

GUIDE TO APPENDIX 4

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INTRODUCTION

In the broadest sense, trails are designated routes of travel. Images of walking or hiking trails through the natural landscape come to mind first for many people, but trails serve a variety of motorized and non-motorized users on both land and water. There are bicycling trails for beginners to experienced cyclists, equestrian trails for horseback riders, park paths for circulation, and exercise trails for those focused on fitness and wellness. There are also specialty trails, such as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing trails for winter enthusiasts, trails for all-terrain vehicles (three- and four-wheeled ATVs) and snowmobiles, and water trails for paddlers. Sidewalks and road shoulders also serve as paths for non-motorized travel to and from home, work, school, park, or shopping destinations in some communities. Several but not all of these trail types exist in the Northern Chester County region (the Region). Many more miles of trails have been proposed or are already under study and development by a variety of public and private entities. Existing, planned and proposed non-motorized, public-use trails in the Region are the focus of this inventory and assessment with acknowledgement given to the presence of social trails and other recreational routes.

In *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County*¹ and County Parks and Recreation publications, Chester County defines a trail as “an off-road facility with a permanent alignment that is open to the general public, and that is designed, constructed and maintained as part of a public park system used for a variety of non-motorized forms of travel including walking, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing or horseback riding.” The County has also defined a path as “a facility that is designed, constructed, maintained and used primarily for one form of travel, such as a bicycle path or a walking path,” and a bike route as “a roadway shoulder or a low volume roadway used for bicycle transportation.” A hiking pathway that has been used for many years but has not been incorporated into a public trail network is termed a “traditional hiking route” or “social trail.” Finally, a trail network is defined as “a network is a combination of trails, paths, sidewalks and other linear facilities used for pedestrian and non-motorized transportation along with destinations.” The County

¹ *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, 2002*. Chester County Planning Commission.

emphasizes the importance of legally defensible definitions of term, particularly in municipal ordinances, to provide a sound foundation for trail network development.

The Chester County Trail Inventory is the most comprehensive source of public-use trail network data in the Region (the Region). The database was assembled by the Chester County Planning Commission to help implement *Landscapes 2*², to track the progress of and investment in trail development, and to aid in further trail planning. The database includes a variety of trail attributes: name, location, status, surface material, access, mileage, owner, maintainer, permitted users, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility, funding, and data source.

Additional trail information was gathered from municipal and regional planning documents, interviews with trail owners and developers, and recreation facility or provider Web sites. *Map 9, Trails*, illustrates available mapping for the emerging trail network in the Region.

EXISTING TRAILS

The Chester County Trail Inventory shows 69 existing trails or trail segments totaling 60.3 miles in the Region. Additional named trails at Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (NHS) and French Creek State Park, the Horse-Shoe Trail, and public-use trails on private lands, not currently inventoried by Chester County, raise the total to 99.4 miles of existing trails. One water trail, the Schuylkill River Water Trail, offers 18.7 miles of river excursion.

REGIONAL TRAILS

The **Schuylkill River Trail**,³ much of which is designated a National Recreation Trail, is the trail spine of the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area. The trail stretches through a landscape that varies from urban and suburban neighborhoods to farmlands to heavy industrial sites, and accesses major metropolitan areas – Reading, Pottstown, Phoenixville, Norristown, and Philadelphia. Fifty-six miles of the 125-mile route have been constructed and are open for use. Most sections of this accessible, multi-use trail are off-road, paved, and level. The trail supports recreational hikers and bikers, as well as people seeking exercise, and tourists visiting the Region. In more urban areas, it serves as an important commuter route for pedestrians and cyclists. Interactive and printable maps are available at www.schuylkillrivertrail.com.

The grand vision for this trail began during the 1970s. The first completed section of trail was designated as a National Recreation Trail – the Manayunk to Valley Forge Bikeway – in 1976. With the recent completion of the Thun Trail section through Birdsboro, the Hopewell Big Woods portion of the trail is now complete. Sections of the trail from Pottstown to Phoenixville are under development by Chester County and anticipated to be open for use in 2011. Once the gap in Phoenixville is complete, trail users will be able to travel north to the Schuylkill headwaters in Schuylkill County.

The Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area requested Chester County funding to complete, on behalf of the county, a 3.5-mile gravel segment of the Schuylkill River Trail between Spring City Borough and Cromby Power Station (PECO) in East Pikeland Township. This section will be completed in 2011. Chester County acquired trail easements for four PECO properties that will help solidify these

² *Landscapes 2, The Chester County Comprehensive Policy Plan, 2009*. Chester County Planning Commission.

³ *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009*. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

connections, including the PECO power plant property at Spring City. Private property was also purchased in Parker Ford for a ranger station and potential boat access to the river. Chester County is developing another 9.5 miles of trail from Spring City to Pottstown. See page 3-13.

Trail management is coordinated by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association. Sections of trail are owned and managed by a number of different entities, including government agencies. The Schuylkill River Heritage Area formed a Trail Council composed of members of each owning or managing entity. The Trail Council is working together with a Trail Steward to create a unified trail system, including a standardized system of signs and brochures. It also developed a standardized method of managing and maintaining the trail, so that users recognize the entire trail as a single unit, rather than a group of interconnected trails.

The **Schuylkill River Water Trail**⁴ is a designated on-river trail route boating along the Region's 18.7 miles of riverfront. The 147-mile waterway begins in the headwaters of the Schuylkill in the heart of Pennsylvania's coal country. The trail passes through historic river and canal towns, the scenic Blue Mountains and State Game Lands, among other natural and cultural features dramatic geologic features. The annual Schuylkill River Sojourn utilizes the Schuylkill River Water Trail for a seven-day paddle from Schuylkill Haven to Philadelphia.

There are two public landings in the Region that allow access to the water trail and, to varying extents, the land trail. At River Mile 53.6 is the Hanover Street boat ramp owned by North Coventry Township, including a parking lot for some 25 cars accessible from Ridge Pike or Route 422. The site is proposed to connect with the North Coventry Township Trail System that would connect to the township's parklands and French Creek State Park. At River Mile 51.3 is the Towpath Park Boat Ramp. Parking and camping are permitted with permission from East Coventry Township. A picnic shelter and toilet facilities are available in the park. Approximately at River Mile 46.5 is the proposed Schuylkill River trailhead at Parker Ford. A small parking lot and ramp launch are located nearby in Spring City.

The Schuylkill River Water Trail offers tremendous opportunities for environmental education and stewardship of natural resources, and consequently, eco-tourism prospects. Online and printed trail guides are available through the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area Web site along with links to real-time data on water levels, water quality forecasts, and safety tips. Unifying directional and orientation signage for the Schuylkill River Water Trail is under development.

INTERNAL AND LOOP TRAILS

TRAILS ON FEDERAL AND STATE LANDS

The **Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site** offers 70 miles of blazed trails that wind throughout the 848-acre site; major trails are illustrated in *Figure A4.1*. An 8-mile segment of the Horse-Shoe Trail passes through the site. The 0.8-mile Baptism Creek National Recreation Trail is a loop trail within the site that accommodates cross-country skiers and equestrians, as well as hikers. The Buzzard, Colliers, Lenape, Mill Creek, and Raccoon trails connect hikers with neighboring French Creek State Park, where additional trails are available. The Bethesda Church/Hopewell Trail connects hikers to the adjacent Crow's Nest Preserve, owned and managed by the Natural Lands Trust (NLT). Biking is allowed only on the site's paved roads.

⁴ Ibid.

Appendix 4 Trail Network

Draft – December 2011

The *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*⁵ states that Hopewell Furnace NHS, French Creek State Park, and NLT desire greater coordination of the interconnected trail system to expose more visitors to the national park and help in managing habitat and visitor use of their facilities. The plan also identified the need for “a bicycle repair and rental concession, with distribution of safety information, and potentially concessions for other recreational equipment...in the Hopewell Big Woods region,” which would logically be located near this concentration of trails.

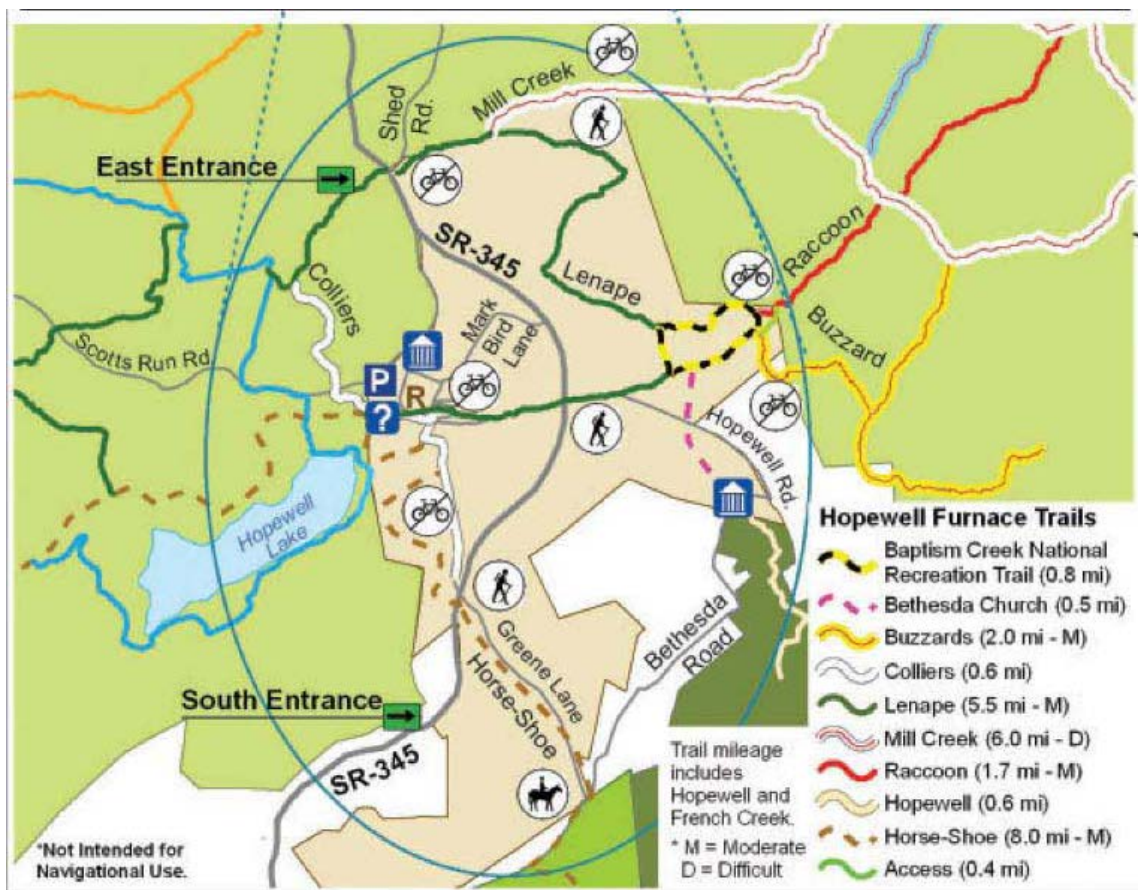


Figure A4.1: Major Trails at Hopewell Furnace NHS

French Creek State Park is a major destination for trail-seekers given its nine trails totaling more than 35 miles.

All trails at the park allow for hiking and access to hunting areas. Mountain bike riders enjoy the over 20 miles of trails that climb hills, cross streams, and pass through forests. The trails explore most parts of the park and are rated as difficult riding. Horseback riding is only allowed on the Horse-Shoe Trail.

Neither paved parking or horse trailer parking are available in the portions of French Creek in Chester County, though both are available at the end of South Entrance Road just across the county line from Warwick Township.

⁵ Ibid.

Table A4.1: Major Trails at Hopewell Furnace NHS

Hopewell Furnace NHS Trails*	Length	Surface	Walking	Bicycling/ Mountain Biking	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Protected Open Space
Baptism Creek National Recreation Trail	0.8	Dirt	P	P	P	N	N	Y
Bethesda Church Trail	0.5	Dirt	P	R	P	N	N	Y
Hopewell Trail	0.6	Dirt	P	U	R	N	N	Y
Total	1.9							

P - Permitted; R - Restricted; U - Unknown; Y - Yes; N - No

* Trails spanning Hopewell Furnace NHS and French Creek State Parks Lands are listed under French Creek State Park.

Table A4.2: Trails at French Creek State Park

French Park State Park Trails	Length	Surface	Walking	Bicycling/ Mountain Biking	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Protected Open Space
Boone Trail	6.0	Dirt	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Buzzards Trail*	3.0	Dirt	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Colliers Trail*	0.6	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Kalmia Trail	1.0	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Lenape Trail*	5.5	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Mill Creek Trail*	6.0	Dirt	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Raccoon Trail*	1.7	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Ridge Trail (short connector)	0.0	Dirt	P	P	R	N	N	Y
Six Penny Trail	3.0	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Turtle Trail	3.6	Dirt	P	R	R	N	N	Y
Total	29.8	(plus unnamed connector trails)						

P - Permitted; R - Restricted; U - Unknown; Y - Yes; N - No

* Trails span Hopewell Furnace NHS and French Creek State Parks Lands. Trail mileage shown is total length.

*The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*⁶ reported that off-road biking has taken place in areas of French Creek State Park where this use is currently restricted, and also in the adjacent national park; however, in recent years the state park has been working effectively with bike and hiking groups to better monitor and manage trail use, educate users on trail etiquette, and maintain the trails. The Plan suggested enhanced signage and informational materials to positively influence trail users. It also indicated that Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and state park staff are studying the feasibility of permitting limited, controlled, and safe access to the quarry, where ATVs have created unauthorized trails and ramps.⁷

⁶ *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009*. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

⁷ *Ibid.*

TRAILS ON COUNTY LANDS

The Chester County Parks and Recreation Department offers six trails totaling 5.6 miles of natural and cultural exploration throughout its more than 500-acre **Warwick County Park**, as listed in *Table A4.3*.⁸ Hiking and walking are permitted on all trails. Three of the improved surface trails permit bicycling. Cross-country skiing is permitted on some trails, and horseback riding is allowed exclusively on the Horse-Shoe Trail. Pets are permitted on all but the Nature Trail. Trails offer various surfaces: four are grass; six are gravel, cinder, or mulch; and one is a paved (asphalt) connector. None are specifically ADA-accessible, though one short connector is paved.

Table A4.3: Trails in Warwick County Park

Warwick County Park Trails	Length	Surface	Walking	Bicycling/ Mountain Biking*	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Protected Open Space
Adirondack Tree ID Trail	0.3	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Charcoal Trail, or Iron Heritage Trail	1.3	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Coventryville Forge Path	0.1	Grass	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Nature Trail	0.4	Grass	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Nature Trail	0.1	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
North Loop Trail	1.8	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Red Cliff Trail	0.6	Grass	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Red Cliff Trail	0.0	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Connector Trails	0.3	Gravel/Cinders/Mulch	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Connector Trails	0.2	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Connector Trails	0.5	Grass	P	P	R	U	P	Y
Total	5.6							

P - Permitted; R - Restricted; U - Unknown; Y - Yes

* Source: www.mountainbikepa.com, accessed July 8, 2011.

The trails take advantage of historic features and landscape elements, recognizing that Warwick’s woodlands provided much of the timber for charcoal used in the local furnaces of the early American iron industry. Charcoal hearths, historic house and barn ruins, and the site of 1717 Coventry Forge are marked to inform the visitor about the area’s iron heritage. The Charcoal Trail, with its charcoal hearth sites, provides the opportunity to feature the lives of the furnace plantation woodcutters and colliers.

There are no parking facilities for horses and their riders, or for bicyclists. *The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*⁹ suggests that improvements to parking areas, such as bike parking, a horse trailer parking area and/or hitching posts and a watering trough, as well as trail maps and brochures, could better support users of the Horse-Shoe Trail, and the proposed multi-use Boars Back/French Creek Trail.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

TRAILS AND PATHS ON MUNICIPAL LANDS

Eight municipalities in the Region own and maintain 22 existing trails or paths totaling 23.9 miles. These facilities are listed below in *Table A4.4* and illustrated on *Map 9*. Since the last update of the Chester County trails inventory, a public trail (estimated at 1.0 miles) and small parking area have opened in East Nantmeal Township at the end of Lyons Run Road, as well as access to the adjacent Nature Conservancy- eased lands of the Great Marsh.

North Coventry has the most trails in number (eight), and in length (8.7 miles). The Coventry Woods trails alone total six open trails: Pigeon Creek, Chestnut Hill, Furnace, Love Valley, Collier, Rock Run, totaling about 6 miles to date. Surfaces range from dirt to grass for off-road trails, to concrete and asphalt for sidewalks and hard-surface trails. Pedestrians are permitted on all trails. Bicyclists are generally permitted on the improved surface trails, except on the Park Springs Trails, West Vincent Equestrian Trail, Community Park on the Ridge Trail, and Andrew Evans Park Trail. Equestrians are expressly permitted to use five of the trails in North Coventry Township, including Coventry Woods, as well as the West Vincent Equestrian trail – totaling 7.6 miles. Pets are permitted on the North Coventry Township trails, the West Vincent Trail Network, and in Pine Creek Park. Trails within municipal parks, open spaces, and private preserves are considered protected. This is true for eight of the 24 municipal trails, which total approximately 15 miles.

SIDEWALK NETWORKS

Sidewalks in the Region are extremely limited. Older areas of South Pottstown/Pottstown Landing have sidewalks one block in each direction at the intersection of Hanover Street and Main Street and within a block or so of Kenilworth Park. It appears the central and eastern municipalities have only recently required sidewalks of developers, resulting in isolated sidewalk systems at the periphery and within major commercial properties, such as Lowe’s and the Suburbia Shopping Center along Hanover Street, and major residential developments, such as Coventry Glen townhomes and The Fields at Creekview in East Coventry; neighborhoods adjacent to Spring City in East Vincent; Coventry Pointe townhomes in North Coventry; Ridglea and Vrynewy Acres in South Coventry; and Weatherstone in West Vincent. Smaller properties also appear to have been affected as there are sidewalk segments at the southeast corner of Hanover Street and Schuylkill Road in North Coventry and along Kimberton Road in front of St. Basil the Great Catholic School in East Pikeland.

TRAILS AND PATHS IN PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Residential developments in the Region offer 10.6 miles of public use trails or paths maintained by the developments’ homeowners association. Access to another 6.9 miles of trails and paths in other developments is unknown, according to the Chester County Trail Inventory. These inventoried trails and paths are listed in *Table A4.5*.

Appendix 4 Trail Network

Draft - December 2011

Table A4.4: Trails on Municipal Lands

Trail Name	Location Owner	Length (miles)	Surface	Walking	Bicycling	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Protected Open Space
Ellis Woods Park Trail	East Coventry	0.1	Gravel/Cinders	P	U	U	U	P	Y
Towpath Park Trail	East Coventry	1.0	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	U	U	U	P	Y
Maack Road Trail	East Coventry	1.7	Grass	P	U	U	U	U	N
New/Unnamed Trail	East Nantmeal	1.0	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	U
Kimberton Park Trail	East Pikeland	0.6	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	R	U	U	Y
Community Park on the Ridge Trail	East Vincent	0.8	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	U	U	U	R	Y
Park Springs Trail	East Vincent	0.3	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	U	R	U	U	N
Existing Sidewalks	East Vincent	0.4	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	P	R	U	U	N
Cedarville Trail ¹	North Coventry	0.3	Unknown	P	U	U	U	U	Y
Kenilworth Park Trail	North Coventry	0.9	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	U	U	P	Y
Pottstown Reconnections Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	P	P	U	P	N
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.2	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	P	U	U	P	N
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	U	U	P	N
Coventry Woods Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	P	U	P	Y
Coventry Woods Trail	North Coventry	4.9	Dirt	P	P	P	U	P	Y
Scholl Road Trail	North Coventry	1.0	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	P	U	P	N
North Coventry Trail Network	North Coventry	0.5	Concrete/Sidewalk	P	P	P	U	P	N
South Coventry Township Trail Network	South Coventry	0.4	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	N
Woody's Woods Trail	South Coventry	4.8	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	Y
Pine Creek Park Trail	West Pikeland	1.6	Grass	P	U	U	U	P	Y
Binky Lee Preserve Trail	West Pikeland	0.1	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	N
Pickering Creek Trail ²	West Pikeland	3.2	Dirt	P	U	U	U	U	N
Andrew Evans Park Trail	West Vincent	0.5	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	U	U	U	U	Y
West Vincent Trail Network	West Vincent	0.5	Asphalt/Blacktop	P	P	R	Y	P	N
West Vincent Equestrian Trail	West Vincent	0.2	Dirt	P	R	P	N	R	N
Total		26.2							

P - Permitted; R - Restricted; U - Unknown; Y - Yes; N - No

¹ Per correspondence with Jay Erb, North Coventry Township.

² Complete from Clover Mill Rd. to Anselma Mill, correspondence with Pam Brown, French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Fall 2010.

Table A4.5: Trails on Homeowners Association Lands

HOA Trails and Paths	Municipal Location	Access	Length (miles)	Walking	Bicycling	Equestrian	ADA	Pets
Bridge Street HOA Trails	East Vincent	Public	1.5	P	P	U	U	U
Cedamill Crossing Trail	North Coventry	Public	0.7	P	P	U	U	P
Chestnut Hill Trail	North Coventry	Public	1.3	P	P	U	U	P
Martin Farm Trail	North Coventry	Public	0.1	P	P	U	U	U
Martin Farm Trail	North Coventry	Public	0.5	P	P	R	Y	U
Stoney Run Farms Trail	East Vincent	Public	0.2	P	P	R	Y	P
Stoney Run Farms Trail	East Vincent	Public	3.6	P	P	U	U	U
Windgate I Trail	East Vincent	Public	1.6	P	U	U	U	U
Windgate II Trail	East Vincent	Public	1.1	P	P	U	U	P
Public Access Total			10.6					
Coldstream Crossing Trail	East Pikeland	Unknown	1.1	P	P	U	U	P
Kimberton Greene Trail	East Pikeland	Unknown	0.9	P	U	R	U	U
Kimberton Greene Trail	East Pikeland	Unknown	1.7	P	P	R	U	P
Kimberton Meadows Trail	East Pikeland	Unknown	0.8	P	U	U	U	U
Kimberton Ridge Trail	East Vincent	Unknown	0.4	P	P	R	U	P
Twin Hills Association Trail	West Pikeland	Unknown	1.9	P	P	R	U	U
Unknown Access Total			6.9					

P – Permitted; R – Restricted; U – Unknown; Y – Yes

PRIVATE LANDS WITH LIMITED TRAIL ACCESS

The following privately-owned destinations offer more than 10 miles of trails to the public on a limited basis.

Natural Lands Trust’s **Crow’s Nest Preserve** offers 6.2 miles of natural surface (grass and dirt) trails through forests of oak, hickory, tulip poplar, beech, maple, and spicebush; through grassland meadows and wildflowers; and through crop fields reflecting the tradition of Chester County farming. The Preserve’s trails are shown on *Map 9*. All of the Preserve trails permit hiking and leashed pets. Select trails permit equestrians; none allow mountain biking or motorized transportation such as ATVs. These constraints are meant to preserve the environmentally-sensitive areas, prevent the disruption of animal life cycles, and maintain the tranquil setting. From the trails, visitors can see and hear a diversity of birds and mammals, which is why the Preserve is part of an Important Bird and Important Mammal Area.

Connection to the adjacent Hopewell Furnace NHS is available via the Bethesda Church Trail, which takes visitors from Crow’s Nest Preserve into the Baptism Creek area of Hopewell Furnace NHS, where trail users can connect with the Baptism Creek National Recreation Trail and walk through forested wetlands. From the National Recreation Trail, visitors can walk east along Hopewell Road into the main park complex.

As an existing destination, *the Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* suggests that the Preserve could become a hub for information on regional recreational facilities and trails – including auto tours – and information on visitor services. Given the Preserve’s Leave No Trace visitor management approach, the Plan also suggests a water basin or similar facility for washing off hiking boots or horse hooves, to minimize the translocation of invasive species.

The **Binky Lee Preserve** offers four miles of natural surface (grass) trails through its rolling woodlands and meadows, for walkers only. (Only 2.9 miles are mapped by the Chester County Trail Inventory, as shown on *Map 9*.) Visitors are greeted by an information kiosk at the parking area and educational signs are throughout the preserve.

Welkinweir, the former estate of Everett and Grace Rodebaugh and home of the Green Valleys Association, offers natural surface (grass) paths through the estate’s formal gardens, arboretum, and native habitats. Spatial data for these trails is not available and thus are not shown on *Map 9*; a total path length of five miles was estimated. The grounds are open weekdays to the public and to members only on weekends. Group access on weekends can be arranged through the office. Only hiking is permitted on the paths, with the exception of the Horse-Shoe Trail, which passes through the site. Welkinweir allows trail-goers to use its parking lot and has worked with the Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy to mark the connector trail from the parking lot to the Horse-Shoe Trail. It does not actively encourage equestrian use of this access point to the Horse-Shoe Trail given its focus on environmental conservation, i.e., protection of wildlife habitat including ground-nesting birds. Like *Crow’s Nest*, *the Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* suggests that Welkinweir could also offer information on regional recreational facilities, trails, and visitor services.

Historic Yellow Springs,¹⁰ home of the **Chester Springs Studio**, preserves and promotes the history and arts of this Chester County village in West Pikeland Township. An estimated half-mile walking tour through the village features a dozen historic buildings and landscapes, including a meadow where Washington’s army camped in Fall 1777. The primary route is shown on *Map 9*.

UNMAPPED PRIVATE TRAILS

The **Great Marsh Trail System** through this inland freshwater marsh in East Nantmeal Township is not considered public. Access to the trails is granted for educational and scientific groups using the conference center by arrangement. Hunting on this property is managed by the Great Marsh Stewardship Committee.

Throughout the Region, there are many more miles of trails on private lands that owners share by private arrangement. These “social trails” are not mapped minimizing publicity of their locations and their abuse by the public. Residents who use these trails appreciate the willingness of property owners to share them and demonstrate their appreciation through informal words and gifts of thanks.

Some would like to see at least some of these social trails permanently protected so that the trails remain in place even as property owners change. However, protection through public funding requires public access, which is generally not desired. Protection through private mechanisms, such as deed restrictions, would not require public access but offers no real value to the property owner.

¹⁰ <http://www.yellowsprings.org> accessed December 10, 2010.

OTHER RECREATIONAL AND TRAVEL ROUTES

HORSE-SHOE TRAIL

The 140-mile **Horse-Shoe Trail**¹¹ is a hiking and equestrian route that stretches through five counties in southeastern Pennsylvania. From its intersection with the Appalachian Trail – a National Scenic Trail – in Dauphin County, the Horse-Shoe Trail winds through the agricultural landscape of Lebanon and Lancaster counties and through southern Berks County and the Region to Valley Forge National Historical Park (NHP) and the Schuylkill River Trail. The Horse-Shoe Trail runs roughly parallel to I-76, the Pennsylvania Turnpike, between Harrisburg East exit 247 and Valley Forge exit 326. The five-foot-wide dirt path passes through Warwick, East Nantmeal, South Coventry, West Vincent, and West Pikeland townships in the Region.

A total of 16.7 miles of the Horse-Shoe Trail traverse the Region, as shown on *Map 9, Trails*, where it accesses:

- French Creek State Park (the Berks County portion), where it connects to several trails within the park, including the Six Penny, Boone, and Mill Creek trails;
- Hopewell Furnace NHS;
- State Game Lands 43;
- Warwick County Park; and
- Welkinweir, the 162-acre arboretum and headquarters of Green Valleys Association, a nonprofit conservation organization.

While no single owner determines route policies, hiking and equestrian use are permitted on route segments in the Region. Bicycling is permitted on some segments, including the portion through Warwick County Park. Leashed pets are also permitted on local portions of the route. The demand for horse trails and their relative scarcity in the Region make the Horse-Shoe Trail a valuable recreational resource.

The nonprofit Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy (formerly known as the Horse-Shoe Trail Club) founded the current trail during the 1920s. It was largely completed by 1935 as a horse-riding path from Valley Forge NHP to Hopewell Furnace NHS. Since that time, the Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy has maintained it with the help of many volunteers. Member dues and contributions largely support the preservation and maintenance of the trail. Trail use is not restricted to members.

Started as a handshake agreement with farmers, trail use is still largely based on short-term informal agreements with the adjacent landowners. As landowners change, the Horse-Shoe Trail often must be relocated. Working with French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, the Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy is seeking to secure easements and address liability concerns on private property. This includes permanent protection of the Horse-Shoe Trail easement through State Game Lands 43. The Conservancy is also trying to make the trail truly open to the public, and remove any segments that are still on-road.

¹¹ *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009*. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

The Horse-Shoe Trail is being considered as a designated section of the proposed Highlands Trail within Pennsylvania. If designated, the Horse-Shoe Trail would receive additional promotion through the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative.

DESIGNATED ROUTES ON PA STATE GAME LANDS

The **PA State Game Lands (SGL)**¹² service roads are intended for hunters moving within the Game Lands. In 2000, a change in state regulations permitted recreationists on non-motorized vehicles (e.g., bicycles), conveyances, or animals to use designated Game Lands routes on Sundays with seasonal limitations to recreational access to ensure public safety during hunting seasons.

Within SGL 43, namely on the western property, there is only one designated route, a 3.4-mile loop, which begins and ends at the rifle range off of Laurel Road. The rifle range includes a buffer to avoid use conflicts, and bicyclists can ride at night or on Sundays to avoid hunters. The Horse-Shoe Trail is noted as a “special use trail” on Pennsylvania Game Commission maps but is not listed as a designated route. There are no authorized single-track or cross-country trails and no authorized connections to French Creek State Park or Hopewell Furnace trails, with the exception of the Horse-Shoe Trail.

*The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*¹³ reported that the Pennsylvania Game Commission is concerned about the development of unauthorized biking/hiking trails through SGL 43 and has been receptive to the idea of a land exchange or purchase that would enable the National Park Service and its partners to expand trail connections as well as limited recreational use of the State Game Lands in the offseason. The Plan also suggests that formal designation of the Horse-Shoe Trail within SGL 43 and the proposed Boars Back Trail as designated routes, could provide the impetus for preserving additional lands adjacent to the trail corridor, improving access for hunters and safety for recreational users away from the rifle range area, and expanding wildlife habitat.

THEMED AND SPECIAL TRAIL EVENTS

The French Creek Iron Tour, sponsored by the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, annually draws more than 1,200 participants to tour through the Trust’s protected open space lands. Route lengths range from 10 miles to 100 miles, offering cyclists of every skill level an opportunity to view scenic Northern Chester County.

The hubs of a wine and cheese trail are in place in the Region. A travel route may soon emerge to promote these locally-grown products. The J. Maki Winery at French Creek Ridge Vineyards, located on Grove Road in Warwick Township, produces award-winning champagne and ice wine, as well as red and white wines. The Amazing Acres Goat Dairy, also on Grove Road, raises Nubian Goats and produces 16 types of fresh and natural artisanal cheeses. The Birch Run Hills Farm produces handcrafted raw milk cheese, including Birchrun Blue, Equinox, Fat Cat, and Red Cat, as well as seasonal and fresh cheeses, from its location in West Vincent Township. This farm is also known for fresh veal and pork. Finally, the Yellow Springs Farm in Chester Springs, West Pikeland Township, produces hundreds of native plant species, herbs, raw honey, and artisanal goat milk cheeses. These three cheese artisans are three of the six farmstead and artisanal cheese makers practicing their craft in

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan*, 2009. Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

Chester County. A tour among these local producers features views of the scenic countryside and well-kept farms, conversations with dedicated owner artisans, and of course, lively animals.

TRAIL AND PATH ACCESSIBILITY

None of the trails in the Region are specifically ADA-accessible. Accessibility is not required by federal regulations for public-use trails, defined as recreational routes constructed or altered on non-federal lands, at this point in time. (See Proposed ADA Guidelines Trails and Shared Use Paths.) However, given the importance of trails as a means to experience the natural and cultural significance of the Region, accessible trail opportunities should be considered.

Proposed ADA Guidelines Trails and Shared Use Paths

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) is responsible for developing accessibility guidelines to ensure that new construction and alterations of facilities subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4151 et seq.) are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. The ADA applies to state and local governments, places of public accommodation, and commercial facilities. The ABA applies to facilities designed, built, altered, or leased with Federal funds.

On June 20, 2007, the Access Board issued a [Notice of Proposed Rulemaking](#) (NPRM) to establish accessibility guidelines pursuant to the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) for camping facilities, picnic facilities, viewing areas, outdoor recreation access routes, trails, and beach access routes that are constructed or altered by or on behalf of the Federal government. The final accessibility guidelines will apply to Federal land management agencies and non-federal entities that construct or alter facilities on Federal lands on behalf of the Federal government, namely Hopewell Furnace NHS in the Region. The Access Board prepared a draft of the final accessibility guidelines based on the NPRM and the comments on the NPRM. The Access Board reviewed the draft final accessibility guidelines with the accessibility program managers for the Federal land management agencies. After public reviewing, the Access Board will issue the accessibility guidelines as a final rule.

The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) to develop accessibility guidelines for shared use paths on March 28, 2011. Shared use paths, as defined by the Access Board, are designed to be part of a transportation system, providing off-road routes for a variety of users – primarily bicyclists and pedestrians, including pedestrians using mobility devices such as manual or motorized wheelchairs. Whether located within a highway right-of-way, provided along a riverbank, or established over natural terrain within an independent right-of-way, shared use paths differ from sidewalks and trails in that they are primarily designed for multiple users for transportation purposes. Once developed and approved by the Access Board, accessibility guidelines will apply to shared use paths.

Trails, as defined by the Access Board, are pedestrian routes developed primarily for outdoor recreational purposes – for pedestrians and other users to "experience" the outdoors; they do not connect elements, spaces, or facilities within a site. Since they are not designed with a transportation focus, they are typically not parallel to a roadway or related to its right-of-way. Accessibility guidelines for shared use paths will not apply to trails.

TRAIL DESTINATIONS AND SUPPORT FACILITIES

Several parks and preserves function as destinations for their on-site trails or as trailheads for trails in their vicinity. These locations include Hopewell Furnace NHS, French Creek State Park, Warwick County Park, Coventry Woods, Woody’s Woods, Crow’s Nest Preserve, Binky Lee Preserve, and Welkinweir.

Table A4.6 lists trail access and use facilities. General vehicular parking is available at all eight sites, though limited at municipal and private parks and preserves. Horse trailer parking is available only at French Creek State Park and Welkinweir. Few comfort and emergency facilities are available beyond the largest parks. Drinking water fountains and restrooms are provided at the national, state and county parks but not at the municipal and private locations; Welkinweir does have restrooms. Public telephones are available at the national and state sites.

Table A4.6: Trail Access and Use Facilities

	General Parking	Horse-trailer Parking	Water/Drinking Fountain	Restrooms/Port-a Johns	Public Phone
Hopewell Furnace NHS	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
French Creek State Park	Yes	South Entrance Road, Berks County	Yes	Yes	Yes
Warwick County Park	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Coventry Woods	Yes	No	No	No	No
Woody’s Woods	Yes	No	No	No	No
Crow’s Nest Preserve	Yes	No	No	No	No
Binky Lee Preserve	Yes	N/A	No	No	No
Welkinweir	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No

TRAIL PLANNING

The Chester County Trail Inventory shows 52 planned trails or trail segments totaling 122.9 miles in the Region. Planned trails updates identified during the planning study raise the total to 127.3 miles. These planned trails include trails in design or under construction, under feasibility study, or proposed for future study and development, and comprise county, municipal, and private trails in the Region.

REGIONAL TRAIL PLANNING

Chester County is leading the development of just over 9.5 miles of the **Schuylkill River Trail** through the Region, including a segment through Spring City. A total trail length of 14.6 miles will be achieved as Phoenixville and Montgomery County extend the trail to connect to the Schuylkill River and Perkiomen Trails to the east and the Thun Trail to the north in Berks County. The trail will be located within existing railroad and PECO Energy right-of-way corridors, former roadway and utility right-of-

ways, canal towpaths, public and private open space, and road shoulders, and over existing bridges and road culverts.

The trail enters North Coventry Township from Pottstown across the US Route 422 bridge. It travels southeast into East Coventry Township through the Heyser Tract and Towpath Park, then on to the village of Fricks Locks. From there it heads southward to Parker Ford, skirting the edge of the Linfield Silt Basin, then eastward toward the former Pennhurst State Hospital property. It then parallels the river through Spring City, where a trailhead is planned on Gay Street, and through East Pikeland to Phoenixville, where the trail crosses the river back into Montgomery County on PA Route 29. Four trailheads are planned in the Region: one in East Coventry at PA Route 724 (at Towpath Park), one at Fricks Locks in East Coventry, one at Parker Ford in East Vincent, and one at Cromby in East Pikeland.

This portion of the Schuylkill River Trail is planned as an off-road, asphalt-paved, surface trail for non-motorized recreation, fitness, and travel. The paved portions of the trail will be an average of 12 feet wide with four-foot grass shoulders on either side. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and leashed pets are to be permitted; equestrians and motorized vehicles will be prohibited. It will comply with ADA standards as of the final design date.

The 15+-mile **French Creek Trail**¹⁴ is a multi-phase project along the creek, to be located on the former railroad beds of the Boars Back Railroad and the Sowbelly Railroad. These short-distance railroads transported granite and iron from the interior of the Region to the Schuylkill River. Phase I includes the development of the trail from St. Peters Village to Trythall Road. Phase II will extend the trail to Elverson to complete the Boars Back Segment of the French Creek Trail. Phases III, IV, and V will comprise the Sowbelly Trail segment from St. Peters Village to Kimberton. *The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* indicates that restaurants and bike shops are envisioned as part of the long-term economic benefits for this key destination within the Hopewell Big Woods.

As the lead trail planning and development entity, the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust has purchased easements on four miles from the Warwick/South Coventry township border to Hollow Road. In cooperation, East Pikeland Township has master planned a two-mile segment of the French Creek Trail and acquired parcels along the creek for the trail's development. A 4.2-mile connection between Kimberton and Phoenixville has been proposed as part of the Phoenixville Area Regional Comprehensive Plan.

The 4.8-mile **Boars Back Trail**¹⁵ segment of the French Creek Trail is intended as a multi-use, non-motorized, natural- and crushed-stone surface, providing recreation for hikers, equestrians, and bicyclists. From the trail, users will be able to access Hopewell Furnace NHS, Natural Lands Trust's Crow's Nest Preserve, French Creek State Park, State Game Lands 43, and the Horse-Shoe Trail. The project is under development by Chester County, the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, and Warwick Township. One mile is completed; 3.8 miles is planned. The Chester County Commissioners provided a \$1.5 million grant to French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust to purchase easements and fund construction of the 2.7-mile Phase I segment. The Trust has acquired three acres of land at Route 345 to build a parking lot and trailhead, and will convey this land to the

¹⁴ *Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan, 2009.* Hopewell Big Woods Partnership.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

county once the trail is complete. Phase II will need to address landowners' disputes over the former rail corridor's ownership and their concerns for safety and liability.

The 12.4-mile proposed **Sowbelly Trail**¹⁶ segment will primarily use the former railroad bed of the Sowbelly Railroad between St. Peters Village and the East Vincent/East Pikeland border. From St. Peters Village, the Sowbelly Trail alignment travels south to Warwick County Park, then continues east along French Creek. The preferred alignment takes the trail off-road at Pughtown, roughly paralleling Pughtown Road to the north along French Creek to Hoffecker Road, then following Lucas Road and West Seven Stars Road. From here the trail will be located on lands along the creek owned or eased by East Pikeland Township. The trail is intended for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians. A total of 2.0 miles will be ADA-accessible in two locations: Warwick County Park and along the border of East and West Vincent townships, east of Hollow Road. These on-road segments are expected to be feasible given the low traffic volumes but will still require further study to ensure the safety of trail users and motorists.¹⁷

The **Warwick-Elverson Regional Recreation Corridor** is identified in Chester County's *Linking Landscapes*. The corridor is shown as a conceptual connection from French Creek Elementary School along the South Branch of French Creek to Elverson. This concept has the potential to feature several historic sites along the creek. A more specific and detailed alignment for a trail connection would be studied during a feasibility study.

The 0.9-mile **Yellow Spring Trail** is a proposed spur from Historic Yellow Springs to the Horse-Shoe Trail along Art School Road. The Chester County Trail Inventory lists only walking as a permitted use; all other users including equestrians are listed as "unknown." However, given the trail's linkage with the Horse-Shoe Trail, equestrian use of this planned natural surface trail may be intended and/or feasible.

Roughly three miles of the **Pickering Creek Trail**, a West Pikeland's segment of the proposed Pickering-Upper Uwchlan Regional Recreation Corridor in *Linking Landscapes*, is complete from Clover Mill Road to the Mill at Anselma along Route 401; completion of the remaining portion from the Mill at Anselma to the Upper Uwchlan Township border is proposed by challenged by wetlands and private land ownership. The trail was envisioned to follow the former Pickering Valley Railroad right-of-way connecting Marsh Creek State Park with the Schuylkill River Trail.

LOCAL TRAIL PLANNING

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT BY MUNICIPAL LOCATION

The Chester County Trail Inventory lists 33 trails or trail segments totaling 83.93 miles of planned trails in the Region. These trails are listed below in *Table A4.7* and illustrated on *Map 9*. Of these more than 80 miles, only 1.5 miles of trail are in design or under construction, namely in North Coventry Township. The vast majority of the planned trails, 79.1 miles, are simply proposed for further study. These include township-wide trail concepts discussed in the subsequent section.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Appendix 4 Trail Network

Draft - December 2011

Table A4.7: Municipal Trails

Trail Name	Location and Owner	Length (miles)	Status	Location	Protected Open Space
Coventry Lake Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Design/Construction	Homeowner's Association (HOA) Property	No
French Creek Trail	East Pikeland	2.0	Design/ Construction	Along creek on township-owned or eased land	Yes
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Design/Construction	Along Stream Corridor	No
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Design/Construction	Open Space	No
North Coventry Trail Network	North Coventry	0.03	Design/Construction	Coventry Woods	Yes
Rosewarne Link Trail	North Coventry	0.2	Design/Construction	Open Space/Along Roadways	No
Karl's Chestnut Hill Trail (Woody's Woods Trail Link)	South Coventry	0.2	Design/ Construction	Open Space	Yes
Pickering Creek Trail	West Pikeland	1.0	Feasibility Study	Along Stream Corridor	Yes
Bickel's Run Trail	North Coventry	1.0	Proposed	Open Space/Bickel's Run Park/Utility Right-of-Way (ROW)	No
Brandywine Trail	West Vincent	2.1	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
Coventry Woods Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Proposed	Coventry Woods	Yes
Cross Trail	North Coventry	1.9	Proposed	Open Space/Along Roadways	No
East Coventry Township Trail Network	East Coventry	21.2	Proposed	Along Stream Corridor	No
East Coventry Township Trail Network	East Coventry	13.7	Proposed	Along Utility ROW/Private Lands	No
French Creek Park Link	North Coventry	1.0	Proposed	Along Roadway	Yes
Hanover Meadows Park Trail	North Coventry	0.3	Proposed	Hanover Meadows Park	No
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Proposed	Along Roadways/Open Space	No
Hanover Trail	North Coventry	0.5	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
Off-Road Pedestrian Trail	East Vincent	1.2	Proposed	Open Space	No
Phoenixville Crossing Trail (within subdivision)	East Pikeland	0.3	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
Pickering Hunt Trail	East Pikeland	0.4	Proposed	Open Space	No
Pottstown Reconnections Trail	North Coventry	1.7	Proposed	Along Roadways	No
Proposed Sidewalks	East Vincent	3.7	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
River Bend Park Trail	North Coventry	0.2	Proposed	River Bend Park	Yes
River Park Trail	North Coventry	1.6	Proposed	Open Space/Wooded Areas	No
Roadside Trail	East Vincent	9.4	Proposed	Along Roadway	No
Rural Walking Street	East Vincent	3.9	Proposed	Along Roadway	No

Appendix 4 Trail Network

Draft – December 2011

Trail Name	Location and Owner	Length (miles)	Status	Location	Protected Open Space
St. Peter's Warwick County Park Connector (French Creek Trail)	Warwick	1.3	Proposed	Open Space/ Along Roadway	No
Schuylkill River Trail	North Coventry	0.7	Proposed	Open Space/ Along Roadway	No
South Coventry Township Trail Network	South Coventry	1.6	Proposed	Stream Corridor/ Along Roadway/ Open Space	No
Sowbelly Segment, French Creek Trail	Phoenixville	0.3	Proposed	French Creek Corridor	No
Western Loop	East Nantmeal	10.0	Proposed	Open Space/ Along Roadway	No
Total Miles		84.13			

Source: Chester County Trail Inventory; Gannett Fleming, Inc.

These trails are universally intended for walkers and most will permit bicyclists. Only 10 are planned to permit equestrians. ADA accessibility is listed as “unknown” for these trails; if studied and constructed with public monies, these trails will have to meet ADA accessibility standards.

The Chester County Trail Inventory lists “along roadway” as the location for nearly half of these trails. The inventory does not specify if “along roadway” means on the road shoulder, on an improved widened shoulder, or some other meaning. Given that many of these roadways are heavily-used local roads, the proposal to use them as trail routes raises concern for the safety of trail users and motorists. Each of these “along roadway” trails should carefully study the physical conditions and use of the roadway as part of its feasibility and design studies.

MUNICIPAL TRAIL NETWORK PLANNING

The municipal trail networks vary greatly in expanse and development.

The **East Coventry Township Trail Network** proposes 34.9 miles of trail connections for walking and bicycling among the following features:

- along the Schuylkill River and Pigeon Creek and their tributaries.
- on-road and off-road connections between the East Coventry Elementary School, Ellis Woods and Towpath Parks, the Heyser, Faulk, and Wade Tracts, and the Maack property.
- along the PECO Energy utility corridor from the Bickel Run area of North Coventry Township to Stony Run in East Vincent Township.

The proposed trail network is a concept awaiting further evaluation and development. The corridors intersect at various points throughout the township, creating trail loops in a variety of sizes. Some of the trails end abruptly at roadways, the township boundary, or tributary headwaters. Further consideration of trail extensions and alignments should be given during the master planning phase of trail development to increase trail connectivity. Additional design and use criteria, such as ADA accessibility, intended users and suitability for equestrians, are not known.

The proposed 10-mile Western Loop Trail is the only mapped trail concept of the **East Nantmeal Township Trail Network** shown in the township’s 1993 *Open Space Plan*. The Western Loop is

proposed as a 10-mile on-road and off-road alignment through the rural landscape in the western portion of the township. Its route could give access to the French Creek and Stonewall Links Golf Courses.

An **East Pikeland Township Trail Network** was initially discussed in the township's 1993 *Open Space, Recreation and Environmental Resources Plan*. As conceived, this ambitious network is intended to "give access to scenic areas and recreation facilities and provide a safe transportation system for pedestrians and bicyclists to move about the community." The network envisioned approximately 20 miles of trails, roadside ways, and footpaths through wilderness corridors for hiking, bicycling, and mountain biking, and horseback riding, as appropriate; only 2.7 miles of proposed trails are inventoried by Chester County. While land acquisition and trail construction for the French Creek Trail took priority, other potential trail locations were not acquired or protected from development. The township is in the process of updating the trail network concept to the development pattern that has emerged since 1993.

The **East Vincent Trail Network** is an 18.2-mile system of roadside trail routes and bike lanes connecting neighborhoods with East Vincent Elementary School, Community Park on the Ridge, French Creek, and the Schuylkill River Trail. Bike lanes are proposed along PA Route 23 and Pughtown Road. Sidewalks are proposed along some roadside routes, while road shoulders would be used in other locations.

The 26.8-mile **North Coventry Trail System** is a network of on- and off-road trail segments proposed to connect major neighborhoods and major destinations throughout the township. Township destinations include its parks, Coventry Woods, and the Schuylkill River Trail, as well as destinations beyond the township border, such as Pottstown, French Creek State Park and the larger Hopewell Big Woods region, and Woody's Woods. Major trails and trail segments include:

- A trail section from the north side of Coventry Woods to PA Route 724.
- A River Park Trail along the south side of the Schuylkill River from PA Route 724 to the Schuylkill River Trail at Route 100, providing access to River Bend Park.
- The Hanover Trail along Hanover Street, using sidewalks and passing through parkland before turning east into Bickel Run Park and heading south to Temple Road.
- The Kirlin Trail from the south side of Coventry Woods to PA Route 100 and the Hanover Trail.

Completed trails total 9.1 miles. Another 11.8 miles are proposed.

The 1996 *South Coventry Township Comprehensive Plan* recommended a trail network in the township. This network would include trails from Woody's Woods to the Horse-Shoe Trail and French Creek Trail in Warwick County Park, bike lanes along PA Routes 23 and 100, designated bike routes along secondary roadways, and recreational trails along stream valleys throughout the township. This recommendation also encouraged the realignment of the Horse-Shoe Trail to ensure its permanent protection. Identified as the Woody's Woods Trail Link by Chester County, a volunteer has cleared and constructed 4.8 miles of the 5-mile Karl's Chestnut Hill Trail, connecting Coventry Woods and the North Coventry trail system to the Harmonyville Road entrance to Woody's Woods in South Coventry Township, on township-owned land. The final 0.2-mile segment will be completed once a neighboring property owner's concerns are addressed. Only one other 1.6 mile trail of the township trail network has been inventoried by Chester County.

Appendix 4 Trail Network

Draft – December 2011

The St. Peter's Warwick County Park Connector of the French Trail system is the only planned trail by **Warwick Township**. (Another 1.6 mile trail system is listed under Trails Planned by/for Private Entities.) However, the township's residents are well served by the numerous public trails on public and private conservation lands in the township. These trails include the Horse-Shoe Trail and trails at Hopewell Furnace NHS, French Creek State Park, Warwick County Park, State Game Lands 43, and Crow's Nest Preserve, as well as the proposed Boars Back Segment of the French Creek Trail and the French Creek Trail connector from St. Peters Village to Warwick County Park. The Warwick-Elverson Regional Recreation Corridor proposed in Chester County's *Linking Landscapes* may provide Warwick Township residents with yet another regional trail, if further studied and developed.

The *2010 West Pikeland Township Comprehensive Plan* outlines trails and greenways in its parks, recreation and open space plan. It acknowledges the abundant private or social trails that require landowner permission for use. No planned trails in the township have been inventoried by Chester County.

The **West Vincent Township Trail Network** currently comprises a few disparate trails and the Horse-Shoe Trail. A half-mile walking and bicycling trail and a quarter-mile equestrian trail are located in the Weatherstone development. Another half-mile walking and bicycling trail is located in Andrew Evans Park. A realignment of the Horse-Shoe Trail is proposed in the township between Birch Run and Jaine Lane. A 2.1-mile extension of the Brandywine Trail to the Horse-Shoe Trail was proposed along St. Andrews Lane and Birch Run Road in the township's 1992 Open Space and Recreation Plan. An effort is currently underway to identify on-road routes suitable for bicycling in the township.

TRAIL PLANNING BY PRIVATE OR VARIED PUBLIC-PRIVATE OWNERS

The Chester County Trail Inventory identifies another eight trails totaling 13.1 miles as planned by/for various private owners. Homeowners associations – both in North Coventry Township – are expected to own and maintain two of these planned trails. In two other cases, a private owner is expected to remain in place as owner/maintainer. The other six planned trails have various owners. Half of these trails are located in protected open space. These trails are listed below in *Table A4.8* and illustrated on *Map 9*.

Two of these trails are in design or under construction: the Boars Back Segment of the French Creek Trail in Warwick Township, and the Temple Estates Trail in North Coventry Township. All others have simply been proposed. All 10 trails are intended to permit walkers, eight are planned to permit bicyclists, and seven will permit leashed pets. None of these planned trails are known to permit equestrians.

Table A4.8: Trails Planned by/for Private Entities

Trail Name	Status	Length (miles)	Walking	Bicycling	Equestrian	ADA	Pets	Owner	Protected Open Space
Boars Back Segment, French Creek Trail	Design/ Construction	2.0	P	P	P	U	P	Various	Yes
Temple Estates Trail	Design/ Construction	0.3	P	P	U	U	P	HOA	No
Boars Back Segment, French Creek Trail	Proposed	1.8	P	P	P	U	P	Various	Yes
Kensworth Association Trail	Proposed	0.9	P	P	U	U	U	HOA	Yes
Kirlin Trail	Proposed	0.6	P	P	P	U	P	Private	Yes
North Coventry Trail Network	Proposed	6.2	P	P	P	U	P	Various	No
Warwick Township Trail Network	Proposed	1.3	P	P	P	U	P	Various	Yes
Total		13.1							

P - Permitted; R - Restricted; U - Unknown

Source: Chester County Trail Inventory; Gannett Fleming, Inc.

OTHER IDENTIFIED TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES

ADDITIONAL EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Within the Region and the larger Hopewell Big Woods region, there is privately-owned infrastructure for horseback riders, including stables and horse farms. Examples include:

- Ryerss Home for Aged Equines in Coventryville
- Sheeder Mill Horse Farm, open to public riding
- Spring Creek Farm in East Coventry
- Clearview Stable, a full-service equestrian facility in Chester Springs
- Pen-Y-Bryn Equestrian Center Ltd. in Birchrunville
- Journey's End Farm in East Nantmeal
- WyndSOR Farm in Elverson, a full-service boarding and training facility
- Magic Hill Farm in Douglassville, a horse training farm
- Horse Spa Products, a horse equipment store in Elverson

Some of these properties may provide the opportunity to develop additional equestrian trails. At a larger scale, this concentration of equestrian destinations and services could be viewed as an opportunity to bring services and trail planners together and to market the Region to horse-lovers.

A REGIONAL TRAIL LOOP

The Schuylkill River Trail and French Creek Trail, along with the Horse-Shoe Trail, are major east-west “spines” through the Hopewell Big Woods that are anticipated to connect with north-south trails currently under development in the Region and southern Berks County. These trails could form a **Hopewell Big Woods Trail Loop** of about 30 miles through the Hopewell Big Woods, allowing communities and visitors access to a remarkable variety of recreational activity options. The loop

would provide a systematic way to experience all the Hopewell Big Woods has to offer, and an understanding and appreciation of natural and cultural resources through interpretive programming.

VOLUNTARY ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL SECURITY AREAS

Viewing protected open space from the public right-of-way provides an opportunity for appreciation of the large-scale landscape. It does not however afford the public a more intimate experience with nature. In a few cases, landowners have been willing to allow the public access to their property to view the natural vegetation and wildlife more closely. To date, landowners with an agricultural easement on their property have been prohibited from granting public access for passive recreational use, i.e., trail use, by strict interpretation of the Agricultural Area Security Law.

In 2008, House Bill 2524 was introduced to amend the Agricultural Area Security Law enacted June 30, 1981 (P.L.128, No.43) to allow “the granting of rights-of-way by the owner of the subject land in and through the land for trails for non-motorized use,” under the following conditions (Section 14.1.(c)(9)):

- the portion of land does not exceed 20 feet in width,
- the portion of land is used as a trail for non-motorized passive recreational use,
- the portion of land is available to the public for use without charge,
- the use of the portion of land as a trail shall not convert land which is devoted primarily to agricultural production or commercial equine activity, and
- if the owner of land subject to an agricultural conservation easement permits or authorizes the use of a portion of the subject land for a trail, the owner may enter into an agreement with a local government unit or an eligible nonprofit entity permitting or authorizing its use of the portion of land as a trail. The agreement shall be recorded with the county recorder of deeds.

The bill was subsequently referred to the Committee on Agricultural and Rural Affairs.

This prohibition of agriculturally-eased land for non-motorized passive recreation use was raised again during the preparation of *Pennsylvania Outdoors: The Keystone for Healthy Living, the 2009-2013 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. Finding value in recreational opportunities on state lands and state-funded private lands, PA DCNR developed Recommendation 4.4. Action Step C:

Work with Department of Agriculture to identify ways to incorporate hiking trails and rails-to-trails on lands under permanent agricultural preservation easements. Review easements and easement policy to determine potential options.

Suggested implementation partners included: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), counties, DCNR, trail groups, Farm Bureau, Penn State Cooperative Extension, and Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA). No action or progress has been publicly reported, though trail groups, like the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, remain hopeful that progress can be made under the new Governor Corbett Administration.

MANDATORY DEDICATION OF PARKLAND FOR TRAILS

A review of municipal ordinances for mandatory dedication of parkland requirements demonstrates that several municipalities recognize trails as an appropriate facility for passive parkland and open space but include no specific standards for trail facilities. Provisions in East Coventry Township, East Vincent Township, and South Coventry Township subdivision and land development ordinances

specially mention trails or pedestrian pathways as rationale for connecting passive recreation and open space. North Coventry Township lists “existing trails connecting the tract to other locations in the Township” as one of its prioritized resources to be incorporated into protected open space to the greatest extent possible. West Vincent Township’s provisions also support continued use of existing trails on the proposed development tract. East Vincent Township and North Coventry Township specifically mention trails as a suitable use for new parkland areas that do not meet the municipal parkland configuration standards. Only East Pikeland Township’s provisions incorporate standards for trail design, construction, maintenance, and dedication.

ANALYSIS OF TRAIL NETWORKS AND POTENTIAL

EXISTING TRAILS, PATHS, AND NETWORKS

1. The Region offers more than one hundred miles of land and water trails. There are 69 existing trails or paths totaling 82.2 miles on county, municipal and private parklands in the Region. Additional named trails at Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site (NHS) and French Creek State Park, the Horse-Shoe Trail, and public-use trails on private lands not currently inventoried by Chester County raise the total to 99.4 miles of existing trails. One water trail, the Schuylkill River Water Trail, offers 18.7 miles of river excursion.
2. There is at least one existing public-use trail or path in every municipality. These include walking paths within parks, neighborhood sidewalk systems, and routes, such as the Horse-Shoe Trail.
3. Municipal and private public-use trails offer a wide range of lengths, ranging from five-mile trails in Coventry Woods and Woody’s Woods to more than a dozen trails or trail segments under one-quarter mile. These trails average 1.5 miles in length.
4. Existing trail networks, interconnecting multiple trail segments, are limited to the larger public parks and preserves. Almost 45 miles of named trails (plus many more unnamed segments) are interconnected among Hopewell Furnace NHS, French Creek State Park, and Crow’s Nest Preserve. Warwick County Park and Welkinweir both hosts internal loop trails as well as segments of the Horse-Shoe Trail. Serving as trailheads to multi-trail networks, *The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan* suggests that Crow’s Nest Preserve and Welkinweir could become hubs for information on regional recreational facilities, specifically trails, and information on visitor services.
5. Four regional (multi-municipal) trails that will pass through the Region are under development: the Schuylkill River Trail, the French Creek Trail, the Pickering Creek Trail, and the Brandywine Trail. Upon completion, the Schuylkill River Trail and the French Creek Trail will both provide northwest-southeast travel routes. Interconnection of the Schuylkill River Trail and French Creek Trail, along with the Horse-Shoe Trail and local trails could form a Hopewell Big Woods Trail Loop of about 30 miles, creating a significant trail destination. The Pickering Creek Trail is completed through most of West Pikeland Township and planned through East Pikeland into Charlestown Township. The Brandywine Trail has a north-south orientation between the Horse-Shoe Trail and Marsh Creek State Park.

Appendix 4 Trail Network

Draft – December 2011

6. Sidewalks in the Region are extremely limited, offering no significant linkages between home and recreational destinations—except in the vicinity of Kenilworth Park and Riverside Park in North Coventry.
7. The Region offers 29.2 miles of off-road bicycling routes for beginner and intermediate bicyclists. Most of these are hard-surfaced trails suitable for the beginner and recreational bicyclists who prefer or require separation from motor vehicles.
8. The Region offers 34.3 trail miles in eight locations for equestrians. Roughly half of this mileage is the Horse-Shoe Trail. Trails at Crow’s Nest Preserve, Warwick County Park, Coventry Woods, and the West Vincent Equestrian Trail at Weatherstone comprise the majority of the remaining public trail mileage for equestrian use.
9. The Horse-Shoe Trail is recognized by Chester County as a recreation resource but not as public-use trail, due to its non-public ownership. The Horse-Shoe Trail Conservancy is seeking to secure easements and address liability concerns on private property to make the trail truly open to the public, and remove any segments that are still on-road.
10. Multi-use trails reportedly lack facilities and amenities for permitted trail users; trails that permit equestrians are especially lacking in these areas. Vehicular parking is limited at municipal and private trailheads, and restrooms, drinking water, bike parking, and public phones are generally not available. Trash/recycling receptacles are also limited, though several sites have pack-it-in, pack-it-out policies. Horse trailer parking is limited to French Creek State Park (South Entrance Road, Berks County) and Welkinwier. Inappropriate trail surfaces for horses where they are permitted have also been reported as a concern. Mounting blocks for horseback-riders to mount and dismount their horses at the trailhead and at regular intervals along the trails, are also absent, discouraging clean up after their horses. The Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Concept Plan suggests that improvements to parking areas, such as bike parking, a horse trailer parking area and/or hitching posts and a watering trough, as well as trail maps and brochures, could better support users of existing and proposed equestrians trails. Access to running water to rinse horse hooves and minimize the transfer of invasive species has been suggested.
11. Trailhead identification signage and trail blazes are also lacking. Signage along the Schuylkill River has been coordinated by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association and may provide a model for recreational signage throughout the Region.
12. None of the trails in the Region are specifically ADA-accessible. Given the importance of trails as a means to experience the natural and cultural significance of the Region, accessible trail opportunities should be considered.
13. Along the more than 18 miles of riverfront in the Region, there are two public access/landings to the Schuylkill River Water Trail: the Hanover Street Boat Ramp and the Towpath Park Boat Ramp. The next access point is located in Spring City. A third boat ramp is proposed in the Region at the Schuylkill River trailhead at Parker Ford.
14. Trails and paths on private lands are not well known by residents, according to the 2010 public opinion survey.

15. There are no running trails for equestrians and their horses. Interest in such trails is reportedly growing.
16. There are many miles of social trails in the Region. Some residents would like to see social trails permanently protected so that the trails remain in place even as property owners change. Others prefer to keep these routes private.

TRAIL NETWORK PLANNING

17. There are 52 planned trails or trail segments totaling 122.9 miles in the Region; 127.3 miles with recent updates. These planned trails include 60.0 miles of trails in design or under construction and 22.2 miles of trail under feasibility study; most of these segments are part of the Schuylkill River Trail and the French Creek Trail. Another 45.13 miles of trail is proposed for future study and development.
18. If proposed trails in the eastern municipalities were found to be feasible and developed, most residents would have access to a trail within two miles of their home, possibly less. However, not all trails will be feasible.
19. The level of detail, practicality, and development in municipal trail network planning varies widely across the nine municipalities. Nearly all municipalities have considered locations and linkages for such a system. All are challenged to connect dispersed destinations and no significant population center within a single township. Many proposed trail and path locations are “lines on a map” with little to no consideration of physical or political feasibility. Only East Pikeland, North Coventry, and West Pikeland have advanced these concepts to feasibility study and design/construction.
20. Municipal trail networks have focused on connections within each township with little to no linkages to destinations beyond each jurisdiction. For example, a trail along Pigeon Creek is proposed by East Coventry Township but not proposed for the North Coventry Township trail system. The hubs and spokes approach to trail planning has been limited.
21. There are two proposed trail concepts in southern Warwick Township and East Nantmeal Township. The Warwick-Elverson Regional Recreation Corridor listed in Chester County’s *Linking Landscapes* could provide a trail along this municipal border. The proposed Western Loop in East Nantmeal suggests that other loop trails may be considered. Connections among Nantmeal Village, Welkinweir, French Creek Elementary School, the Horse-Shoe Trail, and Ludwig’s Corner in West Vincent Township should be considered.
22. Off-road bicycling trails could total more than 100 miles as more trails are studied and constructed. Of the 127.3 miles of known planned trails, 80.5 miles will permit bicycling on paved surface trails and some dirt and compacted surface trails.
23. Trails that permit equestrians could total 57.5 miles, as another 23.4 miles of trail is planned for equestrian use. More than fifteen miles of equestrian trails will be added to the North Coventry Trail Network. Nearly two miles of the proposed Schuylkill River Trail and nearly four miles of the Boars Back Trail will be open to equestrian use.
24. ADA accessibility is listed as “unknown” for nearly all planned trails and “along roadway” as the location for nearly half of the planned trails. Given that many of the “along roadway” locations are

heavily-used local roads, the proposal to use them as trail routes raises concern for the safety of trail users and motorists. Each of these “along roadway” trails should carefully study the physical conditions and use of the roadway as part of its feasibility and design studies. If designed as shared-use paths that provide transportation per the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board and constructed with federal monies, these trails will have to meet ADA accessibility standards.

RELATED TRAIL NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

25. Trail easements need consistent monitoring and enforcement. This has been a recent focus of the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust for the easements it holds, however not all easements are monitored by the Trust.
26. Together, the Schuylkill River Trail and the Schuylkill River Water Trail offer tremendous opportunities for environmental education and stewardship of natural resources, and consequently, eco-tourism prospects.
27. Education is needed for trail users on topics such as trail etiquette (travel speed, right-of-way, etc.) toward other trail users on multi-use trails, trail use (rest) during wet weather conditions, and respect for property owners.
28. Direction to nearest available facilities for non-permitted users, e.g. mountain bikers and ATV riders, is also needed.
29. Education is also needed for private landowners, regarding protection from liability as provided under Pennsylvania’s Recreation Use of Land and Water Act.
30. A relative concentration of equestrian services, including stables and horse farms, is available in the Region and surroundings. These lands may represent potential locations or community support for the development of additional equestrian trails in the Region, as well as the opportunity to market the Region as an equestrian trail destination or community.
31. State legislators and PA DCNR have suggested that lands under permanent agricultural preservation easements could be voluntarily made available to the public for non-motorized passive recreational use. An amendment to the Agricultural Area Security Law would likely be needed and was proposed in House Bill 2524 of 2008.
32. Provisions in several municipal ordinances recognize trails as an appropriate facility for passive parkland and open space but only East Pikeland’s ordinance includes specific standards for trail design, construction, maintenance, and dedication.