

**STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE
OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN
-SCORP-
STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA
2015-2020**

friendly employees comfort eventful Hawks Nest special
ability to see and do things I can't do in my front yard
with grandchildren nice friendly
great outdoors green scenic
quiet landscape enjoyable trails pretty camping boating
bonding rest picnic activities good golf round biking
restorative ballfields the best yet time with family
pride down home feeling music pool concerts active peaceful
family beautiful breath-taking good place for family gatherings
good location hiking educational challenging
variety of activities relaxing
apple butter festival swimming
honeymoon love
school field trips clean view peace isolation
spacious inviting canoeing view peace isolation
autumn colors view peace isolation
water access calming disappointing need more parks!
not accessible boring - closed off joyful small streams playing as a child
fantastic views restful great accomodations a good start fishing
rejuvenating safe rustic awesome
early morning jogging historic magnificent natural scenery
interactive great memories forever water
plain - unused trains
not well-maintained limited use

West Virginia Development Office
Capitol Complex, Building 6—Room 553
Charleston, West Virginia 25305
www.wvcommerce.org/scorp

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)
2015-2020
West Virginia Development Office
Charleston

Acknowledgements

Over 200 West Virginians took the time to help prepare this update to the state's public outdoor recreation plan, without whose survey inputs no conclusions would have been possible. A select few went above and beyond to assist the Development Office staff with their expertise and comments, sometimes responding on limited notice--they deserve special note:

Jessica Wright, WV Bureau of Public Health
John Yauch, WV Bureau of Public Health
Randy Worls, Oglebay Foundation
Eriks Janeisins, Oglebay Foundation
Bill Robinson, WV Division of Highways
Ryan Burns, WV Division of Highways
Bill Miller, WV Division of Tourism
Dr. Jamie Jeffrey, KEYS 4 HealthyKids
Judy Crabtree, KEYS 4 HealthyKids
Laura Dice, KEYS 4 HealthyKids
Dr. Chad Pierskalla, WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design
Dr. Kudzayi Maumbe, WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design
Dr. Christiaan Abildso, WVU School of Public Health
Melina Danko, WVU Center for Excellence in Disabilities
Jeff Lusk, Hatfield-McCoys Regional Recreational Authority
Curtis Taylor, WV Department of Natural Resources
Paul Redford, WV Department of Natural Resources
Adam Flack, WV on the Move

WVDO LWCF Staff:

Mary Jo Thompson
State Liaison Officer

Kelly Workman
Assistant State Liaison Officer

Susan Foster
Secretary

Jim Marshall
Landscape Architect

John McGarrity, AICP
Senior Planner

About our cover:

The QR-inspired 'word cloud' represents the words used most often by SCORP survey respondents to describe their most memorable park experiences.

The Bank Gothic font used in the cover's title block was drawn from the style of signage engraved on a Boone County mine portal, reminiscent of the culture and beliefs of our State's coal heritage.

Overview and Accomplishments from 2009 to 2013

West Virginia's outdoor recreation, tourism, and energy-producing industries are collectively tied to the State's iconic mountain topography (Figure 1). Coal is not only a cultural image but a major contributor to the State's economy (see Figure 2). While alternatives to coal and the State's new-found Marcellus and Utica natural gas formations are sought, these energy sources remain viable—and volatile—fuel resources for not only public utilities but the growth of the State's chemical industry exports.

Parks and public outdoor recreation are integral parts of the State's Leisure and Hospitality industry. Income growth and visitors have been steadily increasing for the last several years, although salary growth falls behind that of the State's other economic sectors (see Figures 3 & 4). The 2013 opening of the 10,600-acre Summit Bechtel Family National Scout Reserve in Southern West Virginia will provide some unique opportunities as well as challenges for the State's recreation and tourism providers, the impact of which is discussed in the *Trends and Issues* section.

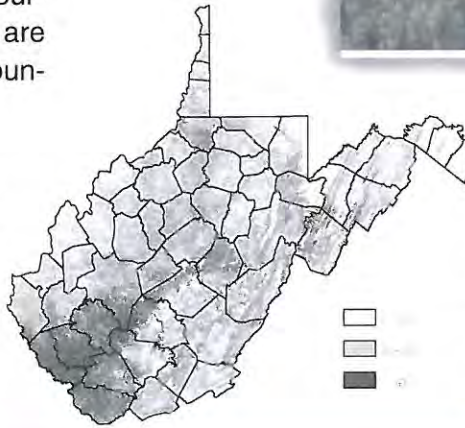
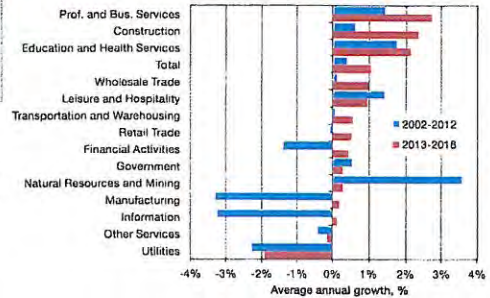


Figure 1—The Mountain State of West Virginia. (left) Slope Map, (above) Bridge Day BASE jumper, Fayetteville, West Virginia.

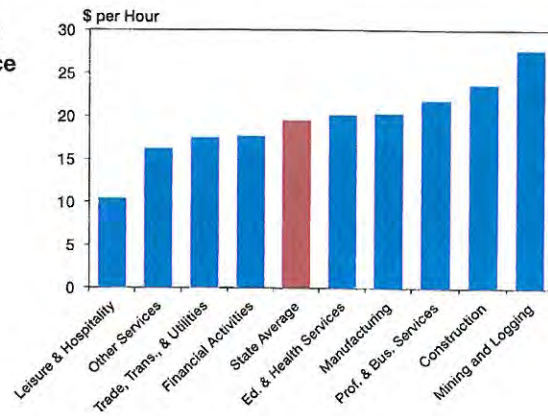
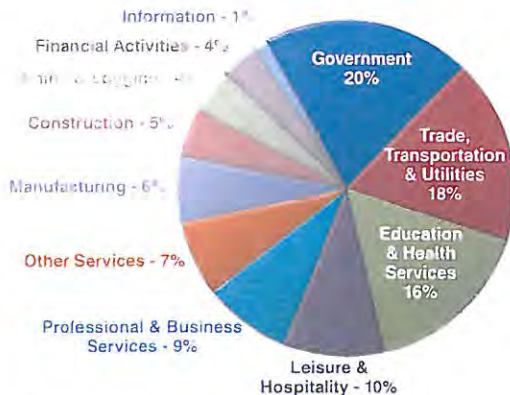


Figure 2—(right) State's natural resources and mining remain strong sectors while future is volatile. (above) unit trains of coal ready to ship.

FIGURE 2.10: West Virginia Employment Growth Forecast by Sector



Figures 3 & 4 (below) Leisure and Tourism's fourth place employment and last place salaries.



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis

Source: US Bureau of Labor Statistics

LWCF Program Progress During the 2009-2013 Period—SCORP Priority I:

- **“Assist park expansions to promote active lifestyles and innovate community cores.”**

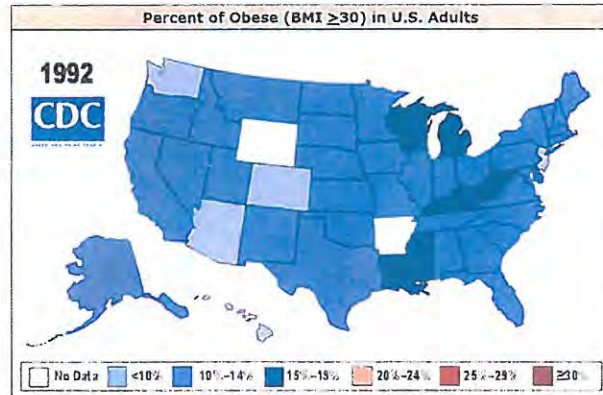
West Virginians share the often-discussed trait that we do not know as many people as we use to, but that we share the same common areas—only now represented by technology and social media rather than actual places.⁽¹⁾ This characteristic has a physical as well as a social dimension, with the lack of physical movement or activity contributing to a major health problem with the State’s high obesity rate and rates of other chronic disease (see Figure 5).

Being predominantly rural in character, many of the State’s small towns retain the fabric of the ‘village center,’ only now bereft of people with the loss of traditional manufacturing (see Figure 2). Without people moving around, appearances suggest whole places in ultimate decline, reinforcing their social isolation. However the framework for a recovery is still present, and in many places population losses have already bottomed-out as jobs already lost cannot be lost again.

The development of parks and tourism infrastructure implicit in this SCORP priority are key forces among a number of factors that can now help bring about a turnabout. However this is a slow process, as improvements within each community are oftentimes only incrementally “lighter, quicker, and cheaper” because of limited funds. Financial matters are further discussed in *Trends*.

Authors having discussed this include:

- “The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces,” by William H. White (1980—Project for Public Spaces, NYC)
- “Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community,” by Robert D. Putnam (2000—Simon & Shuster, NYC)
- “Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection,” by John T. Cacioppo (2008—Norton & Co., NYC)
- “Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other,” by Sherry Turkle (2011—Basic Books, NYC)



Prevalence* of Self-Reported Obesity Among U.S. Adults BRFSS, 2012

*Prevalence reflects BRFSS methodological changes in 2011, and these estimates should not be compared to those before 2011.

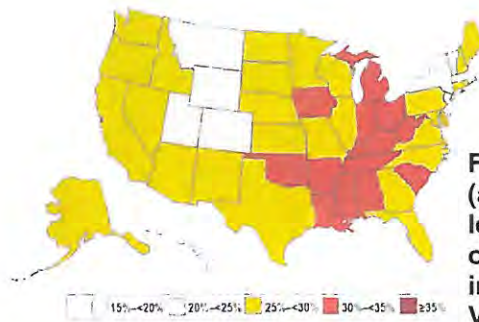


Figure 5 (above and left) 20-year obesity trends in West Virginia.



First Priority LWCF projects built during 2009-2013 were characteristically more costly park infrastructure improvements, which nonetheless greatly widened and deepened their intended impacts to revitalize their local community cores and promote more physical activity. Representative projects in each of the State’s three Congressional Districts are featured here.

Figure 6 (right) Oglebay Park Winter Sports Complex, Wheeling WV, First District.



Thirteen of the 31 LWCF applications funded between 2009 and 2013 were considered *SCORP Priority I* projects, including three new parks now protected under Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.

SCORP Priority I projects were represented in each Congressional District. In Northern West Virginia's First Congressional District, Oglebay Park's new Winter Sports Complex in Wheeling is shown on the preceding page. Second and Third District Priority I projects shown at right, respectively, include a gateway park for Charleston, the Mary Ratrie Greenspace, and the April Dawn Spraypark in Milton.

Photos at right: (top): *Mary Ratrie Greenspace , Charleston WV*
 (middle): *April Dawn Spraypark, Milton WV*
 (bottom): *Chuck Ripper Wildlife Interpretive Trail, Huntington WV*



2009-2013 Period—SCORP Priority II:

- **“Provide park funding for maintenance or additions to restore or maintain services.”**

By far the greatest number of LWCF projects funded during this period were facility upgrades to existing parks. A total of 14 projects, divided almost evenly between the 1st and 2nd Congressional Districts, included a variety of pool repairs, shelter upgrades, and new playground installations. In the 1st District, LWCF projects were awarded to the Town of Beech Bottom, Marshall County, the City of McMechen, the City of Clarksburg, the City of Parkersburg, the City of Shinnston and the Town of Parsons. In the 2nd District, grants were awarded to the Town of Belle, the City of Charles Town, Barbour County, the City of Dunbar, and the City of Nitro. Nitro, Beech Bottom and Dunbar were all first-time LWCF recipients.

2009-2013 Period—SCORP Priority III:

- **“Provide support to complement the State’s Recreational Trails program.”**





*Moulton Park on the Shenandoah River,
Jefferson County WV*

In regard to SCORP Priority III, there were no expressed, RTP-LWCF joint ventures during the 2009-2013 period. However one interpretive trail in Huntington (photo on previous page) and one water trail in Jefferson County were assisted with LWCF funds.

*2009-2013 Period—SCORP Priority IV:
“Acquire lands for conservation values to preclude loss from development and promote healthy lifestyles.”*

One LWCF acquisition project was undertaken during the 2009-2013 period, to save a two acre tract from housing redevelopment in the Jerome Park neighborhood of Morgantown, to be rededicated as Mayfield Park (see photo below).



*Mayfield/Jerome Park Acquisition,
Morgantown WV*

2009-2013 SCORP Activity Priorities:

- **Develop “Certified Healthy Communities” designation**
- **Agency cooperation to assist communities with revitalization strategies**

The state’s 2009-2013 SCORP included two programming priorities (see above) which were partially successful as objectives. The designation of “Certified Healthy Communities” was not accomplished as a LWCF program initiative, however the concept is currently being developed as a new program by the West Virginia Bureau of Public Health.

In a similar fashion, no formalized inter-agency agreements have been formed as expressed, LWCF initiatives, however the West Virginia Development Office continues to work cooperatively with a broad array of public and private, state and local organizations as part of its overall mission to develop or restore essential infrastructure and human capacity needs to ensure a high life quality.

Trends and Issues

Public outdoor recreation is all about creating opportunities to refresh mind and body in different environments. These opportunities evolve over time, influenced by a variety of trends and issues. Broad matters influencing the finance of new recreational development since the state's 2009-2013 SCORP include these major challenges and accomplishments:

- Following the prosperity of the 1990's and Millennium, the recent Great Recession marked the most significant reduction in states' revenues since the Great Depression.
- Federal budget battles have accompanied significant declines in federal LWCF assistance for the acquisition and development of high-quality public outdoor recreational projects.
- Obesity rates continue to increase for West Virginia and the nation as the improvement of public health has arguably become the nation's number one domestic policy issue.
- West Virginia continues to age, as it maintains its rank of having the third oldest population in the United States—both a challenge as well as an opportunity for simultaneously having fewer preferences for active, youth-oriented recreational facilities as well as growth potential for retirees and second home development.
- West Virginia was successful over scores of other states in the Boy Scouts of America's selection of their permanent venue for a National Scout Jamboree site at the Summit Bechtel Reserve in Fayette County. Besides its variety of world-class, outdoor recreational opportunities, the state's 'wild and wonderful'

natural areas were judged to be readily accessible via existing commercial carriers—rail, airline and interstate—to larger regions.

- The U.S. 2010 Census reveals 80.7 percent of the nation's population now living in urban areas. Significantly, the rural-to-urban shift is occurring nearly *three times faster* than the overall population growth increase of 9.7 percent. The land conversion accompanying this population shift accounts for the 'sanctuary in rural greenery' East Coast visitors see in the Mountain State's available natural areas. In large part, this demographic fact accounts for West Virginia's trend-bucking, exponential growth in big game hunting and ATV ridership when compared to national directions.
- The multi-dimensional aspects of linking physical activity opportunities with stronger place-making, access to healthier foods, improvements to the natural environment, and increased access to new or better economic opportunities has now developed a consortium approach by and between nearly 30 state and private agencies or organizations in West Virginia, which are now beginning to network together to address a number of the challenges and opportunities noted here.

Details of Trends

"Recent economic conditions are leading many parks and recreation agencies across the country to cut their budgets....recreation resources per capita are projected to be about 2/3 of what they are now by 2060, yet demand will rise substantially by that year."

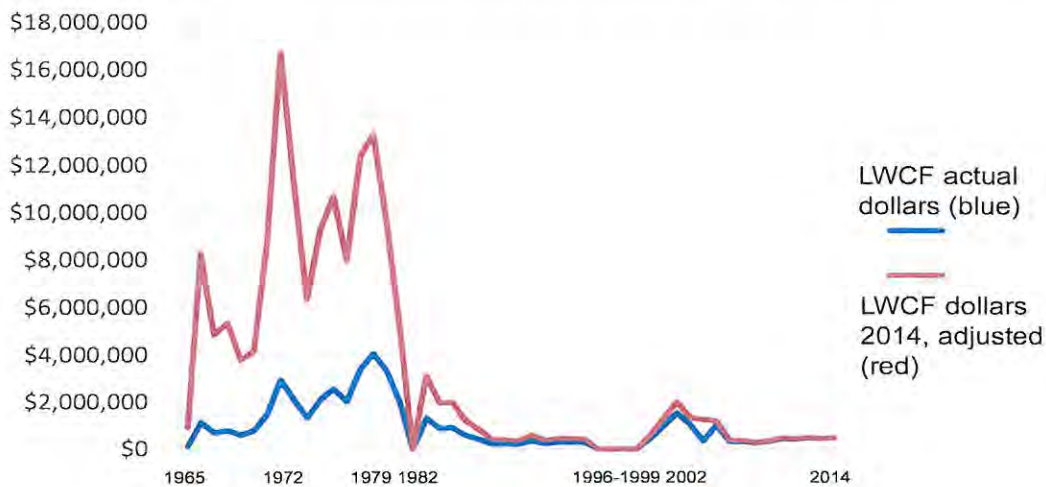
—quotes from Recreation Management and the U.S. Forest Service (NSRE)

For years the LWCF grants-in-aid program has been a 'go-to' source of financial support for park capital improvements. However in the history of the program, federal funds have been dramatically cut since 1982 (see following table), greatly limiting the number and size of grant awards. Effects have been disproportionate, with southern distressed counties of the Third Congressional District seeking funds the least due to the program's local matching requirements.

Of particular interest to West Virginians is the House Bill, sponsored by First District Congressman David McKinley, whose motives in sponsorship include correction of the inequities between federal and state apportionments and the creation of greater incentives for tourism-based job growth and local

Aside from these Congressional initiatives, little state or local support appears evident for new park financial assistance. Our

Time Value of Money: LWCF Annual Apportionments Adjusted for 2014 Dollars



Of greater concern is the obsolescence of previously funded park improvements built during the onset of the program that 40 years later, have all but reached the end of their life cycle. Now much of what was built then is due for replacement, without significant fund sources being available to finance necessary improvements. As a consequence, deferred maintenance is an all-to-common observation, underscored by the large number of comments received in our 2014 survey about needed improvements to existing facilities.

2014 survey asked if current financial assistance for parks and tourism infrastructure was good, bad or indifferent, to which only 12 percent of residents felt it was 'bad' while 51 percent thought current support was good. A significant minority of 37 percent were either indifferent towards, or unresponsive to, this issue.

Measures to reinstate the LWCF program to a greater share of its \$900 million authorization may yet gain traction in the near-term Congressional budget debates. Three current bills to reinstate LWCF funding include S. 1265, S. 1813, and HR 2727.

While the LWCF program is not a sole source of fund support for public outdoor recreation, a comprehensive review of park resources goes beyond the scope of this policy plan. Given the limits of present and prospective governmental assistance, philanthropic support from West Virginia foundations will need to be pursued more in the future (see sidebar and appendix listing of WV foundations).

The Need for Philanthropy and Friends to Sustain Our Parks & Recreation Facilities

By: G. Randolph Worls

Chairman, The Oglebay Foundation

As the competition for traditional funding sources and consumer dollars grows more intense, public service/non-profit organizations must rely on producing revenue through a wide variety of means, among them the donations of friends and supporters. Because revenue from taxes, fees, and charges can no longer meet optimal operation and maintenance requirements, most organizations are facing a challenging financial deficit. To help bridge the gap between agency needs and revenue many park and recreation departments, botanical gardens, zoos, cultural arts groups, and universities have turned to Friends Organizations.

A Friends Organization is simply a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation whose purpose is to assist with the improvement of the agency that it serves, most commonly in the area of financial support. Support may also come in the form of volunteerism and advocacy. Specifically, Friends Organizations can be used in the following ways:

1. Creating an additional flow of funds on a yearly basis through an annual campaign.
2. Creating a flow of funds for a special projects including designated capital improvements.
3. Using Friends as volunteer staff for special projects/special events.
4. Serving as an operating entity if the governmental entity is unable.
5. Sponsorship of fund raising events.

Many governmental agencies have created park and recreation departments that need external public support. With philanthropic support becoming more important to all non-profit organizations, a trust instrument designed for the sole purpose of acquiring gifts is an essential element of a comprehensive development program and key to the long term success and sustainability of park agencies.

Establishing a Foundation

The important of a separate trust fund or supporting foundation is that individuals, businesses, and philanthropic foundations, in general, are reluctant to contribute to governmental agencies. In fact, there is really no precedent for major giving to units of government. However, people will contribute to non-political trust funds established with guidelines that state its specific purpose and are administered by an independent group of trustees whose main purpose is to generate monies for the fund, and assure that they are managed for the purpose intended.

Partnering with Your Community Foundation

It may be appropriate, and to some extent economically feasible, to establish a "donor advised fund" with a local community foundation. Community foundations already have in place tax-exempt status and the expertise to handle such an arrangement. In exchange for using the community foundation's tax exempt status, its facilities, its staff, as well as saving the time, effort, and funds to create a separate trust fund, the local entity relinquishes the rights to the final decisions for managing and distributing the fund monies.

The parks and recreation field must become pro-active in acquiring resources from the private sector to address the deferred maintenance needs of their agencies, to provide for the long-term financial sustainability for West Virginia parks through the establishment of endowments. While we want to build and grow the capital facilities that provide for the healthy places in our communities that attract tourists, improve community wellness, and conserve natural resources, it is imperative that we identify resources that will guarantee the existence of facilities and programs into the future.

"If I knew I was going to live so long, I would have taken better care of myself."

—Lawrence Peter 'Yogi' Berra

West Virginians continue to struggle with the effects from a wide variety of health issues including high blood pressure, smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, diabetes, and preventable hospitalizations, according to the American Public Health Association (see *Appendix for State Health Rankings Details*).

Everyone recreates differently, however our 2014 SCORP survey sought to get a more effective understanding of people's recreational preferences not only by the purpose of their activity but also the context in which they chose one interest over another. As a consequence, several of the most common physical activity preferences—walking, running and cycling—were paired with the passive recreational interest of driving for pleasure, in both census-defined, urban and rural environments. As an additional measure, urban and rural residents were each asked to prioritize their respective park facility interests. Finally, a cross-tabulation of activity interests was examined by physical activity level ('low—being limited or no physical activity interest, medium—being casual or occasional physical activity interest, and high—being daily or near-daily physical activity participation') which was inferred from residents' trip frequencies, purpose and stated priority preferences. The 29 percent 'low' physical activity participants noted in the state's SCORP survey is consistent with West Virginia Bureau of Public Health's 2012 BRFSS data indicating 31 percent of West Virginia adults participate in no leisure-time physical activity or exercise which ranked West Virginia 3rd-highest in the nation for a lack of physical activity. In the other two categories, 50 percent of survey respondents were classified as casual or moderate park users while the remaining 21 percent were classified as daily or frequent park users.

Consistent with national trends and prior state SCORP surveys, walking continues to be the first choice of West Virginia residents for physical activity. By any other measure, the availability of trails to walk on was either a first or second facility priority (see *tables below*). Moreover, the availability of trails was of particular importance to rural West Virginians and those low-activity park users who would stand the most to gain from having better access to some kind of walking opportunity. The health significance of being

Facility Priorities – Urban Areas

- 1 – Good Views - 78%
- 2 – Trails – 52%
- 3 – Water Features – 42%
- 4 – Picnic Areas – 39%
- 5 – Courts & Playgrounds – 32%

Facility Priorities – Rural Areas

- 1 – Trails – 65%
- 2 – Good Views – 50%
- 3 – Picnic Areas – 45%
- 4 – Water Features – 38%
- 5 – Courts & Playgrounds – 34%

Facility Priorities – Low Park Users

- 1 – (tie) Good Views & Picnic Areas
- 2 – Trails
- 3 – Water Features or Access

Facility Priorities – Casual Park Users

- 1 – Trails
- 2 – Picnic Areas
- 3 – Good Views

Facility Priorities – High Park Users

- 1 – Trails
- 2 – Water Features or Access
- 3 – Good Views

Source: WV SCORP Survey, June, 2014
West Virginia Development Office

too far from a safe place to walk for rural residents is noted in the two tables at right—those in a rural area are more likely to be less active and less likely to be more active than an urban resident. This is true by a near 2-to-1 margin if activity preferences are either running or cycling.

Our survey results further indicated that the majority of casual park users were also the 'neediest' in term of requiring more park amenities or programs to feel motivated to be more active. A list of the most common items from more than 550 comments received is shown below. Significantly, two of the highest rated improvements—better walkways and restrooms—are readily achievable within the limits of LWCF projects recently funded.

Statewide Activity Preferences:

1. walking/jogging
2. natural areas/gardens
3. bicycling

Activity Preferences: Walking Running Cycling

Urban Areas	51%	15%	15%
Rural Areas	43%	9%	8%

"Urban vs. Rural" Physical Activity Levels of WV Park Users

	Low Level	Moderate Level	High Level
Urban Areas	25%	46%	29%
Rural Areas	33%	52%	15%
Mean Value	29%	49%	22%

Source: WV SCORP Survey, June, 2014
West Virginia Development Office

Amenity Priorities

Urban Areas:

- 1 – 'walk friendly'
- 2 – big events, festivals
- 3 – restrooms
- 4 – 'dog friendly'
- 5 – farmers markets
- 6 – fountains
- 7 – good views
- 8 – clean-up
- 9 – public art
- 10 – community garden

Rural Areas:

- 1 – 'walk friendly'
- 2 – big events, festivals
- 3 – restrooms
- 4 – good eating nearby
- 5 – wi-fi
- 6 – cultural activities
- 7 – farmers markets
- 8 – good views
- 9 – community gym
- 10 – active sports area

Source: WV SCORP Survey, June, 2014
West Virginia Development Office

Amenity Priorities by Park User

Low Usage:

- 1 – 'walk-friendly'
- 2 – big events, festivals
- 3 -- restrooms
- 4 – good eating nearby
- 5 – flea markets

Moderate/Casual Usage:

- 1 – 'walk-friendly'
- 2 -- restrooms
- 3 – big events, festivals
- 4 – 'dog-friendly'
- 5 – farmers markets
- 6 – good eating nearby
- 7 – good views
- 8 – wi-fi

High Usage:

- 1 -- big events, festivals
- 2 - 'walk-friendly'
- 3 -- restrooms
- 4 -- fountains
- 5 – community gym
- 6 – community gardens

Safe Trails for Healthy Lifestyles

Ryan C. Burns, West Virginia State Trails Coordinator
West Virginia Department of Transportation

The lack of safe places to walk, run or bicycle for both recreation and fitness has been a long term problem recognized by governmental and non-profit organizations fighting the high rate of obesity and poor health in West Virginia. Many times those who wish to walk for recreation or exercise are forced to walk along narrow roadway shoulders with vehicular traffic passing close by.

In recognition of this dangerous reality, the West Virginia Recreational Trails Advisory Board has attempted to ameliorate this situation by recommending projects for the Recreational Trails Program that construct local recreational trails, usually centered around a community asset, like a park, a school, or a community center. These trails, usually level and circular in nature, built to accessibility standards, offer residents of local rural communities a place to walk in safety.

The trails built near schools also have the added benefit of providing physical activity for the local school children and helping combat obesity and poor physical fitness in the young.

The opportunity has also presented itself on a larger scale when urban trails have been created allowing urban resident the opportunity to combine recreational/health benefits with alternative transportation. A prime example of this is the White Oak Rail Trail in Oak Hill.



White Oak Trail – Fayette County

Some examples of Recreational Trails Program awards serving fitness needs in communities are:

Braxton County Trail (Two phases at the middle school)



– Braxton County

Hurricane Valley Park - Putnam County

Morgan Grove Park Trail – Jefferson County

Paden City Trail (Two phases, City Park) – Tyler County

Wine Cellar Trail – Kanawha County



Alexander Park Trail – Monroe County

Belmont School Trail – Pleasants County

Yankee Trail (Wellsburg) – Brooke County

Paw Paw Town Trail – Morgan County

Warm Springs Middle School Trail – Berkeley County

Buckhannon River Trail – Upshur County

Homestead School – Randolph County

Twin Branch Trail – McDowell County

Ellenboro Elementary School Trail – Ritchie County

Calhoun County Trail (Grantsville) – Calhoun County

Waterways Trail – Boone County



Homecrest Manor Trail –

Wood County

With the latest SCORP research indicating the public is receptive to this initiative, the Recreational Trail Program and the West Virginia Trails Advisory Board will continue to recommend community trail projects to the Secretary of Transportation for future grant awards.

“West Virginia must do everything possible to protect its lovely wilderness and natural serenity—while the rest of the world becomes a crowded beehive.”

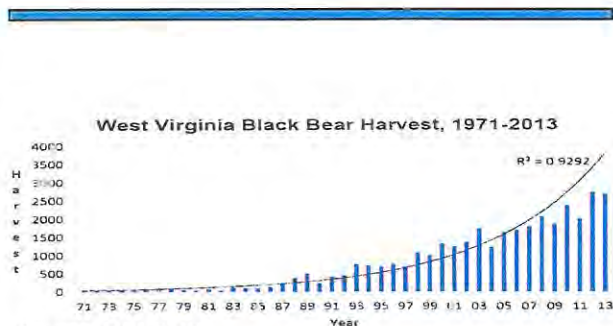
—*Charleston Gazette op-ed, July 27, 2014*

Our 2014 SCORP survey asked residents to describe their most memorable park experience in three words. Their words and thoughts were made into a word ‘cloud,’ for the cover of this report. Many if not most of the comments expressed intangible, unquantifiable market values, which have often-times made support for parks a difficult proposition. Nonetheless these non-market values have become the basis for a significant state tourism industry, which the national Outdoor Industry Association (OIA) estimated in 2012 to generate \$7.6 billion in in-state consumer spending, \$2 billion in wages and salaries, 82,000 direct West Virginia jobs and \$532 million in state and local tax revenues.

State and local parks represent some of the most stable assets in our communities and can well serve to attract other investments and help the state and its localities diversify our economic base. The value of appearances in this regard cannot be underestimated. Significantly, ‘good views’ besides common park amenities rated highly among both urban and rural area residents in our June, 2014 survey. For smaller communities in our more rural areas, as well as some larger places, imagining park improvements can be difficult when growth is minimal. However, quality placemaking demands that this effort be made, and is the object of further discussion in the last section of this report, dealing with updates and implementation of our LWCF program policy for the 2015-2020 period.

On a larger scale, the state Division of Tourism’s 2012 Ten Year Plan highlights the importance of broad investments and capacity building within the state’s parks, forests and wildlife management areas, ski and ATV venues, and cultural or heritage businesses supporting cultural or heritage development, additional lodging and the expressed support of the Boy Scout’s Summit Bechtel Reserve. West Virginia is well-positioned for growth in all these areas, in spite of flat or declining national trends in hunting, fishing and off-road, motorized recreation, according to the U.S. Forest Service’s 2012 Outdoor Recreation Trends and Futures.

While West Virginia’s population growth is among the least of states (2000-2010, +2.5%, U.S. Census), its value as a still-predominantly rural area is a draw for greater visitation from more urbanized areas of the country that now outpace the overall rate of U.S. population growth (12.1 percent urbanized area growth vs. 9.7% overall growth, 2010 Census). As a consequence big game hunting is on the rise here as is ATV ridership.



Source: WV-DNR

While West Virginia ATV ridership is less than U.S. ridership (21.2 %, USFS NSRE vs. 11.7 % WV, 2014 Economic and Fiscal Impact of the Hatfield-McCoy Trail System, MUCBER) the NSRE does not reflect *where* that ridership takes place. In West Virginia’s case, 80 percent of the Hatfield-McCoy Authority’s permits reflect out-of-state visitation, from Canada to Florida over its 700 mile system.

Where Do We Go From Here?

“The mustard seed...indeed is smaller than all seeds. But when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becomes a tree....”

—Matthew 13:31-32

As noted, imagining change can be difficult when growth is limited, as is the case in many parts of West Virginia. However, incremental changes can lead to major impacts when an effort is both organized and committed. Given the limits on grant-in-aid assistance and public consensus supporting repair and replacement over new construction, the state’s LWCF project priorities have been realigned and combined for the Fiscal 2015-2020 funding cycle as shown below.

Facility Priority I: Provide assistance for park, forest or wildlife area capital repairs to restore or maintain services to support demands beyond the present.

Facility Priority II: Provide assistance for State or local park renovations to promote active lifestyles, innovate community cores or attract or retain visitors to an area.

Facility Priority III: Provide assistance for the acquisition and development of natural areas in support of trail development to match approved Recreational Trails projects

A development strategy for assisting any of these objectives to improve public spaces is neither programmatic or regulatory, but a concept often referred to as “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” (LQC). LQC is a do-it-yourself approach based on taking incremental steps, trying low cost experiments, and tapping into local talents (e.g. neighbors, entrepreneurs) to quickly translate a community’s vision into reality and to build momentum for further improvements (see ‘Resources’ in Appendix for additional background information). Employed most often in a town or neighborhood, it is a common strategy used in the West Virginia Development Office’s Main Street and On-Trac development programs.

LQC projects need to start with the concept of a community’s ability to pay. In the June SCORP survey an overwhelming 70 percent of state residents (94%, urban residents, 79% rural residents) felt that underutilized property was available in their areas for start-up outdoor projects. Given the ‘blue sky’ nature of a general question like this, some metrics (below and next page) from the National Recreation and Park Association’s (NRPA) 2013 National Database Report can help establish bounds for continuing discussions and considering alternatives:

Figure 17 Facility Types, Fiscal Year 2013 (United States)

	Departments Offering	Median Jurisdiction Population Per Facility
Playground	96.1%	3,840
Diamond fields (e.g., baseball, softball)	92.0%	3,403
Rectangular fields (e.g., football/soccer)	89.1%	4,242
Tennis court (outdoor)	85.3%	4,283
Basketball court (outdoor)	84.8%	6,544
Recreation/community center	74.3%	24,645
Swimming pool (outdoor)	59.7%	30,376
Community gardens	47.1%	32,529
Dog park	47.1%	50,852
Golf course (9 holes)	34.7%	29,631
Swimming pool (indoor)	32.8%	61,322
Tennis court (indoor)	9.8%	22,852

Source: NRPA National Database

Figure 18

Acres of Park Maintained (United States)

Number of Acres	2013 Operating Expenditures per Acre of Land Managed or Maintained			2013 Acres of Parkland Maintained Per FTE		
	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile	Lower Quartile	Median	Upper Quartile
250 or less	6.454	16.523	34.000	2.7	5	9.8
251 to 1,000	3.487	8.974	18.747	6	8.7	19.6
1,001 to 3,500	1.855	4.808	6.904	9	21.6	54.7
More than 3,500	1.213	3.001	3.846	18.4	32.8	66.3

Source: NRPA National Database

Of note, the NRPA database includes metrics on some of the resident priorities indicated in our June SCORP survey. By and large, most West Virginians park priorities were fairly modest. The simplest improvements—handicapped-accessible restrooms and walkways, fountains, cleaning and clearing, and updated signage—can all be readily phased for a pay-as-you-go approach within a locality’s ability to pay. Better capacity building with improvements such as these can help pave the way towards greater park programming for special events, sports tournaments or races, sponsored youth activities, or arts and crafts exhibits and installations.

Park improvements are not limited to stand alone, park-only projects. In our June survey, park usage was reported to increase in the range of five to ten additional trips per month when a park or sport-related visit could be combined with some other purpose. Chief among other non-park/park related attractions were, “good places to eat nearby.” For larger communities with planning and zoning this may be a consideration in their future comprehensive planning to examine the development of mixed-use, park/commercial combinations that could serve to attract or retain visitors to their area and help reinforce investments with mutually compatible activities.

For the more distant future, the OIA and Forest Service 2012 NSRE forecasts recreational impacts influenced by a mix of environmental, technological and cultural issues. The NSRE forecast is shown below. The OIA

Forecasts for the U. S.

- **Land development** will continue to threaten the integrity of natural ecosystems.
- **Climate change** will alter natural ecosystems and affect their ability to provide goods and services.
- **Competition** for goods and services from natural ecosystems will increase.
- **Geographic variation** in resource responses to drivers of change will require regional and local strategies to address resource management issues.
- **Recreation resources per capita** is projected to be about 2/3 what it they are now by 2060.
- **Yet, demand will rise** substantially by that year.

forecast is more sanguine and underscores the broadening use of social media in sharing outdoor experiences, greater variety in recreational opportunities beyond the usual fare of hiking, fishing, and sightseeing—what they refer to as being ‘inclusive’ of younger, more diverse park users interests, ‘accessible’ parks more accommodating of time constraints needing greater commercial connectivity, and ‘experiential’ —looking for ways and means to make the outdoors a catalyst for building relationships and bonding with family and friends.

Providing outdoor recreational opportunities is certainly a key to developing healthy lifestyles—even more important is maintaining them to make any lifestyle changes permanent.

**SCORP
APPENDIX
“under
construction”**

contact the

West Virginia Development Office

for

source and support data

john.r.mcgarrity@wv.gov