



COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

RECREATION

Cover illustration: Centre Region Parks and Recreation Website

RECREATION

Recreation is the participation in activities which, as defined by Webster: "refresh the strength and spirits after work." This implies the notion of recreation as non-work activity which gives an individual a pleasurable experience and attempts to relieve stress or anxiety that everyday responsibilities place on a person.¹

Outdoor Recreation

The facilities and opportunities available for outdoor recreation use in Centre County are excellent.

State agencies contribute the most to outdoor recreation in Centre County. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) manages many thousands of acres of State Forest Land which provide public hunting, fishing, sightseeing, canoeing and trail related activities such as snowmobiling and hiking. The Department's Bureau of State Parks owns and maintains lands and facilities for fishing, swimming, camping, boating, picnicking, skiing, and trail activities. The Pennsylvania Game Commission maintains State Game Land tracts in the County which are available for public recreation use. Finally, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) provides recreation for County residents. This agency's County-wide holdings include Colyer Lake, Potter Township, and the fish hatcheries. PFBC controls the County's trout and warm water fish stocking programs from which many local fisherman benefit. Figure 1 shows State Public Lands in Centre County.

In Centre County hunting and fishing are the two most common outdoor activities followed by organized sports.

The major providers of outdoor recreation in the County are private concerns, municipalities, school districts, and the state. At the municipal level, officials recognize the need for recreation programs and facilities, both indoor and outdoor within their communities. Through the adoption of parkland fee-in-lieu programs, developers have the option to set-aside, when required or

¹ *Directions for the Future: Guidelines for Decision Making, A Comprehensive Plan for Centre County*, Centre County Planning Commission, 1979

through voluntary participation, parkland as part of the plan approval process or pay fee-in-lieu monies that would eventually go towards parkland acquisition.

Residents also play an important role in the acquisition of parkland. Prompted by either a development plan submission for a particular tract or land being made available by a property owner, affected property owners have banded together to preserve undeveloped tracts of land for recreation purposes. A recent example is the Stan Yoder tract in Harris Township. Funds are being raised to protect this tract from future development which is to be enjoyed by the community as passive recreation.

The area in and around Centre County not only supplies local citizens with many excellent outdoor recreation opportunities, but residents throughout Pennsylvania come into the County seeking recreation. As a result, the recreation and tourist dollar is an important consideration to the County's economy. A 1995 report done by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania entitled, *Pennsylvania Ecotourism, Untapped Potential*, illustrated the economic impact of ecotourism, in selected Pennsylvania locations as noted below for Fisherman's Paradise.

ECONOMIC IMPACT Fisherman's Paradise, Benner Township	
# of Visitors	1,648
Expenditures/Visitor/Day	\$16.56
Annual Total Expenditures	\$35,597
NET Economic Value/Visitor/Day	\$53.40
Annual Total Resource Value	\$84,634
Figure 2: Economic Impact of Ecotourism	

Eco-tourism is also an important component of the Economic Development Plan since this form of recreation plays an integral role in the sustainability of some of our County's local economies.

As a way to better coordinate, enhance, and create outdoor recreation opportunities in Centre County, a Greenways Plan was developed. The study area for the first phase of the Plan encompassed Nittany and Bald Eagle Valleys

Map of State Public Lands

although the study identified existing and future recreation opportunities throughout the County. The importance of greenways with respect to recreation is that they provide opportunities featuring pathways for alternative transportation, fitness, wellness, and enjoyment.² These pathways connect heritage tourism sites, parklands, schools, towns, and other related features. Having a County-wide perspective on outdoor recreational facilities establishes a baseline for planning future opportunities particularly at the multi-municipal level. Regional cooperation is key to the enhancement and development of recreational opportunities.



Figure 3: Railroad bridge, part of the Penns Creek Rail Trail Path, Poe Paddy Centre County. This trail is a 3.6 mile segment which is part of the 206 mile Mid State Hiking Trail.

Indoor Recreation



As a whole, indoor recreational facilities and opportunities are not as prevalent as is outdoor recreation. The most diverse indoor opportunities exist in the

Centre Region primarily because of the intensive programs provided by the Centre Region Department of Parks and Recreation, and the influence of the University.

In 2003, Centre Region was recognized for its programming and coordinated efforts by being designated by *Sports Illustrated* as Pennsylvania's Sportstown of the Year. The award honors the work of the Centre Region Parks and Recreation Department.

Generally, indoor recreation includes educational courses, concerts, plays, galleries and a wide variety of indoor facilities or activities that enrich the indoor cultural and recreational experience. In other parts of the County, our schools are important in providing for sports and performing arts. Schools are important to recreation since they not only provide facilities but land for public use. Also, local church organizations often fill the need for indoor recreation in some areas where particular emphasis is in religious and family activities. Lastly, YMCAs have taken on an expanded role in providing recreation opportunities for all ages. There are currently three YMCAs in the County which are: Bellefonte, Philipsburg, and State College. Indoor and some outdoor activities are provided at YMCA facilities.

Typically, indoor recreation is provided for mainly through private and quasi-public organizations, and only limited opportunities are provided by the local municipalities. Two reasons for this has been the traditional emphasis on outdoor recreation and the tremendous costs involved in construction and supporting of indoor facilities.

Conclusion

Recreation is important to the health of our communities. It fosters physical and mental fitness, social interaction, and cultural awareness. Our youth receive the same benefits as well as developing motor and team building skills in organized activities. Educational nature hikes offered by state agencies and others provide us with knowledge and an appreciation of our natural surroundings. Providing recreation facilities and services is essential, and creating a network of interconnected opportunities strengthens our communities and our County. A more comprehensive look at recreation is needed, and accomplished through improved coordination, thoughtful planning, and efficient utilization of resources.

² *Nittany and Bald Eagle Greenways Plan*, July 2002

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOAL

Promote the appropriate location and maintenance of existing and proposed community facilities, utilities, and services for the citizens of Centre County.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES OBJECTIVES-Recreation

Provide opportunities for recreation, cultural activity, and social interaction with existing and proposed park facilities.

RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Acquisition of community or municipal parks and open space areas should be encouraged to be consistent with local and multi-municipal comprehensive plans.

Cooperation and coordination of indoor and outdoor recreational programming, facility use, and transportation planning for recreation purposes, should be carried out on a County or regional basis between the appropriate agencies or municipalities.

Management of state owned lands in the County should continue to maximize the multiple use concept by balancing natural resource management with recreational needs.

Programming of special outdoor and indoor recreation activities must be provided for persons with special needs.