

Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan

2020-2024



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Acknowledgements

Plan Development & Contributing Writers

Diane Kripas
Alexander MacDonald
Leslie Sarvis
Tyler Sender
Monica Gould
Bob Whitmore
Nate Lotze

DCNR Staff

Christine Dettore
Paula DeVore
Cindy Dunlap
Wes Fahringer
Nathan Fite
Tom Ford
Kathy Frankel
Drew Gilchrist
Michael Hoffman
Lauren Imgrund
Jean Lynch
Adam Mattis
Lorne Possinger
Kelly Rossiter
Jay Schreibman
Erin Wiley Moyers
Lori Yeich
Paul Zeph

Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee Members

Betsy Aiken
Kyle Buchter
John Confer
Elizabeth Fager
Chris Firme
Donna Iannone
Tom Kase
Carl Kelemen
Michael Kuhn
Jim Laird
Frank Maguire
Lydia Martin
Penny Mason
Chris Patterson
Miica Patterson
Todd Peifer
Joe Perry
William Ritting, III
David Saunders
Ron Steffey
Henry Stroud
Gwen Wills
Jeremy Wimpy
Owen Worozbyt

Contributing Agencies and Organizations

Keystone Trails Association
PA Department of Community and
Economic Development
PA Department of Conservation
& Natural Resources
PA Department of Health
PA Department of Transportation
PA Environmental Council
PA Equine Council
PA Game Commission
PA Historical and Museum
Commission
PA Interscholastic Cycling League
PA Off-Highway Vehicle
Association
PA State Snowmobile Association
WeConservePa (formerly
the Pennsylvania Land Trust
Association)

Plan Design

WeConservePA
Fathom

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Dear Pennsylvanians,

One thing we learned from 2020 that many of us in the “recreation business” already knew: trails are a vital part of our mental and physical health. By helping us explore nature and our communities, the trails of Pennsylvania were there to help us get through a year full of unknowns, surprises, firsts, and changes.

We are proud that our trails can serve Pennsylvanians in their time of need. Our state has a long history of supporting trail development, and this *Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan 2020-2024* outlines goals and strategies to ensure motorized and non-motorized trails continue to facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles for all Pennsylvanians for years to come.

When this historic year began, the development of this plan was well underway. DCNR staff had conducted a year-long effort to evaluate the successes and shortcomings of the 2014 trail plan with stakeholders and user groups, to determine changing needs, growing interests, and future direction. The result is seven recommendations and 40 actions that aim to complete long-distance trails, connect trails to destinations, create regional networks and partnerships, and improve opportunities for specialty motorized and non-motorized user groups.

This blueprint for the future of our trails serves as a companion piece to *Pennsylvania’s 2020-2024 Outdoor Recreation Plan: Recreation for All*, which sets an inclusive vision for providing welcoming and accessible recreation in every community. The same can be said for this plan. As this pandemic has proven, we must provide more opportunities and connections for everyone to regularly use a trail regardless of zip code. Our goal is to have a trail within 10 minutes of every Pennsylvanian.

Being a national trail leader and setting ambitious trail goals comes with its challenges. Funding, support, and maintenance continue to get in the way of establishing new trails, completing trail networks, and caring for thousands of existing trail miles. Armed with this plan, we look forward to working with our partners to coordinate funding programs, build capacity, and promote the economic, environmental, and health benefits of our land and water trails.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cindy Adams Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized.

Cindy Adams Dunn
Secretary

Acronyms and Definitions

Acronyms and definitions for agencies, organizations, and terms referred to in the plan

Acronyms

BMPs: Best Management Practices

CNRAC: Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council

DEI: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

DCED: Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development*

DCNR: Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources*

DOH: Pennsylvania Department of Health*

GIS: Geographic Information Systems

KTA: Keystone Trails Association

MPO/RPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization and Rural Planning Organization

PAOHV: Pennsylvania Off-Highway Vehicle Association

PEC: Pennsylvania Environmental Council

PennDOT: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation*

PFBC: Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission*

PGC: Pennsylvania Game Commission*

PHMC: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission*

PICL: Pennsylvania Interscholastic Cycling League

PRPS: Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society

PSSA: Pennsylvania State Snowmobile Association

PTAC: Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee

RTC: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

RTP: Recreational Trails Program

TPL: The Trust for Public Land

USFS: United States Forest Service

**Indicates Pennsylvania state agency*

Definitions

Motorized trails or recreation: Used to describe all forms of motorized trail use and recreation on land

OHV: Off-Highway Vehicle - Used to describe motorized recreation or motorized recreational vehicles that are not snowmobiles

Recreation Plan: Pennsylvania Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Shared-use Trails: These trails, sometimes referred to as multi-use trails, accommodate the needs of most users for walking and biking. However, some shared-use trails may also allow other users such as equestrians and snowmobilers. Rail-trails fall in this category.

Single-use Trails: These trails are designed, built, and managed for specialized trail users.

Specialized Trail Users: Trail users who have their own set of design and management requirements unique to their use, such as equestrians, hikers, mountain bikers, and ATV riders.

Specialized Trail User Groups: Organizations who represent the interests of specialized trail users.

Local Trail Providers: Any organization that owns, manages, and/or builds trails.

WeConservePA: formerly the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA)

Introduction

In 2015, the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) released the first Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan as a companion document to *Pennsylvania's 2014-2019 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*. Since then, Pennsylvania's approach to planning and implementing trails has evolved significantly. Closing gaps to complete long-distance trails, connecting trails to destinations, creating regional networks, and improving motorized trail opportunities have been top priorities.

Although DCNR develops and administers the Trail Network Strategic Plan, implementation is a team effort supported by public and nonpublic trail providers and stakeholders and the Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee (PTAC). PTAC is a 20-member,

that planning process, trails dominated feedback on how to improve outdoor recreation in the state. More than three-quarters of outdoor enthusiasts identified community or regional trail systems as their highest priority for facility investment.

Pennsylvania's new 2020 Trail Plan provides a five-year blueprint for state and local governments, trail providers, and other stakeholders to guide Pennsylvania's trail stewardship and expansion for the next five years. This plan highlights accomplishments since 2014, outlines some of the factors impacting trails, summarizes input collected, and reveals Pennsylvania's 2020-2024 strategy for continuing to implement its vision of a statewide network of land and water trails. Additional efforts were made during the development of this plan to include input from

Pennsylvania's Trail Vision

Develop a statewide land and water trail network to facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles for all.

DCNR appointed committee that represents both motorized and non-motorized trail users and advises the Commonwealth on the use of state and federal trail funding. PTAC meets quarterly and served as the advisory group for implementing the 2014 Trail Plan and member input has been critical to the 2020 update. In addition to discussions at regular meetings, PTAC held two separate facilitated sessions to assist with this plan's development.

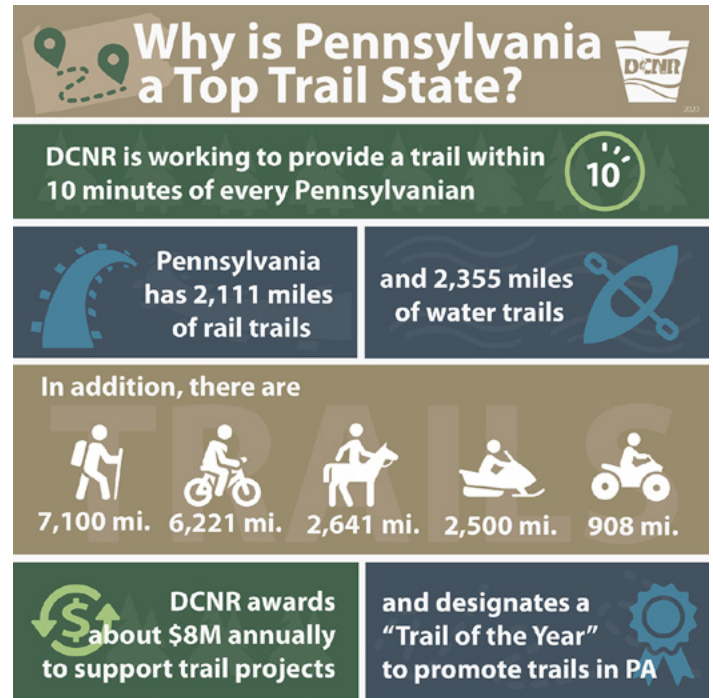
In early 2020, Pennsylvania adopted a new *2020-2024 Outdoor Recreation Plan* (Recreation Plan). Through

specialized trail users including hiking, off-highway vehicle riding, horseback riding, and mountain biking. For water trails, this plan includes relevant information and priorities from *Pennsylvania's 2017-2022 Water Trail Strategic Plan*.

The purpose of this plan is to provide the vision and strategy for all trail stakeholders to work together to not only make key trail connections, but also steward over 12,000 miles of existing trails, and ensure all Pennsylvanians have easy access to enjoyable trail experiences. The plan provides seven

recommendations with 40 action steps and identifies implementing strategies and partners. In addition, the plan also fulfills a requirement of the federal Recreational Trails Program to maintain a statewide trail plan in order to receive funding provided by this program.

Pennsylvania trails and trail uses vary greatly. Shared-use trails—used predominately for walking and biking—such as rail-trails have been and continue to make up most trail efforts and are the focus of state and local funding programs. Though they cost considerably more, shared-use trails provide advantages over single-use trails because they have more universal appeal, are accessible to most people, and can be used for non-motorized transportation. Therefore, much of this plan and its recommendations and actions are geared toward, but not exclusive to, supporting and continuing to develop shared-use trails. Many of the strategies can effectively be applied to other types of trails.



2014-2019 Trail Strategic Plan: Summary of Accomplishments

The 2014 Trail Plan marked the creation of the first statewide land and water trail network strategic plan. The plan called out seven recommendations and 30 actions. Because five years is often not enough time to fully implement ideas and programs, many of the themes and recommendations from the 2014 plan are carried over to the 2020 Trail Plan. Some notable accomplishments include:

1. CLOSE PRIORITY TRAIL GAPS

- In 2018, DCNR analyzed the 248 trail gaps and determined that 46 (18 percent) had been closed.
- A workgroup of trail stakeholders established a new definition and process for identifying trail gaps resulting in a more focused list of 112 Priority Trail Gaps.
- Of the first Top 10 Trail Gaps, two were closed – the Redbank Valley Trail's Climax Tunnel and the Delaware & Lehigh Trail's Jim Thorpe Bridge (now called Mansion House Bridge) requiring an investment of over \$7 million. When the first two were closed, DCNR established a process to elevate two Priority Trail Gaps to Top 10 status. See DCNR's online [Top 10 Trail Gaps story map](#) for a current list and status.
- In 2017, the Pennsylvania Water Trail Partnership completed the *2017-2022 Water Trail Strategic Plan* and in 2018, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) inventoried access points along water trails using currently available data.

2. COORDINATE STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING

- While a formal interagency trail funding coordination committee was not established, coordination among DCNR, PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has improved significantly since 2014. Agencies are coordinating and reviewing grant applications with other county, regional, and state grant programs and partners. Annual trail funding has included, on average, \$8.5 million from DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships grants, \$15.3 million from PennDOT's TAP-Set-Aside rounds, and \$3 million from DCED's Commonwealth Financing Authority's Greenways, Trails and Recreation grants. In more recent years, PennDOT and DCED have funded a few trail projects through their Multi-Modal Transportation Funds.
- PennDOT has also incorporated trail gaps into its Long-Range Transportation Plan and PennDOT Connects to help inform Pennsylvania's planners and engineers of trail needs when designing replacement bridges, expanding highways, and completing repaving projects.

3. CULTIVATE DIVERSE PARTNERSHIPS

- Over half of Pennsylvania counties are now part of a regional trail coalition and branded initiative including the Industrial Heartland Coalition, the Northeast Trails Forum, THE LINK, and the Circuit Trails. These coalitions are creating regional maps and mapping tools, convening workshops, and striving to build funding and political support to complete planned trail systems.
- In partnership with DCNR, WeConservePA (formerly PALTA) developed and maintains the Pennsylvania Greenways & Trails Central website to share news and resources with trail stakeholders.
- To better gauge All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use across Pennsylvania and plan for future riding opportunities in the state, in 2016 DCNR conducted an online survey and completed the [Pennsylvania All-Terrain Vehicle Area Suitability Study](#). This study used Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to identify areas across the state with the most suitable characteristics to support new ATV riding areas.
- DCNR funded nine ATV studies/plans to identify and develop off-highway vehicle facilities on non-DCNR lands.

4. DEVELOP A MARKETING STRATEGY

- Pennsylvania's eight conservation landscapes and 12 heritage areas are helping promote destination trails in various ways. The Pennsylvania Wilds Hiking & Trails webpage promotes over 1,600 miles of hiking trails. The Delaware & Lehigh and Schuylkill River Greenways national heritage areas both provide interactive web maps marketing the 165-mile D&L Trail and the 120-mile Schuylkill River destination trails to provide residents and visitors easy use guides and information on places to visit. Pennsylvania's premier tourism site – Visit PA -- has added outdoor adventures and promotes Pennsylvania's hiking and biking trails.
- In 2018, Pennsylvania established September as Trails Month to encourage trail stakeholders to hold events that inspire Pennsylvanians to get out and explore trails.

5. CONNECT COMMUNITY ASSETS

- Under PA Department of Health's (DOH) leadership, several state agencies and nonprofits collaborated to form the Pennsylvania Walkable Communities Collaborative, whose mission is to increase walking and expand walkable communities across the state. The Collaborative created a rack card to help promote the health, safety, environmental, and economic benefits of walkable communities and supported the funding of 24 active transportation plans and policies.
- Supported by an interagency team, PennDOT completed its first Active Transportation Plan that provides a vision and framework for improving walking and bicycling across Pennsylvania.
- The Allegheny Trail Alliance created the ultimate guide to free and fee-based camping areas along the 150-mile Great Allegheny Passage.

6. MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE

- DCNR, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) and other partners compiled information on the cost of trail maintenance on various types of trails. A 2015 RTC report found that, depending on surface, average maintenance costs range from \$500 to \$1,000 per trail mile per year.
- At statewide and regional conferences, training sessions were provided on the 2014 *Universal Access Trails and Shared Use Paths*. This manual provides best management practices (BMPs) for universal-access trail development, maintenance, and management.

7. PROMOTE ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND HEALTH BENEFITS

- In 2019, WeConservePA became DCNR's education, outreach, and training partner for administering trail-related material. As part of this partnership, a key role of WeConservePA is promoting the economic, environmental, and health benefits of trails through the Greenways & Trails Central website.
- Pennsylvania Recreational Trails funds supported biannual statewide trail conferences in Warren, Reading, and Shippensburg, as well as other regional trail workshops like the 2018 Eastern Greenways and Trails Summit in Bethlehem.
- The RTC completed trail economic benefit studies for the Clarion-Little Toby and D&H rail trails.
- DCNR and the RTC placed 20 trail counters at key trails across Pennsylvania to better document trail use.



Pennsylvania's Trail Providers and Advocates

Pennsylvania has been a national leader in the development of trails for several decades. Today, Pennsylvania has more than 12,000 miles of trails, and each year that system continues to grow. Countless people and organizations contribute to this success.

Trail clubs and local nonprofit organizations:

Many Pennsylvania trail providers are volunteer-based organizations often without paid staff. Pennsylvania has nearly 140 non-profit trail organizations. They contribute a large amount of sweat equity to the development and maintenance of trails. They typically have limited funding; many hold events that raise funds for their activities. Several nonprofits like the Montour Trail Council and the Cumberland Valley Rail Trail have celebrated over 25 years of successfully building and maintaining 20+ miles of rail trails.

Municipalities and counties: The interest in providing local trails continues to grow in Pennsylvania's 67 counties and 2,561 municipalities. Nearly every county has completed a greenway and trail plan and some like Lancaster, Lehigh, and Northampton counties have also completed active transportation plans. These planning efforts have been considered the foundation for establishing trails and trail networks. It is also well documented that strong county involvement is a key factor in establishing successful trail initiatives. A 2020 Recreation Plan survey of local recreation providers found that community and regional trails are now the second highest priority for facility investment. Another factor contributing to this trend is eligibility for funding to acquire, plan, and build trails. The Keystone Park, Recreation and Conservation Fund (administered by DCNR) and the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program (administered by PennDOT), two of the largest funding sources for trail projects in Pennsylvania, both require municipal applicants/sponsors.

Statewide nonprofit organizations: Pennsylvania does not have one statewide organization that advocates for trails; it has many! WeConservePA is DCNR's trail education partner and organizes Pennsylvania's bi-annual conference, coordinates funding for regional training, and manages the Greenways & Trails website. The PEC, RTC, Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) along with specialized trail user groups noted later in the plan provide educational resources, advocacy for trails, and help build capacity for local trail providers to develop and manage trails.

DCNR: The agency manages 2.5 million acres of parks and forests which contribute significantly to the abundance of trails and outdoor recreation.

DCNR's Bureau of Forestry manages over 5,700 miles of non-motorized trails and 276 miles of motorized trails. These are important assets that allow the public to enjoy a variety of activities in state forests. Within this system of trails are 18 designated state forest hiking trails, two national recreation trails, and one national scenic trail. Of these, nine constitute a Pennsylvania major greenway corridor, and all are over 50 miles long, and pass through multiple counties and state forest districts. These trails are often remote and rugged, they are managed by DCNR often with the assistance of local trail groups, with low-density, dispersed recreation in mind.

DCNR's Bureau of State Parks provides a diverse assortment of trails covering over 1,500 miles in 121 parks. Trails range from simple paths that are flat, short, and easy to use by those with physical limitations

or young children, to trails for people wanting more adventurous loop, destination, and/or through hiking trails. All trails are open to hiking, and other trails are marked for multi-use which may include equestrian, mountain biking, bicycling, and cross-country skiing. Each trail has a defined user group which can be found on the maps and trail signage. With a few exceptions for snowmobiling, motorized trails are not found in state

parks. Visitors with physical disabilities are permitted accommodations on non-motorized trails.

Outside of those lands, DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation provides grant funding for trails and leads statewide trail planning.

Summary of Public Input and Data

Throughout 2019 and 2020, DCNR and the PTAC reached out to trail groups, users, local governments, nonprofits, metropolitan and rural planning organizations (MPOs/RPOs), state agencies, and the general public seeking feedback to help shape the next five-year land and water trail plan. The goal of this year-long outreach campaign was to review the 2014 Trail Plan and identify accomplishments and priorities that should continue, assess the current state of trails, and identify future needs. Overall, this data-collection process led to the development of seven recommendations and 40 action steps for this 2020 Trail Plan.

Input was collected through in-person forums/presentations, online public surveys, webinars, and strategic-plan research. Additional data was also collected from major greenway organizations and statewide trail organizations. Below is summary of information gathered and considered for this plan. [See Appendix A](#) for a summary of the public input process.

Regional Public Forum

In March 2019, PTAC, in coordination with DCNR, held a very informative and well-attended regional public trails forum in Lancaster County to collect information and feedback from the trail community. Topics discussed included: management and maintenance of existing trails; planning and construction of new trails; access to trails and use of public lands; municipal,

county, and state funding for trails; public-private partnerships; planning; collaboration; and outreach.

Some of the key takeaways from this forum were:

- Increased trail use and diversification of user groups has created demand for more technical assistance and guidance about managing user conflicts.
- Trail stakeholders need a guide outlining BMPs for sustainable trail development.
- Trail groups are continuing to try to engage a more diverse group of users, including youth.
- Many trails are aging, and trail groups need more equipment and maintenance funding.
- Trail groups want improved collaboration with private and public entities to assess challenges, barriers, and needs.

Surveys

In July 2019, DCNR administered a statewide online survey that was distributed to trail owners, providers, and stakeholders to assess the 2014 Trail Plan recommendations and actions and determine continued priorities. Among the 500+ responses, the following priorities ranked as most important:

- Complete Top 10 Trail Gaps
- Identify common priority projects to leverage maximum joint investments
- Identify destination trail systems in each region

Trail organizations were also asked to detail and rank their accomplishments. Obtaining and coordinating funding sources, conducting long-term maintenance and operations, and building partnerships were identified as top accomplishments.

Around the same time, DCNR also distributed a more detailed and analytical survey among current and past PTAC members and other trail contacts. This survey was created by analyzing the 2014 Trail Plan results and other top results from statewide planning processes such as PennDOT's Active Transportation Plan survey, the 2020 Recreation Plan Lion Polls and surveys, as well as regional trail plans from throughout Pennsylvania. The survey asked 15 detailed questions. The top results were:

- Severe weather events have greatly impacted trail systems and the organizations that manage them.
- Trail organizations need more state, county, and municipal funding to address trail gaps, maintenance needs, and other goals.
- Powered transportation devices (e-bikes, e-scooters, hoverboards, Segways, etc.) should be allowed, but limited to certain conditions, like shared-use trails where bikes are already allowed.

Running concurrently to the 2020 Trail Plan update was the five-year update to the Outdoor Recreation Plan. For the 2020 Recreation Plan, several surveys were conducted by Penn State's Center for Survey Research. Over 12,000 Pennsylvanians gave input. The surveys showed overwhelming support for trails in Pennsylvania with key trail takeaways including:

- A majority of Pennsylvanians agree they can safely access a trail within 15 minutes of where they live. Higher income respondents agreed more than lower income respondents. White respondents agreed more than non-Hispanic Black/African Americans (Spring 2019 Lion Poll)

- More than three-quarters of outdoor enthusiasts identified community or regional trail systems as their highest priority for facility investment. (2019 Public Survey)
- Local recreation providers identified community and regional trail systems as the second highest priority for facility investment over the next five years. (2019 Provider Survey)
- Sixty-five percent of Pennsylvanians agree that parks, trails, and open space are an essential part of the healthcare system. (Fall 2018 Lion Poll)
- Seventy percent of Pennsylvanians agree that outdoor recreation amenities such as parks and trails attract new residents and businesses to communities. (Spring 2019 Lion Poll)
- Walking, hiking, and running are still the most popular outdoor recreation activities for outdoor enthusiasts. (2019 Public Survey)
- Of the more than 6,700 open-ended comments received, about 2,600 were related to trails (38 percent). Of those trail-related comments, about 1,000 related to motorized recreation, most of which were seeking an increase in opportunities for ATV and Off-Highway Motorcycle (OHM) riding. Trails are no longer just for walking, hiking, and biking; they are adapting to serve the needs of growing and diversifying trail uses such as mountain biking, horseback riding, e-biking, kayaking, and motorized trail riding. (2019 Public Survey)

In summary, all public input showed that the vision of the 2014 Trail Plan—developing a statewide land and water trail network—is becoming a reality and is still a top priority for trail organizations and increasing in importance to local and county governments across Pennsylvania. It is also evident that trails are constantly evolving, are critical components of the state's outdoor recreation infrastructure, and play important roles in many residents' lives.

Supporting Studies, Research, and Input

Specialized Trail User Group Priorities

DCNR collected feedback from statewide organizations representing various specialized trail users about their traits, priority issues, challenges, and needs. A summary of each group's top priorities for the next five years is provided below. [Appendix B](#) contains more detailed responses.

Equestrian

Over 2,600 miles of equestrian trails are mostly on state and federal lands with maintenance conducted by volunteers in cooperation with land managers. The Pennsylvania Equine Council and equestrian trail user priorities include engaging more equestrians in trail planning, improving tool-use and land-management skills among equestrians, spreading more information about trail etiquette, continuing to maintain good relations between DCNR and equestrians, and continuing efforts to move the Horse-Shoe Trail off-road, and install signage at road crossings.

Hiking

Within Pennsylvania's trail system, the largest number of miles are hiking trails – 7,100 miles with many built and maintained mostly by volunteers. These trails are some of Pennsylvania's oldest trails. A significant number of miles – over 5,700 exist on state forest lands. Resource agencies like DCNR have played a large role in the establishment and maintenance of those trail systems. Pennsylvania's state forests offer thousands of miles of hiking trails including the 18 State Forest Hiking Trails that cover a variety of terrain and difficulty. The Pennsylvania hiking community, including the Keystone Trails Association (KTA) and local clubs, priorities include identifying and increasing trail funding, addressing the use of e-bikes and new motorized devices on trails, managing the impact of

severe weather events on trails, maintaining existing trails, building new trails to expand networks, and promoting hiking locally as alternative transportation.

Mountain Biking

The term "Mountain Biking" encompasses many different forms of offroad cycling and each form seeks a different type of trail experience. Mountain biking trails tend to be on private, state, and federal lands and are mostly built and maintained by clubs in cooperation with landowners. This user group includes gravel biking and bikepacking, two of the fastest-growing types of cycling. Both utilize a combination of dirt/gravel roads and trails. The Pennsylvania mountain biking community, including the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Cycling League (PICL) and a wide range of other stakeholders who attended the May 2019 Pennsylvania Mountain Bike Summit identified many priorities. More mountain biking trails are needed that: 1) create entry-level trails that offer beginner experiences for new riders; 2) are closer to where people live such as incorporating short skill-building trails and pump tracks in urban greenspaces; 3) accommodate high-school practices and competitions; and 4) encourage the development of bike-optimized trails where appropriate to meet rider desires and cut down on illicit trail construction. Other priorities include more training and managing of trail volunteers, collecting and sharing user data and economic impacts, and promoting opportunities in the state including interscholastic competitions.

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Riding

Pennsylvania's 900+ miles of OHV trails and riding opportunities tend to be on private lands, private club lands, public-private pay-to-ride facilities, state lands, and in Allegheny National Forest. The organizations who manage these trails and riding opportunities have their own unique sets of rules that govern the type of

OHVs that are allowed, as well as how, when, and where they are ridden. OHVs include all-terrain vehicles (ATV), side-by-sides (SxS), off-highway motorcycles (OHM), full-size four-wheel drive vehicles (4x4), and similar types of off-road vehicles. The Pennsylvania Off-Highway Vehicle Association (PAOHV) priorities include closing trail gaps and creating more OHV trails, promoting the economic potential of the OHV industry, rebuilding existing trails to accommodate wider vehicles, and allowing OHMs (aka: dirt bikes) to be registered with DCNR and to access existing ATV trails on public lands. [See Appendix C](#) for a summary of motorized recreation interests (OHV and snowmobiling) over the past five years.

Snowmobiling

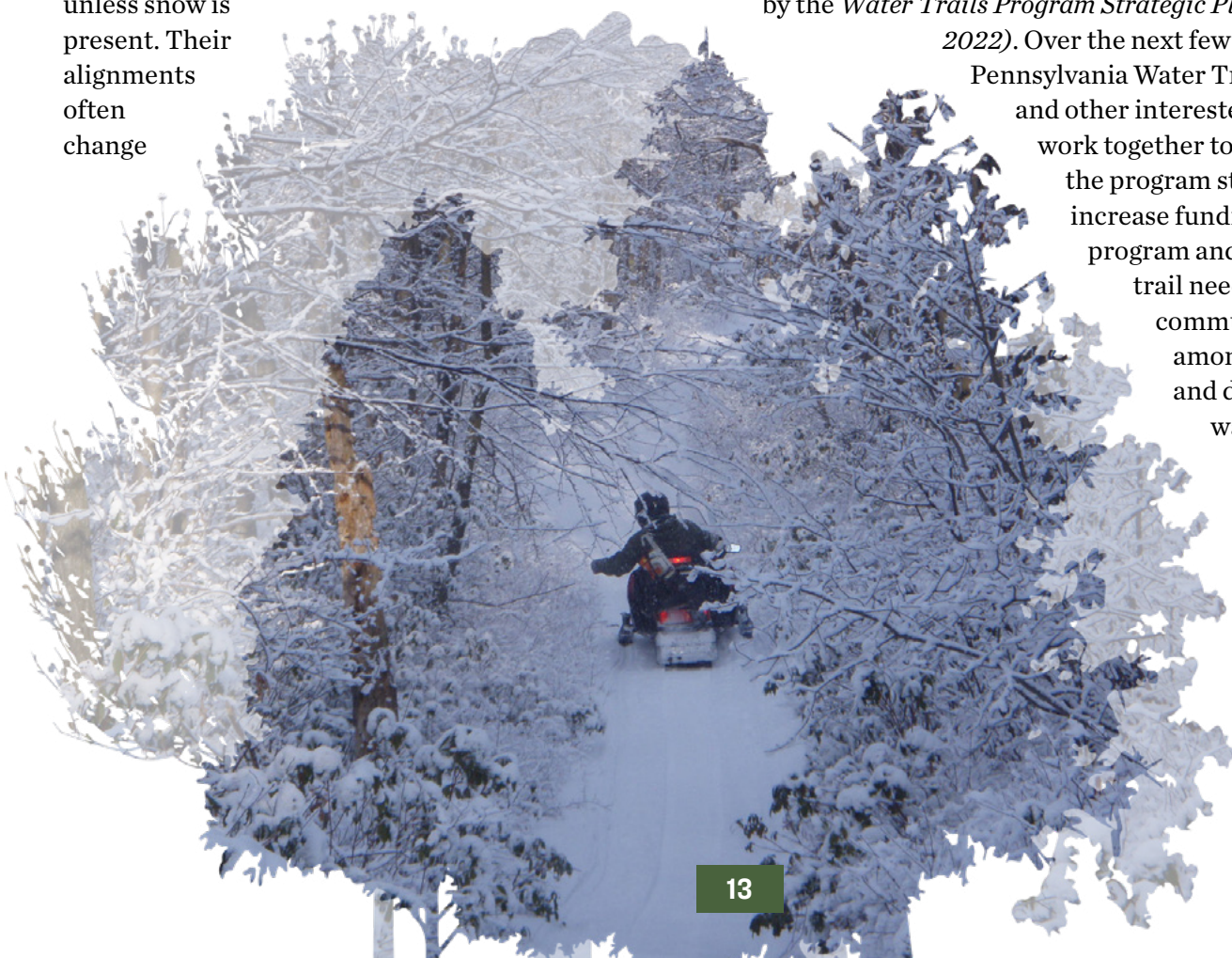
Pennsylvania's 2,500-mile system of snowmobile trails is extensive; however, the seasons and locations where snowmobiling can still occur have declined. Trails are generally established through cooperation between organized clubs, DCNR, PA Game Commission (PGC), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and private landowners. Snowmobile trails often serve other uses in the off-season or may not exist unless snow is present. Their alignments often change

slightly from season to season. The Pennsylvania State Snowmobile Association (PSSA) priorities include obtaining dedicated funding for trail maintenance, implementing a GPS system to use for grooming reimbursement, increasing promotion of snowmobile opportunities, and addressing inconsistent law enforcement.

Water Trails

The network of 28 designated water trails spans over 2,300 miles across all the major watersheds in Pennsylvania. Water trail partners anticipate increased use of trails in the coming years, as evidenced by Pennsylvania's 2020 Recreation Plan naming kayaking as the #1 outdoor recreation activity residents would like to try, and, an 85 percent increase in kayak sales in Spring 2020 as compared to Spring 2019. At this time, roughly 60 percent of Pennsylvanians live within a 10-minute drive of a public water access area. One of the priorities of the Water Trail Partnership is to evaluate public access along each water trail and increase opportunities for residents to connect to their local waterways through close to home water-based recreation. Program improvements are guided by the *Water Trails Program Strategic Plan (2017-2022)*. Over the next few years, the

Pennsylvania Water Trail Partnership and other interested parties will work together to streamline the program structure, increase funding for the program and individual trail needs, improve communication among partners, and develop new ways to promote Pennsylvania's vast water trail system.

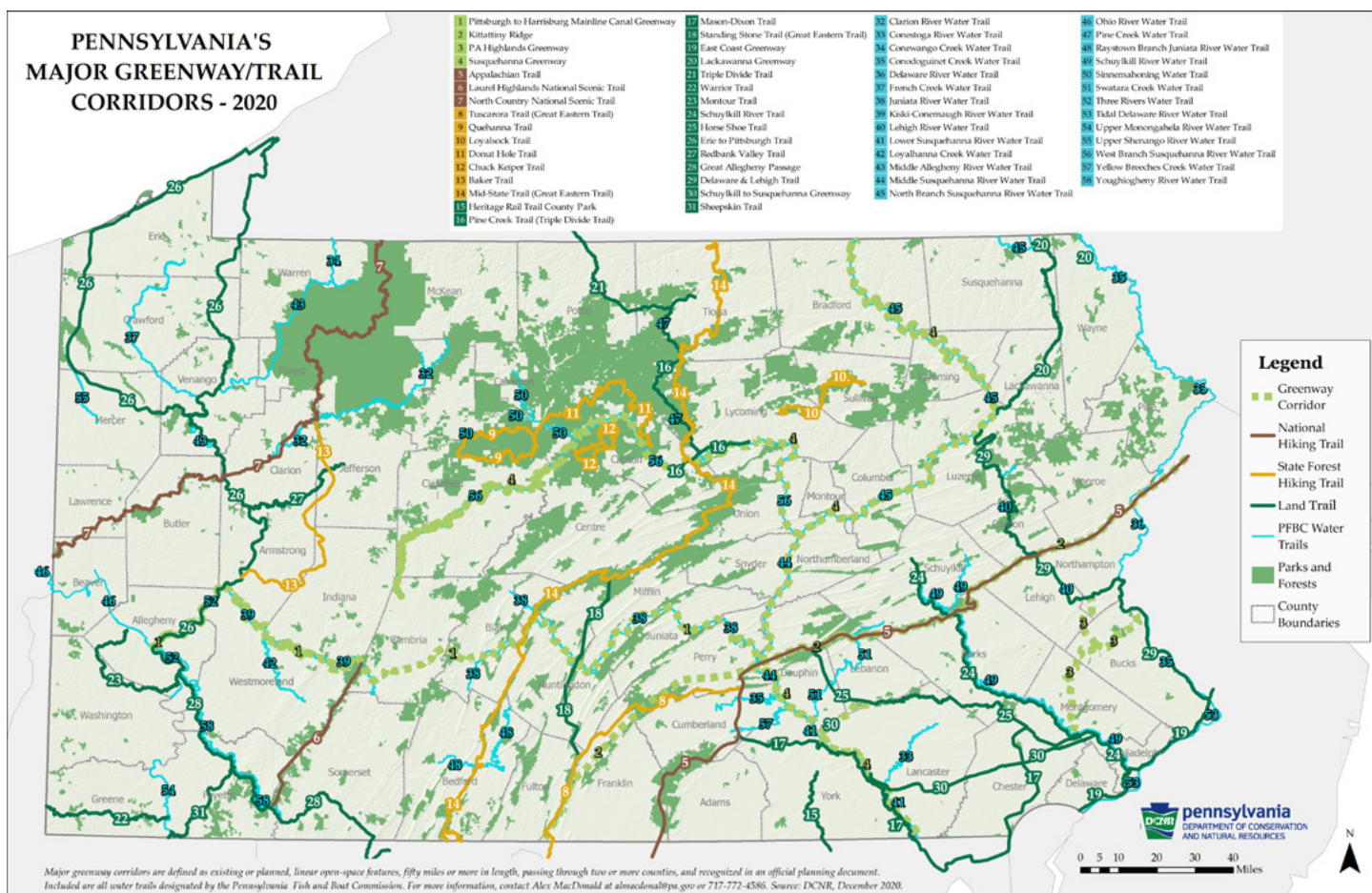


Pennsylvania's Major Greenways Update

Since 2001, DCNR has designated and maintained a list of statewide major greenways, defined as land or water-based greenways/trails that are at least 50 miles long, go through more than one county, and are identified in an official planning document. The purpose of the designation is to support the vision—birthed in 2001 with the release of *Pennsylvania Greenways: An Action Plan for Creating Connections*—of a statewide network of greenways, with major greenways serving as spines for regional and local greenways.

The **list of major greenways** today includes 49 corridors. A significant portion are water trails designated by the Pennsylvania Water Trail

Partnership. The list also includes multiple nationally designated hiking trails, State Forest Hiking Trails, and a handful of landscape-focused greenways. A large share of the attention, development activity, and funding are focused on the trails in the remaining major greenways, most of which are shared use and in various stages of development. These trails still require time and resources in order to realize their full development. Seventeen organizations advancing major greenways provided a status report of their efforts, along with challenges and opportunities. **Appendix D** provides a more detailed summary of the input they provided.



Since 2014 the popularity of a regional (multi-county) approach to trail planning, prioritization, and development has increased significantly and has shown to be a successful approach. At this time, major greenways are still an important part of trail and greenway planning from a statewide perspective and

most regional efforts have identified major greenways as their highest-priority trails. As these major greenways near completion, the approach to planning an interconnected network of trails and greenways will need to be reevaluated.

The Trust for Public Land Trail Access Analysis

Trail connectivity is an important part of any trail system and identifying Pennsylvania's trail gaps—missing connections between trails—is vital in the development of funding strategies. Since 2009, DCNR has actively worked with partners to identify and map trail gaps across the state. However, for the 2020 Recreation Plan, DCNR and WeConservePA collaborated with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) to go a step further, using GIS to identify and understand areas that lack access to trails.

The GIS data was used to create a color-coded state map pinpointing areas that are more than a 10-minute walk or drive from a trailhead or water access point, as well as detailed matrices of the highest-need counties and municipalities. (In order to balance the needs of urban and rural areas, “highest need” is based on a combination of the total number of people and the percentage of the population lacking access.) Overall, the analysis found that 53 percent of Pennsylvanians live within a 10-minute walk of outdoor recreation, including trailheads. Eighty percent live within a 10-minute drive of a trailhead and 60 percent live within a 10-minute drive to a water access point.

This analysis will play a crucial role in helping DCNR and trail stakeholders:

- Guide trail planning efforts at the local, county, and state level
- Partner with private landowners
- Target funding opportunities
- Enhance transit and mobility
- Address diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) related to trails

Refer to [DCNR's State Outdoor Recreation Plan webpage](#) for the full TPL report, new interactive mapping and tutorial on how to use the interactive map.



Pennsylvania's Vision for Trails:

Develop a statewide land and water trail network to facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles for all.

In 2014, a vision for Pennsylvania's trails was established to guide trail development across the state. PTAC revisited the vision statement developed in the 2014 Trail Plan and recommended keeping the same vision statement for the 2020 Trail Plan. Additional feedback from public surveys, agencies, and trail partners confirmed that this vision continues to be the overarching theme for advancing trails in the commonwealth.

Plan Priorities

Like the 2014 Trail Plan, the 2020 Trail Plan is a companion document to the 2020 Recreation Plan. Much of the feedback from the Recreation Plan surveys and outreach indicated trails are a priority for Pennsylvania residents. DCNR engaged numerous trail

partners in the development of the Recreation Plan and collected comprehensive data and input to help guide the Trail Plan's vision, priorities, recommendations, and action steps. These priorities were established to better reflect current trail needs and issues:

- Build on the success of the 2014 Trail Plan, maintain relevant recommendations and update supporting actions.
- Identify the needs, issues, and opportunities of specialized trail users (equestrians, hikers, mountain bikers, motorized recreation, and water trail users) and develop responsive actions.
- Recognize the need for trails to be more accessible to all Pennsylvanians and develop a new DEI-related recommendation with supporting action steps.



Plan Recommendations and Action Steps

1 Close priority trail gaps in Pennsylvania's statewide land and water trail network with the overall goal of having a trail within 10 minutes of every Pennsylvanian.

Action Steps

- a) Identify and close Pennsylvania's Priority Trail Gaps.
- b) From the list of Priority Trail Gaps, identify and close the Top 10 Trail Gaps.
- c) Prioritize funding for projects that address Priority Trail Gaps.
- d) Increase public awareness of Priority Trail Gaps and the importance of closing them.
- e) Close Priority Trail Gaps by relocating and rehabilitating historic metal truss bridges.
- f) Support efforts for specialized trail user groups to define and identify vulnerabilities and opportunities that relate to their unique trails systems (e.g. mountain biking, ATVing, hiking).
- g) Increase opportunities for water-based recreation by identifying areas with the greatest need for public access and closing gaps in water trails.

One of the most forward-looking goals in the 2014 Trail Plan was to have a trail within 15 minutes of every Pennsylvanian. During the development of the 2020 Recreation Plan and Trail Plan, TPL analyzed Pennsylvanian's access to recreation, including trails, and found that the 15-minute goal was largely met. The decision was made to use 10 minutes as a statewide goal for access to all types of recreation, including trails, which is in alignment with nationally accepted standards. As a result, this plan has a revised goal of a trail within 10 minutes of every Pennsylvanian and is included in this recommendation.

Identifying and closing trail gaps has been a priority for over 10 years; doing so will help achieve a new statewide goal to have a trail within 10 minutes of every Pennsylvanian. Two successes as a result of the 2014 Trail Plan are the analysis and reevaluation of the process for identifying trail gaps, as well as the completion of three of the Top 10 Trail Gaps. Recent surveys show that closing trail gaps and maintaining a list of the Top 10 Trail Gaps are still key priorities. In addition, interest from specialized trail users (such as OHV riders, mountain bikers, equestrians, and water trail users) to identify gaps unique to their trail systems was identified as an area of need.

Priority Trail Gaps

DCNR believes identifying and prioritizing trail gaps is an effective and worthwhile approach to building a statewide network of greenways. Establishing reliable data for trail gaps can help quantify the need for trail funding on a statewide basis, aiding the development of funding strategies, and transportation plans. To be considered a Priority Trail Gap, the trail gap must meet the following criteria:

- The gap is along a statewide major greenway or regionally significant trail
- The gap connects two existing segments of trail or connects an existing trail to a state park, state forest, or key community
- The gap is five miles or less
- The trail itself has been formalized in an official planning document

Data collected in 2018 revealed 112 gaps meeting the criteria to be considered a Priority Trail Gap. Closing these gaps will require an estimated 200 miles of new trail, the construction of 41 bridges, and the rehabilitation of 21 bridges. The results are published online on [Pennsylvania's Priority Trail Gaps map](#). [Appendix E](#) contains additional details on the 2018-2019 gap evaluation process. As part of the 2020 Trail Plan implementation strategy, DCNR will work with local trail providers to update the status of each Priority Trail Gap and identify new Priority Trail Gaps. In addition, efforts will be made to identify historic metal truss bridges that could be used to close gaps.

Top 10 Trail Gaps in Pennsylvania

From the list of Priority Trail Gaps, DCNR and PTAC identify the Top 10 Trail Gaps—the state's most critical

gaps that require significant time and resources to address. These 10 trail gaps represent projects that:

- Will connect contiguous open miles of trails
- Require construction or rehabilitation of major infrastructure
- Require a large amount of funding (generally over \$1 million)
- Require interagency coordination

As Top 10 Trail Gap projects close, new projects will continue to be evaluated for listing in the top 10. DCNR maintains a story map of the current [Top 10 Trail Gaps](#). It is estimated that trail stakeholders will need to raise over \$45 million to close the current Top 10 Trail Gaps.



2 Coordinate state and federal funding and programs to leverage maximum investment in priority trail projects.

Action Steps

- Continue to coordinate funding decisions for trail projects among agencies.
- Address safety concerns where existing and future trails interface with highways and railroads.
- Develop a mechanism for sharing real-time data on new trails, existing trails, and trail gaps between DCNR and PennDOT to provide the best user experience as well as a strategic planning tool.
- Engage with MPOs and RPOs annually to discuss funding and support for priority trail projects.
- Advocate for reauthorization and increased funding of the federal Recreational Trails and Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside programs.

Due to the extensive work performed by Pennsylvania's trail providers, many of the easiest trail miles have been built and are currently being enjoyed by Pennsylvania residents and visitors. Several of the state's larger trail systems are nearing completion, and a statewide network of land and water trails is becoming a reality. However, the increase in cost and complexity of trail projects in more recent years has required all parties involved to step up their efforts together. One indicator of this increase is evidenced by the fact that the average DCNR trail grant award amount between 2009 and 2019 increased by over 30 percent. In addition, due to COVID-19 impacts, trail construction costs continue to rise requiring the need to raise additional funds after project costs exceed estimated budgets.

Numerous federal, state, municipal, and private funding sources support all types of trail projects, from acquisition and planning to construction and rehabilitation. For local trail providers, trying to understand and coordinate the different funding sources, funding cycles, and eligibility requirements can be daunting. Since the 2014 Trail Plan, agencies

have implemented several processes to better coordinate funding decisions. DCED engages DCNR staff to review and provide comments on its annual Greenways, Trails, and Recreation Program applications. PennDOT invites DCNR staff to participate in scoring and ranking its Transportation Alternatives applications. Several MPOs invite DCNR staff to participate in scoring and ranking Transportation Alternatives applications at the regional level. Also, DCNR requests comments annually on trail grant applications from PennDOT staff, MPOs, and RPOs. Collaborative efforts and the leveraging of many local and state funding sources will continue to be essential when closing costly trail gaps.

Synchronizing funding cycles—an action listed in the 2014 Trail Plan—is challenging at best, due to legislative and regulatory requirements of different funding sources. The new action steps in the 2020 Trail Plan are focused on continuing to coordinate funding decisions for trail projects between agencies and encouraging better guidance to potential applicants. Overall, the new action steps focus less on compelling grant funding programs to alter their schedules and more on advancing trails by developing methods for sharing data, coordinating agency planning and actions, and supporting current allocation of trail funding programs.

This plan also calls for support of national efforts to fully fund the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP). The Recreational Trails Full Funding Act of 2020:

- Requires the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to estimate the amount of gas taxes paid by non-highway recreational users. The current estimate is more than a decade old, but suggests that those users pay more than \$270 million.
- Increases RTP funding to \$250 million or the mandated new FHWA estimate, whichever is higher.

3 Cultivate a variety of partnerships to build capacity to address local and regional trail needs.

Action Steps

- a) Develop and pilot a technical assistance program to assist local trail providers with trail development.
- b) Further examine geographic areas identified as highly suitable for supporting ATV riding in the ATV Area Suitability Analysis.
- c) Support efforts to identify and establish gravel biking and bikepacking routes.
- d) Develop three pilot projects on Bureau of Forestry lands that demonstrate best practices on how to retire redundant roads to accommodate high-impact trail activities.
- e) Develop training modules that address the most significant trail issues.
- f) Develop a proactive communications strategy between local trail providers and PA Game Commission to address concerns and needs.
- g) Work with DEP to provide guidance on various permits needed for trail projects.
- h) Establish a formal program for DCNR's semi-permanent trail counters to acquire quantitative data on trail use statewide.
- i) Investigate new ways to facilitate the registration of ATVs and snowmobiles to increase the number of registered machines.
- j) Rehabilitate DCNR's current ATV trails to accommodate Class 2 ATVs.
- k) Support water trail partners to ensure that all designated water trails have engaged and active management.

The goal of cultivating many partnerships is driven in part by complex trail needs and issues facing local and regional trail providers, including unique ones confronting specialized trail users. Additional partnerships are needed to provide technical assistance to trail providers on environmental permit requirements, safer trail crossings, identifying and establishing gravel biking and bikepacking routes, and developing new methods to facilitate easy registration of motorized trail vehicles.

In 2017, DCNR in partnership with WeConservePA established the [Greenways and Trails Central website](#). The purpose of the website is to provide a clearinghouse for trail news and resources to assist Pennsylvania trail stakeholders in developing trails. Plans are underway to improve the website's content and usability.

Since 2014, Pennsylvania has developed a robust trail counting program. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission led the way with installing 21 counters in southeast Pennsylvania. DCNR and the RTC followed by installing 20 counters on shared-use trails across the state. When the impacts of COVID-19 hit in spring 2020, those counters documented the significant increase in use of Pennsylvania's trails. In June 2020, PEC released a report, *The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on Pennsylvania's Non-motorized Trails: Increased Use, Added Strain, and a Newfound Appreciation*, which analyzed trail-counter data from across the state. The report also included a trail manager survey and a review of media coverage to establish a snapshot of the initial impacts of COVID-19 on trails. Counter data showed that use of popular trails rose an average of 65 percent from spring 2019 compared to spring 2020. The experience reinforced the importance of a robust counter program that provides quantitative data on trail use, economic impacts, and helps illustrate the return on public investment in trails.

4 Provide more opportunities and connections for everyone to regularly use a trail.

Action Steps

- a) Build a diverse board, volunteer, and user base.
- b) Using The Trust for Public Land findings, develop strategies to address trail access needs in underserved communities.
- c) Develop guidance for trail managers on strategies for handling e-bikes on trails.

It's not enough to build and maintain a robust network of trails across the state. Trail stakeholders must ensure that all Pennsylvanians—regardless of age, neighborhood, gender, skin color, language, ability, or socioeconomic standing—have access to these trails for recreation and transportation and feel welcome and safe using them. Too often, this is not the case.

DEI issues have never been more important. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how trails—especially those close to home—play a crucial role in keeping people mentally and physically healthy. Due to shifting

demographics, Pennsylvania's population is more diverse than ever before, which presents a tremendous opportunity to serve and engage a wide variety of trail users. It is essential that DCNR and other trail stakeholders throughout the state commit to making sure that trails and trail-based activities are accessible and welcoming for everyone.

Following the vision of the 2020 Recreation Plan, the 2020 Trail Plan includes a recommendation to improve access to trails for everyone in Pennsylvania. As a result, two action steps were developed to address the important issues surrounding DEI on trails. First, a diverse base of advisory boards, volunteer groups, and trail users must be established. In addition, DCNR partnered with TPL to use sophisticated mapping tools to evaluate access to trails across Pennsylvania and most importantly identify which communities lack access to trails and other outdoor recreation opportunities. This data will be instrumental for years to come as DCNR and trail partners analyze equity issues and work towards the goal of having a trail within 10 minutes of every Pennsylvanian.

Power-assisted bikes, or e-bikes, are gaining in popularity, and improving access for some segments of the population. According to People for Bikes, e-bikes are designed to be as safe as traditional bicycles, do not compromise consumer safety, and benefit bicyclists who may be discouraged from riding a traditional bicycle due to limited physical fitness, age, disability, or convenience. PTAC and the Pedalcycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee have submitted to DCNR and PennDOT a joint recommendation to develop e-bike guidance for trail managers. Consistent e-bike definitions and guidance are needed for local trail providers and communities to manage their trails in the best possible manner.



5 Establish and expand regional trail networks to connect communities and community assets.

Action Steps

- Complete Pennsylvania's Major Greenways, which will serve as the spine that connects communities and smaller trails systems.
- Support the establishment of new and continuation of existing regional trail coalitions to advance trail planning and coordination at the local level.
- Support trail planning efforts at the county and multi-county level and integrate with active transportation plans.
- Support planning efforts to establish shared-use trail loops, utilizing existing major greenways and regionally significant trails.
- Conduct walkability and bikeability assessments in communities with Priority Trail Gaps and along Major Greenways.

Trails are linear in nature. Utilizing trails to connect communities and the resources within those communities is key to forming a network of trails across the state. Major greenways are the foundation of this network, and completion of the major greenways has been a priority since 2001. This is a new recommendation that will help complete the long-distance spines like

the D&L Trail and create linkages and regionally connected systems.

The action step to support regional trail coalitions to advance trail planning and coordination at the local level consolidates two high-priority actions from the 2014 Trail Plan, both of which identified as top actions to continue into the 2020 Trail Plan: Identify destination trail systems and establish semiannual regional trail focus groups. The action, as written, supports the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition, THE LINK, Circuit Trails, and NEPA Trail Forum. These initiatives have established a vision for a regional trail system, mapped existing trails, and created a brand. Organizers convene regular stakeholder groups and set priorities for advancing a regional vision. More than half of Pennsylvania counties are now part of a regional initiative. Pennsylvania's current regional trail initiatives are described further in [Appendix F](#).

Support for trail-planning efforts at the county and multi-county level and integrating trail-planning efforts with active transportation plans is carried over from past county greenway planning. Feedback from DOH and PennDOT prompted the action step to conduct walkability and bikeability assessments in communities with priority trail gaps and along major greenways. Some major greenways require a connection through towns, and this could be a first step to a community becoming a trail town.



6 Maintain and improve existing land and water trails and related infrastructure.

Action Steps

- a) Enhance and promote [GreenwaysandTrails.org](https://www.greenwaysandtrails.org) as the one-stop resource center for best management practice resources for all trail needs.
- b) Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Park Maintenance Institute to develop resources needed to address top trail maintenance issues.
- c) Establish regional baseline data for trail maintenance activities and costs.
- d) Maintain an accurate statewide trails dataset for existing trails and make available for viewing on [ExplorePATrails.com](https://www.explorepatrails.com).
- e) Study the feasibility of establishing a statewide subsidized liability insurance program/policy for motorized trails.
- f) Identify and implement new options to maintain and groom snowmobile trails.
- g) Develop guidance on incorporating features along shared-use trails that help improve and diversify the user experience.

completed or are near completion, such as the development of a maintenance-expense tracking sheet by RTC, improvements to the ExplorePATrails website, and promotion of the *Universal Access Trails and Shared Use Paths* manual. The new action steps tap into new and existing resources for trail managers.

[GreenwaysandTrails.org](https://www.greenwaysandtrails.org) is an existing website that will be elevated by this plan as the state's one-stop resource center and clearinghouse of trail information. The new Pennsylvania Park Maintenance Institute can also be a valuable resource for addressing top trail maintenance issues. As a result of feedback from the motorized community, additional action steps were developed to address issues faced by motorized trail users, such as studying the feasibility of a statewide subsidized liability insurance program for motorized trails and identifying new options to maintain and groom snowmobile trails.

Over 12,000 miles of land and water trails crisscross the state (plus numerous trailheads, bridges, and tunnels). Maintaining and improving these facilities is critical to ensure the safety and enjoyment of trail users. Numerous survey results showed that local providers and trail users agree on the importance of maintaining and improving existing land and water trails. Maintaining existing park and recreation areas was the top funding priority for local recreation providers and Pennsylvanians from the 2020 Recreation Plan.

Several of the 2014 action steps addressing trail maintenance were



7 Promote Pennsylvania's trails and their economic, environmental, and health benefits.

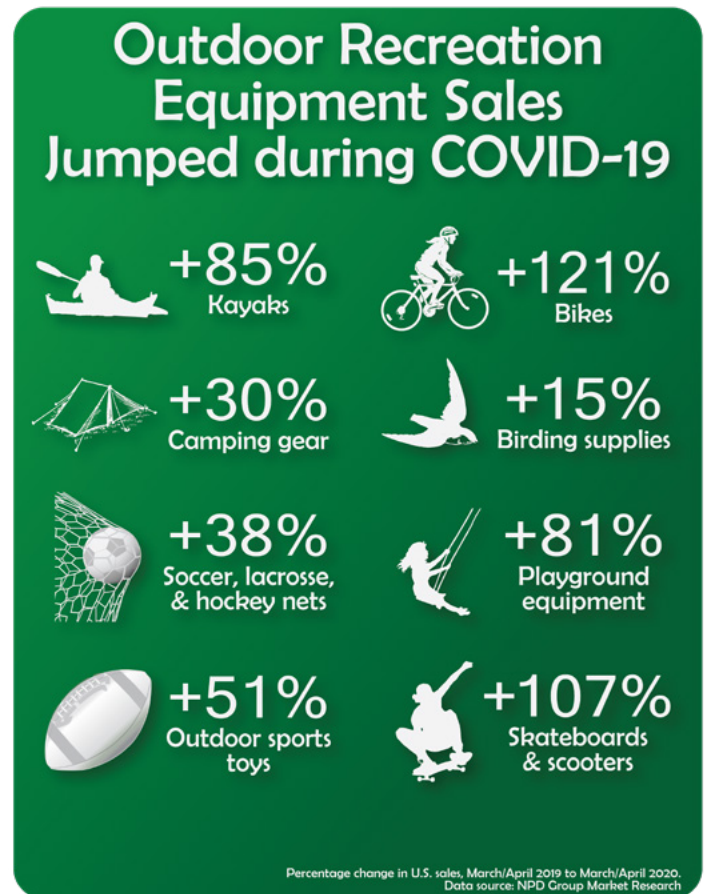
Action Steps

- Develop talking points and content material (infographics, videos, presentations, social media) that promote the benefits of trails.
- Support statewide and regional strategies to market PA trails.

Trails are beneficial to all Pennsylvanians, keeping people healthy and boosting local economies. According to the 2020 Recreation Plan, 70 percent of Pennsylvanians agree that outdoor recreation amenities such as parks and trails attract new residents and businesses to communities. Promoting the many benefits of trails was identified as a priority in 2014, and results from the 2019 Report Card Survey showed strong continued support for this recommendation.

Since Spring 2020, Pennsylvania's state parks and trails have experienced unprecedented use for mental and physical health. Outdoor recreation equipment sales have soared. For example, bike sales increased 121 percent, skateboards and scooters 107 percent, and kayaks 85 percent. New bikes and kayaks were difficult to purchase in some areas.

Training and workshops—identified in the 2014 Trail Plan—are held every year to share information with trail managers and trail users. DCNR and its trail partners will continue to support these educational efforts. In 2018, RTC completed a multiple-trail-user survey and published an economic impact report. In addition, a statewide ATV study was conducted in 2017



to identify potential ATV sites. The new action steps focus less on conducting studies and instead emphasize support for statewide and regional marketing strategies and trail promotion at the local level.

PTAC recommended a new action step to develop talking points and content so that local trail advocates have materials readily available.

Pennsylvania Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Implementation Matrix

Vision: Develop a statewide land and water trail network to facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles.

Definition of a Trail: A designated route on land or water with public access for recreation and/or alternative transportation opportunities such as walking, hiking, fitness, backpacking, cross country skiing, bicycling, mountain biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, four-wheel driving, all-terrain vehicle riding, off-highway motorcycling, canoeing, kayaking, etc. for users of all ages and abilities.

1. Close Priority Trail Gaps in Pennsylvania’s statewide land and water trail network with the overall goal of having a trail within 10 minutes of every citizen.

Action Steps	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Parties & Implementing Partners
a) Identify and close Pennsylvania’s Priority Trail Gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide a public process and criteria for identifying Priority Trail Gaps.• Biannually update trail gaps to capture new gaps and changes in status of existing gaps.• Maintain an online map showing Priority Trail Gaps in Pennsylvania.• Place Priority Trail Gap projects on local Transportation Improvement Programs.	DCNR, PennDOT, local trail providers, county/local municipalities

b) From the list of Priority Trail Gaps, identify and close the Top 10 Trail Gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a public process and criteria for selecting the Top 10 Trail Gaps. • Maintain a story map. • Develop funding strategies, project schedules, scopes of work, and promotional materials for Top 10 Trail Gaps. 	DCNR, PennDOT, PTAC, MPOs/RPOs, local trail providers, county/local municipalities
c) Prioritize funding for projects that address Priority Trail Gaps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of design-only projects to make projects shovel-ready. • Develop an assistance program that helps trail gap projects get ready for funding. • Prioritize funding for land acquisitions and strategies that address trail gaps. 	DCNR, PennDOT
d) Increase public awareness of Priority Trail Gaps and the importance of closing them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop news releases during Trails Month highlighting specific Priority Trail Gaps. • Engage counties and municipalities who have trail gaps within their jurisdictions. • Develop a rack card promoting Priority Trails Gaps and how to close them. 	DCNR, PTAC, county/local municipalities
e) Close Priority Trail Gaps by relocating and rehabilitating historic metal truss bridges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential locations for reusing PennDOT's marketed historic bridges. • Develop funding packages for high value bridges. 	DCNR, PennDOT, PA Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC)
f) Support efforts for specialized trail user groups to define and identify vulnerabilities and opportunities that relate to their unique trails systems (e.g. mountain biking, ATViing, hiking).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with statewide entities who represent specific user groups and develop priorities and strategies. • Adopt trail design standards for the various types of trails. 	DCNR, PSSA, PAOHV, PA Equine Council, PEC, KTA
g) Increase opportunities for water-based recreation by identifying areas with the greatest need for public access and closing gaps in water trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study existing public access along waterways within the Pennsylvania Water Trail Network and identify high need areas. • Share results from completed studies with PennDOT to coordinate bridge projects with water access needs. 	DCNR, DCED, PennDOT, PA Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC), PEC, PA Water Trail Partnership

2. Coordinate state and federal funding and programs to leverage maximum investment in priority trail projects.

Action Steps	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Party / Implementing Partners
a) Continue to coordinate funding decisions for trail projects among agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue annual coordination among staff at various funding agencies. Develop a funding guide for local trail providers describing strategies for using funding from multiple state agencies. 	DCNR, DCED, PennDOT, MPOs/RPOs, WeConservePA
b) Address safety concerns where existing and future trails interface with highways and railroads.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify locations where existing and future trails cross state highways or railroads. Develop a multi-agency strategy to identify, prioritize and address existing highway crossings. Coordinate highway projects with future trail needs and existing crossings requiring upgrades. Develop a guidance document for working with railroads on trail crossings. 	PennDOT, DCNR, DCED, PA Public Utilities Commission MPOs/RPOs, local trail providers
c) Develop a mechanism for sharing real-time data on new trails, existing trails, and trail gaps between DCNR and PennDOT to provide the best user experience as well as a strategic planning tool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a single dataset of DCNR's trail data. Convene a workgroup to establish how to share data and what data is needed. Incorporate trail data into the PennDOT Connects process. Provide the data for existing trails to the public. 	DCNR, PennDOT, PEC
d) Engage with MPOs and RPOs annually to discuss funding and support for priority trail projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop guidance for local trail providers on how and when to approach their MPOs and RPOs with potential trail projects. 	Local trail providers, DCNR, PennDOT, MPOs/ RPOs, county/ local municipalities
e) Advocate for reauthorization and increased funding of the federal Recreational Trails and Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an educational piece on the impact of these programs in PA. Share information on the Coalition for Recreational Trails efforts to increase allocation for the Recreational Trails Program. Update the Recreational Trails fact sheet. 	DCNR, PennDOT, WeConservePA, RTC, PEC, statewide and local trail providers

3. Cultivate a variety of partnerships to build capacity to address local and regional trail needs.

Action Steps	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Party / Implementing Partners
a) Develop and pilot a technical assistance program to assist local trail providers with trail development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a workgroup to determine the specific needs that are not being met by current trail resources. Develop a report that outlines the issues and suggestions for fulfilling unmet needs. 	DCNR, PTAC, county/local municipalities, local trail providers
b) Further examine geographic areas identified as highly suitable for supporting ATV riding in the ATV Area Suitability Analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with state agencies to identify common priority lands suitable for development of ATV riding opportunities. Complete a GIS analysis of identified lands and the ATV suitability data. Convene meeting to review results of analysis. Develop a long-term strategy for coordinating motorized trail development with the restoration or development of these common priority lands. Meet with counties, municipalities, planning organizations, etc. to review findings. 	DCNR, DCED, DEP, county/local municipalities
c) Support efforts to identify and establish gravel biking and bikepacking routes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a guide for how to establish gravel biking and bikepacking routes. Promote established routes. 	DCNR, DCED, PGC, PennDOT
d) Develop three pilot projects on Bureau of Forestry lands that demonstrate best practices on how to retire redundant roads to accommodate high-impact trail activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop evaluation criteria for identifying best projects. Upon completion, evaluate impact after two years. 	DCNR
e) Develop training modules that address the most significant trail issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the best existing training resources. Work with statewide trail organizations to facilitate trainings targeted at their specific trail types/user groups. 	DCNR, PTAC, PALTA, PRPS, statewide trail organizations

f) Develop a proactive communications strategy between local trail providers and PGC to address concerns and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish periodic meetings between local trail providers and PGC. • Develop guidance on proposing new trails on PGC lands. • Develop procedures for managing and maintaining existing trails on gamelands. 	PGC, local trail providers
g) Work with DEP to provide guidance on various permits needed for trail projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand DCNR's Permitting FAQ to include information relevant during the planning, cost estimate and grant application phases. 	DCNR, DEP
h) Establish a formal program for DCNR's semi-permanent trail counters to acquire quantitative data on trail use statewide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish written procedures, roles and responsibilities for the use of trail counters. • Make data publicly available. • Move counters on established intervals. • Develop the process and criteria for identifying new trails for counter placement. 	DCNR, RTC, local trail providers
i) Investigate new ways to facilitate the registration of ATVs and snowmobiles to increase the number of registered machines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the possibility of establishing on-the-spot registration capabilities at local motorized recreation sites. • Promote the positive impacts of the ATV and Snowmobile restricted accounts. • Advertise the list of states that have reciprocity agreements with Pennsylvania for registration of machines. • Update guidance on registration requirements. 	DCNR, PennDOT, local motorized recreation providers.
j) Rehabilitate DCNR's current ATV trails to accommodate Class 2 ATVs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and prioritize ATV trails that are best suited to accommodate Class 2 ATVs. 	DCNR
k) Support water trail partners to ensure that all designated water trails have engaged and active management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish watershed-based networks of support. • Work with water trail managers to determine needed assistance from the PA Water Trail Partnership. • Direct outreach and stakeholder engagement along vulnerable and "orphaned" water trails to support a new management structure. 	DCNR, PFBC, PEC, PA Water Trail Partnership

4. Provide more opportunities and connections for everyone to regularly use a trail.

Action Steps	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Party / Implementing Partners
a) Build a diverse board, volunteer, and user base.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt existing toolkits to establish a Pennsylvania-based guide for improving ADA accessibility and DEI, specific to trails. Update the Universal Access Trails manual to include DEI considerations and guidance. Support a multi-agency DEI workgroup. Develop and implement a recruitment strategy for the PTAC. 	DCNR, PennDOT, local trail providers, Governor's commissions
b) Using The Trust for Public Land findings, develop strategies to address trail access needs in underserved communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate DEI work with PennDOT's Environmental Justice Program to ensure compliance for federal Recreational Trails Program. Develop a communications strategy and educational materials that effectively describes DEI, trail access mapping and explains PA's strategy related to trails. Evaluate DCNR's current trail grant application process to determine how to best provide trail access to underserved communities. 	DCNR, PTAC, PennDOT, PFBC, local trail providers, county/local municipalities
c) Develop guidance for trail managers on strategies for handling e-bikes on trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Release a policy on the use of e-bikes on DCNR lands. Release a guide highlighting issues to consider when implementing an e-bike policy on local trails. 	DCNR, PTAC, PPAC, local trail providers, county/local municipalities

5. Establish and expand regional trail networks to connect communities and community assets.

Action Steps	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Party / Implementing Partners
a) Complete Pennsylvania's Major Greenways, which will serve as the spine that connects communities and smaller trails systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish strategies for completing the D&L Trail, Lackawanna Greenway, Montour Trail and York Heritage Trail. Create marketing materials to assist with expanding public support and fundraising. 	DCNR, local trail providers, county/local municipalities
b) Support the establishment of new and continuation of existing regional trail coalitions to advance trail planning and coordination at the local level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support efforts to coordinate trail planning and development in 3 new regions per year. Expand the Circuit Trail Pipeline Manager tool statewide. 	DCNR, PEC, local trail providers, conservation landscapes, heritage areas, tourism bureaus, county/local municipalities
c) Support trail planning efforts at the county and multi-county level and integrate with active transportation plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update greenway plans over 10 years old with a focus on updating GIS data, evaluating the new trail access mapping and updating the implementation matrix. Develop county-level active transportation plans that include trails. 	DCNR, PennDOT, MPOs/RPOs, county/local municipalities
d) Support planning efforts to establish shared-use trail loops, utilizing existing major greenways and regionally significant trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and support planning for new efforts to link multiple trails together. 	DCNR, PEC, MPOS/RPOs, counties, local trail providers
e) Conduct walkability and bikeability assessments in communities with Priority Trail Gaps and along Major Greenways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support efforts through WalkWorks and encourage communities with Priority Trail Gaps to apply. 	PA Walk Works Collaborative, DOH, county/local municipalities

6. Maintain and improve existing land and water trails and related infrastructure.

Action Steps	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Party / Implementing Partners
a) Enhance and promote GreenwaysandTrails.org as the one-stop resource center for best management practice resources for all trail needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage trail partners contributions to the site. Develop a standard form for case studies. Request information from partners on semiannual basis. 	WeConservePA, DCNR, PRPS
b) Coordinate with the Pennsylvania Park Maintenance Institute to develop resources needed to address top trail maintenance issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop BMPs for mitigating severe weather impacts on trails. Establish a model long-term funding strategy and maintenance plan to address major trail infrastructure as it ages. 	DCNR, WeConservePA, PRPS
c) Establish regional baseline data for trail maintenance activities and costs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage applicants to submit a completed RTC Maintenance Plan with grant applications. Modify the Maintenance Plan for other trail types. Identify the most resource intensive maintenance needs, develop a list of innovative solutions and publish on GreenwaysandTrails.org. 	DCNR, RTC
d) Maintain an accurate statewide trails dataset for existing trails and make available for viewing on ExplorePATrails.com.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make data available through DCNR's open data source. Meet with private trail mapping businesses to discuss the best format for making this data usable for trail apps. Implement a drawing tool on ExplorePATrails.com. 	DCNR, PennDOT, PEC
e) Study the feasibility of establishing a statewide subsidized liability insurance program/policy for motorized trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess liability issues experienced by local motorized recreation providers. 	PAOHV, PSSA

f) Identify and implement new options to maintain and groom snowmobile trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an assessment of the resources required to groom snowmobile trails. • Create a workgroup to investigate options. 	PSSA, DCNR
g) Develop guidance on incorporating features along shared-use trails that help improve and diversify the user experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate guidance into trail design documents. • Provide points on funding applications that will provide these features and amenities. 	DCNR, statewide trail organizations

7. Promote Pennsylvania's trails and their economic, environmental, and health benefits.

Action Steps	Implementation Strategies	Responsible Party / Implementing Partners
a) Develop talking points and content material (infographics, videos, presentations, social media) that promote the benefits of trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick a theme annually. • Participate and contribute to marketing efforts that can be related to trails. • Release new materials during Trails Month and distribute to local trail providers and general public. 	DCNR, DCED, PHMC, DOH, local trail providers, conservation landscapes, heritage areas
b) Support statewide and regional strategies to market PA trails.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a catalog of marketing support. • Reach out to trail providers and regional groups to gauge interest. 	DCED, DCNR, destination marketing organizations

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