

FACT SHEET 4: Enhance Outdoor Recreation Through Better State Agency Cooperation

2009-2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2009-2013: *The Keystone for Healthy Living*, presents research and recommendations developed by recreation experts across the state on how we can reconnect citizens to Pennsylvania's great outdoors. This fact sheet outlines opportunities, challenges and recommendations for *Goal 4: Enhance Outdoor Recreation Through Better State Agency Cooperation*. For a copy of the entire plan, go to www.paoutdoorrecplan.com.

The SCORP process identified four main areas for improving cooperation between and among state agencies: "greening" and broadening access to existing state grant programs; taking better advantage of natural synergies and interests between and among state agencies; identifying solutions to cases where state agency efforts are working at cross purposes; and creating a 5-year standing committee to turn recommendations into actions. These are reflected in Goal 4's seven recommendations and 20 action steps.

Challenges

Divided Responsibility for Natural Resources

Pennsylvania has four agencies tasked with responsibility for conserving our outdoor resources; The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), and the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC). This divided responsibility for Pennsylvania's natural resources can sometimes present an obstacle to improving or expanding recreational opportunities.



Double Duty Rest Stop

The rest stop along state road 322 at the top of Seven Mountains in Centre County combined road improvements and recreational opportunities when it was developed into a trail head for a popular long distance hiking trail.

Need for Greater Inter-Agency Coordination

In many cases, state agencies may share recreational interests but lack the time, staff and momentum to look for those shared interests and implement new programs. Interviews with 12 state agencies during the course of developing

the plan brought forward a number of creative ideas on ways to work together without substantial new resources or investment. In other cases, state agency missions are not always in close alignment. A trail across state lands to one agency may be an amenity, but to another, a trail may represent unwanted public access or a detraction from the main purpose of a land-protection program. Opportunities to work out these misalignments will require creativity, flexibility, and agency commitment. (*Plan Recommendation 4.0*)

Opportunities

Agencies Need to Do More, and Coordinate More

Interviews with agency staff revealed a recognition that individual agencies need to do more to promote outdoor recreation, and often need to partner with others to take advantage of expertise they may not have themselves. One good example of this; staff at the PFBC have expertise in designing and building boat access areas, but have limited land holdings and limited field staff. Their recommendation to train DCNR field staff to build boat access

areas on DCNR state park and forest lands would combine expertise and opportunity for both agencies. (*Plan Recommendation 4.1*)

Use Grants as Leverage for Policy Changes

Grants can be a major tool for accomplishing policy change – specifically, by designing grant programs to promote greener, sustainable, and non-structural approaches to recreation, and to reach more communities – particularly underserved ones. For example, building recreational opportunities into brownfield site restorations was identified as a way to bring more trails, parks and other outdoor amenities to urban areas. (*Plan Recommendation 4.x2*) Incorporating the State Wildlife Action plan (developed and administered by PGC and PFBC) into all state agency recreational grant-making would help ensure that state investments work in tandem with efforts to protect our most vulnerable wildlife species, and not against them. (*Plan Recommendation 4.3*)

Making Better Use of Shared Agency Interests

State agency missions are often compatible as far as recreational interests, but can lack the vision, energy or staff-level cooperation to move forward on joint projects. One recommendation offered by staff at the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission was to combine physical resources



with interpretive resources among agencies. For example, on a trail or greenway built with county and state DCNR funding, PHMC could highlight sites of historic or cultural interest through interpretive signage. (*Plan Recommendation 4.4*)

Leading by Example

Agency change often comes faster through great demonstration projects between cooperating agencies than from top-down planning. As a result, many of the action steps in this SCORP document call for demonstration projects to test and showcase different recommendations, such as looking at planned land sales or exchanges by Commonwealth agencies as opportunities to build in recreational trails or other amenities. (*Plan Recommendation 4.5*)

Correcting Misalignments

Sometimes state, county or local agencies have missions that conflict

or simply are not working well together. Improving coordination of trail funding and development between DCNR and PennDOT (*Plan Recommendation 4.6*), and using existing rights-of-way across PGC and PFBC owned lands to help close trail gaps for low-impact, non-motorized trail users (*Plan Recommendation 4.7*), were ranked among the highest priorities by attendees of SCORP stakeholder meetings held across the state.

Standing TAC Committee

Perhaps the most important recommendation in the SCORP is the creation of a 5-year Technical Advisory Committee to help ensure that the recommendations are implemented. Establishing a standing TAC committee for the duration of the 5-year plan will enable state-agency, local government and nonprofit members to continue to resolve obstacles and monitor progress.

Find out how you can get more involved by visiting www.paoutdoorrecplan.com and send in your comments, suggestions and great project examples.