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## INTRODUCTION

Vision, bold leadership, and effective management are needed to create a successful parks and recreation system. Parks that are safe, clean, ready-to-use, and inviting attract citizens of all ages, interests, and abilities. Having plenty of recreation opportunities in place – both organized activities and things people can do on their own – enhances the quality of life. This chapter describes the current scenario in Northern Chester County in terms of operations, management and financing. It also presents how operations and management could work more efficiently and effectively if the municipalities pooled their resources for parks and recreation. By working in partnership rather than as independent jurisdictions, municipalities can save money, provide more and better public service and be more competitive for grant funding.

## ORGANIZATION OF NORTHERN CHESTER COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The governments in Northern Chester County include nine townships, three school districts, and Chester County. The townships range in population from 1,946 to 7,843. *Table A7.1* presents the nine municipalities of Northern Chester County along with their elected and appointed boards, township administration, police, and county government. *Table A7.2* presents information about the three school districts regarding the boards and municipalities served. In all, 63 elected officials serve the communities of Northern Chester County. Another 227 citizens serve as appointed members of the boards and committees related to parks, recreation, open space, environment, conservation, the arts, history, and culture.

In addition to the permanent boards, the municipalities also provide representatives to regional boards and committees for special purposes. Examples of these special purpose committees include the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Committee, the Hopewell Big Woods Trails and Recreation Plan Advisory Committee, and the Northern Federation Regional Resource Plan Advisory Committee.

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**Table A7.1: Northern Chester County Municipalities, Governance, Administration, and Boards and Committees Related to Parks, Recreation, and Open Space**

Municipality	Elected Officials	Municipal Manager	Police Dept.	Parks and Recreation Board	Related Boards or Committees
East Coventry	5	Yes	Yes		Parks, Recreation & Conservation Board (7 members + alternate) Historical Commission (7 members)
East Nantmeal	3	No	No	No	Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) (7 members) Historical Commission (7 members)
East Pikeland	3	Yes	Yes	Parks & Recreation Board (7 members)	Open Space Committee (9 members) Historical Commission (9 members + building inspector)
East Vincent	3	Yes	Yes	Parks & Recreation Board (7 members)	EAC (4 members) Historical Commission (8 members)
North Coventry	5	Yes	Yes	Parks & Recreation Board (8 members)	Open Space Review Board (7 members) EAC (5 members) Historical Commission (9 members)
South Coventry	3	No	No		Open Space, Recreation, and Environmental Oversight (OREO) Board (7 members) Historical Commission (8 members)
Warwick	3	Administrator	No	No	Historical Commission (5 members)
West Pikeland	5	Yes	Yes	Parks and Recreation Board (7 members + Alternate) Member of Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium (DARC) (10 members) Arts & Culture Committee (5 members)	Open Space Advisory Committee (9 members) West Pikeland Land Trust (11 members) EAC (5 members) Historical Commission (7 members)
West Vincent	3	Yes	Yes	Parks and Recreation Commission (7 members + supervisor liaison)	Open Space Advisory Committee (7 members) West Vincent Land Trust (9 members) EAC (9 members)
Chester County	3	Open Space Department and a Parks & Recreation Department with County Park Rangers.		Parks & Recreation Board (9 members)	Open Space Advisory Committee (10 members)

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**Table A7.2: School Districts Serving Northern Chester County**

School District	School Board Members	Municipalities Served in Northern Chester County
Owen J. Roberts School District	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ East Coventry Township</li> <li>▪ East Nantmeal Township</li> <li>▪ East Vincent Township</li> <li>▪ North Coventry Township</li> <li>▪ South Coventry Township</li> <li>▪ Warwick Township</li> <li>▪ West Vincent Township</li> </ul>
Phoenixville Area School District, based in Montgomery County	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ East Pikeland Township</li> </ul>
Downingtown Area School District	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ West Pikeland Township</li> </ul>

### FEDERATION OF NORTHERN CHESTER COUNTY COMMUNITIES

With nearly 300 elected and appointed officials working toward the planning and implementation of projects in their individual jurisdictions, the Federation of Northern Chester County is a potential nucleus of collaboration. Known as the Northern Federation, it has been leading the way in regional planning, conservation, and partnerships since 1974. The Northern Federation is the oldest and largest active regional planning organization in Chester County. Originally formed as a joint venture of five municipalities to protect the French Creek corridor, the Northern Federation now includes 10 municipalities – 9 of which participated in the development of this Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan – and a host of public and private organizations. Since its establishment, the Northern Federation has been geared toward planning and developing regulations for resource conservation. Although in Pennsylvania municipalities have traditionally operated independently, the Northern Federation has advocated that the municipalities and their partners work together, transcending municipal boundaries toward a common vision of a region united by natural and cultural resources and rural scenic beauty.

The Northern Federation operates informally through consensus of its municipal partners. Although formal paperwork was in place at the time of the establishment of the Northern Federation, the intergovernmental agreement has become informal over the years. The municipal partners contribute about \$2,500 annually to support the Northern Federation’s efforts to secure support for projects that advance the region’s goals. Each municipality appoints one member to the Northern Federation annually, and these members elect the Federation’s annual leadership.

With its long and successful history, the Northern Federation has earned the recognition and support of the citizenry to the degree that many citizens view their place of residence as Northern Chester County rather than as any one municipality. Municipalities working together have become the norm here with the encouragement and example of the Northern Federation. This was borne out in the public opinion survey in which 51 percent of all respondents would prefer to get information about parks and recreation from one Web site for all townships, rather than from single townships or the school district.

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## OTHER GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS

### *FEDERAL GOVERNMENT*

**Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site** ([www.nps.gov/hofu/historyculture/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/hofu/historyculture/index.htm)) offers programs, tours, events, camps, programs, educational activities, and public facilities for walking, hiking, and nature and cultural exploration. About 53,000 people visit the site annually. The Hopewell Furnace's role in the historical, cultural, and recreation system of Northern Chester County could be explored.

While the **Valley Forge National Historical Park** ([www.nps.gov/vafo](http://www.nps.gov/vafo)) is not within the Northern Chester County boundaries, it does abut the area and serves as a major destination for the citizens of the region who like to walk, hike, bicycle, picnic, and enjoy the scenery there. As reported in the survey, it is among the most heavily-used parks by Northern Chester County residents. The role of Valley Forge in the American Revolution is well known. The Northern Chester County landscape and its cultural resources play a lesser-known but also vital part in the story of the Revolution. Working with the National Military Park in telling and promoting this story throughout the region could be considered. Some 2.2 million people visit the park each year.

### *COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA*

**French Creek State Park** ([www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/frenchcreek.aspx](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/frenchcreek.aspx)) is heavily used by the residents of Northern Chester County. About 271,400 people visit the park annually. The park is very important to the Philadelphia area in generating about \$1,842,300 annually in economic impact. Although Pennsylvania state parks have experienced cutbacks in operations, the Commonwealth is still encouraging state parks to form partnerships in order to serve citizens while conserving resources. Beyond its use as a recreation resource, the park could potentially be a partner for Northern Chester County in environmental education, resource management, and other related areas. As the North American capital for orienteering, French Creek State Park could potentially assist Northern Chester County in generating interest in this activity as a way of motivating people of all ages to spend more time outdoors.

The 1,727-acre **Marsh Creek State Park** ([www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateParks/parks/marshcreek.aspx](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateParks/parks/marshcreek.aspx)) provides recreation opportunities that serve the people of Northern Chester County. They are frequent visitors to Marsh Creek. The partnership potential would be similar to that of French Creek State Park. The 2010 Citizen Survey found that people who use one state park tend to use many state, national, regional, and county parks.

The **Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission** ([www.fish.state.pa.us](http://www.fish.state.pa.us)) is an important state organization for municipalities. Commission services that lend themselves to partnerships in Northern Chester County include stream stocking, fishing and boating programs, and grant funding.

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The **Pennsylvania Game Commission** ([www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us)) specializes in wildlife management and conservation. With some state game lands in the area, the Game Commission can potentially be a partner in educational programs and in programs on wildlife management.

The **Schuylkill River Heritage Greenway Association** ([www.schuylkillriver.org](http://www.schuylkillriver.org)) manages the Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area. The Association is a strong supporter, facilitator, planner, advocate, and implementer of trails, greenways, activities, and events in Northern Chester County and other areas surrounding the river. Northern Chester County communities work closely with the Greenway Association. Subjects for potential partnerships already include or could include the following:

- Expanded Schuylkill Land and River Trail System.
- Increased riverfront access.
- Environmental education along the river for children, adults, and families.
- Public recreation facilities on the riverfront.
- Riverfront recreation events, perhaps signature events.
- Greenway protection.
- Reforestation.
- Heritage preservation and interpretation.
- Revitalization of riverfront communities.

### *COUNTY AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS*

**Chester County Parks and Recreation (CCPR)** ([www.chesco.org/ccparks](http://www.chesco.org/ccparks)) manages Warwick County Park, the only county park in Northern Chester County. As such, CCPR provides valuable expertise in assisting Northern Chester County communities in managing natural areas, establishing benchmarks, providing examples of policies and procedures, refining workload cost tracking methods, planning, developing and managing nature-based parks, and programming. The Department also manages the Historic Preservation and Heritage Education Services division. Both the Parks and Recreation Director and the Historic Preservation Coordinator participated in this planning effort. The programs that lend themselves to partnerships with the Northern Federation include historic trail planning, historic and cultural resource preservation, heritage tourism, and town tours, among others.

The **Owen J. Roberts School District (OJR SD)** ([www.ojrdsd.com](http://www.ojrdsd.com)) provides public education for East Coventry, East Nantmeal, East Vincent, North Coventry, South Coventry, Warwick, and West Vincent townships. The school district is progressive in addressing health and wellness as part of its core function. The district has established a Wellness Coordinator position supported in part through a grant from the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation to stimulate physical activity to promote wellness. The school district is engaged in a strategic planning process for the improvement of school facilities over the next 10 to 20 years. As part of the strategic planning process, the school district is exploring facilities that are used for recreation and how they can be enhanced and expanded in the

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future to serve a broad base of citizens in leading active, engaged lifestyles. Topics for partnerships include the following:

- Active healthy lifestyle advocacy, programs, services, and promotion for broad base of citizens within the district.
- Information sharing and promotion.
- Facility planning, development, and operation.
- Sharing of expertise in field operations.
- Potential sharing of equipment.
- Joint purchasing.
- School parks.
- Customer data base for enhanced public service and information dissemination.

East Pikeland Township is served by the **Phoenixville Area School District** ([www.pasd.com](http://www.pasd.com)). The district will be renovating East Pikeland Elementary School on Hares Hill Road and has presented the plans to the township. Given their orientation to the school district, township residents tend to participate in programs and services provided by the Phoenixville Recreation Department.

West Pikeland Township is a member of the **Downingtown Area Recreation Consortium** (DARC) ([www.darcinfo.com](http://www.darcinfo.com)), a consortium of municipalities and the **Downingtown Area School District** ([www.dasd.org](http://www.dasd.org)) organized to provide public recreation programs and services. About 5,500 people are enrolled in DARC’s sports leagues including 500 residents from West Pikeland. This plan supports the continued participation of West Pikeland Township as a member of DARC. As an exemplary municipal school parks and recreation partnership, DARC could serve as a model multi-municipal recreation organization for Northern Chester County.

### PRIVATE AND NON-PROFIT PARTNERS

Table A7.3 presents private and nonprofit organizations that have a relationship or the potential to have a partnership with the Northern Federation in parks, recreation, and open space protection and related areas, such as health and wellness and environmental conservation. This includes promotion and information sharing.

**Table A7.3: Non-Governmental Organizations with Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Interests in Northern Chester County**

Name	Mission
<b>Conservation and Heritage</b>	
Hopewell Big Woods Partnership <a href="http://www.hopewellbigwoods.org">www.hopewellbigwoods.org</a>	Led by Natural Lands Trust, the Partnership is a group of over 30 government agencies, private nonprofits, and municipal entities. The Partnership is seeking to conserve at least 4,000 acres of old growth, 15,000 acres of unbroken forest, and the watersheds supported by this

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Name	Mission
	forest.
French and Pickering Creek Conservation Trust <a href="http://www.frenchandpickering.org">www.frenchandpickering.org</a>	To preserve and protect endangered land and natural resources in the Northern Chester County watersheds for future generations.
Green Valleys Association <a href="http://www.greenvalleys.org">www.greenvalleys.org</a>	To protect and preserve the quality and quantity of water resources in Northern Chester County through advocacy and education.
Schuylkill Highlands <a href="http://www.schuylkillhighlands.org">www.schuylkillhighlands.org</a>	Under the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) and administered by Natural Lands Trust, Schuylkill Highlands is a place-based strategy for natural resource stewardship and advocacy in key landscapes across our state where there are strong natural assets and local readiness and support for land conservation, locally-driven planning, and community economic revitalization efforts.
Natural Lands Trust <a href="http://www.natlands.org">www.natlands.org</a>	Natural Lands Trust protects the forests, fields, wetlands, and streams that are essential to the sustainability and quality of life in eastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey.
Green Space Alliance <a href="http://www.greenspacealliance.org">www.greenspacealliance.org</a>	Dedicated to preserving and connecting open space throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania, the alliance works collaboratively with members, local governments, and nonprofit organizations, to raise awareness of the importance of open space to the region’s quality of life and identity, its economic vitality, and its ecology.
Iron and Steel Heritage Task Force	Created in 2009 to address the lack of comprehensive planning for the area’s iron and steel sites. Goal is to link the sites on the Iron and Steel Trail and promote them as a unit.
<b>Health and Wellness</b>	
Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation <a href="http://www.pottstownfoundation.org">www.pottstownfoundation.org</a>	The Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation serves communities within a 10-mile radius of Pottstown. The Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to assuring increased access to health and wellness education and services. The foundation provides these services directly through its own programs and through other nonprofit health and wellness providers via a trust of about \$70 million.
Phoenixville Community Health Foundation <a href="http://www.pchf1.org">www.pchf1.org</a>	The foundation’s mission is to improve the health and quality of life of people through grants and community involvement within the greater Phoenixville community.
<b>Nature Based Recreation and Environmental Education</b>	
Crow’s Nest Preserve <a href="http://www.natlands.org/preserves-to-visit/list-of-preserves/crows-nest-">http://www.natlands.org/preserves-to-visit/list-of-preserves/crows-nest-</a>	600 acres of protected lands along French Creek managed by the Natural Lands Trust. Offers educational and recreation programs.

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Name	Mission
<a href="#">preserve</a>	
Dame Juliana League Flyfishers <a href="http://www.djlflyfishers.org">www.djlflyfishers.org</a>	Works toward the conservation and protection of our aquatic resources and educating those interested in fly fishing and fly tying.
French Creek Outfitters <a href="http://www.frenchcreekoutfitters.com">www.frenchcreekoutfitters.com</a>	Commercial outfitting company that provides demonstrations and classes on recreation in the great outdoors.
Anselma Mill <a href="http://www.anselmamill.org">www.anselmamill.org</a>	The Mill at Anselma Preservation and Educational Trust was formed in 1998 to create an innovative historical attraction at the Mill at Anselma to demonstrate through sensory experiences the evolution of technology and the impacts of change in commerce, free enterprise, and transportation on American life over three centuries, for schoolchildren, families, scholars, visitors, and local residents.
Historic Yellow Springs and Studio <a href="http://www.yellowsprings.org">www.yellowsprings.org</a>	Historic Yellow Springs is a nonprofit enterprise that preserves and promotes the history and arts of Yellow Springs village. It is home to the <a href="#">Chester Springs Studio</a> , a vibrant arts center that hosts classes, workshops, and exhibitions in the visual arts.
Maki Winery	Demonstrations, tastings, programs, and involvement in development of a regional Wine and Cheese Trail.
Chester County Cheeses <a href="http://www.chestercountycheese.org">www.chestercountycheese.org</a>	Members dedicate their lives and lands to the art and science of making premier farmstead and artisanal cheeses. Offers events and programs; involved in creating a regional Wine and Cheese Trail.
<b>Organized Sports</b>	
Coventry Little League <a href="http://www.coventryll.org">www.coventryll.org</a>	Baseball and softball for males ages 5–12 and females ages 5–18.
Coventry Soccer Association <a href="http://ssl.23sports.net/coventrysoccer">http://ssl.23sports.net/coventrysoccer</a>	Soccer for males and females ages 4-17.
Coventry Youth Lacrosse <a href="http://www.coventrylax.com">www.coventrylax.com</a>	Lacrosse for males ages 7–15 and females ages 8–12.
Glenmoore Eagle Youth Association <a href="http://www.geyasports.org">www.geyasports.org</a>	Baseball and soccer for males and females ages 5–18.
Kimberton Youth Athletic League <a href="http://www.kimbertonyouth.com">www.kimbertonyouth.com</a>	Baseball and softball for males and females ages 5–16.
Lionville Youth Association <a href="http://www.lyasports.org">www.lyasports.org</a>	Baseball, softball, lacrosse, field hockey for males and females ages 5–19.
Norchester Red Knights <a href="http://www.norchesterredknights.com">www.norchesterredknights.com</a>	Flag and tackle football and cheerleading for males and females ages 6–15.

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Name	Mission
Penn Premiere Lacrosse <a href="http://www.pennpremier.com">www.pennpremier.com</a>	Lacrosse for males and females in grades 1 through 12.
Phoenixville Babe Ruth League <a href="http://www.pybrl.com">www.pybrl.com</a>	Baseball for males ages 13–18.
Spring Ford Youth Athletic League <a href="http://www.s-fyouth.com">www.s-fyouth.com</a>	Baseball, softball, cheerleading, basketball, and wrestling for males and females ages 4–18, with most being 6–12.
Vincent United Futbol Club <a href="http://www.vincentunited.com">www.vincentunited.com</a>	Competitive soccer program for females U10–U18.
WC Field Hockey Club <a href="http://www.wcfieldhockey.com">www.wcfieldhockey.com</a>	Total player development in field hockey for females ages 8–18.
<b>Equestrian</b>	
Ludwig’s Corner Riding and Driving Club <a href="http://www.ludwigsriding.org">www.ludwigsriding.org</a>	Club for riding and driving, including English and Western-style pleasure riding and carriage driving for all ages and skill levels.
Bellewood Hunt Club 610-495-6587	Fox hunting.
Warwick Village Hounds 610-286-7337	Fox hunting.
Kimberton Hunt Club 610-469-0227	Fox hunting.
<b>Trails and Greenways</b>	
Horseshoe Trail Conservancy <a href="http://www.hstrail.org">www.hstrail.org</a>	Established in 1935 as the Horseshoe Trail Club, this is a nonprofit volunteer organization working toward protecting and conserving the natural and cultural aspects of the trail.
Equestrian Groups See above.	Equestrian groups identified above are strong advocates of trails and perform outreach to create the network of informal trails throughout the area.
Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia <a href="http://www.bicyclecoalition.org">www.bicyclecoalition.org</a>	Recognized as the top bicycle advocacy coalition in the nation, the Bike Coalition was instrumental in obtaining an \$18 million TIGER grant in 2010. The organization should be considered as a major partner in bicycle trails in Northern Chester County.
Bicycle Club of Philadelphia <a href="http://phillybikeclub.org/newbcp">http://phillybikeclub.org/newbcp</a>	The Bicycle Club of Philadelphia is a recreational biking group which offers a wide variety of rides throughout the Greater Delaware Valley for cyclists of all abilities and interests.
<b>Tourism and Information Dissemination</b>	

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Name	Mission
Brandywine Conference and Visitor's Bureau <a href="http://www.brandywinecvb.org">www.brandywinecvb.org</a>	Conference and Visitors Bureau for Chester County with a focus on the Brandywine area.
Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau <a href="http://www.valleyforge.org">www.valleyforge.org</a>	The Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau is a private, nonprofit membership sales and marketing organization that aggressively promotes the Valley Forge area and Montgomery County as a convention site and leisure visitor destination by promoting patronage of its member hotels, restaurants, attractions, and services.
Chester Springs Surrounds <a href="http://www.chesterspringsurrounds.org">www.chesterspringsurrounds.org</a>	An organization devoted to visitation and appreciation of the beautiful green spaces bounded by Pottstown, South Phoenixville, Elverson, and Exton. The organization produces a brochure oriented toward visitation in this area.

### PARTNERSHIPS AS AN ORGANIZING ELEMENT

Combined, Northern Chester County's local governmental, state, regional, county, private and nonprofit partners number more than 350 organizations. Clearly, the people of Northern Chester County have experienced the value of working together. Partnerships vary, from those that have endured for many decades, to partnerships that are rooted in a certain cause and are of finite duration. For the most part, Northern Chester County partners desire to operate on a handshake and the good word of those involved rather than a formal written agreement. While this seems to work, there is also a desire – noted in the public involvement section – to move ahead more formally over time with a partnership devoted to parks, recreation, and open space. The range of partnerships in this area could include the following:

- A Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission including the nine municipalities of the service area.
- A municipal/ school district partnership among the municipalities and the Owen J. Roberts School District.
- A multi-municipal/school district partnership with a recreation coordinator staff person.
- A multi-municipal/school district partnership as part of a regional coalition with the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation. Under this scenario several regional parks and recreation partnerships would exist in the Foundation's service area within the 10-mile radius of Pottstown. The Northern Federation coalition would focus on the Owen J. Roberts School District and collaborate with the Foundation's efforts on larger topical and service issues and opportunities.

## MANAGEMENT

In Northern Chester County, management of facilities is primarily the responsibility of the entity that owns the property. For example, the National Park Service manages Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, the Bureau of State Parks operates French Creek State Park, and Chester County manages Warwick County Park. For the purposes of this plan, management will focus on the properties owned by the municipalities.

## POLICY MAKING AND IMPLEMENTATION

As Townships of the Second Class, the Boards of Supervisors are the chief elected officials for each municipality. They are responsible for setting policy and decision-making. Those responsible for the implementation of the Boards' policies are township managers, staff, and advisory boards and committees. Township-appointed boards and committees are advisory. It is their job to implement the policy directives of the elected officials and to provide the elected officials with solid information in a timely manner so that the elected body can make informed decisions for the overall good of the community. All of the townships have a manager except Warwick, which has an Administrator, and East Nantmeal, where the Supervisors serve in this capacity.

## PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENTS

No municipality in Northern Chester County has a parks and recreation department. The functions normally provided by a parks and recreation department are handled by volunteer parks and recreation boards. Some, such as North Coventry Township, offer extensive recreation programs and thus employ part-time recreation staff. This is an expected finding as a municipality needs a population of at least 10,000–12,000 to warrant a parks and recreation operation. The Park and Recreation Boards in Northern Chester County provide recreation programs and activities for their communities with a focus on special events and community festivals.

## PARK MAINTENANCE

Park maintenance in Northern Chester County is a function of the Public Works or Roads Departments. This is expected to continue in the future even if the region forms a coalition for parks, recreation, and open space. The usual path to regional parks and recreation begins with a focus on programs and services with the responsibility of park maintenance continuing under the auspices of the public works or roads departments. The focus is typically on mowing, trimming, and trash removal. They also work on capital projects.

Because these are small rural communities and work on parks is done as part of overall public works, there is little if any tracking of workload and costs associated with park maintenance, or specific facilities such as ball fields, or tasks such as mowing. Tracking the cost of labor and expenses provides a base of information for use in decision-making such as setting fees and charges, staff hiring, contracting out tasks, and so on. As the saying goes, "You can't manage what you can't count." As the Northern Chester County parks and recreation system grows, it will be important to begin workload

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cost tracking for park maintenance. The Owen J. Roberts campus maintenance management team may be able to provide expertise, advice, and modeling in this area.

## SPORTS FIELD MAINTENANCE

Sports organizations provide support for the maintenance of game fields in the form of volunteers and contracted maintenance. They spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on field maintenance and improvements.

## OWEN J. ROBERTS SCHOOL DISTRICT ADULT EVENING SCHOOL

The Owen J. Roberts School District contracts its Adult Evening School to Chester County Night School. The Adult Evening School is important to the residents of Northern Chester County. The survey for this plan found that one of every two survey respondents is interested in adult enrichment, lifelong learning, and skill development programs. This was a margin of nearly double that of other types of programs listed in the survey. There is also interest in programs centered on local history and culture. The Adult Evening School is an important source of recreation opportunities that satisfies an interest in this community. It demonstrates how contracting services is an effective management tool.

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

One of the most important findings of the planning process was the consistent identification of the need for information about parks, trails, recreation facilities, programs, and services. One in two survey respondents identified the lack of information about recreation opportunities as their chief block to participation. This is an unusual finding as the chief block to participation in most communities is the lack of time/too busy to participate.

As shown in *Table A7.4*, the majority of the survey respondents indicated that they would like to know more about parks, trails, recreation facilities, programs, and services and where to get information about these topics. *Table A7.4* also shows that the highest level of awareness was about parks and the lowest was about programs. Those who wanted more information about trails outnumbered those who were fully informed about them by a margin of two to one. Fully one in four respondents was not aware of trails in the region.

**Table A7.4: Survey Respondents' Awareness about Parks and Recreation Elements**

	Fully Informed	Would like to Know More	Not Aware
Parks in the area	36%	57%	6%
Trails for cycling	24%	50%	26%
Recreation facilities	27%	58%	15%
Recreation programs, events, and services	19%	63%	18%
Where to get information about parks and recreation	20%	63%	17%

When asked about their preferred means of getting information, the Web sites and township newsletters were the most-preferred means. Overall, respondents most preferred accessing information

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via one Web site for Northern Chester County. This was closely followed by township Web sites. Least preferred was social media. However, it is important to note that the respondents to this survey were primarily over the age of 24. It is highly likely that generational differences are at play in this response. Social media are important for young residents.

Planning for the provision of information will be an evolutionary process with the first step being to establish one Web site as the “go to” place for all things parks and recreation in Northern Chester County, with links to township Web sites as well to other providers and partners. An existing Web site might be able to be tapped to become the “go to” Web site – Chester Springs Surrounds might be a partner in this initiative. The Northern Federation should strongly be considered as the home of the “go to” parks and recreation Web site given its name recognition, success, and long history here. The township newsletters should continue. The investigation about information on trails should consider long-term mobile applications, most likely in partnership with another organization such as the Schuylkill River Greenway Association or the Schuylkill Highlands. A Web site for the Owen J. Roberts School District as well as individual fliers and handouts were not preferred methods.

One of the most valuable things that the Northern Federation does is to bring the parks and recreation boards together for a semi-annual summit. During the summit the participants discuss important parks and recreation issues that they have in common. The merits of regular discussion about parks and recreation issues came to light during this planning process. Participants regularly shared information on topics of importance to them such as the Mandatory Dedication of Parkland. Without a regular forum, such discussion and information sharing do not occur.

### OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

It is important to keep the context of Northern Chester County municipalities in mind in any discussion of management. These are small, rural communities with 2010 populations ranging from 1,803 in East Nantmeal to 7,866 in North Coventry, with an average of 4,879. Given the fact that seven of the nine municipalities and dozens of volunteers are providing recreation programs and activities, these efforts are dispersed, fragmented, and duplicative. About 80 percent of survey respondents reported not knowing where to go to get information (17 percent) or wanting more information (63 percent). Those municipalities and private providers involved with the planning process suggested that by working together, they may be able to schedule and coordinate activities and programs in such a way as to provide more numerous programs, of higher quality and more diversity, to maximize public involvement. The level of coordination could range from sharing information on event schedules to planning a year-round program. Areas that appear to be well-suited to multi-municipal partnerships include information sharing, event planning, program planning, advertising and promotion, recreation staff sharing, and trail planning. Areas that do not appear to be well-suited to multi-municipal sharing include park maintenance and park design. Park planning appears to be on the cusp of multi-municipal involvement especially in the area of ball fields and game courts. With organized sports expanding, and fields already being overused and insufficient in number, discussion

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during this planning process focused on multi-municipal and school district efforts regarding sharing the planning, development, and maintenance of athletic fields.

*Table A7.5* presents potential management options, ranging from retaining the current organizational structure by municipality with the Northern Federation facilitating collaborative projects, to establishing a regional parks and recreation organization. Not everything needs to happen at once. Organizational changes can be phased in as opportunities emerge and circumstances evolve. Not all nine municipalities need to step up together – the municipalities that want to join forces can, leaving the door open for others to join in at a later time. The benefits of collaboration include maximizing available resources through cost and labor sharing, providing more and better public services, and moving initiatives forward across municipal boundaries to establish more facilities and services for recreation than could be done by any one municipality alone.

### FINANCING

Parks and recreation support has departed from the traditional approach in which municipalities used local taxes to develop and operate parks and recreation. Today, parks and recreation is largely supported through a mix of public and private funding.

As small, rural communities, the municipalities of Northern Chester County experienced the traditional pattern of growth in parks and recreation – municipalities providing land and park development largely in response to pressing needs for sports facilities. Programs and services were rooted in volunteer organizations such as sports leagues as well as faith-based institutions. Public schools were hubs for community life, including recreation. Fire companies stepped up by offering land as the location for ball fields. Organizations did their own fundraising through concession stand sales, product sales, and events geared to raising money to support operations.

Today, many citizens view facilities on municipal and school district property as already being in place and available for public use in an unlimited fashion. While the municipalities and the Owen J. Roberts School District operate under the philosophy of maximum public use of facilities for education and recreation, their use requires operational support for labor, maintenance, cyclical repairs, security, utilities, materials, equipment, and supplies. Long-term, 75 percent of the lifetime cost of a facility is in maintenance. It is much easier to get capital funding than it is to get funding for operations and maintenance, especially in this era of concern about paying for salaries and benefits.

The following section provides information about financing parks and recreation in Northern Chester County.

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**Table A7.5: Organizational Options for the Northern Chester County Parks, Recreation, Greenways, Trails, and Open Space System**

Options	Pros	Cons	Comments
<p><b>Current Scenario</b> Federation exploring and facilitating regional collaboration. Each municipality operating parks and recreation opportunities on its own through its parks and recreation board. Trails advanced by individual stakeholder groups. School districts operate independently on recreation-related initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federation fosters collaboration.</li> <li>• Municipalities are working together and contributing joint funding for this plan.</li> <li>• Each municipality has the opportunity to chart its own course.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efforts are fragmented.</li> <li>• Potential for more duplication of facilities and services as municipalities develop independently.</li> <li>• Higher costs.</li> <li>• Less efficiency.</li> <li>• Harder to get grants as single municipalities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “easiest” thing to do is keep the status quo. Change is a challenge. However, the right thing to do and the hard thing to do may be the same thing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Northern Chester County Committee Scenario</b> <i>Current Scenario + Northern Chester County Parks and Recreation Committee</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers formal mechanism for communication and collaboration.</li> <li>• Potentially better use of limited resources.</li> <li>• Flexibility on when and what to collaborate on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as above to a lesser degree.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This could be a first step that would help parks, recreation, and open space advance. The Committee could help advance communication and build trust.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Expanded Municipal Scenario</b> <i>Current Scenario + Northern Chester County Parks and Recreation Committee.</i> Each municipality grows its system independently with parks and recreation staff (part-time or full time).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would help to implement the plan on a municipal basis with a mechanism for communication and cooperation in place via the Committee.</li> <li>• More could be accomplished with additional staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Municipal reluctance about adding staff due to wages and benefits.</li> <li>• Additional staff over nine municipalities is likely to be duplicative and expensive.</li> <li>• May not attract quality staff due to constraints on wage level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the municipalities start hiring parks and recreation staff, it will be more difficult to regionalize in the future.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Municipal Partnership Scenario</b> Northern Chester County Parks and Recreation Committee in place with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more formalized way of coordinating programs and facilities among municipalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scale of accomplishments is likely to be limited without people in place charged with</li> </ul>	

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Options	Pros	Cons	Comments
municipalities working together on identified initiatives using existing municipal staff and/or volunteers to accomplish projects and programs.	<p>than presently followed. Identifies an annual work program with roles, responsibilities, timelines, and resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses existing staff or additional staff at municipal level.</li> </ul>	<p>planning, directing, and managing efforts on a day-to-day basis.</p>	
<p><b>Tri-School District Scenario</b> Municipalities organize by school district. Regional partnership by school district. Three partnerships organized by OJR, Phoenixville, and Downingtown school districts with their associated municipalities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides three parks and recreation systems organized around the current orientation of participants toward their own school district.</li> <li>• West Pikeland already participates in DARC.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separates the Northern Chester County communities by school district: the municipalities of the OJR SD, with East Pikeland in Phoenixville, and West Pikeland in Downingtown.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks and recreation management through DARC and Phoenixville appears to work well in organized, scheduled recreation opportunities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Northern Chester County Regional Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Commission.</b> True regional partnership with an intergovernmental agreement including municipalities and the OJR School District for roles, responsibilities, contributions, planning, and staffing.</p> <p>Under this scenario, a Parks and Recreation Coordinator would serve the Northern Chester County regional parks and recreation partnership by coordinating efforts to develop programs for active healthy living; helping to guide the planning, development, and operation of parks and recreation facilities among the various partners; and providing technical assistance and support to advance partnerships and a broad means of supporting parks and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Federation is very well respected and has demonstrated staying power over decades.</li> <li>• Citizens already relate to the Federation.</li> <li>• Cost savings.</li> <li>• Higher level of public service, enhanced conservation of resources, less cost than operating separately.</li> <li>• Capacity to get things done that cannot be accomplished through volunteers alone.</li> <li>• Capacity to put actions into place in response to public preferences such as providing information about parks and recreation.</li> <li>• Capacity to recruit, sustain,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a lot to work out. Details are complex but achievable.</li> <li>• With OJR being the principal school district, how can we carve out a role with Phoenixville?</li> <li>• West Pikeland is already in DARC and may not want to be in a Northern Chester regional parks and recreation commission.</li> <li>• We need to work out putting in fair and equitable shares by each municipality and the school district. Need to figure in the fairness related to municipalities providing the land and facilities for recreation versus those that do</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All of the right people and conditions are in place to foster success. It is hard to imagine a better set of circumstances to launch a regional system.</li> <li>• The focus of the commission can be determined: parks, recreation, open space, greenways, trails – any or all of these.</li> <li>• Can determine how parks and recreation facilities are planned, acquired, developed, and maintained.</li> <li>• Assumes each municipality would</li> </ul>

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Options	Pros	Cons	Comments
<p>recreation. “Parks and Recreation” encompasses the region’s broad interests of conservation, recreation, trails, history, culture, the arts, and partnerships.</p>	<p>enhance, coordinate, and recognize partnerships, sponsorships, and volunteers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to get staffing that may not be affordable by any one municipality.</li> <li>• Ability to attract higher-quality staff.</li> <li>• Smaller investment required by each municipality to yield greater results.</li> <li>• Ability to address regional issues, e.g., trails, facilities, services.</li> <li>• More competitive for grants.</li> <li>• Potential to be a demonstration area with the school park idea that could attract funding.</li> <li>• State funding available for four years for circuit rider, allowing time to establish and stabilize the system.</li> <li>• Pottstown Health &amp; Wellness Foundation could be a key player.</li> </ul>	<p>not.</p>	<p>continue to own its own land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decisions could be made about regional parks and potential school parks.</li> <li>• Decisions could be made about the level of regional cooperation regarding facility development and operation, including decision-making.</li> <li>• DARC is a good local model of successful formal regional recreation partnership.</li> <li>• Funding for this position may be available under Pennsylvania’s Circuit Rider program. The program offers funding over a four-year period to support the Circuit Rider in 100%, 75%, 50%, and 25% grants, to be matched by the regional partners with no match the first year increasing to 25%, 50%, and 75% over the next three years.</li> </ul>

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### OPERATING BUDGETS

Table A7.6 presents the 2010 municipal and parks and recreation budgets in Northern Chester County. The financial resources available in each community vary widely. It should be noted that the municipal investments in parks and recreation may be higher than reported due to labor, equipment, and materials provided for township parks by the municipal Public Works Departments, for which park expenditures are not tracked.

**Table A7.6: Municipal Operating Budgets, Per Capita Investment, and Ratio of Parks and Recreation to Operating Budget**

Municipality	Population 2010	Municipal Operating Budget	Per Capita Operating Budget	Parks & Recreation Budget	Per Capita Parks & Recreation Expenditure	Ratio of Parks & Recreation to Operating Budget
East Coventry	6,636	\$3,028,581	\$456	\$50,419	\$7.60	1.6%
East Nantmeal	1,803	\$607,217	\$337	-	-	-
East Pikeland	7,079	\$2,286,000	\$323	\$9,500	\$1.34	0.4%
East Vincent	6,821	\$2,309,925	\$339	\$68,550	\$10.05	2.9%
North Coventry	7,866	\$3,812,240	\$485	\$54,676	\$6.95	1.4%
South Coventry	2,604	\$781,478	\$300	\$24,250	\$9.31	3.1%
Warwick*	2,507	\$1,955,000	\$780	\$55,000	\$21.94	2.8%
West Pikeland	4,024	\$2,130,459	\$529	\$97,195	\$24.15	4.5%
West Vincent	4,567	\$5,601,575	\$1,227	\$48,700	\$10.66	0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,907</b>	<b>\$22,512,475</b>		<b>\$408,290</b>		
<b>Municipal Average</b>		<b>\$512</b>		<b>\$45,366</b>	<b>\$9.30</b>	<b>1.8%</b>

\*Warwick Township Parks and Recreation Budget includes \$40,000 is in annual reserve for potential recreation needs and \$15,000 is for annual planning.

### BENCHMARK COMPARISONS

While each municipality is unique and Northern Chester County has higher socioeconomic characteristics than Pennsylvania and the USA, benchmark comparisons serve to provide a measure for gauging parks and recreation investment with other communities. While there is no right or wrong answer, the statistics represent broad “yardsticks” against which a municipality’s operations can be measured. A deviation among those reporting figures is not necessarily good or bad. The information should be used as a tool for informed decision-making rather than absolute standards. Since municipalities differ as to their location, size, and other factors, any two can be successful yet have very different experiences with regard to certain measures. The better the information we have, the more informed we are in making decisions.

- According to the Trust for Public Land, the national average annual per capita investment in parks and recreation is \$67.
- According to Dr. John Crompton, leading national parks and recreation researcher, the national average ratio of a parks and recreation budget to a municipal operating budget is 2 percent. In

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Northern Chester County, the average is 1.95 percent, with a range 0.4 percent to 4.5 percent among the nine municipalities with parks and recreation operating budgets, and zero in place in East Nantmeal and Warwick’s recreation budget for projects that arise.

- According to the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources the average annual municipal investment in parks and recreation is \$28.78 as adjusted for inflation. In Northern Chester County, the average of township per capita spending on parks and recreation is \$9.83 and \$9.21 for the region as a whole with a range of \$1.29 to \$21.59.
- According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, the average annual per capita investment in parks and recreation for rural communities of all populations is \$8.13 with a range of \$6.22 to \$11.23, based on population size. *Table A7.7* presents the figures on per capita investment in parks and recreation in rural communities according to population size in Pennsylvania.

**Table A7.7: Average Rural Municipal Expenditures in Statewide Study Center for Rural Pennsylvania (2004 dollar value adjusted for inflation in 2011)**

Rural Municipalities	Average Municipal Expenditure	Average Parks & Rec Expenditure	Municipal Expenditure per Capita	Parks & Rec Expenditure Per Capita
Municipalities with fewer than 2,500 residents	\$427,834	\$6,547	\$407	\$6.22
Municipalities with 2,500 to 4,999 residents	\$1,113,392	\$26,187	\$320	\$7.50
Municipalities with 5,000 to 9,999 residents	\$2,115,640	\$71,929	\$330	\$11.23
<b>Average for All Rural Municipalities</b>	<b>\$653,828</b>	<b>\$14,630</b>	<b>\$363</b>	<b>\$8.13</b>

### REVENUE SOURCES

Other than municipal taxes, municipalities generate revenues for parks and recreation from fees, charges, and facility rentals. For Northern Chester County as a whole, about 29 percent of the recreation budget is generated from non-tax sources. Typically about 35 percent is viewed as the bottom range of non-tax support, with 50 percent being a target and 85 percent possible by parks and recreation agencies with solid management and a wide range of programs and facilities that can generate rental income and user fees. *Table A7.8* presents Northern Chester County’s parks and recreation non-tax revenues by municipality.

### ROLE OF VOLUNTEERISM

Volunteers in recreation in these communities are invaluable. Volunteers provide planning, programs, events, fundraising, sports leagues, and advocacy which have a significant value without having an exact price. As the management section described, over 350 different boards, committees, and organizations deal with community parks, recreation, open space, culture, the arts, and historical endeavors. The value of a volunteer hour in 2010 was \$21.36.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Independent Sector. [http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time). Accessed December 10, 2010.

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**Table A7.8: Parks and Recreation Fees and Revenues**

Municipality	Source	Facility/Event Revenues	Total Revenues	Percentage of P&R Operating Budget
East Coventry	Towpath Park pavilion rental	\$2,100	\$7,100	14%
	Park Day receipts	\$5,000		
East Nantmeal	No recreation revenues	0		
East Pikeland	Park Facility rentals	\$1,000	\$4,700	49%
	Recreation Program Fees	\$3,700		
East Vincent	NA	NA		
North Coventry	Ball field rental fees	\$5,000	\$14,640	27%
	Facility rentals	\$2,000		
	Tennis	\$240		
	Day Camp	\$4,400		
South Coventry	No recreation revenues	0		
Warwick	No recreation revenues	0		
West Pikeland	No recreation revenues	0		
West Vincent	Playground Fees	\$15,500	\$27,500	56%
	Community Day	\$12,000		
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$53,940</b>		

### FINANCING OVERVIEW

As expected, the operating investment in parks and recreation in the Northern Chester County communities is lower than average. This is due to a number of factors, including:

- It is a rural area.
- Overall municipal budgets are relatively low.
- For many communities, the parks and recreation system is relatively new and growing.
- Public Works or Road Departments provide park maintenance and these expenses are possibly not tracked and reported as park maintenance.

Parks and recreation is largely supported by tax dollars. Only East Coventry, East Pikeland, North Coventry, and West Pikeland generate revenues from parks and recreation through program fees and facility rentals.