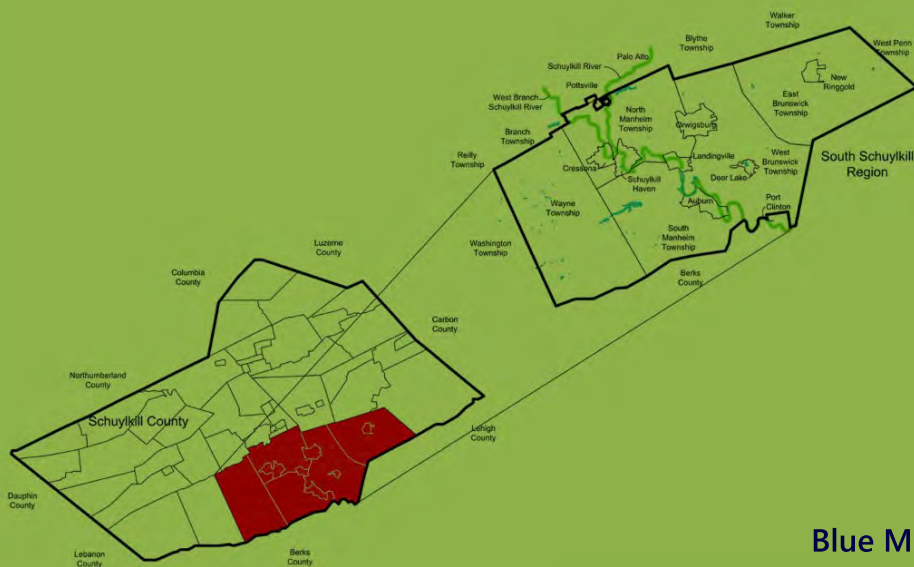




South Schuylkill Region

Comprehensive Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan



Prepared for:
 East Brunswick,
 North Manheim,
 South Manheim,
 Wayne, and
 West Brunswick Townships
 and Auburn, Cressona,
 Deer Lake, Landingville,
 New Ringgold, Orwigsburg,
 and Port Clinton Boroughs,
 Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania

Coordinated by:
 Blue Mountain Recreation Commission



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Brunswick Townships and Auburn, Cressona, Deer Lake, Landingville, New
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Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania

Coordinated by:

Blue Mountain Recreation Commission
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South Schuylkill Region Comprehensive Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan

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Plan Summary

Plan Summary

Twelve municipalities of the South Schuylkill Region have collaborated to develop this **Comprehensive Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan** to guide future decision-making regarding parks, recreation facilities, programs and services, facility management, and the allocation of financial resources. The **Plan** provides an assessment of current assets and operations and suggests strategies and recommendations for enhancing the quality of life for residents of the South Schuylkill Region.

South Schuylkill Region Vision & Blue Mountain Recreation Commission Mission

A vision statement has been defined for the South Schuylkill Region and a mission statement reflects the charge of the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission. The statements are a synthesis of findings from public outreach, research, and consultation with the project study committee. The vision and mission should be used to inform decisions and guide future direction for parks and recreation in the South Schuylkill region.

South Schuylkill County Vision Statement

South Schuylkill County residents live in a vibrant community that celebrates and protects its abundant natural resources and encourages active, healthy lifestyles. The community understands the important role parks and recreation plays in quality of life and economic development and supports funding for park area, trail, and recreation facility improvements. A wide range of recreation programs are offered for all ages in close-to-home locations to keep residents healthy, active and outdoors. Recreation programs and services are well-promoted, coordinated, high quality and affordably priced, with a priority placed on customer satisfaction. Park areas, trails and recreation facilities are well-maintained, accessible, safe community destinations that residents visit regularly. Through a unique, cost-effective regional financing system and the strong support of the Blue Mountain School District, the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission is a valuable community asset and model of cooperation that provides essential, comprehensive parks and recreation services that none of the nine partnering municipalities could provide on their own. Together, the school district and municipalities have achieved a balanced system of passive and active parks, access to creeks and streams, hiking and biking trails, and recreation program opportunities that offers a quality of life and sense of community distinct to the South Schuylkill region.

Blue Mountain Recreation Commission Mission Statement

To provide quality, affordable recreation and learning opportunities including well-maintained park areas, trails and recreation facilities to Blue Mountain residents of all ages.



Goals

The Plan translates the vision for parks and recreation into three goals and associated objectives. Specific recommendations for each goal are documented in Chapter 8.

Goal 1: Establish parks and recreation facilities as regional destinations where residents can have fun, socialize, experience nature, and lead active healthy lifestyles.

Objective 1: Complete park planning to maximize the benefit of existing parks, address accessibility and safety requirements, and create a vision for undeveloped park acreage.

Objective 2: Maximize the recreation benefit of existing parks by incorporating improvements to enhance the safety, convenience, and overall enjoyment of using the facilities.

Objective 3: Expand recreation opportunities through partnerships, the development of public lands, and the acquisition of parkland to meet current and future needs of the municipalities.

Objective 4: Provide recreation facilities for public uses that comply with accessibility and safety regulations and guidelines.

Objective 5: Create great public spaces.

Objective 6: Plan for the continued revitalization and improvement to municipal parks through a comprehensive capital improvement program.

Goal 2: Connect the South Schuylkill region through a system of trails and greenways.

Objective 1: Coordinate greenway and trail planning and development with regional partners and stakeholders.

Objective 2: Undertake initiatives that set the stage for the successful development of greenways and trails.

Objective 3: Develop a greenway and trail network that protects the green corridors and linear natural resources of the South Schuylkill Region and connects neighborhood, parks, schools, and community destinations.

Goal 3: Strengthen and improve the services of the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission.

Strategic Focus Area 1: Community Awareness and Support

Objective 1: Promote the Commission's success in the quality of the programs, the positive experiences people have, and how people and the community benefit from programs.

Objective 2: Promote programs and participation through a vibrant website and an expanded use of social media.

Objective 3: Improve the printed promotional material for programs.

Strategic Focus Area 2: Strategic Alliances and Partnerships

Objective 1: Identify who the key strategic partners should be for the Commission and begin to forge strong relationships to provide expanded programming in partnership and others.

Objective 2: Leverage the board's expertise, influence, and contacts to strengthen existing and establish new partnerships and provide access to potential resources.

Objective 3: Embrace the programs and facilities of other recreation providers as a regional network.

Objective 4: Work towards consolidation of some of the fragmented youth sports programs that are competing for participants.

Strategic Focus Area 3: Park Area and Recreation Facility Support

Objective 1: Make it easier for groups to find out what fields and facilities are available for their use and how to obtain permission to use them.

Objective 2: Ensure that park areas and recreation facilities are well-maintained, meet current safety standards, and provide an enjoyable environment for residents.

Strategic Focus Area 4: Recreation Programming

Objective 1: Grow and modify family programming to provide more opportunities for parents and children to learn and play together

Objective 2: Expand programs for preschoolers with a focus on learning and physical activity.

Objective 3: Provide opportunities for children and adults of all ages to be active outdoors, utilizing the park areas and natural resources throughout the South Schuylkill Region.

Objective 4: Embrace active, healthy living as a primary theme of programs for children, adults, and seniors.

Objective 5: Identify more avenues to promote programs.

Objective 6: Update program administration policies to improve customer experiences.

Objective 7: Enhance non-Blue Mountain Recreation Commission programs.

Strategic Focus Area 5: Financing

Objective 1: Fund parks and recreation operations to expand program opportunities and enhance maintenance and development of park areas, trails, and recreation facilities.

Strategies and Key Recommendations for Accomplishing the Goals

To accomplish these goals, the following strategies summarize the key actions recommended in the Plan.

1. Adopt the South Schuylkill Region Comprehensive Park, Recreation & Open Space Plan

2. Maximize the Benefits of Regional Cooperation – Build upon the success of the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission by undertaking the following specific actions.

- Build public awareness of the Commission's value and the benefits to residents of its services by expanding marketing and promotion efforts with an updated website, increased social media use, branding, and seasonal program guide.
- Develop centralized scheduling and procedures for the reservation and use of the region's recreation facilities.
- Promote municipal and school district park areas, trails and recreation facilities on the Commission website with photos, directions, amenities and a regional map.
- Standardize park rules, regulations and operating hours to improve resident knowledge and enforcement procedures.

3. Improve the Existing Parks to Provide Safe and Accessible Recreation Facilities

- Improve and expand existing playgrounds at East Brunswick Playground, Aaron Kreager Park, Summit Station Playground, Cressona Playground, Cressona Grove, Deer Lake Park, Albright's Woods, Walborn Avenue Park, Auburn Memorial Park, and Port Clinton Park to be age-segregated and compliant with accessibility requirements and safety guidelines.
- Develop loop trails in East Brunswick Playground, Landingville Community Playground, Deer Lake Park, Cressona Ballfield Complex, Fanelli Park, Fisher's Dam, and Auburn Memorial Park.
- Develop a dog park in North Manheim Township.
- Develop Wayne Township Recreation Area based on the Master Plan.

4. Expand Recreation Opportunities for Enjoyment of Natural Areas

- Complete a feasibility study to explore the opportunity of developing a regional passive park in the Landingville Borough/South Manheim Township area which includes lands of the Commonwealth of PA, Borough, Fire Company, and Schuylkill River Trail/John Bartram Trail. Seek a grant from PA DCNR for the feasibility study.
- Seek land that provides opportunities for access to the Schuylkill River, Little Schuylkill River, and their tributaries for launch and paddle craft and fishing.

5. Develop Mandatory Dedication of Parkland Ordinances – Each municipality without an existing ordinance should develop an ordinance for the mandatory dedication of parkland or fee-in-lieu to garner the park and recreation benefits associated with new development.

6. Expand Recreation Programs and Special Events

- Grow and modify Recreation Commission family programming to provide opportunities for parents and children to learn and play together.
- Expand Recreation Commission programs for preschoolers, adults and seniors with a focus on learning, physical activity and active, healthy living.
- Provide Recreation Commission programs for children and adults to be active outdoors utilizing the abundant natural resources in the South Schuylkill region.
- Expand and improve recreation program opportunities for municipalities that are not a part of the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission by exploring a partnership among Schuylkill Haven Borough, Port Clinton Borough, Landingville Borough and South Manheim Township.

7. Pursue Trail Opportunities

- Blue Mountain Recreation Commission should assume the role as the primary agency working on trail initiatives. Coordinate with others to expand trails and pedestrian and bicycle accommodations in the South Schuylkill Region.
- Prioritize trail development to address existing gaps in the John B. Bartram Trail.
- Blue Mountain Recreation Commission, Orwigsburg Borough, and North Manheim Township should complete a feasibility study to explore the potential of a trail on the abandoned rail corridor between Orwigsburg Borough and Blue Mountain High School. Seek funding from PA DCNR.

8. Improve Park Maintenance

- Offer regional in-service training for municipal public works staff on park maintenance tasks and standard practices.
- Inspect municipal and school district playground equipment on a regular basis with the help of the Certified Playground Safety Inspector on the Recreation Commission staff to address safety issues.

9. Sustain and Increase Financial Support for Parks, Recreation and Trails

- Continue strong support for the unique, cost-effective financing system that funds the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission.
- Increase the municipal budget amounts allocated for park maintenance and park and trail development.

10. Develop and Design Partnerships and Strategic Alliances

- Forge strong municipal and Recreation Commission relationships with new partners such as Geisinger-St. Luke's Hospital to work together and share resources to best provide parks and recreation services for the region.
- Work towards consolidation of the duplicated youth sports programs that are competing for participants and recreation facilities.

Implementation of this **Plan** will require the enthusiasm and dedication of the staff and board members of the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission and the elected officials and staff of the twelve municipalities, the investment of time and money, and the commitment of elected officials. The foundation of the existing programs and services of the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission will anchor the many initiatives recommended in the **Plan** while setting the stage for expanded benefits for residents and the municipalities of the region.

As an adopted **Plan**, this document serves as a guide to direct future actions. The recommendations are not carved in stone, but rather provide a road map that suggest strategies to achieve defined goals. It is important to seize opportunities, meet emerging needs, and respond to changing trends throughout the implementation process. The process of implementing the **Plan** is ongoing and recommendations should be updated annually. Successes should be celebrated and built upon to provide momentum for future initiatives. The **Plan** will enable the twelve municipalities of the South Schuylkill Region and the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission to make sound decisions and create and sustain a parks and recreation system that will be a regional treasure and a key reason to live, work, and play here.