

The background of the slide is a photograph of a river scene. In the foreground, there are many bare, thin tree branches reaching across the frame. In the middle ground, a white kayak is on the river. The kayak has some text on it, including "SPAIN" and "1992". In the background, there is a hillside with more bare trees and a cloudy sky.

Chapter 1

Introduction

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Plan Purpose and Goals

The **South Schuylkill Region Comprehensive Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan** provides strategic direction for the 12 municipalities of the South Schuylkill Region to expand and enhance their parks and recreation services. The purpose of this planning effort was to develop a document that will guide future activities to improve parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services, and position parks and recreation as a vital component of municipal government. Parks, recreation facilities, trails, greenways, and open space add to a community's quality of life; help to attract and retain residents and businesses; and can spur economic activity. Recreation programs and services offer residents opportunities to gather together as a community or region and lead a healthful lifestyle.

The **Plan** is an advisory document that serves as a planning tool for the 12 municipalities, Blue Mountain School District, and the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission for the next ten years. The **Plan** recommends initiatives to enhance recreation facilities, expand parkland and trails, and provide new recreation services to complement existing offerings. The **Plan** builds upon the existing framework of parks and services in the region. Recommendations target the desires and interests of citizens, while considering the implications of today's lifestyles and trends in recreation activities.



The **Plan** provides a focus and prioritized recommendations. Addressing the recommendations of this Plan requires the investment of time, energy, and money, as well as, the commitment of elected officials, advisory boards, municipal staff, community partners, and volunteers.

Planning Process

The South Schuylkill Region began this planning process in late 2016. The Blue Mountain Recreation Commission served as the project lead and a Study Committee was appointed with a representative from each of the 12 municipalities and the Blue Mountain School District. The consultant team included landscape architects and recreation planners.

Public input is the foundation of the **Plan** recommendations and was gathered throughout the planning process. Citizens were invited to public meetings to share their ideas and views on parks and recreation; interviews were held with key stakeholders to gather input and insights regarding

parks and recreation; the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission website hosted an on-line opinion survey about parks and recreation services; and two forums were held to solicit input from municipal public works supervisors and sports organizations. The public outreach defined key park and recreation issues and suggested opportunities to enhance parks, facilities, and recreation services in the South Schuylkill Region.

The Plan as a Guide

The **South Schuylkill Comprehensive Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan** will help guide municipal decision-making regarding parks, recreation facilities, trails and greenways, recreation programs and services, and their financing. The recommendations reflect the consensus of the planning process and the path forward to enhance the quality of life for citizens throughout the region through the provision of parks and recreation services.

The **Plan** reflects citizen's opinions and priorities and sets forth a clear vision of the future of parks and recreation in the South Schuylkill Region. The **Plan** positions the 12 municipalities and the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission to undertake the actions recommended and seek the financial support of residents and from various grant programs.

The **Plan** functions in both a legal and an advisory capacity. It may help municipalities, or the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission acquire future funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, federal grant programs, as well as, from local businesses and foundations.

Legal

Once adopted, the **Comprehensive Park, Recreation, and Open Space Plan** can serve a legal function. The MPC (Pennsylvania Municipalities Code) provides planning requirements that can be adopted by municipalities. Municipalities must provide a defensible basis for sound decision-making regarding land use. The **Plan** provides a sound foundation to base local planning decisions regarding parkland. The **Plan** provides the background, assessment, and rationale required to incorporate mandatory dedication of parkland and fee-in-lieu of dedication provisions into municipal ordinances.

Advisory

This **Plan** serves as a reference document for overall municipal planning and management and collaboration with regional partners and the private sector. The **Plan** is intended to be a living document that can shift direction over time as context or circumstances change. The **Plan** will inform the decisions municipalities make about parks, recreation services, trails, financing, management, open space preservation, and related planning efforts.

The **Plan** should be reviewed annually, prior to budget season in each municipality and by the Blue Mountain Recreation Commission. Through this review, accomplishments, needs, emerging opportunities, and changing circumstances should be reviewed and considered. Actions should be adapted to align with current conditions and trends. Budgets should be based on the action plan for the upcoming fiscal year. This proves to be a sound way of targeting resources to community and regional needs and emerging opportunities.

The Benefits of Parks & Recreation

Parks and recreation play a critical role in providing a high quality of life that attracts and retains residents and businesses in a community and region. The National Recreation and Park Association has coined the work of parks and recreation as the “three pillars”. The three pillars are conservation, health and wellness, and social equity. These pillars theme reflects the park and recreation profession’s commitment to community service and improving the quality of life within our community.

Pennsylvania municipalities that invest in park areas and recreation programs are creating opportunities to enhance citizens’ well-being, improve the local economy, conserve the natural environment, and strengthen the community. Working together, municipalities can maximize this benefit for citizens through the region.

Our lives would not be complete without recreation and parks. Recreation brings us purpose, pleasure, and balance. Most of our best memories were made during our recreation time. The benefits of parks and recreation go way beyond fun and games. Consider the following benefits:

Personal Benefits

- Reduce stress
- Increase life expectancy
- Create balance between work and play
- Reduce obesity
- Promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles
- Reduce alienation and loneliness
- Encourage life-long learning and self-discovery



- Provide diversion from routine
- Meet people’s needs for adventure, relaxation, belonging, competition, achievement, and excitement

Community Benefits

- Promote community pride and identity
- Reduce crime, delinquency, and self-destructive behavior
- Keep children involved in positive activities and out of trouble

- Encourage appreciation for community traditions and heritage



- Help people stay connected with others
- Promote cultural understanding and harmony



- Provide opportunities for neighbors to meet and form friendships
- Provide involvement opportunities that build leadership skills

Environmental Benefits

- Reduce pollution
- Protect ecosystems and natural resources
- Enhance air, water, and soil quality
- Protect wildlife and habitat areas
- Provide access to places to enjoy nature



Economic Benefits



- Enhance land and property values

- Assist in business retention
- Increase tourism
- Generate revenue
- Generate income for local businesses
- Reduce vandalism and crime
- Reduce health care costs

What Do Children Learn when Participating in Recreation Activities?

Recreation programs teach children skills they need to be successful in school and in life:

- How to budget time, set goals, communicate effectively with others, make decisions, follow rules, use their imaginations, and resolve problems.
- Sportsmanship and fairness, giving total effort, hard work pays off, the importance of exercise and physical fitness, and being a team player.
- Planning, strategy, leadership, patience, resourcefulness, and social skills.
- How to accept, understand, and value differences.