasson Pool), which both Cranberry and Cornplanter have agreed to contribute to financially in order to offset the operational costs associated with the pool. Since they made a financial commitment, Oil City has agreed to consider them "residents" when they visit the pool, which is open to Cornplanter and Cranberry Townships. Oil City also provides municipal library services to outlining areas.

Oil City and the Oil City School District share fields for baseball, soccer, and football with the school district. Other surrounding municipalities that use Oil City-owned facilities are Cornplanter, for all amenities; Cranberry, for the swimming pool; Rouseville, for sports facilities; and Sugarcreek, for the pool. City owned facilities that are used through agreement by the school district are baseball, soccer, and football fields.

Oil City also helps the school district with municipal-type grants that they are not familiar with; and the City uses school facilities when the school district is not using them, for Relay For Life, youth football, soccer, basketball, tennis, and the track. They continue to be open and willing to work on intergovernmental agreements with surrounding communities.

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 Venango County Regional Planning Commission 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 2009-2010 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, many municipalities in the County have fewer that 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 Venango County, all parks, as well as school facilities are counted as being available for public use. Comparisons are conducted by Planning Unit, with a separate analysis conducted for both Franklin and Oil City. It should be noted as well, that residents in the Northern Planning Unit utilize facilities in the City of Titusville, which are not accounted for in the analysis. NRPA standards show the following deficiencies:

Venango County Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan
Recreation Facility Surplus/Deficit

Facility	Northern Planning Unit	Southern Planning Unit	Central Planning Unit	Oil City Region	Franklin Region
Basketball Courts	-1	2	4	2	2
Tennis Courts	-3	-1	5	4	6
Volleyball Courts	-2	-2	-3	-1	-2
Baseball Fields	4	0	1	-2	1
Softball Fields	-3	-2	-3	0	-3
Soccer Fields	-6	-5	-11	-8	-5
Swimming Pools	0	0	0	0	0
Picnic Shelters	20	3	-1	-1	-4
Football Fields	-2	-2	-3	1	0

As part of the inventory and analysis, two County maps were developed, depicting the location of all outdoor recreation throughout the County. One shows general recreation sites, while the other shows school sites that have recreation facilities.

Recreation Resources Inventory Map will be inserted here

School Facilities map

Major Recreation Program Providers

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

Emlenton Boys and Girls Club and the Crawford Center

The Club, located at 512 Hill St., is located in the Crawford Center. The Center includes a multi-purpose recreation and programming room, library, and craft room. The Boys and Girls Club offers various children's programs for those in first through seventh grades.

YMCA's

Two YMCA facilities can be found in Venango County. They are located in Franklin and Oil City. Each has a swimming pool, fitness center, gymnasium, child care facilities, program space, and related amenities. Programming at both facilities includes programs for pre-schoolers, youth, teens, adults, and seniors. Much of the programming focuses on sports, such as swimming, gymnastics, court sports, and exercise and fitness but also includes a number of non sport-related activities.

The YMCA's are private, non-profit, membership based facilities focused on improving "spirit, mind, and body". Membership is open to everyone.

In addition to the two YMCA's located in Venango County, the Titusville Y, in Crawford County, provides similar services for residents of northern Venango County.

YWCA's

Oil City (Venango County) and Titusville (Crawford County) are each home to a YWCA. The Oil City YWCA includes a fitness center, aerobics room, and program rooms. The Titusville YWCA has an activity building and an emergency shelter for women and children. The focus of both YWCA's is to provide recreation and social service programs for women.

Titusville Leisure Services Board

Titusville Leisure Services Board operates as the community parks and recreation provider for the communities of the Titusville Area School District. In addition to maintaining the City's parks, they operate a variety of recreational programming for the area.

The Leisure Services Board offers programs through the cooperative, joint support of the Titusville Area School District and the City of Titusville. The surrounding community recreation boards and committees, volunteer interest groups, individuals, businesses, and organizations help support the many quality leisure programs. The Titusville Community Center at Burgess Park houses the recreation department, senior center, "Tyc Toc", and the Titusville Council on the Arts.

Titusville Leisure Services manages the City's recreation programs. Titusville has over 285 acres of recreational property that includes 6 parks, 15 ball fields, 8 soccer fields, 3

sand volleyball courts, a 400-meter community track, a community pool, a BMX race track, skate park, tennis courts, walking trails, and bike trails.

Source: http://www.cityoftitusvillepa.gov/leisure.htm

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 help the sports organizations with technical assistance, free use of facilities, publicity, facility maintenance, and general support. There is a strong relationship among the municipalities, school districts, and sports leagues in most communities.

Additionally, many municipalities operate some type of community festival for residents and visitors. These include the Oil City Heritage Festival, Kennerdell Arts Festival, Franklin Apple Fest, and many others.

The OIL 150 celebration commemorates a century-and-a-half of inventions, new business models, new technologies, and family legacies in the oil and natural gas industries that began in 1859 in northwestern Pennsylvania, when Colonel Edwin Drake drilled the first successful commercial oil well.

Held in 2008 and 2009, OIL 150 educational and cultural programs include conferences and symposia, a speaker's bureau, calendar of events, essays, classroom materials, exhibits of art works, and other exhibits, as well as public outreach.

Oil Creek State Parks offers a variety of recreational, environmental, and historic education programs as well.

Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space within Venango County

There are several open space recreation areas inside of Venango County that are used by County residents. We have identified one state park, one state forest, five County-owned properties (previously noted), a PA Fish and Boat Commission lake, seven conservation holdings, six land trails, one water trail, and five State Game Lands. Each facility is described on the following pages. Following the descriptions is a map showing the locations of each.

Venango County Trail Inventory

Oil Creek Trail

Located in Oil Creek State Park, this quality 9.7-mile paved bicycle trail traverses the scenic Oil Creek Gorge. The trail is asphalt-surfaced, 8.5 feet wide, with a few short hills. Trailheads are located at Petroleum Centre in the south and Drake Well Museum in the north. Trail users may rent bicycles at the park office, and picnic tables, benches, rain

shelters, and restrooms are at located at key points along the trail. Historical markers along the way detail special events of the 1860s oil boom era. The trail is open to two-way bicycle traffic.

Justus Trail & Allegheny River Trail

The trail is 31 miles of flat, smooth, asphalt surface from Oil City to Emlenton except for a 1/2 mile break at Sunny Slope, 14 miles south of Franklin. The two trails are, in actuality, one continuous trail built on a portion of the old Pennsylvania Railroad that ran from Pittsburgh to Buffalo. 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. AVTA owns the railroad grade from Franklin to Emlenton (with some exceptions) including tunnels at Kennerdell and Rockland.

McClintock Trail

Linking Rynd Farm with Oil City, this 4-mile multiple-purpose trail is being constructed in phases. Already completed are the northern 2 miles from Rynd Farm in Oil Creek State Park a rider heads downstream paralleling Oil Creek using the low-traffic volume Waitz Road to the parking area at McClintock Well #1. Scheduled for construction during 2011 are the next 2 miles from McClintock Well #1 into Oil City; until that construction occurs, bicyclists and walkers are urged to use caution when utilizing Route 8 with its busy commercial traffic.

Sandy Creek Trail

The Sandy Creek Trail's east section has 8 miles of asphalt surface, 7 pedestrian-safe bridges, and a tunnel reconstructed in 2005. The trail winds along East Sandy Creek through hills, valleys, and forests. The trail runs east and west, crossing over the Allegheny River and the Allegheny River Trail 5 miles south of Franklin via the Belmar Bridge. Access to the trail is at Van off Rt. 322, from the Rockland Rd., at Belmar on the west side of the river, and at Fisherman's Cove.

Clarion Highlands Trail

Approximately three miles of the Clarion Highlands Trail runs through Venango County along the former rail line from near Van to the Clarion County border. Much of the trail travels through State Game Land 45 for 23 miles between Ridgway and Brockway.

Bicycle PA Route V

This share-the-road trail runs from Ohio to New Jersey paralleling Interstate 80 almost the entire distance. This route enters Venango County on State Route 208 in Barkeyville heading east. The route follows State Route 208 passing through Clintonville before entering Emlenton in the southeast corner of the County. In Emlenton, Bike Route V crosses the Allegheny River on the Fifth Street Bridge. Traveling outside of Emlenton, State Route 208 heads north winding along the Clarion and Venango County lines and back into Venango County again before heading east through Clarion County.

Middles Allegheny River Water Trail

The Middle Allegheny River Water Trail is 107 river miles long, starting at Kinzua Dam and ending at the community of Emlenton, just upstream of the I-80 bridge. The water trail is an ideal destination for novice or family canoe and kayak trippers - though the rapids beneath Veteran's Bridge in Oil City are best left to experienced paddlers.

Much of this section of river has been designated by Congress as part of the Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The size of the Allegheny River and the constant release of water from the Kinzua Dam make the river navigable all year long except in periods when there is ice on the river.

Pennsylvania Museum and Historical Commission

Drake Well Museum

Located along the banks of Oil Creek in Cherrytree Township, Drake Well Museum tells the story of the beginning of the modern oil industry through videos, exhibits, operating oil field machinery, and historic buildings in a park setting.

Drake Well Museum is currently in the process of a major transformation of both their indoor and outdoor facilities. The indoor facilities are under construction, and expected to open in late 2010. It will include a 7,000 square foot exhibition space; a comprehensive research center with collections storage, research room, photo darkroom, and computer center; a multi-purpose conference room; and an educational discovery center.

The site will provide unique crossover of cultural, educational, and recreational opportunities for individuals, families, and groups. Visitors will be able learn about petroleum history and it's development into a global enterprise that touches everyone's life everyday by touring the new exhibit, viewing operating antique machinery and building on the grounds, and attending programs about music, crafts, and regional traditions (maple sugaring, tinsmithing, taffy pulling, etc.).

The grounds also provide an arboretum with identified indigenous trees, a wildflower walk, and attractive plantings designed by a local master gardener. When renovations are complete it will be pet friendly and WiFi connected so that visitors can work and play on site in our peaceful, beautiful setting.

Exercise areas with oil and gas themes, picnic pavilion rentals with electrical services, and creek side walkways all add to the opportunities we offer.

Past programs include the Fall Gas-Up engine show, a spring Heritage Lecture Series, Heritage School Tours, Summer History Camps and the Nitroglycerine Show. Programming will be significantly enhanced at the newly renovated facilities.

There are plenty of opportunities for visitors to participate in a variety of special events, educational programs, membership, volunteer, and shopping experiences on site. Recreational opportunities for the whole family, at Drake Well and nearby Oil Creek State Park, include bike and hiking trails which begin at the museum, picnic shelters, fishing, and canoeing on Oil Creek, and rides on the Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad.

As another in the multitude of recreational opportunities in Venango County, Drake Well and Museum should continue to enhance its efforts in providing quality cultural and recreational opportunities for the residents of Venango County and beyond. Additionally, it should work to coordinate and cooperate the other groups and facilities in the County.

The museum is 3 miles south of between Pennsylvania State Routes 8 and 27.

Pennsylvania State Park

Oil Creek State Park
Oil Creek State Park, Venango County is 7,295 acres of mountainous forest land. The primary purpose of Oil Creek State Park is to tell the story of the changing landscape. The early petroleum industry's oil boom towns and important oil well sites are in contrast with clean trout streams and forested hillsides seen today throughout the park. The events of the exciting 1860s, the time of the original oil boom, receive special emphasis. Park resources include the main office, train station visitor center, hiking trails, overnight shelter areas, bike trails, picnic areas, Wildcat Hollow Outdoor Classroom, historic sites such as Rynd Farm, Columbia Farm, Funkville, Pioneer, Shaffer Farm, Miller Farm, Hunt Farm, Broughton, Blood Farm, Egbert Farm, and the Oil Creek & Titusville Railroad.

Pennsylvania State Forest

Kennerdell Tract Clear Creek State Forest
The 3,184-acre Kennerdell Tract in Venango County was purchased in July of 1980 as part of the Clear Creek State Forest. Within the Forest are six miles of shoreline along the Allegheny River. In addition to its outdoor recreation opportunities, such as hiking, fishing, hunting, and sightseeing, the area is known for its natural history and the ways that man utilized those features in years past.

PA Fish and Boat Commission Property

Kahle Lake
The lake compound is a dam on the upper end of Mill Creek, located on the border of Clarion and Venango Counties. The lake is a 251-acre reservoir owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and managed by the PA Fish & Boat Commission for recreational fishing. It is a fairly shallow lake with depths at the dam of about 40 feet. Kahle Lake is part of the Big Bass Program, and Commonwealth Inland Fishing Regulations apply. The Commission annually stocks the lake with tiger muskellunge and walleye fingerlings. Kahle Lake also provides good opportunities to catch nice-size sunfish, crappies, and perch. Boating is limited to boats powered by electric motors and non powered boats. There are 2 boat launches with ample parking.

Lands with Conservation Easements

Total Acreage of Easements: 13,559.4 acres

Sugar Creek Landing (French Creek Valley Conservancy)
Sugar Creek Landing in Sugarcreek Borough, western Venango County protects approximately 263 acres of land. The property encompasses nearly a mile of frontage along French Creek and includes six separate small streams that drain into the river.

St. George Easement (Allegheny Valley Conservancy)
Located in Rockland Township, southern Venango County, this 22-acre property is located along the east bank of the Allegheny River near the confluence of Roberts Run.

White (Allegheny Valley Conservancy)
This 152-acre easement was obtained at the end of 2008. Located in French Creek Township, this property has frontage on and has two streams that feed into French Creek.

Buttermilk Bluffs (Allegheny Valley and French Creek Valley Conservancies)
Buttermilk Bluffs can be found in Canal Township, western Venango County, bordering the west bank of French Creek and the Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary. This property totals 198 acres.

Other AVC Easements
Dotter (Woodings) - 16 acres
Parker Landing - 1.6 acres

Fisherman's Cove, Sandy Creek Confluence (Fisherman's Cove Preservation Foundation)
The cove is located at the confluence of Sandy Creek and Allegheny River in Victory Township. The 207-acre property, on the west bank of the Allegheny River, serves to aid in protecting the creek and floodplain, which supports several animal species of concern with potential for additional natural communities and rare plants and animals throughout as part of the State-designated Sandy Creek Biologically Diverse Area (BDA) and Landscape Conservation Area (LCA) . The property consists of a wooded plateau and a steep, tree-covered hillside facing the Allegheny River and Sandy Creek. It includes approximately 50 acres of level river frontage. The property is bounded by Sandy Creek and private lands on the west and north and on the east by the Allegheny River. Archaeological and historical studies of the property show that it was intermittently used over the past 9,000 years by the region's indigenous American Indian populations as well as by early settlers and their descendents.

Utica Riffle (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy)
Utica Riffle is located on the southern bank of French Creek, in French Creek Township. This 2-acre property was purchased by the WPC to restore the stream bank and implement a streamside buffer for use in protecting freshwater mussel habitat. WPC allows parking and canoe/kayak launching from this site.

Crawford Reserve (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy)
Crawford Reserve is located near the tiny village of President in Pinegrove and President Townships, Venango County. This 11,592-acre reserve has a conservation easement on it, but is open for public recreation.

Firth Property (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy)
As of the writing of this report, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy is in the process of acquiring a conservation easement on the Firth property in Frenchcreek Township that includes 384 acres of land lying adjacent to French Creek. The property will remain open to the public for outdoor recreation. Maintenance of a forested buffer along French Creek and its tributaries to ensure water quality and a healthy population of fish and mussel species is important to this valuable watershed.

Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary
Located in Canal Township in western Venango County, this 458-acre property is home to many nesting and migratory birds. The sanctuary is privately owned and managed, to maximize the attraction to birds and other wildlife.

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 96, 47, 45, 39, and 253 are open and available to the public in Venango County.

State Game Land Identification Number, Location, and Size

State Game Land #	Township	Acreage
96	Plum, Cherrytree, Oakland, Jackson	4,972.80
47	President, Cranberry	2,215.90
45	Cranberry, Rockland, Pine Grove	5,226.83
39	Clinton, Victory, Irwin, Mineral, Frenchcreek	10,687.39
253	Cornplanter	665.20
Total Acreage		**23,767.22**

Improving wildlife habitat is the major objective of the Game Commission. The Commission annually spends millions of dollars on habitat work on State Game Lands to benefit wildlife. However, the agency's 1.4 million acres of State Game Lands comprise roughly five percent of the Commonwealth's landscape spread out in more than 600 parcels in 65 of 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 just on State Game Lands 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 very much would like to share this information with interested landowners to benefit wildlife. More information is available by accessing the agency website at: www.pgc.state.pa.us, or by contacting the Northwest Region Office, Franklin, PA, at (814) 432-3187.

Private Recreation Facilities within Venango County

Private recreation businesses and organizations provide a vast array of recreation facilities and programs in Venango County. The largest of these are listed below. A more complete description of each is located in Appendix E.

General Recreation

- Tri-City Speedway
- Maple Cave Model Airplane Club
- Hilltop RC Model Airplane Club
- VARHA Therapeutic Riding Center

- Vision Quest
- Oil City Boat Club
- UPMC Hospital Trail
- Oil City Izaak Walton League
- Sandy Creek Conservancy Local Gun Club
- Model Rocket Launch Field
- West End Pond, Venango Campus of Clarion University

Private Camps and Campgrounds

- Seneca Hills Camp
- All Saints Ukrainian Camp
- Westminster Highlands Camp
- Pleasantville Free Methodist Camp
- Singing Hills Girl Scout Program Center
- Custaloga Town Boy Scout Camp
- East Sandy Creek Camping Park
- Gaslight Campground
- Kamp Kennerdell
- Marlow's Scenic River Campground
- Whitehall Campground
- Oil Creek Family Campground

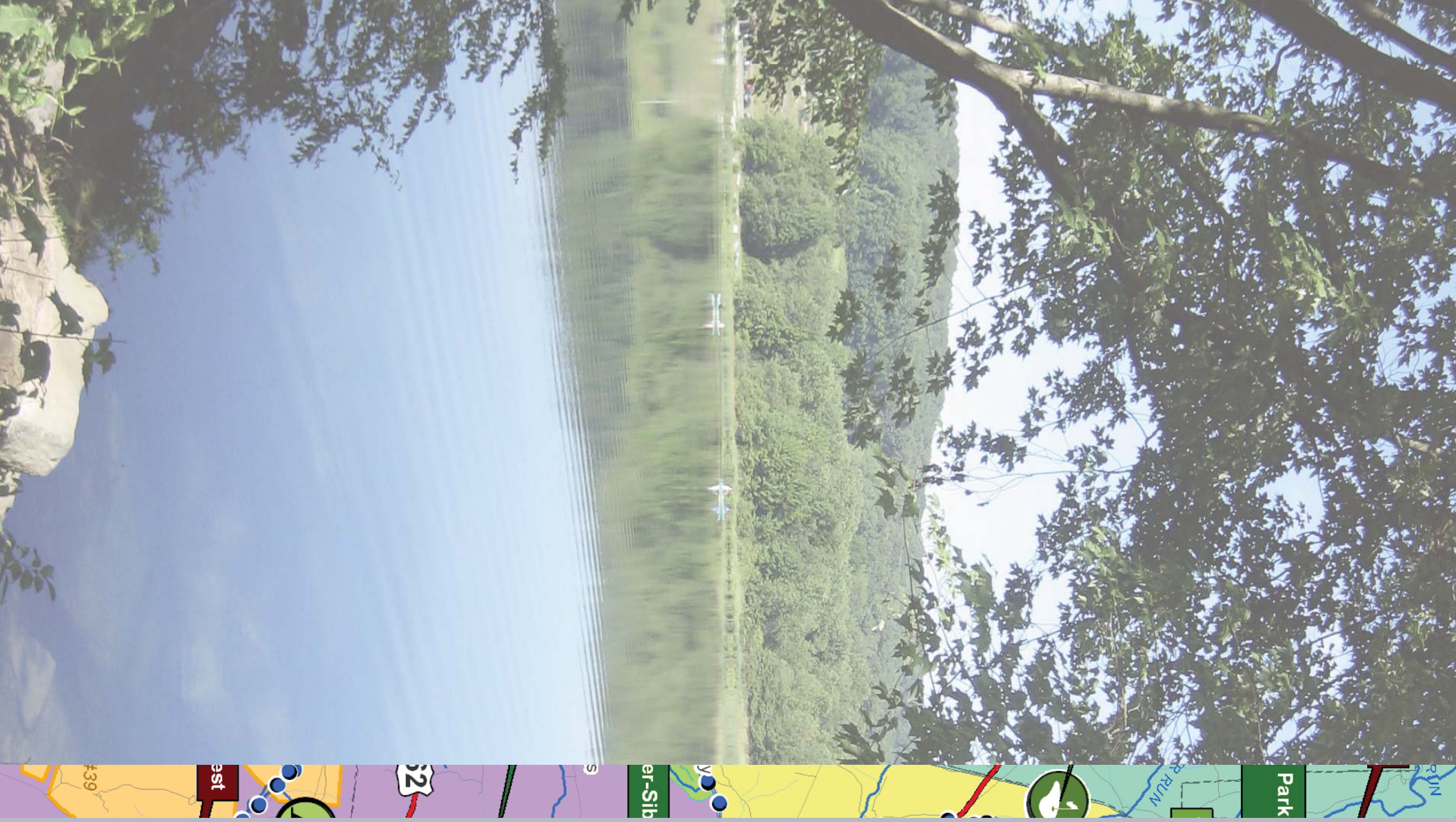
Golf Courses

- Cross Creek Golf Course
- Whitetail Run Golf Course
- Sleepy Hollow Golf Course
- Speer's Public Golf Course
- Wanango Golf Course
- Lucky Hills Golf Course
- River Ridge Golf Course

Regional Parks, Trails, Open Space Outside of Venango County

There are several regional recreation areas outside of Venango County that are used by County residents. We have identified five state parks; one national wildlife refuge; one county, one national, and two state forests; three regional recreation areas; and eight regional trails. A description of each facility shown on the map on page 43 can be found in Appendix F.

The Regional Recreation Resources Map will be inserted here



CHAPTER 3 -
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

CHAPTER 3 - PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The public participation process is crucial in understanding the needs and desires of Venango County residents. It provided valuable grassroots input that assisted in the development of a vision for the future of Venango County recreation, parks, and open space, and of viable implementation strategies. The public input process included:

- a series of regional public meetings
- regular meetings of the project study committee
- distribution and tabulation of a recreation questionnaire
- personal interviews with key stakeholders and users of the County's recreation facilities
- a focus group of stakeholders for Two Mile Run County Park
- local public meetings for Oil City, Franklin, Barkeyville, and Cranberry Township

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 Venango 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 desires:

1. Provide friendly and convenient recreation opportunities.
2. Feature recreation that will attract visitors to the County.
3. Link existing trail systems to one another and to trails outside the County.
4. Focus resources toward current and popular facilities and activities.
5. Increase public access to the County's waterways.
6. Increase awareness of recreational opportunities.
7. Protect special places while still allowing access and recreational use, as well as interpretation and conservation opportunities.
8. Maintain existing recreational facilities.
9. Prioritize recreational development.
10. Further diversify outdoor recreational experiences.
11. Ensure long-term sustainability of local parks and recreation facilities (management, maintenance, enhancement, expansion).
12. Target the long-term sustainability of Two Mile Run County Park.
13. Consider new facilities that compliment rather than compete.
14. Educate the public about their role in parks and recreation support, i.e. maintenance, upkeep, litter control.
15. Address the demand for all terrain vehicle facilities.
16. Feature the rivers as recreation facilities (use, vistas, etc.).
17. Increase public awareness of existing parks, facilities, natural resources, and the various recreational amenities within the County.
18. Strengthen cooperation and communication among government and organizations to work together in providing recreational opportunities.
19. Develop more walking and jogging trails.

20. Develop more scenic overlook areas throughout the County.
21. Establish an environmental learning center at Two Mile Run County Park.
22. Improve youth education curriculum and classes to expand awareness and knowledge of the importance of preserving open space and the benefits that come from recreational opportunities.
23. Improve the navigability of the Allegheny River at Oil City.
24. Encourage the development and expansion of the economic impact of the County's recreation opportunities.
25. Address the recreational needs of local communities.

PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

Each of the venues of input generated its own unique perspective on recreation, parks, open space, and greenways. The remainder of this chapter provides a description of each of the venues of public input. Complete results are included in the Appendices G-K.

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 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 15 residents of Venango County who represented a cross-section of recreation, park, and conservation interests. They began the process by identifying some of the key issues surrounding parks and recreation in the County.

The following list identifies the top 24 of those issues the Committee felt should be addressed in this plan.

- The immediate and long-term needs of Two Mile Run, the only current Venango County park
- The Oil City Comprehensive Waterways Plan
- The newly renovated Oil City Swimming Pool
- Connecting trails and extending them into towns
- Developing areas of canoe launching-accessibility to the river and developing canoe rental business
- Smaller communities lack recreation facilities and need these resources closer to their vicinities
- Motorized recreational vehicles - snowmobiles, ATV's, and off-road motorcycles - need appropriate trails and areas
- Equestrian trails – consider Victory Township efforts and county-wide networking
- Access to more streams for fishing

- Kahle Lake is underutilized; need to find ways to make better use of it
- Consider business opportunities related to recreational development
- Declining access to private lands for hunting, fishing, and camping; what can be done to change this
- Need to increase bird watching and wildlife watching opportunities and accessibility to these areas; possibly build platforms
- Availability of a list of recreation opportunities for residents to access this information
- Demographics of the County indicate an aging population; this needs to be considered in the planning of opportunities
- There is a need for more ball fields
- Develop opportunities that may bring a younger population to visit and live in the County, i.e., develop rock climbing, kayaking, and geo-caching
- Need a base of infrastructure to support recreation development

Public Meetings

Valuable input from the general public was gathered through regional public meetings. Early in the process, each of the County's three planning units hosted a meeting to hear from residents about their thoughts, concerns, needs, desires, and issues concerning parks, recreation, and open space in the County. As the Plan was nearing completion, a county-wide meeting was held at the draft recommendation stage for feedback from residents, with draft recommendations later being presented to the County Commissioners.

Throughout these meetings, a number of similar suggestions were presented. The issue of river and stream accessibility and utilization were voiced most often. County residents were also very adamant about having better communication among government and organizations to improve recreational opportunities throughout the County. Residents also felt that ATV users need accessibility to established use areas. Another issue of concern was the development of a rapids area, and a deepening of the Allegheny River channel for watercraft to pass further up the river beyond Oil City.

The following is a summary of some of the top issues.

- The need for greatly increased awareness of the present parks, facilities, natural resources, and the various recreational amenities and programs within the County, through comprehensive marketing and promotion directed toward residents and tourists
- Better County-wide cooperation and communication among governments and organizations to work together in providing and managing recreational opportunities
- ATV users need access to areas created specifically for off road recreational vehicles; existing laws need to be enforced to encourage riders to use these sites and not ride illegally outside of their designated use areas
- Tennis courts in Pleasantville need funding for resurfacing
- Equestrian trail systems need developed
- Public needs a more comprehensive understanding of what is and what is not offered and permitted at individual public recreational use areas
- Two Mile Run County Park needs both short- and long-range plans developed and implemented
- Link the existing bike trail systems to one another and to areas outside the county

- Establish an environmental learning center at Two Mile Run County Park
- Develop more scenic overlook areas throughout the County with the purpose of targeting specific user groups
- Establish a County-wide trail maintenance plan
- Upgrade and expand the facilities at Two Mile Run County Park
- Develop canoe and kayak rental businesses regionally along the Allegheny River and bike rentals in proximity to trail systems
- Develop access areas and pavilions along the Allegheny River in Emlenton for bird watching (specifically)
- Improve youth education curriculum and classes to expand awareness and knowledge of the importance of preserving open space and the benefits of recreational opportunities
- Develop partnerships to extend the bike trail from Emlenton to Foxburg, and develop a cooperative agreement to extend the trail onto Parker
- Have Kennerdell Tract of Clear Creek State Forest become a PA State Park with developed recreational facilities
- Develop the Allegheny River bank at strategic locations for canoe launching, picnic areas, and for various recreational and cultural venues

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 – Pleasantville Borough Building, Pleasantville; February 21, 2008
The focus of the meeting in the Northern Planning Unit of Venango County was improved awareness, promotion, and marketing of the present parks, facilities, trails, and natural resource-open space that already exist in the County. Attendees noted that the County has much to offer, but residents and tourists need to be much better informed. Participants also believed that there needs to be better County-wide cooperation and communication among governments and organizations, working together for improved accessibility and utilization of all recreational opportunities for County-wide use. Attendees also expressed the need for the development of ATV use areas to curb illegal riding, and provide facilities specifically intended for motorized use.

Meeting # 2 – Venango County Courthouse Annex, Franklin; February 27, 2008
The issues of major concern discussed at the meeting of the Central Planning Unit of Venango County were those of building upon projects already initiated, then sustaining and promoting them. Attendees were interested in seeing follow-through, suggesting the importance of completing the linking of present bike trail systems. They were greatly in favor of establishing an environmental learning center in Two Mile Run Park, as a way to connect all ages to nature education, especially since Venango County has an abundance of natural resources. Throughout much of the meeting, participants' comments were directed toward the utilization the County's natural setting, with an emphasis on making the natural resource destinations accessible. They cited developing and promoting more scenic overlooks, upgrading Two Mile Run Park, horse trails, canoe, kayak, and bike rental facilities. They are also seeking continued efforts in the developing, preserving, and promoting of the historic oil and drilling equipment sites.

Meeting # 3 – Crawford Center, Emlenton; March 4, 2008
In the Southern Planning Unit of Venango County the top issue, by far, targeted the development of the Allegheny River for multi-use venues - from bird watching areas and pavilions, to fishing and watercraft-launching accessibility. Again, environmental and nature

education was also of prime importance - expanding awareness and knowledge of the natural elements in the County, especially for youth. They also wanted to see the Kennerdell Tract of Clear Creek State Forest turned into a State Park, as well as Two Mile Run Park, especially if the County is unable to mange its assets. Attendees also expressed a desire to see the bike trail completed, connecting Emlenton with Foxburg and on to Parker, with bike rental facilities and various eateries for trail users established.

County-Wide Public Meeting - Note to Committee – This meeting has not taken place yet. At the draft recommendation stage for feedback from residents, a Power Point presentation was made summarizing the findings of the study and presenting the vision for the future of parks, recreation, open space, and trails in Venango County. Verbal feedback regarding the findings and vision was very positive. Attendees were also given the opportunity to provide written comments concerning the Plan.

Key Person Interviews

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

Twenty-five respondents indicated they were Venango County residents, and two stated they reside outside the County but their work influences the quality of recreation or open space opportunities within Venango County.

The most common responses to the question "When you think of parks and recreation in Venango County what comes to mind?" were: Two Mile Run Park (10), Oil Creek State Park bike trail (9), rivers and streams (7), Oil Creek State Park (5), Allegheny River (5), State Game Lands (4), fishing opportunities (4), and hunting opportunities (4). These top eight responses targeted mainly outdoor natural open space areas, while the next six were somewhat varied, mixing local recreational structures with outdoor open space uses: the many recreational and outdoor opportunities available (3), public swimming pools (3), that parks and recreation are under-promoted and underutilized (2), playgrounds within city structures (2), canoeing (2), and Hasson Park (2).

Questions on strengths and weakness of parks and recreation in the County generated the following responses: the area's greatest strengths are the accessibility of the ample recreational opportunities throughout the County (15), Oil Creek State Park bike trail (10), and the natural environment (10). Other top strengths suggested were, Oil Creek State Park (6), various trail systems (6), State Game Lands (4), Two Mile Run County Park (3), Allegheny River (3), French Creek (3), and hunting (3). Sports-oriented strengths mentioned were: the many organized sports leagues (2), ball fields (2), and Hasson Park and Pool (2). Still other positive outdoor oriented activities listed were: most park areas are easy to get to and free or moderately priced (2), public lands (2), Justus Lake (2), fishing (2), camping (2), and rail trails (2).

Weakness listed in the area of parks, recreation, and open space were: lack of marketing of the vast diversity of what the County already has (9), Two Mile Run Park conflicts and its inability to be in full operation (7), sparse canoe launches on the many waterways in the

County (5), deficit of Allegheny River access areas (5), lack of community collaborations (3), and that bike trails are not yet fully connected - there are gaps (3). Many also mentioned that there are too many ongoing controversies and squabbles over resource management and public land acquisitions and that there is too much territorialism between communities. Respondents felt that these actions affected the over-all positive influence that could result through better cooperation among decision makers.

The greatest recreational needs for facilities in Venango County mentioned are accessibility and upkeep. Respondents feel there is a need for more boat launch areas on all streams and rivers (6), better maintenance of what already exists (5), comfort stations along the bike trail (4), and more access points on the bike trail (4).

Land use and facility development were continually viewed as needs of importance. Other top interests in this area were: more public land for recreational utilization (3), more public campgrounds (3), more land acquisitions for legal ATV use to curb illegal riding (3), canoe/kayak rentals (3), outdoor multi-use soccer fields (3), equestrian trail and use areas (2), filling missing links in existing trail systems (2), and expanding existing facilities and sites before building new (2).

Respondents listed the greatest needs for recreational programming in Venango County as: better promotion of what already exists (6), County-wide environmental education opportunities (6), and outdoor programming and education for youth (5). Also of interest were: developing programs which teach safety while in the outdoors, (2), more expanded sports and recreational programming County-wide (2), and mandatory coaching education for volunteer sports league coaches (2).

When asked “What group of people is least served or should be targeted with recreational programs or facilities?” respondents replied: lower income families (4), school aged children and youth (4), and people with special needs - to have access to the woods and waterways (4). Four other people believed no particular “group of people” is underserved. Others felt older adults (3), younger lower income children (2), young adults 18 to 25 (2), and females (2) were not being adequately served. Two people suggested that ATV and snowmobile users were underserved and believed that there is illegal riding because there are no large open land tracts for them.

All 27 participants indicated that Venango County should be cooperating with communities to provide parks and recreation. The top responses were: Venango County should be the leader in developing cooperation among all local governments for the good of the individual municipalities and for the County as a whole (5), the County should partner with municipalities for grant opportunities (4), and the County should be involved in comprehensive planning, coordination, and implementation, so there is no replication of efforts (2). There were many responses to this question. Some other individual responses were: that the County should be a sounding board for advice and direction; that they represent all communities because many residents utilize each others’ facilities; the County should help local municipalities coordinate (but not dictate); that communities are territorial and provincial, and there is a need for the County to gather it all together; and the County could help guide in sharing community resources and facilities.

When asked about other issues of importance to be considered by the County, there were similarities in impressions, but not one response was an exact duplication of another. A sampling of responses included: the need for the beautification of the municipal riverfront areas; the necessity to be vigilant in utilizing the waterways and parks; and the need

for better sidewalks, signage, and lighting to and within parks. A number of thoughts turned to the necessity for cooperation and support. People expressed that community competitiveness is a road block to County success in doing a good job, that the constant undertone of bashing former County Commissioners needs to stop, and that people need to complain less and have a better cooperative attitude of pride in what Venango County has to offer. Throughout the whole interviewing process people expressed their beliefs that there has been just too much grumbling, little inter-cooperation, too much territorialism, and too many factions looking out for themselves and not for the overall good of the County residents. They felt if a cooperative spirit could be cultivated, much would improve.

When asked what role the County should play in providing Parks and Recreation in the County, eight respondents said the County should provide oversight and to be a resource to promote the many kinds of activities that are available, seven felt the County should step forward to help municipalities to apply for recreational grants and funding, five said the County is in the position to take a leadership role in providing parks & recreation, and four believed that the County should develop a panel to assist in the needs of municipalities.

Others responded by saying that the County should develop a management or operational authority or board to oversee the Two Mile Run County Park, but the County should not be involved in the day-to-day operations (2); the County Commissioners and Planning Department, etc., need to take the recommendations from this County Comprehensive Recreation Plan and get them accomplished, indicating, "that's why there's a Plan" (2); the County should assist as possible to oversee Two Mile Run Park (2); and the County should serve more in an advisory role and not hire a parks and recreation department head (2).

In a question posed specifically as "How should Two Mile Run Park fit into the County's future?", there were many similar responses, with the majority indicating that the County should in some way remain involved. Responses included: the County should solely manage and maintain it (8); the County needs to get it operating or give it to an entity that can get it into operation (6); the Park needs to become the "show-piece" once again because it is a "gem" to the County (4); it should be the "hub" of the County, providing a multitude of programming and events (4); it is a tremendous asset to the County and should be treated as such (3); and the County should keep it as a natural area and not over commercialize it, while providing the activities and resources that it once had (3).

It should be said that the consensus of those interviewed revealed a real disconnect regarding County support, in that most residents felt that the County was not making a positive or progressive impact in taking steps to develop, stabilize, or support parks, recreation, and open space opportunities.

One individual's response, which seemed to sum up an underlying concern of a majority of respondents throughout the whole Key Person Interview process was, "I represent one of the thousands of County resident consumers of recreational resources. If there are programs and recreational opportunities and open spaces, I will spend time and money here to utilize them. If they are not available - I am not able to."

Recreation Questionnaire

In February 2008, three thousand questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of Venango County households. The questionnaire generated a response rate of 14.7% based on a total of 427 completed surveys that were returned and tabulated by the consultant and just 102 returned as undeliverable

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 22,747, produces a confidence level of 99% at a confidence interval of 2.19. 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 2.19 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 Venango County Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Questionnaire provide an accurate depiction of the thoughts and desires of County residents.

Questionnaire Highlights

According to the questionnaire:

- People indicated that the top programs and activities that a member of their family currently participates in are: community special events, art/music/theater, adult outdoor sports, swimming, and arts and crafts.
- Residents specified that the top programs and activities that a member of their family would participate in if provided were: nature/environmental activities, community special events, swimming, adult outdoor sports, and special interest activities (such as photography).
- Respondents indicated that the top types of recreation and open spaces that they currently use and that they believe are needed in Venango County are: walking and jogging trails, bike trails, picnic areas, lake fishing, hunting areas, stream/river fishing, hiking trails, and scenic roads and overlooks.
- Respondents indicated that the top types of recreation and open spaces that they would use if provided in Venango County are: miniature golf, ice skating areas, outdoor concerts, sledding/tubing areas, wildlife viewing areas, more scenic roads and overlooks, wildflower areas, and cabin rentals.
- When asked how far a person is willing to drive to use a park, 36% said it does not matter.
- 77% of County residents believe a County-wide open space system that protects natural areas such as streams, woodlands, and farms is important or very important to them.
- 56% of County residents believed that the idea of acquisition of open space from willing sellers throughout the County has merit and should be explored further.
- Residents believed that the role the County should have in the future of parks and recreation is as follows (in order of ranking).
    1. Enter into cooperative agreements with local non-profits (highest ranked).
    2. Assist local municipalities in developing recreational services.
    3. Create a County parks and recreation department.
    4. Maintain its present role only with Two Mile Run Park.

- The largest percentage of County residents believe that a multi-use, county-wide, and regional trails and open space system should be developed and maintained by volunteer, non-profit organizations.
- 48% of residents responding said that it was somewhat important to have a motorized recreational facility in Venango County, while 47% said that it was not at all important to them.
- The top three factors residents indicated that keep them from using recreational facilities or attending programs often are:
    1. being unaware of park facilities or programs
    2. facilities are not well maintained
    3. lack of time
- 49% of residents believed that the primary focus of Two Mile Run County Park should remain as it is - maintaining current facilities; while 38% felt that recreational opportunities should be expanded; and 5% believed that it should be allowed to revert back to a more natural property with only a few amenities.
- Residents believed that the operations of Two Mile Run County Park should be funded in the following ways (in order of ranking):
    1. self supporting
    2. user fees
    3. fund raising
    4. tax revenue
- County residents believed that if additions to existing recreational and educational facilities were to be constructed/installed at Two Mile Run County Park, the top facilities of importance to be constructed were (in order of ranking):
    1. more restroom buildings (highest ranked)
    2. more pavilions
    3. paved bike trails
    4. a tow rope on the sledding hill
    5. more camping sites
- 66% of respondents indicated that Venango County should not provide any park in addition to Two Mile Run.

Two Mile Run Re-visioning Workshop

On March 7, 2009, a select group of nineteen individuals that included County Commissioners, County Planning Staff, and employees of Two Mile Run County Park, were joined by representatives of the Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Planning Committee, Oil Region Alliance, the Park Advisory Board, and park volunteers to discuss the future of Two Mile Run County Park. Details of this meeting and its recommendations can be found in Chapter 4.

Public Input for Community Recreation Plans

Separate public and stakeholder meetings were held for the review of individual community recreation plans in Barkeyville, Franklin, Oil City, and Cranberry Township. Descriptions of those meetings and the input gathered are in Chapter 5 of this report.

Venango County Vision for the Future of Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

After an extended, in-depth analysis of the results of the public input and of the existing conditions of recreational resources in the County, the committee worked to summarize the expectations of County residents for the future of recreation, parks, and open space in the County by creating a vision for the future. The Vision establishes the overall picture of where County residents want their recreation, parks, and open space to be in the future. This vision is described in the following three principles that will guide the County into its future of recreation, parks, and open space.

Principle #1

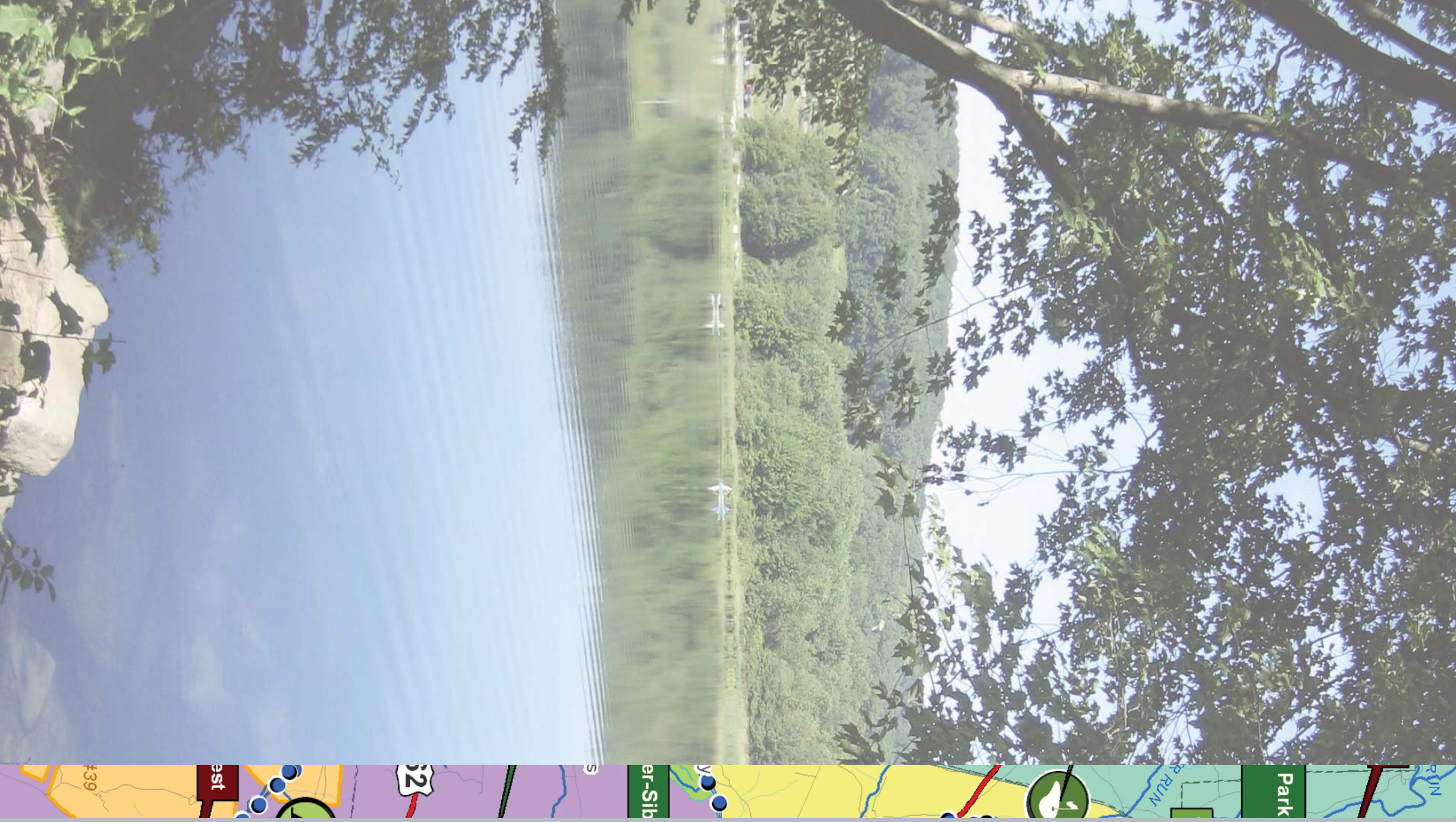
Enable the continued preservation, sustainability, support, promotion, and development of the recreational, natural, and cultural resources within Venango County.

Principle #2

Reveal to Venango County's residents, visitors, and tourists the recreational, natural, and cultural resources available for them to utilize and enjoy.

Principle #3

Cultivate the processes and opportunities needed to enhance recreational experiences and to increase prosperity and population growth, through marketing, promotion, development, and accessibility of recreational, natural, and cultural resources across Venango County.



CHAPTER 4 -
TWO MILE RUN COUNTY PARK

CHAPTER 4-
TWO MILE RUN COUNTY PARK

Two Mile Run first became a County park in the mid 1960's. Its first steps of acquisition, planning, and development were funded, in part, through Penn Soil RC&D, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the PA Department of Community Affairs. Its first master plan was developed in 1967. Shortly thereafter, development of the park began. Some of the original facilities, such as Crosby Beach, still exist today.

In 1967, the Venango County Park and Recreation Board was created to oversee the operation and development of the park. Several management systems have been used by the County since that time to keep park operations functional and successful.

MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

Two Mile Run is governed by the Venango County Board of Commissioners in coordination with its Park Advisory Board. For an eleven-year period, from 1997 through 2007, the County had a long-term lease agreement with Parks Unlimited to manage operations, growth, and development of the park. Beginning January 1, 2008, the County took over full governance responsibilities again.

Since that time, daily operations have been handled by County staff which includes a park manager, one full-time maintenance worker and one part-time maintenance/part-time department clerk, two seasonal full-time maintenance workers and one full-time seasonal department clerk, and other seasonal staff. Additionally, the park utilizes a variety of social service works programs to assist with maintenance and other tasks. Volunteers assist with a variety of functions as well.

This number and type of staffing will not be adequate for ongoing maintenance, upgrades, and programming of park facilities. Additional maintenance staff will be needed soon if the park is to be adequately maintained and operated. Clerical and program staff will be required as park use continues to grow. If it is the intention of the County Commissioners to grow the park to its full potential and provide more opportunities and services, a new staffing structure will need to be considered.

FACILITIES

The Park encompasses 2,695 acres located in Oakland Township and Sugarcreek Borough in the north- central part of Venango County. It features the 144-acre Justus Lake, complete with a 350' beach. Twenty-eight miles of

Facilities are evaluated based on the following criteria

Good: Equipment given this ranking was installed or upgraded during the last 1-3 years. The equipment shows no signs of significant disrepair and no immediately visible safety hazards.

Fair: Equipment given this ranking appears to be several years old. The equipment shows some signs of aging and may present minor safety concerns.

Poor: Equipment given this ranking is in extreme disrepair and is in need of immediate upgrading or replacement.

ADA Compliance: The Americans with Disabilities Act establishes accessibility standards for recreational facilities. Venango County recently completed an ADA compliance analysis that addresses these issues. The inventory in this report only identifies whether or not individual facilities meet ADA standards.

hiking trails, 15 miles of bike trails, and 8 miles of equestrian trails crisscross the park property. Facilities also include 13 pavilions, 53 camp-sites, a softball field and 2 multi-purpose fields, and a community-use building.

Venango County manages all aspects of the Park and subsidizes its operations.

Park Inventory

Facility	No.	Enhancements and Utilities	Condition	Size	ADA Compliant
Park	1	Forest, fields, lake	Good	2,695 acres	
Justus Lake	1			144 acre	
BEACH AREA					
Beach Area	1	Canoe, paddle boats, tri-cycle craft, boat rental, water slide, iceberg-in water climbing apparatus	Good	350'	No
Sand Volleyball Court	1	Sand, posts, net	Good	90'x100'	No
Play Area		Various equipment	See Safety Audit	-	
Beach House	1	Snack Shack, food concession, sundeck, restrooms, shower facilities, and a first aid station.	Good	30'x60'	No
Beach Patio Shelter	1	Electric, 1 picnic table	Good	30'x60'	No
Lake's Edge Shelter	1	Electric, charcoal grill, 9 picnic tables, serving ledges	Fair	20'x36'	No
Lake Side Shelter	1	Electric, charcoal grill, 8 picnic tables, serving ledges	Fair	20'x36'	No
Daniel Boone, Woodchuck Shelter	1	Electric, charcoal grill	Fair	12'x18'	No
Chipmunk Shelter	1	Electric, charcoal grill	Fair	12'x18'	No
Administration Office	1	Outside deck, game room, information center	Fair	-	No
Sewage Plant	1		Fair	-	No
BEHIND ADMINISTRATION BUILDING					
Ball Field	1	Backstop	Fair	RF - 180' LF - 200+	No
Henry Mackey Shelter	1	Electric, water, charcoal grill, 15 picnic tables, serving ledges	Fair	20'x80'	No
Edith C. Justus Shelter	1	Electric, water, charcoal grill, 15 picnic tables, serving ledges	Fair	20'x80'	No
Parking			Fair	50 places	No

Facility	No.	Enhancements and Utilities	Condition	Size	ADA Compliant
FISHING PIER AREA					
Fishing Pier Shelter	1	Electric, water 7 picnic tables	Fair	20'x36'	Yes
Restroom	1		Poor	12'x14'	No
Fishing Pier Shelter	1	Asphalt surface, wooden rail	Poor	20'x120'	No
Parking	1			58 places	Yes
Path	1		Fair	approx. 1/4 mile	No
FLATS AREA					
Hill Top Shelter	1	5 picnic tables	Good	20'x36'	No
Daniel Boone Shelter	1	Water, electric, fire ring, charcoal grill, 2 tables	Good	12'x18'	No
Pioneer Shelter	1	8 tables, grills, fire ring, water	Good	20'x36'	No
Restrooms	1	Men's and women's	Fair	10'x18x	No
Play equipment	1	Poor condition - Remove and replace	Poor	-	No
Multi-purpose Fields	2	Soccer type fields	Good	-	No
RETREAT AREA					
Farm House	1	Kitchen, bath, washer and dryer, gas burning fireplace and air conditioning	Good	-	No
Cottage	1	Kitchen, bath, washer and dryer, gas burning fireplace and air conditioning	Good	-	No
GROUP CAMPING AREA					
ORAS Observatory	1	Wooden building, 14" Meade SCT telescope, picnic pavilion attached	Good	-	
Group Camping	1	Large field area, trees	Good	-	
FAMILY CAMPGROUND AREA					
Family Camp Ground	1	Full hookups are available in twelve sites. Electrical hookups are available in 28 sites. Thirty two sites are primitive with no hookups, and seven of those are walk-in tent sites only. Campground facilities include modern showers, restrooms, and waste station	Good	72 sites	Some
Amphitheater	1			-	No
Play Equipment	1		See Safety Audit	-	No
TRAILS					
Hiking trails				28 miles	
Cross County Ski Trails				8-10 miles	
Equestrian Trails				13.3 miles	

Two Mile Run Trails

Over 20 miles of trails traverse scenic woods and fields. There are trails that offer the novice as well as the experienced hiker a challenge and the pleasure of nature's wonders. Bridle trails around the perimeter of the park give horseback riders a scenic excursion around the lake. Mountain bikers enjoy the challenge of a variety of available terrain and conditions.

FINANCES

Because the County has only operated the Park for one full year since taking control of it again, there is insufficient historic data from which to analyze the Park's finances. However, the accompanying chart on this page depicts revenue and expenses for the Park in 2008.

Two Mile Run County Park 2008 Income and Expenses

	Receipts	*Expenses*
Camping Fees	$25,997	
Pavilion Rental	$6,682	
House Rental	$11,338	
Boat Mooring	$205	
Beach	$1,723	
Local-Other	$1,000	
Donations	$60	
Natural Gas Sales	$59,223	
Miscellaneous	$153	
Payroll		$62,832
Utilities		$19,433
Insurance		$0
Building and Grounds Maintenance		$3,243
Telephone and Internet		$2,830
Office, Advertising, and Postage		$2,906
Supplies		$15,377
Equipment and Tools		$4,760
Vehicle Repair		$2,855
Legal Services		$688
Misc Expenses		$457
Other Expenses		$7,120
Capital Expense		$39,964
Subtotal	$106,381	$162,465
Net Cost to the County	$56,084	

CREATING A VISION

In 2002, Venango County, in conjunction with Parks Unlimited, completed a park master plan entitled A Sustainable Future for Two Mile Run. The plan included the following components that addressed the future needs of the Park:

- Forest Stewardship Plan
- Forest Management Plan
- Natural Gas Protocol
- Soil Conservation Plan
- Park Master Site Development Plan
- Economic and Market Study

As part of the County's Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Study, the County determined that it would be wise to re-visit the master plan to see if it still matched the vision for the park. To that end, an ad hoc committee comprised of 19 county residents was created to review and "re-vision" the previous plan in comparison to current expectations for the park. The committee was comprised of two County Commissioners, representatives of Two Mile Run Park staff, volunteers, and Advisory Board; Venango County Planning Commission; Oil Region Alliance; Venango County Conservation District; the Council of Greenways and Trails; and the Comprehensive Recreation Planning Committee. The meeting was facilitated by Pashek Associates.

For the visioning process, attendees were divided into three groups of six or seven people to discuss a series of issues to discuss about the future of the park. The issues prompted thoughts and discussion as the groups sought to identify the park's purpose, needed facilities, management structure, potential programming, and financing strategies. After extensive discussion within the individual groups, the Committee was brought back together as a whole to come to consensus on the future of Two Mile Run County Park.

The Committee concluded that numerous components of the plan are still valid and useful and should continue to direct the future of the park. These include the Forest Stewardship Plan, Forest Management Plan, Natural Gas Protocol, and Soil Conservation Plan. All of these establish sound planning and implementation strategies that will be of great benefit to the park and to Venango County residents both now and in the future.

The Master Site Plan component of the plan was originally based on the premise that the park would be operated as a private sector facility. Based on that presumption, the master plan recommends a number of facilities such as a lodge, conference center, super cabins, and tree houses that require a large initial investment. Once developed, these facilities would each require a strong business plan and careful operations to ensure their long-term financial success. The focus of the park could easily become centered on maintenance and operation of these facilities rather than the recreation and environmental features of the park.

Through this re-visioning process, the group chose to move the vision toward the sustainability of the natural features and recreational amenities of the park; providing for the current and future recreational needs of Venango County residents; and drawing visitors from outside the County who will support the on-going efforts of the park and enjoy its natural and recreational features. Consequently, the Committee has developed the following vision for Two Mile Run Park.

The Vision

Two Mile Run County Park will be Venango County's premiere outdoor attraction as it balances its natural features with recreational use. The Park will provide Venango County residents and visitors a clean, safe, and user-friendly recreational place to connect with the environment and with each other.

As a multi-facility location, the Park will host local and national events, leaving visitors with a positive and memorable recreational experience. It will encourage use by individuals, organizations, families, companies, and County government for gatherings, site improvement projects, recreation, and education.

It will be a year-round outdoor recreation area where County residents and visitors feel welcome at well-maintained facilities. It will offer a balance between active and passive recreational uses and programs. Recreational facilities and opportunities will be designed and developed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the park and its natural resources.

The Park will be visually natural and engaging through its plants, wildlife, and viewscapes and will serve as a model of environmental education and stewardship. As the County's only Park, it will foster pride, encourage use, and promote a sense of local ownership and support.

Complete details of the meeting are in the Appendix K.

OBJECTIVES TO FULFILL THE VISION

Management and Operations

The Park will be owned, managed, and operated by Venango County.

Adequate staffing for the ***immediate future*** of the park should be comprised of the Park Manager, three full-time maintenance workers, an administrative clerk, two part-time office clerks, and multiple seasonal staff. Multiple volunteers will be needed to support the staff in their functions.

However, as the park continues to enhance and expand its facilities, programs, and visitor base, plans should be in place to provide staffing to meet its long-term needs. ***The following describes the staffing needs as the park begins to reach its full potential.***

Executive Director – Overall responsibility for all aspects of the park focusing on long-term sustainability. Responsibilities will include: natural features management, financial planning and administration, marketing and public relations, long-range planning, supervision of staff and volunteers, community projects, oversight of programming, etc.

Park Manager – Oversee daily operations and maintenance of the park and park development projects.

Maintenance Staff – Four to five year-round staff and multiple seasonal workers.

Office Staff – One full-time administrative assistant and two to four part-time employees according to the activity and the season.

Other Staff – As facilities and programs grow, there may be the need for additional staff in the future including: an outreach director to handle publicity, marketing, partnering and volunteers; a grant writer/financial manager; a programs and events coordinator; and an environmental educator/interpreter.

The Park should utilize sub-contracted services where feasible. Such places could include beach operations, vending and concessions, and watercraft rentals.

Current technology should be used in all aspects of park operations. This would include office management, scheduling and reservations, program management, web base marketing, maintenance management and tracking, long-range planning, environmental inventories and management. New and emerging technologies could increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of park operations.

A strong marketing and publicity program needs to be established to attract visitors and to provide current information to park users and potential users. A majority of the marketing should be web based. An attractive, up-to-date, and easy to use website would be a good first step. Other components of the marketing program may include print, audio, and visual media advertisements and publicity, brochures and flyers, and connections through internet social networking sites such as Facebook, blogs, and Twitter.

Facilities and Improvements

Based on the re-visioning of the 2002 Two Mile Run Park Master Plan, the Park can continue to develop the new and existing facilities with the following exceptions: the Lodge Area; the Super Cabin at the former park office; the Cabin Area proposed at the south end of the lake; The Slope area; and the proposed swimming pool. These areas and related facilities have been eliminated from the Master Plan through the re-visioning process. The re-visioning committee felt that these facilities did not fulfill the long-term vision of operating as a true County park. The ten Year Master Plan has been color coded to depict the priorities of the re-visioning process and is included at the end of this chapter.

Facility improvement priorities

- **Upgrades to existing facilities**
- **ADA Compliance projects**
- **Improvements to increase the Parks ability to produce revenue**
- **Natural resource protection projects.**

The following is a prioritized listing of improvements and identified by the Re-visioning Ad Hoc Committee. Those marked with an asterisk were not part of the 2002 Master Plan

Top priorities

- Continue the development of the Crosby Beach Nucleus of the Park
- Improve the farmhouse and cottage to promote use and provide additional revenue
- Expansion of and improvements to the campground
- Enhancements to the group camping area
- Conservation improvements in the Lockwood area
- Development of a loop trail around the lake
- Construction of an outdoor amphitheater
- Improvements to the boat launch
- Wildlife habitat improvements and viewing areas
- Enhancements to Pioneer Flats and the addition of a formal sled riding hill
- Expand the boat launch to include development of a mid lake boat access point
- Development of an Environmental Education Center*
- Compliance with ADA standards throughout the park*
- Improve and expand the trail system, incorporating environmental education*

Second Priority

- Add riding stables at the Lockwood area
- Develop conference and meeting space
- Provide an information kiosk near the entrance to the main park area*
- Improve cell phone and communication services*

Third Priority

- Expand camping opportunities to another area of the park
- Create an ice skating pond
- Develop a VenanGO Bus stop in the park*

Park Maintenance

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, Venango County 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 they are 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 municipality 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. At least one person should maintain certification as a certified playground safety inspector. The County should obtain a playground equipment safety kit (such as the one manufactured by Little Tikes Commercial Playground Equipment for the National Playground Safety Institute) and use it on an ongoing basis to monitor playground safety. An alternative would be to contract with a Certified Playground Safety Inspector to conduct a playground safety audit whenever playground equipment is changed, replaced, or damaged.

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.

Financing

Public parks are almost never able to produce sufficient revenues to offset expenses. But most often they are looking for new and unique ways of funding their facilities. Special programming and fundraising events should play an important role in the overall revenue program of Two Mile Run County Park. However, there are few programs or outside funding sources that can substantially increase revenues of a

public park. Rather, a balanced business approach to park management offers the best opportunity to provide sufficient revenues and maintain reasonable expenses.

The business concept is often misunderstood by local governments who tend to see themselves as providers of services rather than operators of a business. However, if handled appropriately, the park can offer a good balance between providing a community service and operating under sound business practices. It can also enable the County to be financially successful at operating the park while balancing funding between users and taxpayers.

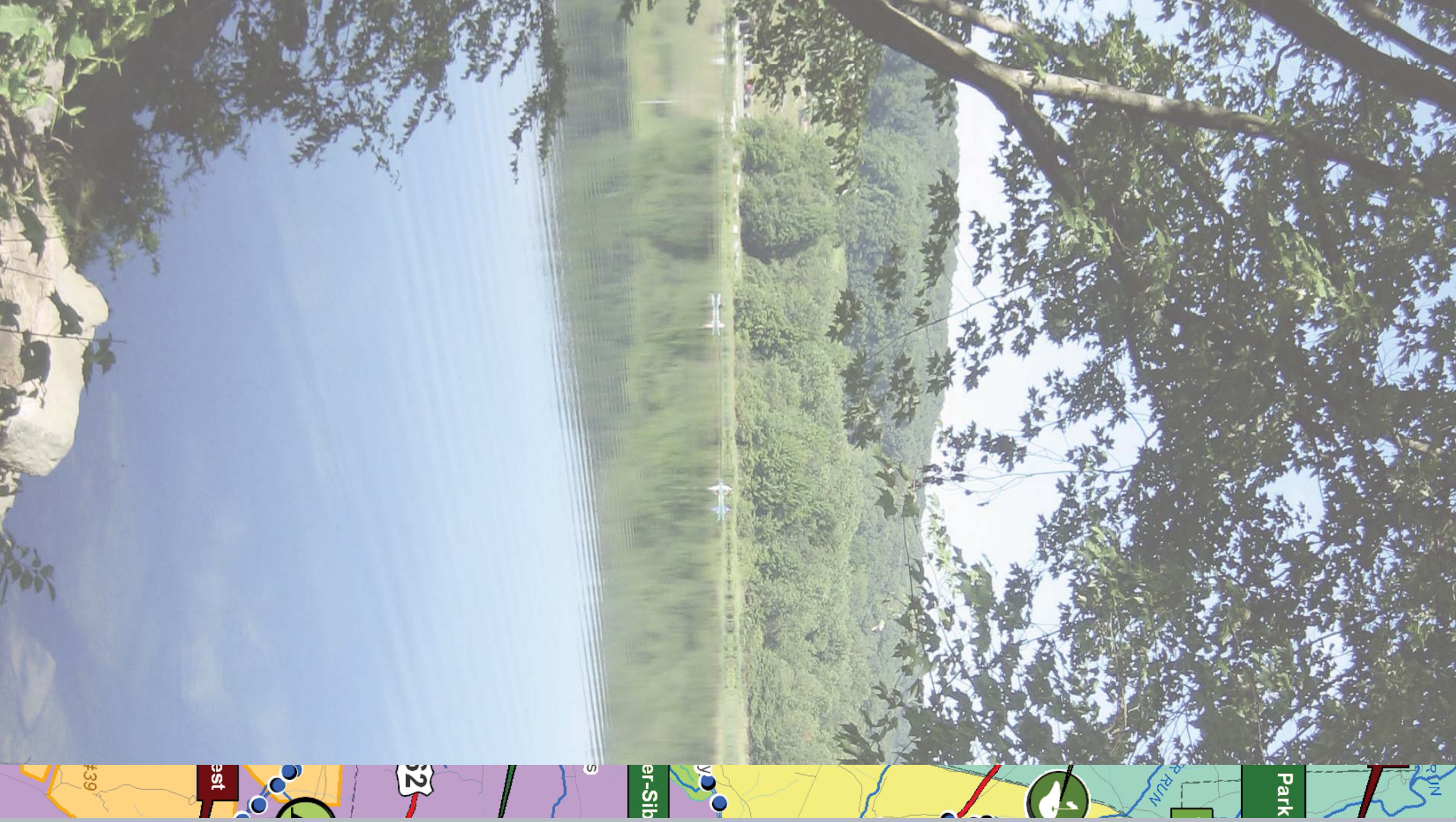
The key question the County Commissioners must answer is, "Where do we want to fit in this balance?" or "How much cost recovery should be expected from Two Mile Run?"

The business approach to park management needs to encompass all aspects of operations: admission fees, operational expenses, staffing, programming, marketing, and much more. A strong park director with a business background will be the key to creating and developing sound business practices for Two Mile Run.

As part of the re-visioning of the Park, the committee identified a number of potential revenue sources and financial management options that should be considered.

- Fundraising activities and events
- Support the park through the County's general fund budget
- Program fees (canoe/kayak, cross country skiing)
- Utilize volunteers (students, seniors, community groups)
- Encourage organizations to hold events at the park
- Major season-specific community events
- Promote equipment rentals
- Charge a fee for all active recreation
- Form partnerships
- Create an active endowment for maintenance and development
- Hold an annual fund raising event
- Utilize natural resource generated revenue only for park operations, maintenance, and development
- Solicit donations
- Pursue all available grant opportunities
- Utilize volunteers for building and maintenance
- Create a "wish list" for donors
- Sell park-wide season passes (camping, launching, swimming)
- Create a "Friends of the Park" organization with membership fees

Park Master Plan Map will be inserted here.



CHAPTER 5 -
MUNICIPAL RECREATION PLANS

CHAPTER 5-
MUNICIPAL RECREATION PLANS

Venango County has recognized the importance of local and regional planning for parks and recreation. As part of this Plan, the County included a review of the existing municipal recreation plans for the four municipalities in the county which have them. These municipalities are Cranberry Township, the City of Franklin, Oil City, and Barkeyville Borough. Through this process, it was the County's desire to look specifically at local needs but also at opportunities for multiple municipalities to share in both planning and providing recreational opportunities to local residents.

To accomplish this, the consultant:

- Met with municipal officials of each of community to discuss their thoughts, plans, and issues related to parks and recreation.
- Held a public meeting in each of the municipalities to gather information and hear from the general public.
- Conducted a detailed inventory of the recreational facilities in each municipality and evaluate their service to their respective community.
- Reviewed recreational opportunities being offered in surrounding municipalities and evaluate possibilities for multi-municipal cooperation.

Dates and Locations of Previously Conducted Municipal Recreation Plans

- **Barkeyville - Park Recreation and Open Space Plan 1998**
- **Cranberry Township – Recreation and Park Plan 1973**
- **Franklin – Comprehensive Park and Recreation Study 1975**
- **Oil City – Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan 2001**

ANALYSIS OF RECREATION PLANS

Barkeyville Borough

Pashek Associates reviewed the 1998 Barkeyville Borough Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. It was determined that the Borough had accomplished much of what it had set out to do in providing park and recreation facilities for its community residents. Barkeyville Borough is surrounded by Irwin Township in the southwest corner of Venango County, and more specifically can be found at the crossroads of Interstate 80 and Highway Rt. 8.

Barkeyville presently has a park with softball field and concession building; basketball court; pavilion; playground; seating area; horseshoe courts; and open space of cut grass areas and woodlands. The park property also extends to include a flower garden along Rt. 8. The facilities are adequate for the present population of Barkeyville. It was also noted that Barkeyville residents felt that they are often forgotten by the County, and that the County does not recognize their needs.

Meetings

Borough Council

A meeting took place on May 13, 2008, at the Barkeyville Municipal Building between

Wally Stearns, Vice President of Barkeyville Council, and the consultant. The meeting resulted with the following being noted:

Barkeyville is waiting for the year 2010 when the Industrial Park will begin to pay taxes. There has been an agreement that the Industrial Park would not have to pay taxes until 2010. There is also a proposed mall that is to be developed in the vicinity of the Barkeyville Rt.80 and Rt. 8 exit. It is their expectation that revenues through taxes and fees will be able to be utilized by the Borough towards improvements and additions to their park and recreation system. The meeting resulted with the following being noted as desired enhancements within the Borough:

- A paved walking trail in the park woods
- Improvements to the borough's flower garden

Public

A public meeting was held on July 31, 2008, at the Barkeyville Municipal Building to take public input and to hear concerns, needs, and desires of parks and recreation in Barkeyville. Seven people attended the meeting. Upon discussion at the public meeting, participants were interested in the following improvements and additions:

- Trails in the borough park
- Volunteer help to maintain current recreation facilities
- Build a community room on property in the Industrial Park
- Grants needed for improvements
- Historic preservation

Recommendations for Barkeyville parks and recreation

- Develop a long-term maintenance and upkeep plan for the park to maintain what they already have, utilizing a financial commitment from the Borough, combined with fundraising, and volunteer efforts
- Replace their playground equipment with newer pieces and/or a modular unit
- Partner with KaBoom!, a non-profit organization whose goal is to provide playgrounds within walking distance of all children
- Repair or replace the park benches
- Renovate the horseshoe courts
- Apply for a DCNR $20k (no match grant) Grants for Small Communities
- Contact the Justus Trust Fund to consider potential grants
- Complete the recommendations of the existing Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan by developing the walking trail proposed in the Plan
- Evaluate the feasibility of building a Community Room as part of the construction of the Clintonville Volunteer Fire Department building. The population of Barkeyville should be evaluated and rental-use interest determined to decide if the potential need and demand for use will offset additional cost.
- Install signage to the existing park
- Develop a system of walking trails in the Barkeyville Industrial Park
- Coordinate efforts with Clintonville Borough and Irwin and Clinton Townships for the provision of recreational opportunities

Cranberry Township

Pashek Associates reviewed the 1973 Cranberry Township Park and Recreation Plan. It was found that after 35 years, not much of the Plan was relevant due to its age and the significant changes in demographics, land-use, and economic trends. Cranberry Township is located in the central region of Venango County, covering the largest area in square miles in comparison to other County Townships. Cranberry's major transportation routes are US Highways 322 and 62, and State Routes 257 and 157.

Cranberry Township presently has two public recreational areas, Morrison Park and Justus Trail from Rockland to Oil City. The Sandy Creek Trail traverses the south border of the Township, and there is an expectation to develop the 20-acre Moody Pond property, located along Rt. 257, in the coming years. Morrison Park has four pavilions; volleyball; tennis; horseshoe; and basketball courts; three playground areas; pond; ball field; a perimeter walking trail; all in approximately 23 acres of a mixture of open cut-grass areas and woodlands.

Cranberry Township is a community on the grow. Presently Morrison Park provides a destination for families to recreate, walk, and spend quality time together in a pleasing outdoor setting. Organized recreational programming is provided to youth through school district activities, community sports leagues, or by attending YMCA or YWCA programs. With a community of seven-thousand, typically 50+ acres is common for recreational use space. With the future acquisition and development of the Moody property, Cranberry Township will be close to meeting that mark. At seven-thousand people and growing, it is common for residents to look to community leadership to provide public recreational facilities and programming rather than needing to drive to another community. With a large youth demographic and park space available, a Township of Cranberry's size typically would find support for summer recreational programming, such as in a day-camp structure, special events, or year around programming where facilities can be provided through the Township, by partnership agreements, or rented for programming. With the recent growth of the Township, which is evidenced by the Rt. 322 and Rt. 257commercial zones and the UPMC Campus; and with land available for future residential and commercial development, expectations will be put upon the Township to provide recreation facilities and programming for community residents.

Meetings

Township Secretary

A meeting took place on May 22, 2008, at the Cranberry Township Municipal Building between Frank Pankratz, Township Secretary/Treasurer, and Pashek Associates. The meeting resulted with the following being noted:

- DCNR just awarded the Township a grant for new playground equipment to replace the wooden structure at Morrison Park
- Existing modular play units will be relocated to the far end of the park
- 13 new picnic tables were built and placed in the park this year
- Moody pond and park property will be developed when that property is settled through the Moody family will

Public

A public meeting was held on July 16, 2008, at the Cranberry Township Municipal Building to take public input and to hear concerns, needs, and desires of parks and

recreation in Cranberry Township. Seven people attended the meeting. The majority of those represented were involved with Morrison Park through paid or volunteer positions. Upon discussion at the public meeting, participants were interested in the following improvements and additions:

- Development of Moody's pond and property for a new community recreational park
- Increase awareness of Township park locations through improved directional signage
- The development of additional parks to meet the growing community's needs
- Provide the park board with helpful educational and informative inspirational and vision-casting training programs

Recommendations for Cranberry Township parks and recreation

- Develop an updated comprehensive recreation, park, and open space plan
- Develop and implement a land dedication and fees-in-lieu-of ordinance
- Develop a plan for land preservation to protect natural features of the Township for future generations
- Ensure adequate playground safety surfacing under the new and relocated play equipment
- Evaluate potential support for a summer day-camp recreation program at Morrison Park. Begin by hiring a seasonal recreational coordinator to develop programs, hire part-time staff, and develop a volunteer staff program.
- Evaluate the feasibility of a regional approach to recreational program provision, developing supporting partnerships with bordering municipalities
- Develop a neighborhood connectivity plan, linking Cranberry commercial strips, local parks, the UPMC trail, Justus and Sandy Creek Trails, and other logical destinations
- Prepare a master site plan for the Moody pond property

City of Franklin

Pashek Associates reviewed the 33 year-old 1975 City of Franklin Comprehensive Park and Recreational Study. It was found that much of the Plan was not relevant due to its age and significant changes in demographics and economic trends. Franklin is located in the central to west-central area of Venango County. Franklin's major transportation routes are US Highway's 322 and 62, and State Routes 8 and 417.

The City of Franklin has two main public recreational areas, the 14-acre Miller-Sibley Park and the 10-acre Riverfront Park. Including the playgrounds and West and South Parks, Franklin oversees 11 park properties which demand constant maintenance and upkeep by the public works department. Miller-Sibley is a community park, providing ball fields; soccer field space; batting cages; tennis; basketball; and horseshoe courts; pavilion; playground; and a public swimming pool. The Miller-Sibley Pool is in need of some significant rehabilitation. Riverfront Park provides tennis and basketball courts, a larger playground area, and an excellent view of the confluence of French Creek and the Allegheny River. The playgrounds offer traditional types of equipment; West and South Park provides a central location for community arts displays, festivals, and for lunch-break meetings or siestas on a park bench. With river and creek accessibility literally

running through the heart of Franklin, opportunity exists to develop this resource which can capitalize on tourism and serve as an economic stimulus.

Meetings

Director of Community Development

A meeting took place on May 19, 2008, at the City of Franklin Municipal Building among Tracy Jamieson, Director of Community Development, and Terry Ruditis, Street Department Supervisor, and Pashek Associates. The meeting resulted with an interest in seeing the following improvements or developments:

- Maintain the upkeep and maintenance of what they presently have
- Refurbish the tennis courts at Riverfront Park
- Decide what to do with one tennis court at Miller-Sibley, whether to repair, eliminate, or make into a different use
- Consider the site of the former hospital as a location for additional recreational opportunities
- Consider conducting a community recreational survey

Public

A public meeting was held on July 14, 2008, at the Franklin City Council Chambers to take public input and to hear concerns, needs, and desires of parks and recreation in the City of Franklin. Three people attended the meeting. Upon discussion at the public meeting, participants were interested in the following improvements and additions:

- Pool updates at Miller-Sibley
- Connect Franklin to Sugarcreek with a trail
- Develop Hoge Island
- Find funding resources for parks and recreation development
- Upgrade tennis courts at Miller-Sibley
- Improve restrooms at 3rd St. boat launch
- Extend bike trail to Barrett Flats
- Bandstand in South Park needs a storage facility
- Pavilion up-grades at Miller-Sibley
- Develop scenic overlooks, in particular at Gurney Rd.

Recommendations for Franklin parks and recreation

- Develop a comprehensive recreation, park, and open space plan
- Develop a plan for the city's waterways to increase access, enhance recreational use, and to support economic development
- Apply for funding to develop riverbank recreational projects for waterway access which could enable capitalizing on tourism and serve as an economic stimulus
- Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate a regional approach to recreational program provision, developing supporting partnerships with bordering municipalities
- Develop a plan for deferred maintenance
- Provide restroom facilities at Riverfront Park and other City parks that have high visitation
- Hire a professional to evaluate the Miller-Sibley Pool to determine appropriate upgrades

Oil City

Pashek Associates reviewed the Oil City 2001 Comprehensive Recreation, Park, and Open Space Plan. It was found that Oil City had completed a significant majority of their Plan recommendations. Oil City completed much of what it had set out to do in meeting its comprehensive recreation and parks goals by providing park and recreation updates and developments to its City park parcels. Oil City is located in the central to northeast-central area of Venango County. Oil City's major transportation routes are US Highway 62 and State Routes 8, 227, 257, and 428.

Oil City has two main public recreational areas. To the northeast is 12-acre Hasson Park, which extends up to and encompasses the James Nelles Memorial Pool and the various sports facilities; and Mitchell Land of Laughter playground area and ball fields south of the downtown business district. Oil City has numerous other neighborhood parks; Justus Park and Riverfront Marina are both public access areas to the Allegheny River. Oil City has also extended the Justus Recreation Trail by utilizing on-street trails.

Meetings

Community Development Director

A meeting took place on May 15, 2008, at the Oil City Municipal Building between Janet Gatesman, then Community Development Director and Assistant City Manager, and Pashek Associates. The meeting resulted with an interest from Oil City to see the following improvements or developments:

- Implement the recommendations of the proposed Waterways Comprehensive Plan
- Continue to use some CDBG funding for upgrades to little league ball fields
- Work with organizations and groups that intend to improve and maintain park, recreational open space, and trail opportunities
- Continue with present efforts to maintain the park facilities

Public

A public meeting was held on July 15, 2008, at the Oil City Public Library to take public input and to hear concerns, needs, and desires of parks and recreation in Oil City. Six people attended the meeting. Upon discussion at the public meeting, participants were interested in the following improvements and additions:

- Develop and improve public access to waterways and use and promotion of waterways
- Provide an ice rink in the downtown area
- Improve the Oil City Marina
- Link the bicycle trail from Oil City to Rynd Farm
- Develop a regionally supported soccer or multi-use field

Northern Venango County Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan

The Northern Venango County Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan for Oil City, Cornplanter Township, and Rousseville Borough was not complete as of the writing of this report. However, the analysis and recommendations of that plan sufficiently address community and neighborhood parks within the three municipalities. This

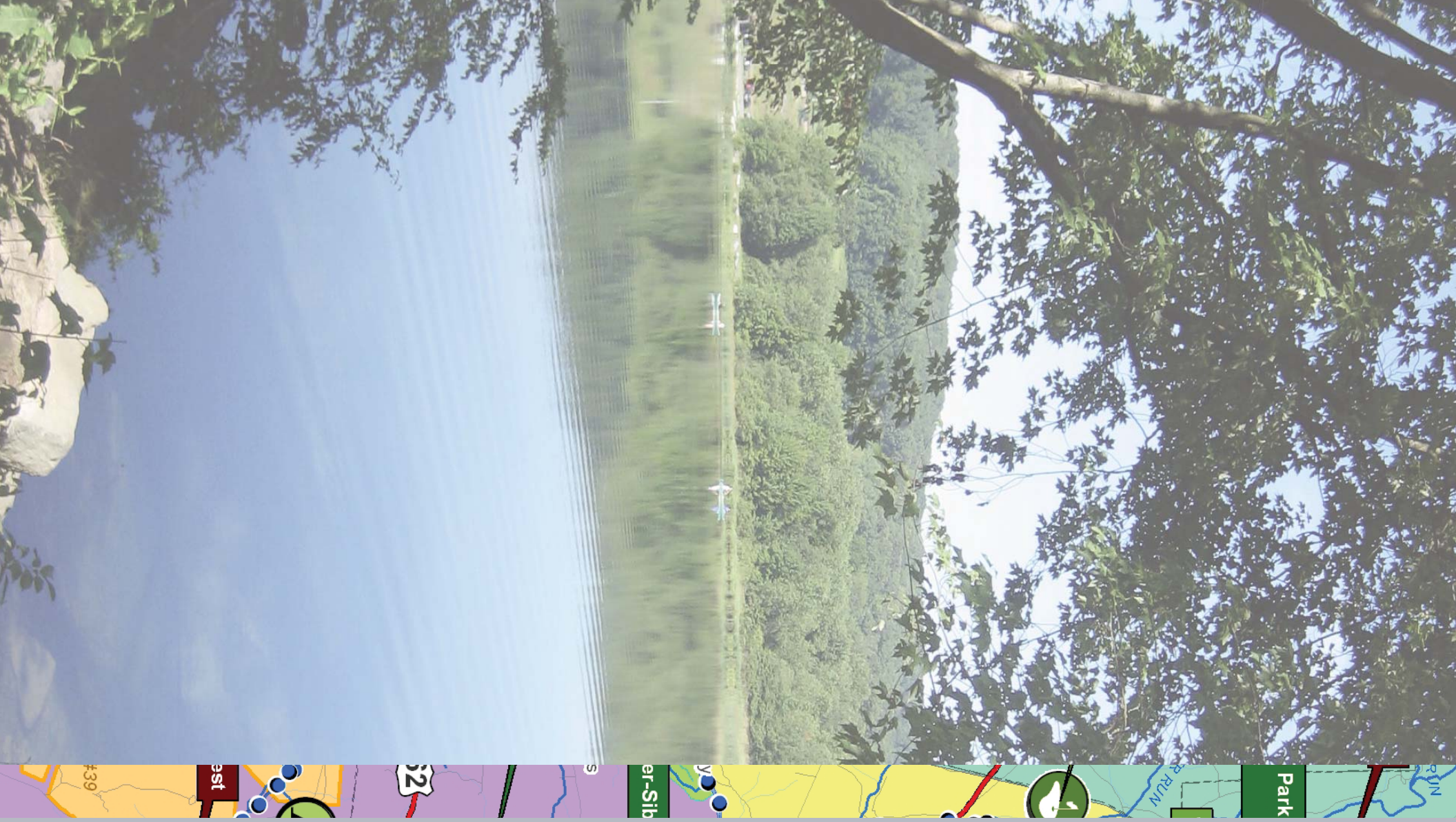
includes modifications to individual parks that align well with this County Plan. The municipalities should reference the Multi-municipal Plan in their decision-making for local parks.

Recommendations for Oil City parks and recreation

- Keep parks and recreation planning a priority by initiating an update to the Comprehensive Recreation Plan in 4-5 years
- Conduct a feasibility study to evaluate a regional approach to recreational program provision by developing supporting partnerships with bordering municipalities
- Complete the Waterways Comprehensive Plan and follow through with its recommendations
- Support Oil Region Alliance and other partners for the development of a trail to connect Oil City to Petroleum Centre, as part of the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail.
- Develop an assertive campaign to increase access and utilization of the Allegheny River, Oil Creek, and other tributaries, focusing on tourism and economic development venues; [i.e.] Development of rapids, and creation of a White Water Recreation Park
- Research grants and providing improvements to the Oil City Marina; [i.e.] Possible additions for camping, canoe livery, pier-use, more park like with amenities
- Create separate trails to eventually eliminate existing “share the road” trails
- Continue to use some CDBG funding for upgrades to little league ball fields
- Work with organizations and groups that intend to improve and maintain park, recreational open space, and trail opportunities

MULTI-MUNICIPAL PARKS AND RECREATION

Additional strategies related to creating multi-municipal parks and recreation opportunities are provided in Chapter 6.



CHAPTER 6 -
VISION, PRINCIPLES, & RECOMMENDATIONS / IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

CHAPTER 6-
VISION, PRINCIPLES, & RECOMMENDATIONS/ IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Successful long-range planning begins with a vision, or "picture", of how recreation, parks, and open space in Venango County should look in the future. By developing an implementation methodology that works in simple, clear steps the County can understand and communicate where it wants to go (the Vision) and how it can get there (Implementation Strategies).

VENANGO COUNTY'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF RECREATION, PARKS, AND OPEN SPACE

After an extended, in-depth analysis of the results of the public input and of the existing conditions of recreational resources in Venango County, the Study Committee worked to summarize the expectations of County residents for the future of recreation, parks, and open space in the County by creating a vision for the future. The Vision establishes the overall picture of where County residents want their recreation, parks, and open space to be in the future. This vision is described in the following three principles that will guide the County into its future of recreation, parks, and open space.

Vision for the Future of Recreation Parks and Open Space

Principle #1
Enable the continued preservation, sustainability, support, promotion, and development of the recreational, natural, and cultural resources within Venango County.

Principle #2
Reveal to Venango County's residents, visitors and tourists the recreational, natural, and cultural resources available for them to utilize and enjoy.

Principle #3
Cultivate the processes and opportunities needed to enhance recreational experiences, and to increase prosperity and population growth, through marketing, promotion, development, and accessibility of recreational, natural, and cultural resources across Venango County.

With each of the Vision's principles is a series of descriptors intended to help the County better understand how the principles effect implementation of this plan.

Principle #1

Enable the continued preservation, sustainability, support, promotion, and development of the recreational, natural, and cultural resources within Venango County.

1. Bring together interested municipal governments and private sector agencies to inform them about the advantages of developing cooperative agreements to advance recreational, natural, and cultural venues.
2. Devise plans for better publicity, marketing, and signage of current County-wide resources; provide friendly and convenient recreation opportunities; and feature recreation that will attract visitors to the County.
3. Increase public access to the County's waterways and greenways through identifying viable and obtainable options.
4. Encourage stakeholders to link existing County land and water trail systems to one another and to the regional systems through improvements and completions of multi-purpose trails, paths, sidewalks, routes, and waterways.
5. Foster the development and sustainability of Two Mile Run as a County Park.
6. Promote the development of maintenance plans and programs for existing recreational facilities.
7. Protect special natural and historic places, while allowing access, interpretation, conservation, and recreational use.
8. Educate the public about their role in parks and recreation support, such as: maintenance, upkeep, litter control, and volunteer support groups.
9. Identify options for site-specific, County-wide environmental education opportunities.

PRINCIPLE #2

Reveal to Venango County's residents, visitors, and tourists the recreational, natural, and cultural resources available for them to utilize and enjoy.

1. Educate interested municipal governments and public and private sector agencies about the advantages of cooperative arrangements and how to be productive, relevant, and equitable in working together to advance joint recreational, natural, and cultural facilities and programs.
2. Develop better publicity, marketing, and signage for the following existing parks and recreation facilities located in the County:
    - Local Parks
    - County Park
    - Island Properties
    - State Park
    - Trails (land & water)
    - Schools with Recreation Facilities
    - River
    - Major Creeks
    - Major Lakes
    - State Game Lands

- State Forest
- National Heritage Area
- Pennsylvania Heritage Area

3. Feature the County's waterways and greenways as recreation facilities, while increasing public access to them.
4. Market the resources of Two Mile Run County Park.
5. Inform the public of the broad array of interconnected land and water trails and their amenities within the County and of those which connect regionally.
6. Publicize County-wide recreational; natural; and cultural programs, activities, and events.
7. Develop environmental education facilities and programs in the County.

Principle #3

Cultivate the processes and opportunities needed to enhance recreational experiences and to increase prosperity and population growth, through marketing, promotion, development, and accessibility of recreational, natural, and cultural resources across Venango County.

1. Establish public/private partnerships, interagency and intergovernmental cooperatives, and other forms of coordinated efforts to enhance recreational, natural, and cultural facilities and programs.
2. Implement a variety of publicity and marketing campaigns that will encourage greater use of the County's facilities.
3. Provide County technical, planning, and administrative support to municipal, non-profit, and public organizations as they carry out the strategies of this Plan.
4. Address the demand for Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) facilities and compatible use areas.
5. Expand use of riverfronts as recreational outlets.
6. Prepare and adopt a comprehensive management plan that will safeguard the long-term success and sustainability of Two Mile Run County Park.
7. Ensure the future existence of the County's trail systems through ongoing maintenance, continued trail development, upgrades and improvements, and connections to regional trails.
8. Maintain recreation areas and facilities, while continuing to ensure their long-term sustainability (management, maintenance, enhancement, expansion).
9. Provide diverse County-wide recreational, natural, and cultural opportunities and events.
10. Prioritize recreational development, considering new facilities that compliment rather than compete.
11. Market the environmental education facilities and programs in the County to the broader region.

Finally, in addition to the Vision principles and their corresponding descriptors, there are six key areas of focus that have been identified throughout the planning process as issues for what will drive the future of recreation, parks and open space in Venango County. They are:

- Venango County's Role in recreation, parks, and open space
- Two Mile Run County Park

- Local Parks
- Regional Opportunities
- Protection of Special Places in Venango County
- Trails and Rivers

Specific implementation strategies are identified to address each of these key issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS / IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The recommendations are detailed Implementation Strategies categorized according to the previously identified Key Issues. 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 County's Vision for the Future.

The Implementation Strategies are organized into tables. The information provided in each table includes categories for strategy, priority, participating organizations, cost estimate, and additional comments or description. These strategies provide guidance to the decision makers of Venango 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 ranking of High, Medium or Low.

- A High (H) ranking suggests that the strategy be implemented in the first one to three years following the adoption of this Plan;
- Medium (M) ranked strategies are to be implemented in the fourth to eighth year and;
- Low (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 also identified. 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. Appendix M of this report provides a list of numerous potential funding sources that should be considered.

Venango County's Role in Recreation, Parks, and Open Space

Venango County is rich with recreational opportunities. Among them are local parks and recreation; natural features; indoor and outdoor recreation facilities; local sports and recreation organizations; public and private offerings; for profits and non profits; and many others.

Public input, collected as part of this plan, has suggests varying ways that the County ought to be involved. Most believe that the County should continue to support and operate Two Mile Run as a County park; that the County should play a supporting role in local community parks and recreation; and that they should provide technical assistance and support for non-profit organizations that provide county-wide recreational opportunities. As well, many believe that the County should support efforts that encourage economic growth through recreational opportunities such as trails, rivers, scenic areas, and cultural and historic sites.

On the other hand, there were some who think the County should play a very small role in parks and recreation and recreation facilities and programs should all be self supporting.

Recognizing the financial and staffing resource constraints of the County, the recommendations of this plan try to address the County's long-term role in parks, recreation, and open space in a manner that provides for these in a financially responsible manner.

Recommendations for:

Venango County's Role in Recreation, Parks, Open Space, and Greenways

	Recommendation	Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Comments
1	Support and operate Two Mile Run County Park.	Action	Venango County Commissioners	H	See Chapter Four for Two Mile Run County Park recommendations.
2	Support and provide technical assistance to local municipalities in their efforts to maintain, upgrade, and develop their park and recreation facilities by providing administrative and technical assistance.	Technical Support	VCRPC	H	This may include writing letters of support, providing background information from this plan, facilitating DCNR workshops, and identifying other grant sources.
3	Adopt, promote, and support a policy of making parks and recreation facilities available "close to home" for all residents in Venango County.	Policy/ Technical Support	Venango County Commissioners; VCRPC	H	

4	Establish a policy of promoting cooperative and/or regional park and recreation efforts throughout the County. Provide technical assistance to support development of these efforts. Function as a key player in significant partnerships that have strong influences in protection of natural resources and regional economic impact.	Policy/ Action	Venango County Commissioners; VCRPC	H	Central Region Parks and Recreation; River development
5	Manage the County's natural systems greenways and open space preservation	Action	VCRPC; Council on Greenways and Trails; Conservation District; Municipalities	H	The greenways and open space are identified in the Greenways Plan.
6	Hire a 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 Venango County Planning Commission office. ***Estimated cost - $40,000 annually***	Action	Venango County Commissioners VCRPC	H	If the position is part-time, the planner could fill other needs in the office to create a full-time position.

Two Mile Run County Park

Chapter Four fully addresses its needs and recommendations of Two Mile Run County Park.

Local Parks and Recreation

One of the basic needs of all communities is the opportunity to engage in leisure time activity. Local communities and their sports and recreation organizations provide grassroots efforts to address community-based parks and recreation needs. There are a host of community and neighborhood parks that serve nearly every locale in the County. Baseball, softball, soccer, and many other youth sports leagues keep the youth of the County active and engaged in outdoor activities much of the year by providing facilities and programming.

While great efforts are made to provide for these local needs, the parks and recreation inventories completed as part of this plan identify numerous deficiencies that should be addressed.

For each of the four communities in Venango County that previously completed their own Parks and Recreation Plans (Oil City, Franklin, Cranberry Township, and Barkeyville) a review of those plans was conducted to identify specific needs and recommendations. These can be found in Chapter 5 of this report.

The following are recommendations that apply to local communities across the County. Unless otherwise indicated, the cost of implementation will vary by municipality.

Recommendations for :
Local Parks and Recreation

	Recommendation	Type of Activity	Responsible Agency	Priority	Comments
1	Make parks and recreation a priority. Each municipality or group of municipalities should create a citizen advisory board to recommend improvements and/ or additions. As well, each municipality or group of municipalities should commit adequate funds for maintenance, up-keep, and improvements. ***Costs will vary by municipality.***	Action	Municipalities	M	VCRPC can provide technical support to facilitate meetings, provide sample ordinances, and encourage compliance with the Plan Local COGs may assist in facilitating on a regional basis
2	Rehabilitate, enhance, and renovate existing facilities to meet current recreational needs.	Action	Municipalities	M	Cooperate with other municipalities when possible
3	Add new facilities or expand existing ones only when re-use is not practical or will not meet current or future recreational demands.	Action	Municipalities	M	Cooperate with other municipalities when possible
4	Address facility deficiencies described for each Planning Unit.	Action	Municipalities	H	See the charts below.

5	Improve all parks and recreation facilities to become compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act.	Action	Municipalities	H	Cooperate with other municipalities when possible
6	Address playground safety deficiencies identified in the local parks Playground Safety Audits.	Action	Municipalities	H	Cooperate with other municipalities when possible
7	Review the park inventories conducted as part of this plan. Each inventory identifies maintenance and facility deficiencies in the park. Develop a plan to correct all deficiencies.	Action	Municipalities	H	
8	Seek funding through a variety of sources for the development, acquisition, and on-going support of parks and recreation. Work to leverage funds from one funding source against another to lower the County's local investment. ***No added cost to the municipalities.***	Action	Municipalities	H	Assistance may be provided from VCRPC; Cooperate with other municipalities when possible
9	Customize one of the sample maintenance plans included in Appendix N of this report to ensure on-going, high-quality maintenance of facilities. The plan can be developed in-house with ***no added cost to the municipalities.***	Action	Municipalities	M	Cooperate with other municipalities when possible

Multi-municipal Recreation Opportunities

One of the expectations of this Plan was to consider ways that municipalities could partner with one another to provide higher quality recreation opportunities while

offering a broader spectrum of facilities, events and activities in a more economical fashion. As it turns out, there are a number of natural groupings of communities and recreational opportunities that could work well together in meeting recreation needs.

Most people do not recognize municipal boundaries for most of the functions of their lives. Social activities such as churches, clubs, friendships, and organizations bring people together from different municipalities. No one thinks about what municipality they are in when they go out to shop, eat, work, recreate, and socialize. People cross municipal boundaries to go to school, visit friends, attend cultural activities, hike or bike, go to the library, visit a swimming pool, and attend church.

As well, most people do not recognize municipal boundaries when it is time to recreate. If one wants to play baseball they go to the baseball field; to hike they go to the trail; to swim, to the pool; to canoe, to the river; regardless of whether or not the facility is located within one's own city, borough, or township.

Proximity, not boundaries seem to be the more important factor in determining use.

As naturally as people cross boundaries to recreate, perhaps cities, townships, and boroughs should consider it more natural to work together to provide for these opportunities.

While multi-municipal planning has become more commonplace, taking the step to multi-municipal implementation has been a harder sell. There are certainly many benefits to both citizens and municipalities in providing recreational opportunities on a multi-municipal basis.

- Reduce duplication of facilities or services
- Offer more and better programs because users can come from a larger group of potential users
- Provide recreational facilities that a single municipality cannot afford on its own, i.e. community center, sports complex or swimming pool
- Spread program and facility costs across a larger area thereby reducing costs to individual municipalities
- Improve chances of receiving grants from DCNR
- Centralize recreation areas to make them more accessible to all users
- Better coordinate recreation facilities
- Afford to hire staff

There are many ways of working together to provide parks and recreation opportunities. This Plan recommends utilization of three different methods.

1. Regional approach to providing parks and recreation
2. Regional development of a specific recreational opportunity
3. Shared services and facilities

Additionally, there are four types of intergovernmental agreements.

1. Handshake agreements – these are generally unwritten working arrangements that are simple and limited in scope

Benefits of Multi-municipal Cooperation

- **Reduce duplication**
- **Spread the cost**
- **Expand programming**
- **Improve facilities**
- **Improve grant opportunities**
- **Provide larger facilities**
- **Hire staff**
- **Centralize recreation areas**

2. Council of Governments (COG) – COGs are general purpose intergovernmental organizations established to allow a group of municipalities to work together on programs and activities that are in their mutual interest. Parks and recreation may be one of those activities.
3. Joint Authorities - Generally used when major capital outlay is required or when specific non-tax revenue is produced - water, sewer, swimming pools, recreation facilities, etc.
4. Act 180 Agreement – this is Pennsylvania's Intergovernmental Agreement legislation.
    a. Two or more municipalities (includes school districts) ...may jointly cooperate or agree in the exercise or performance of their respective function, powers, or responsibilities
    b. Municipalities can do anything together that they can do individually
    c. Can be as limiting or as expansive as the municipalities desire
    d. Requires a written agreement
    e. Benefits - great deal of flexibility, details of function and empowerment are specified, allows as much control or freedom as the municipalities desire
    f. Drawbacks - the degree of flexibility may make if difficult to reach agreement, allows for the potential of excess political influence

Regional approach to providing parks and recreation

- Oil City, Cranberry Township, Cornplanter Township, and Rouseville
- Franklin, Sandy Creek, French Creek, and Polk

This approach suggests a formal intergovernmental agreement that would specify how cooperation would take place. An Act 180 Agreement would be the most likely instrument for detailing the cooperative efforts. The DCNR Peer-to-Peer Grant Program helps municipalities work through the process of deciding if some form of cooperation can work for them. If so, the same grant can assist in formulating the intergovernmental agreement.

Regional cooperation for development of river related recreation opportunities
Oil City, Franklin, & Cranberry Townships, Sugarcreek Borough, and Venango County – regional recreational, conservation, and economic planning for the Allegheny River and French Creek corridors

The regional cooperation would most likely be structured as a regional council where visioning and planning would take place. Implementation could be either regionally or locally based depending on the type of facility or activity.

The same Peer-to-Peer Grant Program would be able to assist the municipalities in determining the best organizational structure to allow for successful cooperation.

Informal cooperation for outdoor recreation
Barkeyville, Clintonville, Emlenton and nearby townships
This would be a more informal group that would meet together three or four times a year to identify, discuss, and implement regionally based outdoor recreational services and/or facilities. While it may not be necessary to develop a formal, written agreement for this project, the communities may be able to benefit from the assistance of the Peer-to-Peer Program to develop an operating structure from which to operate.

Partnering with non-profit organizations
In addition to the municipal partnerships that have been recommended, opportunities should be pursued to include a variety of non-profit organizations in these endeavors. There are a multitude of non-profit organizations with recreational, environmental, conservation, community, and economic interests in Venango County that would greatly enhance the partnerships that have been recommended. Some of these organizations include YMCA's; YWCA's; Boy's and Girl's Clubs; Allegheny Valley Trail Association; Council on Greenways and Trails; Oil Region Alliance for Business, Industry and Tourism; Allegheny/Clarion Valley Corporation; Allegheny Valley Conservancy; and many others.

Unless noted otherwise, the following recommended actions can be completed by existing staff or volunteers with little or no added cost to the municipalities.

Recommendations for:
Multi-municipal Recreation Opportunities

	Recommendation	Type of Activity	Partnering Municipalities	Priority	Comments
1	Bring together the municipalities in the central core of the County to begin discussions concerning opportunities to regionalize parks and recreation opportunities related to the Allegheny River, French Creek, Oil Creek, and other natural features of that area.	Technical Support	VCRPC Oil City Franklin Cranberry Sugarcreek Sandy Creek	H	Many non-profit organizations also have interests in this type of regional efforts and should be invited as partners. They have been described in the earlier narrative description.
2	Bring together representatives of **Oil City, Cranberry Township, Cornplanter Township, and Rouseville** to consider the possibility of working together to form a regional recreation partnership.	Action	VCRPC Oil City Cranberry Cornplanter Rouseville	M	VCRPC should serve as the facilitator to begin the process but could pass on the responsibility if the project gains momentum.
3	Bring together representatives of **Franklin, Sandy Creek, French Creek, and Polk** to consider the possibility of working together to form a regional recreation partnership.	Action	VCRPC Franklin Sandy Creek French Creek Polk	M	VCRPC should serve as the facilitator to begin the process but could pass on the responsibility if the project gains momentum.

4	Bring together representatives of **Barkeyville, Clintonville, Emlenton and nearby townships** to consider the possibility of working together to provide outdoor recreation opportunities	Action	VCRPC Barkeyville Clintonville Emlenton Interested Townships	M	VCRPC should serve as the facilitator to begin the process but would pass on the on-going responsibility to the municipalities.
5	Apply for DCNR Peer-to-Peer Grants to consider the value and details of cooperative efforts recommended in #1-4. ***Costs - $11,000 per project with $10,000 coming from DCNR and $1,000 from the local municipalities.***	Action	A single municipality from each group	M	See the description of Peer-to-Peer Grant Projects

Protection of Special Places in Venango County

While "special places" of Venango County were not specifically defined, there was an overwhelming desire expressed throughout the planning process that these types of places be protected.

Among those "special places" that were talked about in Venango County were:

- Natural features
- Historic and cultural facilities, locations, and resources
- Scenic vistas
- Farm lands
- Recreation places

The ***Venango County Greenways Plan*** and the ***County Comprehensive Plan*** provide a multitude of recommendations for protection of the County's natural features. These plans offer land use; ordinance; and voluntary means of protecting the County's rivers; woodlands; steep slopes; ridge tops; ecological infrastructure; biologically divers areas; landscape conservation areas; Important Bird Areas; and exceptional value watersheds and streams and high quality cold water fisheries. As well, the County Comprehensive Plan identifies methods for the protection of the County's farm land.

The ***Oil Heritage Region National Management Plan*** and its Updates, along with the ***National Heritage Area Management Plan***, provide the most comprehensive compilation of recommendations that address protection of historic, cultural, and recreational areas; scenic vistas; and natural features, as they relate to the Oil Region's heritage. And, they have a highly successful track record of implementing these projects.

This Plan supports the recommendations of each of these plans and makes no further recommendations.

Trails and Rivers

Access to and enhancement of Venango County's trails, rivers, and streams were important issues throughout the planning process. This Plan recognizes the need to address these concerns for the future.

The Venango County Greenways Plan, which is part of the larger Northwest Pennsylvania Greenways Planning effort, was being conducted concurrently with this Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan. The Greenways Plan provides recommendations that address recreational, transportation, and natural resource based greenways.

It provides strategies for the development of a series of transportation and recreational greenways. Among these greenways are seven existing land-based trail routes and eight proposed new ones; and two existing and one new water trail are identified for on-going operations and future development. As part of these recreational and transportation greenways, the Plan recommends the development of three Trail Towns within the county: Oil City, Franklin, and Emlenton. It also recognizes Polk, President, Clear Creek State Forest as hubs along the trails and Oil Creek State Park as a major hub.

The Greenway Plan address the concerns Venango County citizens voiced through the public input process of the Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan.

Therefore, this Plan recommends implementation of the strategies of the Greenway Plan that impact Venango County trails, rivers, and rivers.

The Oil City Comprehensive Waterways Plan (OCCWP) is a comprehensive evaluation of the Oil Creek and Allegheny River corridors in Oil City, PA. Based on detailed investigations and input from the public, the study will provide a basis for specific recommendations and strategies that the community can use to preserve, improve, enhance, create and expand it's waterways uses, management, economic viability, recreational opportunities, and intrinsic natural and social values.

The project is led by the Study Committee, which is comprised of community leaders, residents, and cooperating agency personnel, as well as, key stakeholders who believe that the waterways are an invaluable but underutilized resource that can and should be a more integral part of the community's recreational, economic, and social fabric.

The goals of the OCCWP include, 1) Improve/Increase River and Creek Access by Identifying Suitable Areas, 2) Beautify, Enhance, Protect and/or Preserve the River/ Creek Corridor, 3) Enhance Existing / Create New Waterways Related Recreational Opportunities, 4) Increase Economic Viability of Waterfront Properties and Businesses, 5) Raise Awareness of the Waterways and their Opportunities/Values, and 6) Boost Educational Opportunities Concerning the Waterways

Upon completion, the OCCWP will be a "blueprint" of prioritized implementation strategies that address the stated plan goals and incorporate the public's input. Each strategy will identify the necessary state and federal agency contacts, potential funding sources, project partners, conceptual designs, and anticipated cost estimates. The

anticipation is that as projects are completed, the community will reconnect with the value of their waterways and appreciate them as unique resources.

Current Status: Eight priority areas have been identified along the Allegheny River and the Oil Creek waterfront areas. These areas have been prioritized by the Study Committee with input from the public through the initial public meeting, public survey, and stakeholder interviews. Conceptual designs are being created for the eight areas, which will be presented at the second public meeting in January 2010.

DCNR IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Keystone Principles

In 2005, Governor Rendell's Economic Development Cabinet announced a set of principles and criteria to be used by state agencies to guide investment and support local growth and economic development. These principles are referred to as the "Keystone Principles".

These principles set the focus for continuing efforts to encourage economic development that sustains and grows economies in urban, suburban, and rural areas, while at the same time conserving exceptional natural resources.

This integrated approach not only focuses on prioritizing efforts to focus on economic development, but also addresses the Commonwealth's priorities related to restoring and enhancing the environment, recreation, and cultural resources.

The Ten Keystone Principles are:

1. *Redevelop first*: Support revitalization of Pennsylvania's many cities and towns and give funding preference to reuse and redevelop "brownfield" and previously developed sites in urban, suburban, and rural communities.
2. *Provide efficient infrastructure*: Fix it first: use and improve existing infrastructure. Make highway and public transportation investments that use context-sensitive design to improve existing developed areas and attract residents and visitors to these places. Require private and public expansions of service to be consistent with approved comprehensive plans and consistent implementing ordinances.
3. *Concentrate development*: Support infill and "greenfield" development that is compact, conserves land, and is integrated with existing or planned transportation, water and sewer services, and schools. Foster creation of well-designed developments and neighborhoods that offer healthy life-style opportunities for Pennsylvania residents.
4. *Increase job opportunities*: Retain and attract a diverse, educated workforce through the quality of economic opportunity and quality-of-life offered in Pennsylvania's varied communities. Integrate educational and job training opportunities for workers of all ages with the workforce needs of businesses. Invest in businesses that offer good paying, high-quality jobs and that are located near existing or planned water and sewer infrastructure, housing, existing workforce, and transportation access (highway or transit).
5. *Foster sustainable businesses*: Strengthen natural resource-based businesses that use sustainable practices in energy production and use, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and recreation and tourism. Increase our supply of renewable energy. Reduce consumption of water, energy, and materials to reduce foreign energy dependence and address climate change.

6. *Restore and enhance the environment*: Maintain and expand land, air, and water protection and conservation programs. Conserve and restore environmentally-sensitive lands and natural areas for ecological health, biodiversity, and wildlife habitat.
7. *Enhance recreational and heritage resources:* Maintain and improve recreational and heritage assets and infrastructure throughout the commonwealth, including parks and forests, greenways and trails, heritage parks, historic sites and resources, fishing and boating areas, and game lands offering recreational and cultural opportunities to Pennsylvanians and visitors.
8. *Expand housing opportunities*: Support the construction and rehabilitation of housing of all types to meet the needs of people of all incomes and abilities. Support local projects that are based on a comprehensive vision or plan; have significant potential impact (e.g., increased tax base, private investment); and demonstrate local capacity, technical ability, and leadership to implement the project.
9. *Plan regionally, implement locally*: Support multi-municipal, county, and local government planning and implementation that has broad public input and support and is consistent with these principles. Provide education, training, technical assistance, and funding for such planning and for transportation, infrastructure, economic development, housing, mixed-use, and conservation projects that implement such plans.
10. *Be fair*: Support equitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of development. Provide technical and strategic support for inclusive community planning to ensure social, economic, and environmental goals are met.

Principles for Park Development and Sustainability

Additionally, DCNR has recently adopted the following "Principles for Park Development and Sustainability". They should be incorporated into all rehabilitation and development projects completed as part of this Plan. A complete description of these principles is in Appendix L.

Principle #1: Maintain and Enhance Trees and Natural Landscaping
Principle #2: Connect People to Nature
Principle #3: Manage Stormwater Naturally
Principle #4: Conserve Energy
Principle #5: Integrate Green Design and Construction